

THE PEACE CORPS WELCOMES YOU TO

KENYA



A PEACE CORPS PUBLICATION FOR NEW VOLUNTEERS

June 2013 CCD

MAP OF KENYA



A WELCOME LETTER

Congratulations on having been selected to join Peace Corps Kenya!

Although the over 5,000 volunteers who have served here since 1964 have created a legacy of contributions within hundreds of Kenyan communities, there is plenty of work to be done. The post-election crisis in January 2008 exposed a number of challenges confronting the Kenyan people and its leaders. One major challenge—as well as huge opportunity—is meeting the needs of Kenyan youth who were both the instigators and the victims of the violence and chaos that plagued Kenya for nearly two months following the election.

You and other members of your training class will join currently serving Volunteers posted throughout the country, once you complete pre-service training (PST).

The staff in Kenya is committed to providing the best medical, training, programmatic, and administrative support we can. At the same time, as Peace Corps has since its creation in 1961, we will look to you to be as independent and self-reliant as possible. During PST, you will begin to learn Kiswahili or Kenyan Sign Language and to adapt to the culture, which will include living with a Kenyan family. You will develop the community entry skills needed for your assignment, undergo technical training, and discover how to maintain your health and reduce safety and security risks during your service.

It is important to realize that PST is a time for both you and the Peace Corps staff to assess your suitability to serve in Kenya. A two-year commitment should not be entered casually and is one that you may need to re-affirm in many ways during PST and, in fact, throughout your service. In fairness to our local partners and to safeguard the reputation of the organization, we do periodically make the decision that a trainee or Volunteer is not suited to service here and arrange for their return home. Often, a trainee will reach the same conclusion on his or her own.

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

Please read carefully this *Welcome Book* as part of your preparation for living and working in Kenya as a Peace Corps Volunteer, and best of luck with your preparations.

Country Director

Peace Corps Kenya

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CORE EXPECTATIONS FOR PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS

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

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

PEACE CORPS/KENYA

HISTORY AND PROGRAMS

History of the Peace Corps in Kenya

The Peace Corps program in Kenya began soon after the country gained its independence in 1963. The first group of 37 Peace Corps Volunteers arrived in Kenya on December 31, 1964. Since early 1965, the Peace Corps has been assisting the government of Kenya in meeting its development needs by providing skilled Volunteers in the areas of economic development, education, and public health. In December 2007, Peace Corps Kenya had over 140 Volunteers, making it one of the largest Peace Corps programs in Africa. Due to the violence which occurred during the post-election crisis, Peace Corps Kenya temporarily suspended its program in February 2008. Peace Corps reinstated Volunteers in June 2008 and welcomed its first full training class of 42 trainees in November 2008.

To contribute to Kenya's economic development, the Peace Corps focuses on activities that support creation of employment and income-generating opportunities. The country's focus on gender equality creates a need to expand girls' access to, and retention in, secondary schools. Also, the government of Kenya stresses the importance of providing education to children with special needs so they can be fully contributing members of society. Public health continues to face challenges in both water-borne and infectious diseases, especially HIV/AIDS, malaria control and environmental health hazards. The Peace Corps Kenya program enjoys strong support from government officials at district and national levels.

History and Future of Peace Corps Programming in Kenya

The Peace Corps' support for Kenya's development focuses on capacity building in the three priority areas mentioned above and supports Kenya's goal of industrialization by 2020. The country program addresses the reduction of poverty, educational needs of diverse populations, the impact of environmental degradation on health, and improvement of the life expectancy of Kenyans. Across all sectors, Peace Corps Kenya targets women and youth as the most vulnerable in Kenyan society, and integrates HIV/AIDS education in all projects. Peace Corps Kenya has redesigned the education project to focus on HIV/AIDS.

Education

Peace Corps Kenya's education project places Volunteer teachers in both government and public secondary schools. Volunteers teach biology, chemistry, physics, and mathematics and they work with their Kenyan colleagues to develop innovative teaching techniques in resource-poor environments. In addition, the Peace Corps participates in Kenya's deaf education program. It provides Volunteer teachers in primary deaf education schools to work with children in developing basic life skills and proficiency in Kenyan Sign Language. Education Volunteers also engage their students, teachers, and communities in HIV

education programs that enhance knowledge, prevention of new infections, de-stigmatization of HIV/AIDS, and positive living for People Living With HIV/AIDS (PLWA)..

Kenyan and Volunteer educators work together to help create a future where students, both hearing and deaf, have the skills, knowledge, and attitudes to serve as productive members and future leaders of their communities, families, and work force, and where communities are committed to accepting and taking care of all their members. Peace Corps Kenya's education project's goals reflect the multifaceted roles of Volunteers as teachers, colleagues, community members, and development workers.

Public Health

Peace Corps Kenya's public health project was initiated in 1976 as a water and sanitation project and was renamed in 2000. The purpose of the project is to help youth maintain safe reproductive health behaviors, especially in light of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and to improve the quality of life of households and communities affected by other infectious and water-borne diseases and health problems caused by inadequate domestic and community environmental hygiene. Peace Corps public health Volunteers assist the Ministry of Public Health in the development and implementation of activities that respond to needs of Kenyan communities for HIV/AIDS prevention, environmental health, hygiene promotion, and malaria control and prevention. The Ministry of Health is the key partner in this project, in addition to a growing number of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and local community- and faith-based organizations, with whom Volunteers work at the community level. Peace Corps works closely with the Ministry of Health and organizations to create a collaborative and effective intervention project. Local capacities must be built by empowering the stakeholders to take up the responsibility of determining public health interventions in this sector. There is also a need to strengthen institutions at the grassroots level to develop water and sanitation facilities with a view of increasing efficiency, usage, and coverage. Health Volunteers have counterparts who are generally Ministry of Health functionaries (e.g., public health technicians and officers), providing health extension leadership to health committees and other community members. Supervisors are district or divisional public health officers.

Although national HIV infection rates have dropped from a high of 10 percent in the 1990s to 7.4 percent, there are still more than 1.4 million Kenyans living with HIV, nearly two-thirds being women. Seven out of 10 HIV-infected adults are rural residents. It is estimated that about 150,000 people die every year and there are 650,000 AIDS orphans. In response, public health Volunteers are working in assignments related to the support of PLWA and the promotion of voluntary counseling and testing.

The high morbidity and mortality rates among children age 5 and under in Kenya is primarily due to waterborne and insect-borne diseases such as amebiasis, gastroenteritis, diarrhea, and malaria. Contamination from human and livestock waste is also a major cause of water-related diseases. Flies and other disease carrying insects are drawn to

unsanitary water sites and compound the risk of infection. All of these are exacerbated by the fact that economic hardships, inadequate education, and lack of public transport prevent many individuals from seeking health care in the early stages of an illness.

Availability of safe water and sanitary environment is prerequisite to preventing waterborne and other allied diseases. Continued use of inorganic pesticides has led to deaths of many individuals through pollution of water sources and for those who do not know the long-term dangers of using these chemicals. Many HIV/AIDS victims in Kenya die quickly due to poor nutritional status. The water and sanitation component of the public health project focuses on enhancing the awareness of hygiene education and behavior change.

Small-Enterprise Development/Information Communication Technology (SED/ICT)

Since launching the SED/ICT project in 1992, Volunteers in this sector have worked with their Kenyan counterparts to address opportunities and challenges facing entrepreneurs in the small business sector. These problems include low levels of business skills (e.g., record-keeping, determining material costs, pricing, etc.) and limited access to credit and markets. With increased challenges posed by slowed economic growth, Volunteers work closely with stakeholders to address broader national concerns like poverty alleviation, employment creation, and capacity-building. The technical skills provided by Volunteers include promoting income-generating activities, strengthening business management and marketing linkages, operating credit plans, enhancing basic computer literacy, and using information technology in various aspects of health and education.

Targeted groups served by small enterprise development Volunteers include women's groups, self-help and jua kali (artisan) groups, community-based organizations, selected NGOs, and technical institutes. As a result of Peace Corps intervention, many Kenyans, especially women and youth (who are the most vulnerable economically), have improved their skills, increased their income, and obtained employment. The demand for the services of small enterprise development Volunteers continues to grow.

Due to the nation's high HIV infection rates, Volunteers in all program areas are expected to integrate HIV/AIDS prevention into their assignments. Some examples include Volunteers teaching HIV/AIDS prevention to in-school and out-of-school youth, including life skills, art, sports and HIV awareness; discuss income generating activity possibilities with PLWA; educate caregivers on proper care for PLWA; build skills of service providers who provide care to orphans and vulnerable children; strengthen HIV/AIDS related organizations; work with peer educators on the development of prevention materials; teach life skills activities in primary and secondary schools; and assist a community in organizing World AIDS Day activities.

During post-election violence in Kenya, it was reported that the majority of youth, who comprise of over 60 percent of the current population, participated. In the past, violence in

Kenya has generated a large pool of disaffected youth from the political and economic mainstream. As a result, the government of Kenya has identified youth development as a key priority. Peace Corps/Kenya recognizes this enhanced government interest and has made a commitment to youth development. Volunteers in all programs will work with young people to support the development of their assets and skills. In all activities with youth, Volunteers will use a community development approach in which they engage other adults in the community--parents, teachers, leaders, business owners--in support of youth activities. Volunteers often serve as the connectors or “networkers” between youth and the organizations and services who might support them. In all Volunteers activities with young people, they will apply three key principles for effective and sustainable youth work:

1. Young men and women must be viewed as resources to be developed rather than problems to be solved.
2. Maximum youth participation must be facilitated in the assessment, design, implementation, and evaluation of activities that aim to reach them.
3. Asset-based community development must be practiced, building on existing resources and strengths that are already in place.

COUNTRY OVERVIEW: KENYA AT A GLANCE

History

Kenya's modern history dates from the Berlin conference of 1885, when the European powers first partitioned Africa. In 1895, the British government appointed a commissioner to the area, thereafter designated as the East African Protectorate. The name was changed to Kenya Colony in 1920. Events that followed led to friction between Kenyans and the British administrators as some leading members of the colonial administration wanted to turn Kenya into a "white man's country."

The country was administered through a legislative council whose membership was made up of British settlers. Through political pressure, the first African was nominated to the legislative council as an unofficial member in 1951. The acceptance of African representation in the legislative council inspired Kenyans to work even harder for their freedom. The first political party, the Kenya African Union (KAU), was formed in 1946, and was presided over by the late Jomo Kenyatta. The formation of the freedom fighters' organization Mau Mau led to the death and arrest of thousands of people of all races, and finally resulted in the attainment of independence on December 12, 1963.

Government

Kenya is a civilian republic with a president as head of state. The president appoints the cabinet from among the elected members of the multiparty National Assembly. Kenya had two successful multiparty elections in 1992 and 1997, although in some parts of the country, the elections were marred by violence. In 2002, as a result of fair and peaceful elections, Mwai Kabaki was elected president as the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) candidate. Following a disputed general election in December 2007 between presidential candidates Raila Odinga and President Mwai Kibaki, Kenya experienced nearly two months of political turmoil and widespread violence that resulted in over 1,000 deaths and the displacement of more than 300,000 Kenyans. In February 2008, through the efforts of former U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan, the formation of a grand coalition government brought an end to the crisis and launched a long-term reconciliation and reform process.

Kenya has a unicameral legislature composed of 210 elected representatives and 12 nominated members. The attorney general and National Assembly speaker are ex-officio, non-voting members. Parliamentary procedures usually follow the British pattern. The term of the legislature is five years. The constitution describes all the sections of the government; determines their composition, powers, and duties; and sets out fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual. The Kenyan Constitution is being reviewed, with a focus on creating a level playing field for all political parties and strengthening checks and balances among the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of the government.

The seat of the national government is in Nairobi, the capital. The eight provinces (Central, Coast, Eastern, Nairobi, North Eastern, Nyanza, Rift Valley and Western) are governed through provincial, district, and local government structures.

Economy

Although only 20 percent of the land is suitable for cultivation, agriculture is the most important economic activity. Approximately 70 percent of Kenya's population is involved in rurally based agricultural activities. Kenya's major exports and foreign exchange earners are coffee, tea, pyrethrum, horticultural products, cement, sisal, and tourism. Kenya has no major deposits of valuable minerals, although oil exploration continues in the northern part of the country.

Results from the 2007 Kenya AIDS Indicator Survey indicate that 7.4 percent of Kenyan adults ages 15 to 64 are infected with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. The pandemic continues to pose a very serious threat to Kenya's development, and the strain on the government's resources from combating the disease is being felt in all sectors. The impact of HIV/AIDS is rolling back development gains made after independence. With the far-reaching impact of HIV/AIDS on businesses, education, and health, Kenya is projecting shrinking economic growth, reduced life expectancy, increased child mortality, and an increase in the number of orphans if the current rates of infection and deaths continue. Since youth and young adults are the most vulnerable to HIV/AIDS, Kenya is being robbed of its future generation and their most productive years.

Kenya ranks 148 in the United Nations Human Development Index (an improvement from a ranking of 151 in 2006). Approximately half of the population lives below the poverty line. Foreign investment, which might turn the economy around, is hampered by political and economic conditions, corruption, and an inadequate infrastructure.

The government of Kenya is taking measures to reverse the economic downturn. For instance, the government launched a poverty eradication plan that calls to alleviate poverty by 2016. Civil society and multilateral organizations are also involved in executing the plan. Kenya is an active member in subregional economic activities (e.g., the Common Market for East and Southern Africa and the East African Cooperation), which seek to increase trade in the subregion to enhance economic development. Privatization and labor downsizing of parastatal companies continue, which is increasing efficiency in the delivery of public services, especially in the energy and telecommunications sectors. The informal sector is considered key to Kenya's industrialization goal because of employment growth, and it continues to receive strong technical and financial support from the World Bank and United Nations Development Programme.

People and Culture

Kenya's population is estimated at nearly 35 million, and about 60 percent of its citizens live in rural areas. Approximately 500,000 are non-Africans, principally people from South Asia. The urban populations are centered mainly in the greater Nairobi area, with about 2 million people; and Mombasa, with more than 500,000 people. Urban areas are cosmopolitan, but the rural areas tend to be very conservative in cultural norms and behaviors, which Volunteers are expected to respect. Kenya has 41 ethnic groups, the largest being *Kikuyu* (22 percent), *Luo* (13 percent), and *Luhya* (13 percent). The major religions include Christianity, Islam, and indigenous beliefs.

Kenya is a multiracial society with people of African, Indian, and European origin. The dominant unifying philosophy comes from the late head of state, President Jomo Kenyatta: "All of us are one tribe, and that tribe is Kenya." Kenyatta's ideal is expressed by the word *harambee* (pull together), which is Kenya's national motto.

From the Swahili of the coast to the Maasai of the Rift Valley, Kenya has rich and varied cultures and customs within a busy, modern society. While Kiswahili and English are the official languages, Volunteers also learn the predominantly spoken vernacular language of their communities.

Environment

More than two-thirds of Kenya is classified as arid or semiarid. The country is experiencing serious environmental degradation leading to soil erosion, which results in declining food production. Desertification continues to threaten the livelihoods of millions of Kenyans who depend on the land for food. These conditions are related to global climate change, human activities and population pressures, depletion of forests, and inadequate conservation efforts.

To address these environmental challenges, the government passed an environmental bill in 2001 that aims to alleviate environmental degradation by curbing the exploitation of forest resources and strengthening the management of forests. These efforts were further enhanced when Professor Wangari Mathai, founder of Kenya's Green Belt Movement, became the first African woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize in 2004.

RESOURCES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Following is a list of websites for additional information about the Peace Corps, Kenya, 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 Kenya

www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations

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

www.state.gov

The State Department's website issues background notes periodically about countries around the world. Find Kenya 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.geography.about.com/library/maps/blindex.htm

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

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

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

<http://clubs.yahoo.com/clubs/peacecorps>

This Yahoo site hosts a bulletin board where prospective Volunteers and returned Volunteers can come together.

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 Kenya site: www.friendsofkenya.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.

<http://www.rpcvwebring.org>

This site is known as the Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Web ring. Browse the Web ring and see what former Volunteers are saying about their service.

www.peacecorpswriters.org

This site is hosted by a group of returned Volunteer writers. It is a monthly online publication of essays and Volunteer accounts from countries around the world.

Online Articles/Current News Sites About Kenya

www.nationmedia.com/dailynation/

Site of the Daily Nation

www.eastandard.net

Site of the East African Standard

<http://allafrica.com/kenya/>

News wire stories about Kenya

www.kenya.go.ke

Official site of the Kenyan government

www.bdafrica.com

Kenya's Business Daily

www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html

CIA's The World Fact Book

www.magicalkenya.com

Promotes and markets Kenya as a tourist destination both locally and internationally

www.kenyaweb.com/index.php

A site with news and travel and general information about Kenya

www.nbnet.co.ke

Site of NairobiNet online, a Kenyan Internet service provider

www.wananchi.com

Another Kenyan Internet service provider

International Development Sites About Kenya

http://www.usaid.gov/locations/sub-saharan_africa/countries/kenya/

The U.S. Agency for International Development

www.un.org

The United Nations

Recommended Books

- Elkins, Caroline. *Imperial Reckoning: The Untold Story of Britain's Gulag in Kenya*. Owl Books (reprint edition), 2005.
- Erdman, Sarah. *Nine Hills to Nambonkaha: Two Years in the Heart of an African Village*. New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company, 2003.
- Halperin, Helena. *I Laugh So I Won't Cry: Kenya's Women Tell the Story of Their Lives*. Africa World Press, 2005.
- Herrera, Susana. *Mango Elephants in the Sun: How Life in an African Village Let Me Be in My Skin*. Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1999.
- Kennedy, Geraldine (ed.). *From the Center of the Earth: Stories Out of Africa*. Santa Monica, CA: Clover Park Press, 1991.
- Kennedy, Geraldine (ed.). *Hartmattan: A Journey Across the Sahara*. Santa Monica, CA: Clover Park Press, 1994.
- Parkinson, Tom and Matt Phillips. *Lonely Planet Kenya*, sixth edition. Lonely Planet Publications Pty. Ltd. Victoria: Australia, 2006.
- Tidwell, Mike. *The Ponds of Kalamбайi: An African Sojourn*. Guilford, Conn.: Lyons Press, 1990, 1996 (paperback).

Books About the History of the Peace Corps

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

Books on the Volunteer Experience

- Dirlam, Sharon. *Beyond Siberia: Two Years in a Forgotten Place*. Santa Barbara, Calif.: McSeas Books, 2004.

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

LIVING CONDITIONS AND VOLUNTEER LIFESTYLE

Communications

Mail

Few countries in the world offer the level of mail service we take for granted in the United States. Mail takes a minimum of two weeks to arrive in Kenya. Some mail may simply not arrive (fortunately this is not a frequent occurrence, but it does happen). Some letters may arrive with clipped edges because a postal worker may have attempted to see if any money was inside (again, this is rare, but it does happen). We do not want to sound discouraging, but when someone is thousands of miles from families and friends, communication becomes a very sensitive issue. We would prefer you be forewarned of the reality of mail service in the developing world. Advise your family and friends to number their letters and to include “Airmail” and “Par Avion” on their envelopes.

The length of time it takes for mail to reach Volunteers is as varied as their sites. Airmail from the United States to major cities in Kenya will take about two weeks. More remote post offices receive mail less frequently, and sometimes a local courier is employed to ferry mail from isolated villages to trading centers. The Peace Corps uses the Telkom Kenya network and Securicor courier services to send mail to Volunteers throughout Kenya. Although mail is sent regularly from the Peace Corps office, the timing of its receipt depends on the location of the Volunteer’s site.

We strongly encourage you to write to your family regularly (perhaps weekly or biweekly) and to number your letters. Family members typically become worried when they do not hear from you, so please advise your parents, friends, and relatives that mail is sporadic and they should not worry if they do not receive your letters regularly.

Peace Corps Volunteers are allowed duty-free entry of packages for their first 90 days in Kenya. After the 90-day grace period, the customs office may begin assessing duty charges, which must be paid before a package is released. Customs duties are based on the types of items, as well as their value. Electronics may be assessed a particularly high duty rate. Packages usually take about three months to reach Kenya from the United States if sent via surface mail. Volunteers are requested to follow the mailing procedures described in the Peace Corps Kenya Volunteer Handbook.

Your address during training will be:

Your Name/PCT
PO Box 30518-00100
Nairobi, Kenya

It is your responsibility to forward the postal address at your site to the Peace Corps office in Nairobi so mail can be routed directly to you. Mail sent via international channels will take 10 to 21 days to arrive at your site. Remember that it is important to keep regular contact with relatives and friends, not just for them, but also for you.

Once at your site, you will receive a notification slip in your post office box when you receive a package. Respond promptly with your ID in hand. The sooner you pick up the package, the lower storage fees will be. You will be responsible for paying any customs, storage, and handling charges before your package is released to you.

Trainees and Volunteers are responsible for mailing personal letters and packages. Airmail letters and stamps are available at local post offices.

Telephones

Most large cities and provincial capitals have domestic long-distance service; regional centers and some large cities also provide overseas telephone service. In some locations, the service is fast and efficient; in others, it may take several hours to get calls through.

Cellular telephones and service are widely available in Kenya. Peace Corps does not require Volunteers to purchase a phone, but most Volunteers choose to buy a phone and service once they reach their sites and have a clear idea of network coverage in the area.

Domestic long-distance calls: Volunteers are responsible for all toll charges on calls. But you may call the Peace Corps/Nairobi office collect or reverse charges. The Peace Corps provides 500 Kenyan shillings per month (telecommunications allowance) to cover official and emergency phone calls.

Overseas calls: The Peace Corps occasionally authorizes a Volunteer to call home due to a family emergency. When you receive such notification from the Peace Corps, you may pay for toll charges and bring the receipt to the Peace Corps office for reimbursement. Personal overseas calls will not be authorized by the Peace Corps office, and Volunteers must use locally available public phones for all personal calls.

Computer, Internet, and Email Access

Because Internet use appears to be primarily for personal reasons, you are expected to use your living and telecommunications allowances to cover your Internet costs. Designated computers in the resource center at the Nairobi office do have Internet access. You are welcome to use these, though priority is given to Volunteers who are getting ready to finish their service, to assist them with graduate school and job applications. Volunteers are prohibited from using staff computers in all offices. Internet access is available at some post offices and cybercafés in towns and cities.

Housing and Site Location

As a Volunteer, you will most likely live in a rural community and not have access to indoor water, plumbing or electricity. Expect to use hurricane lamps and candles for lighting. To cook, you will likely use charcoal, wood, or a single-burner kerosene stove. Peace Corps Kenya, for both philosophical and budget considerations, requires host ministries or sponsoring organizations to provide all Volunteers with housing. Volunteer housing must conform to the general standards of the community. That is, the housing should not be of substantially higher or lower standards than typical houses within the community.

The standard and condition of Volunteer housing vary widely, from mud houses with thatched roofs to very modern cement houses with running water and electricity. The type of house you have will depend on your project, the area of the country in which you are posted, and the types of houses available in the community. In short, you can expect to have, at the very least, a room to call your own. The decision as to whether housing standards are “acceptable” lies with the associate Peace Corps directors and medical staff. When it comes to your housing, you should not lose sight of the guiding principles of the Peace Corps.

Because Volunteers are often posted in poor rural areas to work with ministries or organizations with little or no money for housing, the Peace Corps sets minimum housing standards:

- There must be at least a private, lockable room if housing is shared with other people.
- The room should have windows. Windows must provide sufficient lighting and ventilation and must be capable of being closed to provide protection from the elements and exclude vermin as much as possible.
- The roof may be constructed of any material (e.g., thatch, reeds, tile, tin) that is consistent with the standards of the community.
- The floor may be constructed of any material that provides a solid and easily cleaned surface (e.g., wood, cement or packed mud).
- The PCV must be provided with a bathing area (e.g., a locked area inside or outside the volunteer’s living quarters).
- The toilet may be a flush toilet (inside/outside your living accommodation) or a pit latrine.
- The house shall have a reliable water source within a 30-minute walk. Water may be provided by municipal supply (indoor plumbing or communal supply), rain catchments, boreholes/wells or springs.

Your site assignment is made during pre-service training, in collaboration with the training staff and associate Peace Corps directors (APCDs). The assignment is based on their assessment and recommendation regarding community needs and your skill levels in the technical, cross-cultural, and language areas. You will be interviewed prior to an actual placement decision so additional personal preferences can be considered in making the site assignment. Site placements are made using the following criteria (in priority order):

- Medical considerations
- Government of Kenya needs
- Site requirements (community needs) matched with demonstrated technical, cross-cultural, and language skills
- Peace Corps/Kenya needs
- Personal preference of the trainee

The final decisions on site placement are made by your APCD. If you choose not to go to the site assigned to you, you will be given the opportunity to resign from the Peace Corps.

Living Allowance and Money Management

Each Volunteer receives a monthly allowance sufficient to cover basic costs. The allowance enables you to live adequately according to the Peace Corps' philosophy of a modest lifestyle. It is based on the local cost of living and is paid in local currency. Your living allowance is intended to cover food, housing, clothing, transportation from home to worksite, utilities, household supplies, recreation and entertainment, incidental personal expenses, communications, and reading material.

Food and Diet

In most parts of Kenya, there is a wide choice of foods, ranging from fresh fruits and vegetables to meats. With a little creativity, you can enjoy a varied diet. Fruits and vegetables are seasonal. Vegetarian Volunteers will have little difficulty in continuing their diets after becoming familiar with local food items and their preparation.

Transportation

All Volunteers will be expected to travel in Kenya using local transportation (i.e., foot, bicycle, public buses, or matatu van). This includes getting from your training center to your site both during and at the end of pre-service training.

Volunteers may not own or operate motorized vehicles (including motorcycles), but they are allowed to rent vehicles during approved vacation periods. Trainees and Volunteers are not allowed to drive any vehicle during training or at their sites, Volunteers are not allowed to

operate or ride on the back of a motorcycle. If a Volunteer rides on the back of a “bicycle taxi,” he/she must wear a bicycle helmet. Refusal of these policies will result in administrative separation from Peace Corps Kenya.

We strongly recommend that you purchase a bicycle helmet in the U.S. It is a Peace Corps requirement that helmets have the approval of the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (USCPSC). You will be reimbursed up to \$30 for a helmet upon presentation of a receipt. (Helmets approved by the USCPSC are very difficult to find in Kenya!)

All Volunteers are given the option to purchase a bicycle. Peace Corps allocates money in your moving-in allowance to purchase a bicycle, helmet, and tools. If you choose to purchase a bicycle, it can be used with your extension work, in conjunction with the use of public transport.

Geography and Climate

Kenya is located in East Africa and covers 582,650 square kilometers. It is approximately the size of Nevada and shares borders with Tanzania, Uganda, Sudan, Ethiopia, and Somalia. The climate varies from tropical along the coast to arid in the interior, and the topography varies from low plains to central highlands (with an altitude of 3,000 to 10,000 feet) to mountain ridges (e.g., 17,040 feet on Mount Kenya). From the mountains flow Kenya’s four major rivers—Tana, Athi, Turkwel, and Ewaso-Nyiro. The spectacular Rift Valley, a result of geological faulting, stretches all the way to Zimbabwe. Lake Victoria, in the Nyanza province, is the second-largest freshwater lake in the world.

Kenya has four seasons: January-March (warm, sunny, and dry), March-June (long rains), June-September (cool, cloudy, and dry), and October-December (short rains). Despite being on the equator, Kenya enjoys a temperate climate, with temperatures ranging from 35 degrees Fahrenheit to over 100 F, depending on location. Kenya’s diversity of flora and fauna attracts visitors from all over the world, supporting the tourism industry.

Social Activities

The most common form of entertainment in rural communities is socializing with friends and family. Volunteers will take part in the various festivities, parties, and storytelling sessions within their communities. Many Volunteers bring or buy a shortwave radio to listen to international broadcasts (e.g., BBC and Voice of America). Satellite radio receivers and service can be bought in Nairobi.

Professionalism, Dress, and Behavior

Kenyans regard dress and appearance as an outward sign of the respect one holds for another individual. Neatness in appearance is much more important than being “stylish.” You are expected to dress appropriately (long skirts for women and slacks for men) in

training, while traveling, on the job, and when in the Peace Corps office. It takes only one inappropriately dressed Volunteer for a Kenyan host agency to arrive at a generally negative conclusion about the Peace Corps. This jeopardizes the credibility of the Volunteer and the entire program. Kenyan neighbors, counterparts, and supervisors may draw unfavorable impressions of a Volunteer's appearance, and the Volunteer may never be aware that such impressions have been made. In such cases, Volunteers will never know how their work and credibility have been compromised. In addition, Volunteer dress should respect the cultural and religious norms of his or her community.

Volunteers should always wear clean and neat clothes. Buttoned shirts for men and blouses and skirts or dresses for women are appropriate wear during business hours. T-shirts are appropriate only for casual, non-business activities. Tank tops, see-through blouses, or extremely low-cut blouses are not appropriate attire.

Men should not wear dirty or worn-out jeans. Jeans should not be worn during business hours unless the conditions of the job assignment or training activity allow it, and never when visiting government offices or the training center. In most cases, jeans are not acceptable attire for the Peace Corps office. However, should they be unavoidable (for instance, following travel), neat jeans are acceptable in the Peace Corps office and on "dress down" days at the training center. The Kenyan Ministry of Education has determined that jeans are not appropriate attire for classroom teachers.

Women may not wear casual slacks or jeans during business hours unless the conditions of the training activity or job assignment require it, and never when visiting government offices or the training center. Dresses and skirts to or below the knees are appropriate attire for women. Shorts may be worn only at home, when exercising (if appropriate), or when doing work where Kenyan counterparts are also wearing shorts.

Aside from the condition and type of clothing you wear, there are other standards of dress and appearance that need to be remembered. Female Volunteers should wear appropriate undergarments, including bras and slips. Your hair should be clean and combed. For men, beards should be neatly trimmed. Men should never wear a hat indoors, unless custom in the area allows it. Wearing a hat in government, Peace Corps, or similar offices is not allowed, and sunglasses should be removed when indoors. Finally, smoking is prohibited in all Peace Corps and training center offices and in Peace Corps vehicles.

Important Note: These restrictions have been formalized only in response to specific instances of inappropriate dress and behavior by Volunteers. Because it is difficult to know automatically what is appropriate when entering a new culture, we present this list not to offend, but to inform. In general, the above guidance is meant to convey to Volunteers the point that adherence to professional standards is appropriate at all times and in all places.

Peace Corps Volunteers are expected to maintain high standards of behavior. Any behavior that could jeopardize the reputation of the Volunteer or the Peace Corps could be grounds

for administrative separation. All Volunteers are reminded that they are subject to the laws of Kenya and have no immunity from them. The Peace Corps will assist Volunteers in criminal proceedings, but if the proceedings necessitate professional legal counsel, Peace Corps Kenya must obtain prior approval from the General Counsel's office in Washington. Any costs arising from such counsel are usually the responsibility of the Volunteer. Peace Corps Kenya cannot pay fines but can arrange for fines to be paid from the Volunteer's readjustment allowance.

The matter of trainee or Volunteer sexual behavior is, of course, a highly personal one. However, because of other social implications of inappropriate behavior, it is important that Peace Corps standards be clear. Sexual mores in Kenya are generally very conservative and strict, and you are expected to respect them. Public displays of affection such as kissing, hand holding, or hugging, are not generally socially acceptable. Further information will be provided during your pre-service training on appropriate and inappropriate sexual behavior.

While facial piercing, multiple-pierced ears, and visible body piercing or tattoos are common in the United States, they are not typically found in rural Kenya. Volunteers are expected to work with all age groups in their communities. In addition, due to Peace Corps' focus on youth development, Volunteers will be viewed as role models in their community. People's perceptions, especially parents, will affect how Volunteers are accepted into their communities. Thus, facial piercing is not permitted during training and only allowed when the Volunteer has been at site for at least six months. Male Volunteers should not wear earrings, as earrings on men may be the basis of considerable ridicule. Body piercing in general (e.g., eyebrow and tongue) for both sexes may be a source of suspicion and open criticism. We encourage Volunteers with existing tattoos to keep them covered and out of sight as much as possible. Visible tattoos are not permissible during training or your first six months at site. Please do not acquire new tattoos while you are serving in Kenya.

If the country director determines that willful disregard of cultural standards is jeopardizing your credibility as a trainee or Volunteer or that of the entire program, you may be administratively separated from Peace Corps service.

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 Kenya 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 Kenya. 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 – Our Partnership.” Among topics addressed are the risks of serving as a Volunteer, posts’ safety support systems, and emergency planning and communications.

Rewards and Frustrations

Before accepting this assignment, you should give ample thought to some of the potential obstacles you may face. Until your adjustment to Kenya is complete, you will undoubtedly feel out of place speaking a new language and observing and trying to practice customs that seem strange to you. In addition, no matter what your ethnic, religious, or racial background is, you may stick out as someone from outside the Kenyan culture. However, many situations can indeed be overcome with a sense of humor and an ability to be open to new experiences. Your work situation may also present many difficulties and frustrations.

Most of your work will be to educate, motivate, and organize community groups or students. These are slow and challenging tasks. Co-workers, severely underpaid and burdened with extended family commitments, will have a much different outlook on life from your own, and rainy and agricultural seasons will delay many project activities. You must be able to work in an unstructured assignment and approach all of the above situations with flexibility, supreme patience, resourcefulness, and a sense of humor. Your commitment to serve as a Peace Corps Volunteer will be tested throughout your service by any number of everyday events.

Peace Corps service is not for everyone. More than a mere job, it requires greater dedication and commitment to serve than do most other work environments. It is for confident, self-starting, and concerned individuals who are interested in assisting in other countries and increasing human understanding across cultural barriers. The key to satisfying work as a Peace Corps Volunteer is the ability to establish successful human relations at all levels. This requires patience, sensitivity, and a positive professional attitude. If you have the personal qualities needed to accept the challenge described above and can demonstrate them for a two-year term of service in Kenya, you will have a rewarding, enriching, and lasting experience, while at the same time making a much-needed contribution to Kenya’s development.

Often you will find yourself in situations that require an ability to motivate yourself and your colleagues, and take action with little guidance from supervisors. You may work for months without seeing any visible impact 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. Judging by the experience of former Volunteers, the benefits are well worth the difficult times, and most Volunteers leave feeling they have gained much more than they sacrificed during their service.

Even with the many economic, social, political, and environmental challenges facing Kenya today, there is an atmosphere of excitement and hope. The changes occurring are some of the most important in the country's modern history. To join the people of Kenya in this effort, and to be part of this historically pivotal and defining moment, will be both fascinating and satisfying to any Volunteer willing to work hard, be tolerant of ambiguity, and give generously of his or her time.

PEACE CORPS TRAINING

Pre-Service Training

The most important function of Peace Corps staff is to provide support for Volunteers. Support does not imply daily supervision of Volunteers' work, nor does it imply assuming parental roles. Volunteer support implies an ongoing interaction between Volunteers and all Peace Corps staff regarding how you handle such matters as your overall adjustment to the Peace Corps, your job assignment, and your community. Your APCD is responsible for making regular visits to your site to assist you in any way possible in your orientation in-country. Additionally, the country director, training staff and the Peace Corps medical officer (PCMO) make periodic visits to Volunteer sites.

Training will be busy for everyone. You will often work over eight hours a day, five days a week. Be prepared for a rigorous, full schedule. The principal objectives of training are to provide a learning environment that enables you to develop the language (Kiswahili for all, Kenyan Sign Language for deaf educators), technical, and cultural skills; knowledge; and attitude necessary to work and live in Kenya.

The community/school-based approach used as the main training method means you will spend most of your time learning by working in your communities or schools and then reflecting on your experiences during formal sessions. You will spend most days in the field, completing hands-on, practical tasks and participating in group discussions, lectures, and field trips. Every two weeks, you will spend one or two days at the training center, or in one of the schools for deaf educators, discussing what you learned the previous week, preparing for the next work week, and attending essential cross-cultural, health, safety, administrative, and integration sessions.

All of the training staff members are Kenyan nationals with solid experience in training Volunteers. They are helped by Volunteers, who share their personal experiences and provide a bi-national perspective as a bridge to support your transition from life in the United States to a job and life in Kenya. Though we value other Volunteers' experiences in training, each Peace Corps Volunteer's experiences are as unique and individual as the person who enters Peace Corps service. The fact is that the only real answers to your many questions will be your own. Bring an open mind.

Technical Training

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

Language Training

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

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

Cross-Cultural Training

As part of your pre-service training, you will live with a Kenyan 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 Kenya. 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, nonformal 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 Kenya. Nutrition, mental health, setting up a safe

living compound, and how to avoid HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) are also covered.

Safety Training

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

Additional Trainings During Volunteer Service

In its commitment to institutionalize quality training, the Peace Corps has implemented a training system that provides Volunteers with continual opportunities to examine their commitment to Peace Corps service while increasing their technical and cross-cultural skills. During service, there are usually three training events. The titles and objectives for those trainings are as follows:

- **In-service training:** Provides an opportunity for Volunteers to upgrade their technical, language, and project development skills while sharing their experiences and reaffirming their commitment after having served for three to six months.
- **Midterm conference (done in conjunction with technical sector in-service):** Assists Volunteers in reviewing their first year, reassessing their personal and project objectives, and planning for their second year of service.
- **Close-of-service conference:** Prepares Volunteers for the future after Peace Corps service and reviews their respective projects and personal experiences.

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

YOUR HEALTH CARE AND SAFETY IN KENYA

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 Kenya 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 Country X 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 Kenya

[Insert text]

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

Maintaining Your Health

The foundation for staying healthy in Kenya will be your mental outlook: knowing that you can adjust to a varied climate, a different diet, a new language, culture, and job.

As a Volunteer, you must accept considerable responsibility for your own health. Proper precautions will significantly reduce your risk of serious illness or injury. The adage "An ounce of prevention ..." becomes extremely important in areas where diagnostic and

treatment facilities are not up to the standards of the United States. The most important of your responsibilities in Kenya is to take the following preventive measures:

Food and water preparation. Many diseases that afflict Volunteers worldwide are entirely preventable if proper food and water precautions are taken. These diseases include food poisoning, amebiasis, giardiasis, hepatitis A, dysentery, all types of worms, and typhoid fever. Your medical office will discuss specific standards for water and food preparation for Kenya during pre-service training.

Prevention of malaria. Malaria is endemic in Kenya. Malaria can rapidly become fatal in people who have no natural immunity to the disease. It is extremely important to fully comply with the recommended drug regimen to prevent malaria.

Immunizations. The majority of your immunizations will be given to you during your pre-service training. Most immunizations are good for the duration of your time in Kenya. The exception is typhoid, which will require a booster if you extend for a third year of service.

Rabies. Rabies is present in nearly all Peace Corps countries. Any possible exposure to a rabid animal must be reported immediately to the medical office. Rabies exposure can occur through animal bites, scratches from animals' teeth, and contact with animal saliva. Your medical officer will take into consideration many factors to decide the appropriate course of therapy necessary to prevent rabies.

Pregnancy. Volunteers are expected to adhere to an effective means of birth control to prevent unwanted pregnancies. 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 Peace Corps medical office. A reliable method of birth control should be chosen before you leave the United States. Condoms, diaphragms, contraceptive jellies and foams, Depo-Provera injections, and some commonly prescribed birth control pills are available on request.

The spread of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS. Volunteers must use available means of protection in every sexual encounter where bodily fluids may be transferred or they risk contracting a deadly disease. HIV/AIDS is a major health concern in Kenya. In the United States, high-risk groups include sexually active homosexuals and bisexual men with multiple partners, intravenous drug users, and heterosexuals with multiple partners. It is important to emphasize that while HIV/AIDS in the United States has occurred primarily (though not exclusively) in these high-risk groups, in Kenya, the disease affects men and women equally, regardless of sexual preference, and is primarily transmitted by heterosexual contact. It is the responsibility of Volunteers to protect not only themselves, but also a sexual partner. The medical office will provide you with information and tools to help you remain safe during your pre-service training and service in Kenya.

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 Kenya 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 country citizen, a fellow Volunteer, or anyone else, do not assume this person is free of HIV/AIDS or other STDs. You will receive more information from the medical officer about this important issue.

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

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

Women's Health Information

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

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

Your Peace Corps Medical Kit

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

Medical Kit Contents

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

Before You Leave: A Medical Checklist

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

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

If you wish to avoid having duplicate vaccinations, contact your physician's office to obtain a copy of your immunization record and bring it to your pre-departure orientation. If you have any immunizations prior to Peace Corps service, the Peace Corps cannot reimburse you for the cost. The Peace Corps will provide all the immunizations necessary for your overseas assignment, either at your pre-departure orientation or shortly after you arrive in Kenya. 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. If a pair breaks, the Peace Corps will replace them, using the information your doctor in the United States provided on the eyeglasses form during your examination. The Peace Corps discourages you from using contact lenses during your service to reduce your risk of developing a serious infection or other eye disease. Most Peace Corps countries do not have appropriate water and sanitation to support eye care with the use of contact lenses. The Peace Corps will not supply or replace contact lenses or associated solutions unless an ophthalmologist has recommended their use for a specific medical condition and the Peace Corps Office of Medical Services has given approval.

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

SAFETY AND SECURITY: OUR PARTNERSHIP

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

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

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

Factors that Contribute to Volunteer Risk

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

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

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

After you arrive in Kenya, 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 Kenya 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 Kenya. 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 Kenya of which you should be aware:

Based on information gathered from incident reports worldwide, the following factors stand out as risk characteristics for crimes against Volunteers, many of which can be avoided with appropriate actions. Assaults consist of physical and sexual assaults committed against Volunteers; property crimes include robbery, burglary, theft, and vandalism.

- Location: Most assaults (53 percent) occurred when Volunteers were in public areas (e.g., street, park, beach, public buildings). Specifically, 36 percent of assaults took place when Volunteers were away from their sites. Most property crimes occurred in the Volunteer's residence or another Volunteer's residence, followed closely by public areas. Forty-eight percent of property crimes occurred when Volunteers were away from their sites.
- Time: Assaults usually took place during the evening, between 6 p.m. and 11 p.m.—though the single hour with the largest percentage of assaults was 1:00 a.m.(8

percent) Property crimes were more common in the middle of the day, from noon to 9 p.m.

- Day: Assaults and property crimes were more commonly reported on weekends (48 percent and 49 percent, respectively).
- Absence of others: Assaults and property crimes (64 percent and 53 percent, respectively) occurred more frequently when the Volunteer was alone.
- Relationship to assailant: In most assaults and property crimes (64 percent and 85 percent), the Volunteer did not know or could not identify the assailant.
- Consumption of alcohol: 23 percent of all assaults and 4 percent of all property crimes involved alcohol consumption by Volunteers and/or assailants.

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 Kenya 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 Kenya 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 Kenya

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

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 Kenya

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. Kenya's in-country safety program is outlined below.

The Peace Corps/Kenya office will keep you informed of any issues that may impact Volunteer safety through **information sharing**. Regular updates will be provided in Volunteer newsletters and in memorandums from the country director. In the event of a critical situation or emergency, you will be contacted through the emergency communication network. An important component of the capacity of Peace Corps to keep you informed is your buy-in to the partnership concept with the Peace Corps staff. It is expected that you will do your part in ensuring that Peace Corps staff members are kept apprised of your movements in-country so they are able to inform you.

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

Outside of Kenya'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 Kenya 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 Kenya, 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 Kenya

The Peace Corps staff in Kenya 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. Our approach to diversity is to:

- Prepare our staff for working with a diverse population of trainees and Volunteers;

- Prepare trainees and Volunteers for adjusting to issues related to diversity; and
- Prepare communities for working and living with Americans from diverse populations.

What Might a Volunteer Face?

Possible Issues for Female Volunteers

Peace Corps Volunteers in Kenya work mostly in rural areas. Traditional gender roles are very distinct in Kenya, especially among the Muslim community. Generally, women are expected to show deference to men and do most of the housework. Sexual harassment (e.g., men making unwanted comments) is common. As a Volunteer, it is important to stand up for your rights and beliefs as a person while still being culturally sensitive. Female Volunteers should expect curiosity from host country friends regarding their marital status and whether they have children, and if not, why.

Volunteer Comments

“The clinical officer at my health center sat down to talk to me over chai (tea). I had one cup but refused another, and he said that American men like skinny women with big breasts, so I should have more chai to increase my chest size. He later went on to say that women in America have too many rights, and just because a man is abusive or unfaithful is no reason to divorce him. I felt his comments to be inappropriate, but maybe that is just Kenyan culture.”

Possible Issues for Volunteers of Color

The average rural Kenyan assumes that all Americans are Caucasian. With this assumption, Volunteers of color might expect people to react to them differently. White Volunteers may receive special attention, both positive and negative, including being harassed for money, especially in public areas. Volunteers of color, on the other hand, may not receive special attention.

Volunteer Comments

“Many Kenyans are unaware of black Americans, so they will not believe you are an American. When they ask you where you are from, generally, they think you ‘are pretending’ if you say you are an American. It is rare to come across an average Kenyan who knows that there are black Americans. If you are a woman of color living in Kenya, Kenyans will automatically assume you are a prostitute if they see you with a white male Volunteer.”

“Every Volunteer of color in Kenya has unique experiences and encounters with issues relating to their race and ethnicity. However, being called by the wrong race or ethnicity is a common issue. Whereas in the United States a Volunteer may have

identified himself and was identified by others as a member of a specific group, he may suddenly find himself being labeled 'white.' Especially in the rural areas, it is not uncommon for an Asian or Hispanic American to be called a 'white man.' In fact, some Caucasian Volunteers have been called 'Chinese.' Knowing the cause of this mislabeling is not as important as how the Volunteer chooses to react to it. As an ambassador of American culture, the Volunteer can take advantage of the situation and teach Kenyans about his heritage and about the diversity and multiculturalism that is prevalent in the United States. If expressed sensitively, most Kenyans will listen to and respect your objections to, or issues with, being called white."

"Being black in Kenya has a good feeling to it until you are brought back to the reality that you still have a few things to learn. This is when people ask which tribe you are from. When you say you are American, people sometimes disagree. This is always surprising to me. It can be hard at times because you would like to be identified as an American."

Possible Issues for Senior Volunteers

The Kenyan culture has great respect for age. The Kiswahili language even has special expressions for addressing seniors. As a senior Volunteer, people may offer to do things for you as a sign of respect. Since the mandatory retirement age is 55, Kenyans may not fully comprehend why a "retiree" would still be working.

Volunteer Comments

"As a '50-something' Volunteer in Kenya, I feel very welcomed and respected. The average life expectancy in Kenya is 54 years. In general, I feel I have an easier time here than younger Volunteers. I get much less harassment from street kids and men than the younger female Volunteers. Other grown women get 'nosy' about my divorced status. However, I welcome this as an opportunity for cultural exchange, and I talk about issues related to empowerment of women. I feel that I have an advantage over younger Volunteers, since I already know how to cook and care for myself. Also, having spent many years in the U.S. labor force, I know how to structure my environment by attracting positive experiences and repelling negative forces. Experience teaches one to 'roll with the punches,' and not take oneself too seriously."

"I used to bicycle up the mountain to town in 65 minutes when I first arrived at my site; now it takes me 90 minutes. I really don't feel as though the mountain is winning, but rather that I've found an equilibrium with it. The challenges of my Peace Corps service and life in a remote African community haven't beaten me. I've wanted to do the Peace Corps since I was 21, but it took another 30-plus years until the time was right for me. I had a professional life, no significant responsibilities, reasonable health, and lots of motivation. I am aware daily, through my work and

associations, that I represent American goodwill toward people struggling in this place—struggling to make something better for their families, their community, and their nation. I feel it is a special privilege to be with them. My associates have similar values and ideals and deeply appreciate my openness. I can sense already that my friends and students here in Kenya will find a voice through me when I get home.”

“I am 65 years young, and with few exceptions, I have been treated with respect by both young and old. The other day I heard a ‘How are you?’ and a young Kenyan boy came running across a field to shake my hand and greet me with a huge smile on his face.”

Possible Issues for Gay, Lesbian, or Bisexual Volunteers

Homosexuality is illegal in Kenya and is punishable by imprisonment or deportation. Many Kenyans have beliefs about homosexuality similar to those of many Americans in the 1940s and 1950s. It is important for gay, lesbian, or bisexual Volunteers to know about these conservative attitudes to be able to live and work productively in Kenyan communities. Past Volunteers in Kenya have reported that they could not publicly acknowledge their sexuality for fear of negative repercussions. We suggest that anyone wishing to discuss this subject do so in confidence with a Peace Corps staff member. The medical office can provide confidential counseling and help connect you with the gay and lesbian support group for returned Volunteers.

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

Volunteer Comments

“Being openly ‘out’ in Kenya can be a challenge, if not completely impossible. Support, or even acceptance, will probably not come from your community. Talking with other Volunteers has been my best coping mechanism. Within the Volunteer community, understanding and empathy are abundant, but there are occasions when I get frustrated at the lack of other LGBT Volunteers. I think it is important to be comfortable with who and what you are, especially in a society where you often are not able to openly express that.”

“Kenyan attitudes about gay and lesbian people are very different than American attitudes. One of the main reasons is that sexual topics are not talked about at all. This can be good, and it makes it easy to work and get along with everyone at your site without having sexual orientation or sex come up as a topic. However, if you are known as gay or lesbian, it can sometimes lead to people not treating you as

seriously or people not wanting to associate with you, so you have to proceed with caution. Although homosexuality is illegal in Kenya, a gay and lesbian population exists. Many gay and lesbian Kenyans are married, but things are changing slowly, and there are a lot of people who are in homosexual relationships. As for the Peace Corps Volunteers, there is also a community support network available that you can be referred to by the Peace Corps medical officer. I have been here in Kenya for over a year now, and dealing with different attitudes toward sexual orientation is probably one of the smallest challenges I have found.”

Possible Religious Issues for Volunteers

Kenya is a highly religious society, mostly Christian. Prayers at public gatherings are common. Generally, you will not observe the separation of church and state in your community activities. People will ask you what denomination you are and might try to convert you to theirs.

Volunteer Comments

“In Kenya, being religious is not a question of you exercising your rights. It is an expectation of society that you are a Christian or a Muslim. People will not ask you if you are religious; they will ask you which church or mosque you go to. They will be very surprised and even try to ‘save’ you if you tell them you are not religious. Being an atheist is not understood at all.”

“Being a Christian in Kenya seemed like it would be easy, but it has been pretty difficult for me. The ‘brand’ of Christianity is really different from what I am used to—it is often very legalistic and focused on appearances. I hesitate to tell Kenyans that I am a Christian because I know they will automatically have many expectations of my behavior that I don’t agree with. It has also been difficult within the Volunteer community because there are not many Christians here, and people have, at times, been less than accepting of my beliefs. It is possible to find a support network among Kenyans and Americans, but it definitely takes a lot of effort on the part of the Volunteer.”

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 Kenya without unreasonable risk of harm to yourself or interruption of service. The Peace Corps/ Kenya 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.

Kenyans who are physically challenged are generally not accorded the same human dignity as other Kenyans. Regardless of the nature of the physical challenge, social services are

generally lacking for these Kenyans. Volunteers teaching in deaf education schools are often disturbed by attitudes of their colleagues and community toward deaf children. Peace Corps Kenya complies with the Americans With Disabilities Act to ensure productive Peace Corps service by physically challenged Volunteers.

Volunteer Comments

“Access and services that Americans with disabilities are almost able to take for granted are concepts that have barely been introduced here in Kenya.”

“One thing that excites me when I meet many Kenyans is that they are unafraid to communicate with me using gestures. At the same time, they are surprised that a deaf person hails from another part of the world.”

“I am made of many of the various leaves of the tree of diversity. As an African-American, deaf young woman, I undergo a myriad of different experiences. It’s interesting to learn about how Kenyans perceive deaf Americans. Being a hard-of-hearing Volunteer in Kenya is pretty frustrating for me, especially since most Kenyans believe that deafness is one of life’s misfortunes. They feel that people who are hard of hearing are lucky because one can still live a somewhat ‘normal’ life because of residual hearing or by communicating by reading lips or through speech. Instead of living as a hard-of-hearing person by using my voice or lip-reading, I live as a profoundly deaf person. Through everyday challenges, people discover what I, along with other deaf people, am capable of. To quote I. King Jordan, the past president of Gallaudet University: ‘deaf people can do anything but hear.’”

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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

How much luggage am I allowed to bring to Kenya?

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

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

What is the electric current in Kenya?

The local current is 220-240 volts/50 cycles. Small electrical appliances can generally be used with transformers. Some Volunteers' houses have electricity. We suggest that you bring a converter. Electric clocks will not keep time because of different cycles. There are power surges and fluctuations, as well as outages, which take a toll on equipment.

In general, do not bring electrical appliances. If you are one of the few Peace Corps Volunteers to have electricity, appliances for 220 voltages are available in-country, but are very expensive. If not, a solar battery recharger may be useful.

How much money should I bring?

Volunteers are expected to live at the same level as the people in their community. You will be given a settling-in allowance and a monthly living allowance, which should cover your expenses. Volunteers often wish to bring additional money for vacation travel to other countries. Credit cards and traveler's checks are preferable to cash. If you choose to bring extra money, bring the amount that will suit your own travel plans and needs.

When can I take vacation and have people visit me?

Each Volunteer accrues two vacation days per month of service (excluding training). Leave may not be taken during training, the first three months of service, or the last three months of service, except in conjunction with an authorized emergency leave. Family and friends are welcome to visit you after pre-service training and the first three months of service as long as their stay does not interfere with your work. Extended stays at your site are not encouraged and may require permission from your country director. The Peace Corps is not able to provide your visitors with visa, medical, or travel assistance.

Will my belongings be covered by insurance?

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

Do I need an international driver's license?

Volunteers in Kenya do not need an international driver's license because they are prohibited from operating privately owned motorized vehicles. Most urban travel is by bus or taxi. Rural travel ranges from buses and minibuses to trucks, bicycles, and lots of walking. On very rare occasions, a Volunteer may be asked to drive a sponsor's vehicle, but this can occur only with prior written permission from the country director. Should this occur, the Volunteer may obtain a local driver's license. A U.S. driver's license will facilitate the process, so bring it with you just in case.

What should I bring as gifts for Kenyan 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. A very small proportion of Volunteers live in peri-urban areas, and none live in the capital, Nairobi.

How can my family contact me in an emergency?

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

Can I call home from Kenya?

Yes. Most large cities and provincial capitals have a domestic long-distance telephone system; regional centers and some large cities provide overseas telephone services or international calling via the Internet. In some locations, the service is fast and efficient; in other areas, it may take several hours to get calls through. Personal overseas calls cannot be made from any Peace Corps office. Volunteers must use locally available public phones or their mobile phones for all personal calls.

Should I bring a cellular phone with me?

No. The cell phone technology in Kenya is different. Kenya has low frequency while the United States has high frequency. It is easy and relatively cheap to buy a cellular phone in Kenya. The cost ranges from \$50 to \$150. Kenya has three service providers, Safaricom, ZAIN and Telkom wireless.

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

There are now cybercafés in major towns that provide Internet access. In most towns, Internet is also available at the post office. Volunteers can also access email in the Nairobi office. Some Volunteers choose to bring a laptop computer, and many have found it useful in their work. However, access to reliable electricity cannot be guaranteed and, as with any valuable, there is the threat of theft, loss or damage.

WELCOME LETTERS FROM COUNTRY VOLUNTEERS

I remember sitting in your seat a year ago. I was excited, anxious, and curious for what was in my future. Today, I think I have finally gotten the hang of things, and there have been many lessons learned. Each and every one of our experiences is unique. Therefore, I am not writing to tell you what you should or should not do. Rather, I want to tell you about my experiences and what I have learned from them. We all joined the Peace Corps for different reasons, but I would say that most people joined the Peace Corps partly to make a difference in the lives of others. One year into my service, I still have the desire to better the lives of the people in my community. What I have learned is that I cannot do much to better their lives. Let me explain.

Development comes from the people. I see myself as a cheerleader on the sidelines, and the people as development workers. No matter how much technical expertise we may have to offer or how many grants we can help them get, we cannot help people if they are not ready to help themselves. We can teach a person, but that does not mean he will implement those teachings in his life. This goes for any teaching—boiling water, planting trees in a wood lot, or changing behaviors to reduce the risk of HIV/AIDS transmission.

People see me as a development worker, and I see myself as a facilitator of development. They expect me to bring money or resources or do things for the community. The Peace Corps expects us to reach out to many people in two years.

Let me share my thoughts on development work in the Peace Corps and what I have learned about making a difference. What our two years really comes down to is *quality vs. quantity*. You can have quantity if *you* initiate *all* the projects. But what will happen after you leave? Add to the tally of projects that were started and never completed.

As an effective facilitator, you can work together with your community and have a few quality projects and experiences and empower the people along the way. You can be sure that these projects will be sustainable, even after you leave. We are not here to do people's jobs, as this would encourage dependence on outsiders.

There is still a lot you can do to make a difference in people's lives. Just take your time, and go with the flow of things. And as clichéd as this sounds, those people will literally make a world's difference in your life.

Your eyes will open; and adventures you have ahead of you will test your character, humor, patience, and commitment. On behalf of Peace Corps Kenya Volunteers, welcome aboard.

—Peace Corps Volunteer

When I was a trainee, a Volunteer came to speak to us about being health Volunteers. He began his speech with “Well, I wake up ...,” then he trailed off into something about breakfast. I thought he’d talk about grueling, backbreaking labor, or tell horror stories about interior hospitals, but no. It wasn’t what I was expecting, but I knew that any job description that started with “I wake up” was for me. That was about two years ago, and now here I am sitting by the diminishing light of my lantern wishing I had remembered to buy oil and trying to figure out what it is that I actually do.

What do health Volunteers do? Well, I wake up when my neighbor, Mama Purity, starts singing outside my bedroom window or when the rooster starts crowing. I’m not really sure what time it is because I threw out my watch about 1 ½ years ago. From there, I usually have breakfast, *chai* and *mandazi*, at a local hotel and talk to someone or read the paper. Then I go to work.

Work always begins with a few cups of *chai*, ample slices of white bread smeared with Blue-Band butter, and lots of conversation. Then we do what we do, whether that is build a mud *jiko* (stove), construct a water tank, or talk about HIV/AIDS. Afterwards we, of course, have our meal of maize and beans, more *chai*, and more conversation.

Meals are very important; it’s where the real work takes place. You can give a speech to 300 people in a huge auditorium, tell them all about AIDS, and probably make no difference at all. Or you can sit down over *chai* with one or two people whom you’ve talked to a dozen times before and really make an impact. It’s a true success when you’ve made a strong enough connection with someone that they feel comfortable enough to talk to you, really talk to you. So that’s what health Volunteers do. We have meals, we take tea, and along the way, we impart knowledge.

—Peace Corps Volunteer

Congratulations and *karibu* (“welcome to”) Kenya! I am a small enterprise development/information technology Volunteer. I remember packing my bags and wondering what to pack, so I hope some of you will find this useful. For those if you who are IT Volunteers, we have quite a shortage of software and reference manuals, so please bring anything that you can get your hands on. I mostly conduct solar energy trainings, but I also do some IT training. My personal request is for alternative-energy references. Yahoo email is fastest here; Hotmail is the slowest.

Food, food, and more food! You are lucky to have been placed in Kenya because the capital has a diverse mix of foods. You can get an array of chips and candy bars in almost any town or village, but you may want to bring other snack foods and spice mixes. You’ll get a great cookbook when you arrive that helps you make American food with local

ingredients. For those of you who don't cook, you will find that there is plenty of peanut butter and jelly here.

Don't overpack with incidentals. You can buy Colgate toothpaste, toothbrushes, film, blank cassettes, o.b. tampons, and soap locally. You will find that a radio is necessary for sanity (shortwave is needed for remote areas). I brought a week's worth of clothes and was happy, while others were happy with much more. You can also get great clothes inexpensively here. Dress conservatively, and although Kenya is near the equator, you will need some warm clothes because it gets cold at higher elevations. If you plan on doing serious trekking, you will need some good gear for the cold (although it can be rented). I found my guidebook helpful, but there are some in the Peace Corps resource library here.

Other than packing advice, I have to emphasize that you should try to get rid of your expectations. This experience is different for everyone and it really is what you make of it. Life in the Peace Corps has its ups and downs, but it is worth it Good luck!

—Peace Corps Volunteer

It seems like only days ago I was sitting on a comfortable couch in America reading "Welcome Letters From Kenya Volunteers" Via a wrinkle in time, more than a year has suddenly come and gone since then. Now I sit on a hard, decrepit chair in a rural Kenyan village authoring a "Welcome Letter" of my own for you. I'm writing by the glow of a single candle, as I said goodbye to electricity and running water when I said hello to Kenya.

I am a chemistry and biology teacher at a secondary school in the southwestern province of Nyanza. My day begins just before the sun clocks in for its own shift. I wake to a chorus of cows, goats, and roosters. You will soon learn that the latter have the greatest decibel-to-body-size ratio of any creature known to the universe. But like mine, your ears will eventually become less sensitive to the morning barnyard choir. I get dressed, don my boots, grab my book bag, and I'm ready to go. I'm constantly thankful I brought my boots. I live in the rainy Kenyan Highlands and walking to school means trekking through three kilometers of mud. After a 45-minute walk, I'm at school, where students are expected at 6:30 a.m. I greet my fellow teachers in their local language (Kigusii), which always makes them smile.

Teaching class in Kenya is quite different from my teaching days in America. Kenyan students sometimes have difficulty with my American accent, and I've learned they will tell you they understand something regardless of whether or not they actually do. Thus, I need to be very conscious of my rate of speech, I try to articulate every word carefully, and I avoid using contractions.

The school's facilities aren't exactly stellar, or even mediocre. In fact, calling them subpar is still a euphemism. This can be quite the challenge when teaching science.

Demonstrating the practical application of science to students without the luxury of electricity, running water, or proper laboratory equipment truly tests my creativity and improvisational skills. Plastic water bottles are cut in half, inverted, and are suddenly separator funnels. Straws become delivery tubes. Eggplant skin extracts can be used as acid/base indicators.

Your living conditions will vary immensely even among people within your incoming group. While electricity and running water are but fond memories for me, I know Volunteers in Kenya who have toilets, showers, and even refrigerators. Some Volunteers live completely on their own, while others occupy a room in a family's home. Others, like myself, are somewhere in between. My two-room house is one of several on a large family compound.

If you gain nothing else from my words, know that at the most fundamental level, the Peace Corps experience is what you make it. I promise you a roller coaster. I've often described Peace Corps as being an emotion amplifier. You can expect painful, heartbreaking lows, but you will also realize euphoric highs. How will you react? My advice: Dwell on the latter when faced with the former.

Leave your expectations. Bring your patience, flexibility, and sense of humor. Leave your sense of personal space. Bring your headlamp, boots, hiking pack, and Nalgene. Leave your fear. Most importantly, do not even consider getting on the plane without an open mind.

Look me up when you get here. I'm excited to meet you.

Welcome to the Peace Corps!

—Peace Corps Volunteer

PACKING LIST

This list has been compiled by Volunteers serving in Kenya 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 100-pound weight limit on baggage. And remember, you can get almost everything you need in Kenya.

General Clothing

You may also find the clothing you bring from home will suffer more wear and tear than usual. Fortunately; used clothing markets abound in Kenya, even in smaller towns, so it is not necessary to bring two years' worth of clothes.

- Several pairs of cotton trousers
- T-shirts
- Button down shirts/blouses
- Sweatshirts/ fleece/sweater
- Athletic shorts (for sports or home)
- Jeans
- One or two dressy outfits
- Bandannas
- Long skirts
- Raincoat
- Cotton socks (grey or athletic)
- Cotton undergarments, including slips for women

Shoes

Durable shoes are an essential investment. Shoes will wear out more quickly in Kenya than which you are accustomed due to all the walking you will do.

- One or two pairs of hiking/walking shoes or boots
- One or two pairs of sneakers or running shoes
- Two pairs of comfortable dress shoes
- Comfortable sandals

Personal Hygiene and Toiletry Items

A range of basic hygiene items is available in most towns and cities; however, if you have strong personal preferences, plan to bring those brands.

- Contact lens solutions (available locally but very expensive); the Peace Corps does not provide this
- A three-month supply of any prescription drugs you take, including birth control pills
- Tampons (O.B. brand is available locally, but is expensive)
- Aloe or after-sun lotion

Recreation/Entertainment

- Camera and accessories (film is available locally)
- Binoculars
- Music player/recorder—iPod, MP3, CD, cassette (voltage converters are available locally)
- Your favorite music (blank tapes are available locally)
- Shortwave radio (three- to seven-band is recommended)
- Portable musical instruments
- Biking shorts and gloves
- Sports equipment (e.g., Frisbee, kites, football, volleyball, soccer ball, badminton, snorkeling gear)
- Art supplies
- Games and puzzle books (e.g., playing cards, cribbage, Scrabble, chess)
- Favorite novels (but there will also be plenty circulating among Volunteers)
- Almanac and dictionary
- Camping or hiking gear
- Tent (useful for travel, as well as backpacking)

Miscellaneous

- Cotton sheets (full or queen size) *MANDATORY, as these will not be provided during pre-service training and/or home stays. You can bring these items with you to your site)
- A light blanket *MANDATORY, see above
- Bath towels *MANDATORY, see above
- Sleeping bag *MANDATORY, see above
- CPSC-approved bicycle helmets (if interested in having a bicycle)—Up to \$30 reimbursable item with receipt
- Favorite sleeping pillow
- Pens and pencils, stationery, and notebooks
- Alarm clock
- Solar calculator (essential for small enterprise development Volunteers)
- Sturdy water bottle (e.g., Nalgene)
- Solar batteries and recharger
- Sewing kit

- Knives (available locally but of poor quality) *Remember to pack in your checked luggage
- Plastic storage bags and containers
- Duct tape
- Peeler, grater, etc. (available locally, but expensive)
- All-purpose knife (e.g., Leatherman) *Remember to pack in your checked luggage
- Packaged sauces, seasoning, and soft-drink mixes
- Potholders
- Solar shower
- Work gloves
- Cash (most Volunteers bring \$200 to \$1,000 in traveler's checks for travel and vacation)
- Credit card and/or ATM card
- At least 12 passport-size photos of yourself for visas, work permits, etc. (Mandatory—these photos are a must)
- Pictures from home
- S. and world maps
- U.S. stamps (you can often have letters mailed in the United States by travelers)
- Checks from a U.S. bank account (handy for ordering things from home)
- Day planner
- Sunglasses/visor

PRE-DEPARTURE CHECKLIST

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

Family

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

Passport/Travel

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

Medical/Health

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

Insurance

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

Personal Papers

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

Voting

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

Personal Effects

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

Financial Management

- Keep a bank account in your name in the U.S.
- Obtain student loan deferment forms from the lender or loan service.
- Execute a Power of Attorney for the management of your property and business.
- Arrange for deductions from your readjustment allowance to pay alimony, child support, and other debts through the Office of Volunteer Financial Operations at 855.855.1961, extension 1770.
- Place all important papers—mortgages, deeds, stocks, and bonds—in a safe deposit box or with an attorney or other caretaker.

CONTACTING PEACE CORPS HEADQUARTERS

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

Peace Corps Headquarters Toll-free Number: 855.855.1961, Press 1 or ext. # (see below)

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

Questions About:	Staff:	Toll-Free Ext:	Direct/Local #:
Responding to an Invitation	Office of Placement	x1840	202.692.1840
Country Information	Jason Beach Desk Officer / (Kenya/Rwanda) kenya@peacecorps.gov	x2326	202.692.2326
Plane Tickets, Passports, Visas, or other travel matters:	CWT SATO Travel	x1170	202.692.1170
Legal Clearance	Office of Placement	x1840	202.692.1840
Medical Clearance & Forms Processing (includes dental)	Screening Nurse	x1500	202.692.1500
Medical Reimbursements (handled by a subcontractor)	Seven Corners	N/A	202.692.1538 800.335.0611
Loan Deferments, Taxes, Financial Operations	Office Of Volunteer and PSC Financial Services	x1770	202.692.1770
Readjustment Allowance Withdrawals, Power of Attorney, Staging (Pre-Departure Orientation), and Reporting Instructions	Office of Staging <i>Note: You will receive comprehensive information (hotel and flight arrangements) three to five weeks prior to departure. This information is not available sooner.</i>	x1865	202.692.1865
Family Emergencies (to get information to a Volunteer overseas) 24 hours	Office of Special Services	x1470	202.692.1470