

FOOD SECURITY STRATEGIC PLAN

BACKGROUND

Since the inception of the Peace Corps in 1961, Peace Corps Volunteers around the world have addressed the adverse impact of food shortages through traditional programming and targeted initiatives in the countries where they have served. Agricultural Volunteers, at times, have accounted for up to 20 percent of Volunteers serving worldwide. Today, Environmental Volunteers are planting trees in countries plagued by desert conditions to prevent soil erosion and allow for carbohydrate rich food like acacia nuts to be harvested for food. Over the years, projects have ranged from fish farming and the introduction of small scale irrigation systems to improved food processing and food marketing.

In 1985, the Peace Corps launched the Africa Food Systems Initiative (AFSI) designed to help reverse declining food production in Africa and develop sustainable food sources. AFSI projects included land preparation, agricultural education, marketing strategies, storage and preservation of products, and nutrition education. AFSI Volunteers joined together in teams of five to ten individuals working along side small farmers focusing on specific pre-production, production, and post-production objectives. The 10-year initiative announced by then Peace Corps Director Loret Miller Ruppe also sought to increase the number of Americans serving as agricultural Volunteers. As a result, the percentage of Agricultural Volunteers in the field in the late 1980s was nearly 45 percent higher than today.

Currently, the Peace Corps seeks to use its expertise in the area of capacity building at the grassroots level to partner with other government agencies, NGOs, and the private sector to end the devastation of world hunger and create a sound agricultural base for countries in the greatest need. Despite the combined efforts of so many, the food security situation has worsened. Commodity prices have increased significantly over the last year—the rise in the cost of oil has impacted everything from agricultural inputs to the cost of shipping food for distribution. Food security will continue to be a challenge for individuals around the world for the foreseeable future.¹ Drawing on the experience of our staff and Volunteers and our integrated approach to programming and training, the Peace Corps will endeavor to offer short-term and long-term assistance. Our efforts will reflect the Peace Corps' three goals, complement the work of other government agencies and NGOs, and highlight the unique role that Peace Corps Volunteers can play in education, agricultural development, income generation, nutrition, and sustainability. The Peace Corps is committed to providing our host country partners with motivated Volunteers who are equipped with the knowledge and skills to mitigate the adverse effects of the current food security crisis, and offer hope and sustainability to the communities they serve both now and for the future.

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

The following strategic framework is a guide for the Peace Corps to respond to the current food security crisis. This strategy supports the agency's mission of promoting world peace and friendship, contributes to the achievement of the Peace Corps' three goals and aligns with its 2009–2014 Strategic Plan.²

1. Food Security Assessment, 2007/GFA-19, Economic Research Service/USDA, 2008.

2. Peace Corps' 2009-2014 Strategic Plan, Office of Strategic Information, Planning and Research, September 2008.

VISION

The Peace Corps will contribute to the global response to the food security crisis through its core function of capacity building at the individual, service provider, organization, and community levels.

As a result:

- Individuals and communities assisted by Volunteers will gain skills and knowledge to mitigate the adverse effects of the food security crisis.
- The impact of the food security crisis will be lessened as individuals, organizations and communities trained by Volunteers develop and strengthen skills in sustainable agricultural development, income generation, and nutrition.

PRINCIPLES

Food security impacts all development sectors and every region of the world.

For every person, food must be available, food must be accessible, and, the food available must be of sufficient quantities and quality to fulfill proper nutritional requirements.

As the food security crisis widens, the Peace Corps must be flexible in its response, adapt to meet different needs in different locations, and adjust its programming and training in light of new information and best practices.

In accordance with agency policy, Peace Corps Volunteers do not provide direct food aid, yet they can support agencies or NGOs who do so within specific parameters (e.g., World Food Programme).

The Peace Corps Director, through the Food Security Task Force, provides overall strategic leadership for the achievement of the goals set forth in this strategy, collaborates closely with Headquarters, Regional Offices, Peace Corps Response, the Office of Overseas Programming and Training Support, the Office of Volunteer Support, the Office of Returned Volunteer Services, the Office of Volunteer Recruitment and Selection, the Office of Private Sector Initiatives, and other offices to ensure that policies, procedures, and resources support the implementation of this strategy. Country directors are responsible for managing post-level systems related to food security programming, training, monitoring and evaluation, and support for Volunteers; staff training and support; and in-country partnerships to enhance the Peace Corps' role in response to the food security crisis.

ASSUMPTIONS

Properly trained Volunteers can contribute to and support host country responses to the food security crisis through local capacity building.

The Peace Corps will dedicate the personnel and the technical resources necessary to support this strategy, subject to the availability of funds.

The Peace Corps' multipronged approach to the food security crisis will be integrated throughout programming and training for all Volunteers for all sectors.

The work of the Volunteers may include the following: nutrition education, gardening, permaculture, agriculture development, crop diversification, inputs, seeds, livestock, household financial management, cooperatives, food processing, storage, and marketing.

The work of the Volunteers involved in this effort will cross over many sectors not traditionally thought of in the agricultural context, including, but not limited to, information technology, microfinance, HIV/AIDS, and small business.

PERFORMANCE GOALS AND INDICATORS

PERFORMANCE GOAL 1:

Train and support Volunteers who are capable of carrying out effective food security activities.

(Supports Peace Corps Strategic Goal 1, 2, 4, and 5)

Preparing Volunteers to contribute effectively to the food security crisis begins during the recruitment process so prospective Volunteers understand the Peace Corps' approach and the role they may play if selected to serve. Recruitment events and materials will showcase the excellent work of Volunteers while presenting the emotional impact and other challenges faced by some Volunteers, especially in countries with high starvation rates. When necessary, Volunteers may be recruited for specialized food security assignments.

Once in country, Volunteers should be provided with "up-to-date" food security pre-service and in-service training (PST and IST). PST and IST should equip Volunteers with the information and skills needed to carry out effective and culturally appropriate food security partnerships in their communities.

Volunteers working in communities particularly devastated by food shortages may experience added stress watching friends, neighbors, and colleagues struggle with this reality.

Where possible, services for returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs), such as agricultural and environmental career fairs, will highlight opportunities for RPCVs to continue their work in food security (e.g., through Peace Corps Response) and promote ways to share their experiences with other Americans.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS:

of food security-focused recruitment activities

of Volunteers joining Peace Corps with a background in agriculture and the environment (food security related)

% of posts providing food security training

% of Volunteers receiving food security training

Average hours of food security training received by Volunteers

% of posts providing food security training to staff

% of posts/staff exchanging information related to food security using Peace Corps' online collaboration tools (e.g., Guru)

of Peace Corps Response Volunteers assigned to food security-related organizations

% of Volunteers reporting having received adequate emotional support during service

of food security-focused returned Volunteer career events organized by Peace Corps

PERFORMANCE GOAL 2:

Develop food security projects and activities that respond to host country requests, policies and strategies, and are tailored to the interests and priorities of the individuals, service providers, communities, and organizations with which Volunteers live and work.

(Supports Peace Corps Strategic Goal 1 and 2)

The Peace Corps should strive to support evidence-based programming and the development of sustainable solutions. While the Peace Corps continues to seek innovative approaches, programming and training should be informed about promising practices and lessons learned both within the Peace Corps and from other organizations. Peace Corps Volunteers' food security activities should be strategically designed to have a lasting and tangible effect on the individuals they serve, and the operational effectiveness, efficiency, and responsiveness of the service providers, communities, and organizations they assist.

Peace Corps programs may integrate food security into project plans or promote it as a community service activity. To determine the appropriate type and level of intervention for Peace Corps Volunteers, posts should conduct periodic assessments of their local context. These assessments should involve gathering and analyzing information on food shortages, host country food security policies and strategies, other development partners' responses, and the Peace Corps' comparative advantage.

Volunteers' activities should be suited to local needs and designed to strengthen host government policies, strategies, and systems. As with all Peace Corps programs, skills transfer, capacity building, and sustainability at the individual, organization, and community level are the foundations for Volunteers' food security activities. Addressing the social, economic (including income generation), and health and environmental effects of food security, particularly in rural and other underserved areas, should be at the heart of the Peace Corps' work. Volunteers' food security activities should promote and strengthen community leadership and civil society.

The Peace Corps' activities should be culturally sensitive and responsive to local customs and circumstances. The work of the Volunteer should be appropriate to the situation and focus on changing knowledge, attitudes, and behavior. Activities focusing on food security should support the comprehensive nature of family- and community-based strategies.

Accountability through effective monitoring, evaluation, and reporting should be emphasized in the Peace Corps' food security programs. Volunteers should receive training on how to collect and report high quality data to measure progress in terms of both appropriate process, and achievement of desired results.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS:

- % of posts reporting food security activities conducted
- % of Volunteers conducting food security activities
- % of projects that integrate food security at the goal or objective level
- # of individuals assisted with food security activities
- # of individuals trained in food security activities
- # of food security-related organizations assisted

PERFORMANCE GOAL 3:

Optimize food security partnerships and resources.

(Supports Peace Corps Strategic Goals 5)

The Peace Corps should contribute to the achievement of global food security. Where collaboration enhances or expands its food security programs, the Peace Corps may collaborate with United States Government (USG) (e.g., USAID), NGOs, the private sector, and other international relief partners. Collaboration with host country and other partners would include developing policies, strategies and monitoring and evaluation systems that govern the implementation of food security programs and taking advantage of resources to improve these programs.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS:

- % of posts receiving agricultural or food security funds
- % of posts collaborating with international partners and NGOs on food security efforts
- % of posts receiving funds for food security activities through outside resources,
such as the Office of Private Sector Initiatives

SUMMARY

The global food security crisis will continue to impact developing countries in which Peace Corps Volunteers serve for the foreseeable future. Currently, Peace Corps Volunteers work at the grassroots level in 15 of the countries most adversely impacted by food shortages. The Peace Corps seeks to focus our recruitment, placement, training, and programming of food security Volunteers through all sectors and every region of the world. The Peace Corps will partner with other USG agencies and international NGOs to lend our unique expertise in integrated programming and training and capacity building at the grassroots level. The Peace Corps is committed to partnering in the process to provide food security and to offer hope and sustainability to the communities in which Volunteers serve both now and in the future.