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To: Carrie Hessler-Radelet, Director
Keri Lowry, Regional Director, Europe, Mediterranean and Asia Operations
Anne Hughes, Acting Chief Compliance Officer

From: Kathy A. Buller, Inspector General

Date: December 1, 2015

Subject: Final Report on the Program Evaluation of Peace Corps/Nepal
(IG-15-05-E)

Transmitted for your information is our final report on the Program Evaluation of Peace Corps/Nepal.

Management concurred with all 13 recommendations. Twelve recommendations, numbers 1-11 and 13, remain open. Based on the documentation provided, we closed recommendation 12. In its response, management described actions it is taking or intends to take to address the issues that prompted each of our recommendations. We wish to note that in closing recommendations, we are not certifying that the agency has taken these actions or that we have reviewed their effect. Certifying compliance and verifying effectiveness are management's responsibilities. However, when we feel it is warranted, we may conduct a follow-up review to confirm that action has been taken and to evaluate the impact.

OIG will review and consider closing recommendations 2, 4-11 and 13 when the documentation reflected in the OIG's comments and the agency's response to the preliminary report is received. For recommendations 1 and 3, additional documentation is requested so that OIG can review and consider closing them when the documentation is received. Our comments, which are in the report as Appendix E, address these matters. Please respond with documentation to close the remaining open recommendation within 90 days of receipt of this memorandum.

You may address questions regarding follow-up or documentation to Assistant Inspector General for Evaluations Jerry Black at 202.692.2912.

Please accept our thanks for your cooperation and assistance in our review.

cc: Elizabeth Ogunwo, White House Liaison
Rudy Mehrbani, General Counsel
Carlos Torres, Senior Advisor
Ken Yamashita, Acting Associate Director, Global Operations
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PEACE CORPS
Office *of* Inspector General

PC/Nepal Volunteer Aerin Philip (second from right) with host family

Final Program Evaluation Report
Peace Corps/Nepal
IG-15-05-E
December, 2015
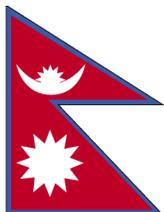
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Almost 4,000 Peace Corps Volunteers have served the people of Nepal since the program began in 1962. The Peace Corps operated continuously in Nepal until 2005 when the post closed for security-related reasons. The agency re-opened its Nepal program in 2012 with partial funding through a five-year agreement with the United States Agency for International Development mission in Nepal (USAID/Nepal).[1] At the time of the evaluation fieldwork there was one project in Nepal, food security. Fifty three actively serving Volunteers were in nine districts in western, mid-western and far-western Nepal and lived with host families for their full 27 months of service. Twenty-six staff were supporting the Volunteers as well as 33 trainees in pre-service training (PST). The post's fiscal year (FY) 2015 operating budget was approximately $1.5 million.[2]

On April 25, 2015, during fieldwork for this evaluation, an earthquake with a magnitude of 7.8 struck central Nepal to the west of Kathmandu. The following day a 6.7 magnitude aftershock struck to the east of Kathmandu. Another large earthquake of magnitude 7.3 struck east of Kathmandu on May 12. The death toll from these earthquakes according to a May 18th report by the United Nations in Nepal had exceeded 8,600 people. After the earthquakes, the Peace Corps removed its trainees and Volunteers from Nepal in early May (sending them back to their homes in the United States) in order to assess Volunteer sites and other conditions, including local medical, communication, and transportation infrastructure. In June the agency invited the trainees and Volunteers back to Nepal and about 85 percent of them returned to Nepal June 22 in order to complete their service.

WHAT WE FOUND

Most Volunteers expressed confidence concerning their ability to be productive at their sites, and that the program had made recent improvements to training. However, the food security project plan was incomplete and did not meet quality standards that had been promulgated through the agency's "focus in/train up"[3] (FITU) strategy. The array of different technical areas in the food security project plan made it difficult for post to deliver sufficient technical training to Volunteers, and difficult for Volunteers to make progress on all the project's goals. Ineffective site development, lack of counterpart support and inadequate training had also impeded Volunteers efforts. The site assessment process did not include a useful gauge by which program

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[1] Reimbursement Agreement between the United States Agency for International Development and The Peace Corps for the Global Health and Food Security in Nepal Program. Award Number: 367-IAA-P-00-12-00001.

[2] This amount does not include the salaries, benefits, and related cost of U.S. direct hires assigned to post and other costs the agency has determined should be centrally-budgeted.

[3] Peace Corps undertook a comprehensive agency assessment which resulted in 2010 in a set of 6 strategies, including what became known as "focus in/train up" (FITU). FITU includes two main strategies outlined in the comprehensive assessment report: "Focus on a more limited number of highly effective technical interventions that will enable the Peace Corps to demonstrate impact and achieve global excellence" [focus-in]; and "Embrace generalist Volunteers, recruit them recognizing the competition for their services, and provide them with training and comprehensive support for success in their project areas and community outreach activities." [train up]

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staff could assess the primary counterpart's interest in or ideas related to collaborating with and supporting a Volunteer.

OIG did not find any significant areas of concern in our review of post's language, safety and security, cultural, and health/medical training. However, technical training did not adequately prepare Volunteers to achieve the goals of the food security project.

Most aspects of Volunteer support in Nepal functioned well, but site visits to the Volunteer did not happen consistently or meet Volunteers' programmatic support needs. The lack of site visits likely resulted in missed opportunities for staff to appreciate the extent to which Volunteers were having difficulty making progress on the goals of the food security project. We also found Volunteer leave policies were overly complex and cumbersome for staff to manage. Some Volunteers had not reported their whereabouts because they did not want their time out of site to be counted against their annual leave or personal time away from site limits.

Some of the challenges we encountered during fieldwork in 2015 were remnants of decisions the agency made in 2012. Peace Corps re-entered Nepal in 2012 without providing staff with sufficient time and resources to carry out important planning activities prior to the arrival of Volunteers; site development and technical training suffered as a result. Contrary to the main programmatic recommendation from its re-entry assessment team, the agency elected to restart the program in the agriculture/food security sector, which, as the team had predicted, resulted in some poorly qualified applicants and exacerbated the challenge of providing sufficient technical training to them. Also, at the time the program was re-starting, the two USAID-supported food security projects (KISAN[4] and Suahaara[5]) with whom Volunteers were supposed to collaborate were just establishing their own field operations in Nepal and so were not prepared to collaborate with Volunteers. Moreover, the Peace Corps failed to locate and provide to the post available documentation, including site history files, training materials, and Volunteer and staff handbooks that had been used in Nepal prior to the post's closing in 2005. Finally, the post lacked sufficient staff with the food security experience needed to provide Volunteers with training and technical support.

RECOMMENDATIONS IN BRIEF
Our report contains thirteen recommendations, which, if implemented, should strengthen post operations and correct the deficiencies detailed in the accompanying report.

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[4] The Knowledge-Based Integrated Sustainable Agriculture and Nutrition (KISAN) project in Nepal is a five-year project of the U.S. Government's Feed the Future initiative managed by USAID/Nepal.
[5] The Suahaara ("good nutrition") project in Nepal is a five-year project of the U.S. Government's Global Health Initiative managed by USAID/Nepal.

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HOST COUNTRY BACKGROUND

Nepal is a landlocked country in southern Asia between China (to the north) and India. The Himalaya Mountains (the Himal), including eight of the 10 highest peaks in the world, span the country's northern border. Southern Nepal, known as the Terai, is low-lying flat farmland. In between the Himal and the Terai is the hill region. The elevation change between the country's lowest and highest points is close to 29,000 feet. Though Nepal is just 150 miles from north to south and 500 miles east to west, its environmental diversity ranges from the rugged, snowy peaks of the Himalayas to hot tropical forests. Environmental insecurity in Nepal is a major problem. Deforestation, water contamination and traffic pollution negatively affect life for Nepalese. Natural disasters are common, including floods, landslides, drought, avalanches and earthquakes.

Figure 1. Nepal's Administrative Boundaries and Ecological Zones
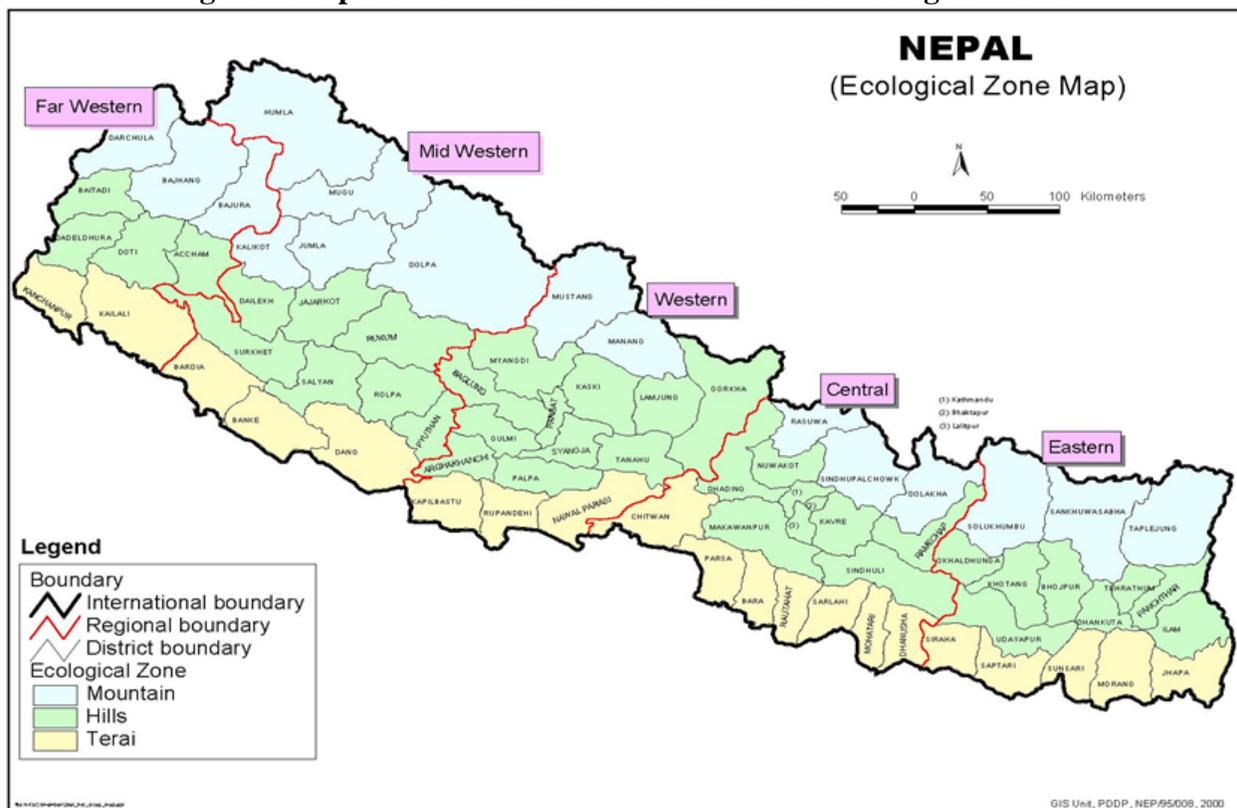
Source: United Nations Nepal Information Platform

About 10 percent of Nepalese are Buddhists. Hinduism is the main religion, practiced by more than eighty percent of Nepalese. Nepal is a culturally diverse nation, with more than 100 distinct castes and ethnic groups. About half the population speaks Nepali, the language taught to Volunteers.

In 1951, the king of Nepal declared Nepal to be a constitutional monarchy and established a cabinet system of government. In 1990, public pressure for more democracy led to democratic reforms and elections. In the mid-1990s, a Maoist insurgency against the monarchy started, and a civil war ensued which claimed more than 12,000 lives over a ten year period. Prince Gyanendra was crowned king of Nepal following a massacre of the royal family in June 2001. In 2002 the king dissolved the cabinet and parliament and assumed all power. In 2006, after public protests, a peace accord was signed with the Maoists, and national elections in 2008 resulted in the monarchy being abolished. Nepal has gone through several different coalition governments since 2008, and has yet to ratify a constitution.

The map above shows the many administrative districts within Nepal, as well as larger regions and zones of the country. Each administrative district (analogous to a state) is subdivided into village development committees (similar to counties) made up of wards or villages.

Nepal is one of the world's poorest countries. Its per capita gross domestic product (GDP) is $1,500, ranking it 205th globally out of 228 countries, and second-to-last in Asia. One-third of the country's GDP comes from agriculture, and 70 percent of Nepalese rely on farming for their livelihoods. Nepal has the highest percentage of people living in poverty, and the most severe income inequality in Asia and the Pacific.

Food insecurity is a serious concern in Nepal: more than 40 percent of children under five in Nepal are stunted,[6] 29 percent are underweight, and 11 percent suffer from acute malnutrition. According to the U.S. government's Feed the Future initiative, "Two out of every three Nepalese suffer from food insecurity [and the]…underlying causes of hunger, poverty and under nutrition in Nepal include low agricultural productivity; limited livelihood opportunities; weak market linkages; inadequate production and consumption of nutritious, locally available foods; poor infrastructure; and inadequate Government of Nepal resources."

PEACE CORPS PROGRAM BACKGROUND

The Peace Corps first entered Nepal in 1962 with Volunteers serving in education and agricultural sectors. The program operated in Nepal for 42 years and almost 4,000 Volunteers served there until 2004 when the agency suspended operations for security reasons, and closed the program in 2005. The agency re-opened its Nepal program in 2012 with partial funding through a five-year agreement with the United States Agency for International Development mission in Nepal (USAID/Nepal).[7] The agreement authorized USAID/Nepal to reimburse Peace Corps up to $10 million over five years for services "in support of USAID/Nepal's programs contributing to the Global Health Initiative and the Feed the Future Initiative." At the time of fieldwork for this evaluation, 26 staff were supporting 53 actively serving Volunteers, and 33

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[6] According to the World Food Programme stunting results from "sustained poor dietary intake or repeated infections or a combination of both. It has severe, irreversible consequences…for physical health…and cognitive functioning, which are intergenerational." Source: (https://www.wfp.org/hunger/glossary)

[7] Reimbursement Agreement between the United States Agency for International Development and the Peace Corps for the Global Health and Food Security in Nepal Program. Award Number: 367-IAA-P-00-12-00001.

trainees were going through PST. The post's FY 2015 operating budget was approximately $1.5 million.[8]

Volunteers in service at the time of fieldwork represented three different training groups. The "199s" were the 199th group of Volunteers to serve in Nepal since 1962 and the first group to re-enter Nepal in 2012. The 199s went through pre-service training in the fall of 2012, and started their service in November 2012. In September 2013 the "200s," the second group to serve Nepal since its re-opening arrived in Nepal for training, and started their service officially in November 2013. The "201s" came in the fall of 2014 for training and began their service in December of 2014. Peace Corps Volunteers were in nine districts in western, mid-western and far-western Nepal: Baglung, Dadeldhura, Dang, Doti, Lamjung, Parbat, Pyuthan, Surkhet and Syangja. Volunteers received training in one language, Nepali, and lived with host families for their full 27 months of service.

Figure 2. Districts of Nepal
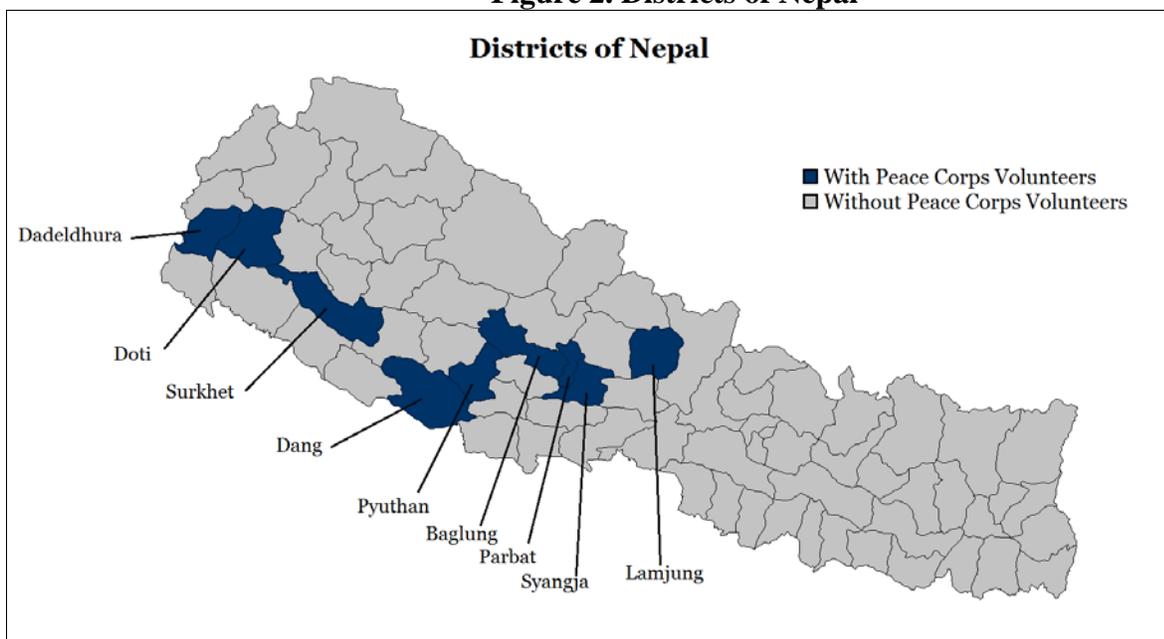
Source: Volunteer Information Database Application.

Peace Corps/Nepal's food security project's stated purpose was to "improve the food security of rural families, including nutrition, especially for the most vulnerable populations in targeted communities in Nepal." The project plan included three general goals with two objectives under each goal, and the types of activities Volunteers would implement with their counterparts to contribute to each objective. The first goal of the project sought to promote behavior change among community members in order to improve nutrition, hygiene, and sanitation. Volunteer activities related to this goal included building hand-washing stations, improved cook stoves, and providing education on exclusive breast feeding. The second goal of the project related to increasing agricultural production of nutritious food. Volunteers sought to encourage more

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[8] This amount does not include the salaries, benefits, and related cost of U.S. direct hires assigned to post and other costs the agency has determined should be centrally-budgeted.

farmers to grow high value and off-season vegetables, to promote soil and water conservation, and to preserve food for year-round availability. The project's third goal concerned reducing community members' vulnerability to food insecurity by promoting networks of community groups and by providing training for various income-generating projects or businesses.

EVALUATION RESULTS

PROGRAMMING

The evaluation assessed the extent to which the post has developed and implemented programs intended to increase the capacity of host country communities to meet their own technical needs. To determine this, we analyzed

- the coordination between the Peace Corps and the host country in determining development priorities and Peace Corps program areas;
- whether post is meeting its project objectives;
- counterpart selection and quality of counterpart relationships with Volunteers;
- site development policies and practices.

The evaluation revealed that Volunteers generally understood and had learned how to contribute at their sites to some of the goals of the food security project in Nepal. Volunteers expressed confidence concerning their ability to be productive at their sites and reported that the program had made recent improvements to training that would benefit future groups.

Due to the earthquakes that struck Nepal at the end of April 2015, fieldwork for the evaluation was interrupted. We were unable to meet with host country government officials to assess coordination between the Peace Corps and the host country. We also were unable to meet with representatives from USAID to obtain that agency's perspective concerning Peace Corps' performance in the food security project.

Volunteers' Understanding of Project Goals. Volunteers understood most of the goals and objectives in the food security project. Just two of 18 Volunteers felt they had a poor understanding of the project goals as written.[9] However, the complexity of goals and objectives in the food security project plan, which is presented below as an issue requiring management attention, made it difficult for Volunteers to comprehend and articulate everything the project intended to accomplish.

Volunteers' Ability to Contribute to Some Food Security Project Goals. Volunteers reported that they felt more confident than they had initially in their ability to achieve some of the food security project goals. Interviewed Volunteers expressed that they had enough work to do, and

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[9] Volunteer interviews were conducted using a standardized interview questionnaire, and Volunteers were asked to rate many items on a five-point scale (1 = not effective, 3 = neutral, 5 = very effective)." The percentage of Volunteers who gave a favorable rating includes those who gave ratings of "4" or "5."

most believed that they could achieve project goals. Of Volunteers interviewed, 14 of 18 (78 percent) believed they could contribute to the food security project goals "well" or "very well," and 12 of 18 Volunteers (67 percent) felt that they had enough work to do at their sites either "most of the time" or "always". These generally favorable responses contrasted with survey results obtained from Volunteers through the 2013 and 2014 Peace Corps' Annual Volunteer Surveys (AVSs). In the 2014 AVS, just 34 percent of Volunteers felt that they had enough work at their sites, and less than half of Volunteers (44 percent) believed they were effective in transferring skills to counterparts or other community members.

Additionally, Volunteers from the first two re-entry groups (the 199s and 200s) rated their ability to achieve food security project goals more favorably (average 4.3 out of 5) than did interviewed Volunteers from the most recent group, the 201s (average 3.5 out of 5) who had been at their sites for only four months when we interviewed them. The 199 and 200 Volunteers reported in April of 2015 that they could achieve the food security goals because they had learned through many months of trial and error at their sites.

Small grant activities. The small grants process at the post seemed to be well managed. Staff reviewed proposed grant-funded activities to ensure alignment with the food security project goals. Several interviewed Volunteers were in the process of planning a grant-funded project to provide youth life skills and leadership development opportunities through camps for girls and boys.

The evaluation uncovered some areas that require management attention. Volunteers continued to experience difficulties achieving the food security project goals due to several factors including: lack of focus in the food security project framework; ineffective technical training; ineffective site development; and lack of counterpart support. The remainder of this section consists of our findings and recommendations regarding these topics.

The food security project plan was incomplete and did not meet quality standards that had been promulgated through the agency's FITU strategy.

According to the agency's Characteristics and Strategies of a High Performing Post: Post Management Resource Guide (April 2010), written project plans should exist and be in line with current agency guidance related to programming and training.

> **6.3.** Project plans exist, are based on actual conditions, are updated when necessary, and have meaning to the various participants (i.e., Peace Corps, host government, partner agency, Volunteer, and counterpart). The participants have direct input into the development and monitoring of the plans.

According to the Peace Corps' Office of Programming and Training Support's June 2013 "Project Framework Toolkit," developed to assist program managers in designing effective and focused project frameworks, a focused project should meet several criteria, including, "Has a project framework that draws from only one or two Sector Schematics…."

The food security project plan was still in draft form at the time of our fieldwork, which was more than three years after the Nepal program re-started. The food security project framework in the draft plan drew from three of the agency's sectors: agriculture, health, and community

economic development. In addition to addressing an overly broad array of development sectors, the food security project sought to have Volunteers work in too many project areas within the sectors. The Peace Corps' project design guidance for the agriculture, health and community economic development sectors included 10 potential project areas, any one of which could be the focus of a particular project.[10] Of the 10 possible project areas across the three sectors, the food security project in Nepal addressed seven. The agency's project design guidance cautioned post to focus their projects in a limited number of project areas and not to attempt to work in all the project areas that make up a sector. With respect specifically to project design considerations in Nepal during its re-start process, agency officials explained that FITU guidance was not applicable to Nepal during the re-entry process because FITU guidance was developed for established posts, not those going through a start-up or re-starting process. Agency officials as well as staff in Nepal acknowledged that after more than three years of operations since re-entry it was important to re-focus the food security project goals and objectives based on the agency's programming guidance, and drawing on lessons learned in Nepal since 2012.

The assortment of different project areas in the post's food security project goals and objectives made it difficult for post to deliver sufficient technical training to Volunteers, and for Volunteers to accomplish the food security project objectives. Many Volunteers spent several months at the start of their service trying to identify food security-related activities that they could undertake. Their situation was made more challenging in 2012 and 2013 due to the lack of readiness of two USAID/Nepal projects (KISAN and Suahaara) with whom Volunteers were supposed to collaborate. The 2013 and 2014 AVS was administered to Volunteers when most were still struggling to identify viable activities. The results of these surveys reflected Volunteers' frustrations and their perceived inability at the time to contribute to the food security project objectives.

In addition, the food security project in Nepal did not meet other criteria for a focused project, including:
- Has a significant number of Volunteers reporting on all project goals and objectives
- Is one in which Volunteers report being prepared to carry out project activities and report effectiveness in transferring knowledge and skills to help build partner capacity
- Has a 27-month training continuum—and a single technical training track—that meets the needs of all [Volunteers] in the project
- Can be explained easily to others by post staff, Volunteers, and other stakeholders

Project status reports from 2014 indicated that most Volunteers in Nepal did not report on all project goals and objectives. In fact, many of the project's objectives included results for the year reported by fewer than five Volunteers. Results from the 2014 AVS indicated that less than half of the Volunteers (44 percent) believed they had been effective in transferring knowledge and skills to build partner capacity. Volunteers we interviewed did not believe that the food security project's goals were easy to explain in Nepali, especially the phrase "food security." And the training program in Nepal did not have a technical training track that met the needs of all

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[10] The agency's sector schematic for agriculture comprised three project areas: nutrition, food production and agribusiness. The health sector schematic included four project areas: HIV mitigation, maternal/child health, environmental health, and life skills for healthy behaviors. The sector schematic for community economic development included three project areas: organizational development, business development and personal money management.

Volunteers, especially those Volunteers placed at health posts. A further discussion of technical training can be found in the "Training" section of this report.

In addition, the complexity of project goals made it difficult for Volunteers to comprehend them all and led to Volunteers' having an incomplete understanding of the food security project goals. Some Volunteers knew that the project included a goal to reduce the risk of food insecurity by helping community members to increase their agriculture-related income. However, half the Volunteers did not convey an understanding that part of this goal was to strengthen the capacities of local organizations in agriculture/food security (businesses, groups, associations, non-governmental organizations, etc.).

In order to better prepare Volunteers to contribute more effectively to project goals throughout their service in Nepal, the post should refocus the goals and objectives in the food security project plan.

> **We recommend:**
>
> 1. **That the director of programming and training work with staff, Volunteers and project partners to re-focus the food security project framework (its purpose, goals, objectives, activities and indicators) and related training for Volunteers, drawing on agency specialists and Focus In/Train Up guidance as needed.**

Ineffective site development, lack of counterpart support and inadequate training impeded Volunteers' ability to contribute to the food security project goals.

While most Volunteers we interviewed believed that they could achieve the goals of the food security project and had enough work to do, it is important to distinguish between the availability of sufficient work for Volunteers to address various needs for development assistance in their communities, versus the availability of sufficient work in support of the food security project's stated goals at a Volunteer's assigned work site. Volunteers had no or very little work available to them at the health post or the agricultural service center to which the Peace Corps had assigned them. The lack of work at the Volunteer's primary work site resulted from an ineffective site and counterpart selection and development process. Only eight of 17 interviewed Volunteers reported that their primary counterparts supported them in meeting their project objectives. Volunteer comments about their primary work sites were mostly negative:

> But there is not anything I can do at the health post. There's nothing to do there, so I told them I was going to work somewhere else around town.
>
> I don't know why they select a counterpart who is only in the office one day a week and really doesn't do anything.
>
> I don't work with my government-assigned counterpart. The government assigned counterpart is just that--assigned to you and not something the counterpart has asked for.

> I don't really know [if the counterpart asked for a Volunteer]. He doesn't seem to want one. I am not sure how he was selected. There's zero plan for me.

> When I got here they said they wanted an agriculture Volunteer, but Peace Corps put a health Volunteer here instead. From the beginning it seemed like a forced relationship. The relationship fizzled.

> He's [the counterpart] working on his own. I think he does not have time for me. I don't know why they chose him.

Most Volunteers we interviewed eventually decided not to work at their primary site and instead had found other ways to serve their communities and host families. Interviewed Volunteers had initiated a wide range of activities at their sites; for example addressing attitudes in their communities toward individuals with mental health issues; providing education on women's reproductive health; forming youth health counselors. Because the food security project's goals were broad Volunteers believed that the work they had crafted for themselves supported the project's health or agriculture goals. However, some Volunteers spent many months struggling to figure out how to be productive and carry out food-security related activities. Volunteers who felt unable to achieve project goals at their site may have elected to leave their sites too frequently.

> I have more trust and contacts now. Nine months ago it would have been a two or a three [ability to achieve project objectives]. Things are starting to pick up now (a Volunteer referring to his 17th month of service in Nepal).

> I feel like I just roam around trying to find something to do and find traction…Look, if you have a good plan and work at site you're going to want to be there—that's just basic management 101. If you are happy and doing work at your site, you will not slack off and go to Pokhara [a city popular with tourists and trekkers] every weekend.

The site selection process in Nepal was complex. According to the programming staff, the Peace Corps had to place Volunteers with local government workers at either health posts or agricultural service centers, because that is what officials in the Ministries of Health and Agriculture had requested. Also, the requirements that Volunteers live with a Nepali host family in a house within a certain walking distance of the Volunteer's official, assigned work site (the local health post or agricultural service center) were cited as factors that limited the options post had for Volunteer site selection. The post's site assessment form included a simple checkbox related to whether or not "a suitable counterpart who is receptive to working with the PCV" was available at the site. The site assessment process as a result did not include a useful assessment by program staff of the primary counterpart's actual interest in or ideas related to collaborating with and supporting a Volunteer. In addition, for the 199 and 200 Volunteers in 2012 and 2013, the fact that both of USAID/Nepal's food security projects (KISAN and Suahaara) were still in their start-up phases resulted in fewer opportunities for Volunteers to collaborate with them and support food security activities at their sites.

The post acknowledged that the site selection process needed improvement to incorporate an assessment of the programmatic needs of each site and the actual demand among potential counterparts for a Volunteer.

We recommend:

2. **That the director of programming and training and program manager for food security improve the site selection and development process so that programmatic site selection criteria are clarified and staff knows how to identify and document the characteristics of a potential site according to the selection criteria.**

3. **That the director of programming and training and program manager for food security improve the site selection and development process to include more opportunity for staff and/or Volunteer leaders to assess the availability and interest of both primary counterparts as well as community-based counterparts in collaborating with the Volunteer in support of project goals.**

4. **That the director of programming and training and program manager for food security improve the site selection and development process so that sites that meet the post's programmatic selection criteria are presented for approval to host government officials, and sites that do not meet the post's selection criteria are not presented as options for Volunteer placement.**

5. **That the director of programming and training, program manager for food security, and the safety and security manager review the criteria for host family selection and determine if additional flexibility can be applied to the host family location and its distance from the Volunteer's assigned work site (local health post or agriculture office).**

TRAINING

Another objective of the post evaluation is to answer the question, "Does training prepare Volunteers for Peace Corps service?" To answer this question we considered such factors as training adequacy and planning and development of the training life cycle.

In reviewing language training, safety and security training, cultural training, and health/medical training we found no significant areas of concern that would necessitate action by the post.

Language Training. Language testing scores indicated that Volunteers had achieved the post's Nepali proficiency requirement in PST. Most interviewed Volunteers (67 percent) rated their language training as having been effective. Six Volunteers gave unfavorable or neutral ratings for the effectiveness of the language training. However, these Volunteers noted that staff had responded to suggestions for improving language training such as providing more instruction in Nepali script and grammar in addition to the focus on conversational skills.

Safety and Security Training. Volunteers gave mostly favorable ratings for the effectiveness of training on safety and security. No Volunteers said safety and security training was ineffective.

Six Volunteers rated safety training neutrally to express their view that too much time was spent on safety and security training and rules. Volunteers also said that the scripted, standardized sessions concerning sexual assault prevention were boring. However, a common sentiment Volunteers expressed related to safety and security training was one of appreciation:

> I thought, oh this is not going to happen. And then after two weeks every security thing happened. So they were important and pretty helpful.

> I know who to call and what [to do] in different scenarios. I feel prepared for an emergency. [A Volunteer interviewed on April 24th, day before a major earthquake struck].

Cultural Training. The effectiveness of cultural training was rated somewhat favorably. Volunteers either said cultural training was effective or felt neutrally about it. Just one of 18 Volunteers we interviewed reported that cultural training had been ineffective. Several Volunteers pointed out that cultural training should provide opportunities for a more candid discussion of the caste system and the challenges associated with working within it. Volunteers also believed that the cultural training sessions presented too little information about the diversity of attitudes and behaviors Volunteers encountered in their host families or communities. We are not making a recommendation related to improving cultural training in Nepal because the neutral ratings and comments from Volunteers did not reveal a negative effect on their service. The post may wish to explore ways to improve the effectiveness of training sessions designed to cover Nepal's diverse culture and traditions, and integrate information about the caste system in other training sessions such as behavior change and other technical training sessions.

Health Training. Health training sessions included information concerning common Volunteer health issues in Nepal, such as gastrointestinal illness, along with information about preventive steps Volunteers should take while living in Nepal. Ten Volunteers rated the health training favorably, while six thought the training was neither effective nor ineffective. Volunteers commented that the health training sessions covered common sense prevention strategies.

Table 1. Effectiveness of Training as Rated by Interviewed Volunteers
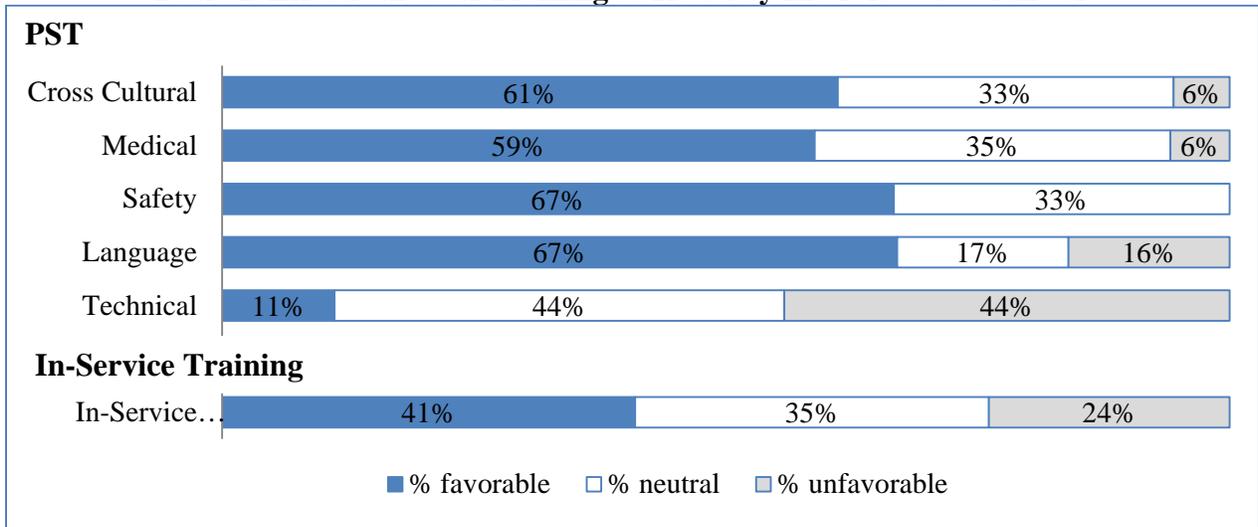
Source: 18 Volunteers interviewed by OIG evaluator.

The evaluation uncovered some areas that require management attention, particularly technical training. Technical training, as noted above in the discussion of the unfocused food security project framework, did not adequately prepare Volunteers to achieve the goals of the food security project. The remainder of this section consists of our finding and recommendations regarding the adequacy of technical training.

Technical training did not adequately prepare Volunteers to achieve the goals of the food security project.

The Peace Corps Manual section (MS) 201 "Eligibility and Standards for Peace Corps Volunteer Service" states that a trainee must demonstrate "proficiency in the technical skills needed to carry out the assignment" in order to be qualified for service.

Also, the Peace Corps' Programming and Training Guidance (E.4. The Task Analysis) describes the important analytic work of identifying the specific knowledge, skills and attitudes Volunteers must possess in order to achieve particular project goals, "the task analysis is a major link between programming and training and is necessary for determining Volunteer learning needs and designing training."

Volunteers rated the effectiveness of technical training very low (11 percent favorable), and complained that the focus of technical training was too broad, and training on health related objectives of the project was insufficient:

> You didn't get enough practice really to have it sink in, and get good at something…It was good to have an exposure to a broad range of things but it came from a lot of different places and people. They need to simplify things I think. A lot was ag-based. Not a lot of health training.

> There were so many different things. Let's see: off season vegetable training; small system irrigation; improved cook stoves; super flour[11]; food preservation--random stuff like that. Goat breeding, which was ridiculous. The trainer talked about different breeds of goats for an hour. They still are just trying to build up the program so I don't want to knock it down too much. But my point is the behavior change piece is totally missing from our training.

> I just think the major criticism would be more health information. What are we supposed to be teaching?

> What do you want health Volunteers to do here? I don't think that's clear. There are health objectives that we have but no trainings on it.

The Volunteers we interviewed nonetheless believed that the effectiveness of agriculture-related technical training had improved for the last two groups of Volunteers (group 201 and 202) who arrived in Nepal in September 2014 and February 2015. Volunteers in the 201 training group rated the effectiveness of their technical training neutrally (average 3 out of 5). Volunteers from the 199 and 200 groups rated their technical training very unfavorably (average 1.8 out of 5).

There were several reasons why technical training in Nepal was insufficient. As mentioned above, the assortment of technical areas in the food security project (behavior change related to nutrition, hygiene and sanitation, agricultural productivity, income generation, community economic development) created a difficult training challenge for staff at post. In addition, the post lacked in-house staff expertise in the technical areas encompassed by the food security goals, and had had to rely upon Volunteers in service and outside trainers to provide technical training sessions for Volunteers. Volunteers were as a result exposed to a broad mix of technical training topics and ideas but received limited time on most topics. For example, the health goal of the project calls for Volunteers to carry out behavior change campaigns in their communities related to nutrition as well as hygiene and sanitation, yet pre-service training did not prepare Volunteers with training in how to promote behavior change. In addition, staff pointed out that the challenge of providing sufficient technical training in food security was exacerbated by the disparate skill level and experiences of trainees, some of whom "had literally never used a shovel and had no idea how to dig a hole." This challenge was predicted in 2011 when the agency's re-entry assessment advised the Peace Corps not to re-start the Nepal program with a focus in food security/agriculture because it "may be difficult for PC [the Peace Corps] to recruit/train sufficiently skilled PCVs [Peace Corps Volunteers] for many of these positions."

Also, in re-starting the program in Nepal staff lacked enough time to carry out a full "task analysis," a critical step in designing technical training based on the specific knowledge, skills and attitudes Volunteers would need to work effectively toward the written project objectives. As a result, technical training included a hodgepodge of loosely related sessions and did not sufficiently equip Volunteers with key skills to achieve project goals. In order to continue to improve the quality and effectiveness of technical training for food security Volunteers in Nepal, it will be necessary to refocus the goals and objectives in the food security project plan, as recommended above. In addition, improvements to technical training sessions should be based on a robust task analysis of the refocused framework.

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[11] Super flour refers to a type of nutritious high protein flour to prevent infant malnutrition.

We recommend:

6. **That the director of programming and training, program manager, and training manager ensure that the training program is redesigned based on agency programming and training guidance, including a task analysis and training design and evaluation process.**

7. **That the director of programming and training and the training manager ensure that Volunteers receive sufficient training related to behavior change and that Volunteers know how to initiate activities at their sites with community support and participation.**

VOLUNTEER SUPPORT

Our country program evaluation attempts to answer the question, "Has post provided adequate support and oversight to Volunteers?" To determine this, we assessed numerous factors, including staff-Volunteer communications; project and status report feedback; medical support; safety and security support including staff visits to Volunteer work sites, the Emergency Action Plan (EAP), and the handling of crime incidents; and the adequacy of the Volunteer living allowance.

We reviewed the following areas of support for Volunteers, including: the Volunteer Advisory Committee (VAC); the selection of host families and volunteer housing; medical support; administrative support; the Volunteer living allowance; safety and security awareness including of the EAP; crime reporting; the accuracy of Volunteer site locator forms; and feedback on Volunteer report forms (VRFs). Overall most aspects of Volunteer support in Nepal functioned well and we found no significant areas of concern that would necessitate action by the post.

Overall staff support. Volunteers expressed a high regard for and appreciation of staff. Many Volunteers described actions the country director and director of programming and training as well as others staff had taken to establish trust and mend previously strained relations between Volunteers and post leadership.

Volunteer Advisory Committee. Volunteers and staff both expressed that the VAC functioned well. Interviewed VAC members noted that the country director and director of programming and training listened well to Volunteers, were receptive to and had acted upon Volunteer suggestions presented at VAC meetings. Interviewed Volunteers also expressed that their representatives on the VAC took their responsibility seriously, communicated well with Volunteers prior to and following meetings with staff, and filtered out individual Volunteer concerns or complaints that did not apply to all Volunteers. As one VAC member put it: "We've got a lot on our agenda crossed off and done with."

Selection of Host Families. Fifteen of 18 Volunteers rated their host family experience favorably. Seven Volunteers rated their host family experience as being excellent (5 out of 5).

Post had developed, and staff involved in host family identification and selection adhered to, a set of selection criteria for host families. In addition, staff used a host family orientation manual to provide host families with consistent information about Peace Corps, including who Volunteers are, the training they have received, the projects they will be working on, the purpose of the host family stay, the role of the Volunteer within the family, and cultural differences and behaviors they might observe in their Volunteer. The orientation sought to clarify expectations concerning meals and nutrition, and outlined some possible challenges the family and Volunteer might face in adjusting to living together. It also addressed health and safety issues and provided host family members with clear instructions on what to do if they had any concerns about the Volunteer's well-being or community integration.

Volunteer Housing. Volunteer housing we inspected conformed to the post's housing standards. Field staff involved in identifying housing and host families had clearly been careful to select and approve housing according to the post's written criteria.

Medical Support. Volunteers gave favorable ratings and made very specific comments regarding improvements they had noticed in the quality of medical care and attentiveness of the post's medical staff. This represented another area of improvement compared to very low ratings Volunteers had given in the 2013 and 2014 AVS concerning their satisfaction with the quality of medical care from post's medical staff.

Administrative Support. Volunteers had a high regard for the quality of administrative support post provided and commented that the director of management and operations was helpful and a good communicator. As one Volunteer noted:

> You know that he knows his stuff--our requirements and guidelines. If he doesn't know he follows up really quick. He again was a huge support during my emergency leave. He worked the weekend to help me get home quickly. He made and implemented some good changes to our leave and allowances that were needed, and they were good and fair changes. He always has time for you, participates in our trainings and is real involved in grants committees.

Allowances. Settling in and living allowances were sufficient, according to almost all interviewed Volunteers: 94 percent rated their settling-in allowance as sufficient; 89 percent rated the monthly living allowance as sufficient. Post had conducted living and settling in allowance surveys as required.

Safety and Security Awareness. All interviewed Volunteers had a copy of the post's EAP and were able to state where they would go in an emergency (typically another Volunteer's house). The level of awareness among Volunteers of the post's EAP was likely high because the safety and security manager had recently updated the EAP (February 2015) and provided it to Volunteers, pursuant to recommendations from the agency's regionally-based safety and security officer, who had visited Nepal as part of the re-entry assessment process in 2011 and subsequently to provide oversight of the post's safety and security program. During fieldwork a major earthquake struck Nepal and all Volunteers did consolidate according to the post's EAP.

Crime Reporting. No interviewed Volunteer had experienced a serious crime, though some had been the victim of petty thefts they had not reported to Peace Corps. Volunteers who did report a

crime to post rated the quality of the response from post staff highly. Volunteers expressed confidence in the safety and security manager and other post staff, and were sure that they would report more serious crimes against them.

Site Locator Forms. Twelve of 15 site locator forms we tested had accurate directions and maps to Volunteers' residences. However, 13 out of 15 site locator forms lacked signatures from the safety and security manager or others to indicate that staff had reviewed the forms for accuracy and completeness. The agency had recently shifted to a new Volunteer site locator form and it was unclear at the time of fieldwork whether and how the new form would work in Nepal.

Feedback on Volunteer Reports. Volunteers from groups 199 and 200 who had submitted VRFs indicated that staff had reviewed and responded to them. Volunteers also stated that the quality of feedback from staff had been useful.

Perceptions about Safety: Transportation Risks. Volunteers expressed that they felt safe in Nepal, except when travelling on buses. The risk of a traffic accident in Nepal is high. Public buses crash frequently and Volunteers ride buses frequently. The main transportation-related risk for Volunteers in Nepal was reported to be getting from a main road to their site on a public bus or other vehicle. Post staff did not appear satisfied with the range of options available to them to minimize Volunteers' exposure to traffic accidents. The post was looking for ways to address transportation risks, including encouraging Volunteers to walk as much as possible when covering short distances from their sites to a main road.

Most types of Volunteer support in Nepal functioned well. However, the evaluation uncovered some areas of Volunteer support that require management attention, particularly site visits and Volunteer time away from site policies. The remainder of this section consists of our findings and recommendations about these topics.

Site visits to the Volunteer did not happen consistently or meet Volunteers' programmatic support needs.

According to Characteristics and Strategies of a High Performing Post, "4.13. Peace Corps programming staff make regular site visits, and other country staff—senior as well as support staff—make periodic site visits to Volunteers in the field." Additional guidance from Characteristics concerning the purpose and quality of site visits includes, "On official visits…staff should have clear goals, including carrying out the proper host-supervisor notification, protocol and follow-up, learning, and rendering service to the Volunteer." Among the Volunteers interviewed, few mentioned having had a site visit by the program manager. Other staff were engaged in site visits to Volunteers, but the purpose and usefulness of the site visits was unclear. Of the 16 Volunteers who had received a site visit from staff, just four remarked that the visit had been helpful in terms of meeting their support needs at the time (25 percent favorable rating). Most were neutral about their site visit, saying it had been neither helpful nor unhelpful.

> It was nice to have visitors but the visit did not really do anything.

> It did not seem to have a purpose or structure to me.

It was very unstructured, even the one I had in the first 3 months…I felt like it was very soon. I was still in the honeymoon period at that point with the site/family. I would have had a better handle on the…program issues I was up against [later]. Four to Five months would be better.

The lack of site visits by the program manager, as well as the lack of structure for site visits that did occur, likely resulted in missed opportunities for staff to appreciate the extent to which some Volunteers were having difficulty making progress on the goals of the food security project. It also likely resulted in missed opportunities to address directly other challenges or issues Volunteers were having at their primary work sites, including the lack of counterpart support.

We recommend:

8. **That the director of programming and training ensure that program staff conduct site visits with a clear purpose and structure, and that site visits are designed and timed to address Volunteers' support needs.**

Volunteer leave policies were complex, ineffective, and cumbersome for staff to manage.

Peace Corps MS 220 3.1 "Time Away from Community" acknowledges that Volunteers will need to be away from their communities on occasion to tend to personal needs. The agency's policy simply states that "such breaks should be taken infrequently and must not be abused."

The Office of Safety and Security's standard operating procedure for field staff on how to implement a whereabouts notification policy requires that a whereabouts notification system be in place solely for the purpose of contacting and finding Volunteers in an emergency, and may not be used as a way to keep track of leave balances, or as an indicator of a Volunteer's work performance.

The post's Volunteer Handbook informs Volunteers about the whereabouts notification requirements for Volunteers in Nepal:

> **Volunteers are required to inform the Peace Corps Office any time they will not be spending the night at their homestay** (i.e., when your head is not in your bed)…. The purpose of this policy is to be able to locate Volunteers in case of emergency (either in country or in America), civil unrest, and natural disaster or security issues. **Program staff will not use it to monitor your performance or your vacation days**. This requirement deals with safety and security only.

The post's whereabouts notification policy clarifies how Volunteers should report their whereabouts, and requires Volunteers to indicate the type of leave they are using each time they leave their community for the night:

> PCVs are required to inform PC/Nepal the day of their departure and also once they return to site. To notify PC/Nepal of your whereabouts, you must either:
>
> 1. Send an SMS text… Keep the message simple, short and clear. Information required:
>   i.   Your name
>   ii. Date and time that you leave your community
>   iii. Date when you will return back

      iv.   Accommodation
       v.   Type of Leave, e.g., AL
           a.   Leave Types include the following:
                i. PTAC: Personal Time Away from Community
               ii. PRT: Project Related Travel
             iii. OL: Official Leave
             iv. AL: Annual Leave
              v. ML: Medical Leave
   2.   You may ALSO call… to notify the Duty Officer of the whereabouts information noted above.

Post allowed Volunteers to take up to 4 days per month for personal time away from their community (PTAC), since the official Nepali work week is 6 days, with Saturday as a day off. Volunteers could use, and staff had to keep track of, two distinct types of PTAC (one specifically for time in Kathmandu), along with other allowable leave type balances. Post had defined a category of leave to allow Volunteers to travel for work purposes ("project-related travel"). As a result, the leave policies in Nepal were complex and cumbersome for staff to monitor and administer. Post staff who monitored Volunteer leave balances estimated that they spent more than 20 percent of their time tracking Volunteer leave balances. One staff member stated: "There are so many functions and different kinds of leave. It is really tough. It's at least 20 percent of my time for sure. Sometimes more."

Also, some staff expressed alarm at the amount of time Volunteers could be away from their sites if they were to utilize all available leave categories--up to 174 days out of the year. One unique factor contributing to the amount of leave Volunteers could take was the high number of official holidays in Nepal, which can be 50 in the year. Yet as generous as the post's personal time away from site policies appeared, several interviewed Volunteers (28 percent) reported they had not reported their whereabouts to post in order to preserve the number of days they were allowed to be away from their communities.

> If I have already used up my personal days I would not report it [whereabouts].
>
> Telling us the activities I can't do on my personal time—it doesn't make sense and makes people disobey the whereabouts policy.
>
> I don't want to use personal days for staying with a Volunteer or going to [X city]. I think Peace Corps wants us to tell them what kind of leave I'm taking. Whereabouts includes where I'm going and what kind of leave I'm taking.
>
> In case I needed the personal days if something came up [Volunteer explaining reason for not reporting whereabouts to staff].

The post's leave policies most likely did not change or affect Volunteers' decisions concerning the amount of time they spent away from their communities. However the requirement to include the type of leave being taken in every whereabouts notification had weakened the value of the whereabouts notification system. When Volunteers do not report their whereabouts to staff it increases the risk that post will not be able to efficiently contact and locate Volunteers in an emergency.

Volunteers we interviewed maintained that their whereabouts reporting would improve if the post simplified its time away from site policies and stressed that whereabouts reporting was an emergency preparedness requirement:

> If you treat adults like they are not adults you are going to have problems. If you don't feel trusted or treated as adults, and don't have a plan at site, you are going to want to leave more, make more unsafe choices, and you're probably not going to tell PC [Peace Corps] where you are…So, if they did say to us, just make safe decisions and let us know where you are, I'd do that. That would be a much better approach.

> It would be awesome if we were simply trusted to do our jobs and did not have to worry about all these leave rules, yes.

We recommend:

9. That the country director simplify or remove the post's personal time away from site policy and stress with Volunteers the importance of being in service to their communities, and the importance of reporting their whereabouts to the Peace Corps.

10. That the country director clarify the post's process for determining that a Volunteer has been spending too much time away from his/her community, and what sort of corrective actions posts will take with Volunteers who have abused the principle of taking infrequent breaks from their community.

11. That the country director and safety and security manager ensure that the post's whereabouts notification system is de-linked from its system for tracking leave balances, and is not used to monitor a Volunteer's leave balance or as an indicator of a Volunteer's performance at his or her site.

MANAGEMENT CONTROLS

Another key objective of our country program evaluation is to assess the extent to which the post's resources and management practices are adequate for effective post operations. To address this question, we assess a number of factors, including staffing; staff development; office work environment; collecting and reporting performance data; and the post's strategic planning and budgeting.

Due to the earthquake that struck Nepal in the middle of our fieldwork, we were unable to collect sufficient information to answer some of our standard evaluative questions related to management practices. In particular, we were unable to review performance appraisals, though the post staff had prepared a set of files for our review. We were also unable to assess the extent to which staff was provided sufficient opportunities for professional development, though staff in Nepal did not complain about the lack of such opportunity during interviews. Additionally we were unable to conduct a full review of file management and organization, including site history files. In reviewing post's relationship with the U.S. Embassy, we had no concerns that would necessitate action by the post.

Communication between the Post and Headquarters. At times during fieldwork it appeared to us that headquarters and the post were not communicating clearly or making decisions based on a common understanding of what steps to take to improve the future of the program in Nepal. Toward the end of fieldwork and as this report was being developed, communication between the post and headquarters seemed to have improved, and as a result an action plan was being created to address some of the challenges presented in this report.

The evaluation uncovered some areas that require management attention, particularly the sufficiency of staff resources to provide technical training and support to the food security project, as well as the agency's guidance related to country re-entries. The remainder of this section consists of our findings and recommendations about these topics.

The post lacked sufficient staff with the experience needed to provide Volunteers with training and technical support related to food security.

The post had hired one program manager with a background in natural resources management to manage the food security project. At the time of fieldwork, the food security program manager was responsible for 53 Volunteers and over 30 trainees in PST. The post had plans to hire an additional staff person to provide food security-related training for Volunteers and provide technical support to Volunteers in service. At of the time of our fieldwork, though, the post lacked enough food security expertise on staff to ensure Volunteers received effective technical training and support. Because post staff lacked in-house food security expertise, it had relied on Volunteers and outside trainers to provide various technical training sessions, an approach which had yielded ineffective technical training (as presented above). Volunteers generally did not perceive staff to be sources of technical support for questions or challenges they were facing in carrying out food security activities at their sites.

> **We recommend:**
>
> **12. That the country director hire staff with sufficient experience in food security (agriculture and health) to support Volunteers with improved technical training and support.**

When re-starting the Nepal program, the Peace Corps did not provide the post with potentially relevant and available documentation, including site history files and training materials that had been developed previously by Nepal staff.

The post originally opened in 1962. Nearly 4,000 Volunteers served in the country from 1962 to 2005. Yet the post did not have at its disposal potentially useful training materials and other documentation that had been shipped back to Peace Corps headquarters when the program closed in 2005.These post materials included a range of documents such as training handbooks for projects that had been active prior to 2005, including health education, community development, water/sanitation, and other projects. Other available documentation included site history files organized by geographic district, including the districts where Volunteers were placed when the

program re-started in 2012: Baglung, Dadeldhura, Doti, Parbat, Pyuthan, Surkhet and Syangia. Field staff we interviewed believed that these files had been lost or destroyed and were surprised and disappointed to learn that the materials were in boxes at a National Archives document warehouse in Maryland.

The agency did not appear to have a reliable process to ensure that such documentation was reviewed for relevance and made available to the field staff tasked with re-opening a post that had been suspended or closed. The agency's new country entry guide, which would have guided the re-entry process for the post, did not include in its checklist of steps any guidance or instruction to obtain, review and return to post the agency's documents and materials that had been used to support and train Volunteers there in the past. As a result, field staff was unable to take advantage of potentially useful technical and other materials that had been used to train Volunteers in Nepal until 2005. Further, field staff was unable to review site history files that could have included important safety and security information related to sites in the districts where Volunteers have been placed since 2012. Though the Peace Corps operated in Nepal for more than 40 years, staff charged with re-opening the post in 2012 reported that they "had to essentially start from scratch."

We recommend:

13. That associate director for Global Operations develop guidance related to country re-entries that includes steps to review and return to the post relevant documentation and training materials that could assist field staff carrying out the re-entry process and include it in the new country entry guide.

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

WE RECOMMEND:

1. That the director of programming and training work with staff, Volunteers and project partners to re-focus the food security project framework (its purpose, goals, objectives, activities and indicators) and related training for Volunteers, drawing on agency specialists and Focus In/Train Up guidance as needed.

2. That the director of programming and training and program manager for food security improve the site selection and development process so that programmatic site selection criteria are clarified and staff knows how to identify and document the characteristics of a potential site according to the selection criteria.

3. That the director of programming and training and program manager for food security improve the site selection and development process to include more opportunity for staff and/or Volunteer leaders to assess the availability and interest of both primary counterparts as well as community-based counterparts in collaborating with the Volunteer in support of project goals.

4. That the director of programming and training and program manager for food security improve the site selection and development process so that sites that meet the post's programmatic selection criteria are presented for approval to host government officials, and sites that do not meet the post's selection criteria are not presented as options for Volunteer placement.

5. That the director of programming and training, program manager for food security, and the safety and security manager review the criteria for host family selection and determine if additional flexibility can be applied to the host family location and its distance from the Volunteer's assigned work site (local health post or agriculture office).

6. That the director of programming and training, program manager, and training manager ensure that the training program is redesigned based on agency programming and training guidance, including a task analysis and training design and evaluation process.

7. That the director of programming and training and the training manager ensure that Volunteers receive sufficient training related to behavior change and that Volunteers know how to initiate activities at their sites with community support and participation.

8. That the director of programming and training ensure that program staff conduct site visits with a clear purpose and structure, and that site visits are designed and timed to address Volunteers' support needs.

9. That the country director simplify or remove the post's personal time away from site policy and stress with Volunteers the importance of being in service to their communities, and the importance of reporting their whereabouts to the Peace Corps.

10. That the country director clarify the post's process for determining that a Volunteer has been spending too much time away from his/her community, and what sort of corrective actions posts will take with Volunteers who have abused the principle of taking infrequent breaks from their community.

11. That the country director and safety and security manager ensure that the post's whereabouts notification system is de-linked from its system for tracking leave balances, and is not used to monitor a Volunteer's leave balance or as an indicator of a Volunteer's performance at his or her site.

12. That the country director hire staff with sufficient experience in food security (agriculture and health) to support Volunteers with improved technical training and support.

13. That associate director for Global Operations develop guidance related to country re-entries that includes steps to review and return to the post relevant documentation and training materials that could assist field staff carrying out the re-entry process and include it in the new country entry guide.

APPENDIX A: OBJECTIVE, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

In 1989, the Peace Corps Office of Inspector General (OIG) was established under the Inspector General Act of 1978 and is an independent entity within the Peace Corps. The purpose of OIG is to prevent and detect fraud, waste, abuse, and mismanagement and to promote economy, effectiveness, and efficiency in government. The Inspector General is under the general supervision of the Peace Corps Director and reports both to the Director and Congress.

The Evaluation Unit provides senior management with independent evaluations of all management and operations of the Peace Corps, including overseas posts and domestic offices. OIG evaluators identify best practices and recommend program improvements to comply with Peace Corps policies.

The Evaluation Unit announced its intent to conduct an evaluation of the post on February 11, 2015. For post evaluations, we use the following researchable questions to guide our work:

- To what extent has post developed and implemented programs to increase host country communities' capacity?
- Does training prepare Volunteers for Peace Corps service?
- Has the post provided adequate support and oversight to Volunteers?
- Are post resources and management practices adequate for effective post operations?

The evaluator conducted the preliminary research portion of the evaluation from February 11 – April 13, 2015. This research included review of agency documents provided by headquarters and post staff; interviews with management staff representing: Europe, Mediterranean and Asia Operations; Overseas Programming and Training Support; the Office of Medical Services and Counseling and Outreach Unit; the Office of Safety and Security; the Office of Volunteer Recruitment and Selection; the Records Management Office; and the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs and Global Partnerships.

In-country fieldwork occurred April 13 – 29 2015, and included interviews with post senior staff in charge of programming, training, and support; the U.S. ambassador and the U.S. Embassy's regional security officer. We were unable to meet, as scheduled, with host country government representatives and representatives from USAID/Nepal due to the effects of earthquakes that struck Nepal on April 25, 2015. In addition, we interviewed a stratified judgmental sample of 18 Volunteers (20 percent of Volunteers serving at the time of our visit) based on their length of service, site location, project focus, gender, age, and ethnicity.

This evaluation was conducted in accordance with the Quality Standards for Inspections, issued by the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency. The evidence, findings, and recommendations provided in this report have been reviewed by agency stakeholders affected by this review.

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED

As part of this post evaluation, interviews were conducted with 18 Volunteers, 11 staff in-country, and 23 representatives from Peace Corps headquarters in Washington D.C., and the U.S. Embassy in Nepal. Volunteer interviews were conducted using a standardized interview questionnaire, and Volunteers were asked to rate many items on a five-point scale (1 = not effective, 3 = neutral, 5 = very effective). The analysis of these ratings provided a quantitative supplement to Volunteers' comments, which were also analyzed. For the purposes of the data analysis, Volunteer ratings of "4" and above are considered favorable. In addition, 16 out of 18 Volunteer interviews occurred at the Volunteers' homes, and we inspected 16 of these homes using post-defined site selection criteria. The period of review for a post evaluation is one full Volunteer cycle (typically 27 months).

The following table provides demographic information that represents the entire Volunteer population in Nepal; the Volunteer sample was selected to reflect these demographics.

Table 2. Volunteer Demographic Data

Project	Percentage of Volunteers
Food security	100%
Gender	**Percentage of Volunteers**
Female	50%
Male	50%
Age	**Percentage of Volunteers**
25 or younger	39%
26-29	22%
30-49	28%
50 and over	11%

Source: Volunteer Information Database Application for PC/Nepal (on 3/3/2015).

At the time of our field visit, the post had 26 staff positions. The post also employed temporary staff to assist with PST. We interviewed 11 staff. The staffing configuration of posts often varies and staff may hold additional responsibilities relevant to the evaluation in addition to their official job title. We conduct interviews with sexual assault response liaisons; grants coordinators; monitoring, reporting, and evaluation champions; and Peace Corps Response coordinators as necessary and when appropriate for the post.

Table 3. Interviews Conducted with Post Staff

Position	Status	Interviewed
Administrative Assistant (2)	PSC	
Cashier	FSN	
Country Director	USDH	X

Director of Management and Operations	USDH	X
Director of Programming and Training	USDH	X
Driver (5)	PSC	
Executive Assistant and Sexual Assault Response Liaison	PSC	X
Financial Specialist	FSN	
Food Security Program Manager	PSC	X
General Services Assistant	PSC	
General Services Manager	PSC	
Information Technology Specialist	PSC	
Medical Assistant	PSC	
Monitoring, Reporting and Evaluation Specialist (vacant)	PSC	
Peace Corps Medical Officer (2)	PSC	X
Program Coordinator (vacant)	PSC	
Regional Managers (3)	PSC	1 of 3
Safety and Security Manager	PSC	X
Training Coordinator	PSC	X
Training Manager	PSC	X

Data as of April 2015. *PSC is personal services contractor; FSN is foreign service national.

23 additional interviews were conducted during the preliminary research phase of the evaluation, in-country fieldwork and follow-up work upon return to Peace Corps headquarters in Washington, D.C.

Table 4. Interviews Conducted with Peace Corps Headquarters Staff, Embassy Officials and Others

Position	Organization
Chief Administrative Officer	PC Headquarters/Europe, Mediterranean and Asia Operations
Chief of Operations	PC Headquarters/Europe, Mediterranean and Asia Operations
Chief of Programming and Training	PC Headquarters/Europe, Mediterranean and Asia Operations
Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist	PC Headquarters/Europe, Mediterranean and Asia Operations
Regional Director	PC Headquarters/Europe, Mediterranean and Asia Operations
Budget Analyst (former director of management and operations for PC/Nepal)	PC Headquarters/Office of Budget and Analysis
Deputy Director	PC Headquarters/Office of

	Health Services/Counseling and Outreach Unit
Director	PC Headquarters/Office of Health Services/Office of Medical Services
Director	PC Headquarters/Office of Intergovernmental Affairs and Global Partnerships
Program Specialist	PC Headquarters/Office of Intergovernmental Affairs and Global Partnerships
Records Management Officer	PC Headquarters/Office of Management
Peace Corps Safety and Security Officer	PC Headquarters/Office of Safety and Security
Director of Assessment and Placement	PC Headquarters/Office of Volunteer Recruitment and Selection
Supervisory Placement Officer	PC Headquarters/Office of Volunteer Recruitment and Selection
Agriculture Specialist	PC Headquarters/Overseas Programming and Training Support
Feed the Future Evaluation Specialist	PC Headquarters/Overseas Programming and Training Support
Librarian	PC Headquarters/Overseas Programming and Training Support
Writer/Editor	PC Headquarters/Overseas Programming and Training Support
Recruitment and Placement Specialist	PC Headquarters/Peace Corps Response
Country Director (former director of programming and training for PC/Nepal)	Peace Corps/Armenia
Director of Programming and Training (PC/Nepal re-entry assessment team member)	Peace Corps/Jordan
Ambassador of the United States of America	United States Embassy/Nepal
Regional Security Officer	United States Embassy/Nepal

Data as of June 2015.

APPENDIX C: LIST OF ACRONYMS

AVS	Annual Volunteer Survey
EAP	Emergency Action Plan
FITU	Focus In/Train Up
FY	Fiscal Year
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GHI	Global Health Initiative
KISAN	Knowledge-Based Integrated Sustainable Agriculture and Nutrition Project
OIG	Office of Inspector General
PCV	Peace Corps Volunteer
PST	Pre-service Training
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VAC	Volunteer Advisory Committee
VRF	Volunteer Report Form

Since 1961.

MEMORANDUM

To: Kathy Buller, Inspector General

Through: Anne Hughes, Acting Chief Compliance Officer

From: Keri Lowry, Regional Director, EMA
               Nelson Chase, Country Director, Nepal

Date: November 19, 2015

CC: Carrie Hessler-Radelet, Director
               Laura Chambers, Chief of Staff
               Joaquin Ferrao, Deputy Inspector General
               Jerry Black, Assistant IG
               Carlos Torres, Associate Director, Global Operations
               Kris Besch, Chief of Operations, EMA
               Karla Wesley, Chief of Programming and Training, EMA
               Corina Langlois, Nepal Country Desk Officer

Subject: Agency Response to the Preliminary Report of Peace Corps/Nepal September
               2015 (15-EVAL-01)

Enclosed please find Peace Corps' response to the recommendations made by the Inspector General for Peace Corps/Nepal as outlined in the Preliminary Report sent to the Agency on September 28, 2015.

The Europe, Mediterranean, and Asia Region (EMA) concurs with the 13 recommendations to PC/Nepal staff in the Preliminary Evaluation Report: Peace Corps/Nepal. Post has addressed and provided supporting documentation for one of the 13 recommendations provided by the OIG in its Preliminary Program Evaluation Report: Peace Corps/Nepal, and will work to address the remaining recommendations by the set target dates. The Region will continue to work with Post and the departments identified in the Preliminary Report to ensure closure of these recommendations by the dates included within, for outstanding recommendations.

We appreciate the work of the evaluation team and their positive remarks about our program, which indeed highlighted the professional work of our dedicated staff and we welcome the

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constructive input provided by the evaluation team. Relevant actions are described under each specific recommendation below.

Recommendation 1

That the Director of Programming and Training work with staff, Volunteers and project partners to re-focus the food security project framework (its purpose, goals, objectives, activities, and indicators) and related training for Volunteers, drawing on agency specialists and Focus In/Train Up guidance as needed.

Concur

Response: A draft of the revised food security framework has been reviewed by Post's formal Project Advisory Committee (PAC) and submitted to the Office of Programming and Training Support (OPATS)'s Nutrition, Agriculture and M&E Specialists. Comments have been received, discussed and incorporated where feasible. The result is a tightly focused "nutrition-sensitive agriculture" project to address local food and nutrition insecurity among rural smallholder farming households, with particular attention to improving the nutrition of women of reproductive age and children under five. To meet this challenge, Post is recruiting applicants with agricultural backgrounds/experience. Additionally, the identified project activities and corresponding PCV tasks are now, the basis for the design of more effective training events during the 27-month training continuum. Post will submit a final draft of a complete Project Framework to Region and OPATS for endorsement by November 30, 2015.

A Training Design and Evaluation workshop, funded and facilitated by OPATS, was held at post, August 10-14, 2015. A task analysis for the revised framework was completed by the P&T team and a final version of a 27-month calendar of learning activities will be completed by January 2016.

The OPATS Agriculture Specialist is providing technical support to post from September 27-November 22, 2015 and the Feed the Future permaculture expert will be providing technical training to P&T staff and PCTs April 11-22, 2016.

Document Submitted:
- Agenda from Training and Evaluation Workshop, 10-14 August, 2015

Document to be Submitted:
- Revised Food Security Framework

Status and Timeline for Completion: December 1, 2015

Recommendation 2

That the Director of Programming and Training (DPT) and Program Manager for food security improve the site selection and development process so that programmatic site selection criteria are clarified and staff know how to identify and document the characteristics of a potential site according to the selection criteria.

Concur

Response: PC/Nepal is finalizing revised procedural guidelines for work site and home stay identification and documentation. Program, Medical, and Safety & Security staff are participating in the review. The Country Director (CD) and Director of Programming and Training (DPT) will ensure all involved staff understand and implement the new guidelines. The new guidelines will support site development for Trainees arriving in April 2016.

Post will evaluate the success of the new guidelines through feedback from staff visits to Volunteer sites, Peace Corps Volunteer (PCV) feedback on their required monthly reports to Program staff, Volunteer Advisory Council (VAC) and Project Advisory Committee (PAC) meetings, and monitoring over time of the number of Volunteers who require site changes for programmatic reasons.

Documents to be Submitted:
- Revised site identification, selection and preparation process in the Nepal Site Development and Monitoring Manual addressing:
    - Flow Diagram of Site Development Process
    - Site Assessment Form
    - Volunteer Request Form
    - Site and Homestay Criteria
    - Homestay Family Orientation Manual

Status and Timeline for Completion: January 15, 2016

Recommendation 3

That the Director of Programming and Training and Program Manager for food security improve the site selection and development process to include more opportunity for staff and/or Volunteer Leaders to assess the availability and interest of both primary counterparts as well as community-based counterparts in collaborating with the Volunteer in support of project goals.

Concur

Response: Site identification procedures have been revised, to include PCVs. Three second-year PCVs were involved in worksite and homestay family identification for new Volunteer sites in 2014-15, and three third-year Peace Corps Volunteer Leaders (PCVLs) will participate as well, in new site selection in 2015-16.

As Post is moving toward placing two to three generations of Volunteers at a specific site, written recommendations from currently serving PCVs will provide important information as to which sites and homestays are appropriate for further placements.

Additionally, for new sites, PCVs and PCVLs will be engaged to assist in any of the three stages of site and homestay family identification for up to 25% of the total new sites to be identified. During site visit identification visits, there will be local-level orientation meetings for stakeholders at each site, to include potential counterparts. For those meetings in which PCVs are involved, the Volunteer and Program Manager will meet together with potential official counterparts to assess their interest and availability. Volunteers' comments and insights at to the potential of possible official counterparts will be included in the overall assessment for that site.

Additionally, potential community-based counterparts will be identified and contact information will be collected. The meeting attendance sheet will be provided to the new Volunteer as part of the site assignment packet.

Documents Submitted:
- Involvement of PCVs in Work Site and Homestay Family Identification
- PCVL Statement of Work

Documents to be Submitted:
- Revised site identification, selection and preparation process in a Nepal Site Development and Monitoring Manual addressing:
    - Flow Diagram of Site Development Process
    - Site Assessment Form
    - Volunteer Request Form
    - Site and Homestay Criteria
    - Homestay Family Orientation Manual

Status and Timeline for Completion: January 15, 2016

<u>Recommendation 4</u>
That the Director of Programming and Training and Program Manager for food security improve the site selection and development process to ensure sites that meet the post's programmatic selection criteria are presented for approval to host government officials, and sites that do not meet the post's selection criteria are not presented as options for Volunteer placement.

<u>Concur</u>
Response: In the site selection process, PC/Nepal organizes initial meetings with the Government of Nepal (GON) Ministries of Agriculture Development and of Health and Population as well as USAID to review districts of national priority (geographic and sectoral). We do accept for consideration suggestions from GON officials at both the national and local levels for sites for PCV placement; however, Post will only present to

GON officials for further consideration, those sites that meet our PC/Nepal programmatic selection criteria.

During these initial meetings, the Program Manager (PM) and DPT present the districts that fall within the overall PC/Nepal site placement strategy, and look for overlap within the prioritization of districts targeted by the Nepal government ministries and USAID projects.

Where there is programmatic overlap within the districts, the PC/Nepal Safety and Security Manager (SSM) and Peace Corps Medical Officer (PCMO) conduct a thorough assessment of each district from the standard safety/security and medical support perspectives. After which, the districts deemed to meet all PC/Nepal site placement criteria are presented to the Country Director for final consideration.

The approved districts are then visited by the Program Manager and/or Regional Manager, who meet with the Chief of Agriculture and the Health Office, to present Peace Corps' interest in placing Volunteers in their district and to discuss the PC/Nepal criteria for site assignment consideration. Recommendations of communities by the Chief of Agriculture and/or Health Office, as well as those made by PCVs and other project stakeholders, are discussed together and a number of communities, typically more than the number required, are agreed upon. Potential official project counterparts for future Volunteer(s) assigned to those communities are identified at that time.

Next, the Program Manager and/or Regional Manager then visit the potential sites to make an assessment and to meet with the potential government counterpart. Each site is assessed from the perspective of safety and security, availability of, or access to, medical support, access to transportation, community and potential counterpart interest and receptiveness, availability of homestay families, and potential for project-related 'meaningful work.' If any criteria are missing or not met, PC/Nepal does not approve a site for Volunteer placement.

All identified sites must be reviewed by the SSM, PCMO, PM, DPT, and CD, and once approved, follow-up visits are made to clarify expectations, identify potential work partners, and identify and prepare a homestay. A list of the approved sites is then sent to the respective ministries to inform them of PC/Nepal's final list of Volunteer assignments.

Document to be Submitted:
- Revised Site Development and Monitoring Manual

Status and Timeline for Completion: January 15, 2016

Recommendation 5
That the Director of Programming and Training, Program Manager for food security, and the Safety and Security Manager review the criteria for host family selection and determine if additional flexibility can be applied to the host family location and its distance from the Volunteer's assigned work site (local health post or agriculture office).

Concur
Response: Post is reviewing our criteria for host family selection with Program, Medical, and Safety/Security staff, with the CD and DMO participating in the discussions. These criteria are under consideration to determine if more flexibility is feasible with regard to the distance of host family home from the assigned work site, from the district center, from the closest medical facility, as well as from the closest accessible road.

Documents to be Submitted:
- Revised Site Development and Monitoring Manual

Status and Timeline for Completion: January 15, 2016

Recommendation 6
That the Director of Programming and Training, Program Manager, and Training Manager ensure that the training program is redesigned based on agency programming and training guidance, including a task analysis and training design and evaluation process.

Concur
Response: To help PCVs become better prepared to perform their assignments, Programming and Training staff, Safety & Security Manager and PCMOs attended the five-day Training Design and Evaluation (TDE) workshop in August 2015, conducted by OPATS trainers. This training enhanced the attendees' knowledge and skills in task analysis, formulation of Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes (KSAs) and the development of a 27-month Calendar of Learning Activities (COLA). Programming and Training staff are currently developing KSAs in line with our new Project Framework, following the TDE process and reviewing and revising the 27-month COLA for Nepal. The recommended changes will be reflected in the upcoming PST Calendar of Training Events and task analysis.

Post will evaluate the success of our efforts through feedback from staff visits to Volunteer sites, PCV feedback on their required monthly reports to Program staff, discussions with Volunteer representatives at VAC and PAC meetings, and utilization of the Global Learning Standards Training Assessment Portfolio to assess Trainee proficiency with regards to the KSAs at the end of PST.

Documents Submitted:
- Agenda from Training and Evaluation Workshop, 10-14 August, 2015

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Documents to be Submitted:
- Calendar of Learning Activities (COLA)
- PST Calendar of Training Events (COTE)
- Task Analysis, including KSAs and sequence of training

Status and Timeline for Completion: January 15, 2016

Recommendation 7

That the Director of Programming and Training and the Training Manager ensure Volunteers receive sufficient training related to behavior change and Volunteers know how to initiate activities at their sites with community support and participation.

Concur

Response: Post currently provides the required, two-hour session on behavior change during PST. To ensure PCVs have the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes to implement and promote behavior change in their communities, Post has developed the following plan:

1. Review the new Community Engagement Training Package, designed to help promote behavior change in communities, and adapt as relevant/appropriate in the Nepali cultural context. This will include four sessions on behavior change during Pre-Service Training (PST) and two at the In-Service Training (IST) for Trainees and Volunteers. This package has not yet been adapted for use by Post.
2. Develop a behavior change toolkit related to both agriculture and nutrition behavior, to include barrier analysis questionnaires. This will be introduced at PST and utilized during Volunteers' first three months of service, with the information Post develops, forming the foundation for their work plans at their sites.
3. Continue to conduct PACA training with practicum during PST.

Success in behavior change will be measured via Volunteers reports against the indicators in the revised Project Framework.

Documents Submitted:
- Community Engagement Training Package – Summary of Sessions

Documents to be Submitted:
- Behavior Change toolkit
- PST Calendar of Training Events (COTE)

Status and Timeline for Completion: January 31, 2016

Recommendation 8

That the Director of Programming and Training ensure that program staff conduct site visits with a clear purpose and structure, and that site visits are designed and timed to address Volunteers' support needs.

Concur

Response: Post program staff have reviewed the EMA Quality Improvement Site Development and Monitoring guidance. Program staff are working with VAC and PAC members to define the purpose and structure of site visits to ensure they are designed and timed to address Volunteers' support needs. As part of this process we are revising our document re: site visits, "Procedure: Volunteer Site Visit- Planning and Documentation."

Post is committed to completing at least three site visits to each Volunteer, during his/her service; with the initial taking place during the first three months at site, and the second occurring toward the end of the PCV's first year. Both visits will be completed by Program staff. The third and possibly further visits may be completed by other staff (CD, SSM, PCMO, PCVLs, etc.) and will take place as opportunity or need arises.

Documents to be Submitted:

- Procedure: Volunteer Site Visit – Planning and Documentation, Revised site identification, selection and preparation process in a Nepal Site Development and Monitoring Manual addressing:
  o Flow Diagram of Site Development Process
  o Site Assessment Form
  o Volunteer Request Form
  o Site and Homestay Criteria
  o Homestay Family Orientation
- PST Calendar of Training Events (COTE)

Status and Timeline for Completion: January 31, 2016

Recommendation 9

That the Country Director simplify or remove Post's *Personal Time Away from Community* policy and stress with Volunteers the importance of being in service to their communities, and the importance of reporting their whereabouts to the Peace Corps.

Concur

Response: Post revised the Time Away from Community policy in September 2015. The changes were discussed with Volunteers, including some VAC members who were in Kathmandu at the time. The final draft of the policy was circulated to the VAC committee via email for comment, with favorable responses.

During the revision, Post was under a Restricted Travel Policy, due to the increased risk of landslides during the monsoon season, as a result of the recent earthquakes. This precluded discussions of the revised policy in a full VAC meeting. The policy was put in

place on a trial basis when Post lifted the Restricted Travel Policy in September 2015. It will be reviewed at the Mid-Service and In-Service conferences and VAC meeting in late November, with any needed changes to be made at that time.

Documents Submitted:
- Policy on "Personal Time Away from Your Community"
- Email to all PCVs on September 28, 2015 from CD announcing the policy change

Documents to be Submitted:
- Revised Volunteer Handbook, including policy on Personal Time Away from Community

Status and Timeline for Completion: December 31, 2015

Recommendation 10

That the Country Director clarify Post's process for determining that a Volunteer has been spending too much time away from his/her community, and what sort of corrective actions Post will take with Volunteers who have abused the principle of taking infrequent breaks from their community.

Concur

Response: Post has revised the Personal Time Away from Community policy to comply with the IG's observation that "Volunteer leave policies were complex, ineffective and cumbersome for staff to manage." See response to Recommendation #9 above. With regard to how Post will determine whether a Volunteer has abused the principle of taking infrequent breaks from his or her community, Post will follow the process described below. At this point in time, Post has not shared this messaging with the Volunteer community but will do so at the upcoming Mid-Service and In-Service Trainings, as well as at the Volunteer Advisory Committee meeting, all to be held at the end of November, 2015. The messaging that will be shared at that time includes new paragraphs to be placed in Section C5 of the Volunteer Handbook.

Throughout a PCV's 24-months of service in Nepal, the Regional Manager will be in periodic contact with the Volunteer and her/his supervisor and/or official counterpart(s) to assess how their work relationships are proceeding and to monitor Volunteer work progress on agreed upon work plans, to assist with any issues or concerns, and to provide Volunteers with any needed support. These check-ins will occur monthly early in a Volunteer's service and less frequently later on, as s/he becomes integrated into her/his communities. If there are problems, including excessive time away from their sites, Peace Corps staff will address them directly with the Volunteer.

Additionally, as part of their work responsibilities, Volunteers are now required to submit a monthly report on their activities to their Regional Managers. Using the template provided by PC/Nepal, these reports provide Volunteers a regular opportunity to update staff on their work and progress to date, to report any work they are doing with other

Volunteers as well as let staff know what issues they might be having and to request any needed support. The monthly reports will then form a foundation for their Volunteer Report Forms (VRF), which are due every four months to the Program Office. Additionally, the monthly reports will provide an indicator to help Post determine whether or not a Volunteer has been spending too much time away from her/his community.

Volunteers who abuse the principle of infrequent breaks from their site will be counseled by their Regional Manager and, as needed, by the PM, DPT and/or CD. Corrective action, beyond counseling support, would include meetings at site with counterparts and/or supervisors with the Volunteer, as well as, if necessary, official letters of reprimand up to administrative separation from the Peace Corps.

Documents Submitted:
- Revised paragraphs for insertion into Section C5 of the PC/Nepal's Volunteer Handbook
- Policy on "Personal Time Away from your Community"

Documents to be Submitted:
- PC/Nepal's Volunteer Handbook - revised Section C5

Status and Timeline for Completion: December 31, 2015

Recommendation 11

That the Country Director and Safety and Security Manager ensure Post's Whereabouts notification system is de-linked from its system for tracking leave balances, and is not used to monitor a Volunteer's leave balance or as an indicator of a Volunteer's performance at his or her site.

Concur

Response: Currently, Volunteers who are taking personal time away from their sites notify the Duty Officer by text before they leave and after they return. The Duty Officers then updates Volunteer Information Database Application (VIDA) with that information. Post is reviewing best practices from other posts as to how best to de-link the Whereabouts notification system from the system of tracking leave balances to ensure that it is not used to monitor leave balances or Volunteer performance.

Documents to be Submitted:
- PC/Nepal's Volunteer Handbook - revised Section C5 *Relationship with Host Country Partners and Organizations: Volunteer Life and Conduct*
- PC/Nepal's Volunteer Handbook - revised Section F.1 *Whereabouts Policy: Volunteer Leave Policies* – to include rationale for new notification system and directions on how it will work.
- Examples of new tracking system in place
- Evidence of messaging to all volunteers on changes for Whereabouts system

- Evidence of messaging to all staff on changes for Whereabouts system

Status and Timeline for Completion: December 31, 2015

Recommendation 12

That the Country Director hire staff with sufficient experience in food security (agriculture and health) to support Volunteers with improved technical training and support.

Concur

Response: Post has hired a new Program Manager for Food Security and a third Regional Manager who has a specialization in agriculture and rural development.

The Program Manager for Food Security brings to PC/Nepal significant work experience in agriculture and food security. His education includes a Bachelor's of Science in Agriculture and a Master's in Rural Development. His work will primarily focus on technical training and field support for Volunteers.

The new Regional Manager also has a Bachelor's of Science in Agriculture and is working on his Master's in Rural Development.

Documents Submitted:
- Nepal Food Security Program Manager SOW
- Curriculum Vitae for new Food Security Program Manager
- Curriculum Vitae for new Regional Manager

Status and Timeline for Completion: Completed

Recommendation 13

That associate director for Global Operations develop guidance related to country re-entries that includes steps to review and return to the Post relevant documentation and training materials that could assist field staff carrying out the re-entry process and include it in the new country entry guide.

Concur:

Response: The Associate Director for Global Operations will revise the New Country Entry guide to include guidance to return to post relevant documentation and training materials, that are still maintained by the agency per legally approved agency record schedules, which could assist field staff with carrying out the re-entry process.

Documents to be Submitted: Revised New Country Entry Guide

Status and Timeline for Completion: February 1, 2016

APPENDIX E: OIG COMMENTS

Management concurred with all 13 recommendations. Twelve recommendations, numbers 1-11 and 13, remain open. Based on the documentation provided, we closed recommendation 12. In its response, management described actions it is taking or intends to take to address the issues that prompted each of our recommendations. We wish to note that in closing recommendations, we are not certifying that the agency has taken these actions or that we have reviewed their effect. Certifying compliance and verifying effectiveness are management's responsibilities. However, when we feel it is warranted, we may conduct a follow-up review to confirm that action has been taken and to evaluate the impact.

OIG will review and consider closing recommendations 2, 4-11 and 13 when the documentation reflected in the OIG's comments and the agency's response to the preliminary report is received. For recommendations 1 and 3, additional documentation is requested so that OIG can review and consider closing them when the documentation is received.

14. **That the director of programming and training work with staff, Volunteers and project partners to re-focus the food security project framework (its purpose, goals, objectives, activities and indicators) and related training for Volunteers, drawing on agency specialists and Focus In/Train Up guidance as needed.**

   <u>Concur</u>
   Response: A draft of the revised food security framework has been reviewed by Post's formal Project Advisory Committee (PAC) and submitted to the Office of Programming and Training Support (OPATS)'s Nutrition, Agriculture and M&E Specialists. Comments have been received, discussed and incorporated where feasible. The result is a tightly focused "nutrition-sensitive agriculture" project to address local food and nutrition insecurity among rural smallholder farming households, with particular attention to improving the nutrition of women of reproductive age and children under five. To meet this challenge, Post is recruiting applicants with agricultural backgrounds/experience. Additionally, the identified project activities and corresponding PCV tasks are now, the basis for the design of more effective training events during the 27-month training continuum. Post will submit a final draft of a complete Project Framework to Region and OP ATS for endorsement by November 30, 2015.

   A Training Design and Evaluation workshop, funded and facilitated by OPATS, was held at post, August 10-14, 2015. A task analysis for the revised framework was completed by the P&T team and a final version of a 27-month calendar of learning activities will be completed by January 2016.

   The OPATS Agriculture Specialist is providing technical support to post from September 27-November 22, 2015 and the Feed the Future permaculture expert will be providing technical training to P&T staff and PCTs April 11-22, 2016.

   Document Submitted:

- Agenda from Training and Evaluation Workshop, 10-14 August, 2015

Document to be Submitted:
- Revised Food Security Framework

Status and Timeline for Completion: December 1, 2015

OIG Analysis: In its concurrence with recommendation 1 the agency mentioned a Training Design and Evaluation workshop that was conducted at post in August 2014, and that workshop participants completed a task analysis for the revised food security project framework. In addition to the documents listed as submitted or to be submitted in the agency's response, please provide OIG with the task analysis (also referenced as a document to be submitted in response to recommendation 6).

3. **That the director of programming and training and program manager for food security improve the site selection and development process to include more opportunity for staff and/or Volunteer leaders to assess the availability and interest of both primary counterparts as well as community-based counterparts in collaborating with the Volunteer in support of project goals.**

    <u>Concur</u>
    Response: Site identification procedures have been revised, to include PCVs. Three second-year PCVs were involved in worksite and homestay family identification for new Volunteer sites in 2014-15, and three third-year Peace Corps Volunteer Leaders (PCVLs) will participate as well, in new site selection in 2015-16.

    As Post is moving toward placing two to three generations of Volunteers at a specific site, written recommendations from currently serving PCVs will provide important information as to which sites and homestays are appropriate for further placements.

    Additionally, for new sites, PCVs and PCVLs will be engaged to assist in any of the three stages of site and homestay family identification for up to 25% of the total new sites to be identified. During site visit identification visits, there will be local-level orientation meetings for stakeholders at each site, to include potential counterparts. For those meetings in which PCV s are involved, the Volunteer and Program Manager will meet together with potential official counterparts to assess their interest and availability. Volunteers' comments and insights at to the potential of possible official counterparts will be included in the overall assessment for that site.

    Additionally, potential community-based counterparts will be identified and contact information will be collected. The meeting attendance sheet will be provided to the new Volunteer as part of the site assignment packet.

    Documents Submitted:
    - Involvement of PCVs in Work Site and Homestay Family Identification

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- PCVL Statement of Work

Documents to be Submitted:
- Revised site identification, selection and preparation process in a Nepal
- Site Development and Monitoring Manual addressing:
    - Flow Diagram of Site Development Process
    - Site Assessment Form
    - Volunteer Request Form
    - Site and Homestay Criteria
    - Homestay Family Orientation Manual

Status and Timeline for Completion: January 15, 2016

OIG Analysis: Please provide more specific responses to these questions related to counterpart identification and selection:
- How will people involved in site identification and development assess and consider the interest and availability of potential counterparts? (For example, will counterparts be asked to articulate or provide a proposed plan for collaborating with the Volunteer?)
- How will people involved in site development document their consideration of potential counterparts?

APPENDIX F: PROGRAM EVALUATION COMPLETION AND OIG CONTACT

PROGRAM EVALUATION COMPLETION

This program evaluation was conducted under the direction of former Assistant Inspector General for Evaluations Jim O'Keefe, by Assistant Inspector General for Evaluations Jerry Black. Additional contributions were made by former Evaluation Apprentice Caroline Hale.

Jerry Black

Assistant Inspector General for Evaluations Jerry Black

OIG CONTACT

Following issuance of the final report, a stakeholder satisfaction survey will be distributed to agency stakeholders. If you wish to comment on the quality or usefulness of this report to help us improve our products, please contact Assistant Inspector General for Evaluations Jerry Black at jblack@peacecorps.gov or 202.692.2912.

Help Promote the Integrity, Efficiency, and Effectiveness of the Peace Corps

Anyone knowing of wasteful practices, abuse, mismanagement, fraud, or unlawful activity involving Peace Corps programs or personnel should contact the Office of Inspector General. Reports or complaints can also be made anonymously.

Contact OIG

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