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# From Debris to Innovative Projects

Plastic bags, worn-out tires, and discarded food cartons may look like trash to the average eye. But for Peace Corps Volunteers, these discarded items scream “opportunity.”

Volunteers serving all over the world have learned the art of innovation—creating school buildings from refuse, turning plastic bags into artwork and tires into gardens, and devising other functional tools to improve daily life. With each new invention, Volunteers not only create sustainable ways to use discarded garbage, but also discover ways for communities to earn money, grow produce, and brighten local streets and neighborhoods.

The projects vary in shape and purpose, but each begins with ordinary material, usually salvaged and recycled from the community. Following are a few projects undertaken by Peace Corps Volunteers worldwide:

**Costa Rica: Recycled Outdoor Gym**  
Recently returned Volunteer Jon Skaggs (Costa Rica, 2009-2011) created an outdoor gym with his wife, Brianna del Castillo (Costa Rica, 2009-2011), by using recycled and donated materials from their community.

After lightning struck a tree in front of their house, Skaggs used the



A young Thai girl tries out the tire playground that Peace Corps Volunteer Kathlyn Paananen (2010-Present) helped build. Above right, children in Cape Verde show the wallets they made from fruit juice cartons.

tree’s lumber to build a workout area where he could hold exercise classes for community members. Skaggs also used recycled tires, PVC pipe, paint cans, wood and reinforcement bar scraps, and local hardware store-donated tubing, rope, and cement.

Within two weeks, Skaggs and his

community built the gym, which included a bench press, barbells, pull-up ropes, a large tractor tire for leg lifts, and an incline bench for abdominal workouts. Today, local youth and families use the gym for fitness classes and independent exercise.

“I think the kids responded well to the fact that they joined the exercise classes by



their own choice and not because I showed up to the school and required them to participate,” said Skaggs, who knows something about fitness, having been a first round draft pick of the New York Yankees in 2001. “They viewed me more as a mentor than a P.E. coach or teacher, and I took the approach of ‘living by example.’ It turned out to be very effective.”

## Philippines: Plastic Bags into Handbags

Volunteer Rachael Saler (2008-Present) learned how to crochet plastic shopping bags, empowering hundreds of Filipino women in Bago City along the way. The women went on to start a business, Bag-O Plastic, which has helped generate extra income and preserve the local area by transforming

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# Take Our Daughters to Work Program in Togo

By MEGAN FARMER | RPCV TOGO

Do you remember the day your mom came to school with you to tell your fellow students about her career? Such a simple gesture may have inspired a classmate to consider a career in firefighting or to become an attorney. Or it may have been just another day at school in America.

Such a concept may have an even greater impact in Peace Corps countries where a woman working in a professional setting may be an anomaly. One example is the West African country of Togo, where the Take Our Daughters To Work (TODTW) program has been successful since the late-1990s.

Outside of Togo, Peace Corps Volunteers and their counterparts are adapting the TODTW concept to fit the needs and realities of their communities. While TODTW programs are flourishing in many countries, there are still others where such activities could



Participants and organizers of the Maritime Region’s Take Our Daughters to Work Camp in Tsévié, Togo, celebrate the camp’s success.

be introduced or expanded. Rose Kpomblekou-Nabine, associate director of Peace Corps/Togo’s Girls’ Education and Empowerment Program, said, “I highly encourage any Peace Corps Volunteer who is interested in empowering

girls to organize a Take Our Daughters to Work activity in their host country.”

The causes of girls dropping out of school prematurely are complex, but among them are the lack of profes-

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## How-To Manual

Any Volunteer interested in organizing a TODTW event in his or her host community is encouraged to go to [togo.peacecorps.gov](http://togo.peacecorps.gov) for an electronic copy of Peace Corps/Togo’s TODTW manual, a comprehensive resource guide that includes sample camp documents and lessons learned.

A variety of funding sources are available for TODTW activities, the most widely accessible being the Peace Corps Partnership Program. Volunteers in Togo also acquired funding through the Friends of Togo Country Fund and the USAID Small Projects Assistance program.



plastic bags into chic items.

Saler and her cohorts collected thousands of plastic bags and crocheted them into handbags and change purses to sell for a profit. Since the project began in August 2010, more than 400 women have been trained and Bag-O Plastic has sold more than 1,500 bags.

“News of the crochet bag project spread like wildfire!” Saler said. “Bag-O



Volunteer Keisha Herbert (2010-Present) and a group of students show the gardens they grew in tires in Guatemala.

Plastic has gained support from people all over the country. Although there have been many challenges along the way, to see the tears of joy on the faces of the women makes every moment together worthwhile.”

In addition to providing ongoing training, the project educates local students and community members about the environment, recycling, and climate change. Those involved have also designed a magazine, bag tags, and labels, created a Facebook group, and have been featured in local media.

### Thailand: Tire Playground

After gathering motorcycle, car, and tractor tires, Volunteer Kathlyn Paananen (2010-Present) organized the construction of five playgrounds that are now used by more than 100 children. The playgrounds include climbing equipment and swing sets, all constructed with recycled materials. Paananen worked with students from a local technical college to weld steel frames, teachers from local schools to build the equipment,

and tapped an expert from a nongovernmental organization to design safe playground equipment.

“I definitely enjoy seeing the children’s smiling faces as they play on the new equipment, but I also enjoy seeing the sense of pride in my counterparts and the village volunteers,” Paananen said. “They accomplished so much by working together as a community.”

### Guatemala: Tire Gardens

Volunteer Keisha Herbert (2010-Present) also used discarded tires to brighten her local community. In 2011, Herbert taught 30 young Guatemalans to transpose discarded rubber tires into community gardens. By cutting the top from the tires, painting them, filling them with soil, and planting seeds, children learned gardening skills. They eventually grew radishes, onions, tomatoes, carrots, and celery.

“The experience marked the absolute best time in my service,” Herbert said. “The proactive attitudes and energy of the girls made the creation of a tire garden enjoyable and easy to accomplish. Despite the unexpected moments, it was a huge success, and these girls definitely have green thumbs.”

### Cape Verde: Cartons into Wallets

Volunteers Jon Berg (2009-2011), Krista Pool (2010-Present), and Jarrod Valderrama (2010-Present) developed a project for their local communities to generate income and teach business skills and environmental awareness. Berg and Pool collected recycled fruit juice cartons and turned them into hundreds of attractive and durable wallets.

The Volunteers also created an instructional brochure in Portuguese and today citizens throughout Cape Verde continue to make the wallets from used fruit juice cartons, many selling them for a profit.

Please write to [pctimes@peacecorps.gov](mailto:pctimes@peacecorps.gov) to learn more about each of these projects.

sional role models, societal pressures, lack of financial means, pregnancy, and the inability to advocate for the importance of continuing their schooling. In 2011, 16 Peace Corps Volunteers from four sectors worked with their Togolese counterparts to organize seven TODTW events in all five regions of Togo. One-hundred sixty girls from 64 villages took part in the events, ranging from a one-day excursion in a regional capital for girls from a small, rural village to five-day regional conferences.

Kpombrekou-Nabine spent a month traveling throughout the country to speak to participants and support Volunteers in their efforts. “What has worked really well in Togo is the close collaboration between Volunteers and their counterparts—the implication of local partners at every step of event organization has allowed for numerous Togolese partners to reinforce their capacities and gain valuable experience that they will be able to apply in their communities after the departure of the Volunteers.”

Career panels and site visits were at the core of TODTW. Such activities were intended to expose participants to the diverse career options available and introduce them to other women. Organizers sought dynamic professional women and female university students to serve as panelists, camp counselors, guest speakers, and tour guides during site visits to various workplaces. Many participants had never met a woman who had continued her education beyond the middle school level.

Dado Amanor, a participant in the Plateaux Region’s 2011 TODTW conference, had considered abandoning her studies after failing the national exam to enter the final year of high school. “The conference motivated me to continue my studies,” said Amanor, who is currently repeating her junior year of high school. “I now have the self-confidence to motivate others as well.”

The experience of meeting successful, educated women who grew up

in similar circumstances showed participants that succeeding in the difficult Togolese education system is possible and allowed them to witness firsthand the benefits of continuing their education. In addition, the majority of the events included a life skills component, addressing topics such as self-confidence, goal setting, leadership, time management, and reproductive health. Participants in many of the activities also had the opportunity to learn basic computer skills and various income-generating activities.

Kpombrekou-Nabine said it’s essential that all TODTW events include a follow-up plan. “Volunteers and host-country nationals who facilitated sessions at the TODTW event should visit the girls in their villages in order to offer them mentoring activities and support them in the positive change that started in their lives.”

Participants are encouraged to share what they learned with their communities through both formal and informal sessions with family members and community groups. Girls not only explain the benefits of TODTW, but they develop valuable public speaking and leadership skills.

After participating in one of three TODTW activities in Togo’s Savannah Region, Magniko Botabe and Magniba Djabaré decided to host a session with girls and families from their village to stress the importance of education. Magniko shared her motivation for the session: “Among the three villages in this sector, there are only three girls who are currently at the middle school level and I believe that is a serious problem. I plan to also organize a session with the parents in my village. I’m going to talk to them about the model women I met during camp and explain to them that if they support their children’s education, their children can become like those women.”

*(Megan Farmer was a girls education and empowerment Volunteer from San Diego, California. She completed her service in November 2011.)*



### Agency Commemorates World AIDS Day 2011

To commemorate World AIDS Day 2011 on December 1, the Peace Corps hosted an event in Washington, D.C., featuring Sandra Thurman, director of the White House Office of National AIDS Policy from 1997 to 2000 and the first presidential envoy for Global AIDS. In remarks addressed to headquarters staff, Thur-

man credited Volunteers for their work in HIV/AIDS prevention. It’s estimated that nearly 40 percent of Volunteers conduct HIV-related activities.



Sandra Thurman addresses Peace Corps headquarters staff during World AIDS Day.

### Director Welcomes Signing of Kate Puzey Act

President Obama signed into law the Kate Puzey Peace Corps Volunteer Pro-

tection Act of 2011, codifying a number of reforms the Peace Corps has put into place over the past two years to better protect and support Volunteers. The act, signed November 21, is named in honor of Kate Puzey, a Volunteer who died while serving in Benin in 2009. “Kate Puzey was an outstanding Peace Corps Volunteer who represented the best America has to offer with her passion for service and commitment to making the world a better place, and this law is a tribute to her legacy,” said Director Aaron S. Williams.

### Peace Corps, VSO Sign Agreement

The Peace Corps and Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) signed a partnership agreement on December 5 at the United Nations headquarters in New York. This

will allow the organizations to share best practices and work more effectively in countries where Volunteers serve. The event was organized by U.N. Volunteers as part of International Volunteer Day and the tenth anniversary of the International Year of Volunteers.

“This innovative partnership will enhance the effectiveness and impact of both Peace Corps and VSO,” said Director Aaron S. Williams. “We will share best practices in programming and training, strengthening our united efforts to combat global poverty.”

The partnership was first announced during President Obama’s state visit to the United Kingdom in May 2011. The Peace Corps and VSO have worked together informally for more than a decade, with operations currently overlapping in 25 countries.



**1<sup>ST</sup> PEOPLE'S CHOICE**

**Riding through the Avenue of Baobabs**  
**Julie Smith**  
 (RPCV/Madagascar, 2009-2011)  
 Volunteer Julie Smith took this picture at the Avenue of Baobabs in Madagascar in 2011.



**1<sup>ST</sup> PHOTOGRAPHIC TECHNICAL MERIT**

**Women Fishing on the Niger** | Ciara Johnson  
 (RPCV/Guinea, 2007-2009)  
 Women in Tiguibery, Guinea, fish with their children in tow. After catching the tiny fish, the women gracefully placed their catch in the calabash bowls balanced on their heads.



**1<sup>ST</sup> PROVIDING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**

**Harvesting Nasi** | Paige Gable  
 (PCV/Indonesia, 2011-2013)  
 Two Volunteers take part in a training session at local rice paddies in Tlekung, Indonesia (Java Timur). They beat the rice plants to remove kernels, which are later dried to allow removal of actual rice.



**1<sup>ST</sup> SHARING OVERSEAS CULTURE WITH AMERICANS**

**Naka Pounding Yams** | Sara Holtz  
 (RPCV/Togo, 1995-1998)  
 The Kabye people of northern Togo are famous for their huge yams. Village women share their way of making fufu, which is eaten with a variety of different sauces.



**1<sup>ST</sup> SHARING AMERICAN CULTURE OVERSEAS**

**Long Distance Relationships** | Cate Crandell  
 (RPCV/Moldova, 2010-2012)  
 Volunteer Cate Crandall shares the magic of the Internet with her 97-year-old host great-grandmother during Easter brunch in Moldova. Five generations reconnected via Skype.



**2<sup>ND</sup> PHOTOGRAPHIC TECHNICAL MERIT**

**Motivational Speaker** | Elle Chang  
 (PCV/Indonesia, 2011-2013)  
 Students at an Islamic boarding school in East Java, Indonesia, await a motivational speech by Volunteer Elle Chang.

## Peace Corps 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Digital Library Photo Contest

Peace Corps Volunteers, returned Volunteers, and staff members participated in the Peace Corps Digital Library 50th Anniversary Photo Contest, which ran July 15-September 8 and highlighted creative, thought-provoking images from the field.

The Peace Corps received 2,279 photos and, combined with existing images in the collection previously submitted, over 3,700 photos were evaluated. Twelve winning photos were selected based on creativity, photographic quality, and effectiveness in representing each award category. First-, second-, and third-place were awarded in the following categories, the first three of which exemplify the Peace Corps' goals: providing technical assistance, sharing American culture overseas, sharing overseas culture with Americans, and photographic technical merit.

Through Facebook, the public was given an opportunity to vote for the 13th winner, identified as the People's Choice Award. A set of 20 photo submissions were displayed in a Facebook album and over 3,730 friends of the Peace Corps voted. The People's Choice photo joined the other 12 winners in a photo exhibit held at Peace Corps headquarters during RPCV Reunion Weekend, September 23-25.

"Riding through the Avenue of Baobabs," submitted by Julie Smith of Peace Corps/Madagascar, won the People's Choice Award with 681 votes.

Highlight and share your own Peace Corps experience by contributing photos and stories to the Peace Corps Digital Library today. Visit [peacecorps.gov/collection](http://peacecorps.gov/collection).



**3<sup>RD</sup> SHARING OVERSEAS CULTURE WITH AMERICANS**

**Spear and Meat** | Michael Goralczyk  
 (PCV/Tanzania, 2010-2012)  
 Volunteer Michael Goralczyk and a friend show pieces of a cow that were slaughtered for a Masai celebration in Tanzania.



**2<sup>ND</sup> SHARING AMERICAN CULTURE OVERSEAS**

**Cultural Exchange** | Pamela Rogers  
 (RPCV/Lesotho, 2007-2009)  
 A Peace Corps Volunteer and a boy enjoy time together at Semonkong Falls in Lesotho.



**2<sup>ND</sup> PROVIDING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**

**Peace Corps Liberia** | Charlene Espinoza  
 (PCV/Liberia, 2011-2013)  
 A student in Liberia practices his English language skills.



**2<sup>ND</sup> SHARING OVERSEAS CULTURE WITH AMERICANS**

**Danny and Lydia** | Emily Haas  
 (RPCV/Armenia, 2009-2011)  
 Volunteer Danny Lovell and his host mother, Lydia, enjoy a snack together in their small village in Armenia. Though Lydia spoke in a heavy and difficult to understand dialect, she and Danny were able to find a way to communicate.



**3<sup>RD</sup> PROVIDING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**

**Life Skills** | Briana Scroggins  
 (RPCV/Malawi, 2010-2012)  
 Girls take turns sewing during Village Apprentice Day at a secondary school in Malawi.



**3<sup>RD</sup> SHARING AMERICAN CULTURE OVERSEAS**

**Music is a Universal Language**  
**Melanie Chamberlain**  
 (RPCV/Senegal, 2009-2011)  
 Volunteer Melanie Chamberlain finds a quiet corner to sit and listen to music with one of her host brothers.



**3<sup>RD</sup> PHOTOGRAPHIC TECHNICAL MERIT**

**Picnic Song** | Chris De Bruyn  
 (RPCV/Mongolia, 2007-2009)  
 Waiting for freshly slaughtered sheep to boil, some community friends enjoy drinks and music in the Darkhan-uul Aimag countryside of Mongolia.

# The Importance of Listening with Our Third Ear

By DARLENE GRANT | CAMBODIA

Recently, while sitting with a small group of my fellow Volunteers during a break from teaching activities at our respective sites, our conversation moved from pride in how much we've learned, to the things that frustrate us. A generally universal lament in our country of service goes something like this, "I still don't understand why I can't get a straight answer. My co-teacher and my students always answer 'yes,' to my questions when I find out later the answer was really 'no.'"

Maybe it's miscommunication or misinterpretation, or the desire to not seem negative on the part of my host family, students, and teaching counterparts, but I do find myself arriving late, overdressed or underdressed for an actual occasion, and generally feeling behind more often than not.

But, a fellow Volunteer, Lisa, recently provided an insight that has changed my perspective. First, in formal and informal speaking, Cambodians

generously use the Khmer word for "yes," as a way of "pausing" or checking for clarity. As another Volunteer put it, "It's like the American version of 'Uuuuummm.'"

Lisa said, "It makes sense then, that in cross-cultural situations, we



**'We stand a chance of better understanding what's going on if we attend to the cultural pacing of communication.'**

shouldn't be so quick to consider the 'yes,' response as the definitive response to our queries. Too many people make that mistake. 'Yes,' is usually not the actual answer, but rather a 'pause,' or a way of letting us know they understand what we're asking and they are processing the information."

Bells went off for me as this revelation resulted in a simple, yet logical, answer to almost all daily challenges. "Could it be as simple as 'Uuuuummm'?" I asked myself. "Yes!" is my resounding and very Khmer response.

I now have a new appreciation of what successful integration into a cross-cultural context involves. It requires Volunteers to cultivate and use many skills. Among the most important is listening in context with a purposeful pause, to allow the possibility of

nuanced information to break through our typical rushed interpretation of the response from the person with whom we're communicating. We stand a chance of better understanding what's going on if we attend to the cultural pacing of communication, and how that might translate in our own interactions.

This epitomizes listening with our third ear.

*(Darlene Grant was a teacher trainer Volunteer in Cambodia who completed her service in July 2011.)*

## Career Corner Timeline for a Successful Job Search



In today's economic climate, the idea of finding a post-Peace Corps job may be enough to keep one up at night. However, there is much you can do before finishing your service to help position you for that next job.

Following are a few tips to enhance the job search process:

Write a concise yet comprehensive Description of Service (DOS): Take time to prepare a well written (typo-free!) DOS that accurately reflects ALL of your work. Proofread the document (never depend on spell check alone) and do not include Peace Corps jargon or confusing acronyms. Include your training hours and the impact/outcome and numbers related to your projects (e.g., number of children taught, people impacted). Spotlight grants written and/or received, budgets managed, etc. Err on the side of more when it comes to detail (without being obnoxiously long-winded) as your DOS cannot be changed once it is signed by your country director and finalized.

Request free Focus Careers software: Once you are within six months of completing your Peace Corps service, you can request access to this self-assessment software, which allows you to explore interest areas and potential fields that correspond to your likes and dislikes. This tool can be useful for Volunteers unsure of what they want to do upon finishing their service. To request a free account, contact [rvs@peacecorps.gov](mailto:rvs@peacecorps.gov) and include your name, country of service, and COS date.

Access Returned Volunteer Services (RVS) resources: This department within Peace Corps is dedicated to assisting Volunteers with transitioning back from service, and offers free career events, online webinars, and access to a variety of job bulletins. Most of these services are available after you complete your COS. For a complete description of resources available through RVS, visit [www.peacecorps.gov/rpcv](http://www.peacecorps.gov/rpcv).

Join the RPCVnetwork listserv: Available to all RPCVs and to current PCVs once they complete their COS conference, this free Google Groups listserv provides daily job postings, housing, and other career-related events, including online webinars. NPCA and other RPCV groups are also valuable resources.

Begin networking: Even before you finish your service, you can tap into social media sites such as LinkedIn and build a professional profile for yourself. Continuing to network once you return is vital since statistics show that up to 75 percent of jobs that are available are never even posted!

## That Was Then ... This is Now

# Goals Two and Three a Tunisian Standard

In 1962, 13 newly sworn-in Peace Corps Volunteers arrived in the small northeastern African country of Tunisia to serve as architects. The Volunteers worked collaboratively with their new counterparts to design buildings and other landmarks, eventually transferring their skill sets to local Tunisian architects. Over the next four decades, nearly 2,500 Volunteers went on to work in the country in areas like agriculture, education, health, and community and youth development until the program was closed in 1996.

President Barack Obama recently announced the re-opening of a Peace Corps program in Tunisia. The first Peace Corps Volunteers will arrive later this year to work in English language training and youth and skills development. For many of the Peace Corps pioneers who served in Tunisia, it's exciting that 50 years since the first Volunteers arrived in the country, Volunteers will once again walk the same streets.

Roger K. Lewis is one of the original Volunteers who served in the only Peace Corps program designed for architects, working as an architect to the Tunisia Ministry of Public Works and Housing in 1964. "At the time, I and my Peace Corps colleagues did help set a few architectural precedents: we designed modern buildings that, nevertheless, used traditional materials and construction methods. [We also] introduced aesthetic motifs that were challenging and new to the Tunisians," he says.

While noting that his impact as a Volunteer was felt in ways beyond his



Peace Corps/Tunisia Volunteer Jacques Ullman (1962-1964) shows President Habib Bourguiba plans for a grammar school that was to be built in Tunis as part of a low cost housing project in 1963.

architectural skills, Lewis states, "Perhaps the most enduring and important imprint on Tunisia was made in pursuing the Peace Corps' Second Goal: living and working directly with Tunisians, enabling them to get to know, learn about, and better understand Americans."

Bruce Cohen, who served as a teacher from 1967 to 1969, agrees. He says an initial case of mistaken identity endeared him to his community. "They actually thought I was Tunisian. If I had to go to Tunis, I would have soldiers sleeping on me, people putting chickens on my lap and asking me the price of tomatoes and so forth. If you were tired it could get exasperating, but if you were ready to be culturally immersed, you

always had the opportunity."

From 1964 to 1980, over 50,000 Tunisian students were taught by Volunteers. Cohen, a graduate of Georgetown School of Foreign Service, said, "I found a love of teaching and in another life that is probably what I would do."

However, Cohen eventually went on to pursue his other love of international development and would fill various leadership roles within the agency. He held jobs in recruitment and was country director in four different countries. He also served as director of the Peace Corps Office of Overseas Recruitment, Selection, and Support before retiring in 2011.

Lewis also translated his Peace Corps service into a career. "Being a returned Peace Corps Volunteer architect was clearly a factor in my appointment in 1968 to teach at the University of Maryland's new School of Architecture. After launching my architectural firm in 1969, I was hired to undertake several projects overseas, in part because of my Peace Corps experience."

Both RPCVs from Tunisia are encouraged that Peace Corps will return to the region.

"I think Tunisians will be anxious to learn and have their young people exposed directly to Americans rather than hearing about us through the media and for our Volunteers to have that same opportunity," Cohen says, adding, "I'm very excited about the possibility of another opportunity for Americans, through Peace Corps, to be introduced to the Arab world and to see its beauty."



# NOTES *from the* FIELD

## *A Brief Look at Posts and Projects*

### **Togo** Volunteer Spearheads Effort to Open Library

Volunteer Emily Jones (2010-2012) is working with her community in northern Togo to build a library of books and research documents in French, English, and other local languages. Villagers donated a building facility and wood materials for the rafters and furniture, and volunteer labor will be used for construction. Once the facility is open, library card dues and income from solar panel cellphone-charging will pay for operating costs and new books.



Volunteer Emily Jones joins Togolese youth in her community.

### **The Gambia** Environment and Health Taught by Volunteers

Volunteers Julia Hoeh (2009-2011) and Casey Donahue (2009-2011) organized a weeklong environmental camp for 30 ninth-grade Gambian girls, five local teachers, and 27 Peace Corps Volunteers. Camp GAGA (Girls About Global Awareness) was designed to help female Gambian youth formulate action plans to improve their communities' environments.

Volunteer Lindsey Green (2009-2011) rallied 120 mothers in her Gambian community to learn about health and sanitation during a three-month health competition. Participants were encouraged to share what they learned with friends and family members. Topics included reproductive and child health, nutrition, personal hygiene, environmental sanitation, and malaria.

### **Morocco** Journalism Workshop Benefits Over 50 Students

More than 50 Moroccan high school and college students received instruction on news reporting and photography during a four-day journalism workshop organized by Volunteer Maureen Sieh (2010-2012).

During the workshop, students formed a journalism club to produce an online youth newspaper and a Facebook page to share local news. The newspaper was written in Arabic, English, and French and was designed to enable Moroccan youth to continue their interest in journalism.

Fellow Morocco Volunteers Erik Syngle (2010-2012) and Aaron Zimmerman (2010-2012) assisted Sieh during the workshop by teaching photography techniques.



Journalism workshop participants ply their trade in Morocco.

### **Ukraine** Students Refine Debating Skills at Camp LEAD

Volunteers throughout Ukraine helped encourage and empower young Ukrainian students and teachers during the country's third Camp LEAD (Letting Everyone Achieve Dreams). Using campers' analytical and English language skills, the camp hosted debates centered on the Euro 2012 football tournament and its future impact on Ukraine.

Other camp activities included discussions on the environment and healthy lifestyles, skits, a talent show, dodge ball, volleyball, and a Ukrainian Independence Day celebration. On the second day of the camp, Peace Corps/Ukraine Country Director Douglas Teschner addressed the importance of leadership and participated in some group sessions. In all, 120 university students, high school students, and local teachers attended the five-day camp.



Ukrainian students and Peace Corps Volunteers participate in Camp LEAD.

### **Nicaragua** Pedestrian Bridges Provide Villagers Access

Volunteer Jamie Nations (2009-2011) helped build the first two pedestrian bridges in her rural community in Nicaragua. Nations organized the planning and construction of bridges that provide access to the local school, health center, children's food bank, and the main highway. One bridge was completed in September 2011 and another in June 2011.

Nations secured funding from the Peace Corps and U.S. Agency for International Development Small Project Assistance (SPA) program, using gabion, rocks, railroad tracks, and wood for construction.



Community members and Volunteers stand on a recently-completed bridge in Nicaragua.

### **Peru** Environment, Health Radio Show Topics

A weekly 45-minute radio show reaching more than 5,000 people in western Peru is hosted by Volunteers Jessica Smith (2009-2011) and Nikki Eller (2010-2012). Since launching the program in February 2011, the duo has hosted 17 shows covering heart health, HIV/AIDS awareness, emotional health, potable water, and the arts.

More than a dozen Volunteers across Peru host similar programs and provide information on health, current events, and the environment. Volunteers often invite local community members and public officials to speak.



Peace Corps Volunteer Jessica Smith (2009-2011) hosts a radio broadcast in Peru.

### **Guyana** Community Members Benefit From Health Fair

More than 250 Guyanese community members attended a health fair organized by Volunteer Ilana Echevarria-Stewart (2011-2013). Echevarria-Stewart partnered with the regional Guyanese hospital to offer educational materials, health presentations, screenings, and information on various hospital services to community members who rarely have such access.

The attendees were able to visit multiple health practitioners and receive immediate treatment. Volun-

teer Nate Stewart (2011-2013) helped regional students attend the fair as an educational field trip.



Volunteer Ilana Echevarria-Stewart conducts a health presentation in Guyana.

### **Armenia** Volunteers Host Spelling Bees

Twenty-six Volunteers in Armenia organized four local spelling bees for nearly 170 youth throughout the month of December. The annual competitions allow Armenian students to demonstrate their English language skills.

Volunteers collaborate with students in their local schools throughout the year to prepare for the event, which is similar to American spelling bees. Prior to competition, students from seventh to 12th grade were given a list of words to study.

Volunteers served as judges and recorders, and helped with registration and other logistics. First- and second-place students at each grade level (48 children) advanced to a regional spelling bee to be held this spring.

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