

THE PEACE CORPS WELCOMES YOU TO

G H A N A



A PEACE CORPS PUBLICATION
FOR NEW VOLUNTEERS



February 2007



A WELCOME LETTER

Congratulations on your invitation to join Peace Corps for two years of voluntary service to the people of Ghana! When you enter into a life of service, you enter into a paradox: You will receive more than you give, and you will learn more than you teach.

Peace Corps is a job, not an adventure. Accepting an assignment in Ghana is accepting to live modestly, respectfully, and compassionately, and to work hard as a professional development worker. If you are not willing to expose yourself to a different world view and allow yourself to be changed, do not accept this invitation. Peace Corps/Ghana needs mature Volunteers of diverse backgrounds representing the full face of America.

Peace Corps began its program in Ghana in 1961 with 52 Volunteers. Since then, more than 4,000 Volunteers have served here. There currently are 130 Volunteers working in small enterprise development, health and water and sanitation, education, and environment and natural resources.

You are fortunate to have been selected to work in Ghana. As you stand on the shoulders of those who served before you, you are joining a legacy of excellence, and a commitment and passion for peace, friendship and development.

I look forward to meeting you and serving with you.

Safe journey,

Madeleine Mader
Country Director



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PEACE CORPS/GHANA HISTORY AND PROGRAMS



History of the Peace Corps in Ghana

Ghana was the first country in the world to receive Peace Corps Volunteers. The program began with 52 Volunteers arriving on August 31, 1961. Currently, 45 years later, there are 130 Volunteers and trainees working in the fields of health and water and sanitation, HIV/AIDS, Guinea Worm disease eradication, junior and secondary school teaching, small business development, and environment. Peace Corps/Ghana brings in approximately 75 new trainees each year. Volunteers work in all 10 regions of Ghana.

Peace Corps has been a witness to the successes and challenges of Ghana's modern post-colonial political, economic and social development. In this period, the changing political landscape has had a direct impact on economic and social development as the nation has forged its identity in the context of an increasingly globalized world. After 45 years, the government of Ghana continues to request assistance from Peace Corps because there is still much work to be done.

History and Future of Peace Corps Programming in Ghana

Peace Corps/Ghana supports economic recovery by strengthening Ghana's human resource base through Volunteer assistance in education, environment, health, and small enterprise development.

Education Volunteers work as junior secondary and senior secondary school classroom teachers helping to improve teaching and learning in science, math, visual arts, and

information technology. They work to increase parent and community engagement in education by strengthening PTAs and civic unions to be effective advocates for education and hold districts accountable for school improvement. The project increases school access, quality and equity.

Environment Volunteers work to improve the productive capacity of rural communities by facilitating agroforestry, conservation, environmental education, and sustainable use of environmental resources for income generation.

Health Volunteers work in water and sanitation helping in water resource delivery, hygiene education, improving sanitation and health practices, HIV/AIDS education, and Guinea worm disease eradication. They work closely with rural community leaders to identify community interests and mobilize human and material resources for village-based health-related development projects.

Small enterprise development Volunteers work as business advisors, providing advice and assistance to a diverse group of rural communities and urban small-scale entrepreneurs to promote the export of non-traditional products and community-based eco-tourism development.

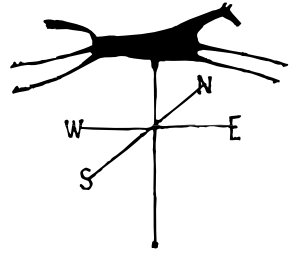
The primary job common to all health, environment and business Volunteer assignments (and to some extent education assignments) is this: help people identify their needs and self-interests and community-interests, then co-lead, co-facilitate, co-mentor, co-plan, and co-train people to meet these needs. This may feel like a very unstructured job but it is a very specific and demanding job.

In addition, Peace Corps/Ghana has cross-sectoral programs in HIV/AIDS education and prevention, and gender and youth development.

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COUNTRY OVERVIEW: GHANA AT A GLANCE



History

Ghanaians have been interacting with Europeans for five hundred years. Portuguese traders built protected forts along the coast in 1491. After them came the Dutch, the Swedish, the Danes and the British. There is a rich history of pre-colonial civilization with sophisticated governance structures and kingdoms of diverse people. The era of colonialism was relatively short but the impact of Europeans was lasting. Ghana is a very modern country but not necessarily Western.

In 1957, Ghana, the former British colony of the Gold Coast, became the first country in colonial Africa to gain its independence. Ghana took its modern name from the ancient African kingdom that was located near what is today the Republic of Mali. Under the leadership of one of Africa's most legendary pan-Africanists, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana was quickly at the forefront of African countries trying to transition from the legacy of colonialism in the midst of cold war competition for strategic alliances. A series of *coup d'etats* during the 1960s and 1970s resulted in the suspension of the constitution in 1981 and the banning of political parties. In 1992, a new constitution was drafted and multiparty politics restored. Flight Lieutenant Jerry Rawlings, who had been head of state since 1981, won presidential elections in 1992 and 1996. In 2000, J.A. Kufuor, of the opposition New Patriotic Party, was elected president. He was re-elected to a second four-year term on December 7, 2004.

Government

Ghana has a parliamentary form of representation. The political climate in Ghana has remained positive since a democratically elected transfer of power from the former President, Jerry Rawlings, to the current President, J.A. Kufuor. There is much open and heated debate of issues on television, on over 100 radio stations, and in the press. There are also active opposition parties. The December 2004 presidential and parliamentary elections are considered the freest and fairest in post-colonial African history.

Ghana is considered a major player in promoting peace in the West African sub-region, as witnessed by its involvement in regional peacekeeping forces and diplomacy. A state visit by President Clinton to Ghana in March 1998, President Rawlings' visit to Washington in March 1999, and official visits by President Kufuor to Washington in 2001, 2005, and 2006 underscore the prominent role Ghana plays in sub-regional security and economic growth. President Kufuor has met President Bush five times.

Economy

Current indicators forecast that Ghana will be able to weather recent shocks in the economy as a result of a drop in gold and cocoa prices and increases in the price of petroleum products. Inflation in Ghana is around 10 percent, and the local currency has stabilized over the past year. Ghana continues to see an increase in foreign investment and possesses a strong private sector economy. Indicators show that Ghana will continue to follow its economic recovery plan as long as oil prices remain stable and cocoa prices remain high. As a result of effective economic policies, Ghana benefited from more than \$200 million in debt forgiveness as one of the heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC).

In the United Nations Development Program's *2005 Human Development Report*, Ghana is classified as a "low human development" country on the Human Development Index; that is, it falls within the poorest 25 percent of the countries surveyed. According to the report, Ghana ranks 138 out of 177 countries. An area of concern is that despite rising incomes, health indicators have fallen.

People and Culture

Ghana currently has a population of just over 21 million people, with an estimated annual population growth of 2 percent. Of that figure, approximately 42 percent are under the age of 14. Life expectancy is approximately 57 years.

Like many African countries, Ghana has flourishing cultural, religious, and language diversity. The major ethnic group (44 percent) is the Akan, of which the Ashanti and Fanti are the most widely known. These largely southern groups are joined by the Ga (8 percent) and Ewe (13 percent) along the coastal areas. In the northern part of the country, the largest ethnic group is the Moshi-Dagomba (16 percent). Across the entire country, however, are many smaller distinct ethnic populations with separate languages and traditions. In Peace Corps training in Ghana, it is not unusual to see nine or 10 different languages being taught to trainees.

The southern half of the country is largely Christian (24 percent) while the northern half is primarily Muslim (30 percent). In addition, there are many people who maintain strong indigenous practices (38 percent). Within the Christian tradition the evangelical and pentacostal churches are experiencing the fastest growth. There is also a relatively new and strong Mormon presence. In addition, there are a few local indigenous churches that are a fusion of Christian and Animist beliefs.

Ghanaians have a well-deserved reputation for being open people. Welcoming visitors is a point of cultural identity. Hosting visitors is the ultimate expression of Ghanaian culture. Acknowledging the presence of another human being by greeting them honors their existence. You will be expected to take on this practice. Indeed, your ability to greet and to form relationships will be a significant factor in your success. Especially in the local communities, visitors will be welcomed into families and quickly be made to feel at home.

Environment

Ghana has vast natural resources. The potential for sustainable environmental management and conservation is good, but environmental degradation is taking place. Most notably, its forests, some of the largest in West Africa, are threatened by the timber industry. Deforestation with no long-term plan for sustainable forest management remains one of the most difficult obstacles to development. Likewise, water pollution from gold mining poisonous effluent, sewage, industrial, and agricultural effluents is also a growing concern. Urbanization is also having negative impacts on the environment. Rising energy consumption is putting pressure on Ghana's capacity to generate electricity.

Education

Ghana has lived through numerous educational reforms but they have been thwarted by political turmoil. The past five years have brought stability and with it, the political will to make reform effective. The government has introduced free compulsory universal basic education (through junior high). The main goals are to improve access to education, and to improve the quality and equity of the system. There is still a

severe shortage of trained teachers in math, science, visual arts, and information technology. Other stresses include: underpaid staff, teachers' strikes, classroom and textbook shortages, a lack of effective school administration, exam fraud, and violence against children in the form of caning and corporal punishment.

Health

The government of Ghana is committed to improving the health of all people living in Ghana. A situational analysis on health indicates that in general, the health of Ghanaians is improving. Since 1957, more infants are surviving, and people are living longer. In spite of increased efforts by the government of Ghana to improve the living status of Ghanaians over the years, the health status of the majority of citizens has not improved significantly. The rather slow rate of improvement has been attributed to a number of factors including: high levels of poverty, low literacy rate, high population growth rate, poor nutrition, limited access to water and sanitation, and poor performance of the healthcare delivery system.

HIV/AIDS has been reported in all the regions of Ghana. The proportion of HIV infected persons is rising and if serious measures are not taken to halt it, the epidemic will undermine efforts to achieve the developmental goals of Ghana. To address the alarming number of people who are infected with the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Ghana, there has been a heightened focus on HIV/AIDS education and prevention and sensitization of community members to increase their compassion and care for People Living with AIDS.

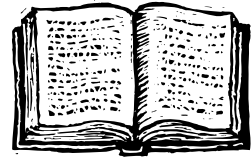
The AIDS pandemic strikes across all social strata in many Peace Corps countries. The loss of teachers has crippled

education systems, while illness and disability drain family income and force governments and donors to redirect limited resources from other priorities. The fear and uncertainty AIDS causes has led to increased domestic violence and stigmatizing of people living with HIV/AIDS, isolating them from friends and family and cutting them off from economic opportunities. As a Peace Corps Volunteer, you will confront these issues on a very personal level. It is important to be aware of the high emotional toll that disease, death, and violence can have on Volunteers. As you strive to integrate into your community, you will develop relationships with local people who might die during your service. Because of the AIDS pandemic, some Volunteers will be regularly meeting with HIV-positive people and working with training staff, office staff, and host family members living with AIDS. Volunteers need to prepare themselves to embrace these relationships in a sensitive and positive manner. Likewise, malaria and malnutrition, motor vehicle accidents and other unintentional injuries, domestic violence, and corporal punishment are problems a Volunteer may confront. You will need to anticipate these situations and utilize supportive resources available throughout your training and service to maintain your own emotional strength so that you can continue to be of service to your community.

NOTES



RESOURCES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION



We offer a list of web sites and books for you to search for additional information about the Peace Corps and Ghana, or connect you to returned Volunteers and other invitees. Please keep in mind that Internet links change. We have tried to make sure that these links are active, but it cannot be guaranteed. A note of caution: As you surf these sites, please also remember that you will find bulletin boards and chat rooms in which people are free to give opinions and advice based on their own experiences. The opinions expressed are not those of the Peace Corps or the United States government. You may also find opinions of people who were unhappy with their choice to serve in the Peace Corps. As you read these comments, we hope you will keep in mind that the Peace Corps is not for everyone, and no two people experience their service in the same way.

Information About Development

<http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/ghana.html>

This is the webpage for the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) project in Ghana

<http://www.undp-gha.org/>

This is the webpage for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) project in Ghana

<http://www.globalaidsalliance.org/>

The mission of the Global AIDS Alliance (GAA) is to mobilize the political will and financial resources needed to slow and ultimately stop the global AIDS crisis, and to reduce its impacts on poor countries hardest hit by the pandemic.

www.watradehub.com

The West Africa Trade Hub is a USAID-funded project working under the West Africa Regional Program to make trade happen in 20 countries across the region.

<http://www.commissionforafrica.org/english/home/newsstories.html>

In early 2004, British Prime Minister Tony Blair established the Commission for Africa. This website is the permanent archive of the work of the commission.

http://www.usaid.gov/locations/sub-saharan_africa/countries/ghana/index.html

This is the webpage for the USAID Mission in Ghana

www.un.org/Pubs/CyberSchoolBus/infonation//e_glance.htm

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

General Information About Ghana:

<http://www.ghanadistricts.com>

Website for a public-private partnership program between the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development, and the Environment and Moks Publications and Media Services.

www.countrywatch.com

On this site, you can learn anything from what time it is in Accra to information about converting currency. Just click on Ghana and go from there. Please note, you must first login to access this site.

www.state.gov

This is the State Department's Web site, which issues background notes periodically about countries around the world. Find Ghana and learn more about its social and political history.

<https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/gh.html>

The world factbook provides up-to-date country information.

www.geography.about.com/library/maps/blindex.htm

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

www.worldinformation.com

This site provides an additional source of current and historical information about countries worldwide.

Connect With Returned Volunteers and Other Invitees at:

<http://clubs.yahoo.com/clubs/peacecorps>

This Yahoo site hosts a bulletin board where prospective Volunteers and returned Volunteers can come together.

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://peacecorpsonline.org/>

This site is an independent news forum serving Returned Peace Corps Volunteers. It includes an RPCV directory organized by country of 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 from countries around the world.

Online Articles/Current News Sites About Ghana:

1. www.graphicghana.com
2. www.ghanaweb.com
3. www.ghana.com
4. <http://allafrica.com/ghana/>
5. <http://www.afrol.com/countries/ghana>
6. <http://www.irinnews.org/>
7. <http://worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/africa/gh.htm>
(maps and facts about Ghana)

Twɔ Language Resources

Language is your key to the culture in Ghana. While many people in the urban areas of the country speak English, communities in the rural areas speak mostly local languages—and so will you! Twɔ is one of the most widely spoken languages in Ghana, and it will be the first language you will study upon arrival in-country. If you're interested in getting started on your Twɔ language skills before departing for Ghana, here are a few resources to try:

1. Dolphyne, Florence Abena. *A Comprehensive Course in Twɔ Asante for the Non-Twɔ Learner*. Ghana Univ. Pr. Book & Audio Cassette edition (1998)
2. Dolphyne, Florence Abena. *The Akan (twɔ-fante) Language: Its Sound Systems and Tonal Structure*. Ghana Universities Press (1988)
3. Kotey, Paul F. *Let's Learn Twɔ: Ma Yensua Twɔ*. Africa World Press (2000)
4. Kotey, Paul A. *Twɔ-English/English-Twɔ Concise Dictionary* (Hippocrene Concise Dictionary) Hippocrene Books (1998)

5. Redden, James E. *Twi Basic Course*. Audio-Forum (1963)
6. *Twi* (Audio Cassette) Pimsleur (1997)

Recommended Books about Development:

1. Burkey, Stan. *People First: A Guide to Self-Reliant Participatory Rural Development*. London: Zed Books, 1993.
2. Friere, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* 30th anniversary ed., New York, NY: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2000.

Recommended Books About Ghana:

1. Aidoo, Ama Ata. *No Sweetness Here and Other Stories*. New York, NY: The Feminist Press, 1995.
2. Amamoo, J.G. *The New Ghana: The Birth of a Nation*. Lincoln, NE: Authors Choice Press, 2000.
3. Appiah, Kwame Anthony. *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 2006.
4. Birmingham, David. *Kwame Nkrumah: Father Of African Nationalism*. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press; Rev edition, 1998.
5. Briggs, Phillip. *Ghana: The Bradt Travel Guide, 3rd Edition*. Chalfont St. Peter: Bradt Travel Guides, 2004.
6. Cole, Catherine M. *Ghana's Concert Party Theater*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001.
7. Gaines, James. *12 Days in Ghana: Reunions, Revelations & Reflections*. Bloomington, IN: Authorhouse, 2002.

8. McCaskie, T. C. *Asante Identities: History and Modernity in an African Village, 1850-1950*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001.
9. McFarland, Daniel Miles. *Historical Dictionary of Ghana*. Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, third edition, 2005.
10. McKissack, Patricia. *The Royal Kingdoms of Ghana, Mali, and Songhay: Life in Medieval Africa*. Henry Holt and Co. (BYR) (1995).
11. Mikell, Gwendolin. *Cocoa and Chaos in Ghana*. Washington, DC: Howard University Press; Reprint edition, 1991.
12. Otoo, David. *Authentic African Cuisine from Ghana, 1st Edition*. East Orange, NJ: Sankofa Books, 1997.

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 1960s*. 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).



LIVING CONDITIONS AND VOLUNTEER LIFESTYLE



Communications

Mail

Few countries in the world offer the level of mail service we have in the United States. If you bring with you U.S. standards for mail service, you will be in for a great deal of frustration. Mail takes two to three weeks to arrive. Advise your family and friends to number their letters and to include "Air Mail" on their envelopes. All packages are opened and inspected at the post office in Accra in the presence of a Peace Corps staff member.

Despite delays, we strongly encourage you to write to your family regularly (perhaps bi-weekly) and to number your letters. Family members will become worried when they do not hear from you, so please advise your parents, friends, and relatives that mail is sporadic and that they should not worry if they do not receive your letters regularly. If a serious problem were to occur, Peace Corps/Ghana would notify the Office of Special Services at the Peace Corps headquarters in Washington, D.C., and family members would be contacted.

Your address during the 10-week pre-service training will be:

"Your Name," PCT
Peace Corps/Ghana
P.O. Box 5796
Accra-North, Ghana
West Africa

Once you have become a Volunteer and are at your site, give your friends and family your new address there, and ask them to send your letters to you directly. Many Volunteers live in a community without a post office. In this case, you will travel to a district or regional capital to pick up and send mail.

Packages

Packages can be sent to the Peace Corps/Ghana Accra office address, where they will be held until either you are in town to pick them up or staff travel up-country. There is always a customs charge for the recipient to pay, typically around 20,000 cedis, or \$2 (U.S.). You will be responsible for reimbursing Peace Corps for the costs of obtaining your package from customs. Avoid liquids and chocolates as they tend to leak or melt in transit.

Telephones

The Ghana telephone agency has offices located in major cities and some smaller towns with direct lines to the United States. You can call collect or use a calling card such as AT&T, MCI or Sprint. The calling card is generally a cheaper option than calling collect. Fax services are available at post offices. Once you are at your site, you can send the fax number to your friends and relatives for easy communication.

Please do not tell friends or family that you will call or e-mail them as soon as you arrive in Ghana. You will not be able to access phones or Internet until after the first couple of days.

Three major Ghanaian mobile phone companies provide services that cover most of the country's major cities and secondary towns. Most Volunteers choose to purchase a mobile phone in Ghana. However, most of them do not have coverage in their communities; they use the phone when

they travel to a larger town. If you choose to bring your own phone be sure that it is a GSM phone and can operate on the systems (900 and 1900 mhz) available in Africa. Peace Corps will not pay for mobile phones.

Computer, Internet, and E-mail Access

There is e-mail access in all major cities and in some towns. These are usually at communications centers (known as com centers). The cost varies, and equipment and connections can be slow.

Housing and Site Location

Housing varies by region, district, community, and by sector. There are few generalities about housing or site location. Peace Corps Volunteers are placed at the request of the government, Volunteers go where they are needed. Peace Corps/Ghana requires that the community contribute housing and that it meet the minimum standard of at least two rooms (or one room with a porch/sitting area). Housing must be adequately ventilated with a leak-proof roof, a solid floor and walls, access to year-round water supply, latrine, bathing facilities (often a bucket bath), and secure doors and windows. Some Volunteers find their housing goes way beyond these minimums, while others barely meet them.

Peace Corps/Ghana has Volunteers in all 10 regions of the country. Some sites are very remote, while others are in sizeable towns or cities. Once you arrive in Ghana, you will be interviewed by the associate Peace Corps director for your project to help guide the final placement decision.

Living Allowance and Money Management

The local currency, the cedi, is freely convertible. The exchange rate is determined by market forces. It has fluxuated around 9000 cedis to the dollar since September 2004.

Volunteers are expected to live modestly. Do not bring flashy or expensive equipment. Volunteers can live comfortably on the living allowance provided. There is no reason or obligation to bring additional money. Some Volunteers choose to bring about \$100 or \$200 for post-service or vacation travel, or to purchase gifts.

As a Volunteer in Ghana, you will receive four types of allowances:

- A living allowance (paid quarterly) in cedis to cover your basic living expenses.
- A vacation allowance of \$24 (U.S.) per month for the upcoming three months is added to your living allowance each quarter. The vacation allowance is converted into cedis at the prevailing rate on the date the money is ordered.
- A one-time settling-in allowance in cedis is given after training to buy basic household items when you move into your house at your site.
- If you are requested by the Peace Corps to travel, you will be provided with additional money for transportation, lodging, and meals.

Most Volunteers find they can live comfortably in Ghana with these four allowances. Volunteers are not permitted to supplement their income with dollars brought from home. The living allowance is adequate, and all Volunteers should have no difficulty living modestly. Credit cards are worthless in a rural setting but can be used in a limited number of establishments in Accra and for travel outside of Ghana. Credit card fraud is high throughout West Africa.

Food and Diet

Ghana has a diverse and flavorful cuisine. You will find yourself cooking creatively with items from Ghanaian markets. Many Volunteers take their meals with friends and neighbors; others enjoy inventive cooking for a fusion of American and Ghanaian flavors.

Common meats and other protein include: chicken and eggs, fish (smoked and dried), beef, pork, goat, grass cutter (small wild animal), beans (bambara, red, and white), and ground nuts (peanuts). Common vegetables include: tomatoes (fresh and canned paste), okra, garden eggs (like small eggplant), onions, kontomire (like spinach), hot peppers, red peppers (very hot), and cabbage. Fruits (in season) include: mango, banana, orange, avocado, pawpaw (papaya), coconut, pineapple, and watermelon. Staple foods include: Bread, coco yam, rice, plantain, pasta, sweet potato, yams, cassava, and oatmeal. Spices include: red pepper (not black), curry pepper, salt, cloves, bay leaves, sugar, fresh ginger, and fresh garlic. Also readily available are: white flour, popcorn, oils, corn flour, dry whole milk, soft drinks, coffee, tea, baking powder, vinegar, crackers, cookies, canned whole milk, and maggie cubes (like beef bouillon). Lettuce, potatoes, apples, cucumbers, cheese, and green peppers, are sometimes available but expensive.

Bring recipes that include these items. It is very unlikely that you will have an oven, but you can make a Dutch oven and bake almost as well as with a conventional oven.

Transportation

The main mode of transportation within and around your site is by bicycle. It is very likely that you will ride a bike on a daily basis. Volunteers are provided cash to purchase

a bicycle. You must bring a bike helmet with you. Peace Corps/Ghana will reimburse you up to \$50 when you arrive for this helmet. Wearing helmets is a requirement. Peace Corps/Ghana prohibits the driving of, or riding on, any two or three-wheeled motorized vehicle. Violation of either of these regulations can be grounds for administrative separation. Volunteers are not allowed to drive cars without the approval of the country director.

For longer distances Volunteers travel by local taxis and *trotros* (vans). Longer trips around the country are on large “Greyhound-type” buses. Internal airline service between Accra, Kumasi, and Tamale is provided by two airlines but the cost is out of the range of a Volunteer’s living allowance. For family and friends, many major airlines fly in and out of Accra daily and to other parts of Africa and the world.

Geography and Climate

Ghana, located on the Gulf of Guinea in West Africa, extends about 450 miles from north to south, and 250 miles from east to west (roughly the size of Oregon). Geographically, the country can be divided into three zones: the southern narrow coastal strip of savanna; a broad tropical rain forest extending 150-200 miles north; and the northern savanna area. Lake Volta, formed by the construction of the Akosombo Dam, is the largest manmade lake in the world and is an important geographical feature of the country.

The climate of Ghana is tropical with two main seasons, the dry season from November through March, and the rainy season from May through August. It is hot and dry along the southeast coast. It is hot and humid in the southwest, and dry in the north. During the dry season, the Harmattan affects the northern and southern regions with days of continual cool air, haze, and fine dust.

Social Activities

Volunteers immerse themselves in their communities and take part in the various festivities, weddings, funerals, parties, story telling, local dances, and other interesting activities. Many Volunteers pay special attention to youth and use informal time with them to read, color, play games, sing songs, and do household chores together. Volunteers are encouraged to explore the areas around their community and visit nearby interesting sites during the weekends. Visiting and spending time with people is a primary form of socializing. You will find yourself socializing with friends in their compounds, under a tree, or on a bench for hours on end. Being present is a critical factor in relationship building.

There is a continually changing repository of books at the main Peace Corps office in Accra and at the offices in Tamale and Kumasi.

When you join Peace Corps, you expect it to be difficult. That's why you join; to challenge yourself, to give and to grow. You will choose what kind of Volunteer you will be. Will you be the kind who gravitates only to other Volunteers or will you be the kind that goes out of your way to develop strong friendships with Ghanaians? Will Ghana be the backdrop to your American adventure in Africa or will Ghana be in the forefront of your experience?

Professionalism, Dress, and Behavior

One of the difficulties of finding your place as a Peace Corps Volunteer is fitting into the local culture while maintaining your own cultural identity and acting like a professional all at the same time. It is not an easy thing to resolve, and we can only provide you with guidelines.

You will be working as a representative of multiple organizations, and as such you are expected to dress and behave accordingly. While some of your Ghanaian counterparts may dress in seemingly worn or old clothes, this will be due to economics rather than choice. The likelihood is that they are wearing their “best.” A foreigner wearing ragged, un-mended clothing is likely to be considered an affront.

Ghanaians are very meticulous about their dress in the workplace and wear their good clothes. They are particular about their personal hygiene (a real accomplishment in communities of mud-brick houses and no running water), and cleanliness is a sign of respect. Shorts are acceptable around your house after work, but Peace Corps Volunteers must never wear them in public. Above-the-knee length skirts are seen in the cities, but not in small communities. Besides, they are not practical, comfortable, or appropriate when traveling in a crowded bus. Although it is hot here, you can only wear tank tops with small neck and sleeve openings. Tops with “spaghetti-string” straps are only appropriate at the beach, so do not bring too many of these.

Personal Safety

Peace Corps’ approach to safety and security is called the acceptance model. You are safest when your neighbors, friends and colleagues look out for you, when you are accepted into the community. More information about the Peace Corps’ approach to safety is outlined in the Health Care and Safety chapter, but it is an important issue and cannot be over-emphasized. 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.

All 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 safety problems. The Peace Corps has established procedures and policies designed to help you reduce risks and enhance your safety and security. These procedures and policies, in addition to safety training, will be provided once you arrive in Ghana. At the same time, you are expected to take responsibility for your safety and well-being.

Unfortunately, as elsewhere, crime does exist in Ghana. Because you are a foreigner and considered “rich,” your new home may be more prone to break-ins than those of your neighbors. Normal precautions such as not leaving your belongings in plain site will usually reduce most risks. Ghanaians are fastidious about locking up their belongings and you must also be careful. Crime at the village or town level is much less frequent, but risks increase in proportion to population size. In urban areas, you must be security conscious. Fortunately, violent crime is not a severe problem. Ghana is considered comparably safe, although in some situations women should be escorted at night or travel in groups.

Rewards and Frustrations

Many Americans never have the opportunity to live in a place where families and the life of the community are literally the most important things. Many people never truly understand how much people can do with seemingly so little, and what a difference just a little help can make in someone’s life. With their familiar habits and routines gone, Peace Corps Volunteers in Ghana learn to develop new routines and relationships, and in doing so, have life changing experiences. What could be more rewarding?

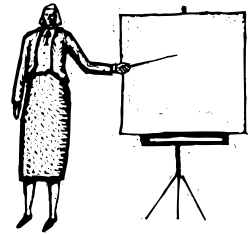
Most Americans coming to Ghana find the pace of life much slower, and for some this is difficult to adjust to. It is especially difficult when you are trying to meet deadlines that you believe are important while everyone around you seems to be on a different schedule. Relying on unpredictable transport rather than just picking up and leaving when you want to, not being able to make yourself clear when communicating, and finding that you really are responsible for making this experience what it turns out to be, can be overwhelming. At the end of two years however, when you realize what you gained and how you adjusted to a new environment, you will see why it was the experience of a lifetime.

NOTES

NEW
PCVs



PEACE CORPS TRAINING



Overview of Pre-Service Training

When you arrive in Ghana, women should wear dresses or long skirts and men should wear long trousers. Although female Volunteers do wear trousers, Peace Corps/Ghana would appreciate the positive impression that will be created by trainees coming into the country for the first time being somewhat dressed up.

Upon arrival at the airport in Accra, you will be met by several staff members. You will then go through the immigration and customs formalities on your own. In filling out the immigration form, use the Peace Corps address of P.O. Box 5796, Accra-North. The day after your arrival, you will have some time to rest and then begin the orientation to pre-service training. The following day you will go to the Peace Corps office for a short welcome ceremony and a tour of the office, during which time you will meet most members of the staff. For the remainder of the day, you will have individual medical interviews. You will also receive a welcome packet and a small walk-around allowance at that time. During the next few days, you will participate in a cultural scavenger hunt, which will take you throughout Accra, attend a reception at the residence of the U.S. ambassador, and have a number of sessions preparing you for training and your next two years. On the sixth day you will start your “vision quest” for five days. This means you will travel on your own or in pairs to a current Volunteer’s site and learn firsthand what your life might be like. The vision quest allows you to set a vision for your two-year service, and, more immediately, allows you to identify what you want to learn in the 10 weeks of pre-service training. After the vision quest, you will travel to Techiman

where you will live with a family for nine weeks of the community-based training program. You will be assigned your site about three weeks after you arrive.

There are five major components of training: a core curriculum, which includes foundations in development skills and cross-cultural issues; job-specific technical training; language; personal health and safety; and finally, Peace Corps policies.

One of the roles of the training staff is to assess the progress of trainees and to help them achieve the training goals set jointly by trainees and trainers. Ongoing evaluations are conducted every two weeks so that you have a good idea where you stand, and so you can participate in setting your own goals and assessing your own progress.

Technical Training

Technical training will prepare you to work in Ghana 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 Peace Corps staff, Ghana experts, and current Volunteers 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.

Technical training will include sessions on general environmental, economic, and political situations in Ghana and strategies for working within such a framework. You will review your technical sector's goals and will meet with Ghanaian agencies and organizations that invited the Peace Corps to assist them.

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

Language Training

Language training is the heart of the program. 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, will help you integrate into your host community, and ease your personal adaptation to the new surroundings. You must successfully meet minimum language requirements to complete training and become a Volunteer. Experienced Ghanaian language instructors give formal language classes five days a week in small classes of four to five people. Your language is also introduced in the health, culture, and technical components of training. Your language training will incorporate a community-based approach. You will have classroom time and will be given assignments to work on outside of the classroom and with your host family to learn the language. Our goal is to get you to a point of basic social communication skills so that you can practice and develop language skills more thoroughly once you are in your site. Prior to swearing-in as a Volunteer, you will work on strategies to continue language studies during your two years of service.

Cross-Cultural Training

As part of your pre-service training, you will live with a Ghanaian host family. This experience is designed to ease your transition into life at your site. Families have gone through an orientation conducted by Peace Corps staff to explain the purpose of the pre-service training program and to assist them in helping you adapt to living in Ghana. Many Volunteers form strong and lasting friendships with their host families.

Cross-cultural techniques and community development will be covered to help improve your skills of perception, communication, and facilitation.

Health Training

You are expected to practice preventive healthcare and to take responsibility for your own health by adhering to all medical policies. During pre-service training, you will be given basic medical training. As a trainee, you are required to attend all medical sessions. The topics include preventive health measures and minor and major medical issues that Volunteers may encounter while in Ghana. Sexual health and harassment, nutrition, mental health, and safety issues are also covered. You will also be given various shots against vaccine-preventable diseases like typhoid, rabies, tetanus, hepatitis A and B, and meningitis. You will learn how to protect yourself from malaria. You do not need to obtain any vaccines or begin taking anti-malaria prophylaxis prior to your departure for the pre-orientation event. You will receive vaccines for MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella), yellow fever, and polio as well as the first dose of your anti-malaria prophylaxis regimen the final day of your pre-orientation.

Safety Training

During the safety training sessions, you will learn how to adopt a lifestyle that reduces risk in your 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.

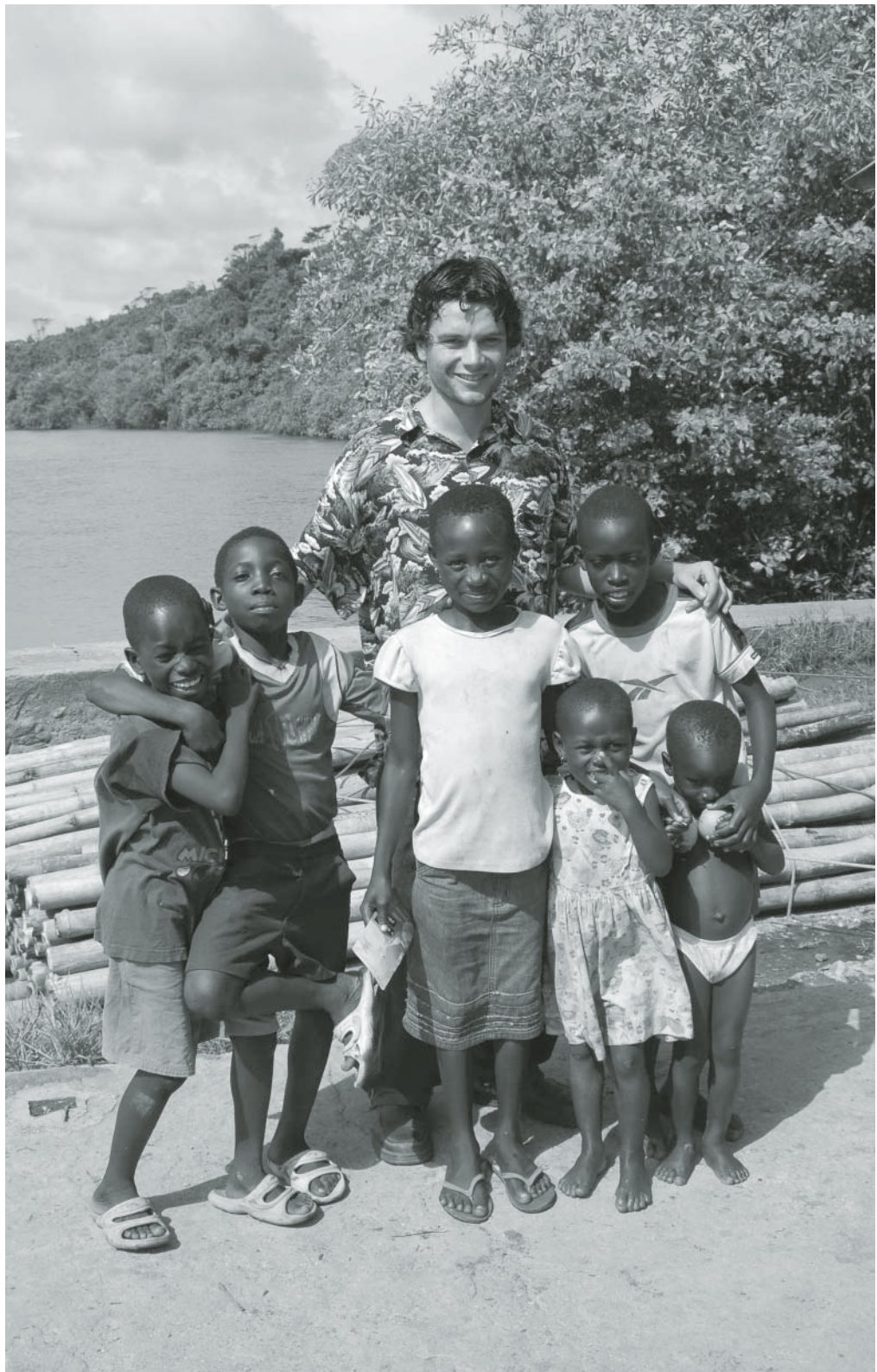
Additional Trainings During Volunteer Service

In its commitment to institutionalize quality training, the Peace Corps has implemented a training system which provides trainees and Volunteers with continuous opportunities to examine their commitment to Peace Corps service while increasing their technical and cross-cultural skills.

During your service, there are usually four training events. The titles and objectives for those trainings are as follows:

- *Pre-service training*: provides trainees with solid technical, language, and cross-cultural knowledge to prepare them for living and working successfully in Ghana.
- *In-service training*: provides an opportunity for Volunteers to upgrade their technical, language, and project development skills while sharing their experiences and reaffirming their commitment after having served for 3 to 6 months.
- *Mid-term conference* (Done in conjunction with technical sector in-service): Assists Volunteers in reviewing their first year, reassessing their personal and project objectives, and planning for their second year of service.
- *Close-of-service conference*: prepares Volunteers for the future after Peace Corps service and to review Volunteers' respective projects and personal experiences.

The number, length, and design of these trainings will be 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.



YOUR HEALTH CARE AND SAFETY IN GHANA



Peace Corps' highest priority is maintaining the good health and safety of every Volunteer. Peace Corps medical programs emphasize the preventive, rather than the curative approach to disease. Peace Corps in Ghana maintains a clinic with a full-time medical officer who takes care of Volunteers' primary healthcare needs. Additional medical services, such as testing and basic treatment, are also available in Ghana. If you become seriously ill, you will be transported to either an American-standard medical facility in the region or to the United States.

Health Issues in Ghana

Almost every tropical disease is endemic in Ghana, and you must be prepared to learn about health hazards and to take necessary measures to protect yourself from them. Proper food and water preparation, malaria prophylaxis, personal hygiene, and safety are essential features of a healthy Volunteer experience. Both HIV 1 and 2, which cause AIDS, are prevalent in Ghana, and you must be willing to adopt appropriate behaviors to protect yourself.

In addition, Ghana's coastal areas are among the most dangerous in the world for having unpredictable undertows and riptides. Many people drown every year while swimming off the Ghana coastline.

Helping You Stay Healthy

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

During pre-service training, you will have access to basic first-aid supplies through the medical officer. However, during this time, 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 new shipments to arrive.

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

Maintaining Your Health

As a Volunteer, you must accept a certain amount of 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 medical diagnostic and treatment facilities are not up to the standards of the United States. The most important of your responsibilities in Ghana include taking preventive measures for the following:

Water-borne disease

Unless your medical officer tells you otherwise, assume that only boiled water or water that has been both filtered and treated with iodine or chlorine is safe to drink. Very little of the water in Africa is potable, whether it comes out of the tap or from the village well. Even in restaurants and on airplanes, there are no guarantees. Bottled carbonated beverages are safe, as are tea or coffee (if prepared with boiling water). Do not forget that ice cubes may contaminate your bottled or canned beverage. Freezing water does not purify it. Even brushing your teeth with tap water can be a source of contamination. Your medical officer will show you how to prepare water.

Food-related disease

Safe foods are those that are recently prepared, thoroughly cooked, and not subsequently left out where flies can recontaminate the food. Uncooked foods that cannot be peeled or soaked should be considered unsafe. Avoid salads. Unboiled milk or unprocessed cheese may harbor tuberculosis or other bacterial disease. Your medical officer will show you how to prepare safe foods and choose those that have already been cooked. Always wash your hands, especially before eating.

Diarrhea

Although travel is great, diarrhea is not. While we wish it were otherwise, years of experience and thousands of Peace Corps Volunteers attest to the simple fact that, from time to time during your Peace Corps experience, you will have diarrhea. If you get diarrhea, be sure to drink a lot of fluids to avoid dehydration. Juice, broth, or oral rehydration solutions (your medical officer will discuss this with you) are best. Avoid coffee, milk products, and alcohol when you have diarrhea. If you are able to eat, choose a light diet of foods such as rice, bread, and broth. As a general rule, it is better not to

use any medications unless provided by the medical officer as they can prolong the recovery period. Fortunately, most cases of diarrhea resolve themselves in a few days with rest and fluids. You should contact your medical officer if you have bloody diarrhea, fever, become dehydrated, or have significant diarrhea lasting longer than three to five days.

Malaria

You are scheduled to serve in an area where malaria, a mosquito-borne disease, is prevalent. The risk of getting malaria can be significantly reduced if certain preventive strategies are used. The use of mosquito nets and screens is essential in reducing the risk of mosquito bites. Other measures are the use of protective clothing and insect repellents.

The regular and continuous use of anti-malaria drugs is a key element in the prevention of malaria. In Ghana, chloroquine-resistant *Plasmodium falciparum* is an important cause of malaria infection. As a result, all Volunteers will be taking a medication regimen. Most Volunteers will take mefloquine (e.g., Lariam, Mephaquin), one tablet (250 mg) every week. Because of individual differences, side-effect profile, and medical history, a small percentage of Volunteers may not tolerate mefloquine and may thus require other prophylactic medications such as doxycycline. The final decision as to the particular anti-malaria drug you will take will be made after taking into account side effects and your medical history.

Once your medical officer selects your malaria prophylactic regimen, you must take it throughout your Volunteer service and for four weeks after you leave the malarious area. In addition, to eradicate any remaining malaria parasites, you also must take another anti-malarial drug, primaquine, when you leave Ghana (one tablet daily for 14 days).

Keep in mind that no single or combined malaria prophylactic regimen is 100 percent effective. Avoidance of mosquito bites is imperative! By using bed nets and insect repellent you will greatly reduce your risk of exposure to mosquito bites. In fact, you cannot get malaria, filaria, dengue fever, and a host of other diseases if you do not get insect bites. The best ways to avoid insect bites are to sleep under a mosquito net (provided by Peace Corps), wear long sleeves and pants whenever possible, use insect repellent (provided by Peace Corps), and be sure there are screens on your windows and doors (if your house does not already have these, you can have them installed locally). Even so, you may get malaria, but it can be effectively treated if you seek prompt medical attention. Failure to take the anti-malaria prophylaxis is grounds for administrative separation from Peace Corps service.

HIV/AIDS

HIV infection is very common in Africa. AIDS is a fatal disease. Peace Corps Volunteers in Africa have become infected with HIV during Peace Corps service. Many other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) are far more common in Africa than in the United States. Abstinence is the only 100 percent certain choice for preventing HIV/AIDS and other STDs. If you choose to be sexually active, you are taking some risks. To lessen the risk, use a condom every time you have sex. Whether your partner is a host country citizen, fellow Volunteer, or anyone else, do not assume your partner is free of HIV/AIDS or any other STD. Most of the Volunteers who have become HIV infected during Peace Corps service contracted the virus through heterosexual transmission. You will receive more information from your medical officer about this very important issue.

Volunteers are expected to adhere to an effective means of birth control to prevent HIV/AIDS and unplanned pregnancies. Your medical officer can help you decide on the most appropriate method to suit your individual needs. Condoms and other forms of birth control are available without charge in the medical office. Remember, unlike condoms, other forms of birth control do not prevent STDs. Talk with the medical officer about what you need.

Alcohol

Some of the local, national, and international beverages containing significant amounts of alcohol are already known to you, but others will come as a surprise. These may be encountered during social events, festivals, and village celebrations. Practices and tolerances vary widely. Know your limits, and if you choose to drink, drink sensibly. Being “out of control” in Ghana can set you up for all sorts of problems, not the least of which are personal injury, assault, and robbery.

Animals

The rabies virus is prevalent throughout Africa, and your chances of being exposed to the virus through an animal bite are not remote. That is why you will receive a series of pre-exposure immunizations against rabies when you arrive in country. If you are exposed to an animal known or suspected of having rabies, inform your medical officer at once so that you can receive post-exposure booster shots. Be wary of all unknown animals. In Ghana, Peace Corps Volunteers are permitted to have pets, acquired locally. If you choose to have a pet, remember that this is a major responsibility. Any animals you have must be immunized against rabies and other prevalent animal diseases in country. If you are unwilling to do this, reconsider your wish to have a pet.

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 your medical officer know immediately of significant illness and injuries.

Women's Health Information

Pregnancy is a health condition that is treated in the same manner as other Volunteer health conditions requiring medical attention, but may 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 can be met. The majority of Volunteers who become pregnant are medically separated.

Feminine hygiene products are available for you to purchase on the local market, though they are expensive. If you require a specific feminine hygiene product, please bring a six-month supply with you. It is recommended to bring two-year's worth of OB tampons because they pack small and there is no applicator that you have to be concerned about disposing in a village setting with no garbage collection system.

Your Peace Corps Medical Kit

The Peace Corps medical officer provides Volunteers with a first-aid kit that contains basic items necessary to prevent and treat illnesses that might occur during service. Kit items can be periodically restocked at your Peace Corps medical office.

First Aid Kit Contents

Ace bandage
Adhesive tape
Antacid tablets (Tums)
Antiseptic antimicrobial skin cleaner (Hibiclens)
American Red Cross First Aid & Safety Handbook
Bacitracin/Neomycin/Polymycin B ointment
Band-Aids
Butterfly closures
Calamine lotion
Cepacol lozenges
Condoms
Dental floss
Diphenhydramine HCL (Benadryl): 25 mg tablets
Insect repellent stick (Cutter's)
Iodine tablets (Water purification tablets)
Lip balm (Chapstick)
Oral rehydration salts and Gatorade
Oral thermometer (Fahrenheit)
Pseudoephedrine HCL (Sudafed): 30 mg tablets
Robitussin-DM lozenges (Cough calmers)
Scissors
Sterile gauze pads
Tetrahydrozoline eye drops (Visine)
Tinactin cream (Tolnaftate)
Tweezers

Before You Leave: A Medical Checklist

If there has been any change in your health—physical, mental, or dental—since the time 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 taking duplicate vaccinations, you should contact your physician's office, obtain a copy of your immunization record, and bring it to your pre-departure orientation. 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, either at your pre-departure orientation or shortly after you arrive in Ghana. You do not need to begin taking malaria medication prior to your arrival at your pre-departure orientation.

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, we 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 anti-oxidant supplements.

You are encouraged to bring copies of medical prescriptions signed by your physician. This is not a requirement, although it might come in handy if you are questioned in transit about your on-hand 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 only once, using the information your doctor in the United States provided on the eyeglasses form during your examination. To reduce the risk of developing a serious infection or other eye disease, we discourage you from using contact lenses during your Peace Corps service. 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 their use has been recommended by an ophthalmologist for a specific medical condition and the Peace Corps' Office of Medical Services has given approval.

If you are eligible for Medicare, 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 and/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 84 percent of Volunteers surveyed in the 2004 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 2004, 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). Specifically, 43 percent of assaults took place when Volunteers were away from their sites.

- 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 1:00 a.m.
- Absence of others: Assaults usually occurred when the Volunteer was unaccompanied. In 82 percent of the sexual assaults the Volunteer was unaccompanied and in 55 percent of physical assaults the Volunteer was unaccompanied.
- Relationship to assailant: In most assaults, the Volunteer did not know the assailant.
- Consumption of alcohol: Forty percent of all assaults involved alcohol consumption by Volunteers and/or 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.

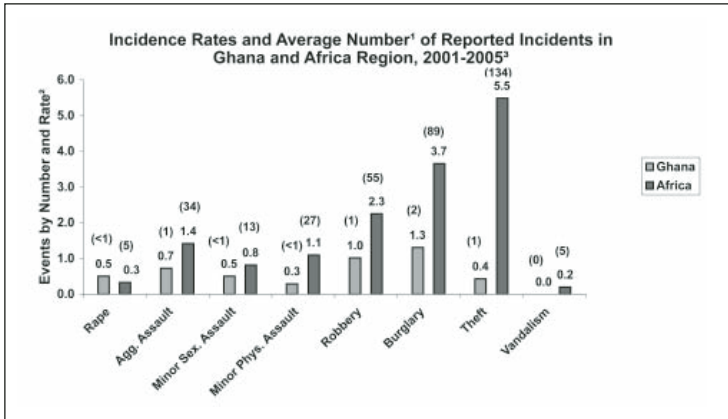
If a trainee or Volunteer is the victim of a safety incident, Peace Corps staff is prepared to provide support. All Peace Corps posts have procedures in place to respond to incidents of crime committed against Volunteers. The first priority for

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 Ghana as compared to all other Africa region programs as a whole, from 2001–2005. 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 2001–2005.

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 Ghana began as of 2001

Source data on incidents are drawn from Assault Notification Surveillance System (ANSS) and Epidemiologic Surveillance System (ESS); the information is accurate as of 12/13/06.

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); minor physical assault (attacking without a weapon with minor injuries); minor 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. Immediate reporting is important to the preservation of evidence and the chances of apprehending the suspect. Country directors and medical officers 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 Ghana

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 Ghana. You can reduce your risk of becoming a target for crime by avoiding situations that make you feel uncomfortable and by taking advance precautions. Crime at the village or town level is less frequent than in the large cities; people know each other and generally will not steal from their neighbors. Tourist attractions, especially in large towns, are the favorite work

sites for pickpockets. Safety concerns in Ghana you should be aware of include pickpockets; thieves breaking and entering; backpacks, bags and purses being stolen or broken into while traveling; and bags, purses and backpacks being ripped off by people driving by in vehicles (especially in Accra).

Staying Safe: Don't Be a Target for Crime

You must be prepared to take on a large responsibility for your own safety. Only you can make yourself less of a target, ensure that your house is secure, and develop relations in your community that will make you an unlikely victim of crime. In coming to Ghana, do what you would do if you moved to a large city in the United States: Be cautious, check things out, ask a lot of 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 Ghana may require that you accept some restrictions to your current lifestyle.

Volunteers attract a lot of attention in large cities and in their sites but receive far more negative attention in highly populated centers where they are anonymous. In smaller towns, “family,” friends, and colleagues will 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 such negative and unwanted attention. Other methods have helped Volunteers avoid becoming targets of unwanted attention and crime. Keep your money out of sight by using an undergarment money pouch, such as 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. During nighttime outings always walk with a companion.

Crimes resulting in personal injury (e.g., robbery, mugging, rape) are, regrettably, a fact of life, both in the United States and abroad. As an American in Africa, you stand out, and as a newcomer, you are less skilled in discerning unsafe places or situations. Also, because you have chosen to be a Volunteer, you have demonstrated your commitment to service and a basic trust in your fellow man. A few will try to take advantage of that. Be street smart, even if that street is a dirt path. Cultural sensitivity does not apply for thieves, thugs, or con artists. Recognize that you are considered “wealthy,” even though you may think otherwise. Recognize, too, that your personal possessions (e.g., watches, backpacks, and jewelry) can be the object of desire for others. Keep valuables attached to you beneath your clothing. Be aware and be cautious.

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

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 reporting and responding to safety and security incidents. Ghana’s in-country safety program is outlined below.

The Peace Corps/Ghana office will keep Volunteers informed of any issues that may impact Volunteer safety through **information sharing**. Regular updates will be provided in Volunteer newsletters and in memoranda from the country director. In the event of a critical situation or emergency,

Volunteers will be contacted through the emergency communication network.

Volunteer training will include sessions to prepare you for specific safety and security issues in Ghana. 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 your two-year service and is integrated into the language, cross-cultural, health, and other components of training.

Certain **site selection criteria** are used to determine safe housing for Volunteers before their arrival. Peace Corps staff works closely with host communities and counterpart agencies to help prepare them for the Volunteer's arrival and to establish expectations of their respective role 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 criteria are 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 support needs.

You will also learn about the country's detailed **emergency action plan**, 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 Ghana will gather at pre-determined locations until the situation resolves itself 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 Peace Corps safety and security coordinator and/or medical officer. The Peace Corps has established **protocols for addressing safety and security incidents** in a timely and appropriate manner. In addition to responding to the needs of the Volunteer, the Peace Corps collects and evaluates safety and security data to track trends and develop strategies to minimize risks to future Volunteers.



DIVERSITY AND CROSS-CULTURAL ISSUES



In fulfilling the Peace Corps' mandate to share the full 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 corps. 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, our diversity poses challenges. In Ghana, as in other Peace Corps host countries, Volunteers' behavior, lifestyles, background, and beliefs will be judged in a cultural context very different from our own. Certain personal perspectives or characteristics considered familiar and commonly accepted in the United States may be quite uncommon, unacceptable, or even repressed.

Outside of Accra, Ghana's capital, residents of rural communities have had relatively little direct exposure to other cultures, races, religions, and lifestyles. What is advertised as "typical" cultural behavior or norms may also be a narrow and selective interpretation, such as the perception in some countries that all Americans are rich and have blond hair and blue eyes. The people of Ghana 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 differences that you present. We will ask you to be supportive of one another.

In order to ease the transition and adapt to life in Ghana, you may need to make some temporary, yet fundamental compromises with who you are 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 will 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 limits. The Peace Corps staff will lead diversity and sensitivity discussions during your pre-service training and will be on call to provide support, but the challenge ultimately will be your own.

Overview of Diversity in Ghana

The Peace Corps staff in Ghana 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 cultures, backgrounds, religions, ethnic groups, and ages and hope that you will become part of a diverse group of Americans who will take pride in supporting each other and demonstrating the richness of American culture.

What Might A Volunteer Face?

Possible Issues for Female Volunteers

Friendships between men and women and ideas about romance are different in Ghana than in the U.S. Ghanaians casually joke about marriage often, and after a while you will appreciate the humor and laugh right along with them. Some Volunteers, however, tire of the constant marriage requests. Wearing a wedding-band does not minimize unappreciated comments.

Possible Issues for Volunteers of Color

Many Ghanaians are under the impression that all Americans are white. People will call you “white woman” or “white man” even if you are obviously non-white. People fall into two categories—either you are African or you are white/foreign. The name they give to foreigners, *oburo*, actually translates to “someone from over the horizon.” But you will find that this term is used interchangeably with “white person.” People will try to guess at what you are or simply assume and yell something at you like “Indian!” or “Chinese!” or “Black-American!” This is very difficult for some people. Sometimes, in the same day, you may be called Indian, black American, half cast, white woman, and Chinese!

Volunteer Comments

“There are many Ghanaians who understand that America is diverse and not homogeneous. Still, there are some misconceptions about black Americans. I have had people tell me that they thought all blacks in America are light skinned. Sadly, there are even a few who think that black Americans are not as intelligent as their white counterparts. I have even had people tell me that the Africans who were enslaved and taken to America were lucky because now their descendants are in the United States. Personally, the hardest thing for me to deal with is the self-hate I see, especially in my female students. Every single one of them has told me that their dark skin is ugly and that white skin is more beautiful. Many of them mix bleaching creams into their soap to bleach their skin. Another hard part was training. I found that a lot of training was geared toward how to cope with being white in Africa, and I felt somewhat excluded. But in the long run, you will find that you are given the unique opportunity to personally dispel the negativity and misconceptions regarding black Americans.

Remember that you will probably be the first non-African black person that your community has ever had contact with. The positive example that you set is, by far, the most effective means of dismissing prejudice. You will also be accepted more into the culture and your community. One of the most memorable experiences I had was when two white English teacher Volunteers moved to my town. One of my students who happens to be absolutely beautiful yet thinks she is ugly because she is dark skinned told me one day, 'Madame, I am more beautiful than them.' It took a year of constantly trying to get her to see the beauty in herself, but in the end, she was able to."

"As an Hispanic, Indian, bi-racial, or light-skinned African American, not only will you be referred to as 'white,' but you might be mistaken as part of a growing population of half-Ghanaian, half-white people in Ghana. They call them 'half-cast' which personally offends me, but it has been really hard for me to get people to understand that the term is offensive. In the cities, I have noticed that anyone who doesn't look black, white, or Asian can get lumped into this category. People might also be confused when you tell them you are American. They might keep asking you what your nationality is, and when you say that your parents are from X country but that you are American, they might say 'Aahhh! I knew you weren't American!' There is a large population of Lebanese and Indian businesspeople in Accra and Kumasi, for which you might also be mistaken."

"As an Asian American, you might get people who insist that you are not American, and you might hear adults and children alike say things like 'hong ching chong' when you pass. There are Japanese Volunteers in the country, as well as Chinese businesspeople. For Volunteers who are

descendants of people of the Pacific Islands, you may have a hard time getting people to understand that you are not Chinese or Japanese. You may face some tough situations and prejudices, but I see it as a huge opportunity to teach Ghanaians about the diversity of America. Remember that you may be the one and only person from your ethnic group that they will ever meet, and you have the unique opportunity to mold a positive perspective on who you are. The good thing is that the misconceptions Ghanaians may have are not deep-rooted. They are very eager to learn about new cultures and customs and will very easily dismiss their negative attitudes by learning from the example you set. Helping Ghanaians see this is one of the most rewarding experiences I have had.”

Possible Issues for Senior Volunteers

Age is respected in Ghana, and Volunteers in their early twenties find that they may have to make an extra effort to be accepted as professional colleagues since very often Ghanaians of that age are still pursuing their education. Younger Volunteers must work for acceptance and respect since respect in traditional Ghanaian society is associated with age. In contrast, every wrinkle and every gray hair earns respect for the experience and wisdom they represent.

Volunteer Comment

“So you’ve decided to join the Peace Corps a little later than most Volunteers. There are several things you might like to know. First, other Volunteers aren’t as concerned about the age difference as much as you might imagine. You will be invited to any and every outing regardless of the time of day. The good thing is that no one is offended if you say no, and you will certainly be on the list the next time around.

Second, Ghanaians hold their seniors in the highest esteem. Age is very important in this culture, and you will certainly receive preferential treatment for having lived longer than others. Chiefs will bow to greet you, drivers will offer you the front seat, chairs will be offered, services will be provided for free, people will pay closer attention to what you say, and so on. It is important that you show the proper respect by not denying these services. It is their pleasure to provide them.

Last, medical requirements are taken very seriously. The Peace Corps does their best to treat you well and ensure that your medical needs are fulfilled. You may get sick, but this may or may not have anything to do with your age or pre-existing conditions. It's just part of being a Peace Corps Volunteer in Africa.

The people you will meet will become a very supportive family and realize that the younger Volunteers are a great resource for support and friendship. They can make your stay a refreshing and enjoyable one.”

Possible Issues for Gay, Lesbian, or Bisexual Volunteers

Ghanaians feel that homosexuality is immoral and depraved behavior. Homosexuality is against the law. Being sensible about revealing one's sexual orientation in one's home, workplace, and community is advisable. Being “out” can invite harassment and physical attack.

Volunteer Comments

“As a Peace Corps Volunteer, along with all the feelings of community and belonging, you will probably experience feelings of loneliness, being out of place, and being something of an oddity. If you are gay, lesbian, or bisexual,

chances are you're no stranger to being made to feel this way. Unfortunately, those feelings can be intensified here. ”

“One of the most incredible things I've witnessed here is how amazingly close my group has become. One reason is that while we are all individually going through huge changes and learning tons about ourselves, we are also going through a lot of the same things together. The amount of support and caring in this group is unbelievable and is one of the most important factors in my happiness here. I have to say that I've never been made to feel uncomfortable or judged by any Volunteer or staff member with whom I've talked about my sexuality, and I think that says a ton about how wonderful these people are.”

“At my site, the question of my sexuality has never been raised. The idea that I'm anything other than straight doesn't seem to have occurred to anyone, and I've chosen not to challenge that assumption. As I'm not here looking for love but rather to work, whether I'm gay or straight is not really an issue. Fielding the all-too-frequent inquiries as to why I'm not yet married is, not surprisingly, somewhat uncomfortable, but I'd have to imagine that that's not so pleasant for the straighter among us either. The Peace Corps can be hard; being gay can make it somewhat harder. Or, looking at it another way, being gay can be hard; being in the Peace Corps can make it somewhat harder. However, because of the universal support and acceptance from staff and Volunteers alike, it's not been at all unbearable or anywhere close to making me regret having chosen to come here.”

Possible Religious Issues for Volunteers

Volunteers in Ghana may frequently be asked if you believe in God. Because church or the mosque and prayer is a big part of many communities, you may feel under pressure to attend.

Because Ghana is predominantly a Christian and Muslim country, people may not understand what it means to be Jewish, Buddhist, or Hindu. Unlike the United States, religion and prayer are built into all official ceremonies and meetings. Interestingly, many educated Ghanaians do not believe in traditional, indigenous beliefs and frown upon others being interested in such topics. If you do not participate in organized religion in the U.S. it is alright to discuss this with Ghanaians. They will be quite intrigued if you do not believe in God. Some people may find this nearly impossible.

Volunteer Comments

“I have observed that a minority of Peace Corps Volunteers are actively involved in a religion. Volunteers who do not have a religion will find themselves immersed in a culture that is steeped in religious ideologies. This can be stressful since Ghanaians will have a hard time understanding their views.”

“There are three major religions in Ghana: Christianity, Islam, and pre-colonial. As a general rule, Ghanaians believe in the existence of a power higher than themselves that rules the universe. They are going to assume that you hold the same basic belief though there seems to be a growing impression among Ghanaians that many Americans and Europeans have a secular worldview. Nevertheless, you will be invited to church by your Christian friends and to prayer by your Muslim ones. Traditionalists are likely to offer you *juju*. *Juju* is given for specific purposes and often requires payment and the sacrifice of animals.”

“Whatever you do or don’t do will have an impact on your standing in the community. Regular attendance to one of your local churches will help you to become more immersed in the culture. The same goes for studying the Koran with Muslims. *Juju* is a bit different since it is generally something that is done behind the scenes, not publicly, and is frowned on by many.”

“You need not be overly concerned if you feel that you wouldn’t be interested in participating in faith related activities with your friends and neighbors. Ghanaians are very tolerant and receptive people. Be open to religious experiences. You may be surprised by what Ghanaians can teach you about living.”

Possible Issues for Volunteers with Disabilities

Being disabled in Ghana brings about its own complications. In some cases, people may not feel you can do the job, and others may try to do things for you instead of letting you do them yourself. As for Ghanaians, they are generally very blunt and direct in asking you about your disability. As a disabled Volunteer in Ghana, you will face a special set of challenges. There is very little infrastructure to accommodate those with disabilities. Peace Corps/Ghana will work with disabled Volunteers to make reasonable accommodations in training, housing, and job sites to enable them to serve safely and effectively.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



How much luggage will I be allowed to bring to Ghana?

The authorized baggage 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 allowance of 50 pounds for any one bag.

Peace Corps Volunteers are not allowed to take pets, weapons, explosives, radio transmitters (short-wave 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 Ghana?

If you have electricity, the current is 50 cycles, 220 volts. There are surges and cuts, which put a strain on voltage converters and appliances, so bring good-quality items. We recommend CD players that use “D” batteries since “C” batteries are a little harder to find. “AA,” as well as watch and calculator batteries, are easy to find. Highly recommend rechargeable batteries.

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. Travelers checks are preferable to cash. If you choose to bring extra money, plan on bringing the amount that suits your own personal 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, the first three months of service, or the last three months of service, except in conjunction with an authorized emergency leave. Family and friends are welcome to visit you after pre-service training and after the first three months of service as long as their stay does not interfere with your work. Long-term visitors are only permitted with the prior approval of the Contry Director. The Peace Corps is not able to provide your visitors with visa or travel assistance. However, if your family or friends plan to visit you in Ghana, they are welcome to contact the Peace Corps/Ghana country desk at Peace Corps headquarters at 202.692.2326/7 for a letter addressed to the Ghanaian Embassy, requesting their assistance to obtain a tourist visa.

Will my belongings be covered by insurance?

The Peace Corps does not provide insurance coverage for personal effects. Such insurance can be purchased before you leave. Ultimately, Volunteers are responsible for the safekeeping of their personal belongings. If you wish, you may contact your own insurance company; additionally, insurance application forms have been enclosed, and we encourage you to consider them carefully. Further information about insurance should be obtained by calling the company directly.

Volunteers should not ship or take valuable items overseas. Jewelry, watches, radios, cameras, iPods, laptop computers, 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 Ghana do not need to get an international driver's license. Operation of vehicles is prohibited.

What should I bring as gifts for Ghanaian 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 in Ghana are assigned to individual sites during the second week of pre-service training. Most Volunteers will live in small towns or in rural villages, but will usually be within three to four hours from the nearest Volunteer. Some sites will require a two- to three-day drive 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, you should 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. During normal business hours, the number for the Office of Special Services

is 800.424.8580, extension 1470. After normal business hours and on weekends and holidays, the special services duty officer can be reached at 202.638.2574. For non-emergency questions, your family can get information from your country desk staff at the Peace Corps by calling 800.424.8580, extension 2327/6.

Can I call home from Ghana?

Yes. The international phone service to and from Ghana is good. The Ghana telephone agency has offices and phone booths located in major cities and some smaller towns. There are direct lines to the United States in regional capitals. You can purchase a phone card locally to make international calls.

Should I bring a cellular phone with me?

You are supposed to be living at the local level, and, in most cases, that does not mean having access to a cell phone. However, many Ghanaians are now able to purchase mobile phones. If you need a cell phone for your job, there are many available in Ghana although coverage is not yet available in all parts of the country.

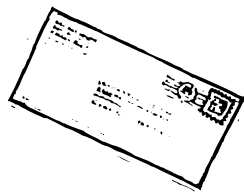
Will there be e-mail and Internet access? Should I bring my computer?

There are more and more places (Internet cafés and com centers) springing up around Ghana although most are still in the larger towns and cities. Most Volunteers are able to access such places once a month or, at best, every two weeks. There are Peace Corps Volunteers with laptops, and some find them useful in their jobs. Even if you do not bring a laptop, it is recommended that you bring a high density memory stick, sometimes called a pen drive or flash drive. They can hold huge quantities of data. Volunteers like to keep letters, e-mails, photos, and project proposals, lesson plans, etc. They are far more reliable than floppy disks or CDs. They can be purchased for around \$30 (U.S.).

NOTES



WELCOME LETTERS FROM GHANA VOLUNTEERS



Dear Future Volunteers:

Akwaaba! Welcome to Ghana! We can consider ourselves lucky in our placement—it's hard to imagine another country more rich in culture, history, beauty, amazing hospitality, and genuinely warm, welcoming people. When we sign up for Peace Corps, we agree to give our time and our skills to a new community that will become home. Now three years after I packed up my own *Welcome Book* and other luggage and left for Ghana, I look back on my time here as a gift that I'm not sure I could repay my communities. It's been a wonderful, life-changing experience.

I'm sure other Volunteers will write about what to pack when you come, so instead I'll pass along a few lessons I've learned during my time here.

1) Laughter cures everything. No matter how frustrating the day, no matter how many times the electric company takes your fuse by mistake thinking that you didn't pay the last bill and leaving you in complete darkness, time spent laughing with a friend, neighbor, or complete stranger can make everything else melt away—embrace laughter whenever you can.

2) Don't try to overcome uncertainties about what to pack by bringing everything. I had easily the heaviest and most luggage of my training group on the way over. Not only did I suffer carrying it all and on the plane with my knees up to my chest because my feet had to rest on my enormous carry-on, but some of the most expensive things I bought before coming broke soon after arriving here. Your training will be held in and around Techiman, a mid-sized city in the middle of the country, where you can buy just about anything you need (and at cheaper prices than in the U.S.).

3) Be open to going anywhere. During training, you will have an interview to help determine where in the country

you'll be living. Allow Peace Corps to challenge you in your placement—there is no bad place to be stationed and two years tends to translate “challenging” into “rewarding.”

4) A little bit of nesting makes a new house and community a home. I remember a Peace Corps trainer telling my group in our first week that though we would be with our homestay families for only nine weeks, that we should make “small-small” changes to our surroundings “to make it your home.” How right she was. Just putting up a few postcards and pictures made the room more cheerful, more mine, less like I was a squatter in a generous family's home. When I arrived in my new community, I spent some free hours doing the same and it shortened the time that passed between “my site” and “my home.”

5) When you see someone you know doing something you're not familiar with, ask if you can help them and learn something new. As human beings, we tend to bond over the activities we do together. One of my favorite memories from early in my service is sitting and making brooms with my neighbor's daughter while we taught each other songs we knew. While we never quite got the harmony for “The Rose” just right, we had a lot of fun and I felt more at home and had more confidence in interacting with other community members after that day.

6) Don't judge your experience here by your first few months. The first two months of training and the next few at site tend to be the most challenging. Just during training, I was chased out of a latrine by a chicken, watched a goat urinate on my breakfast table and dishes, and spent some time in a local hospital—and that's not to mention the everyday struggles and frustrations that go along with adapting to a new culture. Try to take it in stride, laugh a lot, and remember that plenty of Volunteers have gotten off to a rocky start and still had a great experience.

Most of these are things you'll learn for yourself during your journey here, but I feel I would be remiss if I didn't add one final lesson that a wise former Volunteer told me before I arrived. When your two years are coming to an end and some

part of you is reluctant to leave and thinking about staying for another year, don't be afraid to say yes. While your first two years can be called your gift to Ghana, your third year is the gift you give yourself—I wouldn't take back this past year for anything in the world.

You're about to embark on an amazing experience. Safe travels and we're all looking forward to meeting you.

.....

Dear Future Ghana Volunteer:

Congratulations on being nominated to be a Peace Corps Volunteer in Ghana! I'm now in my second year teaching mathematics and English at Nakpanduri Business Secondary School in Ghana's Northern Region. On behalf of everyone here at Peace Corps, let me say we hope you are as excited to get here and start working as we are with the prospect of having you working with us.

I'm sure in your process of decision and preparation you're full of uncertainty and maybe a little angst as well. I recall when I was in your shoes; my angst was only thing of which I was certain. I'm writing to address some of those uncertainties, to attempt to quell any anxieties you may have, and lastly just to tell you a bit about my life in Ghana.

The first thing you ought to know is that you're poised to enter the oldest, most established, and most renowned Peace Corps program in the world. With those distinctions come great relations with the Ghanaian government, a long tradition of work with impact and positive relationships fostered by Peace Corps Volunteers and staff, and a deeply rooted support network for Peace Corps Volunteers to keep you safe, healthy, and happy while you're here. In short, you should feel very fortunate to have been posted to Ghana.

Personally, I am extremely grateful for the wonderfully rich and edifying experience I have had thus far. Teaching at a secondary school has given me opportunities that I couldn't have foreseen. As my primary assignment, I'm teaching math, but I've also been able to teach an English class that lost their teacher. After class hours, I started a "business and

community service club” with a group of motivated students. The club is helping the students develop small income-generating activities for themselves and for the betterment of their school. It’s even leading a community sanitation initiative to clean-up and educate the whole town. I’ve helped organize our library, maintain our school’s few computers, teach extra afternoon classes in math and basic computing, workout with the football team, coach the debate team, and organize evening entertainment activities. With a small group of other Volunteer teachers, I also helped to plan a national youth leadership conference, bringing together some of Ghana’s most promising youth leaders. In many of these programs, I have infused lessons and discussions about HIV/AIDS, which I really hadn’t anticipated before coming to Peace Corps, but for which there’s an undeniable need in Ghana.

Outside of school, too, opportunities abound for me to use my unique skills, my expertise, my ingenuity, and my creative capacities to serve my community. Most recently, I brought an NGO to my town to deliver bicycle safety and maintenance workshops and distribute 100 subsidized mountain bikes to eager residents. Throughout your two years of service in Ghana, you’ll have opportunities to serve like those I’ve mentioned and a host of others; some you’ll seek out and others that will find you. The good news is, you’re free to make your Peace Corps experience whatever you’d like it to be and Peace Corps will be there to help make that possible.

I have concluded that I could spend a lifetime in Ghana and never be able to give back as much as Ghana has given me. Each day I’m filled with the richness of Ghana: its natural beauty, the food, the music, my friends, and the overwhelming kindness and generosity of Ghanaians. Each day I learn. Each day I’m grateful to be here, and I’m grateful to the Peace Corps administration, medical staff, security officers, and my trainers for supporting me every step of the way. You can expect the same.

You will love it here. You are welcome.

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Dear Soon-to-be Peace Corps Volunteers,

You are at the beginning of one of life's greatest adventures, whether you are 23 or 63. I'm certain there is nothing quite like the Peace Corps experience. Anyone can travel and see the world, but it takes an especially determined person to stop and live it; to live the lives of the people you are watching as a traveler. And the experience is incredible; you won't want to go back to just traveling again.

How to describe two years of development work in West Africa? I arrived in Ghana with 35 other Volunteers. Our assignments were teaching science, math, and art to high school students. After spending three long months in training, we were finally suitably trained to go and work in our communities. First, my heart and soul dropped to my knees with the immense job ahead of me that I felt I was facing alone. Then my heart and soul slowly began to inch up and out: As I became accepted into my village and tribe; as I began loving strange and foreign food, especially sharing it out of one large bowl with my Ghanaian family; as I began working with and slowly teaching the people around me; and as I began forgetting about time and remembering each moment. In West Africa, life is slow, and things take time, plenty of time. I remember one fateful day that made me stop and think. I was stuck in a classic African downpour and was late for work. I had no choice but to wait impatiently. The rain continued to pour as I became more and more annoyed. Then finally I gave in and sat down with a woman and began playing with her child. She smiled as if to say I knew you would come around. As we chatted in the local language the rain began to slow. I continued to sit until the last drop had fallen and then I continued with my day. My step had slowed and my eyes had opened to many new possibilities. One thing to remember is that you may not accomplish everything you set out to do here, but if you accomplish one of those things, you have something to be proud of. And you are not alone here. Not only do you have an entire community of Ghanaians, you also have an entire community of Peace Corps Volunteers

and staff. These people quickly become life-long friends and family.

Now I am on my third year of Peace Corps service working as the Volunteer leader, and I see all of these feelings reoccurring in the new Volunteers who arrive. I am always excited when I see them get past the most painful parts, and begin finding where they belong. It is now time to find where you belong. Welcome to the Peace Corps!

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Dear Incoming Volunteer,

Soon you will be thrown into a group of total strangers, stuck with countless needles, given a crash course in malaria prevention, and finally, whisked across the Atlantic into the unknown. The plane will land at Kotoka International Airport, you'll disembark to a face-full of equatorial heat, and then it happens. You exit the airport and are thrust into a sea of eager taxi drivers—Ghana style. These are the only things that I can guarantee will happen. Everything after that is your own experience.

Africa is a special place. I had few expectations when I arrived, and that has served me well. I'm not going to say anything about "open mindedness" because that is garbage. You wouldn't be volunteering to leave your family, friends, and creature comforts if you weren't open to new experiences and relationships. I will say this: you will be viewed by most as a rich American no matter where you are assigned. That's just the way it is. Everyone has an opinion of America, good or bad, due to the profile of our country. This leads to frustration, annoyance, and work barriers. Once you become accustomed to this, service is personally rewarding. I'm a biology teacher in the Volta region, near the Togolese border. The scenery is stunning, and the people are extremely friendly. I am still a bit of a novelty to the locals, but they are becoming more familiar with me.

Now for the important stuff: what to bring. The most useful things have been a nonstick frying pan, sharp knife, shortwave radio, Maglite or Petzl headlamp, rechargeable batteries

and charger, and shoes. I teach in mid-cut boots. Many teachers wear sandals, but boots are good for everything. Light Timberlands or Rockports are the best. Pack two or three slacks for teaching, and a couple of dress shirts. Don't worry about sweating. It's part of the game. If you're a sports fan, your only option is Voice of America, 18 minutes after the hour, sorry! It's killing me, too. It's tough getting college basketball scores, two weeks after the fact. The food is an adjustment. You'll have the trots in training, but that is part of the group bonding experience. I "M-bagged" (U.S. postal service for mailing books) about 70 paperback novels before I left. This was the smartest thing I did. You will have a lot of free time. You might never get time to read the classics again. I sent them in June, and they arrived in October.

The bottom line is that the Peace Corps gives you an unbelievable opportunity to see, do, and be. I have been touched by the experience and I still have a long way to go. I know it will be difficult to go when the time comes, but life is all about new experiences and having the courage to take that next step. Believe me, this is an unforgettable one.

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Hello, Future Volunteers!

Mo tiri nkwaa paaa ne mani agye mo be ba Ghana!!!!

Literally, this translates to "Your head is alive and my eyes are open that you are coming to Ghana!" In English, this means, "You are very lucky and I am happy you are coming to Ghana!" I say that you are lucky because you could not have been assigned to a better country. Now, I know I'm a little biased, but Ghanaians are the friendliest people I have ever met, and they love life. One of the things that I admire most about Ghanaians is their optimism and ability to make the most mundane tasks fun. When you go along the coast of Ghana where the fishermen are reeling in the day's catch, you will see that one of the men will be playing a drum as the others sing and pull in the nets to the rhythm of the music. Even farming can be a treat! During peanut season (you will soon be referring to peanuts as ground nuts), I go to farm with my

neighbors and we dig and pick for hours. Just as soon as I feel fatigue coming and my fingers starting to hurt, Sister Akua, one of my neighbors, will give me a big smile and pull out her pot and make a makeshift fire. We will take a break and snack on *nkatea yanoa* (boiled peanuts), talking and laughing at the dirt smeared on my face and under my nails.

I remember, before coming here, being worried that I would be placed in a “bad” part of the country. Let me assure you that there is no bad part of Ghana. Each region has its own distinct character and pleasures. From the lush greenery and waterfalls of the Volta Region to the rain forests of the middle regions to the quiet serenity of the northern regions, I do not know a single Volunteer who wishes he or she were in another part of the country. Now I also distinctly remember being quite anxious about what to bring, and in response to that anxiety, I tried to bring everything! Let me say that it is not fun when you are standing at the check-in counter at the airport and the check-in lady coolly says to you “Your luggage is over. You will have to pay an additional \$400 to carry this much weight.” Ouch! It’s not fun removing 30 pounds out of your suitcase in the middle of the airport either, which is what I had to do. So, let me try and give you some guidelines as to what I would pack if I could do it all over again. There’s a clothing list later put together by some Peace Corps Volunteers, but here are some of my own suggestions.

Shoes: If you like Berks, bring them. If you don’t, bring some nice open toed sandals—maybe two or three pairs. Tevas or Chacos are nice, too, but get the ones with the antibacterial sole, or you will have stinky feet very soon! If you run or exercise, you will appreciate two pairs of running shoes.

Miscellaneous: Remember your camera, shortwave radio, a gift for your host family (maybe a picture/photo book about America, a calendar of your home state—nothing too extravagant), stickers to put on your students’ work and to give out to children, children’s books to read to the kids in your village (animals, counting, and ABC books are the best)

You don’t need: Sunscreen (unless you like a special brand for your face). The medical unit has it. I don’t know

one person who has used their raincoat! (But bring a small umbrella). You will soon meet the nurses who take care of you just like mom and will give you all the medical supplies you will ever need and then some.

Try not to stress out. If you came with nothing but yourself, you would be able to get everything you need! Just bring a smile and your sense of adventure and get ready to have the time of your life!!

Can't wait to meet you!

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To the Most Welcomed Peace Corps Trainees,

Hold on to precious moments of home, friends, family, and co-workers, but prepare your heart and mind for a new home, new friends, and new co-workers. Adventure and opportunity await you here in Ghana, and so do we. It seems like yesterday, when I opened up my "Welcome to Ghana" packet and read letters from Volunteers who have been in Ghana. I was awestruck with the realization, "Oh my goodness, I am really going!" You have gone so far and carried out so much to be a part of the Peace Corps and you have now made it. From the very beginning, I was told not to expect anything but to come with an open mind. The advice continues, but you can expect to meet some of the warmest and kindest individuals.

I did not know of the beauty of Ghana. There is every type of ecosystem you can imagine: oceanfront, rain forest, mountain, and savannah. These diverse environments of Ghana hold communities, towns, and villages of people waiting to have a person like you come and offer skills to progress the sustainable development of their lives.

As the gender and youth development coordinator for the Peace Corps, I help Peace Corps Volunteers bring programs to their communities that will help empower youth, women, and men to further promote positive development in their communities. By educating individuals on gender sensitivity, people of Ghana can appreciate the roles and special contributions both sexes offer to society and why it is important to involve them both in a positive change for

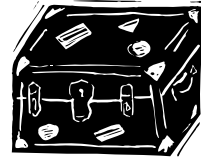
communities. Step by step, the understanding of these roles is becoming more apparent.

Together, we will make a positive contribution to the lives we embrace here. As you prepare for your journey and the Peace Corps experience, enjoy your time with those you love most, eat and savor some of your favorite foods, go out and have fun! Don't worry about the time to arrive; it will come sooner than you think! You are most welcome!

NOTES



PACKING LIST



You could arrive in Ghana with only the clothes on your back and find the rest of what you need here.

This list has been compiled by Volunteers serving in Ghana and is based on their experience. Use it as an informal guide in making your own list, bearing in mind that experience is individual. There is no perfect list! You can always have things sent to you later. You obviously cannot bring everything mentioned, so consider those items that make the most sense to you personally and professionally. There is an 80-pound weight restriction on baggage.

General Clothing

Ghana is either hot and dry, hot and humid, or hot and rainy, and in some places it gets cool (we kid you not!). Hand-washing becomes very hard on your clothes, so pack durable clothing. Cotton clothes are the most practical and comfortable. White clothing tends to get dirty and stain fast. Ghana has great, inexpensive second-hand clothing markets (for example, a pair of shoes for six dollars, a shirt for three dollars). You can buy everything there.

You can easily have clothes inexpensively tailored here with fabrics bought here. Ghanaians really appreciate seeing Volunteers wearing clothing made from colorful Ghanaian cloth. The cloth is relatively inexpensive, depending on the quality and texture. Cloths are colorful, and there is an endless selection. To have a shirt or dress sewn (tailored) costs around an extra \$5, so do not invest your money in a lot of new clothes before you leave. Many people have clothes

made during pre-service training. You will also see what is most appropriate. Your stateside money would be best spent on durable shoes and underwear.

Volunteers are not permitted to wear shorts away from their house unless they are doing sports or manual labor.

Do not buy any clothes that appear to be military issue or that bear any military insignia. It is illegal in Ghana to wear military style clothing.

Essential for Everyone

- A lightweight waterproof jacket
- A sweatshirt, sweater, or fleece (for cool evenings)
- A bathing suit (conservative is advisable)
- Two to three pairs of sturdy shoes and/or sandals (one of these might be a pair of lightweight hiking or trail shoes).
- One pair of dressier but comfortable shoes for professional events or festivals/funerals/weddings (i.e., dressy sandals or flats for women; loafers or something similar for men).
- A durable flashlight (e.g., Maglite or head lamp)
- Two pairs of lightweight trousers
- A multi-tool (e.g., Swiss Army or Leatherman)
- One dressier outfit garden-party style (not cocktail partyish) for the occasional special event (i.e., a decent smart-casual dress or skirt with blouse for ladies; and decent shirt and trousers for men. Short sleeves are okay for men and women. There will be a welcoming reception at the U.S. ambassador's residence within a day or two of arrival. Men can bring one tie to add to the nice shirt. No need to bring a blazer or suit)
- Ten passport-sized photos of yourself for Ghana residence visa, and other IDs and visas

Optional

- Two pairs of athletic shorts (for sports or at home only)
- Running shoes or sports shoes
- Jeans (nice quality, i.e., no rips or holes; some people feel they are too hot, others wear them regularly)

Men

- Two pair of nice, lightweight cotton pants such as Dockers-style (pants must not be baggy or drag on the ground)
- Five pairs of cotton socks
- One belt (Ghanaians wear dress shirts tucked in and pants belted; more casual shirts with a straight hem are worn untucked)
- Two polo-style cotton shirts with a collar.
- Three cotton short-sleeved button-down shirts with collars (Ghanaians like the well-pressed look; charcoal or electric irons will be available)
- Five T-shirts (if printed, no controversial topics such as politics, drugs, or sex)

Women

- Two dress blouses or shirts for mix-and-match with skirts
- Two pairs of cotton pants for work and play
- Two or three cotton dresses or skirts (not short length; these should be below the knees or longer)
- One slip (essential to keep perspiration wicking away from your body, and to prevent seeing through your lightweight dresses and skirts; nylon or synthetic works fine)
- Two to three pair of sturdy casual dress shoes or nice durable sandals (nicer than Texas; do not bother with heels)

- Five nice T-shirts (if printed, no controversial topics such as politics, drugs, or sex) for mix and match with skirts

Note: It is acceptable for women to wear trousers, so bring whatever you are comfortable in, either pants, skirts, or both. However, it is not the norm to teach or attend professional meetings in trousers. Teachers will wear dresses or skirts for work every day. Bring your most comfortable dress or skirt and it can be copied here by a tailor. You can also have inexpensive dresses made here or buy second-hand clothes.

Underwear

Good-quality, comfortable, cotton underwear is very hard to buy in Ghana, so this is one thing you will want to invest in before you come. Men find that boxers are cooler than briefs. Women should bring about five cotton bras. Cotton is a must. Elastic self-destructs in the tropics. You may want to bring enough underwear so that you can put some aside for your second year.

Personal Hygiene and Toiletry Items

Bring lotions, shampoo, and items that you really like to have around, and bring deodorant, unless you like roll-ons. Do not bring toothpaste—it is available everywhere. Bring enough of these items to get you through the first three weeks of pre-service training. After that, you can buy what you need here.

Kitchen

You can easily buy most kitchen supplies here—dishes, pots, glasses, and utensils. There are, however, a few items we highly recommend bringing:

- A good-quality small Teflon fry pan (if you like to cook)
- Two dozen Ziplock baggies (freezer bags are best)
- A good-quality small cutting knife (if you like to cook)

Miscellaneous

- An inexpensive shortwave radio (can be bought here)
- A lightweight towel (dark colors; high-absorbant camping towels are great for traveling)
- A sturdy water bottle (e.g., Nalgene)
- Nail clippers (if you use them)
- One wash cloth (if you use them)
- A good pair of scissors
- Handi-wipes (for long bus rides)
- One set of double-sized bed sheets and pillow cases (preferably not white). Sheets are available here but of lesser quality
- A compact umbrella (though they can be bought here)
- Backpack for four- to seven-day trips (often called a “climbers” pack)
- A tube of good glue (e.g., Barge, epoxy, glue for Birkenstocks if you bring them, etc.)
- A Therm-a-rest pad (these are expensive; bring it if you already own it, but it is not necessary)
- Alarm clock (battery or wind-up)
- One roll of Duct tape (you would not believe all of its uses)
- Pictures of home, family, and friends
- Your favorite books and textbooks—bring some for training and trading (but mail most of them)
- OB tampons (enough for two years; this brand packs small and is very expensive here)

- Prescription drugs (a three-month supply until the medical unit at the Peace Corps can order your special needs)
- Eyeglasses (two pair, since replacements take a long time to arrive from the States)
- Eyeglass repair kit
- Money belt or other means of concealing your passport and valuables when traveling (a belt loop is a good security feature)
- Astronomy and wildlife guides if this interests you (Collins Bird Guide on West African birds is popular)
- Tapes/CDs, or if you already have an iPod or mp3 player bring it (although keep in mind that it could draw some extra attention)
- Frisbee, hacky-sack, hammock, and travel-size games (Yahtzee, chess, cards, UNO, etc.)

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 is not all inclusive of everything you should make arrangements for.

Family

- Notify family that they should call Peace Corps' Office of Special Services any time if there is a critical illness or death of a family member (telephone number: 1.800.424.8580, extension 1470; 24-hour duty officer 202.638.2574).
- Establish a power of attorney to handle your legal and financial issues.
- Give Peace Corps' *On the Home Front* booklet to family and friends.

Passport/Travel

- Forward to the Peace Corps travel office all paperwork for Peace Corps passport and visas.
- Verify that luggage meets the size and weight limits for international travel.
- Obtain personal passport if you plan to travel after your service ends. (Your Peace Corps passport will expire 3 months after you finish your service, so if you plan on traveling longer, you will need a regular passport).

Medical/Health

- Complete dental and medical work.
- If you wear glasses, bring two pair.

- Arrange to take a three-month supply of all medications (including birth control pills) you are presently taking.

Health Insurance

- Make arrangements to maintain life insurance coverage.
- Arrange to maintain supplemental health coverage while away. (Even though the Peace Corps is responsible for your healthcare during Peace Corps service overseas, it is advisable for people who have pre-existing conditions to arrange for the continuation of their supplemental health coverage. Many times if there is a lapse in supplemental health coverage it is difficult and expensive to be reinstated for insurance. This is especially true when insurance companies know you have predictable expenses and are in an upper age bracket).
- Arrange to continue Medicare coverage.

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 articles insurance for 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 lender or loan service.
- Execute a power of attorney for the management of your property and business.
- Arrange for deductions from readjustment allowance to pay alimony, child support, and other debts through the Office of Volunteer Financial Operations at 1.800.424.8580, extension 1770.
- Place all important papers, mortgages, deeds, documents, stocks, and bonds in a safe deposit box, with attorney or with caretaker.



CONTACTING PEACE CORPS HEADQUARTERS



Please use the following list of numbers to 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 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 Arica Region	Ext. 1850	202.692.1850
Programming or Country Information	Jennifer Brown Desk Officer E-mail: ghana@peacecorps.gov	Ext. 2326	202.692.2326
	TBA Desk Assistant E-mail: ghana@peacecorps.gov	Ext. 2327	202.692.2327

For Questions About:	Staff	Toll-free Extension	Direct/ Local Number
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
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</i>	Office of Staging	Ext. 1865	202.692.1865
<i>(hotel and flight arrangements) three to five weeks before departure. This information is not available sooner.</i>			
Family Emergencies (to get information to a Volunteer overseas)	Office of Special Services	Ext. 1470	202.692.1470 9-5 EST 202.638.2574 <i>(after-hours answering service)</i>

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