



Peace Corps

GUYANA




FY 2021-2022

STAFF DRIVEN SERVICE AND VOLUNTEER RE-ENTRY

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Guyana

About Us

A photograph of a diverse group of women clapping, likely at a formal event or ceremony. The women are of various ethnicities and are dressed in colorful, patterned clothing. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

In 1966, the year Guyana gained its independence from Britain, Peace Corps received an invitation to send teachers, architects, engineers, and other professionals to help build the new country's capacity. From 1966–71, 138 Volunteers broadened the school curricula to include home economics, crafts, and manual arts; and assisted in developing and carrying out projects for the Ministry of Works and Hydraulics. In March 1995, the Peace Corps officially returned to Guyana. The first Volunteers served with the ministries of Health and Education in 7 of the 10 administrative regions.

To date, more than 1,400 Volunteers have served in Guyana at sites ranging from the capital city of Georgetown, with a population of 300,000, to small, remote Indigenous villages with populations of 300 or fewer.

Vision

Investing in Guyana's communities through service, relationships, and partnerships for a sustainable future.

Values

COLLABORATION

We value all voices and reach for shared ownership of the plans that we implement

CULTURE

We understand that people are changed by exposure to new ideas and traditions and we value the transformative quality of new experiences

EQUITY

We believe that fair and impartial access to opportunity is the underlying goal of development and we recognize that embracing differences is key to achieving our goals

PEOPLE

We value human connections and we strive for a relational approach to strengthening community assets





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MESSAGE FROM THE COUNTRY DIRECTOR

Between 1966-71 and since 1995, we have been a steady presence in Guyana's development efforts. However, on March 15th, 2020, all 54 Peace Corps Volunteers across 9 regions in Guyana were evacuated along with over 7,000 Volunteers globally.

Between FY 21- 22, we lived and worked through the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic. At first, we tried to stay safe by working remotely and adhering strictly to the national protocols. Then, we focused on the conditions that were necessary to return volunteers to service in Guyana. We worked closely with our partners in the Ministry of Health to assess system capacity to care for volunteers in this new reality. As we strategized, we realized that we needed to understand the pandemic dynamics at the local level—transmission, hospitalization, vaccination—were all indicators that we tracked down to the community level. Our re-entry strategy slowly began to emerge from our understanding of the data, we'd need to come back with a careful, controlled, coastal approach. We could not work in exactly the same ways and the same places as before.

As our strategy evolved, so did our recognition that we—Peace Corps Guyana staff—could support Guyana's COVID-19 response and later recovery.



NADINE ROGERS, PhD, PMP
Country Director



We rolled up our sleeves and began to help with vaccine hesitancy efforts through community outreach, social media, broadcast media and other approaches with our “Get the Facts, Get the Vax” campaign. Through the Virtual Service Pilot, we addressed chronic disease and adolescent health as they intersected with COVID-19. At the end of it all, we know that we’ve done our best. There was no COVID-19 transmission among staff in our building nor trainees at PST. We kept our relationships with our partners viable and perhaps even strengthened them. Finally, GUY 33 arrived on September 29th, 2022 and Response Volunteers were approved for reentry in FY 2023.

It has been an incredible journey and I feel honored to lead Team Guyana through this process. This two-year report is in recognition of the incredible resilience shown by our Peace Corps Volunteers now serving in Guyana—with special thanks to Erika Thorsell for coming back after the evacuation. We are also more than grateful to our partners in the Government of Guyana who never wearied of working through it all with us. The communities that rode the uncertainties with us, pivoted from one site to the next, and opened up their homes to our volunteers, even as we shifted from host families to community coaches—we thank you. We’d also be remiss if we did not thank our partners at the U.S. Embassy in Georgetown, led by Returned Peace Corps Volunteer—Ambassador Sarah-Ann Lynch and the DCM Mark Cullinane.



Wrapping up, I’d like to quote one of my favorite writers, Khalil Gibran, who said, “Your friend is your needs answered.” As we here at Peace Corps Guyana pursue the organization’s mission of World Peace and Friendship, we are thankful for those who have been friends to us, and we trust that we have been a good friend in time of need.



KEEPING PARTNERSHIPS RELEVANT

Partnership is a key element of what we do as an agency. From the support of local government partners that welcome us to Guyana, to the school leaders and teachers alongside whom our Volunteers serve, to the community counterparts who support our Volunteers' integration, everything we do relies on a foundation of true partnership, trust and collaboration.

Our Project Advisory Committees ensure oversight to the implementation of our sector projects as outlined in the memorandums of understanding signed with partner agencies. These representatives from relevant partner agencies and communities work alongside Peace Corps Guyana staff to ensure relevance, sustainability and accountability. In August of 2021, we renewed our agreement with the Government of Guyana for work in the Environment Sector. Guyana is one of the most biodiverse places on the planet and the work done by volunteers on climate change and the environment facilitates a rich give-and-take between volunteer service and real world learning experience.

Our partnership with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) impacts on Peace Corps' people to people efforts by enhancing what we can do in the communities where our Volunteers live and work. The Small Project Assistance (SPA) program (celebrating 40 years of partnership) enables Volunteers to work with community partners to craft projects based on needs that the communities have identified. We continue to support the people of Guyana in their development aspirations.





COVID RESPONSE & RECOVERY

In the absence of volunteers, our resilient and dynamic staff joined with our local government and community partners to implement COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy interventions, using virtual outreach, information booths, YouTube videos, culturally relevant messages and targeted events depending on public health conditions. We held multiple engagement events for healthcare, youth, community, and school leaders to address vaccine hesitancy and provide accurate information on COVID-19. In collaboration with a local singer/songwriter, we produced a song, which aired on national radio and was used in multiple behavior change materials and interventions.

In some of the lowest vaccinated regions of Guyana, our staff gathered with teachers and parents at local primary schools to provide them with a reprieve from the psycho-social stressors supporting student learning in the middle of the pandemic as well as caring for their own families. In these spaces, our medical experts answered their questions about COVID-19 vaccination. Healthcare workers were given a safe space to share their concerns and get answers to burning questions from our staff and notable public health experts. We also prepared and packaged mini sanitization kits for distribution to teachers, parents and students who participated in these activities at selected schools. Our staff also supported blended learning opportunities for Guyanese schoolchildren, by hosting a creative and culturally relevant skills-building training session for local teachers who deliver educational television.

PAINT, GYAFF & POST

Outreach to teachers & parents in Regions 3 and 10

54 teachers and parents were reached during these sessions. 98% of participants received new information about COVID-19 & Vaccination and 94% of them indicated that they were likely/very likely to encourage someone they know to get vaccinated. 55% of participants indicated that they would take the step to get their 2nd dose vaccine or booster shot and 98% of teachers and parents recommended this activity for other schools.



COVID-19 & YOU

Outreach to health care workers in Regions 3 and 10

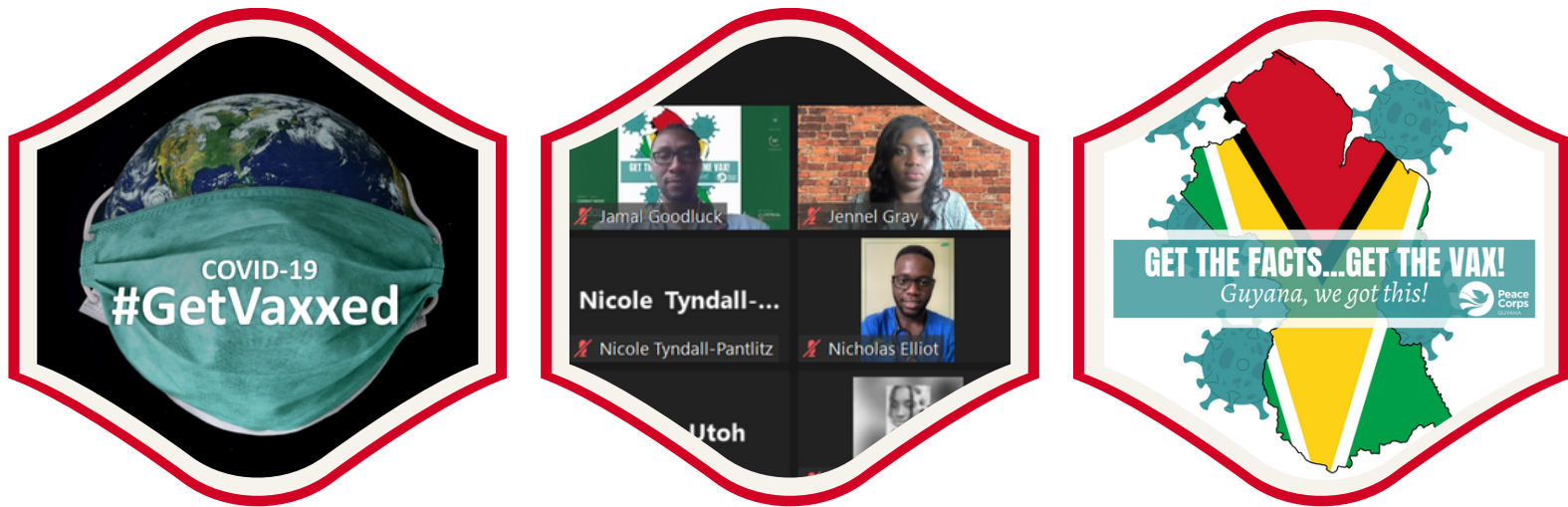
23 healthcare workers were reached virtually and in-person during two sessions. 94% of participants were happy to have a safe space to express their concerns as well as indicated that they were better able to share vaccine related information with family/community members. 98% of those participants strongly recommended that the outreaches be extended to to their colleagues in other regions.



VAX CHATS

Outreach to students at tertiary institutions

With support from the Ministry of Health, our staff connected virtually with more than 100 students from the Cyril Potter College of Education (CPCE) and the Government Technical Institute (GTI). 100% of students acknowledged that they learnt something new from the sessions.



COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Outreach to community leaders in Essequibo Islands

Approximately 50 Community Leaders (including Religious and Youth Leaders, Teachers, Medical Professionals, Public and Civil Servants) on the islands of Wakenaam and Leguan participated in discussions about COVID-19 and COVID-19 Vaccine concerns. Using the data collected from rapid-assessments in these communities, our staff collaborated with medical experts to develop community-specific COVID-19 engagement activities.



INFORMATION BOOTHS

Support to the Ministry of Health's vaccination drive

Our staff supported national and regional Ministry of Health vaccination events, providing information to community members on vaccine side effects, aftercare information for each type of vaccine, and vaccine myths. They also answered general questions about COVID-19 and helped persons understand their role in keeping their families safe.



COVID-19 & LITERACY

Outreach to teachers and students in Regions 5 & 6

We also used the opportunity while conducting site identification to include COVID-19 Response & Recovery activities. At 3 schools, we incorporated COVID-19 prevention messages and components of Peace Corps Guyana's Read to Achieve Framework through story-telling, art and direct sight word instruction. Students' needs, abilities and readiness was the focus of the interventions with these sessions targeting learning loss and students' social and emotional wellbeing.



SOCIAL MEDIA OUTREACH

Tackling vaccine hesitancy by dispelling myths and misinformation



To ensure everyone had access to the facts about COVID-19, we also engaged our online audience. Based on CDC provided data, our staff tackled common myths about the virus using culturally relevant messages. In each of our 10 myth buster videos, we responded directly to an individual myth giving factually available data. Using animation technology, we developed 3 videos that were voiced by staff members.

The scripts for these animated projects incorporated the daily activities of community members and provided information on how to best keep our families safe. To further combat widespread vaccine hesitancy across Guyana, we also worked with a local singer/songwriter to produce a COVID-19 jingle which continue to air on national radio and was used in multiple behavior change materials and interventions.



**"Is my body; if I don't want it,
I shouldn't have to take it."**



COVID-19
MYTH BUSTERS

#GetTheFactsGetTheVax

With support from Embassy Georgetown, some of this content was used as targeted ads via social media in low vaccination regions.

@peacecorpsguyana592 

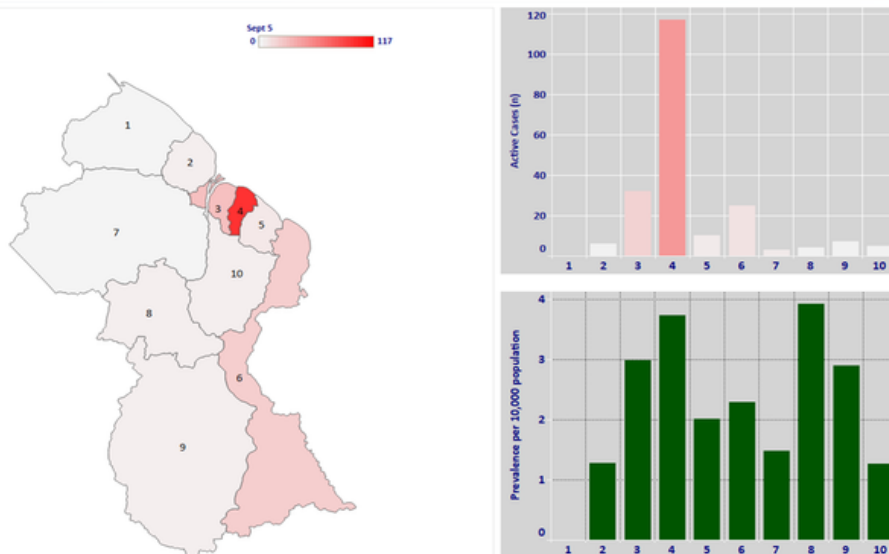
@peacecorpsguyana  

PANDEMIC RESPONSE PROJECT

Supporting data driven decision-making

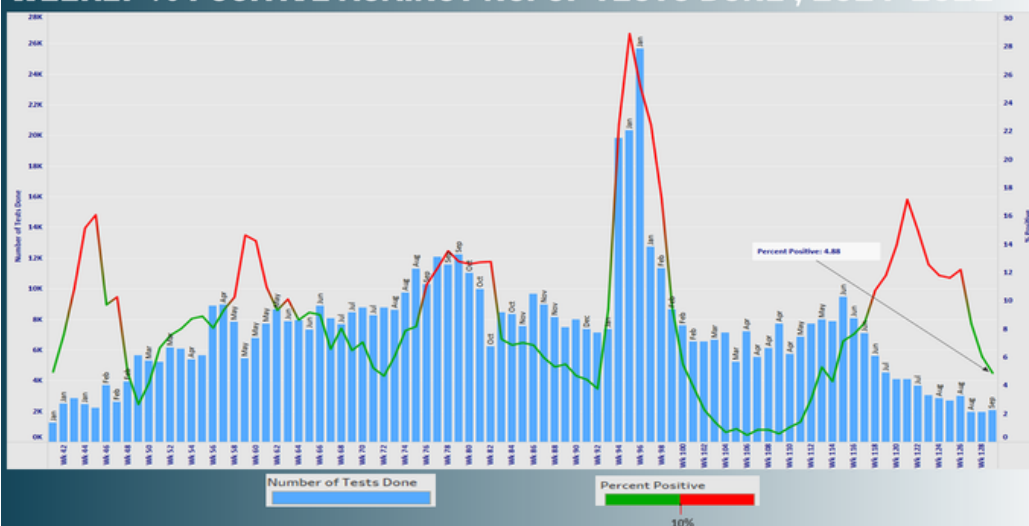
We started the Pandemic Response Project to help us understand the dynamics of COVID-19 in Guyana. Though it was not a popular innovation at first, over time, our work has become a learning space. It has created opportunities for relationship-building: across functional units; with USG experts (mentors Dr. Anne Thomas and Dr. Tony Mounts); between the Peace Corps and the U.S. Embassy, Georgetown; and between the Peace Corps and the Government of Guyana's COVID Task Force. This work gave us a platform from which we were able to advocate for Peace Corps Guyana's return to service—as it allowed us to speak with confidence about what was happening on the ground. It also allows us to visualize the data in ways that help to tell the story in almost “real time.”

ACTIVE CASES AND PREVALENCE BY REGION, SEPT 5TH, 2022



We continue to provide headquarters with analyses based on current data and articulate our mitigation strategies with precision. This project has served as a source of grounding during turbulent times; a place to have community during so much isolation; an opportunity for skills-building and professional growth; and an innovation for the organization to emulate.

WEEKLY % POSITIVE AGAINST NO. OF TESTS DONE, 2021-2022



RETURN TO SERVICE

Closure, Evacuation & the Road Back



In March 2020, Peace Corps took an unprecedented step in response to the COVID-19 pandemic: the global evacuation of almost 7,000 volunteers. The sudden decision – forced by the threat of the virus and the closing of international borders worldwide – was a shock to Peace Corps staff, volunteers and communities alike. In Guyana, 54 volunteers were evacuated on March 15, 2020, beginning the longest gap in our service in Guyana since the program’s re-launch in 1995.

The urgent need to respond to this decision meant our volunteers were unable to say goodbye to their families, colleagues or communities. What remained true however, was their commitment to service. Many have since found ways to continue to work to support the people of Guyana.

“Since the evacuation I’ve remained in contact with my host community and Peace Corps staff. I have from the time I was evacuated to now, remained steadfast and determined to return as a Peace Corps Volunteer to finish a story that needs to be completed.”

Peace Corps Volunteer Erika Thorsell

EXPANDING SERVICE OPTIONS

STAFF

During the period without volunteers on the ground, staff connected with communities, in person and virtually, to address COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy and provide facts on which individuals could base their health decisions. Peace Corps Guyana staff reached out to Ministry of Health partners to find out where our resources and expertise could be used most effectively. This led us to do some creative work in behavior change communication in a number of settings, including in communities, in clinics, in schools, in video conferences, and on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube.



EXPANDING SERVICE OPTIONS

VIRTUAL SERVICE

During this time, Peace Corps developed a new initiative called the Virtual Service Pilot Program, enabling Returned Peace Corps Volunteers to donate their time to Peace Corps communities and partners on a virtual basis, thus contributing to Peace Corps' efforts in Guyana, even while in the US.

Globally, In the two years of its establishment, over 500 virtual volunteers have participated in this program, including 10 participants who supported schools and ministry partners across Guyana. This includes the National Center of Educational Resources Development (NCERD) and the Literacy Department of the Ministry of Education; as well as the Chronic Disease and National Surveillance units of the Ministry of Health.



RE-ENTRY STRATEGY

CAREFUL, CONTROLLED, COASTAL

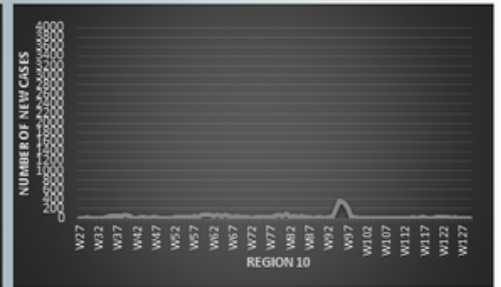
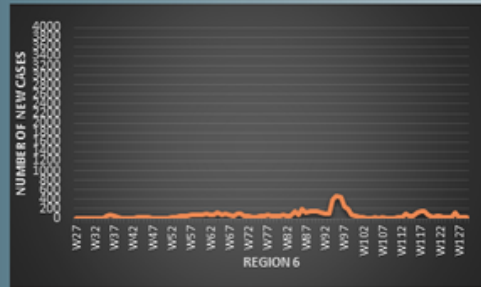
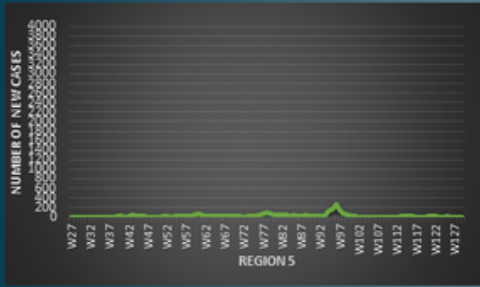
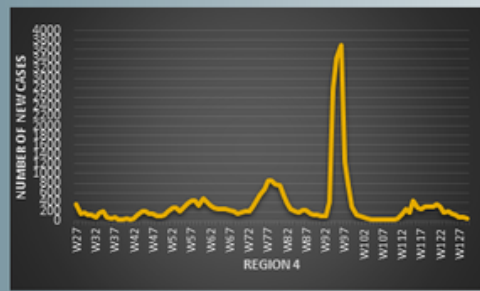
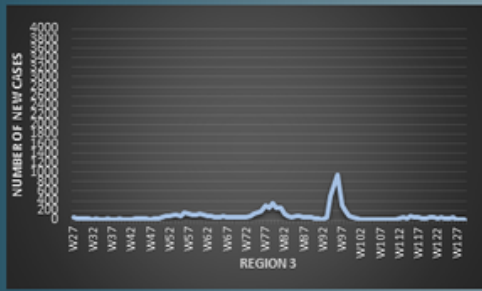
As the pandemic moves towards an endemic stage, Peace Corps Guyana is readied for the return of our two-year and the reintroduction of the Peace Corps Response program.

Most crucial to that return was ensuring that we prioritized health and safety for all in our program – the health of Volunteers, the health of their host communities, the health of our school counterparts and students and the health of our team. With that in mind, Peace Corps Guyana developed a plan that we called **Careful, Controlled and Coastal**, meant to return our Volunteers to the field while mitigating exposure to and spread of COVID-19 among and through the cohort.

This strategy included:

- Identifying communities for volunteer placement along the coast where vaccination rates were highest, COVID rates were lowest and transportation to emergency care in Georgetown was easiest;
- Revising and practicing our Emergency Action Plan, Medical Action Plan and transportation policies to ensure that Peace Corps Guyana could respond to any COVID-19 cases swiftly and effectively;
- Placing our volunteers in independent homes instead of with host families, to mitigate community spread to vulnerable household members, while pairing volunteers with a community coach to support their cultural and community integration;
- Conducting trainings and discussion opportunities for counterparts and community coaches around COVID-19;
- Reinventing our approach to Pre-Service Training, basing our trainings in Georgetown and in trainees' future community sites and regions.
- And ensuring our staff met all vaccination requirements while practicing all COVID-19 mitigation measures.

WEEKLY CONFIRMED CASES IN PEACE CORPS IDENTIFIED REGIONS, SEPT 10TH, 2022



Note: These Regions are reachable within 3 hours on paved roads



APPROACH TO INTEGRATION

COMMUNITY COACHES

Traditionally, Peace Corps Volunteers live with a Guyanese host family. The host family provided a bedroom in their house and meals. This homestay experience offered an opportunity for cultural exchange and has always played a major role in the volunteer's integration into the community. Due to the COVID-19 realities, the first volunteers to come back to Guyana will live in an independent apartment, in the same community with community coaches.



A community coach is a Peace Corps identified family that is considered significant in the volunteer's community and that is knowledgeable of Guyanese culture. These coaches must have a positive reputation and be in good standing in the community. The coach is responsible for guiding the volunteer through community dynamics, culture, language learning, security and social norms.



GUY33 ARRIVAL

HARDWORK PAID OFF

With enormous joy, Peace Corps Guyana welcomed our 33rd cohort – GUY33 – to Guyana on September 29, 2022. We look forward to their swearing in on December 7, 2022, the arrival of our Peace Corps Response cohort in February 2023 and the arrival of GUY34 in June 2023.



These Volunteers will engage in an intensive ten-week Pre-Service Training which assesses their development and performance of the outlined competencies needed for a successful service. Volunteers must exemplify commitment to service and resilience, integrate into their communities, facilitate participatory development, and demonstrate responsibilities for health, safety and security.

They will now live and work in local communities along the coast, partnering to address early childhood literacy, adolescent health, and environmental stewardship.

MEET OUR STAFF



Nadine Rogers, PhD, PMP, Country Director

Nadine has nearly 30 years of experience in management, health policy implementation, science administration, and education and communication across the private, public, and non-profit sectors. Her career in public service has included the U.S. State Department, the National Institute on Drug Abuse at the National Institutes of Health, and PEPFAR Country Lead for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration in Vietnam,

Nadine is a certified Project Management Professional (PMP). She holds a Ph.D. in Health Policy and Management from the John Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health; a Master of Science in Communication from Clarion University of Pennsylvania (now PennWest); and a Bachelor of Arts in English Literature from the University of the West Indies, Cave Hill Campus, Barbados. She was sworn in as the Peace Corps Country Director for the Cooperative Republic of Guyana in February 2020. In 2022, The Johns Hopkins Alumni Association presented Nadine with its Global Achievement Award for epitomizing the University's tradition of excellence in her work internationally.



Elizabeth Mandeville, Director of Programming & Training

Elizabeth studied international relations at Wellesley College (BA) and at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy (MA). She was a Luce Scholar in Cambodia and has worked for the United Nations Development Programme, the Feinstein International Center and Mount Holyoke and Wellesley Colleges, in the US and overseas.



Blair Dudik, Director of Management & Operations

Blair worked at Peace Corps headquarters for several years, most recently in the Office of Global Accounts Payable before moving to Guyana. He began his professional career as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Cambodia (2011) after graduating from Syracuse University with a BA in Anthropology and Photojournalism. He is Smith System certified.



Michelle Henry, Financial Specialist

Michelle is an Accounting and Administrative Professional with over 20 years' experience working with public, private and non-governmental organizations. She joined the Peace Corps in January 2002 as the Administrative Assistant and is currently the Financial Specialist.



Flavio Rose, Safety & Security Manager

Flavio is a graduate of the University of Guyana with a B.Sc. in Computer Science. He worked on several projects (poverty reduction, social cohesion, institutional development, and HIV/AIDS prevention) funded by several donor organizations. Flavio was previously the Response Program Manager. He is completing a post-graduate certificate in Disaster Management. He is Smith System certified.

MEET OUR STAFF



Carey Bhojedat, Program Manager - Environment

Carey is a Forester and Environmental Professional with over 10 years experience. He pursued academic endeavors in the field of Forestry at the University of Guyana and Bangor University, Wales, UK. His career focuses around sustainable forest management planning, research, and forest carbon assessment & analysis.



Lucy Cumberbatch, Program Manager - Health

Lucy completed her undergraduate qualifications in Medical Laboratory Technology at the University of Guyana and her Masters in Public Health at Leeds University, UK. She is currently completing a fellowship in health and climate at the UWI, St. Augustine. She is Smith System certified.



Fiona Persaud, Program Manager - Education

Fiona holds an undergraduate degree in International Relations and a Master's in Development Policy and Analysis from the University of Guyana. Fiona acquired the Project Management Profession Certification (PMP) in 2020. She is Smith System certified.



Jamal Goodluck, Program Manager - Response

Jamal has an undergraduate degree in International Relations and a Master of Public Administration from the University of Guyana. He also has an Advance Diploma in Project Management. He is Smith System certified.



Dr. Fitzroy Marcus, Medical Officer

Fitzroy graduated with a Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS) from the School of Medicine, University of Guyana. He previously served as a medical doctor in the Guyana Defence Force. He also worked at the Georgetown Public Hospital, Woodlands, St. Joseph Mercy and Dr. Balwant Singh hospitals as well as the Variety Medical Clinic, St Vincent and the Grenadines. He is Smith System certified.



Dr. Mark Vyfhuis, Medical Officer

Mark has worked in health administration, hospital management, and primary health care with emphasis on community health and development. He received his medical degree from the Institute of Superior Medical Sciences of Havana Cuba in 2013 in addition to post graduate certificates in Pediatric Nutrition, Global Health and Disability, and Eco Design for Cities and Suburbs. Mark is currently completing his MSc International Public Health at the Liverpool John Moores University, UK. He is Smith System certified.

MEET OUR STAFF



Stephanie Williams, Training Manager

Stephanie graduated from the University of Guyana with a BSc in International Relations/Studies. She served as a Marketing Assistant at Wilderness Explorers and Suriname Airways (2002). Stephanie joined Peace Corps in 2005 as the PEPFAR Assistant, and currently is the Training Manager. She is Smith System certified.



Frederick Adrian, Information Technology Specialist

Frederick is an IT professional with over 20 years in the computer field. He has a BSc Computer Sc., an MSc in Information Systems & an Adv. Dip in Project Management.



Colin Goodluck, General Services Manager

Colin is a University of Guyana graduate with a Diploma in Public Administration and a Degree in International Relations. He was previously employed at the US Embassy as the Shipping-Customs Clerk; receiving the General Services Officer Training & Certifications on Overseas Operation at the US Foreign Services Institute. He is Smith System certified.



Sasha Lindo, Communications Specialist

Sasha has a background in Language and Communication, digital design and photography. Prior to joining Peace Corps she worked as a teacher and a journalist.



Roger Wilson, Program & Training Specialist - Environment

Roger is a graduate from the University of Guyana and a certified classroom teacher with more than 21 years experience. He is Smith System certified.



Dana Waithe, Program & Training Specialist - Education

Dana is an Educator with more than 20 years' professional experience. Dana holds a BSc. in Sociology from the University of Guyana. She is also certified as a Montessori Educator by the Montessori Education Centre, United Kingdom and is a Trained Early Childhood Teacher. She is Smith System certified.

MEET OUR STAFF



Merica George, Program & Training Specialist - Health

Prior to joining Peace Corps, Merica served as a secondary school teacher. She holds a BSc in Public Management and a Diploma in Health and Family Life Education Instruction. She is Smith System certified.



Harry Persaud, Safety & Security Assistant

Before joining the Peace Corps, Harry served as a Detective in the Guyana Police Force. He holds a Bachelor's Degree in International Relations from the University of Guyana. He also has completed studies in International Security Management and serves as a Sexual Assault Response Liaison (SARL) to post. He is completing a post-graduate certificate in Disaster Management. He is Smith System certified.



Jennel Gray, Medical Secretary

Jennel is a pharmacist by profession and has over 10 years experience in hospital, community and distribution pharmacy. Most of her years as a hospital pharmacist were spent supporting persons living with HIV/AIDS, focusing on medication adherence and patient counseling. She serves as a Sexual Assault Response Liaison (SARL) to post. She is Smith System certified.



Delon Brathwaite, Housing Coordinator

Delon holds a BSC. in Social Work from the University of Guyana and a certificate in Industrial Relations and Social Studies. Prior to joining PC/Guyana he worked at the Ministry of Public Health-National AIDS Program Secretariat as Assistant Coordinator for the counseling and testing program. He is Smith System certified.



Alesha Berkley, Administrative Assistant-Finance

Alesha formerly served as the Cashier/Accounting Technician for post. She holds a diploma in Banking & Finance and is a Certified Accounting Technician (ACCA). She is Smith System certified.



Nakita Hicks, Cashier

Nakita is an Ashworth College Alumni with over fifteen years of experience in the financial sector. Personal finance, corporate financial compliance, document, record, and cash management are all areas in which she excels. Additionally, Nakita has an avid interest in human resource management and development.

MEET OUR STAFF



Brian Thorington, General Services Assistant

A professional with more than 30 years experience, Brian served in a wide cross-section of positions before joining Peace Corps. As GSA he works with the general services team to ensure that day to day operations are efficient and effective. He is Smith System certified.



Desmond Schwartz, Driver/Office Assistant

Desmond is a commercially licensed driver who is Smith System certified. He brings a strong skill set that includes electrical and other construction and facilities management work. He has experience working as a chauffeur in the extraction industry.



Olive DeAndrade, Janitress

Olive has been working in Peace Corps residences providing custodian services for over 20 years. She has also worked across the diplomatic and private sector including CARICOM.



Patrick Hawker, Janitor

Patrick previously served as the temporary janitor for Peace Corps Guyana. In March, 2016 he joined the team permanently and has been supporting residences and office maintenance since then.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Peace Corps Guyana wishes to thank Honorable Gail Teixeira, M.P., Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance for her unwavering support as we worked to bring volunteers back to Guyana.

We also wish to thank Honorable Dr. Bharrat Jagdeo, M.P., Vice President of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, Honorable Dr. Frank Anthony M. P., Minister of Health, and Honorable Priya Manickchand M. P., Minister of Education for their partnership during this challenging time.





Peace Corps Guyana staff with Deputy Chief of Mission Mark Cullinane
Staff Retreat
May 2022



**Peace
Corps**
GUYANA