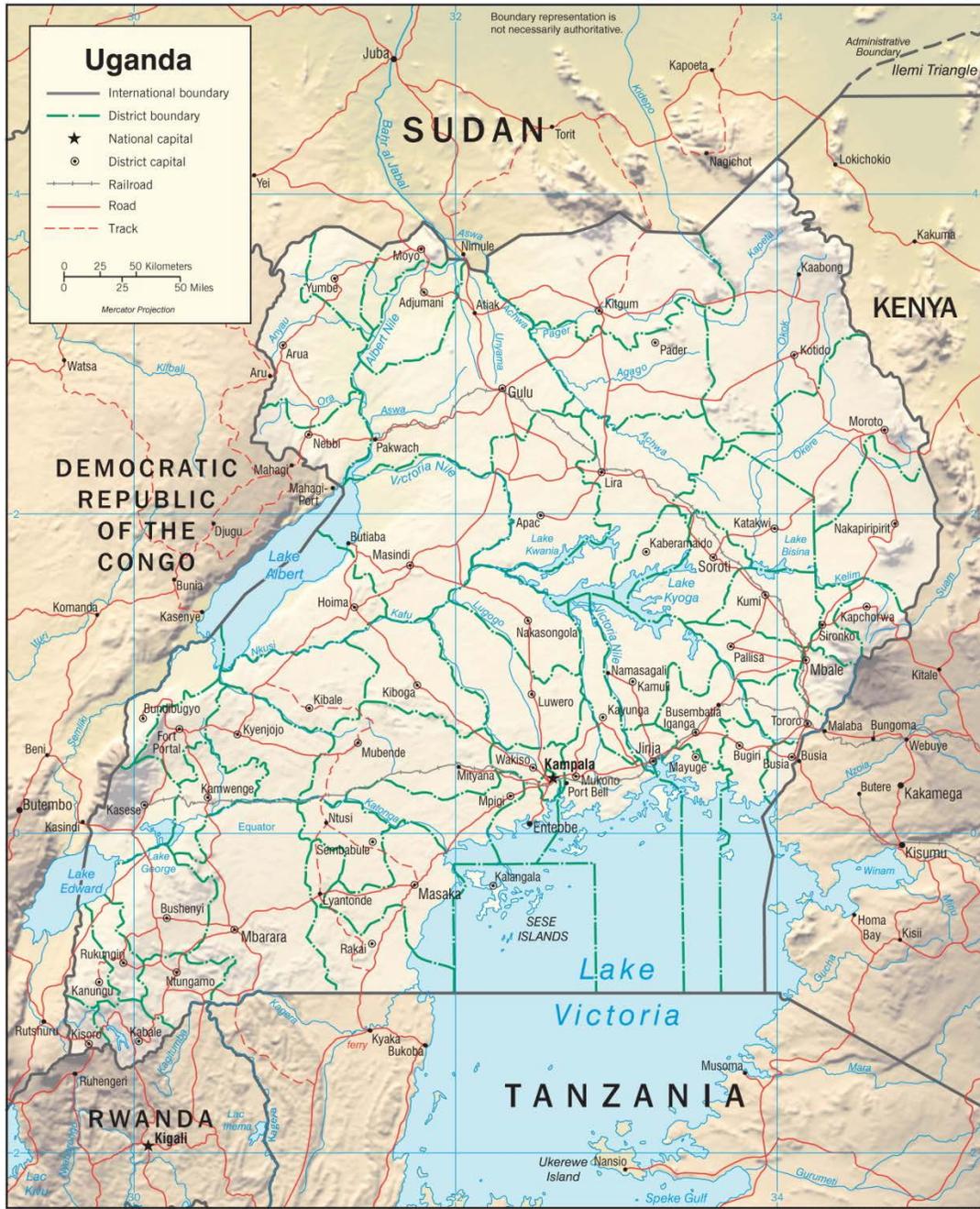


# **THE PEACE CORPS WELCOMES YOU TO UGANDA**



**A PEACE CORPS PUBLICATION FOR NEW VOLUNTEERS  
September 2015**

# MAP OF UGANDA



## A WELCOME LETTER

Dear Peace Corps/Uganda Invitees:

We are all anxiously waiting to welcome you to Peace Corps/Uganda. For most of you this will mark the beginning of one of the most seminal experiences of your life. We're preparing many things to be ready for your training and travel. You are coming to Uganda, the Pearl of Africa, source of the River Nile and home to mountain gorillas and chimpanzees. Uganda is a beautiful country and its people and cultures are engaging and enticing. This opportunity for service in Uganda can be among the richest growth experiences of your life, irrespective of background and age. It will be like nothing you imagine. The emptier your mind is of preconceived notions of the Ugandan people and the Peace Corps experience, the more likely this experience will be a positive one for you.

It is my hope, as it is that of the entire Peace Corps/ Uganda staff, that you will each complete your full two years of service and that many of you will opt to stay a third or fourth year. This will take adjusting to new numerous working relationships that will require a strong collaboration between you and Peace Corps staff, between you and your assigned organization, between you and the Ugandan people. Are you ready to make the commitment of learning new systems and being flexible for the next two years?

There are a number of complexities in Uganda in terms of development. I often call it a positively challenging development context. Uganda has one of the largest youth populations, with more than 80 percent of the population under 30 years of age, out of which 54 percent are less than 15 years old. Most of these youth are unemployed. Uganda is an agricultural country. Agricultural challenges include underdeveloped infrastructure, weak field-to-market linkages, and little value creation to produce. Schools have few resources and many classrooms have more than 100 students. Uganda experiences disease outbreaks like Marburg and typhoid. Occasional tense political rallies take place in Kampala. Human rights issues are in the spotlight from time to time. In 2014, the legislature passed an act creating stronger punishments for the practice and promotion of homosexuality. The act was later found unconstitutional. The environment is truly challenging but can be rewarding if you tackle any of these issues from your sphere of influence.

What about your family in the U.S.? Will they be able to help you keep your commitment in Uganda in the event of challenges faced by loved ones at home? In many places where Volunteers work, there is no electricity or running water. Will you be able to adapt? Some community-based settings have little structure to the work. The Peace Corps will train you, but you need to be creative and determined to make it work. Time obligations are often treated as fluid suggestions. Some Volunteers may experience unwanted attention. Will you be able to make behavioral adjustments to thrive in this environment? There are many positives of the Peace Corps experience, but I also ask that you consider the challenges.

We want you here, the people of Uganda want you here, and, ultimately, you want to be here. Peace Corps/ Uganda has an exciting program and very engaged, productive Volunteers. In 2014 we celebrated our 50th year of entrance to Uganda. We collected legacy stories that our Volunteers continually develop and nurture in Ugandan communities. I look forward to your flexibility, resilience, creativity, and giving spirit that continues to give Peace Corps Volunteers and this agency a strong reputation after more than 50 years of operation.

Safe travels and you are most welcome!

Country Director

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## **CORE EXPECTATIONS FOR PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS**

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

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

## **PEACE CORPS/UGANDA HISTORY AND PROGRAMS**

### **History of the Peace Corps in Uganda**

The first group of Peace Corps Volunteers in Uganda featured secondary school teachers who arrived on November 16, 1964. A year later, the education project consisted of 35 Volunteers. By 1967, the project had more than doubled in size. A health project was initiated in 1968 with the placement of 15 Volunteers. Once the Peace Corps program in Uganda expanded, the major programming area was education, with Volunteers also working in fisheries, agriculture, computer programming, and surveying. The Peace Corps terminated the program in Uganda in 1972 due to the civil unrest during Idi Amin's presidency.

Discussions concerning the Peace Corps' re-entry began in 1987 and continued in 1989 when President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni and his wife met with the Peace Corps Director to discuss a renewed Peace Corps presence in Uganda. Nine months later, the Peace Corps received a formal invitation from the government of Uganda. The 1964 agreement was then reactivated and Volunteers returned to Uganda in June 1991.

The projects during this period—primary education, small enterprise development, and natural resource management—aimed to address needs identified by the government in its efforts to rehabilitate and reform Uganda's educational system, develop the private sector, and effectively manage the country's vast natural resources.

Because of security issues in the capital, Kampala, the program was suspended again in May 1999. In June 2001, Peace Corps/Uganda reopened with a single project in primary teacher training and community school resource teaching.

### **Peace Corps Programming in Uganda**

A community well-being and positive-living project was initiated in May 2002. The project assisted the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Gender in preparing innovative, community-based training programs for its community health workers and those involved in increasing economic livelihoods. Volunteers supported community-based organizations that were working to integrate the health concerns of Ugandan villages ravaged by HIV/AIDS with the benefits of a positive-living approach. Within a couple of years, the project evolved into the Community Health and Economic Development (CHED) project. This new project continued with the former health project focus of mitigating the impact of HIV/AIDS, but had a new focus on more holistic livelihoods and an economic development approach. The Economic Development project afforded Volunteers with the opportunity to work with communities to enhance their livelihood, improve natural resource management techniques, improve food security, improve land management, soil conservation, and create links in the community between education and natural resource management. Building on the success of the environmental program, Volunteers lived in communities near protected areas and game parks to work with fishing communities, agribusinesses, and female heads of households.

By 2010, the project took two separate identities. The Health project became more specialized to HIV/AIDS prevention and services and added malaria mitigation and maternal child health. Volunteer placements included work community-based organizations, public and private clinics that do outreach and more specialized AIDs testing and information organizations. Education and behavioral change programs have been broadened and some Volunteers work to enhance the standard of living for those living positively and there has been an increase of assistance to orphans needs. There has also been a greater focus placed on malaria prevention and eradication. With malaria continuing to be the leading cause of

death in Uganda, Peace Corps Uganda programming includes guidance and infrastructure that enables Volunteers in Health and all sectors to incorporate malaria prevention activities into their projects.

The Community Economic Development (CED) shifted focus to become more specialized on business development skills with particular attention on Volunteers addressing the business side of agriculture and tourism. The CED program became more focused on food security issues as part of the Peace Corps' participation in a U.S. "whole-of-government" effort. The project sector changed to Agriculture in 2013 with a new project name of Community Agri-Business Project. This was a slight programming shift to drop tourism and focus exclusively on agricultural business. Part of that project addresses access to credit as well. Volunteer have worked with village savings and loan associations to assist small-scale farmers to increase sources of credit.

The Education project made some shifts as well. For several years Volunteers worked in both secondary and primary education. Volunteers taught science, mathematics, English, and information and communications technology at the secondary level. In 2012 a reassessment of the project led to the decision to phase out secondary education. The shift was to primary education and to focus that effort on literacy. Education Volunteers serve as literacy teacher trainers at primary teacher's colleges and as literacy specialists at affiliated primary schools. At the teacher colleges, Volunteers often fold in literacy into their math and science classes and in primary schools they focus on in-service training for teachers to increase their skills to help children language acquisition and comprehension. They also work on positive behavior systems, developing instructional materials, and establishing and enhancing school libraries.

The Global Health Service Partnership launched in 2012 with the first 11 Volunteers arriving in July 2013. The first group included six doctors specializing in pediatrics, internal medicine, and infectious diseases and five nurses specializing in maternal and child health, surgical nursing, adult medicine, mental health, and public health. The partners were the colleges of health sciences at Mbarara University, Gulu University, and Lira University College. The project aim is to strengthen the quality of medical and nursing education and clinical practices across the health service delivery system. Through GHSP, Ugandan medical practitioners and students receive didactic and clinical instruction and assistance in developing teaching models and materials. GHSP Volunteers also supervise interns and residents, leading to professional development for local faculty. The project is slated to grow by 50 percent and add more schools in 2015.

## **COUNTRY OVERVIEW: UGANDA AT A GLANCE**

### **History**

In the 20th century, Uganda went from being perceived internationally as an Eden incarnate—Britain’s “Pearl of Africa”—to being considered the antithesis of Eden, largely because of the extreme actions of post-independence leaders Idi Amin and Milton Obote.

Uganda achieved independence from Great Britain in 1962 without any struggle. The British determined a timetable for withdrawal before local groups had organized an effective nationalist movement. Uganda’s political parties emerged in response to impending independence rather than as a means of winning it.

Idi Amin’s well-publicized excesses at the expense of Uganda and its citizens were not unique, nor were they the earliest assaults on the nation’s rule of law. Amin’s predecessor, Milton Obote, suspended the 1962 constitution and ruled part of Uganda by martial law for five years until a military coup in 1971 brought Amin to power. Obote regained power during the civil war from 1981–85, a period when government troops carried out genocidal sweeps of the rural populace in a region that became known as the Luweero Triangle. The dramatic collapse of the government under Amin, his plunder of the nation’s economy, and the even greater failure of the second Obote government in the 1980s certainly had not been expected when the country gained independence. On the contrary, Uganda had been considered a model of stability and potential progress, particularly relative to neighbors Kenya, Tanzania, and Congo.

After years of civil war, Yoweri Kaguta Museveni and the National Resistance Army (NRA) marched on Kampala, and Museveni formally claimed the presidency on January 29, 1986. Museveni’s government has been credited with introducing democratic reforms and enhancing human rights. The Lord’s Resistance Army was active in Northern Uganda killing thousands and displacing millions. They were pushed out of Uganda in 2005, and most internally displaced persons have returned to their land and there have been no major security incidents since then.

President Museveni was re-elected in 2001, 2006, and 2011. There will be another presidential election in 2016.

### **Government**

The National Resistance Army (NRA) became a political party known as the National Resistance Movement (NRM). The Ugandan government followed a single or no-party parliamentary system, which ended in February 2006 with the election of a new parliament, with members representing multiple parties. The NRM is the major political power with the association of the presidency and it remains the overwhelming winner of most recent elections.

Although much of Uganda has remained peaceful and stable since Museveni has been in power, some parts of the country are still considered post-conflict areas, particularly in the north where poverty remains adversely high.

### **Economy**

Uganda is considered an economic success story with its gross domestic product averaging about 5 percent.

Cash-based agricultural activity still constitutes about 26 percent of GDP and 95 percent of export revenues. In addition, agriculture accounts for more than 90 percent of subsistence economic activity. The government of Uganda has put a lot of emphasis on the improvement of agriculture.

Cash crops include coffee, cotton, tea, tobacco, cut flowers, and vanilla. Food crops include plantains, cassava, sweet potatoes, millet, sorghum, corn, beans, and groundnuts. Fishing is important for domestic consumption and exportation.

## **People and Culture**

There are three major linguistic families in Uganda and about 50 distinct languages divided among them. Languages also tend to define the boundaries of cultural differences. In the late 1980s, Ugandan officials estimated that 66 percent of the population consisted of Christians (almost equally divided among Protestants and Roman Catholics), approximately 15 percent were Muslim. Kampala is home to a Baha'i Temple and community. There is a very small black Ugandan Jewish community in the eastern part of Uganda and some of its members have settled in Kampala to study and work. About 19 percent of Ugandans are adherents of local religions or not affiliated with any religion. World and local religions have coexisted for more than a century in Uganda, and many people have established a coherent set of beliefs about the nature of the universe by combining elements of the two. Except in a few areas, world religions are seldom viewed as incompatible with local religions.

Education is highly valued in much of Uganda. As a result of the government's commitment to universal primary education, primary enrollment jumped from 2.4 million children in 1990 to 8.4 million in 2010, with the number continuing to grow. The World Bank estimates a primary enrollment rate of 93 percent, and the gap between boys' and girls' enrollment rates has decreased. For most of the country, the issue is no longer access to primary education, but the quality of that education.

During Uganda's civil wars, the health-care system basically collapsed. It is still weak outside urban areas. Life expectancy has increased from 44 to 58 years between 1995 and 2012. Health, nutrition, and child survival indicators have improved in part because of the government's promotion of immunization to prevent childhood killer diseases such as measles, polio, and whooping cough. However, many infectious diseases remain endemic, including respiratory tract infections, anemia, tetanus, malaria, and tuberculosis.

A significant accomplishment is Uganda's vigorous, effective response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, with adult HIV infection rates reduced by half over the past 10 years. Nonetheless, about 500,000 Ugandans are living with HIV/AIDS, and 1.7 million children under age 18 have lost one or both parents to AIDS—a number expected to double within the next 10 years. The epidemic has had a tremendous social, economic, and personal impact on the country and its people. The current estimated adult prevalence rate is 7.2 percent (2012).

The loss of teachers has had a negative impact on education systems. Illness and disability drains family income and forces governments and donors to redirect limited resources from other priorities. AIDS correlates to increased levels of domestic violence. Stigmatization of people living with HIV/AIDS isolates them from friends and family and cuts them off from economic opportunities.

As Peace Corps Volunteers, many of you may witness and sometimes confront the impact of HIV/AIDS on a personal level. For those who work directly with the infected, it can be very emotional. As you strive to integrate into your community, Volunteers will meet HIV-positive people. Some will work 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.

## RESOURCES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Following is a list of websites for additional information about the Peace Corps and Uganda and to connect you to returned Volunteers and other invitees. Please keep in mind that although the Peace Corps tries to make sure all these links are active and current, the Peace Corps 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 experiences, 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 please keep in mind that no two people experience their service in the same way.

### **General Information About Uganda**

#### State.gov

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

#### Gpo.gov/libraries/public/

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

#### lweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/cshome.html

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

#### [http://unstats.un.org/unsd/pocketbook/World\\_Statistics\\_Pocketbook\\_2013\\_edition.pdf](http://unstats.un.org/unsd/pocketbook/World_Statistics_Pocketbook_2013_edition.pdf)

United Nations resource book with 2013 statistical country data

#### Data.un.org

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

#### Wikipedia.org

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

#### Worldbank.org

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

#### Data.worldbank.org/country

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

## **Connect With Returned Volunteers and Other Invitees**

### [RPCV.org](http://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. Friends of Uganda has a Facebook page.

### [PeaceCorpsWorldwide.org](http://PeaceCorpsWorldwide.org)

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

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

### [UN.org/News/](http://UN.org/News/)

The United Nations news service provides coverage of its member states and information about the international peacekeeping organization’s actions and positions.

### [VOAnews.com](http://VOAnews.com)

Voice of America, the U.S. government’s multimedia broadcaster, features coverage of news around the world.

### [www.buganda.com](http://www.buganda.com)

This site offers a wealth of information about the central Buganda area of Uganda.

### [www.unaids.org](http://www.unaids.org)

This United Nations site includes thorough information about the AIDS pandemic.

### <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world/africa/>

This BBC site features headlines about Africa (search for Uganda).

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

Access this site to search for news about Uganda.

## **International Development Sites About Uganda**

### [www.worldbank.org/afr/ug/](http://www.worldbank.org/afr/ug/)

This features information on the World Bank’s projects in Uganda.

### [www.africaaction.org/index.php](http://www.africaaction.org/index.php)

Site of the U.S.-based organization Africa Action, which works for political, economic, and social justice in Africa.

### [www.bellanet.org/](http://www.bellanet.org/)

Bellanet helps the international community collaborate more effectively, especially by use of information technology.

## **Recommended Books**

### **Books About the History of the Peace Corps**

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

### **Books on the Volunteer Experience**

1. Dirlam, Sharon. "Beyond Siberia: Two Years in a Forgotten Place." Santa Barbara, CA: McSeas Books, 2004.
2. Casebolt, Marjorie DeMoss. "Margarita: A Guatemalan Peace Corps Experience." Gig Harbor, WA: Red Apple Publishing, 2000.
3. Erdman, Sarah. "Nine Hills to Nambonkaha: Two Years in the Heart of an African Village." New York City: Picador, 2003.
4. Hessler, Peter. "River Town: Two Years on the Yangtze." New York City: Perennial, 2001.
5. Kennedy, Geraldine ed. "From the Center of the Earth: Stories out of the Peace Corps." Santa Monica, CA: Clover Park Press, 1991.
6. Thomsen, Moritz. "Living Poor: A Peace Corps Chronicle." Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997 (reprint).

### **Books About Uganda**

1. Baingana, Doreen. "Tropical Fish: Tales from Entebbe." Harlem Moon, New York, 2005.
2. Eichstaedt, Peter. "First Kill Your Family: Child Soldiers of Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army." 2009.
3. Isegawa, Moses. "Abyssinian Chronicles." New York: Knopf, 2000.
4. McDonnell, Faith and Grace Akallo. "Girl Soldier: A Story of Hope for Northern Uganda's Children." 2009.
5. Museveni, Yoweni Kaguta. "Sowing the Mustard Seed: The Struggle for Freedom and Democracy in Uganda." London: Macmillan Education, 1997.
6. Rice, Andrew. "The Teeth May Smile but the Heart Does Not Forget." New York, Metropolitan Books, 2009
7. Twaddle, Michael, and Holger B. Hansen (eds.). "Uganda Now: Between Decay and Development." London: James Curry, 1989.
8. Twaddle, Michael, and Holger B. Hansen (eds.). "Changing Uganda: The Dilemmas of Structural Adjustment and Revolutionary Change." London: James Curry, 1991.
9. Wallman, Sandra. "Kampala Women Getting By: Wellbeing in the Time of AIDS." London: James Currey, 1996.
10. Museveni, Janet. "My Life's Journey." 2010.
11. Hanson, Thor. "The Impenetrable Forest: My Gorilla Years in Uganda." Revised Edition, 2008.

# LIVING CONDITIONS AND VOLUNTEER LIFESTYLE

## Communications

### Mail

Letters take a minimum of two weeks to arrive in Uganda if sent by airmail; packages will take longer. Packages sent by surface mail usually take between one and two months. Occasionally mail “gets lost.” Write “Airmail” on envelopes. It is best if friends and family keep packages small and use a padded envelope so it will be treated as a letter and thereby avoid high customs taxes. Avoid sending valuable items through the mail as there is no guarantee that these items will arrive.

DHL, FedEx, and UPS do operate in Uganda.

If family and friends send letters within the first five weeks (packages up to three weeks) after your departure, you can use the following address:

“Your Name,” Peace Corps Trainee  
P.O. Box 29348  
Kampala, Uganda

Mail after the fifth week after your departure should be sent to your P.O. box at your assigned site. You are responsible to provide your address to those who will send letters and packages. The site may be through your school or organization’s post office box. It may appear as follows:

Name of Volunteer, PCV  
Name of institution or organization  
P.O. Box xxxxx  
Town or city, Uganda

### Email Access and Telephones

Email access is limited. Volunteers often purchase portable Internet connection modems and/ or travel to an urban area for access at Internet cafes. This may mean access as little as once or twice a month depending on the Volunteer’s location.

The telephone system in Uganda is relatively good. Service to the United States is somewhat reliable. Volunteers typically purchase mobile phones and secure local phone services through a “pay as you go” plan. This means they pay for every minute when they place a call. Unlike the U.S., received calls are free to the receiver. Once you are in-country, you can update your family and friends on telephone availability and provide them specific contact information and logistics.

### Computers

Most Volunteers bring a laptop computer with them for work, maintaining social connections and leisure. While many have full size laptops, netbook computers are lighter and more packable. The possibility of solar charging is a bonus.

### Housing and Site Location

Volunteers live in urban, peri-urban, and rural areas in village and town neighborhoods, at school campuses, and in clinic compounds. Living conditions vary widely. The host organization is required to provide you with two rooms, access to good water, bathing, and toilet facilities. One room typically serves as a bedroom and the other room a kitchen and sitting room. These rooms can be standalone small houses or attached to a row of houses. You may have some basic furnishings provided and you also

receive a modest settling-in allowance provided by the Peace Corps to help you with additional basics for setting up a household. Most houses do not have running water or electricity. You should expect to use a pit latrine and a kerosene lantern and stove. Volunteers often hire someone to carry water to their house.

Although the Peace Corps staff makes every effort to collaborate with communities and organizations to see that housing is ready for Volunteers when they arrive at their sites, because of limited resources, sometimes there are delays. You might have to stay in temporary accommodations while your permanent housing is being set up or repaired. It is expected that Volunteers remain flexible and gratefully accept housing the community or organization provides.

At nearly all sites, privacy will be extremely limited. Children may be around constantly, demonstrating their curiosity about you. You will have to adapt to a more public life.

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

Volunteers receive a monthly allowance in Ugandan shillings that is sufficient to live at the level of the local people. The allowance covers food, housing, household supplies, clothing, transportation to and from work, utilities, recreation and entertainment, and incidental expenses. Peace Corps Volunteers are expected to live at a level that is comparable with that of their host country counterparts. The Peace Corps discourages Volunteers from supplementing their living allowance with funds from home.

Banks can be found in all major cities/towns and you will be able to access funds through a debit or bank card from ATMs. You will set up a local bank account into which the Peace Corps deposits your monthly living allowance at the beginning of each month. You are responsible for managing your funds. Volunteers often bring cash and credit cards if they plan to travel outside Uganda during vacations.

### **Food and Diet**

You will generally buy your food from outdoor markets or small shops. Most Volunteers cook for themselves. The local diet is basic but healthy, including a variety of plant protein foods (beans, peanuts, soybeans) and there are a lot of vegetables, greens, and starches. Fish and meats are easily sourced. There are likely to be some local restaurants at or near your site. Imported foods, while expensive, can be found in larger towns and serve as a great treat. During training, there will be sessions on safe food preparation and proper nutrition. There is a Peace Corps/Uganda cookbook that demonstrates how to use local ingredients. A vegetarian diet is relatively easy to follow in Uganda after one becomes familiar with the local food. Vegetarians should be prepared to explain to home stay families and others the concept of vegetarianism.

### **Transportation**

Volunteers travel primarily by foot, bicycle, or public transport. Public transportation to and from the nearest urban or trading center is available near every site—in most cases several times a day. Public transport is likely to be crowded and uncomfortable. Sometimes transport is infrequent and unreliable. . To facilitate fieldwork, Volunteers are given an allowance to purchase a bike. Still, many of the communities and jobsites Volunteers visit may entail a long and challenging ride. Some Volunteers must be able to ride a bicycle in order to do their jobs. When riding a bicycle, Volunteers must wear helmets (provided by the Peace Corps). Please come to Uganda with this as an expectation.

When traveling to and from major cities, there are large, comfortable buses that operate on schedules. Tickets that designate specific seat numbers are purchased in advance or near the time of departure. To move about among specific places within a city, Volunteers often use taxis known locally as “private hires.”

The Peace Corps/Uganda prohibits the use of motorcycles by Volunteers as drivers or passengers because of the extreme safety risks they pose. In some cases, special permission is granted to use motorcycle transportation for work-related reasons. There is a detailed process with strict guidelines to secure the permission.

### **Geography and Climate**

Uganda's area is 96,456 square miles, 30 percent of it is forest and about 18 percent of it is open water or swampland. Much of the country is a plateau that slopes gently downward toward the north, with a central depression occupied by Lake Kyoga. Mount Elgon and the Rwenzori Mountains form Uganda's borders in the east and west, respectively. Approximately one-half of Lake Victoria, the source of the Nile River, lies within Uganda. Vegetation is heaviest in the south, thinning out to savanna and dry plains in the northeast.

Uganda has an equatorial climate that is moderated by altitude. Midday temperatures are in the 70s and 80s (depending upon the part of the country) in all seasons, but evenings are cooler and may require wearing a sweater or light jacket. The southern and western mountainous regions have cooler climates and the northern part of Uganda experiences hotter and dryer climate.

Uganda straddles the equator, which means that the seasons are quite different from those in the United States. Rather than a hot season and a cold one, there are rainy seasons and dry seasons. Average annual rainfall varies from more than 84 inches around Lake Victoria to about 20 inches in the northeast. Rainy periods generally occur in November and December and in April and May. The climate around Lake Victoria is greatly influenced by the lake. As a result, rain can occur there at any time.

### **Social Activities**

The most common form of entertainment is socializing among friends and neighbors. You will find it easy to make friends in your community and to participate in weddings, funerals, birthday celebrations, and other social events. Volunteers also visit other Volunteers at their sites or other locations on weekends or holidays.

Some Volunteers run while others hike and bike. Playing games, local and otherwise, are also options. Football (soccer) is a passion as is cricket. Basketball can be found in certain locations. Billiard tables are commonly seen in semi-outdoor locations. Some larger towns have cinemas as well.

There are opportunities for eco-tourism—birding, wildlife viewing, and nature walks and hikes. There is also popular but risky river rafting due to the risk of schistosomiasis (“schisto”), a parasitic infection caused by schistosome flukes. Rafting companies and others assert that exposure to fast-moving white water during rafting and kayaking presents a low risk for “schisto.” The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports cases among rafters. The risks related to “schisto” are lifelong as there is no “final and absolute” cure.

The Peace Corps encourages Volunteers to remain at their sites as much as possible to develop relationships with community members. It cannot be overemphasized the rewards of establishing rapport with one's supervisors, co-workers, and other community members. A sincere effort to learn the local language will greatly facilitate these interactions.

### **Professionalism, Dress, and Behavior**

Ugandans view dressing appropriately as a sign of respect for others. Dressing in neat, clean, and conservative clothes can assist integration into your community and enhance your professional credibility and effectiveness.

For male Volunteers, clothing should include smart casual pants and a dress shirt. Ties typically are worn for work in urban environments and for major functions.

For female Volunteers, slips, skirts, and dresses below the knees are appropriate in most professional environments; short skirts and low-cut or sleeveless tops are highly inappropriate.

Blue jeans, T-shirts, and casual sandals are not considered appropriate during training, in the workplace, or during visits to the Peace Corps office. Shorts are not worn outside one's house.

Facial piercings are not generally accepted in professional settings, and may make it more difficult to integrate into your community. Discreet studs are likely your best option as hoops could present a safety issue. If you have tattoos, please be prepared to cover them whenever possible, especially when you are in your community. For men, beards are acceptable as long as they are neat and trimmed.

Norms for dress are conservative. If you have reservations about your ability to adapt to Ugandan norms of dress and appearance, you may need to consider re-evaluating your decision to become a Volunteer.

The Peace Corps expects Volunteers to behave in a manner that will foster respect within their communities and reflect well upon the Peace Corps. Behavior that jeopardizes your safety, violates local laws, or presents the Peace Corps unfavorably could lead to your service termination.

## **Personal Safety**

More detailed information about the Peace Corps' approach to safety is contained in the Safety and Security section, but it is an important issue and cannot be overemphasized. As stated in the Volunteer Handbook, becoming a Peace Corps Volunteer entails certain safety risks. Living and traveling in an unfamiliar environment (oftentimes alone), having a limited understanding of local language and culture, and being perceived as well-off are some of the factors that can put a Volunteer at risk. Many Volunteers experience varying degrees of unwanted attention and harassment. Petty thefts and burglaries are not uncommon, and incidents of physical and sexual assault do occur, although most Ugandan Volunteers complete their two years of service without incident. The Peace Corps has established procedures and policies designed to help reduce the risks and enhance your safety and security. These procedures and policies, in addition to safety training, will be provided once you arrive in Uganda. Using these tools, one can be empowered to take responsibility for his or her safety and well-being.

Each staff member at the Peace Corps is committed to providing Volunteers with the support they need to successfully meet the challenges they will face to have a safe, healthy, and productive service. Volunteers and families are encouraged to look at 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 safety. There is a section titled Safety and Security in Depth. Among topics addressed are the risks of serving as a Volunteer, posts' safety support systems, and emergency planning and communications.

At the onset of training, trainees are provided tips on safety, "survival" Lugandan (local dialect), safe water, and hygiene. A trip to Kampala city includes how to navigate public transportation.

You will be given some guidance on mobile phone availability for purchase and you will be provided by Peace Corps a SIM card to a mobile phone provider as part of a closed user group. [Alternatively, you can arrive with an unlocked smart or basic cellphone]. In addition to traveling with a photocopy of your passport, you will be given an emergency card with key telephone numbers of staff, including medical,

the safety and security officer, a 24/7 duty phone managed by a duty officer, training and program staff, and your language instructor. When you travel during pre-service training, you will be provided numbers of those with whom you are to meet at destinations of travel.

During pre-service training, several hours are set aside for in-depth safety and security and health and wellness training, and policies and procedures related to traveling, living, and working in Uganda.

### **Rewards and Frustrations**

The potential for job satisfaction in Uganda is quite high. If you are able to make the commitment to integrate into your community and to focus on the work you were recruited to perform and the community's interests, your service is likely to be a life-altering experience.

You may be given a great deal of responsibility and independence in your work with little guidance or feedback from supervisors. Written job descriptions may look well defined on paper but in practice still need refining. You must possess the self-confidence, patience, and vision—tempered with humility and respect for others—to continue working toward long-term goals without seeing immediate results. Development is a slow process.

All Volunteers encounter frustrations. Perceptions of time are very different from those in America. The lack of basic infrastructure can become very tiring, and social demands on your colleagues may mean their work habits vary greatly from yours. For these reasons, the Peace Corps experience of adapting to a new culture and environment is often described as a series of emotional peaks and valleys.

You will often need to motivate yourself and others. To overcome these difficulties, you will also need maturity, flexibility, open-mindedness, resourcefulness, and, most importantly, a sense of humor. Most Volunteers manage to exhibit enough of these characteristics to serve successfully. Judging by the experience of former Volunteers, the peaks are well worth the difficult times. Most Volunteers leave Uganda feeling they have gained much more than they sacrificed during their service.

# PEACE CORPS TRAINING

## Overview of Pre-Service Training

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

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

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

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

The 10-week training includes the following:

1. Training center (near Kampala)—orientation, safety, health, some technical training
2. School-based (near Kampala)—technical training for Education trainees OR village-based small group technical trainings for Health and Agriculture trainees
3. Community-based (around the country) small group language with individual trainee homestays
4. Future site visit—trainees visit their future sites for a couple of days
5. Supervisors' workshop plenary (near Kampala)—supervisors and trainees review policies and plan

Uganda uses an "Advertise & Bid System" to make site assignments. Before you leave home, Peace Corps/Uganda will send all invitees job descriptions for all opportunities. When you get to Uganda, you will meet with the country director and program staff to discuss your interests. About a week after you arrive, you will submit a "bid" of site preferences. Staff will announce site assignments on about day 10 after your arrival.

Language evaluation is conducted through a language proficiency test. Written and verbal feedback are provided for training presentations. Other feedback is a dialogue between you and the training staff regarding engagement in learning activities and adaptation to Uganda. Upon successful completion of pre-service training, you will be sworn in as a Volunteer and depart for your site.

## Technical Training

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

Technical training occurs several ways: as part of pre-service training, part of the in-service training three months after swearing in, and again at mid-service, about 12 months after swearing in. There are other training events for some groups referred to as "Just in Time" trainings. These are more focused on specific skill areas (such as perma-gardening) you are assessed to need to train Ugandans.

Peace Corps/Uganda has developed an "Education Bootcamp" approach to its technical training for Education Volunteers. Intense and focused with lots of practice and immediate feedback, it has earned high grades in its content and methods to prepare Volunteers in a very short time how to teach in Ugandan schools. In recognition that all Volunteers train as a part of their service, Peace Corps/Uganda is cross-training this model with appropriate modifications in content and methods for Health and Agriculture Volunteers.

### **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, help you integrate into your community, and 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. Uganda language instructors usually teach formal language classes five days a week in small groups.

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 develop strategies to continue studying language during your service.

In the language immersion part of pre-service training, you will live in a community that speaks the target language you will be learning. There will be six regional satellites. You will travel to that community/town with your language and cross-cultural facilitator. S/he will introduce you to your homestay family and the family members will take you "home" to live with them. You will have a great opportunity to develop an understanding of the family and community life. You will walk to a nearby training location to study daily in small groups of three to five trainees under the guidance of your language and cross-cultural facilitator. You will visit the local markets and other activity settings to speak with people in the local language and you are encouraged to find other people apart from your trainers with whom you can practice the language. Your language learning will be assessed by certified language testers using the Language Proficiency Interview (LPI). Near the end of your stay, you and the other trainees in your language cluster will participate in a homestay farewell function.

### **Cross-Cultural Training**

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

Cross-cultural and community development training will help you improve your communication skills and understand your role as a facilitator of development. Training will cover topics such as the concept of

time, power and hierarchy, gender roles, communication styles, and the concept of self and relationships. Because adjusting to a new culture can be very challenging, you will participate in resiliency training which provides a framework and tools to help with adjustment issues.

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

### **Health Training**

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

### **Safety and Security Training**

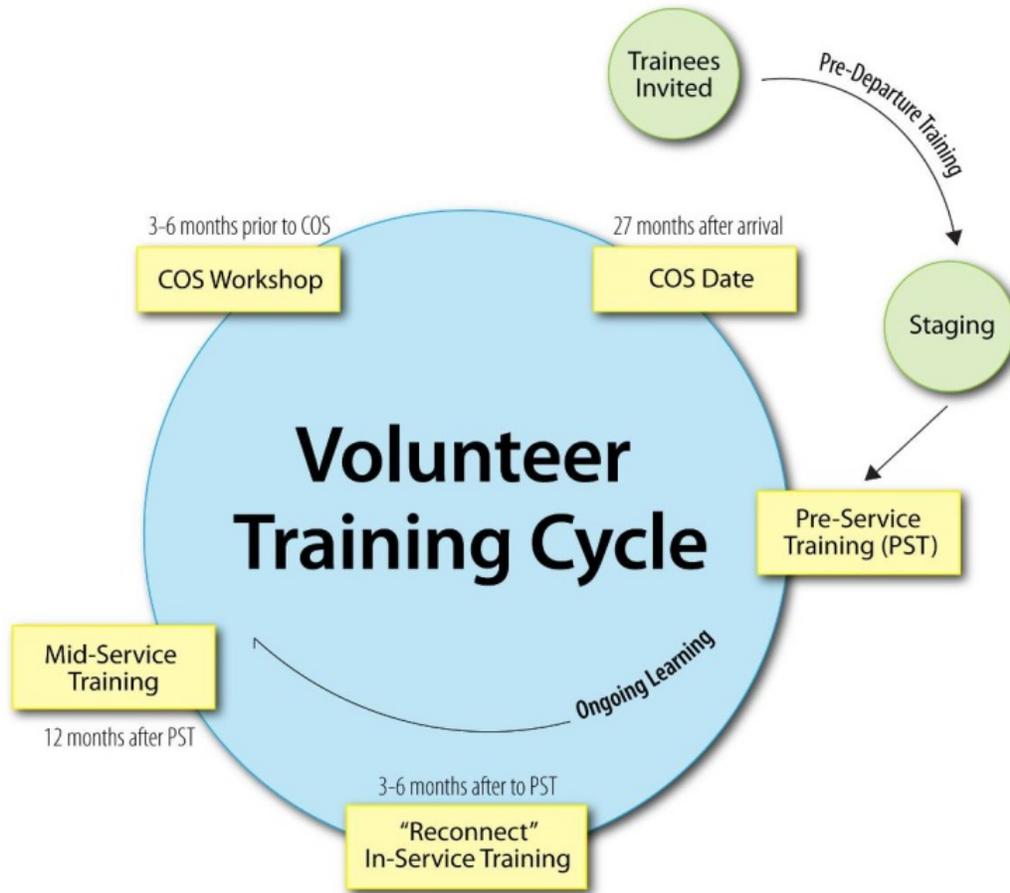
During the safety and security training sessions, you will learn how to adopt a lifestyle that reduces your risks at home, at work, and during your travels. You will also learn appropriate, effective strategies for coping with unwanted attention, how to identify safety risks in-country and about Peace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

### **Additional Trainings During Volunteer Service**

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

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

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



## **YOUR HEALTH CARE IN UGANDA**

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 Uganda maintains a clinic with a full-time medical officer who takes care of Volunteers' primary health-care needs, including evaluation and treatment of most medical conditions. Additional medical services are also available in Uganda at local hospitals. If you become seriously ill and cannot receive the care you need in Uganda, you will be transported to a Peace Corps-approved regional medical facility. If the Office of Health Services (OHS) determines that the care is not optimal for your condition at the regional facility, you will be transported to the United States.

### **Health Issues in Uganda**

Major health problems among Volunteers in Uganda are rare and are often the result of Volunteers not taking preventive measures to stay healthy. The most common health problems in Uganda are relatively minor ones that are also found in the United States, such as colds, diarrhea, skin infections, headaches, dental problems, adjustment disorders, and alcohol abuse. These problems may be more frequent or compounded by life in Uganda because certain environmental factors raise the risk or exacerbate the severity of illnesses and injuries.

The most serious health concerns are malaria, HIV/AIDS, and traffic accidents. Because malaria is endemic in Uganda, taking antimalarial pills is mandated by the Peace Corps. Diarrheal diseases are also common, but can be avoided by regularly washing your hands, thoroughly washing fruits and vegetables, and either boiling your drinking water or filtering and using the water purification tablets issued in your medical kit. You will be vaccinated against hepatitis A and B, meningitis A, C, W, and Y, tetanus, typhoid, rabies, and influenza (annually).

### **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 Uganda, you will receive a country-specific medical handbook. By the end of training, you will receive a medical kit with supplies to take care of mild illnesses and first aid needs. The contents of the kit are listed later in this section.

During pre-service training, you will have access to basic medical supplies through the medical officer. However, during this time, 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 Uganda will consult with the Office of Health Services in Washington, D.C., or a regional medical officer. If it is determined that your condition cannot be treated in Uganda, you may be sent out of the country for further evaluation and care.

### **Maintaining Your Health**

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

Malaria is a major health issue in Uganda. The most important step in preventing malaria and many other tropical diseases is to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes and other insects. The best way to avoid insect bites is to sleep under a treated mosquito net provided by the Peace Corps, wear long sleeves and long trousers whenever possible (especially when outside at night), use insect repellent, and make sure windows have some kind of screen. Since no one can entirely prevent insect bites, you must also take antimalarial pills.

Rabies is prevalent throughout Uganda, so you will receive a series of immunizations against it after you arrive. If you are exposed to an animal that is known to have, or suspected of having, rabies, inform the medical officer at once so you can receive post-exposure booster shots. Be wary of all unknown animals and of behavior changes in known animals.

Many illnesses that afflict Volunteers worldwide are 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 Uganda during pre-service training.

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

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

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

### **Women's Health Information**

The Peace Corps/Uganda medical office does not provide feminine hygiene products. If you require a specific product, please bring enough supply with you. Many female Volunteers take menstrual cups (The Diva Cup, The Keeper, The Moon Cup, etc.) to avoid potential problems with availability or disposal of feminine hygiene products.

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

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

### **Your Peace Corps Medical Kit**

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

Some items in the medical kit have expiration dates; therefore you are expected to check the expiration dates of any medication before usage and to request exchanges for unused but needed medication.

### **Medical Kit Contents**

First Aid Handbook	Dental floss
Ace bandages	Gloves
Acetaminophen (Tylenol)	Hydrocortisone cream
Adhesive tape	Ibuprofen
Antacid tablets	Emergency contraceptive pill
Anti-diarrheal (Imodium)	Ciprofloxacin
Antibiotic ointment	Insect repellent
Antifungal cream	Iodine tablets (for water purification)
Antihistamine	Lip balm
Antiseptic antimicrobial skin cleaner	Oral rehydration salts
Band-Aids	Scissors
Bismuth Subsalicylate (Pepto-Bismol)	Sore throat lozenges
Butterfly closures	Sterile eye drops
Calagel anti-itch gel	Sterile gauze pads
Condoms	Sunscreen
Cough lozenges	Thermometer (Temp-a-dots)
Decongestant	
Tweezers	

### **Before You Leave: A Medical Checklist**

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

If your dentist or Peace Corps dental consultant has recommended that you undergo dental treatment or repair, you must complete that work and make sure your dentist sends requested confirmation reports or X-rays to the Office of Health Services.

If you wish to avoid having duplicate vaccinations, bring a copy of your immunization record to your pre-departure orientation. If you purchase any immunizations prior to Peace Corps service that are not listed as requirement in your Medical Applicant Portal, the Peace Corps cannot reimburse you for the cost. The Peace Corps will provide all the immunizations necessary for your overseas assignment. Volunteers must be willing to get all required vaccinations unless there is a documented medical contraindication. Failure to accept required vaccination is grounds for administrative separation from the Peace Corps. You do not need to begin taking malaria medication prior to departure.

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

If you wear eyeglasses, bring two pairs (of the current prescription) with you. If a pair breaks, the Peace Corps will replace them, using the information your doctor in the United States provided on the eyeglasses form during your examination. The Peace Corps Office of Health Services strongly discourages Volunteers from wearing contact lenses while overseas unless there is a true medical indication documented by your ophthalmologist. Contact lenses, particularly extended use soft contacts,

are associated with a variety of eye infections and other inflammatory problems. One of the most serious of these problems is infectious keratitis which can lead to severe cornea damage which could result in permanent blindness requiring corneal transplantation. These risks of permanent eye damage are exacerbated in the Peace Corps environment where the Volunteer's ability to properly clean the lenses is compromised due to limited access to sterile water as well as decreased effectiveness of cleaning solutions due to prolonged storage in unsatisfactory conditions. In addition, when bacterial eye infections occur, assessment and treatment within hours by a competent ophthalmologist is indicated. This is virtually impossible in the Peace Corps setting. If you feel that you simply must be able to use your contacts occasionally, please consider using single use, daily disposable lenses which do not require cleaning.

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

## **SAFETY AND SECURITY IN DEPTH**

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

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

- The Peace Corps assesses the security environment where you will live and work.
- The Peace Corps ensures you are welcomed by host country counterparts or other community leaders in your new community.
- The 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 your neighbors.
- You decide if purchasing personal articles insurance is appropriate for you.
- You don't change residences before being authorized by the Peace Corps.
- You communicate your concerns to Peace Corps staff.

This welcome book contains sections on Living Conditions and Volunteer Lifestyle, Peace Corps Training, Your Health Care, and Safety and Security, all of which include important safety and security information to help you understand this partnership. The Peace Corps makes every effort to give Volunteers the training and tools they need to function in the safest way possible and prepare for the unexpected, teaching you to identify, reduce, and manage the risks you may encounter.

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

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

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

- Leave valuable objects in the United States, particularly those that are irreplaceable or have sentimental value
- Leave copies of important documents and account numbers with someone you trust in the States
- Purchase a hidden money pouch or "dummy" wallet as a decoy
- Purchase personal articles insurance

After you arrive in Uganda, 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 Uganda learn to do the following:

- Choose safe routes and times for travel, and travel with someone trusted by the community whenever possible
- Make sure one's personal appearance is respectful of local customs
- Avoid high-crime areas
- Know the local language to get help in an emergency
- Make friends with local people who are respected in the community
- Be careful and conscientious about using electronics (phones, cameras, laptops, iPods, etc.) in public or leaving them unattended
- Limit alcohol consumption

As you can see from this list, you must be willing to work hard and adapt your lifestyle to minimize the potential for being a target for crime. As with anywhere in the world, crime occurs in Uganda. You can reduce the risks by avoiding situations that place you at risk and by taking precautions. Crime at the village or town level is less frequent than in the large cities; people know each other and generally are less likely to steal from their neighbors. Tourist attractions in large towns are favorite worksites for pickpockets.

The following are other security concerns in Uganda of which you should be aware:

While you may be much more likely to be pick-pocketed in crowded areas of Kampala, there is a "borrowing" culture in rural areas, which may cause your property to disappear. Ugandans do not have the same concept of private property as Americans and if you leave something where it could be taken, even within your compound or house, a local may take it without asking if he or she perceives that you are either not currently using it or you own too much. Traditionally, when "borrowing" things that are not currently in use, the borrower must eventually return the items to the owner, but when it comes to foreigners, items are seldom returned.

Years ago, Kampala was the site of infrequent rebel activities, which are otherwise restricted to the far north or west. They took the form of small-scale attacks in busy, populated areas. Although no Volunteers were harmed in these attacks, the potential for harm exists, and the Peace Corps program in Uganda was suspended in 1999 as a result of such attacks. With the program's reopening in 2001, several program changes were made to enhance Volunteer safety and the sustainability of the program as a whole. One of these changes is that Volunteers placed outside of Kampala may not travel to Kampala without an official reason and without prior approval from their program manager or Peace Corps medical officer. In late 2007, Uganda was considered free from rebel activities and the Peace Corps has Volunteer placements in the north and northwestern region, however the Karamoja (northeastern) region is a restricted travel area due to cattle rustling and the potential concomitant violence toward any outsiders.

Kampala can also be an epicenter for political uprisings, as was the case in September 2009 when riots began after President Museveni restricted the Buganda Kabaka's (traditional king) travel to an area which was supposedly under his rule. Buganda, angry with the president's assertion of authority over their king, began rioting in Kampala and the center of other towns. Tires were set ablaze in the streets, property was destroyed, and many people were injured or killed as police shifted from firing warning shots into the air to shooting into crowds to disperse mobs. Violence may erupt quickly and with little warning, so Kampala should be avoided during known political demonstrations that could involve conflict.

Another recent development is the presence of Somali terrorist cells within Uganda. Al Shabab took credit for the twin bombings of World Cup spectators near Kampala in July 2010, which killed approximately 80 people, including an American missionary. While terrorism remains a threat in Uganda,

there have been no incidents of violence since then. You will receive clear information about how the Peace Corps is addressing the issues of safety and security and how you can participate.

While whistles and verbal harassment based on race or gender may be fairly common on the street, this behavior may be reduced if you abide by local cultural norms, dress conservatively, and respond according to the training you will receive.

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

Because many Volunteer sites are in rural, isolated settings, you must be prepared to take on a large degree of responsibility for your own safety. To reduce the likelihood that you will become a victim of crime, you can take steps to make yourself less of a target such as ensuring your home is secure and developing relationships in your community. While the factors that contribute to your risk in Uganda 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 Uganda 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 and security 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 support and assist Volunteers who choose to make a formal complaint with local law enforcement. It is very important that a Volunteer reports an incident when it occurs. The reasons for this include obtaining medical care and emotional support, enabling Peace Corps staff to assess the situation to determine if there is an ongoing safety and security concern, protecting peer Volunteers and preserving the right to file a complaint. Should a Volunteer decide later in the process to file a complaint with law enforcement, this option may be compromised if evidence was not preserved at the time of the incident.

### **Office of Victim Advocacy**

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

Contact information for the Office of Victim Advocacy

Direct phone number: 202.692.1753

Toll-free: 855.855.1961 ext. 1753

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

Email: [victimadvocate@peacecorps.gov](mailto:victimadvocate@peacecorps.gov)

## Crime Data for Uganda

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

Few Peace Corps Volunteers are victims of serious crimes. Crimes that do occur abroad are investigated and prosecuted by local jurisdictional authorities. If you are the victim of a crime, you will decide if you wish to file a complaint with law enforcement, who will then determine whether to prosecute. If you decide to file a complaint, the Peace Corps will help through the process. The Peace Corps staff will ensure you are fully informed of your options and understand how the local legal process works. Further, the Peace Corps will help you exercise your rights to the fullest extent possible under the laws of your host country.

The Peace Corps will train you on how to respond if you are the victim of a serious crime, including how to get to a safe location quickly and contact your Peace Corps office. It's important that you notify the Peace Corps as soon as you can so Peace Corps staff can provide assistance.

## Volunteer Safety Support in Uganda

The Peace Corps' approach to safety is a five-pronged plan to help you stay safe during your service. The plan includes information sharing, Volunteer training, site selection criteria, a detailed emergency action plan, and protocols for addressing safety and security incidents. Uganda's in-country safety program is outlined below.

The Peace Corps/Uganda 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 to ensure 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 Uganda. 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/Uganda'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 Uganda at predetermined locations until the situation is resolved or the Peace Corps decides to evacuate.

Peace Corps/Uganda utilizes a Safety Warden system for communicating emerging safety threats to Volunteers as well as assisting resolution of pending issues with regarding to site development and Volunteer safety related work site challenges. Safety Wardens are Volunteers who are contacts for Volunteers in their assigned region for safety issues coordinated through the Peace Corps Uganda Safety Director.

Finally, in order for the Peace Corps to be fully responsive to the needs of Volunteers, it is imperative that Volunteers immediately report any safety and security incidents 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 current and future Volunteers.

## **DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION OVERVIEW**

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

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

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

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

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

Throughout your Peace Corps service, you will have access to support groups comprised of Volunteers that can assist you in dealing with challenges of diversity and cross-culture interaction: the Peer Support Network, the Diversity Committee, and an LGBTQ group nicknamed the “Geography Club.”. Depending on the nature of your challenge, the groups may be in position to provide direct assistance or direct you to additional resources.

### **Diversity and Inclusion at Your Site**

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

Peace Corps staff in your host country recognize the additional adjustment issues that come with living and working in new environments and will provide support and guidance to Volunteers. During pre-

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

### **Cross-Cultural Considerations**

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

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

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

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

### **What Might a Volunteer Face?**

#### **Possible Gender Role Issues**

Gender is a set of socially constructed roles, responsibilities, behaviors, and opportunities. Gender differs from sex, which refers specifically to biological and physiological characteristics of males and females. Gender roles and expectations are learned, change over time, and vary within and among cultures. Volunteers are trained in gender awareness as they approach their work in the host country. Gender roles in the United States may differ greatly from those in your country of service. It is important to absorb and to attempt to understand the cultural nuances of gender where you are. For example, in many cultures

males are held in higher regard than females and females may manage the households. In some places, females are encouraged to attend school, while in other countries females are discouraged from engaging in such activities and instead work inside or outside of the home.

During the pre-service training, trainees receive an introduction to gender awareness in their country of service, and examine their own thinking about gender roles and how this thinking has impacted them. They then learn how to analyze development projects using a gender lens to better understand gender roles in their host country and to understand how these gender roles can benefit or limit what females and males may or may not do. During their 27 months of service, Volunteers will further engage in gender trainings to understand better how their gender identity impacts who they are as females or males in the host country and how this perception influences their work and relationships.

Equality of the sexes is generally considered irrelevant in Ugandan culture, as distinct roles and responsibilities are expected of men and women. Female Volunteers often encounter extremely conservative attitudes regarding gender equality. Likewise, the behavior of female Volunteers is more often scrutinized and criticized than that of their male peers. Although the Peace Corps emphasizes sensitivity toward other cultures, it may occasionally be necessary to explain why you believe something or behave a certain way—but only you can determine when and if such an explanation is worthwhile. Neither men nor women are considered adults until they are married and have children. This being the case, female Volunteers should expect curiosity from Ugandan friends regarding their marital status and whether they have children.

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

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

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

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

in your country of service. These issues may significantly affect how Volunteers interact with fellow Volunteers and host country nationals. Being open and inclusive to everyone will improve your experience in interacting with fellow Volunteers and members of your host community.

### **Possible Issues for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning/Queer, Ally (LGBTQA) Volunteers**

For LGBTQ Volunteers: Uganda criminalizes homosexual sex acts. Given Uganda's restrictive climate, sexual orientation and non-conforming gender identities should not be discussed openly. Mindful of the cultural norms and country-specific laws, the decision to serve openly is left to each individual Peace Corps Volunteer. LGBTQ Volunteers have chosen to be discreet about their sexual orientation and/or gender identity within their host communities. Few LGBTQ Volunteers have chosen to come out to close local friends, with a result of positive and negative reactions, while some have come out only to select Peace Corps staff and Volunteers. Dealing with questions about boyfriends, girlfriends, marriage, and children may, at times, be stressful for LGBTQ Volunteers. You may find that Uganda is a less open and inclusive environment than you have previously experienced. Please know, however, that Peace Corps is supportive of you and Peace Corps staff welcomes dialogue about how to ensure your success as an LGBTQA Volunteer. More information about serving as an LGBTQ Volunteer is available at the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Peace Corps Alumni website at [lgbprpcv.org](http://lgbprpcv.org). Additionally, the Peace Corps' LGBTQA employee resource group, Spectrum, can be reached at [spectrum@peacecorps.gov](mailto:spectrum@peacecorps.gov). Uganda's support group is the Geography Club. They can be contacted at [geoclubuganda@gmail.com](mailto:geoclubuganda@gmail.com).

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

Many LGBTQ Volunteers have served successfully in Uganda and have very fond memories of their community and service. Peace Corps staff will work with Volunteers to provide them with locally informed perspectives.

### **Possible Issues for Volunteers with Disabilities**

As part of the medical clearance process, the Peace Corps Office of Health Services determined you were physically and emotionally capable, with or without additional medical support, to perform a full tour of Volunteer service in Uganda without a significant risk of harm to yourself or interruption of service. The Peace Corps/Uganda staff will work with disabled Volunteers to support them in training, housing, jobsites, or other areas to enable them to serve safely and effectively.

Ugandans with disabilities are generally treated no differently than other Ugandans (hence the lack of special schools or accommodations for those with disabilities) and are expected to complete the same work, though not necessarily using the same methods.

“Non-stereotypical” Volunteers have had excellent experiences in Uganda. Ultimately, only you can shape your time in Uganda as a Volunteer, but Peace Corps/Uganda is here to support you along the way.

### **Possible Issues for Volunteer Couples**

Before committing to Peace Corps service, couples should consider how different degrees of enthusiasm about Peace Corps service, adaptation to the physical and cultural environment, and homesickness will affect their lives. It can be helpful to recognize that your reactions to these issues will change throughout your service, and you may not always feel the same as your partner. You and your partner will have different jobs, different schedules, and difference societal pressures. One partner may learn the language

faster than the other or have a more satisfying assignment. This can create competition and put different kinds of stress on each person. Anticipating how these pressures will affect you and your partner differently throughout your service can help you remain a source of support for each other. Making friends with other Volunteers is a critical part of fitting into the larger volunteer culture and can also be a good way to expand your support network.

While couples will live together during their service, they may live in separate towns during their pre-service training. This is a stressful time for most Volunteers, and it can be helpful to discuss in advance how you will deal with this potential separation. Your partner can be an important source of stability but can also add stress to your training experience. You may feel torn between traveling to visit your partner and focusing on your training, your host family, and friends you have made at your training site.

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

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

Whether you practice a religion or not, you will probably find Ugandan approaches to spirituality differ from what you are used to. You will certainly gain a deeper understanding over your two years of service, but initially, the most disconcerting thing may be the constant open discussion of religion. You should be prepared to be asked if you are a Christian, if you are “saved,” and if there are any Muslims in America. You may be stared at in disbelief if you state you do not believe in God. Tolerance of, and willingness to answer, such questions will serve you well.

### **Possible Issues for 50+ Volunteers**

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

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

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

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

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

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 per 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 Uganda?**

The electric current in Uganda is 220 volts. There are surges and cuts, which can put a strain on voltage converters and appliances. The Peace Corps does not provide transformers.

### **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 (contact your insurance company). Volunteers should not ship or take valuable items overseas. Jewelry, watches, radios, cameras, electronics, 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 Uganda 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 Uganda 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/Uganda uses an “Advertise & Bid System” for site assignments, which will be made within 10 days of your arrival in-country. Before you leave home, Peace Corps/Uganda will send all invitees job descriptions of all possible worksites. About a week after your arrival in-country, you will submit your site “bid,” a statement of your preferences with your three top and bottom preferences and a brief reason for each preference. The staff will use résumés, aspiration statements, input from the country director, program staff and medical interviews, and your bids to decide site assignments. More information on the Advertise & Bid Site Assignment System will be sent with the job descriptions by a separate email.

While the Volunteer is given a voice in this process, keep in mind that many factors influence the site selection process and that the Peace Corps cannot guarantee placement where you would ideally like to be. Most Volunteers live in small towns or in rural villages and are usually within a half day’s ride to another Volunteer. Some sites require a 10- to 12-hour drive from Kampala the capital.

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

The Peace Corps Counseling and Outreach Unit provides assistance in handling emergencies affecting trainees and Volunteers or their families. Before leaving the United States, instruct your family to notify the Counseling and Outreach Unit immediately if an emergency arises, such as a serious illness or death of a family member. The Counseling and Outreach Unit can be reached at 855.855.1961, select option 1, ext. 1470. After business hours, on weekends, and on holidays, the COU duty officer can be reached at the same number. For non-emergency questions, your family can contact your country desk staff through the main Peace Corps number: 855.855.1961.

**How easy is it to call home from Uganda?**

If there is good cellphone network coverage at your site, it can be quite easy to call the U.S. Companies offer special discount packages for calls from Uganda to the United States. You can also use Skype, Viber, Facebook Messenger, or WhatsApp. Prepaid phone cards from the United States do not work in Uganda.

**Should I bring a cellphone with me?**

A phone from America has to be an unlocked phone that accepts standard or mini-SIMs (for iPhones). Volunteers should check the specifics of any phone for international capabilities. While some Volunteers bring unlocked smart phones and basic cellphones from the U.S., most Volunteers purchase cellphones in Uganda during pre-service training. Peace Corps/Uganda provides SIM cards for one service provider as part of a closed user group. Some Volunteers purchase SIM cards from other countries as the service is not always good in all parts of the country. Dual SIM card phones are also popular. The costs of service have been going down and the coverage is almost everywhere.

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

There are places throughout Uganda that provide Internet services; however, proximity to those services will vary depending on site placement. The Peace Corps office in Kampala has computers with Internet for Volunteer/trainee use only. Although there is no guarantee that you will be placed at a site that has electricity, Volunteers in Uganda who brought their laptops are generally glad they did. They can be useful for work purposes or to type emails before going into town to use the Internet, saving time to catch up on old emails. Some Volunteers purchase phone company modems that plug into the USB port of

computers that allow them to connect to the Internet from all over Uganda. Some use these to connect to Skype, allowing them to keep in better contact with family and friends. It is recommended that you purchase personal property insurance to cover costs for all electronic equipment in case it is damaged or stolen.

## WELCOME LETTERS FROM UGANDA VOLUNTEERS

Dear Health Volunteer invitee,

Congratulations! All of your hard work and waiting has finally paid off—in a few short weeks you'll be jet-setting off to Uganda! I remember how I felt two years ago when I was in your shoes—nervous, excited, and completely panicked with last-minute shopping and parties and goodbyes and preparations for what has turned out to be one of the greatest adventures of my life.

We are all eagerly awaiting your arrival in-country. Preparations have been going on for months developing your future sites and planning your trainings: Everyone is working overtime to make sure you will be safe, comfortable, and happy here in Uganda, and you will be walking off that plane to a new group of friends and colleagues.

As Health Volunteers, you will spend your 27 months working on HIV prevention and mitigation, malaria prevention, maternal and child health, and/or water, sanitation and hygiene projects, depending on the need of your community and your interests and expertise. There is so much work to do in Uganda on health issues: 7.2 percent of people in Uganda are living with HIV/AIDS, malaria is the number one killer in Uganda, and one in 15 children die from preventable diseases before their fifth birthday. Wherever you go and whoever you work with, you will find projects you can do to improve the health of your community.

The most amazing thing about the Peace Corps model is the personal connections you will make with the community members you work with. It takes a lot of effort and time to integrate into your community, find your work partners, and get your projects off the ground. But as long as you put in the effort, you can find those projects that you are passionate about—whether it is working with youth, teaching women how to have a healthy pregnancy, repairing mosquito nets, or building rainwater tanks. Living and working in another community is challenging, but I can tell you from personal experience that the rewards are greater because of those challenges, as long as you realize that you will take so much more from this experience than you could ever give.

I'm sure you've heard over and over not to have expectations about your time in Uganda. In a way, I agree: Throw out all of your preconceived notions about what you will be doing and who you will be working with. Uganda will surprise you, disappoint you, anger you, and inspire you. You will laugh and cry and shake your head in confusion (often within a few hours of each other). I can guarantee that what you will find in your workplace or community will not match up with the vision you have in your head. Just keep your mind and your heart open.

However, I do think you need to have certain expectations—not of Uganda or Peace Corps, but of yourself. Expect to challenge yourself, to be proactive, to find the beauty or fun in the strange and extraordinary. Be ready to work hard, to bounce back from disappointment, and to build amazing relationships with your fellow PCVs and your community members. Set yourself high expectations, and strive to meet them every day.

We can't wait to meet you! Enjoy your last few weeks at home—and please eat some froyo for me! ☺

Dear Invitee,

I live at a primary school with more than 900 primary school girls; one might think that might get to be a bit much, and honestly, there have been days where I've felt overwhelmed, but I couldn't have asked for a better placement. The people here are so gracious, so welcoming, and so friendly.

I'll never forget the first day at my site. We were still in training, but we were visiting our sites to get an idea of what it was going to be like out on our own. I arrived at the school and before the gate there were hundreds of girls. They had all heard I was coming that afternoon and were very excited. They greeted me in the local language and argued about who would help me with my bags. The sister, the headmistress at the school, gave me a tour of my house. I could tell they had worked very hard to get the place ready for me. The house was in great shape and someone had painted "You are most welcome, Christine" on the wall. I overlooked the fact that they had misspelled my name, especially since the three or four days I was there they treated me so wonderfully. They brought me all my meals and helped me get acquainted with the school compound and the town.

Since then, and I've been here for a year now, the hospitality really hasn't changed all that much. There aren't more than 100 girls rushing to me, fighting over who will help with my bags anymore—thank goodness—but it's still amazing how good they are to me. I have tried several times to fetch my own water, but I can rarely walk 10 steps out my door without somebody insisting on helping me. I have a group of kids who come over nearly every evening to visit or sometimes to help me with laundry or dishes if I need it. I never ask the kids; they just jump right in. I enjoy their company most of the time; they remind me, on rough days, why I am here.

I can't stress enough how amazing the people here are. I think a lot about the projects that I've been working on and what I am contributing, but I know the people of my town have taught me a whole lot more than I could ever teach them.

Dear Invitee,

Welcome to the Peace Corps family, and welcome to Uganda, your home away from home for the next two years. Uganda, as Winston Churchill said, is the Pearl of Africa. Its border stretches along the shores of Lake Victoria to the south, the Great Rift Valley to the east, the beautiful Mountains of the Moon to the west, and the flowing savannahs of the northern plains, enclosing one of the most diverse landscapes on the continent. And because Uganda is situated on the equator, the weather is always gorgeous!

Along with this diverse landscape, you will find a plethora of cultures, with rich heritages that have spanned centuries. There are 48 different tribes in Uganda, each with its own language and customs. The southern part of the country is mainly composed of Bantu-speaking tribes, while the north consists of Nilolitic speakers. Each of these tribes has shaped Uganda as a country, and this diversity has been critical in fostering the dialogue that made Uganda a leader in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

As a Volunteer, you will have the opportunity to live and work with some of the nicest people in the world. The rewards from such an experience are immeasurable. This does not mean your task will not be free of challenges. There are countless villages in Uganda that lack power, running water, and the other amenities you are accustomed to having at home. Along with this, you are being asked to live and work in a completely new environment with its own social norms and customs. Your decision might begin to seem overwhelming, and this is understandable because you are about to embark on a life-changing journey. But you are not going on it alone.

You will have access to the best staff in the world! The staff at Peace Corps/Uganda is dedicated to making your stay in Uganda as comfortable as possible. Plus, you will have your fellow Volunteers who will be there for you.

Once again, welcome to Peace Corps and welcome to Uganda.

Dear Invitee,

The feelings you must be experiencing right now with your Peace Corps invitation in hand and an impending departure date seem like only yesterday for me. I remember well the long, long to-do list, packets of even more paperwork, packing and re-packing, anxious thoughts, and teary goodbyes. There were certainly moments when I wondered if it would ever really happen. I am happy to report that everything will indeed work out; you will finally set foot in-country, and Peace Corps/Uganda is worth every sleepless night!

Pre-service training provides a smooth adjustment into a new country and a new culture. Peace Corps staff members form a dedicated team. They help you land as gracefully as possible. Homestay families warmly welcome new Volunteers, do their best to make you comfortable, and often make you feel as if you're a member of the family. The training schedule will keep you busy and you will surely wonder where 10 weeks went when the day comes to finally move to your site—your new home for the next two years. It is then that this experience begins to feel less like a whirlwind, and more like a new reality.

The challenges in the beginning soon become nothing. You discover where to buy the best tomatoes, the most efficient way to collect your water, and how to catch a ride to the nearest town. Adjusting to no electricity, cooking over charcoal, bathing with a bucket, and using a pit latrine quickly begin to feel perfectly normal. (OK, let's just say normal.) Eventually, it becomes easier and easier to venture further into your village, test fledgling language skills, and generate ideas about what exactly you will be doing for the next 24 months. Relationships begin to form, and then, there's finally the day when you refer to your site as "home" without even thinking about it; when your neighbor asks if "you've been lost" and offers you a sweet, juicy pineapple upon your return; when a child greets you with a smile of recognition at the borehole; when a colleague invites you to her daughter's introduction; or when a muzee (elder) shows you a better way to light your charcoal. You will feel an invaluable sense of warmth and acceptance. You will recognize these as small steps when there are the inevitable moments of frustration or lingering questions about whether or not you are really making any progress.

In the beginning, 24 months seems like such a long time to be away from America. Already, I recognize that it is such a short time to be here in Uganda. Yes, there was a day when 12 hours of sunlight felt like three times as much as I knew what to do with, but I know in the end, I'll look back and wish I spent every second absorbing it all. I'm doing my best to do just that because now I can see it will all go by in a flash. Each day of this experience opens minds and possibilities and that, to me, is one of the greatest things you have to look forward to in Peace Corps/Uganda.

Best wishes with the rest of your to-do list, see you soon, and safe journey!

Dear Invitee,

Congratulations on your acceptance of your invitation to serve in Peace Corps/Uganda! I am a Volunteer in the Community Agribusiness Project. It was just two short (long?) years ago I was in your shoes, excited about where I was going and what I was going to be doing.

If you're like me, you've been thinking about the types of projects you'll be doing, and what life will be like when you get here. All I can say is it is going to be more familiar than you think but more different than you can ever imagine. I wish I could explain it better.

You will be joining about 120 other Peace Corps Volunteers already in-country working on all sorts of projects, each of which improves, however incrementally, the lives of the Ugandans we are here to work with. Whether you are in the Health or Community Agribusiness Projects, you will find creative uses for your skills, and pick up new ones that you could not have gotten anywhere else. No matter what you do, you will see the changes in your projects, organizations, and communities even if it's only a smile on a face when you greet someone in the local language.

But it's not all work. Getting around Uganda is fairly efficient (although not as easy as in the U.S.!) and each area of the country offers its own options for recreation.

I must admit that life here is not always kittens and rainbows. I have been challenged both personally and professionally by obstacles that I never imagined were possible. But rest assured that every one of us has experienced these rough spots in our own ways, and more importantly each one of us has overcome them with creativity and resolve we never imagined we had. You never know what you can do until you have to try.

I hope you're as excited about your Uganda service as I was when I was packing my bags. Relax, you're anything but on your own. The rest of the Peace Corps crew is looking forward to meeting you and getting your service off to the right start. See you!

## PACKING LIST

This list has been compiled by Volunteers serving in Uganda 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 Uganda.

Take a deep breath. Everything you need, you can find in-country. Quality, selection, or prices may not be exactly what you want, so if you're particular about a certain product (such as the exclusive use of Pantene Extra Body conditioner), bring enough for three or four months. It usually takes 6-8 weeks for those special packages to arrive, but can take longer. If you aren't picky or don't want to buy the nonessentials, that's cool too! The used markets and local tailors are great here, but you won't be able to shop much while in training and it doesn't hurt to be prepared, so check out the list below. Your interests and lifestyle choices probably won't change that much, so only bring hiking boots if you like to hike or an appointment book if you like to pencil things in. Buy fewer items at outdoor stores than you think you should have, and instead bring the comfort items that make you feel good. Remember, you could always have your friends or family send you things you really miss so try not to over-do it.

### General Clothing

#### For men:

- 2 pairs of slacks
- 3-4 collared shirts
- Belt
- Tie

#### For women:

- 2-3 skirts below the knee, not see through/with a slip
- 4-8 shirts (dressy/business casual, no spaghetti straps)
- 2 casual T-shirts for hanging out
- Good bras/sports bras (good support is not available here!); remember, you will have to cover up too
- Culottes. Shorts/leggings to go under skirt for bike riding
- Nice clothes you would wear out with your friends in the U.S.

#### For all:

- Something casual you enjoy wearing; jeans, gauchos, etc.
- 1 sweater, light jacket, fleece, sweatshirt, or long sleeve shirt
- Nice clothes you would wear out with your friends in the U.S.
- Exercise clothes
- Good underwear (local selection is not of good quality)
- Raincoat/poncho
- 1 dressy outfit for official functions (tie for men sports jacket optional; dress for women)
- PJs
- Bathing suit

#### Shoes

- Nice comfortable shoes (think nice sandals, Tevas and Chacos give a discount to PCVs)

- Comfortable flat dress shoes for work and official events; dressy sandals are acceptable and a lot more comfortable
- Running shoes (if you run)

### **Personal Hygiene and Toiletry Items**

- Toiletries to last a month
- Tampons/Diva Cup (pads and OB are widely available)
- Music in whatever form you enjoy (iPod, other MP3, CD player and CDs, tapes)
- Laptop computer (preferably a netbook)
- Solar charger for batteries/electronics (available)
- Portable alarm clock
- Watch

### **Miscellaneous**

- 2 pairs of glasses/sunglasses
- 3-month supply of prescription medication
- 1-month supply of sunscreen and insect repellent
- Towel (quick-dry); you can buy regular towels in-country
- 2 flat bed sheets for homestay (you don't know what size bed you'll have)
- Medium book/messenger bag (for 3–4 day trips)
- Reusable water bottle

### **What Not To Bring**

- Too many books (PCVs are good at sharing)
- Too many pairs of shorts (not common for adults to wear)
- Too many white clothes (they turn brown quickly)
- Tight clothes (culturally inappropriate)
- Too many socks (available here)
- Pillows and blankets (Peace Corps provides these at training)

### **Not Necessary But Useful**

- Camera (advise not to bring large camera bags)
- Shortwave/FM radio (available here)
- Favorite recipes
- Duct tape
- Good quality rope
- Games/cards
- Bandana/hat
- Plastic mattress cover
- Tennis shoes/hiking boots
- Leatherman/Swiss Army knife
- Good pens (if it's important to you, BIC pens are available)
- Seeds (spices, veggies, etc.—can be purchased here or mailed later)
- Beauty products/pampering items (nail polish, eyeliner; if you use them)
- Nice kitchen knife
- Can opener (if you cook or have interest) a decent chef or Santoku is a great item to have
- Vegetable peeler

### **Even Less Essential But Nice**

- Regional spice blend (Lawry's, Old Bay, Cavender's, Mrs. Dash, Asian spices, seaweed, etc.); taco seasoning
- Tea tree oil (great antiseptic for skin infections and mosquito bites)
- Razors (available but very expensive)
- Small ball
- Bike pump
- Good compact umbrella (available)
- Zip-top plastic bags/plastic food-storage containers
- English dictionary (available)
- Money belt
- Smartphone for Internet (Nokia E71/E72 recommended)
- Light sleeping bag and ground pad
- Light tent
- Small toolkit or bicycle repair kit

### **Other Notes**

- Lock your luggage, preferably using TSA-approved locks. This is useful in transit, at homestay, and while traveling during your service.
- Volunteers are encouraged to purchase personal property insurance to cover the maintenance and replacement of computer equipment, electronics, and other valuables that they may bring overseas or purchase in-country.
- At your departure airport in the U.S., security will often screen your luggage upon entering the terminal. It is advisable to pack all sharp objects near the top of one of your bags. In the event that they do search your bag, they will hold onto these items until you check your bags at the ticket counter.

## 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 are relevant to everyone, and the list is not comprehensive.

### Family

- Notify family that they can call the Counseling and Outreach Unit at any time if there is a critical illness or death of a family member (24-hour phone number: 855.855.1961 ext. 1470).
- Give family and friends the Peace Corps On the Home Front handbook.

### 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 service; 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 abroad, 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 United States.
- Obtain student loan deferment forms from the lender or loan service. Information about loan deferment is at [peacecorps.gov/loans](http://peacecorps.gov/loans).
- Execute a power of attorney for the management of your property and business.

- Arrange for deductions from your readjustment allowance to pay alimony, child support, and other debts through the Office of Volunteer Financial Operations at 855.855.1961 ext. 1770.
- Place all important papers—mortgages, deeds, stocks, and bonds—in a safe deposit box or with an attorney or other caretaker.

## CONTACTING PEACE CORPS HEADQUARTERS

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

Peace Corps headquarters toll-free number: 855.855.1961, press 1, then extension number (see below)

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

<b>For Questions About</b>	<b>Staff</b>	<b>Toll-free extension</b>	<b>Direct/Local</b>
Responding to an invitation	Office of Placement	ext. 1840	202.692.1840
Country information	Cara Eandi Desk Officer	ext. 2874	202.692.2874 <a href="mailto:uganda@peacecorps.gov">uganda@peacecorps.gov</a>
Plane tickets, passports, visas, or other travel matters	CWT SATO Travel	ext. 1170	202.692.1170
Legal clearance:	Office of Placement	ext. 1840	202.692.1840
Medical clearance and forms processing (includes dental)	Screening Nurse	ext. 1500	202.692.1500
Medical Applicant Portal questions			<a href="mailto:amsadmin@peacecorps.gov">amsadmin@peacecorps.gov</a>
Medical reimbursements (handled by a subcontractor)			800.544.1802
Loan deferments, taxes, financial operations		ext. 1770	202.692.1770
Readjustment allowance withdrawals, power of attorney, staging (pre-departure orientation), and reporting instructions	Office of Staging	ext. 1865	202.692.1865
New Volunteer Portal questions			<a href="mailto:staging@peacecorps.gov">staging@peacecorps.gov</a>
<i>Note: You will receive comprehensive information (hotel and flight arrangements) three to five weeks prior to departure. This information is not available sooner.</i>			
Family emergencies (to get information to a Volunteer overseas) 24 hours	Counseling and Outreach Unit	ext. 1470	202.692.1470
Office of Victim Advocacy		ext. 1753 24 hours (call or text)	202.692.1753 202.409.2704