



# Office of Inspector General

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To: Dick Day, Regional Director, Africa region  
Jacquelyn Sesonga, Country Director PC/Cameroon

From: Kathy A. Buller, Inspector General *Joquim Sesonga for K.B.*

Subject: Safety and security weaknesses in PC/Cameroon

Date: July 31, 2012

The Office of Inspector General recently sent a team to PC/Cameroon to look into safety and security-related concerns raised to the House Committee on Foreign Affairs. During the trip, Lead Evaluator Heather Robinson reviewed elements of the post's site development process and the safety and security information provided to trainees and Volunteers. OIG did not find evidence that the allegations raised to the House committee regarding site development and housing were well-founded. However, the review did identify weaknesses in the post's safety and security systems that require management attention and are further discussed in this memorandum.

## **1. Housing checks are not being completed for all Volunteer houses**

Staff members only check new houses that do not currently house a Volunteer. Volunteer-occupied houses that will receive a replacement Volunteer are not checked. Instead of conducting a housing check, staff rely on current Volunteers to raise housing concerns. However, Volunteers are unaware of what needs to be reported to staff because they are not provided with a copy of the post's housing and community criteria.

Furthermore, the post has developed at least three separate checklists that contain different housing criteria. Staff members do not consistently use all three checklists, and some staff were not aware that multiple checklists exist. The presence of multiple housing checklists creates confusion and could cause important criteria to be overlooked.

As reported in the Office of Inspector General's *Recurring Issues: OIG Post Audits and Evaluations Fiscal Years 2009–2011*, non-compliance with the agency's housing check policies is a common area of weakness at Peace Corps posts worldwide. PC/Cameroon is no exception. OIG staff used the post's housing checklists to check three Volunteer houses. Noteworthy deficiencies were observed in two of the three houses, including missing window screens, missing bars on windows, and an insufficient number of neighbors.

## **2. The post lacks clear, consolidated site history files**

The post relies largely on "post books" for its site history information. These post books are large notebooks and binders that contain programming information and site notes provided by former Volunteers. These post books do not contain information about past crimes or

health- and safety-related concerns unless they were raised by previous Volunteers in their notes. Post staff would likely find it difficult to determine whether there have been concerns with a site by reviewing these large post books.

In addition to the post books, the post also has a file cabinet that contains site history information. However, the file cabinet only contains information for a small number of sites, and interviews with some members of the programming team confirmed that these files are not typically used during site development. Instead, staff relies on the post books, other staff members, and their own knowledge of sites to determine whether there are concerns with a site they are developing.

Furthermore, the site history files and post books are located throughout the office; some are with individual program managers and others are located in a conference room. Staff responsible for reviewing all of the information for a previous site would have to search for it in multiple locations.

In combination, these factors create unorganized, incomplete site history files that could leave staff without the information they need to manage health and safety risks at Volunteer sites.

### **3. Safety and security authority and responsibilities**

The post's Safety and Security Coordinator (SSC) has held the position since 2003. Since that time, the roles and responsibilities for SSCs have increased in scope and complexity, and it is often necessary for other staff members to assist with important safety and security duties. In PC/Cameroon, safety and security duties are delegated to other staff members but important information is not consistently communicated back to the SSC. For example, the SSC is not always made aware of housing issues, site concerns, and crimes committed against Volunteers. During our work, we found evidence that the SSC was not always informed of safety and security-related issues, making it difficult for the SSC to take the proper action. In addition, the SSC is not in a supervisory position and did not feel she had the authority to ensure staff members completely and accurately documented their safety and security-related duties. It is essential that someone at the post has the responsibility and authority to coordinate safety and security tasks and ensure that these responsibilities are carried out as intended.

We request that you respond within 45 days of receipt of this memorandum, describing actions planned or already taken that address the issues we raised above. Please be aware that OIG's oversight inquiry of other aspects of the agency's response to the Cameroon incident is ongoing.

cc: Ed Hobson, Associate Director for Safety and Security  
Esther Benjamin, Associate Director, Global Operations  
Daljit Bains, Chief Compliance Officer  
Paul Weinberger, Director of Congressional Relations  
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