

THE PEACE CORPS WELCOMES YOU TO T O G O



A PEACE CORPS PUBLICATION
FOR NEW VOLUNTEERS



November 2006



A WELCOME LETTER

What a pleasure it is to welcome you to Peace Corps/Togo as we celebrate 44 years of the Peace Corps' continuing presence here. I know from my experiences in this part of West Africa over the last 25 years that this is a most welcoming environment. The Volunteers who preceded you have left a marvelous legacy of service that I'm sure you will continue.

The talented and experienced Togo staff has established solid programs that are closely tied to the expressed needs of communities throughout the country. Whether you are working in health, education, business, or natural resource management, there is important work for you to do and continuing needs for you to address.

Be prepared for an incredible range of physical, emotional, and intellectual challenges over the next two years. You will feel exuberant one day and exasperated the next. One week you might suffer from isolation; the next week you might crave privacy from curious villagers. At times you will feel overwhelmed by the tremendous responsibilities you have assumed; at other times you will cringe at cultural and Peace Corps restrictions. A two-year commitment to the Peace Corps is not made easily or casually. It is a commitment that you will make repeatedly and in many ways throughout your two years. You will be challenged in every way imaginable and your patience will be tried to its limits. But if you come with an open mind, a warm heart, and a good sense of humor (particularly about yourself), you will do well.

Whatever you experience in this "toughest job you'll ever love," remember that members of the Peace Corps/Togo staff are here to help you make your work and your experience a success. Please read carefully and heed the advice in this book, brush up on your French, and prepare for the adventure of a lifetime.

George C. Monagan
Country Director
RPCV (Benin 1980-82)



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PEACE CORPS/TOGO HISTORY AND PROGRAMS



History of the Peace Corps in Togo

The Peace Corps began its work in Togo in 1962, as part of the second wave of countries where the Peace Corps began service. Since that time, more than 2,000 Volunteers have served in Togo. Peace Corps/Togo has a successful history of collaboration and involvement with the Togolese people at all levels. The Volunteers' efforts build upon counterpart relationships and emphasize low-cost solutions that make maximum use of local resources, which are usually people. Collaboration with local and international private organizations, as well as international development organizations, is an important component of Volunteer project activities.

History and Future of Peace Corps Programming in Togo

Peace Corps/Togo averages 55 trainees per year and fields an average of 110 Volunteers. Volunteers work in all five regions of the country in four programs: natural resource management; community health and AIDS prevention; small business development; and girls' education and empowerment.

Heavy demographic pressure is straining Togo's agricultural systems and the ability of the land to regenerate itself. Traditional farming practices cannot meet the needs of the increasing population, nor do these practices address the problem of soil degradation. Togo's forests are being depleted, while demand for wood products is increasing. Crop residues, a precious organic fertilizer for tropical soils, are no longer left on the land, but are used as alternative fuels. Volunteers

in the natural resource management program work to address these issues and attempt to reverse the trends in the areas of decreasing farm yields, environmental degradation, poor soil fertility, and decreasing forest resources.

In 1995, the safe motherhood and child survival project evolved into the community health and AIDS prevention project. Volunteers in this project assist local-level health personnel and regional offices to promote community health activities. The project's most important components are child growth monitoring and nutrition education, family planning education, education for sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)/AIDS prevention, and improved dispensary management.

Since 1991, small business development Volunteers have worked with credit unions, women's informal savings groups, and youth and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to offer business training and consulting to members who wish to improve their business skills. Workshops covering such topics as accounting, finance, marketing, and feasibility studies are offered to groups of tailors, retailers, merchants, market women, and other entrepreneurs. The goal of this project is to improve basic business and entrepreneurial skills, thereby fostering opportunities for growth and job creation in Togo's small business sector.

Beginning in 1999, Peace Corps/Togo began implementation of the girls' education and empowerment program. Volunteers work with local schools and institutions, particularly in rural areas, to promote literacy and education among girls. Emphasis is given to encouraging girls to attend and stay in school and to make good choices about their future.

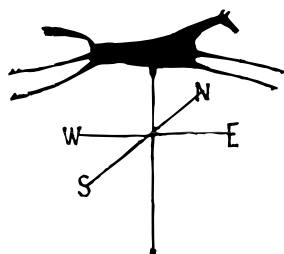
In addition to the four major program areas mentioned above, Volunteers are involved in a variety of secondary activities. Two activities that many Volunteers participate in are youth

summer camps and AIDS Rides. AIDS Ride is a week-long HIV/AIDS education/training program. During AIDS Ride Week, teams of Volunteers in each of the five regions of Togo ride their bikes to isolated villages and deliver HIV/AIDS training sessions to adults and students. In 2005, 55 Volunteers (five teams of eleven) delivered 73 presentations in 51 villages to over 21,000 people.

Each summer, Volunteers from all programs participate in three weeks of youth camps (one week each for girls, boys and young women who have left school early). These camps include formal classes in life skills such as health and nutrition, HIV/AIDS and gender equity, as well as sports and other games.



COUNTRY OVERVIEW: TOGO AT A GLANCE



History

When Germany lost control of its former colonies after World War I, part of Togoland was ceded to the British in the then Gold Coast (now Ghana). The remainder of the territory came under French control and became an independent Togo in 1960. The country's first elected president was killed in a *coup d'état*, Africa's first. In 1967, Gnassingbe Eyadema became president and remained in the position until February 2005, when he suddenly died of a heart attack. Eyadema was Africa's longest-serving head of state. His son, Faure Gnassingbe, was elected president of Togo in April 2005.

Togo continues to experience profound political challenges. After nearly three decades of one-party rule by President Eyadema and the *Rassemblement du Peuple Togolais* (Assembly of Togolese People, or RPT), the Constitution was changed to permit the registration of other political parties. Though the RPT continues to overwhelmingly dominate the government, there is a great deal of pressure for change from within the country and from outside agencies such as the World Bank and the European Union.

Government

The Togolese government is headed by the president and consists of numerous ministries and an elected legislative body. The country is divided up into five regions, and each region is divided into prefectures, the loose equivalent of counties. All political officials are appointed by the government.

Economy

Togo's coastal location, bustling port, and better-than-average infrastructure have helped to make Lomé (the capital) a regional trading center. However, agriculture is the foundation of Togo's economy, contributing 30 percent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) and employing 70 percent of its workers. Corn, sorghum, millet, cassava, yams, cowpeas, and rice are the major food crops. Cash crops include cotton, cocoa, and coffee. Togo is the world's fifth-largest producer of phosphates. Industry and manufacturing account for about a quarter of Togo's GDP. Half of the total domestic output is accounted for in the service sector.

People and Culture

For such a small country, there is an amazing number of ethnic groups and over 60 local languages spoken. The official language is French, and the two principal local languages are Ewé (the predominant language of the south and into Ghana and Benin), and Kabyé (the predominant language of the north and that of the president). Togolese communities are tight-knit and based on a network of extended family and other members of the community. Sharing is very much the norm.

Animism, or fetishism is practiced by a large number of Togolese—even those converted to other religions such as Islam and Christianity.

Environment

Togo's position on the African continent and its proximity to the equator place it in a rain shadow, yet the country receives less rain than either neighboring Benin or Ghana. Togo was

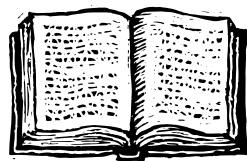
once covered with dry-land forests, but most of this forest is gone—the result of agricultural expansion and the need for wood products over the centuries. Traveling from south to north, the change in climate and environment for each region is readily apparent, from the humid coast to the semi-arid north.

There never were the vast concentrations of wildlife that most Americans associate with Africa—or more specifically, East Africa. Most of the indigenous species are gone, due to human population pressures on the land and hunting practices.

Togo has some area set aside for national parks but increasing pressure for farmland is reducing the size of these areas.



RESOURCES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION



We offer a list of websites for you to search for additional information about the Peace Corps and Togo, connect you to returned Volunteers and other invitees, and to start working on/reviewing French language. Please keep in mind that links change. We have tried to make sure all these links are active and current, but we cannot guarantee it.

A note of caution: As you surf these sites, please remember that you will find bulletin boards and chat rooms in which people are free to give opinions and advice based on their own experiences. The opinions expressed are not those of the Peace Corps or the United States government. You can also connect with returned Volunteers who may be able to share very useful information about their experiences. As you read these comments, we hope you will keep in mind that no two people experience their service in the same way.

General Information About the Country

www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations or www.lonelyplanet.com/worldguide

Visit these sites to learn all you need to know about any country in the world.

www.state.gov

This is the website for the U.S. State Department. There you can find information about Togo and learn more about its social and political history.

www.allafrica.com/togo

This site provides up-to-date information on political and sporting events in Togo. AllAfrica aggregates and indexes content from over 125 African news organizations, plus more than 200 other sources, who are responsible for their own reporting and views.

www.un.org/Pubs/CyberSchoolBus/

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

www.worldinformation.com

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

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

Website for CIA factbook

Additional websites of interest:**Togo news sites such as:**

<http://www.ufctogo.com/sommaire.php3> (in French)

<http://www.togoforum.com/> (in French)

<http://www.icilome.com/> (in French)

<http://www.republicoftogo.com/fr/home.asp> (in French)

<http://www.letogolais.com/> (in French)

<http://www.togoglobe.com/> (in English)

<http://www.diastode.org> (in English and French)

<http://www.graphicmaps.com/webimage/countrys/africa/tg.htm>
(maps and facts about Togo in English)

<http://www.africafocus.org/country/togo.php> (in English)

http://www.togo-tourisme.com/eng/togo_welcome.html

Connect With Returned Volunteers and Other Invitees at:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/peacecorps2/>

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

www.rpcv.org

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

Or skip straight to the Friends of Togo site:

www.friendsoftogo.org

[Http://peacecorpsonline.org](http://peacecorpsonline.org)

This site is an independent news forum serving Returned Peace Corps Volunteers. It includes an RPCV directory organized by country of service.

www.peacecorpswriters.org

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

Togo-L List Serve

Togo-L is an electronic mail discussion list sponsored by the Friends of Togo, Inc., a nonprofit educational and service organization created in 1981. To subscribe, send an e-mail message to: listserv@listserv.AOL.com

Leave the “Subject” area blank (if your e-mail software requires something, put anything you like, or just x). In the body of the message area, write: SUBSCRIBE Togo-L “your name.”

Insert your first and last names in place of “your name” (without quotation marks).

You will be requested to confirm your subscription by replying to a confirmation request message with the simple message “OK”—(without quotation marks). If you have difficulty subscribing, contact the Togo-L list owner at the following e-mail address: Togo-L-request@AOL.com

French Language Websites

It is a good idea to practice French as much as possible before your departure. Local language instruction will be extremely important when you begin your training in-country, and it can only begin when your French level is sufficiently advanced. The following free websites may be useful:

French Language Guide with Sound:

<http://www.languageguide.org/francais/>

Several links to BBC online courses with video clips:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/languages/french/index.shtml>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/languages/french/lj/>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/languages/french/experience/>

Basic French Grammar Site (no sound):

<http://www.jump-gate.com/languages/french/>

wordPROF, French Vocabulary Online (including interactive scenes):

<http://www.wordprof.com/>

French Tutorial:

<http://www.frenchtutorial.com>

ARTFL French-English and English-French Dictionaries:

http://humanities.uchicago.edu/orgs/ARTFL/forms_unrest/FR-ENG.html

A Wealth of Links to Resources on Francophone Africa:

<http://www.hum.port.ac.uk/slas/francophone/frac-in0.htm>

Recommended Books:

1. Decalo, Samuel. *Historical Dictionary of Togo*. 3rd Edition. Metuchen, NJ, Scarecrow Press. 1996.
2. *Foreign Economic Trends and Their Implications: Togo*. Latest Edition. Washington, DC, Dept. of Commerce, International Trade Administration.
3. Kourouma, Ahmadou. *Waiting for the Vote of the Wild Animals*. University Press of Virginia. 2001 (Translated from French).
4. Lewis, Tom and Jungman, Robert. *On Being Foreign: Culture Shock in Short Fiction*. Intercultural Press. 1986
5. Naipaul, V.S. *A Bend in the River*. Vintage; Reissue edition. 1989
6. Newton, Alex. *West Africa, A Travel Survival Kit*. Alex Newton. Berkeley, CA, Lonely Planet. 1988.
7. Piot, Charles. *Remotely Global: Village Modernity in West Africa*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

Books About the History of the Peace Corps

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

Books on the Volunteer Experience

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

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



LIVING CONDITIONS AND VOLUNTEER LIFESTYLE



Communications

Mail

The postal system in Togo is good by regional standards. However, it is nowhere near as efficient as the U.S. postal system. In general, letters will take 2 to 5 weeks to arrive, sometimes longer depending on a myriad of influences as diverse as seasonal slowdowns to Paris airport strikes. Packages will take longer; large packages sent surface mail have been known to take 6 months to a year to arrive. You should tell family and friends to send only small packages under 5 pounds and always to use airmail. There are import duties levied on packages arriving in Togo based on the stated value of the contents. A well-insured package, while more likely to arrive intact, will cost you much more on this end and is not the best option. It is not unheard of to receive packages already opened and with items missing or damaged.

There is a regular weekly Express Mail Service (EMS) between the Peace Corps Office in Lomé and several mail points throughout Togo for Volunteers. Besides EMS, Volunteers in some cities have their own post office boxes, individually, or as a group.

During your pre-service training and throughout your service you may receive letters and packages at the following address:

PCT / PCV "your name"
Corps de la Paix
B.P. 3194
Lomé, Togo
West Africa

Telephones

Togo has a good communications system compared to neighboring countries. A telephone system links all the regional and district capitals, and these lines are fairly reliable (except during the rainy season when breakdowns do happen). The telephone systems in Lomé and within other urban areas are reliable, and there is work in progress to double the capacity of these systems.

Peace Corps Volunteers can easily communicate via telephone with their families. This does not mean that you will have a telephone available at your site, but all regional capitals offer good phone service to the U.S. Phone continues to improve as more and more “cabines” set up shop throughout the country. Volunteers generally arrange in advance to receive phone calls from people in the United States, which makes it much less expensive than calling the United States from Togo. Volunteers are not permitted to make personal calls from the Peace Corps office in Lomé, but they may receive calls there. Collect calls, or calls to 1-800 numbers, cannot be made from Togo to the United States. There is a five-hour time difference between Togo and the U.S. East Coast (four during Daylight Savings Time).

Cell phone reception is expanding through Togo and most Volunteers end up buying cell phones while serving in Togo. However, owning a cell phone is not required by Peace Corps and can sometimes be expensive on a Volunteer allowance. Furthermore, there is no guarantee of cell phone reception at individual Volunteer sites.

There are fax lines linking Togo with other countries all over the world. Lomé has most of the fax capability, but some regional capitals have fax lines as well.

Computer, Internet, and E-mail Access

Internet service providers operate in Togo and Internet cafés are becoming more readily available all over the country.

Internet phone availability provides a cheaper option than landlines. Internet connections may be slow and prices vary.

Housing and Site Location

Volunteers in Togo are provided housing as part of the community's contribution to their work. Most Togo Volunteers live in villages in a two or three-room house, most likely in a compound with a Togolese family. Some Volunteer houses have tin roofs; a few have straw roofs. It is unlikely that you will have running water or electricity although they are more common in larger city posts. Water sources in villages can be traditional wells, bore-holes equipped with pumps, cisterns, and natural water sources—in some cases, rivers. Whatever your source of drinking water, you will have to treat it before use.

Living Allowance and Money Management

As a Volunteer, you receive a monthly living allowance sufficient to live at a modest level in your community. You will also receive a settling-in allowance to defray the initial costs of setting up a household. Both allowances are paid in local currency. The living allowance is deposited into Volunteers' bank accounts on a quarterly basis, which means that you have to manage your money well to avoid running out before the end of the quarter. Many Volunteers' bank accounts are in one of the five regional capitals, which means that you will normally take at least one trip to the regional capital each month. It is inadvisable to keep large sums of money at home.

Food and Diet

Your diet will consist of locally grown foods or a combination of local and imported tinned foods. A typical Togolese meal is a carbohydrate base (rice, yams, *pâte* (boiled corn meal or flour) or *fufu* (pounded white yams), accompanied by a variety of hot, spicy sauces. Rice and beans, usually eaten at breakfast, is another common meal. Meat is available throughout Togo but it is expensive; fresh fish is only available in larger towns.

Fruits and vegetables are seasonal, occasionally making it difficult for vegetarians to adhere to a sound diet, especially in the more remote areas. Some Volunteers plant vegetable gardens to supplement their diet. If not, you can find most of your food in the nearest cities or weekly markets. Smaller villages often provide only basic food supplies. You may need to travel to larger towns for vegetables and specific items, especially during dry season.

Transportation

Togo's main national highway runs the length of the country. Most of the road is in good condition, but some parts are in poor repair. There are several other sections of paved road, some in good condition, others not. Most of the local roads in Togo are sand or dirt—very dusty in the dry season, very muddy in the rainy season.

When traveling around the country, you will use varying types of transportation. Lomé has many private taxis. Taxis also travel frequently between Lomé and the larger towns in the interior. This taxi travel tends to be fairly irregular and uncomfortable, but always interesting. You will be given an all-terrain bicycle and helmet for your transportation needs at your site. Failure to wear a helmet can result in administrative separation from the Peace Corps.

Use of motorcycles by Peace Corps Volunteers is generally prohibited. However, there is a new transportation policy in Togo, allowing a few specific Volunteers in isolated posts to ride as passengers on motorcycles while traveling to their sites. These Volunteers must wear motorcycle helmets, provided by Peace Corps. More details on this policy will be provided upon arrival in Togo.

Distance from the villages to the prefectural and regional capitals could be anywhere from 10 to 60 kilometers. While some Volunteers like biking these distances, others prefer taking local public transportation, such as bush taxis, to the nearest mail point, bank, or shopping location. There is a regular weekly Express Mail Service (EMS) between Lomé and several mail points throughout Togo for Volunteers. Besides EMS, Volunteers in some cities have their own post office boxes, individually, or as a group.

The bottom line, and unfortunately the reality of life in Togo, is that travel is inherently more risky here than what one would experience using public transportation in the United States. Peace Corps Volunteers find that their bikes are sufficient for most work-related travel. In addition, Volunteers are clustered so that most are within a bike ride of another Volunteer. It is usually necessary, however, to use local transport (e.g., bush taxis) when traveling long distances. By and large, the vehicles (usually mini-buses or Toyota station wagons) are old and poorly maintained, and it is unlikely that many of the drivers will win safe-driving awards anytime soon!

Peace Corps/Togo provides a shuttle bus service, the Lomé Limo, that runs from the north of the country to the capital and back once a month. Peace Corps encourages Volunteers to limit transport via bush taxi. When it is necessary to use bush taxis, you are encouraged to select what appears to be the safest vehicle available and to go with drivers whose

driving habits are known and reasonable. When you find yourself in what you consider an unsafe situation (e.g., a driver traveling too fast despite having been asked to slow down), you should demand to be let out of the vehicle immediately. The best strategy, however, is to minimize travel via public transport and to avoid all nighttime travel.

Geography and Climate

Togo is a small country on the West African Coast. Only 50 kilometers wide in sections, it stretches 600 kilometers inland from the Gulf of Guinea to the savanna of Burkina Faso in the north. Situated between Ghana to the west and Benin to the east, it is roughly the size of West Virginia. Togo supports a diverse population of nearly 5 million and has more than 40 ethnic groups and languages.

Togo's geography is mainly savanna-like, although some areas in the center of the country are fairly hilly. The rainy season lasts from June to September in the North and from May to October in the South. The rest of the year is dry and dominated by dry harmattan winds coming off the Sahara. Temperatures range from the seventies and eighties in the south, to the eighties and nineties in the north. In the months before the rains, the temperatures can be higher, reaching the low hundreds in the north.

Social Activities

Togolese are extremely social, and most social activities center around community events. Various ceremonies and fêtes are held throughout the year and Volunteer attendance is always well appreciated. In addition, Volunteers get together on different occasions, even if it is just for a regional meeting. Your social life will be as busy as you care to make it.

Professionalism, Dress, and Behavior

Togolese, like people everywhere, will make judgments about you in terms of how you act and how you dress. Dress in the West African context is a sign of respect and professionalism – one shows respect for colleagues by how they dress. While appropriate dress and behavior will be discussed during pre-service training, you will also take your cues from your colleagues once you are at your site. Togolese business attire—at least outside Lomé—tends to be more casual than in the United States. You will find, however, that your Togolese counterparts are invariably well groomed and wear pressed, clean clothing. Tight, form-fitting clothing for women or clothing exposing the stomach, back, or shoulders is almost never appropriate. The same is true for shorts for both men and women during professional meetings, be they in your village or in the regional capital.

Personal Safety

More information about the Peace Corps' approach to safety is outlined in the Health Care and Safety chapter, but it is an important issue and cannot be over-emphasized. As stated in the Volunteer Handbook, becoming a Peace Corps Volunteer entails certain safety risks. Living and traveling in an unfamiliar environment (oftentimes alone), having a limited understanding of local language and culture, and being perceived as well-off are some of the factors that can put a Volunteer at risk. Many Volunteers experience varying degrees of unwanted attention and harassment. Petty thefts and burglaries are not uncommon, and incidents of physical and sexual assault do occur, although many Volunteers complete their 2 years of service without personal safety problems. 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 Togo. At the same time, you are expected to take responsibility for your safety and well-being.

Rewards and Frustrations

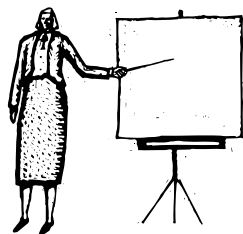
What is considered a challenge or a reward varies from person to person, but certainly you will find yourself having to adapt to a different perception of time and productivity. Female Volunteers will have to deal with the reality that Togo is very much a patriarchal society, meaning that men are generally accorded more power and respect than women simply because of their gender. You may spend a lot of the time being totally baffled as to why things are turning out as they are.

The potential rewards, however, far outweigh any challenges. You will almost inevitably find yourself part of a close-knit community unlike anything you have experienced in America. You will receive the satisfaction of being able to share your good fortune with those less fortunate and knowing that you are participating in the most pressing development issues that Togo faces: including the fight against HIV/AIDS and poverty. By the end of your 2 years of service, you will find that you have grown immeasurably and have become a citizen of the world.

NOTES



PEACE CORPS TRAINING



Overview of Pre-Service Training

Training is held in communities that are as similar as possible to the typical site for a given project. During your pre-service training, you will live with a host family. Other trainees from your program will live in the same village, but you will all have your own host family. All of your language, technical, cross-cultural and community development, and personal health and safety sessions will take place either in your host village or a neighboring community. Current Volunteers are available during PST to assist in training and to answer your questions.

Training days are long and demanding, so be prepared. Your day will start at 7:30 a.m. and continue until 5:30 p.m., with a two-hour break for lunch and other short breaks throughout the day. On Saturdays, you will have classes from 7:30 a.m. until noon. Training is an essential part of your Peace Corps service. Our goal is to give you sufficient skills and information to prepare you for living and working in Togo. Pre-service training uses an experiential approach wherever possible. Rather than reading and/or hearing about Volunteer activities, you will be practicing, processing, and evaluating actual or simulated activities.

The 11 weeks of pre-service training are divided into two phases. Phase I runs for the first six weeks and is very intensive in French language and cultural training. Additionally, there are sessions on safety and security, medical/health, and some technical training. This first phase will help you develop basic language and cultural adaptation skills.

Phase II is also very intensive, but it centers on technical training. Language classes will continue, and technical material will increasingly be presented and practiced in French. Some trainees will begin local language classes during this phase, depending on their level of French. Safety and Security training and medical/health training also continue.

During the second or third week of training, your program director will interview you about possible sites to help identify a post that is linked to your skills, interests, and needs. During the seventh or eighth week, you will spend a week at your site. This will be your first contact with your future site and will provide an idea of what real Volunteer life is like, what work options exist, and an opportunity to know more of Togo. It also gives you a break from the intense, structured regime of the pre-service training schedule.

Technical Training

Technical training prepares you to work in Togo 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, Togolese experts, and current Volunteers conduct the training program. Training places great emphasis on learning how to transfer the skills you have to the community in which you will serve as a Volunteer.

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

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

Language Training

As a Peace Corps Volunteer, you will find that language skills are the key to personal and professional satisfaction during your service. These skills are critical to your job performance, will help you integrate into your host community, and ease your personal adaptation to the new surroundings. Therefore, language training is the heart of the training program, and you must successfully meet minimum language requirements in order to complete training and become a Volunteer. Experienced Togolese language instructors teach formal language classes 5 days a week in small classes of four to five people. Language is also introduced in the health, culture, and technical components of training.

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

Cross-Cultural Training

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

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

facilitation. Topics such as community mobilization, conflict resolution, gender and development, and traditional and political structures are also addressed.

Health Training

During pre-service training, you will be given basic medical training and information. As a Volunteer, you are expected to practice preventive healthcare and to take responsibility for your own health by adhering to all medical policies. As a trainee, you are required to attend all medical sessions. The topics include preventive health measures and minor and major medical issues that Volunteers may encounter while in Togo. Sexual health and harassment, nutrition, mental health, and safety issues are also covered.

Safety Training

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

Additional Trainings During Volunteer Service

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

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

- In-Service Training (IST): Provides an opportunity for Volunteers to upgrade their technical and project development skills while sharing their experiences and reaffirming their commitment to the Peace Corps. The first IST will take place during the first three months of service. The second will occur later during the first year of service. Volunteers also attend an IST in their second year.
- Close-of-Service Conference: Prepares Volunteers for the future after Peace Corps service, and reviews Volunteers' respective projects and personal experiences.

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



YOUR HEALTH CARE AND SAFETY IN TOGO



The Peace Corps' highest priority is maintaining the health and safety of every Volunteer. Peace Corps medical programs emphasize the preventive, rather than the curative approach to disease. The Peace Corps in Togo maintains a clinic with two full-time medical officers, who take care of Volunteers' primary healthcare needs. Volunteers who become seriously ill or injured will be transported to either an appropriate medical facility in the region or to the United States.

Health Issues in Togo

Most tropical diseases are endemic in Togo, and as a Volunteer you must be prepared to learn about health hazards and to take necessary measures to protect yourself from them. Proper food and water treatment, compliance with malaria prophylaxis, good personal hygiene practices, and adherence to personal safety measures are essential to a healthy Volunteer experience. Additionally, you must be willing to adopt appropriate behaviors to protect yourself from HIV 1 and 2 and other sexually transmitted diseases, which are prevalent in Togo.

Togo's coastal areas are among the most dangerous in the world for unpredictable undertows and riptides. As such it is not advisable to swim in the waters off the coast of Togo.

Helping You Stay Healthy

The Peace Corps will provide you with all the necessary inoculations, medications, first aid supplies, and information to stay healthy. It is not necessary to start malaria prophylaxis

or get vaccinations before arriving for orientation. Upon your arrival in Togo, you will receive a medical handbook as well as a first-aid kit containing supplies to take care of mild illnesses and first-aid needs.

During training, you will receive information on various subjects such as food and water preparation and malaria, and you will have access to any additional basic first-aid supplies through the medical officer. However, during this time, you will be responsible for your own supply of prescription drugs and any other specific medical supplies you require. Please bring a three-month supply of any prescription drugs you use, since they may not be readily available in Togo and it may take several months for new shipments to arrive.

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

Maintaining Your Health

As a Volunteer, you must accept 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 medical diagnostic and treatment facilities are not up to the standards of the United States.

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

Many diseases that afflict Volunteers worldwide are entirely preventable if proper food and water precautions are taken. These diseases include food poisoning, amebiasis, giardiasis, dysentery, Guinea worm, tapeworms, other intestinal worms, and typhoid fever. Your medical officer will discuss specific standards for water and food preparation for Togo during pre-service training. It will be up to you to adhere to standards that protect your health.

Measures to prevent malaria including compliance with malaria prophylaxis, use of mosquito nets and application of insect repellent are essential to Volunteer health (these are all provided by Peace Corps). Malaria is a very serious, sometimes fatal disease. Noncompliance with malaria prevention measures can result in medical or administrative separation. You will receive more information on malaria and prevention practices during pre-service training.

Abstinence is the only certain choice for prevention of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases sexually transmitted diseases (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 your medical officer about this important issue.

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

The AIDS pandemic strikes across all social strata in many Peace Corps countries. The loss of teachers has crippled education systems, while illness and disability

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

Women's Health Information

Pregnancy is a health condition that is treated in the same manner as other Volunteer health conditions requiring medical attention, but may also have programmatic ramifications. The Peace Corps is responsible for determining the medical risk and the availability of appropriate medical care if a pregnant Volunteer remains in-country. Given the circumstances under which Volunteers live and work in Peace Corps countries, it is rare that the Peace Corps medical and programmatic standards for continued service can be met. The majority of Volunteers who become pregnant are medically separated.

The Peace Corps medical officer in Togo will provide feminine hygiene products. You don't need to bring anything with you, but if you require a specific product, bring a three-month supply with you.

Your Peace Corps Medical Kit

The Peace Corps Medical Officers provide each Volunteer with a first-aid kit that contains basic items necessary to prevent and treat illnesses that might occur during service. Kit items can be periodically restocked at the Peace Corps medical office.

First Aid Kit Contents

Ace bandage

Acetaminophen (Tylenol)

Alcohol pads

American Red Cross First Aid & Safety Handbook

Antibiotic ointment

Band-aids

Condoms

Cough drops

Dental floss

Di-Gel (or Gelusil, Maalox or Mylanta)

Diphenhydramine (Benadryl)

Eye drops

Gauze pads (to cover wounds)

Hand sanitizer

Hibiclens (to clean wounds)

Hydrocortisone creams

Ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin)

Insect repellent

Iodine pads (to clean wounds)
Iodine tablets (for emergency water purification)
Latex gloves (to avoid contact with other people's blood
and bodily fluids)
Lip balm
Malaria slide kit (for blood smears if you suspect malaria
and cannot get to the health unit; you will be taught
how to make them)
Malaria stand-by treatment
MIF kit (with vials for collecting stool samples to diagnose
giardia, amoebas, and other parasites)
Multivitamins
ORS (Oral Rehydration Solution) or Gatorade
Pepto-Bismol or Pink Bismuth
Pseudoephedrine (Sudafed)
Scissors
Sunscreen
Tape
Thermometer
Tweezers

Before You Leave: A Medical Checklist

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

If your dental exam was done more than a year ago, or if your physical exam is more than 2 years old, contact the Office of Medical Services to find out whether you need to update your records.

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

If you wish to avoid taking duplicate vaccinations, you should contact your physician's office, obtain a copy of your immunization record, bring it to your pre-departure orientation, and keep a copy with you in Togo. If you received 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 Togo. You do not need to begin taking malaria medication prior to departure, since you will begin it at your orientation.

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

There may be instances when a particular brand of birth-control pills is not available, so it may be necessary to switch brands upon arrival or during service. The Peace Corps will not pay for herbal or non-prescribed medications, such as St. John's Wort, glucosamine, Selenium, or anti-oxidant supplements.

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

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

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

Safety and Security—Our Partnership

Serving as a Volunteer overseas entails certain safety and security risks. Living and traveling in an unfamiliar environment, a limited understanding of the local language and culture, and the perception of being a wealthy American

are some of the factors that can put a Volunteer at risk. Property thefts and burglaries are not uncommon. Incidents of physical and sexual assault do occur, although almost all Volunteers complete their two years of service without serious personal safety problems. In addition, more than 84 percent of Volunteers surveyed in the 2004 Peace Corps Volunteer Survey say they would join the Peace Corps again.

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

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

Factors that Contribute to Volunteer Risk

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

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

- Location: Most crimes occurred when Volunteers were in public areas (e.g., street, park, beach, public buildings). Specifically, 43 percent of assaults took place when Volunteers were away from their sites.

- Time of day: Assaults usually took place on the weekend during the evening between 5:00 p.m. and 2:00 a.m.— with most assaults occurring around 1:00 a.m.
- Absence of others: Assaults usually occurred when the Volunteer was unaccompanied. In 82 percent of the sexual assaults the Volunteer was unaccompanied and in 55 percent of physical assaults the Volunteer was unaccompanied.
- Relationship to assailant: In most assaults, the Volunteer did not know the assailant.
- Consumption of alcohol: Forty percent of all assaults involved alcohol consumption by Volunteers and/or assailants.

Summary Strategies to Reduce Risk

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

Strategies to reduce the risk/impact of theft:

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

Strategies to reduce the risk/impact of burglary:

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

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

Strategies to reduce the risk/impact of assault:

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

Support from Staff

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

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

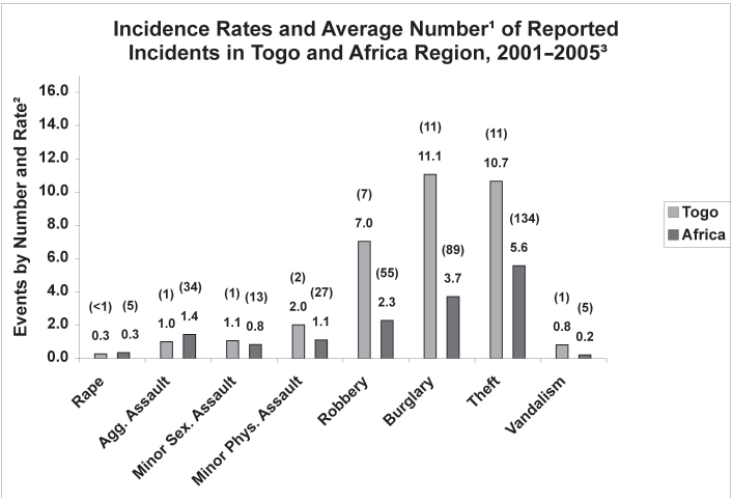
If a trainee or Volunteer is the victim of a safety incident, Peace Corps staff is prepared to provide support. All Peace Corps posts have procedures in place to respond to incidents of crime committed against Volunteers. The first priority for all posts in the aftermath of an incident is to ensure that the Volunteer is safe and receiving medical treatment as needed. After assuring the safety of the Volunteer, Peace Corps staff provide 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 Togo as compared to all other Africa region programs as a whole, from 2001–2005. It is presented to you in a somewhat technical manner for statistical accuracy.

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

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

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



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

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

³Data collection for Togo 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.

The chart is separated into eight crime categories. These include vandalism (malicious defacement or damage of property); theft (taking without force or illegal entry); burglary (forcible entry of a residence); robbery (taking something by force); minor physical assault (attacking without a weapon with minor injuries); minor sexual assault (fondling,

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

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

What If You Become a Victim of a Violent Crime?

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

Crimes that occur overseas, of course, are investigated and prosecuted by local authorities in local courts. Our role is to coordinate the investigation and evidence collection with the regional security officers (RSOs) at the U.S. embassy,

local police, and local prosecutors and others to ensure that your rights are protected to the fullest extent possible under the laws of the country. OIG investigative staff has extensive experience in criminal investigation, in working sensitively with victims, and as advocates for victims. We also, may, in certain limited circumstances, arrange for the retention of a local lawyer to assist the local public prosecutor in making the case against the individual who perpetrated the violent crime.

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

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

Security Issues in Togo

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

Staying Safe: Don't Be a Target for Crime

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

Volunteers attract a lot of attention in large cities and in their sites, but receive far more negative attention in highly populated centers where they are anonymous. In smaller towns, “family,” friends, and colleagues will look out for

them. While whistles and exclamations are fairly common on the street, this behavior can be reduced if you dress conservatively, avoid eye contact, and do not respond to such negative and unwanted attention. Other methods have helped Volunteers avoid becoming targets of unwanted attention and crime. Keep your money out of sight – use an undergarment money pouch, such as the kind that hangs around your neck and stays hidden under your shirt or inside your coat. Do not keep your money in outside pockets of backpacks, in coat pockets, or in fanny packs. You should always walk at night with a companion.

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

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

The Peace Corps Togo office will keep Volunteers informed of any issues that may impact Volunteer safety through **information sharing**. Regular updates will be provided in Volunteer newsletters and in memoranda from the Country Director. In the event of a critical situation or emergency, Volunteers will be contacted through the emergency communication network.

Volunteer Training will include sessions to prepare you for specific safety and security issues in Togo. This training will prepare you to adopt a culturally appropriate lifestyle and exercise judgment that promotes safety and reduces risk in your home, at work, and while traveling. Safety training is

offered throughout your two year service and is integrated into the language, cross-cultural, health, and other components of training.

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

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

Finally, in order to be fully responsive to the needs of Volunteers, it is imperative that Volunteers **immediately report** any security incident to the Peace Corps Safety & Security Coordinator and/or Peace Corps Medical Officer. The Peace Corps has established **protocols for addressing safety and security incidents** in a timely and appropriate manner. In addition to responding to the needs of the Volunteer, the Peace Corps collects and evaluates safety and security data to track trends and develop strategies to minimize risks to future Volunteers.

NOTES



DIVERSITY AND CROSS-CULTURAL ISSUES



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

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

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

differences that you present. We will ask you to be supportive of one another, and encourage you to share American diversity with the Togolese.

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

Historically, the Peace Corps and the Togolese people have benefited from the skills and experiences that persons from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds have offered. Volunteers from various backgrounds, all qualified ages, and both genders have served and benefited from their time in Togo. Your experiences in Togo will differ, to some degree, from every other Volunteer's, both in terms of the challenges and rewards. Togolese are, in general, wonderfully generous, warm, and hospitable people and no matter who you are, if you make the effort necessary to transcend cultural barriers, you will have a rewarding and fruitful stay in Togo.

Overview of Diversity in Togo

The Peace Corps staff in Togo recognizes adjustment issues that come with diversity and will endeavor to provide support and guidance. During pre-service training, several sessions will be facilitated by the Volunteer-initiated and led diversity committee to discuss diversity and coping mechanisms. We

look forward to having male and female Volunteers from a variety of cultures, backgrounds, religions, ethnic groups, and ages and hope that you will become part of a diverse group of Americans who will take pride in supporting each other and demonstrating the richness of American culture.

What Might A Volunteer Face?

Possible Issues for Female Volunteers

Americans working in Togo face cultural adjustments in understanding and addressing prejudices and stereotypes held about them. Unfortunately, the rather lurid films shown in Togo at the cinema and on TV, plus society's general attitude towards women in Africa, may make Togolese view female Volunteers as "loose," or "available." Togolese men may misinterpret friendly and open gestures by female Volunteers as an unintended invitation to something more serious.

Friendships with Togolese men should have clear boundaries in the beginning. Unlike in the U.S. there is less of a concept that a completely platonic relationship can exist between men and women. To be treated respectfully, female Volunteers may find that they will have to curb some of the activities they were used to in the United States. Late-night socializing with Togolese colleagues is not recommended. Neither is inviting any man into your house for any reason if you are alone. Fortunately, you can entertain male guests without giving them—or the community—the wrong idea by remaining in the family compound and ensuring that several family members or neighborhood children are with you and your guest at all times.

This may sound extreme, but it is better to play it safe, especially at the beginning of your service, rather than to be caught in a situation where a Togolese colleague is expecting

sex instead of a friendly chat when he comes to visit. It is also a very good idea to make friends with the women in your family and/or neighborhood as soon as possible. Not only will these friendships probably be immensely rewarding, but spending time with women will also prevent unwelcome or inappropriate attention from men.

Togolese men will frequently ask women to “marry” them or ask for your address. A firm “no” (no smiles, and no eye contact) is usually enough to handle this situation, even though it may have to be repeated a few times. Men will make verbal requests, but it is very rare for them to try force. Togolese respond very well to gentle humor.

Volunteer Comment

“Men invite me to meetings and listen respectfully when I speak. The chiefs of my village enjoy working with me. As a woman, I have babies thrust into my lap on transport, and I am constantly invited to do household chores that, quite frankly, are useful to know how to do. No one finds it strange when I try to work with and get to know women and children, unlike male Volunteers

However, I do get a lot of marriage proposals. Sometimes they are just a sign that men are trying to get to know me, but sometimes they can feel harassing. Learning to deal with sexual advances from Togolese men is a necessary challenge that can be overcome. Just laugh a lot and have some snappy comebacks on hand, and you’ll be fine.”

Possible Issues for Volunteers of Color

Though unconsciously, many Togolese expect that American Volunteers will be white. Peace Corps Volunteers in Togo, who are of ethnic minority backgrounds, will generally

not find overt biases. However, Togolese may make some stereotypic assumptions. For example, most Asian-American Volunteers will automatically be considered Chinese and Kung Fu experts. An African-American Volunteer may first be mistaken for a Ghanaian or Nigerian because of an Anglicized French accent, and then be regarded more as an American instead of someone with African origins. Volunteers of color may be expected to learn local languages more quickly than other Peace Corps Volunteers, may be asked what their tribal language and customs are, and could find themselves evaluated as less professionally competent than Caucasian Volunteers.

Possible Issues for Senior Volunteers

Respect comes with age in traditional Togolese society, so being a senior is generally an advantage. Volunteers in their early 20s find that they may have to make an extra effort to be accepted as professional colleagues since very often Togolese of that age are still pursuing their education. Younger Volunteers must work for acceptance and respect since respect in traditional Togolese society is associated with age. In contrast, every wrinkle and every gray hair earns respect for the experience and wisdom they represent.

Volunteer Comment

“As a senior Volunteer serving in Peace Corps/Togo, I find that Togolese tend to treat me with the respect and courtesy that they would offer any other Americans coming to serve in their country. The challenge I face as a senior Volunteer is that I am in an organization made up of primarily twentysomethings, some of whom are looking for a replacement parent. The most important piece of equipment you should bring into your Peace Corps service is a sense of who you are as a person. Though the Peace

Corps has years of experience in supporting Volunteers, whether you are in your village or among other Volunteers, you have to rely upon your own inner-resources as well to draw upon for support.”

Possible Issues for Gay, Lesbian, or Bisexual Volunteers

Homosexuality is not publicly discussed or acknowledged in Togolese society. Since acceptance in the rural community is part and parcel to a successful Peace Corps experience in Togo, Volunteers with alternative sexual orientations generally choose not to openly discuss their sexual orientation in their villages. Gay and lesbian Volunteers have however, successfully and safely worked in Togo.

Volunteer Comment

“As a Peace Corps Volunteer, along with all the feelings of community and belonging, you will probably, from time to time, experience feelings of loneliness, being out of place, and being something of an oddity. If you are gay, lesbian, or bisexual, chances are you’re no stranger to being made to feel this way. Unfortunately, those feelings can be intensified here.

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

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

Possible Religious Issues for Volunteers

There are three major religions in Togo: Christianity, Islam and Animism. People with different religious backgrounds than these three may have difficulty practicing their religion. Being perceived as having no religion at all may not be understood.

Volunteer Comment

"Christianity and Islam are heavily imbued with traditional African religious practices. Christianity in Togo is very different than Christianity in America. There is an intensely evangelical component here that can lead to some uncomfortable situations for anyone who is not a practicing Christian. As a Jew, I have repeatedly encountered strangers who have actively and assertively tried to convert me to Christianity. Usually, they get frustrated

and tell me that they will pray for my soul and go on their way. Muslims, however, tend to be far more tolerant of Americans' religious backgrounds and choices. Neither I nor anyone I know has ever been intensely pressured to start practicing Islam. Overall, I have found that most Togolese I've met have shown nothing more than curiosity, respect, or ignorance of other major religions. I would advise any new Volunteer in Togo to bring religious stuff: prayer books, crucifixes, candlesticks, and meditation materials. Even if you have been lapsed in your religious practices for years, you'd be surprised at how homesick you can become for the signs and symbols of the culture you know. You'll also be surprised at how connected a few murmured prayers or hymns will make you feel to the people you love whom are thousands of miles away."

Possible Issues for Volunteers with Disabilities

Togolese are very direct and physical disabilities are likely to be pointed out in not very sensitive ways. It should be noted however, that there is no judgment attached to the comments. It is rather a case of stating the obvious. Transportation in Togo is difficult and would be more so for someone with a physical disability. While there are good medical facilities in the capital, up-country medical care is generally substandard by American values.

For the most part, public facilities in Togo are unequipped to accommodate persons with disabilities. However, as part of the medical clearance process, the Office of Medical Services determined that you were physically and emotionally capable, with or without reasonable accommodation, to perform a full tour of Volunteer service in Togo without unreasonable risk of harm to yourself or interruption of your service.

The Peace Corps Togo staff will work with any disabled Volunteers to make reasonable accommodations for them in training, housing, job sites, or other areas to enable them to serve safely and effectively.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



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

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

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

What is the electric current in Togo?

Togo is on a 220-volt system as is found throughout much of Europe.

How much money should I bring?

Volunteers are expected to live at the same level as the people in their community. They are given a settling-in allowance and a monthly living allowance, which should cover their expenses. Often Volunteers wish to bring additional money for vacation travel to other countries. This can be stored safely in the Peace Corps office. Credit cards and traveler's checks are difficult to use in Togo. ATM machines are available only in Lomé. If you choose to bring extra money, plan on bringing the amount that suits your own personal travel plans and

needs. American bills can be exchanged in banks or on the street, although you should be cautious of street vendors who may attempt to take advantage of you.

When can I take vacation and have people visit me?

Each Volunteer accrues two vacation days per month of service (excluding training). Leave may not be taken during training, the first three months of service, or the last three months of service, except in conjunction with an authorized emergency leave. Family and friends are welcome to visit you after pre-service training and the first 3 months of service as long as their stay does not interfere with your work. Extended stays at your site are not encouraged and may require permission from your country director. The Peace Corps is not able to provide your visitors with visa or travel assistance.

Will my belongings be covered by insurance?

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

Volunteers should not ship or take valuable items overseas. Jewelry, watches, radios, cameras, and expensive appliances are subject to loss, theft, and breakage, and in many places, satisfactory maintenance and repair services are not available.

Do I need an international driver's license?

Volunteers in Togo do not need to get an international driver's license. Operation of privately owned vehicles is prohibited. Most urban travel is by bus or taxi. Rural travel ranges from buses to mini-buses to trucks to a lot of walking.

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

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

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

Peace Corps trainees are not assigned to individual sites until about one third of the way through pre-service training. This gives the Peace Corps staff the opportunity to assess each trainee's technical and language skills prior to assigning sites. You will have the opportunity to provide input on your site preferences, including geographical location, distance from other Volunteers, or living conditions. However, keep in mind that many factors influence the site selection process and that the Peace Corps cannot guarantee placement where you might ideally like to be. Most Volunteers will live in small towns or in rural villages, but will usually be within 1 hour from the nearest Volunteer. Some sites will require a 10 to 12 hour drive from the capital. There will usually be at least one Volunteer based in each of the regional capitals, and occasionally a Volunteer or two in the capital city.

How can my family contact me in an emergency?

The Peace Corps' Office of Special Services provides assistance in handling emergencies affecting trainees and Volunteers or their families. Before leaving the United States, you should instruct your family to notify the Office of Special Services immediately if an emergency arises, such as a serious illness or death of a family member. During normal business hours, the number for the Office of Special Services is 1.800.424.8580, 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 your country desk staff at the Peace Corps by calling 1.800.424.8580, extension 2326 or 2327.

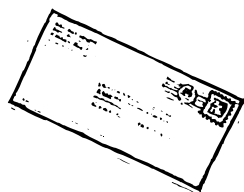
Will there be e-mail and Internet access? Should I bring my computer?

Email and internet services are available in all the regional capitals as well as some of the larger towns. Given that it is impossible to say at this point if you will be assigned to a village without electricity or a town with electricity—and given the high value of a computer—it is probably better at this point to leave your computer behind.

NOTES



WELCOME LETTERS FROM TOGO VOLUNTEERS



Congratulations on your invitation and welcome to Peace Corps Togo! I am a girls' education and empowerment (GEE) program Volunteer posted in Avetonou, a small village located 90 minutes north of Lomé. I recently completed 11 weeks of "stage" (pre-service training). This pre-service training was challenging, though certainly worthwhile and enlightening. My fellow trainees and I persevered and grew to become a family that represented the eclectic nature of the United States. The Peace Corps training staff is a phenomenal group of Togolese professionals. They are incredibly knowledgeable, kind, encouraging and open-minded.

The GEE program works to enhance the educational opportunities and self-confidence of young girls and women in Togo. I also hope my work will sensitize young boys and men about gender equity and social welfare. Togo is a beautiful country and is populated with magnificent citizens who are eager to learn from you, too!

The Peace Corps is a fantastic opportunity for independent, disciplined Americans to utilize their knowledge, skills, and creativity to sustain the well-being of developing communities. It is inevitable that you will experience culture shock, illness and fatigue; however, your enthusiasm will sustain your passion and your loyalty to uphold the goals and objectives of your respective program. Likewise, you will learn a lot about yourself, and you will attain greater physical, emotional and intellectual capacities.

Du courage et ça va aller!

—Nicole Fischer

Félicitations! So, you've made the big decision to come to Togo. One thing I will never, ever forget is the group of smiling and laughing Volunteers who greeted us as soon as we set foot in Togo. It was then that I knew I would never be alone while in service.

However, it's not all smiles and laughter. Pre-service training will present you with innumerable challenges of all sorts, from getting used to your latrine to learning how to admit you have NO IDEA how to wash clothes by hand. And that's all outside of everyday classroom challenges. It's like Led Zeppelin once said ... "good times, bad times, you know I've had my share ..."

And boy, those good times will be plentiful. The exhilaration I have felt with life in Togo consists of a series of moments that have left me speechless: riding my bike at sunset through the dusty mountains, night trips outside to brush my teeth where the stars shone so brightly they felt close enough to touch, sharing a laugh with host family members without needing a common language, waking up and realizing I had made a HOME for myself in this foreign place. And that moment will arrive for everyone at the most unexpected time. Just "trust the process," as they say here. Togo will be yours, it will be what you make of it, and no two days will be the same. *Bon voyage*, and we'll be waiting for you on the other side of the Atlantic!

Ex Africa Semper Aliquid Novi (Always something new out of Africa —Pliny the Elder)

-- Laraine Martin

.....

Soyez les bienvenues!

How are you? And your health? And your family? And your house? And the children? And the work? And the fatigue of yesterday? And the party? Did you sleep well? Have good dreams?

These are the greetings you will receive and give, in many different languages, upwards of 10, 20 times a day. Welcome

to Togo. Before you know it, you'll be responding in your own special mixture of French, English and local language, a process that renders you completely incomprehensible to anyone in the States. And none of that strikes me as odd.

Every so often, it occurs to me how quickly I have acclimated to a situation that, to many in the United States, is more than a bit bizarre. Whether crammed into bush taxis, having conversations entirely in Konkomba, or eating nothing but yams for days at a time, my first few months as a Volunteer could be portrayed as enough to make my already concerned parents book me on the first plane home. But it is not the disparity in my situation that is the focus of my time here. Rather, I am consistently amazed by the small acts of kindness and acceptance from my village, the generosity and loyalty of Volunteers, and my increasing ability to wrangle with a surly cab driver in French. (Soon, hopefully, entirely in local language!)

It is said that this is the hardest job you'll ever love. In my short first few months I have been working on bringing clean, safe drinking water to villages in my region, writing grants with the European Development Fund, harvesting cotton with my villagers, planting tree nurseries, improving cook stoves, and the list goes on. I have seen my nearest Volunteers train an entire region to more effectively combat forced marriages and fill a once empty building with books, creating a new library. And these are just the big projects. The interaction that occurs on a daily basis between Togolese and Americans can be frustrating, but is often heartening and always educational.

That is not to say that every day here is sweetness and light; at times it can be trying to one's sanity. But there are overwhelmingly more good days than bad and I've never once regretted my decision to come to Togo.

So brace yourself, hold your nose, take a deep breath, and jump. Nothing I can write can adequately prepare you for life here; it's just something you have to experience. But I can say that there are more than 100 Volunteers and many

more Togolese, ready and waiting to welcome you, help you acclimate and make sure that your time here is everything you hope it could be and more.

Nous vous attendons avec impatience. So what are you waiting for?!?

Du courage!

—Sarah Cummings

.....

Emotions are just barely under the surface sometimes, just waiting for the pebble to fall, the ripples and waves revealing them.

I was at my kitchen table writing a letter to my sister to thank her for the photos of her summer back home. I looked out the window and saw Prosper and Lydia, and tears welled up in my eyes. Prosper (12 years old) and Lydia (3 years old) have become family in the year that we've been posted in Kaboli. Prosper was carrying basins of water on his head back and forth from the well in our courtyard, filling his family's water barrel. Wanting to be helpful, little Lydia—dark-skinned and wearing only six or seven strings of brightly colored yellow and red beads around her waist, as usual, carried a yellow plastic cup on her head, back and forth, following her brother.

And it was just then that I realized that in a little more than a year, if they make it (or we do), we'll be saying goodbye and we will never see them again. Not likely, anyway. Lydia, seeing me staring out the window, shouts, "*Bon jour Istamana* (she cannot say my name yet)! *Ca va tres bien?! And I cannot say what I want to say: "Non, ca ne va pas! Pas du tout!"* And I cannot explain why, not without tears. And I cannot cry in front of you both. And you know why? Because you will laugh—not at me, not at my tears, but because that's how you're taught to deal with pain. You laugh. And so, I cannot tell you how much you've meant to me, and that you've grown and shown me. I can't tell you how much I'll miss you—your screaming and crying at five in the morning, with the sun

just touching the morning sky; your yellow beads, such sharp contrast to your dark skin; your silly-looking lazy eye; your infectious laugh; and your simple, honest greeting whenever I come home, as if I've been gone for weeks and not just for a few minutes for a trip to the market. So, no, "*ça ne va pas*".

But she's three years old and she has no thoughts of goodbye, thoughts of a year from now. So, I answer, "*Oui, merci, ça va très bien, mieux que tu puisses imaginer!*"

There'll be time enough for all that other stuff later.

—Istvan Rozanich

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So, you're coming to Togo. I remember being so anxious to find out where I was going and then realizing once I received my welcome packet that I still had very little understanding of where I was going and what I would be doing. Hopefully this doesn't bother you too much because these questions remain largely unanswered for quite a while, even after arriving here. They always say everyone's experience is different and so it is hard to describe what you should expect. This is very true. However, it doesn't hurt to let you know what a fellow small business advisor (SBD) Volunteer, like myself, is doing.

I live in Kpele-Ele, a large-ish village of (roughly) a few thousand people. At the time of writing this letter I have been there for five months. So far I have mainly just been getting settled into the village and my home. My home is a four-room house with a fenced-in porch. I have electricity but not running water. It's quite nice really. Better than the mud hut I had expected.

For all intents and purposes, I am the first SBD Volunteer here. That means that I didn't inherit any projects. So far I have been getting to know the villagers and what their needs and assets are. I have started a savings group of market women, which is currently my main project. We have been working to establish rules and systems for internal savings and

micro-credit. I also take trips to neighboring villages to talk to

people about the importance of savings and different savings methods.

At the local high school I am trying to start a program on small business development/domestic economics as well as an income-generating garden project to help the most disadvantaged kids pay their school fees. But, like I said, these are just plans. I started teaching at the English Club at the high school just to try to get to know the kids, but this wasn't really high on my SBD priority list, so I am gradually passing off this responsibility.

And then of course there's the HIV/AIDS awareness that is everyone's responsibility. For this I have participated in AIDS Ride, a week-long event in which several groups of Volunteers travel out to more remote villages to give presentations on HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention. This was an amazing experience that I highly recommend. I also just talk to villagers on a one-on-one basis as they come to me.

So, that's the work aspect. I would like to say that when I first arrived, I came thinking that I was here to work; that the capacity-building aspect of the three Peace Corps goals was definitely the most important and that cultural exchange was just a nice perk of the job. In actuality, cultural exchange and integration is a prerequisite to work. My advice is to start out slowly, make friends, learn the rhythm of life here, and only then will you be able to get really involved with your work.

See you soon!

—Nancy Irvine

.....

Welcome to Peace Corps/Togo.

I have just completed my first year as a health Volunteer here in this village far into the bush. At this moment, I am sitting in front of my small house facing my small garden enjoying this golden afternoon bathed in harmattan dust. There is no "typical day" here as other Volunteers can attest to. Sometimes my days consist of teaching health classes at the middle school then meeting with the student peer educators. I most enjoy working with this group of young

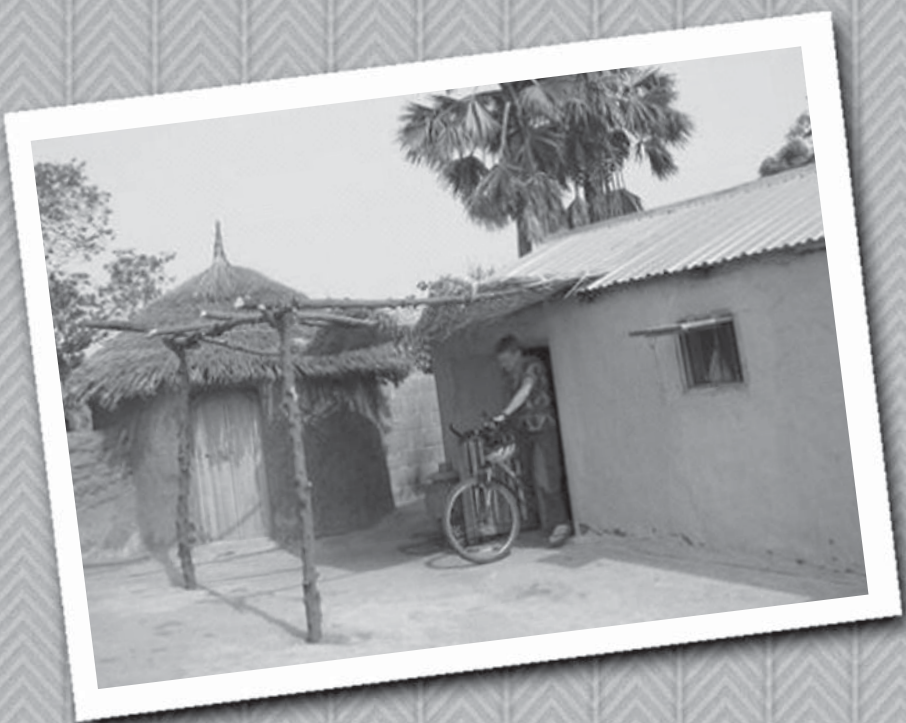
people because they have such hunger for learning. They raise interesting questions and points on topics ranging from AIDS, teen sex, public health, education, gender roles in their society and, most importantly, their future and what they could do to better their lives. They don't know how much I learn from them and how much I have come to share their hopes and fears.

There's also a women's club in my village that I work with. I recently collaborated with a natural resource management (NRM) Volunteer who taught the women how to conserve tomatoes and make natural pesticides.

Some days, I bike out into the surrounding farms and villages to help the *infirmier* at our local dispensary weigh and vaccinate infants, then sometimes hold sessions with the villagers on proper nutrition, family planning and AIDS. AIDS education never ... There will always be new questions and new issues that need to be discussed. Some days, I head out to the fields and even when the farmers do not let me work, much less carry a hoe, I still enjoy the time I spend learning their agricultural methods and observing the men and women work side by side the earth that is the crux of their existence. Some days, I just hang out with friends at *tchouk* stands (where sometimes impromptu sessions on AIDS or family planning occur) or at their houses for meals.

So, welcome to this world that will surely change a part, if not a big part, of you...

—Joan Marshall



PACKING LIST



General Clothing

There are many very good tailors in Togo, and most Volunteers have clothing made in country. The tailors can copy what you already have or follow a picture or sketch. Material, cloth and tailoring are relatively inexpensive. Remember that anything you bring with you will get worn, dirty, and will not come back the same. If you have a favorite style of shirt, pants, skirt or dress, bring it along as it can be easily copied. There are also used clothing markets (like our thrift stores) where you can find almost anything.

Bring cotton as opposed to synthetics as the latter do not “breathe” in hot weather.

Women

- A large supply of underwear and bras. They wear out quickly and take a beating when they are washed. Cotton is best (Bring at least one dozen pairs of underwear. Also, underwire bras are harder to wash.)
- Cotton dresses and/or skirts, knee length or longer. Loose cotton dresses can be cooler than a skirt and blouse. (Try to keep in mind that you may want to ride a bike wearing it!)
- Hair bands and barettes
- Loose fitting cotton tops and t-shirts (nothing too revealing or cropped). Try to stay away from white. It gets dirty fast!
- Tank tops for hot days. (Remember that cultural norms are much more conservative than those in the U.S.. You may only wear tank tops while hanging out in your house)

- One or two pairs of jeans (they are hot, but useful). Khakis and/or cotton pants, capris (ankle length or shorter) are better.
- Cotton socks for jogging or sports (and keeping away mosquitoes). No nylons.
- Shorts (for around the house and sports) and long (knee length) walking shorts. (2 or 3 pairs)
- Cotton bandannas (2 or 3) (Traveling can be dusty).
- A few nice outfits for those two or three special occasions in your village or when visiting regional capitals (nothing heavy, hot, or too revealing).

Men

- Jeans (one or two pairs). They can also be purchased cheaply in Togo at used clothing stores.
- Cotton/khaki pants (two pair). You can have pants made here.
- “Zip-off” pants/shorts. (easy to wash)
- Cotton shirts. You can have shirts made here.
- Cotton underwear, up to two dozen pairs. (Boxers or boxer briefs are recommended because they allow more air circulation, and fungus can be a problem.)
- One tie, nice shirt, and pants. Cotton socks for jogging or sports and for keeping mosquitoes away. (If you’re athletic, bring more.
- Bermuda shorts (two or three pair).
- Baseball cap or bandannas.

Men and Women

- One pair of good sandals like Tevas, Reefs, or Chacos. These are good for mud, water, biking and walking.
- Sneakers/running shoes (especially if you exercise).
- One pair of nice shoes or sandals.
- Windbreaker or rain slicker or umbrella

- Light weight fleece sweatshirt or long-sleeve shirt for occasional cool evening.
- Day pack for shopping; larger backpack for traveling.
- Rain poncho, folding umbrella.
- Bathing suit.
- Catalogs or pictures of clothing you may want copied.

General use items

- Luggage that is tough and flexible such as duffel bags and backpacks without frames plus luggage locks. Have something that will carry your belongings for a week-long trip.
- Money belt or pouch that can be concealed under clothing or worn on the waist to carry money and other valuables.
- U.S. toiletry items (including shampoo, hair conditioner, facial creams, and toners) are available here, but they are expensive. It is a good idea to bring at least a three-month supply to get you through training. Women may want to bring some makeup for special occasions.
- Deodorant, especially if you prefer roll-on or stick.
- A reliable watch plus batteries. (Water resistant sports watches with washable bands are best.)
- A reliable alarm clock (battery-operated), or a watch with an alarm.
- Swiss Army knife or equivalent (i.e., Leatherman tool).
- Small sewing kit and safety pins.
- A favorite hat with wide brim for protection from the sun
- Sunglasses with UV protection
- Camera (35 mm compacts are best since they are inconspicuous and travel well). Bring a good case for protection from sun and dust.

- Photographic film is expensive, so bring a lot (135/126 print film can be developed here, but not slides; Advantix film is available in Lomé).
- Digital Cameras are also quite handy. Digital photos can be stored on computers available to Volunteers. (Get largest memory card you can)
- Digital “thumb drive”. Very useful for transporting digital files between computers. (Remember to bring the “drivers”, or any necessary software.)
- Flashlight (or two) with extra bulbs (you can also buy flashlights in Togo).
- Batteries. If you plan on bringing rechargeable batteries be sure that your charger will run on 220 volt current, or is multi-voltage. (Solar chargers get mixed reviews from Volunteers)
- U.S. stamps. You can often have letters mailed in the United States by people traveling there from Lomé.
- A small pillow
- Plastic water bottle for traveling. *Nalgene* preferred
- Pillowcases and one flat bed sheet. Bring at least one set from home as you will need them right away.
- Hammock (optional).
- Compact, quick drying pack towels. You can buy regular towels in the market.
- Good scissors and nail clippers
- Colored markers, crayons, and construction paper. For making visual aids and playing with kids. These items are available in Togo, but expensive.
- Journal. (paperback style journals are available in Togo)
- Writing paper (small supply, just to get started. There is plenty available in Togo).
- Pens. (Bring plenty; the ones here do not last long.)
- Duct tape/packing tape. (highly recommended)

- Pictures of home. Your Togolese friends will be very interested in seeing what your “former life” was like.
- Maps of the United States and the world.
- Mini office supplies (stapler, hole punch, white out, post it notes, sticky tac.
- Reading light (headlamp style lights work very well as reading lights!)
- Calendar/ day planner
- Seeds for personal garden (flowers or vegetables – remember the climate is tropical!)

Entertainment

- Shortwave radio or satellite receiver. Stations such as BBC, Voice of America, and Radio France International can be received with a moderate quality short wave radio.
- Walkman/cassette tape player/hand-held recorder/i-POD or MP3 player and favorite tapes/CDs plus extra blank tapes and portable speakers.
- Hobby items such as sketch book, sewing/ crochet needles, paints sticky tax for hanging pictures and maps.
- Surge protector/voltage converter for any expensive electronics such as laptop computer, iPod, or mp3 player.
- Games, such as Scrabble, chess, UNO and Frisbee. Ordinary playing cards abound.
- Frisbee, soccer ball, hackey sac, etc.
- Musical instruments—guitar, harmonica (bring extra guitar strings).
- One or two books. There are many books in English in the Peace Corps Office library and the libraries at the regional transit houses. We are, however, short on current bestsellers and books (in English) by African authors.

Kitchen

- Ziploc bags. At least one box of various sizes.
- High quality dish towels (1 or 2, they are available here)

All of the items below can be purchased in Lome at relatively competitive (to the U.S.) prices.

- Plastic food storage containers, a good can opener, small teflon pan, and other kitchen tools for baking (spatula, bake pans, measuring cups).
- Your favorite spices or sauce packets. Local markets may have bay leaves, chili peppers, garlic, anise, and peppercorns. Other spices such as curry, oregano, etc., can be bought in Lomé. Seasoning packets for pasta are highly recommended, as are cinnamon and burrito/taco spices.
- Garlic press.
- Powdered drinks such as Kool-Aid or Crystal Lite. (The Med Unit provides Gatorade.) You can find sweetened powdered drink mixes in Togo.

Medical

- Contact lens solution; two-year supply
- **If you take prescription medicine, bring a three-month supply.**
- Eyeglasses (two pairs).
- Sting Eze/Bite Relief. You will want a lot of this.

Words of wisdom from current Volunteers and staff:

All of the items on the packing list are recommended but not required. Almost anything you would truly need is available here in Togo. Everyday items are nearly the same price, or cheaper than the U.S. Electronics or computer related equipment will be 50 percent to 100 percent more expensive here compared to the U.S. You may want to consider bringing some extra cash and lightening your luggage in the process.



PRE-DEPARTURE CHECKLIST



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

Family

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

Passport/Travel

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

Medical/Health

- ☐ Complete any needed dental and medical work.
- ☐ If you wear glasses, bring two pairs, and consider bringing prescription sunglasses.
- ☐ Arrange to bring a six-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 health care during Peace Corps service overseas, it is advisable for people who have preexisting conditions to arrange for the continuation of their supplemental health coverage. If there is a lapse in coverage it is often difficult and expensive to be reinstated.)
- ☐ Arrange to continue Medicare coverage if applicable.

Personal Papers

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

Voting

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

Personal Effects

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

Financial Management

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



CONTACTING PEACE CORPS HEADQUARTERS



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

Peace Corps Headquarters

Toll-free Number:

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

Peace Corps' Mailing Address:

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

For Questions About:	Staff	Toll-free Extension	Direct/ Local Number
Responding to an Invitation	Office of Placement Africa Region	Ext. 1850	202.692.1850
Programming or Country Information	TBA Desk Officer	Ext. 2327	202.692.2327
	Jennifer Brown Desk Assistant E-mail: jbrown@ peacecorps.gov	Ext. 2326	202.692.2326

For Questions About:	Staff	Toll-free Extension	Direct/ Local Number
Plane Tickets, Passports, Visas, or Other Travel Matters	Travel Officer (Sato Travel)	Ext. 1170	202.692.1170
Legal Clearance	Office of Placement	Ext. 1845	202.692.1845
Medical Clearance and Forms Processing (including dental)	Screening Nurse	Ext. 1500	202.692.1500
Medical Reimbursements	Handled by a Subcontractor		800.818.8772
Loan Deferments, Taxes, Readjustment Allowance Withdrawals, Power of Attorney	Volunteer Financial Operations	Ext. 1770	202.692.1770
Staging (Pre-departure Orientation) and Reporting Instructions <i>Note: You will receive comprehensive information (hotel and flight arrangements) three to five weeks before departure. This information is not available sooner.</i>	Office of Staging	Ext. 1865	202.692.865
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

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