

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

CONTINUING THE LEGACY



OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

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

CONTINUING THE LEGACY

September 2006



H. David Kotz, Inspector General

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
PC/PHILIPPINES: CONTINUING THE LEGACY	2
THE CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESS	3
QUALITY AND CONTINUITY OF STAFF	4
TEAMWORK FOR INTEGRATED PROGRAMMING	5
COMMUNITY-BASED TRAINING: THE DISTINCTIVE MARRIAGE OF PROGRAMMING AND TRAINING.....	7
EARLY AND THOROUGH SITE SELECTION: A STANDARD OF EXCELLENCE	9
STAFF CONFIGURATION: MAXIMIZE VOLUNTEER SUPPORT	11
PARTNERSHIP WITH THE VOLUNTEERS FOR EXCELLENCE	12
PARTNERSHIP WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF THE PHILIPPINES.....	13
LEADERSHIP: THE IMPORTANCE OF MANAGEMENT	14
CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT	15
PHASE II: THE VOLUNTEERS' PERSPECTIVE.....	17
THE OIG FOCUS GROUPS.....	17
HOW THE VOLUNTEERS SEE IT	18
CONCLUSION: CONTINUING THE LEGACY	26
APPENDIX A: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF PC/PHILIPPINES BATCH 64 TRAINING	

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/Philippines case study was conducted by Assistant Inspector General for Evaluation Alice Bunker. Dr. Bunker was in the Philippines for phase I of the study November 18-December 2, 2005 and for phase II July 10-15, 2006.

PC/PHILIPPINES: CONTINUING THE LEGACY

“To be successful as a Volunteer or as a country director you must understand the culture, and the culture of the Philippines is about people,” began the country director of PC/Philippines—the second post to be opened in the Peace Corps and a veritable living history of the Peace Corps experience. In October 1961, only seven months from the day President Kennedy signed the executive order to establish the Peace Corps, the first group of 130 Peace Corps Volunteers arrived in the Republic of the Philippines for classroom teaching assignments in language, math, and science.

Overall, the Volunteers in PC/Philippines seem to be content and happy, just as the Volunteers have been happy about their Peace Corps/Philippines experience for 40 years. More than 7,500 Volunteers have served in the Philippines since 1961. Some Volunteers and former American staff have never left. A former country director who supervised almost 1000 Volunteers at one time is still living in Manila. Indeed,



PC/Philippines Volunteers are about three times more likely than Peace Corps Volunteers worldwide to extend their service beyond 27 months.¹

At the time of our initial visit, 138 Volunteers were serving in five projects and supported by 37 staff. The Volunteers were on 16 of the 7,000 islands that make up the Philippines archipelago. Put in slightly different terms, the Volunteers reside and work in 9 different regions and 32 provinces.

Over these 44 years, the people of the Philippines have seen Volunteers in diverse roles in almost all areas of development work, including agriculture, forestry, small business management, health, urban and regional planning, water/sanitation, fisheries, and education. Many Filipinos remember the name of the Peace Corps Volunteer who taught them in school, played with them in their village, or visited them in their homes. Filipinos place a high value on the Peace Corps within the country; a survey asking their opinion about various foreign aid groups showed that the Peace Corps had a 96% approval rating. The country director noted, "It is an amazing reputation!"

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESS

The local staff of PC/Philippines summarized the basis for the current success of the post as follows:

- 1. Quality and continuity of the local staff.** Most of the staff have worked for the Peace Corps for a significant numbers of years. PC/Philippines benefits from their long history with Peace Corps, extensive institutional memory, and experience. The local staff are very familiar with Peace Corps procedures and expectations. More than one staff member took pride in their cultural propensity to work hard. "Filipinos want to do a good job," said one.
- 2. Teamwork for integrated programming and training.** Cooperation and coordination among program, training, line staff, and management results in integrated programming and training.
- 3. The distinctive marriage of programming and training.** PC/Philippines conducts community-based training in four geographic areas, which provides cultural and language-appropriate training for Volunteers who work in different parts of the country.
- 4. Early, thorough, and generous site development: a standard of excellence.** Sites are identified and cleared with the government before training begins. More sites are developed than are needed to have sites in reserve.
- 5. A staff configuration designed for maximum Volunteer support that is also staff-friendly.** The reconfiguring of staff responsibilities around a regional model has helped staff to perform their jobs more efficiently and effectively.
- 6. Partnership with the Volunteers for excellence.** A Volunteer Forum meets quarterly to discuss issues identified by staff and Volunteers.
- 7. Partnership with the Government of the Philippines.** All projects, assignments, and sites have to be cleared through the government agency

¹ Office of Policy, Planning, and Analysis, 2006.

responsible for oversight of all Volunteer-based foreign assistance. The same agency receives and reviews the Volunteers' quarterly reports.

8. Leadership: Outstanding senior management. The staff commented that senior managers (the country director, the programming and training officer, and the administrative officer) demonstrate:

- Leadership that knows where it is going.
- Principled leadership, practicing what they preach.
- Transparency through communication and regular meetings to keep people updated and informed: "There should be no secrets or mysteries."
- Cultural awareness. In the Philippines, this means showing concern about personal things before talking about work, never forgetting to greet staff, and valuing family.
- Good listening skills.
- Appreciation for the work of the staff.
- Commitment to the Volunteers.

9. A commitment to continuous improvement. Even successful programs can improve performance.

QUALITY AND CONTINUITY OF STAFF

The legacy of PC/Philippines is embodied in the experience and longevity of the staff. They are the foundation on which the excellence, continuity, and legacy of the Peace Corps in the Philippines rests. Staff have worked for PC/Philippines for 27 years, 26 years, 24 years, 21 years, respectively, with most at least 10 years. They easily recall the high and low points of the post's complex history; one staff joked that PC/Philippines has been "like a spouse" for 22 years; another with 16 years of continuous service recalled that when he began his job, the post had 380 Volunteers and American Express had a ticket office within the Peace Corps office. (See Box 1 for a recap of the post's size over the years.)

Many of the staff have worked their way up to their current positions, beginning as language instructors or technical trainers. Other staff members served as counterparts to Volunteers. One staff stated that she worked with seven Volunteers, and another recalled that one of her high school teachers was a Volunteer.

The staff of PC/Philippines were proud of their accomplishments and attributed these accomplishments, in part, to the quality of their colleagues, their extensive experience with the Peace Corps, high levels of motivation, and their cultural propensity to work hard. In a recent realignment of staff duties aimed at improving the quality of Volunteer support, the job descriptions of many of the staff changed. Staff were given the opportunity to apply for the positions, some of which resembled their previous duties while other positions encompassed new responsibilities. The changes gave staff the opportunity to consider what they liked to do and which positions best fit their skills and preferences. The changes were extensive, but had the

Box 1.	
Year	# of PCVs
1965	564
1970	372
1975	385
1980	472
1985	392
1990	0
1995	85
2000	123
2005	110

effect of re-energizing the staff. At the time of our interviews, they exhibited a great deal of excitement and enthusiasm.

Box 2. What the staff say:

- Our motivation is high.
- We are fully engaged and excited about our work.
- Our suggestions are presented, heard, and seriously discussed.
- Management visibly appreciates our work, creating a positive and collegial work environment. When you feel appreciated, it becomes a natural model to appreciate others.
- The organizational transitions were not easy, but we carried them out.
- From an organization that was dysfunctional, we are now a cohesive team with a vision.

The staff expressed a deep gratitude for the Peace Corps and believed that their dedication to the welfare of the Volunteers is a way to serve their own country (see Box 2). The staff embodied a “caring culture” that explains why most of the Volunteers expressed satisfaction with their Volunteer experience. The people of the Philippines, beginning with the staff, are the legacy that current and past Volunteers appreciate and remember.

TEAMWORK FOR INTEGRATED PROGRAMMING

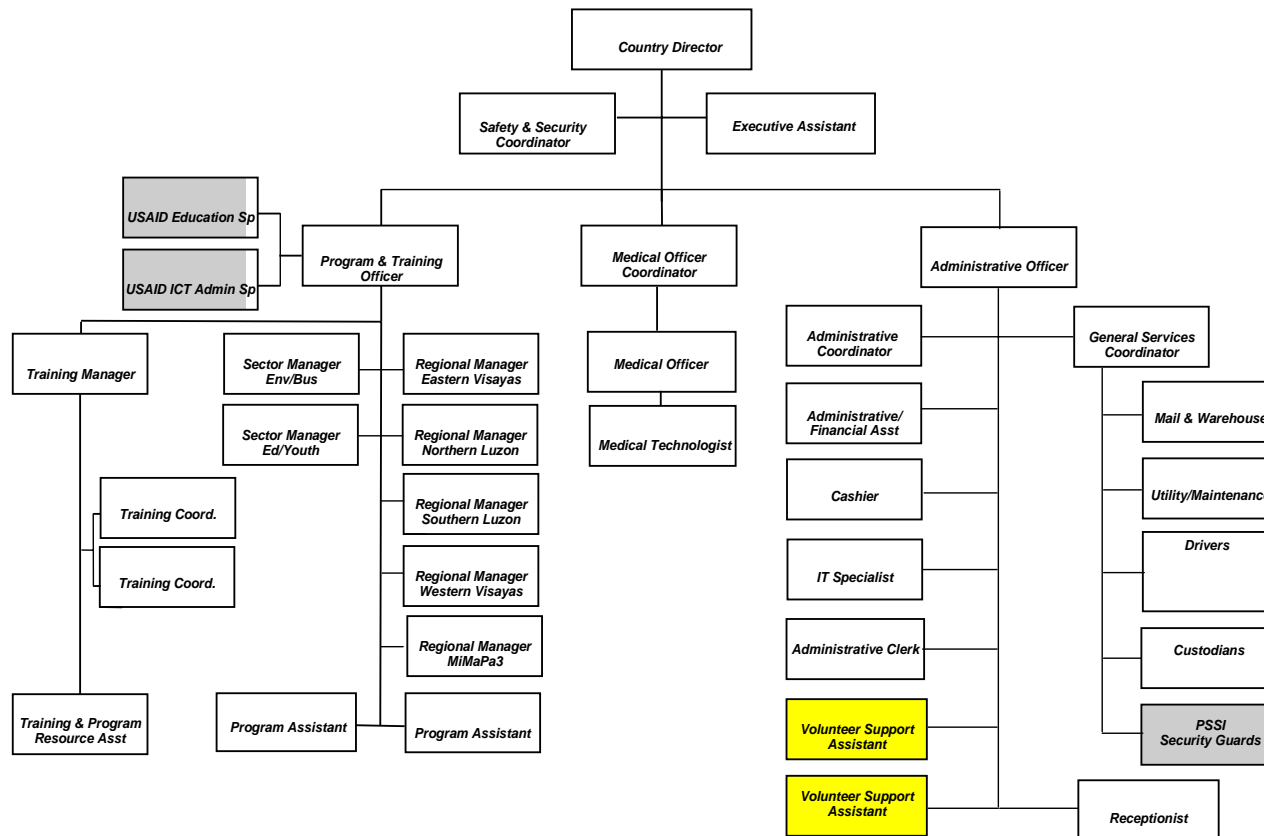
The staff felt that the high level of cooperation and coordination among program, training, line staff, and management makes an effective program in the Philippines possible. Teamwork is particularly important for PC/Philippines because of the following factors:

- *Geography.* The vast distances between Volunteers and the threat of natural disasters, increases the time and effort needed for core activities such as site development and Volunteer support.
- *Involvement of the Philippine government.* The rigorous oversight of all Volunteer-based foreign technical assistance by the Philippines government compels staff to plan carefully and adhere to timelines. The post must complete site development well in advance.
- *Program size.* PC/Philippines, while no longer the Peace Corps’ largest post, still fields a significant number of Volunteers across many islands, language groups, and ethnicities.
- *Organizational structure.* The reorganizing of staff by region, as opposed to sector, requires the program staff to coordinate and communicate with each other, especially in the areas of site development and Volunteer support (see Figure 1). The Peace Corps divided the Philippines into five regions and created one regional manager position for each region.² In addition, there are two sector managers who serve as technical specialists and two program assistants who provide support to all five of the regional managers. The latter carry out programming tasks, such as serving as liaison to the government, coordinating reports, and maintaining the program unit’s databases.

² The regional managers are equivalent to program managers or Associate Peace Corps Directors (APCD) in other posts.

Figure 1. PC/Philippines Organizational Chart

Peace Corps Philippines Staffing



2006-05-08

Maintaining a sense of teamwork and meeting the needs of the Volunteers can be challenging, especially when staff are frequently traveling to the outer reaches of the archipelago. To ensure that, in the words of one staff member, “Everyone knows what everyone does, everyone knows where to find [things], and there are no mysteries,” the staff have developed procedures and standards that everyone is expected to follow; based on the duties laid out in their job descriptions, every staff member lays out the procedures they follow to fulfill their responsibilities, develops the necessary supporting documents, and places all documents on the shared drive. The staff regularly review policies and procedures, reach a consensus on proposed changes, and update the post’s computer server so that documents are accessible to everyone.

The post also created a Volunteer Support Unit to ensure that Volunteers receive the administrative support they need. The two Volunteer Support Assistants (VSA) respond to all requests for assistance from Volunteers.³ After a request has arrived, the VSAs call or text the Volunteer, indicating the request has been fulfilled or to report the status of the request.

Once a month, the VSAs conduct a safety and security check. The Volunteers are required to call in, and the VSAs record and respond to the calls, verifying the Volunteers’ current locations and travel plans and relaying program, administrative, or safety and security advisories. The PC/Philippines Volunteers rated the post’s efforts to provide administrative support as the highest of the nine posts selected for this programming study.

COMMUNITY-BASED TRAINING: THE DISTINCTIVE MARRIAGE OF PROGRAMMING AND TRAINING

Until 2005, PC/Philippines’ conducted pre-service training (PST) at a training center, with the Trainees living with host families in the community. This approach to training, however, did not adequately address the language needs of the Volunteers. Although Tagalog is the official national language and English is widely used, there are approximately 84 local languages spoken in the Philippines. Volunteers learned Tagalog, switching over to a local language only after site assignments were handed out, an event that occurred in the last few days of PST. As the post increasingly placed more Volunteers in rural sites, learning primarily Tagalog became inadequate (see Box 3).

³ The Volunteer Support Assistant, working under the direct supervision of the administrative officer, serves as the primary contact for information, guidance, and assistance in Volunteer policies and procedures; maintenance of volunteer records, reports, and documentation; and the processing and documentation of COS, Medevacs, Early Terminations, and Emergency Leaves. The VSA ensures that all Peace Corps forms are available for Volunteer use; is responsible for the financial management and organization of project funds and funded project activities; logging and maintaining the history of Volunteer payments at post, and providing occasional logistical support services. The VSA also assists the Safety and Security Coordinator with Volunteer contact and documentation during emergency tests and events. Source: PC/Philippines SOW, Volunteer Support Assistant.

In response to what the staff perceived as inadequacies in Volunteer training, PC/Philippines introduced a regional, community-based training model (see Appendix A). As regional managers became familiar with their geographical areas, they identified the specific languages the Trainees needed for their sites and the cultural skills necessary for community integration.

The post created four island “hub” sites that corresponded roughly to the five geographical regions of the regional managers. Each “hub” has a hub manager, a community skills coordinator (CSC) who is also the homestay coordinator, four to five language and cross-cultural facilitators (LCFs), and a Volunteer assistant. The regional managers, the sector managers, the medical staff, the administrative staff, the safety and security coordinator (SSC), and the country director traveled to hub sites to make presentations or to deliver special sessions.

Surrounding these hubs are 21 cluster sites. Each cluster, located in a village, has three to four Trainees and one language and cultural facilitator (LCF). The cluster sites correspond to the language(s) spoken by the community at the Trainees’ permanent sites. The Trainees learn either the national or regional language, depending on the site assignments. The Trainees generally spend the mornings in their cluster sites for language lessons. They focus on community entry activities in the afternoon. The schedule is flexible, depending on the needs of the groups and the availability of people in the community. At the mid-point of PST, the Trainees visit their permanent sites for one week to meet their host agency, new community, and host family.

Technical training in PST is a hybrid of technical and cross-cultural training. Trainees work through a community entry curriculum that provides them with the skills they need to integrate into their communities and be successful in their work assignments.

The elements of this curriculum include:

- Conducting field observations.
- Journaling.
- Making courtesy calls.
- Conducting peer reviews.
- Building international relationships.
- Shadowing community members.

Box 3. Volunteers as frontliners: the messenger is the message

- Language as effective entry-point: There is definitely a pattern that directly relates the PCV’s proficiency in local dialect with his or her overall effectiveness in the community. The communities who hosted a PCV who spoke their language fluently bonded more strongly than did communities with PCVs who failed to speak the dialect.
- Speaking the dialect is a strong message of solidarity and willingness to learn from the host culture.
- Speaking the local language gets the message across very effectively.
- An uncompromising and strict code of conduct during project implementation and other modes of work rub off positively on local partners to be serious with work as well.

The Participating Agency Service
Agreement Project, September 2005

- Conducting community interviews.
- Giving and receiving feedback.
- Taking a local capacity inventory.

The second part of technical training occurs at in-service training (IST), approximately three months after the swearing-in ceremony. Staff bring together the Volunteers according to the technical specialties of their assignments. This allows Volunteers to work on the technical skills most applicable to their projects.

The two-week training agenda of IST combines presentations by Volunteers and technical experts, demonstrations, and field trips. Volunteers from two or more projects may come together for sessions, with the size of the technical training groups varying from seven to 21 Trainees. The training manager suggested that the smaller groups and highly motivated Volunteers made the technical training much more productive than the technical training sessions of previous PSTs.

The community-based training model, according to the training manager, requires extensive planning, communication, and interaction among the staff. PST planning meetings begin in September to prepare for the Trainees' arrival in April and occur every two weeks. No one is exempt from attending the planning meetings.

The post's experience with their new community-based training model at the time of this study was limited to one training group, but the training manager expressed immense satisfaction with the outcome, while agreeing that there were many lessons learned. She believed that this first effort was successful because it set the tone for future PSTs. Most important, they had taken a significant step toward marrying programming and training. Not only were the sector managers heavily involved in the PST, other benefits were visible as well: only five of the more than 80 Trainees early terminated during the first half of training. As new Volunteers, this first group seemed to have fewer adjustment problems and became invested earlier in their primary assignments compared to previous groups of Volunteers.

EARLY AND THOROUGH SITE SELECTION: A STANDARD OF EXCELLENCE

The shift to a regional model and a corresponding reduction in the distance traveled by program staff has translated into more time to invest in site selection. A key to the success in the Philippines is the selection of Volunteer sites that "...are safe, accessible, programmatically viable and meet Volunteer health, well-being, and welfare standards."⁴ In our interviews, the regional managers stressed the importance of identifying host organizations that can provide work for the Volunteers, good counterparts, and host families that will enrich the Volunteers' experience.

- **Identifying work for the Volunteer:** Developing substantive work assignments for the Volunteers is one of the most important aspects of site development. As one regional manager stated, "Having no work for the Volunteers is unfair, and it

⁴ Site Identification Policies, Procedures and Forms, PC/Philippines Policy and Procedures Manual, p. 103.

demonstrates that the Volunteer's sacrifice is not valued." In working with host agencies to develop assignments, however, one regional manager pointed out that "the staff and host agency need to be 'realistic' about the skills of the Volunteers. Hence, the staff must explain to the host agencies the kinds of skills that Volunteers will bring to their organizations while emphasizing Peace Corps' expectation that the host organization provide the Volunteers with real work."

- **A counterpart in a stable agency:** Volunteers, as a rule, are not placed in large urban areas. The staff's experience is that Volunteers are most likely to be successful when placed with schools, non-government organizations (NGOs), and local government units that are located in rural areas. Regional managers become skeptical if the potential host agency expects the Volunteer to provide funding for projects. They verify that the organization has sufficient funding or that a local mayor will provide enough funding to support the work of the Volunteer. One regional manager said, "I don't trust vague ideas about what the Volunteer's work will be; I ask to see the actual project that the Volunteer will join."

Selecting the counterpart is not a last minute decision. The regional managers interview counterparts but also ask a nearby Volunteer to assess the site and meet with the counterpart. PC/Philippines selects counterparts who are technically competent in the work that the Volunteer will perform, have agreed to work with the Volunteer, and understand the Peace Corps' development philosophy.

- **Identifying a host family.** Host agencies recommend prospective host families to PC/Philippines. Volunteers live with the families for their first three months of service. The families must meet Peace Corps standards for Volunteer safety, security, and housing criteria. One regional manager not only visits and orients the host family candidates, but takes pictures to share with the Trainees.

The site selection process is labor-intensive and designed to minimize the possibility of bad sites. While the regional managers mail brochures and distribute press kits to prospective host agencies, most of the regional managers

prefer to distribute applications personally and meet with the host agency face-to-face. If regional managers assist host agencies to complete the long and complicated application process, they use the time to clarify Peace Corps' expectations of the host agency. Regional managers make three visits to prospective sites, followed by a Volunteer who meets with key people and provides a Volunteer's perspective on the viability of the site.

Box 4. The Trading Board

After every staff member has completed their short list of sites, they apportion the Trainees among the regional managers by programming areas. Regional managers can now determine which sites will receive a Volunteer. The next step is to "exchange or trade" with their colleagues using a "trading board." The trading board is a matrix indicating categories of Trainees regional managers are "selling," "bartering," or "buying." This mechanism forces regional managers to determine placement decisions early on. The advantage of this process is that the regional managers have time to prepare the selected sites.

If the regional managers are still unsure, they ask one of the sector managers to visit the site. “The process,” said one regional manager, “may take two or three years.” Another added, “I don’t like it when the officials want to start signing papers right away; I want them to listen, first.” To make placement decisions among the sites, the staff use what they call a Trading Board (see Box 4).

STAFF CONFIGURATION: MAXIMIZE VOLUNTEER SUPPORT AND STAFF EFFECTIVENESS

The reconfiguring of program staff by region was a response to the fact that program managers spent only a small proportion of their time addressing Volunteers’ programmatic or technical needs. They were more often called to resolve conflicts between the Volunteers and their host agency counterparts, supervisors, or host families, or to provide coping strategies to the Volunteers. This was particularly true for Volunteers with weak local language skills or who were finding it difficult to integrate into the local community. The redesign of the training model with its emphasis on teaching the Volunteers local languages and equipping them with community entry skills was one strategy for improving the experience of the Volunteers (see previous section).

In conjunction with changes in the training program, staff needed to be sure that Volunteers were getting the kind of support they needed. It seemed logical to them to organize program managers by regions. Monitoring and supporting a group of Volunteers within a discrete regional area would reduce the amount of time the staff spend traveling from site to site – time that they could invest in site visits, spending quality time with their Volunteers and host agency supervisors and counterparts. A regional model would give the managers more time to address the needs of the Volunteers, whether those needs were technical, social, or emotional.

While the regional managers now have to have a good grasp of every project, they are better able to gauge their region’s needs, identify projects to meet those needs, and request specific Volunteer skill sets to address those needs. In short, the regional management model places staff at the local level where the Volunteers work best and where the staff can plan and manage their programs in ways that best support the Volunteers. Box 5 presents some details of how the sector managers and regional managers work together.

Box 5. Procedure: Regional Allocation Planning

1. Sector managers obtain and read the Philippine government's Medium Term Development Plan and present a summary during the IPBS staff retreats.
2. Regional managers obtain and read Regional Development Plans pertaining to their Peace Corps regions and present summaries during the Integrated Planning and Budget Strategy staff retreats.
3. Sector managers and regional managers convene regional conferences or roundtable discussions with host country partners, representatives from the Regional Development Councils (RDCs), Volunteers, the Philippine National Volunteer Service Coordinating Agency (PNVSCA), and other representatives, to determine current regional/sectoral priorities and ascertain if Peace Corps projects are consistent with helping to meet regional/sectoral/national needs.
4. Sector Managers prepare a set of recommendations to the programming and training officer and the country director for changes to the Project Plan(s), QTRS, VADS and inputs to the succeeding IPBS based on above feedback.
5. The PTO and CD approve changes, and sector managers make actual changes in the Project Plan(s), QTRS, VADS, and IPBS.
6. Sector Managers share approved changes with Volunteers through newsletters and/or succeeding training events or conferences.

PC/Philippines Policies and Procedures

PARTNERSHIP WITH THE VOLUNTEERS FOR EXCELLENCE

According to the country director, “Listening to Volunteers is how programs are built in the Peace Corps. When there is a policy change, we try to get the Volunteers’ feedback and let them make their case. Not only do you learn, but the Volunteers will understand staff’s reasons and needs.” He began his own service as country director by asking questions and listening; he talked to Volunteers; he conducted long exit interviews; in his own words, he “grabbed everyone who walked in the door and asked for their perceptions.” The insights of Volunteers who extended for a third year were especially helpful to him. He listened to Volunteers’ stories of their experiences, their successes, their failures, and their complaints.

To capitalize on the perspectives and experiences of the Volunteers on a regular basis, PC/Philippines established the Volunteer Forum, a mechanism through which Volunteers participate in the life of the post and provide staff with feedback. In response to the 2002 OIG recommendation to form a Volunteer Advisory Committee (VAC), the post initiated quarterly Volunteer Advisory Forums to address issues presented by Volunteers or staff. Each quarter, the staff identified a theme or major issue and, through the newsletter, invited Volunteers interested in the topic to attend the forum. According to staff, the forums were effective because 1) key staff attended, 2) the Volunteers who attended were truly interested, demonstrated by the requirement that Volunteers spent their travel allowances to participate, and 3) the staff responded immediately to Volunteers’ questions and issues. The next newsletter summarized the meeting and its results.

The country director maintained that all major changes emanated from Volunteers identifying their needs and from staff facilitating solutions: “While staff, particularly the PC/Philippine staff, work hard to support the Volunteers, staff can never really know the situation at the site as the Volunteer knows it.” The Volunteer Forum removed the

syndrome of “them vs. us.” Staff members told us that after just one or two sessions of the Volunteer Forum, the attitude of Volunteers began to change. As one Volunteer addressing his peers stated, “These guys really listen to us!”

A staff member summed it up, “Peace Corps engages the Volunteers to be a part of the planning, and to help implement the changes. And, not only do things change, but things get better.”

PARTNERSHIP WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF THE PHILIPPINES

The Government of the Philippines is more than a passive beneficiary of the work of the Volunteers—they are a partner with the Peace Corps. PC/Philippines has excellent relationships with key ministries, e.g., the Department of Education and the Department of Social Welfare. The Philippines is unusual, though, in that the government established a separate agency to coordinate the programs and activities of all volunteer organizations operating in the Philippines, including the Peace Corps. That agency is the Philippines National Volunteer Service Coordinating Agency (PNVSCA), a branch of the National Economic and Development Authority. Peace Corps Volunteers are accountable to the government through the PNVSCA. This unit monitors all the following activities:

- The PNVSCA maintains a list of accredited agencies approved to accept foreign volunteers. The PNVSCA requires host agencies to submit an application for accreditation by the PNVSCA. This application is a prerequisite for applying for a Peace Corps Volunteer.
- A representative of the PNVSCA is directly involved in the selection of sites for Volunteers. This person meets with the country director and the programming and training officer (PTO) to review potential sites. Sixteen weeks prior to the arrival of the Trainees, the regional managers submit to the sector managers the PNVSCA request accreditation forms (from each requesting agency) prioritized by sector, the completed site assessment forms, and the completed site justification checklists. The sector managers and the safety and security coordinator review the prioritized list of sites, cross-check the information with the information in the site history files, and include the findings of the Volunteer site evaluation feedback. (See Figure 2.)

Fourteen weeks prior to Trainee arrival in country, the sector managers conduct a roundtable discussion with appropriate parties: the country director, the safety and security coordinator, the regional managers, the programming and training officer, the medical officer, the program assistants, and a representative from the PNVSCA to select the final list of sites. The group’s goal is to select all the sites needed for an incoming group, plus an extra 20% as reserve sites.

- As a part of the swearing in ceremony, the ambassador and country director formally present the new Volunteers to the PNVSCA.
- At the end of the first month of the Volunteer’s assignment, the Volunteer, in consultation with their local supervisor, prepares and submits a formal work plan

and placement report. The Volunteer submits these reports to the regional manager for review and forwarding to the PNVSCA.

- The Volunteers prepare a two-part quarterly report and submit it to the regional manager to be forwarded to the PNVSCA.
- Finally, the PNVSCA requires that Volunteers prepare a final report and undertake an exit interview with the PNVSCA prior to leaving the Philippines. (The PNVSCA also approves requests for extension of service. Additionally, if the Volunteer resigns, a letter of resignation is sent to the PNVSCA).

PC/Philippines management assigns a staff member to process all required documentation and to coordinate with the PNVSCA. A corresponding contact person in the PNVSCA reviews the Volunteers' quarterly reports and communicates with the Peace Corps when there are complaints or dissatisfaction with Volunteers. The PNVSCA investigates complaints, and will not approve the site for future placement, if it is determined that the site is at fault, rather than the Volunteer.

The PNVSCA is closely involved in PST. During the initial orientation week, a representative of the PNVSCA comes to talk about the role of the Volunteer in the Philippines and briefly describe the requirements. They also attend the supervisors' or counterparts' conference and make a presentation.

According to the country director, the PNVSCA, in spite of limited resources, is well informed of Volunteer activity throughout the country and is credible in its assessments. Recently, the PNVSCA did an evaluation of volunteer work, met with the national level representatives, and assessed the relative overlap of Peace Corps Volunteer work with that of other volunteer agencies. They determined that the work of the Peace Corps Volunteers is within the scope of country needs and that Peace Corps Volunteers work on real needs.

LEADERSHIP: THE IMPORTANCE OF MANAGEMENT

At the time of our site visit for this study, it was clear that the local staff respected and trusted the leadership of PC/Philippines, i.e., the U.S. direct hire (USDH) staff. The local staff perceived the values of the country director, administrative officer, and programming and training officer to show respect and concern for the staff and to be congruent with their own cultural values. The respect for the culture of the Philippines also informs and permeates the programming approach of PC/Philippines, which, in turn, is the core of the Peace Corps' development philosophy: "People, not things." The willingness of the leadership to listen to, support, and value the staff has generated good morale and contributed to the success of the Peace Corps in the Philippines.⁵

⁵ This report reflects what we found at the time of this study, late 2005; the local PC/Philippines staff have experienced the best and worst of USDH management staff—most of whom do not stay in place even for the five years that the agency's legislation allows. While the local staff represented the management style as in tune with their values, listening to and valuing staff is a universally successful management approach in any culture.

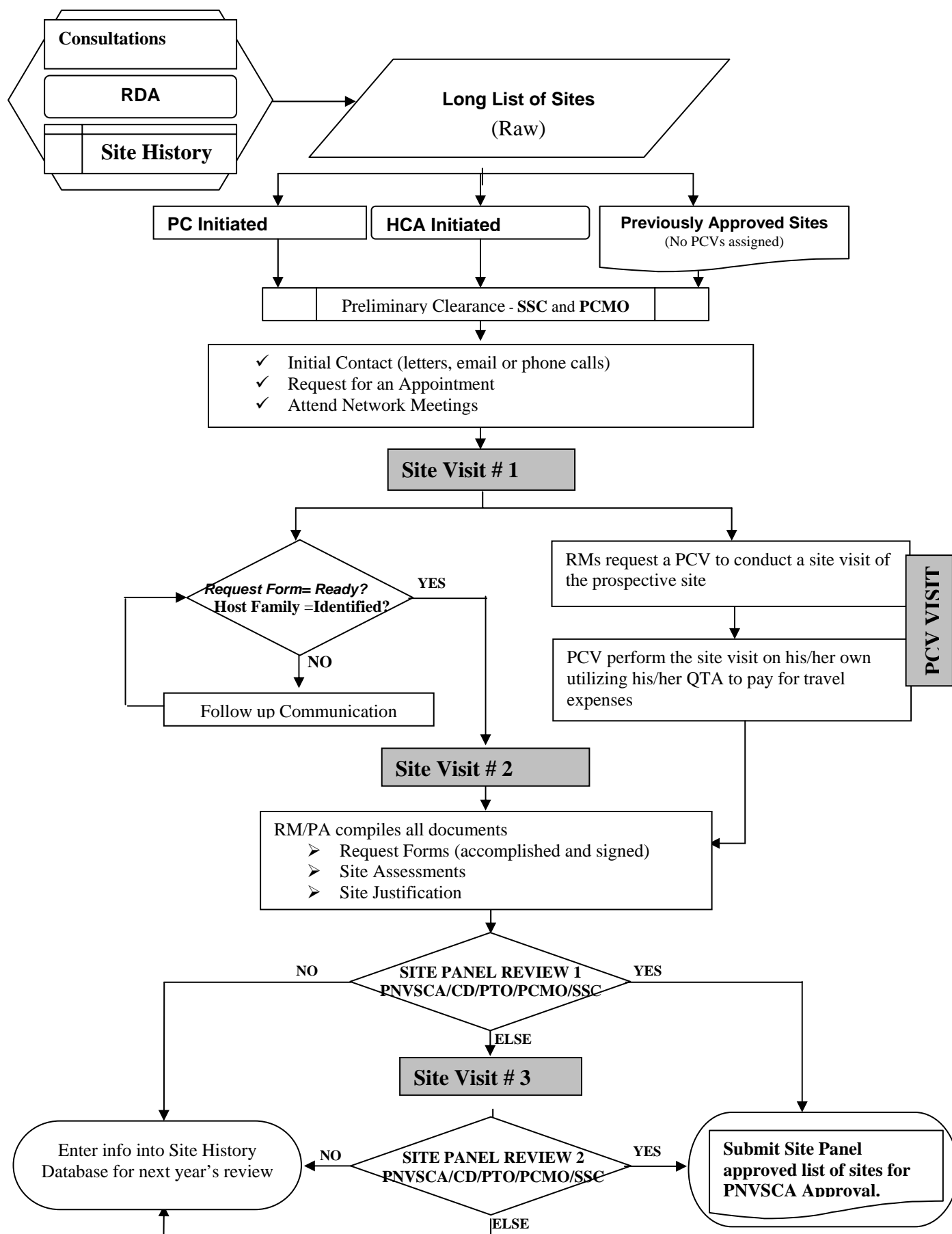
The practices that contributed to PC/Philippines being a well-run and effective post were developed by the USDH management in place at the time of this study. These practices included cluster PST training, regional support for Volunteers, the Volunteer Forum, and the teamwork and sense of being valued as staff and Volunteers. There were also more mundane management practices that characterize well-run organizations: policies and procedures that reflect the realities experienced by the staff and Volunteers, a commitment to transparency in management, and a high degree of consistency in enforcing policies and procedures. Management no longer treated the budget as a “state secret.” Contracts, salaries, and job descriptions were openly negotiated, and staff felt free to discuss problems and to raise issues.

What was evident to the management team was that everyone on the PC/Philippines staff works hard. As the PTO explained, “Hard work and dedication is an unstated standard; it is genuine—not for show and not competitive. It is a matter of pride for the Filipinos.” Management’s job is to make that work productive.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

As noted in the beginning of this report, many of the staff of PC/Philippines have been with the Peace Corps for a long time. They have seen some of the systems currently in place tried in the past and abandoned for other approaches. What needs saying is that nothing in a Peace Corps program is a given. However well things are working at any given time can be brought to ruin quickly by bad management. No matter how poorly a program is at any point in time, it can be rejuvenated with good management. In PC/Philippines, the PTO observed: “... change is hard and to solidify any changes takes time and continuity. . . The experience and the capability and commitment of the local staff were crucial in the process. Because they have had so many CDs, AOs, and PTOs, they know the drill. It is not only the leadership, but the trust and confidence in that leadership.”

Figure 2: The Site Selection and Final Approval Process, PC/Philippines



PHASE II: THE VOLUNTEERS' PERSPECTIVE THE CULTURE + THE PEOPLE = SUCCESS

Approximately nine months after recording the staff's view of the elements of programming success, we spoke to the Volunteers. During our review of the programming as described by the staff, many elements were in the process of change and modification. We asked the post to arrange focus group interviews with the Volunteers that experienced the modified PST and those who were the first to be assigned within the recently formed regional areas with the new regional manager structure of Volunteer support. Management invited us to come to the Mid-term Conference of the 64 Volunteers of Batch 264 who experienced the structural changes described in this report. With the assistance of the post, we convened small groups of Volunteers to learn how the actions of the staff impacted the quality of Volunteer service, but also to determine what other factors contributed to the quality of their service in PC/Philippines.

THE OIG FOCUS GROUPS

Fifty-six percent (36) of the Batch 264 Volunteers in country at the time, gathered to describe their experience as a Volunteer in PC/Philippines. We met in small groups of about 10 Volunteers in each group. We collected the discussion question work sheets that contained open-ended questions on factors that contributed most to their Peace Corps experience. Volunteers had previously recorded their initial reaction for use as reference for discussions and provided those responses at the end of the session. We also asked specific questions to verify the descriptions provided by staff earlier in the study. The sessions each lasted approximately three hours.

The Volunteers were fairly equally divided between male (47%) and female (53%), and all had served for 15 months in country. Fifty-nine percent of the Volunteers were 30 years or less and 21% were 40 years or more. Projects in place at this time were the following:

Volunteers by Project

Project	Business Advising for Youth Development (BAYD)	Basic Education and Technical Assistance (BETA)	Small Islands Development (SID+ Water Sanitation)	Community Services Education (CSE)	Community-based Conservation of Important Biodiversity Areas (CCIBA) also included Coastal Resource Management (CRM)
Number of Volunteers	18	39	32	19	30

Source: FY 2005 Project Status Reports

Fifty percent of the Volunteers participating in the group were BETA (education Volunteers), 28% were a combination of SID, CRM, and water/sanitation Volunteers; the rest of the Volunteers were equally divided among the CSE and the BAYD Volunteers.

HOW THE VOLUNTEERS SEE IT

The following observations were summarized from notes taken by the facilitator, combined with an analysis of worksheets submitted anonymously by the focus group participants and of the most recently submitted quarterly reports of the Volunteers. The composite view of the Volunteers suggested a four-part analysis of the PC/Philippines programming and training program. The perspective of the PC/Philippines Volunteers is uniquely sensitive to the Filipino culture, which, according to the Volunteers, creates a successful Peace Corps experience. They suggest the PC/Philippines Volunteer experience is primarily affected by people—not just by the Filipinos, but by the staff and, particularly, by the Volunteer. The Peace Corps staff provide training and support, the community provides the host family, and the host agency provides site integration; the result is a successful Volunteer experience.

The Volunteers stated plainly that almost all of them experienced both good and bad moments in their 15 months of service. This group of Volunteers took some pride in their identity and role as pioneers; they were quick to acknowledge that staff changes and a new approach to programming are not well-implemented currently and that the staff have more to learn and change. The focus group discussions centered around the programming and training components that most impacted their Volunteer experience—whether these were experienced positively or negatively; the Volunteers agreed that these components were correctly identified by the staff as important to address.

1. The PC/Philippines staff

The focus group members immediately identified two major factors that impacted their Volunteer experience: the training program and the support of the PC/Philippines staff.

a. Training: Learning the Art of Cultural Integration

The Batch 264 Volunteers were the first group to experience a revised training program designed to provide opportunities for the Trainees to develop community entry and community mobilization skills to enhance their effectiveness in their assignments. The strategy involved making early decisions (Week 1) about site placements, thereby stationing Trainees at the “hub” training center that would provide the language and cultural experience corresponding to the Trainees’ site assignment. The 9-week training (PST1) provided Trainees with the language and cultural knowledge to effectively use community entry techniques. Three months after PST1, the training staff provided PST2 that consisted of intense technical training sessions located in sites or institutions comparable to the work site assignments in each sector.

Volunteers had particularly high praise for the community-based approach to training; they said that the host families were uniquely well-prepared to give the “best possible introduction to the country.” A SID (Water/Sanitation) Volunteer was of the opinion that the training made him significantly more effective, “Being introduced to a community assets approach to development has changed not only my expectation of what a

Volunteer does, but also that of my community's [role]. [That the training was] not necessarily focusing on the technological aspects of my work, but also the cultural has enriched my service beyond just an occupational one." Volunteers pointed out that the benefits of training in community entry skills not only provides cultural information, but also "...sharpens observational skills and creates an open-mindedness." Another Volunteer described how her training group "...actually implemented a mini-project that provided a wonderful insight into the nature of their future job."

The Volunteers also felt that CBT is essential for effective language learning. They expressed some surprise that in the Philippines where English is spoken so widely, many Filipinos, especially in the rural and poor areas, commonly use local languages and are uncomfortable using English. Volunteers were especially appreciative of the work of the Language and Cultural Facilitators (LCFs). A Volunteer described the training as being well-balanced: "Cultural understanding plus the language yields a huge response!" Everyone believed that the initial training in the national language, Tagalog, is important, because it is spoken in the schools and is useful when traveling in the Philippines. After PST1, the training staff offer language camps for Volunteers who may attend with a tutor. Volunteers who have participated in language camps considered them to be especially effective for on-going language learning and for an introduction to an alternative language.

As the pioneers in the PC/Philippines PST training strategy, they also were cognizant of the problems, missteps, and obstacles faced by the staff and Trainees. They discussed some of the less successful efforts. However, they were appreciative of the hard work and enormous coordinating efforts required to conduct simultaneous trainings for a large group on several islands around the country and, yet, provide so many opportunities to enhance an experience for each Trainee that was "...at the end of the day, a very personal odyssey." Volunteers noted that staff already have made many improvements for the Batch 265. They appreciated that staff sought their suggestions and implemented many.

The Volunteers also enjoyed post-PST training opportunities provided by the staff. High praise went to training events that involved counterparts and other community members. Speaking of the impact of the training events in project design and management (PDM) and in HIV/AIDS, one Volunteer stated, "I feel that we as Volunteers are knowledge facilitators not idea implementers. I work to increase the level of understanding, involvement, and action of locals; if I didn't, nothing I did would last longer than two years." Volunteers observed that the PDM workshops often introduced host country colleagues to the Peace Corps' development philosophy and to the appropriate role of the Volunteer, noting that Peace Corps does not have many opportunities for counterpart training. It was particularly effective, thought one Volunteer, because many sessions were conducted by experienced Volunteers together with experienced counterparts. Another Volunteer described how the PDM conference he attended with his counterpart was a turning point in his experience: "The timing of the conference was perfect and allowed us ample time to complete our project. It also provided us with technical

knowledge of designing a good and sustainable project.” “Working with my counterpart was the best part of PDM.” Remarked another Volunteer.

b. Volunteer Support: “Helping us to do it.”

Volunteers in the group discussions had an immediate and positive response to the question, “How helpful is the staff in the office?” Asked what specific behaviors/actions they find positive, the first response was “Everybody knows my name!” The responses to the OIG survey data corroborated that response, indicating that 81% of the Volunteers are “well” or “very well” satisfied with the PC/Philippines administrative support, and 56% also indicate they consider the program to be “well” or “very well” managed.

The Volunteer support unit (VSU): First in the list of staff members or units (that eventually included the whole staff) to receive accolades was the VSU. Volunteers enjoy the unit’s responsiveness, positive “yes” attitude and the fact, “they are always there.” Volunteers say that even the most unintelligent question will receive a positive, kind, helpful, and guaranteed response—even if the response is to say, “I’ll check for you.” Volunteers regard the VSU as dependable and approachable and the staff members they are most likely to use frequently.

The regional manager: The Volunteers feel that this position is really critical. They spoke favorably about the value of the regional manager having a personal knowledge of the region they serve, having many personal and professional connections, and having an impact by focusing the work of the Volunteers. Volunteers were concerned about the dual (even triple) role of the regional managers, who are responsible for creating a strategic development plan for the region, conducting site selection/preparation (including host families), and being responsible for on-going Volunteer support such as site visits, reviewing and commenting on the quarterly reports, and constantly responding to emails. Volunteers also acknowledged that, true to the Filipino culture, the regional managers will never complain, and it is “easy to take advantage of them.”

All other staff: Volunteers were anxious to acknowledge the unmistakable emphasis on service to the Volunteer exhibited by all the office staff. Specifically, Volunteers complimented the medical staff; not only is the medical staff “competent and empathetic,” but the medical resources available in Manila have given senior Volunteers confidence in their ability to remain healthy throughout their service. Said one: “Being healthy has enabled me to focus on doing the best Volunteer work possible.”

Volunteers believe the safety and security coordinator deserves “three stars.” Volunteers reported they received helpful responses to their calls and incident reports. He conducts “great and fun training sessions.”

Even with easy access to the internet, Volunteers value the information resource center (IRC); one Volunteer stated, “Having access to the IRC materials at the Peace Corps office in Manila has been great, because I am able to get the useful tools I need in order to perform my job. My school’s educational materials are mostly outdated and extremely

limited; so, it's very good that I didn't have to simply rely on their materials for writing the teaching modules." Almost all the Volunteers in the group sessions relayed examples of the helpfulness and usefulness of IRC staff.

c. The Volunteer Support Forum

While not many Volunteers reported they participated in the Forum, they valued the opportunity to interact with staff if they wished; those who had participated stated that the Forums are useful. The Forum sessions are usually scheduled at the end of another Volunteer conference, allowing for more Volunteers to save travel money and participate. Whether or not they attended, Volunteers agreed that they found the Forum proceedings that are published in the newsletter informative. A Volunteer spoke of his experience with the Forum: "I found staff to be very open to Volunteer needs and should be highly commended. With the Volunteer Support Forums, any comments made about staff improvement were implemented usually within a month."

2. The Community

a. The setting for a professional, cultural, and personal life

The Volunteers' perception of the community's acceptance of and, indeed, investment in the Volunteer was identified by each focus group as a positive factor contributing to the quality of their experience. At one point, we asked the Volunteers, "What is more important as a Peace Corps Volunteer, the job or the community?" After a reflective pause, a Volunteer answered, "My community IS my job." The rest of the group readily agreed. The role of the community factored over and over throughout the discussions.

The quality and characteristics of the community play a large role. Particularly, those Volunteers who live in larger urban areas regretted their lack of a community. One Volunteer who moved into a "*barangay*"⁶ from a larger town reported achieving more satisfaction in her role as an environmental Volunteer. A BAYD Volunteer credits his remote rural site with a richer experience: "...this affords me special experiences that most Volunteers do not get. I see the happiness and poverty associated with rural life. I learned about the difficulty to compete with people that have more access to resources, but also about finding contentment with less than other people."

But the social ties, the hospitality, and the inclusiveness of the people of the Philippine communities appear to impact the Volunteers the most. They speak of the generosity of friends who invite them to their homes and introduce them to others in the school or community. Said one enthusiastic Volunteer, "I have a ton of friends at my site. I even have a best friend, which is more than I could ever have asked for. I have won the hearts of school kids and elderly around, and because of this, I am really engaged in community life here and have more to do than I have hours." Said an education Volunteer of the importance of the community to her job, "It is really the motivated and pro-active people in my community who have supported my efforts."

⁶ Tagalog word meaning small town.

The Volunteers explained that their community provides the same benefits as the family in the United States: it is a family, “a whole bunch of people” caring for the Volunteer, “a whole lot of people watching out for your safety and security,” and also providing a rich social life. In addition, when the job does not work out for the Volunteer, the community becomes the source of work; through their involvement and integration with the community, Volunteers meet other people who are working on ideas or projects and who are anxious to include the Volunteer.

b. Host families—the community entrée

First, Volunteers point out, the host family enhances the work experience of the Volunteer: A CCIBA Volunteer noted that the biggest contribution to his ability to do his work as an environmental Volunteer was “Living with a host family and immersing myself in the Filipino culture. By living and working where I am serving makes me a more productive member of the community. It has taken work on my part to become as engaged in my family, neighborhood and province as I am but the benefits culturally, professionally, and personally are immeasurable.” For those Volunteers whose assignment requires community education and mobilization, the host family is “absolutely required for community entry; it is a ‘make or break’ experience to do a good job.”

Living with a host family is the premier Filipino cultural experience; one Volunteer stated: “It’s the Filipino culture to be hospitable.” According to the Volunteers, hospitality is the country’s self-image or identity. Filipinos speak with pride about their culture’s value of people, children, and the family. One Volunteer explained, “The Filipinos are a worldly people—many have a family member overseas somewhere.”

For a substantial number of Volunteers, the host family provides a social life and emotional comfort. Volunteers were effusive in their enthusiasm about the site host family; a few representative comments are:

- They [host family] are the reason I have any social life in my site.
- If it wouldn’t be for my host family, I’m not sure I would still be a Volunteer. They have adopted me into every aspect of their lives! I love them!
- When I leave this place in another year and think back on my time here, these will be the people I remember the most. They have taken me into their family as one of their own, and truly shown me that I am accepted and welcomed. The majority of my favorite times interacting with local people have been the times I spend with my host family just hanging out and being a family.
- Keeping close ties with my host family is a huge help. Even though I am independent, living in my own home, my host family is one of my joys of service.
- My host family continues to be a critical support in my emotional well-being during my service even though I have moved into an apartment. When I’m down, I still go visit them and ask for help and advice. They helped me feel at home even though I am very far from my home.

Approximately one-third to one-half of the Volunteers participating in the discussion groups were still living with their original host families and intended to continue for the entire length of their service. The Volunteers attributed the more successful host family experience during PST to their preparation. PST host families are chosen and vetted by a person whose sole responsibility it is to find good host families; PST host families are supported by meetings and contacts with the hub (local) training manager who takes time to negotiate and problem-solve immediately with the Trainee and the family; and they are monitored by staff members who are located near-by.

This extensive preparation and support is not available for the host families at the Volunteers' sites. One Volunteer offered the observation that having Americans live with them must create stresses for the host family, just as living with a family creates stresses for the Volunteers. The discussion concluded with Volunteers offering to develop a "tip sheet" for Volunteers living with host families: "How to be a member of the Filipino family."

3. The Host Agency

a. The supervisor and counterpart

The people Volunteers believed impacted the quality of their experience the most were the people with whom they worked—primarily, the supervisors and then, the counterparts. When Volunteers talked about the role of the supervisors, they gave examples of supervisor qualities and behaviors that facilitated the Volunteers' productivity. One Volunteer stated that he had a supervisor who was not so warm and fuzzy, but knew what to do and was a good manager. Even though the Volunteer didn't see him frequently, he felt "very supported." Other Volunteers agreed. Members of the group related the following other desirable traits in a supervisor:

- Having a clear work plan for the Volunteer.
- Being flexible and open to reasonable changes in the plans.
- Introducing the Volunteer to co-workers and the community.
- Explaining the Peace Corps and describing the work of the Volunteer.
- Participating in work and community activities with the Volunteer.
- Including the Volunteer in organizational functions.
- Having some authority to make decisions/or being linked to authority that can make decisions.

Not only do Volunteers believe that counterparts are important to their experience, but they also believe that counterparts are under-valued by the Peace Corps and their host agency. A good counterpart often has achieved a certain educational level or a more sophisticated understanding of the needs of their community, has time to spend with the Volunteer, and if involved in the community, often, will have other activities and commitments. As the discussion progressed, the Volunteers concluded that their "wish list" for what the counterpart/supervisor would be like resembled the positive characteristics of the language and cross-cultural facilitators (LCFs) they had during

training; but quickly, the comparison broke down when they realized the LCFs are paid, trained, and serve for a limited period.

The Volunteers were sensitive to the imposition on people who were willing to serve as their counterparts. The relationship of the Volunteer, the counterpart, and the supervisor can leave the counterpart personally and politically vulnerable. Many Volunteers believed that having several counterparts, depending on the project/activity, is an appropriate adaptation, noting that working with several counterparts would reduce the burden, extra work, and time on one counterpart. The Volunteers noted that in response to their suggestion, the training staff have a session on how to work with counterparts for the newest group of Trainees. Others noted the benefits to the Volunteer when training opportunities were available for the counterparts; stated one, “The PDM was such a great conference that has helped my Peace Corps experience. Going to PDM solidified my relationship with my counterpart.”

b. The quality of the organizations

We asked the Volunteers to describe the environment that provides a productive working relationship for a Volunteer in the host agency. They listed the following characteristics:

- Clear needs (understood by the host agency) of the community or the region.
- Goals, objectives, and work plans that are consistent with Peace Corps agency goals and can utilize the skills of a Volunteer.
- Have some resources such as a budget, an office, or a computer for the work of the Volunteer.

Volunteers generally agreed that government agencies are less flexible and have more difficulty accommodating Volunteers compared to non-government organizations (NGOs) and local neighborhood associations. The better ones are NGOs that have had Volunteers before (sometimes from organizations other than the Peace Corps). NGOs in the Philippines have freedom from the constraints of government rules and do not have the bureaucratic mentality that stifles initiative and enthusiasm; the most enthusiastic Volunteers spoke of the “passion” for a cause demonstrated by their NGO staff.

BETA Volunteers agreed that the schools had the capability to utilize the Volunteers meaningfully; the structure of a school setting with a daily schedule makes it easier to get work done. A CSE Volunteer stated that the sponsoring agency (a state-sponsored home for abused and neglected children) “. . . completely determines the type of work I do. The nature of the way my work site runs has completely dictated the amount of work I am able to do and how I spend my time.” A university setting has also been an excellent host agency for a BAYD Volunteer; he explained, “[The university] provides a lot of support in terms of funding, people, resources, assistance, etc. Although the projects are small, it also helps that the agency makes annual plans and has a somewhat clear path, direction, vision, and goals.”

Many Volunteers spoke of the greater satisfaction they experienced when they were assigned or moved to the poorer baranguays compared to the more prestigious government agencies. One Volunteer describes the enthusiasm demonstrated by his small community: “The people are happy to help me in any way they can. This is both good and bad. My projects usually begin strongly and are well-supported; however, this makes it a bit difficult to assess the true needs and desires of the students and community.”

c. The regional development approach

We asked the Volunteers to describe the impact on their experience of the regional development approach described by the staff. Most of the Volunteers spoke of the benefits they have already experienced of clustering Volunteers in a region. They suggested that future placements consider the importance of planning for a balance of gender, sectors, and for successive Volunteers. They recommended staggering the placements of Volunteers to facilitate the progress of the subsequent Volunteers who would pass on to the new Volunteers the site and project histories. Volunteers spoke of how they benefited in the community entry process if Volunteers are already present in their community or near-by. The Volunteers recognized that there was great potential in the idea of targeted development with a group of coordinated Volunteers.

The Volunteers stated there is a foundation in place now for the regional development approach. They believe that the reliable presence of the regional manager will facilitate the collaboration by the host agencies necessary to make the regional development strategy effective. As an example, many Volunteers spoke of the positive benefits they experienced implementing the Tudlo Mindanao project that utilizes a number of education Volunteers who bring their English teaching skills and techniques to teachers from the Mindanao region. Volunteers feel certain that this highly successful and rewarding activity has made a more significant impact on the teaching skills of the participating teachers of Mindanao than the Volunteers are able to achieve in their regular assignments.

d. The Philippine National Volunteer Support and Coordinating Agency (PNVSCA): the role of the Philippine government

The Volunteers spoke enthusiastically of a meeting in their region that was sponsored by the PNVSCA. The meeting brought together not only Peace Corps Volunteers but all international volunteers in the region to share insights and to consider joining efforts. The Volunteers said that they were energized by the ideas, objectives, and enthusiasm of other volunteers as well as from the PNVSCA representatives.

The Volunteers who participated in the discussions were quite positive about the role of the PNVSCA. They accept that it is appropriate that Volunteers are reminded that they are accountable ultimately to the government of the Philippines as representative of the people. The group members felt that the symbolism of the swearing in ceremony when the American ambassador “presents” the new Volunteers to the Government of the

Philippines is an important and emotional event. Furthermore, they found the requirements to submit work plans, quarterly reports, and a close of service report to the PNVSCA as an appropriate responsibility.

4. The Volunteer: a Personal Attitude

The Volunteers credited their training, the local staff as personal examples, the culture, and their communities with inspiring their best personal characteristics. Asked to clarify, the Volunteers named characteristics like patience, affability, flexibility, positive outlook, friendliness, adaptability, understanding, dedication, focus, ability to see possibilities/opportunities, “go with the flow,” humility, courage, and commitment.

To deal with the workplace situation, one Volunteer stated his key to success was *patience*; patience for this Volunteer meant “practicing every day the importance of learning to let things go and be all right with not taking control of every situation regardless of how easy it would be.” *Friendliness* was important to another who said, “I decided that I would make myself meet people, talk to them, question them about themselves, and show an interest in the town. It works, and I offer my services in any way needed.” Another offered *dedication*; to him it meant, “being there daily [which] has shown my co-workers that I take being there seriously.” *Commitment* to Peace Corps and the site was another quality – “I promised to stay two years. I do not want to renege on that promise; I would let them down.”

Adapting to the culture has been less difficult for some and more for others. One Volunteer said that *flexibility* is the most important: “I have no problems with trying new foods or experiences. I understand that I am the stranger and that I need to change certain things to fit in effectively.” One Volunteer said studying and *understanding* the culture will smooth many difficult circumstances: “There are some cultural differences which can be perceived as rude but not intended to be rude; there is probably a reason.” *Humility* served another Volunteer well: “Things will not always go as planned, which is why a positive attitude and listening will get you through anything, because all things are a learning experience.” Volunteers were most anxious to avoid projecting arrogance.

CONCLUSION: CONTINUING THE LEGACY

Many factors contribute to the quality of PC/Philippines. The pride the staff take in their work and their commitment to the work of the Volunteers explains most of why PC/Philippines is a high performing post. The staff work closely as a team and coordinate on key processes; this enabled them to make significant changes recently in the way the post carries out its functions. The staff have succeeded in integrating programming and training, strengthening Volunteer support, and coordinating site selection procedures – all to the benefit of the Volunteers. The staff take the views of the Volunteers seriously and have given the Volunteers a voice in PC/Philippines. PC/Philippines also has a unique relationship with the Philippines government. In addition to coordinating on project plans and site placement with the line ministries and

local agencies, PC/Philippines clears all of its projects through a government agency that monitors all Volunteer-based foreign assistance.

The Volunteers knew their experience was unique. They saw that the culture of the Philippines infused their entire experience; the warmth, hospitality, and acceptance of the people from the children in their neighborhood to the staff at the Peace Corps office defines the quality of their experience. As they reflected on their own contribution to the Peace Corps' history in the Philippines, one Volunteer wrote: "I am beginning to think of my own legacy. What is it to be a Volunteer? What stories and preconceptions have been hatched out of Volunteers prior to my arrival? How will my service affect those down the line, and what I can do today to determine people's preconceptions?" For their part, the Volunteers told us they hoped the Filipino people would remember them as fondly as the Volunteers will remember the Philippines.

APPENDIX A

Executive Summary of PC/Philippines Batch 64 Training

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A. OVERVIEW

On March 31, 2005 eighty (80) Peace Corps Trainees of Philippines Batch 264 representing six technical groups/sectors (27 – Basic Education Technical Assistance, 10 – Community Services Education, 12 – Business Advising for Youth Development, 14 – Community-Based Conservation of Biodiversity Areas, 7- Water & Sanitation, and 10 – Coastal Resource Management) arrived in country to begin a 10-week Pre-Service Training. The training program started on April 1 and ended with the Swearing-In of 74 Trainees on the week of June 6th.

A 5-day Initial Orientation was conducted at Island Cove, Kawit, Cavite on April 1 - 5 where the Trainees got introduced to PC Philippines and important US Embassy staffs, overviews on PCP program and projects, health, training, safety and security and sessions on the Role of Volunteer in Development and Cultural Dev't. in the Philippines. In addition, a field trip to a historical landmark (Intramuros, Manila) and tour of the PCP office were conducted as well.

After the Initial Orientation, the Trainees were dispersed in four hub sites depending on their project as follows: Northern Luzon (Bayombong, Nueva Vizcaya) - BETA, CSE and WS; Southern Luzon (Los Banos, Laguna) – BETA and CSE; Western Visayas (Banga, Aklan) – BAYD, CCIBA, and CRM; and Eastern Visayas (Baybay, Leyte) – BAYD, CCIBA, and CRM). This is the first time that post used the Community-Based Training model so, the first 3-days at the hub sites were spent for getting to know the hub staff, overviews to home stay, language and culture, cluster sites, and community entry components. Survival language classes were conducted before the start of the homestay on April 9.

A total of 21 cluster sites were used with 3-4 Trainees and 1 Language/Cultural Facilitator to a cluster. The cluster sites were selected based on the language/s spoken by the community. Either the national or regional language was taught depending on the site assignments. A total of 4 languages were taught namely: Tagalog, Ilokano, Ilonggo, and Cebuano. Due to the diversity of the language situation in the country, cluster sites were from 15 minutes to 5 hours away from the hub site.

In cluster communities, the Trainees generally spent the mornings for language sessions and afternoons for community entry activities. Schedule was flexible based on the needs of the groups especially taking into consideration the availability of people to interview, shadow, meet or interact with. Sessions were conducted from Mondays through Saturdays. Sundays were spent with host families.

Trainees returned to the hub site every 7 – 10 days for generic sessions such as processing of cluster experiences, health, safety and administrative sessions. A total of 5 hub sessions including the initial and final hub days were included in the schedule. At

mid-point, a 1-week Site Visit was scheduled for the Trainees to get to know their HCA, community and Host Family.

Five (5) Trainees decided to early terminate during the first half of training and one was medically evacuated to the US after the Site Visit.

Some salient points of this training include:

Different sets of Hub staff came on board at a staggered schedule as follows: Hub Managers (HM) – Feb. 7, 2005; Community Skills Coordinators (CSC) – Feb 14; Language Coordinators (LC) and Resource Volunteer Coordinators (RVC) – Feb. 28; and the Language/Cultural Facilitators (LCF) and General Services Assistants (GSA) – March 7.

A General Training of Trainers with all 42 PST staff in attendance was conducted March 7 – 12 while the Language TOT was conducted March 14 - 23. In addition to language teaching methodologies and culture sessions, the LTOT also included a 2-day workshop on Community Entry Curriculum and Tools workshop.

Four different handbooks were developed and used by the staff and Trainees for this training namely: Hub Manager Handbook, PST Staff Handbook, Homestay Handbook, and Trainee Handbook.

Four Hub sites were headed by four Hub Managers (HM). The HMs were assisted by a CSC, an LC, an RVC, and a GSA.

The Hub Managers spent a total of 5 weeks before the arrival of the Trainees to identify, visit, select, and orient the Host Families for both Trainees and LCFs.

The Community Entry (CE) Curriculum was developed by the Sector Managers for Education and Environment and Livelihood/Youth/Water and Sanitation. CE tools used by the Trainees included: journal keeping, interviewing, community walks, shadowing, community history and change, trend line analysis, mapping, timeline development, observing and listening, identifying local indigenous and technical knowledge, and conducting community meetings and community activity/project.

The Program and Training Units worked together from the planning to the implementation and evaluation of this PST.

For the first time, all Trainees lived with host families that speak their target language which facilitated their language learning.

Visiting cluster sites by both hub staff and Manila staff proved very challenging especially for clusters that were far from the hub sites.

School was out of session so Education Volunteers did not have a chance to observe classes and interact with both teachers and students in a formal way but were able to interview some teachers and students regarding the educational system in the Philippines informally.

Resource Volunteer Coordinators were very effective in assisting the hub staff with contacting, briefing and working with Resource Volunteers as well as assisting with the different components of training. They were very helpful with bridging the gap between the Filipino and American cultures.

Resource Volunteers were invited to share their experiences and facilitate or co-facilitate sessions during the hub days. At least 2-3 RVs were present every hub day.

All 21 clusters were able to do a community activity or project before the end of the PST. Activities included: computer training for village officials, youth, and community members; village clean-up; Day Camps consisting of sports fest, clean-up drive, mothers' class and computer tutorial; Brigada Eskwela (School Brigade) involving gardening, canal concreting, water pump repair and rip rapping; mangrove planting; park beautification with neighborhood children; environmental education day camp; school and community clean-up; make-a-book workshop and summer fun activities.

On the last week of training, key PCP staff headed by the Country Director and the Program and Training Officer conducted commitment to excellence interviews.

All units of the PCP gave their all-out support to this training under the leadership of the Country Director, the Program and Training Officer, the Administrative Officer, and the Medical Officer.

A total of seventy-four Trainees were Sworn-in on June 6, 2005 in Northern Luzon and Western Visayas, on June 9, 2005 in Southern Luzon and Eastern Visayas, and a special Swearing-In for a married couple on June 14 at the Peace Corps Office. Supervisors and local officials witnessed the Trainees' Swearing-In. The Country Director and the Program and Training Officer officiated the Swearing-In of the Trainees.

B. Recommendations

Provide more training on community entry tools for LCFs to enable them to provide better guidance, assistance and support in the implementation of this component. Conduct hands-on activities, role plays, and processing practice during the Language TOT.

As early as Initial Orientation, introduce the Community Entry Curriculum and explain the rationale for the approach or design especially on the use of the different tools during the CBT.

Take a different approach when introducing the community entry tools – use tools like community walks and mapping, journaling, and conducting courtesy calls that don't call for much target language use at the beginning of the CBT, lump similar tools together, introduce tools in situational context, and explain the ultimate goal of the curriculum in order for Trainees to better appreciate the tools.

Conduct language sessions during the hub days to allow for continuity in learning the language. Three days without language session proved detrimental to the progress of the trainees in learning the TL.

Provide language materials like books and dictionaries to all Trainees during training. Order dictionaries that cannot be purchased locally before the start of training.

Include the provision of lunch to LCFs and Trainees when negotiating with Host Families as not all clusters have eateries where they could buy or eat lunch.

Identify hub sites that are at least 2 – 3 hours away from Manila either by land or air transportation. Cluster sites should not be an hour away from the hub site to make trips easier for both trainees and staff.

Identify medical providers that are close to the hub sites for easier accessibility in case trainees need medical attention.

In spite of all the challenges, the PST using the CBT model for the first time, was a resounding success based on final evaluations and reports; informal feedback from trainees, staff and resource Volunteers; hub site debriefing; and the final PST review.

Training Manager [signature]