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To: Carrie Hessler-Radelet, Director
Daljit Bains, Chief Compliance Officer

From: Kathy A. Buller, Inspector General

Date: March 22, 2013

Subject: Final Report on the Program Evaluation of Peace Corps/Malawi
(IG-13-02-E)

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

Management concurred with all 21 recommendations. All 21 recommendations remain open. The post has provided supporting documentation for 11 of the 21 recommendations, which OIG will review following completion of approval and verification procedures through the region and chief compliance officer. OIG will review and consider closing recommendations 2, 4, 5, 7-9, 11-14, and 16-21 when the documentation reflected in the agency's response to the preliminary report is received. OIG will review and consider closing recommendations 1, 3, 6, 10, and 15 pending confirmation from the chief compliance officer that the documentation reflected in the OIG Analysis is received. 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.

Our comments, which are in the report as Appendix C, 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 Evaluation Jim O'Keefe at 202.692.2904 or to Senior Evaluator Reuben Marshall at 202.692.2903.

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

Attachment

cc: Elisa Montoya, White House Liaison/Senior Advisor to the Director
Bill Rubin, General Counsel
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Peace Corps
Office of Inspector General

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Flag of Malawi

Final Program Evaluation Report:
Peace Corps/Malawi
IG-13-02-E

March 2013

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over 2,500 Peace Corps Volunteers have served the people of Malawi since the first Volunteers arrived in 1963. The program was twice suspended, from 1969 to 1973 and 1976 to 1978. There are currently three project sectors in Malawi: (1) community health, (2) secondary education, (3) natural resource management. At the onset of this evaluation there were 88 Volunteers serving in Malawi, 37 trainees in pre-service training, and 12 Peace Corps Response Volunteers (PCRV).

Towards the end of 2011, the management of PC/Malawi (hereafter, "the post") changed hands following the turnover of all three of the post's USDH staff. Upon arriving at the post, the incoming management team encountered significant funding shortfalls caused by issues with the post's financial management processes and headquarters oversight. Senior staff worked closely with headquarters to address the most critical issues though ongoing budgeting challenges remain.[1] The evaluation revealed additional management issues including unclear and duplicate roles and responsibilities in the programming unit and difficulties collecting and reporting performance data. Senior staff was addressing these management challenges and Volunteers and staff in Malawi and headquarters staff were encouraged by their efforts and satisfied with the post's current leadership and direction.

The evaluation determined that the Peace Corps program addresses some of Malawi's most pressing development needs. The post benefits from a history of strong support from host country officials, however Ministry officials were poorly informed about Volunteers' project goals and activities. Site preparation was another area in need of improvement. Poor site preparation by programming staff caused unnecessary obstacles for Volunteers at the start of their service and significantly reduced the impact of the Peace Corps Response program in PC/Malawi.

Volunteers were very satisfied with staff support in the areas of safety and security, medical, and administrative support. In a number of other areas, the post struggled to provide adequate support and oversight to Volunteers. For instance, program staff communicated poorly with Volunteers and failed to provide effective supervision and expectation setting. As a result, Volunteers were disconnected from staff and felt discouraged and demoralized and some Volunteers had stopped taking their assignments seriously. Additional issues related to safety and security operations included incomplete and inaccurate site locator forms and poor Volunteer access to updated emergency action plans.

The post's training program was effective in the key areas of language, culture, safety and security, and medical training. Training areas in need of improvement included technical training, grants training, and HIV/AIDS training. Technical training was negatively impacted by high staff turnover and poor participation by program managers. HIV/AIDS training was ineffective for some Volunteers based on their prior experience and site placements. Grants training did not adequately prepare Volunteers to address questions regarding appropriate resources and project sustainability.

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[1] Senior staff generally refers to the CD, the DMO, and, when applicable, the DPT, who worked at the post from December 2011 until April 2012 before departing for medical reasons.

PC/Malawi uses PEPFAR funds to fully support the costs of Peace Corps Response Volunteers, partially support two-year Volunteer costs, and for HIV/AIDS training for all Volunteers. The post is implementing its PEPFAR objectives, however it struggled to collaborate effectively with other agencies and to collect essential HIV-related data.

Our report contains 21 recommendations, which, if implemented, should strengthen programming operations and correct the deficiencies detailed in the accompanying report.

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HOST COUNTRY BACKGROUND

Malawi is a small, densely populated country in southeast Africa bordered by Zambia, Mozambique, and Tanzania. Formerly the British Protectorate of Nyasaland, Malawi gained its independence from Britain in 1963. In 1994, after thirty years of one-party rule, Malawi peacefully elected a new government committed to multi-party democracy. Following the sudden death of the president in April 2012, Vice President Joyce Banda was sworn in as Malawi's new president and became Africa's second female head of state.

In the 2011 *United Nations Human Development report*, Malawi ranked 171 out of 187 countries, placing it between Cote d'Ivoire and Afghanistan.[2] Malawi has immense development needs: the average life expectancy is 54 years at birth; maternal mortality rates are 675/100,000; under-five mortality rates are 110/1,000; 47 percent of children under-five are stunted; and an estimated 6,000,000 cases of malaria occur annually. The prevalence of HIV/AIDS has been reduced to 10.6 percent from a high of 22 percent in 1999; however the poor state of the economy and the potential termination of funding sources could undermine efforts against HIV/AIDS. Adult literacy is estimated at 74 percent but English comprehension skills remain low and there is a shortage of qualified teachers, overcrowding of classrooms, and a lack of education resources. Malawi's environment is weakened by deforestation, overgrazing, and pressure on the land from high population growth.

In the past two years Malawi has faced significant economic challenges. Due to pronounced and chronic foreign exchange shortfalls, Malawi has experienced fuel and supply shortages, rampant inflation, and shortages of essential drugs. In May 2012, the government devalued the local currency, the Malawian Kwacha, a move supported by the International Monetary Fund, with the goals of increasing the availability of foreign currency, reinvigorating the economy, and releasing suspended aid from donors. Although government officials and donors believe the devaluation will have a long-term positive impact on the economy, the move raised the prices of many basic items by as much as 50 percent, driving many Malawians further into poverty.

PEACE CORPS PROGRAM BACKGROUND

The first Peace Corps Volunteers arrived in Malawi in 1963. The program was suspended from 1969 to 1973 and from 1976 to 1978, due to perceptions by the conservative government that Volunteers were "non-conformist." Peace Corps returned to Malawi in 1978 and has operated continuously since then. In total, over 2,500 Americans have served as Peace Corps volunteers in Malawi.

Prior to 1994, when the president of thirty years stepped down from office, foreigners were not allowed to live in rural areas. After 1994, the opening up of Malawian society made it possible to place Peace Corps Volunteers at the rural community level. Currently, Volunteers work in three

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[2] The United Nations Human Development Report publishes an annual Human Development Index (HDI). The HDI provides a composite measure of three basic dimensions of human development: health, education and income.

sectors – community health, secondary education, and natural resources management. All Volunteers receive HIV/AIDS training and are encouraged to conduct HIV/AIDS projects and activities. Peace Corps Response Volunteers work with government officials at the district level to strengthen Malawi's response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

At the onset of this evaluation, 88 Volunteers were serving in Malawi and there were 37 trainees in pre-service training and 12 PCRVs. The last OIG evaluation was conducted in 1998 and an evaluation team visited Malawi twice in 2005-2006 as part of a study of nine effective posts around the world.

The post's total FY 2012 budget, including its President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) spending, was $2.9 million.[3] At the time of the evaluation, the post had 33 permanent staff positions.

A more detailed explanation of the three project areas are discussed below:

- **Secondary Education**
  The secondary education project seeks to address severe teacher shortages by placing teachers in Community Day Secondary Schools (CDSS). CDSS, which are established by communities, have had little support from the government in terms of teachers' salaries and teaching resources. Volunteers teach physical science, mathematics, biology, and English and are encouraged to integrate girls' education and life skills into lessons by utilizing Community Content Based Instruction (CCBI) techniques.

- **Community Health & HIV/AIDS**
  The health project addresses health issues in rural areas. Volunteers are posted at rural health centers and focus on community health interventions. The project supports government efforts to provide a minimum package of essential health services to all its citizens, with great emphasis on poor women and children and those impacted by HIV/AIDS. The project's focus areas are: disease prevention, behavior change, women's health issues, and support and care for people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWA).

- **Community Based Natural Resources Management**
  The natural resource management project places Volunteers in communities that border forest reserves, game reserves and game parks. Volunteers, communities, and government staff work jointly to enhance the protection, conservation, and management of individual and community natural resources. This is accomplished through the promotion of counterpart and community capacity building, sustainable natural resources management techniques, and income generating activities.

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

EVALUATION RESULTS

MANAGEMENT CONTROLS

One of the key objectives of our country program evaluation is to assess the extent to which the post's resources and agency support are effectively aligned with the post's mission and agency priorities. To address these questions, 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.

The evaluation revealed a post in transition with regard to management controls. Towards the end of 2011, management of the post changed hands following the turnover of all three of the post's U.S. direct hire (USDH) staff: the country director (CD), assistant Peace Corps director (APCD), and the director of management operations (DMO).[4] During 2012, the post's incoming management team addressed a number of management issues to better align the post's resources and agency support with the post's mission and agency priorities. Chief among those challenges were significant funding shortfalls caused by weaknesses with the post's financial management processes and insufficient headquarters oversight. Additional management issues included personnel management and performance reporting. Although senior staff was grappling with significant management challenges, Volunteers and staff in Malawi and headquarters were satisfied with the post's current leadership and direction.

The host country weathered a series of recent crises that tested post morale, including the decline of Malawi's economy which lowered their standard of living. The local economy experienced substantial inflation from July to August 2011 and many household goods doubled in price. In May 2012, the local currency was devalued by 40 percent which raised the price of fuel and drove up the price of locally produced goods and commodities. Although local staff is satisfied with the post's current direction and report improving morale, they report that the numerous changes in the office – new staff, new policies, the Focus In/Train Up (FITU) initiative from headquarters – have been at times overwhelming.[5] At the time fieldwork was conducted for this evaluation, the post was awaiting the arrival of a new DPT to replace the prior DPT who left for medical reasons after five months of service. Local staff was hopeful that a period of stability would follow the arrival of the new DPT.

Management Structure. The post's senior staff took steps to adjust the post's management structure and the adjustment received high levels of satisfaction from staff and Volunteers. The post's former management team had implemented a management structure that concentrated decision-making at the top of the management team and disempowered support staff, who found themselves at times overruled in favor of Volunteers. This had created an environment in which, according to one staff, "Volunteers ran the roost." This environment had a negative impact on staff morale, Volunteer oversight, and Volunteer professionalism.

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[4] The USDH APCD managed the education sector and was replaced with a USDH director of programming and training.

[5] FITU seeks to focus on a limited number of highly effective Volunteer projects to maximize Peace Corps' impact.

Senior staff had taken steps to more fully include host country staff in the management structure and restore authority for decisions with the appropriate support staff. Staff reported high levels of satisfaction with the post's current management structure. Senior staff had also worked to improve Volunteer professionalism. A Volunteer dress code was implemented at the office and a mentoring program was established with embassy staff to provide Volunteers with a professional development opportunity. Volunteers reported strong levels of satisfaction with this adjustment to the post's management structure. Their comments included:

> "At no point along the line does [the CD] think his job is to make Volunteers happy, what he wants is for us to be able to do our jobs as best as possible."

> "I'm extremely hopeful, I really like what [senior staff] is doing. There is much stronger professionalism in the office."

> "[The CD] is delightfully professional and non-personal."

> "When I first got here there was public misbehavior (among Volunteers)…it kept happening and there was no accountability…we've been changing the culture and the new office has been reinforcing that and currently it has improved."

Staff Development. Several of the post's local staff struggled with a number of job competencies due to lack of experience and training. We confirmed that staff struggled with information technology (IT) applications such as Microsoft Outlook. Senior staff initiated a staff development spreadsheet where training needs could be selected that included an integrated role for supervisors. The spreadsheet has the capacity to function as a staff development plan. Senior staff also discussed plans to implement in-house IT training sessions by blocking off "no-travel" days on a calendar to facilitate all-staff training sessions in the office. Staff was responsive to the opportunities for more training and, in light of the post's budget limitations, we commend senior staff for identifying low-cost staff development activities.

Issues related to the post's financial management and oversight resulted in significant funding shortages.

The post had experienced significant problems with its financial management processes that have had an impact on post operations. The post's FY 2012 budget was straight-lined from the previous year despite anticipated increased operational costs due to local economic conditions and high inflation. The post's FY 2012 budget relied too heavily on host country contributions (HCC) and failed to allocate sufficient funds to fully support the operations of the post. The evaluation revealed the following weaknesses in post operations:

- Due to budget shortfalls there were unpaid invoices for utilities, rent, and other basic operations.

- Volunteers were not receiving a living allowance sufficient to pay their basic living expenses, which rose rapidly over the summer of 2011 due to high inflation. A living

allowance survey conducted in January - February 2012 revealed that Volunteers required a 75 percent living allowance increase.

- The post did not have sufficient budget resources to meet expenses for: staff in-country travel to conduct site visits and site development activities; key components of PST such as host family expenses and staff travel; a staff position in the programming unit; local staff salary increases that were implemented in 2011; and the annual staff awards program.

- The post's FY 2012 operations plan neglected to account for aging facilities, old equipment, and necessary upgrades to residential units. According to the Integrated Planning and Budget System (IPBS) report submitted in 2010, "The main office has not been painted, repaired or improved in the last five years. Most of the office furniture is old, broken, and somewhat shabby…" Those issues had not been addressed and additional needs arose. The post's septic systems had not been emptied in over five years and began to overflow. Generators at the USDH staff residences and the office, which are heavily used due to frequent power outages, were second-hand when they were acquired several years ago and required constant repair. Mattresses at the USDH residences were at least 10 years old. Office equipment such as printers, scanners, and copiers, were beyond their useful life and frequently breaking down.

Our evaluation revealed the following causes for the post's financial management challenges:

- Substantial inflation occurred in Malawi from July to August 2011 and many household goods doubled in price. Inflation continued into 2012 and the local economy experienced frequent fuel and supply shortages. Foreign exchange reserves were depleted and in May 2012, the government devalued the local currency, which further raised the prices of many basic items by as much as 50 percent.

- In 2012 the post shifted a number of Volunteer placements from government partnerships to NGOs. The host country contribution is rated by the number of Volunteers working directly with government partners, and this decision reduced the host country contribution by approximately $45,000 in FY 2012.

- The post relied heavily on host country contributions for core operational costs. The host country contribution, which staff reported was the largest in the world, became unreliable due to local political and economic conditions and the post was unable to pay invoices or fund essential items.

- Staff members were disconnected from the budgeting process. Staff reported that the 2011 IPBS was written by one USDH staff without additional staff involvement. One senior staff stated, "I don't think (senior) staff has ever discussed the budget with (local staff). They've just been handed money and then executed their work." Comments from host country staff confirmed their lack of involvement:

> "We are looking at the budgets but previously we did not. This is a plus as a post. Previously we did not have knowledge on how funds are developed. We would plan and then be told there was no money for activities that we are supposed to be doing routinely."

> "In the past it was just 'here is the money' or 'there is no money.' Now we can talk about our needs and find ways to make it happen."

- An additional cause may be attributed to an insufficient response by post and headquarters staff to critical budgeting problems. The post's 2012 operations plan stated, "Post found this year's Op Planning considerably difficult and unrealistic." The plan expressed concern with the post's "dangerous" dependence on HCC for core operations costs, and reported that the post's budget mark for 2012 fell short of its needs and did not include all anticipated increased operational costs due to local economic conditions. However, insufficient actions were taken by post and headquarters staff to guard against these risks or address these concerns.

The post's financial management challenges resulted in significant funding shortages in 2012 that required financial assistance from the region to support key programs and operations. The post's initial appropriated budget mark for 2012 was 1.5 million dollars, at mid-year review the post's budget authority was increased by more than $300,000, and in the third and fourth quarters another $442,000 was transferred to the posts budget to cover costs such as office renovations, a new generator, and salary adjustments due to inflation. Senior staff at the post indicated it could take a year or longer to get financial management back on track and were concerned that ongoing funding limitations, and the necessity to prioritize resources, could undermine long range planning activities and restrict staff development activities and the implementation of new ideas.

The post's financial management challenges eroded the morale of staff and Volunteers. Volunteers lost confidence with the financial management of the post. The agency's annual survey data from 2011 showed that 38 percent of the Volunteer respondents in Malawi were dissatisfied with administrative/logistical support by staff, compared to the average global dissatisfaction rate of 13 percent. In February 2011, frustrated Volunteers filed a FOIA request to obtain the post's operating budget. Staff reported that morale hit a low point in 2011 when the post began experiencing significant funding shortages which coincided with the onset of high inflation rates.

We found that the post's senior staff has worked closely with the region to address the post's financial weaknesses and develop and implement more effective financial management processes. The region asked the post to develop a three-year plan with quarterly cost factors to ensure that the post's ongoing financial needs are met. This plan provides an opportunity for the post and headquarters to implement and carry out effective financial management processes. However, the post's on-going reliance on host country contributions, rather than appropriated funds, as a primary source of funding for essential operations remains a concern.

We recommend:

1. **That the regional chief of administrative operations ensure that the post's operating plan funds essential operations with appropriated funds rather than host country contributions.**

Overlapping work activities reduced the efficiency and effectiveness of the programming unit.

The Peace Corps publication *Characteristics and Strategies of a High Performing Post* emphasizes the need for practical and effective task distribution among programming staff. The guide warns that poor or ineffective task distribution can demoralize staff and damage staff teamwork, planning and reporting processes, training activities, and Volunteer support.

The three programming sectors are each supported by two programming staff members: an APCD and a program assistant (PA). While their position descriptions provide role differentiation, programming staff reported they often share the same program responsibilities and conduct the same work activities. Confusion regarding responsibilities and task completion caused redundant efforts with some tasks while others were not completed. Volunteers said they were confused by programming staff roles and responsibilities and as a result, support to Volunteers was less effective.

The distinction between the APCD and PA roles may have become less defined when two of the post's PAs were promoted to the APCD position in April 2010, following long tenures of seven and eleven years respectively. The programming unit was not staffed with a DPT until December 2011 and lack of oversight may have been a contributing factor.

Senior staff described plans to improve efficiency by better clarifying each PA's role and also determining what duties a single PA could handle for the Volunteers in all three sectors. Senior staff should also ensure that work activities are aligned with job descriptions.

We recommend:

2. **That the country director and director of programming and training ensure that programming staff work roles are clearly delineated and aligned with position descriptions.**

The Post's processes to collect and report project performance were ineffective.

As part of the annual project status reporting (PSR) process, Volunteers use a data system called the Volunteer Reporting Tool (VRT) to submit quarterly reports that collect performance data, such as project outcomes. This performance data is reported to Peace Corps headquarters through

the PSR process and used in the agency-wide aggregation included in the agency's *Performance and Accountability Report* (PAR).

Staff and Volunteer interviews revealed weaknesses in the collection and reporting of the post's performance data. Only 30 percent of the Volunteers we interviewed completed their Volunteer Reporting Form (VRF) "most of the time" or "always." Volunteers reported inconsistencies in how they collected performance data and several Volunteers completed their VRF by memory, rather than tracking notebooks, calendars, etc. In the health and education sectors, the VRF was poorly aligned with training and work activities and Volunteers collected the wrong data. Staff is not responding to Volunteers after they submit their VRF form: only four of the Volunteers we interviewed received feedback from staff.

Volunteers had not completed VRFs for several reasons. Volunteers did not feel sufficiently trained to accurately track and report their work data. Volunteers in the health sector were not issued VRFs during two reporting cycles and no data was collected. Project frameworks had been under revision, but not all of the VRFs had been adjusted accordingly, which led to confusion and frustration. Some Volunteers were frustrated by technical issues that made it difficult for them to download and access the form. Staff did not offer encouragement to Volunteers to complete the forms and some Volunteers who ignored their forms received no reminders or follow up from staff. The lack of training and communications from staff gave Volunteers the impression that staff does not take the VRF seriously.

These weaknesses in collecting and reporting performance information reduced the reliability of data shared with the agency and with partners, while also impairing the post's ability to evaluate and improve programming. Senior staff described plans to promote the importance of the VRT by posting excerpts and best practices from completed VRFs in the post's newsletter and they plan to ask Volunteers to contribute articles from their VRFs to the newsletter.

We recommend:

3. **That the director of programming and training ensure that project frameworks are aligned with the Volunteer Reporting Forms.**

4. **That the director of programming and training ensure that Volunteers are adequately trained to collect performance data and record it on their reporting form.**

5. **That the director of programming and training require programming staff to provide timely and substantive feedback to Volunteers who submit a Volunteer reporting form.**

The evaluation assessed to what extent 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 following:

- 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 determined that the Peace Corps program is supported by host government ministries and the post's programming addresses some of Malawi's most pressing development needs.

Host Country Relations. The Peace Corps enjoys wide recognition and a history of strong support from host country officials. Ministry officials clearly understand the Peace Corps mission and verified that Peace Corps programming aligns with Malawian development goals. Staff reported that Malawi's host country contribution (HCC) was the largest in the world. According to the 2013 IPBS, the post receives approximately $270,000 annually from the government of Malawi. The HCC is expected to remain substantial though recently it was impacted by the devaluation of Malawi's currency, Malawian government financial challenges, and programmatic adjustments made by the post.[6] The post continues to benefit from a long and positive history in Malawi. A case study of effective programs, conducted in 2006 by OIG, found that students once taught by Volunteers had gone on to become high level officials in Malawi, including the Vice President. Two of the ministry officials we interviewed were taught by Volunteer teachers and one had hosted a Volunteer. Notably, in the summer of 2011, the former President of Malawi invited Volunteers to a barbeque at his residence. The post regularly invites ministry partners to participate in pre-service training (PST) and swearing-in ceremonies.

Embassy Relations. The post receives excellent support from the U.S. Embassy and the ambassador has visited numerous Volunteers in the field. Embassy staff was impressed by the caliber of Volunteers. One embassy staff member said, "We've had a terrific group of Volunteers. Some are standouts and they'd be welcome on our staff. They are professional and dedicated. I've visited sites and met many of them." Peace Corps staff participates in weekly embassy team meetings and biweekly one-on-one meetings with the ambassador and deputy chief of mission.

Counterparts. Most Volunteers identified a number of potential counterparts who they could choose to work with at their sites. Volunteers indicated that their counterparts supported their work activities and also helped Volunteers integrate into their communities.

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[6] The local currency was devalued by 40 percent in May 2012, after the distribution of the IPBS report. The devaluation was expected to reduce the dollar value of the host country's contribution.

While the post has host country support and a solid foundation to build on, the evaluation revealed areas that require management attention. The remainder of this section provides more information about these areas.

Project Plans. At the time fieldwork was conducted for this evaluation, senior staff reported that project frameworks were not sufficiently focused and they had undertaken revisions. Project framework revisions for the health and environment sectors had been submitted for headquarters review. A final revision for the education framework was expected no later than September 2012. Staff planned to complete framework revisions prior to trainee inputs in 2013. Following project framework revisions staff planned to finalize project plans for all three sectors. These efforts will align the post with the agency's FITU initiative, which seeks to focus on a limited number of highly effective Volunteer projects to maximize Peace Corps' impact.

The post's small grants programs were not aligned with the Peace Corps's approach to development.

The Peace Corps operates a small grants program to facilitate the development and implementation of sustainable, capacity-building projects in communities where Volunteers serve. Just over half of the Volunteers that we interviewed received project funding from one of the agency's small grants programs, including SPA, PCPP, and VAST.[7] According to *Characteristics and Strategies of a High Performing Post*, "Volunteers must understand how to generate resources and promote activities as a project or community enabler, rather than as the means to a gift that the organization or community begins to rely on or expect. This should be discussed initially during PST and then during an early project design and management (PDM) IST [in-service training] that will provide detailed training on how to help a community access resources…."

Volunteers that we interviewed reported that grants training failed to discuss and address areas of concern related to outside funding, such as corruption and lack of sustainability. Volunteers also felt pressured by staff to apply for grants to increase their work output. One Volunteer declared that grants were promoted for "monument building" rather than community development.

Due to poor training and guidance, half the Volunteers we interviewed were dissatisfied with the post's grant operations and were less interested in initiating grant-funded projects at their sites. The lack of attentiveness to small project sustainability represented a divergence from the agency's sustainable and community-enabling approach to development. Senior staff planned to renew focus on project sustainability.

Staff described plans to implement PDM training, which includes discussions related to project resources. Volunteers would not be allowed to apply for grants until they had received this training. This plan would address the principal areas of Volunteer dissatisfaction and should enhance the effectiveness of the agency's small grants programs in Malawi.

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[7] SPA: Small Project Assistance; PCPP: Peace Corps Partnership Program, VAST: Volunteer Activities Support and Training.

We recommend:

> **6. That the country director ensure that grants-related training and support align with the Peace Corps approach to development.**

Ministry officials were not sufficiently informed about Volunteer project goals and activities.

According to the Peace Corps' *Programming and Training Guidance*, "Partners must be involved in the design process and must continue to be involved in the implementation and evaluation process so Peace Corps projects have ownership by partners, continue to address local and national priorities, implement activities that will be effective, and achieve results that will be sustainable."

Although, as we reported, ministry officials generally supported the Peace Corps mission and programming in their sectors, they did not feel sufficiently informed about Volunteer goals and activities. The officials we interviewed had not received any project documentation, such as project plans or activity reports, in the previous two years. Several officials could not recall the last time they had seen documentation or data on program operations from the Peace Corps. One official stated, "Right now we hear that (Volunteers) have come and then that they have gone, that's it." Another official said he only learns about Volunteer activities by visiting them in the field. The officials we met with also had not participated in any meetings with Peace Corps staff or Volunteers to discuss project goals and activities and provide feedback.

Without having seen any recent programming data, officials could not verify that ministry resources were effectively aligned with Peace Corps project activities. Officials saw a missed opportunity to share best practices with the post while also learning from Volunteers. One official noted, "We learn a lot from Volunteers as they work with us and interact with communities. They impart a lot of knowledge." Officials further believed that better communication with the post would increase knowledge about and receptivity to the Peace Corps program from senior ministers and encourage them to attend official Peace Corps functions. Officials also expressed a sense of responsibility for Volunteers and wanted the assurance of knowing what Volunteers were doing at their sites. The large size of the host country contribution offers an additional incentive for PC/Malawi to inform partners about Volunteer accomplishments, activities, and challenges.

Project Advisory Committees (PACs) are established by many Peace Corps posts to maintain the involvement of key project stakeholders. A former Malawi staff member reported that PACs had previously been established in Malawi but had not been sustained due to poor participation from partners. Ministry officials welcomed opportunities to work more closely with Peace Corps staff but acknowledged that in the past they have not always attended Peace Corps meetings. Programming staff confirmed that scheduling meetings with busy officials and high rates of turnover among ministry staff posed significant challenges for PACs. Nevertheless, ministry officials, programming staff, and senior staff were in agreement that establishing PACs would increase partner involvement and improve programming.

Senior staff discussed plans to increase partner involvement and awareness by implementing an annual report to partners using VRT data, which is an objective they added to the 2013 IPBS. This action would contribute to a goal in the agency's performance plan that 95 percent of posts provide annual progress reports to their partners.

We recommend:

> 7. **That the country director and director of programming and training establish project advisory committees.**
>
> 8. **That the country director provide an annual report to project stakeholders.**

Inconsistent and ineffective site preparation created challenges for Volunteers at the start of their service.

According to the agency's site development criteria documented in MS 270, "Each post must ensure that Volunteer sites, housing, and work assignments are appropriate and meet all Peace Corps and post-established criteria…Each post must establish and apply a process for developing, selecting, and approving sites…"

Data from the agency's 2011 annual Volunteer survey reflected growing PC/Malawi Volunteer dissatisfaction with site development. The data indicated that 43 percent of respondents in Malawi were minimally or not at all satisfied with site selection/preparation compared to the global average of 29 percent reporting dissatisfaction. The percentage of PC/ Malawi Volunteers expressing dissatisfaction in 2011 with site development increased from 24 percent in 2010.

In interviews, Volunteers reported housing and work-place problems that they believed would not have occurred with effective site development. Eight of the Volunteers we interviewed, almost half of the total, did not have adequate housing ready for them when they arrived at their sites. Five of the Volunteers we interviewed reported that their communities had not been expecting them at all. Seventy one percent of the Health Volunteers (5 of 7) we interviewed said their partners either did not understand or did not support their work activities. Some Health Volunteers felt unwelcome and resented by staff at health clinics and non-governmental organizations. Additionally, we learned from staff that six of the eighteen Volunteers sworn-in in May 2012, who were not included in our Volunteer sample, did not have housing ready for them.

Many of the problems faced by newly arriving Volunteers were caused by inconsistencies and lapses in the post's site development activities. Staff reported that they did not follow consistent procedures for developing, selecting, and approving sites. Some staff relied on memory and experience to conduct site development activities. A review of the post's site development documentation and site history files showed that site development criteria were out of date and

site history files were incomplete and poorly organized. Additionally, due to fuel shortages and lack of funding, some site development activities scheduled in 2011 were canceled entirely.

The post's ineffective site development activities and lack of follow-through resulted in inappropriate and potentially unsafe Volunteer housing and created work and integration challenges at the onset of their assignments. In January 2012, staff received approximately nine requests from Volunteers to change their sites. While post staff determined that not all of these requests were the result of poor site development, six of the Volunteers we interviewed had changed sites or initiated discussions with staff to change sites due to dissatisfaction with their site placement.

In discussions, senior staff acknowledged that there was site development deficiencies and described action taken to address them. In February 2012, staff implemented the agency's self assessment tool, the Administrative Management Control Survey (AMCS), and identified site development as an area of high risk. Staff added an objective to the post's IPBS to "identify and refine existing documents, guidelines, forms and protocols to develop a comprehensive site identification, selection, and preparation process that involves and creates 'ownership' in the communities." In August 2012, the CD issued a memo to staff outlining essential elements for site selection criteria and procedures. The full development and implementation of those procedures should help to ensure that Volunteers start their service with safe, adequate living accommodations and an opportunity to conduct meaningful work.

> **We recommend:**
>
> 9. **That the country director ensure that procedures for developing, selecting, and approving sites are established and implemented, and that site development activities are fully documented.**

Inadequate site preparation reduced the impact of Peace Corps Response assignments.

The Peace Corps Response (PCR) program offers short-term, high-impact assignments to experienced individuals. In Malawi, PCRVs are assigned for up to one year to district offices to help the government of Malawi strengthen district-level management, program monitoring and reporting to better respond to Malawi's HIV/AIDS epidemic. To meet these goals in a condensed period of time, the PCR job description provides detailed job responsibilities, project deliverables, and verifiable indicators. However, most of the PCRVs we interviewed were not conducting the work outlined in their job descriptions.

Four PCRVs were interviewed and they all reported that they had struggled to find their niche in district offices where they were placed. None of the PCRVs were working directly with their assigned counterpart, the director of planning and development, and said this official was too busy to collaborate with them and, in one case, unwilling to work with the Volunteer. Three of the PCRVs said they were only able to find meaningful, productive work by establishing

contacts outside of their district offices. One Volunteer developed a project at a prison, another at a hospital. Not only were some PCRVs not carrying out the work described in their job descriptions, they were also unable to quickly establish project activities – an essential component of short-term assignments. On average, it took the PCRVs we interviewed over three months to get their projects started. One Volunteer, who was serving a nine-month assignment, got a project up and running after six months at site.

While PCRVs and staff generally agreed that PCR assignments matched an area of need in Malawi, essential site development activities were not adequately conducted at PCR sites. PCRVs found that their assigned counterparts and other staff at the district offices were unfamiliar with the specifics of their assignments. The assigned counterparts were not viable counterparts and partner expectations had not been effectively established. In addition, none of the PCRVs we interviewed had housing ready for them when they arrived at site. It took PCRVs up to two months to secure housing, which further delayed their project activities. It should be noted that two of the PCRVs we interviewed were placed in different sites after individuals at their selected sites withdrew interest in receiving a Volunteer. Though these new sites had received little or no site preparation, there were similar issues reported at the prepared sites.

The post's Peace Corps/Response coordinator acknowledged that the work activities of some PCRVs did not align with their job descriptions and also that site development is an area that could use improvement. Staff relied on site development procedures from the programming unit that this evaluation has reported elsewhere in our report to be ineffective.

Effective host agency partnership and support is another programming challenge reported by staff. A memorandum of understanding (MOU) is in place with the national ministry but not at the district level, which poses a challenge because district-level officials typically move every two to four years. To address these challenges, PCR staff has asked each district to develop a three-year plan prior to receiving a Volunteer to increase host agency buy-in and mitigate the impact of staff turnover. Site development improvements and increased buy-in from district-level staff should increase the alignment of job descriptions with Volunteer work activities and reduce project implementation delays.

> **We recommend:**
>
> > **10. That the country director develop and implement improved procedures for developing, selecting, and approving Peace Corps Response program work sites.**

Peace Corps Response qualifications have been adjusted to increase the size of the applicant pool.

PCRVs contribute significantly to the post's efforts in HIV programming while also providing important training and support to two-year Volunteers. The post plans to expand its PCR program and to participate in the agency's Global Health Service Partnership by placing qualified PCRVs at schools of medicine and nursing. During the third quarter of FY 2012 the

post requested nine PCRVs to be recruited and placed in Malawi. However, by the end of the recruiting period, only two PCRVs had arrived in Malawi to fill those slots. PCR headquarters staff reported that the post's mandatory recruiting criteria, which included a master's degree, significantly reduced the size of the available applicant pool. Other difficulties impacted the post's third quarter recruitment campaign, including the unexpected withdrawal of four invited applicants and the recurring challenge of recruiting applicants during the third quarter due to the scarcity of applicants before the end of the academic year.

The PCRV shortfall resulted in the post not meeting its goal to place one PCRV in each of Malawi's local government districts and also jeopardized plans to expand the PCR program to 20 PCRVs in FY 2013 and to 28 in FY 2014. In a collaborative effort to increase the size of the applicant pool, staff at the post and headquarters agreed to remove the mandatory master's degree criteria. This educational criteria had not been requested by the host agency, and post program managers did not have concerns that removing this criteria would reduce the effectiveness of PCRVs. The PCRVs interviewed in the field also concurred that the master's degree requirement was not essential to successful assignments.

> **We recommend:**
>
> **11. That the Peace Corps/Response peer coordinator monitor the effectiveness of lowered qualifications requirements and, as necessary, collaborate with the Peace Corps Response office to further strengthen recruitment campaigns.**
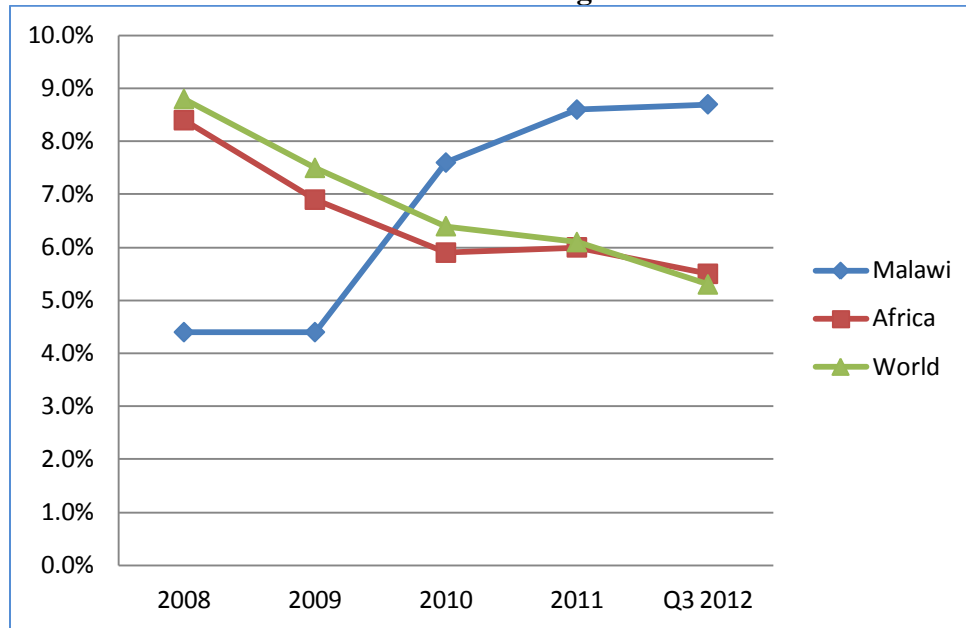
VOLUNTEER SUPPORT

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); post response to crime incidents; and the adequacy of the Volunteer living allowance.

The evaluation determined that Volunteers were very satisfied with staff support in the areas of safety and security, medical, and administrative support, which are discussed in more detail below. In a number of other areas, the post struggled to provide adequate support and oversight to Volunteers. Staff and Volunteers reported that Volunteers were disconnected from the office in Lilongwe, felt abandoned at their sites, and had become discouraged and demoralized. Additionally, staff including senior leadership at post had not set clear expectations for performance, and as a result, Volunteer professionalism had eroded and some Volunteers had stopped taking their assignments seriously. Our findings and analysis of these issues, along with recommendations for corrective action follow.

A review of agency data confirmed that Volunteer satisfaction had trended downwards during the past few years. The rate of Volunteer resignations can be viewed as an indicator of Volunteer satisfaction, and the resignation rate in Malawi saw an increase from 2009 through the third quarter of 2012 even as regional and global rates declined.[8]

Table 1. Rate of Volunteer Resignations in Malawi

Source: data compiled by the Office of Strategic Information, Planning and Research

The agency's annual Volunteer survey, which was conducted in Malawi from June-August 2011, had a response rate of only 46 percent compared to the average global response rate of 86 percent. Senior staff at the post viewed the low response rate as an indicator of poor morale. Volunteers who completed the survey indicated above average levels of dissatisfaction with multiple areas of Volunteer support, which can be viewed in Table 2 below.[9]

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[8] The agency defines a resignation as the voluntary exit of the Volunteer for any reason the Volunteer offers, if any.
[9] All responses are to the survey question, "How satisfied are you with the following support provided by in-country Peace Corps staff?"

Table 2. Volunteer Levels of Dissatisfaction with Key Areas of Staff Support
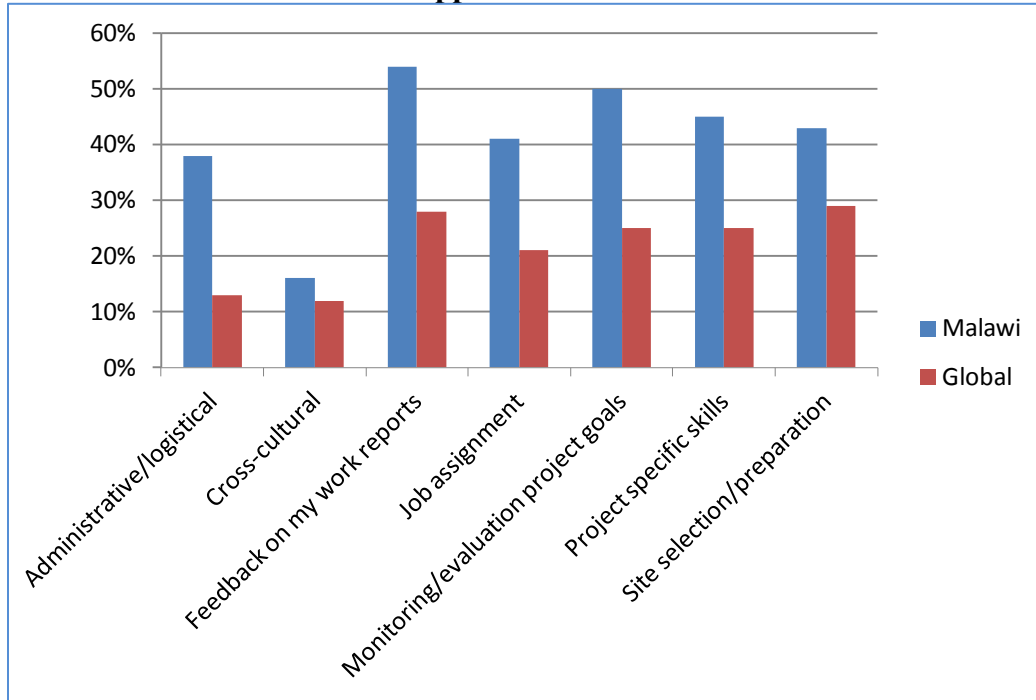
Source: data compiled by the Office of Strategic Information, Planning and Research

Since their arrival in Malawi towards the end of 2011, senior staff have identified and addressed a number of weaknesses in Volunteer support and Volunteers interviewed in our evaluation reported significant improvements due to measures taken. Volunteer comments included:

"[Staff support] dramatically changed with the new CD…I now have more face time with staff."

"[Senior staff] came in as a strong team identifying key areas that needed to be improved and it's very apparent they have been working on that."

"Leadership and support have drastically improved since [senior staff] arrived."

"[Senior staff] are taking seriously the issues that Volunteers have been presenting and they have a vision of what we can be and seriously moving forward on that."

Medical Unit Support. The post's medical unit was a highlight of Volunteer support. Interviewed Volunteers were very satisfied with the medical support provided by two full time PCMOs and a medical assistant. The agency's annual survey data from 2011 showed high rates of Volunteer satisfaction with the quality of interactions and communications with medical unit staff. Malawi had the highest rate in the region for Volunteer satisfaction with medical support.

SSC Support. The support provided by the post's SSC was another area of satisfaction identified by Volunteers. The agency's annual survey data from 2011 showed high rates of Volunteer satisfaction with the quality of interactions and communications with the SSC, and Volunteer satisfaction with safety support scored well compared to regional averages. Volunteers

were placed on alert following the sudden death of the president in April 2012, and staff at the embassy and Peace Corps safety and security staff were satisfied with the post's emergency response mechanisms. Eighty eight percent (15 of 17) of interviewed Volunteers felt adequately familiar with the post's EAP. Volunteers were satisfied with the handling of safety and security incidents by staff at post, and Embassy staff reported that security incidents are handled sensitively, quickly, and effectively. Comments from Volunteers included:

> "[The SSC] is really good. I know that he would get me out of a situation, he's our superhero. I was having trouble at the police station and I called him and he resolved it."

> "[The SSC] is great at his job and cares about us. He goes out of his way to know each Volunteer which is an important aspect of his job. He's very available."

> "[The SSC] is proactive and on top of things. He's good at chatting with Volunteers and humble but he'll tell it to you straight. I was almost arrested and he got me out of it."

> "[The SSC] is very on point. This house was previously broken into and we've worked together and he's responded very aggressively to the (safety) issues."

Administrative Support. Shortly after arriving in December 2011, the DMO conducted a survey that led to a 45 percent living allowance increase. A 10 percent emergency living allowance increase went into effect in August 2011 and another increase was expected in the summer of 2012. Ninety-three percent of the Volunteers we interviewed were satisfied with their new living allowances. Volunteers reported strong satisfaction with administrative support, which received the highest staff support rating in our survey. Volunteers were satisfied with staff responsiveness to their administrative needs and Volunteers were encouraged by the post's readiness to respond to the devaluation of Malawi's currency that occurred in May 2012. Comments from Volunteers included:

> "I was in office the morning [devaluation] happened. They were ready for it and we were not used to that. We spent six-nine months trying to address financial issues and couldn't get anything taken care of. [The DMO] also sent an email to explain what was going on. It was above and beyond."

> "[The DMO] is the remedy this country needed. He's proactive, gets things done, sends out texts, is totally on top of things…he has our health and happiness and safety in mind. These guys (DMO and CD) are turning PC/Malawi around."

> "I think there's been such a change here. One of the big changes is the increase of our living allowance. [The DMO] responds quickly and really listens to Volunteers. He's working hard to make Malawi work."

Volunteer Advisory Committee. The role of the post's Volunteer Advisory Committee (VAC) was revised prior to our evaluation fieldwork. Previously, VAC meetings were attended by a large number of staff who gave reports and updates and fielded questions from VAC members. One staff commented that attending the VAC meeting "was like meeting the board of directors." As part of the revisions, the CD and VAC members signed an MOU to shift the VAC's emphasis from policy involvement to advocacy for the Volunteer community. Attendance at VAC meetings has been reduced to the CD and several senior staff with unit representatives attending as needed. This shift in focus aligns with guidance found in *Characteristics and Strategies of a*

High Performing Post, which states the VAC should be an advisory group that meets just with the CD or with the CD and selected senior staff. VAC members supported the new MOU, and the Volunteers that we interviewed were generally satisfied with VAC activities.

Volunteers Supporting Volunteers. The post's peer support network, Volunteers Supporting Volunteers (VSV), is a support function that was improved prior to our evaluation fieldwork. Seventy-five percent (12 of 16) of the interviewed Volunteers were satisfied with VSV operations. Numerous Volunteers commented that in the past the VSV was weakened by inconsistent support procedures and a reputation for party planning rather than providing support, but that it had been strengthened following efforts by the current VSV members to overhaul the group's structure and goals. Volunteers reported positive and supportive interactions with VSV members through phone calls, text messages, and site visits.

While the post has already taken successful steps to strengthen Volunteer support and oversight, the evaluation did uncover a few areas that require additional management attention. The remainder of this section provides additional information about these topics as well as a further review of key Volunteer support issues.

Poor staff communication affected Volunteer morale and effectiveness.

According to *Characteristics and Strategies of a High Performing Post*, effective staff communication with Volunteers calls for "The country director and staff [to] communicate regularly and openly with Volunteers through a variety of means. They convey useful technical and program information and policies, and give encouragement, constructive suggestions, and admonitions, as appropriate. They also actively seek input from the Volunteers."

Interviews with staff and Volunteers revealed that staff at the post communicated poorly with Volunteers. Volunteers reported that staff were not proactive in contacting them and that they often left messages to staff that were unreturned and required repeated follow-up communications from them. Volunteers were also dissatisfied with the quality of staff communications, particularly the lack of follow-up communications and responses from staff, which Volunteers described as unhelpful. Volunteers did not feel they received sufficient technical guidance from staff and Volunteers described some support staff as aloof or reticent to listen to their challenges and experiences. Volunteers stated that staff was not encouraging and failed to set expectations for professionalism and standards of behavior.

Our findings were consistent with data in the agency's FY 2011 annual Volunteer survey, which reflected that Volunteers had higher than average rates of dissatisfaction with their interactions with the CD, APCDs, and administrative staff. Thirty-one percent of the PC/Malawi survey respondents reported their interactions with staff were "considerably" or "exceptionally" stressful, compared to the much lower global average of seven percent.

Staff also reported that some staff members were reluctant to admonish Volunteers for breaking rules and policies. Due to the lack of proactive communications from staff and the poor quality of follow up to their communications, Volunteers did not believe that staff was interested in their feedback.

Several elements of post operations and program management contributed to the poor quality of staff communications with Volunteers. The post's prior management structure, which concentrated decision-making at the top of the management team and disempowered support staff, discouraged staff from supervising Volunteers and weakened Volunteer support roles. The poor delineation of APCD and PA duties and responsibilities confused staff/Volunteer lines of communication. Staff lost key opportunities to communicate with Volunteers when site visits were canceled and abbreviated. Staff did not take advantage of opportunities to convey useful technical information to Volunteers through feedback to their quarterly reports.

Malawi's poor communications infrastructure created additional staff-Volunteer communications challenges. Many Volunteers did not have Internet access at their sites and Internet access could be slow with frequent disruptions. The quality of mobile phone cellular service was poor in much of the country and calls were blocked or interrupted by network problems. Text messages that remained unopened for three days were automatically deleted by the service provider.

The impact on Volunteers of poor staff communications was significant. Some Volunteers chose to avoid interacting with staff or visiting the office. Independently solving the problems encountered is important for successful Volunteer service. However, due to the poor quality or frequency of communication, Volunteers felt disconnected and became discouraged and struggled to take their assignments seriously. Volunteers' comments included:

> "I kind of got used to figuring it out on my own and being independent. You have to be or else you would be frustrated."

> "When we arrived the Volunteers told us to relax and it became apparent that there wasn't much seriousness. That goes in hand with support when what you are doing is not meaningful…I had to figure everything out on my own."

> "I communicate less with the office because it seems like it's not beneficial."

> "I have not felt supported at all. If you are struggling you have to keep that to yourself or you will feel worse when you go to the office, we are working against the office."

Volunteer professionalism declined due to the lack of effective supervision and expectation setting from staff. Incidents were reported of Volunteers behaving poorly at the ambassador's residence and during other events with U.S. embassy officials, host country officials, and other members of the U.S. mission in Malawi. While embassy staff were pleased overall with the quality of Volunteers, they were appalled by a few incidences of unacceptable Volunteer behavior. The OIG found that many Volunteers we interviewed were embarrassed by the behavior of their peers.

Improving staff communications with Volunteers has been a major focus of the post's current senior staff. Staff implemented a weekly news announcement that is distributed to all Volunteers. Support staff was asked to acknowledge receipt of messages and improve its response times, and its cell phone minutes were increased to allow for longer conversations with Volunteers when necessary. Senior staff is developing distinct roles for PAs to establish clear lines of communication. The staff also described plans to publish schedules for staff site visits in the

newsletter to increase Volunteer awareness of staff availability. Senior staff has placed a priority on site visits and quarterly report feedback. Due to the critical importance of effective communications, the post should make every effort to ensure that these steps are effective at establishing regular, open, and effective communications with Volunteers.

We recommend:

12. That the country director survey Volunteers to assess the effectiveness of staff communications and make adjustments, if necessary.

Volunteer site visit procedures were not adequately performed.

According to the post's site visit policies, each Volunteer should receive at least two site visits from programming staff during their service, the first occurring after four-ten months at site. Site visit policies also require that Volunteers are notified prior to the visit, that visits should be two to three hours in duration, that staff provides Volunteers with feedback regarding their performance, and that staff file site visit reports upon return to office. Interviews with Volunteers and staff confirmed that these site visit policies were not being followed.

Although all of the Volunteers interviewed had been at their sites longer than 10 months, two had not received a site visit from programming staff and only five Volunteers reported programming staff visited for at least two hours. Most Volunteers reported programming site visits were 15 to 45 minutes in duration. Volunteers also noted that site visits were unannounced and staff did not provide feedback regarding Volunteers' performance. A review of 16 files from the sampled Volunteers revealed that only seven files included site visit reports.

Insufficient funds to carry out site visits, combined with fuel shortages and poor planning, caused the cancellation of some site visits in 2011. Staff reported that they nevertheless made an effort to visit as many Volunteers as possible when they could travel but this resulted in unannounced and abbreviated visits that Volunteers found less useful. Only 50 percent of the Volunteers we interviewed were satisfied with site visits from programming staff.

Senior staff has taken some steps to improve site visits. The DMO developed a flexible quarterly budget plan for staff travel to ensure that funding is available for site visits and a site visit calendar will be published in the newsletter to alert Volunteers to travel plans.

We recommend:

13. That the post carry out site visits to each Volunteer according to its site visit policy.

Volunteers could not access their Emergency Action Plan.

According to the agency's safety and security policy contained in the MS 270.8.1, "Each post must develop and maintain a detailed EAP that addresses the most likely emergency situations that would impact Peace Corps personnel and operations." The policy states that the EAP must be revised annually and tested regularly.

Only 33 percent (five of 15) of the Volunteers we interviewed at their homes could easily locate a copy of the EAP, and not all of the copies that could be located were recent. The inability to access essential and up-to-date guidance and direction could pose a risk to Volunteers' safety should the EAP be activated.

> **We recommend:**
>
> > **14. That the country director ensure that all Volunteers have access to the post's Emergency Action Plan at their sites.**

Site locator forms were missing essential information.

Site locator forms (SLFs) contain information about the Volunteer's site, including communication and logistical information that could be needed in an emergency. Each Volunteer in Malawi is required to complete a SLF that forms part of the post's emergency communication system. According to Peace Corps safety and security standard operating procedures, the SSC should coordinate with appropriate staff to ensure that SLFs are reviewed during site visits and a system is in place for the review and improvement of maps to Volunteer residences.

A review of SLFs submitted by Volunteers in our interview sample revealed that two Volunteers had changed sites without submitting updated SLFs. The review also found incomplete contact information for local police and medical services. While traveling to Volunteers' sites, OIG reviewed SLFs, which include maps and directions, for accuracy. Only 23 percent (three of 13) of the reviewed SLFs contained sufficient information to locate Volunteers.[10] Missing or incomplete SLFs and inadequate maps and directions could pose a risk to Volunteers' safety in the event that contact cannot be established using designated communications means. Staff reviews of SLFs could mitigate this risk.

> **We recommend:**
>
> > **15. That the safety and security coordinator ensure that site locator forms are reviewed during site visits and a**

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[10] The evaluator traveled by car and reviewed maps and directions to 13 sites; a married couple shared the same SLF, which was counted only once for this exercise.

**system is in place to review and improve maps to
Volunteer residences when necessary.**

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;
- planning and development of the training life cycle;
- staffing and related budget.

The evaluation concluded that the training program in Malawi is generally effective at preparing Volunteers for their service though there are several areas for improvement. The following table summarizes Volunteers' perceptions on the effectiveness of their training.

Table 3. Volunteer Perceptions of Training Effectiveness

Area	Percent of Volunteers Who Rated Training Favorably	Average Rating
PST Language	100%	4.0
PST Culture	82%	3.5
PST Safety & Security	100%	4.2
PST Medical	100%	4.2
PST Technical	59%	2.8
HIV/AIDS	50%	2.9
Grants	47%	2.5

Source: OIG interviews.

As indicated in the table, Volunteers were satisfied with the local language, safety and security, and medical portions of PST. Volunteers were also, for the most part, satisfied with cultural training. Training areas that require management attention include technical training, HIV/AIDS training, and grants training.

Training staff reported that financial constraints have been a significant challenge for the training program. The training budget was cut in 2011 and those cuts reduced funding to several key areas of PST, including Training of Trainers (TOT), food supplies for host families, and staff travel. Training staff were satisfied with adjustments made by senior staff to include them in the budget process.

At the time fieldwork was conducted for this evaluation, staff was in the process of incorporating the agency's FITU curriculum into the post's training program. Staff reported that some local training staff struggled with the high level of detail found in the FITU materials and training staff were considering lengthening TOT. Nonetheless, staff was optimistic that FITU would enhance the training program.

PST Host Families. During PST all Volunteers live with a host family located near the training site. One hundred percent of the Volunteers we interviewed were satisfied with their host family experience and the average response rating was 4.6. Volunteers stated that their host family members provided effective cross-cultural and local language training. Some Volunteers were trained in a different local language than their host family but they still found value in the cross-cultural experience and the support their host families provided during the challenging training program.

Diversity Training. The post's diversity committee, which is comprised of Volunteers and staff, worked with the DPT to implement significant improvements to the post's diversity program. After arriving in Malawi towards the end of 2011, the DPT helped the diversity committee establish bylaws and a mission statement and develop and implement training objectives and lesson plans for diversity training sessions. In interviews Volunteers noted significant improvement to the diversity training program. Diversity training for staff is an ongoing area of need and the post made plans in its 2011 IPBS to request a diversity trainer to come to Malawi to provide training for staff and Volunteers.

Technical and HIV/AIDS training did not adequately prepare Volunteers for work activities.

MS 201, "Eligibility and Standards for Peace Corps Volunteer Service," states that a trainee must demonstrate technical competence, which is defined as "proficiency in the technical skills needed to carry out the assignment" by the end of training. Volunteers we interviewed did not consider PST technical training or HIV/AIDS training sufficient to effectively carry out their work activities.

Technical Training. Only 59 percent (ten of 17) of interviewed Volunteers rated PST technical training favorably. This low rating is consistent with data from the agency's 2011 annual Volunteer survey in which PC/Malawi Volunteers rated technical training lower than the global average. Education Volunteers felt the least prepared as indicated in the table below.

Table 4. Responses on Perceptions of Technical Training Effectiveness

Sector	Percent of Volunteers Rating "Average Effectiveness" or Better	Average Rating for Effectiveness
Education	50%	2.4
Health	57%	3
NRM	100%	3.3

Volunteers indicated several areas in need of improvement including more focused and better-organized sessions and better-trained technical trainers. Education Volunteers said their technical trainers were new and inexperienced which resulted in poor training delivery. Training staff acknowledged that high turnover with technical trainers had been an ongoing challenge. Not only were all the education technical trainers new in 2011, but their training was reduced by several days due to budget cuts.

Training staff had begun to implement the agency's new FITU global technical curricula, which was the focus for technical training improvements. Senior staff described plans to further

improve the delivery of technical training by reducing the role of contracted trainers and increasing the participation of APCDs, who have not been involved in technical training. Training staff agreed that the participation of APCDs would increase the quality of technical training.

HIV/AIDS Training. Only 50 percent (eight of 16) of the Volunteers we interviewed rated HIV/AIDS training favorably. Volunteers were dissatisfied with the focus of the training sessions. Some Volunteers commented that the training was too technically advanced and failed to cover basic concepts such as how the disease is transmitted. Others felt that the training was pertinent for Health Volunteers, though less feasible in schools or more rural NRM sites. Additionally, Volunteers' different needs, based on their site placements and prior knowledge, skills, and abilities relative to HIV/AIDS, were not sufficiently accommodated in the training.

Staff worked to improve the HIV/AIDS curriculum in 2012 and Volunteers who assisted with a PST in March 2012 reported that the HIV/AIDS training contained significant improvements. At the time fieldwork was conducted for this evaluation, staff had not yet reviewed training results to assess those training improvements.

We recommend:

16. **That the director of programming and training incorporate the participation of associate Peace Corps directors into technical training.**

17. **That the director of programming and training monitor the effectiveness of technical training and make appropriate improvements.**

18. **That the director of programming and training monitor the effectiveness of HIV/AIDS training and make appropriate improvements.**

Grants training did not adequately prepare Volunteers to use Peace Corps' small grants programs.

Characteristics and Strategies of a High Performing Post states:

> To ensure that the [grant] process is done right and that dependencies aren't created, Volunteers must understand how to generate resources and promote activities as a project or community enabler, rather than as the means to a gift that the organization or community begins to rely on or expect. This should be discussed initially during PST and then during an early project design and management (PDM) IST that will provide detailed training on how to help a community access resources.

Only 47 percent (eight of 17) of the Volunteers we interviewed rated grants training favorably. As we demonstrated in the "Programming" section of this report, training failed to discuss areas

of concern related to outside funding, such as corruption and lack of sustainability. Volunteers also reported that training did not provide sufficient instruction on how to effectively complete grants applications. As a result, Volunteers were reluctant to submit grant proposals and poorly prepared to do so.

Senior staff related plans to implement PDM training, which Volunteers would be required to complete before they could submit grant proposals. The agency's PDM training manual underscores the importance of focusing training sessions on topics such as resource identification and funding sources. The completion of PDM training would ensure that Volunteer's are more thoroughly prepared to consider the use of grants in their communities and increase the impact and effectiveness of the agency's small grants programs in Malawi.

> **We recommend:**
>
> > **19. That the country director ensure that Volunteers are adequately trained to use Peace Corps' small grants programs.**

PRESIDENT'S EMERGENCY PLAN FOR AIDS RELIEF

Another objective of this post evaluation is to answer the question "is the post able to adequately administer the PEPFAR program, support Volunteers, and meet its PEPFAR objectives?" To answer this question, we evaluate:

- Whether the post is implementing its PEPFAR objectives as laid out in the annual implementation plan.
- Relationships between the post and coordinating partners.
- Whether Volunteers are fulfilling HIV/AIDS-related assignments and handling related challenges.

The post uses PEPFAR funds to fully support the costs of PCRVs, partially support two-year Volunteer costs, and for HIV/AIDS training for all Volunteers. Staff and Volunteers reported that the post is implementing its PEPFAR objectives and Volunteers are fulfilling HIV/AIDS-related assignments and handling related challenges. However, our evaluation revealed weaknesses with the post's relationships with key PEPFAR partners and its ability to report HIV-related results. The collection of sufficient information on the PCV's PEPFAR-funded activities is an important aspect of program monitoring and reporting.

The post did not effectively collect HIV-related data.

As part of the annual PSR process, the post must submit an HIV/AIDS Initiative report that helps the agency support the initiative and provides data for agency-wide aggregation included in the agency's *Performance and Accountability Report* (PAR).

Only eight of 14 Volunteers who conducted HIV-related activities reported those activities on their VRF. This under-reporting was caused by a combination of systemic data collection and reporting weaknesses, which we reviewed in the "Management Controls" section of this report, as well as the fact that the VRT did not contain specific HIV indicators. In order to meet agency reporting requirements, staff was required to scan a VRT printout for relevant data and contact Volunteers to ask if their activities were HIV-related.

PCRVs, who work towards specific HIV-related goals, were also not reporting their activities on VRFs. Only one of the four PCRVs we interviewed had completed a VRF. PCRVs reported that the VRFs had not been tailored to their specific activities, and they were unsure how to report them in the VRF.

The post's difficulties collecting HIV-related data caused under-reporting and reduced the quality and accuracy of agency-wide aggregated data. Incomplete data also hinders the agency's ability to support the HIV/AIDS initiative. This under-reporting also made it challenging for staff at the post to demonstrate the impact of the post's efforts to address HIV-related issues and obtain the necessary buy-in from key PEPFAR partners. In an effort to strengthen the post's HIV programming, senior staff described plans to improve HIV performance reporting by adding HIV indicators to the post's reporting tool and integrating PCR goals and objectives into the health project framework.

> **We recommend:**
>
> **20. That the country director ensure that HIV-related performance data is effectively collected.**
>
> **21. That the country director ensure that Peace Corps Response activities are incorporated into the Volunteer reporting tool.**

The post has taken steps to more effectively collaborate with PEPFAR country team members.

Although PEPFAR budgets are reviewed and approved by the agency, posts must coordinate with country teams to request PEPFAR funds from the Office of U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator (OGAC). Country teams are comprised of agencies such as USAID and HHS that often submit funding requests that far exceed Peace Corps'. Staff at the U.S. Embassy in Malawi reported that the post had missed important country team meetings which reduced the post's leverage with the country team. The staff commented, "There are a lot of strong personalities in these agencies and for Peace Corps to have a say they have to be involved and be active. If they are passive they won't be considered legitimate players." Staff at the post acknowledged that poor collaboration with other agencies had been a weakness of the post's HIV program.

The post's PEPFAR FY 2012 funding request was 1.3 million dollars. However, the post was allocated less than $700,000, which was not sufficient to fully implement the post's PEPFAR-related activities. Post staff speculated that the lower allocation resulted from the lack of

participation with the country team and an inability to demonstrate results. One staff reported "There was a bad vibe in the [country team] meetings, like we just want money…a comment I heard was that Peace Corps is only interested in photo ops."

Senior staff at the post has increased the post's presence at PEPFAR country team meetings. The CD attended country team meetings and shared plans to strengthen HIV programming and improve the post's HIV-related data collection and reporting processes. The country team responded positively and increased the post's funding allocation to just over $1 million. At the time fieldwork was conducted for this evaluation, the post was awarded an additional $600,000 in PEPFAR funds, bringing the total funding beyond the post's initial request. Staff at the embassy commented that the additional funds indicated confidence from the country team that the post's PEPFAR program was strengthening.

OBJECTIVE, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

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

The Evaluation Unit within the Peace Corps OIG 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.

OIG Evaluation Unit announced its intent to conduct an evaluation of PC/Malawi on March 22, 2012. 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 agency support effectively aligned with the post's mission and agency priorities?
- Is the post able to adequately administer the PEPFAR program, support Volunteers, and meet its PEPFAR objectives?

At the onset of this evaluation there were 12 PCRVs in Malawi and we added interviews with PCR staff and PCRVs to the scope of our evaluation. There were also 37 trainees in PST at the onset of this evaluation. These trainees swore-in as Volunteers May 2, 2012. This group of Volunteers had only been at site for one month during our field work and, though we did meet briefly with two Volunteers from this group, they were not included in the sample of Volunteers.

The evaluator conducted the preliminary research portion of the evaluation March 21-May 18, 2012. This research included review of agency documents provided by headquarters and post staff; interviews with management staff representing the Africa region, the office of Overseas Programming and Training Support (OPATS), the Office of Global Health and HIV (OGHH), the Office of Safety and Security (SS), and PCR; and inquiries to the Office of Volunteer Support, Office of Intergovernmental Affairs and Partnerships, the Office of Private Sector Initiatives, and the Office of Volunteer Recruitment and Selection.

In-country fieldwork occurred from May 21-June 8, 2012, and included interviews with post senior staff in charge of programming, training, and support; the U.S. Deputy Chief of Mission; the embassy assistant regional security officer; the embassy PEPFAR coordinator, and host country government ministry officials. In addition, we interviewed a stratified judgmental

sample of 17 Volunteers (20 percent of Volunteers serving at the onset of our evaluation) based on their length of service, site location, project focus, gender, age, marital status, 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 (CIGIE). The evidence, findings, and recommendations provided in this report have been reviewed by agency stakeholders affected by this review.

INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED

As part of this post evaluation, interviews were conducted with 17 Volunteers, four PCRVs, 15 staff members in-country, and 19 representatives from Peace Corps headquarters in Washington D.C. and Africa, the U.S. Embassy in Malawi, and key host country ministry officials. 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 "3" and above are considered favorable. In addition, Volunteer interviews occurred at the Volunteers' homes, which we inspected 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 Malawi; the Volunteer sample was selected to reflect these demographics.

Table 5. Volunteer Demographic Data

Project	Percentage of Volunteers
Education	38%
Environment	23%
Health	39%
Gender	**Percentage of Volunteers**
Female	55%
Male	45%
Age	**Percentage of Volunteers**
25 or younger	47%
26-29	30%
30-49	21%
50 and over	2%

Source: PC/Malawi Volunteer roster.
Note: Percentages may not total 100 percent due to rounding.

At the time of our field visit, PC/Malawi had 33 positions staffed.[11] The post also employs temporary staff/contractors to assist with PST. Given the time of our visit, these positions were not staffed. We interviewed 15 staff members.

Table 6. Interviews Conducted with PC/Malawi Staff Members

Position	Status	Interviewed
Country Director	USDH	X
Director of Programming and Training (vacant)	USDH	X
Director of Management and Operations	USDH	X
Executive Assistant	PSC*	X
Safety and Security Coordinator	PSC	X
Peace Corps Medical Officer (2)(one interviewed)	PSC	X
Medical Assistant	PSC	
Associate Peace Corps Director (3)	PSC	X
Training Manager	PSC	X
HIV Program Coordinator	PSC	X
Peace Corps Response Coordinator	PSC	X
Program Assistant/PCPP Coordinator	PSC	X
Program Assistant/IRC Manager	PSC	X
Program Assistant/SPA Coordinator	PSC	X
Language Cross-cultural Coordinator	PSC	
Financial Assistant	FSN*	
Cashier	FSN	
IT Specialist	PSC	
Volunteer Support Assistant	PSC	
General Services Officer	PSC	
Receptionist	PSC	
General Services Assistant	PSC	
Head Driver/Mechanic	PSC	
Driver (5)	PSC	
Janitor (2)	PSC	
Gardener	PSC	

Data as of June 2012. *PSC is personal services contractor; FSN is foreign service national.

Nineteen 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 7. Interviews Conducted with PC/Headquarters & Global Staff,
Embassy Officials, and Ministry Officials**

Position	Organization
Regional Director	PC/headquarters/AF region
Chief of Operations	PC/headquarters/AF region
Chief of Programming and Training	PC/headquarters/AF region
Country Desk Officer	PC/headquarters/AF region

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[11] The DPT position was vacant at the time of our field visit. The former DPT, who departed the post for medical reasons in April 2012, was interviewed at PC/headquarters in Washington.

Chief Administrative Officer	PC/headquarters/AF region
Regional Security Advisor	PC/headquarters/AF region
Programming and Training Specialist	PC/headquarters/OPATS
Chief of Programming and Training	PC/headquarters/OGHH
Programming Specialist	PC/headquarters/PCR
Recruitment and Placement Specialist	PC/headquarters/PCR
Peace Corps Safety and Security Officer	PC/headquarters/SS/AF
Former PC/Malawi USDH	PC/headquarters
Deputy Chief of Mission	U.S. Embassy in Malawi
Assistant Regional Security Officer	U.S. Embassy in Malawi
PEPFAR Coordinator	U.S. Embassy in Malawi
Director	Ministry of Forestry
Chief Education Officer	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
Director, Sector-Wide Approach	Ministry of Health
Director, Parks and Wildlife	Ministry of Information and Tourism

Data as of June 2012.

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

WE RECOMMEND:

1. That the regional chief of administrative operations ensure that the post's operating plan funds essential operations with appropriated funds rather than host country contributions.

2. That the country director and director of programming and training ensure that programming staff work roles are clearly delineated and aligned with position descriptions.

3. That the director of programming and training ensure that project frameworks are aligned with the Volunteer Reporting Forms.

4. That the director of programming and training ensure that Volunteers are adequately trained to collect performance data and record it on their reporting form.

5. That the director of programming and training require programming staff to provide timely and substantive feedback to Volunteers who submit a Volunteer reporting form.

6. That the country director ensure that grants-related training and support align with the Peace Corps approach to development.

7. That the country director and director of programming and training establish project advisory committees.

8. That the country director provide an annual report to project stakeholders.

9. That the country director ensure that procedures for developing, selecting, and approving sites are established and implemented, and that site development activities are fully documented.

10. That the country director develop and implement improved procedures for developing, selecting, and approving Peace Corps Response program work sites.

11. That the Peace Corps/Response peer coordinator monitor the effectiveness of lowered qualifications requirements and, as necessary, collaborate with the Peace Corps Response office to further strengthen recruitment campaigns.

12. That the country director survey Volunteers to assess the effectiveness of staff communications and make adjustments, if necessary.

13. That the post carry out site visits to each Volunteer according to its site visit policy.

14. That the country director ensure that all Volunteers have access to the post's Emergency Action Plan at their sites.

15. That the safety and security coordinator ensure that site locator forms are reviewed during site visits and a system is in place to review and improve maps to Volunteer residences when necessary.

16. That the director of programming and training incorporate the participation of associate Peace Corps directors into technical training.

17. That the director of programming and training monitor the effectiveness of technical training and make appropriate improvements.

18. That the director of programming and training monitor the effectiveness of HIV/AIDS training and make appropriate improvements.

19. That the country director ensure that Volunteers are adequately trained to use Peace Corps' small grants programs.

20. That the country director ensure that HIV-related performance data is effectively collected.

21. That the country director ensure that Peace Corps Response activities are incorporated into the Volunteer reporting tool.

APPENDIX A: LIST OF ACRONYMS

AMCS	Administrative Management Control Survey
APCD	Assistant Peace Corps director
CCBI	Community Content Based Instruction
CDSS	Community Day Secondary Schools
CD	Country Director
DMO	Director of Management Operations
EAP	Emergency Action Plan
FITU	Focus In/Train Up
HCC	Host Country Contributions
IG	The Inspector General
IPBS	Integrated Planning and Budget System
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MS	Peace Corps Manual Section
OIG	Office of Inspector General
OGAC	Office of U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator
OGHH	The Office of Global Health and HIV
OPATS	Overseas Programming and Training Support
PA	Program Assistant
PAC	Project Advisory Committees
PAR	Performance and Accountability Report
PCR	Peace Corps Response
PCRV	Peace Corps Response Volunteers
PDM	Project Design and Management
PEPFAR	President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief
PLWA	People Living with HIV/AIDS
PSR	Project Status Reporting
PST	Pre-service Training
SLF	Site locator forms
SS	The Office of Safety and Security
TOT	Training of Trainers
USDH	U.S. Direct Hire
VAC	Volunteer Advisory Committee
VRF	Volunteer Reporting Form
VRT	Volunteer Reporting Tool
VSV	Volunteers Supporting Volunteers

Since 1961.

MEMORANDUM

To: Kathy Buller, Inspector General

Through: Daljit K. Bains, Chief Compliance Officer

From: *for* Dick Day, Regional Director, Africa Region *Michael J. Simsik*
             Kevin Novotny, Country Director

Date: February 25, 2013

CC: Carrie Hessler-Radelet, Acting Director
             Stacy Rhodes, Chief of Staff
             Joaquin Ferrao, Deputy Inspector General
             Jim O'Keefe, Assistant Inspector General/Evaluations
             Esther Benjamin, Associate Director, Global Operations
             Michael Simsik, Chief of Operations, Africa Region
             Alyssa Karp, Chief Administrative Officer, Africa Region
             Krista Rigalo, Chief of Programming and Training, Africa Region
             Sarah Morgenthau, Director, Peace Corps Response

Subject: Agency Response to the OIG Program Evaluation of Peace Corps/Malawi, January
             2013

Enclosed please find the agency's response to the recommendations made by the Inspector General for Peace Corps/Malawi, as outlined in the Preliminary Report of the Audit of the IG Audit sent to the Agency on January 3, 2013.

The Region concurs with 21 recommendations as listed in the Preliminary Audit Report: Peace Corps/Malawi. Post has addressed and provided supporting documentation for 11 of the 21 recommendations 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.

Recommendation 1

That the regional chief of administrative operations ensure that the post's operating plan funds essential operations with appropriated funds rather than host country contributions.

> **Concur:**
> Post's FY13 Operating Plan assures that essential operations are funded by appropriated and PEPFAR funds (as appropriate) and not dependent on Host Country Contributions (HCC). HCC has been reprogrammed to support PCV activities such as MST, COS conference, etc.
>
> **Documents Submitted:**
> - N/A
>
> **Status and Timeline for Completion:** Completed August 2012

Recommendation 2

That the country director and director of programming and training ensure that programming staff work roles are clearly delineated and aligned with position descriptions.

> **Concur:**
> Post developed and implemented a task analysis for the Program Assistants and APCDs to more clearly delineate their roles and responsibilities within the various realms of Volunteer support. This task analysis has been disseminated to all PCVs.
>
> **Documents Submitted:**
> - Peace Corps-Malawi Programming and Training Task Analysis (January 2013)
>
> **Status and Timeline for Completion:** Completed, January 2013

Recommendation 3

That the director of programming and training ensure that project frameworks are aligned with the Volunteer Reporting Forms.

> **Concur:**
> The Volunteer Reporting Forms (VRF) will be aligned with the project frameworks once the Frameworks are finalized after the portfolio review scheduled for June 17 - July 3, 2013.
>
> **Documents Submitted:**
> - N/A
>
> **Status and Timeline for Completion:** Will be completed by September 30, 2013

Recommendation 4
That the director of programming and training ensure that Volunteers are adequately trained to collect performance data and record it on their reporting form.

> **Concur:**
> In December 2012, at the Education IST, Volunteers received training on data collection and reporting in a session where they learned how to report their work through the VRT. PC/Malawi now provides essential monitoring and evaluation training sessions based on the FITU Global Core M&E Training sessions in PST, while training on VRT will continue to take place during ISTs, and M&E refresher sessions will be presented at MSTs, as necessary.
>
> **Documents Submitted:**
> Peace Corps Volunteer VRF Training (from Education In-Service Training-December 2012)
>
> **Status and Timeline for Completion:** Completed, December 2012

Recommendation 5
That the director of programming and training require programming staff to provide timely and substantive feedback to Volunteers who submit a Volunteer reporting form.

> **Concur:**
> Through the bi-monthly PC/Malawi newsletter the country director and director of programming and training have made it clear and public to PCVs and staff that not responding to PCVs reports with quality and timely feedback is not acceptable. In addition, the DPT is developing guidance for Program Staff to ensure a consistent and thorough review and feedback process once VRFs have been received. During the next annual performance appraisal process, staff VRF feedback rates to Volunteers will be considered a factor in determining how well staff met performance objectives and will impact salary step increases and staff contract renewals. Confirmation that feedback has been received should occur in all cases and feedback should be provided within 30 days of receipt of VRFs.
>
> **Documents Submitted:**
> - PC/Malawi newsletter (*Zimachitika*) for January-February 2013
> - Email Guidance for Program Staff on reviewing PCV VRF
> - Emails regarding reports submissions
>
> **Status and Timeline for Completion:** Completed February 2013

Recommendation 6
That the country director ensure that grants-related training and support align with the Peace Corps approach to development.

> **Concur:**
> PC/Malawi has incorporated Project Design and Management (PDM) training into the first IST for all sectors approximately three months after they swear-in. This training is from the PDM Manual and focuses on Peace Corps' approach to development. Tied to the PDM training sessions is a session on the available grant mechanisms at PC/Malawi. These

sessions, along with the new consolidated grant process, has improved the management of the small grants program. These sessions received very high marks at the recent Education IST in December 2012.

Documents Submitted:
The New Project Design and Management Workshop Training Manual; Peace Corps Information Collection and Exchange; Publication Number T0107. Note: on the Peace Corps web site at: http://files.peacecorps.gov/multimedia/pdf/library/T0107_projectdesign.pdf

Status and Timeline for Completion: Completed August 2012

Recommendation 7
That the country director and director of programming and training establish project advisory committees.

Concur:
PC/Malawi will identify project advisory committee stakeholders over the next several months and the committee will be established and activated during the Portfolio Review scheduled for June 17 - July 3, 2013.

Documents to be Submitted:
- List of Stakeholders

Status and Timeline for Completion: Will be completed by September 30, 2013

Recommendation 8
That the country director provide an annual report to project stakeholders.

Concur:
The country director is currently in the process of collecting example annual reports from other PC Posts in Africa, as PC/Malawi intends to develop an annual report to correspond with the current fiscal year for dissemination at the end of the calendar year.

Documents Submitted:
- N/A

Documents to be Submitted:
- Annual Report 2013

Status and Timeline for Completion: Will be completed by December 31, 2013

Recommendation 9
That the country director ensure that procedures for developing, selecting, and approving sites are established and implemented, and that site development activities are fully documented.

Concur:
PC/Malawi is in the process of reviewing site development procedures and guidelines used in the past as well as collecting resources from other PC Posts.   PC/Malawi has incorporated some of these ideas (e.g., use of checklists, site preparation forms, etc.), into the current process of site development for the upcoming PST. PC/Malawi will continue to refine the process as we go forward in preparation of the June PST, and from that process will finalize a standard procedure for the identification, selection, and preparation of sites.

Documents Submitted:
- N/A

Documents to be Submitted:
- Peace Corps-Malawi Site Development Guidelines

Status and Timeline for Completion: Will be completed by September 30, 2013

Recommendation 10
That the country director develop and implement improved procedures for developing, selecting, and approving Peace Corps Response program work sites.

Concur:
With the next intake of Peace Corps Response Volunteers (PCRVs) on February 19, 2013, Post will be analyzing the Peace Corps Response program with our partners and stakeholders to define a three-year strategic framework and assure that PCRVs have clearly defined standard jobs and that their assignments are in line with the needs and priorities of the Government of Malawi, rather than identifying the needs of each individual site.   This will further be integrated in the Health Project Framework during the Portfolio Review scheduled for June 17 - July 3, 2013

Documents Submitted:
- N/A

Status and Timeline for Completion: Will be completed by September 30, 2013

Recommendation 11
That the Peace Corps/Response peer coordinator monitor the effectiveness of lowered qualifications requirements and, as necessary, collaborate with the Peace Corps Response office to further strengthen recruitment campaigns.

> **Concur:**
> In 2012 PC/Malawi in conjunction with the Ministry Local Government and Rural Development, eliminated the Master of Public Health requirement for his position as it was not relevant to the work the PCRVs were doing, and possibly hindering recruitment fill rates. With the next intake of Peace Corps Response Volunteers (PCRVs) on February 19, 2013, Post will be analyzing the Peace Corps Response program with our partners and stakeholders to define a three-year strategic framework and assure that PCRVs skill requirements are appropriate for the direction of the program.
>
> **Documents Submitted**:
> - N/A
>
> **Status and Timeline for Completion:** Will be completed by September 30, 2013

Recommendation 12
That the country director survey Volunteers to assess the effectiveness of staff communications and make adjustments, if necessary.

> **Concur:**
> Formal and informal evaluation has led us to believe that communication has improved throughout PC/Malawi. The need for better communication has been raised in nearly every VAC meeting since January 2012, as well as in the OIG Program Evaluation debrief, and in informal and formal meetings with PCVs. In order to address communication concerns, in June 2012 PC/Malawi initiated a weekly email to Volunteers with essential 'need-to-know' information such as staff travel schedules, duty office roster, upcoming events, and deadlines, etc. The director of management and operations also raised PC/Malawi staff members' cell phone limits to assure they would have sufficient air time credit to make follow-up calls to PCVs. With the Annual Volunteer Survey results of 2012, PC/Malawi also noted that 78% of PCVs in Malawi prefer text or phone calls to receive information; thus, PC/Malawi has been texting targeted important information (such as road closures or anticipated strikes), as well as using the weekly email notice. For the first time in several months, during the VAC meeting on November 30, 2012, communication was not an issue raised by PCVs. In addition, formal discussions (recent Environment and Health COS feedback sessions) and informal discussions with PCVs point to increased satisfaction with these measures and the frequency of PC/Malawi office communication.
>
> **Documents Submitted**:
> - 2013 Environment COS Conference Feedback
> - VAC Meeting Minutes February 1, 2013
>
> **Status and Timeline for Completion:** Completed February 2013

Recommendation 13
That the post carry out site visits to each Volunteer according to its site visit policy.

Concur:
Post has developed a site visit policy that has been in force and practiced since its development in June 2012. The site visit policy and guidelines articulate the objectives, expectations, and roles and responsibilities of the PCV and staff member. PC/Malawi has added more detail in the current site visit guidelines to ensure that follow-up actions are documented and carried out in a defined timeframe.

Documents Submitted:
- Peace Corps-Malawi Site Visit Policy

Status and Timeline for Completion: Completed June 2012

Recommendation 14
That the country director ensure that all Volunteers have access to the post's Emergency Action Plan at their sites.

Concur:
The Emergency Action Plan (EAP) is posted on SharePoint, is available in the Volunteer lounge and Information Resource Center (IRC), and by practice all PCVs receive a hard copy at PST, and electronic updates with pertinent information such as warden lists.

Documents Submitted:
- EAP SharePoint

Status and Timeline for Completion: Completed and ongoing.

Recommendation 15
That the safety and security coordinator ensure that site locator forms are reviewed during site visits and a system is in place to review and improve maps to Volunteer residences when necessary.

Concur:
All volunteers are requested to submit site locator forms within thirty days after being deployed to site. The information is then fed onto Volunteer Information Data Analysis (VIDA). These are further reviewed and clarified as need be at the first IST, approximately three months into the PCV's service. As staff (Programmers, SSC, Drivers, and PCMO) conduct site visits they carry copies of filled site locator forms for review and editing as necessary. Beginning in June 2012, the SSC has also sent a weekly reminder in the PC/Malawi weekly email communication to Volunteers. PCVs that do not submit site locator information within 30 days after site placement or changing sites are denied vacation and/or out-of-site permission.

Documents Submitted:
- Weekly email re: Site Locator

Recommendation 16
That the director of programming and training incorporate the participation of associate Peace Corps directors into technical training.

    Concur:
    Beginning with the Education PST (June 2012 – August 2012), and continuing into the next PST for HE/ENV (March 2013 – May 2013), both APCDs and PAs have been more involved with the development, delivery, and quality assurance of technical training. This is through actually facilitating sessions, and monitoring the trainers and Training Resource Volunteers. This is evidenced in the changed needs for external technical trainers: one FTE per sector as opposed to three FTE per sector as has been the past practice.

    Documents Submitted:
- FY 2012 Training Status Report
- 2012 Education TOT and COTE

    Status and Timeline for Completion: Completed February 2013

Recommendation 17
That the director of programming and training monitor the effectiveness of technical training and make appropriate improvements.

    Concur:
    Starting with the Education Pre-Service Training (PST) in June 2012, Peace Corps-Malawi began strengthening its focus on evaluation, beginning with level one of Kirkpatrick's four-level model for training course evaluation. In November 2012, the director of programming and training required that at minimum a level one evaluation be conducted for every training event. . Between March 2013 and the end of fiscal year 2013, post will undergo the majority of their training schedule, including two PSTs, Mid-Service Trainings (MSTs), and other In-Service Trainings (ISTs), allowing for a full cycle of assessment and improved approaches to technical training. During the upcoming PST in March, Peace Corps Malawi will intensify its focus on preparing appropriate Health and Environment technical sessions and will pilot level one and two evaluations. At the Education PST in June, Peace Corps Malawi will adjust and finalize the level one and two evaluation process to ensure PCVs have the essential technical knowledge and skills to succeed in their PC service. The DPT is also developing a process to ensure needs assessments are conducted prior to commencement of technical training events, including IST and MST.

    Documents Submitted:
- N/A

    Documents to be Submitted:
- Sample Level One Evaluation Form

Will be completed by September 30, 2013

Recommendation 18
That the director of programming and training monitor the effectiveness of HIV/AIDS training and make appropriate improvements.

Concur:
Based on PCV feedback, the Annual Volunteer Survey, and debrief of the OIG Program Evaluation, PC/Malawi has initiated in depth HIV/AIDS trainings as standalone ISTs. Post has standardized training in Action for Natural Medicine (ANAMED) Behavior Change Communication/Life skills, and Grassroots Soccer, and a systematic evaluation process after the event.

Documents Submitted:
- PCV and Counterpart Evaluation Grass Roots Soccer
- Questionnaire for Evaluation of ANAMED Training

Status and Timeline for Completion: February 2013

Recommendation 19
That the country director ensure that Volunteers are adequately trained to use Peace Corps' small grants programs.

Concur:
PC/Malawi has incorporated Project Design and Management (PDM) training into the first IST for all sectors approximately three months after they swear-in. Tied to the PDM training sessions is a session on the available grant mechanisms at PC/Malawi. These sessions, along with the new consolidated grant process, have improved the management of the small grants program. These sessions received very high marks at the recent Education IST in December 2012.

Documents Submitted:
- Grant Mechanisms available at PC/Malawi Training Session

Status and Timeline for Completion: Completed August 2012

Recommendation 20
That the country director ensure that HIV-related performance data is effectively collected.

Concur:
Country Director developed a supplemental HIV/AIDS reporting tool meeting OGAC standards, and distributed it to all Volunteers. It was also discussed and presented again at PCV Regional meetings in August 2012, in which 94 PCVs participated. PC/Malawi has

also worked to incorporate the new PEPFAR definition of Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) to ensure PCVs are accurately counting these groups. This reporting tool will be incorporated into the VRF for all sectors once the Project Frameworks are finalized after the portfolio review scheduled for June 17 - July 3, 2013.

Documents Submitted:
- HIV Reporting Template

Status and Timeline for Completion: Completed June 2012

Recommendation 21
That the country director ensure that Peace Corps Response activities are incorporated into the Volunteer reporting tool.

Concur:
The Peace Corps Response (PCR) activities have never been reported in the VRF, but since June, 2012, have been reported into the newly developed HIV reporting tool (see recommendation #20). However, PCR activities have now been incorporated into the draft Health Project Framework, and these activities will be incorporated in the VRF once the Frameworks are finalized after the portfolio review scheduled for June 17 - July 3, 2013.

Documents Submitted:
- HIV Reporting Template

Status and Timeline for Completion: Will be completed by September 30, 2013

APPENDIX C: OIG COMMENTS

Management concurred with all 21 recommendations. 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.

All 21 recommendations remain open. The post has provided supporting documentation for 11 of the 21 recommendations, which OIG will review following completion of approval and verification procedures through the region and chief compliance officer. OIG will review and consider closing recommendations 2, 4, 5, 7-9, 11-14, and 16-21 when the documentation reflected in the agency's response to the preliminary report is received. OIG will review and consider closing recommendations 1, 3, 6, 10, and 15 pending confirmation from the chief compliance officer that the documentation reflected in OIG Analysis is received.

1: That the regional chief of administrative operations ensure that the post's operating plan funds essential operations with appropriated funds rather than host country contributions.

> **Concur**:
> Post's FY13 Operating Plan assures that essential operations are funded by appropriated and PEPFAR funds (as appropriate) and not dependent on Host Country Contributions (HCC). HCC has been reprogrammed to support PCV activities such as MST, COS conference, etc.
>
> **Documents Submitted**:
> N/A
>
> **Status and Timeline for Completion**: Completed August 2012
>
> **OIG Analysis:** Please submit budget documents that demonstrate essential operations are not funded by Host Country Contributions.

3: That the director of programming and training ensure that project frameworks are aligned with the Volunteer Reporting Forms.

> **Concur**:
> The Volunteer Reporting Forms (VRF) will be aligned with the project frameworks once the Frameworks are finalized after the portfolio review scheduled for June 17 - July 3, 2013.
>
> **Documents Submitted**:
> N/A

Status and Timeline for Completion: Will be completed by September 30, 2013

OIG Analysis: Please submit finalized project frameworks and updated Volunteer Reporting Forms.

6: That the country director ensure that grants-related training and support align with the Peace Corps approach to development.

Concur:
PC/Malawi has incorporated Project Design and Management (PDM) training into the first IST for all sectors approximately three months after they swear-in. This training is from the PDM Manual and focuses on Peace Corps' approach to development. Tied to the PDM training sessions is a session on the available grant mechanisms at PC/Malawi. These sessions, along with the new consolidated grant process, has improved the management of the small grants program. These sessions received very high marks at the recent Education IST in December 2012.

Documents Submitted:
The New Project Design and Management Workshop Training Manual; Peace Corps Information Collection and Exchange; Publication Number T0107. Note: on the Peace Corps web site at:
http://files.peacecorps.gov/multimedia/pdf/library/T0107_projectdesign.pdf

Status and Timeline for Completion: Completed August 2012

OIG Analysis: Please submit in-service training calendar of training events.

10: That the country director develop and implement improved procedures for developing, selecting, and approving Peace Corps Response program work sites.

Concur:
With the next intake of Peace Corps Response Volunteers (PCRVs) on February 19, 2013, Post will be analyzing the Peace Corps Response program with our partners and stakeholders to define a three-year strategic framework and assure that PCRVs have clearly defined standard jobs and that their assignments are in line with the needs and priorities of the Government of Malawi, rather than identifying the needs of each individual site. This will further be integrated in the Health Project Framework during the Portfolio Review scheduled for June 17 - July 3, 2013.

Documents Submitted:
N/A

Status and Timeline for Completion: Will be completed by September 30, 2013

OIG Analysis: Please submit procedures for developing, selecting, and approving Peace Corps Response program work sites.

15 : That the safety and security coordinator ensure that site locator forms are reviewed during site visits and a system is in place to review and improve maps to Volunteer residences when necessary.

<u>**Concur**</u>:

All volunteers are requested to submit site locator forms within thirty days after being deployed to site. The information is then fed onto Volunteer Information Data Analysis (VIDA). These are further reviewed and clarified as need be at the first IST, approximately three months into the PCV's service. As staff (Programmers, SSC, Drivers, and PCMO) conduct site visits they carry copies of filled site locator forms for review and editing as necessary. Beginning in June 2012, the SSC has also sent a weekly reminder in the PC/Malawi weekly email communication to Volunteers. PCVs that do not submit site locator information within 30 days after site placement or changing sites are denied vacation and/or out-of-site permission.

<u>**Documents Submitted**</u>:

Weekly email re: Site Locator

OIG Analysis: Please submit, in addition to the weekly email re: Site Locator, policies or guidance issued to staff to review and edit site locator forms while conducting site visits.

APPENDIX D: PROGRAM EVALUATION COMPLETION AND OIG CONTACT

PROGRAM EVALUATION COMPLETION

This program evaluation was conducted under the direction of Assistant Inspector General for Evaluations Jim O'Keefe by Senior Evaluator Reuben Marshall. Additional contributions were made by Tim Shaw and Hal Nanavati.

Jim O'Keefe
Assistant Inspector General for Evaluations

OIG CONTACT

Following issuance of the final report, a stakeholder satisfaction survey will be distributed. If you wish to comment on the quality or usefulness of this report to help us improve our products, please e-mail Assistant Inspector General for Evaluations Jim O'Keefe at jokeefe@peacecorps.gov, or call 202.692.2904.

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