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**To:** Carrie Hessler-Radelet, Director  
Ken Yamashita, Regional Director, Inter-America and the Pacific Operations  
Anne Hughes, Acting Chief Compliance Officer

**From:** Kathy A. Buller, Inspector General 

**Date:** May 13, 2015

**Subject:** Final Report on the Program Evaluation of Peace Corps/Guatemala  
(IG-15-03-E)

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

Management concurred with all 15 recommendations, 14 of which remain open. Based on the documentation provided, we closed recommendation number 13. 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 through 12, 14 and 15 when the documentation reflected in the OIG's comments and the agency's response to the preliminary report is received. For recommendation number 1, additional documentation is required; it will remain open pending confirmation from the chief compliance officer that the documentation reflected in our analysis below is received.

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

You may address questions regarding follow-up or documentation to Assistant Inspector General for Evaluations Jim O'Keefe at 202.692.2904.

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

cc: Elizabeth Ogunwo, White House Liaison  
Rudy Mehrbani, General Counsel  
Carlos Torres, Associate Director for Global Operations  
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IG



# Peace Corps Office of Inspector General

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*Peace Corps Volunteer Rachel LeQuire (center) with host family*



*Flag of Guatemala*

## **Final Program Evaluation Report: Peace Corps/Guatemala IG-15-03-E**

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**May 2015**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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### BACKGROUND

The Peace Corps has operated continuously in Guatemala since 1963. As of December 2014, more than 4,900 Peace Corps Volunteers had served in Guatemala since the program's inception, more than all countries except for the Philippines and Kenya.<sup>1</sup> There are currently four projects in Guatemala: healthy schools, maternal and child health, youth in development, and food security. At the onset of this evaluation, 78 Volunteers were serving in Guatemala, including one Peace Corps Response Volunteer (PCR), and 28 trainees in pre-serving training (PST). In 2012 the agency reduced the number of Volunteers and put in place extra measures to respond to security risks in the country. The evaluation occurred as the agency was in the process of bringing the number of Volunteers back up to approximately 120 for 2015. The post's fiscal year (FY) 2014 budget was \$2.99 million.<sup>2</sup>

### WHAT WE FOUND

In 2011 Peace Corps management identified Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras as very high crime posts and developed a series of strategies, referred to as the Volunteer Support Initiative, to improve risk management "in an effort to reverse negative safety and security trends." The enhanced risk management measures included: a shuttle service to transport Volunteers along major highways and through high crime cities; a stricter whereabouts reporting policy; requirements that Volunteers seek approval from staff for group events; a rule prohibiting Volunteers serving in other countries from visiting Guatemala; and limits on travelling to various places within Guatemala. One of the questions this evaluation sought to answer was: have these risk management steps been effective in reducing the rate of serious crimes against Volunteers?

Several areas of Volunteer support functioned well, including: staff support and responsiveness to Volunteer concerns, Volunteer housing, host family stays, living allowances, site visits, site locator forms, emergency action plans, consolidation points, the handling of crime incidents, medical support, and staff feedback to Volunteers on their work reports. However, the agency had not effectively communicated to applicants regarding the crimes and risks of service in Guatemala, or the rules and policies they would need to follow as Volunteers. Volunteers were not reporting their whereabouts consistently, and were not reporting all crimes they experienced. The extra risk management steps and measures put in place to reverse negative safety trends had unclear effects: the rate of serious crimes against Volunteers rose sharply in 2013 and dropped in 2014.

Programming in Guatemala was generally well aligned with the development priorities of Guatemala. Host country coordination, site development policies and practices, and the use of site history information were solid. However, Volunteers in the healthy schools project struggled to establish effective working relationships with their supervisors. Also, weaknesses in the agency's reporting system that program staff use to generate summary reports for project stakeholders had created a lack of information regarding results of Volunteer activities in 2013.

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<sup>1</sup> Peace Corps suspended its program in Kenya in July 2014.

<sup>2</sup> This amount does not include the salaries, benefits, and related cost of U.S. direct hires assigned to post and other costs the agency has determined should be centrally budgeted.

While the training program demonstrated many areas of effectiveness, the way post evaluates the second part of the “split model” for PST could be made more systematic.

Resources and management practices were generally adequate for the post to operate effectively, and we had no significant concerns regarding the sufficiency of staffing, staff performance appraisals and staff development, the post’s relationship with headquarters, or post’s relationship with the U.S. Embassy.

It was unclear to us how the agency had determined in 2012 that the post was making progress in reducing serious crimes against Volunteers. The rate of serious crime against Volunteers in Guatemala rose sharply in 2013 as the agency was preparing to increase the number of Volunteers. Fortunately Volunteers experienced fewer serious crimes in 2014.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS IN BRIEF**

Because of the lack of a positive correlation between the safety and security program in place and outcomes for Volunteers, the agency should set specific goals and measures for its security program in Guatemala, assess them regularly, and make adjustments based on its analyses. In total our report contains 15 recommendations, which, if implemented, should strengthen post operations and correct the deficiencies detailed in the accompanying report.

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## HOST COUNTRY BACKGROUND

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Guatemala, the most populous country in Central America, shares borders with Mexico, Belize, Honduras and El Salvador. To its southwest lies the Pacific Ocean, and to the east it borders on the Caribbean Sea at the Gulf of Honduras.

Guatemala has a wide range of climates from low-lying, hot rainforests to cold mountains reaching nearly 14,000 feet high. The country's biodiversity and natural beauty contribute to its popularity as a tourist destination. It is also prone to natural disasters including hurricanes, tropical storms, floods, volcanic activity, and landslides. The last major earthquake struck in 1976.

The Maya civilization in Guatemala and surrounding areas traces back several thousand years. It flourished during the classic period from AD 250 to 900. After almost 300 years of colonial rule, Guatemala gained its independence from Spain on September 15, 1821. Guatemalans endured a prolonged internal conflict from 1962 to 1996 in which more than 200,000 people were killed and many more became refugees. According to the Commission for Historical Clarification,<sup>3</sup> 83 percent of identified victims of this conflict were Mayan. The commission reported that "the violence was fundamentally directed by the State against the excluded, the poor and above all, the Mayan people" and that state forces "between 1981 and 1983, committed acts of genocide against groups of Mayan people." Forty-five percent of human rights violations and acts of violence took place in the department of Quiché. In 1996, the government signed a peace agreement that formally ended the conflict and recognized that "peace must be based on participatory socio-economic development that is geared to the common good." While the internal armed conflict is over, Guatemalans continue to experience a high degree of violent crime due to this legacy of violence, the prevalence of weapons, chronic poverty, and a weak judicial system.

According to the World Fact Book there are more than 20 Mayan languages spoken in Guatemala, the most commonly spoken being Quiché ("K'iche" on the map below).

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<sup>3</sup> The Commission for Historical Clarification was established in 1994 as part of a peace agreement between the Government of Guatemala and the Revolutionary National Unity of Guatemala in order "to clarify past human rights violations and acts of violence that have caused the Guatemalan population to suffer."

**Figure 1. Map of Guatemala**



**Figure 2. Languages of Guatemala**



To generalize, urban populations and communities in the east tend to speak Spanish (“Castilian” on the map above) and not to identify as indigenous. Rural communities and villages in the western highlands of the country where Peace Corps operates include a mix of different indigenous peoples and ethnic groups.

The government of Guatemala is a constitutional, democratic republic. The current president of Guatemala, Otto Perez Molina, took office in January 2012. There are twenty-two administrative departments in Guatemala with governors appointed by the president. Departments are divided into over 300 municipalities which are run by popularly-elected mayors or councils.

Guatemala’s per capita income (\$5,300 in 2013) is about half the average per capita income for Latin America and the Caribbean. Almost 40 percent of its labor force works in the agricultural sector of the economy, which accounts for just 13 percent of the country’s gross domestic product. Income distribution in Guatemala is highly unequal, and more than half of the population lives below the national poverty line. Poverty and extreme poverty disproportionately affect the country’s indigenous communities who make up 40 percent of the total population: 73 percent live in poverty, including 22 percent in extreme poverty (subsisting on less than \$1.25 per day).

Guatemalans, in particular the country’s indigenous populations, struggle in areas of health and development with high rates of malnutrition, infant, child, and maternal mortality and low literacy rates. The country has the highest fertility rate, the highest population growth rate, and the youngest population in Latin America. One in two children under age five suffers from chronic malnutrition, which is among the highest malnutrition rates in the world.



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## PEACE CORPS PROGRAM BACKGROUND

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### **Peace Corps Background**

Since the Peace Corps entered the country in 1963, more than 4,900 Volunteers have served the people of Guatemala. It is one of the agency's largest programs (after the Philippines, Ecuador, Kenya, and Thailand) in terms of the total number of Volunteers to have served in a country. At the time of fieldwork for this evaluation in October 2014, 48 staff was supporting 78 Volunteers (including one PCR Volunteer)<sup>4</sup> and 28 trainees in pre-serving training. The Peace Corps has operated continuously in Guatemala since 1963. The evaluation occurred as the agency was in the process of bringing the number of Volunteers up to approximately 120 Volunteers in 2015. The post's FY 2014 budget was \$2.99 million. The last OIG evaluation in Guatemala took place in 2003.

Volunteers were active in the four main projects: healthy schools, maternal and child health, youth in development and food security. A more detailed explanation of the four projects follows.

### **Healthy Schools (HS)**

The purpose of the Peace Corps' HS project in Guatemala is for primary school students and their communities to improve their health and well-being. Volunteers work with multiple schools in their immediate communities and surrounding areas on three related goals: to assist teachers to implement the national health curriculum; to help families and community leaders improve planning and management of school-based health promotion activities; and to support students in fourth through sixth grades to develop life skills such as leadership, confidence and motivation. Thirty-seven Volunteers (47 percent of the Volunteer population) were serving in the HS project during fieldwork for the evaluation.

### **Maternal and Child Health (MCH)**

The MCH project's purpose is to assist mothers and children in rural communities to lead healthier lives. Volunteers work in health centers to support doctors, nurses, midwives and health education workers. Volunteers coordinate with their health center counterparts to strengthen preventative health activities: training health center staff on non-formal education methods for adults; organizing MCH trainings; promoting team-building exercises for health center personnel; and training health center workers on experiential learning of MCH topics. MCH Volunteers collaborate with health center staff to provide health education to rural mothers and to track their adoption of preventive health behaviors. Volunteers also help establish or strengthen community-based health commissions of community leaders, health center workers, and municipal leaders to improve collaboration on health promotion activities with mothers and children in their communities. Twenty-six Volunteers (33 percent of the Volunteer population) were serving in the MCH project during fieldwork for the evaluation.

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<sup>4</sup> PCR provides qualified professionals the opportunity to undertake short-term assignments in various programs around the world.

### **Youth in Development (YiD)**

The YiD project seeks to assist Guatemalan rural youth to lead healthy lives and play positive roles in their communities. YiD Volunteers work on enhancing the life skills of youth from fourth through ninth grades in areas such as self-esteem, communication and decision-making, and critical thinking skills; preventing substance abuse; enhancing understanding of reproductive and sexual health; and building leadership skills. Volunteers also collaborate with social workers, parents and other community leaders to increase their capacity to support youth, for example by creating more physical “friendly spaces” where in and out of school youth can develop their life skills. Fourteen (18 percent of the Volunteer population) were serving as YiD Volunteers during fieldwork for the evaluation.

### **Food Security**

The purpose of the food security project in Guatemala is to support rural community members to improve their food and nutrition security. The project seeks to accomplish this through three related goals: to increase availability of and access to food through more production and higher purchasing power; to reduce the amount of malnutrition by providing education and training; and to improve the agricultural business skills and management practices of farm production groups. The food security project was funded by the U.S. government’s Feed the Future initiative to assist vulnerable women, children, and others, mostly small-scale farmers, to escape hunger and poverty. Just one PCRV had been in service long enough to be included in our interview sample, and an additional group of seven PCRVs went through training and started their service during fieldwork.

### **The Volunteer Support Initiative**

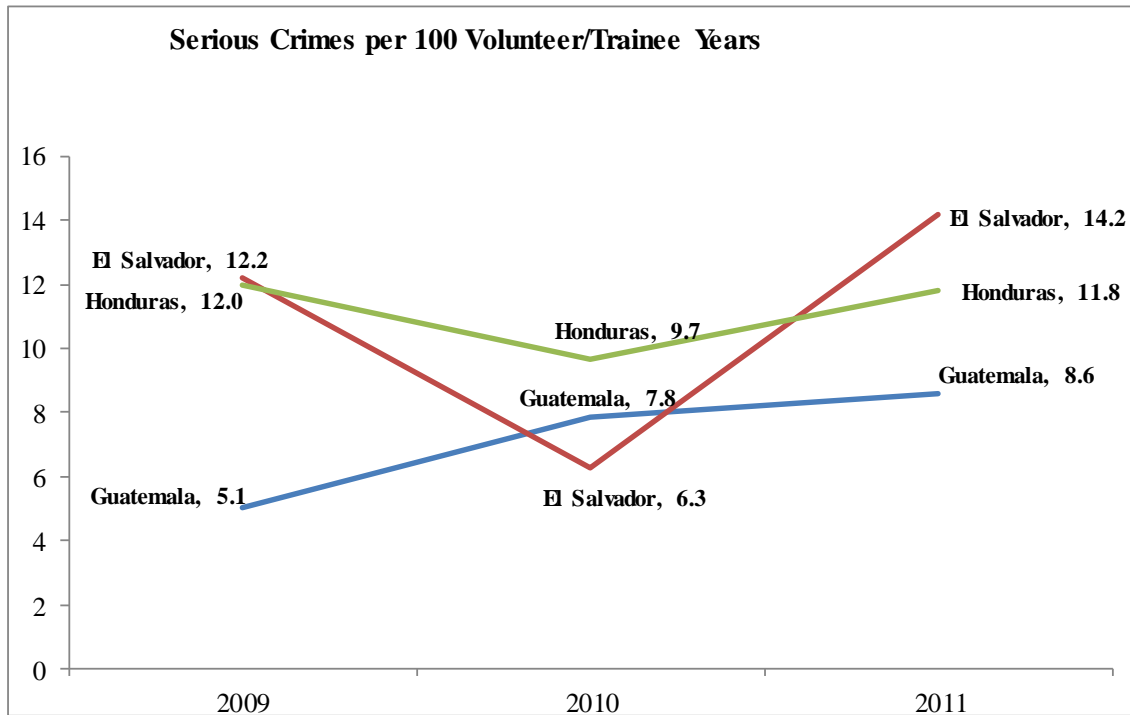
In 2011 Peace Corps management identified Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras as very high crime posts and developed a series of strategies, referred to as the Volunteer Support Initiative, to improve risk management “in an effort to reverse negative safety and security trends.” The chart below shows three years of data from 2009 to 2011<sup>5</sup> for serious crimes<sup>6</sup> against Volunteers in the three countries.

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<sup>5</sup> Dates represent calendar years unless noted.

<sup>6</sup> Serious crime categories include: homicide, kidnapping, rape, aggravated sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault. The serious crimes against Volunteers in Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras from 2009 to 2011 did not include any homicides or kidnappings.

**Figure 3. Serious Crimes Rates in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras (2009 to 2011)<sup>7</sup>**

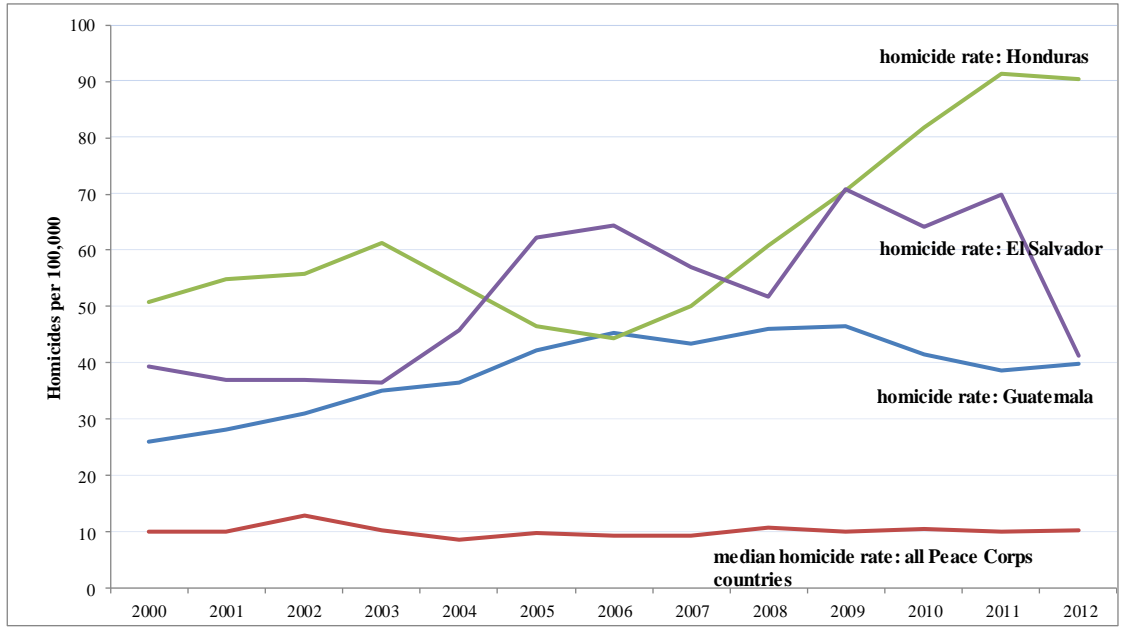


Source: OIG analysis of crimes against Volunteers in the agency’s Consolidated Incident Reporting System.

In addition to the rates of serious crimes against its Volunteers, agency officials were also concerned about negative security trends in the host countries and the extent to which Peace Corps could place and support Volunteers in sufficiently safe areas of the countries. In particular, in 2011 the homicide rate in Honduras had reached over 90 homicides per 100,000 people; by far the highest homicide rate of any country since 2000.

<sup>7</sup> The timeframe illustrated above is for reported incidents prior to implementation of the Volunteer Support Initiative. The serious crime rates in this chart and elsewhere in this report are based on the “Volunteer/trainee year” or VT year, calculated by the agency each year for each country. The VT year represents the length of time Volunteers and trainees served in a particular country from the start of training to the end of service. A Volunteer who leaves after six months of service contributes 0.5 of a VT year; a Volunteer in service for a full year counts as one VT year. The agency generally calculates and reports incident rates per 100 VT years.

**Figure 4. Homicide rates in Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras and Median Homicide Rate for All Peace Corps Countries (2000 to 2012)**



Source: OIG analysis of homicide data from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. Global Study on Homicide 2013.

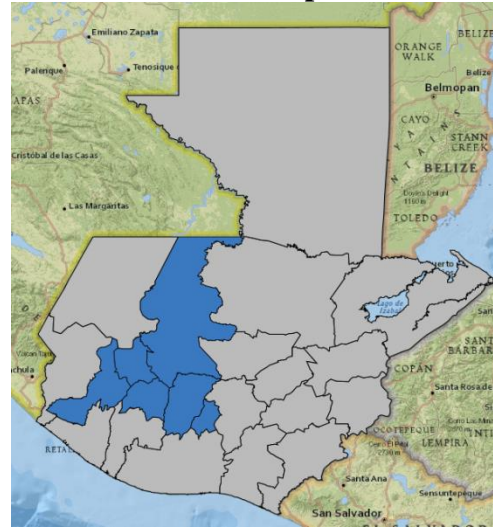
Based on its review of the security environments and available options for managing risks to Volunteers in Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala, agency managers decided to suspend (and eventually closed) operations in Honduras and to put in place extra risk management resources, policies and practices in both El Salvador and Guatemala. For Guatemala these risk management steps included: requiring all Volunteers to live with host families throughout their service; cancelling trainee inputs for 2012, reducing the size of the Volunteer population from over 200 in 2011 to 119 in 2012 and 82 in 2013; and limiting the geographic scope of operations to the western highlands region of the country, considered safer than the rest.

From 2008 to 2010, before the post reduced the geographic scope of site placements as part of the Volunteer Support Initiative, Volunteers had served in 17 departments of Guatemala. Since 2011, Volunteer sites have been confined to six departments: Chimaltenango, El Quiche, Quetzaltenango, Sacatepéquez, Sololá and Totonicapán. The map below highlights the departments of Guatemala (shaded blue) where the Peace Corps placed Volunteers for the three years preceding 2011, and from 2011 to the present.

**Figure 5. Departments with Volunteers  
2008 to 2011**



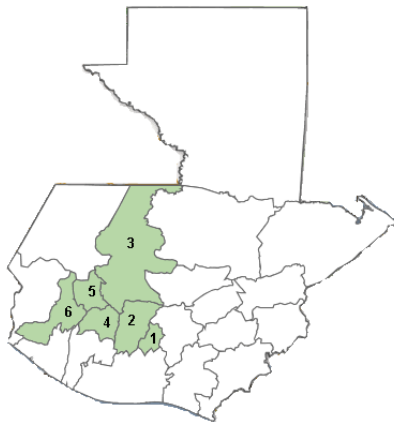
**Figure 6. Departments with Volunteers  
2011 to present**



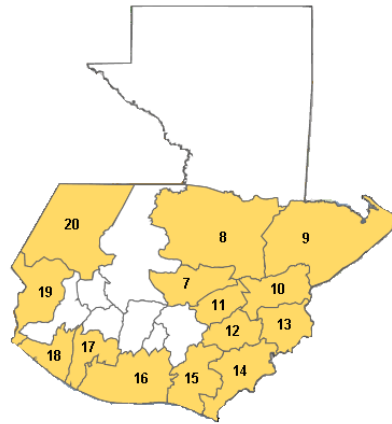
Source: OIG analysis of data in post’s Volunteer Information Database Application (VIDA).

Peace Corps instituted additional security measures in 2011 and 2012: a shuttle service to transport Volunteers along major highways and through high crime cities such as Chimaltenango in the western highlands; a stricter whereabouts reporting policy requiring Volunteers to notify Peace Corps when out of their sites for the night “at all times without exception”; requirements that Volunteers plan and seek approval from staff for events where groups of Volunteers would convene; a rule prohibiting actively serving Volunteers in other countries from visiting Guatemala; and a set of travel restrictions requiring Volunteers to obtain staff authorization to travel to areas of the country where no Volunteers are currently serving. The post’s 12-page transportation policy identifies many towns and roads within the six departments where Volunteers currently serve (green zones) that are off-limits, and specifies which departments of the country Volunteers may only visit with prior approval (yellow zones), and which they are prohibited from visiting (red zones that include some of the department of Petén, and Guatemala City). The transportation policy also includes complex rules that limit Volunteers to specific modes of transportation in certain areas of the country.

**Figure 7. Green Zones**



**Figure 8. Yellow zones**



Source: Peace Corps/Guatemala transportation policy

One of the questions this evaluation sought to answer was, have these risk management steps been effective in reducing the rate of serious crimes against Volunteers? We present our assessment of this question under the Volunteer Support section below.

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## EVALUATION RESULTS

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### *VOLUNTEER SUPPORT*

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Our country program evaluation attempts to answer the question, “Has post provided adequate support and oversight to Volunteers?” To determine this, we assessed numerous factors, including staff-Volunteer communications; project and status report feedback; medical support; safety and security support including staff visits to Volunteer work sites, the Emergency Action Plan (EAP), and the handling of crime incidents; and the adequacy of the Volunteer living allowance.

In reviewing staff support and responsiveness to Volunteer concerns, Volunteer housing, host family stays, living allowances, site visits, site locator forms, emergency action plans, consolidation points, the handling of crime incidents, medical support, and staff feedback to Volunteers on their work reports, we found no significant areas of concern that would necessitate action by the post.

**Support and Responsiveness of Staff to Volunteer Concerns and Needs.** Volunteers we interviewed rated staff as being responsive to issues they had raised. Eighteen of 22 Volunteers said that the responsiveness of staff was either good or very good (82 percent favorable).<sup>8</sup> No

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<sup>8</sup> “Volunteer interviews were conducted using a standardized interview questionnaire, and Volunteers were asked to rate many items on a five-point scale (1 = not effective, 3 = neutral, 5 = very effective).” The percentage of Volunteers who gave a favorable rating includes those who gave ratings of “4” or “5”.

Volunteer complained that staff was unresponsive to their issues or concerns. Volunteers also gave staff high marks for being supportive. Ninety-five percent of Volunteers we interviewed rated the country director (CD) as “very supportive” (100 percent favorable). Volunteers generally rated other staff favorably as well. Representative Volunteer comments about some staff are as follows:

[The CD] is awesome...So wonderful and supportive. His door is always open and he always wants to know how I'm doing and how my life is going...He honestly wants to know how everything is going.

[The director of programming and training] is great. He was our trainer in 2010 and he just had a way of explaining policies and how Guatemala is based on his own experience and he was easy to identify with.

From a Volunteer perspective [the director of management and operations] is always looking out for us and wants Volunteer input, and she is very clear in how she communicates.

I would say [the program manager (PM) for MCH] is very responsive and supportive, flexible and understanding.

They [HS program management team] have been really supportive for feedback and understanding how to grow the program. They are amazing. And it has been improving. They were open to our ideas and also receiving feedback. [The PM for HS] has been supportive of me emotionally and professionally.

For me personally [the PM for YiD] has been very supportive. Very great. She has helped me with some issues I have had with my counterpart.

I think [the training manager] is very good at her job, very organized and approachable. We feel comfortable coming to her with problems...She is very good at giving feedback. And I think that she does a good job of equal treatment of Volunteers and has a good relationship with most Volunteers.

[The safety and security manager (SSM)] has been very supportive. He checks up on me even when I haven't asked him. He is really attentive to the Volunteers. I am always in the know about safety things even if they don't affect me here. He is really good about that.

[The Peace Corps medical officers] are both very approachable. Did my mid service meds and they were both fine. The medical secretary is awesome.

**Host Families.** Since July 2011, as part of the risk management measures in place in the country, all Volunteers in Guatemala have been required to live with a host family throughout their service. Eighteen of 21 Volunteers rated their experience with their host families as either good (38 percent) or very good (48 percent), an 86 percent favorable rating. Just three Volunteers were neutral (rating their host family stay as neither good nor bad), and no Volunteer we interviewed rated her host family experience negatively. The post had helped a few Volunteers who were having a difficult time in their initial host family to move to a different host family, but most Volunteers we interviewed had stayed with the host family Peace Corps staff had identified for them. The post had several staff members involved in finding appropriate host families for Volunteers.

**Volunteer Housing.** Housing we reviewed conformed very closely to the post's housing criteria. Just one element on the post's housing checklist was not always adhered to: that the Volunteer should be the only person with a key to his or her bedroom. Several Volunteers reported that a

host family member also had a key to their room, and those Volunteers appreciated that they could not accidentally lock themselves out of their room.

**Living and Settling-in Allowances.** Twenty of 21 Volunteers rated their monthly living allowance as sufficient. A minority of Volunteers (19 percent) who had moved into unfurnished rooms said that their settling-in allowance had been insufficient. Following our fieldwork, the director of management and operations initiated changes to the post's settling-in allowance policies to provide additional funds to Volunteers who were moving into totally unfurnished or only partially-furnished rooms.

**EAP and Consolidation Points.** The most recent activation of the post's emergency action plan occurred during a storm in June 2014, and records indicated that all Volunteers were located within nine hours. Volunteers we interviewed were able to locate a copy of their EAP and 18 of 20 Volunteers correctly named the hotel they were supposed to go to in an emergency.

**Duty Officer Program.** The post's duty officer program was staffed and functioning well. Duty officers had adequate guidance and technology (tablets with all Volunteers' site locator information). The duty officer handbook included a copy of the EAP; a list of approved medical facilities in Guatemala; emergency information for U.S. Embassy personnel, Guatemala national police, Peace Corps staff in other Central American countries; and standard operating procedures for responding to crimes.

**Site Locator Forms.** Most Volunteer site locator forms (SLFs) provided accurate directions and maps to Volunteer residences. We were able to efficiently locate 15 of 18 Volunteers using the maps and written directions Volunteers had provided on their SLFs; three SLFs had unclear maps and directions. The post had an effective process for obtaining, updating, and maintaining site locator information for Volunteers. The post had begun to create electronic SLFs with pictures and maps, as well as directions in Spanish to the Volunteer's residence. We were unable to test the new SLFs because none were yet available for the Volunteers in our sample.

**Staff Handling of Crime Incidents.** Among the Volunteers we interviewed, eight had reported to staff a crime they experienced. All but one Volunteer said that staff had responded to their reported crime and supported them well. For example, a Peace Corps vehicle had been burglarized in March 2014 in the city of Chimaltenango while a group of trainees were away from it, resulting in those trainees losing their personal belongings. Volunteers we interviewed who experienced this crime expressed appreciation for the supportive manner in which staff responded to that incident. As one Volunteer said:

They were amazing. I think the country director was on the phone...with DC to get us all reimbursed. I had no other clothes left. It was amazing what they did. I was for the most part able to replace things.

A Volunteer we interviewed who had experienced a serious crime and reported it to the Peace Corps also had positive things to say about the quality of support staff had provided, "It made me realize they are very good at their job."

**Medical Support.** Volunteers gave generally positive ratings for the quality of medical care provided by the Peace Corps medical officers (PCMOs): 81 percent of Volunteers said the



PCMOs had been either ‘supportive’ or ‘very supportive’ when they needed medical care. The post maintained a medical evacuation plan as required.

**Site Visits.** Volunteers received an adequate number of site visits from staff. Staff from all major areas of operations (programming, training, safety and security, medical, and administration) visited Volunteers at their sites. Site visits from programmatic staff were documented using site visit forms, which were filed in site history folders. Programming staff sent questions to Volunteers and counterparts before site visit and based the site visit agenda on this needs assessment. In addition, the full-time language and culture facilitators visited Volunteers at their sites early in their service in order to assess on-going language or cultural adaptation needs of the Volunteers.

**Staff Feedback to Volunteers on Their Work Reports.** Fifteen of 17 Volunteers reported that they had received feedback on their VRFs and most (69 percent) said that the quality and substance of the feedback from staff was either good or very good.

However, there was room for improvement in several areas. The agency had not effectively communicated to applicants regarding the crimes and risks of service in Guatemala, or the rules they would have to follow. Volunteers were not reporting their whereabouts consistently and Volunteers were not reporting all crimes they experienced. In 2013 the rate of serious crimes against Volunteers rose sharply, in spite of the enhanced security measures and resources put in place as part of the Volunteer Support Initiative. The serious crime index in Guatemala declined in 2014, but it was impossible to connect that decline to the post’s enhanced security measures, because the same measures were in place in 2013 when serious crimes rose sharply upward. Some measures may be working at cross-purposes to the goal of minimizing Volunteers’ exposure to the risk of serious crime.

***The Peace Corps had not effectively informed applicants about the crimes and risks of serving in Guatemala, or all the rules they would have to follow as part of their service.***

The Kate Puzey Peace Corps Volunteer Protection Act of 2011 requires the Peace Corps to inform all applicants of crimes and risks in their country of service [Sec. 2, Sec. 8A (d)]:

INFORMATION REGARDING CRIMES AND RISKS.—Each applicant for enrollment as a Volunteer shall be provided with information regarding crimes against and risks to Volunteers in the country in which the applicant has been invited to serve, including an overview of past crimes against Volunteers in the country.

In addition, one of the Volunteer Support Initiative recommendations from 2011, which preceded passage of the Kate Puzey Act, was that the agency place more emphasis on informing “invitees of the risks of serving in selected countries and the agency’s practices to mitigate these risks.”

We asked each Volunteer if he or she could recall receiving, as part of their invitation from Peace Corps to serve in Guatemala, information about the crimes and risks that Volunteers have faced in the country. Just two of 22 Volunteers we spoke to recalled receiving any information in their invitation materials concerning crimes and risks of service specific to Guatemala.

As a result, most applicants to Guatemala made decisions to serve in the country without an understanding of the risks and crimes Volunteers have experienced in Guatemala. Volunteers also complained that when they accepted their invitation to service in Guatemala they did not understand all the security-related rules and travel restrictions they would have to agree to as part of their service.

If I had an option to pick a different country with less rules, I would have selected the other country. I wish the placement office had been a bit more candid.

If I knew about the policies, I would have not applied to Guatemala. Given the limitation on simple things, I would not have...I almost feel a bit lied to. It was never presented until I got here and then I would have had to ET [early terminate].

I don't remember if crime statistics were present in the Welcome Book. I had no discussion with the placement officer about the security situation in Guatemala.

As far as I remember it did not have any data on crimes against Volunteers. It did mention it's a country that has crime problems and that we have measures in place. Was it enough? No. I wish I had been more informed about the policies that are in place. Guatemala has a lot of rules. I would have liked to know that before getting here.

No one ever told me and I came here kind of not knowing about the crime.

I don't recall any statistics. I don't remember the hyperlink in the Welcome Book. I read the Welcome Book several times. If it was there it wasn't obvious...I did my own independent research. I did not see Guatemala being different than any other country.

Volunteers had not opened the hyperlink on page 26 of their Welcome Book, which gives a three page summary of crimes that have affected Volunteers in Guatemala. Further, in the Welcome Book, immediately below the hyperlink is this statement: "Few Peace Corps Volunteers are victims of serious crimes and crimes that do occur overseas are investigated and prosecuted by local authorities through the local courts system." Also, headquarters representatives we met with informed us that they had decided not to stress the crimes and risks specific to Guatemala in their communications with applicants any differently from how such communications were typically handled with applicants to other countries. Beyond being told they would have to live with a host family for their entire service, applicants were not given clear information about the many rules and travel restrictions they would have to follow to serve in Guatemala. As one Volunteer said in response to our question concerning her awareness prior to arriving in Guatemala of the security rules and restrictions she would need to follow, "I think that's tricky, right? You may not have wanted to come here."

The risk of serious crime against Volunteers is high in Guatemala and the agency has an obligation to effectively communicate these risks to all applicants so that they can make more informed decisions concerning whether or not to accept their invitations to serve in Guatemala. In addition the agency should ensure that applicants receive information about the rules and restrictions on Volunteers that have been put in place in Guatemala to mitigate those risks and which applicants must decide they are willing to follow as a condition of their service.

**We recommend:**

- 1. That the regional director for Inter-America and the Pacific operations improve the effectiveness of the agency's delivery of information regarding crimes and risks facing Volunteers in Guatemala to all applicants invited to serve in the country, and that this information include the country-specific security policies and travel-related restrictions Volunteers in Guatemala must agree to follow.**

*The post's whereabouts notification system did not work as intended.*

According to the agency's "Whereabouts Notification Requirement" policy staff must put in place a system so that they have current information regarding the whereabouts of all Volunteers and trainees should they need to communicate with them in an emergency:

Each post must establish a system to collect V/T whereabouts and contact information when V/Ts are away from their communities for personal travel, annual leave, or for official reasons... The purpose of this requirement is to ensure that V/Ts can be reached during a crisis or emergency. 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."

The Office of Safety and Security's standard operating procedure for field staff on how to implement this notification policy reinforces the requirement that a whereabouts notification system be in place solely for the purpose of contacting and finding Volunteers in an emergency, and may not be used as a way to keep track of leave balances, or as an indicator of a Volunteer's work performance.

Peace Corps/Guatemala's (hereafter "the post") Volunteer Handbook informs Volunteers about the whereabouts notification requirements for Volunteers in Guatemala:

If a Trainee is away from his/her assigned training site or if a Volunteer is away from his/her project site overnight, the T/V must notify PC/G. Volunteers are responsible for notifying PC/G of their whereabouts **at all times and without exception**... All non-compliance of the Whereabouts Notification Policy will be subject to disciplinary actions up to and including immediate separation from the Peace Corps.

The post's whereabouts notification policy clarifies how Volunteers should report their whereabouts:

A Volunteer is expected to be in their site during the week and would need to discuss any overnight absence away from their site beforehand with their Project Manager or be approved for vacation time. The PC/G whereabouts notification can be achieved by the telephone number: 7828-2538 or by email: [pcvsite@gt.peacecorps.gov](mailto:pcvsite@gt.peacecorps.gov)  
In notifying us of your whereabouts, please be prepared to provide the following information:

- Your full name (clearly stated if via telephone)
- Where you are going to be
- Dates you will be away from site

- A contact telephone number at your new location (other than your cell phone)
- Type of leave you are taking (e.g. work day, PTAS, annual leave, medical, etc.)

Volunteers told us that they reported their whereabouts to post “most of the time.” Based on comments from Volunteers and post staff, the post’s whereabouts reporting records under-represented by between 25 and 50 percent the actual amount of time Volunteers were out of their sites. When asked to explain why they did not report their whereabouts, Volunteers admitted that they were afraid program staff would punish or scold them for being out of site when they had not requested to take leave according to the post’s vacation and leave policies.

Our project manager checks the whereabouts and shuttle reservations...I would report my whereabouts if the whereabouts was only used to contact me in case of an emergency. Whereabouts should not be used to check up on people.

The reason people don’t call in every time is because they don’t want to get in trouble for calling out too much. Mostly they get scolded and told not to leave site for two weeks...Problem is that program managers have access to whereabouts and it would help if you just did not let program managers do that.

I think it should be clarified who has access to whereabouts information and who doesn’t. There are some trust issues.

I think that we should be able to leave our sites when we want and staying in our sites causes Volunteers to feel stifled, frustrated and monitored. Having your boss know where you are every weekend is kind of weird—usually that’s not happening.

I don’t always report my whereabouts when I am trying to save vacation days.

As a result of Volunteers under-reporting their whereabouts to staff, the post lacked accurate current information about the location of Volunteers in the country. As a consequence, there was increased risk that post would not be able to efficiently contact and locate Volunteers in an emergency.

The post’s whereabouts reporting policy required Volunteers to indicate the type of leave the Volunteer was using, resulting in a whereabouts reporting system that was part of its system for tracking annual leave balances. Some staff acknowledged that they had used whereabouts notifications to follow up with Volunteers about their leave balances. Other staff, including staff who Volunteers believed were checking whereabouts, said they intentionally did not check whereabouts because they did not want to police Volunteers. The post’s whereabouts notification system was not fully separate from its system for tracking leave balances, as required by agency policy. Staff also expressed frustration with the agency’s guidance for how to implement a whereabouts notification policy that was separate from an annual leave tracking policy, because that guidance (Peace Corps Manual section 220, Attachment A) appeared to combine whereabouts notification with an annual leave policy.

**We recommend:**

- 2. That the country director clarify with staff and Volunteers that whereabouts reporting by Volunteers is**

**required for emergency preparedness, and may be used only for that purpose.**

- 3. That the country director and safety and security manager ensure that the post's whereabouts notification system is de-linked from its system for tracking leave balances, and is not used by staff as a way to monitor a Volunteer's leave balance or as an indicator of a Volunteer's performance at his or her site.**
- 4. That the director of programming and training ensure that program managers use work reports and other communications with Volunteers and their counterparts to address concerns related to Volunteer performance at site.**
- 5. That the associate director for safety and security improve the agency's guidance, including making revisions to Appendix A MS 220, for posts on how to develop a whereabouts notification system that is fully separate from an annual leave tracking system.**

***Volunteers had not reported all crimes against them, or all serious crimes that occurred in their neighborhoods, and some were unsure if they would report future crimes.***

The post's Welcome Book for Volunteers emphasizes that Volunteers should report the crimes and incidents affecting them:

...for the Peace Corps to be fully responsive to the needs of Volunteers, it is imperative that Volunteers immediately report any security incident to the Peace Corps office.

According to the agency's policy on Volunteer safety and security, MS 270, 6.8.2 Volunteer Initiated Action, "(a) Volunteers are responsible for reporting any safety or security concerns about their site to post staff."

Twenty-seven percent of the crimes and incidents that were reported to us during our interviews with Volunteers had not been reported to staff at the post. These incidents included thefts and sexual assaults.<sup>9</sup> Two Volunteers' did not report these incidents to Peace Corps because they "did not want to deal with the response from Peace Corps." One Volunteer had experienced three sexual assaults and a theft, and claimed to be "kind of numb to it so that's why I didn' report it." Volunteers who told us they had not yet been the victim of crime in Guatemala were unsure if

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<sup>9</sup> Volunteers' description of these incidents conformed to the agency's definition of a sexual assault, i.e. "Another person, without the consent of the Volunteer, intentionally or knowingly: touches or contacts, either directly or through clothing, the Volunteer's genitalia, anus, groin, breast, inner thigh, or buttocks; OR kisses the Volunteer on the mouth."

they would report a crime should one occur. Some Volunteers were concerned, based on their perception of what had happened to Peace Corps/Honduras, that the post would be pressured to close. Volunteers admitted that they did not always let the Peace Corps know about serious crimes in their communities that did not directly affect them or their host family:

The only thing I do get worried about is that, and this is for all Volunteers--that Peace Corps/Guatemala seems to experience so many crimes that we are afraid it is going to get shut down. So here in my site there has not been anything really. But in other Peace Corps sites there has been. There is definitely a fear among the Volunteers...that we'll get shut down. So some things don't get reported, I think.

I did not report a homicide in my town, which happened one street away... There have been Volunteers with crimes in their neighborhood that were unreported...it would depend on the situation [whether or not the Volunteer would report it to staff].

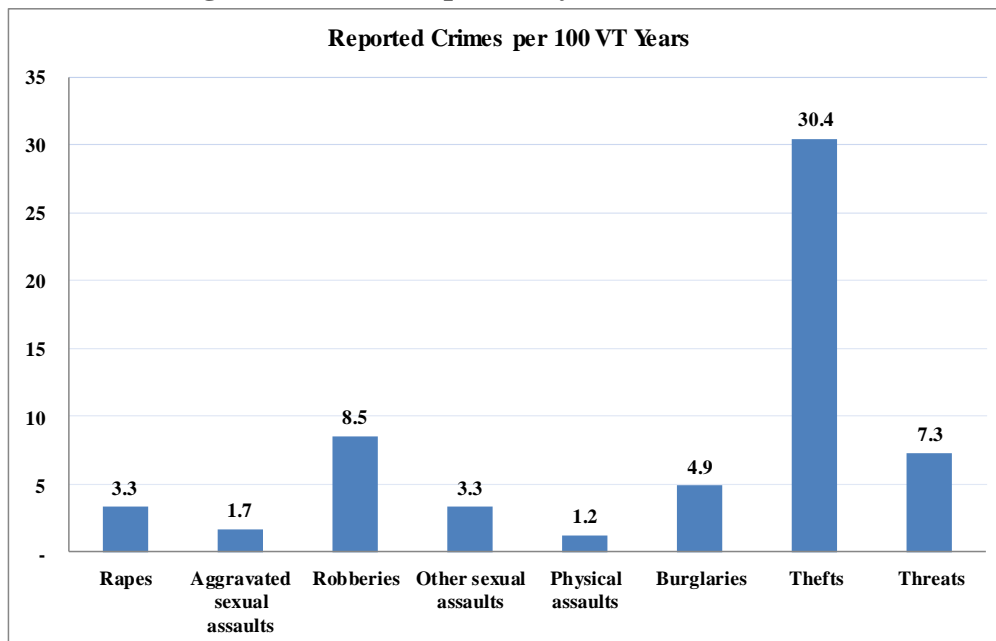
As far as crimes that directly affected them, Volunteers seemed more likely to report a serious crime than a minor theft or incident:

If it was a little theft or something I would not report it but if it was serious I would. I do think that most crimes do get reported--just the small stuff does not get reported.

It would depend on the crime. If it's something small I would not report it. Anything serious I would report it. Getting mugged I would report.

Below are the rates of reported crimes against Volunteers in Guatemala for 2013. Based on our interviews we estimated that the reported rates of thefts and sexual assaults represented from 70 to 80 percent of the actual rates of thefts and sexual assaults against Volunteers.

**Figure 9. Crimes reported by Volunteers in Guatemala in 2013**



Source: 2013 safety of the Volunteer report

Due to the amount of under-reporting of crime against Volunteers in Guatemala, staff did not

have reliable information related to the effectiveness of the safety and security measures and policies in place to mitigate the risk of crime. Additionally, in 2014 the agency removed questions on un-reported crimes from its annual survey of Volunteers and instead began to collect data on unreported crimes when Volunteers close their service. Responses to the annual survey questions had been a source of data for the post regarding the extent of un-reported crimes in the country. According to a staff member at post, this hindered their understanding of under-reporting by Volunteers:

All the information we have now is what the Volunteers report. We do not have access to the All Volunteer Survey data about crime reporting... Adding the non-reporting crime question back into the AVS would be important.

Staff expressed their belief, which was consistent with what Volunteers shared with us, that some Volunteers did not report sexual assaults due to their reluctance to receive the “overwhelming” response from Peace Corps that would follow.

It is overwhelming for a Volunteer to report a groping or other sexual assault because they are going to receive three calls--one from safety and security, one from the medical office, and one from the office of victim advocacy. The system is getting more reporting of major sexual assaults, but less on groping.

In order for the post to ensure that its safety and security program, policies and training can respond to the types and amounts of crimes that Volunteers experience in the country, it is important for Volunteers to inform staff of all security incidents affecting them as well as of serious crimes that occur in their neighborhoods.

#### **We recommend:**

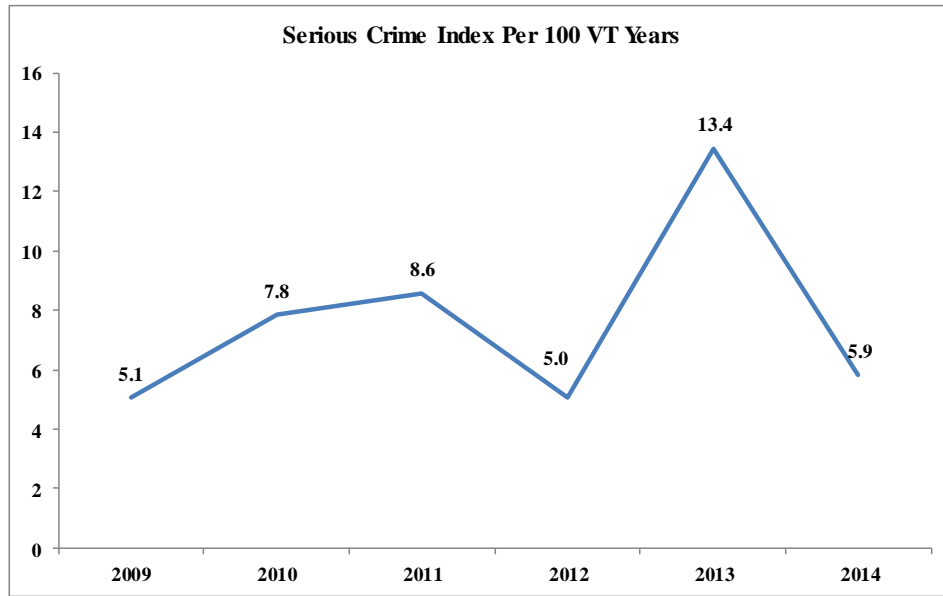
- 6. That the country director emphasize with Volunteers the importance of reporting all crimes that directly affect them, and clarify expectations related to reporting serious crimes that take place in a Volunteer’s site.**

***The safety and security measures put in place through the Volunteer Support Initiative had an unclear effect on mitigating Volunteers’ risk of serious crime.***

As mentioned earlier in this report, a key purpose of the Volunteer Support Initiative was to put in place strategies and resources that might reverse the negative security trends affecting Peace Corps’ programs in Guatemala and El Salvador in particular. The Honduras program was closed due to the lack of viable strategies for managing the risk of serious crimes against Volunteers.

After dropping in 2012 to five serious crimes per 100 VT years, the serious crime rate in Guatemala rose sharply in 2013 to 13.4 per 100 VT years. Volunteers in Guatemala experienced a mix of serious crimes in 2013, including robberies, aggravated physical and sexual assaults and rapes. In 2014 the rate of serious crimes in Guatemala fell to 5.9.

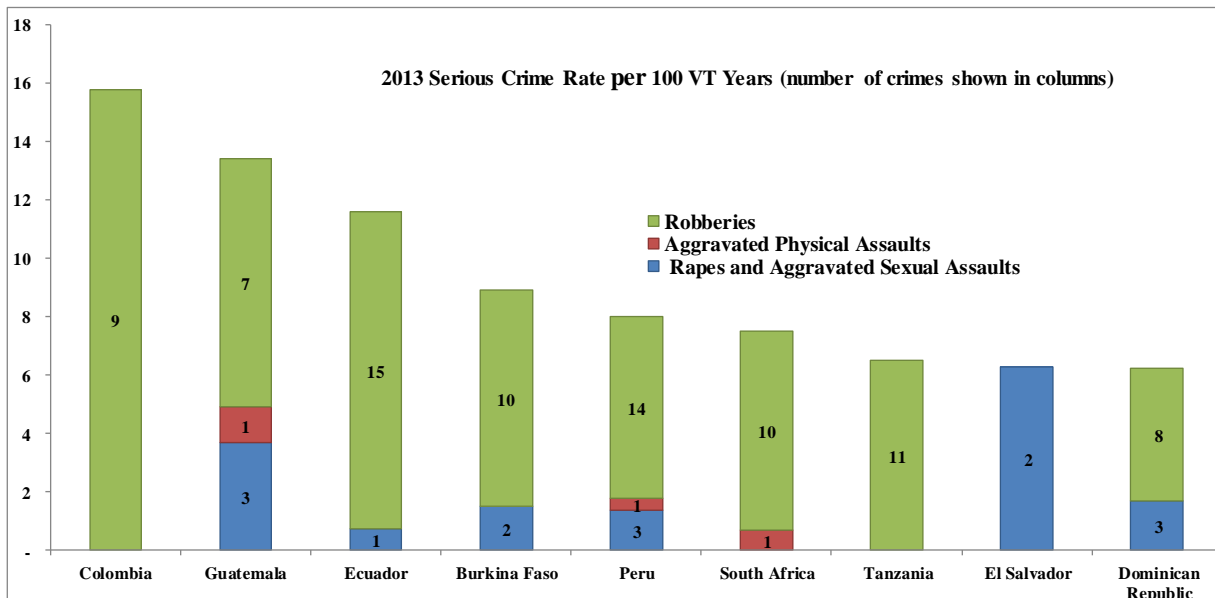
**Figure 10. Serious Crimes Reported by Volunteers in Guatemala from 2009 to 2014**



Source: OIG analysis of serious crimes as reported in the agency’s Consolidated Incident Reporting System

Before falling to 5.9 per 100 VT years for 2014, the rate of serious crimes against Volunteers in Guatemala in 2013 was 13.4 per 100 VT years, the second highest rate of serious crimes among all Peace Corps countries that year.

**Figure 11. Peace Corps Countries with Highest Rates of Serious Crime against Volunteers in 2013**



Source: OIG analysis of crime data in the agency’s Consolidated Incident Reporting System

**Volunteer Perception of Safety.** Ten of 22 Volunteers (including male and female Volunteers) reported to us that they sometimes felt unsafe in Guatemala. Five reported feeling unsafe at their



sites, in particular after sunset or before sunrise. Eight said they felt unsafe when away from their sites in either Antigua or Quetzaltenango (Xela).

The only time when I feel unsafe here is when I walk back home late at night. There are people who hang out by the lamp post on my street, and I don't like to walk back after 6 p.m.

I feel unsafe on buses that are not my normal ones. I feel unsafe in the bus terminal in Xela. Or when there are a lot of men around. I feel unsafe even during the day. I have had drunk people not let me off the bus or give up their seats and hover over me. I carry pepper spray and use water bottle as weapons.

On buses. I was harassed by a gang member. Around the bigger city areas it does feel dangerous... The only thing scary about Xela is [that] it is becoming a bit like Guatemala City in that drivers are getting shot.

In Antigua I have felt unsafe.

There are drunk guys in my site who are out so I avoid being out at dark by myself. When the sun goes down, though, it's a different ballgame. It's dark at like 5:30. In Antigua or Xela, after what happened to my friend I know I need to be more vigilant. She was walking by herself in Xela at night...the little roads are not ok at night. We try to walk in groups of three or more.

Where I feel actually worried, it's only in the bigger cities in Antigua or Xela.

I feel unsafe walking to the bus terminal [in my site] at 4:30 in the morning. Or just walking around when it is dark outside.

While almost half the Volunteers we interviewed expressed that they felt unsafe at various times, few had reported these feelings as serious concerns to staff. The safety and security manager could only recall two occasions when Volunteers informed staff that they felt unsafe at their sites. Staff had responded to those reported concerns, closing one site but determining that the other security concern was not specific to the site.

**Time Spent Away From Their Sites.** The Welcome Book for Volunteers in Guatemala describes the expectation that Volunteers focus their service on their communities and limit their time away from their sites:

Peace Corps/Guatemala believes in the commitment of Volunteers to their project, and the organizations and community members with whom they work. We expect all Volunteers to dedicate their time and efforts to the Guatemalans they serve in their respective project locations... Vacation should be taken at appropriate times (i.e., with respect to local work priorities), in coordination with your counterparts, and approved by your project manager.

Because the risk of crime was higher when Volunteers were out of site, we did our own analysis of the amount of time Volunteers were out of their sites. Volunteers were out of their sites frequently in Guatemala. According to the post's whereabouts reporting records, Guatemala Volunteers were away from their sites 21 percent of the time on average for all reasons.<sup>10</sup> However, as noted above, the post's whereabouts records were not a reliable source of information concerning the actual amount of time Volunteers spent away from their sites because

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<sup>10</sup> Types of leave that Volunteers may request or use in Guatemala include: annual leave (vacation), medical leave, emergency leave, work-related leave, training-related leave, professional/educational leave, leave without allowance, special leave (for Volunteers extending their service for another year), and personal time away from site.

Volunteers under-reported their whereabouts. Assuming the post's whereabouts records under-represented by 25 percent the amount of time Volunteers were away from their sites, almost half of Volunteers were away from their sites more than the three days per month allowed under the post's "personal time away from site<sup>11</sup>" policy. Personal time away from site is a non-vacation type of leave granted to Volunteers in Guatemala.

Compared to El Salvador, the other active Central American post that was also part of the Volunteer Support Initiative and so had implemented similar security strategies to mitigate the risk of serious crime to Volunteers, Volunteers in Guatemala were out of their sites far more. According to records in the agency's Volunteer Information Database Application, Volunteers in El Salvador reported being away from their sites roughly eight percent of the time

Some staff was confused by the different leave categories for Volunteers and how to enforce them. Staff did not want to be in the business of policing and punishing Volunteers who were caught out of site without permission. Volunteers perceived the rules and policies designed to limit their time out of site and require them to report their whereabouts as being "suffocating" and failing to treat them like professional adults. Our discussions with staff about the leave policies and reporting requirements for Volunteers surfaced some disagreements concerning whether post should have policies like the personal time away from site that "micro-manage" Volunteers time in site.

**Peace Corps Shuttle Bus.** The Peace Corps provided transportation for Volunteers to travel along parts of the inter-American highway in the Western Highlands so that they could safely pass through certain high-crime areas where the risk of armed robbery was high. Volunteers expressed appreciation for the shuttle and believed that it reduced their risk of crime and harassment while travelling.

Yes, it is working. I thought it was stupid at first but I know now it's real. Two or 3 bus drivers from this town have been killed. So I know why we can't take the buses and have to take the shuttle. So I definitely understand why it works.

The shuttle reduces my risk associated with travel. It's such a traumatic experience--the crowding, etc. It makes me feel more comfortable.

I prefer to take the shuttle because no one grabs me or over-charges me. I feel more comfortable on the shuttle.

**Complex, Unintended Effects of the Post's Security-Related Policies.** The safety and security-related policies and resources in place in Guatemala functioned well during the workweek when Volunteers were at their sites, but had unintended negative effects, especially on the weekend. The risk of serious crime increased when Volunteers were away from their sites, particularly in Xela and Antigua. Yet the availability of the shuttle and the personal time away from site policy meant that post could be transporting Volunteers to those two cities as frequently as three times in a month over the weekend. As noted above, Volunteers felt safer and

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11 According to the agency's Time Away from Community policy (MS 220.3.1), "V/Ts need occasional days away from their communities to take care of personal needs. Such time away from their community does not constitute leave. However, such breaks should be taken infrequently and must not be abused." MS 220.3.1 does not require posts to specify the number of days a Volunteer may be away from his or her community.

more comfortable travelling in a Peace Corps shuttle compared to a local bus. Yet the shuttle, by reducing Volunteers' costs and risks of travelling, likely made Volunteers more willing to leave their sites to visit larger, less safe cities.

While the post tried to limit Volunteers' personal time away from site to no more than three weekend days per month, in practice this proved difficult to enforce. Staff did not want to police Volunteers or micro-manage their time. The post tried to control the number of Volunteers who could be in one place as a group, but this policy was a source of disagreement and frustration with Volunteers as well, and difficult to enforce.

The post identified safe housing and host families for Volunteers at their sites. Yet most Volunteers did not have enough room to host other Volunteers at their sites. This space constraint had likely contributed to Volunteers choosing to spend more time with other Volunteers at hotels in Xela or Antigua, rather than occasionally hosting one another at their sites. Post had identified and certified hostels in Antigua as being "Peace Corps friendly" but Volunteers were not required to stay in them.

Further, Volunteers expressed in interviews that, after working a long week from Monday to Friday they felt that they should be able to spend their weekends out of their sites if they wanted. Some Volunteers resented the rules that sought to keep them in their communities on Saturday and Sunday, and to require them to get permission from staff prior to leaving their site on the weekend. There was not consensus among staff concerning whether or not they should be in the position of monitoring and managing Volunteers' according to the post's personal time away from site policy. In order to encourage and support Volunteers to spend more time in their communities without undermining important safety and security related policies and practices (including more robust whereabouts reporting), we are making a set of inter-related recommendations.

**We recommend:**

- 7. That the country director and safety and security manager set clear safety and security-related goals and measures, assess them regularly, and make adjustments as needed to mitigate Volunteers' risks of serious crimes.**
- 8. That the country director communicate clear expectations to Volunteers regarding the importance of being in service to their communities 24/7 as appropriate.**
- 9. That the director of programming and training develop training and guidance to help Volunteers identify more opportunities for community-based activities at their sites on the weekend.**

**10. After the post has taken steps to respond to recommendations 2, 3, 4, 8 and 9, that the country director remove the personal time away from site leave category and related monitoring, and simply emphasize with Volunteers that time away from their community should be taken infrequently and not abused.**

*The Volunteer Advisory Committee (VAC) did not communicate sufficiently with Volunteers prior to or following discussions with staff.*

According to Characteristics of a High Performing Post, “There is a Volunteer Advisory Council or some other mechanism that gathers, analyzes, and funnels Volunteer concerns and suggestions to staff.”

Volunteers rated the effectiveness of the VAC as low: three of 19 Volunteers considered the VAC to be ineffective, and seven said the VAC was neither effective nor ineffective. Just nine of 19 Volunteers considered the VAC to be either effective or very effective (a 47 percent favorable rating).

Volunteer comments about the VAC suggested that they saw the VAC as primarily an event-planning body. The CD recognized that the VAC was frequently concerned with social activities. The VAC was inconsistent in reaching out to Volunteers to gather ideas and concerns to bring to staff attention in VAC meetings, and Volunteers we interviewed did not feel well represented by the VAC. Not all Volunteers had been included on the email distribution list used by the VAC. The minutes of VAC meetings listed topics of discussion but conveyed a limited summary of the discussion or decisions that had been made.

As a result, the VAC had an incomplete understanding of Volunteer issues, challenges and suggestions for staff, and Volunteers had a limited understanding, beyond social events, of issues the VAC was discussing with staff or the VAC’s role in policy or other decisions affecting Volunteers.

**We recommend:**

**11. That the country director provide guidance to the Volunteer Advisory Committee on how it can improve its process of seeking input from Volunteers prior to its meetings as well as improve its communication with Volunteers after meetings.**

## **PROGRAMMING**

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The evaluation assessed the extent to which the post has developed and implemented programs intended to increase the capacity of host country communities to meet their own technical needs. To determine this, we analyzed the following:

- the coordination between the Peace Corps and the host country in determining development priorities and Peace Corps program areas;
- whether post is meeting its project objectives;
- counterpart selection and quality of counterpart relationships with Volunteers;
- site development policies and practices.

Programming in Guatemala was generally well aligned with the development priorities of Guatemala and well managed. In reviewing host country coordination, site development and use of site history information, we found no significant areas of concern that would necessitate action by the post.

**Coordination with the Government of Guatemala.** The Peace Corps has operated in Guatemala on the basis of a country agreement since 1962. The agreement allows the Peace Corps to work in any place or sector mutually agreed to with the government of Guatemala. In addition, the post has site-specific memoranda of understanding with municipal or district level government entities for Volunteers; there is none at the national level. Program managers had established Project Advisory Committees that met two or three times annually. A Ministry of Health representative we interviewed was involved in the HS PAC and met frequently with the HS PM.

A Ministry of Health official we interviewed confirmed that the program manager for the HS project had kept him regularly informed concerning the progress of that project:

Peace Corps is responsible for implementing and coordinating activities at the schools, like getting the schools to sell healthier food to students, not just junk food; helping with technical training and gathering data for monitoring and evaluating the project. It's really important to have Peace Corps here doing this with us because we lack our own resources."...[and] "Every month we go over results and discuss our work plan for the next month."

**Site Development.** Site development policies and practices in Guatemala yielded good results. Eighty-six percent of Volunteers reported that they had enough work to do in their primary assignments. Also, 91 percent of Volunteers expressed satisfaction with their sites. The post followed the IAP region's site identification development and monitoring guidelines. Guatemala had many staff dedicated to site identification and development: the PMs for programmatic match-making, two full-time Volunteer support managers and a host family coordinator to find housing and host families, and the safety and security manager and assistant to check housing safety. Others including medical officers were involved as well.

**Site History Files.** Staff used and kept up-to-date documentation related to each site. The post utilized a site matrix spreadsheet with links to a variety of documents about a site. Documents and files were maintained in a centrally available set of electronic files we reviewed during

fieldwork with the director of programming and training. Easily accessible site history file documents included: site selection criteria, letters from host agencies requesting a Volunteer, housing checklists, and other site-specific documents.

While coordination with the host country and site development were functioning well, the evaluation uncovered some areas that require management attention, particularly the ability of Volunteers in the HS project to establish effective working relationships with their supervisors and weaknesses in the system program staff use to generate summary reports for agency stakeholders. The remainder of this section provides more information about these topics.

**Accomplishment of Project Goals.** Seventy-one percent of Volunteers reported they were able to accomplish their project goals “well” or “very well.” However, some Volunteers were less able to accomplish project goals, citing lack of opportunity at their site, or lack of counterpart support. Volunteers self-reported ability to accomplish project goals varied by project. MCH (average 4.3 out of 5) and YiD Volunteers (average 3.8 out of 5) generally felt more able to achieve project goals. Healthy schools Volunteers (average 3.1 out of 5) felt less able to meet project goals. Maternal and child health project Volunteers were in sites where engaged counterparts, clear job expectations, and supportive management by the program manager contributed to high ratings of job satisfaction and feelings of accomplishment. Youth in development Volunteers generally felt able to accomplish the project goals as well though a few reported struggles with their counterparts. The YiD program manager had been engaged in trying to help address counterpart issues.

***HS Volunteers had difficulty achieving the goals of the project.***

Volunteers in the HS project reported more mixed results in terms of their ability to achieve the project objectives than other Volunteers. Volunteers reported difficulty achieving the goals of the project for two main reasons: lack of support from primary counterparts, and being spread too thinly among multiple schools. HS Volunteers also expressed that they had trouble meeting what they perceived to be the expectations of the PM and their host country supervisors.

Volunteers we interviewed had at least one official counterpart. Volunteers rated their counterparts’ support with meeting project objectives generally low, 55 percent favorable, with 27 percent unfavorable. Compared to MCH and YiD Volunteers, HS Volunteers reported getting less support from their primary counterpart (2.6 out of 5); Four out of nine rated their counterparts as being ‘very unsupportive’ of their project objectives. HS Volunteer primary or official counterparts were superintendents of local school districts who were overseeing many more schools than the Volunteers were working in; Volunteers and staff said that as a result these primary counterparts simply did not have much time to support Volunteer activities.

The HS PM was aware of this challenge facing HS Volunteers:

A good number of Volunteers have trouble having a good relationship with the superintendent, their official counterpart, because the superintendents are super busy. Superintendents can supervise anywhere from 13 to 30 schools. The Superintendent is expected to do administration and the technical piece of the healthy school project.

Also, there was frequent turnover at the superintendent position. However, due to the structure of the project, the superintendent had to be the HS Volunteer's official counterpart, and the lack of official counterpart engagement in HS Volunteer activities was not something the Peace Corps could remedy since there is little the Peace Corps can do to make Guatemalan school superintendents less busy. Most HS Volunteers had other administrators and teachers at their schools they considered counterparts, and who were more able to support their HS project goals.

In addition, HS Volunteers frequently told us that it was too difficult for them to achieve meaningful progress in each school they were expected to serve. The number of schools HS Volunteers were expected to serve seemed to vary depending on who we talked to. Some Volunteers believed that they were expected to support 10 schools. The HS program manager expressed to us that the number 10 was not in fact a firm expectation on her part and Volunteers should be able to negotiate with their primary counterpart an appropriate number of schools to support.

In addition, the HS project seemed to occur in a more challenging institutional framework than either the MCH or YID projects. Volunteers and staff reported to us that working in the school system in Guatemala was challenging in many respects, with frequent school closures, limited class time, varying degrees of teacher engagement in health topics, and unclear local ownership of the healthy schools initiative. As one HS Volunteer put it:

At best I can go to a school twice a month. I don't have the time to follow up with teachers or school directors to see if they delivered the lesson that I taught them to the students. It would be better if I could go to a school once a week, so only five schools.

The HS PM was aware that some Volunteers were not getting sufficient support from their primary counterparts, and acknowledged there was a need to help set more appropriate expectations with HS Volunteer official counterparts, and to help Volunteers address counterpart-related challenges they were facing at site.

With [the first group of HS Volunteers] we maybe didn't stress enough that we wanted them to not just work with their primary counterpart but also with others in the community. With [the 3<sup>rd</sup> group of Volunteers], there are still some sites where what was originally their expression of counterpart interest is not being upheld as much as I would like.

The PM had commendably high expectations for her Volunteers but was aware that some Volunteers also were looking for emotional support, and was focusing on improving her soft skills for supporting and providing feedback and guidance to Volunteers.

**We recommend:**

- 12. That the healthy schools program manager improve how expectations regarding Volunteer workload, in particular the number of schools each Volunteer should support, are communicated with official counterparts.**
- 13. That the healthy schools program manager and training manager train and support Volunteers to develop, negotiate and adapt their work plans throughout their service.**

*Weaknesses in the agency's (VRT) made it difficult to know if Volunteers had achieved project objectives.*

Every year PMs submit status reports to Peace Corps' headquarters that summarize the results of Volunteers' activities, according to each of their project's objectives. Status reports draw from periodic reports that the program manager's Volunteers have submitted over the year. The agency has provided a database, called the VRT that facilitates the distribution, collection, management and analysis of information in Volunteer reports.

For 2013 the VRT did not allow PMs to aggregate data from their Volunteer reports. Field staff had very limited ability to pull information out of the VRT due to the VRT's compromised reporting functionality when status reports from the field were due. Status reports for 2013, which would have provided OIG evaluators with a source of information about Volunteers' accomplishments in their primary assignments for that fiscal year, did not contain any useful objective-level data. Status reports for 2014 were being compiled after fieldwork for this evaluation had completed.

Because the VRT did not function correctly, staff was less able to use the information reported by Volunteers for project management purposes, including generating useful reports for local stakeholders. The VRT's reporting functionality had been improved somewhat for FY 2014 status reports, but weaknesses in the system still remained.

**We recommend:**

- 14. That the Chief Information Officer ensure that the summary report functionality of the Volunteer Reporting Tool be improved so that field staff can generate key summary reports, including project-specific, objective-level results, to facilitate project management and accountability to stakeholders.**



## *TRAINING*

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Another objective of the post evaluation is to answer the question, “Does training prepare Volunteers for Peace Corps service?” To answer this question we considered such factors as training adequacy and planning and development of the training life cycle.

Fieldwork focused on Volunteers’ ratings of the effectiveness of training, how well training was planned, delivered, and evaluated, and on staff practices to evaluate and improve training. Guatemala’s training program generally functioned well. In reviewing the adequacy of language and cultural training, health, security training, and most technical training, as well as the sufficiency of resources for training, we found no significant areas of concern that would necessitate action by the post.

**Adequacy of Training.** On average, Volunteers rated their pre-service training favorably. Language and culture training in particular received high marks for their effectiveness. The following Volunteer comment was typical of the high regard Volunteers had for the Peace Corps staff who facilitated their language and culture trainings:

I had a great language teacher who helped me a lot. I speak and understand it well. She became a friend really the LCF. They do a great job and are very kind and really there for us.

Language training was effective. Language testing scores indicated that Volunteers who swore in all had attained the post’s minimal swearing in requirement for Spanish language ability (intermediate middle). Twenty-one of 86 trainees from the three training groups in our sample started PST below the Spanish swearing in requirement; each reached at least intermediate-middle by the end of PST. The average LPI test score for the 21 trainees who started PST below intermediate-mid improved more than two language proficiency levels by the end of PST, e.g. from novice high to intermediate mid or higher. Guatemala’s language and culture facilitators were all full-time, year-round employees with many years of Peace Corps experience. In addition to language training, they made site visits, and acted as resources for Volunteers throughout their service.

Training in safety and security and health also received generally favorable ratings from Volunteers (3.9 and 4.0 out of 5). However, Volunteers in the healthy schools (2.6 out of 5) and YiD (3.0 out of 5) projects rated their technical training lower than Volunteers in the MCH project (4.3 out of 5). Common criticism from both YiD and healthy schools Volunteers was that their technical training did not include enough opportunity to practice implementing different tools and approaches that were presented during training. Volunteers also said that technical training was sometimes not relevant at their site. The lack of specificity in technical training for healthy schools Volunteers stemmed in part from national-level changes to the goals of the healthy schools initiative which were occurring during PST. Because those shifts have since been resolved, and because staff and Volunteers were actively addressing the weaknesses they perceived in previous technical training sessions, we are not issuing a finding or recommendation related to technical training.

**Adequacy of Training Staff and Budget.** The post had sufficient staff and budget to support its training program for trainees and Volunteers. 2014 was particularly busy year for post’s training

staff because Guatemala received three inputs of Volunteers in February, July, and October. This intense input schedule was part of the agency's efforts to bring the number of Volunteers in Guatemala up to approximately 120 in 2015. Because of its robust, full-time, experienced training team, the post was able to handle this input schedule, though it did put a strain on some of the staff. The post was adequately staffed overall, including for training, and according to the post management did not need any more staff.

While the training program demonstrated many areas of effectiveness, the evaluation uncovered a phase of training that could be improved. In particular, the way post evaluates the second part of the "split model" for PST could be made more systematic. The remainder of this section provides more information about this topic.

***The post lacked a systematic approach to assessing the effectiveness of training during in-service training (IST).***

The Peace Corps Programming and Training Guidance: Training Design and Evaluation advises posts to develop, update, and revise Volunteer training based on input from stakeholders, data from assessments, and recommendations developed through training evaluations. This guidance stresses the important role that data plays in allowing posts to know the extent to which learning objectives have been accomplished. It states "it is best to make changes to training based first and foremost on data about performance and not just on opinions." In addition, the agency's Characteristics of a High Performing Post notes the importance of having "systems in place to both monitor and evaluate the country program in its various aspects. The information gathered is used to improve the program."

Unlike for the first nine weeks of PST, the post did not have a systematic method for assessing Volunteer learning during the "early IST" where valuable technical training happens. Technical training was rated relatively poorly by Volunteers, so it is important for post to have an assessment method that sheds meaningful light on the extent to which Volunteers can demonstrate understanding of key technical topics and skills covered during this phase of training.

A key period of Volunteer training is "early IST" where important technical training occurs. Volunteer learning during early IST was not assessed by training staff in the same way as it was during the first nine weeks of PST. The post assessed trainees' knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviors during that period using a trainee assessment portfolio (TAP), but which had not been extended to cover the training that occurred during early IST, the bulk of which was technical training. Training staff recognized that post should ideally have a TAP that covered all key learning objectives for Volunteers, whether those are addressed during the first nine weeks of PST or during the early IST.

We can use it [the TAP] to measure the progress of each Volunteer but I think we need to have something for early IST because we have 2 weeks of technical training.

The Volunteers and staff both stated that improvements were being made in training, particularly technical training, which was the lowest rated part of PST. However, without a systematic approach to assessing Volunteers' learning during early IST, post risks not having reliable

information upon which to base its improvements. This could lead staff and Volunteers to modify technical training sessions based on shifting preferences and tastes of each group of Volunteers, rather than on data that shows whether or not learning objectives were met.

The reason post had not extended its TAP for the full length of PST, including “early IST” was due to a lack of time. Staff had to manage three trainee inputs in 2014, including two that ran back to back for six months, which left insufficient time for staff to invest in completing the TAP for the early IST.

**We recommend:**

**15. That the director of programming and training and the training manager develop an approach for assessing the effectiveness of training, especially technical training, during the “early-in-service training” and use the resulting evaluative data as a basis for improving technical and other trainings.**

### ***MANAGEMENT CONTROLS***

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Another key objective of our country program evaluation is to assess the extent to which the post’s resources and management practices are adequate for effective post operations. To address this question, we assess a number of factors, including staffing; staff development; office work environment; collecting and reporting performance data; and the post’s strategic planning and budgeting.

Resources and management practices were generally adequate for post to operate effectively. In reviewing the sufficiency of staffing, staff performance appraisals and staff development, post’s relationship with headquarters, and post’s relationship with the U.S. Embassy, we found no significant areas of concern that would necessitate action by the post.

**Sufficiency of Staffing.** Guatemala has a very robust staff and has not experienced recent turnover or staffing gaps. The number of Volunteers per program manager as well as per PCMO was reasonable. The staff is supportive and responsive to Volunteer needs. The staffing structure in Guatemala appeared sufficient to support a Volunteer population of 120, as planned for 2015 and subsequent years.

**Staff Performance Appraisals and Staff Development.** We reviewed a sample of 13 staff files and found that staff performance appraisals had been conducted as required. The Feed the Future program manager said that the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) grant supporting post’s food security project allowed her to attend professional conferences which the agency would not have normally have been able to pay for, which was helpful for her own program management skills and development. All staff, except for three drivers, received and passed mandated Kate Puzey Act sexual assault training; post completed the training for the three drivers as this report was being developed, so no recommendation was warranted.

**Office Work Environment.** Evaluators observed no issues with the office work environment or staff morale issues. Post policies and practices were conducive to a positive work environment. The staff handbook was two years old and seemed complete. Staff appreciated the supportive leadership style of the management team. Generally staff was positive about the current work environment and morale. This is a sample of staff comments about morale and teamwork.

I am happy with my job. I would say that it is a good environment here for work. There is trust. And I feel that we have a good team and I have support.

[Post leadership] is amazing. You can go to his office and say I did something really stupid and he will help you problemsolve and figure it out ... Very good supervisor.

**Coordination with Headquarters Offices.** In general there is good coordination between the post and headquarters offices. The post experienced problems with some offices and systems, including the offices of Volunteer Recruitment and Selection, Health Services, and the new DOVE system. These problems affected the post's ability to obtain timely trainee information, such as medical records and project assignments, in order to prepare for the trainees' arrival. The Offices of Health Services and Volunteer Recruitment and Selection were addressing the technical issues with the related systems, and some of the difficulties staff was experiencing with DOVE could also be ameliorated with additional training on this new system.

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## LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

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### WE RECOMMEND:

1. That the regional director for Inter-America and the Pacific operations improve the effectiveness of the agency's delivery of information regarding crimes and risks facing Volunteers in Guatemala to all applicants invited to serve in the country, and that this information include the country-specific security policies and travel-related restrictions Volunteers in Guatemala must agree to follow.
2. That the country director clarify with staff and Volunteers that whereabouts reporting by Volunteers is required for emergency preparedness, and may be used only for that purpose.
3. That the country director and safety and security manager ensure that the post's whereabouts notification system is de-linked from its system for tracking leave balances, and is not used by staff as a way to monitor a Volunteer's leave balance or as an indicator of a Volunteer's performance at his or her site.
4. That the director of programming and training ensure that program managers use work reports and other communications with Volunteers and their counterparts to address concerns related to Volunteer performance at site.
5. That the associate director for safety and security improve the agency's guidance, including making revisions to Appendix A MS 220, for posts on how to develop a whereabouts notification system that is fully separate from an annual leave tracking system.
6. That the country director emphasize with Volunteers the importance of reporting all crimes that directly affect them, and clarify expectations related to reporting serious crimes that take place in a Volunteer's site.
7. That the country director and safety and security manager set clear safety and security-related goals and measures, assess them regularly, and make adjustments as needed to mitigate Volunteers' risks of serious crimes.
8. That the country director communicate clear expectations to Volunteers regarding the importance of being in service to their communities 24/7 as appropriate.
9. That the director of programming and training develop training and guidance to help Volunteers identify more opportunities for community-based activities at their sites on the weekend.
10. After the post has taken steps to respond to recommendations 2, 3, 4, 8 and 9, that the country director remove the personal time away from site leave category and related

monitoring, and simply emphasize with Volunteers that time away from their community should be taken infrequently and not abused.

11. That the country director provide guidance to the Volunteer Advisory Committee on how it can improve its process of seeking input from Volunteers prior to its meetings as well as improve its communication with Volunteers after meetings.
12. That the healthy schools program manager improve how expectations regarding Volunteer workload, in particular the number of schools each Volunteer should support, are communicated with official counterparts.
13. That the healthy schools program manager and training manager train and support Volunteers to develop, negotiate and adapt their work plans throughout their service.
14. That the Chief Information Officer ensure that the summary report functionality of the Volunteer Reporting Tool be improved so that field staff can generate key summary reports, including project-specific, objective-level results, to facilitate project management and accountability to stakeholders.
15. That the director of programming and training and the training manager develop an approach for assessing the effectiveness of training, especially technical training, during the “early-in-service training” and use the resulting evaluative data as a basis for improving technical and other trainings.

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## APPENDIX A: OBJECTIVE, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

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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 August 6, 2014. For post evaluations, we use the following researchable questions to guide our work:

- To what extent has post developed and implemented programs to increase host country communities' capacity?
- Does training prepare Volunteers for Peace Corps service?
- Has the post provided adequate support and oversight to Volunteers?
- Are post resources and management practices adequate for effective post operations?

The evaluation team conducted the preliminary research portion of the evaluation August 5 to October 6, 2014. This research included review of agency documents provided by headquarters and post staff; interviews with management staff representing Inter-America and the Pacific Operations; the Office of Global Health and HIV; the Office of Global Operation; the Office of Strategic Partnerships; the Office of Health Services; the Office of Safety and Security; the Office of Victim Advocacy; the Office of Volunteer Recruitment and Selection; Overseas Programming and Training Support; and Peace Corps Response.

In-country fieldwork occurred from October 5 to October 24, 2014, and included interviews with post senior staff in charge of programming, training, and support; the U.S. charge d'affaires; the U.S. Embassy's deputy regional security officer; director of economic growth for USAID in Guatemala; and host country government ministry official. In addition, we interviewed a stratified judgmental sample of 22 Volunteers (27 percent of Volunteers serving at the time of our visit) based on their length of service, site location, project focus, gender, age, and ethnicity.

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.

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## APPENDIX B: INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED

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As part of this post evaluation, interviews were conducted with 22 Volunteers,<sup>12</sup> 24 staff in-country, and 29 representatives from Peace Corps headquarters (HQ) in Washington D.C., the U.S. Embassy in Guatemala, U.S. Agency for International Development in Guatemala, and key ministry officials. Volunteer interviews were conducted using a standardized interview questionnaire, and Volunteers were asked to rate many items on a five-point scale (1 = not effective, 3 = neutral, 5 = very effective). The analysis of these ratings provided a quantitative supplement to Volunteers' comments, which were also analyzed. For the purposes of the data analysis, Volunteer ratings of "4" and above are considered favorable. In addition, 20 out of 22 Volunteer interviews occurred at the Volunteers' homes, and we inspected 20 of these 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 Guatemala; the Volunteer sample was selected to reflect these demographics.

**Table 1. Volunteer Demographic Data**

Project	Percentage of Volunteers
Healthy Schools	47%
MCH	33%
YID	18%
Peace Corps Response	1%
Gender	Percentage of Volunteers
Female	82%
Male	18%
Age	Percentage of Volunteers
25 or younger	78%
26-29	12%
30-49	6%
50 and over	4%

Source: Volunteer Information Database Application for PC/Guatemala (8/25/2014).

Note: Percentages may not total 100 percent due to rounding.

At the time of our field visit, the post had 48 staff positions. Two positions were vacant.<sup>13</sup> We interviewed 24 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.

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<sup>12</sup> An additional request for an interview from a Volunteer not in the sample was accommodated; thereby increasing the total number of Volunteers interviewed to 22.

<sup>13</sup> Vacant positions during our fieldwork included: the HIV sub-regional coordinator and HIV/AIDS assistant.



**Table 2. Interviews Conducted with Post Staff**

Position	Status	Interviewed
CD	USDH	X
Director of Programming and Training	USDH	X
Director of Management and Operations	USDH	X
Safety and Security Manager	PSC	X
Deputy Director of Management and Operation	FSN	X
General Service Coordinator	PSC	X
PCMO (2)	PSC	X
Healthy Schools Program Manager	PSC	X
MCH Program Manager	PSC	X
YiD Program Manager	PSC	X
Food Security Coordinator	PSC	X
Healthy Schools Programming and Training Specialist	PSC	X
MCH Programming and Training Specialist	PSC	X
YiD Programming and Training Specialist	PSC	X
Programming Assistant	PSC	
Project Specialist	PSC	
Volunteer Support Manager (2)	PSC	X
Volunteer Support Assistant	PSC	
Small Grants Coordinator and Communication Specialist	PSC	X
Information Technology Specialist	PSC	
Training Manager	PSC	X
Training Assistant	PSC	
Family and Logistics Coordinator	PSC	X
Language and Culture Coordinator	PSC	X
Language and Cultural Facilitator (9)	PSC	X <sup>14</sup>
Medical Office Assistant	PSC	
Executive Secretary	PSC	
Administrative Specialist	PSC	
Administrative Assistant/Cashier	FSN	
Regional Administrative Assistant	PSC	
Regional Office Receptionist	PSC	
Drivers (7)	PSC	

Data as of July 2014. \*PSC is personal services contractor; FSN is foreign service national.

Twenty nine 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.

<sup>14</sup> Three of the nine language and cultural facilitators were interviewed for the evaluation.

**Table 3. Interviews Conducted with Peace Corps Headquarters (HQ) Staff, Embassy Officials, and Key Ministry Officials**

<b>Position</b>	<b>Organization</b>
Acting Regional Director	PC HQ/Inter-America and the Pacific Operations
Chief of Operations	PC HQ/Inter-America and the Pacific Operations
Chief of Programming and Training	PC HQ/Inter-America and the Pacific Operations
Regional Security Advisor	PC HQ/Inter-America and the Pacific Operations
Country Desk Officer	PC HQ/Inter-America and the Pacific Operations
Senior Advisor	PC HQ/Office of Global Operations
Director	PC HQ/Office of Health Service
Deputy Director	PC HQ/Office of Health Service
Pre-Service Manager	PC HQ/Office of Health Service
Expert	PC HQ/Office of Health Service
Director	PC HQ/Office of Victim Advocacy
Supervisory Security Specialist	PC HQ/Office of Safety and Security
Peace Corps Safety and Security Officer	PC headquarters/Office of Safety and Security
Program Manager	PC HQ/Office of Safety and Security
Placement Supervisor	PC HQ/Office of Volunteer Recruitment and Selection
Director	PC HQ/Peace Corps Response
Chief of Operations	PC HQ/Peace Corps Response
Director	PC HQ/Office of Global Health and HIV
Food Security Team Lead	PC HQ/Overseas Programming and Training Support
Nutrition Specialist	PC HQ/Overseas Programming and Training Support
Technical Training Specialist	PC HQ/Overseas Programming and Training Support
Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist	PC HQ/Europe, Mediterranean, and Asia Operations
Program Specialist	PC HQ/Office of Strategic Partnerships
Program Support Assistant	PC HQ/Office of Strategic Partnerships
Charge d' Affairs	U.S. Embassy/Guatemala
Deputy Regional Security Officer	U.S. Embassy/Guatemala
Director of Economic Growth	USAID/Guatemala
Agricultural Development Officer	USAID/Guatemala
Chief of Health Education Promotion	Guatemala Ministry of Public Health and Social Assistance

Data as of December 2014.

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## APPENDIX C: LIST OF ACRONYMS

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AVS	All Volunteer Survey
CD	Country Director
ET	Early Termination of Volunteer Service
EAP	Emergency Action Plan
HS	Healthy Schools
IST	In-Service Training
LPI	Language Proficiency Interview
MCH	Maternal and Child Health
MS	Peace Corps Manual Section
OIG	Office of Inspector General
PAC	Project Advisory Committee
PCMO	Peace Corps Medical Officer
PCRV	Peace Corps Response Volunteer
PST	Pre-Service Training
PM	Program Manager
SLF	Site Locator Form
TAP	Trainee Assessment Portfolio
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VAC	Volunteer Advisory Committee
VIDA	Volunteer Information Database Application
VRF	Volunteer Report Form
VRT	Volunteer Reporting Tool
VT	Volunteer/Trainee
YiD	Youth In Development

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## APPENDIX D: AGENCY'S RESPONSE TO THE PRELIMINARY REPORT

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Since 1961.

**MEMORANDUM**

**To:** Kathy Buller, Inspector General

**Through:** Daljit K. Bains, Chief Compliance Officer *John Staring*

**From:** Ken Yamashita, Regional Director  
George Like, Country Director, Guatemala

**Date:** April 17, 2015

**CC:** Carrie Hessler-Radelet, Director  
Carlos Torres, Director of Global Operations and Deputy Director Nominee  
Laura Chambers, Chief of Staff  
Joaquin Ferrao, Deputy Inspector General  
Jim O'Keefe, Assistant Inspector General for Evaluations  
Jeremy Black, Senior Evaluator  
Peter Redmond, Senior Advisor to Global Operations  
Emily Untermeyer, Chief of Operations, IAP  
Craig Badger, Acting Country Director/Director of Programming and Training, Guatemala  
Kristin Kaper, Chief of Programming and Training, IAP  
Eric Duncan, Acting Chief Administrative Officer, IAP  
Joshua O'Donnell, Regional Security Advisor, IAP  
Summer Tucker, Director of Management and Operations, Guatemala  
Kimberly Helm, Country Desk Officer, Guatemala and Mexico  
Francisco Reinoso, Chief Information Officer  
Shawn Bardwell, Associate Director for Safety and Security  
Anne Hughes, Deputy Chief Compliance Officer

**Subject:** Agency Response to the Preliminary Program Evaluation Report of Peace Corps/Guatemala (No. 14-EVAL-06), February 2015

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Enclosed please find the agency's response to the recommendations made by the Inspector General for Peace Corps/Guatemala, as outlined in the Preliminary Report of the IG Evaluation sent to the Agency on February 6, 2015.

The Region concurs with all 15 recommendations provided by the OIG in its Preliminary Evaluation Report: Peace Corps/Guatemala. Post has addressed and provided supporting documentation for 3 of the 15 recommendations and will work to address the remaining recommendations by the set target dates.

The Region will continue to work with Post and the departments identified in the Preliminary Report to ensure closure of these recommendations by the dates included within for outstanding recommendations.

### **Recommendation 1**

**That the regional director for Inter-America and the Pacific operations improve the effectiveness of the agency's delivery of information regarding crime and risks facing Volunteers in Guatemala to all applicants invited to serve in the country, and that the information include the country-specific policies and travel-related restrictions Volunteers in Guatemala must agree to follow.**

#### **Concur:**

**Response:** A safe and productive Volunteer experience is the Inter-America and the Pacific (IAP) Region's highest priority. The regional director of the Inter-America and the Pacific (IAP) recognizes the importance of interested candidates having sufficient information about country-specific security risks, policies and travel-related restrictions that could influence their desire to serve.

In the last year, the agency has made a concerted effort to increase the availability of information about potential assignments so that applicants can discern which countries and projects are the most suitable. Prospective and current candidates receive information related to safety and security at multiple points of the application process beginning at the recruitment and placement level through Pre-Service Training (PST) and beyond. Country-specific Welcome Books (including a hyperlink to crime statistics) and personal discussions have been the most useful to educate candidates on policies and travel-related restrictions. Additionally, the agency and country-specific websites, crime conditions within a country, and U.S. State Department travel advisories are readily accessible via the internet.

To enhance the provision of information regarding crimes and potential risks in Guatemala, the Inter-America and Pacific Region (IAP) will implement the following:

- IAP Region will update the Welcome Book and Volunteer Assignment Description (VAD) to include an appropriate level of detail regarding crime statistics, country-specific policies and travel-related restrictions. Both are provided in the Invitation packet and will allow the candidate to make an informed decision on serving in Guatemala.
- Peace Corps/Guatemala will update the Volunteer Handbook to include more detailed information related to safety/security and travel policies and restrictions.
- Peace Corps/Guatemala will include the most up-to-date copies of the Welcome Book and Volunteer Handbook on its website.
- IAP Region will consult with headquarters offices to determine the appropriateness of referencing country-specific policies and providing a link to documents on Guatemala's website in the Job Specific Request (JSR).

#### **Documents to be Submitted:**

- Calendar confirmation of meeting related to Job Specific Request (JSR)
- Updated Welcome Book
- Updated VAD with travel policy and restrictions
- Updated Volunteer Handbook
- Screen shot of updated Peace Corps/Guatemala website

**Status and Timeline for Completion:** August 31, 2015

**Recommendation 2**

**That the country director clarify with staff and Volunteers that whereabouts reporting by Volunteers is required for emergency preparedness and may be used only for that purpose.**

**Concur:**

**Response:** Peace Corps/Guatemala concurs and will clarify to staff and Volunteers that whereabouts reporting is to be used solely for emergency preparedness, as required in the Agency policy MS 270. Whereabouts reports will not be used to track leave and/or evaluate performance. To reinforce trust between staff and Volunteers, the country director will officially inform Volunteers that the whereabouts notification system is to be used only for emergency purposes, and not to monitor Volunteer absences for performance determinations.

The country director will ensure that staff and Volunteers are aware of the new whereabouts reporting policy by:

- Distributing a memo with policy clarification to staff and Volunteers via email.
- Conducting an all-staff meeting in April 2015 to ensure that staff fully understands the purpose and parameters of whereabouts reporting.
- Updating the text in the Volunteer Handbook accordingly. (Note: the whereabouts notification requirements have been updated to remove information pertaining to the type of leave being used in the response to Recommendation #3)

**Documents Submitted:**

- Copy of email containing the Memo sent to PCVs.

**Documents to be Submitted:**

- Agenda for all-staff meeting with that the above-referenced information was discussed
- Updated Volunteer Handbook

**Status and Timeline for Completion:** August 31, 2015

**Recommendation 3**

**That the Country Director and safety and security manager ensure that the post's whereabouts notification system is de-linked for its system for tracking leave balances, and is not used by staff as a way to monitor a Volunteer's leave balance or as an indicator or a Volunteer's performance at his or her site.**

**Concur:**

**Response:** Peace Corps' Volunteer Information Database (VIDA) is the global system for recording basic information about Volunteers, such as emergency contact information, service dates, site contact information, and leave approvals. VIDA also is the centralized system that Peace Corps headquarters and field offices share to know which Volunteers are in country in the event of an emergency situation, such as a natural disaster.

Peace Corps/Guatemala has launched an initiative to establish a new reporting system for Volunteer whereabouts, called 'Whereabouts Notification System' (WNS). Volunteers will report whereabouts via a separate SMS system through its local telecommunications provider,

TIGO. This is a web-based system that will allow staff to collect, organize, store, and sort whereabouts data as well as print reports independently from the VIDA system. The text system will be more efficient than the current voicemail system. Additionally, it will separate whereabouts from leave reporting and it will require written notification which is anticipated to improve reporting accuracy. The system will be administered by the Safety and Security Manager (SSM) and the Safety and Security Assistant (SSA) and, in case of emergency, can be accessed remotely.

Peace Corps/Guatemala has initiated a one-month pilot of the WNS and expects the results will be positive in the coming weeks, thereby permitting Peace Corps/Guatemala to finalize its implementation by May 2015.

The country director and SSM will ensure that staff and Volunteers are aware of the new whereabouts reporting system changes by (as noted in the response to Recommendation #2):

- Clarifying to staff and Volunteers that the whereabouts reporting system will not be used to monitor Volunteers' leave balances or as an indicator for measuring Volunteers' performance
- Removing the reference to leave categories from the whereabouts policy in the Volunteer Handbook.
- Conducting an all-staff meeting in April 2015 to ensure that staff fully understands the purpose and parameters of whereabouts reporting.
- Reviewing with program staff the criteria that can and cannot be used for evaluating the performance of Volunteers.
- Notifying Volunteers on the new text-based system available for reporting whereabouts

**Documents Submitted:**

- Copy of email containing the Memo sent to PCVs.
- Copy of email containing the Memo sent to staff.
- Screen shot of new Whereabouts Notification System (WNS).
- Copy of email notifying Volunteers of new text based system for reporting whereabouts.

**Documents to be Submitted:**

- Updated Volunteer Handbook
- Agenda for all-staff meeting with confirmation that the above-reference information was discussed criteria that can be used for evaluating the performance of Volunteers.
- Confirmation that the Country Director and Director of Programming and Training met with program staff to review performance evaluation criteria.
- Results from the pilot and confirmation of whether Peace Corps/Guatemala will proceed with the new web-based system or devise an alternative approach

**Status and Timeline for Completion:** August 31, 2015

**Recommendation 4**

**That the director of programming and training ensure that program managers use work reports and other communications with Volunteers and their counterparts to address concerns related to Volunteer performance at site.**

**Concur:**

**Response:** A recent initiative at Peace Corps/Guatemala is to have round table sessions for all PCVs at the 1–2 month mark of service and at 6 months of service. The Language & Cultural Facilitators (LCFs) perform the first site visit at one month and the round table occurs right after that. Each of the areas of programming, management and operations, medical, safety and security, training and country director attend to see where there are challenges, successes and a follow-up action plan is formulated when needed.

We concur with the intent of this Recommendation; however, we believe that program managers are appropriately using work reports, communications, site visits and other tools to assess Volunteer performance. Program Managers (PM) routinely use a variety of resources to determine Peace Corps Volunteers' performance:

- Monthly progress checks or calendars/work reports are utilized to determine how actively engaged a Peace Corps Volunteer (PCV) is in his/her work assignments. Each project has a slightly different method for monthly calendars or monthly progress checks but all give a general idea of the level of engagement of the PCV and the extent to which the PCV completed project activities during the month.
- Formal Site Visits are one of the most accurate methods for determining a PCV's performance. Site Visits performed by the programming staff are conducted between 6–9 months and 13–16 months during a PCV's service. During those visits, performance is measured through a review of the PCV's work plans and meetings with the PCV and his/her work partners.
- Volunteer Reporting Forms (VRFs), which include a PCV's documentation of project indicators, demonstrate where a PCV has dedicated efforts and give a basis for the program manager's feedback and action planning with a PCV.

Peace Corps/Guatemala maintains a telephone plan which allows PCVs to call any staff member at no charge, thereby giving PCVs the ability to ask questions or give updates on activities or progress. Additionally, most PCVs can email staff. These communication channels provide another resource to program managers for assessing and responding to performance-related issues.

The Director of Programming and Training (DPT) will continue to monitor overall volunteer performance by the continual review of site visit documentation, support project managers when follow-up actions are needed after round table reviews, review of feedback to PCVs on their VRF work reports and discussions as needed when PCVs don't comply with monthly work calendars or progress reports. Additionally, the DPT will continue to consider the quality of program managers' conduct in these areas during twice-annual performance reviews.

**Documents Submitted:**

- Monthly calendar and progress check documentation for projects.
- Completed VRF with feedback from Program Manager.
- Site Visit documentation

**Status and Timeline for Completion:** May 31, 2015

**Recommendation 5:**

**That the associate director for safety and security improve the agency's guidance, including making revisions to Appendix A MS 220, for posts on how to develop a whereabouts notification system that is fully separate from an annual leave tracking system.**



**Concur:**

**Response:** MS 220 articulates the allowance for Volunteers to take a variety of leave and how those leave allowances are calculated and tracked. MS 220 also identifies that Volunteers are allowed to occasionally leave their site for personal reasons, but provides post with the authority for determining any limitations or restrictions on their absence from site. MS 270 clarifies that for emergency preparedness reasons, Peace Corps needs information from Volunteers about their whereabouts when they are away from site so that Peace Corps can reach them in an emergency. The collection of that “whereabouts” information is left to the discretion of post and occasionally gets comingled with other leave tracking or performance management systems. MS 220 provides guidance to posts about maintaining separate leave tracking and whereabouts notification systems, but the guidance is vague. Post efforts to use a singular system to capture whereabouts and leave may leave Volunteers with the feeling that Peace Corps will use information about their whereabouts punitively, thus such a system may inhibit whereabouts reporting.

The Associate Director for Safety and Security will work with the Associate Directors for Global Operations and Health Services to make revisions to Appendix A of MS 220 to clarify guidance for posts on establishing a system that tracks Volunteer Whereabouts separately from other categories of leave.

**Documents to be submitted:**

- The revised Appendix A.
- A memo from the Associate Directors for Global Operations, Health Services, and Safety and Security explaining the new guidance and reiterating the requirement that whereabouts information not be used to monitor Volunteer performance or track leave.

**Status and Timeline for Completion:** August 31, 2015

**Recommendation 6**

**That the Country Director emphasize with Volunteers the importance of reporting all crimes that directly affect them, and clarify expectations related to reporting serious crimes that take place in a Volunteer’s site.**

**Concur:**

**Response:** Peace Corps/Guatemala concurs with the recommendation that Volunteers must be strongly encouraged to report safety and security incidents and concerns and to report significant crimes in their communities that could influence the overall safety and security of the site.

Volunteers currently receive over 24-hours of safety and security training in which the importance of crime reporting is emphasized. Beginning with Staging, continued throughout Pre-Service Training (PST), and reinforced throughout the remaining training cycle, Volunteers are informed of the requirement to report immediately to the Safety and Security Manager (SSM) and/or the Peace Corps Medical Officer (PCMO) any crimes that affect them directly, no matter the severity of the crime.

Peace Corps/Guatemala agrees that it is vital that it has accurate information about the safety and security environment where Volunteers are located, and Volunteers in the field are frequently the best sources of this information. Such information facilitates current and future decisions about site development for Peace Corps Volunteers (PCVs).

To further emphasize crime reporting expectations, Peace Corps/Guatemala will implement the following:

- Revision of the Volunteer Handbook to include a new chapter on Safety and Security which will emphasize the importance of and how to report crimes that directly affect Volunteers.
- Modification of the existing Emergency Warden System to be renamed the Volunteer Security Network (VSN) and given expanded responsibilities. The VSN will seek to actively engage Volunteers in safety and security management including reinforcing the importance of reporting crimes. VSN Emergency Wardens will be trained to encourage Volunteers to report whereabouts information, crimes, and other safety concerns. Additionally, VSN Emergency Wardens will be trained to provide a supportive role to Volunteers who are facing challenges within the country's safety and security environment. Emergency Wardens will be elected from each of the six geographic clusters of Volunteers. They will also act as wardens for their cluster in the event of emergencies.

**Documents Submitted:**

- Staging safety and security curriculum
- Calendar of Training Events (COTE) noting the safety and security sessions
- Volunteer Security Network (VSN) description of role and responsibilities
- Email notifying Peace Corps Volunteers and staff of modification to Emergency Warden System
- Agenda of VSN training

**Documents to be Submitted:**

- Updated Volunteer Handbook that addresses safety and security issues

**Status and Timeline for Completion:** August 31, 2015

**Recommendation 7**

**That the country director and safety and security manager set clear safety and security-related goals and measures, assess them regularly, and make adjustments as needed to mitigate Volunteers' risks of serious crimes**

**Concur:**

**Response:** The Volunteer Support Initiative (VSI) begun in 2011 sought to reduce security risks faced by Volunteers in Guatemala. Several significant policies and programmatic decisions were implemented, such as limiting the geographic area for site placements and Volunteer travel, requiring 24-month home stays and establishing more restricted transportation policies and a shuttle system.

Working in close collaboration with the Inter-America and Pacific Region and the Office of Safety and Security, Peace Corps/Guatemala will articulate a comprehensive safety and security strategy that includes safety and security measures and a process for routine monitoring, analysis and reporting of Volunteers' risks of serious crimes.

**Documents to be Submitted:**

- Safety and Security goals and measures from the Peace Corps/Guatemala comprehensive safety and security strategy

- Plan for routine monitoring, analysis and reporting of Volunteers' risks of serious crimes

**Status and Timeline for Completion:** September 30, 2015

### **Recommendation 8**

**That the country director communicate clear expectations to Volunteers regarding the importance of being in service in their communities 24/7 as appropriate.**

#### **Concur:**

**Response:** Peace Corps/Guatemala concurs that it is important for Volunteers to understand expectations for their Peace Corps service. Currently, Peace Corps/Guatemala addresses the 24/7 expectations of service in a variety of ways during Pre-Service Training (PST).

- During the first week of PST, training sessions focus on the Peace Corps' Core Expectations. Action plans are created for each of the 10 Core Expectations that Trainees can initially carry out in their community-based training communities.
- In the second week of PST, Trainees receive the Volunteer Handbook and participate in detailed discussions of the handbook with the Training Manager and Director of Programming and Training (DPT). Such discussions cover the importance of spending time in the community.
- In the seventh week of PST, additional time is focused on the 24/7 nature of Peace Corps service and how it relates to the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> goals of Peace Corps.
- In the last week of PST, Trainees are required to make a formal presentation regarding their commitments to the 10 Core Expectations as it relates to their work partner.

Peace Corps/Guatemala plans to strengthen messaging about service expectations in the following ways:

- Develop an Integration Guide (Cultural Passport) for Trainees to work on during PST and as they commence their service in their two-year sites.
- Produce a list of specific strategies and anecdotes that promote the importance and benefits of spending time in site via the Volunteer Advisory Council (VAC). VAC members will present the information during the VAC Orientation that occurs during the last week of PST.
- Pilot a reflection session during the Close of Service Conference (COS) in May 2015. Volunteers will be asked to reflect on what they consider to be important learnings from their Peace Corps experience. These reflections will be used with newly arriving groups during PST beginning in September 2015.
- Update the Volunteer Handbook to include Peace Corps' Core Expectations and to augment text referencing the importance of spending time in communities and viewing Peace Corps service as a 24/7 commitment.
- Reinforce the 24/7 nature of Peace Corps in the Country Director's opening remarks to Trainees and Volunteers, such as Trainees' first full day in country, other pre-service training events and in-service training events.

#### **Documents Submitted:**

- PST Core Expectation Session Plans
- Work Partner Day Session
- Goals 2 & 3 session plans
- Staging Core Expectation Curriculum
- COTE with Core Expectation Sessions

**Documents to be Submitted:**

- Updated Volunteer Handbook
- VAC list of specific strategies and anecdotes for use in PST
- Integration Guide template

**Status and Timeline for Completion:** August 31, 2015

**Recommendation 9**

**That the director of programming and training develop training and guidance to help Volunteers identify more opportunities for community-based activities at their sites on the weekend.**

**Concur:**

**Response:** Peace Corps/Guatemala considers this to be linked to Recommendation #8 and the importance of the 24/7 nature of Peace Corps Service. Program staff encourages Peace Corps Volunteers (PCVs) to actively engage in secondary projects as long as they meet commitments of their primary projects. In addition to what was mentioned in the response to Recommendation #8, PCVs are provided information and training on numerous secondary project options in their sites, such as the following:

- Two Cross Sector Programming Priorities are both presented to Trainees during their Pre-Service Training (PST) and include themes and activities that can be used for HIV/AIDS prevention and Gender Equity. PEPFAR funds allowed for printing a packet of materials for a fairly easy workshop that PCVs can perform in their sites with or without community partners depending on the context of each community.
- Grassroots soccer is offered as an optional training for PCVs and their work partners on a regional basis.
- Trainees receive a session on Goals 2 & 3 which includes popular activities reported by Volunteers that can easily be done during the weekends.
- Staff with the Education projects discuss with Trainees and PCVs the school year and ideas for complementary or secondary projects during the summer break.
- Girls Leading Our World & Boys Reaching Out camps are actively promoted in all projects and with Small Project Assistance or Volunteer Activities Support & Training funds, many of these are applied for, funded and carried out.
- Trainees all receive basic nutrition and small-scale family gardening as part of the Feed The Future (FTF) agreement with USAID.

Peace Corps/Guatemala will augment messaging and training about community-based weekend activities in the following ways:

- During PST, staff will strengthen messaging on the importance of secondary projects during project orientation sessions, selected core sessions and language learning sessions. These sessions will include: how to respond to community needs and find community interest for special skills brought in by the PCVs; and community integration strategies.
- Volunteers will be asked to report specific successes and challenges of integration and secondary project activities in Early In-Service Training and other In-Service Trainings (ISTs) where appropriate.
- Staff will task Volunteer Advisory Committee (VAC) with promoting and facilitating idea and secondary project sharing between Volunteers to share resources and experiences.

The importance of secondary activities will be discussed with work partners during site development and the Program Managers (PM) will ask for key figures in the community with whom the Volunteers could discuss possible projects that would be interesting for the community.

**Documents Submitted:**

- Goals 2 & 3 session plans
- COTE schedule showing the sessions
- Cross Sector Programming Priorities session plan

**Documents to be Submitted:**

- VAC list of specific strategies and anecdotes for use in PST

**Status and Timeline for Completion:** August 31, 2015

**Recommendation 10**

**That the country director remove the personal time away from site leave category and related monitoring, and simply emphasize with Volunteers that time away from their community should be taken infrequently and not abused.**

**Concur:**

**Response:** Peace Corps/Guatemala has grappled with the approach to policies related to Volunteers' personal time away (PTA) from site for decades. Policy shifts have occurred, often with Peace Corps Volunteer (PCV) or Volunteer Advisory Committee (VAC) input, to respond to a wide range of issues, such as security concerns and the perceived value of visiting other PCVs and Guatemala's cultural and tourism offerings. With implementation of Volunteer Support Initiative policies in 2012, out-of-site policies became more restrictive; such policies were in place at the time of the OIG program evaluation.

Peace Corps/Guatemala believes the more restrictive personal time away from site (PTAS) policies have been counter-productive in that it limited Volunteers' ability to experience Guatemala outside of their assigned site and created a new monitoring role for staff. The past few years have also led to the realization that buy-in to the spirit of Peace Corps service and enhancing community integration will not be achieved by stringent policies that set parameters on how often PCVs can leave their sites. Staff believes the policy can be discontinued, with messaging to Volunteers that PTA should not be taken during the work schedule of the host country agency and should not impede with PCVs' integration into their communities.

Peace Corps/Guatemala will continue to emphasize to PCVs the importance of spending their free time in their communities to the maximum extent possible. Additionally, staff will encourage PCVs who feel the need to leave their sites frequently to reach out to staff and PCV peers to get support for the emotional health and/or community integration challenges they may be facing.

**Documents to be Submitted:**

- Updated Volunteer Handbook with new personal time away from site policy
- Copy of email with Memo regarding policy change to PCVs and staff

**Status and Timeline for Completion:** August 31, 2015

### **Recommendation 11**

**That the Country Director provide guidance to the Volunteer Advisory Committee on how it can improve its process of seeking input from Volunteers prior to its meetings as well as improve its communication with Volunteers after meetings.**

#### **Concur:**

**Response:** Peace Corps/Guatemala has reached out to the current Volunteer Advisory Committee (VAC) and other Inter-America and the Pacific (IAP) field offices to gather information and assess the most productive plan forward. Peace Corps/Guatemala will encourage the VAC to take a more pro-active approach to the collection, recording and dissemination of information concerning the viewpoints of Volunteers.

Currently, the VAC reaches out to Peace Corps Volunteers (PCVs) for feedback and suggestions in a variety of ways, including personal contact, phone conversations, regional meetings, and email (if shared by volunteers), due to the different levels of Volunteer access to technology in the field. When the entire Volunteer population needs to be contacted, staff sends out VAC's email, once reviewed by the country director. VAC members share all of their contact information with trainees and Volunteers upon election, and strive to be accessible and approachable for all PCVs with concerns or suggestions. Before each quarterly staff meeting, VAC members meet to discuss what they've gleaned from PCVs and decide how best to transmit Volunteer concerns to staff at the meeting.

The VAC routinely solicits PCVs' opinions on important events (for example, dates and themes for the All-Volunteer Conference), elections of new VAC representatives, and updates on the results of VAC meetings. They use Survey Monkey for voting and opinion polls. VAC meeting notes are uploaded to a google drive folder that all PCVs can access.

To enhance the effectiveness of the VAC in seeking input from and communicating with PCVs, Peace Corps/Guatemala will take the following steps with the VAC leadership:

- The Country Director will meet with the VAC representatives following their selection each year to discuss the VAC's role and responsibilities, communication strategies, and ways in which the VAC can effectively fulfill the liaison role between Volunteers and staff.
- Connect VAC leadership with the leaders of other VACs in the region to encourage an exchange of best practices.
- VAC representatives will present a calendar at the beginning of each year with events, elections, regional meetings and indicate how they will make themselves available to Volunteers to understand and document the Volunteer communities' issues and concerns.
- The Country Director will institute a new process in VAC bylaws and future bylaws amendments must be approved by the Country Director.
- The Country Director will work with VAC leadership to improve communication with PCVs by employing a more pro-active systematic approach to collection and dissemination of information concerning the issues facing Volunteers.

#### **Documents to be Submitted:**

- Country Director's email of the notification of changes in VAC system to PCVs and PCTs

**Status and Timeline for Completion:** August 31, 2015

### **Recommendation 12**

**That the healthy schools program manager improve how expectations regarding Volunteer workload, in particularly the number of schools each Volunteer should support, are communicated with official counterparts.**

#### **Concur:**

#### **Response:**

Peace Corps/Guatemala plans to include henceforth, in its Site Development for the next cohort (which will be undertaken from July to September, 2015), two new components:

- Proposals in the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) about how schools are selected and how we propose to develop school-based work plans.
- HS Program Manager will propose the average number of schools that can realistically receive individualized attention from a PCV; these will be included in the Healthy Schools Fact Sheet, submitted to the Work Partner, as well as in the Official Healthy Schools PowerPoint presentation to the HCN.
- During the section of project time during Work Partner Day, the Programming team will reinforce with the host country partners the factors that determine number of schools and the range of number of schools depending on the local context and interest.

Peace Corps/Guatemala recognizes that the work load of Volunteers and their results have varied, in large part depending on the number of schools assigned to the Volunteer. In most cases, Healthy Schools Volunteers (HS) serve in 8-10 schools, one or two of which they may visit more regularly in order to work with health promotion groups and parental organizations. The number varies depending on the ease of access to the schools (distance, availability of transport) as well as the level of need of the schools. Volunteers report that information concerning Healthy School Strategies could be better disseminated if the school superintendents could arrange for a training program for all of the principals and this will continue to be promoted on site visits and in-service trainings with work partners given that the Peace Corps Volunteers (PCVs) can only follow-up with and provide support to a limited number of schools.

#### **Documents to be Submitted:**

- Updated Healthy Schools Fact Sheet
- Updated Health Schools PPT
- Updated MOU

**Status and Timeline for Completion:** November 30, 2015

### **Recommendation 13:**

**That the healthy schools program manager and the training manager train and support Volunteers to develop, negotiate, and adapt their work plans throughout their service.**

#### **Concur:**

#### **Response:**

Peace Corps/Guatemala is introducing a series of new activities in the coming months:

- Training for design and implementation of work plans for two Volunteer cohorts during the March 11, 2015 Early IST (completed), as well as a similar training during the Mid-Service Conference in April 2015.
- Completing the first review of monthly progress charts for a cohort of PCVs by the two Peace Corps Volunteer Leaders (PCVLs). The PCVLs will provide direct feedback to the PCVs in March 2015 (completed) as well as bring up any questions or concerns directly to the programing staff. PCVLs will continue reviews on a monthly basis.
- Exploring the possibility of sharing the progress charts with work partners after an initial period of assessing how useful these are to the PCVs and HS program staff. Will be completed by June 2015.
- Requesting to see the PCVs “Visibility Wall” where they should have a space to highlight school-based progress and where they post their weekly calendars with their work partners during site visits from April to July, 2015.
- Introducing the ‘Coaching’ approach to PCVs during their Early IST, taking place on March 6, 2015 (Completed, 3/6/2015) by the HS Program Manager/Training Manager.

Peace Corps/Guatemala recognizes the need to assist Volunteers in the development of their work plans in coordination with their work partners. Currently, Healthy Schools (HS) program staff has been introducing the concept of “Managing Up” to all Volunteer cohorts beginning with Early In-Service Trainings (IST). To date, Peace Corps/Guatemala has experimented with several types of monitoring methods to track Peace Corps Volunteers (PCVs) progress in their programs. Currently, program staff is using ‘results-based’ monthly progress charts as well as weekly calendars highlighting accomplishments and challenges. One reason for this type of reporting is to help superintendents understand the work load of PCVs, with the aim of encouraging superintendents to be open to negotiating and adapting strategies.

**Documents Submitted:**

- Monthly progress chart and weekly calendar template for HS
- Example of result based monthly progress chart and weekly calendar
- Session plan for the training for design and implementation
- Calendar (COTE) to show scheduled training sessions related to recommendation

**Status and Timeline for Completion:** August 31, 2015

**Recommendation 14:**

**That the director of programming and training and the training manager develop an approach for assessing the effectiveness of training, especially technical training, during the “early-in-service training” and use the resulting evaluative data as a basis for improving technical and other trainings.**

**Concur**

**Response:** From November 2013, through November 2014, OPATS, OCIO and other participating offices (OGO, OSP, Regions, OGHH) designed, implemented and deployed versions 3.01 and 3.02 of the Volunteer Reporting Tool, versions that included significantly enhanced reporting capabilities for programming staff at post. These capabilities, being used by posts and HQ M&E today, include project-specific summary reports ,that can facilitate project management and reporting to stakeholders, including external funding partners. **Objective-level reports will be available by end of FY15.**



**Documents Submitted:**

- Project Framework (Apr 2014)
- Project-level Data Extract (Apr 2014)
- Objective-level Data Extract (Apr 2014)
- Activity-level Data Extract (Apr 2014)
- Indicator Data Extract (Apr 2014)
- Indicator Report (Oct 2014)
- *Preliminary Example: Project Status Report (Projected release: Sep/Oct 2015)*
- *Preliminary Example: Project Activities Report (Projected release: Sep/Oct 2015)*
- Project Summary Report produced for Guatemala's Youth in Development Project by OPATS analysts for FY14 SRs (Dec 2014)

**Status and Timeline for Completion:** October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2015

**Recommendation 15:**

**That the director of programming and training and the training manager develop an approach for assessing the effectiveness of training, especially technical training, during the “early-in-service training” and use the resulting evaluative data as a basis for improving technical and other trainings.**

**Concur:**

**Response:** As a result of newer project frameworks and the recent Inter-America and the Pacific (IAP) training conference in Costa Rica, Peace Corps/Guatemala will engage again in the Training Design and Evaluation cycle to ensure training focuses on appropriate Knowledge, Skills and Abilities (KSAs) and sequencing of each project. The Director of Programming and Training (DPT) and Training Manager (TM) will work closely with training staff to ensure the development of an assessment package to determine achievement of all Terminal Learning Objectives (TLOs) during In-Service Training (IST) events, with a focus on Early IST. Program and training staff will use the Global Learning standards TAP process as a best practice to inform and guide the work as well as the recent release of Global Sector guidance in the design of the tool. Peace Corps/Guatemala will implement a pilot during the next Early IST (January 2016) and revise as needed. In addition, the Training Manager will formalize the IST reviews and ensure that Level 1-4 training evaluation data is collected and taken into account for decision-making purposes to ensure ISTs are meeting the training needs of Volunteers and project partners.

**Documents to be Submitted:**

- Multimodal Assessment Portfolio (MAP)
- Terminal Learning Objectives (TLO)

**Status and Timeline for Completion:** August 31, 2015

- By August 2015, start Training Design and Evaluation (TDE) process; implement Task Analysis; and identify KSAs for Maternal and Child Health (MCH), Healthy Schools (HS) and Youth in Development (YiD) projects.
- By August 2015, work with training team to develop TLOs and the assessment package for the 27-month learning continuum of each project (Pre-Service Training, Early IST, other ISTs).
- By August 2015, develop learning continuum focused on all four Kirkpatrick evaluation levels; identify existing tools and processes; and develop tools needed to fill the gaps.

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## APPENDIX E: OIG COMMENTS

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Management concurred with all 15 recommendations, 14 of which remain open. Based on the documentation provided, we closed recommendation number 13. 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.

We appreciate the detailed manner in which the agency considered and responded to each recommendation in the preliminary report. OIG will review and consider closing recommendations 1 through 12, 14 and 15 when the documentation reflected in the OIG's comments and the agency's response to the preliminary report is received. For recommendation number 1, additional documentation is required; it will remain open pending confirmation from the chief compliance officer that the documentation reflected in our analysis below is received.

**1. That the regional director for Inter-America and the Pacific operations improve the effectiveness of the agency's delivery of information regarding crimes and risks facing Volunteers in Guatemala to all applicants invited to serve in the country, and that this information include the country-specific security policies and travel-related restrictions Volunteers in Guatemala must agree to follow.**

**Concur:**

**Response:** A safe and productive Volunteer experience is the Inter-American and the Pacific (IAP) Region's highest priority. The regional director of the Inter-American and the Pacific (IAP) recognizes the importance of interested candidates having sufficient information about country-specific security risks, policies and travel-related restrictions that could influence their desire to serve.

In the last year, the agency has made a concerted effort to increase the availability of information about potential assignments so that applicants can discern which countries and projects are the most suitable. Prospective and current candidates receive information related to safety and security at multiple points of the application process beginning at the recruitment and placement level through Pre-Service training (PST) and beyond. Country-specific Welcome Books (including a hyperlink to crime statistics) and personal discussions have been the most useful to educate candidates on policies and travel-related restrictions. Additionally, the agency and country-specific websites, crime conditions within a country, and U.S. State Department travel advisories are readily accessible via the internet.

To enhance the provision of information regarding crimes and potential risks in Guatemala, the Inter-American and Pacific Region (IAP) will implement the following:

- IAP Region will update the Welcome Book and Volunteer Assignment Description (VAD) to include an appropriate level of detail regarding crime statistics, country-specific policies and travel-related restrictions. Both are provided in the Invitation packet and will allow the candidate to make an informed decision on serving in Guatemala.
- Peace Corps/Guatemala will update the Volunteer Handbook to include more detailed information related to safety/security and travel policies and restrictions.
- Peace Corps/Guatemala will include the most up-to-date copies of the Welcome Book and Volunteer Handbook on its website.
- IAP Region will consult with headquarters offices to determine the appropriateness of referencing country-specific policies and providing a link to documents on Guatemala's website in the Job Specific Request (JSR).

**Documents to be Submitted:**

- Calendar confirmation of meeting related to Job Specific Request (JSR)
- Updated Welcome Book
- Updated VAD with travel policy and restrictions
- Updated Volunteer Handbook
- Screen shot of updated Peace Corps/Guatemala website

**OIG Analysis:** As we reported, Volunteers had not noticed or opened the hyperlink on page 26 of the Welcome Book that provided information on crimes and risks facing Volunteers in Guatemala. Just two of 22 Volunteers we interviewed were aware of this information in the Welcome Book. The agency's response that "Country-specific Welcome Books (including a hyperlink to crime statistics) and personal discussions have been the most useful to educate candidates on policies and travel-related restrictions" is therefore not supported by the results of our fieldwork in Guatemala. It is unclear from the agency's response how the delivery of information about crimes and risks facing Volunteers in Guatemala will be improved, or if the agency will continue to rely on the hyperlink in the Welcome Book to deliver this important information to applicants.

In addition, it was unclear from the agency's response what is meant by "an appropriate level of detail regarding crime statistics, country-specific policies and travel-related restrictions." Our recommendation is that all applicants invited to serve in Guatemala receive the "country-specific security policies and travel-related restrictions" Volunteers must follow in Guatemala. This should include all relevant policies and restrictions.

In responding to recommendation #1, please provide additional documentation that:

- Demonstrates the agency has improved the effectiveness of its delivery of information to applicants about the crimes and risks facing Volunteers in Guatemala. For example, will the information on crimes and risks be sent to all applicants invited to serve as a separate document rather than through a hyperlink in the Welcome Book?

- Demonstrates that applicants invited to serve in Guatemala have been provided with the country-specific travel restrictions (e.g. the transportation policy) all Volunteers must agree to follow.

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## APPENDIX F: PROGRAM EVALUATION COMPLETION AND OIG CONTACT

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### PROGRAM EVALUATION COMPLETION

This program evaluation was conducted under the direction of Assistant Inspector General for Evaluations Jim O'Keefe, by evaluators Jerry Black and Greg Yeich.



Jim O'Keefe  
Assistant Inspector General for Evaluations

### 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 Jim O'Keefe at [jokeefe@peacecorps.gov](mailto:jokeefe@peacecorps.gov) or 202.692.2904.

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