

THE PEACE CORPS WELCOMES YOU TO

# GUINEA



A PEACE CORPS PUBLICATION  
FOR NEW VOLUNTEERS



August 2005



# A WELCOME LETTER

Welcome to the Peace Corps/Guinea!

Should you accept your invitation, you will embark on an incredible experience. Leaving your friends and families behind, you will enter a foreign culture and be forced to communicate in a language with which you are probably totally unfamiliar. You will be frustrated and challenged in multiple ways, and you will persevere. You will get sick, and you will recover. You will arrive in a rural community with little more than the clothes on your back and the food in your pack, and you will survive. You will conquer your own misgivings and the pessimism of others, and you will learn that you can do anything you set your mind to. You will make new friends of all ages and from all walks of life, and even form new family ties within Guinean communities, and within Peace Corps. You will turn failures into victories, and the victories will be numerous. You will learn as much about yourself and what it means to be an American as you will about Guinea and what it means to be a Guinean. You will learn the true meaning of hospitality and hope.

Guinea is a stunningly beautiful country, from the mangroves and palm trees of the Basse Côte, to the rugged highlands of the Fouta Djallon, and the wide open plains of Haute Guinea and the Niger River. No matter where you are posted, you will wake every morning to the sound of birds and children and women at work. In the dry season, you can fall asleep outside under your mosquito net while staring at the stars, and looking at the moon that links you to your friends and family you've left behind.

To be successful, you will need to be resourceful, persistent, patient, and highly motivated. You must keep your sense of

humor, and remind yourself from time to time why you decided to join the Peace Corps. After the initial charm of being in a new and exciting environment wears off, it is easy to become negative and critical, to succumb to the challenges, to be worn down. Some say you have your “highest highs and your lowest lows” emotionally as a Volunteer. As a returned Peace Corps Volunteer (RPCV) myself, I believe this is true.

Fortunately, you will not be alone! The staff of Peace Corps/Guinea is committed to providing you with the best support possible in a country with poor infrastructure. You will have access to a full-time doctor and nurse based in the national capital, available on-call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. You will also have access to a regional doctor based in Dakar, Senegal, and medical professionals in the U.S. when required. Your medical team will work with you during training and throughout your service to help you develop a plan and to acquire the skills you need to stay healthy and safe at your site. Associate Peace Corps directors will answer your technical questions, and communicate with host country institutions, to help you accomplish mutually agreed-upon goals and objectives for the program. They will visit you at your site several times each year, and act as your principle point of contact in the Peace Corps office. Administrative staff will ensure you receive an adequate living allowance, facilitate mail delivery to you at your site, and provide Internet access in Conakry. Cellular phones, satellite phones and high-frequency radios are used to facilitate communications. We are here to support you, and help you get your job done.

During your 11-week pre-service training program you will learn two languages—French and the appropriate local language for your site. It will be a challenge, and it is unlikely you will be fluent in either language when you leave training. You will need to continue your language studies on your own

using the skills and tools acquired during training. Learning the language will be frustrating and tiring, but with persistence, patience and hard work, you will persevere. Your fellow Volunteers will likely provide you with the most critical support you receive during your Peace Corps service—the freedom to speak English, to be American, to be yourself when you feel you need to, and the bonds you make you will keep for life.

Before your departure, please reflect long and hard on your commitment to Peace Corps, and your motivation to work with Guineans and help in their efforts to better their lives. We don't want you to pack up your entire world in a suitcase, say goodbye to everyone you love, and embark on a mission destined for disappointment. We will do everything we can to make sure you have the tools—cultural, medical, programmatic, and linguistic skills—required to succeed. But the determination and the can-do attitude come from within. It is an exceptional thing you will do, and not everyone is cut out for this type of experience. It will be hard, but it will be extremely rewarding. It will be 'the toughest job you'll ever love'.

As you read this *Welcome Book*, the Peace Corps *Volunteer Handbook*, and your Volunteer assignment description, you will learn more about Guinea, your assignment, and the policies and circumstances that guide our program. Talk to RPCVs, and visit the Friends of Guinea website ([www.friendsofguinea.org](http://www.friendsofguinea.org)). While you assimilate this information, decide if Peace Corps is right for you, if Guinea is right for you, and if your program is right for you. The people of Guinea look forward to meeting and working with you as do we—the Peace Corps staff your fellow Volunteers.

We welcome you to our Peace Corps family!

Steve Peterson  
Country Director



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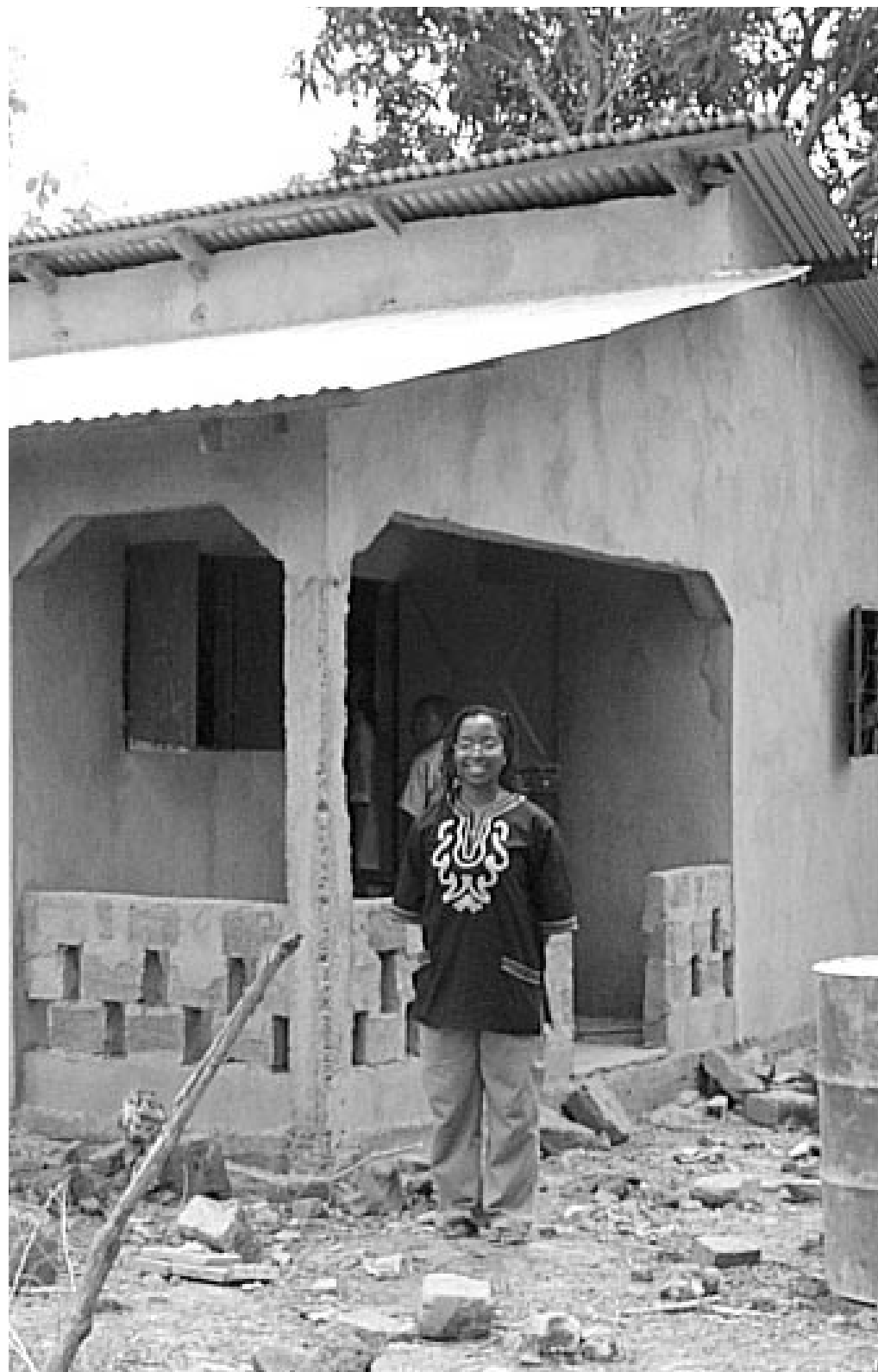
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# PEACE CORPS/GUINEA HISTORY AND PROGRAMS



## **History of the Peace Corps in Guinea**

Peace Corps signed a cooperation agreement with the government of Guinea in 1962, which forms the basis for our current country program. The first Volunteers arrived in Guinea in 1963. However, in 1966, relations between the United States government and the government of Guinea soured, and the Guinean government asked Volunteers to leave. Peace Corps was invited back in 1969, but again relations between the two governments deteriorated, and Volunteers left in 1971. Soon after President Sekou Touré's death in 1984, Peace Corps was asked to return once again to Guinea. Peace Corps has maintained a continuous presence in Guinea since 1986, and will celebrate 20 years next year!

## **History and Future of Peace Corps Programming in Guinea**

The mission of Peace Corps/Guinea is to help meet the development and human resource needs of the people of Guinea. Existing projects address the top development priorities of the government, including education, health, natural resource management and small enterprise development. Most Volunteers are based in rural areas, so that Volunteers reach those communities most in need of assistance.

Since 1963, more than 1,000 Volunteers have served in Guinea. Currently approximately 100 Volunteers serve in-country. No matter what sector they are in, Volunteers are much in demand by schools, health centers, cooperatives, and

rural communities; requests for Volunteers regularly exceed our capacity to provide them.

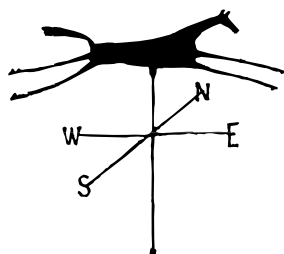
The development philosophy of Peace Corps/Guinea is to build capacity from the ground up—to empower people so they can improve the quality of their own lives. This philosophy has an impact not only on the education, health, and economics of the people in communities where Volunteers work, but also on their view of the role of private citizens in a democracy, leading to a greater appreciation for honest, transparent, democratic institutions.

The future for Peace Corps/Guinea looks good, but we envision changes that will make it even better. Because the government of Guinea is unable to recruit sufficient numbers of teachers to meet the needs of rural schools, Peace Corps/Guinea continues to supply high school classroom teachers. We hope to move to the next level of capacity building and train teachers themselves. There also appear to be opportunities to work in new regions of Guinea, and Peace Corps staff will explore potential opportunities and safety and security issues for Volunteers in the forest region of the country.

## NOTES



# COUNTRY OVERVIEW: GUINEA AT A GLANCE



## History

The geographical landmass commonly referred to today as the Republic of Guinea in West Africa, has been inhabited for thousands of years. Prior to occupation by the French, many parts of the country and the people belonged to the empires of Ghana, Mali, and Songhai that prospered between 1000 and 1400 AD. However, it is probably more useful to focus on the country's more recent history—from the colonial era to independence to the present.

Guinea's colonial period began with the arrival of the French in the early 19th century. The coastal region became a French protectorate in 1849. France's domination of the country was assured by 1898. Official French policy promoted the assimilation of French customs and language by local populations, based on the supposed "cultural superiority" of the French over indigenous people. As elsewhere in French West Africa, colonial rule in Guinea was characterized by neither assimilation nor association. Few Guineans were educated in either French language or culture.

After World War II, a number of changes were introduced in the administration of the colonies. For example, French-educated Guineans were finally allowed to vote under the *Loi Cadre* in 1946. While the French governor remained head of the territorial government, he was assisted by a government council chosen by a newly elected territorial assembly. Provision was also made for an African vice president to be selected from among the assemblymen. These changes

avored political and social progress in the colony and led to the creation of political parties, paving the way to self-determination and independence.

In 1958, Guinea was the first colony in Africa to gain its independence from France, in an effort led by the country's first president, Sekou Touré. The decision by the newly formed Guinean government not to participate in the economic system proposed by French leaders for their former colonies led to a complete break in relations with France, souring relations between the two countries for years to come. As a result of this break with the West and the ongoing political pressures of the Cold War, Sekou Touré developed close relations with Cuba and the Soviet Union, and he instituted Marxist-socialist economic and political reforms.

President Touré died in 1984, and a military coup was led by Guinean army colonel Lansana Conté. The Army formed a committee (*Comité Militaire de Redressement National or CMRN*) to run the country, which banned the Democratic Party, suspended the 1982 constitution, and dissolved the National Assembly. The CMRN also resolved to create a market-oriented economy and promised to encourage an open, pluralistic society.

A constitutional committee was established in October 1988, and a new constitution was put to popular vote at the end of 1990. The revised constitution received overwhelming popular support. This ended the first phase of the transition to a democratically elected government promised by the army since its early days in power.

A second phase began in 1991 with the replacement of the CMRN by the *Conseil Transitoire de Redressement National* or CTRN, which included more civilians than the CMRN. The CTRN served as a transitional government until

presidential and parliamentary elections were held. General Lansana Conte was elected president in the country's first multiparty elections in 1993, and he was reelected president in 1998 and 2003 (although the 2003 elections were not internationally described as free and fair). Parliamentary majority in the 114-member National Assembly is held by the party that supported the president's candidacy, the Party for Unity and Progress (PUP).

## **Government**

Guinea is a republic, gaining its independence from France on October 2, 1958. The government is composed of three branches: executive, legislative, and judicial. The executive branch consists of an elected president and appointed civilian ministers; the legislative branch consists of the elected National Assembly; and the judicial branch has a supreme court. There is universal suffrage for citizens over age 18. Political parties were legalized in April 1992.

The administration of Guinea is carried out on four levels, beginning at the top with the national government, followed by the regions (8), the prefectures (33), and lastly by the sub-prefectures (100 +) or rural development communities (*communes*). The president appoints officials to all levels of the country's highly centralized administration.

## **Economy**

Despite its mineral wealth, Guinea is one of the poorest countries in the world. With a gross domestic product estimated at \$19.5 billion in 2004, the per capita GDP is around \$2,100. The country's economy depends mostly on agriculture and the extraction of natural resources. Leading export crops are coffee, bananas, palm kernels, and

pineapples. Guinea possesses between one-fourth and one-third of the world's known bauxite reserves and high-grade ore. The country ranks second only to Australia in ore production and is the world's largest exporter of bauxite. Mining is the most dynamic and important source of foreign exports, providing the majority of export revenues. There are rich deposits of iron ore, gold, and diamonds, but Guinea's underdeveloped infrastructure has prevented the exploitation all of its available resources.

The industrial and commercial sectors are in the early stages of development. Significant economic liberalization has been achieved from reforms begun in 1984. There has been growth in the trade, agricultural production, manufacturing, and informal (i.e., street vendors and other small-scale entrepreneurial activities) sectors. However, many economic issues are unresolved, including creating a healthier environment for the growth of the private sector and better economic achievement.

## **People and Culture**

Guinea's population of approximately 9.5 million is growing at an annual rate of 2.8 percent. One-sixth of the population lives in Conakry, the capital, where the population is increasing at a rate of 5 percent per year. Forty-five percent of Guineans are under age 15. Life expectancy is 50 years, and child (under five years of age) mortality is 90 per 1,000 live births.

Both the ethnic configuration and the linguistic distribution of people in Guinea are the function of natural geographic divisions. Although there are more than 20 ethnic groups in the country, each geographic region has a predominant group

that absorbs or influences the others in the region. In some cases, smaller ethnic groups are actually subdivisions of larger ones, with similar linguistic and cultural roots.

Lower Guinea (*Basse Côte*) is made up of the Susu, Baga, Nalu, Landuma, Tyapi, and Mikiforé people. The Susu represent about 20 percent of the population of Guinea. Middle Guinea (*Moyenne Guinée*) includes the Fulani people (*Peuhl* in French), with 40 percent of the population; Djalónké (the original inhabitants of the Fouta Djallon); and Tenda. Upper Guinea (*Haute Guinée*) is made up of the Malinke, Djalónké, and Ouassoulounké. The Malinke account for about 30 percent of population. Finally, the Forest Region accommodates the Kissia (*Kissi* in French), Loma (*Toma* in French), and Kpèlè (*Guerzé* in French). There have not been significant clashes among these ethnic groups, as intermarriages and the sharing of a similar culture have brought peaceful cohabitation. However, elections have prompted some ethnic conflicts among followers of ethnically based parties.

Conflicts in neighboring countries, including Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Côte d'Ivoire, have forced more than 800,000 people to migrate to Guinea as refugees. Most of them are women, children, and the elderly. The Guinean government has contributed more than 1,000 troops to peacekeeping forces in neighboring countries. The signing of a peace accord between rebels and the Sierra Leonean government in November 1996 led to hope that stability would at last come to Guinea's neighborhood. The UN peacekeepers are scheduled to leave the border region of Sierra Leone and Guinea in late December 2005, which serves as an indication that peace is returning to the region.

## Environment

Guinea is located on the southern edge of the great bulge of West Africa, approximately 9° 30' north and 13° 43' west of the equator. It borders six other countries: Guinea-Bissau in the northwest, Senegal and Mali in the north and northeast, Côte d'Ivoire in the east, and Liberia and Sierra Leone in the south. Total land area is 98,400 square miles (246,000 square kilometers). The Atlantic coastline includes 218 miles (352 km) of mangroves and beautiful beaches.

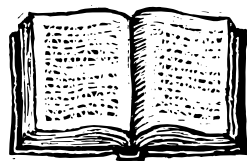
The country's varied terrain is divided into four regions: Lower Guinea or Maritime Guinea, Middle Guinea, Upper Guinea, and the Forest Region. Lower Guinea extends 30 miles (48 km) inland from the shoreline. Beyond the coastal plain is the mountainous plateau region of the Fouta Djallon, with an elevation of about 3,000 feet (915 meters). Upper Guinea features gently undulating savanna, broken by occasional rocky outcrops with an average elevation of 1,000 feet (305 m). In the extreme southeast are the forested highlands. Mount Nimba in this region is the highest point in the country at 6,070 feet (1,850 m).

Guinea is described as "the water tower of West Africa," and has considerable potential to generate hydroelectric power for agriculture and industry. Principal rivers include the Bafing (the upper course of the Senegal River) and the Gambia, both of which start in the mountains of the Fouta Djallon and flow northeast over the country's borders. The Niger River and its important tributary, the Milo River, originate in the forested Guinea highlands.

## NOTES



# RESOURCES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION



Following is a list of websites for additional information about the Peace Corps and Guinea, and to connect you to returned Volunteers and other invitees. Please keep in mind that although we try to make sure all these links are active and current, we cannot guarantee it. If you do not have access to the Internet, visit your local library. Libraries offer free Internet usage and often let you print information to take home.

A note of caution: As you surf the Internet, be aware that you may find bulletin boards and chat rooms in which people are free to express opinions about the Peace Corps based on their own experiences, including comments by those who were unhappy with their choice to serve in the Peace Corps. These opinions are not those of the Peace Corps or the U.S. government, and we hope you will keep in mind that no two people experience their service in the same way.

## **General Information About Guinea**

### **[www.countrywatch.com](http://www.countrywatch.com)**

On this site, you can learn anything from what time it is in Conakry to how to convert from the dollar to the Guinean franc. Just click on “Guinea” and go from there.

### **[www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations)**

Visit this site for general travel advice about almost any country in the world.

**[www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov)**

The State Department's website issues background notes periodically about countries around the world. Find Guinea and learn more about its social and political history.

**[www.psr.keele.ac.uk/official.htm](http://www.psr.keele.ac.uk/official.htm)**

This site includes links to all the official sites for governments worldwide.

**[www.geography.about.com/library/maps/blindex.htm](http://www.geography.about.com/library/maps/blindex.htm)**

This online world atlas includes maps and geographical information, and each country page contains links to other sites, such as the Library of Congress, that contain comprehensive historical, social, and political background.

**[www.cyberschoolbus.un.org/infonation/info.asp](http://www.cyberschoolbus.un.org/infonation/info.asp)**

This United Nations site allows you to search for statistical information for member states of the UN.

**[www.worldinformation.com](http://www.worldinformation.com)**

This site provides an additional source of current and historical information about 228 countries.

**[www.graphicmaps.com/webimage/countrys/africa/gn.htm](http://www.graphicmaps.com/webimage/countrys/africa/gn.htm)**

This site provides maps, flags, and other facts and figures for almost every country in the world.

**[www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/gv.html](http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/gv.html)**

CIA World Factbook

**Connect With Returned Volunteers and Other Invitees****<http://clubs.yahoo.com/clubs/peacecorps>**

This Yahoo site hosts a bulletin board where prospective Volunteers and returned Volunteers can come together.

### **[www.rpcv.org](http://www.rpcv.org)**

This is the site of the National Peace Corps Association, made up of returned Volunteers. On this site you can find links to all the Web pages of the “friends of” groups for most countries of service, made up of former Volunteers who served in those countries. There are also regional groups who frequently get together for social events and local Volunteer activities.

### **<http://www.rpcvwebring.org>**

This site is known as the Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Web Ring. Browse the Web ring and see what former Volunteers are saying about their service.

### **[www.peacecorpswriters.org](http://www.peacecorpswriters.org)**

This site is hosted by a group of returned Volunteer writers. It is a monthly online publication of essays and Volunteer accounts of their Peace Corps service.

### **[www.friendsofguinea.org](http://www.friendsofguinea.org)**

A website hosted by returned Volunteers who served in Guinea. There are several helpful Guinea links on the site, and they share a quarterly newsletter and provide fundraising for current Volunteer projects.

## **Online Articles/Current News Sites About Guinea**

### **<http://allafrica.com>**

News about all of Africa (in English)

### **[http://www.irinnews.org/frontpage.asp?SelectRegion=West\\_Africa&SelectCountry=Guinea](http://www.irinnews.org/frontpage.asp?SelectRegion=West_Africa&SelectCountry=Guinea)**

News site about Guinea from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (in English)

### **[www.boubah.com](http://www.boubah.com)**

Web portal with news about Guinea (in French)

**www.guinea-forum.org**

A forum on Guinean affairs (in French)

**www.jeuneafrique.com**

*Jeune Afrique* online (in French)

## **International Development Sites About Guinea**

**www.usaid.gov/gn**

The U.S. Agency for International Development's work in Guinea

**www.reliefweb.int**

UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

## **French Language Websites**

It is a good idea to practice French as much as possible before your departure. Local language instruction will be extremely important when you begin your training in-country, and it can only begin when your French proficiency is sufficiently advanced. The following websites may be useful:

French Language Guide with Sound:

**<http://www.languageguide.org/francais/>**

Several links to BBC online courses with video clips:

**<http://www.bbc.co.uk/languages/french/index.shtml>**

**<http://www.bbc.co.uk/languages/french/lj/>**

**<http://www.bbc.co.uk/languages/french/experience/>**

Basic French Grammar Site (no sound):

**<http://www.jump-gate.com/languages/french/>**

**wordPROF, French Vocabulary Online (including interactive scenes): <http://www.wordprof.com/>**

STP Computer Aided Language Learning (vocabulary and grammar): <http://stp.ling.uu.se/call/french/>

Fluent French: <http://www.signiform.com/french/>

French Tutorial: <http://www.frenchtutorial.com/>

ARTFL French-English and English-French Dictionaries:

[http://humanities.uchicago.edu/orgs/ARTFL/forms\\_unrest/FR-ENG.html](http://humanities.uchicago.edu/orgs/ARTFL/forms_unrest/FR-ENG.html)

A Wealth of Links to Resources on Francophone Africa:

<http://www.hum.port.ac.uk/slas/francophone/frac-in0.htm>

SCOLA's mission is to help the people of the world learn more about each other, their languages, their cultures and their ideologies through the use of modern technology. Their site provides unedited televised programming from 80 countries in 70 languages and dialects. This language learning resource is recommended by Peace Corps for invitees. For further information, please go to the following site and click on French language (Sorry, no Guinea yet!):

<http://www.scola.org>

## **Recommended Books**

1. *Africa On File*. New York: Facts On File, 1995.
2. *Africa South of the Sahara 2003* (32nd ed.). London: Europa Yearbook Publications, 2002.
3. *Country Profile Guinea and Country Report Guinea*. Economist Intelligence Unit (15 Regent Street, London SW1Y 4LR, United Kingdom).
4. *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2002*. Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, 2003.

5. Kéita, Sidiki Kobélé. *Esquisses biographiques des Premiers Députés Guinéens*. Conakry, Guinea: Editions Universitaires, 1995.
6. Kurian, George Thomas. *The Encyclopedia of the Third World, Vol. 2* (4th ed.). New York: Facts On File, 1992.
7. Laye, Camara. *The Dark Child: The Autobiography of an African Boy*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux Reissue edition (January 1, 1954) (*L'Enfant Noir*, in French)
8. Nelson, Harold D. *Area Handbook for Guinea* (2nd ed.). Washington, D.C.: American University, Foreign Area Studies, 1975.
9. O'Toole, Thomas E. *Historical Dictionary of Guinea* (2nd ed.). Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1987.

### **Books About the Peace Corps**

1. Banerjee, Dillon. *So You Want to Join the Peace Corps: What to Know Before You Go*. Berkeley, Calif.: Ten Speed Press, 2000 (paperback).
2. Erdman, Sarah. *Nine Hills to Nambonkaha: Two Years in the Heart of an African Village*. Henry Holt and Co., 2003.
3. Herrera, Susana. *Mango Elephants in the Sun: How Life in an African Village Let Me Be in My Skin*. Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1999.
4. Hessler, Peter. *River Town: Two Years on the Yangtze*. New York: Harper Perennial, 2001.
5. Hoffman, Elizabeth Cobbs. *All You Need Is Love: The Peace Corps and the Spirit of the 1960s*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000 (paperback).

6. Thomsen, Moritz. *Living Poor: A Peace Corps Chronicle*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1969, 1997 (paperback).
7. Tidwell, Mike. *The Ponds of Kalambayi: An African Sojourn*. Guilford, Conn.: The Lyons Press, 1990, 1996 (paperback).



# LIVING CONDITIONS AND VOLUNTEER LIFESTYLE



## Communications

### *Mail*

Few countries in the world offer the level of mail service considered normal in the United States. If you expect U.S. standards for mail service, you will be disappointed. Mail from the United States takes a minimum of three to four weeks to arrive in Conakry, and can take an additional two weeks or more to reach places outside Conakry (Peace Corps/Guinea has a monthly mail run from Conakry to Volunteer sites). Some mail may simply not arrive (this is not a frequent occurrence, but it does happen). Some letters may arrive with clipped edges because someone has tried to see if any money was inside (again, this is rare, but it does happen). Advise your family and friends to number their letters for tracking purposes, and to include “Airmail” and “Par Avion” on their envelopes.

Despite the delays, we encourage you to write to your family regularly and to number your letters. Family members typically become worried when they do not hear from you, so it is a good idea to advise them that mail is sporadic and that they should not worry if they do not receive your letters regularly. If a serious problem were to occur, Peace Corps/Guinea would notify the Office of Special Services at the Peace Corps headquarters in Washington, which would then contact your family.

Note that nothing of great value should be sent via international mail, since packages sometimes arrive with items missing. While marking a package “educational materials” may

increase the odds that a given item will arrive intact, this labeling should be reserved for books, magazines, and the like. You will be charged a customs and handling fee for all incoming packages, which varies depending on the contents of the package. Valuable items should be mailed via DHL or another express-mail service; DHL is the quickest and safest means of sending things to Guinea.

While in Guinea, your address will be:

“Your Name”

Corps de la Paix Americain

B.P. 1927

Conakry, Guinea

West Africa

### ***Telephones***

The telephone system in Guinea is unreliable, and calling the United States is difficult and expensive. Volunteers often set up calls between Guinea and the United States in advance, arranging for a time and place to receive calls from home. In the interior of the country, where most Volunteers are located, telephone access is sporadic. Few Volunteers have phones at their sites, but tele-centers exist in most large towns and regional capitals. Volunteers cannot make collect calls or calls to toll-free numbers from Guinea. Note that Guinea is five hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time (four hours ahead during Daylight Savings Time).

### ***Computer, Internet, and E-mail Access***

The infrastructure needed for electronic communications has not progressed at the same rate in Guinea as it has in many other parts of the world. Access to e-mail or the Internet is rare in most of the country, although there is limited access (at slow connection speeds) at Internet cafes in Conakry. The Peace Corps has installed computers for Volunteers to use at

regional work stations and at the resource center at the Peace Corps/Guinea office. While Internet access is spreading to other cities in Guinea, the lack of electricity in much of the country remains a problem. Because most Volunteer sites do not have electricity, it is not advisable to bring a computer.

## **Housing and Site Location**

Before Volunteers arrive in-country, Peace Corps/Guinea staff, in collaboration with local partners, identify safe and secure Volunteer housing. Volunteers have their own lodging during service, which varies depending on the region of the country. Your housing might be a two-room house made from cement with a corrugated tin roof or a hut with a thatch roof. Volunteers are located anywhere from seven miles (12 km) to 62 miles (100 km) from the nearest Volunteer or regional capital.

## **Living Allowance and Money Management**

Peace Corps will open a bank account for you in Conakry when you arrive in Guinea, and will deposit your living and travel allowances (in Guinean francs) into this account on a quarterly basis until you are able to open an account closer to your site. The Guinean government or other local development partner pays housing costs for Volunteers. Volunteer living allowance is intended to cover regular expenses such as food, transportation, and clothing. It should enable you to have the same standard of living as your Guinean counterparts.

Although credit cards and ATM cards cannot be used in Guinea, they are widely accepted in neighboring countries and are very convenient to have when traveling abroad.

## **Food and Diet**

Guinea's major food crops include millet, maize (corn), rice, manioc (cassava), groundnuts (peanuts), and palm oil. In addition, coffee and bananas are cultivated for export.

Rice is the staple food, regardless of region. If people have not had any rice on a particular day, they do not feel that they have eaten. Rice is served with a variety of sauces, such as peanut sauce, several different leaf sauces (like spinach, only tastier), and soup. If a family has the means, beef, chicken, or fish (usually dried) may be added to the sauce.

The supply of fruits and vegetables varies according to the season and the region. Bananas are available year-round, but oranges, avocados, and pineapples are seasonal. Mangoes are available (and cheap) in the dry season.

## **Transportation**

Volunteers in Guinea primarily use public transportation to get around, including taxis, buses, and (occasionally) airplanes. Volunteers are not allowed to drive motorized vehicles.

Every Volunteer is issued a mountain bicycle, but because the supply of bicycle helmets in the country is limited, you must bring a good bicycle helmet with you (i.e., one that not only fits well but also meets U.S. Department of Transportation specifications). Agroforestry Volunteers and, in special circumstances, small enterprise development Volunteers, are permitted to ride as a passenger on their counterpart's motorbike, but to do so they must wear a motorbike helmet. If you want to take advantage of this opportunity, you should bring a DOT motorcycle helmet. With a receipt, Peace

Corps/Guinea will reimburse you up to \$40 for a bicycle helmet and up to \$120 for a motorcycle helmet.

## **Geography and Climate**

Guinea has a tropical climate with two distinct seasons: a dry season from November to April, and a wet season from May to October. Annual rainfall varies from 170 inches in Conakry to fewer than 60 inches in Upper Guinea. Temperatures also vary by region. On the coast and in the Forest Region, temperature averages 81 degrees Fahrenheit. In January, in the Fouta highlands, temperatures vary from 86 to 95 degrees Fahrenheit during the day, dropping below 50 degrees at night. In the dry season, midday highs of more than 100 degrees are not uncommon in Upper Guinea.

## **Social Activities**

You will be invited to the major celebrations in your village such as marriages and baptisms, which usually feature music and a feast for all participants. Islamic holidays such as Ramadan and Tabaski offer additional opportunities to socialize with your community. Some villages also have dance halls or discos. The best opportunities for socializing will come when you have made friends at your site.

## **Professionalism, Dress, and Behavior**

One of the difficulties of finding your place as a Peace Corps Volunteer is fitting into the local culture while maintaining your own cultural identity and acting like a professional, all at the same time. It is not an easy situation to resolve, and we can only provide you with guidelines. As a representative of a government ministry, you will be expected to dress and

behave accordingly. While some of your Guinean counterparts may dress in seemingly worn or shabby clothes, this is more likely a matter of economics than choice. The likelihood is that they are wearing their best. You should do the same.

## **Personal Safety**

More detailed information about the Peace Corps' approach to safety is contained in the Health Care and Safety chapter, but it is an important issue and cannot be overemphasized. As stated in the *Volunteer Handbook*, becoming a Peace Corps Volunteer entails certain safety risks. Living and traveling in an unfamiliar environment (oftentimes alone), having a limited understanding of local language and culture, and being perceived as well-off are some of the factors that can put a Volunteer at risk. Many Volunteers experience varying degrees of unwanted attention and harassment. Petty theft and burglaries are not uncommon, and incidents of physical and sexual assault do occur. However, most Volunteers complete their two years of service without personal security incidents. The Peace Corps has established procedures and policies designed to help Volunteers reduce their risks and enhance their safety and security. These procedures and policies, in addition to safety training, will be provided once you arrive in Guinea. At the same time, you are expected to take responsibility for your safety and well-being.

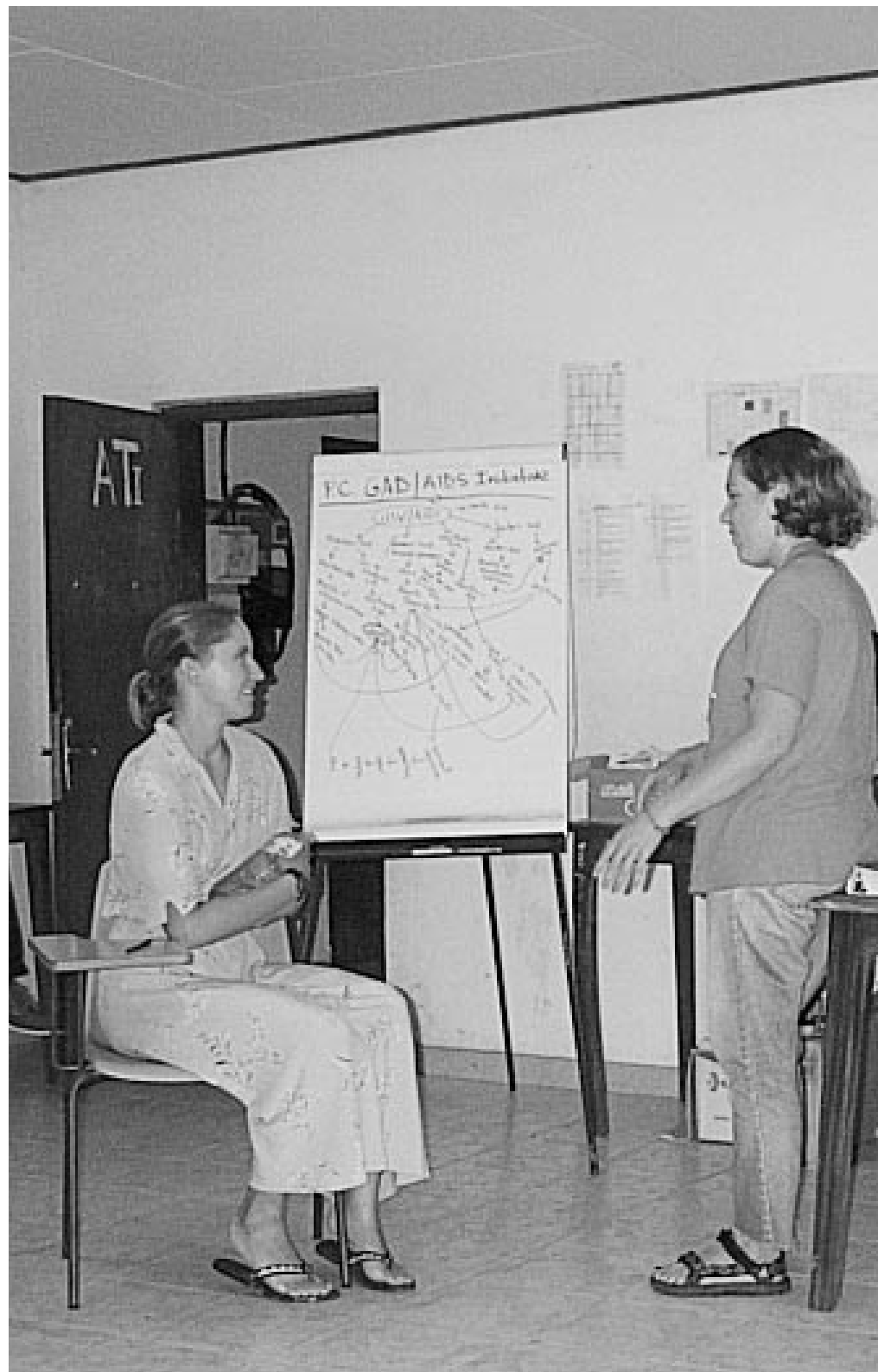
## **Rewards and Frustrations**

Although the potential for job satisfaction is quite high, like all Volunteers, you will encounter numerous frustrations. Because of financial or other challenges, collaborating agencies may not always provide the support they promised. In addition, the pace of work and life in Guinea is slower than what most Americans are accustomed to, and some people

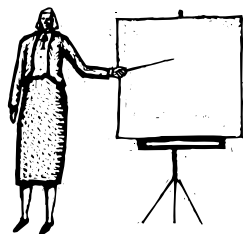
you work with may be hesitant to change practices and traditions that are centuries old. For these reasons, the Peace Corps experience of adapting to a new culture and environment is often described as a series of emotional peaks and valleys.

You will be given a high degree of responsibility and independence in your work—perhaps more than in any other job you have had or will have. You will often find yourself in situations that require an ability to motivate yourself and your co-workers with little guidance from supervisors. You might work for months without seeing any visible impact from, or without receiving feedback on, your work. Development is a slow process. Positive progress most often comes after the combined efforts of several Volunteers over the course of many years. You must possess the self-confidence, patience, and vision to continue working toward long-term goals without seeing immediate results.

To overcome these difficulties, you will need maturity, flexibility, open-mindedness, and resourcefulness. Guineans are warm, friendly, and hospitable, and the Peace Corps staff, your co-workers, and fellow Volunteers will support you during times of challenge as well as in moments of success. Judging by the experience of former Volunteers, the peaks are well worth the difficult times, and most Volunteers leave Guinea feeling that they gained much more than they gave during their service. If you are able to make the commitment to integrate into your community and work hard, you will enjoy your Peace Corps service.



# PEACE CORPS TRAINING



## Overview of Pre-Service Training

The goal of pre-service training is to produce Volunteers who have the skills needed to solve most problems at their post on their own. You should be able to rely on Guinean communities rather than fellow Americans as your primary support group. By the end of training, you will have the skills to integrate rapidly into your community, a clear understanding of your role in your project and in the overall development of Guinea, and the technical skills to be effective in your work.

The Peace Corps/Guinea training program has four major components: language, technical, cross-cultural, and medical (which includes personal safety and security sessions). In language training, you will learn French and local language skills, and explore ways to communicate across cultural barriers. During technical training sessions, you will acquire the skills needed to accomplish project objectives. Cross-cultural training sessions will help you adapt to Guinea's culture. Medical sessions will teach you how to stay healthy, and safety sessions will help you identify safety risks and prepare you to take responsibility for your own safety. The overall training program is designed to integrate as many of these components as possible into simultaneous training sessions.

Pre-service training is based in Dubreka, a semi-urban town about 37 miles (60 km) north of Conakry. During training, you will live with a Guinean family. Peace Corps' language and cultural facilitators will live in the community with you (one per three or four trainees).

Trainees and Volunteers in Guinea consistently rate the host family experience as the most challenging but meaningful aspect of training. The challenge lies in adapting to the basic living conditions of a Guinean village. You will have a private room with a bed and a mosquito net, but toilet facilities usually consist of an outdoor pit latrine, and bathing is done in outdoor stalls under the stars. You will eat breakfast and dinner (and lunch on Sundays) with your host family.

### ***Technical Training***

Technical training will prepare you to work in Guinea by building on the skills you already have and by helping you develop new skills in a manner appropriate to the needs of the country. Peace Corps staff, Guinean experts, and current Volunteers will conduct the training program. Training places great emphasis on learning how to transfer the skills you have to the community in which you will serve as a Volunteer.

Technical training will include sessions on the general economic and political environment in Guinea, and strategies for working within such an environment. You will review technical sector goals, and will meet with the Guinean agencies and organizations that invited Peace Corps to assist them. You will be supported and evaluated throughout training to build the confidence and skills you need to undertake project activities.

### ***Language Training***

As a Peace Corps Volunteer, you will find that language skills are the key to personal and professional satisfaction during your service. These skills are critical to your job performance. They help you integrate into your community, and they can ease your personal adaptation to new surroundings. Therefore, language training is the heart of the training program, and you must successfully meet minimum language requirements to complete training and become a Volunteer.

Guinean language instructors teach formal language classes five days a week in small groups of four to five people. You will learn both French and the local language—Pulaar, Maninka, or Soussou—most commonly spoken at your site.

Your language training will incorporate a community-based approach. In addition to classroom time, you will be given assignments to work on outside of the classroom and with your host family. The goal is to get you to a point of basic social communication skills so that you can practice and develop language skills further on your own. Prior to being sworn in as a Volunteer, you will work on strategies to continue language studies during your two years of service.

### ***Cross-Cultural Training***

As part of your pre-service training, you will live with a Guinean host family. This experience is designed to ease your transition to life at your site. Families go through an orientation conducted by Peace Corps staff to explain the purpose of pre-service training and to assist them in helping you adapt to living in Guinea. Many Volunteers form strong and lasting friendships with their host families.

Cross-cultural and community development training will help you improve your communication skills and understand your role as a facilitator of development. You will be exposed to topics such as community mobilization, conflict resolution, gender and development, nonformal and adult education strategies, and traditional political structures.

### ***Health Training***

During pre-service training, you will be given basic medical training and information. You will be expected to practice preventive healthcare and to take responsibility for your own health by adhering to all medical policies. Trainees are required to attend all medical sessions. The topics include

preventive health measures and minor and major medical issues that you might encounter while in Guinea. Nutrition, mental health, safety and security, setting up a safe living compound, and how to avoid HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) are also covered.

### ***Safety Training***

During the safety training sessions, you will learn how to adopt a lifestyle that reduces risks at home, at work, and during your travels. You will also learn appropriate, effective strategies for coping with unwanted attention and about your individual responsibility for promoting safety throughout your service.

### **Additional Trainings During Volunteer Service**

In its commitment to institutionalize quality training, the Peace Corps has implemented a training system that provides Volunteers with continual opportunities to examine their commitment to Peace Corps service while increasing their technical and cross-cultural skills. During service, there are usually three training events. The titles and objectives for those trainings are as follows:

- *In-service training*: Provides an opportunity for Volunteers to upgrade their technical, language, and project development skills while sharing their experiences and reaffirming their commitment after having served for three to six months.
- *Midterm conference* (done in conjunction with technical sector in-service): Assists Volunteers in reviewing their first year, reassessing their personal and project objectives, and planning for their second year of service.

- *Close of service conference*: Prepares Volunteers for the future after Peace Corps service and reviews their respective projects and personal experiences.

The number, length, and design of these trainings are adapted to country-specific needs and conditions. The key to the training system is that training events are integrated and interrelated, from the pre-departure orientation through the end of your service, and are planned, implemented, and evaluated cooperatively by the training staff, Peace Corps staff, and Volunteers.



# YOUR HEALTH CARE AND SAFETY IN GUINEA



The Peace Corps' highest priority is maintaining the good health and safety of every Volunteer. Peace Corps' medical programs emphasize the preventive, rather than the curative, approach to disease. Peace Corp/Guinea maintains a clinic with two full-time medical officers, who take care of Volunteers' primary health concerns. Additional medical services, such as testing and basic treatment, are also available in Guinea at local hospitals. If you become seriously ill, you will be transported either to an American medical facility in the region or to the United States.

## **Health Issues in Guinea**

Major health problems among Volunteers in Guinea are rare, and often the result of Volunteers' not taking preventive measures to stay healthy. The most common health problems in Guinea are minor ones that are also found in the United States, such as colds, diarrhea, sinus infections, skin infections, headaches, dental problems, STDs, emotional problems, and alcohol abuse. These problems may be more frequent or compounded by life in Guinea because certain environmental factors here raise the risk or exacerbate the severity of illnesses and injuries.

More serious but less common illnesses include malaria and rabies. Because you will be serving in an area where malaria, a mosquito-borne disease, is prevalent, you must take an approved anti-malarial drug, usually Mefloquine (Larium). Mefloquine is safe and generally well tolerated, but some

Volunteers (fewer than 5 percent) experience side effects such as upset stomach, nightmares, or blurry vision. These side effects can almost always be eliminated by simple measures (e.g., taking the Mefloquine with or following a meal, taking it in the morning or at bedtime, or dividing the dose by taking half a tablet twice a week rather than a single tablet once a week). Doxycycline and Malarone are two alternative prophylactic regimens available to Volunteers. The Peace Corps medical officer will assist you in determining the best prophylactic regimen. Any change in malaria prophylaxis must be discussed with the medical officer.

Rabies exists in Guinea, so Volunteers are discouraged from owning pets during service. If you do have a dog or cat, it is your responsibility to make sure it is vaccinated against rabies. Exposure to rabies can occur through animal bites or scratches and from contact with animal saliva. You will receive three preventive rabies shots during training. Any possible exposure to a rabid animal during service must be reported to the medical officer immediately so you can get proper treatment.

## **Helping You Stay Healthy**

The Peace Corps will provide you with all necessary inoculations, medications, and information to stay healthy. Upon your arrival in Guinea, you will receive a medical handbook. At the end of training, you will receive a medical kit with supplies to take care of mild illnesses and first-aid needs. The contents of the kit are listed later in this section.

During pre-service training, you will have access to basic medical supplies through the medical office. However, you will be responsible for your own supply of prescription drugs and any other specific medical supplies you require, as Peace

Corps will not order these items during training. Please bring a three-month supply of any prescription drugs you use, since they may not be available in country and it may take several months for shipments to arrive.

You will have physicals at mid-service and at the end of your service. If you develop a serious medical problem during your service, the medical officer in Guinea will consult with the Office of Medical Services in Washington, D.C. If it is determined that your condition cannot be treated in Guinea, you may be sent out of the country for further evaluation and care.

## **Maintaining Your Health**

As a Volunteer, you must accept considerable responsibility for your own health. Proper precautions will significantly reduce your risk of serious illness or injury. The old adage “An ounce of prevention ...” becomes extremely important in areas where diagnostic and treatment facilities are not up to the standards of the United States.

Many illnesses that afflict Volunteers worldwide are entirely preventable if proper food and water precautions are taken. These illnesses include food poisoning, parasitic infections, hepatitis A, dysentery, guinea worms, tapeworms, and typhoid fever. Your medical officer will discuss specific standards for water and food preparation during pre-service training.

**Abstinence is the only certain choice for preventing infection with HIV and other STDs.** You are taking risks if you choose to be sexually active. To lessen risk, use a condom every time you have sex. Whether your partner is a host country citizen, a fellow Volunteer, or anyone else, do not assume this person is free of HIV/AIDS or other STDs. You will receive more

information from the medical officer about this important issue.

Volunteers are expected to adhere to an effective means of birth control to prevent an unplanned pregnancy. Your medical officer can help you decide on the most appropriate method to suit your individual needs. Contraceptive methods are available without charge from the medical officer.

It is critical to your health that you promptly report to the medical office or other designated facility for scheduled immunizations, and that you let the medical officer know immediately of significant illnesses or injuries.

### **How Will Living and Working in Communities Affected by HIV/AIDS Affect You?**

The AIDS pandemic strikes across all social strata in many Peace Corps countries. The loss of teachers has crippled education systems, while illness and disability drains family income and forces governments and donors to redirect limited resources from other priorities. The fear and uncertainty AIDS causes has led to increased domestic violence and stigmatizing of people living with HIV/AIDS, isolating them from friends and family and cutting them off from economic opportunities. As a Peace Corps Volunteer, you will confront these issues on a very personal level. It is important to be aware of the high emotional toll that disease, death and violence can have on Volunteers. As you strive to integrate into your community, you will develop relationships with local people who might die during your service. Because of the AIDS pandemic, some Volunteers will be regularly meeting with HIV-positive people and working with training staff, office staff and host family members living with AIDS. Volunteers need to prepare themselves to embrace these

relationships in a sensitive and positive manner. Likewise, malaria and malnutrition, motor vehicle accidents and other unintentional injuries, domestic violence and corporal punishment are problems a Volunteer may confront. You will need to anticipate these situations and utilize supportive resources available throughout your training and service to maintain your own emotional strength, so that you can continue to be of service to your community.

## **Women's Health Information**

Pregnancy is treated in the same manner as other Volunteer health conditions that require medical attention, but also has programmatic ramifications. The Peace Corps is responsible for determining the medical risk and the availability of appropriate medical care if a pregnant Volunteer remains in-country. Given the circumstances under which Volunteers live and work, it is rare that pregnant Volunteers can meet Peace Corps' medical and programmatic standards for continued service.

If feminine hygiene products are not available for you to purchase on the local market, the Peace Corps medical officer in Guinea will provide them. If you require a specific feminine hygiene product, please bring a six-month supply with you.

## **Your Peace Corps Medical Kit**

The Peace Corps medical officer provides Volunteers with a medical kit that contains basic items necessary to prevent and treat illnesses that may occur during service. Medical kit items can be periodically restocked at the medical office.

### ***Medical Kit Contents***

Ace bandages

Adhesive tape

*American Red Cross First Aid & Safety Handbook*

Antacid tablets (Tums)

Antibiotic ointment (Bacitracin/Neomycin/Polymycin B)

Antiseptic antimicrobial skin cleaner (Hibiclens)

Band-Aids

Butterfly closures

Calamine lotion

Cepacol lozenges

Condoms

Dental floss

Diphenhydramine HCL 25 mg (Benadryl)

Insect repellent stick (Cutter's)

Iodine tablets (for water purification)

Lip balm (Chapstick)

Oral rehydration salts

Oral thermometer (Fahrenheit)

Pseudoephedrine HCL 30 mg (Sudafed)

Robitussin-DM lozenges (for cough)

Scissors

Sterile gauze pads

Tetrahydrozoline eyedrops (Visine)

Tinactin (antifungal cream)

Tweezers

## **Before You Leave: A Medical Checklist**

If there has been any change in your health—physical, mental, or dental—since you submitted your examination reports to the Peace Corps, you must immediately notify the Office of Medical Services. Failure to disclose new illnesses, injuries, allergies, or pregnancy can endanger your health and may jeopardize your eligibility to serve, and result in administrative or medical termination of service.

If your dental exam was done more than a year ago, or if your physical exam is more than two years old, contact the Office of Medical Services to find out whether you need to update your records. If your dentist or Peace Corps dental consultant has recommended that you undergo dental treatment or repair, you must complete that work and make sure your dentist sends requested confirmation reports or X-rays to the Office of Medical Services.

If you wish to avoid having duplicate vaccinations, contact your physician's office, obtain a copy of your immunization record, and bring it to your pre-departure orientation. If you have any immunizations prior to Peace Corps service, the Peace Corps cannot reimburse you for the cost. The Peace Corps will provide all the immunizations necessary for your overseas assignment, either at your pre-departure orientation or shortly after you arrive in Guinea. You do not need to begin taking malaria medication prior to your pre-departure orientation. You will receive your first dose of the malaria prophylactic during the three-day orientation.

Bring a three-month supply of any prescription or over-the-counter medication you use on a regular basis, including birth control pills. Although the Peace Corps cannot reimburse you for this three-month supply, we will order refills during your service. While awaiting shipment—which can take several months—you will be dependent on your own medication supply. The Peace Corps will not pay for herbal or non-prescribed medications, such as St. John's wort, glucosamine, selenium, or antioxidant supplements.

You are encouraged to bring copies of medical prescriptions signed by your physician. This is not a requirement, but they might come in handy if you are questioned in transit about carrying a three-month supply of prescription drugs.

If you wear eyeglasses, bring two pairs with you. If a pair breaks, the Peace Corps will replace it, using the information your doctor in the United States provided on the eyeglasses form during your examination. We discourage you from using contact lenses during your service to reduce your risk of developing a serious infection or other eye disease. Most Peace Corps countries do not have appropriate water and sanitation to support eye care with the use of contact lenses. The Peace Corps will not supply or replace contact lenses or associated solutions unless an ophthalmologist has recommended their use for a specific medical condition and the Peace Corps' Office of Medical Services has given approval.

If you are eligible for Medicare, are over 50 years of age, or have a health condition that may restrict your future participation in healthcare plans, you may wish to consult an insurance specialist about unique coverage needs before your departure. The Peace Corps will provide all necessary healthcare from the time you leave for your pre-departure orientation until you complete your service. When you finish, you will be entitled to the post-service healthcare benefits described in the Peace Corps *Volunteer Handbook*. You may wish to consider keeping an existing health plan in effect during your service if you think age or preexisting conditions might prevent you from reenrolling in your current plan when you return home.

## **Safety and Security—Our Partnership**

Serving as a Volunteer overseas entails certain safety and security risks. Living and traveling in an unfamiliar environment, a limited understanding of the local language and culture, and the perception of being a wealthy American are some of the factors that can put a Volunteer at risk. Petty

thefts and burglaries are not uncommon. Incidents of physical and sexual assault do occur, although almost all Volunteers complete their two years of service without serious personal safety problems. In addition, more than 83 percent of Volunteers surveyed say they would join the Peace Corps again.

The Peace Corps approaches safety and security as a partnership with you. This *Welcome Book* contains sections on: Living Conditions and Volunteer Lifestyle; Peace Corps Training; and Your Health Care and Safety. All of these sections include important safety information.

The Peace Corps makes every effort to give Volunteers the tools they need to function in the safest and most secure way possible, because working to maximize the safety and security of Volunteers is our highest priority. Not only do we provide you with training and tools to prepare for the unexpected, but we teach you to identify and manage the risks you may encounter.

### ***Factors that Contribute to Volunteer Risk***

*There are several factors that can heighten a Volunteer's risk, many of which are in the Volunteer's control.* Based on information gathered from incident reports worldwide in 2003, the following factors stand out as risk characteristics for assaults. Assaults consist of personal crimes committed against Volunteers, and do not include property crimes (such as vandalism or theft).

- **Location:** Most crimes occurred when Volunteers were in public areas (e.g., street, park, beach, public buildings). Specifically, 47 percent of assaults took place when Volunteers were away from their sites.
- **Time of day:** Assaults usually took place on the weekend during the late evening between 10:00 p.m. and 3:00 a.m.—most often occurring around 1:00 a.m.

- Absence of others: More than 75 percent of crime incidents occurred when a Volunteer was unaccompanied.
- Relationship to assailant: In most assaults, the Volunteer did not know the assailant.
- Consumption of alcohol: Almost a third of all assaults involved alcohol consumption by Volunteers and/or assailants.

### ***Summary Strategies to Reduce Risk***

Before and during service, your training will address these areas of concern so that you can reduce the risks you face. For example, here are some strategies Volunteers employ:

#### Strategies to reduce the risk/impact of theft:

- Know the environment and choose safe routes/times for travel
- Avoid high-crime areas per Peace Corps guidance
- Know the vocabulary to get help in an emergency
- Carry valuables in different pockets/places
- Carry a “dummy” wallet as a decoy

#### Strategies to reduce the risk/impact of burglary:

- Live with a local family or on a family compound
- Put strong locks on doors and keep valuables in a lock box or trunk
- Leave irreplaceable objects at home in the U.S.
- Follow Peace Corps guidelines on maintaining home security

#### Strategies to reduce the risk/impact of assault:

- Make local friends
- Make sure your appearance is respectful of local customs; don't draw negative attention to yourself by wearing inappropriate clothing

- Get to know local officials, police, and neighbors
- Travel with someone whenever possible
- Avoid known high crime areas
- Limit alcohol consumption

### ***Support from Staff***

In March 2003, the Peace Corps created the Office of Safety and Security with its mission to “foster improved communication, coordination, oversight, and accountability of all Peace Corps’ safety and security efforts.” The new office is led by an Associate Director for Safety and Security who reports to the Peace Corps Director and includes the following divisions: Volunteer Safety and Overseas Security; Information and Personnel Security; and Emergency Preparedness, Plans, Training and Exercise. The safety and security team also tracks crime statistics, identifies trends in criminal activity, and highlights potential safety risks to Volunteers.

The major responsibilities of the Volunteer Safety and Overseas Security Division are to coordinate the office’s overseas operations and direct the Peace Corps’ safety and security officers who are located in various regions around the world that have Peace Corps programs. The safety and security officers conduct security assessments; review safety trainings; train trainers and managers; train Volunteer safety wardens, local guards, and staff; develop security incident response procedures; and provide crisis management support.

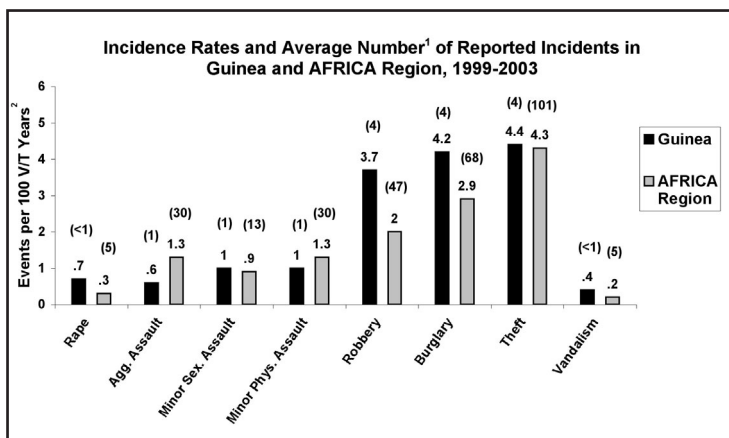
If a trainee or Volunteer is the victim of a safety incident, Peace Corps staff is prepared to provide support. All Peace Corps posts have procedures in place to respond to incidents of crime committed against Volunteers. The first priority for all posts in the aftermath of an incident is to ensure that the Volunteer is safe and receiving medical treatment as needed.

After assuring the safety of the Volunteer, Peace Corps staff provides support by reassessing the Volunteer's work site and housing arrangements and making any adjustments, as needed. In some cases, the nature of the incident may necessitate a site or housing transfer. Peace Corps staff will also assist Volunteers with preserving their rights to pursue legal sanctions against the perpetrators of the crime. It is very important that Volunteers report incidents as they occur, not only to protect their peer Volunteers, but also to preserve the future right to prosecute. Should Volunteers decide later in the process that they want to proceed with the prosecution of their assailant, this option may no longer exist if the evidence of the event has not been preserved at the time of the incident.

The country-specific data chart below shows the incidence rates and the average number of incidents of the major types of safety incidents reported by Peace Corps Volunteers/trainees in Guinea as compared to all other Africa region programs as a whole, from 1999-2003. It is presented to you in a somewhat technical manner for statistical accuracy.

To fully appreciate the collected data below, an explanation of the graph is provided as follows:

The incidence rate for each type of crime is the number of crime events relative to the Volunteer/trainee population. It is expressed on the chart as a ratio of crime to Volunteer and trainee years (or V/T-Years, which is a measure of 12 full months of V/T service) to allow for a statistically valid way to compare crime data across countries. An "incident" is a specific offense, per Peace Corps' classification of offenses, and may involve one or more Volunteer/trainee victims. For example, if two Volunteers are robbed at the same time and place, this is classified as one robbery incident.



<sup>1</sup>The average numbers of incidents are in parenthesis and equal the average reported assaults for each year between 1999–2003.

<sup>2</sup>Incident rates equal the number of assaults per 100 Volunteers and trainees per year (V/T Years). Since most sexual assaults occur against females, only female V/T are calculated in rapes and minor sexual assaults. Numbers of incidents are approximate due to rounding.

Source data on incidents are drawn from Assault Notification Surveillance System (ANSS) and Epidemiologic Surveillance System (ESS); as of 7/29/04.

The chart is separated into the eight most commonly occurring assault types. These include vandalism (malicious defacement or damage of property); theft (taking without force or illegal entry); burglary (forcible entry of a residence); robbery (taking something by force); minor physical assault (attacking without a weapon with minor injuries); minor sexual assault (fondling, groping, etc.); aggravated assault (attacking with a weapon, and/or without a weapon when serious injury results); and rape (sexual intercourse without consent).

When anticipating Peace Corps Volunteer service, you should review all of the safety and security information provided to you, including the strategies to reduce risk. Throughout your training and Volunteer service, you will be expected to successfully complete all training competencies in a variety of

areas including safety and security. Once in-country, use the tools and information shared with you to remain as safe and secure as possible.

## **Security Issues in Guinea**

When it comes to your safety and security in the Peace Corps, you have to be willing to adapt your behavior and lifestyle to minimize the potential for being a target of crime. As with anywhere in the world, crime does exist in Guinea. You can reduce your risk by avoiding situations that make you feel uncomfortable and by taking precautions. Crime at the village or town level is less frequent than in the large cities and towns; people know each other and generally will not steal from their neighbors. Tourist attractions in large towns, for instance, are favorite work sites for pickpockets.

Among the biggest risks to Volunteer safety in Guinea are automobile accidents. Do not travel in taxis that appear unsafe. In addition, do not be afraid to speak to a driver who is driving too fast or in an unsafe manner; if necessary, ask the driver to stop so you can get out. Do not travel long distances in taxis at night.

You must wear a helmet when riding a bicycle. (As mentioned earlier, Volunteers are not allowed to drive motorcycles.) Observe the rules of the road and avoid traveling at night when possible. Ride defensively, and give way to other vehicles.

Volunteer homes have been burglarized in the past. To reduce the risk of a break-in, assess your house carefully for adequate protection against burglars. It should be equipped with sturdy doors, preferably made of metal, with a strong lock for which only you (and a trusted friend) have keys. Likewise, windows should be protected with locking shutters or antitheft bars.

Walls should be intact and sturdy, and the roof should have a ceiling board between the wall and roof to prevent entry of thieves from above. If your house fails to meet these minimum standards, you will need to use your settling-in allowance to have the necessary modifications made. In addition, protect your belongings by putting them away, hiding them, or locking them up. A thief will take valuables lying on a table but may not take time to riffle through a wardrobe for hidden treasures.

To protect your belongings against theft, when in public keep a hand on your bag or backpack and do not wear ostentatious jewelry. Wherever you are and whatever you are doing, walk purposefully and vary your route to avoid predictability. Avoid making eye contact with strangers you do not want to engage in conversation. While you should always carry some form of identification, if you have to carry important papers or large sums of money, hide them under your clothing. Finally, avoid being out on the street alone after dark.

### **Staying Safe: Don't Be a Target for Crime**

You must be prepared to accept responsibility for your own safety. Only you can make yourself less of a target, ensure that your house is secure, and develop relations in your community that will make you an unlikely victim of crime. Do what you would do if you moved to a large city in the United States: be cautious, check things out, ask questions, learn about your neighborhood, know where the more risky locations are, use common sense, and be aware. You can reduce your vulnerability to crime by integrating into your community, learning the local language, acting responsibly, and abiding by Peace Corps policies and procedures. Serving safely and effectively in Guinea may require that you accept some restrictions on your current lifestyle.

Volunteers attract a lot of attention both in large cities and at their sites, but they are likely to receive more negative attention in highly populated centers than at their sites, where “family,” friends, and colleagues look out for them. While whistles and exclamations are fairly common on the street, this behavior can be reduced if you dress conservatively, avoid eye contact, and do not respond to unwanted attention. Keep your money out of sight by using an undergarment money pouch. Do not keep your money in outside pockets of backpacks, in coat pockets, or in fanny packs. You should always walk with a companion at night.

### **Preparing for the Unexpected: Safety Training and Volunteer Support in Guinea**

The Peace Corps’ approach to safety is a five-pronged plan to help you stay safe during your two-year service and includes the following: information sharing, Volunteer training, site selection criteria, a detailed emergency action plan, and protocols for addressing safety and security incidents. Guinea’s in-country safety program is outlined below.

**Information sharing**—The Peace Corps/Guinea office will keep Volunteers informed of any issues that may impact Volunteer safety. Regular updates will be provided in Volunteer newsletters and in memorandums from the country director. In the event of a critical situation or emergency, Volunteers will be contacted through the emergency communication network.

**Volunteer training** will include sessions on specific safety and security issues in Guinea. This training will prepare you to adopt a culturally appropriate lifestyle and exercise judgment that promotes safety and reduces risk in your home, at work, and while traveling. Safety training is offered throughout

service and is integrated into the language, cross-cultural, health, and other components of training.

Certain **site selection criteria** are used to determine safe housing for Volunteers before their arrival. Peace Corps staff work closely with host communities and counterpart agencies to help prepare them for a Volunteer's arrival and to establish expectations of their respective roles in supporting the Volunteer. Each site is inspected before the Volunteer's arrival to ensure placement in appropriate, safe, and secure housing and work sites. Site selection is based in part on any relevant site history; access to medical, banking, postal, and other essential services; availability of communications, transportation, and markets; different housing options and living arrangements; and other Volunteer support needs.

You will also learn about Peace Corps/Guinea's detailed **emergency action plan**, which is implemented in the event of civil or political unrest or a natural disaster. When you arrive at your site, you will complete and submit a site locator form with your address, contact information, and a map to your house. If there is a security threat, Volunteers in Guinea will gather at predetermined locations until the situation is resolved or the Peace Corps decides to evacuate.

Finally, in order for the Peace Corps to be fully responsive to the needs of Volunteers, it is imperative that Volunteers **immediately report** any security incident to the Peace Corps medical officer. The Peace Corps has established protocols for addressing safety and security incidents in a timely and appropriate manner, and it collects and evaluates safety and security data to track trends and develop strategies to minimize risks to future Volunteers.



# DIVERSITY AND CROSS-CULTURAL ISSUES



In fulfilling the Peace Corps' mandate to share the face of America with our host countries, we are making special efforts to see that all of America's richness is reflected in the Volunteer corps. More Americans of color are serving in today's Peace Corps than at any time in recent years. Differences in race, ethnic background, age, religion, and sexual orientation are expected and welcomed among our Volunteers. Part of the Peace Corps' mission is to help dispel any notion that Americans are all of one origin or race and to establish that each of us is as thoroughly American as the other despite our many differences.

Our diversity helps us accomplish that goal. In other ways, however, it poses challenges. In Guinea, as in other Peace Corps host countries, Volunteers' behavior, lifestyle, background, and beliefs are judged in a cultural context very different from their own. Certain personal perspectives or characteristics commonly accepted in the United States may be quite uncommon, unacceptable, or even repressed in Guinea.

Outside of Guinea's capital, residents of rural communities have had relatively little direct exposure to other cultures, races, religions, and lifestyles. What people view as typical American behavior or norms may be a misconception, such as the belief that all Americans are rich and have blond hair and blue eyes. The people of Guinea are justly known for their generous hospitality to foreigners; however, members of the community in which you will live may display a range of reactions to cultural differences that you present.

To ease the transition and adapt to life in Guinea, you may need to make some temporary, yet fundamental compromises in how you present yourself as an American and as an individual. For example, female trainees and Volunteers may not be able to exercise the independence available to them in the United States; political discussions need to be handled with great care; and some of your personal beliefs may best remain undisclosed. You will need to develop techniques and personal strategies for coping with these and other limitations. The Peace Corps staff will lead diversity and sensitivity discussions during pre-service training and will be on call to provide support, but the challenge ultimately will be your own.

## **Overview of Diversity in Guinea**

The Peace Corps staff in Guinea recognizes adjustment issues that come with diversity and will endeavor to provide support and guidance. During pre-service training, several sessions will be held to discuss diversity and coping mechanisms. We look forward to having male and female Volunteers from a variety of races, ethnic groups, ages, religions, and sexual orientations, and hope that you will become part of a diverse group of Americans who take pride in supporting one another and demonstrating the richness of American culture.

## **What Might a Volunteer Face?**

### ***Possible Issues for Female Volunteers***

Female Volunteers who are single are often considered an oddity by Guineans because most Guinean women, particularly in rural areas, are married, some with children, by the time they are 20. Single women also face what in the United States would be considered inappropriate advances from Guinean male colleagues, supervisors, and

acquaintances. Strategies to deal with these issues are discussed in training, and the Peace Corps staff can offer help in resolving any problems. These problems become less common once Volunteers have been accepted into their communities and have built a network of female friends and co-workers.

### ***Possible Issues for Volunteers of Color***

Volunteers who belong to minority ethnic groups will generally not experience overt biases. However, Guineans may make some stereotypic assumptions based on someone's background. For example, many Asian-American Volunteers are considered experts in Chinese or kung fu, and African-American Volunteers may be mistaken for a Liberian or Sierra Leonean because of an Anglicized French accent.

Caucasian Volunteers may be annoyed by local terms for "white people" such as *toubab*, *porto*, or *foté*, but should understand that they are not pejorative. Even educated, middle-class Guineans are also sometimes referred to by those terms. Once Volunteers become known in their towns, children's curiosity and name-calling diminish.

### **Volunteer Comment**

"Although being a minority will affect the nature of your stay in Guinea, life here will probably not be any more or less difficult for you. There are benefits and difficulties, ranging from being a minor celebrity to not sticking out as much as other Americans—this, of course, depends on the type of minority one is and the time of day.

You will face a variety of challenges, but, at the same time, you will be coming in with useful 'life skills' that you picked up as a visible minority in America. The fishbowl effect and issues of cultural identity or relativity will not be new. The

sessions on them [during pre-service training], however, may be bothersome. *Bon courage*—staging (pre-departure orientation) and pre-service training can be difficult.”

### ***Possible Issues for Senior Volunteers***

Volunteers in their early 20s sometimes find that they have to make an extra effort to be accepted as professional colleagues, since Guineans of the same age often are still pursuing an education. Older Volunteers, in contrast, are automatically accorded respect, since Guinean culture recognizes that wisdom and experience come with age.

### ***Possible Issues for Gay, Lesbian, or Bisexual Volunteers***

Homosexuality is not publicly acknowledged or discussed in Guinean society. Although gay and lesbian Volunteers generally choose not to be open about their sexual orientation, they have successfully worked in Guinea.

### **Volunteer Comment**

“As a Peace Corps Volunteer, along with all the feelings of community and belonging, you will probably, from time to time, experience feelings of loneliness, being out of place, and being something of an oddity. If you are gay, lesbian, or bisexual, chances are you’re no stranger to being made to feel this way. Unfortunately, those feelings can be intensified here.

I have found my group to be extraordinarily tight, close, and open-minded and have gotten nothing but support from them. What’s missing, however, is complete understanding. I’ve not found other gay, lesbian, or bisexual Volunteers to discuss this with, so though my friends are perfectly willing to hear me out whenever I need or want to talk, I’ve not found anyone who really knows what I’m feeling and going through.

In my site, the question of my sexuality has never been raised. The idea that I'm anything other than straight doesn't seem to have occurred to anyone, and I've chosen not to challenge that assumption. As I'm not here looking for love but rather am here to work, whether I'm gay or straight is not really an issue. Fielding the all-too-frequent inquiries as to why I'm not yet married and wouldn't I like to become the fourth Mrs. Mamadou Camara is, not surprisingly, somewhat uncomfortable, but I have to imagine that that's not so pleasant for the straighter among us, either.

So, I guess what I'm trying to say with all this is: The Peace Corps can be hard, and being gay can make it somewhat harder. Or, looking at it another way, being gay can be hard, and being in the Peace Corps can make it somewhat harder. However, because of the universal support and acceptance from staff and Volunteers alike, it has not been at all unbearable or anywhere close to making me regret having chosen to come here."

### ***Possible Religious Issues for Volunteers***

Guinea is, for the most part, a Muslim country (the exception is in the Forest Region, where Christians and animists are more numerous). Being of a different religion is not a problem, as Guineans are very tolerant. They may not always agree with your beliefs, but they will not act negatively toward you because of them.

### ***Possible Issues for Volunteers with Disabilities***

Physically challenged Volunteers will be treated initially with curiosity. Those who require ambulatory devices will encounter obstacles to mobility because there are no ramps or lifts on public transportation or in buildings. But those who serve will ultimately win respect and be considered role models.



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



## **How much luggage am I allowed to bring to Guinea?**

Most airlines have baggage size and weight limits and assess charges for transport of baggage that exceeds those limits. Peace Corps has its own size and weight limits. The Peace Corps' allowance is two checked pieces of luggage with combined dimensions of both pieces not to exceed 107 inches (length + width + height) and a carry-on bag with dimensions of no more than 45 inches. Under Peace Corps policy, checked baggage should not exceed 80 pounds total with a maximum weight of 50 pounds for any one bag. However, in the event the weight and size allowances of the airline are greater than the maximum allowed by Peace Corps you may choose to bring baggage that measures up to the maximum allowable weight and size by the airline. Please note, Peace Corps will only insure the delivery of baggage meeting Peace Corps' weight and size policy and will not pay for any excess baggage beyond the allowable weight and size issued by the airline. Please contact the appropriate airline for specific baggage details once you have received your travel itinerary from Peace Corps.

Peace Corps Volunteers are not allowed to take pets, weapons, explosives, radio transmitters (shortwave radios are permitted), automobiles, or motorcycles to their overseas assignments. Do not pack flammable materials or liquids such as lighter fluid, cleaning solvents, hair spray, or aerosol containers.

## **What is the electric current in Guinea?**

It is 220 volts and approximately 50 hertz.

### **How much money should I bring?**

Volunteers are expected to live at the same level as the people in their community. They are given a settling-in allowance and a monthly living allowance, which should cover their expenses. Often Volunteers wish to bring additional money for vacation travel to other countries. Credit cards and traveler's checks are preferable to cash. If you choose to bring extra money, bring the amount that will suit your own travel plans and needs.

### **When can I take vacation and have people visit me?**

Each Volunteer accrues two vacation days per month of service. Leave may not be taken during training, the first three months of service, or the last three months of service, except in conjunction with an authorized emergency leave. Family and friends are welcome to visit you after pre-service training and the first three months of service as long as their stay does not interfere with your work. Extended stays at your site are not encouraged and may require permission from your country director. The Peace Corps is not able to provide your visitors with visa, medical, or travel assistance.

### **Will my belongings be covered by insurance?**

The Peace Corps does not provide insurance coverage for personal effects; Volunteers are ultimately responsible for the safekeeping of their personal belongings. However, you can purchase personal property insurance before you leave. If you wish, you may contact your own insurance company; additionally, insurance application forms will be provided at the pre-departure orientation, and we encourage you to consider them carefully. Although it is not recommended, if you choose to bring with you expensive electronic devices, please be vigilant to your surroundings and operate them in the privacy of your home or work space or in a manner that doesn't generate much unwanted attention. Jewelry, watches,

radios, cameras, and expensive appliances are subject to loss, theft, and breakage, and in many places, satisfactory maintenance and repair services are not available.

### **Do I need an international driver's license?**

Volunteers in Guinea do not need to get an international driver's license because they are prohibited from operating privately owned motorized vehicles. Most urban travel is by bus or taxi. Rural travel ranges from buses and minibuses to bicycles and lots of walking.

### **What should I bring as gifts for Guinean friends and my host family?**

This is not a requirement. A token of friendship is sufficient. Some gift suggestions include knick-knacks for the house; pictures, books, or calendars of American scenes; souvenirs from your area; hard candies that will not melt or spoil; or photos to give away.

### **Where will my site assignment be when I finish training and how isolated will I be?**

Peace Corps sites are assigned to trainees during pre-service training, usually around the fifth week. This gives Peace Corps staff the opportunity to assess each trainee's technical and language skills prior to assigning sites, in addition to finalizing site selections with their ministry counterparts. If feasible, you may have the opportunity to provide input on your site preferences, including geographical location, distance from other Volunteers, and living conditions. However, keep in mind that many factors influence the site selection process and that the Peace Corps cannot guarantee placement where you would ideally like to be. Most Volunteers live in small towns or in rural villages and are usually within one hour from another Volunteer. Some sites require a 10- to 12-hour drive from the capital.

### **How can my family contact me in an emergency?**

The Peace Corps' Office of Special Services provides assistance in handling emergencies affecting trainees and Volunteers or their families. Before leaving the United States, instruct your family to notify the Office of Special Services immediately if an emergency arises, such as a serious illness or death of a family member. During normal business hours, the number for the Office of Special Services is 800.424.8580; select option 2, then extension 1470. After normal business hours and on weekends and holidays, the Special Services duty officer can be reached at 202.638.2574. For non-emergency questions, your family can get information from your country desk staff at the Peace Corps by calling 800.424.8580, extension 2326 or 2327.

### **Can I call home from Guinea?**

Phone service is not available in most of the country, but Volunteers can call home fairly easily from Conakry and periodically from the regional capitals.

### **Should I bring a cellular phone with me?**

Since the cellular network in Guinea is limited to Conakry and a few other cities and cellphones purchased in the United States, for the most part, do not work in Guinea, Volunteers coming to Guinea should not bring cellphones with them.

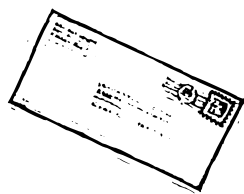
### **Will there be e-mail and Internet access? Should I bring my computer?**

Since most of Guinea does not have electricity, bringing a computer is impractical. There is Internet and e-mail access at a few places in Conakry as well as at the Volunteer resource center at the Peace Corps office. All regional work stations have computers, and Internet access may be available from time to time in regional capitals.

## NOTES



# WELCOME LETTERS FROM GUINEA VOLUNTEERS



Welcome to the Peace Corps and to Guinea! Being a Peace Corps Volunteer in Guinea is both a challenging and a rewarding experience, and I am glad you have decided to join us, the current Volunteers who live and work in this beautiful country.

You are probably wondering what the next two years have in store for you, but take what I say with a grain of salt. The experience of every Volunteer is different. When packing, remember to bring what you think you will need for your own happiness. Some special soap, a book you've always wanted to read, and comfort food are all good ideas. About the only things I initially brought with me that I still use are my Chaco sandals. I have worn those expensive hiking boots I bought maybe three times. Of course, maybe you'll wear them every day.

About everything else you really need, you can buy here. The larger cities have all sorts of toiletries, so your mom doesn't need to send you toothpaste (as mine did for the first year of my service), and you will soon be wearing clothes that you had made here by a local tailor. And the Peace Corps regional offices have libraries of books you can borrow.

I was stationed in a small *sous-prefecture* called Saramoussaya (in the Mamou region), where I spent 22 months living side by side with its 1,500 people. My official job was to teach math at the middle school, but my most rewarding work-related experiences came from my secondary projects, which included working with HIV/AIDS education and doing community cleanup work with local children. Even with the work I was doing, I still had lots of time to read, write, sleep, and explore my community. I lived in an "unfinished" house (no cement covering the exposed-brick walls and no ceiling tiles), but it soon became my home.

I spent a lot of my free time visiting the remote areas of my

sous-prefecture on foot and by bike. I had students who walked 12 km each day to get to school, and I tried to visit every village where my students came from in my two years at site. I learned that generosity resided in nearly every small village over the dusty red hills that enclosed Saramoussaya. The families I encountered never let me go home empty-handed. There was always a chicken hanging from my handlebars or a sack of peanuts in my book bag. The generosity never ceases to surprise me, as most Guineans have so little themselves.

I am now finishing my third year as a Volunteer in Conakry. The city is very different from where you are likely to be posted. Conakry is intimidating when you first arrive, but you will learn where to buy things and that the Peace Corps staff is, in general, extremely supportive. Some Volunteers don't like the "big city," but I've done all right. Once you find local friends, it really becomes just like a series of villages all strung together. And I've been back to my village two times to find the same generous spirit.

When you first arrive at the Conakry airport, you will probably be overwhelmed. The hot, muggy air; the open sewers; the mass of people moving through markets with full buckets on their heads and babies on their backs; the children who scream "white person" at you in their local languages (even if you aren't white)... You will soon get used to it all, even if it takes some time. You will be whisked away by the Peace Corps training staff to Dubreka, a town about an hour outside of Conakry, where you will spend three months learning French and/or a local language, undergo technical training, and live with a Guinean family. Be advised: Training is nothing like being at site. During training, all of your time will be scheduled for you and you will be surrounded by other Americans. After these three months, you will be left in a village with much more free time on your hands and no other English-speaking people around.

Re-reading my journal from my first few months at site was difficult. I hadn't realized at the time how alone I felt. It takes

time to integrate into your village and become comfortable, but it will happen if you give it the chance. Even after you are integrated, not everything is roses: scary rainstorms when you are alone under a tin roof, people asking for gifts because “all Americans are rich,” conflicts with village supervisors ... But the good far outweighs the bad: The trip in which your bush taxi doesn't break down, the day your students bring you bags of fresh bananas and oranges because it is your birthday, the little children who address you by your name and take your hand, the day you first really feel accepted as a part of a Guinean family.

Now I've been here so long that things I once saw as strange are beginning to seem normal. My perspective has changed, as yours soon will, too. It's like they say: It will shock you at first that you are living here. Then it will be amazing that you are actually living here. And finally, it will become normal—you are living here. The only thing that still never fails to take my breath away is the African sky, whether it is the amazing sunrises over the mountains in Saramoussaya, the clear dark hours when you can follow the satellites in their slow course, or the moon-filled nights when you don't need a flashlight. And every time I really stop to take a look at it, I'm happy I'm living here.

*Bonne chance et du courage.* (Good luck and have courage.)

—Mackenzie Pfeifer

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Get ready for Guinea! We are anxiously looking forward to meeting you and welcoming you. Guinea is a beautiful and vibrant country. Your future communities are eagerly awaiting you and will take you in as family. You will live among incredible people for two years. The Volunteers in Guinea are excited by your arrival and ready to get to know you. The current Volunteers are an amazing, supportive group of people who have formed a family among strangers. We are ready to welcome you to our homes in Guinea, show you around, and have a great time.

Volunteers bring their own attitude, experience, and history, so of course each of you will live out your own experience. In writing you this letter, I'm describing something unique to me. I am a 25-year-old agroforestry Volunteer. I have lived in a village in the Fouta, or Moyenne Guinée, for 21 months. I have had an incredible, mind-boggling, life-changing, inspiring two years here and can only tell you my own stories of challenge, frustration, and success.

So you are sitting in a comfy chair somewhere in the States, thinking about what Africa and Guinea will be like. You are surrounded by all the comforts of the developed world: Refrigerator full of good food and chilled beverages, ringing telephone, and water that is drinkable right out of the tap! Incredible. It's impossible to explain what our lives are like here in Peace Corps/Guinea. So I will tell you this: You will be entering a completely different world. Forget everything you are accustomed to and comfortable with. Arriving in Africa will be shocking. The plane will land in Conakry's muggy air, thick with the smells and substances of life. You will see unpaved roads, no sewers, cars honking and running every which way, babies tied on their mothers' backs, mothers who are balancing a bucket of vegetables on their head while weaving through a crowd with perfect grace. On an initial glance, life may appear to be complete chaos, but there is an organization here, invisible but always present, that you will learn about and eventually work within. Conakry is people, people, everywhere. Don't be intimidated—you will get used to it.

Your service will begin with a three-month training period. An hour's ride outside of the capital is the small community of Dubreka, where each Volunteer is adopted by a host family for the duration of training. During the day you will be in language classes (French and/or a local language) and technical training. In the evenings, in free time, and on weekends, you will learn by living the reality of what your life will be like once training is completed and you are sworn in as Volunteers.

You will spend training with a large group of Americans, in a city with few of the amenities of home. Even though training is carefully designed to prepare you to integrate into an African community, your life in training and your life as a Volunteer will have very little in common. This is mainly because during training, you are in a very organized environment, constantly surrounded by Americans and speaking English. The Peace Corps takes care of everybody during adjustment; it helps you learn the cultural ropes, feel comfortable, and start the process of learning the local languages. You are with friends who provide a lot of support, and while training is tough, it is an adventure all the way through. A lot of Volunteers will visit you, share experiences, and answer your questions. Training will culminate in a swearing-in ceremony in which you take on a two-year commitment to live and work at your site.

Thus begins the rest of your life. Moving to site is akin to leaving all you know and starting over. You will move to a community that will take care of you and work with you for your entire service. You will start by making your new hut or house your home, hanging up your mosquito net, and asking someone to show you to the nearest pump to get drinking water. You will live without running water or electricity and you will love it! It's an incredible discovery, and you can dig as deep as you want to.

Moving to site "affectation" is a huge adjustment from training. You will be on your own and not surrounded by Americans. Along that line, most likely you will cease speaking and hearing English and switch completely to French and the local language (Soussou, Malinke, or Pulaar, depending on what region you live in). From here on, you will meet people, observe village life, and start to figure out what is going on—how the community works. You will begin to work among and with your community.

For me, living in my little village setting with the hills and red earth of the Fouta is incredible. The people inspire me, worry over me, feed me, and teach me. I go to sleep to

crickets and wake up to doves cooing and roosters crowing. I read every day and write, paint, or draw. I greet everybody when I pass, and I exchange jokes and gossip. I eat with my hands and bathe from a bucket. I teach little girls the alphabet and give them confidence, hope, and encouragement. I miss my village when I'm away, and upon arrival back from the two-hour bumpy, dusty taxi ride, I step out of the car, take a deep breath, and say, "Aah, I made it home."

—Kate Scott

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Hi! Welcome to Guinea! If you're like I was when I received the welcome package, you're running around right now, trying to find out anything and everything about Guinea, spending tons of money to prepare for living minimally, saying goodbyes, and worrying about all kinds of diseases and dangers. I remember people constantly telling me, "You're so brave!" and hating to hear that; I was afraid they knew something I didn't know, because I didn't feel brave at all.

Well, after 21 months in Africa, I now know exactly what I got myself into. And I still feel privileged to be here. I'm a health Volunteer in Basse (Lower) Guinea. (This means even more rain than anywhere else, plus palm trees, tons of rivers, bauxite, several different ethnic groups, and being close to Conakry.)

As far as pre-service training goes (your immediate concern, I'm sure), I think the most important advice is to be flexible, to be open to new experiences and ways of thinking, and to treasure your sense of humor. Those will be your key resources at site anyway, in my experience. Don't expect too much of yourself during those months; just take it little by little. Actually, that's a very popular phrase in all the local languages (seda, seda in Pulaar, dondoroti in Soussou), and I think that's the key to success (or sanity) in Guinea. During training, you'll be taken care of and thoroughly trained. You will learn to love the food (at first I could only get about one handful in my mouth, and I would immediately lose my

appetite). You will learn French (and probably one or two local languages too). You will make close African and Peace Corps friends, and they will help you through the hard times, the boring times, and the mind-blowing, exciting times. My biggest issue during training was feeling powerless. During training you're babied—you won't have much control over your food, amount of sleep, or time. That all changes completely once you swear in, alhamdulillah (thanks be to God).

I love my village, but I never would have picked it for myself. I wanted to be very isolated (I'm only four hours from Conakry, on a good day), and I wanted to live with Soussous (since I had been studying Soussou). I live mostly with Peuhls, and my community is bigger than I would have liked, dirty, and completely linked to one of the biggest bauxite mines in the world. But the people are wonderful, hospitable, generous, fairly open-minded, and hardworking, and love to laugh and joke. Once I get about five minutes out of the town center, the site is full of stunning scenery—beautiful palm-tree-lined riverbeds, waterfalls, “mountains,” baobab trees, the most delicious mangoes, rice fields, and savannas. I don't have any mosquitoes, and to my great surprise I don't have any rats either! (I didn't think it was possible to do the Peace Corps without rats.) Except for some readjustment time, I've been pretty healthy so far. I think that has to do with control—I filter my water and cook most of my own meals. My village is pretty quiet because it's Peuhl. But when I want to, I can hike to a Soussou district, and they are hardly calm or reserved.

As far as work goes, I spent the first three months or so learning Pulaar and Soussou, meeting everyone, learning whom to trust and how to avoid more difficult people, visiting all my districts (some are about three hours by car), renovating my house, discovering all the little details about my village, and winning people's confidence.

I go to the school most mornings to teach PE and to a women's garden co-op I recently joined. Sometimes I go to the

health center for a few hours, but not always. I usually take a nap, cook, wash dishes, wash clothes by pounding them on rocks by the river, pump water and carry it on my head, cook something, write letters, shower (up to three times a day—it's sticky in Basse Guinea!), visit families, bike or walk out to a nearby sector, and hang out with my beloved neighbor kids.

For food, I eat a ton of peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, oatmeal, omelets, pasta, potato soup, guacamole, fruit (e.g., guavas, oranges, bananas, pineapples, mangoes, papayas, apples, grapefruits, and other fruits I've never tasted before). I'm very lucky, I'd say, in what I can find to eat at my site, and variety is not nearly as much of a problem as I expected. When I'm lazy or lonely, I eat with families, usually peanut sauce with rice, manioc, and dried fish; a tomato soup-y sauce (I love them both); or some kind of ground leaf sauce. If we're really lucky, we get chicken or meat, but I could buy that for myself any time I want. Money is not a problem here.

The days pass pretty quickly. My only big issue is transport. It is literally a nightmare. I was afraid of driving in the States, and that fear has been amplified here with the bad roads, poorly maintained cars, and horrible drivers. That fear is something I've had to accept, and I am still in Guinea in spite of it. The fact is, I can honestly say that I love Guinea. I feel deeply privileged to be accepted and included in my community, and I am happy and still excited to be here.

*Bonne chance et du courage.*

—Helki Spidle

.....

First, congrats for making it this far in the application process. If you're anything like I was at this point, you're still trying to convince yourself, and others, that this is what you want to do for the next two years.

What to pack? You'll be here for two years, so bring stuff you like. Remember, people do live here, and soap and shampoo are sold. But if you like a particular brand, bring it. Something I wish I had brought is more "girly" stuff. I'm

somewhat of a tomboy and thought “two-year camping trip.” Fine, but some good-smelling face scrubs would have been nice. Bring lots of stuff you always wish you had the time to do. If you like to cook, bring spices, lots of them (though they do sell them in Conakry). Something else I really wish I had brought is dried or dehydrated vegetables—mushrooms especially. Another thing is extra camera batteries. I also wish I had a tape recorder to save and send back the sounds of Africa. That’s it for my litany. Remember, bring what you like.

Your site is probably what you want to know the most about between worrying. Well, I can’t really tell you exactly what to expect— everyone’s site is different. I’m an environmental education Volunteer in Sareboido (Koundara Prefecture). It is hot up here, and before I came, I was expecting it to be cool—like I said, no one can really tell you what to expect. I’ve started working with a community garden (with plans for live fencing and compost), built a few mud stoves, and observed lots of classes. I live with a family in the same compound, and this can be a blessing and a challenge.

Guinea is a beautiful country. If you decide to join us, we will all be excited to meet you. There are a few more things I want you to know before coming here. First, patience is definitely a virtue, especially patience with yourself. You never really know how schedule-dependent and task-oriented you are until you come here and find out that much of your job (for environmental education Volunteers) is to talk to people. It can be nerve-racking, especially when people at home and here ask what it is you’re doing. Second, travel here is sometimes dangerous. I’m not sure if you’ve ever seen a Peugeot station wagon, but that’s standard here. The cars often look like they belong in junkyards. The roads are mostly potholes and dirt. On the road between Labé and Koundara, for example, there are a few sections where the “road” is a trench as deep as a Mack truck’s tires and two to three times as long as the truck. If the road is paved, driving conditions are fast and dangerous. This isn’t meant to scare you; it is something most of us agree a person should know before

coming. Third, remember that Guinea is a poor country, one of the poorest. I haven't seen that many cases of malnutrition, but you will constantly be asked for stuff, so be prepared.

For the most part, I'm really glad I decided to come. Remember that everything has its ups and downs and remember to keep your sense of humor.

—Laura McCoy

## NOTES



### Quizzes

1. The student has  
1 month to pass  
the quiz.

2. The student has  
1 month to pass  
the quiz.

3. The student has  
1 month to pass  
the quiz.

4. The student has  
1 month to pass  
the quiz.

### Exercises

1. The student has  
1 month to pass  
the quiz.

2. The student has  
1 month to pass  
the quiz.

3. The student has  
1 month to pass  
the quiz.

4. The student has  
1 month to pass  
the quiz.

# PACKING LIST



This list has been compiled by Volunteers serving in Guinea and is based on their experience. Use it as an informal guide in making your own list, bearing in mind that experience is individual. There is no perfect list! You obviously cannot bring everything we mention, so consider those items that make the most sense to you personally and professionally. You can always have things sent to you later (although mail is unreliable, and postage from the U.S. to Guinea is expensive). As you decide what to bring, keep in mind that Peace Corps has an 80-pound weight restriction on baggage. And remember, you can get almost everything you need in Guinea.

In general, you should pack enough clothes to get you comfortably through the three months of pre-service training and use the rest of the space to pack the things that are most important to you. You can have clothes custom-made in Guinea at a very reasonable cost, and there are markets in Guinea with used clothing from other countries.

## **General Clothing**

For women, appropriate work clothing is a dress or a skirt that is at least knee length (preferably longer). Slips must be worn with anything transparent. For men, appropriate work clothing is a nice pair of slacks, a dress shirt, and dress shoes (loafers are acceptable). Short-sleeved button-down shirts are acceptable, but we recommend at least one long-sleeved shirt, too. All clothes should be clean and in good condition. T-shirts with writing and jeans are generally considered unacceptable for the classroom (and are available in the local market for much cheaper than in the U.S.!).

### ***For Men***

- Two- to three-week supply of cotton underwear
- A few pairs of athletic socks (most Volunteers wear open-toed shoes)
- Three nice outfits appropriate for teaching, conferences, and meetings
- Two pairs of jeans
- Two pairs of casual pants (can be part of the “three nice outfits”; carpenter-type pants are acceptable)
- Two to four T-shirts (easy to buy locally)
- Five tank tops (difficult to buy locally)
- Two or three short-sleeved sport shirts
- One or two long-sleeved shirts
- Three or four pairs of shorts
- Sport or gym clothes
- One sweatshirt, sweater, or flannel shirt
- Swimsuit
- Two or more bandannas (for dusty taxi rides)

### ***For Women***

- Two- to three-week supply of cotton underwear
- Five to eight bras, including a few sports bras (good bras are unavailable locally)
- Two slips (important for teachers)
- A few pairs of socks (most Volunteers wear open-toed shoes)
- Three nice outfits appropriate for teaching, conferences, and meetings
- Two or three casual long dresses (cotton is best; sleeveless is fine)
- Two or three casual long skirts
- One or more pairs of jeans or pants (agroforestry)

Volunteers tend to wear pants more than skirts, while teachers wear skirts)

- Two to four T-shirts (can be bought in Guinea)
- Two or three short-sleeved collared shirts (especially important for teachers)
- One sweater, sweatshirt, or flannel shirt
- Two swimsuits (hard to buy in Guinea)
- A pair of long shorts if you plan to participate in sports
- Hats or caps for sun protection
- Two or more bandannas (for dusty taxi rides)

## **Shoes**

- Two pairs of nice shoes for teaching or dressing up (nice sandals with no heels are also acceptable)
- One pair of light, waterproof hiking boots or sneakers (especially useful for natural resource management Volunteers)
- One pair of running shoes, if you run
- One pair of Chaco or Teva sandals (Birkenstocks do not work as well in the rain)
- One pair of comfortable flip-flops (you can buy all sorts of plastic shoes in Guinea)

## **Personal Hygiene and Toiletry Items**

- Start-up (three-month) supply of toiletries
- Good razors and shaving cream
- Travel towel
- Tampons (very expensive in Guinea; o.b. brand is not available)
- Disposable towelettes or gel hand sanitizer

## **Kitchen**

- Spatula
- Good can opener
- French press or gold filter, if you bring good coffee
- One or two good knives
- Plastic food storage containers
- Spices (some are available in Guinea, but bring what you really like)
- A big supply of plastic baggies
- Food items (pasta sauce packages, herbal teas, coffee, Gatorade, Kool-Aid, Parmesan cheese, macaroni and cheese packages, etc.)

## **Miscellaneous**

- Bicycle helmet (for which you will be reimbursed up to \$40)
- Large internal-frame pack or duffel bag
- Medium-sized hiking backpack
- Small book bag or backpack
- Luggage locks (can be bought cheaply locally)
- Tape player, Walkman, iPod or CD player with mini-speakers (most music is on cassettes)
- Tape recorder to record messages and sounds of your new life for friends at home
- Your favorite music and blank tapes (you can buy 60-minute blank tapes in Guinea)
- Shortwave radio (can be bought for about \$5 in Guinea)
- Camera and film (locally available film costs about \$1.50 a roll, but quality varies; most local film developing is of poor quality); note that it may be difficult to download a digital camera on a regular basis, so be sure to bring an extra memory card (or a card

with lots of memory), and appropriate batteries for your camera(s)

- Good small flashlight or headlamp, with extra bulbs
- Small alarm clock (essential for teachers)
- Batteries for your electronics and camera (batteries from the U.S. last longer. You might also consider bringing a solar battery re-charger as electricity may be non-existent depending on your site.)
- Personal pictures
- Leatherman tool or Swiss Army knife
- A few good books (there is also a supply at all regional Peace Corps facilities)
- Calculator (for teachers)
- Musical instrument, if you play one
- Duct tape
- Sturdy water bottle (e.g., Nalgene or Platypus)
- Tent, sleeping bag
- Seeds for planting a home garden (some seeds are available locally, and are generally better adapted to local growing conditions)
- Videotapes/movies (to watch at Peace Corps regional facilities)
- Good sunglasses
- A few things that will make you feel happy or luxurious (like foot or face scrubs)
- A reading light
- Holiday decorations and music, if they are important to you
- Pillow (pillows are sold locally, but the quality varies)
- Bike equipment (if you are a serious biker)
- A diary or two
- Cards and games (to play with people in your village or other Volunteers)

- Children's books or toys
- Sewing kit
- Earplugs
- Stationery and art supplies

### **Items You Probably Do Not Need to Bring**

- Solar shower
- Water filter (you will be given one by the Peace Corps)
- Sheets
- Expensive jewelry
- Phone calling cards (they do not work in Guinea)
- Breakable or sentimental items you would not want to lose
- Magazine subscriptions (they probably would not make it through the mail; the Peace Corps provides Volunteers with *Newsweek*)
- Basic bicycle equipment (provided by the Peace Corps)

## NOTES

## CADRE

Affiche:  
Document  
Poster  
Mural

II

## POINTS de BASE

## CONSEQUENCES

1. Rappel: Suite de la 1<sup>re</sup>
2. La détermination de l'épave
3. Filles
4. C'est à nous, les 1000
5. Villages du 2000
6. Ce sont nous, nos amis
7. (Pour l'œuvre du 2000)
8. (Pour l'œuvre du 2000)
9. (Pour l'œuvre du 2000)
10. (Pour l'œuvre du 2000)



# PRE-DEPARTURE CHECKLIST



The following list consists of suggestions for you to consider as you prepare to live outside the United States for two years. Not all items will be relevant to everyone, and the list does not include everything you should make arrangements for.

## Family

- ☐ Notify family that they can call the Peace Corps' Office of Special Services at any time if there is a critical illness or death of a family member (telephone number: 800.424.8580, extension 1470; after-hours duty officer: 202.638.2574).
- ☐ Give the Peace Corps' *On the Home Front* handbook to family and friends.

## Passport/Travel

- ☐ Forward to the Peace Corps travel office all paperwork for the Peace Corps passport and visas.
- ☐ Verify that luggage meets the size and weight limits for international travel.
- ☐ Obtain a personal passport if you plan to travel after your service ends. (Your Peace Corps passport will expire three months after you finish your service, so if you plan to travel longer, you will need a regular passport.)

## Medical/Health

- ☐ Complete any needed dental and medical work.
- ☐ If you wear glasses, bring two pairs.
- ☐ Arrange to bring a six-month supply of all medications (including birth control pills) you are currently taking.

## **Insurance**

- ☐ Make arrangements to maintain life insurance coverage.
- ☐ Arrange to maintain supplemental health coverage while you are away. (Even though the Peace Corps is responsible for your health care during Peace Corps service overseas, it is advisable for people who have preexisting conditions to arrange for the continuation of their supplemental health coverage. If there is a lapse in supplemental health coverage, it is often difficult and expensive to be reinstated.)
- ☐ Arrange to continue Medicare coverage if applicable.

## **Personal Papers**

- ☐ Bring a copy of your certificate of marriage or divorce.

## **Voting**

- ☐ Register to vote in the state of your home of record. (Many state universities consider voting and payment of state taxes as evidence of residence in that state.)
- ☐ Obtain a voter registration card and take it with you overseas.
- ☐ Arrange to have an absentee ballot forwarded to you overseas.

## **Personal Effects**

- ☐ Purchase personal property insurance to extend from the time you leave your home for service overseas until the time you complete your service and return to the United States.

## **Financial Management**

- ☐ Obtain student loan deferment forms from the lender or loan service.
- ☐ Execute a power of attorney for the management of your property and business.
- ☐ Arrange for deductions from your readjustment allowance to pay alimony, child support, and other debts through the Office of Volunteer Financial Operations at 800.424.8580, extension 1770.
- ☐ Place all important papers—mortgages, deeds, stocks, and bonds—in a safe deposit box or with an attorney or other caretaker.



# CONTACTING PEACE CORPS HEADQUARTERS



The following list of numbers will help you contact the appropriate office at Peace Corps headquarters with various questions. You may use the toll-free number and extension or dial directly using the local numbers provided. Be sure to leave the Peace Corps' toll-free number and extensions with your family so they have them in the event of an emergency during your service overseas.

## **Peace Corps Headquarters**

### **Toll-free Number:**

80.424.8580, Press 2, then  
Ext. # (see below)

### **Peace Corps' Mailing Address:**

Peace Corps  
Paul D. Coverdell Peace Corps Headquarters  
1111 20th Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20526

<b>For Questions About:</b>	<b>Staff</b>	<b>Toll-free Extension</b>	<b>Direct/ Local Number</b>
Responding to an Invitation	Office of Placement Africa Region	Ext. 1850	202.692.1850
Programming or Country Information	Paul Johnson Desk Officer guinea@peacecorps.gov	Ext. 2327	202.692.2327
	Jennifer Brown Desk Assistant guinea@peacecorps.gov	Ext. 2326	202.692.2326

<b>For Questions About:</b>	<b>Staff</b>	<b>Toll-free Extension</b>	<b>Direct/ Local Number</b>
Plane Tickets, Passports, Visas, or Other Travel Matters	Travel Officer (Sato Travel)	Ext. 1170	202.692.1170
Legal Clearance	Office of Placement	Ext. 1845	202.692.1845
Medical Clearance and Forms Processing (including dental)	Screening Nurse	Ext. 1500	202.692.1500
Medical Reimbursements	Handled by a Subcontractor		800.818.8772
Loan Deferments, Taxes, Readjustment Allowance Withdrawals, Power of Attorney	Volunteer Financial Operations	Ext. 1770	202.692.1770
Staging (Pre-departure Orientation) and Reporting Instructions <i>Note: You will receive comprehensive information (hotel and flight arrangements) three to five weeks before departure. This information is not available sooner.</i>	Office of Staging	Ext. 1865	202.692.1865
Family Emergencies (to get information to a Volunteer overseas)	Office of Special Services	Ext. 1470	202.692.1470 9-5 EST  202.638.2574 (after-hours answering service)

# PEACE CORPS

Paul D. Coverdell Peace Corps Headquarters

1111 20th Street NW · Washington, DC 20526 · [www.peacecorps.gov](http://www.peacecorps.gov) · 1-800-424-8580