

THE PEACE CORPS WELCOMES YOU TO

# GHANA



A PEACE CORPS PUBLICATION FOR NEW VOLUNTEERS

June 2013 CCD



## A WELCOME LETTER

Congratulations on your invitation to join the Peace Corps for two years of voluntary service to the people of Ghana! When you enter into a life of service, you enter into a paradox: You will receive more than you give and you will learn more than you teach.

The Peace Corps is a job, not an adventure. Accepting an assignment in Ghana is accepting to live modestly, respectfully, and compassionately, and to work hard as a professional development worker. If you are not willing to expose yourself to a different world view and to allow yourself to be changed, do not accept this invitation. Peace Corps/Ghana needs mature Volunteers of diverse backgrounds representing the full face of America.

The Peace Corps began its program in Ghana in 1961 with 52 Volunteers. Since then, more than 5,000 Volunteers have served here. Currently, more than 130 Volunteers are working in small enterprise development, health, water and sanitation, education, and environment and natural resources.

You are fortunate to have been selected to work in Ghana. As you stand on the shoulders of those who served before you, you are joining a legacy of excellence, and a commitment and passion for peace, friendship, and development.

I look forward to meeting you and serving with you.

Safe journey,

Michael Koffman  
Country Director

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# 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:

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/GHANA

## HISTORY AND PROGRAMS

### History of the Peace Corps in Ghana

Ghana was the first country in the world to receive Peace Corps Volunteers. The program began with 52 Volunteers arriving on August 31, 1961. Currently, more than 130 Volunteers work in the fields of health, water and sanitation, HIV/AIDS, secondary school teaching, small business development, and environment. Peace Corps/Ghana brings in approximately 70 new trainees each year. Volunteers work in all 10 regions of the country.

The Peace Corps has been a witness to the successes and challenges of Ghana's modern post-colonial political, economic, and social development. During this period, the changing political landscape has had a direct impact on economic and social development as the nation has forged its identity in the context of an increasingly globalized world. After 50 years, the government of Ghana continues to request assistance from the Peace Corps because there is still much work to be done.

### History and Future of Peace Corps Programming in Ghana

Peace Corps/Ghana supports economic recovery by strengthening Ghana's human resource base through Volunteer assistance in education, environment, health, and small enterprise development.

Education Volunteers work as secondary school classroom teachers, helping to improve teaching and learning in science, IT, math, and visual arts education. They work to increase parent and community engagement in education by strengthening parent-teacher associations and civic unions to be effective advocates for education and hold districts accountable for school improvement. The project aims at increasing school access, quality, and equity.

Environment Volunteers work to improve the productive capacity of rural communities by facilitating agroforestry, conservation, environmental education, and sustainable use of environmental resources for income generation.

Small enterprise development Volunteers work as business advisors, providing advice and assistance to a diverse group of communities and small-scale entrepreneurs. They promote increased profitability of agroforestry products and environmentally sustainable use of resources by setting up product quality control measures, establishing links to resources, and developing marketing tools and strategies.

Health Volunteers work in water and sanitation, helping in water resource delivery, hygiene education, improving sanitation and health practices, HIV/AIDS education, and Guinea worm disease eradication. They work closely with rural community leaders to identify community interests and mobilize human and material resources for village-based health-related development projects.

The primary job common to all health, environment, and business Volunteer assignments (and to some extent education assignments) is this: help people identify their needs, self-interests, and community-interests, then co-lead, co-facilitate, co-mentor, co-plan, and co-train people to meet these needs. In short, work wherever you can whenever you can with whom you can.

In addition, Peace Corps/Ghana has cross-sectorial programs in HIV/AIDS education and prevention, and gender and youth development.



## COUNTRY OVERVIEW: GHANA AT A GLANCE HISTORY

Ghanaians have been interacting with Europeans for 500 years. Portuguese traders built protected forts along the coast in 1491. Then came the Dutch, the Swedish, Danes, and the British. There is a rich history of pre-colonial civilization, with sophisticated governance structures and kingdoms of diverse people. The era of colonialism was relatively short, but the impact of Europeans was lasting. Ghana is a very modern country, but not necessarily western.

In 1957, Ghana, the former British colony of the gold coast, became the first country in colonial Africa to gain its independence. Ghana took its modern name from the ancient African kingdom that was located near what is today the republic of Mali. Under the leadership of one of Africa's most legendary Pan-Africanists, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana was quickly at the forefront of African countries trying to transition from the legacy of colonialism in the midst of cold war competition for strategic alliances. A series of coup d'états during the 1960s and 1970s resulted in the suspension of the constitution in 1981 and the banning of political parties. In 1992, a new constitution was drafted and multiparty politics restored. Flight Lieutenant Jerry Rawlings, who had been head of state since 1981, won presidential elections in 1992 and 1996. In 2000, J.A. Kufuor of the opposition new patriotic party (NPP) was elected president. He was re-elected to a second four-year term on December 7, 2004. In January 2009, John Atta-Mills of the national democratic congress (NDC) defeated NPP candidate nana ado Akufo Addo to become the current president.

### Government

Ghana has a parliamentary form of representation. The political climate in Ghana has remained positive since a democratically elected transfer of power from Former President Jerry Rawlings to Former President J.A. Kufuor and a second peaceful transfer in 2009 from Kufuor (NPP) to current president John Evans Atta-Mills (NDC). There is open and heated debate of issues on television, on over 100 radio stations, and in the press. There are also active opposition parties. The most recent presidential and parliamentary elections were considered the freest and fairest in post-colonial African history.

Ghana is considered a major player in promoting peace in the West African sub-region, as witnessed by its involvement in regional peacekeeping forces and diplomacy. There were state visits by President Clinton in 1998, president bush in 2008, and President Obama in 2009. Also, President Rawlings visited Washington in 1999 and there were official visits by President Kufuor to Washington in 2001, 2005, 2006 and 2008. Such visits underscore the prominent role Ghana plays in sub-regional security and economic growth.

## Economy

Inflation in Ghana has recently fallen from around 20 percent to single digits, and local currency is fairly stable. Ghana continues to see an increase in foreign investment and possesses a thriving private sector economy. A recent significant offshore oil discovery is due to be developed soon. Indicators show that Ghana will continue to follow its economic recovery plan as long as oil prices remain stable and cocoa prices do not fall. As a result of effective economic policies, Ghana benefited from more than \$200 million in debt forgiveness as one of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC).

In the United Nations Development Program's 2005 Human Development Report, Ghana is classified as a "low human development" country on the Human Development Index; that is, it falls within the poorest 25 percent of the countries surveyed. According to the report, Ghana ranks 138 among 177 countries. An area of concern is that despite rising incomes, health indicators have fallen.

## People and Culture

Ghana currently has a population approaching 25 million people, with an estimated annual population growth of 2 percent. Of that figure, approximately 42 percent are under the age of 14. Life expectancy is approximately 57 years.

Like many African countries, Ghana has flourishing cultural, religious, and language diversity. The major ethnic group (44 percent) is the Akan, of which the Ashanti and Fanti are the most widely known. These largely southern groups are joined by the Ga (8 percent) and Ewe (13 percent) along the coastal areas. In the northern part of the country, the largest ethnic group is the Moshi-Dagomba (16 percent). Across the entire country, however, are many smaller distinct ethnic populations with separate languages and traditions. In Peace Corps training in Ghana, it is not unusual to see 10 or more different languages being taught to trainees.

The southern half of the country is largely Christian (24 percent), while the northern half is primarily Muslim (30 percent). In addition, there are many people who maintain strong indigenous practices (38 percent). Within the Christian tradition, the evangelical and Pentecostal churches are experiencing the fastest growth. There is also a relatively new and strong Mormon presence. In addition, there are a few local indigenous churches that are a fusion of Christian and Animist beliefs.

Ghanaians have a well-deserved reputation for being open people. Welcoming visitors is a point of cultural identity. Hosting visitors is the ultimate expression of Ghanaian culture. Acknowledging the presence of another human being by greeting them honors their existence. You will be expected to take on this practice. Indeed, your ability to greet and to form relationships will be a significant factor in your success. Especially in the local communities, visitors will be welcomed into families and quickly be made to feel at home.

## Environment

Ghana has vast natural resources. The potential for sustainable environmental management and conservation is good, but environmental degradation is taking place. Most notably, its forests, some of the largest in West Africa, are threatened by the timber industry. Deforestation with no long-term plan for sustainable forest management remains one of the most difficult obstacles to development. Likewise, water pollution from gold mining poisonous effluent, sewage, industrial, and agricultural effluents is also a growing concern. Urbanization is also having negative impacts on the environment. Rising energy consumption is putting pressure on Ghana's capacity to generate electricity.

## RESOURCES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Following is a list of websites for additional information about the Peace Corps, Ghana, and to connect you to returned Volunteers and other invitees. Please keep in mind that although we try to make sure all these links are active and current, we cannot guarantee it. 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 experience, including comments by those who were unhappy with their choice to serve in the Peace Corps. These opinions are not those of the Peace Corps or the U.S. government, and we hope you will keep in mind that no two people experience their service in the same way.

### General Information About Ghana

[www.countrywatch.com](http://www.countrywatch.com)

On this site, you can learn anything from what time it is in the capital of Ghana to how to convert from the dollar to the Ghanaian currency. Just click on Ghana and go from there.

[www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations)

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

[www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov)

The State Department's website issues background notes periodically about countries around the world. Find Ghana 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.

[www.psr.keele.ac.uk/official.htm](http://www.psr.keele.ac.uk/official.htm)

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

[www.geography.about.com/library/maps/blindex.htm](http://www.geography.about.com/library/maps/blindex.htm)

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

[www.cyberschoolbus.un.org/infonation/info.asp](http://www.cyberschoolbus.un.org/infonation/info.asp)

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

[www.worldinformation.com](http://www.worldinformation.com)

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

### **Connect With Returned Volunteers and Other Invitees**

[www.rpcv.org](http://www.rpcv.org)

This is the site of the National Peace Corps Association, made up of returned Volunteers. On this site you can find links to all the Web pages of the “Friends of” groups for most countries of service, 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 Ghana site: [www.friendsofghana.org](http://www.friendsofghana.org)

[www.PeaceCorpsWorldwide.org](http://www.PeaceCorpsWorldwide.org)

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

### **Online Articles/Current News Sites About Ghana**

[www.graphicghana.com](http://www.graphicghana.com)

[www.ghanaweb.com](http://www.ghanaweb.com)

[www.ghana.com](http://www.ghana.com)

[www.allafrica.com/ghana/](http://www.allafrica.com/ghana/)

[www.afrol.com/countries/ghana](http://www.afrol.com/countries/ghana)

[www.irinnews.org/frontpage.asp?SelectRegion=West\\_Africa&SelectCountry=Ghana](http://www.irinnews.org/frontpage.asp?SelectRegion=West_Africa&SelectCountry=Ghana)

[www.graphicmaps.com/webimage/countrys/africa/gh.htm](http://www.graphicmaps.com/webimage/countrys/africa/gh.htm)

Maps and facts about Ghana

### **International Development Sites About Ghana**

<http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/ghana.html>

This is the webpage for the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) project in Ghana

[www.undp-gha.org/](http://www.undp-gha.org/)

This is the webpage for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) project in Ghana

[www.globalaidsalliance.org/](http://www.globalaidsalliance.org/)

The mission of the Global AIDS Alliance (GAA) is to mobilize the political will and financial resources needed to slow and ultimately stop the global AIDS crisis, and to reduce its impacts on poor countries hardest hit by the pandemic.

[www.watradehub.com](http://www.watradehub.com)

The West Africa Trade Hub is a USAID-funded project working under the West Africa Regional Program to make trade happen in 20 countries across the region.

[www.commissionforafrica.org/english/home/newsstories.html](http://www.commissionforafrica.org/english/home/newsstories.html)

In early 2004, British Prime Minister Tony Blair established the Commission for Africa. This website is the permanent archive of the work of the Commission for Africa. Here you can read the Commission report and other materials associated with the Commission.

[www.usaid.gov/locations/sub-saharan\\_africa/countries/ghana/index.html](http://www.usaid.gov/locations/sub-saharan_africa/countries/ghana/index.html)

This is the webpage for the USAID Mission in Ghana

[www.un.org/Pubs/CyberSchoolBus/infonation//e\\_glance.htm](http://www.un.org/Pubs/CyberSchoolBus/infonation//e_glance.htm)

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

## Recommended Books

- Aidoo, Ama Ata. *No Sweetness Here and Other Stories*. New York, N.Y.: The Feminist Press, 1995.
- Amamoo, J.G. *The New Ghana: The Birth of a Nation*. Lincoln, Neb.: Authors Choice Press, 2000.
- Birmingham, David. *Kwame Nkrumah: Father Of African Nationalism*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press; Rev. edition, 1998.
- Cole, Catherine M. *Ghana's Concert Party Theater*. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 2001.
- Briggs, Phillip. *Ghana: The Bradt Travel Guide, 3rd Edition*. Chalfont St. Peter: Bradt Travel Guides, 2004.

- Gaines, James. *12 Days in Ghana: Reunions, Revelations & Reflections*. Bloomington, Ind.: Authorhouse, 2002.
- McCaskie, T. C. *Asante Identities: History and Modernity in an African Village, 1850-1950*. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 2001.
- McFarland, Daniel Miles. *Historical Dictionary of Ghana*. Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, third edition, 2005.
- McKissack, Patricia. *The Royal Kingdoms of Ghana, Mali, and Songhay: Life in Medieval Africa*. Henry Holt and Co. (BYR) (1995).
- Mikell, Gwendolin. *Cocoa and Chaos in Ghana*. Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press; Reprint edition, 1991.
- Otoo, David. *Authentic African Cuisine from Ghana, 1st Edition*. East Orange, NJ: Sankofa Books, 1997.

### Books About the History of the Peace Corps

- Hoffman, Elizabeth Cobbs. *All You Need is Love: The Peace Corps and the Spirit of the 1960s*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000.
- Rice, Gerald T. *The Bold Experiment: JFK's Peace Corps*. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985.
- Stossel, Scott. *Sarge: The Life and Times of Sargent Shriver*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2004.
- Meisler, Stanley. *When the World Calls: The Inside Story of the Peace Corps and its First 50 Years*. Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 2011.

### Books on the Volunteer Experience

- Dirlam, Sharon. *Beyond Siberia: Two Years in a Forgotten Place*. Santa Barbara, Calif.: McSeas Books, 2004.
- Casebolt, Marjorie DeMoss. *Margarita: A Guatemalan Peace Corps Experience*. Gig Harbor, Wash.: Red Apple Publishing, 2000.
- Erdman, Sarah. *Nine Hills to Nambonkaha: Two Years in the Heart of an African Village*. New York, N.Y.: Picador, 2003.
- Hessler, Peter. *River Town: Two Years on the Yangtze*. New York, N.Y.: Perennial, 2001.
- Kennedy, Geraldine ed. *From the Center of the Earth: Stories out of the Peace Corps*. Santa Monica, Calif.: Clover Park Press, 1991.

- Thompsen, Moritz. *Living Poor: A Peace Corps Chronicle*. Seattle, Wash.: University of Washington Press, 1997 (reprint).



# LIVING CONDITIONS AND VOLUNTEER LIFESTYLE

## Communications

### Mail

Few countries in the world offer the level of mail service we have in the United States. If you expect U.S. standards for mail service, you will be in for a great deal of frustration. Mail usually takes two to eight weeks to arrive. Some mail may be very late or not arrive at all. The Ghana office recently received a package that was mailed from the U.S. in October 1997. Some letters may arrive with clipped edges because someone tried to see if any money was inside (again, this is rare, but it does happen). Advise your family and friends to number their letters and to include "Air Mail" on their envelopes.

Despite delays, we strongly encourage you to write to your family regularly (perhaps biweekly) and to number your letters. Family members may become worried when they do not hear from you, so please advise your parents, friends, and relatives that mail is sporadic and they should not worry if they do not receive your letters regularly. If a serious problem were to occur, Peace Corps/Ghana would notify the Office of Special Services at the Peace Corps headquarters in Washington, D.C., and family members would be contacted.

Your address during the 10-week pre-service training will be:

"Your Name," PCT  
Peace Corps Ghana  
P.O. Box 5796  
Accra-North, Ghana  
West Africa

Packages should only be sent to the Peace Corps Accra office address listed above because this is more reliable. The packages will be held for you at the Peace Corps office in Accra until either you are in town to pick them up or staff travel up-country. There are always fees for the recipient to pay, typically under \$10. You will be responsible for reimbursing the Peace Corps for the costs of obtaining your package from customs. Avoid liquids and chocolates as they tend to leak or melt in transit.

Once you have become a Volunteer and are at your site, provide friends and family members your new address there, and ask them to send letters to you directly. Many Volunteers live in a community without a post office. You may travel to a district or regional capital to pick up and send mail. Many Volunteers can use the post office box at their worksites. For teachers, this is a school, for other Volunteers it may be the local agency or organization you are assigned to work with. Some Volunteers choose to open their

own post office box, or several Volunteers pool their resources and open one together. In any case, once you know this address, you will inform Peace Corps/Ghana and friends and family members.

## **Telephones**

The Ghana telephone agency has offices located in major cities and some smaller towns with direct lines to the United States. You can call collect or use a calling card such as ATT, MCI, or Sprint. The calling card is generally a cheaper option than calling collect. Fax services are available at post offices. Once you are at your site, you can send the fax number to your friends and relatives for another communication option.

Please do not tell friends or family that you will call or email them as soon as you arrive in Ghana. You will not be able to access phones or Internet for the first few days.

Three major Ghanaian mobile phone companies provide services that cover most of the country's major cities and secondary towns. Each Volunteer must purchase a mobile phone in Ghana. Some Volunteers do not have coverage in their communities and use a phone when they travel to a larger town. If you choose to bring your own phone, be sure it is a global satellite positioning (GSP) phone and can operate on the systems (900 and 1900 MHz) available in Africa. The Peace Corps includes money for mobile phones in the settling-in allowance you receive when you swear in as a Volunteer. You should bring approximately \$50 to buy a mobile phone to use during pre-service training.

## **Computer, Internet, and Email Access**

There is email access in all major cities and in some towns. Access is usually available at communications centers (known as com centers). The cost varies, and equipment and connections can be extremely slow.

## **Housing and Site Location**

Housing varies by region, district, community, and sector. There are few generalities about housing or site location. Peace Corps Volunteers are placed at the request of the government, so Volunteers go where they are needed. Peace Corps/Ghana requires the community to contribute housing that meets the minimum standard of at least one room with a porch/sitting area. Housing is to be adequately ventilated with a roof, a solid floor, walls, access to year-round water supply, latrine (often a long drop or pit), bathing facilities (often a bucket bath), and secure doors and windows. Some Volunteers find that their housing greatly exceeds these minimum standards, while others live in mud huts at the minimal level.

Peace Corps/Ghana has Volunteers in nine of the 10 regions of the country. Some sites are very remote, while others are in sizeable towns or cities. Once you arrive in Ghana, you will

be interviewed by an associate Peace Corps director to help guide the final placement decision.

### **Living Allowance and Money Management**

The local currency, the cedi, is freely convertible. The exchange rate is determined by market forces. Currently, 1.4 cedis equals U.S. \$1.

Volunteers are expected to live modestly. Do not bring flashy or expensive equipment. Volunteers can live comfortably on the living allowance provided. You may wish to bring about \$100 or \$200 for post-service travel, a cellphone (reimbursable), or to purchase gifts.

As a Volunteer in Ghana, you will receive four types of allowances:

- A living allowance (paid monthly) in cedis to cover your basic living expenses.
- A vacation allowance in cedis that is the equivalent of U.S. \$24 per month, added to your monthly living allowance.
- A one-time settling-in allowance in cedis is given after training to buy basic household items when you move into your house at your site.
- If you are required by the Peace Corps to travel, you will be provided with additional money for transportation, lodging and meals.

Most Volunteers find that these four allowances allow them to live comfortably. Credit cards are worthless in a rural setting and their use is discouraged throughout Ghana. They can be used in a limited number of establishments in Accra, and for travel outside Ghana; however, credit card fraud is a real problem in Ghana and throughout West Africa. Traveler's checks are equally useless since banks in Ghana will not even cash them. The most useful form to bring money in is cash (US dollars).

### **Food and Diet**

Many food items available in an American grocery store (including spices) are available at stores in Accra and other large towns. The prices of foreign imported food are comparable to American prices, but suddenly become extremely expensive on a Peace Corps living allowance. You will find yourself cooking creatively with items from the local market.

#### *Local Market Items*

- Meats (Proteins): Chicken and eggs, fish (smoked and dried), beef, pork, goat, grass cutter (bush rat), beans (Bambara, red, and white), and ground nuts (peanuts).
- Vegetables: Tomatoes (fresh and canned paste), okra, garden eggs (like small eggplant), onions, kontomire (like spinach), hot peppers, red peppers (very hot), and cabbage.

- Staple Foods: Bread, coco yam, rice, plantain, pasta, sweet potato, yams, cassava, and oatmeal.
- Fruits (In season): Mango, banana, orange, avocado (pear), pawpaw (papaya), coconut, pineapple, and watermelon.
- Spices: Red pepper (not black!), curry pepper, salt, cloves, bay leaves, sugar, fresh ginger, and fresh garlic.
- Miscellaneous: White flour, popcorn, oils, corn flour, dry whole milk, soft drinks, coffee, tea, baking powder, vinegar, crackers, cookies, canned whole milk, and maggie cubes (like beef bouillon).
- Available sometimes but expensive: Lettuce, potatoes, apples, cucumbers, cheese, and green peppers.

Bring recipes which include these items. It is very unlikely that you will have an oven, but you can make a “Dutch Oven” and bake almost as well as with a conventional oven.

## Transportation

The main mode of transportation within and around your site is by bicycle. It is very likely that you will ride a bike on a daily basis. Volunteers are provided cash as part of their settling-in allowance to purchase a bicycle. You may bring a bike helmet with you from the U.S. Peace Corps/Ghana will reimburse you up to \$50 when you arrive and present a receipt for the helmet. Otherwise, you may wait until you arrive and determine whether you will be using a bike. Wearing helmets while riding a bike is a requirement. Peace Corps/Ghana prohibits the driving of, or riding on, any two or three-wheeled motorized vehicle for any reason. Violation of either of these regulations can be grounds for administrative separation. Volunteers are not allowed to own private cars without express approval from the Director of the Peace Corps in Washington, D.C., or to drive private cars in Ghana without the written approval of the country director in Accra.

For longer distances Volunteers travel by local taxis and tro tros (vans). Longer trips around the country are on large “Greyhound-type” buses. Internal airline service between Accra, Kumasi, and Tamale is provided by two airlines, but the cost is out of the range of a Volunteer living allowance. Family and friends may enjoy this opportunity when they visit. Many major airlines fly in and out of Accra daily, in addition to other parts of Africa and the world.

## Geography and Climate

Ghana, located on the Gulf of Guinea in West Africa, extends about 450 miles from north to south, and 250 miles from east to west (roughly the size of Oregon). Geographically, the country can be divided into three zones: the southern narrow coastal strip of savanna; a broad tropical rain forest extending 150-200 miles north; and the northern savanna area.

Lake Volta, formed by the construction of the Akosombo Dam, is the largest man-made lake in the world and is an important geographical feature of the country.

The climate of Ghana is tropical, with two main seasons—the dry season from November through March and the rainy season from May through August. It is hot and comparatively dry along the southeast coast. It is hot and humid in the southwest and dry in the north. During the dry season, the Harmattan affects the northern regions with days of continual cool air, haze, and fine dust.

### **Social Activities**

Volunteers immerse themselves in their communities and take part in various festivities, weddings, funerals, parties, storytelling, local dances, and other interesting activities. Many Volunteers pay special attention to youth and develop informal time with children, either reading, coloring, playing games, singing songs, or doing household chores together. Volunteers are encouraged to explore the areas around their community and visit nearby interesting sites during the weekends. Visiting and spending time with people is a primary form of socializing. You will find yourself hanging out with friends in their compounds, under a tree or on a bench, for hours on end. Being present is a critical factor in building relationships.

There is a continually changing repository of books at the main Peace Corps office in Accra and at the offices in Tamale and Kumasi. Volunteers often plan their vacation leave time to travel together or visit each other.

When you join the Peace Corps you expect it to be difficult. That's why you join; to challenge yourself, to give, and to grow. You will choose what kind of Volunteer you will be. Will you be the kind who gravitates only to other Volunteers or will you be the kind that goes out of your way to develop strong friendships with Ghanaians? Will Ghana be the backdrop to your American adventure in Africa or will Ghana be in the forefront of your experience? Choose wisely!

### **Professionalism, Dress, and Behavior**

One of the difficulties of finding your place as a Peace Corps Volunteer is fitting into the local culture while maintaining your own cultural identity and acting like a professional at the same time. It is not an easy thing to resolve, and we can only provide you with guidelines. You will be representing multiple organizations, and as such you are expected to dress and behave accordingly. While some of your Ghanaian counterparts may dress in seemingly worn or old clothes, this is due to economics rather than by choice. The likelihood is that they are wearing their "best." A foreigner wearing ragged, un-mended clothing is likely to be considered an affront.

Ghanaians are very meticulous about their dress in the workplace and wear their good clothes. They are particular about their personal hygiene (a real accomplishment in

communities of mud-brick houses and no running water), and cleanliness is a sign of respect. Shorts are acceptable around your house after work, but Peace Corps Volunteers must never wear them in public. Above-the-knee length skirts are seen in the cities, but not in small communities. Besides, they are not practical, comfortable, or appropriate when traveling in a crowded bus. Although it is hot here, you can only wear tank tops with small neck and sleeve openings. Tops with “spaghetti-string” straps are only appropriate at the beach so do not bring too many of them.

## **Personal Safety**

More detailed information about the Peace Corps’ approach to safety is contained in the “Health Care and Safety” chapter, but it is an important issue and cannot be overemphasized. As stated in the Volunteer Handbook, becoming a Peace Corps Volunteer entails certain safety risks. Living and traveling in an unfamiliar environment (oftentimes alone), having a limited understanding of 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 Ghana Volunteers complete their two years of service without incident. The Peace Corps has established procedures and policies designed to help you reduce your risks and enhance your safety and security. These procedures and policies, in addition to safety training, will be provided once you arrive in Ghana. Using these tools, you are expected to take responsibility for your 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. We encourage Volunteers and families to look at our safety and security information on the Peace Corps website at [www.peacecorps.gov/safety](http://www.peacecorps.gov/safety).

Information on these pages gives messages on Volunteer health and Volunteer safety. There is a section titled “Safety and Security – Our Partnership.” Among topics addressed are the risks of serving as a Volunteer, posts’ safety support systems, and emergency planning and communications.

## **Rewards and Frustrations**

Many Americans never have the opportunity to live in a place where families and the life of the community are literally the most important things. Many people never truly understand how much people can do with seemingly so little, and what a difference just a little help can make in someone’s life. With their familiar habits and routines gone, Peace Corps Volunteers learn to develop new routines and relationships, and in doing so, have life changing experiences. What could be more rewarding?

Most Americans find the pace of life much slower, which may cause adjustment difficulties. It is especially difficult when you are trying to meet deadlines that you believe are important while everyone around you seems to be on a different schedule. Relying on unpredictable transportation rather than just picking up and leaving when you want to, not being able to make yourself clear when communicating, and finding that you really are responsible for making this experience what it turns out to be can be overwhelming. However, at the end of two years, when you realize what you have gained and how you adjusted to a new environment, you will see why it was the experience of a lifetime.



# PEACE CORPS TRAINING

## Pre-Service Training

Female Volunteers should wear dresses or long skirts, while male Volunteers should wear long trousers. Although female Volunteers also wear trousers at times, it is important to create a positive initial impression. Again, appearance is very important in Ghana.

Upon arrival at the airport in Accra you will be met by several staff members. You will then go through the immigration and customs formalities on your own. In filling out the immigration form, use the Peace Corps address of P.O. Box 5796, Accra-North. After clearing customs, you will go by bus to a hotel in Accra. During dinner, the training director will brief you on the schedule for the next few days.

Shortly after your arrival and a brief rest, you will begin the orientation to pre-service training. You will go to the Peace Corps office for a short welcome ceremony and a tour of the office, during which time you will meet most members of the staff. You will have individual medical interviews and will also receive a welcome packet and a small walk-around allowance. During the next few days, you will participate in a cultural scavenger hunt, which will take you throughout the city of Accra, attend a reception at the residence of the American ambassador, and have a number of sessions preparing you for training and your next two years. As part of training, you will undertake a vision quest/job shadowing period. You will travel on your own or in pairs to a current Volunteer's site and experience firsthand what a fellow Volunteer's life is like. The vision quest/job shadowing allows you to set a vision for your two years of service, but most immediately, it allows you to identify what you would like to learn during the pre-service training. You will spend the majority of your training in Kukurantumi where you will live with a family for nine weeks of community-based training. You will be assigned to your site about three weeks after you arrive.

There are five major components of training: a core curriculum, which includes foundations in development skills and cross-cultural issues; job-specific technical training; language; personal health and safety; and finally, Peace Corps policies.

One of the roles of the training staff is to assess the progress of trainees and to help them achieve the training goals set jointly by trainees and trainers. Ongoing evaluations are conducted every two weeks to give you a good idea about where you stand, and to enable you to participate in setting your own goals and assessing your own progress.

## Technical Training

Technical training will prepare you to work in Ghana 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, Ghana 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 Ghana and strategies for working within such a framework. You will review your technical sector's goals and will meet with the Ghana agencies and organizations that invited the Peace Corps to assist them. You will be supported and evaluated throughout the training to build the confidence and skills you need to undertake your project activities and be a productive member of your community.

## **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, they help you integrate into your community, and they 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. Ghanaian language instructors teach formal language classes five days a week in small groups of four to five people.

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 work on strategies to continue language studies during your service.

## **Cross-Cultural Training**

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

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

## **Health Training**

During pre-service training, you will be given basic medical training and information. You will be expected to practice preventive health care and to take responsibility for your own

health by adhering to all medical policies. Trainees are required to attend all medical sessions. The topics include preventive health measures and minor and major medical issues that you might encounter while in Ghana. Nutrition, mental health, setting up a safe living compound, and how to avoid HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) are also covered.

## Safety Training

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

## Additional Trainings During Volunteer Service

In its commitment to institutionalize quality training, the Peace Corps has implemented a training system that provides Volunteers with continual opportunities to 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:

- **In-service training:** 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.
- **Midterm conference** (done in conjunction with technical sector in-service): 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 the future after Peace Corps service and reviews their respective projects and personal experiences.

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



## YOUR HEALTH CARE AND SAFETY IN GHANA

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

### Health Issues in Ghana

Almost every tropical disease is endemic in Ghana, and you must be prepared to learn about health hazards and to take necessary measures to protect yourself from them. Proper food and water preparation, malaria prophylaxis, personal hygiene, and safety are essential features of a healthy Volunteer experience. Both HIV 1 and 2, which cause AIDS, are prevalent in Ghana, and you must be willing to adopt appropriate behaviors to protect yourself.

In addition, Ghana's coastal areas are among the most dangerous in the world for having unpredictable undertows and riptides. In 1995 a Volunteer visiting from Peace Corps/Niger drowned off the coast of Takoradi.

### 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 Ghana, you will receive a medical handbook. At the end of training, you will receive a medical kit with supplies to take care of mild illnesses and first aid needs. The contents of the kit are listed later in this chapter.

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

You will have physicals at mid-service and at the end of your service. If you develop a serious medical problem during your service, the medical officer in Ghana will consult with the Office of Medical Services in Washington, D.C. If it is determined that your condition cannot be treated in Ghana, 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 ...” 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 Ghana is to take the following preventive measures:

**Waterborne disease:** Unless your medical officer tells you otherwise, assume that only boiled water or water that has been both filtered and treated with iodine or chlorine is safe to drink. Very little of the water in Africa is potable, whether it comes out of the tap or from the village well. Even in restaurants and on airplanes, there are no guarantees. Bottled carbonated beverages are safe, as are tea or coffee (if prepared with boiling water). Do not forget that ice cubes may contaminate your bottled or canned beverage. Freezing water does not purify it. Even brushing your teeth with tap water can be a source of contamination. Your medical officer will show you how to prepare water.

**Food-related disease:** Safe foods are those which are recently prepared, thoroughly cooked, and not subsequently left out where flies can recontaminate the food. Uncooked foods that cannot be peeled or soaked should be considered unsafe. Avoid salads. Unboiled milk or unprocessed cheese may harbor Tuberculosis or other bacterial disease. In-country, your medical officer will show you how to prepare safe foods and choose those that have already been cooked. Always wash your hands, especially before eating.

**Diarrhea:** Although travel is great, diarrhea is not. While we wish it were otherwise, years of experience and thousands of Peace Corps Volunteers attest to the simple fact that, from time to time during your Peace Corps experience, you will have diarrhea. If you get diarrhea, be sure to drink a lot of fluids to avoid dehydration. Juice, broth, or oral rehydration solutions (your medical officer will discuss this with you) are best. Avoid coffee, milk products, and alcohol when you have diarrhea. If you are able to eat, choose a light diet of foods, such as rice, bread, and broth. As a general rule, it is better not to use any medication unless provided by the medical officer. These medications may slow down the frequency of stools, but importantly, they can prolong the recovery period as well. Fortunately, most cases of diarrhea resolve themselves in a few days with rest and fluids. You should contact your medical officer if you have bloody diarrhea, fever, become dehydrated, or have significant diarrhea lasting longer than three to five days.

**Malaria:** You are scheduled to serve in an area where malaria, a mosquito-borne disease, is prevalent. The risk of getting malaria can be significantly reduced if certain preventive strategies are used. The use of mosquito nets and screens is essential in

reducing the risk of mosquito bites. Other measures are the use of protective clothing and insect repellents.

The regular and continuous use of anti-malaria drugs is a key element in the prevention of malaria. In Ghana, chloroquine-resistant *Plasmodium falciparum* is an important cause of malaria infection. As a result, all Volunteers will be taking a medication regimen, which takes this important fact into consideration. Consequently, most Volunteers will be taking mefloquine (e.g., Lariam, Mephaquin), one tablet (250 mg) every week. It is important to realize that because of individual differences, side-effect profile, and medical history, a small percentage of Volunteers may not tolerate mefloquine and may thus require other prophylactic medications, such as doxycycline. The final decision as to the particular anti-malaria drug you will take will be made after taking into account side effects and your medical history.

Once you and your medical officer select your malaria prophylactic regimen, you must take it throughout your Volunteer service and for four weeks after you leave the malarious area. In addition, to eradicate any remaining malaria parasites, you also must take another anti-malarial drug, primaquine (one tablet daily for 14 days), when you leave Ghana.

Keep in mind that no single or combined malaria prophylactic regimen is 100 percent effective. Avoidance of mosquito bites is imperative! By using bed nets and insect repellent you will greatly reduce your risk of exposure to mosquito bites. In fact, you cannot get malaria, filaria, dengue fever, and a host of other diseases if you do not get insect bites. The best ways to avoid insect bites are to sleep under a mosquito net, wear long sleeves and pants whenever possible, use insect repellent, and be sure there are screens on your windows and doors. Even so, you may get malaria, but it can be effectively treated if you seek prompt medical attention. Failure to take the anti-malaria prophylaxis is grounds for administrative separation from Peace Corps service.

**HIV/AIDS:** HIV infection is very common in Africa. AIDS is a fatal disease. Peace Corps Volunteers in Africa have become infected with HIV during Peace Corps service. Many other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) are far more common in Africa than in the United States. Recognize that abstinence is the only 100 percent certain choice for prevention of HIV/AIDS and other STDs, and know that if you choose to be sexually active, you are taking some risks. To lessen the risk, use a condom or dental dam every time you have sex. Whether your partner is a host-country citizen, fellow Volunteer, or anyone else, do not assume your partner is free of HIV/AIDS or any other STD. Most of the Volunteers who have become HIV-infected during Peace Corps service contracted the virus through heterosexual transmission. You will receive more information from your medical officer about this very important issue.

Volunteers are expected to adhere to an effective means of birth control to prevent HIV/AIDS and unplanned pregnancies. Your medical officer can help you decide on the

most appropriate method to suit your individual needs. Condoms and other forms of birth control are available without charge in the medical office. Remember, unlike condoms, other forms of birth control do not prevent STDs. Talk with the medical officer about what you need.

**Alcohol:** Some of the local, national, and international beverages containing significant amounts of alcohol are already known to you, but others will come as a surprise, often a GREAT surprise. These may be encountered during social events, festivals, and village celebrations. Practices and tolerances vary widely. Know your limits, and if you choose to drink, drink sensibly. Being “out of control” in Ghana can set you up for all sorts of problems, not the least of which are personal injury, assault, and robbery.

**Animals:** The rabies virus is prevalent throughout Africa, and your chances of being exposed to the virus through an animal bite are not remote. That is why you will receive a series of pre-exposure immunizations against rabies when you arrive in-country. If you are exposed to an animal known or suspected of having rabies, inform your medical officer at once so you can receive post-exposure booster shots. Be wary of all unknown animals. In Ghana, Peace Corps Volunteers are permitted to have pets, acquired locally. If you choose to have a pet, remember that this is a major responsibility. Any animals you have must be immunized against rabies and other prevalent animal diseases in-country. If you are unwilling to do this, reconsider your wish to have a pet.

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 your medical officer know immediately of significant illness and injuries.

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

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

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

## Women's Health Information

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

If feminine hygiene products are not available for you to purchase on the local market, the Peace Corps medical officer in Ghana will provide them. If you require a specific product, please bring a three-month supply with you.

## Your Peace Corps Medical Kit

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

## Medical Kit Contents

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

## Before You Leave: A Medical Checklist

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

If your dental exam was done more than a year ago, or if your physical exam is more than two years old, contact the Office of Medical Services to find out whether you need to update your records. If your dentist or Peace Corps dental consultant has recommended that you undergo dental treatment or repair, you must complete that work and make sure your dentist sends requested confirmation reports or X-rays to the Office of Medical Services.

If you wish to avoid having duplicate vaccinations, contact your physician's office to obtain a copy of your immunization record and bring it to your pre-departure orientation. If you have any immunizations prior to Peace Corps service, the Peace Corps cannot reimburse you for the cost. The Peace Corps will provide all the immunizations necessary for your overseas assignment, either at your pre-departure orientation or shortly after you arrive in Ghana. 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 non-prescribed medications, such as St. John's wort, glucosamine, selenium, or antioxidant supplements.

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

If you wear eyeglasses, bring two pairs with you – a pair and a spare. If a pair breaks, the Peace Corps will replace them, using the information your doctor in the United States provided on the eyeglasses form during your examination. The Peace Corps discourages you from using contact lenses during your service to reduce your risk of developing a serious infection or other eye disease. Most Peace Corps countries do not have appropriate water and sanitation to support eye care with the use of contact lenses. The Peace Corps will not supply or replace contact lenses or associated solutions unless an ophthalmologist has recommended their use for a specific medical condition and the Peace Corps' Office of Medical Services has given approval.

If you are eligible for Medicare, are over 50 years of age, or have a health condition that may restrict your future participation in 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: OUR PARTNERSHIP**

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

Beyond knowing that Peace Corps approaches safety and security as a partnership with you, it might be helpful to see how this partnership works. Peace Corps has policies, procedures, and training in place to promote your safety. We depend 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 of burglary – is:

- Peace Corps assesses the security environment where you will live and work
- Peace Corps inspects the house where you will live according to established security criteria
- Peace Corps provides you with resources to take measures such as installing new locks
- Peace Corps ensures you are welcomed by host country authorities in your new community
- 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 neighbors
- You decide if purchasing personal articles insurance is appropriate for you
- You don't change residences before being authorized by Peace Corps
- You communicate concerns that you have to Peace Corps staff

### **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 Ghana there are several measures you can take to reduce your risk:

- Leave valuable objects in the U.S.
- Leave copies of important documents and account numbers with someone you trust in the U.S.
- Purchase a hidden money pouch or "dummy" wallet as a decoy
- Purchase personal articles insurance

After you arrive in Ghana, 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 in Ghana learn to:

- 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
- 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 does exist in Ghana. You can reduce your risk 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 Ghana of which you should be aware:

- Thieves breaking and entering
- Pickpockets
- Backpacks, bags and purses being stolen or broken into while traveling
- Bags, purses and backpacks being stolen by people driving by in vehicles and motorbikes (especially in Accra)

While whistles and exclamations may be fairly common on the street, this behavior can be reduced if you dress conservatively, abide by local cultural norms, and respond according to the training you will receive.

## Staying Safe: Don't Be a Target for Crime

You must be prepared to take on a large degree of responsibility for your own safety. You can make yourself less of a target, ensure that your home is secure, and develop relationships in your community that will make you an unlikely victim of crime. While the factors that contribute to your risk in Ghana 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 Ghana 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 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 assist Volunteers with preserving their rights to pursue legal sanctions against the perpetrators of the crime. It is very important that Volunteers report incidents as they occur, not only to protect their peer Volunteers, but also to preserve the future right to prosecute. Should Volunteers decide later in the process that they want to proceed with the prosecution of their assailant, this option may no longer exist if the evidence of the event has not been preserved at the time of the incident.

## Crime Data for Ghana

Crime data and statistics for Ghana, which are updated yearly, are available at the following link: <http://www.peacecorps.gov/countrydata/ghana>.

Please take the time to review this important information.

Few Peace Corps Volunteers are victims of serious crimes and crimes that do occur overseas are investigated and prosecuted by local authorities through the local courts system. If you are the victim of a crime, you will decide if you wish to pursue prosecution. If you decide to prosecute, Peace Corps will be there to assist you. One of our tasks is to ensure you are fully informed of your options and understand how the local legal process works. Peace Corps will help you ensure your rights are protected to the fullest extent possible under the laws of the country.

If you are the victim of a serious crime, you will learn how to get to a safe location as quickly as possible and contact your Peace Corps office. It's important that you notify Peace Corps as soon as you can so Peace Corps can provide you with the help you need.

## Volunteer Safety Support in Ghana

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

The Peace Corps/Ghana 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 in ensuring 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 Ghana. 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/Ghana's **detailed emergency action plan**, which is implemented in the event of civil or political unrest or a natural disaster. When you arrive at your site, you will complete and submit a site locator form with your address, contact information, and a map to your house. If there is a security threat, you will gather with other Volunteers in Ghana 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 security incident 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 future Volunteers.



## DIVERSITY AND CROSS-CULTURAL ISSUES

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

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

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

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

### Overview of Diversity in Ghana

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

## **What Might a Volunteer Face?**

### **Possible Issues for Female Volunteers**

Friendships between men and women and ideas about romance are a bit different in Ghana. Ghanaians casually joke about marriage often, and after a while you will appreciate the humor and laugh right along with them. Some Volunteers, however, tire of the constant marriage requests. Even wearing a wedding band look-alike does not always minimize unappreciated comments.

### **Possible Issues for Volunteers of Color**

Many Ghanaians, especially rural Ghanaians, are under the impression that all Americans are white. In rural areas, people will call you “white woman” or “white man” even if you are obviously non-white. Ghanaians seem to lump people into two categories—either you are African, or you are white/foreign. The name they give to foreigners, oburoni, actually translates to “someone from over the horizon.” But you will find that this term is used interchangeably with “white person.” In the cities and even in less rural towns, you will find that people will try to guess what you are or simply assume and yell something at you like “Indian!” or “Chinese!” or “Black-American!” This is very difficult for some people. Sometimes, in the same day, you may be called Indian, black American, half cast, white woman, and Chinese!

### **Possible Issues for Senior Volunteers**

Volunteers in their early twenties find that they may have to make an extra effort to be accepted as professional colleagues since Ghanaians of that age are often still pursuing their education. Younger Volunteers must work for acceptance and respect since respect in traditional Ghanaian society is associated with age. In contrast, every wrinkle and every gray hair earns respect for the experience and wisdom they represent.

### **Possible Issues for Married Couple Volunteers**

During pre-service training, accommodations are available in the host families for married couples in the same program. If they are assigned to different programs, they will live in different villages, but they can be together on weekends. Once the couple swears in and goes to their site, they will live together in the same house and community.

Sometimes it is only one of the spouses who really wanted to be a Peace Corps Volunteer and the other just came along. If this is the case, both husband and wife should be very sure they want to serve as Volunteers before swearing in to do so.

The challenges facing Volunteers (adapting to a different culture, learning a language, working out the details of a job) may be experienced differently by each spouse, but they

will both experience similar and dissimilar rewards as well. A good sense of humor and communication and patience will be required of couples serving together.

### **Possible Issues for Gay, Lesbian, or Bisexual Volunteers**

Even though there is an increasingly open homosexual community in Ghana, particularly in Accra, most Ghanaians feel that homosexuality is immoral and depraved behavior. Being sensible about revealing one's sexual orientation in one's home, workplace, and community is advisable.

A recommended resource for support and advice prior to and during your service is the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender U.S. Peace Corps Alumni website at [www.lgbrpcv.org](http://www.lgbrpcv.org).

### **Possible Religious Issues for Volunteers**

As a Volunteer in Ghana, you may frequently be asked if you believe in God. Because church or the mosque and prayer are a big part of many communities, you may feel pressure to attend. Because Ghana is predominantly a Christian and Muslim country, people may not understand what it means to be Jewish, Buddhist, or Hindu. Unlike the United States, religion and prayer are built into all official ceremonies and meetings. Interestingly, many educated Ghanaians do not believe in traditional, indigenous beliefs and frown upon others being interested in such topics. If you do not participate in organized religion in the U.S. it is alright to discuss this with Ghanaians. They will be quite intrigued if you do not believe in God. Some people may find this nearly impossible.

### **Possible Issues for Volunteers With Disabilities**

As part of the medical clearance process, the Peace Corps Office of Medical Services determined that you were physically and emotionally capable, with or without reasonable accommodations, to perform a full tour of Volunteer service in Ghana without unreasonable risk of harm to yourself or interruption of service.

Being disabled in Ghana brings about its own complications. In some cases, people may not feel you can do the job, and others may try to do things for you instead of letting you do them yourself. As for Ghanaians, they are generally very blunt and direct in asking you about your disability. As a disabled Volunteer in Ghana, you will face a special set of challenges. There is very little infrastructure to accommodate those with disabilities. The Peace Corps/Ghana staff will work with disabled Volunteers to make reasonable accommodations for them in training, housing, jobsites, or other areas to enable them to serve safely and effectively.



## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

This list has been compiled by Volunteers serving in Ghana 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 Ghana.

### **How much luggage am I allowed to bring to Ghana?**

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 for any one bag.

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

### **What is the electric current in Ghana?**

If you have electricity, the current is 50 cycles, 220 volts. There are surges and cuts, which put a strain on voltage converters and appliances, so bring good quality items. "AA" and "D," as well as watch and calculator batteries are easy to find. "C" batteries are not easily found. We highly recommend rechargeable batteries.

### **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.

### **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. If you wish, you may contact your own insurance company; additionally, insurance application forms will be provided, and we encourage you to consider them carefully. Volunteers should not ship or take valuable items overseas. Jewelry, watches, radios, cameras, and expensive appliances are subject to loss, theft, and breakage, and in many places, satisfactory maintenance and repair services are not available.

### **Do I need an international driver's license?**

Volunteers in Ghana 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 Ghana 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 usually within one hour from another Volunteer. Some sites are a two- to three-day drive from the capital. There will be at least one Volunteer based in each of the regional capitals, and one or two Volunteers in Accra, the capital city

### **How can my family contact me in an emergency?**

The Peace Corps' Office of Special Services (OSS) provides assistance in handling emergencies affecting trainees and Volunteers or their families. Before leaving the United States, instruct your family to notify the Office of Special Services immediately if an emergency arises, such as a serious illness or death of a family member. During normal business hours, the number for the Office of Special Services is 855.855.1961, then select option 2; or directly at 202-692-1470. After normal business hours and on weekends and holidays, the OSS duty officer can be reached at the above number. For non-emergency questions, your family can get information from your country desk staff at the Peace Corps by calling 855.855.1961.

### **Can I call home from Ghana?**

Yes. The international phone service to and from Ghana is good. The Ghana telephone agency has offices located in major cities and some smaller towns. There are direct lines to the United States in regional capitals. If you are close to one of the 10 regional capitals, you can either call collect or use a calling card.

### **Should I bring a cellular phone with me?**

Many Ghanaians are now able to purchase cellphones. If you need a cellphone for your job, there are many available, although coverage is not yet available in all parts of the country.

### **Will there be email and Internet access and should I bring my computer?**

There are more places (Internet cafés and com centers) springing up around Ghana, although most are still in the larger towns and cities. Most Volunteers are able to access such places at least once a month. Many Volunteers bring laptops and find them very useful. Even if you do not bring a laptop, it is recommended that you bring a high density memory stick, sometimes called a pen drive.



# WELCOME LETTERS FROM COUNTRY VOLUNTEERS

Welcome Future PCV!

Congrats! You have been invited to serve in Ghana, an excellent choice when it comes to West Africa—stable government, growing economy, and friendly people who speak English. We’ve got beautiful Atlantic coastline, national parks, tropical forests and the wide-open northern savanna; you’re going to have an amazing time. Ghana is a wonderful country and it offers many opportunities to meet people, aid development and make a difference in the world. I’ve heard Ghana called “Africa for beginners” and have certainly found it a good place to start.

During my time here, I have come to truly love the people, food, work, and culture that surrounds me. It takes time to adapt and integrate, but I feel like, after a year of teaching at a tiny rural high school, I am part of my community and I understand my little corner of Ghana. I know that this place will always be important to me; Ghana will always be my home, and the friends I’ve made here will always be like my family.

I hope you choose to come and join me here in Ghana. My Peace Corps service is definitely one of the most important and life-changing experiences I have ever had.

Do good, be well.

— Toby Koy

PCV/Science Education

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Dear Future Peace Corps Volunteer,

I am an outgoing Volunteer who came to Ghana in October of 2008. I just wanted to write a short note to say congratulations on your decision to join the Peace Corps and to pass on a few words of wisdom I’ve gained from my experience here.

So, first ... Congratulations. The Peace Corps is a noble organization. You’re about to join a group whose sole purpose is to “promote world peace and friendship.” Be proud of yourself. The experience on which you are about to embark will make the world a better place.

Second ... a few words of wisdom. As for me, I was scared (more like petrified) to leave the States for West Africa. I was so, so scared. Leaving my friends and family in America was one of the most difficult things about the whole Peace Corps experience. Also, I had no idea what to expect. I’d never been to Africa. What I knew of Africa I’d pretty much surmised from late night infomercials that solicited donations for starving children. I’ve been here over two years now and I know Ghana. I know Ghana well and trying to describe it to you would be akin to describing an apple to someone who has never tasted fruit. So, I won’t even attempt it. I will say, however, that I have absolutely zero regrets about joining the Peace Corps. Sure, I missed my family and it was hot and I was scared and frustrated and sad while I was here. I’ve also had some of the best moments of my life here. I’ve

experienced personal evolution that I don't think would have been possible in my American comfort zone. This place will change you. It's changed me and I'm so grateful. So, so grateful.

Becoming a Peace Corps Volunteer is exciting. It's also scary and frustrating. It's so many things, but know that the next two years will likely be some of the most memorable years of your life. You're about to join a very special group of people. Knowing that there are individuals like you who believe in the Peace Corps cause makes me very hopeful for the future. What you're about to do will show you exactly what you are made of ... and it will also change the world.

Good Luck. Best Wishes. Remember, if it were easy, everyone would do it. YOU are special.

— Kimmie Ellison

Peace Corps Volunteer Leader

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Dear Future Ghana PCV,

**AKWAABA** (WELCOME) to Peace Corps/Ghana.

There is not much that someone can say to prepare you for such an experience, but that's the whole point—to experience it for yourself! While it is hard to truly prepare yourself for what is to come, I hope you feel confident and excited about your upcoming service in Ghana. (It is going to be amazing!)

Development is not a straight line and the role of a Peace Corps Volunteer is not to merely deliver aid. As a Peace Corps Volunteer, you will live in a village/community where you work, exchanging ideas with the locals about their own ideas of development and giving suggestions to help them better themselves. Never forget that the Second Goal and Third Goal of Peace Corps are cultural exchange. If you keep these two goals in mind, your efforts to achieve the First Goal will be greatly facilitated.

It's surprising how much we learn by being with ourselves and others. We learn just how patient we can be. We learn just how patient we can't be (e.g., there are only so many times you can be called "*obruni*" [white person] or have people try to guilt you into giving them something before you want to scream). Most importantly, though, we get to know and understand our friends—our brothers, sisters, mothers, and fathers of our communities. We learn what options we have and what and with whom we have to explore those options to do projects and get the community interested in taking part in its own development. After my time here in Ghana, I've learned a lot about myself and about the people from where I call home.

My suggestion is this: stop worrying about details. Half of what I thought I could not live without is collecting dust in my house. All you need is within you already, and most everything else you can find in Ghana or it can easily be sent from home. So for now, close the suitcase (Oh, I like peanut M&M's), and go eat a huge taco loaded with CHEESE, drink a margarita, and marinate in the uncertainty. The only way for you to get your questions answered is by being here, which will happen soon enough.

Thousands of people have served as Peace Corps Volunteers— if they can do it, so can you!

I leave you with this thought:

*“TIME IS A SORT OF RIVER OF PASSING EVENTS, AND STRONG IS ITS CURRENT;  
NO SOONER IS A THING BROUGHT TO SIGHT THAN IT IS SWEEPED BY AND  
ANOTHER TAKES ITS PLACE, AND THIS TOO WILL BE SWEEPED AWAY.” ~*  
MARCUS AURELIUS

I look forward to your arrival and will be here to help you along the way!

— Michael Burleson (Mikey)

Peace Corps Volunteer Leader

## PACKING LIST

This list has been compiled by Volunteers serving in Ghana 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 Ghana.

### General Clothing

Ghana is either hot and dry, hot and humid, or hot and rainy, and in some places it gets cool (we kid you not!). Hand-washing becomes very hard on your clothes, so pack durable clothing. Cotton clothes are practical and comfortable. Many Volunteers prefer polypropylene underwear and shirts in humid conditions. White clothing tends to get dirty and stain fast. Ghana has great, inexpensive second-hand clothing markets (for example, a pair of shoes for \$6, a shirt for \$3). You can buy everything there.

You can easily have clothes inexpensively tailored with fabrics bought here. Ghanaians really appreciate seeing Volunteers wearing clothing made from colorful Ghanaian cloth. The cloth may cost about \$10 depending on the quality and texture. Cloths are colorful and there is an endless selection. To have a shirt or dress sewn (tailored) costs around an extra \$5, so do not invest your money in a lot of new clothes before you leave. Many people have clothes made during pre-service training. You will also see what is most appropriate. Your stateside money would be best spent on durable shoes and underwear.

Volunteers are not permitted to wear shorts away from their house unless they are engaged in sports or manual labor.

### Essential for Everyone

- Lightweight towel (dark colors; high-absorbent camping towels are great for traveling)
- High density memory stick or other form of media for storing computer files, pictures, music, etc. Bring one even if you're not bringing a laptop. They're sometimes called "pen drives/flashdrives."
- Lightweight waterproof jacket
- Sweatshirt, sweater, or fleece (for cool evenings)
- Bathing suit (conservative is advisable)
- Durable flashlight (e.g., Maglite or head lamp)

- Two pairs of lightweight trousers
- Multi-tool (e.g., Swiss Army or Leatherman)
- One dressier garden-party style outfit—NOT cocktail variety—for the occasional special event (a decent smart-casual dress or skirt with blouse for ladies; and decent shirt and trousers for men). Short sleeves are OK for men and women. There will be a welcoming reception at the U.S. ambassador’s residence within a day or two of arrival. Men can bring one tie to add to the nice shirt. No need to bring a blazer or suit)
- Ten passport-sized photos of yourself for Ghana residence visa, and other IDs and visas
- Hat

### Optional

- Two pairs of athletic shorts (for sports or at home only)
- Running shoes or sports shoes
- Jeans (nice quality, i.e., no rips or holes; some people feel they are too hot, others wear them regularly)

### Men

- Two pair of nice, lightweight cotton pants, Dockers-style (pants must NOT be baggy or drag on the ground)
- Five pairs of cotton socks
- One belt (Ghanaians wear dress shirts tucked in and pants belted; more casual shirts with a straight hem are worn untucked)
- Two polo-style cotton shirts with a collar
- Three cotton short-sleeved button-down shirts with collars (Ghanaians like the well-pressed look; charcoal or electric irons will be available)
- Five T-shirts (if printed, no controversial topics involving politics, drugs, or sex)

### Women

- Two dress blouses or shirts for mix and match with skirts
- Two pairs of cotton pants for work and play
- Two or three light cotton dresses or skirts (these should be below the knees or longer)
- One slip (essential to keep perspiration from your body and to prevent seeing through your lightweight dresses and skirts; nylon or synthetic works fine)

- Two to three pair of sturdy casual dress shoes or nice durable sandals (nicer than Tevas; do not bother with heels)
- Five nice T-shirts (if printed, no controversial topics regarding politics, drugs, or sex) for mix and match with skirts
- Sports bras

*A note to women: It is acceptable for women to wear trousers, so bring whatever you are comfortable in, either pants, skirts, or both. However, it is not the norm to teach or attend professional meetings in trousers. Teachers will wear dresses or skirts for work every day. Bring your most comfortable dress or skirt and it can be copied here by a tailor. You can also have inexpensive dresses made or buy secondhand clothes.*

## Underwear

Good-quality, comfortable, cotton underwear is very hard to buy in Ghana, so this is one thing you will want to invest in before you come. Men find that boxers are cooler than briefs. Women should bring about five cotton bras. Cotton is a must. Elastic self-destructs in the tropics. You may want to bring enough underwear so you can put some aside for your second year.

Warning: The Army-Navy Surplus store is a great place to start shopping, but do not buy any clothes that appear to be military issue or that bear any military insignia. It is illegal in Ghana to wear military-style clothing.

## Shoes

- Two to three pairs of sturdy shoes and/or sandals (one of these might be a pair of lightweight hiking or trail shoes)

## Personal Hygiene and Toiletry Items

Bring lotions, shampoo, and items that you really like to have around, and bring deodorant, unless you like roll-ons. Do not bring toothpaste—it is available everywhere. Bring enough of these items to get you through the first three weeks of pre-service training. After that, you can buy what you need here.

## Miscellaneous

- Inexpensive shortwave radio (Can be bought here)
- Sturdy water bottle (e.g., Nalgene)
- Nail clippers if you use them
- One wash cloth (if you use them)
- Pair of scissors

- Handi-wipes, for long bus rides
- One set of double-sized bed sheets and pillow cases (preferably not white); sheets are available here but are poor quality
- Compact umbrella (though they can be bought here)
- Backpack for four- to seven-day trips (often called a “climbers” pack)
- Tube of good glue (Barge, Epoxy, glue for Birkenstocks if you bring them, etc.)
- Thermarest pad (these are expensive; bring it if you already own it, but it is not necessary)
- Alarm clock (battery or wind-up)
- One roll of duct tape (extremely useful)
- Pictures of home, family, and friends
- Your favorite books and textbooks—bring some for training and trading (but have most of them mailed to you)
- OB tampons (enough for two years; this brand packs small and is very expensive here)
- Prescription drugs (a three-month supply until the medical unit at the Peace Corps can provide special needs)
- Eyeglasses (two pair, since replacements take a long time to arrive from the States)
- Eyeglass repair kit
- Money belt or other means of concealing your passport and valuables when traveling (A belt loop is a good security feature)
- Astronomy and wildlife guides if this interests you (Collins Field Guides on West African birds is popular)
- Tapes/CDs, or if you already have an iPod, bring it (although keep in mind that it could draw some extra attention)
- Frisbee, hacky-sack, hammock, and travel-size games (Yahtzee, chess, cards, UNO, etc.)
- Bicycle repair kit
- Guitar strings
- Vegetable seeds

# PRE-DEPARTURE CHECKLIST

The following list consists of suggestions for you to consider as you prepare to live outside the United States for two years. Not all items will be relevant to everyone, and the list does not include everything you should make arrangements for.

## Family

- Notify family that they can call the Peace Corps' Counseling and Outreach Unit at any time if there is a critical illness or death of a family member (24-hour telephone number: 1-855-855-1961, then press 2; or directly at 202-692-1470).
- Give the Peace Corps' On the Home Front handbook to family and friends.

## Passport/Travel

- Forward to the Peace Corps travel office all paperwork for the Peace Corps passport and visas.
- Verify that 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 your service, so if you plan to travel longer, you will need a regular passport.)

## Medical/Health

- Complete any needed dental and medical work.
- If you wear glasses, bring two pairs.
- 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 overseas, 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 U.S.
- Obtain student loan deferment forms from the lender or loan service.
- Execute a Power of Attorney for the management of your property and business.
- Arrange for deductions from your readjustment allowance to pay alimony, child support, and other debts through the Office of Volunteer Financial Operations at 855.855.1961, extension 1770.
- Place all important papers—mortgages, deeds, stocks, and bonds—in a safe deposit box or with an attorney or other caretaker.

## CONTACTING PEACE CORPS HEADQUARTERS

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 or ext. # (see below)**

Peace Corps' Mailing Address: Peace Corps Headquarters  
1111 20th Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20526

Questions About:	Staff:	Toll-Free Ext:	Direct/Local #:
Responding to an Invitation	Office of Placement	x1840	202.692.1840
Country Information	Zachary Rosen Desk Officer (Benin & Ghana) ghana@peacecorps.gov	x1022	202.692.1022
Plane Tickets, Passports, Visas, or other travel matters:	CWT SATO Travel	x1170	202.692.1170
Legal Clearance	Office of Placement	x1840	202.692.1840
Medical Clearance & Forms Processing (includes dental)	Screening Nurse	x1500	202.692.1500
Medical Reimbursements (handled by a subcontractor)	Seven Corners	N/A	202.692.1538 800.335.0611
Loan Deferments, Taxes, Financial Operations	Office Of Volunteer and PSC Financial Services	x1770	202.692.1770
Readjustment Allowance Withdrawals, Power of Attorney, Staging (Pre-Departure Orientation), and Reporting Instructions	Office of Staging <i>Note: You will receive comprehensive information (hotel and flight arrangements) three to five weeks prior to departure. This information is not available sooner.</i>	x1865	202.692.1865
Family Emergencies (to get information to a Volunteer overseas) 24 hours	Office of Special Services	x1470	202.692.1470