



Life Skills Manual: Education With a Message

As the HIV/AIDS pandemic continues to ravage countries across the globe, prevention and care are becoming an important part of many Peace Corps Volunteers' assignments. Currently, 2,600 Volunteers are working in HIV/AIDS—the highest number ever. And as more Volunteers take on this important task, many are turning to the Life Skills Manual.

The Life Skills Manual works to bridge the gap between information and behavior change in educating communities about HIV/AIDS. The manual offers lesson plans, games, and exercises to engage communities and discuss the effects of HIV/AIDS.

Returned Volunteer Kathy Callahan developed the Life Skills Manual when she was an HIV/AIDS Volunteer in Malawi from 1996-98. As a district AIDS coordinator, Callahan was responsible for training community leaders in prevention and education. But her first attempt was far from successful.

After assembling a group at the local AIDS center, Callahan and her colleagues began a frank presentation about sexual health. Her audience was not pleased.

"It was the biggest mistake I ever made as a Peace Corps Volunteer," Callahan said. "They were so offended that they weren't even listening anymore."

She quickly redirected the presentation to focus on healthy lifestyles and behavior change. Soon after, the Life Skills concepts were born.

Because the Life Skills Manual focuses on decision-making skills, Volunteers can use the manual's concepts in communities where cultural taboos

prevent frank discussions of HIV/AIDS. In addition to providing information about prevention, the manual also offers a way to help Volunteers encourage positive behavior change in their host communities.

"Affecting behavior change takes a long time," said Praya Baruch, who works in the Peace Corps' Office of AIDS Relief.

The trust Volunteers build over their two years in host communities begins the process that, hopefully, leads to lasting change.

The Life Skills Manual helps communities build "planks" in the bridge from information to behavior change, by providing them with skills and confidence to make better and healthier decisions. It also focuses on building values to help people who might fall off the bridge to a healthier life.

"There was something about the bridge model that resonated with people," Callahan said. She would often find copies of the bridge, photocopied from the Life Skills Manual, on the walls of schools and churches in her district.

The concept was so popular that UNICEF funded its expansion. The manual also attracted attention at Peace Corps headquarters, where, in 2002, staff edited it and added a section on the biology of the disease. In 2003, the new edition received the "Best Practices" recognition from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

You need to frame the materials to the people so they really feel it is about them



Peace Corps Volunteer Mary McCoy and her colleagues in Tonga prepare materials that will be used for discussions on HIV/AIDS in her host community.

Although originally developed for use in African posts, the Life Skills Manual is highly adaptable to any country or age group.

Volunteers can use the Life Skills Manual in men's and women's clubs, religious groups, and with the elderly and teenagers. The manual is available in Peace Corps' Online Library in English, French, and Swahili.

In addition, many Volunteers take the Life Skills Manual and adapt it for their host country's culture and traditions. Returned Volunteer and now Deputy Country Director for Ukraine Helen Petrozzola felt that some of the African images and activities would send the wrong message to a Ukrainian audience that AIDS is an Africa-only problem. So, during her service she adapted the manual, titling it "Sound Mind, Sound Body,"

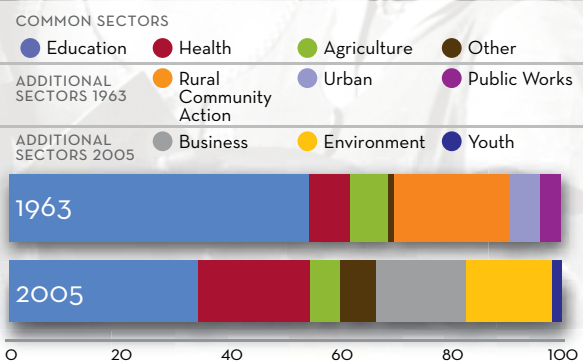
and facilitated its translation into the local languages of Ukrainian and Russian.

"For any country, you need to frame the materials to the people so they really feel it is about them," said Petrozzola.

But no matter how it is adapted, most Volunteers who work with HIV activities agree that trying to get the messages across is the most important aspect of HIV/AIDS training. Callahan, who lost many Malawian friends to AIDS, said the legacy of the manual is its reach in Peace Corps posts throughout the world. Years later, her memories from Malawi drive her in her work as an HIV/AIDS education trainer.

"The hope and the strength of that community is why AIDS is still my passion," she said.

VOLUNTEERS THEN & NOW by sector



Peace Corps Cam: A Glimpse at Volunteer Life



Nicole Zdrojewski walks the market in her host community in Ukraine while a Peace Corps cameraman films her community interactions for an agency video.

Word gets out quickly in the open markets of the world when Peace Corps Volunteers come shopping. Just imagine, then, the stir caused by a Volunteer with a camera crew in tow.

Though it's not quite Hollywood, some Volunteers get a chance to "star" in Peace Corps-produced photo and video shoots. By talking about their experiences on camera, these Volunteers pique the interest of future applicants and help explain in a very real way what it's like to volunteer. Almost anyone who has had an inkling to join the Peace Corps has searched for testimonials or images that can help describe the Peace Corps experience. Especially in today's connected society, those interested in joining the Peace Corps want to see Volunteers making a difference before committing two years of their lives to serve in another country.

The Peace Corps Office of Communications makes this possible by collecting photos and footage of Volunteers, which they turn into recruitment videos, marketing brochures, and website content. Headed by Richard Parker, the Office of Communications is the creative arm of the Peace Corps, and its staff includes a video/photo production team; an editorial, design, and print production team; a marketing team; and a Web team.

On a recent shoot in Ukraine, covering the Peace Corps' largest program, video production manager Karen Chaput led a five-person crew to collect material for use in HIV/AIDS and recruitment videos and photographs. Filming for a week, and often visiting two sites a day, the shoot involved a well-orchestrated collaboration among the country staff, the crew, and headquarters.

Creating these visuals also takes a tremendous amount of logistical effort from the Volunteers themselves. For instance, Kate Tyler of Monroe Center, Ill., could not have imagined that during a group discussion with her students, the local municipality would decide that now was the time to start digging a new road. Sometimes, schedules do not coincide. For instance, being able to find a room full of students to film—when the campus is on fall break—is challenging at best. And having your site be a featured backdrop probably didn't occur to Adam Howell of Lebanon, Tenn., whose modest home—which sits next to the neighbor's chicken coop—was featured in a recent shoot.

At one typical stop, Volunteer Vanessa Villalva of Austin, Texas, met the crew outside a scenic park in her host community with a friend and one of her students. After scoping out the area, a place off a major walkway

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DIRECTOR'S FORUM

In March, the Peace Corps will celebrate 45 years of Volunteer legacies—beginning when the first group entered Ghana in 1961 and continuing with our newest program in Mexico. Pause for a moment to grasp the magnitude of lives impacted by over 182,000 Volunteers, and you will begin to put into perspective the enormity of the work you are doing to better the lives of others.

The theme for the 45th anniversary celebration is "A legacy of service at home and abroad." As we compiled legacy stories from every post to mark the occasion, the results were extraordinary—and everything I have come to expect from Volunteers. From teaching future world leaders to establishing libraries and schools to helping others create their own successful business, people will remember your efforts. During my travels, I am always honored to meet those who have benefitted from the hard work of Peace Corps Volunteers like yourself.

For example, when I traveled for the first time as director of the Peace Corps, I had the opportunity

to visit Afghanistan. There, I had a meeting with the Afghan deputy prime minister and minister for women's affairs, Sima Samar. I was going to talk about the Peace Corps and share the concept, the vision, and the mission of the Peace Corps. Mid-conversation, she stopped me and said, "Mr. Director, you don't have to tell me about the Peace Corps. It was Peace Corps Volunteers who taught me English the last time the Peace Corps was here in Afghanistan."

As an agency, the Peace Corps has much to celebrate this year. Peace Corps continues to expand, and meet the needs of our host countries. Currently, 7,810 Volunteers serve in 75 countries, the highest number in 30 years. We also made the decision to work domestically for the first time. In response to Hurricane Katrina, Volunteers like Ballard Krudop, whose New Orleans house was flooded, and Matthew Koltermann put the needs of others ahead of their own lives. And when the 9th Ward of New Orleans was ready to reopen, a team of Crisis Corps Volunteers answered the call to staff the disaster center and



Director Vasquez discusses Crisis Corps' response in the Gulf States to Hurricane Katrina with Volunteer Matthew Koltermann, who first served in Kenya '02-04.

ensure residents could begin to put their lives back together.

Today, in the new millennium, the Peace Corps' mission and the legacies you leave are more vital than ever for building bonds of friendship across an ever-global world, and for finding common ways to address new global challenges, like HIV/AIDS.

In the now immortal words of President John F. Kennedy, whose vision you help achieve across the globe every day: "In each of us,

there is a private hope and dream which, fulfilled, can be translated into benefit for everyone."

Whether you are a trainee new to your country or entering your third year of service, always be aware of the legacy you leave and how far reaching it will be. And let us begin creating legacies for the next 45 years.

Notes

CAPE VERDE

Innovative approaches to fighting HIV/AIDS

Peace Corps Volunteer Jacob Cullen and other Cape Verde Volunteers have been helping generate youth interest in a contest called Scenarios from Africa.

The contest calls upon youth across Africa to create stories for short films on HIV/AIDS. Winning ideas are then turned into awareness-raising films by some of Africa's best directors, which help curb the spread of HIV and improve the lives of those most directly affected by the virus.

In Cape Verde, 235 young people submitted entries. Five of the nine regional winners came from Sao Domingos, where Jacob had mobilized the youth entries. Overall, there were 20 national winners and one international winner from Cape Verde, 13-year-old Pedro Tavares D. Vieira. The Scenarios from Africa films are dubbed into numerous African and European languages before they are distributed noncommercially to community-based organizations and to television stations across Africa and beyond.

MOLDOVA

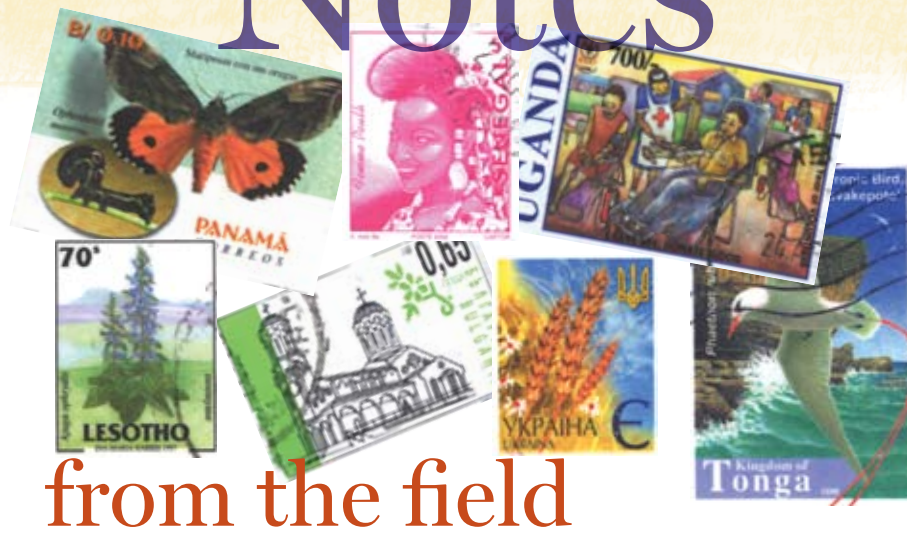
Internet access opens possibilities for future

In Moldova, an innovative project will soon connect the Cahul region to important educational and business opportunities found on the Internet.

Organized by Volunteers Mark and Chrissie Goldberg, the Connect Cahul project brings affordable internet access to more than 35 community centers in the southern region of Moldova. The project raised money to purchase and ship 400 computers from the U.S. to Moldova. Funding came from Peace Corps' Partnership Program, the U.S. Embassy, and private donors.

Through the project, several Volunteers helped set up Internet cafes in their communities. These cafes will benefit schoolchildren and small businesses. Young people interested in job opportunities abroad can use the Internet to research their prospects and hopefully discover opportunities that will prevent delinquent behavior.

Volunteers worked closely with their Moldovan counterparts and with the local and national government to complete the project. The last shipment of computers is on its way to Moldova, and soon, all the Internet cafes will be up and running.



from the field

VANUATU

An ingenious solution for those without electricity

The coral reefs in the Nguna-Pele Marine Protected Area of Vanuatu were dying. Pollution from disposed batteries dumped in the sea were destroying the marine habitat and killing the fish that live there.

But a project designed by Volunteer Chris Bartlett is harnessing the power of solar energy to lessen the island's dependency on battery power and to protect the nation's coral reefs. Through Bartlett's help and those of other Volunteers, the Rechargeable Battery and Reef Rehab Project provides rechargeable batteries and solar-powered battery chargers to villages throughout the area. Villagers can visit their local battery-charging outlet and recharge their batteries for a significantly lower cost than buying new batteries.

Electricity is not widely available to communities in Vanuatu, and many villages depend on battery power to operate their everyday appliances. Before the project began, villagers used as many as 12,000 batteries per year. Discarded batteries often ended up in the coral reefs, where chemicals seeped out and killed the reefs.

"My Peace Corps experience has been a defining stage in my life as a scientist, but most importantly, as a citizen of the world," said Bartlett.

The project was one of 12 finalists in the World Challenge competition, sponsored by BBC World and Newsweek (both of which featured the project), in association with Shell. The World Challenge competition aims to find individuals or groups from around the world who have shown enterprise and innovation at a grass roots level to help protect the earth.

PANAMA

Presidential visit

During his visit to Panama in November, President George W. Bush praised Peace Corps Volunteers for "working on the front lines of humanity."

The President and First Lady Laura Bush met with Volunteers and staff at a reception at the U.S. Embassy in Panama City. Discussing the Volunteers' work—especially in HIV/AIDS activities, which the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief helps fund—the President and First Lady reaffirmed their support for the Peace Corps. Currently, 151 Volunteers serve in Panama.

To commemorate President Bush's visit, Volunteers presented him with a Peace Corps/Panama baseball cap.

EL SALVADOR

Overcoming Katrina

When Sarah Pattison casually left her New Orleans home in August, she figured it would be for three days—at the most—and just a minor delay on her road to Peace Corps staging and El Salvador. Yet, as the water kept rising, and her family home filled with foot upon foot of water, it became clear that if she wanted to become a Peace Corps Volunteer, she would be departing without seeing her home again.

Arriving at her staging with donated supplies and clothing—all from friends and those who had heard of her situation—Pattison said she had to continue with what she wanted to do. While she knew most of her possessions had been destroyed and that she would probably never see them again, Pattison said the bottom-line was, "it is just stuff." Though she initially had some concern about whether she should leave, friends, family, and Peace Corps staff, including Country Director Michael Wise (a Mississippi native), encouraged her, so she followed her convictions. She said Peace Corps staff went out of their way to make contact and ensure she did not have any additional stress placed upon her.

Over the next two years, Pattison plans to keep in close contact with her family as they reclaim their lives. She hopes that when she returns from making a difference abroad, it will be to a proud, rebuilt city.



President and Mrs. Bush recently visited Volunteers in Panama, where President Bush praised the work of Volunteers in that country and across the globe.



What's the Difference?

Sure, in our global society, it seems like American influence can be found almost anywhere. Yet, there will always be products indigenous to your host country that have staying power. Let us know, in a few paragraphs or in pictures, products or items that cannot be found in the United States—be it local delicacies or traditions. Our address is on the back page. We'll feature some of your entries in an upcoming issue.

Guatemala copes with Hurricane Stan

Peace Corps Volunteers have rapidly responded to the devastation in Guatemala caused by mudslides related to Hurricane Stan.

Following the hurricane, many Volunteers began reconstruction efforts by working with disaster relief officials on damage assessment, assisting with relief operations, volunteering at temporary shelters, and helping families repair homes.

For example, Volunteer Eric Black was working on GPS/GIS satellite navigation mapping projects before the hurricane. When the disaster struck, his maps were immediately put into action. Rescue helicopters used Black's GPS system to deliver food and supplies to remote areas that were without aid for days. Black's written report—which included a detailed map and specific requests for resources—was recognized as an important document to help in the relief efforts and was applauded by Guatemalan President Oscar Berger.

30 year high

The agency has reached a 30-year high in the number of Volunteers in the field. The official count includes 7,810 Volunteers serving in 75 countries.

Ninety-six percent of Volunteers have at least a bachelor's degree, with 13 percent having a master's degree or higher. Women comprise 58 percent of all Volunteers. Seniors aged 50 and over represent 6 percent of Volunteers, with the average age of a Volunteer being 28 years.

Donations on the rise

Donations to the Peace Corps' Partnership Program for Volunteer sponsored projects continued to pour in this past fiscal year, as over \$1.25 million helped build everything from community resource centers to aqueducts. And this fiscal year, which began in October, is off to a great start with over \$318,000 already being raised. To learn more about how your community's project can qualify, visit www.peacecorps.gov/contribute.

Bird flu update

The agency's highest priority is the safety and security of all Volunteers, so rest assured that should an outbreak of the avian flu occur, the Peace Corps has contingency plans in place. Peace Corps will continue to work with other government agencies to ensure the agency has the resources necessary in an emergency situation.



Kerry Robarge walks through a community devastated by Hurricane Katrina.

Crisis Corps' domestic response opens a new chapter in Peace Corps history

By Scott Martin, Katrina CCV

This year marks the first time in the history of Peace Corps and Crisis Corps that we are working within the borders of the U.S.

FEMA asked Crisis Corps for Volunteers to help out in the enormous catastrophe effort that was left in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, the worst natural disaster in recorded U.S. history.

The devastation here in coastal Mississippi is hard to describe. They say that the hurricane that came through here was a "class 5," wreaking havoc and leaving almost nothing standing on beachfront property. From what I have seen, it may be in the billions of dollars for reconstruction costs.

My job at the Disaster Recovery Center is accessing the FEMA files for the clients (victims) that come in. One day I dealt with clients all day, ranging in time from 15 minutes to 2 hours. All of them came to me in tears or broke into tears sometime during the conversation. As an example, one cli-

ent came in and was telling me where their two story 1800's home—in her family for generations—once stood. Now, it is only a concrete slab. The house had been washed somewhere out to sea, taking all her personal belongings with it.

Crisis Corps is one of the options that returned Volunteers have when they return to their lives in the USA—and deal with reverse culture shock.

For me and many returned Volunteers, this is the biggest problem I have dealt with here in the U.S. After being overseas, working as a Volunteer in a foreign country, I returned and all my friends seemed to be different people than what I was expecting. They had changed, and inadvertently, I had too.

If anyone needs help going through reverse culture shock, I recommend working in a volunteer status either in Crisis Corps, or somewhere else in a voluntary capacity—giving time and efforts for the greater good of mankind.

LIFE AFTER THE PEACE CORPS

What's Next

It's never too early to think about the future, and you would be surprised at the resources available in country to help you decide on that next step.

Many posts have a resource center, and in it you'll find information on graduate programs, resume writing, and job options. Still deciding which field is best for you? The Career Information Consultants manual lists 600 professionals who are willing to meet with returned or current Volunteers.

In addition, the Peace Corps publishes five manuals on teaching, business, agriculture, environment, and international fields, offering an

overview of the field and extensive lists of leading organizations and their contact information.

Volunteers bound for graduate school should take advantage of the career assessment tests to determine which field is appropriate for their skills and browse the Graduate School Guide with information on Peace Corps' Fellows/USA program and leading graduate programs.

While still in the field, Volunteers can visit www.peacecorps.gov/index.cfm/rpcv for complete information on career resources and job listings through the Peace Corps' Hotline e-newsletter.

The staff who compile these resource manuals value your input. So, if you have a suggestion or comment, drop a line to rvs@peacecorps.gov. The Returned Volunteer Services staff would enjoy hearing the best way to get you information.

Video, cont'd.

was chosen so people wouldn't congregate around the camera and the setting could stay as natural as possible. Filming usually requires a few hours with plenty of takes and retakes. Often, several retakes are necessary for the Volunteer to rework the question asked off camera into an answer. (This is necessary because the interviewer will not appear in the final product.) Sometimes, the distractions—from background noises to unpredictable passersby—prevent a great response from even being useable. And while most Volunteers do not mind signing a release form, having all the local participants understand and agree to the terms can be a time-consuming challenge, even when someone on staff has translated the release into the local language.

The logistical challenges faced by the camera crew and the "on-air talent" are one hurdle, but there are additional drawbacks to this "fame" for the featured Volunteers. Volunteers work very hard to integrate into their host communities. When a camera crew shows up to film an interview or follow the Volunteer around, that Volunteer immediately becomes a curiosity all over again. This notoriety can counter a Volunteer's efforts to blend in. "Trust me, they will remember me the next time I come back," said Volunteer Nicole Zdrojewski of Bel Air, Md.

But for all the Volunteers who participate in these projects, the sense of knowing they have helped explain the Peace Corps experience long overshadows a hard day's work.

PARTING SHOT

A brochure from Ukraine titled "Being young is great" explains the advantages of avoiding STDs.



Peace Corps Times

A publication for Peace Corps Volunteers serving worldwide

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Do you have something to share with us?

We welcome all Volunteer submissions or suggestions. Inquiries may be made to:

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