

VOLUNTEER ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTION

Morocco



Since 1961.

Program: Youth Development

Job Title: Youth Asset Builder

Dates of Service*: December 1, 2016 – December 1, 2018

Orientation/Staging Dates*: September 12-13, 2016

Pre-Service Training*

(in Morocco): September 14, 2016 – November 30, 2016

*dates subject to change

AA171 = 3477BR

AA162 = 3424BR



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

Once you have accepted your invitation, for further information about serving as a Youth Asset Builder in Morocco, call the Country Desk Officer for Morocco at Peace Corps headquarters in Washington, D.C., (9AM to 5PM, EST):

Toll-free: 1-855-855-1961, press 1, then extension 2419; or directly at (202) 692-2419, or via email at morocco@peacecorps.gov

A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMMING AND TRAINING

Congratulations and welcome to Peace Corps Morocco!

My name is Dawn Traut and I am honored to serve as the Director of Programming and Training for Peace Corps/Morocco. I work with the Program Managers, Regional Managers and many other staff that you will meet when you are in training and together we will be supporting you during your two years of service.

Should you accept your invitation, you will join a program that has made a difference in the lives of many Moroccan youth and you will have the opportunity to touch the lives of many youth during your two year service in Morocco. Moroccan youth are eager to learn from you about America, as well as teach you about Morocco. You will find many who want to learn English. While content-based English teaching is still widely used, the program today focuses on youth leadership, strengthening youth networks, building capacity of professionals who work with youth, and promotion of girls' education. Volunteers work with local professionals and youth to promote volunteerism and youth leadership through activities such as sports, study of world geography, libraries, exercise classes, environmental projects, project management training, thematic English teaching, and self-esteem activities for girls.

Spring and summer camps are an important part of this experience so please bring icebreakers, games, and fun activities to share. Youth are eager to gain skills in English, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), sports, dance, art, music, theater, resume writing, business planning, goal setting, conflict resolution and much more.

Please keep in mind that the Ministry of Youth & Sports has invited you as there is a great need for capacity building in youth centers. They hope that you will bring a commitment to being a youth asset builder. If you bring your enthusiasm, a desire to contribute to positive youth development and are willing to learn, then we will be happy to have you serve the Youth of Morocco as a Peace Corps Volunteer.

- *The Youth Development Program team*

PEACE CORPS MOROCCO HISTORY

Since 1963, more than 5,000 Peace Corps Volunteers (PCVs) have served in Morocco. Over the past 50 years, Peace Corps Morocco's Education program transitioned from Volunteers working as teachers in high schools to working in schools for the blind and the handicapped, and university level teaching. Since 1995, Volunteers have been working in local youth development under the Ministry of Youth and Sports.

Youth development has become a major focus for the government of Morocco. King Mohamed VI has taken bold steps to respond positively to the needs of youth. Elections were held in November of 2013 and youth continue to be a strategic priority of the new government.

Unemployment of educated youth, particularly college graduates, is high and many youth are seeking employability and entrepreneurship skills. The Ministry recognizes that leadership and volunteerism are two particular assets that Peace Corps Volunteers bring that they can model and help develop in the youth.

YOUR PRIMARY DUTIES

PC Morocco assigns YD Volunteers to a youth center ("Dar Chabab", literally "House of Youth" in Arabic) or a women's center (Nedi Neswi). You will be working under the Ministry of Youth and Sports under the direct supervision of a Mudir/a (male or female youth center director) at your site. In addition, in each region there will be a Ministry of Youth and Sports delegate who is responsible for the work of the Ministry in your region.

Once you arrive at your site, you will meet with your Mudir/a and plan your work together. There may be another Volunteer already in your site, you may be sent with another Volunteer from your group to the same site or you may be alone.

Because you are an American, the youth in your community will very likely be interested in learning English from you. During training you will be introduced to content-based English teaching so that you can help students improve their English and learn something else as well. Teaching English is an effective community entry activity. It provides you with a legitimate role from the very start, the opportunity for rapid integration into life at the center and a springboard for the implementation of activities outside the classroom. Most Volunteers hold at least one English class per week for their community during the first few months of service, and depending on the community and the interest level, some hold various English classes for various groups of people and proficiency levels. Many Volunteers also tutor youth one on one or in small groups in their communities in English. Community entry is also the time to meet with associations that provide services for youth.

At the beginning, when you are building relationships critical to your success in the community, there will likely be many possibilities for branching out into other activities such as clubs (environment, health,



leadership, sports, theater, creative writing, art, music, etc.) and volunteerism and service learning projects. Girl's education is a priority for the Ministry, Volunteers and their counterparts place special emphasis on meeting girls' and young women's needs through education and empowerment-related activities.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR SECONDARY PROJECTS

Because there has been a history of Volunteers in Environment, Health and Small Business, there are many opportunities for secondary projects. During pre service training (PST) you will learn about community integration and participatory community assessment. These tools will help you be able to design and implement activities outside of your primary assignment.

WORKING CONDITIONS

Available Resources:

Most youth centers have basic furniture such as chairs and tables and some have white boards, and at least one classroom. You may be surprised by some of the centers that have computers, musical instruments, sports equipment, and libraries. What many centers may lack is staff which is why you have been invited to help provide activities.

Many materials have been developed by previous Volunteers and there is a wealth of information in the Peace Corps Information Resource Center (IRC) in Rabat. Volunteers report that bringing a laptop has been very helpful in their work.

Location of Job:

You will be assigned to a Dar Chabab (DC) or Nedi Neswi (NN) at the request of the Ministry of Youth and Sports under the direction of a regional ministry official and a direct supervisor, the center director. Volunteer sites range widely geographically, from smaller towns to larger cities. You may or may not have a site mate.

Working Hours:

In general, youth centers are open for a short time in the morning and longer in the evening. You will be expected to conduct classes, run clubs, activities or programs for youth from 5 – 8 PM Tuesday through Saturday. Sunday mornings are times for activities that engage many youth as everyone will generally be



able to participate then. The Nedi Neswis could be open during the day but you should count on having evening hours of work as well as some mornings, generally from 10 – 12. Clubs in schools, if you have a school in your area, could also take place during the day.

You are expected to contribute **at least 15 hours** face to face time conducting activities based in your primary assignment and Peace Corps/Morocco estimates that you will spend another 15 hours planning for those activities. Between planning and implementing your work, therefore, we expect you will spend approximately 30 hours a week on your primary assignment. Typical activities include teaching classes, organizing clubs, leading camps, and organizing other activities for youth in your community.

Cultural Attitudes and Customs in the Workplace:

In Morocco, respect tends to come with age and experience. Because this is reflected in a society that favors older employees, younger Volunteers sometimes experience initial difficulties gaining respect from their supervisors and community partners. Your professional appearance, your work habits, your language skills along with the deference you demonstrate for your Moroccan counterparts' experience and culture will go a long way toward gaining respect in the workplace.

Dress Code:

Morocco is a study in contrast. European-dressed people walk next to those dressed in traditional clothing. Generally, great importance is attached to neatness and proper dress, particularly in the professional fields. Volunteers should dress appropriately (neat and professional) both on and off the job and respect host country attitudes towards personal appearance.

Pants are acceptable for both men and women. Summers are hot and winters can be cold. Layers can be a smart way to dress. Dress for women requires much more coverage than would be necessary in the U.S. You will find that some workplaces and communities are much more conservative than others, but we would suggest that you come prepared for the most conservative scenario, with at least some professional clothing that covers you from elbow to ankle.

Youth Development Volunteers can be positive adult role models but the type of dress can either enhance or diminish this possibility. It matters how you are viewed in the community. In many cases, youth will not be allowed to participate if the parents do not approve of those organizing the activity.

TRAINING FOR YOUR JOB

Peace Corps Morocco uses a Community Based Training (CBT) model for Pre-Service Training (PST). During pre-service training, (11 weeks) you will be provided with intensive language training. By the end of training you will be expected to have acquired a basic functional level of spoken Moroccan Arabic, also called *Darija*.

You will spend a great deal of time learning about the cultural and social context within which you will live and work. Only a small part of your training will be conducted in a large group. Most of your training will be time spent at a youth center in a small town together with 5-6 other trainees and a Language and Culture Facilitator (LCF). While at your training site, your LCF will provide on-going language and cultural instruction and help facilitate technical activities. You will be living with a host family once the orientation process is completed in Rabat. This model of training will give you a more realistic experience as to what your future site and life will be like. Activities will include: teaching at the Dar Chabab, visiting local authorities, and possibly women's centers, and implementing community-based youth development activities.

LIVING CONDITIONS

The sizes and profile of sites that YD Volunteers are assigned vary greatly depending on the region and climate. You could live in the desert or the mountains or a semi-urban town. It will be hot in the summer and it may be cold in the winter. You may find many amenities such as electricity and hot water and even internet, but don't expect consistent connectivity. When you first arrive at your site you will be staying with a host family until you can find affordable, appropriate safe housing.

POTENTIAL CHALLENGES & REWARDS

Please refer to the Welcome Book for more detailed and specific information on minority and cross cultural challenges.

Morocco, in general, is a safe and secure place to live and work. Some female and male Volunteers, however, experience a high level of unwanted attention and possibly sexual harassment – ranging from lingering looks and suggestive noises, to actual touching and groping. Some of this should be anticipated and factored into your acceptance of this invitation to serve with Peace Corps Morocco. In many cases, harassment can be reduced or managed by awareness, modifying your dress or behavior and/or developing your own coping strategies. Some days it will be merely annoying, on others it may generate temptations to resign.

Politics, and fielding opinions and questions on US foreign policy, can be another challenge. Volunteers are strongly encouraged to avoid engaging in any political discussion whatsoever. As Peace Corps is an apolitical organization and given is Peace Corps policy, volunteers don't engage in these types of discussions. There can also be challenges for Volunteers when being asked about their religion or religious beliefs. Volunteers have found that not engaging in religious discussions has proven to be a helpful strategy to avoid uncomfortable conversations that can feel like harassment.



Morocco is a Muslim-majority country, and as you are likely aware, Muslims are forbidden from drinking alcohol. Alcohol consumption and smoking cigarettes (especially for women), while not prohibited for non-Muslims, is mainly restricted to hotels and restaurants catering to foreigners. Volunteers and trainees are expected to adhere to community norms, but are not prohibited from consuming alcoholic beverages and smoking while serving **except on the premises of ALL training events.**

The safety and security of Volunteers is a high priority for Peace Corps, and is a consideration in site placement and the determination of Volunteer activities and housing. Volunteers are also responsible for their safety and security, which means modifying behavior when required to follow Peace Corps guidelines, as well as communicating with staff when issues arise.

At points in your service, you may feel frustrated, disappointed, exhilarated, sick or thrilled; these are all normal responses to the life of a Volunteer. A combination of pragmatic and idealistic motivations seems to be a key factor in a successful and enduring Peace Corps experience.

Training is a period for examination and challenge. If you have a strong and clear commitment from the start, you will benefit from the training period as a time to make a complete and serious two-year commitment to the program.

For over fifty years, Volunteers have been living and thriving in Morocco. Your patience, understanding, maturity, flexibility, and sense of humor will influence your success.

If you accept, you will be joining an important partnership and building on a foundation laid by over 5,000 Volunteers.

COMMENTS FROM VOLUNTEERS

“Morocco is a very diverse country geographically and culturally. Every day really is an adventure. You could be in a sand storm in the desert and within an hour be having a snowball fight in the mountains and once on the other side of the mountain in a lush palm grove. You can expect to share a taxi with a sheep during the "big holiday", or maybe even a monkey during festival season. You'll find that fresh fruits and vegetables are abundant and Moroccans know how to cook! Life in Morocco is exciting and fun.”

- Lauren Bernstein 2011 – 2013

“My life used to consist of alarm clocks and driving a car,
Now, I wake up to the world, and ride public transportation.

I used to worry when I didn't wear a seat belt,
Now, I have almost forgotten the purpose of them.
I used to spend most of my time watching television,
Now, I read any chance I get.

I used to have a laundry day,
Now, my laundry day is any day the sun is out.

I used to have a bubble,
Now, I find myself between the lady and her live chicken and the man who hasn't washed in days having
a conversation.

I used to think of Morocco as a cross between The Lion King and Aladdin,
Now, I know how diverse it really is.

I used to think any foreign language was the death of me,
Now, I get around without English on a normal basis.

I used to not worry about things like electricity or longer showers,
Now, I think in terms of, “how much will my bill be?” or “when will I have to replace the butagas?”
I used to eat meat,

Now, it's a luxury at other people's houses.

I used to think strangers inviting me into their house had other motives,
Now, I am comfortable drinking tea in a house with people I've never met before.

I used to never have to deal with harassment,
Now, I get called beautiful, pretty, and gorgeous on a daily basis.

I used to work mostly with people who spoke my language,
Now, I've worked with people from Morocco, Algeria, Jordan, Syria, Iraq, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Libya, and
Oman to name a few.

I used to be able to run errands without having to talk to anyone,
Now, anywhere I go I take part in a long dialogue of "hello, how are you?"

I used to think uncovered ladies in the sauna walking around were weird or European,
Now I practically am European in the Moroccan sauna.
I used to think asking for a cheaper price was disgraceful,

Now, I bargain like an old Berber lady.

I used to not be able to sleep unless it was so quiet you could hear the faucet dripping,
Now, I sleep with car horns, dogs barking, animal sounds, the call to prayer, and conversations at cafes.

I used to eat ramen noodles because I was poor,
Now, I only eat it when I get it for a good price at the Marjane because it is expensive.”

“I think the best thing about joining the Peace Corps, and especially PC Morocco is that every day is an adventure. As long as you are open to the adventure, you’ll have the time of your life. Yes, things will be different, but sometimes change is good. You never know what each day holds. So come with uncertainties (that’s OK), but leave here with an amazing experience (I promise!)”

- Libby Weiler 2012-2014