

THE PEACE CORPS WELCOMES YOU TO

MOROCCO



A PEACE CORPS PUBLICATION FOR NEW VOLUNTEERS
January 2015

MAP OF MOROCCO



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A WELCOME LETTER

A'salaam alaikum,

The staff and current Volunteers in Morocco warmly welcome you and look forward to your arrival in this country in these challenging and changing times. Morocco is a beautiful country with wonderfully hospitable people. If you choose to be a Peace Corps Volunteer here, you will find a unique opportunity to serve others, form close friendships with Moroccan colleagues and families, and work in a country that needs your skills and where your commitment will be tested on a daily basis.

We hope this welcome book, with input from both Volunteers and staff, will be a resource that helps answer some of your initial questions and concerns about Morocco itself, the Peace Corps program here, and what you can do to prepare for service. It is by no means comprehensive, but we trust it will offer you some useful information ahead of your arrival. We recommend you share this book with your family and friends as well, to help answer some of their questions.

Your two-year commitment to Peace Corps service should not be made casually. It is a commitment you will make repeatedly and in many different ways throughout your service. You will be challenged in every way imaginable and your patience likely will be tested to the limits both during training and throughout your service.

However, having a positive attitude, enthusiasm, patience, and a commitment to serve, learn, grow and become part of another community will serve you well. The staff is ready to support you; however you are the primary architect of what your success as a Peace Corps Volunteer will be. We are pleased that you are choosing this opportunity to serve the people of Morocco with your skills, and to participate in an experience that will change how you view the world and yourself.

We look forward to meeting you soon!

Ellen M. Paquette
Country Director, Morocco

CORE EXPECTATIONS FOR PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS

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

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

History of the Peace Corps in Morocco

Morocco was among the first countries to invite the Peace Corps to assist in its development process. A group of 53 surveyors, English teachers, and irrigation supervisors arrived in Morocco in 1963 at the invitation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Since then, more than 4,300 Volunteers have served in the Kingdom of Morocco in areas such as lab technology, urban development, home economics, commercial development, education of the blind and deaf, rural water supply, vocational education, maternal child health, natural resources management, youth development, marine and inland fisheries, small business development, sports, beekeeping, architecture, and English language training.

History and Future of Peace Corps Programming in Morocco

Peace Corps/Morocco has worked in a number of different program areas in Morocco since 1963. Most recently, in collaboration with the Ministry of Youth and Sports, Peace Corps/Morocco has focused its work primarily in the area of youth development. The Ministry of Youth and Sports' vision for youth development includes developing leadership, life skills, employability, healthy lifestyles, and community service. Volunteers will have opportunities to participate in spring and summer camps as well.

In 1995, Education Volunteers began teaching English in community youth centers (*Dar Chebab*), enabling youth to practice the English they learned in school. While content-based English teaching is still widely used, the program today focuses on youth leadership, strengthening youth networks, building capacity of professionals who work with youth, and promotion of girls' education. Volunteers work with local professionals and youth to promote volunteerism and youth leadership through activities such as sports, study of world geography, libraries, exercise classes, environmental projects, project management training, thematic English teaching, and self-esteem activities for girls.

Peace Corps/Morocco will continue to work with Moroccan government partners to address the expressed needs of the Moroccan people. The program will increase its efforts to integrate gender activities and continue to improve the effectiveness of pre-service training through closer integration of programming and training.

COUNTRY OVERVIEW: MOROCCO AT A GLANCE

History

Berbers were the original inhabitants of Morocco, followed by the Carthaginians and Romans. Arabs conquered Morocco in 683, bringing with them Islam. By the 11th century, a Berber empire ruled over all of northwest Africa, including Morocco and most of Spain. Up until the 20th century, a succession of native dynasties ruled what is now Morocco. In 1904, French and Spanish colonists occupied parts of Morocco, establishing protectorates in 1912.

Morocco became a sovereign country in 1956 when France and Spain recognized its independence. It was ruled by King Mohammed V until his death on February 26, 1961. His son, Hassan II, then ascended to the throne.

On November 6, 1975, tens of thousands of Moroccans crossed the border, in a “Green March,” into the Spanish Sahara to back their government’s contention that the northern part of the territory was historically part of Morocco. Spain withdrew from the territory in 1975.

King Hassan II was the second Arab leader to meet with an Israeli leader and was active in promoting peace in the Middle East. Hassan II died in 1999, after reigning for more than 37 years. He was succeeded by his son, Mohammed VI. The current king, born in 1963, has taken courageous measures to improve political, economic, and social conditions in the country. Dubbed the “King of the Poor” by the French and the local press, Mohammed VI is keen on improving the quality of life in rural areas, raising the social and legal status of women, and alleviating poverty. These reforms have gained him great popularity among the people and made the country attractive to foreign investment. In April 2002, the king married Salma Bennani, a computer engineer, who is perceived as a force for the promotion of women’s issues. Their first child and son, the future successor to the king, Prince Moulay Hassan, was born in May 2003. A daughter, named Khadija, was born in March 2007.

Government

The Kingdom of Morocco (Al Mamlakah al Maghribiyah) is a constitutional monarchy with executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government. The constitution, which dates from 1972, was revised in 1996 to create a bicameral legislature.. The Constitution was revised again and the people voted to approve the revised document on July 1, 2011.

Since 1999, the head of the executive branch has been King Mohammed VI, who holds the titles of chief of state and Commander of the Faithful. The legal system is based on Islamic law and both the French and Spanish civil law systems. Judges are appointed on the recommendation of the Supreme Council of the Judiciary, over which the king also presides.

In February 2011, following widespread demonstrations for reform, King Mohammed VI spoke to the nation and outlined support for reforms. On July 1, 2011, the new constitution was approved by voters and it revised the authority of the king. Based on the new constitution, the king named Abdelilah Benkirane as the new prime minister.

In December 2012, new Prime Minister Abdelilah Benkirane assembled a coalition to form a majority government and named new ministers.

There is a wide variety of political parties in Morocco, and Moroccans are eligible to vote once they are 18 years old. Legislative elections determine the political makeup of the government.

Economy

Tourism plays a large part in the Moroccan economy, and visitors seek out sites of historical and cultural importance and classic Moroccan handicrafts such as carpets, ceramics, and silver jewelry. Minerals such as phosphates and bauxite are found in certain parts of Morocco and are mined for export. Morocco has a mild, subtropical climate, and citrus fruits and vegetables are grown for export to Europe.

Morocco faces challenges typical of many developing countries: restraining government spending, reducing constraints on private activity and foreign trade, and keeping inflation within manageable bounds. The current unemployment rate stands at 9.1 percent, although youth unemployment in urban areas can be as high as 33 percent. European countries buy much of Morocco's manufactured goods and the recent recession has had a negative impact on Morocco's labor-intensive manufacturing sectors.

Although the government has made reforms in the financial sector and state enterprises are gradually being privatized, agriculture still plays a key role in the economy. From the early 1990s up until the past few years, Moroccan agriculture, largely rain-dependent, has been fairly consistently affected by drought conditions. This has an impact on a rural population that constitutes over 42 percent of the total population and that is largely dependent on rain-fed agricultural production. Abundant rainfall in 2009–10 eased some of the pressures on food production and availability, doubling the previous year's wheat harvest; however, this did not solve all the issues of accessibility. Unfortunately, extreme rainfall events in some years damaged some of the country's fragile infrastructure, isolated rural villages, and flooded large areas of some of Morocco's most productive lands in the north.

Long-term challenges for Morocco include servicing external debt, preparing the economy for freer trade with the European Union, improving education and living standards, and finding jobs for its youthful population (about 50 percent of Moroccans are under age 25). On January 1, 2006, the Moroccan government implemented a free trade agreement with the States, solidifying the two countries' existing good ties.

People and Culture

Morocco has a population of nearly 33 million and an annual population growth rate of just over 1.4 percent. The country's birthrate is almost 21 per 1,000 people, and the death rate is around 5.5 per 1,000 people. The average life expectancy is just under 69 years for men and just over 74 years for women.

More than 99 percent of Moroccans are Sunni Muslims of Arab, Berber, or mixed Arab-Berber ancestry. The country's Jewish minority numbers 3,000–5,000. Most of the 60,000 foreign residents, many of them teachers or technicians, are French or Spanish. Moroccan Arabic (Derija) is the official and principal language of Morocco, but various Berber dialects are also widely spoken and Tamazight (Berber) was made an official language in the 2011 revised constitution. As a remnant of Morocco's colonial history, French is the predominant second language and Spanish is widely spoken in northern Morocco.

There is not a lot of interaction between men and women in public, so it may take some time to get to know the people in your community. However, once you do, you will find Moroccans to be warm, generous, and hospitable.

Environment

Morocco has a total area of 172,000 square miles. With an abundance of sand, sea, and snow, the country is bordered on the north by the Mediterranean Sea and on the west by the Atlantic Ocean and extends to the edge of the Western Sahara in the south. The majority of Morocco's population lives in the foothills of the often snowcapped Atlas Mountains in the north. Between the mountains and the Atlantic coast are

plateaus and fertile, well-watered plains. In the extreme south, at the edge of the Anti-Atlas Mountains, river gorges gradually fade into the sands of the vast Sahara.

The “coolest of the hottest countries,” Morocco has a climate that is unlike what many expect in Africa. In the higher elevations, in particular, winter conditions can be close to arctic. In summer, the mountains are hot during the day and cool at night. The rainy season is normally from November to April, and the amount of rainfall will vary depending on the region.

Security Situation

In March 2003, bombings in Casablanca shocked the nation and the world as Morocco has always enjoyed a relatively peaceful environment. Four years of calm followed, which were broken in March and April 2007 when six Islamists blew themselves up in the course of several weeks in Casablanca, killing one other person.

Like many other countries, it appears that Morocco, too, is now faced with the reality of violence from terrorist groups, some that may be affiliated with Al Qaeda. After the 2007 attacks, government authorities pledged to continue to actively pursue known terrorists, terrorist cells, and others who promote or plan the use of violence. By these actions, the government has shown its high level of vigilance and readiness to launch pre-emptive anti-terror police operations as necessary. Most recently, in April 2011, an individual detonated a bomb in a cafe in the main square in Marrakech resulting in 17 deaths. The alleged bomber was arrested within a week of the event.

On February 20, 2011, following protests in Tunisia and Egypt, many Moroccans demonstrated for democratic reforms. Moroccans continue, as they have often, to demonstrate in the streets for a wide variety of issues. These demonstrations have been orderly and not violent.

RESOURCES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Following is a list of websites for additional information about the Peace Corps and Morocco and to connect you to returned Volunteers and other invitees. Please keep in mind that although the Peace Corps try to make sure all these links are active and current, it cannot be guaranteed. 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 Morocco

State.gov

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

Gpo.gov/libraries/public/

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

lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/cshome.html

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

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

United Nations resource book with 2013 statistical country data

Data.un.org

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

Wikipedia.org

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

Worldbank.org

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

Data.worldbank.org/country

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

Connect With Returned Volunteers and Other Invitees

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 Morocco** site: <http://www.friendsofmorocco.org/>

www.PeaceCorpsWorldwide.org

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

Online Articles/Current News Sites About Morocco

www.map.ma/fr/

The site of Morocco's official national news agency, Maghreb Arab Press

www.north-africa.com/

This journal offers commentary and in-depth analysis of political, economic, and business issues in North Africa. *Available by subscription only.*

International Development Sites About Morocco

www.tanmia.ma/fr/

The first gateway that aims to bring together local, Moroccan development NGOs, providing an interactive site for discussion of development-related issues and sharing of information.

www.pnud.org.ma/

United Nations Development Programme (*in French*)

www.unicef.org/infobycountry/morocco.html

Statistical data from the United Nations' Children's Fund

Recommended Books

Books About Morocco

Nearly all of these books are available in the Peace Corps/Morocco Resource Center. Those that are out of print may be available through a consortium of booksellers called Bibliofind or through a university library.

1. Ardizzone, Tony. "Larabi's Ox: Stories of Morocco." Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 1992.
2. Baker, Alison. "Voices of Resistance: Oral Histories of Moroccan Women." Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998.
3. Ben Jelloun, Tahar. "The Sand Child." Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000.
4. Bowen, Donna Lee, and Evelyn A. Early (eds.). "Everyday Life in the Muslim Middle East" (Second edition). Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002.
5. Bowles, Paul. "The Sheltering Sky" (Second edition). Echo, 1998. Brett, Michael. "The Berbers." Oxford, England: Blackwell, 1997.
6. Hargraves, Orin. "Culture Shock! Morocco." Portland: Graphic Arts Books, 2006.
7. Hart, David M. "Tribe and Society in Rural Morocco." London: Frank Cass & Co., 2000.
8. Lowerre, Susan. "Under the Neem Tree." Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1993.
9. Maxwell, Gavin. "Lords of the Atlas: The Rise and Fall of the House of Glaoua, 1893–1956." Guilford, CO: Lyons Press, 2000.
10. Mernissi, Fatima. "Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in a Modern Muslim Society." Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987.
11. Moran, Michael. "Younger Than That Now: A Peace Corps Volunteer Remembers Morocco." Full Court Press, 1994.
12. Nydell, Margaret K. "Understanding Arabs: A Guide for Modern Times." Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, 2005.
13. Pennell, C.R. "Morocco Since 1830: A History." New York City: New York University Press, 2001.
14. Ponasik, Diane Skelly. "Tangier, A Novel." Booksurge.com, 2006.
15. Porch, Douglas. "The Conquest of Morocco." Cincinnati: Forward Movement, 1986.
16. Wagner, Daniel A. "Literacy, Culture and Development: Becoming Literate in Morocco." Oxford: Cambridge University Press, 1993

Books About the History of the Peace Corps

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

Books on the Volunteer Experience

1. Dirlam, Sharon. "Beyond Siberia: Two Years in a Forgotten Place." Santa Barbara, CA: McSeas Books, 2004.
2. Casebolt, Marjorie DeMoss. "Margarita: A Guatemalan Peace Corps Experience." Gig Harbor, WA: Red Apple Publishing, 2000.
3. Erdman, Sarah. "Nine Hills to Nambonkaha: Two Years in the Heart of an African Village." New York City: Picador, 2003.
4. Hessler, Peter. "River Town: Two Years on the Yangtze." New York City: Perennial, 2001.

5. Kennedy, Geraldine ed. "From the Center of the Earth: Stories out of the Peace Corps." Santa Monica, CA: Clover Park Press, 1991.
6. Thomsen, Moritz. "Living Poor: A Peace Corps Chronicle." Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997 (reprint).

LIVING CONDITIONS AND VOLUNTEER LIFESTYLE

Communications

Mail

During pre-service training, you will receive mail at the Peace Corps/Morocco office, which will forward mail to the training site at least once a week. Please do not have packages sent to you during training. After you are assigned to your permanent site, you will receive mail at a local post office or at your workplace. After training, packages should be sent directly to your site, not through the Peace Corps office. Depending on the distance to your site from Rabat, mail may take anywhere from three days to three weeks to be delivered.

Your mailing address during training only will be as follows:

“Your Name,” Trainee
s/c Corps de la Paix
2, rue Abou Marouane Essaadi
Agdal, Rabat 10100, MOROCCO

It usually takes 10–12 days for an airmail letter to arrive from the United States. Surface mail takes from one to four months. Mail that goes through the Moroccan post office is subject to customs inspection, censorship, and currency control. Advise your friends and relatives that mail delivery is sporadic and that they should not worry if they do not receive your letters regularly. Also, they should never send cash through the mail, as it will seldom reach you. Please check the U.S. Postal Service website at www.usps.com for the latest updates on how best to send your letter or package. Currently, the USPS recommends air Parcel Post (not surface mail) for packages, or airmail for letters.

Although having packages sent from home is not recommended because of the unreliability of mail service and the customs fees, if you do have packages sent, brown padded envelopes work well. Make sure they have the green customs label and are marked as gifts, which should prevent the imposition of fees. However, there is no guarantee that fees will not be imposed and fees can often exceed the value of the item(s) being shipped. It is best to wait until you know your permanent address to have packages sent.

Telephone

Telephone services are available in all parts of the country. The Peace Corps will provide you with a cellphone upon your arrival for use during your service with unlimited calls to fellow Volunteers and staff. A portion of your living allowance can be used for additional communication expenses. Public telephones (called *teleboutiques*) suitable for making direct-dial international calls exist in most towns.

The Peace Corps office in Morocco can be reached by direct dialing from the United States.

During normal working hours, the office number (from most states) is 011.212.537.683.780, and a duty officer monitors calls for emergencies after office hours. In the event of an emergency, Volunteers are permitted to use telephones at the Peace Corps/Morocco office to call family or friends, with approval by the country director.

Housing and Site Location

You will be assigned to your permanent site toward the end of pre-service training. Once you move to the site, you will spend your first several weeks living with a host family chosen by the Peace Corps. This family has prepared for your arrival and will provide you with a safe and secure place to live while you continue to learn the language, adapt to the culture, and integrate yourself into the community. After the mandatory stay with a Moroccan family, you are free to change your housing, in accordance with the Peace Corps' safety and security criteria (see the section on Health Care and Safety). The Peace Corps

will give you a modest settling-in allowance to purchase household necessities such as a stove, dishes, and furniture. The Peace Corps will provide additional items, such as a carbon monoxide detector and mosquito nets.

Volunteers in areas that experience cold winters can be reimbursed for the purchase of a heater. Depending on the site, Volunteer housing generally consists of two or more rooms and private bath and latrine facilities. Some Volunteers live in family compounds with one or two private rooms.

While many Volunteers in Morocco have running water and electricity, you may not have these amenities and may collect your water from an outside faucet or well and spend your evenings reading by candle or lantern. You need to be very flexible in your housing expectations, as there are no guarantees of continuous electricity or water. Depending on your assignment, you may be placed in a community that ranges from a large, semi-urban town to a very small rural village. Some Volunteers share a site, while others are quite a distance from fellow Volunteers. A Peace Corps staff member visits each site to ensure that they meet the Peace Corps' safety and security criteria. Staff members also visit all Volunteers intermittently to provide personal, medical, and professional support.

Living Allowance and Money Management

The Peace Corps provides Volunteers with allowances listed below to cover basic expenses. It is expected that the Volunteers keep records of their spending to provide feedback through annual surveys on settling in and living expenses. It is through these surveys that post can request a change in living allowance amounts as appropriate.

The *walk-around allowance* covers incidental expenses during your training.

The *settling-in allowance* covers the non-recurring costs necessary for setting up housekeeping once at assigned site. You will be provided a list of the essential items usually purchased with this money, based on the annual survey data. Please be sure to cover your essentials first. Purchases should be consistent with the modest living standards expected of Volunteers.

The *living allowance* covers everything associated with living in Morocco. Basic categories are food, household items, communication, clothing, local transportation, personal items, discretionary spending, and housing. The allowance is sufficient for effective and safe service at a modest level comparable to that of your host country counterparts.

Peace Corps Volunteers worldwide earn a standard \$24/month in *leave allowance* deposited in your bank account. The allowance is budgeted in U.S. dollars and converted to local currency so the amount may vary due to exchange rate fluctuations.

Food and Diet

A wide variety of fruits and vegetables are available year-round, and all meats except pork are readily available. Dairy products such as yogurt and milk can usually be obtained. Although maintaining a vegetarian diet should not be difficult, you will be confronted with cultural issues when visiting Moroccan families, as they will offer you, and expect you to accept, traditional foods, which includes meat. Thus, vegetarians need to be flexible about sharing the Moroccan diet when visiting friends and neighbors. Fresh bread is widely available and is an important part of the Moroccan diet. Pastries are available in larger towns, and pasta is available in almost any small shop.

Mint tea is Moroccans' favorite drink. It is traditionally very sweet and is served throughout the day. The numerous cafes in Morocco, which are mostly frequented by men, also serve coffee and fresh orange juice. Because Morocco is a Muslim country, beer and wine are not usually available in rural areas.

Transportation

Most Volunteers travel within the country in commercial buses or long-distance taxis (*grand taxis*). Local taxis (*petit taxis*) are available in all medium and large cities. If required for their work, Volunteers are issued bicycles with bicycle helmets. To reduce safety risks, Peace Corps/Morocco prohibits Volunteers from driving or riding on any two- or three-wheeled motorized vehicle (such as a motorcycle) for any reason. Nor are Volunteers allowed to own or drive private cars. Violation of these policies may result in termination of your Volunteer service.

Geography and Climate

Morocco is sometimes referred to as the cold country with the hot sun. The sun may shine most of the year, but the cold can still penetrate straight to your bones. The country has a varied geography, with beaches, mountains, desert, and agricultural land. The north tends to receive more rain than the south, so the majority of agriculture occurs in the north. Moving southward, the landscape changes to desert, turning into the Sahara in the deep southeast. Morocco boasts a popular ski resort in the Atlas Mountains outside Marrakech, and there are flat, hot, dry plains on either side of the mountains. Summer is hot all over Morocco, ranging from comfortably warm temperatures along the coasts to extreme heat (40–50 degrees C/104–122 degrees F) in the southern desert. Winter temperatures also vary from periods of below freezing in the highlands with snow-covered mountains to mild spring-like temperatures in the coastal lowlands. The coastal areas also experience greater relative humidity than inland areas with the southern desert areas being very dry most of the year.

Social Activities

Morocco is more tolerant than many other Muslim nations toward Western cultural norms. Most Volunteers live in small towns or rural settings and need to conform to local customs. Men have more external freedom than women do and can circulate freely outside the home. Women tend to spend more time in the home, taking care of domestic affairs and socializing with other women. Cultural norms do not allow men and women to mix freely outside the home. Moroccans are known for their hospitality, and you should expect invitations to dinner, weddings, and other social functions.

Professionalism, Dress, and Behavior

People in large cities tend to dress in Western clothing; however those in rural communities dress more traditionally. The people of Morocco take pride in their personal appearance. To gain their acceptance, respect, and confidence, it is essential that you dress and conduct yourself professionally. Dress standards for Volunteers are generally conservative. For normal work-related activity, women may wear pants with long-sleeved shirts that extend well below the hips and do not expose the abdomen. Pants (not jeans) and long skirts are acceptable for meetings and/or workshops with ministry representatives. Men are expected to wear long trousers for work-related activities. Clean jeans without tears are acceptable for both men and women for everyday work activities other than participation in important work-related meetings or workshops.

Adhering to the conservative dress codes in Morocco is a test of your motivation and commitment to adapt to your new environment. If you have reservations about this, you should consider the amount of sacrifice and flexibility required to be successful and re-evaluate your decision to become a Volunteer. The Peace Corps expects Volunteers to behave in a way that will foster respect within their communities and reflect well on the Peace Corps and on the United States. You will receive an orientation to appropriate behavior and cultural sensitivity during pre-service training. As a Volunteer, you have the

status of an invited guest, and, as such, you need to be sensitive to and respectful of the habits, tastes, and taboos of your hosts.

Certain behaviors can jeopardize the Peace Corps' mission in Morocco as well as your personal safety and cannot be tolerated by the Peace Corps. Engaging in these behaviors may lead to administrative separation—a decision by the Peace Corps to terminate your service. The Volunteer Handbook provides more information on the grounds for administrative separation.

Personal Safety

More detailed information about the Peace Corps' approach to safety is contained in the Safety and Security section, but it is an important issue and cannot be overemphasized. As stated in the Volunteer Handbook, becoming a Peace Corps Volunteer entails certain safety risks. Living and traveling in an unfamiliar environment (oftentimes alone), having a limited understanding of local language and culture, and being perceived as well-off are some of the factors that can put a Volunteer at risk. Many Volunteers experience varying degrees of unwanted attention and harassment. Petty thefts and burglaries are not uncommon, and incidents of physical and sexual assault do occur, although most Morocco 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 Morocco. 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. Volunteers and families are encouraged to look at the safety and security information on the Peace Corps website at www.peacecorps.gov/safety.

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

Rewards and Frustrations

Although the potential for job satisfaction is quite high, like all Volunteers, you will encounter frustrations. Because of financial or other challenges, collaborating agencies do not always provide the support promised. Moreover, the pace of work and life is slower than what most Americans are accustomed to, and some people you work with may be hesitant to change practices and traditions that are centuries old. For these reasons, the Peace Corps experience of adapting to a new culture and environment is often described as a series of emotional peaks and valleys.

You will be given a high degree of responsibility and independence in your work—perhaps more than in any other job you have had or will have. Often you will find yourself in situations that require an ability to motivate yourself and your co-workers with little guidance from supervisors. You might work for months without seeing any visible impact from, or without receiving feedback on, your work. Development is a slow process. Positive progress most often comes only after the combined efforts of several Volunteers over the course of many years. You must possess the self-confidence, patience, and vision to continue working toward long-term goals without seeing immediate results.

To overcome these difficulties, you will need maturity, flexibility, open-mindedness, and resourcefulness. The Peace Corps staff, your co-workers, and fellow Volunteers will support you during times of challenge as well as in moments of success. Judging by the experience of former Volunteers, the peaks are well worth the difficult times, and most Volunteers leave Morocco feeling they have gained much more than

they sacrificed during their service. If you are able to make the commitment to integrate into your community and work hard, you will be a successful Volunteer.

PEACE CORPS TRAINING

Overview of Pre-Service Training

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

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

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

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

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

Peace Corps/Morocco's Core Competencies are as follows:

- Commit fully to Peace Corps service
- Integrate successfully into the assigned Moroccan community
- Build local development capacity

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

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

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

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

Technical Training

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

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

Cross-Cultural Training

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

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

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

Health Training

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

Safety Training

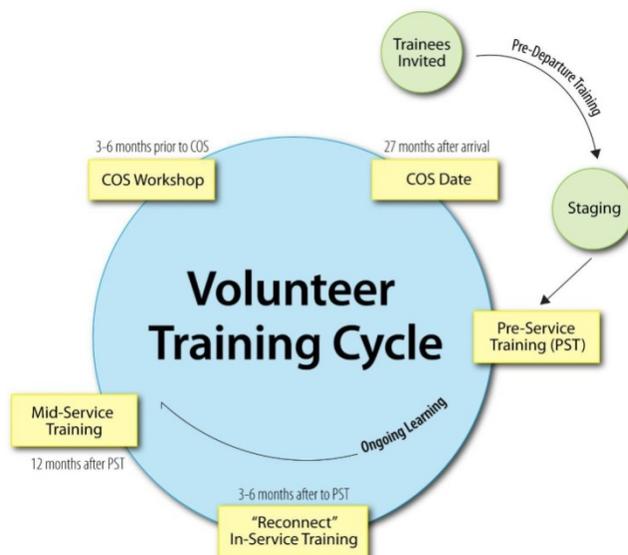
During the safety and security training sessions, you will learn how to adopt a lifestyle that reduces your risks at home, at work, and during your travels. You will also learn appropriate, effective strategies for coping with unwanted attention, how to identify safety risks in-country and about Peace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

Additional Trainings During Volunteer Service

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

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

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



YOUR HEALTH CARE IN MOROCCO

The Peace Corps' highest priority is maintaining the good health and safety of every Volunteer. Peace Corps medical programs emphasize the preventive, rather than the curative, approach to disease. The Peace Corps in Morocco maintains a clinic with a full-time medical officer who takes care of Volunteers' primary health-care needs, including evaluation and treatment of most medical conditions. Additional medical services are also available in Morocco at local hospitals. If you become seriously ill and cannot receive the care you need in Morocco, you will be transported to a Peace Corps-approved regional medical facility. If the Office of Health Services (OHS) determines that the care is not optimal for your condition at the regional facility, you will be transported to the United States.

Health Issues in Morocco

Major health problems among Volunteers in Morocco are rare and are often the result of a Volunteer not taking preventative measures to stay healthy. The most common illnesses in Morocco are minor ones that are also found in the United States: colds, diarrhea, sinus infections, skin infections, headaches, dental problems, minor injuries, STIs, and emotional problems. These problems may be more frequent or compounded by life in Morocco because certain environmental factors in the country raise the risk or exacerbate the severity of illnesses and injuries.

The most common major health concern is bacterial dysentery, but it can be avoided by choosing foods wisely, thoroughly washing fruits and vegetables, and either boiling or bleaching your drinking water. Once you arrive in Morocco you will be vaccinated against hepatitis A and B, meningococcal meningitis, typhoid, rabies, and seasonal influenza. Mumps, measles, and rubella (MMR), polio, tetanus/diphtheria (Td) are now required as part of your medical clearance process. If your Td vaccine will expire during your service, the Peace Corps will give you a booster in-country.

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

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

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

Maintaining Your Health

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

Many illnesses that afflict Volunteers worldwide are entirely preventable if proper food and water precautions are taken. These illnesses include food poisoning, parasitic infections, hepatitis A, dysentery, Guinea worms, tapeworms, and typhoid fever. Your medical officer will discuss specific standards for water and food preparation in Morocco during pre-service training.

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

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

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

Women's Health Information

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

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

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

Your Peace Corps Medical Kit

The Peace Corps medical officer will provide you with a kit 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

First Aid Handbook

Ace bandages

Acetaminophen (Tylenol)

Adhesive tape

Antacid tablets

Anti-diarrheal (Imodium)

Antibiotic ointment

Antifungal cream

Antihistamine

Antiseptic antimicrobial skin cleaner

Band-Aids

Bismuth Subsalicylate (Pepto-Bismol)

Butterfly closures

Calagel anti-itch gel

Condoms

Cough lozenges

Decongestant

Dental floss

Gloves

Hydrocortisone cream

Ibuprofen

Insect repellent

Iodine tablets (for water purification)

Lip balm

Oral rehydration salts

Scissors

Sore throat lozenges

Sterile eye drops

Sterile gauze pads

Sunscreen

Thermometer (Temp-a-dots)

Tweezers

Before You Leave: A Medical Checklist

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

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

If you wish to avoid having duplicate vaccinations, contact your physician's office to obtain a copy of your immunization record and bring it to your pre-departure orientation. If you have any immunizations (other than yellow fever vaccination as directed by OHS) prior to Peace Corps service, the Peace Corps cannot reimburse you for the cost. The Peace Corps will provide all the immunizations necessary for your overseas assignment, either at your pre-departure orientation or during your first six months in Morocco. Volunteers must be willing to get all required vaccinations unless there is a documented medical contraindication. Failure to accept required vaccination is grounds for administrative separation from the Peace Corps. You do not need to begin taking malaria medication prior to departure.

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

Medications supplied may be generic or equivalent to your current medications (including birth control pills).

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

If you wear eyeglasses, bring two pairs (of the current prescription) with you. If a pair breaks, the Peace Corps will replace them, using the information your doctor in the United States provided on the eyeglasses form during your examination. The Peace Corps Office of Health Services strongly discourages Volunteers from wearing contact lenses while overseas unless there is a true medical indication documented by your ophthalmologist. Contact lenses, particularly extended use soft contacts, are associated with a variety of eye infections and other inflammatory problems. One of the most serious of these problems is infectious keratitis which can lead to severe cornea damage which could result in permanent blindness requiring corneal transplantation. These risks of permanent eye damage are exacerbated in the Peace Corps environment where the Volunteer's ability to properly clean the lenses is compromised due to limited access to sterile water as well as decreased effectiveness of cleaning solutions due to prolonged storage in unsatisfactory conditions. In addition, when bacterial eye infections occur, assessment and treatment within hours by a competent ophthalmologist is indicated. This is virtually impossible in the Peace Corps setting. If you feel that you simply must be able to use your contacts occasionally, please consider using single use, daily disposable lenses which do not require cleaning.

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

SAFETY AND SECURITY IN DEPTH

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

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

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

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 Morocco 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 Morocco, 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 Morocco learn to do the following:

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

As you can see from this list, you must be willing to work hard and adapt your lifestyle to minimize the potential for being a target for crime. As with anywhere in the world, crime occurs in Morocco. 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 Morocco of which you should be aware:

Motor vehicle accidents

These represent the single greatest risk to your safety in Morocco. Volunteers are strongly encouraged to wear seat belts when available and to avoid riding in overcrowded taxis, buses, or vans. Because of the high safety risk, Volunteers in Morocco are restricted from traveling at night. If you have to travel for official business, the Peace Corps will reimburse expenses for the safest mode of transport.

Robbery/burglary

Although such crimes have not been a serious problem in Morocco, you will need to take the same precautions you would take in the United States. The Peace Corps requires locks on all Volunteer homes.

Harassment

One of the greatest challenges for Volunteers in Morocco, especially females, is harassment. This is especially true for females of Asian descent. Normally this comes in the form of unwanted verbal attention, but Volunteers have reported incidents such as having small stones or objects thrown at them by children, especially in large cities where they are not known. Strategies for dealing and coping with harassment will be discussed during pre-service training. Volunteers tend to attract a lot of attention both in large cities and at their sites, but they are more likely to receive negative attention in highly populated centers, and away from their support network—friends and colleagues—who look out for them. While whistles and exclamations may be fairly common on the street, this behavior can be reduced if you dress conservatively, abide by local cultural norms, and respond according to the training you will receive. Additionally, invest sincere and continued efforts into gaining the community's trust. By proactively and strategically building relationships with key individuals in the community (i.e., neighbors, hanut [small local shop] owners, taxi/bus station workers), Volunteers can make their site become a place where they feel safe and comfortable throughout service.

Alcohol abuse

Use of alcohol in-site, by a Volunteer or guests, can negatively impact a Volunteer's reputation and credibility within the community and must be carefully considered. Alcohol use can impair judgment and Volunteers who drink must do so responsibly. Alcoholism is not a significant problem, but it is best to

avoid frequenting non-hotel bars, particularly at night. Peace Corps/Morocco has a stringent alcohol-free policy at Peace Corps events and training sites.

Sexual assault

Volunteers in Morocco have rarely been targets of sexual assault. Those who take seriously the training provided on “risk assessment” and dealing with assaults, which are often associated with alcohol consumption and cross-cultural differences in gender relations, can minimize their risk. The Peace Corps urges Volunteers to report all assaults and threats of assault to the medical officer so staff can respond with appropriate support.

Whereabouts Policy

The Peace Corps requires that each Peace Corps country have a “whereabouts” policy and that you, as a Volunteer, comply fully with this policy. Peace Corps/Morocco has developed a whereabouts policy that encourages Volunteers to invest time in their sites, but at the same time realizes that “down time” is also important for Volunteers. You will be expected to follow established procedures any time you contemplate leaving your site by providing notification of your travel prior to leaving your site. The whereabouts policy will be explained in greater detail during your in-country training.

Although this policy will put limitations on your travels, something you need to recognize, it will lessen any risks that you may face while traveling around the country. Most importantly, it will enable Peace Corps/Morocco to locate you at any time should there be any type of emergency, such as those relating to family back in the States or natural disasters such as floods or earthquakes.

Relationships

Sex outside of marriage is illegal in Morocco and may jeopardize your safety or your ability to develop mutually respectful relationships in your community and at your job. In addition, homosexual behavior is illegal in Morocco. Some Moroccans are homophobic, and there have been instances of violence toward individuals who are openly gay. Gay, lesbian, and bisexual Volunteers, therefore, will have to practice discretion. However, Peace Corps/Morocco is committed to providing support for all Volunteers regardless of sexual orientation.

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

Support from Staff

If a trainee or Volunteer is the victim of a safety incident, Peace Corps staff is prepared to provide support. All Peace Corps posts have procedures in place to respond to incidents of crime committed against Volunteers. The first priority for all posts in the aftermath of an incident is to ensure the Volunteer is safe and receiving medical treatment as needed. After assuring the safety of the Volunteer, Peace Corps staff response may include reassessing the Volunteer’s worksite and housing arrangements and making any adjustments, as needed. In some cases, the nature of the incident may necessitate a site or housing transfer. Peace Corps staff will also assist Volunteers with preserving their rights to pursue legal sanctions against the perpetrators of the crime. It is very important that Volunteers report incidents as they occur,

not only to protect their peer Volunteers, but also to preserve the future right to prosecute. Should Volunteers decide later in the process that they want to proceed with the prosecution of their assailant; this option may no longer exist if the evidence of the event has not been preserved at the time of the incident.

Office of Victim Advocacy

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

Contact information for the Office of Victim Advocacy

Direct phone number: 202.692.1753

Toll-free: 855.855.1961 ext. 1753

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

Email: victimadvocate@peacecorps.gov

Crime Data for Morocco

Crime data and statistics for Morocco, which are updated yearly, are available at the following link: www.peacecorps.gov/countrydata/morocco. Please take the time to review this important information.

Few Peace Corps Volunteers are victims of serious crimes and crimes that do occur overseas are investigated and prosecuted by local authorities through the local courts system. If you are the victim of a crime, you will decide if you wish to pursue prosecution. If you decide to prosecute, the 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. The 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 the Peace Corps as soon as you can so Peace Corps staff can provide you with the help you need.

Volunteer Safety Support in Morocco

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. Peace Corps/Morocco's in-country safety program is outlined below.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Diversity and Inclusion at Your Site

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

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

Cross-Cultural Considerations

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

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

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

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

What Might a Volunteer Face?

Possible Gender Role Issues

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

During the pre-service training, trainees receive an introduction to gender awareness in their country of service, and examine their own thinking about gender roles and how this thinking has impacted them. They then learn how to analyze development projects using a gender lens to better understand gender

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

Morocco has a traditional, patriarchal culture. While Moroccan women are gaining more authority in society, there are still few women in top positions in government or in the private sector. Women tend to live with their families until they get married. Thus, female Volunteers can play an important role in modeling behavior that demonstrates the additional capabilities of women. Indeed, gender and development activities are an integral part of the Peace Corps programming in Morocco.

Female Volunteers may find that a single woman living alone goes against the cultural norms of her community. Besides receiving more unwanted and inappropriate attention from Moroccan men than American men, female Volunteers may also have to work harder than male Volunteers to gain the professional respect of colleagues in the workplace. To avoid developing an undesirable reputation, female Volunteers should consider keeping a low social profile and practicing discretion in public (e.g., not smoking in public or drinking in bars).

Volunteer Comments

“What is it like being a female Volunteer in Morocco? Here is a taste: *‘Bonjour! Ca va, ca va gazelle!’* (Hello! How are you, how are you, gazelle?) You may experience daily verbal harassment such as this and perhaps occasional physical harassment. You may receive marriage proposals from men whom you have just met. You may be treated differently because you are a woman. People, men and women, may view you as *muskeena* (a poor thing) because you are alone in a foreign country. Although this may sound daunting, I have learned to adjust and filter the positive and negative aspects of being a woman here. Being a woman allows you into the female world here, which is a powerful place. Through this experience, you can form enduring friendships and begin to understand women’s roles in Morocco.”

“Being a female Volunteer in Morocco is a challenge. Because of the economic situation, many young men are without jobs and university educations. Since female Volunteers have both a job and a university education, we are often resented by local men. We are independent, living on our own in a foreign country, and doing many things that these men wish they could do. As a result, we are often harassed and face challenges in the workplace.”

Possible Issues for Volunteers of Color

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

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

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

Volunteer Comments

“In the beginning, a few Moroccan people looked at me with caution, skepticism, or disgust, like I was ugly or dirty because I have a caramel complexion. I thought to myself, ‘This is Africa, right?’ As in America, oftentimes the lighter you are, the better people accept or treat you. Also, when I go to the hammam (steam bath house), the women tend to scrub me harder than usual, as if to help me out. I want to tell them to stop, that the dead skin is gone and I will always be this color. However, once people have the opportunity to know me, my heart, and my goals, they accept me as one of the family. Living in Morocco makes me even prouder to be an American. At home I am called an African American; here I am just the ‘Amerikania’ (American).”

“I’m Hispanic and Moroccans at first doubt my nationality. They are puzzled when I introduce myself and they hear my name for the first time. ‘That’s not American,’ they tell me. I explain to them how I was born in the States but my entire family emigrated from Cuba. In some ways, they can relate because many Moroccans immigrate to France, Canada, and other countries. As a whole, you will find that Moroccans are diverse, too. They are a mix of Berber and Arabic people and dress differently depending on where they live. They have different physical features as well as various shades of skin color.”

“You have to laugh. As a half-Japanese female in Morocco, I face unique challenges and a multilayered role as a Volunteer. As a female, you will be harassed. As an Asian-American female, you will be greeted by children shouting ‘Kung fu!’ and ‘Bruce Lee, Bruce Lee!’ and you will be called ‘*Chinois*’ (Chinese) and possibly even my favorite: ‘sporty Chinese girl.’ With each of these comments—all meant to engage my attention rather than necessarily insult me—I keep my poker face until I’m out of view and then I break out laughing. Most Moroccans’ knowledge of Asians and Asian culture barely stretches beyond made-in-China dishware and kung fu movies. It is a lack of exposure that allows these comments to proliferate, and offering this exposure is part of our role as Volunteers. I represent not only Americans but also Asian-American females to Moroccans. After explaining the variety of Asian cultures that exist and patiently repeating, ‘*Ana Amerikania*’ (I am American), I slowly get the point across. Little by little, both Moroccans and I realize how it really is a ‘small world after all.’”

Possible Issues for Gay, Lesbian, or Bisexual Volunteers

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

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

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

Volunteer Comments

From Pride Volunteers (the queer Volunteer support network in Morocco): Although homosexual acts are considered immoral according to Islam and are illegal, homosexuality is marginally present in Morocco. There is no visible queer community and finding individuals who are openly "out" is unlikely. In addition, many individuals who have sexual relations with individuals of the same gender do not identify as being gay, lesbian, bisexual, or queer. A majority of Moroccans mostly likely migrate to larger cities where there is more tolerance and anonymity.

Unfortunately, the spectrums of sexuality Volunteers may identify with in America are limited and/or camouflaged in Morocco. Since many Volunteers in Morocco live in rural areas and conservative communities, it is less likely queer Volunteers will encounter individuals of their sexual orientation. If you are accustomed to being out about your sexual orientation, be aware if you are identified in your community as a homosexual, it may impact your efficacy as a Volunteer and most likely will compromise your ability to integrate into your community.

Queer Volunteers typically deal with the same constant questioning by Moroccans in their communities as their heterosexual Volunteer counterparts. Female Volunteers may deal with questions about boyfriends, marriage, and sex. Male Volunteers may have to deal with machismo, talk of conquests, girl-watching, and dirty jokes. There are culturally appropriate ways to deal with these situations which allow Volunteers to sidestep talking about their sexual orientation and history. Peace Corps staff and medical officers are available for support, as is a contracted professionally trained counselor, who is sensitive to issues of sexuality.

In addition, Pride has dedicated its time to building an understanding of and response to the unique challenges facing queer individuals within the Peace Corps community. Through quarterly meetings,

submissions to internal Peace Corps publications, active collaboration with Peace Corps staff, trainers, and programming, Pride works to address issues of equality and respect for all people, regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation. Email pridemorocco@gmail.com with questions or information about support.

Being a queer Volunteer in Morocco does not mean you will put your identity on hold, but you will change the way in which you express it.

“Being queer in Morocco creates the challenge of reconciling your sense of identity with your desire to integrate. When I made the decision to join Peace Corps, I knew I was signing on for a lot of hardship. There’s a reason it was called “The toughest job you’ll ever love.” Most of the difficulty has nothing to do with your sexuality, but yes, some of it will. Just remember most developing countries are much, much less tolerant than the U.S., and for 27 months, life will not be a cakewalk. Expect being a queer Peace Corps Volunteer will challenge you in many ways, and sometimes quite painful ways. For me, being a queer Volunteer in Morocco does not mean I must return to dark closets or shadowy self-denial, but I just find safer ways to express myself within the Peace Corps community. The way I see it, even if homosexuality, as viewed in American culture, does not exist in Morocco, it doesn’t mean I can’t be fabulous behind closed doors with my many supportive queer and straight fellow PCVs.”

“I told myself when I joined the Peace Corps I would have to put my love life on hold until I got back to the States. To my surprise, I met someone in my training group, and we have maintained a relationship ever since. Gender segregation is the norm in Morocco, so we are able to spend a lot of time together. I wear a ring to keep the ‘boyfriend’ questions at bay.”

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

As a disabled Volunteer in Morocco, you will face a special set of challenges. There is very little infrastructure to accommodate people with disabilities in Morocco. There are no ramps in public places, and roads and sidewalks are uneven or otherwise in poor condition.

Possible Issues for Volunteer Couples

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

While couples will live together during their service, they may live in separate towns during their pre-service training. This is a stressful time for most Volunteers, and it can be helpful to discuss in advance

how you will deal with this potential separation. Your partner can be an important source of stability but can also add stress to your training experience. You may feel torn between traveling to visit your partner and focusing on your training, your host family, and friends you have made at your training site.

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

Volunteer Comments

“A real advantage of being married is that I have a built-in sounding board. I think I also encounter less harassment than single female Volunteers. I do get a lot of questions as to why we don’t have children, but I explain that that is Peace Corps policy. People like to compare our language skills, and some days I am *mazeeyan* (excellent) and my husband is *shweeya* (pathetic); and other days I am *shweeya* and Dave is *mazeeyan*. We try not to take it personally! One more thing, public affection is taboo, especially in more rural areas.”

“As to being a married couple, we have spent more time together during our Peace Corps service than in over 30 years of marriage. It is a challenge, but I have one suggestion: This year we have some separate areas. As a result, we have some new and different topics to share with each other.”

Possible Religious Issues for Volunteers

Moroccans are generally very tolerant of religious and ethnic differences, and may or may not ask you about your religious beliefs. Since Morocco is a Muslim country, public profession of one’s Jewish faith, such as wearing a yarmulke, could result in tension with Moroccan counterparts. Volunteers should also be aware that the Jewish community in Morocco is small and there are very few synagogues at which to worship. Proselytizing is not acceptable.

Volunteer Comments

“In general, Moroccans are tolerant of other religions. However, because of the world climate, Jewish Volunteers may hear negative statements or see negative images.”

Possible Issues for 50+ Volunteers

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

Older Volunteers are often accustomed to a greater degree of independence and freedom of movement than the Peace Corps’ program focus and safety and security practices allow. Pre-service training can be particularly stressful for seniors, whose lifelong learning styles and habits may or may not lend themselves to the techniques used. A 50+ individual may be the only older person in a group of Volunteers and initially may not feel part of the group. Younger Volunteers may look to an older Volunteer for advice and support; some find this to be an enjoyable experience, while others choose not to fill this role. Some older Volunteers may find it difficult to adapt to a lack of structure and clarity in their role after having worked for many years in a very structured and demanding job.

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

Volunteer Comment

“I don’t refer to myself as an older Volunteer but as a ‘more experienced’ one. But since mathematically I qualify as ‘older,’ I will try to share a few thoughts. My pre-departure nightmare was that in a group of 80 Volunteers, 79 would be 23 years old, and they would all be laughing at me. What I found was that they weren’t all 23 and nobody was laughing. From the first moment, I found acceptance among my fellow Volunteers, and that carried me through the entire three months we spent together. I truly felt like just another member of the group. I think the fact that I don’t think of myself as older helped a lot. I worked hard on being nonjudgmental, on participating in as many activities as possible, and on not ‘acting my age.’ The truth is you will need the young Volunteers a lot more than they will need you, because they represent the majority and it can get awfully lonely if you don’t make friends. If you can build relationships with people who may be young enough to be your grandchildren, you will do just fine.”

“I am a 67-year-old Asian-American Volunteer and I find it annoying to receive unsolicited verbal attention from Moroccan males, including marriage proposals from men in their 30s!”

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How much luggage am I allowed to bring to Morocco?

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 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 Morocco?

The current is 127/220/380 and 50 cycles. Moroccan outlets accept round two-pronged plugs. Visit the Department of Commerce site for more information on electric current and voltage:
www.trade.gov/mas/ian/ecw/mo.html

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 an amount that will suit your own travel plans and needs.

When can I take vacation and have people visit me?

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

Will my belongings be covered by insurance?

The Peace Corps does not provide insurance coverage for personal effects; Volunteers are ultimately responsible for the safekeeping of their personal belongings. However, you can purchase personal property insurance before you leave (check with your insurance company). Volunteers should not ship or take valuable items abroad. Jewelry, watches, radios, cameras, and expensive appliances are subject to loss, theft, and breakage and, in many places, good maintenance and repair services aren't available.

Do I need an international driver's license?

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

What should I bring as gifts for Morocco friends and my host family?

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

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

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

How can my family contact me in an emergency?

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

Can I call home from Morocco?

It is possible to call the States from Morocco, although the rates for calls are very high. International phone cards can be purchased in large cities that have somewhat cheaper rates. Internet cafes usually have Skype, which is also available to PCVs with laptops and Internet subscriptions.

Should I bring a cellphone with me?

The Peace Corps will provide you with a cellphone upon your arrival for use during your service, however, most Volunteers will also purchase their own Moroccan cellphones. If you would like to bring an iPhone or other smartphone, consult with your carrier to determine your options.

Will there be email and Internet access?

Morocco is very advanced in Internet technology and access. Most towns have cyber cafes (Internet cafes) and the major phone companies offer ADSL and wireless subscriptions. Staff and Volunteers communicate fairly regularly via email, although some Volunteers do have to travel at least an hour, once per week, to access the Internet and check emails (allowances can be made for this travel if deemed necessary by staff).

Should I bring my computer?

While the Peace Corps cannot take any responsibility for the personal items that Volunteers bring to or acquire in Morocco, most Volunteers bring their laptop computers. This is not a requirement for work, but it is a very useful tool for many reasons, including preparing work/action plans, completing quarterly reports, preparing work proposals, completing administrative forms, etc. You will be provided with a flash drive with forms, policy and procedure manuals, and other information. Again, it is a personal choice whether you bring a computer or try to manage with whatever connections may be available locally.

WELCOME LETTERS FROM VOLUNTEERS

Dear Prospective Peace Corps/Morocco Volunteers,

Congratulations! Before starting your Peace Corps journey you are probably feeling a million emotions, such as anxiety, excitement, nervousness, and maybe just a little doubtfulness. Don't worry, this is completely normal! Yes, you should be excited, but, no, you shouldn't doubt yourself. It's not important what school you graduated from, what your degree is, or even your past experiences. Yes, those achievements can help you, but it won't define you as a Volunteer or your service. It is more important to have a giving heart, a positive attitude, and the courage to put yourself out there. I can guarantee you that the next two years will be very challenging but fun at the same time. It will be hard at times when adjusting to the culture and being away from loved ones, but there is no feeling like completing your first project, forming lifelong relationships, or even the little things such as when town children walk you home.

You will have many opportunities to create wonderful relationships with host country nationals, other Peace Corps Volunteers, and with the Peace Corps staff. These relationships will help you through the successes and problems related to your work, and they will be there to carry you through the emotional hardships. I have enjoyed every single day of my service. I have had many amazing days and a handful of bad ones, but that is what makes this experience so unique. You will definitely grow to become a person who can face any challenge with confidence and perseverance. You will find yourself here, out of all places, and be surprised how much your perception will change about the world in the next two years.

Good luck, and get ready for Morocco! You all will be great.

—*Mari Yogi*

Dear Prospective Volunteers,

I thought you might like to hear some of the things one seven-month YD'er wishes he had known at the beginning of his service.

- 1) You don't have to wait to be blessed: One difficult aspect of working in the Peace Corps is ambiguity. If you find yourself sitting somewhere paralyzed and unsure of what to do, realize that you have something to offer. You don't have to wait for someone to give you the responsibility, just start engaging with the youth and share with them something that you love to do!
- 2) Don't let yourself become jaded or negative during your service. You'll meet many people with many strong convictions, some of whom will try to influence your attitudes about Moroccans, the Peace Corps, etc. Remember that all negativity is at some level another person's projection. Even upbeat advice can be a projection, but of what we wish we could do better (this letter included)! Be careful about relying too heavily on advice: Have your own experiences!
- 3) Don't be satisfied by making good only in prescribed ways: The Peace Corps provides a great framework called Youth in Development for you to launch your service. This framework helps create a community of Volunteers engaged in similar activities that are designed to provide support to Moroccan youth. Don't limit the scope of your efforts and thinking, taking the derring-do out of your development work. Use the Peace Corps community and your host community to find inspiration and ideas. Success is also measured in the eyes of your neighbors.

Good luck!

—*Yusuf Saei*

PACKING LIST

This list has been compiled by Volunteers serving in Morocco and is based on their experience. **Use it as an informal guide in making your own list, bearing in mind that each experience is individual.**

There is no perfect list! You obviously cannot bring everything on the list, so consider those items that make the most sense to you personally and professionally. You can always have things sent to you later. As you decide what to bring, keep in mind that you have a 100-pound weight limit on baggage. And remember, you can get almost everything you need in Morocco.

General Clothing

- Lightweight, waterproof jacket (e.g., a windbreaker/rain jacket)
- Heavy jacket or waterproof shell to wear over layers
- A few sweatshirts, fleece tops, or sweaters for cool evenings; cardigans for layering for females
- Bathing suit
- Bandanas, scarves, or handkerchiefs (indispensable for dusty road trips, to keep your head warm in winter, cover shoulders, keep sun/sand out of your face; available in Morocco)
- Several long skirts/dresses that extend beyond the knee, preferably to ankles (for women); pairs of khaki trousers (for men)
- Long-sleeved shirts/blouses (for women, that cover the derriere)
- Athletic shorts (for sports or leisure time in your home only; not to wear in your village/town)
- Pants/jeans
- One dressy outfit (for swearing in or weddings)
- Leggings to wear under long skirts or pants (Lycra can be hot in summer, leggings available in Moroccan souqs)
- T-shirts (without controversial slogans on politics, drugs, or sex)
- A favorite hat, especially wide-brimmed for the hot sun (available easily and cheaply in Morocco)
- Wool or fleece hat, scarf, and gloves
- Two pairs thermal underwear (even warmer sites are cold in winter)

In summer, it gets hot (over 100 degrees in many sites) so bring lightweight night clothing. In winter it can get to freezing (even in the desert), and you will want to layer all your clothes. Bring warmer clothes, such as leggings, thermal underwear, and undershirts. Your home—without AC and with minimal heat—is likely to have a temperature similar to outside.

For Women

- Good bras and underwear (hard to find in Morocco without paying a high price)
- Shirts that you wear in your site will have sleeves at least past your elbows and should cover your derriere. Pants and skirts should be at least mid-calf but preferably ankle-length. In bigger towns you can show slightly more skin, but in site it's best to dress conservatively.
- A purse that slings across your body, closes securely, and is not easily cut
- Pashmina type wrap or scarf (available in Morocco) to cover when wearing V-neck top

Shoes

- Sturdy sandals (e.g. Chaco or Teva)
- All-purpose shoes (that you can walk, run, and/or bike in)
- Flip-flops/shower shoes
- Sneakers or hiking boots
- For women, one pair of dress shoes, preferably flat

Personal Hygiene and Toiletry Items

All of the following items are available in Morocco, but they are sometimes expensive and may not be of the quality you are used to.

- Razors
- Makeup; if you have tan or dark skin, bring a supply of your foundation/powder, as darker colors and bronzers are hard to find in Morocco
- Tweezers (a good, sharp pair is hard to find in Morocco)
- Lotion if you like a specific brand; can be purchased in country otherwise
- Favorite sunscreen (one type of SFP 30 sunscreen in medical kit; local brands are expensive)
- Lip balm (Chapstick comes in the medical kit, but you may want to bring a different brand)
- Tampons (OB and Kotex available in large cities for a price; consider DivaCup or something similar)
- Contact lens solution (Bausch & Lomb's Renu brand is available in the capital; if you require a special brand, bring a two-year supply because the Peace Corps does not provide contact lens supplies)
- Any favorite brands of personal hygiene products (shampoo, conditioner, toothpaste, deodorant, etc.; but all available in Morocco)
- Scissors or other hair-cutting device (there is usually at least one Volunteer in a group who can cut hair)
- Three-month supply of any prescription drugs you take (to last until the medical unit at the Peace Corps can order them)
- Two pairs of prescription eyeglasses, if you wear them; also consider bringing a repair kit

Miscellaneous

- Water bottle (e.g., Nalgene or Camelbak)
- Hand wipes or hand sanitizer (to last for first week or so; available in-country)
- Pillowcase (host family provides sheets and, after that, Volunteers can buy in-country). Some PCVs suggest bringing double bed sheets.
- Swiss Army knife/Leatherman, or the equivalent
- Bicycle gloves (if you use them at home)
- Duct tape (you would not believe all of its uses)
- Two good-quality, lightweight towels (towels can be purchased in Morocco, but are relatively expensive)
- Maps (good for traveling and wall hangings)
- Money belt or other means to conceal your passport and valuables when traveling (not necessary at site)
- Frisbee, Hacky Sack, and travel-sized games (Yahtzee, cards, Uno, etc.)
- Sleeping bag and pad; only bring if you are into camping and plan on doing it while here
- Basic supplies for teaching/activities, including art supplies such as construction paper, colored pencils, markers, index cards (Good art supplies are hard to get, except in Rabat where they are expensive. Consider having them shipped later)
- Lightweight exercise equipment (e.g., jump rope, yoga items)
- Journals
- Plenty of pictures of your home, family, and friends
- Postcards from home to share
- Pocket-sized French-English dictionary
- Sunglasses widely available, yet not often with UV protection
- Backpack or durable duffel bag for weeklong trips
- Day pack or small collapsible sack

- A few books, though there is a large selection at post

Kitchen

You can easily buy most kitchen supplies—dishes, pots, glasses, and utensils—in Morocco. There are, however, a few items we highly recommend bringing:

- Plastic food storage bags (freezer bags are best)
- Favorite spices, e.g., dill, parmesan cheese, taco seasonings, red pepper flakes
- Good vegetable peeler; priceless if you cook a lot
- French coffee press or drip coffee cone (optional; stovetop makers widely used and available in Moroccan markets, French coffee press also available in larger towns in Morocco, filters for drip available)
- Favorite cookbook (a Volunteer-produced cookbook filled with recipes using locally available ingredients in-country will be given at PST)

Electronics

- Flashlight or headlamp with extra batteries (a small Maglite is great, but bring extra bulbs; or an LED flashlight, the bulbs last longer and take less energy)
- Laptop computer (be sure to insure it, and bring a good surge protector and backup disks to fix software problems)
- External hard drive (to store music, files, movies, etc.) and/or large flash drive, recommended for carrying large files
- Music and videos stored in laptop or portable music device
- Good-quality adapter for electronic gadgets (Morocco uses 220 volts)
- Electric or solar-powered battery charger and rechargeable batteries
- Camera supplies
- Travel alarm clock (battery-operated)
- Shortwave radio, for listening to programs on the VOA and the BBC
- Surge protectors can be purchased here. It should be noted that the extreme temperature changes between winter and summer take a toll on all electronic hardware.

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: 855.855.1961, ext. 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. Information about loan deferment is online here: peacecorps.gov/loans/.
- 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, then extension number (see below)

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

For Questions About	Staff	Toll-free extension	Direct/Local
Responding to an invitation	Office of Placement	ext. 1840	202.692.1840
Country information	Morocco CDO	ext. 2419 morocco@peacecorps.gov	202.692.2419
Plane tickets, passports, visas, or other travel matters	CWT SATO Travel	ext. 1170	202.692.1170
Legal clearance:	Office of Placement	ext. 1840	202.692.1840
Medical clearance and forms processing (includes dental)	Screening Nurse	ext. 1500	202.692.1500
Medical Applicant Portal questions			amsadmin@peacecorps.gov
Medical reimbursements (handled by a subcontractor)			800.544.1802
Loan deferments, taxes, financial operations		ext. 1770	202.692.1770
Readjustment allowance withdrawals, power of attorney, staging (pre-departure orientation), and reporting instructions	Office of Staging	ext. 1865	202.692.1865
New Volunteer Portal questions			staging@peacecorps.gov
<i>Note: You will receive comprehensive information (hotel and flight arrangements) three to five weeks prior to departure. This information is not available sooner.</i>			
Family emergencies (to get information to a Volunteer overseas) 24 hours	Counseling and Outreach Unit	ext. 1470	202.692.1470
Office of Victim Advocacy		ext. 1753 24 hours (call or text)	202.692.1753 202.409.2704