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From: Kathy A. Buller, Inspector General 

Date: January 25, 2018

Subject: Final Report on the Follow Up Review of Peace Corps/Peru (IG-18-03-E)

Transmitted for your information is our Final Report on the Follow Up Review of Peace Corps/Peru.

This limited scope review is a follow up to our 2012 country program evaluation of Peace Corps/Peru. The objective was to determine if the agreed-upon corrective actions taken in response to recommendations made in our 2012 report were fully implemented and if the implemented recommendations had the intended effects. We found that in each of the areas under review the post had appropriately responded to our recommendations, and the actions taken had a positive effect on the issues identified in 2012.

You may address questions 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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A Volunteer and his host mother.

Follow Up Review

Peace Corps/Peru

IG-18-03-E

January 2018



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BACKGROUND

In March 2012, the Office of Inspector General (OIG) issued a [Final Report on the Program Evaluation of Peace Corps/Peru \(IG-12-03-E\)](#). The report made 16 recommendations which, if implemented, were expected to strengthen programming operations and correct the deficiencies detailed in the report. The agency's management concurred with all 16 recommendations, and all of them have since been closed based on a review of corrective actions and supporting documentation.

This limited scope review is a follow up to our 2012 country program evaluation of Peace Corps/Peru (hereafter referred to as "the post"). The objective was to determine if the agreed-upon corrective actions taken in response to recommendations made in our 2012 report were fully implemented and if the implemented recommendations had the intended effects. This review was conducted as a desk review from Peace Corps/Washington. We conducted interviews with Peace Corps/Peru staff and Volunteers through videoconference or telephone.

In 2012, we found that, despite considerable growth in Volunteer numbers between the post's re-opening in 2002 and the issuance of the report in 2012, the post was generally well-run with satisfied Volunteers. We highlighted the post's strong Volunteer support, including Peace Corps medical officers who had established high levels of trust with Volunteers. However, the report found some areas of concern requiring management attention. We chose to follow up on five findings from the report that were significant areas of concern and conducive to being assessed without the need for travel to the post. The specific findings are discussed in the results section below.

There are currently four active projects in Peru: youth development; community health; community economic development (CED); and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH). A fifth project, community-based environmental management, was recently discontinued, but 11 Volunteers were still serving in this sector at the time of the review, either as Peace Corps Response Volunteers or Volunteers who had extended their service beyond 2 years.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

We found that in each of the areas under review the post had appropriately responded to our recommendations, and the actions taken had a positive effect on the issues identified in 2012. We found that Volunteers felt that they had enough work related to project objectives, technical training had improved with the exception of CED technical training, and the post had implemented a system for assessing trainees. In safety and security, we found that although some Volunteer sites were still inaccessible for brief periods of time, the post had site identification and emergency response procedures to mitigate this issue. Further, the post's emergency preparedness had improved in the areas of concern we had identified in 2012.

A MAJORITY OF VOLUNTEERS REPORTED HAVING ENOUGH WORK RELATED TO THEIR PROJECT OBJECTIVES.

The Peace Corps' *Programming, Training, and Evaluation Guidance* advises that each post and program manager "establish and document criteria for selecting communities, partner agencies, and housing for Volunteers" which takes into account "organizations with a strong interest in hosting a Volunteer" and "demonstrated needs that are consistent with project goals and objectives."

In 2012, OIG found that although Volunteers' overall site satisfaction was high, some Volunteers were placed in sites where it was difficult for them to achieve their primary assignment goals. At the time, 25 percent of the interviewed Volunteers raised concerns about their ability to achieve project goals due to challenges related to their site location. We assessed that programmatic site selection criteria had not been documented and did not appear to be used during site development, so we recommended that programming staff document the post's programmatic site selection criteria and communicate the criteria to all staff involved in site development.

During this review, we found that the post's site identification and development procedures required staff to assess each site to ensure Volunteers had enough work and support from community partners. Other than for Peace Corps Response Volunteers, for whom some site development documentation was not required (which we will discuss in a different finding below), we found that site identification and selection was well-documented. A senior staff member told us that site development, including preparation of counterparts, had been a focus area for improvement since 2012. Based on our interviews with Volunteers, we found that most had enough meaningful work to do related to their project objectives.

In addition, some senior staff members said that they were revising project frameworks in a way that resonated with Volunteers. The youth project, for example, was revised to focus on sustainable development and community engagement based on a 6-year strategy in which each site or community would host three generations of Volunteers to promote long-term results.

IN GENERAL, PEACE CORPS/PERU VOLUNTEERS THOUGHT TECHNICAL TRAINING WAS EFFECTIVE, THOUGH WEAKNESSES REMAINED WITH CED TECHNICAL TRAINING.

Peace Corps Manual Section 201 requires that by the end of training, a trainee must have “proficiency in the technical skills needed to carry out the assignment.” OIG found in its 2012 evaluation of the post that Volunteers thought that their technical training was not practical or relevant to the work in their sites, and some felt unprepared to achieve their project objectives. The variety of programming goals and learning objectives, the variety of sites within Peru, and the timing of the post’s site assignment during pre-service training affected the post’s ability to provide relevant and practical training. We recommended that the country director and programming and training staff provide technical training that was more relevant and practical to Volunteer site assignments.

In the 2017 All-Volunteer Survey (AVS) conducted by the agency, 89.4 percent of Volunteers in Peru said technical training was relevant to the work they did at their site. Overall, 77 percent of Peace Corps/Peru Volunteers said that the training they received was effective in preparing them to perform technical aspects of their work. Scores on the AVS for technical training for the environment, health (WASH and community health combined), and youth development sectors all exceeded averages for the region as a whole. Scores for the effectiveness of community economic development technical training were low, however. (See Figure 1)

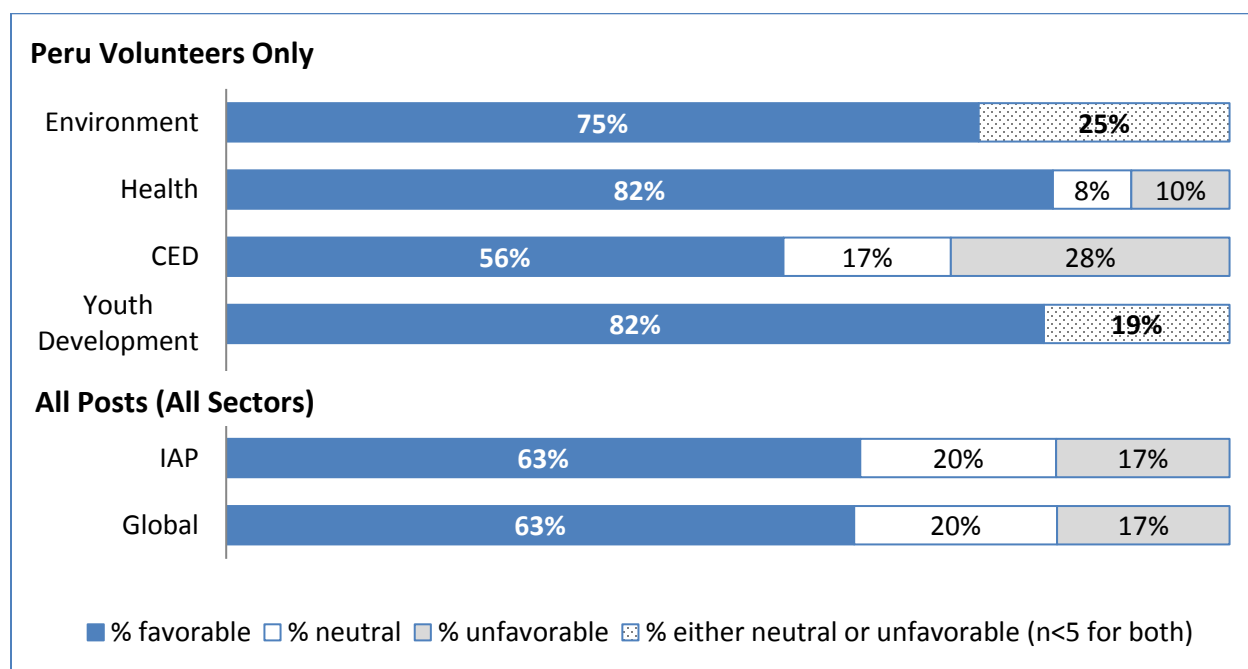


Figure 1: AVS Responses to Technical Training Effectiveness by Sector

Source: Peace Corps All-Volunteer Survey 2017. *Note: Percentages were not given when the number of respondents was less than five, so some responses were combined.

Responses to the 2016 AVS for CED training effectiveness were better than in 2017, and some programming and training staff members attributed the lower scores in 2017 to the technical trainer being new to the position and still learning. One staff member also suggested that the

field-based training may have been too challenging, and they have since adjusted that portion of the training so it is less overwhelming for Volunteers.

THE POST HAD A SYSTEMATIC AND WELL-DOCUMENTED METHOD FOR ASSESSING TRAINEES' KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND ABILITIES.

Agency guidance advises posts to assess the effectiveness of their training program based on data that indicates if trainees and Volunteers have met the program's learning objectives. The 2012 evaluation found that the post did not have a reliable method for tracking and analyzing Volunteer progress on core competencies and learning objectives. At that time, the post did not have a robust system for tracking Volunteer progress in any training areas other than Spanish language acquisition. We recommended that the training manager develop and implement a system to better monitor and analyze trainee and Volunteer achievement of their learning objectives.

Agency guidance now requires posts to have a trainee assessment portfolio that includes methods and criteria for assessing Volunteer achievement of terminal learning objectives, and we found that the post was in compliance with that requirement. The post used a trainee assessment package which included several different assessments of Volunteers' knowledge of technical training, safety and security, language, and health. We performed a review of trainee assessment documentation for 20 Volunteers in our interview sample and found that the assessments were well-documented. The post also maintained an overall tracking spreadsheet of Volunteer results on each assessment. If Volunteers did not meet the standards for each assessment, they were given feedback and a chance to improve.

ALTHOUGH SOME VOLUNTEERS REPORTED THAT THEIR SITES WERE INACCESSIBLE FOR SHORT PERIODS OF TIME, STAFF HAD IDENTIFIED WAYS TO REACH ALL VOLUNTEERS IN AN EMERGENCY.

Peace Corps Manual Section 270.6.2 requires each post to develop and apply criteria for the selection and approval of sites, including vulnerability to natural disasters and transportation. In 2012, the OIG found that the post did not sufficiently consider travel-related risks for Volunteers during the site selection process. Some Volunteers were placed in sites that could only be accessed by dirt roads that became slippery and hazardous when wet, sometimes making them too risky to travel on. The post did not have a standard site identification and selection process for all staff to follow, and site identification and selection forms did not contain information on the accessibility of road conditions when dirt roads were wet and muddy. We therefore recommended that the country director assess the year-round accessibility of sites of each Volunteer and identify measures the post could take to mitigate heightened seasonal travel risks in order to safely access Volunteers in these areas.

Five of the 15 Volunteers we interviewed for this review said that sometimes the road to their site gets blocked or washed out for short periods of time. One Volunteer was sometimes afraid to travel out of site when road conditions were treacherous. However, senior staff members reported that placing Volunteers only in sites that had no risk of being blocked for any amount of time would substantially limit the program.

The post's site development procedures require that sites are accessible year-round, including during the rainy season, and that regular access routes or transportation should not involve taking unacceptable safety risks. Our review of site development documents showed that staff took this requirement under consideration, and supervisory staff involved in site development reported to OIG that regional coordinators who perform site identification visits consider this criteria seriously. Further, we learned in interviews with staff and by reviewing post's emergency action plan that if a medical or safety emergency should occur while a particular road was blocked or inaccessible, the post had access to sufficient resources to reach the Volunteer, including local transportation and healthcare resources, regional coordinators familiar with each site, and embassy resources if necessary.

THE POST IMPROVED ITS EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS IN AREAS FOUND TO HAVE WEAKNESSES IN 2012.

The agency's safety and security policy, Manual Section 270, requires posts to maintain a detailed emergency action plan to address the most likely emergency situations." The 2012 evaluation of Peace Corps/Peru found weaknesses in the post's safety and security program that could compromise its response to an emergency and place Volunteers in unsafe situations. Deficiencies in 2012 were related to consolidation points, site locator forms, the whereabouts policy, and Volunteer housing. During our follow-up review, we found that the post improved in each of these areas as described below.

CONSOLIDATION POINTS

In 2012, half of all interviewed Volunteers could not correctly identify their consolidation point, and some expressed doubt about whether the consolidation point was appropriate. As a result, we recommended that the country director ensure that all Volunteers know the location of their consolidation point.

During our interviews for this review, 73 percent of the Volunteers were able to correctly name their consolidation point which was an improvement over the 2012 results. We also asked Volunteers if their consolidation points were accessible, and a majority said it was, though (as noted above) some said it would depend on the type of emergency (e.g. a landslide) since roads could become impassable.

Although these results were not ideal, we assessed that the post had multiple ways of ensuring Volunteers know their consolidation points. Volunteers received a training session that included discussion of consolidation points, and the post provided Volunteers with a manual which designates consolidation points. The post required Volunteers to visit their consolidation points during pre-service training, and often held regional meetings at consolidation point venues.

Importantly, the post activated its emergency procedures in 2017 when a natural disaster caused severe flooding and mudslides and the post had to consolidate and evacuate a large number of Volunteers. Post documentation indicated that the process of consolidating Volunteers from their individual sites to the capital for evacuation was completed within three days. Headquarters and post staff agreed that the response was handled very well considering that the event happened without warning. Some Volunteers we interviewed were involved in the evacuation, and they

said that they felt comfortable and safe because of how staff had handled the event. One Volunteer was unable to leave site for a time, but staff remained in communication with the Volunteer and assessed that the Volunteer was safe. A regional coordinator was eventually able to help the Volunteer get out of the site.

SITE LOCATOR FORMS

In 2012, the agency used site locator forms that contained information about each Volunteer's site, including communication and logistical information to help staff support Volunteers in an emergency. We found that site locator forms were not adequately completed by Volunteers or checked by staff. The post did not have copies of some of the Volunteers' site locator forms, and many of those they did have were missing information. We recommended that the country director require appropriate staff members to review the accuracy and completeness of Volunteers' site locator forms.

Since the evaluation, the agency changed its policy to require site contact forms instead of site locator forms, so we reviewed site contact forms for the 20 Volunteers in our interview sample. We received up to date site contact forms for all 20 Volunteers, and most of them contained all of the required information.

WHEREABOUTS POLICY

According to standard operating procedure for safety and security managers, all posts are required to collect Volunteers' whereabouts and information when they travel away from their sites so that they can reach Volunteers in an emergency. In 2012, only 37 percent of Volunteers we interviewed reported whereabouts "always" or "most of the time." As a result, we recommended that the country director develop and implement a plan to promote a higher level of compliance among Volunteers with the post's whereabouts policy.

In our interviews with Volunteers for this review, most Volunteers said that staff clearly communicated what the whereabouts policy was and the importance of reporting for emergency response reasons. Several Volunteers noted that the country director frequently reminded them to report whereabouts. Most Volunteers said that they almost always reported their whereabouts. If they did not report, it was usually because they forgot. Just two of the fifteen Volunteers said they did not always report when they knew they should have, for example when traveling within their region.

HOUSING CHECKS

According to Manual Section 270, all Volunteer housing "must be inspected by post staff...prior to occupancy to ensure each house and/or homestay arrangement meets all minimum standards as established by the Peace Corps and the post. Reports of the inspections must be documented and maintained by the post."

During fieldwork for the 2012 report, OIG inspected housing for the Volunteers we interviewed. The housing check found that 59 percent of Volunteer houses did not meet the required criteria for Volunteer housing. We further found that there was no documentation to show that housing checklists had been completed and reviewed by staff. We recommended that the country director

ensure that staff inspect Volunteer housing so that the post's minimum standards are met prior to occupancy. We further recommended that the country director ensure the post maintain accurate housing inspection reports.

As part of this review, we were not able to physically inspect Volunteer housing since we did not travel to the post, but we reviewed the post's documentation of housing checklists for the 20 Volunteers in our interview sample. In our review, we found that housing checklist documentation was completed in accordance with the post's site development procedures, except for housing for Peace Corps Response (PCR) Volunteers.

The housing checklist was not required under Peru's PCR procedures at the time that Response Volunteers in our sample entered on duty. A senior staff member said the housing checks were being done for PCR houses, but the documentation was not completed. In addition, the post had not required site approval checklists for PCR Volunteers. The post recently hired a new Peace Corps Response Coordinator, and, according to senior staff members, the previous lack of a PCR coordinator partly explained why their PCR Volunteer site development protocol had not been formalized. The post has recently developed a template for PCR housing checklists and site approval, and put in place protocols for PCR site development, including documentation of housing checks.

APPENDIX A: RELEVANT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OIG'S 2012 PROGRAM EVALUATION OF PEACE CORPS/PERU

Finding: *Although Volunteers' overall site satisfaction is high, some Volunteers are placed in sites where it is difficult for them to achieve their primary assignment goals.*

Recommendation:

- That the programming staff document the post's programmatic site selection criteria and communicate the criteria to all staff involved in site development.

Finding: *Many Volunteers reported that technical training is not practical or relevant to their Sites.*

Recommendation:

- That the country director and programming and training staff provide technical training that is more practical and relevant to Volunteer site assignments.

Finding: *Post lacks a reliable method for tracking and analyzing Volunteer progress on core competencies and learning objectives.*

Recommendation:

- That the training manager develop and implement a system to better monitor and analyze trainee and Volunteer achievement of their learning objectives.

Finding: *Post does not sufficiently consider travel-related risks for Volunteers during the site selection process.*

Recommendations:

- That the country director assess the year-round accessibility of each Volunteer, paying particular attention to those sites where dirt roads become so muddy and slippery when wet (i.e., rainy season) that Volunteers are effectively inaccessible by car.
- That the country director identify measures post can take to mitigate heightened seasonal travel risks in order to safely access Volunteers in these areas.

Finding: *Weaknesses in the post's safety and security program could compromise its response to an emergency and place Volunteers in unsafe situations.*

Recommendations:

- That the country director ensure that all Volunteers know the location of their consolidation point.
- That the country director require the appropriate staff members to review the accuracy and completeness of every Volunteer's site locator form.
- That the country director develop and implement a plan to promote a higher level of compliance among Volunteers with the post's whereabouts policy.
- That the country director ensure that staff inspect Volunteer housing and the post's minimum standards are met prior to occupancy.
- That the country director ensure that the post is maintaining accurate housing inspection reports.

APPENDIX B: 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 a follow up review of issues identified in the 2012 evaluation of Peace Corps/Peru on October 24, 2017. The objective of this limited scope follow up review was to determine if the agreed-on corrective actions taken in response to the 2012 report's recommendations were fully implemented and had the intended effects.

The follow up review concerned specific findings from our 2012 report that pertained to programming, Volunteer training, and safety and security. This review was conducted from Peace Corps headquarters without travel to the post.

The evaluator reviewed agency documents provided by headquarters and post staff and conducted interviews in-person with headquarters staff and through video conference or phone conversations with Peace Corps/Peru staff. Headquarters staff interviewed for this review included leadership of IAP Operations. Post staff interviewed were in programming, Volunteer training, Volunteer support, and safety and security staff.

The evaluator also selected a representative sample of 20 Peace Corps/Peru Volunteers with whom to conduct telephone interviews. A total of 15 Volunteers were interviewed out of the sample of 20, representing a response rate of 75 percent.

This review was conducted in accordance with the Quality Standards for Inspections, issued by the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency.

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED

As part of this post review interviews were conducted with 15 Volunteers, 10 in-country staff, and 3 representatives from Peace Corps headquarters in Washington D.C. The period of review for a post review is one full Volunteer cycle (typically 27 months).

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

Table 1: Volunteer Demographic Data

Project	Percentage of Volunteers
Youth Development	21%
Community Health	27%
Community Economic Development	18%
Water, Sanitation and Hygiene	22%
Community Based Environmental Management	11%
Gender	Percentage of Volunteers
Female	69%
Male	31%
Age	Percentage of Volunteers
25 or younger	52%
26-29	31%
30-49	13%
50 and over	4%

Source: Volunteer Information Database Application. Volunteer Roster, October 2017.
Note: Percentages may not total 100 percent due to rounding.

At the time of our review, the post had 64 staff positions, including 7 temporary training staff to assist with pre-service training. We interviewed 10 post staff. We conducted interviews with staff with oversight responsibilities related to the scope of this review.

Table 2: Interviews Conducted with Post Staff

Position	Interviewed
Administrative Assistant (4)	
Cashier	
Country Director	X
Deputy Director of Management and Operations	
Director of Management and Operations	
Director of Programming and Training	X

Driver (6)	
Grants Coordinator	
Guard (2)	
Information Technology Assistant	
Information Technology Specialist	
Janitor / Maintenance (3)	
Language and Culture Coordinator	
Medical Assistant (2)	
Monitoring, Reporting, and Evaluation Coordinator	X
Peace Corps Medical Officer (3)	
Peace Corps Response Coordinator	
Program and Executive Assistant	
Program Assistant (2)	
Program Manager (4)	X
Programming & Training Specialist (3)	
Regional Coordinator (6)	
Safety and Security Assistant	
Safety and Security Manager	X
Technical Trainer Assistant (2)	
Temporary Language and Culture Facilitator (7)	
Training Administrative Assistant	
Training Manager	X
Training Secretary	
Volunteer Support Manager	X
Year-Round Language and Culture Facilitator (2)	

Data as of December 2017.

Three additional IAP region staff were interviewed during the preliminary research phase of the review at Peace Corps headquarters in Washington, D.C.

Table 3: Interviews Conducted with Peace Corps Headquarters Staff

Position	Office
Chief of Programming and Training	Inter-America and the Pacific Operations
Chief of Operations	Inter-America and the Pacific Operations
Regional Security Advisor	Inter-America and the Pacific Operations

Data as of November 2017.

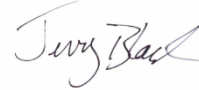
APPENDIX D: LIST OF ACRONYMS

AVS	All Volunteer Survey
CED	Community Economic Development
IAP	Inter-America and the Pacific
OIG	Office of Inspector General
PCR	Peace Corps Response
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

APPENDIX E: REVIEW COMPLETION AND OIG CONTACT

REVIEW COMPLETION

This limited scope follow-up review was conducted by Program Analyst Alexandra Miller. Additional contributions were made by Senior Evaluator Erin Balch. Supervisory review was conducted by Assistant Inspector General for Evaluation, Jerry Black.



OIG CONTACT

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