

THE PEACE CORPS WELCOMES YOU TO
LESOTHO



A PEACE CORPS PUBLICATION
FOR NEW VOLUNTEERS

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A WELCOME LETTER

Lumelang Bo 'M'e le Bo Ntate (Greetings, ladies and gentlemen):

It is my pleasure to congratulate you on making the choice to become a Peace Corps Volunteer in Lesotho.

Peace Corps/Lesotho has the history of being one of the longest running programs on the continent. You will be joining a legacy of more than 2,000 Americans who have had the privilege of serving in the country since 1967.

Peace Corps/Lesotho strives to respond to the numerous and challenging needs in communities throughout the country. We will count on your professionalism, creativity and self-motivation to help achieve the goals upon which the government of Lesotho and the Peace Corps have agreed.

Lesotho is a stunningly beautiful country with a rich culture, proud history, and warm, friendly people. I hope you will love it here, and I look forward to welcoming you to the Mountain Kingdom!

Khotso! Pula! Nala! (Peace! Rain! Prosperity! – the motto of Lesotho)

Kathy Jacquart Dill
Country Director



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CORE EXPECTATIONS

FOR PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS

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

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



Peace Corps/Lesotho History and Programs

History of the Peace Corps in Lesotho

The Peace Corps was invited to work in Lesotho soon after independence in 1966 and the first Volunteers arrived in 1967. Since that time, a relatively constant number of between 80 and 90 Volunteers have served at any given time, except for a brief period following a political uprising in 1998 when the program was suspended. Education, agriculture, and health have been the primary Peace Corps programs here. The focus of Volunteer placement has been rural development, which mirrors the country's 85 percent rural population demography. Volunteers serve in all 10 districts of the country.

Peace Corps Programming in Lesotho

Current Peace Corps/Lesotho programming is based on community development goals that place Volunteers in the education, community health, and economic development sectors with a special emphasis on HIV/AIDS prevention and care.

Education Volunteers are assigned to the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) to strengthen the quality of education through the deployment of English teachers in secondary schools and resource teachers in both early childhood care centers and primary schools.

Secondary education Volunteers provide English, math, and science classroom instruction and assist in developing critical thinking skills through innovative teaching methods.

Resource teachers work with their counterparts to equip teachers and caregivers in primary schools and early childhood education centers with skills to enable them to use innovative and appropriate teaching methodologies, enhancing their classroom management skills and applying principles of gender equity in their teaching practices.

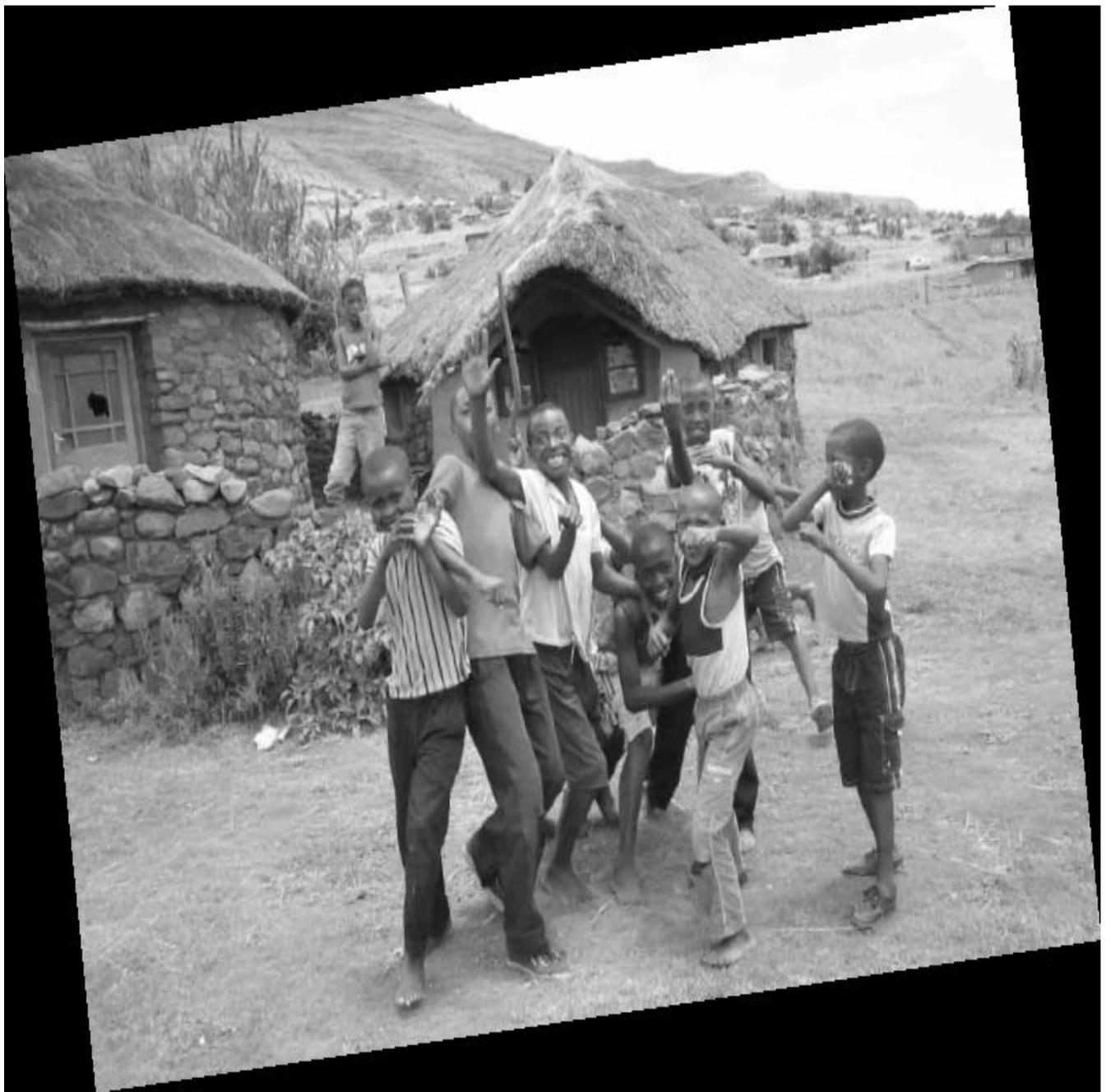
Education Volunteers also teach life skills, help establish functional school and community libraries, and assist communities in mitigating the effects of HIV/AIDS.

The community health and economic development project (CHED) helps to develop an economically productive society capable of effectively dealing with HIV/AIDS. Volunteers focus on preventing and mitigating the effects of HIV/AIDS, strengthening community-based organizations and working in the areas of youth development, skills promotion, and business and economic development.

CHED Volunteers also promote better services for orphans and vulnerable children, help organizations and groups mobilize resources and community support to improve food security, and teach at skills training centers.

The AIDS epidemic strikes across all social strata in Lesotho. Illness and disability drain family income and force the government of Lesotho and donors to redirect limited resources from other priorities. The fear and uncertainty AIDS causes has led to increased domestic violence and the stigmatizing of people living with HIV/AIDS, isolating them from friends and family

and cutting them off from economic opportunities. As a Peace Corps Volunteer, you will confront these issues on a very personal level. It is important to be aware of the high emotional toll that disease, death, and violence can have on Volunteers. As you strive to integrate into your community, you will develop relationships with local people who might die during your service. Volunteers need to prepare themselves to embrace these relationships in a sensitive and positive manner. You will need to utilize supportive resources available throughout your training and service to maintain your own emotional strength so you can continue to be of service to your community.



COUNTRY OVERVIEW:

LESOTHO AT A GLANCE

History

The area now known as Lesotho was home to Stone Age people and the San, who left artifacts and cave paintings. Sotho and Tswana people settled in the area several hundred years ago. In the mid-1800s, King Moshoeshoe I brought these people together in a loosely federated Basotho state

Lesotho became a British protectorate in 1868 after a series of territorial wars that cost Lesotho much of its best agricultural land. It gained its independence in 1966, by which time Lesotho had already been forced into a state of economic dependence on South Africa. The civilian government elected at independence suspended the constitution in 1970 and remained in office until a military coup in 1986. The first democratic elections were held in March 1993.

Government

The head of state of Lesotho is King Letsie III, a direct descendant of King Moshoeshoe I. Lesotho has a constitutional democracy so the prime minister presides over a parliamentary system. Local and national elections are planned for 2011 and 2012, respectively.

Economy

Lesotho's economy is based on exports of water and electricity sold to South Africa, manufacturing, agriculture, livestock, and, to some extent, the earnings of laborers employed in South Africa. Lesotho also exports diamonds, wool, mohair, clothing, and footwear. Lesotho is geographically surrounded by South Africa and economically integrated as well. Most households subsist on farming or migrant labor, primarily miners who remain in South Africa for three to nine months a year. The western lowlands form the main agricultural zone. The eastern half of the country is dominated by 200- to 3,000-meter highlands. Almost half the population earns income through crop cultivation or animal husbandry, with more than half of the country's income coming from the agricultural sector.

Water is Lesotho's only significant natural resource. It is exploited through the 21-year, multibillion-dollar Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP), which began in 1986. The LHWP is designed to capture, store, and transfer water from the Orange River system to South Africa's Free State and greater Johannesburg area. This area features a large concentration of South African industry, population, and agriculture. The World Bank, African Development Bank, European Investment Bank, and many other bilateral donors financed the project. Completion of the first phase of the project has made Lesotho almost completely self-sufficient in the production of electricity and generated approximately \$24 million annually from the sale of electricity and water to South Africa.

Lesotho has a modest manufacturing sector. Asian investors own most factories. Lesotho has nearly 6,000 kilometers of roads, ranging from unpaved to modern all-weather roads. There is

a short freight rail line linking Lesotho with South Africa that is owned and operated by South Africa.

People and Culture

Lesotho presents a dichotomy of past and present, traditional and modern beliefs. For example, weddings are conducted with the full blessing of the church, but bride prices are still extracted from the groom's family. The bride, in turn, becomes his property. Cattle represent wealth among the Basotho (people from Lesotho). Lesotho's viable pastures are diminishing by the year, but many Basotho still value cows more than money. Many cultural rites demand the sacrifice of a cow.

The country and people of Lesotho are generally conservative in nature, due, in part, to inherited colonial traditions and the influence of well-established Catholic and Protestant missionaries. The Basotho, therefore, generally favor Volunteers who are self-motivated, maintain professional standards (including professional dress and appearance), and set a good example as dedicated development workers.

Environment

Lesotho is mountainous, with two major ranges dissecting the country from the northeast to the southwest. It lies entirely outside the tropics, at roughly 30 degrees south longitude, which is the southern hemisphere equivalent of Houston, Texas. Some of the most incredible scenery in all of Africa lies in Lesotho—one of the continent's smallest countries.

Lesotho's climatic conditions are subject to wide seasonal and geographic variations. Temperatures range from 36 to 90 degrees Fahrenheit (2 to 32 degrees Celsius) in the lowlands and are generally lower and more volatile in the highlands. The mean annual rainfall ranges between 24 inches (600 millimeters) in the southern and western lowlands and 48 inches (1,200 millimeters) in the northeastern highlands. The country is vulnerable to frost, heavy snowfall, and hailstorms during the winter months. Recurrent periods of drought have contributed to desertification in the south, and intense pressures on the land have further contributed to serious environmental degradation. With only 9 percent of the 12,142 square miles (30,355 square kilometers) of land suitable for food production, farmland is scarce. Both arable and range lands are heavily eroded, so Lesotho imports most of its food and relies on food donations during drought periods.

Because Lesotho has a temperate climate, it is a relatively healthy environment in which to live. Tropical diseases such as malaria are not a problem, but waterborne diseases; ear, nose, and throat ailments; and skin problems are prevalent. Because the weather is extremely dry, and the winter season is very cold, some people with pre-existing respiratory problems like asthma and bronchitis may have problems.



RESOURCES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Following is a list of websites for additional information about the Peace Corps and Lesotho 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 Lesotho

www.countrywatch.com

On this site, you can learn anything from what time it is in the Maseru to how to convert from the dollar to the Maloti. Just click on Lesotho and go from there.

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 Lesotho and learn more about its social and political history. You can also go to the site's international travel section to check on conditions that may affect your safety.

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

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

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

This online world atlas includes maps and geographical information, and each 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

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 Lesotho site: www.FOL.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.

News Sites About Lesotho

www.lestimes.com

The website of the *Lesotho Times*, a local newspaper.

www.publiceyenews.com

The website of the *Public Eye*, a local newspaper.

International Development Sites About Lesotho

[DHS, PEPFAR, MCC]

Recommended Books

Books About the History of the Peace Corps

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

Books on the Volunteer Experience

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

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

Other resources of interest:

Rosenberg, Scott. *Promises of Moshoeshoe: Culture, Nationalism and Identity in Lesotho*. Lesotho: 2008.

Rosenberg, Scott; Weisfielder, Richard; and Frisbie-Fulton, Michelle. *The Historical Dictionary of Lesotho*. Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2004.

Epstein, H. *The Invisible Cure: Africa, The West and the Fight Against AIDS*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007



LIVING CONDITIONS AND VOLUNTEER LIFESTYLE

Communications

Mail in Lesotho is fairly reliable. Volunteers -generally receive mail and packages from the United States in two to three weeks. The same is true for sending mail from Lesotho. Of course, there are exceptional cases in which a letter or a package might arrive within a shorter period or be substantially delayed. Rarely, but occasionally, letters and packages are lost altogether. It is a good idea to number all letters and packages you send to the United States and to encourage people sending you things to do the same. If you do this consistently, you will always know when something is missing.

While in pre-service training, you will receive all mail through the Peace Corps/Lesotho post office box address:

Jane/John Doe, PCT
c/o Peace Corps/Lesotho
PO Box 554
Maseru, 100 LESOTHO

During your Volunteer service, you will likely to be able to receive mail directly at your site. However, Volunteers may always elect to receive mail through the Peace Corps post office box number.

If a package or parcel is sent to you through the Peace Corps/Lesotho post office box while you are in pre-service training, the training director will request identification from you so we can retrieve the package on your behalf. Usually we only need your passport for this purpose. After pre-service training, you will need to retrieve your own packages.

Telephones

A large part of the country does not have land-line telephones; however, cellphone coverage is readily available.

Most, if not all, Volunteers buy a cellphone in-country during their service. The cell network is different here, and it can be quite expensive to use international roaming. In the first few weeks of training, trainees will be provided an opportunity to purchase a cellphone at their expense. (Many inexpensive models are available).

Computer, Internet, and Email Access

Many Volunteers bring laptop computers to Lesotho. Please keep in mind that there is no guarantee that you will be working or living in a village with regular access to electricity. If you choose to bring a laptop computer, make certain that you purchase personal insurance to cover the computer in case of theft or damage. Also, bring all the equipment necessary for the computer's operation (i.e., adapters, surge protectors, external hard drive). While there are two reputable computer dealers in Maseru, the services and equipment are expensive.

Notify family and friends that you will have very limited access to the Internet while you are in training, and may have limited access during your time as a Volunteer in Lesotho. A few

Volunteer sites will not have cellphone coverage either.

Volunteers have access to computers and the Internet at remote Volunteer Resource Centers or Internet cafés in camptowns (district capitals) throughout the country. Internet access is only as reliable as the telephone lines provided in the area.

Housing and Site Location

You must be prepared for a number of hardships and lack of amenities that you may have been accustomed to in the United States. Your house will be simply furnished with a bed, a two-burner gas stove, and a heater for winter. You will probably have to walk a short distance to fetch water from a community tap. Most likely you will be required to use an outdoor pit latrine.

The Peace Corps works with communities prior to the arrival of Volunteers to ensure safe and adequate housing. For a house to be considered suitable, it must have strong doors and windows, a good roof, and burglar bars. Many Volunteers live in a one-room *rondavel* (round house) with a thatch roof and no running water or electricity. Others have a two- or three-room house with a tin roof, electricity, indoor plumbing, and running water.

Living Allowance and Money Management

Near the end of training, before you move to your worksite, you will receive a modest, one-time settling-in allowance. This is meant to cover basic household supplies, including any additional furniture you might need. During your Volunteer service, you will be given approximately M2000 (approximately \$290) per month as a living allowance. This money should cover items such as utilities, food, household supplies, domestic help, clothing, recreation, transportation, communication expenses, and incidentals while you are a Volunteer. Additionally, in the winter months you will receive a heating allowance. You will also receive a leave allowance of \$24 each month once you are sworn in (given in Maloti at the same time as your living allowance) and you will accrue \$275 a month, which you receive at the end of your service as a readjustment allowance.

The living and leave allowances are deposited on a monthly basis in a Lesotho bank account, which you will open during pre-service training (PST).

Peace Corps/Lesotho discourages Volunteers from using other sources of money to supplement their daily needs during service, as the living allowance should sufficiently cover those expenses and it is important that Volunteers live at the same economic level as their hosts. However, people may want to bring additional funds for travel during vacations. Many Peace Corps/Lesotho Volunteers bring credit cards and/or debit cards, traveler's checks, dollars, or checkbooks with them to Lesotho.

Credit cards (and usually debit cards) are widely accepted at places of business in South Africa and parts of Lesotho. Major hotels, restaurants, and shops in Maseru and tourist areas will be able to process electronic payments, but your village shop or café will not. Many ATMs in Lesotho will allow you to access bank accounts in the United States. Be sure to bring your

PIN for any credit or debit cards you bring. After two years of service, lots of things will get rusty, including your memory for the PIN!

Places that accept credit cards generally also accept traveler's checks, but it is difficult to purchase traveler's checks in Lesotho unless you have an airline ticket to leave the country.

A personal checkbook from the United States isn't very helpful as very few places are able to accept the risk of cashing a check from a foreign account. However, it is a good idea to bring all account numbers, your bank's name and address, and the bank's nine-digit routing number with you. When you finish your service, you will have options about the way in which you receive some post-Volunteer service allowances. Many Volunteers want to have it by direct deposit. This can be convenient for folks who wish to travel and want to withdraw money from their accounts back home (as opposed to carrying large amounts of cash with you as you travel home).

Food and Diet

Most food, such as fruits and vegetables, is imported from South Africa. There is a wide range to choose from if you have access to shops in the bigger towns in Lesotho. The main meal of the Basotho includes *papa*, made of cornmeal; *moroho*, or vegetables (mainly cabbage or Swiss chard); and *nama*, or meat, which could be beef, pork, mutton, or chicken.

Dairy products are also available. Because of the prevalence of tuberculosis and brucellosis in Lesotho, do not consume raw milk. For storage purposes, we recommend the use of powdered milk or ultra pasteurized milk, which comes in cartons and is available throughout Lesotho.

In some parts of the country, maintaining a vegetarian diet can be challenging in terms of being able to find all that you need to get recommended daily allowances of vital food groups. Whether you are a lacto-ovo vegetarian (eats dairy products and eggs) or a vegan (consumes no animal products at all), your daily meals will need to be balanced to provide sufficient energy. Many soy products are available in Maseru, although they can be expensive. There is a wide variety of *pulses* (legumes such as peas, beans, and lentils) in Lesotho. The medical office can also provide multivitamin supplements.

Many Volunteers in Lesotho have their own vegetable gardens. This enables you to have fresh food during certain times of the year, and gardening can be good for your mental and emotional well-being. There are four distinct seasons in Lesotho; charts indicating the crops that grow in Lesotho and when they should be planted are available for those interested in gardening.

Achieving a healthy and balanced diet will be discussed during pre-service training.

Transportation

Local transportation varies from your own two feet to "luxury" coach buses. For the most part, as a Volunteer you will travel around the country in *kombis* (which are basically minivans that seat 10-12 people), "4+1s" (small sedan taxis), or regular buses. Fares for public transportation are reasonable.

Volunteers are expected to walk long distances on rocky, uneven terrain. It is likely that you will walk from two to eight kilometers before reaching your worksite or where you can access public transportation.

At your site you will most likely walk to work and shop. A few Volunteers may be issued bicycles or authorized to rent horses depending on need, resource availability, and safety and security concerns. If you are issued a bicycle or approved to rent a horse, the Peace Corps will provide you with a mandatory helmet for riding to work.

Operating or riding on a motorcycle is strictly prohibited by Peace Corps/Lesotho and is grounds for administrative separation. Under exceptional circumstances, Peace Corps/Lesotho may authorize Volunteers to operate a motor vehicle for project-related purposes. Currently, no Volunteers are authorized to drive for work purposes.

Geography and Climate

The climate in Lesotho can be extreme. Daytime temperatures in the summer may reach 90 degrees Fahrenheit, and in the winter there can be severe frost and snow, especially in the mountains. Summer is between November and February, and winter falls between May and July. Heavy rain is fairly regular in the summer and is often mixed with hail. Conditions range from very hot to cool and damp. In the winter, the sunshine warms the days, but the breezes are still cool, and the nights are very cold. Lesotho's climate is the result of its high altitude.

Lesotho includes the highest parts of the Drakensberg Mountains in the east. It also has the distinction of having the "highest low point" of any country in the world. Stated simply, this means that Lesotho's lowlands are a high plateau, and from there the only way to go is up!

Social Activities

The Basotho are a welcoming, hospitable people. You will meet many who will look out for you and make sure you are taken care of. Within a few months, many Volunteers refer to their Lesotho hosts as "families" and feel that Lesotho is home. For the most part, social activities in Lesotho are fairly informal. Those who are interested in getting to know you can be quite persistent. It is normal for people to stop by completely unannounced. Do not be put off by this; the Basotho will expect the same from you. It is rare to receive a formal invitation to visit. If you want to see someone, just stop by.

Unfortunately, many social situations are connected to funeral activities.

Alcohol use in Lesotho is widespread and alcohol abuse is common.

Dress

As representatives of the United States and Peace Corps/Lesotho and a guest in Lesotho, your appearance should be acceptable and appropriate at all times.

In Lesotho, dress and appearance can be perceived as signs of respect (or a lack thereof) and are important for your effectiveness as a Volunteer. Appropriate dress shows respect for co-workers, the community, and the culture. Good judgment, good taste, and cleanliness are all important.

Professional dress is required while on the job, at the Peace Corps office in Maseru, during PST and at any Peace Corps-organized event, and when traveling in a Peace Corps vehicle. Be open to suggestions from Peace Corps staff or others about appearance.

Professional dress means:

- No flip-flops or shorts
- No revealing clothing (e.g., exposed cleavage or midriffs, tight-fitting clothing)
- For males: long pants, a shirt with a collar (i.e., not T-shirts), and closed-toed shoes (i.e., not sneakers)
- For females: a longer dress or skirt, dress slacks, closed-toed shoes (i.e., not sneakers), nice sandals or “Teva-like” footwear

If the material from which the garment is made is sheer or see-through, a camisole or slip should be worn underneath. Sleeves are preferable to sleeveless, particularly in the rural districts. Sleeveless garments may be acceptable if they are not so open as to expose undergarments. Bras should be worn. Spaghetti straps, bare-backed tops, and tops that expose the midriff must be avoided to minimize unwanted attention and are never acceptable at the Peace Corps office or at Peace Corps events.

Friday is “casual day” at the PC/Lesotho office. Volunteers and staff are permitted to wear nice jeans and sneakers on Friday only.

Volunteers should present a clean appearance - including feet - at all times. Clothing must be clean, mended, and ironed or at least not a mass of wrinkles. Shoes should be polished and clean. Backpacks and day packs must be clean.

Hairstyle is also important. Women’s hair should be neat and clean. For men, clean, short (above the collar), conservative hair is expected. Beards and moustaches should be trimmed. In some communities in Lesotho, dreadlocks are associated with *dagga* (marijuana) use. For your safety and security and effectiveness in the community, your associate Peace Corps director (APCD) will advise you if he/she strongly feels that you should cut your hair. You should be willing to do so.

Small studs in one’s nose are acceptable during working hours. You should be mindful, however, that multiple nose rings appear strange in this culture and at times may be cause for harassment. Earrings for men are not acceptable in the workplace. Assess the situation in your community to determine if they are acceptable after working hours. Obvious tattoos are not appropriate for either men or women; in Lesotho, tattoos are associated with prisoners.

Peace Corps/Lesotho takes this dress code very seriously and will address Volunteers not adhering to these guidelines. Those who continue to ignore the dress code will be invited to discuss the situation with the country director. If a mutually agreeable resolution cannot be reached, administrative separation from the Peace Corps may be considered.

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, robberies and burglaries are not uncommon, and incidents of physical and sexual assault do occur, although most Lesotho 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 Lesotho. 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

Being a Peace Corps Volunteer is a rewarding experience. Living in Lesotho, you will meet an enriching variety of Basotho and learn many new things about our world and Basotho culture. If you have never lived overseas before, your Volunteer experience will provide an excellent opportunity for you to see yourself and American culture from another vantage point. If you have lived or traveled extensively overseas, living in Lesotho may provide you with additional depth in your understanding of the world. Regardless of your background, being a Lesotho Volunteer will offer many opportunities to grow and learn.

With nearly 50 years of operation in Lesotho, the Peace Corps is a respected organization that is recognized for performing an essential role in Lesotho’s development. The people of Lesotho are very welcoming to Volunteers and do their best to ensure Volunteers have everything they need to work successfully. Basotho expect Peace Corps Volunteers to be responsible and professional at the same time, most Basotho love a good party with plenty of delicious food and good music and are happy to have Volunteers join in the fun.

However wonderful your Volunteer experience is, there will also be times when you will experience frustration and perhaps even aggravation. As with any new and foreign experience, there will be ups and downs. Life in Lesotho, as in most places, is not perfect. Sometimes you might feel that everyone’s curiosity about you and America is overwhelming; you might feel like your home is a fishbowl with Basotho constantly watching all that you do; you might become frustrated by buses that do not arrive on time or meetings that do not take place when scheduled. Completing a project that would take a couple of days or a week in the United States might take a month or several months here because of a lack of resources, information, and infrastructure.

Many Volunteers also find that there are a number of social dynamics that add to the difficulties of working in Lesotho. An increasing level of poverty associated with the rising rate of unemployment has exacerbated social issues such as crime, HIV/AIDS, and incidences of domestic violence, to name a few. As a Lesotho Volunteer you may or may not have a visible impact on any of these issues. However, you do have the opportunity to make a real difference here with your work.



PEACE CORPS TRAINING

Overview of Pre-Service Training

Peace Corps/Lesotho has two training groups annually. One group, consisting of education Volunteers, arrives in October; the other group of community health and economic development (CHED) Volunteers arrives in June.

All new Volunteers arriving in Lesotho are provided with a nine- to 10-week pre-service training program prior to their site assignment. This training focuses on skills development in Sesotho, cross-cultural communication, and Volunteers' particular job assignments. Sessions also cover specific medical and security conditions in Lesotho; personal health and safety; and the historical, economic, political, and development issues facing Lesotho and southern Africa. Sesotho language classes and cultural training make up a large part of pre-service training as community integration is key to your success as a Volunteer.

Training is meant to prepare you to become a productive Peace Corps Volunteer. It is an intense (often overwhelming) time during which you will be required to absorb a lot of new information. Sometimes training sessions may not seem relevant to what you think you will be doing as a Volunteer. However, it is usually months after becoming a Volunteer that you realize why the Peace Corps trained you in these areas. Coming to training with an open mind and the ability to be flexible will help you adjust to a new environment and the journey you are about to undertake.

Technical Training

Technical training will prepare you to work in Lesotho 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, Basotho 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 Lesotho and strategies for working within such a framework. You will review your technical sector's goals and will meet with the Basotho 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. Basotho language instructors teach formal language classes throughout training in small groups of four to five trainees.

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.

You will take part in structured Sesotho lessons given by Basotho instructors. At the completion of pre-service training, you will be tested by a certified language examiner, who will rate your ability in spoken Sesotho. Although many Basotho speak English and Volunteers can "get by" with minimal Sesotho, most communication among Basotho is Sesotho. Volunteers who do not continue learning Sesotho limit their duty to integrate into their communities.

Volunteers who wish to continue their Sesotho training after pre-service training may hire a tutor. Peace Corps/Lesotho provides financial reimbursement for continuing language lessons.

Cross-Cultural Training

You will live and eat with a Basotho host family for the duration of the pre-service training. 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 Lesotho. 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 needs assessment, community mobilization, conflict resolution, gender and development, non formal and adult education strategies, and political structures.

Health Training

During pre-service training, you will be given basic training and information to help keep you healthy during your service. You will be expected to practice preventive health care and to take responsibility for your own health by adhering to all medical policies. The topics include preventive health measures and minor and major medical issues that you might encounter while in Lesotho. 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:

- **Phase II Training:** This is the three-month period after PST and is primarily self-directed. You will be given assignments to complete to further your learning of topics presented in PST.
- **Phase III Training:** Three to five months after the end of PST, this 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.
- **In-service Training:** This provides Volunteers an opportunity to further technical, language and cross cultural training in specific areas. The training is designed to assist Volunteers in reviewing their service thus far, allowing them to reassess their personal and project objectives and plan for the remainder of their service.
- **Close-of-Service Conference:** Held three to four months before the end of your service, this 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 Peace Corps staff, Volunteers, and other stakeholders.



YOUR HEALTH CARE AND SAFETY IN LESOTHO

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 office in Maseru 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 Lesotho and nearby towns in South Africa 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 Lesotho

Most of us take our health for granted. As a Peace Corps Volunteer in Lesotho, however, you will be expected to play a vital and proactive role in your health care. When you get here, you will realize that your emotional and physical health will depend on how you deal with social, work, and environmental factors.

Lesotho has none of the exotic or tropical illnesses or diseases common to most other parts of Africa. The exception to this is HIV/AIDS, which is prevalent in Lesotho at a rate of 23 percent. The Peace Corps has adopted medical policies and practices worldwide to help protect Volunteers and staff from transmission of this disease, but it is each Volunteer's responsibility to take steps to avoid infection.

Because of the altitude and temperate nature of the climate, there is no malaria or bilharzias (schistosomiasis) in Lesotho. However, since Volunteers do travel outside of Lesotho, the personal health and safety component of pre-service training covers a wide variety of illnesses, including problems you may encounter in Southern Africa. Illnesses that Volunteers in Lesotho commonly experience are diarrhea from amoebas and giardia; high fevers from varied causes; skin infections from fungus, bacteria, or insect bites; upper respiratory symptoms; and allergies from dust and dryness. Diarrhea is the number-one complaint by Volunteers worldwide, and Lesotho is no exception. Peace Corps/Lesotho recommends that Volunteers boil all their drinking water for three minutes. This method is adequate at all altitudes and helps prevent many illnesses that are waterborne. Many other diseases are related to poor hygienic conditions.

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 Lesotho, you will receive a medical handbook. At the end of training, you will receive a medical kit with basic 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 at least 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 a medical consultation at mid-service (in-service training) and a full physical at the end of your service. If you develop a serious medical problem during your service, the medical officer in Lesotho will consult with the Office of Medical Services in Washington, D.C. If it is determined that your condition cannot be treated in Lesotho, you may be sent out of the country for further evaluation and care.

Maintaining Your Health

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

- Proper food preparation and water treatment.
- Prompt reporting to the medical office. You must visit the medical office for scheduled immunizations, and you must immediately report any significant illnesses or injuries, including any possible exposure to rabies.
- Safe sex to prevent HIV and other STDs. Abstinence is the only certain choice for preventing HIV infection. Volunteers who choose not to abstain are expected to use condoms in every sexual encounter in which bodily fluids might be transferred. Condoms are available in the medical unit.
- Use of an effective means of birth control. Volunteers are expected to adhere to an effective means of birth control to prevent an unwanted pregnancy. Contraceptive methods are available from the Peace Corps medical unit. Condoms should be used regardless of other birth control methods.
- Strict adherence to recommended drug regimen for the prevention of malaria. Fortunately, Lesotho is a malaria-free country. If you plan to travel to a malaria endemic country, however, you will be required to take a malaria prophylaxis.

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

It is not unusual for female Volunteers to experience more frequent bladder or yeast infections as well as changes in their menstrual pattern. Female Volunteers will have a Pap smear, as part of their mid-service medical evaluation if needed, and their close-of-service physical. If you need to have more frequent Pap smears, let the medical officer know during

your meetings at pre-service training. The Peace Corps provides annual mammograms for all Volunteers over age 50 or whenever there is a specific indication. If you have had any previous mammograms, you need to bring all films with you. Do not send them to Washington, D.C. The medical office will keep them and return them to you when you complete your service.

Your Peace Corps Medical Kit

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

Medical Kit Contents

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

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

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

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

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

Taking care of your health while you are in Lesotho is an extremely high priority. Because conditions in Lesotho cannot approximate U.S. standards of care, we are obliged to send to the country only those Volunteers whose health care needs can be met in Lesotho's health care system. Your entrance into the Peace Corps training program is, therefore, dependent upon your obtaining medical and dental clearances from the Office of Medical Services in

Washington.

Because each medical qualification is linked to conditions at a particular post, the medical clearance is not transferable. That means that if for some reason you are ultimately unable to fulfill your assignment in Lesotho, there is no guarantee that you can be medically qualified for the next post that needs your skills. We sincerely regret that we must adhere to such stringent standards, but it truly is for your own welfare that we do so.

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.

Like anywhere else in the world, crime exists in Lesotho, and many Volunteers fall victim to crime, particularly property theft and burglary. Although almost all Volunteers complete their two years of service without serious personal safety problems, incidents of physical and sexual assault do occur. Tragically, volunteers in Lesotho were victims of murder, rape and attempted armed robbery in Maseru in 2010.

Crime in villages and rural communities is less frequent than in cities. Volunteers are generally safer in their host communities than in Maseru. Crime in Maseru is mostly street theft and of a nonviolent nature, but those who are obviously not Basotho are often targets. Volunteers are advised to come to Maseru only when necessary and, when there, to be wary of their location and activities.

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

- Peace Corps assesses the security environment where you will live and work
- Peace Corps inspects the house where you will live according to established security criteria
- Peace Corp provides you with resources to take measures such as installing new locks
- Peace Corps ensures you are welcomed by host 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

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

Factors that Contribute to Volunteer Risk

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

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

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

After you arrive in Lesotho, 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 Lesotho 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
- Limit time in Maseru
- 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 Lesotho. 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 Lesotho of which you should be aware:

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 Lesotho 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 Lesotho will require that you accept some restrictions on your current lifestyle.

Before and during service, your training will address these areas of concern so that you can reduce the risks you face.

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 Lesotho

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

Please take time to review this important information.

Crimes that 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 Lesotho

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

The Peace Corps/Lesotho office will keep you informed of any issues that may impact Volunteer safety through information sharing. Regular updates will be provided in Volunteer newsletters, text messages and e-mails. 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. Peace Corps Lesotho's out of site and leave policy will be explained to you during PST.

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

Outside of Maseru, 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 Lesotho 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 Lesotho, 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 Lesotho

The Peace Corps staff in Lesotho 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.

Perhaps because Lesotho is rooted in the fusion of a variety of tribes and traditions, Basotho culture tends to emphasize conformity over diversity. The size, complexity, and diversity of American culture continue to surprise many Basotho.

Although apartheid is officially a policy of the past, and there have been great changes in neighboring South Africa, its history continues to influence the region. Many Basotho have experienced the now defunct apartheid system. Hence, relations between certain Basotho

and any white person can be, at first, somewhat strained. For the most part, however, Basotho differentiate quite readily between white Volunteers and other whites in the region. Foreigners are generally perceived as guests and treated with respect and care. Basotho also enjoy good relations with large numbers of their white South African neighbors.

What Might a Volunteer Face?

Possible Issues for Female Volunteers

Lesotho is mostly an agrarian and traditional place, and specific gender roles are still significant in Basotho culture. Women may be expected to fulfill certain domestic duties that are not expected of men. Women may be expected to defer to men in a workplace setting. Additionally, female Volunteers often receive marriage proposals, professions of love, and other unwanted attention from men. Some female Volunteers find this type of attention very difficult to handle. Peace Corps attempts to teach Volunteers coping mechanisms for dealing with these situations.

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.

Possible Issues for Volunteers of Color

It continues to surprise some rural Basotho that Peace Corps Volunteers are people of many different complexions and appearances. Although Basotho are generally quick to accept and support Volunteers of color, historical social divisions based on color and features may still influence a Volunteer's experience.

African-American Volunteers report that they may be expected to learn Sesotho faster, may be expected to understand or agree with all aspects of the culture, and may be seen as less knowledgeable than white Volunteers. Volunteers of color also say it may be easier to form close and lasting friendships and to gain community support. African-American Volunteers may find that their features, color, cultural attitudes, or language make it obvious to Basotho they are not southern Africans. Until they make close acquaintances and friendships, some African-American Volunteers may feel like outsiders.

Over the past few years, a sizable number of Asians (mainly Chinese and Indians) have opened manufacturing establishments and retail businesses in Lesotho. There have been Asian business people in Lesotho for many years, and most get along well with Basotho. However, the business practices of some recently arrived Asians have resulted in negative feelings among some Basotho. There were incidents of looting and personal violence against Asians in May 1991. Asian-American Volunteers are sometimes confused with other Asians. Asian Volunteers, particularly women, have been harassed, especially in the larger cities of Lesotho. At their sites, however, Volunteers have found that acceptance and good relations develop quickly.

Possible Issues for Senior Volunteers

Senior Volunteers can expect to be treated with high regard. Senior women are likely to encounter less harassment than younger female Volunteers. Seniors often take precedence for

seating on public transportation. Younger Volunteers often look to senior Volunteers for guidance and support.

Possible Issues for Gay, Lesbian, or Bisexual Volunteers

Being gay or lesbian is not culturally acceptable in Lesotho, so in general people do not usually express this sexual orientation openly. Volunteers have had to be very discreet about their sexual orientation because if they openly express themselves it can become a security issue. Some Volunteers serving in Lesotho choose to be “out” in the Peace Corps community but not in the Basotho community. Gay, lesbian, and bisexual Volunteers may feel alone and lacking the support experienced by other gay, lesbian or bisexual individuals. The Peace Corps medical officer and Peace Corps/Lesotho’s peer support network are available to provide support.

Possible Religious Issues for Volunteers

The general perception in Lesotho is that American Volunteers belong to a Christian denomination. There may be an initial expectation that a Volunteer will attend a local church; however, most Volunteers find their communities to be accepting of personal choices in religious matters.

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 Lesotho without unreasonable risk of harm to yourself or interruption of service. The Peace Corps/Lesotho 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. People with disabilities obviously exist in Lesotho, although services for them are limited.

Possible Issues for Married Volunteers

Married couples serving together in the Peace Corps are in a unique situation. While they benefit from having a constant companion to provide support, they may have differing expectations of service. One spouse may be more enthusiastic, homesick, or adaptable than the other. In a new culture, married women may be expected to perform certain domestic chores, and find themselves in a less independent role than they are accustomed to. A married man may feel pressure to act as the dominant member in the relationship and make decisions apart from his wife’s views. Some spouses experience differing levels of language ability, acceptance by their community, or job satisfaction.

Each of you will have specific job assignments that may require you to spend time without your spouse during training and throughout your service.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

You will receive reporting instructions from the Office of Staging approximately four weeks before your staging. In the meantime, here are answers to some questions frequently asked by trainees.

I have just been accepted for an assignment in Lesotho, is there anything I should be doing to get ready?

Submit an updated copy of your résumé, along with your personal statement, as requested in the Next Steps Email to the Lesotho country desk at Peace Corps headquarters (send via email to lesotho@peacecorps.gov). Complete and submit your passport application to SATO Travel. Be sure you have completed all of your medical and dental requirements; you must be medically cleared before you arrive at staging!

If you are not sure of your clearance status, contact the Office of Medical Services.

We strongly encourage you to take advantage of the resources suggested in this *Welcome Book*. You will receive several weeks of intensive instruction in-country, but the more familiar you are with Lesotho before arriving, the less difficulty you will have adjusting to the new culture.

How much luggage am I allowed to bring to Lesotho?

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 Lesotho?

Lesotho uses 220 current with large three-pronged round plugs and sometimes smaller two-pronged round plugs like many countries in Europe.

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. Peace Corps/Lesotho allows you to store cash and credit cards at your own risk in the Peace Corps office safe. You will not be reimbursed for lost or stolen cash.

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 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, if you do decide to bring valuable items, jewelry, watches, radios, cameras, and expensive appliances are subject to loss, theft, and laptops, and in many places, satisfactory maintenance and repair services are not available.

Do I need an international driver's license?

Volunteers in Lesotho 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. Volunteers occasionally rent cars to travel in other countries when on approved leave. Volunteers are responsible for finding out the driver's license regulations in those countries.

What should I bring as gifts for Lesotho 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 given their site assignments toward the end of pre-service training. This gives Peace Corps staff the opportunity to assess each trainee's technical and language skills, 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 a few hours from another Volunteer. Some sites require a 10- to 12-hour drive from the capital.

How can my family contact me in an emergency?

The Peace Corps' Counseling and Outreach Unit (COU) provides assistance in handling emergencies affecting trainees and Volunteers or their families. Before leaving the United

States, instruct your family to notify the COU 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 1.855.855.1961; select option 2, then extension 1470, or dial directly: 202.692.1470. After normal business hours and on weekends and holidays, the Special Services duty officer can be reached at the above number. For non-emergency questions, your family can get information from your country desk staff at the Peace Corps by calling 855.855.1961, ext. 2255.

Can I call home from Lesotho?

International phone service to and from Lesotho is reasonably good throughout the country. Calling cards may be used from some telephones—check with your international long-distance company to see if it provides services in Lesotho. Collect calls may also be made but are very expensive. Although the Peace Corps does not provide them, most, if not all, Volunteers in Lesotho purchase cell phones before the end of PST. During the first week of training you will be allowed to call home from the Peace Corps office.

Should I bring a cellular phone with me?

There is no need to bring a cellular phone with you. They are widely available in Lesotho. Many Volunteers use them to stay in touch with each other and the U.S. There are a few sites where cell phone signals do not exist. In some cases Volunteers have both Lesotho and South African phone numbers, depending on coverage in these areas.

Will there be email and Internet access?

Should I bring my computer?

The training site does not have Internet facilities. Maseru and some camptowns (district capitals) have Internet cafés or Remote Volunteer Resource Centers. Make sure your email service has quick-loading pages (like gmail) because connections are slow here. Many Volunteers have problems with Hotmail on some servers here. It is best to get used to life without regular phone and Internet capabilities, as this is a reality for many Volunteer sites in Lesotho.



WELCOME LETTERS FROM Lesotho VOLUNTEERS

Khotso!

Congratulations on being assigned to serve in Lesotho (pronounced Le-su-tu, in case you haven't figured that out yet), southern Africa's mountain kingdom.

We are second-year Volunteers living in the district of Mafeteng. We both work as primary resource teachers in rural villages where we serve up to three elementary schools and all the teachers and administrators therein (upwards of 25 educators). Most primary resource teachers focus on teacher observations, workshops, and other aspects of professional development, though every site - not to mention every school - is unique, with their own ambitions and needs.

Between the two of us, one lives in a small, tin-roofed, mud-walled hut near the top of a mountain with the other lives in a brick and thatch *rondavel*, the traditional Basotho home. Even though we both technically live in what's designated as lowland territory, both sites feature sweeping views of mountains near and distant, rolling hills, and fields of maize. While neither of us has running water or electricity in our homes (this is usually the standard for Volunteers), water taps are never far off and there are opportunities to charge small electronics (i.e., iPods, cell phones, occasionally laptops) by relying on personal solar panels or the electricity of neighbors.

Most other Volunteers are placed in rural or semirural villages throughout the country and live within a reasonable proximity to a "camp town." These are small urban hubs that are Lesotho's equivalent to county seats. Camp towns generally contain most modern conveniences, including grocery stores, Internet cafes and ATMs.

The following advice is based on our own experiences thus far:

- You will not need to pack half of your house in order to endure two years of Peace Corps service. Most necessities can be found in Lesotho. Other items (e.g., good coffee, sports equipment, etc.) can be purchased in South Africa when on vacation there. The postal service is also reliable and receiving packages from friends/family is a terrific way to judge just how much they love you (just kidding! Kind of).
- Sturdy, easy-to-clean, professional/business casual clothes are important for work in the Peace Corps Office and at your schools. The more versatile the clothes the better, and be sure to pack for all four seasons, especially winter (*especially winter*).
- In terms of must-haves, most Volunteers recommend bringing compressible sleeping gear (i.e., pads, bags, pillows), backpacks (recommended 35-60 liters), laptops (for word processing and the occasional cinema screening), iPods, short-wave radios, etc. More comprehensive lists do exist, but we recommend you use them as a guide to what you might want, rather than essentials that you definitely need.

- Books are heavy to pack so choose a few must-reads and learn to rely on the tremendous lending library currently circulating in the country.
- Cell phones in Lesotho are readily available and, depending on the mode, can access basic Internet sites, including Facebook. Most Volunteers use this as an alternative or supplement to writing snail mail to the States.
- Take a deep breath. Yes, there'll be hardships. There will also be outrageously wonderful experiences. Peace Corps/Lesotho is like a second family; you'll have support from your peer Volunteers, as well as the relationships you form in your communities.

So welcome to Lesotho! Here's your first Sesotho lesson (it's also the country's motto, so get it down):

Khoto (Peace). Pula (Rain). Nala (Prosperity).

All the best, Dustin and Joey (ED 10)

Khotso mokhotsi (Peace friend),

Congratulations on your invitation to serve in the beautiful mountainous country of Lesotho!

This letter is to welcome you and give one Volunteer's perspective on service in Lesotho. Every Volunteer's service is unique and depends on the site and Volunteer. However, one common theme is that service in Peace Corps/Lesotho is eye opening and life changing.

I am a secondary teacher at a rural high school in northernmost district of Butha Butha. Last year I taught maths (yes, math is plural) and life skills (a class that focuses on physical and mental health with a particular focus on HIV/AIDS prevention). There are 20 teachers at my school for approximately 450 students. My classes range from 30-75 students. School is entirely in English, but it is the second language for most people here. Communication with students is sometimes a challenge and I have learned to speak very slowly. I took Spanish throughout high school and I imagine it is as if every subject were taught in Spanish. That being said, many students enjoy speaking English after they have become comfortable with me. By far, the most rewarding part of my experience here has been interacting with my students.

I live in a round mud hut with a thatched roof (called a rondavel) that is a 15-minute walk from school. I don't have electricity or running water in my house. My school has electricity so I can charge my laptop and cell phone at school during the day. I live on the same compound as a host father who has taken me under his wing. Some Volunteers teaching in secondary schools live on school compounds, while others live with families in villages. There are pros and cons to each, but I enjoy living in the village, as it provides a great opportunity to meet people.

There are some things I could not live without. My laptop is one. I use it every day. I have it at school to type lesson plans and calculate grades. I use it at home to watch movies and write emails. Before joining Peace Corps, I was worried that I would be cut off from the world completely. That is certainly not the case. The cell network in Lesotho is very good. The majority of Volunteers have cell service at their sites and those who don't usually can find an area near their house where they get service. I purchased a modem so I can get on the Internet every day to check email, news, and sport scores. Some Volunteers also have Internet on their cell phones. The technology available here has been improving greatly in the last few years, and it is easy for most Volunteers to stay connected.

Other things I love to have: books (only bring a few favorites as there are many floating around the Volunteer community), knitting needles (I learned to knit here with a book I brought), a Nalgene water bottle, a small backpack (school bag size) for short trips, a sleeping pad and sleeping bag for traveling, a headlamp, nice clothes (I am the worst-dressed teacher at my school and wish I had brought more nice clothes. A polo or short-sleeved collared shirt are acceptable for guys), my Ipod, Ipod speakers, and pictures from home.

You can buy most other things here. I was shocked by how much is available in most places. And if you cannot find something in Lesotho, you can find it in South Africa (though you won't be allowed out of the country for the first three months after training). These are just the things I really rely on, but everyone is different. My life changed a lot in some ways, but in others it did not. Really think about the things in your life in the U.S. that you cannot do without and bring them! Along those same lines, when you go through the packing list, if there is something on there you think you will not use, don't bring it. (For example, I have not once used a French press). If you discover you didn't bring something, it is not the end of the world. Someone can mail it or you most likely can find it here.

Life in Peace Corps/Lesotho has a lot of ups and downs. Some days are the best days of my life, while others are soul crushing. But overall I am really happy with my experience here, even with the bad days. Prepare yourself for two years you will not forget. Lesotho awaits you!

- All the best, Adam/Teboh matjelo
(my Sesotho name, ED 10)



PACKING LIST

This list has been compiled by Volunteers serving in Lesotho and is based on their experience. Use it as an informal guide in making your own list, bearing in mind that each experience is individual. There is no perfect list! You obviously cannot bring everything on the list, so consider those items that make the most sense to you personally and professionally. You can always have things sent to you later. As you decide what to bring, keep in mind that you have an 80-pound weight limit on baggage.

There are many things that you can get in Lesotho and especially in South Africa (though you won't be allowed to go to South Africa for the first five months). You will be in training for the first two months, and the following three months you are not permitted to travel outside the country.

Volunteers in Lesotho must prepare themselves for extremes in climate (up to 95 degrees Fahrenheit in summer and below freezing in winter). In winter, sweaters and coats are a must because there is no central heating or insulation, and buildings get very cold when evening temperatures drop below freezing and remain cold during the day even when temperatures rise outside. Because of the large discrepancy between nighttime and daytime temperatures, it is useful to bring clothes that will layer so you can shed clothes as the day warms up.

You will do your laundry by hand in cold water, so bring clothes that can take that kind of treatment. All clothes should be washable and comfortable. Bring clothes that are versatile by being both rugged and attractive. Hard to wash items include jeans, silk, whites, and linens. Items that are easy to wash include polyester, cotton, dickies, patterns instead of solids, and lightweight/quick-drying materials. There is a lot of wind, dust, and dirt so clothes need to be washed frequently. Clothes and shoes have a tendency to self-destruct in Lesotho, so don't count on bringing anything back home when you've completed service.

A few items most Volunteers find worth spending money on for good quality are:

- Sleeping bag and pad that compress well
- Rain jacket
- Good durable shoes
- Backpack (carrying big/heavy bags on public transport can be painful so consider the weight and size of things you will travel with on vacations)

Following are suggested items to pack:

General Clothing

Comfortable shoes (sandals, tennis shoes, etc.), durable walking shoes (with good tread), sturdy, good-quality waterproof/Gore-Tex hiking boots, and flip-flops or slippers for lounging around the house

- Sweatshirts and sweaters (hoodies and zip-ups are good)
- Long shorts (for vacations and lounging in the house)
- Warm jacket or coat and light jacket (try to combine jackets by getting a jacket with a waterproof shell and fleece liner)

- Items for cold weather (e.g., long underwear, tights, hat, gloves, scarf, and fleece tops)
- Lots of underwear and socks (harsh detergent and scrubbing are rough on underwear)
- Rain gear (don't skimp on a raincoat; you will get wet. You can easily buy rain boots here, but bring waterproof shoes or boots)
- Swimwear and light gym clothes
- Bandannas

For Men

- Dressy outfit for swearing in, weddings, funerals (e.g., dress shirt, tie, nice pants, and nice shoes)
- Button-down shirts and T-shirts (Polo shirts are good for everything)
- Comfortable and durable trousers, jeans and pants for hiking or gardening
- Dark-colored socks (white ones are difficult to keep clean)

For Women

- At least one dressy outfit for swearing in, weddings, funerals, etc. (e.g., a nice dress)
- Dress shoes that you can walk in on uneven and rocky paths
- Dresses and skirts for work; below the knee (make sure you can walk easily in the skirts; and consider elastic waistbands because weight loss/gain does happen!)
- Blouses (wash and wear) and casual tops such as T-shirts
- Slips for sheer dresses and skirts
- Two or three pairs of pants (many people can wear pants in their workplace, but there are no guarantees. Nice pants, dresses or skirts are required during training)

Personal Hygiene and Toiletry Items

A three-month supply of any prescription medicine you take, including birth control pills (if applicable)

- Any favorite brands of toiletry or cosmetic items (American brands are usually not available locally)
- Hair clippers for men (clippers are available locally so buying here eliminates the need for a power converter)
- Quick-drying camp towels are a good option; towels can easily be purchased in-country, but bring at least one for use during training (big, fluffy towels and washcloths are nice but take up space)
- Hand sanitizer (not readily available here)
- Lots of contact lens solution for those who plan on wearing contacts
- Hand-held mirror (available, but can be hard to find)

Kitchen

- Favorite recipes (remember that some ingredients may be hard to find, particularly refrigerated items)
- Knives (they are not good here; bring one good one to cook with; don't just depend on your Leatherman)
- Spices (if you love to cook, bring some of your favorite spices; they may be available)

here, but you never know)

- Herbal and specialty teas
- Good hand-operated can opener
- Good vegetable peeler (this is an awesome gift for your host mother in the village during training; they typically scrape vegetables with knives)
- Garlic press (if you use one now)
- Sturdy water bottles like Nalgene; bring a splashguard for the bottle as it's hard to drink on a bumpy taxi.

Miscellaneous

- Sleeping bag (for a cold climate, preferably one that packs into a small stuff sack); some Volunteers prefer down bags because of their warmth, while others advise against down, as it can be hard to keep clean and dry
- Lightweight foam or air sleeping pad, e.g., Therm-a-Rest, because sleeping on the floor is tough
- Sleep sack (easy to carry and travel with; prevents bed bugs at hostels and in villages)
- Sheets/pillowcases (unfortunately you won't know your bed size until you get here, but sheets are available locally and you can use your sleeping bag; if you do decide to bring sheets, flannel or light-colored sheets are harder to wash)
- Two backpacks (a large, internal-frame camping pack and a smaller day/weekend pack because you won't want to carry your big pack everywhere)
- Two additional passport pictures (for visas to other countries)
- Sewing kit/safety pins
- Sunglasses and a hat for the sun
- Ear plugs for LOUD music in taxis or for getting a good night's rest
- Swiss Army/Leatherman knife
- Pictures of your home, family, and friends (these are precious commodities)
- Credit cards for travel outside Lesotho (American Express, Visa, or MasterCard)
- Keep a bank account in your name in the U.S.
- Personal passport (if you have one)
- Duct tape (very useful!)
- Books (a few good ones to read and trade with other Volunteers); Peace Corps Lesotho has an extensive library of novels that get passed around
- Travel books (e.g., *Africa on a Shoestring* and South Africa, Lesotho, and Swaziland guides; there are several copies of these books at post and they are shared among Volunteers, but you might want your own)
- Markers, crayons, colored pencils, ink pens, and mechanical pencils (to use and to give to Basotho friends and family; the quality of pens is especially lacking here in Lesotho)
- Supplies for favorite hobbies (knitting, crochet, artwork/drawing, guitar or other musical instrument)
- Zip-close bags (all sizes for travel, around the house, etc.; gallon and two-gallon sizes are especially handy)
- Teaching materials (if you are assigned to the education sector)

Technology

- Battery-operated, solar, and/or crank shortwave AM/FM radio (in some areas only shortwave stations come in well)
- Music tapes, books, children's songs, and blank cassettes
- Batteries (they are available in-country, but are expensive and not long lasting; many Volunteers use rechargeable batteries and a solar charger)
- iPod or MP3 player and speakers (worth the investment if you love music; be sure to load it up as many Volunteers share music this way)
- Laptop (if you love your laptop, bring it; you also may want to load software that reduces photo sizes for easy email)
- Flash drives (nice to have; they are very expensive here)
- Camera (35mm film is available but expensive)
- Solar or battery-operated calculator (can be purchased here)
- Flashlight/headlamp (choose a flashlight with a long battery life/LED; headlamps are great for cooking and latrine visits)
- Electrical adapters (make sure they are for 110V-240V)
- External hard drive
- Portable solar charger (e.g., Solio) is great for charging cellphones and Ipods



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 the 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 Number:

Responding to an Invitation: Office of Placement, x1840, 202.692.1840

Country Information: Heidi Broekemeier, x2255, 202.692.2255 Lesotho@peacecorps.gov

Plane Tickets, Passports, Visas, or other travel matters: CWT SATO Travex1170, 202.692.1170

Legal Clearance: Office of Placement, x1840, 202.692.1840

Medical Clearance and Forms Processing (includes dental): Screening Nurse, x1500, 202.692.1500

Medical Reimbursements (handled by a subcontractor): 800.818.8772

Loan Deferments, Taxes, Financial Operations: x1770, 202.692.1770

Readjustment Allowance Withdrawals, Power of Attorney, Staging (Pre-Departure Orientation), and Reporting Instructions: Office of Staging, x1865, 202.692.1865

Note: You will receive comprehensive information (hotel and flight arrangements) three to five weeks prior to departure. This information is not available sooner.

Family Emergencies (to get information to a Volunteer overseas) 24 hours: Counseling & Outreach Unit (COU), x1470, 202.692.1470