

THE PEACE CORPS WELCOMES YOU TO

# PARAGUAY



**A PEACE CORPS PUBLICATION FOR NEW VOLUNTEERS**

- June 2013 CCD



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# A WELCOME LETTER

Welcome to the toughest job you'll ever love. You may recall this as a former tagline for the Peace Corps. It's not in quotation marks because it is the reality that Volunteers live every day here in their communities. Whether it becomes true for you largely depends on you and your commitment to serve the people of Paraguay for two years as a Peace Corps Volunteer.

I want to welcome you to Peace Corps/Paraguay. My expectation, and that of the staff in Paraguay, is that you will embrace this challenge, demonstrate your professionalism and commitment, and make long-lasting friendships and contributions to Paraguayan development, just as thousands have done since the first Volunteers arrived in 1967.

This *Welcome Book* was prepared jointly by Volunteers and staff. We hope that this resource will help to answer some of your questions and concerns about Paraguay itself, the Peace Corps program in Paraguay, and what you can do to prepare for service. It is by no means comprehensive, but we trust that it will offer you some useful information ahead of your arrival. We recommend that you share this book with your family as well.

The Paraguayan people make this country an excellent place to be a Peace Corps Volunteer. After you get over the initial shock of having lost most of your privacy because of your guest status, you will find that Paraguayans are very friendly and compassionate. They love to laugh and tell jokes and stories. This makes it important for you to consider two fundamental points as you prepare for your arrival here. First, be prepared to not take yourself too seriously. Paraguayans will laugh heartily at your language mistakes, and comment on everything from your clothing to your hairstyle to your ethnicity and your weight. To the degree you can take a good-natured ribbing, and engage their friendly witticisms with your own, you will find that Paraguayans will “take a shining” to you. Achieving this will not mean that you do not take your

job seriously; it just means that you will have recognized that laughter is an integral part of the human development process. Second, please be prepared to initially practice engaging Paraguayans as people, and then, as people with whom you've come to do development work. Establishing this personal rapport and friendship is not just the Paraguayan way; it's just plain good manners and essential to good sustainable development work.

It is important to underscore that development work here in Paraguay, as in many other places in the world, is a really difficult job. Another challenge you will face is motivating people to engage in, and stick with, a process of working together to assess their current reality and implementing a plan to change that reality. This challenges and frustrates most development professionals. It will probably challenge and frustrate you, too. Your degree of self-described "success" as a development professional here will depend on your ability and effort to meet those challenges and frustrations with professionalism, commitment, and personal aplomb.

Peace Corps/Paraguay has an excellent staff that is committed to supporting you in your 11-week pre-service training period and throughout your two years of service. Our pre-service training staff will help you learn Spanish and Guaraní, and identify strategies to integrate into your community and work. It may be helpful to you to begin now to study up on Spanish and begin preparing for your immersion—Volunteers have commented that it helps to build confidence as one prepares for arrival to Paraguay.

I want to thank you for your commitment to serve the people of Paraguay. We look forward to meeting you and working with you during what is certain to be one of the most challenging and rewarding periods of your life!

Best regards,  
Donald Clark  
Country Director

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## CORE EXPECTATIONS

### FOR PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS

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

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

9. Recognize that you will be perceived, in your host country and community, as a representative of the people, cultures, values, and traditions of the United States of America
10. Represent responsibly the people, cultures, values, and traditions of your host country and community to people in the United States both during and following your service

## PEACE CORPS/PARAGUAY HISTORY AND PROGRAMS

### History of the Peace Corps in Paraguay

The Peace Corps has been working in Paraguay since 1967, and the country is one of the oldest continuously operating posts in the agency. After the government of Paraguay and the Peace Corps signed a joint agreement on November 4, 1966, the first Volunteers arrived in 1967 to work in agricultural extension in rural areas. Before long, projects were also established in the health and education sectors. Nearly 3,000 Peace Corps Volunteers have served in Paraguay since 1967, and more than 40 years later, an average of 130 Volunteers arrive each year. Today, approximately 200 Volunteers are working in agriculture, community economic development, education, environment, and health. Many former Paraguay Volunteers continue to stay informed about the country's affairs and assist in development efforts in the country—years after they completed their service. At the same time, returned Volunteers have contributed a great deal to increasing Americans' knowledge and appreciation of Paraguay and its people.

### History and Future of Peace Corps Programming in Paraguay

Peace Corps/Paraguay works in the five major projects of agriculture, community economic development, education, environment, and health. The focus of the agriculture sector is to increase farm productivity and crop diversification of small-scale farmers while ensuring sustained food crop availability for families. Agriculture Volunteers work in two areas: crop extension and beekeeping extension. Crop extension Volunteers assist farmers in implementing new agricultural practices related to vegetable production, soil conservation, pest management, small animal husbandry, and the marketing of new products. Beekeeping extension Volunteers address crop diversification and promote beekeeping as a viable option for income generation. Beekeeping has proved to be a suitable project for any family member, including single mothers, who are often the poorest of the poor. Agriculture Volunteers work mainly with extension agents and representatives from different agencies and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).

Paraguay suffers from an alarming rate of unemployment and underemployment. Peace Corps/Paraguay's community economic development project works to create jobs and increase incomes for low-income Paraguayans by providing technical training and assistance to small business owners, promoting entrepreneurship among urban and suburban youth, and helping families to better use their resources. The Volunteers work with committees, associations, youth groups, and cooperative education committees to strengthen local capacity in the areas of management, accounting, marketing, finance, entrepreneurship, and educational programs. Volunteers in this sector also help community groups work well with their municipalities and work with civil society organizations, neighborhood commissions, associations, schools and high schools—whether they are connected with their local government or not. This helps to increase community members' organizational management and planning capacity, as Volunteers build leadership and use dynamic and participatory methodology of teaching in the classroom setting.

The environmental education and conservation sector has been encouraging environmental awareness in local communities throughout Paraguay for nearly 30 years. The overall vision of the sector is to raise awareness of environmental issues in the communities where we work and to provide practical solutions to local environmental problems at a local level, while also offering tools for sustainable development. Environmental themes addressed by the sector Volunteers are in the areas of deforestation/reforestation, soil conservation, diversification of farm use, garbage management, nature appreciation, and home gardens, among others. Main community contacts are community leaders, agriculturalists, local teachers, school principals, youth groups, and women's groups. Volunteers work in schools, with farm families and, at the community level, through local groups and commissions. The environmental sector Volunteers' work complements the ongoing efforts of the government of Paraguay (Ministries of Education, Environment, Tourism, and Forestry) and NGOs (e.g., Guyra, WWF, Procosara).

The goal of the rural health and sanitation project is to improve the infant, child, and maternal health of rural Paraguayans. Volunteers promote preventive health care and sponsor seminars on maternal and child care for village nurses, parents, and community members. Additionally, Volunteers work in schools to promote improved hygiene and dental health. Volunteers also work in select communities promoting HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention. Finally, Volunteers work with the protection and decontamination of water sources, latrine construction, and the excavation of garbage pits. The Peace Corps' health project counterpart is the Ministry of Health and Welfare.

Until 2010, the education sector consisted of two projects: early elementary education, which concentrated on formal education in rural areas, and urban youth development, which focused on nonformal education in urban areas. These sector projects merged into one project in 2011, under the new name of education and youth development. The purpose of this project is to work with

primary and secondary school principals, teachers, students, parents, and community leaders to strengthen basic reading and math, in addition to life skills and community service. The goal is to improve student performance and enable youth to become an active part of the community as empowered citizens. Besides working with early elementary education and the first cycle of primary school, this project will reach second and third cycles, including secondary education teachers and students in school and community settings, to promote self-esteem building, leadership skills, and values for a healthy lifestyle. Skills that lead to a successful integration into the work world and active citizenship practices will be emphasized. Peace Corps' counterpart agencies for this project are the Ministry of Education, its dependent office for the Sub-Secretariat of Youth, and several NGOs.

In addition to the major projects mentioned above, Peace Corps/Paraguay has four initiatives that cut across project lines and provide secondary work opportunities for Volunteers in all project areas: information and communications technology (ICT), HIV/AIDS education and prevention, youth development, and gender and development.

## COUNTRY OVERVIEW: PARAGUAY AT A GLANCE

### History

Almost no archaeological research has been done in Paraguay, and the pre-Columbian history of the country is poorly documented. What is certain is that the eastern part of the country was occupied by Guaraní Indians for at least 1,000 years before the Spanish conquest. Evidence indicates that those indigenous inhabitants developed a fairly sophisticated level of political autonomy, with quasi-sedentary, multi-village chiefdoms.

The first Spaniards settled in the territory in the 16th century. They were predominantly young men, as few women followed

them to the relatively unpromising region. Following the Spaniards' assumption of power, a mixed, or mestizo, population developed that spoke the language of their indigenous mothers but adopted many of the cultural norms of their Spanish fathers.

The country's colonial history was one of general calm punctuated by turbulent political events. The colony was economically unimportant to the Spanish crown, and the distance of its capital from other new cities on the continent virtually ensured the territory's isolation. Paraguay declared its independence from Spain in 1811.

From independence onward, the country has had a fascinating history of dictatorial governments, from the utopian regime of José Gaspar de Francia (El Supremo) to the suicidal reign of Francisco Solano López, who nearly devastated the country in warfare against the combined forces of Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay from 1865 through 1870. The so-called War of the Triple Alliance ended in the near annihilation of Paraguay and set the stage for the formation of a two-party (Colorado vs. Liberal) political system that continues today.

Following political turmoil during the first three decades of the 20th century, Paraguay went to war again, this time with Bolivia. From 1932 to 1935, approximately 30,000 Paraguayans and 65,000 Bolivians died while fighting over possession of the Chaco region.

Modern-day Paraguayans look with pride on their history of surviving devastating wars and rebuilding their country in the face of great odds. On the other hand, initiative and creativity were stifled for many years during the rule of a series of dictators. From 1870 to 1954, Paraguay was ruled by 44 different men, 24 of whom were forced from office. In 1954, General Alfredo Stroessner took advantage of the strong link between the armed forces and the Colorado Party to overthrow the government; he ruled until 1989.

Although there is little ethnic strife to impede social and economic progress, there is social conflict caused by underemployment and the enormous gap between the rich and the poor. Positive steps to correct these inequities have occurred since the 1989 ousting of the last dictator, and the country is moving toward a fully functioning democracy. However, the tradition of hierarchical organizational structures and generous rewarding of political favors prevails.

### Government

Because of Paraguay's long history of dictatorship, the government has always exercised strict control over the political system and economic activities of the country, including local government activities. However, in 1992 Paraguay approved a new constitution that introduced several changes in its political system. The new constitution calls for a process of decentralization in which certain powers are to be transferred to municipal and departmental governments.

Since Alfredo Stroessner was deposed in a military coup in 1989, Paraguay has undergone a process of democratization. Open elections, liberalization of the press, and public debate of issues have created an atmosphere conducive to change. In May 1993, Paraguay elected its first nonmilitary president in 40 years. In another landmark election in May 1998, Paraguay voted to pass the presidency from one civilian government to another. In March 1999, the assassination of the vice president led to the resignation of the new president. In spite of threats of a constitutional crisis, the presidency passed to the president of the Senate, Luis Angel González Macchi, as mandated by the constitution. The Macchi government, however, was ineffective in making necessary reforms, and the country's socioeconomic difficulties worsened during his mandate. The Duarte Frutos government (2003-2008) began with promise but fell well short of expectations. That paved the way for the upset victory of ex-bishop Fernando Lugo, the opposition candidate. His victory broke the more than 60-year rule of the Colorado Party. Swept in under the promise of reform, the

Lugo government has plodded along, mired in personal scandals and general disorganization. Nevertheless, the government's goals of reducing poverty and eliminating corruption in the public sector remain in place.

### Economy

With an estimated 6.2 million people, Paraguay ranks as the second smallest country in Latin America. The economy is fundamentally agrarian, with agriculture and agribusiness representing about 40 percent of output and employment. Paraguay depends heavily on exports and prices of a few key commodities, such as beef, lumber, cotton, and soybeans. These sectors provide about one-third of the gross domestic product and 45 percent of the employment.

For many years, cotton had been the main source of income for *campesino* (farming) families. However, the export of cotton has decreased over the past decade, being supplanted by soybeans. Paraguay is ranked as the world's fourth largest exporter of soybeans and its fifth largest producer. At the same time, dependence on so few export crops places Paraguay in a highly vulnerable position when there are drastic shifts in international market prices or serious climatic perturbations.

Beef exports have also increased substantially. This shift has contributed significantly to rising poverty among *campesino* families since meat is produced by large ranches with low labor input.

Paraguay ranks as the second poorest country in South America, with a 2010 [GDP per capita](#) of US \$2,860. According to the National Statistical Office, by 2007, 2.1 million (35.6 percent) of the population was still living in poverty and the percentage of those living in extreme poverty had actually increased from 15.5 percent in 2005 to 19.4 percent in 2007. Approximately 1 million, or 15.9 percent, are [unemployed](#).

Household economic patterns in the countryside vary from basic subsistence to full-wage labor. Most families earn a living from a combination of strategies, with cultivation of some food crops and some cash crops, and the occasional outside paid labor of one or more family members. As the population increases and land becomes scarcer, increasing numbers of farm families abandon the land and search for wage-labor opportunities in rural areas or the capital city of Asunción. Of these rural origin migrants, 48.7 percent go to other urban/metropolitan areas, and the remaining 51.3 percent go to rural areas.

A traditional release for Paraguay's unemployed has been Argentina, but this option no longer exists because of that country's own economic conditions. Beginning in 2002, there was a sudden surge in migration to Europe, and primarily to Spain. By 2007, there were an estimated 100,000 Paraguayans living in that country, of which only 11,000 were legal immigrants. In 2007 alone, over 42,000 Paraguayans attempted to enter Spain, and 4.3 percent of them were sent back.

Remittances from Paraguayan workers overseas have increased significantly over the years, from approximately \$200 million in 2000 to \$500 million today.

## People and Culture

In Paraguay, a multitude of customs, beliefs, and art forms contribute to the richness of the culture. These customs and beliefs provide a sense of continuity to Paraguayans, and some may regard change with suspicion. The pace of life and work tends to be slower than that to which Volunteers are accustomed. Indeed, the universal watchword is *tranquilo*, or tranquil.

Paraguayans hold their native language, Guaraní, very dear, viewing it as the vessel that carries and transmits their culture. However, music is undoubtedly the art that has given Paraguay its greatest prestige around the world. It is the country's most efficient means for the dissemination of its culture, even if the

common tunes are known as “waltzes” and “polkas” (*Guaranias* are also a musical staple). Native handicrafts unique to Paraguay include the delicate *ñandutí* lace. Employing great imagination and skill, Paraguayan women produce some of the world’s finest lacework. *Ñandutí*, which is made in a circular design, takes its name from a Guaraní word meaning “spider web.”

## Environment

Landlocked Paraguay, located in the heart of South America, is a place of great physical beauty and considerable environmental diversity. Surrounded by Argentina, Bolivia, and Brazil, it is linked to the Atlantic through the Paraná-Paraguay River system, which flows south through Argentina. The country lies in the subtropics, mostly south of the Tropic of Capricorn. Similar to central Florida in climate, it can be very hot in the summer months and extremely cold in the winter months. Freezes are rare but do occur once or twice each year.

The Paraguay River divides the country into distinct eastern and western regions. Eastern Paraguay is more temperate and has a gentle, rolling terrain with wooded hills, subtropical forests, and fertile grasslands. Rainfall is plentiful for most of the year in this section of Paraguay. So, too, are heat and humidity, especially from October through April, when temperatures typically rise above 90 degrees Fahrenheit. The Chaco in western Paraguay is a low plain covered by marshes, savannas, and dense scrub forests. As one travels westward from the Paraguay River, rainfall becomes increasingly scarce and living conditions become increasingly harsh.

Although Paraguay is in many ways more fortunate than more densely populated Latin American countries, it is nonetheless undergoing an alarming degree of environmental degradation. Paraguay’s deforestation rate is among the highest in the world, and its fragile soils are subjected to unsustainable farming practices that also involve high use of chemical pesticides and fertilizers. These factors and others have led to decreased

agricultural productivity and shortages of firewood, fruits, and  
lumber.

## RESOURCES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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

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

General Information About Paraguay

[www.countrywatch.com/](http://www.countrywatch.com/)

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

[www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations)

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

[www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov)

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

**[www.psr.keele.ac.uk/official.htm](http://www.psr.keele.ac.uk/official.htm)**

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

**[www.geography.about.com/library/maps/blindex.htm](http://www.geography.about.com/library/maps/blindex.htm)**

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

**[www.cyberschoolbus.un.org/infonation/info.asp](http://www.cyberschoolbus.un.org/infonation/info.asp)**

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

**[www.worldinformation.com](http://www.worldinformation.com)**

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

Connect With Returned Volunteers  
and Other Invitees

**[www.rpcv.org](http://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 Paraguay site:

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

**[www.peacecorpsworldwide.org](http://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 Paraguay

[www.discoveringparaguay.com/home/](http://www.discoveringparaguay.com/home/)

Discovering Paraguay is full of articles, recommendations, and links with all kinds of valuable information about food, culture, and life in Paraguay.

[www.lanacion.com.py](http://www.lanacion.com.py)

Site of *La Nación*, a Paraguayan newspaper

[www.ultimahora.com.py](http://www.ultimahora.com.py)

Site of *Ultima Hora*, a Paraguayan newspaper

[www.abc.com.py](http://www.abc.com.py)

Site of *ABC Color*, a Paraguayan newspaper

International Development Sites About Paraguay

[www.usaid.gov/country/lac/py](http://www.usaid.gov/country/lac/py)

U.S. Agency for International Development

[www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org)

World Bank (search for Paraguay using the “Countries & Regions” link in the left navigation column)

[www.jica.go.jp/paraguay/espanol/index.html](http://www.jica.go.jp/paraguay/espanol/index.html)

Japan International Cooperation Agency

<http://www.plan-international.org/wherewework/americas/paraguay/>  
Plan International

[www.unicef.org/paraguay](http://www.unicef.org/paraguay)

UNICEF

[www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org)

UNESCO (search for Paraguay)

[www.worldwildlife.org](http://www.worldwildlife.org)

World Wildlife Fund (search for Paraguay)

Recommended Books

1. Abou. *The Jesuit republic of the Guaranis. (1609-1768)*.1998.
2. Boschmann. *Paraguay – a tour guide*. 2009.
3. Brodsky. *Madame Lynch & friend: a true account of an Irish adventuress and the dictator of Paraguay*. 1975.
4. Caraman. *The lost paradise: an account of the Jesuits in Paraguay, 1607-1768*. 1975.
5. Carver. *Paradise with serpents: travels in the lost world of Paraguay*. 2009.
6. Cawthorne. *The Empress of South America*. 2003.
7. Clastres. *The land-without-evil:Tupi-Guarani prophetism*. 1995.
8. Dyck. *Up from the rubble: the epic rescue of thousands of war-ravaged Mennonite refugees*. 1991.
9. English. *The green hell: a concise history of the Chaco War between Bolivia and Paraguay 1932-35*. 2008.
10. Farcau. *The Chaco War: Bolivia and Paraguay, 1932-1935*. 1996.
11. Giles. *Guarani*. 2006.
12. Gimlette. *At the tomb of the inflatable pig: travels through Paraguay*. 2005.
13. Graham. *Portrait of a dictator: Francisco Solano López (Paraguay, 1865-1870)*. 1933.

14. Graham. *A vanished Arcadia: being some account of the Jesuits in Paraguay, 1607 to 1767*. 2008.
15. Greene. *The honorary consul: a novel*. 1973.
16. Grow. *The Good Neighbor Policy and authoritarianism in Paraguay*. 1981.
17. Hill. *Aché life history: the ecology and demography of a foraging people*. 1996.
18. Hilton. *The General* (In: *Granta*, No. 31, spring 1990)
19. Horst. *The Stroessner regime and indigenous resistance in Paraguay*. 2007.
20. Jaenike. *Black robes in Paraguay*. 2008.
21. Keeney. *Guaraní shamans of the forest*. 2000.
22. Kolinski. *Independence or death: the story of the Paraguayan War*. 1965.
23. Leuchars. *To the bitter end: Paraguay and the War of the Triple Alliance*. 2002.
24. Lewis. *Paraguay under Stroessner*. 1980.
25. Lewis. *Political parties and generations in Paraguay's Liberal era, 1869-1940*. 1993.
26. Lewis. *Socialism, liberalism and dictatorship in Paraguay*. 1982.
27. Lopez. *The colonial history of Paraguay: the revolt of the Comuneros*. 2005.
28. Macintyre. *Forgotten fatherland: the search for Elizabeth Nietzsche and the Aryan colony in Paraguay*. 1992.

29. McNaspy. *Conquistador without a sword: the life of Roque González, S. J.* 1984.
30. McNaspy. *Lost cities of Paraguay: art and architecture of the Jesuit Reductions, 1767.* 1982.
31. Miranda. *The Stroessner era: authoritarian rule in Paraguay.* 1990.
32. Mora. *Paraguay and the United States: distant allies.* 2007.
33. Mora. *Portrait of a dictator: Francisco Solano López (Paraguay, 1865-1870).* 1933.
34. O'Shaughnessy. *The priest of Paraguay: Fernando Lugo and the making of the nation.* 2009.
35. Pallamary. *Land without evil: a novel.* 1999.
36. Phelps. *Tragedy of Paraguay.* 1975.
37. Roa Bastos. *I, the Supreme.* 1986.
38. Saeger. *Francisco Solano López and the ruination of Paraguay: honor and egocentrism.* 2007.
39. Schmidt. *Do you have an Opy: politics and identity among the Mbya-Guaraní of Argentina and Eastern Paraguay.* 1995.
40. Service. *Spanish-Guaraní relations in early colonial Paraguay.* 1971.
41. Stoesz. *Like a mustard seed: Mennonites in Paraguay.* 2008.
42. Tuck. *The news from Paraguay: a novel.* 2004.

43. Turner. *Community politics and peasant-state relations in Paraguay*. 1993.
44. Warren. *Paraguay: an informal history*. 1949.
45. Warren. *Paraguay and the Triple Alliance*. 1978.
46. Washburn. *The history of Paraguay: with notes of personal observations, and reminiscences of diplomacy under difficulties*. Vol. 1-2. 2001.
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# LIVING CONDITIONS AND VOLUNTEER LIFESTYLE

Communications

## *Mail*

Your mailing address in Paraguay will be:

“Your Name,” PCT [for trainee] or PCV [for Volunteer]  
Cuerpo de Paz  
162 Chaco Boreal c/Mcal. López  
Asunción 1580, Paraguay  
South America

Compared with mail in many developing countries, mail between the United States and Paraguay is relatively dependable, but slow in arriving. Letters usually take two to three weeks to reach Paraguay; surface mail can take months. Packages and other types of correspondence are delayed much longer and may take several weeks to several months.

As a result of the departure of two major airlines, only regional carriers serve Paraguay with smaller aircraft, and cargo space for mail is extremely limited. Packages and other types of correspondence are being delayed for weeks and even months at intermediate points, such as Buenos Aires and Sao Paulo, where they await eventual delivery to Paraguay by other means of transport.

All packages from overseas pass through the Paraguayan International Package Center, where postal and customs inspectors determine which packages will be sent directly to the Peace Corps office for distribution and which will be retained for further inspection. Any package—regardless of content, weight, type of packing material, or religious slogans—may be held at the International Package Center (also known as “the package place”

or the “package center”). In this case, the Volunteer will receive a notice in his/her mailbox indicating that the package is being retained. PCVs who receive this notification must collect their parcel/s personally; packages must be retrieved within one month of the date on which the notification is prepared.

Another option for sending packages to Paraguay is by courier services such as DHL, FEDEX, and UPS. Although these services are more expensive, packages do arrive here in 3-5 days. Another point in favor is that packages sent through courier services do NOT go through the Paraguay Postal Service. U.S. Express Mail works in the same way.

Packages with a *declared* value—the value claimed on the green sticker affixed to the package—in excess of \$100 are usually sent to customs. If the package is sent to customs, the PCV will be assessed a tax based on the type of merchandise and its declared value. Volunteers whose package/s is/are sent to customs will be advised to this effect. Peace Corps/Paraguay’s customs agent will do the leg- and paperwork to process and retrieve the parcel. The Volunteer is responsible for paying any fees and taxes assessed, as well as the customs agent’s fees. *Note:* Packages which arrive through a courier may also be sent to customs.

We recommend that you establish a regular pattern of writing or emailing friends and relatives in the United States, as they may become concerned if they do not hear from you for an extended period of time. You may want to tell them, however, that once Volunteers move to their sites and become more involved in their projects, their correspondence habits often change.

Some Volunteers and their families number their letters in sequence to try to keep track of how many have been sent and received. This is a good way to know whether someone is just too busy to write or if letters are not arriving for some other reason.

Peace Corps regulations prohibit Volunteers from accepting gifts of property, money, or voluntary services directly. Such gifts can

cause confusion about the role of the Volunteer, who might be perceived as a facilitator of goods and funding, rather than a person who is working to build a community's capacity to identify local resources. You are not permitted to solicit materials or funds for your community during your first six months at site so you have time to engage the community in project identification. To ensure that any request for funding or donations is appropriate for your project and your community, you must have prior authorization from your program director and the country director.

The Peace Corps has a mechanism in place for you and the communities you work with to access U.S. private-sector funds. The Peace Corps Partnership Program, administered by the Office of Private Sector Initiatives, can help you obtain financial support from corporations, foundations, civic groups, individuals, faith-based groups, and schools for projects approved by the country director. To learn more about the Partnership Program, call 800-424-8580 (ext. 2170), email [pcpp@peacecorps.gov](mailto:pcpp@peacecorps.gov), or visit [www.peacecorps.gov/index.cfm?shell=resources.donors.volproj](http://www.peacecorps.gov/index.cfm?shell=resources.donors.volproj).

### *Telephone*

International phone service to and from Paraguay is fairly reliable and accessible to most Volunteers. Volunteers are provided with a cellular phone and a basic calling plan. If Volunteers want to increase their minutes and/or upgrade the cellphone model, they must do so with their own living allowance. Although not all areas of the country are accessible by cellphone, most Volunteers are able to call Asunción and to receive international calls with their cellphones. Those who call you on your cellphone from the States must dial the following: 011-595-981/2/3/4/5- <your phone number>.

The Peace Corps office, in collaboration with the U.S. Embassy in Asunción, has access to a direct phone line between Asunción and Washington, D.C. This line is mainly for conducting official business with Peace Corps headquarters; however, it is available for Volunteer use after office hours during the week, as well as on

weekends and holidays. Volunteers can place direct calls to the Washington area at no charge, while calls to all other areas are billed at the long-distance rate from Washington. Use of this line is on a first-come, first-served basis. To utilize this service, Volunteers must have a calling card.

### ***Computer, Internet, and Email Access***

Paraguay is hardly at the forefront of the “e-revolution,” but Volunteers increasingly are able to rely on the Internet to communicate with family and friends in the United States. There are several Internet cafes in Asunción, and cafes are opening with increasing frequency even in rural towns. There are also computers with Internet access available for trainee and Volunteer use in the Peace Corps office. Many Volunteers acquire free email accounts and use these computers to send and receive email while they are in Asunción on official business. Trainees and Volunteers also use the library’s computers for work-related matters. Trainees and Volunteers are assigned individual user accounts, which enable them to access the computer, Internet, etc.; these accounts are non-transferrable. Please note that use of PC computers is restricted to Volunteers and trainees. The office now has “hotspots” throughout the complex to which PCVs can connect. Volunteers are also able to buy a portable modem for use with their personal laptops. This cost will be deducted from the Volunteers’ monthly living stipend. Many Volunteers find that bringing a laptop is useful to them for filling out their trimester reports for Peace Corps, watching movies, and accessing the Internet. However, do keep in mind that there is always the risk that these computers may get lost, stolen, or damaged here in Paraguay.

### **Housing and Site Location**

Most Volunteers live and work in rural areas, but a growing number are being assigned to work in urban centers in response to a recent increase in urban migration. The latest census shows that more than half of the population lives in larger towns or cities. Your Volunteer Assignment Description (VAD) should indicate

whether your project site is likely to be urban or rural. All Volunteers spend some time in Asunción because it is the location of the Peace Corps office, as well as the site of conferences and some in-service training.

About 80 percent of Volunteers live in small towns or villages with fewer than 5,000 people, and some of these *campo* (countryside) sites have fewer than 200 inhabitants. Most (but not all) have electricity, as the country has increased the availability of electricity from 24 percent of Paraguay's 3 million people in 1978 to more than 60 percent of the current population of about 6.2 million. Generally, streets in the *campo* towns are unpaved, and there is no running water or indoor toilets. Few people in these towns have traveled outside Paraguay, and many have never even been to Asunción. The only people with cars are likely to be the doctor, the priest, and a few business people, government officials, and ranchers. Horses, motorcycles, bicycles, and ox carts make up the majority of local traffic, with children playing freely alongside roaming cows, pigs, and chickens.

For both rural and urban Volunteers, housing in Paraguay is basic. Volunteers are required to live with a Paraguayan family during their initial three months of service. Some Volunteers then choose to live alone in one- or two-room wood or brick homes; others choose to live with a Paraguayan family for their entire two years of service. Peace Corps/Paraguay strongly recommends that Volunteers, especially single women, consider this option. Living with a family not only helps with community integration, but also decreases personal security risks. If you choose to live with a family, the furniture will be adequate and functional, but probably not overly comfortable. If you choose to live on your own, you will likely need to furnish the place yourself.

Volunteers who live in the capital or other large cities will have easier access to services such as running water, electricity, telephones, public transportation, and the Internet. They will also

enjoy many of the same shopping and entertainment amenities found in similar-size cities in the United States.

### Living Allowance and Money Management

As a Volunteer, you will receive a living allowance that enables you to maintain a modest but safe and adequate lifestyle. While the living allowance is calculated to enable you to live at the same standard as your Paraguayan neighbors, the Peace Corps requires that Volunteer housing meet minimal standards for security and that Volunteers have the resources to maintain a healthy diet and respectable lifestyle. Living allowances are reviewed once a year to ensure that they are sufficient to meet basic needs, and they are adjusted by the Peace Corps if necessary.

You will receive three additional allowances: a monthly vacation allowance (along with two days of vacation for each month of service); a one-time settling-in allowance to cover the initial expenses of furnishing a house or room and purchasing basic supplies; and an allowance, set aside by the U.S. government, of \$275 for each month of service. This readjustment allowance, which is available upon completion of service, permits returning Volunteers to resettle in the United States without undue financial burden.

While Volunteers are expected to live at the same level as the Paraguayans in their communities and are able to do that with the allowances provided by the Peace Corps, some Volunteers bring additional money or credit cards for extraordinary expenses or for travel during vacations. The Peace Corps strongly recommends that cash be held in the form of traveler's checks to prevent loss or theft; these checks may be cashed at "MaxiCambios." The ATMs that are increasingly available in Asunción and other large cities accept ATM cards from most U.S. financial institutions, including Citibank. Peace Corps will safeguard traveler's checks for Volunteers in the office. Cash will not be safeguarded, nor will PCVs be able to deposit it into their Peace Corps bank accounts. Volunteers are unable to open

personal bank accounts in Paraguay due to local banking rules. Keep this in mind should you decide to bring cash, as Peace Corps/Paraguay strongly discourages Volunteers from bringing large amounts of cash.

## Food and Diet

Paraguayans tend to eat more simple meals than people do in the United States. Dietary habits and the lack of agricultural diversity often limit meals to beans, rice, noodles, meat (when available), corn, onions, tomatoes, and manioc. Manioc, or *mandioca* (more commonly known in other countries as yucca or cassava), is the staple food in rural Paraguay and is as ubiquitous at the table as bread is in other countries. Paraguayan food is not spicy and is quite different from Mexican food (for instance, in Paraguay, a tortilla is a kind of fritter). Most Paraguayans are exceptionally generous and will insist on sharing their food, no matter how little they have.

Volunteers who choose to maintain a vegetarian diet are able to do so with varying degrees of difficulty, as it is a challenge not only to find the variety of foods necessary to remain healthy, but to get Paraguayans to understand such a decision. A vegetarian diet is much easier to follow if one incorporates eggs and dairy products, and some Volunteers choose to add fish and chicken.

## Transportation

Most Volunteers live in communities served by a simple dirt road, which may or may not be close to a paved road. Inexpensive bus service is available to almost all communities, although heavy rain can unexpectedly close dirt roads to bus traffic for an unpredictable length of time. While a community may not be a great distance from the capital in miles, getting there may involve a trip of several hours because of the condition of unpaved roads. You will receive assistance in identifying alternative forms of

transportation (i.e., a private vehicle, taxi, or truck) from your site in the event of an emergency. Volunteers may, upon request, be issued a mountain bicycle and helmet.

Peace Corps/Paraguay, as mandated by Peace Corps/Washington, prohibits Volunteers from driving or riding as a passenger on any two- or three-wheeled motorized vehicle (such as a motorcycle) for any reason. Moreover, Volunteers are not allowed to own or drive private vehicles in Paraguay. These prohibitions are in response to serious safety concerns, and violation of the policy will result in the administrative separation of the Volunteer from Peace Corps service.

### Geography and Climate

Unlike more tropical countries, Paraguay does have distinct seasons. Summer (November through March) is long, hot, and humid, with temperatures on occasion reaching as high as 115 degrees Fahrenheit (46 degrees Celsius). Winter (June through mid-September) is short and mild, with periods of cold weather (down to 30 F) and occasional frosts. Because of the high humidity and lack of indoor heating, cold winter days may seem more severe than they actually are. The short spring and autumn seasons usually are mild and balmy.

Because of Paraguay's southern latitudes, the length of daylight also differs according to the season. In the winter, the sun may set by 5 p.m. In October, the country goes on Daylight Savings Time, and by mid-December it is light outside until nearly 8:30 p.m. Paraguayans adjust their social and business calendars according to these differences. In the winter, activities are compressed, and people are in bed by 10 p.m.; however, in the summer, people may not even eat dinner until after 10 p.m. At the same time, activities slow down remarkably during the summer, especially in rural areas, and a long midday siesta divides the workday into early morning and late afternoon periods.

In the eastern part of the country, there is no marked rainy or dry season, and there is apt to be abundant rain throughout the year. Summer rains tend to be short and intense, while winter rains tend to be longer and lighter. There are months with little or no rain and months when it rains nearly every day.

### Social Activities

Recreation in smaller towns often centers on the family, with an occasional dance, soccer game, or horse race to attend. In the evening, many families gather with friends for volleyball games. The losers pay for drinks, which might be soft drinks (*gaseosas*) or beer. People frequently sit in clusters (often limited to one gender or age group) to drink the ubiquitous *yerba mate*, a common local drink made from the leaves of a shrub native to the region, either cold (*tereré*) or hot (*mate*) in the early morning or wintertime. During the hot summer, an important social activity is likely to be bathing in the local stream (*arroyo*). The electrification of the countryside has increased the popularity of “boomboxes,” TVs, DVDs, etc. Volunteers often participate in organized groups, such as ecology clubs or youth groups, that meet occasionally for selected activities.

In Asunción and larger towns, there is a wider variety of options for social activities, including movie theaters, nightclubs, restaurants, and sporting events. Volunteers usually take advantage of their rare weekends in the capital to see the latest movies and enjoy some night life. Volunteers also have access to the swimming pool at the U.S. Embassy while in Asunción.

### Professionalism, Dress, and Behavior

Cleanliness and a neat personal appearance are very important to Paraguayans. You must dress appropriately when meeting with government or other officials. **Shorts, tank tops, and flip-flops are inappropriate except around your home or for recreational activities. Whether you work in a school or office setting, in rural or urban Paraguay, proper attire will help establish your professional credibility. It also reflects your**

**respect for the customs and lifestyle of the people with whom you are living and working.**

Although affluent Paraguayans in Asunción may be influenced by international trends and fashions, most Paraguayans view shoulder-length hair, dreadlocks, ponytails, tattoos, and earrings on men with suspicion. It is not unusual for a person to be labeled a *drogadicto* (drug addict) based on appearance alone. Therefore, Volunteers are not permitted to have facial piercings (nose, tongue, and eyebrow). Tattoos for both men and women should remain covered until Volunteers have been at their sites for at least six months and can realistically judge the degree to which these would be accepted by community members. Female Volunteers should always wear bras outside of their homes. Male Volunteers with beards must keep them well-trimmed and clean. Nevertheless, we ask that men arrive in Paraguay clean shaven for their official identification photo.

If you do not cut your hair and remove body rings before you arrive in Paraguay, you will be asked to do so before you are placed with a host family during training. Adherence to these rules is considered to be a sign of your motivation and commitment to adapt to your new environment. If you have reservations about this, or if you view this as an unacceptable sacrifice, you should re-evaluate your decision to become a Peace Corps Volunteer in Paraguay. If you decide to conform to the country's norms, you will be amply rewarded by the great adventure and lasting friendships that await you.

### Personal Safety

More detailed information about the Peace Corps' approach to safety is contained in the "Health Care and Safety" chapter, but it is an important issue and cannot be overemphasized. As stated in the *Volunteer Handbook*, becoming a Peace Corps Volunteer entails certain safety risks. Living and traveling in an unfamiliar environment (oftentimes alone), having a limited understanding of local language and culture, and being perceived as well-off are

some of the factors that can put a Volunteer at risk. Many Volunteers experience varying degrees of unwanted attention and harassment. Petty thefts and burglaries are not uncommon, and incidents of physical and sexual assault do occur, although most Paraguay 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 Paraguay. Using these tools, you are expected to take responsibility for your safety and well-being.

Each staff member at the Peace Corps is committed to providing Volunteers with the support they need to successfully meet the challenges they will face to have a safe, healthy, and productive service. We encourage Volunteers and families to look at our safety and security information on the Peace Corps website at [www.peacecorps.gov/safety](http://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

Volunteers have a variety of reasons for joining the Peace Corps, but high on the list must be the desire to help others. Most Volunteers bring a high degree of motivation and enthusiasm to their service. These are not lost in serving others, but are necessarily tempered by the process of learning about the daily realities of a different culture. So while Volunteers should not expect to “change the world,” they can look forward to making a tangible impact.

Being a Volunteer requires adjusting to alternative ways of thinking, living, and working. Such adjustments are neither simple

nor painless. The people you work with may have strong feelings of pride and nationalism, so your own enthusiasm for change, however well intended, may be misunderstood. You will constantly need to take into consideration the emotions, needs, traditions, institutions, and way of life of the people you work with.

Your satisfaction will come from your commitment to learning and the flexibility you possess to deal with new values and experiences. After living and working with the people of another culture, Volunteers often develop strong ties that are reflected in strong emotions. Intense feelings of desperation, satisfaction, anger, happiness, anxiety, and peace of mind will crop up over and over. These feelings are all part of the Volunteer experience. But in the end, it is a rare Volunteer who does not feel that the experience was one of the most important in his or her life.

# PEACE CORPS TRAINING

## Overview of Pre-Service Training

Pre-service training (PST) is the first event within a competency-based training program that continues throughout your 27 months of service in Paraguay. PST ensures that Volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to effectively perform their jobs. Training is conducted in Paraguay at the Peace Corps Training Center by the training staff, with participation from current and former Volunteers, program managers, some representatives of Paraguayan organizations, medical officers, the safety and security officer, the program and training officer, and the country director. The length of PST varies, usually ranging from 10 to 11 weeks, depending on the competencies required for the assignment. Peace Corps/Paraguay measures achievement of learning through written tests that have a minimum score requirement, through ongoing qualitative technical assessments of the various tasks assigned trainees, through periodic personal interviews and language interviews, through a self-evaluative process called TAPS, through staff observation of the trainees in their communities, and through conversations with the host families and other members of the satellite community. If a trainee has successfully achieved competencies, including language standards, he/she is then sworn-in as a Peace Corps Volunteer.

Throughout service, Volunteers strive to achieve performance competencies. Initially, PST affords the opportunity for trainees to develop and test their own resources. As a trainee, you will play an active role in self-education. You will be asked to decide how best to set and meet objectives and to find alternative solutions. You will be asked to prepare for an experience in which you will often have to take the initiative and accept responsibility for decisions. The success of your learning will be enhanced by your own effort to take responsibility for your learning and through sharing experiences with others.

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

Woven into the competencies, the ability to communicate in the host country language is critical to being an effective Peace Corps Volunteer. So basic is this precept that it is spelled out in the Peace Corps Act: No person shall be assigned to duty as a Volunteer under this act in any foreign country or area unless at the time of such assignment he (or she) possesses such reasonable proficiency as his (or her) assignment requires in speaking the language of the country or area to which he (or she) is assigned.

### **Qualifying for Service**

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

Peace Corps/Paraguay'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.

### Technical Training

Technical training will prepare you to work in Paraguay 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, Paraguay 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 Paraguay and strategies for working within such a framework. You will review your technical sector's goals and will meet with the Paraguay 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.

Paraguay has the following competencies:

### **Common Area (Core Curriculum) Competencies for all Paraguay PCVs**

Competency 1: Integrate into Paraguayan family, community, and culture

Competency 2: Commit to Peace Corps mission, goals, work placement procedure

Competency 3: Facilitate participatory community development

### **Competencies for Community Economic Development Volunteers**

- Competency 1: Form and strengthen community groups through needs assessment and by linking to resources
- Competency 2: Promote improved business management practices
- Competency 3: Improve financial decision making among families
- Competency 4: Teach computer skills and promote the implementation of information and communication technology
- Competency 5: Civic education and participation
- Competency 6: Entrepreneurship

### **Competencies for Agriculture Extension Volunteers**

- Competency 1: Facilitate sustainable community development.
- Competency 2: Promote organic gardening, human nutrition, and increased environmental awareness with youth and other community groups.
- Competency 3: Promote holistic farm management and improved production techniques

### **Competencies for Environmental Education and Conservation Volunteers**

- Competency 1: Build Paraguayan community awareness and capacity for sustainable environmental protection.
- Competency 2: Promote soil conservation, organic gardening, and agroforestry practices.

### **Competencies for Rural Health and Sanitation Volunteers**

- Competency 1: Build awareness of hygiene issues in Paraguay
- Competency 2: Promote healthier nutrition and *fogón* (brick oven) construction
- Competency 3: Advance the knowledge of HIV/AIDS and reproductive health
- Competency 4: Improve existing water sources through protection and promotion of running water projects.

### **Competencies for Education and Youth Development**

- Competency 1: Promote Ministry of Education educational requirements and support equal participation for girls and boys
- Competency 2: Build teacher capacity and improve student learning in math, health, and reading

- Competency 3: Build contextual knowledge of Paraguayan youth
- Competency 4: Develop, organize and implement community analysis, planning, and integration techniques
- Competency 5: Design and implement strategies for working with youth on critical issues
- Competency 6: Design and implement enrichment activities with youth

In response to the needs expressed by Paraguayans, Peace Corps/Paraguay is in the process of restructuring some of the program sectors. The Rural Economic Development (RED) and Municipal Service Development (MUNI) sectors have been combined to form the community economic development sector, otherwise known as CED. The agricultural sector has been expanded to include aspects of the beekeeping sector and the agroforestry sector. All of these topics will be combined under the agriculture sector. The agroforestry Volunteers who work more closely with schools will be absorbed by the environment sector. The early elementary education sector is also being expanded to include education from grades K-12. The urban youth development sector is being dismantled and the competencies for developing, organizing, and implementing strategies for working with youth on critical issues and developing enrichment activities for youth are being absorbed by all sectors.

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 director, 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 training staff makes recommendations to the country director, and it is the country director who 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 circumstance. 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.

### **Oath**

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

### Language Training

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

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

#### Cross-Cultural Training

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

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

#### Health Training

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

#### Safety Training

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

**Paraguay has the following safety and security competencies:**

1. Trainees articulate a personal safety strategy that includes an awareness of how Volunteer characteristics, such as race, age, sexual orientation, ability, religion, etc., influence personal safety, and are able to apply this strategy, identifying risks to which Volunteers are most vulnerable and strategies to reduce vulnerability, including being able to make inquiries concerning personal safety in Spanish and/or Guaraní.
2. Trainees are able to travel safely in Paraguay, practice the steps for emergency travel, use knowledge of what to look for when selecting a mode of public transportation, and identify potential transportation risks and response strategies to reduce exposure.
3. Trainees are competent in effective and safe site entry, apply the minimum housing security standards for Volunteers, and demonstrate culturally appropriate community integration skills.
4. Trainees identify the types of unwanted attention/sexual advances that are most likely to occur to Volunteers and demonstrate an ability to cope effectively with unwanted attention or sexual advances and to decline, in a culturally appropriate manner, offers of food, drink, assistance, etc.
5. Trainees identify specific risk factors associated with assault and strategies for reducing risk (including behavior that discourages harassment and reflects concrete preventive strategies for assaults) and are able to identify the support resources available to victims of assault.
6. Trainees demonstrate the importance of, and reasons for, incident reporting, define a reportable incident, and detail the procedure for reporting an incident.

7. Trainees describe the importance of the Emergency Action Plan (EAP) and their own roles and responsibilities in the EAP and develop a complete site locator form, including a map.

8. Trainees communicate sufficiently in the local language with a basic safety and security vocabulary, including the ability to ask for assistance in the local language, to describe their assignment/Peace Corps Volunteer role in the local language, and to give the address and phone number of the Peace Corps office in the local language.

9. Trainees determine how gender roles, relations, and perceptions in Paraguay may be different than those in the U.S., how these differences can influence the Volunteer perspective, judgment, and understanding of Paraguay and how they can support and constrain Volunteer personal life and work. They also determine how these differences may impact Volunteer safety.

10. Trainees demonstrate knowledge of, and comply with, Peace Corps policies and procedures that affect their safety and personal well-being (as described in the *Peace Corps Volunteer Handbook*); they understand the rights and responsibilities that Volunteers have under Paraguayan law and recognize important points where Paraguayan laws and U.S. laws differ, including a strategy for dealing with police or military detention.

#### Additional Trainings During Volunteer Service

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

- In-service training: *Provides an opportunity for Volunteers to upgrade their technical, language, and project development skills while sharing their experiences and reaffirming their commitment after having served for three to six months.*

- Midterm conference (done in conjunction with technical sector in-service): *Assists Volunteers in reviewing their first year, reassessing their personal and project objectives, and planning for their second year of service.*
- Close-of-service conference: *Prepares Volunteers for the future after Peace Corps service and reviews their respective projects and personal experiences.*

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

Formal opportunities for ongoing learning in Paraguay include the following:

1. Integral education and youth development
2. Health and education and youth sectors COS conference
3. Agriculture and environment sectors midservice IST
4. Community economic development(CED)tech IST
5. Health and education midservice IST
6. PDM No. 1
7. CED sector midservice IST
8. Agriculture and environment sectors COS conference
9. Health sector tech IST
10. CED sector reconnect IST

## YOUR HEALTH CARE AND SAFETY IN PARAGUAY

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

### Health Issues in Paraguay

The most common illnesses that plague both Paraguayans and Volunteers are also found in the United States: colds, bronchitis, diarrhea, constipation, sinus infections, skin infections, headaches, dental problems, minor injuries, STDs, emotional problems, and alcohol abuse. These problems may be more acute in Paraguay because certain environmental factors increase the risk or aggravate the severity of some illnesses and injuries. For instance, problems associated with cultural adaptation may exacerbate emotional problems or contribute to alcohol abuse. However, the most common ailments, which are easily preventable, such as diarrhea and giardiasis (caused by a common parasite) are either water- or food-borne. Hepatitis is much rarer, but it can also be transmitted by polluted water or poorly prepared food.

Paraguay is fortunate to be free of many of the diseases endemic to tropical areas, such as amebiasis, Guinea worm, and typhoid fever. However, there are seasonal outbreaks of dengue fever, which is transmitted by mosquitoes. Yellow fever is uncommon; however, there was an outbreak recently. Chagas disease is found in Paraguay, but no Volunteer using the safety measures taught has ever contracted it. Malaria is rare and limited to a small part of

the country. Therefore, Volunteers do not need to take malaria medication, but Volunteers traveling outside of the country may be exposed to malaria or other diseases not normally encountered in Paraguay. Volunteers are issued mosquito repellent and mosquito nets, which can be effective in the prevention of mosquito-borne diseases.

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

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

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

### Maintaining Your Health

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

the United States. The most important of your responsibilities in Paraguay 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 Paraguay during pre-service training.

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

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

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

#### Women's Health Information

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

programmatic standards for continued service during pregnancy can be met.

Pap smears will only be performed on an individual basis if the Volunteer requires it. Mammograms are done for women over age 40, also at midservice and the end of service.

Female Volunteers should consider bringing a one-year supply of feminine hygiene products. Tampons are expensive and choices may be limited and are not always available near their sites.

#### Your Peace Corps Medical Kit

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

#### Medical Kit Contents

Ace bandages

Adhesive tape

*American Red Cross First Aid & Safety Handbook*

Antacid tablets (Tums)

Antibiotic ointment (Bacitracin/Neomycin/Polymycin B)

Antiseptic antimicrobial skin cleaner (Hibiclens)

Band-Aids

Butterfly closures

Calamine lotion

Cepacol lozenges

Condoms

Dental floss

Diphenhydramine HCL 25 mg (Benadryl)

Insect repellent stick (Cutter's)

Iodine tablets (for water purification)  
Lip balm (Chapstick)  
Oral rehydration salts  
Oral thermometer (Fahrenheit)  
Pseudoephedrine HCL 30 mg (Sudafed)  
Robitussin-DM lozenges (for cough)  
Scissors  
Sterile gauze pads  
Tetrahydrozoline eyedrops (Visine)  
Tinactin (antifungal cream)  
Tweezers

#### Before You Leave: A Medical Checklist

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

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

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

either at your pre-departure orientation or shortly after you arrive in Paraguay. You do not need to begin taking malaria medication prior to departure.

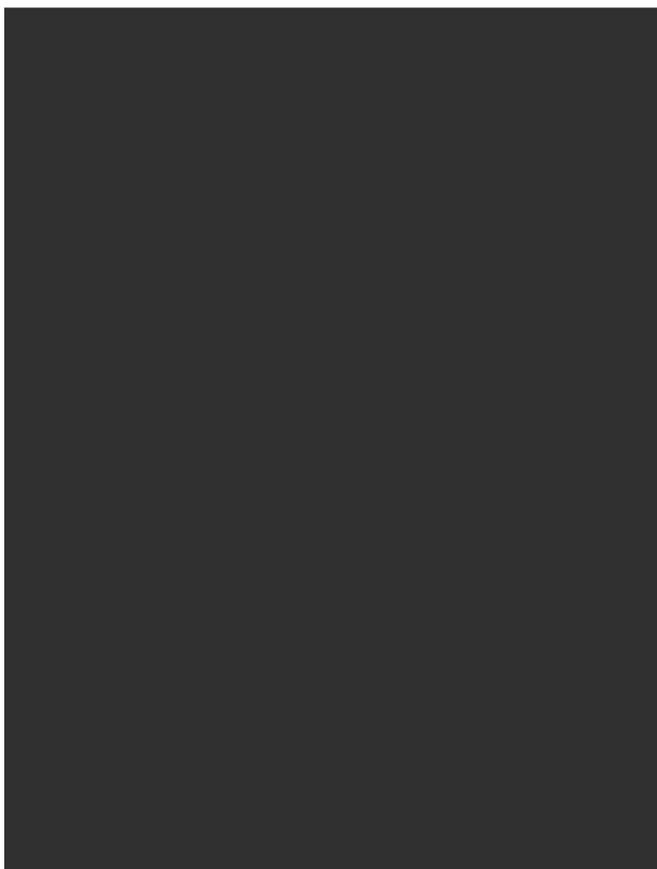
Bring a three-month supply of any prescription or over-the-counter medication you use on a regular basis, including birth control pills. Although the Peace Corps cannot reimburse you for this three-month supply, it will order refills during your service. While awaiting shipment—which can take several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

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

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

If you are eligible for Medicare, are over 50 years of age, or have a health condition that may restrict your future participation in health care plans, you may wish to consult an insurance specialist about unique coverage needs before your departure. The Peace Corps will provide all necessary health care from the time you

leave for your pre-departure orientation until you complete your service. When you finish, you will be entitled to the post-service health care benefits described in the Peace Corps *Volunteer Handbook*. You may wish to consider keeping an existing health plan in effect during your service if you think age or pre-existing conditions might prevent you from re-enrolling in your current plan when you return home.



## Safety and Security—Our Partnership

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

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

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

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

As you can see from this list, you must be willing to work hard and adapt your lifestyle to minimize the potential for being a target for crime. As with anywhere in the world, crime does exist in Paraguay. 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.

In general, the crime rate in Paraguay is still one of the lowest in the region; but, as stated before, the majority of incidents happen in the city. There are several “typical” ways to commit robbery in Paraguay: *Caballos locos* (crazy horses) are men who usually pretend to be street vendors. However, when they detect a victim (either on foot or on a bus), they run up from behind, grab a cellphone, purse, necklace, or other valuable object (iPod, earrings, etc.) and run away so fast that they are almost impossible to catch. Also, while walking alone on the street, we may encounter *peajeros*—teenagers who demand money or threaten to harm you. They don’t demand wallets or cellphones, just coins or

a small amount of money. Sometimes a group of street children will surround the person and beg for money. If this happens during daytime it is usually OK, but at nighttime it can become a dangerous situation as some of the children are older and may carry sticks, stones, or any kind of object.

While in the countryside, Volunteers should use common sense in order to be safe at all times. We recommend that you not walk at night. However, if it is necessary for you to do so, take someone from the community along with you. Jogging is a good idea, but using the same route or going out too early (or too late) is not. Instead, having someone else or a group of children join you is always more secure. Also, lengthy travel at night should be avoided as assaults happen more often on night buses than on day ones. The other preferred method to rob or assault is using a motorbike. Burglars use motorbikes to run around and to choose random victims, so please avoid isolated streets outside of the downtown and also keep yourself in visible areas.

While whistles and exclamations may be fairly common on the street, this behavior can be reduced if you dress conservatively, abide by local cultural norms, and respond according to the training you will receive.

### Staying Safe: Don't Be a Target for Crime

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

### **General Safety on the Street:**

- PRACTICE awareness, vigilance, and other safety do/don'ts!
- Don't call attention to yourself with flashy clothes and jewelry.
- Keep cameras out of sight.
- Know where you are going (or look like you know). Learn landmarks. Plan your route in advance. Be aware of what "part of town" you are in and take precautions accordingly.
- Learn higher risk areas:
  - *Plaza Uruguaya*
  - Downtown (*el Centro*) Asuncion
  - *Chacarita*
  - *Mercado 4*
  - Known gringo hangouts
  - Any crowded bus areas
- Know local caution times: Noon-3 p.m. (siesta) and nights; weekends, especially slow Sundays when streets are more deserted.
- Be alert to surroundings and people (avoid suspicious people in crowds and on buses: cross the street, change routes, go into a store or hotel).
- Project confidence and assertiveness.
- Know your strengths and plan for emergencies.

- Pedestrians do not have the right of way in Paraguay! Pedestrians should use EXTREME caution because traffic laws are commonly violated.

### **When you are new and meeting new people:**

- Be somewhat wary.
- Take your time: establish relationships slowly and don't feel that you must be liked by everyone.
- Observe and learn about local behavior, take cues from your family and how they act around new people, share information with others in your group.
- Don't let others take advantage of you, do not give loans or loan your possessions!

### **When you go to *fiestas* (parties):**

- Come and go with a friend you trust. Do not go alone.
- Tell people where you are going. Plan to stay until a certain time BEFORE you go, and make definite plans. Is it a fiesta or drinking fest? A "good" crowd? Place? Time?
- Avoid really late nights, as crowds get rougher, drunker (particularly men, who can become aggressive), and chances of mugging and other kinds of fights and assaults increase.
- Know your drinking limit! Don't drink too much!
- Think and act like a role model: defuse situations vs. responding with physical force, when possible.

### **When you travel:**

- Try not to travel at night, plan ahead, and travel with a friend, where possible.

- Be prepared—get good directions and schedules for your route and choose wisely. Have a Plan B.
- Divide up your money and valuables and carry only what is necessary; put money that you will need, with a little extra (in case of mugging, to have something to give), in a front pocket or another accessible spot, and hide the rest elsewhere on your body.
- Safeguard emergency money at home or with nearby friends.
- Attach bags to body, under your feet, on your lap, etc.
- Maintain body space and control of whom you sit by or who sits by you. Try and sit with a female if you are female, move to a different seat if someone you feel uncomfortable with sits beside you.
- Don't leave your possessions unattended.

### **At Home:**

- Develop a good relationship with your neighbors (*vecinos*).
- Don't leave your possessions out and in view.

### **For your future sites, when you are Volunteers:**

- Select your home with safety in mind (good locks, windows, bars)
- Place strong physical barriers on doors and windows. Consider changing locks on new houses.
- Look and ask when people come to the door/gate.
- Don't open the door at night to anyone you don't **completely trust**.
- Don't let strangers in.
- Use good judgment in decisions about staying over with persons of the opposite sex—what kind of impression do you want to give?

- Live with a family until you get to know the community.
- Allow the community to get to know you slowly.
- Leave valuables with a trusted *vecino* (*neighbor*) or family or secure them with a lock.
- Don't be obvious about leaving (especially with luggage).
- Do be obvious about locking up and always do it.
- Balance privacy with personal safety (a house on the outskirts of town, with high grass nearby or few neighbors is a high risk).

**If something happens:**

- Don't panic, but react.
- Call the safety and security coordinator at Peace Corps immediately to help guide you through the next processes.
- Find witnesses and get a physical description.
- Get pertinent information: for buses (the line number, driver, route), what happened, and where.
- Go to the *comisaría* (local police station) to file a report (list missing items, file report, call Peace Corps).
- File Peace Corps Incident Report.
- Seek assistance and support.

\*\* The most important thing is to be careful and conservative—especially at the beginning\*\*

**Support from Staff**

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

the Volunteer's worksite and housing arrangements and making any adjustments, as needed. In some cases, the nature of the incident may necessitate a site or housing transfer. Peace Corps staff will also assist Volunteers with preserving their rights to pursue legal sanctions against the perpetrators of the crime. It is very important that Volunteers report incidents as they occur, not only to protect their peer Volunteers, but also to preserve the future right to prosecute. Should Volunteers decide later in the process that they want to proceed with the prosecution of their assailant, this option may no longer exist if the evidence of the event has not been preserved at the time of the incident.

### **Crime Data for Paraguay**

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

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

Please take the time to review this important information.

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

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

### **Volunteer Safety Support in Paraguay**

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

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

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

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

## DIVERSITY AND CROSS-CULTURAL ISSUES

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

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

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

To ease the transition and adapt to life in Paraguay, you may need to make some temporary, yet fundamental compromises in how you present yourself as an American and as an individual. For example, female trainees and Volunteers may not be able to exercise the independence available to them in the United States; political discussions need to be handled with great care; and some of your personal beliefs may best remain undisclosed. You will need to develop techniques and personal strategies for coping with these and other limitations. The Peace Corps staff will lead diversity and sensitivity discussions during pre-service training and will be on call to provide support, but the challenge ultimately will be your own.

### Overview of Diversity in Paraguay

The Peace Corps staff in Paraguay recognizes the adjustment issues that come with diversity and will endeavor to provide support and guidance. During pre-service training, several sessions will be held to discuss diversity and coping mechanisms. We look forward to having male and female Volunteers from a

variety of races, ethnic groups, ages, religions, and sexual orientations, and hope that you will become part of a diverse group of Americans who take pride in supporting one another and demonstrating the richness of American culture.

### What Might a Volunteer Face?

#### Possible Issues for Female Volunteers

*Machismo* manifests itself in obvious and subtle ways, and both Paraguayan men and women generally adhere to male dominance at work, in the home, and in community matters. Female Volunteers may be targets for harassment, particularly if they disregard norms for behavior and dress. Male Volunteers, on the other hand, may be viewed as sexual competitors and be pressured to discuss their “conquests.”

Female Volunteers in Paraguay face the kinds of unwelcome attention from men that Paraguayan women experience. Some of this attention can be avoided by dressing and behaving in culturally appropriate, more conservative manners.

#### Possible Issues for Volunteers of Color

Because of Paraguay’s general lack of experience with diverse ethnic groups, some Volunteers of color have encountered verbal harassment, especially in Asunción or when traveling away from their sites. African Americans are most often mistaken for Brazilians, and due to the commonly held Paraguayan stereotype of the Afro-Brazilian soldier who fought against Paraguay in the War of the Triple Alliance, Volunteers should be prepared to hear and receive negative remarks about skin color or hair.

Asian-American Volunteers are often mistaken for Koreans or Japanese and may be questioned about whether they are “real Americans.” While Hispanic Volunteers may enjoy some advantages because of their ethnic background, they may also face irritating questions about their “true” nationality or their inability to speak the local languages of Spanish and Guaraní.

As a Volunteer of color in Paraguay, you should be prepared to handle offensive remarks or attitudes, which stem primarily from ignorance and a lack of direct contact with people of color. Once you become established in your community, such harassment will be less common, though you will probably continue to encounter it outside your site. In many cases, these incidents provide opportunities to educate people about America's diversity. There are Volunteer support groups to address diversity issues in Peace Corps Paraguay.

Volunteer Comment:

“As a Colombian-American Volunteer I have always viewed myself as having some unique advantages, along with some inconveniences. Having the same *pinta*, or characteristics, as a Paraguayan (brown hair, brown eyes) certainly allows me to blend in with the masses and hide my *yanqui* (yankee) attributes. It's kind of like having an on-and-off switch ready at my fingertips. When I want to find some solitude I simply stop playing the role as *yanqui* and play the Paraguayan: I just act naturally and speak only *castellano* (Spanish)—it's not that hard for me. I can eat without being stared at and walk into any town without anyone taking a second glance. Now that can be difficult when you are a blue-eyed, blonde male or female, speaking *castellano* with an American accent.

“However, I have confronted some unforeseen hurdles in my time here in Paraguay. For instance, speaking *castellano* with no accent and having Paraguayan attributes automatically eliminate the fact that I could be Colombian American. Many people can't see past the physical attributes. Some Paraguayans will ask themselves, ‘How can he have origins from Colombia and be from the United States?’ The idea of living in a melting pot in the U.S. is still something that many

Paraguayans are learning about. When they see me it is difficult for many of them to understand my background and perceive me as an American citizen with a professional background. As a result, when I am working alongside Paraguayans, I don't have that immediate credibility that many Volunteers experience upon initial contact in their communities.

“Throughout my experience, though, I have used this minor inconvenience to teach others about the diversity that exists in the U.S., and as an advantage in various work situations. Each one of us comes down here with a special set of characteristics and will have to juggle them in our own way. But I believe that is part of the experience and is what molds us as people and as Volunteers in our communities. My advice to you is to embrace your uniqueness and use it to your advantage in making your two years that much more interesting! Good luck!”

#### Possible Issues for Senior Volunteers

Although senior Volunteers may encounter hardships related to the rugged living conditions and the difficulties of learning two languages, many have served very successfully in Paraguay. Seniors may find peer support within the Volunteer community to be inadequate, especially during pre-service training, as the majority of Volunteers are under age 25. Seniors have sometimes formed informal support groups to deal with the specific issues seniors share.

#### Volunteer Comment:

“As a senior Volunteer in Paraguay I could not feel more accepted and respected by both country nationals, especially

adolescents, and my fellow Volunteers. There are no words to describe the feeling that I have when people in passing greet me warmly as *señora* or when I am invited to an *asado* (barbecue) or a birthday party. I find that people in my site are always interested in hearing my thoughts about a topic and in problem solving together. My fellow Volunteers, the majority of whom are younger than my own children, have consistently included me in their social and work-related activities and I never lack the company of someone fun to dine or dance with when the Volunteers come together as a group.”

#### Possible Issues for Gay, Lesbian, or Bisexual Volunteers

Gay and lesbian Volunteers should be aware that homosexuality is considered taboo by most Paraguayans and that they, therefore, must exercise discretion regarding their sexual orientation. Although Asunción has a cosmopolitan atmosphere, to develop productive social and professional relationships and for reasons of personal security and well-being, most Volunteers find that they must reconcile their lifestyle to the demands of extremely conservative communities. Gay and lesbian Volunteers have a support and resource network that can be of assistance.

#### Volunteer Comment

“After living in an open and accepting community in the States, it was hard at first to live my life back in the closet. As a woman and a gay Volunteer, I especially feel the pressure my community puts on me to have a boyfriend and get married. A sense of humor is essential in responding to the comments I hear. Fortunately, I have been able to find support among my fellow Volunteers, and have encountered Paraguayans outside my community I can be open with. And I keep in touch with the gay community at home through emails, phone calls, and magazines my friends send me.”

### Possible Religious Issues for Volunteers

Paraguay is overwhelmingly Roman Catholic, and Paraguayans have little experience with other religions or with people who have no religious affiliation. While Paraguayans tend to be tolerant of non-Catholics, they may be curious about your beliefs, which could lead to seemingly rude behavior. On the whole, however, they recognize a difference between “belief” and “practice,” and some non-Catholic Volunteers simply state that they are not “practicing.” Those who feel uncomfortable skirting the issue in this way usually find that if they state their beliefs in a non-challenging way, they will be accepted by their community. Be aware that very few Volunteer sites will have a place of worship other than a Catholic Church or chapel.

Jewish Volunteers have been surprised to discover a certain degree of anti-Semitism in Paraguay as a result of General Alfredo Stroessner’s open-border policy toward Nazis and World War II war criminals. It is not unusual to see swastikas and other anti-Semitic graffiti, and Jewish Volunteers should use caution when visiting German communities. It is also advisable to get to know the members of your community before “coming out” as Jewish. Kosher food products and religious paraphernalia are not available in Paraguay, but there is an active Chabad House and a Reform synagogue in Asunción.

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

## Possible Issues for Married Volunteers

Married Volunteers have both advantages and disadvantages to service. Living with your best friend and support system is the biggest advantage that many couples cite. Issues such as language discrepancy between the couple and cultural issues, such as the expectation that wives work in the home and maintain the house while husbands are in the field or should be more “macho” may allow for more difficult integration.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How much luggage am I allowed to bring to Paraguay?

Most airlines have baggage size and weight limits and assess charges for transport of baggage that exceeds those limits. The Peace Corps has its own size and weight limits and will not pay the cost of transport for baggage that exceeds these limits. The Peace Corps' allowance is two checked pieces of luggage with combined dimensions of both pieces not to exceed 107 inches (length + width + height) and a carry-on bag with dimensions of no more than 45 inches. Checked baggage should not exceed 80 pounds total with a maximum weight of 50 pounds for any one bag.

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

What is the electric current in Paraguay?

The voltage is 220 volts—any electrical appliance of 110 volts will require a transformer (these can be brought with you or easily and affordably purchased in-country)

How much money should I bring?

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

When can I take vacation and have people visit me?

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

Will my belongings be covered by insurance?

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

Do I need an international driver's license?

Volunteers in Paraguay 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 Paraguay 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' Office of Special Services provides assistance in handling emergencies affecting trainees and Volunteers or their families. Before leaving the United States, instruct your family to notify the Office of Special Services immediately if an emergency arises, such as a serious illness or death of a family member. During normal business hours, the number for the Office of Special Services is 800.424.8580; select option 2, then extension 1470. After normal business hours and on weekends and holidays, the Special Services duty officer can be reached at the above number. For non-emergency questions, your family can get

information from your country desk staff at the Peace Corps by calling 800.424.8580.

Can I call home from Paraguay?

Yes. As mentioned earlier, Peace Corps/Paraguay has a direct telephone line from Asunción to Washington, D.C., that is available for Volunteer use after office hours and on weekends and holidays. Calls made to the Washington area are free, but calls to all other areas are billed to Volunteers at the long-distance rate from Washington, D.C. To take full advantage of the service, you should bring a major telephone company calling card or prepaid phone card to Paraguay to bill non-free calls made through this line. Volunteers who call home from their sites (or the telephone office nearest to a site) usually place collect calls, since the telephone company, COPACO, is unpredictable about accepting calling cards and credit cards. VoIP services such as Skype currently function in Paraguay, accessible via a cybercafé or a personal computer.

Should I bring a cellular phone with me?

Although not every site may be within the range of cellular service, Peace Corps/Paraguay provides you with a basic model cellphone and a monthly stipend. Should you choose to upgrade your cellphone or purchase more credit, you may do so by using your own living allowance. Peace Corps/Paraguay also has a corporate calling plan for these telephones (all PCVs and staff) where the first 10 minutes are free. If you still desire to bring a cellphone, make sure that it supports GSM 850/1900. Although these happen to be the same frequencies used in the U.S., make sure that your phone is not “locked” by your carrier (AT&T, Cingular, etc.)

Will there be email and Internet access?

Many businesses and individuals in the capital and the larger cities have Internet access, and Internet cafes are springing up even in some of the more provincial towns. Volunteers posted at rural sites, however, may be limited to sending and receiving email on their occasional visits to the capital. The Peace Corps office has computers with Internet access that Volunteers can use. Before leaving the United States, most Volunteers sign up for free email accounts, such as Yahoo, Hotmail, or Gmail, that they can access worldwide.

Additionally, the office has a free wireless hotspot for personal laptop use. Although Internet access and coverage is improving throughout Paraguay, it may still be difficult to get reliable Internet access in your site. Internet access is generally attained by purchasing a USB modem from one of the local cellphone service providers and the cost is approximately \$15 to \$50 USD per month based on bandwidth and/or traffic volume. The signal coverage will vary depending on what part of the country your site is in, ranging from very good to nonexistent. For more specifics, see [http://www.hipuu.com.py/int\\_movil.html](http://www.hipuu.com.py/int_movil.html) and <http://www.tigo.com.py/seccion/banda-ancha-movil-tigo>

Should I bring my computer?

Many Volunteers find it useful for both work and personal reasons to bring a laptop computer. Should you do so, please be advised that the laptop may be at risk not only of theft but also damage due to the varying extreme environmental conditions (heat, dust, humidity and rain—bring a sleeve or case!). Should Volunteers decide to bring their laptop computers, they are responsible for insuring and maintaining the equipment themselves. The Peace Corps will not replace stolen computers and strongly encourages those who bring computers to get personal property insurance. Because of the high value of laptops, owners may significantly increase their risk of becoming a victim of theft. Be aware that you probably will not find the same level of technical assistance and service in Paraguay as you would in the States and that replacement parts could take many weeks to arrive.

Additionally, bring any software that might need to be reinstalled (the Operating System, Office, etc. *but not items* that can be easily downloaded, such as iTunes, Skype, etc.) on CD or DVD disks as these have proven to be essential. A reliable anti-virus program is a must as the majority of publicly accessible computers tend to be infected and this has been the leading problem with Volunteers' personal computers. Unfortunately, Peace Corps does not offer software for sale or use of the Volunteers.

## WELCOME LETTERS FROM COUNTRY VOLUNTEERS

CONGRATULATIONS! I imagine you are thinking to yourself “For what? Paraguay? Where is Paraguay?” I was in your shoes just a few short years ago, but so much has changed for me during my Paraguayan experience that I feel compelled to say once again, CONGRATULATIONS! You are about to become a member of a select group who call themselves Peace Corps/Paraguay Volunteers. The program has a long proud history and a very prestigious reputation in the Peace Corps world, routinely identified as a “high performance post.” So as you look over your welcome packet and realize that Paraguay has neither mountains nor ocean, keep in mind the tradition of excellence and steel yourself for an amazing and life-changing experience.

My Peace Corps experience began in December 2007, with my arrival in a rural community in north central Paraguay. I had the good fortune of being within 30 minutes of a town with Internet and markets, and with frequent buses to Asuncion. On the other hand, I became accustomed to living with electricity that would go out when strong winds blew and the mixed blessing of running water that would disappear for days at a time. I had a latrine I dug myself and a roof so leaky my floors would flood when it rained. I learned to cook “*campo* gourmet,” pickled my own pickles, and built a solar dryer just to handle all the hot peppers in my garden. It’s important to understand that my experience was not common in an amenities sense. That is, each Volunteer’s living experience is unique. Some Volunteers have refrigerators and electric stoves, some live in wood houses, some have grass-thatch roofs, and others have modern bathrooms. Perhaps you will have running water in your front yard or perhaps you will have to draw water from your neighbor’s well. Regardless of where you are and the place that you might live, the conveniences and inconveniences become background to the larger experience you are going to have.

More than hot showers and flush toilets, your experience will be formed by the Paraguayans you meet. You will never meet a more giving, caring, curious, laid back people in your life. From the moment that you get off of the plane, you will find yourself being invited to drink *tereré*, to a soccer game, to a family event, to dinner, or to experience anything and everything else happening in the community. You will be peppered with questions about everything: how much do your shoes cost, if your teeth are real, what Americans eat, and where is the U.S. anyway? At times these questions will be too much to bear, but as you become accustomed to Paraguayan curiosity, you will find yourself becoming more open as well. You will discover that the American need to schedule every hour of every day may not be the most effective way to accomplish things in Paraguay. Yes, you will get frustrated, but you will also develop profound patience and the ability to let the unimportant details slide ... at least a little.

One last bit for you as you are making your final preparations to leave. This is going to be hard in ways that you cannot anticipate. In no way are you signing up for something easy, so be ready for the low points that will present themselves. Yet, with every low point there will be a high point. You might enter your community as a strange and awkward foreigner, but you will almost certainly leave it as a departing family member. You might even begin to wonder how you will ever leave it at all.

So, get your family pictures together, grab your banjo, yoga mat, and running shoes, and get ready for the craziest ride of your life.

Doug Stephens

Crop Extension Volunteer Coordinator

Congratulations and welcome to Peace Corps/Paraguay! Finding Paraguay on a map will probably be your first step to discovering this beautiful and *tranquilo* South American country. As a future Peace Corps Volunteer in Paraguay, you will discover why it is a place that many people fall in love with. You will develop relationships with people of a very different background and culture from your own, discovering things about yourself and your culture that you may never have known. Your experience will be uniquely and genuinely “Paraguayan.”

When I swore in as a Peace Corps Volunteer in December 2007, I had some ideas about what my work would be and what I might do. For one thing, I had no plans to work in a school. What a mistake that would have been! Reflecting on my two years of service, I can easily say that open-mindedness and flexibility were two everyday necessities.

My site was located in what used to be the San Rafael Forest in the department of Itapúa. For many years, unchecked deforestation and the expansion of large-scale mechanized agriculture has led to the near extinction of this once rich bio-diverse habitat. As an environmental education Volunteer, I worked with community contacts to identify ways to spread environmental awareness about these local problems.

When not working on environmental projects, most of my time was spent integrating. This is a word that you will grow very used to hearing as it is a huge part of our work. In Paraguay, most integration takes places among a circle of people drinking *tereré*. *Tereré* not only provides a rest from the incessant heat and a means of re-hydration, the act of *tereré* consumption is ideal for planning, brainstorming, and getting to know members of your community. Imagine a group of people seated in a circle passing the same *guampa* (cup) from person to person, discussing the day’s events, the weather forecast, honey production, local gossip, recipes, tips on crop cultivation, etc. This process could happen from one to 20 times daily, depending on many factors: if the

weather is hot, if the gossip is hot, if the cotton prices are hot, and if your *tereré* company is hot. But, if the water is hot, then you are drinking something called *mate*.

Serving as a Peace Corps Volunteer can be a powerful opportunity for personal change while serving others. Take advantage of this unique time and you will emerge a better person. Good luck!

Austin Durr

Environmental Project Volunteer Coordinator

## PACKING LIST

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

The standard for work attire in Paraguay is neat and professional, but not fancy. This (business casual) applies during both pre-service training and Volunteer service. Volunteers working in different professional capacities will need different sets of clothing, although, in general, Volunteers should be prepared to have a couple of good business casual-type outfits. For example, community economic development Volunteers and Volunteers working within the school system will need more clothes for an office setting than a Volunteer placed in a rural setting. Think in terms of comfort, versatility, and, most important, durability. Since there are extremes in weather, separates that coordinate well

and that can be layered on or off as needed are useful. Remember that it gets really hot in the summer and, although it does not freeze in the winter, homes in Paraguay are not insulated and are drafty—imagine going camping in 40 degrees Fahrenheit weather. It is a very good idea to bring a mummy-type sleeping bag for the cold (comes with a stuff sack, is lightweight, and easy to pack). Thick-soled shoes are best purchased in the United States because of price and quality, and men’s sizes over 10 1/2 and women’s sizes over 9 are difficult to find in Paraguay.

It is also important to consider the color of your clothing. Volunteers generally recommend darker colors because they are less likely to show dirt. However, Volunteers working in beekeeping will need light-colored work clothes, and education Volunteers working with teachers should bring navy blue pants or skirts and white shirts or blouses. Red and royal blue are the colors of the main political parties. Wearing these colors inside a municipality may have political implications. Business casual is recommended for community economic development and education and youth development Volunteers. For both men and women, simple, non-flashy clothing will open more doors and minds. Everything on the general clothing list applies to both women and men. Also, Paraguayans wear typical embroidered clothing called *ao'poi* for formal occasions, as well as business casual, which is very popular with Volunteers in Paraguay. Most Volunteers buy at least one *ao'poi* item of clothing during training. Do not pack anything precious or expensive that you could not reasonably part from.

Note: Many Volunteers bring their laptops to Paraguay to assist them in their work, personal communications, and for entertainment purposes; however, there is always the risk of theft (personal insurance is recommended).

## General Clothing

- Two to four pairs of durable, dark-colored pants or jeans (one nicer pair for special occasions)
- Two sets of long underwear for the winter (a necessity)
- One pair of sweatpants
- Six or more T-shirts
- One or two long-sleeved shirts or flannel shirts for layering with sweaters and sweatshirts
- Two sweaters for special winter occasions
- Two winter sweaters/sweatshirts/fleece shirts
- One medium winter jacket (fleece generally works great)
- Hooded raincoat
- Two or three pairs of shorts to wear around the house or for sleeping or exercising, etc. (shorts are not to be worn at the training center or in the Peace Corps office)
- Six to eight pairs of socks—include cotton and wool (at least one pair of Smart Wool socks is recommended)
- Your favorite hat for sun protection (baseball hats work well, but wide-brimmed are best to keep the sun off your neck, which can be purchased in-country)
- Warm hat and gloves and scarves for winter—a necessity!
- A belt (there is a tendency for people's weight to fluctuate)

## **For Women**

- Ten to 15 pairs of cotton underpants and five to 10 bras (including sports bras)
- Four or five nice shirts (this may include blouses, some sleeveless, nice long-sleeve or short-sleeve)
- Three or four lightweight, loose-fitting, knee-length skirts or lightweight pants (bring at least one nice one for special occasions)
- One or two lightweight sun dresses
- Something nice for swearing in and special occasions (this can include nice pants, a skirt and blouse, or dress)
- Three or four thick-strapped tank tops (tank tops should not be worn for training or professional activities)
- Swimsuit (you will wear them at Volunteers events; Paraguayan women usually wear shorts and T-shirts to swim)

## **For Men**

- Dress shirt and tie for swearing in and other special occasions
- Cotton underwear (boxers are difficult to find in Paraguay)
- Three or four short-sleeved, button-down shirts with collars for work settings (they are cooler in the summer than T-shirts or polo shirts)
- Three pairs of khaki-style pants
- Two pairs of durable, dark-colored pants or jeans

- Three to four short-sleeved, button-down shirts—if Volunteers don't have these, *ao'poi* shirts are a great substitution!

- Swim trunks

## **Shoes**

- At least one pair of sandals for summer (sandals are not normally worn by men at work)

- One pair of tennis shoes or all-terrain shoes, preferably in a dark color to hide the red dirt (good ones are expensive locally)

- Flip-flops (available locally)

- One pair of durable hiking or other boots (preferably waterproof) (optional)

- Soccer cleats, if you play soccer

- For women, one pair of flat shoes (in a basic color like black and with thick soles)

- For men, one pair of informal, closed-toe dress shoes

## **Personal Hygiene and Toiletry Items**

- Contact lens solutions (available in Paraguay but very expensive)

- Makeup (if you are picky about brands)

- Good supply of tampons (only applicator-free tampons, pads, and panty liners are available locally)

- Sunscreen (only if you have a favorite brand; the Peace Corps provides some)

- Three-month supply of any prescription drugs you use (to last you until the Peace Corps orders refills)
- Two pairs of eyeglasses, if you wear them
- Two or three bandannas or handkerchiefs (available locally)
- Shampoo, toothpaste, deodorant, face wash (one-month supply, three- to four-month supply if you are brand picky); while many brands are available locally, bring enough for pre-service training (three months) as time and money will be limited to allow for you to buy replacements

### **Miscellaneous**

- Travel bag or small daypack
- Large backpack for longer trips (one with an internal frame is recommended)
- Camping sleeping pad (great for visitors) or yoga mat (some Volunteers swear by these)
- Tent (optional)
- Travel alarm clock (the Peace Corps cellphones have an alarm feature)
- Multipurpose tool/pocket knife (**Make sure to put it in your check-in luggage, not allowed as a carry-on in the airport**)
- Water bottle
- Flashlight or headlamp, LED for longer battery life
- Sunglasses with UV protection
- Ponytail holders (available locally, but of very poor quality)

- Washcloths and bath towels, preferably lightweight (extra-large quick dry recommended)
- Warm (down, or compactable) sleeping bag-considered essential by Volunteers, especially in winter
- Set of sheets to fit a double-sized bed (can also be purchased locally but of low quality)
- Duct tape (considered a must by many)
- Small, basic cookbook and/or favorite recipes
- Dietary supplements you take other than multivitamins
- Sealable baggies (they are essential for keeping out bugs, ants, etc.)
- Photos of your family, friends, and home (a good conversation starter)
- Frisbee, soccer ball, baseball glove, football, and other recreational or sports equipment
- Permanent markers (available locally, but expensive and of poor quality)
- Portable games such as cards, Uno, checkers, chess, etc.
- Rechargeable batteries (regular batteries are available in Paraguay)
- 220-volt adapter, preferably with a surge protector (small ones cost about \$20 in Paraguay)
- USB flash drive or high capacity external hard drive (for information sharing)
- Portable CD player or MP3 and traveling speakers (there are inexpensive electronics available locally, so you can choose to wait until you get here)

- Camera and rechargeable batteries (expensive cameras are not recommended without insurance)
- Laptop computer (optional; there is an Internet plan offered through the Peace Corps and Wi-Fi in the office, but please note that not all rural Volunteers have Internet access at their sites)

## SECTOR-SPECIFIC PACKING LISTS

### CED Sector:

Computer (if brought, also bring an external hard drive)  
 Nicer clothes for meetings  
 Nice but comfortable shoes for meetings  
 Old clothes for working outdoors  
 Small calendar to stay organized

### Health (RHS) Sector:

Please bring enough professional clothing (business casual) for pre-service training (six days a week), in-service trainings (3-4 days at a time) and one to two days a week in the school or health post.  
 One pair of shoes you can work in, such as Chacos, good tennis shoes, or work boots

### Agriculture Sector:

Two pairs of pants you don't mind ruining  
 One long-sleeved white button-up collared shirt (for beekeeping activities, doesn't have to be nice)  
 One pair very light-colored pants (for beekeeping activities, don't have to be nice)  
 One pair of work/gardening gloves

### Environmental Education and Conservations Sector

Professional clothes for training, working in the schools, and working at the Peace Corps office (lightweight dark pants with a light-colored top will generally work)  
 Two pairs of clothes that you don't mind getting dirty for working in gardens or on tree planting projects

Garden or other work gloves

Work boots and/or footwear that can walk/work in for extended periods of time

Markers, paints, stickers, and other art supplies to use with the kids at the schools or camps.

Calendar or planner to keep yourself organized (can be purchased locally)

Kids' books in Spanish, especially relating to the environment

### Education and Youth Development Sector

Games (playing card games, puzzles, board games) in Spanish

Kids' books/chapter books in Spanish

Materials—markers, crayons, coloring books

## PRE-DEPARTURE CHECKLIST

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

### Family

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

### Passport/Travel

- Forward to the Peace Corps travel office all paperwork for the Peace Corps passport and visas.

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

#### Medical/Health

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

#### Insurance

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

#### Personal Papers

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

#### Voting

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

#### Personal Effects

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

#### Financial Management

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

# CONTACTING PEACE CORPS HEADQUARTERS

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

Peace Corps Headquarters Toll-free Number: 800.424.8580, Press 2, Press 1, then Ext. # (see below)

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

<b>For Questions About:</b>	<b>Staff: Direct/Local Number:</b>		<b>Toll-Free Ext:</b>
<b>Responding to an Invitation:</b>	Office of Placement	x1840	202.692.1840
<b>Country Information:</b>	Desk Officer/ Meghan Curley	x2516	202.692.2516
<b>Plane Tickets, Passports, Visas, or Travel:</b>	SATO Travel	x1170	202.692.1170
<b>Legal Clearance:</b>	Office of Placement	x1840	202.692.1840
<b>Medical Clearance (includes dental):</b>	Screening Nurse	x1500	202.692.1500
<b>Medical Reimbursements (handled by a subcontractor)</b>			800.818.8772
<b>Loan Deferments, Taxes, Financial Operations</b>		x1770	202.692.1770
<b>Readjustment Allowance Withdrawals, Power of Attorney, Staging (Pre-Departure Orientation), and Reporting Instructions:</b>			
<b>Office of Staging</b>	x1865		202.692.1865
<b>Family Emergencies (to get information to a Volunteer overseas) 24 hours:</b>			
<b>Office of Special Services</b>	x1470		202.692.1470