

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

PRESENTING THE FACE OF AMERICA



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/Mauritania case study was conducted by James Scanlon.¹ Mr. Scanlon was in Mauritania for phase I of the study September 11-18, 2005, and for phase II April 25-May 8, 2006.

PC/MAURITANIA: PRESENTING THE FACE OF AMERICA

Mauritania is characterized by travel guides as a “dramatic” country with remnants of ancient camel caravan trade routes combined with some surprisingly modern elements. Sparsely populated, with most of its land covered by the Sahara Desert, nature is the main challenge. Some Mauritians still lead a nomadic life, living in tents and moving over the desert in search of water and pasture, but the majority of the country's population now resides in urban areas, with one-third of the population residing in Nouakchott, the capital.²

Mauritania is one of the least developed countries in the world. It ranks number 152 of 177 on the 2004 United Nations Human Development Index. Literacy is calculated at 93% for males, but at 31% for females. Annual per capita income is \$280. The state religion is Islam, and virtually 100% of the population is Muslim. There are very few international donor and development agencies active in Mauritania. Peace Corps is the largest and most visible international organization in the country and plays an important role in development activities in Mauritania. Over 1,000 Peace Corps Volunteers have served in Mauritania since 1967.

¹ Mr. Scanlon was hired as an expert to assist with this study. He is a former country director twice, a former regional Chief of Operations, and a former Director of Recruitment.

² World Bank, *Mauritania Country Brief*, updated August 2006.

Our interviews with the staff and Volunteers identified three elements that appeared most to determine the Volunteers' positive service experience in Mauritania:

- PC/Mauritania's pre-service training (PST) program.
- The post's programmatic focus on girls' education in secondary projects.
- The post's successful Volunteer support strategy that addresses the challenges that the staff face in the absence of infrastructure.

VOLUNTEER TRAINING: PREPARING THE FACE OF AMERICA

PC/Mauritania Volunteers live and work in a highly political environment. The government and the local people with whom the Volunteers work are sensitive about events in the Middle East, which have twice forced the Peace Corps to close its program in Mauritania. The Integrated Programming and Budgeting System (IPBS) 2007-2009 proposal notes the need for further sensitivity and vigilance: "Continuing difficulties in the Arab/American relationship impact Peace Corps Volunteers in Mauritania. Overwhelmingly, Peace Corps Volunteers are the only Americans at their sites, and the Peace Corps is the biggest and most visible international organization in [the] country."

More than two-thirds of the Volunteers are female, reflecting the gender composition of Volunteers worldwide. In the 2004 Volunteer survey, 69% of the Volunteers in country and responding to the survey were female; 87% were under 35 years old, and 83% were unmarried. The IPBS notes: "Although Mauritania, a traditionally conservative Muslim society with a history of ethnic/racial problems, is gradually opening up to other religions, cultures, and ideas, non-Muslims, women, and minority Volunteers still encounter difficulties and endure frequent harassment." The challenge is to prepare the typical American Volunteer—young, single, and female—to live and work in Mauritania. The post meets this challenge in the following ways:

Realistic Volunteer Assignment Descriptions (VADs): In the 2004 Volunteer survey, almost twice the proportion of PC/Mauritania Volunteers rated the VADs as "useful" or "extremely useful," compared to the global data. A review of the VADs indicates that the staff provided specific details of actual tasks and realistic descriptions of the conditions where the Volunteers work. The VADs include:

1. Clear expectations about language learning, as illustrated below:
 - "As a Volunteer and a community member, you will need to be able to communicate in French or the local language."
 - "[During training] . . . local languages are taught in French . . ."
2. The following concrete examples of the work the Volunteer will be expected to perform:
 - "Explaining your role to your community."
 - "Promoting biogas as an alternative fuel source."
 - "Promoting and building live fencing and windbreaks to protect the gardens, fruit trees, and Moringa plantation from animals and wind effects."

- “Assisting community members in the maintenance and operation of a clean water supply system.”
- “Creating solar-powered computer centers in rural areas that lack electricity.”
- “Teaching numeracy and literacy.”

3. Practical guidance about culturally acceptable standards of dress includes:

- “When working in gardens, ...female Volunteers should wear blouses and long skirts....Neither males nor females show their knees in public.”

Concentrating resources for one Trainee Input (TI) per year: PC/Mauritania has one PST each July. A single annual Trainee input has several advantages for the post:

- Because schools are not in session, the post attracts highly qualified teachers as language and cross-cultural facilitators (LCFs).
- The agroforestry Trainees benefit by arriving in the rainy season, when they experience common negative gardening conditions, such as pest infestations.
- Using the same location for PST continuously over a period of time facilitates ongoing relationships with the local political structure, the local education officials who approve the use of the local high school as a training center, and the families who become hosts to the Trainees.
- One TI in the same location is also more efficient for the administrative staff in providing logistical support.

Preparing and planning for PST: The training manager and the Associate Peace Corps Directors (APCDs) share a strong commitment to training. They recognize that programming drives training and that the post must prepare the Volunteer to perform the tasks that fulfill the goals of the project plan as well as to deal with the realities of living in Mauritania. Training begins PST, continues with two in-service training events (ISTs), and ends with the close of service (COS) conference. The training manager prepares for PST by:

- Developing a training team of APCDs, training staff, Peace Corps Medical Officers (PCMOs), the administrative officer, and the safety and security coordinator (SSC). This team monitors the progress of the Trainees in skills development and provides feedback to the training manager and trainers.
- Convening a Training Design Workshop lasting approximately 2 - 3 days for the APCDs to establish the Trainees’ competencies. The group discusses what needs to be learned; how best to present it; and the modalities for teaching and learning language, technical, and cross cultural proficiencies. This occurs about six months prior to PST.
- Conducting an Integration Workshop about three months prior to PST that includes the APCDs, programming and training assistants, training coordinators, and trainers. The focus and purpose of this one to two day workshop is to design cross-sectoral training events or sessions among the four projects, so that Volunteers from one project understand, are involved in, and can collaborate with Volunteers from other projects. This approach enhances collaboration among the Trainees across all

projects to complete assigned technical exercises during the community-based training (CBT) and lays the groundwork for future Volunteer collaboration.

- Organizing the Training of Trainers (TOT) workshop. The TOT is scheduled approximately two weeks prior to the arrival of the Trainees. Everyone involved in the PST attends, including all the trainers, APCDs, the country director, administrative officer, logistics staff, PCMOs, and Volunteer trainers. The purpose of this four to five day session is to develop the PST calendar, the daily activities, individual responsibilities, and what is needed to conduct these activities.

Providing superior language training: Trainees live in villages with host families for eight weeks. The language and cross-cultural coordinators live with them in these villages. The emphasis is on learning the language and culture. Daily lessons are augmented by the language and cross-cultural opportunities with families and other village residents. In addition to French, the Trainees learn Hassaniya, Pulaar, Soninke, or Wolof, depending on the language spoken at their site. The staff make tentative site placement decisions within the first two weeks of PST, based on the Trainees' resumes, aspiration statements, and discussions with staff. Final decisions about site assignments are made in the sixth week of PST.

Language learning is facilitated by the following factors:

1. Early assignment decisions based on the sectors, e.g., urban-based Volunteers (business and education) are in urban settings requiring French.
2. Assigning Trainees to homestay families who speak the target languages.
3. Hiring language instructors who have taught for Peace Corps in the past, and monitoring and supporting new language instructors.
4. Setting firm expectations for language achievement. The training manager and language coordinator establish achievement levels.
5. Grouping language classes of the same level for one day a week to give Trainees the opportunity to be taught by different facilitators (communication styles, accents, teaching strategies, and skills).
6. Monitoring and evaluation of Trainees' progress.
7. An experienced language coordinator who understands Volunteers' language needs, because he has traveled to Volunteer sites to help train tutors and monitor Volunteers' long-term language learning (see Box 1).

Cross-cultural training and preparation:

The PST site is located in a mid-size town about 3 to 4 hours south of the capital. It is a government high school in a safe location. This location has been used continuously for the past several years. The PST site was chosen because it contains a diverse population, allowing the Trainees to be placed with families speaking the target languages. The location also provides homestay families

Box 1. On-going language learning

To assure on-going language learning at site, the language coordinator provides the Volunteers with a list of trained and vetted tutors available at their site. Language tutoring is provided during the two-year service with intensive tutoring during the first three months in the field. These tutors are often the language instructors at PST, or local qualified teachers from the primary schools in the villages.

Training Manager, PC/Mauritania

in rural settings for the Volunteers most likely to be assigned to rural areas. While the staff presents general sessions on the social, cultural, religious, and economic conditions in Mauritania, the Trainees learn how to manage cultural differences largely through the homestay family experience. The staff prepare the homestay families to expect and assist Trainees through the inevitable cultural mishaps; the training manager stated that many of the families have hosted several generations of Trainees. The language facilitators are available to the Trainees for instant feed-back and assistance. The surrounding villages form clusters of Trainees who can collaborate for group technical learning exercises.

Integrated technical training: The PST is a mix of the CBT and center models. The goal of the PST is to provide the Trainees with technical competence in 10 weeks, along with language and cross-cultural skills. This process begins in the first ten to twelve days of the PST. While at the training center, the Trainees receive logistical and introductory information about Peace Corps policies and procedures, PST goals and guidelines, medical care, etc., and are introduced to the project plans and an overview of the technical training schedule. The most important objective during this period is to interview and observe the Trainees. The staff make preliminary decisions for language and homestay assignments that will match the Trainees' site assignments with the appropriate community and family environment.

During the majority of the subsequent eight weeks, Trainees are with their families focused on language learning and cross-cultural understanding. The Trainees and staff come to the training center for "Center Days" for two days every two weeks for technical training sessions and project group discussions by APCDs, ministry trainers, programming and training assistants, and second and third-year Volunteers, who give hands-on presentations with a "how to" focus. The Trainees learn gardening, how to teach in the Mauritanian schools, and how to conduct Gender and Development (GAD) promotions and HIV/AIDS presentations. The experienced Volunteers' presentations raise the Trainees' confidence and enthusiasm. The technical competencies prepare new Volunteers for their first three months in their assignments, after which their technical training continues at an in-service training.

Box 2. Pre-Service training

The PST is designed in the spirit of **encouraging independence, celebrating community, and promoting sustainability**. Peace Corps Mauritania's training approach is best described as discovery-oriented and self-directed. It is based on adult training methods that encourage the learner to take responsibility for his or her own learning, as well as on the experiences of current Peace Corps Volunteers in field.

PC/Mauritania TSR, 2005

Trainee Directed Activities (TDAs) are the medium of technical training during PST. There is a consistent message from the program staff and trainers that Volunteers are in Mauritania to do a job in a professional, culturally sensitive, and partnering manner. The Trainee Directed Activities promote Trainees' ownership for their training (see Box 2).

Two factors enhance TDAs as a learning experience. The first is the use of a "motivator exercise" before each technical session; the exercise helps the Trainee understand how the upcoming session is going to be directly related to their work as a Volunteer. Volunteer trainers provide examples or scenarios to demonstrate the practical implications of the training session. The

second factor is the immediate application of the lesson. Each training village is the setting for practicing gardening techniques, tree planting or grafting, and giving presentations and leading activities in such topics as HIV/AIDS awareness or environmental education. The community provides practical laboratories to learn about small businesses in Mauritania and to practice teaching or instructing in such subjects as simple accounting or literacy. A model school complete with Mauritanian students, chalk, bells, and a simulated administration provides about 40 hours of experience for the education Volunteers. APCDs and the programming and training assistants (PTAs) visit the clusters during the two-week intervals between center presentations and the community experience to monitor the Trainees' progress.

During the sixth week of PST, staff announce their final decisions on site assignments and the Trainees depart to spend one week at their sites with a COSing Volunteer who explains the activities at the site and introduces the Trainee to the community. Where there is no current Volunteer, the training staff, APCDs, and programming and training assistants accompany Trainees to their sites.

Monitoring and evaluation systems: The training staff monitor Trainee progress in a number of ways. Each instructor is responsible for observing and documenting Trainees' progress. At two different intervals in the training calendar, Trainees are asked to assess their own progress with their instructors and facilitators. In addition, PC/Mauritania training staff use a team of "evaluators." These evaluators are members of the staff assigned to monitor a group of Trainees. They observe Trainee interactions and interview Trainees to offer a third perspective (see Appendix A).

The results: The staff's attention to language learning helped the post achieve better than average levels of Volunteer satisfaction with their language skills. In the 2004 Volunteer survey, 64% of PC/Mauritania Volunteers indicated they speak the local language "well" or "very well," compared to 45% of Volunteers worldwide. Fifty-seven percent of PC/Mauritania Volunteers rate on-going support of language learning after PST as "considerably" to "completely" satisfactory, compared to 39% of Volunteers worldwide with similar ratings. Success is shown by the Volunteers' rating of their technical training as third among the nine posts participating in this study.

Immediately after the swearing in ceremony, the training staff conduct a detailed assessment of the PST. They analyze the staff and Trainee evaluations and make recommendations for changes. Staff credited the meticulous preparation and implementation of PST to the experience, skill, and leadership of the training manager.

About PC/Mauritania's PST
It's tough! If I had to go through this training, I would never make it!
Country Director, PC/Mauritania

PC/Mauritania training continues with the Early Term Reconnect (ETR) after three months in the field. The ETR includes sector technical training, which lasts from three to five days. After one year, the Volunteers attend a Mid-Term Reconnect (MTR) training

event. To encourage continued language learning, Language Performance Indicators (LPIs) are measured at the end of PST, at the MTR, and at the end of service.

PROGRAMMING: HOW THE VOLUNTEERS WORK TO ADDRESS THE NEEDS OF MAURITANIANS

The Peace Corps consistently has worked with the Government of Mauritania (GoM) ministries to focus the work of the Volunteers on the needs outlined in the country plans. The Integrated Programming and Budgeting System (IPBS) 2007-2009 describes the Peace Corps' close relationship with the government as follows:

Peace Corps has a seat at the table: Mauritania hosts a very small number of international donor and development agencies. The majority of the larger ones are members of the United Nations system and a remaining handful are international NGOs. The GoM has set up a coordination body that meets with these agencies and involves them in the design of national strategies. Collaboration with Peace Corps and the important contributions of Volunteers are discussed at these meetings. All five of the GoRIM Ministries linked to Peace Corps by an MOU, have identified high-level focal points for follow-up and PC has regular access to Ministers.

PROGRAMS

Volunteers work in the following five projects. See Table 1 for the number of Volunteers assigned to each project.

Education/TEFL: The education project was re-launched in the year 2000, following a sweeping education reform that introduced English in the first segment of secondary education (junior high school). PC/Mauritania works primarily with The National Ministry for Education and other partners to:

- Provide English teaching to Mauritanian secondary school students.
- Build and develop the host country national (HCN) teachers' capacity.
- Support and increase the enrollment and attendance of female students.

Agroforestry: The agroforestry project helps local communities improve their nutrition by producing and consuming more diversified food while protecting, conserving and restoring their environment. Volunteers focus on three goals:

- Teach about nutrition and support the production of more diversified food and promote better gardening techniques, growing fruit trees, and planting Moringa trees.
- Raise awareness about environmental protection and restoration through tree planting and the promotion of alternative energy sources and energy conservation.
- Organize communities to promote and protect their agricultural resources.

Environmental Education: The environmental education project's purpose is to increase environmental awareness among local community members and elementary school children and promote appropriate behavior toward the environment. Volunteers:

- Work with teachers to develop and teach environmental education lessons that take into account the local environmental realities.
- Promote educational and practical activities at the school and facilitate environmental awareness between the schools and their communities.
- Develop an environmental protection action plan with communities.

Small Enterprise Development/Information Communications and Technology (SED/ICT): The business and ICT programs exist to help Mauritians raise their standard of living by increasing income and employment opportunities in the informal sector or the economy. Volunteers work in a variety of activities including business, micro-finance, and computer training for entrepreneurs and cooperatives.

Health Education: The health project assists the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs in reducing the morbidity and mortality of Mauritians by planning and implementing preventative health activities across the country. The project works to raise public awareness of preventative health issues and improve behaviors. Volunteers and collaborators also work to reinforce hygiene, water, and sanitation structures.

Table 1. Number of Volunteers in PC/Mauritania Projects

Project	Education/TEFL	Agroforestry	Environmental Education	SBD/ICT	Health Education
Number of Volunteers	23	14	10	25	16

Source: FY 2005 Project Status Reports

PC/Mauritania's biggest secondary project: Changing the status of women. All PC/Mauritania Volunteers are trained in the promotion of girls' education and play a role assisting the GoRIM to foster girls' education. Together with the Ministry of Education and the State Secretariat for Women's Affairs and with the financial assistance of NGOs and the American embassy, Volunteers established a number of Girls' Mentoring Centers. Often located in a school or other central space, the centers provide a safe and relaxing environment for Mauritanian girls to advance their skills and capabilities outside the formal classroom setting. At the time of our study, there were twelve centers, predominantly in the regional capitals. The role of the Volunteers and other volunteer mentors and educators is to provide tutorials, computer science, and vocational skills.

The centers are usually managed by a Volunteer—most often an Education/TEFL Volunteer but sometimes an SED/ICT Volunteer. A third-year Volunteer, located in the capital, coordinates and supports the Volunteers who work in the centers. The centers are popular with Mauritanian women and girls. The country director believes that the demand for services stretches the time and resources of the Peace Corps staff, but the Volunteers respond to the demand. Almost every Volunteer becomes involved in some capacity in a nearby Girls' Mentoring Center.

According to the country director, the need is enormous, the response is overwhelming, the government is enthusiastic, and the satisfaction experienced by the Volunteers is so significant that the activity merits designation as a major project. The country director points out that female Volunteers are available and competent to fill the role of mentor. The next major objective, however, is to find competent Mauritanian women to assume leadership in the management of the centers.

PC/Mauritania's role in promoting gender equity is visible. In the 2004 Volunteer survey, 48% of the Volunteers reported working with girls as a part of their primary project, compared to 24% of Volunteers worldwide; 68% of PC/Mauritania Volunteers reported girls' education as a secondary project, compared to 28% of Volunteers worldwide.

WHY THE VOLUNTEERS SUCCEED: THE STAFF

Staff summarized four characteristics that they believe explain their success. These are:

- Excellent intra-office staff working relations.
- Qualified and experienced staff.
- Excellent working relationships with the government ministries.
- Respect and support for the Volunteers.

Excellent intra-office staff working relations: Staff attribute their programming success, in part, to the collegiality and collaboration that characterizes their professional relationships as co-workers. The entire programming and training staff seemed secure and competent in their specific areas of work, but not too proud to reach out and help others, or to allow other staff to enter into their "program space" with ideas and suggestions for how programs could work more effectively for the Volunteers and the communities. Cooperation among staff results in cross-sector integration and collaboration among the Volunteers and their projects (see Box 3). Education Volunteers may have projects in gardening or HIV/AIDS; agriculture Volunteers participate in Girls' Mentoring Centers or income-generating schemes; and health Volunteers may present environmental education topics in their activities at their Girls' Camps. The program and training staff meet monthly to identify, develop, and promote opportunities for collaboration.

Box 3. Effective cross-sectoral collaboration

The production and marketing of "Cere Amine," a flour made from locally grown grains developed as a nutritional food supplement is a joint project of the SED and health Volunteers. The SED Volunteers enlisted the help of the health Volunteers to provide a demonstration (complete with sample donuts and drinks made from "Cere Amine") to the women. The presentations resulted in a 50% increase in sales the first month.

PC/Mauritania Video Clip

Qualified and dedicated staff: As seen in Box 4, the majority of the host country national staff have been with PC/Mauritania for nine years or more (training director for 25 years), and they have worked their way up the ladder to their current positions. They are skilled in their program areas; familiar with other staff responsibilities; knowledgeable of host country government operations; and remarkable in their drive, initiative, and enthusiasm.

Most of the local staff worked previously at high levels in the ministries of the Mauritanian government and with the principal NGOs. These personal connections, and the staff's understanding of the bureaucratic procedures, help significantly in the post's ability to garner support and cooperation for Volunteer activities. The country director was particularly enthusiastic about the ability of the host country staff to interact positively with representatives of the GoRIM. Government representatives see the local Peace Corps staff as the "Mauritanian face of Peace Corps."

Box 4. PC/Mauritania Staff Positions: Background and Experience

POSITION	BACKGROUND AND EXPERIENCE
Country Director, USDH	With PC/Mauritania for 5 years, first as APCD/SED/ICT, then as country director. RPCV in the Central Africa Republic as a math teacher, and in Tunisia as a Youth Development Agent. Before coming to PC/Mauritania, served in management roles in several NGOs dealing with African issues including three years as Executive Assistant for the African-American Institute. Degrees in Economics, Political Science, and French.
Administrative Officer USDH	Came to PC/Mauritania in 2004 after serving as administrative officer in Gabon, three years as country director of an American non-profit educational and cultural program in Tunisia, and director of an English teaching program in Burkina Faso.
APCD/Agroforestry and Environmental Education	With PC/Mauritania since 1997, beginning as a lead technical trainer for the agroforestry sector and managing the Small Project Assistance and Peace Corps Partnership Programs. He has a M.A. degree in Forestry from Northern Arizona University.
APCD/Health	With PC/Mauritania since 1997, first as a language and cross-cultural facilitator for five years and since 2005 as APCD/Health. Degree in TEFL from the Moray House College of Education, Edinburgh, UK. Has taught English and French for 15 years. In addition to French, speaks Arabic and three other Mauritanian dialects.
APCD/SED/ICT, USDH	Came to PC/Mauritania after three years as Peace Corps Recruiter. RPCV in agroforestry in Niger and has an M.B.A. and a B.A. in International Studies. Has experience in market research and product development.
APCD/Education and GAD advisor	With PC/Mauritania for three years after 14 years of English teaching at both the high school and university levels. M.A. in TESOL from Moray House College in Edinburgh, Scotland and former professor at University of Nouakchott.
Training Manager	Began as a language instructor 25 years ago, then became a language coordinator, and later the training manager for 10 years. Prior to Peace Corps, served as a mathematics instructor and associate high school director in Mauritania.

The American leadership: According to the host country staff we interviewed, the qualities of the American staff have an immense impact on the functioning of the post. PC/Mauritania staff report that the current country director provides an open and supportive management approach that leads rather than directs; the staff state these leadership qualities allow them to work effectively. The country director has prior experience as a former Volunteer in other African countries and, more recently, as an APCD in Mauritania. The staff also appreciated the work and style of the administrative officer; they value the collaborative approach that allows them to understand the financial resources required for good programming and training; the administrative officer is serving his second tour in Mauritania.

The staff suggested that leadership with experience in Mauritania was important to understand the local work environment such as vast distances, harsh conditions, poor infrastructure, and poverty—conditions that are removed from the experience of many Americans. For example, program staff meetings are held only once a month as a concession to the fact that the staff must travel for long periods of time; the staff remain in the office one week each month for meetings and other joint activities.

Relations with the local government and NGOs: PC/Mauritania involves the government in its project planning and implementation. All project plans and significant changes to the plans are reviewed and discussed with the ministries at all levels. All training reports and yearly project plan reviews are shared with ministry officials at their headquarters and regional offices. The same process is used with the NGOs with which the Peace Corps places Volunteers. This results in consistent and high quality support to Volunteers at the local level from the government and the NGOs.

Site Selection: an example of government collaboration: The site development process is collaborative for Peace Corps staff and their partner ministries and NGOs. In January of each year, the APCDs, together with the country director, PCMOs, safety and security coordinator, and the programming and training assistants, discuss Volunteer sites and assignments from the perspective of regional balance and areas of need.

Following those discussions, they meet with central ministry officials, followed by meetings with regional and local representatives and Volunteer regional coordinators regarding potential sites. From these discussions, the APCDs select target sites and begin meeting with local mayors and village leaders to determine interest and to explain the responsibilities and expectations. Peace Corps outlines its criteria for housing, transportation, communications, safety and health facilities, and Volunteer support. By March, the APCD makes site decisions and shares these with the relevant stakeholders and Peace Corps staff. The process is both practical and mutually beneficial to the government and the PC/Mauritania staff. For the Volunteers, the process is also rewarding; in the 2004 survey, PC/Mauritania Volunteers were asked how well their assignments matched their skills, interests, and experience; 43% stated their assignments were “considerably” or “completely” satisfactory, compared to 28% of Volunteers worldwide.

RESPECT AND SUPPORT FOR THE VOLUNTEERS

The staff use site visits and peer support as the two main pillars of Volunteer support.

Site visits. Of the PC/Mauritania Volunteers who responded to the 2004 Volunteer survey, 93% reported that their “comfort level” with the country director during site visits was “more than adequate,” and 79% stated the country director was “more than adequate” in his response to their issues. The country director visits sites as often as possible. PC/Mauritania program staff, PCMOs, and the safety and security coordinator all visit Volunteers once a year—some more often. In the survey responses, 89% of PC/Mauritania Volunteers reported visits from the safety and security coordinator, compared to 46% worldwide. The programming and training assistants also conduct site visits, as does the administrative officer on occasion. The staff use a published site visit schedule that is updated regularly to help the staff coordinate their travel. As often as possible, staff travel together for vehicle and gasoline efficiency, and frequently the APCDs will visit Volunteers of another project who are in the same area. Forty percent of the PC/Mauritania Volunteers responding to the 2004 Volunteer survey, compared to 29% of Volunteers worldwide, said they were “considerably” or “completely satisfied” with technical support.

Peer support. Volunteers receive informal peer support from nearby Volunteer colleagues, and they receive formal support from PC/Mauritania’s regional representatives, who serve as elected representatives and wardens.

Exchanging ideas and planning projects or events instill confidence, enthusiasm, and motivation among Volunteers. PC/Mauritania promotes these informal Volunteer interactions in strategic ways to ensure that Volunteers hear about and adopt culturally appropriate activities to be effective in the local environment and to achieve successful results. The strategies designed and employed by staff include Volunteer presentations at PST and IST events and site placements that group Volunteers together to provide opportunities for exchange within and among the sectors in proximity to one another. Staff reported a multiplier effect from Volunteers who have achieved positive program results, sharing their approaches and activities with other Volunteers.

Regional representatives are usually third year Volunteers living in proximity to the thirteen regional offices. The regional offices usually are a room, often in the local mayor’s office, equipped with a computer, printer, a phone, a fax, a fan, and, maybe, a bookshelf. The purpose of the regional offices is to provide computer, internet, and communication resources for the Volunteers, minimizing the need to travel long distances on the local “bush taxis.”

The duties of the regional representative include:

- Serving as the primary contact for the Volunteers in the area.
- Reporting weekly to the safety and security coordinator on the whereabouts and security of the Volunteers.

- Acting as trained and certified sub-cashiers responsible for paying the phone bills, electricity, and rent, if applicable.
- Maintaining an emergency evacuation fund for Emergency Action Plan (EAP) implementation.
- Serving as representatives in the Volunteer Advisory Council (VAC).
- Providing technical support to Volunteers.

WHAT WE LEARNED...

PC/Mauritania has consistently low early termination (ET) rates, and several survey indicators of Volunteer satisfaction were above the norm compared to global averages. We also found programs that are needed by the people and supported by the government, an exemplary training approach, and Volunteer support that successfully overcomes significant difficulties.

The early termination rate for PC/Mauritania is among the lowest in the Africa Region and worldwide. PC/Mauritania also enjoys a higher than average rate of Volunteers extending their service; for PC/Mauritania, the extension rate is 13%, compared to 7% worldwide. Overall, the Volunteer survey showed that 60% of PC/Mauritania Volunteers reported they find their Peace Corps service “exceptionally” rewarding, compared to 32% Volunteers worldwide. Fifty-five percent of the Volunteers believe that the Peace Corps in Mauritania should be expanded, compared to 33% of Volunteers worldwide. PC/Mauritania is doing a lot of things well.

Table 2. Volunteer Early Termination Rates

Year	PC/Mauritania (%)	Africa Region (%)	Worldwide (%)
2001	19	12.6	12.3
2002	22.5	11.4	11.7
2003	19.5	10.6	10.5
2004	4.3	11.7	11.3
2005	8.8	10.6	11.7

Source: Office of Planning, Policy, and Analysis

PHASE II: THE VOLUNTEERS' PERSPECTIVE

This job is tough – in about a hundred and unexpected ways daily.

PC/Mauritania Volunteer

Approximately seven months after recording the staff's view of the post's elements of programming success, we spoke to the Volunteers. With the assistance of the post, we convened small groups of Volunteers to learn what factors contributed to their service in PC/Mauritania. We met with 28 Volunteers or 32% of the Volunteers in country at the time of our visit. We met in small groups of 6 to 15 Volunteers in each group and we conducted some individual interviews. The meeting sites were in Nouakchott, Aleg, Mathlager, Tidjikja, Atar, Chinguetti, Tirit, Jidrei Mohghen and Rosso. The sessions lasted from three to five hours.

“Why we are here.” A theme that recurred in talking with the Volunteers was their acute awareness of the impact of their service on the people of Mauritania and of their role as emissaries of the United States.

One Volunteer wrote, “My town hadn't seen a Westerner for over 20 years, and some thought they couldn't eat with us. I hope more Volunteers follow me and continue to give them another face of America.” Wrote another, “They have had the opportunity to be exposed to a ‘real’ American and learn that we are human beings just like them—despite the many differences between us!”

“The women here have seen that as a woman, I can live independently and thrive on my own and living on my own.”

PC/Mauritania Volunteer

Volunteers clearly understand – and enjoy – their role as “another face of America” for Mauritians to see, rather than being exposed only to what is on the television and the news, and to know that Americans care and are committed to working and living with them. In the OIG survey completed for this study, 65% of the PC/Mauritania Volunteers who responded to the survey indicated their “time and efforts are valued” “well” or “very well.”

Others stressed the personal benefit of their experience. Explaining why she believed her Peace Corps experience was so satisfying, a Volunteer wrote, “[I have received] exposure to Islam and Muslim societies dispelling [my own] fear and stereotypes.”

Transforming attitudes does not come easily. “It's the toughest job of all time,” said one Volunteer. A Volunteer explained how the process worked for him, “At first, it seemed like they close themselves off from foreigners, but when you speak their language, they respect you and begin to see us as approachable. At first, Volunteers struggle with this closed aspect, but we do eventually go from outside to inside.” Another summarized her experience, “Yes, Volunteers can witness conservatism and closed-mindedness, but, once you take that initiative to integrate, make friends, and become accepted by them, you cross the line from visitor to community member. Every

Volunteer has that crossing and defining moment when you become one of the community.” The success of the PC/Mauritania Volunteers in the face of the cultural and language challenges is impressive. Of the posts participating in the programming study, PC/Mauritania ranks third in Volunteers considering themselves “well” or “very well” integrated into their communities.

The Volunteers appreciated that this exchange of two cultures allows peoples of both to grow and to recognize the goodness and positive aspects in each. Many Volunteers stated that they have grown in the sense of “understanding myself.” “This Peace Corps job is not easy, this country is not easy, but the difficulties have made me more determined, more resilient to overcome the difficulties, to stay and to continue on,” said a Volunteer. One Volunteer expressed a newfound respect for Mauritania as well as for America, “I appreciate my home, my culture, my family as never before, but I recognize and appreciate the endurance of this culture and these people and how they survive and maintain their happiness in their simple way of life. Our culture may be different, but there is much that is the same as we strive to live life.”

The Volunteers’ assessment of their own effectiveness places PC/Mauritania third among the nine posts participating in this study. The Volunteers felt they had grown from living among the people of Mauritania. They learned how to live in this culture even though at times it is very difficult. They described the country (not the people) as a harsh environment, i.e., hot, an overabundance of poverty, poor physical infrastructure (roads, water, power, communication and transportation). This cross cultural experience has opened them up to another set of values, another approach to living, a different way of doing things and different government operations. Another stated thoughtfully, “I have gained a more mature understanding of the nature of poverty.” After living in Mauritania, another Volunteer summarized her experience writing: “As time passes, I am realizing their reality. Life is *Insh’allah* (as God wills it) here.”

PREPARED FOR THE CHALLENGE

Community-Based Training: Volunteers repeated themes of “good technical and language training in PST, and good cross-cultural training.” The Volunteers consistently gave high marks to PST. They considered the community-based training very difficult and challenging, but also helpful in preparing them for the cultural challenges at their sites. “The first few days of living, eating, working, and learning a language in a local village with a Mauritanian family was exhausting and not easy. But as the days went on, it became easier and more enjoyable and definitely was the best way to prepare for the work assignment in the villages and a very effective way to become immersed in another culture,” stated a health Volunteer.

[It’s] the land of tea and tents and dunes and donkeys... .90% of my community has not received an education past 9th grade, but they know more about life and living and this land than one can ever discover in a textbook. I admire and respect those with whom I work and live for their courage, perseverance, and optimism.

Volunteer, PC/Mauritania

Excellent language training: There was universal agreement with the Volunteer who stated, “Language is the foundation. Without language, you can’t do anything here.” The Volunteers were confident in their language abilities and credited their language trainers as excellent instructors and tutors who always had time to work with them. “Good language instructors—always at site and always available,” was a common remark from the Volunteers. The Volunteers feel their language training gives them a great advantage; said one, “The language training is so great because it is our tool to communicate with the local people. [Language training] puts us above other non-Mauritanians.” Another Volunteer recapped the discussion: “Language and cross-culture training were the most important and impactful [*sic*] aspects of pre-service training that allowed me to better integrate in the community once posted.”

Technical Training: The PC/Mauritania Volunteers were clear about the priorities for PST. After language and cross-cultural training, it is technical training that determines the quality of their experience. An education Volunteer wrote: “[First] Technical training (very crucial), then, language (a necessity). These are the obvious, yet essential [components].” The education Volunteers also spoke appreciatively of their model school experience at PST. The Volunteer teachers recognized the value of this model school experience and how much it helped them in their current assignments. The agroforestry Volunteers reported they learned how to garden, how and what trees to plant, and the cycles and tasks for successful gardening.

Volunteers also had substantive remarks regarding the current Volunteers who were effectively used as program trainers in the various sectors. Consistently, they mentioned these Volunteers as being realistic, practical, and able to put the work assignments in perspective with focused and hands-on presentations.

“[PST] convinced me I had something of value to offer to Mauritanians,” said one Volunteer discussing the overall PST experience; the Volunteers believe that they not only received the most important tools they needed to be successful at their sites, but, more importantly, they believed the PST established their self-confidence. An enthusiastic education Volunteer said, “Peace Corps has provided the foundation I need to get work done. The language training and the teacher training have allowed me to begin living here and doing my job with some degree of confidence.”

BEING USEFUL: PC/MAURITANIA PROJECTS

The VADs: The Volunteers agreed that the descriptions of service as presented in the VAD provided a realistic impression of their work, their life in Mauritania, and of the people of Mauritania. Said one Volunteer, “[The] VAD is the reality of what I do. It [VAD] was surprisingly accurate. Some materials are very honest and forthright.”

Good sites: The Volunteers spoke positively of their sites and assignments. This was particularly true of the education and agricultural project sectors. Volunteers were appreciative of the freedom they have in pursuing the needs of the Mauritanian people. Volunteer comments included: “The needs here are so great that you can find a niche for

any of your interests, hobbies, or skills. The Peace Corps is very supportive and encourages new approaches.” “The work possibilities are endless.” “Flexibility in the projects is an opportunity to be creative.”

Good counterparts: Many of the Volunteers we interviewed also credited productivity in their work with the quality of their relationship with their supervisors and counterparts. A SED Volunteer stated: “I was blessed with a very supportive mayor, and a very actively involved counterpart. Personal relationships were key in order to be able to create a support network both personal and professional. I have had open and supportive relations with local NGOs such as the World Lutheran Foundation and CARITAS, which allowed me to occasionally use their transportation, staff, and equipment.” An education Volunteer agreed, “I’m the first education Volunteer here. They have accepted me now. They notice that I’m teaching with them, with their syllabus, and with host national teaching methods.”

Cultural integration: The Volunteers attributed their success in their primary assignments to their cultural integration. Described one Volunteer, “The people in the community are the backbone for the success of a Volunteer’s site. The willingness and helpfulness of a local community are critical. The communities become our new relatives and families. They give us our blueprint and action plan for what we will do in our service. In short, our communities allow us to experience what Peace Corps is.”

Other Volunteers also pointed to the importance of their integration into the community to enhance their work accomplishments. The following statements are a sample of the important role Volunteers believe is played by their communities and counterparts:

- “Yes, I have a counterpart, and I do work with her, and she is also my friend.”
- “Other teachers at the Lycee have helped introduce me to the community and accelerate my cultural integration. . . .”
- “I have a good counterpart who introduced me to 40 families. The Volunteer here before me suggested the counterpart for me.”
- “My school director is supportive of me—thinks I am a good teacher, and I live with a host family here with a Mauritian father, and he has helped me. He’s accepted by all his peers and neighbors.”
- “My counterpart is my best friend, although I don’t work with him.”
- “Have great teacher support.”

Many of the Volunteers we interviewed spoke of their activities in the Girls Mentoring Centers. Some were more active as leaders or managers of the Centers and others worked in the Centers as tutors or with Volunteer colleagues as tutors for the girls or on short-term projects. According to the Volunteers, the women of Mauritania are becoming better organized and seek out the Volunteers for support and leadership. One SED Volunteer reported, “The president of a women’s rights group welcomed us, and working in the women’s cooperative, you see there are a lot of motivated people that I can work with. Women come in from other towns and go to classes to learn new skills like, tie-dyeing, sewing, computers, soap making, and food conservation (canning).” Another

Volunteer stated that her own work style was to work with women individually, “It’s nice to go and train 50 women, but one of the most valuable experiences [for me] is to help one, two, or three women. It gives people the confidence to do what they want.”

PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS AND THE GOVERNMENT OF MAURITANIA

The Volunteers were impressed with the Ministry contacts and relationships that the APCDs had with their respective government offices. We were equally impressed with the familiarity and ease of relationships Volunteers said they had with government officials. This level of communication with the ministries helped to smooth the progress of some program and managerial issues at the various sites. A SED Volunteer commented: “[The government representatives] ...are very enthusiastic about Peace Corps and help me a lot.”

Recent changes in the ministries as a result of the 2005 *coup d’etat* meant that APCDs and Volunteers alike had to re-establish contacts and explain, yet again, the presence and role of Peace Corps, but none of the Volunteers expressed concern or overt negative consequences to the Peace Corps as a result of the coup; they said some decisions were delayed and projects postponed longer than usual to accommodate new officials, but activities continued. In fact, Volunteers told us, the new government sent three emissaries from three different ministries to a Gender and Development awards ceremony organized by the Volunteers in one region. The more experienced Volunteers also noted that ministry changes, government restructuring, government policy changes, and expansion to new regions or personnel changes at host agencies (including at Peace Corps) occurred regularly and required flexibility on the part of the Volunteers.

The Volunteers were sensitive to the importance of the government’s involvement and support of Volunteer initiatives. For example, most of the Volunteers we interviewed who reported they were active in the Girls Mentoring Centers, mostly as secondary project activities, were concerned about the long-term sponsorship and sustainability of the centers. At the time of our visit, there were 12 Girls’ Mentoring Centers directed by education or SED Volunteers with a Volunteer leader located in the capital to coordinate the activities of all the centers. Some Volunteers expressed concern that neither the Ministry of Education nor the Ministry of Women’s Affairs are official sponsors of the Volunteers’ work. The Volunteers believe that the Girls’ Mentoring Centers movement is growing rapidly and needs management by Mauritians, direction and sponsorship by Mauritians, and acknowledgement by the Mauritanian government.

SUPPORT FROM PC/MAURITANIA STAFF: “THE BEST!”

The Volunteers emphasized that they were impressed with the PC/Mauritania staff. They find their APCDs easy to talk with, available to them, good listeners, and supportive. One Volunteer stated, “[The APCD] is very, very good because he’s sympathetic, personal, helpful, and attentive.” Another said, “My APCD is wonderful. He is a huge asset to the Peace Corps program, but I think highly of the other APCDs, too.”

Volunteers singled out the work and attitude of the host country staff for special accolades. Said one Volunteer, “[The] host country staff are just wonderful people. Americans are good too, but the host country staff are very good working with Americans.” Another wrote, “The Peace Corps staff in-country are phenomenal. They are very receptive to Volunteers’ needs and are friendly and responsive.” Asked why he felt so positive about the staff, one Volunteer stated, “They tend not to be judgmental. They have time for us when we call, write or see them in the office; [they are] an open, talented and helpful group of staff.” Other comments were similar. “Beginning with the training,” began another Volunteer, “the training manager and the entire staff were supportive and understanding.”

The Volunteers noticed the staff encouraged cross-sectoral activities among the Volunteers and appreciated that Volunteers had access to other sector APCDs for assistance. One Volunteer explained, “All the APCDs are helpful in “cross-over” like an SED Volunteer getting advice on gardening from another APCD.” The Volunteers said they benefited from this staff cross-fertilization and collaboration and consulted other APCDs regarding approaches and strategies for their specific projects. Said one, “The flexibility allowed as far as projects are concerned has also been extremely helpful, along with the feed-back received regularly from my APCD.”

The Volunteers indicated that they received sufficient site visits from the APCDs, PCMOs, and the safety and security coordinator and that they appreciated the attention they received. As one Volunteer said, “[There is] good support and site visits by APCDs—get visited two to three times a year. [There is a] wide open agenda, but quality time.” Another Volunteer wrote, “[I] get visited once every three months; [the staff are] generous, sharing and supportive; [there is] lots of openness.” The Volunteers only regretted that APCDs can’t spend more quality time with them during their site visits to discuss specific program/project concerns. The Volunteers expressed concern about the work load of the program staff and felt that staff were forced to hurry the site visits. Said one Volunteer, “It would be nice for site visits to focus on quality rather than quantity.” The Volunteers suggested that the APCDs initiate regional project sector meetings with opportunity for dialogue, but focused on work and projects.

The Volunteers also expressed appreciation for the country director’s leadership and staff’s understanding of the transportation issues facing Volunteers stationed in regional villages. Wrote one Volunteer, “[Country director] does his best to come up with creative solutions to problems and is constantly looking for ways to improve

The terrain, though spectacular, is extremely rugged. The routes, often not maintained, are frequently covered in areas by the unrelenting shifting sand.

Volunteer, PC/Mauritania

PC/Mauritania.” “The shuttle is a great improvement. It is possibly the reason some Volunteers did not ET,” said one Volunteer after speaking of the dangers of bush taxis. Another Volunteer singled out the Volunteer Support Officer (VSO) for his support of the Volunteers, “[VSO] does all the dirty work for me!” Many echoed this appreciative comment. There is general good will from the Volunteers when they speak of the staff and the office ambiance, “Doors are always open in the PC office.” When asked how PC/Mauritania contributes to the quality of their experience, one Volunteer wrote: “I

most appreciate the support that PC/Mauritania provides. Everyone is very friendly and will help you until they couldn't help you anymore. They are my safety net.”

CONCLUSION: PREPARING THE FACE OF AMERICA

Mauritania hosts a very small number of international donor and development agencies. Consequently, PC/Mauritania staff and Volunteers have a visible and important role in the development of Mauritania. As the only U.S. aid program, the Peace Corps—specifically the Volunteers—are “the face of America.” In PC/Mauritania, we found programs that are needed by the people and supported by the government. Programming in PC/Mauritania is uniquely shaped by the Volunteers’ collaboration, facilitated by clustering Volunteers in sites and led by the staff’s cooperative example. The staff make extraordinary efforts in supporting the Volunteers in this country, where logistics and transportation are serious challenges.

The Volunteers reported a high degree of openness and communication between and among staff and Volunteers in Mauritania. The Volunteers feel supported and valued by the staff. We heard consistently that the quality of leadership of the country director and staff was excellent. The staff were viewed as hard-working, dedicated, talented, and accessible to the program and personal needs of the Volunteers. One Volunteer’s written comment provided a good summary:

I feel that the technical, language, and cultural training, as well as the management of the Peace Corps program in Mauritania are rather exceptional. Throughout my service, my experiences with support staff (CD, APCD, medical staff and Volunteer support, etc) have been very good, and certain staff members have gone out of their way to provide me with specific resources and assistance I needed to carry on my work as a Volunteer.

The Volunteers had a keen sense of being “the face of America” and felt an obligation to gain respect professionally and personally.

APPENDIX A

Tools to Monitor Trainee Progress

Trainee Self-Assessment and Feedback Form 2005

(for Trainee as reference)

The overall purpose, goals, competencies, and behavioral objectives for Pre-Service Orientation and Training - which we mutually make efforts to help you to achieve - encourage you and provide opportunities for you to exhibit behavior that we can objectively monitor and provide you feedback on. This is all with respect to the overall training plan information, respective Technical, Language, Cross Culture, and Personal Health & Safety component overviews, qualification criteria guidelines, and policies and procedures which have been presented to you. Summary guides and explanations for monitoring and documenting these observations are listed below for the four major components plus the overall general PST which is covered in item # 6. Individual feedback/evaluation meetings based on these forms are scheduled for **August 4** and **August 30**.

Please comment on how you view yourself in training to date, rating yourself on the 1 to 10 scale and providing examples of behavior of what you have done. Use the following simply as a guide. Please add any pertinent information.

(Not very confident/comfortable)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(Very confident/comfortable)

1. Technical Component

Consider the following in choosing examples: How do I achieve/perform competency requirements, demonstrate efforts to be able to perform behavioral objectives, participate in sessions, ask relevant questions which fit a given situation, demonstrate appropriate knowledge, complete assignments, display creativity, set goals, develop strategies, solve problems, exhibit professional behavior, demonstrate teamwork/cooperation, help group stay task-oriented and moving towards solution, demonstrate effective use of available resources, assimilate and demonstrate new knowledge, develop and/or use locally appropriate materials?

(Not very confident/comfortable)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(Very confident/comfortable)

2. Language

How do I achieve/perform competency requirements, demonstrate efforts to be able to perform behavioral objectives, participate in sessions, complete homework/assignments, perform the following in target language(s): greet, meet basic needs without translator, respond to questions, engage/take turns in small talk, use simple vocabulary, demonstrate willingness to use/learn target language, converse inoffensively and in a way appropriate to the occasion?

(Not very confident/comfortable)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(Very confident/comfortable)

3. Cross-Culture/Adaptability

How do I achieve/perform competency requirements, demonstrate efforts to be able to perform behavioral objectives, recognize and accept differences, spend time with host family, participate with host family in activities, honor customs, cope with lack of privacy, deal effectively with loss of control, eat local food, use local toilet/shower, deal with fishbowl effects, exhibit adjustment to new environment, make concessions, show ability to change, implement adjustment strategies, exhibit self-sufficiency, pro-actively seek out cultural information, avoid stereotyping/judging, elicit and utilize others' skills and knowledge, observe common standards of etiquette during interaction with others, project sense of self-respect and respect for others through personal deportment and appearance, acknowledge possible cultural biases, appear relaxed/at ease in unfamiliar surroundings by using verbal/non-verbal gestures, help others adjust to new surroundings, resolve unpleasant situation or set of circumstances, react with little frustration to ambiguous situations?

(Not very confident/comfortable)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(Very confident/comfortable)

4. Personal Health & Safety Component

How do I demonstrate efforts to be able to perform behavioral objectives, attend/participate in sessions, take shots and follow other health requirements, maintain personal health and safety, use medical guidance and tips in preventing illness, injury, or any type of stress or trauma, develop and use coping strategies, take care of own needs, demonstrate healthy attitude about self and others?

(Not very confident/comfortable)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(Very confident/comfortable)

5. Safety & Security Component

How do I demonstrate applied knowledge of safety and security and set personal boundaries in new cultural environment?
How do I have awareness of my own environment and be aware of risk to which I could be exposed. How do I reduce risk and cope with unwanted attention. How do I use basic safety and security local language vocabulary to communicate in a safely manner and understand survival signs to better integrate the community. How do I develop personal strategies for transportation and site entry?
How do I abide with EAP and follow security instructions.

(Not very confident/comfortable)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(Very confident/comfortable)

6. Overall PST/Motivation/Emotional Maturity/Social Sensitivity

How do I achieve/perform competency requirements, demonstrate efforts to be able to perform behavioral objectives, complete assignments, participate in sessions, display sense of humor (lighten mood or relax people), exercise promptness/punctuality, accept responsibility and accountability for actions, show flexibility, make suggestions - not just complaints, develop and use coping strategies, look at all sides, demonstrate understanding that actions can reflect on whole group, listen, empathize, try new behaviors, show willingness to conform to other ways of performing familiar tasks, solicit feedback, respond constructively to feedback, admit mistakes, recognize own strengths and weaknesses, persevere in difficult or confusing situations, ask for clarification, show ability to disagree without being disagreeable, demonstrate courtesy and mutual respect, recognize needs of others?

(NOTE: In written feedback, each trainee must sign acknowledging feedback and the staff member must sign as well acknowledging any comments or response from the trainee to the feedback.)

Trainee Self-Assessment and Feedback Form 2005

(for Trainee to fill)

Individual feedback/evaluation meetings based on these forms are scheduled for **August 4** and **August 30**. Please comment on how you view yourself in training to date, rating yourself on the 1 to 10 scale and providing examples of behavior of what you have done. Use the following simply as a guide. Please add any pertinent information.

(Not very confident/comfortable)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(Very confident/comfortable)

1. Technical Component

(Not very confident/comfortable)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(Very confident/comfortable)

2. Language

(Not very confident/comfortable)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(Very confident/comfortable)

3. Cross-Culture/Adaptability

Not very confident/comfortable

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Very confident/comfortable

4. Personal Health & Safety Component

Not very confident/comfortable

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Very confident/comfortable

5. Safety & Security Component

(Not very confident/comfortable)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(Very confident/comfortable)

6. Overall PST/Motivation/Emotional Maturity/Social Sensitivity

(NOTE: In written feedback, each trainee must sign acknowledging feedback and the staff member must sign as well acknowledging any comments or response from the trainee to the feedback.)

PCT EVALUATION #3

STEP ONE "PCT Written Self-Assessment" (given away during center days & filled out by PCTs)

1. Were you well prepared for Site Visit?
2. How has Site Visit affected your commitment to 2 years with Peace Corps Mauritania?
3. How have you been progressing since the last Evaluation (Tech, XC, PH&S, S&S, Lang, Overall)?
Where are the gaps?
4. What is your plan to fill the gaps, in order to accomplish all TDAs/Objectives/Competencies, and to feel best prepared for service?

STEP TWO "Sharing" (Preparation Mtg.)

Staff Meeting for any heads-ups! August 25, 2005

STEP THREE "The Evaluation Mème" (Process as below)

1. Group Meeting with the team. Coordinators facilitate a discussion concerning:
 - Teamwork
 - Facilitator
 - Issues
 - How do they think PST is preparing them for service?
 - Recommendations
2. The coordinator meets individually with each Trainee.
 - Go over their written Self-Assessment
 - Give staff perspective
 - Fill in any extra comments made during the meeting, Sign and Collect it
 - Solicit any specific comments they might not have wanted to share in the group
3. Write a summary of the meeting if needed after the evaluation. This summary should be given to the trainee as soon as it is written specially if it is a heads-up.

PCT Written Self-Assessment

Evaluation #3

Tuesday, August 30

1. How were you well prepared for Site Visit? How were you not well prepared?

2. How has Site Visit affected your commitment to 2 years with Peace Corps Mauritania?

3. How have you been progressing since the last Evaluation (Tech, XC, PH&S, S&S, Lang, Overall)? Where are the gaps?

4. What is your plan to fill any gaps, to accomplish all TDAs/ Objectives/ Competencies, and to feel best prepared for service?

Comments

Trainee' s Name_____

Trainee' s Signature_____

Staff' s Signature_____

Date_____

Feedback Time

VERY IMPORTANT: Please note down the responses to the following:

- Ask the Trainees about the effectiveness of the learning process.
Effectiveness of...
 - Language classes?
 - Technical Sessions?
 - Cross Culture Sessions?
 - Homestay Sessions?
 - Medical Sessions?
 - Safety and Security sessions
 - Support Systems (from staff, amongst Trainees)
- Any Feedback for staff (facilitators, admin, coordinators)?
- How are things going with the facilitator?
- How are they managing their time? Free time?
- What are issues at this point?

Wrap It Up

- Remind them that we will have Town Meeting during each center time. This is a time for them to do anything they want. In the past people would share stories, sing songs, perform skits or music, etc...
- Remind them to bring their syllabus, PST Journal and mosquito net with them to the Center for each seminar.
- Remind them that their best support comes from their community and their group, but that we recognize that this is a rather intense time for everybody. We are here to support them!
- Close-up by thanking them for their participation and add any recommendation for them to better profit from each other.

First Evaluation Meeting by Group

July 9, 2005

Motivation (Suggestions)

- Tell a story about your week. Inform them what the staff has been up to since they arrived.
- Ask for any anecdotes.
- How are people handling food? How are they with their health?
- Share any information related to PST life.

Evaluation System

- Explain that this first meeting is meant to further their understanding of how these meetings will occur, to show them the forms we'll be using for the 2nd Evaluation, and to explain the procedure for the following meetings.

1st Meeting (July 9)

- The purpose of this 1st meeting is to solicit feedback from the PCTs, rather than to evaluate the PCTs. We will ask them a number of questions concerning different aspects of the training and take notes of the discussion.
- They should feel free to be honest and bring up anything they want to communicate to the staff. If there is anything they would rather disclose in private, we are planning to stay after the meeting ends in order to meet individually with whoever wishes to.

2nd Meeting (August 4)

- The 2nd meeting will revolve around forms which they fill out individually. These forms concern their personal progress in training and the evaluator will be filling out the same form from the staff perspective (as a whole), having discussed your individual progress with all pertinent staff members. Both Trainee and Evaluator will come to the meeting with the forms filled out. They will then meet for 10-20 minutes to discuss and compare the different perspectives. Both Trainee and Evaluator will sign the forms, to document that they met and discussed the above issues.
- The forms are then filed with the Training Director. They have access to their file, in which any other written observations or reports are kept concerning their progress for the duration of PST (not beyond).
- Hand out the forms.
- They will also be asked to fill out a written evaluation of PST (mid-PST eval.) at this time.

3rd Meeting (August 26)

- The 3rd meeting will begin in the group and then break into individual meetings between the evaluator and Trainees. As in the 2nd meeting, the Trainees and Evaluator will fill out the same forms before they meet to guide the conversation during their individual Mtgs.
- Evaluators will give feedback to the group and solicit feedback from the group, concentrating on how they are working as a group.
- After the group meeting, the Evaluator will meet with each Trainee to chat about their progress and go through the same forms used for the 2nd Mtg.
- This is a time to encourage PCTs to continue what they are doing well and for any head-ups or warnings to be given to individuals who need to make extra efforts to accomplish the needed objectives, competencies, language level by the end of PST (including behavior, motivation & attitude).

4th Meeting (Sept. 14)

- Trainees will meet individually with his/her evaluator at the Center for the final evaluation with will comprise of the staff's group recommendation for the Trainee to be or not to be sworn-in as a PCV.

FINAL RECOMMENDATION INTERVIEW ___Trainee name_____ **Tuesday, August 27, 2010**

The following comments are a summary of overall objective observations from staff. Any personal comments provided are from me alone, but they are intended for your benefit.

Trainee name: _____

You've worked very hard during PST. You have been a highly motivated and optimistic trainee. The excellent contributions you made during sessions were valuable and highly appreciated. You have been an important member of the AGFO team and a real support for your peers.

We hope that you bring as much enthusiasm to your site as you did here in PST. You have met the basic requirements of PST. You were tested at the level of **Intermediate Mid** in Hassaniya which means that you can swear-in as a Volunteer.

Keep working on your language after affectation.
Good luck with everything. It's been great getting to know you.

With these few words, training staff recommends to the Country Director of Mauritania that you be sworn in as a Volunteer.

I accept _____ I decline _____ Signed: _____
(trainee)

Signature of staff member: _____