

THE PEACE CORPS WELCOMES YOU TO

# UGANDA



A PEACE CORPS PUBLICATION  
FOR NEW VOLUNTEERS



February 2007



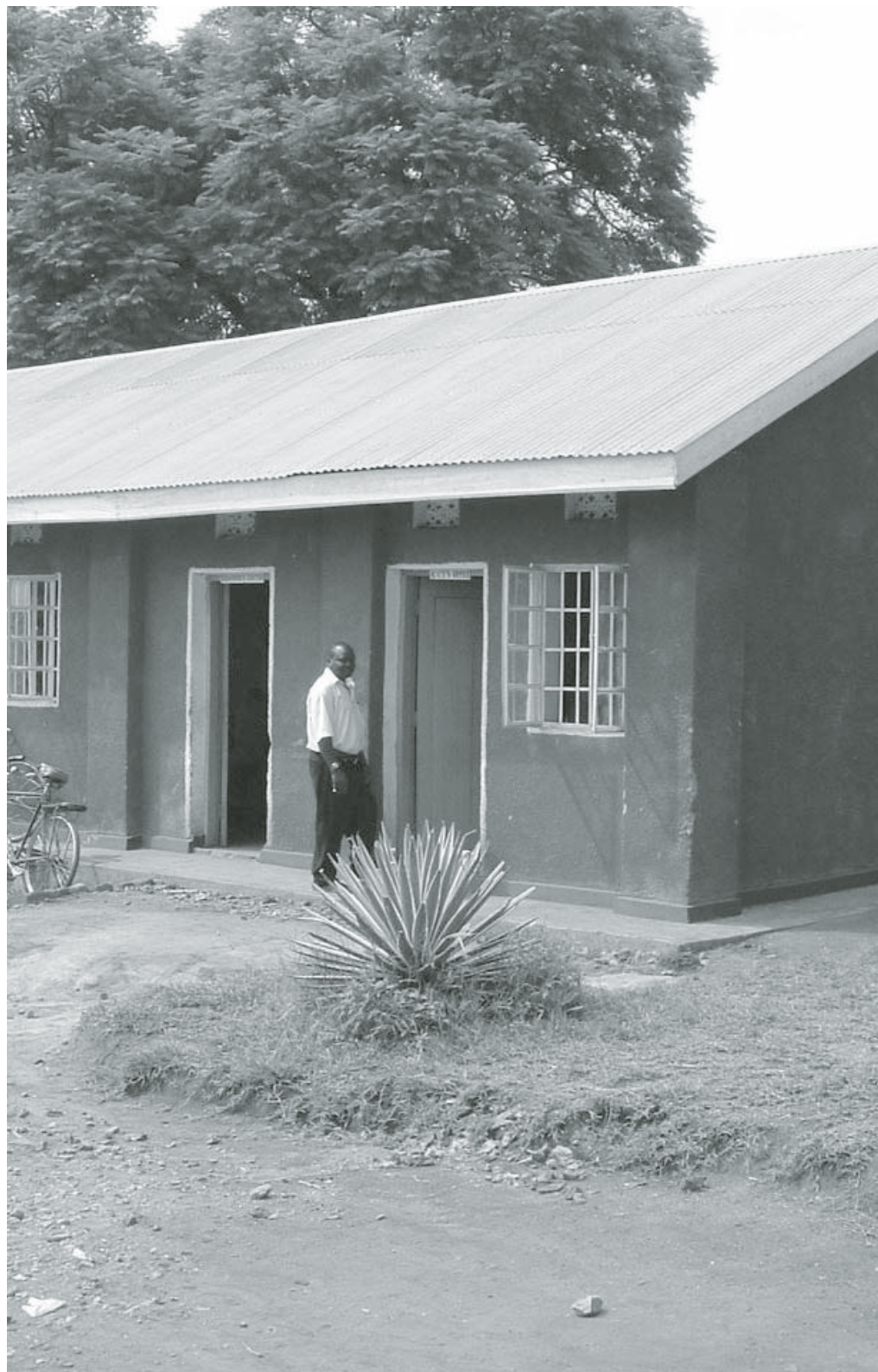
# A WELCOME LETTER

Greetings from Kampala! On behalf of the staff and Volunteers of Peace Corps/Uganda, let me say that we are very pleased that you are considering an invitation to join us as a Volunteer. The Ugandan people are wonderfully welcoming, the land is extraordinary, and there is much work to be done.

This is an exciting time to be in Uganda. The primary education system is stretched to the breaking point in a committed effort to provide universal primary education to the country's children. The HIV/AIDS pandemic, which has hit Uganda hard, is entering a new phase as people gain access to HIV/AIDS drugs and strive to find ways to live with the disease in hope rather than in despair. As you can imagine, these issues are both frustrating and challenging for Ugandans. But with challenges come opportunities, and as Peace Corps works in these two areas of great need in Uganda, we have many opportunities to make a difference.

As former Volunteers will tell you, the rewards of the hard work you invest and the benefits of your experience will far outweigh the inevitable frustrations and challenges you will encounter. If you decide to come to Uganda, you will be making an important commitment, one not only fraught with difficulties but also rich with joy. A two-year commitment to the Peace Corps, and to the people of a community in Uganda, is not to be made casually. You must make it and remake it in numerous ways throughout your two years of service. You will be challenged in ways imaginable and unimaginable, and your patience will be tried to its limits. But if you come here with an open mind, a warm heart, a good sense of humor, a willingness to evaluate and adjust your expectations, and a focus on the needs of others rather than your own, you will do well. The Peace Corps' trainers and staff are here to help you, but you will be the primary architect and judge of your experience as a Volunteer. We offer you this opportunity to serve the people of Uganda and to have an experience that will change the way you look at the world and at yourself.

McGrath Jean Thomas  
Country Director



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## **Map of Uganda**

<b>A Welcome Letter</b>	<b>1</b>
-------------------------	----------

<b>Peace Corps/Uganda History and Programs</b>	<b>7</b>
--	----------

History of the Peace Corps in Uganda	7-8
--------------------------------------	-----

History and Future of Peace Corps Programming in Uganda	8-9
--	-----

<b>Country Overview: Uganda at a Glance</b>	<b>11</b>
---	-----------

History	11-12
---------	-------

Government	12
------------	----

Economy	12-13
---------	-------

People and Culture	13-14
--------------------	-------

Environment	15
-------------	----

<b>Resources for Further Information</b>	<b>17</b>
--	-----------

<b>Living Conditions and Volunteer Lifestyle</b>	<b>23</b>
--	-----------

Communications	23-24
----------------	-------

Housing and Site Location	25
---------------------------	----

Living Allowance and Money Management	26
---------------------------------------	----

Food and Diet	26-27
---------------	-------

Transportation	27
----------------	----

Geography and Climate	27-28
-----------------------	-------

Social Activities	28
-------------------	----

Professionalism, Dress, and Behavior	28-29
--------------------------------------	-------

Personal Safety	29-30
-----------------	-------

Rewards and Frustrations	30-31
--------------------------	-------

**Peace Corps Training 33**

Overview of Pre-Service Training	33
<i>Technical Training</i>	34
<i>Language Training</i>	35
<i>Cross-Cultural Training</i>	35-36
<i>Health Training</i>	36
<i>Safety Training</i>	36
Additional Trainings During Volunteer Service	36-37

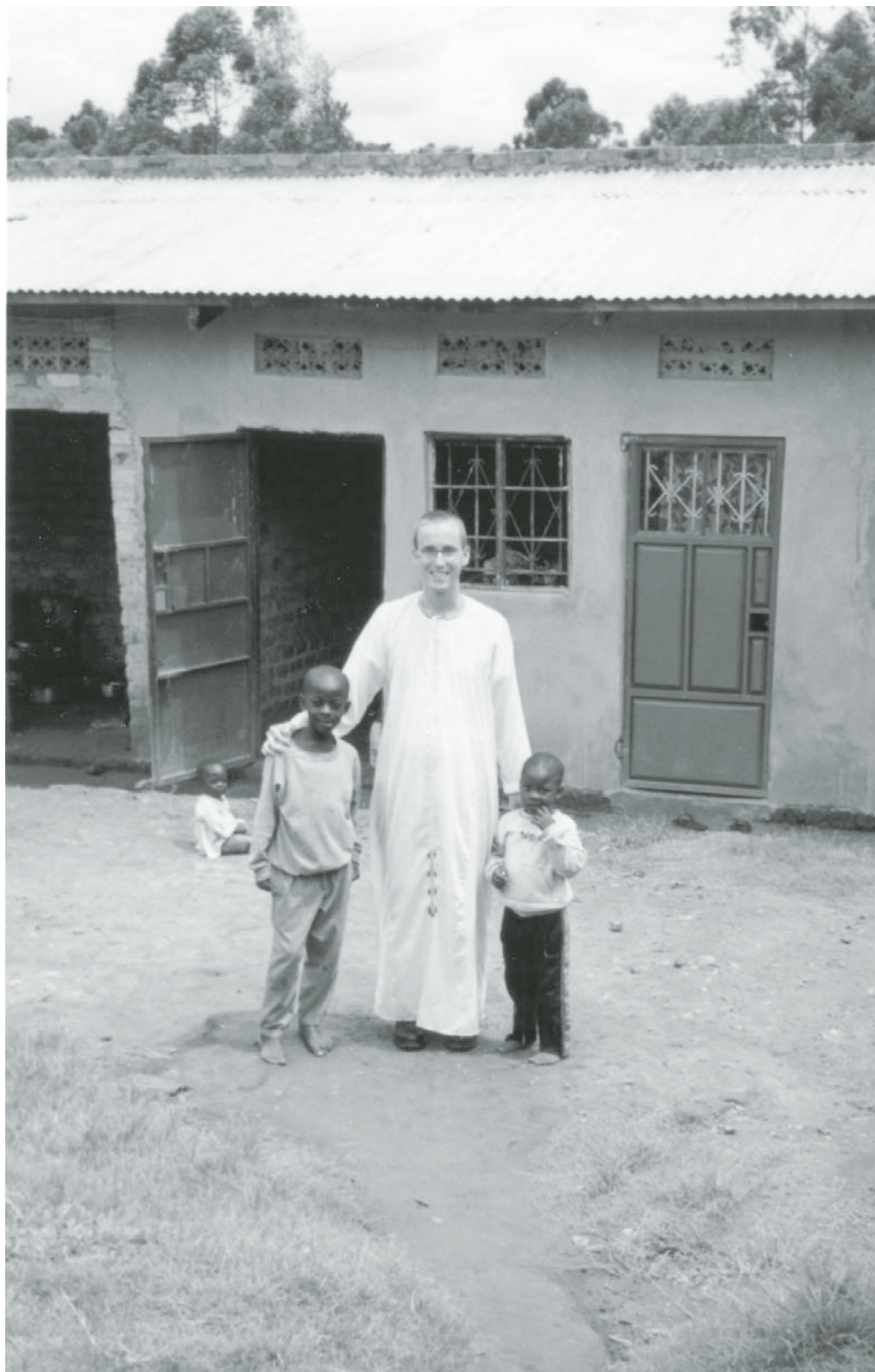
**Your Health Care and Safety in Uganda 39**

Health Issues in Uganda	39-40
Helping You Stay Healthy	40
Maintaining Your Health	40-42
Women's Health Information	42
Your Peace Corps Medical Kit	43
Before You Leave: A Medical Checklist	44
Safety and Security—Our Partnership	46-52
<i>Factors that Contribute to Volunteer Risk</i>	46-47
<i>Summary Strategies to Reduce Risk</i>	47-48
<i>Support from Staff</i>	48-51
<i>What if you become a victim of a violent crime?</i>	51-52
Security Issues in Uganda	52-53
Staying Safe: Don't Be a Target for Crime	53-54
Preparing for the Unexpected: Safety Training and Volunteer Support in Uganda	54-56

**Diversity and Cross-Cultural Issues 59**

Overview of Diversity in Uganda	60-61
What Might a Volunteer Face?	61
<i>Possible Issues for Female Volunteers</i>	61-62
<i>Possible Issues for Volunteers of Color</i>	62-63
<i>Possible Issues for Senior Volunteers</i>	63
<i>Possible Issues for Gay, Lesbian, or Bisexual Volunteers</i>	63
<i>Possible Religious Issues for Volunteers</i>	64
<i>Possible Issues for Volunteers With Disabilities</i>	64-65

<b>Frequently Asked Questions</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>Welcome Letters From Uganda Volunteers</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>Packing List</b>	<b>79</b>
<b>Pre-departure Checklist</b>	<b>87</b>
<b>Contacting Peace Corps Headquarters</b>	<b>91</b>





# PEACE CORPS/ UGANDA HISTORY AND PROGRAMS



## **History of the Peace Corps in Uganda**

The first group of Peace Corps Volunteers in Uganda were secondary school teachers who arrived on November 16, 1964. A year later, the education project consisted of 35 Volunteers. By 1967, the project had more than doubled in size. A health project was initiated in 1968 with the placement of 15 Volunteers. Once the Peace Corps program in Uganda expanded, the major programming area was education, with Volunteers also working in fisheries, agriculture, computer programming, and surveying. The Peace Corps terminated the program in Uganda in 1972 due to the civil unrest during Idi Amin's presidency.

Discussions concerning the Peace Corps' reentry into Uganda began in 1987 and continued in 1989 when President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni and his wife met with the Peace Corps director to discuss a renewed Peace Corps presence in Uganda. Nine months later, the Peace Corps received a formal invitation from the Government of Uganda. The 1964 agreement was then reactivated and Volunteers returned to Uganda in June 1991.

The projects during this period—primary education, small enterprise development, and natural resource management—aimed to address needs identified by the government in its efforts to rehabilitate and reform Uganda's educational system, develop the private sector, and effectively manage the country's vast natural resources.

Because of security issues in the capital, Kampala, the program was suspended again in May 1999. In June 2001, Peace

Corps/Uganda reopened with a single project in primary teacher training and community school resource teaching. A community well-being and positive-living project was initiated in May 2002. Approximately 60 Volunteers are currently serving in Uganda.

## **History and Future of Peace Corps Programming in Uganda**

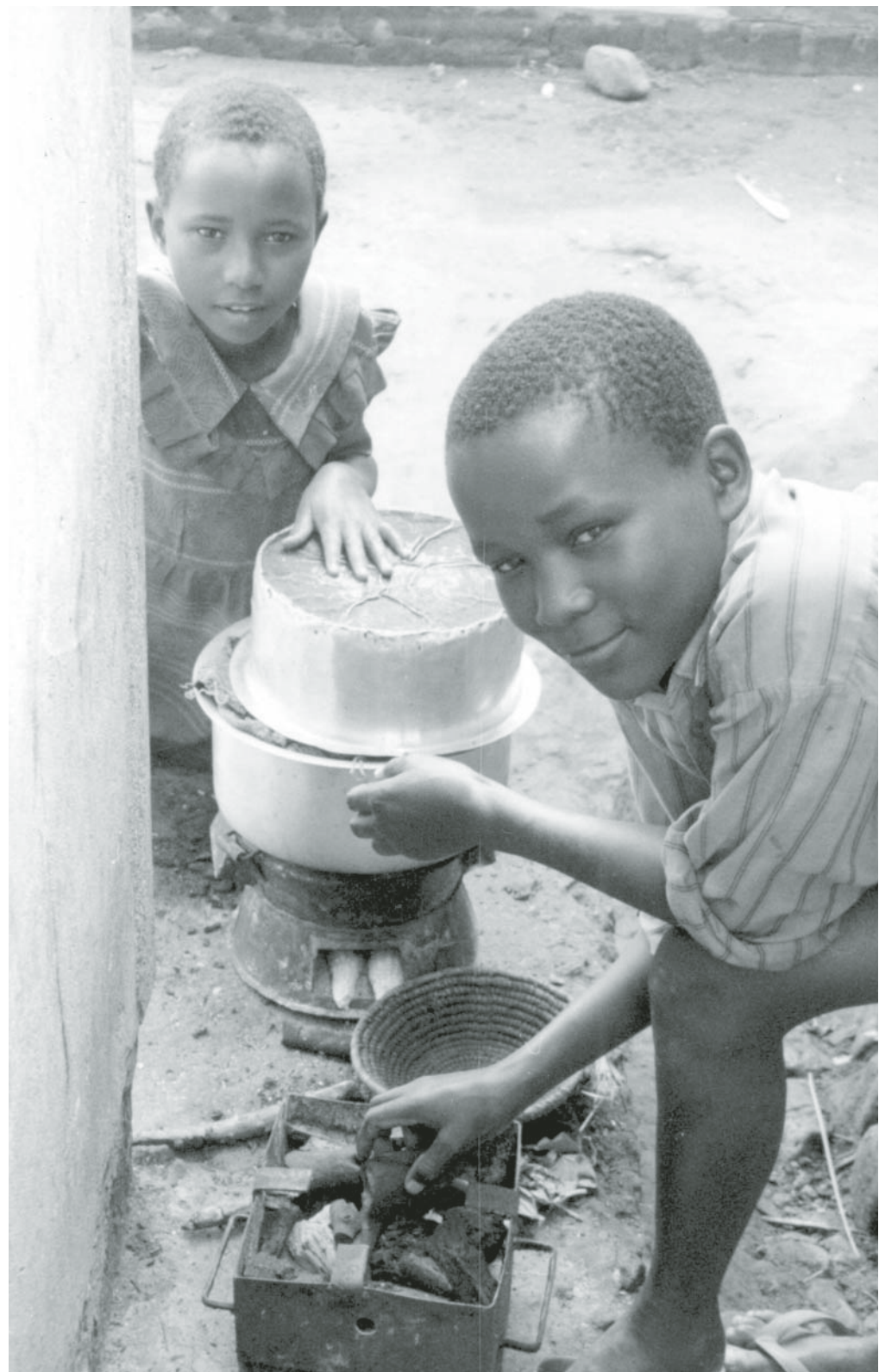
In the first of the two current programs in Uganda, the Peace Corps provides Volunteer teacher trainers in support of the Ministry of Education's Teacher Development and Management System. Volunteers serve at coordinating centers and at Primary Teachers Colleges, where they work hand-in-hand with Ugandan education professionals. Each two-person team provides in-service training support to a cluster of between 10 and 120 surrounding schools. They train teachers and headteachers to improve education within schools, mobilize communities to support their primary schools, and work with communities and schools to mitigate the impact of HIV/AIDS on the education system.

Improving the delivery of primary education requires more than improved teaching, however. It also requires the commitment of parents and community leaders to make each school sustainable and to ensure its continued improvement. Thus, Volunteer teacher trainers also help develop links between schools and communities. If you have been invited to join this project, you have been selected on the basis of expertise in one of the following fields: early childhood development or pedagogy, information technology, health, natural resources management, or community development. You will use your particular interests and expertise as a window through which you engage schools and surrounding communities. Along with intensive work with teachers and school administrators, you might be the catalyst for developing clubs and workshops,

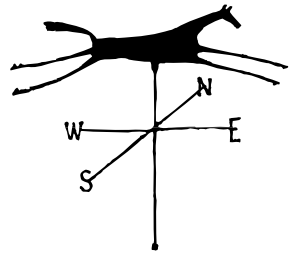
you might promote exhibits and newsletters, or you might work with community groups to support income-generating activities for youth affected by HIV/AIDS. The list of potential activities is endless.

The Peace Corps' other current effort, the community well-being and positive-living project, assists the Ministry of Health in preparing innovative, community-based training programs for its community health workers. Volunteers also support community-based organizations that are working to integrate the myriad health concerns of Ugandan villages ravaged by HIV/AIDS with the benefits of a positive-living approach.

Uganda ranks among the countries most severely affected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic, but it is also one of the few success stories, in that it has reduced infection rates dramatically. The government's commitment, the willingness to compromise on the part of churches and other institutions, extraordinary sacrifices on the part of many individuals living with HIV and AIDS, and the growth of community-based organizations to educate and care for affected people have all contributed to this success. Nonetheless, the infection rate remains at about 10 percent of adults, according to the United Nations AIDS agency, UNAIDS. Education and behavioral change programs must be broadened. Lessons learned about the benefits of living positively (actively seeking physical, mental, emotional, and environmental health) must be spread beyond the population of people living with HIV and AIDS. Ways of supporting home-based care must be augmented, and assistance to orphans needs creative approaches.



# COUNTRY OVERVIEW: UGANDA AT A GLANCE



## History

In the 20th century, Uganda went from being perceived internationally as an Eden incarnate—Britain’s “Pearl of Africa”—to being considered the antithesis of Eden, largely because of the extreme actions of post-independence leaders Idi Amin and Milton Obote.

Uganda achieved independence from Great Britain in 1962 without any struggle. The British determined a timetable for withdrawal before local groups had organized an effective nationalist movement. Uganda’s political parties emerged in response to impending independence rather than as a means of winning it.

Idi Amin’s well-publicized excesses at the expense of Uganda and its citizens were not unique, nor were they the earliest assaults on the nation’s rule of law. Amin’s predecessor, Milton Obote, suspended the 1962 Constitution and ruled part of Uganda by martial law for five years until a military coup in 1971 brought Amin to power. Obote regained power during the civil war of 1981 to 1985, a period when government troops carried out genocidal sweeps of the rural populace in a region that became known as the Luwero Triangle. The dramatic collapse of the government under Amin, his plunder of the nation’s economy, and the even greater failure of the second Obote government in the 1980s certainly had not been expected at independence. On the contrary, Uganda had been considered a model of stability and potential progress, particularly relative to its neighbors Kenya, Tanzania, and Congo.

After years of devastating civil war, Yoweri Kaguta Museveni and the National Resistance Army (NRA) marched on Kampala, and Museveni formally claimed the presidency on January 29, 1986. Museveni's government has been credited with introducing democratic reforms and enhancing human rights. President Museveni was re-elected in 2001 and again in 2006 following a constitutional change that allowed him to run for a third term.

## **Government**

As the NRA gained legitimate control of the government, it became known as the National Resistance Movement (NRM). Until recently, the Ugandan government followed a single or no-party parliamentary system. This system ended in February 2006 with the election of a new parliament with members representing multiple parties. Despite this change, the NRM continues to control access to political power as it was the overwhelming winner of these most recent elections.

Although much of Uganda has remained peaceful and stable since Museveni has been in power, some parts of the country still experience rebel activity, particularly in the north and in the west along the border with Congo. Volunteers are not assigned to these areas, and they are off-limits for travel.

## **Economy**

Beginning in 1986, Uganda implemented broad economic reforms that can be categorized into two phases. The first phase focused on stabilizing the economy and the second phase focused on introducing reforms to remove structural distortions in markets. These reforms were successful, and the economy was stabilized by 1992. The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank have repeatedly cited

Uganda as an economic success story. Its gross domestic product has averaged a growth rate of 6.3 percent since 1992.

Cash-based agricultural activity still constitutes about 26 percent of GDP and 95 percent of export revenues. In addition, agriculture accounts for more than 90 percent of subsistence economic activity. The government of Uganda has put a lot of emphasis on the improvement of agriculture.

Cash crops include coffee, cotton, tea, tobacco, cut flowers, and vanilla. Food crops include plantains, cassavas, sweet potatoes, millet, sorghum, corn, beans, and groundnuts. Fishing is important for domestic consumption as well as for exportation. Forest covers 7.5 million hectares, but this resource is being rapidly depleted despite attempts at regulation.

The economy has seen a slowdown in recent years, probably because all the easy routes to economic growth have already been taken. Difficult policy and reform decisions lie ahead if the government hopes to continue the economy's uphill climb.

## **People and Culture**

There are three major linguistic families in Uganda and about 50 distinct languages divided among them. The language families also tend to define the boundaries of cultural differences. In the late 1980s, Ugandan officials estimated that 66 percent of the population were Christians (almost equally divided among Protestants and Roman Catholics), approximately 15 percent were Muslims, and roughly 19 percent were adherents of local religions or not affiliated with any religion. World and local religions have coexisted for more than a century in Uganda, and many people have established a coherent set of beliefs about the nature of the universe by combining elements of the two. Except in a few areas, world religions are seldom viewed as incompatible with local religions.

Education is highly valued in much of Uganda. As a result of the government's commitment to universal primary education, primary enrollment jumped from 2.7 million children in 1996 to 6.5 million in 1999. These numbers continue to grow with nearly 7.4 million students enrolled in 2004. The net primary enrollment rate is estimated at 93 percent, and the gap between boys' and girls' enrollment rates has decreased. For most of the country, the issue is no longer access to primary education but the quality of that education.

During Uganda's civil wars, the healthcare system basically collapsed. It is still barely functional outside urban areas, and in certain services, today's care is worse than that in the 1980s. Life expectancy has increased from 44 to 47 years since 2000. Health, nutrition, and child survival indicators have improved in part because of the government's promotion of immunization to prevent childhood killer diseases such as measles, polio, and whooping cough. However, many infectious diseases remain endemic, including respiratory tract infections, anemia, tetanus, malaria, and tuberculosis.

**A significant accomplishment is Uganda's vigorous, effective response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, with adult HIV infection rates reduced by half during the past 10 years. Nonetheless, about half a million Ugandans are living with HIV/AIDS, and 1.7 million children under age 18 have lost one or both parents to AIDS—a number expected to double within the next 10 years. The epidemic has had a tremendous social, economic, and personal impact on the country and its people.**

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 stigmatiz-



ing 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.

## **Environment**

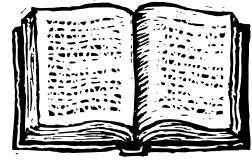
Uganda's land area is 96,456 square miles, including 17,600 square miles of open water or swampland. Much of the country is a plateau that slopes gently downward toward the north, with a central depression occupied by Lake Kyoga. Mount Elgon and the Rwenzori Mountains form Uganda's borders in the east and west, respectively. Approximately one-half of Lake Victoria, the source of the Nile River, lies within Uganda.

Uganda has an equatorial climate that is moderated by altitude. Average annual rainfall varies from more than 84 inches around Lake Victoria to about 20 inches in the northeast. Vegetation is heaviest in the south, thinning out to savanna and dry plains in the northeast.

# THE WORLD



# RESOURCES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION



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

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

## **General Information About Uganda**

### **[www.countrywatch.com](http://www.countrywatch.com)**

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

### **[www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations)**

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

### **[www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov)**

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

**[www.psr.keele.ac.uk/official.htm](http://www.psr.keele.ac.uk/official.htm)**

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

**[www.geography.about.com/library/maps/blindex.htm](http://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](http://www.cyberschoolbus.un.org/infonation/info.asp)**

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

**[www.worldinformation.com](http://www.worldinformation.com)**

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

## **Connect With Returned Volunteers and Other Invitees**

**[www.rpcv.org](http://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. The Uganda site is at [www.friendsofuganda.org](http://www.friendsofuganda.org).

**[www.peacecorpswriters.org](http://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 Uganda**

### **[www.buganda.com](http://www.buganda.com)**

Offers a wealth of information about the central Buganda area of Uganda

### **[www.unaids.org](http://www.unaids.org)**

Thorough information about the AIDS pandemic from the United Nations

### **<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa>**

Headlines about Africa from the BBC (search for Uganda)

### **<http://allafrica.com>**

Search for news about Uganda

### **[www.csmonitor.com](http://www.csmonitor.com)**

Christian Science Monitor allows you to search for stories on Uganda.

## **International Development Sites**

### **[www.worldbank.org/afr/ug/](http://www.worldbank.org/afr/ug/)**

Information on the World Bank's projects in Uganda

### **[www.africaaction.org/index.php](http://www.africaaction.org/index.php)**

Site of a U.S.-based organization Africa Action, which works for political, economic, and social justice in Africa

### **[www.bellanet.org/](http://www.bellanet.org/)**

Bellanet helps the international community collaborate more effectively, especially by use of information technology.

## **Recommended Books**

1. Isegawa, Moses. *Abyssinian Chronicles*. New York: Knopf, 2000.
2. Museveni, Yoweni Kaguta. *Sowing the Mustard Seed: The Struggle for Freedom and Democracy in Uganda*. London: Macmillan Education, 1997.
3. Twaddle, Michael, and Holger B. Hansen (eds.). *Uganda Now: Between Decay and Development*. London: James Curry, 1989.
4. Twaddle, Michael, and Holger B. Hansen (eds.). *Changing Uganda: The Dilemmas of Structural Adjustment and Revolutionary Change*. London: James Curry, 1991.
5. Wallman, Sandra. *Kampala Women Getting by: Wellbeing in the Time of AIDS*. London: James Currey, 1996.

## **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 service considered normal in the United States. If you expect U.S. standards for mail service, you will be in for some frustration. Letters take a minimum of three weeks to arrive in Uganda if sent by airmail, packages even longer. Packages sent by surface mail can take six months or *even longer*. Some mail may simply not arrive (fortunately this is not a frequent occurrence, but it does happen). Advise your friends and family to number their letters for tracking purposes and to write “Airmail” and “Par Avion” on their envelopes. If someone sends you a package, it is best to keep it small and use a padded envelope so it will be treated as a letter. Valuables should not be sent through the mail.

Despite the delays, we encourage you to write to your family regularly and to number your letters. Family members typically become worried when they do not hear from you, so it is a good idea to advise them that mail service is sporadic and that they should not be concerned if they do not receive letters from you regularly. This is especially true at the beginning, when you will be involved in an intense training program.

Your address during training will be:

“Your Name,” PCT  
P.O. Box 29348  
Kampala, Uganda

Volunteers in Uganda are allowed to receive packages containing work-related clothing and household items without paying customs fees for six months after arrival. Duty may be charged on food, cosmetics, electronics, and other items not explicitly for work purposes.

After training, you will be expected to establish a mailing address in the community where you are posted. Let family know that the address listed above will be a temporary one used during your first few months in Uganda.

### **Telephones**

*You are unlikely to have access to e-mail or international telephone service during training.* International calls can be made in some of the rural regional centers, but connections are unreliable and the cost can be high. Uganda has mobile phone services, and most Volunteers purchase cellular phones here. However, even with a cellphone, having to charge the battery, pay for airtime, and find an area with quality network coverage makes phoning home problematic. It is advisable to make clear to your family and friends that it is not easy to call the United States from Uganda. They should not expect regular communications from you, at least not initially.

### **Computer, Internet, and E-mail Access**

The Peace Corps does not recommend that you bring a personal computer, since few Volunteers have housing with electricity. If you choose to bring one, it will be at your own expense and risk. Securing it from theft may be a challenge.

Access to e-mail and the Internet is available at Internet cafes in Kampala, the capital, and in a growing number of towns outside Kampala. You are likely to have access to these occasionally, unless there is an Internet cafe near your site, which is rare. You probably will not have access during pre-service training.

## **Housing and Site Location**

During your service, you will most likely live in a rural area in very modest accommodations provided by your host organization, which will try to provide you with at least a bedroom and a sitting room. You might live in part of a Ugandan family's house or in part of a house built for staff of a school or a community organization. It is unlikely that you will share your accommodations with anyone else unless you choose to do so.

Living conditions vary according to the resources of the community or organization in which you are placed. Most houses do not have running water or electricity. You should expect to use a pit latrine and a kerosene lantern and stove. Most Volunteers hire someone to carry water to their house. The community may provide some basic furnishings, and you can supplement these with your modest settling-in allowance provided by the Peace Corps. At nearly all sites, the kind of privacy that most Americans are used to will be extremely limited. Children may be around constantly, demonstrating their curiosity about you. You will have to adapt to a more public life.

As most communities and organizations have extremely limited resources, providing housing and furnishing is provided at a great sacrifice. Sometimes there are delays in obtaining housing or furnishings. You might have to stay in temporary accommodations while your permanent housing is being set up.

Although the Peace Corps staff makes every effort to collaborate with communities to see that housing is ready for Volunteers when they arrive at their site, you should be prepared to gratefully accept whatever the community provides, no matter how basic.

## **Living Allowance and Money Management**

As a Volunteer, you will receive a modest living allowance, paid in local currency, that will allow you to live on a par with your colleagues and co-workers. The amount of this allowance is based on regular surveys of Volunteers and the cost of living in Uganda. The allowance is paid quarterly into Volunteer bank accounts, so the ability to manage funds wisely is important. The current living allowance is equivalent to approximately \$200 per month and is meant to cover the cost of food, utilities, household supplies, clothing, recreation and entertainment, reading materials, and other incidentals. You may find that you receive more remuneration than your counterpart or supervisor.

You will also receive a leave allowance of \$24 per month (standard in all Peace Corps countries), which is paid in local currency along with your living allowance.

Current Volunteers suggest that you bring cash and credit cards if you plan to travel during your vacations. Only a few establishments in Uganda accept credit cards, so they are mainly useful for travel to other countries. The amount of cash you will need depends on the amount of traveling you plan to do while serving in Uganda (Volunteers earn two days of leave per month of service, excluding training). Some local banks offer ATM cards for local accounts. The exchange rate is approximately 1,800 Ugandan shillings to the U.S. dollar.

## **Food and Diet**

You will buy your food from outdoor markets or small shops, and you will generally cook for yourself. The local diet is basic but healthy, including a variety of fruits, vegetables, starches, and meats. There are likely to be some restaurants at or near your site, and imported food items can be found that, though

expensive, provide an occasional treat. During training, there will be sessions on safe food preparation and proper nutrition. It is relatively easy to follow a vegetarian diet in Uganda after one becomes familiar with the local food. Most Ugandans will not be prepared to serve a vegetarian meal if you are a guest in their home, but will generally accept a sensitive explanation of your dietary preferences.

## **Transportation**

Volunteers travel primarily by foot, bicycle, or public transport. Public transportation to and from the nearest urban or trading center is available near every site, in most cases several times a day. Public transport is likely to be crowded, uncomfortable, and unreliable. To facilitate fieldwork, Volunteers are either provided with a bicycle or given an allowance to purchase one. Still, many of the communities and job sites Volunteers visit may entail a long and challenging ride particularly on the single-gear bicycles most common in Uganda. Volunteers in the Education must be able to ride a bicycle in order to do their job. Please come to Uganda with this as an expectation of your work.

Peace Corps/Uganda prohibits the use of motorcycles by Volunteers because of the extreme safety risks that they pose. When using a bicycle, Volunteers must wear helmets (provided by Peace Corps).

## **Geography and Climate**

Uganda straddles the equator, which means that the seasons are quite different from those in the United States. Rather than a hot season and a cold one, there are rainy seasons and dry seasons. Rainy periods generally occur in November and December and in April and May. The climate around Lake

Victoria is greatly influenced by the lake. As a result, rain can occur there at any time. Midday temperatures are in the 70s and 80s (depending upon the part of the country) in all seasons, but evenings are cooler and may require wearing a sweater or light jacket.

## **Social Activities**

The most common form of entertainment is socializing among friends and neighbors. Some Volunteers visit other Volunteers on weekends or holidays. 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 infrequent trips to regional centers and to visit friends.

Uganda has several rural radio stations, and many Volunteers bring shortwave radios so that they can listen to international broadcasts by the BBC, Voice of America, and Deutsche Welle. Some larger towns have cinemas as well.

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 one's supervisors, co-workers, and other community members. A sincere effort to learn the local language will greatly facilitate these interactions.

## **Professionalism, Dress, and Behavior**

Norms for dress are much more conservative in Uganda than in the United States, where we view our clothes as an expression of our individuality. Ugandans view dressing appropriately as a sign of respect for others. Wearing clothes that are dirty,

have holes in them, or are too revealing sends the message that the people you are interacting with are not worth greater care. Dressing in neat, clean, and conservative clothes, on the other hand, can ease your integration into your new community and enhance your professional credibility and effectiveness in your assignment.

Many Ugandan men wear jackets and ties in professional settings. Blue jeans, T-shirts, and casual sandals are not considered appropriate in the workplace, during training, or during visits to the Peace Corps office. Women wear dresses or skirts with tops in both professional and nonprofessional environments; short skirts and low-cut or sleeveless tops are highly inappropriate, particularly in rural settings. Male Volunteers must wear their hair short and neat. Volunteers doing fieldwork generally should wash up and change their clothes before returning to a public area. When riding bicycles, women wear skirts or split skirts/culottes.

If you have reservations about your ability to adapt to Ugandan norms of dress and appearance, you should reevaluate your decision to become a Volunteer. Working effectively in another culture requires a certain level of sacrifice and flexibility, and the Peace Corps expects Volunteers to behave in a manner that will foster respect within their communities and reflect well on the Peace Corps. Behavior that jeopardizes your safety or the presence of the Peace Corps program in Uganda could lead to administrative separation—a decision by the Peace Corps to terminate your service.

## **Personal Safety**

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

## **Rewards and Frustrations**

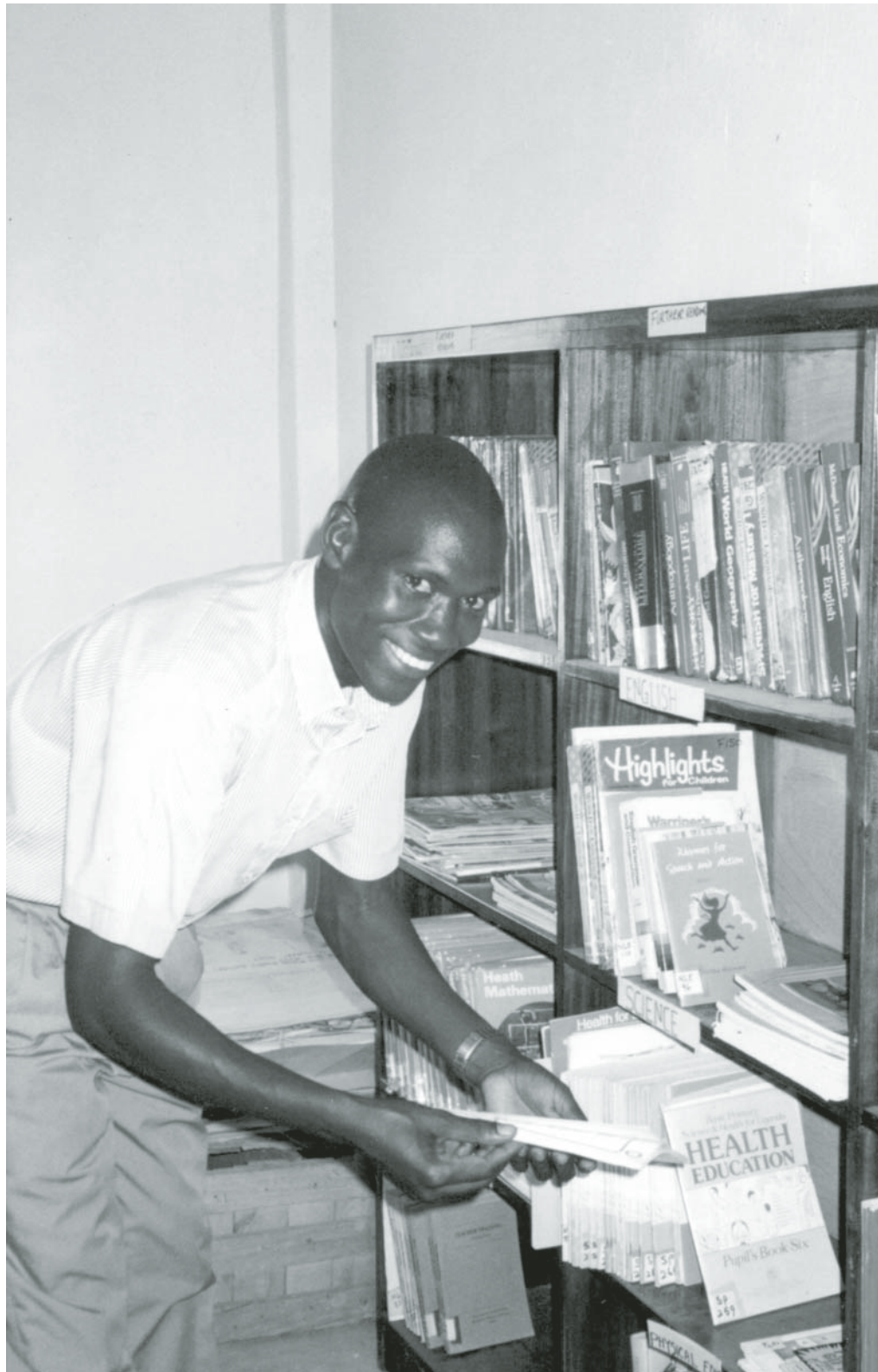
Although the potential for job satisfaction in Uganda is quite high, like all Volunteers, you will encounter numerous frustrations. Perceptions of time are very different from those in America. The lack of basic infrastructure can become very tiring, and social demands on your colleagues may mean that their work habits vary greatly from yours. For these reasons, the Peace Corps experience of adapting to a new culture and environment is often described as a series of emotional peaks and valleys.

You will be given a great deal of responsibility and independence in your work—perhaps more than in any other job you have had or will have. You will often need to motivate yourself and others with little guidance from supervisors. You might work for months without seeing any visible impact from, or

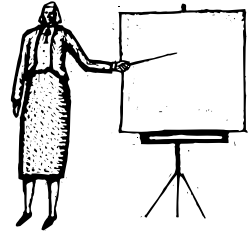


without receiving feedback on, your work. Development is a slow process. You must possess the self-confidence, patience, and vision—tempered with humility and the resulting respect for others—to continue working toward long-term goals without seeing immediate results.

To overcome these difficulties, you will also need maturity, flexibility, open-mindedness, resourcefulness, and, most important, a sense of humor. Most Volunteers manage to exhibit enough of these characteristics to serve successfully. Judging by the experience of former Volunteers, the peaks are well worth the difficult times, and most Volunteers leave Uganda feeling that they have gained much more than they sacrificed during their service. If you are able to make the commitment to integrate into your community and to focus on the community's interests, your service is likely to be a life-altering experience.



# PEACE CORPS TRAINING



## Overview of Pre-Service Training

Pre-service training will provide you with the knowledge and skills you need to integrate into your community and begin to work with your Ugandan counterparts in formal and informal settings. Training provides a friendly and safe environment in which to ask questions and learn about life in Uganda. The 10-week program covers a variety of topics, including language, cross-cultural communication, area studies, development issues, health and personal safety, and technical skills pertinent to your specific assignment.

The pre-service training in Uganda is community-based, which means that most of the training sessions take place in a community as similar as possible to actual Volunteer sites.

After your arrival in Uganda, you will spend a few days at a central training facility to recover from jet lag and learn a few basics before moving in with a Ugandan host family in the community chosen to host training. You will live with this family throughout training. This gives you the opportunity to observe and participate in Ugandan culture and to practice your language skills.

At the onset of training, the training staff will outline the goals of training and the criteria that will be used to assess your progress. Evaluation during training is a continual process, characterized by a dialogue between you and the training staff, which is ready to work with you toward the highest possible achievement of training goals. Upon successful completion of pre-service training, you will be sworn in as a Volunteer and depart for your site.

## ***Technical Training***

Technical training will prepare you to work in Uganda by building on the skills you already have and by helping you develop new skills in a manner appropriate to the needs of the country. The Peace Corps staff, Ugandan experts, and current Volunteers will conduct the training program. Training places great emphasis on learning how to transfer the skills you have to the community in which you will serve as a Volunteer, whether as a primary school teacher trainer or a health worker in the community well-being and positive-living project.

For teacher trainers, technical training emphasizes implementation of the Ugandan government's priorities for education reform: improving teaching skills for literacy, numeracy, and life skills; improving classroom methods; improving school leadership; addressing the impact of HIV/AIDS on education; and enhancing collaboration between schools and communities. For health Volunteers, technical training emphasizes working with communities to address primary healthcare issues.

You will review your technical sector's goals and will meet with the Ugandan agencies and organizations that invited the Peace Corps to assist them. You will be supported and evaluated throughout the training to build the confidence and skills you need to undertake your project activities and be a productive member of your community.

Throughout training, your technical skills development and sense of professionalism will be assessed using a variety of techniques including observation and the completion of a variety of assignments. A major component of this assessment is evaluating both your ability and willingness to serve as a full-time professional health or education professional with a Ugandan organization. Remember, while you are a Volunteer for Peace Corps, you should consider yourself a professional staff member of the organization with which you are placed.

### ***Language Training***

As a Peace Corps Volunteer, you will find that language skills are the key to personal and professional satisfaction during your service. These skills are critical to your job performance, they help you integrate into your community, and they can ease your personal adaptation to the new surroundings. Therefore, language training is the heart of the training program, and you must successfully meet minimum language requirements to complete training and become a Volunteer. During training, Ugandan language instructors teach formal language classes six days a week in small groups of four to five trainees.

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

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

gender and development, nonformal and adult education strategies, and political structures.

### ***Health Training***

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

### ***Safety Training***

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

## **Additional Trainings During Volunteer Service**

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

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 UGANDA



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 Uganda maintains a clinic with two part-time medical officers, who take care of Volunteers' primary healthcare needs. Additional medical services, such as testing and basic treatment, are also available in Uganda. If you become seriously ill, you will be transported either to a medical facility in the region or to the United States.

## **Health Issues in Uganda**

Major health problems among Volunteers in Uganda are rare and are often the result of Volunteers' not taking preventive measures to stay healthy. The most common health problems in Uganda are relatively minor ones that are also found in the United States, such as colds, diarrhea, skin infections, headaches, dental problems, adjustment disorders, and alcohol abuse. These problems may be more frequent or compounded by life in Uganda because certain environmental factors in the country raise the risk or exacerbate the severity of illnesses and injuries.

The most serious health concerns are malaria, HIV/AIDS, and traffic accidents. Because malaria is endemic in Uganda, taking antimalarial pills is mandated by Peace Corps. Diarrheal diseases are also common, but can be avoided by regularly washing your hands, thoroughly washing fruits and vegeta-

bles, and either boiling your drinking water or using the water purification tablets issued in your medical kit. You will be vaccinated against hepatitis A and B, meningitis A and C, tetanus, diphtheria, typhoid, and rabies.

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

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

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

## **Maintaining Your Health**

As a Volunteer, you must accept considerable responsibility for your own health. Proper precautions will significantly reduce your risk of serious illness or injury. The old adage

“An ounce of prevention ...” 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 Uganda is to take preventive measures for the following:

As mentioned above, malaria is a major health issue in Uganda. The most important step in preventing malaria and many other tropical diseases is to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes and other insects. The best way to avoid insect bites is to sleep under a treated mosquito net provided by Peace Corps, wear long sleeves and long trousers whenever possible (especially when outside at night), use insect repellent, and make sure windows have some kind of screen. Since no one can entirely prevent insect bites, you must also take antimalarial pills.

Rabies is prevalent throughout Uganda, so you will receive a series of immunizations against it after you arrive. If you are exposed to an animal that is known to have or suspected of having rabies, inform the medical officer at once so that you can receive post-exposure booster shots. Be wary of all unknown animals and of behavior changes in known animals.

Many diseases that afflict Volunteers worldwide are entirely preventable if proper food and water precautions are taken. Your medical officer will discuss specific standards for water and food preparation in Uganda during pre-service training.

AIDS and other STDs are far more common in Uganda than in the United States. Abstinence is the only certain choice for preventing infection with HIV and other STDs. You are taking risks if you choose to be sexually active. To lessen risk, use a condom every time you have sex. Whether your partner is a host country citizen, a fellow Volunteer, or anyone else, do not assume this person is free of HIV/AIDS or other STDs. You will

receive more information from the medical officer about this important issue.

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

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

## **Women's Health Information**

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

Feminine hygiene products are available for purchase in larger towns. The medical officer will provide Tampax or o.b. tampons on request, but sanitary pads must be purchased locally. If you require feminine hygiene products other than these, please bring a supply with you.

## **Your Peace Corps Medical Kit**

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

### ***Medical Kit Contents***

Ace bandages  
Adhesive tape  
*First Aid & Safety Handbook*  
Antacid tablets (Tums)  
Antibiotic ointment (Bacitracin/Neomycin/Polymycin B)  
Anti malarial medication  
Antiseptic antimicrobial skin cleaner (Hibiclens)  
Band-Aids  
Butterfly closures  
Cepacol lozenges  
Condoms  
Dental floss  
Diphenhydramine HCL 25 mg (Benadryl)  
Hydrocortisone cream  
Ibuprofen 400 mg tabs  
Insect repellent  
Iodine tablets (for water purification)  
Lip balm (Chapstick)  
Oral rehydration salts  
Oral thermometer (Fahrenheit)  
Pseudoephedrine HCL 30 mg (Sudafed)  
Robitussin-DM lozenges (for cough)  
Scissors  
Sterile gauze pads  
Tetrahydrozoline eyedrops (Visine)  
Tinactin (antifungal cream)  
Tylenol 325mg tabs  
Tweezers

## **Before You Leave: A Medical Checklist**

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

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

If you wish to avoid having duplicate vaccinations, contact your physician's office, obtain a copy of your immunization record, and bring it to your pre-departure orientation. If you 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 Uganda. You will be given your first dose of antimalarial medication prior to departure.

Bring a three-month supply of any prescription or over-the-counter medication you use on a regular basis, including birth control pills. Although the Peace Corps cannot reimburse you for this three-month supply, we will order refills during your service. While awaiting shipment—which can take several months—you will be dependent on your own medication supply. The Peace Corps will not pay for herbal or nonprescribed

medications, such as St. John's wort, glucosamine, selenium, or antioxidant supplements.

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

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

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

## **Safety and Security—Our Partnership**

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

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

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

### ***Factors that Contribute to Volunteer Risk***

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

Based on information gathered from incident reports worldwide in 2004, the following factors stand out as risk characteristics for assaults. Assaults consist of personal crimes committed against Volunteers, and do not include property crimes (such as vandalism or theft).



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

### ***Summary Strategies to Reduce Risk***

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

#### Strategies to reduce the risk/impact of theft:

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

#### Strategies to reduce the risk/impact of burglary:

- Live with a local family or on a family compound
- Put strong locks on doors and keep valuables in a lock box or trunk

- Leave irreplaceable objects at home in the U.S.
- Follow Peace Corps guidelines on maintaining home security

Strategies to reduce the risk/impact of assault:

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

***Support from Staff***

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

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

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

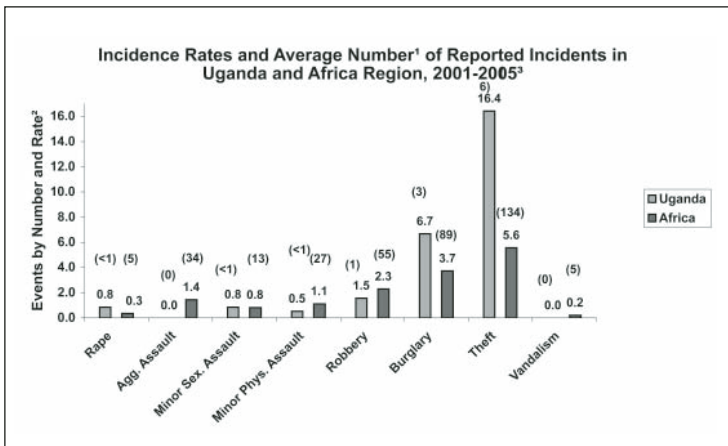
The country-specific data chart below shows the incidence rates and the average number of incidents of the major types of safety incidents reported by Peace Corps Volunteers/trainees in Uganda as compared to all other Africa region programs as a whole, from 2001–2005. It is presented to you in a somewhat technical manner for statistical accuracy.

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

The incidence rate for each type of crime is the number of crime events relative to the Volunteer/trainee population. It is expressed on the chart as a ratio of crime to Volunteer and trainee years (or V/T years, which is a measure of 12 full months of V/T service) to allow for a statistically valid way

to compare crime data across countries. An “incident” is a specific offense, per Peace Corps’ classification of offenses, and may involve one or more Volunteer/trainee victims. For example, if two Volunteers are robbed at the same time and place, this is classified as one robbery incident.

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



<sup>1</sup>The average numbers of incidents are in parenthesis and equal the average reported assaults for each year between 2001–2005.

<sup>2</sup>Incident 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.

<sup>3</sup>Data collection for Uganda began as of 2001

Source data on incidents are drawn from Assault Notification Surveillance System (ANSS) and Epidemiologic Surveillance System (ESS); the information is accurate as of 08/29/06.

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](mailto:violentcrimeline@peacecorps.gov).

## **Security Issues in Uganda**

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 Uganda. You can

reduce your risk by avoiding situations that make you feel uncomfortable and by taking precautions. Crime at the village or town level is less frequent than in the large cities; people know each other and generally will not steal from their neighbors. Outdoor markets and bus stations in large towns, for instance, are favorite work sites for pickpockets.

In the recent past Kampala has had its own particular risks as the site of infrequent rebel activities, which are otherwise restricted to the far north or west. They have taken the form of small-scale attacks in busy, populated areas. Although no Volunteers have been harmed in these attacks, the potential for harm exists, and the Peace Corps program in Uganda was suspended in 1999 as a result of such attacks. With the program's reopening in 2001, several program changes were made to enhance Volunteer safety and the sustainability of the program as a whole. One of these changes is that Volunteers placed outside of Kampala may not travel to Kampala without an official reason and without prior approval from their associate Peace Corps director or Peace Corps medical officer.

Several of Uganda's national parks are located on the western border with Congo. Because the safety of this area varies as a result of rebel activity, it is generally off-limits to Volunteers and U.S. government employees. If you wish to plan a vacation trip to a national park while you are a Volunteer, the Peace Corps will need to evaluate the safety of traveling to some of these parks at the time you choose to travel.

### **Staying Safe: Don't Be a Target for Crime**

You must be prepared to take on a large degree of responsibility for your own safety. Only you can make yourself less of a target, ensure that your house is secure, and develop relations in your community that will make you an unlikely victim of crime.

In coming to Uganda, 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 Uganda may require that you accept some restrictions on your current lifestyle.

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

### **Preparing for the Unexpected: Safety Training and Volunteer Support in Uganda**

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

The Peace Corps/Uganda office will keep Volunteers informed of any issues that may impact Volunteer safety through



**information sharing.** Regular updates will be provided in Volunteer news-letters and in memorandums from the country director. In the event of a critical situation or emergency, Volunteers will be contacted through the emergency communication network.

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

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

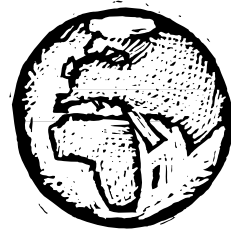
You will also learn about Peace Corps/Uganda's *detailed* **emergency action plan**, which is implemented in the event of civil or political unrest or a natural disaster. When you arrive at your site, you will complete and submit a site locator form with your address, contact information, and a map to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

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

## NOTES



# DIVERSITY AND CROSS-CULTURAL ISSUES



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

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

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

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

## **Overview of Diversity in Uganda**

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

Many Ugandans have little or no concept of the United States as a pluralistic society and generally view Americans as a homogeneous group. For some Ugandans, being American is synonymous with being white or of European descent. This is understandable when one considers the images that come to Uganda via the Western media and the extremely limited contact the average Ugandan has had with the Western world, mainly in the form of development agencies, missionaries, and television. Peace Corps/Uganda closely reflects the demographic distribution of Peace Corps Volunteers worldwide.

While approximately 80 percent of Volunteers are caucasian between 21 and 30 years of age, Peace Corps worldwide continues to attract an increasingly more diverse group of Americans to assist us in demonstrating an ever more realistic portrait of America to Ugandans.

## **What Might a Volunteer Face?**

### ***Possible Issues for Female Volunteers***

Equality of the sexes is generally considered irrelevant in Ugandan culture, as distinct roles and responsibilities are expected of men and women. Female Volunteers often encounter extremely conservative attitudes regarding gender equality. Likewise, the behavior of female Volunteers is more often scrutinized and criticized than that of their male peers. Although the Peace Corps emphasizes sensitivity toward other cultures, it may occasionally be necessary to explain why you believe something or behave a certain way—but only you can determine when and if such an explanation is worthwhile. Neither men nor women are considered adults until they are married and have children. This being the case, female Volunteers should expect curiosity from Ugandan friends regarding their marital status and whether they have children.

### **Volunteer Comments**

“Getting people, men in particular, to take me seriously has been a bit of a challenge. Like all things here, it’s a learning experience for everybody. I learn how to get a man’s job done while still being a woman, and maybe my community learns a little about gender equality.”

“I need more time for lunch because I have to actually prepare it myself; my male counterpart just goes home and eats what his wife made. So when he complains that I cannot

spend enough time at school after school hours, I just tell him that it is hard because I do not have a wife.”

“It is hard to say why you are not married 10 times a day. Every Ugandan male says that you are to be his first wife, even though he is already married and has four or five children.”

### ***Possible Issues for Volunteers of Color***

Skin color and appearance, more than actual heritage, often influence how Volunteers are perceived and treated by their host communities. Even if they can convince Ugandans that they are indeed American, Volunteers who do not fit the mold of the “typical” American may still not be regarded as “true” Americans. African-American Volunteers often express frustration or disappointment at being asked, “What are you?” and having Ugandans show genuine shock or amazement when they answer “African American” or “black American.” Ugandans often react with disbelief and ask, “But where are your parents from?”

African-American women should be aware that they may be perceived as Ugandan women and thus be treated as such. This can be an asset in some situations and a challenge in others in many instances. African-American women may find that their behavior is scrutinized more closely than that of white women.

Asian-American Volunteers express frustration at being assumed to be Chinese or Japanese rather than American. Because of the kung fu movies shown throughout the country, some Asian Americans have been asked if they know kung fu. This may seem humorous at first, but can eventually become tiresome. Americans of South Asian descent, whether Indian, Sri Lankan, Bangladeshi, or Pakistani, are collectively referred to as Indians or Asians rather than Americans. Some



Ugandans may feel resentment toward people with a South Asian background because of the unequal treatment received by Ugandans and South Asian residents of Uganda during the period of British colonialism.

On the flip side, Volunteers of color may also be surprised to find that Ugandans consider them to be American or European regardless of their color and refer to them using words normally used to describe white people.

### ***Possible Issues for Senior Volunteers***

Age can also determine how a Volunteer is perceived and treated by Ugandans. Older Volunteers may be respected for their wisdom but may face challenges in being fully accepted in the workplace. Ugandans can be especially curious about older female Volunteers, puzzled as to why they have no spouse or children, even if they have the pictures to prove otherwise. In addition, since most Volunteers are younger than 30, it may be difficult for older Volunteers to develop friendships and gain the necessary support within the most accessible group—other Peace Corps Volunteers.

### ***Possible Issues for Gay, Lesbian, or Bisexual Volunteers***

Gay and lesbian Volunteers need to know that Uganda has a very conservative society. Homosexuality is illegal (with a possible sentence of 17 years to life imprisonment), and many Ugandans deny that homosexuality actually exists in their culture. Any display of your sexual orientation will, at best, be severely frowned upon and, at worst, may threaten your safety and security. Most previous gay, lesbian, or bisexual Volunteers in Uganda have decided to not be open about their sexual orientation. Prior to accepting an assignment in Uganda, you should discuss this issue thoroughly with a member of the recruitment staff with whom you feel comfortable. Anyone who wants to discuss this subject further once in Uganda can do so in confidence with a Peace Corps staff member.

### ***Possible Religious Issues for Volunteers***

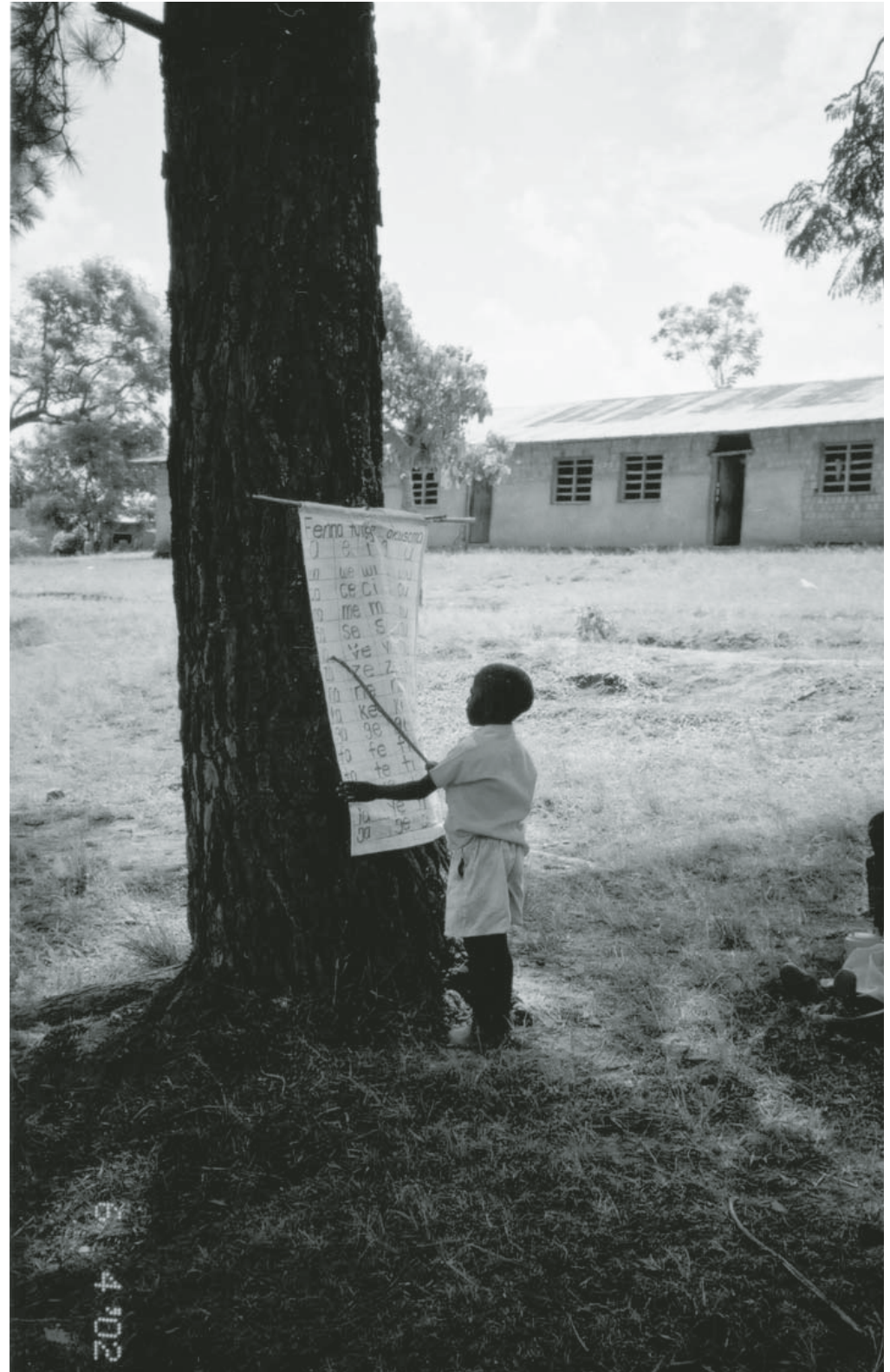
Whether you practice a religion or not, you will probably find Ugandan approaches to spirituality different from what you are used to. You will certainly gain a deeper understanding over your two years of service, but initially, the most disconcerting thing may be the constant open discussion of religion. You should be prepared to be asked if you are a Christian, if you are “saved,” and if there are any Muslims in America. You may be stared at in disbelief if you state that you do not believe in God. Your tolerance of and willingness to answer such questions will serve you well.

### ***Possible Issues for Volunteers With Disabilities***

Ugandans with disabilities are generally treated no differently from other Ugandans (hence the lack of special schools or accommodations for those with disabilities) and are expected to complete the same work, though not necessarily using the same methods.

There is little of the infrastructure to accommodate individuals with disabilities that has been developed in the United States. 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 Uganda without unreasonable risk of harm to yourself or interruption of your service. Peace Corps/ Uganda 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.

While this section on diversity may be unsettling to some of you, we want you to be prepared for the many challenges you are about to face. Know that “non-stereotypical” Volunteers have had excellent experiences in Uganda. Ultimately, only you can shape your time in Uganda as a Volunteer, but Peace Corps/Uganda is here to support you along the way.



6:4:02

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS?

## **How much luggage am I allowed to bring to Uganda?**

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

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

## **What is the electric current in Uganda?**

It is roughly 220 volts, 50 cycles. When the electricity is on (currently this is only every other day), it can range from 190 to 260 volts. Few Volunteers have electricity at home or at work. Batteries are available in Uganda, but C batteries may be hard to find, and AA batteries are very expensive and of poor quality.

## **How much money should I bring?**

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

expenses. Often Volunteers wish to bring additional money for vacation travel to other countries. Because credit card fraud is common, traveler's checks may be the safest option. Note, though, that the exchange rate you will receive for your traveler's checks will likely be lower than for cash and they may be harder to exchange than dollars. If you choose to bring extra money, bring the amount that will suit your own travel plans and needs. Due largely to rumors regarding counterfeit currency, it can be nearly impossible to exchange bills smaller than 50s, and it is best to bring more recently printed (2003 or later) bills to country.

### **When can I take vacation and have people visit me?**

Each Volunteer accrues two vacation days per month of service (excluding training). As Volunteers are considered to be "on-duty" 24 hours a day, 7 days per week, vacation days are charged at 7 days per week. In addition, 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. If their stay does interfere with your work, you will be required to count these days as vacation days used. Extended stays at your site are not encouraged and require permission from the country director. The Peace Corps cannot 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. If you wish, you may contact your own insurance company;

additionally, insurance application forms will be provided, and we encourage you to consider them carefully. You should not ship or take items overseas that you are not prepared to lose. Jewelry, watches, radios, cameras, computers, and expensive appliances are subject to loss, theft, and breakage, and in many places, satisfactory maintenance and repair services are not available.

**Do I need an international driver's license?**

Volunteers in Uganda do not need to get an international driver's license because they are prohibited from operating privately-owned motorized vehicles. Most urban travel is by bus or taxi. Rural travel ranges from buses and minibuses to trucks and lots of walking. If you plan to drive a rental vehicle when you take vacation, you may need an international driver's license, so you should bring your U.S. driver's license.

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

This is not a requirement; a token of friendship is sufficient. Some gift suggestions include knickknacks for the house; pictures, books, or calendars of American scenes; souvenirs from your part of the U.S.; nice soap; 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?**

Trainees are not assigned to individual sites until approximately the eighth week of pre-service training. This gives Peace Corps staff the opportunity to assess each trainee's technical and language skills prior to assigning sites, in addition to finalizing site selections with the Ugandan government and community counterparts. You will have an opportunity to provide input on your site preferences, including geographical location, distance from other Volunteers, and living condi-

tions. However, many factors influence the site selection process and the Peace Corps will not guarantee placement where you would ideally like to be. Volunteers normally live in small towns or in rural villages and usually are within three hours from another Volunteer. Some sites require an eight-hour drive to reach Kampala.

### **How can my family contact me in an emergency?**

The Peace Corps' Office of Special Services provides assistance in handling emergencies affecting trainees and Volunteers or their families. Before leaving the United States, instruct your family to notify the Office of Special Services immediately if an emergency arises, such as a serious illness or death of a family member. During normal business hours, the number for the Office of Special Services is 800.424.8580, extension 1470. After normal business hours and on weekends and holidays, the Special Services duty officer can be reached at 202.638.2574.

For nonemergency questions, your family can get information from the country desk staff at the Peace Corps by calling 800.424.8580.

### **Can I call home from Uganda?**

Yes, but generally only from larger towns or where there is good cellular phone network coverage. Calls from Uganda to the United States are very expensive. We recommend letter writing and setting up periodic calls from home on special occasions. Prepaid phone cards from the United States do not work in Uganda.

### **Should I bring a cellular phone with me?**

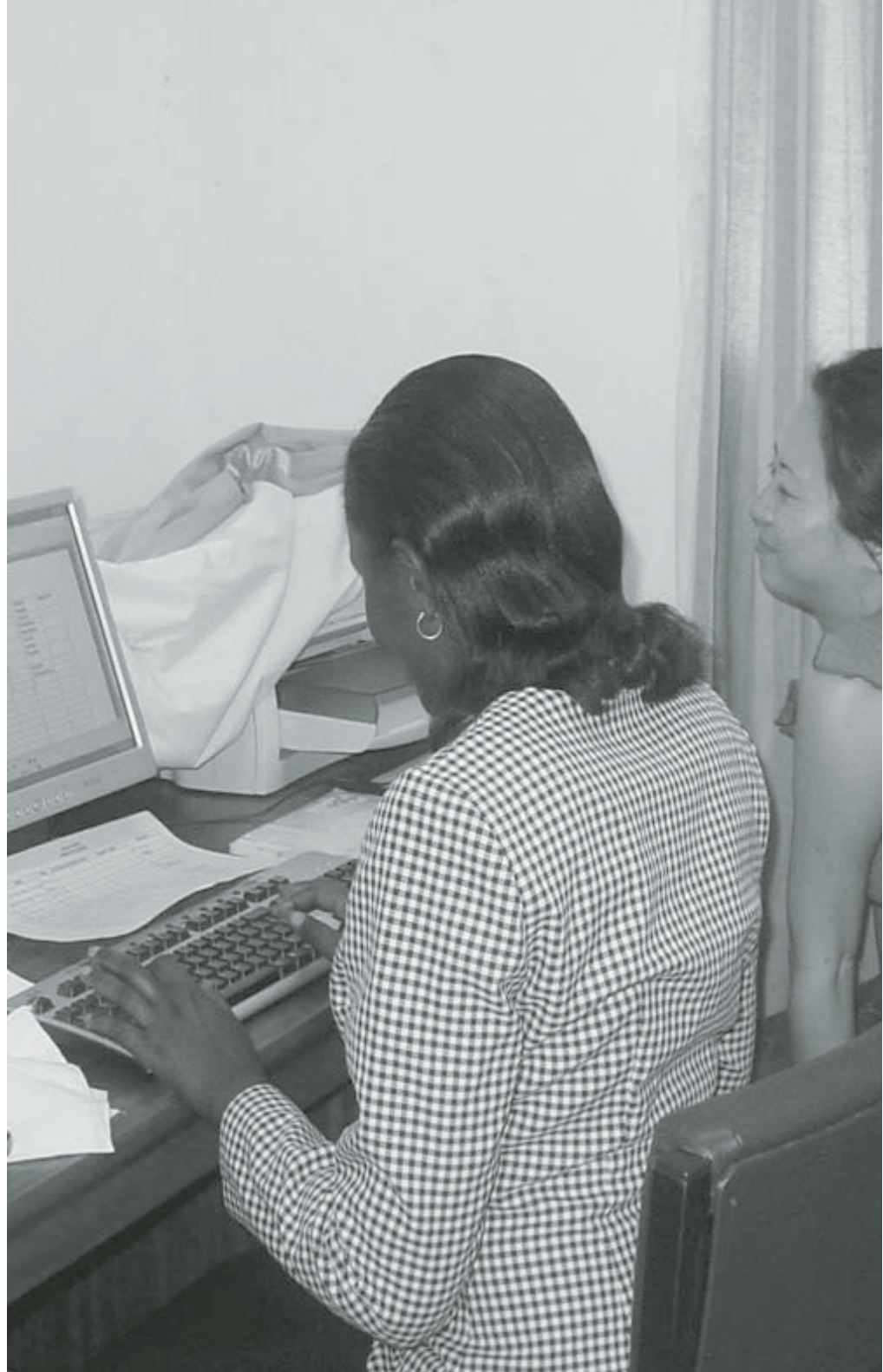
In general this is not recommended. The systems in Uganda are different from those typically used in the United States, the costs of service are very high, and the coverage area is



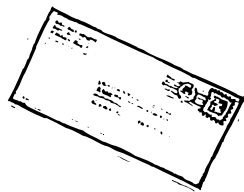
limited. Most Volunteers have chosen to purchase cellphones in Uganda after finding out the extent of coverage at their sites.

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

There are Internet cafes in most, although not all, larger cities throughout Uganda. Most Volunteers can expect to access such cafes once every two to three months. We do not recommend bringing a computer, as few Volunteer sites have electricity, power surges are common where there is electricity, and maintenance and repair options are very limited. Also, because of the high value of computers, owners significantly increase their risk of becoming victims of crime. If you do bring a computer, it will be at your own risk and expense.



# WELCOME LETTERS FROM UGANDA VOLUNTEERS



Dear Potential Trainee:

I live at a primary school with more than 900 primary school girls; one might think that with time that might get to be a bit much, and honestly, there have been days where I've felt overwhelmed, but I couldn't have asked for a better placement. The people here are so gracious, so welcoming, and so friendly.

I'll never forget the first day at my site. We were still in training, but we were visiting our sites to get an idea of what it was going to be like out on our own. I arrived at the school and before the gate there were hundreds of girls. They had all heard that I was coming that afternoon and they were very excited. They greeted me in the local language and argued about who would help me with my bags. Sister Kevin, the headmistress at the school, gave me a tour of my house. I could tell they had worked very hard to get the place ready for me. The house was in great shape and someone had painted "You are most welcome, Christine" on the wall. I overlooked the fact that they had misspelled my name, especially since the three or four days I was there they treated me so wonderfully. They brought me all my meals and helped me get acquainted with the school compound and the town.

Since then, and I've been here for a year now, the hospitality really hasn't changed all that much. There aren't more than one hundred girls rushing to me, fighting over who will help with my bags anymore—thank goodness—but it's still amazing how good they are to me. I have tried several times to fetch my own water, but I can rarely walk 10 steps out of my door without somebody insisting to help me. I have a group of kids that comes over nearly every evening to visit or sometimes to help me with laundry or dishes if I need it. I never ask the kids; they just jump right in. I enjoy their company most of the time; they remind me why I am here on rough days.

I can't stress enough how amazing the people here are. I think a lot about the projects that I've been working on and what I am contributing, but I know that the people of Budaka, Uganda, have taught me a whole lot more than I could ever teach them.

— Kristin Traub Budaka

Dear New Volunteer,

Welcome to the Peace Corps family, and welcome to Uganda, your home away from home for the next two years. Uganda, as Winston Churchill said, is the Pearl of Africa. Its border stretches along the shores of Lake Victoria to the south, the Great Rift Valley to the East, the beautiful Mountains of the Moon to the West, and the flowing savannahs of the northern plains, enclosing one of the most diverse landscapes in the continent. And because Uganda is situated on the equator, the weather is always gorgeous!

Along with this diverse landscape, you will find a plethora of cultures with rich heritages that have spanned centuries. There are 48 different tribes in Uganda, each with its own language and customs. The southern part of the country is mainly composed of Bantu-speaking tribes, while the North consists of Nilotic speakers. Each of these tribes has shaped Uganda as a country, and this diversity has been critical in fostering the dialogue that made Uganda a leader in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

As a Volunteer, you will have the opportunity to live and work with some of the nicest people in the world. The rewards from such an experience are immeasurable. This does not mean that your task will not be free of challenges. There are countless villages in Uganda that lack power, running water, and the other amenities you are accustomed to having at home. Along with this, you are being asked to live and work in a completely new environment with its own social norms and customs. Your decision might begin to seem overwhelming and this is understandable. You are about to embark on a life-changing journey. But you are not going on it alone.

You will have access to the best staff in the world! The staff at Peace Corps/Uganda is dedicated to making your stay in the Uganda as comfortable as possible. Plus, you will have your fellow Volunteers who will be there for you whenever and for whatever.

Well, I think that I've said enough. I don't want to give away all the surprises! Once again, welcome to Peace Corps and welcome to Uganda. See you soon!

— Paul T. Babcock

.....

Dear Future Volunteer,

The feelings you must be experiencing right now with your Peace Corps invitation in hand and an impending departure date seem like only yesterday for me. I remember well the long, long to-do list, packets of even more paperwork, packing and re-packing, anxious thoughts and teary goodbyes. There were certainly moments when I wondered if it would ever really happen. I am happy to report that everything will indeed work out, you will finally set foot in-country, and Peace Corps/Uganda is worth every sleepless night!

Pre-service training provides a smooth adjustment into a new country and a new culture. Peace Corps staff is a dedicated team. They help you land as gracefully as possible. Home-stay families warmly welcome new Volunteers, do their best to make you comfortable, and often make you feel as if you're a member of the family before you leave. The training schedule will keep you busy and you will surely wonder where 10 weeks went when the day comes to finally move to your site, your new home for the next two years. It is then when this experience begins to feel less like a whirlwind, and more like a new reality.

The challenges in the beginning soon become nothing. You discover where to buy the best tomatoes, the most efficient way to collect your water, and how to catch a ride into the nearest town. Adjusting to no electricity, cooking over charcoal, bathing with a bucket, and using a pit latrine quickly begin to feel perfectly normal. (Ok, let's just say normal. J)

Eventually, it becomes easier and easier to venture further into your village, test fledgling language skills, and generate ideas about what exactly you will be doing for the next 24 months. Relationships begin to form and then, there's finally the day when you refer to your site as "home" without even thinking about it; when your neighbor asks if "you've been lost" and offers you a sweet, juicy pineapple upon your return; when a child greets you with a smile of recognition at the borehole; when a colleague invites you to her daughter's introduction; or when a muzee [elder] shows you a better way to light your charcoal. You will feel an invaluable sense of warmth and acceptance. You will recognize these as small steps when there are the inevitable moments of frustration or lingering questions about whether or not you are really making any progress.

In the beginning, 24 months seems like such a long time to be away from America. Already, I recognize that it is such a short time to be here in Uganda. Yes, there was a day when 12 hours of sunlight felt like three times as much as I knew what to do with, but I know in the end, I'll look back and wish I spent every second absorbing it all. I'm doing my best to do just that because now I can see that it will all go by in a flash. Each day of this experience opens minds and possibilities and that, to me, is one of the greatest things you have to look forward to in Peace Corps/Uganda.

Best wishes with the rest of your to-do list, see you soon, and safe journey!

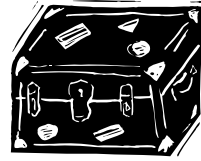
— Mbabazi Jennifer Wetter

## NOTES





# PACKING LIST



This list has been compiled by Volunteers serving in Uganda and is based on their experience. Use it as an informal guide in making your own list, bearing in mind that an essential item to one person is a waste of space and money to another. There is no perfect list! You obviously cannot bring everything mentioned below, so consider each of the suggestion below and make certain bringing it makes sense to you personally and professionally. If you can't imagine why you would use an item on this list, you probably never will. As you decide what to bring, keep in mind that you have a 80-pound weight limit on baggage. And remember, you can get almost everything you need in Uganda, including made-to-order clothes. Also note that you will be responsible for carrying all of these items through airports, on crowded buses, and through large cities.

Luggage should be lightweight but sturdy, lockable, and easy to carry. As mentioned earlier, Ugandans place great emphasis on being well-groomed and appropriately dressed. When it comes to dress, it is best to err on the conservative side. Tight, torn, revealing, and skimpy clothing is unacceptable. Women's skirts should be below the knee, and slippers are a must. Most Ugandan women do not wear sleeveless garments or trousers in the workplace. For men, button-down shirts are a must for work; T-shirts are not appropriate as professional wear. Do not bring military- or camouflage-style clothing.

The climate in Uganda is pleasantly moderate, although it can be quite cool at night and in the rainy season, especially in the hilly areas. In choosing clothing, remember that you will be washing clothes by hand, that it can take a long time for items to dry in the rainy season, and that dark clothing is better at hiding mud and dirt.

## **General Clothing**

- Belt
- Rain gear
- Sleepwear
- Sun hats or caps
- Sweater, sweatshirt, or windbreaker
- Sturdy gloves for gardening and other work

## ***For Women***

- Three basic below-the-knee skirts
- One or two pairs of culottes for bike riding and field-work
- Four short-sleeved (not sleeveless) tops (tank tops can be worn underneath if desired)
- One below-the-knee dress for special occasions
- One or two pairs of slacks for gardening and travel (jeans are rarely appropriate for women and are hard to wash and dry)
- One or two pairs of shorts for sports
- Two-year supply of cotton underpants, bras, and socks (not available locally)
- Nylons (not necessary for Uganda but perhaps useful for vacation) -- they are available in country as well
- Durable sports bra
- Two or three half slips and one full slip
- At least one, one-piece swimsuit

## ***For Men***

- Four pairs of nice cotton or polyester-blend trousers for work (jeans are okay for casual wear, not for work, but are very hard to wash and dry)
- One nice dress shirt and tie for special occasions (a sports coat is useful but not a must, and some teacher trainers find they need to wear ties)

- Four or five button-down shirts for work, most short-sleeved
- One or two pairs of shorts (conservative length) for sports and wearing around the house
- Four or five T-shirts for casual wear and physical labor
- Two-year supply of cotton underwear and socks
- Swimsuit

## **Shoes**

- One pair of dress shoes
- One pair of sturdy, comfortable work shoes with closed toes
- One pair of hiking boots or sturdy walking shoes
- One pair of sturdy sandals (flip-flops and simple canvas shoes are available in Uganda)

## **Personal Hygiene and Toiletry Items**

- Prescription drugs for the first three months
- Two or three months' supply of sanitary napkins or other feminine hygiene supplies (ob-brand minipads are available locally but are expensive, and you will not have a chance to buy any during training)
- Shaving cream (available locally)
- Deodorant (available locally but expensive)
- Cotton swabs (also available locally)
- Shampoo and cream rinse for the first few weeks
- Toothbrushes and travel case (toothpaste is available locally, but bring an initial supply)
- Dental floss (though the Peace Corps provides floss, it is handy to have some for other purposes (e.g., hanging pictures))
- Hair clips, bobby pins, covered elastic bands

- Razors and blades (some types are available locally); remember not to pack these or other sharp objects in your carry-on bag
- Brush/comb, some extra ones
- Lotions and powders (note that scented toiletries can attract insects)
- Nail clippers and nail files or emery boards
- Hair-cutting scissors

## **Kitchen**

You will be given a modest settling-in allowance after training to buy household items in Uganda, and pots and pans, dishes, cups, basins, cookers, and lanterns are widely available. You might want to send some food items to yourself before you leave, such as powdered drink mixes, granola bars, chocolate that won't melt, and your favorite spices (many spices are available here, especially Indian ones).

- Two sets of sheets; twin-size flat ones are the most useful (local sheets are of poor quality and expensive, though local blankets are of good quality)
- French press, if you appreciate good coffee
- Three to four washcloths for use in bucket baths (also available locally)
- Several large towels (lightweight beach towels are a good choice-these are available locally as well)
- Cookbook or recipes
- Swiss Army knife or Leatherman tool
- Good can opener (available locally, but often of poor quality)
- Vegetable peeler and other favorite low-tech gadgets (most items available locally)
- Measuring cup and spoons (also available locally)

- Mess kit for cooking (most items available locally)
- Plastic food storage containers and bags

### **Miscellaneous**

- At least 15 passport-size photos will be used to obtain a residency permit and for use in obtaining other forms of identification soon after you arrive, so pack them in your carry-on luggage
- Umbrella (available locally)
- Sewing kit
- U.S. stamps, for sending mail with people traveling back home
- Good dictionary
- Reference books for your specialty (there are also good materials in Peace Corps/Uganda's resource center)
- Duct tape
- Small stapler and staples (also available locally)
- Travel alarm clock
- Small mirror
- Sturdy water bottle (e.g., Nalgene)
- Pocket-size solar calculator
- Sleeping bag and pad (some Volunteers say these are essential; others say they never use them)
- Good flashlight and extra bulbs
- Sunglasses
- Money belt
- Basic wristwatch
- Shortwave radio
- Binoculars (optional-Uganda is a bird-watcher's heaven)
- Camera
- Bungee cords

- Daypack
- Solar-powered battery charger and batteries (if needed for your gear)
- Music player and music (consider the power and battery consumption of the different options, also consider the risk of having this stolen)
- Musical instruments (if you play or plan to learn)
- A few novels (to read and swap)
- Hobby materials like sketching pads and pencils
- Games

Note: Do not bring a mosquito net; Peace Corps/Uganda provides these.

## 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 for which you should make arrangements.

## Family

- Notify your family that they can call the Peace Corps' Office of Special Services at any time if there is a critical illness or death of a family member (telephone number: 800.424.8580, extension 1470; after-hours duty officer: 202.638.2574).
- Give the Peace Corps' *On the Home Front* handbook to family and friends.

## Passport/Travel

- Forward to the Peace Corps travel office all paperwork for the Peace Corps passport and visas.
- Verify that luggage meets the size and weight limits for international travel.
- Obtain a personal passport if you plan to travel after your service ends. (Your Peace Corps passport will expire three months after you finish your service, so if you plan to travel longer 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 you are away. (Even though the Peace Corps is responsible for your healthcare during Peace Corps service overseas, it is advisable for people who have preexisting conditions to arrange for the continuation of their supplemental health coverage. If there is a lapse in coverage, it is often difficult and expensive to be reinstated.)
- Arrange to continue Medicare coverage if applicable.

### **Personal Papers**

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

### **Voting**

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

### **Personal Effects**

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

## **Financial Management**

- Obtain student loan deferment forms from the lender or loan service.
- 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 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

<b>For Questions About:</b>	<b>Staff</b>	<b>Toll-free Extension</b>	<b>Direct/Local Number</b>
Responding to an Invitation	Office of Placement Africa Region	Ext. 1850	202.692.1850
Programming or Country Information	Angus Martin Desk Officer E-mail: <a href="mailto:uganda@peacecorps.gov">uganda@peacecorps.gov</a>	Ext. 2324	202.692.2324
	Melissa Chipili Desk Assistant E-mail: <a href="mailto:uganda@peacecorps.gov">uganda@peacecorps.gov</a>	Ext. 2323	202.692.2323

<b>For Questions About:</b>	<b>Staff</b>	<b>Toll-free Extension</b>	<b>Direct/ Local Number</b>
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 9-5 EST  202.638.2574 (after-hours answering service)

# PEACE CORPS

Paul D. Coverdell Peace Corps Headquarters

1111 20th Street NW · Washington, DC 20526 · [www.peacecorps.gov](http://www.peacecorps.gov) · 1-800-424-8580