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To: Sheila Crowley, Chief Executive Officer
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Kate Becker, Country Director, Albania
Angela Kissel, Acting Chief Compliance Officer

From: Kathy Buller, Inspector General

Date: December 12, 2017

Subject: Final Report on the Program Evaluation of Peace Corps/Albania (IG-18-02-E)

Transmitted for your information is our final report on the Program Evaluation of Peace Corps/Albania.

Management concurred with 21 of 22 recommendations, but did not concur with recommendation 14, which we closed. Twenty recommendations, numbers 1-10 and 12-13, 15-17 and 20-22, remain open pending confirmation from the chief compliance officer that the documentation identified in management's response has been received. In its response, management described actions it is taking or intends to take to address the issues that prompted each of our recommendations. OIG will review and consider closing recommendations 1-10, 12-13, 15-17 and 20-22 when the documentation reflected in the OIG's comments and the agency's response to the preliminary report is received. For recommendations 11 and 18, additional documentation is required. OIG closed recommendation 19 based on documentation submitted and reviewed.

We wish to note that in closing recommendations, we are not certifying that the agency has taken these actions or that we have reviewed their effect. Certifying compliance and verifying effectiveness are management's responsibilities. However, when we feel it is warranted, we may conduct a follow-up review to confirm that action has been taken and to evaluate the impact.

Our comments, which are in the report as Appendix E, address these matters. Please respond with documentation to close the remaining open recommendations within 90 days of the receipt of this memorandum.

You may address questions regarding follow-up or documentation to Assistant Inspector General for Evaluation Jeremy Black at 202.692.2912.

Please accept our thanks for your cooperation and assistance in our review.

cc: Kathy Stroker, Deputy Chief Executive Officer

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INSPECTOR GENERAL

A Volunteer and her English Club students.

Final Country Program Evaluation
Peace Corps/Albania
IG-18-02-E
December 2017

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

More than 700 Peace Corps Volunteers have served the people of Albania since the program was first launched in 1992. Peace Corps left Albania in 1997 due to political instability. Peace Corps/Albania (the post) re-opened in September of 2003. There are currently 3 projects in Albania: English education (TEFL), health education (HE), and community and organizational development (COD). At the onset of this Office of Inspector General (OIG) evaluation, 137 Volunteers and trainees were serving in Albania.

WHAT WE FOUND

Programming, Training and Evaluation

Albania is more developed than many countries where Peace Corps operates. We found that Peace Corps/Albania needed to develop a strategy to focus the program on the needs of youth and underserved populations in poor areas of the country, as the Peace Corps Act requires. The post should leverage the strong partner relationships it has built to redirect activities to identify and benefit at-risk groups.

Map of Albania
Source: UN

Peace Corps/Albania's training program had several strengths, including its training team, a well-developed 27-month learning continuum, and its approach to assessing training. The programming team also participated effectively in training. We identified that the post should improve some training areas, including technical training on key skills Volunteers needed in their work, and intercultural training to support their social integration. We advised the post to revisit its decision not to join the TEFL certificate program since the program could address some of the obstacles education Volunteers faced. Volunteers were not all using the Peace Corps approach to community assessment, and the post should update its training in this area to take advantage of recent guidance and tools. Also, we recommended that the post provide more consistent messaging to Volunteers about what constitutes a secondary project.

According to Volunteers' performance reports, they were achieving most of the projects' objectives, and were on track to achieve 5-year project goals. Programming staff gave Volunteers timely feedback on their reports, and they used data from Volunteer reports to make programmatic decisions and share information on project impacts with partners. However, program staff needed better direction on what to prioritize when reviewing and providing feedback to Volunteers about their reports so that staff spend less time identifying and fixing Volunteers' reporting errors and more time providing substantive feedback to Volunteers about their work.

All staff at the post worked together on site development, including the safety and security manager and Peace Corps medical officers. Volunteers' housing met the housing criteria, and site history files were well organized and used during the site development process. There was potential to improve site development by verifying that Volunteers' assigned host agencies and counterparts needed the Volunteers' assistance and could work effectively with the Volunteers. We found that the post did not have a formal site development/selection strategy or finalized site development standard operating procedures.

Volunteer Support

The post was well prepared for emergencies and exhibited an effective response to crimes and risks Volunteers faced. The post should ensure that global positioning system (GPS) data is recorded for all Volunteer sites to make it easier to locate Volunteers in an emergency. Like many other posts, ensuring Volunteers' compliance with the whereabouts policy was a challenge. The post was in the process of addressing this issue.

The medical unit experienced some challenges in the past, but with two new medical officers and significant temporary duty staff support from the Office of Health Services in Peace Corps/Washington, these challenges were being resolved. The post was also undertaking a major construction project to improve access, ensure greater confidentiality, and improve the quality of the medical facilities. The capacity of post's medical officers to respond to the mental health care needs of Volunteers requires strengthening. Also, the medical unit must have an updated medical action plan to ensure full preparedness for a medical emergency. This was also in process during the evaluation. The post should take steps to ensure that Volunteers are aware of the Quality Nurse Line.

Some Volunteers expressed frustration with abrupt policy changes. The country director had worked hard to make sure that staff provided consistent messaging about policy changes in the Volunteer Handbook, but there was still some confusion among Volunteers. Some volunteers said that their concerns were not always well understood by some members of senior staff. Training all senior and programming and training staff on professional coaching could result in more consistent support.

Leadership and Management

The country director was appropriately focused on rectifying deficiencies in management. Staff, in general, reported that they felt sufficiently consulted about decisions that affected their job. All post staff participated in planning meetings and articulated their priorities for the upcoming year.

The post could improve the well-being of Volunteers by continuing the process of reviewing living allowances to bring them in line with the economic requirement of living at the same level as people in their host community. Settling-in allowances could also be revisited to ensure every Volunteer can equip their home adequately depending on their living situation.

RECOMMENDATIONS IN BRIEF

Our report contains 22 recommendations, which, if implemented, should strengthen post operations and correct the deficiencies detailed in the accompanying report.

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HOST COUNTRY BACKGROUND

Albania is a small European country, which borders both the Adriatic and Ionian Sea. It is similar in size to the state of Maryland. Albania gained its independence from the Ottoman Empire during the First Balkan War in 1912 when its modern borders were established. These borders, drawn by the European powers, excluded almost half of former Albanian lands and approximately three million Albanians. Following World War II, Enver Hoxha, became Albania's dictatorial leader and expelled all foreigners. Under Hoxha, Albania suffered from repression and isolation from the rest of the world until his death in 1985. Albania became a democracy in the early 1990s. At that time, Albania's underdeveloped financial sector allowed for the growth of pyramid schemes, which caused the Albanian economy to collapse when these schemes failed in 1997. Massive rioting resulted in the death of over 2,000 people and the government briefly lost control of the country. In the most recent national elections held in June of 2017, the Socialist Party retained control of the government and gained the majority of seats, enabling it to push ahead on reforms required for entry into the European Union.

Three generations of Volunteers in Peshkopi pose with a statue of the Albanian hero Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbeu.

Albania is one of the poorest countries in Europe, with 14.3 percent of Albanians living below the poverty line. Remittances from the Albanian diaspora in Greece and Italy have been 'a significant catalyst for economic growth,' but have declined significantly since the 2008 global financial crisis. Agriculture accounts for almost half of employment, but is limited primarily to small family operations and subsistence farming. The private sector, while growing, suffers from complex tax codes and licensing requirements, a weak judicial system, corruption, poor enforcement of contracts, and antiquated infrastructure.

Albania enjoys a 99 percent adult literacy rate. Of the children eligible for school enrollment, 92 percent are enrolled in primary schools, and 78 percent attend secondary school. Albania falls in the top third of Peace Corps countries with respect to the Human Development Index.

PEACE CORPS PROGRAM BACKGROUND

Albania and the United States reestablished diplomatic relations in March 1991 after a 35-year break. Shortly thereafter, the Albanian government invited the Peace Corps into the country. More than 700 Volunteers have served in Albania since the program's inception in 1991. The first group of 21 Volunteers arrived in June 1992 to teach English in secondary schools and universities. In 1997, Volunteers were evacuated and the post closed after the fraudulent pyramid

savings schemes threatened the country's stability. The post re-opened in 2003 with Volunteers working in community and organizational development (COD). The following year, the post opened its English education (TEFL) and health education (HE) projects. These three projects continue to operate today. Post receives one input of approximately 50 Volunteers per year.

Staff turnover in the last couple of years, particularly for the U.S. direct-hire (USDH) staff, caused a significant amount of stress on the post. In September 2015, the former country director departed abruptly, followed shortly thereafter by the director of management and operations. The replacement director of management and operations remained at the post for a little over a year before also leaving unexpectedly in February 2017. From late 2015 through 2016, post had vacancies in the director of management and operations and country director positions for a total of 284 days. In 2017 there was a 175 day gap in the director of management and operations position. For 2016 alone, this was more than three times both the global and regional average. In addition, the post also lost its safety and security officer and safety and security manager when they departed from post in June of 2017. Headquarters sent a number of temporary duty staff to support the post during the periods of staff vacancies and to provide mentoring for the two new medical officers hired within the last year.

Community and Organizational Development. COD Volunteers worked with local government municipalities and non-governmental organizations in a variety of areas, including business development, tourism/cultural development, municipal development, communications management, and technology capacity-building. The goals of the COD project were (1) for local organizations and community groups to strengthen their management and organizational skills and processes, and (2) for individuals to increase their capacity to participate in local community and civil society development. The COD project primarily assigned Volunteers to work with local government municipalities. In 2014, the Government of Albania implemented a comprehensive reform of territorial governance which reduced the number of local municipalities from 373 to 61. This reform, along with the local elections of 2015, impacted the availability of counterparts and host agencies for COD Volunteers. Recently, post stopped assigning Volunteers to work with municipalities as urban planners because the need for urban planning support was being met by consultants hired by the government. At the time of the evaluation there were 43 COD Volunteers.

English Education. TEFL Volunteers co-taught English as a foreign language in a high school or combined elementary/middle school setting. Volunteers typically co-taught alongside an Albanian English teacher during their first year, but some Volunteers taught on their own in the second year. Volunteers also worked with students to improve critical thinking and problem solving, often through after-school activities. The goals of the TEFL project were: (1) to improve the English language proficiency, teaching methods, and resource development skills of English teachers and instructors; (2) to improve students' English proficiency, communication, and life skills through English instruction in the classroom and through extracurricular activities; and (3) to strengthen the collaboration between education stakeholders and increase their participation in the school community. PC/Albania no longer assigns Volunteers to work at universities. This was due in part to the inconsistency of the scheduling of the academic year, and an inability of Volunteers to address community needs at this level. At the time of the evaluation there were 67 TEFL Volunteers.

Health Education. HE Volunteers either co-taught health education at the high school or combined elementary/middle school level, or worked across multiple schools co-teaching with the Albanian "Life Skills" teachers. In addition, some Volunteers provided staff training at health centers. HE Volunteers were primarily placed in smaller towns and rural areas. The goals of the HE project were (1) for youth to adopt behaviors and practices that contribute to improved sexual and reproductive health and (2) for youth to develop the life skills necessary to make healthy choices to positively impact their lives as well as the lives of the people around them. The post reviewed the HE project in 2014 with assistance from the Office of Global Health and HIV. Around the same time, the Ministry of Education implemented a pilot program to introduce youth sexual health and reproductive health topics into the country's education curriculum. As a result, Peace Corps decided to support the Ministry of Education's pilot program by placing HE Volunteers in schools to promote these topics. The post did not receive any Volunteers in the HE sector in 2015 allowing staff to focus on redesigning the project. The HE Volunteers who arrived in 2016 were the first to implement the new HE project. At the time of the evaluation there were 26 HE Volunteers.

The post's Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 operational budget was approximately $1.6 million USD.[1] The last OIG evaluation of PC/Albania took place in 2008.

EVALUATION RESULTS

This evaluation addresses researchable questions in the following topic areas:

- Programming, Training, and Evaluation
- Volunteer Support
- Post Leadership and Management

PROGRAMMING, TRAINING AND EVALUATION

Programming, training and evaluation were assessed using the following researchable questions:

- Is the program focused on the country's stated development priorities, in the poorest areas of the country?

- How well qualified and prepared are Volunteers for service?

- Are Volunteers achieving project objectives? How are staff using monitoring, reporting and evaluation results?

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[1] This amount does not include the salaries, benefits, and related cost of U.S. direct hires assigned to the post and other costs the agency has determined should be centrally-budgeted.

- Does the site development process provide Volunteers with an environment conducive to Volunteer success? Are sites, housing, and work assignments appropriate and meeting all established criteria?

This evaluation examined whether the program focused on the country's stated development priorities, in the poorest areas of the country, as stipulated in the Peace Corps Act. This question was particularly pertinent because "Albania has a lower level of need compared to 83% of Peace Corps countries in the world and 65% of countries in the [Europe, Mediterranean, and Asia (EMA)] region" according to a headquarters staff member, referring to Albania's ranking on the UN Human Development Index compared to other Peace Corps countries. The evaluation determined that post programming could be improved by greater focus on youth and underserved populations. We found no significant areas of concern that would necessitate action by the post regarding stakeholder engagement, as there were memoranda of understanding with host country stakeholders, there was a high level of engagement of local partners, and well constituted project advisory committees were active. The training program was also very strong due to the availability of highly competent training staff, the solid participation of program staff, the existence of a 27 month learning continuum, and compliance with language proficiency interview procedures. The training team's effective implementation of the global learning standards was particularly commendable. The programming team's use of data in project management was notable. They also provided timely feedback on Volunteer reports. The safety and security manager and medical staff participated in site development.

Areas of No Concern Regarding Programming, Training, and Evaluation:

- **Memoranda of understanding with Albanian partners**. According to post staff, the memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Ministry of Education is being updated after elections held in June of 2017. The post was in the process of establishing a new MOU with the Ministry of Health and, at the time of evaluation, was considering developing an MOU with the Ministry of Social Welfare.

- **Positive engagement with local partners**. The level of engagement and communications with local officials was satisfactory, although some post staff would like to have more time available for building relationships. Partners with whom we met appreciated the positive communication and effective collaboration with Peace Corps. PC/Albania's leadership at the Model United Nations Conference, organized in collaboration with the United Nations, U.S. Embassy and Ministry of Education was laudable. Also, the Peace Corps' Girls Leading Our World camps created opportunities for partners to reach beneficiaries with health messages. The post produced an annual report for FY 2016 in English and Albanian language which it distributed to local stakeholders, partners, and counterparts.

- **Project advisory committees (PAC)**. Each project had a PAC which included key stakeholders and which held meetings in March and April of FY 2017. A senior staff person at the post mentioned that PACs will be part of the post's communications strategy in the future. The post saw PACs as an excellent mechanism for updating

stakeholders on Volunteers' activities and accomplishments. One partner felt that the PAC was helpful because Peace Corps was open to concerns he shared.

- **Effective recruitment of training staff.** The post was able to recruit sufficiently qualified trainers in time for training. During fieldwork, local Albanian staff said that most of the short-term language and technical trainers returned to work with them every year. "Overall, most of the team is returning." This is a strength of the PC/Albania training program.

- **Program managers were sufficiently involved in training.** During fieldwork, program managers, the director of programming and training, and the training manager all concurred that program manager involvement during training was sufficient. The program managers played an important role in designing and providing technical training. For example, the TEFL program manager and assistants gave feedback to trainees after observing them teach in Albanian classrooms as a training exercise.

- **27-month learning continuum.** The post used an Excel workbook to track Volunteers' progress in relation to the objectives of training and events over their 27-months of service. Most Volunteers said they received the training when they needed it and felt they could apply the training within a reasonable amount of time.

- **The post complied with language proficiency interview requirements.** The post tested and recorded Volunteers' Albanian language proficiency, as required, at the end of pre-service training, at an in-service training event, and at the completion of service. The agency used trained and qualified testers to conduct the language proficiency interviews with all trainees and Volunteers.

- **The post complied with the standards for assessing trainees' readiness to serve.** The post produced a trainee assessment portfolio (TAP) document for trainees, and conducted appropriate assessments during pre-service training. According to the training manager:

  > The TAP itself is one way, among many other ways, we track and observe their performance. We address, encourage, and celebrate in a timely fashion. The communication system we have helps ensure that we are on the right track--that they are ready to take off after [pre-service training (PST)].

  The training manager did not report any challenges in implementing the TAP. Albania had been a pilot post and early adopter of the TAP when the agency promoted a set of learning standards for all Volunteers. All staff involved in training understood that they played a role in the training assessment process.

- **Post staff were using project-level data in project management.** The post used Volunteer performance data from the Volunteer reporting tool (VRT) for project management and shared it with Volunteers and stakeholders. The country director set the expectations that staff use data to inform feedback to the Volunteers, and the director of programming and training prepared a data report after each reporting period. Program staff also provided Volunteers with timely feedback on their reports. One post staff

member reported during field interviews that she found the process of doing an in-depth review of the data in Volunteer reports useful.

- **Key staff were involved in site development and approval, placement and housing.** The safety and security manager was involved in the site development processes, from managing standard operating procedures related to site development and site history files, to training new staff on site development procedures, and even coordinating the housing inspection process. We inspected the post's site history files and found that staff had reviewed and approved sites and housing that met the post's health and safety criteria, and that approvals were documented in the files. Once the site history file was created for each site, key staff met to review and approve the sites, including the safety and security manager, the medical officer, the director of programming and training, the program managers, and the country director. The safety and security manager and medical officer were required to sign off on the site assignment approval form. According to the draft site development standard operating procedures (SOP) pertaining to inspection of homes, the safety and security manager and director of management and operations were responsible for training staff on how to do house inspections during the site development process. The medical officers provided suggestions regarding accommodations and health-related housing issues.

Areas of Programming, Training and Evaluation that Require Management Attention

There were several aspects of programming which required management attention, particularly fulfilling the Peace Corps mission of serving people in the poorest areas of Albania.

Volunteer sites and assignments were not focused on meeting the needs of people in the poorest areas of Albania.

The Peace Corps Act established the mission of the Peace Corps as:

> …to promote world peace and friendship through a Peace Corps, which shall make available to interested countries and areas men and women of the United States qualified for service abroad and willing to serve, under conditions of hardship if necessary, to help the peoples of such countries and areas in meeting their needs for trained manpower, ***particularly in meeting the basic needs of those living in the poorest areas of such countries [emphasis added]***, and to help promote a better understanding of the American people on the part of the peoples served and a better understanding of other peoples on the part of the American people.

Most Volunteers were not assigned to work with poor beneficiaries. According to our review of information in the Volunteer information database application (VIDA), only 17.5 percent of Volunteer site assignments were in the poorest areas of the country. Safety and security constraints restricted the post's ability to place Volunteers in some of the poorest northern regions of Albania. However, the post had opportunities to prioritize more underserved areas and underserved populations within the areas where Volunteers were located. For example, one senior staff member mentioned that the post had assigned a small number of education Volunteers to vocational or specialized schools as a way to reach more underserved groups.

During fieldwork, 91 percent of Volunteers interviewed[2] said that they were not serving the poorest people in their primary assignments. Several Volunteer comments include:

> Where I was originally assigned is the richest school here.

> I do not feel that I am serving the poorest community here in Albania.

> I'm serving the broader community … which is the poorest region in Albania, but I am not serving the poorest people in Albania. The people who are able to work with me, and I have the capacity to help, are more on the privileged side.

Many of the Volunteers interviewed identified the poorest people in Albania as the Roma, 78 percent of whom are living in poverty. They are severely disadvantaged in terms of access to education, healthcare, and opportunities for employment.

We did not find evidence in project documentation, site selection criteria, or training that the post had placed a priority on meeting the needs of underserved, poor populations. Working with underserved or poor populations was not mentioned in the goals or objectives of the three project frameworks. Programming staff did not reference opportunities to work with disadvantaged groups as programmatic site selection criteria. For example, the TEFL project Volunteer request form did not ask the school to provide any information about the wealth/income status of students at the school. When reviewing criteria for selecting sites, the health education project did not look at the economic profile of the intended beneficiaries of the Volunteer's activities.

According to a staff member, the TEFL and HE projects did not have official criteria to evaluate whether a school served poor or affluent student populations. The site selection criteria listed in the post's draft site development standard operating procedures did not mention the need for staff to identify opportunities for Volunteers to serve the poor. The site/community survey did not ask about the distribution of wealth in the community. Working with the poor was also not mentioned in the brochure or letter used to educate potential host agencies about the work of Peace Corps. Finally, according to one staff member, trainees in a recent PST did not receive any specific training on how to work with poorer populations in Albania.

We assessed that some Volunteers thought their service was less meaningful because they were not assigned to work with those most in need. For example, one Volunteer explained:

> At the one year mark I took stock and sometimes I feel bad that I am working a lot with the youth center where the kids are well off. I justify it by saying that these are tomorrow's leaders, so it is good to invest. I would like to do more with the underserved communities.

Some Volunteers we interviewed did not believe they were making a difference. As one Volunteer said: "When I first got here, I did not feel like I was really making a difference for these people." Further, in the All-Volunteer Survey (AVS) a lower percent of Albania Volunteers found their overall Peace Corps service rewarding (82 percent), compared to Volunteers in the EMA region (89 percent) and Volunteers globally (90 percent).

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[2] Volunteer interviews were conducted in-country using a standardized interview questionnaire.

PC/Albania could improve Volunteers' sense of accomplishment with their service by enabling them to achieve the Peace Corps mission of working more directly with underserved populations. Some Volunteers used secondary activities to reach underserved communities with whom they were not assigned to work, indicating that the post could take a more purposeful approach to assigning and training Volunteers for work which benefits the poor. PC/Albania staff asserted that they would like to create more opportunities for Volunteers to work with underserved populations by placing Volunteers in smaller communities. However, the post put many Volunteers in larger communities with more resources because most of the country's population lives in larger cities. In order to take a more systematic approach to this issue, the post will need to consider how to meet the needs of underserved groups in all Volunteer sites whether small communities, rural areas, or larger cities.

> **We recommend:**
>
> > 1. **That the country director and director of programming and training develop a strategy for integrating a focus on Albanian underserved populations into programming, training, and monitoring and evaluation.**

Post lacked a site selection strategy and a final version of the site development standard operating procedures.

Peace Corps requires posts to have a site selection strategy. According to the Programming, Training and Evaluation Guidance, E.1. Site Selection Strategy: "A site strategy defines a project's geographic focus, clustering strategy, use of rural versus urban sites, site selection criteria, and length of project assistance at each site." Also, the Europe, Mediterranean, and Asia (EMA) region site development guidance specifies that the director of programming and training is responsible for "articulating a comprehensive strategy" for site development. PC/Albania's programming and training staff had discussed the elements of a site development strategy in a staff meeting, but did not have a formal document which captured their conclusions and plans for site development each year. Additionally agency records indicated that since 2013 the post has lacked a final version of its site development standard operating procedures, which can lead to confusion among staff and inconsistent site development and selection.

In section E.1.5 the guidance states that a post's site selection strategy "should define the number of sequential Volunteers to be placed in each site (usually two or three), and the roles that sequential Volunteers will play" in moving toward the project goals. PC/Albania did not specify the number of sequential Volunteers who should serve in a site before it is closed or rested. According to our analysis, multiple generations of Volunteers have served at most sites in Albania since 2003. For example, we identified five large towns where post had placed from 17 to 22 Volunteers, one after another. Staff and Volunteers in Albania observed that it is harder for Volunteers to culturally integrate when living in larger towns and cities. One staff member observed that: "Volunteers in big Albanian sites are not as embraced by their community as in smaller communities where the presence of foreigners has been very scarce." Another staff member said: "I want to see Volunteers moving out of larger cities where many Volunteers live

now, into smaller communities. I feel this will improve integration and enable Volunteers to do more of the work in line with Peace Corps goals."

Eighty-eight percent of Albanian Volunteers reported on the AVS that they were not the first Volunteer at their site, compared with 68.5 percent of Volunteers in EMA and 66.8 percent of Volunteers globally. During field interviews, several Volunteers mentioned challenges with serving at a site where there have been many preceding generations. Some of the problems they encountered included being compared with their predecessors, having set expectations for what they should do, and meeting resistance to doing activities because people in the community said they have already done the same types of things with previous Volunteers. One Volunteer reported that: "The Volunteer I replaced was not prepared to be in [this work setting.] She did not meet my personal professional standards and set a very skewed perception of my role." Even though senior staff advocated using smaller sites, and staff said they tried to have a balance between replacement sites and new sites, this was not evident in the sample of Volunteer sites we visited. Only 1 out of 21 Volunteers visited said they were the first Volunteer at their site. If post had a formal site development strategy approved by the country director as stipulated in the guidance, it would be possible to hold staff accountable to achieving their stated goals of having a balance between new and replacement sites and placing Volunteers in smaller towns.

We recommend:

2. **That the director of programming and training lead development of an annual site development strategy which is consistent with agency criteria and guidance.**

3. **That the director of programming and training finalize Peace Corps/Albania's site development standard operating procedures.**

Site development needed improvement.

The Peace Corps Manual, section 270.6, establishes the critical importance of having good work assignments and sites for a safe and effective volunteer service. In addition, the EMA Region Site Development Standards (4.2), specify that "Volunteers have meaningful jobs that respond to priority community needs at their sites."

Volunteers in all three project areas encountered problems in carrying out their primary assignments with their host agencies. In the HE project, health program staff had begun in 2015 to assign HE Volunteers to schools rather than health clinics as part of a pilot program with the Ministry of Education. All of the HE Volunteers interviewed struggled to find sufficient work in schools and said that Albanian teachers didn't understand their roles. Volunteers reported that they had to force their way into teaching in the classrooms and that teachers and students were not receptive to the health topics. As one Volunteer expressed the challenge, "I thought [the biggest obstacle] would be the taboo of speaking about [youth sexual and reproductive health

topics] but I feel like I am not even getting the chance." Also, the curriculum included health topics only for a short period in the spring, and teachers and students were absent from schools during open periods when they could do extra classes beyond the required curriculum.

Project advisory committee (PAC) members for TEFL were concerned that Volunteers' expectations of co-teaching with Albanian teachers were not being met. TEFL Volunteers reported that their counterpart teachers often did not live near the school and were not present in the evenings or weekends to do extra-curricular activities or lesson planning. Volunteers complained that their counterparts expected them to take over teaching classes and did not want to co-teach with them:

> There is willful misunderstanding of the fact that Volunteers are not supposed to be replacement teachers.
>
> I think our situation in the schools is poorly thought out, and I don't think it functions as intended most of the time. I think if we are placed in the schools, we should be here as extra resources to help advanced/dedicated students, not as glorified teaching assistants who provide occasional dictionary services.

COD Volunteers said that they were not able to work effectively on organizational development, and most mentioned struggling in their assignments with the municipal offices (*bashkias*). During field interviews, COD Volunteers described problems including a lack of need for their services, a politicized environment, and too few people with whom to work. They also mentioned being assigned mundane clerical tasks such as making photocopies or doing data entry. Members of the COD PAC proposed developing Volunteer assignments that emphasized building capacity in areas such as youth employability, volunteerism, business development, tourism, and support for people with special needs, for which Peace Corps can recruit and train Volunteers to work more effectively.

Post staff said that they met and trained counterparts during the site development process, and yet, Volunteer responses on our Volunteer survey indicated that a third of counterparts and almost half of local officials were unclear about the Volunteer's role. During field interviews, Volunteers in all three projects reported that counterparts lacked interest or motivation, were not present at site or were frequently absent from work, and did not have time to work with them. A couple of HE Volunteers mentioned that teachers did not want to do lesson plans or be involved in the health sessions. Peace Corps also encouraged Volunteers to find additional counterparts at site. Over half of the Volunteers we interviewed had better working relationships with the counterparts they found than the Peace Corps designated counterpart.

The post did not have clear programmatic criteria for the selection of sites, which would enable staff to rank or prioritize sites based on potential for Volunteers to succeed in their work. The draft site development SOP mentioned "the viability of the Volunteer assignment," as a criterion for site selection, but did not provide details about how this was to be assessed. Post staff indicated on the site assessment checklist using check boxes if the requesting organization expressed need for the skills that the Volunteers could provide. There was also a criterion requiring an assigned "adequate counterpart," and relevant questions on the first and second site identification report forms. However, the draft site development SOP did not specify how to evaluate these criteria during the site development process.

We assessed that an additional factor contributing to sub-optimal site development outcomes was the misallocation of responsibilities among staff. For example, the previous safety and security manager was tasked with a large role in the site development process that went beyond the scope of her work, including negotiating leases with landlords and compiling information used by the finance team to prepare sites. In 2017 the post implemented a new policy requiring all Volunteers to live with host families, so post staff had to focus site development efforts on finding suitable host families for the first time as part of the site development process. The EMA Region did not grant the post permission to hire a homestay coordinator to support this work.

As a result of these issues with site development, many Volunteers did not feel they were meeting community needs or had productive work assignments. Sixty-three percent of Education volunteers interviewed in Albania expressed that they sometimes did not have enough work in their primary assignments. All of the health Volunteers said that there was not enough work. Sixty-six percent of the COD Volunteers reported that there was not enough work under their primary assignment. (See Figure 1)

During the field interviews, half of the Volunteers in each sector said that their community needs were not a good fit with their Volunteer assignment and project goals.
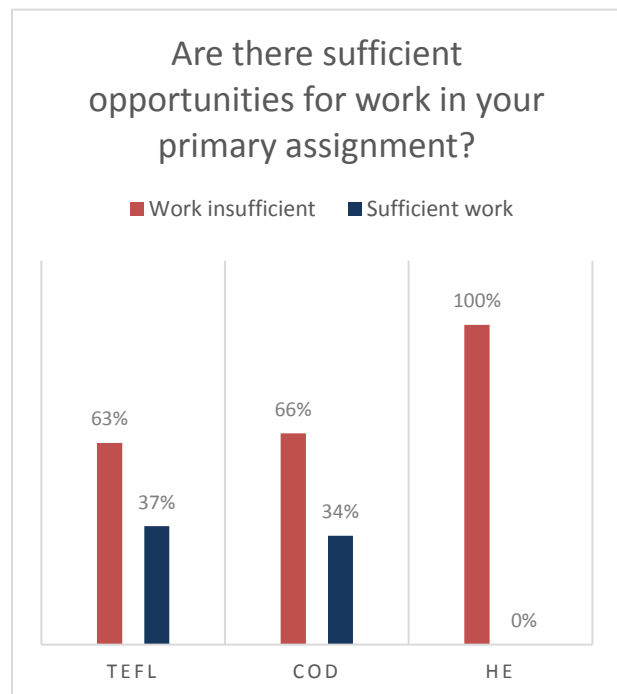
One person said their host agency directed them to just sit in [a room] with the door locked because their counterpart didn't know what they were supposed to be doing.

Figure 1: Sufficient work opportunities in primary assignment. (22 respondents) Source: Volunteer interviews

To overcome some of the problems associated with their primary assignments, many Volunteers changed their host agency and sought out new counterparts:

> I am venturing beyond my primary assignment by introducing myself to [counterparts] at the [different host agency].

> I was thinking about leaving because of the issues with the [host agency]. I told Peace Corps I really like [a different agency]. My [program manager] was crafty in figuring out a way for me to work with them-having them fill out a Volunteer request, so I am able to be officially assigned to the [other agency].

> I have 9 counterparts I work with on a weekly basis. I work with them on projects. One of them, [name] at the [host agency], was assigned to me. She encouraged me to go work [at a different host agency], she saw that I was having problems at the [originally assigned host agency].

We recommend:

4. **That the director of programming and training include in the post's site development standard operating procedures, clear processes, and project-specific programmatic criteria for assessing the viability of meaningful Volunteer assignments at potential host agencies.**

5. **That the director of programming and training improve how staff involved in site development vet and prepare motivated counterparts to engage Volunteers in meaningful work.**

6. **That the country director and director for programming and training assess the alignment of staff roles and responsibilities so that program staff focus more of their time on program management rather than addressing issues with Volunteer housing and host families.**

There were gaps in technical training.

The Peace Corps Manual, section 201 (MS 201), states that Volunteers must demonstrate competence in technical skills to qualify for Peace Corps service.

Our evaluation identified that Volunteers could be more effective in their assignments if the post addresses some gaps in technical training. We found that Volunteers in TEFL and HE needed more training on classroom management, co-teaching, and how to overcome challenges encountered in the Albanian classroom. The HE PAC signaled the need for HE Volunteers to be trained on the Albanian school system and culture. The TEFL PAC also noted that Volunteers were struggling with classroom management challenges. During interviews, one Volunteer commented that "TEFL Volunteers that are placed in high schools should have more preparation for the atmosphere they will be encountering." A second Volunteer said: "I felt the sector specific PST was a waste of time because it did not address the problems in Albanian schools, such as lack of rules/discipline." On the FY 2016 AVS, 50 percent of Volunteers in Albania rated technical training as effective or very effective compared to 63 percent of EMA Volunteers and 64 percent of Volunteers globally. HE and TEFL Volunteers gave the lowest ratings on this question. COD Volunteers reported that for their work at site they relied more on technical skills from prior work experience.

Classroom management and co-teaching were critical skills for HE and TEFL Volunteers, and yet only the TEFL Volunteers received training on these topics according to the 2016 PST schedule. The evaluator noted that TEFL and HE Volunteers both had more training time on classroom management and teaching in the Albanian classroom in 2017 than was scheduled in 2016, however the interview sample did not include Volunteers from this training cohort since

they had only just arrived at site.[3] COD Volunteers reported that their technical training focused more on the specifics of working in Albania rather than on technical skills.

As a result of these training issues Volunteers did not feel successful in their work. Twenty-two percent of PC/Albania Volunteers in TEFL and COD found their primary project "very unrewarding" or "unrewarding" on the annual Volunteer survey. This was a higher rate of dissatisfaction than for other Volunteers in EMA (16 percent) and globally (14 percent) (See Figure 2). One stated that "It is so difficult to stay motivated working at the high school. There are behaviors at the high school that I wish I was better prepared for--given information about how to interact, help, and change."
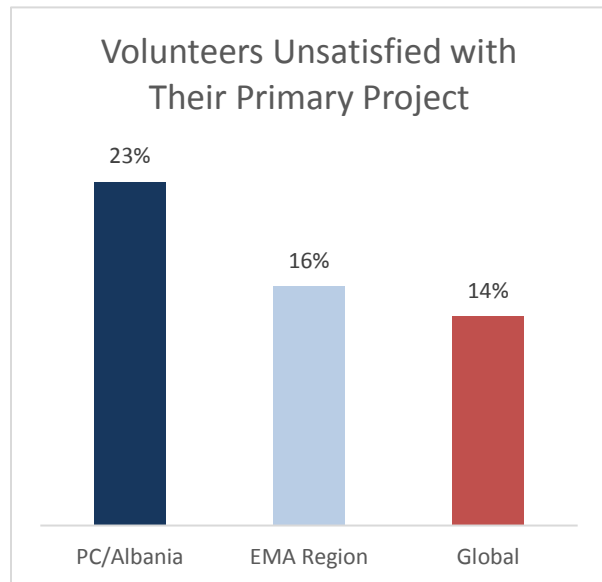
Volunteers Unsatisfied with Their Primary Project

Figure 2. Percent of Volunteers surveyed who found their primary project "very unrewarding" or "unrewarding." (5,201 respondents). *Source: 2016 All Volunteer Survey*

We recommend:

7. **That the director of programming and training and the programming and training team analyze tasks performed during service by community organizational development, English education, and health education Volunteers and provide appropriate practical skills training during pre-service training.**

Intercultural training needed to be updated.

MS 201 also states that Volunteers must demonstrate competence in cultural awareness to qualify for Peace Corps service.

In addition to gaps in technical training, our evaluation identified that the post's intercultural training curriculum needed to be updated. It was focused mainly on external aspects of culture such as holidays and traditions, superstitions, gender relations, social services, history of Albania, communism and post-communism, religious institutions, movies, folk songs and dancing. One session on "intentional relationship building," which accounted for one-eighth of the curriculum, would best equip Volunteers to navigate relationships in Albania. During

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[3] This evaluation did not include Volunteers who arrived in 2017 since they only had 1-2 weeks of experience at their sites. This was insufficient time to enable them to answer most questions regarding their projects and effectiveness of training.

interviews, several Volunteers spoke about the need for better training on intercultural factors. One person said that Volunteers need to know more about the difficult aspects of Albanian culture even if it might discourage some people initially. Another Volunteer reflected: "…They don't do a good job of explaining Albanian culture. There have been so many instances where [social interactions] go down-hill very fast."

Albania Volunteers reported being less integrated than other Volunteers in EMA by 22 percent, and 27 percent less than Volunteers globally on the FY 2016 AVS. PC/Albania's country director recognized that Volunteers in Albania were struggling to integrate and had implemented two solutions which may demonstrate effects next year. During fieldwork interviews, a third of Volunteers expressed challenges with cultural integration. Poor cultural integration concerned Volunteers, the post, and the EMA region. One post staff member pointed out that:

> Many of the complaints we hear are related to [cultural misunderstandings]. If they don't learn how to develop and maintain these relationships, all these other things fall apart. For me that is a major cause of many of the issues we are having I am a firm believer that to thrive in a country like Albania, cross culture understanding is paramount.

PC/Albania had not received the intercultural competence, diversity, and inclusion (ICD&I) foundations workshop from staff in the Office of Overseas Programming and Training Support (OPATS). The ICD&I Initiative was launched by Peace Corps Headquarters to better enable Volunteers and staff to "build and maintain authentic relationships with people from different backgrounds."

Frustrations with their work assignments and a lack of social integration in their communities resulted in Volunteers frequently leaving their sites or using alcohol to relieve their discomfort and isolation. One Volunteer related that:

> I have drank more in the first 4 months of service than I have in my whole life. My first blog would be "how Peace Corps made me an alcoholic." We keep bringing up leaving site because we want to hang out, and when we do hang out we get drunk. There are definitely some Volunteers [who] are definitely alcoholics. It's all we do here. It's rare for me to be in a social setting and not drink.

When asked about risks, another Volunteer said: "There are a lot of events where Volunteers get together and get wasted. It can go bad. I don't like it- that's why I don't have a lot of friends." Similarly, another Volunteer worried that: "Drinking is a humungous issue. I was starting to drink as a coping mechanism and I realized I was doing it too much. It is a huge unchecked issue." One Volunteer explained that Volunteers have a hard time staying at site: "If I didn't do it [leave site] as much as I do, I could not stay here. I would not be able to maintain my sanity." Post staff also expressed concerns about Volunteers leaving their sites too often and mentioned their lack of connection with their communities. This is a strong indication that Volunteers are not integrating and building the kinds of supportive relationships with Albanians that would enable them to feel at home in their host communities. Intercultural training should focus more on helping Volunteers be able to build meaningful relationships. This will supplement the post's plans to improve Volunteer's integration through a new policy requiring Volunteers to live with a host family for the first six months[4] at site, and changing the arrival date for new Volunteers

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[4] However, the Service Handbook Peace Corps Albania (updated November 2016) states that: "Volunteers… may move from their host families after a three-month homestay period…"

from March to January, so that school-based Volunteers will be able to start working in schools before summer vacation begins. This will take effect with the next group arriving in January of 2018.

We recommend:

> **8. That the country director develop a plan to improve intercultural training in consultation with overseas programming and training support staff from headquarters.**

> **9. That the country director develop a plan to address Volunteers' negative coping strategies such as alcohol abuse by promoting resiliency and positive coping strategies.**

Volunteers confused primary and secondary projects.

According to the Programing, Training, and Evaluation Guidance, secondary activities are those activities that Volunteers do in addition to the activities which support the goals and objectives of their assigned projects. In Albania, we found that Volunteers often mistakenly described primary activities as secondary activities during the Volunteer interviews. This confusion between which activities count as secondary versus primary stemmed from the heavy emphasis placed on working with the host agencies during training. Volunteers felt that staff were very concerned that they fulfill their obligations to the host agency. Once that was done, they were free to do whatever they wanted to do. As one Volunteer stated: "The [program] staff in training really emphasize that you have to keep working with the [host agency], and that is your primary concern." However, because of frustrations with their assigned schools and host agencies, Volunteers often find their work outside of the assigned agency more fulfilling.

In 2017 PC/Albania Volunteers supported the introduction of Girl Scouts in Albania

We recommend:

> **10. That the director of programming and training, and programming and training staff uniformly define primary and secondary activities following the definitions provided in the Programming, Training, and Evaluation Guidance.**

PC/Albania did not participate in the TEFL Certificate Program.

MS 201 stipulates that by the end of pre-service training Volunteers must demonstrate technical competence in the technical skills needed for their work assignments to qualify for service.

The lack of teacher preparation, poor classroom management, and the lack of continuing training for teachers were identified as big challenges for TEFL Volunteers in Albania. TEFL Volunteers were struggling due to a combination of their lack of stature and standing as qualified teachers, and the project's focus on co-teaching instead of other modes of engaging with Albanian teachers. Staff expressed that a Volunteer with less teaching experience than their Albanian counterpart may not be perceived as a source of advice on teaching methods. One staff member speculated that "It doesn't seem feasible for a young person to advise an older teacher."

In order to help Volunteers cope with common classroom challenges globally, the agency has developed a TEFL certificate program. This program is designed to improve Volunteers' abilities to work with their counterparts. For example, one Volunteer participating in the TEFL certificate in another country said: "The structure of the certificate program helped me work with my counterparts. It provided me with tools and ideas to share with them." The TEFL certificate program enables Volunteers to use communities of practice to build teacher capacity, improves student's mastery of English, and engages the community in improving schools and student performance. According to the stated rationale for the TEFL certificate program: "…the primary purpose of the Certificate is to frame the ongoing training and professional development that allows Volunteers to make a positive professional contribution to the skills and knowledge of their teacher counterparts."

PC Albania's TEFL staff received the training necessary to implement the TEFL certificate program, which represented a significant investment on the part of the US Government for four international training events. Subsequently, post leadership decided not to join the TEFL certificate program due to concerns that the TEFL programming team did not have sufficient time available to dedicate to this program, as well as concerns about the challenges associated with co-teaching and the need to focus on strengthening the program. However, staff also pointed out that a large TEFL Volunteer input from 2015 completed service and the size of training classes were now more stable, so the post should be able to take on implementing the TEFL certification program.

We recommend:

> **11. That the director for programming and training and education program team review the education project to clarify the role of co-teaching and expand the range of primary activities contributing to the project goals.**
>
> **12. That the country director, director for programming and training, and education program manager re-assess post's participation in the Teaching English as a Foreign Language certificate program with input from staff in Overseas Programming and Training Support.**

Volunteers were not using Participatory Analysis for Community Action (PACA) to assess their communities' needs.

The Programming, Training and Evaluation Guidance states that Peace Corps "stresses a
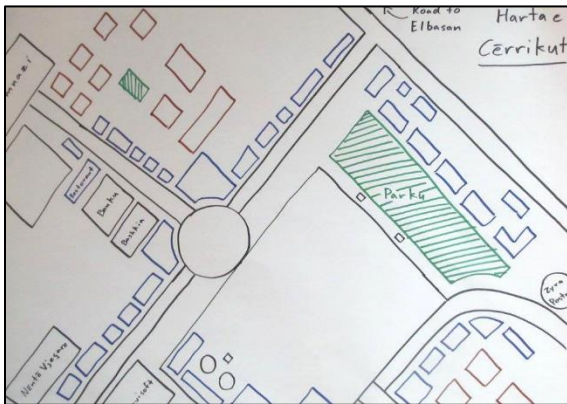
Map from PACA training during PST

participatory approach to project design and revision, since participatory decision-making is at the heart of the Peace Corps' philosophy of development." Further, the guidance specifies that it is necessary for Volunteers to use PACA tools and conduct a site-level baseline assessment during the first three to four months at site.

According to the OIG Volunteer survey, 48 percent of Volunteers had not used PACA and were therefore not applying the Peace Corps' core tool for participatory development. There was a divergence between the sectors, with 50 percent of HE Volunteers saying they did use PACA, but only 38 percent of COD Volunteers and 32 percent of TEFL Volunteers said they used it.

One reason that Volunteers were not using PACA is because the training was insufficient. While all Volunteers recalled receiving training on the tools, four of the Volunteers interviewed mentioned that the training could have been improved with more hands-on practice. On the AVS, 56 percent of Albania Volunteers rated the training on conducting community needs assessment as effective or very effective. This was lower than the regional and global ratings of 60 percent and 61 percent respectively. Volunteers mentioned that they were overwhelmed with a lot of information during pre-service training and didn't appreciate the importance of these tools.

Another reason Volunteers were not utilizing Peace Corps' tool for participatory development was likely due to insufficient communication skills. As one PC/Washington staff member pointed out: "Volunteers aren't quite equipped with the language during community entry to

implement PACA." One Volunteer indicated that it would have been better if his counterpart had been trained, so they could have worked together with the tools.

Volunteers who used the PACA tools found them useful for knowing where they could hold events and meetings, understanding calendars and schedules to time things appropriately, identifying community health priorities, and getting to know their communities better through interviews and observation. Although some Volunteers struggled to use them, one Volunteer pointed out that: "You need this information, it is something that should feed into your decisions about the area." We concluded that a more effective use of PACA tools may contribute to higher Volunteer satisfaction with their service.

OPATS at Peace Corps Headquarters recently revised the PACA approach, and will be implementing a new version called PACA 2.0 in the spring of 2018.

We recommend:

> **13. That the training manager improve participatory analysis for community action training.**

Programming staff needed clarification of priorities in the monitoring and evaluation process.

In the Peace Corps Strategic Plan, Strategic Objective 11 is "Advance the agency's ability to measure progress, improve performance, and demonstrate impact through integrated monitoring, reporting, and evaluation practices." The agency aims to capture rigorous, high-quality data which can be used to inform decision-making at the post and the agency level.

Volunteers frequently entered indicator data in their reports incorrectly. Due to the design of the Volunteer reporting form (VRF), Volunteers had to manually tabulate certain data that their report form should have done automatically. As a result, Volunteers did not always enter the indicator data accurately. During interviews, some Volunteers noted difficulty entering the indicators. One stated, "I thought the information I entered into the objectives would auto-populate into the indicators, and it didn't. I had to re-enter the data again." Another person said: "The indicators were very tedious. Having to add indicators to the activities took an hour phone call to the office." Another Volunteer pointed out that "I usually miss indicators." Using a locally developed Excel workbook, Albanian programming staff pulled the number of participants for each category from the objectives data, added it up, and entered the sums in under the indicators for each Volunteer to verify that this had been done accurately.

PC/Washington had no plan to change the VRT until it is fully redesigned and re-issued as "VRT Next," scheduled for late 2019. A headquarters staff member we interviewed said "That has led to frustration at posts and by Volunteers in using the VRT, which has fomented distrust in confidently using the VRT data."

Meanwhile, there was no standard guidance from HQ on how posts should handle cleaning VRF data to remove inconsistencies between activities and indicator data. According to one headquarters staff member: "Each post, depending on the complexity of their project and what indicators Volunteers potentially report on, handles this tabulation flaw in different ways." In Albania, the program managers started using Excel spreadsheets a couple of years ago to clean and correct the indicator data.

Some Volunteers reported that the VRF was not user friendly and required a lot of coaching from staff to complete. During field interviews, a few said that they would like to receive more feedback on the activities they do and ways to do it better rather than focusing on the numbers and errors in reporting on the VRF. The VRF feedback period in the fall for PC/Albania coincided with several other high priority activities, such as site development for the next PST, the in-service training for the new group, and completing the project status report process for PC/Washington. The extra work required to tally the data, clean it, and communicate with Volunteers about errors required a lot of time which programming staff needed for other higher priority activities. During field interviews, a Volunteer brought up the issue of staff not having enough time to give good feedback as well: "The timing of when we do the VRFs- it's a very busy time of year for staff. I think staff does not have a lot of time to work on it. I was satisfied with my feedback, but it was not very extensive."

We recommend:

> **14. That the director of programming and training provide programming staff with clear expectations for cleaning Volunteer reporting form data.**

VOLUNTEER SUPPORT

The country program evaluation assessed Volunteer support using the following researchable questions to guide our work:

- How well prepared is the post to respond to emergencies and security incidents, and are preventative safety and security measures adequate?
- Is the health care program meeting Volunteers' needs?
- Does the post provide adequate housing to Volunteers to maintain health and safety?
- How constructive is the relationship between staff and Volunteers?

In reviewing Volunteer site visits, emergency preparedness, crime response, the Volunteer advisory committee (VAC), and medical support, we found no significant areas of concern that would necessitate action by the post.

Areas of no concern regarding Volunteer support:

- **Volunteers felt supported through site visits**. Albania Volunteers receive frequent site visits. All of the Volunteers interviewed reported that they had received a site visit from a staff member, and most reported receiving multiple visits. Eighteen of 20 Volunteers interviewed were generally positive about their site visits. Volunteers felt that site visits provided a good opportunity for staff to help clarify the Volunteers' roles with project partners; introduce Volunteers to other potential project partners; better understand the Volunteers' surroundings and context; and demonstrate to locals that the Volunteers are supported by a powerful organization. Similarly, staff saw it as a way to discuss Volunteer challenges and frustrations, check-in with Volunteers' counterparts, and clarify Volunteers' roles and expectations.

- **The Emergency Action Plan was well developed.** Our review of documentation showed that the post had conducted successful drills to test Volunteers' responses when the emergency action plan (EAP) was activated. After the most recent test of the post's EAP, staff discussed and documented lessons learned and developed recommendations for the future. During fieldwork, 19 of 20 Volunteers (95 percent) correctly identified their emergency consolidation points. We also found that the safety and security manager effectively utilized Volunteer wardens[5] to augment the post's emergency preparedness by having them develop sub-regional contingency plans. The sub-regional plans provided clear instructions to Volunteers about how to access their consolidation points, laid out possible routes of evacuation including driving instructions, and provided multiple contingency meeting points.

- **Volunteers had confidence in staff's ability to respond to crimes and other safety incidents.** Volunteers reported that they were satisfied with the post's ability to respond to safety incidents and were comfortable reporting crimes to the safety and security manager. In the FY 2016 AVS, 93 percent of the Volunteers were satisfied with the safety and security manager's support. In addition, of the eight Volunteers who told us during interviews that they had been a victim of a crime, six (75 percent) said that they had reported it to Peace Corps.[6] Furthermore, 100% of interviewed Volunteers said that they would report significant crimes in the future.—although several qualified that it would depend on the significance of the crime.[7]

- **Volunteers felt that the Volunteer Advisory Committee was effective**. We determined that the VAC was doing a good job communicating issues between staff and Volunteers. PC/Albania's VAC typically consists of six representatives, three from each cohort, and meets quarterly. In general, VAC members felt that their committee was effective, and

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[5] Wardens are Volunteers who live in easily accessible areas, and who receive in-depth training on the emergency action plan. They are responsible for helping coordinate communications with Volunteers in their area when the EAP is activated, and host other Volunteers in the event of a consolidation.

[6] Of the Volunteers who told us that they didn't report crimes to Peace Corps, one said it was because the crime was too insignificant, and the other said it was because Peace Corps couldn't do anything about it.

[7] In June of 2017 there was significant turnover in the safety and security team at the post with the departure of the long-serving safety and security manager and the safety and security officer. New staff have been hired to fill these two positions.

95% of interviewed Volunteers were positive about the VAC and felt that the committee did a good job communicating Volunteers' issues to staff. Several Volunteers commented that they appreciated their VAC representative reaching out to them prior to VAC meetings and later providing them with meeting minutes. VAC members have also helped in the interview process for staff members (e.g., safety and security manager and medical officer) and the policy manual revisions.

- **Volunteers were satisfied with their medical care.** Before 2016 Albania's medical unit suffered from an underperforming medical officer, followed by an influx of temporary duty staff. Volunteer satisfaction with their medical care increased dramatically with the hiring of two new medical officers. In FY 2016, only 46 percent of Volunteers in Albania were satisfied with their healthcare. During FY 2017 fieldwork, we determined that 91 percent of Volunteers were satisfied with the medical care that they received. As one senior staff member observed:

  > The [Peace Corps Medical Officer (PCMO)] unit has done a 180 degree [shift] since early 2016. Medical support was an issue for Volunteers who were [closing service] in 2017 and those currently serving. The transition of doctors and care is felt by the Volunteers who, through VAC, have shared great appreciation of the direction of the PCMO unit.

The evaluation uncovered some areas that require management attention, particularly collection of GPS data, completion of the Medical Action Plan, and level of awareness of the Quality Nurse Line.

Areas of Volunteer Support that Require Management Attention

Staff lacked a consistent approach for responding to Volunteer concerns and problems.

According to Peace Corps' Programming, Training, and Evaluation Guidance, "Staff should lean toward a coaching approach, working with Volunteers and trainees to solve their own challenges."

Staff and Volunteers told us that the country director faced serious challenges when she arrived. Agency employees we interviewed noted that under the previous leadership at the post Volunteers were routinely out of site. Staff we interviewed also noted there had been an inconsistent approach to enforcing violations of the rules, including the prohibition against renting cars, and the requirement to report one's whereabouts when travelling overnight. Senior staff we interviewed described steps that the new country director had taken to address the challenges she inherited, believed she had made progress, and expressed confidence in her ability to lead the post. The Ambassador also reported to us that the country director's efforts had helped to "turn the page" for Peace Corps/Albania.

However, some Volunteers expressed frustration with abrupt policy changes. The country director has worked to make sure that staff were consistent in their messages about policy changes, but some Volunteers were confused. Most Volunteers who reported that they had raised issues to staff felt that staff were responsive and supportive. The post struggled to adjust

Volunteers' expectations. In the last two training groups, some Volunteers arrived at the post with inaccurate assumptions. While the post has made it clear to invitees that they would be living with host families, invitees had been assured by currently serving Volunteers that they could live independently. In addition, multiple Volunteers in the health sector reported that they thought they would be working in health clinics, not schools.

Some volunteers said that their concerns were not always well understood by some members of senior staff. Also, staff member's responses to Volunteers were not perceived as being consistent, but were influenced by factors unrelated to the issue at hand, such as the history of past interactions. This led some Volunteers to hesitate in seeking assistance since they were unsure about the type of support they might receive.

One staff member received preliminary training on coaching two or three years ago as part of the same sex couples training, and found the information very useful but insufficient. According to some headquarters staff, the absence of a consistent approach to Volunteer support contributes to Volunteers' feelings that they are not treated fairly. This has been a reason given for requesting coaching workshops by some posts in the past.

We recommend:

> **15. That the country director arrange for all senior staff in PC/Albania to be trained on how to use coaching in Volunteer support.**

The post was not entering GPS coordinates for all Volunteers into VIDA in a timely manner.

Safety and Security Instruction 603 states: "GPS coordinates also provide a precise location for emergency management purposes. For this reason, the collection of geographic coordinates and the input of those coordinates into VIDA is required."

During fieldwork, the evaluator was given a sample of Volunteer site contact forms, and none of them included GPS coordinates. As of June 30, 2017, only 31 percent of Volunteers interviewed had their GPS coordinates documented in VIDA.[8] Furthermore, GPS coordinates had not been entered for 19% of the most recent group of Volunteers who had been at their sites for six months, as of November 8, 2017. In his most recent trip report, the Peace Corps safety and security officer commented that the post was working towards reconciling all the GPS information[9] and had developed an excellent interactive Volunteer location map. However, he issued the recommendation that the post "continue to populate GPS data."

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[8] The VIDA is the repository of all information about Volunteers during their service, including key dates (enter on duty, close of service), vacation days, communications with staff, site information, emergency contact information, personal information, and program information.
[9] In the last 6 months the post has reduced the number of Volunteers without GPS coordinates. In January 2017, the Peace Corps Safety and Security Officer found that 35 Volunteers were without GPS coordinates, in June 2017, 22 Volunteers were without GPS coordinates.

The need to collect GPS coordinates is clearly mentioned in the house inspection SOP, which says that "GPS coordinates should be input into VIDA in decimal degree format under the [Volunteer] contact section as soon as feasible." However, the SOP does not clarify who is responsible for entering GPS coordinates into VIDA.

During fieldwork, the evaluator observed that PC/Albania drivers frequently had to call Volunteers for help finding their homes. In the event of an emergency, this practice could pose serious challenges for staff and endanger the health and safety of Volunteers. While the Peace Corps safety and security officer felt confident that, in an emergency, staff could locate all Volunteers, recent staff turnover of senior leadership and the safety and security team (country director, director of management and operations, director of programming and training, safety and security manager, and Peace Corps safety and security officer) suggests that those responsible for responding to an emergency may not be familiar with all Volunteer locations.

> **We recommend:**
>
> > **16. That the country director designate staff responsibility for entering GPS coordinates into VIDA and update the post's housing inspection standard operating procedures accordingly.**

Volunteers were not consistently reporting their whereabouts.

MS 270 states that "Each post mush establish a system to collect V/T [Volunteer/Trainee] whereabouts and contact information when V/Ts are away from their communities for personal travel, annual leave, or for official reasons… The system is separate from other systems used to keep track of leave balances and will not be used as an indicator of a Volunteer's work performance." According to PC/Albania's Service Handbook, "Volunteers must notify Peace Corps when they will be traveling out of their communities overnight and upon their return. Volunteers must always report their whereabouts, whether the travel requires approval or not. Failure to comply with this policy may result in administrative separation from Peace Corps."

Many Volunteers reported that the whereabouts policy was well understood, and most agreed that the policy was consistently enforced by staff. However, some Volunteers interviewed asserted that other Volunteers were not consistently reporting their whereabouts. One Volunteer commented, "Our group is sort of resistant to the [whereabouts] policy. Wink, wink--it says this, but here is what most people do."

Volunteers reported several reasons for the lack of compliance with the whereabouts policy. Volunteers did not like the post's newly implemented travel policy. Albania's service handbook states that "School-based [Volunteers] are not encouraged to plan leave that impacts their presence during school days, however school-based Volunteers will be allowed a maximum of ten days of regular annual leave during the school calendar year." Furthermore, when calculating annual leave, "If taking time off to travel in Albania, the annual leave must be taken for any week days (other than Albanian holidays) a Volunteer is gone from their site *including travel*

days [emphasis added]." Volunteers who lived in remote communities with limited transportation felt that the leave policy was unfair. Others thought that the ten day limit for school-based Volunteers was unreasonable.

Some interviewed Volunteers told us that another reason Volunteers may not report whereabouts is that they were afraid that staff would compare their whereabouts report to their leave requests, and dock them for leave they should have requested but did not. Post leadership insisted that they did not use whereabouts reporting to keep track of leave balances or as indications of a Volunteer's work performance, and provided examples to us of how they had used whereabouts notifications appropriately in response to events. The safety and security manager reported that the country director was not in the practice of adjusting annual leave balances for Volunteers who were caught out of site. And although staff would have conversations with Volunteers who were out of site too often, they did not use whereabouts reporting as a measure of performance.

However some Volunteers did not trust the system. In our volunteer survey, one Volunteer explained:

> Although the out of site phone is intended for safety and security, [a staff member] has openly stated that she monitors the out of site phone to see if volunteers are leaving site too often. I have heard of some volunteers that do leave site on the weekends, however do not report it to the out of site phone in fear that they will be reprimanded… Although VAC raised this issue to [the country director] she, in the VAC notes, states that the policy of monitoring the out of site phone would continue. In short, she is inadvertently endangering volunteers by mixing a good safety and security policy with a mechanism that could get them in trouble.

Another Volunteer stated, "There has been concern that [the out of site phone] is being used more of a 'Gotcha! You were out of site.' So that makes people hesitant to text because they don't want to get caught." Volunteers' inconsistent reporting of whereabouts could inhibit the post's ability to communicate with or consolidate them during an emergency.

We Recommend:

> **17. That the country director produce a communications plan for clarifying the whereabouts and travel policies.**

Post was concerned about its future capacity to support Volunteers' mental health care.

We found that 100 percent of respondents from the most recent training group, who had the opportunity to get to know both of the new PCMOs during pre-service training, felt comfortable going to the PCMO for support. However, only 53 percent of Volunteers reported that they would be comfortable approaching the PCMOs with a mental health concern.

For the past year, PC/Albania relied heavily on an in-country American counselor. However, that counselor left Albania in July of 2017, after our fieldwork had concluded. While PCMOs provided the initial assessment for Volunteers who wanted counseling as required by TG 510,

neither one expressed a lot of confidence in their ability to address Volunteers' mental health needs. Post leadership expressed concerns to us regarding capacity to meet Volunteers' mental health care needs, and was in the process of looking for a new in-country counselor at the time of fieldwork.

We Recommend:

18. That the director of counseling and outreach develop a plan to support Peace Corps/Albania's medical officers to build their capacity and confidence to respond to or address Volunteers' mental health care needs.

The post had not updated its medical action plan (MAP).

Peace Corps TG 385 'Medical Action Plan' states "Every post must develop, document and regularly update post-specific plans to properly handle potential urgent or emergent medical needs of its Volunteers… The plan, which is primarily a list of emergency resources, should be formulated from the perspective that it is being written for a community backup provider or a temporary duty PCMO who does not have the same familiarity with these resources as the full-time PCMOs." At the time of our evaluation, the post had an incomplete medical action plan. The Office of Health Services (OHS) staff discussed the need for a completed medical action plan with medical officers in December 2016 and agreed that March 2017 would be the deadline for the plan. However, in May 2017, a medical officer reported that the medical action plan was only 80 percent complete. At the time of fieldwork, one of the medical officers attended a continuing medical education conference and received updated information on the process of the MAP which she needed to in order to complete it. Without an updated MAP, the post may be delayed in its response to a Volunteer medical emergency. A completed plan will ensure that any provider—particularly a backup or temporary duty medical officer—will be able to respond efficiently in the event of an emergency.

We recommend:

19. That the Peace Corps medical officers complete a medical action plan.

The majority of Volunteers were unaware of the Quality Nurse Line (QNL).

As explained in TG 302 'Volunteer Concerns,' Volunteers have the opportunity to express any concerns with the quality of their health care to Peace Corps' Quality Improvement Unit. All posts are responsible for posting the quality improvement unit's contact information as well as instructions on how to raise a concern. According to the OIG Volunteer survey, 77 percent of Volunteers reported that they had not heard of the QNL, 16 percent reported that they had heard of the QNL, and 7 percent did not answer. We determined that Volunteers, while informed of the

QNL, may not be retaining the information. During fieldwork, the evaluator observed that the QNL poster was on display in the Volunteer lounge and in the medical unit waiting area. In addition, one medical officer confirmed that staff had explained the QNL to trainees during the two most recent PSTs. Furthermore, the second medical officer reported that the medical staff reminds Volunteers about the QNL when they come for medical services. As determined in the Follow-Up Evaluation of Issues identified in the 2010 PC/Morocco Assessment of Medical Care, if a high percentage of Volunteers and trainees are unaware of the QNL, quality issues may not have been consistently reported to OHS, impeding OHS's ability to provide effective oversight.

We Recommend:

> **20. That the country director explore new ways to raise Volunteer and trainee awareness of the quality nurse line.**

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Another key objective of the country program evaluation is to assess leadership and management using the following researchable questions:

- How effective is senior staff in leading post operations toward the achievement of the agency's mission?

- Does the post's planning and budgeting process yield the resources necessary to achieve agency objectives?

- Is the post staffed appropriately for efficient and effective operations?

- Do administrative practices at the post support effective post operations?

In general, senior staff is effectively leading post operations. The current country director inherited a complex situation from the departing country director, and has helped "turn the page." Post staff expressed that they felt they were all on the same page regarding policies and procedures. The Volunteers also recognized that changes in management were necessary, even as they expressed frustrations with the manner in which some changes were executed. The U.S. Ambassador highly praised the country director and Peace Corps' operations in Albania.

Areas of No Concern Regarding Leadership and Management:

In reviewing the post's relationship with the U.S. Embassy, coordination with PC/Washington, and staff on-boarding, we found no significant areas of concern that would necessitate action by the post.

- **The post maintained a close relationship with the Embassy**. The post had excellent coordination with the regional security officer. The country director reported that they met with the regional safety officer quarterly and engaged the regional security officer when interviewing safety and security manager candidates. The regional security officer appreciated being included in that process. In addition, the USDH staff regularly attend the Embassy country team meetings. The ambassador was aware of the post's recent controversies and was very positive about the post's new country director.

- **Coordination and communication between the post and headquarters was effective.** We determined that there was sufficient consultation and understanding between headquarters and the post about operational priorities. According to the FY 2016 and FY 2017 administrative management control survey, the post communicates openly and systematically with appropriate HQ offices to better ensure efficiency and support. Both headquarters and post staff confirmed this assessment. As one headquarters staff member commented, "Post is not afraid to reach out to other HQ offices to get the information they need."

- **The post developed an effective onboarding process**. In the FY 2017 administrative management control survey, the post confirmed that they had an onboarding program for new employees. According to the country director, the post recently developed a new onboarding process that included a fully-scheduled first week to introduce the new employee to Peace Corps and ensure they receive the necessary training. The schedule included meetings with the administrative staff, human resources, information technology specialist, and other key staff. The onboarding process also included completion of the Overseas Staff Orientation guide in PC University. At the time of fieldwork, staff were still in the process of drafting an SOP to formalize the onboarding process. The first employee to experience the new onboarding process felt it was very effective. She explained, "I met with everyone on staff. They gave me the full picture of their duties and how they work with [my position]. So I know who to go to."

- **Staff participated in annual operations planning and decision making.** Each year all staff participated in an Integrated Planning and Budget System retreat, at which they collaborated on merging PC/Albania and EMA priorities for the upcoming year. Staff we interviewed generally reported that they felt sufficiently consulted about decisions that affected their job. In the host country national staff survey, 100% of staff agreed that they had appropriate input into decisions that affected their work.

The evaluation uncovered some areas that require management attention, particularly Volunteer's living and settling-in allowances. The remainder of this section provides more information about these topics.

Areas of Leadership and Management that Require Management Attention

The post's living allowance was insufficient for some Volunteers.

MS 221 'Volunteer Allowances' states "It is Peace Corps policy that Volunteers live modestly by the standards of the people they serve, yet not in a manner that would endanger their health or safety… Each post should establish a base living allowance... Supplements to the base living allowance may be added on a per Volunteer basis to cover housing, utilities, locality supplements, and Peace Corps Volunteer Leader supplements."

According to the OIG Volunteer survey, only 61 percent of Volunteers felt that the living allowance was adequate. While some Volunteers reported that they were able to live within their budgets, and a few were even able to save money, many agreed that those in larger cities or tourist towns struggled. A few Volunteer comments include:

> I live in the most expensive site in the country and everyone receives the same allowance (for everything but housing). There are many months when I put my own money into living expenses.
>
> Peace Corps does not adjust our food allowance based on where we are living. So one volunteer might not have a problem with their food budget, but another would have a lot of trouble because the food in their site is just more expensive.
>
> In [my site], we have not had a problem, but Volunteers in some larger sites have trouble making ends meet. The living allowance is barely meeting their needs.

To make matters worse, the cost of utilities in Albania has risen and the winter of 2016 was unexpectedly cold. In October 2016, the post requested additional funds to meet the rising utility costs in Albania. The additional funds were provided, but multiple Volunteers still reported that they struggled to pay for their utilities during the winter months.

Currently, the post does not have a tiered structure for living allowances. The country director reported that a previous living allowance survey suggested the need for a tiered living allowance structure, which was also supported by the VAC. According to the country director, Volunteers in about half of the communities could live adequately off of the current living allowance, but those in larger cities and coastal towns were insufficiently supported.

In 2016, PC/Albania requested a 7 percent increase to Volunteers' living allowances. However, this request was rejected by the EMA chief administrative officer, and he recommended that the post consider a locality adjustment instead of an increase across the board. While the living allowance survey exhibited outliers, the EMA chief administrative officer concluded that the median spending did not warrant an increase. He suggested to the post that they conduct a market basket survey. In December of 2016, the post initiated another market basket survey, but the director of management and operations departed before the matter could be pursued further and a second living allowance survey could be conducted.

An analysis of the post's 2017 market basket survey results suggested that there is a locality variance in Albania. Three of the cities where the post conducted a market basket survey had 10 or more items that cost more than one standard deviation from the mean. An additional three cities had more than five items that cost more than one standard deviation from the mean.

Several of the Volunteers who felt that they did not receive a sufficient living allowance reported that they often depend on their personal savings to make ends meet. At the time of fieldwork, the post was considering conducting another living allowance survey in the fall.

> **We recommend:**
>
> > **21. That the director of management and operations conduct a market basket survey and living allowance survey and determine if an adjustment to Volunteer's living allowances in higher cost sites is justified.**

The Post did not consider different living situations when determining settling-in allowances.

MS 221 states that upon arrival at sites, Volunteers are to be provided with a settling-in allowance to purchase necessary housing supplies and equipment. To determine the appropriate amount of the allowance, the post must conduct surveys on the prices and items commonly purchased by Volunteers. The Overseas Financial Management Handbook section 2.2 states: "Posts may establish one rate for all trainees or may establish varied rates, to reflect different living situations."

PC/Albania Volunteers received approximately 90 euros for their settling-in allowance. According to the OIG Volunteer survey, 60 percent of Volunteers felt that the settling-in allowance was adequate. Out of 63 Volunteers, 15 Volunteers conveyed in the survey that the settling-in allowance, while fine for those who were replacing Volunteers and able to inherit the departing Volunteers' household items, was inadequate for Volunteers who opened new sites and had to buy everything for themselves. As one Volunteer explained:

> Settling-in allowances should be determined based on what is found at the volunteers' new housing instead of being a set price. For instance, a volunteer inheriting a house lived in by previous volunteers likely will not have to spend as much on basics for the house and therefore could receive a lower settling-in allowance. On the other hand, a volunteer moving into a new house with no cooking ware, bedding, table, chairs, towels, will need to spend a much larger amount to settle into his/her housing and should get a larger settling-in allowance.

Volunteers who were unable to inherit items from a previous Volunteer often spent money out of pocket. One Volunteer estimated spending four times the settling-in allowance to equip an empty apartment.

PC/Albania's settling-in allowance has not changed since 2003. The post recently conducted a settling-in allowance survey, but did not achieve the 75 percent response rate required to justify a monetary increase.

PC/Albania's recent shift to requiring Volunteers to live with host families for the first six months of their service may impact Volunteers' settling-in allowance needs. By delaying Volunteers' need to equip an apartment until they have an opportunity to establish contacts in

their communities, Volunteers may be able to reduce the number of items they need to purchase themselves by drawing upon the resources of their community contacts. Alternatively, the homestay requirement could make it more difficult for new Volunteers to inherit items from the Volunteers they replace. In the most recent VAC meeting, participants discussed the need for the incoming group of Volunteers to track how they spend their settling-in allowance.

We recommend:

> **22. That the country director and director of management and operations evaluate whether settling-in allowances should be changed to reflect different living situations.**

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

WE RECOMMEND:

1. That the country director and director of programming and training develop a strategy for integrating a focus on Albanian underserved populations into programming, training, and monitoring and evaluation.

2. That the director of programming and training lead development of an annual site development strategy which is consistent with agency criteria and guidance.

3. That the director of programming and training finalize Peace Corps/Albania's site development standard operating procedures.

4. That the director of programming and training include in the post's site development standard operating procedures, clear processes, and project-specific programmatic criteria for assessing the viability of meaningful Volunteer assignments at potential host agencies.

5. That the director of programming and training improve how staff involved in site development vet and prepare motivated counterparts to engage Volunteers in meaningful work.

6. That the country director and director of programming and training assess the alignment of staff roles and responsibilities so that program staff focus more of their time on program management rather than addressing issues with Volunteer housing and host families.

7. That the director for programming and training and the programming and training team analyze tasks performed during service by community organizational development, English education, and health education Volunteers and provide appropriate practical skills training during pre-service training.

8. That the country director develop a plan to improve intercultural training in consultation with overseas programming and training support staff from headquarters.

9. That the country director develop a plan to address Volunteers' negative coping strategies such as alcohol abuse by promoting resiliency and positive coping strategies.

10. That the director of programming and training, and programming and training staff uniformly define primary and secondary activities following the definitions provided in the Programming, Training, and Evaluation Guidance.

11. That the director for programming and training and education program team review the education project to clarify the role of co-teaching and expand the range of primary activities contributing to the project goals.

12. That the country director, director for programming and training, and education program manager re-assess post's participation in the Teaching English as a Foreign Language certificate program with input from staff in Overseas Programming and Training Support.

13. That the training manager improve participatory analysis for community action training.

14. That the director of programming and training provide programming staff with clear expectations for cleaning Volunteer reporting form data.

15. That the country director arrange for all senior staff in PC/Albania to be trained on how to use coaching in Volunteer support.

16. That the country director designate staff responsibility for entering GPS coordinates into VIDA and update the post's housing inspection standard operating procedures accordingly.

17. That the country director produce a communications plan for clarifying the whereabouts and travel policies.

18. That the director of counseling and outreach develop a plan to support Peace Corps/Albania's medical officers to build their capacity and confidence to respond to or address Volunteers' mental health care needs.

19. That the Peace Corps medical officers complete a medical action plan.

20. That the country director explore new ways to raise Volunteer and trainee awareness of the quality nurse line.

21. That the director of management and operations conduct a market basket survey and living allowance survey and determine if an adjustment to Volunteer's living allowances in higher cost sites is justified.

22. That the country director and director of management and operations evaluate whether settling-in allowances should be changed to reflect different living situations.

APPENDIX A: OBJECTIVE, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

In 1989, OIG was established under the Inspector General Act of 1978 and is an independent entity within the Peace Corps. The purpose of OIG is to prevent and detect fraud, waste, abuse, and mismanagement and to promote economy, effectiveness, and efficiency in government. The Inspector General is under the general supervision of the Peace Corps Director and reports both to the Director and Congress.

The Evaluation Unit provides senior management with independent evaluations of all management and operations of the Peace Corps, including overseas posts and domestic offices. OIG evaluators identify best practices and recommend program improvements to comply with Peace Corps policies.

The Evaluation Unit announced its intent to conduct an evaluation of the post on March 14, 2017. For post evaluations, we use the following researchable questions to guide our work:

A. Programming, Training and Evaluation

- Programming: *Is the program focused on the country's stated development priorities, in the poorest areas of the country? Are Volunteers making a difference in their communities?*

- Volunteer Training: *How well qualified and prepared are Volunteers for service?*

- Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting: *Are Volunteers achieving project objectives? How are staff using monitoring, reporting, and evaluation results?*

- Site Development: *Does the site development process provide Volunteers with an environment conducive to a successful service? Are sites, housing, and work assignments appropriate and meeting all established criteria?*

B. Volunteer Support

- Safety and Security: *How well prepared is the post to respond to emergencies and security incidents, and are preventative safety and security measures adequate?*

- Health: *Is the health care program meeting Volunteers' needs?*

- Housing: *Does the post provide adequate housing to Volunteers to maintain health and safety?*

- Staff-Volunteer Relations: *How constructive is the relationship between staff and Volunteers?*

C. Leadership and Management

- Leadership: *How effective is senior staff in leading post operations toward the achievement of the agency's mission?*

- Planning: *Does the post's planning and budgeting process yield the resources necessary to achieve agency objectives?*

- Staffing: *Is the post staffed appropriately for efficient and effective operations?*

- Oversight: *Do administrative practices at the post support effective post operations?*

The evaluator conducted the preliminary research portion of the evaluation March 14-May 11, 2017. This research included review of agency documents provided by headquarters and post staff; interviews with management staff representing Europe, Mediterranean, and Asia Operations, the Office of Global Health and HIV, the Office of Global Operations, the Office of Health Services, the Office of Safety and Security, the Office of Victim Advocacy, the Office of Volunteer Recruitment and Selection, and Overseas Programming and Training Support; an online survey of 76 Peace Corps/Albania Volunteers; and inquiries to the Office of Strategic Information, Research, and Planning.

In-country fieldwork occurred from May 15-June 2, 2017, and included interviews with post senior staff in charge of programming, training, and support; the U.S. Embassy's regional security officer, the U.S. Ambassador, host country government ministry officials, and local project partners. In addition, we interviewed a stratified judgmental sample of 20 Volunteers (22 percent of Volunteers serving at the time of our visit) based on their length of service, site location, project focus, gender, age, and ethnicity, as well as 6 Volunteers who requested to speak with OIG.

This evaluation was conducted in accordance with the Quality Standards for Inspections, issued by the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency. The evidence, findings, and recommendations provided in this report have been reviewed by agency stakeholders affected by this review.

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED

As part of this post evaluation, interviews were conducted with 26 Volunteers,[10] 13 in-country staff, and 32 representatives from Peace Corps headquarters in Washington D.C., the U.S. Embassy in Albania, local partners, and key ministry officials. Fifteen out of 26 Volunteer interviews occurred at the Volunteers' homes, and we inspected these 15 homes using post-defined site selection criteria. The period of review for a post evaluation is one full Volunteer cycle (typically 27 months).

The following table provides demographic information that represents the entire Volunteer population in Albania; the Volunteer sample was selected to reflect these demographics.

Table 1: Volunteer Demographic Data

Project	Percentage of Volunteers
Community and Organizational Development	29
English Education	45
Health Education	25
Gender	**Percentage of Volunteers**
Female	51
Male	49
Age	**Percentage of Volunteers**
25 or younger	27
26-29	44
30-49	18
50 and over	11

Source: VIDA
Note: Percentages may not total 100 percent due to rounding

At the time of our field visit, the post had 29 staff positions. The post also employs temporary staff to assist with PST. Given the time of our visit, these positions were not staffed. We interviewed 12 staff. The staffing configuration of posts often varies and staff may hold additional responsibilities relevant to the evaluation in addition to their official job title. We conduct interviews with sexual assault response liaisons; grants coordinators; monitoring, reporting, and evaluation champions; and Peace Corps Response coordinators as necessary and when appropriate for the post.

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[10] Additional Volunteers not in the sample requested to be interviewed; thereby increasing the total number of Volunteers interviewed to 26.

Table 2: Interviews Conducted with Post Staff

Position	Status	Interviewed
Country Director	USDH	X
Director of Programming and Training	USDH	X
Peace Corps Safety and Security Officer	USDH	X
Financial Specialist	FSN	X
Gender and Youth Coordinator	PSC	X
PCMO (2)	PSC	X
Program Manager (3)	PSC	X
Safety and Security Manager	PSC	X
Training Manager	PSC	X
Language and Cross Cultural Coordinator	PSC	X
Executive Assistant	PSC	
Cashier	FSN	
Admin. Assistant	PSC	
IT Specialist	PSC	
Program Specialist (4)	PSC	
General Services Manager	PSC	
Medical Assistant	PSC	
Driver (4)	PSC	
Janitor	PSC	

Data as of April 2017. *PSC is personal services contractor; FSN is "foreign service national."

Thirty-two additional interviews were conducted during the preliminary research phase of the evaluation, in-country fieldwork and follow-up work upon return to Peace Corps headquarters in Washington, D.C.

**Table 3: Interviews Conducted with Peace Corps Headquarters Staff,
and Embassy Officials**

Position	Organization
Chief Administrative Officer	PC Headquarters/Europe, Mediterranean and Asia Region
Chief of Operations/Acting Regional Director	PC Headquarters/Europe, Mediterranean and Asia Region
Country Desk Officer	PC Headquarters/Europe, Mediterranean and Asia Region
Monitoring, Reporting, and Evaluation Specialist	PC Headquarters/Europe, Mediterranean and Asia Region
Programming and Training Specialist/ Acting Chief of Programming and Training	PC Headquarters/Europe, Mediterranean and Asia Region
Regional Security Advisor	PC Headquarters/Europe, Mediterranean and Asia Region
Program Specialist (2)	PC Headquarters/Office of Gifts and Grants Management
Small Project Assistance Program Manager	PC Headquarters/Office of Gifts and Grants Management
Expert	PC Headquarters/Office of Global Health and HIV
Training Specialist	PC Headquarters/Office of Global Health and HIV
Acting Associate Director	PC Headquarters/Office of Global Operations
Field Support Manager	PC Headquarters/Office of Health Services
Peace Corps Medical Officer Mentor	PC Headquarters/Office of Health Services
Director	PC Headquarters/Office of Victim Advocacy
Language Training Specialist	PC Headquarters/Overseas Programming and Training Support
Let Girls Learn Evaluation Specialist	PC Headquarters/Overseas Programming and Training Support
Let Girls Learn Program Specialist	PC Headquarters/Overseas Programming and Training Support
Sector Specialist (3)	PC Headquarters/Overseas Programming and Training Support
Placement Officer	PC Headquarters/Volunteer Recruitment and Selection
Regional Recruiter	PC Headquarters/Volunteer Recruitment and Selection
Ambassador	US Embassy/Albania
Regional Security Officer	US Embassy/Albania
VRT Manager	PC Headquarters/Overseas Programming and Training Support
Deputy Chief of Programming and Evaluation	PC Headquarters/Overseas Programming and Training Support
Evaluation Specialist	PC Headquarters/Office of Strategic Information, Research and Planning

Data as of July, 2017

Table 4: Interviews Conducted with Host Country Partners and Key Ministry Officials

Position	Organization
Director of EU Integration	Ministry of Health
Education Specialist	Ministry of Education
Chief of Party	Planning and Local Governance Project
National Program Analyst, Youth and Gender	United Nations Population Fund

APPENDIX C: LIST OF ACRONYMS

AVS	All-Volunteer Survey
COD	Community and Organizational Development
EAP	Emergency Action Plan
EMA	Europe, Mediterranean, and Asia Operations
FSN	Foreign Service National
FY	Fiscal Year
GPS	Global Positioning System
HE	Health Education
ICD&I	Intercultural Competence, Diversity and Inclusion
MAP	Medical Action Plan
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MS	Manual Section
OHS	Office of Health Services
OIG	Office of the Inspector General
OPATS	Overseas Programming and Training Support
PAC	Project Advisory Committee
PACA	Participatory Assessment for Community Action
PCMO	Peace Corps Medical Officer
PSC	Personal Services Contractor
PST	Pre-Service Training
QNL	Quality Nurse Line
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
TAP	Trainee Assessment Portfolio
TEFL	Teaching English as a Foreign Language
TG	Technical Guidance
USDH	U.S. Direct Hire
VAC	Volunteer Advisory Committee
VIDA	Volunteer Information Database Application
VRF	Volunteer Reporting Form
VRT	Volunteer Reporting Tool
V/T	Volunteer/Trainee

APPENDIX D: AGENCY RESPONSE TO THE PRELIMINARY REPORT

MEMORANDUM

To: Kathy Buller, Inspector General

Through: Angela Kissel, Acting Chief Compliance Officer

From: Jean Seigle, Acting EMA Regional Director/EMA Chief of Operations
Kate Becker, Country Director, Albania

Date: November 29, 2017

CC: Shelia Crowley, Chief Executive Officer
Carl Sosebee, Acting Chief of Staff
Kathy Stroker, Deputy Chief Executive Officer
Kristin Besch, Acting Director of Global Operations
Joaquin Ferrao, Deputy Inspector General
Jerry Black, AIG/Evaluations
Kyle Olsen, Director of Programming and Training, Albania
Marie Aughenbaugh, Director of Management and Operations

Subject: Agency Response to the Report on the Program Evaluation of Peace
Corps/Albania (Project No. 17-EVAL-03)

Enclosed please find the agency's response to the recommendations made by the Inspector
General for Peace Corps/Albania as outlined in the Preliminary Report on the Program
Evaluation of Peace Corps/Albania (Project No. 17-EVAL-03) given to the agency on
October 11th, 2017.

The Region and the Post have addressed and provided supporting documentation for 2 of the 22
recommendations provided by the OIG in its Preliminary Evaluation Report: Peace
Corps/Albania and did not concur with one of the recommendations. The Post and Region will
work to address the remaining recommendations by the set target dates.

Recommendation 1
That the Country Director and Director of Programming and Training develop a strategy for integrating a focus on Albanian underserved populations into programming, training, and monitoring and evaluation.

Concur
Response: During site development in the fall of 2017, for the group of Volunteers scheduled to arrive in January 2018, the Country Director (CD) and Director of Programming and Training (DPT) have instructed each program manager to identify sites which more directly engage with underserved populations for each sector.

Additionally, during Pre-Service Training (PST) the DPT will design sessions to train Volunteers to work with populations who need Peace Corps' services the most.

Following the placement of Volunteers in 2018, post intends to conduct a review of the site development process in 2017/2018 to identify areas of efficiency and improvement in regard to developing sites which work with underserved populations. Post will compile these lessons and incorporate them into post's site development operating procedure and site development strategy.

> **Documents to be Submitted:**
> - Post's site development operating procedure
> - Finalized copy of post's site development strategy
> - List of 2018 Volunteer placements indicating sites in underserved areas
> - Notes from meetings regarding the 2017/2018 site development process
> - Curriculum from PST sessions related to how a PCV can serve those most in need in their respective community
>
> **Status and Timeline for Completion:** July 31, 2018

Recommendation 2
That the Director of Programming and Training lead development of an annual site development strategy which is consistent with agency criteria and guidance.

Concur
Response: Beginning in 2017, post has been working to identify smaller sites and new sites for Volunteer placement. In 2017 post opened 5 new sites, all of which serve fewer than 5000 residents. Also in 2017 post began the site development process by reviewing the country with respect to economic need and targeting specific regions that could benefit from Peace Corps support. Since the time of the evaluation, post has taken further steps to strengthen its strategy regarding site development and site placement. In September 2017, the CD and DPT, instructed each program manager to limit the overall number of volunteer placement per town to no more than two new Volunteers. This was done in order to decrease the overall number of Volunteers per town as well as set up post to create more overlap between generations of Volunteers.

Post plans to continue discussions regarding post's overall site development strategy throughout the remainder of the 2017/2018 site development process. Following the placement of Volunteers in 2018, post intends to conduct a full review of the 2017/2018 site development process including consultation with relevant agency staff to further carve out the pillars of post's site development strategy moving forward.

> **Documents Submitted**:
> - Post's finalized site development strategy
>
> **Status and Timeline for Completion:** July 31, 2018

Recommendation 3
That the Director of Programming and Training finalize Peace Corps/Albania's site development standard operating procedure.

Concur
Response: Following the placement of Volunteers in 2018, post will conduct a full review of the site development process to finalize post's site development standard operating procedure. The Standard Operating Procedure will include project-specific programmatic criteria for assessing the viability of meaningful Volunteer assignments at potential host agencies.

> **Documents to be Submitted:**
> - Finalized copy of post's site development standard operating procedure
>
> **Status and Timeline for Completion:** July 31, 2018

Recommendation 4
That the Director of Programming and Training include in post's site development standard operating procedures clear processes and project-specific programmatic criteria for assessing the viability of meaningful Volunteer assignments at potential host agencies.

Concur
Response: As mentioned above in response to Recommendation three, Post will develop a site development standard operating procedure and will include a focus on viability of meaningful Volunteer assignments at potential host agencies.

> **Documents Submitted**:
> - Finalized copy of post's site development standard operating procedure.
>
> **Status and Timeline for Completion:** July 31, 2018

Recommendation 5
That the Director of Programming and Training improve how staff involved in site development vet and prepare motivated counterparts to engage Volunteers in meaningful work.

Concur
Response: Post understands and appreciates the value of having motivated counterparts with whom Volunteers can engage with to create meaningful work.

Post plans to continue discussions regarding post's site development operating procedure throughout the remainder of the 2017/2018 site development process. Following the placement of Volunteers in 2018, post intends to conduct a full review of the 2017/2018 site development process to finalize post's site development standard operating procedure and site development strategy. Within each of these documents, there will be guidance in regard to the vetting and preparation of counterparts.

> **Documents to be Submitted:**
> - Finalized copy of post's site development standard operating procedure
> - Finalized copy of post's site development strategy
> - Communication and implementation plan
>
> **Status and Timeline for Completion:** July 31, 2018

Recommendation 6
That the Country Director and Director of Programming and Training assess the alignment of staff roles and responsibilities so that program staff focus more of their time of program management rather than addressing issues with Volunteer housing and host families.

Concur
Response: The Country Director and Director of Programming and Training, in consultation with the programming and training team, will complete a review of staff roles and functions to ensure that the structure of the office is best suited to supporting current needs of Volunteers.

> **Documents to be Submitted:**
> - Updated Organizational Chart (if applicable)
> - New and revised statements of work (if applicable)
> - Overview of the assessment post completed
>
> **Status and Timeline for Completion:** September 30, 2018

Recommendation 7
That the Director of Programming and Training and the programming and training team analyze tasks performed during service by community organizational development, English education, and health education Volunteers and provide appropriate practical skills training during pre-service training.

Concur
Response: In 2017, post identified that for TEFL and Health Volunteers, many of the technical sessions related to working in school such as classroom management and lesson planning, could be delayed until after swearing-in to account for the long summer which Volunteers encounter when first arriving at their site. To this end, many of these technical sessions were held until IST (typically delivered in the late summer) so that the content of the trainings would be fresh in Volunteers' minds. Additionally, throughout the fall of 2017 the director of programming and training has worked with the training manager and program managers to identify gaps in post's training and ensure that each sector's training program fully prepares Trainees for service. This has included revisiting feedback from the 2017 PST, consulting with Volunteers, and reviewing materials from previous trainings.

> **Documents to be Submitted:**
> - 2018 PST Calendar of Training Events
> - 2018 PST Calendar of Training Events for each sector
> - Relevant 2018 PST session outlines for each sector
> - 2017 IST Schedule
> - Notes from roundtable discussion regarding PST 2018
> - Relevant 2017 IST session outlines for each sector
>
> **Status and Timeline for Completion:** April 15, 2018

Recommendation 8
That the Country Director develop a plan to improve intercultural training in consultation with overseas programming and training support staff from headquarters.

Concur
Response: As part of preparations for the 2018 Pre-Service Training the Director of Programming and Training, Training Manager, and Language and Culture Coordinator will evaluate post's culture training program, make revisions, and consult with headquarters staff as necessary.

> **Documents to be Submitted:**
> - PST Calendar of Training Events
> - PST session outlines demonstrating intercultural training
> - Meeting notes from consultation with headquarters staff
>
> **Status and Timeline for Completion:** April 15, 2018

Recommendation 9
That the Country Director develop a plan to address Volunteers' negative coping strategies such as alcohol abuse by promoting resiliency and positive coping strategies.

Concur
Response: Post discussed the OIG findings regarding substance abuse at an offsite staff retreat and identified some strategies and objectives for the 2018 Annual Plan. Post has continued to develop a multi-pronged strategy to impact Volunteer resiliency and optimize positive coping strategies. The plan include Peace Corps Medical Officer and/or Safety Security Manager Site visits, strengthening communication with Volunteers on the issue via emails from the CD, resiliency trainings, and utilizing the Volunteer Advisory Committee and Peer Support Network to advance the importance of the issue with Volunteers.

> **Documents to be Submitted:**
> - Calendar of site visits completed by PCMO and SSM
> - Calendar of anchor activities and communications toolkit
> - CD letter to Invitees
> - IST session plan led by PCMOs at the IST in July 2017
> - Minutes from the VAC Meeting October 2017
> - Summary of relevant conversation from the Peer Support Network Training October 2017
> - PST session plans for Volunteer Resiliency workshop during PST 2018
>
> **Status and Timeline for Completion:** April 15, 2018

Recommendation 10
That the Director of Programming and Training and programming staff uniformly define primary and secondary activities following the definition provided in the Programming, Training, and Evaluation Guidance.

Concur
Response: To support this recommendation, post will develop and finalize the definition of primary and secondary activities, and ensure communication to all PCVs and staff.

> **Documents to be Submitted:**
> - Notes from meeting discussing primary and secondary activities
> - Memo issued by Director of Programming and Training to Programming and Training staff outlining the definition of primary and secondary activities.
>
> **Status and Timeline for Completion:** December 31, 2017

Recommendation 11
That the Director of Programming and Training and education program team review the education project to clarify the role of co-teaching and expand the range of primary activities contribution to the project goals.

Concur
Response: In 2018, post intends to host a Project Advisory Committee (PAC) meeting for the TEFL sector to address the status of the project and discuss additional ways that post can address the needs of Albania.

In September 2017, the post led a Student Friendly Schools IST for TEFL and it was an opportunity for experiential learning together with counterparts on how to co-teach. Along with the PAC meeting mentioned above, post intends to hold internal conversations, hold discussions with other similarly sized and structured posts, and other sources to identify areas in which post can clarify the role of co-teaching and expand the range of primary activities.

> **Documents to be Submitted:**
> - Notes from Project Advisory Committee meeting
> - Schedule for the Student Friendly School IST held in September 2017
>
> **Status and Timeline for Completion:** September 30, 2018

Recommendation 12
That the Country Director, Director of Programming and Training, and education program manager re-assess post's participation in the Teaching English as a Foreign Language certificate program with input from staff in Overseas Programming and Training Support.

Concur
Response: In 2014 and 2015 post received training and aligned its staffing model in anticipation of implementing the TEFL Certificate Project in March 2016. However, in early 2016 post made the strategic decision not to implement the project in order to focus on other aspects of Volunteer support and program management.

In response to this recommendation, post will consult with other Peace Corps posts which have implemented the project and with the office of Overseas Programming and Training Support to determine whether the project aligns with post's current goals and strategy.

Additionally, post will hold internal discussions on the value of the TEFL Certificate Project based on post staff's knowledge of the program, including its benefits and drawbacks, from staff experience in being trained to implement the program.

> **Documents to be Submitted:**
> - Notes from conversations with other Peace Corps posts and the office of Overseas Programming and Training Support
> - Notes from internal meetings on the value of the TEFL Certificate Project
> - Final decision memo on post's decision to implement the TEFL Certificate Project
>
> **Status and Timeline for Completion:** June 30, 2018

Recommendation 13
That the Training Manager improve participatory analysis for community action training.

Concur
Response: Throughout the fall of 2017, the DPT has worked with the training manager to identify areas where post can better reinforce the Peace Corps' community based approach to development. For the Pre-Service Training (PST) beginning in January 2018, post will integrate PACA training into a greater number of sector and cross-cultural training sessions to increase trainees' awareness and ability to use PACA tools.

Additionally, post will evaluate its In-Service Training and Mid-Service training curriculum to identify additional areas of improvement in regard to PACA training.

> **Documents to be Submitted:**
> - Updated PST session outlines related to PACA Training
> - List of suggested changes to IST and MST curriculum and implementation plan
>
> **Status and Timeline for Completion:** June 30, 2018

Recommendation 14
That the Albania Director of Programming and Training provide programming staff with clear expectations for cleaning Volunteer reporting form data.

Do not concur
Response: Post concurs with the narrative of this report as it relates to the challenges of the Volunteer Reporting Tool and the burden which it places on the post's ability to make data driven decisions as mandated in the 2013-2018 Strategic Plan. Post also believes that is important to clean the data and to conduct some analysis of the information to ensure it is optimally meaningful. The Volunteer Reporting Tool is the mechanism the agency has directed posts to use to collect inputs and outputs of service being conducted by Volunteers.

In order to give the Volunteer Reporting Tool value for the Volunteers who spend time and resources submitting the forms and to accurately understand the work Volunteers are performing, the data must be carefully reviewed, cleaned, processed, and compiled. As the Volunteer Reporting Tool does not lend itself to streamlined data submissions, post staff are required to take additional steps to ensure the data is cleaned and usable by post and Peace Corps Washington. The Agency also addressed this issue with the Office of Inspector General when this report was in the preliminary phase and expressed that this recommendation should not be addressed to post.

> **Documents to be Submitted:**
>   N/A
>
> **Status and Timeline for Completion:** N/A

Recommendation 15
That the Country Director arrange for all staff in PC/Albania be trained on how to use coaching in Volunteer Support.

Concur
Response: Post has been working with Region and Office of Programming and Training Support (OPATS) on a coaching training. Post views this as also tying directly to the Recommendation 9 and view this three-day training more comprehensively as a Volunteer Resiliency Training. The training will be conducted by OPATS and will be for all Program Staff and a majority of our team members to further develop the Volunteer support techniques of post staff.

> **Documents to be Submitted:**
> - The agenda for the training including dates and names and length of sessions
> - Complete list of participants from the Post
>
> **Status and Timeline for Completion:** December 30, 2017

Recommendation 16
That the Country Director require post staff to collect GPS data for all Volunteers, and the DPT incorporate collecting GPS data into its site development standard operating procedures.

Concur
Response: GPS data was previously optional on Post site contact form because the information was collected by staff in the final stages of housing confirmation. GPS data is then uploaded to Post VIDA records. Post has done an audit of this and has additionally uploaded all GPS data into our contact records for Volunteers so it is now accessible by phone contact records. Post will update the site development policy to include collection of this data and ensure it is: in site contact records (removing optional), and in VIDA and in contact records within a specific timeframe following swearing-in.

> **Documents to be Submitted:**
> - Copy of all currently serving PCVs contact records with GPS data included by
> - Copy of updated site contact form
> - Copy or revised Post Site Development Standard Operating Procedure
> - Email to staff on the revised site development policy/procedure
>
> **Status and Timeline for Completion:** July 31, 2018

Recommendation 17
That the Country Director produce a communications plan for clarifying the whereabouts and travel policies.

Concur
Response: In addition to providing whereabouts policy to Invitees prior to departure, covering policies and procedures in PST, providing the written Service Handbook, the quiz on the materials, and the reiteration in all Staff Notes going out to Volunteers about Whereabouts, Post is working on a document that will show in brief the different types of leave and relevant information. Post is creating this with members of Volunteer Advisory Council (VAC) and other Volunteers. Post will summarize this communications into a communication plan as requested by OIG.

> **Documents to be Submitted:**
> - Travel policy 2 page summary
> - Communication plan outlining the communications that occur related to travel and whereabouts
>
> **Status and Timeline for Completion:** April 30, 2018

Recommendation 18
That the Director of Counseling and Outreach develop a plan to support post's Peace Corps medical officers to build their capacity and confidence to respond to or address Volunteers' mental health care needs.

Concur
Response: Current Albania PCMOs have received formal and informal training in supporting the mental health needs of Volunteers. Both PCMOs attended Overseas Staff Training (OST) in 2017 and engaged in COU-led trainings that covered topics including trauma informed care, basic support skills, normal adjustment and common emotional issues, resilience, psychiatric emergencies, and understanding and assessing alcohol use. These skills were reviewed at the 2017 Continuing Medical Education (CME) conferences and numerous opportunities for experiential learning and role playing were provided. Albania PCMOs will attend the 2018 CME conferences and engage in several hours of COU-led formal training specific to supporting Volunteer mental health.

Additionally, Albania PCMOs have engaged in frequent and ongoing informal consultation related to the mental health needs of Volunteers. The PCMOs reach out to COU regularly for case consultation and support via phone, Skype, or email. During an Office of Medical Services (OMS) site visit in August 2017, HQ medical staff discussed mental health cases with PCMOs in person and modeled live supportive interactions with Volunteers. With COU guidance and support, the Albania Post is also actively searching for a new in-country mental health provider, as the prior provider no longer resides in Albania.

> **Documents to be Submitted:**
> - COU OST materials
> - COU CME 2017 materials
> - Position Description for in-country mental health provider

Status and Timeline for Completion: Completed, August 2017

Recommendation 19
That the Peace Corps Medical Officers complete a medical action plan.

Concur
Response: Post had a medical audit in August that the Peace Corps Medical Officers were preparing for when the OIG Program Evaluation was conducted. The medical action plan was completed before the medical audit, submitted to the medical evaluation team and approved during their evaluation.

Documents to be Submitted:
- Medical Action Plan

Status and Timeline for Completion: Completed, August 2017.

Recommendation 20
That the Country Director explore new ways to raise Volunteer and trainee awareness of the quality nurse line.

Concur
Response: In addition to the current practices listed below, post will begin to include a message about the quality nurse in communications from the medical team. Post will also add contact information to the "important contact info" in the Service Handbook distributed to all Volunteers.

The current practices at post include providing information at PST, having posters up at the Pre-Service Training Hub, in the medical unit, and in the Volunteer Lounge, and in addition to the Country Director and PCMOs recommending to Volunteers directly and through Volunteer Advisory Committee to reach out to the Quality Nurse.

Documents to be Submitted:
- Email documentation of inclusion of info about Quality Nurse in emails from medical unit to PCVs by January 30, 2018
- Service Handbook phone list with contact info for Quality Nurse by March 30, 2018

Status and Timeline for Completion: March 30, 2018

Recommendation 21
That the Director of Management and Operations conduct a market basket survey and living allowance survey and determine if an adjustment to Volunteer's living allowances in higher cost sites is justified.

Concur
Response: Post gave an 8.7% living allowance increase to all Volunteers that was effective in October 2017. Post will conduct the annual living allowance and a market basket surveys in 2018. Post will consider this data as done every year to determine any adjustments that post requests for PC/Albania Volunteers.

> **Documents to be Submitted:**
> - Analysis of market basket survey from 2018
> - Analysis of living allowance survey from 2018
> - Decision memo regarding potential of tiered living allowance
>
> **Status and Timeline for Completion:** December 2018

Recommendation 22
That the Country Director and Director of Management and Operations evaluate whether settling-in allowances should be changed to reflect different living situations and act accordingly.

Concur
Response: Post will collect settling in allowance information from the most recently sworn-in group of Volunteers, and conduct an analysis of this data to determine if post should change settling in allowances based on different living situations.

> **Documents to be Submitted:**
> - Results from settling in allowance information
> - Conclusion and course of direction as determined by post regarding settling in allowance
>
> **Status and Timeline for Completion:** March 1, 2018

APPENDIX E: OIG COMMENTS

Management concurred with 21 of 22 recommendations, but did not concur with recommendation 14, which we closed. Twenty recommendations, numbers 1-13, 15-18, and 20-22, remain open. In its response, management described actions it is taking or intends to take to address the issues that prompted each of our recommendations. We wish to note that in closing recommendations, we are not certifying that the agency has taken these actions or that we have reviewed their effect. Certifying compliance and verifying effectiveness are management's responsibilities. However, when we feel it is warranted, we may conduct a follow-up review to confirm that action has been taken and to evaluate the impact.

OIG will review and consider closing recommendations 1-10, 12-13, 15-17, and 20-22 when the documentation reflected in the OIG's comments and the agency's response to the preliminary report is received. For recommendations 11 and 18, additional documentation is required. These recommendations remain open pending confirmation from the chief compliance officer that the documentation reflected in our analysis below is received. OIG closed recommendation 19 based on documentation submitted and reviewed.

11: That the director for programming and training and education program team review the education project to clarify the role of co-teaching and expand the range of primary activities contributing to the project goals.

Concur
Response: In 2018, post intends to host a Project Advisory Committee (PAC) meeting for the TEFL sector to address the status of the project and discuss additional ways that post can address the needs of Albania.

In September 2017, the post led a Student Friendly Schools IST for TEFL and it was an opportunity for experiential learning together with counterparts on how to co-teach. Along with the PAC meeting mentioned above, post intends to hold internal conversations, hold discussions with other similarly sized and structured posts, and other sources to identify areas in which post can clarify the role of co-teaching and expand the range of primary activities.

> **Documents to be Submitted:**
> - Notes from Project Advisory Committee meeting
> - Schedule for the Student Friendly School IST held in September 2017
>
> **Status and Timeline for Completion:** September 30, 2018
>
> **OIG Analysis:** Additional documentation demonstrating how post is implementing an expanded range of primary activities for TEFL Volunteers is necessary. This documentation could include a decision memo or technical training session plans showing how staff are preparing Volunteers to perform an expanded range of primary activities. If the post updates the TEFL project framework to mention additional activities, it could also be submitted.

14: That the director of programming and training provide programming staff with clear expectations for cleaning Volunteer reporting form data.

Do not concur
Response: Post concurs with the narrative of this report as it relates to the challenges of the Volunteer Reporting Tool and the burden which it places on the post's ability to make data driven decisions as mandated in the 2013-2018 Strategic Plan. Post also believes that is important to clean the data and to conduct some analysis of the information to ensure it is optimally meaningful. The Volunteer Reporting Tool is the mechanism the agency has directed posts to use to collect inputs and outputs of service being conducted by Volunteers.

In order to give the Volunteer Reporting Tool value for the Volunteers who spend time and resources submitting the forms and to accurately understand the work Volunteers are performing, the data must be carefully reviewed, cleaned, processed, and compiled. As the Volunteer Reporting Tool does not lend itself to streamlined data submissions, post staff are required to take additional steps to ensure the data is cleaned and usable by post and Peace Corps Washington. The Agency also addressed this issue with the Office of Inspector General when this report was in the preliminary phase and expressed that this recommendation should not be addressed to post.

> **Documents to be Submitted:**
> N/A
>
> **Status and Timeline for Completion:**
> N/A
>
> **OIG Analysis:** In its response, the agency did not concur with OIG's recommendation that the director of programming and training provide staff with clear expectations for cleaning Volunteer report form data. The agency acknowledged that the finding accurately represented the issue of staff's efforts to clean Volunteer reporting form data. The agency maintains that post staff "are required to take additional steps to ensure the data is cleaned and usable by post and Peace Corps Washington."
>
> As presented in the report, agency MRE specialists stated that guidance for overseas staff on how to correct inaccurately reported activities data and indictor data did not exist. According to one headquarters staff member: "Each post, depending on the complexity of their project and what indicators Volunteers potentially report on, handles this tabulation flaw in different ways." OIG made further inquiries after receiving the response from the post and received a link to specific data cleaning guidance that validates post's response. This guidance was not accessible from the agency's Volunteer Reporting Tool Resources Center webpage, but was located on another webpage. According to the Data Cleaning Guidance, there is a requirement for post staff to undertake what appears to OIG to be an onerous amount of effort to clean VRF data and reconcile discrepancies between activities data and indictor data.

Although OIG is closing this recommendation to Peace Corps/Albania, we remain concerned about the effect that these data cleaning efforts are having on posts. OIG closes this recommendation with the intention of further examining this issue and providing the results of its review in a subsequent report to the agency.

18: That the director of counseling and outreach develop a plan to support Peace Corps/Albania's medical officers to build their capacity and confidence to respond to or address Volunteers' mental health care needs.

<u>**Concur**</u>
Response: Current Albania PCMOs have received formal and informal training in supporting the mental health needs of Volunteers. Both PCMOs attended Overseas Staff Training (OST) in 2017 and engaged in COU-led trainings that covered topics including trauma informed care, basic support skills, normal adjustment and common emotional issues, resilience, psychiatric emergencies, and understanding and assessing alcohol use. These skills were reviewed at the 2017 Continuing Medical Education (CME) conferences and numerous opportunities for experiential learning and role playing were provided. Albania PCMOs will attend the 2018 CME conferences and engage in several hours of COU-led formal training specific to supporting Volunteer mental health.

Additionally, Albania PCMOs have engaged in frequent and ongoing informal consultation related to the mental health needs of Volunteers. The PCMOs reach out to COU regularly for case consultation and support via phone, Skype, or email. During an Office of Medical Services (OMS) site visit in August 2017, HQ medical staff discussed mental health cases with PCMOs in person and modeled live supportive interactions with Volunteers. With COU guidance and support, the Albania Post is also actively searching for a new in-country mental health provider, as the prior provider no longer resides in Albania.

> **<u>Documents to be Submitted:</u>**
> - COU OST materials
> - COU CME 2017 materials
> - Position Description for in-country mental health provider
>
> **<u>Status and Timeline for Completion:</u>** Completed, August 2017
>
> **OIG Analysis:** Additional documentation is required from the director of counseling and outreach which documents their future plans to support Peace Corps/Albania's medical officers in responding to the mental health care needs of Volunteers.

APPENDIX F: PROGRAM EVALUATION COMPLETION AND OIG CONTACT

PROGRAM EVALUATION COMPLETION

This program evaluation was conducted under the direction of Assistant Inspector General for Evaluations Jerry Black by Senior Evaluator Kristine Hoffer Additional contributions were made by Senior Evaluator Kaitlyn Large and Evaluations Apprentice Alexandra Miller.

OIG CONTACT

Following issuance of the final report, a stakeholder satisfaction survey will be distributed to agency stakeholders. If you wish to comment on the quality or usefulness of this report to help us improve our products, please contact Assistant Inspector General for Evaluations Jerry Black and at jblack@peacecorpsoig.gov or 202.692.2912.

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