



## *from the* **Director**

November 4, 2014

TO: Peace Corps Global  
FROM: Carrie Hessler-Radelet, Director  
SUBJECT: Message on Peace Corps' Response to the Ebola Outbreak

I want to share with all of you, our extended Peace Corps family, the text of a letter I sent today to all Peace Corps Volunteers and Trainees worldwide concerning the agency's response to the Ebola epidemic. I want to assure everyone that we are monitoring the situation not only in the three countries from which we have withdrawn Volunteers, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea, but worldwide. The health, safety, and security of our Volunteers and staff are our top priorities as this tragedy unfolds. I am grateful to all of you for continuing to ensure that our Volunteers are safe, healthy, and well-supported throughout their service.

As noted in the letter, we will post updates on our response to the Ebola outbreak and information on our global efforts on the [Ebola update page](#) on [peacecorps.gov](#).

Thank you again for your commitment to the Peace Corps' mission and our Volunteers.

### **Letter from the Director**

Dear Peace Corps Volunteers,

We have all been seized by the tragedy in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea caused by the Ebola outbreak. It is heart wrenching to see the suffering from this dreadful disease—in places that have been home to so many Volunteers over the years. News of the Ebola epidemic has dominated the American and international media and it has caused great worries and even fear, some of which is well founded, and some of which is not consistent with the actual science behind the disease.

As Ebola continues to spread in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea, the entire world has come to realize that precautions are critical to ensure that Ebola does not become a global threat. It is likely that some cases—hopefully isolated—will arise elsewhere. The Peace Corps is working in close collaboration with the Department of State's Office of Medical Services and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to continuously monitor the Ebola epidemic and assess the most prudent measures we should take. Our decision-making will always be driven by our concern for and commitment to your health and safety, which is our top priority.

We want you and your families to know what will happen if Ebola cases occur in your country of service. If that occurs, we will take several actions:

- We will continuously monitor the situation and provide up-to-date, authoritative information, and recommendations to all our staff and Volunteers.
- We will proactively encourage our Volunteers and Trainees to take the following precautions to prevent infection:
  - Avoid physical contact with any person who has a fever, including those complaining of malaria or any other unexplained illnesses.
  - Avoid health facilities that are treating Ebola patients.
  - Avoid activities associated with Ebola risk, such as funerals.
  - Avoid butchering, handling, preparing, or eating any bush meat, as these are all known modes of transmission.
  - And, as always, we encourage you to contact your PCMO immediately if you feel sick or unsafe at your site.
- We will move Volunteers—temporarily or permanently—from areas where the population is significantly affected by the Ebola virus or entirely from the country as we did with 340 Volunteers in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea.
- At any time, if a Volunteer or Trainee feels uncomfortable in continuing service in a country where an outbreak of Ebola is occurring, we will grant Interrupted Service at their request.

It is important to remember that the Ebola virus is extremely difficult to contract. Transmission of the virus requires direct contact with the body fluids of an infected, symptomatic individual. Individuals who are infected, but not yet showing any symptoms, are not considered contagious. Transmission is not airborne, such as with influenza or the common cold. If there are no cases of Ebola in your country, it is impossible to contract it. We encourage all Volunteers to use common sense and simple measures, such as rigorous hand washing, as it can be the first defense against a host of illnesses.

I recognize and so deeply appreciate the sacrifices that you—Volunteers and staff alike—make to serve in the Peace Corps. Through your service, you are changing countless lives in your communities, classrooms, and organizations. You are transferring skills, planting ideas, nurturing dreams, modeling values, and teaching global perspectives. Thank you for your commitment to service and your willingness to go literally to the ends of the earth to change lives and be changed.

In the context of the Ebola tragedy, our Peace Corps staff members in Liberia, Guinea, and Sierra Leone are amazing examples of compassionate, altruistic service. They volunteered—at some personal risk—to assist CDC experts in their community-level outreach to stem the tide of the Ebola virus in their countries. They have earned high praise from the CDC and their own nations for their work. I am so proud of them and so thankful for their commitment to service.

I very much appreciate the anxiety that the Ebola outbreak may cause you and your loved ones back home. I want to assure you that we have your health and safety as our top priorities as we

make decisions in the face of this unprecedented outbreak. For the latest information on Peace Corps' response to the Ebola outbreak and updates on our global efforts, please visit the [Ebola update page](#) on [peacecorps.gov](http://peacecorps.gov).

Warmest regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carrie". The script is cursive and fluid, with a small dot above the 'i'.

Carrie Hessler-Radelet  
Director