

# PEACE CORPS Office *of* Inspector General



## Evaluation of Peace Corps/Guyana

IG-25-01-E

March 2025

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## ABOUT THIS REPORT

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### ***WHY OIG CONDUCTED THIS REVIEW***

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On February 8, 2024, the Office of Inspector General (OIG) announced its evaluation of Peace Corps/Guyana (hereafter referred to as “the post”) to assess the agency’s effectiveness in meeting its objectives related to Volunteer health and safety, project activities, Volunteer training and support, and post leadership. Evaluations are a key tool in helping OIG fulfill its mission to provide independent oversight of Peace Corps operations and programs. Specifically, Post evaluations address program efficiency and effectiveness, identify best practices, and recommend improvements to help the Peace Corps better achieve its mission: to promote world peace and friendship through community-based development and cross-cultural understanding.

### ***HOW OIG CONDUCTED THIS REVIEW***

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The scope of this evaluation extended to the post’s programs, operations, and activities from October 2021 to May 2024. OIG evaluation activities included Volunteer and post staff surveys, interviews, document collection and analysis, and in-person observations. Evaluators performed on-site work at the post from April 13 to May 3, 2024, by closely collaborating with post leadership and staff to learn more about past and present operations.

OIG’s post evaluations are unique because evaluators gather Volunteers’ first-hand perspectives in the field. During this review, OIG traveled to Volunteers’ homes and work sites for in-person observations and interviews. The Peace Corps mission is made possible by the Volunteers, and through its oversight, OIG remains committed to supporting their overall safety, well-being, and success.

The Inspector General accompanied the evaluators to the post for a portion of this site visit and met with post leadership, staff, and Volunteers. The evaluation team experienced effective collaboration and communication with the Country Director (CD) and all parties that OIG interacted with throughout the visit. The team greatly appreciates the CD and all post staff, Volunteers, headquarters staff, and other stakeholders for their assistance and cooperation during this evaluation.



**Image 1: Inspector General Joaquin Ferrao with a Peace Corps Volunteer and her host family**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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### WHAT OIG FOUND

While the evaluation revealed several opportunities for post improvement, OIG found that some existing challenges stem from prior practices, and current post leadership is working to address these issues, as noted in this report.

OIG determined that the goals and objectives of the post's project activities were impactful and aligned with host country priorities and needs. The post reported it had made progress in meeting Volunteer project targets, and Volunteers believed they were making a difference in their communities. For example, Volunteers reported having success in classroom environments by generating excitement about learning and stimulating student curiosity. However, while the post received adequately trained and qualified Volunteers, OIG found that over the past 3 years the post received fewer Volunteers than it had requested—an agency-wide challenge that has impacted many Peace Corps Posts.

OIG found that the post was not in compliance with its procedures for assessing Volunteer work assignments, and Volunteer counterparts were often unprepared to successfully fulfill their roles due to high turnover.<sup>1</sup> For example, OIG's work revealed that untrained counterparts did not understand their responsibilities and failed to show up for key project activities, which led to Volunteers falling short of their project goals.

Additionally, while staff successfully met post standards for visiting Volunteers, OIG found that staff did not meet the requirements for uploading their site visit documentation into the Peace Corps database or documenting feedback on Volunteers' quarterly project reports. For example, staff documented their feedback on less than half of the quarterly reports OIG sampled, resulting in a lack of guidance for many Volunteers who needed to adjust or improve their planned activities.

OIG found that overall, the post's Volunteer safety and security program was compliant with agency requirements and highly regarded by Volunteers. The Volunteers who responded to an OIG survey highlighted the safety and security team as one of the post's strengths, and Volunteers who were interviewed said post safety and security training enabled them to lower their risk of experiencing security problems during their service. Conversely, some Volunteers reported that they did not feel sufficiently informed about protecting themselves from bush fires and smoke. In addition, while most of the sites OIG visited met post housing criteria, some Volunteer homes had improperly placed propane tanks, which pose a serious safety risk.

The post's Volunteer health program complied with agency requirements and was also highly regarded by Volunteers. Specifically, Volunteers told OIG they were successful in staying healthy at their sites. Moreover, there have not been any Volunteer complaints submitted to the

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<sup>1</sup> Counterparts are community partners who are aware of the local environment, culture, and history, and provide guidance and assistance to Volunteers' project activities. Counterparts may be professional colleagues, members of organizations, or community members that connect Volunteers with their networks to fulfill the capacity-building aspect of their work. (T0121, Working with Supervisors and Counterparts, November 2013)

Quality Nurse about the post's health unit since 2022. Peace Corps headquarters had also reviewed the Peace Corps/Guyana health unit in 2023, and post staff successfully closed all recommendations associated with this review by March 2024.

Finally, this evaluation revealed that post leadership effectively supported Volunteers and staff by providing the required training and adequate resources, among other positive activities. However, through interviews, OIG learned that there was a decline in staff morale, and that the post could benefit from focusing on these issues.

Current post leadership created an environment to openly discuss these concerns and identify agreed-upon strategies at a staff retreat in October 2024, a positive step in addressing potential issues. The CD demonstrated an understanding of existing challenges, a willingness to acknowledge where improvements are needed, and a commitment to sustaining a positive work environment with a culture of accountability. OIG encourages post leadership to continue to maintain its focus on staff morale and sustain its overall effective support for Volunteers and staff.

### **WHAT OIG RECOMMENDS**

This report contains nine recommendations: four related to improving Volunteer site and project support documentation; one focused on ensuring counterparts are adequately prepared to support Volunteers; and four concerning Volunteer health and safety risks associated with bush fires and propane gas use in homes. For the full list of recommendations, see page 15 of this report.

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## COUNTRY BACKGROUND - GUYANA

Guyana is the only country in South America with English as the official language. It is located 5 degrees north of the Equator and has a warm and tropical climate throughout the year. Guyana has a combined Caribbean culture on the coast, featuring a mixture of Afro- and Indo-Guyanese influences, with a variety of indigenous cultures in the interior forested hinterland. The majority of its population lives in a long narrow strip along the Atlantic Ocean stretching from Venezuela to Suriname. The open savannah and forests in the interior of Guyana are dotted with small indigenous communities, some of which still preserve their own language.



**Table 1: Overview of Guyana**

Overview of Guyana	
Population	826,353
Language	English
Economy	GDP Per Capita: \$20,765.4 Unemployment: 12.4%
Health	Life Expectancy: 66 years
Human Development Index	Rank 105, 0.742, "High"
Education	Expected years of schooling: 13 years

*Table data from World Bank Group and United Nations Development Programme as of 2022 – 2023.*

## POST BACKGROUND - GUYANA

**Table 2: Overview of Peace Corps/Guyana**

Overview of Peace Corps/Guyana	
Dates of Operation	1966-1971; 1995-present
Volunteers (all time)	More than 900
Volunteers at Post	39 Volunteers as of February 2024
Programming Sectors	Environment, Health, and Education
Post Staff Positions	3 USDH, 1 FSN, 25 PSC*
Post Budget	FY 2023: \$1,820,570 USD

\*United States direct hire (USDH); foreign service national (FSN); personal services contractor (PSC)

Peace Corps Volunteers returned to Guyana in September 2022 following the global suspension of Peace Corps operations in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 outbreak. Volunteers in Guyana work on projects in the Education, Health, and Environment sectors. Volunteers in all three sectors work in schools, and health Volunteers also work in healthcare facilities.

- Education Volunteers work with students, teachers, and families to enhance students' literacy skills, build teachers' capacity in promoting literacy in classrooms, and foster opportunities for family and caregiver engagement.
- Health Volunteers work with students, teachers, families, and healthcare workers to enhance youth knowledge and skills to improve their overall well-being and increase the school staffs' and healthcare workers' capacity to provide life-skills education and youth-friendly health services.
- Environment Volunteers work with students, teachers, and communities to equip youth with the knowledge and skills to be environmental stewards; increase teachers' capacity in teaching science and the environment; and manage natural resources to support community resilience to environmental stressors.

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## EVALUATION RESULTS

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### OBJECTIVE 1: WERE THE POST'S PROJECT ACTIVITIES ALIGNED WITH HOST COUNTRY'S NEEDS AND IMPACTFUL?

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OIG addressed this objective by answering the following researchable questions:

1. Were the post's projects focused on host country needs?
2. Were Volunteers meeting key project expectations?

### WHAT OIG FOUND

OIG determined that the post's project activities were impactful and aligned with the host country's needs. Specifically, OIG found that the goals and objectives of the Peace Corps' projects aligned with the Government of Guyana's priorities: to provide an education system that delivers quality education and training at all levels; to provide quality health services and health literacy for adolescents; and to conserve and improve the environment.<sup>2</sup> OIG interviewed representatives from the Guyanese government ministries, and they all agreed that the Peace Corps is appropriately focused on Guyana's needs. The 20 Volunteers OIG interviewed reported that they were working on community-focused projects based on what they had learned from assessments and surveys of local stakeholders, as they were trained to do during pre-service training (PST).<sup>3</sup>

According to the post's FY 2023 Annual Report, Volunteers have made progress in achieving project targets. In addition, OIG found that most Volunteers reported that their project activities were impactful. More than half of the 20 Volunteers interviewed highlighted ways in which they felt they had made a difference when performing on-site work that corresponded with the goals in their sector frameworks. They said the main benefit of their service was working as classroom teachers. Most Volunteers described how they were making a difference by relating to students, generating excitement about learning, and stimulating their curiosity.

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<sup>2</sup> As outlined in the agency's memorandums of understanding with the Office of the President, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Health.

<sup>3</sup> Volunteers are trained on a variety of participatory methods to engage community members and empower them to determine their own assets, needs, priorities, and paths for community action, referred to as Participatory Analysis for Community Action (PACA).



## OBJECTIVE 2: WERE VOLUNTEERS QUALIFIED AND EFFECTIVELY SUPPORTED FOR THEIR PROJECT ACTIVITIES?

OIG addressed this objective by answering the following researchable questions:

1. Did the post provide host communities with qualified and trained Volunteers?
2. Did staff effectively support Volunteer project work?

### WHAT OIG FOUND

While the post successfully provided host communities with adequately trained and qualified Volunteers, OIG found that Peace Corps headquarters did not fill the last three Guyana cohorts with the requested number of Volunteers. In addition, the post did not adequately prepare for Volunteer work assignments or ensure that the participating communities were committed to supporting Peace Corps Volunteers; Volunteer counterparts had a significant turnover rate, necessitating more training for new counterparts.

OIG also found that staff did not meet the documentation requirements for uploading Site Visit Questionnaires<sup>4</sup> into the Volunteer Information Database Application (VIDA) or reporting their feedback on Volunteers' quarterly project reports.

*Volunteers were adequately trained and qualified, but the post did not receive the full cohort of Trainees requested*

Staff at the post and headquarters confirmed that the post received qualified Trainees who met the requirements of Guyana's request for Peace Corps Trainees.<sup>5</sup> In addition, OIG found that Volunteers received adequate training during PST, and most Volunteers interviewed said PST prepared them for their work. Ministry representatives also reported that Volunteers were adequately prepared to perform their work assignments. However, OIG found that for the last 3 years, the post did not receive the number of Trainees it had requested, as detailed in Table 3.

**Table 3: Peace Corps/Guyana Fill Rate by Year**

Peace Corps/Guyana Fill Rate			
Year	Requested Number of Trainees	Number of Trainees Received	Percent Fill
2022	30	22	73%
2023	45	29	64%
2024	45	22	49%

<sup>4</sup> Program staff must complete a Program Site Visit Questionnaire to document their visit with a Volunteer to monitor and address issues related to work assignments. (Peace Corps/Guyana Site Identification and Site Monitoring Standards and Procedures, February 2024)

<sup>5</sup> When Peace Corps Trainees arrive in-country, they attend PST until they are sworn-in as a Peace Corps Volunteer and begin their service.

Receiving underfilled cohorts for 3 consecutive years may have negatively impacted the post's relationships with some host country partners and stakeholders because their expectations were not met. For example, according to post staff, the underfill disappointed homestay families<sup>6</sup> who spent time and resources to meet the Peace Corps' requirements, but did not receive the benefits of hosting a Volunteer. The post's program and training staff told OIG that this disappointment could make it difficult to recruit host families in the future.

Additionally, the post redesigned its technical training for a reduced pool of Trainees. The post had also expended resources for developing sites that were never used due to the low Volunteer numbers. According to the Director of Programming and Training, the post's project objectives were adversely impacted because their targeted number of students and teachers influenced by Volunteers were based on a higher anticipated number of Volunteers.

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**Receiving underfilled cohorts for 3 consecutive years may have negatively impacted the post's relationships with some host country partners and stakeholders because their expectations were not met.**

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According to headquarters staff, the underfills occurred because the Office of Volunteer Recruitment and Selection has experienced challenges in recruiting and retaining applicants, which has impacted many Peace Corps Posts. OIG's ongoing evaluation of the agency's Volunteer Delivery System will further examine these issues and make associated recommendations, as appropriate.

*Volunteer work assignments were not adequately vetted during the site development process to ensure community commitment to hosting a Volunteer*

While reviewing post records, OIG discovered incomplete site selection documentation, including some sites that were not assessed for programmatic fit. Peace Corps Manual Section (MS) 270, Volunteer/Trainee Safety and Security, (herein MS 270) requires Posts to develop and apply criteria for selecting and approving sites that address the Volunteers' primary work assignments.

OIG visited 20 Volunteers living in 18 sites, which were reviewed against the post's site selection criteria to ensure Volunteers have appropriate work sites. OIG found that important criteria were not met at many sites, as shown in Table 4.

**Table 4: Site Selection Criteria Related to Primary Work Assignment**

Site Selection Criteria	Percentage of Sites that Met the Criteria
There is a clearly identified role, sufficient workload, and workspace for the Volunteer.	50%
There is/are available, interested, and committed counterpart/work partner(s) willing to work with and provide support to the Volunteer.	67%

<sup>6</sup> Volunteers live with local families during PST and when they arrive at their sites.

OIG also uncovered incomplete Volunteer request forms, which were missing the required documentation that host communities must submit to affirm their commitment to support their Volunteers. During interviews with Volunteers, OIG learned that some leaders and counterparts were not committed to working with or supporting their Volunteers, or did not understand their Volunteers' roles.

Due to their communities' inadequate support of their work activities or poor understanding of their project roles, Volunteers reported issues such as unreasonable workloads and teaching classes by themselves, which conflicted with their expectations. Project plans indicate Volunteers should support teachers by co-teaching and transferring skills, not independently taking on teaching jobs.

### **OIG recommends:**

1. The Country Director and Director of Programming and Training ensure site development documentation is complete and reflects accurate and appropriate assessments based on the post's site selection criteria.

### *Volunteers' counterparts were often not trained due to turnover*

Nearly half of the Volunteers OIG interviewed did not have trained counterparts because their counterparts had changed after the Volunteers arrived at site. Counterparts who had been trained by the Peace Corps often left their sites for other opportunities and the post did not have a process for training replacement counterparts.

**Volunteers reported to OIG that they found it difficult to work or co-teach with partners who had not been trained by the Peace Corps and struggled to meet project goals.**

The post described the importance of well-oriented counterparts (and host families) in their Site Identification and Site Monitoring Standards and Procedures Guide, which states that "When done properly, it lays a critical foundation, builds local relationships for PCV [Peace Corps Volunteer] support and improves the likelihood that the PCV has a safe and productive service." Peace Corps Safety and

Security Instruction 110 outlines that the Associate Peace Corps Director or Project Manager "Ensures designated host country counterparts participate in counterpart orientation/training and are prepared to work with and support Volunteers, including their role in Volunteer safety and security."

Volunteers reported to OIG that they found it difficult to work or co-teach with partners who had not been trained by the Peace Corps and struggled to meet project goals. Some Volunteers told OIG that their counterparts did not understand their roles, were absent or would not show up for classes, and were unsupportive of the Volunteers. These statements reflected the results from the 2023 Peace Corps Annual Volunteer Survey (AVS), where 54 percent of Volunteers indicated that their community partners or counterparts were not knowledgeable about their assigned project when they arrived at site. Additionally, 33 percent of the respondents in the 2023 AVS indicated that a "lack of a counterpart or community partner" and "logistical difficulties with counterparts (turnover, limited availability, etc.)" were major challenges in achieving Peace Corps goals.

Guyana's Volunteer Service Improvement Committee (SIC), which is composed of Volunteer representatives and Peace Corps staff, deliberated this issue in October 2023. According to meeting notes, Guyana's SIC stated, "When counterparts or HM's [headmasters/mistresses] change, an orientation must be given to their replacements to ensure continuity of the program. Going forward, the Peace Corps needs to have a system in place for when this happens."

**OIG recommends:**

2. The Country Director implements a process for staff notification when counterparts change and ensures training for new or replacement counterparts.

*Staff visited Volunteers as required but did not complete and upload program site visit questionnaires to the Volunteer Information Database Application*

All 20 of the Volunteers OIG interviewed reported that staff visited them as required by the post's standards, however, only 3 had the completed site visit documentation uploaded to their site files in VIDA. Subsequently, there were no records in VIDA to document the issues Volunteers discussed with staff during these site visits or any associated actions taken by staff. The Peace Corps/Guyana Site Monitoring Standards and Procedures state that staff must document the site visit using the Program Site Visit Questionnaire and upload the document into VIDA and the Volunteer's site file.

Recent turnover in programming staff may have resulted in new staff being unaware of this requirement. Failure to upload site visit documentation could lead to misunderstandings or gaps in Volunteer support due to a lack of awareness of past support provided to Volunteers, particularly for new staff.

**OIG recommends:**

3. The Director of Programming and Training ensures staff know the site visit documentation requirements and periodically reviews the Volunteer Information Database Application to confirm that program staff are properly documenting site visits.

*Staff did not provide Feedback on Volunteer activity reports in the Volunteer Reporting Grants system as required*

OIG found that staff did not record their feedback on the Volunteer quarterly activity reports in the Volunteer Reporting and Grants (VRG) system as required. The agency uses the VRG system to plan, manage, and share information about Volunteer programmatic activities and their results. The post's VRG Reporting, Monitoring and Feedback Standard Operating Procedure (herein SOP) included a requirement that Volunteers input quarterly updates on all planned, ongoing, and completed activities in VRG. The SOP also required staff to provide feedback to Volunteers on their activities within 30 days after each quarterly submission. Staff are expected to document their feedback and the Volunteers' receipt of the feedback in VRG.

Of the Volunteers OIG visited, only 44 percent of their submitted quarterly reports had documented feedback from staff in VRG. During a February 7, 2024 meeting with staff, Guyana's SIC discussed concerns about Volunteers not receiving VRG feedback. Program staff

acknowledged that they had not documented their feedback on some reports, and staff indicated that they need more training on VRG.

The SOP states that staff feedback should address the content and quality of a Volunteer's quarterly update and may include recommendations or suggestions on planned activities. However, some Volunteers told OIG that the feedback they received in VRG was not very helpful. It is important for Volunteers to get feedback on their VRG submissions to make necessary adjustments or improvements to their planned activities.

**OIG recommends:**

4. The Director of Programming and Training ensures that staff receive sufficient training to use the Volunteer Reporting and Grants system.
5. The Director of Programming and Training ensures that Volunteers are receiving feedback in compliance with the post's standard operating procedures.

### **OBJECTIVE 3: WAS THE POST'S VOLUNTEER SAFETY AND SECURITY PROGRAM IN COMPLIANCE WITH AGENCY REQUIREMENTS AND EFFECTIVE?**

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OIG addressed this objective by answering the following researchable questions:

1. Did the post monitor the security environment and communicate that information to Volunteers and Trainees?
2. Did the post provide effective safety and security training to Volunteers and trainees?
3. Did Volunteer sites and housing meet established requirements?
4. Did the post comply with procedures for reporting and responding to Volunteer and Trainee incidents?
5. Did Volunteers and staff report that the post's safety and security program is effective?

#### **WHAT OIG FOUND**

OIG found that the post's Volunteer safety and security program was largely compliant with agency requirements and highly regarded by its Volunteers. For example, the post kept Volunteers informed of potential safety and security risks and had regular contact with the U.S. Embassy concerning emerging security issues related to crime in the country's capital.

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**Respondents to an OIG Volunteer survey said that the safety and security manager's performance was "very good" and highlighted the safety and security team as one of the post's strengths.**

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Moreover, the post had established procedures for reporting and managing crime incidents and encouraging Volunteers to report any security incidents. Volunteers confirmed that they do and would report incidents if they occurred and that the safety and security team is effective in their responses.

In addition, OIG confirmed that Volunteers received all the globally required safety and security trainings, such as sexual assault awareness and response and emergency action planning, as well as Guyana-specific trainings, such as watercraft safety. The Volunteers OIG interviewed said the safety and security training enabled them to lower their risk of experiencing security problems during their service. They also said that the training encouraged them to report any safety and security incidents.

Respondents to an OIG Volunteer survey said that the safety and security manager's performance was "very good" and highlighted the safety and security team as one of the post's strengths. The Regional Security Advisor and the Peace Corps Safety and Security Officer provided similar comments. The post's safety and security staff reported that they feel confident about responding to crime incidents.

The OIG Volunteer survey results indicated that the safety and security team informed them about security issues. However, Volunteers raised concerns about the threat of bush fires and that they needed more information on how to react if they felt threatened by one. Finally, while most sites met housing criteria, evaluators observed safety issues at some Volunteer homes visited, which had improperly placed propane tanks.

*Volunteers did not have sufficient information about what to do in case a bush fire threatened their home or how to protect themselves from smoke*

OIG interviewed 11 Volunteers at their sites who said they were at risk from bush fires. Volunteers told OIG they did not know how to protect themselves from smoke and fire because they were not prepared and did not receive related guidance.

According to MS 270, “Each post must keep V/Ts [Volunteers and Trainees] informed of the potential safety and security risks they may face, both before their departure and throughout the course of their service. Accurate, comprehensive, and timely information is necessary for V/Ts to take steps to minimize those risks.”

The risk assessment in the post’s Emergency Action Plan (EAP) stated that forest fires are not a significant risk to Peace Corps operations and noted that Volunteers do not live near the communities that are most affected by forest fires. However, safety and security staff explained to OIG that a prolonged dry season in 2024 led to an increase in bush fires. According to one safety and security staff member, this topic was not addressed in the safety and security training during PST because they did not anticipate that it would be a problem for Volunteers.

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**OIG learned in Volunteer interviews that some Volunteers joined bucket brigades to put out fires when the bush fires threatened their homes or schools, placing the Volunteers at risk without adequate preparation or training.**

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OIG learned in Volunteer interviews that some Volunteers joined bucket brigades to put out fires when the bush fires threatened their homes or schools, placing the Volunteers at risk without adequate preparation or training. While many Volunteers said they were given masks from post staff, the Volunteers were still concerned about the long-term health effects of smoke exposure. One Volunteer explained that they reached out to post staff about their concerns with the smoke and only received guidance to wear a mask, which did not answer all the Volunteer’s concerns.

**OIG recommends:**

6. The post works with the Peace Corps Safety and Security Officer to reassess the health and safety risk level of bush fires in the post risk assessment.
7. The post works with the Peace Corps Safety and Security Officer, Office of Health Services, and Peace Corps Medical Officers to prepare Volunteers for the potential scenario in which their home or worksite is threatened by bush fires.
8. The post develops a support mechanism for Volunteers who report poor air quality and smoke in their homes and work areas.

*Some Volunteer homes had propane tanks placed in closed cabinets*

OIG found that a few Volunteers had propane tanks placed in closed cabinets in their homes. Evaluators asked the Office of Safety and Security about this concern, which responded that, with no exceptions, propane tanks cannot be placed in cabinets near the stove because it doesn’t



provide the proper ventilation to avoid a gas buildup. It is imperative that Volunteers homes provide a space to safely cook meals and store kitchen equipment.

As a result of an OIG review of a Volunteer death in Ghana, OIG issued a Management Advisory Report (MAR) in 2020 that focused on gas cooking safety.<sup>7</sup> The recommendations from the MAR were closed after the agency issued guidance and conducted training addressing this issue. OIG will continue focus on compliance with relevant requirements as OIG conducts country program evaluations.



**Image 2: Propane Tank in Volunteer's Kitchen Cabinet**

**OIG recommends:**

9. The Country Director and safety and security manager work with the Office of Safety and Security to ensure and verify that the post's gas stove standards are met at all sites and conform to agency requirements.

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<sup>7</sup> [Management Advisory Report: Peace Corps/Ghana Gas Tank Cooking Safety \(IG-20-02-SR\)](#)



#### **OBJECTIVE 4: WAS THE POST'S VOLUNTEER HEALTH PROGRAM IN COMPLIANCE WITH AGENCY REQUIREMENTS AND EFFECTIVE?**

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OIG addressed this objective by answering the following researchable questions:

1. Did the post implement health risk prevention, as required?
2. Did the post meet key agency requirements for the provision of in-country health care?
3. Did the post implement quality improvement activities, as required?
4. Did Volunteers and staff report that the post's health program is effective?

#### **WHAT OIG FOUND**

OIG determined that the post met key agency requirements for the provision of in-country health care. The post's Volunteer health program complied with agency requirements and was effective according to staff and Volunteers. OIG reviewed the post's Medical Action Plan (MAP) and facility assessments and found that the MAP corresponded to the facility assessments on file. The Peace Corps Medical Officer (PCMO) reported that he consulted with headquarters on case management and provision of care. In addition, the Peace Corps' Office of Health Services (OHS) conducted appropriate clinical oversight of the Peace Corps/Guyana health unit.

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**Volunteers and staff reported that overall, the post's Volunteer health program was effective.**

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OIG also found that the post implemented quality improvement activities, as required by Peace Corps Technical Guideline 110. OHS conducted assessments of the post's health unit in July 2023, and all recommendations were closed as of March 2024. Posts are required to display the Peace Corps' quality improvement email address for Volunteers to report concerns regarding healthcare; OIG observed that the contact information was clearly displayed in the post's health unit. There have been no Volunteer complaints regarding the health unit since 2022.

Finally, OIG found that the post provided the required health training during PST in 2022 and 2023. The PCMO participated in the Volunteer site selection, including the evaluation of Volunteers' living, work, and training sites. The PCMO also conducted at least one site visit for each Volunteer in OIG's sample. Volunteers and staff reported that overall, the post's Volunteer health program was effective. Additionally, the Volunteers interviewed told OIG that they were able to stay healthy at their site. The CD and Director of Management and Operations did not have concerns about Volunteers managing risks related to drugs and alcohol.

## **OBJECTIVE 5: DID THE POST’S LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVELY SUPPORT VOLUNTEERS AND STAFF?**

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OIG addressed the following researchable questions to address this objective:

1. Did the post’s leadership comply with personnel and planning requirements?
2. Did the post’s leadership comply with key Volunteer support requirements?
3. Did Volunteers and staff report that leadership is effective?

### **WHAT OIG FOUND**

OIG’s evaluation determined that post leadership effectively supported both Volunteers and staff by providing the required training and adequate resources, among other positive activities. For example, the post met all requirements for staff training, medical evacuation (medevac) readiness, emergency planning, and the strategic planning process.

Additionally, results from the OIG staff survey indicated that they have received useful feedback on their performance from their supervisors throughout the year. Post staff reported being involved in developing all required documentation for the FY 2024 Program Plan, which was submitted in accordance with Peace Corps’ requirements for annual program and resource management planning.

The post also conducted an EAP test in 2023, in which the post met the requirements for medevac preparedness and demonstrated that the PCMO was prepared for emergencies. The PCMO said that staff are reinforcing their capacity to manage medevacs through training and updating memoranda of understanding for water and air ambulance services.

#### *Leadership Effectively Supported Volunteers*

According to the staff and Volunteers OIG interviewed, the post’s SIC was effective in communicating Volunteers’ issues to post staff. OIG also confirmed that most Volunteers trusted that any sensitive and personal information they shared was kept private by staff, who understood and followed the confidentiality policy.

Volunteers were informed about how to report allegations of sexual assault and were aware of the Office of Victim Advocacy and OIG. Many Volunteers shared examples of positive experiences interacting with the current senior leadership.

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**According to the staff and Volunteers OIG interviewed, the post’s SIC was effective in communicating Volunteers’ issues to post staff.**

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Volunteers are entitled to a living allowance, and the post must annually conduct a Volunteer living allowance survey and market basket survey to determine if an increase or decrease is warranted.<sup>10</sup> OIG confirmed that the required living allowance and market basket surveys had been conducted and that the post implemented an

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<sup>10</sup> Per Peace Corps Manual Section 221, Volunteer Allowances, a market basket survey consists of selected staple items, commonly appearing on the Volunteer living allowance survey from each allowance category, which should be priced by staff in multiple locations. The survey is to be used as a guide to validate the cost data on the Volunteer living allowance survey submissions.

increase in living allowances on April 1, 2023. Most Volunteers OIG interviewed said their living allowances are sufficient to meet their needs.

### *Leadership Supported Staff overall*

In general, post staff said leadership supported them, and that they were provided with the necessary resources and training to do their jobs effectively.

Some staff also mentioned ways in which support from leadership could be improved, such as: having clearer directions about their expectations; more internal training on essential skills for supporting Volunteers; more time for onboarding training for new staff; and more realistic expectations for the time they need to travel to complete site assessments and recuperate afterwards.

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**In meetings with OIG, the CD acknowledged some of the issues raised and indicated her commitment to addressing challenges as her time progressed at the post.**

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In 2023, the post experienced significant turnover in its leadership (to include the CD, the Director of Programming and Training, and the Director of Management and Operations). The current CD had been at the post for less than 6 months when OIG announced its evaluation. In meetings with OIG, the CD acknowledged some of the issues raised and indicated her commitment to addressing challenges as her time progressed at the post.

### *Staff Morale Requires Ongoing Attention*

Some staff indicated during OIG interviews that there was a decline in staff morale. On the 2023 Host Country Staff Survey, the majority of employees strongly disagreed with the statement “Morale, or the overall feeling of confidence and enthusiasm at work, among staff at my post is very high.”

MS 647, Staff Responsibilities and Conduct, defines “Core Expectations” for staff, including: “Collaborate with staff, Volunteers, Trainees and community partners to create an atmosphere of open communication, accountability, belonging and trust.” In interviews with post staff, OIG learned that some staff were concerned that the post was not led with sufficient collaboration or transparency in communications.

A staff retreat in October 2024 also revealed concerns regarding team communication and accountability. However, at that same retreat, staff were able to agree on strategies to clarify roles and responsibilities, balance workloads, and mitigate leadership gaps. OIG is not making a recommendation for this finding because the post, under the direction of the current CD, has taken actions towards addressing these problems, including those mentioned at the staff retreat. OIG encourages the region to continue to support post leadership’s efforts to improve morale.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

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### OIG RECOMMENDS:

1. The Country Director and Director of Programming and Training ensure site development documentation is complete and reflects accurate and appropriate assessments based on the post's site selection criteria.
2. The Country Director implements a process for staff notification when counterparts change and ensures training for new or replacement counterparts.
3. The Director of Programming and Training ensures staff know the site visit documentation requirements and periodically reviews the Volunteer Information Database Application to confirm that program staff are properly documenting site visits.
4. The Director of Programming and Training ensures that staff receive sufficient training to use the Volunteer Reporting and Grants system.
5. The Director of Programming and Training ensures that Volunteers are receiving feedback in compliance with the post's standard operating procedures.
6. The post works with the Peace Corps Safety and Security Officer to reassess the health and safety risk level of bush fires in the post risk assessment.
7. The post works with the Peace Corps Safety and Security Officer, Office of Health Services, and Peace Corps Medical Officers to prepare Volunteers for the potential scenario in which their home or worksite is threatened by bush fires.
8. The post develops a support mechanism for Volunteers who report poor air quality and smoke in their homes and work areas.
9. The Country Director and safety and security manager work with the Office of Safety and Security to ensure and verify that the post's gas stove standards are met at all sites and conform to agency requirements.

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## OIG RESPONSE TO AGENCY COMMENTS

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In response to the preliminary report, the Peace Corps concurred with the nine report recommendations. OIG reviewed evidence of corrective actions completed by the agency and closed recommendations 1, 2, 3, 8 and 9. OIG will consider closing the remaining four recommendations upon confirmation from the chief compliance and risk officer that corrective actions listed in the agency's response are documented and complete.

OIG wants to note that in closing recommendations, OIG is not certifying that OIG has reviewed their effects. For the full text of the agency's comments, see Appendix D.

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## APPENDIX A: OBJECTIVES, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

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OIG conducted the evaluation of Peace Corps/Guyana by addressing the following objectives:

1. Were the post's project activities aligned with host-country needs and impactful?
2. Were Volunteers qualified and effectively supported for their project activities?
3. Was the post's Volunteer safety and security program in compliance with agency requirements and effective?
4. Was the post's Volunteer health program in compliance with agency requirements and effective?
5. Did the post's leadership effectively support Volunteers and staff?

The scope of this evaluation extended to the post's programs, operations, and activities from October 1, 2021, to May 3, 2024.

To address the objectives, OIG evaluators reviewed Federal laws and regulations as well as post and agency policies relating to post operations. Surveys were distributed to Guyana Volunteers and post staff to learn about post-specific processes and risk areas. Evaluators interviewed Peace Corps headquarters staff, post staff, and a sample of 20 Volunteers as described in Appendix 2. Evaluators traveled to the post from April 13 to May 3, 2024, to conduct in-person interviews, observations of Volunteers' sites, and collect further documentation. OIG conducted this evaluation in accordance with the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency's *Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation* (December 2020).

## APPENDIX B: OIG INTERVIEWS

At the time of the evaluation announcement, there were 39 Volunteers at the post. Table 5 provides demographic information for the post's Volunteers. OIG interviewed a stratified, judgmental sample of 20 Volunteers which reflected these demographics.

**Table 5: Peace Corps/Guyana Volunteer Demographics**

Project	Percentage of Volunteers
Environment	31%
Education	36%
Health	33%
Sex	Percentage of Volunteers
Female	56%
Male	44%
Age	Percentage of Volunteers
25 or younger	43%
26-29	28%
30-49	18%
50 and older	10%

Note: Percentages may not total 100 percent due to rounding

PEACE CORPS OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

At the time of the evaluation announcement, the post had 24 full-time staff. Table 6 lists the post's full-time staff OIG interviewed.

**Table 6: Peace Corps/Guyana Post Staff Interviewed**

Position	Status*
Country Director	USDH
Director of Programming and Training	USDH
Director of Management and Operations	USDH
Safety and Security Manager	PSC
Safety and Security Assistant	PSC
Peace Corps Medical Officer	PSC
Training Manager	PSC
Program Managers (3)	PSC
Response Program Manager	PSC
Program and Training Specialist	PSC
Acting Deputy Director for Management and Operations	FSN
Administrative and Communications Specialist	PSC

\*United States direct hire (USDH); personal services contractor (PSC); foreign service national (FSN)



OIG interviewed key stakeholders, including 10 Peace Corps headquarters staff, 3 officials with the U.S. Embassy in Guyana, and 3 host country partners. OIG stakeholder interviews are shown in Table 7.

**Table 7: Peace Corps/Guyana Stakeholders Interviewed**

Position	Organization
Regional Director	IAP, Peace Corps Headquarters
Chief of Operations	IAP, Peace Corps Headquarters
Chief of Programming and Training	IAP, Peace Corps Headquarters
Chief Administrative Officer	IAP, Peace Corps Headquarters
Regional Security Advisor	IAP, Peace Corps Headquarters
Country Desk Officer	IAP, Peace Corps Headquarters
Peace Corps Safety and Security Officer	Office of Safety and Security, Peace Corps Headquarters
Volunteer Placement and Assessment Specialist	Office of Volunteer Recruitment and Selection, Peace Corps Headquarters
Placement Supervisor	Office of Volunteer Recruitment and Selection, Peace Corps Headquarters
Chief of Quality Improvement	Office of Health Services, Peace Corps Headquarters
Ambassador	U.S. Embassy Guyana
Deputy Chief of Mission	U.S. Embassy Guyana
Regional Security Officer	U.S. Embassy Guyana
Director of Primary Health Care Services	Guyana Ministry of Health
Subject Specialist - Science	National Center for Education Resources Development – Guyana Ministry of Education
National Literacy Coordinator	Guyana Ministry of Education

## APPENDIX C: LIST OF ACRONYMS

AVS	Annual Volunteer Survey
CD	Country Director
EAP	Emergency Action Plan
FSN	Foreign Service National
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
MAP	Medical Action Plan
OHS	Office of Health Services
OIG	Office of Inspector General
PCMO	Peace Corps Medical Officer
PCV	Peace Corps Volunteer
PSC	Personal Services Contractor
PST	Pre-Service Training
SIC	Service Improvement Committee
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures
USDH	U.S. Direct Hires
V/T	Volunteers/Trainees
VDS	Volunteer Delivery System
VIDA	Volunteer Information Database Application
VRG	Volunteer Reporting and Grants

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## APPENDIX D: AGENCY COMMENTS

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### MEMORANDUM

TO: Joaquin Ferrao, Inspector General

FROM: Cheryl Gregory Faye, Deputy Chief Executive Officer

Cheryl

Gregory Faye

Digitally signed by Cheryl  
Gregory Faye  
Date: 2025.03.27  
08:33:27 -04'00'

CC: Allison Greene, Chief Executive Officer  
Julie Burns, Acting Chief of Staff  
Emily Haimowitz, Chief Compliance and Risk Officer  
David Van Hoogstraten, Acting General Counsel  
Chaitra Shenoy, Associate General Counsel  
Deborah Conner, Country Director, Peace Corps/Guyana  
Kris Besch, Acting Associate Director, Office of Global Operations  
Christine Gottschalk, Deputy Director, Office of Global Operations  
Kavita Pullapilly, Acting Regional Director, Inter-America and Pacific Region  
Jennifer Piorkowski, Executive Secretariat  
Julie Nelson, Compliance Officer

DATE: March 27, 2025

RE: Agency Response to the Evaluation of Peace Corps/Guyana (24-Eval-03)

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to this preliminary report from the Office of Inspector General (OIG). Enclosed please find the agency's response to the recommendations made by the Inspector General as outlined in the OIG's Evaluation of Peace Corps/Guyana (24-Eval-03) sent to the agency on February 14, 2025.

#### Recommendation 1

The Country Director and Director of Programming and Training ensure site development documentation is complete and reflects accurate and appropriate assessments based on post's site selection criteria.

#### Concur

Response: Peace Corps/Guyana has taken action to ensure site development documentation is complete and accurately reflects assessments based on post's site selection criteria. These actions include:

- Hiring and onboarding a Quality Assurance Specialist (QAS), whose scope of work includes oversight of VIDA and promoting compliance with site management documentation;

- Conducting a Site History Documentation audit, and actions were taken to amend incomplete documents and to add notes and upload missing documents to VIDA;
- Implementing the Tri-Regional Site Management Guidance and updating the Site Management Manual and Site Management Forms, which provide clear guidance on the site assessment process and post's site selection criteria.

The updated guidance, manual, forms, and standard operating procedures (SOPs) are being used for the site identification, preparation, selection and approval process, including with the most recent Response cohort.

Documents Submitted:

- QAS Statement of Work
- VIDA Report Email Examples
- Site Management Manual
- Site History Documentation SOP
- VIDA Data Entry SOP
- Site Selection Criteria Checklist

Status and Timeline for Completion: March 2025

Recommendation 2

The Country Director implements a process for staff notification when counterparts change and ensures training for new or replacement counterparts.

Concur

Response: Post developed a standard operating procedure (SOP) that outlines the process for staff notification following changes in counterparts, which ensures that new or replacement counterparts receive the necessary training to support a Volunteer. The process outlined in the SOP includes: the Volunteer or head teacher notifying Peace Corps of the counterpart change, Post staff conducting orientation for new counterparts and sharing resources such as the Counterpart Manual, and Post staff conducting follow-up activities to monitor progress.

Documents Submitted:

- *SOP for Staff Notification & Training of New or Replacement Counterparts*
- *Orientation presentation for New/Replacement Counterparts*
- *Counterpart Manual*

Status and Timeline for Completion: March 2025

### Recommendation 3

The Director of Programming and Training ensures staff know the site visit documentation requirements and periodically reviews Volunteer Information Database Application (VIDA) to confirm that program staff are properly documenting site visits.

#### Concur

*Response: Post's updated Site Management Manual and VIDA Data Entry SOP specify that staff are required to upload completed Site Visit Forms to VIDA within five business days of the visit. Program staff maintain a shared Site Visit calendar, and the QAS tracks the visit schedule and reviews VIDA on the first Monday of each month to ensure that the completed Site Visit Forms are uploaded in VIDA and a status report is sent to the Director of Programming and Training (DPT) and CD.*

#### Documents Submitted:

- *Post Site Management Manual*
- *Post VIDA Data Entry SOP*
- *VIDA Report Email Examples*

Status and Timeline for Completion: March 2025

### Recommendation 4

The Director of Programming and Training ensures that staff receive sufficient training to use the Volunteer Reporting and Grants system.

#### Concur

*Response: The Director of Programming and Training will coordinate with Peace Corps Headquarters to conduct a training for all PC/Guyana Programming and Training (P&T) staff focused on VRG reporting and feedback. This training will be aimed at ensuring all relevant staff are proficient in VRG and understand agency-wide and post-specific requirements.*

#### Documents Submitted:

- *Training attendance records*
- *Training materials*

Status and Timeline for Completion: June 2025

### Recommendation 5

The Director of Programming and Training ensures that Volunteers are receiving feedback in compliance with the post's standard operating procedures.

#### Concur

Response: Post will establish a process for the DPT to check-in with Program Managers thirty days after the deadline for quarterly reporting in the Volunteer Reporting and Grants (VRG) system to ensure that appropriate feedback has been given to Volunteers. Additionally, the DPT will monitor the VRG platform to confirm that helpful feedback is being given to Volunteers, including addressing the content and quality of the Volunteer's update.

Documents to be Submitted:

- Example VRG Feedback to Volunteers on Activities
- Examples of DPT review notes in VRG

Status and Timeline for Completion: May 2025

Recommendation 6

The post works with the Peace Corps Safety and Security Officer to reassess the health and safety risk level of bush fires in the post risk assessment.

Concur

Response: Peace Corps Guyana will collaborate with the Peace Corps Safety and Security Officer (PCSSO) to incorporate bush fires as a specific threat in the post's risk assessment during the PCSSO's scheduled visit for the five-year Risk Assessment. The next Risk Assessment is scheduled to be conducted in July 2025. Following this, the Safety and Security Manager (SSM) will update the Emergency Action Plan (EAP) to include specific guidance on responding to bush fires.

Documents to be Submitted:

- *Updated Risk Assessment*
- *Updated EAP*

Status and Timeline for Completion: November 2025

Recommendation 7

The post works with the Peace Corps Safety and Security Officer, Office of Health Services, and Peace Corps Medical Officers to prepare Volunteers for the potential scenario in which their home or worksite is threatened by bush fires.

Concur

Response: In collaboration with the PCSSO and the Office of Health Services (OHS), Peace Corps Guyana will revise both the Emergency Action Plan (EAP) and the Medical Action Plan (MAP) to incorporate response measures for bush fire threats that may impact Volunteer health and work or housing locations. The SSM, in collaboration with

Peace Corps Medical Officers, will develop bush fire response scenarios to train PCTs during the EAP session at PST.

Additionally, to enhance fire safety awareness, Peace Corps Guyana is planning to partner with the local fire department to conduct an annual informational session on general fire safety, which will be integrated into Pre-Service Training (PST) for Peace Corps Trainees (PCTs).

Bush fire-related scenarios will also be used to train staff during the annual tabletop exercises at the staff retreat, ensuring that all staff are oriented on post's response to such incidents that may affect Volunteers' well-being.

*Documents to be Submitted:*

- *Updated EAP*
- *Updated MAP*
- *Updated Tabletop scenarios including threat of bush fires*
- *Updated training calendar for PST (COTE)*

Status and Timeline for Completion: September 2025

Recommendation 8

The post develops a support mechanism for Volunteers who report poor air quality and smoke in their homes and work areas.

Concur

Response: Post has well-developed mechanisms for supporting Volunteers reporting health or safety issues. Post strengthened those processes as they relate to air quality and smoke by developing an SOP to support Volunteers at sites where there were concerns for smoke, bush fire, and Sahara Dust Plumes<sup>8</sup>. The SOP focuses on measures to take in sites with poor air quality. The SOP requires bi-weekly updates on significant weather pattern changes, dry season alerts, Sahara Dust Plume alerts, and steps to take for at-risk PCVs. PCVs have been provided with guidance, including steps to take at site if in the presence of these conditions, both via News Alerts to Volunteers and in the Bi-Weekly Newsletter.

*Documents Submitted:*

- *SOP for Sites with Poor Air Quality*

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<sup>8</sup> Per EPA (2024), a dust plume is a layer of sand, dirt and dust lifted from the Sahara Desert in North Africa. It is transported by the Tradewinds from North Africa over the Atlantic Ocean, through the Caribbean and South America. The reach of the plume is dependent on the wind and weather. The Saharan Dust Plume is a normal phenomenon that may occur several times throughout the year.

- *Examples of News Alerts to PCVs about Sahara Dust Plumes*
- *Examples of Bi-Weekly Newsletters*

Status and Timeline for Completion: March 2025

#### Recommendation 9

The Country Director and safety and security manager work with the Office of Safety and Security to ensure and verify that post's gas stove standards are met at all sites and conform to agency requirements.

#### Concur

Response: The CD and SSM worked with the PCSSO to ensure compliance with agency and post-specific requirements regarding Volunteer home and cooking safety. Post is utilizing the most up-to-date resources and criteria, including the Housing Criteria Checklist, PC/Guyana Housing Inspection Manual, and Site Management Manual. The SSM conducted housing inspection training with P&T staff and will conduct annual refresher trainings.

Post has visited each Volunteer's home since the OIG's evaluation, except for recently arrived Response Volunteers because their housing was inspected using the updated guidance. During those Volunteer site visits as well as site identification visits for future sites, P&T staff verified that each Volunteer's home meets the minimum housing standards outlined in the post's site management guidelines, including the post's gas stove standards. More specifically, the P&T staff ensured that propane tanks are placed outside of cupboards or cupboard doors are removed where propane tanks are stored. Housing Criteria Checklists are in VIDA for each approved housing location. To further ensure compliance, staff asked that all current two-year Volunteers send in photos of the placement of their gas tanks, which have been saved to an office shared drive as an added verification method.

#### Documents to be Submitted:

- *Housing Inspection Training Presentation*
- *Housing Inspection Training Attendance Record*
- *Updated Site Management Manual*
- *Updated Housing Inspection Manual*
- *Example of Completed Housing Criteria Checklist and propane tank photo for Response Volunteer house*
- *Example Photos of Gas Tanks of Current Two-Year Volunteers*

Status and Timeline for Completion: March 2025



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## APPENDIX E: Key Contributors

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<b>Kristine Hoffer</b>	Senior Evaluator & Team Leader
<b>Christine Fagioletti</b>	Senior Evaluator
<b>Belen Carriedo</b>	Program Analyst
<b>KJ Adler</b>	Writer-Editor
<b>Carissa Anderson</b>	Administrative Specialist
<b>Rashawna Alfred</b>	Supervisory Evaluator
<b>Reuben Marshall</b>	Assistant Inspector General for Evaluation

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Mail: Peace Corps Office of Inspector General  
1275 First Street NE  
Washington, DC 20526

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Website: [peacecorpsig.gov](http://peacecorpsig.gov)



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