

Finding Place in Paraguay: Rethinking the Placement of Peace Corps Volunteers

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Peace Corps Paraguay relies on a sectoral approach for training volunteers, making assignments to a particular community, and evaluating performance during their two years of service. Based on views expressed by Peace Corps Volunteers working in the

Environmental Sector, including the author's own experience as an agroforestry extension volunteer assigned to the small, rural Paraguayan community of Tacuapity, the paper argues that the sectoral approach fails to enable volunteers to adequately assist communities. It is particularly problematic when a volunteer's sectoral assignment does not match the needs of the community. Environmental concerns were not a high priority in the author's community of Tacuapity where labor availability and insecure land tenure limited community participation in agroforestry activities. The paper concludes with two policy recommendations for Peace Corps Paraguay: to either maintain the sector approach but improve it by conducting and using the results of community needs assessments to better identify and match community needs with the volunteer's sector of work, or take a more integrated approach to training that enables and encourage volunteers to respond to diverse community needs across different sectors.