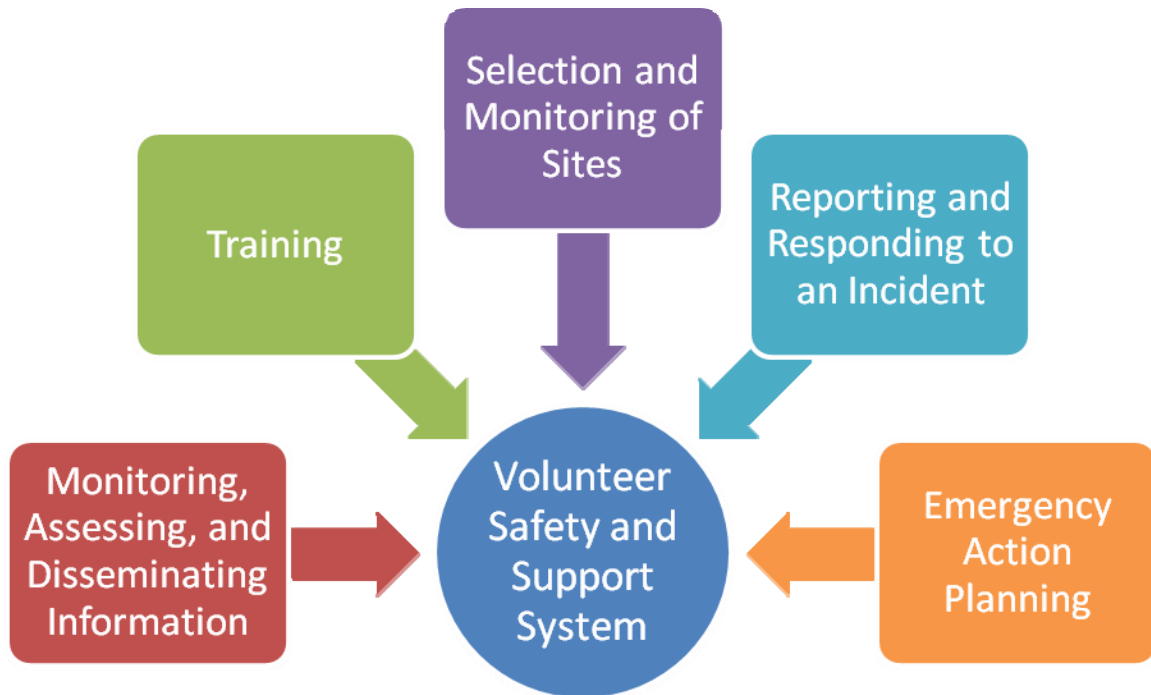




Peace Corps Office of Inspector General



The Volunteer Safety Support System, as outlined in the Peace Corps Manual.

Final Program Evaluation Report: Volunteer Safety and Security


August 2008



FINAL PROGRAM EVALUATION REPORT

Volunteer Safety and Security

IG-08-13-E


Kathy A. Buller
Inspector General

August 2008

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Peace Corps has implemented several of the recommended safety and security measures identified in the General Accountability Office's reports on Volunteer safety and security. According to Peace Corps Manual section 270, the agency has identified the following as five tenets for enhancing the safety and security of its Volunteers:

- Responding to crimes and reporting and analyzing crime statistics
- Monitoring, assessing, and disseminating information on the security environment
- Safety and Security Training
- Development, monitoring, and inspection of Volunteer sites
- Planning for emergencies through Emergency Action Plans

The Office of Inspector General/Evaluations Unit performed an evaluation of the agency's safety and security system from January 2007 to January 2008. Our evaluation reviewed the agency's policies and procedures that address these five tenets. Some of our findings included the following:

- Peace Corps has successfully conducted 39 evacuations of approximately 2,600 Volunteers from 1997 to 2007. The Office of Safety and Security is not aware of any injuries or deaths resulting from these evacuations.
- In the 2004 and 2006 biennial Volunteer surveys conducted by Peace Corps, over 90% of Volunteers rated the efficacy of safety and security training during pre-service training as "adequate," "effective," or "very effective." Results from the 2007 Close of Service Survey, which Volunteers complete just prior to returning to the U.S., reflect similar results. Eighty-seven percent of the Volunteers we interviewed echoed the survey results by expressing satisfaction with safety and security training.
- Agency crime data was unreliable. In our sample of data from ten posts, we found that 56% of incident reports between February 2006 and June 2007 contained at least one error in a critical data field. Additionally, six of the ten posts in our sample did not timely report violent crimes to headquarters. One post took an average of 58 days to report violent crimes via the Crime Incident Reporting Form (CIRF).
- Welcome Books provided information on global safety and security risk factors, they did not provide country-specific risk factors; this could be misleading to potential Volunteers as global safety and security risk factors may be very different than the country specific risk factors.
- At the time of the OIG visits, 40% of the Volunteers' houses did not meet the posts' own criteria for safe housing. Also, Volunteer Site Locator Forms (SLFs) were not

always complete. Specifically, 37% of the SLFs did not contain sufficient information to locate Volunteers' sites in emergency situations.

- Emergency Action Plans (EAPs) did not always contain essential information to facilitate Volunteers' speedy and safe consolidation or evacuation from their country of service; 95% of EAPs worldwide did not contain contact information for ground transportation, and 35% did not include information on charter flight options.
- Not all EAPs were tested in accordance with agency policy or under realistic conditions. From 2005 to 2006, ten posts did not include all Volunteers in at least one EAP test and 16 posts did not test their EAPs without the use of cell phones.
- Peace Corps Safety and Security Officers (PCSSOs), who serve as regionally-based safety and security specialists, have provided posts with substantial support, including Volunteer safety training, training of safety and security coordinators (SSCs) and other staff, reviewing and testing emergency action plans (EAPs), and site selection and monitoring procedures.
- PCSSO recommendations were not systematically tracked by all three regions and were often not implemented due to budgetary considerations or lack of consensus between field and headquarters management.
- Agency performance indicators of strategic goals on Volunteer safety and security did not consistently promote improvement.

Our report contains 20 recommendations, which if implemented, should improve internal controls and correct the weaknesses outlined above.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	i
Introduction.....	1
Objective, Scope, and Methodology	2
Responding to Crimes and Reporting and Analyzing Crime Statistics	5
Monitoring, Assessing, and Disseminating Information on the Security Environment	14
Safety and Security Training.....	16
Development, Monitoring, and Inspection of Volunteer Sites.....	18
Peace Corps Safety and Security Officers	21
Strategic Goals and Performance Indicators	34
List of Recommendations.....	38
Appendix A: Threats to Volunteer Safety at Posts That Did Not Include All Volunteers in Emergency Action Plan Tests	
Appendix B: Comparison of Global Risk Factors For Assaults Reported In Welcome Books With Actual Country Data For 2004	
Appendix C: Historical Perspective of Peace Corps' FY 2007 Performance Goal and Indicators Related To Volunteer Safety And Security	
Appendix D: Prior Reports	
Appendix E: Errors in Crime Data Found in the Ten Sample Posts Reviewed	
Appendix F: Management's Response	
Appendix G: OIG Comments	
Appendix H: Office of Inspector General Contacts	

INTRODUCTION

The Peace Corps has stressed that the safety and security of its Volunteers is its highest priority. To reduce the risks facing its Volunteers, the agency has identified the following five tenets to promote and enhance the safety and security of its Volunteers:

- Responding to crimes incidents and concerns, and reporting and analyzing statistics on crimes against Volunteers.
- Monitoring, assessing, and disseminating information to Volunteers on the security environment.
- Comprehensive safety and security training preparing Volunteers to adopt culturally appropriate lifestyles and exercise judgment that promotes safety and reduces risk in their home, at work, and while traveling.
- Development, inspection, and monitoring of Volunteer sites to ensure placement in appropriate, safe, and secure housing and work sites.
- Planning for emergencies through Emergency Action Plans (EAPs) which set forth procedures staff and Volunteers should follow to prepare for and respond to non-medical emergencies that may occur in-country.

In 2002, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) conducted an evaluation of Peace Corps' safety and security program. One of the main findings of the GAO report was that the Peace Corps safety and security framework was unevenly implemented. The Peace Corps concurred with this and all other findings in the GAO report. To respond to the GAO's recommendations, in 2003 the agency created a centralized Office of Safety and Security, which is responsible for establishing the agency's safety and security policy and supporting overseas posts in implementing safety and security policies through guidance, training, supervision, and oversight.

The Office of Safety and Security incorporated three functional areas of safety and security responsibility that were previously under other offices:

1. Volunteer Safety and Overseas Security (VSOS) is responsible for coordinating overseas operations and directing the activities of nine Peace Corps Safety and Security Officers (PCSSO). PCSSOs report to VSOS and serve as consultants to the posts on matters such as (1) safety and security training to Volunteers and (2) posts' EAPs.
2. Physical Security is responsible for securing domestic facilities.
3. Information and Personnel Safety and Security is responsible for initiating and processing security clearances for Peace Corps employees.

In addition, the agency created two new units and placed them in the Office of Safety and Security:

1. The Crime Statistics and Analysis (CSA) unit is responsible for the management of data collection on crimes against Volunteers, statistical analysis of security trends for the agency, and oversight of the incident reporting process.

2. The Emergency Preparedness Plans, Training, and Exercise unit (EPPTE) is responsible for coordinating the Presidentially-mandated continuity of operations planning (COOP).

In addition, one safety and security desk officer, who serves as a liaison between headquarters and the field, was added to each of the three regions: Europe, Mediterranean, and Asia (EMA), Inter-America and the Pacific (IAP), and Africa.

The safety and security infrastructure at the post level was enhanced by adding a local hire position, called safety and security coordinator (SSC). SSCs are located at each Peace Corps post and they are responsible for analyzing the security environments throughout the country and particularly in the communities where Volunteers live and work.

One of the agency's most recent efforts to improve the tracking of the safety and security of Volunteers was the implementation of a new crime tracking system. This system automates the immediate notification of a crime incident against a Volunteer per the Office of Inspector General's 2004 Violent Crime Protocol¹ and introduces a globally uniform method for reporting crime incidents.

On February 1, 2006, Peace Corps officially launched the Crime Incident Reporting Form (CIRF) to all posts. The CIRF replaced the Assault Notification and Surveillance System that was implemented in 1990 by the Office of Medical Services. With the introduction of the CIRF, the responsibility of collecting and managing the accuracy of crime data reported to headquarters was transferred from the Office of Medical Services to the Office of Safety and Security.

The CIRF combines all crime related information used by the Office of the Inspector General, the Office of Medical Services (OMS), and the Office of Safety and Security into one reporting system that is guided by one crime incident hierarchy. The Office of Safety and Security intends to replace the CIRF with the Crime Incident Reporting System (CIRS) in April 2008.

OBJECTIVE, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

The Office of Inspector General/Evaluations Unit performed an evaluation of the agency's safety and security system from January 2007 to January 2008. We interviewed headquarters staff, collected relevant data and documents from headquarters offices, and performed fieldwork at 17 Peace Corps posts from February to May 2007.

We selected ten Peace Corps posts (of 74 total posts in January 2007) to conduct fieldwork, based on Volunteer crime statistics reported in the 2004 and 2005 Safety of the Volunteer reports. From each of the nine PCSSOs' sub-regions, we chose one country where Volunteers had reported a wide variety of crimes (sexual assaults, physical assaults, and

¹ In 2004, the agency initiated the Violent Crime Protocol that required posts to notify Peace Corps/OIG of a violent crime immediately (preferably within 24 hours of a Volunteer reporting the crime).

property crime) and the crime rate was high compared to other posts in the sub-region. In addition, we included PC/Thailand in our sample because that post had a low crime rate in 2004 and 2005 compared to other Peace Corps posts worldwide and served as the home post for a PCSSO.

We spent two weeks conducting in-depth safety and security reviews in each of the following ten countries: Bolivia, Jamaica, Kyrgyz Republic, Mali, Moldova, Mongolia, Senegal, Swaziland, Thailand, and Vanuatu. In addition, we interviewed the PCSSO and where available, the country director, SSC, and Regional Security Officers in El Salvador, Fiji, Kenya, Peru, South Africa, Togo, and Ukraine.

The objective of our evaluation was to determine whether the major components of Peace Corps' safety and security strategy for Volunteers function effectively and in accordance with established standards and best practices. Our evaluation sought to determine whether:

1. Volunteers receive relevant information on safety and security risks in their countries of service before their departure overseas and throughout their service.
2. Peace Corps has provided Volunteers with accurate and relevant training on safety and security.
3. Peace Corps staff ensured Volunteers were placed in appropriate, safe, and secure housing and work sites and made regular visits to monitor safety at each Volunteer's site.
4. Peace Corps staff reported and responded to safety issues and criminal incidents in accordance with agency and post policies.
5. Peace Corps ensured that each post has developed and tested a detailed EAP to prepare for and respond to emergencies at post.
6. Peace Corps' agency-wide and office-specific strategic goals and performance indicators related to Volunteer safety and security meet agency and federal requirements.
7. Peace Corps Safety and Security Officers have provided adequate support to country directors, as outlined in the Peace Corps Manual.

In order to encompass one full Volunteer cycle (typically 27 months), our period of review covered the period January 2005 - June 2007. For the section on Peace Corps Safety and Security Officers (PCSSOs), we expanded our scope to January 2003 - December 2006; PCSSOs began issuing safety and security reports in 2003.

We reviewed the CIRF data for accuracy. We obtained CIRF reports submitted between February 1, 2006 and June 20, 2007 from the ten posts in our sample. We compared the data submitted to headquarters by the posts to the data maintained in the official CIRF database to determine if the data maintained its integrity during transmission from overseas posts to headquarters. We read the incident narrative in each CIRF report and compared that information to the six data fields: date of incident, time of day, crime classification, location, offender, and site information. We noted discrepancies when the narrative conflicted with the data maintained in the official database at headquarters. In instances where the narrative did not specifically address a data element, we relied on the post's original transmissions. For example, if the narrative did not specifically say whether the incident occurred at the Volunteer's site, but post staff selected "Yes" to the question "Did

the incident occur at the Volunteer's site?" we relied on the post's answer. We provided the results of our analysis to the Crime Statistics and Analysis (CSA) staff, who responded to our noted discrepancies. We made changes to our analysis of the CIRF data based on the explanations and information provided by CSA.

We also reviewed relevant criteria, including: the GAO reports on Peace Corps' Safety and Security System published in 2002 and 2004; Peace Corps Manual sections 130 and 270; the CIRF Users Manual; Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and Peace Corps guidance on strategic planning; agency-wide guidance on the EAP and evacuation preparation; and post-specific policies and procedures.

In addition, we reviewed other relevant media and documentation, such as the EAPs in effect as of June 2007 for all Peace Corps posts; EAP test results for all posts in 2005 and 2006; site development and visit reports for the Volunteers in our sample; safety and security information provided to Volunteers in e-mails, newsletters, and other formats; site locator forms for Volunteers in our sample; PCSSO reports for Peace Corps posts from 2003 to 2006; Peace Corps training videos related to safety and security; and training curricula developed by the posts in our sample.

We selected a sample of Volunteers based on their length of service, project focus, gender, age, marital status, and ethnicity. We interviewed 208 of 1,066 Volunteers serving at the ten posts in our sample, visited 176 of the Volunteers at their sites, and interviewed 50 of their community partners. In addition, we reviewed the Department of State's Consular Information Sheets for each of the ten countries in our sample to determine the areas with the highest safety risk to U.S. citizens and Volunteers based in or near those locations. We also considered whether Volunteers were serving in urban, mid-sized, or rural communities and their degree of isolation when selecting our sample.

Additionally, we reviewed 41 PCSSO trip reports (covering a four-year period from 2003 to 2006) to determine how frequently PCSSOs addressed the safety and security issues identified under Peace Corps Manual (PCM) section 130 and whether gaps in coverage existed.

We interviewed Peace Corps headquarters staff, including the Director, the Deputy Director, the former Chief Compliance Officer, the Associate Director for Safety and Security, the Chief of the Volunteer Safety and Overseas Security Division, the Social Science Analyst and Data Analyst of the Crime Statistics and Analysis Unit, the Director of Congressional Relations, the three Regional Directors, the three Chiefs of Operations, Safety and Security Desk Officers (SSDOs), acting SSDOs, and country desk officers and country desk assistants for the posts in our sample. We collected and analyzed safety and security documents and data provided by headquarters offices.

Overseas, we interviewed PCSSOs, country directors, SSCs, training managers, and programming staff. In addition, we interviewed other individuals in our sample countries, such as managers of hotels used as Volunteer consolidation sites, managers of Volunteer training sites, and a helicopter operator identified as a resource to extricate Volunteers in emergency situations.

RESPONDING TO CRIMES AND REPORTING AND ANALYZING CRIME STATISTICS

On average, 1,262 crime incidents are submitted from 69 overseas posts to the CSA unit in the Office of Safety and Security on an annual basis.²

In February 2006, the crime incident reporting process changed as follows:

- 1) All crime incident data was collected using one application, the CIRF. Previously, data was collected using multiple forms and methods and reported to multiple offices.
- 2) Responsibility for ensuring that all posts were reporting assaults and property crimes accurately and in a standardized way was transferred to the Office of Safety and Security. One of the CSA staff's main responsibilities became to ensure that all posts were reporting assaults and property crimes accurately and in a standardized way for the agency. Previously data quality assurance for violent and non-violent assault crime reporting was performed by the Office of Medical Services.
- 3) Responsibility for reporting crimes at the post was transferred from the Peace Corps Medical Officers (PCMOs) to the country directors for violent crimes and the SSCs for non-violent crimes. After the implementation of the CIRF, the PCMOs who had been reporting crime incidents for approximately 15 years were now only involved in reporting incidents that had a significant medical component, such as rapes.
- 4) Property crimes were submitted to headquarters with incident details. In the past, property crimes had been submitted by the post at the end of the month to the Office of Medical Services as a tally that only reported the frequency and type of crime that occurred; details such as the location, time of day, and assailant were not required.

Some crimes against Volunteers were not reported within the timeframe prescribed in the CIRF Users Manual.

The CIRF Users Manual stresses the importance of reporting all crimes in a timely manner to appropriate Peace Corps and U.S. Department of State officials. According to the CIRF Users Manual, when post staff are informed of a violent crime against a Volunteer, the violent crime:

...must be reported immediately to both the OIG and RSO [Regional Security Officer]. In the case that all required information...is not available, send in as much as is known and send additional information later. Immediate notification to the OIG and the RSO is the foremost priority.

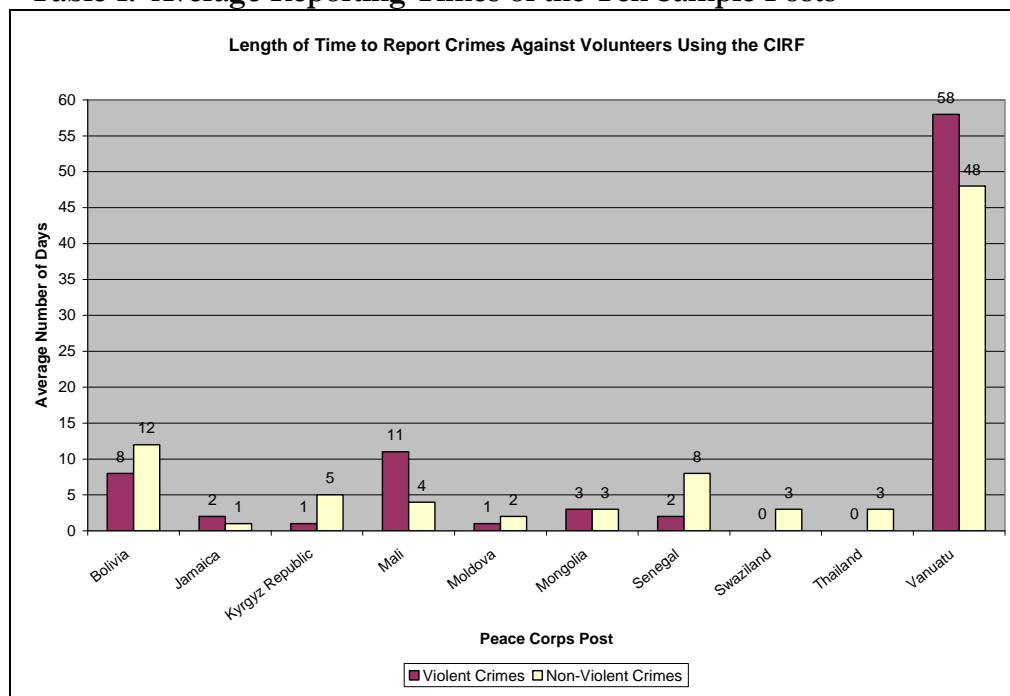
² This is an annual average of the three-year period 2004 – 2006.

According to the agency’s Violent Crime Protocol, all violent crimes must be reported by post to headquarters immediately after (within 24 hours) the Volunteer reports the crime. Although non-violent crimes were not covered by the agency’s Violent Crime Protocol, the CIRF Users Manual states that non-violent crimes:

... should be submitted [to CSA] as soon as possible. However, with non-violent crimes, it is permissible to take an extra day to collect as much information as possible before submitting the CIRF.

To account for this “extra day” plus weekends and holidays, CSA staff informed us that they consider posts’ reporting of non-violent crimes within three days after notification by the Volunteer as timely.

Table 1. Average Reporting Times of the Ten Sample Posts



The aforementioned table shows the average number of days that it took the ten posts in our review to report crimes. Between June 2006 and June 2007, six of the ten posts in our sample had average reporting times for violent crimes that did not meet the agency’s deadline. Five of the posts had average reporting times that did not meet the deadline for non-violent crimes.³ However, average reporting times can mask individual exceptions. For example, PC/Bolivia on average reported violent crimes via CIRF within 12 days; in one instance, that post did not report a robbery for 24 days. Even PC/Moldova, whose reporting average met Peace Corps’ requirements, reported an aggravated assault via CIRF within a three-day period rather than the one-day requirement. See Table 2.

³ We analyzed the amount of time that lapsed between the date that the post first became aware of the crime incident and the date that the post submitted the CIRF report. In most cases, the actual crime occurred at least one day before a Volunteer reported it to the post.

Table 2. CIRF Reporting Times, June 2006 - June 2007*

Post	Violent Crime	Number of Days
Bolivia	Robbery	24
Jamaica	Robbery	11
Kyrgyz Republic**	Intimidation	3
Mali	Burglary with Volunteer Present	60
Moldova	Aggravated Assault	3
Mongolia	Aggravated Assault	6
Senegal	Burglary with Volunteer Present	11
Swaziland***	Intimidation	1
Thailand	Not Applicable	0
Vanuatu****	Intimidation	113

*From our ten post sample, the violent crimes that took the longest to report.

**PC/Kyrgyz Republic initially reported this incident as “Unknown,” but we determined that it should have been reported as “Intimidation,” in accordance with Peace Corps’ crime definitions.

*** PC/Swaziland initially reported this incident as “Other Physical Assault,” but we determined that it should have been reported as “Intimidation,” in accordance with Peace Corps’ crime definitions.

**** PC/Vanuatu initially reported this as Attempted Rape.

PC/Vanuatu took on average 58 days to report violent crimes and 48 days to report non-violent crimes using the CIRF. In one instance, PC/Vanuatu took 113 days to file a CIRF report on an incident that initially appeared to be an attempted rape. Even though CSA reclassified the incident as an intimidation, it remained a violent crime under Peace Corps’ classification system. The crime warranted immediate attention by the OIG and the RSO because it involved a threatening situation: a local man attempted to undress a Volunteer against her will while they were alone in his car.

Timely reporting of crime incidents is essential so that Peace Corps staff, OIG criminal investigators, RSOs, and local police officials can effectively investigate crimes against Volunteers. The more time that elapses between the incident and victim’s contact with a criminal investigator, the more details the victim may forget and the less likely that the subject would be apprehended and a prosecution would be successful. In that vein, timely reporting of non-violent crimes is also important to enhance correct classification of crimes. An incident initially reported as a non-violent crime may later be reclassified as a violent crime once received by headquarters and require subsequent investigative actions. Some country directors informed us that they were not aware of the reporting deadlines, particularly with regard to non-violent crimes. According to one country director, he believed that there was no need to report non-violent crimes via the CIRF within a set timeframe, since non-violent crimes were by definition less serious and did not trigger involvement by the RSO and/or OIG. Another country director stated that his staff generally waits for the Volunteer victim to submit a written incident report before completing the CIRF report.

Peace Corps has no system in place to monitor the timeliness of crime incident report submissions. According to the regional Safety and Security Desk Officers’ (SSDOs) position description, SSDOs could monitor and regularly report on the timeliness of CIRF reports generated by each post. Such responsibilities align with the SSDO’s duties to “provide technical support to Regional senior management in developing, integrating, and monitoring

Regional safety and security activities, trainings, data compilation and analysis, and other relevant initiatives into the Volunteer Safety Support System....”

We recommend:

1. That the regional directors establish policies and procedures to monitor the timeliness of crime incident report submissions from the posts.

Peace Corps’ crime data was unreliable.

Our review showed that the data collected since the launch of the CIRF in February 2006, had a high rate of unreliable data, and therefore, we could not rely on the agency’s crime data to analyze crime trends or formulate recommendations for this evaluation.

We reviewed six data fields⁴ vital to Volunteer safety and oversight of Peace Corps’ safety and security in the 309 crime incidents reported (1,854 individual data fields) by the ten posts in our sample (February 2006 - June 2007, see Table 3). The 309 reports represent 18% of the 1,768 total crime incidents reported agency-wide.⁵ We found that 291 (16%) of the data fields posted inaccurate or inconsistent information as compared with the crime incident summary written by post staff. See Table 4.

A number of federal agencies have stressed the importance of ensuring that data are reliable and accurate enough to draw meaningful conclusions. According to GAO:

Data are reliable when they are (1) complete (they contain all of the data elements and records...) and (2) accurate (they reflect the data entered at the source or, if available, in the source documents). A subcategory of accuracy is consistency. Consistency refers to the need to obtain and use data that are clear and well-defined enough to yield similar results in similar analyses. For example, if data are entered at multiple sites, inconsistent interpretation of data rules can lead to data that, taken as a whole, are unreliable.⁶

We found that at least one major data element was missing or inconsistent with the crime incident narratives written by post staff for 56% of all reported crime incidents in our sample. See Table 3.

⁴ The six data fields that we reviewed were: 1) day of the week the crime occurred; 2) hour of day the crime occurred; 3) type of crime; 4) location of the crime; 5) relationship of the offender to the victim; and 6) site information (i.e., whether the crime occurred at the Volunteer’s assigned site).

⁵ The number of total CIRF reports was provided by the Crime Statistics and Analysis Unit of the Office of Safety and Security. We did not verify the accuracy of the total universe of CIRF reports, because that task would have been a labor-intensive process outside the scope of our review. This figure should be considered with caution, because our analysis showed that the CIRF headquarters database did not record 17 (6%) of the 309 incidents in our sample as crimes, even though they should have been recorded as such.

⁶ “Assessing the Reliability of Computer-Processed Data,” issued October 2002.

Table 3. Errors in Incidents Reported

Post	Number of incidents reviewed	Number of incidents with at least one error	Percentage of incidents with reporting errors
Bolivia	22	14	64%
Jamaica	31	10	32%
Kyrgyz Republic	40	22	55%
Mali	51	38	75%
Moldova	27	12	44%
Mongolia	40	24	60%
Senegal	48	27	56%
Swaziland	18	11	61%
Thailand	10	2	20%
Vanuatu	22	14	64%
Totals	309	174	56% (average)

Table 4. Type of Errors by Data Field

Data Field	Total Number of Data Fields Reviewed	Number of Data Fields Reported Incorrectly	Percentage of Data Fields Reported Incorrectly
Day of the Week	309	32	10%
Time	309	71	23%
Crime	309	40	13%
Location	309	53	17%
Offender	309	72	23%
Site Information	309	23	7%
TOTALS	1,854	291	16% (average)

We provided CSA with a list of the errors that we found and described in this section. We also provided them with corrected data, based on the incident narratives. CSA responded to our analysis in writing. According to Peace Corps' FY 2007 Performance and Accountability Report (PAR) to Congress, CSA then ceased normal operations, reviewed over 1,300 incident cases completed in 2006, and immediately initiated action to correct the errors.

CSA has no written policies and procedures stating the type and frequency of quality assurance activities.

We found that CSA staff performed some quality assurance checks, such as reviewing the crime classification for each CIRF report and ensuring that no data fields requiring an entry were left blank. They also conducted a manual reconciliation process with all posts early in 2007 to determine if the CSA unit had received all CIRF reports submitted by posts. However, with 13% of crime incidents in our sample inappropriately classified in CIRF headquarters database, additional quality assurance procedures are required. See Table 4.

We also noted that some electronic data was inadvertently changed during e-mail transmission from the post to the CIRF headquarters database. For instance, posts in our sample reported offenders as “Other” and this was erroneously translated to “Other PCV [Volunteer]” in the CIRF headquarters database.

The CSA’s social science analyst informed the OIG that she did not know why the data changed, but that it appeared to be a problem with the computer program that transfers the data from the e-mail into the CIRF headquarters database. Rigorous testing of the CIRF application and process of transferring CIRF incident reports into the CIRF headquarters database prior to deployment of the system may have caught such transmission errors.

Post staff were provided with inadequate and inaccurate training on how to use the CIRF.

The agency's decision to launch the CIRF at the end of 2005 appears to have left inadequate time to train country directors and SSCs on the CIRF prior to its release. Approximately 138 staff members⁷ new to the process of reporting crimes were suddenly required to report crimes using the CIRF. CSA staff provided day-to-day support to post staff on corrections to submissions and training on how to properly categorize a crime.

While CSA did send posts written materials, such as the CIRF User Manual, CIRF crime definitions, and Frequently Asked Questions upon the release of CIRF, post staff were not provided with a training forum where they could ask questions and practice filing CIRF reports prior to the CIRF implementation on February 1, 2006. Since country directors and safety and security coordinators were now responsible for reporting crimes,⁸ training on how to use the CIRF would have been especially advantageous because this was a new responsibility for them.

During interviews, we were informed that some post staff had a difficult time transitioning to the CIRF reporting format. We found that crime classification training was provided only twice since the roll-out of the CIRF in February 2006. We did not find any training materials advising posts on how to properly complete a CIRF report. According to the posts in our sample, no country directors formally requested the PCSSOs to train post staff on the use of CIRF. In our opinion, with at least three people⁹ at each of the more than 69 Peace Corps’ posts worldwide authorized to submit CIRF reports, training all appropriate staff to fill out incident reports consistently was crucial to promote data accuracy.

Some of the training materials provided to post staff on crime classification were inconsistent with the way the incident should be recorded in the CIRF headquarters database. For instance, if Volunteers leave property behind but make an unsuccessful attempt to recover it in a reasonable period of time, CSA records the incident as a theft. However, information posted on the Office of Safety and Security’s intranet site provides contrary information; Figure 1 shows two Volunteers leaving a phone behind at a café.

⁷ This total represents the country director and the SSC at each of the 69 overseas posts.

⁸ Previously Peace Corps Medical Officers had the responsibility for reporting violent crimes against Volunteers.


⁹ The country director, the safety and security coordinator, and the Peace Corps Medical Officer.

According to the slide, such incidents need not be reported to headquarters; however, CSA records similar events as theft.

Figure 2 informs staff responsible for reporting crimes against Volunteers to consider the act of someone reaching through a window to take a Volunteer's property from their residence as burglary. However, CSA records this type of an incident as a theft in its database. As of December 2007, this slide was still on the agency's intranet.

Figure 1.

Incident 8 Answers



What crime is this?

d. This is not a crime—because the PCV has forgotten the phone and left it at the café. Lost items are not reported through the CIRF.

When should this be reported to HQ?

d. Because this is not a crime, it is not reported to HQ using the CIRF.

3

Figure 2.

Incident 12 Answers

■ A PCV wakes up one morning and sees that his backpack has been moved and that his iPod, his digital camera, and his cell phone are missing. His door is still locked, but he sees that part of the window screen has been torn away.

What crime is this?

c. Burglary with PCV present – because the assailant tore the window screen to illegally gain access to the PCV's residence while the PCV was present. This includes reaching through a window to take property from the PCV.

Is this a violent crime?

a. Yes –Burglary with PCV present is a violent crime because the PCV's presence greatly increases their risk of harm.

4

As a result, some SSCs reported the perpetrator of crimes based solely on the Volunteers' suspicions, while other SSCs based the offender information only on eyewitness accounts, an admission of guilt, or tangible evidence. Still other SSCs filled in dates and times for burglaries even when the incident narrative specifically stated that the Volunteer was away from home and did not know the time or date the crime occurred.

CSA staff used resources not specified in the agency's crime definitions to classify crimes.

The CSA staff used external resources, such as *Black's Law Dictionary* and the *National Incident-Based Reporting System Data Collection Guidelines*, to help them determine how to classify crimes. CSA's use of these external resources means that the CSA unit may be classifying crimes inconsistently. A lack of adherence to the agency's standard classification system could cause the agency's crime trends to be recorded inaccurately.

An insufficient number of staff was assigned to collect and analyze agency crime data.

The two-person CSA unit is responsible for collecting, analyzing, and preparing reports of crime incidents against Volunteers.¹⁰ In our opinion, the workload placed on the CSA unit does not allow them sufficient time to verify data quality.

On average, the two-person CSA unit was checking seven to eight incidents on a daily basis, contacting posts and providing training, developing formal training following the launch of the CIRF, designing a new CIRF that would address the critical fixes requested but not implemented in the initial CIRF pilot, and producing monthly and annual safety and security reports. The CSA staff was also tasked with developing, distributing, analyzing and reporting a major survey on safety and security that went out to nine PCSSOs during the time of this evaluation.

The inclusion of property crimes in CIRF, which are much more frequent than assaults, increased the amount of time it took post staff to report property crimes. This new requirement significantly increased the amount of time it took CSA staff to check the fields on an incident submission to ensure that the information was accurate. The CSA verified incident fields that they deemed the most important to crime trend analysis and reporting. The CSA staff recognized that verifying all data fields was not feasible given their workload.

We reviewed the timesheets for the two full-time CSA staff submitted between January 2006 and September 2007. After accounting for holidays and leave, we determined that the social science analyst and the data analyst worked a combined additional 6.5 weeks beyond their required hours during that timeframe. Because of the importance that crime data plays in trend analysis and the oversight of the Volunteer safety and support system, Peace Corps should strongly consider providing additional resources to CSA.

¹⁰ One social science analyst and one data analyst comprise the staff of the agency's Crime Statistic and Analysis unit.

We are particularly concerned that Peace Corps management does not appear to recognize the gravity of inaccurate crime reporting. This perspective is reflected by the agency's comments included in its 2007 PAR, which repeatedly referred to the errors as minor:

Few of these errors were substantive and some of the errors are not agreed to by the Office of Safety and Security...In general, the crime trends and risk factors do not fluctuate significantly from one year to the next; therefore, minor errors in incident reporting are not likely to negatively impact the overall safety and security training at any given post.

We recommend:

2. That the Office of Safety and Security conduct an independent review of agency safety and security incident data for validity and reliability.
3. That the Office of Safety and Security implement written policies and procedures that detail quality assurance requirements for Peace Corps' safety and security incident data.
4. That the Office of Safety and Security establish an allowable data error rate and systematically check safety and security incident data fields for accuracy and consistency.
5. That the Office of Safety and Security implement policies and procedures to guide post and CSA staff in accurately and consistently reporting safety and security incident data.
6. That the Office of Safety and Security request a staffing assessment to determine whether the Crime Statistics and Analysis unit requires more personnel resources.
7. That the regional directors implement a process to ensure that safety and security incident data is effectively reviewed for accuracy and clarity by country directors before submission to headquarters.

MONITORING, ASSESSING, AND DISSEMINATING INFORMATION ON THE SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

Upon receiving an invitation to serve in the Peace Corps, applicants receive a country-specific Welcome Book. This book contains information on a variety of topics, including safety and security, and is a key document to help them understand their country of service and prepare for their experience overseas. We reviewed the Welcome Books for each of our ten sample posts and found that they provided valuable safety and security information in the following two major aspects.

- All of the Welcome Books contained a discussion of how potential Volunteers may need to change their lifestyles to maintain personal safety due to the cultural norms of their host country. They typically described issues that Volunteers might face due to their gender, religion, race, sexual orientation, and disability, along with tips to mitigate related safety risks.
- The Welcome Books also extensively described the support that the Peace Corps post, the OIG, and the U.S. Embassy's Regional Security Officer can provide victimized Volunteers; for example, the Welcome Books stated that Peace Corps would assist Volunteers who choose to press charges, and may arrange for the retention of a local attorney to assist the local public prosecutor in such instances.

Our review also found that after Volunteers arrive overseas and complete their pre-service training, the Peace Corps uses a variety of methods to disseminate safety information to Volunteers on an ongoing basis throughout their service. All ten posts in our sample included safety tips in newsletters that are distributed regularly to Volunteers. This information covered issues such as maintaining personal safety in busy marketplaces, while traveling, and during times of political unrest. At posts such as PC/Jamaica, PC/Thailand, and PC/Swaziland, where cell phone usage is prevalent among Volunteers, several Volunteers informed us that the safety and security coordinators (SSCs) send security warnings via text message as soon as the post becomes aware of threatening situations.

The Welcome Books provide applicants with global risk factors for crime that may not hold true for a Volunteer's country of assignment.

Peace Corps Manual section 270.3.1 identifies monitoring, assessing, and disseminating country-specific information as an integral component of the Volunteer Safety Support System:

V/Ts [Volunteers/Trainees] should have a clear and informed understanding of the potential safety and security risks in their countries of service. This information should include an overall assessment of potential safety and security risks to V/Ts, any country-specific conditions that may require V/Ts to adjust their lifestyles, and the support that V/Ts can expect from the Peace Corps.

Using the 2004 criminal incidence data provided by the Office of Safety and Security, we constructed assault profiles for each of the ten countries in our sample and compared them with the risk factors provided in the Welcome Books. (See Appendix A: Global Risk Factors.) We found that most of the global risk factors for 2004 did not hold true for the ten countries in our sample. Global averages can mask variations in risk factors and inflate or understate their importance, depending on the country.

Because cultural norms vary between countries like Vanuatu and the Kyrgyz Republic, Volunteers would be better informed if Peace Corps provided specific risk factors for their countries of service. Even regional risk factors covering several countries that share cultural similarities would provide potential Volunteers with a more accurate picture of the risks that they may face overseas.

Communicating accurate, country-specific risk factors is important for two main reasons. First, according to a statement on Peace Corps' website, potential Volunteers should use this information to help them "make informed decisions about whether Peace Corps service is right for them and whether they are prepared to live at any site in their host country, where local community members will be their primary support system." Second, such information can help Volunteers develop a personal safety strategy by advising them when and where to heighten vigilance in cultures that may be unfamiliar to them.

Peace Corps' Office of Communications has standardized much of the safety language in the Welcome Books to minimize the burden on the editorial staff and the country desk units. Peace Corps retains one editor to manage the publication process for nearly 70 Welcome Books and relies heavily on the country desk units, who also directly support the posts, to help edit and update the books.

We recommend:

8. That the Office of Communications include in the Welcome Books (1) a statement providing the internet link to the Safety of the Volunteer report and (2) a statement that informs potential Volunteers that risk factors in their country of service may vary from the global risk factors.
9. That the Office of Volunteer Recruitment and Selection include a statement in its invitation materials to encourage applicants to review country of service risk factors in the most recent Safety of the Volunteer report.

SAFETY AND SECURITY TRAINING

According to Peace Corps' Post Management Handbook, training is the most important activity conducted by the agency in any given year. The Handbook stresses that "For a country program to achieve excellence, it must start in PST [Pre-Service Training]." Peace Corps also recognizes training as an essential element of the Volunteer safety support system.

In recent Volunteer surveys and in interviews conducted for this evaluation, Volunteers generally expressed satisfaction with safety and security training. In the 2004 and 2006 biennial Volunteer surveys conducted by Peace Corps, over 90% of Volunteers rated the efficacy of safety and security at PST as "adequate," "effective," or "very effective." Results from the 2007 Close of Service Survey, which Volunteers complete just prior to returning to the U.S., reflect similar results. (See Table 5.) Eighty-seven percent of the Volunteers we interviewed echoed these survey results by expressing satisfaction with safety and security training.

Table 5. Volunteers Rating PST Safety and Security Training as "Adequate," "Effective," or "Very Effective"

Source	Percentage
Biennial Volunteer Survey, 2004	95%
Biennial Volunteer Survey, 2006	94%
Close of Service Survey, 2007	96%

Volunteers' satisfaction can largely be attributed to the agency's sound structuring of its safety and security training. According to the 2007 Training Status Reports, all ten of our sample posts reported that they molded their safety and security training around Peace Corps' global safety and security competencies.

These competencies require Volunteers to demonstrate their knowledge of a variety of key safety issues, such as safety risk factors, dealing with unwanted attention and sexual advances, and emergency action planning. Seven of the ten posts sampled required Trainees to pass a written test on safety and security before moving to their sites.

Some posts have even begun testing Volunteers' practical application of the competencies. For example, PC/Jamaica gives Trainees a travel test, which requires them to document their activities while taking public transportation to buy certain items. Afterwards, Trainees participate in a debriefing session with training staff, who highlight important points like the concealment of cash and grade the Trainees' performance.

Peace Corps safety and security competencies did not include Volunteers and Trainees knowledge of culturally appropriate ways to respond to safety and security situations.

While Peace Corps' safety and security training largely received positive reviews from Volunteers, we identified two areas that require the agency's attention. Each highlights the need to provide Volunteers with culturally appropriate safety and security training, as required by PCM section 270.4.1:

[Volunteers and Trainees] should be provided training that prepares them to adopt culturally appropriate lifestyles and exercise judgment that promotes safety in their home, at work, and while traveling.

The agency's safety and security training competencies¹¹ do not directly address a Trainee's ability to identify culturally appropriate ways to respond to crimes, should prevention fail. The competencies only state that Trainees should be able to "identify strategies to reduce vulnerability" and "describe strategies to reduce the incident and impact of unwanted attention or sexual advances." The posts that we visited did not test or otherwise determine the adequacy of Volunteers' knowledge in this particular area.

Nearly all of the Volunteers we interviewed remarked that Peace Corps staff advised them of situations that they should avoid to reduce their risk of crime. However, prevention techniques can fail, and Volunteers could find themselves being victimized. We asked 46 Volunteers¹² to articulate culturally appropriate strategies¹³ to help extricate themselves from an actual crime situation. For example, several Volunteers serving in Vanuatu were able to describe a strategy that staff had suggested. The PC/Vanuatu Volunteers recalled that training staff advised them to vomit or urinate on themselves in the event of an imminent rape; in that culture, this defense tactic could make victims appear unclean and undesirable to the attacker. Such cultural-specific knowledge could help Volunteers gain enough leverage in a crime situation to escape or foil the crime and could mean the difference between a rape and an attempted rape. However, twenty-four (52%) Volunteers, serving in eight countries in our sample, were unable to describe any strategies.

We recommend:

10. That the Office of Safety and Security revise the Pre-Service Training Safety and Security competencies to include demonstrating culturally appropriate ways to respond to a crime situation.

¹¹ The Pre-Service Training Safety and Security Competencies are posted on VSOS's intranet site.

¹² This issue arose during the course of our field work and we were unable to ask all Volunteers in our sample this question.

¹³ A culturally appropriate strategy in the U.S. might be to yell "Fire" or "9-1-1" rather than "Help," as the former phrases are more likely to garner immediate attention from passers-by.

DEVELOPMENT, MONITORING, AND INSPECTION OF VOLUNTEER SITES

Not all posts have effective and measurable criteria for identifying appropriate Volunteer housing.

PCM section 270.5.2 states that country directors are “responsible for establishing safety and security criteria for prospective V/T sites [and] ... establishing procedures to ensure that prospective sites meet the criteria before a V/Ts arrival at site.”

The documents and training currently provided to overseas staff by the agency do not adequately define what constitutes effective criteria or provide appropriate examples of measurable criteria. The Program and Training Booklet (Book Five), the Post Management Handbook (2003), and the Site Development Toolkit stress the importance of developing criteria for site selection, but do not clearly state that criteria specify a standard that must be met. According to the Site Development Toolkit:

The criteria for selecting sites will vary from one post to another. For example, *secure housing* at one post may mean solid core doors and dead bolt locks on all outside doors ..., while at another post these precautions are neither available nor necessary given the security situation.

Six of the ten posts that were included in our sample did not have adequate criteria for evaluating housing and sites for Volunteers. If a post does not have specific site development criteria, staff members could judge a site’s suitability differently. For example, PC/Mali’s housing criteria specifies that Volunteers must have “access to clean drinking water throughout the year (pump, covered well, spigot) [and] water sources should be no more than 800 meters from PCV lodging.” In contrast, PC/Jamaica’s housing criteria provides that staff must ensure that “safe water be available at a Volunteer’s site;” however, the criteria does not specify what kinds of water sources are acceptable or how far away the water source can be from the Volunteer’s house before the site is unacceptable.

In cases where criteria are not measurable by quantitative standards, policies and procedures should provide alternative means to test whether a condition is sufficient. For example, most posts require that housing be made out of “solid structures.” In the absence of a quantifiable measure for “solid,” alternative guidance can be provided to assess whether the structure will provide a safe dwelling for the Volunteer. PC/Mali has moved toward providing staff with additional guidance by offering basic instructions on how to test whether doors and windows are secure.

At the ten posts that we visited, we found that some posts had procedures to ensure that housing is inspected by a staff member prior to the arrival of the Volunteer. In Senegal, the staff member who brings a new Volunteer to his/her site after training must inspect the house. If the house does not meet PC/Senegal’s housing criteria, the staff are prohibited from leaving the Volunteer at the site. PC/Senegal’s procedure appears to be effective

because only three Volunteers, of the 15 who responded to our questions about housing, reported that their homes were not ready for them.

In Thailand, the housing checklist goes beyond checking boxes. The person who completes the housing inspection must provide descriptions of critical elements, such as the condition and materials used in the doors and windows. When verifying whether cell phone service is available, the person must provide the names of the cell phone services that work in the area and assess the strength of the signals. These additional descriptions can facilitate decisions when a site almost meets criteria and a decision has to be made to grant an exception.

We found that not all posts had procedures for granting exceptions to minimum standards or identifying “deal breakers.” Undoubtedly, staff encounter sites in which Volunteers have an opportunity to work with a committed community or organization, but the housing options may not meet all of the post’s criteria. One approach is to develop a system for ranking required elements. PC/Vanuatu had developed a simple scoring system. During a site development visit, the staff rate twenty elements on a scale of one to five under the categories of community awareness, safety and security, and community preparedness.

Some Volunteer housing did not meet the post’s own criteria for Volunteer housing.

Peace Corps Manual section 270.5.0 states:

Each V/T site should be inspected before the V/T’s arrival to ensure placement in appropriate, safe, and secure housing and work sites. Site selection should be based on established safety and security criteria that reflect consideration, among other things: any relevant site history; access to medical, banking, postal, and other essential services; availability of communication, transportation, and markets; different housing options and living arrangements; and other V/T support needs.

At 122 (74%) of the 163 sites, Volunteers whom we asked stated that their housing was ready for them when they arrived at their sites. Of the 26% of the Volunteers whose housing was not ready, some had to find temporary housing or reside in houses that did not yet meet the posts’ safety and security criteria. Most common among the unfinished items were no bars on the windows, doors without functioning locks, and unfinished pit latrines. We found examples that included the following:

- In Vanuatu, a Volunteer’s house did not have a private area for bathing for his first few months at site. At the time of the OIG’s visit, he did not have locks on his windows. Two Volunteers in Vanuatu stated that they were allowed to live in houses with unsecured windows and doors.
- In Thailand, nine Volunteers stated that their housing was not ready for them because the communities had not finished preparing their houses or because their houses did not meet the post’s criteria and they had subsequently requested alternative housing.

Forty percent of the Volunteers' houses that we visited did not meet the posts' own criteria at the time of our visit (see Table 6). Common deficiencies that we found included the lack of screens on windows (in malarial countries), unsecured doors on pit latrines, leaking roofs, and gaps between walls and ceilings or roofs. Specifically, we found the following:

- In Swaziland, nine of the 12 houses that failed to meet the housing criteria had latrines that lacked functioning and lockable doors. In several cases, the doors to the latrines had fallen off the hinges. One male Volunteer who was placed in a housing compound with an unsecured pit latrine was attacked by an African Rinkhals cobra in the latrine.
- In Thailand, a Volunteer lived in a house with a gap between the top of the wall and the roof that was wide enough to allow a small person to crawl through the gap and gain entry into the Volunteer's home. The Volunteer told the OIG that cats crawled through this space and into her house at will and once she found a dead cat in her kitchen. The OIG observed that the concrete walls had cracks running through them that were sufficiently large to question the structural integrity of the building.
- Two female Volunteers in Vanuatu stated that they used a bucket at night instead of their outdoor toilets. One of the toilets was approximately 50 meters from the Volunteer's house, even though PC/Vanuatu's housing criteria requires that outdoor toilets be no more than 10 meters from the house.

Table 6. Housing Status*

Country	Housing was ready when the Volunteer arrived at the site	Housing met the post's requirements
Bolivia	80%	73%
Jamaica	79%	82%
Kyrgyz Republic	95%	58%
Mali	54%	85%
Moldova	100%	90%
Mongolia	83%	67%
Senegal	81%	31%
Swaziland	67%	33%
Thailand	36%	25%
Vanuatu	47%	53%
Average	74%	60%

* From our ten sample posts.

We also found that some Volunteers were being placed in sites and houses that put their safety and health at risk as follows:

- In Vanuatu, female Volunteers are subject to a local custom known as “creeping.”¹⁴ At least one female Volunteer was placed in a house with unsecured windows; in lieu of metal locks, she had secured her windows with nailed chicken wire. Two male Volunteers also had unsecured windows.
- In Senegal, a female Volunteer woke up in the middle of the night to find a young man attempting to crawl under her mosquito net and into her bed. When the Volunteer screamed, her host family woke up and chased the man away. She was frightened, but not injured. The intruder lived next door to the Volunteer.
- In Thailand, a Volunteer enters and exits her house through a window because she does not have the keys to her locked front door. Her back door swelled shut due to the rain. Another Volunteer’s windows did not have the required bars on them.

We recommend:

11. That the regional directors provide the posts with:
 - Examples of well-developed post safety and security criteria.
 - Examples of well-designed checklists for use in verifying whether post safety and security criteria have been met.
 - An explanation of how to rank site and housing criteria, including procedures for making exceptions to criteria.
12. That the regional directors establish a system to ensure that posts develop and follow housing policy standards, such as inspecting every house before a Volunteer moves in, to ensure appropriate, safe, and secure Volunteer housing.

PEACE CORPS SAFETY AND SECURITY OFFICERS

PCM section 130 identifies the PCSSOs’ areas of responsibility as:

- Conduct Security Assessments
- Review safety training in pre-service and in-service training
- Train trainers and training managers
- Train Volunteer wardens, local guards, and staff
- Emergency Action Plan review and testing

¹⁴ “Creeping” is a more aggressive form of “peeping tom;” the person doing the “creeping” expresses an interest in a person by knocking on their bedroom window or calling for them to come out of their house.

- Develop security incident response procedures
- Coordinating with Regional Security Officers
- Provide crisis management support
- Collect and disseminate best practices

PCSSO responsibilities also include assisting posts in other areas of safety and security covered under PCM section 270, such as developing site selection and monitoring procedures and dissemination of information.

We found that PCSSOs were assisting the posts on a wide range of safety and security issues, as required of them under PCM section 130. PCSSOs provided substantial support in the areas of Volunteer safety training, training of SSCs and other staff, reviewing and testing EAPs, and site selection and monitoring procedures.

PCSSOs were also responding to the unique needs of their posts. For example, one PCSSO worked with PC/Vanuatu to develop strategies to protect female Volunteers from potentially dangerous forms of sexual harassment. In the EMA region, PC/Kyrgyz Republic was visited by the PCSSO twelve times over a four-year period, assisting them with setting up policies and procedures and training staff and Volunteers. In the Africa region, PC/Swaziland requested assistance from their PCSSO to assess Volunteer safety concerns.

Senior regional management has not adequately monitored the implementation of PCSSO recommendations.

While in 2007, the agency has taken incremental steps toward monitoring PCSSO recommendations, management could not provide assurance that posts' safety and security deficiencies, as identified by the PCSSOs, were being addressed by the country directors. The regional directors stated that they discuss PCSSO recommendations with their country directors, but neither the Office of Safety and Security or regional management could verify the extent to which country directors implement PCSSO recommendations.

According to the Chief, VSOS, it is not the role of the Office of Safety and Security or the PCSSOs to act as compliance officers. The PCSSOs serve as advisors or consultants to the posts and are not responsible for ensuring that their recommendations are implemented by the country directors. According to several PCSSOs, putting them in a compliance role could jeopardize their relationship with the posts. PCSSOs serve at the pleasure of the country director; they must wait for an invitation from the country director or the region and then the country director controls the scope of work for a PCSSO visit.

The extent to which regional directors and the SSDOs monitor PCSSO trip reports and recommendations, and implement PCSSO recommendations varies. One region relies on the SSDO to monitor trip reports and alert the regional director as necessary. Another regional director reads the PCSSO reports, checks a matrix of recommendations completed by the SSDO, and raises issues with the country directors in monthly conference calls. In the third region, the SSDO stated that the region does not track PCSSO recommendations.

In our opinion, regional management has not exercised its supervisory authority over the posts to ensure that PCSSO recommendations are implemented by the country directors. One regional director acknowledged that it is the region's responsibility to follow-up on the PCSSO recommendations because "the region controls the resources required to comply with many of the PCSSO recommendations." She stated that if a country director disagrees with a recommendation, "at this point they ignore it." Another regional director expressed a reluctance to make PCSSO recommendations mandatory. In his view, PCSSOs do not have a sufficient level of professional safety and security training to be able to make mandatory recommendations.

Regional directors are beginning to acknowledge that they must take more responsibility to implement PCSSO recommendations and establishing clear expectations for the country directors in terms of PCSSO visits and activities to be conducted during their visits. One regional director has instructed the country directors to have annual PCSSO visits and that a complete review of PCM section 270 be performed annually. At the request of the regions, the PCSSOs are beginning to classify their recommendations into categories: critical recommendations that should be implemented, recommendations that require funding, and professional guidance.

In mid-2007, the SSDO for the Africa region developed a matrix for tracking PCSSO recommendations and documenting actions taken by the posts to address the deficiencies. The matrix includes the date of the PCSSO visit, recommendations, whether the recommendation is a formal requirement, and actions taken by the post.

The agency has not developed policies and procedures¹⁵ for PCSSO visits and recommendations. When the agency does establish these policies and procedures, it is reasonable to expect the Office of Safety and Security to play more than an advisory role. One SSDO stated that the regions are looking to the Office of Safety and Security to take a leadership role and assist the agency in developing guidance on how to "analyze the PCSSO recommendations and develop management priorities to address Volunteer safety and security in a strategic way."

According to PCM section 130.4.1:

The Office of Safety and Security coordinates and promulgates all world wide Peace Corps Safety and Security policies save for Information Systems ... [and] the Office institutes, reviews, refines and recommends security policy to the Director of the Peace Corps.

The Chief, VSOS stated that he is working with the three regions on new guidelines for PCSSO visits to posts, including a new report format and classification of recommendations.

Widespread agreement exists within the agency that the establishment of the PCSSO position has contributed to the safety of the Volunteers. Two of the three regional directors

¹⁵ According to the Government Accountability Office, monitoring of internal controls should include policies and procedures for ensuring that the findings of audits and other reviews are promptly resolved.

attributed the higher levels of compliance with safety and security policies by posts to the work of the PCSSOs. This confidence in the value of the PCSSOs has not translated into a willingness of the regions to monitor compliance by country directors, measure the impact of PCSSOs, or assess their cost-effectiveness. In fiscal year 2006, the nine PCSSOs at overseas posts cost the agency \$1,360,700.

We recommend:

13. That the regional directors implement a tracking and monitoring system for PCSSO recommendations.
14. That the Office of Safety and Security assist the regions to develop methods for evaluating PCSSO recommendations and establishing management priorities for addressing Volunteer safety and security.

PLANNING FOR EMERGENCIES THROUGH EMERGENCY ACTION PLANS

EAPS did not always contain essential elements necessary to promote Volunteer safety.

Our review of the Emergency Action Plans (EAPs) developed and used by 65 Peace Corps posts¹⁶ in 2007 disclosed that the majority of EAPs needed improvement in a number of essential areas, as outlined in the following table. While nearly all EAPs incorporate other information needed to facilitate emergency planning, such as a description of the posts' emergency communication systems, an outline of Volunteer and staff responsibilities at each stage of an emergency, and a description of at least one evacuation plan, the following missing elements could cause confusion among staff and Volunteers during times of emergency and ultimately hinder Peace Corps' efforts to account for, consolidate, and safely evacuate Volunteers.

¹⁶ As of December 2007, Peace Corps Volunteers were serving at 67 overseas posts. However, PC/Cambodia and PC/Ethiopia were not open in 2005, one of the years for which we reviewed EAP test results. Since we did not evaluate the performance of these two posts in our review of EAP testing, we excluded them from consideration in this finding.

Table 7. Post EAPs with Missing Elements

Element	Percentage
Clear Code Words	26%
Realistic Trip Wires	55%
Clear Communication Tree	46%
Maps to Consolidation Points	54%
Charter Flight Contacts	35%
Ground Transportation Contacts	95%

Code Words¹⁷

Code words inform Volunteers when to move to consolidation points or evacuate the country. They become particularly important during the most extreme emergencies, which often result in the disruption of telephone service, forcing Volunteers to rely on high frequency or public radio for instructions from Peace Corps staff. Twenty-six percent of EAPs used ambiguous code words and phrases that could cause confusion and/or fail to alert Volunteers of actions they should take in an emergency.

During a recent EAP test, PC/Swaziland sent Volunteers a sentence-long text message in which one of the following code words was hidden: “record,” “tape,” “CD,” and “i-Pod.” According to the SSC and the former country director, several Volunteers did not realize a test had commenced, since the code words were too commonly used in everyday language to alert them of the emergency test.

In our opinion, code words such as “bicycle,” “motorcycle,” and “taxi” that are widely used throughout Peace Corps EAPs could cause similar confusion. We noted that the EAP for PC/Mozambique included one group of code words, while the corresponding “short version” of its EAP, used as a quick reference by Volunteers at their sites, listed different code words for the three most critical phases of the EAP.

If code words are not clear, simple, distinct, and commonly understood by all Volunteers and staff, Volunteers could find themselves left in harm’s way and/or unsure of the actions that they should take during the most threatening situations or emergencies.

Trip Wire

Trip wires are events that the post has determined raise concern for Volunteer safety and require the post to take emergency action. Fifty-five percent of EAPs contained inadequate or no trip wires to assist staff in deciding when to activate a phase of the EAP. For example, trip wires that call for the activation of the consolidation phase of PC/Suriname’s EAP include “civil war” and “no transportation due to civil war.” Such trip wires anticipate the movement of Volunteers from their sites to consolidation points while civil war rages and transportation options are severely limited. More effective trip wires would identify political events likely to precede a civil war and require, to the extent possible, that Volunteers consolidate and/or evacuate prior to the outbreak of crisis situations.

¹⁷ Code words are not a required EAP element, but 49 of the 65 EAPs we reviewed used them.

Utilizing trip wires is a best practice recognized by the U.S. Department of State: each U.S. Embassy is required to develop emergency trip wires. With regard to Peace Corps, trip wires could be particularly useful during times of staff turnover to help new or acting staff determine when and how to activate the EAP.

Clear Communication Tree

The Standard Operating Procedures for the Emergency Action Plan Template states:

The Emergency Communication System must have the ability to communicate with all PCVs within a time frame defined by post. It is vital that a communication tree be established....

Appendix B of the Standard Operating Procedures states:

In this section, the “Communications Tree” (with names) is specified and included. This and the [Volunteer] roster are the most frequently updated documents among the appendices. Updated versions need to be sent to the [Country Desk Unit] in PC/Washington.

However, 46% of EAPs that we reviewed did not clearly demonstrate how emergency communication would flow among Peace Corps staff members or between staff and Volunteers. For example, PC/Azerbaijan’s communication tree does not clearly indicate how staff would contact each Volunteer. Instead, it shows multiple individuals contacting unspecified groups of Volunteers. See Figure 3.

In contrast, PC/Burkina Faso’s communication tree clearly shows which staff are responsible for contacting geographic groups of Volunteers (see Figure 4). In a subsequent EAP appendix, PC/Burkina Faso compliments its communication tree with a Volunteer roster that provides the names and contact information for each Volunteer by region.

Without a clear communication tree, Volunteers might not receive all emergency messages in a timely manner, potentially resulting in confusion at the worst possible time – the height of an emergency.

Maps to Consolidation Points

According to the Standard Operating Procedures for the Emergency Action Plan Template:

Although [Volunteers] will know how to get to the town where their consolidation point is located, a map of the specifics (to the hotel or the [Volunteer] warden’s home, etc.) will be helpful.... Again, a consolidation test will ensure [Volunteers] know their consolidation points.

Our evaluation disclosed that fifty-four percent of EAPs did not include street maps or included unreadable maps to Volunteers’ consolidation points. This matter is particularly troubling because GAO also noted this deficiency in its 2002 report. Instead of street maps, some posts’ EAPs included maps that showed only the city or town where Volunteers were expected to consolidate. Without adequate maps, new Volunteers could find themselves in

Figure 3 PC/Azerbaijan's EAP Communication Tree

Appendix B - Emergency Communication System

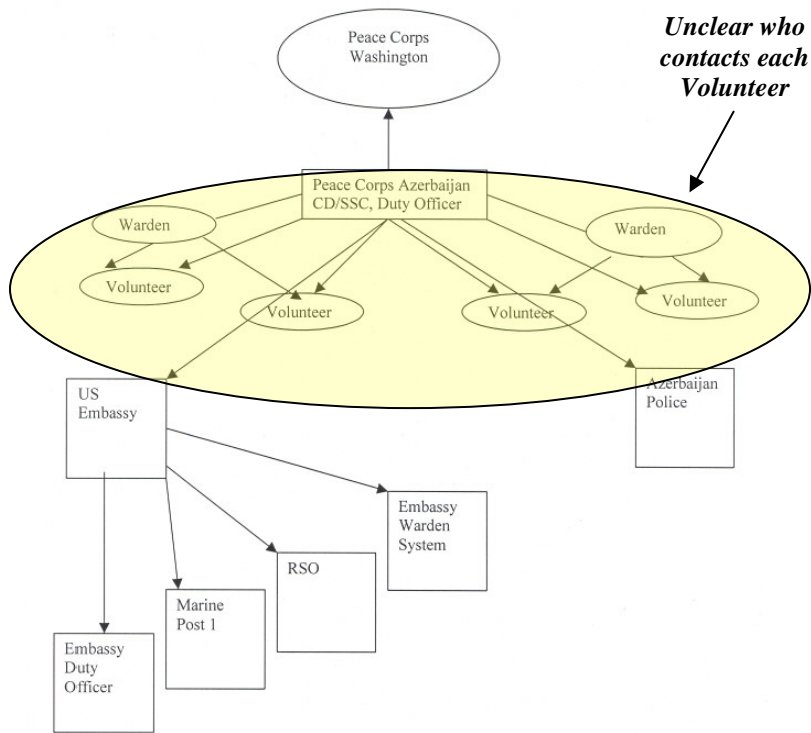
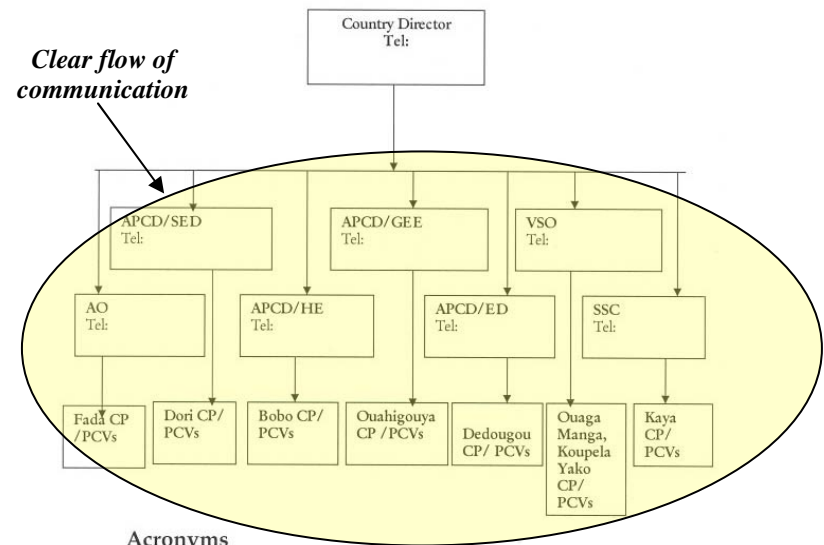


Figure 4 PC/Burkina Faso's EAP Communication Tree

Appendix B - Emergency Communication System



Acronyms

- PCV = Peace Corps Volunteer
- CP= Consolidation Point (town)
- AO= Admin Officer
- VSO= Volunteer Support Officer
- SSC= Safety and security Coordinator
- APCD= Associate Peace Corps Director
- HE= Health program
- SED= Small Enterprise Development program
- GEE= Girls' Education and Empowerment program
- ED= Secondary Education program

unfamiliar areas or unsure of the location of their consolidation sites when emergencies like natural disasters or civil strife unfold around them.

In a February 6, 2003 memo to all country directors in Africa, the Regional Director for Africa highlighted the importance of this issue for yet another reason: “[D]o we have adequate maps to the consolidation points so that a military helicopter could locate the [Volunteers] if necessary?”

Charter Flight Contacts

EAPs generally included a statement anticipating the use of such transportation options, such as: “Due to the number of Volunteers in [the country], it is not feasible to move them all overland using Peace Corps vehicles. Transportation options include: Peace Corps vehicles, hired vehicles (trucks, vans, buses), and commercial vehicles (buses, taxis, kombis), charter aircraft, and commercial aircraft.”

However, our evaluation found that 35% of EAPs did not include the contact information for charter flights, and 95% did not provide the contact information to hire ground transportation in an emergency.

In the Kyrgyz Republic, 36 Volunteers were left “stranded” in one region during protests following parliamentary elections, according to a PCSSO report covering the period March 21-28, 2005. The post had relied on the governor of this region to help evacuate Volunteers by airplane. After the opposition took control of the local airport, this option was eliminated, and the post had not identified an alternate means to move Volunteers out of the area. As a result of this incident, as of October 2007, PC/Kyrgyz Republic was one of only three Peace Corps posts worldwide with an EAP containing contact information for drivers and ground transportation companies that could be called upon in an emergency.

Without including contact information for non-public modes of transportation in the EAPs, the agency has no assurance that posts have explored and identified transportation alternatives or that such options could be called upon in short notice of an emergency.

We found instances of incomplete EAPs, which arose in part to them not being consistently reviewed using the requirements outlined in Standard Operating Procedures for the Emergency Action Plan Template. According to a Chief of Operations, regional staff do not have the expertise to adequately review the content of EAPs. This individual noted that the PCSSOs possess the expertise to catch problems like ambiguous code words, impractical trip wires, or even poor evacuation routes that someone without country-specific knowledge might miss.

If post or regional staff are unable to adequately review the EAP, the regional director could instruct country directors to include an EAP review and update in the scope of work as a part of PCSSO visits. Alternatively, the regions could work with the Office of Safety and Security to develop a training program for regional staff to better understand and assess the adequacy of individual EAPs.

We recommend:

15. That the regional directors ensure that all EAPs are reviewed and revised to contain:
 - Clear code words (if code words are used).
 - Logical trip wires that anticipate the most likely emergencies and posts' planned actions.
 - Communication responsibilities and contact information.
 - Readable street maps to Volunteers' consolidation points.
 - Contact information for all means of emergency transportation identified in the EAP, including charter flights and ground transportation.

16. That the Office of Safety and Security develop and administer safety and security compliance training to all regional personnel responsible for reviewing MS 270 documents, including EAPs and MS 270 compliance reports.

Peace Corps did not ensure that emergency action plans were consistently tested in accordance with agency policy or under realistic conditions.

According to PCM section 270.7.2:

Under the direction of the CD [country director], the EAP must be reviewed and tested annually to identify areas that may need revision. Such testing should include, at a minimum, the adequacy and reliability of the in-country communication network and the process for confirming the course of action to be taken by [Volunteers and Trainees] and staff at each potential stage of an emergency.

Because emergencies can arise at any time and can affect Volunteers in various locations, testing only selected Volunteers and staff on an annual basis is not sufficient. Untested Volunteers and staff may not be prepared to respond to the wide variety of safety threats recognized in these posts' own EAPs, ranging from terrorist attacks to epidemic outbreaks. See Appendix B.

Our review disclosed that 60% of all Peace Corps posts did not schedule an evacuation test in their most recent EAP. We were unable to determine if the remaining 40% of posts completed the scheduled evacuation tests, because very few posts submit evacuation test results to Peace Corps Headquarters. We noted that the completeness of the EAP test reports varied from post to post.

Furthermore, our review found that country directors and their staff did not always submit EAP test and activation reports to Headquarters using the template form, as required. The former Peace Corps Director in a March 5, 2004 memo to all country directors wrote, “Utilization of [the EAP template and Standard Operating Procedures] will establish consistency, ease of use, and improved understanding and communication between posts and headquarters.” This form greatly facilitates Safety and Security Desk Officers’ ability to track various facets of EAP tests, including which EAP stage was tested, when the test took place, who participated, how the test was conducted, whether testing occurred under varying conditions, and which methods of communication were used.

Additionally, we found that 5% of posts in 2005 and 12% of posts in 2006 were unable to provide documentation that all Volunteers participated in at least one EAP communication, consolidation, or evacuation test. This is contrary to PCM section 270.7.2, which requires posts to annually test “the process for confirming the course of action to be taken by V/Ts and staff at each potential stage of an emergency,” including the evacuation stage.

To effectively perform these tests, some posts use table top exercises requiring participants to deal with challenging scenarios that could compromise their safety in emergency situations. At other posts, Volunteers and staff demonstrate their understanding of the EAP process by actually traveling to consolidation and evacuation points as quickly and safely as possible. Absent these or similar tests, Peace Corps has no assurance that all Volunteers, Trainees and staff have the knowledge and ability to safely evacuate the country in an emergency.

Varying Conditions

We found that 35% of posts did not report testing their EAPs under varying conditions from 2005 to 2006, as required by PCM section 270.7.0c. For the purpose of this analysis, we defined a “varying condition”¹⁸ as any non-ideal situation articulated in the post’s test results, such as tests that occurred outside of office hours, excluded the use of cell phones, or happened when a large number of Volunteers were away from their sites. Testing the EAPs in this manner allows Peace Corps to fix critical weaknesses in its communication network and evacuation plans prior to the onset of actual emergencies. Posts that test under optimal or unchanging conditions risk being unable to account for or safely evacuate all Volunteers during an actual crisis.

Cell phones

Our review disclosed that in 2005 and 2006, at least 25% of all Peace Corps posts did not conduct an EAP test that excluded the use of cell phones. This figure is likely to be higher, because we were unable to determine the communication method used by 62% of all posts due to inadequate documentation.

While we believe that testing the Volunteer cell phone network on an occasional basis is reasonable, relying on cell phones to conduct EAP tests is problematic, as this communication method has proven unreliable even during localized emergencies in the United States. For instance, according to the Minneapolis-St. Paul Star Tribune, the surge in

¹⁸ The Peace Corps has no policies and procedures describing how to conduct evacuation tests or how to meet the requirement that tests occur under “varying conditions.”

cell phone traffic following the Interstate 35 bridge collapse on August 1, 2007 blocked calls for hours, prompting police to ask people to cease using their cell phones. The article articulates a lesson that Peace Corps posts would be wise to heed: “The Minneapolis bridge collapse has illustrated the ironic twist to cell phones: Just when people need them most, they might not work.”

Although Peace Corps has an excellent track record of safely evacuating Volunteers in an emergency, it is our opinion that only unwavering vigilance and sound preparation can truly promote Volunteer safety in an actual emergency. As cell phone technology spreads throughout the developing world, more traditional means of communication, like passing messages through public bus drivers or using high frequency radios may become less common. However, because advanced technology can actually be less than reliable in an emergency, Peace Corps should develop and regularly test ways to reach Volunteers and use the results of those tests to revise its EAPs accordingly.

We recommend:

- 17. That the regional directors establish a system to ensure that all posts test their EAPs annually, including testing the EAPs under “varying conditions.”

Site locator forms lacked essential elements and did not always provide enough information to locate Volunteers in a timely manner.

An essential element of Peace Corps’ emergency planning is the ability to communicate with and locate all Volunteers quickly enough to keep them from harm’s way. To that end, Peace Corps requires all Volunteers to complete a site locator form, which should include a map and directions to their site; a primary, secondary, and tertiary means of communication; contact information for local medical facilities and police stations; and other relevant items. We reviewed 160 site locator forms from Volunteers in our sample and found that they did not consistently meet these standards, as shown in Table 8.

Table 8. Site Locator Forms Missing Elements

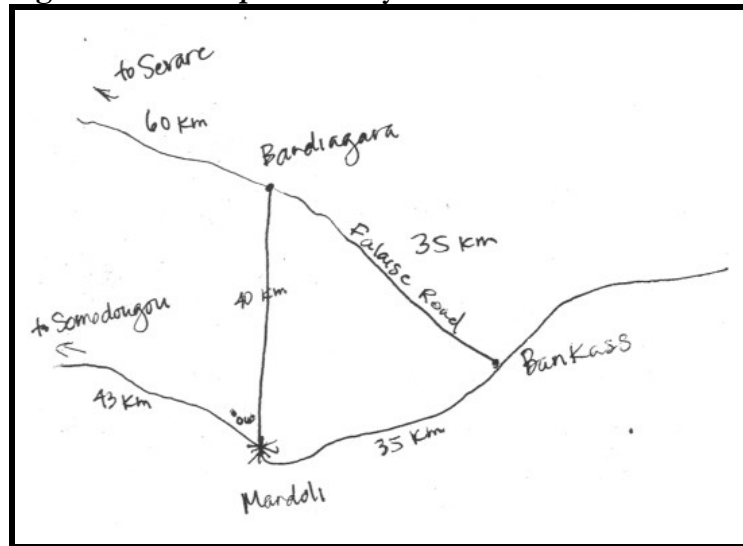
Missing Element	Percentage
Adequate Maps and Directions to Volunteers’ Sites	37%
GPS Coordinates of Volunteers’ Sites	80%
Non-cell Phone Contact Information for Volunteers	13%
Information on Local Police Post	38%
Information on Local Medical Facility	21%

Adequate Maps and Directions to Volunteers’ Sites

During our visits to Volunteers’ sites, we found that 37% of the site locator forms did not provide adequate maps and directions to allow us to locate the Volunteers’ homes without assistance. According to language in the forms themselves, they should provide directions to

someone who has never visited the Volunteer's site and might arrive at night in response to an emergency. Figure 5 shows one example of a map that was not drawn with sufficient detail to direct us to the Volunteer's residence. The map shows no landmarks, and the accompanying directions did not adequately describe how someone could find her site having never been there before.

Figure 5. Site Map Drawn by Volunteer



In situations when public transportation ceases to operate, Peace Corps staff or third parties like military personnel may be unable to quickly locate and extract Volunteers from emergency situations if the site locator forms contain inadequate directions. For example, OIG evaluators had to ask for directions even though the Volunteer accompanied us to his site. Not only were the directions on his site locator form inadequate, but the Volunteer was unfamiliar with the route taken by car, since he usually biked on paths to reach his site.

GPS Coordinates of Volunteers' Sites

GPS coordinates could help helicopter operators and staff equipped with GPS devices to locate and extract Volunteers quickly in an emergency.

We spoke with a helicopter owner who PC/Vanuatu planned to call upon in the event of an emergency. He informed us that no flight maps exist for Vanuatu, and without GPS coordinates, he would be forced to rely on the site locator form and a topographical map of the country to locate a Volunteer's site, which could waste precious minutes or even hours during a safety or medical emergency. The pilot also expressed concerns of running low on fuel if he were unable to locate a remote Volunteer quickly. The pilot only knew of two locations where he could refuel in the entire country.

Our review found that 80% of site locator forms did not include global positioning satellite (GPS) coordinates of Volunteers' sites. This should not be surprising since the majority of posts do not have GPS units and currently the agency does not allow mapping software to be installed on post computers. The benefit of quickly locating a Volunteer's site in an emergency appears to far outweigh the cost of handheld GPS devices, which can be

obtained at minimal cost. As of February 2008, the regional offices were working with the Office of the Chief Information Officer and the Investment Review Board to have the prohibition of mapping software on Peace Corps computers lifted so posts would be able to collect coordinates and create precise maps for locating Volunteers.

Contact Information for Volunteers

Thirteen percent of the site locator forms that we reviewed provided only cell phone numbers as a means of contacting Volunteers. According to the Standard Operating Procedures for the Emergency Action Plan Template:

A redundant communication system must be created and maintained between the [Peace Corps] office and [Volunteers]. All [Volunteers] must complete a Site Locator Form and indicate a primary, secondary, and tertiary means of communication.

The importance of this point was highlighted during Peace Corps' evacuation of Cote d'Ivoire in September and October 2002, after fighting erupted between a rebel group and government forces. According to the PCSSO report covering this event, two of the post's most important means of communication failed: the cell phone network and the FM radio frequency. This problem hampered Peace Corps' efforts to broadcast safety messages to its Volunteers, verify their safety, and even maintain contact with staff who had left the capital to retrieve Volunteers.

Information on Local Medical Facility

Twenty-one percent of the site locator forms that we reviewed did not include any information on the closest medical facility to the Volunteer's site, and 38% did not provide information on the nearest police station. The Post Management Handbook states:

Components of [emergency] action plans include...updated emergency information forms (or emergency site locator forms) for each Volunteer and site, including ... nearest clinic, airfield and police post, and various other site-related information...

In our opinion, without this information, Peace Corps has no assurance that its Volunteers know where to get help locally in the event that staff cannot quickly reach them during medical or police emergencies.

We believe that these problems persisted because the posts relied on Volunteers to accurately fill out and submit the site locator forms to the Peace Corps office. Most of the posts we visited also required a Peace Corps staff member to review the site locator forms, but this process still did not consistently result in accuracy or completeness. Rather than using this method, staff could take on the responsibility of drawing a map to the Volunteer's residence and filing in the form's most critical elements during site development visits. This information could be verified by staff during site visits and augmented by Volunteers as they discover additional resources and means of communication throughout their service. Additionally, country directors could hold staff accountable for the accuracy and completeness of the most important sections of the site locator forms.

We recommend:

18. That the regional directors require Peace Corps staff members to fill out the most critical sections of site locator forms during site development visits and require country directors to hold staff responsible for the accuracy and completeness of those sections.
19. That the Office of Safety and Security determine if global positioning system tools would complement the agency's safety and security initiatives.

STRATEGIC GOALS AND PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

In its 2002 report on Volunteer safety and security, GAO recommended that the Peace Corps Director develop indicators to assess the effectiveness of the safety and security initiatives. As a result, Peace Corps developed agency-wide and office-specific performance goals and indicators related to Volunteer safety and security.

Peace Corps' strategic goals and performance indicators do not consistently promote improvement in the Volunteer safety and security environment.

Peace Corps' outcome goal¹⁹ related to safety and security is to "increase the percentage of Volunteer survey respondents indicating they feel safe most of the time [‘usually safe’ to ‘very safe’] where they live from the FY 2002 level of 86% to 88% by FY 2008." We believe that the intended result of the Volunteer safety support system is to enhance Volunteer and Trainee safety overseas, not just to ensure that Volunteers feel safe where they live. Volunteers' feelings regarding safety may not reflect how safe they really are. Volunteers who have spent a relatively short time in their new communities may not be able to judge the degree to which they are safe. According to the 2006 biennial survey, upon which Peace Corps' safety and security outcome goal is measured, 46% of responding Volunteers had lived at their sites nine months or less.

We noted that in the FY 2007 PAR, Peace Corps began using the results of annual close-of-service surveys to monitor progress on this goal during the years when the biennial survey is not given. We agree that at the end of service, Volunteers can better judge their degree of safety, but even after two years of living in a foreign country, their views should not be the primary basis upon which Peace Corps monitors overall progress related to its safety and support system.

¹⁹ According to OMB Circular A-11, "Preparation, Submission, and Execution of the Budget," outcomes "describe the intended result of carrying out a program or activity. They define an event or condition that is external to the program or activity and that is of direct importance to the intended beneficiaries and/or the public."

Additionally, it is our opinion that determining how safe Volunteers feel where they live does not take into account the safety of Volunteers away from their sites. The current outcome goal does not capture incidents like the following, quoted from a 2007 CIRF report: “Female Volunteer reported..that she was raped in [a city in her country of service] approximately two month[s] prior....The Volunteer stated that she feels safe at her site, and the incident occurred when she was away from her site.” At some posts, a significant number of crimes against Volunteers occur outside of their communities: between February 2006 and June 2007, only 5% of crimes against Volunteers in Bolivia occurred at their sites.

We found that Peace Corps’ outcome goal for Volunteer safety is an incomplete measure of this issue.

Agency safety and security performance indicators merit revision.

Only one target²⁰ for the current agency-wide safety and security performance indicators has changed since FY 2004. These targets merit revision, since Peace Corps has always met or exceeded them.

Performance indicators developed by the Africa, EMA, and IAP regions and the Office of Safety and Security did not strive for continual improvement in the Volunteer safety and security environment. Our review of these offices' three most recent strategic plans showed that nearly three-quarters of safety and security-related performance indicators anticipated no improvement throughout the years covered by the strategic plans.

Table 9. Performance Indicators in the Three Most Recent Strategic Plans

	Indicators Anticipating No Improvement	Total Indicators	Percentage of Indicators Anticipating No Improvement
IAP Region	23	24	96%
EMA Region	33	47	70%
Africa Region	29	34	85%
Safety and Security	12	27	44%
Totals	97	132	74%

Source: The Regions’ and Office of Safety and Security’s Strategic Plans for FY 2006 to 2008, FY 2007 to 2009, and FY 2008 to 2010.

As this report’s findings have indicated, the Volunteer safety and support system can be improved, but Peace Corps' strategic plans do not always reflect this fact. The agency can draw from the issues highlighted in this report as well as from its staff's experience to

²⁰ According to OMB’s Program Assessment Rating Tool Guidance Nos. 2006-02 and 2007-02: Targets refer to improved levels of performance needed to achieve the stated goals. These targets must be *ambitious* [original emphasis] (i.e., set at a level that promotes continued improvement given program circumstances) and *achievable* [original emphasis] given program characteristics. ... Target setting should consider circumstances (e.g., funding levels, changing legislative constraints, past performance) and targets may be adjusted annually as these factors change.

develop more effective safety and security goals. New output and outcome goals should include meaningful and ambitious performance indicators; possibilities include:

- The percentage of major crime data elements reported in error via the CIRF or CIRS.
- The average number of days that posts take to report violent and non-violent crimes to Headquarters.
- The percentage of Volunteer sites that meet the post's own site criteria.
- The percentage of Volunteers receiving the minimum number of site visits, per post policy.
- The percentage of posts that annually test all phases of their EAP.
- The percentage of posts testing their EAPs on an annual basis without using cell phones.
- The percentage of site locator forms reviewed for accuracy.
- The percentage of Volunteer sites for which Peace Corps has recorded GPS coordinates.

Since 2005, we found no indication that the agency attempted to officially revise these targets by approaching OMB. Also, we found no evidence that Peace Corps unofficially revised the targets in-house to enhance accountability. Furthermore, officials involved in developing strategic plans for the three Peace Corps regions noted that while the Office of the Director has provided them feedback on their strategic plans, the issue of ambitious targets has not arisen.

In our opinion, by not developing meaningful goals and performance indicators, Peace Corps cannot determine the extent to which it is addressing critical shortcomings in the Volunteer safety and support system. Further, the agency jeopardizes its fulfillment of the goals outlined in the Government Performance and Results Act.²¹

We recommend:

20. That the Office of Strategic Information Research and Planning ensure that Peace Corps' strategic goals, objectives, and performance indicators related to safety and security are meaningful at the agency and individual office levels.

²¹ The goals of the Government Performance and Results Act are: a) To improve the confidence of the American people in the capability of the Federal government, by systematically holding Federal agencies accountable for achieving program results, b) To improve Federal program effectiveness and public accountability by promoting a new focus on results, service quality, and customer satisfaction, c) To help Federal managers improve service delivery, by requiring that they plan for meeting program objectives and by providing them with information about program results and service quality, d) To improve congressional decision-making by providing more objective information on achieving statutory objectives, and on the relative effectiveness and efficiency of Federal programs and spending, and e) To improve internal management of the Federal government.

We believe that the outlook for improving strategic planning with regard to safety and security is hopeful. In 2006, the Director established the Office of Strategic Information, Research, and Planning (OSIRP), in part to meet the agency's performance planning and reporting needs. This office is responsible for articulating and coordinating the content on goals, measures, and performance of the Peace Corps. In an interview, the director of OSIRP generally concurred with our findings in this area and noted that a safety and security working group was in the process of revising the agency-wide performance indicators for the next 6-year strategic plan required under the Government Performance and Results Act.

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend:

1. That the regional directors establish policies and procedures to monitor the timeliness of crime incident report submissions from the posts.
2. That the Office of Safety and Security conduct an independent review of agency safety and security incident data for validity and reliability.
3. That the Office of Safety and Security implement written policies and procedures that detail quality assurance requirements for Peace Corps' safety and security incident data.
4. That the Office of Safety and Security establish an allowable data error rate and systematically check safety and security incident data fields for accuracy and consistency.
5. That the Office of Safety and Security implement policies and procedures to guide post and CSA staff in accurately and consistently reporting safety and security incident data.
6. That the Office of Safety and Security request a staffing assessment to determine whether the Crime Statistics and Analysis unit requires more personnel resources.
7. That the regional directors implement a process to ensure that safety and security incident data is effectively reviewed for accuracy and clarity by country directors before submission to headquarters.
8. That the Office of Communications include in the Welcome Books (1) an internet link to the Safety of the Volunteer report and (2) a statement that informs potential Volunteers that risk factors in their country of service may vary from the global risk factors.
9. That the Office of Volunteer Recruitment and Selection include a statement in its invitation materials to encourage potential Volunteers to review country of service risk factors in the most recent Safety of the Volunteer report.
10. That the Office of Safety and Security revise the Pre-Service Training Safety and Security competencies to include demonstrating culturally appropriate ways to respond to a crime situation.
11. That the regional directors provide the posts with:
 - Examples of well-developed post safety and security criteria.
 - Examples of well-designed checklists for use in verifying whether post safety and security criteria have been met.
 - An explanation of how to rank site and housing criteria, including procedures for making exceptions to criteria.

12. That the regional directors establish a system to ensure that posts develop and follow housing policy standards, such as inspecting every house before a Volunteer moves in, to ensure appropriate, safe, and secure Volunteer housing.
13. That the regional directors implement a tracking and monitoring system for PCSSO recommendations.
14. That the Office of Safety and Security assist the regions to develop methods for evaluating PCSSO recommendations and establishing management priorities for addressing Volunteer safety and security.
15. That the regional directors ensure that all EAPs are reviewed and revised to contain:
 - Clear code words (if code words are used).
 - Logical trip wires that anticipate the most likely emergencies and posts' planned actions.
 - Communication responsibilities and contact information.
 - Readable street maps to Volunteers' consolidation points.
 - Contact information for all means of emergency transportation identified in the EAP, including charter flights and ground transportation.
16. That the Office of Safety and Security develop and administer safety and security compliance training to all regional personnel responsible for reviewing MS 270 documents, including EAPs and MS 270 compliance reports.
17. That the regional directors establish a system to ensure that all posts test their EAPs annually, including testing the EAPs under "varying conditions."
18. That the regional directors require Peace Corps staff members to fill out the most critical sections of site locator forms during site development visits and require country directors to hold staff responsible for the accuracy and completeness of those sections.
19. That the Office of Safety and Security determine if global positioning system tools would complement the agency's safety and security initiatives.
20. That the Office of Strategic Information Research and Planning ensure that Peace Corps' strategic goals, objectives, and performance indicators related to safety and security are meaningful and ambitious at the agency and individual office levels.

APPENDIX A

Comparison of Global Risk Factors for Assaults Reported in Welcome Books with Actual Country Data for 2004¹

Post	Total Assaults	Occurred in a Public Place		Occurred When the Volunteer Was Not at Site		Occurred between 5:00 p.m. and 2:00 a.m.		Occurred during the Weekend ¹		Occurred When the Volunteer Was Unaccompanied ²		Involved Alcohol Consumption	
		Welcome Book	Actual Data	Welcome Book	Actual Data	Welcome Book	Actual Data	Welcome Book	Actual Data	Welcome Book	Actual Data	Welcome Book	Actual Data
Bolivia	8	"Most Crimes"	75%	43%	38%	"Usually"	25%	"Usually"	25%	82%	25%	40%	13%
Jamaica	5	"Most Crimes"	20%	43%	40%	"Usually"	40%	"Usually"	40%	82%	0%	40%	0%
Kyrgyz Republic	12	"Most Crimes"	66%	43%	16%	"Usually"	42%	"Usually"	25%	82%	25%	40%	8%
Mali	4	"Most Crimes"	25%	43%	50%	"Usually"	50%	"Usually"	0%	82%	50%	40%	25%
Moldova	5	"Most Crimes"	100%	43%	20%	"Usually"	80%	"Usually"	20%	82%	0%	40%	40%
Mongolia	7	"Most Crimes"	57%	43%	29%	"Usually"	71%	"Usually"	29%	82%	0%	40%	14%
Senegal	8	"Most Crimes"	62%	43%	88%	"Usually"	13%	"Usually"	62%	82%	20%	40%	13%
Swaziland	3	"Most Crimes"	66%	43%	33%	"Usually"	67%	"Usually"	67%	82%	0%	40%	0%
Thailand	1	"Most Crimes"	0%	43%	0%	"Usually"	100%	"Usually"	0%	82%	0%	40%	0%
Vanuatu	13	"Most Crimes"	85%	43%	92%	"Usually"	46%	"Usually"	77%	82%	50%	40%	15%

¹ This column includes all incidents that took place from Friday through Sunday, in accordance with the method that the Peace Corps calculates this data.

² This column includes data for sexual assaults only.

APPENDIX B

Threats to Volunteer Safety at Posts That Did Not Include All Volunteers in Emergency Action Plan Tests

Post	Nature of Threat
Ghana	<p>Political and Civil Unrest: As many as 20 inter- and intra- ethnic conflicts have been recorded since 1980. One conflict in 1994 engulfed an area of 50,000 square kilometers and involved approximately one million people.</p> <p>Epidemics: Avian flu has been reported in three towns, but the entire country is at risk.</p>
Guatemala	<p>Natural Disasters: In 1998, Hurricane Mitch caused approximately 260 deaths in Guatemala, and 30,000 people died in a 1976 earthquake.</p> <p>Political and Civil Unrest: A strong possibility exists for civil unrest, usually taking the form of protests, roadblocks, and marches.</p>
Kazakhstan	<p>Natural Disasters: In 2003, 626 people were injured and 36,000 were affected by an earthquake. Floods and landslides have also affected more than 30,000 people since 2001.</p>
Malawi	<p>Natural Disasters: In 1991, extensive floods affected 268,000 people and resulted in 472 deaths.</p> <p>Political and Civil Unrest: Anti-American riots took place in one city in 2003 after the arrest of terror suspects. Political violence occurred following the 2004 general elections.</p> <p>Epidemics: Epidemics caused nearly 700 deaths in 2001 and 2002.</p>
Namibia	<p>Natural Disasters: Since February 2007, floods in the northeastern part of the country have cut off villages and schools, resulting in the evacuation of 1,400 students and teachers. Droughts from 1982 through 2004 affected nearly all of Namibia.</p> <p>Political and Civil Unrest: The Angolan civil war spilled over Namibia's borders in 1999.</p>
Niger	<p>Natural Disasters: Drought affected 3.6 million people in 2001 and 2005.</p> <p>Political and Civil Unrest: Niger has had three coups, and student protests, which can turn violent, are becoming increasingly common. Strikes and work stoppages could also result in civil unrest.</p>
Philippines	<p>Natural Disasters: The Philippines is very earthquake-prone, with the last two major destructive earthquakes occurring in 1990 and 1994. Volcanic eruptions in 1992 and 2001 threatened lives and disrupted travel. This country is also at risk for typhoons.</p> <p>Political and Civil Unrest: Military coups were frequent from 1989 to 1990, and the most recent attempted coup occurred in 2003.</p> <p>Terrorism: Bombings have claimed many lives and injured hundreds of people in recent years.</p>
Thailand	<p>Natural Disasters: Nearly 6,000 people were killed after a tsunami struck in December 2004. Since 2002, Volunteers living in three provinces have been forced to leave their homes due to flooding.</p> <p>Political and Civil Unrest: The most recent military coup occurred in September 2006.</p> <p>Terrorism: On December 31, 2006, a series of bombings killed three and injured more than 20 people in Bangkok.</p>
Turkmenistan	<p>Natural Disasters: This country has a history of floods and earthquakes that could require Volunteers to leave affected areas.</p> <p>Political and Civil Unrest: A natural disaster or leadership change could threaten stability, with conditions deteriorating rapidly.</p>
Ukraine	<p>Natural Disasters: Certain areas have been subject to flooding due to heavy rainfall, sudden melting of snow, and damages to dams.</p> <p>Political and Civil Unrest: Anti-American and Anti-NATO demonstrations have occurred, in addition to attacks on election polling stations.</p> <p>Epidemics: Avian flu has been discovered in localized areas, but the disease has not claimed any human lives.</p>

Source: EAPs of the posts listed above, with the exception of Thailand. The information on Thailand was taken both from its EAP and news reports found at www.cnn.com, since that post did not update its March 2007 EAP to include all the significant threats shown here.

APPENDIX C

Historical Perspective of Peace Corps' FY 2007 Performance Goal and Indicators Related to Volunteer Safety and Security

Overall Performance Goal: Incrementally increase the percentage of respondents to the biennial Peace Corps Volunteer survey indicating that Volunteers feel safe most of the time (“usually safe” to “very safe”) where they live by 2% from FY 2002 level of 86% to 88% by FY 2008.

Performance Indicator No. 1: Posts undergoing safety and security assessments (FY 2004 and 2005) or percentage of posts receiving safety and security report recommendations annually (FY 2006 and 2007)³

FY	Target	Actual	Change from Prior Period
2004	75%	92%	N/A
2005	85%	86%	Decrease
2006	85%	85%	Decrease
2007	85%	87%	Increase

Performance Indicator No.2: Percentage of Volunteer respondents reporting the safety and security portion of their pre-service training as “adequate,” “effective,” or “very effective” as measured by the biennial Volunteer survey.

FY	Target	Actual	Change from Prior Period
2004	85%	95%	N/A
2005	N/A	N/A	N/A
2006	85%	94%	Decrease
2007 ⁴	85%	96%	Increase

Performance Indicator No.3: Percentage of Volunteer respondents reporting they were “somewhat,” “considerably,” or “completely” satisfied with support provided by Peace Corps staff for safety and security, as measured by the biennial Volunteer survey.

FY	Target	Actual	Change from Prior Period
2004	85%	91%	N/A
2005	N/A	N/A	N/A
2006	85%	92%	Increase
2007 ⁵	85%	90%	Decrease

³ According to the Chief, Volunteer Safety and Overseas Security Division, very few security assessments resulted in no report with recommendations. Therefore, even though the wording of this performance indicator changed, the indicator has always been determined using essentially the same data.

⁴ Peace Corps used close-of-service survey results to inform this performance indicator since the biennial Peace Corps Volunteer survey will be conducted again in FY 2008.

⁵ Peace Corps used close-of-service survey results to inform this performance indicator as well.

APPENDIX D

PRIOR REPORTS

Over the past five years, the GAO and the Peace Corps OIG have reported extensively on the safety and security of Peace Corps Volunteers. GAO's reports focused exclusively on safety and security, while the OIG included safety and security as one area of review in many of its program evaluations and audits of Peace Corps posts.

Government Accountability Office Reports

- “Initiatives for Addressing Safety and Security Challenges Hold Promise, but Progress Should be Assessed” (GAO-02-818, July 2002).
According to this report, the Peace Corps had adopted policies that broadly addressed the major elements of the Volunteer Safety and Support System. However, the report noted “mixed performance in key areas” regarding the agency’s efforts to implement these policies. According to GAO, unclear guidance, inadequate staff training, uneven application of supervision and oversight mechanisms, and staff turnover hampered Peace Corps’ efforts to ensure high-quality performance for the agency as a whole. GAO therefore recommended that the Peace Corps develop indicators to assess the effectiveness of its new safety and security initiatives and include the results of those initiatives in its annual reports under the Government Performance and Results Act. The report also recommended that Peace Corps develop a strategy to address staff turnover. The agency concurred with these recommendations.

- “Peace Corps, Status of Initiatives to Improve Volunteer Safety and Security” (GAO-04-600T, testimony provided to the House Committee on International Relations on March 24, 2004).
This testimony provided a summary of GAO’s findings from its July 2002 report and included an update on Peace Corps’ actions since the release of that report. According to the testimony, the Peace Corps established the Office of Safety and Security to strengthen supervision and oversight of safety and security worldwide. In response to GAO’s recommendations from the 2002 report, the testimony noted that Congress had granted Peace Corps authority to exempt 23 safety and security positions from the five-year statutory restriction on tenure. In addition, GAO noted that Peace Corps had adopted a framework to monitor post compliance and develop quantifiable performance indicators. At the time this testimony was presented, the agency was reportedly still clarifying guidance, revising indicators, and establishing a performance baseline.

- “Peace Corps, Observations on Volunteer Safety and Security” (GAO-04-903T, testimony provided to the Senate Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere, Peace Corps, and Narcotics Affairs on June 22, 2004).
This testimony provided the same information summarized above under GAO report number GAO-04-600T.

APPENDIX D

PRIOR REPORTS

Peace Corps Office of Inspector General Reports

The majority of safety and security recommendations from prior OIG program evaluations and audits focused on the selection and monitoring of Volunteers' sites and emergency action plans. Other areas of substantial focus included training related to safety and security, language, and cross-cultural issues; reporting and responding to incidents; transportation policies; staff training; and out-of-site policies.

Safety and Security Recommendations in OIG Reports, January 2002-August 2007

Recommendation Area	Number
Selection and Monitoring of Sites	136
Emergency Action Plan	120
Volunteer Training	69
Reporting and Responding to Incidents	27
Staff Training	18
Transportation Policy	12
Out-of-Site Policy	10
Volunteer Behavior	7
Volunteer Transit Houses	5
Compliance with Peace Corps Manual section 270	4
Monitoring, Assessing, and Disseminating Information	3
PCSSO Recommendations	2
Miscellaneous	10
Total	423

The following 48 OIG reports included recommendations on Volunteer safety and security:

- Program Evaluation of Peace Corps/Niger (IG-01-03-S, May 2002)
- Audit, Program Evaluation, and Safety and Security Assessment of Peace Corps/Russia (IG-01-09-AES, May 2002)
- Audit and Safety and Security Assessment of Peace Corps/Senegal (IG-01-10-AS, February 2002)
- Program Evaluation and Audit of Peace Corps/Jordan (IG-01-11-EA, March 2002)
- Program Evaluation, Safety and Security Assessment, and Administrative Review of Peace Corps/Ghana (IG-01-12-ES, March 2002)
- Evaluation and Audit of Peace Corps/El Salvador (IG-01-15-AE, April 2002)
- Program Evaluation of Peace Corps/Burkina Faso (IG-02-02-E, March 2002)
- Audit, Program Evaluation, and Safety and Security Assessment of Peace Corps/Bolivia (IG-02-05-AES, September 2002)
- Audit, Program Evaluation, and Safety and Security Assessment of Peace Corps/Philippines" (IG-02-07-AS, February 2003)
- Program Evaluation of Peace Corps/Cape Verde (IG-02-08-E, February 2003)
- Review of the Peace Corps United Nations Volunteer Program (IG-02-10-AE, March 2003)
- Program Evaluation of Peace Corps/Vanuatu (IG-02-12-E, January 2003)
- Program Evaluation of Peace Corps/Thailand (IG-02-14-E, March 2002)
- Audit and Program Evaluation of Peace Corps/Kazakhstan (IG-02-22-FAE, January 2003)

APPENDIX D

PRIOR REPORTS

Audit, Program Evaluation, and Safety and Security Assessment of Peace Corps/Romania (IG-02-23-FES, January 2003)

Program Evaluation and Audit of Peace Corps/Morocco (IG-02-25, June 2003)

Program Evaluation and Audit of Peace Corps/Tanzania (IG-02-26, July 2003)

Audit of Peace Corps/Mongolia (IG-02-27-A, March 2003)

Audit of Peace Corps/Samoa (IG-03-01, October 2003)

Program Evaluation and Audit of Peace Corps/Guatemala (IG-03-03-EA, September 2003)

Program Evaluation and Audit of Peace Corps Kenya (IG-03-02-AE, September 2003)

Program Evaluation and Audit of Peace Corps/Moldova (IG-03-08-AE, January 2004)

Program Evaluation of Peace Corps/Mozambique (IG-03-09-E, September 2004)

Program Evaluation and Follow-up Audit of Peace Corps/Togo (IG-03-11-AE, April 2004)

Program Evaluation and Audit of Peace Corps/Gabon (IG-03-13-AE, March 2004)

Follow-up Program Evaluation and Audit of Peace Corps/Benin (IG-03-14-FUE, January 2004)

Program Evaluation and Audit of Peace Corps/Honduras (IG-04-02-AE, September 2004)

Program Evaluation and Audit of Peace Corps/Madagascar (IG-04-03-AE, October 2004)

Program Evaluation of Peace Corps/Mauritania (IG-04-10-E, January 2005)

Audit of Peace Corps/Samoa (IG-04-11-FUA, December 2004)

Program Evaluation and Audit of Peace Corps/Armenia (IG-05-02-AE, February 2005)

Program Evaluation and Audit of Peace Corps/Tonga (IG-05-06-AE, March 2005)

Program Evaluation of Peace Corps/Samoa (IG-05-07-E, March 2005)

Program Evaluation of Peace Corps/Macedonia (IG-05-08-E, March 2005)

Program Evaluation of Peace Corps/Dominican Republic (IG-05-11-E, April 2005)

Follow-up Evaluation of Peace Corps/Mozambique (IG-05-12-FUE, May 2005)

Program Evaluation and Audit of Peace Corps/Kiribati (IG-05-14-AE, July 2005)

Program Evaluation of Peace Corps/Philippines (IG-05-16-E, August 2005)

Program Evaluation and Audit of Peace Corps/Costa Rica (IG-05-17-AE, August 2005)

Follow-up Program Evaluation of Peace Corps/Kenya (IG-05-18-FUE, August 2005)

Program Evaluation of Peace Corps/Federated States of Micronesia and Palau (IG-05-20-E, September 2005)

Program Evaluation and Audit of Peace Corps/Chad (IG-05-24-AE, September 2005)

Follow-up Audit and Program Evaluation of Peace Corps/Gambia (IG-06-07-FUA, January 2006)

Program Evaluation of Peace Corps/Bulgaria (IG-06-09-E, January 2006)

Audit and Program Evaluation of Peace Corps/Zambia (IG-06-12-AE, June 2006)

Program Evaluation of Peace Corps/Botswana (IG-06-18-E, September 2006)

Program Evaluation of Peace Corps/Cameroon, (IG-07-01-E, October 2006)

Audit and Program Evaluation of Peace Corps/South Africa (IG-07-02-EA, October 2006)

Audit and Program Evaluation of Peace Corps/Ecuador (IG-07-04-EA, January 2007)

Program Evaluation of Peace Corps/Azerbaijan (IG-07-11-E, July 2007)

Program Evaluation of Peace Corps/Eastern Caribbean (IG-07-12-E, July 2007)

Program Evaluation of Peace Corps/Guinea (IG-07-14-E, August 2007)

All Ten Posts In Sample

Crime Incidents with Reporting Errors	Number of Incidents Reviewed	Frequency	Percentage of Incidents with Reporting Errors
Incidents with One Error	309	113	37%
Incidents with Two or More Errors	309	61	20%
TOTALS	309	174	56% (average)

Data Field	Total Number of Data Fields Reviewed	Number of Data Fields Reported Incorrectly	Percentage of Data Fields Reported Incorrectly
Day of the Week	309	32	10%
Time	309	71	23%
Classification	309	40	13%
Location	309	53	17%
Offender	309	72	23%
Site Information	309	23	7%
TOTALS	291	1,854	16% (average)

PC/Bolivia

Crime Incidents with Reporting Errors	Number of Incidents Reviewed	Frequency	Percentage of Incidents with Reporting Errors
Incidents with One Error	22	10	46%
Incidents with Two or More Errors	22	4	18%
TOTALS	22	14	64% (average)

Data Field	Total Number of Data Fields Reviewed	Number of Data Fields Reported Incorrectly	Percentage of Data Fields Reported Incorrectly
Day of the Week	22	3	14%
Time	22	4	18%
Classification	22	3	14%
Location	22	6	27%
Offender	22	11	50%
Site Information	22	3	14%
TOTALS	132	30	23% (average)

PC/Jamaica

Crime Incidents with Reporting Errors	Number of Incidents Reviewed	Frequency	Percentage of Incidents with Reporting Errors
Incidents with One Error	31	9	29%
Incidents with Two or More Errors	31	1	3%
TOTALS	31	10	32% (average)

Data Field	Total Number of Data Fields Reviewed	Number of Data Fields Reported Incorrectly	Percentage of Data Fields Reported Incorrectly
Day of the Week	31	2	7%
Time	31	3	10%
Classification	31	1	3%
Location	31	2	7%
Offender	31	3	10%
Site Information	31	1	3%
TOTALS	186	12	7% (average)

PC/Kyrgyz Republic

Crime Incidents with Reporting Errors	Number of Incidents Reviewed	Frequency	Percentage of Incidents with Reporting Errors
Incidents with One Error	40	17	43%
Incidents with Two or More Errors	40	5	13%
TOTALS	40	22	55% (average)

Data Field	Total Number of Data Fields Reviewed	Number of Data Fields Reported Incorrectly	Percentage of Data Fields Reported Incorrectly
Day of the Week	40	3	8%
Time	40	10	25%
Classification	40	7	18%
Location	40	5	13%
Offender	40	6	15%
Site Information	40	3	8%
TOTALS	240	34	14% (average)

PC/Mali

Crime Incidents with Reporting Errors	Number of Incidents Reviewed	Frequency	Percentage of Incidents with Reporting Errors
Incidents with One Error	51	24	47%
Incidents with Two or More Errors	51	14	28%
TOTALS	51	38	75% (average)

Data Field	Total Number of Data Fields Reviewed	Number of Data Fields Reported Incorrectly	Percentage of Data Fields Reported Incorrectly
Day of the Week	51	8	16%
Time	51	18	35%
Classification	51	4	8%
Location	51	5	10%
Offender	51	24	47%
Site Information	51	4	8%
TOTALS	306	63	21% (average)

PC/Moldova

Crime Incidents with Reporting Errors	Number of Incidents Reviewed	Frequency	Percentage of Incidents with Reporting Errors
Incidents with One Error	27	7	26%
Incidents with Two or More Errors	27	5	19%
TOTALS	27	12	44% (average)

Data Field	Total Number of Data Fields Reviewed	Number of Data Fields Reported Incorrectly	Percentage of Data Fields Reported Incorrectly
Day of the Week	27	2	7%
Time	27	3	11%
Classification	27	3	11%
Location	27	4	15%
Offender	27	6	22%
Site Information	27	1	4%
TOTALS	162	19	12% (average)

PC/Mongolia

Crime Incidents with Reporting Errors	Number of Incidents Reviewed	Frequency	Percentage of Incidents with Reporting Errors
Incidents with One Error	40	16	40%
Incidents with Two or More Errors	40	8	20%
TOTALS	40	24	60% (average)

Data Field	Total Number of Data Fields Reviewed	Number of Data Fields Reported Incorrectly	Percentage of Data Fields Reported Incorrectly
Day of the Week	40	5	13%
Time	40	10	25%
Classification	40	4	10%
Location	40	9	23%
Offender	40	6	15%
Site Information	40	2	5%
TOTALS	240	36	15% (average)

PC/Senegal

Crime Incidents with Reporting Errors	Number of Incidents Reviewed	Frequency	Percentage of Incidents with Reporting Errors
Incidents with One Error	48	15	31%
Incidents with Two or More Errors	48	12	25%
TOTALS	48	27	56% (average)

Data Field	Total Number of Data Fields Reviewed	Number of Data Fields Reported Incorrectly	Percentage of Data Fields Reported Incorrectly
Day of the Week	48	4	8.
Time	48	10	21%
Classification	48	10	21%
Location	48	13	27%
Offender	48	7	15%
Site Information	48	6	13%
TOTALS	288	50	17% (average)

PC/Swaziland

Crime Incidents with Reporting Errors	Number of Incidents Reviewed	Frequency	Percentage of Incidents with Reporting Errors
Incidents with One Error	27	7	26%
Incidents with Two or More Errors	27	5	19%
TOTALS	27	12	44% (average)

Data Field	Total Number of Data Fields Reviewed	Number of Data Fields Reported Incorrectly	Percentage of Data Fields Reported Incorrectly
Day of the Week	18	2	11%
Time	18	6	33%
Classification	18	2	11%
Location	18	4	22%
Offender	18	1	6%
Site Information	18	1	6%
TOTALS	108	16	15% (average)

PC/Thailand

Crime Incidents with Reporting Errors	Number of Incidents Reviewed	Frequency	Percentage of Incidents with Reporting Errors
Incidents with One Error	10	1	10%
Incidents with Two or More Errors	10	1	10%
TOTALS	10	2	20% (average)

Data Field	Total Number of Data Fields Reviewed	Number of Data Fields Reported Incorrectly	Percentage of Data Fields Reported Incorrectly
Day of the Week	10	0	0%
Time	10	1	10%
Classification	10	0	0%
Location	10	0	0%
Offender	10	2	20%
Site Information	10	0	0%
TOTALS	60	3	5% (average)

PC/Vanuatu

Crime Incidents with Reporting Errors	Number of Incidents Reviewed	Frequency	Percentage of Incidents with Reporting Errors
Incidents with One Error	22	7	32%
Incidents with Two or More Errors	22	7	32%
TOTALS	22	14	64% (average)

Data Field	Total Number of Data Fields Reviewed	Number of Data Fields Reported Incorrectly	Percentage of Data Fields Reported Incorrectly
Day of the Week	22	3	14%
Time	22	6	27%
Classification	22	6	27%
Location	22	5	23%
Offender	22	6	27%
Site Information	22	2	9%
TOTALS	132	28	21% (average)

APPENDIX F

MANAGEMENT'S RESPONSE TO THE PRELIMINARY REPORT

MEMORANDUM

To: Kathy Buller, Inspector General

From: Patrick J. Hogan, Associate Director for Safety and Security

CC: David Liner, Chief of Staff/Operations
Allene Zanger, RD Inter-America and Pacific Region
Henry McKoy, RD Africa Region
Jay Katzen, RD Europe, Mediterranean and Asia Region
Richard Parker, Director of Communications
Rosie Mauk, AD Volunteer Recruitment and Selection
Ruben Hernandez, Director of the Office of Strategic Information,
Research and Planning
John Dimos, Chief Compliance Officer

Date: August 4, 2008

Subject: Preliminary Program Evaluation Report: Volunteer Safety and Security,
dated March 31, 2008.

This is a joint response to the recommendations made by Acting Inspector General Geoffrey Johnson, regarding Volunteer Safety and Security as outlined in the Preliminary Program Evaluation Report: Volunteer Safety and Security dated March 31, 2008.

The Office of Inspector General (OIG) recommendations are numbered 1 through 20. Appearing immediately after each recommendation and labeled as Disposition is the Peace Corps response prepared by the appropriate staff element.

The affected offices concur with 10 and partially concur with 8 of 20 recommendations.

1. That the regional directors establish policies and procedures to monitor the timeliness of crime incident report submissions from the posts.

Disposition: Concur. The Office of Safety and Security will work with the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) to devise a technological solution within the Crime Incident Reporting System to automatically notify all recipients about incidents which are not reported in a timely fashion. In the meantime, until this system is developed, the Regional Safety and Security Desk Officer (SSDO) will inform their respective Regional Directors about trends in late reporting or egregious lapses in time between post receiving the incident information and completing an

incident report. Regions will work with the Office of Safety & Security to develop policies and procedures to monitor timeliness of incident reports by October 1, 2008. The Office of Safety and Security will work with the OCIO to get a technical solution as soon as possible.

2. That the Office of Safety and Security conduct an independent review of agency safety and security incident data for validity and reliability.

Disposition: Partially Concur. The agency has recently launched a new incident reporting system which is intended to enhance quality assurance and control. Additionally, there are features which have been built into the new incident reporting system that provide “hints” when filling out the form, intended to minimize errors. Since this new system is designed to address many of the concerns associated with the interim incident reporting system (CIRF), the agency believes that it is premature to determine if an independent assessment is warranted. The Office of Safety and Security will monitor quality, validity and reliability on a quarterly basis and recommend follow-up actions as necessary.

3. That the Office of Safety and Security implement written policies and procedures that detail quality assurance requirements for Peace Corps’ safety and security incident data.

Disposition: Concur. The Office of Safety and Security is working on policies and procedures that clarify quality assurance requirements with respect to incident data. Expected completion date is December 2008.

4. That the Office of Safety and Security establish an allowable data error rate and systematically check safety and security incident data fields for accuracy and consistency.

Disposition: Concur. The allowable data error rate will be a part of the policies and procedures outlined above. The Office of Safety and Security will monitor this on an ongoing basis and will include data error information as part of the Safety of the Volunteer report beginning with 2008 data.

5. That the Office of Safety and Security implement policies and procedures to guide post and CSA staff in accurately and consistently reporting safety and security incident data.

Disposition: Concur. The Office of Safety and Security will ensure that policies and procedures to guide post and Crime Statistics and Analysis Unit (CSA) staff are included in the policies and procedures that are being developed as noted above. These will be disseminated to the field upon completion. Expected completion date is December 2008.

6. That the Office of Safety and Security request a staffing assessment to determine whether the Crime Statistics and Analysis unit requires more personnel resources.

Disposition: Partially Concur. The Office of Safety and Security, CSA Unit has been primarily focused on two projects that have consumed the preponderance of their work hours: maintaining the now-superseded CIRF system, which was very labor intensive; and designing and developing a new replacement system. The new system, which was launched in April 2008, should significantly reduce the workload of the CSA unit, therefore allowing that unit to more carefully monitor quality assurance. The Office of Safety and Security believes that it is premature to conduct a staffing assessment until the impact of the new CIRS is evaluated. The staffing needs of CSA will be assessed during the spring 2009 IPBS process.

7. That the regional directors implement a process to ensure that safety and security incident data is effectively reviewed for accuracy and clarity by country directors before submission to headquarters.

Disposition: Partially Concur. The newly established incident reporting process automatically informs all staff at post with access to the incident reporting system about an incident. This is an improvement over the old system, which did not inform all staff about an incident. If there are concerns about clarity or accuracy, country directors can access and update information as necessary. The Regions and the Office of Safety and Security do not believe that it is necessary for CDs to review the incident reports before they are submitted however, as this may further hinder the timeliness of reporting. Since incident information is reviewed at HQ by the Office of Safety and Security and the Regions, any questions or concerns about clarity or accuracy can be addressed on an as-needed basis.

8. That the Office of Communications include in the Welcome Books

(1) an internet link to the Safety of the Volunteer report and

(2) a statement that informs potential Volunteers that risk factors in their country of service may vary from the global risk factors.

Disposition: Partially Concur.

(1) The *Safety of the Volunteer* report is publicly available for any applicant to review. This report, however, contains technical information that is more difficult to digest and less relevant than the country-specific information that is currently available in the Welcome Books. The Office of Communications recommends instead using the “What About Safety” page on the website at www.peacecorps.gov/safety with the language in the attached document.

(2) The Office of Communications will begin including a statement in all Welcome Book revisions beginning October 1, 2008, which is also in the attached document.

9. That the Office of Volunteer Recruitment and Selection include a statement in its invitation materials to encourage potential Volunteers to review country of service risk factors in the most recent Safety of the Volunteer report.

Disposition: Do Not Concur. Welcome Book information currently has country-specific information related to the country of service to which the individual is being invited. This information is aggregated and averaged over a 5-year period and compares crime information to other posts within the same region. The *Safety of the Volunteer* report only provides country specific incidence rates and the number of actual incidents for a specific year. Due to the low numbers of actual incidents of serious crimes in a given year, this information is less informative than a 5-year trend average. None-the-less, the *Safety of the Volunteer* report is available online for any individual to consult.

10. That the Office of Safety and Security revise the Pre-Service Training Safety and Security competencies to include demonstrating culturally appropriate ways to respond to a crime situation.

Disposition: Do Not Concur. In the context of the OIG report, incident response strategies appear to refer to actions that a Volunteer would take to thwart an attack or improve their chances of survival. Training on averting an imminent attack must not be prescriptive and must recognize that individuals will respond according to their abilities and instincts. When taking action to either affect an escape or improve chances of survival, cultural appropriateness is not a consideration, and in fact, could further increase one's risk. Strategies to escape or defend oneself must be based on ability, circumstances and judgment.

11. That the regional directors provide the posts with:

- **Examples of well-developed post safety and security criteria.**
- **Examples of well-designed checklists for use in verifying whether post safety and security criteria have been met.**
- **An explanation of how to rank site and housing criteria, including procedures for making exceptions to criteria.**

Disposition: Partially Concur. Regions and the Office of Safety and Security believe that posts are being provided with sufficient guidance and examples about post safety and security criteria and checklists for evaluating whether the criteria is being met. As part of their routine post visits, Peace Corps Safety and Security Officers (PCSSO) review and propose enhancements to posts' criteria. However,

Regions and the Office of Safety and Security will review current strategies employed by posts and provide several good examples on the Peace Corps Intranet to ensure that posts have some examples. This will be done by October 1, 2008.

Regions and the Office of Safety and Security do not believe that posts need to rank site and housing criteria, nor do they necessarily need a process for making exceptions. Posts need a clear process to ensure that criteria are being met. Decisions about whether or not to “except” certain criteria are best made by post staff based on their knowledge of the security environment, site and other relevant factors.

12. That the regional directors establish a system to ensure that posts develop and follow housing policy standards, such as inspecting every house before a Volunteer moves in, to ensure appropriate, safe, and secure Volunteer housing.

Disposition: Partially Concur. Regions concur that safe Volunteer housing is critical to the success of the Peace Corps and to Volunteer well-being. Based on current policy, Regions recognize that all sites must afford safe housing for Volunteers, and current MS 270 reporting requirements ask all CDs to ensure that site selection criteria and procedures are being met. The housing checklist is one of the means of verification. On the 2008 MS 270 compliance checklist, all posts indicate that they have and are using a housing checklist.

Regions and the Office of Safety and Security have two concerns with the OIG findings related to safe and secure housing. The first is that some examples in the OIG report do not clearly demonstrate that the house failed to meet the criteria. For example, indicating that a break-in occurred does not mean housing failed to meet criteria. The implication is that the Volunteer was burglarized due to a housing security deficiency. The OIG does not demonstrate that this is the case. The second concern is that some of the items mentioned may demonstrate a maintenance issue rather than failure to initially meet criteria (i.e. latrine doors that had fallen off hinges).

Regions and the Office of Safety and Security believe that improvements can be made, but are reluctant to be overly prescriptive due to the wide variation of Volunteer housing that is safe throughout the world. We also believe that Volunteers can and should be empowered to assume greater responsibility for ascertaining that their houses are acceptable and managing repairs where appropriate. The Office of Safety and Security and the Regions will work together to establish clearer policy guidance regarding Volunteer housing and procedures for ensuring that posts are ensuring housing meets criteria. Expected completion of the guidance is December 2008.

13. That the regional directors implement a tracking and monitoring system for PCSSO recommendations.

Disposition: Concur. This has been completed in all three regions. Examples are in Attachment B.

14. That the Office of Safety and Security assist the regions to develop methods for evaluating PCSSO recommendations and establishing management priorities for addressing Volunteer safety and security.

Disposition: Concur. The Office of Safety and Security will work closely with the Regions to ensure that there are clear procedures for evaluating PCSSO recommendations and establishing management priorities. Expected completing October 1, 2008.

15. That the regional directors ensure that all EAPs are reviewed and revised to contain:

- **Clear code words (if code words are used).**
- **Logical trip wires that anticipate the most likely emergencies and posts' planned actions.**
- **Communication responsibilities and contact information.**
- **Readable street maps to Volunteers' consolidation points.**
- **Contact information for all means of emergency transportation identified in the EAP, including charter flights and ground transportation.**

Disposition: Partially Concur. Regions and the Office of Safety and Security concur that all necessary elements of EAPs need to be included and reviewed, but do not concur that all of the above-mentioned bullets must be included. In order to satisfy this recommendation, the Regions and the Office of Safety and Security will ensure that a revised and accurate checklist for reviewing EAPs is developed and disseminated. In addition, the Office of Safety and Security and the Regions will ensure that CDUs are trained in the use of the checklist to ensure they understand what components are critical when they are reviewing EAPs. A revised checklist will be developed and disseminated by October 1, 2008 and training will be ongoing after that date. All current regional employees with responsibility for reviewing EAPs will be trained by the end of Q2 2009.

16. That the Office of Safety and Security develop and administer safety and security compliance training to all regional personnel responsible for reviewing MS 270 documents, including EAPs and MS 270 compliance reports.

Disposition: Concur. In collaboration with the Regions, the Office of Safety and Security will develop compliance training for all regional personnel responsible for

monitoring MS 270 compliance, including EAPs. This activity will be completed by the end of Q2, 2009.

17. That the regional directors establish a system to ensure that all posts test their EAPs annually, including testing the EAPs under “varying conditions.”

Disposition: Concur. This activity has been completed with updated guidance sent to all posts in March 2008. Guidance is in Attachment C.

18. That the regional directors require Peace Corps staff members to fill out the most critical sections of site locator forms during site development visits and require country directors to hold staff responsible for the accuracy and completeness of those sections.

Disposition: Partially Concur. We agree that Country Directors should hold their staff responsible for the accuracy and completeness of the most critical sections of site locator forms, but it is not practical or operationally prudent to require staff members to complete them during site development visits. As part of the site selection process, staff already gather information that would enable them to reach or contact the site in an emergency situation. The site locator form is an important site entry tool for the Volunteer and giving the Volunteer a partially completed form negates the responsibility for the Volunteer to make valuable contacts and locate health clinics or police posts (which could be remote).

Alternatives, such as a more robust review and follow-up process (including the project manager and/or the staff person who visited the site for the selection process) would enhance site locator forms as a reliable means of finding the Volunteer’s site. The Office of Safety and Security will collaborate with Regions to ensure that guidance for improving the site locator form procedures is developed and disseminated by December 31, 2008.

19. That the Office of Safety and Security determine if global positioning system tools would complement the agency’s safety and security initiatives.

Disposition: Concur. The Office of Safety and Security recognizes the value of GPS and GIS technology and its capability to enhance other safety and security systems. The Office of Safety and Security will collaborate with ongoing efforts to pilot GPS/GIS solutions and continue to research the possible ways in which GIS/GPS technology would be effective for the Peace Corps. The Office will present a recommendation to the Director by the end of Q2, 2009.

20. That the Office of Strategic Information Research and Planning ensure that Peace Corps’ strategic goals, objectives, and performance indicators related to safety and security are meaningful and ambitious at the agency and individual office levels.

Disposition: Concur

2009-2014 OSIRP is working with all Peace Corps organizations to improve the outcome nature of our performance goals and indicators. This work is being done in conjunction with the development of the Peace Corps 2009-2014 Strategic Plan. This information was made available to the OIG program evaluators prior to the release of this preliminary report. The Peace Corps Strategic Plan will be submitted to the Office of Management & Budget on September 30, 2008

Attachments (3)

APPENDIX G

OIG COMMENTS

Management concurred with 10 of the 20 recommendations, partially concurred with eight recommendations, and did not concur with two recommendations. We closed recommendation number 13. Recommendation numbers 1 – 12 and 14 – 20 remain open pending confirmation from the chief compliance officer that the following has been received:

- For recommendation number 1, documentation that the duty of monitoring the timeliness of incident reporting has been addressed by the regions.
- For recommendation number 2, documentation that the Office of Safety and Security has had an independent review of agency crime data conducted.

Management's response does not address the reliability of previously collected data that the agency will continue to use; this data should be validated for reliability.

- For recommendation numbers 3, 4, and 5, a copy of the quality assurance policies and procedures for the Crime Statistics and Analysis unit.
- For recommendation number 6, a copy of the plan to address inadequate staff time allotted to perform data quality control.
- For recommendation number 7, a copy of the regions' plan to ensure that crime data submitted to headquarters is routinely reviewed for accuracy by an additional post staff member (i.e., not the staff member who originally submitted the crime data).
- For recommendation number 8, a copy of a revised Welcome Book that contains a statement informing Invitees that risk factors in their country of service may vary from the global risk factors.
- For recommendation number 9, documentation that Invitees are encouraged to review the "What about Safety" page on Peace Corps' internet website.
- For recommendation number 10, documentation that Pre-Service Training Safety and Security competencies include culturally appropriate ways to respond to a crime situation.
- For recommendation number 11, documentation that examples of 1) well-developed post safety and security criteria, 2) well-designed checklists for use in verifying whether post safety and security criteria have been met, and 3) how some posts have ranked site and housing criteria, including procedures for making exceptions to criteria have been posted on the Peace Corps intranet.

APPENDIX G

- For recommendation number 12, documentation that regional directors have a system in place to ensure that posts develop and follow housing policy standards.
- For recommendation number 14, a copy of the regions' policies and procedures for evaluating PCSSO recommendations.
- For recommendation number 15, a copy of the Emergency Action Plan (EAP) review checklist, and documentation that country desk unit staff have received EAP review training.
- For recommendation number 16, documentation that regional staff who review EAPs and MS 270 documents have received compliance training.
- For recommendation number 17, a copy of the revised EAP Testing Guidelines that state that testing under varying conditions is an agency requirement.
- For recommendation number 18, a copy of the regions' guidance to overseas posts on improving site locator form accuracy and completeness.
- For recommendation number 19, a copy of the Office of Safety and Security's recommendation to the Director on GIS/GPS technology.
- For recommendation number 20, a copy of the revised Office of Safety and Security strategic goals, objectives, and performance indicators.

In their response, management describes actions they are taking or intend 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 they have taken these actions nor 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.

APPENDIX H

OIG CONTACT

OIG CONTACT

If you wish to comment on the quality or usefulness of this report to help us improve our products, please e-mail Shelley Elbert, Assistant Inspector General for Evaluations and Inspections, at selbert@peacecorps.gov, or call (202) 692-2904.

STAFF ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Team Leader Senior Evaluator Crist Chensvold, Alice Bunker, Assistant Inspector General for Evaluations and Inspections, and Senior Evaluators Lynn Khadiagala and Carlos Torres contributed to this report.

REPORT FRAUD, WASTE, ABUSE, AND MISMANAGEMENT

Fraud, waste, abuse, and mismanagement in government affect everyone from Peace Corps Volunteers to agency employees to the general public. We actively solicit allegations of inefficient and wasteful practices, fraud, and abuse related to Peace Corps operations domestically or abroad. You can report allegations to us in several ways, and you may remain anonymous.

Mail:

**Peace Corps
Office of Inspector General
P.O. Box 57129
Washington, DC 20037-7129**

Phone:

**24-Hour Toll-Free: (800) 233-5874
Washington Metro Area: (202) 692-2915
24-Hour Violent Crime Hotline: (202) 692-2911**

Fax:

(202) 692-2901

E-Mail:

oig@peacecorps.gov

