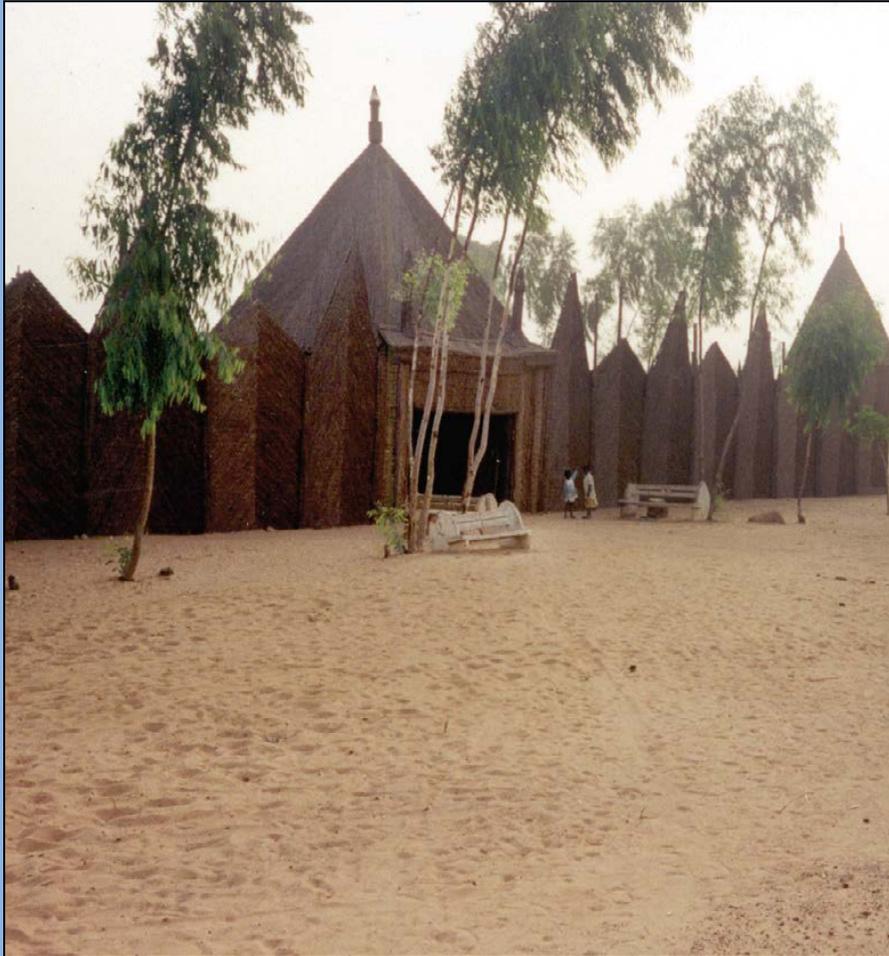


THE PEACE CORPS WELCOMES YOU TO

# SENEGAL



A PEACE CORPS PUBLICATION FOR NEW VOLUNTEERS

June 2013 Year CCD

# MAP OF SENEGAL



## A WELCOME LETTER

Congratulations on your invitation to become a Peace Corps Volunteer in Senegal! This next chapter will be the most challenging and rewarding of your life. You will do good work, make many friends, and have experiences that you'll never forget. You will learn much about yourself and about another culture. Your future neighbors in Senegal, along with Peace Corps staff and your fellow Volunteers, are looking forward to meeting you and working with you.

This book provides you with a detailed introduction to Peace Corps/Senegal and should answer some of the many questions that you and your family and friends may have about your upcoming service. It is, though, just a start to a process of orientation, training, and support that will continue once you arrive in Senegal.

In the meantime, we urge you to reach out to returned Peace Corps Volunteers who have served in Senegal and other countries in West Africa, who can share stories and advice about their service. The quality of your Peace Corps service is largely in your hands, so we encourage you to start preparing for a great experience now. You can start by visiting [www.pcsenegal.org](http://www.pcsenegal.org), a website created by currently serving Volunteers.

The Peace Corps has always had three main goals: to help enable sustainable development in the countries where we work; to help the people we work with gain a better understanding of America and Americans; and to help Americans better understand the rest of the world. Now, more than

ever, each of these goals is tremendously important. Our job as Peace Corps staff members is to help create the environment in which you can succeed in best achieving each of these goals.

Peace Corps/Senegal has a very strong emphasis on the first goal of Peace Corps—the development goal. We take pride in tangibly helping the communities where we live and work make progress in improving their day-to-day lives.

In addition to our strong focus on programs, such as health, education, small enterprise development, agroforestry, and agriculture, Peace Corps/Senegal is developing innovative approaches to working across these sectors to achieve goals where we work. In these efforts, Volunteers work as teams to design, develop and implement strategies for development in collaboration with each other, their communities, the local government, and nongovernmental organization (NGO) partners. While we recognize the importance of the second and third goals, the cross-cultural exchange, our focus is on holding ourselves accountable for helping to enable measurable and sustainable progress in our communities.

This approach guides our staff efforts in training, site selection, partnership development, and programming. We are very serious about our work and expect you to be, too. Part of that approach is being open to suggestions on how to improve the program. We encourage

you to be professional in voicing your point of view and helping us to build a more effective program for our Volunteers and the communities they serve.

In Senegal, the government's development priorities include agriculture and forestry, small enterprise development, community health, ecotourism, and environmental education. The Peace Corps program addresses each of these areas. As a community of Volunteers, supported by staff, and working collaboratively with our Senegalese partners, you will help enable progress that should sustainably improve the conditions of life for the Senegalese people. Your work and daily life as a Volunteer may sometimes be frustrating and challenging, particularly in the beginning, but as a community we will all support you and each other along the way.

There is much to learn, but don't worry. Soon, you will face the challenges and share the rewards of Peace Corps service.

We welcome you and look forward to your arrival!

All the best,

The Peace Corps Senegal Staff

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# CORE EXPECTATIONS FOR PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS

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

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

## HISTORY AND PROGRAMS

### History of the Peace Corps in Senegal

The Peace Corps program in Senegal began in 1963 with the assignment of 15 English teachers to secondary schools around the country. In the ensuing years, the program has evolved to better address the changing needs of the Senegalese people. Currently, approximately 150 Volunteers work throughout the country. The 3,000 Volunteers who previously served in Senegal have left in place a positive legacy that will help those who will follow to benefit from the respect and positive perceptions of being a Peace Corps Volunteer in Senegal.

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

In the beginning, the predominant Peace Corps project was teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL), while rural development played a secondary role. Current programming efforts integrate the goals of the government of Senegal with the goals of the Peace Corps, placing special emphasis on meeting basic human needs. Currently, Peace Corps/Senegal has projects in small enterprise development, ecotourism, agroforestry, agriculture, and health education.

Peace Corps/Senegal assigns Volunteers primarily to small-scale activities aimed at training rural individuals or communities to tackle their own development problems and priorities. Some Volunteers are also placed in more urban settings and may help coordinate the efforts of Volunteers with nongovernmental organization (NGO) partners. This policy reflects Peace Corps/Senegal's adherence to a philosophy of grassroots sustainable development and coincides with a growing recognition by the government of Senegal that a centralized, top-down development approach is neither effective nor affordable. Much of our work focuses on helping communities achieve progress on meeting the Millennium Development Goals adopted by the government of Senegal.

As Senegal's population has grown at an annual rate of 2.5 percent, the number of children seeking to attend school has risen dramatically. The population of Senegal is young, with an average age of 21.8 years for men and 22.6 years for women. School enrollment has grown to more than 80 percent, and though boys' enrollment still outnumbers girls, that gap is decreasing. The government devotes 40 percent of its national expenditures to support education, but the needs remain greater than the progress being made. In particular, the demand for qualified and adequately-trained teachers exceeds the supply. Many teachers are placed in front of classes with inadequate preparation and lacking the resources and materials to effectively teach.

Peace Corps Volunteers have worked in primary schools since 1994 through the environmental education project, and the results have been very encouraging. There is an important need to accelerate teacher training, provide increased materials and resources for schools—especially in rural areas—and to update and revise curricula.

The AIDS pandemic strikes across all social strata in many Peace Corps countries. The loss of teachers has crippled education systems, while illness and disability drains family income and forces governments and donors to redirect limited resources from other priorities. The fear and uncertainty AIDS causes has led to increased domestic violence and stigmatizing of people living with HIV/AIDS, isolating them from friends and family and cutting them off from economic opportunities. Though Senegal has a relatively low incidence of HIV/AIDS, as a Peace Corps Volunteer, you may confront these issues on a very personal level. It is important to be aware of the high emotional toll that disease, death, and violence can have on Volunteers. As you strive to integrate into your community, you will develop relationships with local people who might die during your service. Because of the AIDS pandemic, some Volunteers will be regularly meeting with HIV-positive people and working with training staff, office staff, and host family members living with AIDS. Volunteers need to prepare themselves to embrace these relationships in a sensitive and positive manner. Likewise, malaria and malnutrition, motor vehicle accidents and other unintentional injuries, domestic violence, and corporal punishment are problems a Volunteer may confront. You will need to anticipate these situations and utilize supportive resources available throughout your training and service to maintain your own emotional strength so you can continue to be of service to your community.

# COUNTRY OVERVIEW: SENEGAL AT A GLANCE

## History

Senegal has a rich and colorful history. Many African empires gained prominence in the region, the most important of which was Tekrur, a powerful trading state along the Senegal River that flourished from the 10th through the 12th centuries. Islam first entered the region through these contacts. The groups residing in the region sent slaves and gold north across the desert in exchange for salt and weapons.

Europeans began to arrive in the mid-15th century, beginning with the Portuguese and followed later by the French, English, and Dutch. The Europeans competed intensely for Senegal's lucrative slave trade, and by the end of the 17th century, the French had established forts at Dakar and throughout the Senegal River Valley, while the English had seized the mouth of The Gambia River.

Although they established a colony at this early date, the French needed an additional two centuries to extend their dominion beyond their forts and coastal cities. They faced stiff resistance from African leaders throughout the country, with Islam or traditional kingdoms often becoming a rallying point against French domination. By the end of the 19th century, France controlled most of Senegal north of The Gambia, but groups south of The Gambia continued to resist into the early years of the 20th century.

French colonial rule, as elsewhere in Africa, was primarily a system of political and economic exploitation. The French introduced the peanut to Senegal as a cash crop in the mid-19th century, and soon Senegal was France's most profitable African colony. France typically ruled peacefully in Senegal until African demands for independence became too strong to ignore in the years following World War II.

On April 4, 1959, Senegal and French Sudan (present-day Mali) combined to form the Mali Federation, which became fully independent in June 1960. April 4 remains the date that Senegal annually commemorates its independence. Because of internal political and economic differences, the federation was dissolved when Senegal seceded in August 1960, and Senegal and Mali became separate, independent nations.

Senegal's first president, Léopold Sedar Senghor, was one of the leading figures of the independence movement. He was also a highly respected French-language poet and the only African ever elected to the prestigious and powerful Académie Française. His writings on negritude, a political philosophy that champions the strengths of African ideals, remain important in contemporary African political science.

After a power struggle within the first government, Senghor ousted and imprisoned Prime Minister Mamadou Dia in 1962. He passed a new Constitution in 1963 that organized the

government as a representative republic with executive power vested in the president and legislative power vested in a National Assembly elected by universal suffrage. Senghor also instituted the beginnings of local democratic rule in 1972 by establishing a political governance system centered on groups of villages called “rural communities.” This remains the basis of modern Senegalese democracy. In 1976, the Constitution was amended to institutionalize four political parties across the spectrum from right to left. Senghor, the head of the Socialist Party, was re-elected in 1978 as a moderate socialist, but he resigned on December 31, 1980, passing on the presidency to Prime Minister Abdou Diouf.

President Diouf removed all restrictions on opposition political parties. An overwhelming majority returned him and the Socialist Party to power in 1983 in the country’s first unrestricted multiparty elections. More than 50 parties are active in Senegal today, with the Socialist Party and the governing Democratic Socialist Party among the most prominent.

As acting president of the Organization of African Unity in 1985 and 1986, Diouf led the international diplomatic battle against South Africa’s apartheid regime. Senegal accorded full diplomatic recognition to both Namibia’s South-West Africa People’s Organization (SWAPO) and South Africa’s African National Congress (ANC).

On November 14, 1981, Senegal and The Gambia signed an agreement proposing to unite the two countries as the Confederation of Senegambia. Various government officials had proposed such a union since the early days of independence. The Gambia, a former English colony, is nearly completely surrounded by Senegal, a former French colony. The two countries share the same ethnic groups and pre-colonial history; the main differences between them are their official languages and colonial traditions.

The agreement was precipitated by an attempted military coup in The Gambia in July 1981, while Gambian President Dawda Jawara was out of the country on a state visit. Fearing regional instability, the Senegalese Army entered the country and suppressed the rebellion. After this aborted coup, the two countries tried to implement a confederation. Political integration was going faster than economic integration when the two governments decided to dismantle the confederation in 1989.

Between 1997 and 1999, Djibo Ka and Moustapha Niasse, both important figures in Diouf’s party and longtime government ministers, quit the government and created their own parties. Although the ruling party minimized the event’s significance, most observers saw it as the beginning of the end of the Socialist Party. On March 19, 2000, President Diouf lost to an opposition coalition led by longtime rival Abdoulaye Wade in the presidential election. This was a first in Senegal, as the Socialist Party had won all presidential elections for more than 40 years.

Wade benefited from the support of about 20 parties grouped within the Coalition for an Alternation of Power. Although the election was not trouble-free, most national and international observers considered it fair and democratic.

Senegal's political stability has, in many ways, been a shining light in what has otherwise been a difficult post-independence struggle for most of sub-Saharan Africa. The March 2000 election was a model for all young democracies. What had been expected to be an election surrounded by civil unrest with contested results fortunately turned out to be a transparent and peaceful transfer of power from a long-governing political party to another, restoring hope among the majority of Senegalese, especially the young. Senegal entered a new phase full of hope, as well as uncertainty.

On December 30, 2004, the president announced that he would sign a peace treaty with two separatist factions of the Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC) in the Casamance region, initiating an end to West Africa's longest-running civil conflict. The peace treaty appears to be working, as both factions and the Senegalese military continue to honor the treaty. With recognized prospects for peace, refugees began returning home from neighboring Gambia and Guinea-Bissau. Occasional violence between the separatists and the government and banditry along roadways has continued in the Ziguinchor Region. Because of these activities and concerns about some remaining landmines in that region, Peace Corps/Senegal does not currently place Volunteers in the Ziguinchor Region and travel in the zone is restricted.

President Wade was re-elected to a five-year term in 2007. Senegal hosted the international Islamic Conference in March 2008, a point of considerable national pride.

## **Government**

The Senegalese government is a republic under multiparty democratic rule. There is universal suffrage, with citizens, including the police and the military, eligible to vote at age 18.

The president heads the executive branch and appoints a prime minister as the head of government. Members of the Council of Ministers, or cabinet, are appointed by the prime minister in consultation with the president. The most recent government reorganization occurred in November 2006.

The legislative branch consists of a 150-seat unicameral National Assembly (Assemblée Nationale) whose members are elected by direct popular vote for five-year terms. In January 2007, a 100-member Senate also was introduced. The legal system is based on French civil law. Following a 1992 reform, the judicial branch is composed of a Constitutional Court, Council of State, Financial Review Court (Cour des Comptes), Court of Final Appeals (Cour de Cassation), and Court of Appeals. The Constitutional Court reviews legislative acts, and the Council of State audits the government's accounting office.

The country is divided into 14 administrative regions: Dakar (the capital), Diourbel, Fatick, Kaffrine, Kaolack, Kedougou, Kolda, Louga, Matam, Saint-Louis, Sediou, Tambacounda, Thiès, and Ziguinchor. These regions are further divided into departments, administrative districts (arrondissements), and rural communities.

## Economy

Although Senegal has a diversified economy by West African standards, it remains one of the poorest of the world's nations. A major problem over the past 40 years has been recurrent drought, which has limited plans to increase agricultural production and expand industrialization.

The Senegalese government exerts a great degree of control over the peanut oil and phosphate industries, but in most other sectors, foreign ownership (mostly French, Lebanese and, increasingly, Chinese) is dominant. The nation's primary sources of income are phosphate mining, fishing, light manufacturing, agricultural processing, and tourism. Of these, only tourism has been growing substantially. Fishing has declined in importance as fisheries have been depleted by overproduction. Recently, substantial foreign investments have been made in developing gold and iron ore mining in the southeastern region of Kedougou.

Peanut cultivation and refining have seen a tremendous decline over the past two decades. Once the country's leading foreign currency earner, the peanut industry now accounts for only 25 percent of exports. This loss is the result of overcultivation in traditional peanut-growing regions, drought, and the diversion of peanuts from Senegal into neighboring countries for export via the black market. The Senegalese government has taken a number of steps to restructure production and marketing systems and to increase domestic prices for farmers, but the effects of these steps have yet to be fully evaluated. In the 1980s, poor economic performance placed Senegal under sometimes severe economic structural adjustment measures. These included drastic reduction of government expenditures for social services and led the way to some of the more difficult problems that Senegal is now experiencing.

About 70 percent of Senegal's population is engaged in agriculture, but the performance of the agricultural sector has been steadily worsening, and it now contributes less than 25 percent of gross domestic product. Sugar production and diversification into nontraditional and vegetable crops have been promoted in recent years, but there has been limited success. Rice production in the north and south is hampered by both growing and marketing conditions. With the population increasing at a nearly 3 percent annual rate and cereal production declining in many areas, Senegal is finding it more difficult to attain self-sufficiency in rice crops, although millet and corn production tend to be adequate to meet the country's overall needs. Senegal has relied increasingly on imports and transfers of money from Senegalese living abroad to satisfy its growing demand for rice and wheat.

Helped by better rains than in past years, the 2008 harvest, however, was relatively successful.

There is an important herding tradition among some groups in Senegal. Cattle, sheep, and goats are found throughout much of the country. Chickens and other fowl are also prevalent. In Catholic and animist areas of the country, pigs are raised in limited numbers. Camels are also raised in northern parts of the country.

The New Agricultural Policy (Nouvelle Politique Agricole) and its followup, the Cereal Plan (Plan Céréalière), were the centerpiece of government policy in this sector. The major objectives were the complete phase out of state-run regional development agencies, privatization of the agricultural sector, and progress toward food security. These policies did not achieve the desired results and the government is still seeking a way to address its agricultural needs.

Continuous cycles of drought and soil depletion problems have been exacerbated by sporadic locust infestations, underlining the precariousness of farming in Senegal. Depleted soils and lack of timely, affordable inputs and other constraints have seriously impacted crop production in most areas of the peanut basin and yields nationwide have been consistently low.

## People and Culture

While some African countries have hundreds of distinct ethnic groups, in Senegal there are only a few principal ethnicities. The Wolof, the largest group, constitutes 36 percent of the population. They live predominantly in the western and central regions, north of The Gambia, and in urban centers. They have traditionally been Senegal's leading peanut cultivators.

The Pulaar-speaking people (also known as the Fulani) make up 26.5 percent of the population. Found throughout West and Central Africa, owing to their nomadic past, in Senegal they can be divided into two distinct groups. The Pulafuta (17.5 percent) are shepherds or farmers who live all over the country, except in the coastal areas. The Toucouleur (9 percent) have traditionally farmed along the banks of the Senegal River, but in recent years many have migrated to urban centers.

The Sereer, who constitute 16.5 percent of the population, live primarily in the Thiès and Fatick regions. The Diola (9 percent) include a number of distinct linguistic groups with similar cultural traditions and live primarily in the Ziguinchor region, south of The Gambia. The Mandinka (6.5 percent) are scattered throughout the Kedougou, Kolda and Tambacounda regions; they are Mandé, culturally and linguistically related to the Bambara of Mali, the Dioula of Côte d'Ivoire, and the Malinké of Guinea. All of these groups are primarily sedentary farmers, although those settled on the coast actively fish.

Smaller ethnic groups include the Bainouk, Balante, Bambara, Bassari, Bédik, Diakhanké, Dialonké, Mandjak-Mankagn, and Soninké. Large groups of foreigners, principally French, Lebanese, and Cape Verde Islanders, reside in urban centers, especially in Dakar. While the predominant religion in Senegal is Islam, the Senegalese take great pride in their country's climate of religious tolerance. In fact, the government officially celebrates both Muslim and Roman Catholic holidays, even though more than 90 percent of the people are Muslim.

Sufism, the type of Islam practiced in Senegal, is based on the teachings of an ancient form of Islamic mysticism. Sufism follows the basic tenets of Islam but does not follow all of the practices of Sunnite or Shiite Muslims. Some indigenous ethnic groups have been Muslim for more than 600 years, while others did not convert until the end of the 19th century. About 5 percent of Senegalese are Christian, primarily adherents of Roman Catholicism, which was brought to the country by Portuguese and French colonialists in the 15th through the 20th centuries. A small percentage of citizens are animists, following traditional beliefs centered on the power of supernatural spirits. Animism also profoundly influences the practice of Islam and Christianity in Senegal.

## Environment

Approximately 40 years of drought in the Sahel has severely impacted natural resources in Senegal. Dramatic reductions in plant cover, biological diversity, and land productivity have occurred in much of Senegal north of The Gambia. Current tree-planting efforts in the sub-Saharan are estimated to be only about 10 to 15 percent of the level required to balance losses of wooded vegetation from activities such as land clearing, charcoal production, fuel collection, and brush fires. Recent patterns of below-normal precipitation have reduced the carrying capacities of affected lands. A new balance must be achieved between a relatively drier environment and the ability of the natural resource base to support agricultural and pastoral systems.

Efforts by donor groups such as the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the World Bank, and the United Nations initially focused on an industrial plantation approach to remedy deforestation and desertification problems in Africa. Project successes were the exception rather than the rule. In a revamped approach, village-level wood lots were promoted as the panacea to Africa's energy crisis, but this approach yielded few success stories after considerable donor spending. A third approach is now focusing on a variety of interventions (i.e., agroforestry, protection of natural regeneration, and land management) at the village and farm levels. These efforts in Senegal are being coordinated by the Waters and Forests Agency within the Ministry of Environment and Protection of Nature.

Another result of the prolonged drought is the reduction of Senegal's already limited groundwater and surface water resources, which has severely affected agricultural production and threatened the health of rural inhabitants. Water tables have dropped an

average of 20 inches (50 centimeters) per year in many regions of the country, while traditional flood plains and marsh areas have remained dry. Salinization has become a serious problem in some areas. A large portion of the government's water budget goes to the country's rapidly expanding urban centers, and the technology for tapping deep aquifers or for diverting river water remains prohibitively expensive for most rural communities.

Senegal has undertaken a number of initiatives to satisfy the water needs of the rural population and to develop and manage existing water resources rationally. With donor assistance, the government has promoted construction of deep bore-hole wells in selected rural communities that can provide safer and more reliable water for human consumption and promote agricultural and livestock production. The government also provides technical advice and equipment to communities to assist them in digging and repairing traditional cement-tube wells.

Despite recognition of sufficient rural water supplies as a pressing national priority, inadequate water supply continues to be a major problem around which the cycle of poverty and poor health revolves. The government is not equipped to solve the problem alone, and an infusion of outside funding in this sector remains necessary.

## RESOURCES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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

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

This site was developed by currently serving Peace Corps/Senegal Volunteers and provides information about Senegal and the Peace Corps in Senegal.

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

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

<https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/>

This world fact book provides up-to-date country information.

[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.gouv.sn](http://www.gouv.sn)

The official site of the Government of Senegal and it contains links to many other sites (Note that the site is entirely presented in French)

[www.africa.upenn.edu/Country\\_Specific/Senegal.html](http://www.africa.upenn.edu/Country_Specific/Senegal.html)

University of Pennsylvania African Studies Center offers a comprehensive gateway to many useful references on Senegal.

[www.lclark.edu/~nicole/SENEGAL/HOME.HTM](http://www.lclark.edu/~nicole/SENEGAL/HOME.HTM)

An orientation to Senegal from Lewis and Clark University

[www.gksoft.com/govt/en/sn.html](http://www.gksoft.com/govt/en/sn.html)

Information on the government of Senegal

[www.senegal-online.com/](http://www.senegal-online.com/)

Practical information targeted towards tourists for getting around the country.

[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.

[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.

<http://www.erslah.com/attaya/fosg.asp>

This is the website for Friends of Senegal and The Gambia. The group's listserv is <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/FriendsOfSenegalGambia/>.

[Facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com)

Search for Peace Corps/Senegal and join the Facebook group.

### **Online Articles/Current News Sites About Country**

[www-sul.stanford.edu/depts/ssrg/africa/senegal/senenews.html](http://www-sul.stanford.edu/depts/ssrg/africa/senegal/senenews.html)

Provides links to a variety of informative news sites about Senegal

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

A Senegalese news Web portal (in French)

<http://www.onlinenewspapers.com/senegal.htm>

Provides links to several of Senegal's newspapers.

### **International Development Sites About Country**

[www.worldbank.org/data/countrydata/aag/sen\\_aag.pdf](http://www.worldbank.org/data/countrydata/aag/sen_aag.pdf)

World Bank data on Senegal

[www.irinnews.org/frontpage.asp?SelectRegion=West\\_Africa&SelectCountry=Senegal](http://www.irinnews.org/frontpage.asp?SelectRegion=West_Africa&SelectCountry=Senegal)

Humanitarian news and analysis from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

<http://www.plan-international.org/wherewework/westafrica/senegal/>

United Kingdom's issues-oriented description of their work in Senegal.

[mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Data.aspx](http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Data.aspx)

The official site for the Indicators associated with the Millennium Development Goals.

### Recommended Books

- Behrman, Lucy C. *Muslim Brotherhoods and Politics in Senegal*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970. (Also available in a 1999 paperback from iUniverse.com.)
- Fagg, William Buller, et al. *Yoruba: Sculpture of West Africa*. New York: Knopf, 1984.
- Gellar, Sheldon. *Senegal: An African Nation Between Islam and the West*. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1995.
- Gordon, Eugene (ed.). *Senegal in Pictures*. Minneapolis: Lerner Publications, 1989. (Available from LernerBooks.com.)
- Holloway, Kris. *Monique and the Mango Rains: Two Years with a Midwife in Mali*. Long Grove, Ill.: Waveland Press, 2006.
- Maranz, David E. *African Friends and Money Matters*. Dallas, Texas: SIL International, 2001.

### Books About the History of the Peace Corps

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

### Books on the Volunteer Experience

- Dirlam, Sharon. *Beyond Siberia: Two Years in a Forgotten Place*. Santa Barbara, Calif.: McSeas Books, 2004.
- Casebolt, Marjorie DeMoss. *Margarita: A Guatemalan Peace Corps Experience*. Gig Harbor, Wash.: Red Apple Publishing, 2000.
- Erdman, Sarah. *Nine Hills to Nambonkaha: Two Years in the Heart of an African Village*. New York, N.Y.: Picador, 2003.

- Hessler, Peter. *River Town: Two Years on the Yangtze*. New York, N.Y.: Perennial, 2001.
- Kennedy, Geraldine ed. *From the Center of the Earth: Stories out of the Peace Corps*. Santa Monica, Calif.: Clover Park Press, 1991.
- Thompsen, Moritz. *Living Poor: A Peace Corps Chronicle*. Seattle, Wash.: University of Washington Press, 1997 (reprint).

# LIVING CONDITIONS AND VOLUNTEER LIFESTYLE

## Communications

### Mail

Few countries in the world offer the level of mail service considered normal in the United States. If you expect U.S. standards for mail service, you will be in for some frustration. Mail from the U.S. to Senegal often takes about two weeks to arrive; however, it may take several more days for it to reach some areas that are further from the capital. Some mail may simply not arrive (fortunately, this is not a frequent occurrence, but it does happen). Letters may arrive with clipped edges because someone may have tried to see if any money was inside (again, this is rare, but it does happen). Advise your family and friends to number their letters for tracking purposes and to include "SENEGAL-WEST AFRICA", "Airmail" and "Par Avion" on their envelopes.

Despite the delays, we encourage you to write to your family regularly and to number your letters. Family members typically become worried when they do not hear from you, so it is a good idea to advise them that mail is sporadic and that they should not worry if they do not receive your letters regularly.

Your address during training will be:

PCT "Your Name"  
Corps de la Paix  
B.P. 299  
Thiès, Senegal  
West Africa

Once you have been sworn in as a Volunteer and are at your permanent site, you will set up a postal box (Boite Postale, B.P.) and be able to share your new address with your family and friends.

Parcel post and other packages may also be received by trainees and Volunteers. They frequently take longer to arrive, even when sent via airmail, and they are subject to customs and other fees upon arrival. These fees often begin at \$4 (U.S.) per package and can go higher, depending on the value of the goods received. It is wise to include (or separately send) a list detailing what is in the box when shipped.

## Telephones

Landline calls can be made from private telephone shops known as telecenters at reasonable prices. Volunteers' residences typically are not equipped with telephones, but, occasionally, neighbors may have a phone, particularly for Volunteers in towns. Telecenters

are found in most towns but may not exist in small villages. Some villages have solar-powered phone booths. Regional transit houses, which may be available to some Volunteers, also are equipped with landline phones.

Many Volunteers use cell phones for calls and SMS text messaging. Cell phone connectivity depends on network availability at the Volunteer's assigned site. About 70 percent of Volunteers in Senegal have regular access to the cell phone network. All Volunteers purchase locally available cell phones in the first week of training, facilitated by the Peace Corps training staff.

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

Many Internet cafes have sprung up throughout Senegal, particularly in regional capitals. Some areas are equipped with asymmetric digital subscriber lines (ADSLs). Typically, the computers are older models and may not offer speed or reliable connectivity. The cost varies from the equivalent of around 50 cents to \$4 an hour. Most Volunteers live some distance from a regional capital, so few Volunteers have regular access to the Internet. Some regional transit houses have DSL Internet access with Wi-Fi. The Peace Corps office in Dakar has shared computers for Volunteer use and Wi-Fi access.

### **Housing and Site Location**

Most Volunteers in Senegal are assigned to rural areas, especially those who work in agriculture, ecotourism, health, natural resources, and environmental education. For safety and cultural reasons, Volunteers are usually housed in family compounds, where accommodations range from a cement-block room with a tin roof to a traditional hut with a thatched roof. The Peace Corps expects that all housing be equipped with screens to protect against mosquitoes and other insects, doors and windows with locks, and a concrete floor. Additionally, bathing and toilet facilities must meet Peace Corps standards. Your site will be supplied with water through a reliable well water source, a community tap, or a tap in your home, depending on where you may be assigned. Volunteers are encouraged to bring pictures or other decorations to “make their hut a home.”

### **Living Allowance and Money Management**

The living allowance is deposited into Volunteers' bank accounts on a quarterly basis and is intended to cover the cost of food, household supplies, and work-related travel. The amount varies from region to region and whether the site is in an urban or rural area. As the funds are issued quarterly, it is important for Volunteers to keep track of their expenditures so their allowance will last until the next payment is issued. Volunteers living with host families are encouraged to make appropriate contributions to their heads of families to cover food and other costs. Each year, Volunteers are encouraged to complete a survey to help determine the amount of the living allowance. It is important that Volunteers live at the same economic level as people in their community, so supplementing the living

allowance to enhance your community living standard with additional funds is strongly discouraged.

## Food and Diet

Senegalese cooking can be considered monotonous by the uninitiated Westerner, but it can also be delicious. Rice and millet are the two staples, with millet being the traditional food crop in the peanut basin and rice being more prevalent in the river basins. Depending on your assignment and the relative wealth of the families with whom you live, you may end up eating millet or rice three times a day. Corn and sorghum are also widely prepared. Generally, rice is served at lunch and millet at dinner, both with seasonal vegetables, and fish when available. The national dish is *thiéboudien*, a tasty blend of fish and rice simmered in tomato sauce and spices, accompanied by various vegetables. Other popular dishes are *mafé* (rice and peanut sauce), *yassa* (rice, onions, and chicken, beef, or fish), and *cere neex* (millet and bean sauce). Bread was introduced by the French during the colonial period and is popular, but is expensive for the average Senegalese since all of its ingredients are imported. It has become a breakfast staple in urban areas. On Muslim holidays, the standard fare is lamb. A variety of fruits is also available at different seasons, including mangoes, papayas, watermelons, mandarins, oranges, and bananas. Fruits are more widely available in the south, where more abundant rainfall supports fruit tree production. Available vegetables include potatoes, sweet potatoes, eggplant, okra, cabbage, beans, turnips, squash, tomatoes, onions, lettuce, and carrots.

## Transportation

Volunteers are issued bicycles for daily use. Use of helmets is mandatory and you will be issued a helmet with your bicycle. Volunteers are not permitted to drive or ride on motorcycles or motor scooters. Village-based Volunteers may find themselves passengers on *charrettes*, (horse- or donkey-drawn carts). For intercity transportation, some areas are served by Peugeot 504 station wagons called *sept-places* or *taxis-brousse*. They are frequently unreliable, unsafe, crowded, and uncomfortable. Other zones depend on minibuses or vans of various shapes and sizes, which may be even more unreliable, unsafe, crowded, and uncomfortable. In Dakar, Volunteers often use city buses or taxis. Peace Corps/Senegal regularly reminds Volunteers to examine the condition of a vehicle and its driver before purchasing a ticket to board any intercity mode of transport. If you find yourself in a vehicle you believe to be unsafe, you should demand that the driver let you out immediately. Vehicle accidents are the leading cause of death of Americans in Africa. In Senegal, since 1963, one Volunteer and one staff member have died in an automobile accident.

## Geography and Climate

Senegal, a semiarid country with a population of more than 12 million, is one of America's most important partners in sub-Saharan Africa. Occupying an area approximately the size of South Dakota, it shares borders with Mauritania, Mali, The Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, and the Atlantic Ocean, and it is the westernmost country on the African continent. Because of its geographic location and deep-water port, Dakar, the capital, serves as the western gateway to the African continent.

The landscape consists of monotonous flat plains in the middle of the arid, sandy Sahel. The only significant elevations are in the far southeast along the Guinea border, the northern tip of the Fouta Djallon plateau, and farther east along the Malian border.

The Senegal River originates in the Fouta Djallon and forms the border with Mauritania. Saint-Louis, an old colonial city, is at the river's mouth. The wide flood plains, cultivated with peanuts and millet, are among the country's most productive areas. Senegal is very important to migrating birds, particularly waterfowl, which return in large numbers each winter from Europe. Djoudj Park, one of the most important bird reserves in the world, is to the north of Saint-Louis.

Senegal is biologically diverse, with more than 550 animal species. Certain species of wildlife, however, such as giraffes, have disappeared altogether. The increasing desertification of the northern part of the country and the salt intrusion in coastal zones has created concern about the viability of much of the wildlife found there.

## Social Activities

Social activities vary from region to region. Baptisms and weddings are big events in all areas. Some of West Africa's best-known musicians are from Senegal, including Youssou Ndour and Baaba Maal. Soccer, called football in Senegal, is a major preoccupation throughout the country and basketball is becoming more popular. Traditional wrestling tournaments and the ceremonies surrounding them are important sources of entertainment throughout the country. Dakar is home to a softball league consisting of both Senegalese and ex-pat teams.

## Professionalism, Dress, and Behavior

Senegalese, with rare exception, appear in public neatly dressed. While an unkempt or sloppy appearance may be an expression of individuality in the United States, in Senegal it is viewed as demeaning and disrespectful. Thus, Volunteers are expected to dress neatly and be well groomed at all times. Male Volunteers who wear shorts risk being treated as schoolboys, since generally only schoolboys wear shorts in Senegal. Female Volunteers should not wear anything above the knee, including shorts, in public. Long hair, unconventional hairdos, blatant tattoos, and piercings are considered unusual and may

attract attention or cause ridicule or harassment. They are considered inappropriate and should not be worn during Volunteer service. If you have any of these appearance characteristics, a decision to go without them for the duration of your Peace Corps service should be made prior to accepting the invitation to serve in Senegal.

These recommendations for dress are consistent with Peace Corps policies established to ensure the safety and well-being of Volunteers and with the wishes of the Senegalese government. As guests of the government, Volunteers should not abuse the hospitality of their host by showing disregard for local norms. Peace Corps Volunteers are expected to set good examples for the young people of Senegal, in addition to providing technical assistance. The respect they earn by virtue of their education, relative affluence, and status as representatives of the United States is easily lost by improper behavior or dress.

Note that the use of drugs, disorderly conduct, public drunkenness, and participation of any kind in Senegalese political affairs by Volunteers are strictly forbidden and will result in immediate termination from the Peace Corps.

## **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 Country 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 Country. 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 – Our Partnership." Among topics addressed are the risks of serving as a Volunteer, posts' safety support systems, and emergency planning and communications.

## Rewards and Frustrations

The cultural adaptation Volunteers must undertake while serving in Senegal is substantial. Customs and practices, such as polygamous and early marriages, reliance on extended families, and subsistence farming require Volunteers to re-evaluate their own attitudes and values. The slower pace may be a pleasant contrast to the American rush at breakneck speed, but can also be a source of frustration when things do not get done as quickly as one is accustomed to.

In addition, Volunteers are considered rich by Senegalese, an image that is hard for Volunteers to accept, particularly when beggars or representatives of charitable causes constantly approach them. It is important to remember that even though Volunteers work without a salary, in actuality their living allowance is far more than the income of the average village family. You will have to learn how to say no with discretion.

West Africa is known for its friendly and generous people, and the Senegalese exemplify these characteristics. Most Senegalese want to be friends with Volunteers and visit them continually. Volunteers are likely to attract attention wherever they go and be stared at simply because they are different and interesting. Some Senegalese may have never seen an American up close. The typical American's desire for privacy also will seem strange to Senegalese. Volunteers may find it difficult to have times of solitude and seeking privacy or "alone time" may be viewed as anti-social behavior. Volunteers will need to find a balance between making time for themselves and integrating into their community.

# PEACE CORPS TRAINING

## Pre-Service Training

Pre-service training (PST) is an essential part of Peace Corps service. The objective is to provide you with solid technical, language, and cross-cultural knowledge to prepare you for living and working successfully in Senegal. The training uses an experiential approach wherever possible; thus, rather than reading or hearing about Volunteer activities, you will practice, process, and evaluate actual or simulated activities. Senegal's pre-service training is very intensive and occurs during an 8 1/2-week period.

A welcome committee led by the Peace Corps country director and other staff will meet you at the airport. The committee will help you collect your baggage, go through customs formalities, and load your baggage on rented buses. Because trainees' baggage has occasionally been left somewhere en route, we advise you to carry essential items, toiletries, and enough clothing for three days in your carry-on luggage. Be certain to clearly and securely label all your baggage before checking it at the airport.

After leaving the airport, you will take a two-hour bus ride to Thiès, the location of the training center. You will stay at the center for your first three days in-country, when training will focus on an orientation to living with a host family; survival language classes; safety issues; a medical orientation; language placement interviews; and "getting to know you" activities.

The training plan is designed to provide trainees with the knowledge, skills, and experience necessary to make them linguistically capable, culturally aware and adapted, and technically informed to successfully begin Volunteer duties and to live confidently and safely. There is a lot to learn in eight weeks. Training will be intense and the training staff will work hard to make the learning environment as supportive as possible. PST will consist of four components: language, technical, cross-cultural, and personal health care. Safety training is integrated into all of these components, particularly in the cross-cultural and health care components. Please note that, in the training model used by Peace Corps/Senegal, you will not be completely trained technically until after your in-service training (IST), which occurs three months after you become a Volunteer.

Most activities and learning during the PST period will take place in the communities where trainees are hosted. About one-third of the 56 days of pre-service training will be with the entire training class at the Thies Training Center. The remainder of training will occur in the villages and small towns surrounding Thies, where groups of three to eight trainees, along with one or two of our Senegalese staff language and cross-cultural facilitators, will live with host families in the community. Focus in this setting will be on language learning (either French or local languages, such as Wolof, Pulaar, Mandinka or Sereer) and cross-cultural integration. Every one or two weeks, trainees will be brought

together as a group for technical training, and safety and security, administrative, and medical briefings.

To facilitate language acquisition, national languages are expected to be spoken at the training center (except during technical, medical, or cross-cultural sessions). This is what we call language immersion (practice makes perfect!). Please do all you can to improve your French before arriving, including using the online Rosetta Stone French you will be provided. The better you speak French, the easier it will be for you to focus on learning the local language that will help you become culturally more integrated.

You will receive focused formal language instruction during PST. Additionally, you will have ample opportunity outside of classes to practice your language skills, especially in your homestay environment. We encourage you to respect language immersion. It is the fastest way to acquire the language skills that you will rely on during your Peace Corps service.

The cross-cultural program, in broad terms, comprises two components: the hands-on homestay experience, and a more theoretical aspect that comprises sessions on various topics to help you develop insights and deeper understanding of the cultures of the Senegalese people with whom you will work. Most cross cultural training will be integrated into the days you spend in your host communities, rather than in class settings at the training center.

Technical training consists of classroom sessions and hands-on community-based training activities. Please note that in the current training model, PST technical training is designed to provide you with an understanding and overview of the program in which you will work. During IST, and during periodic technical conferences, such as the all-Volunteer conference and regional and sectoral summits, you will receive a more detailed treatment of specific techniques and skills required for successful service.

Personal health care training is designed and delivered by the Peace Corps medical officers (PCMOs). The PCMOs will also provide immunization and curative care throughout training and your Volunteer service.

For one week during PST, trainees, usually in groups of one to three, will visit current Volunteers at their sites to learn more about Volunteer work in the field. Generally, you will be visiting Volunteers working in the same program to which you are assigned and in a community where you will be able to practice your local language. This will help you gain firsthand exposure to the typical working and living conditions of Volunteers. This visit will provide an excellent opportunity for you to better understand the environment in which Peace Corps Volunteers serve in Senegal and to enhance your language, cross cultural, and technical understanding.

The training staff will be available for support throughout the program and will provide feedback on your progress. You must meet required technical competencies and a defined language ability to be sworn in as a Volunteer.

During training, when you are not doing field work, you will be expected to wear neat, clean, and conservative clothing. Pants, shirts (including T-shirts), skirts, and dresses are fine, but shorts are appropriate only for recreational activities (e.g., jogging or soccer). Clothing that reveals stomachs, backs, or undergarments is not appropriate for Volunteers or trainees. Such appearance is not professional or culturally acceptable and can provoke unwanted attention and even harassment. Peace Corps/Senegal strongly advises that trainees and Volunteers adopt sensible and appropriate means of dressing throughout their Peace Corps service.

You can receive mail at the training center's post office box, but the center's telephone is for official business only. You can make calls to the United States at the post office for approximately \$2 per minute. Volunteers generally buy cellphones (about \$40) during their first week of training. Mail will be collected from the post office once a day on workdays. You will have to pay customs taxes of \$2 or more for any packages, depending on the items' value.

Peace Corps service is not for everyone. Training is a time for you to re-evaluate your commitment to two years of service. Although training is very intense, it can also be a lot of fun. Be flexible and maintain a good sense of humor and you will have a rewarding and enjoyable training experience.

## **Technical Training**

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

## **Language Training**

As a Peace Corps Volunteer, you will find that language skills are key to personal and professional satisfaction during your service. These skills are critical to your job

performance, they help you integrate into your community, and they can ease your personal adaptation to the new surroundings. Therefore, language training is at the heart of the training program. You must successfully meet minimum language requirements to complete training and become a Volunteer. Country 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.

Peace Corps Volunteers in Senegal are very proud of their mastery of local languages, in addition to French. In many cases, when Senegalese discover you are a Volunteer, they automatically will switch to speaking a local language. This mastery of languages begins at pre-service training and becomes a proud pursuit for each Volunteer throughout his or her service.

## **Cross-Cultural Training**

As part of your pre-service training, you will live with a Country 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 Country. Many Volunteers form strong and lasting friendships with their host families.

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

## **Health Training**

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

## Safety Training

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

## Additional Trainings During Volunteer Service

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

- *In-service training*: Provides an opportunity for Volunteers to upgrade their technical, language, and project development skills while sharing their experiences and reaffirming their commitment after having served for three to six months.
- *Sector conferences*: Meetings of all Volunteers in a particular sector, such as health, Environmental education, agroforestry or others, with a focus on sharing best practices, reviewing goals, and improving technical skills.
- *Regional strategy sessions*: Meetings of all Volunteers in particular regions of Senegal to develop and hone their plans for working together, with the government of Senegal, and with nongovernmental organizations active in the area, to achieve defined goals, particularly aligned with Millennium Development Goals.
- *Technical education seminars*: Periodic seminars on technical subjects, such as tree grafting, beekeeping or other subjects of interest to particular groups of Volunteers.
- *All-Volunteer conference*: An annual conference in which staff, Volunteers, and partners network and share information and best practices.
- *Close-of-service conference*: Prepares Volunteers for the future after Peace Corps service and reviews their respective projects and personal experiences.

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

## YOUR HEALTH CARE AND SAFETY IN COUNTRY

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 Senegal 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 Senegal 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 Country

All water in Senegal is considered contaminated. This includes tap water in Dakar and other cities. Visitors should drink only bottled or treated (boiled or chemically treated) water or brand-name bottled or canned beverages, such as Coca-Cola, Fanta, etc. Ice cubes in restaurants are not safe and mixing alcohol with contaminated water will not purify the water. If visitors plan to travel to villages where safe bottled water may not be available, they should plan to carry an adequate water supply or chemical additives with them.

Peeled fruit and vegetables are safe to eat, as are unpeeled fruit and vegetables that have been well cooked. Salads can be dangerous, even in "good" restaurants, since lettuce and other vegetables may have been washed with contaminated water. Food should be thoroughly cooked, freshly prepared, served hot, and should not have been exposed to contamination by flies or other insects. All raw seafood should be avoided. Meat should be ordered well-done, "bien cuit" in French.

### 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 Senegal, 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 Senegal will consult with the Office of Medical Services in Washington, D.C. If it is determined that your

condition cannot be treated in Senegal, 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 Senegal is to take the following preventive measures:

**Vaccinations.** Yellow fever vaccination is required for entry into Senegal. Polio and measles-mumps-rubella are recommended and will be administered during staging, prior to departing for Senegal. Hepatitis A and B, typhoid, tetanus and diphtheria, rabies, influenza, and meningococcal vaccines also are recommended and will be administered during pre-service training.

Due to the possibility for a rapid spread of avian flu, the Office of Medical Services (OMS) in Washington, D.C., has directed that **ALL** Peace Corps Volunteers/trainees worldwide receive the flu vaccine this year (unless there are medical contraindications).

**Malaria.** You are scheduled to serve in an area where malaria, a mosquito-borne disease, is prevalent. Senegal is an area where chloroquine-resistant falciparum malaria (CRFM) is reported. Approved malaria prophylaxis medications are prescribed to suppress attacks of malaria. In the absence of absolute contraindication, the current recommended prophylaxis in Senegal is Mefloquine, 250 mg. taken in tablet form, once a week throughout your stay and for one month after your close of service. Side effects such as lightheadedness, dizziness, gastrointestinal disturbances, and insomnia are not uncommon when first starting mefloquine, but these side effects are typically general, mild and short lived, diminishing with continued use of the drug.

The medical officer will offer you an intensive review of these prophylactic recommendations and will provide you with country-specific information to assist you in determining your best prophylactic regimen. In addition, to eradicate any remaining malaria parasites you may have acquired, you will be given another anti-malarial drug to take when you terminate your Peace Corps service (primaquine, two tablets daily for 14 days).

No single or combined malaria prophylactic regimen is 100 percent effective. Avoidance of mosquito bites is imperative! Using bed nets, wearing appropriate clothing, and applying insect repellent to exposed skin will greatly reduce your risk of exposure to mosquito bites. Malaria, if contracted, can be effectively treated, if

prompt medical attention is sought. A good “rule of thumb” to remember: **consider all unexplained fevers as possible malaria.**

**Other health concerns.** There may be health risks at medical facilities in Senegal, which have standards that are not comparable to medical facilities in the United States. Peace Corps medical staff cannot care for family members or friends who require medical attention while in Senegal.

It is critical to your health that you promptly report to the health unit for scheduled immunizations, and that you let your medical officer know immediately of significant illness and injuries.

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 Senegal during pre-service training.

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

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

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

## **Women’s Health Information**

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

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

## Your Peace Corps Medical Kit

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

### Medical Kit Contents

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

### Before You Leave: A Medical Checklist

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

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

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

you for the cost. The Peace Corps will provide all the immunizations necessary for your overseas assignment, either at your pre-departure orientation or shortly after you arrive in Senegal. 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 Corps provides you with resources to take measures such as installing new locks
- Peace Corps ensures you are welcomed by host country authorities in your new community
- Peace Corps responds to security concerns that you raise
- You lock your doors and windows
- You adopt a lifestyle appropriate to the community where you live
- You get to know neighbors
- You decide if purchasing personal articles insurance is appropriate for you
- You don't change residences before being authorized by Peace Corps
- You communicate concerns that you have to Peace Corps staff

### **Factors that Contribute to Volunteer Risk**

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

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

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

After you arrive in Senegal, 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 Senegal 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 Senegal. 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.

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

## Support from Staff

If a trainee or Volunteer is the victim of a safety incident, Peace Corps staff is prepared to provide support. All Peace Corps posts have procedures in place to respond to incidents of crime committed against Volunteers. The first priority for all posts in the aftermath of an incident is to ensure the Volunteer is safe and receiving medical treatment as needed. After assuring the safety of the Volunteer, Peace Corps staff response may include reassessing the Volunteer's worksite and housing arrangements and making any adjustments, as needed. In some cases, the nature of the incident may necessitate a site or housing transfer. Peace Corps staff will also assist Volunteers with preserving their rights to pursue legal sanctions against the perpetrators of the crime. It is very important that Volunteers report incidents as they occur, not only to protect their peer Volunteers, but also to preserve the future right to prosecute. Should Volunteers decide later in the process that they want to proceed with the prosecution of their assailant, this option may no longer exist if the evidence of the event has not been preserved at the time of the incident.

## Crime Data for Senegal

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

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

The Peace Corps/Senegal 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 Senegal. 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/Senegal'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 Senegal 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 Senegal, 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 Senegal.

Outside of Senegal'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 Senegal 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 Senegal, 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 Senegal

The Peace Corps staff in Senegal 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**

The roles that women play and the skills that women have in Senegal are quite different from those of American women in general. Most often, the work responsibilities of female Volunteers in Senegal are different from the roles of traditional Senegalese women. Further, the attitudes and actions of some Senegalese men, partly because of how American women have been portrayed in films and the general media, may be quite offensive to an American woman. Sometimes, the way women dress or carry themselves send signals of “availability.” Sometimes it seems as though a woman has to constantly prove, especially to Senegalese women, that she is a real woman. For example, a female Volunteer explained that she felt she had to spend hours pounding grain or going to the well to transport water just to prove to the women of her village that she could “cut the mustard” like a real woman. At other times, a woman may need to prove, especially to men, that she is a respectable woman. Acceptable behavior and dress are very important means that will help a woman attain the level of respect she desires. These and other issues for women will be discussed during training and strategies on how to maintain your own sense of self and be culturally sensitive will be explored.

### **Possible Issues for Volunteers of Color**

African-American Volunteers often are expected to master languages and adapt culturally more quickly than other Volunteers. They sometimes may be mistaken for a host country national and some Senegalese may not readily excuse or accommodate their lack of understanding or “correctness.”

It also may be more difficult for Senegalese to associate Asian Americans, Arab Americans or Hispanic Americans as being truly American. There may be stereotypes that Senegalese associate with these groups on the basis of the person’s perceived ancestral origin rather than his or her nationality. This added difficulty can be moderated if one views it not as an offense, but as a lack of understanding and accepts the challenge to teach Senegalese more about the diversity of the American population and the wonderful contributions that accrue from the differences in its composition.

Volunteers of color sometimes may feel a sense of isolation within the Volunteer community, because some Americans, too, may not have been educated about diversity or experienced diversity in their home communities. Again, this can be an opportunity for these Volunteers to interact with, and help expand, their fellow Volunteers’ understanding of American diversity.

### **Possible Issues for Senior Volunteers**

Throughout Africa, older individuals are highly respected, a clear plus for older Volunteers serving in Senegal. There is an expectation that these Volunteers have more knowledge and

experience. Because language acquisition often may be challenging for older Volunteers, they may sometimes become frustrated about their ability to communicate, an ability that is important to them and their mission. Patience and steadfast determination often unleashes a remarkable adaptability to communicate messages, often through demonstration, with satisfying results. Additionally, pre-service training can be physically challenging to older Volunteers.

Because the vast majority of Volunteers in Senegal are comparatively young, older Volunteers may feel a sense of isolation within the Volunteer community. On the other hand, some older Volunteers serve as mentors and may be sought out by the younger Volunteer community.

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

Throughout Senegal, most of the population can be characterized as predominantly religious and conservative. Homosexual acts are illegal and there is no tolerance for public displays of gay or lesbian behavior in Senegal. Those who openly exhibit these behaviors risk being attacked. Over the years, several Volunteers have felt the need to disclose their sexual orientation to their host family members. Peace Corps staff discourages such confessions due to the discomfort or danger that could follow. Gay and lesbian Volunteers have served successfully in Senegal, maintaining discretion and privacy during their service. Peace Corps staff and fellow Volunteers are very supportive of gay, lesbian, and bisexual Volunteers and have participated in periodic Volunteer-organized conferences to share approaches and best practices in dealing with different issues.

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

### **Possible Religious Issues for Volunteers**

As stated earlier, Senegal is more than 90 percent Muslim, the rest of the population being Christian or Animist. There is considerable religious tolerance in this country. Occasionally you may find a friend who encourages you to explore or convert to Islam. Generally, there is very little knowledge of religions other than Islam and Christianity and, to a lesser extent, Judaism. Volunteers are free to exercise their personal religious beliefs, but may not engage in religious proselytizing.

During one recent training session, a Jewish trainee discussed her experience with her training group and trainers. She stated that even though she explained to her Muslim friends and host family that she was Jewish, their relationships did not change and she felt just as comfortable with their friendships.

### **Possible Issues for Volunteers With Disabilities**

There is no city in Senegal, including the capital, and few buildings, that has facilities to accommodate the needs of individuals with physical handicaps, blindness or mobility-impairment. Though Senegalese are very accepting of people with disabilities, many of the accommodations one is accustomed to in the United States are absent here. Thus, everyday life would be difficult for people who depend on such conveniences.

That being said, 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 Senegal without unreasonable risk of harm to yourself or interruption of service. The Peace Corps/ Senegal 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.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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

### **How much luggage am I allowed to bring to Senegal?**

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

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

### **What is the electric current in Senegal?**

It is 220 volts, 50 cycles.

### **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 Senegal 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 Senegalese 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. Many Volunteers will be assigned within half a day's travel from another Volunteer, though some sites require a 12- to 16-hour drive to get to or from the capital.

### **How can my family contact me in an emergency?**

The Peace Corps' Office of Special Services (OSS) provides assistance in handling emergencies affecting trainees and Volunteers or their families. Before leaving the United

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

### **Can I call home from Senegal?**

Yes. International calls to most countries can be dialed directly. To call the United States, first dial “00” and wait for a continuous tone (different from the regular tone). Then dial “1” plus the area code and the number. If you prefer to call through an operator, dial “16.” Calls can be made at businesses known as telecenters and at *cabines téléphoniques* (phone booths). At a telecenter, a clerk will present you with a bill after you have completed the call. Many Volunteers use cellphones to place or receive international phone calls and SMS text messages. However, cellphones do not operate everywhere in the country.

### **Should I bring a cellular phone with me?**

Cellular phones are widely used in Senegal but do not function in all parts of the country. Volunteers are advised to purchase them in Senegal after ensuring that cellphones will work at their sites. Training staff facilitates this purchase. Note that the cost of cellphones and service is the personal responsibility of the Volunteer.

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

There is email and Internet access at the many Internet cafes across Senegal, particularly in regional capitals. Careful consideration should be given before bringing a computer to Senegal. Many Volunteers do not have electricity in their homes, and security and maintenance of personal computers cannot be guaranteed. If you do bring a computer, it is imperative that you purchase personal property insurance because the Peace Corps does not reimburse trainees or Volunteers for the loss of personal items. Internet access with Wi-Fi is available at the Peace Corps office in Dakar and at some of the regional transit houses.

## WELCOME LETTERS FROM SENEGAL VOLUNTEERS

Dear Peace Corps trainee:

As a Peace Corps Volunteer, it is mind boggling to think about where you once were, where you are now, and what still lies ahead of you once here in Senegal. Every new day provides a different set of challenges and rewards. The obstacles that once seemed difficult and unbearable typically become easier and more enjoyable as your service moves forward.

As a second-year urban agriculture Volunteer living and working in Dakar, a multinational city of about 2.5 million people, I still remember all the questions and worries I had the first several months here. I struggled trying to figure out how to integrate into this large, diverse city, feel a sense of community that seems to come so naturally in a village, and make this my home for the next two years. While the Peace Corps/Senegal community was here to help, the only way to answer the questions I had was to try different approaches and see what worked well for me. There is no formulated response on how you should approach your service other than that it is up to you to make it work.

Now a year into my Peace Corps service, the efforts I made have truly started to pay off and the struggles faced early on are now only faint memories. This city that once seemed so large and intimidating is now smaller and manageable. The individuals who make up Dakar have gone from just faces to friends, co-workers, and mentors.

Looking back on some of the highlights that helped me get to this level of comfort, I often laugh and even question what I was thinking at the time. I do not think I can count on one hand the number of times I would get on the wrong bus and then just ride the entire route, hoping it would go to where I was going. After awhile, I just started walking everywhere, until I figured things out better and then realized an eight-mile walk home from work could be entertaining, but was far from practical.

For the two years that you will be here, you are going to experience one of the most enriching times of your life. The stories you will be able to share, the memories that will impact your life, and the friends you will make truly make your presence here worthwhile. Congratulations and welcome to Peace Corps/Senegal. All of us here wish you the best of luck and are here to support you throughout your journey.

Justin Land

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Dear Peace Corps trainee:

I first heard of the Peace Corps from my high school world history teacher. He was a grumpy and bitter old man, overdue for retirement, but he had been a Peace Corps Volunteer. He was my original inspiration.

Ultimately, I joined the Peace Corps to see the world for myself. When I was younger, I really thought I could save the world; now I'm a little more humble and cynical. In a way, being a Volunteer is an extremely selfish thing—we have been given this incredible privilege to live a life that so few Americans could ever even dream of, and it's all paid for by Uncle Sam (not that every day you are happy to be here!). One of my college professors talked about how the Volunteer is the one who ends up being developed, and I really feel that way.

### Where I Live:

I live in a rural town of about 15,000 on the Sine-Saloum Delta. It's a beautiful region, Mangroves grow out of the brackish water; mango, cashew, and baobab trees are everywhere; and farmers cultivate millet, corn, sorghum, rice, and cowpeas in the rainy season. The region is very ethnically diverse, with Serers, Mandinkas, Pulaars, Dioulas, Wolofs and more. Because of this diversity, there are a lot of Catholics and Muslims living side by side.

### What I Do:

My assignment is as an urban agriculture Volunteer. We run a demonstration garden, where we do trainings in micro-gardening and improved gardening techniques (upkeep of this garden occupies me every morning). The goal is to increase food security and income for households by sharing techniques for growing vegetables in urban spaces. We also intervene in small poultry and rabbit raising to increase protein intake, fruit tree planting for more vitamins and household income, development of floral and ornamental production to generate income, soil amelioration (composting, agroforestry, etc.) and reforestation projects. My townmate (an ecotourism Volunteer) and I started a girls' club as a secondary project; we meet biweekly with a group of 12 girls in middle school.

### My Daily Life:

I love my days. I go to a little breakfast stand and enjoy conversation and a spicy bean sandwich on my way to my garden, spend a few hours surrounded by my gardeners and our plants, go home for a delicious lunch, and relax a little during the hot part of the day before going back out in the late afternoon. By dinner time, I'm usually content and ready for bed.

But my daily life contrasts significantly with any other woman's life. Normally, by my age a woman in my village would be married with children. She would have, at best, a middle school-equivalent education and would spend her days cooking for a large family. (There

are between 18 and 25 mouths to feed on any given day.) Women work in the home while the men are supposed to go out and make money for the family, but because there are so few jobs, the men generally sit under a mango tree and talk and drink tea for hours on end.

My daily life is quite different from a Senegalese person's, even though I am living at the same level. I think a key difference is that I am essentially genderless: I have almost-male status, but at the same time am such a sexual object because I am white and, therefore, represent power, money, American citizenship, and everything that is so desired but that is so out of reach for the typical Senegalese.

Before I came here, I was really concerned about trying to figure out what I want to do with my life. Now, I take things a day at a time; there are so many things I would be happy doing and it doesn't so much matter which one pops up first. I think maybe I've learned to appreciate the journey of life more than the destination.

#### New Learned Skills:

How to haggle, how to tell a man that I don't want to marry him, how to take a bucket bath, how to be assertive.

I've learned a lot of new gardening techniques (improved beds, micro-garden tables, recycled garden containers, hydroponics). I can identify a lot of cool trees and bugs. (The bugs are not so cool—they make it really hard to grow anything!). I can tell sorghum apart from millet (and even Peace Corps sorghum apart from local sorghum). And I manage to get by mostly in Wolof (although I am very grateful for my French). Plus, I've learned greetings in Balante, Serer, Diola, Pulaar and Soose.

#### Why This Matters:

In terms of me intervening to improve the community, that's tricky. I feel like, especially in more urban areas, traditional culture is breaking/has broken down. For example, my town is full of illegitimate children; teachers complain about today's youth as unwilling to cooperate; no one wants to stay in Senegal (this breaks my heart—I came here to help Senegal, but many people have given up). What can my role be as an outsider? To me, many aspects of my culture are "better"—in terms of economics, in terms of gender, in terms of education—than their culture, but who am I to judge? How can Senegal, and other developing countries, emerge from this limbo between tradition and modernity without experiencing social collapse? When I think about "community" on this broad scale, I feel overwhelmed and incapable of action.

But I guess that's the beauty of the Peace Corps: Any change we achieve is at the scale of the individual, and that individual will have the agency to use that personal change to affect the community in a culturally appropriate manner.

Erika Jerme

## PACKING LIST

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

### General Clothing

- One pair of jeans (expensive to buy locally), but because of the extreme heat, most prefer to wear khakis
- Loose cotton tops—some sleeveless and some with sleeves to protect bare shoulders from sunburn
- One or two light jackets or a few sweatshirts, sweaters, microfiber garments or flannel shirts (after you have been in Senegal a while, 60-degree evenings and mornings will seem very cold)
- Underwear—cotton is best
- One or two pairs of shorts (but note that they are inappropriate to wear in most contexts, but good for exercising.)
- For women, several skirts or dresses, below knee length (short skirts are inappropriate except for at a few places in Dakar)
- For men, two or three pairs of lightweight pants (cotton or cotton blend)
- Two or more dressy outfits for more formal work or social occasions
- Belt(s)
- One or two hats or caps for sun protection
- Two or three pairs of socks; Volunteers wear sandals most of the time, but you will need them for other shoes

### Shoes

- One pair of sturdy sandals and sandals such as Bir-kenstocks, Chacos, Keen, or Tevas for daily wear
- Casual shoes with closed toes, such as sneakers or running shoes
- Dress shoes (one pair should suffice)

## Personal Hygiene and Toiletry Items

- One bath towel (when it wears out you can buy a local one that is not as plush but does the job)
- Two pairs of prescription eyeglasses and one pair of prescription sunglasses, if you wear them
- Contact lens solution (although dust is a real problem, some Volunteers wear them; note that the Peace Corps does not recommend their use or provide re-placements)
- Sunglasses—the darker, the better
- Hair conditioner (it is expensive in Senegal, so most Volunteers do without it)
- Hand sanitizer (like Purell)
- Hair ties or elastics
- Nail clippers (good quality)
- Keeper or Diva Cup (female Volunteers)

## Kitchen

- Soft-drink mixes (especially Gatorade powder sold in cans; some Volunteers use them to cover the taste of chemically treated water)
- Sturdy water bottle(s) (e.g., Nalgene) or unbreakable thermos to carry clean water
- Your favorite recipes
- Plastic food storage containers with airtight lids
- Coffeepot, if you prefer real coffee over instant (coffee is available, but expensive)
- Spices
- Can opener (poor quality openers are locally available)

## Miscellaneous

### Essential Items

- Camera and accessories, such as SD cards or film
- USB flash memory key (at least one, perhaps several)
- Plug adapters from U.S. (two flat prong to European/African; two round prong)
- Flashlight (preferably "shake-up" or "wind-up" kinetic energy models though standard battery-operated metal ones are available in Senegal); if you bring a Maglite, do not forget to bring extra bulbs
- Swiss Army knife and small whetstone

- Daypack or sports bag for weekend trips (suitcases are very inconvenient)
- Pictures of your family and friends to share with Senegalese friends
- One or two bathing suits for beach or pool swimming
- Watch—inexpensive, rugged, waterproof, and dustproof (cheap ones are available locally)
- MP3 player and small speakers, as needed
- Battery-operated shortwave radio and a supply of batteries (inexpensive radios are available locally)
- Batteries (local batteries are either expensive or of poor quality)
- Three or four bandannas
- Scissors
- U.S. stamps—to send letters to the States with people going home
- One set of fitted and flat sheets—double size is best (inexpensive flat sheets are available in Senegal)
- Light sleeping bag (many Volunteers use them as port-able mattresses)
- Battery-powered alarm clock
- Calendar or schedule book

#### Nice to Have but Not Essential

- Rain jacket or poncho
- Books (the Peace Corps office has many, but additions are always welcome)
- Maps
- Musical instrument (if you play one and can tolerate possible damage to it from the climate)
- Cosmetics
- Games (e.g., Frisbee, Scrabble, playing cards)
- Sports equipment (e.g., football, softball and mitt, tennis racket)
- Solar calculator (available locally)
- Solar battery charger and/or cell phone charger
- Small stapler and staples
- Warm blanket (some find one to be comforting)
- Sunscreen, at least SPF 15 (non-hypoallergenic varieties are available in Senegal)

- Comfortable pillow(s) and pillowcase(s)
- Inflatable neck pillow (for long road journeys)
- Notebooks, pens, envelopes (all available locally, but expensive and of low quality)
- Knitting supplies and patterns
- Packing tape, scotch tape, duct tape

# PRE-DEPARTURE CHECKLIST

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

## Family

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

## Passport/Travel

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

## Medical/Health

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

## Insurance

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

## Personal Papers

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

## Voting

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

## Personal Effects

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

## Financial Management

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

## CONTACTING PEACE CORPS HEADQUARTERS

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

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

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

Questions About:	Staff:	Toll-Free Ext:	Direct/Local #:
Responding to an Invitation	Office of Placement	x1840	202.692.1840
Country Information	Abdul Bala Desk Officer / (Senegal & The Gambia) Senegal@peacecorps.gov	x2307	202.692.2307
Plane Tickets, Passports, Visas, or other travel matters:	CWT SATO Travel	x1170	202.692.1170
Legal Clearance	Office of Placement	x1840	202.692.1840
Medical Clearance & Forms Processing (includes dental)	Screening Nurse	x1500	202.692.1500
Medical Reimbursements (handled by a subcontractor)	Seven Corners	N/A	202.692.1538 800.335.0611
Loan Deferments, Taxes, Financial Operations	Office Of Volunteer and PSC Financial Services	x1770	202.692.1770
Readjustment Allowance Withdrawals, Power of Attorney, Staging (Pre-Departure Orientation), and Reporting Instructions	Office of Staging <i>Note: You will receive comprehensive information (hotel and flight arrangements) three to five weeks prior to departure. This information is not available sooner.</i>	x1865	202.692.1865
Family Emergencies (to get information to a Volunteer overseas) 24 hours	Office of Special Services	x1470	202.692.1470