



# Office of Inspector General

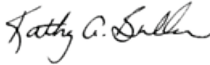
Office  
202.692.2900  
[peacecorps.gov/OIG](http://peacecorps.gov/OIG)  
[OIG Reports](#)

Hotline  
202.692.2915 | 800.233.5874  
[Online Reporting Tool](#)  
[OIG@peacecorps.gov](mailto:OIG@peacecorps.gov)

---

**DATE:** November 21, 2014

**TO:** Carrie Hessler-Radelet, Director  
Daljit Bains, Chief Compliance Officer

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

**SUBJECT:** Management Advisory Report: Agency Policies Related to Volunteer Sexual Assault Allegations

The purpose of this report is to bring to your attention concerns the Office of Inspector General (OIG) identified during a recent investigation of a Volunteer on Volunteer sexual assault reported to the Peace Corps by several third-party witnesses. The investigation disclosed that several staff members were confused about their reporting requirements, and that the Volunteers were reluctant to report sexual assaults to host country national (HCN) staff because of perceived societal values held by that community. OIG understands that the Peace Corps is currently conducting a comprehensive review of the agency's policies and procedures for responding to sexual assaults, and the information in this report may be useful to that endeavor.

## **Background on the Peace Corps' Sexual Assault Policies**

On July 1, 2013, the Peace Corps issued new Interim Policy Statement (IPS) 1-12, "Volunteer/Trainee Sexual Misconduct." Accompanying the new policy were IPS 1-12 "Procedures for Handling Complaints of Volunteer/Trainee Sexual Misconduct," IPS 1-12, "Frequently Asked Questions for Country Directors," and IPS 1-12, "Frequently Asked Questions for Volunteers/Trainees."

On September 1, 2013, the Peace Corps issued revised IPS 3-13, "Responding to Sexual Assault." Since then, IPS 3-13 has been revised five times, the most current version effective October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2014. Also revised on October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2014, were the 107-page procedural guidelines for IPS 3-13. The current version of *Peace Corps Manual* section (MS) 861, "Office of Inspector General," has been in effect since July 19, 2012.

## **Staff Confusion on Reporting Responsibilities**

In early July 2014, a Volunteer at a post in Eastern Europe reported to the country director (CD) that he/she had recently witnessed a Volunteer sexually assault another Volunteer. The CD, who was unclear on his reporting responsibilities for third-party allegations of sexual assault, promptly contacted Europe, Mediterranean and Asia Region (EMA) management and the Office of Safety and Security (OSS) to obtain guidance. Representatives from EMA and OSS met that day with an attorney from the Office of General Counsel (OGC), and the staff decided the incident should not be reported to OIG or the U.S. Embassy's Regional Security Office (RSO) in country. The Office of Victim Advocacy (OVA) was contacted, but the identity of the victim was not provided.

The following week, additional Volunteer witnesses reported the same alleged sexual assault between Volunteers to the acting CD. The acting CD reported the additional allegations to EMA management, who consulted with a different attorney within OGC. The attorney advised that all third-party complaints of sexual assault result in a “standard report” and OIG would be notified of the event in the normal course of business. Additionally, because the alleged offender was a Volunteer, the incident should be immediately reported to OIG.

As a result of the revised guidance from OGC, the acting CD promptly reported the allegations to OIG. OIG initiated an investigation and ensured that the RSO was made aware of the allegations. During the course of that investigation, the accused Volunteer resigned. Under IPS 1-12, “Procedures for Handling Complaints of Volunteer/Trainee Sexual Misconduct,” section 4.7, a sexual assault complaint is considered closed if the accused Volunteer resigns.<sup>1</sup>

### **Third Party Complaints – Reporting to OIG and the RSO**

MS 861 requires that managers and supervisors expeditiously report to OIG suspected misconduct by staff and Volunteers including allegations of sexual assaults. Pursuant to the passage of the Kate Puzey Volunteer Protection Act of 2011 (“Kate Puzey Act”) the agency issued IPS 3-13 on September 2013 impacting staff reporting requirements to the OIG. The policy implemented a restricted reporting system allowing a Volunteer who is the victim of sexual assault to confidentially disclose the details of his or her assault to specified individuals and receive services without the dissemination of his or her personally identifying information (PII) and without triggering an official investigation. As a result, managers and supervisors do not disclose restricted reports to OIG. However, per agency policy, “‘Restricted Report’ means a confidential report made to Designated Staff *by a Volunteer who is sexually assaulted* (emphasis added). . . .” Neither the Kate Puzey Act nor agency policy provides for agency managers or supervisors to treat allegations by Volunteers who are not victims of sexual assault as restricted reports. Such allegations must be expeditiously reported by managers and supervisors to OIG.<sup>2</sup> Staff is required to report such allegations to OIG or another appropriate authority.

However, OIG interviewed post senior staff, region management, as well as senior staff from OSS and OGC, and nearly everyone interviewed expressed confusion about their role and responsibilities in regard to third-party complaints of sexual assault particularly because the accused was another Volunteer. Several interviewees expressed their desire for agency policy to include a frequently asked questions sheet or flow chart that specifically addressed third-party allegation processes. OIG observed that Peace Corps staff currently must interpret three different, oft-competing policies to reach the correct resolution. OIG has identified other instances of mixed messaging. For example, in response to a congressional inquiry and as

---

<sup>1</sup> During the investigation it was determined that there was no jurisdiction for federal criminal prosecution.

<sup>2</sup> Even in such cases, per IPS 3-13 (incorporating a memorandum of understanding entered into by the Peace Corps and OIG) OIG has agreed to contact OVA when it independently receives information about a sexual assault incident from a third party other than the Volunteer who was the victim of sexual assault. OVA must explain to the Volunteer that OIG received the information independently from any restricted report that may have been filed. The Volunteer is asked whether he/she would like to be contacted by OIG or would allow his/her PII or details of the assault to be released to OIG. OIG agrees to respect the Volunteer’s choice regarding contact and the release of the information.

reported in its Semiannual Report to Congress, OIG expressed its concern over guidance by the agency (Office of General Counsel) instructing CDs (in at least one regional conference/training) not to provide OIG with third-party complaints or allegations, even though such information is not covered by the Kate Puzey Act.<sup>3</sup>

### **Volunteer Reluctance to Report Sexual Assaults to Host Country National Staff**

Several Volunteers observed that IPS 3-13 requires that a restricted report of sexual assault be filed with HCNs. Volunteers told OIG that the societal views of HCNs at their post differed widely from those held by Americans, and this difference directly affected Volunteers' willingness to report sexual assaults. For example, they explained that in their country of service, sexually active females were looked down upon and HCNs were less sensitive to sex-related concerns reported by those Volunteers. Similarly, Volunteers told OIG that because of in-country views toward gays and lesbians, gay Volunteers were reluctant to report sexual assaults to HCNs because they were generally viewed by HCNs as participants in a deviant lifestyle. The Volunteers expressed their belief that there would be increased reporting of sexual assaults, including Volunteer on Volunteer sexual assaults, if victims were allowed to report incidents directly to a U.S. direct hire employee.

The two U.S. direct hires at the post recognized that under the current policy, there is no American staff member in country that a Volunteer victim can confide in regarding a sexual assault without risk that their report would be converted from a restricted report to a standard report. The U.S. direct hires recognized that the cultural mores that existed in-country differed greatly from those in the U.S. as they pertained to sexual activity and sexuality, and they too recognized that Volunteers may be reluctant to speak with HCN staff because of cultural and societal differences.

#### **We recommend:**

1. That the agency clarify ISP 3-13 reporting requirements as they relate to third-party allegations of sexual assaults, to include staff responsibilities to report such cases, as well as supervisors' responsibility to report to OIG all cases where the alleged perpetrator is another staff member or Volunteer.
2. That the agency take steps to increase the availability of U.S. direct hire staff to serve in "designated staff" positions at each post, such as sexual assault response liaisons, for the purpose of receiving "restricted reports" of sexual assault from Volunteers.
3. That the agency address Volunteer reluctance to report sexual assault incidents to host country national staff by strengthening sexual assault risk reduction and response training to better prepare staff to respond to Volunteers, particularly to address individual or cultural bias, and ensure sensitivity and responsiveness to sexually active Volunteers or those of diverse backgrounds.

---

<sup>3</sup> Peace Corps Office of Inspector General, *Semiannual Report to Congress* (April 1 to September 30, 2013): 13.

cc: Laura Chambers, Chief of Staff  
Rudy Mehrbani, General Counsel  
Paul Jung, Associate Director, Office of Health Services  
Kate Raftery, Senior Program Team Lead, SARRR  
Carlos Torres, Associate Director, Global Operations  
Shawn Bardwell, Associate Director, Office of Safety and Security  
Kellie Greene, Director, Office of Victim Advocacy