

**PEACE CORPS/GEORGIA
A CASE STUDY OF EFFECTIVE
PEACE CORPS PROGRAMS**

GOING THE EXTRA MILE



OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

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INTRODUCTION

This report is one of nine in the Office of Inspector General's (OIG) Study of Effective Peace Corps Programs. The study consists of nine case studies of Peace Corps programs – three in each region: Africa; Inter-America and Pacific; and Europe, Mediterranean, and Asia. Chosen in consultation with regional management, the posts selected were Niger, Malawi, Mauritania, Panama, Paraguay, Honduras, Georgia, Ukraine, and the Philippines. The purpose of the study was to document what these posts do to effect high quality programs.

We defined high quality programs as:

- Programs that prepare and place Volunteers in sites where they can be productive and are hosted by communities and organizations organized to be their partners in achieving the purpose of their assignment (goal one).
- Programs and assignments that bring Volunteers satisfaction, provide a healthy cross-cultural exchange (goal two), and inspire them to bring the world home (goal three).

The study of these programs was conducted in two phases. In phase I, OIG staff conducted extensive interviews with the staff at each overseas post involved with designing and planning programs; training Volunteers; developing sites; providing technical, medical, emotional, and administrative support to Volunteers; and managing the operational aspects of ensuring that these functions are performing effectively. Initial reports were then drafted and sent to the staff for their review.

In phase II, we spoke with Volunteers, mostly in small groups, about the same subjects: training, site development, site visits, support, and satisfaction with their Volunteer experience. In this phase, we asked Volunteers for their perspective on what the staff described they did in phase I. In three posts, Paraguay, Honduras, and Panama, we also interviewed counterparts during phase II for their viewpoints on implementing an effective Peace Corps program and a mutually beneficial Volunteer site placement and assignment.

The purpose of this study is to describe how some of the agency's best programs are led, managed, and administered: the procedures they use, the management approaches, the staffing assignments, and the programming and administrative details that distinguish one post's operations from another. The objective was to use real life examples as the basis for setting expectations for assessing program effectiveness and as a resource for staff to understand what it takes to run an effective program, as well as to provide some tools and ideas for establishing high-performing programs.

In some of our discussions with Volunteers in phase II, they felt that some of what the staff described to us in Phase I was not actually being done, was not being done effectively, or was not having the intended positive effect. This is not reflected in this

report, because of its focus on describing what the posts do well. But we did we report this information to the staff on an informal basis, and the instances of this type of feedback were not common. In general, the Volunteers' views did not contradict the staff in terms of the principal elements represented in well-run programs that are described here.

In writing these case studies, we decided not to name staff we credit for what we found to work well, but only to make reference to staff position titles. Our intention in doing this was to put the emphasis on the actual accomplishments, rather than who performed them. We do not mean in any way to minimize the credit that many individuals rightfully deserve for their excellent work. What we want to demonstrate is that there are actions that anyone can take or make an effort to initiate that are shown to effect positive Peace Corps program outcomes.

The PC/Georgia case study was conducted by Lynn Khadiagala. Ms. Khadiagala was in Georgia for phase I of the study October 30 – November 4, 2005 and for phase II April 19-30, 2006.

COUNTRY CHARACTERISTICS

Georgia is a country in transition, and programming and the placement of Volunteers are shaped by Georgia's physical, political, and economic changes. Its passage from a Soviet republic to independent country has been marked by political instability and conflict. The potential for civil unrest, criminal activity, and weather-triggered emergencies keep this post vigilant on safety and security. Earthquakes, flooding, and avalanches help to determine where Volunteers can be placed. The presence of nuclear power plants in Armenia and on Russian military bases and the illegal dumping of nuclear waste are also significant concerns.

In 2003, Georgians rose up against the government of former President Eduard Shevardnadze in the Rose Revolution. Since then, President Mikheil Saakashvili has initiated reforms to reduce corruption, spur economic growth, and restructure government. His attempts to restore Georgia's territorial integrity have been only partially successful. Ajaria in the southwest has agreed to give up its secessionist plans, but negotiations continue with South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

Poverty remains entrenched in Georgia. According to the World Bank, its gross national income per capita is \$736. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Georgia suffered the worst decline among all post-Soviet transition countries with output falling by 70% and exports by 90%. Since the Rose Revolution and installation of the Saakashvili government, economic stabilization has resulted in economic growth rates of 6% in 2004 and impressive increases in government revenue as a percentage of gross domestic product.¹

¹ World Bank Country Brief 2006 (updated August 2006).

PROGRAMS

Peace Corps/Georgia began in 2001. Since then, 105 Volunteers have served in Georgia. In April of 2006, there were 58 Volunteers in the country. PC/Georgia has two programs. Teaching English as a Second Language (TEFL) is the largest and oldest program and had 41 Volunteers in 2005. The non-governmental organization program is smaller and newer with 23 Volunteers in 2005.

TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE (TEFL)

The program manager credits the success of the TEFL project to the first programming and training officer (PTO), who designed a project plan with clear objectives and tools for assessing the needs of Georgia and the schools. As the Ministry of Education reforms the education system, she has the ability to make changes in the TEFL project to meet the needs of the Ministry and the schools. For example, Volunteers have been asked by the Ministry to introduce their Georgian colleagues to new teaching and evaluation methods and help them to meet the Ministry's expectation for a more student-centered and interactive approach to teaching.

In Fiscal Year (FY) 2005, PC/Georgia had an average of 41 TEFL Volunteers. The program expects to grow to an average of 58 in FY 2006.² The TEFL Volunteers team teach with a Georgian colleague. The Georgian teacher focuses on grammar while the Volunteer works with students on their communication skills. Teaching English, however, is very much a medium through which Volunteers achieve other goals, such as development of critical thinking skills through classroom and extra-curricular activities. They help to prepare students to compete for the American Council's Future Leaders Exchange Program, an English-language competition, and help teachers to prepare for the American Council's Teaching English and American Studies Excellence Awards program contest. Five of the Volunteers' co-teachers were named National Finalists and one won the national award. The finalist participated in a six-week professional development training program in the United States.³

NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION (NGO) DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

Georgia's newest project places Volunteers with local NGOs to help them build their organizational, financial, and technical capacity. The post hopes to focus this project on youth and health, with additional areas of agriculture, business development, environment, and civil education as appropriate. The prevalence of NGO projects in the EMA region reflects the important role that NGOs have performed by providing education and services. Roughly 3,000 NGOs have registered in Georgia, but staff estimate that only 300 are functional and even fewer are self-sustaining. This project is still developing conceptually; as the Government of Georgia gains capacity, it may reclaim from NGOs some of their functions. PC/Georgia coordinates with the Horizonti Foundation, an umbrella organization for NGOs.

² TEFL Project Status Report 2005.

³ Ibid.

The post has been fortunate to receive well-qualified Volunteers for this project. Many have experience with U.S.-based NGOs and offer applicable skills to their host organization. These include fundraising, networking, monitoring and evaluation, budgeting, strategic planning, project planning, and management. The Volunteers also provide informal English language classes. An important intangible benefit is the broadening of Georgians' viewpoints. Volunteers convey to their organizations that in the world beyond Georgia, work ethics and planning and budgeting strategies are pillars for success. The NGO staff eventually understand the link between developing these organizational characteristics and processes and gaining respect in the community, among the donors, and even internationally.

Early indicators show that this project is having an impact on the NGO world in Georgia. Some of the Volunteers have been creative in developing niche sectors and activities for their NGOs, only to be followed into those areas by larger NGOs. In addition, the Volunteers are productive. According to the 2004 Volunteer survey, 78% of the NGO Volunteers work 21 - 40 hours per week on their primary projects.

GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

PC/Georgia works closely with the Ministry of Education in mutually beneficial ways. The education sector is currently under reform, and the post has tried to adjust the TEFL program and Volunteer activities to support the changes. Ministry officials are involved in training sessions and ceremonial events. The post invites a ministry official to attend the pre-service training (PST) and in-service trainings (ISTs) to talk about the reforms and expectations for the education sector and to answer Volunteers' questions. The official who attended the most recent PST even handed out his cell phone number to the Volunteers. The Minister of Education was the keynote speaker at the 2005 swearing-in ceremony, where he gave a moving speech on the Peace Corps.

At the request of the Ministry of Education, Volunteers piloted, with their Georgian colleagues, a new points-based grading system that is more transparent and objective. They have also helped Georgian teachers to adopt new English textbooks, approved by the Ministry of Education, that are based on communication rather than only grammar.

OVERVIEW

We begin our analysis with the staff and management because they are the foundation of this post. The staff are cohesive and competent. They approach their work with a commitment, creativity and pragmatism that makes them good problem solvers. In a country where politics, geography, and weather create challenges for Peace Corps, problem solving is an invaluable asset.

Equally significant is the management philosophy of the country director.⁴ The degree of trust between the country director and staff and his oversight and guidance give staff the freedom and confidence to be creative in their approaches and honest about what works. The simple act of the country director's visits to staff in their offices – what we have termed “walkabouts” – signals that he welcomes their ideas and values their work. The country director manages the post on the principle that the Peace Corps belongs to everyone. This effect is manifest in the perception of the staff in each unit—programming/training, administration, and management – that they are equally significant to the mission of the post and the success of the Volunteers. In many ways, the post has expanded the definition of programming to encompass the totality of staff responsibility to make programming a collective responsibility. This is best illustrated by the emphasis on partnership between the administrative office and other staff in the budget process.

This post implements several facets of programming and training particularly well. Site development, for example, benefits from staff's attention to detail and the comprehensiveness of their procedures. The marketing of the Peace Corps to prospective schools and NGOs results in host organizations competing for Volunteers; with each new round of applications, the post receives more and better quality applicants. We are especially impressed with the use of workshops to prepare host organizations and families and the procedures used to develop a sense of responsibility among the police for the safety and security of the Volunteers. We found evidence that the investment of the program staff's time in their workshops has a similar effect on host organizations and families. The staff have a clear understanding of their goals and the Volunteers, and they design programs, training, and site assignments accordingly.

Staff pragmatism is evident in Volunteer support, another strong feature of PC/Georgia. Our interviews with Volunteers, the constant presence of cell phones, the tenor of staff interviews, the 2004 Volunteer Survey, and a close of service report support our observations. The post has concentrated several trainings in the winter months to help alleviate the isolation Volunteers often feel during the winter. Several sessions focus on winter coping skills and safety aspects. On the technical side, staff have developed simple but effective ways of helping Volunteers to share creative ideas for teaching and formulating secondary projects.

⁴ Unless otherwise noted, our comments about staff and quotes from staff refer to the staff at post at the time of our visit for this study.

Finally, PC/Georgia provides the rest of the Peace Corps world some insights into the value of extended homestays for the Volunteers. Homestays are usually justified on the basis of improving language skills, cultural orientation, and safety. In Georgia, we think that homestay requirements affect the quality of programming in positive ways.

MANAGEMENT AND STAFF

MANAGEMENT PHILOSOPHY: THE SMALL THINGS MAKE BIG DIFFERENCES

Good management is more art than science, and finding the right balance between supervising staff and trusting them to do their jobs is often difficult. Sometimes, small gestures by managers have an effect that far exceeds the effort it took. The country director received high marks from staff for his “walkabouts.” Instead of calling staff to his office, he makes the effort to climb up and down the staircase to visit them in *their* offices. Especially for the host country national staff, this gesture has important symbolic value in shaping country director-staff relationships around trust and mentoring.

Country directors have played a significant role in setting the work environment of this post. Staff gave considerable credit to the first country director and programming and training officer for establishing an open, creative, and consultative environment (see Box 1). The country director has strengthened this atmosphere by emphasizing to staff that communication is the key to their success. His ability to listen and give critical responses in a constructive way makes it easy for staff to take their questions and issues to him. This approach may explain, to some extent, the honesty and openness of staff about what they have done well and where they need to improve.

Handbooks and manuals will never capture the personal characteristics that make for good managers. According to staff, the country director’s sense of humor and respectful manner toward both staff and Volunteers helps to diffuse tension and resolve issues with them before reaching conflict levels. When staffing issues and poor communication created problems at the 2005 PST, the country director had the courage and professionalism to acknowledge the problem before the Trainees.⁵

The bedrock of PC/Georgia is its staff. Their commitment to the mission of Peace Corps and to the Volunteers is evident in the energy they give to their jobs and their hands-on approach to training, site development, Volunteer support, and safety/security. The commitment of the host country national staff is rooted in a belief that, by working for the Peace Corps, they are contributing to the development of Georgia. Many of the host country national staff had worked for a government ministry or an international organization prior to joining the Peace Corps; they contrasted the rural focus of the Peace Corps and the willingness of Volunteers to live in rural and remote areas to the more urban and macro focus of governments and international organizations. The Peace Corps, in their minds, was filling a vital development niche.

⁵ Interview with staff, November 2006, Tblisi.

Box 1. Programming is a Collective Responsibility: Budget Stewardship

PC/Georgia has – intentionally or not – redefined programming beyond its traditional categories of projects and training to include the totality of staff functions. The country director's mantra that "Peace Corps Belongs to Everyone" recognizes that each unit is equally important to the success of the Volunteers and acknowledges that the units' functions are interdependent. The intangible result is a cohesiveness and cooperative spirit among staff. The tangible outcome is that effective programs are a collective responsibility.

The methods for drafting the Integrated Plan and Budget System (IPBS) best illustrate the collective nature of programming. According to the administrative officer, each unit takes responsibility for sketching out an initial budget. The program staff then sits with the administrative officer to develop it more fully. The intent is to make sure that staff are aware of where their resources come from and how much they have over the course of the fiscal or programming year.

The effects are twofold: first, by working with the programming, training, and medical staff, the administrative officer is more knowledgeable about the goals and needs of each unit; second, based on a good understanding of each unit, the administrative officer can better help staff make choices as new opportunities or needs arise or should resources suddenly become scarce. For example, if staff decide they need to provide additional training to Volunteers or host a Volunteer-Supervisors Conference, the administrative officer can identify potential savings elsewhere and work with the program staff on the tradeoffs.

The most impressive staff characteristics included their attention to detail, their honesty about the things they have tried with less than satisfactory success, and their creativity and pragmatism. These characteristics enable them to be good problem solvers. For example, pragmatism guides staff in their approaches to recruitment, training, and Volunteer support. For TEFL Volunteers, the program managers anticipate that 80% of the Trainees will have little or no teaching experience, so they build that expectation into their recruitment requests, training design, and site placement procedures:

- ▶ *Recruitment:* The staff work with the Office of Recruitment to specify those qualities that make for a successful Volunteer in Georgia. Staff identified motivation and enthusiasm as the most valued quality for a successful TEFL Volunteer, followed by cultural adaptability, emotional maturity, and technical knowledge. Any Volunteer with the right attitude, according to the TEFL program manager, can be trained.
- ▶ *Training:* The staff know that many of the Trainees will be inexperienced and will not be able to perform their assignments without effective training. PST starts with that assumption, emphasizing practical experience for both TEFL and NGO Volunteers. TEFL Volunteers spend about nine days over a two-week period practice teaching with a Georgian teacher and students. NGO Volunteers are matched with organizations in the vicinity of their training sites. For three hours

each day, they have field assignments related to their host NGO, such as developing a strategic plan, grant proposals, or organizing training sessions. The NGO Trainees come in with a great deal of technical knowledge about American NGOs, but they do not necessarily understand how NGOs function in Georgia. Their time spent with NGOs during pre-service training exposes the Volunteers to the culture and working principles of Georgian NGOs.

- *Site Placement:* For TEFL Volunteers, staff have learned that matching Volunteers with less teaching experience to schools with weaker English language programs improves the productivity and sense of satisfaction of the Volunteer and the Georgian teaching staff. While this approach to matching Volunteers to sites is counterintuitive, the staff observed that schools with strong English programs have higher expectations of the Volunteers' professional skills and experience. Innovations and skills that a less experienced Volunteer would bring to a strong program might seem insignificant to the faculty in a strong English program, but make a significant difference to a school with an underdeveloped program. In short, the program managers try to match the expectations of the schools to the skill level of the Volunteers.

SITE SELECTION

The site selection and preparation process in Georgia is effective for several reasons. Most importantly, the staff are detail-oriented and start the process at least 14 months before the Volunteers arrive (see Box 2 for a brief description and Appendix A for more details). TEFL program managers conduct two calls for applications to accommodate the number of sites they need. They also pay attention to the schools' calendars so that the site selection process occurs when school directors and teachers are available to meet PC/Staff and Volunteers.

The PTO and program managers have a set of tools and processes for site selection and preparation that are thorough and systematic. They use multiple methods for collecting information, including written applications, informal interactions at a workshop, and site visits by staff and Volunteers. They understand the importance of site selection for the Volunteers' relationships with their families, co-workers, and community members, which are critical in framing the nature of their Peace Corps experience.

Box 2. Timeline for Completing Site Selection Tasks

Activity	Months Prior to PST
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Call for applications from schools	14
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Second call for applications from schools	8-9
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Call for applications from NGOs	8-9
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Site Identification workshops for prospective hosts	7-8
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Visit host families, host workshop for host families, and select families	1-4

Source: Peace Corps/Georgia staff, July 2006.

HOST ORGANIZATIONS COMPETE FOR VOLUNTEERS*PC/Georgia markets its programs to generate demand for Volunteers*

PC/Georgia markets its programs through a variety of channels, almost guaranteeing that the demand for Volunteers will exceed their supply. This strategy contributes to the improving quality of applications. In 2005, 90 schools submitted applications that staff determined were good enough to be considered. Thirty schools were assigned a TEFL Volunteer. The NGO program received 19 applications which were of sufficient quality to receive consideration. Sixteen organizations received a Volunteer.

The program managers advertise in professional newsletters, newspapers, and through Volunteers. The TEFL program manager, with the assistance of the Ministry of Education, puts an advertisement in the Ministry's newsletter to public school teachers. The newsletter serves the Peace Corps' mission of reaching more schools in remote areas. For the NGO project, staff work with an umbrella organization and larger NGOs in Tblisi to identify potential NGOs in rural areas. The PTO and country director also network with NGOs through a monthly meeting for NGOs at the U.S. Agency for International Development.

The application process is sufficiently demanding to weed out less serious applicants.

The applications require schools and NGOs to invest a demanding, but reasonable, amount of time and thought. The burden is on the school or NGO to think about their goals and explain how a partnership with a Peace Corps Volunteer would help them achieve those goals (see Appendix B). All applications must be written in English, which helps staff ensure that English speakers will be present to assist new Volunteers. NGOs must also prove their financial viability by providing budgets and sources of revenue,

discuss how they cooperate with other organizations and governments, and provide plans for improving their service to beneficiaries.

All schools and NGOs are required to reapply for successive Volunteers.

PC/Georgia does not automatically allocate a succession of two or three Volunteers to a site. The staff require schools and NGOs with currently serving Volunteers to reapply when that Volunteer's service is finished. While a positive recommendation from a Volunteer will trigger the allocation of a second Volunteer, staff felt that it is important to rotate sites. By requiring host organizations to submit a new application, the program staff can assess how they have benefited from having a Volunteer. The process also forces the organizations to evaluate how they would use a second or third Volunteer in different ways. If they cannot show progress, they are unlikely to be competitive. We thought this was an ingenious way to motivate host organizations to use their Volunteers in productive ways.

DUE DILIGENCE: COLLECT AND DISTRIBUTE RELIABLE INFORMATION

The quality of site selection depends heavily on the quality and thoroughness of information that staff collect and what they do with it. PC/Georgia collects information on prospective sites through a well-designed application, interactions with applicants at workshops, and site visits. Volunteers attend the workshops and visit all potential work sites; their thoughts are taken into account when making the final site selections.

The program staff pay close attention to details and leave little to chance. To ensure that staff collect the necessary information, they maintain a detailed worksheet that outlines the required activities in sequential order and who is responsible (see Appendix C). In preparation for their workshops with host families or organizations, for example, they spell out every objective, identify questions to prompt discussions, and specify a list of needed materials. At the end of the document is space to note what went well, the challenges, and recommendations for the next time.

The criteria for assessing prospective host organizations are clear, objective, and transparent.

The program managers use clear criteria for selecting host organizations that they link to questions in applications and interviews. In Box 3, we show the selection criteria and the corresponding questions that the TEFL program managers use for evaluating the schools.

Box 3. Matching Selection Criteria to Application Questions

School Selection Criteria

Question on Application

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Staff and School Director are open to innovation	Describe teaching methodologies, best practices, and accomplishments.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Faculty exhibit initiative	Identify extracurricular language activities and ideas for school or community projects.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Can the Volunteer make a contribution at this school?	Are there any special skills or background that you would like in a Volunteer?
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Are expectations realistic and appropriate?	Schools are asked to identify how Volunteer can help improve their English program.

Source: Peace Corps/Georgia, Application for a Volunteer, TEFL project; Interviews with staff, November 2005.

The staff also refer to checklists for determining the readiness of schools and NGOs to host a Volunteer. These checklists are thorough in coverage. The one that the TEFL program managers use for schools includes:

- School and community's priorities are consistent with project goals.
- Volunteers can make a valuable contribution to the school.
- Supervisor and staff demonstrate a strong interest in and a commitment to working with a Volunteer.
- Staff is able to articulate how they will partner with a Volunteer.
- Staff is open to learning and incorporating new ideas and approaches.
- Atmosphere at the school is friendly.
- Community has adequate means of transportation and communication.
- Community meets safety and security standards.

Distribute Information to Potential Host Organizations: Site Identification Handbooks

The staff stressed the importance that schools and NGOs understand PC/Georgia's selection criteria. The primary vehicle to communicate this information is the Site Identification Handbook. For example, the Handbook for prospective NGOs includes a

detailed list of criteria that the NGOs must meet to be considered for a Volunteer (see Box 4). The Handbook also includes basic information on the Peace Corps, the history of the project, frequently asked questions, instructions on how to apply for a Volunteer, and an application form. The Handbooks are in Georgian and English.

Box 4. Site Selection Criteria for Non-Governmental Organizations

- ☑ The NGO staff must include the Volunteer as a full-time member.
- ☑ The NGO must provide an English speaker that will be willing to work with the Volunteer.
- ☑ The Head of the NGO and Volunteer's counterpart must form an action plan with the Volunteer specifying his/her duties and responsibilities in the organization.
- ☑ The Head of the NGO as well as other members should be willing to cooperate with the Volunteer on community-initiated secondary projects.
- ☑ There must be a workspace provided to the Volunteer that is appropriate to local workplace standards.
- ☑ The Head of the NGO and staff must be able to clearly communicate the NGO's needs and how the partnership with a Volunteer will help meet those needs.
- ☑ The NGO must cover all business related expenses of the Volunteer such as business related transportation, conference cost, etc.
- ☑ The Head of the NGO and staff must assist Peace Corps to identify a host family in a safe location for the Volunteer.
- ☑ The NGO must be within 30 - 40 minutes walking distance from the Volunteer's home and/or there should be some reliable form of transportation available.
- ☑ The NGO staff should be open and willing to assist the Volunteer with Georgian language study and cultural integration.

Source: Peace Corps Georgia, Site Identification Handbook, NGO Development Program, 2005-2006.

The Final Check: Site Visits

After the workshops (see below) and review of applications are complete, staff visit the NGOs and schools that are under serious consideration. PC/Georgia surveys more sites than it needs just in case a school or NGO backs out at the last minute. At the site visit, staff check that there is an office with space for the NGO Volunteers. They talk to several members of the organization or school to gauge their interest, assess ongoing and future projects, and the scope of work for a Volunteer. The program managers pointed out that, sometimes school directors are eager to have a Volunteer placed at their school, but this enthusiasm does not extend to the teaching staff. Talking to as many staff as possible gives the program managers a better sense of the level of enthusiasm of the faculty. The NGO program manager noted the importance of seeing an NGO's facilities and meeting with their staff to avoid selecting transient organizations.

PC/Georgia incorporates serving Volunteers into its site selection process. Volunteers visit prospective host organizations and host families and provide the staff feedback from a Volunteer's perspective.

Matching Volunteers with Sites

The collection of information continues as staff learn about the needs and preferences of the Volunteers. Even before the Trainees arrive in Georgia, they fill out a survey on their preferences regarding host organizations and families. They discuss their answers with the program managers at a placement interview during PST. Program managers get to know the Trainees during their weekly visits to PST, at which time they also receive progress reports from the training staff. Before assigning the Trainees to their permanent sites, the program staff conduct a final interview with the Trainees. They use a set of questions to guide the discussion and to prompt the Trainee to reflect on why he or she wants to be a Volunteer, what they hope to accomplish, and how they plan to work toward their goals (see Appendix D). In consultation with the training staff, program managers assign Trainees to their permanent sites.

In approximately week six of PST, Trainees travel to meet their host organization and family. On their return, they assess the quality of the match and identify any concerns they might have about the site together with the program managers in a debrief session.

SITE PREPARATION

WORKSHOPS: INVEST THE TIME TO PREPARE HOST ORGANIZATIONS

Program staff invest time in preparing schools and NGOs to work with a Volunteer. After staff have completed the first screening of applications, the remaining prospective host organizations are invited to a workshop. These workshops serve multiple purposes. Most important, it is an opportunity to convey information about the Peace Corps and the work of the Volunteers and to set realistic expectations about what Volunteers can accomplish. Staff provide some cross-cultural training by talking about cultural differences, potential difficulties that might arise, and how to support the Volunteers as they adjust to Georgia. The staff answer any questions that arise. A video of Volunteers team-teaching with Georgian counterparts is shown at the TEFL workshops so that the school directors can see the specific work and commitment required by a counterpart.

The workshops are also an opportunity for staff and invited Volunteers to collect additional and different kinds of information through informal conversations with NGO and school directors. They listen for statements that signal potential problems, such as an unwillingness to take a female Volunteer or someone of a particular ethnic background. They pick up on the personality of the directors, their potential to be supportive of a Volunteer, and the extent to which they might use someone productively.

Finally, the workshops are one of PC/Georgia's inspired innovations because they signal to host organizations and host families their importance in shaping the experiences of the Volunteers and make them feel vested in the well-being of the Volunteers.

HOMESTAYS

Justifications for requiring Volunteers to live with local families are often based on the contributions they make to language skills and Volunteer safety. We think that the benefits of this cultural immersion go beyond language and safety to affect programming. We asked staff in Georgia and Ukraine to reflect on our hypothesis. Their responses are summarized in Box 5.

Volunteers are required to live with Georgian families for the first six months of service, and approximately 80% of Volunteers live with host families for their entire service. Staff ask the Trainees to fill out a brief survey on their housing preferences and then discuss the surveys with them at PST. As they do in matching Trainees to host organizations, the training staff also provide input regarding host families based on their knowledge of the Trainee over the course of PST.

The schools and NGOs identify three families that meet Peace

Corps/Georgia's criteria for hosting a Volunteer (see Box 6). Once the program staff have confirmed which host organizations they have selected, the Cross Culture/Homestays/Language Coordinator takes over. She inspects the homes, meets with the families, talking to as many of the members as she can, and checks for amenities in the communities (see Appendix E).

PC/Georgia combined cross culture, homestays, and language functions into one staffing position in response to the need to dedicate more time to identifying and preparing host families. As PC/Georgia grew, it had become more difficult for the program staff to conduct site visits that covered both the organizations and the families. The Coordinator oversees cross cultural and language training for part of the year and attends to the home stay responsibilities for the rest of the year.

Programming and training staff would like to improve their ability to make good matches between families and Volunteers.⁶ The post recently increased the allowances to families, which enlarged the pool of interested households to choose from.⁷

Among the 2004 class (Group 4), 7 of the 26 Volunteers (27%) requested a change in host family. Four of these were NGO Volunteers. This was the first intake of NGO Volunteers and greater emphasis had been placed on finding suitable host organizations.

Box 5. Homestays and Quality Programming

How do homestays translate into more effective programming? Program staff in Ukraine and Georgia offered their thoughts on the relationship between having Volunteers live with families and the quality of programming:

- “When Volunteers have credibility in their community, community participation in Peace Corps projects will be more forthcoming.”
- “In addition to host families introducing Volunteers around the community, the role of Volunteers as teachers is enhanced because Volunteers are more respected by their students if they live with a family.”

⁶ Communication with post, December 27, 2005.

⁷ Ibid.

Of the 44 Volunteers in the 2005 (Group 5) class, seven Volunteers (16%) requested to move to new families. In spite of the higher transfer rate among the Group 4 Volunteers, almost 80% of them opted to remain with a family beyond the required six months. At the time the 2004 Volunteer Survey was conducted, 88% of the Volunteers who completed the survey reported that they were living with a host family.

Box 6. Peace Corps Housing Specifications:

- ▶ The host family must be able to provide the Volunteer with a private room that can be locked with basic furniture; a bed, desk/table and chair, and a place to store clothing (wardrobe and/or dresser).
- ▶ Volunteers must have keys to the main doors and have easy access to the house.
- ▶ Toilet facilities must be located inside the house or not far from the house. In the case of a latrine, it must be clean, well-ventilated, and located at least 20 meters from the well.
- ▶ The Volunteer should be able to heat water for a bath/shower and to bathe/shower in a clean, private place.
- ▶ The house must have a reliable source of heat (electricity, electric or diesel heater, kerosene balloon, wood stove, etc.).
- ▶ There should be access to a land line phone either within the home or at a neighbor's house.
- ▶ The Volunteer needs to have access to facilities for washing clothes and access to cooking facilities.
- ▶ The host family should preferably have at least one member who can speak a little English.
- ▶ Members of the host family should be open and eager to exchange cultural information with the Volunteer.

Source: Peace Corps Georgia, Site Identification Handbook, NGO Development Program, 2005-2006.

Workshops

Staff conduct a workshop for the families where they both provide and collect information, similar to the workshops with prospective host organizations.

The Challenges

The challenges of homestays are numerous. The Volunteers have to learn to cope with the rudimentary living conditions of rural Georgian households -- some have outdoor latrines and most lack hot showers -- as well as the isolation of winter. The homestay experience can also be fraught with cultural faux pas and misunderstandings. For instance, many Georgians have difficulty understanding why Americans would come to Georgia to Volunteer. Volunteers must understand that Georgian families are close and interconnected and that they will have to give up some of their space and privacy. Host families also feel responsible for ensuring the safety and security of the Volunteers. This can lead to families keeping close track of the location of the Volunteer, which does not

always sit well with independent-minded Americans. The staff try to select families who understand and appreciate the Peace Corps. They also talk with the families about the cultural adjustments the Volunteers undergo and how families can help.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

Safety and security issues remain a top priority for PC/Georgia. The staff's approach to Volunteer safety is best described as inclusive and collaborative. Internally, the staff's processes ensure that the safety and security coordinator is fully integrated into the selection of sites, training, and monitoring of Volunteers. External to post, the staff have created a network of persons who are in daily contact with the Volunteers and feel a sense of responsibility for them.

We were most excited, though, about the creative ways that post has reached out to the regional police chiefs and local police units. Local police in small communities can be good sources of information about security matters. But, more importantly, this post has developed mutually beneficial working relationships with police that increase their sense of responsibility for Volunteers in their area.

WORKSHOPS FOR REGIONAL AND LOCAL POLICE

What did the Volunteers think about the orientation workshops for the Georgian police?

"The workshops put us on their radar screen."

-- Volunteer

The country director and safety and security coordinator have invested time in developing relationships with regional and local police to foster their sense of responsibility for the safety of the Volunteers. Their strategy, though, goes

beyond the typical visits and phone calls. With the permission of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the country director and the safety and security coordinator conduct regional workshops for district police chiefs and local police officers. The country director introduces the new Volunteers to the police and reviews Peace Corps safety and security procedures with them. The workshop is an opportunity to acknowledge formally the role of the local police in the safety of the Volunteers. The presence of the region's chief of police helps to reinforce the message that this responsibility flows from a higher authority.

Good relations with local police are further supported by some of the Volunteers offering English classes for police officers. Many of the police are graduates of the FBI Academy and are eager to improve their English. Their exposure to community development ideas in the United States also helps the police understand the mission of the Peace Corps.

SAFETY TRAINING IN A CROSS-CULTURAL CONTEXT

Inducing independent-minded Americans, especially the younger ones who still see themselves as invincible, to conform to Peace Corps policies can be challenging. The

SSC encourages the Volunteers, especially the women, to live with a host family throughout their service. But convincing Volunteers to remain with host families beyond the required six months is not always easy. After observing the Trainees and Volunteers, the SSC has decided that they respond best to data. At the PST sessions on safety and security, she strengthens her case with statistics and power point presentations.

The relationship between the crime rate and the type of housing does seem to hold up. In 2002, only 57% of the Volunteers lived with families, but in 2003 this number climbed to 78%, and in 2004 it rose to 81%. For the most part, the number of criminal acts against Volunteers has declined as the tendency of Volunteers to live with families has risen. Between 2003 and 2004, the number of incidents remained steady (31 and 30, respectively), even though the number of Volunteers had grown from 32 in FY 2003 to 43 in FY 2004. According to the SSC, the post has had to deal with fewer burglaries against Volunteers, and the harassment of female Volunteers has declined.

SAFETY LANGUAGE COMPETENCIES

Another challenge that the SSC faces relates to language. The new Volunteers are not always as advanced in their language skills as staff would like. Therefore, the SSC has worked with the language and cross-cultural trainers to develop a set of survival terms in Georgian that will help the Volunteers communicate on essential safety and security-related topics from the point they leave training through the first few months at site.

FEEDBACK FROM VOLUNTEERS

PC/Georgia had an opportunity to test the Emergency Action Plan (EAP) under realistic conditions during the Rose Revolution in 2003. All Volunteers were put on standfast with the country director and SSC checking their status twice each day. When the demonstrations escalated and schools became common sites for civil disobedience, TEFL Volunteers were not allowed to go to school. It was not until late November when the situation returned to normal that Volunteers were given the all clear. The country director and SSC traveled to all Volunteer consolidation centers to gather feedback from Volunteers on what worked and what they needed to improve.

Based on Volunteer suggestions, the post made several changes:

- *More frequent testing:* Volunteer wardens suggested more frequent testing of the EAP to ensure that the post can handle future emergency events more smoothly.
- *More staff support during emergencies:* The wardens felt that they needed more support from staff, because some of them had difficulties dealing with the restlessness of the Volunteers.
- *Include the supervisors and host families in the communication loop:* The Volunteers reported that the implementation of the EAP raised suspicions among their host families and supervisors. On the basis of this observation, the post decided to include supervisors and host families in the communication loop during any emergency

action. This also reinforces their sense of responsibility for the Volunteers and increases the cooperation among host families.

VOLUNTEER SUPPORT

PC/Georgia staff invest a great deal of time in supporting the Volunteers. They are accessible, responsive, show a genuine concern for the Volunteers, and provide substantive feedback on Volunteers' projects.

INCLUDING VOLUNTEERS IN THE HIRING PROCESS

One way PC/Georgia conveys that program and training staff are committed to the Volunteers is by including Volunteer representatives on the hiring committee. They poll all of the Volunteers for questions to ask the candidates, and Volunteers' appraisals are factored into the final decisions. Therefore, not only do the Volunteers buy into the decision, but they offer crucial feedback to staff on how each of the candidates interacted with the Volunteers. The PTO felt that Volunteer feedback has proven effective in helping staff to hire the best candidate to support Volunteers.

ACCESSIBILITY AND RESPONSIVENESS: THE EVER PRESENT CELL PHONE

The PC/Georgia staff are creative in how they make themselves accessible to the Volunteers. Because it is relatively easy for the Volunteers to reach Tblisi, the staff decided to reserve Fridays for Volunteer office hours (see Box 7).

Box 7. Friday Office Hours

Fridays at PC/Georgia are reserved for meetings with Volunteers. The staff dress more formally on Fridays to reinforce the dress code among Volunteers.

Cell phones are a constant presence in the life of Peace Corps staff in Georgia. Because many of the land lines were destroyed in the civil war, each staff member and Volunteer is provided a cell phone for safety and security and communication. Over 60% of the Volunteers rated their communication resources for contacting in-country staff as excellent or good.⁸ Another 32% rated it as adequate.

Having reliable forms of communication no doubt increases the responsiveness of staff to Volunteers. One staff member told us that she has memorized all of her Volunteers' cell phone numbers and knows most their supervisors' phones numbers as well, suggesting that she dials those numbers frequently. According to the country director, no one turns their phones off.

⁸ Peace Corps 2004 Volunteer Survey

WINTER COPING MECHANISMS

Winters in Georgia can be long, dark, and cold. Volunteers who live with families endure some tough conditions. To help the Volunteers cope with the isolation and lack of basic amenities (hot water is a significant one), and to give the host families a much-needed break from the Volunteers, the country director has initiated a once a month activity during the winter months. Volunteers gather in Tbilisi where they have access to two hot water showers at the office and participate in meetings and trainings. In November, the focus was on winter safety and security; the February meeting provided the Volunteers with additional language training along with a Life Skills Conference; in March, the local chapter of Returned Peace Corps Volunteers sponsored an event for the Volunteers.

We must admit that our first reaction to this strategy was negative. We felt that Volunteers were being pulled out of site too often. But this is a case where staff pragmatism and creativity meet and found solutions to an ongoing problem. Rather than telling the Volunteers to tough it out, these retreats rejuvenate the Volunteers and keep them focused on their goals.

TECHNICAL SUPPORT

Accessibility of staff to Volunteers. The accessibility staff to the Volunteers pays off in their ability to know the needs of their Volunteers. The TEFL Volunteers are constantly looking for creative ideas to use in the classroom. The program manager asked the Volunteers to bring their classroom exercises to IST, where she compiled them into binders (see Box 8).

The program staff have done the same for secondary projects. Volunteers who find it difficult to come up with ideas on how to get a project off the ground can peruse the binders when visiting the office. Staff reported that this simple idea has been very effective.

Responding to Volunteers' reports. In addition, the post takes the task of responding to the Volunteers' trimester reports seriously. The staff admitted that this time-consuming task can be tedious, but they see the dialogue that ensues between themselves and the Volunteers as a vital form of communication. Because making site visits can be difficult in winter months, the opportunity to review and comment on the specific activities of the Volunteers provides them with year-round technical support.

Project Design and Management (PDM) Workshops. The program and training staff modified how they handle Project Design and Management workshops to enhance the working relationship of Volunteers and their counterparts. The three- or four-day PDM workshops that Peace Corps/Georgia sponsors are planned, organized, and run by the

Box 8. Idea Binders

Staff have created idea binders to help Volunteer teachers with classroom activities and secondary projects. For the classroom, the binders include descriptions of teaching exercises, games, songs, and poems.

Every Volunteer who received a grant for a secondary project is obligated to submit a brief description. After several years of collecting from the Volunteers, the binders are several inches thick.

Volunteers and their Georgian counterparts. PC/Georgia staff provide the workbooks, which are in English and Georgian. The staff also run a four-day training session for the Volunteers and counterparts who were selected to be PDM trainers (see Appendix F for the application/information sheet).

The Volunteers and counterparts are responsible for:

- Finding a meeting room that is free of charge.
- Scheduling the meetings to accommodate public transport schedules.
- Arranging for lunch at a local restaurant and for coffee and tea breaks.
- Inviting local community members and local government officials to participate.
- Conducting the sessions, including giving participants feedback on their proposals and translating from Georgian to English or vice versa.
- Conducting a final evaluation.

This format has several benefits for the Volunteers and their counterparts, especially those who serve as trainers:

- The process requires the Volunteers and counterparts to plan carefully, pay attention to details, and share responsibilities. According to the training manager, the Volunteers and counterparts developed a higher level of trust and cooperation in the process of planning and running the workshops.
- The counterparts who serve as trainers can use their experience and knowledge of PDM to teach others.
- Inviting members of the community and local government officials to participate in the workshops gives them a chance to learn about Peace Corps, see what the Volunteers and their counterparts are working on, and take home new planning and project design skills. The community members and government officials participate fully in the workshop. They bring project ideas with them and use the four days to develop a project proposal. Volunteers and counterparts have a chance to broaden their network, learn about the interests and goals of people in their area, and explore new opportunities.

According to the training manager, the response from the Volunteers and other participants has been positive. One Volunteer brought seven teachers with her to the workshop, including her school director. The director would like to hold a similar workshop at the school so that all of her teachers can participate.

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

The motto of the administrative unit is customer service. According to the administrative officer, his staff have worked hard to anticipate Volunteer needs before issues turn into complaints. For example, they tracked when Volunteers were most likely to come to the office and set cashier hours accordingly. The HCN staff have been with PC/Georgia from the start, so they know the programming and budget cycles and can anticipate peak cash demands. The administrative officer attends Volunteer Advisory Committee

meetings and close of service conferences to listen to Volunteers' comments. The administrative officer created a form for staff and Volunteers to provide feedback to his unit.

The administrative staff have fostered closer working relationships with Volunteers and colleagues so that people come forward with information sooner rather than later. Repeated requests for specific types of information from Volunteers result in procedural changes to meet those demands better in the future.

PHASE II: THE VOLUNTEERS' PERSPECTIVE

The findings for this part of the study are from discussions with 30 Volunteers, held in April 2006 in Borjomi, Kutaisi, and Telavi, as well as a few meetings with individual Volunteers at the office. Discussions lasted from three to five hours. A brief survey was distributed to all Volunteers several weeks prior, to which 80% of the Volunteers responded. A roughly equal number of male and female Volunteers responded to the survey and participated in the discussion groups.

Volunteers were keen to convey the message that PC/Georgia was as good as it was because of the quality of the American and Georgian staff. They credited the country director's leadership, but also the willingness of staff to listen to feedback from Volunteers and be proactive in making changes. Volunteers identified host families, the quality staff and their support to Volunteers, the quality of sites, and Volunteer attitudes among the most important factors to the quality of their Peace Corps service.

A majority of the Volunteers expressed that their time and work in Georgia has been valued by people in their communities and at their places of work. Almost 60% of the Volunteers in the OIG survey said that their work was well- or very valued. NGO Volunteers were more positive than education Volunteers; Volunteers who had been in country for two years were more confident that Georgians valued their work than Volunteers who were just reaching their first-year mark.

FACTOR ONE: HOST FAMILIES

The opportunity to live with Georgian families was an overwhelmingly positive factor for a majority of the Volunteers who participated in the discussion groups. For many of them, they learned about Georgia, met people, and acquired a sense of belonging through their host family. The staff's strategic decision to place Volunteers with families, thereby taking advantage of the Georgians' sense of hospitality and the function of family in Georgian society, was validated by the Volunteers.

According to the Volunteers, the Cross Culture/Homestays/Language Coordinator has done an excellent job of selecting, preparing, and supporting the host families: 83% of the Volunteers in our survey said that their housing was well or very well prepared when they arrived.

The Volunteers recognized the value of living with host families. Even those who grumbled about living with host families admitted that staying with a family has important benefits. One Volunteer said that some had to move several times before they found a compatible family, but Volunteers who had a positive attitude were able to find a compatible family more easily. Those who moved out (mostly male Volunteers) did so because they wanted their independence and privacy, but still remained in close contact with their family. One Volunteer who moved into his own apartment for his second year of service moved back in with his host family for his last month in country. When asked why he made this decision, he said that his family wanted to share the last month with him.

The Volunteers have varied experiences with families and different levels of comfort in living with people of a different culture. But for the majority of the Volunteers whom we met, the host families were a significant part of their experience in Georgia. One Volunteer even mentioned that her host family participates in secondary projects with her.

From comments made in discussions and on the surveys, we have distilled the most important contributions that host families make to Peace Corps programming and training:

- ◆ *Host family as family:* The warmth of Georgians and their willingness to treat the Volunteers as members of their family was phenomenal. Volunteers told us that their families “opened their arms to me,” “kept me sane,” and “prevented me from early termination.” Another Volunteer wrote that their family “was everything to me.” Another mentioned that his host family lit a candle for his arrival, which signifies the birth of a new child in the household. Many Volunteers wrote in their comments about the enormous patience their families demonstrated as they struggled to learn the language.
- ◆ *Host family as protection:* The families take their responsibility of protecting the Volunteers seriously. Volunteers who live on their own, especially female Volunteers, are vulnerable to theft and other crimes. Volunteers provided several examples to demonstrate how living with a Georgian family helped them to be safer than they would be living alone. One Volunteer said that she was occasionally harassed by the 17-year old boys in the neighborhood, until she mentioned her host father’s name, which caused the boys to scatter. When one Volunteer was treated inappropriately by a Georgian man, her host father confronted the person and forced him to apologize to her.
- ◆ *Host family as survival:* While the adjustment to family life can be challenging for many Volunteers, the pluses appeared to outweigh the negatives. Living with a Georgian family was a survival mechanism for many of the Volunteers. Volunteers who moved into their own home often lost weight because they did not cook or eat properly. Volunteers living with families did not have this problem.

In the winter, they came home to a warm house. Many said that their host families were willing to put additional wood on the fire when they were around because they understood that the cold is difficult for the Volunteers.

- ◆ *Host Family as cultural exchange:* Many spoke or wrote about the high level of acceptance that their host families and organizations had for them. Host families played a significant part in introducing the Volunteers into the community, teaching them about the culture, and introducing them to vital contacts in the community. Volunteers attended family and cultural events with their host families. But it was also important to the Volunteers that their host families were interested in learning about American culture as well as teaching the Volunteers about Georgian culture.
- ◆ *Host family as problem solver:* The Volunteers also turned to their host families for advice and guidance. Families were often willing to share information about the community and people in it that was useful to avoiding political pitfalls or awkward situations.

PC/Georgia invests the time and resources into finding and preparing host families because of the benefits to the Volunteers in greater security, better language skills, and cultural integration. As discussed in part one, the program managers and homestay coordinator work hard to get to know the Volunteers and prospective families to be able to match personalities and living styles. They invite the families to workshops for cross-cultural training. It is an opportunity to discuss potential problems that may arise and how the families can help the Volunteers to adjust.

Our survey data confirms that the post's effort to go the extra mile to find and prepare host families has significant benefits to the Volunteers. Seventy-four percent of the respondents felt that they were well or very well integrated into Georgia culture (see Table 1). Another 18% of the respondents said that they were moderately integrated. Based on Volunteers' comments in discussion groups, the host families have contributed significantly to the integration of Volunteers into Georgian culture. Living with host families also facilitated language learning. Almost half of the Volunteers who completed the survey said that they could communicate well or very well.

Table 1. Cultural Integration of the Volunteers

How well do you feel integrated into the community?	Very Well %	Well %	Moderately %	Somewhat %	Not at All %
TEFL	28	45	24	0	3
NGO	35	42	18	6	0
9 -12 months in country	19	46	27	4	4
20+ months in country	42	42	16	0	0

Source: OIG Effective Programs Study Questionnaire 2006.

Due to rounding, totals may not equal 100%.

FACTOR TWO: QUALITY OF STAFF

If host families are one pillar of a Volunteer's experience, the high quality of staff and the support they give the Volunteers formed an equally important second pillar. Volunteers identified many of the same characteristics in staff that we had observed and felt important to the quality of programming. Where we had noted a willingness among staff to evaluate their work and seek improvements in programming and training, the Volunteers were quick to point out that PC/Georgia was constantly improving because of the hard work and dedication of the staff. The Volunteers in every group credited the staff with being proactive and responsive to feedback from Volunteers.

One Volunteer commented that her success in Georgia has "... resulted from several factors, but the quality of the staff made a special difference to me." It was important to the Volunteers that staff cared about them, inquired about their sites, and were attentive to their needs. They appreciated that staff focused on finding solutions to problems rather than on challenges and obstacles. The Volunteers credited the leadership of the country director, programming and training officer, and the administrative officer (all Americans) for many of the positive changes in PC/Georgia. The willingness of the American staff to listen and respond to Volunteers set an important tone for the entire staff.

FACTOR THREE: STAFF SUPPORT AND GOING THE EXTRA MILE

We asked the Volunteers to identify the most important roles and functions that staff fulfilled for them. They most frequently mentioned technical support, problem solving, and cultural interpretations.

Technical support: Many Volunteers have developed professional and productive working relationships with their program managers. They look to their program managers for technical advice and resources when they cannot locate it elsewhere. The NGO Volunteers said that the willingness of program staff to help them locate resources for their organizations and to make contacts with other organizations working in Georgia was helpful to their work with their host NGOs. The TEFL Volunteers look to their program managers for teaching strategies in the classroom, especially in the early months when they are struggling to adapt to their schools and colleagues. As a result, 70% of the Volunteers who responded to the OIG survey said they were very or well satisfied with technical support; another 21% said they were moderately satisfied (see Table 2).

Staff as problem solvers: Volunteers valued the program staff for their willingness to help them resolve problems in their workplace or homes by offering different options to try. Staff bring the authority and prestige of Peace Corps to the table, as well as an understanding of the cultural dynamics of a problem. One Volunteer gave an example of a project that was close to being sabotaged by her new school principal. The program manager made an emergency trip out to meet with everyone who was involved with the project. Her presence was crucial to getting the project back on track.

Table 2. Volunteer Satisfaction with Technical Support

How satisfied are you with the technical support you receive from PC staff?	Very Well %	Well %	Moderately %	Somewhat %
TEFL	27	43	20	10
NGO	41	30	24	6
9 -12 months in country	22	48	22	7
20+ months in country	47	26	21	5

Source: OIG Effective Programs Study Questionnaire 2006

Due to rounding, totals may not equal 100%.

The Volunteers had a clear understanding that the staff would go the extra mile for them and that the Volunteers were their first priority. One Volunteer spoke about the time she was having difficulties that she was unable to resolve on her own; she asked for a special site visit and, with her program manager, worked things out with her host organization. At the end of the discussion, everyone agreed that the staff were available for them when needed – they just had to speak up.

Staff as cultural interpreters: Volunteers rely on the Georgian staff to help them understand different cultural practices or situations in which the Volunteers find themselves. Volunteers commented that the program staff were “great on cultural issues” and “know which aspects of Georgian culture are strange for Americans.”

FACTOR FOUR: QUALITY SITES

The Volunteers appreciated the challenges that staff face in finding good sites where Volunteers will have meaningful work and can be productive. In describing what constitutes a good site, Volunteers emphasized the importance of finding organizations where people are motivated to work, open to new ideas, and eager to learn from the Volunteers. According to Volunteers’ responses to the OIG survey and their comments in the discussion groups, the investment of staff time in a lengthy and detailed site development process resulted in sites where Volunteers felt productive and satisfied.

- According to the OIG surveys, almost 80% of the Volunteers who responded felt that they were in sites where their work was valued.
- Three-quarters of the Volunteers said that their host organizations and counterparts were prepared when they arrived.
- Over half of the NGO Volunteers and almost 75% of the TEFL Volunteers said that work assignments were clear to their host country colleagues.

The time that program staff invested in shaping the Volunteers’ expectations also helped the Volunteers in some interesting ways. The Volunteers told us that they were more effective when they knew the host organizations’ reasons for wanting a Volunteer, the program staff’s assessment of the site, and the program manager’s rationale for placing them there. One Volunteer elaborated on what this information had done for her.

Knowing that she was walking into a young organization, but one that “had a heart and wanted to change” helped her shape her approach and expectations. Knowing why her manager thought she had the right qualities for this organization allowed her to adjust mentally to the assignment.

Many of the Volunteers who participated in the discussion groups expressed an appreciation for the leeway that staff gave them in designing their three-month work plans together with their supervisors. The Volunteers placed importance on meeting the needs of their site, rather than striving to meet every goal in the project plan. Other Volunteers, however, wanted their work situations to be more defined and appeared to need more involvement from staff in defining their work plans. Not surprisingly, the NGO Volunteers struggled more than the education Volunteers to define and develop work plans. Among the education Volunteers in the OIG survey, 73% said that their work assignments were well or very well defined; only 20% said that their assignments were moderately clear to them. The NGO Volunteers were less positive: only 18% felt that their assignments were well or very well defined, whereas 71% rated the clarity as moderate.

FACTOR FIVE: THE VOLUNTEER

In our interviews about site development with the staff, they proposed a division of labor between staff and Volunteers that delineated the responsibilities of each of them. It is the responsibility of staff to lay the foundation by finding sites where the Volunteers can be safe and productive. This responsibility includes locating host organizations that have meaningful work and preparing counterparts to work with and support the Volunteers. If the foundation of a good site is in place, the Volunteers told us that those who are willing to work hard and persist through the challenges will have a productive and satisfying Peace Corps experience.

The Volunteers offered some characteristics that they felt were important to their quality of their two years. In addition to being a self-starter, the Volunteers felt it was important to have an open mind and a willingness to try new things. One Volunteer commented that Volunteers need to have “... the commitment to overcome the rough patches and the patience to accept that things move at a different pace.” They felt that one of the best qualities they could bring was flexibility and an ability to “go with the flow.”

CONCLUSION: GOING THE EXTRA MILE

PC/Georgia is a successful program because it has in place a highly dedicated, cohesive, and talented staff. They stand out for their attention to detail. They have developed systems for site development, safety and security, and Volunteer support that they are continuously evaluating and refining. This commitment to make PC/Georgia an even better program was evident to the Volunteers, who credited the hard work and dedication of the staff for their success.

The creativity and pragmatism of the staff also make them good problem solvers. To increase the quality of applications from prospective host organizations, they market PC/Georgia through a variety of channels. Demand for Volunteers exceeds supply and host organizations compete for Volunteers through a rigorous application process. The result is that host organizations are better prepared to use the Volunteers productively.

We were also impressed with the workshops that PC/Georgia holds for prospective host organizations, host families, and local police. In addition to providing supervisors, families, and local police with important information about the Peace Corps and the Volunteers, these workshops vest in host organizations, families, and the local police a sense of responsibility for the safety and well-being of the Volunteers and their success in their assignments.

Finally, PC/Georgia offers insights into the value of Volunteers living with host families throughout or for a majority of their service. For many of the Volunteers, the opportunity to live with a Georgian family and to see Georgia and the world through their eyes was an invaluable part of their Peace Corps experience.

APPENDIX A

Site Development and Selection Strategy Timeline

SITE DEVELOPMENT AND SELECTION STRATEGY TIMELINE

[illegible]

APPENDIX B

Request for a Peace Corps Volunteer

Peace Corps Georgia

Request for a Peace Corps Volunteer

Request forms are due **15 October 2005**

Deliver in person to: 110b Burdzgla St. (Sairme), Tbilisi, or mail to: P.O. Box 66, Tbilisi 2, 0102
attn: Program Manager NGO Development

Please type or print thoroughly and clearly.

Requesting Organization

Name _____

Region _____ Village/Town _____

Address _____ Postal Code _____

_____ Web-page _____

Tel/Fax: 8 () _____ E-mail _____

Head of the Organization _____

Tel/Fax: 8 () _____ Cell Phone 8 () _____

Home Phone 8 () _____ E-mail _____

Person filling out this application (if different from the Head)

Name _____ Position _____

Tel/Fax: 8 () _____ Cell Phone 8 () _____

Home Phone 8 () _____ E-mail _____

Date of Establishment: _____

☐ Local

☐ International

☐ Branch Office *(Specify)* _____

☐ Branch Office *(Specify)* _____

List other branches your organization has, if any

Region	Town	Address
1.		
2.		
3.		

FIELD OF ACTIVITIES

(MARK ALL THAT APPLY)

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Infrastructure Development |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business Development | <input type="checkbox"/> Environment | <input type="checkbox"/> IDP Issues |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Civic Society Development | <input type="checkbox"/> Gender Issues | <input type="checkbox"/> Youth Development |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community Development | <input type="checkbox"/> Health | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: <i>specify</i> |

RESOURCES/EQUIPMENT AVAILABLE IN YOUR ORGANIZATION

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Computer(s) | <input type="checkbox"/> Library | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: <i>specify</i> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Copier | <input type="checkbox"/> Resource room | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Internet access | <input type="checkbox"/> Land line phones | |

Female	
Male	
Total	

Female	
Male	
Total	

How many days per week does your organization work? _____

Please identify employee(s) with English Language competency that can support the Volunteer

[illegible]

ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND

Briefly describe the background of your organization. What are your mission, goals and objectives? *(Please attach the statute of your organization and the organizational chart)*

What is the project that you have accomplished so far that you are proud of? What ongoing projects do you have?

Which international, local, governmental and/or non-governmental organizations do you cooperate with? What type of cooperation do you have?

FINANCIAL BACKGROUND

How does your organization achieve financial sustainability? (other than grants)

Please give us your organization's average annual budget for past 2 years and projected budget for the year 2005:

Year	Budget	Amount of Grants among this
2003	\$	\$
2004	\$	\$
2005	\$	\$
2006	\$	\$

If a Peace Corps Volunteer (PCV) is assigned to your organization you will be required to cover his/her business related expenses (e.g. transportation, conference costs, etc). How will your organization's budget accommodate these expenses? How will you cover them?

PARTNERSHIP WITH A PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEER

Has your organization ever worked with a Peace Corps Volunteer? (If yes, please briefly describe)

☐ Yes ☐ No

Which areas would you like to improve and/or develop in your organization in order to better serve your beneficiaries? What skills/knowledge would you like to gain to improve the operations of your organization?

How do you see the partnership and cooperation with a Peace Corps Volunteer (PCV)?
What will be the PCV's duties and responsibilities in your organization?

What background, experience, and skills should a Volunteer possess in order to best benefit your organization?

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Use the space below to further describe your ideas on collaboration with an American Volunteer. What kind of activities would you like the Volunteer to become involved in? Describe the support that your staff will give the Volunteer. Please also tell us if you have any questions or concerns about hosting an American Volunteer.

COMMUNITY INFORMATION

Population _____ people _____ families

Travel (fill all applicable)

Travel to:	Distance	Mode of travel	Frequency	Travel Time	Cost
District Center (or nearest big town)	km	marshrutka			GEL
		bus			GEL
Tbilisi	km	marshrutka			GEL
		bus			GEL
		train			GEL

Community Resources

	Yes	No	Distance from NGO	Comment
Post office/telephone number	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____8 ()_____	
International telephone available	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	
Food market	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	
Basic shops available	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	
Town library	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	
Museum, theatre, culture house, etc.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	

Other NGOs or orgs. in the area ☐ ☐ _____

Internet ☐ ☐ _____

Bank of Georgia (branch) ☐ ☐ _____

Polyclinic/medical point ☐ ☐ _____

Hospital ☐ ☐ _____

Other Banks ☐ ☐ _____

Interesting facts about your town/village/community _____

Please share any additional information and references (brochures, booklets, publications, etc) that will assist Peace Corps in assessing your request for a Volunteer.

REQUIRED SIGNATURE

Head of the Organization

Name _____

Signature _____

Date _____

APPENDIX C

Site Development and Selection Strategy for Peace Corps/Georgia

Appendix C. Site Development and Selection Strategy for Peace Corps/Georgia.

ACTIVITY	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	NOTES
Advertise the school competition information in a newspaper.	PM	Place an advertisement in a newspaper of Ministry of Education that is provided to all educational institutions all over Georgia.
Distribute Site Development Handbooks and PCV Request forms to regions	PA	Use established site development contact /distribution list to disseminate information through mail, email, and personal delivery (through MOE, NGOs, PCVs, and other contacts and at various meetings and events).
Collect, file, and review PCV Request forms	PM, PA	Review PCV site evaluations and survey PCV sites and alternate/promising sites from previous years. Survey new sites. File survey forms according to region and promising/borderline/unsuitable sites.
Conduct Site Development Workshops in the regions	PM, PA, PCVs	Workshops will be held in district centers for the following regions. Telavi: Kakheti; Tbilisi: Kvemo Kartli, Mtskheta-Mtianeti; Borjomi: Samtskhkhe-Javakheti;; Kutaisi: Imereti and Racha; Ozurgeti: Guria; Batumi: Adjara
Select and survey potential sites	PM, PA	Meet with School Director and English teachers. Meet gamgebeli and district school department head if possible. Explore community; check information about food market, transportation, communication, safety/security situation, etc. Meet potential Host Families and provide them with an initial orientation. Complete all site and Host Family survey forms.
Create site development reports	PM, PA	Go over the list of the surveyed schools/communities and based on site development forms design a report for each potential site.
Select and approve final sites	PM, PA, PTO, PSMO, SSO	Choose final sites and at least three alternate sites. Present information about each site to the senior management and discuss any types of positive/negative aspects that Volunteer may encounter in a specific community.
Select final sites; submit list to RSSO for an approval	SSO	Choose final sites and at least three alternate sites. Make certain that RSSO approves communities for safety/security.
Make security clearance of potential host families.	SSO	Choose final host families and submit information to the Ministry of Internal Affairs for approval.
Conduct Host Family Orientation workshops	PM, PA, PCVs	Conduct HF group orientation workshops for selected host families in district centers.
Conduct individual site placement interviews with Trainees and match Trainees to sites	PM	Distribute written site placement interview form to Trainees during week 3; conduct interviews at training sites during week 4. Finalize site placements.
Announce sites (4 th week of PST)	PTO, PM	Create site placement 'brochures' for site placement announcement. Establish Volunteer Program Files.
Ongoing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and amend site development materials Maintain Volunteer Program Files Sustain close communication with MOE re: site development and evaluation Attend meetings and events (PR!) 	PTO, PM, PA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amend materials according to changing site development and selection needs and PCV/host agency input. Follow guidelines for filing Volunteer and site documents. Collaborate with MOE on site identification and selection; keep them updated on sites and project status through meetings and reports. Use various means to inform potential schools about the possibility of hosting a PCV (meetings, events, personal connections, etc.).

Source: Peace Corps/Georgia staff, November 2005.

APPENDIX D

Permanent Site Placement Interview Form

Permanent Site Placement Interview Form, Peace Corps/Georgia

Name of Trainee_____

Date_____

1. What makes you want to become a TEFL PCV?
2. What do you hope to accomplish as a Volunteer (both personally and professionally)?
What is your expectation about your future PCV job in school and community?
3. What do you think are your greatest strengths – characteristics or talents that you bring to the project?
4. What are the skills that you need to work on/develop/gain?
5. Taking into account your experience and the training received, what knowledge and skills will you be able to use best in your teaching? What skills could you transfer to your partner and colleagues starting with first days at site?
6. What strategies will you use to transfer the knowledge and skills mentioned above?
7. Would you rather work with more experienced or less experienced teacher? Do you see yourself as a self-starter, or do you prefer work environment that is more established?
8. Do you have any particular questions or concerns, which will help us in determining your site placement?

APPENDIX E

Peace Corps/Georgia's Application to Host a Peace Corps Volunteer

Peace Corps/Georgia's Application to Host a Peace Corps Volunteer

maspinZeli ojaxis SesarCevi kiTxvari
dawvrilebiT SeavseT es kiTxvari da miawodeT skolis direktors

Region	District
--------	----------

_____	raioni
regioni	

<u>Village/Town</u>	<u>Postal Code</u>
---------------------	--------------------

sofeli/qalaqi	safosto indeqsi
---------------	-----------------

Family Home Address

misamarTi

Family Phone Home 8 () Mobile 8 ()

ojaxis telefoni

Neighbor's Name _____ Phone 8 () _____

<p> sxva sakontaqto piri </p>	<p> telefoni </p>
-------------------------------	-------------------

[illegible]

Accommodation/sacxovrebeli pirobebi:

Type of housing: ☐ Private ☐ Apartment Number of rooms
saxlis tipi: kerZo saerTo oTaxebis raodenoba_____

Toilet: ☐ Inside ☐ Latrine If Latrine, distance from house
tualeti: house gareT Tu gareTaa, ra manZilzea_____(m)

Heating facilities: ☐ Electric ☐ Wood Stove ☐ Gas ☐ Kerosene
gaTboba: eleqtro SeSa bunebrivi airi navTi

Water supply: ☐ Municipal ☐ Well ☐ Spring ☐ Water tank
wylis mowodeba: saxlSi Seyvanili Wa wyaro wylis avzi

Hot water ☐ Wood stove ☐ Gas heater ☐ Electric heater ☐ Other:
SeSis qura gazis gamaTbobeli eleqtro- gamaTbobeli sxva:

Electricity: Winter/zamTarSi Summer/zafxulSi ☐ Other:
sxva:

Morning_____ -- ___h/sT Morning____-- ___h/sT

Family environment/ojaxuri garemo:

Do you have pets at home? If yes, what kind? Do they stay inside the house or in the yard?
gyavT Tu ara saxlis cxovelebi? Sin Tu ezoSi? Tu gyavT, CamoTvaleT:_____

Do any of your family members smoke? Do they smoke inside the house? Will you be
willing to accommodate a smoker? gyavT Tu ara mweveli ojaxSi? eweviT Tu ara saxlSi? SeZlebT Tu ara mwevelis
maspinZlobas?_____

Will you be able to accommodate the needs of a vegetarian Volunteer?

SeZlebT Tu ara umaspinZloT vegetarianel moxalises? _____

PCV room/moxalasis oTaxi:

The Peace Corps Volunteer must have a separate room that can be locked with a key.
mSvidobis korpusis moxalasis unda gamouyoT calke oTaxi saketiT/gasaRebiT karze..

Does the room you have available for the Volunteer contain:

oTaxSi, romelic gankuTvnilil gaqvT moxalasisTvis, unda iyos:

- | | | | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bed | <input type="checkbox"/> Table/Chair | <input type="checkbox"/> Wardrobe | <input type="checkbox"/> Lamp | <input type="checkbox"/> Lock w/key |
| sawoli | magida/skami | karada | naTura | gasaRebiani saketi |

Location of house/saxlis mdebareoba:

Provide explanatory information on location of your house:

mogvawodeT dawvrivebiTi informacia Tqveni saxlis mdebareobis/ganlagebis Sesaxeb:

☐ How far is the food market from your house? How often does it operate?
ra manZilze mdebareobs saxli bazridan?kviraSi ramdeni dRe muSaobs?_____

☐ Are there small shops around your house?
aris Tu ara maRaziebi Tqveni saxlis siaxloves?_____

☐ Is there public transportation available? Specify what kind:
gaqvT Tu ara (Tqven an samezoblos) satransporto saSualeba? Tu gaqvT, ra saxis:_____

☐ How long will it take the Volunteer to walk from your house to the school?
ra droSi SeiZleba Tqveni saxlidan skolamde fexiT misvla?_____

About the family/ojaxis Sesaxeb:

Why do you want to host a Peace Corps Volunteer?

ratom gsurT mSvidobis korpusis moxalasis maspinZloba?

What would you like the Volunteer to know about your family, community and village/town?

ra gindaT rom moxalisem icodes Tqveni ojaxis, Temis, soflis/qalaqis SesaxeB?

How will the Volunteer benefit from living with your family?

ras dadebiT gamocdilebas SesZens moxalises Tqvens ojaxSi cxovreba?_____

How will your family benefit from hosting the Volunteer?

ra dadebiT gamocdilebas moutons Tqvens ojaxs moxalasis maspinZloba?_____

Peace Corps requires the Volunteer to live with a host family for the first 6 months of his/her service, with the possibility of continuing to live with the family for up to 2 years.

What questions or concerns do you have about this?

mSvidobis korpussis moTxovniT moxalise maspinZel ojaxTan 6 Tvis ganmavlobaSi cxovrobs. umetes SemTxvevebSi moxaliseebi TavianT maspinZel ojaxTan ori wlis ganmavlobaSi rCebian. gaqvT Tu ara raime SekiTxva moxalasis ojaxTan cxovrebis vadasTan dakavSirebiT?

Date/TariRi: _____

Completed by/Sevsebulia: _____

APPENDIX F

Project Design and Management Regional Trainings

Appendix F. Project Design and Management Regional Trainings

Information about PDM ToT and PDM Regional Trainings

Dear PCVs,

On February 27 through March 2 we will hold a four-day PDM ToT for 8 PCVs and their counterparts in Tbilisi at the Peace Corps office. This is a **ToT** – or Training of the Trainers. The conference is not designed to be a full PDM workshop but will prepare the attendees to conduct PDM workshops themselves. Because of the nature of the responsibility, we strongly encourage G4s who have attended PDM ToTs in the past to apply, as well as anyone else who has attended PDMs or has a strong background in PDM.

After the ToT: Planning and Conducting a Regional PDM

Each PCV and counterpart who attend this ToT will be a regional training team, responsible for organizing, designing, and delivering a three-day PDM training between March-May for all PCVs in their region, their counterparts, and any interested community members.

We are trying this regional model of PDM training with PCV and counterpart trainers for the first time, and those who will be trainers have a big responsibility. You and your counterpart will choose a workshop location, plan the dates, design the PDM training, and communicate with the PCVs, counterparts and community members about the workshop. Because of the regional nature of the trainings, participants will make day trips to the training venue and not receive per diem or lodging (lodging will be provided in unusual circumstances of long travel distances). Peace Corps staff will support the training teams in terms of planning and designing the training, and we expect to visit the trainings as well. However, since you and your counterpart will be the local experts, you will be able to do such things as find training venues better than we could.

See the below draft list of the regional centers and the sites that would attend the PDM training for that region. Your site does not need to be in the Regional PDM Center to be a trainer for that area.

Regional PDM Center	Participating Sites
Batumi	Batumi, Vaio, Keda,
Kobuleti	Village Kobuleti, Khutsubani, Chakvi, Mukhaestate, Chokhatauri, Ozurgeti, Poti
Lanchkhuti	Lanchkhuti
Kutaisi	Kutaisi, Khoni, Abasha
Akhaltzikhe	Akhaltzikhe, Borjomi
Khashuri	Gori, Khashuri, Chiatura, Sachkhere
Telavi	Gurjaani, Telavi, Shalauri, Kvareli, Magaro
Tbilisi	Akhlagori, Dusheti, Rustavi, Sagarejo, Kaspi

Note that this application is to attend the ToT and be a trainer for regional PDM workshops. You DO NOT need to submit an application to attend the later PDM workshop in your region.

If you have any questions please contact Tengo or Mary.

Before you submit your application form to attend the ToT (see below) please honestly think about these questions:

- Are you motivated to become a trainer and provide regional PDM trainings for the PCVs living in your area, their counterparts and other community members?
- Are you willing to organize the training on your own with your counterpart with minimal outside help? This includes all the details, starting with the invitations, finding the venue, creating the curriculum, conducting the training, etc.
- Have you attended any PDM ToT before, and have you conducted a PDM workshop?
- Can you choose a dedicated counterpart to be a co-facilitator?
- An English-speaking counterpart is not required. We will have some materials in Georgian, and have a complete PDM manual in Russian.
- Note that for the ToT in Tbilisi, standard conference costs (travel, lodging, meals, etc) will be provided for the 8 PCVs and counterparts.

Application Form due February 1, 2006 to PTO:

Your name:

Your Counterpart's Name:

City/Village:

Have you or your counterpart *attended* a PDM ToT before? If yes, please describe:

Have you or your counterpart *conducted* a PDM before? If yes, please describe:

Have you or your counterpart *attended* a PDM workshop before? If yes, please describe:

Please describe any additional skills or experience for your or your counterpart that would make you good trainers.

Any further comments:

APPENDIX G

Map of Georgia

Map of Georgia

