



The Exchange

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Peace Corps' Women in Development Newsletter

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BUILDING SELF-ESTEEM: Lithuanian campers making self-portrait collages at the Women's Business Leadership Camp.

Photo: Lynette Andreson/PCV



Lithuanian Campers Learn About Business Leadership

Submitted by Lynette Andresen/PCV

Three women's nongovernmental organizations worked in partnership with Peace Corps/Lithuania's Women in Development Committee (WID) to organize and direct a week-long business leadership camp. Thirty-one young women from the various regions of Lithuania attended. The objective of the Women's Business and Leadership Camp (WBLC) was to develop women's leadership skills and knowledge. This in turn would help the women participate more effectively in the development of a market economy. The camp, which was funded by an European Business Development Project grant, focused on self-esteem, skills and careers, goal setting, and entrepreneurial attitudes.

The participants were women from 15–18 years of age selected by Peace Corps Volunteers in collaboration with school directors. They were chosen for their leadership aptitude and English proficiency. These future Lithuanian leaders found the scheduling a bit intense with optional meditation and swimming at 7:30 a.m., and mandatory sessions from 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. They welcomed the recreational activities, which included traditional Fourth of July games,

making s'mores at a campfire near the river, tie-dying tee-shirts, and Texas line dancing. While they found the camp to be a lot of work, the young women also learned that an educational environment can include lots of engaged discussion and laughter.

What Did the Girls Accomplish? The Answer In Their Own Words

Kristina Eberskyte and Rasa Petruokeviciute, two Lithuanian university students and camp counselors

In 1997, only 28.9% of the managers in Lithuania businesses were female. This and other facts illustrate that there are very few women who have been given the chance to gain, or use their leadership skills to compete in Lithuania business. Without doubt, the WBLC was a much needed event to help young women understand their leadership role in Lithuanian society. This camp was organized by Peace Corps Volunteers, the Vilnius Women's Society, and the Anyksčiai Women's Club. It is unfortunate that more

Lithuanian Campers continues on page 22

From the Editors

Dear Readers:

This issue of *The Exchange* focuses on women in microenterprise development. In many countries where Peace Corps works, women do not have access to financial systems and the business training necessary to start up and run small businesses. Studies show that women have higher loan repayment rates than men and that a higher percentage of women's earnings go into the household than men's. Therefore, micro-enterprise development makes good development sense.

In this issue, we share your stories of women's business roundtables, business workshops, leadership development and project planning, and a women's group that meets regularly to discuss their business issues and concerns.

You will also see that *The Exchange* has a new column called, "Building Sustainability" (see p. 24). This new column will illustrate sustainable development practices, ideas, and theories by highlighting Peace Corps Volunteer success stories. We welcome your contributions to this new column, as well as to *The Exchange* newsletter as a whole.

Finally, we apologize for the lateness of this issue of *The Exchange*. Our technological platform has been undergoing a few changes, and we have been involved in several large trainings here and abroad; these things have set our timeline back a little more than we anticipated. But worry not; we are still dedicated to providing you with the best support possible in your WID/GAD adventures, and will try to get more issues of *The Exchange* to you in 2001.

Lyn Messner
Women in Development/
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The Exchange is a publication of the Peace Corps. Letters to the editor are the expressed views of the individual writers and do not necessarily represent the official position of the Peace Corps. We reserve the right to edit for style, clarity, and length.

Why You Have Seen Me at Most GAD Meetings

By Michael D. Amey/PCV

I read with great interest the letter titled "Why You Haven't Seen Me at Any GAD Meetings" (see *The Exchange*, Winter 2000, Volume No. 32, p. 2). I appreciated Mr. Richards' insights about why some male Volunteers might feel uncomfortable being involved with GAD (Gender and Development). However, as a male president of Peace Corps/Niger's GAD committee, I disagree with Mr. Richards. For the past year I have tried to encourage all Volunteers, regardless of their sex, to attend GAD meetings and to support GAD through their ideas and through their work.

Mr. Richards is right; GAD is all too often confused with WID (see *The Exchange*, Winter 1999, Volume No. 30, pp. 10-11). I would like to submit, however, that WID cannot promote sustainable development the way that GAD can. Gender related problems are, by definition, a multi part equation that demands a dialogue between men and women. We cannot hope to improve the lives of one sex without addressing the gender needs of the other sex—as a Zarma proverb expresses it, "you need to wash both hands before you sit down to eat."

Part of GAD's strength is its ability to confront the reality that, while we do want to improve women's lives, most developing countries are patriarchal. In a country where men control the majority of the resources,

and where the rights of women are not readily recognized, it is important to address gender roles of women and men and help them see that it is in everyone's best interest to empower women.

For years, Peace Corps/Niger has focused on educating women, but with limited success. It is only recently that we have recognized the necessity of changing men's perceptions of women, and of changing men's perceptions of themselves. Reproductive health, the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases, the encouragement of girls in education, and good parenting are all examples of gender issues in Niger that require involving both women and men. This year, for the first time, Peace Corps/Niger is hosting a Nigerien men's summit. Twenty-two young Nigerien men will receive training in family health and education, the prevention of HIV/AIDS, money management, and the rights of women under Islam. These men will then take what they learned back to their communities and neighboring villages. This is one way that we believe men and women can be integrated into GAD activities.

Mr. Richards raised an interesting point when he suggested that GAD was about "women's empowerment," and that men should not take leadership positions in GAD. In my opinion, GAD is about people's empowerment. Nigeriens will never reach their full potential as long as Nigerien women are marginalized, and Nigerien women will never achieve their full potential until men are an integral part of family life. Volunteers should encourage dialogue across gender roles to help both achieve their highest potential.

Our GAD committee, which is comprised of men and women, encourages all Volunteers to participate. It is not a matter of position, or women versus men. It is a matter of collaboration, of sharing ideas and resources, and doing everything possible to make everyone's lives a little bit better. As long as I can contribute to this process, you can expect to see me at GAD meetings.

c/o Assalama Sidi Dawalak
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Seeking WID/GAD Project and Conference Information

By Peace Corps/Côte d'Ivoire WID Committee

Dear WID,

I am happy to send you information on two recent Women in Development activities that took place in Côte d'Ivoire. I have enclosed articles on our first ever Take Our Daughters to Work Day and a girls' camp that took place in the north of Côte d'Ivoire. (see p. 23 "Daughters in Côte d'Ivoire Learn About Career Possibilities").

At the same time, I would like to solicit information from other WID/GAD committees and Volunteers about projects they may have done with university women's associations. The WID committee in Côte d'Ivoire is also looking for information from people who may have worked on leadership conferences for women. Any input that you have would be very helpful to us.

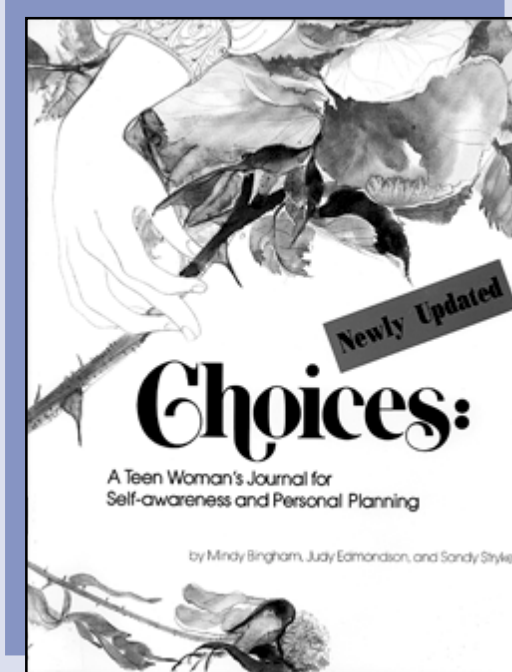
That's all for now. Thanks for bringing us *The Exchange* and keep up the good work!

c/o Claudine Adou-Lath
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WID Reviews in ICE

WD135—Choices: A Teen Woman's Journal for Self-Awareness and Planning. Mindy Bingham, et al. (Advocacy Press) 1985.



Choices: A Teen Woman's Journal for Self-Awareness and Planning is a new resource that was used to develop the curriculum for the first Camp GLOW (Girls Leading Our World), started by Peace Corps Volunteers in Romania. Volunteers interested in starting or strengthening a version of Camp GLOW in their country will find this resource extremely useful. It is a journal designed to strengthen and prepare teenage women for their futures. It is full of both real and hypothetical thought-provoking situations to stimulate ideas and direct female teenagers in areas such as decision-making, career possibilities, values, self-esteem, and self-perceptions. It also includes a space for entering the user's reflections.

If you would like to use this book and it is not available in your In-Country Resource center (IRC), you may order directly from ICE through your Peace Corps office. List your name, your sector, your address, the book title, and the ICE publication number, and a copy will be sent to you. Send your requests to:

Distribution Management Specialist
ICE Resource Center
Peace Corps/The Center
1111 20th Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20526 USA
{vwomack@peacecorps.gov}

To locate other resources, please refer to *The Whole ICE Catalog*, which contains a complete listing of technical books and other publications from the Peace Corps ICE Resource Center for Peace Corps Volunteers and staff to use during their Peace Corps service. WID and GAD resources can be found on pages 155-163 of the catalog.

If you have a favorite ICE publication, *The Exchange* would like to share your reviews and comments on how you have used the resource. Please send to the WID office the title and catalog number of the resource; let us know what you thought about the book; how you used it; and how you think it could be used. If you have found helpful resources not currently distributed through *The Whole ICE Catalog*, please send information on them as well. Through this common sharing, we can continue to help Volunteers find meaningful resources.

Breaking the Poverty Cycle

By Ava Allsman and Andrew Baird, Program Specialists/Business

Why are families poor? What can be done to break the poverty cycle? Development workers often ask these questions, but do not have all the answers; however, during the last several years two answers have emerged and they suggest areas where Peace Corps Volunteers can make a difference.

A short story about a typical, but not actual, family (see sidebar at right) illustrates many of the reasons hard working people are unable to earn enough to acquire minimal food, housing, health care, and education for their children.

Reflecting on Sakhubai and Rambhau's situation helps to identify factors that contribute to poverty, and suggests ways to improve the family's situation.

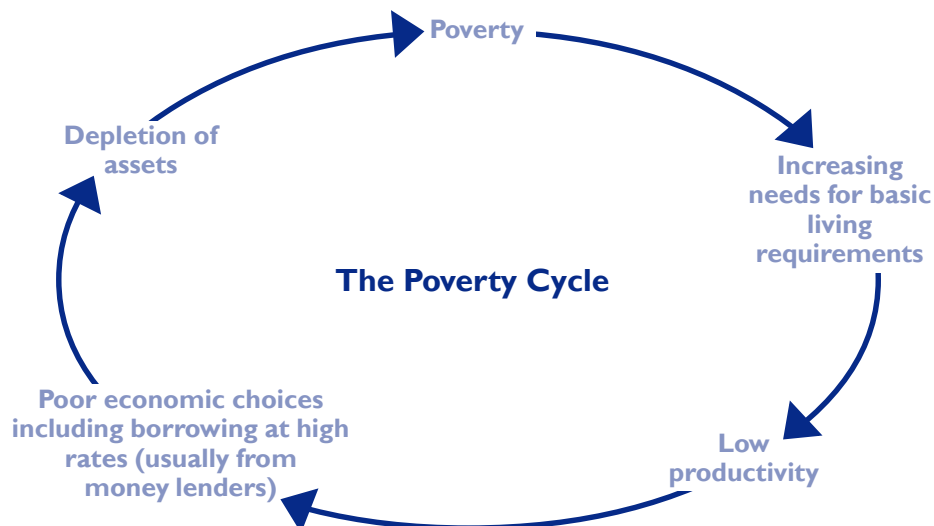
An illness, death, house fire, bad crops, or theft can be disastrous for a family with few resources. Other events, such as the birth of a child or marriage, increase the amount of money a family needs to just meet their basic living requirements. Inadequate tools and equipment keep their productivity low. Lack of education and limited choices lead to poor economic choices. Often the family's meager assets are sold or used to cover the financial emergency, leading to a deeper level of poverty.

The names may be different. The crops may be coffee beans or bananas, rather than sugarcane. The family may reside in an urban rather than a rural area, but similar circumstances face hundreds of millions of working poor families on our planet. They are caught in a vicious cycle of poverty.

How Can the Poverty Cycle Be Broken?

Experience shows there are two promising ways to break the poverty cycle:

1. When families acquire productive assets through savings, small grants, or affordable micro-loans, they can increase their capacity to produce income by starting or expanding an income generating activity (microenterprise).



Sakhubai and Rambhau

Sakhubai and Rambhau's family consisted of their one-year old baby girl, Rambhau's mother, and his 10-year-old sister. The sister did not attend school; she worked doing laundry for a rich family in the village. Rambhau owned two acres of land and even a bullock-cart.

Every year Rambhau would borrow money from the moneylender at the rate of 10 percent per month (120 percent annual interest!). The money was used for the purchase of seeds, fertilizer, and pesticides for his field. But as soon as he reaped the harvest, all his income would go in repaying the loan and interest.

Suddenly one day, Rambhau's mother died. Where was he to get the money for performing the funeral rites? This was a crisis. Poor Rambhau! He was forced to mortgage one acre of his land to get the money required. His income was now decreasing.

After some years, Sakhubai had a son. They now started running short of money for his medicines, house repairs, and for so many other basic needs of the home. Expenses and inflation were constantly on the rise. How much money could one get after selling the grain? To make matters worse the production of the land was diminishing each year. Finally, in order to repay his ever-increasing loan, Rambhau had to sell the remaining acre of land they owned.

Two years later, when his sister was 14 years old, Rambhau decided to marry her off since she was now 'marriageable age'. He borrowed money from a sugarcane contractor for the dowry, purchases and other expenses for the wedding. The entire family now had to work for the sugarcane contractor in order to repay the loan. In spite of working themselves to exhaustion and almost starving themselves, their problems kept increasing. Their needs were constantly increasing and it was impossible to make ends meet. The family now had no land; they had even lost their bullock-cart repaying the loans. Sakhubai and Rambhau just did not seem to find a way out of their situation.

Poverty Cycle continues on page 5

Poverty Cycle continued from page 4

Microenterprises are businesses with 10 employees or less. Many microenterprises involve only one person, the owner-operator or "microentrepreneur." Typical micro-entrepreneurs are vendors working on the street, in market stalls, or out of their homes. They may produce handmade items or provide services such as simple repairs and dressmaking. They are involved in food processing and tiny agro-processing operations such as rice husking, and other usually low technology, labor-intensive activities.

Often a small amount of capital and a few business skills are all that is needed to purchase a bicycle to get their produce to market or raw materials to make handicrafts or other homemade items for sale. A little additional family income makes a big difference.

2. The second answer, which is equally important to breaking the poverty cycle is education. An education not only allows family members to earn higher wages, but also enables them to make better choices in managing the family's scarce resources.

Unfortunately, an education even at the primary level costs money! Though attending schools may be "free," students still must have school clothes and supplies. Addition-

ally, there is an opportunity cost for children attending school. The time a son or daughter spends in school limits the time they can be engaged in income producing activities or doing household chores, which allow adult family members to generate income. In the poorest of families, children cannot attend school regularly until the family's basic nutritional, clothing, shelter, and health requirements are at least minimally met.

"Most of the world's women are poor, and most of the world's poor are women." (*International Center for Research on Women Global Fact Sheet*, p.1, no date given) So it is not surprising that more women than men start their own micro-businesses as a way to generate income. These informal sector activities add an additional burden for women who already work long hours. But for many poor women, self-employment is their only option because:

- They often have low levels of education,
- Family duties prevent them from holding regular jobs, or
- Gender bias and cultural norms prevent them from becoming employees.

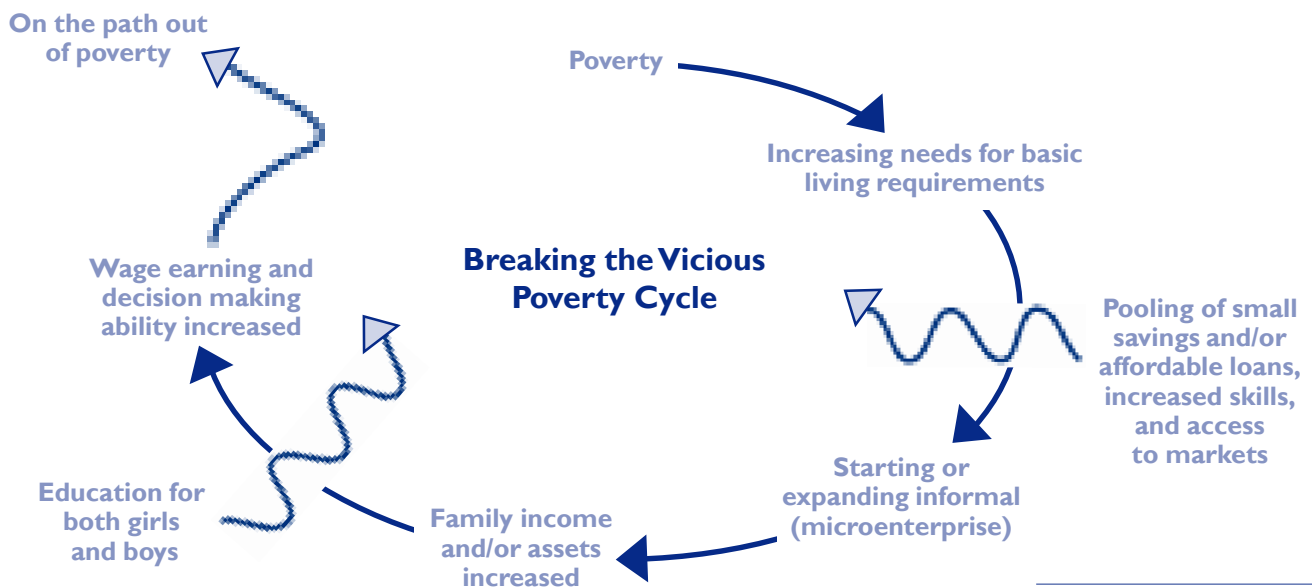
The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) reported in 1997 that the

percentage of women receiving micro-loans to start businesses supported by USAID funds was 85% in Africa; 68% in Asia/Near East; 66% in Eastern Europe/NIS; and 62% in Latin America/Caribbean.

Education and ability to secure productive assets to operate a microenterprise are effective in breaking the poverty cycle. But does it matter who in the family receives the education and controls productive assets? Experience indicates families benefit most when women control the assets, and girls and women receive education. According to information gathered by the Microcredit Summit, an organization with members from 85 countries:

- Women's microenterprises are more likely to be sustainable.
- Women have proven themselves to be creditworthy, they repay their loans 98 percent of the time; men's repayment rate is closer to 70 percent.
- Poor women almost always use their income to meet their family's needs, while men are more likely than women to spend their income outside the family.

At the annual meeting of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in Geneva,



Poverty Cycle continues on page 6

Poverty Cycle continued from page 5

United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan called on the international community to do more to promote women's prospects. "Women are among the poorest of the poor," he said. "They work long days, walk long distances to fetch water, and must find time and energy for informal sector activities, which are their only source of income. Their jobs are truly never done."

The Microcredit Summit in February 1997 launched a nine-year campaign to reach 100 million of the world's poorest families, especially the women of these families, with credit for self-employment and other financial and business services by 2005. If successful, they will have directly helped about half of the world's poorest families to move toward self-sufficiency.



What Can Volunteers Do to Help Break the Poverty Cycle?

The previous issue of *The Exchange* was dedicated to Girls' Education (*The Exchange Winter 2000, Volume 35.*) As mentioned earlier, increasing girls' access to education and their ability to stay in schools can go a long way to help break a family's poverty cycle. Re-read that issue and see which of the many activities discussed in the articles may be feasible at your site.

There are also a number of other strategies that you may be able to implement at your site. The following non-exhaustive list

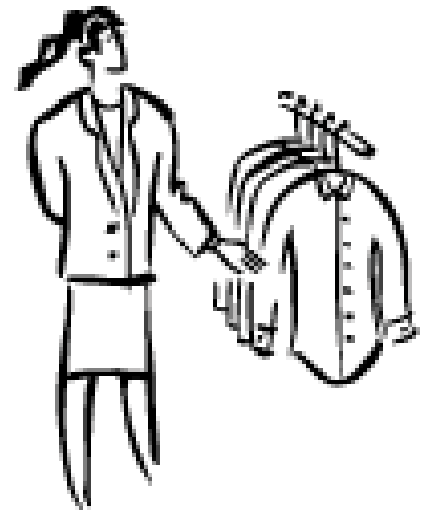
of suggestions is meant to spark ideas. Scan the list and see which ones may be of interest to you and helpful to those in your community. Remember, whenever an economic activity is introduced, be sure that it is both economically sound and does not place an undue burden on those who will be carrying it out.

Raise awareness

- Discuss the benefits of saving with your host family, the groups with whom you work, and your co-workers. Recognize the difficulty of saving at all, but emphasize that even the smallest amount saved each day, week, or month is better than having no savings plan at all. It is best to put the savings in some sort of savings institution where one cannot just reach into a jar to pull out the money.
- Become familiar with the financial institutions, credit unions, and savings clubs that exist in or near your communities. If there are nongovernmental institutions working on credit or savings programs in your area, find out what they do and how individuals and groups can get involved. Spread the word.
- If you have a business development project in your country, talk with the Volunteers in that project as they may have valuable information that you can share with others.
- Encourage girls to join business clubs or groups that may function in your community.

Help identify opportunities

- What types of income generating activities are women and girls involved in? Is there one primary activity, such as weaving, or selling a certain agricultural produce that dominates the area? If so, are there opportunities in other areas? Could additional value be added to a product?



- Can individuals doing similar activities be grouped to save labor or share the cost of transport or tools for example? (This does not necessarily mean forming a formal group).
- Are there new markets that could be exploited? Sometimes simple packaging can make a product normally destined for the local market, appeal to the tourist or expatriate market.
- Share ideas with Volunteers at other nearby sites as well as those in other parts of the country. There may be ways to link the productive activities of one area with that of another.

There are many resources in-country that can help you and your counterparts address the poverty cycle. Check with your associate Peace Corps director (APCD), your in-country resource center, the Peace Corps ICE catalog, and feel free to contact Ava Allsman or Andrew Baird at the Center for further suggestions.

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Dominican Girls Make Dolls to Brighten Christmas

By Laura M. Cangemi, PCV

I am a small business development Volunteer in Nagua, a medium-sized town on the north coast of the Dominican Republic. I have been working with an orphanage located on the outskirts of Nagua for the past year and a half. There are 27 girls and three full-time workers that live at the orphanage. In hopes of making their Christmas brighter, fellow Volunteer Marybell Ramirez and I collaborated on a doll project to raise funds for Christmas gifts. It was successful beyond expectation. We made dolls constructed primarily of plantain leaves and palms, which are abundant and free on our beautiful island. In addition to these materials one needs only: glue, clear varnish (to maintain the leaves and avoid decomposition), paint, and ribbon.

The first step we took was to compose a letter asking for material donations. We were extremely fortunate and received generous donations from U.S. citizens and Dominicans alike. The second step we took was to find a venue to sell the dolls. We sold our dolls at the annual Peace Corps/Dominican Republic porch fair, where artisans from different Volunteers' communities sell their crafts. After we gathered the materials, we went to work and constructed more than 350

dolls. The girls in the orphanage were wonderful and eager to help. Their ages range from six months to fourteen years. We delegated the doll-making responsibilities according to age and were delighted to see that there was a task for everyone. The girls loved the project and really enjoyed being creative, something that they do not often have the opportunity to do.

With the funds raised we bought a wonderful assortment of Christmas gifts, ranging from books to basketballs to art supplies. We had money left over and decided to hold a small party with community members to celebrate the orphanage and the girls as well as to raise awareness about the institution in the community. This celebration was successful and there has been an increase of visits to the orphanage.

I have found a mothers' club that will continue to make the dolls as an income-generating project. Five to ten percent of their profits will be donated to the orphanage. I have been working with female inmates at the Nagua prison, and they too will be making the dolls as a Mother's Day fundraiser to construct a new latrine. They will also donate a percentage of their profits to the orphanage.

This project is easy, inexpensive, and reaps wonderful rewards. It is a great way to bring creativity and crafts into people's lives as well as raise small incomes. It also serves as a fabulous catalyst to teach basic business skills and other lessons.

c/o Violeta Tavarez
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Dominican Women Unite Through Business

By Rebecca Bankston, PCV

Las Madres Unidas de La Joya, or the United Mothers of La Joya, is a group of women dedicated to building a better future for themselves, and in turn for their families and community. I am a small enterprise development Volunteer, and I work with these women as my primary project. The group is comprised of 50 women and 15 young girls. They meet twice weekly to work together and discuss issues of concern in their business. They formed their group almost one year ago with the purpose of learning a skill and using this skill

to improve their lives. The crafts are sold in two ways: by special order, and from the store that is located in Café La Joya (a coffee factory that gives tours to local tourists). The group is not only learning how to manage a business and produce finished products, but is also learning about community issues. We have had informational sessions on HIV/AIDS, water sanitation and purification, waste management, and numerous business topics such as quality control, accounting, proper record keeping, and customer service. Upcoming talks include

nutrition guidance and a career panel of local female professionals who will speak of their education and careers. The United Mothers of La Joya is an excellent example of women taking the initiative and working together with the idea of improving all facets of their lives.

c/o Violeta Tavarez
Program Assistant
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Niger Holds Women's Work Fair

By Betsy Parrell, GAD Committee Vice-President/Niger

Peace Corps/Niger's Gender and Development committee (GAD) held its third annual gathering of Nigerien women community leaders May 10–12, 2000 at the Peace Corps training center in Hamdallaye. The National Women's Work Fair brought together 51 women to provide skills training, information sessions, and a forum for the exchange of experiences and ideas. Volunteers from across Niger worked with their host communities to select motivated women who are both leaders in their communities and active in small income-generating activities.



Following an introductory welcome session, Volunteer Heather Vogel song kicked off the first day with a team-building game. From there, participants and Volunteers rotated through a series of stations in small groups, most of which focused on unique small-income generating skills. Women from Volunteers' communities, who currently generate small amounts of income by using skills they learned at past work fairs, were invited to present at this year's work fair. These presentations included: Yado Haro's demonstration on how to make balms and lotions out of beeswax and shea butter, and Lantu Mai Aiki's lesson on how to make bread over a traditional cooking fire. The other work stations featured peanut processing and products with Hadjia Hwachima Ibrahimu; crocheting with plastic bags with Aissa Ibrihim; and community gardening with Peace Corps/

Niger's Technical Coordinator Yacouba Sangare, and Fatima Adamou. The final station featured a small-group discussion on reproductive health, facilitated by Balkissa Seyni, the head nurse at the Gabi health clinic south of Madarounfa. We concluded the day with a video in local languages dramatizing the benefits of formal education for Niger's young girls.

We spent half of the second day applying the skills learned the previous day and exposing participants to money management strategies. Participants then practiced using two of the small-income generating skills of their choice in extended, hands-on sessions. Also, a representative of CARE International spoke on CARE's "Women on the Move" program, a system of micro-credit that trains women to manage small community-level savings and credit associations.

The participants also took a structured driving tour of Niamey, the capital of Niger. The tour of the country's capital gave participants, many of whom have never traveled outside of their immediate home region, a sense of empowerment through seeing where the entities of their national government work and by observing professional women in the workplace. The day ended with a video in local languages on HIV/AIDS transmission and prevention.

On the final morning we held information sessions on the impact of traditional health practices, improved animal husbandry, and a testimonial on women's community organizing. Madame Mariko, of CONIPRAT (Nigerien Committee for Traditional Practices), facilitated a discussion on the traditional health practices of the participants' various regions and provided training on the positive and negative impacts of these practices. Two Volunteers had collaborated with CONIPRAT to develop a 10-page visual aid on traditional health practices that can be used in presentations to small or large groups. Participants were trained in using the visual aid, and each received a copy to take home and use in educating their communities. Since many women own livestock as a

form of savings and investment, Sido Samba, of the government agency for animal husbandry in Hari Kannasou, led a session on chicken and goat health. He concluded the session with a demonstration on how to make salt licks for small ruminants using locally available materials. Next, Haoua Ibio and Rabi Madugu from Tabla, shared their inspiring experience founding a women's community center in their village. The women of Tabla pooled their resources and talents to create the center, through which women learn and maintain small-income generating activities such as sewing, knitting, and embroidery.

The participants ended the final day with evaluation sessions and a *tam-tam* drumming and dancing celebration. The participants went home feeling well equipped and motivated to share what they had learned with their communities and to continue striving to improve the well-being of their families and their communities. Volunteers and participants will now work together to organize village tours, regional gatherings, and market booth presentations to facilitate the transfer of information to the participants' home communities at the local and regional levels.

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Women Hold Business Roundtable in Ukraine

By Jennifer Lewis/PCV, GAD Council Member

The Gender and Development Council of Peace Corps/Ukraine is a cross-sector program. Over our history as a council, we have primarily acted as a conduit of information for Volunteers and resources. In an effort to move toward a more active role, the GAD Council developed an action plan to coordinate activities on gender issues in Ukraine. In addition to our meetings held every six to eight weeks, we decided to develop a calendar of activities, which includes a roundtable meeting in the fall, an essay contest in the winter, a curriculum development workshop in the spring, and a service project in the summer.

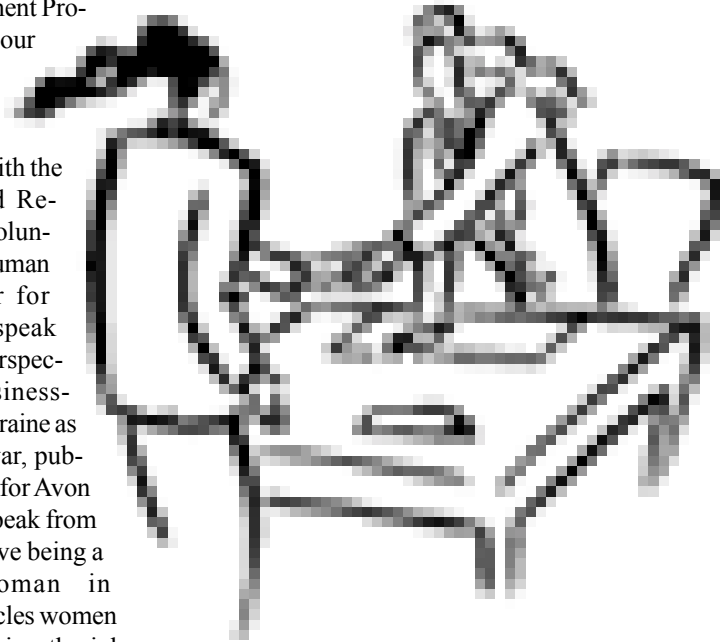
Last September, the GAD Council put to a test its new action plan and held its first roundtable conference in Kyiv, called "Women in Business." The purpose of the roundtable was to provide an opportunity for Peace Corps Volunteers to obtain information and collect resources to promote the integration of Ukrainian women into the development processes of their communities. In the past, a lot of attention had been placed within our GAD newsletters on gender issues and camp curricula; however, given the growing presence of business Volunteers as well as more Volunteers interacting with women in business, the GAD council decided that there was a need among Volunteers for more information and discussion on the activities taking place in Ukraine related to promoting women in business.

Over the two-day conference, speakers addressed the group with information about their own support organizations and their lives as women working in Ukraine. In order to provide a diverse set of speakers, the GAD council sought out women who both work for organizations that address women's business issues as well as women (Ukrainian and American) who work in Ukraine business. First, we had Grace Warnecke, Chief of Party, from Winrock International and Tetyana Tymoshenko from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), who spoke together on the Women

Economic Empowerment Program (WEE). Four of our current Volunteers work for WEE sites and they shared their experiences as well with the group. Next we had Returned Peace Corps Volunteer, Nikki Lemley, Human Resources Manager for Western NIS Fund speak from an American perspective on being a businesswoman working in Ukraine as well as Oksana Sedlyar, public relations specialist for Avon Cosmetics-Ukraine speak from a Ukrainian perspective being a young businesswoman in Ukraine and the obstacles women encounter when entering the job market. The group found both Nikki and Oksana's perspectives very interesting and had fun asking questions.

The next day we opened with Olena Suslova, advocacy coordinator for Winrock International, who spoke about the training programs that Winrock offers to women in Ukraine. The training programs focus on economic empowerment and enhancing self-esteem. Following Olena, we asked Volunteer Nell Connors to speak about a resource available on the internet called On-line Women's Business Center, where such information as how to start your own business can be obtained. The GAD Council provided all the Volunteers who attended with copies of these materials. During a session after lunch on resources available to Volunteers in-country, Mike Wetherell from Project Harmony and Eilene Anderson from The Alliance For Collaboration on Enterprise Development spoke on the resources available through their organizations. Closing the day we had Oksana Kuts, the Gender Programs Focal Point at UNDP Ukraine speak on the UNDP's activities in Ukraine.

Nineteen Volunteers attended the confer-



ence from communities throughout Ukraine and were representative of all our programs here in Ukraine (Environment, Business, and TEFL). Overall, the roundtable was an excellent opportunity for Volunteers to obtain information about current development programs as well as to network with other Volunteers and obtain resources. Beyond the information they gathered from the speakers and the handouts from the Council, Peace Corps staff Member Zhanna Parkhomenko provided Volunteers with some tips on writing successful small project assistance (SPA) grants for women in business development projects. In summary, the roundtable was such a success that we hope to hold more events in the future on other important issues dealing with Gender and Development.

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Women Lead Development in Honduras

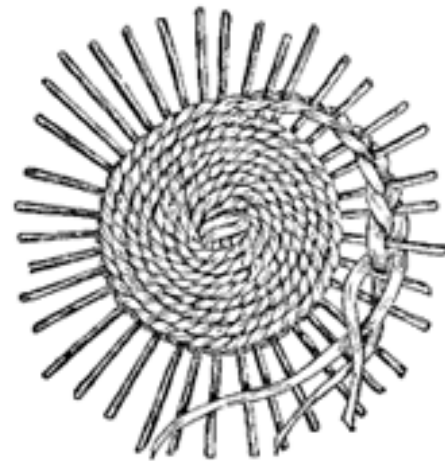
By Kim Donat, and Shana Yansen/PCVs

In June, Peace Corps/Honduras' WID committee, ENLACE, sponsored its third annual women's conference, "Women Leaders in Development." Twenty-two Volunteers participated with their female counterparts in the conference. Participants represented a wide range of professions, including: teachers, nurses, farmers, community organizers, professionals, artisans, and business owners.

The focus of the conference was leadership development, and project planning. Volunteers led the sessions using activities from "Women Working Together: For Personal, Economic and Community Development" by Suzanne Kindervatter (see *The Exchange*, Spring/Summer 1999, Volume No. 31, p. 3), and from their own personal experiences. Several Volunteers' counterparts were involved in session planning and facilitation. In addition to the mini-workshops developed from "Women Working Together," Volunteers led sessions on the roles, values, skills, and resources of women, and recognizing and developing leadership skills. They also conducted a four-part, one and a half day session on designing, implementing and managing a community project. The Volunteers worked extensively to identify and select community resources.

Several outside speakers, representing well-known Honduran women's organizations, were invited to participate in the conference. The Honduran Women's Rights Center held a lively discussion regarding current Honduran laws on domestic violence, assault, and rape. UNISA, a national organization involved in community banking initiatives with women's groups, presented their model for developing small savings and loans groups. Three local women who have been working alongside UNISA community groups gave personal testimonies. One of these women was also a conference participant and has been involved with an UNISA community bank. Before working with UNISA she was illiterate, but was now using written audiovisual aids for her presentation. Female artisans gave an evening presentation, including demonstrations on the dying and creative processes involved with making red mats and bags, woven bowls, baskets and plates, cornhusk dolls, and straw hats. They also spoke about their cooperative, its organization, and its struggles and successes.

The mini-workshops on leadership development and project planning built on one another throughout the conference so that by the end, each Honduran woman went away

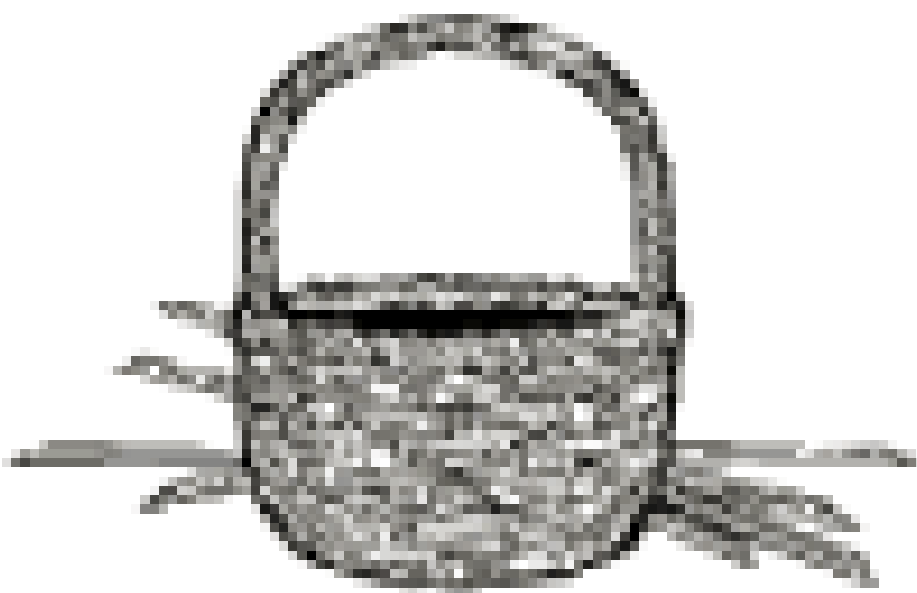


with a complete, concrete project plan to elaborate in her community. Participants were also given extensive materials and resources, including a directory of all the organizations and institutions in Honduras working with and for women. A directory of all the Honduran leaders involved in the conference will be produced as a grassroots networking reference.

Conference participants enjoyed the participatory nature of the sessions, the laughter and comradery shared among the Volunteers and Honduran women, and the time in the sessions directly devoted to planning a project for each individual community. Volunteers have reported that the conference has led to increased enthusiasm, leadership, and initiative in their counterparts. Many Volunteers are actively working on the projects they developed with their counterparts during the conference.

The success of the conference was directly related to the collaboration and teamwork of Volunteers, Honduran national women's organizations, and the Honduran Peace Corps staff. A thank you must go out to all, as well as Suzanne Kindervatter for her book, "Women Working Together."

c/o Parmer Heacox, PTO
Cuerpo de Paz
Apartado 3158
Tegucigalpa, Honduras



Zambian Girls Explore New Horizons

By Lilia Gerberg & Sara Peterson/PCVs

We kicked off Eastern Province's Third Annual Women in Development Girls' Career Week on a Monday. With only about 27% of Zambian girls completing grade 8, girls need continued support in their academic endeavors. The Volunteers gathered 19 girls from 14 different villages in a pick-up truck. The girls, in grades 4–7, had clustered at two points. Though the sun was blazing and the road bumpy, the girls did not complain. Instead, they started singing.

After arriving in the provincial capital of Chipata, we played icebreakers and name games, like "Hot Potato" and "Duck, Duck Goose." While shy and reserved initially, the girls quickly warmed up to each other and to us, and were soon singing and dancing and teaching us Zambian games. We introduced the girls to their hosts, Zambian members of Peace Corps' WID committee, in whose homes they stayed for three nights.

Since we wanted to expose the participants to a number of different professions and workplaces, we arranged site visits with various companies and offices in town. On Tuesday and Wednesday mornings, all the



girls convened in the center of town. We then proceeded on group field trips to a secondary school, hospital, social welfare and judiciary offices, bank, a woman-owned res-

taurant, and a large supermarket. Female professionals spoke with the girls at each location. These women talked about their education histories, explained their work responsibilities, described how they juggled a family and a career, and encouraged the girls to continue with their education. The girls were at first quiet and reluctant to speak, but soon gained the confidence to ask questions and express their opinions. We supplied each girl with a pen and notebook in which to record her activities and thoughts.

On the last day of the event, we played more games, including a Zambian version of "London Bridge is Falling Down." Then each girl stood and read a brief essay about her impressions and what profession she might be interested in pursuing—pilot, agricultural officer, and doctor were just a few of their ideas. The chairperson of the WID committee, Mrs. Elizabeth Phiri, distributed certificates to the hosts who were wearing



EXPLORING NEW HORIZONS: Peace Corps Volunteers pose with their WID host members and the participants of "Girls' Career Week" in Zambia.

Photo: Karla Berg/PCV

new "Take Our Daughters To Work" t-shirts. They then proudly watched the girls receive their diplomas.

Like every commencement ceremony, we viewed the close of Girls' Career Day not as an ending but a beginning. We hope these 19 girls will share their insights and observations with their classmates, disseminating information and expanding the horizons of other girls in their villages. Hopefully, as we demonstrate different professional opportunities and help foster a stronger sense of self-worth and empowerment, more girls will stay in school and be motivated to become active, integral members of their communities.

c/o Zera Nalwimba,
Programming Secretary
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Engendering Development

“Engendering Development” is an ongoing column that provides theories and tools for integrating a gender perspective into programs and training.

The articles in previous issues of *The Exchange* introduced gender analysis as a tool for identifying the socio-cultural factors that determine individuals’ perspectives, roles and responsibilities, decision-making and needs based on their sex, age, ethnicity, religion, and other social factors. It is important for Volunteers to be aware of these factors when working with communities in any given activity and to understand what supports and/or constrains community members’ participation to and in the activity.

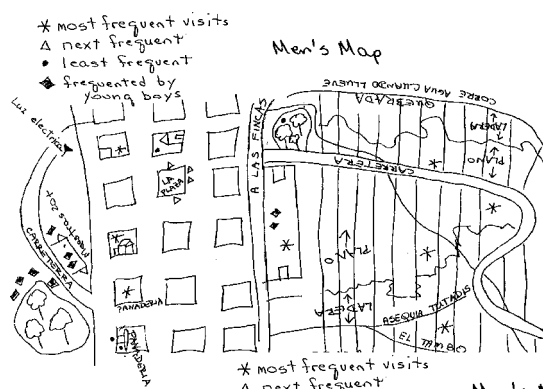
The last article introduced key components of gender analysis:¹

- **Gender Roles** are the roles and responsibilities of men, women, boys, and girls.
- **Division of Labor** is the work done by men, women, girls and boys.
- **Access** to resources, facilities, opportunities, organizations, information, benefits, among others, differ based on one’s sex, age, and other social factors.
- **Power Relations** are the different types of power individuals have and how that power is used to interact with others. There are four different types of power: power over, power with, power to, and power within. These all influence decision-making.
- **Gender Needs** are the different needs of men and women, boys and girls based on gender roles, division of labor, access and power relations. Understanding these different needs informs the development and implementation of projects and activities.

Identifying and understanding these components assists Volunteers to better understand the gender issues that impact their projects and activities. How do Volunteers get this information? By using PACA.

What is PACA?

Participatory Analysis for Community Action (PACA)² was developed by the Peace Corps in order to provide a set of gender-sensitive tools that facilitate the implementation of a participatory development approach that is inclusive of all community members. These tools are representative of those developed for community development, gender analysis, Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA). PACA tools are used to better understand gender issues in any given community.



PACA Tools

There are four tools described in PACA. Volunteers facilitate PACA activities with community members to explore perceptions, identify roles and responsibilities, understand how community members use their time and establish community desires and needs. With this understanding, you and your community can work together to ensure that all community members participate in and benefit from project planning and implementation. The PACA tools³ are described briefly below:

Community Mapping

Community resource mapping is an effective way of locating different types of activities over a landscape. This tool can reflect gender differences in regard to division of labor, access, and decision-making and relative importance of different resource areas. This tool provides an interactive way to understand the community and is most appropriate in small villages or neighborhoods where there

Engendering Development continues on page 13

¹ Parker A. R., Lozano I., Messner, L. (1995) *Gender Relations Analysis: A Guide for Trainers*. Save the Children, Whole ICE Number WD138.

² Peace Corps (1996) *PACA: Participatory Analysis for Community Action*, Whole ICE Number M0053; and Peace Corps (1997) *Gender and Development Training/Girls' Education Manual*. Whole ICE Number M0054

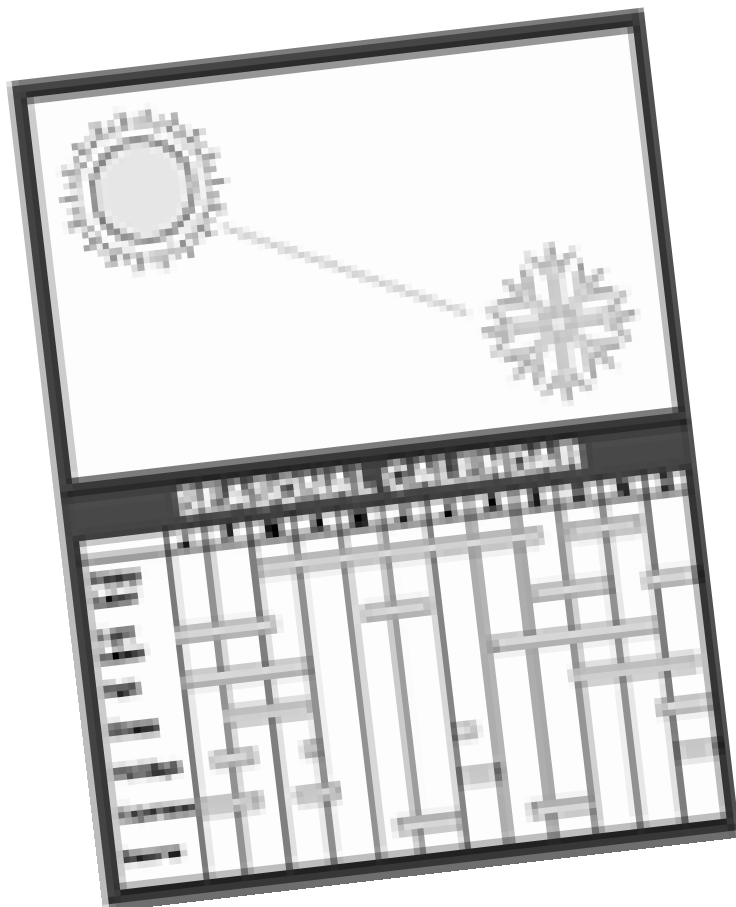
³ Peace Corps (1997) *Gender and Development Training/Girls' Education Manual*, booklets 5, 6, and 8. Whole ICE Number M0054.

Engendering Development continued from page 12

are clear connections between residence and community resources. Community mapping can also be used in classrooms to assess perceptions, needs, access to resources and information, and division of labor. This tool can also be used for monitoring and evaluation of a project and changes in the community.

Daily Activities

This tool is used to identify the routine work patterns of men and women (girls and boys). The information resulting from this tool provides valuable insights into both the daily work of each group, but also how that work is valued and perceived by both men and women. This information can be used to identify how a project should be designed to ensure participation of all community groups. The Daily Activities tool helps to raise awareness of men's and women's contributions to the welfare of the household and can be used to develop baseline data to monitor the impact of a project's activities on men's and women's (girls' and boys') time.



Seasonal Calendar

This tool tracks the seasonal variations in household work, income, and spending patterns over time. It is well demonstrated that household well-being fluctuates seasonally relative to food and income availability and the demand on household resources. These variations have different impacts on men, women, boys and girls within the household. In addition, some times of the year are busier for one group than another. The Seasonal Calendar identifies these variations in household well-being and work from the perspective of men and women (boys and girls). An understanding of these seasonal variations is important for the development and implementation of a community action plan.



Needs Assessment and Priority Ranking

Needs Assessment and Priority Ranking leads communities through a process whereby they identify principal constraints and opportunities for men and women (boys and girls) in regard to project interventions based on community preferences. This tool can serve as an initial community-planning tool as well as for monitoring and evaluation.

Summary

What makes any of these tools unique in PACA is the focus on the following:

1. Men and women (or boys and girls, or other subgroups) do the activity separately and then share and discuss their work with each other. This provides the perspective of everyone, not just the leaders or dominant group.
2. The whole group processes the information together, sharing their observations and drawing conclusions. Decisions about and from the information are made by the community as a whole, not by a few or by outsiders.

Other tools can be used in the same way; the PACA approach is not limited to the four tools described.

How To... Start an After School Theater Group

By Bezel Evoy/PCV

Note from the Author: If you have some creativity and patience, and love to see children with whiskers painted on their cheeks, you can do this activity.

Purpose:

1. To provide cultural experiences in the developing world that children and adolescents might not normally receive.
2. To provide a space to help children and adolescents build their self esteem, communication skills, and understand and control their behaviors in a fun and creative atmosphere.

Age Group:

The participants can be 8–12 or 13–18 years old. It is important to separate groups according to their reading, memorization, and maturity levels. You should not have more than 15 members in one group.

Materials Needed:

3. **Scripts**—Provide scripts in the language of your country. You can also work with your group to translate books into scripts. You can present any children’s story (or any story with a message you would like to teach) with a narrator(s), while the rest of the members act out the story.
4. **Sets**—Depending on the play and your budget, your set (and costumes) will vary. Many wonderful sets (and costumes) have been made out of cardboard boxes, paper, glue, and paint, in which case your set and costumes will cost about \$5 for materials per show.
5. **Costumes**—In Ecuador I found small plastic containers of face grease paint for the equivalent of 20 cents a color. These face paints can really help an aspiring actress or actor bring their character to life.
6. **Things from home**—Ask your group members before you start a play if they have some set, prop, or costume materials in their homes. This will help save money.
7. **Awards**—If you would like to give rewards for positive behavior, this will be a small added cost. For example: copies of coloring books, colorful pencils, etc.



Running the Group:

You will have to find a space big enough for all members of your group to move around at one time (for warm-up activities). If you have a school space, great! If not try to find a principal who will let you have a school space. Convince the principal that it will be a great cultural experience for the students, and that you can give the students a cultural arts grade. That way you will have continuity of space, group meetings, and a tool with which to provide behavior management (if the students know your group is a grade on their report card, they will work with the other players and behave much better).

- You will probably have to be responsible about giving the grades to their teachers. They may not be used to the idea of a real cultural arts class.
- Try to get an interested adult to be your permanent helper or co-director. Ask them to help monitor the students’ behaviors (ask them to make notes of positive and negative behaviors for consistency. Your group members will take your group more seriously if you are consistent about behavior management).

Theater Group continues on page 15

Theater Group continued from page 14

- If you have an assistant or co-director, this will also help to keep the drama group going when you are done with service. If you have a teenage group, one member can be a captain. They can help keep the group going when you close service.
- Ask for a group meeting with the teachers to get a list of possible group members (If you cannot work with a school you will have to look to community organizations. Then ask for a meeting with the perspective group members. Sell the group on the activity as “really fun, but challenging.” Once you have members who want to commit, ask them to sign their names on a list, and set a date and time to begin.
- At the first meeting with the final group, ask the members to make a poster of group rules. Tell them that they should expect each other to stick to these rules, and that they will be on a point or grade system. You can modify them if there are rules you feel are lacking. It is a good idea to use the grades of the local school system, so they will understand how they are doing. This will especially help if you are submitting grades. If you cannot do this project in a school setting, I highly suggest you do a point system with rewards every three months for group members who receive the equivalent of a B or above.
- After all the rules are out of the way do a warm-up and teach your group members that a warm-up is essential in theater. Warm-ups are used to prepare oneself for rehearsal times. They should also do warm-up exercises before they do their shows—this will help to clear their minds of outside stimulus. Warm up their voices so that the audience can hear them, and unite them into a group that is ready to work together. The warm ups should be games or activities that people play all the time with school children, for example: Simon says, follow-the-leader, say your name with a movement, or say your name with an animal. Use any activity that includes movement and where the voice can be used. It does not matter what you do. It only matters that they warm up their voices and bodies before each group, and that they respect each other while doing the warm-ups.
- If you have a script you can read it at the first group meeting. Otherwise, ask the group to bring stories to the next meeting, or you can take a trip to the library. Have the group decide which story they would like to use—a majority vote will help the members feel more invested in the show. You will probably have to do some work outside of the group to cut the script and make it work for the amount of people you have in your group.
- This is just an average, but I have found that 10–12 year olds, for example, need 2 months to memorize a short 1/2 hour show.

So remember to cut your script down if you are working with younger children. This will relieve everyone’s stress level immensely!

Summary:

- Meet at least once a week—twice is better;
- Members should read the rules at least once a week;
- Mark down positive and negative behaviors every group meeting;
- Do a warm-up activity at each group meeting, and before shows;
- Work on sections of the play until the lines are memorized, and then practice the whole play;
- Present the show; and
- Maybe charge a small admission so that you have some funds for your next show, or a party to celebrate!

Extra Advice:

Start off small, do not expect a Broadway performance right away and **BREAK A LEG!**

c/o Marcy Kelley, CD
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WHAT'S GOING ON...

Nicaragua Hosts Regional GAD Team Training of Trainers

By Sarah Henshaw/PCV

In August 1999, I had the honor of being invited to join the Inter-America and Pacific (IAP) Region's Gender and Development Team/Training of Trainers in Nicaragua. As a Volunteer in Nicaragua, working in the environmental education sector, I was honored not only that I personally was invited, but also that the Peace Corps valued Volunteer insight and experience. From this conference I learned not only about the Peace Corps' commitment to gender issues, seen through the writing and publishing of the GAD Training/Girls' Education manual, but also how I personally, as a Volunteer working in the field, can apply the theories discussed.

When I first received the invitation, about two weeks before the conference, I could barely decipher the alphabet soup that appeared at the top of the page: "The IAP GAD Team TOT." Fortunately, I was familiar with the term GAD, Gender and Development,

and therefore knew that invitees of the conference would be discussing gender issues, but in what exact terms, I was unaware. But upon entering the conference and listening to the opening remarks by Maryann Minutillo, the Inter-America and Pacific Region Chief of Operations, I understood the issues that would be discussed.

First, I learned that Peace Corps had written and published a collection of pamphlets, presented within large, almost intimidating binder, known as the Peace Corps Gender and Development Training/Girl's Education manual. The manual contains useful and interesting information on topics ranging from basic theories of gender, development, WID/GAD, and gender analysis, to practical exercises and activities Volunteers can use to incorporate gender analysis in their projects and everyday work. Every post worldwide has a copy available for Volunteer use, and I would highly recommend taking a look at it. (*The manual is available in your In-Country Resource Center, or you can ask your APCD where your post keeps its copy*).

Once participants at the conference had the opportunity to discuss their experiences and thoughts on gender, development, women's issues, and the Peace Corps, I realized that most of the others were actively including GAD and/or gender analysis in their programs and projects. Some had active GAD committees, which were both supporting the work of Volunteers in their primary and secondary projects, and increasing the overall awareness of gender issues in community development. Other countries' GAD committees had helped to get gender analysis included in their sectors' project plans. This means Volunteers are expected to be knowledgeable and to use these practices in their primary and secondary projects. I believe that this should be the ultimate goal of all of us: the incorporation of gender

analysis to better understand our communities.

To better enable each country represented—Panama, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Paraguay, Bolivia, Guatemala, Dominican Republic, Belize, and Samoa—we developed a gender team to reach the goal of GAD inclusion into Volunteers' projects. First, we learned and developed together the definitions of important terms, like "gender and development," "gender analysis," etc. This enabled us to explore our posts' experiences using the GAD Training/Girls Education manual. From this discussion, I learned about community mapping, constructive forms of interviewing, a daily activity comparison, and many other useful activities that allows myself and other Volunteers to systematically work with communities to analyze their needs. The results allow the Volunteer, along with the participating community, to develop a project that fits with the community's needs in order to accomplish a sustainable project.

I realize that this seems incredibly simplistic, which it is. All Volunteers who have been in the field for even small amounts of time can tell you that a sustainable project, no matter how well done the community analysis, seems unachievable. Yet gender analysis tools have assisted me to build sustainability in emergency planning, community gardening, and other projects. I strongly recommend looking into the tools, if you have not already. I also suggest looking into GAD or WID committees that your post might have, or if one of these is not currently formed and working, to form one.

c/o Yamileth Alguera, Program Assistant
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Peace Corps Director
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The GAD Training/Girls' Education Manual. Look for it in your In-Country Resource Center!

Women Can Do Anything In Lesotho

By Jeanmarie M. Mitchell/PCV

Peace Corps/Lesotho's Women in Development (WID) Committee presented the First Annual *Basali!* (Women) Conference at the Anglican Training Center in the capital city, Maseru. Twenty-five young Basotho women, ages 16-25, from all over Lesotho participated in the conference. Peace Corps selected these women based on their leadership ability, academic success, and desire to participate. For five days in January, these 25 young Basotho women met and developed relationships with successful female entrepreneurs. Through the examples and encouragement of these successful Basotho women, team-building activities and games, the young women found the inspiration and empowerment they needed to recognize their potential, self-worth, and personal power to become the leaders of tomorrow.

After the arrival of the participants, the Honorable Minister of Environment, Gender, and Youth Affairs, Mrs. Lepono opened with an outstanding speech and set the tone for the conferences' theme, "Women Can Do Anything!" The next day was filled with speakers from the National University of Lesotho, Women in Law in Southern Africa, The National AIDS Control Center, and an inspiring presentation by Dr. Mphu Ramatlapeng, an ophthalmologist and leader of Women in Business in Lesotho.

On Wednesday, the Lesotho Red Cross Youth Group gave a presentation on HIV/AIDS and then gave tips on beginning youth organizations in communities. A debate then took place over the pros and cons of *lobola* (dowry), and sex before marriage. The debates provided a forum for the young women to voice their thoughts and challenge their peers. After the debates, the Assistant Commissioner of Police, Mrs. Letoane, and two of her colleagues talked about crime in Lesotho and opportunities for women at the Police Training College. Following them, Mrs. Keratile Thabang, a senior environmental outreach officer, spoke about the environmental conditions in Lesotho. The afternoon continued with a Maseru scavenger hunt. We divided the group into five teams

FIGHTING AIDS: Basotho women from the National AIDS Control Program demonstrate methods of preventing HIV/AIDS.

Photo: Jeanmarie M. Mitchell/PCV



who ran around the city visiting different sights. Some had the opportunity to visit Radio Lesotho and to be interviewed on the air. Others visited local organizations such as the US Embassy, Irish High Commission, British High Commission, and the British Council to request information about the kind of assistance available for projects and scholarships. The participants also visited the National AIDS Control Center, the National

ers, as well as a radio station manager and a chief executive officer of the Lesotho National Development Council. Every woman was an inspiration and gave the participants motivation to pursue their goals. After the panel, the women joined the girls for an informal luncheon, which provided more time for discussion. In the afternoon, the young women received an education resource manual filled with information on and applications to schools, colleges, and universities in Lesotho. A few young women who attended some of the schools answered questions and shared information about applying. For the final evening together, the women relaxed, had a dance party, and made a banner to remember the week.

During the closing ceremonies, news reporters, Radio Lesotho, and Lesotho TV were all present. The participants presented their banner, photos were taken, and the Honorable Ambassador of the United States, Katherine H. Peterson, attended the ceremony. The Honorable Prince Seeiso Bereng Seeiso arrived, to the great surprise of the participants, and, together with the US Ambassador, presented the certificates to the young women. The *Basali!* Young Basotho Women's Conference was a success. The media and community loved the idea and it is strongly hoped that this occasion will mark the beginning of many more conferences for the youth of Lesotho.

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Lesotho



GO TEAM: Participants at the Basali conference do team building exercises with Peace Corps Volunteers.

Photo: Jeanmarie M. Mitchell/PCV

Library, the police station, and internet cafes. Some of the young women experienced their first time in the city and their first elevator ride! In the evening some of the young women took an opportunity to visit the Square One Computer Training Center where they learned the basics of computer applications.

A professional women's panel presented on Thursday, comprised of female teachers, nurses, accountants, foresters and research-

Women Have a Positive Impact on the Dominican Republic's Environment

By Elise Morris/PCV

The Women in Development (WID) committee of Peace Corps/Dominican Republic has had a full year. Two regional conferences on Women and the Environment were poignant in light of today's environmental challenges in the Dominican Republic, such as deforestation and water sanitation.

Members of the WID committee, Dominicans, many of whom were high school-aged, and other Peace Corps Volunteers developed and planned both of the conferences. Seventy-five Dominican women participated, each coming from different lifestyles, family situations, and environments. This created a truly diverse group.



INTERACTION: Dominican girls share their thoughts with Volunteers during discussions on women's impact on the environment.

Photo: Kristin Shipler Santin/PCV

The activities and discussions on the first day of the conferences raised many issues, including the environment of the Dominican Republic, linkages between the environment and quality of life, and the impact of women on the environment. The second day consisted of discussions and workshops with

WORKING HARD: Participants practice their new environmental skills through hands on activities.

Photo:
Kristin Shipler Santin/PCV



corresponding field activities to attain a more hands-on approach. Topics included composting and trash disposal, gardening and natural insecticides/fertilizers, reforestation and resource management, and water source contamination.

On the final day of the conferences, the participants studied the elements needed in making effective presentations. The women then worked with their host Peace Corps Volunteer to create a work plan for their own community. It was stressed to all participants that they do follow-up work. It is a critical step in bringing information back to a larger audience, reinforcing the roles of the participants as educators, and being the final step in the cycle of sustainable work.

The women have already begun to do follow-up work through environmental presentations, the planning of an educational trash campaign, and several other projects. This has been an exciting response to an excellent conference.

The WID committee has also been hard at work. Currently, it is about to launch a new bilingual cookbook in a never-ending effort to raise funds. The WID committee

has also recently awarded ten scholarships to outstanding Dominican women to pursue their educational and professional goals.

c/o Violeta Tavez
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APPLAUDING WOMEN: High school girls cheer on each other's presentations.

Photo: Kristin Shipler Santin/PCV

Women Build Their Futures in Bolivia

By Katie Melland/PCV

Peace Corps/Bolivia held a four day conference for 25 girls from communities surrounding Tarija, Bolivia called "Building the Futures of Bolivian Women." The objectives were to motivate the girls to continue studying and learning, to motivate the girls to be leaders in their communities, and to help empower them to care for their health.

On the first day the girls participated in a variety of activities that helped them understand the importance of self-esteem. This included a skit by two Volunteers showing how one's self-esteem can easily be torn down. At one point all the girls had to make a list of five things that they thought they could not do, such as "I cannot dance." Then, they tore up their lists and threw them to the ground. This helped the girls see they could do what they want if they put their minds to it. The girls then wrote their names on a big sheet of paper and wrote a positive adjective describing themselves with each letter of their name.

The next class focused on good communication skills, as illustrated by Volunteers Amber Denton Johnson and Katie Melland. Katie started the class by using horrible public speaking skills. The girls then had to help her change her speaking methods to make her a more successful speaker. Next we broke the girls into groups, gave them a topic to prepare, and asked them to present it using the good communication skills. The second part of this class was centered more on good listening skills. Two girls did two skits, the first one being an example of poor listening skills, the second one being an example of good listening skills.

The second day of the conference started with a class on gender roles. We began by having the girls make a list of things they thought only males can do or only females can do. They also listed female and male stereotypes. We explained the difference between "gender roles" and "sex" (see *The Exchange, Spring/Summer 1999 Volume No. 31*, p. 7). By the end of the class the girls understood that society places gender roles on everyone, but we do not necessarily have to comply with these gender roles. They

understood that they can do some things that generally are only thought to be done by males.

Next, there was a class on goal-setting and actualizing those goals. We began by having the girls make a human knot and try to figure out how to unravel themselves—a goal they accomplished. We then led the girls in a visualization activity, where each girl had to close her eyes and picture where she wanted to be in 1, 5, 15, and 20 years. Afterwards they drew pictures of these goals and began thinking about the steps they needed to take to get there.

The last class of this day was given by a Bolivian woman on women's rights. She brought flipchart sheets with various laws supporting women's rights in Bolivia, and went through each and explained them to the girls. Next, we had a session where the mentors came to meet the girls whom they would be taking to their places of work the following morning.

The morning of the third day seemed to be the most exciting part of the conference for the girls. Each girl went to work for the morning with a Bolivian woman in the city of Tarija. We paired each girl with a woman whose work interested the girl. After spending the morning at work, the girls and the mentors all returned to the conference location and had lunch together and received certificates.

In the afternoon, a Bolivian professor came and spoke to the girls about different career opportunities. He explained to the girls about the universities and technical schools in Tarija. The girls then visited some of the various universities and technical schools, again, according to their interests. Upon returning, the girls had to give a presentation on what they learned about the university or technical school they visited.

On the last day of the conference a Bolivian woman who works with a domestic violence organization conducted a class on



domestic violence. She asked the girls questions about domestic violence, where it occurs, to whom it occurs, and why it occurs. She then provided answers to each of these questions, and concluded by explaining a Bolivian law that protects all people against violence.

After a short break, we continued with a class on women's health given by a Bolivian woman who works with ProSalud. Using slides and videos, she taught the girls how to care for their health.

Another Bolivian woman followed with a class on alcoholism. During this interactive class, the girls had to come up with solutions for lowering the amount of alcoholism in their communities. They also identified many consequences of alcoholism.

At the end of all the seminars, the Volunteers put together a slide show of pictures taken during the conference. Afterwards, we presented each girl with a certificate.

Upon returning to their communities, the girls each gave a presentation to their classmates on everything they learned at the conference. They were able to teach what they learned to those who were not able to attend the conference.

c/o Mimi Smith, CD
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Casilla #55
La Paz, Bolivia

English Teachers Learn More Than English at Camp in Turkmenistan

By Kristen Axxvig/PCV

In December 1998, a group of Peace Corps Volunteers and their local counterparts had an idea to have an English immersion camp for teachers. In keeping with Peace Corps/Turkmenistan's trend of successful English immersion camps for students, they wanted to provide such an opportunity for teachers of English. Little did they realize how much more this would turn into. Over the next nine months, this idea developed into a ten-day camp for teachers and their children, where the women were not only given a chance to improve their English and learn new teaching methodologies, but also to learn the incredible value of themselves as individuals.

As this camp was being planned, local teachers made it clear that unless women were allowed to bring their children, they would not be able to leave their families for ten days. In response to this, a children's camp, where skills such as team building and self-expression would be taught, was

SERIOUS COSTUMES: Children of the English teachers also participate at the camp with fun self-development activities including team-building, English lessons, and making costumes.

Photo: Kristen Axxvig/PCV

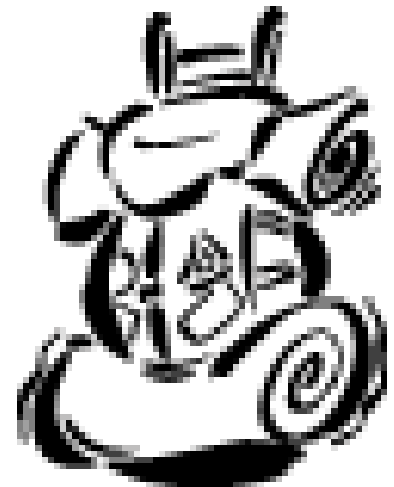


planned simultaneously. It was also decided that this camp would be for female English teachers only. From this point forward, the mission of the camp became two-fold: to help women improve their English and to bring women together to discuss critical issues in their lives. In the end, the camp would help the women see their value, not just as teachers and mothers, but as people.

The camp was held in August in the mountains of southern Turkmenistan near the capital city, Ashgabat. Twenty-seven women participated as campers and sixteen local teachers and Peace Corps Volunteers worked as counselors. Thirty children took part in the children's camp. The first day of camp began with the eager but nervous arrival of campers and their children. As the women and their children began to meet the other campers and children, they never guessed that ten days later they would leave as good friends.

Every morning the children left their mothers to attend their camp. Their day consisted of art, music, English lessons, swimming, and team-building/self-development activities. The women's day was equally busy. Before breakfast, the women met for a morning assembly during which they usually did yoga and some self-reflection meditations. After breakfast, the women attended

workshops on various topics, such as games in the classroom, testing, lesson planning, women's studies, art, writing, goal setting, and health. These workshops were among the most successful parts of camp, consisting of topics such as ping-pong, ethnic cuisine, and *Beatles* songs. The campers also listened to a variety of guest speakers dis-



cuss topics such as financial planning and starting a business. After the morning workshops, they were free to swim, hike, or sit and relax by the river. In the afternoon, the campers were responsible for preparing and



CRITICAL ISSUES: An English teacher in Turkmenistan provides improved lesson plans at Peace Corps' English Teachers' Camp.

Photo: Kristen Axxvig/PCV

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Turkmen Teachers continued from page 20

teaching their own lesson to the rest of the camp. In the evenings, the children were brought back to their mothers and the families spent the rest of the night together. Evening programs consisted of stargazing at the observatory, dancing, scavenger hunting, and singing around the campfire.

Although everyone was very busy with workshops and camp activities, the women found time to do many other things. One group of women produced a camp newspaper with poems, articles, and pictures about the English teachers camp. Another group wrote a declaration of the rights of women in Turkmenistan that all of the campers signed in agreement. They also found the time to develop friendships with each other and made professional and personal connections that would last beyond the camp grounds.

The change that came over these women in the course of just ten days was amazing. They soaked up very simple and new ideas that they had never been exposed to before. They explored ideas that women are strong and capable of anything they set their minds to, and that every person has value within and a gift to give the world. On the final evening, as everyone sat around the campfire, each woman was asked to share one thing she had learned or a way in which she

had grown from the camp. Their responses were all similar in nature, each reflecting growth in their self-esteem and the value of the friendships they had made with the other women at camp. It was a touching ceremony that celebrated the uniqueness, love, value and strength within all women. It also celebrated the bonds that women make and the power that comes from such connections.

These women came as strangers and left

as colleagues and friends. Though it was a sad goodbye, they were comforted by the fact that they would see each other in one month, when they would meet to plan next year's camp.

Presently, women from English Teachers Camp are working together on a number of projects that promote women's development, such as poetry evenings, women's clubs in the different regions of Turkmenistan, yoga classes, and many others. The enthusiasm and commitment these women have shown since then to teach other women the lessons they learned, is the greatest measure of success for English Teachers Camp.

c/o Zohre Ovezliva
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ALL SMILES: Participants and PCVs pose together for a camp snap shot.

Photo: Kristen Axvig/PCV



SWEET REWARDS: English camp participants show off their culinary skills.

Photo: Kristen Axvig/PCV



Lithuanian Campers continued from page 1

Lithuanian business people did not support this camp financially. This shows that not everyone realizes or understands that there is a problem with women's situation in Lithuania's business society.

WBLC was different from other camps. The first thing that surprised the girls was how well the camp was organized and how busy the schedule was going to be. It was unusual for them to go to sessions and not have large amounts of free time as in other camps they attended. The entire day, from 7:30 a.m. until bedtime, was planned. At WBLC, the girls attended 21 sessions in one week. During these sessions they learned about networking, team building, advertising, and stereotypes in the work place. The girls were most interested in the career fair, where Lithuanian businesswomen participated. During this session girls could ask the businesswomen questions on topics that interested them. Camp participants were impressed by the business-women's personal



*LITHUANIA'S FUTURE: Staff and campers pose in their newly made tie-dyed tee-shirts at WBLC.
Photo: Lynette Andreson/PCV*

method was helpful to build the girls' self-confidence and self-motivation, which are important qualities for leaders. The camp was useful for developing the 31 young women's potential to become leaders and making their lives more attractive.

Ausma Matuzeviciute/camp participant:

Life treats each person differently, and we do not know when and what will happen to us. Sometimes life just changes people and their future, but sometimes we need just a little more to change ourselves. It happened to me. Seven months ago I came to the WBLC camp. I was very shy and not too self-confident. I met a lot of friendly, self-confident girls who came here to share their experiences. I met wonderful women who gave motivating speeches and communicated with us all week. That week was very important to me. It made me think about everything in my life and about my behavior. This camp changed my life a little bit. My first school project after returning from camp was translating a book from French into Lithuanian. I presented it to the school and now it is in the school's museum. My second step was becoming a journalist for our school's newspaper, where I write comic strips and other articles. The third step is my creative work—writing poems that are appreciated by my teachers. So maybe these steps are little in comparison to others, but they are great to me. I am thankful to the WBLC camp, which has given me encouragement.

Laura Poskute/camp participant:

Camp is a good place for resting, meeting new acquaintances, playing, and gaining new knowledge. But this camp was something more. WBLC was not an ordinary one. It brought a lot of good things into my life. I don't have dreams of reaching the sky or a star, but the camp has changed a part of my personal life. Now I know how to realize my goals and dreams. I have learned not to give up when it is difficult. I think you won't believe it, but I'm still writing in my journal in English. I think that is the best way to hide my thoughts from my parents and my curious brother. Surely I have gained more things than I realize thanks to the camp. I have translated half of your book. Besides, it was not as difficult as I believed. I think everything depends on your resolution. That is the main thing that I learned at the camp. Speaking generally, I would like to say that the relations with counselors and other girls made me self-confident, strong, and resolute. I'm thankful for this. In conclusion, I would like to say that I have never found such a wonderful camp, counselors, and friends.

c/o Rita Perkons,
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*LAUGHTER AND LEADERSHIP:
Young Lithuanian women don costumes at a
Mindaugas Crowning Day celebration during the
Peace Corps Women's Business Leadership Camp.*

Photo: Lynette Andreson/PCV

life stories, and how they were able to have successful careers while being wives and mothers. In the evening, the girls relaxed with fun activities. All the girls, without exception, mentioned that the camp was well-organized and that the staff responded to their wishes. A second unusual thing for participants was the facilitation of the sessions. Girls were given an incentive to participate and be creative in their sessions. Young women had to use information creatively in the performance of practical tasks. Such a

Daughters in Côte d'Ivoire Learn About Career Possibilities

By Sandy Nichols/PCV

The level of women's education has a great effect on social, health, environmental, and economic conditions in developing countries. However, conditions in developing countries often make girls' education a complicated process. To encourage girls' education in Côte d'Ivoire, the Women in Development (WID) committee in collaboration with the Division for Promoting Women's and Girls' Education (CEPEF) of the Ministry of Education, organized Take Our Daughters to Work Day.

The conference took place over five days at the Mamie Houphouet Fetai School in Bingerville. Volunteers from around the country accompanied a total of seventeen girls from their posts to the event. Sponsored by the Small Projects Assistance Fund (SPA), the conference included a day at work with women in the work force and a day of workshops.

The opening ceremony was attended by approximately forty people, including Dr. Claudine Adou-Lath, the Peace Corps WID liaison; Mrs. Sékoué, Director of the Ministry of Education Department of the Promotion of the Education and Formation of Girls and Women; professional women mentors, and Volunteers. To set the tone for the event, we used several welcome addresses and theater sketches on the pressures facing girls and the increased possibilities educated women have.

The female mentors hosting the girls represented a wide range of professions. Among them were an air traffic controller, a judge, a pediatrician, a businesswoman, a lawyer, a director of a sewing school, an anesthesiologist, and a chief of police. Each girl spent the day with her mentor observing the work environment, discussing the mentors' career and, in some cases, even helping out with the tasks at hand. The day at work presented the girls with a whole new range of experiences. Sharing her experience of the day, one girl told of her fearful first encounter with an elevator. After walking into a very small room in a building in Plateau, a set of doors closed behind her and much to her astonishment, the room began moving! Other girls shared similar new experiences, such as the chance to use computers for the very first time.

The following day the girls had many revelations to share with the group. Some were inspired to follow in the footsteps of their mentor; others were inspired by the mentor of a peer. All were exposed to the myriad possibilities available to women in Côte d'Ivoire. During her presentation of her day at work, one participant continually repeated her astonishment at the fact that her men-

tor "trains men!" Greatly influenced by her mentor, the participant stated that she wished to do the same. A participant, who had spent the day with the first female police commissioner, expressed her fear at being near so many criminals. "Women can't do that!" she stated. Mariam Fofana from the organization Athena Girls, was quick to point out, however, that the girl had just spent the day with a woman who does.

Afterwards, Peace Corps Volunteer Paul Merrill and Ms. Bodoua from CEPEF played pin the eye on the elephant as an introduction to their topic on motivating girls. We then presented a variety of different goals, from the routine to the more complex to illustrate the different steps involved in the process of motivating girls. As a final exercise the girls were given the task of detangling themselves from a human knot — an attainable goal which they must and could achieve.

Mariam Fofana and Ms. Akossi, a psychologist from the University in Abidjan, facilitated the next session. The girls split into several groups to discuss the various roles played by women in Ivoirian society. The groups later came together to share their ideas.

Ms. Akossi and Mr. Tiecoura from the Ministry of Education began the afternoon with presentations. Ms. Akossi helped the girls determine the career paths most appropriate for their interests as well as their future in those careers. Mr. Tiecoura's focused on how to achieve the career and find resources available to help students.

Next, Ms. Assi of the National Program for Reproductive Health gave a presentation on sexual health. Mr. Kouakou, a CEPEF lawyer, spoke to the girls about sexual harassment and the laws of Côte d'Ivoire.

Volunteer Azalia Mitchell and Mr. Gohouré from CEPEF concluded the conference with a presentation on how to prepare and give a presentation. When the girls returned home they were expected to present to their classmates a report on the experiences they had and the lessons they had learned at the conference.

Before their departure, the girls were busily exchanging addresses with their newfound friends. It was a great bonding weekend filled with both fun and education. The girls returned home full of ideas, motivated to start school and determined to share the lessons they had learned with their classmates.

c/o Claudine Adou-Lath, APCD/Health
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*After walking into
a very small room in
a building in Plateau,
a set of doors closed
behind her and much
to her astonishment,
the room began
moving!*

Everyone Has Their Own Life in the Kyrgyz Republic

Submitted by Natalie Mykysey/PCV

As a TEFL Volunteer in Talas, Kyrgyzstan, I teach ninth, tenth, and eleventh graders. I was inspired by a letter I read in The Exchange, detailing an essay contest organized in the Czech Republic (see The Exchange, July 1997, Volume No. 27, pp. 6-7), so I decided to coordinate one in my region, the Talas Oblast. First, I would like to sincerely thank the Volunteers in the Czech Republic for this wonderful idea! Also, thanks to the help of the local Soros Resource Center (especially the efforts of Gulnar Mursalieva). The contest was a success. Entrants were divided into three groups: seventh to ninth grades, tenth and eleventh grades, and university students. They were asked to write on one of the following topics: the importance of women in government, the changing role of women in Kyrgyzstan, or the differences between the life of a woman in a village and that of a woman in a city. We received nearly twenty essays, and one winner was selected from each group. The following is the winning essay from the seventh to ninth grade group, by Pasha Shalagin, comparing village and city life. There have been no editorial changes to this essay. It is reprinted as it was originally submitted.

Untitled

By Pasha Shalagin, winner from the seventh to ninth grade group

These places is very beautiful. There are the mountains. On the mountains grow trees and bushes. If you look up you can see the blue sky. High up in the blue sky the birds sing songs. In one of this village lives one family.

This family is big and hospitable. In this family are ten people. There are mother and father, and six childrens. Aigal is housewife. She is fifty years old. Aigal works very hard in her house and in the field. Azamat is chief in the house. He is fifty two years old. Many years ago Aigal was young and beautiful. But

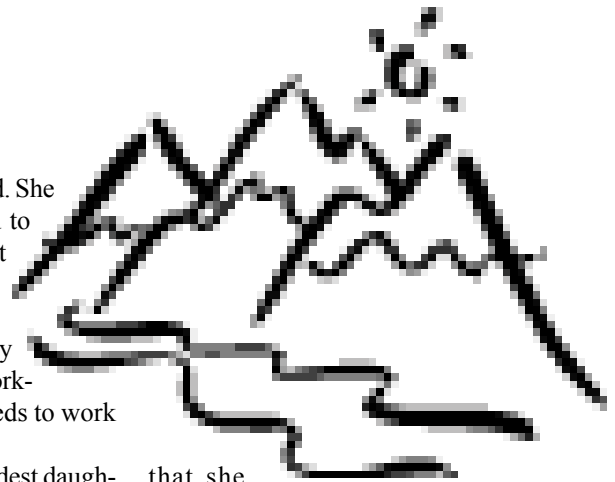
now she changes, grew more tired. She thought to leave the village and to move to some town. But now it can't be true, because of farm, it is a hard time for the country. They don't have the money to buy a new house. In summer Aigal works in the field, in winter she needs to work in her house.

Her childrens grew up. The oldest daughter is Dinara. She doesn't want to live in the village and she want to get the some profession in the city. But second daughter is Asel doesn't want to leave her village. Still Asel doesn't want to leave her mother and father. Asel wants to help her mother to cook the foods, to look after old grandmother and grandfather. She must to look after the childrens. Asel is 18 years old, she is beautiful nice girl. Usually the same girls get marry early, and they have to difficult life, because in one or two years they have a baby and a big farm like usually. In 2 years ago with Asel appear first baby.

Each family there are the cows, the sheeps. The woman must to milk the cows, and to lead the cattle to the field every morning. Then they must to sell the milk. With small baby they have much the troubles. Usually, in the family are many boys. They work in the field every day. The woman who don't have the baby, works in the field in spring. They plant the tobacco and the sugarbeets. They work very hard. In summer they work every day. They must to plant small plants in the soil. Then they weed her seeding from weeds. In autumn they have a big harvest. There are the tobacco leaves which can be killed by the early frosts. Everybody tries gather its. This time is a hot time for all people in the villages. So it is from one year to another year.

Why so? —asks Asel herself, and she is answering: Everybody have his own life. "You can work very good. What secrets do you have?" —ask the some people. She gives them the advices, and helps them. Asel is a very kind girl.

And where is Dinara? Do you remember,



that she went in the city? Dinara has to lived in the city for many years. Now she is Dinara Karimovna. She finished the university. She got married with a one boy. Dinara works in the office. The parents love the baby very much. Life of Dinara is very difficult too. Her job is strained. Her son is 10 years old. His name is Aibek. Aibek likes to learn English. He goes to school. In the city there are a lot of the bad temptations. And his mother tries to show him the right way in the life. Dinara likes to in the shops. She must cook the foods. She is at home with her son, and her husband every evening.

Dinara with her family go to the village very seldom. She is very sad when she sees her mother and the sister. But what she can do for them? A few times Dinara called her family to the city. Her husband promised them to help to find a job. But mother said, "I don't afraid that the old age came to me, I afraid, that my youth leaved me, how can I go from here, I can't do it."

So every woman lives in the village. They are waiting when it will be easier for their children. They want to have the hospitals, the schools, the shops in the villages. I think would be better when they have its and I would never seen the unhappy people!

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Building Sustainability

"Building Sustainability" is an ongoing column that illustrates sustainable development practices through highlighting Peace Corps Volunteer success stories.

A Tanzanian International Women's Day Pep Rally

By Ethan Field/PCV

I wanted to start a girls' club at my school for some time, and recently felt that I was finally ready to attempt such a large project. Then over the weekend, I realized that the upcoming Wednesday was International Women's Day (IWD). I kicked myself for forgetting—me, the big girls' education advocate, right? Well, since it was on Wednesday, and because my counterpart and I had already agreed to have the club meet on Wednesdays, we felt that an IWD kickoff would be ideal—if only I had planned it earlier!

Since there was no time to lose, I jumped into action. In the past I had wanted to ask one of the two women at the local bank to speak at an event—one of them is of the local Maasai tribe, like many of our students. So, on Monday afternoon, after getting the headmaster's go-ahead, I went to the bank to ask the women if they would help. The new manager (one of the two women) was there, but the older Maasai assistant was not—her child had become very ill and was in the hospital. The manager told me that she, herself, would like to do it, but she would need to see what the other woman would be doing—if one is away, the other can not leave. I promised to check back the next day.

Tuesday, there was no change in the situation. So, I went to nearby Arusha to ask a woman, Mama Grace if she could help—I had met her through other Peace Corps activities and knew that she had done things like this before. Mama Grace enthusiastically said that she could come to the event, and would also invite Mama Simba, another woman who happened to be doing a girls' self-empowerment program at her own school. She also was someone I had met through Peace Corps activities.

On Wednesday, International Women's Day, I got up early and went back to the bank. Both the manager and the assistant were there, but knee-deep in work. I was crumbling. I would feel a little ashamed having only one speaker at the event.

But I was lucky! The two women at the bank had been on the phone all morning calling friends and acquaintances trying to find someone else to go in their places! Without any prodding or asking from me, they had been trying hard to make sure the event succeeded! Sadly, they had no success. As I was ready to leave as a failure, the Maasai woman accompanied me out the door and brought me down the street to the District Advisory Office for Women and Children—a place I obviously should have already gone to if I had known what I was doing, or if I had known it ex-

isted. She personally introduced me to one of the people in charge—a man. He told me that actually, most everybody from his department had gone to a big event in Mto Wa Mbu (also in the district) for the same holiday.

My heart was sinking again, but my friend from the bank stayed with me at the District Advisory Office and the three of us discussed other ideas. We finally agreed to ask Mama Assenga, a woman who had worked at the district education office for a long time. Satisfied that we had a plan of action, my friend returned to the bank, and the advisory head took me to the district education office. Mama Assenga met with us and explained how she was the first woman ever to get an official leadership position in Monduli District, 20 years ago. She told us about how she ignored everybody's warning to not take the job, and how they told her that being a female leader in a predominantly Maasai area would be self-defeating. With this, Mama Assenga said she would be really honored and excited to come to the event.

Riding high, but nervous, I went back to school in time to tell my headmaster that things were a "go." He gladly announced the plan to the other staff. Since I had not organized the whole thing very well, and since I had to go down to the school to wait for the guests, I asked the girls from the student government to take charge of setting up for the event. They were the ones who made sure the library was cleaned out, chairs were brought in from the classrooms, and the front table was decorated with cloth to make it look more "official"—all things to which I had not given much thought!

It was quite a sight to see 150 girls shouting "No!" in the school library.

By 4:15, the girls were gathered and sitting relatively quietly in the library—we were already 15 minutes into the event, and none of the guests had arrived. I had to simultaneously keep the girls entertained and wait for the guests, which would be impossible. I told people at the main school building to send a student once any of the guests arrived.

I had to work some magic, so I went up to the library and entered a room of 150 Tanzanian schoolgirls, most of whom I did not know, since I teach the upper level where there are fewer girls. I was not exactly a peer, however, I had one advantage: I was a silly white man who did not mind making a fool of himself. As I entered the room, I noticed Jehovaness, a Junior High girl, standing and shouting something at the other girls. Jehovaness is one of the most energetic girls in the school. She would be the perfect leader.

I called on her and asked if she would like to lead the girls in singing a song, one I felt sure she would know. She sang it with all

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Building Sustainability continued from page 25



the girls, in her energetic way—silly, but it broke the ice. When that song fell apart, I led them in another song, “*Wasichana Msilale*” (“Girls, Don’t Sleep!”) which they had more fun with, especially with the crazy white guy dancing around—well, at the least, I had received their approval!

Of course, persisting in my incompetence, I had run out of songs, but knew I could rely on them. I asked if there was anybody else who knew any songs about girls (I had already gotten them started in the right direction). They all knew who I should pick, a tiny girl in the back, who proceeded to lead the girls in a really fantastic song that I had never heard before, but which they all knew. That kept them busy for a while.

Soon, a student came to tell me that the guests were coming. Mama Assenga had already arrived, and when I got down below I found that Mama Grace had indeed brought Mama Simba with her! I had three guests! To add another lovely touch, it turns out that Mama Simba had worked under Mama Assenga over 20 years ago and they had not seen each other since. They met with an embrace that gave me great vibes about having them all together on the panel.

The event went beautifully, aside from my nervously fumbled introductions. Wanting to be as low profile as possible, I asked the head girl to facilitate the pep rally. Each woman spoke at length about her respective past, including all the trouble she had in succeeding as a woman. The speakers ended with a moral, driving home the point that they had only succeeded because they had worked hard, studied, and went beyond the traditional role of getting married and having babies—an admonition that they should persevere.

The girls continued with a follow-up question-and-answer session that evoked more reinforcements of the ideals the speakers had highlighted earlier. The girls were particularly excited with the exercise practicing saying “No!” The idea was to help the girls

believe that they could say “No” to sexual advances, instead of using coy declinations that would only compound their problems. It was quite a sight to see 150 girls shouting “No!” in the school library. This was an exercise that would hopefully help even just one of them at the right time in the future. It might be the thing that sets her on the path to a career, instead of an early pregnancy, which pulls countless girls too early out of school; or exposes them to HIV, which pulls them too early out of life.

Towards the end, many of the girls asked questions that revealed their desire to have a place to discuss these issues on a regular basis; to carry forward that day’s momentum they so badly wanted to hold on to. After the last question, I stepped in right on cue and shared the idea for a girls-only English club. It was exactly what they wanted; something that would help them reach their academic goals, but would also provide a fun and empowering atmosphere, like the one they were in today. They all cheered for the club—the pressure was now on. I had committed myself to 150 hopeful, singing girls—this is not something I can let slide!

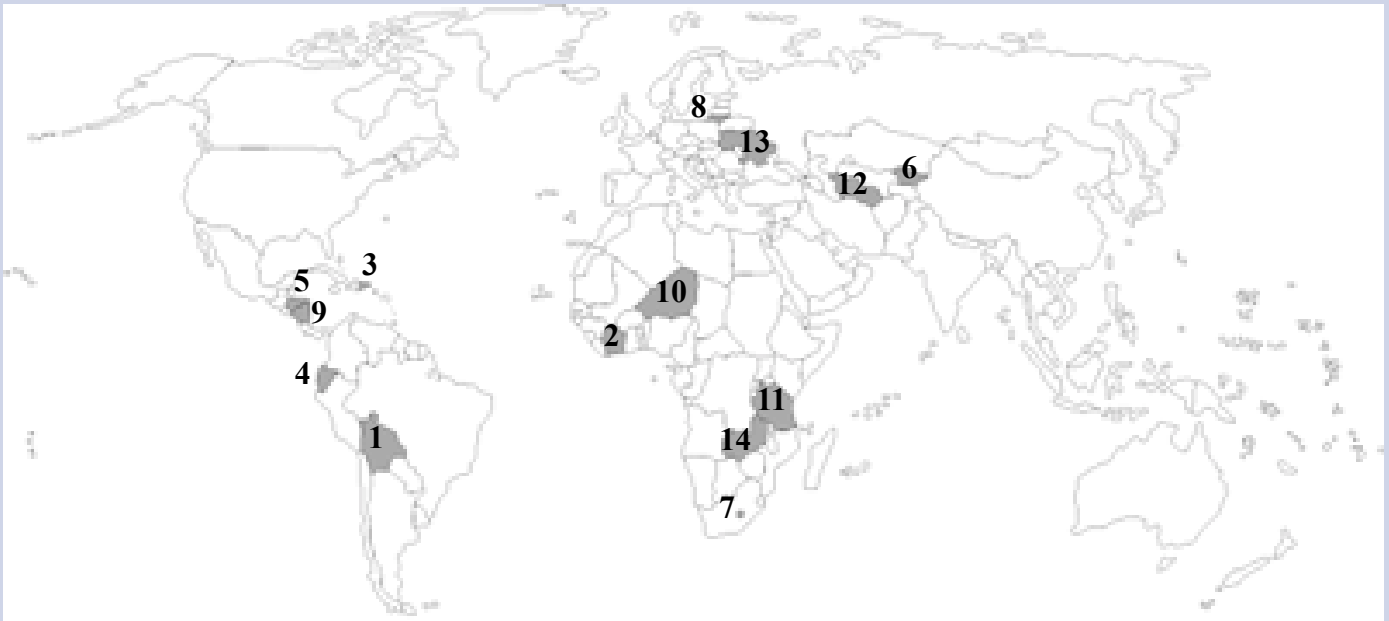
Somehow, through my stumbling, procrastinating, and incompetence, I had managed to do something right along the way—but what was it? With all I had done wrong, what had I done right?

I learned that the long term efforts of becoming a part of the community paid off once I began to work on the event. If I had not worked on my relationships within the community, the people would have never taken initiative or given the level of commitment, and energy that made this event a success.

Lessons I Learned

- Be a part of the school community.
- Have a recognized and supportive relationship with the school headmaster and teachers.
- Become familiar with your community before initiating large projects.
- Think through who you want to work with before you approach them.
- Build more than working relationships, build friendships—those friends will prove valuable when they take the extra steps to help you.
- Learn your local language and culture. This will help the community take you more seriously.

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Articles in *The Exchange*, Spring/Summer 2000, Were Submitted From...

- | | | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|------------------|-------------|
| 1. Bolivia | 5. Honduras | 9. Nicaragua | 13. Ukraine |
| 2. Côte d'Ivoire | 6. Kyrgyz Republic | 10. Niger | 14. Zambia |
| 3. Dominican Republic | 7. Lesotho | 11. Tanzania | |
| 4. Ecuador | 8. Lithuania | 12. Turkmenistan | |

Upcoming Issues

The next issue of *The Exchange* (Autumn 2000) will focus on HIV/AIDS. The submission deadline is November 15, 2000.

The Winter 2001 issue of *The Exchange* will focus on Information Technology (IT). The submission deadline is January 15, 2001.

- WID/GAD and Peace Corps: a Global Overview
- Life Skills Manual and HIV/AIDS Idea Book
- Experiences from:

– Benin	– Kyrgyz Republic
– Bolivia	– Malawi
– Burkina Faso	– Namibia
– Ghana	– Panama
– Guinea	– Tanzania
– Kazakhstan	– Togo



Upcoming Opportunities

- UNICEF Day (October 31)
- International Day Against Violence Against Women (November 25)
- World HIV/AIDS Day (December 1)
- International Volunteer Day (December 5)
- Human Rights Day (December 10)

An Ecuador Volunteer Finds Meaning in Hair

By Andrei M. Cotton /PCV

Yesterday, it happened! As I was elbow deep in a field of hair in an Ecuadorian orphanage, a truth was revealed to me. Although the miracle happened yesterday, the story began eighteen months ago when I traded my comfortable job for a life of adventure and service. I became a Peace Corps Volunteer in Ecuador.

The mission of the Peace Corps is to facilitate cultural and technical exchange between U.S. citizens and host country nationals. My background in agricultural business and economics prepared me for an assignment as a small business development Volunteer. As such, I work with women's groups and agricultural associations in the areas of marketing and income generation. However, I try to involve myself in secondary projects when time and opportunity permit.

Currently, there are 160 Peace Corps Volunteers serving in Ecuador, seven of whom are African-American. With the cooperation of our country director, we formed the African-American support/awareness group named *The Black Out*. In addition to providing a support system for African American Volunteers, we participate in diversity panels and conduct workshops during Volunteer and staff training. Furthermore, we assist Volunteers who are interested in introducing their communities to another facet

of the cultural diversity of the United States. Due to the vast influence and limited scope of North American television, many Ecuadorians are not aware of the presence and/or contributions of many ethnic groups in the U.S. This brings me to our magical day.

At the request of a Volunteer working at an orphanage in the capital city of Quito, we paid a visit to her place of work. Twenty-five little girls live in the orphanage, nine of whom are black. Although the children's caretakers do a great job with their limited resources, they simply did not know how to care for the hair and skin of the black children. Upon arriving at the orphanage, we encountered a room full of wonderfully energetic girls ranging in age from 5 to 14. After making our introductions, we split into two teams. One group of Volunteers entertained the non-black children with games, so that they would not feel left out of the activities. The other group taught the black children and their caretakers the art of maintaining *black hair*. Judging from the varying states of disarray of the heads before us, we were going to have our hands full—literally.

We began by talking about self-esteem and sisterhood. Then we gave them a lesson on using ordinary household goods like eggs, oil, aloe, and bananas to care for their hair and skin. Finally, we went to work combing,

greasing, and braiding. As we practiced the ancient ritual of the *laying on of hands* with a comb in one hand, some grease in the other and a child between our knees, the conversation centered on geography, life, and the stack of *Essence*, *Ebony*, and *Emerge* magazines we had brought. *That's when it happened!* At some point in the evening, the room had transformed itself. Time, place, language, and nationality fell away and became meaningless. Our kinship and love was conveyed by the texture of healthy hair, the glow of oiled black skin, the smiles of everyone enjoying this moment of connection, and the wonder in the eyes of a child discovering her beauty. By the end of the night, we were all changed and our bond as a people was solidified. We realized that our strength lay in our diversity. Being "black," or more correctly "a child of Africa," does not mean that we must speak the same language, act the same, have similar beliefs, or live in a certain neighborhood, city, or country.

c/o Marcy Kelley, CD
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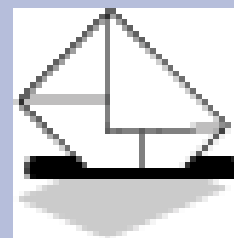
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