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OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

To: Aaron Williams, Director
Dick Day, Regional Director, Africa
Daljit Bains, Chief Compliance Officer

From: Kathy A. Buller, Inspector General 

Date: September 8, 2011

Subject: Final Report on the Program Evaluation of Peace Corps/Liberia
(IG-11-07-E)

Transmitted for your information is our final report on the program evaluation of Peace Corps/Liberia.

Management concurred with all 33 recommendations. Based on the documentation provided, we closed one recommendation: number seven. In its response, management described actions it is taking or intends to take to address the issues that prompted each of our recommendations. We wish to note that in closing recommendations, we are not certifying that the agency has taken these actions or that we have reviewed their effect. Certifying compliance and verifying effectiveness are management's responsibilities. However, when we feel it is warranted, we may conduct a follow-up review to confirm that action has been taken and to evaluate the impact.

Thirty-two recommendations, number(s) 1-6 and 8-33, remain open. OIG will review and consider closing recommendations 1, 3, 5-6, 9-15, 17-33 when the documentation reflected in the agency's response to the preliminary report is received. For recommendations 2, 4, 8, and 16, additional documentation is requested. These recommendations remain open pending confirmation from the chief compliance officer that the documentation reflected in OIG Analysis below is received. Our comments, which are in the report as Appendix C, address these matters. Please respond with documentation to close the remaining open recommendations within 60 days of receipt of this memorandum. You may address questions regarding follow-up or documentation to Assistant Inspector General for Evaluations Jim O'Keefe, or to Senior Evaluator Heather Robinson.

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

Attachment

cc: Carrie Hessler-Radelet, Deputy Director
Stacy Rhodes, Chief of Staff/Chief of Operations

Elisa Montoya, White House Liaison/Senior Advisor to the Director
Bill Rubin, General Counsel
Lynn Foden, Chief of Operations, Africa
Madeleine Mader, Chief of Program and Training, Africa
Edward Hobson, Associate Director, Safety and Security
Esther Benjamin, Associate Director, Global Operations
Sonia Derenoncourt, Director, Overseas Programming and Training Support
Sarah Morgenthau, Director, Peace Corps Response
Daryn Warner, Country Director, Liberia
Vince Groh, Country Desk Officer, Liberia



Peace Corps Office of Inspector General



Map of Liberia



Final Country Program Evaluation Report: Peace Corps/Liberia

IG-11-07-E

September 2011

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Nearly 3,900 Peace Corps Volunteers have served the people of Liberia since the program was first launched in 1962. The program was closed in 1990 due to civil war but re-opened in October 2008 when 12 Peace Corps Response Volunteers (PCRVs) arrived. Since that time, the program has evolved into a regular Peace Corps program with Volunteers who serve the traditional 27-month assignment. In July 2010, 14 two-year Volunteers began serving in the secondary education sector. At the onset of this evaluation, 30 Volunteers were serving in Liberia, including 16 PCRVs.

The program has been well received by the Liberian government since re-opening in 2008. The secondary education project is aligned with host country needs, and the post has developed a good working relationship with the Ministry of Education. While this report draws attention to important programming concerns that need to be addressed, the post's positive relationship with the Liberian government should provide a solid foundation to improve the program.

Since 2008, the staff has been resolving issues caused by opening the post under an accelerated schedule without sufficient financial and physical resources. The post also suffered from confusion about the roles various headquarters offices would play in providing management support and oversight. These challenges burdened the post's staff and contributed to Volunteer dissatisfaction and high early termination (ET) rates. Most of these concerns have been addressed, although the post continues to operate without a full-time American staff member overseeing the programming and training unit. To date, lessons learned from the post's opening have not been incorporated into agency processes and policies to help ensure that similar mistakes are not repeated in the future.

The evaluation uncovered programming issues with the newly-opened two-year Volunteer program because the agency did not fully prepare the post to transition from Peace Corps Response (PCR) to a two-year program. Liberia is still rebuilding its educational system after years of civil war, and two-year Volunteers faced significant challenges in effectively carrying out their primary assignments. Most two-year Volunteers were unable to identify counterparts or initiate secondary projects to supplement their primary assignments. Furthermore, the post has not finalized the secondary education sector's project plan.

Two-year Volunteers also reported that they were inadequately prepared for Liberia's post-conflict-related challenges. The post-conflict environment impacted Volunteers' community integration as well as their ability to be effective in their work assignment. The two-year Volunteers expressed the need for strategies that could better enable them to manage the post-conflict-related challenges they encounter.

Most PCRVs reported higher levels of satisfaction than two-year Volunteers regarding their primary assignment and their ability to develop counterpart relationships and be productive. However, it is unclear what the post is trying to achieve with its PCR positions in health and education. Some staff questioned whether the short-term assignments were worth the time and

resources they required, especially given the number of challenges that need to be addressed with the two-year program.

The evaluation also uncovered issues related to the post's safety and security program that could result in a poor response to emergencies. Some of the primary concerns are as follows:

- Forty percent of interviewed Volunteers could not correctly identify their consolidation points.
- Sixty-nine percent of Volunteers' houses did not meet the post's housing criteria.
- Volunteers were not accurately completing their site locator forms (SLFs).
- The post is not providing updated copies of the emergency action plan (EAP) to Volunteers, staff, and the embassy.
- Over 50 percent of interviewed Volunteers raised concerns about how the post is preparing for and responding to safety and security threats.

The post has made improvements since its opening thanks to the efforts of the local staff members who are dedicated to the program and demonstrate an eagerness to learn. However, the challenges uncovered during the evaluation, particularly those with the two-year program, raise concerns about the agency's growth plans for the post. Initially, the agency planned to double the number of two-year Volunteers in Liberia, a commitment that was made before the post assessed how well the program was working and corrected deficiencies. The agency has since scaled back its growth plans but will need to continue to monitor post operations and observe improvements in programming and safety and security before committing to future expansion.

Our report contains 33 recommendations, which, if implemented, should strengthen programming operations and correct the deficiencies detailed in the accompanying report.

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HOST COUNTRY BACKGROUND

Liberia is located on the West African coast and is bordered by Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Côte D'Ivoire. The country was founded by free African Americans and freed slaves from the United States, referred to as Americo-Liberians. The style of government and constitution was modeled after that of the United States. It gained its independence in 1847 and is the oldest independent republic in Africa.

Early in its history, the country experienced tensions between the Americo-Liberians and the indigenous inhabitants. The Americo-Liberian elite monopolized political power and restricted the voting rights of the indigenous population who were excluded from citizenship until 1904. These tensions grew over time and eventually culminated in a civil war that began in December 1989. Fighting initially ended in 1996 but problems continued and a new rebellion erupted. The conflict intensified in mid-2003 until Charles Taylor, who led a rebellion to assume the presidency in 1989, left Liberia and took refuge in Nigeria. After two years of rule by a transitional government, the country held a peaceful presidential election in the fall of 2005 and elected Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf as the President of Liberia. Before achieving peace, the war claimed the lives of more than 200,000 Liberians and displaced a million others into refugee camps in neighboring countries.

Years of civil war and government mismanagement destroyed much of Liberia's economy. The country's education infrastructure was one of many areas that suffered during the civil war. The average adult has had only 3.9 years of schooling. Liberia is listed as "low human development" and ranks 162 out of 169 countries in the 2010 "United Nations Human Development Report."¹ The country is heavily reliant on foreign assistance for revenue.

Although the country is currently peaceful, situations exist that could threaten its stability. The country is preparing for presidential elections that will take place in October 2011. Various ethnic groups and opposition parties will be represented, and candidates may include former warlords from the civil war era, increasing the potential for violence. There are also concerns with regional security stemming from an election dispute in Côte D'Ivoire, a border country. The situation resulted in violence and created a refugee situation as Ivoirians escaped to Liberia.

PEACE CORPS PROGRAM BACKGROUND

Over 3,800 Volunteers served in Liberia from the program's opening in 1962 until the program was closed in 1990 due to civil war. After years of unrest, the first democratically-elected female head of state in Africa, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, was elected in 2005 and requested that Peace Corps return to Liberia. The program was initially re-started in 2008 using the Peace

¹ "The Human Development Report" publishes an annual Human Development Index (HDI). The HDI provides a composite measure of three basic dimensions of human development: health, education and income. Countries receive a ranking that ranges from "very high human development" to "low human development" based on related data.

Corps Response program, and the first group of 12 PCRVs arrived in October of that year to focus on education and teacher training.² Since that time, the program has evolved into a regular Peace Corps program with Volunteers who serve the traditional 27-month assignment. In July 2010, 14 two-year Volunteers began serving as English, math, and science teachers.³ A more detailed explanation of the project is described below:

- **Secondary Education**

Volunteers help implement the Ministry of Education's goals of improving the quality of education, especially at the junior and senior high levels. The Volunteers teach English, science and mathematics in secondary schools; train, coach and mentor teachers; strengthen school/community partnerships; and facilitate extra-curricular activities with a focus on gender equity, girls enrollment in school, reproductive health, school gardens, and youth development.

In addition to the two-year program, the post continues to operate a Peace Corps Response program. In January 2011, 16 new PCRVs arrived in Liberia. Currently, PCRVs are working in two areas:

- **Education**

The majority of PCRVs in Liberia work under the Ministry of Education in areas such as teacher training, strengthening Parent Teacher Associations, and library creation.

- **Community Health**

PCRVs work under the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare to create in-service training programs for existing health care professionals and assist in the training of new health professionals.

In total, there were 30 Volunteers serving in Liberia at the onset of this evaluation. These Volunteers were a mix of two-year and PCRVs.⁴ At the time of the evaluation, the post was making preparations for the next Volunteer intake, which would double the number of Volunteers serving in Liberia.

² Peace Corps Response provides opportunities for Returned Peace Corps Volunteers to undertake short-term assignments in various program areas around the world.

³ During the evaluation, one two-year Volunteer terminated service, bringing the total number of two-year Volunteers to 13.

⁴ Refer to the Interviews Conducted section of the report for select Volunteer demographics.

EVALUATION RESULTS

PROGRAMMING

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

- The coordination between the Peace Corps and the host country in determining development priorities and Peace Corps program areas
- Whether post is meeting its project objectives
- Counterpart selection and quality of counterpart relationships with Volunteers
- Site development policies and practices

In reviewing the post's grant programs, the Office of Inspector General (OIG) found no significant areas of concern that would warrant action by the post. A programming staff member has been assigned responsibility for managing the post's Small Project Assistance grant program. The post has had limited grant activity, although that might increase now that the post is operating a two-year program.

The secondary education project is aligned with host country needs and supported by the Liberian government.

Since the program re-opened in 2008, the post has welcomed nine inputs of PCRVs and one group of two-year Volunteers. At the time of the evaluation, over 75 Volunteers had been placed in Liberia, and more were expected to arrive in the summer of 2011. When launching a new post, it is important to have support from the host country and to align programming with the country's development needs. The *Peace Corps New Country Entry Guide* states that building relationships with the government and Volunteer sponsors is essential to creating an effective post. The guide also emphasizes the need to work with the host country government to determine their development priorities when identifying Volunteer projects. PC/Liberia has had successes in both of these areas.

Improving education is one of the Liberian government's top priorities and is part of its "Education for All" action plan. The secondary education project's concept paper incorporates the Liberian government's education goals into its own. At the time of the evaluation, 80 percent of the two-year Volunteers and PCRVs serving in Liberia were assigned to education-related projects. Although the country has many needs to help it recover from the long civil war, the region and post staff expressed an interest in remaining focused on education, at least for the time being.

The education program is well-received by the government, and the post has developed a positive relationship with the Ministry of Education. To demonstrate the importance of the Peace Corps program, the Minister of Education made a special effort to meet with the evaluator during the evaluation. During this meeting he demonstrated detailed knowledge of the post's

programming and stated that Volunteers are working in essential areas. Staff and Volunteers stated that they have been well-received by the country, which has a long, positive history with the Peace Corps. The Minister of Education demonstrated this favorable reception when he stated, “We think Peace Corps is one of the best things to happen to Liberia.”

Although the rest of this evaluation report will describe some important programming concerns, the post’s positive relationship with the Liberian government should provide a good foundation to develop solutions and make program improvements.

Two-year Volunteers faced significant challenges in effectively carrying out their primary assignments.

Peace Corps’s *Characteristics and Strategies of a High Performing Post: Post Management Resource Guide* states that job-related problems “can compromise a Volunteer’s chances for a satisfying and successful work experience.” One such problem is a struggling organization that does not have enough resources. Liberia is still rebuilding its educational system after years of civil war, and staff and Volunteers reported that many schools do not function well or have the resources to help students.

While we recognize that it is early in their service, none of the seven two-year Volunteers interviewed during the evaluation rated their ability to carry out their primary assignment favorably (0 percent favorable response with a 1.8 average). Volunteers stated that they face numerous challenges in their roles as secondary school teachers, such as:

- Student and teacher absenteeism
- Frequent school cancellations
- Classrooms with students of varying educational levels
- Cheating and corruption by students, teachers, and principals
- Limited number of teachers with which to develop counterpart relationships

A comprehensive pre-entry assessment of Liberia’s post-conflict economy and infrastructure could have identified the challenges with the country’s educational system and been used by staff to develop an education project with achievable goals. The assessment data could also have been used to select sites where the challenges could be minimized and inform pre-and in-service training program design so that Volunteers were better prepared to overcome obstacles. Although the agency conducted an assessment before opening the PCR program, the post was not re-assessed to determine the best way to utilize two-year Volunteers and adequately prepare for their arrival. This is discussed in further detail in the Management Controls section of the report.

As a result of the challenges they face, many two-year Volunteers were frustrated with their assignments and did not think they were having an impact. Comments from Volunteers reflect their frustrations and concerns:

“I knew it wouldn't be a typical teaching experience but here it's not structured at all. I often go to school and either school is canceled or nothing is going on. I don't feel I've had an opportunity to do anything.”

“Education is a critical need but there's the problem of getting schools to meet and that's not in our control. I don't know how to improve.”

“There have been so many times I try to do something and the school isn't ready to receive it. There aren't enough teachers there for me to teach normally. It isn't structured enough for me to complete the goals.”

As Volunteers progress throughout their service, they will likely gain skills to overcome some of these challenges, which will give them a greater sense of accomplishment.⁵ But the number of challenges faced by the two-year Volunteers indicates a broader problem with the Liberian educational system that will likely not be fully addressed as Volunteers progress throughout their service. Because of these systemic problems, two-year Volunteers questioned whether they could be effective in secondary education placements. Volunteers recognized that education is a critical need in Liberia but suggested that they might be more effective teaching students at lower grade levels where there is a greater likelihood that students will be performing at or near their grade level. Post staff was aware of Volunteers' challenges and was planning to focus on sites where there was a greater likelihood of success.

We recommend:

- 1. That the country director work with the post's programming team, the Africa region, and the Office of Programming and Training Support, as appropriate, to develop a strategy and plan to improve Volunteer effectiveness in their primary assignments.**

Most two-year Volunteers had not been able to identify a counterpart.

Peace Corps's *Characteristics and Strategies of a High Performing Post: Post Management Resource Guide* emphasizes the importance of counterpart relationships by recommending that post staff work with partner agencies to identify counterparts and assess the likelihood of creating successful counterpart relationships. The guidance also notes that not having a productive counterpart relationship “can compromise a Volunteer's chances for a satisfying and successful work experience.”

At the time of the evaluation, most of the two-year Volunteers had a supervisor but only one of the seven we interviewed had been able to identify a counterpart. The Volunteer Assignment Descriptions (VADs) for the post do not provide a lot of information about counterpart identification but refer to counterparts as other teachers. Not having counterparts impacts two-year Volunteers' ability to achieve the goal of supporting Liberian secondary school teachers through collaboration, sharing resources and instructional materials, and encouraging teacher observation and team teaching.

Staff acknowledged that selecting counterparts was a challenge for Volunteers. The post identified supervisors for Volunteers but let them identify their own counterpart. Because

⁵ Two-year Volunteers were in their seventh month of service at the time of the evaluation fieldwork.

schools suffer from frequent teacher absenteeism, it is difficult for Volunteers to identify and develop counterpart relationships with other teachers. Post staff stated that they were planning to adjust site development by gathering information about the number of teachers at the school and obtaining a list of possible Volunteer counterparts. This could increase the likelihood that Volunteers will be able to identify a counterpart.

We recommend:

- 2. That the country director work with the post's programming team to develop a strategy and plan to help Volunteers identify counterparts.**

Two-year Volunteers have not initiated secondary activities at their sites.

Only one of seven two-year Volunteers interviewed as part of the evaluation reported having enough work to do “most of the time” or “always.” In their primary assignment as secondary education teachers, Volunteers often faced school closures, class cancellations, and poor student attendance, leaving them with less classroom time than anticipated.

In addition to primary assignments, most Volunteers undertake secondary projects. Peace Corps’ *Programming and Training Guidance - Management and Implementation* provides the following information and guidance related to these community service (“secondary”) activities:

...community service supports [Volunteers’] integration in the community, their modeling of Volunteerism, and their desire to feel they are accomplishing something at times when their assigned project work is frustrating...Because Volunteers often look for ideas for community service activities, posts may provide resources and training for high-impact community service activity ideas.

Seven months into their service, two-year Volunteers had not yet been able to identify and execute secondary projects that could supplement their primary assignment work schedules. Volunteers reported the need for secondary projects due to the challenges they encountered in their primary assignment but did not believe Peace Corps staff had provided enough guidance or placed enough emphasis on secondary activities. Volunteer comments included:

“I think the secondary projects will come into play later but I don't think they've been reinforced by Peace Corps.”

“We've had no guidance on secondary activities. I don't think anyone has a secondary project and we've been here since August.”

“I'd like to start [a secondary project] and fill up free time. There hasn't been a lot of emphasis placed on it by the program staff.”

Secondary activities were discussed briefly during pre-service training (PST) and the “Reconnect” training that was held after three months of service. Programming staff stated that secondary activities had not been emphasized because they felt that teaching would be a big enough job. Staff planned to cover the topic in more detail during in-service training (IST);

however, IST was replaced with a perma-garden training that taught Volunteers about gardening and food security. The VADs issued to prospective Volunteers provided some suggestions for secondary activities. However, the VADs did not emphasize the importance of initiating secondary activities given the classroom challenges faced by Volunteers. Even though secondary projects were included in trainings and the VADs, Volunteers could use more guidance and reinforcement to help them create a successful, productive Volunteer experience.

We recommend:

- 3. That the country director work with the programming team to revise the Volunteer Assignment Descriptions to emphasize the importance of secondary activities given the challenges of working in the Liberian school system.**
- 4. That the training manager review pre- and in-service training programs to ensure that they adequately address and prepare Volunteers to identify and carry out secondary activities.**

The post has not finalized its secondary education project plan.

Even though Volunteers in Liberia have been working in the areas of education and health since the first PCRVs arrived in October 2008, the post had not finalized project plans for either of these sectors. To prepare for the arrival of two-year Volunteers, the post drafted a concept paper for the secondary education project but did not finalize the project plan. No project plan or concept paper existed for the six health-related positions filled by PCRVs. Staff members from PCR stated that PCRVs do not typically operate under a project plan. Instead, they have individual job descriptions that communicate their work activities.

Peace Corps's *Characteristics and Strategies of a High Performing Post: Post Management Resource Guide* emphasizes the importance of a project plan because of the benefits gained from systematically developing the project itself and summarizing what will be carried out in the field. The agency does not have clear guidance about whether a post needs to have a project plan in place before Volunteers begin their service.

The agency recommends that posts involve counterparts, Volunteers, and project partners in project plan development so post staff delayed development of the project plan until those relationships were developed. Staff intended to finalize the project plan in December 2010 but was unable to do so because other priorities took precedence. The director of programming and training (DPT), the only programming staff member with experience developing Peace Corps project plans, was unable to finalize the plan because she was only assigned to the Liberia post for 30 percent of her time. Post staff was planning to seek feedback from the Office of Programming and Training Support (OPATS) on the draft concept paper so they could finalize the project plan. To date, no target completion date has been set.

Without a finalized project plan, interviewed Volunteers were unclear on the goals of their primary assignment. Only 17 percent (1 of 6) of interviewed two-year Volunteers rated their knowledge of the project plan goals favorably, with a 1.8 average.⁶ The lack of a project plan has also prevented the post from fully implementing the training design and evaluation (TDE) process and the Volunteer Reporting Tool (VRT). These are essential in developing effective, relevant Volunteer training and gathering performance data needed for the agency's Performance and Accountability Report (PAR). Refer to the Training section of this report for more information.

We recommend:

- 5. That the country director and programming team obtain the necessary input from the office of programming and training support and finalize the secondary education project plan.**

The purpose of the Peace Corps Response program is unclear.

PCRVs serve in a variety of assignments in PC/Liberia. Of the 17 PCRVs serving at the time of the evaluation, six were community health Volunteers and the remaining 11 were serving in education assignments.

According to PCR documentation, PCRVs across the world provide support in the areas of HIV/AIDS; humanitarian assistance; natural disaster relief and reconstruction; disaster preparedness and mitigation; and post-conflict relief and reconstruction. The agency does not require PCR positions to be part of a sector's project plan or be aligned with post-specific goals and objectives.

The PCR position descriptions in Liberia do not state the purpose or goals of the assignments, although one states that Peace Corps was commencing its "post-conflict reconstruction assistance to Liberia" with PCRVs. Current post staff did not know the rationale behind the PCR assignments and could not explain why PCRVs were serving in both health and education. Without this knowledge and a clear link to goals and objectives, it is difficult to determine what the agency is trying to achieve with the Liberia PCR positions. This is most notable for the health positions. For instance, there are only a small number of health PCRVs and no two-year health sector Volunteers who can build upon the health PCRVs' work.

Without a clear understanding of the purpose of the PCR positions, some staff questioned whether the post had adequately focused its programming and prioritized the use of staff resources. Currently, Liberia PCRVs serve six-month assignments, which means staff are almost constantly engaged in verifying housing and job assignments and orienting new PCRVs. Staff stated that the PCR positions can be time-intensive, and they questioned whether the short-term assignments were worth the time and resources they spent developing them, especially given the number of challenges that need to be addressed with the two-year program. The post would

⁶ One two-year Volunteer was unfamiliar with the project plan goals and declined to provide a rating.

benefit from assessing the value and purpose of the PCR positions to ensure resources are being used effectively and the post is appropriately leveraging the PCR program.

We recommend:

- 6. That country director and Peace Corps Response director review the post's Peace Corps Response program and establish its purpose and intended goals.**

MANAGEMENT CONTROLS

Another key objective of our country program evaluation is to assess the extent to which the post's resources and agency support are effectively aligned with the post's mission and agency priorities. To address these questions, we assess a number of factors, including post staffing; staff development; office work environment; collecting and reporting performance data; and the post's strategic planning and budgeting process.

In reviewing the post's relationships with headquarters and the U.S. embassy in Liberia, OIG found no significant areas of concern that would warrant action by the post. Post staff stated that they are well-supported by Peace Corps headquarters. Post staff members also participate in embassy meetings and communicate with embassy staff on a regular basis while still maintaining the necessary independence of Peace Corps.

The agency did not adequately prepare the post to transition from PCR to a two-year Volunteer program.

In *The Peace Corps: A Comprehensive Agency Assessment*, the assessment team recommended that the agency "make Peace Corps Response an engine of innovation by piloting new programs to expand the Peace Corps' presence and technical depth and increase overseas service opportunities for talented Americans." Even before the assessment report was issued, the agency had decided to use this model in Liberia. The program in Liberia was started with PCRVs and then transitioned to a more traditional two-year program two years later.

Before opening the PCR program, a team conducted an assessment of Liberia in June 2007 to provide the Director with information that could be used to "make an informed decision as to the desirability and feasibility of establishing a [Peace Corps Response] program in Liberia."⁷ The initial assessment followed the agency's new country entry guidance and covered key post operations such as Volunteer medical support, safety and security, programming, Volunteer recruitment, and administration.

Following the initial assessment in June 2007, there were no additional assessments undertaken to determine whether the post could support a viable program for two-year Volunteers, although feedback was gathered from PCRVs and incorporated into pre-departure preparation and

⁷ At the time of the new country entry assessment, Peace Corps Response was called Crisis Corps, which is how it was referenced in the assessment documentation.

training. Although some of the assessment results might not have changed when the focus shifted to the two-year program, others, particularly programming and recruiting, should have been re-evaluated. In the initial programming assessment, the team reviewed capacity-building Volunteer assignments designed for PCRVs, such as working directly with the Ministry of Education and teacher training institutes. The team did not assess direct teaching assignments in secondary schools, which is where two-year Volunteers have been placed. The Programming section of this report discusses the challenges two-year Volunteers were facing in these assignments. These challenges could likely have been identified and mitigated if the agency had re-assessed the program before inviting two-year Volunteers.

The agency does not require a re-assessment when transitioning from a Response program to a more traditional two-year program. This represents a lost opportunity for PCRVs to provide valuable insight that could inform Volunteer work site development and training for two-year Volunteers serving in the same country. Learning from the experiences of PCRVs will be important as the agency implements the recommendations found in the comprehensive agency assessment. The results of these pilot programs need to be fully assessed before committing to two-year programs.

We recommend:

- 7. That the associate director for Global Operations and the director of Peace Corps Response develop a process to assess the results of Peace Corps Response pilot programs before launching a two-year Volunteer program.**

Lessons learned from the post's opening have not been incorporated into agency processes and policies.

Headquarters staff from the Africa region and PCR agreed that the post's opening was not ideal. In particular, the post faced problems because of an accelerated re-opening timeline, unclear roles and responsibilities for the Africa region and PCR, and limited resources for the post.

Staff reported that the post was opened earlier than planned. Although the region was making preliminary plans to re-open the program in Liberia, the timeline was accelerated and Liberia was given priority over other opening posts due to a commitment made by the White House. This gave the agency less time to prepare for the arrival of staff and Volunteers and proactively manage the challenges associated with operating in a post-conflict environment.

The post's opening was also hindered by a lack of coordination between the region and PCR. Because the country program was started with PCRVs, the region did not provide the same oversight and resources that they provide to other posts. PCR was responsible for managing the daily coordination, communication, and logistics, responsibilities that are usually handled by regional staff. Staff from PCR stated that the office was not accustomed to managing these activities and was not prepared for them.

The post also suffered from inadequate resources. Because the post only had PCRVs in the beginning, the program was not provided the same financial and physical resources that other posts receive. The post did not have a sufficient number of drivers and vehicles, did not have a proper office space, and had a reduced number of staff members.

These challenges placed a burden on the post's few staff members and likely contributed to Volunteer dissatisfaction. In the post's first two years of operations, the ET rate for the PCRVs in Liberia was over 20 percent, which is significantly higher than the global average of approximately 8-11 percent for two-year Volunteers during the same time period. Although many factors influence a Volunteer's satisfaction and productivity, it is likely that the accelerated timeline and insufficient resources and coordination created problems for Volunteers that resulted in their dissatisfaction.

We found that most, if not all, of the problems that resulted from the post's difficult opening have been addressed. The Africa region has assumed responsibility for general management and oversight. The post now has its own office space, has acquired more vehicles, and has added numerous staff members, including several programming and training staff and a Safety and Security Coordinator (SSC). Moving forward, it is important for the agency to learn from and document the ways the post's opening could have been improved. This will help the agency build institutional knowledge that benefits future post openings.

We recommend:

- 8. That the associate director for Global Operations work with the post, Africa region, and Peace Corps Response to document lessons learned from the post's opening and incorporate them into existing new country entry processes and policies, as appropriate.**

The lack of guidance from full-time, experienced staff has impacted programming and training.

As a newly opened post, the programming and training unit was staffed by local hires who had limited experience with Peace Corps systems and processes. The post did not have a full-time United States Direct Hire (USDH) staff member to oversee the programming and training unit. Instead, one DPT covered two posts, Liberia and Sierra Leone. The DPT was physically located in Sierra Leone and estimated that 30 percent of her time was dedicated to the Liberia post. These two programs had similar programming, although they were both start-up operations in post-conflict countries, requiring more time and attention than an established post. To compensate for the lack of a full-time DPT, previous assessments of the post conducted by headquarters staff recommended that the country director (CD) have a strong programming and training background; however, neither the previous nor current CD had this requisite background. Without this base of experience, the post lacked someone who could provide the daily mentoring and guidance needed by an inexperienced programming and training team.

Staff and Volunteers spoke very favorably about the DPT's contribution to the post but noted that her impact was limited because of the small amount of time she was able to devote to the Liberia program. Staff stated that the DPT was beneficial because she understood Peace Corps' approach to programming, which the local staff members recognized they had not fully learned. Having an American staff member on the programming and training team also provided a beneficial cultural perspective for both staff and Volunteers. Staff also stated that they were unable to make decisions as quickly and easily when the DPT was not present. Comments from staff reflect the reasons they believe they would benefit from a full-time DPT:

"The programming and training issue is a make or break issue and it's the biggest issue here. We have one program, secondary education, and it doesn't seem to be going well....We're a new post with an unproven programming and training team. We get Volunteer feedback that there are communication and comprehension challenges [with local staff]. We have a new country director and [director of management and operations], neither of whom have a programming background."

"Some Volunteers want to see decisions taken at a higher level so there's a need for that role. Her 30% time here has been helpful....But we're beginning to expand. We need a full-time [DPT] to help with some of the issues. And some things require a cultural approach that we're not trained to handle."

"Sometimes we need immediate intervention. And email doesn't always communicate that. She's a great person to work with but we need a full time [DPT]. When it comes to our programming the [DPT] plays a pivotal role. Having a resident in Liberia would help the program a lot. There are technical issues we need to be decisive on but we can't be because she's not around."

Many of the people we spoke with stated that assigning one staff member with responsibilities for programming and training at two start-up posts was too much work for one person. Important programming elements, such as completing the project plan, were not completed because the post lacked experienced staff to provide oversight.

Due to the Peace Corps' five-year rule term limitations, Liberia's DPT was planning to leave the agency by the fall of 2011, leaving an even bigger gap in the post's programming and training unit. Initially, regional staff stated that there were budget challenges associated with re-filling the position and they were trying to determine whether the post needed a full-time DPT. However, since the evaluation was concluded, the regional managers stated that they planned to hire a full-time USDH to oversee the programming and training unit. This should provide much-needed guidance and oversight to the local programming and training staff members.

We recommend:

- 9. That the regional director of the Africa region ensure the post hires an experienced, full-time United States Direct Hire employee to oversee the programming and training unit.**

Disorganization impacted the efficiency and effectiveness of the office.

Staff members need to be able to effectively communicate with one another and access important information to carry out their jobs and provide support to Volunteers. Peace Corps's

Characteristics and Strategies of a High Performing Post: Post Management Resource Guide emphasizes the importance of having clear roles and responsibilities for staff and managing documents “in a systematic, organized manner so they can be accessed when needed.”

We found that information at the post was not always well organized and transmitted clearly, and staff members could not easily access requested documentation. Unclear roles and responsibilities contributed to disorganization and confusion in the office, which impacted Volunteer support and training. For example, at least two staff members were organizing Embassy homestay approvals, and multiple staff members were communicating with Volunteers regarding the status of passports and visas that were needed for upcoming travel. There was also multiple staff members involved in whereabouts reporting. According to the out-of-site policy, Volunteers could report overnight stays away from their community to three different staff members; however, the post did not have clear guidelines to inform staff how to record the information and communicate it to others.

The office’s disorganization also impacted the OIG evaluation. Staff was not always able to complete tasks and gather requested documents during the evaluation because they did not know where the information was stored or were unable to effectively hand off tasks from one person to another. For example, as part of the evaluation, staff was required to submit standard programming and safety and security documents to the evaluator. Staff was unable to complete this over a period of three months. The documents were stored in multiple locations within the office and some were only available electronically while others were in hard copy. Staff was unable to locate the necessary documentation, and they provided contradictory information about where documents were stored and who had access to the needed files.

This disorganization impacted the post’s ability to function efficiently and effectively and was noted by staff and Volunteers. Volunteers reported an overall lack of organization during training. Volunteers stated that sessions were not always well-coordinated, which made some activities redundant because they were covered multiple times by different people. Volunteers also faced difficulty getting their passports returned to them after the office processed their visas. Volunteers reported that they received conflicting responses from staff members regarding the status of the passports and when they would be available. Some Volunteers also reported difficulty getting their Embassy homestay approval processed in a timely manner. They had to follow up multiple times to determine the status of the request and remind staff to process it.

The post’s inability to execute tasks and hand off information raises concerns about the ability to respond quickly and effectively in an emergency situation. The post would benefit from clarifying roles and responsibilities and identifying primary points of contact for key office processes. If needed, the post can also designate secondary points of contact to ensure there is coverage when people are traveling; however, the post should document how information should be handed off to ensure information flows effectively.

We recommend:

- 10. That the country director ensure that the staff creates a more stream-lined, coherent filing structure for programming and training and safety and security documents.**
- 11. That the country director clarify roles and responsibilities of post staff, correct instances of unclear ownership of office processes, and make staff accountable for performing their duties as prescribed.**

VOLUNTEER SUPPORT

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

In reviewing the adequacy and timeliness of Volunteers’ living and settling in allowances, diversity support, the availability of communication methods between post staff and Volunteers, the number and quality of site visits, and the Volunteer Advisory Committee (VAC), OIG found no significant areas of concern that would warrant action by the post.

In general, most Volunteers were satisfied with the adequacy and timeliness of reimbursements and their settling-in and living allowances, although Volunteers noted some possible areas for improvement. Thirty-three percent of the interviewed Volunteers stated that the settling-in allowance should have been received sooner so Volunteers could buy needed items in Monrovia. Several Volunteers also stated that the settling-in allowance was less adequate for Volunteers who moved into new, unfurnished houses or did not have a roommate to help with initial expenses.

Overall, interviewed Volunteers did not raise significant concerns related to diversity, although they confirmed that females and homosexual Volunteers face additional challenges. In interviews, American staff members were more aware of these challenges than host country nationals. The Peace Corps medical officer is supporting the Volunteers as they create a Peer Support Network.

Volunteers reported that they are usually able to reach staff easily via phone, and some Volunteers have access to email. However, Volunteers emphasized that internet and email are not reliable communication methods and should not be used for important, time-sensitive information.

Eighty percent (12 of 15) of the interviewed Volunteers were satisfied with the number of site visits they received. Staff delayed visiting some of the PCRVs who began their service in January 2011 because of the arrival of the new CD and the timing of the evaluation fieldwork. However, the staff planned to conduct these site visits after the evaluation fieldwork was completed. Ninety-two percent of the interviewed volunteers rated the quality of the site visits favorably.

The VAC, which held its first meeting in November 2010, was too new for many Volunteers to evaluate, and most Volunteers were unaware of the VAC's activities. At the time of the evaluation fieldwork, the VAC had only held two meetings and was finalizing its by-laws.

Two-year Volunteers were inadequately prepared for Liberia's post-conflict-related challenges.

From 1980 to 2003 Liberia experienced significant upheaval, including a military coup, an armed rebellion, and a prolonged civil war. Children were recruited to fight in the war, and many Liberians fled to neighboring countries as refugees. The country has been rebuilding since an August 2003 peace agreement was signed, but there continue to be challenges with basic infrastructure, transportation, and limited resources. The years of civil war also had an emotional impact on Liberians. These factors combine to present a stressful environment for Volunteers to live in and conduct their work. The *Volunteer Welcome Book* states that Volunteers in Liberia will receive additional training to help them manage their mental health "while serving in a post-conflict country suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder."

During PST, Volunteers participated in training sessions about Liberia's history and the community impact of post traumatic stress disorder. When asked if they had been adequately prepared to serve in a post-conflict country, only one of seven two-year Volunteers rated the support and information favorably. Volunteers reported that the post-conflict environment impacted their community integration and their effectiveness in their work assignment. Some Volunteers reported being scared of their students, co-workers, and community members and did not know how to deal with students who might have been ex-combatants. The two-year Volunteers found the history and background information beneficial but expressed the need for additional information, particularly strategies that could better enable them to manage the post-conflict-related challenges they encounter. Volunteer comments reflect some of their challenges and their request for more training:

"PTSD [is] everywhere. I don't know what to do or say. It's scary sometimes. You hear stories of what people did in the war and you realize they're living around you."

"They gave good background on what the country and people went through but there needs to be more follow through on how to use that and what it means. Recognition of what post-conflict means – poor communication, supplies and greater challenges. And then tell how to manage that better."

"One thing we didn't address in training is what if your students are ex-combatants. It's possible they were."

“At training we went over the civil war and its history but I don't know that it prepared us for working in this....They talked about stuff like corruption and how to deal with it if someone tells you a war story but it was limited. I wish it was more extensive.”

Some regional staff stated that they wanted to request Volunteers with backgrounds that could help them serve in a post-conflict country. However, they were discouraged from doing so because the agency was focused on recruiting generalist Volunteers and could not recruit Volunteers with specific backgrounds.⁸ In light of this, it will be important for the agency to take extra steps to inform Volunteers of the post-conflict-related challenges they will face and provide them with strategies to overcome these challenges. This effort to educate and inform should start early in the process, beginning with the placement invitation, and continue through the Volunteer's service.

We recommend:

- 12. That the country director and the Peace Corps medical officer work with post-conflict specialists in the Africa region and the Counseling and Outreach Unit to develop a strategy and plan to prepare invitees and Volunteers for post-conflict-related challenges.**

Safety and security weaknesses could result in an inadequate response to emergencies.

According to the agency's primary safety and security policy, manual section (MS) 270, the agency's safety and security program is based on several factors, including “the necessity of having plans in place to respond promptly and effectively to threats or events.” MS 270.8.1 further states that “Each post must develop and maintain a detailed EAP that addresses the most likely emergency situations that would impact Peace Corps personnel and operations.”

The evaluation uncovered several deficiencies in the post's emergency preparedness, including Volunteers' knowledge of their consolidation points; the completeness and accuracy of SLFs; EAP distribution and testing; and the duty officer system.

Consolidation points

Forty percent of interviewed Volunteers could not correctly identify their consolidation points. The list of consolidation points in the EAP was not well-organized, and it was difficult to ascertain each Volunteer's consolidation point. Furthermore, the EAP did not include directions to the various consolidation points or provide identifying information to help Volunteers locate a consolidation point they had not previously visited.

SLFs

We found that Volunteers were not accurately completing their SLFs, which are documents that contain communication and logistical information to help staff support Volunteers during crises.

⁸ The term “generalist” refers to Volunteers who are college graduates with limited specialized technical skills or experience.

Fifty-three percent of the SLFs we reviewed were missing at least one key piece of information, such as the Volunteer's phone number, community police contact information, community medical facility, and the location of and directions to the consolidation point. Inaccuracies on the SLFs, including incorrect consolidation points, were not detected by staff because they do not review the forms for completeness and accuracy after submission. Also, staff was not collecting SLFs in a timely manner after Volunteer site changes. The post had not received updated SLFs for Volunteers who had changed sites over two months prior to the evaluation. Staff stated that they had not followed up with Volunteers concerning the SLFs.

EAP distribution

The post is not providing updated copies of the EAP to Volunteers, staff, and the embassy. Two-year Volunteers most recently received a copy of the EAP in September 2010; however, they did not receive an updated version after the new PCRVs arrived in January 2011. Volunteers need an updated EAP because the post uses a Volunteer warden system, and wardens may be called upon to notify Volunteers in their area if the EAP is activated. The EAP contains warden information, Volunteer contact information, and an emergency phone tree. At the time of the evaluation, all of the wardens were two-year Volunteers. Because the post's EAP was outdated, some wardens did not have contact information for the Volunteers they would be responsible for contacting in the event of an emergency.

The embassy's regional security officer (RSO) and the post's duty officer bag contained outdated EAPs. Both of these copies were dated April 2010. Because of the timing of the post's Volunteer inputs, only one of the 30 Volunteers serving at the time of the evaluation would have been included in the April 2010 EAP. Even though Volunteer contact information is maintained electronically in the Volunteer information database application, the duty officer bag should include an up-to-date EAP in case electronic information is not available when the EAP is activated.

EAP testing

The post tested its EAP with an unannounced cell phone test in November 2010. However, it has not conducted a non-cell phone test since the current wardens arrived in August 2010. Conducting this test is important because the telephone landline system in Liberia has not fully recovered from the war and Volunteers primarily rely on cell phones. If the cell phone network went down, Volunteers would need an alternate way to receive messages.

Duty officer system

The post uses a duty officer system to ensure a staff member is available in the event of an emergency. The post's duty officer bag was disorganized and contained multiple logs and incident report forms, and, as noted above, did not contain the most recent EAP. It is unlikely that staff would be able to quickly access needed information in an emergency.

The deficiencies in numerous elements of the post's safety and security systems raise concerns about staff and Volunteers' ability to quickly and effectively respond to an emergency. The evaluation revealed that important safety and security documents are not appropriately reviewed and distributed to people who may be required to respond to an emergency. Although the regional security advisor and the regionally-based Peace Corps safety and security officer have

provided guidance to the SSC as he learns Peace Corps' systems and processes, the post needs continued safety and security oversight and monitoring to ensure he is receiving proper training and deficiencies are addressed.

We recommend:

- 13. That the country director ensure that all Volunteers know the location of their consolidation point.**
- 14. That the country director ensure that Volunteers are adequately informed of their consolidation points during training.**
- 15. That the country director ensure that all wardens have at least two methods of contacting the Volunteers in their region.**
- 16. That the country director require appropriate staff members to review the accuracy and completeness of site locator forms.**
- 17. That the country director ensure that the most current version of the Emergency Action Plan is included in the duty officer bag and distributed to Volunteers, staff, the embassy regional security officer, and neighboring posts that are listed as possible evacuation sites.**
- 18. That the country director ensure that the post develops a process to provide updated Emergency Action Plans to all Volunteers, staff, the embassy regional security officer, the duty officer bag, and neighboring posts that are listed as possible evacuation sites after changes are made.**
- 19. That the country director develop and implement a plan to ensure that the post conducts a non-cell phone emergency action plan test.**
- 20. That the country director ensure that the post updates and organizes the duty officer binder.**
- 21. That the country director, in consultation with the regional security advisor and Peace Corps safety and security officer, develop a professional development plan for the safety and security coordinator and monitor progress towards those goals.**
- 22. That the Peace Corps safety and security officer conduct a complete review of the post's safety and security systems and recommend changes to ensure the post is in compliance with all agency safety and security policies and procedures and is taking an appropriate security posture for the environment.**

Volunteer housing did not meet the post's housing criteria.

Sixty-nine percent (9 of 13) of the inspected houses did not fully comply with the post's housing criteria at the time of the evaluation, and 77 percent of the interviewed Volunteers reported that their housing did not meet all the criteria upon their move-in.⁹ Common areas of non-compliance included general safety of the neighborhood and proximity to neighbors; roofing; door construction; and door locks. See Appendix A for a complete copy of the post's site selection and housing criteria.

MS 270.6.3, Housing Standards, states:

“All [Volunteer/trainee] housing or host family arrangements must be inspected by post staff (or a trained designee) prior to occupancy to ensure each house and/or homestay arrangement meets all minimum standards as established by the Peace Corps and the post. Reports of the inspections must be documented and maintained by the post.”

A review of the housing checklists completed by staff before Volunteers arrived at their sites revealed that these forms are not being accurately completed during site development. The housing checklists completed by the Evaluator were compared to those completed by the SSC. Ninety-one percent (10 of 11) of the reviewed housing checklists completed by staff showed full compliance with the housing criteria even though 69 percent of the houses reviewed as part of the evaluation showed at least one area of non-compliance.¹⁰ Although some of the deficiencies such as roof leaks might not have been detectable during site development, other deficiencies, such as window bars, door locks, and door construction, should have been checked, accurately documented, and addressed before the Volunteer arrived at site. In at least one case, the SSC did not complete a housing checklist for a site because it had previously been occupied by a Volunteer.

Housing deficiencies create potential security risks for Volunteers, and some of the interviewed Volunteers had to change sites because of housing-related problems that should have been resolved before they arrived. Housing previously occupied by Volunteers should be reviewed before a new Volunteer moves in because housing conditions may change during a Volunteer's service. In addition to placing Volunteers at risk, the lack of proper housing checks made some Volunteers question the extent to which the SSC takes his duties seriously. This could damage the SSC's credibility with Volunteers and diminish his effectiveness.

We recommend:

23. That the country director ensure that staff inspect all current Volunteer housing and address any deficiencies.

⁹ Fifteen Volunteers were interviewed as part of the evaluation but two sets of roommates were interviewed. Their housing assessments were only counted once to avoid double counting.

¹⁰ Thirteen Volunteer houses were reviewed as part of the evaluation but only 11 housing checklists were available for review because the post was missing the other two housing checklists.

24. That the country director ensure that staff inspect all prospective Volunteer housing and address any deficiencies before a Volunteer's arrival at site.

25. That the country director ensure that the post is maintaining accurate housing inspection reports.

Volunteers are not satisfied with tone, content, and frequency of safety and security-related communications.

At the time of this evaluation, Liberia was experiencing several situations that could pose safety and security risks to Volunteers. Cote D'Ivoire, a border country, was experiencing violence as a result of political unrest. In Liberia, a verdict was expected in the Hague war crimes trial of a former Liberian president. In addition, Liberia was preparing for presidential elections in October 2011.

Over 50 percent of interviewed Volunteers raised concerns about the current security situation in Liberia and a perceived lack of seriousness by the SSC in addressing safety and security risks. Although Volunteers appreciate the SSC's positive attitude, they stated that safety and security needs to be taken more seriously. Volunteers reported that the SSC laughs and jokes too much when discussing safety and security topics, does not appear serious in training, and dismissed concerns they raised about security threats witnessed in their communities. Sample comments from Volunteers illustrate their concerns:

"It's like it's a joke. [The SSC] giggles and laughs and there needs to be more seriousness. He never tells us to be serious about it. He laughs through the entire session."

"All this war business, [the SSC is] laughing and joking about it.... It seems that the people here aren't as affected by war as we are because they were at war for 25 years. [The SSC] said not to worry about it."

"[The SSC] was here during the war so if you tell him there are people with guns on the border he thinks that's ok. I want to talk to someone who will take it more seriously."

Volunteers were also concerned that the post is not proactive enough in preparing for and addressing security threats such as the upcoming Liberian presidential election and the political violence in Cote D'Ivoire. At the time of the evaluation, several interviewed Volunteers placed near the border with Cote D'Ivoire had witnessed an increasing number of refugees and international support organizations. Comments from Volunteers include the following:

"In the upcoming election the previous warlord is running for president. He has a militia in [a bordering county]. I'm scared ... when we ask Peace Corps about it they don't have any good information."

"My major question is in regards to conflict in the region and what should be the response and preparedness of Peace Corps.... There have been reports of people coming to Liberia and Liberians going [to Cote D'Ivoire] to fight. I don't know what Peace Corps is doing."

MS 270.4.0 requires posts to keep Volunteers informed of safety and security risks throughout their service and provide “accurate, comprehensive, and timely information” so Volunteers can minimize the risks. We found that the post was taking steps to monitor the security environment, but was not proactively communicating the information to Volunteers. Post staff was receiving security updates during weekly meetings at the embassy and attended UN-led meetings of the Humanitarian Advisory Committee. The post was testing back-up evacuation routes and discussing ways to ensure transportation would be available for Volunteers if they needed to consolidate or evacuate. Staff was also trying to maintain frequent communications with Volunteers and was receiving updates from Volunteers located closer to the border with Cote D’Ivoire. However, the post was not proactively communicating this information to Volunteers on a regular basis. Volunteers did not receive regular safety and security updates and the last two Volunteer newsletters did not contain safety and security information.

Poor safety and security communication has been an ongoing area of concern at the post. After a security incident in March 2009, Volunteers raised concerns about the way Peace Corps managed the situation, particularly regarding the support they received from the local staff. In response, Peace Corps conducted a management assessment of operations in Liberia. The assessment team determined that the post appropriately managed the initial circumstances and follow-up but could have done a better job communicating with Volunteers.

The country director planned to start sending weekly text messages to Volunteers with safety and security-related information. Working to provide Volunteers with regular, updated safety and security information will help alleviate Volunteers’ concerns and give them the information they need to respond to an emergency.

We recommend:

- 26. That the country director and safety and security coordinator develop a strategy and plan to regularly communicate safety and security information to Volunteers.**

TRAINING

Another objective of the post evaluation is to answer the question, “Does training prepare Volunteers for Peace Corps service?” To answer this question we considered such factors as:

- Training adequacy
- Planning and development of the training life cycle
- Staffing and related budget

By the time of the evaluation, two-year Volunteers at the post had participated in several trainings, including PST; a Reconnect after three months of service; and a perma-garden training after five months of service. PCRVs also participated in the perma-garden training as part of their in-country orientation. Overall, we found that Volunteers were satisfied with the culture

and medical/health portions of PST, the perma-garden training, and the PCRV orientation. The following table summarizes Volunteers’ perceptions on the effectiveness of their training.

Table 1: Volunteer Perceptions of Training Effectiveness

| Area | Percent of Volunteers Who Rated Training Favorably) | Average Rating |
|-------------------------------|---|----------------|
| PST: ^a | | |
| Language | 0% | 1.7 |
| Culture | 86% | 3.0 |
| Safety/Security | 57% | 2.4 |
| Medical/Health | 100% | 4.0 |
| Technical | 57% | 3.0 |
| Reconnect ^b | 33% | 2.2 |
| Perma-garden ^c | 100% | 4.3 |
| PCRV orientation ^d | 88% | 3.5 |

Source: OIG Volunteer Interviews, 2011

^aN = 7, ^bN = 6, ^cN = 15, ^dN = 8

In reviewing the post’s process for planning and developing training, the availability of training resources, and trainee assessments, OIG found no significant areas of concern that would warrant action by the post.

The post uses an inclusive process when planning and delivering Volunteer training and gathers input from staff members in multiple units. Staff also reported that they have adequate resources to deliver Volunteer training. The region supported the post in hiring a full-time language and cross-cultural coordinator, and the post is able to find qualified part-time staff to assist with PST.

Even though the post has not finalized the TDE process, the training staff assessed trainees’ skills during the 2010 PST. While the post had not administered an official language proficiency test to trainees, the training staff assessed their language skills. During PST, trainees took a medical pre- and post-test, and trainees’ technical skills were observed and assessed by staff twice.

Volunteers were not well-prepared to speak local languages.

English is the official language of Liberia, although locals speak a dialect referred to as “Liberian English” along with local languages. To prepare Volunteers for service, trainees learned Liberian English and the local language spoken in their assigned community. During the 2010 PST, nine local languages were taught.

Local language proficiency is an important component of a successful Volunteer experience. The Peace Corps Acts states that:

No person shall be assigned to duty as a volunteer under this chapter in any foreign country or area unless at the time of such assignment he possesses such reasonable proficiency as his assignment requires in speaking the language of the country or area to which he is assigned.

None of the two-year Volunteers interviewed as part of the evaluation rated PST language training favorably. Volunteers stated that too much focus was placed on Liberian English. A review of the post's 2010 PST training calendar revealed that over 27 training hours were spent on Liberian English while less than four hours were provided for local language training. Although Volunteers found knowledge of key phrases helpful, some stated that their PST homestay experience was often more useful in teaching practical Liberian English than the formal training sessions. Volunteers stated that familiarity with the local language impacted community integration, and they recommended that training focus more on local language instruction.

Volunteers provided feedback regarding their need for local language in their PST evaluations, and post staff stated that they were planning to increase the number of local language training sessions in the 2011 PST. Identifying tutors for Volunteers to work with after they are posted at their sites would also improve local language proficiency.

We recommend:

27. That the training manager increase local language instruction.

Improvements in the delivery of safety and security training could increase its effectiveness.

According to MS 270 section 5.0, "Each post must provide [Volunteers/trainees] with a program of ongoing safety and security training..." The post provided approximately 10 hours of training in the 2010 PST that were focused exclusively on Volunteer safety and security.

Two-year Volunteers reported mixed satisfaction levels with the safety and security training they received during PST. Fifty-seven percent (4 of 7) of the two-year Volunteers rated the training favorably with a 2.4 average; none of the interviewed Volunteers rated the training higher than "moderately effective." Some Volunteers stated that the SSC joked too much and did not deliver the training in a serious manner. Volunteers also stated that the training was disorganized and they questioned the accuracy of the information and strategies presented.

Improvements in the delivery of safety and security training could increase its effectiveness and ensure Volunteers are appropriately informed of crime risks and know how to respond to emergencies. The embassy's RSO offered to participate in future Volunteer training sessions. The post might want to consider this as one way of stressing the importance of the post's safety and security systems.

We recommend:

28. That the country director, training manager, and safety and security coordinator develop a strategy and plan to improve safety and security training.

Technical training instruction needs to be improved.

MS 201 “Eligibility and Standards for Peace Corps Volunteer Service” states that a trainee must demonstrate technical competence, which is defined as “proficiency in the technical skills needed to carry out the assignment,” by the end of training. The post provided over 40 hours of technical training to Volunteers and held several model school sessions during the 2010 PST. Overall, 57 percent (4 of 7) of the two-year Volunteers interviewed as part of the evaluation found technical training to be effective. Volunteers stated that the sessions led by experienced Volunteers from another African post were most helpful. However, aside from those Volunteer-led sessions, Volunteers were disappointed with some of the instruction and information provided by staff and guest speakers.

“The Volunteers that were leaving were phenomenal. I learned more from them than everyone else combined.”

“[Technical training] was basically done by other Volunteers. In some ways that's really good but I also wish there were staff members who could train us on it.”

“Some of the Volunteers who were on their way out helped train us and told us what to expect. But anyone they brought in - principals and district people - they didn't know which way was up and couldn't give us answers. I didn't feel prepared.”

Because it was the post’s first PST since the program re-opened, it is understandable that Volunteers noted areas for improvement. Furthermore, as already noted in the Management Controls section of the report, the post did not have a full-time DPT who could provide the oversight that was needed for relatively new staff members not yet familiar with Peace Corps processes and training methods. The post could likely benefit from ongoing guidance and training participation by experienced staff members and Volunteers, even if they are from another post. More effective technical training sessions could better prepare Volunteers for some of the work-related challenges they face.

We recommend:

- 29. That the country director, training manager, and programming staff members develop a strategy and plan to improve technical training.**

Some Volunteers reported that the IST sessions were not useful.

In addition to PST, two-year Volunteers had also received two ISTs before the evaluation was conducted. Two-year Volunteers participated in a “Reconnect” IST approximately three months after swearing in. Programming staff originally planned to conduct another IST a few months later but subsequently altered these plans. In lieu of a second IST, two-year Volunteers received perma-garden training in January 2011.¹¹

¹¹ This training occurred approximately five months after two-year Volunteers swore in. PCRVs also participated as part of their in-country Response orientation.

While the post has made efforts to provide Volunteers with an adequate amount of training, some Volunteers did not think the ISTs were sufficient. Two-year Volunteers stated that Reconnect did not provide them with useful information they could apply at their sites. Only 33 percent of the two-year Volunteers rated Reconnect favorably, with a 2.2 average. Some Volunteers also questioned the purpose of the perma-garden training. Volunteers rated the session favorably because it was a well-run training session led by a qualified instructor. However, some Volunteers questioned its usefulness and applicability in Liberia.

Peace Corps' Programming and Training Guidance "Training Design and Evaluation" instructs posts to develop a training continuum that identifies when major learning objectives will be accomplished throughout the Volunteers' 27 months of service. The content of the training continuum and individual training sessions is driven by the competencies and learning objectives required to successfully carry out the Volunteer project. By developing a training continuum, Volunteer training sessions build upon one another and provide Volunteers with the skills they need at a particular point in their service.

Although the post has conducted several training sessions, staff was unable to develop a training continuum and adhere to its training schedule. Since the two-year Volunteers arrived in July 2010, programming and training staff had to make numerous changes to their training calendar, including the timing and content of ISTs. As a result of the training changes and the lack of a stable training schedule, post staff did not develop training programs that met Volunteers' needs or maximized the post's limited financial resources. Completing the project plan and updating the competencies and learning objectives should allow the staff to develop a training continuum and improve the timing and content of future ISTs.

We recommend:

- 30. That the training manager, with assistance from specialists in the Office of Programming and Training Support, as appropriate, develop a training continuum.**

Most PCRVs did not receive an adequate orientation from their supervisor or counterpart upon arrival at their project work site.

In addition to the orientation provided by post staff, the PC/Liberia Volunteer handbook and the PCRv job descriptions state that PCRVs should receive an orientation from their supervisor or counterpart upon arrival at their project work site. Only 38 percent (3 of 8) of the interviewed PCRVs received an orientation at site, and Volunteers were unsure what the orientation was supposed to cover. Some Volunteers were not introduced to co-workers or provided an overview of their organization's operations.

Post staff did not always provide supervisors and counterparts with clear, written guidance concerning work site orientations, which also affected the quality and content of the orientations.

The post should reinforce the need for these site orientations and provide guidance on the content that needs to be covered.

We recommend:

- 31. That the program manager determine whether Peace Corps Response Volunteers should receive an orientation upon arrival at site and, if so, update related documentation and deliver training accordingly.**

Two-year Volunteers did not receive sufficient training and information to complete the Volunteer Reporting Forms.

Peace Corps' Programming and Training Guidance "Project Design and Evaluation" describes the recommended process for developing Peace Corps projects. Posts are expected to develop a monitoring and evaluation plan to measure project implementation and evaluate how well the project is working. Volunteers play a role in the agency's monitoring and evaluation activities by collecting baseline data, observing and documenting behavior changes of targeted populations, and reporting information to their APCD/PM in the Volunteer Reporting Form (VRF). Volunteers' performance data is reported to headquarters through the project status report process and used in the agency-wide aggregation included in the agency's PAR.¹² Programming and training staff is expected to develop the initial monitoring and evaluation plan and train Volunteers. The guidance states, "It is important that Volunteers be properly trained in how to fulfill their monitoring and evaluation roles, and that they understand how the information they provide will be used."

Two-year Volunteers we spoke to did not feel well-prepared to gather and submit performance information. Although they acknowledged that performance reporting was covered during training, they stated that the training was brief and confusing, and the need to collect performance data had not been reinforced by staff after they took up their projects. Volunteers did not have a clear understanding of what was expected of them and how and when they needed to report performance data.

At the time of the evaluation, staff had not set up the VRT or determined the reporting frequency and method, although they briefly covered performance reporting during PST and Reconnect and distributed activity tracking booklets to Volunteers. Staff reported that they were planning to provide more guidance to Volunteers in the April 2011 IST.

The reliability of the post's performance data is dependent on the training and guidance Volunteers receive. Given the significance of the PAR data, it is important for all Volunteers to submit accurate, timely performance reports. Volunteers need to clearly understand what kind of information to collect and how and when they need to report the data.

¹² As required by the Government Performance and Results Act and related Office of Management and Budget guidance, the Peace Corps prepares strategic and annual performance plans and reports results annually in its Performance and Accountability Report.

We recommend:

- 32. That the country director ensure that the staff has set up the volunteer reporting tool and is collecting Volunteer performance data.**
- 33. That the training manager improve performance reporting training for Volunteers.**

OBJECTIVE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

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

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

OIG Evaluation Unit announced its intent to conduct an evaluation of PC/Liberia on December 10, 2010. For post evaluations, we use the following researchable questions to guide our work:

- To what extent has post developed and implemented programs to increase host country communities' capacity?
- Does training prepare Volunteers for Peace Corps service?
- Has the post provided adequate support and oversight to Volunteers?
- Are post resources and agency support effectively aligned with the post's mission and agency priorities?

The evaluator conducted the preliminary research portion of the evaluation December 13, 2010-March 4, 2011. This research included review of agency documents provided by headquarters and post staff; interviews with management staff representing the Africa region, OPATS, PCR, the office of Volunteer Support, and the office of Safety and Security; and inquiries to the office of Volunteer Recruitment and Selection and the Office of Private Sector Initiatives.

In-country fieldwork occurred from March 7-25, 2011, and included interviews with post senior staff in charge of programming, training, and support; the embassy RSO; and host country government ministry officials. In addition, we interviewed a stratified judgmental sample of 15 Volunteers (50 percent of Volunteers serving at the time of our visit) based on their length of service, site location, project focus, gender, age, and ethnicity.

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

INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED

As part of this post evaluation, interviews were conducted with 15 Volunteers, nine staff members in-country, and 21 representatives from Peace Corps headquarters in Washington D.C., the U.S. Embassy in Liberia, and key ministry officials. Volunteer interviews were conducted using a standardized interview questionnaire, and Volunteers were asked to rate many items on a five-point scale (1 = not effective, 3 = average effective, 5 = very effective). The analysis of these ratings provided a quantitative supplement to Volunteers' comments, which were also analyzed. For the purposes of the data analysis, Volunteer ratings of "3" and above are considered favorable. In addition, all 15 Volunteer interviews occurred at the Volunteers' homes, and we inspected these homes using post-defined site selection criteria. The period of review for a post evaluation is one full Volunteer cycle (typically 27 months).

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

Table 2: Volunteer Demographic Data

| Project | Percentage of Volunteers |
|---|--------------------------|
| Secondary Education (two-year Volunteers) | 43% |
| Education (PCRVs) | 37% |
| Community Health (PCRVs) | 20% |
| Gender | Percentage of Volunteers |
| Female | 57% |
| Male | 43% |
| Age | Percentage of Volunteers |
| 25 or younger | 43% |
| 26-29 | 30% |
| 30-49 | 17% |
| 50 or over | 7% |

Source: February 2011 PC/Liberia Volunteer roster.

Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

At the time of our field visit, PC/Liberia had 20 staff positions. The post also employs temporary staff/contractors to assist with PST. Given the time of our visit, these positions were not staffed. We interviewed nine staff members.

Table 3: Interviews Conducted with Post Staff Members

| Position | Status | Interviewed |
|---------------------------------|--------|-------------|
| Country Director | USDH | X |
| Peace Corps Medical Officer | PSC | X |
| Safety and Security Coordinator | PSC | X |

| | | |
|--|------------------|---|
| Director of Programming and Training ¹³ | USDH | X |
| Program Manager | PSC ^a | X |
| Training Manager | PSC | X |
| Program Assistant (2) | PSC | X |
| Language and Cross Cultural Coordinator | PSC | |
| Director of Management and Operations | USDH | X |
| Financial Assistant | FSN ^b | |
| Cashier | FSN | |
| Information Technology Specialist | PSC | |
| Receptionist | PSC | |
| General Services Manager | PSC | |
| Driver (3) | PSC | |
| Janitor (2) | PSC | |

Data as of April 2011.

^aPersonal Services Contractor

^bForeign Service National

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

Table 4: Interviews Conducted with PC/Headquarters Staff, Embassy Officials and Key Ministry Officials

| Position | Organization |
|--|---------------------------------|
| Regional Director | PC/Headquarters/Africa Region |
| Chief of Operations | PC/Headquarters/Africa Region |
| Chief Administrative Officer | PC/Headquarters/Africa Region |
| Chief of Programming and Training | PC/Headquarters/Africa Region |
| Program and Training Specialist | PC/Headquarters/Africa Region |
| Country Desk Officer | PC/Headquarters/Africa Region |
| Country Desk Assistant | PC/Headquarters/Africa Region |
| Regional Security Advisor | PC/Headquarters/Africa Region |
| Supervisor, Program Support Unit | PC/Headquarters/OPATS |
| Evaluation Specialist | PC/Headquarters/OPATS |
| Technical Training Specialist | PC/Headquarters/OPATS |
| Language and Cross Cultural Specialist | PC/Headquarters/OPATS |
| Director | PC/Headquarters/PCR |
| Chief of Operations | PC/Headquarters/PCR |
| International Health Coordinator | PC/Headquarters/VS ^a |
| Expert-Consultant | PC/Headquarters/VS |
| PC Safety and Security Officer | PC/Headquarters/SS ^b |
| Deputy Chief of Mission | U.S. Embassy in Liberia |
| Regional Security Officer | U.S. Embassy in Liberia |

¹³ The Director of Programming and Training position is shared by Peace Corps' posts in Sierra Leone and Liberia. Thirty percent of the DPT's time is focused on PC/Liberia.

| | |
|-----------------|---------------------------------------|
| Minister | Ministry of Education |
| Deputy Minister | Ministry of Health and Social Welfare |

Data as of April 2011.

^aOffice of Volunteer Support

^bOffice of Safety and Security

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

WE RECOMMEND:

1. That the country director work with the post's programming team, the Africa region, and the Office of Programming and Training Support, as appropriate, to develop a strategy and plan to improve Volunteer effectiveness in their primary assignments.
2. That the country director work with the post's programming team to develop a strategy and plan to help Volunteers identify counterparts.
3. That the country director work with the programming team to revise the Volunteer Assignment Descriptions to emphasize the importance of secondary activities given the challenges of working in the Liberian school system.
4. That the training manager review pre- and in-service training programs to ensure that they adequately address and prepare Volunteers to identify and carry out secondary activities.
5. That the country director and programming team obtain the necessary input from the office of programming and training support and finalize the secondary education project plan.
6. That country director and Peace Corps Response director review the post's Peace Corps Response program and establish its purpose and intended goals.
7. That the associate director for Global Operations and the director of Peace Corps Response develop a process to assess the results of Peace Corps Response pilot programs before launching a two-year Volunteer program.
8. That the associate director for Global Operations work with the post, Africa region, and Peace Corps Response to document lessons learned from the post's opening and incorporate them into existing new country entry processes and policies, as appropriate.
9. That the regional director of the Africa region ensure the post hires an experienced, full-time United States Direct Hire employee to oversee the programming and training unit.
10. That the country director ensure that the staff creates a more stream-lined, coherent filing structure for programming and training and safety and security documents.
11. That the country director clarify roles and responsibilities of post staff, correct instances of unclear ownership of office processes, and make staff accountable for performing their duties as prescribed.

12. That the country director and the Peace Corps medical officer work with post-conflict specialists in the Africa region and the Counseling and Outreach Unit to develop a strategy and plan to prepare invitees and Volunteers for post-conflict-related challenges.
13. That the country director ensure that all Volunteers know the location of their consolidation point.
14. That the country director ensure that Volunteers are adequately informed of their consolidation points during training.
15. That the country director ensure that all wardens have at least two methods of contacting the Volunteers in their region.
16. That the country director require appropriate staff members to review the accuracy and completeness of site locator forms.
17. That the country director ensure that the most current version of the Emergency Action Plan is included in the duty officer bag and distributed to Volunteers, staff, the embassy regional security officer, and neighboring posts that are listed as possible evacuation sites.
18. That the country director ensure that the post develops a process to provide updated Emergency Action Plans to all Volunteers, staff, the embassy regional security officer, the duty officer bag, and neighboring posts that are listed as possible evacuation sites after changes are made.
19. That the country director develop and implement a plan to ensure that the post conducts a non-cell phone emergency action plan test.
20. That the country director ensure that the post updates and organizes the duty officer binder.
21. That the country director, in consultation with the regional security advisor and Peace Corps safety and security officer, develop a professional development plan for the safety and security coordinator and monitor progress towards those goals.
22. That the Peace Corps safety and security officer conduct a complete review of the post's safety and security systems and recommend changes to ensure the post is in compliance with all agency safety and security policies and procedures and is taking an appropriate security posture for the environment.
23. That the country director ensure that staff inspect all current Volunteer housing and address any deficiencies.
24. That the country director ensure that staff inspect all prospective Volunteer housing and address any deficiencies before a Volunteer's arrival at site.

25. That the country director ensure that the post is maintaining accurate housing inspection reports.
26. That the country director and safety and security coordinator develop a strategy and plan to regularly communicate safety and security information to Volunteers.
27. That the training manager increase local language instruction.
28. That the country director, training manager, and safety and security coordinator develop a strategy and plan to improve safety and security training.
29. That the country director, training manager, and programming staff members develop a strategy and plan to improve technical training.
30. That the training manager, with assistance from specialists in the Office of Programming and Training Support, as appropriate, develop a training continuum.
31. That the program manager determine whether Peace Corps Response Volunteers should receive an orientation upon arrival at site and, if so, update related documentation and deliver training accordingly.
32. That the country director ensure that the staff has set up the volunteer reporting tool and is collecting Volunteer performance data.
33. That the training manager improve performance reporting training for Volunteers.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

| | |
|-------|--|
| DPT | Director of Programming and Training |
| EAP | Emergency Action Plan |
| ET | Early Termination |
| IST | In-Service Training |
| MS | Manual Section |
| OIG | Office of the Inspector General |
| OPATS | Office of Programming and Training Support |
| PAR | Performance and Accountability Report |
| PCR | Peace Corps Response |
| PCRV | Peace Corps Response Volunteer |
| RSO | Regional Security Officer |
| SLF | Site Locator Form |
| SSC | Safety and Security Coordinator |
| TDE | Training Design and Evaluation |
| USDH | United States Direct Hire |
| VAC | Volunteer Advisory Committee |
| VAD | Volunteer Assignment Description |
| VRF | Volunteer Reporting Form |
| VRT | Volunteer Reporting Tool |

PC/LIBERIA SITE SELECTION AND HOUSING CRITERIA

The following is the post's site selection and housing criteria dated September 2010.

| Site: | County: | Contact Name/No. |
|--|---|---|
| Site History | | |
| Site history file verified by PM (if appropriate): Site history file verified? <input type="checkbox"/> | | |
| Police security check re: the location of the house completed with the SSC: Security check completed? <input type="checkbox"/> | | |
| SITE CRITERIA | | |
| WHAT | STANDARDS | WHO DOES WHAT |
| House Location Site meet these standards <input type="checkbox"/> PM <input type="checkbox"/> SSC <input type="checkbox"/> PCMO <input type="checkbox"/> | Situated in a safe neighborhood within the community and surrounded by neighbors (minimum on three sides)*. Not located near a bar, disco, or market. Area is clean of weeds/rubbish. | PM, SSC with community or host sponsoring agency (CEO, School Headmaster, Health Center Supervisor, Govt. Agency Head, etc.) |
| Communications Site meet these standards <input type="checkbox"/> PM <input type="checkbox"/> SSC <input type="checkbox"/> PCMO <input type="checkbox"/> | Phone or HF radio within one (1) hour for emergency purposes by some mode of transportation (e.g. taxi, bus, private vehicle) for access to phone.* | PM, SSC with host sponsoring agency to verify emergency communication options (e.g. Health Center HF radio, Police HF radio, Telecenter, landline, SAT phone, etc.) |
| Transportation to County or District town Site meet these standards <input type="checkbox"/> PM <input type="checkbox"/> SSC <input type="checkbox"/> PCMO <input type="checkbox"/> | The site should be no more than two (2) hours by normal transport (e.g. taxi, bus, private vehicle or bicycle) to a market for basic foods, supplies and seasonal produce.* | PM, SSC |
| Transportation to MONROVIA Site meet these standards <input type="checkbox"/> PM <input type="checkbox"/> SSC <input type="checkbox"/> PCMO <input type="checkbox"/> | Maximum 48 hours total travel time by a four-wheel drive vehicle throughout the year. | PM, SSC |
| Medical Evacuation Transportation Site meet these standard <input type="checkbox"/> PM <input type="checkbox"/> SSC <input type="checkbox"/> PCMO <input type="checkbox"/> | Landing strip within 5 hours of the PCV site that can be accessed year round, in case of a medical emergency evacuation.* | PM, SSC and PCMO |
| Water Site meet these standards <input type="checkbox"/> PM <input type="checkbox"/> SSC <input type="checkbox"/> PCMO <input type="checkbox"/> | Reliable water source (ex. borehole, well, hand pump, etc.) within 100 meters or transported & available year round. | PM, SSC with community or host sponsoring agency |
| HOUSING CRITERIA | | |
| WHAT | STANDARDS | WHO DOES WHAT |
| Housing Type | Housing should conform to the same style found in the community | PM, SSC with community or host sponsoring agency |
| Living Quarters The house meets standards <input type="checkbox"/> PM <input type="checkbox"/> SSC <input type="checkbox"/> PCMO <input type="checkbox"/> | Minimum one room per/PCV required (bedroom) with separate kitchen inside (preferred) or outside. | Community with host sponsoring agency identifies and PC approves. |

APPENDIX A

| <p>Floor The house meets standards <input type="checkbox"/> PM <input type="checkbox"/> SSC <input type="checkbox"/> PCMO <input type="checkbox"/></p> | All living quarter floors are cement and all cracks are sealed.* | Community with host sponsoring agency provides material and labor. |
|--|---|---|
| HOUSING CRITERIA (Continued) | | |
| WHAT | STANDARDS | WHO DOES WHAT |
| <p>Roofing The house meets standards <input type="checkbox"/> PM <input type="checkbox"/> SSC <input type="checkbox"/> PCMO <input type="checkbox"/></p> | Made of galvanized tin sheeting, clay fired tiles, or thatch. Leak-proof, vermin-proof, bat-proof. | Community with host sponsoring agency provides roofing material and labor. |
| <p>Doors The house meets standards <input type="checkbox"/> PM <input type="checkbox"/> SSC <input type="checkbox"/> PCMO <input type="checkbox"/></p> | Doors are constructed of solid metal or wood.* Doors should close tight after locking. | Community with host sponsoring agency provides material and labor. |
| <p>Windows The house meets standards <input type="checkbox"/> PM <input type="checkbox"/> SSC <input type="checkbox"/> PCMO <input type="checkbox"/></p> | Windows are constructed of solid metal or wood and fitted with burglar bars (1" iron or metal mesh)* | Community with host sponsoring agency provides material and labor |
| <p>Ventilation and Light The house meets standards <input type="checkbox"/> PM <input type="checkbox"/> SSC <input type="checkbox"/> PCMO <input type="checkbox"/></p> | Enough windows are present per room to provide cross-ventilation and light* | Community with host sponsoring agency provides material and labor |
| <p>Door locks The house meets standards <input type="checkbox"/> PM <input type="checkbox"/> SSC <input type="checkbox"/> PCMO <input type="checkbox"/></p> | Double keyed lock or deadbolt for all exterior doors of the house. Slide bolts inside exterior doors. | PCV replaces locks upon arriving at site. Cost included in Volunteer's Setting-In Allowance (SIA). |
| <p>Screens on roof vents The house meets standards <input type="checkbox"/> PM <input type="checkbox"/> SSC <input type="checkbox"/> PCMO <input type="checkbox"/></p> | Where roof vent exists, they must be screened-in to prevent the entry of vermin (i.e. bats, rats, feral cats, etc.). | Community with host sponsoring agency provides material and labor |
| <p>Screens The house meets standards <input type="checkbox"/> PM <input type="checkbox"/> SSC <input type="checkbox"/> PCMO <input type="checkbox"/></p> | Required on all windows and exterior doors. | Community with host sponsoring agency provides material and labor |
| <p>Interior Walls The house meets standards <input type="checkbox"/> PM <input type="checkbox"/> SSC <input type="checkbox"/> PCMO <input type="checkbox"/></p> | Well plastered walls sound enough to prevent entry of rain, rodents, etc. | Community with host sponsoring agency provides material and labor |
| <p>Drop Ceiling The house meets standards <input type="checkbox"/> PM <input type="checkbox"/> SSC <input type="checkbox"/> PCMO <input type="checkbox"/></p> | Made of mat or wood material and sealed to prevent rats and bats from entering. | Community with host sponsoring agency provides material and labor |
| <p>Furniture (Optional but desirable) The house meets standards <input type="checkbox"/> PM <input type="checkbox"/> SSC <input type="checkbox"/> PCMO <input type="checkbox"/></p> | Minimum furnishings include: 1 bed frame (wood/metal); 1 table, 3 chairs of any kind, 1 food safe (wooden), and shelves (or wardrobe) to arrange clothes. | Community with host sponsoring agency provide, if not , PC will review and decide on a case by case basis. |
| <p>Private Toilet/Bathing Area The house meets standards <input type="checkbox"/> PM <input type="checkbox"/> SSC <input type="checkbox"/> PCMO <input type="checkbox"/></p> | Exclusive use by PCV only with lock. Located inside house (preferred) and if outside not more than 10m from house. Cover for slab or VIP latrine | Community with host sponsoring agency provides material and labor |
| <p>Vermin The house meets standards <input type="checkbox"/> PM <input type="checkbox"/> SSC <input type="checkbox"/> PCMO <input type="checkbox"/></p> | No presence of flying creatures in the roof when Volunteer moves into the house.* | Community ensures that house is critter free prior to occupancy. |

| NEGOTIABLE AMENITIES | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------|----------------------|
| WHAT | STANDARDS | WHO DOES WHAT |

APPENDIX A

| | | |
|--------------|--|---|
| Shade | Outside shaded area to greet visitors is preferred. In case of need, PCV will submit a request to the PM | PC will review the request on a case by case basis. |
|--------------|--|---|

*** Action required prior to posting the Volunteer at site**

N. B. While Settling-In Allowance (SIA) is intended to cover some of the items listed above, reimbursements may be provided for authorized expenses that exceed the SIA. Volunteers seeking reimbursement for items on this list must provide proof (receipts) that their SIA was not sufficient to bring the house up to the standards. PCVs should get approval from their PM PCMO and the AO before assuming that Peace Corps will reimburse them.

CERTIFICATION BY SPONSORING AGENCY OR COUNTERPART

A. I certify that the above mentioned standards have been met.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

CERTIFICATION BY A PEACE CORPS STAFF MEMBER (PM, SSC, etc.)

A. I certify that the above mentioned standards have been met.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

OR

| Additional action to be taken | Person Responsible | Who Pays |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|----------|
| | | |

CERTIFICATION BY SPONSORING AGENCY OR COUNTERPART

B. I certify that all the above mentioned additional actions to be taken are now completed (Refer to chart above)

Signature: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX A

CERTIFICATION BY A PEACE CORPS STAFF MEMBER (PM, SSC, etc.)

B. I certify that all the above mentioned additional actions to be taken are now completed (Refer to chart above)

Signature: _____

Date: _____

AGENCY'S RESPONSE



Since 1961.

MEMORANDUM

To: Kathy Buller, Inspector General

Through: Daljit Bains, Chief Compliance Officer *[Signature]*

From: Dick Day, Africa Regional Director *[Signature]*
Vince Groh, Country Director, Liberia

Date: August 19, 2011

CC: Carrie Hessler-Radelet, Deputy Director
Stacy Rhodes, Chief of Staff/Chief of Operations
Bill Rubin, General Counsel
Lynn Foden, Chief of Operations, Africa Region
Madeleine Mader, Chief of Program and Training, Africa Region
Edward Hobson, Associate Director, Safety and Security
Esther Benjamin, Associate Director, Global Operations
Sandra Derenoncourt, Director, Overseas Programming and Training Support
Joseph Hepp, Chief Financial Officer
Sarah Morgenthau, Director, Peace Corps Response
Brenda Goodman, Deputy Associate Director, Volunteer Support
Daryn Warner, Country Desk Officer, Liberia

Subject: Response to the Preliminary Report of Peace Corps/Liberia, July 2011

Enclosed please find the Africa Region's response to the recommendations made by the Inspector General for Peace Corps/Liberia, as outlined in the Preliminary Program Evaluation Report sent to the Agency on July 8, 2011.

The Africa Region concurs with all 33 recommendations provided by the OIG in its Preliminary Program Evaluation Report: Peace Corps/Liberia. Post has addressed and provided supporting documentation for 5 of the 33 recommendations and will work to address the remaining recommendations by the set target dates.

Peace Corps/ Liberia is emerging from a period of rapid growth as it transitions from a small start-up program supporting a handful of Response Volunteers, to a fully-staffed post with two-year Volunteers. Region acknowledges that this transition has not been smooth, and that during this time Post has struggled to build its program, experiencing many challenges not uncommon to New Country Entry posts, and some unique to the realities of starting a post in a post-conflict environment that has suffered years of arrested development and erosion of infrastructure and human resources. While we agree with the report's

assessment that more could have been done to preclude many of these difficulties, we have been working with Post to strengthen systems and build capacity since early 2010 when region first identified issues at post via an assessment team visit. Region supports Country Director Vince Groh's active leadership in implementing an aggressive plan to rectify the deficiencies noted and has employed TDY support and a variety of trainings to help implement this plan to improve PST and safety and security systems at post (see Appendix A). In all of these efforts, we are guided by the belief that the best response to the identified challenges is to strengthen the effectiveness of Volunteers in their primary assignments. While there is certainly much more to be done, region and post are committed to reinforcing the foundations of solid programming, training and Volunteer support, and we feel that PC/ Liberia is well-positioned to become a high-performing post.

Several of the responses below refer to Volunteer cohorts, both two-year and Response Volunteers. To avoid confusion, the table below outlines the recently-served and currently-serving PCV and PCRV cohorts.

| Cohort Name | Two-Year or Response | Arrival Date | PST or Orientation Dates |
|-------------|----------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| LR-1 | Two-Year | July 27 th , 2010 | July-August 2010 |
| Response 9 | Response | January 5 th , 2011 | January 2011 |
| LR-2 | Two-Year | June 12 th , 2011 | June-August 2011 |
| Response 10 | Response | August 10 th , 2011 | August 2011 |

The region will continue to work with post and the departments identified in the preliminary report to ensure closure of these recommendations by the dates included within for outstanding recommendations.

1. **That the country director work with the post's programming team, the Africa region, and the Office of Programming and Training Support, as appropriate, to develop a strategy and plan to improve Volunteer effectiveness in their primary assignments.**

Concur: Post agrees with the assessment that Volunteer effectiveness in their primary assignments requires improvement.

As a first step, post has decided to eliminate its community health assignments to focus exclusively on secondary education placements. Post has also eliminated several ongoing Response education assignments unrelated to secondary education, leaving classroom teaching in junior and senior high schools as post's sole programmatic focus area.

Going forward, Peace Corps Response assignments will solely support the goals of post's secondary education project. Given the dysfunction in the Liberian secondary education sector, experienced Response Volunteers, many with teaching experience in other African posts, can be highly effective teachers in challenging classrooms. In addition, Post believes that integrating Response Volunteers into the two-year project, in many cases sharing a house or school with a two-year Volunteer, creates powerful mentorship opportunities and a voice of experience that is helpful, especially at the beginning of a two-year Volunteer's service.

Post will finalize its project plan for secondary education.

Post will re-design its 27-month continuum of pre-service and in-service training using the Training Design and Evaluation (TDE) process with the guidance of the regional advisor. This work was begun with the most recent PST, in which region programming and training staff, the regional advisor, and two Niger staff members (including the training manager) were sent to support post training staff at various points prior to and during PST (see Appendix A). In order to sustain the momentum for training improvements, post will request region and headquarters support for the implementation of that plan and the required staff development among post's programming and training team.

Additionally, post has begun a major staff restructuring in order to provide better support and to improve Volunteer effectiveness. The program manager (PM) and the program assistant (PA) for secondary education (both personal services contractors) were placed on performance improvement plans and warned about the potential termination of their contracts based on these performance concerns. Based on incomplete and inadequate improvements, both contracts will be terminated in August 2011. The PA position will be refilled in the September/October timeframe and the PM position will not be rehired. An experienced USDH APCD currently serving as an education APCD at another post will be transferred to PC/ Liberia in September 2011 to become APCD for programming & training. This new APCD programming & training position will be responsible for supervising two programming and training assistants, one of which will be responsible for supporting two-year Volunteers and the other for Response Volunteers. This structure reflects the integrated approach outlined above in which PCR and two-year Volunteers work in complementary assignments under the same project plan. The APCD programming & training will also spearhead the revision and finalization of the secondary education project plan, implement improvements to PST technical training, and train programming and training staff in Peace Corps programming and training best practices—all of which will contribute to the ability of Volunteers to be effective in their primary assignments.

Documents to be Submitted

- Strategy and Implementation Plan for Improving Volunteer Effectiveness, which will include:
 1. Training Design and Evaluation (TDE) & Calendar of Training Events (COTE)
 2. Project Plan for Secondary Education

3. Organization Chart

Status and Timeline for Completion: December 31st 2011

2. That the country director work with the post's programming team to develop a strategy and plan to help Volunteers identify counterparts.

Concur: Post agrees that Volunteers have struggled to identify counterparts at their sites. (As noted in the evaluation report, all education Volunteers are assigned supervisors/principals and these relationships are generally functional.) However, Post believes that this issue is larger than simply identifying a single counterpart but rather involves preparing Volunteers to work collaboratively with their colleagues at school and within the wider school community. To address this issue, post has planned a comprehensive approach with two prongs: first, to improve the quality of site selection and development such that new Volunteers arrive at site with a broad selection of potential resource people to choose as counterparts, and second, to strengthen the understanding of the role the counterpart and the quality of the relationship through additional training.

Post will update its site development and school assessment materials to broaden the sources and types of information upon which site selections are made. New sources and types of information may include local non-school leaders, teachers, students, parents, county officials, NGOs, and current Volunteers. Overall, post will be assessing the readiness of a school's community to make effective use of a Volunteer and identifying potential resource persons beyond the school supervisor/ principal that the Volunteer may use to make an informed decision regarding a counterpart. As post matures, detailed site history files will be maintained to capture staff and Volunteer recommendations regarding good counterparts at particular sites.

During this year's PST (which began in June 2011), post conducted a two-day supervisors' workshop where two-year Volunteers were first introduced to their school's principal. During the workshop, clear expectations were set for all participants on successful counterpart development. This practice will be continued and refined in successive PSTs beginning June of 2012.

Post has also received USAID approval to fund (through the SPA program) the participation of counterpart teachers, school administrators, and community leaders in all of post's in-service training activities for FY12.

Documents to be Submitted

- USAID approval for the use of SPA funds for counterpart participation in in-service training activities
- Training materials used during supervisors' workshop
- Site Development and Assessment Criteria
- Project Plan for Secondary Education

Status and Timeline for Completion: December 31st 2011

3. That the country director work with the programming team to revise the Volunteer Assignment Descriptions to emphasize the importance of secondary activities given the challenges of working in the Liberian school system.

Concur: Post agrees with this assessment and will better articulate in the VADs the challenges of working in the Liberian school system and Volunteers' roles in secondary activities. Additionally, post remains committed to better preparing Volunteers to be effective in their primary assignments both in and outside of the classroom. Post continues to believe that Peace Corps Volunteers assigned to secondary school communities can be very effective participants in the reconstruction of Liberia.

While we recognize the necessity of having the VADs reflect the realities and challenges of Volunteers' primary assignments, we do not accept the implication in the preliminary report that the challenges faced in Liberia's education sector are insurmountable and thus incompatible with successful Peace Corps service. The report proposes that the solution to Peace Corps/ Liberia's programmatic challenges is to focus Volunteers on secondary activities. Rather, Region believes the best response to the identified challenges is to strengthen Volunteers' preparation to be effective in their primary assignments: classroom teaching in Liberian high schools. Region believes that the challenges identified are common throughout Africa, although perhaps accentuated in Liberia. Region believes that Peace Corps' success and experience in a range of secondary education projects throughout Africa can be brought to bear on the nascent project in Liberia.

Documents to be Submitted

- Updated VADs for AA171, 173 & 175

Status and Timeline for Completion: September 30th 2011

4. **That the training manager review pre- and in-service training programs to ensure that they adequately address and prepare Volunteers to identify and carry out secondary activities.**

Concur: As part of the overall restructuring of the Peace Corps Liberia training program, Post will include for the first time a Project Design and Management (PDM) workshop in its Calendar of Training Events (COTE) for in-service training and learning objectives aimed at increased Volunteer effectiveness in secondary project development.

Additionally, Peace Corps Liberia is launching a PCVL program. Post's PCVL program will target ongoing peer support for two-year Volunteers in successful community integration, project design and management, counterpart development, needs assessment, primary assignment effectiveness and secondary project development.

Documents to be Submitted

- PCVL Program Handbook
- Training Design and Evaluation (TDE) & Calendar of Training Events (COTE)

Status and Timeline for Completion: December 31st 2011

5. **That the country director and programming team obtain the necessary input from the office of programming and training support and finalize the secondary education project plan.**

Concur: Post agrees that the project plan for secondary education needs to be finalized and that OPATS and Region's Programming & Training Unit will be consulted during the design and finalization of the plan.

Documents to be Submitted

- Secondary Education Project Plan

Status and Timeline for Completion: December 31st 2011

6. **That country director and Peace Corps Response director review the post's Peace Corps Response program and establish its purpose and intended goals.**

Concur: Post and Peace Corps Response have agreed to a more targeted set of goals for Response Volunteers. First, Post is eliminating its Health project and by January 2012 will no longer have Health Volunteers serving in Liberia. Second, Post is eliminating Response education assignments outside of the core focus on classroom teaching in high schools, e.g. computer skills training for

primary school teachers, learning resource center development, PTA promotion, library development, etc. In this way, the purpose of Post's Response program is simply to fully support our secondary education project.

For the Response intake scheduled for February 2012, Post is requesting Response Volunteers for high school classroom teaching assignments in math, science and English. These Volunteers will be placed with currently-serving two-year Volunteers as well as in newly-developed sites. During a six-month assignment the PCRVs will assess the school's readiness to participate in the two-year program and will begin to identify partners and resources.

Post is planning on enhancing its use of Peace Corps Response, possibly creating Response positions to act as consultants / peer advisors to Liberian high school principals in the rollout of an upcoming new Liberian education curriculum. This program element will be detailed in Post's secondary education project plan.

Documents to be Submitted

- Secondary Education Project Plan
- Position Description for Response Assignments

Status and Timeline for Completion: December 31st 2011

7. **That the associate director for Global Operations and the director of Peace Corps Response develop a process to assess the results of Peace Corps Response pilot programs before launching a two-year Volunteer program.**

Concur: Based on the lessons learned in Liberia, the agency is moving away from launching NCE as pilot programs. As a result, there will not be a need to assess results of NCE pilot programs prior to transitioning to two-year Volunteer programs.

Global Operations and Regions have determined that all NCEs will follow the same guidelines and will ensure that the post is properly staffed and that sites and programming are appropriately developed whether sending PC Response Volunteers or traditional PC Volunteers.

As outlined in the lessons learned in recommendation #8, the Office of Peace Corps Response will no longer be fully responsible for developing and implementing a pilot NCE program and leading a new country entry or re-entry. Since Peace Corps Response specializes in recruitment and placement of highly skilled Volunteers, Peace Corps Response will maintain its focus on selection of the Volunteers and assistance with programming for the Volunteer's assignments.

Documents Submitted

- Memo to the Office of Global Operations, dated: 11 August 2011 Re: Lessons Learned from the Liberia NCE Process

Status and Timeline for Completion: August 19, 2011

8. **That the associate director for Global Operations work with the post, Africa region, and Peace Corps Response to document lessons learned from the post's opening and incorporate them into existing new country entry processes and policies, as appropriate.**

Concur: The Africa Region initially assessed lessons learned through an assessment team (consisting of the acting CHOPS, RSA, and PCSSO) sent to Liberia in April 2010. The goal of the assessment was to broadly review post's operations and support needs. As with the OIG program evaluation report, many of the challenges it identified could be directly traced to the start-up and initial support and handling of post operations. The team produced seven recommendations for future New Country Entries. These recommendations were then shared and discussed with Peace Corps

Response in July 2011 to arrive at a more comprehensive understanding of how to improve the NCE process and challenges to be avoided in the future. The final recommendations have been reviewed by the Office of Global Operations. Lessons learned from Liberia and other recent NCE will be incorporated into existing new country entry processes and policies, as appropriate.

Documents Submitted

- Memo to the Office of Global Operations, dated: 11 August 2011 Re: Lessons Learned from the Liberia NCE Process

Status and Timeline for Completion: August 19, 2011

9. **That the regional director of the Africa region ensures the post hires an experienced, full-time United States Direct Hire employee to oversee the programming and training unit.**

Concur: Region is in the process of transferring an experienced APCD for education, Jason Burns, from Malawi to Liberia. In Liberia, Jason will become the APCD for Programming and Training. In conjunction, Post is restructuring the programming and training unit so that it consists of two Program Assistants and a Training Manager all reporting into the incoming APCD. Jason's anticipated arrival date in Liberia is September 20, 2011.

Documents to be Submitted

- New organization chart for Post
- Position Description for APCD for Programming and Training

Status and Timeline for Completion: September 30, 2011

10. **That the country director ensures that the staff creates a more stream-lined, coherent filing structure for programming and training and safety and security documents.**

Concur: The country director has worked with the programming, training and safety and security teams to begin improving the filing structure for all Volunteer documentation. Today, important original documents related to Volunteers and their sites are securely filed in site history folders. These folders include the site prospection form, site selection criteria and housing checklist form, site locator forms for all Volunteers who have served at that site, and CIRS incident reports if applicable.

Following the arrival at site of LR-2 and Response 10, Post will work to update all site history folders for new and continuing sites and will formally document the filing requirements for each Volunteer and site. The CD will develop a memo outlining the expectations for maintaining these documents including identifying the responsible staff.

Documents to be Submitted

- Sample scanned contents of one site history folder
- Memo from CD to programming, training and S&S teams on formal document filing requirements

Status and Timeline for Completion: October 31st 2011

11. **That the country director clarify roles and responsibilities of post staff, correct instances of unclear ownership of office processes, and make staff accountable for performing their duties as prescribed.**

Concur: Post agrees with this assessment that many processes, particularly related to PCV communication around out-of-site and whereabouts, were unclear and were performed by many staff members, resulting in frequent confusion and miscommunication.

Guided by the Regional PCSSO, Post has redesigned the Duty Officer program, including a broader set of responsibilities and training support to centralize and clarify duties while freeing time from members of the programming team and the Safety and Security Coordinator (SSC), especially related to PCV whereabouts.

Several non-security office processes previously collectively owned by the programming team have been reassigned (on a pilot basis) to the IT specialist and/or the office receptionist, resulting in a reduced administrative burden for the programming team and improved accountability and process performance. Based on the finding of this pilot, the CD will adapt effected position descriptions to reflect any changes to responsibilities.

Documents Submitted

- PCSSO Trip Report May 20th 2011

Documents to be Submitted

- Memo to staff clarifying roles and responsibilities around key Post processes
- Updated PDs for effected staff

Status and Timeline for Completion: September 30th, 2011

- 12. That the country director and the Peace Corps medical officer work with post-conflict specialists in the Africa region and the Counseling and Outreach Unit to develop a strategy and plan to prepare invitees and Volunteers for post-conflict-related challenges.**

Concur: Post agrees that Liberia's status as a post-conflict country presents challenges to Volunteer service and community integration. The Country Desk Unit has developed and delivered a pre-departure preparation packet which begins the process of working with trainees on the realities of accepting to work in a post-conflict/post-civil war country. Issues such as extreme poverty and social trauma are broached and conference calls have been organized, offering the opportunity for invitees to question currently serving PCVs and staff on the unique challenges of working in Liberia. Post's PCMO does a session during PST on psychosocial issues and personal mental health. Africa region funded the involvement of the region's Program and Training Specialist (a post-conflict development specialist) during Post's pre-service training for LR-2 in June 2011. This was well-received by PCTs, and constitutes an important (but not solely sufficient) strategy for addressing the issue. Post and Region will involve the Counseling and Outreach Unit and post-conflict specialist in developing additional training for PCT/Vs and PCVLs as well as the creation of a Peer Support Network.

Documents Submitted

- CDU-developed pre-departure guidebook
- Post-Conflict IST training Guide ("Approaching the Psychosocial through Development: A Training Manual) distributed during the September 2010 Post-Conflict Workshop and used during June 2011 Liberia 2 PST for trainees and currently serving resource PCVs

Documents to be Submitted

- Peer Support Network training materials

Status and Timeline for Completion: September 30th 2011

- 13. That the country director ensures that all Volunteers know the location of their consolidation point.**

Concur: Post agrees and has prioritized the communication and training of consolidation points as part of its EAP training. In April, 2011 at an IST event, all members of LR-1 and Response 9 received group training on their consolidation points in the context of Post's EAP. All members of LR-2 and Response 10 will receive consolidation point training during their PST in August 2011. Post is planning an all PCV/PCRV (LR-1, LR-2, Response 10) consolidation point drill the weekend of September 17-18 to confirm Volunteer understanding of their consolidation points.

Documents to be Submitted

- Agenda for IST April 2011 (which included consolidation point training)
- VIDA results of consolidation drill scheduled for September 17-18th

Status and Timeline for Completion: September 30th 2011

14. That the country director ensures that Volunteers are adequately informed of their consolidation points during training.

Concur: Post agrees and includes EAP and consolidation point training into PST and Response orientation. This will occur for LR-2 and Response 10 in August 2011. Post is planning an all PCV/PCRV consolidation drill the weekend of September 17-18 to test Volunteer understanding of their consolidation points.

Documents to be Submitted

- Agenda for IST April 2011 (which included consolidation point training)
- Agenda for EAP training during PST and Response orientation

Status and Timeline for Completion: September 30th 2011

15. That the country director ensures that all wardens have at least two methods of contacting the Volunteers in their region.

Concur: Post agrees and will be training and testing all wardens on the use of local taxi networks to deliver messages to Volunteers in their areas in case of mobile network unavailability. The training will occur on August 22nd. During the period of August 24th-September 17th, each warden will be instructed and required to contact each Volunteer through the use of notes carried by taxi drivers to their school principals or health team supervisor. The consolidation point drill on September 17th-18th will take place without the use of mobile phones.

Documents to be Submitted

- Agenda for EAP training during PST and Response orientation
- VIDA results of consolidation drill scheduled for September 17-18th

Status and Timeline for Completion: September 30th, 2011

16. That the country director requires appropriate staff members to review the accuracy and completeness of site locator forms.

Concur: The country director has reviewed the site locator forms for the eleven members of LR-1 and found ten of the eleven to be complete and accurate, including contact information for counterparts, supervisors and neighbors; police phone numbers; satellite phone numbers (if applicable); site directions and map; a plan for reaching the consolidation point; and radio stations accessible at the site. One member of LR-1 who has recently changed sites has been requested to submit a new site locator form for their new site. All members of LR-2 and Response 10 will be required to complete their site locator forms within 30 days of site arrival, i.e. before September 24th.

The country director and APCD/programming and training will review site visit procedure with all programming, security and medical staff to ensure that these visits include a review of information contained on the site locator form. In addition, the country director has utilized the materials provided by the Office of Safety and Security to reviewed the orientation materials with the SSC and will continue with the review and implementation of suggested standard operating procedures.

Documents to be Submitted

- Scanned sample site locator forms from LR-1

Status and Timeline for Completion: October 31, 2011

17. **That the country director ensure that the most current version of the Emergency Action Plan is included in the duty officer bag and distributed to Volunteers, staff, the embassy regional security officer, and neighboring posts that are listed as possible evacuation sites.**

Concur: Post has completed a review and distributed the latest version of the EAP to the locations and recipients listed above. In addition, Post will be publishing and distributing an updated EAP following the completion of our PST as there will be a significant increase in Volunteer numbers as well as changes to consolidation points.

Documents to be Submitted

- Post's revised EAP

Status and Timeline for Completion: September 30th 2011

18. **That the country director ensure that the post develops a process to provide updated Emergency Action Plans to all Volunteers, staff, the embassy regional security officer, the duty officer bag, and neighboring posts that are listed as possible evacuation sites after changes are made.**

Concur: Post has confirmed that updated versions of the EAP have been delivered to all recommended locations and recipients. The next version of the EAP will coincide with LR-2 and Response 10 traveling to sites on August 24th and this version will immediately be provided to all required locations and recipients. The country director will draft a formal process for these required updates and will communicate to the SSC for implementation.

Documents to be Submitted

- Memo documenting EAP version update process to SSC

Status and Timeline for Completion: September 30th 2011

19. **That the country director develops and implements a plan to ensure that the post conducts a non-cell phone emergency action plan test.**

Concur: Post will be training and testing all wardens on the use of local taxi networks to deliver paper messages to Volunteers in their areas in case of mobile network unavailability. The training will occur on August 22nd. During the period of August 24th-September 17th, each warden will be instructed and required to contact each Volunteer through the use of notes carried by taxi drivers. The consolidation point drill on September 17th-18th will take place without the use of mobile phones.

Documents to be Submitted

- Agenda for EAP training during PST and Response orientation
- Results of consolidation drill scheduled for September 17-18th

Status and Timeline for Completion: September 30th, 2011

20. That the country director ensures that the post updates and organizes the duty officer binder.

Concur: Post has completed a review of all documentation in the duty officer binder and updated each document version. The duty officer binder is composed of the documents listed below.

Documents to be Submitted

- Duty Officer Handbook
- Africa Region Phone Tree
- Current Post EAP
- Responding to Rape and Major Sexual Assault
- Emergency Medical Procedures

Status and Timeline for Completion: September 30, 2011

21. That the country director, in consultation with the regional security advisor and Peace Corps safety and security officer, develop a professional development plan for the safety and security coordinator and monitor progress towards those goals.

Concur: Post agrees and the Country Director and PCSSO have communicated and collaborated on this topic. The Country Director has drafted and delivered a memo to the SSC highlighting key responsibilities in the SSC statement of work.

During the PCSSO's next trip to Liberia, the CD, SSC and PCSSO will conduct and document another formal conversation on the SSC's statement of work and any performance improvements required. This review will follow additional training provided by the Office of Safety and Security in Bamako, Mali.

Documents to be Submitted

- Memo from CD to SSC on Statement of Work and Performance Requirements
- Documented SSC performance review

Status and Timeline for Completion: December 31st 2011

22. That the Peace Corps safety and security officer conduct a complete review of the post's safety and security systems and recommend changes to ensure the post is in compliance with all agency safety and security policies and procedures and is taking an appropriate security posture for the environment.

Concur: The PCSSO covering West Africa, Michael Fitzgerald, traveled to Liberia from April 23rd through May 4th 2011 to conduct a complete review of Post's safety and security systems. The trip focused on the Emergency Action Plan (EAP), Duty Officer and Fire Safety training, the Crime Incident Reporting System (CIRS) reporting, and Volunteer site visits (17 PCVs were visited) with a focus on site inspections and the housing checklist.

The PCSSO will be making a follow-up visit in the last quarter of CY2011 to ensure that all recommendations have been implemented and to ensure the post is in compliance with all agency policies and procedures.

Documents Submitted

- PCSSO Trip Report dated May 20th 2011

Documents to be Submitted

- PCSSO Trip Report following upcoming Liberia trip.

Status and Timeline for Completion: December 31st 2011

23. **That the country director ensures that staff inspects all current Volunteer housing and address any deficiencies.**

Concur: Post conducts regular visits to Volunteer sites and generally completes a site inspection including an updated confirmation that the house meets post standards and criteria. In May, the CD, SSC and PCSSO conducted an extensive visit to 17 Volunteers at their sites and inspected their housing. Plans were made to address all deficiencies, minor repairs (e.g. lock changing) were completed on the trip, and in one case a site change was recommended and initiated. Updated site inspection reports were completed and are on file.

Remaining sites for LR-1 will be inspected on upcoming site visits and will include the remediation of any deficiencies.

Documents to be Submitted

- Updated set of housing checklists for LR-1
- Revised housing criteria

Status and Timeline for Completion: December 31st 2011

24. **That the country director ensure that staff inspect all prospective Volunteer housing and address any deficiencies before a Volunteer's arrival at site.**

Concur: In Liberia, ensuring the adequate housing is ready for Volunteers is the primary challenge in the site development process today. The S&S and programming teams have worked extensively with communities, schools, principals and the ministry of education to ensure that housing that meets Peace Corps' criteria will be available when Volunteers arrive at their sites. All prospective sites are assessed for the suitability of identified housing, and Peace Corps works with communities and schools as they make final improvements prior to Volunteer arrival.

To address the immediate need the country director is working closely with the safety and security and programming teams to ensure that all remaining housing deficiencies are addressed prior to Volunteer arrival. As a part of the verification process during pre-service training, all PCTs in LR-2 made short visits to their sites with their supervisors. During these trips, PCTs were instructed to check their identified housing against Post's housing criteria. All remaining deficiencies were documented and delivered to the S&S and programming team. Based on these findings, the safety and security coordinator has made two upcountry trips for final inspections of houses with outstanding issues.

The country director and APCD/programming and training will review the statements of work for appropriate staff to ensure they understand their role. Additionally, Post will develop standard operating procedures with all programming, security and medical staff, integrating site preparation in to routine program planning.

Documents to be Submitted

- Complete set of signed-off site selection and housing inspection reports for LR-2 and Response 10
- Standard operating procedures for site development

Status and Timeline for Completion: December 31st, 2011

25. That the country director ensures that the post is maintaining accurate housing inspection reports.

Concur: The country director has worked closely with the SSC to ensure that accurate housing inspection reports are maintained. These reports are filed centrally in a set of site history files.

Following the arrival of LR-2 and Response 10 to their sites on August 24th, Post will confirm that all housing inspection reports are available within the site history files.

Documents to be Submitted

- Scans of sample housing inspection reports.

Status and Timeline for Completion: October 31st 2011

26. That the country director and safety and security coordinator develop a strategy and plan to regularly communicate safety and security information to Volunteers.

Concur: Post agrees and is improving its communication of safety and security information to Volunteers. Post has enhanced the use of the duty phone program to regularly communicate time-sensitive safety and security information with Volunteers (as well as receive emergency calls from Volunteers 24/7/365). The SSC and CD regularly attend security briefings in Liberia and report general information to Volunteers about the national or regional security situation through the duty phone system and through phone conversations. During the border crisis with Côte d'Ivoire in May, 2011, the CD, SSC and PCSSO made in-person visits to all sites in the region to review the EAP and answer questions for Volunteers about the situation. Post will formalize this communication strategy and plan in a memo to all staff. Additionally, Post will integrate safety and security messaging into routine communications to Volunteers such as newsletters, at ISTs and with SMS technology.

Documents to be Submitted

- Memo from CD to SSC and all staff who serve as Duty Officers on S&S communications strategy
- Training material used to ensure Volunteers understand the communication system

Status and Timeline for Completion: September 30th 2011

27. That the training manager increase local language instruction.

Concur: The inclusion of local language instruction has been the main enhancement to Post's PST learning objectives. Post hired a full-time Language and Cross-cultural Coordinator in April 2011 to manage instruction in local language proficiency. In addition to training conducted at PST and IST, Post is planning on funding ongoing instruction at PCV sites through local tutoring. This policy will be integrated into the Volunteer Handbook.

LR-2 is currently receiving instruction in five local languages¹ spoken in the regions to which Volunteers will be assigned. Post is planning to implement additional training for language instructors to assure quality instruction and training

Documents to be Submitted

- COTE for LR-2 PST
- Revised language tutoring section in Volunteer Handbook

Status and Timeline for Completion: May 31st 2012

¹ Of the ~15 local languages spoken in Liberia, Post has developed sites in five (5) linguistic regions and is training PCTs in these five (5) languages: Kpelle, Gola, Mano, Vai and Mende.

28. **That the country director, training manager, and safety and security coordinator develop a strategy and plan to improve safety and security training.**

Concur: Post will re-design its 27-month continuum of pre-service and in-service training using the Training Design and Evaluation (TDE) process under the leadership of the Regional Advisor and the APCD/Programming and Training. A central component of this effort will be the redesign and improvement of safety and security training. The SSC, APCD, and TM will attend a Training of Trainers hosted by the Office of Safety and Security in Bamako, Mali.

Documents to be Submitted

- Training Design and Evaluation (TDE) & Calendar of Training Events (COTE)
- Project Plan for Secondary Education

Status and Timeline for Completion: December 31st 2011

29. **That the country director, training manager, and programming staff members develop a strategy and plan to improve technical training.**

Concur: Post will re-design its 27-month continuum of pre-service and in-service training using the Training Design and Evaluation (TDE) process under the leadership of the Regional Advisor for Programming and Training. As a central component of this effort will be the redesign and improvement of technical training.

Post will request Region and Headquarters provide support for technical training during its PST in summer 2012. This request will advance recommendations made the Region's Chief of Programming and Training following her review in July 2011.

Documents to be Submitted

- Chief of Programming and Training's Report and Recommendations
- Training Design and Evaluation (TDE) & Calendar of Training Events (COTE)
- Project Plan for Secondary education

Status and Timeline for Completion: December 31st 2011

30. **That the training manager, with assistance from specialists in the Office of Programming and Training Support, as appropriate, to develop a training continuum.**

Concur: Post will re-design our 27-month continuum of pre-service and in-service training using the Training Design and Evaluation (TDE) process with the assistance of the Regional Advisor. Post will request Region and Headquarters support for the implementation of that plan and the required staff development among Post's programming and training team.

Documents to be Submitted

- Training Design and Evaluation (TDE) & Calendar of Training Events (COTE)
- Project Plan for Secondary education

Status and Timeline for Completion: December 31st 2011

31. **That the program manager determine whether Peace Corps Response Volunteers should receive an orientation upon arrival at site and, if so, update related documentation and deliver training accordingly.**

Concur: Post agrees that Response Volunteers should receive an orientation upon arrival at site. This will be covered during the Supervisors Introduction as part of the Response Orientation. Specific

expectations for the orientation will be introduced. As well, programming staff will follow up with Response supervisors and PCRVs to ensure that orientations occur shortly after arrival at site.

Documents to be Submitted

- Training presentations to supervisors of Response 10
- Follow-up notes from programming team for all members of Response 10

Status and Timeline for Completion: September 30th 2011

32. That the country director ensures that the staff has set up the Volunteer reporting tool and is collecting Volunteer performance data.

Concur: With assistance from the Regional Advisor for Programming and Training, Post rolled out the Volunteer reporting tool (VRT) to LR-1 during the April 2011 IST. The VRT will be rolled out to LR-2 and Response 9 during their PST in August 2011. PCVs in LR-1 are expected to utilize the VRT to report performance data before the upcoming September 15th deadline for the March-August period. This will be the first time post reports Volunteer performance data.

Documents to be Submitted

- Results of completed VRT submissions

Status and Timeline for Completion: September 30th 2011

33. That the training manager improve performance reporting training for Volunteers.

Concur: Post agrees and has made performance reporting training a part of its standard training program. VRT training was delivered to all members of LR-1 and Response 9 in April 2011 during an in-service training event. VRT training will be delivered to LR-2 and Response 10 during their pre-service training and Response orientation in August 2011. VRT training is now a standard component of post training.

Documents to be Submitted

- Training Presentations Delivered to LR-1, LR-2 and Response 9

Status and Timeline for Completion: September 30, 2011

Appendix A: PC/ Liberia Timeline of Staff Training & Support

| Date | Duration | Type of Support | Who/What | Purpose |
|---------------------|----------|---------------------------------|--|---|
| 3/23/10 – 4/3/10 | 10 days | Assessment team visit | Cynthia Threlkeld, Acting AF Chief of Operations Allison Lange, AF Regional Security Advisor Michael Fitzgerald, PCSO Zayzay Miller | To assess Post management and operations and determine appropriate areas and level of support needed |
| | | PSN Training | Alonso Porte, PC/ Liberia Training Manager | |
| January 2011 | 2 weeks | Overseas Staff Training - Dakar | Jimmy Nyanwopulu, PC/ Liberia Education Program Manager | To introduce PM/ education Jimmy Nyanwopulu to agency programming & training guidance and practices |
| 4/1/11 – 6/27/11 | 3 months | TDY | Aboubacar Tondi Mahaman, PC/ Niger Training Manager | To assist with TOT, Host Family Training and PST. |
| 4/1/11 – 6/27/11 | 3 months | TDY | Soba Fodi, PC/ Niger Eastern Regional Coordinator | To assist with site development and PST preparation and implementation |
| | | | Michael Fitzgerald, PCSO | |
| | | | Kristine Hoffer, AF Regional Advisor | |
| | | TDY | Krista Rigalo, AF Programming & Training Specialist | |
| 7/17/11 – 7/29/11 | 2 weeks | TDY | Madeline Mader, AF Chief of Programming & Training Angela Glenn, CDO | |
| | | | Kristine Hoffer, AF Regional Advisor | |
| 10/31/11 – 11/11/11 | 2 weeks | TEFL Core Curriculum Training | Jason Burns, Incoming APCD/ P&T for PC/ Liberia Alonso Porte, PC/ Liberia Training Manager | To prepare key post staff to redesign and roll-out the secondary education project at post (which includes TEFL) as well as rebuild TEFL technical training |

OIG COMMENTS

Management concurred with all 33 recommendations. Based on the documentation provided, we closed one recommendation: number seven. In its response, management described actions it is taking or intends to take to address the issues that prompted each of our recommendations. We wish to note that in closing recommendations, we are not certifying that the agency has taken these actions or that we have reviewed their effect. Certifying compliance and verifying effectiveness are management's responsibilities. However, when we feel it is warranted, we may conduct a follow-up review to confirm that action has been taken and to evaluate the impact.

Thirty-two recommendations, number(s) 1-6 and 8-33, remain open. OIG will review and consider closing recommendations 1, 3, 5-6, 9-15, 17-33 when the documentation reflected in the agency's response to the preliminary report is received. For recommendations 2, 4, 8, and 16, additional documentation is requested. These recommendations remain open pending confirmation from the chief compliance officer that the documentation reflected in OIG Analysis below is received.

2: That the country director work with the post's programming team to develop a strategy and plan to help Volunteers identify counterparts.

Concur: Post agrees that Volunteers have struggled to identify counterparts at their sites. (As noted in the evaluation report, all education Volunteers are assigned supervisors/principals and these relationships are generally functional.) However, Post believes that this issue is larger than simply identifying a single counterpart but rather involves preparing Volunteers to work collaboratively with their colleagues at school and within the wider school community. To address this issue, post has planned a comprehensive approach with two prongs: first, to improve the quality of site selection and development such that new Volunteers arrive at site with a broad selection of potential resource people to choose as counterparts, and second, to strengthen the understanding of the role the counterpart and the quality of the relationship through additional training.

Post will update its site development and school assessment materials to broaden the sources and types of information upon which site selections are made. New sources and types of information may include local non-school leaders, teachers, students, parents, county officials, NGOs, and current Volunteers. Overall, post will be assessing the readiness of a school's community to make effective use of a Volunteer and identifying potential resource persons beyond the school supervisor/ principal that the Volunteer may use to make an informed decision regarding a counterpart. As post matures, detailed site history files will be maintained to capture staff and Volunteer recommendations regarding good counterparts at particular sites.

During this year's PST (which began in June 2011), post conducted a two-day supervisors' workshop where two-year Volunteers were first introduced to their school's

principal. During the workshop, clear expectations were set for all participants on successful counterpart development. This practice will be continued and refined in successive PSTs beginning June of 2012.

Post has also received USAID approval to fund (through the SPA program) the participation of counterpart teachers, school administrators, and community leaders in all of post's in-service training activities for FY12.

Documents to be Submitted

- USAID approval for the use of SPA funds for counterpart participation in in-service training activities
- Training materials used during supervisors' workshop
- Site Development and Assessment Criteria
- Project Plan for Secondary Education

OIG Analysis: We acknowledge the agency's efforts to address this recommendation and await the USAID approval for the use of SPA funds for counterpart participation in in-service training activities; training materials used during supervisors' workshops; site development and assessment criteria; and the project plan for secondary education. The agency's response states that counterpart development will be one of the PCVL's responsibilities; accordingly, please also submit the PCVL Program Handbook.

4: That the training manager review pre- and in-service training programs to ensure that they adequately address and prepare Volunteers to identify and carry out secondary activities.

Concur: As part of the overall restructuring of the Peace Corps Liberia training program, Post will include for the first time a Project Design and Management (PDM) workshop in its Calendar of Training Events (COTE) for in-service training and learning objectives aimed at increased Volunteer effectiveness in secondary project development.

Additionally, Peace Corps Liberia is launching a PCVL program. Post's PCVL program will target ongoing peer support for two-year Volunteers in successful community integration, project design and management, counterpart development, needs assessment, primary assignment effectiveness and secondary project development.

Documents to be Submitted

- PCVL Program Handbook
- Training Design and Evaluation (TDE) & Calendar of Training Events (COTE)

OIG Analysis: We acknowledge the agency's efforts to address this recommendation and await the PCVL Program Handbook, Training Design and Evaluation (TDE) documentation, and Calendar of Training Events (COTE). Please also submit a copy of

the updated learning objectives related to Volunteer effectiveness in secondary project development.

8: That the associate director for Global Operations work with the post, Africa region, and Peace Corps Response to document lessons learned from the post's opening and incorporate them into existing new country entry processes and policies, as appropriate.

Concur: The Africa Region initially assessed lessons learned through an assessment team (consisting of the acting CHOPS, RSA, and PCSO) sent to Liberia in April 2010. The goal of the assessment was to broadly review post's operations and support needs. As with the OIG program evaluation report, many of the challenges it identified could be directly traced to the start-up and initial support and handling of post operations. The team produced seven recommendations for future New Country Entries. These recommendations were then shared and discussed with Peace Corps Response in July 2011 to arrive at a more comprehensive understanding of how to improve the NCE process and challenges to be avoided in the future. The final recommendations have been reviewed by the Office of Global Operations. Lessons learned from Liberia and other recent NCE will be incorporated into existing new country entry processes and policies, as appropriate.

Documents Submitted

- Memo to the Office of Global Operations, dated: 11 August 2011 Re: Lessons Learned from the Liberia NCE Process

OIG Analysis: We appreciate the efforts of the agency to document the lessons learned from the opening of the Liberia post. Please submit updated new country entry guidelines, processes, and/or policies that reflect these lessons learned.

16: That the country director require appropriate staff members to review the accuracy and completeness of site locator forms.

Concur: The country director has reviewed the site locator forms for the eleven members of LR-1 and found ten of the eleven to be complete and accurate, including contact information for counterparts, supervisors and neighbors; police phone numbers; satellite phone numbers (if applicable); site directions and map; a plan for reaching the consolidation point; and radio stations accessible at the site. One member of LR-1 who has recently changed sites has been requested to submit a new site locator form for their new site. All members of LR-2 and Response 10 will be required to complete their site locator forms within 30 days of site arrival, i.e. before September 24th.

The country director and APCD/programming and training will review site visit procedure with all programming, security and medical staff to ensure that these visits include a review of information contained on the site locator form. In addition, the

country director has utilized the materials provided by the Office of Safety and Security to reviewed the orientation materials with the SSC and will continue with the review and implementation of suggested standard operating procedures.

Documents to be Submitted

- Scanned sample site locator forms from LR-1

OIG Analysis: We acknowledge the agency's efforts to address this recommendation and await the sample site locator forms from LR-1. Please also submit updated site visit procedure guidance for staff that reflects their responsibilities for reviewing site locator forms.

PROGRAM EVALUATION COMPLETION AND OIG CONTACT

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| PROGRAM EVALUATION COMPLETION | <p>This program evaluation was conducted under the direction of Jim O’Keefe, Assistant Inspector General for Evaluations, and by Senior Evaluator Heather Robinson. Additional contributions were made by Reuben Marshall and Lisa Chesnel.</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <p>Jim O’Keefe Assistant Inspector General for Evaluations</p> |
| OIG CONTACT | <p>Following issuance of the final report, a stakeholder satisfaction survey will be distributed. If you wish to comment on the quality or usefulness of this report to help us improve our products, please e-mail Jim O’Keefe, Assistant Inspector General for Evaluations and Inspections, at jokeefe@peacecorps.gov, or call (202) 692-2904.</p> |

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