

THE PEACE CORPS WELCOMES YOU TO

ETHIOPIA



A PEACE CORPS PUBLICATION
FOR NEW VOLUNTEERS



June 2007



A WELCOME LETTER

Tenastaling wholachu! Hello everyone! Welcome to the opportunity to join Peace Corps/Ethiopia! The ancient land of “The Lion of the Tribe of Juda. The land of the King of Kings.” A land of an ancient people, an ancient language and ancient customs. A land with a written language 2,500 years before the founding of America. A people able to read and write even as Europe was going through the Dark Ages. A people who see themselves as direct descendants of King Solomon. And yet, a people who need your ideas, your vision, your vitality. Joining Peace Corps/Ethiopia is an experience that will change your life. Ethiopians are some of the loveliest people you will ever meet, friendly, generous, sincere, and accepting. They welcome you into their homes, they feed you as an honored guest. And, if you come equally open minded and with a warm heart, a sense of humor and a willingness to appreciate the diversity in which you will live, your experience in Ethiopia will broaden your thinking and enrich your life.

The task in Ethiopia is a serious one. The program focuses on HIV/AIDS in urban and rural areas in hospitals, in rural clinics, in schools and with the young and the old. It is sometimes heartbreaking, yet it is also rewarding. You will struggle, you will ask a thousand whys as you witness transitions in the lives of people you work with. You will be forced to look at life in a new way. You will be touched deeply by the resilience of people around you who have very little. Know that the Peace Corps staff—health officer, program manager, trainers and language instructors are all there to support you and to help you help others to make a difference in their lives.

While Ethiopia is at one and the same time beautiful and mysterious, it is also going through changes in culture and in security on its borders. Before you make a commitment, please make a personal investment in learning more about Ethiopia as you consider joining the Peace Corps/Ethiopia team. The Peace Corps health HIV/AIDS program is both north and south of Addis Ababa, the capital. That means it is far from the northern and eastern borders where there is periodic conflict. Make a special point of researching the current security realities, because while they are far away on the borders, every volunteer has the personal responsibility of living safely and making sound common-sense decisions. Ethiopia is a country with one of the lowest crime rates and Addis Ababa is one of the safest capital cities in Africa. Talk openly about your interest in volunteering in Ethiopia with your friends and families so that if you make the decision, you make it with their understanding and support.

And if you decide that volunteering in Ethiopia is a mission of importance to you, then we, Peace Corps, and our Ethiopian friends and counterparts welcome you warmly to join the team to work together to improve Ethiopians' quality of life and enrich your own.

Peter Parr
Country Director

NOTES

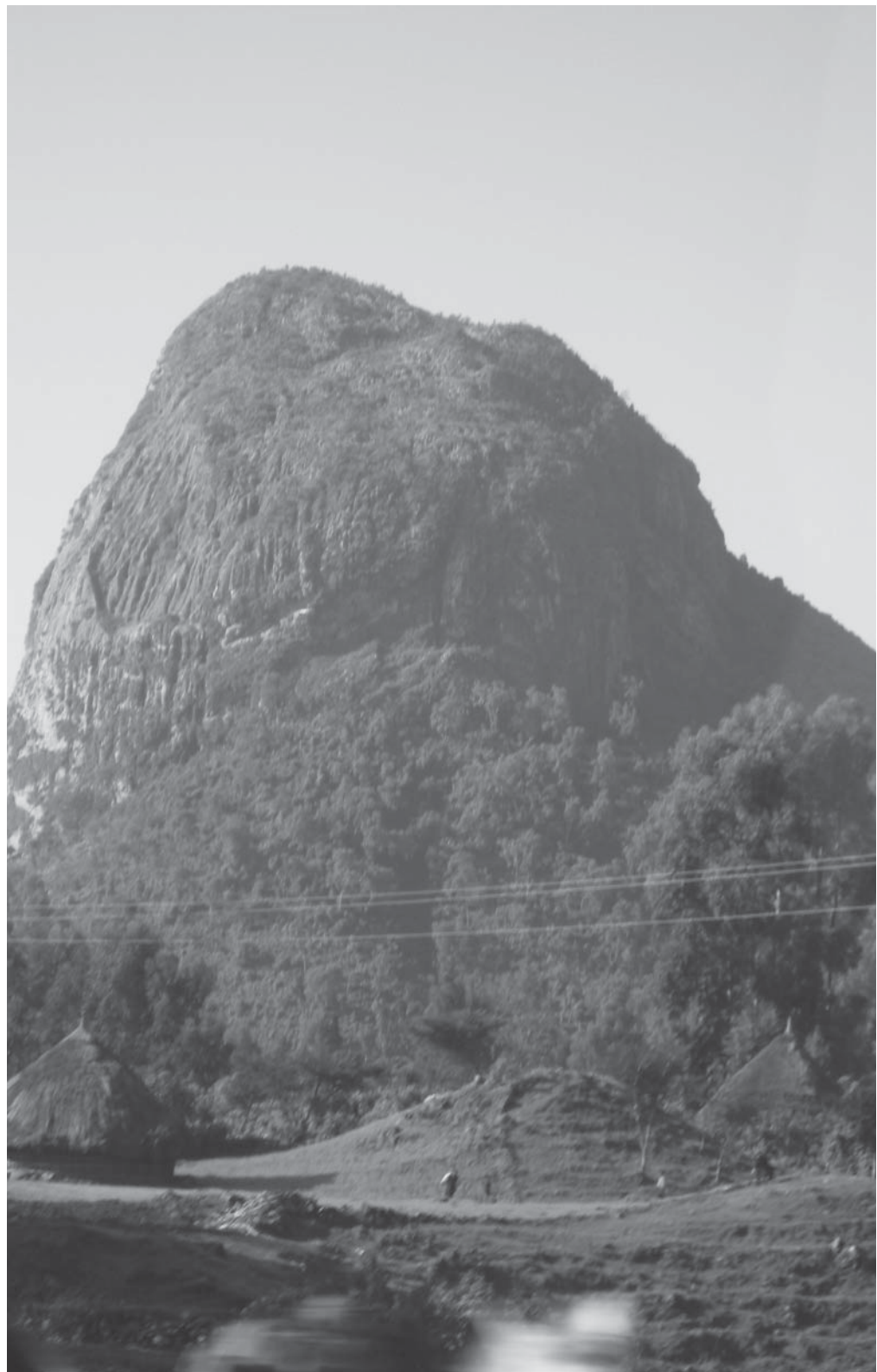


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PEACE CORPS/ETHIOPIA HISTORY AND PROGRAMS



History of the Peace Corps in Ethiopia

Peace Corps/Ethiopia is a very old Peace Corps program. The first group of Peace Corps Volunteers arrived in Ethiopia (including present-day Eritrea) in September 1962, with 279 secondary school teachers. Volunteers worked in both secondary and vocational/technical schools, with others working in the health, small business, rural development, law, and agriculture sectors. From 1962 to 1977, Peace Corps/Ethiopia was one of the largest Peace Corps programs in the world. More than 3,000 Volunteers served in the country before Peace Corps terminated the program in 1977 due to the unstable political situation and increased security concerns for Volunteers.

In 1991 the Marxist regime in power since 1974 was overthrown and a new democratic government installed. The new government of Ethiopia requested Peace Corps' return and in January 1994 a country assessment team recommended Peace Corps' re-entry into Ethiopia. Peace Corps staff returned in 1994 and in July 1995, 25 Peace Corps Volunteers arrived as secondary school English teachers. Hostilities between Ethiopia and Eritrea erupted in 1999, forcing the Peace Corps to suspend its operations; the program was officially closed in March 2000.

In June 2000 the governments of Ethiopia and Eritrea signed a peace accord, ending the hostilities, but not the conflict. In May 2002 the Peace Corps received an invitation from the government of Ethiopia to resume its program. The agency sent assessment teams to evaluate the feasibility of returning.

These assessment teams recommended Peace Corps' re-entry to Ethiopia, and, with the availability of resources, the Peace Corps began the re-entry process in January 2007. Forty health Volunteers are scheduled to arrive in September 2007 to work with the people of Ethiopia in their fight against HIV/AIDS.

History and Future of Peace Corps Programming in Ethiopia

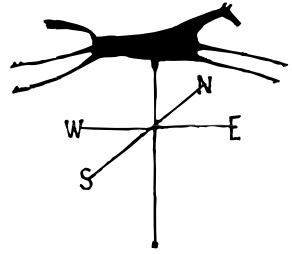
The Peace Corps has been involved in almost every facet of Ethiopia's development over the past decades, making contributions in the fields of education, health, rural development, and small business development. Its most recent contributions have been in education where Volunteers served in secondary schools in the Amhara and Oromiya regions. They taught English as a foreign language to secondary school students in grades 9–12 and as teacher trainers.

When Volunteers return in 2007, they will concentrate in the field of public health. This initial input of 40 Volunteers will collaborate with other U.S. government partners to support the government of Ethiopia's strategy to create and strengthen a community- and family-centered HIV/AIDS prevention, care, and treatment network model in the Amhara and Oromiya regions. Given their high population densities and relatively high HIV prevalence, these regions are considered priorities by the government of Ethiopia and the U.S. government. Placements will be in hospitals, regional health centers, village health centers, community organizations, and HIV/AIDS resource centers. Volunteers will help build capacity, and provide quality prevention, care and treatment services.

NOTES



COUNTRY OVERVIEW: ETHIOPIA AT A GLANCE



History

Few African countries have had such a long, varied, and troubled history as Ethiopia. The Ethiopian state originated in the Aksumite kingdom, a trading state that emerged about the 1st century (Common Era). After the rise of Islam in the 7th century, the Aksumite kingdom became internationally isolated as Arabs gradually gained control of maritime trade in the Red Sea. By the early 12th century, the successors of the Aksumites had expanded southward and established a new capital and a line of kings called the Zagwe. A new dynasty, the so-called “Solomonic” line, which came to power about 1270, continued this territorial expansion and pursued a more aggressive foreign policy. In addition, this Christian state, with the help of Portuguese soldiers, repelled a near-overpowering Islamic invasion. Starting about the mid-16th century, the Oromo people, migrating from the southwest, gradually forced their way into the kingdom, most often by warfare.

Ethiopia’s modern period (post-1855) was characterized by the beginning of a process of recreating a cohesive Ethiopian state, beginning with Tewodros II, and continuing with Yohannis IV, Menelik II, Zawditu, and Haile Selassie I; by the Marxist regime of Mengistu Haile Mariam; and, since mid-1991, by the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) under Meles Zenawi. The period has been characterized by nation-building as well as by warfare.

After becoming emperor in 1930, Haile Selassie embarked on a nationwide modernization program. After 1941 Selassie undertook further military and political changes and sought

to encourage social and economic development. Although he initiated a number of fundamental reforms, the emperor was essentially an autocrat, who relied on political manipulation and military force to remain in power and to preserve the Ethiopian state. Selassie failed to pursue the political and economic policies necessary to improve the lives of most Ethiopians.

In 1974 a group of disgruntled military personnel overthrew the Ethiopian monarchy. Eventually, Mengistu, who participated in the coup, emerged at the head of a Marxist military dictatorship. Almost immediately, the Mengistu regime unleashed a military and political reign of terror against its real and imagined opponents. It also pursued socialist economic policies that reduced agricultural productivity and helped bring on famine, resulting in the deaths of untold tens of thousands of people. Thousands more fled or perished as a result of government schemes to relocate peasants from drought-prone areas of the north to better-watered lands in the south and southwest.

Aside from internal dissent, which was harshly suppressed, the regime faced armed insurgencies in the northern part of the country. The longest-running of these was in Eritrea, where the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) and its predecessors had been fighting control by the central government since 1961. In the mid-1970s, a second major insurgency began in Tigray, where the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), a Marxist-Leninist organization under the leadership of Meles Zenawi, opposed not only the policies of the military government but also the very existence of the government itself.

By May 1991, the EPLF controlled almost all of Eritrea, and the EPRDF, had overrun much of the center of the country. Faced with impending defeat, on May 21 Mengistu fled into

exile in Zimbabwe; the caretaker government he left behind collapsed a week later. The EPLF completed its sweep of Eritrea, and its chairman, Issaias Afwerki, announced the formation of the Provisional Government of Eritrea (PGE). Meanwhile, EPRDF forces marched into Addis Ababa and assumed control of the national government.

After seizing power, Tigrayan and Eritrean leaders confronted an array of political, economic, and security problems that threatened to overwhelm both new governments. They adopted similar strategies, which concentrated on national reconciliation, eventual democratization, good relations with the West, and social and economic development. Each, however, pursued different tactics to implement his respective strategy. Although it received accolades for running an open conference, the EPRDF tightly controlled the proceedings. The conference adopted a national charter, which was signed by representatives of some 31 political groups; it established the Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE), consisting of executive and legislative branches; and it sanctioned an EPLF-EPRDF agreement that converted Aseb into a free port in exchange for a referendum on Eritrean self-determination to be held within two years. To ensure broad political representation, an 87-member Council of Representatives was created, which was to select the new president, draft a new constitution, and oversee a transition to a new national government. The EPRDF occupied 32 of the 87 council seats. The Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) received 12 seats, and the TPLF, the Oromo People's Democratic Organization, and the Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement each occupied 10 seats. Twenty-seven other groups shared the remaining seats.

Government

In Ethiopia, President Meles Zenawi and members of the TGE pledged to oversee the formation of a multi-party democracy. The election for a 547-member constituent assembly was held in June 1994, and this assembly adopted the constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia in December 1994. The elections for Ethiopia's first popularly chosen national parliament and regional legislatures were held in May and June 1995. Most opposition parties chose to boycott these elections, ensuring a landslide victory for the EPRDF. International and nongovernmental observers concluded that opposition parties would have been able to participate had they chosen to do so. The Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia was installed in August 1995.

Parliament consists of the House of Federation or upper chamber (108 seats; members are chosen by state assemblies to serve five-year terms) and the House of People's Representatives or lower chamber (547 seats; members are directly elected by popular vote from single-member districts to serve five-year terms). The Council of Ministers is selected by the prime minister and approved by the House of People's Representatives. The president is elected by the House of People's Representatives for a six-year term (eligible for a second term). The last election was in May 2005; the next will be held in October 2010. The prime minister is designated by the party in power following legislative elections.

Economy

In the economic arena, the TGE inherited a shattered country. In his first public speech after the EPRDF had captured Addis Ababa, Meles Zenawi indicated that Ethiopia's coffers were empty; moreover, some 7 million people were threatened with starvation because of drought and civil war. Economic performance statistics reflected this gloomy assessment.

The current government has embarked on a cautious program of economic reform, including privatization of state enterprises and rationalization of government regulation. While the process is ongoing, reforms have attracted only meager foreign investment.

The Ethiopian economy is based on agriculture, which contributes 47 percent to GNP and more than 80 percent of exports, and employs 85 percent of the population. The major agricultural export crop is coffee, providing 35 percent of Ethiopia's foreign exchange earnings, down from 65 percent a decade ago because of the slump in coffee prices since the mid-1990s. Other traditional major agricultural exports are hides and skins, pulses, oilseeds, and leather. Sugar and gold production has also become important in recent years.

Ethiopia's agriculture is plagued by periodic drought, soil degradation caused by poor agricultural practices and overgrazing, deforestation, high population density, undeveloped water resources, and poor transport infrastructure, making it difficult and expensive to get goods to market. Yet agriculture is the country's most promising resource. Potential exists for self-sufficiency in grains and for export development in livestock, flowers, grains, oilseeds, sugar, vegetables, and fruits.

Gold, marble, limestone, and small amounts of tantalum are mined in Ethiopia. Other resources with potential for commercial development include large potash deposits, natural gas, iron ore, and possibly oil and geothermal energy. Although Ethiopia has good hydroelectric resources, which power most of its manufacturing sector, it is totally dependent on imports for its oil.

A landlocked country, Ethiopia has relied on the port of Djibouti since the 1998–2000 border war with Eritrea. Ethiopia is connected with the port of Djibouti by road and rail for international trade. Of the 23,812 kilometers of

all-weather roads in Ethiopia, about 7,000 km are asphalt. Mountainous terrain and the lack of good roads and sufficient vehicles make land transportation difficult and expensive. However, the government-owned airline's reputation is excellent. Ethiopian Airlines serves 38 domestic airfields and has 42 international destinations.

The agricultural sector suffers from frequent drought and poor cultivation practices. Coffee is critical to the Ethiopian economy with exports of some \$350 million in 2006. The war with Eritrea in 1998–2000 and recurrent drought have buffeted the economy. In November 2001, Ethiopia qualified for debt relief from the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative, and in 2005 the International Monetary Fund voted to forgive Ethiopia's debt. Under Ethiopia's land tenure system, the government owns all land and provides long-term leases to the tenants; the system continues to hamper growth in the industrial sector as entrepreneurs are unable to use land as collateral for loans.

People and Culture

Ethiopia's population is mainly rural, with most people living in highlands above 5,900 feet (1,800 meters). Almost half the people are Muslim; more than a third belong to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church; and about 15 percent practice traditional religious beliefs. There are more than 77 different ethnic groups with their own distinct languages within Ethiopia. The Amhara and Tigrean, who together comprise about 33 percent of the population, live mostly in the central and northern Ethiopian Plateau; they are Christian and hold most of the higher positions in the government. The Oromo, who make up about 40 percent of the population, live in southern Ethiopia and are predominantly Muslim. The pastoral Somali, who are also Muslim, live in eastern and southeastern Ethiopia.

Amharic is the country's official language, but a great many other languages are spoken, including Tigrinya, Oromifa, Somali, and Arabic. A substantial number of Ethiopians speak English, which is commonly taught in the school system. Educational facilities in the nation are very limited, however, and in the late 1990s adult literacy was estimated at just over 35 percent.

There are nine ethnically based states (*kilil*): Afar, Amhara, Binshangul Gumuz, Gambela Hizboch, Hareri Hizboch, Oromiya, Sumale, Tigray, and Ye Debub Biheroch Bihereseboch na Hizboch (Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples); and two self-governing administrations (*astedader*): Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa.

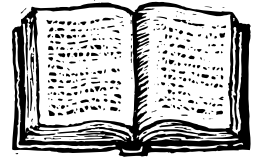
Environment

Ethiopia is located in the Horn of Africa and is bordered on the north and northeast by Eritrea, on the west by the Sudan, the east by Somalia and Djibouti, and the south by Kenya. It has several high mountains; the highest is Ras Dashan at 15,158 feet (4,620 meters). The Blue Nile or Abbai rises in the northwest and flows in a semicircle before entering the Sudan; its source is Lake Tana in the northwest.

The climate is temperate on the plateau and hot in the lowlands. At Addis Ababa, which ranges from 7,000 feet to 8,500 feet (2,200 meters to 2,600 meters), maximum temperature is 80° F (26° C) and minimum 40° F (4° C). The weather is usually sunny and dry with the short (*belg*) rains occurring from February to April, and the big (*meher*) rains beginning in mid-June and ending in mid-September.



RESOURCES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION



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

A note of caution: As you surf these sites, be aware that you will find bulletin boards and chat rooms in which people are free to give opinions and advice based on their own experiences. The opinions expressed are not those of the Peace Corps or the U.S. Government. You may find opinions of people who were unhappy with their choice to serve in the Peace Corps. As you read these comments, we hope you will keep in mind that the Peace Corps is not for everyone, and no two people experience their service in the same way.

General Information About Ethiopia

www.countrywatch.com/

On this site, you can learn anything from what time it is in the capital of Ethiopia to how to convert from the dollar to Ethiopian currency. Just click on Ethiopia and go from there.

www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations

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

www.state.gov

The U.S. State Department's website issues background and consular notes about countries around the world. Find Ethiopia and learn more about its social and political history as well as its contemporary concerns.

<https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/>

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

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

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

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

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

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

This site includes links to all the official sites for governments of countries around the world.

Connect With Returned Volunteers and Other Invitees

www.rpcv.org

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

<http://www.rpcvwebring.org>

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

www.peacecorpswriters.org

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

Online Articles/Current News Sites About Ethiopia

<http://allafrica.com/ethiopia/>

News wire stories about Ethiopia

International Development Sites About Ethiopia

http://www.usaid.gov/locations/sub-saharan_africa/countries/ethiopia/

The U.S. Agency for International Development's work in Ethiopia

www.un.org

The United Nations' website

Recommended Books

1. Ashabranner, Brent. *A Moment in History: The First Ten Years of the Peace Corps*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1971.
2. Clift, Elayne (ed.). *But Do They Have Field Experience!* Potomac, Md.: OGN Publications, 1993.
3. Kennedy, Geraldine (ed.). *From the Center of the Earth: Stories Out of Africa*. Santa Monica, Calif.: Clover Park Press, 1991.
4. Kennedy, Geraldine (ed.). *Hartmattan: A Journey Across the Sahara*. Santa Monica, Calif.: Clover Park Press, 1994.

Books About the History of the Peace Corps

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

Books on the Volunteer Experience

1. Banerjee, Dillon. *So You Want to Join the Peace Corps: What to Know Before You Go*. Berkeley, Calif.: Ten Speed Press, 2000.
2. Casebolt, Marjorie DeMoss. *Margarita: A Guatemalan Peace Corps Experience*. Gig Harbor, Wash.: Red Apple Publishing, 2000.
3. Dirlam, Sharon. *Beyond Siberia: Two Years in a Forgotten Place*. Santa Barbara, Calif.: McSeas Books, 2004.
4. Erdman, Sarah. *Nine Hills to Nambonkaha: Two Years in the Heart of an African Village*. New York, N.Y.: Picador, 2003.
5. Herrera, Susana. *Mango Elephants in the Sun: How Life in an African Village Let Me Be in My Skin*. Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1999.
6. Hessler, Peter. *River Town: Two Years on the Yangtze*. New York, N.Y.: Perennial, 2001.

7. Kennedy, Geraldine ed. *From the Center of the Earth: Stories out of the Peace Corps*. Santa Monica, Calif.: Clover Park Press, 1991.
8. Thompsen, Moritz. *Living Poor: A Peace Corps Chronicle*. Seattle, Wash.: University of Washington Press, 1997 (reprint).



LIVING CONDITIONS AND VOLUNTEER LIFESTYLE



Communications

Mail

Few countries in the world offer the level of mail service we take for granted in the United States. Airmail from the United States to major cities in Ethiopia will take about four weeks or more. Some mail may simply not arrive (fortunately this is not a frequent occurrence, but it does happen). Some letters may arrive with clipped edges because a postal worker tried to see if any money was inside (again, this is rare, but it does happen). We do not want to sound discouraging, but when thousands of miles from families and friends, communication becomes a very sensitive issue. We would prefer you be forewarned of the reality of mail service in the developing world. Advise your family and friends to number their letters and to include “Airmail” and “Par Avion” on their envelopes.

The length of time it takes for mail to reach Volunteers is as varied as their sites. More remote post offices receive mail less frequently, and sometimes a local courier is employed to ferry mail from isolated villages to trading centers. Although mail is sent regularly from the Peace Corps office, the timing of its receipt depends on the location of the Volunteer’s site.

We strongly encourage you to write to your family regularly (perhaps weekly or biweekly) and to number your letters. Family members will typically become worried when they do not hear from you, so please advise your parents, friends, and relatives that mail is sporadic and that they should not worry if they do not receive your letters regularly.

Packages normally take about four to five months to reach Ethiopia from the United States if sent via surface mail. Volunteers are requested to follow the mailing procedures described in the Peace Corps/Ethiopia *Volunteer Handbook*.

Your address during training will be:

Your Name/PCT

US Peace Corps/Ethiopia

P.O. Box 7788

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

It is your responsibility to forward the postal address at your site to the Peace Corps office in Addis Ababa so mail can be routed directly to you. Remember that it is important to keep regular contact with relatives and friends, not just for them but also for you. Write often so that no one has cause to worry, which a lapse in letters for any period of time has been known to create.

Once at your site, you will receive a notification slip in your post box when you receive a package. Respond promptly; the sooner you pick up the package, the less storage fees will be.

Trainees and Volunteers are responsible for mailing personal letters and packages. Airmail letters and stamps are available at local post offices.

Telephones

Most large cities and provincial capitals have domestic long-distance service; regional centers and some large cities also provide overseas telephone service. In some locations, the service is fast and efficient; in others, it may take several hours to get calls through.

Cellular telephones and service are available in Ethiopia, especially in Addis Ababa and larger towns. The lack of SIM cards to new customers, however, makes it difficult to procure cellphone service. The Peace Corps does not require Volunteers to purchase a cellphone, but Volunteers may choose to buy one once they reach their sites and learn whether there is network coverage in their area.

Volunteers are responsible for all toll charges on domestic long-distance calls. But you may call the Peace Corps/Addis Ababa office collect or reverse charges if it is an emergency. Peace Corps/Ethiopia will provide a monthly telecommunications allowance to cover official and emergency phone calls.

The Peace Corps occasionally authorizes a Volunteer to call home because of a family emergency. When you receive such notification from the Peace Corps, you may pay for toll charges and bring the receipt to the Peace Corps office for reimbursement. Personal overseas calls will not be authorized by the Peace Corps office, and Volunteers must use locally available public phones for all personal calls.

Computer, Internet, and E-mail Access

Internet access is available at post offices and cybercafes in towns and cities, but can be slow and costly.

Typically, Internet use is for personal reasons, so you are expected to use your living and telecommunications allowances to cover your Internet costs. Designated computers in the resource center at the Addis Ababa office do have Internet access, and you are welcome to use these, though priority is given to Volunteers who are getting ready to finish their service, to assist them with graduate school and job applications. Volunteers are prohibited from using staff computers in all offices.

Housing and Site Location

As a Volunteer, you will most likely live in a peri-urban or rural community, and not have access to indoor plumbing or electricity. Expect to use lamps and candles for lighting and to cook using a single-burner kerosene stove, wood, or charcoal. The standard and condition of Volunteer housing vary widely, from mud houses with thatched roofs to very modern cement houses with running water and electricity. The type of house you have will depend on your project, the area of the country you are posted, and the types of houses available in the community. You may also be required to share housing with other staff or to live in a room behind a shop at a market center. You can expect to have, at the very least, a room to call your own. The decision as to whether housing standards are “acceptable” lies with the associate Peace Corps director and medical staff. When it comes to your housing, you should not lose sight of the guiding goal of the Peace Corps. Maintain your focus on service to the people of Ethiopia and not on the level of your accommodations.

Because Peace Corps Volunteers are often posted in poor rural areas to work with communities with little or no money for housing, the Peace Corps sets minimum housing standards:

- There must be at least a private, lockable room if housing is shared with other people.
- The room should have windows.
- The roof should not leak.
- There should be a cement floor and a place for a Volunteer to take a bucket bath or shower.
- There should be a latrine that is private or semiprivate (e.g., not used by all schoolchildren at a school, but perhaps shared by other staff members).
- The Volunteer will be expected to use the same water source as his or her community.

Your site assignment is made during pre-service training, in collaboration with the training staff. The assignment is based on their assessment and recommendation regarding community needs and your skill levels in the technical, cross-cultural, and language areas. You will be interviewed prior to an actual placement decision so that additional personal preferences can be considered in making the site assignment. Site placements are made using the following criteria (in priority order):

- Medical considerations
- Government of Ethiopia needs
- Site requirements (community needs) matched with demonstrated technical, cross-cultural, and language skills
- Peace Corps/Ethiopia needs
- Personal preference of the trainee

Living Allowance and Money Management

Each Volunteer receives a monthly allowance sufficient to cover basic costs. The allowance enables Volunteers to live adequately according to the Peace Corps' philosophy of a modest lifestyle. It is based on the local cost of living and is paid in local currency. Your living allowance is intended to cover food, housing, clothing, transportation from home to work site, utilities, household supplies, recreation and entertainment, incidental personal expenses, communications, and reading material.

Food and Diet

In most parts of Ethiopia there is a wide choice of foods, ranging from fresh fruits and vegetables to meats. With a little creativity, you can enjoy a varied diet. Fruits and vegetables are seasonal, which means that some items may not be available at all times. Vegetarian Volunteers will have little

difficulty in continuing their diets after becoming familiar with local food items and their preparation. Also, vegetarians get a bonus on “fasting” days (over 100 throughout the year on Wednesdays and Fridays) when vegetarian dishes are available at restaurants; they are difficult to find on non-fasting days, however.

Transportation

All Volunteers will be expected to travel in Ethiopia using local transportation (i.e., foot, bicycle, public buses, mini-vans or “blue donkeys”). This includes getting from your training center to your site during and at the end of pre-service training.

Volunteers may not own or operate motorized vehicles, but they are allowed to rent vehicles during approved vacation periods. Trainees and Volunteers are not allowed to drive any vehicle during training or at their sites.

Volunteers are provided 18-speed, all-terrain bicycles (and helmets) by the Peace Corps. This bicycle is to be used with your extension work, in conjunction with the use of public transport.

Geography and Climate

Most of Ethiopia is supposed to enjoy a tropical climate due to its proximity to the equator, but since most of the country’s land mass is above 4,920 feet (1,500 meters), that is not the case. Ethiopia experiences extremely varied climatic conditions from cool to very cold in the highlands where most of the population inhabits, to one of the hottest places on Earth at the Dallol Depression. Normally, the rainy season lasts from mid-June to mid-September (longer in the southern highlands) preceded by intermittent showers from February or March; the remainder of year is generally dry.

Social Activities

The most common form of entertainment is socializing among friends and neighbors. Some Volunteers visit other Volunteers on weekends and holidays. The Peace Corps encourages Volunteers to remain at their sites as much as possible to develop relationships with community members, but it also recognizes that they need to make occasional trips to regional centers and to visit friends.

You will find it easy to make friends in your community and to participate in weddings, funerals, birthday celebrations, and other social events. It is impossible to overemphasize the rewards of establishing rapport with supervisors, co-workers, and other community members. A sincere effort to learn the local language will greatly facilitate these interactions.

Professionalism, Dress, and Behavior

Ethiopians regard dress and appearance as an outward sign of the respect one holds for another individual. Neatness in appearance is much more important than being “stylish.” You are expected to dress appropriately (long skirts for women and slacks for men) in training, while traveling, and on the job. It may take only one inappropriately dressed Volunteer for an Ethiopian host agency to arrive at a generally negative conclusion about the Peace Corps. This jeopardizes the credibility of the Volunteer and the entire program. Neighbors, counterparts, and supervisors may draw unfavorable impressions of a Volunteer’s appearance, and the Volunteer may never be aware that such impressions have been made. In such cases, Volunteers will never know how their work and credibility have been compromised. In addition, Volunteers dress should respect the cultural and religious norms of their community.

Volunteers should always wear clean and neat clothes. Buttoned shirts for men and blouses and skirts or dresses for women are appropriate wear during business hours. T-shirts are appropriate only for casual, non-business activities. Tank tops, see-through blouses, or extremely low-cut blouses are not appropriate attire; exposing one's shoulders is unacceptable.

Men should not wear dirty or worn-out jeans. Jeans should not be worn during business hours unless the conditions of the job assignment or training activity allow it, and never when visiting government offices. In most cases, jeans are not acceptable attire for the Peace Corps office or training center. However, should they be unavoidable (for instance, following travel), neat jeans are acceptable in the Peace Corps office and on "dress down" days at the training center. The Ethiopian Ministry of Education has determined that jeans are not appropriate attire for classroom teachers.

Likewise, women may not wear casual slacks or jeans during business hours unless the conditions of the training activity or job assignment require it, and never when visiting government offices. Dresses and skirts, to or below the knees, are appropriate attire for women. Shorts may be worn only at home, when exercising (if appropriate), or when doing work where Ethiopian counterparts are also wearing shorts. As mentioned above, only in specific circumstances are jeans, casual slacks, or shorts considered acceptable attire for women in the Peace Corps office or the training center.

Aside from the condition and type of clothing you wear, there are other standards of dress and appearance that need to be remembered. Female Volunteers should wear appropriate undergarments, including bras and slips. Your hair should be clean and combed. For men, beards should be neatly trimmed. Men should never wear a hat indoors, unless custom in the area allows it. Wearing a hat in government, Peace Corps, or similar

offices is not allowed, and sunglasses should be removed when indoors. Finally, smoking is prohibited in all Peace Corps and training center offices and in Peace Corps vehicles.

These restrictions have been formalized in response to specific instances of inappropriate dress and behavior by Volunteers. Because it is difficult to know automatically what is appropriate when entering a new culture, we present this list not to offend, but to inform. In general, the above guidance is meant to convey to Volunteers that adherence to professional standards is appropriate at all times and in all places.

Peace Corps Volunteers are expected to maintain high standards of behavior. Any behavior that could jeopardize the reputation of the Volunteer or the Peace Corps could be grounds for administrative separation. All Volunteers are subject to the laws of Ethiopia and have no immunity from them.

The matter of trainee or Volunteer sexual behavior is, of course, a highly personal one. However, because of other social implications of inappropriate behavior, it is important that Peace Corps standards be clear. Sexual mores in Ethiopia are very conservative and strict, and you are expected to respect them. Public displays of affection such as kissing, hand holding, or hugging are not generally socially acceptable, though hand holding among men and boys is not uncommon. Further information will be provided during your pre-service training on appropriate and inappropriate sexual behavior.

If the country director determines that willful disregard of cultural standards is jeopardizing your credibility as a trainee or Volunteer or that of the entire program, you may be administratively separated from Peace Corps service.

Personal Safety

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

Rewards and Frustrations

Before accepting this assignment, you should give ample thought to some of the potential obstacles that you will face. Until your adjustment to Ethiopia is complete, you will undoubtedly feel out of place speaking a new language and observing and trying to practice customs that may seem strange to you. No matter what your ethnic, religious, or racial background is, you may stick out as someone from outside the Ethiopian culture. However, many situations can be overcome with a sense of humor and an ability to be open to new experiences.

Your work situation may also present many difficulties and frustrations. Most of your work will be to educate, motivate, and organize community groups. These are slow and challenging tasks. Co-workers, severely underpaid and burdened with extended family commitments, will have a much different outlook on life from your own, and rainy and agricultural seasons will delay many project activities. You must be able to work in an unstructured assignment and approach situations with flexibility, supreme patience, resourcefulness, and a sense of humor. Your commitment to serve as a Peace Corps Volunteer will be tested throughout your service by any number of everyday events.

Peace Corps service is not for everyone. More than a mere job, it requires greater dedication and commitment to serve than do most other work environments. It is for confident, self-starting, and concerned individuals who are interested in assisting in other countries and increasing human understanding across cultural barriers. The key to satisfying work as a Peace Corps Volunteer is the ability to establish successful human relations at all levels. This requires patience, sensitivity, and a positive professional attitude. If you have the personal qualities needed to accept the challenges described above and can demonstrate them for a two-year service in Ethiopia, you will have a rewarding, enriching, and lasting experience, while at the same time making a much-needed contribution to Ethiopia's development.

Often you will find yourself in situations that require an ability to motivate yourself and your colleagues, and take action with little guidance from supervisors. You may work for months without seeing any visible impact and without receiving feedback on your work. You must possess the self-confidence, patience, and vision to continue working toward

long-term goals without seeing immediate results. Judging by the experience of former Volunteers, the benefits are well worth the difficult times, and most Volunteers leave feeling that they have gained much more than they sacrificed during their service.

Even with the many economic, social, political, and environmental challenges facing Ethiopia today, there is an atmosphere of excitement and hope. The changes occurring are some of the most important in the country's modern history. To join the people of Ethiopia in this effort, and to be part of this historically pivotal and defining moment, will be both fascinating and satisfying to Volunteers willing to work hard, be tolerant of ambiguity, and give generously of their time.

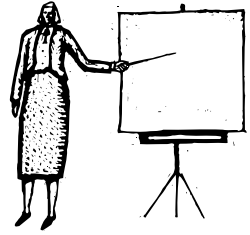
The AIDS pandemic strikes across all social strata in many Peace Corps countries. The loss of teachers has crippled education systems, while illness and disability drains family income and forces governments and donors to redirect limited resources from other priorities. The fear and uncertainty AIDS causes has led to increased domestic violence and stigmatizing of people living with HIV/AIDS, isolating them from friends and family and cutting them off from economic opportunities. As a Peace Corps Volunteer, you will confront these issues on a very personal level. It is important to be aware of the high emotional toll that disease, death, and violence can have on Volunteers.

As you strive to integrate into your community, you will develop relationships with local people who might die during your service. Because of the AIDS pandemic, some Volunteers will be regularly meeting with HIV-positive people and working with training staff, office staff, and host family members living with AIDS. Volunteers need to prepare themselves to embrace these relationships in a sensitive and positive manner.

Likewise, malaria and malnutrition, motor vehicle accidents and other unintentional injuries, domestic violence and corporal punishment are problems a Volunteer may confront. You will need to anticipate these situations and utilize supportive resources available throughout your training and service to maintain your own emotional strength, so that you can continue to be of service to your community.



PEACE CORPS TRAINING



Overview of Pre-Service Training

The most important function of Peace Corps staff is to provide support for Volunteers. Support does not imply daily supervision of Volunteers' work, nor does it imply assuming parental roles. Volunteer support implies an ongoing interaction between Volunteers and all Peace Corps staff regarding how you handle such matters as your overall adjustment to the Peace Corps, to your job assignment, and to your community. Your associate Peace Corps director is responsible for making regular visits to your site to assist you in any way possible in your orientation in-country. Additionally, the country director and the Peace Corps medical officer make periodic visits to Volunteer sites.

Training will be busy for everyone. Often you will work over eight hours a day, five days a week. Be prepared for a rigorous, full schedule. The principal objectives of training are to provide a learning environment that enables you to develop the language (Amharic and Oromifa for all), technical, and cultural skills; knowledge; and attitude necessary to work and live in Ethiopia.

The community-based approach used as the main training method means that you will spend most of your training learning by doing in your communities, and then reflecting on your experiences during formal sessions. You will spend most days in the field, completing hands-on, practical tasks and participating in group discussions, lectures, and field trips. Each week you will spend one or two days at the training center, discussing the prior week's learning, preparing for the next work week, and attending essential cross-cultural, health, safety, administrative, and integration sessions.

All training staff are Ethiopian nationals with solid experience in training. They will be helped by Volunteers (who transferred from other Africa posts) who can provide a bi-national perspective as a bridge to support your transition from life in the United States to a job and life in a developing country, as well as share their personal experiences. Though we value other Volunteers' experiences in training, each Peace Corps Volunteer's experiences are as unique and individual as the person who enters Peace Corps service. The fact is that the only real answers to your many questions will be your own. Bring an open mind.

Technical Training

Technical training prepares you to work in Ethiopia by building on the skills you already have and by helping you to develop new skills in a manner appropriate to the needs of the country. The Peace Corps staff, Ethiopia experts, and extending Volunteers from other African countries conduct the training program. Training places great emphasis on learning how to transfer the skills you have to the community in which you will serve as a Volunteer.

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

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

Language Training

As a Peace Corps Volunteer, you will find that language skills are the key to personal and professional satisfaction during your service. These skills are critical to your job performance, they help you integrate into your host community, and they can ease your personal adaptation to the new surroundings. Therefore, language training is the heart of the training program, and you must successfully meet minimum language requirements to complete training and become a Volunteer. Experienced Ethiopian language instructors give formal language classes five days a week in small classes of four to five people. Ethiopian languages are also introduced in the health, safety, culture, and technical components of training.

Your language training will incorporate a community-based approach. You will have classroom time and will be given assignments to work on outside of the classroom and with your host family. The goal is to get you to a point of basic social communication skills so that you can develop language skills more thoroughly once you are at your site. Prior to swearing in as a Volunteer, you will work on strategies to continue language studies during your two years of service.

Cross-Cultural Training

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

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

Health Training

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

Safety Training

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

Additional Trainings During Volunteer Service

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

- *In-service training*: Provides an opportunity for Volunteers to upgrade their technical, language, and project development skills while sharing their experiences and reaffirming their commitment after having served for three to six months.
- *Midterm conference* (done in conjunction with technical sector in-service): Assists Volunteers in reviewing their first year, reassessing their personal and project objectives, and planning for their second year of service.
- *Close-of-service conference*: Prepares Volunteers for the future after Peace Corps service and 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 ETHIOPIA



The Peace Corps' highest priority is maintaining the good health and safety of every Volunteer. Peace Corps medical programs emphasize the preventive, rather than the curative, approach to disease. The Peace Corps in Ethiopia maintains qualified staff to take care of Volunteers' primary healthcare needs. Additional medical services, such as testing and basic treatment, are also available in Ethiopia at local hospitals. If you become seriously ill, you will be transported either to an equivalent of American-standard medical facility in the region or to the United States.

Health Issues in Ethiopia

Ethiopia is geographically diverse. Health risks in Ethiopia include insect-borne diseases such as malaria, tick-borne typhus, plague, and dengue fever; food- and water-borne diseases such as intestinal worms, giardiasis, amebiasis, typhoid fever, hepatitis A and E, and cholera; hepatitis B and HIV/AIDS; polio; and rabies and snake bites. There are also periodic outbreaks of meningococcal meningitis in some areas, and fatal hemorrhagic fevers are present but rare.

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

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

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

Maintaining Your Health

The foundation for staying healthy in Ethiopia will be your mental outlook: knowing that you can adjust to a varied climate, a different diet, a new language, culture, and job.

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

Food and water preparation. Many diseases that afflict Volunteers worldwide are entirely preventable if proper food and water precautions are taken. These diseases include food poisoning, amebiasis, giardiasis, hepatitis A, dysentery, all types of worms, and typhoid fever. Your medical officer will

discuss specific standards for water and food preparation for Ethiopia during pre-service training.

Prevention of malaria. Malaria is endemic in Ethiopia. Malaria can rapidly become fatal in people who have no natural immunity to the disease. It is extremely important to fully comply with the recommended drug regimen to prevent malaria.

Immunizations. The majority of your immunizations will be given to you during your pre-service training. Most immunizations are good for the duration of your time in Ethiopia. The exception is typhoid, which will require a booster if you extend for a third year of service.

Rabies. Rabies is present in most Peace Corps countries. Any possible exposure to a rabid animal must be reported immediately to the medical office. Rabies exposure can occur through animal bites, scratches from animals' teeth, and contact with animal saliva. Your medical officer will take into consideration many factors to decide the appropriate course of therapy necessary to prevent rabies.

Pregnancy. Volunteers are expected to adhere to an effective means of birth control to prevent unwanted pregnancies. 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 Peace Corps medical office. A reliable method of birth control should be chosen before you leave the United States. Condoms, diaphragms, contraceptive jellies and foams, and some commonly prescribed birth control pills are available on request.

The spread of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS.

Volunteers must use available means in every sexual encounter where bodily fluids may be transferred or they risk contracting a deadly disease. HIV/AIDS is a major health concern in Ethiopia. It is the responsibility of Volunteers to

protect not only themselves but also a sexual partner. The medical office will provide you with information and tools to help you remain safe during your pre-service training and service in Ethiopia.

Women's Health Information

Pregnancy is a health condition that is treated in the same manner as other Volunteer health conditions requiring medical attention, but may also have programmatic ramifications. The majority of Volunteers who become pregnant and wish to carry to term are medically separated.

Feminine hygiene products are available in some towns and cities in Ethiopia.

Your Peace Corps Health Kit

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

Health Kit Contents

Ace bandage

Adhesive tape

American Red Cross First Aid & Safety Handbook

Antacid tablets (Tums)

Antibiotic ointment (Bacitracin/Neomycin/Polymycin B)

Antiseptic antimicrobial skin cleaner (Hibiclens)

Band-Aids

Butterfly closures

Cepacol lozenges

Condoms

Dental floss

Diphenhydramine HCL 25 mg (Benadryl)
Insect repellent stick (Cutter's)
Iodine tablets (for water purification)
Lip balm (Chapstick)
Oral rehydration salts and Gatorade
Oral thermometer (Fahrenheit)
Pseudoephedrine HCL 30 mg (Sudafed)
Scissors
Sterile gauze pads
Tinactin (antifungal cream)
Tweezers
Hydrocortisone cream
Aspirin
Acetaminophen
Ibuprofen
Sunblock/ sunscreen

Before You Leave: A Medical Checklist

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

If your dental exam was done more than a year ago, or if your physical exam is more than two years old, contact the Office of Medical Services to find out whether you need to update your records.

If your dentist or Peace Corps dental consultant has recommended that you undergo dental treatment or repair, you must complete that work and make sure your dentist sends requested confirmation reports or X-rays to the Office of Medical Services.

If you wish to avoid having duplicate vaccinations, you should contact your physician's office, obtain a copy of your immunization record, and bring it to your pre-departure orientation. If you have any immunizations prior to Peace Corps service, the Peace Corps cannot reimburse you for the cost. The Peace Corps will provide all the immunizations necessary for your overseas assignment, either at your pre-departure orientation or shortly after you arrive in Ethiopia. You will need to begin taking malaria medication prior to departure while at the staging event.

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

While awaiting shipment—which can take several months—you will be dependent on your own medication supply. The Peace Corps will not pay for herbal or nonprescribed medications, such as St. John's wort or antioxidant supplements.

You are encouraged to bring copies of medical prescriptions signed by your physician. This is not a requirement, although it might come in handy if you are questioned in transit about carrying 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. To reduce the risk of developing a serious infection or other eye disease, we discourage you from using contact lenses during your Peace Corps service. Most Peace Corps countries do not have appropriate water and sanitation to support eye care with the use of contact lenses. The Peace Corps will not supply or

replace contact lenses or associated solutions unless their use has been recommended by an ophthalmologist for a specific medical condition and the Peace Corps' Office of Medical Services has given approval.

If you are eligible for Medicare, 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 and/or preexisting conditions might prevent you from re-enrolling in your current plan when you return home.

Safety and Security—Our Partnership

Serving as a Volunteer overseas entails certain safety and security risks. Living and traveling in an unfamiliar environment, a limited understanding of the local language and culture, and the perception of being a wealthy American are some of the factors that can put a Volunteer at risk. Property thefts and burglaries are not uncommon. Incidents of physical and sexual assault do occur, although almost all Volunteers complete their two years of service without serious personal safety problems. In addition, more than 84 percent of Volunteers surveyed in the 2004 Peace Corps Volunteer Survey say they would join the Peace Corps again.

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

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

Factors that Contribute to Volunteer Risk

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

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

- Consumption of alcohol: Fourteen percent of all assaults involved alcohol consumption by Volunteers. Twenty-six percent of all assaults involved alcohol consumption by assailants.

Summary Strategies to Reduce Risk

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

Strategies to reduce the risk/impact of theft:

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

Strategies to reduce the risk/impact of burglary:

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

Strategies to reduce the risk/impact of assault:

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

Support from Staff

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

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

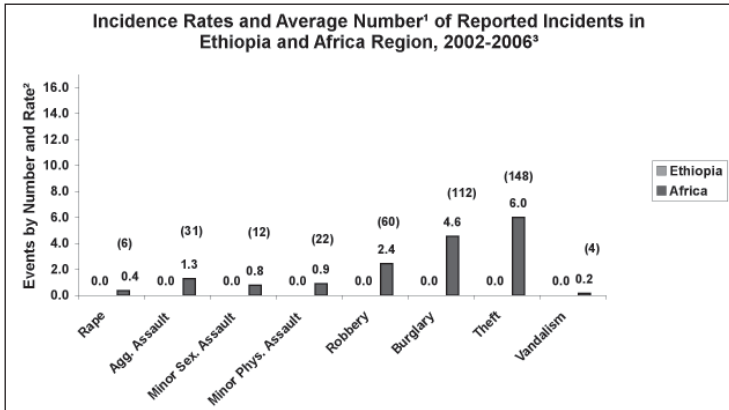
If a trainee or Volunteer is the victim of a safety incident, Peace Corps staff is prepared to provide support. All Peace Corps posts have procedures in place to respond to incidents of crime committed against Volunteers. The first priority for all posts in the aftermath of an incident is to ensure that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

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

The 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 Africa region from 2002–2005. It is presented to you in a somewhat technical manner for statistical accuracy.

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

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



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

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

³Data collection for Botswana began as of 2002

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

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

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

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

What if you become a victim of a violent crime?

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

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

If you do become a victim of a violent crime, first, make sure you are in a safe place and with people you trust and second, contact the country director or the Peace Corps medical officer. Immediate reporting is important to the preservation

of evidence and the chances of apprehending the suspect. Country directors and medical officers are required to report all violent crimes to the Inspector General and the RSO. This information is protected from unauthorized further disclosure by the Privacy Act. Reporting the crime also helps prevent your further victimization and protects your fellow Volunteers.

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

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.

Security Issues in Ethiopia

When it comes to your safety and security in the Peace Corps, you have to be willing to adapt your behavior and lifestyle to minimize the potential for being a target of crime. As with anywhere in the world, crime does exist in Ethiopia. You can reduce your risk of becoming a target for crime by avoiding situations that make you feel uncomfortable and by taking advance precautions. Crime at the village or town level is less frequent than in the large cities; people know each other and generally will not steal from their neighbors. Tourist

attractions, especially in large towns, are the favorite work sites for pickpockets. Following are some safety concerns in Ethiopia you should be aware of.

Major Ethiopian cities are growing at a rapid rate, and with increasing economic difficulties, they are becoming more dangerous. There are increases in the number of beggars, street children, and violent crimes in all the large cities of Ethiopia.

Travel is by far one of the biggest concerns for Volunteers in Ethiopia. The safest response is to avoid travel whenever possible; yet, the reality is that for work, medical, or other reasons Volunteers do travel from time to time. As part of Peace Corps/Ethiopia's overall preventive strategy to reduce road travel, the post has developed a safety and security plan that includes bringing service closer to Volunteers (e.g., conducting medical clinics at regional offices and conducting regional meetings). The post also has developed detailed safety policies regarding Volunteer travel. Regional meetings provide opportunities to review safety and security information at Volunteer sites, discuss preventive strategies, and review or revise locator maps and the emergency action plan.

Staying Safe: Don't Be a Target for Crime

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

and abiding by Peace Corps policies and procedures. Serving safely and effectively in Ethiopia may require that you accept some restrictions on your current lifestyle. Remember that no matter how well you get to know your community, you still need to be careful with your possessions. Having goods stolen is a major source of stress, and this can make Volunteers even more vulnerable. You need to consider strategies to protect yourself and your possessions during the day and night.

Volunteers attract a lot of attention in large cities and at their sites, but receive far more negative attention in highly populated centers where they are anonymous. In smaller towns, “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. Keep your money out of sight by using an undergarment money pouch, such as the kind that hangs around your neck and stays hidden under your shirt or inside your coat. Do not keep your money in outside pockets of backpacks, in coat pockets, or in fanny packs. Avoid walking or cycling at night. Peace Corps/Ethiopia has developed a very comprehensive Volunteer safety and security handbook that will be issued to you when you arrive in-country.

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

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. Ethiopia’s in-country safety program is outlined below.

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

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

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

You will also learn about the country's detailed **emergency action plan** in the event of civil or political unrest or a natural disaster. When you arrive at your site, you will complete and submit a site locator form with your address, contact information, and a map to your house. If there is a security threat, Volunteers in Ethiopia will gather at predetermined locations until the situation resolves itself 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 Peace Corps medical officer. The Peace Corps has established **protocols for addressing safety and security incidents** in a timely and appropriate manner. In addition to responding to the needs of the Volunteer, the Peace Corps collects and evaluates safety and security data to track trends and develop strategies to minimize risks to future Volunteers.

NOTES



DIVERSITY AND CROSS-CULTURAL ISSUES



In fulfilling the Peace Corps' mandate to share the face of America with our host countries, we are making special efforts to see that all of America's richness is reflected in the Volunteer corps. More Americans of color are serving in today's Peace Corps than at any time in recent years. Differences in race, ethnic background, age, religion, and sexual orientation are expected and welcome 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 Ethiopia, as in other Peace Corps host countries, Volunteers' behavior, lifestyles, background, and beliefs will be judged in a cultural context very different from our own. Certain personal perspectives or characteristics commonly accepted in the United States may be quite uncommon, unacceptable, or even repressed.

Outside of Ethiopia's capital, residents of rural communities have had relatively little direct exposure to other cultures, races, religions, and lifestyles. What is viewed as "typical" cultural behavior or norms may be a narrow and selective interpretation, such as the perception in some countries that all Americans are rich and have blond hair and blue eyes. The people of Ethiopia are justly known for their generous hospitality to foreigners; however, members of the community in which you will live may display a range of reactions to differences that you present. We ask you to be supportive of one another.

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

Overview of Diversity in Ethiopia

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

- Prepare our staff for working with a diverse population of trainees and Volunteers;
- Prepare trainees and Volunteers for adjusting to issues related to diversity; and
- Prepare communities for working and living with Americans from diverse populations.

What Might a Volunteer Face?

Possible Issues for Female Volunteers

Peace Corps Volunteers in Ethiopia work mostly in rural areas. Traditional gender roles are very distinct in Ethiopia, especially among the Muslim community. Generally, women are expected to show deference to men and do most of the housework. Sexual harassment (e.g., men making unwanted comments) is uncommon. As a Volunteer, it is important to stand up for your rights and beliefs as a person while still being culturally sensitive. Female Volunteers should expect curiosity from host country friends regarding their marital status and whether they have children, and if not, why.

Possible Issues for Volunteers of Color

The average rural Ethiopian assumes that all Americans are white (Caucasian). White Volunteers may receive special attention, both positive and negative, including being harassed for money or food, especially in public areas. Some Ethiopians are unaware that there are black Americans, Asians and Latinos, and may not believe, at first, that you are an American.

Volunteers of color in Ethiopia will have unique experiences and encounters with issues relating to their race and ethnicity. However, being called by the wrong race or ethnicity is a common issue. Whereas in the United States Volunteers may have identified themselves as a member of a specific group, they may suddenly find themselves being labeled “white.”

Possible Issues for Senior Volunteers

The Ethiopian culture has great respect for age. As a senior Volunteer, people may offer to do things for you as a sign of respect. Since the mandatory retirement age is 55, Ethiopians may not fully comprehend why a “retiree” would still be working.

Pre-service training may be physically demanding for older Volunteers. Likewise, language acquisition may also be challenging.

Because most Peace Corps Volunteers are comparatively young, older Volunteers may feel a sense of isolation within the Volunteer community. On the other hand, some older Volunteers serve as mentors and may be sought out by the younger Volunteer community.

Possible Issues for Gay, Lesbian, or Bisexual Volunteers

Homosexuality is illegal in Ethiopia and is punishable by imprisonment or deportation. Many Ethiopians have beliefs about homosexuality similar to those of many Americans in the 1940s and 1950s. It is important for gay, lesbian, or bisexual Volunteers to know about these conservative attitudes to be able to live and work productively in Ethiopian communities. Past Volunteers in Ethiopia have reported that they could not publicly acknowledge their sexuality for fear of negative repercussions. We suggest that anyone wishing to discuss this subject do so in confidence with a Peace Corps staff member. The medical office can provide confidential counseling and help connect you with the gay and lesbian support group for returned Volunteers.

Possible Religious Issues for Volunteers

Ethiopia is a highly religious society, both Christian and Muslim. Prayers at public gatherings are common. Generally, you will not observe the separation of church and state in your community activities. People will ask you what denomination you are and might try to convert you to theirs.

Possible Issues for Volunteers With Disabilities

Ethiopians who are physically challenged are generally not accorded the same human dignity as other Ethiopians. Regardless of the nature of the physical challenge, social

services are generally lacking for these Ethiopians. Ethiopia has little infrastructure to accommodate the needs of individuals with physical handicaps, blindness or mobility impairment.

That being said, As part of the medical clearance process, the Peace Corps' Office of Medical Services determined that you were physically and emotionally capable, with or without reasonable accommodations, of performing a full tour of Volunteer service in Ethiopia without reasonable risk of harm to yourself or interruption of your service. Peace Corps/ Ethiopia staff will work with disabled Volunteers to make reasonable accommodations in training, housing, job sites, and other areas to enable them to serve safely and effectively. The post complies with the Americans With Disabilities Act to ensure productive Peace Corps service by physically challenged Volunteers.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



How much luggage am I allowed to bring to Ethiopia?

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 limits and will not pay the cost of transport for baggage that exceeds these limits. 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 (shortwave radios are permitted), automobiles, or motorcycles to their overseas assignments. Do not pack flammable materials or liquids such as lighter fluid, cleaning solvents, hair spray, or aerosol containers. This is an important safety precaution. Please check the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) website for a detailed list of permitted and prohibited items at <http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/airtravel/prohibited/permitted-prohibited-items.shtm>

What is the electric current in Ethiopia?

The local current is 220-240 volts/50 cycles. Small electrical appliances can generally be used with transformers. Some Volunteers' houses will have electricity, so we suggest you bring a converter. Electric clocks will not keep time because of different cycles. There are power surges and fluctuations as well as outages, which take a toll on equipment.

In general, do not bring electrical appliances. If you are one of the few Peace Corps Volunteers to have electricity, appliances for 220 voltage are available in-country, but are very expensive. If not, a solar battery recharger may be useful.

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. Traveler's checks can only be cashed in the capital, Addis Ababa. Bank cards are not accepted in Ethiopia, but can be useful when traveling to other countries. If you choose to bring extra money, bring the amount that suits your own travel plans and needs.

When can I take vacation and have people visit me?

Each Volunteer accrues two vacation days per month of service (excluding training). Leave may not be taken during training, the first three months of service, or the last three months of service, except in conjunction with an authorized emergency leave. Family and friends are welcome to visit you after pre-service training and the first three months of service as long as their stay does not interfere with your work. 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, medical, or travel assistance.

Will my belongings be covered by insurance?

The Peace Corps does not provide insurance coverage for personal effects; Volunteers are ultimately responsible for the safekeeping of their personal belongings. However, you can purchase personal property insurance before you leave by contacting your own insurance company. 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 Ethiopia do not need to get an international driver's license, and are prohibited from driving for safety and security reasons at their sites, and discouraged from driving while on authorized leave. Most urban travel is by bus or taxi. Rural travel ranges from buses and minibuses to trucks and lots of walking.

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

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

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

Peace Corps trainees are not assigned to individual sites until after they have completed their pre-service training. This gives the Peace Corps staff the opportunity to assess each trainee's technical and language skills prior to assigning sites, in addition to finalizing site selections with their ministry counterparts. If feasible, you may have the opportunity to provide input on your site preferences, including geographical location, distance from other Volunteers, or living conditions. 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 peri-urban areas or in rural villages, but will usually be within one hour from the nearest Volunteer.

How can my family contact me in an emergency?

The Peace Corps' Office of Special Services provides assistance in handling emergencies affecting trainees and Volunteers or their families. Before leaving the United States, you should instruct your family to notify the Office of Special Services immediately if an emergency arises, such as a serious illness or death of a family member. The 24-hour number for the Office of Special Services is 202.692.1470. For nonemergency 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 Ethiopia?

Yes. Most large cities and provincial capitals have a domestic long-distance telephone system; regional centers and some large cities provide overseas telephone services. In some locations, the service is fast and efficient. In other areas, it may take several hours to get calls through. Personal overseas calls cannot be made from the Peace Corps office. Volunteers must use locally available public phones for all personal calls.

Should I bring a cellular phone with me?

No. The cellphone technology in Ethiopia is different. It is easy and relatively cheap to buy a cellular phone in Ethiopia, but the difficulty of procuring SIM cards make accessing cellular service almost impossible.

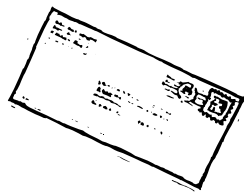
Will there be e-mail and Internet access? Should I bring my computer?

There are now cybercafes in major towns that provide Internet access. Additionally, in most towns, Internet is also available at post offices. However, Volunteers can access e-mail in the Addis Ababa Peace Corps office resource center on a time-available basis. Some Volunteers may choose to bring a laptop computer, however, access to reliable electricity cannot be guaranteed and, as with any valuable, there is the threat of theft, loss, or damage.

NOTES



WELCOME LETTERS FROM ETHIOPIA VOLUNTEERS



Note: The following letters are from returned Peace Corps Volunteers who served in Ethiopia.

Dear Invitees,

Congratulations on your invitation to join Peace Corps/Ethiopia. Although it has been eleven years, I still vividly remember all the emotions that I was going through at that time. I described this as “Scared/Excitement.” I had so many unanswered questions running through my head day and night. Just packing for two years of survival in two suitcases was a challenge.

This is definitely such an amazing opportunity and new chapter in your life. I personally believe everyone should do what you’re doing and move to a developing country and help however you can.

Peace Corps is an excellent organization and takes such great care of their Volunteers. Please pass this information on to your parents in hopes of putting their minds at ease.

Ethiopia is a beautiful country with such a rich history. Once you are settled into your site, you will make wonderful friends with the Ethiopian people. They are extremely kind and generous with very big hearts. On a personal note, I liked one of them so much that I ended up marrying him and we have been happily living together for eight years! When they say that Peace Corps can be a life-changing event—it certainly was for me!

—Kiki Bayisa (1996-98)

Welcome to Peace Corps/Ethiopia!

You are so fortunate to have been chosen to serve as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Ethiopia—the country of 13 months of sunshine! I remember vividly receiving my country of assignment and worrying because I didn't know anything about Ethiopia or East Africa for that matter. Rest assured though, Ethiopians are a very welcoming people and will make you feel a part of their family and culture right away.

Although it has been eight years since I was in Ethiopia, I still feel a strong connection to that country. I speak with one of my former students on a weekly basis and read new events as it pertains to the country itself. I've found that as the years pass, my interest in Ethiopian events has not wavered.

If you haven't already tried *wot* and *injera*, the staple of an Ethiopian diet, you will soon enough. Unlike other countries, you will eat variations of this meal for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Believe it or not, you will actually grow to love and crave their food. And if you are a coffee drinker, you will be in “*buna*” heaven! Ethiopia has some of the best coffee in the entire world. I suggest my personal favorite *buna be wetet* (coffee and milk)—it may be one of the best java drinks I've ever had.

Congratulations on being chosen to serve as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Ethiopia. I enjoyed my service so much I now work for Peace Corps in Washington, D.C. As you will hear so frequently, it was an experience that changed my life. I met amazing people, both Americans and Ethiopians, learned so much about this fascinating country and culture, and in the process learned a great deal about myself.

All the BEST!

—Shawn E. Wesner (Gebre Guracha, 1997-99)

Dear Re-Entry Group,

Welcome to Ethiopia! It was with a heavy heart that our groups left this incredibly varied and hospitable country eight years ago, and I'm so pleased that Peace Corps has returned to continue its efforts there. If your group is anything like ours, you're feeling a wide variety of emotions these days: overwhelming awe, frustration, fascination, disorientation, and exhaustion, to name just a few. Remember that you all are brave souls and, although your reactions may not always be perfect, you're on your way to a truly life-changing adventure. How could it be otherwise?

Hopefully you'll soon have the chance to perfect the tricky maneuver of eating *injera* and *wot*, sit for a few hours enjoying the commingling of incense and roasted coffee at every coffee ceremony, watch the funky shoulder dances of different Ethiopian ethnic groups, and look at the clear blue sky overhead with such amazement you'll have to stop what you're doing to pay it the attention it deserves. As for all those kids who will appear from every doorway and tree, consider them your personal escorts for the next two years. I wish I could say they will stop finding fascination in your every movement and gesture, but that would be false, and besides, when will you ever experience this again?

This truly is God's country, folks, so make the most of every single moment.

All the best,

—Hope Blosser (Debre Sina, 1997-99)

Dear Peace Corps/Ethiopia Invitee,

I lived and worked in Fenote Selam, West Gojam, Ethiopia from 1997-1999. It's hard to believe it's been 10 years since I went to Ethiopia, but I'll try to give you some decent tips before you go! Just keep in mind that I have heard that there are Internet cafés and cellphones in regional capitals now, so this might be really outdated.

I learned to love Ethiopia. The people, landscape, and food are just amazing. I am a vegetarian and had no problem remaining a vegetarian the whole time I was there. I did witness more than my fair share of chicken, bull, and sheep slaughterings, though, so be prepared!

My Ethiopian friends were amazing and wonderful. They went out of their way to make me feel at home in my community. Most of my friends were women, many of whom had young children and didn't speak English. Because they were used to translating for their little kids, they had no problems understanding my broken Amharic and making sure that I didn't screw up too badly culturally. I'm very glad that I didn't surround myself with English speakers, and I learned a lot from my friends!

Even though my friends were great, foreigners definitely get a lot of attention in Ethiopia. Be prepared to feel like the paparazzi are hot on your heels! When I left my normal routes in town, children (and sometimes adults) would chase me, screaming, "*Farenj!*" (foreigner). This behavior didn't dissipate with time. I never really felt threatened by anyone in my town—it was more like I was a big, funny-looking creature, and they wanted to see what I was about.

I have a few suggestions of what to bring (and things not to bring). When I was in Ethiopia, the people I worked with wore one outfit per week. I adopted the same strategy to minimize laundry (hand-washing is tough!) and the attention I got. So, I wish I had brought fewer clothes or multiple pairs of my

favorite jeans (they wear out quickly!). Ziploc bags and duct tape come in handy in all situations! Good books and music are nice to have, too!

Have a great time! It's definitely an adventure you'll never forget! Good luck!

—Kym Samuels (Fenote Selam, 1997-99)

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Dear Invitee,

Welcome to Ethiopia. Although it would be impossible to really give you a sense of what your life will be like as a Volunteer in this country, especially in such a short letter, I'd like to share a few things that were important to me.

I taught 10th-grade English in Wereilu, in South Wollo, from 1997-99. Wereilu then was probably similar to many other towns in which you might be posted—not too big, but it had a high school, so it was the center of commercial activity in the area. There was a big market on Thursdays, bringing in people from the countryside around town to sell their tomatoes or potatoes or onions, and to have some local beer. There were a mosque and two orthodox churches, and everyone pretty much got along.

My students were probably a pretty typical mix, although at only 50 per class, I think I had a relatively light load. Many of them didn't know much English at all, which made for interesting lesson planning, but a few were extremely bright and most were eager to learn. All were a bit baffled by the foreign teacher who didn't do things the same way as their other teachers.

My colleagues were an interesting bunch, some more motivated than others, some more experienced than others. It's probably the same mix as you would find at any public school in the U.S., I suspect. They were all interested in talking to the foreigner as well, and I counted my closest friend in Wereilu among them: the biology teacher, Mohammed.

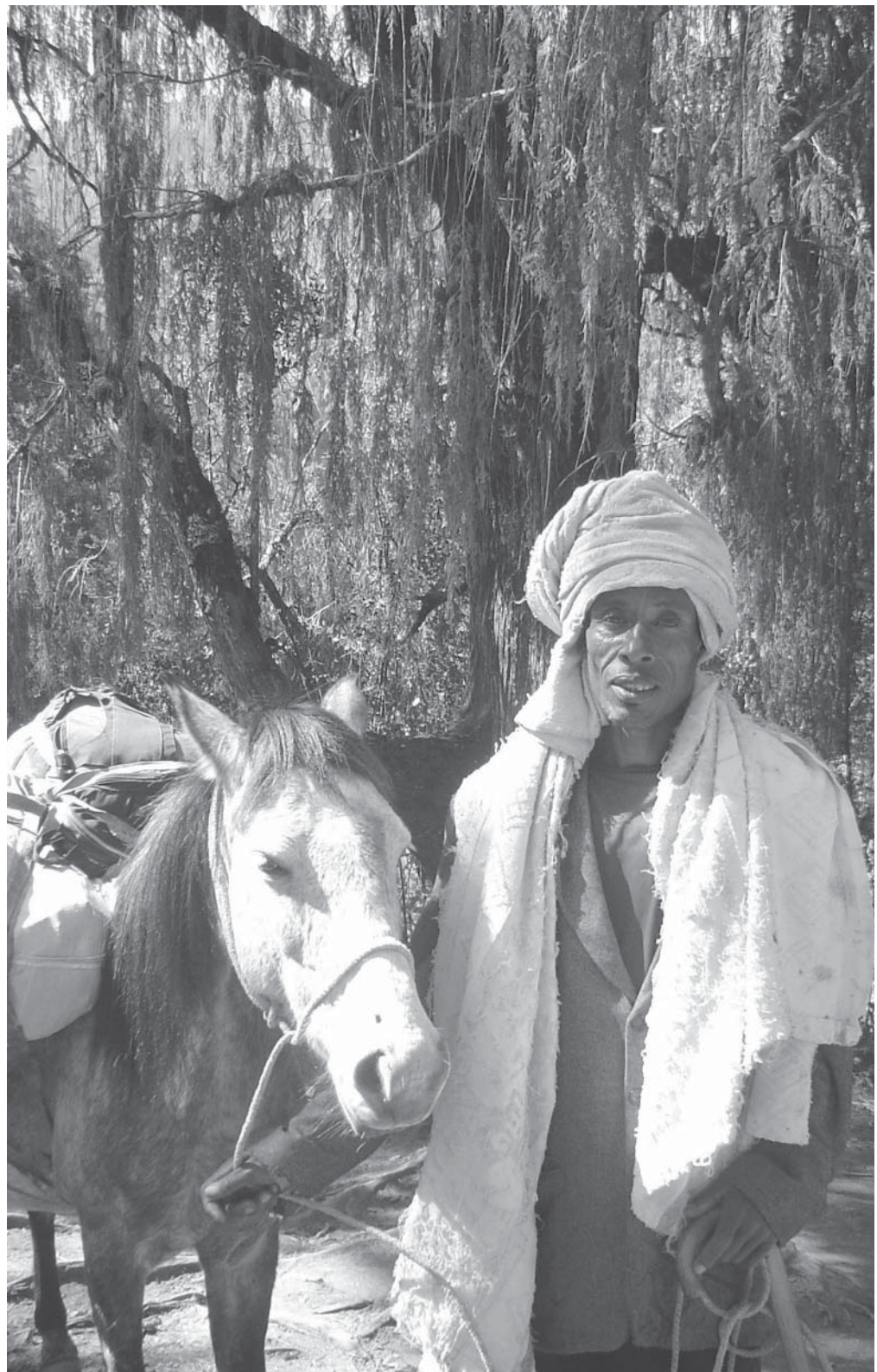
I returned this year to Ethiopia to see Mohammed, and visited Wereilu. Although it is still difficult to travel around the country, almost everything has been improved since 1999: roads, electricity, telecommunications, Internet access—you name it really. That said, I can imagine that some of the same things that applied during my service still hold true. First, arrange for plenty to read in English, if you like to read. Even if you don't like to read, you probably will find you read a lot once you're at site. If you like music, bring plenty of that as well. Bring a nice pair of walking shoes, because you'll be doing a lot of that as well. And be prepared for one of the nicest things about Peace Corps service: writing letters (using the postal service, that is). Although Internet access has reached a surprising number of places, you'll probably find that old-fashioned letters are your most regular form of communication, and you'll have plenty of time to write them.

Finally, although you're probably left with more questions than answers at this point, I thought I should mention that while I was in Ethiopia I met three of my former students. It was quite humbling. All of them are teachers themselves now—two in Wereilu. Two were even English teachers, which warmed my heart, and one of them was using some of the same lessons I had prepared for them almost 10 years ago! You are about to start on a journey that will stay with you for your entire lifetime, but it's nice to realize that you'll leave something behind, as well.

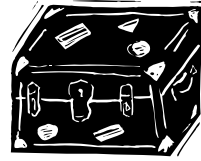
Best

—Jason Mosley (1997-99)

NOTES



PACKING LIST



This list has been compiled by past Volunteers 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 we mention, 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 Ethiopia.

General Clothing

You will find that clothing you bring from home will suffer more wear and tear than usual. Fortunately, used clothing markets abound in Ethiopia, even in smaller towns, so it is not necessary to bring two years' worth of clothes.

- Several pairs of khaki trousers
- T-shirts
- Sweatshirts/fleece
- Athletic shorts (for sports or home)
- Jeans (not torn or ripped)
- One or two dressy outfits
- Bandannas
- Long skirts
- Raincoat
- Cotton socks (grey or athletic)
- Undergarments, including slips for women

Shoes

Durable shoes are essential. Shoes will wear out more quickly in Ethiopia because of all the walking you will do.

- One or two pairs of hiking/walking shoes or boots
- One or two pairs of sneakers or running shoes
- Two pairs of comfortable dress shoes
- Comfortable sandals (e.g., tevas)

Personal Hygiene and Toiletry Items

A range of basic hygiene items is available in most towns and cities, however, if you have strong personal preferences, plan to bring those brands.

- Deodorant (if you prefer the stick kind, which is not available locally)
- Contact lens solutions (available in Addis Ababa, but very expensive); the Peace Corps does not provide these
- A three-month supply of any prescription drugs, including birth control pills
- Good-quality sunscreen (with a high SPF)
- Tampons
- Aloe or after-sun lotion

Recreation/Entertainment

- Camera and accessories (film is available locally)
- Binoculars
- Music player/recorder, iPod, MP3, CD, cassette (voltage converters are available locally)
- Your favorite music (blank tapes are available locally)

- Shortwave radio (three- to seven-band is recommended)
- Portable musical instruments
- Biking shorts and gloves (the Peace Corps provides a helmet and basic repair tools)
- Sports equipment (e.g., Frisbee, kites, football, soccer ball, snorkeling gear)
- Art supplies
- Games and puzzle books (e.g., playing cards, cribbage, Scrabble, chess)
- Favorite novels (but there will also be plenty circulating among Volunteers)
- Almanac and dictionary
- Camping or hiking gear (including a tent, which is useful for backpacking)

Miscellaneous

- Pens and pencils, stationery, and notebooks
- Alarm clock
- Solar batteries and recharger
- Sewing kit
- Knives (available locally but of poor quality)
- Plastic storage bags and containers
- Duct tape
- Peeler, grater, etc. (available locally but expensive)
- Tools such as a Leatherman knife and pruning shears
- Packaged sauces, seasoning and soft-drink mixes
- Potholders
- Solar shower
- Work gloves

- Cash (most Volunteers bring \$200 to \$500 in traveler's checks for travel and vacation)
- Credit card and/or ATM card (for travel)
- Pictures from home
- U.S. and world maps
- U.S. stamps (you can often have letters mailed in the United States by travelers)
- Checks from a U.S. bank account (handy for ordering things from home)
- Day planner
- Sturdy water bottle (e.g., Nalgene)
- Sun glasses/visor

NOTES



PRE-DEPARTURE CHECKLIST



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

Family

- Notify family that they can call the Peace Corps' Office of Special Services at any time if there is a critical illness or death of a family member (telephone number: 202.692.1470).
- Give the Peace Corps' *On the Home Front* handbook to family and friends.

Passport/Travel

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

Medical/Health

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

Insurance

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

Financial Management

- Obtain student loan deferment forms from 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 Africa Region	Ext. 1850	202.692.1850
Programming or Country Information	Desk Officer E-mail: Ethiopia@peacecorps.gov	Ext. 2324	202.692.2324
	Desk Assistant Ethiopia@peacecorps.gov	Ext. 2323	202.692.2323

For Questions About:	Staff	Toll-free Extension	Direct/ Local Number
Plane Tickets, Passports, Visas, or Other Travel Matters	Travel Officer (Sato Travel)	Ext. 1170	202.692.1170
Legal Clearance	Office of Placement	Ext. 1845	202.692.1845
Medical Clearance and Forms Processing (including dental)	Screening Nurse	Ext. 1500	202.692.1500
Medical Reimbursements	Handled by a Subcontractor		800.818.8772
Loan Deferments, Taxes, Readjustment Allowance Withdrawals, Power of Attorney	Volunteer Financial Operations	Ext. 1770	202.692.1770
Staging (Pre-departure Orientation) and Reporting Instructions <i>Note: You will receive comprehensive information (hotel and flight arrangements) three to five weeks before departure. This information is not available sooner.</i>	Office of Staging	Ext. 1865	202.692.1865
Family Emergencies (to get information to a Volunteer overseas)	Office of Special Services	Ext. 1470	202.692.1470 <i>24 Hours</i>

PEACE CORPS

Paul D. Coverdell Peace Corps Headquarters

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