



# BUILDING BRIDGES



*"Knowing is not enough; we must apply. Willing is not enough, we must do.."*

*- Johann Wolfgang von Goethe*

## SIGN UP FOR OUR E-NEWSLETTER!

The Office of Private Sector Initiatives is going GREEN! In the new year, we will no longer send out paper newsletters. We will save on postage and paper waste by sending a newsletter directly to your e-mail inbox. We hope that you will come to our website (<http://www.peacecorps.gov/buildingbridges>) and sign up to learn about Volunteer projects and inspiring stories from the field. If you are receiving this as a member of an organization or group, we would love for your members to sign up too. We have truly enjoyed sharing our stories with you and hope we may continue to do so online.

### PCV LAURA GREGORY GROWS SUSTAINABILITY IN PANAMA

Peace Corps Volunteer Laura Gregory made a difference in Panama through an innovative rice production project. With the introduction of a two wheeled tractor, the community was able to double their rice production after only one year of use.

Gregory served in the community of Las Quebradas, located

in the northern foothills of Veraguas, one of Panama's poorest regions. Gregory worked with 35 families in the area, who relied on subsistence farming and were unable to earn an income due to the isolation of their village.

Although the farmers used an efficient rice farming technique, they still had to prepare the land before planting with shovels, picks, and hoes. With a shortage of manual labor this was a daunting and exhausting task, and there were more rice paddies than the existing workforce in the area could physically farm.

Gregory and her community decided that the introduction of a tilling machine would greatly



decrease the labor required to prepare rice patties before planting. Together they created a business proposal and solicited funding through the Partnership Program to purchase a walk-behind, diesel powered tractor to prepare the hard-to-till soil.

The tractor enabled the farmers to work their land in one hour instead of what used to take 10 men an entire day's work. Gregory commented, "I saw the town's rice production jump two-fold in one year, and growers had more time to dedicate to farming other products. In addition to being able to produce enough rice for their families throughout the year, the town has enough surplus rice to sell outside the community."

Knowing the project was sustainable was very rewarding; however Gregory mentioned that "listening to the pride in farmers' voices when they told me how beautiful the farms are, was the most rewarding of all."

**You've Got Mail!!**



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and enter your e-mail  
address. We can't wait  
to visit your inbox!!



## INTRODUCING OPSI'S NEW DIRECTOR: JENNIFER CHAVEZ RUBIO

As the new Director of the Office of Private Sector Initiatives (OPSI), I want to thank you for your partnership and interest in our exciting work to support Peace Corps Volunteers (PCVs) in the field through the Peace Corps Partnership Program (PCPP). I have joined OPSI after many years in philanthropy and the nonprofit sector. Most recently, I worked at Silicon Valley Community Foundation helping top Silicon Valley corporations to positively impact communities locally and globally through corporate philanthropy and corporate citizenship programs.

It is an exciting time to work at Peace Corps under the leadership of Director Aaron Williams. OPSI is well-positioned to build on the tremendous success of the PCPP and to take our impact to the next level in FY 2010. In FY 2009 alone, through the generous support of so many of you, the PCPP supported 639 community-initiated projects in 60 countries. We received an impressive 10,595 donations to make these projects a reality, which is an increase of 9.5% over FY 2008. Moving forward, we hope to deepen our partnership with you as we continue our important work to engage individual donors, foundations, and corporations in order to increase the number of PCPP projects we are able to support. In the short time I have been on board, I have already had the privilege of meeting with PCVs in their communities in both Panama and the Dominican Republic. I was so impressed by the depth of the relationships PCVs had with their local communities and, of course, by the impact they are making through innovative and creative PCPP projects.

We look forward to an ongoing partnership with you and would love your support in helping expand OPSI's reach through our e-newsletter in 2009!

Sincerely,

Jennifer Chavez Rubio



*Jennifer Chavez Rubio visiting a PCPP project in Panama*

## GIFT GIVING IN 2010

No matter how you celebrate holidays, birthdays, or special events, the Peace Corps Partnership Program offers a variety of giving opportunities to satisfy a range of personalities. As you struggle to figure out the perfect gift, consider making a donation to a Volunteer project or country fund in honor of a loved one.

Perhaps your son or daughter is a high school teacher and has dedicated his or her life to educating our youth. They might love to be a part of building a classroom for students in Benin. Or maybe your brother or sister is a sports enthusiast. Never fear, the Partnership Program has projects working on youth empowerment through baseball in Moldova or basketball and soccer in El Salvador.

Although there are usually more than 100 projects online at all times,



it's possible that your friends might be more interested in supporting an overarching cause such as the Environment, Youth, or Water & Sanitation. We know that many of you are returned Peace Corps volunteers or know someone who is – what better way to honor their experience than by supporting a Country Fund in their name?

The Partnership Program offers numerous ways to give creative gifts. One hundred percent of your contribution will go directly to a Volunteer project and all donations are tax deductible. Your gift will not only delight your loved ones, but will also provide a wonderful surprise for the Volunteers in the field who are working very hard to get their projects funded.

Please visit us at [www.peacecorps.gov/](http://www.peacecorps.gov/) donate to begin shopping.