

THE PEACE CORPS WELCOMES YOU TO
B O T S W A N A



A PEACE CORPS PUBLICATION
FOR NEW VOLUNTEERS



January 2008

A WELCOME LETTER

Congratulations on having been selected to join Peace Corps/Botswana. The organization has a proud legacy of more than 35 years of service here, and its contributions to the development of this nation are well-recognized and appreciated. Currently, there are about 90 Volunteers working to support the government of Botswana in its fight against the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

The staff in Botswana is committed to providing the best medical, training, programmatic, and administrative support we can. At the same time, we will look to you to be as independent as self-reliant as possible. During pre-service training (PST), you will begin to learn Setswana and adapt to the culture, which will include living with a Botswana family. You will develop the community-entry skills needed for your assignment, and discover how to maintain your health and reduce safety and security risks during your service.

It is important to realize that PST is a time for both you and the Peace Corps staff to assess your suitability for service in Botswana. A two-year commitment should not be entered into casually and is one that you may need to reaffirm in many ways during PST and throughout your service. In fairness to our local partners and to safeguard the reputation of the organization, we do periodically make the decision that a trainee or Volunteer is not suited to service here and return him or her home.

As you may have already heard, the extent to which you become an accepted and valued colleague and community member depends largely on you. If you come with an open mind, a warm heart, and a good sense of humor, you will do well. Although we are here to support you, you are the ultimate architect and builder of a successful Peace Corps service.

Please read this *Welcome Book* as part of your preparation for living and working in Botswana as a Peace Corps Volunteer.

We look forward to meeting you.

Peggy McClure
Country Director



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Map of Botswana

A Welcome Letter 1

Peace Corps/Botswana History and Programs 7

History of the Peace Corps in Botswana 7-8

History and Future of Peace Corps
Programming in Botswana 8-13

Country Overview: Botswana at a Glance 15

History 15-16

Government 16

Economy 16-17

People and Culture 17-18

Environment 18-19

Resources for Further Information 21

Living Conditions and Volunteer Lifestyle 27

Communications 27-28

Housing and Site Location 28

Living Allowance and Money Management 29

Food and Diet 29-30

Transportation 30

Social Activities 31

Professionalism, Dress, and Behavior 31-32

Personal Safety 32

Rewards and Frustrations 32-33

Peace Corps Training	35
Overview of Pre-Service Training	35
<i>Technical Training</i>	36
<i>Language Training</i>	36
<i>Cross-Cultural Training</i>	37
<i>Health Training</i>	37
<i>Safety Training</i>	37
Additional Trainings During Volunteer Service	38
Your Health Care and Safety in Botswana	41
Health Issues in Botswana	41
Helping You Stay Healthy	41-42
Maintaining Your Health	42-43
Women’s Health Information	43-44
Your Peace Corps Medical Kit	44-45
Before You Leave: A Medical Checklist	45-47
Safety and Security—Our Partnership	47-53
<i>Factors that Contribute to Volunteer Risk</i>	47-48
<i>Summary Strategies to Reduce Risk</i>	48-49
<i>Support from Staff</i>	49-52
<i>What if You Become a Victim of a Violent Crime?</i>	52-53
Security Issues in Botswana	54
Staying Safe: Don’t Be a Target for Crime	54-55
Preparing for the Unexpected: Safety Training and Volunteer Support in Botswana	55-56
Diversity and Cross-Cultural Issues	59
Overview of Diversity in Botswana	60
What Might a Volunteer Face?	60
<i>Possible Issues for Female Volunteers</i>	60-61
<i>Possible Issues for Volunteers of Color</i>	61
<i>Possible Issues for Senior Volunteers</i>	62
<i>Possible Issues for Gay, Lesbian, or Bisexual Volunteers</i>	62
<i>Possible Religious Issues for Volunteers</i>	63
<i>Possible Issues for Volunteers With Disabilities</i>	63

Frequently Asked Questions	65
Welcome Letters From Botswana Volunteers	71
Packing List	83
Pre-departure Checklist	87
Contacting Peace Corps Headquarters	91



PEACE CORPS/BOTSWANA HISTORY AND PROGRAMS



History of the Peace Corps in Botswana

The Peace Corps entered the Republic of Botswana, formally known as Bechuanaland, in December 1966, only two months after the country gained independence from the United Kingdom. Botswana's emergence as an independent nation heightened the need for a skilled labor force. This need provided a unique opportunity for the Peace Corps, which initiated a program aimed at helping the Botswana strengthen their ability to tackle their multiple development challenges. Over the next 31 years, more than 2,100 Peace Corps Volunteers served in Botswana. From 1966 to 1997, Peace Corps projects contributed to nearly every sector of Botswana's development plan. Volunteers worked in education, health, the environment, urban planning, and economics. The largest group of Volunteers served as teachers in secondary schools. Volunteers filled significant gaps in the labor force and, in many cases, made singular contributions to the development of Botswana. There are scores of leading figures in Botswana who have a Peace Corps connection, be it as a co-worker, teacher, or friend.

Since its independence in 1966, Botswana has gone from one of the world's poorest countries to one of the few developing nations to reach middle-income status. The country's per capita income has grown rapidly. Life expectancy at birth increased from 48 years to over 60 years. Formal sector employment grew from 14,000 jobs to 120,000. Moreover, the nation's infrastructure, including roads, power generation, schools, health facilities, and housing, increased dramatically. Partly because of Botswana's remarkable economic transition,

the Peace Corps decided to withdraw from the country in 1997, and it was with mixed emotions that the Peace Corps closed one of its earliest and most prolific programs. At the request of President Festus Mogae, the Peace Corps was asked to return to Botswana in 2003, to work exclusively in HIV/AIDS education and prevention and to supporting and enhancing the government of Botswana's efforts to respond to HIV/AIDS and its impacts. President Mogae's request was borne out of a stark recognition that AIDS is poised to erode the prodigious steady development advances realized in Botswana since independence.

History and Future of Peace Corps Programming in Botswana

Botswana continues to enjoy steady economic growth, mostly as a result of smart management of the country's natural resources—particularly diamonds. At the same time, the country has not escaped the devastating effects of the AIDS pandemic. Like many countries in southern Africa, Botswana is being hard hit by the social and economic impact of AIDS. According to UNAIDS, Botswana's HIV infection rate is one of the highest in the world. As the epidemic moves from silent and unseen to highly manifest in a large portion of the population, communities find themselves ill-equipped to deal with its deplorable effects. The government estimates that between 2000 and 2015, as many as 36,000 Botswana will die from the disease annually. The vast majority of these casualties will be young people in the prime of life, who will also leave behind a generation of orphans. A sobering reality is the drop in Botswana's ranking in the United Nations Human Development Index (from 71st place in 1996 to 131st in the 2006 report).

Botswana has some powerful allies in the fight against AIDS. The government, under the leadership of President Mogae, has publicly acknowledged the crisis and has signaled a

commitment to action through a national strategic AIDS plan. The President, having committed his two terms in office to dealing with the impact of HIV/AIDS, heads the National AIDS Council. The government has mobilized resources, both internally and externally, in a fashion heretofore unprecedented in confronting any national disaster. Botswana consistently makes the news as one of the few countries willing to provide free antiretroviral drugs to pregnant women and to those infected with HIV. An increasing awareness of the need for multi-sector care and prevention strategies is leading to innovative partnerships with both civil society organizations and the business community.

At the insistence of the National AIDS Coordinating Agency (NACA), Peace Corps/Botswana began its AIDS program with a capacity-building project. Volunteers were recruited and partnered with newly hired district AIDS coordinators (DACs). DACs, new to their positions and new to the world of program planning, implementation, and monitoring/evaluation, are based in district and sub-district offices. They are charged with ensuring that HIV/AIDS programming is mainstreamed into every substantial government development project. In addition, they mobilize both the government and community responses to HIV and AIDS in every community in Botswana. Finally, they are the major link in the accumulation of information for the national monitoring and evaluation program. The Volunteers currently serving in the DAC program have proven invaluable to the government's attempts to launch coordinated district- and village-level responses to HIV and AIDS. In addition to the transfer of skills and knowledge directly to their DAC counterparts, Volunteers have stimulated greater community involvement in HIV and AIDS programs and activities. They have been critical to establishing the national monitoring and evaluation initiative and helped local communities initiate grassroots responses to the impact of AIDS.

Preliminary agreements with NACA included the recognition that Peace Corps has a history of effective implementation at the grassroots (or village) level—a historically underserved sector in Botswana. As a result, two new initiatives were added in June 2004. The first is a program to provide support for the government’s Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission (PMTCT) program. Although the government has provided free PMTCT services since 1999, an evaluation had identified poor uptake in services as a critical obstacle to the program’s success. A pilot project was instituted in the villages of four health districts. Its aim was to promote community involvement in PMTCT through community mobilization. In partnership with the Ministry of Health and BOTUSA (the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s program in Botswana), Peace Corps Volunteers were placed in villages throughout the pilot districts. Partnered with local clinics and local PMTCT counselors, Volunteers are engaged in a variety of activities to increase the uptake of PMTCT services and to build capacity in PMTCT service providers. Some activities include:

- Building village-based AIDS education and community awareness (through workshops, community meetings, one-on-one sessions, etc.);
- Forming and developing community support groups, both for people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHAs) and for those affected by HIV/AIDS;
- Creating youth groups linked to HIV/AIDS education and programming;
- Building technical capacity in clinics (through systems creation, record keeping, training of trainers, and monitoring and evaluation activities);
- Transferring skills to counterparts, village leadership, and youth;
- Increasing client follow-up and introducing strategies to promote PMTCT regime adherence;

- Working with leadership structures (traditional, formal and informal) to identify and dismantle the causes of stigma and discrimination;
- Developing a database to collect information on PMTCT for report writing;
- Mobilizing and educating communities on HIV/AIDS;
- Designing and implementing strategies to promote male involvement.

The second new program introduced in 2004 is housed in the Department of Social Services (Ministry of Local Government). In this program, Volunteers provide support to home-based care and orphan care (HBC/OC) in communities hardest hit by AIDS. HBC/OC Volunteers are partnered with village-based government social workers. Their work is very similar to the work of PMTCT Volunteers. They also help improve village access to government benefits and services, specifically those for orphans and other vulnerable people. Many HBC/OC Volunteers are helping to create programs that cater to the needs of the sick and orphaned. Student service-learning projects, community-sponsored day-care centers, and support groups for caregivers are just a few examples of how Volunteers are getting communities mobilized against AIDS in their communities.

Another need identified in the National Strategic Framework in Botswana is to strengthen the response of the civil society to the HIV and AIDS pandemic. A third Peace Corps program, initiated in 2005 and funded by the United States President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), places Volunteers in nongovernmental, faith-based, or community-based organizations, primarily those that serve orphans and vulnerable children. Peace Corps has a successful history of helping organizations become more sustainable and effective, building capacity so that they can better serve their clients.

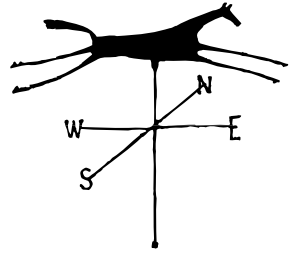
As treatment programs start to lower the mortality rate and care programs are implemented, the Botswana government wants to strengthen prevention and behavior change efforts. The National Strategic Framework calls for “No new infections by 2016” (Botswana’s 50th year of independence). A PEPFAR-funded pilot program, initiated in 2007 in partnership with the Ministry of Education, places Volunteers in schools to assist with the rollout of a Botswana-specific life skills curriculum. Volunteers serve as liaisons among the schools, community, and parents, reinforcing the messages to lead the behavior changes needed to reduce risky behavior.

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 drains family income and forces 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.



COUNTRY OVERVIEW: BOTSWANA AT A GLANCE



History

By about 1700, the ancestors of today's Batswana were established as self-sufficient herders, farmers, and hunters. Their first contact with Europeans was through missionaries in the early 19th century. After hostilities broke out between the Batswana and expansionist Afrikaners from South Africa in the last quarter of that century, the tribal chiefs asked the British for assistance. The British responded and in 1885 proclaimed a protectorate in what was then called Bechuanaland. They retained colonial control until 1966. Bechuanaland played a prominent role in the British penetration of Central Africa in the 19th century. Cecil Rhodes called the region the "Suez Canal to the north" and considered it vital to his plans for territorial expansion. British interests in Bechuanaland were primarily strategic, and internal affairs were handled with more or less benign neglect.

Under British authority, local tribal governments were allowed to continue, with chiefs retaining much of their authority. With the establishment of separate advisory councils representing Africans and Europeans in 1920, the evolution of modern self-government began. In 1951, a joint advisory council was formed consisting of both European and African members. Over the years these advisory bodies were consulted on a constantly expanding range of matters.

By 1964 the British were prepared to accept a system of internal self-government. Seretse Khama, the British-educated heir to the chieftainship of the Bangwato (which he forfeited) and a former enemy of the British Empire, was elected as the

first prime minister. He is revered for his nonpartisan politics and for leading the country to full independence in 1966.

Government

Botswana is a multi-party democracy with a stable and progressive political climate. The constitution established a unicameral national assembly, now composed of 40 members directly elected by popular vote, four members elected by the assembly, and the attorney general. The chief executive is the president, who is chosen by national election to serve a five-year term. The president selects the cabinet ministers and the vice president from the national assembly. The constitution provides for freedom of speech, the press, and religion, contributing to Botswana's reputation for being one of Africa's most stable countries.

Botswana has four main political parties and numerous minor parties. National politics has been dominated by the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP), which has won every presidential election since independence. Seretse Khama, Botswana's first president, was elected under the banner of the BDP. He was succeeded in an orderly transition by Quett Ketemile Masire, who retired in March 1998. The country's current president is Festus Mogae. Vice President Ian Khama, son of the first president, is expected to succeed President Mogae whose term will end in 2008.

Economy

Botswana has maintained one of the world's highest economic growth rates since independence in 1966. Through fiscal discipline and sound management, the nation has transformed itself from one of the poorest countries in the world to a middle-income country with a per capita GDP of approximately

\$6,000 in 2004. Despite its categorization as a middle income country, there is high unemployment (approximately 25 percent), and a wide gap between those participating fully in the economy and those who do not.

Botswana's mining industry includes nickel (second largest producer in Africa), diamonds (Orapa and Jwaneng are the second and third largest diamond pipes in the world), cobalt, coal, asbestos, manganese, talc, gypsum, gold, chromium, silver, and platinum. Diamond mining has fueled much of the economic expansion and currently accounts for more than one-third of GDP and for three-fourths of export earnings. Other income-generating activities include tourism, agriculture (especially beef production), food processing, and light industrial manufacturing.

The government has managed the country's resources prudently and has kept its recurrent expenditures within its revenue, allowing for investment in human and physical capital improvements. The government's revenue from diamonds, as well as profits from the large foreign exchange reserves of the Bank of Botswana, has largely cushioned Botswana from the recessions that have hurt most countries in the region. While Botswana has experienced extremely high rates of growth, it has also experienced the most acute ravages of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. HIV/AIDS is much more than a health problem in Botswana; it is a development problem that will impact all aspects of Botswana life for years to come.

People and Culture

Botswana's population includes no fewer than 20 African ethnic groups and a small population of peoples of Indian and European descent. In the colonial period, white settlement in Botswana consisted mainly of Afrikaners and English who settled on border farms. Since then, a larger expatriate

population from Europe, North America (including a healthy number of former Peace Corps Volunteers), South Asia, and elsewhere in Africa (e.g., Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Nigeria, Kenya) has been drawn to the country. Much of this immigration is the result of Botswana's continued reliance on foreign skilled labor, particularly in the medical sector.

Although there are distinct linguistic and cultural differences among Botswana's ethnic groups, the majority of the population (79 percent) is Tswana, whose ethnic dominance in Botswana dates from the eight Tswana states that ruled most of the area in the 19th century. The populations of these states were given the official status of "tribes" under British colonial rule, and the term is still used commonly today. The name Botswana derives from the Tswana. The official language is English and the national language is Setswana; both are widely spoken.

Botswana is predominantly Christian, but many religions are represented in larger towns. The two most active and popular churches are the Zion Christian Church and the Roman Catholic Church. There are also numerous smaller denominations throughout the country, including Zionist and Apostolic, United Reformed (Congregational and Methodist), Dutch Reformed, Lutheran, Anglican, Seventh Day Adventist, Quaker, Hindu, and Bahai. Although Christianity is widely practiced, so, too, are indigenous religions. Interestingly, there are fewer than 500 Western-educated doctors in the country, while there are more than 5,000 practicing traditional healers.

Environment

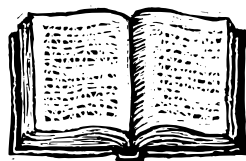
Botswana is one of Africa's least densely populated countries, with a population of approximately 1.8 million people in a land area slightly smaller than Texas. It is known for unforgettable wilderness, the spectacular waterways of the Okavango Delta,

the Kalahari sand dunes, and an abundance of wildlife. Much of the country is flat, with gentle undulations and occasional rocky outcrops. In the northwest, the Okavango River drains inland from Angola to form the Okavango Delta. In the central northeast is a large area of hardpan plains bordering the Makgadikgadi Pans. In the east, adjacent to the Limpopo drainage system, the land rises above 3,960 feet (1,200 meters), and the Limpopo Valley gradually descends from 2,970 feet (900 meters) in the south to 1,650 feet (500 meters) at its confluence with the Shashe River. This eastern region, which straddles the north-south railway line, has a somewhat less harsh climate and more fertile soil than elsewhere; it is here that most Batswana live.

The rest of Botswana is covered with the thick sand (up to 396 feet, or 120 meters, deep) of the Kgalagadi (or Kalahari) Desert, which accounts for more than two-thirds of Botswana's land area. The Kgalagadi supports a vegetation of scrub and grasses, but there is an almost complete absence of surface water. The country is largely arid or semiarid, and average rainfall ranges from 26 inches (650 millimeters) in the extreme northeast to less than 10 inches (250 millimeters) in the extreme southwest. Almost all the rainfall—consisting primarily of localized showers and thunderstorms—occurs during the summer months from October to April. Average daily maximum temperatures range from 72 degrees Fahrenheit (22 degrees Celsius) in July to 91 degrees Fahrenheit (33° C) in January. However, the extremes range widely, from less than 23 degrees Fahrenheit (-5° C) up to 109 degrees Fahrenheit (43° C). The lowest temperatures are in the southwest, where early morning frost can occur from June to August.



RESOURCES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION



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

A note of caution: As you surf these sites, be aware 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 U.S. government. You may 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.

General Information About Botswana

<http://gaborone.usembassy.gov/>

Visit the website of the U.S. embassy in Botswana.

www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations

This is an excellent site for travel books, maps, and general information.

www.worldtravelguide.net

This site's comprehensive travel guides include information on climate, health issues, and more.

www.state.gov

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

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

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

www.un.org/Pubs/CyberSchoolBus/

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

www.worldinformation.com

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

Connect With Returned Volunteers and Other Invitees

www.rpcv.org

This is the site of the National Peace Corps Association, made up of returned Volunteers. Here you can find links to all the Web pages of the "friends of" groups for most countries of service, composed of former Volunteers who served in those countries. There are also regional groups who frequently get together for social events and local Volunteer activities. Or go straight to the Friends of Botswana page:
www.rpcv.org/pages/webpage.cfm?id=24.

<http://www.rpcvwebring.org>

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

www.peacecorpswriters.org

This site is hosted by a group of returned Volunteer writers. It is a monthly online publication of essays and Volunteer accounts from countries around the world.

Online Articles/Current News Sites About Botswana

www.gazette.bw

The website of the *Botswana Gazette*, a weekly newspaper based in Gaborone

www.gov.bw

The website of the government of Botswana offers daily news articles.

www.mmegi.bw

The website of *Mmegi*, a newspaper based in Gaborone

www.mg.co.za/

The *Mail & Guardian* of South Africa contains articles of regional interest.

International Development Sites

www.usaid.gov

U.S. Agency for International Development

www.unaids.org

Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS

www.undp.org

United Nations Development Programme

Recommended Books

1. Alverson, Marianne. *Under African Sun*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987.
2. Denbow, James and Phenyó C. Thebe. *Culture and Customs of Botswana*. Greenwood Press, 2006.
3. Dutfield, Michael. *Marriage of Inconvenience: The Persecution of Ruth and Seretse Khama*. London: Unwin Hyman, 1990.
4. Head, Bessie. *When Rain Clouds Gather*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1996.
5. Rush, Norman. *Whites: Stories*. New York: Vintage Books, 1992.
6. Smith, Alexander McCall. *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency*. New York, NY: Anchor Books/Random House. 1998.
7. Sparks, Allister. *The Mind of South Africa*. New York: Knopf, 1990.

Books About the History of the Peace Corps

1. Hoffman, Elizabeth Cobbs. *All You Need is Love: The Peace Corps and the Spirit of the 1960's*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000.
2. Rice, Gerald T. *The Bold Experiment: JFK's Peace Corps*. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985.
3. Stossel, Scott. *Sarge: The Life and Times of Sargent Shriver*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2004.

Books on the Volunteer Experience

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



LIVING CONDITIONS AND VOLUNTEER LIFESTYLE



Communications

Mail

Postal rates in Botswana are reasonable, and airmail to the United States generally takes about a week. Mail supplies can be purchased at all post office branches. Sending large packages via airmail can be very expensive, but smaller items such as photographs or CDs can be sent for a reasonable fee. Surface mail from the United States to Botswana can take two months or more to arrive. Advise your family and friends to keep all documentation related to the packages they send to Botswana so that any package that does not arrive can be traced. Postal insurance is a good idea when sending packages from the United States.

During pre-service training, your mail should be sent to the Peace Corps office address (Private Bag 00243, Gaborone, Botswana). The Peace Corps staff will then forward your mail to the training site. After training, you can give your family and friends the address of your site of assignment.

Telephones

Domestic and international phone service is available throughout Botswana. Service is more expensive than in the United States, particularly for international calls. While there are few public phone booths, individuals offering phone services can be found in nearly every corner of small towns and villages. You can purchase a cellphone in-country for less than \$100, although ones with additional features can cost considerably more, and the network covers most towns and

larger villages. The Peace Corps does not provide cellphones to Volunteers but will help them identify suitable options for purchase.

Computer, Internet, and E-mail Access

Most larger villages and towns in Botswana have Internet cafes. However, your access to e-mail will be scant during the eight to nine weeks of pre-service training because e-mail is not available at the training site or in most of the training host villages. E-mail is likely to be available, however, in the town closest to the training site, so you should be able to access e-mail at an Internet cafe during off-hours and on weekends.

Housing and Site Location

Your housing is contributed by the government of Botswana or other partner organizations. Because of the wide range of housing in Botswana, there is considerable variance in Volunteer living situations. You should come prepared to accept the Peace Corps' minimum standard for housing: A single room that is clean and can be secured with a lock, with access to clean water and sanitary bathroom and cooking facilities. Electricity and piped-in water are not required by the Peace Corps.

Volunteers placed at the district level can expect fairly comfortable housing, which typically means a two-bedroom cement house with a kitchen, indoor plumbing, and electricity. Volunteers based at the village level can expect more basic housing, perhaps a room in a family dwelling in which services are limited to nonexistent. The government or partner organization is responsible for providing limited furnishings (i.e., a bed, a table, a chair, and some sort of closet space) and covering the cost of utilities (cooking gas, electricity, water, etc.).

Living Allowance and Money Management

The Peace Corps provides each Volunteer with a small “walk-around” allowance during training, a settling-in allowance to cover some of the costs of setting up a new home, and a monthly living allowance (roughly equivalent to \$290) that is intended to cover basic expenses. In addition, you will be paid a leave allowance equal to \$24 per month and a travel allowance for Peace Corps-related trips (e.g., trips to the capital for shots, meetings, etc.). All allowances are paid in local currency. The living allowance is deposited directly into your bank account (which you will set up before completion of pre-service training) on a quarterly basis.

Volunteers are expected to live modestly. The living allowance supports a very simple lifestyle and does not include money for things like weekly trips to the movies or phone calls home.

Food and Diet

The absence of basic food items is not an issue in Botswana. In fact, Volunteers may be surprised to find a large variety of English and American products, such as Heinz ketchup, Hellmann’s mayonnaise, and M&M’s. Fresh fruits and vegetables are widely available, even in outlying areas. However, access to specialty foods and grocery stores does vary according to one’s placement. Those posted to district-level or large towns will be able to buy food items in their immediate vicinity. Those posted to villages, particularly in very rural spots, will be limited to periodic shopping trips to the larger towns.

The traditional diet in Botswana relies heavily on meat and starches (notably corn or maize, beans, rice, potatoes, and sorghum). Starches are usually served in a stew or with gravy, made of vegetables like cabbages, tomatoes, greens, and onions. Beetroot and butternut often give color to a dish.

Committed vegetarians will find it relatively easy to maintain their diet, but will have to find a way to convince meat-loving Batswana of the healthiness of their choice. Note that consumption of meat is given particular importance in some cultural celebrations.

Transportation

In general, it is not difficult to get around in Botswana. Common and inexpensive forms of public transportation include buses, trains, and private taxis. Buses travel on a fairly regular schedule throughout the country, although transfers may be necessary to reach your destination. Buses range in size from *combis* (10- to 12-seat minivans) to large luxury buses (think Greyhound). While most transportation is reliable, the Peace Corps encourages Volunteers to assess the condition of both the vehicle and the driver before boarding.

Passenger trains run twice daily from Gaborone (in the south) to Francistown (a seven-hour ride to the north). An overnight train departs from Lobatse in the evening, arriving in Francistown early the next morning and continuing on to Zimbabwe. When boarding the evening train, it is advisable to board second-class accommodation to avoid security incidents. The trains south from Francistown also run twice daily and once overnight. The rates are reasonable, but the train has become increasingly run down. The Peace Corps' recommended mode of transport among Volunteer sites and the capital is a luxury bus, and Volunteers' travel allowances reflect the slightly higher cost of this service. While many Volunteers are tempted to hitchhike, Peace Corps/Botswana strongly discourages this practice.

Social Activities

In fulfillment of the three goals of the Peace Corps, Volunteers are expected to make their host community the center of their social life and to stay at their site unless on approved vacation or work travel. But the types of activities and relationships that constitute a social life will vary according to the Volunteer's own interests and site assignment. Those in more urban settings will find a host of facilities, organizations, and other social outlets. Those in more rural settings may find limited formal social structures; in such cases, host families and friends in the community often become the center around which social activity revolves.

Professionalism, Dress, and Behavior

Batswana place great importance on conservative dress in the workplace. The norms of professional dress mean slacks, shirts, and, often, ties for men and dresses or skirts for women. (Nice slacks are acceptable for women in some locations.) It is seen as a sign of respect for others when you dress "smart," and how you are viewed by your colleagues will be highly dependent on the way you present yourself. Tennis shoes, sneakers, or Teva-type sandals are not appropriate footwear for work. Although jeans and T-shirts are acceptable as casual wear, it is more common to see men wearing shirts with collars and casual slacks and women wearing skirts or slacks with blouses or casual dresses during non-work hours.

Sleeveless tops with spaghetti straps, tank tops, and low-cut tops are not appropriate for women outside the capital and larger towns.

All Volunteers should bring at least one business outfit (i.e., a suit or jacket and tie for men; a long, conservative dress or skirt for women). There will be occasions that bring

Volunteers face-to-face with senior diplomats, traditional authorities, and civil servants, for which professional dress is expected.

Personal Safety

More detailed information about the Peace Corps' approach to safety is contained in the Health Care and Safety chapter, but it is an important issue and cannot be overemphasized.

As stated in the *Volunteer Handbook*, becoming a Peace Corps Volunteer entails certain safety risks. Living and traveling in an unfamiliar environment (oftentimes alone), having a limited understanding of local language and culture, and being perceived as well-off are some of the factors that can put a Volunteer at risk. Many Volunteers experience varying degrees of unwanted attention and harassment. Petty thefts and burglaries are not uncommon, and incidents of physical and sexual assault do occur, although most Botswana Volunteers are likely to complete their two years of service without personal security incidents. The Peace Corps has established procedures and policies designed to help you reduce your risks and enhance your safety and security. These procedures and policies, in addition to safety training, will be provided once you arrive in Botswana. At the same time, you are expected to take responsibility for your safety and well-being.

Rewards and Frustrations

Invariably, Volunteers who have completed their service speak of the relationships that they have established as the highlight of their service. Many speak of how they have learned to value and respect a more family- and community-centered way of life and of how they have grown in patience and

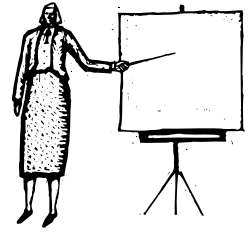
understanding. Most are able to point to specific contributions they have made to a country's development. In Botswana, such contributions might include increasing the dialogue about HIV/AIDS, promoting the use of HIV/AIDS programs and services, seeing co-workers adopt new ways of accomplishing their jobs with an increase in productivity and effectiveness, decreasing stigma and discrimination against people with HIV/AIDS, and helping organizations develop and implement HIV/AIDS programs.

Such positive reflections are the endpoint of a series of highs and lows that are part and parcel of the process of leaving the United States, entering Botswana, and adapting to the practices and pace of life in a new culture.

You will have less guidance and direction than you would get in a new job in the United States. Things will undoubtedly move at a much slower pace than that to which you are accustomed. You will probably need to make a paradigm shift from the American orientation toward tangible results to the Botswana love for a consultative process and protocol. To succeed in this environment, you will need a high degree of patience, self-confidence, creativity, and flexibility. If you do not deal well with gray areas, Botswana is probably not a good match for you. But if you come with a healthy respect for the process of being a Peace Corps Volunteer, as well as a desire to make tangible changes, you will have an incredible experience.



PEACE CORPS TRAINING



Overview of Pre-Service Training

Training is an essential part of your Peace Corps service. Our goal is to give you enough skills and information to allow you to live and work effectively in Botswana. In doing that, we build upon the experiences and expertise you bring to the Peace Corps. We anticipate that you will approach your training with an open mind, a desire to learn, and a willingness to become involved. Trainees officially become Peace Corps Volunteers after successful completion of training.

The eight- to nine-week pre-service training program will provide you the opportunity to learn new skills and practice them as they apply to Botswana. You will receive training and orientation in language, cross-cultural communication, development issues, health and personal safety, and technical skills pertinent to your specific assignment. The skills you learn will serve as the foundation upon which you build your experience as a Volunteer in Botswana.

At the beginning of training, the training staff will outline the training goals and assessment criteria that each trainee has to reach before becoming a Volunteer. Evaluation of your performance during training is a continual process that is based on a dialogue between you and the training staff. The training director, along with the language, technical, and cross-cultural trainers, will work with you toward the highest possible achievement of training goals by providing you feedback throughout training. After successfully completing the pre-service training—as the majority of trainees do—you will be sworn in as a Volunteer and make the final preparations for departure to your site.

Technical Training

Technical training places great emphasis on learning how to transfer the skills you have to the community in which you will serve as a Volunteer. Training will include sessions on the environment, economics, and politics in Botswana and strategies for working within such a framework. You will review your technical sector's goals and will meet with the Botswana agencies and organizations that invited the Peace Corps to assist them. You will be supported and evaluated by experienced Botswana trainers and Peace Corps staff throughout the training to build the confidence and skills you will need to undertake your project activities and be a productive member of your community.

Language Training

As a Peace Corps Volunteer, you will find that language skills are the key to personal and professional satisfaction during your service. These skills are critical to your job performance, they help you integrate into your community, and they can ease your personal adaptation to the new surroundings. Therefore, language training is the heart of the training program, and you must successfully meet minimum language requirements to complete training and become a Volunteer. Experienced teachers will provide intensive instruction in the Setswana language in classes of four to five people.

Your language training will incorporate a community-based approach. In addition to classroom time, you will be given assignments to work on outside of the classroom and with your host family. The goal is to get you to a point of basic social communication skills so that you can practice and develop language skills further on your own. Prior to your 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 Botswana host family. This experience is designed to ease your transition to life at your site. Families go through an orientation conducted by Peace Corps staff to explain the purpose of pre-service training and to assist them in helping you adapt to living in Botswana. Many Volunteers form strong and lasting friendships with their host families.

Cross-cultural and community development will be covered to help improve your skills of perception, communication, and facilitation. Topics such as community mobilization, conflict resolution, gender and development, and traditional and political structures are also addressed.

Health Training

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

Safety Training

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

Additional Trainings During Volunteer Service

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

During service, there are usually four training events.

The titles and objectives for those trainings are as follows:

- *In-Service Training (IST)*: Provides an opportunity for Volunteers to re-connect with the Volunteers they arrived with, upgrade their technical, language, and project development skills while sharing their experiences and reaffirming their commitment after having served for two to three months. Volunteers spend the first few months at their site conducting a community needs assessment. This becomes the basis for developing a work plan for the next eight to nine months of service.
- *Mid-Service 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 (COS)*: Prepares Volunteers for the future after Peace Corps service and reviews their respective projects and personal experiences.

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

NOTES



YOUR HEALTH CARE AND SAFETY IN BOTSWANA



The 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. The Peace Corps in Botswana maintains a clinic with full-time and part-time medical officers who take care of Volunteers' primary healthcare needs. Additional medical services, such as testing and basic treatment, are also available in Botswana at local hospitals that have been evaluated by the medical officer. If you become seriously ill, you will be transported either to a American-standard medical facility in the region or to the United States.

Health Issues in Botswana

Health conditions in Botswana are quite good. The most common health problems are related to the climate, which at times is very hot and dry. Preventive measures such as a good diet, adequate hydration, and being alert to changes in your body are more important here than at home. Most villages have health posts or clinics, with hospitals in the larger villages and towns. Hospitals in the capital have excellent facilities. HIV/AIDS is a major health and development problem in the region, as Botswana's HIV infection rate is the highest in the world. Infection with HIV is preventable, however, if one avoids risky behavior.

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 Botswana, you will receive a medical

handbook. During training, you will receive a medical kit with supplies to take care of mild illnesses and first-aid needs. The contents of the kit are listed later in this chapter.

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

You will have physicals during mid-service and at the end of your service. If you develop a serious medical problem during your service, the medical officer in Botswana will consult with the Office of Medical Services in Washington, D.C. If it is determined that your condition cannot be treated in Botswana, 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 diagnostic and treatment facilities are limited and are not always up to the standards of the United States. The most important of your responsibilities in Botswana is to take preventive measures for malaria, digestive disorders, sunburn, dehydration, and stress.

Many diseases that afflict Volunteers worldwide are entirely preventable if proper food and water precautions are taken. These diseases include food poisoning, parasitic infections, hepatitis A, dysentery, Guinea worm, tapeworms, and

typhoid fever. While most locations in Botswana have safe drinking water, the medical officers will discuss specific standards for water and food preparation in Botswana during pre-service training.

Abstinence is the only certain choice for preventing infection with HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases. You are taking risks if you choose to be sexually active. To lessen risk, use a condom every time you have sex. Whether your partner is a host country citizen, a fellow Volunteer, or anyone else, do not assume this person is free of HIV or other STDs. You will receive more information from the medical officer about this important issue.

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

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

Women's Health Information

Pregnancy is treated in the same manner as other Volunteer health conditions that require medical attention but also have programmatic ramifications. The Peace Corps is responsible for determining the medical risk and the availability of appropriate medical care if the Volunteer remains in-country. Given the circumstances under which Volunteers live and work, it is rare that the Peace Corps' medical and programmatic standards for continued service during pregnancy can be met.

If feminine hygiene products are not available for you to purchase on the local market, the Peace Corps medical officers in Botswana will provide them. If you require a specific product, please bring a three-month supply with you.

Your Peace Corps Medical Kit

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

Medical Kit Contents (Note: contents may vary slightly)

Ace bandages

Adhesive tape

American Red Cross First Aid & Safety Handbook

Antacid tablets (Tums)

Antibiotic ointment (Bacitracin/Neomycin/Polymycin B)

Antiseptic antimicrobial skin cleaner (Hibiclens)

Band-Aids

Butterfly closures

Calamine lotion

Cepacol lozenges

Condoms

Dental floss

Diphenhydramine HCL 25 mg (Benadryl)

Insect repellent stick (Cutter's)

Iodine tablets (for water purification)

Lip balm (Chapstick)

Oral rehydration salts and Gatorade

Oral thermometer (Fahrenheit)

Pseudoephedrine HCL 30 mg (Sudafed)

Robitussin-DM lozenges (for cough)

Scissors

Sterile gauze pads

Tetrahydrozaline eyedrops (Visine)
Tinactin (antifungal cream)
Tweezers

Before You Leave: A Medical Checklist

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

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

If you wish to avoid having duplicate vaccinations, 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 Botswana. You do not need to begin taking malaria medication prior to departure.

Bring a three-month supply of any prescription or over-the-counter medication you use on a regular basis, including birth control pills. Although the Peace Corps cannot reimburse you

for this three-month supply, 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 antioxidant supplements.

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

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

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

during your service if you think age or pre-existing conditions might prevent you from re-enrolling in your current plan when you return home.

Safety and Security—Our Partnership

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

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

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

Factors that Contribute to Volunteer Risk

There are several factors that can heighten a Volunteer's risk, many of which are within the Volunteer's control.

Based on information gathered from incident reports

worldwide in 2006, the following factors stand out as risk characteristics for assaults. Assaults consist of personal crimes committed against Volunteers, and do not include property crimes (such as vandalism or theft).

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

Summary Strategies to Reduce Risk

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

Strategies to reduce the risk/impact of theft:

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

Strategies to reduce the risk/impact of burglary:

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

Strategies to reduce the risk/impact of assault:

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

Support from Staff

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

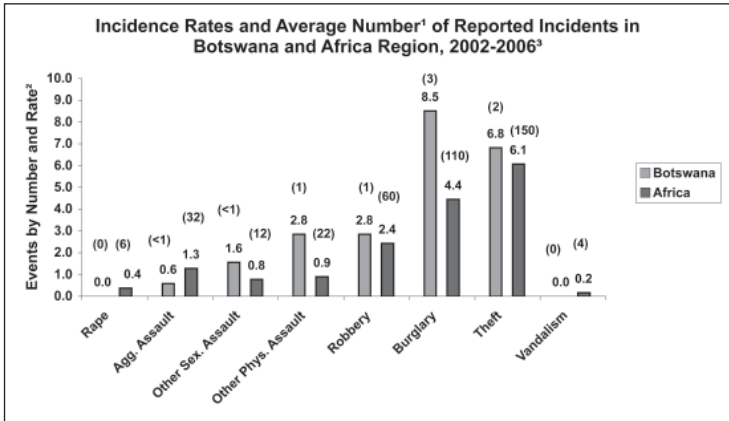
The major responsibilities of the Volunteer Safety and Overseas Security Division are to coordinate the office’s overseas operations and direct the Peace Corps’ safety and security officers who are located in various regions around

the world that have Peace Corps programs. The safety and security officers conduct security assessments; review safety trainings; train trainers and managers; train Volunteer safety wardens, local guards, and staff; develop security incident response procedures; and provide crisis management support.

If a trainee or Volunteer is the victim of a safety incident, Peace Corps staff is prepared to provide support. All Peace Corps posts have procedures in place to respond to incidents of crime committed against Volunteers. The first priority for all posts in the aftermath of an incident is to ensure that the Volunteer is safe and receiving medical treatment as needed. After assuring the safety of the Volunteer, Peace Corps staff provides support by reassessing the Volunteer's work site and housing arrangements and making any adjustments, as needed. In some cases, the nature of the incident may necessitate a site or housing transfer. Peace Corps staff will also assist Volunteers with preserving their rights to pursue legal sanctions against the perpetrators of the crime. It is very important that Volunteers report incidents as they occur, not only to protect their peer Volunteers, but also to preserve the future right to prosecute. Should Volunteers decide later in the process that they want to proceed with the prosecution of their assailant, this option may no longer exist if the evidence of the event has not been preserved at the time of the incident.

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

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



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

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

³Data collection for Botswana began as of 2002; due to the small number of V/T years, incidence rates should be interpreted with caution.

Sexual Assaults are termed Other Sexual Assault and Other Physical Assault per CIRF definitions as of the year 2006. Prior to CIRF and prior to 2006, Sexual Assaults were termed Minor Sexual Assault Assault and Minor Physical Assault per ANSS definitions.

Source data on incidents are drawn from Assault Notification Surveillance System (ANSS), Epidemiologic Surveillance System (ESS), and Crime Incident Reporting Form (CIRF); the information is accurate as of 10/22/07.

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.

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

When anticipating Peace Corps Volunteer service, you should review all of the safety and security information provided to you, including the strategies to reduce risk. Throughout your training and Volunteer service, you will be expected to successfully complete all training competencies in a variety of areas including safety and security. Once in-country, use the tools and information shared with you to remain as safe and secure as possible.

What if you become a victim of a violent crime?

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

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

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

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

Security Issues in Botswana

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 Botswana. You can reduce your risk by avoiding situations that make you feel uncomfortable and by taking precautions. Crime at the village or town level is less frequent than in the large cities; people know each other and generally will not steal from their neighbors and will watch each other's house during their absence. Larger population centers present greater opportunities for criminal activity, and tourist attractions are favorite work sites for pickpockets. Houses and rooms left empty during holidays also create tempting opportunities. Wherever you are in Botswana, alcohol can fuel unsafe driving, unsafe sex, and sexual assaults. In general, individuals are easier targets than groups and women are easier targets than men. While being aware of these matters may seem like common sense, our altruism often overrides common sense until something bad happens.

Staying Safe: Don't Be a Target for Crime

You must be prepared to take 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 Botswana, do what you would do if you moved to a new city in the United States: Be cautious, check things out, ask questions, learn about your neighborhood, know where the more risky locations are, use common sense, and be aware. You can reduce your vulnerability to crime by integrating into your community, learning the local language,

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

Volunteers attract a lot of attention both in large cities and at their sites, but they are likely to receive more negative attention in highly populated centers than at their sites, where “family,” friends, and colleagues look out for them. While whistles and exclamations are common on the street, this behavior can be reduced if you dress conservatively, avoid eye contact, and do not respond to unwanted attention. Keep your money out of sight by using an undergarment money pouch, the kind that hangs around your neck and stays hidden under your shirt or inside your coat. Do not keep your money in outside pockets of backpacks, in coat pockets, or in fanny packs. You should always walk with a companion at night.

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

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

The Peace Corps/Botswana 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 memorandums 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 Botswana. This training will prepare you to adopt a culturally appropriate lifestyle and exercise judgment that promotes safety and reduces risk in your home, at work, and while traveling. Safety training is offered throughout service and is integrated into the language, cross-cultural, health, and other components of training.

Certain **site selection criteria** are used to determine safe housing for Volunteers before their arrival. The Peace Corps staff works closely with host communities and counterpart agencies to help prepare them for a Volunteer's arrival and to establish expectations of their respective roles in supporting the Volunteer. Each site is inspected before the Volunteer's arrival to ensure placement in appropriate, safe, and secure housing and work sites.

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

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

NOTES



DIVERSITY AND CROSS-CULTURAL ISSUES



In fulfilling the Peace Corps' mandate to share the face of America with our host countries, we are making special efforts to see that all of America's richness is reflected in the Volunteer 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, it poses challenges. In Botswana, as in other Peace Corps host countries, Volunteers' behavior, lifestyle, background, and beliefs will be judged in a cultural context very different from our own. Certain personal perspectives or characteristics commonly accepted in the United States may be quite uncommon, unacceptable, or even repressed in Botswana.

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

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

Overview of Diversity in Botswana

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

What Might a Volunteer Face?

Possible Issues for Female Volunteers

To address restrictive laws and traditions of its society, Botswana has a constitution that protects women's rights. The country has made great strides in gender equity in the modern sector, and ministerial, senior-level government,

and private-sector posts are held by women. In addition, the government has developed a national gender program to improve the lives of vulnerable women. Nevertheless, rural, less educated women at the lower end of the socioeconomic scale tend to have less authority and responsibility than men do for income, spending, and reproductive health. Although this is changing, many rural communities have not had much experience with women who take on professional roles, remain unmarried, and live away from their families. Thus, female Volunteers may experience a great deal of unwanted attention and may need to practice discretion in public. During both cross-cultural and safety training sessions, all Volunteers are provided with strategies and practice in limiting and responding to unwanted attention.

Possible Issues for Volunteers of Color

Most Batswana in cities and towns are aware of the different racial and ethnic groups that exist in the United States. However, this level of knowledge and understanding greatly diminishes among rural populations. African-American Volunteers may not be recognized as Americans. They may be expected to learn local languages more quickly than other Volunteers, may be accepted more readily into the culture than other Volunteers, and may be treated according to local social norms because they are assumed to be African.

Hispanic American and Asian-American Volunteers may also be perceived as not being American. Batswana may expect Asian Americans to exhibit stereotyped behavior observed in films, sometimes referred to as the “kung fu syndrome.” Asian-Americans are often assumed to be Chinese. In addition, the presence of Asian merchants in the country may have an impact on how Asian-American Volunteers are perceived.

Possible Issues for Senior Volunteers

In Botswana, older members of society are viewed and treated with a great deal of respect. Issues for older Volunteers are more likely to be in relation to their younger fellow Volunteers. Older Volunteers may meet individuals in the Peace Corps community who have little understanding of or respect for the lives and experiences of senior Americans and may not be able to offer the necessary personal support. Older Volunteers, in turn, may be inclined to withdraw from full participation in order to “give the younger folks their turn,” and may be reluctant to share personal, sexual, or health concerns. They may not find appropriate role models among the Peace Corps staff or may find that younger Volunteers look to them for more advice than they feel comfortable giving. Finally, older Volunteers may need to be assertive about asking for an effective individual approach to language learning during pre-service training.

Possible Issues for Gay, Lesbian, or Bisexual Volunteers

In general, Botswana view homosexuality as immoral; it is illegal according to the country’s constitution. Homosexuality certainly exists in Botswana, but not with the same level of acceptance as in the United States. Because of cultural norms, homosexual Volunteers may discover that they cannot be open about their sexual orientation and have to serve for two years without revealing to their community that they are gay. Homosexual or bisexual Volunteers may also serve for two years without meeting another homosexual or bisexual Volunteer. Lesbians, like all American women, are likely to have to deal with constant questions about boyfriends, marriage, and sex, while gay men may have to deal with machismo: talk of sexual conquests, girl watching, and dirty jokes.

Possible Religious Issues for Volunteers

Most Batswana have some religious affiliation, and many attend church regularly. Most meetings, government-sponsored or not, often start with a prayer. Both Christian and non-Christian Volunteers may be expected to attend church with the members of their community. They may be asked to explain why they do not belong to a certain Christian denomination or may be actively recruited by a Christian group. Volunteers may not be able to adequately convey their own religious beliefs because of language or cultural barriers.

Possible Issues for Volunteers With Disabilities

There is very little infrastructure in Botswana to accommodate individuals with disabilities. Disabled Volunteers may find living in rural communities particularly challenging. Nevertheless, the Peace Corps' Office of Medical Services determined that you were physically and emotionally capable of performing a full tour of Volunteer service in Botswana without unreasonable risk to yourself or interruption of your service. Peace Corps/Botswana staff will work with disabled Volunteers to make reasonable accommodations in projects, training, housing, job sites, and other areas to enable them to serve safely and effectively.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



How much luggage am I allowed to bring to Botswana?

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

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

What is the electric current in Botswana?

It is 220 volts, 50 hertz. Plugs/outlets consist of both three-prong round and three-prong square shapes.

How much money should I bring?

Volunteers are expected to live at the same level as the people in their community. You will be given a settling-in allowance and a monthly living allowance, which should cover your

expenses. Often Volunteers wish to bring additional money for vacation travel to other countries. Credit cards and bank cards are preferable to cash. Traveler's checks are not widely accepted by businesses in Botswana and are redeemable only at certain banks. However, they can be useful for travel to other countries during vacations. Note, too, that ATM machines are widely available and linked to the banking network in the States. Credit and debit cards stamped with the "PLUS" logo on the back are useable. If you choose to bring extra money, bring the amount that will suit your own travel plans and needs.

When can I take vacation and have people visit me?

Each Volunteer accrues two vacation days per month of service (excluding training). Leave may not be taken during training, 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 the first three months of service as long as their stay does not interfere with your work. All vacation plans must be approved by the Volunteer's Botswana supervisor before being submitted to the Peace Corps for approval. Extended stays (those that require more leave than you have accrued) away from your site are not encouraged and must be reviewed by your Peace Corps supervisor before being submitted to the Peace Corps country director for a final decision.

The Peace Corps cannot provide Volunteers with vacation planning assistance. You are responsible for making reservations, purchasing tickets, and procuring the appropriate visas. The Peace Corps cannot provide your visitors with visa or travel assistance.

Will my belongings be covered by insurance?

The Peace Corps does not insure personal effects. Volunteers are ultimately responsible for the safekeeping of their

personal belongings. However, you can purchase personal property insurance before you leave. If you wish, you may contact your own insurance company; additionally, insurance application forms will be provided, and we encourage you to consider them carefully. Volunteers should not ship or take valuable items overseas. Jewelry, watches, radios, cameras, and expensive appliances are subject to loss, theft, and breakage, and in many places, satisfactory maintenance and repair services are not available.

Do I need an international driver's license?

Volunteers in Botswana are not allowed to drive except during an approved vacation. Many Volunteers in southern Africa find it economically advantageous to rent a car, either alone or as a group, while traveling in the region. In such cases, it is helpful to have an international driver's license. As with other personal travel arrangements, the Peace Corps does not assist in the procurement of international driver's licenses.

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

The Peace Corps does not encourage you to bring gifts for your family and friends during training. The provision of such gifts is an issue to be discussed and decided by the entire group of trainees, since it is precedent-setting and may have ramifications outside the gift giver's original intent. For instance, expectations may arise in host families if some people provide gifts but others do not. Should you feel moved to provide a small token of appreciation to your host family, a wide range of suitable items are available locally.

One of the greatest gifts you can provide to your host family and friends is information about yourself and your life in the United States. For this reason, we encourage you to bring photos of the people and things that are important in your life.

Where I be assigned to live when I finish training and how isolated will I be?

Peace Corps trainees are not assigned to individual sites until near the end of pre-service training. This gives Peace Corps staff the opportunity to assess each trainee's technical and language skills prior to assigning sites, in addition to finalizing site selections with their ministry counterparts. The Botswana program has a wide variety of sites, ranging from urban to peri-urban to rural, and Volunteers should be prepared to accept any of them.

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. The Office of Special Services can be reached around the clock at 800.424.8580, extension 1470 or 202.692.1470. For non-emergency questions, your family can get information from your country desk staff at the Peace Corps by calling 800.424.8580.

Can I call home from Botswana?

Yes. Most telephones in the country can be used for international calls. Volunteers often call home and ask to be called back or prearrange a time to be called at a private phone or pay phone.

Should I bring a cellular phone with me?

While cellular phone services are widely available in Botswana, it is not advisable to bring a cellphone from the United States unless you check with the manufacturer and confirm that the phone will work in Botswana. In all cases, these phones are the type with SIM cards that can be changed

in and out. SIM cards in Botswana cost about \$15. The cost of a new cellphone in Botswana is approximately \$100. Peace Corps does not provide cellphones to Volunteers, nor do they provide funds to enable Volunteers to buy phones.

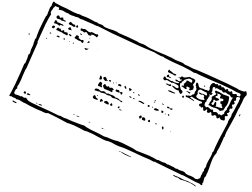
Will there be e-mail and Internet access?

Should I bring my computer?

Internet service is widely available in Botswana; most larger villages and towns have Internet cafes. The choice about whether to bring a computer is an individual one. Those who decide to bring a personal computer should be aware that Botswana's climate can be tough on sensitive equipment. In addition, peripherals like printer cartridges and disks are very expensive locally. Those who bring computers or other valuable equipment should consider purchasing personal property insurance.



WELCOME LETTERS FROM BOTSWANA VOLUNTEERS



Dumela future Botsers!

First off, congratulations on being invited to serve in a country as beautiful and welcoming as Botswana! You are about to embark on an amazing journey that will no doubt challenge you mentally, emotionally, and physically. You might be feeling nervous, scared, or anxious, but know that this is totally normal and with time will go away. It will also be one of the most rewarding, unique, and awesome experiences you will ever have in life.

You will be involved at a major point of Botswana's history. You will be at the forefront of the country's proactive approach to fighting the AIDS epidemic. You are like a torchbearer for the Olympics. Only a select few will ever get this chance. You may not carry the torch to its final destination, but you know the ultimate goal. You must trust in the people who carry it before and after you to help see it through. Together (as PCVs working with Botswana) we will get the torch to the finish line and put out the flame of HIV/AIDS and ignite a fresh light for a new chapter in Botswana's history.

You will be a friend, mentor, community mobilizer, observer, and student. The reality is you never know just how many lives you have saved, inspired, or empowered. Always remember that just being here has an impact on the people of Botswana and every day you are making a difference. We are all humans with a heart, spirit, and a story. Do not come with expectations or to pass judgment; instead, come with patience and a willingness to learn.

The pace of life here is different. There is more value placed on personal relationships than material products. It will take time to adjust, but savor it. This is a great opportunity

for anyone coming with a fast-paced, quantifiable-results American mentality! You will experience the culture of Botswana and become a member of your community on a level you never could as a tourist. With time you will undoubtedly build meaningful relationships that will strengthen your time in-country as well as in the future.

With all that being said, let's talk about the dreaded P word... packing! The basic premise I would follow is bring what is comfortable to you. In your own space, it is totally appropriate for girls to wear clothes such as jeans, capris, shorts, and tank tops. But be reasonable, don't bring miniskirts, halter tops, saggy jeans, that kind of thing. Think in terms of what image you are projecting and what attention your clothes are bringing to you.

It depends on your placement what you will wear to work. Those working in district AIDS coordinator offices are often the most professionally dressed as they are placed in offices, while community capacity building Volunteers (CCBs) are mostly placed at the village level. For CCBs it depends on the individual what they wear every day. A few wear nice jeans; others always wear skirts or khakis.

In the winter, which is when you will be arriving, don't doubt that it gets cold, especially at night! Definitely throw a jacket, sweaters, heavy socks, and mittens in with your warm weather wear. Bring something for the rain; I recommend an umbrella because it also helps with the sun.

You might be from somewhere that is cold in the States. But keep in mind that the cold is different here. During training, and likely at site, you will be living in a 100 percent concrete house without insulation and with thin windows and no heat. That definitely intensifies the cold, windy nights!

You will find that you can buy a lot in Botswana, from toiletries to clothing to food. So bring more of the personal things that make you feel at home (like a journal, pictures, etc.) that you cannot buy here. Bring along something to do for fun. For me I brought a lot of games because I love playing games (UNO is definitely the best one I brought!) while other

Volunteers brought things such as books, journals, laptops (you can buy movies here very cheaply). Whatever helps you pass the time bring it!

In the end, the most important things to pack are not material or tangible, but rather acceptance, an open mind, kindness, and humility. So relax and just pack what you can. You can always buy here what you feel you still need after nine weeks of training and being to site. You might be surprised at what seems important now, but you cannot even remember once you are here!

And always remember that you are a little ambassador of peace who imparts a spirit of dedication, hope, and inspiration upon everyone you meet.

Go Siame,

— Ashlee “Olorato” Irwin

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Dear Future PCVs of Botswana:

Congratulations on your acceptance to the Peace Corps! You are in for an exciting two years in a wonderful country. So, let me give you some of my impressions of Botswana...

I'm sure you have already read a lot about Botswana—a peaceful, land-locked country with prodigious amounts of cattle and diamonds, etc. Still, you must be wondering, what is Botswana really like? The truth is, Botswana is a land of many contrasts. There are urban areas that offer a full range of amenities, such as shopping malls, movie theaters, and Internet cafes. In rural areas, however, some villages still lack electricity, running water, and phone coverage. The climate also varies, from the remote desert village of Tsabong to the verdant resort town of Kasane on the Chobe River. Most Volunteers will probably end up living somewhere in-between.

Though it might sound cliché, the most important advice I can give you is to arrive with no expectations! If you are anticipating the idealistic “Peace Corps experience” (i.e., living in a mud hut that you built), you might be disappointed. But, if you arrive with an open mind, Botswana has a lot to offer.

Like most cultures, much of what makes Botswana interesting and unique is underneath the surface and takes time and patience to understand. One reason I love being a Peace Corps Volunteer is that we have the opportunity to see and learn things that casual travelers and many international volunteers generally do not. I recall that on my first day with my host family during pre-service training; I was struck at how Americanized my family seemed as they passionately cheered on “The Rock” while watching professional wrestling on television. Over time, however, I have realized that most people are much more traditional than they appear to be. My host mother, for example, is a fun-loving woman who speaks excellent English, attends Christian church service on Sundays, and is a devoted fan of “Walker: Texas Ranger.” At the same time, she is a practicing traditional healer. The old and new coexist in Botswana, and you will surely see this on a daily basis.

You probably have questions about HIV/AIDS. It is often said in Botswana that everyone is either infected or affected. HIV/AIDS truly does permeate every aspect of society, but this often remains unspoken as stigma and discrimination are still enormous obstacles. Botswana is pouring resources into fighting the epidemic, but vast amounts of work still need to be done. Yet, despite being one of the hardest-hit countries in the world, this is not a sad place. Botswana are very jovial and love to laugh, dance, and sing more than any people I have ever known. Working with HIV/AIDS will challenge you in more ways than you ever thought imaginable, but because of the people it can also be fun and rewarding.

As far as what to bring, remember that you’re better off packing like you’re going on an extended business trip rather than a summer at camp. Botswana value dressing “smart.” I would especially suggest clothes that are wrinkle- and stain-resistant, as this drastically reduces the work of hand-washing and ironing. Also, white clothes, while cool, tend to attract the ubiquitous red dust of Botswana. Bring clothes for the summer AND the winter, which in parts of the country can

be bitterly cold. Don't forget your nice casual wear either, as you'll want to look good when you go out on the town. If you like camping, a tent and sleeping bag are holiday essentials. Basically, bring a little bit of everything and you'll be fine. And don't forget your books and CDs, as Peace Corps Volunteers end up sharing a lot!

Good luck as you pack and say your goodbyes. You should never get too lonely here because you'll always have your fellow Volunteers, and we really are kind of like a family. We're looking forward to meeting you! You're going to learn and grow so much over the next few years and I wish you all the best. Oh yeah—and you'll have a lot of fun!!!

Go fitlhelela re kopana mo Botswana... (Until we meet in Botswana...)

Pula!!!

— Kevin Collins

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As a married couple, our advice and experiences will probably contain some similar and some quite different information than those of single Volunteers. Volunteering together has many advantages in that loneliness and social isolation are much lessened. You always have a friend to laugh with and who understands you. On the other hand, being together with your partner is often stressful and frustrating situations can test a relationship. I hated people telling me this before we left, but it is true. For us, the outcome has been the development of an incredibly strong and close relationship.

Working and living in Botswana has its advantages and challenges. People are welcoming and friendly. The people are very responsive if you make an attempt to speak their language, Setswana. The country varies greatly—from desert to delta. Some of the world's most beautiful and awe-inspiring wildlife are a bus trip away. Living accommodations may not be on par with U.S. standards, but some are more comfortable than people often imagine when they think of Peace Corps.

Of course, some placements are very remote and Volunteers live without electricity and plumbing.

The work setting may also be different than “typical” Peace Corps. Both of us dress more professionally for work here than we did in the U.S. Office hours are a firm 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., with an hour for lunch. Some settings have computers and faxes—a few even have Internet access. Conversely, you may find yourself in a health post where pens are prized and highly guarded. One of the more taxing aspects of working in Botswana is its labyrinth of bureaucracy and protocol.

The most difficult aspect of living and working in Botswana is it is a nation mired in a pandemic. Many Volunteers face death of people on a daily basis. At this point in time, many Botswana deal with the horrible scourge of HIV/AIDS through denial. It can be overwhelming at times. However, it is exactly the huge extent of the pandemic that makes any success you experience here have such an impact.

Right now, packing is probably at the forefront of your mind. In Botswana, winter is cold at night and summer is very hot. There is little in-between, so your precious packing space must make room for lightweight summer clothes as well as heavier winter things. People do dress up for work, so for women bring skirts, short- and long-sleeved tops, tights for winter, dress shoes and nice sandals for summer and a few sweaters. Don't forget to bring casual clothes as well. If you are not used to dressing in skirts, it can be strange to spend all day in them, so bring clothes you can feel like yourself in for your off hours. At home, pants and sweats are a must for winter and shorts for summer.

For men, the trick is to find work shoes and pants that you don't smother in under the hot sun. The dress shoes I brought are durable leather, but way too hot. My best pants are a professional-looking pair I picked up at an outdoors store and are made of some space-age polymer. Before departure, I was against bringing a down winter jacket, but it turned out to be one of the most important pieces of clothing. I wore it before

breakfast and soon after sundown during winter. Here's a short list of non-clothing items to bring. Remember that the capital, Gaborone, is very Westernized and you can purchase almost any item there.

- A shortwave radio that works well
- Music
- Books (but don't go overboard—there are a couple of great bookstores in the capital and many villages have good libraries)
- Sleeping bags are better than blankets
- Electrical converters—be aware that for heat-producing appliances (hairdryers, irons), you need a high-wattage converter

We hope these few suggestions have been helpful. Botswana is a beautiful country in transition—from a traditional to a Westernized society, from an impoverished nation to a middle-income economy and, with your involvement, from a country suffering with the highest HIV prevalence to a healthy and vital nation.

Go siame,

— Bob Hicks and Debra Smith-Hicks

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Greetings Future Bots Volunteer!

You are probably very excited (maybe a little nervous or unsure) and devouring every page of this book to try to find out more about what lies ahead. Although we can never be sure what to expect, I will tell you a few things that I think may be helpful. Remember, most of all, that every experience is different and every Peace Corps Volunteer is different, therefore DO NOT HAVE ANY EXPECTATIONS or personal agendas. These will only lead to disappointment and frustration. Peace Corps is a roller-coaster of emotions and experiences, but it will take you for the ride of your life!

There is a lot wrapped up in “the Peace Corps experience.” The things that make it fun and great and meaningful for

some are just as different as the ways that it is difficult and frustrating and challenging for others. But regardless of those differences, the thing that binds us all together is our ability to adapt and deal with these different people and situations, and to learn and to grow from it all. How each Volunteer does that is unique to the Volunteer.

The biggest part of training is just learning how to adapt. Everything that happens with Peace Corps and with your host families are part of that lesson. Try to handle it with grace. As you are adjusting to life in Botswana, you'll come across many different faces. Try to remember that in each of these faces, fellow Peace Corps Volunteers and Botswana, there is a heart and a mind and a life, and each of these lives serves a purpose. By being here we are serving a purpose, but it is not that purpose that is as important as the fact that we are all sharing our lives. Learn from that and have fun!

OK, OK, I'm sure all you really want to know is: "What should I pack?" I believe essential comfort items include a journal (whether you are an avid journaler or not, there will no doubt be things that you will want to write down); a yoga mat or some other tools for physical activity (the most important part of staying healthy and still the best-known stress reliever!); lots of music (don't forget a way to listen to it, and speakers that project for when you are at home, too); lots and lots of pictures of friends and family (there are periods of pretty intense homesickness even for those who never thought they would be!); and a few books (just one or two, there are lots around here already and you will find you have less time to read than you thought). Then pack whatever special things that make you happy (special toiletry items to spoil yourself, art supplies, or whatever). These will help get you through some of those tough times--and I guarantee there will be some!

As far as the essential items go, I suggest you bring comfortable walking shoes, flip-flops or sandals, a fleece jacket, a backpack, a compact sleeping bag and a multi-use tool like a Leatherman. With these few items you can go just about anywhere. There are a lot of awesome places to explore

in and around Botswana, and you won't want to be bogged down while you travel. You will not need to pack toiletry items (other than special items you can't live without or what you'll need to get you through training). You can get just about anything you'll need in familiar brands just about anywhere. Botswana is still very traditional in many ways, but Botswana, especially the younger generations, are very modern. Professional work clothes that are acceptable in an office in the States are usually acceptable here, too (nice pants or skirts and almost any nice shirts). I came prepared to wear long skirts and baggy shirts every day. Although I still need these for some events and some workplaces are more strict than others, within a few weeks I had my parents send me another box of clothes that I liked better. One returned Peace Corps Volunteer told me that I should bring a few things that make me feel good. Be sure to bring a couple of outfits and shoes that you would wear in a club or when you are just hanging around. And don't forget those comfy outfits that you will sleep in or lounge around in, or clean the house in.

When you are thinking of exactly what clothes to bring, remember that in the winter (about two to three months) it really is very cold. You will need a hat, mittens, scarf, long johns, warm socks, warm jacket and a few warm sweaters. However, in the summer it is also hotter than hot! You will need a hat to shade your face, and cool and comfortable breathable clothing made in linen or lightweight cotton. Also remember that you will be doing your own laundry so bring items that are durable and easy to wash. Botswana are very particular about looking clean and neatly pressed, so be sure that you come prepared to iron or have materials that don't need as much effort.

Don't let the weight and size limit of your luggage stress you out. Bringing more with you is worth it in mailing costs. Although you should try to live a simpler life, don't deprive yourself of anything (some days are hard enough on their own), but it is amazing to see how "necessary items" change throughout your service!

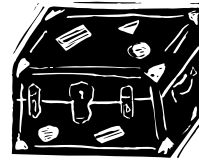
Just don't spend all of your last few weeks obsessing over what to pack. Enjoy your friends and family and going to your favorite places, doing some of your favorite things-these are the things you'll miss the most and you can't bring with you. During these last few weeks really look inside yourself, try to relax and enjoy yourself and those around you. And don't forget to enjoy the ride!

— Kristin Unzicker “Sethunya”

NOTES



PACKING LIST



Use this packing list as an informal guide in making your own list. You obviously cannot bring everything we mention, so consider those items that make the most sense to you personally and professionally. There is no perfect list! You can always have things sent to you later. As you decide what to bring, keep in mind that you have an 80-pound weight restriction on baggage. And remember you can get almost everything you need here.

Note that while the climate is comfortable for the greater part of the year, houses do not have heat, making the winters colder than you might expect. Do not bring any camouflage or military-style clothing to wear—your time is much too valuable to spend detained at a police checkpoint.

General Clothing

For Men

- Dress slacks and khaki trousers (jeans are not appropriate at work)
- Lightweight cotton dress shirts (T-shirts are not appropriate at work)
- Dress shoes or loafers (tennis shoes or sandals are not appropriate at work)
- Sports coat or suit for special events
- Ties
- Durable jeans (for weekends, travel, or after-work wear)
- Casual shoes (tennis or running)
- Warm coat
- Sweaters or fleece pullovers

- Thermal underwear
- A few pairs of thick socks
- Gloves or mittens
- Shorts and/or a bathing suit
- Lightweight raincoat or poncho

For Women

- Dresses or skirts (knee length or longer for work, no denim; nice slacks acceptable in some settings)
- Lightweight cotton blouses
- Dress shoes (for work)
- Durable jeans (for weekends, travel, or after-work wear)
- Casual shoes (tennis or running)
- Warm coat
- Sweaters or fleece pullovers
- A few pairs of thick socks
- Bathing suit
- Long shorts
- Lightweight raincoat or poncho

Shoes

Women's shoes larger than size 10 may be difficult to find. Most other types of shoes are readily available in Botswana, although they may not be of the same quality found in the United States.

Personal Hygiene and Toiletry Items

All basic toiletry items are available in Botswana, so you only need to bring enough for the first five or six weeks. Although the selection here may not be what you are used

to, the quality is generally quite good. Medicine and first-aid items will be available from the Peace Corps medical office once you are sworn in as a Volunteer. The office will also supply feminine hygiene products if they are not available for purchase at your site, but if you have special needs, please bring a three-month supply.

Miscellaneous

- French press (if you appreciate good coffee)
- 10 passport-size photos in color or black-and-white (to be used for various permits, visas, and ID cards; also helpful for obtaining visas if you plan to travel outside Botswana)
- Bicycle helmet (You will be able to purchase a bicycle with your settling-in allowance if you choose to and wearing a helmet is required. If you do not already have a good helmet, we advise you to buy a helmet that you like in the United States; the Peace Corps will reimburse you up to \$30. If you do not bring a helmet, the Peace Corps will provide one, but you will not have a choice of style or color.)
- Good sunglasses and a hat (There are about 345 sunny days per year in Botswana; the Peace Corps will supply all the sunscreen you need)
- Three-month supply of any prescription medicine you take
- Electronics—cameras, CD players, etc. are available in Botswana but are very expensive (AA and D batteries are the most commonly available size)



PRE-DEPARTURE CHECKLIST



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

Family

- Notify family that they can call the Peace Corps' Office of Special Services at any time if there is a critical illness or death of a family member (24-hour telephone number: 800.424.8580, extension 1470).
- Give the Peace Corps' *On the Home Front* handbook to family and friends.

Passport/Travel

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

Medical/Health

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

Insurance

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

Personal Papers

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

Voting

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

Personal Effects

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

Financial Management

- ❑ Obtain student loan deferment forms from the lender or loan service.
- ❑ Execute a power of attorney for the management of your property and business.
- ❑ Bring necessary banking/routing information for deductions from readjustment allowance to pay alimony, child support, student loans and other debts. These deductions may be set up after swearing-in as a Peace Corps Volunteer.
- ❑ Place all important papers—mortgages, deeds, stocks, and bonds—in a safe deposit box or with an attorney or other caretaker.



CONTACTING PEACE CORPS HEADQUARTERS



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

Peace Corps Headquarters

Toll-free Number:

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

Peace Corps' Mailing Address:

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

For Questions About:	Staff	Toll-free Extension	Direct/Local Number
Responding to an Invitation	Office of Placement Africa Region	Ext. 1850	202.692.1850
Programming or Country Information	Desk Officer E-mail: botswana@peacecorps.gov	Ext. 2334	202.692.2334
	Desk Assistant E-mail: botswana@peacecorps.gov	Ext. 2333	202.692.2333

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 (hotel and flight arrangements) three to five weeks before departure. This information is not available sooner.</i>	Office of Staging	Ext. 1865	202.692.1865
Family Emergencies (to get information to a Volunteer overseas)	Office of Special Services	Ext. 1470	202.692.1470 (24 hours)

PEACE CORPS

Paul D. Coverdell Peace Corps Headquarters

1111 20th Street NW · Washington, DC 20526 · www.peacecorps.gov · 1-800-424-8580