STRATEGIC PLAN

THE PEACE CORPS STRATEGIC PLAN: IMPACTING THE WORLD THROUGH SERVICE AND FRIENDSHIP

Current Plan

In fiscal year (FY) 2009, the agency will undergo a transition period as it moves from its FY 2003 to 2008 strategic plan to a newly crafted six-year strategic plan covering FY 2009 to 2014. This transition will call for the Peace Corps to continue using the FY 2008 indicators from the FY 2003 to 2008 strategic plan with new FY 2009 performance targets, while the FY 2009 to 2014 plans are in development. A driving force behind this transition was the creation of a new Office of Strategic Information, Research and Planning to enhance the Peace Corps' strategic planning and reporting, its evaluation and measurement, and its data governance activities. The office was established in May 2007 and is charged with leading the development of content for long-range planning efforts, facilitating the implementation of Peace Corps level program evaluations and improving the use of outcome-based performance measures. For FY 2009, the existing strategic plan not only reflects the agency's long-standing commitment to the unique role that Volunteers perform to further the three goals set forth in the Peace Corps Act, but it institutionalizes a comprehensive safety and security approach and furthers the modernization of the agency's support infrastructure to meet the growing needs of our overseas programs and partners.

Tweny-first Century Focus

The mission of promoting world peace and friendship, as well as the three goals of the Peace Corps, has remained the same since the agency's inception in 1961. Development indicators, however, suggest that nations on all continents will continue to be challenged in the years ahead by demands for improved development in information technology, agriculture, education, public health, the environment, youth development, and business.

Recognizing the on-going strategic importance of the Peace Corps in this century, President George W. Bush continues to affirm his support of the agency and its three goals. In a 2007 letter to Volunteers, the President states that "[Peace Corps] Volunteers like you are demonstrating the compassionate spirit of America by serving in developing communities, improving education and health care services, and enhancing technology across the globe. ... [Y]our positive influence promotes the cause of world peace and human progress, and your dedicated efforts display the true character of our Nation." It is this commitment to service and cross-cultural exchange that Peace Corps Volunteers embody.

At the close of FY 2007, the Peace Corps had 8,079 Volunteers in the field serving 68 posts in 74 countries. The Peace Corps is pleased with its expansion efforts to date seeing its ranks grow by over 1,400 Volunteers since FY 2002. Thus, in FY 2009, the agency will seek to expand and diversify the number of Volunteers in the field, enter or re-enter three new countries, actively participate in the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), assess the placement and possible expansion of Volunteers in predominantly Muslim countries, and continue to develop new programming opportunities in response to natural disasters and humanitarian crises. These objectives will be accomplished as the agency strives to enhance the effectiveness of the service of its Peace Corps Volunteers and focuses on Volunteer safety and security.

Vision

The vision of the Peace Corps is to assist interested countries around the world while providing an effective and satisfying Volunteer experience for a diverse group of Americans in a safe and secure environment, and to build an operational infrastructure to efficiently and effectively support the Volunteer in the 21st century.

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1 *This number of Volunteers reflects all funding sources and includes 195 Volunteers funded by the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and nine Volunteers funded by USAID Tsunami funds.*

THE PEACE CORPS MISSION AND THREE GOALS

The purpose of the Peace Corps is to promote world peace and friendship

1. To help the people of interested countries in meeting their need for trained men and women.
2. To help promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of the peoples served.
3. To help promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans.

Mission

The mission, to promote world peace and friendship, and the three goals of the Peace Corps are as vital today as they were 47 years ago.

The Peace Corps combines development with people-to-people relationships that Volunteers forge with host country colleagues and communities. This combination serves as a crucial foundation for peace and friendship for generations to come.

Since its inception in 1961, the Peace Corps has sent more than 190,000 Volunteers to serve in 139 countries around the globe—from Albania to Zambia—promoting the Peace Corps' mission of world peace and friendship. In carrying out the agency's three goals, Volunteers share their time and talents by serving as teachers, business advisors, information technology consultants, agriculture and environmental specialists, and health and HIV/AIDS educators.

Strategic Planning Process

The Integrated Planning and Budget System (IPBS) is the Peace Corps' primary strategic planning mechanism. IPBS is consistent with the planning process defined by the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA). It features a multilevel strategic planning process that requires each Peace Corps office and sub-office to set goals and establish quantifiable objectives and specific tasks—in essence, a performance plan—with related timelines. IPBS incorporates a three-year planning cycle, where every Peace Corps office and overseas post is required to define its goals and objectives and develop a strategic plan and budget that will enable each office to meet them. However, these plans are based on projected levels of funding, which are adjusted accordingly if the funding levels are not realized through actual appropriations. This is possible through the annual update of the three-year plan as well as quarterly reviews and adjustments of office plans to executed actions.

IPBS annually includes an assessment and evaluation of the previous year's plans and projects. It then identifies lessons learned, potential improvements, and plans for the future. IPBS was reengineered in fall 2005 to better align the agency with federal planning and budget mandates and to take full advantage of the agency's integrated financial management system. The reengineered IPBS structure provides appropriate flexibility for all levels of budget holders while demanding increased accountability agency-wide. The system has resulted in effective resource management, transparent decision-making, timely external reporting, and the production of financial statements directly from the financial management system.

The Peace Corps also requires overseas posts to develop plans for their Volunteer projects that describe the goals, objectives, and life span of the project. The status of each project sector's accomplishments is reviewed annually. Each project sector's strengths and weaknesses are assessed, and the plan is reaffirmed or altered based on lessons learned during its actual implementation.

The agency's planning process begins each spring with the issuance of guidance by the Peace Corps Director. In addition to reaffirming the agency's mission and goals, agency offices must specifically address the impact of its plans on the safety and security of Volunteers and staff. Each office aligns its individual plans with the agency's overall direction and then each office's strategic and operating plan submission is presented to the Director and reviewed. After the review activities conclude, each overseas post, sub-office, and major office assembles its respective performance plan with an emphasis on defining the outcome and performance goals together with accompanying performance indicators.

Moreover, the Peace Corps now reports performance results in the annual Performance and Accountability Report (PAR), as well as receives a review via the Performance Assessment Rating Tool (PART) process. The last PART review was completed in 2005 with the Peace Corps receiving an effective rating. The Peace Corps expects its next PART review to be completed subsequent to the submission of the agency's Strategic Plan for FY 2009-2014 in September 2008. In the PAR, the agency must report and analyze its annual performance results compared to the annual targets. Together, these tools ensure that the agency is monitoring and reporting performance goals and results and continually seeking ways to improve. In 2007, the Peace Corps received an unqualified financial statement opinion from its external auditors (moving from a qualified opinion in FY 2006), which was part of its FY 2007 PAR submission.

The Peace Corps' Goals for Fiscal Years 2003-2008

Our existing strategic plan continues to present the four strategic goals that the Peace Corps seeks to achieve with specific FY 2009 performance indicators. Each strategic outcome goal is followed by a set of measurable performance goals with accompanying means and strategies; a discussion of the relationship to the agency's annual performance goals vis-à-vis the annual budget; key factors potentially affecting achievement of the stated goals; and the methods used to assess achievement. The four strategic goals are outlined below and brief detail about each goal's outcome measures and performance goals follows.

In FY 2007, the Peace Corps attained the highest number of Volunteers serving across the globe in the last 37 years. While efforts are underway to develop a new strategic plan for FY 2009 to 2014, the agency continues to work under the guidance of the existing plan (FY 2003 to 2008). The agency anticipates submitting the new strategic plan to the Office of Management and Budget in September 2008. In the meantime, we have crafted an updated performance plan to guide our efforts until our final plan is completed.

STRATEGIC GOAL 1

Assist interested countries with their identified needs by gradually expanding the number of trained Volunteers serving overseas; broadening the impact on the lives of men and women in their host communities by transferring tangible skills; and helping to promote an understanding of Americans, including representing American diversity, at a rate consistent with annual funding.

STRATEGIC GOAL 2

Ensure a quality Volunteer experience by increasing the quality of healthcare and managing the safety and security risk factors in each of the communities where the Volunteers live.

STRATEGIC GOAL 3

Increase the exposure of Americans to other cultures by sharing Volunteer experiences and stories in numerous venues, including the classroom, special events, community visits, and through electronic means, as well as engaging those who have completed their service in ongoing Peace Corps-supported volunteer opportunities.

STRATEGIC GOAL 4

Increase the retention level of Americans interested in the Peace Corps by better facilitating the process of obtaining information, applying, joining, and completing their Volunteer service.

STRATEGIC GOAL 1

Assist interested countries with their identified needs by gradually expanding the number of trained Volunteers serving overseas; broadening the impact on the lives of men and women in their host communities by transferring tangible skills; and helping to promote an understanding of Americans, including representing American diversity, at a rate consistent with annual funding.

Strategy

The Peace Corps is committed to maintaining the number of Volunteers in the field achieved in FY 2007. This will require modest expansions in trainee input, which is both strategically and incrementally implemented. These input requirements will be balanced with the need to preserve the core values of the Peace Corps and to provide the infrastructure necessary to support the work of the Volunteers and the business of the agency. The Peace Corps will also continue to use data from the Biennial Volunteer Survey and our updated close-of-service survey to assess Volunteer effectiveness and satisfaction.

The Peace Corps continues to receive new requests and perform assessments as it works to broaden its mission and deepen the impact Volunteers have on the men and women of their host countries. Evidence suggests that there is an increasing demand for the Peace Corps and the programs it provides to foreign countries. In FY 2007, the agency conducted three country assessments, re-opened a program in Ethiopia, and initiated plans to begin a Peace Corps Response program in Liberia in FY 2008. Entering or re-entering new countries is always directly tied to the agency's annual appropriations.

With the addition of Ethiopia, the Peace Corps now participates in 10 out of 15 PEPFAR countries. The Peace Corps also expanded its participation in PEPFAR through programs in 12 other nations. This participation is enabling the agency to enhance and expand its contributions to the battle against AIDS. In FY 2007, nearly 93 percent of all Peace Corps posts worked directly or indirectly in HIV/AIDS activities. For the second year in a row, Volunteers assisted approximately 1 million people through their HIV/AIDS prevention and care related activites. The establishment by the Peace Corps of an Office of AIDS Relief to provide overall leadership for the agency's response to the pandemic throughout the world while facilitating the agency's PEPFAR and HIV/AIDS commitments has added to our Volunteers' success.

During FY 2007, traffic to the Peace Corps' website continued to increase. The growing international focus of our society also builds increased awareness of global issues and the Peace Corps is a key means for U.S. citizens to exercise their sense of service and informal ambassadorship overseas. The positive reception of the marketing campaign, Internet resources, and related materials are key indicators of that success.

The Peace Corps plans to continue to track individuals through the online application process and provide them with updates, reminders, and assistance. Additionally, the agency is seeking to strengthen its relationships with national associations and build its community outreach efforts, targeting audiences of diverse ages, including people approaching retirement as part of the Director's 50+ initiative.

Expansion

Peace Corps Response

Peace Corps Response (formerly known as Crisis Corps) is a program within the Peace Corps that mobilizes returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) to provide short-term humanitarian service and technical assistance to countries worldwide. In FY 2007, Peace Corps Response deployed 64 Volunteers into service. Additionally, working through an interagency agreement with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Peace Corps Response sent nine Americans to provide relief to those affected by the devastation caused by the tsunami in Southeast Asia. They also worked on PEPFAR funded, short-term assignments.

Infrastructure Enhancements

Under the direction of the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO), the Peace Corps is improving its technical infrastructure to streamline current operational processes that will support Volunteers in the field, reduce administrative burdens, under-gird operational needs of the agency, and improve the security of digital assets. Notable among the infrastructure enhancements is the creation of Magellan, a global IT network that will securely connect posts to the headquarters and regional recruiting offices, continue to improve and enhance the

Volunteer Delivery System, and establish online collaboration tools. Management is also reviewing personnel practices to identify and analyze trends and future needs among Volunteers and staff to determine workforce processes and resource allocations. These analyses will also inform policy decisions and maximize resource efficiency and quality of service.

Recruitment

While four-year, higher-education institutions have been the main source for Volunteers over the years, the Peace Corps is now working with professional associations to expand recruiting activities to attract mid-career professionals and transitioning older professionals. Assignment areas, such as health and information technology, can often be filled by these professionals who are trained in these qualifying skills.

Efforts to expand the applicant pool also include reaching out to those of diverse age groups and ethnic backgrounds presently underrepresented in the Peace Corps. The Peace Corps continues to identify venues such as national associations, conferences, and publications, and to develop partnerships that will assist with recruitment. In addition, the Center for Field Assistance and Applied Research has developed a "diversity starter kit" to be used in pre-service training to better educate Volunteers about diversity and constructive coping and support strategies to use during their time in the field. Efforts to expand the number of older Americans serving in the Peace Corps include identifying "50+" Peace Corps officials and RPCVs who can be spokespersons at national conferences and other forums. The Office of Medical Services (OMS) is developing materials to inform older Volunteers about issues of relevance to them, such as the impact of serving overseas on retirement benefits, insurance, and medical benefits.

The Peace Corps places significant importance on attracting underrepresented ethnic and age group applicants. The redesign of the Peace Corps website, additional content geared toward underrepresented audiences, and the overall Peace Corps marketing campaign have attracted many new and repeat visitors to the portions of the site devoted to minority groups.

Communications

The "Life is Calling. How far will you go?" public service campaign continues to grow and reach wider audiences in recruiting applicants for the Peace Corps. In FY 2007, the campaign garnered over $15 million in donated media. Additionally, the agency released 23 new print public service announcements (PSAs) and two new Spanish radio PSAs. These Spanish radio PSAs more than doubled the value of donated media from the previous package in just a few short months of release. Diversity media outlet PSA placements exceeded the agency goal by almost 400 percent for the fiscal year.

The Peace Corps released a new English radio PSA with the voice of actress Ashley Judd in December of 2007, and placements of "Out Of Home" media continue to see strong growth. In the first quarters of 2008, there will be more than 2,150 billboards, airport dioramas, or interior bus/train transit boards in 24 target markets representing worth over $1.9 million in donated media. And, a promising pilot test is underway on 23 college bus systems with over 1,250 interior bus transit boards running during the spring semester.

The agency's website, www.peacecorps.gov, received over 20 percent more visitors in FY 2007 due to expanded content, Really Simple Syndication (RSS) feeds, and a new "50+" and "teens" section. A new "kids" section, targeted mini-sites, and more video content of Volunteers serving throughout the world are planned for the website in FY 2008 and FY 2009.

The Peace Corps also received the prestigious Telly Award in 2007 for "A Legacy of Service," a video produced in honor of the agency's history of spreading world peace and friendship since 1961.

Outcome Goal 1.1

Assist interested countries with their identified needs by gradually expanding the number of trained Volunteers serving overseas from 7,920 in FY 2007 to 8,100 in FY 2009 at a rate consistent with annual funding.

Performance Goals

Increase the number of Peace Corps Volunteers:

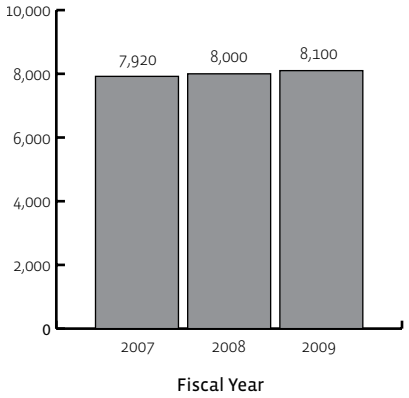
1.1.1 ... to 7,920 by FY 2007.

1.1.2 ... to 8,000 by FY 2008.

1.1.3 ... to 8,100 by FY 2009.

FIGURE 1.1

Increase the number of Peace Corps Volunteers:



Outcome Goal 1.2

Broaden the impact of Volunteers on the lives of men and women in their host communities by transferring tangible skills, as measured by increasing Volunteers reporting in the Peace Corps close-of-service survey that they were "adequately" to "exceptionally" effective in transferring knowledge and skills to members of their host community to 85 percent by FY 2009.

Performance Goals

Incrementally increase Volunteers' skill-transfer effectiveness rating:

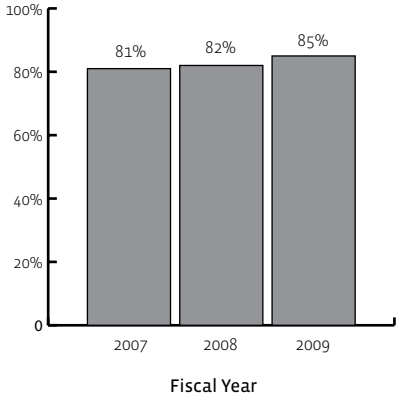
1.2.1 ... to 81% by FY 2007.

1.2.2 ... to 82% by FY 2008.

1.2.3 ... to 85% by FY 2009.

FIGURE 1.2

Incrementally increase Volunteers' skill-transfer effectiveness rating:



Outcome Goal 1.3

Represent American diversity in Peace Corps host communities by increasing the numbers of Peace Corps applicants representing diverse ethnicities and people ages 50 and older by 2 percent, from FY 2007 level of 27 percent to 29 percent by FY 2009.

Performance Goals

Incrementally increase the percentage of Peace Corps applicants from underrepresented groups:

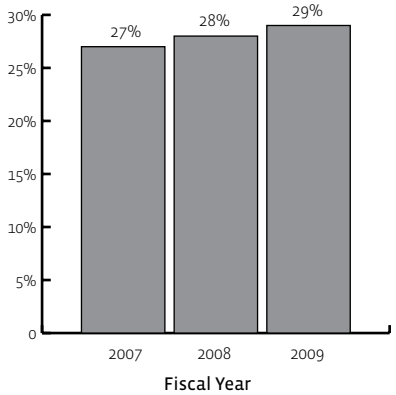
1.3.1 ... to 27% by FY 2007.

1.3.2 ... to 28% by FY 2008.

1.3.3 ...to 29% by FY 2009.

FIGURE 1.3

Incrementally increase the percentage of Peace Corps applicants from underrepresented groups:



STRATEGIC GOAL 2

Ensure a quality Volunteer experience by increasing the quality of healthcare and managing the safety and security risk factors in each of the communities where the Volunteers live.

Strategy

The Peace Corps will continue to use the results of the biennial Volunteer survey which is conducted during even numbered years, and the close-of-service Volunteer surveys conducted during odd numbered years, to measure performance and to determine if target outcomes are met. If they are not met, the areas noted below will be evaluated to reassess processes and practices and to implement changes to ensure that future targets are achieved.

Technical Guidelines from the Office of Medical Services

OMS recognizes that technical guidelines are established to provide comprehensive health services and preventative education to Volunteers. These guidelines provide procedures that standardize and monitor healthcare administered by Peace Corps medical officers. These include medical office management, medical logistics, administrative and emergency procedures, ongoing evaluation of medical officers, and recommended current approaches to common medical conditions experienced by Volunteers. Finally, these guidelines ensure that screening policies are based on current research, best practices, and knowledge from the field, all of which are reviewed on an ongoing basis.

Emergency Care

OMS provides medical evacuation (medevac) and support to Volunteers who require medical and/or psychological care beyond what is available in-country. To achieve this, the medical staff conducts prompt field consults (within 48 hours) and responds to the immediate medical and emotional needs of the Volunteer or trainee in-country. Medically evacuated Volunteers also receive timely and quality medevac care, and, if appropriate, may return to the country of their service.

Special Services for Volunteers

The Office of Special Services (OSS) provides comprehensive clinical and mental health services for Volunteers. The office also consults with and trains staff to enable them to advocate and promote healthy emotional adaptation by Volunteers to their Peace Corps service. This is critical to ensuring that Volunteers have a positive, productive experience in-country and that there is the support necessary to handle crises and challenging situations.

Safety and Security Personnel

The Office of Safety and Security, along with regional and post-level safety and security personnel, provides a safety and security framework for Volunteers. This involves training Volunteers to maintain their safety while serving in a foreign country as well as providing assistance with any safety-related issues. When Volunteers are adequately prepared and have access to guidance and assistance from safety and security staff, they are more likely to be safe at home and at work.

Safety Approach

The safest and most secure Volunteer is one who is at site, well-known, accepted, and integrated into his or her community. This comes by learning the local language and culture, by working in a well-designed project, and by staying close to host families. The safest Volunteers are those who take responsibility for their own behavior and know how to minimize personal risks. According to the 2006 biennial Volunteer survey and the 2007 close-of-service surveys, Volunteers feel safe where they live and work most of the time. The Peace Corps will continue to review and enhance its safety and security policies.

Outcome Goal 2.1

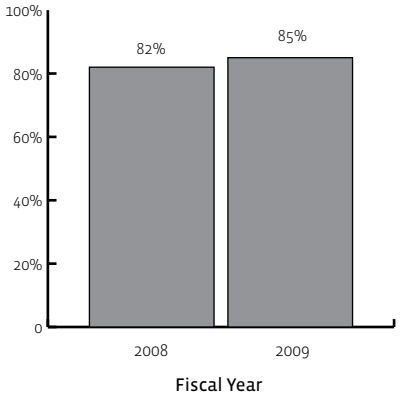
Increase the percentage of Volunteers indicating feeling "adequately" to "exceptionally" satisfied with their in-country healthcare from the FY 2008 level of 82 percent to 85 percent by FY 2009.

Performance Goals

2.1.1 Incrementally increase the percentage of respondents to the 2008 biennial Volunteer survey and the 2009 close-of-service Volunteer surveys who rate their healthcare as satisfactory from 82 percent in FY 2008 to 85 percent in FY 2009.

FIGURE 2.1

Target percentage of Volunteers indicating they are satisfied with their in-country healthcare, as reported in the biennial Peace Corps Volunteer survey (2008) and the Close of Service Survey (2009).



Outcome Goal 2.2

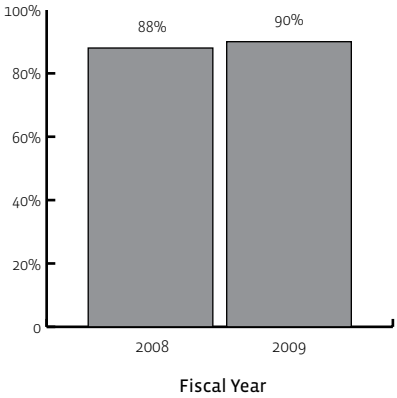
Increase the percentage of Peace Corps Volunteer survey respondents indicating that Volunteers feel safe most of the time ("usually safe" to "very safe") where they live from the FY 2008 level of 88 percent to 90 percent by FY 2009.

Performance Goals

2.2.1 Incrementally increase the percentage of respondents to the 2008 biennial Volunteer survey and the 2009 close-of-service Volunteer surveys who feel safe most of the time (usually safe to very safe) where they live from 88 percent in FY 2008 to 90 percent in FY 2009.

FIGURE 2.2

Target percentage of Volunteers reporting they feel safe where they live most of the time, as reported in the biennial Peace Corps Volunteer survey (2008) and the Close of Service Survey (2009).



STRATEGIC GOAL 3

Increase the exposure of Americans to other cultures by sharing Volunteer experiences and stories in numerous venues, including the classroom, special events, community visits, and through electronic means, as well as engaging those who have completed their service in ongoing Peace Corps-supported volunteer opportunities.

Strategy

The Peace Corps achieves its third goal of improving Americans' understanding of other peoples by providing opportunities and resources to RPCVs and educators to teach Americans about other cultures and peoples around the world. The Peace Corps increases these opportunities by encouraging new colleges and universities to participate in the Fellows/USA and Master's International programs, by persuading educators to participate in the Coverdell World Wise Schools program (CWWS), and by seeking donations to Peace Corps Volunteer projects through private-sector donors. This goal is also achieved by ensuring that RPCVs have the information and support they need to engage in third-goal activities.

While previous reporting focused solely on Peace Corps Week activities (which celebrates the anniversary of the agency), regional recruiting offices now highlight other Peace Corps-supported activities that include RPCV interaction with the U.S. public. These include RPCVs giving talks on campuses and at career fairs, in elementary and secondary schools, and at cultural and community fairs. These kinds of interactions all help to raise public understanding of other cultures around the world. RPCVs help educate the American people in many other significant ways, and the Peace Corps is taking steps to better capture these data.

Coverdell World Wise Schools Program

Established in 1989 by then-Peace Corps Director Paul D. Coverdell, this program provides a variety of free services and materials that help U.S. schoolchildren learn about the world's diverse peoples, cultures, and geography. The World Wise Schools website received nearly 2 million visits in FY 2007.

The World Wise Schools program matches U.S. teachers with Peace Corps Volunteers in the field on a one-to-one basis, enabling them to maintain a vibrant cross-cultural correspondence. World Wise School materials, produced for U.S. classrooms, promote cross-cultural understanding and the ethic of community service. They include writings by Peace Corps Volunteers and returned Peace Corps Volunteers supported by standards-based lesson plans, online narrated slide shows, weekly podcasts of Volunteer experiences, a monthly educational electronic newsletter, and award-winning videos about countries served by the agency. Some materials are published in book form; all are available for downloading at no charge from the website at www.peacecorps.gov/wws. Besides being excellent resources for educators, these materials help the agency achieve the Peace Corps' mandated third-goal—helping Americans better understand other peoples.

Outcome Goal 3.1

Increase the number of interactions with Americans to further the Peace Corps' goals through Peace Corps-supported activities from 22,606 in FY 2008 to 23,500 in FY 2009.

Performance Goal

Increase the number of interactions with Americans to further the Peace Corps' goals through Peace Corps-supported activities

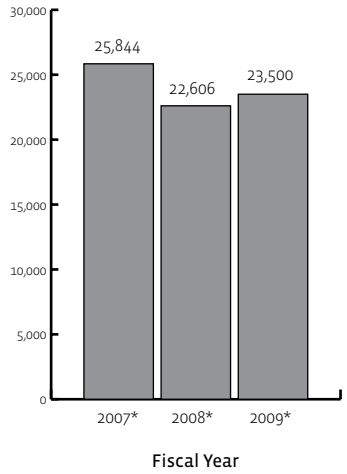
3.1.1 … to 25,844 in FY 2007.

3.1.2 … to 22,606 in FY 2008.

3.1.3 … to 23,500 in FY 2009.

FIGURE 3.1

Number of interactions with Americans to further the Peace Corps' goals through Peace Corps-supported activities, FY 2007–2009



* In early FY 2007 we determined that the previously used methodology to capture this data was labor intensive and did not provide verifiable, optimal results. This was due to the fact that it included an estimate of the number of unregistered returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCV) that participated in Peace Corps week activities. While there is definitely a number of these individuals that contribute to the attainment of this goal, we have decided to exclude this estimate of unregistered participants in future calculations.

Returned Volunteer celebrating the Peace Corps' third goal with a Girl Scout troop

STRATEGIC GOAL 4

Increase the retention level of Americans interested in the Peace Corps by better facilitating the process of obtaining information, applying, joining, and completing their Volunteer service.

Strategy

The application process to become a Volunteer can be lengthy and the agency continues to look for ways to reduce the application time. However, the Peace Corps must determine if a potential Volunteer is suited for two years of service overseas, so it must assess each applicant thoroughly. These assessments include medical, legal, and psychological screenings as well as comprehensive skills and suitability evaluations. To streamline this process and reduce the application time, the following areas continue to be targeted for enhancement:

Application Redesign and Use of Online Application Forms

Online applications have increased dramatically; they currently comprise 93 percent of all applications. The agency continues to review opportunities for more efficiencies and greater user compatibility in its online application process.

Medical Screening

OMS and the Office of Volunteer Recruitment and Selection (VRS) use regionally-assessed medical evaluation and placement teams to better identify matches between future Volunteers and potential countries. OMS and VRS have reviewed and updated the mental health pre-service screening process to reduce evaluation time. The redesigned health status review form and its online availability has significantly reduced processing time. Now nearly 96 percent of all health status review forms are received from applicants online.

Retaining Applicants and Volunteers

Significant effort has been made to retain applicants, trainees, and Volunteers from the time that they apply until the time they close their service. The pre-departure online training project provides a means by which applicants can start preparing for their service using online educational tools. During the application process, training modules help them get a head start in learning about culture, languages, and personal responsibility requirements, which will increase their chances for success and satisfaction.

Volunteers are trained to live and work successfully in the context of their assignments and cultural environment. Their satisfaction will be measured by questions in the 2008 Peace Corps Volunteer survey and the redesigned close-of-service survey.

Volunteer Delivery System

In early FY 2007, the Director announced the formation of the Volunteer Delivery System (VDS) Steering Committee as a major initiative within the agency's overall strategic planning effort. VDS represents the entire system through which Volunteers are recruited, apply, are invited, trained, and deployed to serve overseas.

The objective of the VDS Steering Committee is for the Peace Corps to optimize the Volunteer Delivery and Support System by leveraging the full force of the agency's organization, management, technology, and fiscal operations to improve and sustain the delivery system holistically. The Steering Committee ensures seamless continuity of operations between offices, a targeted focus on agency resources, and strategic solutions to emerging challenges.

To date, the VDS Steering Committee has focused on new recruiting strategies (including Americans age 50 and over), better messaging of the meaning of service, expediting the process for clearing and inviting applicants, language training, and the development of good sites and projects for Volunteers. Process and system changes are currently under evaluation. Additionally, pilot posts have been identified to evaluate the effectiveness of changes in field operations. The active and important work of the VDS Steering Committee will continue into FY 2008 and beyond as changes are expected to be implemented.

Outcome Goal 4.1

Improve the responsiveness of the Volunteer application process by streamlining the application process and decreasing the Peace Corps' response time to applicants by 7 percent, from 150 days in FY 2007 to 140 days in FY 2009.

Performance Goals

Decrease the Peace Corps' response time to applicants:

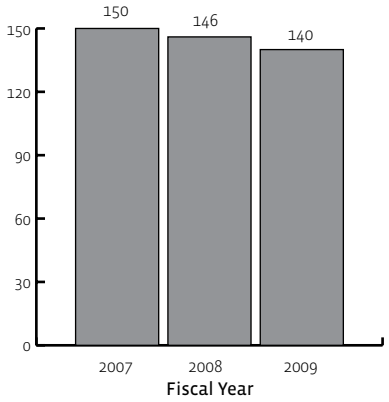
4.1.1 ... to 150 days by FY 2007.

4.1.2 ... to 146 days by FY 2008.

4.1.3 ... to 140 days by FY 2009.

FIGURE 4.1

Decrease in the Peace Corps' response time to applicants, FY 2007–2009



Outcome Goal 4.2

Maintain the overall 12-month Volunteer resignation rate (with resignation officially defined as a decision made by a Volunteer/trainee that he/she no longer wishes to continue in Peace Corps service) at 10 percent or less.

Performance Goals

Maintain the overall 12-month Volunteer resignation rate

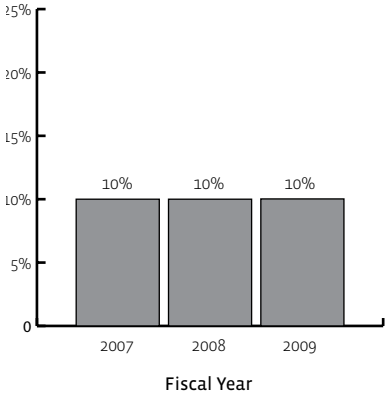
4.2.1 ... at 10.0% or less in FY 2007.

4.2.2 ... at 10.0% or less in FY 2008.

4.2.3 ... at 10.0% or less in FY 2009.

FIGURE 4.2

Overall 12-month resignation rate, FY 2007–2009



Conclusion

The agency is proud of the Americans currently serving as Peace Corps Volunteers. By living, working, and integrating into their local communities, Volunteers have a unique role in empowering people in countries throughout the world to take charge of their own futures and to strengthen the bonds of friendship and understanding between Americans and the people of other cultures. Through targeted implementation of the FY 2003–2008 strategic plan, and the current development of our 2009-2014 strategic plan, the Peace Corps will continue its leadership, management, and stewardship of resources to enable more Americans to have the opportunity to carry out the Peace Corps' noble mission around the globe.

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