

Steve Iams, Peace Corps Volunteer, Nepal* and China (2003–2006)

Biography

Steve with his host-family sister during in-country training

As a high school student in Ohio, I never imagined I'd join the Peace Corps. My mother had enough trouble getting me to travel as far as Colorado for a family vacation. I was famous in my family for wanting to travel only to places where there would be a Taco Bell. When I was 20, my uncle invited me to visit Ecuador with him. In one small town, we stopped at a post office to ask directions and bumped into a Peace Corps Volunteer. He told us he'd been teaching health and nutrition in a nearby village. He was enthusiastic about his job, but I remember thinking to myself, "Wow—this is something I could never do."

Several years later, after graduating from the University of Virginia, I was working at the Ohio House of Representatives, in Columbus, when I started to think about traveling and working abroad. My mom had given me a newspaper article about teaching English in Japan. I had nothing to lose, I figured, and the next thing I knew I was living in Tokyo, teaching conversational English to adults. Teaching abroad enabled me to further explore my interests in traveling, writing, and photography, and Tokyo became a staging point for trips to China, Vietnam, Thailand, and Australia. When my term of service expired in Japan, joining the Peace Corps seemed like the perfect way to further both my professional and personal goals.

When I'm not traveling, I enjoy spending time with my mom and dad; my brothers, Andy and Alex; my sisters, Sara and Molly; and my dog, Packer. When I am traveling, my Uncle Marty and friend Tommy make for the best of companions.

Site Assignment

My Peace Corps assignment is to work with the Nepalese government schools as an English language teacher trainer. I spent the first year of my service teaching English to grades 4–8 in a small village near Kathmandu, the capital city of Nepal. During my second year, I'll conduct training in English language and teaching methods for the primary-level teachers of English in my school district.

Some of the projects I've worked on outside of my assignment include a conversation class for the higher-level students of English, where the students had the opportunity to practice using English in a fun, informal setting. I also organized training in the use of improved cook-stoves. During this five-day training, village women learned how to build safer, more efficient wood-burning stoves. In addition to the teacher-training I'll do this year, I'm organizing a GLOW Camp (Girls Leading Our World) in my village, a leadership and skills-development camp for girls ages 12–18.

* In September 2004, the Peace Corps suspended its program in Nepal and withdrew all Peace Corps Volunteers from the country for their personal safety because of political violence.



Steve with his host sister, Onju



Steve's new host family in the village



View from Steve's window



Children from Steve's village



Steve with fifth graders