PEACE CORPS

CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET JUSTIFICATION | FISCAL YEAR 2009

Cover: Amhara girl from Gojam region of Ethiopia carrying an *ensera* water pot
Back : An education Volunteer who started a successful after-school sports program in his community in Micronesia
Title page: An education Volunteer in the Philippines and her class

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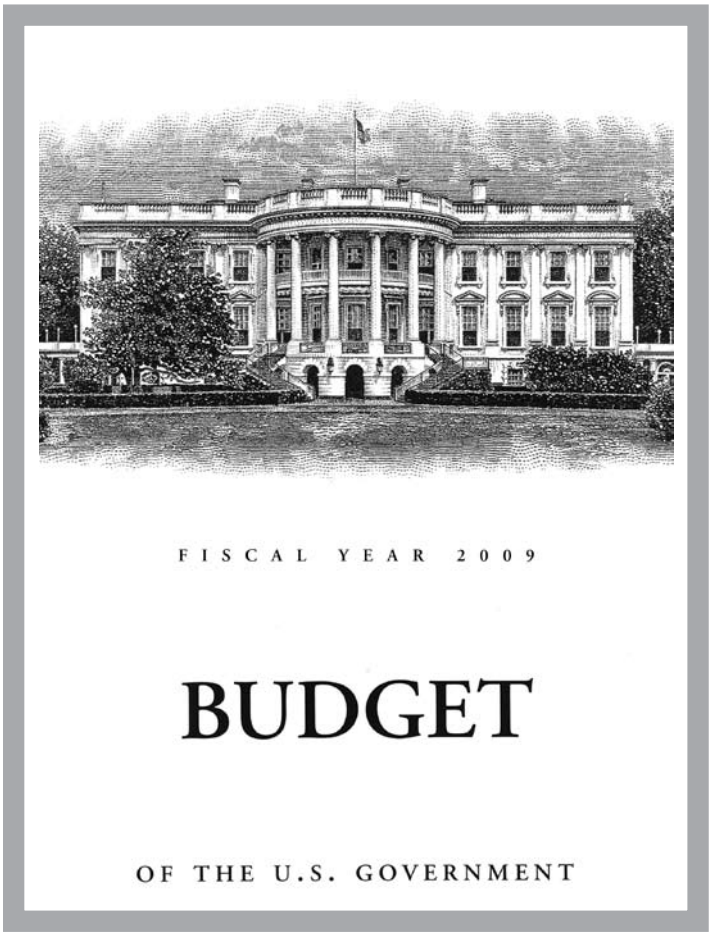

PEACE CORPS FY 2009 BUDGET REQUEST

The Peace Corps budget request for FY 2009 is $343,500,000, an increase of $10,000,000 over the FY 2008 appropriation of $333,500,000.[1] The FY 2009 request will enable the Peace Corps to expand the number of Americans serving abroad to 8,100 through September 30, 2009; provide for the safety and security of the Volunteers and staff; open three new country programs; and strengthen activities and strategies established in 2008.

[1] *The FY 2008 appropriation of $333,500,000 was reduced by a rescission of $2,701,000.*

THE DIRECTOR OF THE PEACE CORPS
WASHINGTON, DC

Dear Member of Congress:

As the agency moves toward its 50th anniversary in the spring of 2011, it has much to be proud of, and I am pleased to submit the Peace Corps' fiscal year 2009 budget request of $343.5 million. This funding level reflects not only President Bush's recognition of the Peace Corps' critical value in the world, but the importance of the agency's role in promoting peace and friendship overseas. The FY 2009 budget will support approximately 8,100 Volunteers in the field in 79 countries by the end of FY 2009.

As of September 30, 2007, 8,079 Peace Corps Volunteers were serving at 68 posts representing 74 countries. This is an increase from FY 2006, when 7,749 Volunteers served, and is the largest number of Americans serving in the Peace Corps since 1970—a 37-year high.

The Peace Corps is one of America's most cost-effective ways to share its ideals and values abroad. Each Volunteer sent out into the field represents another opportunity to dispel myths about the United States; help people of interested countries meet their need for trained men and women, and create bonds of friendship with host country citizens that last a lifetime. Host country governments are thankful for the assistance the Peace Corps provides, and are always requesting more Volunteers. Volunteers share their time in a variety ways, including, as teachers, business advisors, information technology consultants, agriculture and environmental specialists, and health and HIV/AIDS educators. In many countries, government leaders can point to the English they learned during their youth from Peace Corps Volunteers.

With regard to HIV/AIDS, Volunteers have been working with populations affected by HIV/AIDS for more than two decades. At approximately 93 percent of Peace Corps posts, Volunteers receive training in HIV/AIDS prevention, and in partnership with their communities, they work on a wide range of HIV/AIDS activities focused on building the capacity of host country nationals and local organizations. The ability of Volunteers to learn local languages and implement sustainable and culturally appropriate grass roots interventions gives them a strategic advantage in the fight against HIV/AIDS, particularly in Africa. Through the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), Peace Corps Volunteers continue to meet the challenges of the HIV/AIDS pandemic working in 10 of the 15 focus countries. The agency began operations in its 10th PEPFAR country in 2007 when it re-opened a program in Ethiopia.

Other agency highlights include: the Peace Corps' expected return to Liberia in FY 2008 after a 17-year absence through the agency's Peace Corps Response program; the agency's presence in 16 predominately Muslim countries (approximately 22 percent of Volunteers around the world); the opening of a new country program in the Kingdom of Cambodia in 2007; country assessments in Indonesia, Rwanda, and Sierra Leone; and an increase in minority recruitment. In fact, minority numbers have reached their highest level since the agency began tracking ethnicity in 1987. Minorities now comprise 17 percent of all Volunteers.

There are also several new initiatives currently underway at the agency focusing on: Strategic Recruitment and Outreach, Measuring Success and Impact, and Promoting Volunteerism. With regard to strategic recruitment, I believe that the 50+ population, with their lifetime of experience, represents a tremendous opportunity for

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the Peace Corps, and as such, the regions and headquarters are currently conducting assessments and making recommendations on how to better support the needs of potential 50+ Volunteers. Our medical services team is seeking ways to better process and evaluate 50+ applications, 10 pilot posts are examining changes to their existing pre-service training curriculum, and the Peace Corps' training staff is designing new language learning modules. Currently, five percent of all Volunteers are 50+, and I am committed to increasing this percentage.

Concerning the second initiative, while there is an intrinsic understanding of the great value the Peace Corps brings to the world, the agency needs to better measure its impact in quantifiable ways. To add to its current performance measures and countless stories of individuals influenced by the work of Volunteers who go on to become Presidents, Ministers, and business and cultural leaders in their countries — the Peace Corps is looking to bolster its ability to capture its impact in more measurable terms. As such, the Office of Strategic Information, Research and Planning was established in 2007. This office is currently in the process of developing the Peace Corps' new strategic plan for FY 2009–FY 2014 that will better measure the agency's performance.

Regarding the third initiative, I believe the Peace Corps is the gold standard for volunteerism, and it can assist its host country partners around the world in promoting volunteerism among their own people. In June 2007, I created a task force to carry forward the vision of promoting volunteerism in interested countries in which we serve, and to develop a set of best practices on volunteerism. Encouraging less developed countries to establish programs under which their citizens would volunteer is actually a mandate of the agency under the Peace Corps Act, and I am enthusiastic about this renewed effort to support countries that have asked for our assistance in exploring the creation of their own national service corps.

The agency has also seen growth in its Peace Corps Partnership Program which links interested individuals, groups, foundations, service organizations and businesses to Volunteers overseas in order to obtain financial support for community-initiated projects. Projects range from building libraries and latrines to supporting youth camp scholarships and micro-finance enterprises. In FY 2007, the Partnership Program received 5,684 donations totaling $1.4 million that were applied to 429 community-initiated projects in 50 countries.

Finally, the safety and security of our Volunteers remains the agency's highest priority. All trainees, before they are sworn-in as Volunteers, must demonstrate proficiency in key worldwide safety and security core competencies. And, the agency will continue to do its part to ensure that all Volunteers have an extensive support system and a quality Volunteer experience.

I appreciate the on-going bipartisan support that the Congress has provided to the Peace Corps, and look forward to working with you as the Peace Corps seeks to expand its promotion of world peace and friendship in FY 2009. As I have visited with over 1,000 Volunteers and trainees in the field, I am continually amazed at the work they are doing and the impact they are having in communities around the globe. They truly represent the best face of America abroad. Please let me know when your travel plans may take you to a Peace Corps country, my staff would be delighted to arrange a visit with Volunteers during your trip. The Peace Corps is poised to recruit, train, and send out Volunteers to further its expansion efforts and share the generosity of America with its host country partners.

Sincerely,

Ron Tschetter
Director

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Peace Corps provides practical assistance to developing countries by sharing America's most precious resource—its people. The close interaction between Peace Corps Volunteers and local communities has allowed the Peace Corps to establish an admirable record of service that is recognized around the world. For 47 years, Peace Corps Volunteers have helped build the path to progress with people who want to build a better life for themselves, their children, and their communities. Around the world, Peace Corps Volunteers continue to bring a spirit of hope and optimism to the struggle for progress and human dignity. More than 190,000 Americans have served in 139 countries since the agency's establishment.

While times have changed since the Peace Corps' founding in 1961, the agency's mission—to promote world peace and friendship—has not. The three core goals of the Peace Corps are as relevant today as they were 47 years ago:

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

In fiscal year (FY) 2009, the Peace Corps will continue to build upon the accomplishments achieved to date by placing 8,100 Volunteers in the field in 79 countries at the close of FY 2009. This expansion will occur primarily in programs in existing countries, along with three proposed new country entries. Additionally, the agency will remain an active participant in the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (Emergency Plan/PEPFAR), serving in 10 of the 15 focus countries (the agency began operations in its 10th PEPFAR country in the fall of 2007 when it re-opened a program in Ethiopia); maintain its presence in predominately Muslim countries; and increase the recruitment of Volunteers from diverse backgrounds, particularly those age 50 years and older.

The proposed budget request of $343.5 million will allow the Peace Corps to make lasting contributions to the United States, the international community, and the American work force. By representing American values and diversity, responding to humanitarian crises and natural disasters, and developing leadership skills among host country nationals, Volunteers will be given opportunities to change the lives of men and women in their host communities through the transfer of tangible skills. They will improve American's understanding of other peoples by increasing the exposure of Americans to other cultures. And, by sharing Volunteer experiences and stories in numerous venues, including the classroom, special events, community visits, and through electronic means, returning Peace Corps Volunteers will continue to spread cross-cultural understanding throughout the United States.

The budget will also be used to further increase the retention level of Americans interested in the Peace Corps by better facilitating the process of obtaining information, applying, joining, and completing volunteer service. Efforts to reduce the overall application time for those applying to the Peace Corps will remain an agency priority, and an anticipated trainee input of approximately 4,369 future Volunteers will be needed to meet the Peace Corps' recruitment goals. Country assessments and new program ramp-up funds will be required for any new country entry or re-entry, if entry is determined to be feasible.

The safety and security of each Volunteer will remain the agency's number one priority, and the staff of the Office of Safety and Security will continue their commitment to research, planning, training, and compliance. The Peace Corps will ensure a quality Volunteer experience by increasing the quality of health care, including the monitoring of Avian influenza, and by managing the safety and security risk factors in each of the communities where Volunteers live.

The Peace Corps will also evaluate the number of Volunteers serving within each region, build on the current Volunteer work satisfaction rate of 90 percent, focus on enhancing communication with Volunteers at post, and further efforts to develop innovative responses to natural disasters and humanitarian crises through its Peace Corps Response program. Peace Corps Response, formerly known as the Crisis Corps, mobilizes Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) to provide short-term humanitarian assistance to countries worldwide. Since its inception in 1996, this program has sent more than 1,000 Returned Volunteers into the field in over 40 countries. The Crisis Corps will be retained as a unique branch within Peace Corps Response, designed for Volunteers who are deployed to crisis and immediate need situations, such as disaster relief following hurricanes, earthquakes, floods, volcanic eruptions, and other catastrophes. Peace Corps Response assignments are short-term, generally lasting three to six months.

Additionally, the FY 2009 budget request will provide the necessary funds to continue the implementation of congressionally mandated upgrades to the Peace Corps' financial system and ensure agency compliance with new auditing requirements and process management. The Peace Corps was pleased to obtain an unqualified financial audit in FY 2007 and looks forward to achieving greater efficiencies in the year ahead. In the area of information technology, notable investments will continue to be made to the Volunteer Delivery System, online Volunteer communication and collaboration tools, and in federally mandated infrastructure security.

Lastly, the budget reflects the reimbursements required to the Department of State for the Capital Security Cost-Sharing Program, increases in expenditures to the International Cooperative Administrative Support Services (ICASS), and foreign service modernization relating to personnel.

Encouraging service and volunteerism among the American people is part of a long tradition in the United States and of this Administration. Over 100,000 people contact the Peace Corps each year seeking information about serving as a Volunteer. When Volunteers complete their overseas service, many continue their commitment to volunteerism or use their skills and experience to enhance careers and make contributions to our society in virtually every sector. It is the people-to-people relationships that Peace Corps Volunteers forge with their host country colleagues and communities that serve as a crucial foundation for world peace, cross-cultural exchange, and understanding—and make a lasting investment for the United States.