



Peace Corps Milestones

1960s

- In a 2 a.m. impromptu presidential campaign speech, then-Sen. John F. Kennedy addresses 5,000 students at the University of Michigan, challenging them to contribute two years of their lives to help people in countries of the developing world. (October 14, 1960)
- Within weeks of his inauguration, President Kennedy signs Executive Order 10924, establishing the Peace Corps on a temporary pilot basis. (March 1, 1961)
- R. Sargent Shriver is appointed by President Kennedy to be the Peace Corps' first Director. During his tenure from March 1961 to February 1966, Shriver developed programs in 55 countries with more than 14,500 Volunteers. (March 1961)
- Tanganyika I and Colombia I begin training for Peace Corps service. Peace Corps training activities are conducted at U.S. colleges, universities, and private agencies. Many trainees head to Puerto Rico, the Rocky Mountains, and other locations for field-training activities. (June 1961)
- Peace Corps Director Sargent Shriver tells the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that the agency has received "about 11,000 completed applications" in the first few months of the agency's existence. (June 22, 1961)
- President Kennedy hosts a ceremony at the White House Rose Garden in honor of the first groups of Peace Corps Volunteers departing for service in Ghana and Tanganyika (now known as Tanzania). (August 28, 1961)
- The first group of 51 Peace Corps Volunteers, Ghana I, arrives in Accra to serve as teachers. (August 30, 1961)
- Congress approves legislation for the Peace Corps, giving it the mandate to "promote world peace and friendship" through a mission statement that continues today. (September 22, 1961)
- Peace Corps Volunteers learn a cultural lesson when a postcard written by a fellow volunteer describing her first impressions of Nigeria's living conditions is found by a local student. Not realizing her comparisons would be an affront to her local community and that the anonymous nature of the U.S. postal process would not apply in another country, this short communication home made front-page news in Nigeria and beyond. (October 14, 1961)
- 500+ Peace Corps Volunteers are serving in nine host countries: Chile, Colombia, Ghana, India, Nigeria, the Philippines, St. Lucia, Tanzania, and Pakistan. An additional 200+ Americans are in training in the United States. (December 1961)
- Programs begin in 28 host countries: Afghanistan, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Cyprus, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Honduras, Iran, Jamaica, Liberia, Malaysia, Nepal, Niger, Peru, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Senegal, Thailand, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, and Venezuela. As of June 30, 2,816 Volunteers are in the field. (1962)
- *National Geographic* magazine features Peace Corps Volunteers on its cover. (September 1964)
- More than 15,000 trainees and Volunteers are serving in the field. Historically, this is the highest number of Peace Corps Volunteers. (June 1966)
- Lillian Carter, the mother of President Jimmy Carter, departs for Peace Corps service at the age of 68 as a public health Volunteer in India. (September 1966)

1970s

- With Executive Order 11603, President Nixon folds the Peace Corps and several other service programs into a new federal volunteer agency called ACTION. The Peace Corps' original Congressional mandate, however, remains unchanged. (July 1, 1971)
- Christopher Dodd of Connecticut, a Volunteer in the Dominican Republic from 1966 to 1968, and Paul Tsongas of Massachusetts, a Volunteer in Ethiopia from 1962 to 1964, are the first returned Peace Corps Volunteers elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. They both go on to be elected to the U.S. Senate. (November 1974)
- Carolyn Robertson Payton is appointed Peace Corps Director by President Jimmy Carter. She is the first female and the first African American to be Peace Corps Director. (October 1977)
- Peace Corps closes its post in Afghanistan. The Peace Corps entered Afghanistan in 1962 and 1,652 Volunteers served in the country until the program ended. (1979)

1980s

- Peace Corps becomes an independent federal agency and is no longer a part of ACTION. (December 29, 1981)
- The longest-serving Peace Corps Director, Loret Miller Ruppe, and USAID Director M. Peter McPherson sign a Memorandum of Understanding to establish the Small Project Assistance (SPA) program. Since then, the SPA program has supported small, community-initiated grants and has facilitated technical assistance and training activities. Today, SPA funds activities in over 40 Peace Corps posts. (January 1983)
- Months before the agency's 25th anniversary, there are more women entering service than men, a first in the agency's history. (September 1985)
- Barbara Jo White, a Volunteer in the Dominican Republic (1987-1989), creates the first World Map Project at a local school. Volunteers today continue to use the project as an educational tool worldwide. (1988)

1990s

- The first group of Peace Corps Volunteers to serve in Central and Eastern Europe depart for Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic, and the Slovak Republic. (1990)
- Carol Bellamy, a returned Peace Corps Volunteer from Guatemala, becomes the first returned Peace Corps Volunteer to serve as Peace Corps Director (1993-1995). She is followed by Mark Schneider, who served in El Salvador (Director from 1999-2001); Ronald Tschetter, who served in India (Director from 2006-2008); and Aaron Williams, who served in the Dominican Republic (Director from 2009-Present).

- The first group of Volunteers to serve as English teachers in China arrives in country. (June 1993)
- Peace Corps sends three Volunteers to Antigua to rebuild homes damaged by Hurricane Luis. This pilot program originally known as Crisis Corps is now called Peace Corps Response and provides short-term humanitarian service to countries worldwide. www.peacecorps.gov/response (December 1995)
- In 1995, Peace Corps volunteers in Romania and local teachers create the first Camp GLOW (Girls Leading Our World) to address unique challenges that young women face. Today, volunteers in over 60 posts worldwide are empowering young women by organizing Camp GLOW programs that encourage self-confidence, challenge campers to think beyond traditional gender roles, and address the unique societal and health issues young women face. (1995)
- The Peace Corps celebrates its 35th anniversary. Nearly 7,000 Volunteers are serving in 94 developing countries. (March 1, 1996)
- Following apartheid, the first group of 33 Peace Corps volunteers arrive in South Africa. (February 1997)

2000s

- For the first time, Volunteers are deployed domestically when Peace Corps Response assists the Federal Emergency Management Agency's relief operations in the Gulf Coast region following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. (September 2005)
- After the 1994 genocide, Peace Corps returns to Rwanda where Volunteers begin working in secondary education and HIV/AIDS education and prevention. (January 2009)
- President Barack Obama signs H.R. 3288 – an omnibus appropriations package that includes \$400 million for Peace Corps operations in fiscal year 2010, the agency's largest budget appropriation from Congress. (December 16, 2009)

2010s

- Peace Corps re-opens three historic programs in Colombia, Indonesia, and Sierra Leone and surpasses the 200,000 mark in total Americans who have served overseas with the Peace Corps. (2010)
- Peace Corps commemorates 50 years of promoting world peace and friendship by honoring the 50th anniversary of President John F. Kennedy's signing of Executive Order 10924, formally establishing the Peace Corps. (March 1, 2011)