

THE PEACE CORPS WELCOMES YOU TO

NAMIBIA



A PEACE CORPS PUBLICATION FOR NEW VOLUNTEERS

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A WELCOME LETTER

Dear Prospective Namibia Volunteer:

Congratulations on your invitation to join the Peace Corps! We are extending to you an early welcome to Namibia as our future colleague. Peace Corps Volunteers have made contributions to the people and communities of this country while learning about the many cultures within Namibia and helping people here understand Americans. In the process, we all have learned a lot about ourselves.

When Namibia gained its independence in March 1990, one of the first requests made by the government was to the Peace Corps to help in establishing a truly national, all-inclusive educational system. In fact, the request was made on plain paper since the government was so new it did not yet have letterhead stationary! Peace Corps responded that same year with a group of 14 Volunteers to assist with the transition from Afrikaans to English as the means of instruction in Namibian schools.

As Namibia works to extend educational access and quality to all groups, it faces the additional burden of protecting its population against the spread of HIV/AIDS. HIV/AIDS has become the new emergency in southern Africa, threatening not only the lives of Namibia's citizens, but also the progress achieved since independence in developing Namibia's human and natural resources. Volunteers in the education sector teach math, science, English, and potentially help with teacher training at a Teachers' Resource Center (TRC). Health sector Volunteers assist individuals and communities in the prevention of HIV/AIDS and in mitigating its effects. Health volunteers also work with Namibians to improve maternal and child health outcomes, addressing issues related to substance abuse and poverty. Volunteers in the Small Enterprise and Entrepreneurship program seeks to promote small scale economic development through the reinforcement of entrepreneurial and business management skills in Namibian communities. Peace Corps Volunteers are deeply appreciated by the government of Namibia as integral contributors to the health and well-being of the country.

During your eight-week training in Namibia you will begin the two-year process of learning a Namibian language, be introduced to various cultural Issues, and gain technical skills you'll need for your work. You will then join the Volunteers who are here now and have served before you. You will find you have entered a fascinating and complex country with a long history of colonial conquest and apartheid policies - but one which gained its independence through a long struggle. You will quickly recognize there are many opportunities for you to serve and learn and by doing so - to grow. This *Welcome Book* and its resources are an early reference for you to begin to understand Namibia and the role that you'll have during your two years of service here. We look forward to your arrival and to working with you as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Namibia.

Gilbert Collins
Country Director

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CORE EXPECTATIONS FOR PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS

In working toward fulfilling the Peace Corps Mission of promoting world peace and friendship, as a trainee and Volunteer, you are expected to:

1. Prepare your personal and professional life to make a commitment to serve abroad for a full term of 27 months
2. Commit to improving the quality of life of the people with whom you live and work; and, in doing so, share your skills, adapt them, and learn new skills as needed
3. Serve where the Peace Corps asks you to go, under conditions of hardship, if necessary, and with the flexibility needed for effective service
4. Recognize that your successful and sustainable development work is based on the local trust and confidence you build by living in, and respectfully integrating yourself into, your host community and culture
- 5) Recognize that you are responsible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for your personal conduct and professional performance
6. Engage with host country partners in a spirit of cooperation, mutual learning, and respect
7. Work within the rules and regulations of the Peace Corps and the local and national laws of the country where you serve
8. Exercise judgment and personal responsibility to protect your health, safety, and well-being and that of others
9. Recognize that you will be perceived, in your host country and community, as a representative of the people, cultures, values, and traditions of the United States of America
10. Represent responsibly the people, cultures, values, and traditions of your host country and community to people in the United States both during and following your service

PEACE CORPS/NAMIBIA HISTORY AND PROGRAMS

History of the Peace Corps in Namibia

The first group of 14 Volunteers arrived in Namibia on September 9, 1990, less than six months after the country became independent. By January 1991, the program was in full operation. The primary role of these early Volunteers was to teach English, in support of the new government's declaration of English as the country's official language. Classroom teachers also assisted in the transition from Afrikaans to English as the language of instruction in upper primary and secondary schools. In the early 1990s, Volunteers also provided assistance to drought relief efforts and began to work in youth development offices. The number of Volunteers peaked in the late 1990s, reaching a high of almost 150 people. This spike was largely driven by a collaborative effort with the Ministry of Health and Social Services requesting Health volunteers to work with communities in the area of HIV prevention. Today, about 120 Volunteers work as primary and secondary school teachers, resource teachers, community health volunteers and Small Business volunteers.

History and Future of Peace Corps Programming in Namibia

Peace Corps/Namibia has made substantial contributions to the reform of the educational system in teacher training, classroom teaching, and subject matter support to teachers, especially in English, mathematics, and science. In addition, Volunteers have provided direct support to parents and other community members to increase both school and community materials and human and financial resources. Activities that have become part of Volunteers' primary or secondary duties include recreational sports, library development, girls clubs, HIV/AIDS awareness activities, environmental conservation projects, adult literacy, and community development.

Since 2002, Peace Corps/Namibia has supported the government of Namibia's efforts to stem the spread of HIV/AIDS through more effective educational programming and youth outreach and community-based activities.

In addition, Volunteers established Entrepreneurship Clubs for their learners; revamped businesses which are now fully managed and operated by entrepreneurship learners and created linkages between their schools and the business community.

COUNTRY OVERVIEW: NAMIBIA AT A GLANCE

History

Pre-colonial Namibia saw migrations of peoples from the south, central, and northeastern parts of Africa. At the time of the German conquest of Namibia in 1885, several groups of indigenous Africans were well-established throughout this vast land. Several important historical developments influenced modern Namibia:

Germany's occupation of Namibia and indigenous resistance, notably by the Ovaherero and Nama;

League of Nations and United Nations mandates for the administration of Namibia after World Wars I and II and the United Nation's subsequent role in rejecting Namibia's incorporation into South Africa and promoting its full independence;

South Africa's defiance of the mandates in administering Namibia as a province and imposing apartheid on it;

Organized resistance to South African rule (beginning in the early 1950s), including diplomatic initiatives abroad, internal political initiatives, and eventually an armed struggle, launched first from Zambia and later from Angola;

The U.N. General Assembly's recognition of the South-West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) as the legitimate representative of the Namibian people and the role of the U.N. and the Western Contact Group in working toward a peace settlement;

Angola's achievement of independence from Portugal in 1975 and the Popular Liberation Movement of Angola's assumption of power in Luanda, which enabled SWAPO to move its bases to southern Angola; and

Cuba's military support of the MPLA government and subsequent alliances among Angolan, Namibian, and South African political parties.

The peace plan that was finally ratified in December 1988 paved the way for a cease-fire in April 1989, elections in November 1989, and independence on March 21, 1990. In the years since independence, Namibia has made social, political, and economic gains, promoting national unity, improving equitable access to social services, and maintaining an upward trend in economic growth. In 2005, Namibia held national elections that resulted in the democratic and orderly transfer of power to its current government of President Hifikepunye Pohamba.

Government

Namibia's Constitution provides for fundamental freedoms, environmental protection, and a two-thirds majority to amend the Constitution. It established the new nation as a multiparty democracy with separation of powers among the executive, legislative, and judicial branches. The president is elected by popular vote for a five-year term. The bicameral legislature consists of a 72-member National Assembly and a 26-member National Council. Members of the National Assembly are elected for five-year terms on the basis of proportional representation. Members of the National Council are elected on a constituency basis, with two representatives from each of the country's 13 regions elected for six-year terms by members of regional councils. The National Council reviews bills passed by the National Assembly and recommends legislation of regional concern. The independent judiciary is composed of a supreme court, a high court, and lower courts. The role of regional and municipal governments continues to grow, and the national government is working to decentralize many social services, giving responsibility for them to the regional councils.

Economy

Namibia's economy is mixed, allowing for several forms of ownership of capital. Although Namibia's per capita gross domestic product (GDP) of more than \$4,700 is high relative to that in much of sub-Saharan Africa, it is unequally distributed. Five percent of the population earns more than 70 percent of the national income. Those in the bottom 55 percent of income, overwhelmingly from the majority black population, are primarily

rural and share 3 percent of the GDP, with per capita income of less than \$100 per year. Namibia is one of the most unequal countries in the world.

Mining, agriculture, and fishing account for more than 25 percent of the GDP. Namibia's mineral resources include diamonds, uranium, copper, lead, zinc, and a variety of semiprecious stones. These industries are very susceptible to external influences, however, and their contribution to the GDP fluctuates. The apartheid system of job allocation and education continues to influence employment in these sectors. The overall unemployment rate in Namibia is over 50 percent, and the highest unemployment rates are among the least educated and skilled.

People and Culture

Namibia's people have a rich variety of linguistic and ethnic origins. The principal indigenous ethnic groups are the Aawambo, Vakavango, Caprivian, Ovaherero (including Ovahimba), Colored, Baster, Damara, Nama, San, and Tswana. The white population is of Afrikaans, English, and German descent.

The people who live in the Owambo, Kavango, and East Caprivi areas, occupying the relatively well-watered and wooded northeastern part of the country, are settled farmers and herders. Historically, they have shown little interest in the central and southern parts of Namibia, where conditions are unsuited to their traditional way of life. Until the early 1900s, these people had little contact with the Nama, Damara, and Ovaherero people, who roamed the central part of the country, vying for control of sparse pastureland. Urbanization, industrialization, and the demand for labor have led to peaceful interaction among these groups in recent decades.

Most Namibians converted to Christianity as a result of missionary activity beginning in the 1800s and comprise several denominations, including Lutheran, Roman Catholic, Methodist, Anglican, and Dutch Reformed. Most Namibian Christians are Lutherans.

Environment

Namibia is located on the southwest coast of Africa. It borders Angola and Zambia in the north, Botswana in the east, South Africa in the southeast and south, and the Atlantic Ocean in the west. The total land area is 317,500 square miles (about 825,000 square kilometers), almost twice the size of California.

Most of Namibia consists of a high plateau, a continuation of the main South African plateau. Its average altitude is 3,600 feet above sea level. The strip along the coast consists of the Namib Desert, extending from the Orange River in the south to the Kunene River in the north. About 60 miles wide, this area is mostly uninhabited. The eastern part of the country, which forms part of the Kalahari Desert, consists mainly of sandy stretches but provides some grazing ground. The Etosha Pan in the north is the focal point of an important national park and game reserve.

Namibia boasts clear skies for more than 300 days of the year, providing brilliant days and star-filled nights. The varied landscape provides opportunities for hiking, camping, bird watching, and game viewing.

RESOURCES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Following is a list of websites for additional information about the Peace Corps and Namibia and to connect you to returned Volunteers and other invitees. Please keep in mind that although we try to make sure all these links are active and current, we cannot guarantee it. If you do not have access to the Internet, visit your local library. Libraries offer free Internet usage and often let you print information to take home.

A note of caution: As you surf the Internet, be aware that you may find bulletin boards and chat rooms in which people are free to express opinions about the Peace Corps based on their own experience, including comments by those who were unhappy with their choice to serve in the Peace Corps. These opinions are not those of the Peace Corps or the U.S. government, and we hope you will keep in mind that no two people experience their service in the same way.

General Information About Namibia

www.countrywatch.com/

On this site, you can learn anything from what time it is in the Windhoek to how to convert from the dollar to the Namibian dollar. Just click on Namibia and go from there.

www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations

Visit this site for general travel advice about almost any country in the world.

www.state.gov

The State Department's website issues background notes periodically about countries around the world. Find Namibia and learn more about its social and political history. You can also go to the site's international travel section to check on conditions that may affect your safety.

www.psr.keele.ac.uk/official.htm

This includes links to all the official sites for governments worldwide.

www.geography.about.com/library/maps/blindex.htm

This online world atlas includes maps and geographical information, and each country page contains links to other sites, such as the Library of Congress, that contain comprehensive historical, social, and political background.

www.cyberschoolbus.un.org/infonation/info.asp

This United Nations site allows you to search for statistical information for member states of the United Nations.

www.worldinformation.com

This site provides an additional source of current and historical information about countries around the world.

Connect With Returned Volunteers and Other Invitees

www.rpcv.org

This is the site of the National Peace Corps Association, made up of returned Volunteers. On this site you can find links to all the Web pages of the "Friends of" groups for most countries of service, comprised of former Volunteers who served in those countries. There are also regional groups that frequently get together for social events and local volunteer activities.

www.PeaceCorpsWorldwide.org

This site is hosted by a group of returned Volunteer writers. It is a monthly online publication of essays and Volunteer accounts of their Peace Corps service.

www.peacecorpswriters.org

This site is hosted by a group of returned Volunteer writers. It is a monthly online publication of essays and Volunteer accounts of their Peace Corps service.

www.peacecorpsjournals.com

This site serves as a clearinghouse for Volunteer blogs from around the world. There are several from Namibia.

www.pcnamibia.org

We are building our own website and are hopeful that it will be online by the time you receive this welcome book!

www.facebook.com

Most incoming groups of Volunteers create their own facebook groups to get to know each other prior to departure. In country staff and Volunteers will occasionally check these groups to provide guidance on packing and answer any questions that you may have.

Online Articles/Current News Sites About Namibia

www.namibian.com.na

A Namibian English-language newspaper

www.mg.co.za

The site of South Africa's Mail and Guardian, with articles of regional interest

www.parliament.gov.na

The site of the Namibian Parliament

International Development Sites About Namibia

www.usaid.gov

U.S. Agency for International Development

<http://www.unaids.org>

Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS

www.undp.org

United Nations Development Programme

Recommended Books

1. Bridgman, Jon M. *The Revolt of the Hereros (Perspectives on Southern Africa)*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981.
2. Hayes, Patricia, et al. (eds.). *Namibia Under South African Rule: Mobility and Containment, 1915-46*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 1998.
3. Leys, Colin. *Namibia's Liberation Struggle: The Two-Edged Sword*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 1995.
4. Nujoma, Sam. *While Others Wavered: The Autobiography of Sam Nujoma*. London: Panaf Books, 2001.

Books About the History of the Peace Corps

1. Hoffman, Elizabeth Cobbs. *All You Need is Love: The Peace Corps and the Spirit of the 1960s*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000.
2. Rice, Gerald T. *The Bold Experiment: JFK's Peace Corps*. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985.
3. Stossel, Scott. *Sarge: The Life and Times of Sargent Shriver*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2004.
4. Meisler, Stanley. *When the World Calls: The Inside Story of the Peace Corps and its First 50 Years*. Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 2011.

Books on the Volunteer Experience

1. Dirlam, Sharon. *Beyond Siberia: Two Years in a Forgotten Place*. Santa Barbara, Calif.: McSeas Books, 2004.
2. Casebolt, Marjorie DeMoss. *Margarita: A Guatemalan Peace Corps Experience*. Gig Harbor, Wash.: Red Apple Publishing, 2000.
3. Erdman, Sarah. *Nine Hills to Nambonkaha: Two Years in the Heart of an African Village*. New York, N.Y.: Picador, 2003.
4. Hessler, Peter. *River Town: Two Years on the Yangtze*. New York, N.Y.: Perennial, 2001.
5. Kennedy, Geraldine ed. *From the Center of the Earth: Stories out of the Peace Corps*. Santa Monica, Calif.: Clover Park Press, 1991.
6. Thompson, Moritz. *Living Poor: A Peace Corps Chronicle*. Seattle, Wash.: University of Washington Press, 1997 (reprint).

LIVING CONDITIONS AND VOLUNTEER LIFESTYLE

Communications

People in Namibia communicate by mail (called “post”), fax, e-mail, telephone or cell phone, and radio.

Mail

The postal system is reliable, but service to the more remote villages is often slow. Mail from the United States to Windhoek, the capital, can take up to two weeks. From there, it could take two more weeks for mail to reach your village.

During pre-service training (PST) you may use the Peace Corps office address:

“Your name,” PCT
Peace Corps
PO Box 6862
Ausspannplatz,
Windhoek, Namibia

Your mail will be forwarded periodically to your training site. Once you have moved to your permanent site, you will use the school’s address or get a private post office box.

Telephones

Telephones are available in most towns and villages, along or near main roads, most people use cell phones. No international telephone companies (e.g., MCI or AT&T) operate in Namibia, so you will be unable to make collect calls or use calling cards purchased in the United States. Calling cards are available in Namibia for use in-country and internationally. International service from the larger towns is good, but calls must be made from a telecommunications office or a private phone. Most Volunteers will communicate with home via their cell phones. Cell phone usage and coverage is available almost throughout Namibia, especially in urban areas. All Volunteers are expected to purchase cell phones, and the cost is included in their settling-in allowance. Only a few PCVs will lack coverage at their sites, and they will be able to use their phones by traveling a short distance for weekend shopping. Text messaging and email via a smartphone are quickly becoming a preferred means of communication between Volunteers and with the PC office.

Smartphones are increasingly becoming the norm for Volunteers, allowing them to have basic internet access even in their communities. 3G coverage is increasingly common but connection speeds are well below American standards. Because IT equipment is significantly more expensive in Namibia, most Volunteers who are interested in a Smartphone bring an unlocked phone into country with them. U.S. Postal restrictions currently prohibit the shipping lithium ion batteries, making it complicated for friends, family, etc to mail you a smartphone after your arrival.

Computer, Internet, and Email Access

Access to e-mail is available in Internet cafes in Windhoek and other larger towns. As telephone service expands, so will Internet access. Volunteers tend to bring their own laptops or tablets into country with them. The harsh climate, heat, dust, erratic electricity, and rural conditions tend to age IT equipment faster than in the

United States, so most volunteers will bring older IT as opposed to purchasing a new computer or smartphone.

Housing and Site Location

Housing varies considerably. Your site may be a Western-style cement block house, usually with electricity and running water; an apartment attached to a health facility (nurses dorm); or, in the case of more rural areas, a mud hut with a local family in a traditional homestead. As the government has invited assistance from a variety of sources, you may also be asked to share a two- or three-bedroom house with one or two colleagues (either Namibian colleagues or PC Volunteers of the same sex). Our expectation is that you will have a private bedroom, but remember that there is a shortage of housing for government staff in most areas in Namibia. In most circumstances, the ministry/hosting agency to which you are assigned is responsible for paying your monthly utilities and providing you with the basic furnishings (e.g., bed, mattress, chairs, table, stove).

Living Allowance and Money Management

The Peace Corps provides Volunteers with a monthly living allowance for basic expenses, a leave allowance of \$24 a month, and a quarterly travel allowance for in-country travel. All allowances are paid in local currency. The amounts are intended to allow a modest lifestyle, and most Volunteers find the allowances to be adequate.

Volunteers open accounts at the First National Bank of Namibia during pre-service training and are issued an ATM card. The Peace Corps deposits all allowances and reimbursements at the Windhoek branch, which Volunteers can then withdraw from the bank nearest their site or through the use of their ATM card. For some, this involves a five-minute walk. For most, it requires planning ahead for a ride to town on a free day. Volunteers often travel to town with fellow teachers on payday.

Food and Diet

Basic food such as corn, millet, and greens can be bought in most communities, and a wide variety of products are available in the larger town centers. Fresh fruits and vegetables are highly seasonal in rural areas and may have to be transported from quite a distance. Canned goods are widely available throughout Namibia.

Although committed vegetarians and vegans have successfully maintained their diet and health in Namibia, obtaining the recommended daily allowances of vital food groups and micronutrients can be quite challenging. The Peace Corps medical office provides multivitamins, calcium, iron tablets, and, in some instances, vitamin B-12. Some Volunteers in Namibia grow their own gardens in order to have fresh vegetables when they want them. Maintenance of a healthy and balanced diet will be discussed extensively during pre-service training.

Transportation

The Peace Corps policies on transportation in Namibia urge Volunteers to limit their travel to essential trips and to stay at site as much as possible. If a Volunteer has to travel by road, care must be taken to choose the safest route and means of transportation. Given the limited number of transportation options available to Volunteers, this requires prior planning and flexibility on the part of the Volunteer. It will occasionally be necessary to extend or put off a trip because safe transportation options are not available. The ultimate responsibility for choosing the safest means of travel falls on the Volunteer. Traveling by road can be dangerous in Namibia, because of excessive speed and the lack of defensive driving skills. The level of driving skill and courtesy is often lower than one would encounter in the United States. The miles of unpaved roads and the poor state of many vehicles on the road, including those serving as informal taxis, present challenges to Volunteers trying to get around. Given the lack of public transport in many areas, Volunteers are often forced to utilize informal bush taxis or other forms of hitching a ride. The number of taxis available in populated areas continues to grow, and

bus service is beginning to expand throughout the country, and train service travels north and south of Windhoek each week. Volunteers will be provided with information on the safest modes of travel during training.

Geography and Climate

Namibia borders the South Atlantic Ocean, Angola, Zambia, Botswana, and South Africa. It lies between latitudes 18 degrees to 28 degrees south and longitudes 12 degrees to 24 degrees east. It covers approximately 317,500 square miles and has a population of about 1.8 million.

Namibia's generally hot and dry climate ranges from true desert to subtropical. As in other parts of southern Africa, temperatures are closely related to wind systems, ocean currents, and altitude. Except for the highest mountain areas, the lowest temperatures occur in the Namib Desert region and are affected greatly by the cold Benguela current from the South Atlantic. Daytime summer temperatures in the desert frequently exceed 120 degrees Fahrenheit, and nighttime winter temperatures can drop below 32 degrees. Volunteers who accept an assignment to Namibia must be willing and medically able to live and work in this extreme climate.

In the mountainous Windhoek region, average temperatures for the warmest month, December, range from 63 to 86 degrees Fahrenheit. In July, average temperatures range from 43 to 69 degrees. Annual rainfall averages 22 inches in the north, six inches in the south, and about two inches in the coastal region. Rain falls mostly during the summer (October through March), and the winter (July through September) is very dry. The most pleasant months are April, May, and June.

Windhoek is the seat of the national government and the business and cultural center. Keetmanshoop is the center of the *karakul* (sheepskin) industry, Tsumeb is the headquarters of copper-mining operations, and Otjiwarongo is the center of the cattle farming area. Swakopmund is a coastal tourist center, Oranjemund is a diamond-mining town, and Arandis is the home of the Rossing uranium mine. Walvis Bay is an important port and fishing center west of Windhoek.

Social Activities

Social activities vary depending on where your site is located. In more rural communities, social activities include visiting neighbors' fields and cattle posts and, for men, drinking at local bars. Cultural festivals, sporting events, weddings, and even funerals provide opportunities to meet and socialize with community members and their extended families. Groups of teachers sometimes go to town to shop and relax on paydays before heading off to visit their families. Namibia's rich geography provides many opportunities to enjoy outdoor activities, including national parks and conservation areas. Volunteers sometimes visit each other or meet in larger towns for shopping, socializing, or going to a movie. Although the Peace Corps recognizes that periodic visits to towns are important for networking and moral support, Volunteers are encouraged to remain at their sites as much as possible, to develop language competency and ensure integration in their communities.

Professionalism, Dress, and Behavior

Namibians attach great importance to neatness and proper dress, particularly in professional situations. Volunteers are expected to dress appropriately both on and off the job and to show respect for Namibian attitudes concerning personal appearance. For work, male Volunteers usually wear slacks or khakis and a nice shirt, often with a tie. Female Volunteers usually wear below-the-knee dresses or skirts with a nice top, or pants with a shirt.

Excessive drinking is widespread in Namibia. Volunteers may come under social pressure from colleagues or

other Volunteers to drink, often to excess. Because of the Volunteers' unique status in the community and as a representative of the American people, they are "on duty" 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. As such, Volunteers are expected to comport themselves in a professional and culturally sensitive manner at all times. Peace Corps/Namibia has strict regulations concerning the excessive consumption of alcohol and these rules are enforced. We look to PCVs to model alternative behaviors, particularly for youth, as they work in Namibian society.

Personal Safety

More detailed information about the Peace Corps' approach to safety is contained in the "Health Care and Safety" chapter, but it is an important issue and cannot be overemphasized. As stated in the Volunteer Handbook, becoming a Peace Corps Volunteer entails certain safety risks. Living and traveling in an unfamiliar environment (oftentimes alone), having a limited understanding of local language and culture, and being perceived as well-off are some of the factors that can put a Volunteer at risk. Many Volunteers experience varying degrees of unwanted attention and harassment. Petty thefts and burglaries are not uncommon, and incidents of physical and sexual assault do occur, although most Namibia Volunteers complete their two years of service without incident. The Peace Corps has established procedures and policies designed to help you reduce your risks and enhance your safety and security. These procedures and policies, in addition to safety training, will be provided once you arrive in Namibia. Using these tools, you are expected to take responsibility for your safety and well-being.

Each staff member at the Peace Corps is committed to providing Volunteers with the support they need to successfully meet the challenges they will face to have a safe, healthy, and productive service. We encourage Volunteers and families to look at our safety and security information on the Peace Corps website at **www.peacecorps.gov/safety**.

Information on these pages gives messages on Volunteer health and Volunteer safety. There is a section titled "Safety and Security —Our Partnership." Among topics addressed are the risks of serving as a Volunteer, posts' safety support systems, and emergency planning and communications.

Rewards and Frustrations

Invariably, former Namibia Volunteers speak of the relationships they established as the highlight of their service. Many speak of how they learned to value a more family- and community-centered way of life, and of how they grew in patience and understanding. Most are able to pinpoint specific contributions they made to Namibia's development (i.e., improving the levels of English proficiency of their students, teachers, and community colleagues; seeing students pick up science and math concepts; watching teachers try new ideas in the classroom; helping a community organize an important development project; and fostering a dialogue about HIV/AIDS).

The positive reflections are the endpoint of a series of highs and lows that are part of the process of leaving the United States, arriving in Namibia, and adapting to the practices and pace of life in a new culture. You are likely to have less guidance and direction than you would get in a new job in the United States. You may have to motivate yourself and your colleagues without receiving any feedback on your work. You will need flexibility, maturity, open-mindedness, and resourcefulness to overcome difficulties. If you are willing to respect and become integrated into your community, continue developing your local language skills, work hard at your assignment, and be open to all Namibia has to offer, you will be a successful Volunteer. You, too, will be able to look back positively on the relationships you have built and the small differences you have made by virtue of those relationships.

PEACE CORPS TRAINING

Pre-Service Training

Training is an essential part of Peace Corps service. Our goal is to give you enough skills and information to allow you to live and work effectively in Namibia. In doing that, we build on the experiences and expertise you bring to the Peace Corps. We anticipate that you will approach your training with an open mind, a desire to learn, and a willingness to become involved. Trainees officially become Volunteers after successful completion of training.

The training will provide you the opportunity to learn new skills and practice them as they apply to Namibia. You will receive training and orientation in language, cross-cultural communication, development issues, health and personal safety, and technical skills pertinent to your specific assignment. The skills you learn will serve as the foundation upon which you build your experience as a Volunteer in Namibia.

During the first few days of training, you will stay at a central training facility. Members of your training group will then move to different host families in the community near the training site. This home stay will help bring to life some of the topics covered in training, giving you a chance to practice your new language skills and directly observe and participate in Namibian culture. For the final week of training, you will rejoin the members of your training group until a swearing-in ceremony. Your training will also include a trip to your future site, to experience a bit of the day to day reality of your posting.

At the onset of training, the training staff will outline the competencies you have to master before becoming a Volunteer and the criteria that will be used to assess achievement of those competencies. Evaluation of your performance during training is a continual process based on a dialogue between you and the training staff. The Training Manager, along with the language, technical, and cross-cultural trainers, will work with you toward reaching the highest possible achievement of training competencies by providing you with feedback throughout training. After successful completion of pre-service training, you will be sworn in as a Volunteer and make the final preparations for departure to your site.

Technical Training

Technical training will prepare you to work in Namibia by building on the skills you already have and helping you develop new skills in a manner appropriate to the needs of the country. The Peace Corps staff, Namibia experts, and current Volunteers will conduct the training program. Training places great emphasis on learning how to transfer the skills you have to the community in which you will serve as a Volunteer.

Technical training will include sessions on the general economic and political environment in Namibia and strategies for working within such a framework. You will review your technical sector's goals and will meet with the Namibia agencies and organizations that invited the Peace Corps to assist them. You will be supported and evaluated throughout the training to build the confidence and skills you need to undertake your project activities and be a productive member of your community.

Language Training

As a Peace Corps Volunteer, you will find that language skills are key to personal and professional satisfaction during your service. These skills are critical to your job performance, they help you integrate into your community, and they can ease your personal adaptation to the new surroundings. Therefore, language training is at the heart of the training program. You must successfully meet minimum language requirements to complete

training and become a Volunteer. Namibia language instructors teach formal language classes five days a week in small groups of four to five people.

Your language training will incorporate a community-based approach. In addition to classroom time, you will be given assignments to work on outside of the classroom and with your host family. The goal is to get you to a point of basic social communication skills so you can practice and develop language skills further once you are at your site. Prior to being sworn in as a Volunteer, you will work on strategies to continue language studies during your service.

Cross-Cultural Training

As part of your pre-service training, you will live with a Namibia host family. This experience is designed to ease your transition to life at your site. Families go through an orientation conducted by Peace Corps staff to explain the purpose of pre-service training and to assist them in helping you adapt to living in Namibia. Many Volunteers form strong and lasting friendships with their host families.

Cross-cultural and community development training will help you improve your communication skills and understand your role as a facilitator of development. You will be exposed to topics such as community mobilization, conflict resolution, gender and development, nonformal and adult education strategies, and political structures.

Health Training

During pre-service training, you will be given basic medical training and information. You will be expected to practice preventive health care and to take responsibility for your own health by adhering to all medical policies. Trainees are required to attend all medical sessions. The topics include preventive health measures and minor and major medical issues that you might encounter while in Namibia. Nutrition, mental health, setting up a safe living compound, and how to avoid HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are also covered.

Safety Training

During the safety training sessions, you will learn how to adopt a lifestyle that reduces your risks at home, at work, and during your travels. You will also learn appropriate, effective strategies for coping with unwanted attention and about your individual responsibility for promoting safety throughout your service.

Additional Trainings During Volunteer Service

In its commitment to institutionalize quality training, the Peace Corps has implemented a training system that provides Volunteers with continual opportunities to examine their commitment to Peace Corps service while increasing their technical and cross-cultural skills. During service, there are usually three training events. The titles and objectives for those trainings are as follows:

- In-service training: *Provides an opportunity for Volunteers to upgrade their technical, language, and project development skills while sharing their experiences and reaffirming their commitment after having served for three to six months.*
- Midterm conference (done in conjunction with technical sector in-service): *Assists Volunteers in reviewing their first year, reassessing their personal and project objectives, and planning for their second year of service.*
- Close-of-service conference: *Prepares Volunteers for the future after Peace Corps service and reviews their respective projects and personal experiences.*

The number, length, and design of these trainings are adapted to country-specific needs and conditions. The key to the training system is that training events are integrated and interrelated, from the pre-departure orientation through the end of your service, and are planned, implemented, and evaluated cooperatively by the training staff, Peace Corps staff, and Volunteers.

YOUR HEALTH CARE AND SAFETY IN NAMIBIA

The Peace Corps' highest priority is maintaining the good health and safety of every Volunteer. Peace Corps medical programs emphasize the preventive, rather than the curative, approach to disease. The Peace Corps in Namibia maintains a clinic with a full-time medical officer, who takes care of Volunteers' primary health care needs. Additional medical services, such as testing and basic treatment, are also available in Namibia at local hospitals. If you become seriously ill, you will be transported either to an American-standard medical facility in the region or to the United States.

Health Issues in Namibia

Namibia's hot and dry climate keeps many of the diseases associated with developing countries at bay. Preventive measures, which include taking the required malaria prophylaxis, drinking plenty of water, and protecting your skin and eyes from sun damage, will help you avoid the most common problems. The prevalence of HIV/AIDS in Namibia is estimated to be approximately 13 percent, but this disease, too, is preventable by avoiding risky behavior.

The HIV epidemic strikes across all social strata in many Peace Corps countries. The loss of teachers has crippled education systems, while illness and disability drains family income and forces governments and donors to redirect limited resources from other priorities. The fear and uncertainty AIDS causes has led to increased domestic violence and stigmatizing of people living with HIV/AIDS, isolating them from friends and family and cutting them off from economic opportunities. As a Peace Corps Volunteer, you will confront these issues on a very personal level. It is important to be aware of the high emotional toll that disease, death, and violence can have on Volunteers. As you strive to integrate into your community, you will develop relationships with local people who might die during your service. Because of the AIDS pandemic, some Volunteers will be regularly meeting with HIV positive people and working with training staff, office staff and host family members living with AIDS. Volunteers need to prepare themselves to embrace these relationships in a sensitive and positive manner. Likewise, malaria and malnutrition, motor vehicle accidents and other unintentional injuries, domestic violence and corporal punishment are problems a Volunteer may confront. You will need to anticipate these situations and utilize supportive resources available throughout your training and service to maintain your own emotional strength, so you can continue to be of service to your community.

Namibia's health services are significantly more developed than those of many other countries in Africa. For example, there is one doctor per 4,450 inhabitants and one hospital bed per 166 people - the sixth and third best ratios, respectively, on the continent. Medi-City Hospital in Windhoek, which is used by Peace Corps/Namibia, is a modern facility that offers excellent care. However, most health issues for Volunteers are managed at other approved medical facilities at or near their sites.

Helping You Stay Healthy

The Peace Corps will provide you with all the necessary inoculations, medications, and information to stay healthy. Upon your arrival in Namibia, you will receive a medical handbook. At the end of training, you will receive a medical kit with supplies to take care of mild illnesses and first aid needs. The contents of the kit are listed later in this chapter.

During pre-service training, you will have access to basic medical supplies through the medical officer. However, you will be responsible for your own supply of prescription drugs and any other specific medical supplies you require, as the Peace Corps will not order these items during training. Please bring a three-month supply of any prescription drugs you use, since they may not be available here and it may take several months for shipments to arrive.

You will have physicals at midservice and at the end of your service. If you develop a serious medical problem during your service, the medical officer in Namibia will consult with the Office of Medical Services (OMS) in Washington, D.C. If it is determined that your condition cannot be treated in Namibia, you may be sent out of the country for further evaluation and care.

Maintaining Your Health

As a Volunteer, you must accept considerable responsibility for your own health. Proper precautions will significantly reduce your risk of serious illness or injury. The adage “An ounce of prevention ...” becomes extremely important in areas where diagnostic and treatment facilities are not up to the standards of the United States. The most important of your responsibilities in Namibia is to take the following preventive measures: Many illnesses that afflict Volunteers worldwide are entirely preventable if proper food and water precautions are taken. These illnesses include food poisoning, parasitic infections, hepatitis A, dysentery, Guinea worms, tapeworms, and typhoid fever. Your medical officer will discuss specific standards for water and food preparation in Namibia during pre-service training.

Abstinence is the only certain choice for preventing infection with HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases. You are taking risks if you choose to be sexually active. To lessen risk, use a condom every time you have sex. Whether your partner is a host country citizen, a fellow Volunteer, or anyone else, do not assume this person is free of HIV/AIDS or other STIs. You will receive more information from the medical officer about this important issue.

Volunteers are expected to adhere to an effective means of birth control to prevent an unplanned pregnancy. Your medical officer can help you decide on the most appropriate method to suit your individual needs. Contraceptive methods are available without charge from the medical officer.

It is critical to your health that you promptly report to the medical office or other designated facility for scheduled immunizations, and that you let the medical officer know immediately of significant illnesses and injuries.

Women’s Health Information

Pregnancy is treated in the same manner as other Volunteer health conditions that require medical attention but also have programmatic ramifications. The Peace Corps is responsible for determining the medical risk and the availability of appropriate medical care if the Volunteer remains in-country. Given the circumstances under which Volunteers live and work in Peace Corps countries, it is rare that the Peace Corps’ medical and programmatic standards for continued service during pregnancy can be met.

If feminine hygiene products are not available for you to purchase on the local market, the Peace Corps medical officer in Namibia will provide them. If you require a specific product, please bring a three-month supply with you.

Your Peace Corps Medical Kit

The Peace Corps medical officer will provide you with a kit that contains basic items necessary to prevent and treat illnesses that may occur during service. Kit items can be periodically restocked at the medical office.

Medical Kit Contents

Ace bandages
Adhesive tape
American Red Cross First Aid & Safety Handbook
Antacid tablets (Tums)
Antibiotic ointment (Bacitracin/Neomycin/Polymycin B)
Antiseptic antimicrobial skin cleaner (Hibiclens)
Band-Aids
Butterfly closures
Calamine lotion
Cepacol lozenges
Condoms
Dental floss
Diphenhydramine HCL 25 mg (Benadryl)
Insect repellent stick (Cutter)
Iodine tablets (for water purification)
Lip balm (Chapstick)
Oral rehydration salts
Oral thermometer (Fahrenheit)
Pseudoephedrine HCL 30 mg (Sudafed)
Robitussin-DM lozenges (for cough)
Scissors
Sterile gauze pads
Tetrahydrozoline eyedrops (Visine)
Tinactin (antifungal cream)
Tweezers

Before You Leave: A Medical Checklist

If there has been any change in your health—physical, mental, or dental—since you submitted your examination reports to the Peace Corps, you must immediately notify OMS. Failure to disclose new illnesses, injuries, allergies, or pregnancy can endanger your health and may jeopardize your eligibility to serve.

If your dental exam was done more than a year ago, or if your physical exam is more than two years old, contact the OMS to find out whether you need to update your records. If your dentist or Peace Corps dental consultant

has recommended that you undergo dental treatment or repair, you must complete that work and make sure your dentist sends requested confirmation reports or X-rays to the OMS

If you wish to avoid having duplicate vaccinations, contact your physician's office to obtain a copy of your immunization record and bring it to your pre-departure orientation. If you have any immunizations prior to Peace Corps service, the Peace Corps cannot reimburse you for the cost. The Peace Corps will provide all the immunizations necessary for your overseas assignment, either at your pre-departure orientation or shortly after you arrive in Namibia. You do not need to begin taking malaria medication prior to departure.

Bring a three-month supply of any prescription or over-the-counter medication you use on a regular basis, including birth control pills. Although the Peace Corps cannot reimburse you for this three-month supply, it will order refills during your service. While awaiting shipment—which can take several months—you will be dependent on your own medication supply. The Peace Corps will not pay for herbal or nonprescribed medications, such as St. John's wort, glucosamine, selenium, or antioxidant supplements.

You are encouraged to bring copies of medical prescriptions signed by your physician. This is not a requirement, but they might come in handy if you are questioned in transit about carrying a three-month supply of prescription drugs.

If you wear eyeglasses, bring two pairs with you—a pair and a spare. If a pair breaks, the Peace Corps will replace them, using the information your doctor in the United States provided on the eyeglasses form during your examination. The Peace Corps discourages you from using contact lenses during your service to reduce your risk of developing a serious infection or other eye disease. Most Peace Corps countries do not have appropriate water and sanitation to support eye care with the use of contact lenses. The Peace Corps will not supply or replace contact lenses or associated solutions unless an ophthalmologist has recommended their use for a specific medical condition and OMS has given approval.

If you are eligible for Medicare, are over 50 years of age, or have a health condition that may restrict your future participation in health care plans, you may wish to consult an insurance specialist about unique coverage needs before your departure. The Peace Corps will provide all necessary health care from the time you leave for your pre-departure orientation until you complete your service. When you finish, you will be entitled to the post-service health care benefits described in the Peace Corps *Volunteer Handbook*. You may wish to consider keeping an existing health plan in effect during your service if you think age or pre-existing conditions might prevent you from re-enrolling in your current plan when you return home.

Safety and Security—Our Partnership

Serving as a Volunteer overseas entails certain safety and security risks. Living and traveling in an unfamiliar environment, a limited understanding of the local language and culture, and the perception of being a wealthy American are some of the factors that can put a Volunteer at risk. Property theft and burglaries are not uncommon. Incidents of physical and sexual assault do occur, although almost all Volunteers complete their two years of service without serious personal safety problems.

Beyond knowing that Peace Corps approaches safety and security as a partnership with you, it might be helpful to see how this partnership works. Peace Corps has policies, procedures, and training in place to promote your safety. We depend on you to follow those policies and to put into practice what you have learned. An example of how this works in practice—in this case to help manage the risk of burglary—is:

- Peace Corps assesses the security environment where you will live and work
- Peace Corps inspects the house where you will live according to established security criteria

- Peace Corps provides you with resources to take measures such as installing new locks
- Peace Corps ensures you are welcomed by host country authorities in your new community
- Peace Corps responds to security concerns that you raise
- You lock your doors and windows
- You adopt a lifestyle appropriate to the community where you live
- You get to know neighbors
- You decide if purchasing personal articles insurance is appropriate for you
- You don't change residences before being authorized by Peace Corps
- You communicate concerns that you have to Peace Corps staff

Factors that Contribute to Volunteer Risk

There are several factors that can heighten a Volunteer's risk, many of which are within the Volunteer's control. By far the most common crime that Volunteers experience is theft. Thefts often occur when Volunteers are away from their sites, in crowded locations (such as markets or on public transportation), and when leaving items unattended.

Before you depart for Namibia there are several measures you can take to reduce your risk:

- Leave valuable objects in the U.S.
- Leave copies of important documents and account numbers with someone you trust in the U.S.
- Purchase a hidden money pouch or "dummy" wallet as a decoy
- Purchase personal articles insurance

After you arrive in Namibia, you will receive more detailed information about common crimes, factors that contribute to Volunteer risk, and local strategies to reduce that risk. For example, Volunteers in Namibia learn to:

- Choose safe routes and times for travel, and travel with someone trusted by the community whenever possible
- Make sure one's personal appearance is respectful of local customs
- Avoid high-crime areas
- Know the local language to get help in an emergency
- Make friends with local people who are respected in the community
- Limit alcohol consumption

As you can see from this list, you must be willing to work hard and adapt your lifestyle to minimize the potential for being a target for crime. As with anywhere in the world, crime does exist in Namibia. You can reduce your risk by avoiding situations that place you at risk and by taking precautions. Crime at the village or town level is less frequent than in the large cities; people know each other and generally are less likely to steal from their neighbors. Tourist attractions in large towns are favorite worksites for pickpockets.

The following are other security concerns in Namibia of which you should be aware:

When it comes to your safety and security in the Peace Corps, you have to be willing to adapt your behavior and lifestyle to minimize the potential for being a target of crime. As with anywhere in the world, crime does exist in Namibia. You can reduce your risk by avoiding situations that make you feel uncomfortable and by taking precautions. Crime at the village level is less frequent than in towns and cities; people know each other and generally will not steal from their neighbors.

While the need to be cautious in the following situations may sound like common sense, our altruism often overrides our common sense until something happens. Larger population centers create opportunities for pickpockets and other thieves. This is especially true of ATM machines around payday or weekends. Alcohol fuels unsafe driving, unsafe sex, and physical and sexual assaults. Houses and rooms left empty during vacations create tempting opportunities. Individuals are better targets than groups; women are easier targets than men.

While whistles and exclamations may be fairly common on the street, this behavior can be reduced if you dress conservatively, abide by local cultural norms, and respond according to the training you will receive.

Staying Safe: Don't Be a Target for Crime

You must be prepared to take on a large degree of responsibility for your own safety. You can make yourself less of a target, ensure that your home is secure, and develop relationships in your community that will make you an unlikely victim of crime. While the factors that contribute to your risk in Namibia may be different, in many ways you can do what you would do if you moved to a new city anywhere: Be cautious, check things out, ask questions, learn about your neighborhood, know where the more risky locations are, use common sense, and be aware. You can reduce your vulnerability to crime by integrating into your community, learning the local language, acting responsibly, and abiding by Peace Corps policies and procedures. Serving safely and effectively in Namibia will require that you accept some restrictions on your current lifestyle.

Support from Staff

If a trainee or Volunteer is the victim of a safety incident, Peace Corps staff is prepared to provide support. All Peace Corps posts have procedures in place to respond to incidents of crime committed against Volunteers. The first priority for all posts in the aftermath of an incident is to ensure the Volunteer is safe and receiving medical treatment as needed. After assuring the safety of the Volunteer, Peace Corps staff response may include reassessing the Volunteer's worksite and housing arrangements and making any adjustments, as needed. In some cases, the nature of the incident may necessitate a site or housing transfer. Peace Corps staff will also assist Volunteers with preserving their rights to pursue legal sanctions against the perpetrators of the crime. It is very important that Volunteers report incidents as they occur, not only to protect their peer Volunteers, but also to preserve the future right to prosecute. Should Volunteers decide later in the process that they want to proceed with the prosecution of their assailant, this option may no longer exist if the evidence of the event has not been preserved at the time of the incident.

Crime Data for Namibia

Crime data and statistics for Namibia, which is updated yearly, are available at the following link: <http://www.peacecorps.gov/countrydata/namibia>. Please take the time to review this important information.

Few Peace Corps Volunteers are victims of serious crimes and crimes that do occur overseas are investigated and prosecuted by local authorities through the local courts system. If you are the victim of a crime, you will decide if you wish to pursue prosecution. If you decide to prosecute, Peace Corps will be there to assist you. One of our tasks is to ensure you are fully informed of your options and understand how the local legal process works. Peace Corps will help you ensure your rights are protected to the fullest extent possible under the laws of the country.

If you are the victim of a serious crime, you will learn how to get to a safe location as quickly as possible and contact your Peace Corps office. It's important that you notify Peace Corps as soon as you can so Peace Corps can provide you with the help you need.

Volunteer Safety Support in Namibia

The Peace Corps' approach to safety is a five-pronged plan to help you stay safe during your service and includes the following: information sharing, Volunteer training, site selection criteria, a detailed emergency action plan, and protocols for addressing safety and security incidents. Namibia's in-country safety program is outlined below.

The Peace Corps/Namibia office will keep you informed of any issues that may impact Volunteer safety through **information sharing**. Regular updates will be provided in Volunteer newsletters and in memorandums from the country director. In the event of a critical situation or emergency, you will be contacted through the emergency communication network. An important component of the capacity of Peace Corps to keep you informed is your buy-in to the partnership concept with the Peace Corps staff. It is expected that you will do your part in ensuring that Peace Corps staff members are kept apprised of your movements in-country so they are able to inform you.

Volunteer training will include sessions on specific safety and security issues in Namibia. This training will prepare you to adopt a culturally appropriate lifestyle and exercise judgment that promotes safety and reduces risk in your home, at work, and while traveling. Safety training is offered throughout service and is integrated into the language, cross-cultural aspects, health, and other components of training. You will be expected to successfully complete all training competencies in a variety of areas, including safety and security, as a condition of service.

Certain **site selection criteria** are used to determine safe housing for Volunteers before their arrival. The Peace Corps staff works closely with host communities and counterpart agencies to help prepare them for a Volunteer's arrival and to establish expectations of their respective roles in supporting the Volunteer. Each site is inspected before the Volunteer's arrival to ensure placement in appropriate, safe, and secure housing and worksites. Site selection is based, in part, on any relevant site history; access to medical, banking, postal, and other essential services; availability of communications, transportation, and markets; different housing options and living arrangements; and other Volunteer support needs.

You will also learn about Peace Corps/Namibia's **detailed emergency action plan**, which is implemented in the event of civil or political unrest or a natural disaster. When you arrive at your site, you will complete and submit a site locator form with your address, contact information, and a map to your house. If there is a security threat, you will gather with other Volunteers in Namibia at predetermined locations until the situation is resolved or the Peace Corps decides to evacuate.

Finally, in order for the Peace Corps to be fully responsive to the needs of Volunteers, it is imperative that Volunteers immediately report any security incident to the Peace Corps office. The Peace Corps has established **protocols for addressing safety and security incidents** in a timely and appropriate manner, and it collects and evaluates safety and security data to track trends and develop strategies to minimize risks to future Volunteers.

DIVERSITY AND CROSS-CULTURAL ISSUES

In fulfilling its mandate to share the face of America with host countries, the Peace Corps is making special efforts to assure that all of America's richness is reflected in the Volunteer corps. More Americans of color are serving in today's Peace Corps than at any time in recent history. Differences in race, ethnic background, age, religion, and sexual orientation are expected and welcomed among our Volunteers. Part of the Peace Corps' mission is to help dispel any notion that Americans are all of one origin or race and to establish that each of us is as thoroughly American as the other despite our many differences.

Our diversity helps us accomplish that goal. In other ways, however, it poses challenges. In Namibia, as in other Peace Corps host countries, Volunteers' behavior, lifestyle, background, and beliefs are judged in a cultural context very different from their own. Certain personal perspectives or characteristics commonly accepted in the United States may be quite uncommon, unacceptable, or even repressed in Namibia.

Outside of Namibia's capital, residents of rural communities have had relatively little direct exposure to other cultures, races, religions, and lifestyles. What people view as typical American behavior or norms may be a misconception, such as the belief that all Americans are rich and have blond hair and blue eyes. The people of Namibia are justly known for their generous hospitality to foreigners; however, members of the community in which you will live may display a range of reactions to cultural differences that you present.

To ease the transition and adapt to life in Namibia, you may need to make some temporary, yet fundamental compromises in how you present yourself as an American and as an individual. For example, female trainees and Volunteers may not be able to exercise the independence available to them in the United States; political discussions need to be handled with great care; and some of your personal beliefs may best remain undisclosed. You will need to develop techniques and personal strategies for coping with these and other limitations. The Peace Corps staff will lead diversity and sensitivity discussions during pre-service training and will be on call to provide support, but the challenge ultimately will be your own.

Overview of Diversity in Namibia

The Peace Corps staff in Namibia recognizes the adjustment issues that come with diversity and will endeavor to provide support and guidance. During pre-service training, several sessions will be held to discuss diversity and coping mechanisms. We look forward to having male and female Volunteers from a variety of races, ethnic groups, ages, religions, and sexual orientations, and hope that you will become part of a diverse group of Americans who take pride in supporting one another and demonstrating the richness of American culture.

What Might a Volunteer Face?

Possible Issues for Female Volunteers

Namibia has made great strides in gender equity in the government and the private sector. Women hold ministerial portfolios and senior-level government and private sector posts. However, less educated women at the lower ends of the socioeconomic scale tend to have less authority and control over income, spending, and reproductive health. This situation is driven as much by the lingering pattern of migratory labor (i.e., adult males working away from the homestead) as by tradition. Thus, many rural communities do not have much experience with women who take on professional roles, remain unmarried, and live away from their families. Because of the differences in cultural norms for women and men, female Volunteers may receive unwanted sexual attention and need to practice discretion in public (e.g., not smoking or drinking).

Volunteer Comments:

“At break time, the male and female teachers generally do not hang out together. I generally choose to hang out with the male teachers because they make me feel more welcome, they translate more, and the conversation is usually friendly, with light joking. Also, more of the men are educated and know English, and the women often lack confidence in their English skills.”

“Most of the social life in town centers takes place in the bars. However, there are not many women at the bars, and as a teacher, it would not be appropriate for me to go alone. I’ve asked, ‘Where do the women spend their Friday and Saturday nights?’ The answer is generally ‘at home’—cooking, washing, and taking care of the kids. Also, it’s more appropriate for women to drink in the privacy of their own homes.”

Possible Issues for Volunteers of Color

Stereotypical notions of Americans often exclude people of color. Therefore, Volunteers of color often are identified by their cultural heritage or are simply ignored in a setting where most Volunteers conform to the “blond-haired and blue-eyed” stereotype. In addition, you may feel isolated in your training group if there are few other minority trainees.

African Americans may face higher expectations for their performance, especially in acquiring language and adapting to local norms. Asian Americans are often grouped with Chinese regardless of their actual background and face stereotypes resulting from Namibia’s current involvement with Asian countries or the presence of Asian merchants in the community. All groups are affected by the impact of popular culture on perceptions of minority groups.

Volunteer Comments:

“One thing I’ve experienced is surprise, stares, and stereotypes because of my Asian features. It’s pretty easy to pick out the word *oshilumbu* (white or foreigner), and even more grating is the word China. I never respond to it, but I do know that people are talking about me, and I’ve encountered some pretty vocal disbelief about my true origin in America. I go up and down with ignoring comments, being annoyed, or laughing about them. There is one stereotype that cracks me up: My Meme told me that I needn’t be afraid when I walk around Oshakati because ‘everyone thinks you know karate.’ Though I still look out for *botsotsos* (thieves), that stereotype gives me an advantage, I guess.”

“To Namibians, living in America is such a dream, and they feel some sort of connection with African Americans. But all the Volunteers they have had here have been of European descent, so they ask me questions about African Americans and seem fascinated with the concept.”

“I try to understand how *oshilumbu* should be translated. In general, people say it means white. My learners would probably tell you I’m *oshilumbu*, which is a surprise to me, having spent the last quarter-plus century calling myself black. Once I got over the shock, I couldn’t help feeling offended. I guess it goes back to the days when one of the worst taunts for a young math-and-science geek was accusing her of trying to act white.”

“There is an uncomfortable way Afrikaners treat me as a white person. I was on a school athletics trip, and we stopped at a service station. The owner saw me standing in line to buy a cool drink. He motioned for me to come to the back. He chatted with me for a bit, was incredibly friendly, and gave me a cool drink. Afterward, the other teachers asked me what he wanted. It makes it hard to fit in with my community and let them know

that I'm one of them when Afrikaners single me out like that.”

Possible Issues for Senior Volunteers

Senior Volunteers will find their age an asset in the Namibian context. They will often have access to individuals and insights that are not available to younger Volunteers. On the other hand, they will be in a distinct minority within the Volunteer population and could find themselves feeling isolated, looked up to, or ignored. Seniors are often accustomed to a greater degree of independence and freedom of movement than the Peace Corps' program focus and safety and security practices allow. Pre-service training can be particularly stressful for seniors, whose lifelong learning styles and habits may or may not lend themselves to the techniques used.

Possible Issues for Gay, Lesbian, or Bisexual Volunteers

Homosexuality has been the topic of much heated debate in Namibia. Human rights proponents argue that the Constitution protects individuals regardless of sexual orientation, while others argue that homosexual behavior is unnatural and, as such, should be deemed criminal. Homosexual or bisexual Volunteers may discover they cannot be open about their sexual orientation in their community. In addition, they may serve for two years without meeting another gay or bisexual Volunteer. Peace Corps/Namibia is committed to ensuring that staff members understand the particular support needs of homosexual and bisexual Volunteers.

Volunteer Comment:

“The Peace Corps book they sent us when we were still in the States mentioned that one thing homosexual Volunteers might have to face was never coming out to their communities. That didn't really seem to be a problem: I don't go up to random acquaintances and say, ‘Hey, I'm a lesbian you know.’ One day, I was with my host parents when we saw some old friends of theirs. They had gone through life at the same pace, and both families had three sons of about the same ages. Tate then said, ‘Now we have a daughter.’ So now I have another family. If one day I'm lucky enough to find a woman and do the family thing, I wonder which would be worse: never mentioning her when I write to Meme and Tate or telling them about her and losing this new family.”

A recommended resource for support and advice prior to and during your service is the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender U.S. Peace Corps Alumni website at www.lgbrpcv.org.

Possible Religious Issues for Volunteers

Churches play a vital role in the life of most rural communities in Namibia. As such, they are social as well as religious institutions, and you will find them to be a source of information and support regarding community events and practices. Community members frequently ask Volunteers about their religious affiliation and may expect them to attend a community church. Volunteers not in the practice of attending Christian churches may be challenged to explain a decision not to attend.

Volunteer Comment:

“I remember distinctly my site visit and the question, ‘Are you Lutheran or Catholic?’ I simply don't practice organized religion, and so any questions on that order make me uncomfortable for fear of offending someone or being judged negatively. Morning devotion every day at school has been nothing but awkward, and I still find it difficult to talk about and share my religious beliefs with Namibians.”

Possible Issues for Volunteers With Disabilities

As part of the medical clearance process, OMS determined that you were physically and emotionally capable, with or without reasonable accommodations, to perform a full tour of Volunteer service in Namibia without unreasonable risk of harm to yourself or interruption of service. The Peace Corps/ Namibia staff will work with disabled Volunteers to make reasonable accommodations for them in training, housing, jobsites, or other areas to enable them to serve safely and effectively.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

This list has been compiled by Volunteers serving in Namibia and is based on their experience. Use it as an informal guide in making your own list, bearing in mind that each experience is individual. There is no perfect list! You obviously cannot bring everything on the list, so consider those items that make the most sense to you personally and professionally. You can always have things sent to you later. As you decide what to bring, keep in mind that you have a 100-pound weight limit on baggage. And remember, you can get almost everything you need in Namibia.

How much luggage am I allowed to bring to Namibia?

Most airlines have baggage size and weight limits and assess charges for transport of baggage that exceeds those limits. The Peace Corps has its own size and weight limits and will not pay the cost of transport for baggage that exceeds these limits. The Peace Corps' allowance is two checked pieces of luggage with combined dimensions of both pieces not to exceed 107 inches (length + width + height) and a carry-on bag with dimensions of no more than 45 inches. Checked baggage should not exceed 100 pounds total with a maximum weight of 50 pounds for any one bag.

Peace Corps Volunteers are not allowed to take pets, weapons, explosives, radio transmitters (shortwave radios are permitted), automobiles, or motorcycles to their overseas assignments. Do not pack flammable materials or liquids such as lighter fluid, cleaning solvents, hair spray, or aerosol containers. This is an important safety precaution.

What is the electric current in Namibia?

It is 220 volts, 50 cycles. You will need a transformer to use American appliances. However, not all Volunteers have electricity at their sites.

How much money should I bring?

Volunteers are expected to live at the same level as the people in their community. You will be given a settling-in allowance and a monthly living allowance, which should cover your expenses. Volunteers often wish to bring additional money for vacation travel to other countries. Credit cards and traveler's checks are preferable to cash. If you choose to bring extra money, bring the amount that will suit your own travel plans and needs.

When can I take vacation and have people visit me?

Each Volunteer accrues two vacation days per month of service (excluding training). Leave may not be taken during training, the first three months of service, or the last three months of service, except in conjunction with an authorized emergency leave. Family and friends are welcome to visit you after pre-service training and the first three months of service as long as their stay does not interfere with your work. Extended stays at your site are not encouraged and may require permission from your country director. The Peace Corps is not able to provide your visitors with visa, medical, or travel assistance.

Will my belongings be covered by insurance?

The Peace Corps does not provide insurance coverage for personal effects; Volunteers are ultimately responsible for the safekeeping of their personal belongings. However, you can purchase personal property insurance before you leave. If you wish, you may contact your own insurance company; additionally, insurance application forms will be provided, and we encourage you to consider them carefully. Volunteers should not ship or take valuable items overseas. Jewelry, watches, radios, cameras, and expensive appliances are subject to loss, theft, and breakage, and in many places, satisfactory maintenance and repair services are not available.

Do I need an international driver's license?

Volunteers in Namibia do not need an international driver's license because they are prohibited from operating privately owned motorized vehicles. Most urban travel is by bus or taxi. Rural travel ranges from buses and minibuses to trucks, bicycles, and lots of walking. On very rare occasions, a Volunteer may be asked to drive a sponsor's vehicle, but this can occur only with prior written permission from the country director. Should this occur, the Volunteer may obtain a local driver's license. A U.S. driver's license will facilitate the process, so bring it with you just in case.

What should I bring as gifts for Namibia friends and my host family?

This is not a requirement. A token of friendship is sufficient. Some gift suggestions include knickknacks for the house; pictures, books, or calendars of American scenes; souvenirs from your area; hard candies that will not melt or spoil; or photos to give away.

Where will my site assignment be when I finish training and how isolated will I be?

Peace Corps trainees are not assigned to individual sites until after they have completed pre-service training. This gives Peace Corps staff the opportunity to assess each trainee's technical and language skills prior to assigning sites, in addition to finalizing site selections with their ministry counterparts. If feasible, you may have the opportunity to provide input on your site preferences, including geographical location, distance from other Volunteers, and living conditions. However, keep in mind that many factors influence the site selection process and that the Peace Corps cannot guarantee placement where you would ideally like to be. Most Volunteers live in small towns or in rural villages and are usually within one hour from another Volunteer. Some sites require a 14-hour or more drive from the capital.

How can my family contact me in an emergency?

The Peace Corps' Counseling and Outreach Unit (COU) provides assistance in handling emergencies affecting trainees and Volunteers or their families. Before leaving the United States, instruct your family to notify the Counseling and Outreach Unit immediately if an emergency arises, such as a serious illness or death of a family member. During normal business hours, the number for the Counseling and Outreach Unit is 855.855.1961, then select option 2, then extension 1470; or directly at 202-692-1470. After normal business hours and on weekends and holidays, the COU duty officer can be reached at the above number.

For non-emergency questions, your family can get information from your country desk staff at the Peace Corps by calling 855.855.1961.

Can I call home from Namibia?

Yes. Most telephones can be used for international calls. Volunteers often call home and, in a brief exchange, ask to be called back, or prearrange a time for someone to call them at a work phone or pay phone.

Should I bring a cellular phone with me?

Cellular phone service is growing in Namibia and is available in most rural areas where Volunteers serve. Fewer than 5 percent of currently serving Volunteers live in areas with no or poor cell phone coverage. Cell phones purchased in the United States are not likely to operate in country unless they are unlocked and are dual band. PC provides funds for you to purchase a local cellphone in Namibia as a safety measure.

Will there be email and Internet access?

Should I bring my computer?

Laptops can be useful for many Volunteers. When not out in communities and villages, much of the Volunteer's work and day-to-day living will be in urban settings conducive to laptop use. Laptops can also be useful for education Volunteers, as most sites where you will be located do have electricity, though not necessarily Internet access. Volunteers use laptops to type assignments and tests, as well as to communicate with family and friends

back in the States. Like with any valuable, however, it is advisable to exercise caution in storing the laptop safely. A security cable is highly recommended and insurance coverage for the laptops and other valuables is advisable.

WELCOME LETTERS FROM NAMIBIA VOLUNTEERS

When I was in school in California in the '60s, it was common to talk about taking a course, or even majoring, in "underwater basket weaving" as if it were a total cop out – so easy that it was only for those who couldn't withstand the pressure of "real" subjects. Trust me, basket weaving in Shambyu, Namibia, though not underwater (thank god!), is definitely not a cop out. In fact, it may be the most difficult thing I've ever attempted.

But first, a bit of background. I am a health volunteer (HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention) living on the grounds of a Roman Catholic mission in rural Namibia, near the community health centre. One of the first people to invite me over was Sister Adelheidis, a German nun who has lived and worked here since 2002. As I was soon to find out, her personal charity is supporting the local basket weavers. She uses donations from friends in Germany to purchase baskets from the local women and has done so for years. In fact, Wednesday has turned into market day on the mission; anywhere from eight to over 20 women show up faithfully between 7 a.m. and 10 a.m. to sell their wares in the nuns' garden.

Being an only partially-reformed shopaholic and lover of all handicrafts, I asked what she did with all the baskets. Instead of answering, she ushered me into a catch-all room off the dining area and opened a huge, floor-to-ceiling closet. Baskets – literally hundreds of them in all sizes and shapes and patterns – tumbled out! As luck would have it, we'd just received our trimester allowance and, figuring I could eat cereal for dinner for weeks if need be, I spent a considerable portion of it right then and there.

My tiny, round room (I live in a concrete hut – separate kitchen and bathroom facilities are a short distance away, across a patch of sand) was soon wall to wall baskets. Obviously, however, due to both spatial and financial constraints, my purchases could in no way support the local basket weaving community. So when Sister told me she was due to retire in July 2008, I knew we (!) had to do something. The picture of market day on the mission and no Sister there to buy baskets, was just too depressing. And, so, serendipitously, I fell into my first secondary Peace Corps project – finding a sustainable market for the local basket weavers.

In order to do this properly, I figured I needed to learn how to basket weave in order to understand the time, effort, and costs that go into the baskets and to be able to "sell the story," along with the baskets. I also thought it would be a great way to really integrate, get some one-on-one language practice and provide a small, supplementary income for one of the weavers.

Well, you know what they say about the best-laid plans ... First of all, language. Magdalena, the spry, 67-year old basket weaver I chose to be my teacher, turned out to be a native Nyemba speaker, as are most of the weavers. So much for improving my Rushambyu! Next, income. We went along fine for a couple of months until one day, with the help of a translator, she made it known that we couldn't have any more lessons because the women in her village were jealous and had stopped speaking to her! That was hard for me to understand – I'd meant so well. And I had looked forward to Magdalena's Saturday morning visits whenever I was at site – we'd sit on the sand under a tree and weave, talk, and laugh (mainly at my lack of weaving ability!). I'd take pictures and provide a simple lunch; sometimes she'd bring a grandchild or two.

That said, if I'm really honest, I have to admit the timing was perfect – for stopping the lessons that is. I'd come to realize that basket weaving is truly an art – one I will never master! After several hours a morning for I don't know how many Saturdays, I ended up with a small, flat basket – slightly larger than a coaster. It is almost perfect – thanks to the fact that Magdalena was a strict, proud teacher and would pull out most of my work and order me to do it again! But it is very small and when one considers the time involved, well, it's priceless.

To be fair, the integration part worked wonderfully. I have been to Magdalena's home twice and eaten mahangu

(millet) porridge and mutete (a wild spinach-like green) with her and her extended family (the first time I was even offered a rooster!). We have come to know each other quite well and I consider her a friend. The fact that whenever she's at the health centre and catches sight of me, her face lights up and she throws her arm around me, and tells me she feels the same way.

And, as for the secondary project part, well that has a happy ending too. With the help of the Namibia Craft Centre, we held a weeklong quality and design workshop for basket weavers in Shambyu last November and the craft centre has agreed to buy all the baskets that meet its standards. Best of all in terms of sustainability is that there is now a system in place whereby the weavers can sell directly to Christina and Agnes – two Namibian women who will come to the mission once a month and purchase the baskets directly and then grade and send them to the craft centre in Windhoek.

So this story definitely has a happy ending: Sister Adelheidis can retire knowing that her beloved basket weavers have a market and I have found other worthwhile projects to work on. I just hope that Magdalena will continue to visit me and that she and some of the other women will bring a very special basket or two to the mission now and again to offer to me first.

I have also sent baskets to a friend in California who sells them at fancy prices and sends the profit back to Namibia. That money is being used to pay for driving lessons for four young people from an HIV/AIDS awareness group I work with. But that's another story

Community Health Volunteer in Kavango Region

When I was sitting in my room playing guitar recently I saw three pigs calmly walk past my window. I'm pretty used to seeing animals at Kahenge. I've had goats enter the classroom, seen donkeys eating at my trash pile and even found foot-long lizards in my bedroom! Donkeys, cattle, goats, little naked children, and even the stray chicken. These are all things I'm used to seeing. And now there are pigs roaming free.

My life in the Kavango region as an education Volunteer has been intense. Intense heat, intense insects and intense friendliness from the local people. During site visit my community decided to throw a welcoming party for me. They took out all of the stops, slaughtering a goat, performing a cultural dance, and presenting a performance from the school choir. My principal gave a speech thanking me for coming to the school and I even danced with some of the village's elder women!

The beauty of the Kavango is what really gets me. From November to March it just POURS rain. The countryside becomes green everywhere. Farmers are plowing the earth to grow millet and maize. The small boys run around cracking whips at their cattle and goat herds, which are busy getting fat by eating the thick grass. On the weekends I like to take a walk along the Kavango River, which is about a kilometer from my house. All along the banks young girls are washing their clothes and men catch fish with reed baskets. And yes, there are crocodiles and hippos in the river. I've seen both personally.

I have found it to be a challenging experience to work in a Kavango school. On one hand, the principal, teachers, and community have been very friendly and supportive. My opinion is generally respected and consequently I'm able to exert power over school issues. However, there are really some problems at the school, notably, teacher absenteeism, run-down facilities, and corruption. Just in my first year of teaching I've observed the following: a teacher having an affair with a 10th-grade student, hostel workers stealing food and selling it, and teachers absent from school for weeks. Our students come from poor backgrounds. Many are unable to buy basic school supplies or pay their fees. I'm asked almost every day for food or money. All of these issues can become really wearing on a volunteer. How much is the volunteer expected to give? You begin to even grow

cynical about the “true” intentions of others.

Finally, to end on a high note, the students themselves are great to work with. They are very motivated and disciplined. They will become your best friends (if you let them). Even though they have so little, they very rarely complain.

Education Volunteer in Kavango Region

An Owambo wedding is a weeklong event, beginning with an announcement at church the Sunday before the ceremony. On the morning of the wedding, there is a ceremony at church, followed by a reception at the groom’s parents’ house and, a day later, a second reception at the bride’s parent’s house, usually in another village. Most people only go to the reception in their village. You don’t need an invitation – you just have to be acquainted with a relative or someone who is invited.

Everyone told me this wedding was going to be the biggest party of the year, and they weren’t kidding. I arrived at Tate Shilumbu’s house at about 10 a.m. The wedding party wasn’t expected to arrive until late afternoon, but already there were hundreds of people. Nine cattle and twice as many goats had been slaughtered, and huge pots were boiling with rice, pasta, and potatoes.

I can’t quite figure out what I’m supposed to be doing. Everybody else is bustling around the homestead, fetching water, cooking food, storing the soda in cool places. I’ve tried cooking, but I burn the food on the open fire; I’ve tried making potato salad, but I don’t include enough mayonnaise to the locals’ liking; I’ve tried serving people drinks, but I can’t seem to figure out who is entitled to which drinks, so I decide to wander.

I come across a group of six kukus, or old ladies, crammed across a couch in one of the rooms. When they see me, the ladies burst into joyous singing and dancing, and they invite me inside to join them. One of the kukus is trying to teach me how to dance. She is blowing a whistle on a triple beat and bouncing from one foot to the other. I can follow her dance, and I can blow the whistle to the correct beat, but I can’t perform both tasks simultaneously. The kukus take delight and laugh at my mistakes and become more jubilant, though I can’t decide if they’re celebrating the wedding or my errors.

Finally, the wedding party arrives. When the bride and groom arrive, everyone rushes outside to the gate to greet the newlyweds. There must be over a thousand people by now. Everybody is in a huge mob surrounding the bride and groom, singing, dancing, and blowing whistles. Women in the crowd give out a shrill, high pitched “lalalalalalalalala” cry that cannot be reproduced in text. It sounds like an Indian war cry you might hear on “Last of the Mohicans,” only it means the women are happy. They progress down the road in this manner, swinging horse tails and palm branches in the air. It’s a true celebration!

When they reach the house and all the singing, dancing, and “lalala” crying has died down, there is a presentation of gifts. I am now debating if I want a registry for my own wedding or if I want to be surprised by the hocus-pocus people bring like they do here. Although gifts seem random to the foreign eye, they are actually quite practical for a couple creating a new home in Namibia: an ax to cut down trees, a cauldron to cook over an open fire, a rake, broom, chairs ... any home furnishings are completely acceptable gifts. Following the presentation of gifts, everyone moves into big circus-like tents that have been rented for the occasion, where good food and drinks are served. This continues for several hours until everyone is drunk and merry, at which point they make their way home.

I am happily invited to another wedding in just two weeks. I even received my own invitation, “Miss Perry and

partner,” meaning I get first dibs on the food. Anyone who can get to Namibia in two weeks is welcome to be my plus one.

Education Volunteer in Oshikoto Region

You can feel so alone when you haven't left the village for quite some time. And when its 8:30 on a Saturday night and the family's stereo, which is always tuned to Oshiwambo radio, is, for some strange reason, playing Phil Collins' "Just One More Night," it will make you feel much lonelier than you were before the song began. It always seems to be a song that will enhance your sad feelings, make you want to cry and think of the things that were once called home.

It's found in the small things. I often question what legacy I will leave behind. Either way, there's no turning back now. My perception has changed, as well as my beliefs; however, the young children I work with every day always manage to put a smile on my face.

The school was in shambles when I first arrived. There was no apparent leadership and everything was unorganized, from staff meetings to the bookshelf. Hey, this is Africa, I kept telling myself, and things continued as they were. I refused my underlying ambitions to surface. It wasn't until, "Hey, this is home" when I desired to create something new. That was second term and five months into my service.

Let's build a chicken coop. The idea was blossomed by a selfish desire: I wanted eggs. Eggs are difficult to get from town back to the village. You have to protect them as if you are the hen itself. It was difficult enough finding a lift. Some days I would be in four or five different cars, in the back of bakkies with 20 other people, or just waiting for a lift sometimes for three hours or more. The last thing I wanted was the responsibility of protecting six measly eggs.

I recognized the need for an afterschool program. I talked the "chicken house" idea over with a few of my most clever students. They gave me the confidence to take it a step further. I started the business club. I had never started a club before and had no real plans for the future. I just wanted eggs. Many students joined and, in no time, we were electing club representatives and finding new innovative ways of making money: saving to pay for the "chicken house." The club grew popular and more students were wanting to join; teachers wanted to join.

It's now in its second year. We have earned enough money to build the "chicken house" and have extra to pay for a trip to Etosha Game Park.

Today the club and I walked through the bush in the midday sun, crossed knee-deep waters, with our hoes slung over our shoulders. We were working in the village. "Sir, can you swim?" "Do you know how to hoe?" "Do you know how to drive a bike?" their curiosity would compel them to gently ask me. We worked hard, sweat dripping from our faces. We joked and laughed together. We had fun. A small girl on the homestead we were working at followed me around and couldn't stop staring at me. I was her first oshilumbu (white person). Her fascination was evident and I was making her laugh.

On the way home, walking past the same homesteads I passed just hours earlier, the kids' spirits were still filled with joy, as they slowly disappeared into the bush one by one on their way home. Soon I was all alone, walking my own path. I took pleasure in watching the sun melt into the distant horizon, highlighting the thunderheads behind me with a magnificent ruby orange. Small boys were bringing in their goat herds. The sounds of thunder made me chuckle as I remembered the time a whole herd of goats broke into Grade Five's classroom to escape the night's downpour. The goats ate the books and sprinkled the floor with their droppings.

I soon came to the pastor's homestead. The lot was now vacant. It was a missed opportunity I regrettably failed to capitalize on. His pre-independence stories were rich and honest. Now he's gone and so are the many stories I never found time to hear. Approaching my own home I was greeted by my dog Booty. Whenever I'm in sight, he runs straight toward me, wagging his tail. Today he was giving me one of his famous smiles that looks more like an angry growl. I was home.

It's these small delights that have kept me above ground: frustrations are matched with unexpected simple pleasures. Both will surprise you and make you come alive.

Education Volunteer in Omusati Region

PACKING LIST

This list has been compiled by Volunteers serving in Namibia and is based on their experience. Use it as an informal guide in making your own list, bearing in mind that each experience is individual. There is no perfect list! You obviously cannot bring everything on the list, so consider those items that make the most sense to you personally and professionally. You can always have things sent to you later. As you decide what to bring, keep in mind that you have an 100-pound weight limit on baggage. And remember, you can get almost everything you need in Namibia

General Clothing

- Dress clothes for work and Peace Corps training.
 - Guys: dress pants, button down long- and short-sleeve shirts, ties.
 - Girls: dress pants, capris, or skirts below the knee. Nice tops that cover the shoulders.
- Casual clothes for around your site, visiting your shopping town, going on holiday, etc. Versatile clothing that can be dressed up for work or down for casual are always good. Don't forget clothes for sleeping/ lounging. Hat and/or sunglasses, too!
- Appearance is valued in Namibian culture. Clean and neat is important... And stylish is admired! I.e. jeans (especially skinny) are quite in fashion! Dressing fairly modestly is advised, but it's not overly emphasized here. Exposed knees, shoulders, etc. is mostly acceptable casually, but not in professional, work settings.
- Weather will likely range from very hot to quite cold (but it depends on your site and the time of year). Layers make a nice alternative to packing heavy sweaters or a coat. A light jacket or fleece is good to have, and you may need a hat and scarf for winter, even though it doesn't last very long. If you like hoodies, bring one. Do keep in mind that lighter-weight materials dry more quickly and are easier to wash by hand. It's good to pack clothes for all temperatures and climates, as you will likely travel to places with different climates than your site during your service.

Shoes

- Dress shoes for work (not all schools permit open-toed shoes for women)
- Casual shoes or sandals that are comfortable for doing a lot of walking some days
- Chacos, Tevas, or other hard rubber-soled shoes are very commonly worn by Volunteers (when appropriate) because of their comfort, durability, and long life, protection from thorns, ease to clean and get the sand out of, and they tend to be waterproof. Also great for hiking, if that's your thing
- Hiking shoes/boots if you enjoy the outdoors. (Already worn-in is even better!)

Personal Hygiene and Toiletry Items

- **HYGIENE PRODUCTS:** Deodorant may be the top one to bring in bulk from home unless you are not very picky. *Tide* pens are nice (and travel-sized ones can be found at *Target* in their small bins). As for the rest of the basics, bring at least a few weeks' supply, but you can buy the necessities in town or you

can buy them at better prices and with better selection in Windhoek when you go a few weeks after arriving.

- Women: Pack a good supply of tampons and/or pads. Quality here may not be to your satisfaction. Diva Cup comes highly recommended by many female volunteers.

Miscellaneous

- Nalgene or other durable water bottles (2 are recommended)
- Travel-sized umbrella or poncho
- Swiss army knife or Leatherman multi-tool
- Flashlight(s) (consider solar-powered ones, the ones you shake to recharge, or rechargeable batteries)
- Zip-lock bags in multiple sizes
- Duct tape.
- Wristwatch
- Driver's License (in case you rent a car for approved leave during holidays),
- Credit & debit cards,
- USD of \$120 or more (there's no set amount you should bring; it's whatever you feel comfortable handling, and no need to convert yet).
- Memorabilia: Photos, etc. to remind you of home.

Electronics:

- Laptop
- Camera
- Flash drive(s)
- MP3 Player
- Headphones
- Batteries are a bit pricey in Namibia so you may want to pack a bunch and/or get your hands on some rechargeable batteries (and don't forget the charger!)
- Kindle
- External hard drive (1-2 TB is not unreasonable)
- External speakers, and all chargers/accessories.

* The last few things may not seem crucial, but *many* PC volunteers share and consume a lot of movies and TV, even the ones who were never very into it before. As for a Kindle, you may or may not necessarily want to go out and buy one for Peace Corps, but if you have one or are an avid reader then consider bringing it. PCV's share a lot of books, too, and do know that there are great libraries of hard copy books in the office in Windhoek and the regional work stations.

You can pack it or you can buy it in Namibia:

- Outdoor gear: It is possible to buy everything you need here. If you are a gear junkie or you already have a tent, sleeping bag, pad, stove, etc. that is easy to packed, it may be best to bring it. But you can buy it here if you are more concerned about packing space/weight than quality, selection, and bang-for-your-buck.
- Sheets and towels
- Pad locks (small-medium)
- Spices (specialty and Mexican-type spices are tougher to find in Namibia)
- Coffee (...But instant coffee can also be nice to receive in care packages)

- Cell phone which takes a SIM card, but do check with your cell phone provider if it will be compatible here. Note: PC volunteers are required to have a cell phone and PC gives you an allowance for this after you arrive. Most Volunteers buy basic cell phones quite cheaply in Namibia (and many internet-capable phones also fall into this category).
- Host family gifts such as photos, candy, stickers, t-shirts, mugs, and souvenir-type things relating to the U.S. in general or, more specifically, where you're from. Remember to keep both adults and kids in mind, and that you will likely have two host families: one during training and one at your permanent site. Also, it is possible to take a photo with your host family, print it at a Kodak-type machine in Windhoek, and put it in a frame as a very nice gift.

PRE-DEPARTURE CHECKLIST

The following list consists of suggestions for you to consider as you prepare to live outside the United States for two years. Not all items will be relevant to everyone, and the list does not include everything you should make arrangements for.

Family

- Notify family that they can call the Peace Corps' Counseling and Outreach Unit at any time if there is a critical illness or death of a family member (24-hour telephone number: 1-855-855-1961, then press 2, then extension 1470; or directly at 202-692-1470).
- Give the Peace Corps' *On the Home Front* handbook to family and friends.

Passport/Travel

- Forward to the Peace Corps travel office all paperwork for the Peace Corps passport and visas.
- Verify that your luggage meets the size and weight limits for international travel.
- Obtain a personal passport if you plan to travel after your service ends. (Your Peace Corps passport will expire three months after you finish your service, so if you plan to travel longer, you will need a regular passport.)

Medical/Health

- Complete any needed dental and medical work.
- If you wear glasses, bring two pairs.
- Arrange to bring a three-month supply of all medications (including birth control pills) you are currently taking.

Insurance

- Make arrangements to maintain life insurance coverage.
- Arrange to maintain supplemental health coverage while you are away. (Even though the Peace Corps is responsible for your health care during Peace Corps service overseas, it is advisable for people who have pre-existing conditions to arrange for the continuation of their supplemental health coverage. If there is a lapse in coverage, it is often difficult and expensive to be reinstated.)
- Arrange to continue Medicare coverage if applicable.

Personal Papers

- Bring a copy of your certificate of marriage or divorce.

Voting

- Register to vote in the state of your home of record. (Many state universities consider voting and payment of state taxes as evidence of residence in that state.)
- Obtain a voter registration card and take it with you overseas.
- Arrange to have an absentee ballot forwarded to you overseas.

Personal Effects

- Purchase personal property insurance to extend from the time you leave your home for service overseas until the time you complete your service and return to the United States.

Financial Management

- Keep a bank account in your name in the U.S.
- Obtain student loan deferment forms from the lender or loan service.
- Execute a Power of Attorney for the management of your property and business.
- Arrange for deductions from your readjustment allowance to pay alimony, child support, and other debts through the Office of Volunteer Financial Operations at 855.855.1961, extension 1770.
- Place all important papers—mortgages, deeds, stocks, and bonds—in a safe deposit box or with an attorney or other caretaker.

CONTACTING PEACE CORPS HEADQUARTERS

This list of numbers will help connect you with the appropriate office at Peace Corps headquarters to answer various questions. You can use the toll-free number and extension or dial directly using the local numbers provided. Be sure to leave the toll-free number and extensions with your family so they can contact you in the event of an emergency.

Peace Corps Headquarters Toll-free Number: 855.855.1961, Press 1 or the Ext. # (see below)

Peace Corps' Mailing Address: Peace Corps Headquarters
1111 20th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20526

For Questions About:	Staff:	Toll-Free Ext:	Direct/Local Number:
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Responding to an Invitation:	Office of Placement	x1840	202.692.1840
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Country Information:	Patrick Koster	x2323	202.692.2323
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Desk Officer/Namibia, Malawi, Ethiopia

Namibia@peacecorps.gov

Plane Tickets, Passports, Visas, or other travel matters:

	CWT SATO Travel	x1170	202.692.1170
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Legal Clearance:	Office of Placement	x1840	202.692.1840
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Medical Clearance and Forms Processing (includes dental):

	Screening Nurse	x1500	202.692.1500
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Medical Reimbursements (handled by a subcontractor):			800.818.8772
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Loan Deferrals, Taxes, Financial Operations:		x1770	202.692.1770
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Readjustment Allowance Withdrawals, Power of Attorney, Staging (Pre-Departure Orientation), and Reporting Instructions:

Office of Staging x1865 202.692.1865

Note: You will receive comprehensive information (hotel and flight arrangements) three to five weeks prior to departure. This information is not available sooner.

Family Emergencies (to get information to a Volunteer overseas) 24 hours:

Counseling & x1470 202.692.1470
Outreach Unit