

THE PEACE CORPS WELCOMES YOU TO

HONDURAS



A PEACE CORPS PUBLICATION
FOR NEW VOLUNTEERS



July 2007

A WELCOME LETTER

Dear Peace Corps/Honduras Invitee:

Congratulations on your invitation to serve as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Honduras. Honduras is one of the most challenging countries in Central America, where you will find a wide variety of cultures, climates, and people as well as an equally wide variety of challenging Volunteer assignments.

I am sure that you have many questions regarding both the country and the Peace Corps program here. This book will provide you with some initial information to address many of the most common questions and concerns. Many current and former Peace Corps staff members and Volunteers have contributed to this *Welcome Book* based on their extensive knowledge of and experience in Honduras. This book also lists additional resources where you can obtain more information. While it may not answer all of your questions, it's a good start.

It is quite a challenge to leave your home and your culture for two years to live in a foreign country, especially when you will be living at a very basic level in a small community. The information in this book will help you affirm your commitment to the two-year Peace Corps assignment and its related experiences. The key elements that you need to bring with you are a positive attitude, flexibility, a desire to work hard, a sense of humor, and openness to the Honduran culture and to new experiences.

Peace Corps Volunteers first came to Honduras in 1962, and more than 5,000 Volunteers have served here since that time. Approximately 180 Volunteers are serving in Honduras at this time. We appreciate your Volunteering for this assignment and expect that you will bring the necessary commitment, motivation, and flexibility to carry out the duties of a Peace Corps Volunteer and become a member of the dynamic and dedicated group of Volunteers currently serving in Honduras.

Welcome, and I look forward to working with you to help the people of Honduras.

Trudy Jaycox
Country Director

EL MUNDO NECESITA JOVENES SANOS

no permitamos que el sida destruya tu futuro ni tu vida



* Cartas de agradecimiento
del mes de mayo de 2004



MARCO A.
ROBERTO C.
CARLOS M.
PATRICIA B.
GONZALO S.
JOSÉ M.
SILVANO P.
FRANCISCO
GONZALO S.
LARRY M.

MIRIAM U.
TERESA L.
FRANCISCA A.
JOSÉ M.
MELLY Z.
PATRICIA S.
ROBALDO C.
SUSAN A.

50 AÑOS INSTITUTO LEMPIRA 1954 - 2004

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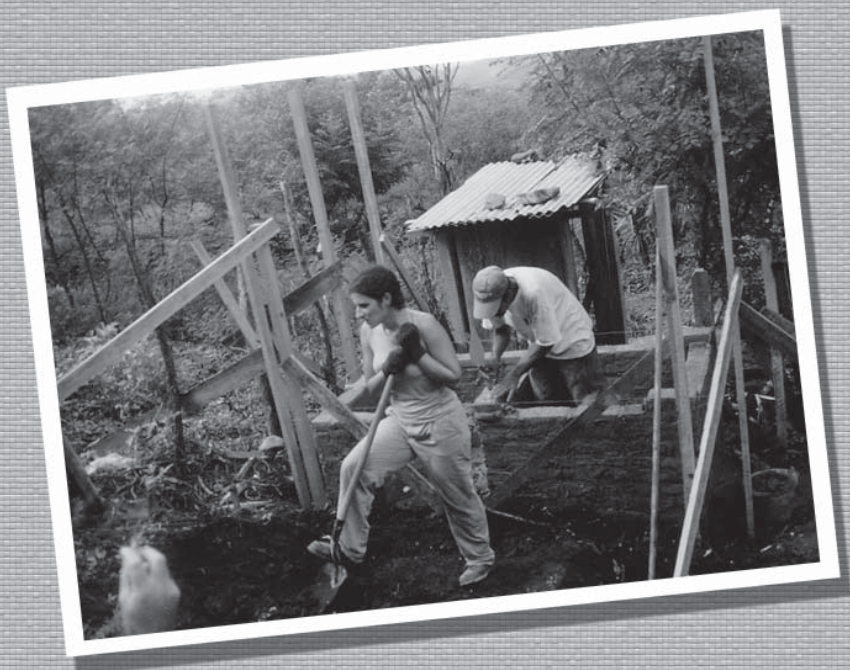
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PEACE CORPS/HONDURAS HISTORY AND PROGRAMS



History of the Peace Corps in Honduras

Times have changed since the first lady of Honduras, Doña Alejandrina Bermudez de Villeda Morales, accompanied the first training class of Peace Corps Volunteers to Honduras in 1962. Over the past 40+ years, more than 5,000 Volunteers have served in Honduras in a wide range of project areas, including health, fisheries, beekeeping, animal husbandry, special education, vocational education, small business, and agriculture. Project areas and numbers of Volunteers have changed in response to the changing needs of the country. Projects such as fisheries, beekeeping, and education were phased out as Honduran people and institutions developed the capacity to continue the work on their own. Other projects, such as municipal development, HIV/AIDS prevention, and business development, have been initiated or have evolved with technological advances, increased globalization of world markets, and other developments.

In response to the crisis caused by Hurricane Mitch in 1998, the number of Volunteers in Honduras increased dramatically. Today an average of 180 Volunteers work in the western, eastern, and southern regions of Honduras. In 2003 Peace Corps/Honduras expanded its program to the north coast of Honduras.

History and Future of Peace Corps Programming in Honduras

The Peace Corps/Honduras program has six primary projects: business, child survival and HIV/AIDS prevention, water and sanitation, protected areas management, youth development, and municipal development. We collaborate with the government of Honduras, Honduran and international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and communities throughout the country. Our program is very much in concert with the poverty-reduction strategy developed by Honduras and the international donor community. This type of integrated community development program makes Peace Corps/Honduras a very traditional post in many ways. Community development and integrated rural development have been around conceptually for at least 40 years and were especially popular from the mid-1960s until about the late 1970s. We all have learned a lot since then about human capital, social capital, dependency and empowerment, and sustainability. We know that development takes a long time, with consistent work in an auspicious setting, which we do our best to provide through excellent site selection. Despite the traditional appearance, Peace Corps/Honduras' approach to and work in HIV/AIDS prevention, municipal development, business and information technology, protected areas management, and youth development put us very much in the vanguard of Peace Corps programming worldwide. Our objective as community development facilitators is not to teach the people of Honduras "American" values but to help them help themselves within their own cultural framework.

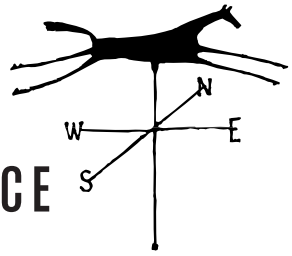
The health project focuses on HIV/AIDS education and prevention, child survival, and reproductive health. The water and sanitation project provides technical assistance for constructing water supply and waste-management systems.

At the same time, the project empowers communities to manage their water systems and protect their watersheds by developing water boards in conjunction with municipal environment committees. The protected areas management project focuses on agroforestry and natural resource management in buffer-zone communities. Business Volunteers apply basic business skills to help organizations and entrepreneurs better utilize local resources to increase income and opportunity. Municipal development Volunteers work with municipal employees and community leaders to improve public services, increase citizen participation, and enhance civic education. Finally, the youth development project builds on existing cross-project efforts, focusing on youth at-risk, leadership development, gender equality, and increasing all types of opportunities for Honduran youth.

Peace Corps/Honduras emphasizes cross-project collaboration. Volunteers are likely to find themselves sharing or coordinating projects with Volunteers from other sectors. Additionally, Peace Corps/Honduras has taken a number of initiatives to enrich projects and allow for increased opportunity in community development. These initiatives include gender inclusion and development, environmental education, cross-project youth development, HIV/AIDS prevention, and information and communication technology.



COUNTRY OVERVIEW: HONDURAS AT A GLANCE



History

Human occupation of what is now Honduras began between 9000 and 7000 B.C. These original inhabitants were nomadic hunters. Agriculture in the region began about 6,000 years ago, when people began to gather in villages. The Maya Indians settled in western Honduras around 1000 B.C. and developed an important network of communities centered around the city of Copán. Archaeological remains tell the story of a civilization that grew slowly from 2000 B.C. to 800 A.D., greatly expanded, and then collapsed around 900 A.D. The civilization's descendants, the Maya Chortí, inhabit the region today.

The European invasion of Honduras began in 1502 with the fourth and last voyage of Christopher Columbus. He arrived on the island of Guanaja, which he called *Isla de Pinos* (Pine Island). Before the arrival of the Spaniards, Honduras was heavily populated with an estimated 500,000 to 1 million people. However, slavery and diseases (e.g., smallpox) diminished the population to fewer than 20,000 in less than 100 years.

Additional Spanish expeditions to Honduras occurred in 1524 and 1525, including one from Mexico commanded by Hernán Cortés. The occupiers appointed a governor, but the native population of Lenca Indians would not accept colonialism without a war. Lempira, the chief of the Lencas, led 30,000 Indians against the Spaniards on several occasions until 1536. During peace talks, he was betrayed and assassinated, and Indian resistance was quickly suffocated. The Spanish colonization brought not only new kinds of people—from Spaniards to African slaves—but also new species of plants

and animals. The Spaniards introduced cattle and horses to the New World and took tobacco, coffee, maize, potatoes, and cacao to the Old World. In time, gold and silver mining techniques were introduced, large cattle ranches and plantations were developed, and new towns and fields emerged from the forests.

Central America gained its independence from Spain in 1821, and within a short time various factions developed. During this period, Central America was briefly annexed to Mexico, then withdrew to join the newly formed United Provinces of Central America. However, conservative politicians in the Central American government who rejected the plan invaded Honduras in 1826. Francisco Morazán, a liberal, repelled the invasion and took control, but efforts to maintain the union were unsuccessful. In 1838, the countries decided to go their separate ways. Honduras signed a new constitution in 1839. Its first capital was Comayagua. In 1880, President Marco Aurelio Soto moved the capital to Tegucigalpa, in part because his Guatemalan Indian wife was not accepted by the high society of Comayagua. Another factor in the rise of Tegucigalpa was its great mineral wealth of gold and silver.

Since independence, Honduras has suffered nearly 300 internal rebellions, civil wars, *coups d'état*, and changes of government, more than half of which took place during the 20th century. The country has also been the target of foreign intervention, the most famous being that of U.S. soldier William Walker, who appointed himself president of Nicaragua in 1860 and aimed to take over the rest of Central America. His campaign ended in failure, and he was executed in Trujillo.

As a result of its infamous banana companies and “banana wars,” Honduras was known as the Banana Republic. When banana production dominated the economy, these companies had great influence in local politics. In 1913, for example, the

Standard Fruit Company and the Cuyamel Fruit Company owned 75 percent of the nation's banana plantations and nearly 100 percent of its politicians. While the banana companies built railroads and seaports, little of their wealth remained in Honduras.

Government

Honduras' governmental structure is very similar to that of the United States. The Constitution of 1982 provides for a strong executive branch, a unicameral National Congress elected by popular vote, a judiciary branch appointed by the National Congress, and a president elected to a four-year term by popular vote. Since 1980, the country has had seven general elections. In November 2005, Manuel Zelaya of the Liberal Party was elected as president; he will hold the office until January 2010. The 128 members of the National Congress also are also elected for four-year terms. Congressional seats are assigned to a party's candidates in proportion to the number of votes received by each party. Honduras is divided into departments (states), each with its own *cabecera departamental* (capital). Municipal authorities are also elected for four years during general elections.

The judicial branch includes a Supreme Court of Justice, courts of appeal, and several courts of original jurisdiction, such as labor and criminal courts. The executive branch consists of 14 cabinet-level ministries: Government and Justice, Foreign Relations, Defense, Economy, Finance, National Agrarian Institute, Education, Health, Labor, Communications and Public Works, Natural Resources, Culture and Tourism, Superior Council of Economic Planning, and the Presidency.

Economy

Agriculture and forestry are the largest sectors in the economy, providing 60 percent of all jobs and two-thirds of the nation's exports. The major products for export are timber, bananas, meat, and coffee. Their production usually involves foreign capital and is highly developed. While *campesinos* (small farmers) constitute the social majority, their contribution to the gross national product (GNP) is minor because they still rely on traditional agricultural practices, including slash-and-burn cultivation and the use of wooden plows. Coffee and bananas contribute more than 50 percent of the country's export revenues. In addition, nontraditional exports such as shrimp and lobster have begun to impact the economy.

Maquiladoras, or factories, that assemble imported items for re-export were introduced in 1990 to take advantage of the country's low wages (which range from \$2 to \$3 per day in the non-export agricultural sector to as much as \$4 per day in the export sector). The Honduran *maquiladoras* have earned a negative reputation in the United States because of adverse publicity about their use of child labor. In most *maquiladoras*, the workers are young women, often single mothers who support their families with low but sufficient wages. It is estimated that 80 percent of men ages 18 to 25 are unemployed.

In the 1980s, the United States gave aid money to Honduras for the use of its territory in support of the Contras' efforts to overthrow the Sandinistas in Nicaragua. Most of the aid money was spent on supporting the Contras rather than on the country's vast social needs. Through overspending, the Honduran government eventually amassed a huge fiscal deficit, and because of its debt, international banks cut off financing.

Honduras' economic situation remains uncertain. In 1994, a drought resulted in a shortage of electric power. In 1998, Hurricane Mitch devastated numerous rural and urban areas, many of which have yet to be fully reconstructed. While international disaster relief funds helped Honduras during this crisis, they made little impact in the fight against poverty. Most of these funding sources were exhausted in 2002.

People and Culture

The majority of the population is a mixture of indigenous, African, and Spanish heritage sometimes referred to as *Ladino*. There are minorities of Europeans, Africans, Asians, and Arabs and six main indigenous groups: the Miskito, Pech (or Paya), Maya Chortí, Lenca, Jicaque (or Tolupan), and Tawahka. Another group in this diverse mix is the Garifuna. In the 1500s, when Europeans brought African slaves to the Caribbean islands, the slaves on two ships that wrecked near St. Vincent escaped. The Africans adopted the language and culture of their hosts, the Carib Indians, and intermarriage resulted in a group known today as the Garifuna or black Caribs. In 1700, Britain took over St. Vincent, and in 1797 the Garifuna were exiled to the island of Roatán; they later spread to Belize, Nicaragua, and other parts of Honduras.

Most Hondurans are Roman Catholic, but Protestant congregations do exist in fewer numbers. Although Spanish is the predominant language, some people, especially along the north coast and in the Bay Islands, speak English. Garifuna is spoken in Garifuna communities.

The country has an estimated population of 7.3 million people and enjoys a relatively low population density, especially compared with neighboring El Salvador and Guatemala. On the other hand, its population distribution and growth patterns

are not favorable. The area suitable for settlement is limited, so the bulk of the population is concentrated in the city of Tegucigalpa, the Comayagua and San Pedro Sula valleys, and the north coast. The eastern quadrant of the country remains one of the most inaccessible and least inhabited areas of Central America. The rate of annual population growth was estimated at 2.16 percent in 2005. Rapid population growth is placing increasing strains on the government's capacity to keep pace in providing health, economic, educational, and other services to the Honduran people.

Environment

With a land area of 44,997 square miles (112,492 square kilometers), Honduras is the second largest country in Central America. The climate is characterized by a wet season from June to November and a dry season from December to May. Climatic variations are more pronounced in the coastal lowlands, particularly in the north, where major hurricanes and severe floods and droughts have occurred in recent years. Temperate conditions prevail in the higher elevations.

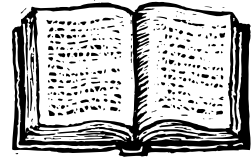
The country consists of mountains, mangrove and other forests, beaches, and coral reefs. It has more than 500 miles of exceptional coastline. Two-thirds of the terrain is mountainous, with agriculture and small cities tucked away in valleys. The average altitude is 1,000 feet above sea level, with the highest peak, in Celaque National Park, reaching 9,275 feet.

Honduras also possesses an underwater paradise of coral reefs on the Caribbean coast, the longest in the Northern Hemisphere, which is easily accessible from the Bay Islands. About 45 percent of the land is covered with forests. Among the tree species are palm, pine, mahogany, Spanish cedar,

balsa, and rosewood. Honduras is home to several distinct ecosystems, including lowland rain forests and highland cloud forests in the interior, tropical rain forests on the Atlantic coast, and dry forests on the Pacific coast.



RESOURCES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION



Following is a list of websites for additional information about the Peace Corps and Honduras and to connect you to returned Volunteers and other invitees. Please keep in mind that although we try to make sure that all links are active and current, we cannot guarantee it.

A note of caution: As you surf the Internet, be aware that you may find bulletin boards and chat rooms in which people are free to express opinions about the Peace Corps based on their own experiences, including comments by those who were unhappy with their choice to serve in the Peace Corps. These opinions are not those of the Peace Corps or the U.S. government, and we hope you will keep in mind that no two people experience their service in the same way.

General Information about Honduras

www.countrywatch.com

On this site, you can learn anything from what time it is in Tegucigalpa to how to convert from the dollar to the lempira. Just click on Honduras and go from there.

www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations

Visit this site for general travel advice about almost any country in the world.

www.state.gov

The U.S. State Department's website issues background notes periodically about countries around the world. Find Honduras and learn more about its social and political history.

www.psr.keele.ac.uk/official.htm

This site includes links to all the official sites for governments worldwide.

<http://geography.about.com/library/maps/blindex.htm>

This online world atlas includes maps and geographical information, and each country page contains links to other sites, such as the Library of Congress, that contain comprehensive historical, social, and political background.

www.cyberschoolbus.un.org/infonation/info.asp

This United Nations site allows you to search for statistical information for member states of the U.N.

www.worldinformation.com

This site provides an additional source of current and historical information about countries around the world.

Connect With Returned Volunteers and Other Invitees

www.rpcv.org

This is the site of the National Peace Corps Association, made up of returned Volunteers. On this site you can find links to all the Web pages of the “friends of” groups for most countries of service, made up of former Volunteers who served in those countries. There are also regional groups who frequently get together for social events and local Volunteer activities.

<http://www.rpcvwebring.org>

This site is known as the Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Web Ring. Browse the Web Ring and see what former Volunteers are saying about their service.

www.peacecorpswriters.org

This site is hosted by a group of returned Volunteer writers. It is a monthly online publication of essays and Volunteer accounts of their Peace Corps service.

Online Articles/Current News Sites about Honduras

www.honduras.net

A Honduran Web portal with a variety of resources

www.marrder.com/htw

Online version of *Honduras This Week*, an English-language weekly newspaper

www.hondudata.com

General information about Honduras (in Spanish)

Recommended Books

1. Acker, Alison. *Honduras: The Making of a Banana Republic*. Cambridge, Mass.: South End Press, 1989.
2. Alvarado, Elvia. *Don't Be Afraid, Gringo: A Honduran Woman Speaks From the Heart (The Story of Elvia Alvarado)*. New York: HarperCollins, 1989.
3. Amaya Amador, Ramón. *Prisión Verde (Green Prison)*. Tegucigalpa, Honduras: Editorial Universitaria, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Honduras, 1987. (In Spanish)
4. Berryman, Phillip. *Inside Central America: The Essential Facts Past and Present on El Salvador, Nicaragua, Honduras, Guatemala, and Costa Rica*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1985.
5. Guzman, Juda. *Memories of a Central American*. New York: Vantage Press, 1988.

Books About the History of the Peace Corps

1. Hoffman, Elizabeth Cobbs. *All You Need is Love: The Peace Corps and the Spirit of the 1960's*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000.

2. Rice, Gerald T. *The Bold Experiment: JFK's Peace Corps*. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985.
3. Stossel, Scott. *Sarge: The Life and Times of Sargent Shriver*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2004.

Books on the Volunteer Experience

1. Banerjee, Dillon. *So You Want to Join the Peace Corps: What to Know Before You Go*. Berkeley, Calif.: Ten Speed Press, 2000.
2. Casebolt, Marjorie DeMoss. *Margarita: A Guatemalan Peace Corps Experience*. Gig Harbor, Wash.: Red Apple Publishing, 2000.
3. Dirlam, Sharon. *Beyond Siberia: Two Years in a Forgotten Place*. Santa Barbara, Calif.: McSeas Books, 2004.
4. Erdman, Sarah. *Nine Hills to Nambonkaha: Two Years in the Heart of an African Village*. New York, N.Y.: Picador, 2003.
5. Herrera, Susana. *Mango Elephants in the Sun: How Life in an African Village Let Me Be in My Skin*. Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1999
6. Hessler, Peter. *River Town: Two Years on the Yangtze*. New York, N.Y.: Perennial, 2001.
7. Kennedy, Geraldine ed. *From the Center of the Earth: Stories out of the Peace Corps*. Santa Monica, Calif.: Clover Park Press, 1991.
8. Thompsen, Moritz. *Living Poor: A Peace Corps Chronicle*. Seattle, Wash.: University of Washington Press, 1997 (reprint).

Online Spanish Learning Resources

<http://www.transparent.com/>

Free Spanish short course from Transparent Language

http://www.byki.com/free_lang_software.pl

Language-learning software based on the flash-card system

<http://www.studyspanish.com/>

Spanish tutorial provides a good opportunity for self-study; contains lessons, audios, and exercises that are corrected instantly

<http://www.miscositas.com/>

Short stories, links and other exercises for learning Spanish

<http://www.podcast.net/search?t=description&q=spanish&s=1>

Podcast.net

<http://www.podcast.net/show/88221>

Si Spanish Language Institute; Spanish course podcast

<http://www.podcast.net/show/800>

Really Learn Spanish podcast

<http://www.podcast.net/show/69294>

Insta Spanish Lessons podcast

<http://www.podcast.net/show/88106>

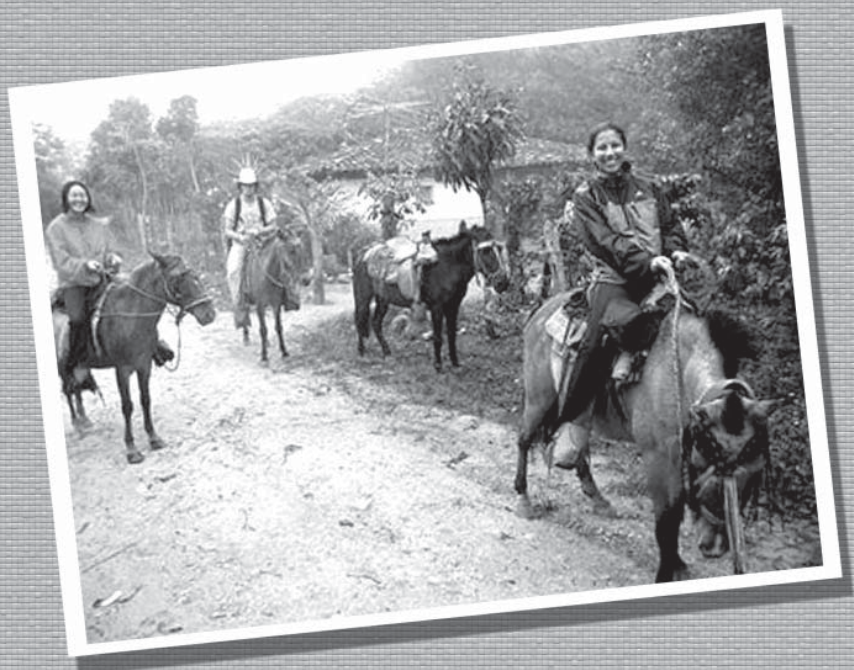
Rolling Rs: Free Spanish Lessons (video podcast)

<http://www.podcast.net/show/40167>

Trying To Learn Spanish podcast

<http://www.podcast.net/show/84043>

Spanish Arriba's podcast



LIVING CONDITIONS AND VOLUNTEER LIFESTYLE



Communications

Mail

Letters sent from the United States generally arrive in Honduras in two to three weeks. However, the mail system is not always reliable, and it is not unheard of for a letter to take several months to arrive. Packages can take even more time. You will have to pay a tax of approximately 20 lempira (about \$2) at the post office to retrieve any packages.

During pre-service training, mail will be delivered to you at the training site, and your mailing address will be:

“Your Name,” PCT
Voluntario del Cuerpo de Paz
Apartado Postal 3158
Tegucigalpa, Honduras
America Central

Volunteers have two options to receive mail: 1) direct delivery to your site via the Honduras postal system; or 2) delivery to the Peace Corps office and the mail can be kept in your mail file at the Peace Corps office.

Option #1: Once you become a Volunteer, you will be responsible for sending your site address to friends and family. We recommend you get a P.O. box (if available at your local post office) if you want to receive correspondence at your site and avoid the cost of coming to the capital city as well as a delay in delivery time.

Option #2: Mail will be kept in your file at the Peace Corps office until you visit the capital for official business. In some instances, Volunteer mail received at the Tegucigalpa office will be forwarded to a Volunteer's site once a month. If Volunteers choose to have their packages mailed to the Peace Corps office, Peace Corps staff will pick up their packages from the Tegucigalpa post office and keep them in the Peace Corps office. Volunteers are responsible for coming to Tegucigalpa to pick them up. All Volunteers must reimburse the Peace Corps for the postal package fee.

We strongly recommend that you establish a regular writing pattern with your friends and relatives, since they might become concerned if they do not hear from you for an extended period of time.

Do not have money or other valuable items sent to you through the mail. Electrical appliances cannot be sent through the mail, as they are prohibited items and could be subject to a fine. Letters and packages are sometimes opened by postal workers, and valuable items occasionally disappear. In addition, the process of retrieving a package at the post office can be time consuming, and customs duties may exceed the value of the items sent. If you must have packages sent; we recommend padded envelopes. You will have a bank account at your site, and you can have money wired to that account (but note that the Peace Corps is not allowed to give out your account number). Airline tickets can be paid for in advance and picked up at the airline's office in Tegucigalpa.

Federal Express, UPS, and DHL have offices in Tegucigalpa and can deliver packages to the Peace Corps office. Please do not send any electrical device or appliances via FedEx, UPS, or DHL, as a customs clearance process is required that will cost \$90 plus an additional charge of 75 percent of the cost of the device. Please let your family and friends know

this before sending any mail. We also encourage you to ask for shipment tracking numbers so you can track packages through the carriers' websites. Remember that these delivery services cannot deliver to a post office box, so you will have to provide the following street address for the Peace Corps office: Avenida Republica de Chile #401, Colonia Palmira, Tegucigalpa (phone: 504.232.1753).

Please check the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) website for a detailed list of permitted and prohibited items at <http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/airtravel/prohibited/permitted-prohibited-items.shtm>.

Telephones

International phone service to and from Honduras is relatively good. Hondutel, the telephone agency, has offices in many cities and towns, and some of those offices offer direct lines to U.S. long-distance carriers. You can also call or receive calls from the United States from local phones. To reach you in an emergency, your family can contact the Office of Special Services in Washington, D.C., at 800.424.8580, ext. 1470, or 202.692.1470 (24-hours a day). The Office of Special Services will contact Peace Corps/Honduras immediately and will help you contact your family.

Some Volunteers have telephones in their homes but most rely on cellphones. Rather than bringing one from the States, purchase it when you get to Honduras. Phone cards are readily available.

Computer, Internet, and E-mail Access

The Volunteer lounge at the Peace Corps office has several computers with Internet access that Volunteers may use for their work. Volunteers cannot use Peace Corps staff computers. Regular access to these computers is not possible

during pre-service training because the training site is not near the office. The number of Internet cafes is increasing, especially in major urban centers (including in the town of the training center). Volunteers are encouraged to use the Internet at cafes in or near their communities.

When considering whether or not to bring a laptop or digital camera to Honduras, remember that there is the real possibility of theft or water damage. Most counterparts and agencies where you may be assigned to work may not have this type of equipment, or it may be very slow and dated. While it may be beneficial to bring a laptop to augment your personal and professional work, you should consider whether your utilization of this technology is sustainable. If you choose to bring a laptop or other valuable equipment, you should insure it against theft and damage. You will receive information on personal articles insurance from the Peace Corps prior to departure.

Housing and Site Location

Volunteer housing varies according to the area of the country and its climate. In much of the southern region, houses are open and airy to provide ventilation. Houses tend to be more closed in mountainous areas. Some Volunteers live in houses made of adobe; others live in houses made of wood or cinder blocks or in apartments. Roofing generally consists of clay tiles or corrugated metal. Most Volunteer houses have electricity and running water, though the source of water is often outside the house and water may flow only sporadically. Housing in rural sites may have outdoor latrines instead of indoor plumbing.

Peace Corps/Honduras requires Volunteers to live with a Honduran family during the initial months of their service. The Peace Corps will provide Volunteers with one secure housing option upon site assignment. Peace Corps/Honduras may also suggest other housing options that can be explored by Volunteers after this initial period. Volunteers will not be assigned to communities where adequate housing is not available.

The Peace Corps expects Volunteers to use good judgment in deciding where and with whom to live after the initial time period. Volunteers are strongly encouraged to continue living with a family and to take the necessary time to choose a living situation that considers community norms, language acquisition, and personal safety.

During the site-selection process, Peace Corps/Honduras staff will determine the availability of adequate housing. If no options are available, the site will not host a Volunteer. Safe and secure housing is a priority, and Peace Corps/Honduras will help you work with the landlord to make any necessary modifications to improve the safety and security of your home, such as adding deadbolt locks and bars on windows. Additionally, the Peace Corps makes an effort to select sites that offer reasonable and safe transportation. Keep in mind that rural areas of Honduras are more rustic than rural areas of the United States.

Peace Corps Volunteer sites are located throughout Honduras with the exception of the departments of Gracias a Dios and the Bay Islands. The site in which you eventually serve will be selected based upon the local needs of the community, your skills and interests, and the overall goals and objectives of the Peace Corps/Honduras project in which you will work.

Living Allowance and Money Management

As a Volunteer, you will receive a monthly allowance to cover your basic living expenses. The living allowance is reviewed at least once a year through a market survey to ensure that it is adequate for a healthy lifestyle comparable to that of the community in which you live. The allowance is provided in local currency and can range from an equivalency of USD\$200 to \$320 per month depending on eventual site location.

Funds are deposited into your local bank account. You will also receive a housing allowance, which varies according to average housing costs in each region.

The living allowance is intended to cover the cost of food, utilities, household supplies, clothing, recreation and entertainment, transportation, reading materials, and other incidentals. The amount that will be provided to you has been calculated to permit you to live at the modest standards of the people you serve, though you may find that you receive more compensation than your neighbors and even your community partner or supervisor.

You will accrue two days of leave and earn a \$24 vacation allowance for each month of service which is provided in local currency. The vacation allowance is also deposited into your local account each month. Following your swearing in as a Volunteer, you will also receive a one-time settling-in allowance, paid in local currency equivalent to \$250, to buy basic household items when you move to your site. This amount is also reviewed annually and adjusted as needed. If the Peace Corps asks you to travel to attend conferences or workshops, you will be given additional funds to cover the related costs of transportation, food, and lodging.

The majority of Volunteers find that they can live comfortably in Honduras with these allowances. While many bring additional money with them for out-of-country travel, the Peace Corps expects Volunteers to live at the same level as their neighbors and colleagues and therefore strongly discourages Volunteers from supplementing their income with money brought from home.

Credit cards can be used in the capital and in tourist areas. Traveler's checks can be cashed for a nominal fee. Trainees can store cash and any traveler's checks in the safe at the Peace Corps office.

Food and Diet

Although a wide variety of food is available in Honduras, beans, rice, plantains, and tortillas are the standard fare (*plato tipico*) throughout the country. Medium-size and large communities have markets that sell fruits, vegetables, meat products, milk, cheese, and grains (including soy and soy products). Volunteers who live in smaller communities, however, may only be able to purchase basic foods such as noodles, canned goods, and rice and may have to travel weekly to nearby markets to purchase perishables.

Vegetarians can maintain a healthy diet in Honduras. However, it may be difficult to maintain a strictly vegetarian diet when you live with a family during pre-service training. Families cannot be expected to change their regular diet to meet your needs. These issues will be discussed and explored further during pre-service training.

Transportation

Volunteers in Honduras use public transportation in most situations, even though it can be time-consuming. If you live in a major population center, there will be regular buses from your site to the capital. Smaller communities may have only one bus a day, so you may have to depend on a minivan or truck for transportation. Although in some circumstances it may be necessary to ride in the back of a pickup truck, Volunteers are highly discouraged from traveling this way. Any travel at night is also highly discouraged.

Volunteers are not allowed to drive or ride as a passenger on motorcycles in Honduras. Only rarely are Volunteers permitted to drive a vehicle for work-related activities if their counterpart agency requests them to do so. In this case, the Volunteer must first receive written approval from the country director and then obtain a Honduran driver's license (a valid U.S. driver's license is required to obtain a Honduran license).

In some areas, Volunteers may request a bicycle, horse, or donkey for work transportation. If approved, the Peace Corps will provide the funds for the initial purchase. When riding a bicycle, Volunteers are required to wear a helmet, which the Peace Corps will provide. All Volunteers should be prepared to walk regularly, sometimes long distances, to communities within their assignment area. In some cases, because of the distance traveled, Volunteers have to arrange for overnight lodging.

Geography and Climate

For such a small country, Honduras has a wide variety of temperatures—ranging from 60 degrees to 100 degrees Fahrenheit in the lowlands to 40 degrees to 90 degrees in the mountains. In general, the western region is relatively cool, while the southern and eastern regions are moderate to

hot in the valleys and colder in the mountains, especially at night. The tropical coasts and large valleys can be very hot and humid. In most parts of Honduras, the rainy season lasts from June through November. You should come prepared for all types of climates. The training center is located at a high altitude and gets quite cold in the mornings and evenings, so bring some warm clothes.

Social Activities

Most social activities revolve around family or community events and religious holidays. Hondurans are very hospitable. They often invite Volunteers to their homes for meals and family celebrations, which are a great opportunity to build ties of trust and sharing. You may encounter more traditional gender roles than exist in the United States. While men have freedom of movement, women may be unable to leave their homes unaccompanied after dark. It is not common for women to jog in Honduras, and those who do, never jog alone. In some parts of Honduras, people abuse alcohol, and in other areas, alcohol is prohibited. You need to be moderate in your own alcohol consumption. A Volunteer whose consumption of alcohol results in behavior that is unsafe, culturally inappropriate and not professional will be disciplined and depending on the severity of the behavior, may be asked to conclude their service early.

Professionalism, Dress, and Behavior

To be effective, Volunteers must be respected by the communities in which they work. The Peace Corps builds its reputation not through massive publicity campaigns but through its Volunteers, one community at a time. You should be prepared to be a role model throughout your service. When

Volunteers find themselves unable to gain and maintain the respect and confidence of their communities, it is almost always due to the Volunteers' failure to meet community standards of behavior. Behavior that is detrimental to the image of the Peace Corps or that threatens the reputation or physical safety of other Volunteers can result in administrative separation from the Peace Corps.

Hondurans are fairly traditional and conservative, especially in smaller villages. During pre-service training, you will learn how to dress and act appropriately in such a society, which has double standards for men and women and often for Hondurans and Americans. Your community is likely to hold you to higher standards because you are a Peace Corps Volunteer.

Dressing appropriately can enhance your credibility, since it reflects your respect for the customs and expectations of the people with whom you live and work. Inappropriate dress, like inappropriate behavior, is something that can set you unnecessarily apart from your community. Until you become well-known by Hondurans, your dress will be an important indicator to them. From the biggest city to the remotest village, you will be judged, especially initially, on your appearance.

You will find that some clothing that is considered appropriate for Hondurans is not considered appropriate for you. At the training center, you are expected to dress as you would on the job. Shirts and shoes must be worn at all times, and shorts and flip-flops are not appropriate.

Men will be asked to remove any earrings during pre-service training and the first few months at their site. Pierced eyebrows, noses, and tongues are not permitted during pre-service training and are discouraged during service. If you

have a tattoo, it is best to keep it covered. Tattoos are often associated with gang affiliation. A new anti-gang law was recently passed authorizing police to perform searches on people who are considered to be probable gang members. (Though gang tattoos are of a specific nature, you need to be aware of this Honduran reality.)

Hondurans like to dress well and to be neat and clean. Honduran businessmen do not normally wear suits and ties, so male Volunteers can wear a short-sleeved, button-down shirt or nice polo shirt and khakis or nice jeans in professional settings. Casual clothing can be worn at home and in informal situations. Low-cut necklines are not appropriate for women, but sleeveless blouses and dresses are fine, especially in coastal areas and certain valleys. Do not bring any military-style clothing (i.e., olive green or camouflage), which Honduran customs officials reserve the right to confiscate.

Personal Safety

More detailed information about the Peace Corps' approach to safety is contained in the Health Care and Safety chapter, but it is an important issue and cannot be overemphasized. As stated in the *Volunteer Handbook*, becoming a Peace Corps Volunteer entails certain safety risks. Living and traveling in an unfamiliar environment (oftentimes alone), having a limited understanding of local language and culture, and being perceived as well-off are some of the factors that can put a Volunteer at risk. Many Volunteers experience varying degrees of unwanted attention and harassment. Petty thefts and burglaries are not uncommon, and incidents of physical and sexual assault do occur, although most Volunteers complete their two years of service without personal security incidents. The Peace Corps has established procedures and policies

designed to help reduce your risks and enhance your safety and security. These procedures and policies, in addition to safety training, will be provided once you arrive in Honduras. At the same time, you are expected to take responsibility for your own safety and well-being.

Rewards and Frustrations

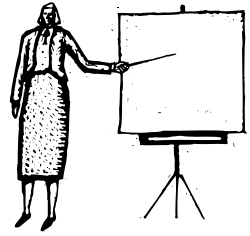
You are likely to derive much satisfaction from helping to improve the living conditions of Hondurans and from learning a new culture and language. You will also encounter unusual social and cultural situations that will require flexibility and understanding on your part. By communicating honestly and demonstrating an interest in Honduras and its people, you will soon come to enjoy your community, its customs, and your role as a Volunteer. A low level of interest, motivation, or participation by community members and co-workers, however, may cause you some frustration. You must remember that development takes time and that you may not immediately see any demonstrable impact from your work.

The Peace Corps is not for everyone. Being a Volunteer requires greater dedication and commitment than most other work environments. It is for confident, self-starting, concerned individuals who are interested in participating in the development of other countries and increasing human understanding across cultural barriers. The key to satisfying work as a Peace Corps Volunteer is the ability to establish successful human relationships at all levels with your host family, the community members with whom you work, counterpart agencies and school officials, and your fellow Volunteers. This requires patience, sensitivity, empathy, and

a positive, professional attitude. If you have the personal qualities needed to meet the challenges of two years of service in Honduras, you will have a rewarding, enriching, and lasting experience. At the same time, you will contribute to the development of Honduras and leave a part of yourself and your culture behind.



PEACE CORPS TRAINING



Overview of Pre-Service Training

Prior to becoming a Volunteer, you will participate in an 11-week training program in Honduras. Pre-service training incorporates experiential learning and adult learning methodology that is meant to challenge you while preparing you to begin your work as a Volunteer. Though pre-service training can be taxing at times, Peace Corps/Honduras works to ensure that it is demanding, but fun.

Upon arrival in Honduras, trainees move in with host families after a brief introductory session. The first four weeks of training take place in a large group and include trainees from various projects. In the fifth week, most trainees will move to other communities for field-based training, which focuses on the practical application of project technical skills.

Although you were recruited for a particular project and your training will be tailored to the requirements of that project, all Volunteers are community development facilitators. You will receive theoretical and hands-on training in community analysis, participatory analysis, gender analysis, community development, and integrated community development and become familiar with current development efforts in Honduras. As the weeks pass, you may find that you need to adapt both existing skills and new skills to your work environment in Honduras.

Language Training

As a Peace Corps Volunteer, you will find that language skills are the key to personal and professional satisfaction during your service. These skills are critical to your job performance, they help you integrate into your host community, and they can ease your personal adaptation to the new surroundings. Therefore, language training is the heart of the training program, and you must successfully meet minimum language requirements to complete training and become a Volunteer. Honduran language instructors teach formal language classes five days a week in small groups of three to five people. They will also be available for individual tutoring sessions after hours during the week.

Your language training will incorporate a community-based approach. In addition to classroom time, you will be given assignments to do outside of the classroom and with your host family. The goal is to equip you with basic social communication skills so that you can practice and develop language skills further on your own. Prior to being sworn in as a Volunteer, you will work on strategies to continue independent language studies during your two years of service.

Project Training

Project training will prepare you to work in Honduras by building on the skills you already have and by helping you to develop new skills in a manner appropriate to the needs of the country. The project staff, training staff, Honduran experts, and current Volunteers will conduct the training program. Training places great emphasis on learning how to transfer the skills you have to the community in which you will serve as a Volunteer.

Project training includes sessions on the general economic and political environment in Honduras and strategies for working within such a framework. You will review your project's goals and will meet with the Honduran agencies and organizations that have invited the Peace Corps to

assist them. You will be supported and evaluated throughout the training to build the confidence and skills you need to undertake your project activities and be a productive member of your community.

Cross-Cultural Training

As part of your pre-service training, you will live with two Honduran host families—one during center-based training and another during field-based training. As a member of the family, you will engage in routine family activities and share in meals. An important part of both cross-cultural and language training, this experience is designed to ease your transition to life at your site. Families go through an orientation conducted by Peace Corps staff to explain the purpose of pre-service training and to assist them in helping you adapt to living in Honduras. Many Volunteers form strong and lasting friendships with their host families.

Cross-cultural and community development training will help you improve your communication skills and understand your role as a facilitator of development. You will be exposed to topics such as community mobilization, conflict resolution, gender and development, nonformal and adult education strategies, and political structures.

Health Training

During pre-service training, you will be given basic medical training and information. You are expected to practice preventive healthcare and to take responsibility for your own health by adhering to all medical policies. Trainees are required to attend all medical sessions. The topics include preventive health measures and minor and major medical issues that you might encounter while in Honduras. Nutrition, mental health, safety and security, setting up a safe living compound, and how to avoid contracting HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are also covered.

Safety Training

During the safety training sessions, you will learn how to adopt a lifestyle that reduces your risks at home, at work, and during your travels. You will also learn appropriate, effective strategies for coping with unwanted attention and about your individual responsibility for promoting safety throughout your service.

Additional Trainings During Volunteer Service

In its commitment to institutionalize quality training, the Peace Corps has implemented a training system that provides Volunteers with frequent opportunities to examine their commitment to Peace Corps service while increasing their technical and cross-cultural skills. During service, there are a number of training events. The titles and objectives for two of those trainings are as follows:

- *In-service training*: Provides opportunities for Volunteers to upgrade their project, language, safety and security and community development skills while sharing their experiences and reaffirming their commitment after having served for five months and again after approximately one year.
- *Close-of-service conference*: Prepares Volunteers for the future after Peace Corps service and reviews their respective projects and personal experiences.

The number, length, and design of these trainings are adapted to country-specific needs and conditions. The key to the training system is that training events are integrated and interrelated, from the pre-departure orientation through the end of your service, and are planned, implemented, and evaluated cooperatively by the training staff, Peace Corps staff, and Volunteers.

NOTES



YOUR HEALTH CARE AND SAFETY IN HONDURAS



The Peace Corps' highest priority is maintaining the good health and safety of every Volunteer. The Peace Corps Volunteer healthcare emphasizes the preventive, rather than the curative, approach to disease. Peace Corps/Honduras maintains a clinic with three full-time medical officers, who take care of Volunteers' primary healthcare needs. Additional medical services, such as testing and treatment, are also available at regional medical facilities. If you become seriously ill, you will be transported to a major hospital in the capital and then, if necessary, medically evacuated to Panama City or the United States.

Health Issues in Honduras

Malaria is endemic in almost all of Honduras, so taking antimalarial medication is mandatory for Volunteers throughout service. Bites and scratches by rabies-carrying animals can also be life-threatening, so pre-exposure and post-exposure rabies vaccines are also mandatory. Mild to severe viral illnesses like dengue fever (including hemorrhagic dengue) are also threats to health in Honduras.

Existing skin conditions like acne and eczema often worsen in Honduras because of the climate. Sun-aggravated and fungal skin conditions are fairly common. Solar keratosis, a precancerous skin condition, can be acquired from prolonged exposure to the sun without adequate protection.

Helping You Stay Healthy

The Peace Corps will provide you with all the necessary inoculations, medications, and information to stay healthy. Upon arrival in Honduras, you will receive a medical handbook. At the end of training, you will receive a medical kit with supplies to take care of mild illnesses and first-aid needs. The contents of the kit are listed later in this chapter.

During pre-service training, you will have access to basic medical supplies through the medical officer. However, you will be responsible for your own supply of prescription drugs and any other specific medical supplies you require, as we will not order these items during training. Please bring a three-month supply of any prescription drugs you use, since they may not be available here and it may take several months for shipments to arrive.

You will have physicals mid-way through service and at the end of your service. If you develop a serious medical problem during your service, the medical officer in Honduras will consult with the Office of Medical Services in Washington, D.C. If it is determined that your condition cannot be treated in Honduras, you may be sent out of the country for further evaluation and care.

Maintaining Your Health

As a Volunteer, you must accept considerable responsibility for your own health. Proper precautions will significantly reduce your risk of serious illness or injury. The old adage “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure” becomes extremely important in areas where diagnostic and treatment facilities are not up to the standards of the United States.

Many illnesses that afflict Volunteers worldwide are entirely preventable if proper food and water precautions are taken. These illnesses include food poisoning, parasitic infections, hepatitis A, dysentery, tapeworms, and typhoid fever. Your medical officer will discuss specific standards for water and food preparation in Honduras during pre-service training.

Honduras has the highest rate of HIV/AIDS infection in Central America, and the disease is a growing problem. Abstinence is the only certain choice for prevention of HIV/AIDS and other STIs. You are taking risks if you choose to be sexually active. To lessen risk, use a condom every time you have sex. Whether your partner is a host country citizen, a fellow Volunteer, or anyone else, do not assume this person is free of HIV/AIDS or other STIs. You will receive more information from the Peace Corps medical officer about this important issue.

Volunteers are expected to adhere to an effective means of birth control to prevent an unplanned pregnancy. The medical officer can help you decide on the most appropriate method to suit your individual needs. Contraceptive methods are available without charge from the medical officer.

It is critical to your health that you promptly report to the medical office or other designated facility for scheduled immunizations, and that you let the medical officer know immediately of significant illnesses and injuries.

Women's Health Information

Pregnancy is treated in the same manner as other Volunteer health conditions that require medical attention but also have programmatic ramifications. The Peace Corps is responsible for determining the medical risk and the availability of appropriate medical care if the Volunteer remains in-country.

Given the circumstances under which Volunteers live and work in Peace Corps countries, it is rare that the Peace Corps' medical and programmatic standards for continued service during pregnancy can be met.

Due to the nature of Honduras' tropical climate, vaginal yeast infections can occur with greater frequency than usual. Female Volunteers should wear loose-fitting, cotton undergarments to help prevent this condition.

If feminine hygiene products are not available for you to purchase on the local market, the medical officer will provide them. If you require a specific feminine hygiene product, please bring a six-month supply with you.

Your Peace Corps Medical Kit

The Peace Corps medical officer provides Volunteers with a medical kit at the end of pre-service training that contains basic items necessary to prevent and treat illnesses that may occur during service. Kit items can be periodically restocked at the Peace Corps medical office.

Medical Kit Contents

Ace bandages

Adhesive tape

American Red Cross First Aid & Safety Handbook

Antacid tablets (Tums)

Antibiotic ointment (Bacitracin/Neomycin/Polymycin B)

Antiseptic antimicrobial skin cleaner (Hibiclens)

Band-Aids

Butterfly closures

Calamine lotion

Cepacol lozenges

Condoms

Dental floss

Diphenhydramine HCL 25 mg (Benadryl)
Insect repellent stick (Cutter's)
Lip balm (Chapstick)
Oral rehydration salts
Oral thermometer (Fahrenheit)
Pseudoephedrine HCL 30 mg (Sudafed)
Robitussin-DM lozenges (for cough)
Scissors
Sterile gauze pads
Tetrahydrozoline eyedrops (Visine)
Tinactin (antifungal cream)
Tweezers

Before You Leave: A Medical Checklist

If there has been any change in your health—physical, mental, or dental—since you submitted your examination reports to the Peace Corps, you must immediately notify the Office of Medical Services. Failure to disclose new illnesses, injuries, allergies, or pregnancy can endanger your health and may jeopardize your eligibility to serve.

If your dental exam was done more than a year ago, or if your physical exam is more than two years old, contact the Office of Medical Services to find out whether you need to update your records. If your dentist or Peace Corps dental consultant has recommended that you undergo dental treatment or repair, you must complete that work and make sure your dentist sends requested confirmation reports or X-rays to the Office of Medical Services.

If you wish to avoid having duplicate vaccinations, contact your physician's office, obtain a copy of your immunization record and bring it to your pre-departure orientation. If you do not have documentation you will be vaccinated again. If you have

any immunizations prior to Peace Corps service, the Peace Corps cannot reimburse you for the cost. The Peace Corps will provide all the immunizations necessary for your overseas assignment shortly after you arrive in Honduras. You do not need to begin taking malaria medication prior to departure.

Bring a three-month supply of any prescription or over-the-counter medication you use on a regular basis, including birth control pills. Although the Peace Corps cannot reimburse you for this three-month supply, it will order refills during your service. While awaiting shipment—which can take several months—you will be dependent on your own medication supply. The Peace Corps will not pay for herbal or non-prescribed medications, such as St. John's wort, glucosamine, selenium, or antioxidant supplements.

You are encouraged to bring copies of medical prescriptions signed by your physician. This is not a requirement, but they might come in handy if you are questioned in transit about carrying a three-month supply of prescription drugs.

If you wear eyeglasses, bring two pairs with you—a pair and a spare. If a pair breaks, the Peace Corps will replace it, using the information your doctor in the United States provided on the eyeglasses form during your examination. We discourage you from using contact lenses during your Peace Corps service to reduce your risk of developing a serious infection or other eye disease. Most Peace Corps countries do not have appropriate water and sanitation to support eye care with the use of contact lenses. The Peace Corps will not supply or replace contact lenses or associated solutions unless an ophthalmologist has recommended their use for a specific medical condition and the Peace Corps' Office of Medical Services has given approval.

If you are eligible for Medicare, are over 50 years of age, or have a health condition that may restrict your future participation in healthcare plans, you may wish to consult an insurance specialist about unique coverage needs before your departure. The Peace Corps will provide all necessary healthcare from the time you leave for your pre-departure orientation until you complete your service. When you finish, you will be entitled to the post-service healthcare benefits described in the Peace Corps *Volunteer Handbook*. You may wish to consider keeping an existing health plan in effect during your service if you think age or pre-existing conditions might prevent you from re-enrolling in your current plan when you return home.

Safety and Security—Our Partnership

Serving as a Volunteer overseas entails certain safety and security risks. Living and traveling in an unfamiliar environment, a limited understanding of the local language and culture, and the perception of being a wealthy American are some of the factors that can put a Volunteer at risk. Property thefts and burglaries are not uncommon. Incidents of physical and sexual assault do occur, although almost all Volunteers complete their two years of service without serious personal safety problems. In addition, more than 85 percent of Volunteers surveyed in the 2006 Peace Corps Volunteer survey say they would join the Peace Corps again.

The Peace Corps approaches safety and security as a partnership with you. This *Welcome Book* contains sections on: Living Conditions and Volunteer Lifestyle; Peace Corps Training; and Your Health Care and Safety. All of these sections include important safety and security information.

The Peace Corps makes every effort to give Volunteers the tools they need to function in the safest and most secure way possible, because working to maximize the safety and security of Volunteers is our highest priority. Not only do we provide you with training and tools to prepare for the unexpected, but we teach you to identify and manage the risks you may encounter.

Factors that Contribute to Volunteer Risk

There are several factors that can heighten a Volunteer's risk, many of which are within the Volunteer's control. Based on information gathered from incident reports worldwide in 2006, the following factors stand out as risk characteristics for assaults. Assaults consist of personal crimes committed against Volunteers, and do not include property crimes (such as vandalism or theft).

- Location: Most crimes occurred when Volunteers were in public areas (e.g., street, park, beach, public buildings).
- Time of day: Assaults usually took place on the weekend during the evening between 5:00 p.m. and 2:00 a.m.— with most assaults occurring around 11:00 p.m.
- Absence of others: Assaults usually occurred when the Volunteer was unaccompanied. In 73 percent of the sexual assaults the Volunteer was unaccompanied and in 48 percent of physical assaults the Volunteer was unaccompanied.
- Relationship to assailant: In most assaults, the Volunteer did not know the assailant.
- Consumption of alcohol: Fourteen (14) percent of all assaults involved alcohol consumption by Volunteers. Twenty-six (26) percent of all assaults involved alcohol consumption by assailants.

Summary Strategies to Reduce Risk

Before and during service, your training will address these areas of concern so that you can reduce the risks you face. For example, here are some strategies Volunteers employ:

Strategies to reduce the risk/impact of theft:

- Know the environment and choose safe routes/times for travel
- Avoid high-crime areas per Peace Corps guidance
- Know the vocabulary to get help in an emergency
- Carry valuables in different pockets/places
- Carry a "dummy" wallet as a decoy

Strategies to reduce the risk/impact of burglary:

- Live with a local family or on a family compound
- Put strong locks on doors and keep valuables in a lock box or trunk
- Leave irreplaceable objects at home in the U.S.
- Follow Peace Corps guidelines on maintaining home security

Strategies to reduce the risk/impact of assault:

- Make local friends
- Make sure your appearance is respectful of local customs; don't draw negative attention to yourself by wearing inappropriate clothing
- Get to know local officials, police, and neighbors
- Travel with someone whenever possible
- Avoid known high crime areas
- Limit alcohol consumption

Support from Staff

In March 2003, the Peace Corps created the Office of Safety and Security with its mission to “foster improved communication, coordination, oversight, and accountability of all Peace Corps’ safety and security efforts.” The new office is led by an Associate Director for Safety and Security who reports to the Peace Corps Director and includes the following divisions: Volunteer Safety and Overseas Security; Information and Personnel Security; Emergency Preparedness, Plans, Training and Exercise; and Crime Statistics and Analysis.

The major responsibilities of the Volunteer Safety and Overseas Security Division are to coordinate the office’s overseas operations and direct the Peace Corps’ safety and security officers who are located in various regions around the world that have Peace Corps programs. The safety and security officers conduct security assessments; review safety trainings; train trainers and managers; train Volunteer safety wardens, local guards, and staff; develop security incident response procedures; and provide crisis management support.

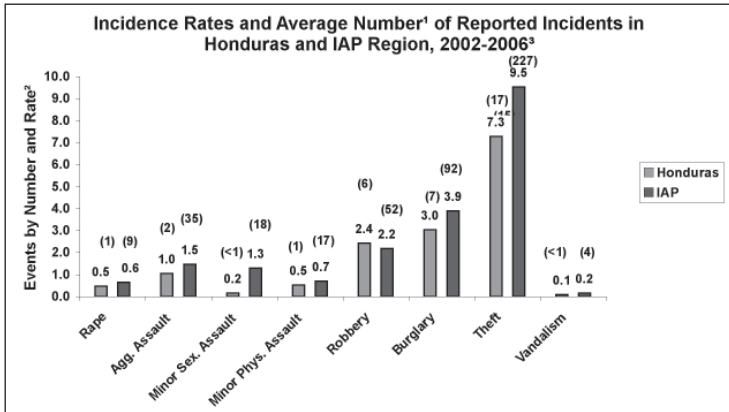
If a trainee or Volunteer is the victim of a safety incident, Peace Corps staff is prepared to provide support. All Peace Corps posts have procedures in place to respond to incidents of crime committed against Volunteers. The first priority for all posts in the aftermath of an incident is to ensure that the Volunteer is safe and receiving medical treatment as needed. After assuring the safety of the Volunteer, Peace Corps staff provides support by reassessing the Volunteer’s work site and housing arrangements and making any adjustments, as needed. In some cases, the nature of the incident may necessitate a site or housing transfer. Peace Corps staff will also assist Volunteers with preserving their rights to pursue

legal sanctions against the perpetrators of the crime. It is very important that Volunteers report incidents as they occur, not only to protect their peer Volunteers, but also to preserve the future right to prosecute. Should Volunteers decide later in the process that they want to proceed with the prosecution of their assailant, this option may no longer exist if the evidence of the event has not been preserved at the time of the incident.

The country-specific data chart below shows the incidence rates and the average number of incidents of the major types of safety incidents reported by Peace Corps Volunteers/trainees in Honduras as compared to all other Inter-America and Pacific (IAP) region programs as a whole, from 2002–2006. It is presented to you in a somewhat technical manner for statistical accuracy.

To fully appreciate the collected data below, an explanation of the graph is provided as follows:

The incidence rate for each type of crime is the number of crime events relative to the Volunteer/trainee population. It is expressed on the chart as a ratio of crime to Volunteer and trainee years (or V/T years, which is a measure of 12 full months of V/T service) to allow for a statistically valid way to compare crime data across countries. An “incident” is a specific offense, per Peace Corps' classification of offenses, and may involve one or more Volunteer/trainee victims. For example, if two Volunteers are robbed at the same time and place, this is classified as one robbery incident.



¹The average numbers of incidents are in parenthesis and equal the average reported assaults for each year between 2002–2006.

²Incident rates equal the number of assaults per 100 Volunteers and trainees per year (V/T years). Since most sexual assaults occur against females, only female V/Ts are calculated in rapes and minor sexual assaults. Numbers of incidents are approximate due to rounding.

³Data collection for Honduras began as of 2002

Source data on incidents are drawn from Assault Notification Surveillance System (ANSS), Epidemiologic Surveillance System (ESS), and Crime Incident Reporting Form (CIRF); the information is accurate as of 05/29/07.

The chart is separated into eight crime categories. These include vandalism (malicious defacement or damage of property); theft (taking without force or illegal entry); burglary (forcible entry of a residence); robbery (taking something by force); other physical assault (attacking without a weapon with minor injuries); other sexual assault (fondling, groping, etc.); aggravated assault (attacking with a weapon, and/or without a weapon when serious injury results); and rape (sexual intercourse without consent).

When anticipating Peace Corps Volunteer service, you should review all of the safety and security information provided to you, including the strategies to reduce risk. Throughout your training and Volunteer service, you will be expected to successfully complete all training competencies in a variety of

areas including safety and security. Once in-country, use the tools and information shared with you to remain as safe and secure as possible.

What if you become a victim of a violent crime?

Few Peace Corps Volunteers are victims of violent crimes. The Peace Corps will give you information and training in how to be safe. But, just as in the U.S., crime happens, and Volunteers can become victims. When this happens, the investigative team of the Office of Inspector General (OIG) is charged with helping pursue prosecution of those who perpetrate a violent crime against a Volunteer. If you become a victim of a violent crime, the decision to prosecute or not to prosecute is entirely yours, and one of the tasks of the OIG is to make sure that you are fully informed of your options and help you through the process and procedures involved in going forward with prosecution should you wish to do so. If you decide to prosecute, we are here to assist you in every way we can.

Crimes that occur overseas, of course, are investigated and prosecuted by local authorities in local courts. Our role is to coordinate the investigation and evidence collection with the regional security officers (RSOs) at the U.S. embassy, local police, and local prosecutors and others to ensure that your rights are protected to the fullest extent possible under the laws of the country. OIG investigative staff has extensive experience in criminal investigation, in working sensitively with victims, and as advocates for victims. We also may, in certain limited circumstances, arrange for the retention of a local lawyer to assist the local public prosecutor in making the case against the individual who perpetrated the violent crime.

If you do become a victim of a violent crime, first, make sure you are in a safe place and with people you trust and second, contact the country director or the Peace Corps medical officer or the safety and security coordinator. Immediate reporting is important to the preservation of evidence and the chances of apprehending the suspect. Country directors, medical officers, and safety and security coordinator are required to report all violent crimes to the Inspector General and the RSO. This information is protected from unauthorized further disclosure by the Privacy Act. Reporting the crime also helps prevent your further victimization and protects your fellow Volunteers.

In conjunction with the RSO, the OIG does a preliminary investigation of all violent crimes against Volunteers regardless of whether the crime has been reported to local authorities or of the decision you may ultimately make to prosecute. If you are a victim of a crime, our staff will work with you through final disposition of the case. OIG staff is available 24 hours-a-day, 7 days-a-week. We may be contacted through our 24-hour violent crime hotline via telephone at 202.692.2911, or by e-mail at violentcrimeline@peacecorps.gov.

Security Issues in Honduras

When it comes to your safety and security in the Peace Corps, you have to be willing to adapt your behavior and lifestyle to minimize the potential for being a target of crime. As with anywhere in the world, crime does exist in Honduras. You can reduce your risk by avoiding situations that make you feel uncomfortable and by taking precautions. Crime at the village or town level is less frequent than in the large cities. Tourist attractions are favorite work sites for pickpockets.

There is increased gang activity in all the major cities in Honduras, and gangs have begun to make inroads into rural areas as well. Assaults and robberies attributed to gangs have been reported on buses, so Volunteers are prohibited from traveling on certain bus routes. In addition, Volunteers are encouraged to limit their nighttime activities, which may require a modification in social habits.

Recent economic developments have increased criminal activity in all areas of the country. Kidnappings of national and foreign citizens have occurred, and drive-by motorcyclists in the capital sometimes snatch someone's purse or bag without stopping. Being alone in an isolated area increases the risk of criminal activity.

Some areas of Honduras are banned or highly discouraged for Volunteers. These areas include all beaches at night (banned), and San Pedro Sula (most areas in this city are banned) among other areas. Peace Corps/Honduras expects Volunteers to comply at all times with its safety and security regulations. Volunteers must take responsibility for their actions and make the best choices possible to keep themselves safe.

Staying Safe: Don't Be a Target for Crime

You must be prepared to take on a large degree of responsibility for your own safety. Only you can make yourself less of a target, ensure that your home is secure, and develop relations in your community that will make you an unlikely victim of crime. In coming to Honduras, do what you would do if you moved to a new city in the United States: Be cautious, check things out, ask questions, learn about your neighborhood, know where the more risky locations are, use common sense, and be aware. You can reduce your vulnerability to crime by integrating into your community,

learning the local language, acting responsibly, and abiding by Peace Corps policies and procedures. Serving safely and effectively in Honduras may require that you accept some restrictions on your current lifestyle.

Volunteers attract a lot of attention both in large cities and at their sites, but they are likely to receive more negative attention in highly populated centers than at their sites, where “family,” friends, and colleagues look out for them. While whistles and exclamations are fairly common on the street, this behavior can be reduced if you dress conservatively, avoid eye contact, and do not respond to unwanted attention. It is also important to be aware of and respectful of cultural differences because your body language, manners, and dress may send an unintended message to Hondurans.

Keep your money out of sight by using an undergarment money pouch, the kind that hangs around your neck and stays hidden under your shirt or inside your coat. Do not keep your money in outside pockets of backpacks, in coat pockets, or in fanny packs. You should always walk with a companion at night, and it is a good idea to share any travel plans and your destination with a trusted friend.

Preparing for the Unexpected: Safety Training and Volunteer Support in Honduras

The Peace Corps’ approach to safety is a five-pronged plan to help you stay safe during your two-year service and includes the following: **information sharing**, Volunteer training, site selection criteria, a detailed emergency action plan, and protocols for addressing safety and security incidents. Honduras’ in-country safety program is outlined below.

Peace Corps/Honduras has an extensive information sharing network, through which Peace Corps staff will keep Volunteers informed of any issues that may impact Volunteer safety. Regular updates will be provided in Volunteer newsletters and in memorandums from the country director. In the event of a critical situation or emergency, Volunteers will be contacted through the emergency communication network. Upon your arrival, you will be asked to provide Peace Corps staff with an e-mail address to facilitate the information-sharing process. This address will serve as a point of contact for Peace Corps staff for programmatic, administrative, and safety and security information.

Volunteer training will include sessions on specific safety and security issues in Honduras. This training will prepare you to adopt a culturally appropriate lifestyle and exercise judgment that promotes safety and reduces risk in your home, at work, and while traveling. Safety training is offered throughout service and is integrated into the language, cross-cultural, and health components of training.

Certain **site selection criteria** are used to determine safe housing for Volunteers before their arrival. The Peace Corps staff works closely with host communities and counterpart agencies to help prepare them for a Volunteer's arrival and to establish expectations of their respective roles in supporting the Volunteer. Each site is inspected before the Volunteer's arrival to ensure placement in appropriate, safe, and secure housing and work sites. Site selection is based in part on any relevant site history; access to medical, banking, postal, and other essential services; availability of communications, transportation, and markets, different housing options and living arrangements, and other Volunteer support needs.

You will also learn about Peace Corps/Honduras' **detailed emergency action plan**, which is implemented in the event of civil or political unrest or a natural disaster. When you arrive at your site, you will complete and submit a site locator form with your address, contact information, and a map to your house. If there is a security threat, Volunteers in Honduras will gather at predetermined locations until the situation is resolved or the Peace Corps decides to evacuate.

Finally, in order to be fully responsive to the needs of Volunteers, it is imperative that Volunteers **immediately report** any security incident to the safety and security coordinator or the medical officer. The Peace Corps has established **protocols for addressing safety and security incidents** in a timely and appropriate manner, and it collects and evaluates safety and security data to track trends and develop strategies to minimize risks to future Volunteers.

NOTES



DIVERSITY AND CROSS-CULTURAL ISSUES



In fulfilling the Peace Corps' mandate to share the face of America with our host countries, we are making special efforts to see that all of America's richness is reflected in the Volunteer community. More Americans of color are serving in today's Peace Corps than at any time in recent years. Differences in race, ethnic background, age, religion, and sexual orientation are expected and welcomed among our Volunteers. Part of the Peace Corps' mission is to help dispel any notion that Americans are all of one origin or race and to establish that each of us is as thoroughly American as the other despite our many differences.

Our diversity helps us accomplish that goal. In other ways, however, it poses challenges. In Honduras, as in other Peace Corps host countries, Volunteers' behavior, lifestyle, background, and beliefs are judged in a cultural context very different from their own. Certain personal perspectives or characteristics commonly accepted in the United States may be quite uncommon, unacceptable, or even repressed in Honduras.

Outside of Honduras' capital and other large cities, residents of rural communities have had relatively little direct exposure to other cultures, races, religions, and lifestyles. What is viewed as typical American behavior or norms may be a misconception, such as the belief in some countries that all Americans are rich and have blond hair and blue eyes. The people of Honduras are justly known for their generous hospitality to foreigners; however, members of the community in which you will live may display a range of reactions to cultural differences that you present.

To ease the transition and adapt to life in Honduras, you may need to make some temporary, yet fundamental compromises in how you present yourself as an American and as an individual. For example, female trainees and Volunteers may not be able to exercise the independence available to them in the United States, political discussions need to be handled with great care, and some of your personal beliefs may best remain undisclosed. You will need to develop techniques and personal strategies for coping with these and other limitations. The Peace Corps staff will lead diversity and sensitivity discussions during pre-service training and will be on call to provide support, but the challenge ultimately will be your own.

Overview of Diversity in Honduras

One aspect of cultural adaptation is being sensitive to the diversity among the Volunteer population. The Peace Corps staff in Honduras recognizes adjustment issues that come with diversity and will endeavor to provide support and guidance. During pre-service training, several sessions will be held to discuss diversity and coping mechanisms. We look forward to having male and female Volunteers from a variety of races, ethnic groups, ages, religions, and sexual orientations, and hope that you will become part of a diverse group of Americans who take pride in supporting one another and demonstrating the richness of American culture.

In addition to the support provided to Volunteers by Peace Corps/Honduras staff, several peer support groups exist to help Volunteers serve effectively. COLORS is an organization of Volunteers whose vision is to create an environment where diversity is respected and celebrated in fulfillment of the Peace Corps' goal of intercultural exchange. The Gay, Lesbian, or Bisexual Experience (GLOBE) was formed in 1998 to promote the health and well-being of gay, lesbian,

and bisexual Volunteers by providing direct support and by educating the Peace Corps community. Volunteers Offering Support (VOS) is a peer network and is available to any Volunteer or trainee who needs a supportive network of concerned Volunteers trained in active listening. VOS members are strategically located throughout Honduras and can be contacted via e-mail. Lastly, OAKS (Older and Knowing Souls) is a support group formed in 2003 to support the needs of older Volunteers in Honduras.

What Might a Volunteer Face?

Possible Issues for Female Volunteers

You should be prepared for unwanted attention from Honduran men simply because you are an American woman. American women are sometimes perceived as being “easy” because of stereotypes portrayed on American TV shows and movies aired on Honduran television. It is very common to receive stares, comments, or requests for dates or sex on the street and in other situations. In addition, women often are not taken as seriously as men in their jobs and may not receive the respect that is readily given to both American and Honduran men. In Honduran culture, a woman is viewed as either a “mother” or a “daughter.” If you are not married, you may be treated like a daughter or a child instead of a grown woman.

Honduran women have very specific, traditional roles (e.g., they generally do not work outside of the home), which some Hondurans may think female Volunteers should adopt. Working with men can be difficult if they refuse to believe a woman is capable of work other than cleaning the house or raising children. Working with women can be difficult when they cannot understand why a woman would want to do anything that is not “women’s work.” Honduran men also have specific roles, and machismo, or manliness, is considered very

important. Men are expected to be dominant in almost all aspects of society; they are expected to smoke, drink, pursue women, be strong, and be willing to discipline their wife and children. Thus male Volunteers who do not drink, smoke, or like to pursue women openly may be chided for not being manly enough. Both female and male Volunteers will learn strategies to handle these situations during pre-service training.

Volunteer Comment

“No matter how you dress, you may still receive unwanted attention just for being an American woman. In some areas, you may find that Honduran women tend to dress more provocatively than American women. However, please realize that regardless of what a woman is wearing, it doesn’t mean she deserves the treatment she receives. Always try to dress professionally to portray such an image to your community

Another source of personal and professional frustration is the difficulty female Volunteers encounter when establishing rapport with male community members. In Honduras, it is very rare for a relationship between a man and a woman—of any age—to be seen without sexual overtones. Most female Volunteers experience some form of harassment from men in their communities and workplaces. This powerful and constant affront, which male Volunteers do not commonly face, can make the process of cultural adjustment more complex. Female Volunteers in Honduras often find themselves serving as supportive allies and advocates for women of all backgrounds and ages in the struggle for better access for all to opportunities in development.”

Possible Issues for Volunteers of Color

African-American Volunteers may be viewed as less professionally competent than white Volunteers. They may be called *negrita*, *trigueña*, or other words that distinguish them as dark-skinned. Although these terms are not necessarily derogatory, Volunteers may initially feel demeaned by them. In addition, Hondurans may not believe you are an American, thinking you must come from the north coast of Honduras or the Bay Islands, which have a heavy concentration of Garifuna or black Caribs.

Hondurans may expect Hispanic Americans to interact socially with more ease. Likewise, Volunteers with Latino surnames may be expected to speak Spanish fluently and may not be perceived as being North American.

Asian Americans, too, are often identified more by their cultural heritage than by their American citizenship. Hondurans may expect you to be a kung fu expert because of stereotypes based on behavior observed in films. Many Asians are labeled as Chinese, regardless of their actual ethnic background. Honduras' current or historical involvement with certain Asian countries, or the presence of Asian merchants in the community, may also have an impact on how Asian-American Volunteers are perceived.

If you would like more information on the COLORS Peace Corps Volunteer group in Honduras, please visit the Pch COLORS Yahoo group home page at: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/PchCOLORS>. For specific questions, please email the group at: PchCOLORS@yahoogroups.com.

Volunteer Comment

“Being an African-American Volunteer has been a great experience. As an African American, we all have faced some degree of racism in our lives. Here in Honduras if you are a darker-skinned African American, normally the only thing you might receive is a suspicious or inquiring look because you are believed to be Garifuna or from the north coast. As a lighter-skinned African American, you’ll probably be mistaken for someone from Costa Rica, Cuba, or some other Latin American country.

Unfortunately, most of what Hondurans see of African Americans are from movies, music, and television. It has been a pleasure, most of the time, to play an important role in helping change many of those stereotypes. I’ve seen that many Hondurans are curious and glad to meet African Americans. This difference can often become a great way to start conversations and meet new friends. You might meet some Hondurans who believe they know everything and will try to prove it by telling you what you are even though you’ve told them you’re not. Rest assured, however, that your peers are also trying to change perceptions and stereotypes of all kinds. Also remember that you will probably be one of the few African-American Volunteers here in Honduras and feeling isolated or unsupported even from your group is possible. Your fellow PCVs are, however, very important to your health and safety, so don’t be afraid to make that first very important step or ask for extra support. If you take everything as an opportunity to learn something new and are not afraid to make mistakes, you’ll have a great time as a Volunteer in Honduras.”

Possible Issues for Senior Volunteers

Senior Volunteers often receive more respect from Hondurans than younger Volunteers do, but they need to be aware of possible issues of inclusion and acceptance by fellow Volunteers. Others in the Peace Corps community may have little understanding of the lives and experiences of seniors, and seniors may not receive the personal support they desire from younger Volunteers. Older Volunteers may not feel comfortable sharing personal, sexual, or health concerns with younger members of the Peace Corps staff. On the other hand, seniors may find that younger Volunteers look to them for advice and support. While some seniors find this a very enjoyable part of their experience, others choose not to fill this role.

Older trainees sometimes encounter a lack of attention to their particular needs for an effective learning environment and may need to be assertive in developing an individual approach to language learning, for instance. Senior Volunteers should consider designating a power of attorney for management of their financial affairs during service.

Volunteer Comments

“In my site I am commonly referred to as ‘Doña Barbara.’ The fact that I have been married and am a mother and a grandmother is an experience I share with local people, especially women. Banks and other establishments have special, shorter lines for people over 60 (*tercera edad*). People often give me their seat on the bus. I have a number of Honduran friends of all ages. On the other hand, I am occasionally treated in a patronizing way or called grandmother (*abuelita*) or little mother (*mamacita*) or even (rarely) little old lady (*viejita*). Some kids make fun of me or

point when I ride by on my bike with a bicycle helmet—‘Doña Barbara is riding a bike, look! Look!’ Nor am I totally exempt, at age 63, from marriage proposals from younger men looking for a ticket to the United States. Sometimes younger Volunteers are assumed to be my children. Because of my age and the general respect I command in my town, I feel it especially important that I dress conservatively, act properly, and observe local customs.”

“Although I tend to agree with the issues that senior Volunteers may have to contend with, so far they have not been problematic for me. Fellow trainees and staff have been very friendly and inclusive. It has been easy to share my experiences and discuss concerns with them. I have stayed in hotel rooms, been to restaurants and movies with other trainees and have not been uncomfortable. Although my social and recreational interests sometimes differ from theirs, I am interested in hearing about what they like to do and talk about. It’s refreshing. While it’s probably true that those of us who are older have less need for contact with others, I agree that it is a good idea to seek out other older Volunteers. I have talked with several of them about possibly getting together for a weekend or a vacation trip. I ‘feel my age’ when walking a long way uphill with a heavy pack, but I manage to make it. And I’ve been able to do my fair share of work in the agriculture projects. Learning Spanish is difficult, but I try hard and everyone is helpful. Respect is important, and I feel I’ve given it as well as received it in Honduras. I hope the Peace Corps will continue to support diversity.”

Possible Issues for Gay, Lesbian, or Bisexual Volunteers

Homosexuality is not illegal in Honduras; however, it is met with varying degrees of acceptance by Hondurans, one's community, and other Volunteers. Volunteers generally choose not to be open about their sexual orientation in their communities, but often do reveal it to individuals with whom they have built a trusting relationship. You will have to decide for yourself how open to be.

Like most Volunteers, you may have difficulties with the *machismo* in Honduras. Lesbian and bisexual women should be prepared to field questions regarding boyfriends, marriage, and sex. Likewise, gay and bisexual men will be asked about girlfriends and may find themselves in situations in which men brag about sexual conquests or objectify women. You will have to develop personal strategies to deal with such situations.

Peace Corps staff members are committed to supporting gay and bisexual Volunteers, but they may not always know how best to do so. You will need to be patient and willing to educate staff and other Volunteers about your needs. Peace Corps/Honduras has a Volunteer support group called GLOBE (for Gay, Lesbian, or Bisexual Experience) that meets at least twice a year and maintains an e-mail address. If you would like to contact GLOBE before your departure, send an e-mail to globehonduras@yahoo.com.

Volunteer Comments

“My experience as a gay Volunteer has been positive within the Peace Corps community (i.e., administration, staff, Volunteers), and I have had the utmost support from peers in my training group. In my village, I decided to closet myself because of ignorant beliefs about homosexuality.

However, this decision didn't stop me from successfully completing my projects. I have formed some amazing friendships in my village, and I cherish the wonderful memories. Though it has been hard to be back in the closet, I've been able to teach Hondurans to treat others for who they are and not what they are."

"One of the first things that occurred to me during training was how seemingly conservative and straight my training group peers were. As an openly bisexual woman, I suddenly realized just how important the half-gay part of myself was to me. It had never occurred to me that I might have to close the closet door completely to everyone I met over the next two years. Once at my site, I quickly realized that within the Honduran community, I could easily mask my sexual orientation without harm to the rest of my identity. I am often asked about boyfriends—why I don't have any and whether I want to marry a Honduran man. I got involved with GLOBE, the gay, lesbian, and bisexual support group, and connected with my not-so-straight Peace Corps peers. This gave me the sense of community that I was lacking and allowed me to be myself, with no questions asked."

Possible Religious Issues for Volunteers

Honduras is a Christian country, with the Roman Catholic and Evangelical Christian faiths being predominant. There is little knowledge among Hondurans of other world religions, and Volunteers of other faiths may experience stereotyping or misinformation about their religion. Volunteers should be prepared to be challenged by local people when they express or practice their own beliefs, but this is primarily the result of curiosity or ignorance. Many Volunteers choose not to draw attention to their own religion to avoid awkward or sensitive situations. This is a very personal choice that can

only be made on an individual basis. There is a strong Jewish community in Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula that has been very welcoming to Jewish Volunteers. Those who want more information about religious challenges in Honduras are encouraged to contact the COLORS support group.

Volunteer Comments

“When I first arrived in Honduras I was extremely hesitant to share that I was Jewish due to tales of anti-Semitism I had heard on more than one occasion. However, I learned that there is no organized anti-Semitic movement in Honduras, but there is widespread ignorance, as most people have never even met a Jew. Most Hondurans’ knowledge about the Jewish faith comes from what they have read in the Bible. Most people will show interest instead of disdain, and there is never any danger involved. When all is said and done, it is up to the individual if he or she chooses to share with other people, but it can be one of the greatest exchanges of culture that you have during your stay in Honduras. During my service here I have had Shabbat dinner with Honduran friends, and I have had long discussions on cultural differences and similarities. For me, it has been more of a bonding experience than a deterrent.”

“As a Peace Corps Volunteer, I have not practiced Judaism like I did in the States. I knew that about 200 Jews live in Honduras and that there are two synagogues, but I wasn’t sure how average people would react to learning that I practiced a distinctly different religion. I learned that it was better to avoid the subject, especially since I spoke very little Spanish. Rather than go into the differences between Judaism and Christianity, it was better to say that I practiced a religion very few people here practiced, but that I believed in God. I decided to avoid explaining anything

in depth to minimize my differences from others. At the same time, I conscientiously explained to other Volunteers and staff why I do some things differently. While I wasn't able to attend services at the synagogue with regularity, I made a point of seeking out other Jewish Volunteers or members of the Jewish community to celebrate the High Holy Days, Hanukkah and Passover. Over time I began to feel comfortable with certain members of my town and began to explain what it is to be a Jew. I made a point of sharing traditional foods with my Honduran friends, including bagels, challah, and falafel. For the most part, I received a good response. For virtually everyone, I was the first Jew they had ever met. One last thing: Many people here don't realize that mortadella, hot dogs, sausage, and ham contain pork!"

Possible Issues for Volunteers with Disabilities

There is little consciousness of the needs of the physically challenged in Honduras. Volunteers with physical disabilities may find mobility difficult because the infrastructure does not make many accommodations for disabled people. Nevertheless, as part of the medical clearance process, the Peace Corps Office of Medical Services determined that you were physically and emotionally capable, with or without reasonable accommodations, to perform a full tour of Volunteer service in Honduras without unreasonable risk of harm to yourself or interruption of your service. The Peace Corps/Honduras staff will work with disabled Volunteers to make reasonable accommodations in training, housing, job sites, and other areas to enable them to serve safely and effectively.

Possible Issues for Married Volunteers

Being a married couple in the Peace Corps has its advantages and its challenges. It helps to have someone by your side to share your experience with, but there are also cultural expectations that can cause stress in a marriage. It is

important to remember that you are in a foreign country with new rules and you need to be open-minded about cultural differences. A couple may have to take on some new roles. A married man may be encouraged by Hondurans to be the more dominant member in the relationship, be encouraged to make decisions independently of his spouse, or be ridiculed when he performs domestic tasks. A married woman may find herself in a less independent role than she is accustomed to or may be expected to perform “traditional” domestic chores such as cooking or cleaning. Other issues may also arise: One spouse may be more enthusiastic about Peace Corps service, be better able to adapt to the new environment, or be less homesick than the other. Competition may arise if one spouse learns the language or other skills faster than the other.

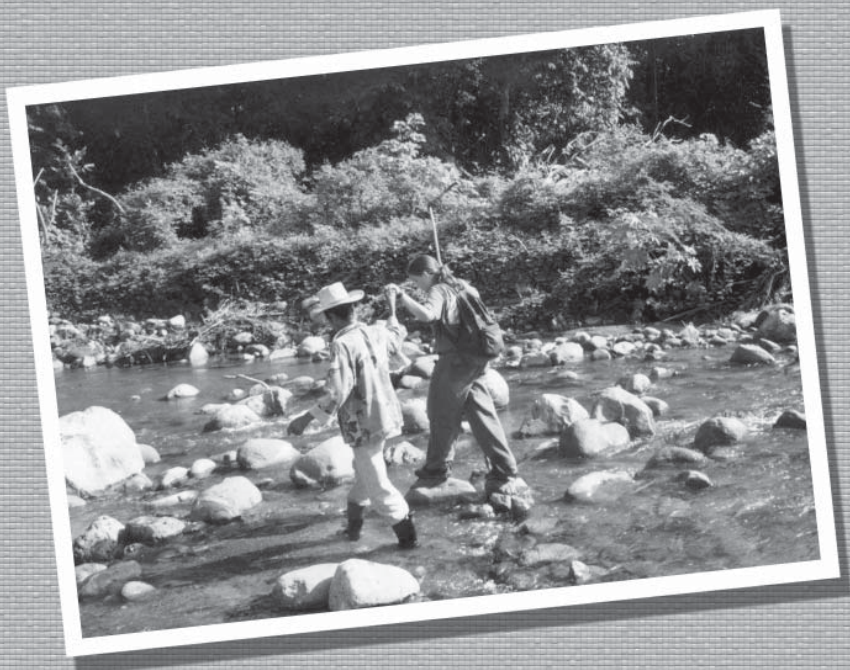
Volunteer Comment

“A big part of what made our time here so rewarding was serving as a married couple. It has been great to have my partner and best friend by my side to share experiences, talk over difficulties, and receive her support. We've had more time together than we ever had in the States, and we have enjoyed greatly this shift in life style.

We feel like we have been good ambassadors during our time here, giving our friends, neighbors, and community a positive view of who Americans are. One aspect of this has been to show people our marriage, which is culturally different than the typical Honduran marriage. The facts that I cook more than Deb; that we do house hold chores more or less equally; and that she works and travels independent of me has started many conversations with neighbors, kids who visited us in our apartment, and counterparts. We were told more than once that our relationship was admired.

I do think my progress in Spanish has been slowed by being married. Despite good intentions, we usually spoke English to each other. In hindsight, I wish we had been with separate host families during training. Nonetheless, we've both progressed and communicated well enough to get the job done.”

NOTES



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



How much luggage am I allowed to bring to Honduras?

Most airlines have baggage size and weight limits and assess charges for transport of baggage that exceeds those limits. The Peace Corps has its own size and weight limits and will not pay the cost of transport for baggage that exceeds these limits. The Peace Corps' allowance is two checked pieces of luggage with combined dimensions of both pieces not to exceed 107 inches (length + width + height) and a carry-on bag with dimensions of no more than 45 inches. Checked baggage should not exceed 80 pounds total with a maximum weight of 50 pounds for any one bag.

Peace Corps Volunteers are not allowed to take pets, weapons, explosives, radio transmitters (shortwave radios are permitted), automobiles, or motorcycles to their overseas assignments. Do not pack flammable materials or liquids such as lighter fluid, cleaning solvents, hair spray, or aerosol containers. This is an important safety precaution. Please check the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) website for a detailed list of permitted and prohibited items at <http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/airtravel/prohibited/permitted-prohibited-items.shtm>.

What is the electric current in Honduras?

Both 110 volts, 60 cycles (the U.S. standard), and 220 volts can be found in houses in Honduras. The outlets often are close to each other and easily confused, so you need to know which outlet to use. Some Volunteers do not have electricity in their houses or have it only for a few hours a day.

How much money should I bring?

Volunteers are expected to live at the same level as the people in their community. They are given a settling-in allowance and a monthly living allowance, which should cover their expenses. Often Volunteers wish to bring additional money for vacation travel to other countries. Credit cards and traveler's checks are preferable to cash. If you choose to bring extra money, bring the amount that will suit your own travel plans and needs.

When can I take vacation and have people visit me?

Each Volunteer accrues two vacation days per month of service (excluding training). Leave may not be taken during training, during the first three months and last three months of service, except in conjunction with an authorized emergency leave. Family and friends are welcome to visit you after you have completed your first three months of service, and as long as their stay does not interfere with your work. Extended stays of family, friends and significant others at your site are not encouraged and may require permission from your country director. The Peace Corps is not able to provide your visitors with visa, medical, or travel assistance.

Will my belongings be covered by insurance?

The Peace Corps does not provide insurance coverage for personal effects; Volunteers are ultimately responsible for the safekeeping of their personal belongings. However, you can purchase such insurance before you leave. If you wish, you may contact your own insurance company; additionally, insurance application forms will be provided, and we encourage you to consider them carefully. Volunteers should not ship or take valuable items overseas. Jewelry, watches, radios, cameras, and expensive appliances are subject to loss, theft, and breakage, and in many places, satisfactory maintenance and repair services are not available.

Do I need an international driver's license?

Volunteers in Honduras do not need to get an international driver's license. Most urban travel is by bus or taxi. Rural travel ranges from buses and minibuses to trucks and lots of walking. On very rare occasions, a Volunteer may be asked to drive a host country agency vehicle, but this can occur only with prior written permission of the country director. Should this occur, the Volunteer may obtain a local driver's license. A U.S. driver's license will facilitate the process, so bring it with you just in case.

What should I bring as gifts for Honduran friends and my host family?

This is not a requirement. A token of friendship is sufficient. Some gift suggestions include knickknacks for the house, pictures, books, or calendars of American scenes, souvenirs from your area, hard candies that will not melt or spoil, or photos to give away.

Where will my site assignment be when I finish training and how isolated will I be?

Peace Corps trainees are assigned to individual sites toward the end of training, but do not move to the sites until after they have completed training. This gives Peace Corps staff the opportunity to assess each trainee's project and language skills prior to assigning sites, in addition to finalizing site selections with Honduran counterparts. If feasible, you may have the opportunity to provide input on your site preferences, including geographical location, distance from other Volunteers, and living conditions. However, keep in mind that many factors influence the site selection process and that the Peace Corps cannot guarantee placement where you would ideally like to be. Most Volunteers live in small towns or in rural villages and are usually within one hour from another Volunteer. Some sites require a 10- to 12-hour bus ride from the capital.

How can my family contact me in an emergency?

The Peace Corps' Office of Special Services provides assistance in handling emergencies affecting trainees and Volunteers or their families. Before leaving the United States, instruct your family to notify the Office of Special Services immediately if an emergency arises, such as a serious illness or death of a family member. The 24-hour number for the Office of Special Services in Washington, D.C., is 800.424.8580, extension 1470; or 202.692.1470. OSS will determine approval of emergency leave in conjunction with your family members and medical professionals. For non-emergency questions, your family can get information from your country desk staff at the Peace Corps by calling 800.424.8580, extension 2519, 2520, or 2521.

Can I call home from Honduras?

International phone service to and from Honduras is relatively good. Hondutel, the local telephone agency, has offices in many cities and towns, and some of these offices offer direct lines to U.S. long-distance carriers. Many Internet cafes also offer international phone lines from which you can make calls.

Should I bring a cellular phone with me?

No. You may buy one in Honduras. Phone cards are readily available.

Will there be e-mail and Internet access? Should I bring my computer?

There are a growing number of Internet cafes in urban centers throughout Honduras. Volunteers receive a monthly allowance for Internet use and are encouraged to utilize businesses in or near their communities. Volunteers do not have access to the equipment used by Peace Corps staff. If you choose to bring

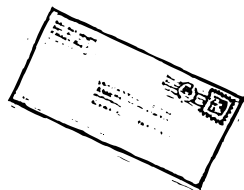
a laptop computer to Honduras, please take extra precautions as they are subject to theft and damage. If you choose to bring a laptop or other valuable equipment, you should insure it against theft and water damage.

Do Volunteers have diplomatic status during their service in Honduras?

No. Volunteers do not have diplomatic status. They are subject to Honduran and Peace Corps rules and regulations, and the U.S. embassy cannot interfere with any judicial process.



WELCOME LETTERS FROM HONDURAS VOLUNTEERS



To future Peace Corps Volunteers:

¡Bienvenido a Honduras!

Congratulations! I hope you are looking forward to joining our team here in Peace Corps/Honduras. Right now is a very exciting time for you, but it is about to get much more exciting. Honduras has it all: mountains, rivers, beaches, jungle, warm people, cute kids, bananas, and pineapples. As a Volunteer, you get to experience them all. But Honduras also has many problems with health, education, community organization, economy, and sanitation (just to name a few). As a Volunteer, you will experience all of these as well. Peace Corps/Honduras can be wonderful and frustrating at the same time, but it is always a very humbling experience.

As a municipal development Volunteer in Honduras, I have gotten to be a part of almost every aspect of my community. I have worked with environmental education, deforestation, and making improved stoves. I have also worked with basic education in rural schools, rural banks, civic education, HIV prevention, drug rehabilitation, women's rights, and microfinance projects. It is not often that you get to play the role of teacher, counselor, fireman, banker, businesswoman, women's rights advocate, and mason in the span of less than two years. But that is the great thing about Peace Corps—you get to wake up each day and try and figure out what is the best way to help your community. The only limit you have is how far your own creativity and determination will take you. Your work will force you to use skills and talents that you might not even know you have (or that you take for granted).

It is hard saying goodbye to friends and family, but know that you will very soon meet some wonderful people that you will quickly call friends and become part of the Peace Corps family in Honduras.

—Katie Long

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Dear Prospective Volunteers,

Congratulations! Are you excited? I hope so. You are about to embark on one of the most amazing adventures of your life. Welcome to Honduras.

I'm sure there are a million questions running through your mind right now, and top on the list is: What will life be like in the Peace Corps? The truth is that every experience is different. Some Volunteers live in small towns and don't have electricity; others live in larger towns and have access to Internet cafes. The real fun—and challenges—start once you get to your site.

I am a youth development Volunteer in central Honduras. My town is larger than most (about 25,000) and as a result I am virtually overwhelmed with work opportunities—I love it! I spend mornings in the schools working in civic education and family life classes and afternoons in a children's shelter teaching about hygiene and helping with homework. Every Wednesday I work with a group of pregnant adolescents and on Thursdays I teach English to primary school teachers who then teach the material to their own students. I've taught nurses about HIV/AIDS, talked with parents about domestic violence, and weighed babies as part of a United Nations-sponsored health project. I wish I could do more. You will, too. You may be able to choose the work you focus on, but the great part is, the projects that you will pursue will be the ones that you have the most interest in. It is unlikely that you will ever again have as much freedom to form your own agenda. I urge you to take advantage of it.

There will be frustrations, but they will almost always be outweighed by the good that you find. The inconvenient power outage will turn into an unforgettable three-hour candlelight conversation with your neighbor. You will miss Thai food, but you will come to love *baleadas*. You may stop working with one organization because the people aren't motivated, but you will find another with people so motivated that you will never want to leave Honduras. You will be pushed to physical and emotional limits that you never knew you had—and when you are through, you will be wiser, stronger, and prouder because of it. Enjoy your time here. Never be afraid to try something new. You will surprise yourself, I promise.

—Blair Cantfil

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Dear Prospective Volunteer,

Congratulations on your invitation! I am just finishing up my two-year commitment here and have very pleasant memories of the day I found out I was going to be a health Volunteer. Now I can't believe it is over. I want to share some of my experiences with you to help give you a little picture of what might be coming your way. I am an older married Volunteer so my experience was different from that of the younger single Volunteers, but when I was an invitee, I relished hearing the stories of experienced Volunteers. I hope my words will instill some enthusiasm for what you have ahead of you.

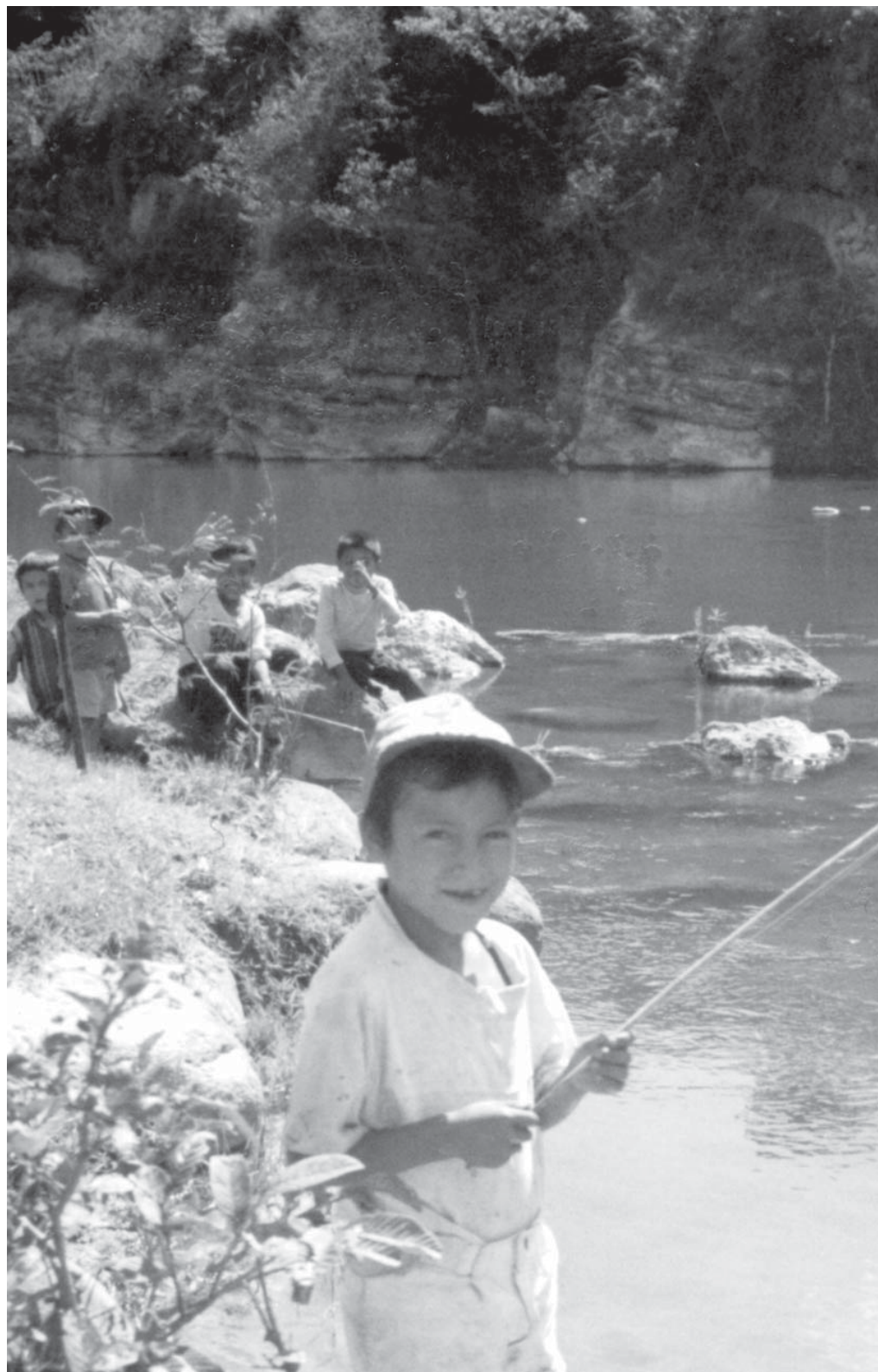
My primary goal was to work with midwives, and I spent most of my first year finding the midwives in the 50 villages that surrounded my site. I went to their homes and visited them to find out what their lives were like and how I could help them. Together with my counterpart, we designed

a project based on the needs of the midwives and the community, and I wrote a community partnership grant for funding. Last August I started monthly meetings of midwives and nurses in six different communities. We had meetings for eight months and at each meeting there was an opportunity to share experiences, an educational component, and a chance for each midwife to receive some needed materials for her work. Even though my Spanish is far from perfect and I often did not understand when the midwives and nurses got talking to each other rapidly, I thoroughly enjoyed this project and each month the midwives and nurses expressed enthusiastic appreciation. My last meeting was two days before I left my site for good and as sad as I was, I left with a great sense of accomplishment and satisfaction.

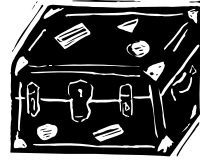
During one of final meetings, I received many gifts from the midwives. One midwife walked over an hour in the hot sun to give me a live chicken!! What an unforgettable gift. I wish you all a service filled with adventure, pitfalls, accomplishments, challenges, and a few chickens!!

—Debby Drew

NOTES



PACKING LIST



When packing, keep in mind that there are many, many products available in Honduras, but not necessarily in the training town of Santa Lucia. Santa Lucia is a small village, with a few *pulperias* (local convenience stores) where you can purchase a limited and random supply of toiletries and school supplies. In Tegucigalpa and other bigger cities, there are malls and supermarkets where you can get all your products, down to a desired name brand, if you wish (bearing in mind that you'll be paying a bit more). That being said, it is best to bring enough of your favorite essentials for your time during training. You won't get into the capital often during training, so the chance of you getting to Tegucigalpa to get a missing item is slim. Nevertheless, know that you can buy them after you are in your site. In other words, you don't need to bring a two-year supply of anything except for very specific and hard-to-find items or brands.

Another good rule of thumb is to leave at home anything that would make you really upset to lose. You may lose items through misplacing them, having them stolen, or simple breakage through wear-and-tear in this environment. Also, many Volunteers like to give away all of their items to other Volunteers when they leave (because they do not want to travel with them). Thus, it is best to bring functional yet cheap items.

Regarding clothing, pack to make yourself comfortable, but be prepared to dress in a way that is appropriate to the culture and your status as a professional. Women in particular will want to take care to avoid calling unwanted attention to themselves through their dress. This does not mean that women cannot wear things they would normally wear in the States, such as tank tops, but they will be expected to use their judgment to determine the most appropriate and culturally sensitive attire for the situation.

In addition, please be aware that the following suggestions of what to pack, have been compiled by current and past Volunteers in Honduras. Your list will vary according to your personal preferences and comfort levels. You should bring what you feel that you need and what you can easily carry.

Essentials:

- **Clothing.** During training, you will be expected to wear “professional” clothing, which in Honduras loosely translates to business casual wear. For instance, collared golf shirts and khakis or skirts are perfectly acceptable, and jeans are also worn by most professionals. Thus, this type of respectable clothing is expected for training and in most sites. It is fine to bring clothes that need to be ironed, because people here are quite meticulous about ironing their clothes and dressing neatly; your host family will thus most likely have an iron to use. Later, depending on your site, you will probably be wearing the same business casual wear. Keep in mind, however, that in more rural sites, dress is very important, and even hard laborers will be seen wearing collared dress shirts, so you may want to bring one or two. Also, regarding weather, sites in Honduras range from extremely hot to extremely cool, so it is difficult to plan until you reach your site after training. The training site is in a rather cool climate, so you will want to be prepared with layers, and a jacket can come in handy. Expect to dress for fall in Santa Lucia. In general, it is best to bring a good mix of both cold weather and warm weather essentials, since, regardless of the weather in your site, you will most likely be traveling to various parts of the country. In addition, please note that there are an abundance of used clothing stores (*Ropa Americana*), where you

can buy good-quality clothing at a very cheap price. You will most likely purchase here, or you can get clothes made, sometime during your service since your clothes will get worn out more quickly here than in the States.

In short, you will be able to purchase plenty of clothing in country, so just bring the essentials to get you through training. A more detailed list follows.

- Five pair of nice pants/skirts/jeans (two weeks' worth)
- Seven business casual shirts (two weeks' worth)
- Two long-sleeve breathable cotton (or techwick) shirts
- One long-sleeved hooded sweatshirt/light sweater/light fleece
- One collared dress shirt
- One tie for men for the swearing-in ceremony
- One semi-formal dress/shoes to match for women for swearing in ceremony
- Two weeks' worth of cotton underwear
- Seven pairs of cotton socks
- One pair of wool socks (also can be used as slippers to walk around inside)
- Three to four comfortable bras and one or two sports bras
- Two pajama bottoms
- Three pajama t-shirts
- One casual, comfortable outfit for going out
- **Rain gear.** You will need a light, breathable rain jacket/windbreaker/poncho for the downpours during the rainy season. Also, a small travel umbrella is convenient for protection from the rain and sun, as used by many Honduran women. If your site is rainy and muddy enough for rubber boots, you can always purchase them at the markets in bigger cities, so bringing them is unnecessary.

- **Bathing suit.** Generally, people here wear T-shirts and shorts to go swimming, sometimes with a bathing suit underneath and sometimes without, but there are enough opportunities to go swimming to merit bringing whatever type of bathing suit you like. You may want to bring swim shorts or board shorts as well.
- **Bath towel.** While you can buy smaller, cheaper-quality bath towels in Honduras, most Volunteers bring one large towel with them to use during training and throughout service.
- **Sandals.** A good, comfy pair of sturdy sandals for everyday wear is a must (e.g., Chacos or Tevas). (One Volunteer reports that Chacos has a 50 percent discount on their website for PCVs.) Also, you will need a cheap pair of flip-flops for shower shoes. These can be found easily in Honduras.
- **Hiking/mountain/all-terrain boots.** Much of the terrain in Honduras is very irregular, which means that supportive hiking shoes are convenient for long walks or even just to wear as your everyday footwear. Some Volunteers like to use waterproof shoes since they can be a lifesaver during the rainy season, but remember that they are a little less breathable than non-waterproof shoes. Sizes larger than 9 are hard to find for any type of shoe.
- **Sneakers/running shoes.** Depending on your preference, you can either bring the aforementioned hiking boots or a good pair of sneakers (or both if you use them for different purposes). It is very difficult to find a quality pair of sneakers in Honduras, so make sure you bring them if you will want to wear them.
- **Comfortable dress shoes.** Although you will most likely be wearing sandals or sneakers in your site, it is necessary to have a pair of dress shoes for training and/or dressier events that you may need to attend during service. Dress shoes, in general, translate to

comfortable closed-toed shoes. Keep in mind that dust runs rampant in Honduras, so it is best to bring a pair that will endure this environment.

- **Medium-sized backpack.** A lot of people have made the mistake of bringing large expedition backpacks, with nothing for day-to-day use or a weekend trip. No matter what the size, packs with zippered side pockets are great and will always be useful.
- **Pocket knife or Leatherman.** Always convenient to have even if it's only as an extra knife in the kitchen.
- **Durable AA flashlight or headlamp (LED).** While most sites have electricity, it often is unreliable and inconsistent, periodically going out for hours or even days. Thus, a sturdy flashlight (e.g., Maglite) or headlamp (perfect for hands-free cooking) is essential.
- **Battery re-charger (AA).** Batteries here are expensive, low quality, and (as anywhere) horrible for the environment. So, it is recommended to bring a battery re-charger according to the size of batteries required by whatever electronics you are bring with you. Also two to three sets of rechargeable batteries are recommended. Some Volunteers solely use batteries due to the power outages that can ruin appliances, or because they don't have electricity. But, even if your site does not have electricity, you will have access to areas that do (e.g., the capital, your closest city or *pueblo*), so you will still be able to plug in an electric re-charger at some point.
- **One or two durable water bottles.** Many Volunteers like Nalgene bottles because they are so tough. Just re-using plastic water bottles is another option as well.
- **Travel sewing kit.** Clothes go through more here than they do in the States, especially in washing, and a sewing kit becomes necessary more often here.

- **A camera (digital, if possible).** Film and processing are expensive here, and the quality is not great, so digital is preferable. Also, people in your site will love to see the instantaneous display of a digital camera, and digital photos are easier to send home or just burn onto a CD.
- **Watch/Travel Alarm Clock.** You should bring a small clock that does not need electricity, and that will wake you up. This is especially convenient for early training days.
- **A money belt.** Most people feel safer with one to hide their money when traveling.
- **Personal hygiene items.** This may include anti-bacterial hand gel in travel sizes and stain-removing wipes (e.g., Shout Wipes). Don't overload, we do have soap in Honduras), a fabric pen, a good nail care set and tweezers, a brush/comb, a toothbrush and travel toothbrush case, hair clippers (men), and for women, your favorite brand of tampons to last you through training. Also, if there is any sort of specific, nice-quality hygiene items that you use regularly (e.g., body lotions, hair products, oil-free sunscreen), you may want to bring these to make your life here more comfortable. Most people find that the local products are just fine and that they can live without a lot of "essentials" after a few weeks.
- **Sleep sac or light sleeping bag.** You'll do some overnight traveling during training to visit other Volunteers' sites, and you never know what kind of accommodations will be available. Thus, you need to have something to sleep on. Blankets or larger items are not recommended because it's better to wait and assess your needs once you arrive at your site and then buy bulky items in-country as necessary. A light sleeping bag is perfect for traveling and in-site use. (Make sure it is light so that it is practical for the weather in Honduras.)

- **Sunglasses.** This sunny country can do major harm to your eyes. Bring a cheap pair of sunglasses; flashy ones are too tempting for robbers. You can always buy a replacement pair in country.
- **Personal photos.** These are not only great for the occasional pick-me-up, but also to show your host family and the folks in your site. People love seeing these photos, and they are a good way to practice your Spanish and develop relationships.
- **A small CD player/MP3 player/iPod/radio.** Many Volunteers bring portable CD players or radios and then attach small speakers to turn them into stereos. However, you can also buy a stereo in-country if needed. Remember that electronics can be extremely expensive here, with a huge mark-up on the prices found in the U.S. The terrain here makes a shortwave radio useless in many parts of the country, so a simple radio is your best option.
- **Portable USB memory drive.** As this technology becomes more common, most Volunteers in Honduras have brought these with them or had one sent. Not considering whether you have a personal computer or computer available at your site, there are plenty of instances where a memory drive comes in handy. You can use them at Internet cafes, fellow Volunteers' sites, and the Volunteer-designated computers at the Peace Corps office to transfer information and resources easily and safely (especially reports) and to trade photos and music.
- **Surge protector and uninterruptible power supply (also known as voltage stabilizer) for your electronics.** The inconsistent electricity in Honduras is harmful to most electronics. While you may find these items in larger stores in Honduras, you will not be able to easily get them during training.

- **Spanish/English dictionary.** You should definitely have a Spanish/English dictionary, particularly if you are just learning the language. You may also want to consider purchasing *501 Spanish Verbs*.

Non-Essentials, but Nice if You Don't Mind Carrying It:

- **Laptop computer.** Many Volunteers have reservations about bringing laptops due to security, maintenance, and use issues. Other Volunteers who bring laptops feel it has been most useful. If you choose to bring one, a basic laptop is sufficient, with the basic Microsoft programs (i.e., Excel, Word, Access) or their equivalent. It may facilitate your work, especially if you don't have a computer available at your counterpart agency's office. At the same time, you should consider if/how you will ensure that work you accomplish on your laptop and the skill in using it can be transferred to your counterpart agency. Laptops are convenient for downloading digital photos, watching DVDs, listening to music, playing games, and reviewing resources available on CD-ROMs. Many Volunteers even use laptops to write e-mails at home, save them, and then spend less money to just send them once they reach an Internet café. If you do not have electricity in your site, most laptops have a battery that can last for a good amount of time. If you do decide to bring a laptop, you should always insure expensive items in case of theft or breakage. In addition, the dusty and humid atmosphere may cause maintenance problems with your laptop, which are difficult to fix in country.
- **Hobby kit/activities.** Volunteers bring yoga kits, magnetic chess/checker boards, decks of cards, travel games, word puzzles, etc., all of which can be used for your personal time and with people in your site, both for fun and for incorporating your educational information. If you enjoy sports, bring your gear (your baseball glove, cleats,

Frisbee, your workout clothes, or other small, lightweight supplies). If you plan on bringing your laptop, you may want to download a few entertaining games.

- **Travel coffee/tea mug.** These are especially great during training. Although you can find any type of coffee here, if you enjoy tea, bring a couple boxes of your favorite kinds because there are only about three varieties available in country.
- **Sleeping mat (e.g., Therm-a-Rest).** These are not an essential because you can buy cheap, thin mattresses for guests in most sites, or just sleep on a bunch of blankets when traveling. However, some Volunteers love their sleeping mats (or even yoga mats) and bring them wherever they go.
- **Travel pillow.** This is not a necessity, but some people use them for bus rides. Consider an inflatable pillow you can wrap around your neck.
- **Stationary supplies.** Plain paper is available here, but if you like nice, letter-writing supplies, they can be hard to find. You can find pens, pencils, and markers, but you might want to bring a few to get you through training.
- **Make-up/jewelry/accessories.** It's not a good idea to bring anything flashy, especially gold, and you should only bring things that you would feel comfortable wearing in the States and that you wouldn't mind losing.
- **Gift for host family.** Many Volunteers like to bring something representative of their home region to give to their host families (you will have two different families). However, other Volunteers feel awkward giving gifts upon arrival and either wait to give the gift they brought at the end of their stay, or just purchase something useful for the host family in-country after getting to know the family (e.g., coffee, calendar, home goods, treats for kids).

- **Resealable plastic bags.** These help keep little pests from getting into food and for keeping food fresh in the humidity. Plastic bags can be also used for traveling with toiletries to avoid spillage.
- **Warm cap/scarf.** If you get chilly easily, bring something to cover your head for cold mornings during training. You will not be able to find these items in your training site of Santa Lucia. However, remember that you can find scarves and/or hats in-country if you are placed in a site with a cool climate.
- **A few good books.** The Peace Corps office in Tegucigalpa has an informal library for Volunteers, which contains a wide range of titles that have been circulating among Volunteers over the years. While there is never a shortage of books (since people are always donating and returning new ones), some Volunteers find the available books to be old and uninteresting. Though you will always be able to find something to read if you have a good eye and dig deep enough, those with particular tastes should bring a few books to occupy their time and then find some good friends with whom they can trade.

What NOT to Bring:

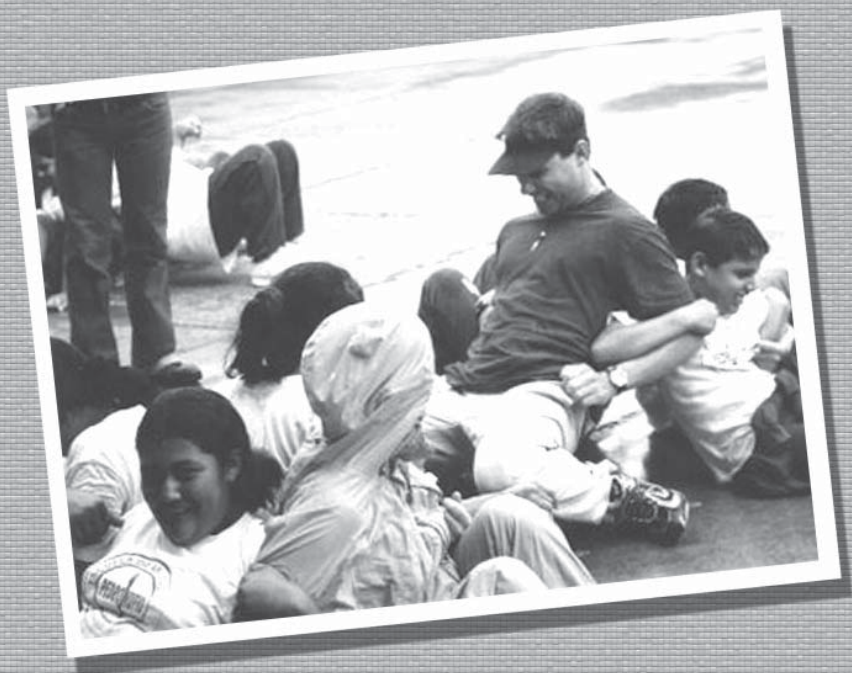
- **Medical supplies.** All the medical supplies you could possibly need are available here through Peace Corps. The healthcare for Volunteers is excellent: everyone receives a medical kit upon arrival in-country, and the medical office will provide you with refills of everything in the kit. This includes vitamins, bug spray, sun block (for face and body), lip protector, floss, condoms, cough drops, cold medicines, stomach medicines, bandages, mosquito net, and many other items. Women receive plastic applicator tampons from the medical unit since they are difficult to find in-country. If you are comfortable using these, you do not need to bring your own supplies

(except those that you **will need for the first three months of training**). If you prefer a specific type or brand of tampons, you should bring them with you.

- **Tool kits.** Volunteers in the past have brought tools such as hammers and screwdrivers and found them unnecessary. You can usually borrow these items from a neighbor or landlord if necessary. If you absolutely need your own, you can buy these items for cheap prices at hardware stores in most towns.
- **Bedding.** Your host families must provide bedding. And, until you arrive in site, you will not know what size of bed you will be given or buy. Thus, it is best to just buy sheets in a market, and perhaps use your sleep sac for the first few nights before purchasing sheets. If you are particular about sheets, those found here are low quality, so you may consider having these sent to you.
- **Kitchen supplies.** You can find all of these in local markets or malls at larger cities.
- **Cellphone.** You will be able to buy one in Honduras at a reasonable price.
- **Iron.** You do not need to bring one. You may borrow or buy one in-country.
- **Outdoor “survival” gear.** Although you are going to live in a developing country, please remember that the Peace Corps will never place you in a site where a minimum standard of living is not possible. Unless you use them often in the States, or if you plan on taking a jungle trip (and even then, most trips provide gear), it is unnecessary to bring water pumps/purifiers (you can boil your water or use iodine tablets), tents (however, a tent would be good if you are a passionate hiker), compasses, binoculars, etc. However, if you are an avid outdoors-person, these items may be essential to you so you should bring them since you will not be able to buy them in Honduras.

As a final note, remember not to bring too many products because you can find nearly everything you could possibly want here. It is amazing how many things Volunteers acquire in their two years of living in Honduras. A good rule of thumb is to bring half of what you think you'll need. Packing can be a pain, but hopefully, this will make it easier. And, don't stress out: things can always be sent to you from the States.

NOTES



PRE-DEPARTURE CHECKLIST



The following list consists of suggestions for you to consider as you prepare to live outside the United States for two years. Not all items will be relevant to everyone, and the list does not include everything you should make arrangements for.

Family

- Notify family that they can call the Peace Corps' Office of Special Services at any time if there is a critical illness or death of a family member (telephone number: 800.424.8580, extension 1470 or 202-692-1470).
- Give the Peace Corps' *On the Home Front* handbook to family and friends.

Passport/Travel

- Forward to the Peace Corps travel office all paperwork for the Peace Corps passport and visas.
- Verify that luggage meets the size and weight limits for international travel.
- Obtain a personal passport if you plan to travel after your service ends. (Your Peace Corps passport will expire three months after you finish your service, so if you plan to travel longer, you will need a regular passport.)

Medical/Health

- Complete any needed dental and medical work.
- If you wear glasses, bring two pairs.
- Arrange to bring a three-month supply of all medications (including birth control pills) you are currently taking.

Insurance

- Make arrangements to maintain life insurance coverage.
- Arrange to maintain supplemental health coverage while you are away. (Even though the Peace Corps is responsible for your healthcare during Peace Corps service overseas, it is advisable for people who have preexisting conditions to arrange for the continuation of their supplemental health coverage. If there is a lapse in coverage, it is often difficult and expensive to be reinstated.)
- Arrange to continue Medicare coverage if applicable.

Personal Papers

- Bring a copy of your certificate of marriage or divorce.

Voting

- Register to vote in the state of your home of record. (Many state universities consider voting and payment of state taxes as evidence of residence in that state.)
- Obtain a voter registration card and take it with you overseas.
- Arrange to have an absentee ballot forwarded to you overseas.

Personal Effects

- Purchase personal property insurance to extend from the time you leave your home for service overseas until the time you complete your service and return to the United States.

Financial Management

- Obtain student loan deferment forms from the lender or loan service.
- Arrange for deductions from your readjustment allowance to pay alimony, child support, and other debts through the Office of Volunteer Financial Operations at 800.424.8580, extension 1770.
- Place all important papers—mortgages, deeds, stocks, and bonds—in a safe deposit box or with an attorney or other caretaker.



CONTACTING PEACE CORPS HEADQUARTERS



The following list of numbers will help you contact the appropriate office at Peace Corps headquarters with various questions. You may use the toll-free number and extension or dial directly using the local numbers provided. Be sure to leave the Peace Corps' toll-free number and extensions with your family so they have them in the event of an emergency during your service overseas.

Peace Corps Headquarters

Toll-free Number:

800.424.8580, Press 2, then
Ext. # (see below)

Peace Corps' Mailing Address:

Peace Corps
Paul D. Coverdell Peace Corps Headquarters
1111 20th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20526

For Questions About:	Staff	Toll-free Extension	Direct/ Local Number
Responding to an Invitation	Office of Placement Inter-America and the Pacific	Ext. 1835	202.692.1835
Programming or Country Information	Desk Officer E-mail: honduras@peacecorps.gov	Ext. 2520	202.692.2520
Plane Tickets, Passports, Visas, or Other Travel Matters	Travel Officer (Sato Travel)	Ext. 1170	202.692.1170
Legal Clearance	Office of Placement	Ext. 1845	202.692.1845

For Questions About:	Staff	Toll-free Extension	Direct/ Local Number
Medical Clearance and Forms Processing (including dental)	Screening Nurse	Ext. 1500	202.692.1500
Medical Reimbursements	Handled by a Subcontractor		800.818.8772
Loan Deferments, Taxes, Readjustment Allowance Withdrawals, Power of Attorney	Volunteer Financial Operations	Ext. 1770	202.692.1770
Staging (Pre-departure Orientation) and Reporting Instructions <i>Note: You will receive comprehensive information (hotel and flight arrangements) three to five weeks before departure. This information is not available sooner.</i>	Office of Staging	Ext. 1865	202.692.1865
Family Emergencies (to get information to a Volunteer overseas)	Office of Special Services	Ext. 1470	202.692.1470

PEACE CORPS

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