

THE PEACE CORPS WELCOMES YOU TO

VANUATU



A PEACE CORPS PUBLICATION
FOR NEW VOLUNTEERS



May 2007



A WELCOME LETTER

Dear Future Peace Corps Volunteer:

I welcome you as a prospective Peace Corps Volunteer. The staff and Volunteers of Peace Corps/Vanuatu look forward to meeting you at pre-service training.

This *Welcome Book* offers you information and much to think about with regard to Volunteer service and the commitment you are making as a Volunteer. It includes sections on what it means to be a Volunteer; suggestions for what to pack; medical information; a description of the Peace Corps program in Vanuatu; and background information on the history, culture, and government of Vanuatu.

While you are busy tying up loose ends on your side of the world, we are on our side getting ready for you. We have already started planning for your arrival and your training program. We look forward to helping you set the stage for a productive and meaningful two years of service in Vanuatu. Some of the things we highly recommend you bring with you are an open mind, a willingness to accept challenge, a love of adventure, and a sense of humor.

Peace Corps service promises to be one of the most formative, eye-opening, and enlightening experiences of your life. It will also have its share of physical and emotional challenges. There will be high points and low points in training and in service, and you may very well question the commitment you are about to make. As a Volunteer in Vanuatu, you will be largely responsible for, but not alone in, shaping your experience as a Volunteer. The staff of Peace Corps/Vanuatu, your fellow Volunteers, and the members of the Ni Vanuatu community where you serve will be important resources for you.

Feel free to contact me by email at kgeorge@vu.peacecorps.gov if you have questions about our training or programs that are not fully answered in this booklet.

I commend you for your willingness to step into the unknown, your desire to be challenged, your willingness to learn, and your commitment to work for peace. See you soon!

Kevin George
Country Director

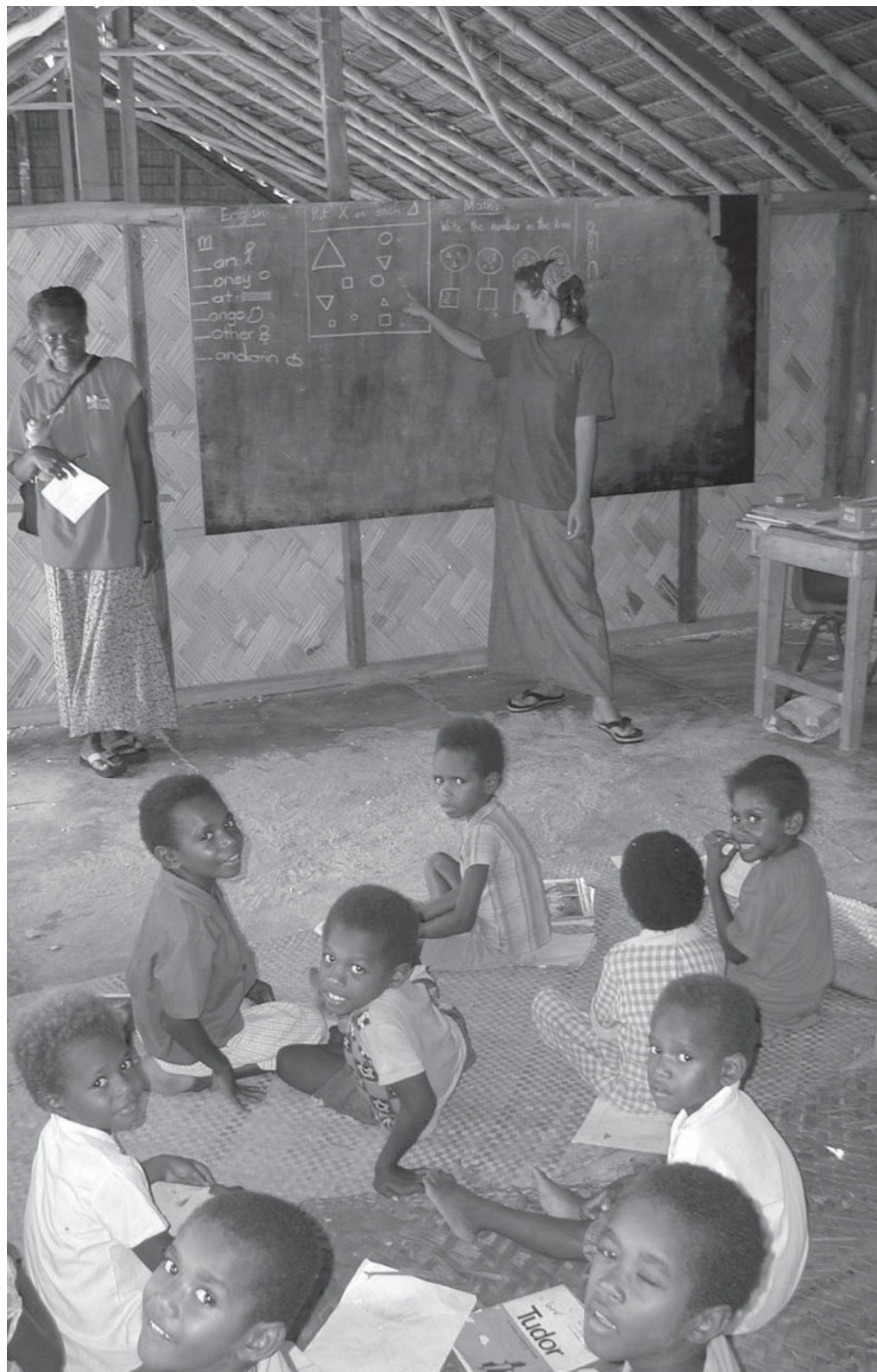
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PEACE CORPS/VANUATU HISTORY AND PROGRAMS



History of the Peace Corps in Vanuatu

Despite intermittent talks between the government of the newly independent Republic of Vanuatu and the Peace Corps through the 1980s, a country agreement was not signed until 1989. The first Peace Corps Volunteers arrived in Port Vila late that same year. During the first four years of its existence, the Peace Corps/Vanuatu program was administered by Peace Corps/Solomon Islands. Following the initial programming assessment trip, the Peace Corps decided to focus resources and Volunteers in the education sector. The first three Volunteers arrived in 1989, and they were assigned to teach either math or science at two different junior secondary schools. These Volunteers were followed a year later by three additional math and science Volunteer teachers. The Peace Corps program in Vanuatu now has more than 80 Volunteers working in five development sectors on more than 20 islands.

History and Future of Peace Corps Programming in Vanuatu

Peace Corps Volunteers contribute in very important ways to Vanuatu's national goal of increasing opportunities for Ni-Vanuatu, particularly those living in rural areas. Volunteers support the work of development partners that include government departments, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), local institutions, and communities. Ni-Vanuatu counterparts work with Volunteers to build capacity and to make projects sustainable beyond the service of the Volunteer. The Peace Corps program in Vanuatu helps:

- Ni Vanuatu increase opportunities for education and training and improve the quality of education for young people;
- Communities develop and implement strategies for the wise and sustainable use of their marine, terrestrial, and cultural resources;
- Identify and promote opportunities for income generation by Ni Vanuatu through a hands-on approach to training, production, and the marketing of products and services.
- Promote sustainable and integrated agricultural systems that balance livelihood security, income generation, and environmental conservation.
- Increase awareness of and empower communities to improve the quality of community health.
- Encourage youth and women to take active, leading roles in development.
- Facilitate the delivery of other important development programs and resources to rural communities and institutions.

Working and living with Ni Vanuatu at the community level is the theme that transcends the varied assignments of Peace Corps Volunteers. Volunteers are distinguished by their respect for culture, ability to speak Bislama, and willingness to live in some of the most remote areas of the country. They range in age, gender, and experience, but all share a commitment to the goals of the Peace Corps and to the people of Vanuatu.

The work of Peace Corps Volunteers is channeled through two projects: the Strengthening Human Resources through Education Project (SHREP) and the Resource Stewardship, Enterprise Promotion, Agriculture and Community Health (REACH) project. These projects share complementary objectives and activities and enable Peace Corps Volunteers to help build the capacity of local institutions and communities while also strengthening linkages to national development goals and resources.

SHREP Volunteers help improve the quality of education and promote the institutional capacity of rural training centers. Volunteers support the teaching of disadvantaged students in schools with an inadequate supply of qualified teachers. Along with their counterparts, they teach math, English, science, and information technology (IT) in schools. Volunteers contribute through classroom teaching, developing curriculum and resources, strategic planning for schools, and supporting initiatives to strengthen community involvement in schools.

Volunteers working as primary education teacher trainers and literacy trainers help the Ministry of Education improve the quality of basic education by promoting the enhancement of teaching skills and methodologies, which results in higher literacy levels and effective learning by students.

Volunteers help the Vanuatu Rural Development and Training Centres Association and community-managed rural training centers to provide vocational and basic life skills to students who do not qualify for advancement to the secondary education system. Volunteers advance opportunities for these youth to contribute to their communities. They also help counterpart managers strengthen the capacity of rural training centers by developing and implementing strategic plans that stress the self-sufficiency of these institutions.

REACH Volunteers enable institutions and communities to develop the potential of young people, promote opportunities for income generation through agriculture and other types of small business, and manage natural resources in sustainable ways.

Volunteers help rural farmers manage their farms with attention to soil and landscape conservation practices so that farms can be sustainable and more productive. Volunteers help farmers develop the business skills for marketing agriculture products and producing higher value crops.

Volunteers also promote greater environmental awareness and the sustainable management of Vanuatu's natural resources and biodiversity. Volunteers promote ecotourism, conservation enterprises, and implementing improved traditional conservation practices at landowner and community levels.

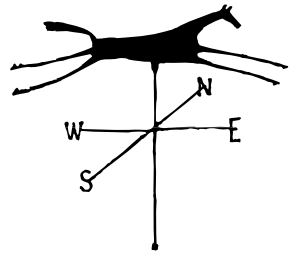
REACH Volunteers also help increase the capacity of communities, rural cooperatives, farmers groups, and other organizations to manage their activities and produce sustainable income-generation activities. They promote sound space, time and money management, and provide business services and training.

Volunteers skilled as community-based facilitators work with village health committees and health practitioners in Shefa Province, Vanuatu's most populated province. They focus on reorienting health services to a promotional and preventive model so community members can be directly involved as partners in sharing responsibility for their own health.

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COUNTRY OVERVIEW: VANUATU AT A GLANCE



History

Vanuatu is an independent republic consisting of 83 islands in the southwestern Pacific Ocean. It is located about 3,500 miles southeast of Hawaii and about 1,500 miles northeast of Australia. The capital and largest city is Port Vila, located on the island of Efaté. From the late 19th century until it gained independence in 1980, Vanuatu was governed jointly by France and Great Britain.

Vanuatu's prehistory is obscure; archeological evidence supports the commonly held theory that people speaking Austronesian languages first came to the islands some 4,000 years ago. Potsherds have been found dating back to 1300–1100 B.C.

The first island in the Vanuatu group to be visited by Europeans was Espiritu Santo, when, in 1606, Portuguese explorer Pedro Fernandez de Queiros spied what he thought was a southern continent. Europeans did not return until 1768, when Louis Antoine de Bougainville “rediscovered” the islands. In 1774, Captain James Cook named the islands the New Hebrides, a name that lasted until independence.

The majority of Vanuatu's population (78.5 percent) lives in isolated rural areas. The two urban centers, Port Vila and Luganville, have rapidly increased in size, with 15.7 percent of the population residing in Port Vila and 5.8 percent in Luganville. Port Vila, a small but cosmopolitan capital city, contrasts sharply with the rest of the country, with an economy that caters to a significant number of tourists and foreign residents.

In making the delicate transition from a largely self-sufficient, agriculture-based economy to one that is more market-oriented, Vanuatu is at a pivotal point in its young history. While traditional values and customs continue to influence society, the pull of the new economy and the lifestyles that come with it have led to a deterioration of the community-based social safety net. The challenge for Ni-Vanuatu is how to create a balance between the traditional community support system and the rising expectations for jobs, education, healthcare, and other public services.

Government

In 1906, after years of strife in colonizing Vanuatu, France and the United Kingdom developed a unique compromise agreement to administer the islands jointly. Called the British-French Condominium, it provided two completely separate governmental systems, one for the English-speaking settlers and one for the French, that came together only in joint court. Melanesians were barred from acquiring citizenship of either power. In effect, this dual system divided Ni-Vanuatu, and aspects of the system remain (e.g., the existence of both French and English educational systems) even though the country now has its own democratic system.

Challenges to the colonial government began in the early 1940s. The arrival of Americans during World War II, with their informal demeanor and relative wealth, was instrumental in the rise of nationalism in Vanuatu. Indigenous beliefs in a mythical, messianic figure named John Frum led to a “cargo cult” (related to obtaining industrial goods through magic) that promised Melanesian deliverance.

The first political party, originally called the New Hebrides National Party, was established in the early 1970s. One of its founders was Father Walter Lini, who later became prime minister. Renamed the Vanua'aku Pati in 1974, the party pushed for independence, which did not come until 1980.

Economy

Vanuatu's economy is based primarily on subsistence or small-scale agriculture, which provides a living for 65 percent of the population. Agricultural exports (copra, beef, and cocoa), offshore financial services, and tourism are other mainstays of the economy. Tax revenues come mainly from import duties. Mineral deposits are negligible, and the country has no known petroleum deposits. A small light-industry sector caters to the local market.

Economic development is hindered by Vanuatu's poor transportation infrastructure, dependence on relatively few commodity exports, and vulnerability to natural disasters and by the long distances from main markets and between constituent islands. A precipitous decline in world copra prices has reduced the real income of much of the population and has put increased pressure on other resources (i.e., timber, fisheries, and traditional agriculture). The most recent major natural disaster, a severe earthquake in January 2003, on Efaté Island, damaged roads, bridges, buildings, and homes in the Port Vila area extensively, though almost all damaged structures have been repaired.

According to 2006 World Health Organization figures, Vanuatu's population has a median life expectancy of 67 years for males and 69 years for females and a child mortality rate of 38 per 1,000 live births. Forty-eight percent of females and 57 percent of males ages 15 and older can read and write.

The United Nations' Human Development Index, which measures average achievement in terms of longevity, knowledge, and standard of living ranked Vanuatu 118 out of 177 participating countries in 2005.

People and Culture

The people of the archipelago, who number about 210,000, are known as Ni Vanuatu. The indigenous population is predominantly Melanesian, but on some islands, Melanesians blend with some Polynesians. Small numbers of French, British, Australians, New Zealanders, Vietnamese, and Chinese also reside on the islands.

The islands are rugged and isolated, and have some forested peaks several thousand feet high. Vanuatu's land area, scattered over 65 inhabited islands, is about the size of Connecticut, but is dispersed across an expanse of the equatorial Pacific equivalent to California. The consequent pattern of small settlements with limited outside contact fostered the development of well over 100 distinct Melanesian languages. The most common dialect, a form of pidgin English called Bislama, is the language of national unity. English and French are also official languages and are taught in schools throughout the country.

Most people are Christians, with the predominant denominations being Anglican, Presbyterian, Seventh-Day Adventist, and Roman Catholic. Many professed Christians also practice some indigenous religious customs, and some Ni Vanuatu adhere solely to the traditional animist beliefs.

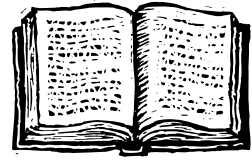
Environment

Vanuatu is an island archipelago consisting of approximately 82 relatively small, geologically newer islands of volcanic origin (65 of them inhabited), with about 800 miles north to south distance between the outermost islands. The climate is sub-tropical with approximately nine months of warm to hot rainy weather and the possibility of cyclones and three to four months of cooler drier weather characterized by winds from the southeast. The land base is very limited (roughly 4,700 sq. km.); most of the islands are steep, with unstable soils, and little permanent freshwater. The shoreline is usually rocky with fringing reefs and no continental shelf, dropping rapidly into the ocean depths.

Vanuatu's relatively fast growing population (estimated at 3.6 percent annually) is placing increased pressure on local resources for agriculture, grazing, hunting, and fishing. Some 90 percent of Ni-Vanuatu households fish and consume fish, which has caused intense fishing pressure near villages and the depletion of near-shore fish species. While well vegetated, most islands also show signs of deforestation. They have been logged (particularly of higher-value timber), subjected to wide-scale slash-and-burn agriculture, converted to coconut plantations and cattle ranches, and show evidence of increased soil erosion and landslides. Freshwater is becoming increasingly scarce and many upland watersheds are being deforested and degraded. Proper waste disposal and water and air pollution are also increasingly troublesome issues around urban areas and large villages. Additionally, the lack of employment opportunities in industry and urban areas and inaccessibility to markets have combined to lock rural families into a subsistence or self-reliance mode, putting tremendous pressure on local ecosystems.



RESOURCES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION



The following is a list of websites for additional information about the Peace Corps and Vanuatu and to connect you to returned Volunteers and other Invitees. Please keep in mind that although we try to make sure all these links are active and current, we cannot guarantee it.

A note of caution: As you surf the Internet, be aware that you may find bulletin boards and chat rooms in which people are free to express opinions about the Peace Corps based on their own experience, including comments by those who were unhappy with their choice to serve in the Peace Corps. These opinions are not those of the Peace Corps or of the U.S. government, and we hope you will keep in mind that no two people experience their service in the same way.

General Information About Vanuatu

www.lonelyplanet.com/worldguide/destinations/pacific/vanuatu

Visit this site for general travel advice about Vanuatu.

www.state.gov/p/eap/ci/nh/

The U.S. State Department's website issues background notes periodically about countries around the world. Learn more about Vanuatu's social and political history.

www.geography.about.com/library/maps/blvanuatu.htm

This online world atlas includes maps and geographical information, and each country page contains links to

other sites, such as the Library of Congress, that contain comprehensive historical, social, and political background.

www.cyberschoolbus.un.org/infonation/index.asp

This United Nations site allows you to search for statistical information for member states of the U.N.

www.vanuatugovernment.gov.vu/

The official site for the government of the Republic of Vanuatu.

www.vanuatutourism.com

This is the official site of the Vanuatu Tourism Bureau and contains a lot of information of interest to tourists and residents alike. It also has some excellent links to other websites.

www.islandsvanuatu.com

This is the website of the Vanuatu Island Bungalows Association (VIBA), a nonprofit organization established to develop sustainable eco-tourism in Vanuatu. It contains information about food and lodging.

Connect With Returned Volunteers and Other Invitees

<http://www.peacecorps.vu>

This is Peace Corps Vanuatu's official site. It is updated regularly and contains a lot of news, tips, and pictures of Peace Corps/Vanuatu and its Volunteers.

www.rpcv.org

This is the site of the National Peace Corps Association, composed of returned Volunteers. There are links to all the Web pages of the "friends of" groups for most countries of service, made up of former Volunteers who served in those countries. There are also regional groups who frequently get together for social events and local Volunteer activities.

<http://www.rpcvwebring.org>

This site is known as the Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Web Ring. Browse the Web ring and see what former Volunteers are saying about their service.

www.peacecorpswriters.org

This site is hosted by a group of returned Volunteer writers. It is a monthly online publication of essays and Volunteer accounts of their Peace Corps service.

Online Articles/Current News Sites about Vanuatu

<http://www.topix.net/world/vanuatu>

<http://www.vanuatu.net.vu>

Recommended Books

1. *Asia and Pacific Annual Review*. Saffron Walden, England: World of Information (annual).
2. Bennett, Judith A. *Wealth of the Solomons: A History of a Pacific Archipelago, 1800-1978*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1987.
3. Bunge, Frederica M., and Melinda Cooke. *Oceania: A Regional Study (Area Handbook Series)*. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1989.
4. *The Far East and Australia 2002*. London: Europa Publications, 2001.

Books About the History of the Peace Corps

1. Hoffman, Elizabeth Cobbs. *All You Need is Love: The Peace Corps and the Spirit of the 1960's*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000.

2. Rice, Gerald T. *The Bold Experiment: JFK's Peace Corps*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985.
3. Stossel, Scott. *Sarge: The Life and Times of Sargent Shriver*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2004.

Books on the Volunteer Experience

1. Dirlam, Sharon. *Beyond Siberia: Two Years in a Forgotten Place*. Santa Barbara, CA: McSeas Books, 2004.
2. Casebolt, Marjorie DeMoss. *Margarita: A Guatemalan Peace Corps Experience*. Gig Harbor, WA: Red Apple Publishing, 2000.
3. Erdman, Sarah. *Nine Hills to Nambonkaha: Two Years in the Heart of an African Village*. New York, NY: Picador, 2003.
4. Hessler, Peter. *River Town: Two Years on the Yangtze*. New York, NY: Perennial, 2001.
5. Kennedy, Geraldine ed. *From the Center of the Earth: Stories out of the Peace Corps*. Santa Monica, CA: Clover Park Press, 1991.
6. Thompsen, Moritz. *Living Poor: A Peace Corps Chronicle*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1997 (reprint).

NOTES



LIVING CONDITIONS AND VOLUNTEER LIFESTYLE



Communications

Mail

Pre-service training is held on the island of Efaté, north of Port Vila, the capital of Vanuatu. During training, family and friends can send you mail from the Peace Corps office. The address is:

“Your Name”
Peace Corps/Vanuatu
PMB 9097
Port Vila
Republic of Vanuatu

Although you can collect your mail from the office, the Peace Corps staff usually brings it to the training site.

Once you are sworn-in as a Volunteer, you should have mail sent to your site. Most villages in Vanuatu have a small post office; otherwise mail can be sent to the Peace Corps office and staff will forward it to your site. Airmail sent from Port Vila takes two to four weeks to reach the United States. The length for mail sent from United States varies, but small envelopes and parcels generally arrive in Port Vila in one or two weeks. If one is lucky, surface mail takes around three months.

Telephones

There is one telephone company in Vanuatu (Vanuatu Telecom), and telephone service is reliable but expensive. Phone cards can be purchased at the Vanuatu Telecom office and at many stores and these cards can be used at the public

phones in Port Vila. You can also make reverse-charge calls and send faxes to the United States from the Telecom office inside the post office. At your site, there is likely to be phone service within walking distance, but this is not always the case. Mobile phones can only be used in Port Vila, Luganville, and Norsup. SIM cards can be purchased from the Vanuatu phone company to activate U.S. mobile phones.

Computer, Internet, and E-mail Access

There are a few Internet cafes in the Port Vila area, including one very close to the Peace Corps office. It costs approximately 30 vatu (about 26 U.S. cents) per minute to check e-mail and surf the Web. You can also use Internet phone service at these locations.

You can also access e-mail and the Internet at the Peace Corps office's resource center, which has four computers for use by trainees and Volunteers. A sign-up sheet is used during peak periods. There is no Internet access at the training site and trainees visit Port Vila only occasionally.

Housing and Site Location

For the first few days of pre-service training (PST), you will stay in Port Vila. You will then move to a rural village on Efaté, staying with a Ni-Vanuatu family for the remainder of training. Although some homes in the village use solar power or generators for electricity, you are more likely to use a kerosene lamp or candles. At the training site and in most rural villages, households have a rainwater tank, well, or piped water for drinking and showers. Most houses are composed of local materials including wood, bamboo, palm and coconut leaves, and tin sheets.

At about the midpoint of pre-service training, you will go on a "walkabout." This four- to six-day day visit to your assigned site or a similar location provides an opportunity to discuss

your assignment, meet and visit with future colleagues and community members and current Volunteers, and become familiar with living conditions in another part of the country. Before going on the walkabout, you will be given information about the site and have an opportunity to discuss the assignment with Peace Corps staff and other Volunteers.

Living Allowance and Money Management

All Volunteers receive a monthly living allowance that enables them to live modestly by the standards of the people they serve, yet not in a manner that would jeopardize their health and safety. The monthly allowance is intended to cover food, household supplies, clothing, transportation, recreation, entertainment, and incidental expenses such as postage, film, reading materials, stationery, and toiletries.

Toward the end of pre-service training, the Peace Corps will open an account for you at the National Bank of Vanuatu, where it will deposit your living allowances every two months. This bank has branches on many of the islands, so it is easy for most Volunteers to access their bank account.

Peace Corps/Vanuatu will provide you with various resources and materials for use during training and service. Normally you are provided with items such as a medical kit, mattress, lantern, sheets, and mosquito net. These items are yours to use while you are a Volunteer, but must be returned at the end of your service.

After you take the oath of service at the end of pre-service training, you will receive a settling-in allowance of 30,000 vatu per individual (approximately U.S. \$270) or 50,000 vatu per couple (approximately \$450) to purchase household items such as pots, pans, and a stove.

Food and Diet

Vanuatu has an abundance of fruits, root crops, and vegetables. Most island families grow food in their gardens, and food shortages are rare. There are a few markets and numerous stores on the main islands of Santo and Efaté that carry canned goods, meats, spices, fresh vegetables, cheese, cereal, milk, rice, pasta, and chocolate. On other islands, there are fewer stores and markets and few refrigerated products, but you usually can obtain the essentials.

While many of Vanuatu's foods, such as taros, yams, and breadfruit, will be familiar, you are likely to rapidly develop a taste for virtually all of them. Papayas, pineapples, mangoes, plantains, and sweet potatoes are abundant through much of the year. Coconut milk and cream are used to flavor many dishes, and you will soon appreciate them as much as the Ni Vanuatu do. Most food is cooked using hot stones or through boiling and steaming; very little food is fried.

During pre-service training, you will become familiar with Vanuatu's traditional island food (fish, taro, yams, etc.), or *aelan kakaë*, by eating it with your host family. You will eventually develop your favorite dishes and learn how to cook some of them, albeit in your own style.

Transportation

In Vanuatu, you will probably do more walking, riding in the back of pickup trucks, flying in small planes, and bouncing around in small boats than you have ever done before. The undeveloped road system, with less than 100 miles of paved roads, consists mostly of dirt tracks suitable only for four-wheel-drive vehicles. Every island has one or two short airstrips where Vanair's Twin Otter planes land two or three times weekly. In addition, every island has a small port or

wharf where small cargo ships and boats regularly dock. After one arrives at these locations, transportation is usually via pickup truck, foot, or small boat. Bicycles are becoming popular in Vanuatu, and, depending on your site, the Peace Corps may provide you with one. Port Vila and Luganville have numerous taxis and mass-transit vans that provide good service at a reasonable cost. Peace Corps Volunteers are prohibited from driving or riding on motorcycles.

Geography and Climate

Vanuatu features isolated rural communities scattered among a chain of beautiful, but rugged and lightly populated, tropical islands, which extend about 500 miles from north and south.

The water temperature ranges from 72 degrees Fahrenheit (22 degrees Celsius) in winter to 82 degrees Fahrenheit (28 degrees Celsius) in the summer. Cool between April and September, the days become hotter and more humid starting in October. The daily temperature ranges from 68 to 90 degrees Fahrenheit (20 degrees to 32 degrees Celsius). Southeasterly trade winds occur from May to October. Vanuatu has a long rainy season, with significant rainfall usually occurring almost every month. The wettest and hottest months are December through April, which also constitute the cyclone season. The driest months are June through November.

Vanuatu has a variety of natural hazards, such as cyclones, volcanic activity, and earthquakes. Cyclones are the only natural event that generally affects the entire country at once in one way or another. Although they can occur at any time of the year, they are most frequent between January and April. You will receive detailed information about how to cope with cyclones and other natural hazards during your pre-service training.

Social Activities

Village life in Vanuatu is very social, resulting more in a lack of privacy than physical isolation from others. There will be many opportunities to build supportive relationships at your site and to get involved in a village's activities. Although cultural isolation can be a problem, it is less of one nowadays due to Peace Corps/Vanuatu policy of "clustering" sites where Volunteers are stationed. Rural Volunteers now have the opportunity to build friendships and socialize with other Volunteers near their sites. Though distances vary from island to island, most Volunteers have someone within a few hours' walk or closer.

Peace Corps/Vanuatu is headquartered in Port Vila. Volunteers frequently travel to and from Port Vila for business and pleasure. While taking time off in the city, Volunteers shop, hang out, and enjoy good food at restaurants such as Jill's American Café or the Café Deli. There are several bars and small nightclubs catering to tourists and expatriates. Port Vila is also home to several resorts that allow casual use of their facilities by Peace Corps Volunteers. Some of these resorts may require a small payment. Snorkeling, SCUBA diving, kayaking, sailing, and horseback riding are some of the options open to Volunteers while in the city. Similar activities are available in Luganville on Espiritu Santo Island.

Professionalism, Dress, and Behavior

One of the challenges of finding your place as a Peace Corps Volunteer is fitting into the local culture while maintaining your own cultural identity and acting like a professional all at the same time. It is not an easy thing to do, and we can only provide you with guidelines.

You are expected to show sensitivity to the culture of Vanuatu in both dress and behavior. A foreigner who wears ragged, unmended clothing is likely to be considered an affront. Most Ni Vanuatu are conservative in their dress. Since each job has different clothing requirements, you should consider your particular job when deciding what to bring. Volunteers who are assigned to classrooms, offices, or health posts have a greater need for professional clothing than do those who spend most of their time in the field. However, all Volunteers need an assortment of clothing for work and relaxation. Although T-shirts are suitable for days off and swimsuits are fine for the beach, you should have at least one or two nice outfits for special occasions, even if your work site is in a rural area.

Although attitudes about women's dress are more liberal in Port Vila and Luganville and some Ni Vanuatu women in villages go without tops, female Volunteers must dress modestly. Wearing large blouses with skirts is a local fashion, so it is worth bringing such blouses with you. If a dress or blouse is transparent, a camisole or slip is necessary. It is never appropriate for women to show bare thighs (except at tourist pools and tourist beaches), and short-shorts for women are considered improper. When swimming in non-resort areas, women should wrap a lava-lava (a sarong-like wrap) around their waist. Many female Volunteers find that it is most acceptable in rural areas to wear a "Mother Hubbard"—a dress that is sold locally and may be given to you by your pre-service training Ni-Vanuatu host family.

Lightweight but durable cotton or cotton-blend clothes are the most comfortable in Vanuatu's hot and humid climate. Local methods of washing clothes can be very hard on them. Note that leather is subject to mold and mildew and elastic tends to lose its elasticity. Since you may not have electricity for an iron, you may have to get used to wearing more wrinkled clothes than you usually do.

In the hot, direct tropical sun, protective hats are a must. You should also bring raingear (a rain hat is especially desirable if you wear glasses) and a windbreaker for cooler weather. You will need some warm clothes, such as sweatshirts and sweaters, for the cooler months, particularly at night.

For most of the year, sandals without socks are the normal footwear for men and women (sandals like Tevas not only are very comfortable and durable, but are a Peace Corps tradition). Many Volunteers also like to wear regular shoes and socks in the cooler months. You will be doing a lot of walking, so think comfort and durability when you buy shoes (i.e., light hiking shoes or sneakers). Local people work and play in flip-flops.

All types of clothing are available in Port Vila and Luganville, but they can be expensive. However, many Volunteers find bargains at the used-clothing stores in Port Vila and Luganville. It is helpful to learn your sizes in the European metric system.

Personal Safety

Volunteer safety is the Peace Corps' number-one priority. More detailed information about the Peace Corps' approach to safety is contained in the Health Care and Safety chapter, but it is an important issue and cannot be overemphasized.

As stated in the *Volunteer Handbook*, becoming a Peace Corps Volunteer entails certain safety risks. Living and traveling in an unfamiliar environment (often while alone), having a limited understanding initially of local language and culture, and being perceived as well-off are some of the factors that can put a Volunteer at risk. Many Volunteers experience varying degrees of unwanted attention and harassment. Petty thefts and burglaries are not uncommon, and incidents of

physical and sexual assault do occur, although most Vanuatu Volunteers complete their two years of service without personal security incidents. The Peace Corps has established procedures and policies designed to help you reduce your risks and enhance your safety and security. These procedures and policies, in addition to safety training, will be provided once you arrive in Vanuatu. At the same time, you are expected to take responsibility for your safety and well-being.

Rewards and Frustrations

Although the potential for job satisfaction in Vanuatu is quite high, like all Volunteers, you will encounter numerous frustrations. Because of financial or other challenges, collaborating agencies do not always provide the support promised. In addition, the pace of work and life is slower than what most Americans are accustomed to, and some people you work with may be hesitant to change practices and traditions that are centuries old. For these reasons, the Peace Corps experience of adapting to a new culture and environment is often described as a series of emotional peaks and valleys.

You will be given a high degree of responsibility and independence in your work—perhaps more than in any other job you have had or will have. You will often find yourself in situations that require an ability to motivate yourself and your co-workers with little guidance from supervisors. You might work for months without seeing any visible impact from, or receiving feedback on, your work. Development is a slow process. Positive progress most often comes after the combined efforts of several Volunteers over the over the course of many years. You must possess the self-confidence, patience, and vision to continue working toward long-term goals without seeing immediate results.

To overcome these difficulties, you will need maturity, flexibility, open-mindedness, resourcefulness, and a positive attitude. The Peace Corps/Vanuatu staff, your co-workers, and fellow Volunteers will support you during times of challenge as well as in moments of success. Judging by the experience of former Volunteers, the peaks are well worth the difficult times, and most Volunteers leave Vanuatu feeling that they gained much more than they sacrificed during their service. If you are able to make the commitment to integrate into your community and work hard, you will be a successful Volunteer.

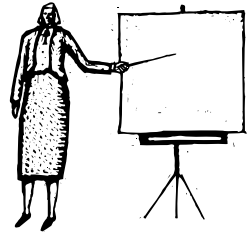
Volunteers are usually readily accepted into their community and form lasting friendships. However, it is important to note that traditional customs and beliefs are held dear, especially in rural areas, and change comes slowly. Having to constantly answer personal questions, the lack of privacy, being considered a rich foreigner, and the need to be constantly aware of different social modes can all be frustrating. The Peace Corps is not for everyone.

Creativity, initiative, patience, flexibility, and a high tolerance for ambiguity are necessary attributes in confronting the challenges associated with facilitating change in a new cultural setting. Your dedication can, however, lead to real lasting results that empower community members not only to achieve your project's goals but also to identify and address other important needs. You are likely to experience the deep satisfaction of having played a role in a grass-roots development process that gives the people of Vanuatu greater control of their future.

NOTES



PEACE CORPS TRAINING



Overview of Pre-Service Training

Pre-service training provides trainees with 10 weeks of intense, entry-level language, cultural, technical, development, and personal security and health skills to function effectively as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Vanuatu. Training emphasizes building interpersonal skills and self-confidence, identifying and using local resources, and teaching relevant skills to host country counterparts. It will be the first “reality test” of life as a Volunteer, which will help you make an informed commitment when you are sworn-in as a Peace Corps Volunteer.

Technical Training

Technical training will prepare you to work in Vanuatu by building on the skills you already have and by helping you develop new skills in a manner appropriate to the needs of your community and the country. The Peace Corps staff, Vanuatu experts, and current Volunteers conduct the training program. Training places great emphasis on learning how to transfer the skills you have to the community in which you will serve as a Volunteer.

Technical training includes sessions on the general economic and political environment in Vanuatu and strategies for working within such a framework. You will review your technical sector’s goals and will meet with the Vanuatu agencies and organizations that invited the Peace Corps to assist them. You will be supported and evaluated throughout the training to build the confidence and skills you need to undertake your project activities and be a productive member of your community.

Language Training

The national language of Vanuatu is Bislama; this is the language you will learn during pre-service training. As a Peace Corps Volunteer, you will find that language skills are the key to personal and professional satisfaction during your service. These skills are critical to your job performance, they help you integrate into your community, and they can ease your personal adaptation to the new surroundings. Therefore, language training is the heart of the training program, and you must successfully meet minimum language requirements to complete training and become a Volunteer. Vanuatu language instructors teach formal language classes five days a week in small groups of four to five people.

Your language training incorporates a community-based approach. In addition to classroom time, you will be given assignments to work on outside of the classroom and with your host family. The goal is to get you to a point of basic social communication skills so that you can practice and develop language skills further once you are at your site. Prior to being sworn-in as a Volunteer, you will work on strategies to continue language studies during your service.

Although Bislama is the national language, there are many other local languages throughout Vanuatu. Although you will not be taught local languages during pre-service training, you are encouraged to learn the local language of your community during your service.

Cross-Cultural Training

The culture of Vanuatu is diverse and fascinating. As part of your pre-service training, you will live with a Ni-Vanuatu host family. This experience will ease your transition to life at your site. Families go through an orientation conducted by Peace Corps staff to explain the purpose of pre-service training and to assist them in helping you adapt to living in Vanuatu. Many Volunteers form strong and lasting friendships with their host families.

Cross-cultural and community development training will help you improve your communication skills and understand your role as a facilitator of development. You will be exposed to topics such as community mobilization, conflict resolution, gender and development, informal and adult education strategies, and political structures.

Health Training

During pre-service training, you will be given basic medical training and information. You are expected to practice preventive healthcare and to take responsibility for your own health by adhering to all medical policies. Trainees must attend all medical sessions. The topics include preventive health measures and minor and major medical issues that you might encounter while in Vanuatu. Nutrition, mental health, safety and security, setting up a safe living compound, and how to avoid HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) are also covered.

Safety Training

During the safety training sessions, you will learn how to adopt a lifestyle that reduces your risks at home, at work, and during your travels. You will also learn appropriate, effective strategies for coping with unwanted attention and about your individual responsibility for promoting safety throughout your service.

Additional Trainings During Volunteer Service

In its commitment to institutionalize quality training, the Peace Corps has implemented a training system that provides Volunteers with continual opportunities to examine their commitment to Peace Corps service while increasing their technical and cross-cultural skills. During service, there are usually three training events. The titles and objectives for those trainings are as follows:

- *In-service training (IST)*: Provides an opportunity for Volunteers to upgrade their technical, language, and project development skills while sharing their experiences and reaffirming their commitment after having served for three to six months.
- *Midterm conference* (done in conjunction with technical sector in-service): Helps Volunteers review their first year, reassess their personal and project objectives, and plan for their second year of service.
- *Close-of-service (COS) conference*: Prepares Volunteers for the future after Peace Corps service and reviews their respective projects and personal experiences.

The number, length, and design of these trainings are adapted to country-specific needs and conditions. The key to the training system is that training events are integrated and interrelated, from the pre-departure orientation through the end of your service, and are planned, implemented, and evaluated cooperatively by the training staff, Peace Corps staff, and Volunteers.

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YOUR HEALTH CARE AND SAFETY IN VANUATU



The Peace Corps' highest priority is maintaining the good health and safety of every Volunteer. Peace Corps medical programs emphasize the preventive, rather than the curative, approach to disease. Peace Corps/Vanuatu maintains a clinic and a full-time medical officer takes care of Volunteers' primary healthcare needs. Additional medical services, such as testing and basic treatment, are also available in Vanuatu at local hospitals. If you become seriously ill during your service, you will be transported either to an American-standard medical facility in the region or to the United States.

Health Issues in Vanuatu

On the whole, Vanuatu is a healthy place to live. There are almost no poisonous insects or reptiles on land or in the sea. Many of the serious tropical diseases present in other parts of the world are absent or are controlled in Vanuatu. One of the major problems for the local population is malaria. You will be taught how to reduce your risk of catching this disease by using sensible precautions to prevent mosquito bites and by taking prophylactic drugs. Volunteers rarely catch malaria, but those who do can make a full recovery if they seek prompt treatment. You will be given extensive information about malaria during training.

Since weather in Vanuatu is hot and humid much of the time, good personal hygiene is important to prevent skin diseases.

Helping You Stay Healthy

The Peace Corps will provide you with all the necessary inoculations, medications, and information to stay healthy. Upon your arrival in Vanuatu, you will receive a medical handbook. At the end of pre-service training, you will receive a medical kit with supplies to take care of mild illnesses and first-aid needs. The contents of the kit are listed later in this chapter.

During pre-service training, you will have access to basic medical supplies through the medical officer. However, you will be responsible for your own supply of prescription drugs and any other specific medical supplies you require, as the Peace Corps will not order these items during training. Please bring a three-month supply of any prescription drugs you use, since they may not be available here and it may take several months for shipments to arrive.

You will have physicals at mid-service and at the end of your service. If you develop a serious medical problem during your service, the medical officer in Vanuatu will consult with the Office of Medical Services at Peace Corps headquarters in Washington, D.C. If your condition cannot be treated in Vanuatu, you may be sent out of the country for further evaluation and care.

Maintaining Your Health

As a Volunteer, you must accept considerable responsibility for your own health. Proper precautions will significantly reduce your risk of serious illness or injury. The adage "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" becomes extremely important in areas where diagnostic and treatment facilities are not up to the standards of the United States. The most important of your responsibilities in Vanuatu is to take the following preventive measures:

To suppress attacks of malaria, a mosquito-borne disease, you must take an approved anti-malarial drug, usually mefloquine. Mefloquine has been shown to be the most effective and practical drug in areas with significant chloroquine resistance. Taken at the prophylactic dose of 250 mg. per week, mefloquine is safe and generally well-tolerated. Fewer than 5 percent of all Volunteers worldwide experience annoying side effects from mefloquine. With rare exceptions, Volunteers must remain on mefloquine for the duration of their stay in Vanuatu. As an alternative to mefloquine, doxycycline, an antibiotic, can be taken daily.

Many illnesses that afflict Volunteers worldwide are entirely preventable if proper food and water precautions are taken. These illnesses include food poisoning, parasitic infections, hepatitis A, dysentery, Guinea worm, tapeworms, and typhoid fever. Your medical officer will discuss specific standards for water and food preparation in Vanuatu during pre-service training.

Abstinence is the only certain choice for preventing infection with HIV and other STDs. You are taking risks if you choose to be sexually active. To lessen risk, use a condom every time you have sex. Whether your partner is a host country citizen, a fellow Volunteer, or anyone else, do not assume this person is free of HIV/AIDS or other STDs. You will receive more information from the medical officer about this important issue.

Volunteers are expected to adhere to an effective means of birth control to prevent an unplanned pregnancy. Your medical officer can help you decide on the most appropriate method to suit your individual needs. Contraceptive methods are available without charge from the medical officer.

It is critical to your health that you promptly report to the medical office or other designated facility for scheduled immunizations, and that you let the medical officer know immediately of significant illnesses and injuries.

Women's Health Information

Pregnancy is treated in the same manner as other Volunteer health conditions that require medical attention but also have programmatic ramifications. The Peace Corps is responsible for determining the medical risk and the availability of appropriate medical care if the Volunteer remains in-country. Given the circumstances under which Volunteers live and work in Peace Corps countries, it is rare that the Peace Corps' medical and programmatic standards for continued service during pregnancy can be met.

If feminine hygiene products are not available for you to purchase on the local market, the Peace Corps medical officer in Vanuatu will provide them. If you require a specific product, please bring a three-month supply with you.

Your Peace Corps Medical Kit

The Peace Corps medical officer will provide you with a kit that contains basic items necessary to prevent and treat illnesses that may occur during service. Kit items can be periodically restocked at the medical office.

Medical Kit Contents

Ace bandages

Adhesive tape

American Red Cross First Aid & Safety Handbook

Antacid tablets (Tums)

Antibiotic ointment (Bacitracin/Neomycin/Polymycin B)

Antiseptic antimicrobial skin cleaner (Hibiclens)

Band-Aids

Butterfly closures

Calamine lotion

Cepacol lozenges

Condoms
Dental floss
Diphenhydramine HCL 25 mg (Benadryl)
Insect repellent stick (Cutter's)
Iodine tablets (for water purification)
Lip balm (Chapstick)
Oral rehydration salts
Oral thermometer (Fahrenheit)
Pseudoephedrine HCL 30 mg (Sudafed)
Robitussin-DM lozenges (for cough)
Scissors
Sterile gauze pads
Tetrahydrozoline eyedrops (Visine)
Tinactin (antifungal cream)
Tweezers

Before You Leave: A Medical Checklist

If there has been any change in your health—physical, mental, or dental—since you submitted your examination reports to the Peace Corps, you must immediately notify the Office of Medical Services. Failure to disclose new illnesses, injuries, allergies, or pregnancy can endanger your health and may jeopardize your eligibility to serve.

If your dental exam was done more than a year ago, or if your physical exam is more than two years old, contact the Office of Medical Services to find out whether you need to update your records. If your dentist or Peace Corps dental consultant has recommended that you undergo dental treatment or repair, you must complete that work and make sure your dentist sends requested confirmation reports or X-rays to the Office of Medical Services.

If you wish to avoid having duplicate vaccinations, contact your physician's office to obtain a copy of your immunization record and bring it to your pre-departure orientation. If you have any immunizations prior to Peace Corps service, the Peace Corps cannot reimburse you for the cost. The Peace Corps will provide all the immunizations necessary for your overseas assignment, either at your pre-departure orientation or shortly after you arrive in Vanuatu. You do not need to begin taking malaria medication prior to departure.

Bring a three-month supply of any prescription or over-the-counter medication you use on a regular basis, including birth control pills. Although the Peace Corps cannot reimburse you for this three-month supply, we will order refills during your service. While awaiting shipment—which can take several months—you will be dependent on your own medication supply. Also make sure to bring any vitamins you may take regularly, as these will not be supplied by Peace Corps. The Peace Corps will not pay for herbal or non-prescribed medications, such as St. John's wort, glucosamine, selenium, or antioxidant supplements.

You are encouraged to bring copies of medical prescriptions signed by your physician. This is not a requirement, but they may be useful if you are questioned in transit about carrying a three-month supply of prescription drugs.

If you wear eyeglasses, bring two pairs with you—a pair and a spare. If a pair breaks, the Peace Corps will replace it, using the information your doctor in the United States provided on the eyeglasses form during your examination. The Peace Corps discourages you from using contact lenses during your service to reduce your risk of developing a serious infection or other eye disease. Most Peace Corps countries do not have

appropriate water and sanitation to support the use of contact lenses. The Peace Corps will not supply or replace contact lenses or associated solutions unless an ophthalmologist has recommended their use for a specific medical condition and the Peace Corps' Office of Medical Services has given approval.

If you are eligible for Medicare, are over 50 years of age, or have a health condition that may restrict your future participation in healthcare plans, you may wish to consult an insurance specialist about unique coverage needs before your departure. The Peace Corps will provide all necessary healthcare from the time you leave for your pre-departure orientation until you complete your service. When you finish, you will be entitled to the post-service healthcare benefits described in the Peace Corps Volunteer Handbook. You should consider keeping an existing health plan in effect during your service if you think age or preexisting conditions might prevent you from reenrolling in your current plan when you return home.

Safety and Security—Our Partnership

Serving as a Volunteer overseas entails certain safety and security risks. Living and traveling in an unfamiliar environment, a limited understanding of the local language and culture, and the perception of being a wealthy American are some of the factors that can put a Volunteer at risk. Property thefts and burglaries are not uncommon. Incidents of physical and sexual assault do occur, although almost all Volunteers complete their two years of service without serious personal safety problems. In addition, more than 84 percent of Volunteers surveyed in the 2004 Peace Corps Volunteer Survey say they would join the Peace Corps again.

The Peace Corps approaches safety and security as a partnership with you. This *Welcome Book* contains sections on: Living Conditions and Volunteer Lifestyle; Peace Corps Training; and Your Health Care and Safety. All of these sections include important safety and security information.

The Peace Corps makes every effort to give Volunteers the tools they need to function in the safest and most secure way possible, because working to maximize the safety and security of Volunteers is our highest priority. Not only do we provide you with training and tools to prepare for the unexpected, but we teach you to identify and manage the risks you may encounter.

Factors that Contribute to Volunteer Risk

There are several factors that can heighten a Volunteer's risk, many of which are within the Volunteer's control. Based on information gathered from incident reports worldwide in 2004, the following factors stand out as risk characteristics for assaults. Assaults consist of personal crimes committed against Volunteers, and do not include property crimes (such as vandalism or theft).

- Location: Most crimes occurred when Volunteers were in public areas (e.g., street, park, beach, public buildings). Specifically, 43 percent of assaults took place when Volunteers were away from their sites.
- Time of day: Assaults usually took place on the weekend during the evening between 5:00 p.m. and 2:00 a.m.—with most assaults occurring around 1:00 a.m.
- Absence of others: Assaults usually occurred when the Volunteer was unaccompanied. In 82 percent of the sexual assaults the Volunteer was unaccompanied and in 55 percent of physical assaults the Volunteer was unaccompanied.

- Relationship to assailant: In most assaults, the Volunteer did not know the assailant.
- Consumption of alcohol: Forty percent of all assaults involved alcohol consumption by Volunteers and/or assailants.

Summary Strategies to Reduce Risk

Before and during service, your training will address these areas of concern so that you can reduce the risks you face. For example, here are some strategies Volunteers employ:

Strategies to reduce the risk/impact of theft:

- Know the environment and choose safe routes/times for travel
- Avoid high-crime areas per Peace Corps guidance
- Know the vocabulary to get help in an emergency
- Carry valuables in different pockets/places
- Carry a "dummy" wallet as a decoy

Strategies to reduce the risk/impact of burglary:

- Live with a local family or on a family compound
- Put strong locks on doors and keep valuables in a lock box or trunk
- Leave irreplaceable objects at home in the U.S.
- Follow Peace Corps guidelines on maintaining home security

Strategies to reduce the risk/impact of assault:

- Make local friends
- Make sure your appearance is respectful of local customs; don't draw negative attention to yourself by wearing inappropriate clothing
- Get to know local officials, police, and neighbors

- Travel with someone whenever possible
- Avoid known high crime areas
- Limit alcohol consumption

Support from Staff

In March 2003, the Peace Corps created the Office of Safety and Security with its mission to “foster improved communication, coordination, oversight, and accountability of all Peace Corps’ safety and security efforts.” The new office is led by an Associate Director for Safety and Security who reports to the Peace Corps Director and includes the following divisions: Volunteer Safety and Overseas Security; Information and Personnel Security; Emergency Preparedness, Plans, Training and Exercise; and Crime Statistics and Analysis.

The major responsibilities of the Volunteer Safety and Overseas Security Division are to coordinate the office’s overseas operations and direct the Peace Corps’ safety and security officers who are located in various regions around the world that have Peace Corps programs. The safety and security officers conduct security assessments; review safety trainings; train trainers and managers; train Volunteer safety wardens, local guards, and staff; develop security incident response procedures; and provide crisis management support.

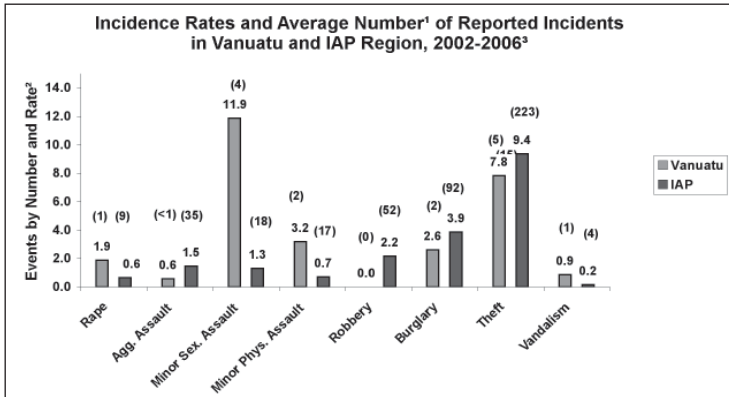
If a trainee or Volunteer is the victim of a safety incident, Peace Corps staff is prepared to provide support. All Peace Corps posts have procedures in place to respond to incidents of crime committed against Volunteers. The first priority for all posts in the aftermath of an incident is to ensure that the Volunteer is safe and receiving medical treatment as needed. After assuring the safety of the Volunteer, Peace Corps staff provides support by reassessing the Volunteer’s work site and housing arrangements and making any adjustments,

as needed. In some cases, the nature of the incident may necessitate a site or housing transfer. Peace Corps staff will also assist Volunteers with preserving their rights to pursue legal sanctions against the perpetrators of the crime. It is very important that Volunteers report incidents as they occur, not only to protect their peer Volunteers, but also to preserve the future right to prosecute. Should Volunteers decide later in the process that they want to proceed with the prosecution of their assailant, this option may no longer exist if the evidence of the event has not been preserved at the time of the incident.

The country-specific data chart below shows the incidence rates and the average number of incidents of the major types of safety incidents reported by Peace Corps Volunteers/trainees in Vanuatu as compared to all other Inter-America and Pacific (IAP) region programs as a whole, from 2002–2006. It is presented to you in a somewhat technical manner for statistical accuracy.

To fully appreciate the collected data below, an explanation of the graph is provided as follows:

The incidence rate for each type of crime is the number of crime events relative to the Volunteer/trainee population. It is expressed on the chart as a ratio of crime to Volunteer and trainee years (or V/T years, which is a measure of 12 full months of V/T service) to allow for a statistically valid way to compare crime data across countries. An “incident” is a specific offense, per Peace Corps' classification of offenses, and may involve one or more Volunteer/trainee victims. For example, if two Volunteers are robbed at the same time and place, this is classified as one robbery incident.



¹The average numbers of incidents are in parenthesis and equal the average reported assaults for each year between 2002–2006.

²Incident rates equal the number of assaults per 100 Volunteers and trainees per year (V/T years). Since most sexual assaults occur against females, only female V/Ts are calculated in rapes and minor sexual assaults. Numbers of incidents are approximate due to rounding.

³Data collection for Vanuatu began as of 2002

Source data on incidents are drawn from Assault Notification Surveillance System (ANSS) Epidemiologic Surveillance System (ESS), and Crime Incident Reporting Form (CIRF); the information is accurate as of 03/22/2007.

The chart is separated into eight crime categories. These include vandalism (malicious defacement or damage of property); theft (taking without force or illegal entry); burglary (forcible entry of a residence); robbery (taking something by force); minor physical assault (attacking without a weapon with minor injuries); minor sexual assault (fondling, groping, etc.); aggravated assault (attacking with a weapon, and/or without a weapon when serious injury results); and rape (sexual intercourse without consent).

When anticipating Peace Corps Volunteer service, you should review all of the safety and security information provided to you, including the strategies to reduce risk. Throughout your training and Volunteer service, you will be expected to successfully complete all training competencies in a variety of

areas including safety and security. Once in-country, use the tools and information shared with you to remain as safe and secure as possible.

What if you become a victim of a violent crime?

Few Peace Corps Volunteers are victims of violent crimes. The Peace Corps will give you information and training in how to be safe. But, just as in the U.S., crime happens, and Volunteers can become victims. When this happens, the investigative team of the Office of Inspector General (OIG) is charged with helping pursue prosecution of those who perpetrate a violent crime against a Volunteer. If you become a victim of a violent crime, the decision to prosecute or not to prosecute is entirely yours, and one of the tasks of the OIG is to make sure that you are fully informed of your options and help you through the process and procedures involved in going forward with prosecution should you wish to do so. If you decide to prosecute, we are here to assist you in every way we can.

Crimes that occur overseas, of course, are investigated and prosecuted by local authorities in local courts. Our role is to coordinate the investigation and evidence collection with the regional security officers (RSOs) at the U.S. embassy, local police, and local prosecutors and others to ensure that your rights are protected to the fullest extent possible under the laws of the country. OIG investigative staff has extensive experience in criminal investigation, in working sensitively with victims, and as advocates for victims. We also, may, in certain limited circumstances, arrange for the retention of a local lawyer to assist the local public prosecutor in making the case against the individual who perpetrated the violent crime.

If you do become a victim of a violent crime, first, make sure you are in a safe place and with people you trust and second, contact the country director or the Peace Corps medical officer. Immediate reporting is important to the preservation

of evidence and the chances of apprehending the suspect. Country directors and medical officers are required to report all violent crimes to the Inspector General and the RSO. This information is protected from unauthorized further disclosure by the Privacy Act. Reporting the crime also helps prevent your further victimization and protects your fellow Volunteers.

In conjunction with the RSO, the OIG does a preliminary investigation of all violent crimes against Volunteers regardless of whether the crime has been reported to local authorities or of the decision you may ultimately make to prosecute. If you are a victim of a crime, our staff will work with you through final disposition of the case. OIG staff is available 24 hours-a-day, 7 days-a-week. We may be contacted through our 24-hour violent crime hotline via telephone at 202.692.2911, or by e-mail at violentcrimeline@peacecorps.gov.

Security Issues in Vanuatu

When it comes to your safety and security in the Peace Corps, you have to be willing to adapt your behavior and lifestyle to minimize the potential for being a target for crime. As with anywhere in the world, crime does exist in Vanuatu. You can reduce your risk by avoiding situations that make you feel uncomfortable and by taking the precautions taught during pre-service training. Crime at the village or town level is less frequent than in the large cities; people know each other and generally will not steal from their neighbors. On the other hand, tourist attractions in large towns are favorite sites for pickpockets.

Although violent crime is not commonplace, there have been cases of crimes against Volunteers. Criminal activity largely entails stealing, though there have been incidences of attempted assault, and aggravated assault toward foreigners.

Staying Safe: Don't Be a Target for Crime

You must be prepared to take on a large degree of responsibility for your own safety. Only you can make yourself less of a target, ensure that your home is secure, and develop relationships in your community that will make you an unlikely victim of crime. In coming to Vanuatu, do what you would do if you moved to a new city in the United States: be cautious, check things out, ask questions, learn about your neighborhood, know where the more risky locations are, use common sense, and be aware. You can reduce your vulnerability to crime by integrating into your community, learning the local language, acting responsibly, and abiding by Peace Corps' policies and procedures. Serving safely and effectively in Vanuatu may require that you accept some restrictions on your current lifestyle.

Volunteers attract a lot of attention both in large cities and at their sites, but they are likely to receive more negative attention in highly populated centers than at their sites, where "family," friends, and colleagues look out for them. While whistles and exclamations are fairly common on the street, this behavior can be reduced if you dress conservatively, avoid eye contact, and do not respond to unwanted attention. In addition, keep your money out of sight by using an undergarment money pouch, the kind that hangs around your neck and stays hidden under your shirt or inside your coat. Do not keep your money in outside pockets of backpacks, in coat pockets, or in fanny packs. And always walk with a companion at night.

Preparing for the Unexpected: Safety Training and Volunteer Support in Vanuatu

The Peace Corps' approach to safety is a five-pronged plan to help you stay safe during your two-year service and includes the following: information sharing, Volunteer training, site selection criteria, a detailed emergency action plan, and protocols for reporting and responding to safety and security incidents. Vanuatu's in-country safety program is outlined below.

The Peace Corps/Vanuatu office will keep Volunteers apprised of any issues that may impact Volunteer safety through **information sharing**. Regular updates are provided in Volunteer newsletters and in memorandums from the country director. In the event of a critical situation or emergency, Volunteers will be contacted through the emergency communication network, using telephones, satellite phones and two-way radios.

Volunteer training includes sessions on specific safety and security issues in Vanuatu. This training will prepare you to adopt a culturally appropriate lifestyle and exercise judgment that promotes safety and reduces risk in your home, at work, and while traveling. Safety training is offered throughout service and is integrated into the language, cross-cultural, health, and other components of training.

Certain **site selection criteria** are used to determine safe housing for Volunteers before their arrival. The Peace Corps staff works closely with host communities and counterpart agencies to help prepare them for a Volunteer's arrival and to establish expectations of their respective roles in supporting the Volunteer. Each site is inspected before the Volunteer's arrival to ensure placement in appropriate, safe, and secure housing and work sites. Site selection is based in part on any relevant site history; access to medical, banking, postal,

and other essential services; availability of communications, transportation, and markets; different housing options and living arrangements; and other Volunteer support needs.

You will also learn about Peace Corps/Vanuatu's detailed **emergency action plan** (EAP), which is implemented in the event of civil or political unrest or a natural disaster. When you arrive at your site, you will complete and submit a site locator form with your address, contact information, and a map to your house. If there is a security threat, Volunteers will gather with other Volunteers at a predetermined location until the situation is resolved or the Peace Corps decides to evacuate.

Finally, in order for the Peace Corps to be fully responsive to the needs of Volunteers, it is imperative that Volunteers **immediately report** any security incident to the Peace Corps medical officer. The Peace Corps has established **protocols for addressing safety and security incidents** in a timely and appropriate manner, and it collects and evaluates safety and security data to track trends and develop strategies to minimize risks to current and future Volunteers.



DIVERSITY AND CROSS-CULTURAL ISSUES



In fulfilling its mandate to share the face of America with host countries, the Peace Corps is making special efforts to see that all of America's richness is reflected in the Volunteer corps. More Americans of color are serving in today's Peace Corps than at any time in recent years. Differences in race, ethnic background, age, religion, and sexual orientation are expected and welcomed among our Volunteers. Part of the Peace Corps' mission is to help dispel the notion that Americans are all of one origin or race and to establish that each of us is as thoroughly American as the other despite our many differences.

Our diversity helps us accomplish that goal. In other ways, however, it poses challenges. In Vanuatu, as in other Peace Corps host countries, Volunteers' behavior, lifestyle, background, and beliefs are judged in a cultural context very different from their own. Certain personal perspectives or characteristics commonly accepted in the United States may be quite uncommon, unacceptable, or even repressed in Vanuatu.

Outside of Vanuatu's capital, residents of rural communities have had relatively little direct exposure to other cultures, races, religions, and lifestyles. What people view as typical American behavior or norms may be a misconception, such as the belief that all Americans are rich and have blond hair and blue eyes. The people of Vanuatu are justly known for their generous hospitality to foreigners; however, members of the community in which you will live may display a range of reactions to cultural differences that you present.

To ease the transition and adapt to life in Vanuatu, you may need to make some temporary, yet fundamental compromises in how you present yourself as an American and as an individual. For example, female trainees and Volunteers may not be able to exercise the independence they had in the United States; political discussions need to be handled with great care; and some of your personal beliefs may best remain undisclosed. You will need to develop techniques and personal strategies for coping with these and other limitations. The Peace Corps staff will lead diversity and sensitivity discussions during pre-service training and will be on call to provide support, but the challenge ultimately will be your own.

Overview of Diversity in Vanuatu

The Peace Corps staff in Vanuatu recognizes the adjustment issues that come with diversity and will endeavor to provide support and guidance. During pre-service training, several sessions will be held to discuss diversity and coping mechanisms. We look forward to having male and female Volunteers from a variety of races, ethnic groups, ages, religions, and sexual orientations, and hope that you will become part of a diverse group of Americans who take pride in supporting one another and demonstrating the richness of American culture.

What Might a Volunteer Face?

Possible Issues for Female Volunteers

Female Volunteers generally face challenges in adapting to and understanding the role of women in Vanuatu, who may appear to be treated as “second-class citizens” or “property.” Though Ni-Vanuatu women can hold positions of authority, this does not occur to the same extent as in the United States. Female Volunteers need to understand that their communities

may have little experience with women, particularly young women, who have professional roles or live independently of their families and thus may expect them to conform to more traditional roles.

Besides receiving more unwanted and inappropriate attention from Ni-Vanuatu men than they get from American men, female Volunteers may also have to work harder than male Volunteers to gain the respect of colleagues in the workplace. The Peace Corps encourages female Volunteers to keep a low social profile and practice discretion in public (e.g., not smoking in public or drinking in bars) to avoid developing an undesirable reputation. You will receive support from the Peace Corps in dealing effectively with these issues.

Possible Issues for Volunteers of Color

Volunteers of color may face special challenges in Vanuatu. While unlikely, you may be the only minority trainee or Volunteer within the Volunteer corps or a particular project. You may not receive necessary personal support from other Volunteers, and there may be no minority members on the Peace Corps/Vanuatu staff to serve as role models.

Once you move to your site, you may work and live with individuals who have no experience or understanding of a non-Caucasian-American culture. Out of ignorance or because of Vanuatu's current or historical involvement with other countries, you may encounter stereotyped cultural perceptions. You may not be perceived as being American, or you may be viewed as less professionally competent than a white Volunteer. You need to be prepared for staring, pointing, and comments in any community in which you are not known. Finally, while very uncommon, you should be prepared to hear derogatory terms or racial epithets that would be considered completely inappropriate in the United States.

Possible Issues for Senior Volunteers

During training and at their sites, senior Volunteers may face challenges solely due to age. Because the majority of Volunteers are in their 20s, you may work and live with individuals in the Peace Corps community who have little understanding of, or respect for, the lives and experiences of senior Americans. You may not feel that staff members give you sufficient personal support, or you may be reluctant to share personal, sexual, or health concerns with the staff. You may find that younger Volunteers look to you for advice and support. While some seniors find this a very enjoyable part of their Volunteer experience, others choose not to fill this role.

Training presents its own special challenges. Older trainees may encounter a lack of attention to their specific needs for an effective learning environment. You may need to be assertive in developing an effective individual approach to language learning.

There are also benefits to being older, as respect comes with age in Vanuatu. A younger Volunteer is likely to have to work much harder than an older colleague to be accepted as a professional.

Possible Issues for Gay, Lesbian, or Bisexual Volunteers

Vanuatu is conservative by U.S. standards, and homosexual acts are against the law. Because of this, Volunteers who are gay, lesbian, or bisexual have not been able to be open about their sexual orientation. It is advisable to use discretion and common sense before disclosing your sexual orientation to Ni-Vanuatu colleagues and community members.

Homosexuals certainly exist in Vanuatu, but not with the same level of acceptance as there is in the United States. Most homosexuals in Vanuatu have probably migrated to the larger cities, while most Volunteers are posted in smaller

communities. Styles of hair, earrings on men, and certain clothing viewed as acceptable in the United States may be considered inappropriate in Vanuatu.

The Peace Corps staff maintains a supportive atmosphere for all Volunteers and will address the concerns of gay, lesbian, and bisexual Volunteers in a sensitive manner.

Possible Religious Issues for Volunteers

Ni-Vanuatu frequently ask Volunteers about their religious affiliation and may invite them to attend a community church. Volunteers not in the practice of attending church may be challenged to explain their reluctance, but it is possible to politely decline if the church or religion is not one of their choices. However, church-going is as much of a social obligation as it is religious, and usually a generous community meal is served afterwards. Ultimately, most Volunteers find effective ways to cope with these issues and come to feel quite at home in Vanuatu.

Possible Issues for Volunteers With Disabilities

In Vanuatu, as in other parts of the world, some people may hold prejudicial attitudes toward individuals with disabilities and may discriminate against them. In addition, there is very little infrastructure that can accommodate people with disabilities.

As part of the medical clearance process, the Peace Corps Office of Medical Services determined that you were physically and emotionally capable, with or without reasonable accommodations, of performing a full tour of Volunteer service in Vanuatu without unreasonable risk of harm to yourself or interruption of your service. The Peace Corps/Vanuatu staff will work with disabled Volunteers to make reasonable accommodations for them in training, housing, job sites, or other areas to enable them to serve safely and effectively.

Possible Issues for Married Volunteers

Being a married couple in the Peace Corps has its advantages and challenges. It helps to have someone by your side to share your experience with, but there are also cultural expectations that can cause stress in a marriage. The most important thing to remember is that you are in a foreign country with new rules. As long as you remain open-minded you will have a successful service. The possible issues listed below will also depend on the size of the community you will be living in. Sometimes, one spouse may be more enthusiastic about joining Peace Corps; be better able to adapt to the new physical and/or cultural environment; or be less or more homesick than the other.

Your roles may be different in a new culture. A married man may be encouraged to be the more dominant member in the relationship or to make decisions independent of his spouse's views or to have his wife serve him. He also may be ridiculed if he performs domestic tasks. On the other hand, a married woman may find herself in a less independent role than that to which she is accustomed. She may experience a more limited social life in the community than single Volunteers (since it may be assumed that she will be busy taking care of her husband). She may also be expected to perform "traditional" domestic chores such as cooking or cleaning.

Other possible issues for married Volunteers include the following:

- Competition may cause difficulties; one spouse may learn faster than the other (e.g., language skills, job skills).
- There may be differences in job satisfaction and/or different needs.
- Younger Volunteers may look to couples for advice and support.
- Married couples are likely to be treated with more respect because the community sees marriage as a responsibility.
- You may be asked why you do not have children.

NOTES



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



How much luggage am I allowed to bring to Vanuatu?

Most airlines have baggage size and weight limits and assess charges for transport of baggage that exceeds those limits. (Check with your airline's website for the latest information.) The Peace Corps has its own size and weight limits and will not pay the cost of transport for baggage that exceeds these limits. The authorized baggage allowance is two checked pieces of luggage with combined dimensions of both pieces not to exceed 107 inches (length + width + height) and a carry-on bag with dimensions of no more than 45 inches. Checked baggage should not exceed 80 pounds total (although you can usually get away with more) with a maximum weight allowance of 70 pounds for any one bag.

Peace Corps Volunteers are not allowed to take pets, weapons, explosives, radio transmitters (shortwave radios are permitted), automobiles, or motorcycles to their overseas assignments. Do not pack flammable materials or liquids such as lighter fluid, cleaning solvents, hair spray, or aerosol containers. This is an important safety precaution. Please check the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) website for a detailed list of permitted and prohibited items at <http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/airtravel/prohibited/permitted-prohibited-items.shtm>.

What is the electric current in Vanuatu?

Vanuatu uses 220-volt current and three-prong "Australian" plugs. Port Vila, Luganville, Lenakel, Isangel, and Norsup are the only areas with central electricity. Inexpensive converter plugs are available in Vanuatu.

How much money should I bring?

Volunteers are expected to live at the same modest level as the people in their community. They are given a settling-in allowance and a monthly living allowance, which should cover their expenses. Often Volunteers wish to bring additional money for vacation travel to other countries. Credit and debit cards and traveler's checks are preferable to cash. There are ATMs that accept Visa and debit cards in the downtown areas of Port Vila and Luganville. If you bring extra money, bring the amount that will suit your own travel plans and needs. The currency exchange rate for the Vanuatu currency, the vatu, can be found at <http://finance.yahoo.com/>.

When can I take vacation and have people visit me?

Each Volunteer accrues two vacation days per month of service (excluding training). Leave may not be taken during training, the first three months of service, or the last three months of service, except in conjunction with an authorized emergency leave. Family and friends are welcome to visit you after you complete your pre-service training and have been a Volunteer for six months; guests are welcome to stay for up to 30 days. However, it is important to realize that such visits can be stressful when you are adapting to your assignment and a new lifestyle. You may want to advise visitors to wait until after you have completed your first year of service. The Peace Corps cannot provide your visitors with visa, medical, or travel assistance; or access to computers and Internet service.

Will my belongings be covered by insurance?

The Peace Corps does not provide insurance coverage for personal effects; Volunteers are ultimately responsible for the safekeeping of their personal belongings. However, you can purchase insurance before you leave. If you wish, you may contact your own insurance company; additionally insurance application forms will be provided to you, and we encourage

you to consider all options carefully. Volunteers should not take valuable items overseas. Jewelry, watches, radios, cameras, laptop computers, and expensive appliances are subject to loss, theft, and breakage.

Do I need an international driver's license?

Volunteers in Vanuatu do not need an international driver's license because they are prohibited from operating privately owned motorized vehicles and Peace Corps vehicles. Most urban travel is by bus or taxi. Rural travel ranges from trucks to lots of walking. On very rare occasions, a Volunteer may be asked to drive a sponsor's vehicle, but this can occur only with prior written permission of the country director. However, you do need a valid U.S. driver's license to rent cars in other countries while on vacation, so you may want to bring one.

What should I bring as gifts for Ni-Vanuatu friends and my host family?

This is not a requirement. A token of friendship is sufficient. Some gift suggestions include knickknacks for the house; pictures, books, or calendars of American scenes; souvenirs and caps from your area; hard candies that will not melt or spoil; or photos to give to your host pre-service training family and community members.

Where will my site assignment be when I finish training and how isolated will I be?

Peace Corps trainees are not assigned to individual sites until they have completed pre-service training. This gives Peace Corps staff the opportunity to assess each trainee's technical and language skills prior to assigning sites, in addition to finalizing site selections with host country counterparts. You will have the opportunity to provide input on your site preferences, including geographical location, distance from

other Volunteers, and living conditions. However, many factors influence the site selection process and the Peace Corps cannot guarantee placement where you would ideally like to be. Most Volunteers live in small towns or rural villages.

How can my family contact me in an emergency?

The Peace Corps' Office of Special Services provides assistance in handling emergencies affecting trainees and Volunteers or their families. Before leaving the United States, instruct your family to notify the Office of Special Services immediately if an emergency arises, such as a serious illness or death of a family member. During normal business hours, the number for the Office of Special Services is 800.424.8580, extension 1470. After normal business hours and on weekends and holidays, the Office of Special Services duty officer can be reached at 202.638.2574. In non-emergency questions, your family can get information from your country desk staff at the Peace Corps by calling 1.800.424.8580.

Can I call home from Vanuatu?

Many improvements were made to Vanuatu's telephone system in 2002. As a result, local and international calls can be placed from most islands, as well as from Port Vila and Luganville. Therefore, you should be able to call home during training if you wish. To do so, you must first purchase a calling card, available at Vanuatu Telecom offices and in many shops. Although Vanuatu's phone system is reliable, most of the islands rely on solar energy and storage batteries; hence, during prolonged periods of cloudy weather, telephones may temporarily go out of service. However, Peace Corps/ Vanuatu has strategically placed radios and satellite phones, so temporary phone outages should not cause any major communication difficulties.

Should I bring a cellular phone with me?

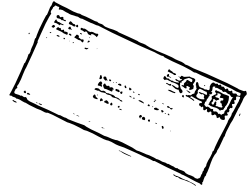
Cellular phone service is currently available only in a few urban areas. However, if you bring a cellphone from the United States, you will need to buy a SIM card (approximately \$50) locally to be able to use it.

Will there be e-mail and Internet access? Should I bring my computer?

There is a reliable e-mail and Internet access at the Peace Corps office and at Internet cafes in Port Vila and Luganville. Some agencies to which Volunteers are assigned also have Internet access. Some Volunteers bring laptops and access the Internet on their own. Be advised, however, that most Volunteers are assigned to sites that lack regular electric power. If you bring a laptop, you may want to purchase a solar panel with the appropriate adapter to recharge the laptop's battery.



WELCOME LETTERS FROM VANUATU VOLUNTEERS



As an agricultural and environmental conservation and awareness volunteer on the small island of Paama, I am focused on helping the people throughout the island community to sustainably manage and utilize their environment. I have several projects that I am currently working on with the community including; helping to set up agroforestry demonstration plots, starting a local market house to provide people with an income generating opportunity, assisting women to begin to grow pepper plants, encouraging people to make tree nurseries, and to find a way to improve waste disposal and clean up a potential environmental hazard. I have been at this site for about two months. I am still in the process of feeling out the whole situation and developing an understanding of the people and culture of the island. Much of my time is spent simply living and intermingling with the people of my community in order to gain their respect so that we can move forward together. The views from “my island” are spectacular and the people are super friendly here!

—Christie Thompson, Environmental Conservation Volunteer,
Liro, Paama Island

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Despite the demand for eggs on my island, no one was producing any for sale. All of the eggs to be found in the village stores were shipped in from the main island, and were therefore relatively expensive and sometimes rotten upon arrival. When I asked villagers why no one had started a local poultry farm, the two reasons given were 1.) lack of money, and 2.) lack of knowledge. My village counterpart and I decided to address both of these problems through our Poultry Feed Research Project.

The primary objective of the project is to identify a combination of local crops that can serve as a good feed for layer hens. This is done by running controlled experiments with hens to determine which feed crops support high levels of egg production. If local crops can be used as feed, then potential poultry farmers can rely on their own land and labor to sustain their flock, rather than depend upon commercially available feeds that must be shipped in from elsewhere. This drastically reduces the cost of running a poultry operation on the one hand, and protects the farmers from the uncertainties of inter-island shipping on the other.

The secondary objective of the project is to establish a “model” poultry farm. The project is located in a highly visible location, and community members, as well as visitors to the community, are able to observe for themselves how a successful poultry farm is managed. Seeing how the project works has aroused much interest among people from my village and from neighboring villages, and many people have requested that I help them learn the basics. To that end, I will be running a 4-day workshop on poultry farming in the next few months.

Through the establishment and management of this project, my counterpart and I have learned much about running a poultry farm, and we are continually sharing this knowledge with others who are interested. And now that the hens have started laying, we can begin collecting data on what kinds of local crops are best for feeding a flock of layer hens. Finally, the most tangible benefit of the project is that people in my community now have a reliable, cheap, and fresh source of eggs. The project is still in its early stages, but because of the protein source it provides and the interest it has aroused in local agri-business potential, I consider it a success.

—John Wheatley, Small Business Development Volunteer,
Lolowai, Ambae, Vanuatu

At my Rural Training Center, a vocational-type school, I teach small business, a basic math course and home care. Earlier this year the school's construction students had the project of building a cement bread oven. Upon it's completion the home care students fired it up for the first time and each made a loaf of bread, which were to be sold in the student run school store (after tasting one, of course).

While the bread was baking we sat down in the classroom and determined the cost of making each individual loaf, using fraction skills that we had been working on in math class. I continually stress to my students that price needs to not be an arbitrary figure, it needs to reflect your expenses and so you need to know what they are.

The students decided to bake bread twice a week and to post notices at different locations so that our potential customers would be aware of this new product. We had made bread four or five times when Peace Corps asked me to leave site for a meeting. When I asked my students if they wanted to continue to make bread while I was gone and they said yes, saying that since they had already posted signs saying there would be bread that they wanted to stick to it. This really pleased me since we had talked about consistency and reliability being important in business. At the same time though I was not entirely confident that they had mastered the skill since I usually had to provide a little prompting and reminding. They were enthusiastic, so I left my husband a list of materials to have out for them and gave him a run down on the bread making process in case they needed to ask him questions.

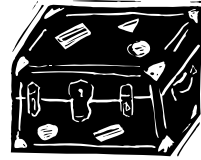
I called home in the middle of the week and was really pleased to hear that my students had made the bread without any problems and had even gone the extra mile to post extra signs near the local primary school as extra marketing.

I have been very proud of my students on this project, start to finish. I feel like each of them has truly mastered the skills necessary to start and continue something like this on their own in the future.

—Sarah Reedy, Napil RTC, Tanna
Peace Corps - Vanuatu



PACKING LIST



This list has been compiled by Volunteers serving in Vanuatu and is based on their experience. Another packing list, with more detail and explanation, is located on the website at <http://www.peacecorps.gov.vu/list.html>. Use these as informal guides in making your own list, bearing in mind that experience is individual. There is no perfect list! You obviously cannot bring everything on the list, so consider those items that make the most sense to you personally and professionally. You can always have things sent to you later. As you decide what to bring, keep in mind that you have an 80-pound weight limit on baggage. And remember, you can get almost everything you need in Vanuatu or through Internet purchases.

General Clothing

(Note that Port Vila has a large used-clothing market, and most clothing is available locally.)

- At least five light-weight T-shirts or other casual durable shirts
- At least two semi-formal shirts (polo-type, etc.)
- One formal shirt (button-down type)
- Cool, baggy long-sleeved shirt for nighttime wear and mosquito protection
- One sweatshirt for winter
- Two-week supply of socks (including short ones)
- Two-week supply of underwear (cotton is recommended)
- Belts (nylon not leather)
- Two or three swimsuits

- Rain gear (suitable for hot weather, which is Vanuatu's rainy season)
- Hats (not caps) for sun protection
- Lightweight, breathable windbreaker or jacket
- Two pair of lightweight, quick-drying pants (pants that are zipper-convertible to shorts are recommended)

For Men

- One or two pairs of lightweight dress pants
- One to three pairs of lightweight casual pants
- Five to seven pair of shorts

For Women

- Additional loose short-sleeved or sleeveless blouses (no thin-strap or strapless tank tops)
- One or two pairs of casual pants
- Two or three pairs of knee-length or longer shorts
- Three to five lightweight casual skirts (loose, calf-length, and comfortable)
- Three to five casual dresses
- Three to five sports bras

Shoes

(Flip-flops are available locally, but all other good-quality shoes are difficult to find in Port Vila.)

- One pair of running or athletic/sport shoes
- One pair of hiking boots or sturdy walking shoes
- Flip-flops, aqua socks, or reef shoes (for the water)
- Two pairs of good sandals for hiking (strap-on type is best)

Personal Hygiene and Toiletry Items

(Many familiar brands of shampoo and other toiletries are available in the duty-free and tourist shops of Port Vila.)

- Start-up supply of toiletries (e.g., shampoo, deodorant, tampons, etc.)
- Start-up supply of non-prescription medicines
- Three-month supply of prescription drugs
- Two pairs of prescription eyeglasses (if applicable)
- Two bath towels (fast-drying), one beach towel, and one hand towel
- One set of sturdy cotton sheets with pillow case
- Good pillow (foam pillows are available locally)

Kitchen

You can easily buy most kitchen supplies in Port Vila (i.e., dishes, pots, glasses, and utensils). However, there are a few items we recommend bringing:

- Plastic storage bags (zip-lock, freezer bags, sandwich bags)
- Good can opener
- Favorite spices (many are available locally, but they are expensive)
- Favorite cookbook
- Measuring cups and spoons (metric ones are available locally)
- Rubber spatula
- Good-quality paring knife
- Coffee press
- Garlic press

Miscellaneous

- Sturdy waterproof backpack or duffel bag for three- to four-day trips
- Day pack or small backpack
- Fanny pack or money belt
- Inexpensive water-resistant/waterproof watch
- Small travel alarm clock
- Extra batteries, including special-sized ones (e.g., camera, watch, computer, etc.)
- Ear plugs
- Two pairs of good-quality sunglasses
- Swiss army knife or Leatherman multi-tool
- Camera with extra film and batteries (many Volunteers use digital cameras with good results; be sure to bring rechargeable batteries with a small solar charger, as well as extra memory cards).
- CD player and speakers, or battery-operated radio/cassette player
- Shortwave radio
- Good-quality water bottle (hiker or biker type such as Nalgene)
- Headlamp or flashlight (and extra batteries)
- A few U.S. dollars or coins
- Sewing kit and good scissors
- Start-up supply of stationary, pens, and waterproof markers
- World and U.S. maps
- Photos of family, friends, and home
- Deck of cards, or other travel games
- U.S. stamps (for sending letters with friends traveling back to the United States)

- Camping-type solar shower for hot showers (available at camping goods stores)
- Battery-operated reading light.
- Face mask, snorkel, and fins (if you like snorkeling)
- Books for pleasure reading and reference for your job. (Peace Corps/Vanuatu has a good selection of paperbacks and technical materials; otherwise, English language books are not generally available)
- Good tweezers and hair-trimming scissors
- USB or Zip drives
- Silica for keeping stored possessions dry in a wet climate (go to zorbit.com for more info)



PRE-DEPARTURE CHECKLIST



The following list consists of suggestions for you to consider as you prepare to live outside the United States for two years. Not all items will be relevant to everyone, and the list does not include everything you should arrange for.

Family

- Notify family that they can call the Peace Corps' Office of Special Services at any time if there is a critical illness or death of a family member (telephone number: 800.424.8580, extension 1470; after-hours duty officer: 202.638.2574).
- Give the Peace Corps' *On the Home Front* handbook to family and friends.

Passport/Travel

- Forward to the Peace Corps travel office all paperwork for the Peace Corps passport and visas.
- Verify that luggage meets the size and weight limits for international travel.
- Obtain a personal passport if you plan to travel after your service ends. (Your Peace Corps passport will expire three months after you finish your service, so if you plan to travel longer, you will need a regular passport.)

Medical/Health

- Complete any needed dental and medical work.
- If you wear glasses, bring two pairs.
- Arrange to bring a three-month supply of all medications (including birth control pills) you are currently taking.

Insurance

- Make arrangements to maintain life insurance coverage.
- Arrange to maintain supplemental health coverage while you are away. (Even though the Peace Corps is responsible for your health care during Peace Corps service overseas, it is advisable for people who have preexisting conditions to arrange for the continuation of their supplemental health coverage. If there is a lapse in coverage, it is often difficult and expensive to be reinstated.)
- Arrange to continue Medicare coverage if applicable.

Personal Papers

- Bring a copy of your certificate of marriage or divorce.

Voting

- Register to vote in the state of your home of record. (Many state universities consider voting and payment of state taxes as evidence of residence in that state.)
- Obtain a voter registration card and take it with you overseas.
- Arrange to have an absentee ballot forwarded to you overseas.

Personal Effects

- Purchase personal property insurance to extend from the time you leave your home for service overseas until the time you complete your service and return to the United States.

Financial Management

- Obtain student loan deferment forms from the lender or loan service.
- Execute a power of attorney for the management of your property and business.
- Arrange for deductions from your readjustment allowance to pay alimony, child support, and other debts through the Office of Volunteer Financial Operations at 800.424.8580, extension 1770.
- Place all important papers—mortgages, deeds, stocks, and bonds—in a safe deposit box or with an attorney or other caretaker.



CONTACTING PEACE CORPS HEADQUARTERS



The following list of numbers will help you contact the appropriate office at Peace Corps headquarters with various questions. You may use the toll-free number and extension or dial directly using the local numbers provided. Be sure to leave the Peace Corps toll-free number and extensions with your family so they have them in the event of an emergency during your service overseas.

Peace Corps Headquarters

Toll-free Number:

800.424.8580, Press 2, then
Ext. # (see below)

Peace Corps' Mailing Address:

Peace Corps
Paul D. Coverdell Peace Corps Headquarters
1111 20th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20526

For Questions About:	Staff	Toll-free Extension	Direct/ Local Number
Responding to an Invitation	Office of Placement Inter-America and Pacific	Ext. 1835	202.692.1835
Programming or Country Information	Leah Tafara-Maddox Desk Officer E-mail: ltafaramaddox@peacecorps.gov	Ext. 2522	202.692.2522
	Nathan Eberhardt Desk Assistant E-mail: rreese@peacecorps.gov	Ext. 2523	202.692-2523

For Questions About:	Staff	Toll-free Extension	Direct/ Local Number
Plane Tickets, Passports, Visas, or Other Travel Matters	Travel Officer (Sato Travel)	Ext. 1170	202.692.1170
Legal Clearance	Office of Placement	Ext. 1845	202.692.1845
Medical Clearance and Forms Processing (including dental)	Screening Nurse	Ext. 1500	202.692.1500
Medical Reimbursements	Handled by a Subcontractor		800.818.8772
Loan Deferments, Taxes, Readjustment Allowance Withdrawals, Power of Attorney	Volunteer Financial Operations	Ext. 1770	202.692.1770
Staging (Pre-departure Orientation) and Reporting Instructions <i>Note: You will receive comprehensive information (hotel and flight arrangements) three to five weeks before departure. This information is not available sooner.</i>	Office of Staging	Ext. 1865	202.692.1865
Family Emergencies (to get information to a Volunteer overseas)	Office of Special Services	Ext. 1470	202.692.1470 9-5 EST 202.638.2574 (after-hours answering service)

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