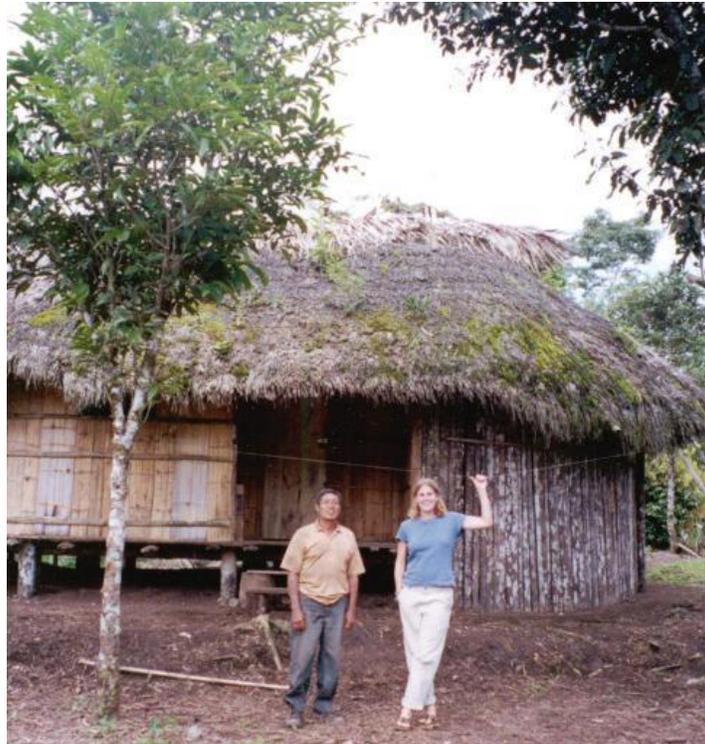


THE PEACE CORPS WELCOMES YOU TO

ECUADOR



A PEACE CORPS PUBLICATION FOR NEW VOLUNTEERS

June 2011
June 2013 CCD

A WELCOME LETTER

Dear Peace Corps/Ecuador Invitee:

Congratulations on your invitation to the upcoming pre-service training in Ecuador. Here you will find a wide variety of cultures, climates, and peoples, and an equally wide variety of challenging Volunteer assignments.

We are sure you have many questions regarding both the Ecuador and the Peace Corps program here. This book is designed to provide you with some initial information to address many of the most common questions and concerns. Many current and former Peace Corps staff members and Volunteers have contributed to this *Welcome Book* based on their extensive knowledge of, and experience in, Ecuador. This book lists additional resources where you can obtain more information. While it may not answer all of your questions, it's a good start.

It is quite a challenge to leave your home culture for two years and live in a foreign country, especially when you will be living at a very basic level in a small community. The information in this book is designed to help you affirm your commitment to the two-year Peace Corps assignment. The key elements you need to bring with you are a positive attitude, flexibility, a desire to work hard, a sense of humor, and openness to the Ecuadorian culture and to new experiences.

Peace Corps Volunteers first came to Ecuador in 1962, and more than 5,600+ Volunteers have served here since that time. We appreciate your volunteering for this assignment and expect that you have the necessary commitment, motivation, and flexibility to carry out the duties of a Peace Corps Volunteer and to become a member of the dynamic group of Peace Corps Volunteers currently serving in Ecuador.

Peace Corps/Ecuador Staff

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CORE EXPECTATIONS

FOR PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS

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

1. Prepare your personal and professional life to make a commitment to serve abroad for a full term of 27 months
2. Commit to improving the quality of life of the people with whom you live and work; and, in doing so, share your skills, adapt them, and learn new skills as needed
3. Serve where the Peace Corps asks you to go, under conditions of hardship, if necessary, and with the flexibility needed for effective service
4. Recognize that your successful and sustainable development work is based on the local trust and confidence you build by living in, and respectfully integrating yourself into, your host community and culture
5. Recognize that you are responsible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for your personal conduct and professional performance
6. Engage with host Ecuador 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 Ecuador 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 Ecuador and community, as a representative of the

people, cultures, values, and traditions of the
United States of America

10. Represent responsibly the people, cultures, values, and traditions of your host Ecuador and community to people in the United States both during and following your service

PEACE CORPS/ECUADOR HISTORY AND PROGRAMS

History of the Peace Corps in Ecuador

The first group of Peace Corps Volunteers arrived in Ecuador on August 7, 1962. Since that time, more than 5,700 Volunteers have served in almost every imaginable capacity, from working on rural electrification and organic family gardens to teaching in preschool centers and universities. There are few communities in the country where Peace Corps Volunteers have not left their mark over the past 40 years. One town even has a main street named for a Volunteer who served there many years ago.

As conditions in Ecuador have changed, the Peace Corps has refined and adapted its programs to target those areas most in need of the support the Peace Corps can provide. Peace Corps/Ecuador defines its mission as follows:

Peace Corps/Ecuador promotes sustainable development that will improve the quality of life of the populations with whom we collaborate. Through activities focused on income generation, non-formal education, strengthening local organizations, and protecting the environment, our four programs—natural resource conservation, community health, youth and families, and teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL)—are our tools to achieve our goals.

History and Future of Peace Corps Programming in Ecuador

The natural resource conservation (NRC) project focuses on improving the ability of Ecuadorians to manage their natural resources so they will be available for future generations.

The community health project has three main components: child maternal health, reproductive health and rights, and prevention of tropical disease. Volunteers also work to reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted illnesses (STIs).

The youth and families project provides youth and families in marginal neighborhoods with more opportunities to improve their quality of life. The program focuses on youth and families at greatest risk for negative outcomes.

Peace Corps Ecuador was scheduled to establish a TEFL program

in Ecuador in June 2011. The project will support the government of Ecuador's development goals in helping Ecuadorian primary, secondary, and tertiary teachers improve their skills and resources for teaching English as a foreign language.

OVERVIEW: ECUADOR AT A GLANCE

History

Indigenous cultures flourished in Ecuador long before the Inca Empire conquered the area in the 15th century. In 1534, the Spanish arrived and defeated the Incas. The indigenous people were decimated by disease in the first decades of Spanish rule. They also became forced laborers for the Spanish elite. In 1563, Quito became the seat of a *royal audiencia* (administrative district) of Spain. After independence-seeking forces defeated the royalist army in 1822, Ecuador joined Simón Bolívar's Republic of Gran Colombia, only to become a separate republic in 1830. The 19th century was marked by instability and a rapid succession of rulers.

Government

Rafael Correa was re-elected to a second presidential term in April 2009. His political movement, the Proud and Sovereign Fatherland Alliance (Alianza PAIS), is the dominant national political force in Ecuador. These elections, along with changes in government institutions, were mandated by the new constitution, enacted in October 2008.

Economy

The Ecuadorian economy is based on petroleum productions, manufacturing primarily for the domestic market and agricultural production for domestic consumption and export. Ecuador adopted the dollar as its national currency in 2000, following a major banking crisis and recession. Per capita income increased from \$1,296 in 2000 to \$3,670 in 2008, while the poverty rate fell from 51 percent in 2000 to 38 percent in 2006. President Correa's economic policies include higher social spending, increased government control over strategic sectors, and a greater share of

natural resource revenues for the state. The World Economic Forum's Competitiveness Index rated Ecuador 104th out of 134 countries for 2008.

People and Culture

The diversity of the country is reflected in its people and culture. Ecuador's population is ethnically mixed. The population of about 13.3 million includes a mix of indigenous and *mestizo* groups, along with smaller populations of Afro-Ecuadorians and Europeans. Although Spanish is the official language, the country's indigenous groups speak numerous other languages, including Kichwa (the Ecuadorian dialect of Quechua). Many small Amerindian groups, including the Kichwa and Shuar, are struggling for ethnic and cultural survival.

Although Ecuadorians were heavily concentrated in the mountainous central highland region a few decades ago, today's population is divided about equally between that area and the coastal lowlands. Migration toward cities in all regions has increased the urban population by over 60 percent. The Ecuadorian emigration phenomenon—especially to Europe and the U.S.—has dramatically increased recently.

Ecuador is a nation of young people; the population under 18 years represents 41 percent of the nation's 12,191,519 inhabitants (UNICEF 2009). Nearly 70 percent of Ecuador's 4.8 million children live in poverty. Boys and girls have equal access to education, but indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian children do not. Ninety percent of these children live in poverty and only 39 percent complete primary school compared to 76 percent of children from other groups (UNICEF, 2006).

Environment

Ecuador is located in northwestern South America. Its total land area is 276,840 square kilometers, or just over 110,000 square miles—about the size of Colorado. Ecuador is divided into 22 provinces, 10 in the Andean Highlands (Sierra), six in the Amazon Lowlands (Oriente), five in the Coastal Lowlands (Costa), and the Galápagos Islands, located about 600 miles west of the mainland in the Pacific Ocean.

Ecuador is one of the world's treasures of biodiversity. Two of Conservation International's 34 biodiversity hotspots are represented in the country, and it is the smallest of the 17 mega-diverse countries of the world. The Andes Mountains, with its snowcapped volcanoes, divide the generally drier coastal plain from the moist, tropical Amazon Basin region. The wide variety of environmental conditions supports an equally wide variety of plants and animals, some of which are found nowhere else on earth.

RESOURCES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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

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

General Information About Ecuador

www.Ecuadorwatch.com/

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

www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations

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

www.state.gov

The State Department's website issues background notes periodically about countries around the world. Find Ecuador and learn more about its social and political history. You can also go to the site's international travel section to check on conditions that may affect your safety.

www.psr.keele.ac.uk/official.htm

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

www.geography.about.com/library/maps/blindex.htm

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

www.cyberschoolbus.un.org/infonation/info.asp

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

www.worldinformation.com

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

**Connect With Returned Volunteers
and Other Invitees**

www.rpcv.org

This is the site of the National Peace Corps Association, made up of returned Volunteers. On this site you can find links to all the Web pages of the “Friends of” groups for most countries of service, comprised of former Volunteers who served in those countries. There are also regional groups that frequently get together for social events and local volunteer activities. Or go straight to the Friends of Ecuador site:

<http://www.friendsofecuador.org/>

www.PeaceCorpsWorldwide.org

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

Online Articles/Current News Sites about Ecuador

www.ecuadorexplorer.com/html/about_ecuador.html

This site provides information on culture, language, art, food, and travel.

www.escapeartist.com/ecuador/ecuador.htm

This site provides useful tips for those moving to Ecuador.

www.quitonews.com

This site provides daily news about Ecuador from the World News Network.

www.unicef.org/infobycountry/ecuador_statistics.html#2

This site provides health statistics on Ecuador from UNICEF.

International Development Sites about Ecuador

www.ecuadorexplorer.com/html/ngo_list.html

This site provides links to nongovernmental organizations working in a variety of sectors.

www.fao.org/forestry/fo/country/index.jsp?lang_id=1&geo_id=208

This site is the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization overview of Ecuador's natural resources.

Recommended Books on Ecuador

1. Beirne, Barbara. *The Children of the Ecuadorean Highlands*. Minneapolis: Carolrhoda Books, 1996.
2. Blankenship, Judy. *Canar: A Year in the Highlands of Ecuador*. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 2005.
3. Collaredo-Masfield, Rudi. *The Native Leisure Class: Consumption and Cultural Creativity in the Andes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999.
4. Handelsman, Michael. *Culture and Customs of Ecuador*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2000.

5. Miller, Tom. *The Panama Hat Trail*. Washington, D.C.: National Geographic, 2001.
6. Peck, Robert McGracken. *Headhunters and Hummingbirds: An Expedition Into Ecuador*. New York: Walker & Co., 1987.
7. Whitten, Norman E. *Millennial Ecuador: Critical Essays on Cultural Transformations and Social Dynamics*. Iowa City, Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 2003.

Recommended Books on Development

1. Berger, Peter. *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. Garden City, NY: First Anchor Books, 1966.
2. Bornstein, David. *How to Change the World: Social Entrepreneurs and the Power of New Ideas*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.
3. Collier, Paul. *The Bottom Billion: Why the Poorest Countries are Failing and What Can Be Done About It*. New York, Oxford University Press, 2007.
4. Easterly, William. *The White Man's Burden: Why the West's Efforts to Aid the Rest Have Done So Much Ill and So Little Good*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.
5. Gladwell, Malcolm. *Blink*. New York: Little, Brown and Co, 2005.
6. Gladwell, Malcolm. *Outliers*. New York: Little, Brown and Co, 2008.
7. Gladwell, Malcolm. *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*. New York: Little, Brown and Co, 2000.
8. Harrieson, Lawrence. *Culture Matters: How Values Shape Human Progress*. New York: Basic Books, 2000.

9. Hawken, Paul. *Blessed Unrest: How the Largest Social Movement in History Is Restoring Grace, Justice, and Beauty to the World*. London: Penguin Books, 2007.
10. Kidder, Tracy. *Mountains Beyond Mountains: The Quest of Dr. Paul Farmer, the Man Who Would Cure the World*. New York: Random House, 2003.
11. Kuhn, Thomas S. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1962.
12. Lasch, Christopher. *True and Only Heaven: Progress and Its Critics*. New York: Norton and Company, 1991.
13. Olson, Mancur. *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 2002.
14. Redfield, Robert. *A Village that Chose Progress: Chan Kom Revisited*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
15. Sachs, Jeffery. *Common Wealth: Economics for a Crowded Planet*. New York: Penguin Press, 2008.
16. Sachs, Jeffery. *The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities for Our Time*. New York: Penguin Press, 2005.
17. Sen, Amartya. *Development as Freedom*. New York: First Anchor Books, 1999.
18. Yunus, Muhammad. *Banker to The Poor: Micro-Lending and the Battle Against World Poverty*. New York: Public Affairs, 2010.
19. Fadiman, Anne. *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*. New York: Farr, Straus and Giroux, 1997.
20. Kidder, Tracy. *The Strength in What Remains*. New York: Random House, 2009.
21. Kincaid, Jamaica. *A Small Place*. New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1988.

22. Lederer, William J. *The Ugly American*. New York: Norton, 1958.
23. Miller, Shawn William. *An Environmental History of Latin America*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
24. Alinsky, Saul. *Rules for radicals*. New York: Random House, 1971.
25. Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Continuum, 2000.
26. Giddens, Anthony. *Runaway world: How globalization is shaping our lives*. New York: Routledge, 2000.
27. Harvey, David. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.
28. hooks, bell. *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope*. Routledge, 2003.
29. Kristof, Nicholas D. & Sheryl WuDunn. *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunities for Women Worldwide*. New York: Knopf, Borzoi Books, 2009.

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, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000.
2. Rice, Gerald T. *The Bold Experiment: JFK's Peace Corps*. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985.
3. Stossel, Scott. *Sarge: The Life and Times of Sargent Shriver*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2004.
4. Meisler, Stanley. *When the World Calls: The Inside Story of the Peace Corps and its First 50 Years*. Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 2011.

Books on the Volunteer Experience

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

LIVING CONDITIONS AND VOLUNTEER LIFESTYLE

Communications

Mail

Until you have your own address, you can receive mail at Peace Corps/Ecuador's post office box:

"Your Name," PCV (for Volunteer) or PCT (for trainee)
Cuerpo de Paz
Casilla 17-08-8624
Quito, Ecuador
South America

It takes a week to 10 days for a letter from the United States to reach the Peace Corps office. Once you are living at your assigned site, mail may take 2-4 weeks to reach you.

Receiving packages through international mail can be difficult. All packages must go through Ecuadorian customs and you may have to make a special trip to Quito to pick up the package. All packages are opened by customs, and there is usually a significant customs charge. Customs officials may confiscate items that are not allowed to be imported, like chocolates. We recommend that families and friends send only small items, limited to two kilos (4.4 pounds), clearly marking the contents. They should not use couriers, such as DHL and Federal Express.

Packages over 4.4 pounds are expensive to retrieve from customs and it is a long and arduous process that can involve visiting several different cities. Officials charge just for notifying you, in addition to a daily storage fee. Letters and packages under this weight usually arrive in less than two weeks, but it is not uncommon to receive them opened and sifted through. Using packing envelopes that would be difficult to rip open is highly recommended.

Telephones

Peace Corps/Ecuador's office is located at the following address: Av. Granda Centeno No. OE 4-250, y Baron de Carondelet, Quito, Ecuador. The telephone numbers for the office are 227.6300, 227.2824, 245.5007, or 800.723.282 (toll-free only within Ecuador); the fax number is 227.3763.

To use these numbers from the United States, you must first dial 011 for access to the international network, 593 for Ecuador (country code), and 2 for Quito. Note that after regular business hours and on weekends and holidays, the person answering the phone is not likely to speak English.

To reach you in an emergency, your family should call the Counseling and Outreach Unit at Peace Corps headquarters in Washington, D.C., at 800.424.8580, extension 1470 (or 202.638.2574 during non-business hours). They will contact Peace Corps/Ecuador.

Computer, Internet, and Email Access

Because Ecuador is a popular tourist destination, there are Internet cafes throughout the country. Almost all Volunteers in Ecuador have email addresses and, except for those posted to the most remote sites, are able to check email and access the Internet on a regular basis. In addition, computers with Internet access are available for Volunteers to use at the Peace Corps office in Quito.

Housing and Site Location

All volunteers in Ecuador will be required to live with a family for the entire two years of service. Volunteers have found that this helps them get to know the community better as well as provides additional safety and security support. Sharing meals, conversation, and other experiences with your host family are important steps in developing the skills and attitudes that will help you integrate into your community.

Housing varies greatly by site. Volunteers may live and work in either a rural or urban community. Some live in buildings with

up-to-date plumbing and electrical systems. Others may have a small cement house with an outdoor latrine in the back and one or two bare light bulbs for illumination. A few Volunteers live in very isolated sites without electricity or running water.

Volunteer sites are located throughout the country, but generally are clustered in several regions so Volunteers from all four project areas and from older and newer groups are located relatively close to one another. In most cases, you will be located within two or three hours of other Volunteers. There are some areas of the country where the Peace Corps does not place any Volunteers, either because the level of development is such that Volunteers are no longer needed or due to safety and security concerns (e.g., the jungle regions on the Colombian border).

Living Allowance and Money Management

Peace Corps/Ecuador will open a bank account for you and you will get an ATM card. Your monthly living allowance will be deposited into this account by the first day of each month. Most Volunteers travel to a nearby town every week or two to withdraw cash, check their mail, and shop. Many Volunteers bring a credit card, additional cash, or traveler's checks for emergency expenses and travel. Please note that traveler's checks are not easy to exchange, except when one is in a large city. Peace Corps/Ecuador is prohibited from storing any Volunteer property.

The living allowance is calculated to allow you to live at the level of the general population. Volunteers who spend most of their time in their community find that they have adequate resources, while those who choose to travel often to major cities tend to find their budgets stretched by the end of the month.

Food and Diet

The diet in Ecuador is varied. You will have the chance to sample a vast array of fruits and vegetables. We encourage you to experiment and try everything, including, for the more adventurous, guinea pig, cow stomach, and blood soup.

While living with your host family in training and for your initial months at site, you will eat the typical fare of the family. Most Ecuadorians eat a light breakfast, a large midday meal, and a lighter dinner. The diet, of course, varies depending on regions or if you are in a city or rural site. On the coast, seafood is a staple, in addition to plantains. In the highlands, potatoes and corn are more commonly eaten. Yucca and chicha (a drink made from Yucca) are staples in the diet of the Amazon. On the whole, food is not spicy, but meals are accompanied by hot sauce called “aji.” The diet tends to be high in carbohydrates and foods are more often fried than baked.

For the most part, vegetarians do not have a hard time meeting their dietary needs. Commonly available foods include dried grains, beans, quinoa (a native grain which is a complete protein), eggs, and dairy. Specialty items like tofu and peanut butter may be available in larger cities, but are not available in most communities.

Transportation

Your job may require occasional or frequent travel within the area where you are assigned. Although you may be able to travel in your host agency’s vehicle, riding a bicycle or a horse and/or walking is often the only way to reach small communities or distant farms.

Most of your long-distance travel will be by crowded public bus. A number of reliable bus lines with modern equipment run throughout the country. Travel at night is permitted but strongly discouraged. Nighttime travel is limited to nonstop, direct interurban buses. Plane travel for medical emergencies and unusual circumstances may be approved by senior staff on a case-by-case basis.

Although Ecuador has been known for its political coups over the last few decades, this does not usually affect or endanger Volunteers’ daily lives. All the action generally occurs in the

capital, and people in the campo watch with disinterest from afar. Strikes are very common. Roads may be blockaded for days or weeks at a time, but as long as Volunteers stay away from the strike lines and do not attempt to cross them, it will not affect them. However, this may limit Internet and mail access for a short period of time if Volunteers need to travel to other cities for these services.

Volunteers are not authorized to operate any type of motorized vehicle in Ecuador. Motorcycle riding (as a driver or passenger) is prohibited.

Geography and Climate

The four main areas of Ecuador have different climates. Because the country is on the equator, the temperature depends on the altitude, not the season. There are only two seasons—rainy and dry.

The highland area is warm during the day (60 degrees Fahrenheit to 80 F) and cool at night (below 55 F). Several layers of clothing may be necessary. The dry season tends to be warm and dusty. During the rainy season, temperatures are about 10 degrees cooler.

The coastal area is generally hot and humid. The rainy season, January through April, is hot (80-95 F) and mold is sometimes a problem. The dry season, May through December, is slightly cooler (70-85 F).

The Amazon Basin region is usually warm and muggy. Temperatures fluctuate greatly during the day, ranging from 60 to 90 F. Although there are dry and rainy seasons, it rains year-round and mold is a constant problem.

The Galápagos Islands are hot and dry most of the time, but the pleasant ocean breezes make the temperatures more comfortable.

Social Activities

Ecuadorian entertainment, especially in small towns, centers on drinking, dancing, and talking. Movies are also popular in Ecuador, although recent releases from the United States (with Spanish subtitles) are usually delayed by several months. The movies shown are often martial arts, horror, or Mexican slapstick films. Large towns usually have at least one movie theater, and many also have video/DVD stores. Small cities have a public library and cultural activities at the local Casa de la Cultura.

Ecuadorians love music and love to dance, and many Volunteers enjoy learning salsa, cumbia, and merengue from Ecuadorian friends. Radio stations play a variety of music, including some American rock and pop. Many Volunteers make their own music, bringing or purchasing a guitar, violin, flute, harmonica, or other instrument. Ecuadorian craftsmen make quality guitars that are inexpensive.

Sports are very popular in Ecuador, especially soccer, basketball, and volleyball. Soccer is a national, indeed, Latin American, passion. Volunteers will have many opportunities to play sports informally in their communities. Occasionally, Volunteers even coach local teams.

Volunteers spend a lot of time reading. Although local bookstores carry books in English, prices are higher than in the United States. Volunteers who learn Spanish well enough will, of course, find many books and magazines available. The Peace Corps office has an extensive library, and Volunteers often trade books with one another. Although you will probably want to bring some paperback books with you, it is a good idea to ask your family and friends to send you a book occasionally.

Alcohol plays a big role in social activities and Volunteers are advised to use their best judgment when consuming alcohol. There is a high correlation between alcohol use and crimes committed

against Volunteers, ranging from petty theft to physical assault and rape.

Professionalism, Dress, and Behavior

“Neat and modest” sums up the dress code for Volunteers in Ecuador. Since most Volunteers are assigned to rural or marginally developed urban sites, there is rarely a need for more formal attire. You will be working as a professional development worker, however, and inappropriate dress may make Ecuadorians less receptive to you. When you visit the office of a counterpart agency, you should wear clothing that is slightly more formal than what you wear daily. For such visits, skirts or dress slacks for women and slacks and button-down shirts with collars for men are appropriate. During training, and less often as a Volunteer, there will be a few occasions, such as the swearing-in ceremony or a wedding, when men will want to wear jackets and ties and women will want to wear dresses.

Women should not wear halter tops, low-cut blouses, miniskirts, and any other attire that could be considered revealing. While young Ecuadorian women in the larger lowland cities do wear such items, cultural stereotypes regarding American women are only exacerbated by revealing attire, sometimes leading to unwanted attention or harassment. Ripped or patched jeans, tank tops, flip-flops, shorts, and body piercings (other than pierced ears) are unacceptable for men and women during training and in any professional or office setting in Ecuador.

Earrings are acceptable for women, but generally not for men. Younger men in large cities occasionally wear earrings, but as foreigners, male Volunteers should not wear earrings, especially outside of major cities. Hair and beards should be neatly trimmed and clean at all times. Since dreadlocks are associated with the use of illegal drugs, Volunteers may not wear them.

Most of the indigenous populations live in the highlands, where the cold and rain often keep people indoors for days at a time.

People in the highlands tend to be more reserved and formal, and many still retain their traditional dress and languages. Life in the lowland and coastal regions is often less formal, with loud music and people conversing in the streets—a common feature of everyday life. Even in these regions, however, business and social interactions have a greater degree of formality than what Americans are accustomed to. The rituals of greetings and acknowledgment are an important part of doing business, and failure to adhere to these customs may be viewed negatively. You will learn a great deal about these customs during pre-service training.

Personal Safety

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

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

safety and security information on the Peace Corps website at www.peacecorps.gov/safety.

Information on these pages gives messages on Volunteer health and Volunteer 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

The total time of your commitment to Peace Corps/Ecuador is 27 months—which includes approximately three months of pre-service training and 24 months of Peace Corps service upon successful completion of training. Peace Corps service is not for everyone. Requiring greater dedication and commitment than most jobs, it is for confident, self-starting, and concerned individuals who are interested in helping other countries and increasing understanding across cultural barriers. Your willingness to serve in smaller towns and cities and to give up U.S. standards of space and privacy in your living accommodations will be greatly appreciated by Ecuadorians.

The key to satisfying work as a Peace Corps Volunteer is the ability to establish successful relationships at all levels, which requires patience, sensitivity, and a positive professional attitude. It is essential that you work with Ecuadorian counterparts to ensure that tasks begun during your service will continue after your departure. It is also important to realize that while you may have a lot of energy and motivation, you will be in Ecuador for only two years. Your colleagues will probably continue to work in the same job after you leave—for little money—and may not possess quite the same level of motivation. Often you will find yourself in situations that require the ability to motivate both yourself and your colleagues and to solve problems with little or no guidance from supervisors. You may work for months without seeing any visible impact from, and without receiving feedback on, your work. You must possess the self-confidence, patience,

and vision to continue working toward long-term goals without seeing immediate results. Nevertheless, you will have a sense of accomplishment when small projects are rendered effective as a result of your efforts. Acceptance into a foreign culture and the acquisition of a second or even a third language are also significant rewards.

Judging by the experience of former Volunteers, the peaks are well worth the valleys, and most Volunteers leave Ecuador feeling they have gained much more than they sacrificed during their service. Indeed, many former Volunteers will readily tell you that their Peace Corps service was the most significant experience of their lives.

PEACE CORPS TRAINING

Overview of Pre-Service Training

Pre-service training (PST) is the first event within a competency-based training program that continues throughout your 27 months of service in Ecuador. Pre-service training ensures that Volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to effectively perform their jobs.

Pre-service training is conducted in Ecuador and directed by the Peace Corps with participation from representatives of Ecuador organizations, former Volunteers, and/or training contractors. The length of PST varies, usually ranging from 11-12 weeks, depending on the competencies required for the assignment. Ecuador measures achievement of learning and determines if trainees have successfully achieved competencies, including language standards, for swearing in as a Peace Corps Volunteer.

Throughout service, Volunteers strive to achieve performance competencies. Initially, PST 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 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 Ecuador community and culture. Trainees are prepared for this through a “homestay” experience, which 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, the ability 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 Ecuador by building on the skills you already have and helping you develop new skills in a manner appropriate to the needs of the Ecuador. The Peace Corps staff, Ecuador 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.

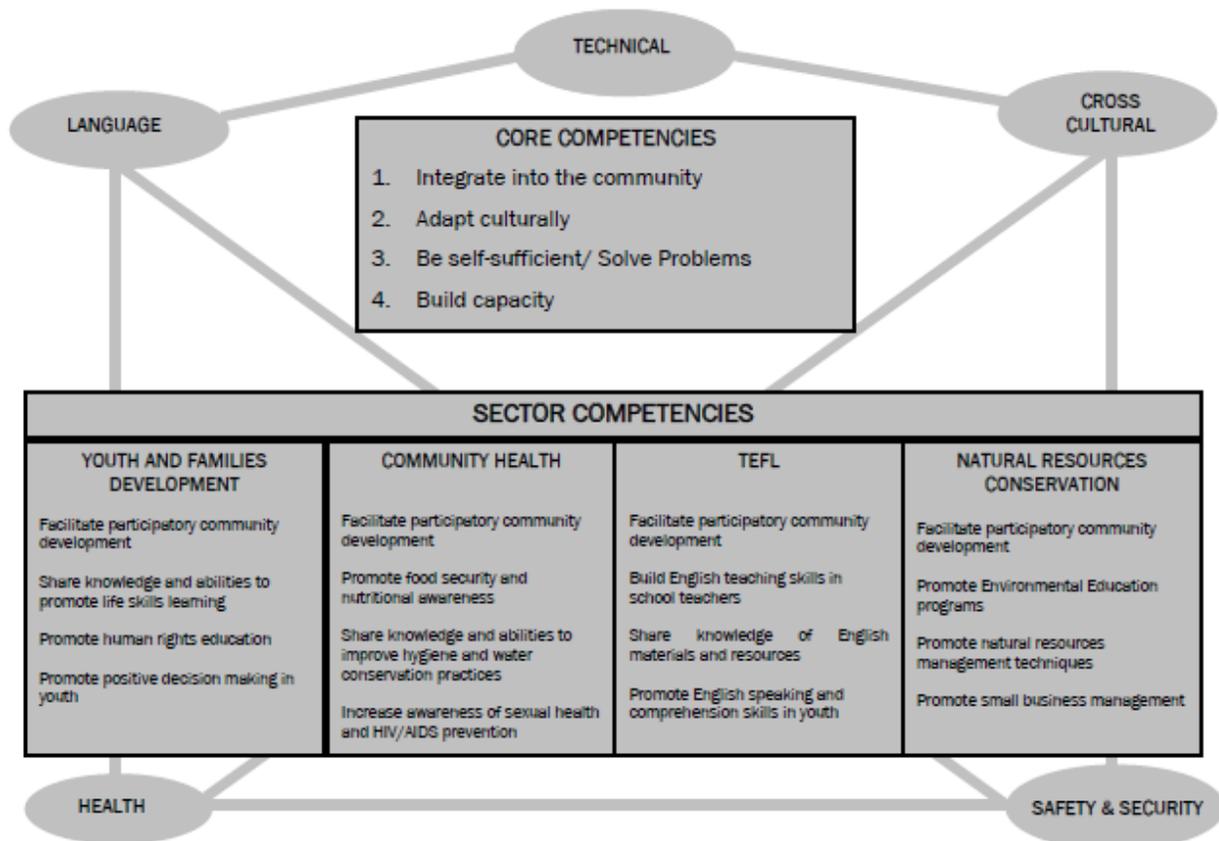
Technical training will include sessions on the general economic and political environment in Ecuador and strategies for working within such a framework. You will review your technical sector's goals and will meet with the Ecuador agencies and organizations that invited the Peace Corps to assist them.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

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/Ecuador'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 Volunteer.

Ecuador's Core and Sector Competencies are the following:

CORE & SECTOR COMPETENCIES



Evaluation of your performance throughout service is a continual process, as Volunteers are responsible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for personal conduct and professional performance. Successful completion of pre-service training is characterized by achievement of a set of learning objectives to determine competence. Failure to meet any of the selection standards by the completion of training may be grounds for a withdrawal of selection and disqualification from Peace Corps service.

Progress in one's own learning is a dialogue between you and the training staff. All of the training staff—including the training manager, and the language, technical, medical, safety and security, and cross-cultural trainers—will work with you toward the highest possible competencies by providing you with feedback on learning objective performance throughout training. After reviewing and observing your performance, the country director is responsible for making the final decision on whether you have qualified to serve as a Volunteer in the host country.

Upon successful completion of training, trainees who qualify for Peace Corps service are required by law to swear or affirm an oath of loyalty to the United States; it cannot be waived under any circumstances. The text of the oath is provided below. If you have any questions about the wording or meaning of the oath, consult a staff member during training.

I, (your name), do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States of America against all enemies, domestic or foreign, that I take this obligation freely, and without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion, and that I will well and faithfully discharge my duties in the Peace Corps (so help me God).

Language Training

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

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

Cross-Cultural Training

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

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

Health Training

During pre-service training, you will be given basic medical training and information. You will be expected to practice preventive health care and to take responsibility for your own health by adhering to all medical policies. Trainees are required to attend all medical sessions. The topics include preventive health measures and minor and major medical issues that you might encounter while in Ecuador. Nutrition, mental health, setting up a safe living compound, and how to avoid HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) are also covered.

Safety Training

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

Additional Trainings during Volunteer Service

In its commitment to institutionalize quality training, the Peace Corps has implemented a training system that provides Volunteers with continual opportunities to examine their commitment to Peace Corps service while increasing their technical and cross-cultural skills.

The number, length, and design of these trainings are adapted to Ecuador-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.

You are expected to improve your knowledge and skills in the areas of technical, language, cross-cultural, diversity, health, and safety throughout your service as a Volunteer. Training staff provide learning objectives during the 27-month continuum to

help guide Volunteers throughout service. The manner in which you do this may be formal, through tutoring or workshops organized by the host government or in-country staff, or informally, through conversations and reading. Your learning will continue after you become a Volunteer, formally and through in-service training opportunities, specialized language or technical workshops, and a close-of-service workshop to help you evaluate your service and prepare for your return to the United States.

Formal opportunities for ongoing learning in Ecuador include the following:

1. **Reconnect:** This is the first in-service training (IST) where PCVs from your region will get back together to process and reflect on the first four months of service at their site.
2. **Tech training:** Two-day additional technical training will be provided at the six-month mark on how to design and manage a small project, in addition to technical training more specific to your assignment in which you will be invited to attend along with a community member.
3. **Midservice conference:** This event takes place in the middle of your service (after 12 months at site). It will focus on your achievements during your first year and also will give you tools to make your projects more sustainable by encouraging more leadership from the community.
4. **Close/continuation-of-service conference:** This is your last conference and its goal is to help you transition from your community to your life in the United States.
5. **Other:** Peace Corps/Ecuador also partners PCVs with agencies and organizations, with some of these organizations providing ongoing learning opportunities through their own trainings.

YOUR HEALTH AND SAFETY IN ECUADOR

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 Ecuador maintains a clinic with a full-time medical officer, who takes care of Volunteers' primary health care needs. Additional medical services, such as testing and basic treatment, are also available in Ecuador at local hospitals. If you become seriously ill, you will be transported either to an American-standard medical facility in the region or to the United States.

Health Issues in Ecuador

Although you may suffer some minor illnesses in Ecuador, if you take the proper precautions you can expect to have a healthy and safe two years. If you become seriously ill, however, Ecuador has some of the best hospitals and specialists in South America.

Diarrheal illness is the biggest health problem for Volunteers around the world, including Ecuador. This problem can be prevented with proper food and water preparation, which will be discussed during pre-service training.

Altitude varies greatly among Ecuador's four geographical zones, and Quito is 9,300 feet above sea level. Problems common in the first few days at a high altitude are headaches, indigestion, and shortness of breath.

Malaria is a serious health threat in the coastal and jungle areas of Ecuador. In addition to using insect repellent and mosquito nets (provided by Peace Corps), Volunteers assigned to these areas are required to take malaria prophylaxis to prevent malaria.

Peace Corps service can be a stressful experience, and you may need to put all your positive coping skills to work. The Peace Corps medical officers are available to help you with your

emotional needs and can refer you to English-speaking counselors. Peace Corps/Ecuador also has a Volunteer peer support network.

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

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

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

Maintaining Your Health

As a Volunteer, you must accept considerable responsibility for your own health. Proper precautions will significantly reduce your risk of serious illness or injury. The adage “An ounce of prevention ...” becomes extremely important in areas where diagnostic and treatment facilities are not up to the standards of the United States.

Many illnesses that afflict Volunteers worldwide are entirely 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 Ecuador during pre-service training.

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

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

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

Women's Health Information

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

If feminine hygiene products are not available for you to purchase on the local market, the Peace Corps medical officer in Ecuador

will provide them. If you require a specific product, please bring a three-month supply with you.

Your Peace Corps Medical Kit

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

Medical Kit Contents

Ace bandages

Adhesive tape

American Red Cross First Aid & Safety Handbook

Antacid tablets (Tums)

Antibiotic ointment (Bacitracin/Neomycin/Polymycin B)

Antiseptic antimicrobial skin cleaner (Hibiclens)

Band-Aids

Butterfly closures

Calamine lotion

Cepacol lozenges

Condoms

Dental floss

Diphenhydramine HCL 25 mg (Benadryl)

Insect repellent stick (Cutter's)

Iodine tablets (for water purification)

Lip balm (Chapstick)

Oral rehydration salts

Oral thermometer (Fahrenheit)

Pseudoephedrine HCL 30 mg (Sudafed)

Robitussin-DM lozenges (for cough)

Scissors

Sterile gauze pads

Tetrahydrozaline eyedrops (Visine)

Tinactin (antifungal cream)

Tweezers

Before You Leave: A Medical Checklist

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

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

If you wish to avoid having duplicate vaccinations, contact your physician's office to obtain a copy of your immunization record and bring it to your pre-departure orientation. If you have any immunizations prior to Peace Corps service, the Peace Corps cannot reimburse you for the cost. The Peace Corps will provide all the immunizations necessary for your overseas assignment, either at your pre-departure orientation or shortly after you arrive in Ecuador. 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.

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

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

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

Safety and Security—Our Partnership

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

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

- Peace Corps assesses the security environment where you will live and work
- Peace Corps inspects the house where you will live according to established security criteria
- Peace Corp provides you with resources to take measures such as installing new locks
- Peace Corps ensures you are welcomed by host Ecuador authorities in your new community
- Peace Corps responds to security concerns that you raise
- You lock your doors and windows
- You adopt a lifestyle appropriate to the community where you live
- You get to know neighbors
- You decide if purchasing personal articles insurance is appropriate for you
- You don't change residences before being authorized by Peace Corps

- You communicate concerns that you have to Peace Corps staff

This *Welcome Book* contains sections on: Living Conditions and Volunteer Lifestyle; Peace Corps Training; and Your Health Care and Safety that all include important safety and security information to help you understand this partnership. The Peace Corps makes every effort to give Volunteers the tools they need to function in the safest way possible, because working to maximize the safety and security of Volunteers is our highest priority. Not only do we provide you with training and tools to prepare for the unexpected, but we teach 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 Ecuador there are several measures you can take to reduce your risk:

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

After you arrive in Ecuador, 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 Ecuador learn to:

- Choose safe routes and times for travel, and travel with someone trusted by the community whenever possible
- Make sure one's personal appearance is respectful of local customs
- Avoid high-crime areas
- Know the local language to get help in an emergency
- Make friends with local people who are respected in the community
- Limit alcohol consumption

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

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

Volunteers tend to attract a lot of attention both in large cities and at their sites, but they are more likely to receive negative attention in highly populated centers, and away from their support network—friends and colleagues—who look out for them.

While whistles and exclamations may be fairly common on the street, this behavior can be reduced if you dress conservatively,

abide by local cultural norms, and respond according to the training you will receive.

Staying Safe: Don't Be a Target for Crime

You must be prepared to take on a large degree of responsibility for your own safety. You can make yourself less of a target, ensure that your home is secure, and develop relationships in your community that will make you an unlikely victim of crime. While the factors that contribute to your risk in Ecuador 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 Ecuador will require that you accept some restrictions on your current lifestyle.

Support from Staff

If a trainee or Volunteer is the victim of a safety incident, Peace Corps staff is prepared to provide support. All Peace Corps posts have procedures in place to respond to incidents of crime committed against Volunteers. The first priority for all posts in the aftermath of an incident is to ensure the Volunteer is safe and receiving medical treatment as needed. After assuring the safety of the Volunteer, Peace Corps staff response may include reassessing the Volunteer's worksite and housing arrangements and making any adjustments, as needed. In some cases, the nature of the incident may necessitate a site or housing transfer. Peace Corps staff will also assist Volunteers with preserving their rights to pursue legal sanctions against the perpetrators of the crime. It is very important that Volunteers report incidents as they occur, not only to protect their peer Volunteers, but also to preserve the future right to prosecute. Should Volunteers decide later in the process that they want to proceed with the prosecution of their

assailant, this option may no longer exist if the evidence of the event has not been preserved at the time of the incident.

Crime Data for Ecuador

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

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

Please take the time to review this important information.

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

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

Volunteer Safety Support in Ecuador

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

The Peace Corps/Ecuador 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 Ecuador director. In the event of a critical situation or emergency, you will be

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

Volunteer training will include sessions on specific safety and security issues in Ecuador. 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/Ecuador'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

Ecuador at predetermined locations until the situation is resolved or the Peace Corps decides to evacuate.

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

DIVERSITY AND CROSS-CULTURAL ISSUES

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

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

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

To ease the transition and adapt to life in Ecuador, you may need to make some temporary, yet fundamental compromises in how you present yourself as an American and as an individual. For example, female trainees and Volunteers may not be able to exercise the independence available to them in the United States; political discussions need to be handled with great care; and some

of your personal beliefs may best remain undisclosed. You will need to develop techniques and personal strategies for coping with these and other limitations. The Peace Corps staff will lead diversity and sensitivity discussions during pre-service training and will be on call to provide support, but the challenge ultimately will be your own.

Overview of Diversity in Ecuador

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

What Might a Volunteer Face?

Possible Issues for Female Volunteers

Gender roles in Ecuador are markedly different from those in the United States. Most Ecuadorian women, especially those in rural areas, have traditional roles: They run the household, prepare meals, clean, and rear children. Many women also work in the fields, run small businesses, and care for farm animals. Men also have specific roles, and “manliness” is considered very important. Although many Volunteers are bothered by these gender roles, it is important to understand them to be effective in your work.

It is not uncommon for women to be subjected to stares, comments, and offers of dates on the street or in other situations. Female Volunteers are obvious targets because they often look quite different from Ecuadorian women. Female Volunteers must learn how to handle these situations and sometimes have to accept constraints on their behavior that male Volunteers do not face.

Male Volunteers also encounter harassment, though less frequently. If you do not drink, smoke, or like to pursue women openly, you may be teased about not being manly enough and pressured to participate in these activities. Male Volunteers who cook, wash clothes and dishes, and clean the house may seem very strange to their neighbors.

All Volunteers have to adjust to the gender norms and different ways of doing things in Ecuador. Pre-service training will orient you to these norms and customs.

One Volunteer commented, “The inherent social phenomenon of machismo in Ecuador can present itself in a variety of ways during the day-to-day activities of female Volunteers. Examples of machismo may be overt, such as catcalls in the street, but may also include subtle remarks regarding the perceived inability of women to work in labor, business, or financial affairs. Although machismo can be frustrating for female Volunteers, the majority of them find ways of dealing with and overcoming these difficulties. Female Volunteers in Ecuador are generally happy, productive, and hardworking, despite these challenges.”

Possible Issues for Volunteers of Color
Ecuador has a variety of ethnic groups, including an Afro-Ecuadorian population concentrated in a couple of areas of the country. Thus, African-American Volunteers are likely to stand out more for their manner of dress and lifestyle than for their ethnic background, especially if they live in these particular areas. And since Afro Ecuadorians are a visible minority subject to negative attitudes or discrimination, African-American Volunteers may experience similar treatment.

Volunteers of color may encounter verbal harassment on the street—especially when away from their sites in larger towns or cities. Asian Americans may be called chino or china even if they are not of Chinese descent. However, comments or jokes regarding race or ethnicity are more likely to be used in a

descriptive sense than in a derogatory sense. Most of them arise from misinformation or unfamiliarity with other races and cultures rather than mean-spiritedness. You will find it helpful to maintain a positive attitude about yourself and to approach any negative comments with patience and confidence.

Ecuadorians (particularly in rural areas) tend to think of all Americans as Anglo. For Anglo Americans who have had little experience with being the only one of their kind in a community, being the center of attention because of one's nationality, regardless of race or ethnicity, may sometimes feel uncomfortable.

One Volunteer commented, "Ecuador does, in fact, have a diverse population with a variety of racial, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds. A significant number of Asians are represented in Ecuador in more urban areas; however, Asians generally do not participate in agrarian sectors. Ecuadorians of African descent constitute significant populations in specific rural areas of Ecuador and are visible in urban areas as well. Indigenous groups are spread throughout the country, particularly in the sierra region. Volunteers of color may be asked questions regarding their ethnicity and may encounter insensitivity toward minorities."

Possible Issues for Senior Volunteers

In general, older members of the community are well respected in Ecuador. Specific challenges for senior Volunteers most often are related to language abilities and adaptation to the relatively basic living conditions of Ecuador.

One Volunteer commented, "Senior Volunteers are usually looked up to in the Peace Corps community. They may feel some stress because they are not the majority in the Peace Corps community, but this tends to be an advantage. They may find that learning the language is a huge obstacle and may be frustrated by some of the inconveniences of life in Ecuador."

Possible Issues for Gay, Lesbian, or Bisexual Volunteers

While some Ecuadorians are open about their sexual orientation, gay, lesbian, or bisexual Volunteers will have to be very circumspect with their Ecuadorian colleagues about their sexual orientation. The experience of each Volunteer will differ, but many LGBTQ individuals never come out to the Ecuadorians in their site during their 27 months of service. Although there are not many support mechanisms in the broader society, Peace Corps/Ecuador does have an LGBTQ working group, SpeQtrum, to help individuals find the support they need during their two years of service. SpeQtrum meets 3-4 times a year for support group meetings and provides safe space trainings for PCVs and staff in order to provide a more inclusive environment for LGBTQ Volunteers.

One Volunteer commented, “Volunteers in Ecuador come face to face with a macho and, at times, racist society. Getting accustomed to this is a challenge for many, but more so for gays, lesbians, or bisexuals. In most areas, people are not very open to such lifestyles, both because of a lack of public awareness about homosexuality and because of the strong influence of the Roman Catholic Church. Volunteers probably should not be open with their community until they feel they are in a safe environment and among people who are willing to understand. They can use group activities and educational meetings to open discussions and, thereby, share opinions and concerns without putting themselves in an uncomfortable position.”

Possible Religious Issues for Volunteers

Roman Catholicism is the dominant religion in Ecuador. Other religious groups are increasingly visible, however, and tolerance of other religions is fairly high. In some smaller communities, divisions exist across religious lines, and Volunteers need to understand these and be careful about being seen as aligned exclusively with one side or the other.

One Volunteer commented, “Because Roman Catholicism is the dominant religion, those who might wish to attend Protestant, Jewish, or other services may not be able to. But there are missionaries throughout Ecuador, and various Christian denominations have become more prevalent.”

Possible Issues for Volunteers with Disabilities

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

One Volunteer commented, “Ecuador is not a service-oriented country and, therefore, not user-friendly on most levels. Getting around is difficult, and transportation can be tricky. But since everyone has to deal with the same problems, Ecuadorians are understanding. People are generally very willing to help if they are able. The secrets to success here are patience and creativity.”

Possible Issues for Married Volunteers

One couple shared the following insight and advice, “Marriage in the Peace Corps is wonderful and enriching. Never again in your lives will you have so much time to be together, sharing the daily experiences of living in a foreign culture. The time you spend abroad can be a time of significant growth, individually and as a couple.

“The inordinate amount of time together can be a boon to marriage and also a stress. The consensus among other married Volunteers I have heard from is that it is essential to establish routines that allow for space and individuality in your relationship.

“Your spouse will be your biggest supporter as you adapt to life in this new culture, but make sure not to make him/her your only supporter. Reach out to fellow Volunteers to build a support network that will enrich your marriage.

“Make sure to get out of your site together. Treat yourself to a mini-vacation; a romantic getaway. Make sure you continue to be intentional about communication; don’t take it for granted that your relationship will be strengthened just because you are spending hours together. Enjoy this wonderful country and the company of your partner.”

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How much luggage am I allowed to bring to Ecuador?

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 80 pounds total with a maximum weight of 50 pounds for any one bag.

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

What is the electric current in Ecuador?

The current is 110 volts, 60 cycles, the same as in the United States. Some towns, however, do not have electricity.

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 Ecuador director. The Peace Corps is not able to provide your visitors with visa, medical, or travel assistance.

Will my belongings be covered by insurance?
The Peace Corps does not provide insurance coverage for personal effects; Volunteers are ultimately responsible for the safekeeping of their personal belongings. However, you can purchase personal property insurance before you leave. If you wish, you may contact your own insurance company; additionally, insurance application forms will be provided, and we encourage you to consider them carefully. Volunteers should not ship or take valuable items overseas. Jewelry, watches, radios, cameras, and expensive appliances are subject to loss, theft, and breakage, and in many places, satisfactory maintenance and repair services are not available.

Do I need an international driver's license?
Volunteers in Ecuador 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 Ecuador 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 Ecuador friends and my host family?

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

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

Peace Corps trainees are not assigned to individual sites until after they have completed pre-service training. This gives Peace Corps staff the opportunity to assess each trainee's technical and language skills prior to assigning sites, in addition to finalizing site selections with their ministry counterparts. If feasible, you may have the opportunity to provide input on your site preferences, including geographical location, distance from other Volunteers, and living conditions. However, keep in mind that many factors influence the site selection process and that the Peace Corps cannot guarantee placement where you would ideally like to be. Most Volunteers live in small towns or in rural villages and are usually within one hour from another Volunteer. Some sites require a 10- to 12-hour drive from the capital. There is at least one Volunteer based in each of the regional capitals and about five to eight Volunteers in the capital city.

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 Office of Special Services immediately if an emergency arises, such as a serious illness or death of a family member. During normal business hours, the number for the Office of Special Services is 800.424.8580; select option 2, then extension 1470. After normal business hours and on weekends and holidays, the Special Services duty officer can be reached at the above number. For non-emergency questions, your

family can get information from your Ecuador desk staff at the Peace Corps by calling 800.424.8580.

Can I call home from Ecuador?

Telephone service from Ecuador to the United States is generally quite good, and all of the major calling card services are available (i.e., AT&T, Sprint, and MCI). Most communities have a telephone office where you can call the United States collect or pay for the call on the spot. Very few Volunteers have phones in their homes, but many have neighbors with phones. (Note that it is not a good idea to use a neighbor's phone with the promise to repay the phone owner later.)

Should I bring a cellular phone with me?

No. Since April 2006, Peace Corps/Ecuador has issued all Volunteers a cellphone for safety and security purposes. The cellphone will be assigned during the first few weeks of training. It will have a limited number of minutes and international access depending on the plan you purchase. Most Volunteers buy a local cellphone (most U.S. cellphones are not compatible with the Ecuadorian system) and purchase prepaid cards for service or enter a service plan. Keep in mind that cellphones are very much in demand and that theft is an issue for any Volunteer who has a cellphone.

Will there be email and Internet access?

Because it is a major tourist destination, Ecuador is well supplied with Internet cafes. In fact, there are so many of them in Quito that prices are quite low as a result of the intense competition. In addition to email services, most Internet cafes offer phone call alternatives such as Net2Phone.

Should I bring my computer?

Peace Corps/Ecuador neither recommends nor discourages bringing a computer, but it should be made clear that computers are easily stolen, so you should purchase personal property insurance if

you decide to bring one. However, many Volunteers find them useful for project work and personal use.

WELCOME LETTERS FROM ECUADOR VOLUNTEERS

Dear prospective Volunteer:

If you're anything like me, you spent months or even years thinking about becoming a Peace Corps Volunteer. You read books, you talked to RPCVs, and you memorized the layout of the Peace Corps website. Then you took the leap of faith and finally applied. Now, after several more months of medical exams and waiting, you've received the news. You will be a PCV. Not only that, but you're going to live, work, and play in one of the most spectacular countries on earth. Hats off to you.

Ecuador is ridiculously diverse. You may wake up for two years to the view of a 20,000-foot volcano outside your window. You may dance salsa every Saturday night at the sweaty disco in your coastal city. Or, you may pass the tranquil evening hours chatting with the owner of the corner store in your sleepy jungle town. The diversity adds to the unknown, which adds the anxiety you are, no doubt, feeling. Don't worry. Everything will be OK. During training, you'll meet tons of other really cool people from different backgrounds linked by the desire to serve. You'll bond over common experiences. Then you will go to your site where you're ripped from your comfort zone and forced to interact with Ecuadorians who, at first, seem a little strange. Over time, you'll be able to strip away all the culturally imposed differences and establish meaningful relationships on some common level.

Whether it be through work, sports, or just whiling away the hours with neighbors or a host family, most people eventually find their niche and become part of the community. This is the miracle of Peace Corps. My personal journey has been both typical and unique. After training, I took a 20-hour bus ride to my new hometown of Guayzimi, located in the extreme southwest of the

country. I worked with a child development agency, going up and down the river in a motorized canoe to teach the local Shuar villages about healthy lifestyle practices. After challenges at my site, I felt it better to work predominantly in the local schools where I had already made contacts. I still work there, teaching computer and English classes and giving the occasional health talk. I also organize side projects, such as a children's running group and a women's cooking class.

Throughout the whole experience, I've lived with my host family. At first I was terrified of them, but now think of them as my adoptive family. They are incredible people, and someone could base a primetime sitcom off of our dinners together.

That's all I have to say. Enjoy your final moments in the States. Spend time with family and friends, go on vacation, and eat all the food you love. Prepare yourself mentally for the adventure that is the Peace Corps.

PCV

Dear prospective Volunteer:

Greetings and congratulations as you begin a journey with Peace Corps/Ecuador. I am a community health Volunteer living and working in Ecuador's central highland, or *sierra* region. Like many *sierra* Volunteers, I work in a small town whose culture is extremely influenced by the indigenous Kichwa culture, which makes my situation very different from those Volunteers living and working in the coastal and Amazon regions.

The general health problems in my area are: malnutrition, lack of education in the areas of personal and domestic hygiene, and no prenatal or postnatal care, among others. I am training a group of 20 local health promoters on these topics and in other related areas.

Every week the health promoters and I go out into the small communities surrounding our town and give *charlas* (or nonformal education sessions) to small groups of mothers and their children. Also, during the week we go to these same communities for home visits. The home visits are designed so the mothers can feel at home and we, as health educators, can make constructive observations about how they can improve their health and the health of their families. These observations are small, inexpensive tips that are ideally supposed to show them that even small changes in behavior, like boiling water, can make a huge difference.

My secondary projects include teaching basic health to special needs children and children who are not able to read. I took on these projects because, unfortunately, these children are lacking basic levels of education, especially health education. They have proven to be some of my best students!

However, one of the most enriching experiences has not been work-related. For the first three months in my site I lived with an amazing and caring Ecuadorian family. Through them I have been able to feel a sense of belonging because they accepted me from the beginning. Due to this, I have been able to learn and integrate better. Even though I no longer live with them, they still see me as their adoptive daughter. I attend my sister's school functions, my brother's soccer games, and eat lunch with them. I know that not only have I learned from them, but they have learned from me. These memories are some of the many gifts that I will take back to the States with me.

I would like to end this welcome letter on a very important note. The best advice I can give to you is NEVER GIVE UP. This is a thankless job, where you may never see the fruits of your labor, but it does happen and it will make it all worthwhile. Keep trying, no matter how difficult it is, to learn the Spanish subjunctive. YOU WILL! The health fair will eventually happen and be a huge success. Try not to feel stressed. It will all come together. Just take

it one day at a time. Every Volunteer has a unique experience and a different story. Are you ready to write yours?

PCV

Dear prospective Volunteer:

So you have finally made it through all of the paperwork/application process, huh? Well first off, congratulations, you are quite lucky to be coming to Peace Corps/Ecuador. The people, geography, and climate here are amazingly diverse. Since you are all probably wondering what your next two years might be like, let me tell you a little bit about my life here. Unfortunately, and you will hear this a lot—each Peace Corp Volunteer’s life is different and this depends a lot on where they live, the interests they have, and the type of person they are. Now, on to Yantzaza, Ecuador.

Yantzaza is a small town of about 6,000 people located in the southeastern-most providence of Ecuador. It is classified as a cloud-forest and situated at about 800 meters. The town is kind of like a central hub for a lot of the smaller towns and villages that are located near here, some of which are actual Shuar villages.

My work has primarily entailed collaborating with the hospital and the local doctors to improve knowledge in subjects such as alcoholism, sexuality, HIV/AIDS, sanitation, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and adolescent pregnancy. My main objective is to have more presentations given by local Ecuadorian doctors to the people living in their respective communities. In order to do this I have created many PowerPoint presentations, which the local doctors and I have presented. Luckily, there are many resources available to me here at the hospital, such as Internet, a projector, and a laptop computer.

Many times we have concentrated on adolescents of the community. Most of the presentations have actually been given at local high schools. The teens seem to enjoy learning about these subjects and I am quite pleased that some of the directors of these high schools have come personally to the hospital to ask us to return.

I am also trying to work with the teens here instead of just presenting information to them, creating an “Investigators in Health” group. There are currently five students in this group and they decide what subjects we will research and what format the presentation will be in, while we will give these presentations to their high school classmates. Thus far, we meet once a week and have decided they will be conducting a different presentation for their fellow classmates on a monthly basis.

This may or may not be the kind of information you were looking for, but what I want to stress most is the nearly unlimited amount of opportunities you will have in your new life. For the most part, it will only be your own lack of creativity or fear of the unknown that will stop you from making this one of the most memorable experiences of your life. I challenge you to take full advantage of your time here!

PCV

Dear prospective Volunteer couples:

Hello! We are a couple serving in the rural public health project in Ecuador, and we'd like to share some of the experiences we and other couples have had in Peace Corps/Ecuador.

As you can probably imagine, serving together is huge source of personal support for couples and provides them with a travel

companion and a potential work partner. But we also face challenges and frustrations, just like other Volunteers.

As a couple, you will be placed together at training and permanent sites and should not have to separate for more than a few days here and there. At our site, my wife and I prefer to work separately and share our experiences at the end of the day; other couples prefer to work together. You and your spouse will have a significant amount of free time together, something my wife and I have enjoyed immensely. One packing recommendation: Scrabble, cribbage, and other games are nice to have for the occasional rainy day. And if you need to get away, there are always short trips to be made.

Serving as a couple has been a unique experience that I'm sure my wife and I will treasure forever. I highly recommend it. So don't worry too much, and we'll see you soon!

PCV couple

PACKING LIST

This list has been compiled by Volunteers serving in Ecuador 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 an 80-pound weight limit on baggage. And remember, you can get almost everything you need in Ecuador.

For the most part, you should bring long-lasting high quality items with you to Ecuador, most clothing basics you can purchase quite inexpensively in-country. Packing tip: when packing your stuff, place everything in zip-close bags of varying sizes and/or vacuum compression bags. This not only protects your stuff, but you can re-use the bags when you are in Ecuador.

General Clothing

- ✓ One or two pairs of nice pants
- ✓ One to four pairs of heavy work pants or jeans (agriculture and habitat conservation Volunteers usually need more and health and youth Volunteers usually need fewer; anything over a women's size 8 is difficult to find locally)
- ✓ Six T-shirts or short-sleeved polo shirts (T-shirts are readily available in Ecuador unless you need something larger than XL)
- ✓ One or two dress outfits for occasional formal meetings
- ✓ Three or more long-sleeved shirts
- ✓ Two to four pairs of shorts (not too short) or capris (quick-dry are the best option)
- ✓ 12 or more pairs of cotton underwear
- ✓ One or two pairs of long underwear or other clothes to layer (bring items that are easy to wash by hand)
- ✓ 12 pairs of good-quality socks (lower-quality socks are available)
- ✓ One or two pairs of heavy wool socks

- ✓ Two or more sweatshirts, sweaters, or fleeces
- ✓ One warm jacket
- ✓ One waterproof windbreaker or poncho
- ✓ One pair of heavy work gloves (agriculture and habitat conservation Volunteers)
- ✓ Athletic clothing for working out
- ✓ One or two bathing suits
- ✓ One or two sun hats, visors, or caps with a bill

General Clothing Women

- ✓ Six or more bras
- ✓ One or two nice dresses or modest sundresses (read above)
- ✓ Two or more tank tops
- ✓ Skirts can be a great alternative to shorts, as shorts are often culturally unacceptable outside of sports and the beach. Also keep in mind that longer skirts are more acceptable.

General Clothing Men

For swearing-in and occasional semiformal events:

- ✓ One sport coat
- ✓ One or two neckties

Shoes

- ✓ Two pairs of tennis or running shoes
- ✓ One pair of good-quality hiking/work boots (agriculture and conservation Volunteers)
- ✓ One or two pairs of comfortable dress shoes
- ✓ One pair of flip-flops (decent local brands are \$2-\$5), sandals (easily purchased locally), or sturdy sandals
- ✓ One pair of rain/mud boots (sizes under 10 available locally and are inexpensive)
- ✓ It is difficult to find men's shoe sizes over 10 and women's shoe sizes over 8

Personal Hygiene and Toiletry Items

- ✓ Shampoo and other toiletries are readily available in Ecuador
- ✓ Contact lens solutions and extra cases and travel bottles

(available in larger cities, but much more expensive than in the United States)

- ✓ Tampons (expensive and difficult to find, except in main cities). An alternate option is a menstrual cup
- ✓ Makeup (U.S. brands are expensive here). Good quality sunscreen and bug-spray. You can find the basic brands down here, but if you are particular about either sunscreen or bug-spray, better to bring your preferential brand

Miscellaneous

- ✓ Small portable USB drive/memory stick
- ✓ Sleeping bag (Depending on the Volunteer and if he or she travels a lot, sleeping bags can be helpful, but are far from necessary. They are, however, expensive on the local market.)
- ✓ Sheets (full size is recommended) and pillowcases (available locally, but are expensive and low quality)
- ✓ One shower towel (expensive on the local market)
- ✓ Towels (note: camping towels fold up small and dry quickly)
- ✓ Camera and film (expensive locally)
- ✓ Portable music player and good quality headphones
- ✓ Guitar or other musical instrument (if you play)
- ✓ Charger and rechargeable batteries
- ✓ Sunglasses (important to have with UV protection)
- ✓ Wide-colored markers and other art supplies (available locally, but expensive)
- ✓ Decorations for your room or apartment (e.g., posters, maps, and postcards of your hometown)
- ✓ Favorite books and “how-to” books with illustrations (some Volunteers teach English formally or informally)
- ✓ Flea collars, if you plan to have a pet
- ✓ Equipment for hobbies, such as sewing patterns (expensive and hard to find in Ecuador) and musical instruments (you can buy a good handmade guitar in Ecuador)
- ✓ Favorite games, Frisbee, foam footballs, word games, etc.
- ✓ Knapsack or day pack (very important)
- ✓ Medium-size backpack or duffel bag for weekend travel

- (available locally, but expensive)
- ✓ Photos of family and friends (important) to show host family
 - ✓ Pillow, if you have a favorite one
 - ✓ Small flashlight or headlamp
 - ✓ Small pocket calendar or daily planner
 - ✓ Pocket knife or multi-tool (highly recommended)
 - ✓ Good quality water bottle
 - ✓ Duct tape
 - ✓ At least one good quality kitchen knife.
 - ✓ Ethnic spices (e.g., Indian) from the States if you plan to cook a lot
 - ✓ Travel alarm and watch (nothing flashy or expensive)
 - ✓ Small tool kit (available locally, but expensive so only bring if you would normally use one)
 - ✓ Hair dryer (if you use one frequently in the States)
 - ✓ Laptop (useful for work purposes and tracking progress and activities throughout service, but not required)

Remember, after training you will have to get all of your luggage to your site by yourself and only a few of you will live in big cities with good public transportation. So if you bring it, you will have to carry it! Big suitcases with wheels don't work too well on dirt or gravel roads. There will also be many Volunteers completing their two years of service about the time you begin your service, so they may have many items to sell.

PRE-DEPARTURE CHECKLIST

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

Family

- Notify family that they can call the Peace Corps' Office of Special Services at any time if there is a critical illness or death of a family member (24-hour telephone number: 800.424.8580, extension 1470).
- Give the Peace Corps' *On the Home Front* handbook to family and friends.

Passport/Travel

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

Medical/Health

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

Insurance

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

Personal Papers

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

Voting

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

Personal Effects

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

Financial Management

- Keep a bank account in your name in the U.S.
- Obtain student loan deferment forms from the lender or loan service.

- Execute a Power of Attorney for the management of your property and business.
- Arrange for deductions from your readjustment allowance to pay alimony, child support, and other debts through the Office of Volunteer Financial Operations at 800.424.8580, extension 1770.
- Place all important papers—mortgages, deeds, stocks, and bonds—in a safe deposit box or with an attorney or other caretaker.

CONTACTING PEACE CORPS HEADQUARTERS

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

Peace Corps Headquarters Toll-free Number: 800.424-8580, Press 2, and then Ext. # (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 Number |
|---|-------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Responding to an Invitation | Office of Placement | Ext. 1840 | 202.692.1840 |
| Programming or Country Information | Desk Officer | Ext. 2525 | 202.692.2525 eewart@peacecorps.gov |
| Plane Tickets, Passports, Visas, or Other Travel Matters | Travel Officer at SATO Travel | Ext. 1170 | 202.692.1170 |
| Legal Clearance | Office of Placement | Ext. 1840 | 202.692.1840 |
| Medical Clearance and Forms Processing (including dental) | Screening Nurse | Ext. 1500 | 202.692.1500 |

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|--|--------------------------------|-----------|--------------|
| Medical Reimbursements | Handled by a Subcontractor | | 800.544.1802 |
| Loan Deferments, Taxes, Readjustment Allowance Withdrawals, Power of Attorney | Volunteer Financial Operations | Ext. 1770 | 202.692.1770 |
| Staging and Reporting Instructions Pre-departure <i>Note: You will receive comprehensive information (hotel and flight arrangements) 3 to 5 weeks before departure. This information is not available sooner.</i> | Office of Staging | Ext. 1865 | 202.692.1865 |
| Family Emergencies (to get information to a Volunteer overseas) | Office of Special Services | Ext. 1470 | 202.692.1470 |