

Madagascar

VOLUNTEER ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTION

Community Health Project



Since 1961.

Program: Community Health Project

Job Title: Health Advisor

Dates of Service: April 22, 2015 – April 23, 2017

Staging Date: February 10, 2015
(in the USA)

Pre-Service Training

(in Madagascar): February 12, 2015 – April 22, 2015

*dates subject to change



This document is intended to give an overview of the project you are invited to work on in the Peace Corps. For more detailed information about Madagascar and living there, please read the Welcome Book via the link included with your invitation and check out the related Web sites referenced in the welcome book.

For further information about serving as a Health Advisor in Madagascar, call the Country Desk Officer for Madagascar at Peace Corps headquarters in Washington, D.C. (9 a.m. to 5 p.m., EST):

Toll-free: 1-855-855-1961, press 1, then extension 2635;

or directly at (202) 692-2635

or via email at Madagascar@peacecorps.gov

A NOTE FROM THE PROGRAM MANAGER

Congratulations on your invitation to serve as a Peace Corps Volunteer for the Madagascar Health Program! You will be part of an incredibly exciting Peace Corps program that responds to the Government of Madagascar's prioritized development needs.

When the Ministry of Health (MOH) started the Behavior Change Communication (BCC) department in 1996, Peace Corps was asked to pilot its program. The program focus within BCC is implemented among communities and households, health centers, and schools. Our role is to ensure that your assignment as health educator is clearly understood by the health authorities and community members with whom you will work.

Please take great care in reading and understanding the following document. It has been written to provide you with a realistic picture of what you can expect and what is expected of you as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Madagascar. If you accept this invitation to serve in Madagascar, you will be part of the health training class. The MOH appreciates the work of Peace Corps Volunteers to fight against mother and child diseases and to promote nutrition as preventive care providers. We are also focusing on malaria and water/sanitation. You should take that into consideration before accepting this invitation.

You must be prepared to undergo considerable scrutiny prior to and during your Volunteer service. This scrutiny will center on your technical skills as a health educator, on your interpersonal and intercultural skills, and on your adaptability and flexibility. This adaptability will be tested as the Peace Corps program continues to develop, and as the Malagasy people and government officials become acquainted with Peace Corps as an agency and Volunteers as individuals. You are, therefore, asked to read this Volunteer Assignment Description very carefully to determine whether you are ready and open to the challenges of being a Peace Corps Volunteer in Madagascar.

You will experience many ups and downs throughout your stay and there will be times when the downs seem to significantly outnumber the ups. However, given the various challenges, life in Madagascar can offer a lot of eye-openers, mainly in terms of cultural exchange and development.

Peace Corps service is a great opportunity to bolster your resourcefulness and self-reliance. We will be there to address both the negatives and the positives in order to help you and your community realize its potential.

Mandrapihaona (See you)!

Ghislain Ravelonjatovo (Tovo)
Associate Peace Corps Director, Health Project

PEACE CORPS/MADAGASCAR HISTORY

The Republic of Madagascar is the fourth largest island in the world. It is an intriguing country that is neither African nor Asian, but a blend of the two that results in a culture uniquely Malagasy. In 1991, Peace Corps was invited to establish a program in Madagascar for the first time in the country's history. Peace Corps' initial program began in the education sector in 1993. The country program expanded into the environment sector in 1994 and the health sector in 1995.

Madagascar is among the world's poorest countries and faces many challenges in reaching its health goals. Health services are inadequate and not broadly available. Health personnel are unevenly distributed. Drug and medical supplies are prone to shortages and are unavailable in remote areas. Administration of the public health system is weak. The country's resources and services are stretched due to a rapidly growing population and development is undermined by high rates of illiteracy (29% of adults are illiterate and only 60% of children complete primary school), gender inequity, and economic disparity. Madagascar has the third highest rate of stunting among children under age 5 in the world: 45 percent of children under 5 are chronically malnourished. Diarrheal disease and malaria are the primary causes of death for children under five years of age; however, acute respiratory infections and newborn deaths also contribute. Nearly 60% of the population does not have access to safe drinking water, and nearly one in two households live without sanitary facilities. Malaria is a key health concern in Madagascar; it is ranked as a leading cause of under-five mortality in the country and in 2008 was responsible for almost 10% of all outpatient visits and over 15% of hospital admissions in children under five years of age. Fortunately, the HIV/AIDS prevalence rate of 0.9 percent is among the lowest in Africa, although rates of sexually transmitted infections remain high.

Health centers in Madagascar are underused due to distance, ignorance, and low rates of literacy. The Malaria Indicator Survey, conducted in 2011, showed that 56% of children fewer than 5 years of age who had a fever in the two weeks preceding the survey received no treatment—demonstrating the deficiency of care seeking behavior. There is a significant need for Behavior Change Communication, especially in remote villages where access is difficult and where trained community health workers (CHWs) are able to extend and provide case management according to the newly adopted National Policy for Community Health.

The underlying causes of these health problems are complex and inter-related, including poor child care at the home and community level, and a lack of effective health education and information.

The MOH has re-introduced the cost recovery system, meaning essential generic drugs are supplied to each health center and in the community level to trained CHWs, and a minimal monetary contribution is required in order to receive them. Vaccines, contraceptives, malaria testing and treatment, and treatment for sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS became free of charge at every health center.

In the past, Volunteer health activities focused on health posts with very little interaction at the community level. The emphasis was mainly on the delivery of center-based curative health services with little input into preventive educational activities.

In 1996, the MOH created an IEC (Information, Education, and Communication) or BCC (Behavior Change Communication) department at the central level. The IEC-Task Force includes the MOH and all partners involved in IEC/BCC. Peace Corps is one of the partners.

Volunteers are placed in small towns or villages near health clinics. Their aim is to help the community place an emphasis on preventive health care. Focus areas generally include diarrhea, immunization, malaria, acute respiratory infections, nutrition, family planning, sexually transmitted infections, HIV/AIDS, and safe pregnancies. Since last year there has been an increased focus on water/sanitation. Volunteers work with and train community leaders and community groups in maternal and child survival messages, and develop creative ways to convey health messages to the community.

Volunteers collaborate with health care counterparts from the MOH and non-governmental organizations with the goal of transferring expertise to these counterparts while strengthening their ability to develop and deliver appropriate, effective health messages. As Volunteers support CHWs associated with government health posts, the emphasis will be mainly into preventive educational activities and on the delivery of community-based curative health services.

Volunteers are placed in government health clinics in small towns or villages. Their aim is to help the community place an emphasis on preventive health care. Focus areas include: 1) Maternal and Child Health: Maternal Health, Nutrition, Prevention of Childhood Illnesses, and Malaria; 2) Environmental Health: Community Water Sanitation, Household, Water, Hygiene and Sanitation, Hygiene, Water and Sanitation at Schools; and 3) Capacity Building for Community Workers: IEC/BCC and Management.

Volunteers will work with individuals (health care counterparts, CHWs, community leaders), community groups, and NGOs with the goal to support global and national efforts to ensure that all Malagasy have long and healthy lives through: mobilizing community members, trainings, workshops, one-on-one mentoring, health promotion activities, BCC/IEC, Outreach, and other related capacity building activities.

YOUR PRIMARY DUTIES

Health Volunteers with a variety of skills are invited to work in Madagascar in order to meet the needs identified by the Ministry of Health and our other partner organizations.

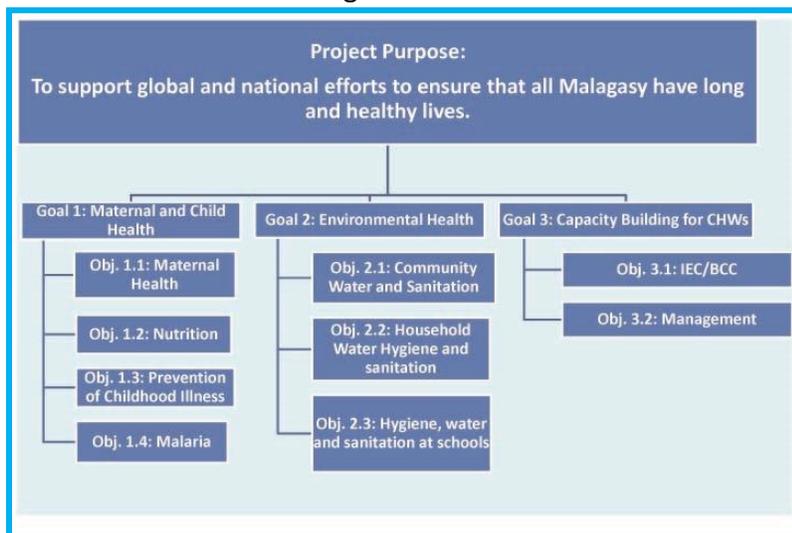
As a Community Health Advisor, you will work at the community level with local counterparts. Peace Corps will post you with a rural health clinic run by the MOH. You will help train village-

level health educators in your target area. You and your counterpart will work on implementing a social communication process to improve Madagascar's health workers' ability to transfer important messages to mothers and caregivers.

You will work with a Community Health Supervisor to assist communities served by your health clinic and focus on health outreach interventions to those communities, including:

This would include:

- With Community Health Workers (CHWs), provide health education at household, community, and schools level
- Focus on Behavior Change through the use of evidence-based methodologies (e.g. Care Group model)
- Assist CHWs with quality of their health education: technique, visual aids, etc.
- Train CHWs in Behavior Change Communication strategies and techniques
- Identify concrete interventions at household and community levels in areas of maternal and child health including:
 - Promoting safe pregnancies
 - Promote better nutrition for mothers and children
 - Prevention of childhood illnesses
 - Promotion of child immunization
 - Malaria prevention and control
- Identify concrete interventions at household and community levels in the areas of Environmental Health.
 - Community water and sanitation
 - Household water, hygiene, and sanitation
 - Water, hygiene, and sanitation at schools
- Capacity Building for CHWs in their Monitoring, Reporting, and Evaluation (MRE) requirements
 - Support for IEC/BCC Interventions
 - Promotion of better management skills



Dissemination of health messages is often most effective in one-on-one discussion or when they take place in venues such as village forums, theaters, and festivals, or during informal social communication.

You will organize formal training sessions on health information, education, and interventions for your counterparts, village health educators, peer educators, and teachers. Transferring skills in order to effectively conduct health education at the village level is the key to ensuring your efforts will be sustainable after the Peace Corps project ends.

You will have a lot of opportunity for creative input. You will need to be self-directed and able to motivate others. You will need the ability to conceptualize, organize, and present ideas clearly in verbal and written form. Strong local Malagasy language skills will also be necessary since you will be communicating with people from varying levels of society.

Please note that your success as a Peace Corps Volunteer in this project requires a strong and equal commitment to both the development of excellent communication skills and excellent cross-cultural skills.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR SECONDARY/COMMUNITY PROJECTS

Many Health Volunteers undertake secondary projects during their service that tend to be related to their primary duties. Previous Volunteers have worked with their counterparts, communities, and/or other Volunteers to organize youth camps, hold weekly English club meetings, provide information on environment protection, and refurbish schoolrooms and community centers. In any secondary project, Volunteers seek to promote and develop self-reliance on the part of the project beneficiaries.

Volunteers have taken up malaria education as a secondary project as well. As a Volunteer in Madagascar, you will also be equipped to play a key role in the Peace Corps' Stomping Out Malaria initiative, which addresses the multiple health, social, and economic problems related to the malaria pandemic. Many local organizations are working on communities' education about malaria.

As a Volunteer in Africa, you will also be equipped to play a key role in the Peace Corps' HIV/AIDS initiative, which addresses the multiple health, social, and economic problems related to the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

To ensure that the Peace Corps is playing its part in the important global effort to stem the spread of the disease, all Volunteers serving in Africa, in every program sector, will be trained to be advocates and educators for HIV/AIDS prevention. You will receive training in HIV/AIDS education and prevention during Pre-Service Training and/or In-Service Training sessions, which will include sessions that address specific cross-cultural issues. After receiving this training, you will be encouraged to work with your host country partners to develop activities that integrate HIV/AIDS education into your primary work.

Although we do not expect every Peace Corps Volunteer to make HIV/AIDS prevention his/her primary assignment, we hope that additional training will provide you with the tools you need to reach more people to prevent the spread of the disease. Since Madagascar is a country still in a position to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS, Volunteer efforts focus largely on awareness education. Volunteers form HIV/AIDS awareness clubs, organize festivals and teach in schools about HIV transmission and messages associated with AIDS prevention and are active in the international AIDS day celebration. Environment and Education Volunteers are also trained in HIV/AIDS awareness education, which increases the opportunity for cross-sector collaborations.

WORKING CONDITIONS

Available Resources:

The local MOH or private basic health center is available for you. A local midwife usually provides prenatal consultations, baby growth monitoring, and nutrition education. You will support CHWs who have been trained by either the local doctor or international or local NGOs. The NGO agent at the district or communal level should also be available to support for

sensitization program or community mobilization on diseases prevention. You will also work with the *Médecin Inspecteur* who will be in charge of supervising all health activities in a district.

Location of Job:

While the local health center will be an important resource and support network for you, your main working place will be within communities around the local health center. You may find that you spend only about 10% of your time at the local health center and 90% with Community Health Workers, engaging in health education with mothers, community leaders, educators, and teachers – and building the capacity of those CHWs. You will likely need to bike or hike more than five kilometers a day from the main commune to reach those villages where CHWs were trained to be the closest health workers to those villagers. You will use all IEC materials developed by the MOH with the help of some available NGOs. You may also work at schools, providing health messages to students.

Working Hours:

The official code of conduct is similar to what you would find in the United States. If you are working at the local health center, the doctors and his co-workers work from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.; if you are at school, they work from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., pause for lunch, and continue from 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. If you are within the community, people start their days with the first rooster in the morning (3:30 a.m.) and go home before dark (6:00 p.m.). Usually people work from Monday to Saturday and rest on Sunday. Of course there are differences in people's habits per regions. On the coast, where it is hotter than in the highland, people take a longer lunch break and finish late around 6:00 p.m. As in the United States, you are expected to be on time and to dress and act professionally.

Cultural Attitudes and Customs in the Workplace:

Work place attitudes vary considerably from place to place. In general, Malagasy are very warm and open. However, as with any other job, respect has to be earned. Job roles in the Malagasy workplace are largely divided along gender and class lines. The chain of command is generally hierarchical, with little room for lateral lines of authority. Malagasy also respect age in the workplace and at home. You might experience difficulties at first gaining credibility in the eyes of your colleagues and clients because of your age, gender, language difficulties, or previous experience. You can gradually earn respect through your professional and respectful comportment and your willingness to get to know your counterparts and understand their needs despite your language and cultural differences.

Personal appearance and conduct are more important in Madagascar than they are in the United States. Malagasy present themselves in neat, clean, and pressed clothes. The same is expected of you. You will be expected to present yourself in a serious, professional manner during all aspects of your work, whether you are working in a village or in your counterpart's office. A professional appearance and demeanor will greatly facilitate your job and your

integration into the culture. It will also enhance your personal credibility and that of Peace Corps as an organization. Rural areas tend to be fairly conservative, so respecting elders and observing protocol are extremely important.

Dress Code:

Dress and appearance in Madagascar are very important social cues determining the respect that people merit. Madagascar's mores, in behavior and in dress, range on the conservative side. You must keep in mind that some of your work will be done in an agricultural field setting, and you should pack accordingly.

Women wear long skirts and keep the upper part of their bodies covered, and we recommend that you plan to be similarly attired. Cut and sewn shirts, skirts and dresses for women, and suitable trousers for men are the norm for your work; for women, pants can be worn when riding a bike.

Tank tops, halter tops, too tight- or too loose-fitting clothing, sheer fabrics or translucent clothing, and shorts are not appropriate for professional work situations or social occasions (although shorts or jeans may be acceptable when doing manual labor and at home). It is important to recognize that dressing inappropriately (e.g., not keeping legs covered) puts a female Volunteer and her peers at risk. Wearing short skirts or tight clothing will serve as an invitation to sexual harassment as this style of dress connotes "loose" behavior in the eyes of Malagasy, especially in more conservative areas.

Men with long hair will need to keep their hair tied back and groomed. You may not notice it, but you will always be seen and talked about by the Malagasy with whom you come into contact. In general, the clothes you wear and the way you act will affect your credibility and the impressions that are formed about Peace Corps and other Peace Corps Volunteers. Certainly, there is a corresponding impact on your ability to serve as an effective development agent. If you feel you cannot adhere to standards of dress and professional conduct, Peace Corps/Madagascar may not be the place for you.

TRAINING FOR YOUR JOB

As part of the preparation for Volunteer service, you will participate in a 9.5 week community-based Pre-Service Training (PST) program at a rural training site outside of Antananarivo. PST is very intense, highly structured, and quite stressful for many people. It is a testing ground that can be quite rewarding to those who are willing and able to apply themselves.

The food will likely not be what you are accustomed to eating. There will be very limited access to e-mail, Internet, and your blog. Classes are held during mornings and afternoons all week as well as Saturday mornings, and you are expected to attend all sessions.

However, if you are able to maintain your enthusiasm, interest, and commitment to learning, you will enter your Volunteer service well prepared to contribute to Madagascar's development.

After about three months at your site, you will return to our Peace Corps training center and will participate in an eight-day In-Service Training (IST). Three of these days will be with one of your site counterparts. One year into your service, you will take part in a Mid-Service Conference to further hone your skills and knowledge. A final training event, your Close of Service Workshop, occurs three months prior to completing your two years of Volunteer service.

These trainings provide you the opportunity to acquire and fine-tune the skills that will enable you to be an effective grassroots development worker. PST is also a time for you to confirm your commitment to working in Madagascar for two years and for Peace Corps staff to assess your abilities to contribute positively to Madagascar's development. Swearing in as a Peace Corps Volunteer is contingent upon the successful completion of your Pre-Service Training.

During PST, you will live with a Malagasy family for six weeks to help you learn more about Malagasy culture and life. The remainder of your PST will be at our training center in Mantsoa.

Training consists of seven hours of class per day, 5.5 days per week, and includes six components: language (Malagasy), technical (Agriculture-specific), cross-culture, administration, personal health, and safety.

Your language teachers will be experienced Peace Corps Malagasy language trainers. Your technical trainers may be Malagasy professionals or American Volunteers. The Peace Corps Medical and Security staff teach the health and safety modules. To become accustomed to life in Madagascar, and to facilitate language acquisition, you will spend four of the nine weeks living with a Malagasy family.

Language: The acquisition of language is a major focus of your Pre-Service Training and is essential to both your work and everyday life. During training you will have the opportunity to study the appropriate language so that you will be able to live and work effectively at your

assigned post. You must possess a minimum practical level of language proficiency in order to swear in as a Peace Corps Volunteer.

Technical: The PST program for Health Volunteers will cover the basics of Malagasy Public and Community Health System and Approach including Maternal and Child Health (MCH): Safe motherhood, Pre-Natal Consultations, Birth attended by skilled attendant and Birth Plan; Child Health: Nutrition, prevention of Childhood Illnesses and Malaria; Environmental Health and Water and Sanitation: at the household level, in the community, and at schools. Community Health Workers (CHWs) system and trainings will occupy a big blog of your training because most of your work once you arrive at your respective sites will be in villages working together and supporting those CHWs. With the Community Health Project focusing on prevention through Behavior Change Communication (BCC), Health Promotion, and Community Mobilization, the training program will also include a hands-on practicum in the training community and a thorough initiation to conducting household health surveys.

Cross-Culture: You will improve your skills of perception, communication, and facilitation. This will enable you to better understand and work with Malagasy. You will also learn a process through which you can assist villages to identify and solve their problems.

Safety: These sessions covered by the Peace Corps/Madagascar staff will teach you about strategies on how to stay safe in Madagascar. Because our highest priority is the safety and security of our Volunteers, safety elements will be incorporated into all the training sectors, including language, technical, cross-culture, and medical.

Administration: Sessions regarding Peace Corps/Madagascar policies, Volunteer finances, financial operations, and how our local office functions.

Personal Health: These sessions covered by the Peace Corps/Madagascar medical staff will teach you about the health hazards of Malagasy living and help you to develop the critical skills needed to assume responsibility for your continued physical and mental health. You will learn how to properly prepare your food and water, how to avoid malaria, how to deal with stress, how to treat minor illnesses and infections, and how to deal with assault or harassment, among other topics.

LIVING CONDITIONS

Assuming you successfully complete the requirements of training, you will most likely be posted to a small village, semi-urban town, or regional center. Volunteer sites are usually one or two days' travel by public transport or a few hours' flight from Antananarivo. Housing will vary from site to site. Your community partner will either build you a house or renovate an existing house, and it could be made of local materials with a thatched roof, in a rural setting; or, in a more urban setting, it could be a cement dwelling with a tin roof. Your housing will be the same as that of your counterparts in the communities, which means very simple. Sites in some regional capitals may have electricity and/or running water.

As you adjust to a new culture you may have feelings of isolation and loneliness. However, as your language and cross-cultural understanding improve, you will find yourself becoming more and more a part of the community.

Most Volunteers (particularly those new to developing countries) are initially shocked by the country's poverty and the resultant effect on public sanitation. There are no landfills and garbage may be thrown anywhere. Sewage systems are unreliable in the major cities and do not exist in the smaller ones where Volunteers live. Pit latrines are used by some Malagasy and not by others, and men often urinate in public. Untreated water is not potable (drinkable without risk to health).

The cultural environment of Madagascar is an extremely social one. Your neighbors will be friendly and curious, and you will find yourself the target of constant attention. Volunteers, especially females, may often be the recipients of unwelcome attention from Malagasy men. The kinds of food available depend on the geography and weather, although your usual diet will consist of boiled rice, corn, or cassava and a simple sauce. In some areas of the country, fruits and vegetables can be expensive when they are not readily available, while in other places, meat is hard to come by. With some effort, it may be possible to maintain a vegetarian diet. You may only have access to a large market on some days of the week, or to a post office on a monthly basis when you go to your banking town. (Please let your family and friends know this so that they will understand if it takes a while to receive your letters.)

It is important to understand that reliance on a bicycle or public transportation will to some extent limit your freedom of movement. Public transportation may only be available a few days during the week, and same-day round trip transportation (e.g., to and from your village and a larger neighboring town) will probably not be available. Therefore, you should not depend on access to immediate transportation for your daily needs. (For emergency transportation situations, Peace Corps/Madagascar maintains a system of vehicles and duty drivers available around the clock.)

While limited access to immediate long-distance transportation may result in some minor inconveniences and adjustments, there are tangible benefits. Not only will you have increased opportunities for greater integration into the local community, but there will also be the potential for greater impacts among the populations you serve.

POTENTIAL CHALLENGES & REWARDS

Please reference the [Welcome Book](#) for more detailed information regarding diversity and cross-cultural issues, and safety and security in the Peace Corps.

“If you have come to help me you can go home. But if you see my struggle as part of your own survival, then perhaps we can work together.” (Australian Aborigine Woman)

To accept an assignment as a Health Volunteer in Madagascar is to choose a job that will require initiative, resourcefulness, and patience for two years. You will finish your service with a renewed sense of purpose and a better understanding of yourself and your culture.

Your job assignment will challenge you by asking you to adapt your prior experience and education to a completely different environment and mentality. You might find that what seems to you like a logical way to organize things makes little sense to your colleagues.

You could have your plans for the day completely altered because of a sudden rainstorm, a funeral, or lack of available gas for a vehicle. Or you might be surprised to call a meeting for a specific time and have participants arriving anytime within a two-hour window. You may have a neighbor do something kind for you simply in appreciation of your regular greetings every morning. In any case, your flexibility, sense of humor, and willingness to see things differently will assure that the difficulties and challenges you face will only reap you irreplaceable rewards.

Yet the Peace Corps is not for everyone. More than just a job, it requires greater dedication and commitment to serve than most other assignments. It is for the confident, self-starting, flexible individuals who are interested in working for development and increasing human understanding across cultural barriers. The key to satisfying work as a Peace Corps Volunteer is the ability to establish successful relationships at all levels. This will require self-knowledge, sensitivity towards others, and a positive attitude. The romance and excitement of working in Madagascar will quickly wear off. Homesickness, missing your family and friends, the frustrations of the job, the struggle to adapt culturally, and the lack of amenities taken for granted back home will discourage those without the necessary vision and commitment.

A great deal of patience, flexibility, awareness, and tolerance is needed on your part if you do choose to become a Volunteer in Madagascar. Please reread this Volunteer Assignment Description (VAD) before contacting Peace Corps/Washington with your acceptance. With much input from current and recent Volunteers, this VAD has been deliberately written to emphasize the difficulties so that if you choose to come and serve, you have been informed and are prepared. The frustrations and adjustments described here are very real.

Malaria and malnutrition, motor vehicle accidents and other unintentional injuries, domestic violence, and corporal punishment are problems a Volunteer may confront. You will need to anticipate these situations and utilize supportive resources available throughout your training

and service to maintain your own emotional strength, so that you can continue to be of service to your community.

Despite the frustrations and challenges, you are expected to serve for two years in a manner that reflects positively on your own family, friends, and home community in the U.S. If you are considering coming to “try” the assignment, please decline now. Declining from your service after it begins is a disservice to your colleagues, community, and Peace Corps itself. When Volunteers leave their communities before the completion of their two years of service, Malagasy critically question the commitment, preparedness, and integrity of not only Peace Corps Volunteers and the Peace Corps/Madagascar program, but of the American people themselves.

If we have chosen to de-emphasize the positives of service in Madagascar, it is because the warmth and generosity of your Malagasy friends, the beauty of the countryside and the personal growth that all Peace Corps Volunteers experience will be their own reward.

The people of Madagascar are committed to continuing along the path of development on which they have embarked in the last few years. There is no doubt that Peace Corps Volunteers are needed and are warmly welcomed in their communities.

If you are tolerant of obstacles, open to strange ideas, and able to laugh in the face of adversity, you will be rewarded with patience, a broader worldview, and many accomplishments.

COMMENTS FROM VOLUNTEERS

“As in all other countries, serving as a PCV can be difficult at first in Madagascar. You go through your share of trials and tribulations with learning the language and eating rice two or three times a day, but the turning point comes when you begin to crave your life at site and the people who have come to make your experience so special and unique—these are the people you feel privileged to eat all that rice with. And you know you’re completely ‘tamana’ (well-adjusted) when a lemur jumps across your yard and you don’t even bat an eye!”

“Nothing constitutes routine for a Peace Corps Volunteer. There are always surprises, shocks, adventures, and letdowns. However, what you relish every day to keep you sane and uniquely you are the routine things—like washing your clothes, cooking your meals, reading, singing out loud to your music, and just being in your own head for relaxation. Madagascar is a great place that has so much opportunity for a motivated person. You just need to let it guide you, and you’ll accomplish great things.”