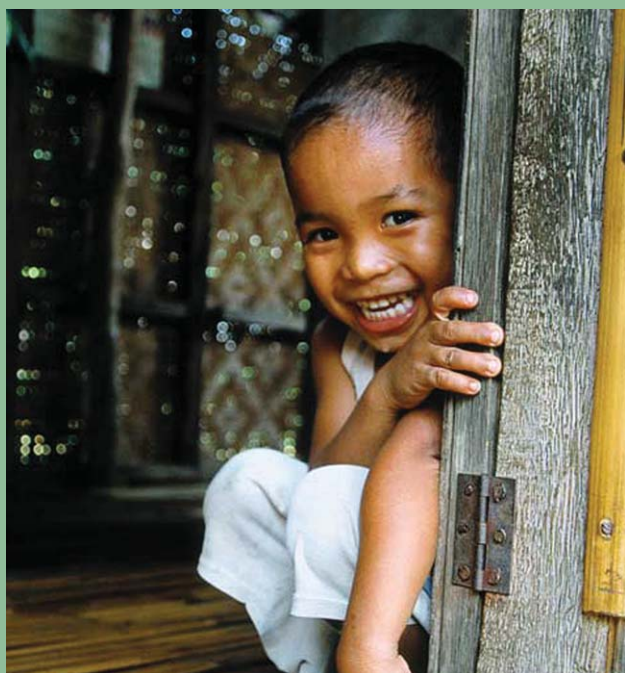


THE PEACE CORPS WELCOMES YOU TO

PHILIPPINES



A PEACE CORPS PUBLICATION
FOR NEW VOLUNTEERS



March 2008



A WELCOME LETTER

Dear Prospective Peace Corps Volunteer,

On behalf of the Peace Corps staff, I would like to thank you for applying to the Peace Corps and for choosing to come to the Philippines. We are very eager to have you as part of our team. We know you must be very busy right now preparing for your departure and saying your goodbyes. However, it is very important to set aside some uninterrupted time to carefully read this *Welcome Book*. The information contained in the book has been carefully assembled and updated by Peace Corps staff and Volunteers to provide the most accurate information possible on Volunteer service and living conditions in the Philippines.

You are fortunate to have been selected for service in the Philippines. It is a fascinating country with wonderfully friendly people and a rich diversity of cultural influences, including Malay, Arab, Spanish, American, and Chinese. It is also a place of great contrasts. Manila and other large cities at first glance appear to be cosmopolitan cities with shopping malls, familiar restaurant chains, and modern airports; at second glance, however, extreme poverty, urban sprawl, and environmental degradation become apparent.

Peace Corps/Philippines and Philippine authorities place a very high value on the potential of each Volunteer to contribute meaningfully to the positive development of people in a community and to gain experience, knowledge, and broadened understanding during their Peace Corps service. With these goals in mind, the Peace Corps and its Philippine partner organizations make a great effort to ensure that each Volunteer has a well-defined, full-time job and favorable prospects for successful service.

Volunteers, Peace Corps staff, and Philippine partner organizations have identified education, youth services, and the environment as areas in which Peace Corps Volunteers can contribute to the development of the Philippines. In these

project areas, Volunteers engage their communities and assist by building local capacity. Peace Corps/Philippines has a rich history of excellent work and significant contributions by its Volunteers. The program has changed to meet the needs of the country, but the one thing that has not changed is the willingness on the part of Volunteers and host agencies to share their knowledge, skills, and culture.

Volunteers are intended to be agents of positive change. However some Volunteers experience difficulty in making changes in themselves that are essential to effective Peace Corps service. At first lots of things in the Philippines might seem “just like home.” Then you will begin to appreciate that you are in a very different culture than the one you knew in the U.S. No one will expect you to become a Filipino, but you will need to learn much about Philippine culture to operate in your work and social environments in ways that will encourage Filipinos to accept and cooperate with you.

The task of becoming a productive contributor in any foreign work and life environment is by definition extremely challenging. To fulfill your service commitment, most likely you will have to make changes in your attitudes, priorities, and approach. Success as a Volunteer will also require commitment, flexibility, determination, perseverance, humor, and above all else, patience.

Please accept our sincere congratulations on your decision to become a Peace Corps Volunteer. You will soon join one of the world's most effective human development organizations. Peace Corps' success derives directly from the central emphasis on positive learning that features in all aspects of our program. We are confident that your service will continue and strengthen the Peace Corps' effectiveness. And we are eager to welcome you in person and to help you become a fully integrated and successful part of the Peace Corps/Philippines team.

With best wishes for a smooth departure from home and a safe journey to Manila,

Peace Corps/Philippines Staff and Volunteers

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PEACE CORPS/PHILIPPINES HISTORY AND PROGRAMS



History of the Peace Corps in Philippines

In October 1961, the first group of Peace Corps Volunteers in the Philippines arrived to begin classroom assignments in the areas of language, mathematics, and science. Those 123 Volunteers were the second group in any Peace Corps country.

Today, approximately 130 Volunteers continue to work with Filipinos to train primary, secondary, and tertiary teachers; to support organizations working with children, youth, and families at risk; to assist in the management of coastal resources, water systems, and waste management; to provide livelihood assistance; and to promote biodiversity conservation. Since 1961, more than 8,000 Peace Corps Volunteers have served in the Philippines; it is the country in which the largest number of Volunteers has served.

The fact that more than 8,000 Volunteers have served in the Philippines is significant. Filipinos tend to like Americans in general and Peace Corps Volunteers in particular. Many of the Filipinos you meet will recall with great fondness former Volunteers they have known.

History and Future of Peace Corps Programming in the Philippines

In the 1970s, the growing number of qualified Filipino teachers led to a shift in the Peace Corps' priorities to rural programming in the areas of social and economic

development. In the 1980s, a memorandum of understanding between the Peace Corps and the Departments of Education, Culture, and Sports; Environment and Natural Resources; and Agriculture provided a framework for projects in these areas. Volunteers worked on projects in health and nutrition, urban community development, appropriate technology, water and sanitation, agriculture extension, farmers' marketing coops, fisheries, income generation for small farmers, agroforestry, upland community development, integrated social forestry, vocational education, deaf education, physical education, local development planning, small business development, and income generation.

From the mid-1980s through the 1990s, Volunteers once again worked in schools, this time as teacher trainers at the high school level, while continuing the projects in health, agriculture, fisheries, agroforestry, income generation, and local development planning.

In June 1990, the Peace Corps suspended the program because of security concerns. The program resumed in 1992 with a project in small-island integrated development, with Volunteers working in coastal resources management, health and nutrition, water and sanitation, local development planning, and an integrated protected areas system project.

At present 130 Volunteers work alongside Filipino counterparts to teach students and train teachers; strengthen organizations working with children, youth, and families at risk; and assist communities in the management and conservation of coastal resources.

Peace Corps/Philippines Projects

In each project the development of human capacity is the central goal. Every Volunteer is offered the chance to enhance the capabilities and self reliance of their Filipino counterparts and their Philippine host communities while learning how to perceive the world more broadly and to operate with credibility and success in a foreign environment.

Education

Over the past two decades declining knowledge of English has weakened the Philippines' once strong competitiveness among Asian countries vying for foreign business investment. In 2006 President Arroyo requested the Peace Corps' assistance in a national campaign aimed at restoring English language fluency. Subsequently the Peace Corps resumed placement of Volunteer teachers in high schools, colleges, and universities as co-teachers working with Filipino colleagues. The first group to work under this program structure began service in August 2007 as teachers of English-language fluency.

In each school term, the Volunteer teachers are responsible for co-planning lessons with one, two, or three teachers. This allows opportunities for Volunteers to introduce the communicative method of English language teaching that emphasizes equipping the students to master the four skills of English which are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Through collaboration with their Volunteer counterparts, the Filipino teachers have daily opportunities to practice English and to learn successful communication with a mother-tongue English speaker.

Education Volunteers design pedagogical strategies and materials, and they are available to lead sessions on English language teaching at regional and national teacher training seminars. They assist in the design and implementation

of remedial courses for students needing extra English instruction. It is usual for Education Volunteers to formulate recommendations for further development of the national English curriculum and to circulate English lesson plans with other Volunteers and Filipino teachers.

Most Education Volunteers carry out projects in their schools to teach basic computer literacy, restore or create libraries, advise debate teams or journalism clubs, support ecology campaigns, or support other activities aimed at promoting English learning and use among students, faculty, and other community members. In some places, Volunteers also work closely with the parent, teacher, and community associations to improve their schools' learning environments.

Youth, Children, and Family Services

This project places Volunteers with social work and mental health services backgrounds in Philippine government social welfare centers and nongovernmental organizations that protect and educate at-risk children, youth, and families (CYF). CYF Volunteers collaborate with their counterparts to strengthen the organizations' capacities to serve their clients. Service also includes intensive community participation, networking, and advocacy.

Almost all CYF Volunteers engage in formal or non-formal teaching of basic literacy. These include reading and writing skills, basic mathematical functions, and simple English language. Volunteers can also expect to teach life skills and staff development. Often CYF Volunteers help lead the way in tackling previously unaddressed problems and piloting new approaches to client support and development.

Life skills development includes training in self-awareness, decision making, problem solving, creative and critical thinking, interpersonal communication, coping with stress, goal setting,

HIV/AIDS, sexuality, and reproductive health education. The Volunteers assist through formal and non-formal education as mentors, co-teachers, and advice givers. Some CYF Volunteers also coach sports or work on the development of their clients' skills to help them learn how to gain livelihoods once they leave the protection of residential institutions. Other Volunteers engage in highly individual project activities that are suggested by their worksite colleagues and clients or that the Volunteers determine to be needed as a result of their participation in their organizations and their close contact with their clients.

Some CYF Volunteers serve as advisors and coaches in the delivery of psychosocial services for at-risk children, youth, and families. These services include individual and group counseling; art, play, and group therapy; child case conferences and case management; and other therapeutic and developmental activities.

A CYF Volunteer also serves as a staff and organizational development facilitator and advisor. Volunteers co-plan and co-implement staff trainings on a range of topics such as stress, anger, and time management; basic counseling; child development; behavior modification; rehabilitative techniques; and other programs that enhance the delivery of psychosocial services.

Assignment sites for CYF Volunteers include residential centers and facilities managed and operated by the Philippine Department of Social Welfare and Development, local government units, and accredited nongovernmental organizations. The residential facilities variously cater to at-risk children and youth from zero to eighteen years old and at times some adults. Caseloads include children in conflict with the law; abandoned, neglected, and abused children and youth; and children and adults with physical and mental disabilities.

Environment

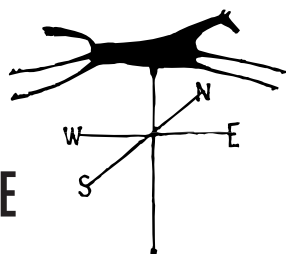
Peace Corps/Philippines' environment project focuses on coastal resource management (CRM). Volunteers assist coastal communities' ongoing efforts to implement restoration and protection of marine habitats and to enhance food security through participative community action and environmental education. Volunteers work with local government units and their coastal populations in developing, implementing, and managing integrated CRM plans and projects. They also assist communities with organizing, environmental education and training, and establishing the bases for legal protection of fish stocks and marine habitats.

Volunteers have a mixed workload that can include research, writing, and facilitating CRM planning and assessment meetings and workshops. They also help in developing public awareness strategies and materials aimed at educating local people about environmental topics. At times they undertake field work while organizing, conducting, and analyzing participatory biophysical and socio-economic coastal resource assessments; helping communities develop their own CRM plans; conducting public information, education, and communication activities; helping to draft environmental protection ordinances; conducting paralegal education; and helping facilitate the development and implementation of a wide variety of coastal management projects. The coastal management programs can include marine protected area establishment and management, fisheries management, integrated coastal use zoning, sustainable coastal tourism, waste management, and other similar endeavors.

Peace Corps/Philippines' environment project makes Volunteer assignments in alternate years in Luzon and the Visayas, the two principal regions where the Peace Corps is active. This arrangement enables the Peace Corps to focus on the specific development needs in each region. It also promotes networking and collaboration among environment Volunteers, their co-workers, and their host communities.



COUNTRY OVERVIEW: PHILIPPINES AT A GLANCE



History

The first people to inhabit the Philippines, the Negritos, are believed to have come to the islands 30,000 years ago from Borneo and Sumatra. Their descendants, the Malays, remained the dominant group until the Spanish arrived in the 16th century. Chinese merchants and traders settled in the islands in the ninth century A.D. In the 14th century, some Arabs arrived, introducing Islam to people in the Sulu Archipelago, central and western Mindanao, and the mountains of northern Luzon.

Ferdinand Magellan claimed the archipelago for Spain in 1521, putting the Philippines under Spanish rule for the next 377 years. Independence from Spain was declared on June 12, 1898, after Spain ceded the islands to the United States in the Spanish-American War. Japan occupied the islands during World War II. The period after World War II was dominated by U.S.-assisted reconstruction. On July 4, 1946, independence from the United States was proclaimed in accordance with an earlier act passed by the U.S. Congress. Most Filipinos converted to Christianity during nearly 400 years of Spanish and American rule.

On January 20, 2001, President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo was installed through a second “People Power” movement (the first toppled the Marcos dictatorship and led to the presidency of Corazon Aquino). After serving for two and a half years as an “appointed” president, President Arroyo was selected by the electorate in May 2004 to serve a full six-year term.

Government

The Philippines has a constitutional government. Legislative power is vested in a bicameral Congress composed of 24 senators and 250 representatives. The president is elected directly by the voters for a six-year term. The country is divided into 16 administrative regions consisting of 81 provinces. Each province is administered by an elected governor from its provincial capital. Provincial municipalities, administered by elected mayors, consist of varying numbers of village communities called *barangays*, after the Malay term for the boats that carried settlers to the islands.

Economy

The Philippine economy grew rapidly after World War II. The pace slowed in the 1950s and the early 1960s, and ever since the Philippines has not kept abreast with the spectacular growth of its Southeast and East Asian neighbor countries. Altered monetary policies spurred growth to some extent in the 1970s with the economy peaking at 10 percent growth in 1973. Then during a severe economic recession from 1984 to 1985 the Philippine economy contracted by nearly 10 percent.

In the 1990s, economic growth accelerated somewhat. Infrastructure improvements including paved roads, electrification, water supply, and other public facilities were realized though most of the Philippines.

The performance of the Philippine economy continues to favor those who are educated, well connected, and located in urban areas. The urban poor and the majority of people in rural areas struggle to gain a living. This combined with rapid population growth has produced widespread joblessness and historically high levels of labor migration out of the country.

The Philippines' GDP in 2006 was \$117.6 billion. Annualized GDP growth in the same year was 5.4 percent, and per capita GDP was \$1,352.

Languages

More than 85 native languages are spoken in the Philippines. All of these belong to the Malayo-Polynesian linguistic family. Eight languages are the mother tongues of more than 85 percent of the population. English is used as a second language by almost half the population. Filipino, which is based on the Tagalog language spoken in central Luzon, is legally the national language, and it is the first language of instruction in Philippine schools. Many Filipinos speak a mixture of English and one or more local languages with a smattering of Spanish.

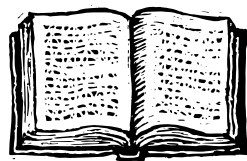
Geography and Environment

The Philippines consists of 7,100 islands, of which around 2,000 are inhabited. Only about 500 of the islands are larger than half a square mile, and 2,500 do not even have names. The archipelago stretches 1,100 miles north-to-south, opposite the southeastern rim of Asia. The total area is about 115,000 square miles (300,000 square kilometers). The land includes mountain ranges and inland and coastal plains.

The country has a tropical marine climate. The lowland areas are warm and humid throughout the year, with only slight variations in the average mean temperature of 80 degrees Fahrenheit (27 degrees Celsius). The Philippines lies within the typhoon belt and has an average of 15 typhoons (known as hurricanes in the United States) every year between July and October. There are 37 volcanoes, of which 18 are active. The islands also experience destructive earthquakes.



RESOURCES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION



Following is a list of websites for additional information about the Peace Corps and the Philippines 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: When you read and research on the Internet, be aware that you may find bulletin boards and chat rooms in which people are free to express opinions about the Peace Corps based on their own experience, including comments by those who were unhappy with their choice to serve in the Peace Corps. These opinions are not those of the Peace Corps or the U.S. government, and we hope you will keep in mind that no two people experience their service in the same way.

General Information About the Philippines

<http://www.wowphilippines.com.ph/>

The official website of the Philippine Department of Tourism.

www.countrywatch.com/

On this site, you can learn anything from what time it is in Manila to how to convert between U.S. dollars and Philippine pesos. Just click on the Philippines and go from there.

www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations

Visit this site for general travel advice relating to the Philippines and almost any other country.

www.state.gov

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

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

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

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

This is an online world atlas that includes maps and geographical information. Each country page contains links to other organizations' sites such as the Library of Congress. This is a good source for comprehensive historical, social, and political background.

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

This United Nations site offers statistical information for all 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.

Connecting with Returned Volunteers and Other Invitees

www.rpcv.org

This is the site of the National Peace Corps Association, made up of returned Volunteers, former staff, and friends of the Peace Corps. On this site you can find links to the websites of the "friends of" groups for most countries of service, made up of former Volunteers who served in those countries. There are also regional groups who frequently get together for social events and local Volunteer activities. Or go straight to the Friends of the Philippines site: www.rpcvphilippines.org

www.peacecorpswriters.org

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

Articles and Current News Sites About the Philippines

www.pia.gov.ph

Philippines Information Agency.

www.inquirer.net

The site of the Philippine *Daily Inquirer*.

www.mb.com.ph

Manila *Bulletin* website.

www.philstar.com

Philippine *Star* website.

Other Sites with Information About the Philippines

www.who.int

World Health Organization.

www.un.org/english

United Nations.

www.imf.org/external/country/phi/index.htm

International Monetary Fund.

www.usaid.gov

U.S. Agency for International Development.

www.adb.org/philippines/default.asp

Asian Development Bank.

www.haribon.org.ph

Haribon Foundation for the Conservation of Natural Resources, a Philippine nonprofit that promotes environmental protection and sustainable resource management.

www.worldbank.org.ph

The official website of the World Bank in the Philippines.

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

U.S. Embassy in the Philippines.

Philippine Government Agencies

www.dti.gov.ph

Philippines Department of Trade and Industry.

www.pia.gov.ph

Philippines Information Agency.

www.deped.gov.ph

Department of Education.

www.neda.gov.ph

National Economic and Development Authority.

www.denr.gov.ph

Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

www.doh.gov.ph

Department of Health.

www.dswd.gov.ph

Department of Social Welfare and Development.

Books about the Philippines

1. Guerrero, Amadis. *The Philippines: A Journey Through the Enchanted Isles*. Manila, Philippines: Anvil Publishing, 1995.
2. Hagedorn, Jessica. *Burning Heart: A Portrait of the Philippines*. Rizzoli, 1999.
3. Joaquin, Nick. *Manila, My Manila*. Makati City, Philippines: Bookmark, 1999.
4. Karnow, Stanley. *In Our Image: America's Empire in the Philippines*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1990 (reissue edition).
5. Peters, Jens. *Philippines Travel Guide*. Jens Peters Publications, 2005.
6. Rowthorn, Chris. *Lonely Planet Philippines*. Lonely Planet Publications, 2003.
7. Whitehead, Kendal. *Odyssey of a Philippine Scout: Fighting, Escaping and Evading the Japanese, 1941–1944*. The Aberjona Press, 2006.

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, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000.
2. Rice, Gerald T. *The Bold Experiment: JFK's Peace Corps*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985.
3. Stossel, Scott. *Sarge: The Life and Times of Sargent Shriver*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2004.

Books About Volunteers' Experiences

1. Dirlam, Sharon. *Beyond Siberia: Two Years in a Forgotten Place*. Santa Barbara, CA: McSeas Books, 2004.
2. Casebolt, Marjorie DeMoss. *Margarita: A Guatemalan Peace Corps Experience*. Gig Harbor, WA: Red Apple Publishing, 2000.
3. Erdman, Sarah. *Nine Hills to Nambonkaha: Two Years in the Heart of an African Village*. New York, NY: Picador, 2003.
4. Hessler, Peter. *River Town: Two Years on the Yangtze*. New York, NY: Perennial, 2001.
5. Kennedy, Geraldine (ed.). *From the Center of the Earth: Stories out of the Peace Corps*. Santa Monica, CA: Clover Park Press, 1991.
6. Thompsen, Moritz. *Living Poor: A Peace Corps Chronicle*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1997 (reprint).

NOTES



LIVING CONDITIONS AND VOLUNTEER LIFESTYLE



Communications

Mail

Letters, which usually take one to two weeks to arrive, should be sent to:

“Your Name,” PCT	or	“Your Name,” PCT
U.S. Peace Corps		c/o U.S. Peace Corps
P.O. Box 7013		6/F PNB Financial Center
Airmail Distribution Center		Pres. Diosdado
N.A.I.A.		Macapagal Ave.
Pasay City, Philippines		Pasay City, Philippines
1301		1308

A Peace Corps staff member picks up mail from the airport post office box daily. It is sent to Volunteer sites by special delivery through a courier service known in-country as the Peace Corps pouch, or through the Philippine mail system.

When the Peace Corps receives a package for you, it will notify you and ask you whether you want to pick up the package at the office in Manila or have it sent to you by regular Philippine mail. If a package is forwarded, you will be responsible for the cost. After training, many Volunteers choose to have packages and letters mailed directly to their site.

Please note that all mail sent to the Peace Corps addresses listed above is opened and checked according to standard U.S. government policy.

Peace Corps Volunteers regularly use the Philippine postal system without problems to send mail to friends and family in the United States. Postage for letters sent within the Philippines is very inexpensive. An airmail letter to the U.S. weighing 20 grams or less costs 26 pesos (52 cents); a letter weighing 21 to 50 grams costs \$1.16; a letter weighing 51 to 100 grams costs \$2.22.

Peace Corps/Philippines advises you not to have packages sent through any airline. Even if the freight charges are prepaid in the United States, there will be numerous charges in the Philippines for customs, brokerage, storage, and clearing.

Telephones

The Philippines has several phone companies, and household telephone service in rural areas is becoming more widely available. People without phones usually go to a local telephone office and wait while a call is placed by an operator. Because this system often ties up all the available lines, it can be very difficult to receive a call in rural areas. Volunteers with local friends who have private phones might be able to receive calls at their friends' homes or places of business. Volunteers generally find it most convenient to place land line calls to the United States when they are in Manila.

Cell phone use is very common in the Philippines. Many Volunteers use cell phones for calls to and from the United States. Calls to the U.S. cost about 40 cents per minute. Volunteers sometimes call home collect, but if the call will last more than a few minutes it is less expensive to ask the person in the U.S. to call back. A cell phone from the U.S. should be tri-band or quad-band. U.S. phones must be unlocked for use in the Philippines at a phone shop. Good cell phones sell in the Philippines for between \$50 and \$120.

Direct-dial calls from the U.S. to the Philippines are much less expensive than calls to the U.S. from the Philippines. Volunteers' friends and relatives should call their local phone company for information on the best rates.

To call Manila from the U.S., dial 011 (the international long distance code), 63 (the country code for the Philippines), 2 (the city code for Manila), and then the seven-digit number.

Calls to the Peace Corps office after hours are answered by the security guard and relayed to the duty officer. The duty officer relays calls to Volunteers at their sites only in emergencies. In emergencies, it is best for families to call Peace Corps headquarters in Washington at 800.424.8580, extension 1470. After normal business hours and on weekends and holidays, they should call 202.638.2574.

Computer, Internet, and E-mail Access

Many Philippines cities and towns have Internet cafés. You will have access to e-mail, if not at your site, at least in a neighboring city. Some Volunteers bring laptops and find them useful. However, some assignment sites are in rural areas with no Internet access and even uncertain electricity supply. Having a laptop in the Philippines involves worries about humidity, fluctuating current, and the risk of theft. Any expensive electronic equipment should be insured for loss before your arrival in country.

Housing and Site Location

For Volunteers assigned to underdeveloped areas, housing typically is a hollow concrete block, wood, or bamboo structure. In more developed areas housing can be either the same or more substantial. Most houses have running water and electricity.

Trainees live with host families during pre-service training and during their first three months at their assigned sites. After this period, Volunteers may choose to continue living with a host family or to move into their own rented accommodations. Volunteers who continue living with host families usually develop the best Philippine language fluency and the deepest understanding of Philippine culture.

Living Allowance and Money Management

Volunteers receive a monthly allowance in Philippine currency that is sufficient to live at the level of the local people. The allowance covers food, housing, household supplies, clothing, transportation to and from work, utilities, recreation and entertainment, and incidental expenses such as reading material. Volunteers are expected to live at a level commensurate with that of their Filipino co-workers. The Peace Corps discourages Volunteers from supplementing their living allowance with funds from home.

ATM savings accounts are opened for all Volunteers immediately on their arrival in the Philippines. These accounts are used for all deposits that Peace Corps/Philippines makes for Volunteers. ATMs are available in most major cities.

Credit cards should be carefully guarded against theft and scams. Some Volunteers bring either a small amount of cash in small denominations such as \$20 bills or travelers checks which can be cashed at a bank or at a hotel in Manila. In the provinces it is very difficult to cash travelers' checks.

Food and Diet

Rice is the staple food for most Filipinos who live in the lowlands, while corn, potatoes, and tubers are the staple foods of people who live at higher altitudes. Fish, pork, chicken,

bread, noodles, various vegetables, bananas, and some other fruits are widely available. Food is often cooked in lard or coconut oil. Many Filipinos prefer rice, fish, meat, and sweets over vegetables and fruits. Maintaining a strict vegetarian diet can be difficult, and vegetarians need to expend considerable time and energy to maintain a healthy diet.

Transportation

In cities or municipalities, the most common means of transportation are buses, minibuses, “jeepneys” (colorfully decorated converted World War II jeeps), vans, motorized tricycles, and pedicabs, depending upon the distance. Travel among islands occurs via airplanes, ships, or small motorboats. Peace Corps/Philippines requires that Volunteers use public transportation and prohibits them from owning, operating, and riding on a motorcycle.

Climate

Weather in almost all parts of the Philippines is hot and humid year-round. The weather pattern is changeable, but it usually consists of a dry season from approximately January to approximately June and a wet season during the remainder of the year. January is usually the coolest month, and May is the hottest. Higher elevations in some places are cooler year round. Heavy rainfall occurs in all parts of the Philippines, and strong storms are frequent.

Social Contacts

Many Filipinos are wonderfully gregarious and very adept at pleasant chats. Volunteers should be prepared for frequent and fascinating impromptu conversations in all manner of

places. Quite personal questions from Filipinos can at times startle and amuse Americans who typically are more reserved.

Social events are an important part of Philippine life, and get-togethers of work colleagues and friends can start on a moment's notice. Typical occasions are mid-morning and mid-afternoon snacks called *meriendas* which can include pastries, rice dishes, noodles, spaghetti, and a lot more.

Volunteers often are invited to birthday parties, baptisms, weddings, blessings of new buildings, and programs to celebrate holidays and important school or local events. Every community holds an annual *fiesta* for which the citizens make elaborate preparations and in which the local people take great pride.

Volunteers are encouraged to be open to social contacts and to participate in social events whenever possible. Filipino colleagues, friends, and neighbors welcome Volunteers' participation in social events, and social occasions offer Volunteers both pleasant ways to relax and valuable opportunities to learn about Filipino customs and traditions.

Professionalism, Dress, and Behavior

Despite the considerable level of Western influence, Philippine culture generally is quite conservative. This is especially the case outside large cities. One aspect of this conservatism is the high priority that Filipinos place on a neat personal appearance. Volunteers, whether based in urban or rural areas, should wear neat and clean clothing at all times when they are in public and especially when they are at their work sites. Sloppiness, poor hygiene, and bad grooming can cause Filipinos to avoid a person. Such avoidance can effectively negate a Volunteer's chances of cooperating successfully at the workplace and interacting effectively with people in the community.

Volunteers should always bear in mind that they are in the Philippines as professional development workers and not as backpacking world travelers.

Personal Safety

More detailed information about Peace Corps' efforts to help Volunteers be safe is contained in the Health Care and Safety chapter. However the importance of safety cannot be overemphasized.

Being a Peace Corps Volunteer entails risks. Living and traveling in an unfamiliar environment, having a limited understanding of local language and culture, and being perceived as well-off are only a few of the factors that can put Volunteers 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. In 2007 a Volunteer hiking alone in a remote area was murdered. By contrast fewer Volunteers in the Philippines experience criminal incidents and physical assaults than the worldwide average for Peace Corps posts. Most Philippine Volunteers complete their two years of service without experiencing personal security incidents or threats.

The Peace Corps has carefully conceived trainings, procedures, and policies designed to help Volunteers reduce risks and enhance their safety and security. Such measures can succeed only if each individual Volunteer accepts responsibility for his or her personal safety and follows reasonable precautions in order to stay safe.

Rewards and Frustrations

In a country that is still predominantly agricultural, daily life revolves more around the seasons, planting, and harvesting than around making money. The result can be a lack of concern for punctuality. For Filipinos, there is always time, while for Westerners, there may never be enough. Because appointments do not necessarily happen as scheduled, patience is one virtue that Volunteers develop while working in the Philippines.

Traditional Filipino kinship customs contribute to a lax attitude toward helping oneself to family members' personal possessions. Sharing is common and not doing so is considered stingy. If you do not want something of yours to be touched in a Filipino home, you have to put it away in a locked place.

Since the closing of the American military bases in 1991, relations between the United States and the Philippines have improved. Many Filipinos still express appreciation to Americans for introducing modern standards of government and education during the colonial era. Very large numbers of Filipinos have visited the U.S., and it is not uncommon to meet Filipinos who have close relatives who are American citizens.

In general, there is a large amount of interest and goodwill concerning Americans. This fact, and the sophisticated understanding that many Filipinos have concerning Americans and American culture, are great assets for Volunteers who wish to establish friendly and cooperative relationships with their work colleagues and other Filipinos.

Other assets include the extensive culture of volunteerism and community development that exists in Philippine national life. Many Filipinos do volunteer work in their own communities, and a very large number of have had some connection with development project concepts or with actual projects.

NOTES



Vermicomposting

Savings + Loan
Association

8 Members

Start-up

1 1/2 kilos - 1,500 ₪

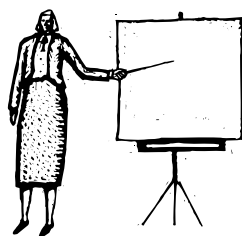
of facility - 13,000

200 @ 2 ₪ ea) - 400

(10000) - 2,000

Total Start-up 16,900 ₪
Capital

PEACE CORPS TRAINING



Overview of Pre-Service Training

The goal of pre-service training is to provide you with the technical, language, cross-cultural, safety and security, and personal and health management skills necessary to work effectively and live successfully at your site.

Your pre-service training is conducted during your first 12 weeks in the Philippines, at cluster sites in Filipino communities. At each cluster site, you will live with Filipino host families and train every day with four or five other trainees.

Pre-service training has three phases. Phase 1 is a one-week orientation, in which you will learn about the Peace Corps' role in the Philippines, receive administrative and medical information, and be introduced to Peace Corps policies. Phase 2, which lasts nine weeks, includes community entry/technical skills, language, cross-cultural, safety and security, and personal and health management sessions and activities. This phase takes place both at the hub site and cluster sites in the community. Phase 3 is held three months after you have been at your site. This training focuses on enhancing your capacity to carry out the technical aspects of your role based on your assigned sector and the goals and objectives of your project plan.

Technical Training

Technical training helps facilitate your entry into your work assignments and community. Sessions and activities are conducted by experienced Filipino facilitators. The purpose is to develop required technical skills and to learn about successful methods and strategies to work successfully at

sites. Actual practical work in schools and organizations is an important part of this training.

Another purpose of technical training is to help you learn how to achieve community integration at your site. This will include courtesy calls to local community leaders, peer and community interviewing, community walks, field observations, community mapping, shadowing, and conducting community meetings. The new Volunteers learn how to identify specific community needs and to develop strategic partnerships with community members.

At the mid point of training, you will visit your assigned site and see what it is really like to be a Volunteer there. Your training in this component will culminate with your application of community entry tools in planning, implementing, and evaluating a small community activity or project. You will be supported and evaluated by the training staff throughout training to build the confidence and skills you need to undertake your project activities and to be a productive member of your community.

Language Training

As a 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. You must successfully meet minimum language requirements to complete training and become a Volunteer. Experienced Filipino language/cultural facilitators teach formal language classes six days a week in small groups 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 once you are at your site. Prior to being sworn in as a Volunteer, you will work on strategies to continue language studies during service.

Cross-Cultural Training

As part of your pre-service training, you will live with a Filipino 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 the Philippines. Many Volunteers form strong and lasting friendships with their host families.

Cross-cultural training will help you improve your communication skills and understand your role as a facilitator of development. The training covers a very broad range of topics, and there is an emphasis on responding to Volunteers' questions and requests for specific information. Among the topics are Philippine beliefs, standards of good manners, standard cultural usages, gender roles in Philippine society as well as community mobilization, conflict resolution, gender and development, and community social and political structures.

Health Training

During pre-service training, you will be given basic medical training and information. You are expected to practice preventive healthcare and to take responsibility for your own health by adhering to all medical policies. Trainees are required to attend all medical sessions. The topics include preventive health measures and minor and major medical issues that you might encounter while in the Philippines. Nutrition, mental health, safety and security, setting up a

safe living compound, and how to avoid HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases are also covered.

Safety Training

During the safety and security training sessions, you will learn how to develop a personal safety and security plan for yourself. Information will also be provided to help you adopt a lifestyle that reduces risk in your home, at work, and during your travels. You will learn appropriate, effective strategies for coping with unwanted attention and about your individual responsibility for promoting safety throughout your Peace Corps service. There will be special sessions and training on the post's emergency action plan so that you become familiar with the various standard operating procedures that have been put in place to help ensure your personal safety and security.

Additional Training 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, language, and cross-cultural skills. During service, there are usually three training events. The titles and objectives for those events are as follows:

- *In-service trainings*: Provides an opportunity for Volunteers to upgrade their technical, language, and project development and management skills while sharing their experiences and reaffirming their commitment after having served for a few months.
- *Mid-service training*: Provides an opportunity for Volunteers to review the successes and challenges of their service and the project plan, and provides additional skills training and support.

- *Close of service conference*: Prepares Volunteers for the future after Peace Corps service and reviews their respective projects and personal experiences.

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



YOUR HEALTH CARE AND SAFETY IN THE PHILIPPINES



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. Peace Corps/Philippines maintains a clinic with two full-time medical officers and a medical technologist, who take care of Volunteers' primary healthcare needs. Other medical services, such as additional testing and specialized consultations, are available at local, Peace Corps-certified hospitals. If you become seriously ill, you will be transported either to the premier medical facility in the region or to the United States.

Health Issues in the Philippines

Malaria, amebic dysentery and other gastrointestinal illnesses, respiratory and skin infections (including fungal infections, heat rash, and heat exhaustion) are all common problems. In addition, there are occasional outbreaks of dengue fever and typhoid fever. Volunteers can decrease their risk of contracting these illnesses by practicing good health habits and following preventive measures recommended by Peace Corps Philippines.

Note that social pressure to drink alcohol in the Philippines ranges from pesky to intolerable, and the country can be a difficult place for those who have problems controlling their use of alcohol.

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

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

During training, you will be immunized against hepatitis A and B, typhoid, Japanese B encephalitis, rabies, MMR (measles) meningococcal influenza, mumps, rubella, polio, and tetanus. It is important that you bring copies of your previous immunization record to determine if you need further immunizations.

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

Maintaining Your Health

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

Because malaria exists in the Philippines, Volunteers are required to take prophylactic medicine against the disease. Those who live in areas where there is high incidence of malaria and with chloroquine resistance must take one 250 mg tablet of mefloquine once a week or one doxycycline/100mg tablet daily. Those areas with low incidence or malaria-free must take one 500 mg tablet of chloroquine phosphate once a week. Volunteers who cannot take any of these drugs must notify the medical officer right away for other possible alternative drugs.

Many illnesses 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, and typhoid fever. Your medical officer will discuss specific standards for water and food preparation in the Philippines 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/AIDS 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 illnesses and injuries.

Women's Health Information

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

The Peace Corps does not provide for feminine hygiene products. There is a selection available in the local market. If you have a particular feminine hygiene product you use, it may be best to bring at least a six-month supply. Most Volunteers request their families and friends to include these products when they send packages from home; they're usually much cheaper in the States.

Your Peace Corps Medical Kit

The Peace Corps medical officer will provide you 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 at the Peace Corps medical office.

Medical Kit Contents

Ace bandages
Adhesive tape
American Red Cross First Aid & Safety Handbook
Antacid tablets (Tums)
Antibiotic ointment (Bacitracin/Neomycin/Polymycin B)
Antiseptic antimicrobial skin cleaner (Hibiclens)
Band-Aids
Benadryl
Bentyl
Butterfly closures
Calamine lotion
Condoms
Dental floss
Diphenhydramine HCL 25 mg (Benadryl)
Imodium
Insect repellent
Oral rehydration salts
Oral thermometer
Pseudoephedrine HCL 30 mg (Sudafed)
Robitussin-DM lozenges (for cough)
Scissors
Sterile gauze pads
Tinactin (antifungal cream)
Tweezers
Tylenol

Before You Leave: A Medical Checklist

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

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

If you wish to avoid having duplicate vaccinations, contact your physician's office, obtain a copy of your immunization record, and hand it over to the Peace Corps medical officers when you arrive to the Philippines. 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 the Philippines. You do not need to begin taking malaria medication prior to departure.

Bring a three-month supply of any prescription or over-the-counter medication you use on a regular basis, including birth control pills. Although the Peace Corps cannot reimburse you for this three-month supply, it will order refills during your service.

While awaiting shipment—which can take several months—you will be dependent on your own medication supply.

The Peace Corps will not pay for herbal or non-prescribed medications, such as St. John's wort, glucosamine, selenium, or antioxidant supplements.

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

If you wear eyeglasses, bring two pairs with you—a pair and a spare. If a pair breaks, the Peace Corps will replace it, using the information your doctor in the United States provided on the eyeglasses form during your examination. The Peace Corps discourages you from using contact lenses during your 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 preexisting conditions might prevent you from reenrolling 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, 85 percent of Volunteers surveyed in the 2006 Peace Corps Volunteer Survey say they would make the same decision to join the Peace Corps again today and 84 percent responded that they would recommend Peace Corps service to others they thought were qualified.

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

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

Factors that Contribute to Volunteer Risk

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

Based on information gathered from incident reports worldwide in 2004, the following factors stand out as risk

characteristics for assaults. Assaults consist of personal crimes committed against Volunteers, and do not include property crimes (such as vandalism or theft).

- Location: Most crimes occurred when Volunteers were in public areas (e.g., street, park, beach, public buildings). Specifically, 43 percent of assaults took place when Volunteers were away from their sites.
- Time of day: Assaults usually took place on the weekend during the evening between 5:00 p.m. and 2:00 a.m.—with most assaults occurring around 1:00 a.m.
- Absence of others: Assaults usually occurred when the Volunteer was unaccompanied. In 82 percent of the sexual assaults the Volunteer was unaccompanied and in 55 percent of physical assaults the Volunteer was unaccompanied.
- Relationship to assailant: In most assaults, the Volunteer did not know the assailant.
- Consumption of alcohol: Forty percent of all assaults involved alcohol consumption by Volunteers and/or assailants.

Summary Strategies to Reduce Risk

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

Strategies to reduce the risk/impact of theft:

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

Strategies to reduce the risk/impact of burglary:

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

Strategies to reduce the risk/impact of assault:

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

Support from Staff

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

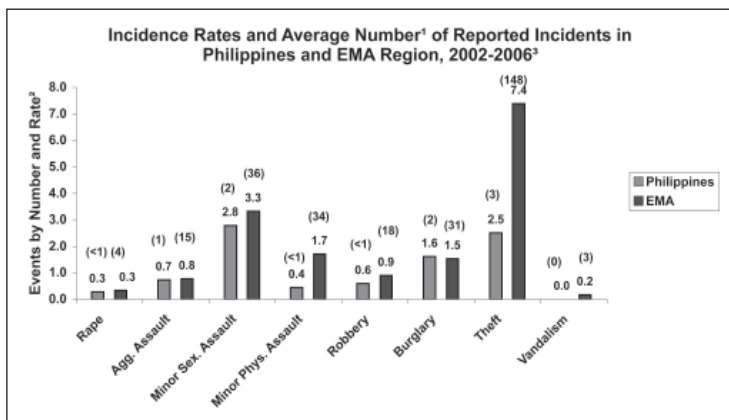
The major responsibilities of the Volunteer Safety and Overseas Security Division are to coordinate the office’s overseas operations and direct the Peace Corps’ safety and security officers who are located in various regions around the world that have Peace Corps programs. The safety and security officers conduct security assessments; review safety

trainings; train trainers and managers; train Volunteer safety wardens, local guards, and staff; develop security incident response procedures; and provide crisis management support.

If a trainee or Volunteer is the victim of a safety incident, Peace Corps staff is prepared to provide support. All Peace Corps posts have procedures in place to respond to incidents of crime committed against Volunteers. The first priority for all posts in the aftermath of an incident is to ensure that the Volunteer is safe and receiving medical treatment as needed. After assuring the safety of the Volunteer, Peace Corps staff provides support by reassessing the Volunteer's work site and housing arrangements and making any adjustments, as needed. In some cases, the nature of the incident may necessitate a site or housing transfer. Peace Corps staff will also assist Volunteers with preserving their rights to pursue legal sanctions against the perpetrators of the crime. It is very important that Volunteers report incidents as they occur, not only to protect their peer Volunteers, but also to preserve the future right to prosecute. Volunteers who decide later in the process that they want to proceed with the prosecution of their assailant, may find that the option may no longer exist if evidence of the event was not 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 the Philippines as compared to all other Europe, Mediterranean, and Asia (EMA) region programs as a whole, from 2000–2004. 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 Philippines began as of Jan. 1, 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 the Crime Incident Reporting Form (CIRF); the information is accurate as of March 5, 2008.

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); minor physical assault (attacking without a weapon with minor injuries); minor sexual assault (fondling, groping, etc.); aggravated assault (attacking with a weapon, and/or without a weapon when serious injury results); and rape (sexual intercourse without consent).

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

What if you Become a Victim of a Violent Crime?

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

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

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

In conjunction with the RSO, the OIG does a preliminary investigation of all violent crimes against Volunteers regardless of whether the crime has been reported to local authorities or of the decision you may ultimately make to prosecute. If you are a victim of a crime, our staff will work with you through final disposition of the case. OIG staff is available 24 hours-a-day, 7 days-a-week. We may be contacted through our 24-hour violent crime hotline via telephone at 1.800.233.5874, or by e-mail at: violentcrimeline@peacecorps.gov.

Security Issues in the Philippines

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 is true anywhere in the world, crime does exist in the Philippines. 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. Tourist attractions in large towns, for instance, are favorite work sites for pickpockets.

Among the risks to safety in the Philippines you should be aware of are theft, robbery, and mugging; crimes related to illegal drugs; natural calamities such as volcanic eruptions, typhoons, and earthquakes; and transportation-related accidents such as capsized boats and vehicle and bicycle accidents.

Staying Safe: Don't Be a Target for Crime

You must be prepared to take on a large degree of responsibility for your own safety. Only you can make yourself less of a target, ensure that your house is secure, and develop relations in your community that will make you an unlikely victim of crime. In coming to the Philippines, 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, learn the risky locations, use common sense, and be aware. You can reduce your vulnerability to crime by integrating into your community, learning the local language, acting responsibly, and abiding by Peace Corps policies and procedures. Serving safely and effectively in the Philippines may require that you accept some restrictions on your current lifestyle.

Volunteers attract a lot of attention both in large cities and at their sites, but they are likely to receive more negative attention in highly populated centers than at their sites, where “family,” friends, and colleagues look out for them.

While whistles and exclamations are fairly common on the street, this behavior can be reduced if you dress conservatively, avoid eye contact, and do not respond to unwanted attention. In addition, 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. And always walk with a companion at night.

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

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. The Philippines’ in-country safety program is outlined below.

The Peace Corps/Philippines office will keep Volunteers informed of any issues that may impact Volunteer safety through **information sharing**. Regular updates will be provided in 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 on specific safety and security issues in the Philippines. This training will prepare you to adopt a culturally appropriate lifestyle and exercise

judgment that promotes safety and reduces risk in your home, at work, and while traveling. Safety training is offered throughout your 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. Site selection is based in part on any relevant site history; access to medical, banking, postal, and other essential services; availability of communications, transportation, and markets; housing options and living arrangements; and other Volunteer support needs.

You will also learn about Peace Corps Philippines' 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 the Philippines 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 local Peace Corps medical officer and safety and security coordinator. 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.



DIVERSITY AND CROSS-CULTURAL ISSUES



In fulfilling its mandate to share the face of America with host countries, the Peace Corps is 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 the Philippines, as in other Peace Corps host countries, Volunteers' behavior, lifestyle, background, and beliefs are judged in a cultural context very different from their own. Certain personal perspectives or characteristics commonly accepted in the United States may be quite uncommon, unacceptable, or even repressed in the Philippines.

Outside of Manila, residents of rural communities 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 Filipino people 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 the Philippines, 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. Peace Corps staff will lead diversity and sensitivity discussions during pre-service training and will be on call to provide support, but the challenge ultimately will be your own.

Overview of Diversity in the Philippines

The Peace Corps staff in the Philippines 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

Many American women find Filipino society chauvinistic. Men are allowed much greater freedom than women. For example, Filipinos expect female but not male Volunteers to travel

with a companion. Because of depictions in the media, some Filipinos assume American women are promiscuous. Behavior by women that is considered normal in the United States—such as jogging in shorts or wearing a swimsuit to swim—may reinforce this stereotype, especially in rural areas, and may lead to sexual harassment. Female Volunteers should not wear short skirts, halter-tops, or other revealing clothing. In addition, some Filipinos may have a hard time understanding what a single woman is doing away from her family. Female Volunteers used to being independent may feel overprotected and may resent encouragement from Filipinos to get married. Despite these issues, the overwhelming majority of female Volunteers feel safe and happy in the Philippines.

Volunteer Comments

“I stand out with my blond hair, blue eyes, and pale skin. The majority of the time I don’t have any problems. Sure, men call out as you pass on the street, but that happens in the United States, too. I tend to dress more conservatively at work and in town than the average Volunteer, in either ankle-length skirts or pants and a short-sleeved shirt. Many female Volunteers wear knee-length skirts, shorts, and tank tops and never experience any sexual harassment. The best thing to do is gauge how your work colleagues and female members of your host family dress. When I go to a student hangout with my host sister, we have no problems when we dress in tank tops. I live in a city where there are a lot of young students—many very fashionable in tube tops and miniskirts—but in a more rural area or even in my suburban barangay that would definitely not be appropriate. By all means, bring ‘going out’ clothes, as there are ample opportunities to wear them at nightclubs, at Volunteer parties, and on vacation.”

“You can, at times, feel very limited as a woman in the Philippines. Women here do play a very large role in society, but it seems to be an ‘equal but separate’ philosophy. Women rarely seem to mix casually with men, although women often bring male relatives or acquaintances for security when they go out at night. If you are out alone with a man, it is assumed that he is your boyfriend—not always a bad thing! I have been told that I am demure, which appears to be a compliment here. I have noticed that women act coy, innocent, and young for their age, but when you get to know them, they often talk about men, sex, alcohol, clothes, and gossip. So it may just be a facade. Many of the women I meet do drink or smoke, but they only do it at home or at certain establishments.”

“As a female Volunteer in the Philippines, you will have issues that you may never have confronted in the United States. But here, you must be aware of them for your own safety. One issue in particular that I think people should be aware of is alcohol consumption. As a female in the Philippines, you will find out that few women drink; those who do are often viewed as ‘easy.’”

“Let me share a story with you. I had been at my site for eight months, and I trusted my male supervisor—I even lived with his family. I had had drinks with him and some other friends on a few occasions at my site. I never had any problems with him, such as suggestive comments or passes, and I felt comfortable with him. Then I attended a conference with him away from my site. One evening we went out with a group of friends. But this time, he made physical advances toward me. I was scared because I thought I knew him. Fortunately, nothing serious happened, but something very easily could have. This story just goes to show you that you cannot assume that everyone always

understands your actions, even after you have been at your site for many months. Don't risk being caught in a circumstance like I did. Use good judgment when you are thinking about drinking with Filipino men and ask yourself if it is really worth it."

Possible Issues for Volunteers of Color

African-American Volunteers may experience racist attitudes but are more likely to face great curiosity from Filipinos about everything from intimate habits to food preferences. All Volunteers can expect to be stared at, but African Americans may get more stares. African-American Volunteers may work or live with individuals who have no experience or understanding of black American culture. They may use offensive terms, although these are more likely to be used because of ignorance than because of malice.

Asian-American Volunteers may be identified more by their ethnic background than by their American citizenship. They may have to deal with Filipinos' stereotypical views about other Asian cultures (e.g., all Chinese are rich traders). Mistaken for Filipinos, on the other hand, Asian-American Volunteers may be given less assistance than other Volunteers. People may expect an Asian American to speak their language and to know local customs. By the same token, by blending in, Asian Americans may not be stared at as often as other Volunteers are.

Volunteer Comments

"Upon arrival, I was greeted with tons of questions about what I am doing here, where I am from, and where I am really from. Most of the Filipinos I encounter assume I am either Japanese or Korean; American is not usually their first guess. It takes patience to describe over and over that in America not everyone is blond and Caucasian. Sometimes

a local person points out Korean tourists to me, thinking I might know them. The people of my place of assignment are savvy enough to understand that I grew up in America and that I am American regardless of what I look like. On the flip side, I do not encounter some of the things that other Volunteers experience: stares at the market, kids yelling ‘Kano,’ etc.”

“I was a Filipino-American Volunteer in the Philippines and found that host families would have been more thrilled to host a white American. People did not believe that I was a Volunteer because, to many, Americans are either Caucasian or African. Not knowing the local dialect, I tried to communicate in English, but I was labeled as a Filipino trying to be an American. White Americans or white foreigners were afforded more respect than I was in group situations. It brought me a lot of pain to experience discrimination in my own country. Thank God I was mature enough to handle this. If given another chance to serve here, I’d do it again. The experience made me a better and stronger person, and I am more convinced than ever that I can make a difference, especially in the way some people think.”

“What I find to be the biggest issue is that Filipinos associate you with your ethnicity and not your nationality—even if you explain that you were born and raised in America. It’s harder for people to grasp you’re American than it is for them to grasp that someone of European descent is American, for example. Just don’t let it bother you; it’s another cultural piece of information you can share with others. One positive thing is physically blending in more with Filipinos. Thus, you get less staring and people calling ‘Hey, Joe.’ However, since you are also Asian, you are expected to understand the culture—like ‘blessing’ an elder out of respect—more than a non-Asian.”

Possible Issues for Senior Volunteers

During training and at their sites, older Volunteers may face challenges solely due to age. Since the majority of Volunteers are in their 20s, older Volunteers may work and live with individuals in the Peace Corps community who are not able to provide them with adequate personal support. At times tensions occur in a training cluster if an older trainee is making slower progress in language acquisition than the younger trainees.

Older Volunteers may find that younger Volunteers look to them for advice and support. While some seniors find this an enjoyable part of their Volunteer experience, others choose not to fill this role. In addition, difficult issues may arise if your host “parents” are even younger than your children at home.

There are also benefits to being an older Volunteer. For instance, older people are shown great respect in the Philippines. But while this will open many doors, senior Volunteers may also find that they are perceived as unapproachable by younger Filipino counterparts. Service in the Philippines may also be physically harder for senior Volunteers, who may, for instance, find riding in motorized, three-wheel bicycles, jeepneys, or minibuses uncomfortable or have difficulty hauling water and other supplies.

Volunteer Comments

“Of course, I can’t speak for seniors in other parts of the world, but I believe the Philippines to be unique. In spite of the poverty and other problems obvious to Americans, the people here are helpful and happy. One must not take offense when asked, ‘How old are you, anyway?’ or when people look at you as if you came from Mars. It has been my experience that they do defer to my age when I need help

of any kind. And they feel it is disrespectful to ask an older person to help with a job. It takes time and patience to convince people that you are here to initiate a project and see it through to fruition. Another aspect of being a senior Volunteer is that my peers always treated me as an equal. This was invaluable in helping me adjust and get on with my job. A few physical limitations aside, I highly recommend Peace Corps service!”

“Although I am only 61 years old, there are a few issues that need to be addressed specifically for senior citizens:

- Sleeping on the floor is okay, but it’s hard to get up in the morning.
- Having to dine when called is a nuisance. I want to be accommodating, but new guys should set the rules. I finally have.
- It is important to be yourself, say why you are here, and explain what your goals are.
- Be receptive to a smile, question, whatever it is, and don’t feel it’s intrusive. It’s only a greeting.
- You have the advantage of experience and maturity. During training, be yourself and participate in classes and after hours.

In a nutshell, be prepared for poverty, a major adjustment of lifestyle, learning to wash your own clothes, eating dried fish and rice, and becoming part of a loving, sincere, needy population that gives of themselves if you do the same.”

Possible Issues for Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Volunteers

It is not uncommon to encounter obviously and openly gay men (and to a lesser extent, openly gay women) in the Philippines. But Volunteers will find that attitudes about being gay or bisexual, even among Filipino gays, are not the same as in the U.S. Denial and silence play a large role in many Filipinos' interactions with homosexuals and bisexuals.

In the mindsets of conservative Filipinos who might be the parents of a Volunteers' students or the leading figures at Volunteers' worksites, an openly gay or bisexual lifestyle might not be compatible with the role of respected professional that Volunteers are expected to fulfill. Volunteers who are immediately open to their Philippine communities about their sexual orientation might limit their acceptability and potential for success as development workers.

Gays and lesbians have to deal with constant and at times quite personal questions even from strangers about why they don't have girlfriends or boyfriends, why they are not married, or which person of the opposite sex in the community they are attracted to. Although public expressions of hatred against gays, lesbians, and bisexuals are very infrequent, gay and lesbian Volunteers must contend with a commonly held attitude among Filipinos that gays and lesbians are comic characters and fair game for teasing.

Some Volunteers who were open about their sexuality at home find it works best if they go back into the closet while in their Philippine communities. However the situation is so varied from place to place that each Volunteer must work out for himself or herself the most comfortable and effective way to balance possible issues about their sexuality with their need to integrate successfully into a new community and gain acceptance in a new culture. Going slowly is the best approach.

Peace Corps offers the same welcome for gays, lesbians, and bisexuals that it extends to all Volunteers. Throughout the history of Peace Corps gays, lesbians, and bisexuals have performed distinguished service as both Volunteers and staff. In all probability they have continually represented a higher percentage of Peace Corps Volunteers and staff than in the population as a whole. Nevertheless gay, lesbian, and bisexual invitees should consider that there may or may not be readily accessible peer support. They may serve for two years without meeting another gay or bisexual Volunteer.

Men and women of any orientation must deal from time to time with attitudes that to Americans come across as shamelessly macho. This includes aggressive talk and behavior by men towards women, boasting by men about their conquests, female ogling unconstrained by any concern about the feelings of the girl or woman, and rude jokes with explicit sexual content and profanity.

Volunteer Comments

“Peace Corps/Philippines expects Volunteers to be discreet and conservative at all times during their service. This can help in maintaining good working relationships with host country nationals, their representative agencies, and the community in general. Filipinos’ attitudes toward lesbian, gay, and bisexual life are significantly different from those generally held by Americans. For instance, lesbian, gay, and bisexual Filipinos are often made fun of and may be viewed as unsuccessful in life if they do not marry and raise a family. Unlike in the United States, however, jokes or hostile remarks are almost never directed at a person but are whispered among friends. To cause another a person shame in the Philippines, for whatever reason, is never acceptable, and lesbian, gay, and bisexual Volunteers are accorded great status as foreigners, especially as Americans.”

“The Peace Corps medical unit provides any necessary services (e.g., counseling or referrals to support groups of other Volunteers), and there are usually other Peace Corps Volunteers at a nearby site. Of the many obstacles Volunteers have to overcome, being lesbian, gay, or bisexual is not extremely difficult to cope with—it’s probably much more difficult to be a vegetarian. Lesbian, gay, and bisexual Filipinos can be a source of information once Volunteers are settled at their site. Do not avoid the Philippines out of concern over issues for lesbians, gays, and bisexuals. The country is wonderful, and life here is rich and fascinating. In the end, your service is always what you put into it: Love and you’ll be loved back!”

Possible Religious Issues for Volunteers

The Philippines is the only country in Asia with a predominantly Christian population—more than 90 percent (about 80 percent of these are Roman Catholic). Of minority religious groups, about 8 percent are Muslim and 4 percent belong to the Philippine Independent Church—a nationalist Catholic Church. The *Iglesia ni Kristo* (Church of Christ) is the largest Protestant denomination with 4 percent, while Baptists, Methodists, Mormons, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and other denominations make up about 2 percent. Although Volunteers are free to exercise their personal religious beliefs, they may not engage in religious proselytizing or other activities that are against the law or would impair their effectiveness as a Volunteer.

Possible Issues for Volunteers With Disabilities

The Peace Corps’ Office of Medical Services determined that you were physically and emotionally capable, with or without reasonable accommodations, of performing a full tour of Volunteer service in the Philippines without unreasonable risk to yourself or interruption of your service. Peace Corps/

Philippines staff will work with Volunteers with disabilities to make reasonable accommodations in training, housing, job sites, and other areas to enable them to serve safely and effectively.

Buildings in the Philippines generally are not suited for people with disabilities. Only a few hotels and other establishments are equipped with wheelchair ramps, although some movie houses in big cities now have toilets with big doors. These deficits are largely made up for by the sheer humanity of the people. When they see a person with a disability, Filipinos behave perfectly naturally, without ingratiating themselves in an embarrassing way. And there is always someone around with a helping hand.

Volunteer Comment

“Obviously, the experience of a Volunteer with a disability will depend on his or her disability, site, project, personality, etc. I’ve listed the stuff I think would be good for most people to know.

- People in the Philippines will ask a lot of questions about your disability. They will seem very inquisitive by American standards. You might want to put together a short non-technical explanation you can give.
- While some of the larger businesses are starting to develop accessibility, it’s just not available in most places, especially rural ones. You’ll have to take the initiative on this. Figure out what you need, and be creative and flexible on how you arrange it. Get a carpenter to modify your living space, bring portable adaptive equipment, whatever works. Peace Corps requires imagination, adaptability and willingness to rough it from all Volunteers, disabled or not.

- Filipinos are naturally helpful, sometimes to a rather extreme extent. This can be great, like when you're trying to figure out how to get a giant box back from the post office and the clerk grabs you a pedicab; or annoying, like when the pump-boat crew practically carries you over the gangplank without permission. If they're being overly helpful, smile and explain that it's easier for you to do it your way. If you're patient and polite, they usually will listen.
- Most Filipinos with disabilities don't travel, hold jobs, or run normal errands. They either stay home where they're looked after, or beg on the streets. As a Peace Corps Volunteer, you're probably more widely traveled, better educated, and more professionally accomplished than much of your community. Just by participating in everyday life, you're setting an example that can open minds and change attitudes. Enjoy that, it's pretty cool."



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



How much luggage am I allowed to bring to the Philippines?

Most airlines have baggage size and weight limits and assess charges for transport of baggage that exceeds this allowance. The Peace Corps has its own size and weight limitations, and will not pay the cost of transport for baggage that exceeds these limitations. The authorized baggage allowance is two checked pieces of luggage with combined dimensions of both pieces not to exceed 107 inches (length + width + height) and a carry-on bag with dimensions of no more than 45 inches. Checked baggage should not exceed 80 pounds total with a maximum weight allowance of 70 pounds for any one bag.

Peace Corps Volunteers are not allowed to take pets, weapons, explosives, radio transmitters (short-wave radios are permitted), automobiles, or motorcycles to their overseas assignments. Do not pack flammable materials or liquids such as lighter fluid, cleaning solvents, hair spray, or aerosol containers. This is an important safety precaution.

What is the electric current in the Philippines?

The electric current is generally 220v, 60 cycles, although the voltage is often less.

How much money should I bring?

Volunteers are expected to live at the same level as the people in their community. They are given a settling-in allowance and a monthly living allowance, which should cover their expenses. Often Volunteers wish to bring additional money for vacation travel to other countries. Credit cards are preferable to cash, although there is a risk of the credit card number being pilfered and illicitly used. If you choose to bring extra money, plan on bringing the amount that suits your own personal travel plans and needs. Travelers checks can be

cash in banks and hotels in Manila; in the provinces it is very difficult to do so.

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. Extended stays at your site are not encouraged and may require permission from your country director. The Peace Corps is not able to provide your visitors with visa or travel assistance.

Will my belongings be covered by insurance?

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

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 the Philippines do not need to get an international driver's license. Operation of privately owned vehicles is prohibited. Most urban travel is by bus, jeepneys,

motorized trikes, and, infrequently, taxis. Rural travel ranges from buses, mini-buses, jeepneys, motorized tricycles, trucks, a lot of walking, and riding of bicycles.

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

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

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

Peace Corps trainees in the Philippines are assigned to individual sites during pre-service training. This is after you are given the opportunity to provide input on your site preferences, including geographical location, distance from other Volunteers, or living conditions. This is important because of the diversity of the language situation in the country. Once the sites are decided, appropriate languages are assigned to be learned at the pre-service training. However, keep in mind that many factors influence the site selection process and that The Peace Corps cannot guarantee placement where you might ideally like to be. Most Volunteers will live in small towns or in rural villages but will usually be within one hour from the nearest Volunteer. Some sites will require a 9- to 10- hour drive from the capital.

How can my family contact me in an emergency?

The Peace Corps' Office of Special Services provides assistance in handling emergencies affecting trainees and Volunteers or their families. Before leaving the United States, 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 number for the Office of Special Services is 800.424.8580, extension 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 the Philippines?

Yes. The Philippines has several telephone companies. All pre-service training sites have telephones. There are public calling places in the capital towns and cities, and cell phones have become very popular in the country. Some host families also have telephones from which you may call the United States.

Should I bring a cellular phone with me?

If you bring one from the United States, it should be a tri-band or quad-band phone. In addition, you will have to take it to a mobile phone center to have it unlocked. Mobile phones do not cost much in the country. A good mobile phone here will cost between \$50 and \$120.

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

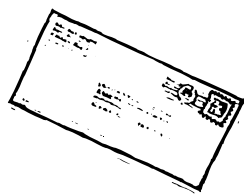
There are Internet cafés in most capital towns and cities that charge as low as 50 cents per hour. At present, there are more than 35 Internet service providers in the Philippines. Major online providers are available and are adding lines all the time.

Having a laptop involves risks due to humidity, fluctuating current, and concern for theft. But a laptop can also be a great asset in any kind of work assignment. If you bring a computer have it insured before you leave the U.S.

NOTES



WELCOME LETTERS FROM PHILIPPINES VOLUNTEERS



There is nothing I can say here that will prepare you for the journey you are about to embark on. But, in the spirit of Peace Corps, I'm going to try anyway.

First, some reassurance: The world beyond the horizon holds many of the things I was trying not to hope for when I was where you are now—but a lot of those things came in forms I didn't expect.

The Philippines is a country of contradiction. It's a tempest of modern western culture and ancient eastern beliefs, of third-world limitations and first-world ambitions. Teenagers practice traditional dances wearing "Vote for Pedro" and Billabong shirts. They ford rivers on the way to school listening to Akon on Ipod nanos. Secluded waterfalls, draped in flowering vines, and crystal-clear turquoise reefs are just jeepney rides away from mega malls, McDonalds and Internet cafes. I've met students here at the top of their school that will spend their life fishing, because they cannot afford college. This is not your grandpa's Peace Corps country.

Trying to take it all in is overwhelming. From the second I stepped on the plane, I was humbled by how much I didn't know I didn't know. Even before I got to the Philippines, just talking to other volunteers, who are from all over the country and all walks of life, I discovered my knowledge of America lacking for someone who was moving out to learn about another country.

When I arrived, there were the mundane adjustments to make. Dealing with the heat and humidity was like acclimating to someone strapping an irate wolverine to my face. I was impressed by anyone who wore pants instead of shorts. Scratching bug bites and finding out who had contracted what parasite became new hobbies. But after a couple of months, I found myself wearing jeans, the bugs became tolerable—my host mother likes to say my blood lost its imported

flavor—and I wondered how I was so cranky about it all not so long ago.

Those are the easy things to overcome—finding one’s way around Filipino society is infinitely more difficult. On the surface, it should be easy. Filipinos are renowned for their warmth, come-what-may attitude, and camaraderie. If smiles could be exported, the Philippines would be the richest nation on earth.

Despite those virtues, and many others, I’ve learned, via many awkward moments, Filipinos come from a vastly different cultural paradigm. No matter how much they try to make me feel at home—I’m not. This manifests itself in subtle ways.

For example, I was playing basketball when I noticed slight frowns on the other players—a rarity for a Filipino. It was because I kept motioning for the ball if I had made my shot. In the US, if you make it in, you get the ball back out of respect—it’s unspoken. In the Philippines, if you make it in, it often means it’s time to give someone else a turn—it’s unspoken.

I have stumbled on biases I wasn’t aware I had—I once asked my host brother his opinion on U.S. politics, and he replied, “Do you have an opinion on Filipino politics?” When I sheepishly answered no, he continued, smiling, “Just like Americans don’t watch news about the Philippines unless something happens here, we don’t watch news about America.”

Remember the words of Socrates: A fool is a fool because he thinks he is wise, while the wise are aware of their ignorance.

At times, the gap between where I’m from and where I am is exasperating. Sometimes I get tired of having to repeatedly debunk stereotypes that all Americans are rich, snobby, or Caucasian. The relaxed pace here can be excruciating to someone eager to get something done.

Other times, I wish I could bring the Philippines home with me. There’s nothing like coming back to dozens of neighborhood kids screaming *kuya*, or big brother, and getting hugs from every one—even if I had only left an hour

ago. Or having a Filipino friend serenade me for half-hour, just because I said I had a bad day. Or receiving dozens of “Good morning sirs!” everyday on the way to school.

I teach English in a high school in Casiguran, a municipality on the bottom tip of Luzon. Working in a foreign education system and with students, and teachers, who are often unfamiliar with my methods and concepts has inevitably led to some bad days.

Even if my teaching was going well, by far the harder task was motivating my students to learn. There have been days when I have felt worthless—I just couldn’t reach them the way I wanted to. The frustration of trying and failing gave birth to a temporary apathy and a bone-deep exhaustion most volunteers encounter at some point, and most volunteers overcome. I realized I am not Superman. The difference I wanted to make was going to come one student, one lesson and one day at a time, if at all.

The rewards are not always apparent, but when they are, I’ll remember them decades from now...the rapt look in my class’s eyes when a lecture hits home. Stopping a class momentarily because I couldn’t stop smiling over how a student, who had always sat in the back, had surreptitiously moved to the front to hear me.

On my last day teaching my training class, a student ran alongside the tricycle taking me home, shaking my hand as long as he could, and thanking me for being his teacher. He had rarely participated in class. I didn’t even know his name.

Some advice I still need to remind myself of: Take the initiative! When things weren’t happening, I realized it was because I had not taken the right first step. Finding the right first step is easy—just take first steps in every direction. Action breeds more action and it’s got to start somewhere.

One last parable: I was shopping for a goodbye party, when, to my great and somewhat irritated surprise, the Filipinos the party was for kept taking my change to buy other things, like cigarettes or snacks. Why they did that only occurred to me later, during one of their birthday parties. The host was hurt when I didn’t dig into the food he offered me—even when I

told him it was because I had just eaten dinner. He pushed as much food and drink onto me as he could anyway.

I've learned when it's time to give, one should give freely and generously, and when it's time to take, one should take without reservation and happily, to celebrate the generosity of the giver. It's not a bad way to approach Peace Corps—give freely to this country and its people, and celebrate what it offers in return.

As of this letter, I've only been here a little more than six months. There are so many experiences to sort out, and so much more to learn, understand and do, but I'm already sure of one thing: Coming here was worth it.

—Grant Tse

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Welcome!!!

“Don't over analyze going. There is no way to be prepared for this experience. Nothing will be like you expected it would be. Everything is so much better and so much worse and totally different. Pack your stuff (it will all be wrong), go with a smile (you'll need it), and DO IT.” No matter what you take from my letter I hope you appreciate this quote from another Peace Corps Volunteer. It is a quote my friend found and wrote in a going away picture album she gave me which has been an accurate description of how to approach life as a Peace Corps Volunteer. It is not meant to scare you or to make you feel like there is nothing you can do to be ready before you come, but to realize that for this experience you need to be ready for it all. You will have an amazing support system, remember all your batch mates are going through the same thing, so do not be afraid to rely on them when you need to!

I am writing to you as an Education volunteer and my site is a small town called Gasan, Marinduque. Locally, Marinduque is called the heart of the Philippines due to its shape and location which personally makes feel special to live in the Heart of the Philippines! My assignment is to be an English

teacher in a high school. Education is going to test you in many ways and trust me in terms of grammar, you probably do not know English as well as you thought. Joke... On a serious note, it is not only your job to teach the students but to help them understand why it is important to learn. Just because they are in school does mean they want to be there, for me this has been the toughest part of the job but with dedication and patience it shows a promising future.

Since I mentioned patience I will focus on that word for a bit. I am supposed to write to you about my personal experience adjusting but in all honesty there is not one thing that I can say sums up my adjusting period. To this date it is still going on! During the application period and training, patience is a word I used and heard many, many times. I thought of course, just use patience and everything will be easy and relaxed. Guess what, it is not like that. Don't get me wrong, patience is important but once you are in the situation, the actual practice is not as simple as it sounds. The constant questions and stares begin to weigh on you making the volunteer experience seem more like an interview than development work. My mom will often remind me in a sarcastic tone, "What did you expect? You are in a different country!"

No worries though, you will find your own way to cope with your bad moments which accompanied with the plethora good times make this experience all that it is supposed to be. The people here want you to be part of their community and friendship circles despite the fact that they seem scared and nervous when you first come around. I still look in amazement at the way friends and families stay close here. I have spent time on the porch of my site mate's house doing nothing but admiring the interaction between neighbors. They care for each others children and homes. Teenage boys are not scared to handle little children which is unreal in my opinion but this is just part of the differences you will see in the culture here. Be prepared to be amazed, excited, sad and anxious all at the same time.

Your life is about to change and you will miss home. These, among other things are inevitable, but remember you are going to take on a fantastic challenge which will allow you to teach just as much as you can learn. I wish you all the best of luck and look forward to meeting you upon arrival.

—Marie Morse

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Five Things Your Recruiter Didn't Tell You

1. You will get technical training. In addition to learning a language, you will get training in your sector. Whether its CYF, Education, or CRM, it will be taught by Filipinos with expertise in their field. It's a combination of classroom and practicum experiences in the field. You will learn a lot of skills related to your sector and about Filipino work style. By the end of PST your brain will be "fried" because you will have experienced some demanding course work in both language and technical areas. Also, you will be painfully aware of how much you have yet to learn. But with energy and enthusiasm, that you will magically conjure from some untapped place deep inside you, you will march to your site more prepared, more ready than you realize.
2. You get one (1) weekend a month to explore this great, beautiful country. You are a volunteer 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. On your weekends and days off, you'll be in your community getting to know people, getting to know things (transportation systems) and getting to know places. Volunteers have one weekend to travel and explore new places. You will enjoy your exploration and you will look forward to it. But during those other weekends please don't forget you're part of a special group of people that is watched, admired, or viewed with disdain by others not because of who you are, but because of what you may represent in the perceptions others hold. The Philippines has had some of the most awesome volunteers doing really wonderful things

in their communities. We have also had some not so wonderful volunteers. Don't be one of them. You will be tired and exhausted many, many times. You will be raw. That is when you'll be most prone to doing something stupid. You will learn to rely on yourself in a new way. Also, get to know us. The staff and volunteers are eager to get to know you and help you out.

3. If you can swing it, bring your laptop and iPod/mp3 player. American plugs work just fine and there's Wi-Fi accessibility. If you can't swing it, that's okay; there's an Internet cafe on every street corner. Most Volunteers have cells and we text in a crazy-mad fashion. Your thumbs will become powerful and dexterous.
4. Nobody cares about your resume. If you've just got out of college and feel you haven't got enough real world experience or your resume seems empty, don't worry about it. If you've spent any time in the work world (10 years, 20 years, 30 years), I'm sure you have a lot of wonderful skills and qualifications that make you a desirable volunteer, but nobody cares about that either. People want to get to know you. Your genuine interest in helping and your rapport-building skills will be what carry you here.
5. Don't expect an exotic culture that is like the pictures in travel guides or what you've heard from other returned PCVs reminiscing. I daydreamed of living in a *nipa* hut and brought a short-wave radio with me. Refer to Point 3 to understand why the radio remains at the bottom of my backpack. I live in an urban area, a suburb of Manila working with street children. I have an awesome site, but the municipality where I live draws many comparisons to where I lived in the U.S. This is a westernized culture on the surface, the intricate interplay of Filipino lifestyle and culture is hidden beneath and the observant volunteer will benefit from their patience and ability to make friends with others.

—Rachel Kavanagh

Congratulations! I realize that you have been filling out masses of paper work and waiting anxiously for news of your future site. I have found that the Philippines is a diverse, lively and hot country with some exceptionally beautiful places. The people are generous, friendly, helpful, joyful and think highly of Americans.

My husband and I have been living in the Philippines for six months. We trained for three months in the province of Bataan and have lived three months in Batangas. I am in the English education program and I co-teach four classes with a Filipino teacher. I have three third-level high school classes and one fourth year. My students are great; they are respectful, polite and have lots of questions about life in America. My husband is in the coastal resource management program.

The positives we have experienced in this country are innumerable. Learning the language has been a lot of fun and people really appreciate it when you speak to them in Filipino. We have tried lots of new foods and we really enjoy the fresh seafood, fruits and vegetables. We have access to everything we need and almost anything we want. Our town has lots of internet cafés, a great market and even a cute coffee shop. The best part of our service is the people we have met: training with other volunteers is fun and Peace Corps staff have been helpful, the families we have lived with are wonderful and people in our community are great.

The greatest challenge for us as a couple has been our site. I enjoy my school, co-teacher and students a lot, but my husband's job has been difficult. Placing couples is harder, because Peace Corps has to find a location where both persons will have a job in their field. Therefore you do not have as much input into your permanent site location.

We just started living by ourselves. Six months of living with host families was difficult, but very rewarding. Lack of privacy and not cooking our own meals was hard, but we learned more about Filipino families and culture from our six month home stays than we could ever learn on our own.

I wish you the best of luck as you prepare to serve as a Peace Corps Volunteer. Don't over pack! It is impossible to not have expectations, but try to remember that the Philippines is diverse and not all towns are in your *Lonely Planet Guide* for a reason. This has been such a rewarding and educational experience for me already and our service has barely begun.

Hope to see you here!

—Rebeka Lawrence-Gomez

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I imagine that Peace Corps attracts independent folks. If you're anything like the typical Volunteer, you've got a degree or perhaps years of work under your belt now—perhaps you feel like there's nothing you can't tackle on your own. Of course that perception couldn't be any further from reality and if you don't know that yet leave it to the Philippines to show you. You will need your Filipino friends to explain the stark differences and subtle quirks that separate our cultures; your family to explain what you're eating; and if you're language progress is anything like mine, someone to explain what has just been explained.

Even today, after six months in-country, I still need all of those things. I expected service to full of challenges—that's partly why I decided to serve in the first place. But what I didn't expect, and what I've come to love most about my life here, is how quickly I've become comfortable depending on my new family and community to help me face them. I come home to a hot lunch every workday; I find open hearts and patient listeners at every corner; my neighbors are interested my work—and all to willing to help.

The warmth and care people show toward me has nothing to do with the fact that I'm an American—that's just how people treat each other here. I've watched night after night as my host-mom feeds relatives and neighbors when they haven't been able to cook. I'm continually reminded that sometimes it's okay to let go of one's pride and lean on others a little bit; here in the Philippines, sometimes it's necessary to survive.

As a work-oriented person, I need this support because after four months at my permanent site my role here remains largely undefined. I hope to help organize a new fisheries management council, train community members in resource monitoring techniques, and I also plan to work with our schools to increase environmental awareness and the ethic of stewardship amongst the youth. Progress on all these fronts has been slow, but I've come to appreciate the volunteer timeline as it's shown me how separate well-being from my work and the outcomes I might want to see.

As a new Volunteer, you have the *opportunity* to be changed by the Philippines too, but just showing up won't be enough. You'll need to stay open-minded, flexible, and patient. I can offer the following advice:

1. Even after you think you've come to know your site, force yourself to one new thing every day--whether that's meeting one new person or taking a slightly different route home work. (This is advisable from a safety and security standpoint as well!)
2. Study your language, and study it well. But don't expect to be able converse fully with people for some time.
3. If you come with loads of American gizmos do yourself a favor: for the first few months at your site, use them sparingly. Of course you can listen to your Mp3 player to calm your nerves or watch some movies on your laptop to put yourself to sleep. But don't lock yourself in a room and let yourself be numbed by these toys because if you don't make an effort to make friends, you may find you need more and more numbing all the time.

I wish you the best of luck in your service. And welcome to the Philippines!

—Daniel Luck

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I am senior Volunteer (almost 63 years). I had an opportunity to go to Morocco in 2004 as a small business development Volunteer. Unfortunately due to medical reasons,

my stay in Morocco was only for three months. However, I still had a very positive experience. Joining Peace Corps was my life long dream and when I got better, I was determined to pursue to my goals to return to my Peace Corps assignment. I was finally accepted and received an invitation to serve as a Volunteer in the children, youth and family program in Peace Corps/Philippines

I must mention that I am pure vegetarian. This was my major concern at first as the usual Philippine meals consist of pork, fish, chicken, other meats and eggs. However, I overcame this easily. I learned that there are lots of fresh vegetables, fruits, and various forms and varieties of Mungo beans (beans, sprouts and togie) and tofu available. These have taken care of my protein needs. If you have a sweet tooth, you will enjoy this country. Several sweet dishes are made from sticky rice and coconut milk.

I have three host families. I live in rural areas with farming communities. People are kind, simple, welcoming and hospitable. I have been accepted as part of their families. They were curious to know who I am, why am I here and why at my age? I am an Indian-American with light brown complexion and people tend to identify with me based on their ethnicity and not nationality. Neighbors come and watch me eat, make small conversation and ask if I know their relatives or friends who are in the USA. They always ask, "Where you are going and where you came from?" Don't let it bother you. They do not mean to pry. These are very common expressions and it is their way of saying hello. They address me as Ate, Tita, Mama, and Lola etc., which means older sister, mother, aunty and grandmother.

Here, the younger people take older folks' hand and let it touch their forehead as a blessing. This custom of blessing is very unique. When I am away, my host family members text me to ask if I am ok, when I am coming home and to say they miss me. I am at ease with my community. One of the highlights of my Volunteer experience here was witnessing the family pig give birth to 15 piglets. I wrote to my family

back home that this was a unique experience seeing the whole process of delivering multiple births. The piglets were all of different colors.

I have learned so much from the Filipino culture. I did this by willingly integrating myself in their culture and enjoying the process at the same time. I was able to hold health and nutrition related workshops with a local group. My schedule also permits time for exercise. I was even able to recruit a few ladies to join me for my morning walks. In addition, I also do yoga and meditation to address my spiritual needs.

The Peace Corps staff is very helpful and cooperative. They guide you and look out for your best interests. They support you through various trainings that will prepare you for your assignment. So far, I've already started learning two languages. I studied Tagalog in my pre-service training and when I was assigned to the Bicol region, I also started to learn the Bicolano dialect.

If I could be of any help to any of you, please let me know. I may not be able to respond immediately as I have to go to town for Internet and email access. It's a 45-minute ride by tricycle or jeepney. I'd like to welcome you as you embark on a lovely adventure. I want you to have positive experience. Just be open-minded, flexible and have an adaptive attitude. Last but not least, don't forget to smile and have fun.

—Rekha Shah

NOTES



PACKING LIST



This list has been compiled by Volunteers serving in the Philippines and is based on their experience. Use it as an informal guide in making your own list, bearing in mind that experience is individual. There is no perfect list! You obviously cannot bring everything on the list, so consider those items that make the most sense to you personally and professionally. 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 limit on baggage. And remember, you can get almost everything you need in the Philippines.

Women

- 5 casual pants and or capris or skirts for work
- 2 pairs of jeans (no rips or shredding)
- 4 pairs of shorts that extend to mid-thigh or knee
- 6 work shirts/tops (like polos)
- 4 casual cotton t-shirts (nothing with a deep “V”) for non-work days
- One nice dress or skirt and top for official, more formal occasions such as Swearing In and courtesy calls to government officials
- 2 modest one piece bathing suits (if one get’s ruined it is hard to find a replacement locally), board shorts and a two piece for vacation
- 20 pairs of underwear (anything larger then a size 8 is hard to find locally)
- 5 bras (anything larger then a size 36B is hard to find locally)
- 6 pairs of socks
- Comfortable work shoes - flats or nice sandals
- Flip flops

- Teva or Keen work sandals
- Sneakers or running shoes
- Cheap “don’t care if you lose them” earrings.

Men

- 3 pairs khakis or dress pants
- 2 pairs of jeans (no rips, holes or shredding)
- 4 pairs of shorts
- 1 swim trunks
- 5 short sleeve button down collared shirts and / or polos
- 5 cotton t-shirts
- 12 pairs of boxers/briefs
- 6 pairs of socks
- 1 pair of comfortable dress/work shoes
- Flip flops
- Teva or keen work sandals
- Sneakers/running shoes

Miscellaneous Items

- Headlamp
- Ipod with speakers or CDs and CD player
- 3 lightweight, super-absorbent quick dry body towels
- USB/Flash drive
- Rechargeable batteries and charger (AA and AAA batteries)
- Tampons (very hard to find locally)
- Swiss army knife or leatherman
- Ziplock bags in different sizes
- Durable backpack enough for a 5 day trip
- Recreational equipment - hacky sack, Frisbee, snorkel and mask

- Photos of your family, friends, pets to show your community.
- Digital camera with airtight container to protect it when not in use
- Sunglasses
- 2 Cotton sheets - flat sheet only, queen size with pillow cases
- Money belt
- Nalgene water container with replacement lid as they tend to break
- Small, cheap gifts for your two host families such as, “Uno” and other American games, US maps, calendars with pictures in them (maybe of your home state), coloring books, key chains, pens and pencils, chocolate, and hard candies like Jolly Ranchers.

What to pack in a box ready to be shipped by a family member after your arrival here, if you are placed in a cold mountain area:

- 2 light weight fleeces or sweaters
- 1 soft shell
- 7 long sleeve t-shirts or tech shirts
- Additional socks
- Lightweight breathable rain jacket

What not to bring:

- Mosquito net (PC issues you one upon arrival)
- Pepto, Imodium, water tablets, dental floss, bug spray etc. The Peace Corps issues PCVs a thorough medical kit with all this and more the day of arrival.
- Jewelry with emotional value or anything with diamonds
- Spices for cooking
- Short wave radio



PRE-DEPARTURE CHECKLIST



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

Family

- ☐ Notify family that they can call the Peace Corps' Office of Special Services at any time if there is a critical illness or death of a family member (telephone number: 800.424.8580, extension 1470; after-hours duty officer: 202.638.2574).
- ☐ 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.
- ☐ Bring you immunization record.

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 health care during Peace Corps service overseas, it is advisable for people who have preexisting conditions to arrange for the continuation of their supplemental health coverage. If there is a lapse in coverage, it is often difficult and expensive to be reinstated.)
- ☐ Arrange to continue Medicare coverage if applicable.

Personal Papers

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

Voting

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

Personal Effects

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

Financial Management

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



CONTACTING PEACE CORPS HEADQUARTERS



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

Peace Corps Headquarters

Toll-free Number:

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

Peace Corps' Mailing Address:

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

For Questions About:	Staff	Toll-free Extension	Direct/ Local Number
Responding to an Invitation	Office of Placement Europe, Mediterranean, and Asia	Ext. 1875	202.692.1875
Programming or Country Information	Desk Officer E-mail: philippines@ peacecorps.gov	Ext. 2416	202.692.2416

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
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)

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