Peace Corps
Office of Inspector General

**Final Program Evaluation Report:
Peace Corps/Suriname**

July 2010

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over 300 Volunteers have served the people of Suriname since the Peace Corps program was launched in 1995. Current volunteer assignments focus on community economic development and health education programs. In recent years, Peace Corps Suriname has faced challenges developing and maintaining effective volunteer assignments. A period of high senior staff turnover also had an impact on the stability of post operations.

While obstacles remain, PC/Suriname has made progress increasing the effectiveness of their operations and programs and furthering Peace Corps' goals. Suriname government representatives told the OIG that they have positive working relationships with Peace Corps staff. They believe Volunteers have good language skills, are well-integrated into their host communities, and are making contributions to development. Government officials would like a more structured collaboration with Peace Corps, with program sectors and Volunteer assignments more directly centered on ministry goals.

PC/Suriname's projects have broadly focused on community development. Within the last two years, the post has developed two distinct projects and has strengthened relationships with project partners. Peace Corps has also partnered with national and international non-governmental organizations (NGO), which provides more structured assignments for Volunteers, capacity building opportunities for their communities, and opportunities for cost-sharing. However, PC/Suriname does not have current agreements with project partners; this has created some confusion about roles and responsibilities of the cooperating parties.

PC/Suriname is working to address site development challenges and programming support, but our review found that PC/Suriname does not adequately engage host communities during site development, and is not adequately assessing host community needs or their capacity to host a Volunteer. Volunteers reported that host communities do not understand Volunteer roles and are not motivated to work with them.

PC/Suriname is not providing adequate technical training to Volunteers and some Volunteers are receiving funds for their projects through unauthorized channels. Volunteers are familiar with the Emergency Action Plan (EAP) and procedures. However, staff members require additional training to ensure they are prepared to carry out their responsibilities during the activation of an EAP. Volunteer housing did not consistently conform to established housing criteria, and we recommended that staff inspect Volunteer housing and ensure it meets the criteria prior to the Volunteer's arrival.

Our report contains 23 recommendations intended to strengthen PC/Suriname programming operations and correct the deficiencies detailed in the accompanying report. Our recommendations address project partnerships, site development, Volunteer training and support, and the Emergency Action Plan. In order to address staff turnover and leadership challenges we have recommended that that the region and post establish a succession plan for leadership positions.

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HOST COUNTRY BACKGROUND

Suriname is situated on South America's northeastern coast. It was first colonized by the Spanish, settled by the British, and then became a Dutch colony in 1667. Independence from the Netherlands was granted in 1975.

Suriname's population of approximately 481,000 is made up of several distinct ethnic groups. East Indians or Hindustani form the largest group at 37%, Creoles 31%, Javanese 15%, Maroons (descendents from escaped slaves) 10%, and Amerindians 2% of the population. The remaining population includes Chinese, Europeans, and Brazilian immigrant workers who have arrived in Suriname in recent years. There is also a significant Surinamese population of approximately 334,000 living in the Netherlands

Suriname's official language is Dutch. English is widely spoken and the lingua franca, or language most commonly used to communicate between persons not sharing a mother tongue, is Sranang Tongo, also sometimes called Taki-Taki. In addition, several ethnic groups speak their own language. Approximately 90% of the population lives either in the capital Paramaribo or in the districts along the coast. Most of the country's land area lies in the northeastern flank of the Amazon forest and is only accessible by dirt roads, boats, or airplanes. This remote interior region is home to primarily Amerindian and Maroon settlements established along the maze of river systems fed by the Amazon. The communities are strongly tied to their indigenous Amerindian and African heritage, and tribal structures and customs are evident.

Coastal roads connect Suriname with Guyana and French Guiana, however no roads pass south through the Amazon into Brazil. This effectively isolates Suriname from the rest of South America. Suriname's commercial activities with the Netherlands and the Dutch or English-speaking Caribbean has led to closer relationships with the Caribbean countries to the north than with its Spanish or Portuguese-speaking neighbors to the south.

Since independence from the Netherlands in 1975, Suriname has weathered coups by differing political factions and civil wars. Many roads, bridges and district governmental centers in the interior remain damaged or destroyed following civil strife in the 1980s and early 1990s. Social service delivery to the interior region has been characterized by scant investment in health care and educational infrastructure. After more than a decade of military or one-party rule, a democratically elected government - a four-party New Front coalition came to power in 1991, and has ruled since; the coalition expanded to eight parties in 2005.

PEACE CORPS/SURINAME PROGRAM BACKGROUND

Peace Corps and Suriname share an active country agreement signed in 1995. In 1995, the Peace Corps opened an office in Paramaribo to support country programs in both Guyana and Suriname; the Guyana program came under independent management in 1997. Since its inception, over 300 Volunteers have served in Suriname's capital, districts, and interior Maroon and Amerindian communities.

PC/Suriname's sponsoring host ministry is the Ministry of Regional Development[1,] which oversees the advancement of the interior of the country. PC/Suriname also works in partnership with the Ministry of Health and was working to further develop its partnership with the Ministry of Tourism. Additionally, PC/Suriname partners with international, regional, and indigenous NGOs.

PC/Suriname places Volunteers primarily in Maroon and Amerindian communities, which are geographically isolated within the country's interior. These communities have limited educational and job opportunities. Thus, many people, under-educated men and youth in particular, are shifting from rural communities to the urban centers in search of job opportunities. At the onset of this evaluation, there were 36 Volunteers serving in Suriname; there is one Trainee class each year. Currently, Peace Corps Volunteers in Suriname support the following two projects:

Community Health Education
Community Health Education Volunteers work with communities to assess their needs for health education and water and sanitation systems. They work with village health promoters, health clubs, and community members to develop and deliver informal and formal trainings and activities on nutrition, sexual and reproductive health, HIV/AIDS, sanitation, and life skills. They also work with schools and communities on gardens and composting, and with support from partner organizations, assist communities to build water and sanitation systems.

Community Economic Development
Community Economic Development Volunteers work with community groups, business organizations, NGOs, and individuals to promote community planning, project design and management, small business development, and sound business practices. Volunteers work with men, women, and youth to develop leadership, business and information technology skills, agricultural products, and tourism products and services.

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[1] Although, the sponsoring host ministry is the Ministry of Regional Development, the country agreement was signed with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

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 Evaluation Unit within the Peace Corps Office of Inspector General provides the agency with independent evaluations of the 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.

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, agency support, and oversight effectively aligned with the post's mission and program, and agency priorities?

The Office of Inspector General Evaluation Unit announced its intent to conduct an evaluation of PC/Suriname on January 23, 2009. The evaluation team conducted the preliminary research portion of the evaluation January 26 – February 27, 2009. 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). Fieldwork occurred March 1 - 21, 2009, and was comprised of interviews with: senior post staff in charge of programming, training, and support; the U.S. Ambassador; the U.S. Embassy Regional Security Officer; non-governmental project partners; and host country government ministry officials.[2] In addition, we interviewed a stratified judgmental sample of 47% of currently serving Volunteers based on their length of service, site location, project focus, gender, age, and ethnicity. Sixteen Volunteers were selected for the sample and one additional Volunteer requested and was granted an interview. The majority of the Volunteer interviews occurred at the Volunteers' homes, and their homes were inspected using post-defined site selection criteria.

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[2] The OIG briefed the PC/Suriname country director, programming and training officer and incoming administrative officer of its program evaluation findings on March 20, 2009. The OIG briefed the Inter-America and Pacific (IAP) regional management and representatives from OPATS and the Office of Safety and Security on April 9, 2009.

Table 1: PC/Suriname Volunteer Demographic Data

Project	Percentage of Volunteers
Community Economic Development	50%
Community Health Education	50%
Gender	**Percentage of Volunteers**
Male	53%
Female	47%
Age	**Percentage of Volunteers**
25 or younger	58%
26-29	25%
30-54	6%
55 and over	11%

Source: PC/Suriname Volunteer Roster, January 2009

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. The findings and recommendations provided in this report have been reviewed by agency stakeholders affected by this review.

EVALUATION RESULTS

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.

From the program's inception in 1995 until 2006, PC/Suriname's projects had a broad, rural community development focus. A 2002 agency project review of the Non-Formal Rural Community Education project activities determined that the project's broad activities created challenges with administrative coverage and priority setting, ultimately leading to poor programming and training support.

In January and August of 2006, the Community Health Education (HE) and Community Economic Development (CED) project plans were initiated. In conjunction with Office of Programming and Training Support (OPATS) formal project reviews held in 2008, both projects established Project Advisory Committees (PACs) and conducted initial meetings with stakeholders. Programming staff and post leadership described these meetings as useful for setting direction for the projects and establishing relationships with ministry partners and NGO stakeholders.

In addition to working with Surinamese Ministry partners, PC/Suriname has partnered with several large multinational non-governmental organizations. The goal for these partnerships has been to: provide more structure to Volunteer assignments; maximize resources; target areas identified by different stakeholders; and to approach development in Suriname collaboratively,

Representatives from the Ministry of Regional Development told the OIG that they enjoy positive working relationships with Peace Corps staff, but over time are looking towards a more structured collaboration centered on the ministry's goals. They believe Volunteers have good language skills, are well-integrated into their host communities, and are making contributions to development, though "not necessarily strategically or sustainably." NGO partners stated that they found value in their partnerships with Peace Corps, that Peace Corps was "a reliable partner," and "an organization you could trust." They found Volunteers to have good communication skills and the trust of their communities.

PC/Suriname's comprehensive approach to Suriname's development by leveraging international and local partnerships is an encouraging one, as the Agency looks globally for new strategies for expansion and opportunities for greater impact. However, to achieve successful outcomes, it is imperative that all cooperating parties understand the end goal vision as well as their related roles and responsibilities. As noted in Programming and Training (P&T) Booklet 1, "working in partnership creates the greatest opportunity for Volunteers and community partners to work productively together toward sustainable changes" and "strategic planning is the glue that cements the partnerships between the Peace Corps and its host-country partner agencies."

PC/Suriname does not have agreements with some of its project partners and many existing agreements are out–of–date.

PC/Suriname works with multiple non-governmental project partners and Volunteers work with these organizations in a variety of different roles. Some Volunteers are placed directly with the partner organization and are incorporated into project teams that support the organization's mission. More often, Volunteers work as extensionists in capacity building projects within the context of their Peace Corps project. One partner explained that Peace Corps' participation provides it with entrée into a community that needs assistance, while in turn, it provides specialized technical training for the Volunteer and host community members. This allows both organizations to meet their goals and ultimately transfer capacity to the host community.

Peace Corps uses different levels of program and project agreements when working in a host country. The country agreement is the formal agreement signed by the Peace Corps Director and host government that permits Peace Corps to operate in the country. Additionally, interagency agreements, memoranda of understanding, or project partner agreements are used to further clarify roles, responsibilities, and expectations between the entities.

The three memoranda of understanding (MOU) that the post provided to the OIG as part of this evaluation were not applicable to the current project sectors or partners. No documentation was provided that defined the current role of Peace Corps and the partner organization, be it ministry partner or NGO. In interviews, both ministry and NGO partners expressed a desire for a better defined, more structured collaboration with Peace Corps, and for formal agreements for the Volunteers who work with their organizations.

At the time of this evaluation, PC/Suriname did not seek formal feedback on performance for Volunteers placed in partner organizations. Project partners reported that they would welcome opportunities to discuss Volunteer performance and Peace Corps-partner collaborations. They raised questions regarding the delineation of responsibilities between Peace Corps and partner organizations for both establishing the Volunteer's work responsibilities and for their support. This has resulted in Volunteers working on a number of Peace Corps initiatives that did not fall within the partnering organization's

mission and were not supported by the partnering organization. The mixed messages ultimately led to confusion for the host community.

Peace Corps Manual (PCM) section 103.4.1 states that the Peace Corps may enter into interagency agreements that are consistent with applicable law and the purposes and goals of the Peace Corps. PCM section 103.4.2 further states that "no funds may be used and no activities may be undertaken pursuant to an interagency agreement until the agreement has been approved and authorized as provided in this manual section." While PC/Suriname does not partner with other U.S. agencies, the Peace Corps Office of General Counsel (OGC) uses PCM 103 as the governing policy for agreements with non-U.S. government partners as well. Further, OGC has developed a standard Volunteer assignment MOU template, which has been disseminated to all posts through the regions. This template outlines the roles and responsibilities of Peace Corps and the partnering organization with respect to their collaborative agreement to select, supervise, and support Volunteers over the course of their assignments.

Indicators of a High Performing Post (IHPP) section 6.2 articulates the need for MOUs and the importance of clearly defining "all important aspects, rights, and responsibilities of the relationship", and also lists a number of elements that should be contained within the MOU as follows:

> As a matter of both guidance and protection for the Volunteer, as well as the Peace Corps and the partner agency, there needs to be a formal memorandum of understanding signed by the country director and the responsible authority from the government ministry or NGO agency that is accepting or sponsoring PC Volunteers. This MOU should clearly set down the roles and responsibilities of the cooperating parties and serve as a basis and source of reference for the cooperative relationship established between the two (or more) parties.

While partnering provides the potential of opportunities for greater impact, collaboration, cost-sharing, and more structured assignments for Volunteers, without a clear agreement establishing the nature of the cooperative relationship, there is also the potential for confusion, competing priorities, and risk to the agency.

> **We recommend:**
>
> 1. **That the post, in consultation with OPATs Partnership Development Unit, review current partnership agreements and make adjustments where necessary.**
>
> 2. **That the post, in consultation with General Counsel, develop agreements or memoranda of understanding with all partner organizations.**

3. **That the Agency formalize and widely disseminate the existing Volunteer assignment MOU template.**

4. **That the Agency develop guidelines that address partnerships with NGOs, government ministries and other entities, including circumstances when the MOU should be used and when the post should seek advice from OGC.**

PC/Suriname is working to address Volunteer site development challenges.

Prior safety and security assessments have flagged concerns with the post's site development process. Concerns about site selection and monitoring have been raised by Peace Corps Safety and Security Officers (PCSSOs) since 2005. Suriname scored lower than the global average in the 2008 Biennial Volunteer Survey for the following questions:

- "When you arrived at your community, how prepared for your arrival were the host people with whom you work?"– 57% responded adequately to very well, compared to a global average of 74%.
- "How well prepared was your site upon your arrival?" – 51% responded adequately to very well, compared to a global average of 79%.

Our Volunteer and staff interviews reflect that the post is working toward making improvements in its site development process. One of post's stated goals in its 2008 IPBS was to, "better define the roles of Peace Corps Volunteers in Suriname." Post staff reported they have focused on building relationships with partner organizations and have sought to provide more structure to Volunteer assignments. The responses to our interviews of Volunteers in two cohorts indicate that recent Volunteers are more familiar with project goals and believe their activities relate to project goals, which is an indication that site development has improved. However, our fieldwork has identified areas in need of improvement.

Responses indicating the percentage of Volunteers rating "moderately" or better

	Overall	SUR 13	SUR 14[3]
How satisfied are you with your site placement?	82%	67%	90%
How familiar are you with the goals of your project?	88%	67%	100%
How well do your activities relate to the project goals/objectives?	71%	50%	80%

Source: 2009 OIG Interviews

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[3] The SUR13 cohort was sworn in-to service on August 3th, 2007. The SUR 14 cohort was sworn into service on August 1st 2008.

PC/Suriname does not fully assess host communities or adequately engage them during the site development process.

In Programming and Training (P&T) Booklet 5, Peace Corps defines four areas of site development: (1) identification, (2) selection, (3) Volunteer placement and (4) ongoing partnership. P&T Booklet 5 describes strategies for Peace Corps staff to engage each project partner by: orienting the community to the Peace Corps' development philosophy and project plan, obtaining agreement on expectations for the duration of Peace Corps' involvement and each partner's roles and responsibilities, including partners in monitoring and evaluation processes, and agreeing when the Peace Corps' support is no longer needed. However, post has not fully integrated these strategies into its Site Identification and Preparation (SIP) manual.

During our visit to post, PC/Suriname was in the process of developing a Site Development Procedures manual (SIP). We reviewed the post's draft SIP manual, which details the major components of PC/Suriname's site development process. We also interviewed post staff and Volunteers about the site development process.

The post's SIP manual defines the steps in the site identification and preparation process and includes most of the elements recommended in P&T Booklet 5. However, it did not include a section for ongoing partnership. It also did not include a discussion of Volunteer placement or site selection strategies. Additionally, while the site assessment form included a section on programmatic viability, the criteria could be improved to more fully assess community needs, community receptivity, and readiness for hosting a Volunteer.

Staff reported that site development for the SUR 14 cohort was improved over previous inputs because they obtained more specific details about community needs and Volunteer assignments. Additionally, PC/Suriname has included currently serving Volunteers in the site development process in its recent site assessments. Their involvement ranges from helping new communities fill out the site assessment forms, to participating in site development visits.

However, challenges in identifying viable and meaningful assignments still exist. For example one staff member explained, "If staff goes [to the community] they will agree to everything staff is saying, so it makes it harder for us to understand if they are really willing to work with a Volunteer." Also, staff reported they were aware that Volunteers received pressure from communities to divert from their project plan to implement projects with a higher community priority. Specifically, one staff member explained, "Once a Volunteer gets placed there, [the community] wants bigger and better things, like electricity, and sometimes pressures the Volunteer. For example, if you won't help us get solar panels, we won't help you with your project."

PC/Suriname was aware of issues its staff and Volunteers faced in site development. Engaging community members and counterparts in the site development process should be a priority activity.

We recommend:

5. **That the post incorporate Program and Training Booklet 5 strategies for on-going partnership with the community into its site development manual, and align staff training programs accordingly.**

6. **That the post clearly define the criteria used to assess community receptivity and readiness for hosting a Volunteer and include this criteria in its site assessment activities.**

Host communities do not understand Volunteer roles and are not motivated to work with them.

P&T Booklet 2 explains "in the planning process, it is important to spend time with host-country agency partners to identify who will be the Volunteer's counterparts and supervisors. These key relationships are critical to the success of projects and Volunteer assignments."

PC/Suriname defines "counterpart" as the Volunteer's main contact who introduces the Volunteer to the community. This point person is generally selected by the host community and the relationship is expected to last the length of the Volunteer's service.[4] However, Volunteers were encouraged to develop relationships with multiple community partners with whom the Volunteer will work on projects.

Volunteers we interviewed consistently reported that their communities did not understand Peace Corps Volunteer roles or the types of projects on which Volunteers should focus. Ten of 17 Volunteers interviewed highlighted the lack of motivation of their community or counterparts as one of his/her major challenges. Programming staff echoed this sentiment. They reported that Volunteers complained of low community motivation, a lack of community cohesiveness, or a lack of community ownership of a project.[5] Programming staff reported that they hold counterpart conferences, but that they do not spend sufficient time preparing a community to work with a Volunteer because of the limited amount of time they spend in the community.

All Volunteers reported having at least one community partner. However, only 57% (8 of 14) of Volunteers interviewed as part of this evaluation considered their working relationship with their counterparts to be "average" or better (a score of 3, 4, or 5 on a five point scale). Volunteers reported the following challenges concerning their working relationships with counterparts: that the counterpart was too busy to work with them, the

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[4] Due to village tribal/organizational structures, it is often difficult, especially in new communities, for Peace Corps staff to identify a counterpart for the Volunteer. Counterparts are put forth by the host community.

[5] Programming staff and Volunteers explained that members of a community feel responsible for their own individual development but not for the development of the community as a whole.

counterpart spent considerable time out of the village or was looking to move out of the village/and had already left the village, or the counterpart was consumed with family activities, like taking care of children.

Improving the community assessment process and addressing ongoing project partnership will help PC/Suriname identify and place Volunteers in the most appropriate communities. The Volunteer's will also require additional training and support to educate communities about the mission of Peace Corps and their role in the community.

> **We recommend:**
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> 7. **That the post, in consultation with OPATS, identify agency best practices for successful community partnerships and include these strategies in its Volunteer training and support programs.**
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> 8. **That the post poll Volunteers on the successful strategies they have employed to identify community partners and educate communities on their role and that it include these strategies in its Volunteer training and support programs.**

Some Volunteers received funds for community projects from unauthorized sources.

PC/Suriname has active projects in the Peace Corps Partnership Program (PCPP) which is designed to identify and accept financial donations to support, within the context of the goals of the Peace Corps, small-scale, community-initiated development projects. Volunteers also seek funding for community projects through additional outside funding sources. Volunteers write proposals and submit them directly to corporations operating in Suriname such as Suralco, Staatsolie, or to international organizations such as Rotary International, Lions Club, and World Wildlife Fund. Peace Corps program managers and program assistants liaise with the organization to which the Volunteers submit proposals and as needed, review proposals, conduct research on the Volunteer's behalf, or recommend which organization to submit a proposal.

Peace Corps Manual section 720.3.3 states:

> OPSI [Office of Private Sector Initiatives] is the only Peace Corps office authorized to generate support and accept donations for a Partnership project. PCVs are not authorized to accept donations on behalf of the Peace Corps."

Per agency policy, Volunteers may never directly receive funds for community projects unless it is done through the Partnership Program. Agency officials responsible for PCPP said that this is not only to preserve the spirit of Peace Corps as a Volunteer organization, but also to maintain the safety and security of Volunteers, and to mitigate risk to the agency for liability related to the fraud or abuse of funds. PCPP policies require that

Volunteer projects meet a pressing community need, be community initiated and directed, and include a community contribution at least 25% of the total project cost.

In interviews, Volunteers stated they held funds intended for community projects if the funding organization required it, and that they were unclear of Peace Corps expectations for how to handle funds they had received.

> **We recommend:**
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> 9. **That the country director work with OPSI to institute a process to ensure that all funding for community projects is acquired and reported on in accordance with agency policy.**
>
> 10. **That the post train Volunteers on the policies related to funding for community projects.**

CROSS-CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

The second objective of a post evaluation assesses whether the Peace Corps country program promotes 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. To understand the extent to which the post has implemented programs and activities to promote cross-cultural understanding, we interviewed Volunteers, post and headquarters staff, Ministry officials, project partners, and we reviewed training and evaluation materials.

In our interviews, project partners stated that Volunteers have good language skills, and were integrated and accepted in their communities. Correspondingly, 100% of Volunteers interviewed rated themselves average or better (3, 4 or 5 on a 5 point scale) on understanding cross-cultural issues. PC/Suriname scored higher than global averages on the 2008 Biennial Volunteer Survey (BVS) question regarding increasing the capacity of host country counterparts by giving them a better understanding of Americans. Eighty percent of respondents said that their assignment was average, better than average, or exceptional at providing host country nationals a better understanding of Americans compared to the global average of 67.9%.

The communities in which PC/Suriname Volunteers live and work are primarily rural Maroon or Amerindian communities located in the interior of the country. From a cultural perspective, the variety of communities where Volunteers work poses different integration challenges for the Volunteers. To prepare Volunteers for the specific community they will serve, PC/Suriname follows a community-based training model. We found that at the time of our evaluation visit, the training manager had not visited the Upper Marojinwe region, where the post was expanding its programs, prior to Volunteers being placed there. His first visit to this region occurred concurrently with that of the OIG. Following the visit, the training manager stated that, in his estimation,

PC/Suriname's current pre-service training would not adequately train and prepare Volunteers for the cultural practices of that region, specifically the level of traditionalism, the community's reliance on traditional medicine men, and dialectical language differences among the communities. Additionally, during interviews with the OIG, Volunteers placed in Amerindian communities voiced frustration with the lack of accurate cross-cultural information provided to them before arriving at site.

While cross-cultural training scores have improved from one cohort to the next, we encourage the post to assess the systemic risks of expanding into new communities before moving forward with a decision.

> **We recommend**:
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> 11. **That the post develop and implement a mechanism to fully assess the community cultural makeup, traditions, and other related factors for communities that host Volunteers.**
>
> 12. **That the post use this information to develop pre-service training to prepare future Volunteers for the challenges they will face during service in their community.**

TRAINING

The third 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 determine the extent to which this goal is reached, the following factors are considered:

- 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 are met.
- The feedback on the effectiveness of training in providing the skills and knowledge needed for successful Volunteer assignments.

PC/Suriname does not provide adequate technical training to Volunteers.

In the 2008 Biennial Volunteer Survey (BVS), PC/Suriname's training effectiveness scores indicated the need to immediately address serious deficiencies in pre-service training (PST) programs. In all areas examined, favorable scores[6] for PC/Suriname were lower than global. Scores were lowest in the areas of preparing Volunteers to: perform

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[6] Favorable scores were derived from averaging "adequate," "effective" and "very effective" for sets, Peace Corps global, and PC/Suriname.

technical aspects of their work, work with project goals and objectives, monitor project goals and outcomes, and work with counterparts.

How effective was your PST in preparing you to:	PC/Suriname % of those responding Adequate, Effective and Very Effective	PC Global % of those responding Adequate, Effective and Very Effective	Difference
c. Work with counterparts	36.1%	69.5%	33.3%
e. Perform technical aspects of your work	16.7%	72.5%	55.9%
f. Work with project goals and objectives	36.1%	82.7%	46.6%
h. Monitor project goals and outcomes	41.7%	76.0%	34.3%

Question B2 on Biennial Volunteer Survey for PC/Suriname compared to PC/Global

The information we obtained in interviews with currently serving Volunteers was somewhat more positive than what was reflected in the 2008 BVS, but the effectiveness of language and technical training during PST was still low. None of the Volunteers in the SUR13 cohort rated the technical training as effective or better. However, there was a significant improvement between the SUR13 and SUR14 trainee groups. While still low, the Volunteers serving in the health sector rated their technical training as more effective than the Volunteers serving in the business sector.

Regarding PST, how effective was PST in each of the following areas	Suriname Overall[7]		SUR 13[8]		SUR 14[9]	
	% Favorable Scores	Average Score	% Favorable Scores	Average Score	% Favorable Scores	Average Score
Language	71%	3.4	67%	3.2	70%	3.3
Culture	81%	3.3	67%	2.8	100%	3.8
Safety/Security	94%	3.6	100%	4.0	90%	3.4
Medical/Health	100%	4.4	100%	4.0	100%	4.5
Technical	41%	2.5	0%	1.5	70%	3.1

Source: 2009 OIG Interviews

Regarding PST, how effective was PST in each of the following areas	Suriname Overall		Health[10]		Business[11]	
	% Favorable Scores	Average Score	% Favorable Scores	Average Score	% Favorable Scores	Average Score
Language	71%	3.4	75%	3.5	67%	3.2
Culture	81%	3.3	86%	3.6	78%	3.1
Safety/Security	94%	3.6	100%	3.8	89%	3.6
Medical/Health	100%	4.4	100%	4.5	100%	4.2
Technical	41%	2.5	50%	2.9	33%	2.1

Source: 2009 OIG Interviews

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[7] N=17, except for Cultural training where n=16
[8] N=6
[9] N=10, except for Cultural training where n=9
[10] N=8, except for Cultural training where n=7
[11] N=9

The OIG has found that delivering effective technical training is consistently a challenge for Peace Corps posts worldwide. The Training Design and Evaluation (TDE) process developed by OPATS is intended to provide a structured methodology to ensure that programming and training is aligned, and Volunteers are working towards competencies needed for a successful service. It is intended to provide a mechanism to assess and monitor trainee progress against relevant targets.

PC/Suriname has been working through the TDE process since an OPATS technical assistance visit in 2007. Post leadership reported that programming and training staff has focused their efforts towards completing a task analysis, establishing Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (KSAs), and developing core and project sector competencies as part of the TDE process. At the time of evaluation fieldwork, the agency-mandated TDE process had not been fully implemented. PC/Suriname did not have specific training targets that could be used to assess and monitor trainee progress.

> **We recommend:**
>
> **13. That the post provides core and sector competencies and related learning objectives to confirm implementation of the TDE process.**
>
> **14. That the post establish training targets and use the targets to assess Trainees/Volunteers.**

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 OIG 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.

In reviewing crime reporting and handling, medical support, and the Volunteer living allowance, the OIG did not find significant areas of concern that would warrant action by the post. Volunteers have generally been satisfied with the way the staff responded to their report of a crime, and 100% of the Volunteers interviewed stated that they would report a crime to Peace Corps if it occurred. Support provided by the PCMO was rated the highest among all the staff members, with an average rating of 4.8 on a 5 point scale. Thirteen of the 16 Volunteers we interviewed reported that their living allowance was adequate for them to maintain a safe and healthy lifestyle.

Overall, Volunteers reported that they were supported by PC/Suriname staff. Volunteers commented that the office atmosphere is friendly and welcoming. Ten of sixteen of the Volunteers interviewed rated PC/Suriname staff as "effective" or better at helping them to adjust to life as a Volunteer, with an average rating of 3.1. For overall support, the average ratings for staff are as follows:

Table X: Responses on Perception of Volunteer Support[12]

Area	Average Rating for Support	% of Volunteers rating "average support" or better
Leadership	4.1	100%
Programming	3.3	83%
Training	3.3	80%
Safety and Security	3.9	88%
Medical	4.8	100%
Administrative[13]	4.2	100%

Source: 2009 OIG Interviews

PC/Suriname needs to assess Volunteer program support workloads and redistribute them among the staff as necessary.

Program managers received the lowest ratings on level of support during Volunteer interviews. Only 11 of 17 Volunteers interviewed found the support from their program managers to be average or better; however, this score did improve from one cohort to the next. Volunteers raised concerns with program managers' availability, timeliness of response and follow-through. However, all Volunteers stated that their program assistant provided average or better support.

Indicator 4.8 of IHPP states that "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 Volunteers help themselves, as appropriate."

Eleven of 15 Volunteers (73%) interviewed stated that the number of site visits they received was adequate. Ten of the 15 (67%) found the visits to be moderately effective or better. Some Volunteers questioned why staff scheduled site visits, but then canceled because of the cost. Administrative staff recognized that there was not sufficient coordination in the budgeting process to support site development and Volunteer support. This will be addressed further in Management Controls.

IHPP also points out that "site visits are one of the most critical…parts of any staff member's job. They are staff's principal tool for keeping in touch with and understanding what's going on in the field, what the Volunteer's life is like, what counterparts in the field think, whether projects are working on the ground, and what the Volunteer's concerns are."

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[12] The Leadership score was derived from the score for the country director; the Programming score was derived by averaging the scores for the PTO, program managers, and programming and training assistants; the Training score was derived from the score for the Training Manager; the Safety and Security score was derived from the score for the safety and security coordinator; the Medical score was derived from the Peace Corps Medical Officer; and the Administrative score was derived from the score for the administrative officer.

[13] Five Volunteers responded to the question on administrative support as the majority of Volunteers in the sample did not have recent or any experience with an administrative officer as that position had been vacant for six months prior to this evaluation.

PC/Suriname recognizes that programming support could be improved. Staff were aware that Volunteers in previously serving cohorts had been unhappy with the quality of staff support. Post staff reported that program managers had not played a significant role in the pre-service training activities for those groups and, therefore, trainees had not established a trusting relationship prior to being placed at their sites.

Additionally, program managers reported that they had been tasked with a number of time-intensive operational initiatives, including developing a site development manual, implementing the TDE process, and building relationships with partner organizations. The OIG commends these efforts and recognizes that their successful completion will improve the Volunteer's overall success and effectiveness. However, on-going Volunteer support remains an important staff responsibility as other initiatives are completed .

> **We recommend:**
>
> **15. That the post assess the work distribution of programming staff and ensure that all functions are covered.**
>
> **16. That the programming staff set clear expectations during pre-service training about the support they will provide to Volunteers and ensure those expectations are met.**

Staff were not prepared to perform their roles and responsibilities during an activation of the EAP.

All of the Volunteers we interviewed were familiar with their EAP and procedures. Each of the Volunteers interviewed at his or her house produced a copy of the most recent EAP document and were able to name their consolidation point. However, during our interviews we determined that three staff members were unfamiliar with their roles and responsibilities when the EAP is activated. Peace Corps Manual section 350.3.1 requires that the country director "ensure that PC staff and PCVs are prepared to respond appropriately to emergencies at post."

> **We recommend:**
>
> **17. That the country director review with the staff all required EAP responsibilities so they are fully prepared to respond to emergencies at the post.**

Volunteer housing failed to meet housing criteria.

Seven of the eight Volunteer houses inspected as part of this evaluation failed to meet at least one and up to four of post's housing criteria. The one Volunteer house that met all standards had been significantly upgraded by a Peace Corps staff member. The two

criteria that were most often not met were: (1) all doors with outside access are of solid wood and have a key lock (or padlock); and, (2) liquid propane gas cylinders are stored outside the home.

However, 100% of Volunteers said that their current housing was average or better with an average score given of 4.4, but many noted multiple problems with their houses upon their arrival at site including missing boards, no latrine, and no water source (duro tank).

PCM section 270.5, *Selection and Monitoring of Sites,* states "Each V/T [Volunteer/trainee] site should be inspected before the V/T's arrival to ensure placement in appropriate, safe, and secure housing and work sites."

> **We recommend:**
>
> 18. **That the country director ensure that staff have inspected all prospective Volunteer housing and that it meets the post's criteria before a Volunteer's arrival.**
>
> 19. **That the country director ensure that staff have inspected all current Volunteer housing and that it meets post's criteria.**

MANAGEMENT CONTROLS

Another key objective of the post evaluation is to assess the post's planning and oversight of operations, staff management and training, relationships with headquarters offices and the embassy, and performance reporting.

In reviewing staff performance appraisals, Volunteer performance reporting and relationships with headquarters offices and the embassy, the OIG found no significant areas of concern that would warrant action by the post.

Volunteers received training on performance reporting during pre-service training and an in-service training. Overall, 94% of Volunteers interviewed reported that the information they submit is of average reliability or better. However, some Volunteers raised concerns to the OIG that the information they reported does not accurately reflect what they are doing in the field.

According to all parties involved, the post maintains positive relationships with the U.S. Embassy in Suriname and with Peace Corps headquarters offices. The region, the post, and Volunteers agree that morale at the post has improved under the current leadership and that post staff are actively committed to improving processes and procedures. Staff reported that the addition of a weekly Volunteer support meeting has been helpful in facilitating communication between the different staff functions.

Post staff and Volunteers reported that the office environment is friendly and supportive but that staff communication and scheduling is disorganized and there are often last minute changes. Issues with scheduling may be influenced by the sheer number of partners with which PC/Suriname coordinates and relies on for cost-sharing.

PC/Suriname's staffing turnover has contributed to the post's challenges.

Between 2007 and our post evaluation visit in March 2009, PC/Suriname experienced significant staffing changes, including a new administrative officer, country director, programming and training officer, program manager for the Community Economic Development project, training manager, financial assistant, and two new programming and training assistants. The administrative officer position was vacant from September 2008 – March 2009. The function was supported by the post's financial assistant with some temporary duty support from headquarters. The current administrative officer arrived at post in March 2009. The period of staff turnover was complicated by the fact that post did not have a succession plan.

In the IPBS for FY2009-2011, PC/Suriname identified personnel management and staff development as one of its three priorities. Many staff development opportunities have been supported since 2007. OPATS, with support from the region, provided four technical assistance visits to: (1) improve Volunteer training, (2) train Volunteers and staff on diversity and develop staff communication through a session on the multicultural workplace, (3) review the Community Health Education project, (4) review the Community Economic Development project. Additionally, some PC/Suriname staff members have attended a training managers' conference, a youth development conference, and overseas staff training. In the sample of performance appraisals reviewed during this evaluation, nine of ten staff performance reviews were conducted on schedule and contained written feedback.

Post does not have standard documented operating procedures. Following the OIG evaluation, post identified in its FY10-12 IPBS that it needs to document standard operating procedures so that staff and back-up staff understand who does what, when and how, as well as the development of a staff handbook. IHPP 3.2 states "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."

> **We recommend:**
>
> **20. That the post develop a staff handbook of standard operating procedures.**

21. That region and post establish a succession plan for leadership positions, such as overlapping the country director and PTO positions for a training period during the next transition.

PC/Suriname did not effectively use its budget to inform operations.

To ensure an effective control environment, GAO-01-1008G requires that management has an appropriate attitude toward risk-taking and proceeds with new ventures, missions, or operations only after carefully analyzing the risks involved and determining how they may be minimized or mitigated. Additionally, as discussed in the previous section on programming, agreements should be established with project partners.

The post did not effectively use its budget, including partner contributions, to inform operational decisions. This situation likely occurred as a result of the absence of an administrative officer at post. For example, it appears that partner organizations' defrayal of transportation costs influenced the post's placement of Volunteers in remote sites. However, at the time of evaluation fieldwork, the post did not systematically track partner contributions.

The post identified in its FY10-12 IPBS that it needs to identify additional opportunities to share costs with villages and partners for housing and transportation of Volunteers and program managers to mitigate the expense of goods and travel. While the OIG commends the post's efforts to save costs to the agency, the appropriate controls must be in place.

We recommend:

22. That post assess financial contributions of partnerships and define the terms per agency guidance.

23. That post develop a risk analysis for expanding into new areas and collaborating with partners and make decisions accordingly.

POST STAFFING

At the time of our field visit, PC/Suriname had 20 staff positions, one of which was vacant. The positions included three U.S. direct hire employees (USDH), two foreign service nationals (FSNs), and 15 personal services contractors (PSCs). The post also employs temporary staff/contractors to assist with PST. We interviewed 10 staff members.

PC/Suriname Positions

Position	Status	Interviewed
Country Director	USDH	X
Programming & Training Officer	USDH	X
Administrative Officer (vacant 9/08-3/09)	USDH	
Safety and Security Coordinator	PSC	X
PCMO	PSC	X
Medical Assistant	PSC	
IT Specialist	PSC	
Program Manager/Health	PSC	X
Program Manager/Business	PSC	X
Program Assistant/Health	PSC	X
Program Assistant/Business	PSC	X
Training Manager	PSC	X
Language Coordinator	PSC	
Secretary/Receptionist	PSC	
Financial Assistant (acting AO at time of visit)	FSN	X
Motor pool Specialist	PSC	
General Services Assistant	PSC	
Cashier	FSN	
Driver	PSC	
Cleaner/Back-up Receptionist	PSC	
Peace Corps Volunteer Coordinator	PCV	X

Data as of March 2009.

INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED

As part of this post evaluation, interviews were conducted with 17 Volunteers, 10 in-country staff members, and 19 representatives from Peace Corps headquarters in D.C., the U.S. Embassy in Suriname, and Ministry officials and project partners.

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

Position	Organization
Acting Regional Director and Regional Chief Administrative Officer	PC/Headquarters
Acting Chief of Operations	PC/Headquarters
Regional Chief of Programming	PC/Headquarters
Peace Corps Regional Safety and Security Desk Officer	PC/Headquarters
Country Desk Officer	PC/Headquarters
Technical Training Specialist	PC/Headquarters
Youth Development and Education Program Training Specialist	PC/Headquarters
Evaluation Specialist	PC/Headquarters
Cross-Cultural and Diversity Training Specialist	PC/Headquarters
Ambassador	U.S. Embassy in Suriname
Regional Security Officer	U.S. Embassy in Suriname
Districts Commissioner	Ministry of Regional Development
Policy Officer	Ministry of Regional Development
Secretary to the Minister of Health	Ministry of Health
IICA Representative in Suriname	Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture
Education Specialist	United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
Country Representative, Suriname	Pan-American Health Organization
Representative	Federation for the Development of the Interior
Executive Director, Suriname	Conservation International

Data as of March 2009.

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the post, in consultation with OPATs Partnership Development Unit, review current partnership agreements and make adjustments where necessary.

2. That the post, in consultation with General Counsel, develop agreements or memoranda of understanding with all partner organizations.

3. That the Agency formalize and widely disseminate the existing Volunteer assignment MOU template.

4. That the Agency develop guidelines that address partnerships with NGOs, government ministries and other entities, including circumstances when the MOU should be used and when the post should seek advice from OGC.

5. That the post incorporate Program and Training Booklet 5 strategies for on-going partnership with the community into its site development manual, and align staff training programs accordingly.

6. That the post clearly define the criteria used to assess community receptivity and readiness for hosting a Volunteer and include this criteria in its site assessment activities.

7. That the post, in consultation with OPATS, identify agency best practices for successful community partnerships and include these strategies in its Volunteer training and support programs.

8. That the post poll Volunteers on the successful strategies they have employed to identify community partners and educate communities on their role and that it include these strategies in its Volunteer training and support programs.

9. That the country director work with OPSI to institute a process to ensure that all funding for community projects is acquired and reported on in accordance with agency policy.

10. That the post train Volunteers on the policies related to funding for community projects.

11. That the post develop and implement a mechanism to fully assess the community cultural makeup, traditions, and other related factors for communities that host Volunteers.

12. That the post use this information to develop pre-service training to prepare future Volunteers for the challenges they will face during service in their community.

13. That the post provides core and sector competencies and related learning objectives to confirm implementation of the TDE process.

14. That the post establish training targets and use the targets to assess Trainees/Volunteers.

15. That the post assess the work distribution of programming staff and ensure that all functions are covered.

16. That the programming staff set clear expectations during pre-service training about the support they will provide to Volunteers and ensure those expectations are met.

17. That the country director review with the staff all required EAP responsibilities so they are fully prepared to respond to emergencies at the post.

18. That the country director ensure that staff have inspected all prospective Volunteer housing and that it meets the post's criteria before a Volunteer's arrival.

19. That the country director ensure that staff have inspected all current Volunteer housing and that it meets post's criteria.

20. That the post develop a staff handbook of standard operating procedures.

21. That region and post establish a succession plan for leadership positions, such as overlapping the country director and PTO positions for a training period during the next transition.

22. That post assess financial contributions of partnerships and define the terms per agency guidance.

23. That post develop a risk analysis for expanding into new areas and collaborating with partners and make decisions accordingly.

APPENDIX A

MANAGEMENT'S RESPONSE TO
THE PRELIMINARY REPORT

MEMORANDUM

To: Kathy Buller, Inspector General

From: Roger Conrad, Regional Director, Inter-America and Pacific

Date: May 12, 2010

Subject: Preliminary Audit Report on Peace Corps/Suriname

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

The Region concurs with all 23 recommendations.

1. That the post, in consultation with OPATs Partnership Development Unit, review current partnership agreements and make adjustments where necessary.

> **Concur:** Post had a phone conversation on April 28th, 2010 with Andrew Neustaetter, Emily Dutterer, and Howard Anderson from OPATS Partnership Development Unit to discuss the status of Post's agreements and support available from PDU. In April 2010, Post also drafted a letter of agreement with the Medical Mission, which is also under review. Post has completed community partnership agreements for Suriname Group 15 who arrived in May 2009.
>
> **Date of completion:** June 15, 2010

2. That the post, in consultation with General Counsel, develop agreements or memoranda of understanding with all partner organizations.

> **Concur:** In December 2009, Post determined that the partnership agreement with UNICEF required an MOA and has been working with Lien Galloway in the Office of the General Counsel on this agreement. Post drafted an MOA, which was then reviewed by OGC and now it is being reviewed by the representatives of UNICEF in country. Post will consult GC on additional MOU/MOAs with future partner organizations.
>
> **Date of Completion:** August 31, 2010

3. That the Agency formalize and widely disseminate the existing Volunteer assignment MOU template.

> **Concur:** The Office of Global Operations and the Office of the General Counsel will revise, as necessary, the Standard Volunteer Placement MOU template and disseminate it widely. The template is currently available on the Peace Corps intranet.
>
> **Date of Completion:** July 31, 2010

4. That the Agency develop guidelines that address partnerships with NGOs, government ministries and other entities, including circumstances when the MOU should be used and when the post should seek advice from OGC.

> **Concur:** The Office of Global Operations, Office of Public Engagement, Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, OPATS, and other offices in consultation with the Office of the General Counsel will develop guidelines on partnerships with NGOs, government ministries, and other entities. These guidelines will include guidance on when to seek advice from OGC.
>
> **Date of Completion:** July 31, 2010

5. That the post incorporate Program and Training Booklet 5 strategies for on-going partnership with the community into its site development manual, and align staff training programs accordingly.

> **Concur:** The Site Identification, Selection, and Preparation Manual has been revised since the Program Audit was conducted in March 2009. Post is planning to make additional revisions to the manual that align with these recommendations. Additionally, the Programming and Training Booklet 5, which is also under revision by OPATS, will be used to gather more ideas regarding recommendations. All staff involved in the Site Identification, Selection, and Preparation Process will be trained in August and September 2010.

Date of Completion: September 2010 and ongoing

6. That the post clearly define the criteria used to assess community receptivity and readiness for hosting a Volunteer and include this criteria in its site assessment activities.

Concur: Post clearly defines the criteria used to assess community receptivity and readiness for hosting a Volunteer in the updated site assessment section in the SIP on programmatic viability. This criteria will be used in site assessment. We are also looking at some best practices from other posts to assess strategies that can be applicable for Suriname. PCVs have been involved in helping to assess new communities by visiting the new site and conducting an assessment of the site in an informal setting. PCVS are spending 1-2 days at the site and talk about Peace Corps and the role of the PCV.

Date of Completion: July 1, 2010

7. That the post, in consultation with OPATS, identify agency best practices for successful community partnerships and include these strategies in its Volunteer training and support programs.

Concur: Post reported this challenge in its 2009 Project Status Report and discussed best practices with both OPATS and Region staff during PSR debrief teleconferences and during the January 2010 visit to post by an OPATS specialist.

During the annual strategic planning process, Post staff and Volunteers determined that identifying an appropriate Counterpart during the site identification and preparation (SIP) process is extremely difficult. Therefore, a new approach will be used during the 2010-11 SIP process; a Community Contact will be identified during staff SIP visits but the primary Project Partner(s) for the PCV will be identified by the PCV her or himself after a period of living in the community for approximately 2.5 months. The role of the community contact will be to serve as a first liaison between the PCT/PCV and the community. The community contact will welcome the PCT/PCV to the community, introduce him/her to the village leadership and other members of the community, and educate the PCT/PCV about the cultural normsin the village. The community contact is also the first contact for the PC office regarding programming or safety issues. After being at site for approximately 2.5 months the PCV will identify one or more project partners to work with. The community contact could potentially be a project partner as well, but this is not a requirement.

Current Volunteers serving in the same region will visit each village for a 24 to 48 hour period to orient the Community Contact prior to the new PCV's arrival at site. Orientation for the PCV-identified Project Partner(s) will occur in regional conferences that will occur within three months of the new PCV's arrival at site. This information will be included in Post's SIP manual.

We are in ongoing consultation to implement sector-specific strategies with OPATS Specialists Holly Christofferson for Business and Marguerite Joseph with health.

Date of Completion: July 1, 2010

8. That the post poll Volunteers on the successful strategies they have employed to identify community partners and educate communities on their role and that it include these strategies in its Volunteer training and support programs.

Concur: Post informally polled Volunteers on successful strategies for identifying community partners and educating interior communities on their role. Additionally, COSing PCVs provide this information in their final site report. The information gleaned from these surveys helps inform training session

such as the "Working with Project Partners" session that focuses on understanding the Surinamese cultural context of community work and challenges Volunteers might face within it.

Date of Completion: Spring 2010

9. That the country director work with OPSI to institute a process to ensure that all funding for community projects is acquired and reported on in accordance with agency policy.

Concur: The country director has contacted OPSI to request assistance in reviewing current practices, making improvements and assuring that Post's policy is in accordance with the agency.

Date of Completion: June 15, 2010

10. That the post train Volunteers on the policies related to funding for community projects.

Concur: Post has issued new policies and practices related to soliciting and managing funding for community projects. These policies have been disseminated through email, hard copy and during in-service trainings including the Early Service Training (PDM Overview), the Project Design and Management (PDM) TOT.

In addition, Program Managers now have a review meeting with Volunteers, about a project they are planning to submit for funding. During these meetings PM and PCV discuss the role of the volunteer and the importance of having the project funds managed by the community.

Date of Completion: May 2010

11. That the post develop and implement a mechanism to fully assess the community cultural makeup, traditions, and other related factors for communities that host Volunteers.

Concur: Over the past years, Post's focus has been mainly geared towards the Upper Suriname River. With (1) the expanding of the number of PCT's coming in, (2) having PCVs in nearly all villages along the Upper Suriname river, (3) and more requests coming in to place PCVs in other regions of Suriname which are underserved. Post has to adjust the training on Cross Cultural Understanding. Post contacted several organizations working in "newly" developed regions and community based organizations to participate in Site Fairs and invited representatives of those organizations and current PCVs to either help to strengthen training preparation and implementation. Post continues to focus on strengthening this as PCVs of the Upper Marowijne River and the city/district area's have been asked specifically what they would like us to include in training regarding cross cultural understanding.

In addition, due to the diversity of staff that is representative of the diversity of the country, staff is routinely asked for input.

Date of Completion: May 2010 and ongoing

12. That the post use this information to develop pre-service training to prepare future Volunteers for the challenges they will face during service in their community.

Concur: During the Training of Trainers for the upcoming training class, the Program Manager has prepared a new session on cross-cultural understanding. The cultural section in the language workbooks is also updated to include information provided by PCVs during site visits about cultural challenges they face.

Date of Completion: April 27, 2010

13. That the post provides core and sector competencies and related learning objectives to confirm implementation of the TDE process.

Concur: In January 2010 Post, in conjunction with an OPATS specialist, developed and refined core and sector competencies and related learning objectives.

Date of Completion: January 2010

14. That the post establish training targets and use the targets to assess Trainees/Volunteers.

Concur: The TDE process was reviewed with the support of an OPATS Specialist in January 2010. Post re-examined KSAs in light of project changes, updated core and sector competencies, and updated terminal and enabling learning objectives for these competencies (which serve as the training targets for the 27-month continuum of learning).

The Trainee Assessment Packet (TAP) for the health and the business projects was updated to include the 15 terminal learning objectives. Trainees will self-assess twice during PST, at which time Training staff will also provide an assessment of each trainee on the same learning objectives.

Volunteers are assessed during site visits from Program Managers and Programming & Training Specialists. The CD and PTO also visit Volunteers and provide informal assessments. Volunteers are also assessed at in-service training events such as EST, MST, and COS.

Date of Completion: January 2010

15. That the post assess the work distribution of programming staff and ensure that all functions are covered.

Concur: Beyond intensive work on the TDE process, site identification and preparation manual, and relationship building, staff has also allocated substantial time to assessing the work distribution of programming staff and ensuring that all functions are covered. Many priorities have now been addressed which has freed up several staff members' time. During a review of IPBS goals and objectives for 2009, work distribution and staffing resources were analyzed and assignments were allocated to each staff member. Each staff member was responsible to coordinate, plan, and execute 1-2 of the goals mentioned in the IPBS. This helped to lessen the burden on staff to focus on multiple topics at once. As a result, a Program and Training Specialist was hired for each project and PST funds were reallocated to allow for a short term Program Assistant for the duration of PST. This will allow full coverage of Volunteer support functions throughout the year.

PMs do recognize the importance of bonding with PCVs and personally becoming engaged in their activities. Peace Corps Suriname has worked to better define the roles and responsibilities within the P&T unit feel that the adequate importance is now placed upon interaction and support between Project Managers and PCVs. PMs try as much as possible to have phone conversations, email conversations or person to person conversations with each PCV at least once per month. PMs and PCVs also agreed to a list of core expectations for PMs and PCVs.

Date of Completion: March 2010

16. That the programming staff set clear expectations during pre-service training about the support they will provide to Volunteers and ensure those expectations are met.

> **Concur:** During PST, EST and MST a session on expectations will be provided by PMs. This will give an opportunity to both PCTs/PCVs and staff to discuss the challenges and applaud the successes in the relationship. This was developed during a visit by Randy Adams and Mike McCabe in 2008.
>
> **Date of Completion:** July 2010

17. That the country director review with the staff all required EAP responsibilities so they are fully prepared to respond to emergencies at the post.

> **Concur:** The Peace Corps Country Director has reviewed all required EAP responsibilities with staff and has practiced them during the Crisis Management Overview and Exercise held March 26 and 27, 2009.
>
> **Date of Completion:** March 2009

18. That the country director ensure that staff have inspected all prospective Volunteer housing and that it meets the post's criteria before a Volunteer's arrival.

> **Concur:** A Housing Coordinator has been hired as part of the Admin Team. The Housing Coordinator and the Safety and Security Coordinator complete housing inspections for all incoming trainees prior to the start of PST. Information from the inspections is shared with the Volunteer Support Team to determine next steps, if necessary. In addition, a systematic process has been included in Post's Site Identification and Preparation (SIP) Manual for ensuring Volunteer housing meets post's criteria prior to the new Volunteer's arrival. All prospective Volunteer housing will be checked prior to Volunteer arrival.
>
> **Date of Completion:** June 1, 2010 and ongoing

19. That the country director ensure that staff have inspected all current Volunteer housing and that it meets post's criteria.

> **Concur:** Recognizing this as a complex challenge in Suriname, PC Suriname's Country Director implemented a weekly Volunteer Support meeting to address housing and other Volunteer support issues. The meeting has been a very successful way of identifying issues and coordinating efforts to resolve them in a timely way. In addition, a systematic process has been included in Post's Site Identification and Preparation (SIP) Manual for ensuring Volunteer housing meets post's criteria prior to the new Volunteer's arrival.
>
> A full inspection of current Volunteer housing was conducted during PCV site visits to ensure that all current housing meets post's criteria. Programming staff have been trained on how to conduct an inspection and a check list has been created for them to complete during each site visit. Following the site visit, the completed and signed check list is filed.
>
> **Date of Completion:** June 1, 2010

20. That the post develop a staff handbook of standard operating procedures.

> **Concur:** For programming functions, the Site Identification and Preparation (SIP) manual serves as a collection of standard operating procedures (SOP) relevant to the SIP process. For training, Post has

created a TDE management tool that standardizes many of the processes and procedures concerning training design, management, and evaluation, including a database of learning objectives and corresponding session plans that can be referred to in the coming years. Post has also created a Staff Handbook and several SOPs.

Date of Completion: January-March 2010

21. That region and post establish a succession plan for leadership positions, such as overlapping the country director and PTO positions for a training period during the next transition.

Concur: Post is working with the Region to ensure timely hiring of a PTO to replace the incumbent who will depart in July 2010 and to establish a succession plan using the template provided by the Region. This transition document clearly details priority action items, location of key files, and a general overview of programming and training. If logistically and financially feasible, post would welcome overlap between the current and new PTO. There was a two-week overlap of the outgoing and incoming CD in March 2010. The two CDs spent time reviewing IPBS, examining staff strengths and areas for development, and key partnerships.

Date of Completion: March 2010 and July 2010

22. That post assess financial contributions of partnerships and define the terms per agency guidance.

Concur: Program staff have been oriented on communicating the distribution of costs clearly to community partners and a written explanation of respective responsibilities is now included in the community agreement. The community responsibility of Volunteer housing costs is stated in the SIP manual.

Date of Completion: March 2010

23. That post develop a risk analysis for expanding into new areas and collaborating with partners and make decisions accordingly.

Concur: The Post has consulted Programming and Training Specialist from IAP, Amy Johnson, who will share examples of effective ways to assess risk from other Posts in the Region. Post will develop a mechanism based on its needs and best practices.

Date of Completion: September 2010

OIG COMMENTS

Management concurred with all 23 recommendations. Based on the documentation provided, we closed 16 recommendations: numbers 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22. In its response, management described actions it is taking or intends to take to address the issues that prompted each of our recommendations. We wish to note that in closing recommendations, we are not certifying that the region or post has taken these actions or that we have reviewed their effect. Certifying compliance and verifying effectiveness are management's responsibilities. However, when we feel it is warranted, we may conduct a follow-up review to confirm that action has been taken and to evaluate the impact.

Seven recommendations: numbers 1,2,3,4, 9, 10, and 23, remain open pending confirmation from the chief compliance officer that the documentation reflected in OIG Analysis below is received.

1. That the post, in consultation with OPATs Partnership Development Unit, review current partnership agreements and make adjustments where necessary.
Agency Response:

> **Concur:** Post had a phone conversation on April 28th, 2010 with Andrew Neustaetter, Emily Dutterer, and Howard Anderson from OPATS Partnership Development Unit to discuss the status of Post's agreements and support available from PDU. In April 2010, Post also drafted a letter of agreement with the Medical Mission, which is also under review. Post has completed community partnership agreements for Suriname Group 15 who arrived in May 2009.
>
> **Date of completion:** June 15, 2010

OIG Analysis:
> To close recommendations number 1, please provide updated partner agreements or results of discussions with OPATS PDU and OCG that determine current agreements are sufficient.

2. That the post, in consultation with General Counsel, develop agreements or memoranda of understanding with all partner organizations.
Agency Response:

> **Concur:** In December 2009, Post determined that the partnership agreement with UNICEF required an MOA and has been working with Lien Galloway in the Office of the General Counsel on this agreement. Post drafted an MOA, which was then reviewed by OGC and now it is being reviewed by the representatives of UNICEF in country. Post will consult GC on additional MOU/MOAs with future partner organizations.
>
> **Date of Completion:** August 31, 2010

OIG Analysis:

> To close recommendations number 2, please provide updated partner agreements or results of discussions with OPATS PDU and OCG that determine current agreements are sufficient.

3. That the Agency formalize and widely disseminate the existing Volunteer assignment MOU template.

> **Concur:** The Office of Global Operations and the Office of the General Counsel will revise, as necessary, the Standard Volunteer Placement MOU template and disseminate it widely. The template is currently available on the Peace Corps intranet.
>
> **Date of Completion:** July 31, 2010

OIG Analysis:

> The OIG confirmed that two links to the standard placement template are listed on OGC's intranet page. We recognize that the agency is determining if revisions to the Standard Volunteer Placement MOU template are required in conjunction with actions to close recommendation 4. To close recommendation number 3, please provide documentation of those revisions and evidence of wide dissemination.

4. That the Agency develop guidelines that address partnerships with NGOs, government ministries and other entities, including circumstances when the MOU should be used and when the post should seek advice from OGC.
Agency Response:

> **Concur:** The Office of Global Operations, Office of Public Engagement, Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, OPATS, and other offices in consultation with the Office of the General Counsel will develop guidelines on partnerships with NGOs, government ministries, and other entities. These guidelines will include guidance on when to seek advice from OGC.
>
> **Date of Completion:** July 31, 2010

OIG Analysis:

> To close recommendation number 4, please provide documented guidelines.

9. That the country director work with OPSI to institute a process to ensure that all funding for community projects is acquired and reported on in accordance with agency policy.
Agency Response:

> **Concur:** The country director has contacted OPSI to request assistance in reviewing current practices, making improvements and assuring that Post's policy is in accordance with the agency.

Date of Completion: June 15, 2010

OIG Analysis:

To close recommendation number 9, please provide post's new policies and practices related to soliciting and managing funding for community projects and results of discussions with OPSI.

10. That the post train Volunteers on the policies related to funding for community projects.
Agency Response:

Concur: Post has issued new policies and practices related to soliciting and managing funding for community projects. These policies have been disseminated through email, hard copy and during in-service trainings including the Early Service Training (PDM Overview), the Project Design and Management (PDM) TOT.

In addition, Program Managers now have a review meeting with Volunteers, about a project they are planning to submit for funding. During these meetings PM and PCV discuss the role of the volunteer and the importance of having the project funds managed by the community.

Date of Completion: May 2010

OIG Analysis:

The post provided documentation on the PDM session related to budget and financial protocols. However, this recommendation is in tandem with recommendation 9 and will not be closed until OPSI determines that the process is in compliance.

23. That post develop a risk analysis for expanding into new areas and collaborating with partners and make decisions accordingly.
Agency Response:

Concur: The Post has consulted Programming and Training Specialist from IAP, Amy Johnson, who will share examples of effective ways to assess risk from other Posts in the Region. Post will develop a mechanism based on its needs and best practices.

Date of Completion: September 2010

OIG Analysis:

To close recommendation number 23, please provide a risk assessment mechanism.

APPENDIX C

PROGRAM EVALUATION COMPLETION
AND OIG CONTACT

OIG CONTACT

Following 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 Jim O'Keefe, Assistant Inspector General for Evaluation and Inspection, jkeefe@peacecorps.gov, or call 202.692.2904.

STAFF ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This program evaluation was conducted under the direction of former Assistant Inspector General for Evaluations, Shelley Elbert and Deputy Inspector General Joaquin Ferrao and by Evaluator Susan Gasper.

REPORT FRAUD, WASTE, ABUSE, AND MISMANAGEMENT

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