

Peace Corps Volunteer Safety and Security

Table of Contents

I.	Introduction	2
II.	Review of New Office of Safety and Security	4
III.	Assessment of General Accounting Office 2002 Study Status of Recommended Initiatives on Volunteer Safety and Security	7 7
IV.	Volunteer Safety and Security – Training, Programming, Communications and Clustering	10
	A. Training.....	10
	B. Programming.....	14
	C. Communicating with the Volunteer at the Site.....	17
	D. Clustering.....	20
V.	2002 Peace Corps Volunteer Survey: Safety and Security	23
	A. Volunteers’ perception of safety	24
	B. Community Integration: Key to Safety.....	24
VI.	The Changing World in which Peace Corps Operates	25
VII.	Overview of the Relationships of the Peace Corps with Other Federal Agencies	26
	A. Prevention of Crimes Against Volunteers	26
	B. Follow-up after the Occurrence of a Violent Crime	28
VIII.	Conclusion	30

Appendix

A.	Manual Section 270: Safety and Security Implementation Procedures
B.	Manual Section 270: Volunteer/Trainee Safety and Security
C.	Evacuation Support Guide – January 2000
D.	Pre-Service Training Safety and Security Competencies
E.	Volunteer Safety Training – PST – Best Practices for Safety Training
F.	Safety and Security Coordinator Workshop Agenda (Eastern and Southern Africa, Peru)
G.	PCV Site Locator Information
H.	Summary of Trends in 2002 Safety Report
I.	Glossary of Acronyms

Peace Corps Volunteer Safety and Security

“Recognizing that Peace Corps Volunteers are working on the cutting edge in an ever-changing world, it is essential that we continue to make their safety and security our number one priority. The Peace Corps has strong research, planning, training, and compliance systems in place so that Volunteers can do what they signed up to do—effectively carry out their mission of training men and women and building cross-cultural relationships.”

— Gaddi H. Vasquez
Peace Corps Director

I. Introduction

The safety and security of our Volunteers is the top priority for the Peace Corps. Meeting the President’s initiative to double the number of Peace Corps Volunteers from 7,000 to 14,000 by FY 2007 is entirely dependent on the Peace Corps providing a safe and secure environment during the Volunteers term of service.

Volunteer safety and security has always been fundamental to the Peace Corps’ mission and its three goals. However, in today’s unpredictable world, many areas can quickly become volatile and this changing context it is imperative to educate Volunteers to conduct themselves in the safest possible manner. While the Peace Corps can never design or build a perfect safety system, it must do everything possible to ensure that all Volunteers are given the knowledge and tools to perform their service safely and in a secure environment.

Peace Corps’ safety and security philosophy is one of full Volunteer integration. This means thoughtful design of viable projects, the adaptation of Volunteers into their sites, and the development of the Volunteers’ support network. These are among the most significant factors to ensure Volunteer safety and security. By setting safety and security as the highest priority, it ensures focus on Volunteer integration in all aspects of training, project development, and site selection-- elements that have been a part of the Peace Corps’ mission and three goals since it began in 1961.

Each Peace Corps country has unique challenges for Volunteers and staff regardless of region, history, language, or primary religious belief. Each post’s safety and security measures will reflect these differences often taking into account the cultural differences among the 71 nations in which Peace Corps serves.

The principle documents outlining Peace Corps’ safety and security policies are found in the Peace Corps Manual Section (MS) 270 on Volunteer/Trainee Safety and Security, MS 350 on Emergency Action Plans, the Office of Medical Services Technical Guidelines, and agency, regional and country specific standard operating procedures. These manual sections, and related operating procedures, specifically delineate the safety and security roles and responsibilities of

both staff and Volunteers at post and at the Peace Corps headquarters. These documents were significantly upgraded following the 2002 GAO study on Volunteer safety. Country Directors enforce the manual sections and are held directly accountable for non-compliance. The Office of the Inspector General (OIG) includes safety and security as part of its inspections.

The basic systems that Country Directors monitor and ensure are in place at each post are as follows:

- Participation in the Embassy's Emergency Action Committee (EAC) and meeting regularly with Embassy personnel to discuss relevant safety and security threats within the country;
- Development of an Emergency Action Plan (EAP) and ensuring that the plan is part of the larger Mission emergency preparedness plan. This plan must be reviewed and tested at least annually. Volunteers should receive a copy of the EAP and understand how to use it and what their respective roles are;
- Distribution of information to all Peace Corps Volunteers arriving in-country about the safety and security environment in their country. This message is reiterated through invitation materials developed by in-country staff, during pre-service training, and in-service trainings. Volunteers are required to report criminal/threatening incidents following specific procedures, which Country Directors subsequently disseminate to inform Volunteers about potential risks within the country;
- Verification that all Peace Corps Volunteers arriving in-country have a well-designed job with a counterpart organization;
- Assurance that the Peace Corps trainees are trained and meet minimum competencies in areas of language, cross-cultural integration, technical skills, health, and safety and security. Some countries have developed additional competencies, which they feel are necessary for Volunteer safety in particular countries. (See Appendix - Pre-Service Training Safety and Security Competencies.) Messages on safety and security are not limited to one training segment, yet woven throughout the various training modules to reiterate their importance.
- Location of sites that are well developed and meeting basic minimum standards which allow the Volunteer to be able to find acceptable housing, expect reliable public transportation, obtain basic consumer goods and services, and expect reliable, supportive counterparts;
- Regular contact with the Department of State's Regional Security Officer; and
- Full compliance with MS 270, which incorporates the above activities.

MS 270 compliance tool: The creation of a compliance tool for MS 270 was implemented in June 2002. Country Directors certify that they are in compliance and have the necessary

documentation to demonstrate that compliance. Once a Country Director has certified compliance, headquarters staff such as the regional leadership, the Country Desk Units, or the OIG can review and monitor compliance.

Volunteer Safety Council (VSC): The VSC is an inter-office body of the Peace Corps whose mission “is to unite agency leadership to support Country Directors in fulfilling their responsibility for Volunteer safety.” It has played an important role in the development and implementation of MS 270, revising and distributing the *Crisis Management Handbook* and the *Rape Response Handbook* and creating the Safety Assessment Tool for assessing potential threats in Peace Corps countries.

II. Review of New Office of Safety and Security

In 2002, a separate Office of Safety and Security was established by the Peace Corps Director. Because safety and security is the Peace Corps’ top priority, the agency authorized 80 new positions in the field and at headquarters and restructured the safety and security system to manage the infrastructure. This ensures that the agency can be in full compliance with its safety and security procedures and provide the critical back up to the new MS 270 compliance components. The office includes three divisions—Volunteer safety and overseas security (VSOS); information and personnel security; and emergency preparedness plans, training, and exercise.

Associate Director for Safety and Security – centralizing safety and security oversight:

This new office is led by the Associate Director for Peace Corps Safety and Security and is designed to foster improved communication, coordination, compliance, and accountability. Reporting to the Peace Corps Director, this senior position has oversight for all agency safety and security activities. These include Volunteer/trainee safety and security, staff, trainee, and Volunteer training, domestic and international physical security, information technology security, Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP), staff and Volunteer background checks, and trend analysis.

Because safety and security is the personal and collective responsibility of all Peace Corps staff and Volunteers, agency safety and security must remain integrated throughout the organization. Hired in March 2003, the new Associate Director ensures that responsibilities are carried out effectively and provides coordination across departments and offices.

Chief Compliance Officer: Another new position created in the last 18 months is the Chief Compliance Officer. The Compliance Officer reports directly to the agency’s Director and works with the Office of Safety and Security. This person is responsible for tracking and following up on all compliance reports, providing oversight to the activities that need a response, and ensuring compliance with reports from the Office of the Inspector General. Over 60 percent of the Peace Corps compliance requirements involve safety and security.

Research Psychologist: Another key new position in the Office of Safety and Security is the research psychologist, who is working to enhance the office’s ability to track crime statistics,

identify trends in criminal activity, and highlight potential safety risks to Volunteers on both a regional and worldwide basis.

Volunteer Safety and Overseas Security moves to new Associate Director's Office: In addition, the current Office of Volunteer Safety and Overseas Security (VSOS), consisting of a coordinator and an associate has now moved to this new office. VSOS division holds primary responsibility for safety and security training and resource support for Peace Corps staff regarding Volunteer safety and security. It is also staffed by a Safety and Security Specialist and nine regional, field-based Peace Corps Safety and Security Officers (PCSSOs). It provides leadership and guidance to the agency in support of Country Directors, their staffs and Volunteers in all areas related to Volunteer safety and security. The VSOS has as its objectives, to:

- Plan, coordinate and facilitate activities of the VSC;
- Consult with and build consensus among agency offices on a broad range of Volunteer safety and overseas security issues;
- Oversee implementation of Volunteer safety and security improvement strategies developed by posts as set forth in MS 270; and
- Direct headquarters Volunteer related staff training.

Peace Corps Regional Safety and Security Officers (PCSSOs): Nine Regional PCSSOs are placed throughout the world to provide country specific training, support, and resource back up to all assigned countries in their sub-regions. They report to the VSOS division and work out of El Salvador, Peru, Togo, Uganda, Lesotho, Romania, Kazakhstan, Thailand, and the Philippines. They are available to travel to other overseas locations, upon request, to provide staff support and training, materials development and safety and security reviews. Three more PCSSOs are slated to come on board in FY 2004, bringing the total to 12. Specific duties for the PCSSOs are described below:

Under the supervision of the Coordinator for Volunteer Safety and Overseas Security, the PCSSO:

- Ensures the integration of trainings, workshops and activities for regions into the Volunteer Safety Support System, which are consistent with policies and standards set forth by the Agency. The PCSSO reports directly to the Coordinator for Volunteer Safety and Overseas Security, and collaborates primarily with Country Directors. The PCSSO works closely with Program and Training Officers (PTOs), (including the Sub-regional Programming and Training Officers for each region), Associate Peace Corps Directors (APCDs), Peace Corps Medical Officers (PCMOs), General Service Officer, Volunteer Leaders and Volunteers. The PCSSO acts as a liaison with the State Department Regional Security Officer (RSO) and communicates on a regular basis with the Safety and Security Specialist at Headquarters.
- Develops and conducts regional trainings, conferences and workshops that will enable each post to improve components of the Volunteer Safety Support System,

(including, but not limited to: information sharing, site selection and development, safety and security training, incident reporting and response, and Emergency Action Plan (EAP) planning and testing).

- Evaluates existing training programs and procedures and assists in the development of safety and security training guidelines and modules for regions that are consistent with Agency standards.
- In consultation with the Department of State RSO, conducts regional safety and security assessments of Peace Corps offices and facilities, Volunteer and staff residences to ensure they are consistent with Peace Corps standards.
- Analyzes and prepares reports on safety and security activities for the purpose of recommending revised procedures and program management guidance to the region.
- Assesses regional Volunteer safety and security concerns/issues and designs a series of strategies to improve a post's ability to address these concerns/issues.
- Collects and disseminates resources/best practices to all posts through participation and facilitation at workshops, conferences and joint training events with other posts.
- Facilitates the collection and analysis of post and sub-regional safety and security information/data and provides posts with current safety and security information, data and reports.
- Provides regular and recurring written Status Reports to the Coordinator for Volunteer Safety and Overseas Security and written special reports as considered necessary or directed by the Coordinator.
- Assists in the management of regional safety and security crisis situations as they arise in the region in concert with Country Director and Headquarters staff.
- Participates in the safety and security components of pre-service training and in-service training at posts where this participation will advance and support the Country Director's activities.
- Performs other safety and security related tasks as assigned by the Coordinator for Volunteer Safety and Overseas Security.

Safety and Security Desk Officers: These three new positions were filled in FY 2003, one for each region, to provide safety and security compliance back up to Country Desk Units (CDU) and Regional Directors. They also conduct CDU and regional staff training and support, primarily through the Desk Units, review the work of the posts, and inform the region on specific field-based safety and security issues.

Safety and Security Support Positions at Posts: Each post is primarily responsible for Volunteer safety and security through the implementation of MS 270. Because new compliance measurements are clearly stated and documentation is required, each post now has either a full- or part-time locally hired Administrative Associate, to support compliance demands. This person reports to the Country Director, is the main point of contact for the Peace Corps Safety and Security Officers (PCSSOs), and is responsible for tracking and following-up on safety and security measures at post.

Funding: In FY 2002, the Peace Corps spent approximately \$8.3 million on specific safety and security related activities. This included the personnel in the new Office of Safety and Security, the safety desk officers in each of the three regions, the new overseas positions, trainee preparation, staff training, the Situation Room, telecommunications equipment, guard services, equipment and vehicles.

In FY 2003, the total was approximately \$10 million and in FY 2004 the amount is expected to be close to \$13 million, which would include some physical security upgrades.

The above funding amounts do not, however, reflect the total budget dollars spent on safety and security. Safety and security is incorporated into nearly every activity in which the Peace Corps undertakes from Volunteer recruitment and staging to in-country training, programming, and medical care to the Office of the Inspector General. These are just some of the examples of additional safety and security measures, which are not specifically included in the Office of Safety and Security budget.

III. Assessment of General Accounting Office 2002 Study

Overview:

The General Accounting Office (GAO) conducted an extensive review of Peace Corps' safety and security practices in 2001 through May of 2002. The GAO evaluation, issued in the July 2002 report "*Initiatives for Addressing Safety and Security Challenges Hold Promise, but Progress Should Be Assessed*," included a description of rates and trends in crime against Volunteers and a review of the agency's system for generating this information. It described the framework of the agency for maintaining Volunteer safety and security and evaluated the Peace Corps' implementation of this framework. Lastly, the report reviewed the agency initiatives to improve current practices.

A. Status of Recommended Initiatives on Volunteer Safety and Security

Recommendations:

The GAO had two main recommendations for the Peace Corps, as a result of its report.

Recommendation #1:

That the Peace Corps develop indicators to assess the effectiveness of the agency's initiatives (to heighten the safety and security of the Volunteer).

Outcome:

Over the past 20 months, the agency has developed and adopted indicators by revising the Peace Corps' MS 270, initiating compliance tools, and improving internal tracking systems. Examples of a few of these changes are described below. The outcome of these initiatives is also addressed in the Peace Corps' annual Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) submission in which safety and security is the first General Goal.

Changes to MS 270

MS 270, the guide for the safety and security of the Volunteer, was finalized in June 2002. The Peace Corps continues to integrate MS 270 into all Peace Corps activities. It is the backbone of Peace Corps field-based safety and security systems and provides guidance and support to all agency personnel. (See Appendix – Manual Section 270: Safety and Security Implementation Procedures; Manual Section 270: Volunteer/Trainee Safety and Security.)

The Peace Corps has focused on strengthening the implementation of MS 270 in three significant areas:

1) The establishment of standards for safety systems. For example, a compliance tool was developed in 2002 to assess country posts on a quarterly basis to determine if they are in compliance with various safety and security measures. The categories assessed include: Country Director responsibilities; Volunteer and trainee responsibilities; monitoring, assessing and disseminating of information; training; selection and monitoring of sites; reporting and responding to incidents against Volunteers; and the development of an Emergency Action Plan. These quarterly reports are then reviewed by the agency's three Regional Directors (Africa; Europe, Mediterranean, and Asia; and, Inter-America and the Pacific) and transferred to the Chief Compliance Officer for further review and analysis. After these reviews, the Compliance Officer briefs the Director and other members of the senior staff and facilitates the implementation of any recommended actions.

2) The development of comprehensive standard operating procedures (SOPs) for the Emergency Action Plan (EAP) template. The EAP is a country-specific document that sets forth a detailed plan of action to be followed by the post in the event of various emergency situations, including an evacuation. (See Appendix - Evacuation Support Guide – January 2000.) The Volunteer Safety Council in mid-October approved a final draft of the new SOPs for the EAPs. The document, once formatted and edited, will be placed on a CD-ROM and sent to each post by January 31, 2004. The posts will be required to use the information when updating and upgrading their EAPs.

3) The creation of site development procedural guidance. Site development is one of the most critical features of a safe and successful Volunteer experience. The Peace Corps Country Director is ultimately responsible for the safety and well being of all Volunteers. Although Associate Peace Corps Directors (APCD) or Project Managers

make recommendations for potential Volunteer sites, the final approval rests with the Country Director. Site selection guidance was revised in May 2003 and includes a number of compliance items such as: formal invitation from a community or agency; housing criteria; consultation of site history files; counterpart orientation; and, a suggested timeline for site identification and selection. (See Appendix - Site Development Procedural Guidance.) Site selection is an area, which is continually under review and the agency is always seeking methods of improvement.

Tracking Peace Corps Volunteer assaults

The agency is also in the process of improving its method of tracking the rate of assault incidents against Volunteers to reduce and prevent future assaults. The Assault Notification and Surveillance System (ANSS), which Peace Corps designed in 1990 will undergo further adjustments to revise its reporting methods and become a more comprehensive assault tracking system. (See section **VII. Peace Corps Relationship with other Federal Agencies.**)

Recommendation #2:

That the Peace Corps develop a strategy to address staff turnover, in light of the five year rule, and request a waiver from Congress.

Outcome:

Legislative language in the Peace Corps FY 2003 appropriations bill gave the agency a waiver of the five-year rule for staff involved in Volunteer safety, at the discretion of the Director. After careful analysis, 23 positions have been determined, to date, to fall under this waiver. The legislative language is below:

For necessary expenses to carry out the provisions of the Peace Corps Act (75 Stat. 612), \$297,000,000, including the purchase of not to exceed five passenger motor vehicles for administrative purposes for use outside of the United States: Provided, That none of the funds appropriated under this heading shall be used to pay for abortions: Provided further, That funds appropriated under this heading shall remain available until September 30, 2004: Provided further, That the Director of the Peace Corps may make appointments or assignments, or extend current appointments or assignments, to permit United States citizens to serve for periods in excess of 5 years in the case of individuals whose appointment or assignment, such as regional safety security officers and employees within the Office of the Inspector General, involves the safety of Peace Corps volunteers: Provided further, That the Director of the Peace Corps may make such appointments or assignments notwithstanding the provisions of section 7 of the Peace Corps Act limiting the length of an appointment or assignment, the circumstances under which such an appointment or assignment may exceed 5 years, and the percentage of appointments or assignments that can be made in excess of 5 years. (*Appropriation of \$297,000 thousand was reduced by a rescission of \$1,930.5 thousand.)*

In addition, the Peace Corps is continually strengthening its safety and security training and tracking systems to mitigate the effects of staff turnover. Since all staff and Volunteers are

involved in safety and security in some capacity, it is important that safety and security is woven throughout all phases of initial orientation and on-going training. For example, Emergency Action Plans (EAPs) templates and standard operating procedures, site development procedures, site locator forms, and the quarterly reporting of MS 270 implementation (as noted above), make it easier for new staff to understand and implement required safety and security activities. Each Region is also seeking ways to standardize staffing operations, budget functions, and establishing project management processes to enhance Volunteer productivity, which in turn bolsters Volunteer safety.

IV. Volunteer Safety and Security – Training, Programming, Communications and Clustering

A. Training

Training is the most important aspect of Peace Corps’ ability to ensure adequate safety and security for Volunteers. This includes safety and security training for Volunteers throughout their Peace Corps experience beginning with the application process to their close of service. Additionally, ensuring that Peace Corps staff at headquarters, in the field, and in the regional recruiting offices are well-trained is an important factor so that they can effectively work to ensure the safety of the Volunteer and help prepare applicants for their own safety and security roles. The ability of the Volunteer to successfully carry out the Peace Corps’ goals is based on this preparation, support, and understanding of safety and security expectations and requirements. The Chief Compliance Officer is responsible for verifying compliance of all training activities. The training activities of the Peace Corps include the following:

Volunteer Safety and Security Training

<p>Current applicant information opportunities</p>	<p>Current safety and security information available to the applicants include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruiter information throughout the recruitment process; • Welcome Books with consistent safety and security information; • Placement officer conversations; • Assignment descriptions that include safety and security information; • Panels and other sessions through Regional Recruitment Offices; • Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Mentors; and • Agency Website with updated safety and security information.
<p>Training Framework Project for</p>	<p>The Training Framework Project (online learning tools)</p>

<p>Peace Corps Applicants and other applicant information opportunities</p> <p>(The first phase is currently being piloted.)</p>	<p>is developing critical training opportunities for applicants to prepare them for taking personal responsibility for safety and security, choices, and change.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through these tools, integrated safety training begins as soon as the volunteer applies to Peace Corps. In the fall, Peace Corps introduced for the first time, on-line learning tools and exercises in the areas of language, culture and the role of the Volunteer in development. These tools increase knowledge with the goal of producing more effective, safe, successful Volunteers throughout their service. Volunteer safety and security is addressed in a variety of ways throughout.
<p>Staging for Trainees</p> <p>Trainees take part in a two-day orientation prior to departing the U.S. for their host country.</p>	<p>In the summer of 2002, the Peace Corps went from a one-day to two-day staging. The two-days are spent focusing almost exclusively on safety and security and the importance of personal responsibility. This reinforces the themes articulated during the application process and flows directly to the Pre-Service training that follows. The staging includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peace Corps approach to safety and security; • Awareness of policies and procedures that must be followed; • Acceptance of cultural differences that exist and willingness to make adjustments; • Awareness of risks and how they can be managed; and • Understanding that Volunteers, Peace Corps staff, community have specific responsibilities for Volunteer safety.
<p>Pre-Service Training</p> <p>Trainees spend two to three months training in language, technical skills, and cross-cultural, health and personal safety issues. After successful completion of training and passing competency tests, trainees are sworn in as Peace Corps Volunteers.</p>	<p>Safety and security components are woven throughout the three months of training, beginning with living with host families and learning the local language. Trainees also learn technical skills as well as cross-cultural, health and personal safety issues. Training modules are based on those of Staging, but specific to the country and in much more depth. In addition to the important language and cultural training needed for Volunteer integration, trainees receive extensive training on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency evacuations procedures; • Peace Corps' safety and security support system;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The importance of reporting safety incidents; and • Overall responsibilities for risk reduction. <p>Volunteers are required to show safety and security competencies in eight areas by the end of training. (See <u>Appendix - Pre-Service Training Safety and Security Competencies and the sample Pre-Service Training Best Practices for Safety Training.</u>)</p>
<p>In-Service Training</p> <p>Staff conducts periodic continuing education training sessions for Volunteers.</p>	<p>Safety and security is built into technical In-Service training as well, which can occur throughout the two years of service. In most countries a separate mandatory In-Service training occurs about half way through the Volunteer’s time of service. This periodic training aims to address changing health and safety issues and improve Volunteers’ technical and language skills.</p>

Headquarters Staff Safety and Security Training

Country Desk Unit/Regional staff training	At least every two years, safety and security related training is given to the Desk Units and staff in the three regions. The training is predominately related to MS 270 implementation and compliance, including monitoring and tracking each Country’s EAPs.
US Regional Recruiting Office/Recruiter/Regional Manager training	At least once every two years, Regional recruiting staff in all 11 Regional Offices is trained by VSOS. This is the beginning of the consistent Peace Corps safety and security message given to applicants that Peace Corps’ approach to safety is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peace Corp service involves risk; • Adopting a culturally appropriate life style and integrating into the host country’s community is key; and • Peace Corps posts have effective safety and security support systems if there is a threat to Volunteer safety.
Headquarters staff training in safety and security and emergency procedures	Offered every six months, an overall orientation to Volunteer safety and security and domestic physical safety. A security briefing is offered to each headquarters staff member.

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Overseas Staff Pre-Service Safety and Security Training

Overseas Staff Training (OST) / Country Directors/ Associate Directors/Peace Corps Safety and Security Officers (PCSSOs)/ Safety and Security Coordinators	<p>One day of safety and security training and integrated components in other training modules</p> <p>Components, depending on group, include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety and security policies and procedures; • Emergency Action Plans; • Safety and security philosophy; • Country Director/Associate Peace Corps Director responsibilities; • Security threats/general operational security awareness; • Site Selection/housing criteria; • Volunteers and counterpart communication; and • Working with other U.S. government agencies and organizations focusing on safety and security.
Medical Overseas Staff Training (MOST) / Peace Corps Medical Officers	<p>At least one full day of safety and security training. Peace Corps experience has shown that health and safety and security of Volunteers are intimately linked. Training is provided in identifying and preventing high-risk behavior by Volunteers.</p>
Administrative Officer Training (AOT)/Administrative Officers	<p>Modules of safety and security linked to relevant areas of administrative training.</p>
Training of Trainer Training/In-house and contract Pre-Service Trainers	<p>Modules of safety and security training for Volunteers are reviewed. Methods discussed to integrate modules into all aspects of Pre-service training.</p>

Overseas Staff In-Service Safety and Security Training

Sub-Regional Staff Training/CDs, APCDs, Volunteers	<p>At least once every two years, three days of sub-regional training (both representative staff and Volunteers) by PCSSOs.</p>
Regional Continuing Medical Education (CME)	<p>At least once a year, all Medical Officers (PCMOs) receive updates on health, safety, and security</p>

	information, and reinforcing the need for Volunteer training in personal responsibility.
Country Director Conferences	At least once every two years, CDs have nearly a full day of briefings on safety and security changes, updates, and issues related to their overall Region.
APCD Conferences	At least once every two years, APCDs receive up to a day of briefings on safety and security issues. This information is reinforced in other training modules throughout the conference.
PCSSO Conferences	At least once every two years, PCSSOs receive comprehensive updates on safety and security training, monitoring, and compliance.
Safety and Security Coordinator Training	<p>Beginning this fall with all Safety and Security Coordinators on board, Safety and Security Coordinators receive comprehensive updates on safety and security training, monitoring, and compliance. In the fall of 2003, regional training programs were offered to all new Safety and Security Coordinators worldwide. These coordinators have become the critical human resource for ensuring monitoring, tracking, and follow-up. Their training had the purpose of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reviewing Peace Corps safety and security systems using MS 270 as a guide ○ Sharing best practices between safety and security colleagues ○ Getting to know their fellow safety and security staff. <p>Peace Corps expects that this will also become a biennial training event. (<u>See Appendix - Example of an October 2003 training conference agenda.</u>)</p>

B. Programming

In addition to being well-trained on safety procedures and provided important language and cultural training for integration into the community, ***a safe and secure Volunteer is one who is working in the community on a well-designed project.*** In its programming, Peace Corps works to ensure Volunteers have clearly defined job assignments. Solid training and jobs enable Volunteers to become more quickly involved in their work, build a support network that includes

their new colleagues, and produce measurable project outcomes. These factors lead to higher rates of Volunteer job satisfaction, which is important to Volunteer safety.

The site development process has multiple facets. The Peace Corps provides Volunteers with sites that are safe and with assignments that are viable and meaningful. First and foremost, for a Volunteer's safety and security, it is essential to confirm that the appropriate infrastructure exists to support a Volunteer. In accordance with written guidelines, this includes verifying access to medical, banking, postal, and other essential services; assessing the availability of communication, transportation, and markets; and determining if appropriate housing is available.

Site development places Volunteers in meaningful assignments.

In addition to assessing the site to meet security criteria, ultimately, Volunteers need meaningful work that supports the purpose and goals of the project in the Volunteer's community. They also need community partners who have the interest and resources to support them in their work. Site development helps fulfill these needs. It begins with the first contact the Peace Corps makes with a community or organization and continues until the Peace Corps leaves.

Site development is divided into four areas:

- Identification and selection
- Volunteer placement
- On-going partnership
- Phasing out

During site development Peace Corps staff are involved in the following activities with each partner:

- Orienting the community to the Peace Corps' development philosophy and project plan
- Discussing possibilities for working together
- Getting agreement on expectations for the duration of the Peace Corps' involvement
- Getting agreement on each partner's roles and responsibilities
- Assigning Volunteers to increase local capacities if the partner meets the Peace Corps criteria and if Volunteers with appropriate skills are available
- Including partners in monitoring and evaluation processes
- Communicating activities and outcomes related to the project
- Including agency staff and community members in workshops where information on the Peace Corps, technical knowledge, and skills are learned
- Agreeing when the Peace Corps' support is no longer needed

This collaboration provides a mutual sharing of ideas and a process of mutual growth as the Peace Corps and the community learn about and work with each other to meet the communities' needs and achieve the goals of the Peace Corps.

To clarify the roles of all of the participating entities, it is helpful to have a Community Agreement that clearly outlines the expectations in writing. This is a sample of the important elements contained in a community agreement.

**Community Agreement –
Sample of Important Elements including Roles and Responsibilities**

Topics to Include in an Agreement

Preamble: The reason for cooperation between Peace Corps and the host agency.

Purpose: Refers to the Country Agreement, host agency development needs, and the Peace Corps' response to those needs through the project plan.

Project Development: Refers to the collaborative development of the project.

Request for Volunteers: Outlines how posts can request Volunteers and the Peace Corps' timing, standards, and qualifications for applicants.

Training: Refers to on-going knowledge and skill building during the PST and ISTs. Identifies the components (technical, language, cultural, health, and safety).

Volunteer Assignment: Refers to how sites are identified, minimum criteria, and procedures for site reassignment.

Partner Agency Responsibilities: Lists expectations, including day-to-day supervision of Volunteer, provision of viable work that does not take the place of a qualified and available local person, orientation to the agency/community including introductions to key people, mutual transfer of knowledge and skills through formal and informal training, designation of a work partner, provision of communication in the event of an emergency, provision of materials and supplies, reimbursement for job-related transportation, provision for or identification of housing, provision for part of either the settling-in or monthly living allowance (if applicable), provision of a translator or language tutor, permission for Volunteer to participate in the Peace Corps trainings and functions, provision for Volunteer to participate in activities in addition to the primary assignment.

Volunteer Responsibilities: Lists expectations, including dedication to supporting partner agency through meeting expectations of job description, mutual transfer of skills and knowledge, community activities in addition to the primary assignment, following of Peace Corps policies and guidelines as outlined in the *Volunteer Handbook*, guidelines for leave and time away from site, procedures for authorization from host supervisor for leave, living and working in accordance to the laws of the U.S. and the host country.

Peace Corps Responsibilities: Lists expectations, including settling-in allowance and monthly living allowance that supports Volunteer style of living at the level of host-country staff, medical and dental care, Peace Corps-related domestic and international travel to and from site, training throughout the two years of service, site visits, and conducts analysis of safety and security.

Peace Corps Policies: Lists the policies that will cause the Peace Corps to begin procedures for Administrative Separation.

Period of Assignment: Refers to length of tour of duty and criteria and procedures for transfers, resignations, and extensions.

Extension of Service: Refers to procedure and criteria for continued Volunteer service, as well as timing of requests.

Problem Solving: Refers to procedures that the host-country partner agency should use if there is a problem that they cannot solve by working with the Volunteer, and procedures for reassigning or replacing a Volunteer.

Project Evaluation: Refers to Peace Corps activities (quarterly reports, MSCs, evaluation instruments, etc.) and collaborative efforts.

Amendments: Refers to procedure for amending agreement.

Termination: Refers to termination of agreement, giving 30 days written notice.

Other Agreements: Includes in the sections above any other agreements that the Peace Corps has made with the partner agency.

Signatures: Principal person from the community or partner agency, the Peace Corps, community members, or Volunteers.

A Volunteer placement strategy matches Volunteers' skills and interests with appropriate assignments and community needs.

Peace Corps posts have a placement strategy that identifies how to determine where to assign Volunteers. As strategies are developed or revised, they address a number of variables. These variables include the goals and objectives of the project, the skills of Volunteers, partner agency capacity for appropriate Volunteer support, participation of other development agencies, and availability and interest of partner agencies to work with Volunteers.

The Volunteer placement strategy designed for the project framework describes:

- how many Volunteers are needed
- what experience and skills they should have
- where they will be placed
- what resources will be needed

Additionally, posts take into account issues such as rural or urban placement, sites that are geographically centralized or decentralized, and whether other Volunteers working on projects in similar or different sectors are nearby.

Peace Corps Volunteers primarily work in one of six sectors – agriculture, business development, education, the environment, health and HIV/AIDS, and youth. Projects in areas such as information and communications technology overlap in all of the sectors. While many Volunteers have advanced degrees, a specific area of expertise, and a wealth of life experiences, others are skilled generalists who are willing to serve in areas of need after receiving technical training. ***According to the respondents of the 2002 Volunteer Survey, 86 percent of Volunteers reported that the skills and interests documented on their application adequately matched their primary assignment.***

Overall, it is key to a Volunteer's safety and security that the Volunteer's site is well developed with clear roles and expectations for the Volunteer and the community members and that the Volunteer is well suited for the assignment.

C. Communicating with the Volunteer at the Site

When Peace Corps Volunteers are placed in communities around the world, they have a circle of support around them that includes local host country nationals as well as Peace Corps staff. Volunteers have established networks for communication that may include host country counterparts, friends, neighbors, colleagues, and local police to send and receive emergency messages. Peace Corps' emphasizes the importance of community integration, which enhances Volunteer safety and security and facilitates Volunteer communication. Volunteers become members of the community through their work, their ability to speak the local language, and their association with friends in the community. Volunteers use the most common communications methods of the local community to keep in touch with family, friends, and Peace Corps staff in country and abroad.

Peace Corps Volunteers' Circle of Support



Peace Corps has a variety of methods of regularly contacting a Volunteer or reaching a Volunteer in emergency situations. Emergency contact methods are routinely tested.

- **Volunteer Locator form:** As part of the Emergency Action Plan, all Volunteers must provide very specific contact information on their Volunteer Locator form. (See [Appendix – PCV Site Locator Information](#)). The Volunteer Locator form includes detailed instructions on how to reach a Volunteer, such as how a Peace Corps staff member would get to the Volunteer’s site if arriving in the middle of the night in case of an emergency medical situation or evacuation.
- **Routine communications:** Depending on the communication infrastructure in the country, posts choose to use a combination of landlines, solar-powered landlines, cell phones, text messages, satellite phones, email, beepers, radios, and message relay systems to reach Volunteers on a regular basis (or in an emergency situation).
- **Cell phones:** Volunteer cell phone access and use is increasing rapidly as cell phones become more reliable and readily available. Availability is increasing both to a wider

distribution of geographic areas, as well as to more economically diverse segments of host country populations. This enables Peace Corps posts to increasingly communicate with Volunteers by cell phone.

- **Satellite phones:** Every Peace Corps country has an office-based satellite phone for use if all other forms of communication are down. The satellite phones are regularly tested and tracked on a testing cycle.
- Unannounced testing of communications between Peace Corps posts and Volunteers: As a part of testing the Emergency Action Plan for each post, communication tests between the post and Volunteers occur regularly. They are done at least every six months and more often as necessary or appropriate. In times of emergencies, communication can occur every day or multiple times a day depending on the situation.
 - For example, on October 7, 2003 in Uganda, Peace Corps implemented an unannounced test of the communications system. In the test, the staff utilized the established contact Volunteers to initiate the test, with Volunteers reporting back to the staff as they received word of the test. The exercise resulted in 100 percent of Volunteers receiving the test message and reporting back in less than seven hours.
 - Prior to the U.S. military operations in Iraq, Peace Corps Headquarters staff covering the three Peace Corps regions around the world was conducting daily check-ins with each country post to monitor the situation on the ground. In addition to the regular tracking of Volunteers at site, posts were also providing lists of which Volunteers were on vacation and where. When PC/Morocco was evacuating, the Regional staff at Headquarters was able to cross-reference a Niger volunteer on vacation in Morocco. Within two hours the Volunteer was reached at an Internet cafe via an e-mail address she had listed on her leave application, and she was immediately connected to the Safety and Security Coordinator in Morocco, who facilitated getting her to the consolidation point with the PC/Morocco group.
 - The country-by-country Post/Volunteer communication tests are summarized by region for quick review in headquarters and any necessary follow-up. The summaries include communication strategies, communication methods, last Emergency Action Plan test date, and contact time.
- **Out of site policy:** Peace Corps has worked to strengthen the Volunteer out of site policy, which references traveling out of site for reasons other than vacation. It is imperative that Volunteers fill out the appropriate paperwork, provide their specific itinerary and appropriate contact information. Occasional trips from site allow Volunteers to learn more about the country, conduct business, and participate in projects of other volunteers. However, another key component of Volunteer safety is community integration, so it is important for the Volunteer to spend time in the community. The rationale for the out of site policy is to know the Volunteer's whereabouts for safety and security purposes. In the event of an emergency when a

Volunteer is not at his or her site, all communications methods available will be used to reach the Volunteer.

- **Vacation policy:** Volunteers accrue annual leave at the rate of two days for each month of service. Annual leave provides Volunteers the opportunity to increase their understanding of the host country and region, while allowing time for rest and relaxation. Like the notification required when a Volunteer will be traveling out of site for business reasons, all posts require that Volunteers on annual leave provide an itinerary and contact numbers with the Peace Corps staff so that they can be contacted quickly in case of a family or other emergency. Peace Corps also recommends that Volunteers traveling outside the host country inform the Peace Corps Country Director (if any) in the country of travel, the American Embassy, or the nearest American consulate of their whereabouts.

D. Clustering

The Peace Corps has no data to indicate that Volunteers would be safer if placed together – or “clustered” – at sites. It has been Peace Corps’ experience that the site of the Volunteer is the safest location in the host country. Since Volunteers spend time integrating into their community by learning the local language and interacting with local friends and colleagues, Volunteers placed at the same site run the risk of not establishing these vital relationships and of experiencing a disconnect from their community members. Drawing Volunteers together and away from involvement with host country nationals is at cross-purposes with the mission of the Peace Corps.

Since a Volunteer has multiple layers of support in a community, from friends and colleagues to local police, having another Volunteer at the same site would not necessarily be a protective factor in helping to prevent safety incidents. Furthermore, multiple Americans in one location on a long-term basis can draw attention to the Volunteers and heighten their chance of being targeted for criminal activity.

A Peace Corps Volunteer’s circle of support includes members of the local community as well as Peace Corps staff.

Peace Corps has officially been invited to work in a host country and has formal relationships with the host country national who will be the on-site supervisor of the Volunteer. The Volunteer will meet many individuals who will be part of his or her network of support in carrying out his or her professional responsibilities. However, a Volunteer integrates into the community by living every day at the level of the locals, establishing friendships, patronizing merchants, and through other social interaction. Additionally, the Peace Corps staff regularly interacts with the Volunteer to provide project guidance, medical care, safety updates, and general oversight.

Peace Corps strategies on placing multiple Volunteers within a region or community to strengthen Volunteer security and support vary according to what is best at the local level.

Peace Corps posts have adopted various strategies for strengthening Volunteer security and support, including grouping several Volunteers within a geographic area, normally within a couple of hours travel time using local transportation. These geographical groupings generally include a mix of first and second year Volunteers and various programmatic specialties so that they can support each other's programmatic efforts. This grouping allows the added benefit of having peers who can assist and reinforce each other's integration strategies and assist with security concerns.

However, clustering Volunteers in one community may not create a more secure situation; in fact, it may be less secure. It can inhibit learning the local language and customs and can heighten awareness of the Volunteers as potential targets.

One of the core values of Peace Corps is to provide an opportunity for the Volunteer to fully integrate into the local community by learning the language and culture and becoming an integral part of the community. This approach has proven successful and safe for over 42 years, as communities have embraced the Volunteers. Clustering of Volunteers may have the effect of creating an American or expatriate community within the village and may have a negative impact on their safety and security.

A Volunteer is safest when accepted by the community at his or her site.

The safest and most secure Volunteer is one that is at the site, well known, accepted and integrated into the community through learning the local language, the culture, working in a well designed project, and close to host families. The safe Volunteer takes responsibility for his or her own behavior and knows how to minimize personal risks.

Approximately one-third of Peace Corps Volunteers live with host families or within a family compound. The interaction with their host family can help the Volunteer learn the local language and customs and integrate quickly into the community. For Volunteers who do not live with a host family, their neighbors, friends, and colleagues at work help in their assimilation process. In the 2002 Volunteer Survey, 81 percent of Volunteers reported that they can adequately communicate in a language used by most local people, and 91 percent felt that they had adequately integrated into their community. These are important indicators for Peace Corps' model of community integration as an important factor in Volunteer safety.

Furthermore, in addition to members of their local community and Peace Corps staff, Volunteers can turn to fellow Volunteers for support when needed. According to the 2002 Volunteer Survey, 81 percent of Volunteers reported they can reach the nearest Peace Corps Volunteer in less than two hours, and 95 percent see other Volunteers at least monthly. It is clear that while other Volunteers can be a source of support, their local friends and community members meet their daily needs.

Accompaniment by a fellow Volunteer does not necessarily safeguard against an assault.

Regardless of whether a Volunteer has a fellow Volunteer in his or her community, the statistics indicate that it would not necessarily safeguard against assaults. In approximately one-fourth of the cases of physical assaults, another Volunteer was present and the assault still occurred. (See below chart).

Assaults 1997-2002

	Number of Assault events	Events where PCV accompanied by other PCV	Percent of events where PCV was accompanied by other PCV
Sexual Assaults*			
• Major	223	19	8.5%
• Minor	286	67	23.4%
Physical Assaults			
• Major	662	182	27.5%
• Minor	514	125	24.3%

*females only

Additionally, in over half of major physical assaults the Volunteer was accompanied by a fellow Volunteer or other individual and the assault still occurred. (*See Appendix - Summary of Trends in 2002 Safety Report.*) Moreover, the highest risk hours are the evening to early morning for both major sexual assault events (10pm – 5 am) and major physical assaults events (7pm – 2 am). Even if more than one Volunteer was placed in a community, it is unlikely that the Volunteers would be together 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, nor would having another Volunteer necessarily prevent a safety incident. Rather, the most important protective factors are adhering to the Peace Corps’ guidance on adopting safe and healthy lifestyles and following community cultural norms.

V. 2002 Peace Corps Volunteer Survey: Safety and Security

The Peace Corps Volunteer Survey is an anonymous, self-administered questionnaire that is sent to all Peace Corps Volunteers to collect their feedback on the efficiency and effectiveness of Peace Corps operations.

The use of the Volunteer survey has varied since its inception as a program evaluation mechanism in the early 1970s. For several years, the Volunteers were surveyed annually until 1981, at which time this practice was discontinued. The process resumed between 1997 and 1999. Due to limited staffing and budget constraints, the survey was not administered in 2000 or 2001. Once the Administration of President Bush came into office, it was determined that the surveys were extremely valuable and would be conducted on a regular basis. As of 2002, the surveys resumed on a biennial basis to currently serving Volunteers.

In February 2002, the Peace Corps Volunteer Survey was provided to all Peace Corps Volunteers to collect their opinions and feedback on their experiences at post. Survey responses were collected from Volunteers who had completed their pre-service training at the time of distribution. Data from 3,717 Volunteers worldwide were analyzed, representing a response rate of 69 percent. The survey is one of the agency’s main methods of gathering data on Volunteers’ perceptions of various facets of their Peace Corps experience.

Data from the 2002 Volunteer Survey were shared with headquarter staff and posts. Staff and Country Directors use the valuable Volunteer perspective from these reports in a variety of ways to improve programming and training. The staff also uses the reports in their staff trainings to provide a quantitative snapshot of the Volunteers' experiences. Within the regions, the information is useful for improving post management and the support that is provided to the Volunteers.

The below excerpts of survey results regarding safety and security and related issues reflect the answers of respondents to the 2002 Volunteer Survey.

A. Volunteers' perception of safety

In light of the priority the Peace Corps places on safety and security issues, it is helpful to consider the Volunteers' personal perception of safety conditions during their Peace Corps service.

Volunteer Survey: How safe do you feel in the following situations?

	“Very,” “Usually,” or “Adequately Safe”	“Often Unsafe” or “Not at All Safe”
Where You Live	97%	3%
Where You Work	99%	1%
When You Travel	84%	15%

B. Community Integration: Key to Safety

The safest and most secure Volunteer is one that is at the site, well known, accepted and integrated into the community through learning the local language, the culture, working in a well designed project, and close to host families. The safe Volunteer takes responsibility for his or her own behavior and knows how to minimize personal risks.

Volunteer Survey: How well do you feel integrated into your community?

	“Very Well,” “Well,” or “Adequately”	“Poorly” or “Not at All”
Integrated	91%	9%

Volunteer Survey: How well can you communicate in a language used by most local people?

	“Very Well,” “Well,” or “Adequately”	“Poorly” or “Not at All”
Communication	81%	19%

VI. The Changing World in which Peace Corps Operates

Question: Given the current global security situation, are the risks too high for American Volunteers to serve in the countries where the Peace Corps presently operates?

Every effort is made to adequately protect Volunteers and staff, but in view of the global security situation and the protection of individual liberties, no absolute guarantees can be made. This is true, however, for any American citizen whether in the United States or abroad, since September 11th.

Volunteers live and work in the local communities, learning the language, navigating the culture, and performing their jobs with competency. The Peace Corps' current and clear historical record is that communities embrace the Volunteers and, along with the security measures put in place by the Peace Corps, provide a safety net. This safety net is built on the Volunteers fully integrating into their communities through mutual respect, trust and training—particularly in the area of personal responsibility. There is no present indication that this has changed. Risk assessment is a standard component of the Peace Corps safety and security program and Peace Corps at this time has no evidence that risks are too high for American Volunteers serving in 71 countries around the world.

Question: Can enough safety and security measures be adopted to adequately protect volunteers and maintain the core mission and value of the Peace Corps?

This is a fundamental question that needs to be answered to determine the future of Peace Corps.

From our view, the answer is YES. Peace Corps believes under current known information that there is, and can continue to be, a balance between safety and security measures and the core mission of Peace Corps. The first two goals of Peace Corps— 1) to help the people of interested countries in meeting their need for trained men and women, and 2) to help promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of the peoples served— reinforce the necessity of the Volunteers' full integration into the communities and countries in which they serve. Integration is the key to their safety and security. However, to ensure this balance, Peace Corps has adjusted many of its operating procedures and safety and security requirements.

For example, the Peace Corps has put in place an increasingly stringent enforcement of out-of-site policies, a much stronger emphasis on the Volunteers' behavior as it relates to their own safety and security, increased site development measures, and improved communication. The real value of the Peace Corps Volunteers is the service they provide to host communities by their immersion into the local village, living with neighbors and co-workers, and assisting in grassroots development. They do not live separately from that community. They become embedded in their communities and are seen as family members. The Peace Corps is also in close contact with the State Department, USAID, other NGOs, and host government officials that are privy to the best information about threats and security issues. Volunteers and staff would be immediately informed if there were any specific security alerts or threats toward them.

Every effort is made by the Peace Corps, prior to the Volunteers' arrival, to ensure that Volunteers are not placed in sites in which their safety and security is compromised. If safety and security measures are of such a magnitude that the Volunteer cannot safely be in a particular location, the Volunteer should not be there and is moved.

VII. Overview of the Relationships of the Peace Corps with Other Federal Agencies

The Peace Corps works with a variety of other U.S. Government agencies to help ensure the safety and security of Volunteers, and to provide appropriate follow-up if a crime against a Volunteer has occurred. The Peace Corps consults and collaborates with other agencies on safety and security issues both before entering a country and throughout the Peace Corps' tenure in a country. The Peace Corps' Office of Safety and Security takes the lead to ensure that the agency is effectively working to prevent crimes against Volunteers. When a crime does occur, the Office of the Inspector General is charged with reviewing the investigation efforts of local officials, conducting appropriate follow-up actions to support the investigation, and assisting in the prosecution.

A. Prevention of Crimes Against Volunteers

The Role of Peace Corps' Office of Safety and Security

The Peace Corps Office of Safety and Security works to prevent crimes against Volunteers by ensuring that the Peace Corps has strong research, planning, training, and compliance systems in place. The newly hired research psychologist works to enhance the office's ability to track crime statistics, identify trends in criminal activity, and highlight potential safety risks to Volunteers. The office also continually evaluates the policies and structures that are put into place by the Peace Corps to protect Volunteers and try to prevent them from becoming targets of crime. As a part of these efforts, staff at Peace Corps headquarters and in the fieldwork with other federal agencies, as outlined below.

U.S. Department of State

The Peace Corps works primarily with Diplomatic Security, Regional Security Officers, Ambassadors and other U.S. Department of State personnel in the prevention of crimes against Volunteers.

Country Assessment

A safety and security assessment is conducted for every country Peace Corps considers entering. When the Peace Corps has suspended its program in a host country, a new safety and security assessment is conducted prior to re-entering the country. Included in the safety and security assessment are contacts with:

- U.S. Department of State's Office of Diplomatic Security for background on the country and safety and security issues.

- The Regional Security Officer (RSO) for the Embassy. The RSO is the person responsible for monitoring the safety and security environment for Americans at post and is the primary law enforcement and security advisor to the Ambassador.
- The Ambassador and other relevant Embassy personnel that the assessment team feels are important to interview.

Weekly U.S. Country Team Meetings

The Peace Corps is an integral part of the safety and security network at the Embassy. The Peace Corps Country Director is a regular member of the Embassy's Country Team that meets on a weekly basis. The Embassy's Regional Security Officer is also part of the same meetings, which gives the Country Director at least a weekly opportunity to make contact with this critical Peace Corps resource.

U.S. Embassy Emergency Action Committee

The Peace Corps Country Director is also a member of the Embassy's Emergency Action Committee, which is convened at the discretion of the Ambassador. During emergency situations, the Emergency Action Committee meets daily or more often if necessary.

Regional Security Officer Advisories

The Regional Security Officer communicates regularly with the Peace Corps Country Director on any situation that impacts the Peace Corps. The Country Director can use travel advisories and or other general safety and security points of interest to notify Volunteers of events or important safety information.

Tracking Assaults for Prevention Purposes

In 1990, the Peace Corps designed the Assault Notification and Surveillance System (ANSS) for internal tracking purposes. From this data, Peace Corps has enhanced policies, systems, and training to help prevent future Volunteer assaults. The Peace Corps had collected assault data before 1990 but not in a form that facilitated trend analysis.

The ANSS established specific definitions to allow for the systematic collection of data regarding the characteristics of an assault event. Definitions are critical to ensure consistency for trend analysis and prevention purposes so that the prevention strategies are appropriate to the types of incidents taking place. The Peace Corps uses safety statistics to increase the understanding of trends so that training and policies can be adjusted and safety enhanced. Improvements in safety reporting have allowed the Peace Corps to identify associated risk factors (time of day, location, alcohol use, means of transportation, etc.) and develop strategies to help Volunteers address them.

The Peace Corps has taken steps to add additional components to our original tracking of the rate of assault incidents. These steps include updating the assault reporting form to be more

comprehensive, and provide closed ended responses for easier data analysis and tracking in addition to the general narrative of the incident.

Department of Justice – Bureau of Justice Statistics

The revised reporting form for the ANSS has been reviewed by Department of Justice’s Bureau of Justice Statistics, as part of its ongoing statistical consulting role to Peace Corps. The Peace Corps will continue to utilize and strengthen this relationship as it uses tracking and analysis systems to help prevent crimes against Volunteers.

B. Follow-up after the Occurrence of a Violent Crime

Office of Inspector General Overview

When an assault against a Volunteer occurs, the Peace Corps Office of the Inspector General (OIG) is charged with working with the appropriate officials in-country to review and support the investigation efforts. OIG investigators work with the U.S. Embassy’s Regional Security Officer (RSO) to assess and assist local police efforts to apprehend and prosecute individuals who have committed serious crimes against Peace Corps Volunteers, Trainees, or American staff. OIG investigators also consult with and work with the Peace Corps Country Director, medical officer, and other post staff as well as headquarters staff.

The Peace Corps Protocol on “Violent Crimes Against Volunteers” establishes the OIG as the coordinator for Peace Corps’ investigative responses to violent crimes against Volunteers. When there is an assault, the OIG works with the Peace Corps post and U.S. Embassy to develop evidence for local prosecution, including witness identification through lineups and photo spreads, fingerprinting, and DNA analysis. In the case of sexual assault, the post uses its rape response kit, and the OIG assists in obtaining additional forensic evidence and analysis. In the case of a death, the investigation follows the same principle that is used in the United States: death is not presumed natural until an appropriate authority – such as a medical doctor or coroner – concludes that it is. Thus, it is important that an autopsy be conducted and that the case be coordinated with local law enforcement. When there is a death, the OIG also works closely with the Office of the Director and the Office of Medical Services in headquarters. As the law enforcement and investigative coordination office of the Peace Corps, the OIG works with federal agencies such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Secret Service, and the Department of State’s Diplomatic Security Service, as outlined in greater detail below.

Personnel of the Peace Corps Office of Medical Services, Office of Special Services, the Office of Safety and Security, and all other agency offices with related responsibilities advise the Inspector General of notifications and information received regarding violent crimes. The OIG provides information to agency field and headquarters personnel as needed and provides coordinated investigative efforts both at headquarters and in the field to support a successful criminal investigation and prosecution. Furthermore, as appropriate, the OIG escorts the Volunteer or former Volunteer back for host national investigative and prosecutorial proceedings.

The OIG interfaces and collaborates with the federal agencies listed below.

Investigation

U.S. Department of State's Diplomatic Security Office/Regional Security Officer

The Regional Security Officer (RSO) is a Special Agent of the Diplomatic Security Service and as such is the primary law enforcement and security advisor to the Chief of Mission for the United States. The overall security mission of RSOs includes the development and maintenance of close working relationships with host national police officials. While the Peace Corps Country Director often has a pre-existing working relationship with the RSO for prevention purposes, it is the OIG that works extensively with the RSO during the investigation of a violent crime. Additionally, RSOs may help coordinate the collection of evidence, and other support needed for prosecution.

Federal Bureau of Investigation

In cases involving the homicide of an American, a missing Volunteer, or conceivably a terrorist event that involves Volunteers, the Federal Bureau of Investigation generally would work with the Peace Corps OIG to investigate the case.

Forensic Evidence Analysis

Armed Forces Institute of Pathology

The Peace Corps OIG works with the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology for important pathologic support to OIG investigations. For instance, the AFIP has performed autopsies to determine or verify the cause of death of a Volunteer.

Federal Bureau of Investigation

The FBI crime lab provides forensic support to the Peace Corps OIG. The lab may provide DNA analysis or process forensic evidence such as fingerprints and stain analysis. The FBI's complex analyses have enabled sophisticated and incriminating evidence to be admitted in foreign courts of law.

Secret Service Forensic Services Division

The OIG has a Memorandum of Understanding with the Secret Service Forensics Division for assistance. For example, the Secret Service assisted in a case by aiding a victim in making a composite sketch of the perpetrator. The sketch led to the apprehension of the perpetrator.

Prosecution

U.S. Department of Justice - Office of Foreign Litigation

When the U.S. Government is represented in a case abroad, it is the Department of Justice's Office of Foreign Litigation that coordinates and oversees the representation of the U.S. in foreign proceedings. Thus, the OIG works closely with this office to ensure that the Peace Corps effectively provides all needed information in resolving an outstanding matter.

U.S. Department of State's Diplomatic Security Office/Regional Security Officer

Because prosecution takes place under local law, the main avenue for assistance is the Regional Security Officer at the Embassy. The OIG works closely with the RSO and Country Director to assist in taking the appropriate steps for prosecution. In selecting and coordinating with appropriate local foreign counsel, as provided for in the Peace Corps Act, Country Directors coordinate with the OIG and RSO in advance for guidance.

VIII. Conclusion

The Peace Corps will continue its heightened focus on safety and security measures and a graduated expansion of the agency's safety infrastructure to meet growth demands. Vigilant review of safety and security efforts remain an on-going priority along with quality site selection and programming for all Volunteers, regardless of their country of service.

The result will be a safe, informed, culturally sensitive, and diverse group of Volunteers who contribute to projects with clear job descriptions, find satisfaction in their accomplishments, and become ready to share their experiences and understanding when they return to America.