THE PEACE CORPS WELCOMES YOU TO

ETHIOPIA

A PEACE CORPS PUBLICATION FOR NEW VOLUNTEERS
September 2015

MAP OF ETHIOPIA

A Welcome Letter

Congratulations on your decision to join the Peace Corps! The Peace Corps/Ethiopia staff is very excited about your assignment and anxious to ensure that your transition to Peace Corps life is smooth, effective, and rewarding. You're coming to one of the oldest civilizations in Africa. King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba figure significantly into Ethiopia's story, and it is one of the few African countries that did not endure a long colonial presence. Ethiopians are very proud of their history, their culture, and the beauty of their land.

But Ethiopia is not about the past; it is about the present and the future. Although it sits near the bottom of a list of countries on the United Nations Human Development Index, this country has enjoyed one of the most robust economic growth rates in Africa for several years. The country is located in a rough neighborhood—the Horn of Africa—but despite the turmoil and despair in most of the countries on its borders, Ethiopia has been relatively stable for two decades. Its stability and economic progress—in the face of vast human need—make it an ideal Peace Corps country. The people and government of Ethiopia are very pleased that Peace Corps Volunteers continue to serve the development needs and aspirations of our host communities.

In that context, you have every reason to be excited about the adventure on which you are about to embark. We hope that this welcome book will fuel your enthusiasm and provide you with useful information about Ethiopia and Peace Corps life. The more you understand about the country and Peace Corps service before you arrive, the more comfortable you will be during your first few action-packed weeks as you adjust to your new surroundings and a rigorous but fulfilling training schedule.

You're about to take on "the toughest job you'll ever love" (our former tagline). The Peace Corps/Ethiopia staff and I thank you for your desire to improve the opportunities in life for others, and we stand ready to support you in the days and weeks leading up to your arrival.

Warm regards,

Brannon T. Brewer
Country Director

TABLE OF CONTENTS

A Welcome Letter 2
Core Expectations for Peace Corps Volunteers 5
Peace Corps/Ethiopia History and Programs 6
History of the Peace Corps in Ethiopia 6
Peace Corps Programming in Ethiopia 6
Country Overview: Ethiopia at a Glance 9
History 9
Government 9
Economy 10
People and Culture 10
Resources for Further Information 12
General Information about Ethiopia 12
Connect With Returned Volunteers and Other Invitees 12
Online Articles/Current News Sites about Ethiopia 13
International Development Sites about Ethiopia 13
Recommended Books 13
Books about Ethiopia 13
Books about the History of the Peace Corps 13
Books on the Volunteer Experience 13
Living Conditions and Volunteer Lifestyle 15
Communications 15
Housing and Site Location 15
Living Allowance and Money Management 16
Food and Diet 16
Transportation 16
Geography and Climate 16
Social Activities 16
Professionalism, Dress, and Behavior 16
Personal Safety 18
Rewards and Frustrations 19
Peace Corps Training 20
Overview of Pre-Service Training 20
Technical Training 20
Language Training 20
Cross-Cultural Training 21

Health Training 21
Safety and Security Training 21
Additional Trainings During Volunteer Service 21
Your Health Care in Ethiopia 22
Health Issues in Ethiopia 23
Helping You Stay Healthy 23
Maintaining Your Health 23
Women's Health Information 24
Your Peace Corps Medical Kit 24
Before You Leave: A Medical Checklist 25
Safety and Security in Depth 27
Factors that Contribute to Volunteer Risk 27
Staying Safe: Don't Be a Target for Crime 28
Support from Staff 28
Office of Victim Advocacy 29
Crime Data for Ethiopia 29
Volunteer Safety Support in Ethiopia 29
Diversity and Inclusion Overview 31
Diversity and Inclusion at Your Site 31
Cross-Cultural Considerations 32
What Might a Volunteer Face? 32
Possible Gender Role Issues 32
Possible Issues for Volunteers of Color 33
Possible Issues for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning/Queer, Ally (LGBTQA) Volunteers 34
Possible Issues for Volunteers with Disabilities 35
Possible Issues for Volunteer Couples 36
Possible Religious Issues for Volunteers 36
Possible Issues for 50+ Volunteers 37
Frequently Asked Questions 38
Welcome Letters from Ethiopia Volunteers 40
Packing List 45
Pre-Departure Checklist 48
Contacting Peace Corps Headquarters 50

CORE EXPECTATIONS FOR PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS

In working toward fulfilling the Peace Corps mission of promoting world peace and friendship, as a trainee and Volunteer, you are expected to do the following:

1. Prepare your personal and professional life to make a commitment to serve abroad for a full term of 27 months
2. Commit to improving the quality of life of the people with whom you live and work and, in doing so, share your skills, adapt them, and learn new skills as needed
3. Serve where the Peace Corps asks you to go, under conditions of hardship if necessary, and with the flexibility needed for effective service
4. Recognize that your successful and sustainable development work is based on the local trust and confidence you build by living in, and respectfully integrating yourself into, your host community and culture
5. Recognize that you are responsible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for your personal conduct and professional performance
6. Engage with host country partners in a spirit of cooperation, mutual learning, and respect
7. Work within the rules and regulations of the Peace Corps and the local and national laws of the country where you serve
8. Exercise judgment and personal responsibility to protect your health, safety, and well-being and that of others
9. Recognize that you will be perceived in your host country and community as a representative of the people, cultures, values, and traditions of the United States of America
10. Represent responsibly the people, cultures, values, and traditions of your host country and community to people in the United States both during and following your service

PEACE CORPS/ETHIOPIA HISTORY AND PROGRAMS

History of the Peace Corps in Ethiopia

Peace Corps/Ethiopia is one of the oldest Peace Corps programs. The first group of Peace Corps Volunteers arrived in Ethiopia (including present-day Eritrea) in September 1962, with 279 secondary school teachers. Volunteers worked in both secondary and vocational/technical schools, with others working in the health, small business, rural development, law, and agriculture sectors. From 1962–77, Peace Corps/Ethiopia was one of the largest Peace Corps programs in the world. More than 3,000 Volunteers served in the country before the program closed in 1977 due to the unstable political situation.

In 1991, the Marxist regime that had been in power since 1974 was overthrown. The new government requested the Peace Corps' return and, in July 1995, 25 Volunteers arrived as secondary school English teachers. Hostilities between Ethiopia and Eritrea erupted in 1999, forcing the Peace Corps to suspend its operations; the program was closed in March 2000. In May 2002, the Peace Corps received an invitation from the government of Ethiopia to resume its program. After a thorough assessment, the program reopened with the arrival of 43 Health Volunteers in October 2007. In September 2010, the first group of Environment Volunteers arrived, just in time for the Ethiopian new year. In May 2011, the post reopened the Education sector, bringing in its first group of Education Volunteers since 1999.

Peace Corps Programming in Ethiopia

The Peace Corps has been involved in almost every facet of Ethiopia's development over the past decades, making contributions in the fields of education, health, rural development, and small business development. The Peace Corps' current program focuses on three core areas: strengthening English-language learning, addressing HIV/AIDS and other public health concerns, and promoting food security and natural resources management. Volunteers collaborate with Ethiopian counterparts to support the government of Ethiopia's strategy to strengthen communities in the Amhara, Oromiya, Tigray, and Southern Nations regions. To best serve the needs of the Ethiopian government, Volunteers are placed in public secondary schools, community health centers and health posts, farmer training centers, community-based organizations, and district-level government offices.

Education

The Education program began in 2011 as part of a local five-year Participating Agency Partnership Agreement with USAID, and in close coordination with the Ministry of Education. The project was officially titled Improving the Teaching of English Language in Ethiopia (ITELE). Volunteers were assigned to build English faculty capacity, directly supporting the ministry to implement its plan to enhance the quality of English instruction and teachers and students' proficiency in English in both colleges of teacher education and primary schools. The ITELE project ended in September 2015 with the official close of service of the last cohort of ITELE Education Volunteers.

Since 2013, Volunteers and staff have worked together to adapt the Education project framework to enhance Volunteer impact in their schools. The refocused education project is known as Promoting English Language Learning in Ethiopia (PELLE). The overall purpose of the program is for Ethiopian high-school students and teachers to gain access to personal, academic, and professional development opportunities through improved English education. To achieve that purpose, the program has two goals:

1. **Increase student success in and outside of the classroom:** Ethiopian high-school students will use English more effectively and confidently to broaden their academic and professional opportunities.
2. **Improve teaching:** Ethiopian high-school teachers will engage in professional development to teach English effectively and confidently.

In order to meet these broader goals, since September 2014, Education Volunteers have been placed in high schools as English teachers, with a maximum of three sections of their own. Additionally, Volunteers plan and lead extracurricular activities including student and teacher English clubs, gender-empowerment clubs, and teacher trainings, to name a few.

Environment

The Environment project, formerly known as Conservation and Natural Resource Management, was launched at the beginning of fiscal year 2013 following Peace Corps/Ethiopia's entrance into the global Peace Corps food security partnership agreement with USAID and the Feed the Future initiative. The project has evolved from its previous focus on protected area management and ecotourism to enhancing agricultural systems in order to improve food security at the grassroots level. The current environment project is called Resilient Environment, Agriculture and Livelihoods. The overall purpose of the project is that Ethiopian community members will improve food security and management of their natural resources. This is accomplished through the following two goals:

1. **Food security:** Community members will increase availability of and access to diverse and more nutritious foods.
2. **Environmental stewardship:** Communities will improve environmental awareness and natural resources management.

Environment Volunteers provide core support at the village level to improve the food security status of the communities they serve.

Environment Volunteers work primarily at the grassroots level with rural communities and farmer training centers. Their main counterparts are development agents from the local agricultural and rural development office and community members interested in undertaking reforestation, agroforestry, and other natural resource management activities. Food security and natural resource management includes a wide range of activities, from small-scale gardening to reforestation and watershed protection to farming and sustainable food production.

All Volunteers in this project are trained on specific technical skills such as permagardening, tree planting, water harvesting, environmental education programming, and fuel-efficient cookstoves, providing them with a toolkit of focused activities that will help address agricultural and environmental challenges in Ethiopia.

Community Health and HIV

Since 2007, Peace Corps/Ethiopia has worked closely with the Ministry of Health and the federal HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Office to help the Ethiopian government implement prevention, care, and support interventions. Fully funded by the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), the Health project focuses on establishing and strengthening community-based HIV/AIDS prevention, care, and treatment programs. Health project systems-level activities focus on improving community awareness about HIV/AIDS prevention, improving care and support services for families affected and infected by HIV/AIDS, strengthening referral systems between health facilities and communities within their areas of operation, and enhancing client-based tracking of patients through the service delivery continuum. To support networks of prevention, care and support services for people living with HIV, orphans and vulnerable children, and their caregivers at the individual level, Volunteers focus on activities including HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention, training of youth and other community members in life skills, support of livelihoods, and business development activities that target households of people living with HIV, promotion of counseling and testing programs for people with HIV, and system strengthening within local organizations working to combat HIV/AIDS.

In 2011, the program diversified its areas of technical support after the government's adoption of the Global Health Initiative. Under this framework, Volunteers now also work on maternal and child health with a focus on nutrition, water, hygiene and sanitation, and malaria. The overall purpose of the Health project is to improve individual and family health in Ethiopia through the reduction of infectious diseases and development of healthy behaviors. The project has three goals:

1. **HIV prevention, care and support:** Community members will adopt behaviors to decrease the spread and mitigate the harmful effects of HIV.
2. **Maternal and newborn health:** Mothers and caregivers will demonstrate the knowledge and skills that contribute to improved maternal, neonatal, and child health outcomes.
3. **Water, sanitation, and hygiene:** Community members will adopt healthy behaviors to reduce infectious diseases and improve environmental health.

Community Health and HIV Volunteers work at a health center or health post. The primary counterpart is the local health extension worker. Together with their counterparts, Volunteers facilitate community outreach and health education programs by conducting home visits, facilitating school-based health activities for youth, and supporting community gatherings that focus on community health priorities.

COUNTRY OVERVIEW: ETHIOPIA AT A GLANCE

History

Ethiopia is a diverse country with an ancient history, dating as far back as human history itself. The oldest fossil remains of humans and our ancestors have been found within its borders, including the famous skeleton of *Australopithecus afarensis*, better known as Lucy. Lucy and our other ancient ancestors found in this region contributed to Ethiopia's moniker as the cradle of humanity.

The first strong kingdom in Ethiopia was the Aksumite kingdom, at its time one of the most powerful kingdoms of the ancient world. The Aksumite kingdom is believed to have stretched into large parts of southern Arabia and west into the Nile Valley. Its longest lasting influence was the introduction of Christianity to Ethiopia. Ethiopian traditional legend holds that the founder of the Aksumite kingdom was King Menelik I, the son of the Queen of Sheba (known in Ethiopia as Makeda) and King Solomon of Israel. After the rise of Islam in the seventh century, the kingdom became isolated as Arabs gained control of the Red Sea trading routes. In the 12th century, successor of the Axumite Dynasty had expanded southward, principally to Lalibela.

Ethiopia is an ethnically diverse country with over 80 ethnic and linguistic communities, making governance and the development of a unitary state challenging. Despite this diversity, Ethiopia was never colonized by the European powers and Ethiopians are extremely proud of this legacy. Ethiopia's modern period (post-1855) was characterized by the process of recreating a cohesive state: by Emperor Haile Selassie; by the Marxist regime of Mengistu Haile Mariam; and, since mid-1991, by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) under Meles Zenawi (until 2012) and Hailemariam Desalegn. The period has been dominated by recurring conflict with neighboring Eritrea, which was a province of Ethiopia until it gained independence in 1991. A tentative ceasefire ended hostilities in 2000, but the border remains undefined and tensions continue, particularly since the 2007 withdrawal of U.N. peacekeepers.

Government

With the overthrow of the Mengistu regime in 1991, the Transitional Government of Ethiopia under Zenawi pledged to oversee the formation of a multiparty democracy. The election of a 547-member constituent assembly occurred in June 1994, and this assembly adopted the constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia in December 1994. The elections for Ethiopia's first popularly chosen national parliament and regional legislatures were held in May and June 1995. Most opposition parties chose to boycott these elections, ensuring a landslide victory for the EPRDF. International and nongovernmental observers concluded that opposition parties would have been able to participate had they chosen to do so. The government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia was installed in August 1995.

Parliament has two houses. The House of Federation, or upper chamber, consists of 108 members chosen by state assemblies to serve five-year terms. The House of People's Representatives, or lower chamber, comprises 547 members directly elected by popular vote from single-member districts to serve five-year terms. The Council of Ministers is selected by the prime minister and approved by the House of People's Representatives. The president is elected by the House of People's Representatives for a six-year term and is eligible for a second term. The last election was held in May 2015 and the EPRDF or its allies won all 547 seats of the House of People's Representatives. Following legislative elections, the party in power designates the prime minister.

Economy

In the economic arena, the TGE inherited a shattered country. In his first public speech after the EPRDF had captured Addis Ababa in 1991, Zenawi indicated that Ethiopia's coffers were empty; moreover, some 7 million people were threatened with starvation because of drought and civil war. Economic performance statistics reflected this gloomy assessment.

The current government has embarked on a cautious program of economic reform, including privatization of state enterprises and rationalization of government regulation. While the process is ongoing, reforms have attracted only meager foreign investment.

The Ethiopian economy is based on agriculture, which contributes about 45 percent to gross national product and more than 80 percent of exports. Agriculture employs approximately 85 percent of the population. The major agricultural export crop is coffee, providing 35 percent of Ethiopia's foreign exchange earnings, down from 65 percent a decade ago due to lower coffee prices since the mid-1990s. Other traditional major agricultural exports are hides and skins, pulses, oilseeds, and leather. Sugar and gold production has also become important in recent years.

Ethiopia's agriculture is plagued by periodic drought, soil degradation caused by poor agricultural practices and overgrazing, deforestation, high population density, undeveloped water resources, and poor transport infrastructure (making it difficult and expensive to get goods to market). Yet agriculture is the country's most promising resource. Potential exists for self-sufficiency in grains and for export development in livestock, flowers, grains, oilseeds, sugar, vegetables, and fruits.

Gold, marble, limestone, and small amounts of tantalum (used in the production of electronics) are mined in Ethiopia. Other resources with potential for commercial development include large potash deposits, natural gas, iron ore, and possibly oil and geothermal energy. Although Ethiopia has good hydroelectric resources that power most of its manufacturing sector, it is totally dependent on imports for its oil.

A landlocked country, Ethiopia has relied on the port of Djibouti since the 1998–2000 border war with Eritrea. Ethiopia is connected with the port of Djibouti by road and rail for international trade. Of the 14,796 miles (23,812 kilometers) of all-weather roads in Ethiopia, about 4,349 miles (7,000 km) are asphalt. Mountainous terrain and the lack of good roads and sufficient vehicles make land transportation difficult and expensive. However, the government-owned airline's reputation is excellent. Ethiopian Airlines serves 17 domestic airfields and has 62 international destinations.

In November 2001, Ethiopia qualified for debt relief from the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative, and in 2005 the International Monetary Fund voted to forgive Ethiopia's debt. Under Ethiopia's land tenure system, the government owns all land and provides long-term leases to the tenants; the system continues to hamper growth in the industrial sector as entrepreneurs are unable to use land as collateral for loans.

People and Culture

With about 87.9 million people, Ethiopia is Africa's second-largest country by population. The growth rate is also among the highest in the world. However, Ethiopia's population is mainly rural, with most people living in highlands above 5,900 feet (1,800 meters).

There are over 80 different ethnic groups in Ethiopia, with the four largest being Oromo (34 percent), Amhara (27 percent), Somali (6 percent), and Tigray (6 percent). Ethiopia's people speak about 90 individual languages. While Amharic is the only official national language, Oromo has an almost equal number of speakers. Tigrinya and Somali are spoken by the people of their respective ethnic groups. Volunteers learn Amharic, Oromo, or Tigrinya.

Religion plays an important role in Ethiopian society. Almost half the people are Ethiopian Orthodox, while Muslims account for about 35 percent of the total population. A small minority includes Catholics and Protestants; the remainder practice traditional religious beliefs.

RESOURCES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Following is a list of websites for additional information about the Peace Corps and Ethiopia and to connect you to returned Volunteers and other invitees. Please keep in mind that although the Peace Corps tries to make sure all these links are active and current, the Peace Corps cannot guarantee it. If you do not have access to the Internet, visit your local library. Libraries offer free Internet usage and often let you print information to take home.

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 please keep in mind that no two people experience their service in the same way.

General Information About Ethiopia

State.gov
The Department of State's website issues background notes periodically about countries around the world. Find Ethiopia and learn more about its social and political history. You can also go to the site's international travel section to check on conditions that may affect your safety. Link directly to the Ethiopia page at http://www.state.gov/p/af/ci/et/.

http://unstats.un.org/unsd/pocketbook/World_Statistics_Pocketbook_2013_edition.pdf
United Nations resource book with 2013 statistical country data

Data.un.org
United Nations site with links to data from U.N. member countries

Wikipedia.org
Search for Ethiopia to find encyclopedia-type information. Note: As Wikipedia content is user-generated, information may be biased and/or not verified.

Worldbank.org
The World Bank Group's mission is to fight poverty and improve the living standards of people in the developing world. It is a development bank that provides loans, policy advice, technical assistance, and knowledge-sharing services to developing countries to reduce poverty. This site contains a lot of information and resources regarding development.

Data.worldbank.org/country
Provides information on development indicators on countries, including population, gender, financial, and education, and climate change statistics.

Connect With Returned Volunteers and Other Invitees

http://www.peacecorpsconnect.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, comprised of former Volunteers who served in those countries. There are also regional groups that frequently get together for social events and local volunteer activities. Or go straight to the Friends of Ethiopia site: http://www.ethiopiaeritrearpcvs.org.

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

Online Articles/Current News Sites About Ethiopia

UN.org/News/
The United Nations news service provides coverage of its member states and information about the international peacekeeping organization's actions and positions.

VOAnews.com
Voice of America, the U.S. government's multimedia broadcaster, features coverage of news around the world.

Allafrica.com
News wire stories about Ethiopia.

International Development Sites About Ethiopia

http://www.usaid.gov/ethiopia
This site explores the U.S Agency for International Development's Work in Ethiopia.

http://www.et.undp.org
This site explores the work of the United Nations Development Program in Ethiopia.

Recommended Books

Books About Ethiopia

1. Mezlekia, Nega. "Notes from the Hyena's Belly: An Ethiopian Boyhood." Picador, 2002.
2. Verghesse, Abraham. "Cutting for Stone." Vintage Canada Edition, 2010.
3. Theroux, Paul. "Dark Star Safari: Overland from Cairo to Cape Town" Mariner Books, 2004.
4. Shah, Tahir. "In Search of King Solomon's Mines." Arcade, 2012.

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 1960s." Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000.
2. Rice, Gerald T. "The Bold Experiment: JFK's Peace Corps." Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985.
3. Stossel, Scott. "Sarge: The Life and Times of Sargent Shriver." Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2004.
4. Meisler, Stanley. "When the World Calls: The Inside Story of the Peace Corps and its First 50 Years." Boston: Beacon Press, 2011.
5. Ashabranner, Brent. "A Moment in History: The First Ten Years of the Peace Corps." Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1971.

Books on the Volunteer Experience

1. Dirlam, Sharon. "Beyond Siberia: Two Years in a Forgotten Place." Santa Barbara, CA: McSeas Books, 2004.

2. Casebolt, Marjorie DeMoss. “Margarita: A Guatemalan Peace Corps Experience.” Gig Harbor, WA: Red Apple Publishing, 2000.
3. Erdman, Sarah. “Nine Hills to Nambonkaha: Two Years in the Heart of an African Village.” New York City: Picador, 2003.
4. Hessler, Peter. “River Town: Two Years on the Yangtze.” New York City: Perennial, 2001.
5. Kennedy, Geraldine ed. “From the Center of the Earth: Stories out of the Peace Corps.” Santa Monica, CA: Clover Park Press, 1991.
6. Thomsen, Moritz. “Living Poor: A Peace Corps Chronicle.” Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997 (reprint).
7. Clift, Elayne (ed.). “But Do They Have Field Experience!” Potomac, Md.: OGN Publications, 1993.
8. Kennedy, Geraldine (ed.). “Hartmattan: A Journey across the Sahara.” Santa Monica, Calif.: Clover Park Press, 1991.

LIVING CONDITIONS AND VOLUNTEER LIFESTYLE

Communications

Mail

Few countries in the world offer the level of mail service available in the United States. Volunteers have been pleasantly surprised by the efficiency of the Ethiopian postal service, but delayed and lost mail does occur. Advise your family and friends to number their letters and to include "Airmail" and "Par Avion" on their envelopes. Packages normally take three to four weeks to reach Ethiopia via airmail. Flat-rate boxes (available through the United States postal system) are a good deal, allowing the sender to send several things without having to worry about the weight.

Your address during training will be as follows:

Your Name/PCT
U.S. Peace Corps/Ethiopia
P.O. Box 7788
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

You will purchase a personal post office box once you move to your site. After you have obtained your own post office box, mail arriving in Addis Ababa will continue to be held at the Peace Corps office until you pass through on official business or when a staff member visits you at your site.

Telephones

Almost all sites have telecom centers with international long distance. Peace Corps/Ethiopia provides a telecommunications allowance. Cellphones are widespread in Ethiopia, although coverage varies across the country. You will have the option of purchasing a SIM card and phone during pre-service training (PST); all current Volunteers have mobile phones. Volunteers' settling-in allowance includes funds to cover this purchase.

Computer, Internet, and Email Access

Internet access is rapidly changing in Ethiopia. Typically, Internet is available at Internet cafes in many towns and cities, but service can be slow and costly. A growing number of towns now have access to Internet via pre-paid Internet devices that you can purchase in Ethiopia and use with your laptop. As such, several Volunteers are finding it much easier to keep in contact with friends and family at home. Nevertheless, there are still several sites and Volunteers without access to Internet connection options. You should, therefore, not count on having daily, or even weekly, Internet access during your service in Ethiopia. Designated computers in the resource center at the Peace Corps office have Internet access, and you are welcome to use these when in Addis Ababa or at a Peace Corps regional office. The offices are also equipped with Wi-Fi service exclusively for Volunteers' use. Many Volunteers bring laptops for research, digital photos, or entertainment, but as with any valuable item, there is a risk of theft or damage. Many PCVs recommend bringing a laptop computer, but the Peace Corps is not responsible for theft or damage, and you will need to take additional precautions if you choose to bring one.

Housing and Site Location

All trainees stay with Ethiopian host families during the initial 12-week pre-service training.

Peace Corps/Ethiopia places Volunteers in four regions: Amhara, Oromiya, Tigray, and Southern Nations. Due to its wide range of altitudes, Ethiopia experiences extremely varied climate conditions, including cold mountains, temperate highlands, and hot deserts. Volunteers should be prepared for a placement in any of these regions.

During service, Volunteers live in accommodations identified by the Peace Corps in coordination with local representatives from the host organization. Volunteers will have a modest dwelling that may be one or more rooms in a house on a common compound, as is the local standard. All Volunteer housing meets Peace Corps/Ethiopia's safety and security standards and is approved by Peace Corps staff prior to the Volunteer's arrival at site. Some Volunteer sites are remote and the standard of living is at a basic level (e.g., a mud house with an occasionally unreliable supply of water or electricity). Other Volunteers may be placed in a rural town and live in a cement structure with electricity and running water. Rural sites can be isolated with the closest shopping town being anywhere from 20–150 miles away. Volunteers must be prepared to accept the living conditions to which they are assigned as they will be living under the same conditions as the people with and for whom they work.

Living Allowance and Money Management

Volunteers receive a monthly allowance in Ethiopian birr that is sufficient to live at the level of the local people. The allowance covers food, housing, household supplies, clothing, transportation to and from work, utilities, recreation and entertainment, and incidental expenses. Peace Corps Volunteers are expected to live at a level that is comparable with that of their host country counterparts. The Peace Corps discourages Volunteers from supplementing their living allowance with funds from home.

Food and Diet

In most parts of Ethiopia there is a regular, although limited, selection of fresh fruits and vegetables. Butcher shops sell beef and lamb; live chickens can be purchased at the market; and, in areas near lakes, fresh fish is available. With a little creativity, you can enjoy a varied diet. Fruits and vegetables are seasonal, which means some items may not be available at all times. Vegetarian Volunteers will have little difficulty continuing their diets, as Orthodox Christians "fast" by eating a vegan diet on Wednesdays and Fridays throughout the year. Vegetarianism, however, is not common, so be prepared to explain your habits. Meat is eaten during special occasions and holidays, so it may be prudent to discuss your vegetarianism with host families early to avoid embarrassing or offending them.

Transportation

All Volunteers will be expected to travel in Ethiopia using local transportation (i.e., foot, bicycle, public buses, and minivans—called "line taxis"). Volunteers may not own or operate motorized vehicles in Ethiopia. The Peace Corps will provide a stipend for Volunteers wishing to purchase a bicycle at their site. Volunteers are required to always wear a helmet while riding a bicycle.

Geography and Climate

Most of the country's land mass is above 4,920 feet (1,500 meters). Ethiopia experiences extremely varied climate conditions from cool or very cold in the highlands, which most of the population inhabits, to one of the hottest places on Earth, the Danakil Depression.

Social Activities

Volunteers find it easy to make friends in their communities and to participate in weddings, funerals, birthday celebrations, holiday celebrations, and other social events. It is impossible to overemphasize the rewards of establishing rapport with supervisors, co-workers, and other community members. A sincere effort to learn the local language will greatly facilitate these interactions.

Professionalism, Dress, and Behavior

Dress Code

Accommodating Ethiopian norms in dress and grooming will greatly facilitate your own professional credibility and effectiveness in your assignment. Anything that does not conform to the norm risks loss of acceptance and lack of cooperation from community members. Ethiopians are, by nature, very polite and

will not likely call attention to unconventional styles. However, such unconventional styles might make Ethiopians uncomfortable with you. The basic question Volunteers should ask themselves is if you want your community to be polite to you, or if you want them to be comfortable with you, respect you, and truly accept you.

Ethiopians are conservative in professional and casual attire. Although your counterparts' resources are limited, they will present themselves in a professional way. In the workplace or when conducting activities in your community, you will be expected to dress professionally and maintain a neat appearance. Men wear trousers such as chinos and button-down shirts in work settings. Jackets and ties are occasional requirements. Jeans, T-shirts, and very casual sandals are not considered professional attire.

Women wear dresses, skirts, or trouser suits with tunic style tops in both work and leisure environments. For women, please note that long leggings or opaque tights should not be worn as a form of pants in any setting, professional or casual. This type of attire is culturally inappropriate and will attract unwanted attention. Short, low-cut, or sleeveless garments are also not considered appropriate for women in professional settings.

Volunteers with visible body piercings or tattoos may need strategies to conceal them. In Ethiopia, tattoos may be associated with criminal activity or invite unwanted attention. Likewise, having visible body piercings may make it more difficult to integrate into your host community. For men, long hair and untrimmed beards are unusual. In some cases, Volunteers have chosen to shave their facial hair or cut their hair to facilitate integration and have regrown hair after gaining acceptance in their community. Some Ethiopians associate dreadlocks on both men and women with “Rasta culture” and consider them inappropriate. Keep in mind that Peace Corps/Ethiopia staff may encourage you to be flexible with regard to personal appearance to facilitate integration in training and during your service. Remaining flexible is key to Peace Corps service in any country.

In further regard to being respectful of cultural traditions and standards, the way in which you present yourself has considerable bearing on being respected in your community and workplace. As Volunteers and foreigners (*ferenji*), you are outsiders striving to become participating members of the local culture, and keeping your dress and appearance consistent with the relatively conservative and modest cultural conventions enables you to earn people’s respect far more readily than to challenge what they consider as appropriate within their context. For example, since men wear trousers and children wear shorts, wearing trousers would be the most culturally appropriate choice for men. This is not surrendering your personal choices. Rather, you are making a choice to respect the culture of which you strive to become a part, you will avoid any misconception that you are mocking the culture, and you will attract far less negative or unwanted attention as a result.

If you choose to serve as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Ethiopia, you must be willing to comply with acceptable Ethiopian social norms of dress and grooming. This may require that you modify the manner of dress to which you are presently accustomed.

Cultural Attitudes and Customs

You will find that your acceptance into the community will depend a great deal on your willingness to experience Ethiopian lifestyles. The most successful Volunteers are those who are well integrated into their communities. They eat the local food, speak the local language(s), and attend important community ceremonies. Commitment to your work and exemplary behaviors will also help you command respect and acceptance from the public.

Expect a slow pace of life, both professionally and socially. The people of Ethiopia have a strong work ethic, but Volunteers' collective objective is not to teach American values or sense of time to Ethiopians; it is to help Ethiopian students and teacher communities help themselves within their own cultural framework.

In Ethiopia, respect tends to come with age and experience, as well as with the way you dress and comport yourself. Younger Volunteers sometimes experience initial difficulties gaining respect from supervisors, counterparts, and audiences. Your professional appearance and work habits, along with the respect you demonstrate for your Ethiopian counterparts, will go a long way toward helping you gain respect in your community and in the workplace.

All Volunteers have to make many intercultural adjustments during their service in Ethiopia. Volunteers who are of different religions or of a minority ethnic group may find that they have even more or less freedom to "be themselves" than they do in the United States. For example, being an African-American in Ethiopia may provide greater freedom or serve as a hindrance depending on circumstances, personality, and your approach to your service.

Many of the social norms, mores, and laws of Ethiopia differ from those you are accustomed to as an American. Your personal safety and ability to be received as a professional are dependent upon being mindful and respectful of the cultural traditions and standards.

The matter of sexual behavior is, of course, a highly personal one. However, because of other social implications of such behavior, it is important that Peace Corps standards be clear. Sexual mores in Ethiopia are very conservative and strict, and you are expected to respect them. Public displays of romantic affection between members of the opposite sex, such as kissing, hand holding, or hugging are not generally socially acceptable, though hand holding among men is very common. Further information will be provided during your PST on appropriate and inappropriate sexual behavior.

Gender norms and relations are another challenge for all Volunteers, but most particularly for women. Women in Ethiopia commonly follow very traditional gender roles that include raising children and performing domestic responsibilities. Though women are increasingly entering the workplace and professional occupations, women sometimes experience verbal and physical harassment, including sexually touching or grabbing, and Volunteers are not exempt from this behavior. Female Volunteers model an independence that some men may see as challenging to their traditional social dominance. Both Peace Corps staff and Volunteers work together to help Volunteers understand the impact this has on the social dynamic, and training is provided to enable them to work within the challenges this can present and mitigate such occurrences.

In general, the above guidance is meant to convey to Volunteers that adherence to professional standards is appropriate at all times and in all places. When in doubt, look to your Ethiopian counterparts for guidance.

Personal Safety

More detailed information about the Peace Corps' approach to safety is contained in the Safety and Security section, 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 local language and culture, and being perceived as well-off are some of the factors that can put a Volunteer at risk. Many Volunteers experience varying degrees of unwanted attention and harassment. Petty thefts and burglaries are not uncommon, and incidents of physical and sexual assault do occur, although most Ethiopia Volunteers complete their two years of service without incident. The Peace Corps has established procedures and

policies designed to help reduce the risks and enhance your safety and security. These procedures and policies, in addition to safety training, will be provided once you arrive in Ethiopia. Using these tools, one can be empowered to take responsibility for his or her safety and well-being.

Each staff member at the Peace Corps is committed to providing Volunteers with the support they need to successfully meet the challenges they will face to have a safe, healthy, and productive service. Volunteers and families are encouraged to look at safety and security information on the Peace Corps website at peacecorps.gov/safety.

Information on these pages gives messages on Volunteer health and safety. There is a section titled Safety and Security in Depth. Among topics addressed are the risks of serving as a Volunteer, posts' safety support systems, and emergency planning and communications.

Rewards and Frustrations

Before accepting this assignment, you should give ample thought to some of the potential obstacles you will face. Until you adjust to living in Ethiopia, you will undoubtedly feel out of place speaking a new language and trying to practice customs that may seem strange to you. No matter what your ethnic, religious, or racial background is, you may stick out as someone from outside the Ethiopian culture. However, many situations can be overcome with a sense of humor and an open mind.

Your work situation will also present many difficulties and frustrations. Most of your work will be to educate, motivate, and organize community groups, often a slow task. You will find yourself in situations that require an ability to motivate yourself and your community to take action with little guidance from your colleagues and counterparts. You must possess the self-confidence, patience, and vision to continue working toward long-term goals without seeing immediate results or feedback. Co-workers, severely underpaid and burdened with extended family commitments, will have a much different outlook on life than your own. Rainy and agricultural seasons, as well as vacations and holidays, will delay and threaten the "success" of many project activities. As each Volunteer's job description will be uniquely dependent upon the expressed needs of the community and the skills that you bring, you will be constantly defining and redefining your role as you attempt to meet the needs of your community. This is both a gift and a challenge: a gift in that you are free to work in areas where you are needed most and really make a difference in your community, and a challenge in that you must invent and reinvent yourself in an oftentimes-unstructured work environment. Defining your role and finding your niche within your community will be one of your greatest challenges. You may have to reach beyond your assigned counterpart and organizations to find people and opportunities to begin projects. This aspect of your work will be difficult, but can be achieved with time, personal drive, resourcefulness, and a flexible and patient mind. And who knows, you may meet some great people in the process!

Even with the many economic, social, political, and environmental challenges facing Ethiopia today, there is an atmosphere of excitement and hope. The changes occurring in health, environment, education, and infrastructure development are some of the most important in the country's modern history. To join the people of Ethiopia in this effort, and to be part of this historic defining moment, will be both fascinating and satisfying to Volunteers willing to work hard, be tolerant, and give generously of their time.

PEACE CORPS TRAINING

Overview of Pre-Service Training

The Peace Corps uses a competency-based training approach throughout the continuum of learning, supporting you from arrival in Ethiopia to your departure. Pre-service training (PST) is the first event within this continuum of learning and ensures that you are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to effectively perform your job. Pre-service training is conducted in Ethiopia by Peace Corps staff, most of whom are locally hired trainers. Peace Corps staff measures your achievement to determine if you have successfully achieved competencies, including language standards, before swearing-in as a Peace Corps Volunteer.

Peace Corps training incorporates widely accepted principles of adult learning and is structured around the experiential learning cycle. Successful training results in competence in various technical, linguistic, cross-cultural, health, and safety and security areas.

Integrating into the community is one of the core competencies you will strive to achieve both in PST and during the first several months of service. Successful sustainable development work is based on the relationships you build by respectfully integrating into the host country community and culture.

You will be prepared for this through a homestay experience, which often requires trainees to live with host families during PST. Integration into the community fosters language and cross-cultural learning and ensures your health, safety, and security.

Technical Training

Technical training will prepare you to work in Ethiopia by building on the skills you already have and helping you develop new skills in a manner appropriate to the needs of the country. The Peace Corps staff, Ethiopian 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 and political environment in Ethiopia and strategies for working within such a framework. You will review your project's goals and objectives and will meet with the Ethiopian agencies and organizations that invited the Peace Corps to assist them. You will be supported and evaluated throughout training to build the confidence and skills you need to undertake your project activities, report your progress, and serve as a productive member of your community.

Language Training

As a Peace Corps Volunteer, you will find that language skills are key to personal and professional satisfaction during your service. These skills are critical to your job performance, help you integrate into your community, and can ease your personal adaptation to the new surroundings. Therefore, language training is at the heart of the training program. You must successfully meet minimum language requirements to complete training and become a Volunteer. Ethiopian language instructors usually teach formal language classes five days a week in small groups. Volunteers in Ethiopia learn Amhara, Oromo, or Tigrinya, depending on which region they will be placed in.

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 once you are at your site. Prior to being sworn in as a Volunteer, you will develop strategies to continue studying language during your service.

Cross-Cultural Training

Cross-cultural training will provide opportunities for you to reflect on your own cultural values and how they influence your behavior in Ethiopia. You will also discuss the questions you have about the behaviors and practices you observe in Ethiopia, exploring the underlying reasons for these behaviors and practices.

Cross-cultural and community development training will help you improve your communication skills and understand your role as a facilitator of development. Training will cover topics such as the concept of time, power and hierarchy, gender roles, communication styles, and the concept of self and relationships. Because adjusting to a new culture can be very challenging, you will participate in resiliency training which provides a framework and tools to help with adjustment issues.

The host family experience provides a unique context for cross-cultural learning, and 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 PST and to assist them in helping you adapt to living in Ethiopia. Many Volunteers form strong and lasting friendships with their host families.

Health Training

During pre-service training, you will be trained in health prevention, basic first aid, and treatment of medical illnesses found in Ethiopia. You will be expected to practice preventive health and to take responsibility for your own health by adhering to all medical policies. Trainees are required to attend all medical sessions. Health education topics will include nutrition; food and water preparation; emotional health; alcohol awareness; prevention of HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and other common illnesses; domestic and intimate partner violence; emergencies; and medical policies in Ethiopia.

Safety and Security Training

During the safety and security 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, how to identify safety risks in-country and about Peace Corps' emergency response and support systems.

Additional Trainings During Volunteer Service

The Peace Corps' training system provides Volunteers with continual opportunities to examine their commitment to Peace Corps service while increasing their technical and cross-cultural skills. During service, there are usually three training events. The titles and objectives for those trainings are as follows:

- **Reconnect:** Provides an opportunity 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.
- **Mid-service training** (done in conjunction with technical training): Assists Volunteers in reviewing their first year, reassessing their personal and project objectives, and planning for their second year of service.
- **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 the needs and conditions in Ethiopia. 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 IN ETHIOPIA

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. Peace Corps/Ethiopia maintains a clinic with a full-time team of medical professionals who take care of Volunteers' primary health-care needs, including evaluation and treatment of most medical conditions. Additional medical services are also available in Ethiopia at local hospitals. If you become seriously ill and cannot receive the care you need in Ethiopia, you will be transported to a Peace Corps-approved regional medical facility. If the Office of Health Services (OHS) determines that the care is not optimal for your condition at the regional facility, you will be transported to the United States.

Health Issues in Ethiopia

Ethiopia is geographically diverse. Health risks in Ethiopia include insect-borne diseases such as malaria, tick-borne typhus, and dengue fever; food- and water-borne diseases such as intestinal worms, giardiasis, amebiasis, typhoid fever, hepatitis A and E, and cholera; and hepatitis B, HIV/AIDS, polio, rabies, and snake bites. There are also periodic outbreaks of meningococcal meningitis in some areas. Schistosomiasis is also very common.

Helping You Stay Healthy

The Peace Corps will provide you with all the necessary inoculations, medications, and information to stay healthy. Upon your arrival in Ethiopia, you will receive a country-specific medical handbook. By 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 section.

During pre-service training, you will have access to basic medical supplies through the medical officer. However, during this time, you will be responsible for your own supply of prescription drugs and any other specific medical supplies you require, 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 midservice and at the end of your service. If you develop a serious medical problem during your service, the medical team in Ethiopia will consult with the Office of Health Services in Washington, D.C., or a regional medical officer. If it is determined that your condition cannot be treated in Ethiopia, 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 adage "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" 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 Ethiopia is to take the following preventive measures:

Many illnesses that afflict Volunteers worldwide are preventable if proper food and water precautions are taken. These illnesses include food poisoning, parasitic infections, hepatitis A, dysentery, Guinea worms, tapeworms, and typhoid fever. Your medical officers will discuss specific standards for water and food preparation in Ethiopia during pre-service training.

Abstinence is the most effective way to prevent infection with HIV and other STIs. 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 STIs. 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

If feminine hygiene products are not available for you to purchase on the local market, the Peace Corps medical officers will provide them. If you require a specific product, please bring a three-month supply with you. Many female Volunteers take menstrual cups (The Diva Cup, The Keeper, The Moon Cup, etc.) to avoid potential problems with availability or disposal of feminine hygiene products.

Pregnancy is treated in the same manner as other Volunteer health conditions that require medical attention. The Peace Corps is responsible for determining the medical risk and the availability of appropriate medical care if the Volunteer chooses to remain in-country. Given the circumstances under which Volunteers live and work in Peace Corps countries, it is rare that the Peace Corps' medical standards for continued service during pregnancy can be met.

The Peace Corps follows the 2012 U.S. Preventive Services Task Force guidelines for screening PAP smears, which recommend women aged 21–29 receive screening PAPs every three years and women aged 30–65 receive screening PAPs every five years. As such, most Volunteers will not receive a PAP during their service, but can use Peace Corps supplied health insurance after service to have an exam.

Your Peace Corps Medical Kit

The Peace Corps medical officer will provide you with a kit containing basic items to prevent and treat illnesses that may occur during service. Kit items can be periodically restocked at the medical office.

Medical Kit Contents

First Aid Handbook
Ace bandages
Acetaminophen (Tylenol)
Adhesive tape
Antacid tablets
Anti-diarrheal (Imodium)
Antibiotic ointment
Antifungal cream
Antihistamine
Antiseptic antimicrobial skin cleaner
Band-Aids
Bismuth Subsalicylate (Pepto-Bismol)
Butterfly closures
Calagel anti-itch gel
Condoms
Cough lozenges
Decongestant
Dental floss
Gloves
Hydrocortisone cream
Ibuprofen
Insect repellent
Iodine tablets (for water purification)
Lip balm
Oral rehydration salts
Scissors
Sore throat lozenges
Sterile eye drops
Sterile gauze pads
Sunscreen
Thermometer (Temp-a-dots)
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 Health Services (OHS). Failure to disclose new illnesses, injuries, allergies, or pregnancy can endanger your health and may jeopardize your eligibility to serve.

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 Health Services.

If you wish to avoid having duplicate vaccinations, bring a copy of your immunization record to your pre-departure orientation. If you purchase any immunizations prior to Peace Corps service that are not listed as requirement in your Medical Applicant Portal, the Peace Corps cannot reimburse you for the cost. The Peace Corps will provide all the immunizations necessary for your overseas assignment. Volunteers must be willing to get all required vaccinations unless there is a documented medical contraindication. Failure to accept required vaccination is grounds for administrative separation from the Peace Corps. 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. Although the Peace Corps cannot reimburse you for this three-month supply, it will order refills during your service. While awaiting shipment—which can take several months—you will be dependent on your own medication supply. The Peace Corps will not pay for herbal or nonprescribed medications, such as St. John's wort, glucosamine, selenium, or antioxidant supplements. Medications supplied may be generic or equivalent to your current medications.

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 (of the current prescription) with you. If a pair breaks, the Peace Corps will replace them, using the information your doctor in the United States provided on the eyeglasses form during your examination. The Peace Corps Office of Health Services strongly discourages Volunteers from wearing contact lenses while overseas unless there is a true medical indication documented by your ophthalmologist. Contact lenses, particularly extended use soft contacts, are associated with a variety of eye infections and other inflammatory problems. One of the most serious of these problems is infectious keratitis which can lead to severe cornea damage which could result in permanent blindness requiring corneal transplantation. These risks of permanent eye damage are exacerbated in the Peace Corps environment where the Volunteer's ability to properly clean the lenses is compromised due to limited access to sterile water as well as decreased effectiveness of cleaning solutions due to prolonged storage in unsatisfactory conditions. In addition, when bacterial eye infections occur, assessment and treatment within hours by a competent ophthalmologist is indicated. This is virtually impossible in the Peace Corps setting. If you feel that you simply must be able to use your contacts occasionally, please consider using single use, daily disposable lenses which do not require cleaning.

If you are eligible for Medicare, are over 50 years of age, or have a health condition that may restrict your future participation in health-care plans, you may wish to consult an insurance specialist about unique coverage needs before your departure. The Peace Corps will provide all necessary health care 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 health-care benefits described in the Peace Corps Volunteer Handbook.

You may wish to consider keeping an existing health plan in effect during your service if you think age or pre-existing conditions might prevent you from re-enrolling in your current plan when you return home.

SAFETY AND SECURITY IN DEPTH

Ensuring the safety and security of Volunteers is Peace Corps' highest priority. 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 theft and burglaries are not uncommon. Incidents of physical and sexual assault do occur, although most Volunteers complete their two years of service without a serious safety and security incident. Together, the Peace Corps and Volunteers can reduce risk, but cannot truly eliminate all risk.

Beyond knowing that the Peace Corps approaches safety and security as a partnership with you, it might be helpful to see how this partnership works. The Peace Corps has policies, procedures, and training in place to promote your safety. The Peace Corps depends on you to follow those policies and to put into practice what you have learned. An example of how this works in practice—in this case to help manage the risk and impact of burglary—follows:

- The Peace Corps assesses the security environment where you will live and work.
- The Peace Corps inspects the house where you will live according to established security criteria.
- The Peace Corps ensures you are welcomed by host country counterparts or other community leaders in your new community.
- The Peace Corps responds to security concerns that you raise.
- You lock your doors and windows.
- You adopt a lifestyle appropriate to the community where you live.
- You get to know your neighbors.
- You decide if purchasing personal articles insurance is appropriate for you.
- You don't change residences before being authorized by the Peace Corps.
- You communicate your concerns to Peace Corps staff.

This welcome book contains sections on Living Conditions and Volunteer Lifestyle, Peace Corps Training, Your Health Care, and Safety and Security, all of which include important safety and security information to help you understand this partnership. The Peace Corps makes every effort to give Volunteers the training and tools they need to function in the safest way possible and prepare for the unexpected, teaching you to identify, reduce, 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. By far the most common crime that Volunteers experience is theft. Thefts often occur when Volunteers are away from their sites, in crowded locations (such as markets or on public transportation), and when leaving items unattended.

Before you depart for Ethiopia there are several measures you can take to reduce your risk:

- Leave valuable objects in the United States, particularly those that are irreplaceable or have sentimental value
- Leave copies of important documents and account numbers with someone you trust in the States
- Purchase a hidden money pouch or "dummy" wallet as a decoy
- Purchase personal articles insurance

After you arrive in Ethiopia, you will receive more detailed information about common crimes, factors that contribute to Volunteer risk, and local strategies to reduce that risk. For example, Volunteers learn to do the following:

- Choose safe routes and times for travel, and travel with someone trusted by the community whenever possible
- Make sure one's personal appearance is respectful of local customs
- Avoid high-crime areas
- Know the local language to get help in an emergency
- Make friends with local people who are respected in the community
- Be careful and conscientious about using electronics (phones, cameras, laptops, iPods, etc.) in public or leaving them unattended
- Limit alcohol consumption

As you can see from this list, you must be willing to work hard and adapt your lifestyle to minimize the potential for being a target for crime. As with anywhere in the world, crime occurs in Ethiopia. You can reduce the risks by avoiding situations that place you at risk and by taking precautions. Crime at the village or town level is less frequent than in the large cities; people know each other and generally are less likely to steal from their neighbors. Tourist attractions in large towns are favorite worksites for pickpockets.

The following are other security concerns in Ethiopia of which you should be aware:

- Verbal and/or sexual harassment and unwanted attention
- Theft, pick-pocketing and "snatch and run," especially in cities
- Transportation-related accidents

While whistles and verbal harassment based on race or gender may be fairly common on the street, this behavior may be reduced if you abide by local cultural norms, dress conservatively, and respond according to the training you will receive.

Staying Safe: Don't Be a Target for Crime

Because many Volunteer sites are in rural, isolated settings, you must be prepared to take on a large degree of responsibility for your own safety. To reduce the likelihood that you will become a victim of crime, you can take steps to make yourself less of a target such as ensuring your home is secure and developing relationships in your community. While the factors that contribute to your risk in Ethiopia may be different, in many ways you can do what you would do if you moved to a new city anywhere: Be cautious, check things out, ask questions, learn about your neighborhood, know where the more risky locations are, use common sense, and be aware. You can reduce your vulnerability to crime by integrating into your community, learning the local language, acting responsibly, and abiding by Peace Corps policies and procedures. Serving safely and effectively in Ethiopia will require that you accept some restrictions on your current lifestyle.

Support from Staff

If a trainee or Volunteer is the victim of a safety and security 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 the Volunteer is safe and receiving medical treatment as needed. After assuring the safety of the Volunteer, Peace Corps staff response may include reassessing the Volunteer's worksite 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 support and assist Volunteers who choose to make a formal complaint with local law enforcement. It is very important that a Volunteer

reports an incident when it occurs. The reasons for this include obtaining medical care and emotional support, enabling Peace Corps staff to assess the situation to determine if there is an ongoing safety and security concern, protecting peer Volunteers and preserving the right to file a complaint. Should a Volunteer decide later in the process to file a complaint with law enforcement, this option may be compromised if evidence was not preserved at the time of the incident.

Office of Victim Advocacy

The Office of Victim Advocacy (OVA) is a resource to Volunteers who are victims of crime, including sexual assault and stalking. Victim advocates are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to help Volunteers understand their emotional, medical, and legal options so they may make informed decisions to meet their specific needs. The OVA provides a compassionate, coordinated, and supportive response to Volunteers who wish to access Peace Corps support services.

Contact information for the Office of Victim Advocacy
Direct phone number: 202.692.1753
Toll-free: 855.855.1961 ext. 1753
Duty phone: 202.409.2704 (available 24/7, call or text)
Email: victimadvocate@peacecorps.gov

Crime Data for Ethiopia

Crime data and statistics for Ethiopia, which are updated yearly, are available at the following link: http://www.peacecorps.gov/countrydata/ethiopia

Please take the time to review this important information.

Few Peace Corps Volunteers are victims of serious crimes. Crimes that do occur abroad are investigated and prosecuted by local jurisdictional authorities. If you are the victim of a crime, you will decide if you wish to file a complaint with law enforcement, who will then determine whether to prosecute. If you decide to file a complaint, the Peace Corps will help through the process. The Peace Corps staff will ensure you are fully informed of your options and understand how the local legal process works. Further, the Peace Corps will help you exercise your rights to the fullest extent possible under the laws of your host country.

The Peace Corps will train you on how to respond if you are the victim of a serious crime, including how to get to a safe location quickly and contact your Peace Corps office. It's important that you notify the Peace Corps as soon as you can so Peace Corps staff can provide assistance.

Volunteer Safety Support in Ethiopia

The Peace Corps' approach to safety is a five-pronged plan to help you stay safe during your service. The plan includes information sharing, Volunteer training, site selection criteria, a detailed emergency action plan, and protocols for addressing safety and security incidents. Ethiopia's in-country safety program is outlined below.

The Peace Corps/Ethiopia office will keep you 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, you will be contacted through the emergency communication network. An important component of the capacity of Peace Corps to keep you informed is your buy-in to the partnership concept with the Peace Corps staff. It is expected that you will do your part to ensure that Peace Corps staff members are kept apprised of your movements in-country so they are able to inform you.

Volunteer training will include sessions on specific safety and security issues in Ethiopia. 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 aspects, health, and other components of training. You will be expected to successfully complete all training competencies in a variety of areas, including safety and security, as a condition of service.

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 worksites. 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; different housing options and living arrangements; and other Volunteer support needs.

You will also learn about Peace Corps/Ethiopia's **detailed emergency action plan (EAP),** 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, you will gather with other Volunteers in Ethiopia at predetermined locations until the situation is resolved or the Peace Corps decides to evacuate.

Finally, in order for the Peace Corps to be fully responsive to the needs of Volunteers, it is imperative that Volunteers immediately report any safety and security incidents to the Peace Corps office. 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 current and future Volunteers.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION OVERVIEW

The Peace Corps mission is to promote world peace and friendship and to improve people's lives in the communities where Volunteers serve. Instituting policies and practices to support a diverse and inclusive work and Volunteer environment is essential to achieving this mission.

Through inclusive recruitment and retention of staff and Volunteers, the Peace Corps seeks to reflect the rich diversity of the United States and bring diverse perspectives and solutions to development issues. Additionally, ensuring diversity among staff and Volunteers enriches interpersonal relations and communications for the staff work environment, the Volunteer experience, and the communities in which Volunteers serve.

The Peace Corps defines diversity as a "collection of individual attributes that together help agencies pursue organizational objectives efficiently and effectively. These include, but are not limited to, characteristics such as national origin, language, race, color, disability, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, socioeconomic status, veteran status, and family structures. Diversity also encompasses differences among people concerning where they are from and where they have lived and their differences of thought and life experiences."

We define inclusion as a "culture that connects each [staff member and Volunteer] to the organization; encourages collaboration, flexibility, and fairness; and leverages diversity throughout the organization so that all individuals are able to participate and contribute to their full potential." The Peace Corps promotes inclusion throughout the lifecycle of Volunteers and staff. When staff and Volunteers are able to share their rich diversity in an inclusive work environment, the Peace Corps mission is better fulfilled. More information about diversity and inclusion can be found in the Volunteer Handbook.

An inclusive agency is one that seeks input from everyone in an effort to find the best ideas and strategies possible to execute its objectives. When input is solicited, heard, and considered from a rich multitude of individuals the best course of action usually emerges. The Peace Corps seeks to improve its operations and effectiveness by ensuring that all voices and ideas are heard and that all Volunteers and staff feel welcome and appreciated. When each person's voice is heard, the agency is stronger and the impact of Volunteers is strengthened.

Diversity and Inclusion at Your Site

Once Volunteers arrive at their sites, diversity and inclusion principles remain the same but take on a different shape, in which your host community may share a common culture and you—the Volunteer—are the outsider. You may be in the minority, if not the sole American like you, at your site. You will begin to notice diversity in perspectives, ethnicity, age, depth of conversation, and degree of support you may receive. For example, elders, youth, and middle-aged individuals all have unique points of views on topics you may discuss, from perspectives on work, new projects, and social engagements to the way community issues are addressed.

Peace Corps staff in your host country recognize the additional adjustment issues that come with living and working in new environments and will provide support and guidance to Volunteers. During pre-service training, a session will be held to discuss diversity and inclusion and how you can serve as an ally for your peers, honoring diversity, seeking inclusion, challenging prejudice and exclusion, exploring your own biases, and learning mechanisms to cope with these adjustment issues. The Peace Corps looks forward to having Volunteers from varied backgrounds that include a variety of races, ethnic groups, ages, religions, sexual orientations and gender identities. The agency expects you to work collaboratively to create an inclusive environment that transcends differences and finds common ground.

Cross-Cultural Considerations

Outside of Ethiopia's capital, residents of rural communities might have had little direct exposure to other cultures, races, religions, and lifestyles. What people view as typical U.S. 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 Ethiopia are known for their generous hospitality to foreigners; however, members of the community where you will live may display a range of reactions to cultural differences that you present.

As a Volunteer and representative of the United States, you are responsible not only for sharing the diversity of U.S. culture (to include your individual culture and the culture of other Americans) with your host country national counterparts, but also for learning from the diversity of your host country. An important aspect of this cultural exchange will be to demonstrate inclusiveness within your community in a sensitive manner. Additionally, you will share the responsibility of learning about the diversity of your fellow Peace Corps Volunteers and exploring how best to respect differences while serving as supportive allies as you go through this challenging new experience.

To ease the transition and adapt to life in your host country, 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 they have in the United States; male Volunteers may be expected to not perform chores or other tasks ascribed to women; political discussions need to be handled with great care; and some of your personal beliefs may best remain undisclosed. You will need to develop techniques and personal strategies for coping with these and other limitations. The Peace Corps staff will lead a diversity, inclusion, and sensitivity discussion during pre-service training and will be on call to provide support. This training covers how to adapt personal choices and behavior to be respectful of the host country culture, which can have a direct impact on how Volunteers are viewed and treated by their new communities. The Peace Corps emphasizes professional behavior and cross-cultural sensitivity among volunteers and within their communities to help integrate and be successful during service.

An ideal way to view the pursuit of cross-cultural adaptation and/or cultural integration is to recognize that everything done in your host country has both a specific reason for why it is done and an expected outcome. Trust that your host country counterparts are acting with positive intentions and work to mutually seek understanding and commonality. Language differences may add a communication barrier and lead to misunderstandings. Listen more than you speak and seek clarity. Remember that having the ability to laugh at yourself and at life's little surprises goes a long way—laughter is universal.

If you identify with any underrepresented group and would like more information or to be connected to a currently serving Volunteer from that group, please contact the Ethiopia country desk officer.

What Might a Volunteer Face?

Possible Gender Role Issues

Gender is a set of socially constructed roles, responsibilities, behaviors, and opportunities. Gender differs from sex, which refers specifically to biological and physiological characteristics of males and females. Gender roles and expectations are learned, change over time, and vary within and among cultures. Volunteers are trained in gender awareness as they approach their work in the host country. Gender roles in the United States may differ greatly from those in your country of service. It is important to absorb and to attempt to understand the cultural nuances of gender where you are. For example, in many cultures males are held in higher regard than females and females may manage the households. In some places, females are encouraged to attend school, while in other countries females are discouraged from engaging in such activities and instead work inside or outside of the home.

During the pre-service training, trainees receive an introduction to gender awareness in their country of service, and examine their own thinking about gender roles and how this thinking has impacted them. They then learn how to analyze development projects using a gender lens to better understand gender roles in their host country and to understand how these gender roles can benefit or limit what females and males may or may not do. During their 27 months of service, Volunteers will further engage in gender trainings to understand better how their gender identity impacts who they are as females or males in the host country and how this perception influences their work and relationships.

Comment from a Female PCV

"Being female in Ethiopia isn't easy, of course, but comes with its own unique set of rewards, too. You may struggle with harassment yourself, and you'll have to make changes to your habits such as the way you dress or what time you come home at night. You will also feel the pain of empathy, knowing that your women friends here face discrimination, disempowerment, rape or abuse, and genital mutilation. But you will also be in a special position to befriend these women, hear their stories, and walk beside them in their pursuit of equality. Many of us would say that some of our most rewarding moments in service have been shared with women and girls, joyfully finding their own voice and strength."

Possible Issues for Volunteers of Color

Volunteers of color sometimes, but not always, have a different Peace Corps experience than white Volunteers. Because of limited exposure, some foreign nationals will expect to see U.S. citizens who are white. Cultures of the world do not typically envision the States as a place of rich diversity with various culturally acceptable perspectives, personalities, and characteristics. Thus, a Volunteer of color may be questioned as about their U.S. citizenship.

In places where American stereotypes and/or caste system dynamics influence perception, Volunteers of color should be mindful of the reasons for these views without creating contentious environments. All too often, host country nationals are simply unaware of the diversity of the United States and require additional information and dialogue. Direct interactions with someone new or something different can take time to get used to, but those who take the time tend to be better off. Although host country nationals may assert that the United States is made up of predominately one race, we know that is not true. If a member of your community knows of compatriots living in the United States or of notable U.S. citizens of color, you can build on this knowledge as a point of reference for discussing diversity within the U.S.

These instances can be turned into teachable moments for the Volunteer and the host country national, in which the Volunteer can ask questions surrounding perception and collaborate with respect to issues and projects at hand, while engaging in cross-cultural exchanges. All Volunteers, to include white Volunteers and those of color, should be mindful of the issues of race that are embedded in U.S. culture and within the culture in your country of service. These issues may significantly affect how Volunteers interact with fellow Volunteers and host country nationals. Being open and inclusive to everyone will improve your experience in interacting with fellow Volunteers and members of your host community.

For Volunteers of color, the range of responses to their skin color may vary from the extremely kind to the very insensitive. In African countries, host country nationals may say "welcome home" to African Americans. Sometimes Volunteers expect to be "welcomed home" but are disappointed when they are not. More commonly, if a Volunteer is mistaken for a host-country national citizen, he or she is expected to behave as a male or female in that culture behaves, and to speak the local language fluently. Host country nationals are sometimes frustrated when the Volunteer does not speak the local language with ease. Conversely, some in the same country may call you a "sell out" because they feel the United States has not done enough to help with social issues.

In Ethiopia, host country nationals may perceive Volunteers of color as belonging to different ethnic and racial groups and misidentify their background: African-Americans may be perceived as host country nationals; Hispanic/Latinos may be perceived as being white or African-American; Asian-Americans may be perceived as Chinese, with little knowledge of other Asian ethnicities. Volunteers may be the target of race-based street harassment, including being mocked for being "Chinese" or having the Chinese language mocked—even if the Volunteer isn't ethnically Chinese.

Comment from an African-American Volunteer
"As a black PCV, many locals usually perceive me as an African. I am a descendant of West Africans who were sold into slavery, and I am not ashamed of it. However, when some stranger on the street begins shouting 'African' or 'Kenyan' or 'Nigerian' at me, I do not feel a sense of belonging. The words are said in a tone that is condescending and forbidding. And then, there are times when a stranger will say something that makes me feel like less of an outsider and more like someone who shares a common ancestral bond. I realize now more than ever before that Mother Africa does not consist of black people who automatically relate to one another as brothers and sisters merely because of the color of their skin. Black Americans may have similar preconceived notions that they should definitely eliminate before they arrive in Ethiopia. There's no telling how you will be perceived or treated until you're in the thick of it."

Comment from a Hispanic/Latin-American Volunteer
"Being a Mexican-American PCV in Ethiopia is very much like being one back home. You can't walk down the street without saying 'Hi' to someone and the greetings are quite long even though you just saw that person the day before. Some of the customs that you see in Ethiopia are very similar to Mexican customs, for example, it is impolite to start a conversation or ask for something without first inquiring about how the person is doing. Also, declining an invitation can take up to three to five tries and you have to ask for a raincheck rather than just saying no flat out. Ethiopia has been a home away from home in many ways. The Ethiopian people very easily open their homes and their hearts to a new stranger, especially when said stranger comes afraid and without a family. And just like any Mexican family, they will put you on the spot with what you might think are embarrassing questions and comments and they will want to know everything there is to know about you. So in short, just imagine going to visit your dad's second cousin for a family vacation after not seeing them for a long time: Enjoy the laughs, don't take anything too personally, and make great memories to laugh at later."

Comment from an Asian-American Pacific Islander Volunteer
"As an Asian-American Volunteer in Ethiopia, I have been confronted with more overt racism than I've ever faced before. I am often judged on the way I look and have felt prejudice against me because of it. It has made me re-examine my identity and its effects on my daily life."

Possible Issues for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning/Queer, Ally (LGBTQA) Volunteers
For LGBTQ Volunteers: Ethiopia has restrictive laws that target certain sexual acts. Consensual same-sex sexual activity between adults is criminalized and punishable by imprisonment. Persons do not identify themselves as LGBTQ due to severe societal stigma. Volunteers will need to be mindful of cultural norms and country-specific laws. Staff and currently serving Volunteers will address this topic during pre-service training and identify support mechanisms for incoming trainees. LGBTQ Volunteers can be out within the Peace Corps Volunteer and staff community and will find an open and inclusive support network within this community. Please refer to the Local Laws and Special Circumstances of the U.S. Department of State's travel page for more information. Many LGBTQ Volunteers have served successfully in Ethiopia and have very fond memories of their community and service.

Peace Corps staff welcomes dialogue about how to ensure your success as an LGBTQA Volunteer. More information about serving as an LGBTQ Volunteer is available at the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and

Transgender Peace Corps Alumni website at lgbrpcv.org. Additionally, the Peace Corps' LGBTQ employee resource group, Spectrum, can be reached at spectrum@peacecorps.gov.

For Ally Volunteers: Peace Corps staff intends to create open, inclusive, and accepting environments. As an agency, the Peace Corps encourages Volunteers to serve as allies to their LGBTQ colleagues in order to create a safe environment.

LGBTQA support groups may be available in your country of service, providing a network to support the needs of the Peace Corps LGBTQA community. Peace Corps staff will work with Volunteers to provide them with locally informed perspectives.

Comment from an LGBTQ Volunteer

"Although I had been out to my family and friends for a number of years before coming to Ethiopia, being a lesbian was not something I thought of as hugely defining. After two years of having to go back into the closet in most facets of my life, I now see it as a massive part of who I am—and I love that. Having to hide that part of myself has shown me how important it is to be who I am, whenever I can be. I now take every opportunity there is, mostly with other PCVs, American staff, and the other foreigners I meet, to be out and share my experiences as a gay woman living in Ethiopia. I have also been in relationships since being here which have added a great layer of support in which I could talk openly and freely. I do find it very sad that I do not feel comfortable coming out to Ethiopian staff members who I am very close with. I do not believe that all Ethiopians would be disgusted or angry with me because of my sexuality, but I stay in the closet because you just never know. I have had many dark times of sadness and/or frustration surrounding my sexuality but overall, believe it or not, Ethiopia and the Peace Corps has made me a more confident and proud gay woman than I have ever been before."

Possible Issues for Volunteers with Disabilities

As part of the medical clearance process, the Peace Corps Office of Health Services determined you were physically and emotionally capable, with or without additional medical support, to perform a full tour of Volunteer service in Ethiopia without a significant risk of harm to yourself or interruption of service. The Peace Corps/Ethiopia staff will work with Volunteers with disabilities to support them in training, housing, jobsites, or other areas to enable them to serve safely and effectively.

Comment from a Volunteer

"Being differently abled has played both an integral and inconsequential part of my service. I was born with one hand and have never considered myself disabled, just different. Just like in America, people in my community reacted in different ways to my limb difference. Some reacted with misplaced sympathy or suspicion, but most were indifferent. When you are the only foreigner in a small town, the fact that you have one hand is just one of many things that makes you a subject of attention. Nevertheless, being differently abled presented some obstacles due to social perceptions. In many developing countries, people who are differently abled are kept at home and out of site. Lack of awareness and understanding fosters ignorance and negative perceptions; thus, many differently abled children often don't go to school, and eventually are forced to turn to begging as their only option for income. By being out in society, whether you are at work, buying food at the market, or hanging out with friends, the fact that you are living and thriving in the public sphere shows your community that differently abled people can be productive members of society. While I have never considered myself inherently vulnerable, being differently abled has allowed me in my service to more easily reach out to various at-risk groups and has resulted in awareness programs and new inclusive education policies both in local schools and universities. My time in Ethiopia, like many others', has been filled with high and low points, but being differently abled has only enhanced my commitment to my community and my service. Being differently abled has never defined me as a person, though I am extremely proud in the ways it has affected my service and my life."

Possible Issues for Volunteer Couples
Before committing to Peace Corps service, couples should consider how different degrees of enthusiasm about Peace Corps service, adaptation to the physical and cultural environment, and homesickness will affect their lives. It can be helpful to recognize that your reactions to these issues will change throughout your service, and you may not always feel the same as your partner. You and your partner will have different jobs, different schedules, and different societal pressures. One partner may learn the language faster than the other or have a more satisfying assignment. This can create competition and put different kinds of stress on each person. Anticipating how these pressures will affect you and your partner differently throughout your service can help you remain a source of support for each other. Making friends with other Volunteers is a critical part of fitting into the larger Volunteer culture and can also be a good way to expand your support network.

While couples will live together during their service, they may live in separate towns during their pre-service training. This is a stressful time for most Volunteers, and it can be helpful to discuss in advance how you will deal with this potential separation. Your partner can be an important source of stability but can also add stress to your training experience. You may feel torn between traveling to visit your partner and focusing on your training, your host family, and friends you have made at your training site.

Couples often face pressure from host country nationals to change their roles to conform better to traditional Ethiopian relationships. Ethiopian men and women alike will often not understand American relationship dynamics and may be outwardly critical of relationships that do not adhere to traditional gender roles. It is also helpful to think about how pressures to conform to Ethiopian culture can be challenging to men and women in very different ways. Considering how your partner is being affected and discussing what, if any, aspects of your relationship should be changed can help reduce stress for you both.

Unmarried couples should understand that Ethiopian norms and customs frown on men and women living together before marriage. Peace Corps staff will likely ask you to not share with your Ethiopian counterparts that you are unmarried, especially when first integrating into a community.

Comment from a Volunteer Couple
"One issue we've faced is that the work culture here tends to be very male-centered, and women are not necessarily respected or taken seriously. This was very frustrating, because initially, one of us felt much less valued professionally. Another issue has been the challenge of getting other people to see us as individuals. There is a tendency in Ethiopia for a woman's marriage to define her identity, and even other Peace Corps Volunteers can sometimes forget that we are separate people. Finally, don't assume that being married means that you never get lonely. As wonderful as it is to be able to share the Peace Corps experience with someone you love, you can still feel isolated and homesick for friends and family in America. None of these challenges are easy to overcome. We rely on each other, and on a support network of other PCVs, as well as friends and family back home. Journaling helps too!"

Possible Religious Issues for Volunteers
Religion plays an important role in Ethiopian culture no matter where you are placed. Expressions of religious faith are seen in dress, language, and behavior. People will be curious about your religion and they will ask. The degree to which you express your beliefs at your site will be up to your judgment. It can be difficult to figure out the balance of integrating and expressing your culture and personal beliefs. Talking about religion in regard to culture can be a good way to achieve second goal, but it may stress some Volunteers out due to judgments passed by both PCV and host country nationals. Some Volunteers feel as though they must hide their faith and some can comfortably express it and even use it to their advantage. It is not considered rude to ask a person about his or her religion. You will find that during

most conversations with host country nationals it is one of the first questions you will be asked after your name, nationality, and occupation. The most prevalent religions are Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity, Protestant, and Islam.

Comments from Volunteers on Religion

"Sharing the faith of those I am living and working with has been one of the most beneficial—in terms of integration—and personally rewarding aspects of my service thus far. It has helped me foster working relationships and friendships with so many, as well as providing a valuable means of support."

"The slang term for Judaism in Amharic is *Falasha*, which translates to exile or foreigner. I don't want my religion to affect my integration and overall success as a Volunteer, so when asked about my religion I claim to be Christian. It's possible that Judaism would be acceptable to the people in my rural village, but I'm afraid to take that risk. Religion is a crucial part of Ethiopian society and is discussed openly, so I advise preparing an answer about your religious affiliation, because you will be asked. It's difficult to hide an important part of myself from the members of my community; especially those that I consider close friends. However, this challenging experience has strengthened my dedication to Judaism and made me appreciate the acceptance and freedom to practice my religion in the United States, and I will no longer take this for granted upon my return."

Possible Issues for 50+ Volunteers

Older Volunteers may find their age an asset in Ethiopia. They will often have access to individuals and insights that are not available to younger Volunteers. On the other hand, they will be in a distinct minority within the Volunteer population and could find themselves feeling isolated, looked up to, or ignored.

Older Volunteers are often accustomed to a greater degree of independence and freedom of movement than the Peace Corps' program focus and safety and security practices allow. Pre-service training can be particularly stressful for older trainees, whose lifelong learning styles and habits may or may not lend themselves to the techniques used. A 50+ individual may be the only older person in a group of Volunteers and initially may not feel part of the group. Younger Volunteers may look to an older Volunteer for advice and support; some find this to be an enjoyable experience, while others choose not to fill this role. Some 50+ Volunteers may find it difficult to adapt to a lack of structure and clarity in their role after having worked for many years in a very structured and demanding job.

More than younger Volunteers, older Volunteers may have challenges in maintaining lifelong friendships and dealing with financial matters from afar. They may want to consider assigning power of attorney to someone in the States.

Comment from a 50+ Volunteer

"As an older Volunteer in Ethiopia, my training is the exact same as younger Volunteers, but my perspective can often be quite different. My past work experience and more extensive general life experience is much more broad and varied which allows me not only to offer a unique view to host country nationals, but also to other PCVs. The two-year commitment does require a simplification of lifestyle that the younger Volunteers usually do not have to be concerned with, but this can be a very satisfying process all in itself. Ethiopians are a very generous and welcoming people, and I have had a very pleasant experience. In serving others, one grows exponentially. In allowing others to serve you, a true relationship and exchange of understandings can occur. This transcultural exchange changes both of you, resulting in new ways of perceiving the world."

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How much luggage am I allowed to bring to Ethiopia?
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 100 pounds total with a maximum weight of 50 pounds per 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 Ethiopia?
The local current is 220-240 volts/50 cycles and electrical outlets are of European configuration (two small round pins). Small electrical appliances can generally be used with converters. Most electronic equipment (MP3 players, battery chargers, etc.) will operate on local current with just an adapter.

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 should cover your expenses. Volunteers often wish to bring additional money for vacation travel to other countries. Credit cards and traveler's checks are preferable to cash. 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. Extended stays at your site are not encouraged and may require permission from your country director. The Peace Corps is not able to provide your visitors with visa, medical, or travel assistance. Education Volunteers are expected to be in their site and teaching during all school terms, so you will have to plan any vacation accordingly.

Will my belongings be covered by insurance?
The Peace Corps does not provide insurance coverage for personal effects; Volunteers are ultimately responsible for the safekeeping of their personal belongings. However, you can purchase personal property insurance before you leave (contact your insurance company for information). Volunteers should not ship or take valuable items overseas. Jewelry, watches, radios, cameras, electronics, 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 Ethiopia do not need an international driver's license because they are prohibited from operating privately owned motorized vehicles. Most urban travel is by bus or taxi. Rural travel ranges from buses and minibuses to trucks, bicycles, and lots of walking. On very rare occasions, a Volunteer may be asked to drive a sponsor's vehicle, but this can occur only with prior written permission from the

country director. Should this occur, the Volunteer may obtain a local driver's license. A U.S. driver's license will facilitate the process, so bring it with you just in case.

What should I bring as gifts for Ethiopia 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 after they have completed pre-service training. This gives 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 may have the opportunity to provide input on your site preferences, including geographical location, 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 frequently 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 Counseling and Outreach Unit provides assistance in handling emergencies affecting trainees and Volunteers or their families. Before leaving the United States, instruct your family to notify the Counseling and Outreach Unit immediately if an emergency arises, such as a serious illness or death of a family member. The Counseling and Outreach Unit can be reached at 855.855.1961, select option 1, ext. 1470. After business hours, on weekends, and on holidays, the COU duty officer can be reached at the same number. For non-emergency questions, your family can contact your country desk staff through the main Peace Corps number: 855.855.1961.

How easy is it to call home from Ethiopia?
Calls can be expensive and Skype can be very erratic. It is suggested that Volunteers and friends and family members individually investigate long distance calling cards and plans, as these rates and services are constantly changing.

Should I bring a cellphone with me?
Bringing a cellphone is a personal choice. Volunteers can bring their own smartphones; however, Peace Corps/Ethiopia will also provide money to purchase an inexpensive Ethiopian phone. All Volunteers will be provided with a local SIM card. SIM cards from the U.S. will not work in Ethiopia. Please keep in mind that if a smartphone is lost or stolen, Peace Corps/Ethiopia will not reimburse for the full cost of the smartphone, only for the inexpensive phone allotment.

Will there be email and Internet access? Should I bring my computer?
Internet service in Ethiopia is slow and erratic compared to the U.S. Wireless access is to the Internet is rarely available and often not secure.

Many Volunteers decide to bring laptops and external hard drives to Ethiopia and, by and large, are glad they did. You will need a computer to complete many work-related tasks, including a trimester Volunteer reporting form. Volunteers also use their computers for personal entertainment to watch movies and listen to music. However, there is always the possibility it could get lost, stolen, or damaged, and repair parts are often difficult to obtain locally or expensive.

WELCOME LETTERS FROM ETHIOPIA VOLUNTEERS

Selam nachu! Indet nachu!?

Ethiopia. There is no other place in the world like it. Its diverse languages, religions, and customs are astounding. You will soon have a passport in hand with your suitcases in tow, granted passage to where it is believed civilization started. And in the thousands of years where hominids have roamed the horn of Africa, Ethiopia's gorgeous, ancient culture has become timeless. How lucky you are to be able to say that you lived in the oldest place on Earth? Other Volunteers would only wish to be so fortunate.

As a Peace Corps Volunteer in Ethiopia, you will have to learn that time is told as the sun rises and sets, and 13 months mark the calendar. That even though Ethiopia lies north of the equator, her winter (rainy season) is our summer. That her people are overcome with sheer joy whenever you attempt a few words in their native tongue. That *injera* equals life. And that every holiday (and there are more than I can count) will have you bursting at the seams with the most delicious, spicy food that Ethiopia has to offer. And whether you are teaching in the classroom, at the clinic, or out in the field, you have the opportunity to impact your future community in ways that no one else ever has; the Peace Corps is beautiful that way.

I know you must be anxious about the journey that is ahead of you, but I am envious that you are about to experience Ethiopia for the first time with fresh eyes and eager hearts; embrace that vulnerability, because only good can come from it. After all, "Life begins at the end of your comfort zone."

Enjoy your last few days in the States; we are all so looking forward to meeting you!

Oh, and one last piece of advice: devour a chimichanga or plate of tamales. If not for you, then for me. Trust me: You won't regret it.

-Education Volunteer in the Oromiya Region

Greetings, *ferenji* (foreigner)! Welcome to Ethiopia!

Congratulations on successfully completing the application process and obtaining the coveted invitation letter!

What is life like in Ethiopia? Boy, I wish I could answer that! Each experience is unique. What I can say is that it will be full of adventure, embarrassing moments, challenging experiences, and rewarding outcomes. When you first get here your hands will probably shake from all the coffee you drink. After about two months, you will develop an unnaturally high tolerance for caffeine. You will live with a host family that will constantly tell you to eat, even if you have food in your mouth.

Children with snot running from their noses will run up to you with big smiles on their faces and shake your hands. People will stop whatever they are doing to watch you walk across the street, buy food from the market, or pick up a piece of paper you dropped. You will get used to seeing sheep and goats tied to the top of minivans. After about three months, your eyes will not bulge out as they cram 30 people in a minivan built for 12.

Eventually, you will be able to walk confidently to the marketplace and know how to ask the lady for a kilo of potatoes. One day, you will have a big goofy smile on your face because you finally understood what the *suk* (store) owner said to you. You will build relationships with people that will touch you

deeply. You will be inspired by the people and their kind hearts. You will make a difference in people's lives, even though you may never see it.

But, before you head to the motherland, I would like to offer a few words of advice and encouragement. Not too long ago, I remember receiving the list of suggested items to pack sent by the Volunteers. I tried to fit every single one of those things in my bags, which led me to have four extremely heavy bags. I ended up having to leave two bags' worth of clothes, blankets, and junk that I didn't need (including a pair of heels). Pay attention to airline weight limits! You can always pack a box in the States and have it shipped to you. Just bring the things that you absolutely need now, and would be devastated to live without.

Initially, I was completely nervous when I received my invitation. I am serving as an environmental Volunteer, but I have a business background, with limited experience in the environmental sector. You may be nervous about how you will use your expertise with your assignment. But don't worry! The Peace Corps placement officers gave you this assignment because they know that your skills can be used and are greatly needed. Each Volunteer has a different skill set, and each community has its own needs. Training staff will also give you technical skills training. I am using my business background to help farmers develop environmentally friendly income-generating activities and teaching farmers' wives basic business concepts.

Remember that you are here not only to share your talent, but to learn about Ethiopian culture and to share your own culture. Take time to participate in cultural events, greet your neighbors, and develop relationships. Ethiopians are very welcoming and will appreciate any attempt you make to talk to them. They will invite you to their homes, host coffee ceremonies for you, hold your hand while they show you around town, and ask you to break bread with them. Please don't be afraid to make a fool of yourself. You won't be the first *ferenji* to do so. During the first week of training, one of my fellow Volunteers tried to tell her host mother that she loves egg sandwiches, but instead she told them she "loves butt sandwiches." It created a bond between her and her host mother—a memory for them to cherish.

Remember to laugh when you find yourself in these types of situations. Have fun! *Gorsha* your host mom (a cultural practice of shoving food in someone's mouth), drink seven cups of coffee a day, play soccer with the kids, take the time to learn the language, and share your experiences with loved ones back home. You will also have a wonderful support network of your peers ready to help you. Don't be afraid to ask us any questions (including how to use the *shint bet*/latrine).

Environment Volunteer in Tigray Region

Selam naw!

On behalf of all the current Volunteers here in Ethiopia, allow me to congratulate you on embarking on a remarkable journey to the birthplace of coffee and the cradle of civilization. Many things and beings got their start here, including the Peace Corps (Ethiopia was one of the very first countries to request PCVs in 1962). Hardly a day goes by without an elder telling me, proudly, "I was taught by a Peace Corps Volunteer." As such, Ethiopia welcomes American Volunteers with open arms.

In thinking of your service in Ethiopia you may have imagined dry, dusty wastelands, a starving population, and nomadic tribes warring over cattle—but it's far from the reality here. Ethiopia is, in many ways, unlike any other country in Africa, and you will be enthralled at the diversity. Where I live in Western Ethiopia there's dense tropical rainforest. Other PCVs are scattered in the rocky highlands of the north, the flat scrubland of the Rift Valley, the chilly mountains of Bale or Simiens, or the cosmopolitan

flair of Ethiopia's regional capitals. While the food here is amazing, you can always reliably fall back on peanut butter and banana sandwiches, even in the smaller towns.

No matter your site, it will get colder at night and the rainy season brings its own kinds of challenges. Bring jeans, a jacket, thermals, and a durable raincoat. The two things Ethiopians maintain the most is their hair and their shoes, so bring nice work shoes and consider a haircut. While you aren't going on a two-year camping trip, oftentimes it will feel like you're living out of a backpack. Pack versatile clothes that you could wear again and again and again with minimal washing. Dress smart. Ethiopians appreciate it.

Start practicing your patience and flexibility now, as these will be your greatest strengths in weathering the adaptation to a culture that makes plans on-the-fly, places special emphasis on greetings, and uses an entirely different clock and calendar than the West. These concepts are second nature to me now, but at first blush they had the power to turn my usual calm, collected self into a bag of rants. Don't worry: You will adjust. Everything will be fine.

Leaving behind beloved family and friends in the U.S. for over two years is probably the hardest part about the Peace Corps, but you will soon realize that you're joining a PCV family here in Ethiopia. We are a natural support group willing to help your transition to Ethiopia go as smoothly as possible. As awkward as we were in the beginning, my PST group has now become old friends I can count on after a period of distress. So launch a Facebook group and start the conversation as soon as you can.

Don't leave the U.S. without a reliable laptop, small portable speakers, software installation media, external hard drives, an e-reader, and a handful of flash drives. Try to fail-safe everything, as electronics and a bumpy dusty Africa often clash.

The most important thing in the months before you depart for staging is to absorb as much American culture, food, and sports events as you can. If there's one thing you'll walk away with as a PCV, it's a deeper understanding and appreciation of the American way of life, in all its chaotic, epic grandeur. Moreover, be ready for daily surprises here in Ethiopia. One day you might miss cheese, but the next day you'll crave injera (spongy sour bread). One day 100 kids shouting at you will drain you, while the next day an Ethiopian's big wide smile will floor you. Expect the unexpected, and you're well on your way.

Fare forward, travelers!

Education Volunteer in Southern Nations Region

"There are a few things harder to put up with than a good example." —Mark Twain

Dear future Volunteers,

I couldn't agree more with the famous words of Mark Twain. When I arrived in Ethiopia several months ago I did not know what to expect in terms of how I'd be received. Different emotions went through my mind, similar to the feelings you are probably feeling now: I was anxious about whether I'd be able to set the right example and how much effort it was all really going to take. Slowly but surely, I've been able to get to know the Ethiopian people and have realized they are more similar than different. At the end of the day, they all want the same things we do: the best for themselves, their families, and their communities. The relationships I've built have encouraged me to forge forward and work toward our common goals of sustainability and mutual benefit.

As you prepare to embark upon your service in Ethiopia, I encourage you to plan to do the same. Get to know the people in your community. Build relationships and make friendships. Learn about their lives, their families, and their goals. Remember to be proactive and that, if you want to make an impact, it begins with you. There will be times you will feel frustrated, but remember, no matter how hard you try, you can't fall further than from where you began. As you grow as an individual and in your respective community, know that with each attempt of your positive efforts you will achieve more confidence in yourself as well as be successful in your assignment.

Arrive with an open mind and an ideal for service to the town you will be assigned. As you commence, acknowledge and attempt to understand the culture and the values of the Ethiopian people. Most importantly, always remember that the good example you set goes a long way in shaping this society, as well as yourself.

Health Volunteer in Amhara Region

Congratulations and welcome to the Peace Corps/Ethiopia family!

If you've never been to Ethiopia before, then you've never been anywhere like Ethiopia. You will have at least two years to experience it, and you will still be seeing new things at the end of your stay. You might be placed in a hot lowland city or a small alpine village, working with international NGOs or just the members of your community. You will learn at least one language and possibly a smattering of several, adjust to not having a winter, set your watch to Ethiopia's own time, and learn the best spots for coffee, and when there is electricity and when there isn't. If nothing else, you will have good local food and coffee wherever you go. Welcome to a two-year learning experience. Be patient!

One of the remarkable features of Ethiopia is its diversity, not only in culture and language, but also in development, altitude, terrain, and vegetation. Pack clothes for hot and cold weather, and make up two boxes for someone at home to mail out upon request: one consisting of hot weather clothes and one with cool weather clothes. Since there is no way to know where you'll end up before you get here, it is best to make preparations for both extremes. In either case, pack things you like and clothes you will be comfortable wearing. Dress respectfully, but realize that you're still going to stand out.

The Peace Corps slogan that calls a Volunteer's work "the toughest job you'll ever love" is often true, but not necessarily because you'll be working hard. In fact, for many Volunteers, finding work in the beginning is often the hardest part of the job. The daily challenges of finding and making food, getting around, braving curious crowds, and trying to work with people who often seem ambivalent to your very presence will be more wearing than you expect. The Peace Corps is also sometimes known as "the hardest job you'll never understand," and that is also often true. The work you accomplish here often will not sound much like work when you try to describe it to folks back home, and even to you it may be difficult to know what you are accomplishing until after it is over. Just being you, a foreigner, living in your site will have greater ripple effects than you can initially appreciate, so take your time. You will accomplish what you will accomplish, even if you can't describe it very well, and even if you're never sure what the lasting impact will be.

Because your work life and your daily life will merge and overlap, be prepared to spend your free time in a way that is valuable and productive, to you if to no one else. You'll spend a lot of time cooking, but you'll also have time for other pursuits. If you read, bring books (but there are also a lot here among PCVs to share). If you write, bring notebooks. If you paint or draw, bring your materials. If you like to juggle or slackline, bring those things.

Share what you do with your community, even if it is just reading in a café. They will want to spend time with you, no matter how or when. Remember that being you is part of your job, so do it well and be prepared for a lot of spectators, no matter what you're doing. You will be the most interesting thing in your town when you first arrive, and you'll probably still be the most interesting thing in your town when you leave, so accept it. The faster you can adjust to being the center of constant attention, the more comfortable you'll be.

There is an interesting duality to being a foreigner (*ferenji*) here. Ethiopia never had the colonizing influence that most other African nations had, so foreigners are still quite novel in most places. People will be very friendly and open with you, curious to ask questions, but they will also shout out to/at you on the street for no apparent reason. Some people will go out of their way to give you special treatment, while others (much more rarely) will go out of their way to try and shake you down. Children will be endlessly fascinated by everything you do, and that fascination will sometimes seem adorable and sometimes seem like harassment. Just get used to it. This, too, is part of your new job.

No matter where you end up, whether it is Tigray or Oromiya, you can and will find your place. Be patient with yourself and your community, and life will gradually be what you make of it. This is one amazing journey and no two are alike. So take the time you need to mentally adjust to Ethiopia and remember to come in with minimal expectations. You will be successful. But remember, Western standards of success and accomplishment are just one way to measure success.

Welcome!

Environment Volunteers in Oromiya Region

PACKING LIST

This list has been compiled by Volunteers serving in Ethiopia and is based on their experience. Use it as an informal guide in making your own list, bearing in mind that each experience is individual. There is no perfect list! You obviously cannot bring everything on the list, so consider those items that make the most sense to you personally and professionally. You can always have things sent to you later. As you decide what to bring, keep in mind that you have a 100-pound weight limit on baggage. And remember, you can get almost everything you need in Ethiopia.

General Clothing
Ethiopians are conservative in professional and casual attire. Although your counterparts' resources are limited, they will present themselves in a professional way. In the workplace or when conducting activities in your community, you will be expected to dress professionally and maintain a neat appearance.

Men wear trousers such as chinos and button-down shirts in work settings. Jackets are ties are occasional requirements. Blue jeans, t-shirts, and very casual sandals are not considered professional attire.

Women wear dress, skirts, or trouser suits with tunic style tops in both leisure and work environments. Please note that long leggings or opaque tights should not be worn as a form of pants in any setting, professional or casual. This type of attire is culturally inappropriate and will attract unwanted attention and harassment. Short, low cut or sleeveless garments are not appropriate for women in professional settings.

Bring clothing that makes you feel good, but still works with Ethiopian dress standards. You will find that clothing you bring from home will suffer more wear and tear than usual, so don't bring anything you will be sad to see ruined. Most Ethiopians wear the same outfit for several days and you will probably adopt that same practice. Also, Ethiopians are pretty thin people, so finding clothes in-country can be difficult. Height is different too.

Some suggestions:

- Rain jacket
- Scarves
- Bandanas
- Sunglasses
- Jeans
- Hiking socks
- Bathing suit
- Long skirt (mid-calf at least)
- Warm tights/spandex for under skirts
- Good hat
- Work pants
- T-shirts for lounging/working
- Lightweight workout/sport pants
- Lightweight, quick-dry apparel
- Nice pants, black slacks
- Button-down shirts

Shoes
Durable shoes are essential. Shoes will wear out more quickly in Ethiopia because of all the walking you will do. Sizes run small so most American sizes are not available.

- Hiking shoes (ankle height)
- Mud/rain boots (especially if larger than size 10 male)
- Light hiking shoe/day shoe
- Sandals/Chacos/Keens/Crocs
- Slippers
- Running shoes
- Closed-toe business casual shoes for work

Personal Hygiene and Toiletry Items
Most basic hygiene items are available, but selection is limited. The Peace Corps provides a medical kit with first aid supplies, insect repellent, sunscreen, and over-the-counter medications. Also consider the following:

- Razors
- Face wash
- Facial sunblock (for sensitive skin
- Tweezers
- Shampoo
- Hand mirror
- Anti-bacterial hand soap (travel-size)
- Cotton swabs
- A few toothbrushes
- Deodorant
- Hair-cutting scissors
- Diva cup (women)
- Tampons (women)

Recreation/Entertainment
Though pre-service training will be very busy, you may find yourself with a great deal of free time when you might have to entertain yourself once you are in your worksite, particularly at night. Bring your favorite hobbies or materials to learn new ones, such as the following:

- Camera
- Shortwave radio/iPod/music player
- Laptop (you will want this)
- Small laptop speakers
- External hard drive for movies, podcasts, etc.
- USB drive
- Headlamp
- Headphones
- Crank-powered or key chain flashlight
- Anti-virus software for PC computer
- Rechargeable batteries and charger
- Power converter
- Sewing kit
- Compass with clinometer
- Stationery
- List of addresses for writing snail mail
- Index cards for language
- Good pens/notebooks
- Earplugs
- Photo album of family/friends
- Exercise videos
- Jump rope
- Frisbee
- Soccer ball
- Yoga mat
- Cards
- Games
- Travel board games (such as Bananagrams/Scrabble)
- Super glue
- Work gloves
- Seeds
- Binoculars
- Camping gear
- Musical instrument

An important note on surge protectors: It is a very good idea to run your computer and other electronic items through a surge protector, as currency fluctuates drastically and often. Surge protectors are, however, voltage specific, so a U.S. 110-volt surge protector will not work in Ethiopia. (In fact, it will blow as soon as you plug it in.) 220-volt surge protectors are available in Ethiopia but their quality is not high. An alternative to purchasing a 220-volt surge protector in Ethiopia is to buy one in the U.S. from a company specializing in 220-volt products. There are several of these companies online.

Kitchen/Household Items
Most kitchenware/household items can be found in the capital or other big cities. However, the first couple of months are not spent in these cities. Some useful items include the following:

- Good kitchen knife
- Spatula
- Can opener
- Veggie peeler
- Zip-close bags
- Small frying pan/sauce pan
- Water bottle
- French press

- Travel mug
- Spices (your favorites—consider black pepper and garlic salt!)
- Gum/candy
- Multitool/pocketknife
- Small screwdriver set, glasses repair
- Duct tape
- Pack of ultra-absorbent towels
- Fitted sheet
- Sleeping bag
- Masking or clear tape
- Umbrella

Miscellaneous

- Host family gift
- Solar shower
- Travel wallet
- Travel locks for luggage
- Weeklong trip pack or big duffel
- School/small backpack, messenger bag
- Tote

Note: Again, bring those items you feel you cannot live without. Items that make you feel good should also be packed.

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 are relevant to everyone, and the list is not comprehensive.

Family

- Notify family that they can call the Counseling and Outreach Unit at any time if there is a critical illness or death of a family member (24-hour phone number: 855.855.1961 ext. 1470).
- Give family and friends the Peace Corps On the Home Front handbook.

Passport/Travel

- Forward to the Peace Corps travel office (SATO) all paperwork for the Peace Corps passport and visas.
- Verify that your luggage meets the size and weight limits for international travel.
- Obtain a personal passport if you plan to travel after your service ends. (Your Peace Corps passport will expire three months after you finish service; 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.
- 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 health care during Peace Corps service abroad, it is advisable for people who have pre-existing 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

- Keep a bank account in your name in the United States.
- Obtain student loan deferment forms from the lender or loan service. Information about loan deferment is at peacecorps.gov/loans. Bring any forms required by your lender to staging.

- Execute a power of attorney for the management of your property and business.
- Make arrangements for deductions from your readjustment allowance to pay alimony, child support, and other debts through the Office of Volunteer and PSC Financial Operations at 855.855.1961 ext. 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

This list of numbers will help connect you with the appropriate office at Peace Corps headquarters to answer various questions. You can use the toll-free number and extension or dial directly using the local numbers provided. Be sure to leave the toll-free number and extensions with your family so they can contact you in the event of an emergency.

Peace Corps headquarters toll-free number: 855.855.1961, press 1, then extension number (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
Responding to an invitation	Office of Placement	ext. 1840	202.692.1840
Country information	Karen Corey Desk Officer	ext. 2855 ethiopia@peacecorps.gov	202.692.2855
Plane tickets, passports, visas, or other travel matters	CWT SATO Travel	ext. 1170	202.692.1170
Legal clearance:	Office of Placement	ext. 1840	202.692.1840
Medical clearance and forms processing (includes dental)	Screening Nurse	ext. 1500	202.692.1500
Medical Applicant Portal questions			amsadmin@peacecorps.gov
Medical reimbursements (handled by a subcontractor)			800.544.1802
Loan deferments, taxes, financial operations		ext. 1770	202.692.1770
Readjustment allowance withdrawals, power of attorney, staging (pre-departure orientation), and reporting instructions	Office of Staging	ext. 1865	202.692.1865
New Volunteer Portal questions			staging@peacecorps.gov
Note: You will receive comprehensive information (hotel and flight arrangements) three to five weeks prior to departure. This information is not available sooner.			
Family emergencies (to get information to a Volunteer overseas) 24 hours	Counseling and Outreach Unit	ext. 1470	202.692.1470
Office of Victim Advocacy		ext. 1753 24 hours (call or text)	202.692.1753 202.409.2704