

THE PEACE CORPS WELCOMES YOU TO



BOTSWANA

A PEACE CORPS PUBLICATION FOR NEW VOLUNTEERS
August 2014



A WELCOME LETTER

Ke dumedisa ka pula!

Congratulations on having been selected to join Peace Corps/Botswana, which has a proud legacy of over 40 years of service. Its contributions to the development of this nation are well-recognized and appreciated.

The staff in Botswana is looking forward to working with you. We are committed to providing the best medical, training, programmatic, and administrative support we can. At the same time, as Peace Corps has for over 50 years, we will look to you to be as independent and as self-reliant as possible. During pre-service training (PST), you will begin to learn Setswana and adapt to the culture, which will include living with a Batswana family. You will develop the community assessment skills needed for your assignment and discover how to maintain your health and reduce safety and security risks during your service.

PST is a time for both you and Peace Corps staff to assess your suitability for service in Botswana. A two-year commitment should not be entered into casually. It is one that you may need to reaffirm in many ways during PST and throughout your service. In fairness to our local partners and to safeguard the reputation of the organization, we do periodically determine that a trainee or Volunteer is not suited to serve here and return him or her home.

The extent to which you become an accepted and valued colleague and community member depends largely on you. If you come with an open mind, a warm heart, and a good sense of humor, you will do well. Although staff members are here to support you, you are the ultimate architect and builder of your successful Peace Corps service.

Please read this welcome book as part of your preparation for living and working in Botswana as a Peace Corps Volunteer. We look forward to meeting you.

Tim Hartman
Peace Corps/Botswana 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 do the following:

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

History of the Peace Corps in Botswana

The Peace Corps entered the Republic of Botswana, formerly known as Bechuanaland, in December 1966, just two months after the country gained independence. Botswana's emergence as an independent nation heightened the need for a skilled labor force. More than 1,800 Peace Corps Volunteers served in Botswana from 1966–97. Peace Corps projects contributed to nearly every sector of Botswana's development, including education, health, environment, urban planning, and economics. Volunteers filled significant gaps in the labor force and, in many cases, made singular contributions to the development of Botswana. There are scores of leading figures in Botswana who have a Peace Corps connection, be it as a co-worker, teacher, or friend.

Since its independence in 1966, Botswana progressed from being one of the world's poorest countries to one of the few developing nations to reach middle-income status. The country's per capita income has grown rapidly. Life expectancy at birth increased from 48 years to over 60 years. Formal sector employment grew from 14,000 jobs to 120,000. Moreover, the nation's infrastructure, including roads, power generation, schools, health facilities, and housing, increased dramatically. Partly due to Botswana's remarkable economic transition, the Peace Corps withdrew from the country in 1997.

In 2003, the Peace Corps returned to Botswana at the request of former President Festus Mogae, who recognized that HIV/AIDS was starting to erode the prodigious development realized in the country since independence.

Peace Corps Programming in Botswana

Botswana's HIV infection rate is one of the highest in the world. The government, under the leadership of former President Mogae, has publicly acknowledged the crisis, implemented a National AIDS Council and Coordinating Agency, and developed a national plan called the National Strategic Framework for HIV/AIDS.

The National AIDS Coordinating Agency (NACA) asked Peace Corps/Botswana to focus on capacity-building. Volunteers work in four programs:

1. **Schools (Life Skills):** Volunteers facilitate the implementation of the life skills curriculum and work with teachers and school officials to develop life skills in students and the community.
2. **Community based and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs):** Volunteers build organizational and staff capacity in management, programming, resource use, and fundraising.
3. **Clinics and health management teams (CHT):** Volunteers increase awareness of HIV/AIDS and prevention, develop community support groups, work with youth, build technical capacity, and increase participation in government programs.
4. **Local government capacity building (LGCB):** Volunteers work in District AIDS Coordinating (DAC) offices and Social and Community Development (S&CD) offices. They build capacity in program planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and the mobilization of government and community responses to HIV/AIDS.

COUNTRY OVERVIEW: BOTSWANA AT A GLANCE

History

By about 1700, the ancestors of today's Batswana (citizens of Botswana) were established as self-sufficient herders, farmers, and hunters. Their first contact with Europeans was through missionaries in the early 19th century. After hostilities broke out between the Batswana and expansionist Afrikaners from South Africa in the last quarter of that century, the tribal chiefs asked the British for assistance. The British responded and, in 1885, proclaimed a protectorate in what was then called Bechuanaland. They retained colonial control until 1966. Bechuanaland played a prominent role in the British penetration of Central Africa in the 19th century. Cecil Rhodes called the region the "Suez Canal to the north" and considered it vital to his plans for territorial expansion. British interests in Bechuanaland were primarily strategic, and internal affairs were handled with more or less benign neglect.

Under British authority, local tribal governments were allowed to continue, with chiefs retaining much of their authority. With the establishment of separate advisory councils representing Africans and Europeans in 1920, the evolution of modern self-government began. In 1951, a joint advisory council was formed, consisting of both European and African members. Over the years these advisory bodies were consulted on a constantly expanding range of matters.

By 1964, Britain was prepared to accept a system of internal self-government. Seretse Khama, the British-educated heir to the chieftainship of the Bangwato tribe and a former enemy of the British Empire, was elected as the first prime minister and, subsequently, first president. He is revered for his nonpartisan politics and for leading the country to full independence in 1966. Since then, Botswana has had orderly presidential transitions, beginning with Quett Ketumile Masire, who followed Khama, then Festus Mogae, and currently Lt. Gen. Seretse Khama Ian Khama (son of the first president), who took office on April 1, 2008.

Government

Botswana is a multiparty democracy with a stable and progressive political climate. The Constitution established a unicameral National Assembly, now composed of 57 members directly elected by popular vote, four members elected by the Assembly, and the attorney general. The chief executive is the president, who is chosen by his party. Presidents serve up to two five-year terms. The president selects the cabinet ministers and the vice president from the National Assembly. The Constitution provides for freedom of speech, press, and religion, contributing to Botswana's reputation for being one of Africa's most stable countries.

Botswana has three main political parties and numerous minor parties. National politics has been dominated by the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP), which has won every presidential election since independence.

Economy

Botswana maintained one of the world's highest economic growth rates since independence in 1966. Through fiscal discipline and sound management, the nation transformed itself from one of the poorest countries to a middle-income country with a per capita GDP of \$16,600 in 2012. While there have been major reductions in poverty levels of Botswana citizens since independence, there is still high unemployment (approximately 18 percent) and a gap between those participating fully in the economy and many who do not.

Botswana's mining industry includes nickel and diamonds, among other elements. It is the second-largest producer of nickel in Africa and has the second-largest diamond pipes in the world. Other economic activities include tourism and agriculture, especially beef production.

The government has managed the country's resources prudently and kept recurrent expenditures within its revenue, allowing for investment in infrastructure and services. HIV/AIDS has affected the development gains and impacts all aspects of Botswana life.

People and Culture

The population includes no fewer than 20 African ethnic groups and a small population of peoples of Indian and European descent. In the colonial period, white settlement in Botswana consisted mainly of Afrikaners and British who settled on border farms. Since then, a larger expatriate population from Europe, North America (including former Peace Corps Volunteers), South Asia, and elsewhere in Africa has been drawn to the country. Much of this immigration is the result of Botswana's continued reliance on foreign skilled labor, particularly in the medical sector.

Although there are distinct linguistic and cultural differences among Botswana's ethnic groups, the majority of the population (79 percent) is Tswana, whose ethnic dominance in Botswana dates from the 19th century, when the area was ruled by eight Tswana states. The populations of these states were given the official status of "tribes" under British colonial rule, and the term is still used commonly today. The name Botswana is derived from the Tswana. The official language is English and the national language is Setswana; both are widely spoken.

Botswana is about 70 percent Christian, but many religions are represented in larger towns. The two most active and popular churches are the Zion Christian Church and the Roman Catholic Church. There are also numerous smaller denominations throughout the country. Although Christianity is widely practiced, so too are indigenous religions. Interestingly, there are fewer than 500 Western-educated doctors in the country, while there are more than 5,000 practicing traditional healers.

Of the 2.1 million Botswana, 18.5 percent of the general population (18 weeks and over) are estimated to be infected with HIV, roughly 320,000 adults and children. Over 200,000, or 87 percent of those infected, are receiving antiretroviral therapy (ART). Most who need ART are on it. AIDS orphans are estimated at 52,000.

The long-term impact of the epidemic is still grave. The government estimates that the population will be 18 percent lower in 2021 than it would have been in the absence of the disease. In addition, despite the longer life expectancy for patients receiving antiretroviral therapy, the number of deaths is expected to rise and nearly double by 2016.

Environment

Botswana is one of Africa's least densely populated countries, with a population of approximately 2.1 million people in a land area slightly smaller than Texas. It is known for unforgettable wilderness, the spectacular waterways of the Okavango Delta, the Kalahari sand dunes, and an abundance of wildlife. Much of the country is flat, with gentle undulations and occasional rocky outcrops.

RESOURCES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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

A note of caution: As you surf the Internet, be aware that you may find bulletin boards and chat rooms in which people are free to express opinions about the Peace Corps based on their own experiences, including comments by those who were unhappy with their choice to serve in the Peace Corps. These opinions are not those of the Peace Corps or the U.S. government, and please keep in mind that no two people experience their service in the same way.

General Information About Botswana

State.gov

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

Gpo.gov/libraries/public/

The U.S. Government Printing Office publishes country studies intermittently.

lweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/cshome.html

The Library of Congress provides historical and sociological data on numerous countries.

http://unstats.un.org/unsd/pocketbook/World_Statistics_Pocketbook_2013_edition.pdf

United Nations resource book with 2013 statistical country data

Data.un.org

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

Wikipedia.org

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

Worldbank.org

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

Data.worldbank.org/country

Provides information on development indicators on countries, including population, gender, financial, and education, and climate change statistics.

Connect With Returned Volunteers and Other Invitees

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.

PeaceCorpsWorldwide.org

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

Online Articles/Current News Sites About Botswana

UN.org/News/

The United Nations news service provides coverage of its member states and information about the international peacekeeping organization’s actions and positions.

VOAnews.com

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

International Development Sites About Botswana

www.usaid.gov

U.S. Agency for International Development

www.unaids.org

Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS

www.undp.org

United Nations Development Programme.

Recommended Books

Books About the History of the Peace Corps

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

Books on the Volunteer Experience

1. Dirlam, Sharon. "Beyond Siberia: Two Years in a Forgotten Place." Santa Barbara, CA: McSeas Books, 2004.
2. Casebolt, Marjorie DeMoss. "Margarita: A Guatemalan Peace Corps Experience." Gig Harbor, WA: Red Apple Publishing, 2000.
3. Erdman, Sarah. "Nine Hills to Nambonkaha: Two Years in the Heart of an African Village." New York City: Picador, 2003.
4. Hessler, Peter. "River Town: Two Years on the Yangtze." New York City: Perennial, 2001.
5. Kennedy, Geraldine ed. "From the Center of the Earth: Stories out of the Peace Corps." Santa Monica, CA: Clover Park Press, 1991.
6. Thomsen, Moritz. "Living Poor: A Peace Corps Chronicle." Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997 (reprint).

Books About Botswana

1. Dow, Unity and Essex, Max. "Saturday is for Funerals." Harvard University Press, 2009.
2. Allison, Peter. "Whatever You Do, Don't Run: True Tales of a Botswana Safari Guide." The Lyons Press, 2007.
3. Alverson, Marianne. "Under African Sun." Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987.
4. Denbow, James and Pheny C. Thebe. "Culture and Customs of Botswana." Greenwood Press, 2006.
5. Epstein, Helen. "The Invisible Cure: Why We Are Losing the Fight Against AIDS in Africa." Picador, 2008
6. Head, Bessie. "When Rain Clouds Gather." Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 1996.
7. Nolen, Stephanie. "28 Stories of AIDS in Africa." Walker & Company, 2007
8. Rush, Norman. "Whites: Stories." New York, N.Y.: Vintage Books, 1992.
9. Smith, Alexander McCall. "The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency." New York, N.Y.: Anchor Books/Random House. 1998.
10. Williams, Susan. "The Colour Bar: The Triumph of Seretse Khama and His Nation." Penguin Group (U.S.), 2008.

LIVING CONDITIONS AND VOLUNTEER LIFESTYLE

Communications

Mail

Postal rates in Botswana are reasonable and airmail to the United States generally takes about two weeks. Mail supplies can be purchased at all post office branches. Sending large packages via airmail can be very expensive, but smaller items, such as photographs or CDs, can be sent for a reasonable fee. Airmail from the U.S. to Botswana takes two to four weeks, while surface mail takes four to six weeks to arrive. Advise your family and friends to keep all documentation related to the packages that they send to Botswana so any package that does not arrive can be traced. Most mail will come with a tracking number that can be tracked online and will show when a package from the U.S. clears customs in Botswana. Postal insurance is a good idea when sending packages from the United States.

During pre-service training, your mail should be sent to the Peace Corps office address: PCT Name, c/o Peace Corps/Botswana, Private Bag 00243, Gaborone, Botswana. Peace Corps staff will then forward your mail to the training site.

After training, you can give your family and friends the address of your site assignment to avoid lengthy delays in transferring from the Peace Corps office to your final location.

Telephones

Domestic and international phone service is available throughout Botswana. Service is more expensive than in the United States, particularly for international calls. While there are few public phone booths, individuals offering phone services can be found in nearly every corner of small towns and villages. The Peace Corps purchases a cellphone for each Volunteer in-country (for less than \$30, although ones with additional features can cost considerably more). The network covers most towns and larger villages. Many friends and family members in the U.S. purchase low-cost international dialing plans to contact a Volunteer in Botswana, or they use Skype or similar programs for communicating with a Volunteer.

Computer, Internet, and Email Access

Most larger villages and towns in Botswana have Internet cafes. Your access to email will be limited during the 10 weeks of pre-service training because email is not always readily available at the training site and training is time-consuming. You should be able to access email at an Internet cafe during off-hours and on weekends. At your site placement, you may not have regular Internet access. Some Volunteers, approximately 25 percent, only access the Internet once a month when they visit a larger nearby village for grocery shopping.

Housing and Site Location

Your housing is provided by the government of Botswana or other partner organizations. Because of the wide range of housing in Botswana, there is considerable variation in Volunteer living situations. You should come prepared to accept the Peace Corps' minimum standard for housing: a single room that is clean and can be secured with a lock, with access to clean water and sanitary bathroom and cooking space. Electricity and piped-in water are not required by the Peace Corps.

Volunteers placed at the district level can expect fairly comfortable housing, which typically means a one- or two-bedroom cement house with a kitchen, indoor plumbing, and electricity. Volunteers based at the village level can expect housing to be more rustic, perhaps a house on a family compound where services are limited or nonexistent. The government or partner organization is responsible for providing limited furnishings (bed, table, chair) and covering the cost of utilities (cooking gas, water).

Living Allowance and Money Management

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

Food and Diet

The absence of basic food items is not an issue in Botswana. In fact, Volunteers may be surprised to find a large variety of English and American products, such as Heinz ketchup, Hellmann's mayonnaise, and Doritos, although all might not be accessible at your site or given the Volunteer living allowance. Fresh fruits and vegetables are usually available, even in outlying areas, although variety may be quite limited. Access to specialty foods and grocery stores varies according to one's placement. Those posted to district-level villages or large towns will be able to buy food items in their immediate vicinity. Those posted to villages, particularly in very rural spots, will be limited to periodic shopping trips in the larger towns.

The traditional diet in Botswana relies heavily on meat and starches (notably corn or maize, beans, rice, potatoes, and sorghum). Starches are usually served in a stew or with gravy, made of vegetables such as cabbages, tomatoes, greens, and onions. Beetroot and butternut squash often give color to a dish.

Committed vegetarians will find it relatively easy to maintain their diet but will have to find a way to convince meat-loving Botswana of the healthiness of their choice. Note that consumption of meat is given particular importance in some cultural celebrations.

Transportation

In general, it is not difficult to get around in Botswana. Common and inexpensive forms of public transportation include buses and private taxis. Buses travel on a fairly regular schedule throughout the country, although transfers may be necessary to reach one's destination. Buses range in size from combis (10- to 12-seat minivans) to large luxury buses (similar to Greyhound). While most transportation is reliable, the Peace Corps encourages Volunteers to assess the condition of both the vehicle and the driver before boarding.

The Peace Corps' recommended mode of transportation among Volunteer sites and the capital is a large bus and Volunteers' travel allowances reflect the slightly higher cost for this service.

Geography and Climate

In the northwest, the Okavango River drains inland from Angola to form the Okavango Delta. In the central northeast is a large area of hardpan plains bordering the Makgadikgadi Pans. In the east, adjacent to the Limpopo drainage system, the land rises above 3,960 feet (1,200 meters), and the Limpopo Valley gradually descends from 2,970 feet (900 meters) in the south to 1,650 feet (500 meters) at its confluence with the Shashe River. This eastern region, which straddles the north-south railway line, has a somewhat less harsh climate and more fertile soil than elsewhere; it is here that most Botswana live. The rest of Botswana is covered with the thick sand (up to 396 feet, or 120 meters, deep) of the Kgalagadi (or Kalahari) Desert, which accounts for more than two-thirds of Botswana's land area. The Kgalagadi supports a vegetation of scrub and grasses, but there is an almost complete absence of surface water.

The country is largely arid or semiarid, and average rainfall ranges from 26 inches (650 millimeters) in the extreme northeast to less than 10 inches (250 millimeters) in the extreme southwest. Almost all the rainfall—consisting primarily of localized showers and thunderstorms—occurs during the summer

months of October to April. Average daily maximum temperatures range from 72 degrees Fahrenheit (22 degrees Celsius) in July to 91 F (33 C) in January. However, the extremes range widely, from less than 23 F (-5 C) up to 109 F (43 C). The lowest temperatures are in the southwest, where early morning frost can occur from June to August.

Social Activities

In fulfillment of the three goals of the Peace Corps, Volunteers are expected to make their host communities the center of their social life and to stay at their sites unless they are traveling for approved vacation or work purposes. The types of activities and relationships that constitute a social life will vary according to a Volunteer's own interests and site assignment. Those in more urban settings will find a host of facilities, organizations, and other social outlets. Those in more rural settings may find limited formal social structures; in such cases, host families and friends in the community often become the center around which social activity revolves.

Professionalism, Dress, and Behavior

Botswana place great importance on conservative and professional dress in the workplace. The norms of professional dress mean slacks, shirts, and usually ties for men and dresses, skirts or nice pants for women. Ties are required of men in schools. Women are expected to wear skirts and men expected to wear jackets in the *kgotla*, which is the traditional chief's meeting place in every town or village. It is seen as a sign of respect for others when you dress professionally, and how you are viewed by your colleagues will be highly dependent on the way you present yourself. Tennis shoes, sneakers, or sport sandals are not appropriate footwear for work. Although jeans and T-shirts are acceptable as casual wear, it is more common to see men wearing shirts with collars and casual slacks and women wearing skirts or slacks with blouses or casual dresses during non-work hours. Although shorts may be appropriate at home, most males wear long pants outdoors, even in summer months.

Sleeveless tops with spaghetti straps, tank tops, and low-cut tops are not appropriate for women outside the capital and larger towns. However, many Volunteers choose to wear tank tops inside their homes, particularly during the hot summer months.

All Volunteers should bring at least one business outfit (i.e., a suit or jacket and tie for men; a long, conservative dress or skirt for women). There might be occasions that bring Volunteers face-to-face with senior diplomats, traditional authorities, and civil servants, for which professional dress is expected.

Personal Safety

More detailed information about the Peace Corps' approach to safety is contained in the Safety and Security section, but it is an important issue and cannot be overemphasized. As stated in the Volunteer Handbook, becoming a Peace Corps Volunteer entails certain safety risks. Living and traveling in an unfamiliar environment (oftentimes alone), having a limited understanding of local language and culture, and being perceived as well-off are some of the factors that can put a Volunteer at risk. Many Volunteers experience varying degrees of unwanted attention and harassment. Petty thefts and burglaries are not uncommon, and incidents of physical and sexual assault do occur, although most Botswana Volunteers complete their two years of service without incident. The Peace Corps has established procedures and policies designed to help reduce the risks and enhance your safety and security. These procedures and policies, in addition to safety training, will be provided once you arrive in Botswana. Using these tools, one can be empowered to take responsibility for his or her safety and well-being.

Each staff member at the Peace Corps is committed to providing Volunteers with the support they need to successfully meet the challenges they will face to have a safe, healthy, and productive service. Volunteers

and families are encouraged to look at safety and security information on the Peace Corps website at peacecorps.gov/safety.

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

Rewards and Frustrations

Invariably, Volunteers who have completed their service speak of the relationships they have established as the highlight of their service. Many speak of how they have learned to value and respect a more family- and community-centered way of life and of how they have grown in patience and understanding. Most are able to point to specific contributions they have made to a country's development. In Botswana, such contributions might include increasing the dialogue about HIV/AIDS, promoting the use of HIV/AIDS programs and services, seeing co-workers adopt new ways of accomplishing their jobs with an increase in productivity and effectiveness, decreasing stigma and discrimination against people with HIV/AIDS, and helping organizations develop and implement HIV/AIDS programs. Such positive reflections are the endpoint of a series of highs and lows that are part and parcel of the process of leaving the United States, entering Botswana, and adapting to the practices and pace of life in a new culture.

You will have less guidance and direction than you would receive at a new job in the United States. Things will undoubtedly move at a much slower pace than you might expect. You will probably need to make a paradigm shift from the American orientation toward tangible results to the Botswana love for a consultative process and protocol. To succeed in this environment, you will need a high degree of patience, self-confidence, creativity, and flexibility. If you do not deal well with gray areas, Botswana is probably not a good match for you. But if you come with a healthy respect for the process of being a Peace Corps Volunteer, as well as a desire to make tangible changes, you will have an incredible experience.

PEACE CORPS TRAINING

Overview of Pre-Service Training

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

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

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

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

The pre-service training experience provides an opportunity not only for the Peace Corps to assess a trainee's competence, but for trainees to re-evaluate their commitment to serve for 27 months to improve the quality of life of the people with whom Volunteers live and work and, in doing so, develop new knowledge, skills, and attitudes while adapting existing ones.

Peace Corps/Botswana's competencies are designed to be accomplished throughout the Volunteer's 27 months of learning. A trainee may not be able to complete all learning objectives for a competency during pre-service training; however, he or she must show adequate progress toward achieving the competencies in order to become a Volunteer¹. Botswana's core competencies include the following:

- Build organization and individual capacity
- Integrate into your community
- Own your service
- Understand HIV/AIDS

Pre-service training is conducted in Botswana and directed by the Peace Corps with participation from representatives of Botswana organizations, current and former Volunteers, and/or training contractors. The length of pre-service training is 10 weeks. Botswana measures achievement of learning and determines if trainees have successfully achieved competencies, including language learner standards, for swearing in as a Peace Corps Volunteer.

Throughout service, Volunteers strive to achieve performance competencies. Initially, pre-service training affords the opportunity for trainees to develop and test their own resources. As a trainee, you will play an active role in self-education. You will be asked to decide how best to set and meet objectives and to find alternative solutions. You will be asked to prepare for an experience in which you will often have to take

¹ Peace Corps Manual section 201.305.4.

the initiative and accept responsibility for decisions. The success of your learning will be enhanced by your own effort to take responsibility for your learning and through sharing experiences with others.

Peace Corps training is founded on adult learning methods and often includes experiential “hands-on” applications such as conducting a participatory community needs assessment and facilitating groups. Successful training results in competence in various technical, linguistic, cross-cultural, health, and safety and security areas. Integrating into the community is usually one of the core competencies Volunteers strive to achieve both in pre-service training and during the first several months of service. Successful sustainable development work is based on the local trust and confidence Volunteers build by living in, and respectfully integrating into, the Botswana community and culture. Trainees are prepared for this through a homestay experience, which often requires trainees to live with host families during pre-service training. Integration into the community not only facilitates good working relationships, but it fosters language learning and cross-cultural acceptance and trust, which help ensure your health, safety, and security.

Woven into the competencies, setting trainees on the path to be able to communicate in the host country language is critical to being an effective Peace Corps Volunteer. So basic is this precept that it is spelled out in the Peace Corps Act:

No person shall be assigned to duty as a Volunteer under this act in any foreign country or area unless at the time of such assignment he (or she) possesses such reasonable proficiency as his (or her) assignment requires in speaking the language of the country or area to which he (or she) is assigned.

Technical Training

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

Language Training

As a Peace Corps Volunteer, you will find that language skills are key to personal and professional satisfaction during your service. These skills are critical to your job performance, help you integrate into your community, and can ease your personal adaptation to the new surroundings. Therefore, language training is at the heart of the training program. You must successfully meet minimum language requirements to complete training and become a Volunteer. Botswana language instructors usually teach formal language classes five days a week in small groups.

Your language training will incorporate a community-based approach. In addition to classroom time, you will be given assignments to work on outside of the classroom and with your host family. The goal is to get you to a point of basic social communication skills so you can practice and develop language skills further once you are at your site. Prior to being sworn in as a Volunteer, you will develop strategies to continue studying language during your service.

Cross-Cultural Training

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

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

The host family experience provides a unique context for cross-cultural learning, and is designed to ease your transition to life at your site. Families go through an orientation conducted by Peace Corps staff to explain the purpose of PST and to assist them in helping you adapt to living in Botswana. Many Volunteers form strong and lasting friendships with their host families.

Health Training

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

Safety and Security Training

During the safety and security training sessions, you will learn how to adopt a lifestyle that reduces your risks at home, at work, and during your travels. You will also learn appropriate, effective strategies for coping with unwanted attention, how to identify safety risks in-country and about Peace Corps' emergency response and support systems.

Additional Trainings During Volunteer Service

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

- **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.
- **Midservice training** (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 their future after Peace Corps service and reviews their respective projects and personal experiences.

The number, length, and design of these trainings are adapted to 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 IN BOTSWANA

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

Health Issues in Botswana

Health conditions in Botswana are quite good. The most common health problems are related to the climate, which at times is very hot and dry and in winter can be colder than you may expect. Such preventive measures as a good diet, adequate hydration, and being alert to changes in your body are more important here than at home. Most villages have health posts or clinics, with hospitals in the larger villages and towns. Hospitals in the capital have good facilities. HIV/AIDS is a major health and development problem in the region, as Botswana's HIV infection rate is one of the highest in the world. Infection with HIV is preventable, however, if one avoids risky behavior.

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 Botswana, you will receive a country-specific medical handbook. By the end of training, you will receive a medical kit with supplies to take care of mild illnesses and first aid needs. The contents of the kit are listed later in this section.

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

You will have physicals at midservice and at the end of your service. If you develop a serious medical problem during your service, the medical officer in Botswana will consult with the Office of Health Services in Washington, D.C., or a regional medical officer. If it is determined that your condition cannot be treated in Botswana, you may be sent out of the country for further evaluation and care.

Maintaining Your Health

As a Volunteer, you must accept considerable responsibility for your own health. Proper precautions will significantly reduce your risk of serious illness or injury. The adage "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" becomes extremely important in areas where diagnostic and treatment facilities are not up to the standards of the United States. The most important of your responsibilities in Botswana is to take the following preventive measures:

- Malaria prophylaxis
- Precautions to prevent HIV/AIDS transmission
- Safe transportation choices

Many illnesses that afflict Volunteers worldwide are preventable if proper food and water precautions are taken. These illnesses include food poisoning, parasitic infections, hepatitis A, dysentery, Guinea worms,

tapeworms, and typhoid fever. Your medical officer will discuss specific standards for water and food preparation in Botswana during pre-service training.

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

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

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

Women's Health Information

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

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

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

Your Peace Corps Medical Kit

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

Medical Kit Contents

First Aid Handbook	Bismuth Subsalicylate (Pepto-Bismol)
Ace bandages	Butterfly closures
Acetaminophen (Tylenol)	Calagel anti-itch gel
Adhesive tape	Condoms
Antacid tablets	Cough lozenges
Anti-diarrheal (Imodium)	Decongestant
Antibiotic ointment	Dental floss
Antifungal cream	Gloves
Antihistamine	Hydrocortisone cream
Antiseptic antimicrobial skin cleaner	Ibuprofen
Band-Aids	Insect repellent

Iodine tablets (for water purification)
Lip balm
Oral rehydration salts
Scissors
Sore throat lozenges

Sterile eye drops
Sterile gauze pads
Sunscreen
Thermometer (Temp-a-dots)
Tweezers

Before You Leave: A Medical Checklist

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

If your dental exam was done more than a year ago, or if your physical exam is more than two years old, contact OHS 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 Health 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 (other than yellow fever vaccination as directed by OHS) 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 during your first six months in Botswana. Volunteers must be willing to get all required vaccinations unless there is a documented medical contraindication. Failure to accept required vaccination is grounds for administrative separation from the Peace Corps. You do not need to begin taking malaria medication prior to departure.

Bring a three-month supply of any prescription or over-the-counter medication you use on a regular basis, including birth control pills. Although the Peace Corps cannot reimburse you for this three-month supply, it will order refills during your service. While awaiting shipment—which can take several months—you will be dependent on your own medication supply. The Peace Corps will not pay for herbal or nonprescribed medications, such as St. John's wort, glucosamine, selenium, or antioxidant supplements. Medications supplied may be generic or equivalent to your current medications (including birth control pills).

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

If you wear eyeglasses, bring two pairs (of the current prescription) with you. If a pair breaks, the Peace Corps will replace them, using the information your doctor in the United States provided on the eyeglasses form during your examination. The Peace Corps Office of Health Services strongly discourages Volunteers from wearing contact lenses while overseas unless there is a true medical indication documented by your ophthalmologist. Contact lenses, particularly extended use soft contacts, are associated with a variety of eye infections and other inflammatory problems. One of the most serious of these problems is infectious keratitis which can lead to severe cornea damage which could result in permanent blindness requiring corneal transplantation. These risks of permanent eye damage are exacerbated in the Peace Corps environment where the Volunteer's ability to properly clean the lenses is compromised due to limited access to sterile water as well as decreased effectiveness of cleaning solutions due to prolonged storage in unsatisfactory conditions. In addition, when bacterial eye infections occur, assessment and treatment within hours by a competent ophthalmologist is indicated. This is

virtually impossible in the Peace Corps setting. If you feel that you simply must be able to use your contacts occasionally, please consider using single use, daily disposable lenses which do not require cleaning.

If you are eligible for Medicare, are over 50 years of age, or have a health condition that may restrict your future participation in health-care plans, you may wish to consult an insurance specialist about unique coverage needs before your departure. The Peace Corps will provide all necessary health care from the time you leave for your pre-departure orientation until you complete your service. When you finish, you will be entitled to the post-service health-care benefits described in the Peace Corps Volunteer Handbook. You may wish to consider keeping an existing health plan in effect during your service if you think age or pre-existing conditions might prevent you from re-enrolling in your current plan when you return home.

SAFETY AND SECURITY IN DEPTH

Ensuring the safety and security of Volunteers is Peace Corps' highest priority. Serving as a Volunteer overseas entails certain safety and security risks. Living and traveling in an unfamiliar environment, a limited understanding of the local language and culture, and the perception of being a wealthy American are some of the factors that can put a Volunteer at risk. Property theft and burglaries are not uncommon. Incidents of physical and sexual assault do occur, although most Volunteers complete their two years of service without a serious safety and security incident. Together, the Peace Corps and Volunteers can reduce risk, but cannot truly eliminate all risk.

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

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

This welcome book contains sections on Living Conditions and Volunteer Lifestyle, Peace Corps Training, Your Health Care, and Safety and Security, all of which include important safety and security information to help you understand this partnership. The Peace Corps makes every effort to give Volunteers the training and tools they need to function in the safest way possible and prepare for the unexpected, teaching you to identify, reduce, and manage the risks you may encounter.

Factors that Contribute to Volunteer Risk

There are several factors that can heighten a Volunteer's risk, many of which are within the Volunteer's control. By far the most common crime that Volunteers experience is theft. Thefts often occur when Volunteers are away from their sites, in crowded locations (such as markets or on public transportation), and when leaving items unattended.

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

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

After you arrive in Botswana, 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 Botswana learn to do the following:

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

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

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

- Houses and rooms left empty during holidays also create tempting opportunities.
- Wherever you are in Botswana, alcohol can fuel unsafe driving, unsafe sex, and sexual assaults.
- In general, individuals are easier targets than groups and women are easier targets than men.
- While whistles and verbal harassment based on race or gender may be fairly common on the street, this behavior may be reduced if you abide by local cultural norms, dress conservatively, and respond according to the training you will receive.

While being aware of these matters may seem like common sense, our altruism often overrides common sense until something bad happens.

Staying Safe: Don't Be a Target for Crime

Because many Volunteer sites are in rural, isolated settings, you must be prepared to take on a large degree of responsibility for your own safety. To reduce the likelihood that you will become a victim of crime, you can take steps to make yourself less of a target such as ensuring your home is secure and developing relationships in your community. While the factors that contribute to your risk in Botswana 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 Botswana will require that you accept some restrictions on your current lifestyle.

Support from Staff

If a trainee or Volunteer is the victim of a safety and security incident, Peace Corps staff is prepared to provide support. All Peace Corps posts have procedures in place to respond to incidents of crime committed against Volunteers. The first priority for all posts in the aftermath of an incident is to ensure the Volunteer is safe and receiving medical treatment as needed. After assuring the safety of the Volunteer, Peace Corps staff response may include reassessing the Volunteer's worksite and housing

arrangements and making any adjustments, as needed. In some cases, the nature of the incident may necessitate a site or housing transfer. Peace Corps staff will also support and assist Volunteers who choose to make a formal complaint with local law enforcement. It is very important that a Volunteer reports an incident when it occurs. The reasons for this include obtaining medical care and emotional support, enabling Peace Corps staff to assess the situation to determine if there is an ongoing safety and security concern, protecting peer Volunteers and preserving the right to file a complaint. Should a Volunteer decide later in the process to file a complaint with law enforcement, this option may be compromised if evidence was not preserved at the time of the incident.

Office of Victim Advocacy

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

Contact information for the Office of Victim Advocacy

Direct phone number: 202.692.1753

Toll-free: 855.855.1961 ext. 1753

Duty phone: 202.409.2704 (available 24/7, call or text)

Email: victimadvocate@peacecorps.gov

Crime Data for Botswana

Crime data and statistics for Botswana, which are updated yearly, are available at the following link:

<http://www.peacecorps.gov/countrydata/Botswana>

Please take the time to review this important information.

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

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

Volunteer Safety Support in Botswana

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

The Peace Corps/Botswana office will keep you informed of any issues that may impact Volunteer safety through **information sharing**. Regular updates will be provided in Volunteer newsletters and in memorandums from the country director. In the event of a critical situation or emergency, you will be contacted through the emergency communication network. An important component of the capacity of

Peace Corps to keep you informed is your buy-in to the partnership concept with the Peace Corps staff. It is expected that you will do your part to ensure that Peace Corps staff members are kept apprised of your movements in-country so they are able to inform you.

Volunteer training will include sessions on specific safety and security issues in Botswana. 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/Botswana'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 Botswana at predetermined locations until the situation is resolved or the Peace Corps decides to evacuate.

Finally, in order for the Peace Corps to be fully responsive to the needs of Volunteers, it is imperative that Volunteers immediately report any safety and security incidents to the Peace Corps office. The Peace Corps has established **protocols for addressing safety and security incidents** in a timely and appropriate manner, and it collects and evaluates safety and security data to track trends and develop strategies to minimize risks to current and future Volunteers.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION OVERVIEW

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

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

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

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

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

Diversity and Inclusion at Your Site

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

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

Cross-Cultural Considerations

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

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

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

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

What Might a Volunteer Face?

Possible Gender Role Issues

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

During the pre-service training, trainees receive an introduction to gender awareness in their country of service, and examine their own thinking about gender roles and how this thinking has impacted them.

They then learn how to analyze development projects using a gender lens to better understand gender roles in their host country and to understand how these gender roles can benefit or limit what females and males may or may not do. During their 27 months of service, Volunteers will further engage in gender trainings to understand better how their gender identity impacts who they are as females or males in the host country and how this perception influences their work and relationships.

To address restrictive laws and traditions of its society, Botswana has a constitution that protects women's rights. The country has made great strides in gender equity in the modern sector. Ministerial, senior-level government, and private-sector posts are held by women. In addition, the government has developed a national gender program to improve the lives of vulnerable women. Nevertheless, rural, less-educated women at the lower end of the socioeconomic scale tend to have less authority and responsibility than men do for income, spending, and reproductive health. Although this is changing, many rural communities have not had much experience with women who take on professional roles, remain unmarried, and live away from their families. Thus, female Volunteers may experience a great deal of unwanted attention and may need to practice discretion in public. During both cross-cultural and safety training sessions, all Volunteers are provided with strategies and practice in limiting and responding to unwanted attention. Also, younger female Volunteers may find it takes longer to establish credibility with co-workers than male or older Volunteers.

Possible Issues for Volunteers of Color

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

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

For Volunteers of color, the range of responses to their skin color may vary from the extremely kind to the very insensitive. In African and Latin American countries, host country nationals may say "welcome home" to African Americans or Hispanic Americans. Sometimes Volunteers expect to be "welcomed home" but are disappointed when they are not. More commonly, if a Volunteer is mistaken for a host-country national citizen, he or she is expected to behave as a male or female in that culture behaves, and to speak the local language fluently. Host country nationals are sometimes frustrated when the Volunteer does not speak the local language with ease. Conversely, some in the same country may call you a "sell out" because they feel the United States has not done enough to help with social issues. These instances can be turned into teachable moments for the Volunteer and the host country national, in which the Volunteer can ask questions surrounding perception and collaborate with respect to issues and projects at hand, while engaging in cross-cultural exchanges. All Volunteers, to include white Volunteers and those of color, should be mindful of the issues of race that are embedded in U.S. culture and within the culture in your country of service. These issues may significantly affect how Volunteers interact with fellow Volunteers and host country nationals. Being open and inclusive to everyone will improve your experience in interacting with fellow Volunteers and members of your host community.

Most Batswana in cities and towns are aware of the different racial and ethnic groups that exist in the United States. However, this level of knowledge and understanding greatly diminishes among rural populations. African-American Volunteers may not be recognized as Americans. They may be expected to learn local languages more quickly than other Volunteers, may or may not be accepted more readily into the culture than other Volunteers, and may be treated according to local social norms because they are assumed to be African.

Hispanic-American and Asian-American Volunteers may also be perceived as not being American. Batswana may expect Asian Americans to exhibit stereotyped behavior observed in films, sometimes referred to as the “kung fu syndrome.” Asian Americans are often assumed to be Chinese. In addition, the presence of Asian merchants in the country may have an impact on how Asian-American Volunteers are perceived.

Possible Issues for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning/Queer, Ally (LGBTQA) Volunteers

For LGBTQ Volunteers: Given Botswana’s traditional values, sexual orientation and non-conforming gender identities might not be discussed openly. In some cases, the LGBTQ community may be stigmatized. Mindful of the cultural norms and country-specific laws, the decision to serve openly is left to each individual Peace Corps Volunteer. Many LGBTQ Volunteers have chosen to be discreet about their sexual orientation and/or gender identity within their host communities. Some LGBTQ Volunteers have chosen to come out to community members, with a result of positive and negative reactions, while some have come out only to select Peace Corps staff and Volunteers. Dealing with questions about boyfriends, girlfriends, marriage, and children may, at times, be stressful for LGBTQ Volunteers. You may find that Botswana is a less open and inclusive environment than you have previously experienced. Please know, however, that Peace Corps is supportive of you and Peace Corps staff welcomes dialogue about how to ensure your success as an LGBTQ Volunteer. More information about serving as an LGBTQ Volunteer is available at the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Peace Corps Alumni website at lgbprcv.org. Additionally, the Peace Corps’ LGBTQ employee resource group, Spectrum, can be reached at spectrum@peacecorps.gov.

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

Many LGBTQ Volunteers have served successfully in Botswana and have very fond memories of their community and service. LGBTQ support groups may be available in your country of service, providing a network to support the needs of the Peace Corps LGBTQ community. Peace Corps staff will work with Volunteers to provide them with locally informed perspectives.

In general, Batswana view homosexuality as immoral; the country’s penal code criminalizes “unnatural offenses,” which many take to include homosexual sexual activity. However, discrimination based on sexual orientation was banned under the Employment Act in 2010. Sexual orientation and gender minorities certainly exist in Botswana, but not with the same level of acceptance as in the United States. Because of cultural norms, LGB Volunteers may choose not to be open about their sexual orientation and serve for two years without revealing to their community that they are gay. This omission might lead to a lessened intensity or depth to friendships formed, particularly those with community members, which could be disheartening. Gay or bisexual Volunteers may also serve for two years without meeting another gay or bisexual Volunteer, although Peace Corps/Botswana has an internal support network to deal with Volunteer issues of diversity and peer support. Lesbians, like all American women, are likely to have to

deal with constant questions about boyfriends, marriage, and sex, while gay men may have to deal with machismo: talk of sexual conquests, girl watching, and dirty jokes.

Possible Issues for Volunteers with Disabilities

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

Possible Issues for Volunteer Couples

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

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

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

In Botswana, public displays of affection between married couples is not a common occurrence and may be considered as showing a poor example for the younger generation. Kissing and affectionate touching is confined to the bedroom. At the same time, you might see Batswana friends holding hands in public—two women, two men, or man and a woman.

Possible Religious Issues for Volunteers

Most Batswana have some religious affiliation, and many attend church regularly. Most meetings, government-sponsored or not, often start with a prayer. Both Christian and non-Christian Volunteers may be expected to attend church with the members of their community. They may be asked to explain why they do not belong to a certain Christian denomination or may be actively recruited by a Christian group. Volunteers may not be able to adequately convey their own religious beliefs because of language or cultural barriers.

Possible Issues for 50+ Volunteers

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

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

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

In Botswana, older members of society are viewed and treated with a great deal of respect. Issues for older Volunteers are more likely to be in relation to their younger fellow Volunteers. Older Volunteers may meet individuals in the Peace Corps community who have little understanding of, or respect for, the lives and experiences of senior Americans and may not be able to offer the necessary personal support. Older Volunteers, in turn, may be inclined to withdraw from full participation in order to "give the younger folks their turn," and may be reluctant to share personal, sexual, or health concerns. They may not find appropriate role models among the Peace Corps staff or may find that younger Volunteers look to them for more advice than they feel comfortable giving. Finally, older Volunteers may need to be assertive about asking for an effective individual approach to language learning during pre-service training.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How much luggage am I allowed to bring to Botswana?

Most airlines have baggage size and weight limits and assess charges for transport of baggage that exceeds those limits. The Peace Corps has its own size and weight limits and will not pay the cost of transport for baggage that exceeds these limits. The Peace Corps' allowance is two checked pieces of luggage with combined dimensions of both pieces not to exceed 107 inches (length + width + height) and a carry-on bag with dimensions of no more than 45 inches. Checked baggage should not exceed 100 pounds total with a maximum weight of 50 pounds per bag.

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

What is the electric current in Botswana?

It is 220 volts, 50 hertz. Plugs and outlets consist of both three-prong round and three-prong square shapes. It is recommended that you buy and bring a universal adapter from the U.S., but you can find adapters of lesser quality in Botswana.

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 you are encouraged to consider them carefully. Volunteers should not ship or take valuable items overseas. Jewelry, watches, radios, cameras, electronics, and expensive appliances are subject to loss, theft, and breakage, and, in many places, satisfactory maintenance and repair services are not available.

Do I need an international driver's license?

Volunteers in Botswana 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 Botswana friends and my host family?

This is not a requirement. A token of friendship is sufficient. Some gift suggestions include knickknacks for the house; pictures, books, or calendars of American scenes; souvenirs from your area; hard candies that will not melt or spoil; or photos to give away.

Where will my site assignment be when I finish training and how isolated will I be?

Peace Corps trainees are not assigned to individual sites until after they have completed pre-service training. This gives Peace Corps staff the opportunity to assess each trainee's technical and language skills prior to assigning sites, in addition to finalizing site selections with their ministry counterparts. If feasible, you may have the opportunity to provide input on your site preferences, including geographical location, distance from other Volunteers, and living conditions. However, keep in mind that many factors influence the site selection process and that the Peace Corps cannot guarantee placement where you would ideally like to be. Most Volunteers live in small towns or in rural villages and are frequently within one hour from another Volunteer. Some sites require a day's travel to reach the Peace Corps/Botswana office.

How can my family contact me in an emergency?

The Peace Corps Counseling and Outreach Unit provides assistance in handling emergencies affecting trainees and Volunteers or their families. Before leaving the United States, instruct your family to notify the Counseling and Outreach Unit immediately if an emergency arises, such as a serious illness or death of a family member. The Counseling and Outreach Unit can be reached at 855.855.1961, select option 1, ext. 1470. After business hours, on weekends, and on holidays, the COU duty officer can be reached at the same number. For non-emergency questions, your family can contact your country desk staff through the main Peace Corps number: 855.855.1961.

Can I call home from Botswana?

Yes. Volunteers receive a cellphone during training. Volunteers often text or call home and ask to be called back or pre-arrange a time to be called on their cellphone or on a private or office phone.

Should I bring a cellphone with me?

While cellular phone services are widely available in Botswana, it is not advisable to bring a cellphone from the United States unless you check with the manufacturer and confirm that the phone will work in Botswana. In all cases, these phones are the type with SIM cards that can be changed. Smartphones work and are available in Botswana, although they are quite expensive. If you choose to bring a smartphone from home, be sure to unlock it for use prior to leaving the U.S. SIM cards in Botswana cost about \$3. The cost of a new basic cellphone in Botswana is approximately \$30.

Will there be email and Internet access? Should I bring my computer?

Internet service is widely available in Botswana; most larger villages and towns have Internet cafes. Wireless Internet is becoming increasingly common, particularly in the cities. Additionally, Internet is available via most major cellphone networks.

The choice about whether to bring a computer is an individual one. The Peace Corps does not require Volunteers to bring a computer. Not all Volunteers live at sites with electricity and the climate in Botswana can be tough on sensitive electronics. In addition, peripherals like printer cartridges and CDs are very expensive locally. Yet, Peace Corps quarterly report forms are submitted electronically. If you do not have your own computer you can arrange to complete the form at an Internet cafe or possibly a neighboring Volunteer's site. The Peace Corps sometimes communicates with Volunteers via email;

however, the Peace Corps keeps an updated list of which Volunteers do not have consistent Internet access and will communicate with these Volunteers via phone, text message, or post.

Despite the difficulties, most current Volunteers recommend that you bring a laptop citing it as a useful tool for both work and entertainment. If you bring a computer or other valuable equipment you should consider purchasing personal property insurance and ensure that you have antiviral software good for the length of your service. Computer viruses and worms are rampant throughout the country. Bring antiviral software hard discs with you that will cover the length of your service. Downloading anti-viral software by Internet is not always possible due to slow Internet connections.

What about credit cards?

If you bring credit cards, make sure they are good for the length of your service. Renewing cards can be a challenge from Botswana. You should also talk to your bank to unlock your card for use in Botswana and find out the procedure for informing your bank when you travel to neighboring countries. Otherwise, your card is likely to be frozen after one use.

WELCOME LETTERS FROM BOTSWANA VOLUNTEERS

Greetings Bots invitees!

I welcome your consideration to serve in one of the four program areas confronting HIV/AIDS in Botswana.

You are being offered an opportunity and a privilege to be part of a new culture while facing many challenges in adjustment and role definition. My experiences have allowed me to be an observer, learner, and a participant in events rich in culture and the realities of daily life for many Batswana. Additionally, I am now bonded for life with over 50 incredible individuals who make up Bots 8.

In a recent discussion with several of my PCV colleagues, we concluded that until you are in your role, you are unable to conceive the complete reality of serving. However, there are many ways of preparing yourself, as recommended by the Peace Corps. I followed their recommendations and found them very helpful.

Once you receive your invitation, you are faced with your most significant decision: whether or not to accept. I strongly suggest that you read the material carefully and weigh it honestly and openly against your understanding of yourself. Perhaps having an objective person or counselor also read the material and offer feedback would be helpful. Occasionally, we were surprised by a trainee's reaction to something that was clearly spelled out in the invitation packet.

In terms of clothing, having wrinkle-resistant fabrics that can withstand hand-washing with harsh soap is the goal. The soil is reddish so keep that in mind when choosing white clothing, although bleach is available. Shoes get beat up quickly walking on dirt paths with rocks, even with the Merrells I brought. The bottom line is that Batswana do not wear wrinkled clothing or dirty shoes so keep that in mind when you are selecting items to bring. For those of us in office settings, the attire is professional and most of the women wear high heels.

As an older Volunteer, I will offer a few comments on stamina and physical fitness. Although the Peace Corps does not have fitness requirements, perhaps that will be a consideration in the future with people serving in their 70s and 80s. Accommodations are made for medical necessity, but not for age or fitness level. As a result, all ages have physical demands. For example, to access food and banking, I walk an hour and ride a bus for two hours per round trip. Everything is carried either in a backpack or other bag for traveling, groceries, or books. I lug large pails of water for bathing and laundry and do extensive walking in my role as a Volunteer for district AIDS program coordination. Therefore, if your lifestyle has been sedentary of late, I would suggest a regular program of fitness to prepare you for a life on foot with heavy packages. You will appreciate the effort made to ease your transition to living in a village without a car.

I wish you the very best while deliberating this life changing and exciting decision!

Sincerely,
Karen "Rebaone" Butler, Bots 8

Welcome to Peace Corps Botswana!

As you are preparing to leave the U.S. for Botswana, I am sure you have a million questions running through your head: What will the food be like? What will the culture be like? Did I pack enough underwear? While all of these thoughts are normal and it is difficult to put them out of your mind, I urge you to enjoy the adventure and rest assured that you will find everything you need when you arrive.

When you arrive the questions won't subside: They will multiply. This is the exciting part about learning about a new culture and place: Embrace it. There will be many questions that will arise during training that won't really be able to be answered until you get your site and final assignment.

As you are thinking about packing, worry less about clothing. The things you will long for are the items that remind you of home. If you have something you can't live without in the U.S., you will probably want it with you in Botswana too. Half of the things I packed, I turned out not needing. The things that I have found most helpful during my service: good pots and pans, spices, coffee and a French press, good walking and running shoes, and my iPhone.

Electronics are a large part of our daily life in America and sometimes the change of "unplugging" is difficult. You could be in a village with no electricity or you could be in a city.

Either way, keep this in mind; what do you enjoy doing in your free time in America? Oftentimes, Volunteers find that they enjoy watching movies or TV shows: It can be a good way to decompress after a long day, share a bit of American culture, have a laugh, or remind you of home. The external hard drive that I packed has been my saving grace some days, especially if I am sick, missing family, or just having an off day. I am quite an avid reader but sometimes it's comforting to just watch a movie.

If you want to stay connected on the Internet, keep in mind that your access to Wi-Fi is generally non-existent unless you are in a major city. I mention this because many Volunteers with iPads have difficulty ever accessing the Internet with them. You will be able to figure out a way to access the Internet, even if you are in one of the most remote corners of Botswana.

While the packing might be the thing at the forefront of your mind at the moment, take time to begin learning Setswana. The more you learn before you arrive the better off you will be. There are many people throughout Botswana who speak English but you will instantly gain respect and trust in your site if you can carry out a decent conversation in Setswana. Don't be afraid to make mistakes either, throw in English words if you don't know something, you might get a laugh but you will probably also make a friend.

Use the rest of your time to do the things you enjoy in America and spend as much time as possible with family and friends. It is a great journey and I guarantee you will learn a lot about yourself and the world if you are patient, persistent, and kind. Be open to new experiences and enjoy the ride!

Rachel "Kesego" Ecklund, Bots 11
PCV Botswana 2011–13
School and Community Liaison for Life Skills

Greetings Bots invitees!

Welcome to the Peace Corps and welcome to an experience of a lifetime and one that you will never regret!

Perhaps a lot of questions are running through your mind? Perhaps you are a little nervous about such a commitment, especially without knowing “exactly” what you will be doing. Congratulations, you’re normal!

I can tell you that you will receive excellent training here before you set out to your location within the country. I can also tell you that you have access to excellent support in the Peace Corps staff as well as the support of many of the other new Peace Corps Volunteers you will have bonded with during your weeks of training. Last, but not least, there is the support from other Peace Corps Volunteers already serving within the country. Yes, you have a new family here—and for life!

The important thing you need to have is something you have read over and over, but so incredibly important so I will emphasize it yet again—and make sure you pack this when you come—a positive attitude! Pack some fortitude too. Why? Well things here are not the same as in the U.S.A. In the U.S. you have your ups and downs in life and you will here too. But in the U.S., you have some experience in handling these situations. Here, you are open to a whole new world. Maybe you will lose electric power and/or water for some hours each week. You will learn how to deal with these situations and they will become just another part of the adjustment.

The Sub-Saharan culture is unlike any culture I had previously experienced and it will take some time to get used to. Also, things happen very slowly here. Did I mention that things happen very slowly here? You will eventually see some aspects of “African time” that are nice for a change.

Bring clothes that will stand up to hand-washing—and, yes, you will be doing the washing. Perma-press clothes and quick-drying socks and underwear will be very good investments. Buy a pair of shoes that are high quality: You will not regret spending the extra money as they take a beating here.

If you would like to stay in shape, Botswana is for you as you will be walking, walking, and walking. I am an older Volunteer and I love the walking. You will meet villagers and children along the way and they all will remember your name; remembering all their names is not so easy.

It will take some time to get used to your location but you will eventually find something to do for community activity (your niche!) that will be both beneficial to your community and to your sense of being a valuable member of it.

My opinion, a laptop is a must. Even if there is no access to Internet in your village, there will be places you will have access. You can communicate with family/friends, it will be helpful to your work and also for doing research on various subjects that you know little about (but someone needs that information and you are deemed an “expert” by the mere fact you are Peace Corps). Lastly, a laptop affords you access to movies, which are good form of relaxation. Also a good separate hard drive for all the movies and music you will share with your fellow PCVs.

OK, time to strap yourself in and get ready for the ride of your life!

Sincerely,
David “Kabelo” LaFratta, Bots 12

Welcome to Peace Corps/Botswana!

You're in for an adventure of a lifetime. While the Peace Corps is completely different for each person, I can assure you that two years in the Peace Corps will challenge, excite, motivate, and inspire each person who approaches the experience with an open heart.

You've been blessed to receive an invitation to an extraordinarily unique African country. You'll hear people say that Botswana is "the gem of Africa," and although it sounds a little cliché, I can't help but agree. You'll fall in love with the people, the culture, the peaceful environment, and breathtaking scenery. Botswana is a truly remarkable country to be serving in.

Keep in mind how challenging development work can be (especially in terms of behavior change) to help regulate your expectations. While you may not see direct results of your blood, sweat, and tears during service, rest assured that you will make an impact. Our work to fight against HIV is powerful and worthwhile. The lessons we teach others will stay with them for the rest of their lives. You simply can't put a price on education and empowerment. It's an investment worth making.

You have so much to look forward to during your service, but for now, spend more time with your loved ones than you do worrying about packing. Soak up all the things you love in the States: family, friends, pets, outdoor activities, hobbies, etc. Don't spend your last few weeks stressing out about packing. Bring things that are important to you, whatever will make you feel more like who you were back at home. You are still the same *you* during service. Pack that yoga mat, carry-on that guitar, and shove in your teddy bear last minute. And most importantly, be sure you bring your best attitude, sense of humor, plenty of flexibility, and desire for adventure.

Joining the Peace Corps is a decision you won't regret.

Cheers,
Tate Van Winkle, Bots 12
Clinic and Health Team Volunteer

PACKING LIST

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

General Clothing

- Warm coat (can buy in Botswana but not always of the same quality)
- Sweaters or fleece pullovers
- Gloves or mittens
- Lightweight raincoat or poncho
- Durable jeans (for weekends, travel, or after-work wear)
- Bathing suit
- A few pairs of thick socks
- Thermal underwear

For Men

- Dress slacks and khaki trousers (jeans are not appropriate at work)
- Lightweight cotton dress shirts (T-shirts are not appropriate at work)
- Sports coat or suit for special events (even more important than a tie for some events)
- Ties; if you are in the Life Skills program, male teachers wear ties daily
- Shorts (to wear in your home)

For Women

- Dresses or skirts (knee-length or longer for work, no denim; nice slacks are acceptable in some settings)
- Lightweight cotton blouses
- Long shorts
- Cotton leggings (can be very useful in winter under skirts and pants)
- Sports bra, yoga pants, other exercise or leisure clothing

Shoes

Women's shoes larger than U.S. size 10 and smaller than a size 7 may be difficult to find. Most other types of shoes are readily available in Botswana, although they may not be of the same quality found in the United States. Casual shoes should be especially durable: Sand, gravel, and lots of walking tend to be hard on casual flip-flops. Good running shoes are hard to find and are expensive.

- Dress shoes or loafers (make sure they are easy to walk in; tennis shoes or sandals are not appropriate at work)
- Casual shoes (tennis shoes, running shoes, sandals, etc.)

Personal Hygiene and Toiletry Items

All basic toiletry items are available in Botswana, so you only need to bring enough for the first five or six weeks. Although the selection here may not be what you are used to, the quality is generally quite good. Medicine and first aid items will be available from the Peace Corps Medical Office once you are sworn in as a Volunteer.

Miscellaneous

- Headlamp
- French press
- Leatherman or a Swiss Army knife
- Good sunglasses, a hat (or two), and umbrella. There are about 345 sunny days per year in Botswana; the Peace Corps will supply sunscreen, although some Volunteers prefer a specific type for their face. Umbrellas are used in Botswana to block the sun. You may also easily purchase cheap umbrellas, hats, and not-so-good sunglasses in shopping villages.
- Three-month supply of any prescription medicine you take
- Electronics: Cameras, MP3 players, external hard drives, and so on are available in Botswana but are very expensive; AA and D batteries are commonly available. Note: Take serial numbers or get insurance for all electronics in case of theft. The police will use the serial numbers to find stolen items.
- Sleeping bag (a rectangular one can also be used as a blanket at home)
- Cooking spices, such as basil, cilantro, taco seasoning, and more rare spices (gourmet food and seasonings are available in Gaborone, but not elsewhere)
- Things to entertain yourself or others who visit, such as games, books, and knitting supplies
- Maps, postcards from your hometown, pictures of family, and mementos, which you can use to decorate your new home and for telling people where you are from
- Stationery, envelopes, and good pens (they expensive and difficult to find)

PRE-DEPARTURE CHECKLIST

The following list consists of suggestions for you to consider as you prepare to live outside the United States for two years. Not all items are relevant to everyone, and the list is not comprehensive.

Family

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

Passport/Travel

- Forward to the Peace Corps travel office all paperwork for the Peace Corps passport and visas.
- Verify that your luggage meets the size and weight limits for international travel.
- Obtain a personal passport if you plan to travel after your service ends. (Your Peace Corps passport will expire three months after you finish service; if you plan to travel longer, you will need a regular passport.)

Medical/Health

- Complete any needed dental and medical work.
- If you wear glasses, bring two pairs.
- Arrange to bring a three-month supply of all medications (including birth control pills) you are currently taking.

Insurance

- Make arrangements to maintain life insurance coverage.
- Arrange to maintain supplemental health coverage while you are away. (Even though the Peace Corps is responsible for your health care during Peace Corps service abroad, it is advisable for people who have pre-existing conditions to arrange for the continuation of their supplemental health coverage. If there is a lapse in coverage, it is often difficult and expensive to be reinstated.)
- Arrange to continue Medicare coverage if applicable.

Personal Papers

- Bring a copy of your certificate of marriage or divorce.

Voting

- Register to vote in the state of your home of record. (Many state universities consider voting and payment of state taxes as evidence of residence in that state.)
- Obtain a voter registration card and take it with you overseas.
- Arrange to have an absentee ballot forwarded to you overseas.

Personal Effects

- Purchase personal property insurance to extend from the time you leave your home for service overseas until the time you complete your service and return to the United States.

Financial Management

- Keep a bank account in your name in the United States.
- Obtain student loan deferment forms from the lender or loan service. (Information about loan deferment is online here: peacecorps.gov/learn/whyvol/finben/. Answers to frequently asked loan deferment questions are here: peacecorps.gov/learn/whyvol/finben/faq/.)

- 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 ext. 1770.
Place all important papers—mortgages, deeds, stocks, and bonds—in a safe deposit box or with an attorney or other caretaker.

CONTACTING PEACE CORPS HEADQUARTERS

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

Peace Corps headquarters toll-free number: 855.855.1961, press 1, then extension number (see below)

Peace Corps mailing address: Peace Corps
Paul D. Coverdell Peace Corps Headquarters
1111 20th Street NW
Washington, DC 20526

For Questions About	Staff	Toll-free extension	Direct/Local
Responding to an invitation	Office of Placement	ext. 1840	202.692.1840
Country information	Gregory Pachuta	ext. 2197 Desk Officer gpachuta@peacecorps.gov	202.692.2197
Plane tickets, passports, visas, or other travel matters	CWTSatoTravel	ext. 1170	202.692.1170
Legal clearance:	Office of Placement	ext. 1840	202.692.1840
Medical clearance and forms processing (includes dental)	Screening Nurse	ext. 1500	202.692.1500
Medical reimbursements (handled by a subcontractor)			800.818.8772
Loan deferments, taxes, financial operations		ext. 1770	202.692.1770
Readjustment allowance withdrawals, power of attorney, staging (pre-departure orientation), and reporting instructions	Office of Staging	ext. 1865	202.692.1865
<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>			
Family emergencies (to get information to a Volunteer overseas) 24 hours	Counseling and Outreach Unit	ext. 1470	202.692.1470
Office of Victim Advocacy		ext. 1753 24 hours (call or text)	202.692.1753 202.409.2704