



Peace Corps Office of Inspector General



Final Program Evaluation Report: Peace Corps/Jordan

September 2009



**Final Program Evaluation Report:
Peace Corps/Jordan
IG-09-15-E**

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Susan Gasper". The signature is written in a cursive style and is centered within a light blue rectangular box.

Susan Gasper
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September 2009

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Office of Inspector General (OIG) conducted an evaluation of Peace Corps/Jordan operations November 1 - 21, 2008. The evaluation covered fiscal years 2007 and 2008 and reviewed programming, training, Volunteer support, health care, Volunteer safety, housing, work sites, and staff organization.

At the onset of our evaluation, there were 56 Volunteers and 18 staff in Jordan. Interviews were conducted with 14 Volunteers (25% of Volunteers) and 10 in-country staff. Additional interviews were conducted with Peace Corps headquarters staff, U.S. Embassy representatives in Jordan, and key project partners. PC/Jordan has three project sectors: (1) Youth Development; (2) Special Education; and (3) Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL).

The OIG evaluation determined that PC/Jordan has a competent staff working in a politically charged cultural context. Despite the post's challenge of identifying and retaining appropriate counterparts, Volunteers reported that they are generally satisfied with site placements. PC/Jordan works effectively with host country stakeholders, and has effective operational systems in place related to programming, training, and most aspects of Volunteer support. Safety and security of the Volunteer is of primary concern for PC/Jordan and is integrated into all aspects of the post's operations.

In addition to identifying successful systems and initiatives, we identified opportunities to improve the effectiveness of Peace Corps/Jordan:

- While pleased with current Volunteer efforts, Ministry partners believe they would be further served by Volunteers with more relevant expertise and experience.
- The post has the second highest early termination (ET) rate in the Europe, Mediterranean and Asia (EMA) region – likely influenced by cultural integration issues and unclear expectations of support.
- In interviews, Volunteers cited technical training deficiencies in all sectors.
- Due to agency budget cuts, the post is facing impacts to programming, training, and Volunteer support activities.

Our report contains 14 recommendations, which, if implemented, should strengthen programming operations and correct the deficiencies detailed in the accompanying report.

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HOST COUNTRY BACKGROUND

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan¹ is a Middle Eastern country surrounded by Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Syria, Israel, and the Palestinian Territories. This small country (slightly smaller than Indiana) shares borders with several countries in political turmoil or at war, yet Jordan is relatively stable and safe. Jordan's population, mainly Muslim, includes many refugees from neighboring countries. Poverty and high unemployment of a well-educated population are Jordan's major challenges, brought on in part by limited natural resources, high foreign debt, and an increasing immigrant population over the last four decades. Threats of external and homegrown terrorism are real and constant, but crime rates are low.

PEACE CORPS/JORDAN PROGRAM BACKGROUND

The United States and Jordan share an active country agreement that was signed in 1996. The agreement lays out the major responsibilities held between the governments of the United States and Jordan, though the language is not specific to program sectors or Volunteer activities. Based on input and guidance from the Ministries of Social Development, Education, and the Higher Council for Youth, PC/Jordan provides the following projects to targeted populations.

- The Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) project operates in partnership with the Ministry of Education in government primary and secondary schools, predominantly in rural areas. Volunteers focus on developing student and staff communicative skills in English, improving school resources and materials, and working with their colleagues to develop effective and innovative teaching methods to complement the curriculum.
- The Special Education project strives to improve the quality of care for the physically and mentally challenged. The project focuses its efforts on basic education, improving essential care and services, developing staff skills and knowledge, as well as raising public awareness of issues faced by this socially marginalized group. As new reforms and initiatives are suggested, the project works with the Ministry of Social Development to ensure that its programs and services continue to meet the needs of these citizens.
- The Youth Development project works in coordination with the Ministry of Social Development, the Higher Council for Youth, and Jordanian non-governmental organizations. Volunteers work in youth and community centers to improve social outreach programs aimed at preparing youth for their future roles within the family, the world of work, and society. Volunteers work with local partners to create programs and activities which develop positive life skills. In

¹ The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan will be referred to as Jordan throughout the rest of the report.

addition, Volunteers work closely with youth to promote healthy lifestyles targeting issues such as smoking, nutrition, hygiene and the importance of exercise.

To date, over 300 Volunteers have served in Jordan. The first group of Volunteers arrived in 1997 to assist with community development projects. The assignments were geared to assist the ongoing efforts of national NGOs and ministries to expand the economic and social opportunities for women and youth-at-risk in communities. The TEFL program was created in response to the Ministry of Education's request for teacher training and acknowledgement of the importance of English as the language of global commerce.

Due to security concerns, the Peace Corps suspended the program and withdrew its Volunteers in November 2002. The country director and Jordanian staff used this period to evaluate programs, redesign training, and upgrade site development and safety and security systems. In June 2003, a Peace Corps assessment team, working with U.S. embassy and Jordanian officials, deemed the situation in the country stable, and Volunteers returned in February 2004. At the onset of our review, the post had 56 Peace Corps Volunteers in the field and 18 staff members based in the capital city of Amman.

Programmatic direction is developed in close collaboration with the Ministries of Social Development, Education, and the Higher Council for Youth. The program continues to focus on teaching English, special education, and a wide range of youth development activities. Gender plays a major role in programming and training, particularly when placing Volunteers in rural assignments where the separation between males and females is strict. The training input for FY 2009 was postponed due to budget constraints and a plan to change the timing of PST; the next group of Trainees will arrive in the first quarter of FY 2010.

OBJECTIVES, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

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

The Evaluations Unit within the Peace Corps Office of Inspector General 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 Office of Inspector General Evaluations Unit announced its intent to conduct an evaluation of PC/Jordan on September 23, 2008. For post evaluations, we use the following researchable questions to guide our work:

- To what extent has the post developed and implemented programs intended to increase the capacity of host country communities to meet their own technical needs?
- To what extent has the post implemented programs to promote cross-cultural understanding?
- To what extent does training provide Volunteers the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes to integrate into the community and perform their jobs?
- To what extent has the post provided adequate support and oversight to Volunteers?
- To what extent are post resources and agency support and oversight effectively aligned with the post's mission and program, and agency priorities?

The evaluation team conducted the preliminary research portion of the evaluation September 24 - October 31, 2008. This included review of agency documents provided by headquarters and post staff and interviews with management staff representing the region and the Office for Overseas Programming and Training Support (OPATS) (previously called the Center for Field Support and Applied Research). Fieldwork occurred November 1 - 21, 2008, and was comprised of interviews with: post senior staff in charge of programming, training, and support; the U.S. Ambassador; the U.S. Embassy Deputy Director of Security, Regional Security Office; and host country government ministry officials. In addition, we interviewed a stratified judgmental sample of 25% of currently serving Volunteers based on their length of service, site location, project focus, gender, age, and ethnicity. Twelve Volunteers were identified as part of the sample and an additional two Volunteers requested and were granted interviews.

Table 1: PC/Jordan Volunteer Demographic Data

Project	Percentage of Volunteers
Special Education	21%
Teaching English as a Foreign Language	52%
Youth Development	27%
Gender	Percentage of Volunteers
Male	43%
Female	57%
Age	Percentage of Volunteers
25 or younger	59%
26-29	18%
30-54	16%
55 and over	7%

Source: PC/Jordan Volunteer Roster, October 2008

The majority of the Volunteer interviews occurred at the Volunteers' homes; we also inspected these homes using post-defined site selection criteria. The period of review for a post evaluation is one full Volunteer cycle (typically 27 months).

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

EVALUATION RESULTS

PROGRAMMING

The evaluation assessed whether 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 Peace Corps and the host country in determining development priorities and Peace Corps program areas.
- The existence of project plans based on host country development priorities and the Volunteers' understanding of the project plan goals and objectives.
- Whether Volunteers are placed in sites where they can contribute meaningfully to meeting host country development priorities.
- Relationships with counterparts that enable Volunteers to have productive work assignments that meet host country development priorities.

We found no significant areas of concern that would warrant action by the post related to PC/Jordan's project plans and feedback loops related to programming. Volunteers reported that they are aware of their project goals and 79% of those interviewed stated that their activities related to their project objectives moderately well to very well. The post continues to work with staff from OPATS and the region to hone its project plans. The post also works with its sponsoring organizations in country on an as-needed basis and has annual Project Advisory Council (PAC) meetings. PC/Jordan programming staff reported that they believe that PACs provide a valuable perspective but that they lack the financial resources to be truly effective. The post has also piloted regional workshops which provide technical training to counterparts, and a forum for community stakeholders to discuss experiences and expectations and provide feedback in a cost-effective manner. Additionally, the post's systematic coordination with Jordanian government officials in its site development practices to ensure Volunteer safety is a practice that sets PC/Jordan apart from other posts.

PC/Jordan is working with sponsoring host government officials to place Volunteers in safe work environments.

Volunteer safety and security is a primary concern for Peace Corps, the U.S. Embassy, and the Jordanian government. The three entities work together to place Volunteers in safe training and work sites. Training site locations are changed periodically as a safety precaution.

After PC/Jordan has created its list of potential Volunteer work sites, the list is sent to the Preventive Security Directorate (PSD), a branch within the Jordanian government, for review. The PSD returns a list of recommended placements. PC/Jordan does not place Volunteers in any site that has not received a recommendation from the PSD.

Another effective practice that PC/Jordan uses during site development is the Community Meeting. This meeting, with PC/Jordan staff and representatives from the Jordanian government in attendance, provides a forum for the community to ask questions and for staff to assess the community's willingness to accept a Volunteer.

The U.S. Embassy's Deputy Director of Security stated that he was very impressed with PC/Jordan's site selection process and believes that it ensures the community's commitment to support a Volunteer. He commended Peace Corps/Jordan for doing an excellent job with its site selection.

We encourage other posts to consider, as appropriate, employing a similar practice as part of site development as it provides a joint assessment of the community and ensures that the three overseeing entities are in accord.

Host country officials stated that Jordan would benefit from Volunteers with more relevant technical expertise and experience.

During our interviews with representatives from the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Social Development, and Higher Council for Youth, we found them well informed about Peace Corps activities in their sectors. They viewed their relationships with Peace Corps to be very positive. Each representative highlighted Peace Corps' emphasis on cross-cultural exchange, especially in the current context of U.S.-Middle East relations, as an important mutual benefit. Additionally, they emphasized the example of volunteerism that Peace Corps Volunteers provide to be valuable. They considered these aspects to be among the most beneficial aspects of the Peace Corps program. However, each of the three stated that they would benefit from more experienced Volunteers or Volunteers with specific expertise relevant to their sectors.

Peace Corps programs worldwide struggle with balancing accomplishable project goals related to the host country's development priorities while effectively using the available supply of Trainees and skills. We commend PC/Jordan for identifying the need and requesting from the Office of Volunteer Recruitment and Selection more experienced teachers for the next TEFL project training input. Additionally, as noted in the annual project status reporting feedback provided by headquarters offices to posts, each PC/Jordan project has made progress towards improving monitoring and reporting of expected outcomes to inform future requests for Trainees with specific skills and expertise.

We recommend:

- 1. That post work closely with OPATS to ensure that monitoring and reporting of Volunteers’ performance and outcomes inform requests for Trainees.**
- 2. That post consider revising its project plans to use Trainees’ existing skills or skills that can be developed during PST.**

Volunteers reported that they were satisfied with site placement in light of a challenging counterpart environment.

Identifying and keeping motivated and trained counterparts was highlighted by post staff as one of the top site placement challenges for PC/Jordan. Contributing to this is a high attrition rate for individuals in counterpart positions, especially for teachers and directors.

Counterparts are initially identified by program managers. However, because counterparts must travel to conferences and training events, and because of the social stigma associated with females being away from home overnight, alternate² counterparts are occasionally identified by the sponsoring school or center. Volunteers are encouraged to develop additional counterpart relationships once at site. Most Volunteers interviewed (79%) have at least one counterpart they work with regularly, most (77%) stated they had multiple counterparts, and most have good working relationships (average score 3.36 on a 5 point scale) with these counterparts.

Table 2: Volunteer Responses to Select Interview Questions

Volunteer Interview Question	Rating
How satisfied are you with your job placement?	86% “satisfied” or better
Please characterize your working relationship with your primary counterpart.	71% “average” or better

CROSS-CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

The second objective of a post evaluation assesses whether Peace Corps programs in a given country help promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of the people served. Cultural exchange is an integral part of the transfer of knowledge and skills that occurs between host-country community partners and Volunteers. As the only Peace Corps post in the Middle East, and especially in the context of current political relations, cross-cultural transfer in Jordan is seemingly even more important than in other Peace

² An “alternate” counterpart could be a female from a less conservative family who is able to travel or a male.

Corps countries. To understand the extent to which the post has implemented programs and activities to promote cross-cultural understanding, we interviewed Volunteers, post staff, and Ministry officials and reviewed training and evaluation materials.

PC/Jordan was the focus of an Internal Management Assessment (IMA) in 2006. The assessment examined PC/Jordan's strategies for operations and Volunteer service in a politically sensitive Arab Muslim country and the issue of succession planning and transition for key senior leadership positions at the post. The assessment found that the operating environment is such that "the margin for error is minimal. The cultural and religious mores are so strong at post that Volunteers and staff are simply not afforded mistakes. Every customer encounter counts." With that emphasis as a backdrop, the post integrates cross cultural exchange into all aspects of programming, training, and support operations.

PC/Jordan's has one of the agency's highest early termination rates.

At the time of this evaluation, PC/Jordan had the second highest early termination (ET) rate in the EMA region at 19% with the majority of those Volunteers resigning from service.³ The resignation rate for 2008 was 15%. Worldwide, only four posts had a higher resignation rate.

PC/Jordan staff expressed frustration and confusion with the ET rate and stated that there was little to no advance dialogue of a Volunteer's decision to terminate service. They also expressed their concerns with the perceived lack of commitment by Volunteers and unrealistic expectations of Volunteers – related to work situations and support. Also noted was that what Volunteers said to staff during exit interviews differed from what other Volunteers would relay informally about resignation reasons. Common reasons given by Volunteers to staff were: "I'm unhappy;" "I don't like it;" and "I'm lonely." In extreme situations, staff members had been informed of Volunteers' intent to terminate service from host country counterparts. According to the Office of Strategic Information, Research and Planning, it had not received any ET Volunteer Resignation Reasons forms from PC/Jordan in 2007 or 2008.

Headquarters staff, interviewed as part of this evaluation, stated that the PC/Jordan's ET rate has fluctuated over the years, and they did not express concern about the current rate. Headquarters staff mentioned cross-cultural constraints and gender segregation as being the major challenges for Volunteers. In addition, they told us they believed that Volunteers' reliance on support systems at home through the use of the internet and cellphones was a constraint to cultural integration.

The most common Volunteer perspective on PC/Jordan's ET rate was that adjusting to Jordanian culture was very difficult and played a role in early terminations. Other common perspectives expressed by Volunteers were:

³ The Peace Corps tracks early termination from service in the following categories: resignation, medical separation, administrative separation, and interrupted service. The aggregation of the categories is considered the entire set of early terminations (ET).

- Expectations of work situations were not confirmed/Volunteers felt that they were not doing what they had expected.
- Lack of support (staff support or opportunities to build Volunteer-specific support systems).
- Lack of commitment by and unrealistic expectations of Volunteers.
- Perception that “staff care more about numbers and appearances than people.”

Volunteers cited their most common hindrances to cultural integration as: gender segregation/gender roles; and the need to “hide who we are” (i.e., religious beliefs, behaviors such as drinking alcohol, interactions with opposite sex, typical clothing/appearance, etc). Some Volunteers commented that cross-cultural exchange was one-sided; they felt like they were living “double lives” in an effort to be accepted by their communities. One Volunteer commented, “people ask a lot of personal questions but the more honest you are the less likely you will be accepted.”

The 2006 IMA found a similar theme of Volunteers reporting that they live “dual lives – telling community members what they need to hear with respect to whether the Volunteer ever drinks alcohol, has ever socially interacted with the opposite sex, or receives a text message from a PCV of the opposite sex.”

However, there were two differences between the findings of this evaluation and the 2006 IMA. First, Volunteers’ perception of support and empathy from senior leadership and staff was reported as high during the IMA. Support scores for PC/Jordan staff obtained during this evaluation were generally high, though not across the board. Second, the IMA reported a proactive Volunteer Resiliency Group as a current practice that should be continued as a method of support. At the time of the evaluation, the Volunteer Resiliency Group had lapsed, but the post was making significant strides in re-establishing a Peer Support Network.

A senior EMA regional staff member told us, “...most important of Post Staff’s jobs is to motivate Volunteers. The approach will differ depending on where a Volunteer is during service. This becomes even more important in a post like Jordan as the culture is so very different and Volunteers will always be at a distance.”

There are many factors that contribute to Volunteers’ resigning early from their service. The two most significant factors that we found were Volunteers’ difficulties with cultural integration and the appearance of a disparity in understanding between staff and Volunteers.

We recommend:

- 3. That the post review the post’s definition of support and expectations and communicate it to all Volunteers and staff.**

4. **That the post create a special working group comprised of staff and Volunteers to develop and implement strategies to address the lack of trust issues between staff and Volunteers.**
5. **That the post develop and implement strategies to collect Volunteer feedback and address cultural integration issues.**

As reported in their Integrated Planning and Budget Strategy (IPBS), PC/Jordan had been working towards its goal of “positively affect[ing] fill rates by increasing the recruitment of 50+ PCVs,⁴ couples, and technically qualified individuals.” To support this, the post planned to focus on specific training needs for the 50+ Trainees and couples and using the Training Design and Evaluation process to improve the technical training component for the most recently entering group of Trainees.

One female Volunteer told us, “I’ve been able to feel successful as part of a married couple; for single women - I have a hard time trying to imagine what it would be like. The gender roles are difficult to work within and conform to; even being married, I have to conform (i.e., men are supposed to do the talking). There are challenges but [being part of a married couple] has helped my integration a lot. Women who are married and have families see me as one of them. I can have conversations that women who are single can’t.”

We found that PC/Jordan’s consideration of placing married couples in communities to facilitate integration promising and encourage that the post monitor the success of these placements.

TRAINING

Another objective of the post evaluation is to answer the question “to what extent does training provide Volunteers the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes to integrate into the community and perform their jobs?” To answer this question we consider a number of factors, including:

- The existence of training goals, competencies, and learning objectives that help a post understand the skills Volunteers need.
- The types of training Trainees and Volunteers receive, the topics covered during those training sessions, and whether training targets were met.
- The feedback on the effectiveness of training in providing the skills and knowledge needed for Volunteer assignments and success.

⁴ At the time of fieldwork for this evaluation, the age of the oldest Volunteer in the field was 38. Therefore, we were unable to address the 50+ placement strategy.

PC/Jordan is moving its Trainee input to the first quarter of 2010 to accommodate agency budgetary constraints and to improve the timing of pre-service training (PST). The new PST timeframe will not occur during Ramadan, which has hindered training effectiveness in the past. The post is revising PST and is considering changing the format from community-based training (CBT) to mixed-format training.

Similar to other posts, PC/Jordan Volunteers receive training throughout their service: pre-service training; an in-service training (IST) which is a Project Design and Management workshop after six months of service; and an IST which is also known as the mid-service conference after 12 months of service. Additionally, Volunteers participate in counterpart trainings by sector.

PC/Jordan uses the Training Design and Evaluation (TDE) model to establish competencies and learning objectives, as required by the agency, for pre-service training. The post is working towards expanding the use of the model to all training events. Training targets were met for the most recent incoming cohort of Trainees.

PC/Jordan's approach to train to the most conservative contexts appears to prepare Volunteers to understand cultural challenges.

PC/Jordan teaches Trainees how to be successful in the most conservative of contexts. One hundred percent of Volunteers interviewed rated cross-cultural training during pre-service training (PST) favorably (3 or higher on a 5 point scale), with an average rating of 3.9. The cultural training and experiences provided to Trainees appears to be effective; 93% of PC/Jordan Volunteers interviewed rated themselves as having "above average success" to being "very successful" in understanding cross-cultural issues. The average rating given was four on a five-point scale (1 = unsuccessful, 5 = very successful). Additionally, the 2008 Biennial Volunteer Survey found that 93.5% of Volunteers felt "adequately" to "very well" integrated into their community.

Jordanian government stakeholders interviewed stated that Volunteers are "well prepared regarding traditions, language, things to keep in mind," but that "a Volunteer's success is related to skills and attitude. The Volunteers who are well integrated accept the community as it is."

The majority of Volunteers interviewed praised the conservative approach to cultural training and commented that "they prepared us for the worst" and "[it was] very smart to teach to the most conservative [situations]. I've heard other Volunteers complain, but I'm glad they [taught this way]." However, 4 of 14 Volunteers relayed that the approach to cross-cultural training did not strike the right balance. They commented that they were afraid to express themselves or were confused about when to approach members of the opposite sex.

PC/Jordan staff members, who were interviewed, put forth that a conservative approach to training provided a firm base for understanding, but recognized that this approach could instill a fear in Volunteers. Second-year Volunteers were available during the

entire PST time period to help Trainees answer questions, adjust to life as a Volunteer, and integrate into Jordanian culture. They were commended by multiple members of the most recent training group and their presence was recognized as valuable.

We recommend:

- 6. That the training staff assesses Trainees’ abilities to express themselves in a culturally appropriate manner and to employ additional support strategies as needed.**

The information that the post collects from Volunteers does not provide an accurate representation of the effectiveness of pre-service technical training.

We asked Volunteers to rate how effective PST was in several key areas – language, culture, safety and security, medical and health, and technical aspects. Overall, we found that PC/Jordan Volunteers were satisfied with their training. The notable exception to this was in the area of technical training. Sixty-four percent of Volunteers in our sample responded that technical training during PST was below average or inadequate. This rating spanned Volunteers from all project sectors and at different points in service. The most common criticisms were that the technical training superficially covered too many topics and that it was not specific to the Jordanian context (i.e., applicable for a Jordanian school or center). The practicum component of technical training was highlighted as the best component of technical training.

Table 3: Volunteer Perceptions of PST Training Effectiveness

PST Area	Ineffective (1)	Below average (2)	Moderate (3)	Above average (4)	Very effective (5)	Average
Language	7%	14%	29%	36%	14%	3.4
Culture	0%	0%	36%	36%	29%	3.9
Safety/Security	0%	0%	7%	43%	50%	4.4
Medical/Health	0%	0%	7%	21%	71%	4.6
Technical	14%	50%	21%	14%	0%	2.4

Source: OIG Interviews with 14 Volunteers.

However, PC/Jordan’s programming and training staff’s opinion on the effectiveness of PST technical training differed from Volunteers. One PC/Jordan staff member stated the most recent PST had “one of the best Technical Training sessions ever.” Another staff member agreed that the most recent PST had been an improvement over prior. Possibly contributing to their perception was that the post had hired separate technical trainers for each project, even though finding qualified instructors was a difficult task.

The difference in opinion on the effectiveness of technical training may lie in the way that the post collects feedback on technical training. PC/Jordan collects PST feedback from Trainees through staff interviews with Trainees, via Language and Cultural Facilitator (LCFs), and two written evaluation forms at the conclusion of PST. The first written evaluation form asks the Trainee to respond to three general questions about PST. This final evaluation form solicits very general information about PST and does not provide a format for Trainees to comment separately on each component of training (i.e., safety and security, cross-cultural, medical/health, language, and technical training). The second form asks Trainees to rate their LCF according to specific criteria.

In addition, the post has identified sector competencies and learning objectives for each sector. But it is not clear whether the Trainee feedback process assesses technical competence. This information would provide an additional feedback loop for technical training.

We recommend:

- 7. That the programming and training staff collect Trainee feedback on all components (language, cross-cultural, technical, safety and health) of pre-service training.**
- 8. That post use sector competencies and learning objectives in their Trainee assessment process.**

VOLUNTEER SUPPORT

This evaluation attempts to answer the question “to what extent has the post provided adequate oversight and support to Volunteers?” To determine this, the evaluation assesses numerous factors, including staff communications to Volunteers; project and status report feedback; medical support; safety and security support elements such as site visits, the Emergency Action Plan (EAP), the handling of crime incidences; and the adequacy of the Volunteer living allowance.

We found no significant areas of concern that would warrant action by the post related to medical support or the Volunteer living allowance. Volunteers feel well supported by the medical office. The Peace Corps Medical Officer (PCMO) plays a collaborative role in the support of Volunteers and is often looked to by Volunteers for additional emotional support. Regarding the living allowance, 93% of Volunteers interviewed stated that their living allowance allows them to live a safe and healthy lifestyle “moderately” to “very well.” Additionally, all Volunteers (n=13) interviewed stated that they believed that the

number of site visits that they had received was adequate. All seven Volunteers who had received site visits stated that they were moderately to very effective.⁵

PC/Jordan's and Jordanian officials work diligently to provide Volunteers with safe and secure living and working environments.

As noted earlier in this report, the safety and security of Volunteers is at the forefront of PC/Jordan post operations. The results of the post's attention to safety and security are evident.

Volunteers reported that they feel most safe at their homes, work sites, and/or in their communities. Their perception changes slightly when asked about traveling or visiting the Peace Corps office in Amman; 43% believe that they have an "average" likelihood of experiencing a crime when traveling; 14% believe that they have an average likelihood of experiencing a crime while visiting the Peace Corps office.

A review of crime incident data shows that Jordan's rate of crimes is less than other posts. The highest categories of incidents reported are "theft" and "other sexual assault." The post keeps a reconciliation log of all incidents reported and entered in the Consolidated Incident Reporting System to ensure trend reporting on incidents is accurate (i.e., reclassification of incidents that might occur at PC/Headquarters).

PC/Jordan's Safety and Security Coordinator (SSC) has worked with PC/Jordan since 1999 and has been in the SSC position since it was created in 2002. One hundred percent of Volunteers interviewed found that the support provided by the SSC to be favorable (average to very supportive) and found safety and security training in PST to be moderately to very effective (average score: 4.4). All Volunteers interviewed who reported to have experienced a crime stated that they had reported the crime to the SSC and that they believed that it was handled appropriately. Additionally, all Volunteers but one, regardless of whether they had experienced a crime, stated that they would report a crime should it occur to them.

PC/Jordan works closely with the U.S. Embassy. The Regional Security Office was informed of and had access to Peace Corps processes for emergency action planning and systems for crime incident reporting. All Volunteers interviewed at their homes were able to produce the most recent copy of the post's Emergency Action Plan (EAP). Additionally, our review of the most recent EAP consolidation test, which the post conducts annually after incoming Volunteers arrive at their permanent sites, showed that the post successfully managed the consolidation test.

During Volunteer visits, 64% of Volunteer sites were located using Site Locator Forms. Site Locator Forms for Volunteers in our sample had completed critical elements. No global positioning system (GPS) coordinates were recorded on the forms; however, the

⁵ When asked "Is the number of site visits you have received adequate?" there was no distinction between "technical" and "support" site visits from leadership, programming, training, safety and security, or medical staff.

post had recently received their GPS unit. Staff took coordinates during Volunteer visits for this evaluation.

The Volunteer housing that we observed did not meet the post's housing criteria.

We reviewed Volunteer housing in our sample to see if it met the post's criteria. This evaluation did not find significant areas of concern with the Volunteer housing that would warrant action by the post. However, we found the following items of interest:

- Five of 10 failed the criterion that the residence must be “away from where crowds gather.”⁶
- Three of 10 did not have iron bars on all accessible windows.
- Seven of 10 did not have screens on all windows.

PC/Jordan's criteria for selecting Volunteer housing is clear, though some items require judgment that exceeds a physical inspection and requires a familiarity with the site.

We recommend:

- 9. That the post review its housing criteria and associated checklist to determine criteria that are meaningful.**

Volunteers reported that they were not clear on the type and frequency of program support they can expect from PC/Jordan staff.

While Volunteers interviewed as part of this evaluation reported that they generally felt supported, they were not clear on how to involve PC/Jordan programming staff at different stages in their service. Additionally, Volunteers reported that they did not find feedback from their trimester reports to be useful, especially technical feedback. This information corresponds with 2008 BVS scores on the inadequacy of feedback on trimester reports.

IHPP Indicator 4.8 states:

...staff and Volunteers alike recognize the distinction between when the staff can and should help Volunteers and when Volunteers can and should help themselves. Staff members are able to act in both cases, i.e., to provide help directly and to help the Volunteers help themselves, as appropriate (IHPP, p.6.)

⁶ The Volunteer's assessment of whether the housing location was “away from where crowds gather” was used as the evaluator was only at the site for a brief time period.

We recommend:

10. That the post clarify expectations for Volunteer support by communicating to Volunteers (1) turn-around times for communication activities (2) what they can expect from whom in terms of support and (3) what PC/Jordan expects from Volunteers.

11. That the post publish a schedule of events for the cycle of Volunteer service that includes communication, site visits, training, and performance reporting events.

Volunteers reported that they feel less supported by the country director than all other post staff.

As part of this evaluation, we asked Volunteers to rate the level of support they receive from post staff. On the whole, Volunteers reported that they feel supported by PC/Jordan staff. However, Volunteers we interviewed perceive the support they receive from the country director to be significantly lower than all other staff.

Table 4: Responses on Perception of Volunteer Support⁷

Area	Average Rating for Support	% of Volunteers rating “average support” or better
Leadership	2.8	57%
Programming	4.1	95%
Training	4.3	100%
Safety and Security	4.6	100%
Medical	4.6	100%
Administrative	3.6	100%

Source: OIG Volunteer Interviews, 2008

The 2008 Biennial Volunteer Survey reported Volunteers’ perception of support provided by the country director; 78% percent of Volunteers thought that the country director interaction with Volunteers was less than adequate to be aware of issues and concerns.

⁷ The leadership score was derived from the country director score (n= 7; 7 Volunteers gave a scoring of “no basis from which to judge”); the programming score was derived by averaging the PTO, the Program Manager, and the Programming and Training Assistant scores; the training score was derived from the Training Manager score; the safety and security score was derived from the Safety and Security Coordinator score; the medical score was derived from the PCMO score; the administrative score was derived from the administrative officer score (n=3; 11 Volunteers gave a scoring of “no basis from which to judge”)

Table 5: Responses Regarding Country Director Interaction with Volunteers

E11. To what extent does your country director interact with Volunteers to be aware of Volunteer issues and concerns, through training events, in-service conferences, site visits, Volunteer Advisory Council meetings, and other informal interaction?					
	Not at all	Minimally	Adequately	Considerably	Completely
To what extent does your country director interact with Volunteers to be aware of Volunteer issues and concerns...? ⁸	14%	64%	11%	7%	5%

Indicator 4.16 in Indicators of a High Performing Post states:

...the Country Director has frequent personal contact with Volunteers. In addition to informal conversations, the country director conducts at least two formal interviews with each Volunteer in the country (i.e., Trainee interview and exit interview). Country directors do this to establish and reinforce relationships with Volunteers, assess training and service-related issues and convey their own messages to Volunteers on a personal level.

On a positive note, the country director has established a Volunteer Advisory Council (VAC) at the post as a formal mechanism to collect Volunteer feedback. Indicators of a High Performing Post highlights “the existence of a VAC or some other mechanism that gathers, analyzes, and funnels Volunteer concerns and suggestions to staff” as an indicator of success.

The evaluator attended a PC/Jordan VAC meeting and was encouraged that the majority of issues raised during OIG interviews were raised for discussion during the meeting.

Though this finding does not seem to directly impact post operations, it might contribute to the lack of trust and poor communication between Volunteers and PC/Jordan staff and the post’s high early termination rate.

We recommend:

- 12. That the country director make efforts to build relationships with Volunteers.**

⁸ n=44

MANAGEMENT CONTROLS

Another objective of the post evaluation is to assess the extent to which the post's resources are effectively aligned with the post's and agency's mission and priorities. The evaluation also assesses how the agency has supported and overseen the post's mission and program. To address these questions we assess a number of factors, including the post's planning and oversight of operations, staff management and training, relationships with headquarters offices, and performance reporting.

PC/Jordan has systems and processes in place to ensure continuity of operations.

Although PC/Jordan is a relatively “young” post, the post benefits from seasoned staff. All of the senior staff, except U.S. direct hires (country director, programming and training officer, administrative officer), have been associated with the program for at least ten years.

PC/Jordan seems to have clearly divided staff responsibilities into activities related to particular functions: programming and training activities, led by the PTO; administrative activities, led by the administrative officer; safety and security activities, led by the SSC; and medical activities, led by the PCMO. All of the functions are overseen by the country director.

PC/Jordan complies with submitting agency-required operational assessments such as the Administrative Management Control Survey (AMCS), MS270 Compliance, Project Status, and Training Status reports. The post has a clear system for keeping Volunteer files and has a Duty Officer Handbook and duty officer log. In a review of ten files, Performance Appraisals were conducted on schedule for all except two recently hired employees. Additionally, the post employs a process for cross-training and human resource back-ups for required functions.

Embassy officials who work with Peace Corps commended the country director, programming and training officer and safety and security officer during OIG interviews. Additionally, PC/Jordan staff interviewed as part of this program evaluation feel supported by their leadership. The PTO was highlighted as providing additional support outside of his purview. As part of his role, he supports the country director in conducting community meetings, holding Volunteer interviews during training or exit interviews, representing Peace Corps with outside entities. Additionally, PC/Jordan staff stated that they feel well-supported by Peace Corps headquarters.

PC/Jordan's quarterly roster review highlight priority support issues from different staff perspectives and facilitates open communication between staff.

Each quarter, the PC/Jordan team meets to discuss support needs for currently serving Volunteers. This provides each team member an opportunity to provide their perspective regarding recent interactions or visits, confer with others and highlight any Volunteer support matters to be addressed. This practice helps ensure that all staff are in accord and

that multiple perspectives are taken into consideration. We find this practice encouraging and believe it to be one that other posts might benefit from.

PC/Jordan staff reported that they were unclear on how to interpret the post's policies on compensation such as "comp time" and per diem.

During the evaluation, some staff members, who must travel to visit Volunteers, voiced confusion on the post's policy on compensation (i.e., comp time and per diem). Additionally, the 2007 OIG Audit of PC/Jordan found deficiencies with time and attendance records and practices, including compensatory (comp) time. The post acknowledged that it is currently in the process of updating its staff handbook.

Indicators of a High Performing Post section 3.2 states that "Peace Corps staff know their responsibilities and rights, which are assembled in a readily accessible personnel manual or handbook. All personnel have written job descriptions or statements of work, with practical channels of supervision and responsibility. These are reviewed periodically and tasks are changed or redistributed among staff or sections, as appropriate." Additionally, Peace Corps Manual section 813 requires the country director to establish per diem rates for country staff and contract personnel while performing official travel within the country of assignment.

We recommend:

13. That the post review, establish, and communicate its policy for in-country staff and contract personnel official travel.

PC/Jordan has transitioned to the Volunteer Reporting Tool for Volunteer performance reporting.

As part of the annual Project Status Reporting (PSR) process, program managers compile and aggregate Volunteer performance reports for the Volunteers they supervise. This information is reported to Peace Corps/Headquarters through the PSR process and is used in the agency-wide aggregation included in the agency's Performance and Accountability Report (PAR). This evaluation attempted to understand the post's process for collecting and aggregating performance data.

Peace Corps has started the distribution of a new performance data collection tool, the Volunteer Reporting Tool (VRT), for Volunteers in the field. This tool is customized for each post and each project's framework.

Volunteers interviewed for this evaluation stated that they were not trained on performance reporting during PST. Most Volunteers in the most recent input knew little, if anything, about performance reporting for their projects or the type of information

needed to be collected. The implementation timing of the VRT played a roll in this according to staff interviews. Performance reporting training was provided to the longer serving group during mid-service conference. Of the five Volunteers who responded to the question, “how reliable is the data submitted in your performance reports,” four believed that the information that they report is average to very reliable.

We recommend:

14. That the post provide training during PST on the content and format of the Volunteers’ trimester reporting.

Agency budget cuts have impacted PC/Jordan programming, training, and Volunteer support activities.

The current budget environment for the agency is being felt by posts as they attempt to conduct normal operations. Like many Peace Corps posts, PC/Jordan has been creative in identifying cost-cutting solutions; however, the following negative impacts on programming, training and support were raised during interviews with PC/Jordan staff:

- *Site Visits to Volunteers:* Staff has been required to prioritize Volunteer site visits (prioritizing incoming Volunteers highest) and have logistically arranged visits so that they will not require overnight stays. Staff have noted that these make for long days with a decreased amount of quality time spent with Volunteers and community stakeholders/counterparts.
- *Length of PST:* The length of PST has decreased from ten to eight weeks. Trainees have two fewer weeks to learn the language, technical skills, and safety and medical concerns that will help ensure a safe, healthy, and productive service.
- *Ongoing support for language learning:* The amount of money available for language tutoring once Volunteers are at site is insufficient. Post recommends a minimum number of tutoring hours to help Trainees who need language assistance. However, the post can no longer afford to pay for the minimum number of tutoring hours.
- *Staff recruitment and retention:* The post is unable to pay competitive wages to recruit and retain professional-level Language and Cultural Facilitators.

The post is facing additional daunting challenges with price increases and significant fluctuations for leases and lease renewals; the administrative officer stated that 15-25% increases were typical. In their FY 2009 Operating Plan, the post submitted un-funded requests to cover lease cost increases and salaries. Medical accommodations and costs in general were also raised as potential concerns.

While we believe that PC/Jordan and the EMA Region are in the best position to prioritize operational activities, we highlight how agency budget cuts have impacted

PC/Jordan's programming, training and support because it is ultimately affecting the quality of service Peace Corps provides to Jordan and to the Volunteers.

POST STAFFING

At the time of our field visit, PC/Jordan had 19 staff positions, one of which was vacant. The positions included three U.S. direct hire employees (USDH), two foreign service nationals (FSN), and 14 personal services contractors (PSC). We interviewed 10 staff.

The post also employs temporary staff/contractors to assist with PST. Given the time of our visit, there were no PST temporary contractors on staff.

PC/Jordan Positions

Position	Status	Interviewed
Country Director	USDH	X
Programming and Training Officer	USDH	X
Administrative Officer	USDH	X
Safety and Security Coordinator	PSC	X
PCMO	PSC	X
Medical Assistant	PSC	X
Financial Assistant (vacant)	FSN	
Cashier	FSN	
IT Specialist	PSC	
General Services Officer	PSC	
General Services Assistant/Driver (3)	PSC	
Homestay and Logistics Coordinator	PSC	
Training Manager	PSC	X
Program Manager/Youth Development and Special Education	PSC	X
Program Manager/TEFL	PSC	X
Programming and Training Assistant	PSC	X
Receptionist and IRC Manager	PSC	

INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED

As part of this post evaluation interviews were conducted with 14 Volunteers, 10 in-country staff members, and 15 representatives from Peace Corps headquarters in Washington, D.C., the U.S. Embassy in Jordan, and key project partners.

Interviews Conducted with PC/Headquarters Staff, Embassy Officials, and Key Project Partners

Position	Organization
Regional Director	PC/Headquarters
Regional Chief Administrative Officer	PC/Headquarters
Regional Programming and Training Advisor	PC/Headquarters
Regional Chief of Operations	PC/Headquarters
Country Desk Officer (2)	PC/Headquarters
Safety & Security Desk Officer	PC/Headquarters
Education Specialist	PC/Headquarters
Youth Specialist	PC/Headquarters
Ambassador	U.S. Embassy in Jordan
Deputy Director of Security, Regional Security Office	U.S. Embassy in Jordan
Managing Director of General Education and Students' Affairs	Jordan's Ministry of Education
Manager of Organizations and International Cooperation	Jordan's Higher Council for Youth
Minister of Social Development	Jordan's Ministry of Social Development
Secretary General	Jordan's Ministry of Social Development
Director of Charitable Societies	Jordan's Ministry of Social Development

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

WE RECOMMEND:

1. That post work closely with OPATS to ensure that monitoring and reporting of Volunteers' performance and outcomes inform requests for Trainees.
2. That post consider revising its project plans to use Trainees' existing skills or skills that can be developed during PST.
3. That the post review the post's definition of support and expectations and communicate it to all Volunteers and staff.
4. That the post create a special working group comprised of staff and Volunteers to develop and implement strategies to address the lack of trust issues between staff and Volunteers.
5. That the post develop and implement strategies to collect Volunteer feedback and address cultural integration issues.
6. That the training staff assesses Trainees' abilities to express themselves in a culturally appropriate manner and to employ additional support strategies as needed.
7. That the programming and training staff collect Trainee feedback on all components (language, cross-cultural, technical, safety and health) of pre-service training.
8. That post use sector competencies and learning objectives in their Trainee assessment process.
9. That the post review its housing criteria and associated checklist to determine criteria that are feasible.
10. That the post clarify expectations for Volunteer support by communicating to Volunteers (1) turn-around times for communication activities (2) what they can expect from whom in terms of support and (3) what PC/Jordan expects from Volunteers .
11. That the post publish a schedule of events for the cycle of Volunteer service that includes communication, site visits, training, and performance reporting events.
12. That the country director make efforts to build relationships with Volunteers.
13. That the post review, establish, and communicate its policy for in-country staff and contract personnel official travel.
14. That the post provide training during PST on the content and format of the Volunteers' trimester reporting.

APPENDIX A

**MANAGEMENT'S RESPONSE TO
THE PRELIMINARY REPORT**



Since 1961.

MEMORANDUM

To: Kathy Buller, Inspector General

From: David Burgess, Action Regional Director of Europe, Mediterranean & Asia

Date: August 6, 2009

Subject: Response to the Preliminary report of the Office of Inspector General Program Evaluation of Peace Corps/Jordan

Enclosed please find the Regional response to the recommendations made by the Inspector General for Peace Corps/Jordan, as outlined in the Preliminary Report of the IG Program Evaluation.

The Region concurs with all recommendations.



RESPONSE

to the March 2009

PRELIMINARY REPORT

of the

**Office of Inspector General
Program Evaluation of Peace Corps/Jordan**

Conducted November 1 -21, 2008

Summary

The Europe, Mediterranean and Asia (EMA) Region concurs with all fourteen recommendations provided by the OIG in its “*Preliminary Program Evaluation Report: Peace Corps / Jordan (March 2009)*.”

The EMA Region is heartened that the OIG found “no significant areas of concern that would warrant action by the post related to PC/Jordan’s project plans and feedback loops related to programming.” The Region also appreciates OIG observation that the program’s Jordanian partners view their relationship with PC/Jordan positively, and that these partners believe that the examples of Volunteerism which PCVs provide are valuable. The Region also notes that 86% of Peace Corps Volunteers in Jordan are satisfied with their job placements/assignments, despite a challenging counterpart environment.

The Region and PC/Jordan understand that there is still work to be done, and post staff members welcome the insights and information offered by the OIG Evaluation Report.

OIG Evaluation Results

Major themes in the OIG Program Evaluation Report deal with the challenges that Volunteers face in cultural adjustment, community integration, and how PC/Jordan staff can best provide Volunteer support. The Region and the post agree that training is the key intervention to address these findings. How well a Volunteer is trained is often a primary determinant of an individual’s success as a PCV. This is especially important considering that 50% of PC/Jordan Volunteers perceived their technical training to be “below average.” PC/Jordan is confident that it will address these findings through improved training staff preparation, and by adapting its Community-Based Training (CBT) model in Q1 – FY-2010 to better accommodate PCVs’ technical needs and cultural adjustment challenges. But the impact of these changes will necessarily be demonstrated in the future. PC/Jordan has included many of these planned actions in its recent IPBS submission for FYs 2010-2012, and the Region expects that sufficient resources will be available to fully integrate and implement these improvements.

RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS

PROGRAMMING

1. Recommendation: That the post work closely with OPATS to ensure that monitoring and reporting of Volunteers’ performance and outcomes inform requests for Trainees.

Concur

PC/Jordan continues to work closely with OPATS to obtain technical assistance in monitoring and reporting Volunteers’ performance and outcomes. PC/Jordan also works closely with its national partners: the Ministry of Education (MoE), Ministry of Social Development (MSD), and the Higher Council for Youth (HCfY), through respective Partner Advisory Committees (PACs). These PACs analyze the effectiveness of the projects, project direction, size and strategies, and establish the skills and experience qualifications levels that PC/Jordan will request for each training group. Beginning in April 2009, the post implemented the agency’s new Volunteer Reporting Tool (VRT) to better document performance and outcomes for PCVs. PC/Jordan’s plans for 2010 include requests for additional OPATS assistance in the areas of Program Design and Management workshops and M&E assistance. Virtual assistance (e.g., Web-Ex sessions) will also be undertaken as needed.

Action & Status

A. Implementation of the new VRT

Date of Completion: April 2009

Documentation: IG Recommendation # 1 Action A – VRT Roll-Out Notices

B. Post will submit an OPATS assistance request for a consultation to strengthen its field-based monitoring and evaluation process, thereby better informing the Post when establishing trainee requests.

Date of Completion: July 2009

Documentation: IG Recommendation #1 Action B – FY2010 OPATS Field Assistance Request- M&E Specialist

2. Recommendation: That the post consider revising its project plans to use Trainees’ existing skills, or skills that can be developed during PST.

Concur

All three PC/Jordan project plans have a “green” status with OPATS and are meeting their established objectives. Nevertheless, the post continues to review its project plans and makes adjustments as necessary. During each PST and IST, the Training Unit continues to identify and utilize existing and relevant skills that trainees possess. For the FY-2010 Trainee Input requests, Program Managers (PMs) worked with their PCVs and incorporated Volunteers’ suggestions into the VADs, expanding the tasks that PCVs in all three projects can undertake.

Action & Status

- A. The Training Unit will develop a questionnaire / skills assessment to be included in Trainees’ pre-arrival materials. This assessment will determine areas of technical, cultural and language curriculum to which a trainee might contribute during the PST.

Date of Completion: July 2009

Documentation: IG Recommendation #2 Action A – J-13 Experience Skills Survey 2009

- B. The Training Unit will develop and use a post-training questionnaire to measure how successful the PST was in using and developing PCV skills that meet host country needs during this period of training.

Date of Completion: December 2009

Documentation: IG Recommendation Action B – J-13 Post PST Experience Skills Survey 2009

Additional Actions:

- In the TEFL project, PC/Jordan has requested from MoE more emphasis and support to allow experienced PCVs to conduct more teacher training.
- The Youth Development (YD) project is investigating sites affiliated with universities and emphasizing community development activities.
- The Special Education (SE) project is determining where SE Volunteers might teach students who are studying special education; and those SE Volunteers who have appropriate skills will be encouraged to become more involved in Community Based Rehab (CBR) activities.

CROSS-CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

3. Recommendation: That the Post review its definition of support and expectations and communicate it to all Volunteers and staff.

Concur

Providing proper Volunteer support is a major goal of the program and is taken very seriously by all staff in every department of PC/Jordan. The Post has initiated efforts to communicate to Volunteers the kinds and frequency of support that they can expect during their service. In 2008, the Country Director resurrected PC/Jordan’s newsletter, which is now used by staff to communicate and clarify policies and procedures. In 2009 PC/Jordan also organized a Peer Support Network and trained selected Volunteers to provide support to other PCVs in Jordan. In FY-2010, PC/Jordan will use the Agency’s *Core Expectations for Volunteers* to clarify and help to communicate its definition of PCV support and expectations. These efforts and materials will be shared in various PC/Jordan documents and publications such as: PC/Jordan Welcome Packets; PST orientation sessions; the post’s resurrected newsletter; and through VAC and Peer Support Network activities.

Action & Status

- A. Post will review its *Policies and Procedures Guide* and expand the Volunteer and Program Support section to include the *Core Expectations for Volunteers* and better clarify expectations for all Volunteers and staff.

Date of Completion: October 2009
Documentation: N/A

- B. PC/Jordan will incorporate a statement and description of expectations regarding Volunteer support into the Staff Handbook.

Date of Completion: July 2009
Documentation: IG Recommendation #3 Action B – Staff Handbook
 Volunteer Support Statement

- C. Post will organize an office retreat and include on the agenda a discussion on Volunteer support expectations, and how the staff can better address those expectations.

Date of Completion: April 2009
Documentation: IG Recommendation #3 Action C – Peace Corps Office
 Retreat Agenda

4. Recommendation: That the Post create a special working group comprised of staff and Volunteers to develop and implement strategies that will address the issue of lack of trust between staff and Volunteers.

Concur

Working with the current VAC, PC/Jordan has discussed ways to improve communication between staff and Volunteers to build trust and to overcome any perceived lack of trust. This of course is an on-going effort, as PCVs constitute an ever-changing population. It also relates directly to PCVs’ expectations. At the March 2009 VAC meeting, PC/Jordan established a working group to:

- 1) Review the PC/Jordan *Policies and Procedures Guide* to identify areas that require clarification, updating, inclusion or modification.
- 2) Solicit feedback and suggestions from Jordan PCVs regarding actions that staff and Volunteers can take to improve Volunteer support, as well as communications between staff and Volunteers.
- 3) Produce a report that presents the findings of the working group and recommendations for actions to be taken.

The working group presented its findings at the June 2009 VAC meeting. Its recommendations will be incorporated as appropriate into an updated PC/Jordan *Polices and Procedures Guide*, and into training sessions scheduled for the upcoming MSC, PST and ISTs.

Action & Status

- A. Establish the Volunteer Support and Communication Working Group.

Date of Completion: April 2009
Documentation: IG Recommendation #4 Action A –VSCWG SOW

- B. Present the Volunteer Support and Communication Working Group’s findings and recommendation to the VAC and the CD.

Date of Completion: June 2009
Documentation: IG Recommendation Action G – VSCWG Final Report 2009

- C. Incorporate feedback from the working group into the PC/Jordan *Policies and Procedures Guide* and into MSC and PST sessions.

Date of Completion: October 2009
Documentation: N/A

5. Recommendation: That the Post develop and implement strategies to collect Volunteer feedback and address cultural integration issues.

Concur

PC/Jordan incorporates substantive cross-cultural sessions into all training events. Cultural sessions are based on the TDE process which is used to identify competencies and training needs. With the implementation of the new Volunteer Reporting Tool (VRT) PC/Jordan has included a question specifically soliciting feedback concerning Volunteers’ cultural adaptation. Post will consider these responses when designing future cross-cultural training sessions.

Action & Status

- A. Inclusion of a cultural integration question into the new VRT to provide feedback from currently serving PCVs on issues related to cultural integration.

Date of Completion: July 2009
Documentation: IG Recommendation #5 Action A – Volunteer Reporting Tool Cultural Question

- B. The PC/Jordan Training Unit will conduct a survey of COSing PCVs to identify successful strategies for addressing post-specific cultural integration issues, and will incorporate findings into the PST.

Date of Completion: August & September 2009
Documentation: IG Recommendation #5 Action B – J-11 COS Cultural Integration Questionnaire

- C. The PC/Jordan Training Unit will conduct an additional survey at the Mid-Service Conference of group J-12 to assess successful strategies for addressing cultural integration issues.

Date of Completion: October 2009
Documentation: IG Recommendation #4 Action B – J-12 MSC Cultural Integration Questionnaire

TRAINING

6. Recommendation: That the Training staff assess Trainees’ abilities to express themselves in a culturally appropriate manner and employ additional support strategies as needed.

Concur

During the PST Trainees receive an average of 54 hours of targeted cross-cultural communication training, with an emphasis on adapting to the most conservative context of the Jordanian culture. PCTs receive feedback from PST staff on their core cross-cultural training competencies and cross-cultural communication abilities throughout the PST. During each IST PC/Jordan assesses cross-cultural challenges and shares best practices to address those challenges. Best practices are then incorporated in the next PST for subsequent Trainees to benefit from their predecessors.

Action & Status

A. The Training Unit will develop a tracking process to assess PCTs’ progress adapting US-based communication styles to the Jordanian culture. These data will be used to provide individual feedback to help PCTs to adjust to Jordanian culture.

Date of Completion: October 2009

Documentation: N/A

7. Recommendation: That the Programming and Training staff collect trainee feedback on all components (language, cross-cultural, technical, safety and health) of PST.

Concur

Using the TDE process of the “Kirkpatrick Levels of Performance,” PC/Jordan will identify strengths and areas for improvement after each PST. These data will be incorporated into the Post’s planning of the next PST’s design.

Action & Status

A. The Training Unit will develop a tracking matrix using the ratings that each PCT provides in the PST evaluations. The P&T Staff will review this information with the PCTs after each evaluation period.

Date of Completion: October 2009

Documentation: N/A

8. Recommendation: That the post use sector competencies and learning objectives in the Trainee assessment process.

Concur

Prior to arriving in Jordan, Peace Corps provides each prospective PCT a CD-ROM with a copy of the project plan and framework under which they will be working. These documents are reviewed and updated through the Post’s TDE process. Upon arrival in Jordan, each PCT receives a Training Handbook with a detailed list of competencies and learning objectives for

each training component and technical sector. During the individual trainee assessments, the PCTs are asked to rate their progress on the established competencies for their training period.

Action & Status

- A. The Training Unit will administer a detailed pre- and post-assessment procedure that each PCT will complete. This process will document the progress that the PCTs have made during the PST period, and help to identify areas for additional training.

Date of Completion: October 2009

Documentation: IG Recommendation Action A – J-13 PST PCT Assessment Tools

VOLUNTEER SUPPORT

9. Recommendation: That the Post review its housing criteria and associated checklist to determine criteria that are feasible.

Concur

PC/Jordan staff regularly work with counterpart organizations to identify and arrange suitable Volunteer housing, which in some communities may be quite limited. Two PC/Jordan staff members physically visit each community to assess housing options, using the PC/Jordan housing criteria checklist as a tool to assess housing options,

Action & Status

- A. Post will establish a committee comprised of the SSC, PCMO, GSO, a PM and a PCV to review and as necessary to revise the housing criteria checklist.

Date of Completion: June 2009

Documentation: IG Recommendation #9 Action A – Revised Housing Checklist

10. Recommendation: That the Post clarify expectations for Volunteer support by communicating to Volunteers: (1) turnaround times for communication activities; (2) what support they can expect from whom; and (3) what PC/Jordan expects from Volunteers.

Concur

Peace Corps recently introduced the organization’s “Core Expectations for Peace Corps Volunteers.” These 10 Core Expectations mirror what Post endeavors to communicate to its Volunteers from the time they are invited to PC/Jordan, to the day they end their service. PC/Jordan has posted these Core Expectations in the PC office and in the Volunteer lounge, and has these expectations in the PC/Jordan “Policies and Procedures Guide” that each Volunteer receives. Nevertheless, post accepts that some PCVs do not effectively retain what is presented in training and printed in the Guide. Staff therefore reminds PCVs of the information and content available in the Guide.

Action & Status

- A. PC/Jordan has posted the organization’s “*Core Expectations for Peace Corps Volunteers*” in the office and in the PCV lounge, and will further communicate these through the Post newsletter.

Date of Completion: April 2009 (“*Core Expectations for Peace Corps Volunteers*” Posted in office & PCV Lounge)
 August 2009 (*Core Expectations for Peace Corps Volunteers*” included into the J-13 Invitee Newsletter and Posts Newsletter)

Documentation: IG Recommendation #10 Action A – Post Newsletter with Core Expectations

- B. Post will review its “*Policies and Procedures Guide*” and expand the Volunteer and Program Support section to better clarify expectations to all Volunteers, including information concerning turnaround times for communication activities.

Date of Completion: October 2009

Documentation: N/A

11. Recommendation: That the Post publish a schedule of events for the cycle of Volunteer service that includes communication, site visits, training, and performance reporting events.

Concur

On a quarterly basis, the PTO sends an e-mail to all Volunteers listing specific dates and events that are planned for the upcoming quarter. General information on the major events during the cycle of a Volunteer’s service is included in the Volunteer “*Policies and Procedures Guide*.”

Action & Status

- A. Post will review its “*Policies and Procedures Guide*.” to expand and clarify sections relating to events for the cycle of Volunteers’ service

Date of Completion: October 2009

Documentation: N/A

- B. Quarterly notices of major events will be posted on the P&T bulletin board and in the Volunteer Lounge, and will be included in the Newsletter.

Date of Completion: June 2009

Documentation: IG Recommendation # 11 Action B & C- Peace Corps Jordan Events Schedule

12. Recommendation: That the Country director increase efforts to build relationships with Volunteers.

Concur

Action & Status

- A. The CD will implement a schedule of periodic contacts with every Volunteer by phone.
Date of Completion: *Implemented in April 2009*
Documentation: *Documentation is being requested.*

- B. Post will organize optional Volunteer functions on a bi-monthly basis that will allow more opportunities for the CD to have informal contact with the Volunteers.
Date of Completion: *Implemented in March 2009*
Documentation: *IG Recommendation #12 Action B – Peace Corps
Jordan Social Events Schedule*

MANAGEMENT CONTROLS

13. Recommendation: That the Post review, establish, and communicate its policy for in-country official travel by staff and contract personnel.

Concur

In 2001, PC/Jordan published its most recent *Staff Manual/Handbook*. This publication is currently being revised and updated. However, the post’s Admin Office has already revised certain travel reporting documents, trained staff on using those documents, and held orientation meetings explaining and discussing the in-country staff travel policy for PC/Jordan. The updated policy and guidance will be included in the final 2010 revision of the *Peace Corps Jordan Staff Manual/Handbook*.

Action & Status

- A. Post has reviewed and updated the in-country staff and contract personnel official travel policy.
Date of Completion: *June 2009*
Documentation: *IG Recommendation # 13 Action A –Staff Handbook
2010 In-Country Travel Policy*

- B. Post has drafted a revised *2010 Staff Manual/Handbook* for review and discussion at post and in Hq. The final edition of the Handbook will be published and staff will receive orientation on the handbook following Hq. approval.
Date of Completion: *October 2009*
Documentation: *PC/Headquarters is currently reviewing revisions to the
Post Staff Handbook*

14. Recommendation: That the Post provide training during PST on the content and format of the Volunteers’ trimester reporting.

Concur

During FY-2009, Peace Corps introduced the new Volunteer Reporting Tool (VRT). Unfortunately that system was not introduced until after the PC/Jordan PST had ended; nor were funds available to conduct special PCV training sessions in that new system. After funds became available, the Post trained the newest group of Volunteers (i.e., the J-12s) to use the new VRT reporting format during that new group's first IST. PC/Jordan expects to be able to fund training for additional PCVs during FY-2010.

Action & Status

- A. A comprehensive training session on Volunteer Reporting and use of the new Volunteer Report Tool (VRT) will be incorporated into the PST schedule prior to the Volunteers' deployment to site.

Date of Completion: July 2009

Documentation: IG Recommendation #14 Action A – A Volunteer Training Session for VRT



Since 1961.

MEMORANDUM

To: Kathy Buller, Inspector General

From: David Burgess, Acting Regional Director of Europe, Mediterranean & Asia

Date: August 24, 2009

Subject: Addendum to Response to the Preliminary report of the Office of Inspector General Program Evaluation of Peace Corps/Jordan

Enclosed please find an addendum and additional supporting documentation to the Regional response to the recommendations made by the Inspector General for Peace Corps/Jordan.

The Region concurs with all recommendations.

2. Recommendation: That the post consider revising its project plans to use Trainees' existing skills, or skills that can be developed during PST

Additional information for recommendation #2:

Post holds weekly Programming & Training Staff Meetings. At the staff meeting on June 28, 2009, the Programming & Training staff discussed the current project plans and whether the plans use trainees' already existing skills or skills that were developed during PST. The programming staff agreed that the current project plans do appropriately use the skills of the PCVs, and they will use the skills of the incoming training class. However, in order to capture the PCV perspective in post's consideration on this issue, a simple survey tool has been developed that will be implemented during the J-13 IST in Q2 of 2010. Beyond this J-13 input, post plans to use this survey with all new PCV groups as a monitoring tool. Depending on the results of the surveys, post will continue to take appropriate action in further considering revision of project plans.

Additional Actions & Status:

- C. Post held a programming staff meeting to consider revision of the project plans and developed a survey tool to capture the new PCV perspective on revision of project plans.

Date of completion: July 15, 2009

Documentation: Added Project Plan Feedback Survey

3. Recommendation: That the Post review its definition of support and expectations and communicate it to all Volunteers and staff.

Additional information for recommendation #3: Revised Volunteer Support Statement for Action B.

5. Recommendation: That the Post develop and implement strategies to collect Volunteer feedback and address cultural integration issues.

Additional information for recommendation #5: Revised J-11 COS Cultural Integration Questionnaire

8. Recommendation: That the post use sector competencies and learning objectives in the Trainee assessment process.

Additional information for recommendation #8: Revised J-13 PST PCT Assessment Tools (3 documents by sector)

12. Recommendation: That the Country director increase efforts to build relationships with Volunteers.

Additional information for recommendation #12:

- Added a volunteer contact log from the Country Director
- Added list of Jordan Social Events PCV Attendees

APPENDIX B

OIG COMMENTS

Regional management concurred with all 14 recommendations. We have closed recommendation numbers 2, 8, 9, 12, and 14. Recommendation numbers 1, 3 – 7, 10, 11, and 13 remain open pending confirmation from the chief compliance officer that the following has been received:

- For recommendation number 1, documentation that the workshop referenced in the region's response was conducted.
- For recommendation numbers 3 and 10, a copy of the revised Volunteer and Program Support section contained in the post's "*Policies and Procedures Guide.*"
- For recommendation number 4, a copy of the revised "*Policies and Procedures Guide.*"
- For recommendation number 5, documentation that Volunteer feedback has been incorporated into pre-service training sessions on cultural integration issues.
- For recommendation number 6, documentation that the post has implemented a tracking process as described in the region's response.
- For recommendation number 7, a copy of the post's tracking matrix as described in the region's response.
- For recommendation number 11, a copy of the section related to the cycle of Volunteer service in the post's "*Policies and Procedures Guide.*"
- For recommendation number 13, a copy of the post's revised Staff Manual/Handbook.

In their response, management described actions they are taking or intend 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 region or post has taken these actions nor that we have reviewed their effect. Certifying compliance and verifying effectiveness are management's responsibilities. However, when warranted, we may conduct a follow-up review to confirm that action has been taken and to evaluate the impact.

PROGRAM EVALUATION COMPLETION AND OIG CONTACT

OIG CONTACT

Following the issuance of the final report, a stakeholder satisfaction survey will be distributed. If you wish to comment on the quality or usefulness of this report to help us improve our products, please e-mail Susan Gasper, Acting Assistant Inspector General for Evaluations and Inspections, at sgasper@peacecorps.gov, or call (202) 692-2908.

STAFF ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This program evaluation was conducted under the direction of Shelley Elbert, Assistant Inspector General for Evaluations, and by Evaluator Susan Gasper. Additional contributions were made by Reuben Marshall.

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