

Mali

VOLUNTEER ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTION

Water Sanitation and Hygiene(WASH)



Since 1961.

Program: Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

Job Title: Water Sanitation and Hygiene Extension Agent

Dates of Service: August 07, 2015 – August 09,2017

Staging Dates: June 02- 03, 2015

(in the USA)

Pre-Service Training

(in [Country Name]): June 05, 2015 – August 07,2015

*dates subject to change

AA124= 2644BR

AA131 = 2645BR



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 Mali 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 Water Sanitation and Hygiene Extension Agent in Mali, call the Country Desk Officer for Mali at Peace Corps headquarters in Washington, D.C., (9AM to 5PM, EST):

Toll-free: 1-855-855-1961, press 1, then extension 2612;

or directly at (202) 692-2612

or via email at mmonrealstarling@peacecorps.gov

A NOTE FROM THE PROGRAM MANAGER

Dear Future Water and Sanitation Volunteer,

Congratulations on your invitation to serve in Peace Corps/Mali. I am the Program Manager for the Water Sanitation and Hygiene project. As such, I will be your main contact and supervisor within Peace Corps/ Mali. I am responsible for supporting you during your 27 months in Mali. In accordance with the Government of Mali's development objectives, Peace Corps/Mali's water sanitation and hygiene project focuses on improving health in Malian communities through enhanced management of water and sanitation resources coupled with clean water, hygiene/sanitation education, and behavior change. Water Hygiene and sanitation Volunteers work with local Malian organizations generally in rural villages or small towns. Working in Malian communities poses a number of challenges including linguistic, cultural and geographic challenges. Along with these challenges, serving in Mali offers incredible opportunities to work, to share your life with a community, and to make new friends. In the end, most people who serve here count it as one of the most rewarding experiences of their life.

Starting a new adventure is always a bit overwhelming. Expect impediments and rewards; expect frustration and elation; expect to fall in love with Mali and its people; expect to work hard and to laugh hard. In the meantime, spend time with your family and friends, eat your favorite foods, watch your favorite shows, try to relax, and enjoy your last few months before jumping in to Peace Corps. We will be waiting for you at the airport.

Bisimillah (Welcome)!

Dr. Haoua Traore Sissoko,
Program Manager
Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

PEACE CORPS MALI HISTORY

The Peace Corps has been active in Mali continuously from 1971 to 2012. All Volunteers were evacuated from Peace Corps Mali on April 8, 2012 due to potential security risks and political instability. Peace Corps Mali (PCM) is restarting its program operations and the return of Volunteers to Mali in 2014. PCM is working with water issues since 1974. The project began by carrying out well construction for village water supplies, moved through a period of intensive Guinea worm eradication, and has now developed into a more comprehensive health and sanitation-oriented program. Since 1998, Peace Corps/Mali has been operating under a water, hygiene, and sanitation project plan. Before the suspension under this plan, an average of thirty Volunteers worked in rural and peri-urban environments helping communities address their water Hygiene and sanitation needs. The program will restart with input of a moderately-sized class (10) of two-year WASH Peace Corps Volunteers (PCVs).

In Mali, about 75% of the households have access to a safe and clean water source also about 20 -45% of these sources are not functional, putting people at risk for diarrhea, schistosomiasis, malaria and Guinea worm, among other illnesses and parasites. This situation is especially acute in rural areas where only 9 % of households have access to safe environmental sanitation. In the urban area 30 % of the households have access to safe environmental sanitation. There is a critical need for increased access to potable water sources and improved environmental sanitation. In addition, the lack of available water for agricultural production is one of the primary limiting factors to increasing crop yields.

YOUR PRIMARY DUTIES

*"Development work is like constructing a wall...
every brick is needed but a single brick is never sufficient."*

Water sanitation and Hygiene Volunteers are essentially extension agents who work with local communities and individuals in well construction and repair, improved latrine and soak pit construction, small scale irrigation, hygiene education, pump repair and maintenance, waste management, and other environmental sanitation efforts. Volunteers are assigned to work with a variety of government and non-governmental organizations involved in public health, and water, sanitation, and hygiene activities. The water and sanitation project has six general areas of technical intervention, including the following:

- Construction and repair of wells using inexpensive and easily transferred construction techniques;
- Building capacity of local mason and pump repair teams;
- Promotion of basic health practices to improve drinking water quality and hygiene;
- Promotion of better environmental sanitation practices through the construction and maintenance of improved pit latrines, the establishment of improved domestic waste disposal practices, and the implementation of improved community waste disposal systems;
- Introduction of alternative water-lifting devices for domestic and agricultural use; and
- Promotion of positive community behavior change using extension, communication, and education techniques.

In all of these areas of technical intervention, the emphasis is on technology and skills transfer so that local communities can become increasingly able to effectively assess and address their water and sanitation needs. To do this Peace Corps/ Mali trains its Volunteers to use and promote a systematic approach to project planning, implementation and evaluation. This community-based project management approach promotes the use of important skills that can be used by local communities to accomplish the long-range goal of improving the quality of life in Mali.

One of the exciting parts of your professional work is to participate in the Peace Corps monitoring, reporting, and evaluation (MRE) process. All Volunteers receive training on the Peace Corps MRE tracking and reporting system. Each Volunteer regularly reports MRE information and this information is summarized to describe overall progress of the project. This important MRE system helps Peace Corps improve its programming and report its accomplishments. The opportunity to learn and practice professional monitoring and evaluation skills are some of the many valued benefits of Peace Corps service.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR SECONDARY/ COMMUNITY PROJECTS

There are innumerable opportunities for interesting secondary projects in Mali. Water sanitation and hygiene Volunteers will be active in malaria prevention and control, nutrition, and disease prevention in the future as cross-sector focal activities under PMI/Stamp out Malaria and Food Security in irrigation projects. Many Volunteers also find satisfying work through schools, rural radio broadcasts, and informal youth groups.

Volunteers throughout Mali have also taken up HIV/AIDS education as a secondary project. 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 pandemic. As you are well aware, this pandemic has reached critical proportions, particularly in Africa where it is estimated that more than 14 million people have died of the disease and more than 11 million children have been orphaned by it. As a result of HIV/AIDS, the average life expectancy has been lowered by as much as 17 years in some African countries. Many international organizations have referred to the HIV/AIDS crisis as the greatest challenge to development in Africa.

WORKING CONDITIONS

Available Resources:

Resources in Mali are limited. Volunteers have to rely on ingenuity and locally available materials to disseminate their development messages to the Malians with whom they live and work. Since literacy rates are low in rural Mali, most Volunteers disseminate information and educate others primarily through the use of demonstrations, presentations, and skits. Many Volunteers have access to local radio stations, which facilitate access to a much wider audience.

Location of Job:

Most of Mali's water sanitation and hygiene Volunteers live and work in small rural communities. Volunteers work in both their community and neighboring villages. While the majority of Volunteers are assigned to work with government agencies involved in public health, community development, or water supply activities. Increasingly, Volunteers are assigned to work with local non-governmental organizations, village associations, and private enterprises engaged in water hygiene and sanitation activities. As Mali continues to move towards a more decentralized system of government, it is anticipated that this trend will continue and more water sanitation Volunteers will be placed outside of government agencies in more rural areas.

All Volunteers are loaned a mountain bike to use as their primary mode of personal and work transportation during your two years of service. Your bicycle will provide you with access to villages and other work sites within the target zone as defined by Peace Corps/Mali and your counterpart organization. A typical Volunteer work zone can cover up to a 15-kilometers radius, often over rough, sandy, or rocky terrain.

Working Hours:

Most water sanitation and hygiene Volunteers have very unstructured schedules. In some cases, your work counterpart may not live in the same village as you do. In addition, the nature of the work of a water and sanitation Volunteer changes with the season. For example, well improvement or latrine construction tends to occur during the dry season while extension and education activities can take place in the rainy season.

Cultural Attitudes and Customs in the Workplace:

Malians tend to be very warm and open, and readily accepting of outsiders. However, work place attitudes vary considerably from job to job, and as with any other job, respect has to be earned. Job roles in the Malian workplace are largely divided along gender and class lines. Malians 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 behavior 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 Mali than they are in the United States. Malians 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 in all aspects of your work, whether you are working in a village or visiting your counterpart's office. A professional appearance and demeanor will greatly facilitate your job and your integration into the local 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:

Religious garb does not make a priest, but being poorly dressed does make one a fool.
-- Bambara proverb

As the proverb notes above, dress and appearance in Mali are very important social cues concerning the respect that people merit. As a predominantly Muslim country, Mali's mores, in behavior and in dress, are conservative. For example, women wear long skirts and keep the upper part of their bodies covered. We recommend that you plan to be similarly attired. Shirts with sleeves, calf-length skirts, dresses for women, and trousers for men are the norm for your work; for women, pants can be worn when riding a bike. Tank tops, halter tops, tight fitting clothing, sheer fabrics, translucent clothing, and shorts are not appropriate for professional work situations or social occasions (although shorts or jeans may be acceptable for men when doing manual labor). It is also important to recognize that dressing inappropriately (e.g., not keeping legs covered) puts a female Volunteer and her peers at risk. Wearing short (above-the-knee) skirts or tight clothing will serve as an invitation to sexual harassment as this style of dress connotes "loose" behavior in the eyes of Malians.

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 Malians 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, other Peace Corps Volunteers, and Americans. Certainly, there is a corresponding impact on your ability to serve as an effective development agent. If you do not gain the respect of your Malian community by adhering to local customs and norms, you will find it difficult to be a successful in your work efforts. If you feel you cannot adhere to standards of dress and professional conduct, Peace Corps/Mali may not be the place for you.

TRAINING FOR YOUR JOB

As part of the preparation for Volunteer service, you will participate in a nine week, community-based pre-service training (PST) program at a rural training site outside of Bamako, and a week in-service training (IST) after having served for three months as a Volunteer at your site. The training includes five components: language (local language or French), cross-culture, community development, personal health and safety, and technical (water hygiene and sanitation-specific). Your technical trainers may be Malian professionals or currently-serving Volunteers. In order to become accustomed to life in Mali and to facilitate language acquisition, during training you will live with a Malian family. Also, about mid-way through training you will visit the site to which you will be assigned for your Volunteer service and meet the people with whom you will be working during your service.

The technical training will concentrate to a large extent on developing and refining your technical skills, including country-specific sessions in the planning, construction, and maintenance of wells, latrines, soakpits, pumps, and other appropriate technology, as well as low cost water and sanitation interventions. One other important part of your training is hygiene and sanitation behavior change activities, such as the community-led total sanitation (CLTS) approach; water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) activities in schools (CHAST: children hygiene and sanitation training) and communities (PHAST:

participatory hygiene and sanitation transformation); and training of community water and sanitation committees to promote sustainable water and sanitation services. Also critical to your work are the skills you will gain in extension techniques used to plan and implement community projects. The overall objective of the technical component of training is to provide you with the technical background necessary to train and transfer water and sanitation skills to your Malian counterparts and collaborators.

The acquisition of language is a major focus of the training and is essential to both your work and everyday life. During training you will have the opportunity to study one of Mali's national languages. The better your French upon arrival, the more time you will have during pre-service training to work on the local language spoken at your site.

Couples serving together should expect that they will most likely be placed in separate home stays in separate villages throughout PST for ten weeks, with occasional visits on the weekends and some periodic common sessions as a large group once or twice in training.

Every day the ear goes to school and the world is a house for learning!
-- Bambara proverb

LIVING CONDITIONS

Assuming your successful completion of training, you will most likely be posted in a small town or village in the dry, cooler countryside of Mali (South of Koulikoro and Sikasso Region), usually less than one day's travel by public transport from Bamako. Like most Volunteers, your house will likely be made of adobe/mud bricks, without electricity or running water. It will be two rooms house with a concrete floor. There are four windows and one door. All have an interior screen and exterior corrugated metal door. You will live in the house occupied by a Volunteer before the evacuation. Your site will have cell phone communication either by SMS, direct voice contact, or both; will have daily transport (bicycle or car) access to a communal or regional capital, or to Bamako; and will be placed with host families in a compound. As you adjust to a new culture you may have feelings of isolation and loneliness. However, as your language and cross-culture understanding improves, you will find yourself becoming more and more a part of the community.

The kinds of food which are available depend on the geography and weather, although your usual diet will consist of boiled rice, corn, or millet and a simple sauce. In some areas of the country, fruits and vegetables are not readily available, while in other places, meat is hard to come by. If you are accustomed to a vegetarian diet, you will have to adjust your eating habits, as fruits and vegetables are sometimes unavailable. You may only have access to a large market on some days of the week, or to a post office on a monthly or bi-weekly basis (it is important to let your family and friends know this so that they will understand if it takes a while to receive your letters).

If you are a stranger in a village and you say that you have no father in this village, it is because you have not accepted someone's father as your own.
-- Bambara proverb

POTENTIAL CHALLENGES & REWARDS

The cultural environment of Mali is an extremely social one. Your neighbors will be friendly and curious, and you will find yourself the target of constant attention. You will also find yourself often surrounded by children, who make up half of the population in Mali. Female Volunteers in particular may often be the recipients of unwelcome attention from Malian men. If you are someone who needs a lot of privacy and time alone, Mali might not be the place for you.

It is important to understand that reliance on a bicycle or public transportation will limit to some extent your freedom of movement. Public transportation may only be available a few days during the week, and same-day round trip transportation (e.g., from your village to 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/Mali 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.

While you will have a job that is part of a project plan, your specific job may not always be well defined. You will have to be resourceful, self-motivated and, above all, patient. A good sense of humor is invaluable for dealing with the many frustrations you will inevitably encounter as a Volunteer in Mali. Settling into a new village, gaining people's trust and respect, and working together successfully requires an investment of time and effort. The results of your work may not always be immediately evident. You must learn to measure your accomplishments in small increments and to be persistent in overcoming logistical, bureaucratic, and financial obstacles inherent in any development project. Along with these difficulties come the rewards of two years of Volunteer service. Malians are warm, generous people who appreciate the contribution Peace Corps makes to their development efforts, and Peace Corps Volunteers are proud to serve in Mali.

Through the course of your two years in Mali you will experience frustrations. The work may at times be slow and you may experience language difficulties. You will be living and working in a culture very different from your own. The key to being a successful Peace Corps Volunteer is establishing relationships with neighbors and co-workers. If you have the sensitivity and motivation for the challenges described above, you will have an enriching experience and will develop the initiative and self-reliance that will be helpful to you for the rest of your life.

Given Malian conservative values, homosexuality is not likely to be tolerated by the general Malian population. It will probably be impossible to be open about your sexual orientation and maintain a positive working relationship with members of your community. Disclosure of gay, lesbian, or bisexual orientation in Mali could compromise your safety and security, and impact your relationship with others in the community in a negative way. Other Volunteers and the Peace Corps staff will provide support, but you will find it very difficult to be open outside of that circle.



COMMENTS FROM VOLUNTEERS

I am a current Peace Corps Response Volunteer serving in the Philippines, but was formerly a Peace Corps Volunteer initially in Mali (2010-2012), then Kenya (2012-2013). Although I have since moved onto two different countries, my experience in Mali was by far the most transformative and cherished.

Mali is an interesting country to serve in. On one hand, Peace Corps Volunteers are greeted with some of the harshest conditions found in any Peace Corps country. But on the other, Mali benefits from the greatest asset any country could boast - its people. I lived in a mud house, and slept outside most of the year due to the excessive heat: pushing 115 degrees during the day within the hot season. The 3-month rainy season isn't simply when rains are heaviest, but really the only time rains arrive. The local diet consists primarily of millet and sauce made from local leaves, or on special occasions, peanuts.

Malian culture is very different from American culture, and definitely takes time to become accustomed to it. Meals are eaten by hand from a common bowl shared by up to 10 people. Greeting every person you encounter is compulsory. You will drink more tea than ever, but in small shot glass quantities over conversations from morning to midnight. Since most communities only speak Bambara, language learning is imperative, but be assured it will come.

But all the inconveniences give way to something absolutely beautiful about the life of the Malian people. The sense of community is stronger than anywhere I have ever experienced. They are a fun-loving and happy people, with jokes and music prevalent in all aspects of daily life.

As a Water and Sanitation Volunteer, my projects all revolved around 3 separate committees I formed alongside my counterparts: a Water and Sanitation Committee, a Women's Garden Committee, and a Fish Farm Committee. Within these committees, we primarily tried to mobilize local resources to facilitate sustainable development.

My biggest project involved obtaining a grant to, alongside a community contribution, replace two broken water pumps and train 5 committee members on how to maintain and repair them. But most projects involved small things; behavior change such as monthly dues collection, pump rules enforcement, water treatment, and handwashing.

At times, things will move excruciatingly slow, or seem to not be moving at all. People won't show up to meetings, or will come two hours later. Don't expect grand projects, but subtle changes the community can build upon long after you have left.

You will learn to be adaptable. Your work will be varied. You will learn how to better relate with people different from yourself, but you will also see those commonalities that bind us all together. Peace Corps service is always about what you put into it. Accept that you will be frustrated along the way, but never lose sight of the little things. Open yourself up to your community, and you will develop relationships that you will cherish for the rest of your life.

Mike Thibert

RPCV Mali (2010-2012), Kenya (2012-2013) and PCRV Philippines.



Dear Future Mali Trainees,

Bienvenue au Mali! Aw bissimilah! Welcome! Congratulations on your Peace Corp's invitation to one of the friendliest, culturally rich, unique, and challenging countries you can serve. You've of course been chosen for an extremely important sector, water and sanitation, that is essential to human health and well-being. The next two years will have a profound impact on your life as well as others. You will have unforgettable experiences, form life-long friendships, and learn a new language.

That last part, a new language (French, Bambara, Senufo, etc.), may be one of your most challenging and rewarding experiences in Peace Corps. It at least was for me. Don't worry; you'll get the hang of it. Malians, especially children, will be willing to give you plenty of practice and will be extremely grateful that you are taking the time to get to know them and their culture. This is not without a lot of hard work and stepping outside your comfort zone. It will be essential for your work in water and sanitation whether holding committee or community meetings, handwashing demonstrations at a school, teaching a household how to treat their water, or constructing a latrine.

As you may know many people in the world do not have access to potable water or sanitation or have education in germ theory. This leads to the spread of diarrheal disease, dysentery, Giardia, acute respiratory infections, etc. that kill millions each year mostly children under five. The Peace Corps Mali Water and Sanitation staff will provide you with the materials and training you need to help prevent these diseases and deaths. However, much of this will require behavior change (handwashing, latrine use, and water treatment for example) so have patience. Also, your major challenge is to make your projects sustainable so that your community will continue with the behavior and maintain the facilities after you leave. Given your background and hard work as well as the help of the Peace Corps Mali staff, you will be able to accomplish this!

We are excited to welcome you into the Peace Corps Mali family and your second home.

Colleen Naughton
PCV: Water and Sanitation Sector 2009-2012



Dear Future Mali Trainees,

Welcome to Mali! Aw bissimilah and bienvenue! Start getting excited for the next two years of your life – they'll be unlike any you've had before. Mali is a fascinating country in which to live. The cliff dwellings and mask dances of Dogon country, the history and mystique of Timbuktu, the Senufo rain rituals, the Fula nomadic tradition, and the beautiful Bamana works of art are just the beginning of what makes Mali such an amazingly unique country in which to serve.

Malians will constantly surprise and impress you with their openness and their incredible kindness. From the moment you begin to learn your new language, people will be delighted that you are taking the time to get to know them and their culture. Don't be nervous - you'll learn faster than expected and will soon



be making people laugh with your clever bean jokes and “joking cousin” witticisms. Your village will welcome you with enthusiasm and open arms, and you will quickly become a part of the community.

Mali can be a tough place to live, but you will find that the rewards outweigh the challenges. Patience, perseverance, and hard work are the virtues that will carry you through your time in Peace Corps. Make no mistake - you’re going to make an impact on your community in a way that will be remembered for many years to come. It will be difficult, but it will be worth it.

Both your village and your fellow Peace Corps Volunteers await your arrival with excitement.

Katherine Arnold

PCV: Water and Sanitation Sector 2009-2011.