

THE PEACE CORPS WELCOMES YOU TO

BURKINA FASO



A PEACE CORPS PUBLICATION
FOR NEW VOLUNTEERS



May 2008

A WELCOME LETTER

Congratulations on your invitation to join the Peace Corps in Burkina Faso. My own Peace Corps service in Morocco was a long time ago, but I clearly remember the excitement, anticipation, and nervousness that I felt when preparing to head overseas for two years. I hope the materials you have received in your invitation packet will help you decide whether accepting a Peace Corps assignment in Burkina Faso is the right choice for you.

Living and working as a Volunteer in Burkina Faso is an experience that will likely transform you in more ways than you can possibly imagine. Peace Corps service here will, in all likelihood, include times of frustration, boredom, discomfort, loneliness, and self-doubt. However, if you are like the vast majority of Volunteers who have served in Burkina Faso, you will have an overwhelmingly positive experience.

You will make a small but substantive contribution to Burkina Faso's development while becoming adept at working effectively in a completely new culture. You will learn to speak one or more new languages, make lifelong friends, and become recognized as a significant resource in the eyes of the people in your new community. When you finally leave here at the end of your service, it will most assuredly be with a sense of pride and achievement and a much better understanding of the world, coupled with the sadness of leaving behind a place that will have positively impacted your life in so many ways.

You are no doubt aware that Burkina Faso is a poor, hot, landlocked country with some of the world's poorest socioeconomic indicators. Do not be fooled into thinking, however, that your service here will consist of two years of sweaty deprivation among people who have little to offer the outside world. What you may not know, but will soon discover, is that despite poverty and difficult living conditions, the people of Burkina Faso (the Burkinabé) are proud, dignified, enterprising, optimistic, tolerant, and hospitable.

You will be amazed by the cultural diversity and richness of Burkina Faso. Foreigners — Africans, Europeans, Americans, and Asians — all find Burkina Faso a pleasant place to live and work because the Burkinabé are such wonderful people.

The Peace Corps program in Burkina Faso is designed to meet real needs in the areas of education, health, and small enterprise

development. The government is very appreciative of Peace Corps Volunteers and the work that they do at the grassroots level to address these needs.

Lack of electricity and running water, learning a new language, and a harsh climate are things that most Volunteers in Burkina Faso adapt to very quickly. The biggest challenges for many relate to isolation.

I encourage you to think hard about the challenges and rewards as you consider your invitation to Burkina Faso. As you consider the possibility of being a part of this program, keep in mind that you are making a 27-month commitment not only to Peace Corps, but to Burkina Faso and to the community that will be your new home.

You will find that pre-service training is intense and effective. I strongly encourage you to take care of any “loose ends” in the U.S. before coming so you are able to fully focus on preparing for your Peace Corps experience once you arrive in Burkina.

Many Volunteers in Burkina Faso find that they really need to speak two languages to live and work effectively — French and one of the local languages (Mooré, Jula, Fulfulde, Gourmantchema, etc.). Pre-service training puts a lot of emphasis on language-learning, but it’s not easy to learn two languages at the same time, so you’ll be glad for all the French that you can learn before you arrive! That way, you will be able to learn more local language during training and be better able to talk to your neighbors when you arrive in your new community after swearing-in. Consider taking a class, reviewing old class notes, identifying someone to practice with, finding a course on the Internet, etc. You won’t regret it!

In addition to working on your French, you should begin to prepare yourself by learning more about Burkina Faso and its people and by reading the Peace Corps Volunteer Handbook, as well as the information in this Welcome Book.

While the Peace Corps staff will do our very best to train and support you, the quality of your Peace Corps experience is largely in your hands. I know the recruitment process has been long and at times arduous but, as a result, we have every confidence that you will be successful.

We look forward to seeing you in Burkina Faso!

Sincerely,

Douglass Teschner
Country Director

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PEACE CORPS/BURKINA FASO HISTORY AND PROGRAMS



History of the Peace Corps in Burkina Faso

The Peace Corps entered Burkina Faso, then called Upper Volta, in 1966 and operated there uninterrupted for 21 years. Major projects included forestry extension, young farmer education, small enterprise development, secondary education (math, science, and English language), water well construction, agricultural and environmental extension, arts and crafts, basketball coaching, and parks development. In June 1986, the government of Burkina Faso asked the Peace Corps to cease sending Volunteers because the Peace Corps' programs no longer coincided with Burkina Faso's development goals. The 30 Volunteers in the country completed their service in 1987. In 1995, 19 trainees arrived in Burkina Faso as part of a newly established health project. One year later, the Peace Corps established a secondary education project in response to the government's urgent request for teachers. In 2003, in response to government initiatives and articulated local needs, a small enterprise development project began with 15 trainees. A girls' education project started in 2005. Currently, nearly 107 Volunteers work throughout the country, primarily in rural areas. Approximately 1,550 Peace Corps Volunteers have served in Burkina Faso to date.

History and Future of Peace Corps Programming in Burkina Faso

Peace Corps/Burkina Faso currently works in the areas of health, small enterprise development, secondary education, and girls' education and empowerment.

Health Volunteers are assigned to the Ministry of Health and work in small rural communities at Health and Social Promotion Centers (*Centres de Santé et de Promotion Sociale*) that provide treatment and preventive services to the inhabitants of five to ten surrounding villages. Health Volunteers' primary responsibilities are to assist in the establishment, training, and operation of a health management committee (*comité de gestion*) and to assist in a community health needs assessment. In addition, they help plan, conduct, and evaluate health promotion programs to address priority problems in the community.

Volunteers working in the secondary education sector are assigned to the Ministry of Higher Education to work in underserved middle and high schools as math and science teachers. Teachers in Burkina Faso typically have large classes, sometimes with more than 100 students, and are expected to teach up to 25 hours per week. In 2008 a new component of the education project will include ICT education at the secondary education level. PCVs will work with students and teachers to develop their computer skills. In addition to classroom work, education Volunteers work in secondary projects during school breaks, in collaboration with their communities and schools. One of the most popular of these secondary projects is running camps that focus on promoting girls' education and empowerment.

In 2003, Peace Corps/Burkina Faso, in collaboration with the Ministries of Commerce and Tourism, initiated a small enterprise development project. Volunteers work with entrepreneurs, cooperatives, and organizations to improve business practices associated with agribusiness, artisans' businesses, and micro-credit institutions.

In 2005, Peace Corps/Burkina Faso introduced a girls' education and empowerment project. Volunteers in this project work with schools and communities to promote formal

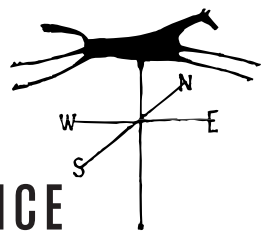
and informal education for girls. They help communities understand the importance of educating girls and work to develop and implement strategies to increase their chances of success in school. This may include girls' clubs, training in life skills, mentoring activities, and other creative projects.

All Peace Corps Volunteers in Burkina Faso, whether working in health, small enterprise development, or education, are involved in HIV/AIDS education.

HIV/AIDS is definitely present in Burkina Faso, but it is not one of the countries most affected. However, 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 you can continue to be of service to your community.



COUNTRY OVERVIEW: BURKINA FASO AT A GLANCE



History

Most of the area known today as Burkina Faso was once dominated by the Mossi people, who established their empire around 1500. In 1897, France imposed its rule over the people of Burkina Faso, but it was not until 1947 that the French colony of Haute Volta (Upper Volta) was created. Full independence from the French came on August 5, 1960, with Maurice Yaméogo as the nation's first president.

Four of the six presidents after Yaméogo came into power through military coups. Thomas Sankara, who, after a coup, led the country from August 1983 until his death on October 15, 1987, was arguably the most influential of Burkina Faso's presidents. Sankara's charismatic leadership style, which emphasized self-sufficiency and a lean and efficient government that transferred wealth from urban centers to rural areas, was popular with citizens and created a sense of hope in the country. In 1984, the country's name was changed from Upper Volta to Burkina Faso: "Country of the Upright/Honorable People."

The current president, Blaise Compaore, has been in power since Sankara's death. Compaore was the only candidate in an election held after four years of military rule, and he was sworn-in as president of the fourth republic on December 24, 1991. Compaore has won the last two presidential elections, held in 1998 and 2005, by wide margins.

Government

Burkina Faso is an independent republic with a unicameral National Assembly of 111 members (called deputies) who serve five-year terms. Political and constitutional reforms have moved Burkina Faso incrementally toward democratization. In 1991, a new constitution was passed through a referendum, laying the foundation of the fourth republic.

Economy

Burkina Faso has few natural resources, and 90 percent of its population engages mainly in subsistence agriculture (producing peanuts, sesame, cotton, sorghum, millet, corn, rice, and livestock). Agricultural production is limited and risky because of poor soils and cyclical droughts. A significant portion of the labor force migrates annually to neighboring coastal countries, in search of unskilled employment. Due to an ongoing conflict and unrest in Côte d'Ivoire during the last eight years, however, that number has diminished. Burkina Faso is landlocked, which drives up the price of imports and is a significant obstacle to maintaining the competitiveness of exports. The primary exports — cotton and livestock — are subject to major price and yield fluctuations as a result of agricultural production conditions, in the case of cotton and livestock, and global market prices, in the case of gold. These factors, combined with a relatively undeveloped infrastructure, have contributed to Burkina Faso's classification as one of the poorest countries in the world (with a per capita gross domestic product of \$1,213). The country ranked 176 out of 177 in the 2007/2008 United Nations Human Development Index.

People and Culture

The population of Burkina Faso is approximately 13.7 million, with an annual growth rate of about 2.8 percent. Sharing borders with six countries, Burkina Faso is composed of a rich mix of people representing over 60 language or ethnic groups. The major groups include the Mossi (48 percent), Fulani (10 percent), Mande (7 percent), Lobi-Dagari (7 percent), Bobo (7 percent), and Senufo (6 percent). Islam is practiced by about 50 percent of the population; Christianity (Roman Catholicism and Protestantism) by about 20 percent; and indigenous beliefs, which continue to play a major role in the lives of many Burkinabé regardless of their religious orientation, by approximately 30 percent.

The Burkinabé are known for their tolerance and acceptance of ethnic and religious diversity. While Islam is practiced by a significant portion of the population, religious fundamentalism is rare. In addition, it is very common to find Christians, Muslims, and animists in the same family participating in one another's religious celebrations, and marriage across ethnic lines is widely accepted.

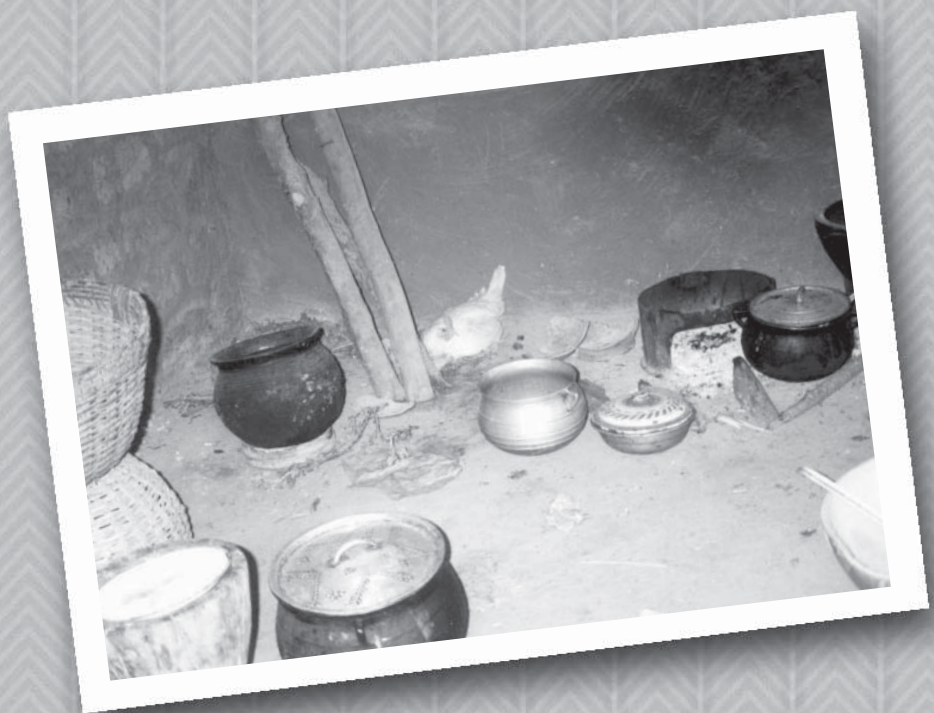
The Pan-African Film and Television Festival of Ouagadougou (FESPACO) and the International Arts and Crafts Show of Ouagadougou (SIAO) are two major events that highlight Burkina Faso's role as a country devoted to cultivating the arts. Artists and art connoisseurs from all over the world come to Ouagadougou for these events, injecting the society with new levels of creative talent.

The people of Burkina Faso are the country's greatest resource. Despite their poverty, they remain dignified, extremely hardworking, and very welcoming to foreigners. Peace Corps Volunteers could not find a more hospitable group of people to work with than the Burkinabé.

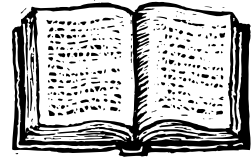
Environment

Burkina Faso, a landlocked country that sits on the edge of the Sahel, is mostly flat with undulating plains. It has an area of 105,869 square miles, slightly larger than Colorado. It is bordered on the north by the Sahelian countries of Mali and Niger and on the south by Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo, and Benin. While the north is mainly desert, the southern and central regions are forested. There are two distinct seasons in Burkina Faso: the rainy season from June to October and the dry season from November to May. The climate is warm and dry from November to March, hot and dry from March to May, and warm and wet during the rainy season. Temperatures range from a cool and dry 50 degrees Fahrenheit (10°C) in November to a humid 104 degrees Fahrenheit (40°C) before the rains begin in June. Average rainfall ranges from approximately 40 inches in the south to less than 10 inches in the north.

NOTES



RESOURCES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION



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

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

General Information About Burkina Faso

www.lonelyplanet.com

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

www.state.gov

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

www.worldinformation.com

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

Connect With Returned Volunteers and Other Invitees

www.rpcv.org

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

<http://www.rpcvwebring.org>

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

www.peacecorpswriters.org

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

Online Articles/Current News Sites About Burkina Faso

www.primature.gov.bf

The website of the government of Burkina Faso (in French)

www.fespaco.bf

The website of the Pan-African Film and Television Festival of Ouagadougou (in French or English), which takes place in Burkina Faso every two years

www.sas.upenn.edu/African_Studies/Country_Specific/Burkina.html

Burkina Faso page from the University of Pennsylvania's African Studies Center, with links to other sites of interest

www-sul.stanford.edu/depts/ssrg/africa/burkina.html

A Stanford University-based site on the region with links to a variety of other sites

www.uiowa.edu/~africart/

Site for the Art and Life in Africa Project of the University of Iowa, set up by returned Burkina Faso Volunteer Chris Roy, a professor of art history and specialist on Voltaic masks

www.allafrica.com

The site of AllAfrica Global Media, a news and information service

International Development Sites

www.unaids.org

Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS

www.unicef.org

UNICEF

www.who.int/en/

World Health Organization

www.pnud.bf

United Nations Development Programme (in French)

Recommended Books

1. Erdman, Sarah. *Nine Hills to Nambonkaha: Two Years in the Heart of an African Village*. Henry Holt and Company.
2. Chilson, Peter. *Riding the Demon: On the Road in West Africa*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1999.
3. Else, David, et al. *West Africa*. Oakland, Calif.: Lonely Planet, 1999.
3. Englebert, Pierre. *Burkina Faso: Unsteady Statehood in West Africa*. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1995.
4. Guirma, Frederic. *Tales of Mogho: African Stories from Upper Volta*. New York: Macmillan, 1971.
5. Rupley, Lawrence, and Daniel Miles McFarland. *Historical Dictionary of Burkina Faso (2nd ed.)*. Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 1998.
6. Knight, James, and Katrina Manson. *Burkina Faso: The Bradt Travel Guide*. Bradt Travel Guides, 2006.

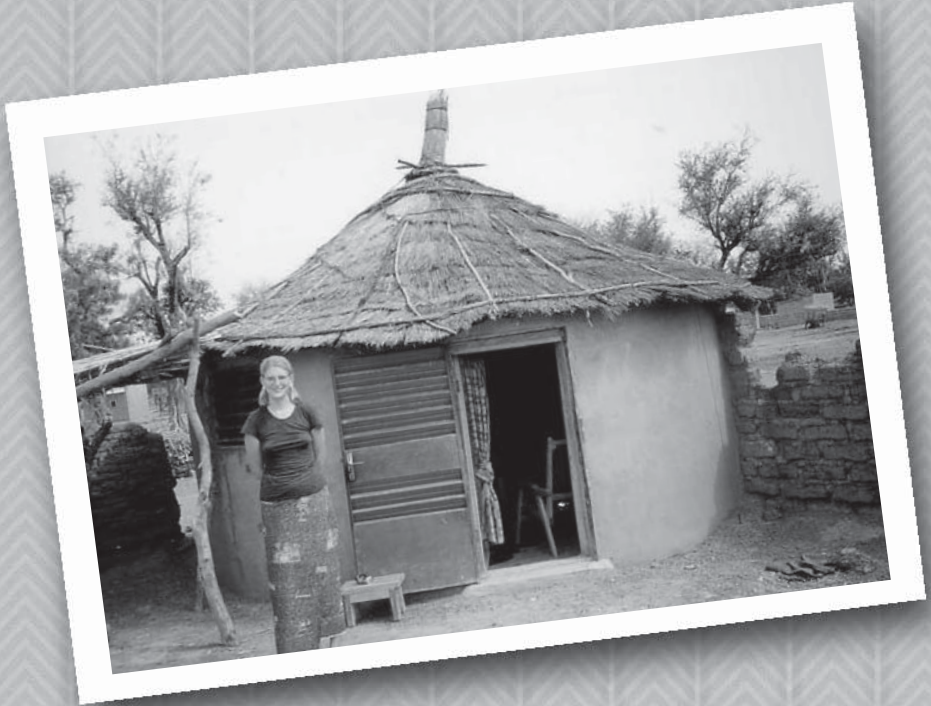
Books About the History of the Peace Corps

1. Hoffman, Elizabeth Cobbs. *All You Need is Love: The Peace Corps and the Spirit of the 1960's*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000.
2. Rice, Gerald T. *The Bold Experiment: JFK's Peace Corps*. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985.

3. Stossel, Scott. *Sarge: The Life and Times of Sargent Shriver*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2004.

Books on the Volunteer Experience

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



LIVING CONDITIONS AND VOLUNTEER LIFESTYLE



Communications

Despite Burkina Faso's relatively good communications systems, you should be prepared for a significant reduction in the frequency and reliability of your communications with friends and family. It is important to begin to prepare yourself, as well as your family and friends, for the realities of lengthy delays between letters, the lack of nearby telephones, and uncertain access to e-mail.

Mail

The postal system in Burkina Faso is reliable by African standards. Few Volunteers report problems with receiving letters and packages sent from the United States by airmail. Airmail letters and packages typically take three to four weeks to arrive, but can take longer if there are mail strikes or other disruptions. Please share this information with family and friends; it will spare them many frustrations about delayed packages. Surface mail is not currently available from the United States to Burkina Faso (and even when it was, it took six months or longer). Internal mail service is, for the most part, reliable, and mail is delivered within a reasonable amount of time (a few days to two weeks from one part of the country to another). Essential documents are best sent via a courier service such as DHL. Please note, however, that items sent via courier service, such as DHL, or packages sent via the post will incur customs fees, which will need to be paid on the Burkina side before receiving the package. These customs fees may run anywhere between the equivalent of \$1 (for a small package through the post) to \$100 (for a valuable/large package through DHL). Peace Corps will usually pay these fees up front and deduct the fees from your living allowance.

You can choose to receive mail at the Peace Corps office or at your site. Most Volunteers obtain a local post box once they know their assignment. During pre-service training, you will receive mail in care of the Peace Corps office, which will forward mail to the training site once a week.

Your address during training will be:

“Your Name,” PCT
S/c Corps de la Paix
01 B.P. 6031
Ouagadougou 01, Burkina Faso

Telephones

Telephone service in Burkina Faso, like the postal system, is relatively reliable. A number of Volunteers have access to phone service at their sites through land-line phones at telecenters (essentially expanded versions of the telephone booth, providing phone and perhaps fax services). Cellphone service is expanding rapidly and most Volunteer sites are now covered. Those Volunteers without phone coverage at site usually have access at least two times a month when they go to town for shopping, banking, etc.

Volunteers are not permitted to use the telephones at the Peace Corps office in Burkina Faso to call family or friends unless the call pertains to an emergency and is approved in advance by the country director.

Computer, Internet, and E-mail Access

Use and ownership of computers in Burkina Faso are rapidly expanding, but are still limited to better-funded government offices and wealthy individuals and companies. There are a growing number of private and governmental Internet service providers in the larger towns and cities.

Housing and Site Location

Your community or the government ministry to which you are assigned will provide you with safe and adequate housing in accordance with the Peace Corps' site selection criteria. The majority of health Volunteers live in small rural villages, while education and small enterprise development Volunteers tend to live in larger villages and towns. Volunteer housing is typically a small house made of mud or cement bricks with a thatch or tin roof. Many Volunteers do not have running water or electricity; they draw their water from a well and obtain light through kerosene lanterns. Nearly all Volunteers are within a couple hours of a neighboring Volunteer and able to reach the Peace Corps office in Ouagadougou by public transport within a day.

Living Allowance and Money Management

Peace Corps/Burkina Faso covers the cost of Volunteers' basic living and professional expenses, including a vacation allowance equivalent to \$24 a month (paid in local currency). The Peace Corps opens a checking account for each Volunteer that can be accessed at several post offices around the country.

The current living allowance is approximately \$240 per month. The Peace Corps also gives Volunteers a quarterly allowance for work-related travel of approximately \$60. All of these allowances are paid in the local currency, the CFA franc.

The amount of the living allowance is based on an annual survey of Volunteers' financial needs. Most Volunteers report they have no trouble living comfortably on this allowance, which even provides for occasional "nights on the town." Because you are expected to live at the level of your host country counterparts,

the Peace Corps discourages you from bringing extra money or receiving money from home to spend in-country.

If the Peace Corps asks you to travel, you will be given additional money for transportation and meals. The amount is established by the administrative officer based on the cost of transportation and lodging.

Food and Diet

Your drinking water is likely to be of poor quality and thus will require boiling and filtering (the Peace Corps will provide you with filters). The variety of fruits and vegetables is somewhat limited, with only one fruit or vegetable often available during any given season. Burkina Faso produces some of the best mangoes and papayas in the world, but they are seasonal. Garlic, onions, tomatoes, and a local variety of eggplant are available year-round in many locations. Other fruits and vegetables grown in the country, depending on the season and location, include oranges, grapefruits, bananas, carrots, cabbages, potatoes, beets, lettuce, and cucumbers.

Burkinabé meals are simple. A typical dish consists of a staple food like rice, millet, yams, sorghum, or maize served with a sauce made from okra, various greens (e.g., spinach), tomatoes, or peanuts. Sauces may contain fish or meat. French bread is available in larger towns and villages.

Transportation

Paved roads connect the largest towns and cities in Burkina Faso, and fairly well-maintained buses service these routes on a regular schedule. Smaller towns and villages are served by “bush taxis” — typically overcrowded and poorly

maintained minibuses that do not run on a fixed schedule. Most Volunteers do not live near paved roads, preventing daily access to motorized transportation out of their villages.

All Volunteers are issued basic mountain bikes and bicycle helmets for work purposes. For safety reasons, Peace Corps/ Burkina Faso prohibits Volunteers from driving or riding on any two- or three-wheeled motorized vehicles (such as a motorcycle) except in a life-threatening emergency. Some Volunteers receive special authorization to ride as a passenger on a motorbike when necessary for work purposes. Please note that Volunteers are not allowed to own or drive any type of motorized vehicle in Burkina Faso.

Geography and Climate

Burkina Faso is slightly larger than Colorado. Its topography has little variation, consisting mainly of grassland with sparse forests. Many of the ecosystems found in West Africa are represented in Burkina Faso, from the forest zone in the south to savannah in the midlands to the Sahara Desert in the north. Burkina Faso is generally greener in the south because of its higher annual precipitation. The combination of population pressures and prolonged dry cycles has contributed to widespread environmental degradation, as indicated by declining vegetation cover, soil fertility, and land productivity.

There is a rainy season from June to October, when most staple crops are grown, and a long dry season from November through May. The harmattan winds blowing off the Sahara last from November through March, a period characterized by dry, dusty conditions. Temperatures range from a cool and dry 50 degrees Fahrenheit (10°C) in November to a humid 104 degrees Fahrenheit (40°C) before the rains begin in June.

Social Activities

Social activities will vary according to where you are located. They might include relaxing and talking with friends and neighbors, going to the market, or taking part in local festivals. The cultural diversity of Burkina Faso means that there is always something of interest taking place nearby that you can learn from, be it drumming and dancing or planting peanuts. Many Volunteers meet periodically in regional market towns to share ideas and experiences. But in keeping with its goal of cross-cultural exchange, the Peace Corps expects Volunteers to establish social networks with Burkinabé friends and colleagues at their sites rather than seek out other Volunteers for social activities. Such networks enhance Volunteers' ability to be effective in their work.

Professionalism, Dress, and Behavior

One of the biggest challenges faced by Volunteers in Burkina Faso is defining their role as professionals in the Burkinabé context while maintaining a sense of their own work ethic and cultural identity. The tendency of Burkinabé counterparts to blur (from a Western perspective) the distinction between professional and personal time and space adds another layer of complexity to the challenge of establishing oneself as a professional in this context. Cultivating work relationships is not something that happens only during work hours; behavior and activities outside the work setting will have an impact on your professional relationships.

The Burkinabé, like many other Africans, put a great deal of emphasis upon dressing well in public, whether at work, in the market, or at a night spot. It is almost unheard of, for example, for a Burkinabé man or woman to wear shorts in public unless he or she is taking part in some kind of sporting

event. Nor would a professional man or woman ever be seen wearing dirty, disheveled, wrinkled, or torn clothing. Volunteers need to be aware of other unwritten rules of the culture, such as the fact that Burkinabé women never go to a bar on their own. Exposed body piercing on men and women, and long hair on men, may elicit stares and, possibly, rude questions or comments, so they are not advisable. Serving in the Peace Corps often requires sacrificing personal preferences regarding dress and behavior. There will be ample discussion of this subject during cross-cultural sessions in pre-service training.

Personal Safety

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

Rewards and Frustrations

Although the potential for job satisfaction in Burkina Faso is quite high, like all Volunteers, you will encounter frustrations. Because of financial constraints, inefficient management, and an often contradictory incentive system, collaborating agencies may not always provide the support that has been promised. In addition, the pace of work and life is slower than that which most Americans are accustomed. For these reasons, the Peace Corps experience of adapting to a new culture and environment is often described as a series of emotional peaks and valleys.

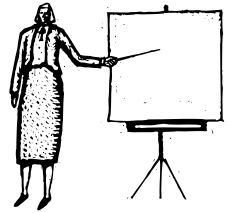
You will be given a high degree of responsibility and independence in your work — perhaps more than in any other job you have had or will have. You will often find yourself in situations that require an ability to motivate yourself and your co-workers with little guidance from supervisors. You might work for months without seeing any visible impact from, or without receiving feedback on, your work. Development anywhere in the world — including disadvantaged areas in the United States — is slow work that requires perseverance. You must possess the self-confidence, patience, and vision to continue working toward long-term goals without seeing immediate results.

To overcome these difficulties, you will need maturity, flexibility, open-mindedness, and resourcefulness. The Peace Corps staff, your Burkinabé co-workers, and fellow Volunteers will support you during times of challenge, as well as in moments of success. Judging by the experience of former Volunteers, the peaks are well worth the difficult times, and most Volunteers leave Burkina Faso feeling they have gained much more than they sacrificed during their service. If you are able to make the commitment to integrate into your community and work hard, you will be a successful Volunteer.

NOTES



PEACE CORPS TRAINING



Overview of Pre-Service Training

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

You will receive training and orientation in components of language, cross-culture, development issues, health, safety and security and technical skills pertinent to your specific assignment. Training combines some structured classroom study, independent study, and hands-on experiences. The skills you learn will serve as the foundation upon which you build your experience as a Peace Corps Volunteer.

During the first couple days of training, you will stay at a training center or hotel in the capital. After this orientation period, you will move to Ouahigouya, a regional capital north of Ouagadougou. Trainees will be placed in clusters of four to five people, along with a language and cross-culture facilitator. Health and girls' education clusters will be located in villages a short distance from Ouahigouya. Clusters of small enterprise development and secondary education trainees will most likely be based in Ouahigouya.

Trainees will be assigned to a host family with whom they will live for the duration of pre-service training. The host family experience, which Volunteers in Burkina Faso consider

one of the most critical elements of training, allows you to gain hands-on experience in some of the new skills you are expected to acquire. Although some Volunteers become a little frustrated by the constraints that may be involved in living with a family, Volunteers tell us that this experience is one of the most valuable parts of the training. Most Volunteers remain in close contact with their host families throughout their service.

At the beginning of training, the training staff will outline the goals that each trainee must achieve before becoming a Volunteer and the criteria that will be used to assess progress toward those goals. The training director, along with the language, technical, and cross-cultural trainers, will work with you toward the highest possible achievement of training goals by providing you with feedback throughout training. After successful completion of pre-service training, you will be sworn-in as a Volunteer and make final preparations to depart for your site.

Depending on your sector, your initial period of training will be either nine or 11 weeks. Those with the shorter period of pre-service training will have specific assignments to do during their first few months at site and then will attend a longer in-service training.

Technical Training

Technical training will prepare you to work in Burkina Faso 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. Peace Corps staff, Burkinabé experts, and current Volunteers will conduct the training program. Training places great emphasis on learning how to transfer the skills you have to the community in which you will serve as a Volunteer.

Technical training will include sessions on the general economic, social, and political environment in Burkina Faso and strategies for working within such a framework. You will review your technical sector's goals and will meet with the Burkinabé agencies and organizations that invited the Peace Corps to assist them. You will be supported and evaluated throughout the training to build the confidence and skills you need to undertake your project activities and be a productive member of your community.

Training will involve a number of practical, "hands-on" experiences. For education Volunteers this includes experience teaching in a model school.

Language Training

As a Peace Corps Volunteer, you will find that language skills are the key to personal and professional satisfaction during your service. These skills are critical to your job performance; they help you integrate into your host community, and they can ease your personal adaptation to the new surroundings. Therefore, language training is the heart of the training program, and you must successfully meet minimum language requirements to complete training and become a Volunteer. Experienced Burkinabé language instructors teach formal language classes five to six days a week in small groups of four to five people. Secondary education and SED trainees initially focus on French, studying a local language after they have achieved the required level of French. Health and girls' education trainees may start local language study even earlier in pre-service training.

Your language training will incorporate a community-based approach. In addition to classroom time, you will be given assignments to work on outside of the classroom and with your host family. The goal is to get you to a point of basic

social communication skills so you can practice and develop language skills further on your own. Prior to being sworn in as a Volunteer, you will work on strategies to continue language studies during your service.

Cross-Cultural Training

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

Cross-cultural and community development training will help you improve your communication skills and understand your role as a facilitator of development. You will be exposed to topics such as community mobilization, conflict resolution, gender and development, non-formal and adult education strategies, and political structures.

Health Training

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

Safety and Security Training

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

Additional Trainings During Volunteer Service

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

- *In-service training*: Provides opportunities for Volunteers to upgrade their technical, language, and project development skills while sharing their experiences and reaffirming their commitment after having served for three to six months.
- *Close-of-service conference*: Prepares Volunteers for their future after Peace Corps service and reviews their respective projects and personal experiences.

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



YOUR HEALTH CARE AND SAFETY IN BURKINA FASO



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

Health Issues in Burkina Faso

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

The most common major health concerns in Burkina Faso are malaria, amebic dysentery, hepatitis, meningitis, and HIV/AIDS. Because malaria is endemic in Burkina Faso, Volunteers are required to take anti-malarial pills. You will also be vaccinated against hepatitis A and B, meningitis A and C, tetanus and diphtheria, typhoid, and rabies.

Helping You Stay Healthy

The Peace Corps will provide you with all the necessary inoculations, medications, and information to stay healthy. Upon arrival in Burkina Faso, you will receive a medical handbook. At the end of training, you will receive a medical kit with supplies to take care of mild illnesses and first-aid needs. The contents of the kit are listed later in this chapter.

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

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

Maintaining Your Health

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

Malaria is a major health issue in most parts of Africa, including Burkina Faso. The most important step in preventing malaria and many other tropical diseases is to avoid mosquito and other insect bites. The best ways to avoid insect bites are to sleep under a mosquito net (which the Peace Corps provides), wear long sleeves and pants whenever possible, use insect repellent, and be sure there are functional screens on your windows and doors. Mosquitoes bite primarily from dusk until dawn. Since no one can entirely prevent mosquito bites, Volunteers in Burkina Faso must take anti-malarial pills; failure to do so is grounds for administrative separation from the Peace Corps.

Many diseases that afflict Volunteers worldwide are entirely preventable if proper food and water precautions are taken. These diseases include food poisoning, parasitic infections, hepatitis A, dysentery, tapeworms, and typhoid fever. The Peace Corps will provide you with water filters, and the medical officer will discuss specific standards for water and food preparation for Burkina Faso during pre-service training.

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

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

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

Women's Health Information

Pregnancy is treated in the same manner as other Volunteer health conditions that require medical attention but also have programmatic ramifications. A pregnant volunteer cannot continue service in Burkina Faso because Peace Corps medical and programmatic standards are not met.

If feminine hygiene products are not available for you to purchase on the local market, the Peace Corps medical officer in Burkina Faso will provide them. If you require a specific feminine hygiene product, please bring a six-month supply with you. Peace Corps/Burkina Faso currently supplies tampons and pads to you during the duration of your service. Some Volunteers use menstrual cups like the Diva Cup or The Keeper for their monthly cycles. Information on these products is available on their websites (www.divacup.com and www.keeper.com.)

Your Peace Corps Medical Kit

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

Medical Kit Contents

Ace bandages

Adhesive tape

American Red Cross First Aid & Safety Handbook

Antacid tablets (Tums)
Antibiotic ointment (Bacitracin/Neomycin/Polymycin B)
Antiseptic antimicrobial skin cleaner (Hibiclens)
Band-Aids
Butterfly closures
Calamine lotion
Cepacol lozenges
Condoms
Dental floss
Diphenhydramine HCL 25 mg (Benadryl)
Insect repellent stick (Cutter's)
Iodine tablets (for water purification)
Lip balm (Chapstick)
Oral rehydration salts
Oral thermometer (Fahrenheit)
Pseudoephedrine HCL 30 mg (Sudafed)
Robitussin-DM lozenges (for cough)
Scissors
Sterile gauze pads
Tetrahydrozoline eye drops (Visine)
Tinactin (antifungal cream)
Tweezers

Before You Leave: A Medical Checklist

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

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

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

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

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

Ordering medical supplies overseas can take several months. You will be dependent on your own medication supply. The Peace Corps will not pay for herbal or nonprescription medications, such as St. John's wort, glucosamine, selenium, or antioxidant supplements.

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

If you wear eyeglasses, bring two pairs with you — a pair and a spare. If a pair breaks, the Peace Corps will replace it, using the information your doctor in the United States provided

on the eyeglasses form during your examination. The Peace Corps discourages you from using contact lenses during your service to reduce your risk of developing a serious infection or other eye disease. Most Peace Corps countries do not have appropriate water and sanitation to support eye care with the use of contact lenses. The Peace Corps will not supply or replace contact lenses or associated solutions unless an ophthalmologist has recommended their use for a specific medical condition and the Peace Corps' Office of Medical Services has given approval.

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

Safety and Security—Our Partnership

Serving as a Volunteer overseas entails certain safety and security risks. Living and traveling in an unfamiliar environment, a limited understanding of the local language and culture, and the perception of being a wealthy American are some of the factors that can put a Volunteer at risk. Property thefts and burglaries are not uncommon. Incidents of physical and sexual assault do occur, although almost all Volunteers complete their two years of service without serious

personal safety problems. In addition, more than 84 percent of Volunteers surveyed in the 2004 Peace Corps Volunteer Survey say they would join the Peace Corps again.

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

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

Factors that Contribute to Volunteer Risk

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

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

- **Location**: Most crimes occurred when Volunteers were in public areas (e.g., street, park, beach, public buildings). Specifically, 43 percent of assaults took place when Volunteers were away from their sites.
- **Time of day**: Assaults usually took place on the weekend between 5:00 p.m. and 2:00 a.m.— with most assaults occurring around 1 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 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

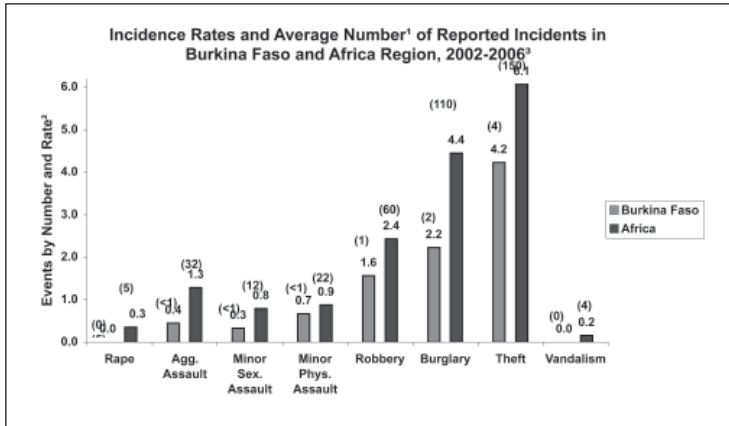
their peer Volunteers, but also to preserve the future right to prosecute. Should Volunteers decide later in the process that they want to proceed with the prosecution of their assailant, this option may no longer exist if the evidence of the event has not been preserved at the time of the incident.

The country-specific data chart below shows the incidence rates and the average number of major types of safety incidents reported by Peace Corps Volunteers/trainees in Burkina Faso as compared to all other Africa programs as a whole, from 2000–2004. It is presented to you in a somewhat technical manner for statistical accuracy.

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

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

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



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

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

³Data collection for Burkina Faso began as of 2002.

Source data on incidents are drawn from the Crime Incident Reporting Form (CIRF); Assault Notification Surveillance System (ANSS); and Epidemiologic Surveillance System (ESS). The information is accurate as of 04/16/08.

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

What if you become a victim of a violent crime?

Few Peace Corps Volunteers are victims of violent crimes. The Peace Corps will give you information and training in how to be safe. But, just as in the U.S., crime happens, and

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

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

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

In conjunction with the RSO, the OIG does a preliminary investigation of all violent crimes against Volunteers regardless of whether the crime has been reported to local authorities or of the decision you may ultimately make to prosecute. If you are a victim of a crime, our staff will work with you through final disposition of the case. OIG staff is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. We may be contacted through our 24-hour violent crime hotline via telephone at 202-692-2911, or by e-mail at violentcrimeline@peacecorps.gov.

Security Issues in Burkina Faso

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 of being a target of crime. As with anywhere in the world, crime does exist in Burkina Faso. You can reduce your risk by avoiding situations that make you feel uncomfortable and by taking precautions. Crime at the village or town level is far less frequent than in Ouagadougou and Bobo-Dioulasso; people know each other and generally will not steal from their neighbors. Following are safety concerns in Burkina Faso of which you should be aware:

Almost all security incidents in Ouagadougou involving Volunteers fall in the general category of purse or cellphone snatching or pickpocketing. You can avoid such incidents by taking taxis (Volunteers have put together a list of trusted taxi men who can be reached by phone); not carrying anything that resembles a passport pouch, fanny pack, or backpack; traveling with at least one other person; and never visiting downtown Ouagadougou on foot or alone after dark. Security incidents at the village and town level typically involve petty theft from Volunteers' houses while they are away. These

types of incidents can be minimized by establishing good relationships with your neighbors, informing people when you are going to be gone, and locking all windows and doors.

Political demonstrations that escalate into clashes between security forces and demonstrators are infrequent and are not likely to present a direct threat to Volunteers. Nonetheless, the Peace Corps advises Volunteers to stay away from demonstrations and to immediately inform Peace Corps staff when they occur.

While sexual harassment of women is quite common, sexual assault is rare. However, it is possible that during your Peace Corps service, you may become a victim of physical or sexual assault. Peace Corps worldwide has found that alcohol consumption and cross-cultural differences in gender relations are often associated with sexual assaults. Just as in the United States, you can avoid some of the risk by changes in your own behavior. You will receive a thorough briefing on strategies for dealing with harassment during training.

All Volunteers, whether homosexual or not, should be aware that being open about one's sexual preferences can present a serious security risk. Gay men, in particular, should exercise caution when confiding in others. Volunteers who are aware of the sexual orientation of gay and lesbian Volunteers should never divulge this knowledge to Burkinabé counterparts, friends, or acquaintances because this could seriously jeopardize the security and effectiveness of the gay or lesbian Volunteer.

Should you become a victim of violence the medical office will be there to help you. It is important that you involve the medical office to receive appropriate care, including care for your emotional well-being.

Staying Safe: Don't Be a Target for Crime

You must be prepared to take on a large degree of responsibility for your own safety. Only you can make yourself less of a target, ensure that your house is secure, and develop relationships in your community that will make you an unlikely victim of crime. In coming to Burkina Faso, do what you would do if you moved to a new city in the United States: Be cautious, check things out, ask questions, learn about your neighborhood, know where 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 Burkina Faso may require that you accept some restrictions on your current lifestyle.

Volunteers attract a lot of attention both in large cities and at their sites, but they are likely to receive more negative attention in highly populated centers than at their sites, where “family,” friends, and colleagues look out for them. Among the measures you can take to protect yourself are keeping your money out of sight by using an undergarment money pouch (the kind that hangs around your neck and stays hidden under your shirt); not carrying a backpack, purse, or fanny pack in downtown Ouagadougou; and never walking around downtown Ouagadougou at night — always take a taxi. You should also avoid walking at night elsewhere in the country, but if you must, be sure to go with a companion.

Preparing for the Unexpected: Safety Training and Volunteer Support in Burkina Faso

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. Peace Corps/Burkina Faso's in-country safety program is outlined below.

Information related to Volunteers' safety is gathered on an ongoing basis from Volunteers, their co-workers, the U.S. embassy, and other organizations working in Burkina Faso. The Peace Corps/Burkina Faso office will keep Volunteers informed of any issues that may impact Volunteer safety through **information sharing**. Regular updates will be provided in Volunteer newsletters and in memorandums from the country director. In the event of a critical situation or emergency, Volunteers will be contacted through the emergency communication network.

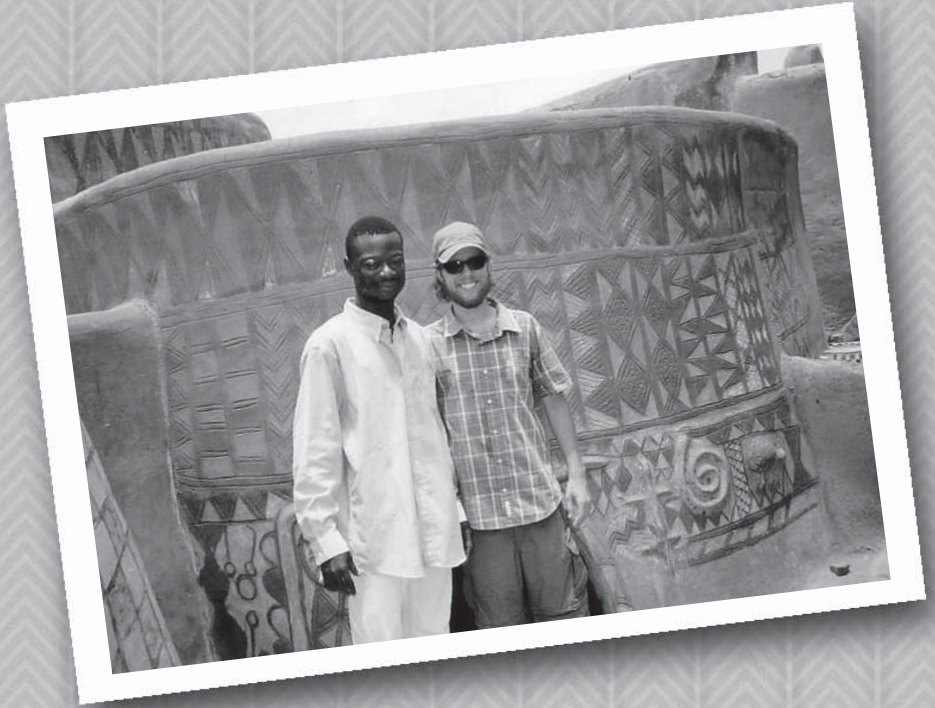
Volunteer training will include sessions to prepare you for specific safety and security issues in Burkina Faso. This training will prepare you to adopt a culturally appropriate lifestyle and exercise judgment that promotes safety and reduces risk in your home, at work, and while traveling. Safety training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

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

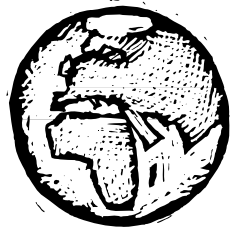
You will also learn about Peace Corps/Burkina Faso's detailed **emergency action plan**, which is implemented in the event of civil or political unrest or a natural disaster. When you arrive at your site, you will complete and submit a site locator form with your address, contact information, and a map to your house. If there is a security threat, Volunteers in Burkina Faso will gather at predetermined locations until the situation is resolved or the Peace Corps decides to evacuate. The emergency action plan can operate effectively only when the Peace Corps staff is aware of Volunteers' whereabouts. When away from your site, you must keep staff informed of your location; failure to do so may result in administrative separation from the Peace Corps.

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

NOTES



DIVERSITY AND CROSS-CULTURAL ISSUES



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

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

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

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

Overview of Diversity in Burkina Faso

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

What Might a Volunteer Face?

The Peace Corps/Burkina Faso staff is committed to providing a supportive work environment that values diversity and is always available to address any concerns.

Possible Issues for Female Volunteers

Burkina Faso has a traditional, patriarchal society. Female Volunteers may be surprised by the extent to which community and domestic roles are defined along gender lines. Men generally hold positions of authority in the workplace (though women are becoming more visible there), in the community, and in the home. This can present challenges for female Volunteers, as the work they do may be seen as a typically “male” job. The difficulties are exacerbated because single women do not usually have the status and respect that come with marriage and having children. Thus, women may find it challenging to have their ideas recognized and respected by both women and men.

Possible Issues for Volunteers of Color

Although Burkinabé society can be conservative, Volunteers generally find the Burkinabé to be hospitable and accepting of people with a wide variety of backgrounds. Nevertheless, Burkinabé may have preconceived notions of Americans based on the kind of information available in Burkina Faso about Westerners, which comes mainly from television, movies, magazines, and local news reports and often presents a limited view of American diversity. For example, Asian Americans are often called *Chinois* (Chinese), regardless of their actual background, and African-Americans may not be considered Americans.

Possible Issues for Senior Volunteers

The high regard for seniors in Burkinabé society lends support to senior Volunteers’ effectiveness at work. They, in turn, are able to find ways to use their extensive experience to assist their communities. However, seniors often comment that they feel a lack of camaraderie with other, mostly much younger, Volunteers. And the three months of pre-service training can be particularly frustrating for seniors because of the rigid

schedule, classroom setting, and issues of integration with other trainees in the group. Language learning may present an additional challenge. However, most senior Volunteers find living and working at their sites to be very rewarding.

Possible Issues for Gay, Lesbian, or Bisexual Volunteers

Given the society's conservative values, homosexuality is not likely to be tolerated by the general public in Burkina Faso. There may even be potential safety and security concerns. It is not possible to be open about your sexual orientation and maintain a positive working relationship with members of your community, and you will have to exercise extreme discretion. Other Volunteers and the Peace Corps staff will provide support, but you will find it very difficult to be open outside of that circle.

Possible Religious Issues for Volunteers

Christianity, Islam, and indigenous belief systems all are represented in Burkina Faso. You will be free to practice your own religion as long as you demonstrate respect for the religion of the people in your community and refrain from proselytizing.

Possible Issues for Volunteers With Disabilities

As a disabled Volunteer in Burkina Faso, you may find that you face a special set of challenges. In Burkina Faso, as in other parts of the world, some people may hold prejudicial attitudes about individuals with disabilities and may discriminate against them. There is very little of the infrastructure to accommodate individuals with disabilities that has been developed in the United States. As part of the medical clearance process, the Peace Corps Office of Medical Services determined that you were physically and emotionally capable, with or without reasonable accommodations, to perform a full tour of Volunteer service in Burkina Faso

without unreasonable risk of harm to yourself or interruption of your service. The Peace Corps/Burkina Faso staff will work with disabled Volunteers to make reasonable accommodations in training, housing, job sites, or other areas to enable them to serve safely and effectively.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



How much luggage am I allowed to bring to Burkina Faso?

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

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

What is the electric current in Burkina Faso?

If you have electricity at your site, and it works, the current will be 220 volts, 50 cycles. Voltage sags and surges are very common and place a real strain on power supplies and voltage transformers or regulators. The Peace Corps does not provide transformers or regulators to Volunteers. For battery-powered appliances, such as tape players and radios, we suggest "D" batteries, since these are readily available in local markets. Many Volunteers use rechargeable batteries with a solar charger, which is a good alternative to disposable batteries. There are also means to recharge your MP3 players, depending on the electrical resources in your community.

How much money should I bring?

Volunteers are expected to live at the same level as the people in their community. You will be given a settling-in allowance and a monthly living allowance, which will cover your in-country expenses and normal vacation costs. Some Volunteers wish to bring additional money for vacation travel outside the region. Credit cards and traveler's checks are preferable to cash. All banks require proof of purchase (i.e., receipts) to cash traveler's checks. If you choose to bring extra money, bring the amount that will suit your own travel plans and needs.

When can I take vacation and have people visit me?

Each Volunteer accrues two vacation days per month of service (excluding training). Leave may not be taken during training, the first three months of service, or the last three months of service, except in conjunction with an authorized emergency leave. Family and friends are welcome to visit you after pre-service training and the first three months of service as long as their stay does not interfere with your work. Visitors are discouraged from spending extended periods (more than a few weeks) in-country, and you will have to take vacation time if hosting visitors requires you to take time off from work. The Peace Corps is not able to provide your visitors with visa, medical, or travel assistance. Because an evacuation, in the event of a medical emergency, can cost more than \$25,000, all visitors should plan to buy medical evacuation insurance.

Will my belongings be covered by insurance?

Volunteers are ultimately responsible for the safekeeping of their personal belongings. The Peace Corps does not provide insurance coverage for personal effects. You are encouraged to purchase insurance if you are bringing valuable items with you. You will be provided with application forms at staging.

If you prefer, you may also contact your own insurance company. Volunteers should not ship or take valuable items overseas. Jewelry, watches, radios, cameras, and expensive appliances are subject to loss, theft, and breakage, and in many places, satisfactory maintenance and repair services are not available.

Do I need an international driver's license?

Volunteers in Burkina Faso do not need to get an international driver's license because they are prohibited from operating motorized vehicles. Most urban travel is by bus or taxi. Rural travel ranges from buses and minibuses to bicycles and a lot of walking.

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

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

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

Peace Corps trainees are not assigned to individual sites until late in pre-service training. This gives the Peace Corps staff the opportunity to assess each trainee's technical and language skills prior to assigning sites, in addition to finalizing site selections with their ministry counterparts. If feasible, you will have the opportunity to provide input on your site preferences, including distance from other Volunteers and living conditions. However, keep in mind that many factors influence the site selection process and that the Peace Corps cannot guarantee placement where you would ideally like to be. Most Volunteers live in small towns or in rural villages and

are usually within one hour from another Volunteer. Some sites require a 10- to 12-hour drive from the capital.

How can my family contact me in an emergency?

The Peace Corps' Office of Special Services provides assistance in handling emergencies affecting trainees and Volunteers or their families. Before leaving the United States, instruct your family to notify the Office of Special Services immediately if an emergency arises, such as a serious illness or death of a family member. The number for the Office of Special Services is 202-692-1470 or 1-800-424-8580, extension 1470, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. For non-emergency questions, your family can get information from your country desk staff at the Peace Corps by calling 1-800-424-8580.

Can I call home from Burkina Faso?

International phone service to and from Burkina Faso is quite good. The national telephone company, ONATEL, has offices in all of Burkina Faso's administrative towns. Calls to the United States are expensive, so most Volunteers prearrange to receive calls from home or limit calls to giving call-back information so the receiver can return the call. U.S. calling cards cannot be used in Burkina Faso at this time, and calling collect is not possible.

Should I bring a cellular phone with me?

No. They can be purchased inexpensively in Burkina Faso. Most American cellphones do not work in Burkina Faso.

Should I bring my computer?

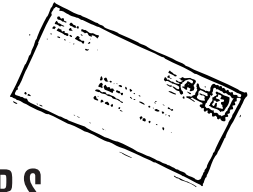
The decision whether to bring a laptop computer depends on your own needs. Among the factors to consider are that computers are not required for Volunteers' work; that the Peace Corps does not provide technical support or insurance for personal computers; you may not be assigned to a site

with electricity; and computer access is available at private Internet cafes (and, for work-related purposes, the Peace Corps office). However, most Volunteers who have brought laptops with them have been happy with their decision and have used their computers for both personal and work-related purposes.

For more information on computers, please see the memo on electronic equipment later in this document.



WELCOME LETTERS FROM BURKINA FASO VOLUNTEERS



Hello,

So you've been accepted into Peace Corps Burkina Faso. Congratulations! You're about to leave on an amazing journey. I remember when I had just received my invitation kit with the name Burkina Faso in bold letters and how I was so excited and anxious at the same time. I was worried about what to pack. How hot it was going to be? Were there going to be huge mosquitoes? I imagine you are probably going through many of the same things.

Everyone's experience coming to Burkina is so different, but I can guarantee it will be a rewarding and enjoyable one. I found most of my worries to be silly. My experience has been the most rewarding and awesome thing I've ever done. The Burkinabé people are some of the most wonderful, accepting, down-to-earth people in the world. They have made this experience so much more than I could have ever made it myself. The relationships I have formed with these people will be lifelong.

You are going through so many worries and a lot of excitement right now. You have gone through countless applications, interviews, and doctor appointments. It will be worth it. Peace Corps does a lot of great work around the world, and you are now going to be a part of it. Stay dedicated, and what you take away from this experience is going to be life-changing.

It will not be an easy experience, as I'm sure you know, or you wouldn't have signed up for it. The living conditions are much different than you are used to, but you will find that those things that seem weird to you now will soon become a reality and seem just as normal as daily Internet or electricity. Don't make too many expectations, as they will all be shattered. The way of life is slow-paced, and you will learn to slow down and enjoy the relaxing atmosphere of the culture and people here.

A lot of work has gone into bringing you to Burkina Faso. You have a staff and team of volunteers excitedly awaiting your arrival, and you will find a warm and sincere welcome from the Burkinabé people. Don't stress too much about what to pack. There is a good list being provided for you. So pack your bags, say your goodbyes, and enjoy what I guarantee will be a rewarding and exciting adventure.

— Cory Fish, Health Volunteer

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Hello and welcome to Peace Corps / Burkina Faso!

I am writing this letter in December of 2007. We are in the midst of Burkina's dry season. For the second year in a row, I am surprised by how much temperatures drop at this time. I can't speak for the whole country, but where I live (in the north), the night weather is downright cold. While preparing to leave for Burkina, one thing I never imagined doing was sleeping inside under a heavy blanket while wearing sweatpants and a long-sleeve shirt. This is just one example of the hidden rewards one discovers while living in Burkina Faso.

And the hot season? It gets hot, no doubt about it. To say otherwise would be a disservice. As in the U.S., conversations and complaints about the weather are common. Most volunteers come to recognize the futility of these exchanges and, instead, adopt unique strategies to deal with the heat. During training, current volunteers will share ideas that work for them and you will probably devise some of your own.

You and your family may also be wondering about communication. Cellphone coverage is rapidly expanding in Burkina and I can tell you cell ownership is the norm among volunteers and Burkinabé alike. For myself, I climb on top of my house for coverage and I can call my parents direct. As with cellphone coverage, Internet connections are multiplying. There may be an Internet café in your nearest town, although it will likely be unreliable and slower than what you are accustomed to.

In general, try not to worry too much about what to bring, as you may be surprised at what is available here. Some

practical advice: I found my headlamp, tent, and music to be indispensable. In terms of food: I wouldn't use the limited packing space for it; however, you might consider putting a box together and mailing it to yourself before you leave for staging. Common volunteer requests from home include granola mixes, dry fruit, powder drinks, favorite spices, and chocolate (though it will probably melt in transit). In this way, among all the changes and adjustments you will experience upon arrival, you will know some of your favorite foods are on the way.

I hope this has been helpful. Come ready to study, ready to learn, and ready to teach. Come with a spirit of adventure and openness to collaborate with Burkina Faso's most vital resource: her noble, upright people.

We'll see you soon.

— Kevin McClellan

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So you're going to be a Peace Corps Volunteer? Are you sure you have what it takes? Did you shop like mad to check off every last item on the provided list? Did you take one last adult-ed French class and pick up the latest copy of *French for Dummies*? Did you finally figure out what an aspiration statement is and send yours in? What about a resume documenting your life since birth? Check. Check. Check. Oh yeah. You're ready. Please make sure your tray table is up, your seats are in their upright and locked positions and your seatbelt is securely fastened because, ladies and gentlemen, you are about to depart on the ride of your life.

You may be struggling with the ambiguity of all this. The truth is that you and you alone will decide what your work/service entails, and you can't do that until you get here. You might raise money to build a new school. You might educate an entire village (or two or three) on what malaria is and how to help prevent it. You might learn and speak a local language fluently. You might make the best friends of your lives with Burkinabe. Any of these could feasibly be considered work and part of your job as a Peace Corps volunteer. Some volunteers

complete their entire two years only to find they have trouble explaining what exactly they've done in the American context of work. Being a Peace Corps volunteer isn't just about the measurable things you do to help another country. It's also about living and adapting to a foreign culture and at the same time sharing some of yours.

I am sorry I can't give you the answers you may have been hoping for. I could have explained my daily routine, but it would in no way reflect what yours will be. The best I can do is to leave you with the most influential advice I've received since arriving in Burkina:

1. Peace Corps is two years (not six months or one year) for a reason. Believe in the process. You need at least a year to understand life here. It's seeing and believing when you hear that everyone goes to the fields in rainy season, EVERYONE is literally in the fields in rainy season.
2. Don't sweat it if your French isn't perfect. It's a second or third language for the Burkinabe, too.
3. If it's a three-syllable word in English then it's probably the same word in French

I would wish you luck, but you don't need it. An open mind (preferably a wide open one) and perseverance is all it takes to be a great volunteer. You'll be fine. See you soon!

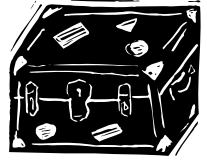
Life as you know it will never be the same during or after this experience.

— Erica Baker

NOTES



PACKING LIST



This list has been compiled by Volunteers serving in Burkina Faso and is based on their experience. Use it as an informal guide in making your own list, bearing in mind that experience is individual. There is no perfect list! You obviously cannot bring everything we mention, so consider those items that make the most sense to you personally and professionally. As you decide what to bring, keep in mind that you have an 80-pound weight limit on baggage. And remember, you can get almost everything you need in Burkina Faso.

Peace Corps Burkina Faso Packing List

Please see Electronics Guidelines below for suggestions about technology (laptops, cameras, etc.)

Clothes

- One or two pairs of jeans (no holes, nothing ratty)
- One pair of sweatpants (or other lightweight pants for sleeping) and a lightweight cotton sweatshirt/sweater
- Three or four pairs of socks (more if you like to go running)
- Four to six cotton short-sleeve shirts (preferably not all white or light colors — everything turns brown here with the dust and it's hard to beat out when you wash them by hand. Also, some Volunteers prefer non-cotton wicking shirts, but these are expensive. The tank top wicking shirts are good as a base layer, under cotton shirts)
- A pair of sturdy sandals/flip-flops (e.g., Tevas, Reefs, Rainbows or Chacos) and a pair of athletic shoes. You may want a nice pair of shoes for dressing up, but these can also be bought here. (Chacos offer a 50 percent

discount to invited PCVs with proof of status. This can only be done on-line and must be delivered to a U.S. address.)

- Baseball cap or wide-brimmed hat
- Breathable rain jacket
- Swimsuit (there are swimming pools in the capital and other cities)
- Belt (you may lose weight and need one to hold up your pants)
- Sturdy sunglasses with UV protection (plan on losing them; you may want two pairs)

Men

- Two to four pairs of shorts for around the house and biking
- Two to four pairs of comfortable lightweight pants
- Two to three sets of “dress casual” clothes: shirts with collars, casual slacks
- One dress-up outfit (shirt and tie is sufficient)
- Underwear

Women

- Nice dresses (or long skirts) for training and teaching (make sure these cover your knees, even when you sit down, and are not see-through. This is very important)
- Two nicer outfits (think spring/summer wear that covers your knees)
- One or two pairs of comfortable lightweight pants or long capris (one pair of workout capris would be good for biking)
- One or two pairs of longer shorts for around the house and biking

- Lots of bras and underwear (bring comfortable stuff that you don't mind ruining; many female Volunteers prefer wicking sports bras for transport and biking)
- Cosmetics and hair accessories (mascara, bandanas, etc., if you use them)
- Your favorite jewelry, but nothing too dear to you

A note on clothing: Burkinabé, while not excessively formal, put a great deal of emphasis on a professional appearance. Dressing appropriately will greatly enhance your credibility at work, improve your ability to integrate into your community, and increase your odds of having a safe Peace Corps service. You'll probably feel a lot more comfortable in your village, too. Men should expect to wear shirts with a collar and casual slacks; women should wear below-the-knee skirts, dresses, or casual slacks with shirts that are not revealing. This means, for men and women, no tight or see-through clothing or ratty and worn articles. *For women, especially, please note that Peace Corps does not consider spaghetti strap tank-tops, skirts that reveal the knee, and pants/skirts that reveal the top of your underwear (this goes for the men, too) to be appropriate, professional clothing.* For fancy occasions like your swearing-in ceremony, many Volunteers opt to have special clothing made from cloth here rather than wear the dressy outfit they brought. You are expected to dress appropriately at all times when you are in public and while at the Peace Corps training site. That said, it is fine to dress down when you are hanging out with other Volunteers or while you are at home and in your courtyard.

Very important: Don't bring anything that you can't bear to see destroyed by the dusty climate, harsh soap, and merciless hand washing.

Toiletries

- Bring a three-month supply to get you through training
- Deodorants (very hard to find your favorites here)
- Soap holder
- Shampoo and hair conditioner (Two-in-one shampoo comes in handy with limited water.)
- Razor and a supply of razor blades (available here, but very, very expensive)
- Foot care items (sorry, but your feet will get trashed, so you may want a pumice stone and other exfoliating devices; you can find inexpensive shea butter and shea butter products here)
- Hand sanitizer
- Sunscreen
- Lotion
- Toothpaste (Colgate is available in Ouagadougou)

A note about medical supplies: Unless you need a special prescription medicine, the Peace Corps supplies all of the basic medical supplies you may need. This includes multivitamins, sunscreen, bug repellent and lip balm. These items are only available after you swear-in. Bring a three-month supply to get you through training.

However, if you prefer a certain brand name over-the-counter drug or product, bring it. Peace Corps also provides you with an excellent water filter and several water purification options for travel. You do not need to bring your own water filter.

A note to females: Peace Corps/Burkina Faso provides feminine products, including Tampax and OB tampons and sanitary napkins, but if you have a preference, you may want to bring your own supply. Some Volunteers recommend the “Keeper” or “Diva Cup” in lieu of disposable products. The medical staff

recommends the “Diva Cup” because it is latex-free. They are available from medical after you swear-in. Some volunteers find that they are not practical due to the lack of running water available to rinse them out. Others use Nalgene’s or water pot and have no problems.

General

- Sturdy backpacks. Day packs (some like fanny packs or the tops of larger packs) are nice for work and bike rides. Medium packs are good for short trips. And large packs are recommended for longer trips (if you plan any) and getting all your stuff here.
- A good headlamp
- Leatherman or Swiss Army knife
- Durable water bottle (e.g., Nalgene; you might want to bring two as they tend to wander off)
- It is strongly recommended by volunteers and staff that you bring a lightweight screen mosquito tent for sleeping outside in the hot season and traveling (Peace Corps provides mosquito nets, but many Volunteers recommend Tropic Screen Tents)
- Good can opener
- Duct tape
- Ziploc bags (in various sizes)
- Good pens and craft supplies (special papers, sharpie permanent markers, highlighters, pencils, pastels, etc.)
- A book or two of U.S. stamps (Volunteers traveling home can mail letters for you)
- Good nonstick frying pan and plastic spatula (can be found here, but they are expensive)
- Sharp kitchen knife (if you plan on cooking, this is essential; knives here are very dull, you may even want to bring your own knife sharpener)

- Pot holders
- Good scissors (and hair-cutting scissors if you want them)
- Family pictures and anything from home that will make you feel more comfortable (pictures, posters, your favorite book, journal, scented candles ... but, again, don't bring items too dear to you)
- Eyeglass repair kit
- Travel sewing kit
- A durable watch with alarm (nothing you mind losing) or travel-size clock (many volunteers use cellphones they bought here; the alarms work even when the phone is off.)
- Rechargeable batteries and a recharger that works with local current (Solio brand charger works very well.)
- Bottle opener
- Vegetable peeler
- Calendar or day planner
- Thermometer

Books

- Do not worry too much about books. There are plenty of books already here, especially classic novels, fiction about Africa, Oprah's book club, Harry Potter, and way too many romance novels. You may want to bring a few to get you through training or some newer novels. (Note: shared books are not usually available to trainees)

Food

- Powdered drink mixes (e.g., Crystal Lite or Kool-Aid; sugar is available here)
- Cheese, soup, and sauce packets

- Your favorite spices (cinnamon, seasoning salt, and Italian seasoning are some suggestions)
- Power bars and granola bars
- Dried fruit and nuts (peanuts are abundant and cashews can be found in Ouagadougou)
- Candy and your favorite junk foods
- Crackers
- Easy cheese/ parmesan cheese
- Condiment packages
- Chewing gum

You can conserve packing space by preparing a package with food, books, and anything else you feel you may not require right away during training and ask your family to ship it to you. Shipping can take anywhere from one to four months. It makes sense for you to have stuff for your house, i.e., pans etc., shortly after you depart the U.S. Tell your family that rice and pasta are not necessary as they are available in even the smallest villages.

You also might want...

- Music instrument (if you play or would like to take up a new hobby)
- Sleeping pad for sleeping outside or on the floor (e.g., Therm-a-rest)
- Travel-size board games (Scrabble, Boggle, etc.) (Playing cards are readily available throughout the country.)
- Small towel or a special pack light towel (a piece of cloth bought in Burkina serves just as well.)
- Small battery-powered fan with water spritzer
- And if you're at all picky about pillows, bring your own

And you may be biking a lot, so think about ...

- Bike gloves
- Bike shorts
- Biking hydration system (e.g., Camelbak)
- Any other bike accessories you prefer (like a padded seat)

Things you can get here (You can find almost anything here, but buy it in the U.S. when quality and name brand are important.)

- Gas stove, cooking utensils, pots, forks, spoons, etc.
- Second-hand European and U.S. clothing
- African and European cloth that can be made into any kind of clothing you desire at very reasonable prices (if you're interested in making Western-style clothing you may want to bring a few clothes catalogues with pictures to take to the tailor)
- A wide selection of plastic flip-flops and cheap sunglasses (non U-V protection)

Teachers Only

- Bring your calculator
- If you can find one, a good French/English technical dictionary in your discipline may also be helpful

Guidelines for Electronic Equipment in Burkina Faso

The following are a few suggestions put together by staff and Volunteers regarding electronic equipment that you may wish to bring to Burkina Faso. These suggestions are not at all intended to be comprehensive or authoritative, but rather they are meant to provide some guidance in a complicated and confusing area.

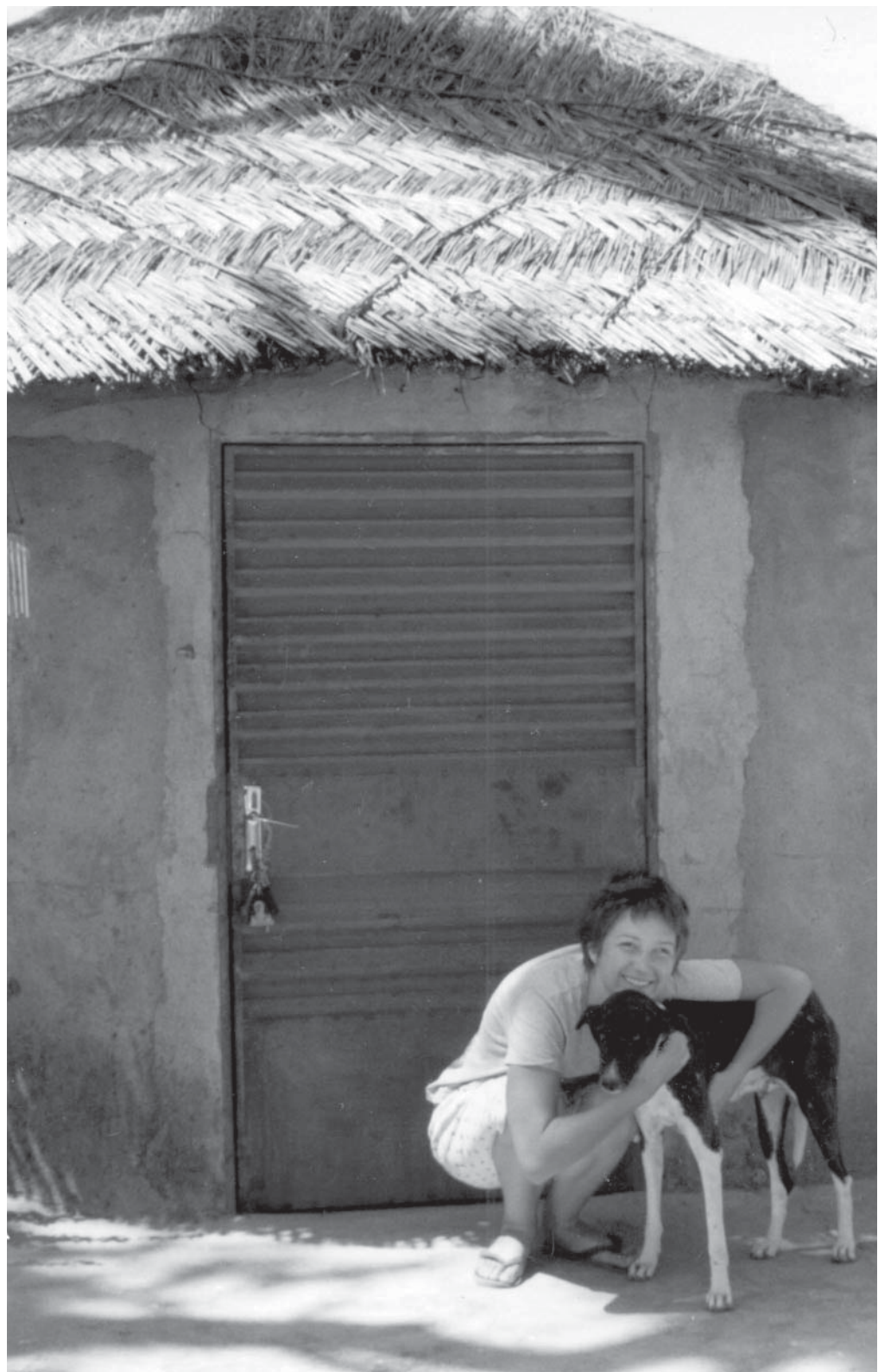
- Burkina Faso is a very dusty country, so it is a good investment to purchase protective covering for any electronic devices you bring.
- Volunteers find a USB key to be very valuable and you are strongly recommended to bring one to Burkina.
- By no means should you think that you must bring a laptop to do your work here. If you don't have the money for one, don't worry about it. Volunteers do a wide variety of work with and without computers. However, most Volunteers who have brought laptops are glad they did. It may make things a lot easier for you, though most Volunteers do not have electricity in their villages and need to charge their laptops elsewhere. A computer is an enormous symbol of wealth in Burkina Faso; if you reveal that you own one, it will affect how people view you and could make you a target for theft.
- The electrical current in Burkina Faso is 220 volts, twice the strength of the current in the U.S. Make sure you understand how to adapt your equipment before you plug it in. In some cases, this simply means turning a switch from 110 to 220; in other cases, you will need a transformer or converter. (One trainee who wasn't aware of this ruined a laptop when he plugged it in immediately upon arrival.) Watt converters (110-220) are of better quality in the U.S. and we suggest purchasing this before arriving in-country. (Radio Shack name brand is good and has a dual voltage converter for both electronics and small appliances, i.e. blow dryer, etc.)
- Whatever electronic equipment you will need, bring it with you. Almost anything can be purchased here, but often only after a lengthy search, at exorbitant prices and of inferior quality.
- You may type documents in French. Often the software that comes with your computer lets you install a French dictionary and spell check. Load this sort of thing before

you come. If you don't have such a package, consider purchasing one.

- Electrical outlets here have different prongs than in the U.S. Here it's two round pegs like in France, rather than the two flat prongs in the U.S. You can buy these adaptors in the U.S., but they are much cheaper (about 40 cents) in Burkina Faso where they are available in most hardware stores. If you choose to purchase it in the U.S., it is called a French adaptor.
- Very few organizations that Volunteers work with have a desktop computer. Volunteers who have USB jump drives or flash memory are glad they brought them. They can carry documents and pictures around as needed. This is a good idea even if your organization does not have a computer, as all Volunteers can save work done on computers in Ouagadougou.
- There is Internet access now in almost every large town and is even wireless in some places in Ouagadougou. This will be at a public Internet café where you will pay anywhere from \$0.75 to \$3.00 an hour. Connections can be slow and unreliable. If you have a LAN card in your laptop, often you can hook up directly to the Internet café connection. If you know the staff at the Internet café, you may be allowed to connect your laptop to their network. (You must know how to configure the proper addresses to connect to the network; it is common that the person in charge of the Internet café does not know how to configure the network card.)
- Many Volunteers have digital cameras. This is a pretty new technology here. While you will be able to e-mail pictures home, you can print pictures from USB keys in Ouagadougou (usually \$1 a picture.) A very nice thing to have with the digital camera is a USB card/memory reader so you can easily transfer pictures to a computer.
- Blank DVDs or CDs for backing up pictures are suggested.

- Batteries sold here are of very poor quality. Bring a charger and rechargeable batteries for your camera or you will spend a fortune on batteries.
- Radios, "boomboxes," CD players, etc. are very expensive here and are often of poor quality. While shortwave radios are available in markets here, many Volunteers suggest bringing your own shortwave from home. (Grundigs are great and they make a hand crank model that doesn't require batteries.) If you want music, make sure you bring something to play it on; iPods work well. If you don't have an iPod or MP3 player, many Volunteers bring Discmans and find that they can use these despite the dust. Bring good portable speakers, too.

During your training you will be living with a host family. It would be a good idea not to show off your electronics. If community members know you have something rare and interesting, it will put pressure on you to lend it out, etc.



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: 1-800-424-8580, extension 1470 or 202.692.1470).
- Give the Peace Corps' *On the Home Front* handbook to family and friends.

Passport/Travel

- Forward to the Peace Corps travel office all paperwork for the Peace Corps passport and visas.
- Verify that luggage meets the size and weight limits for international travel. (Check with the airline you are flying.)
- 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. Prescription sunglasses are a good idea if you plan on wearing them.
- Arrange to bring a three-month supply of all

medications (including birth control pills) you are currently taking.

Insurance

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

Personal Papers

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

Voting

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

Personal Effects

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

Financial Management

- ❑ Obtain student loan deferment forms from the lender or loan service. (Some need to be renewed every year.)
- ❑ Execute a Power of Attorney for the management of your property and financial affairs. During your pre-departure staging, you will have an opportunity to fill out a Privacy Act Waiver, which will authorize Peace Corps to disclose financial information (usually a W-2, but that may include other information), to a specific person. This document is not a Power of Attorney.
- ❑ Arrange for deductions from your readjustment allowance to pay alimony, child support, and other debts through the Office of Volunteer Financial Operations at 1-800-424-8580, 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	Nicole Lewis Desk Officer E-mail: burkinafaso@peacecorps.gov	Ext. 2327	202 692.2327
	Jason Burns Desk Assistant E-mail: burkinafaso@peacecorps.gov	Ext. 2328	202.692.2328

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		800.18.8772
Loan Deferments, Taxes, Readjustment Allowance Withdrawals, Power of Attorney	Volunteer Financial Operations	Ext. 1770	202.692.1770
Staging (Pre-departure Orientation) and Reporting Instructions <i>Note: You will receive comprehensive information (hotel and flight arrangements) three to five weeks before departure. This information is not available sooner.</i>	Office of Staging	Ext. 1865	202.692.1865
Family Emergencies (to get information to a Volunteer overseas)	Office of Special Services	Ext. 1470	202.692.1470 (24 hours)

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