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Office of Inspector General

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**Final Program Evaluation Report:
Peace Corps/Ghana
IG-09-13-E**

July 2009

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Office of Inspector General (OIG) conducted an evaluation of Peace Corps/Ghana's operations February 2 – 19, 2009. The evaluation covered fiscal years 2007 and 2008 and reviewed programming, training, Volunteer support, health care, Volunteer safety, housing, work sites, and staff organization.

At the onset of our evaluation, there were 134 Volunteers and 33 staff in Ghana. Interviews were conducted with 30 Volunteers (22% of Volunteers) and with 12 in-country staff. Additional interviews were conducted with Peace Corps headquarters staff, U.S. Embassy representatives in Ghana, and key project partners. PC/Ghana has four project sectors: (1) Education; (2) Environment; (3) Health/Water and Sanitation; and (4) Small Enterprise Development.

PC/Ghana is proud to be the first site that received Peace Corps Volunteers in 1961 and is preparing to celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2011. Over the years, PC/Ghana has built a strong program. The OIG evaluation determined that PC/Ghana has a knowledgeable and competent staff. The post has effective working relationships with project partners and Peace Corps headquarters and has established effective operational systems related to programming and most aspects of Volunteer support and training. In addition, the evaluation determined that the post has been particularly effective in establishing a system for Volunteers to identify counterparts; this has resulted in strong working relationships with at least one counterpart or supervisor in the community, which can greatly enhance a Volunteer's impact.

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

- Although most Volunteers reported that they were satisfied with their site placement, the evaluation identified concerns that could be solved with more thorough, in-person site development, including verifying that housing is ready for Volunteers when they arrive and identifying the appropriate language for a Volunteer to learn.
- Language training and the in-service training (IST) curriculum could be adapted to better meet Volunteers' needs.
- Although Volunteers stated that they were well-supported on average, Associate Peace Corps Director (APCD) support varied and alternate means of support were either undefined, not being implemented, or were not well understood by Volunteers.
- Peace Corps Volunteer Leaders did not have primary projects that comply with Peace Corps policy.
- Volunteers were not regularly submitting performance reports.

Our report contains 17 recommendations, which, if implemented, should strengthen programming operations and correct the deficiencies detailed in the accompanying report.

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HOST COUNTRY BACKGROUND

The Republic of Ghana is located in Western Africa, bordering Cote d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Togo, and the Gulf of Guinea. Ghana became the first sub-Saharan country to gain its independence in 1957 and has been viewed as one of Africa's most stable democracies since the mid-1990s. Slightly smaller than the state of Oregon, Ghana's population is mainly Christian (69%) and Muslim (16%), with 11 official languages spoken in 10 regions. The economy is strengthening as a result of its Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy, although Ghana remains heavily dependent on international financial and technical assistance. More than half of Ghana's labor force is agricultural, and the tourism industry is expanding. Chieftaincy and religious disputes, especially in the north, have lessened recently, although tensions over the land tenure system still persist. After elections, Ghana successfully transferred power to President John Atta Mills in January 2009.

PEACE CORPS PROGRAM BACKGROUND

On August 31, 1961, Ghana was the first country to receive Peace Corps Volunteers and is quickly approaching its 50th anniversary of consecutive service. The United States and Ghana share an active country agreement that was signed in 1961, and current Memorandums of Understanding are shared between PC/Ghana and its project partners. PC/Ghana provides the following projects in targeted communities.

- **Education**
  This sector operates in partnership with the Ghana Education Service and the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology. Volunteers teach secondary school math, science, information and communications technology (ICT), and visual arts, mainly in rural areas. They develop teaching resource manuals, help acquire computer and library resources, organize student clubs, work with health clinics, and coach sports. They transfer community organization and planning skills by mobilizing their schools to build latrines, wells, dormitories, libraries, art studios, laboratories, and science resource centers. Many visual arts teachers use sign language to teach in schools for the deaf.

- **Environment**
  Collaborating partners of the environment projects include the government of Ghana and several non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as the Adventist Development Relief Agency. Agro-forestry Volunteers promote alternative livelihood activities that increase community members' income and reduce environmental degradation. They also participate in projects that focus on sustainability of natural resources by helping to establish tree nurseries and woodlots and by assisting communities with their environment plans. Volunteers address

environmental issues in community groups, work with farmers to improve farming practices, and help communities reduce their dependence on natural resources.

- **Health/Water and Sanitation**
The multitude of partners involved in this sector include: the Ghanaian government, the Canadian International Development Agency, and several local and international not-for-profit organizations such as ProNet. The Health/Water and Sanitation (WatSan) project promotes health and hygiene to reduce water and sanitation related diseases and to create awareness and prevention, problem/need identification, and community mobilization that will result in action plans, implementation, and capacity building. Health Volunteers assist communities in planning, acquiring, operating, and managing water and sanitation facilities, and they help rural health clinics extend health education and services. They also disseminate information in schools, homes, and communities on practical hygiene procedures and sexually transmitted infections. Both Health and WatSan Volunteers work to eradicate Guinea worm disease.

- **Small Enterprise Development (SED)**
Partner agencies of the SED sector include the Ghanaian government, Nature Conservation Research Center, and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), among others. SED Volunteers are assigned projects in the areas of eco-tourism, small business and micro-business development, financial management, marketing, product development, and non-financial services for small entrepreneurs. They teach financial management, marketing, product development, and credit availability for small entrepreneurs. They have assisted women and youth via economic associations and cooperatives to develop agricultural products and crafts for export.

In addition, all PC/Ghana Volunteers participate in training and activities involving HIV/AIDS education and prevention, and gender and youth development.

OBJECTIVES, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

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

The Evaluations Unit within the Peace Corps Office of Inspector General provides senior management with independent evaluations of all management and operations of the Peace Corps, including overseas posts and domestic offices. OIG evaluators identify best practices and recommend program improvements to comply with Peace Corps policies.

The Office of Inspector General Evaluations Unit announced its intent to conduct an evaluation of PC/Ghana on December 12, 2008. For post evaluations, we use the following researchable questions to guide our work:

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

The evaluation team conducted the preliminary research portion of the evaluation December 15, 2008 – January 30, 2009. This included review of agency documents provided by headquarters and post staff and interviews with management staff representing the region and the Office for Overseas Programming and Training Support (OPATS). In-country fieldwork occurred February 2 – 19, 2009, and was comprised of interviews with post senior staff in charge of programming, training, and support; the U.S. Ambassador; the acting Regional Security Officer; and project partners. Interviews with Ministry officials were limited due to Ghana's government transition following Presidential elections in January 2009. In addition, we interviewed a stratified judgmental sample of 22% of currently serving Volunteers based on their length of service, site location, project focus, gender, age, and ethnicity. Thirty Volunteers were identified as part of the sample.

Table 1: Volunteer Demographic Data

Project	Percentage of Volunteers
Education	39%
Environment	19%
Health/Water and Sanitation	22%
Small Enterprise Development	20%
Gender	**Percentage of Volunteers**
Male	47%
Female	53%
Age	**Percentage of Volunteers**
25 or younger	58%
26-29	22%
30-54	15%
55 and over	4%

Source: PC/Ghana Volunteer Roster, January 2009.
Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

Nineteen of 30 Volunteer interviews occurred at the Volunteers' homes, and we inspected these homes using post-defined site selection criteria. The period of review for a post evaluation is one full Volunteer cycle (typically 27 months).

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

EVALUATION RESULTS

PROGRAMMING

The evaluation assessed whether post has developed and implemented programs intended to increase the capacity of host country communities to meet their own technical needs. To determine this, we analyzed the following:

- The coordination between Peace Corps and the host country in determining development priorities and Peace Corps program areas.
- The existence of project plans based on host country development priorities and the Volunteers' understanding of the project plan goals and objectives.

- Whether Volunteers are placed in sites where they can contribute meaningfully to meeting host country development priorities.
- Relationships with counterparts that enable Volunteers to have productive work assignments that meet host country development priorities.

As a result of the December 2008 Presidential election in Ghana, post staff report that they will soon establish working relationships with newly placed ministry officials. In reviewing coordination between PC/Ghana and the host country, PC/Ghana's programming in response to development priorities established in Ghana, and Volunteers' understanding of their project goals and objectives, the OIG found no significant areas of concern that would warrant action by the post.

Volunteers reported their satisfaction with job placement as "above average" in interviews. The OIG observed a good site development practice at PC/Ghana. Post staff initially interact with a contact person in the community in order to conduct a site assessment. Later, Trainees are asked to identify a counterpart based on their interactions with community members and their own judgment of who can best support them. Volunteers are likely to have a strong working relationship with at least one counterpart or supervisor in the community as a result.

Staff responsible for site development were not physically observing all Volunteer housing before Volunteers move in.

Eight of 30 Volunteers we interviewed reported that they moved into housing after swearing in that did not meet the post's minimum criteria. We learned from discussions with Volunteers that a possible reason this has occurred is that staff rely on community members to provide updates regarding the condition of housing, rather than post staff verifying the status of Volunteer housing themselves. Peace Corps' "Programming and Training Booklet 5" states,

> Often during site identification post staff negotiate housing…with the partner agency or community. In these cases a member of the selection team will need to return to the site to ensure that all criteria and agreed upon expectations have been met. Always make a personal visit to the site at least once before the Volunteer arrives to the site.

Community members may not be familiar with Peace Corps' minimum housing standards when asked to confirm the status of housing. Placing Volunteers in housing that did not meet the post's housing standards could have been prevented if post staff had conducted in-person observation of housing. This is particularly important given that post staff is preparing to develop all new sites for the next input in June 2009.

We recommend:

1. **That post staff physically observe housing to ensure it meets the post's minimum housing criteria before a Volunteer arrives at site.**

Staff responsible for site development were not identifying the correct language for Volunteers to learn in pre-service training (PST).

Seven of 30 Volunteers we interviewed reported that the language they were trained in was not the language most needed at their work site and in their community. According to the post's site development guidance, communities wishing to host a Volunteer complete a site survey form that is used by post staff to conduct the site assessment. The Site Survey Form requests information on languages spoken in the community. However, the form does not indicate that this information is used to determine the primary language a Volunteer will be expected to speak for work or for community integration. Further, PC/Ghana's site development guidance does not specifically discuss steps for identifying the correct language.

The post would benefit by planning specific milestones for identifying the most appropriate language during site development, and also by sharing the purpose of collecting language information with community members. This is particularly important given that post staff is preparing to develop all new sites for the next input in June 2009.

We recommend:

2. **That post staff include the purpose of collecting information on languages spoken in the community on the Site Survey Form.**

3. **That post staff update its site development process to include follow up in the community to determine which language the Trainee should learn during PST for the purposes of working on their primary assignment and for community integration.**

CROSS-CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

The second objective of a post evaluation assesses whether Peace Corps programs in a given country help promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of the people served. Cultural exchange is an integral part of the transfer of knowledge and skills that occurs between host-country community partners and Volunteers. To understand the

extent to which the post has implemented programs and activities to promote cross-cultural understanding, we interviewed Volunteers, post staff, and project partners and reviewed training and evaluation materials.

In reviewing PC/Ghana Volunteers' cross-cultural understanding, the OIG found that language is the only cross-cultural challenge that was consistently mentioned by Volunteers, region staff, post staff, and OPATS specialists. This challenge is addressed in the Programming and Training sections of this report.

There were no other significant areas of concern that would warrant action by the post. Volunteers believe they are well-integrated in their communities; 100% of Volunteers rated themselves as having "average success" to being "very successful" in understanding cross-cultural issues, with an average rating of 3.9 on a 5-point scale (1 = unsuccessful, 5 = very successful).

TRAINING

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

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

In reviewing the post's training goals, competencies, and learning objectives, the OIG found no significant areas of concern that would warrant action by the post. The post has hired a programming and training officer (PTO) to better integrate programming and training. With the support of the sub-regional programming and training coordinator, both departments are working together to develop more specific learning objectives for each sector's technical competencies.

We asked 30 Volunteers to rate the effectiveness of pre-service training (PST) and in-service training (IST) on a 5-point scale (1 = ineffective, 5 = very effective):

Table 2: Volunteer Perceptions of Training Effectiveness

Area	Ineffective (1) / Below average (2)	Moderate (3) / Above average (4) / Very effective (5)	Average Rating
PST:			
Language[1]	27%	77%	3.4
Culture[1]	3%	97%	3.7
Safety/Security[1]	0%	100%	4.0
Medical/Health[1]	3%	97%	4.1
Technical[2]	14%	86%	3.4
IST[3]	14%	86%	3.4

Source: OIG Volunteer Interviews.
[1] N= 30
[2] N = 29
[3] N = 21

Volunteers generally spoke positively about the cultural, safety and security, and health training received during PST, and the majority of Volunteers gave IST a favorable rating. Although Volunteers rated all aspects of PST a 3.4 or higher in interviews, they told us that providing additional technical training and improving language instruction during PST would improve training. Post staff, region staff, and OPATS specialists all described the difficulty of teaching nine or more languages in each PST, and post staff reported that they are currently working to improve language instruction. In addition, as discussed previously, we recommended that the post take steps to correctly identify the appropriate language for Trainees during site development. The post's efforts to improve language instruction and identify the correct language for PST should improve Trainees' satisfaction of language instruction.

Some Volunteers reported that they were unable to meet their community members' expectations when they arrived at their sites.

Twelve of 30 Volunteers we interviewed stated they lacked project-specific technical training that they believed that they needed when they arrived at their site. Some Volunteers described that they were approached by community members with questions that they could not answer, but felt they could have answered if they had received more project-specific technical training during PST. Comments from Volunteers included:

> "The lesson plans and curriculum isn't dynamic enough to deal with all the jobs that SED offers. We never divided up the people who are doing microfinance, ecotourism, etc. Instead we did everything as a group."

> "I had no idea how to build a latrine or how a bore hole works, nor how to address riverborne diseases." [WatSan]

PC/Ghana emphasizes the importance of Volunteers completing a community needs assessment during their first 12 weeks at site. It is unclear whether community members were told during site development that the community

assessment will be conducted before technical projects begin. Helping community members understand that Volunteers' contributions will be more limited in their first weeks at site will allow Volunteers to gain the trust and confidence of their counterparts and help them to better integrate in their communities.

We recommend:

4. **That post staff better communicate the timeframe and purpose of the community needs assessment with community members during site development.**

Some Volunteers were not receiving requests to submit IST needs assessments in time to provide input for planning purposes.

Seven of 21 Volunteers we interviewed that attended IST commented that either the material covered during IST was not effectively addressed or was not what they expected to learn during IST.

The post attempts to include Volunteers in IST planning by distributing a needs assessment by email. Post staff use this information to plan IST workshops. The OIG is encouraged by the post's efforts as Indicator 7.3 of *Indicators of a High Performance Post* prescribes the active involvement of Volunteers in the planning of training.

However, we learned from Volunteers that they often do not respond to this request for primarily two reasons; either they were unaware that an email requesting their input was sent, or they received the request but were unable to respond prior to attending IST.

PC/Ghana Volunteers' preferred method of contact is by text message. They described this as less costly than speaking on the phone or exchanging email; some noted that they check their email about once per month. Volunteers suggested that the post should send a text message informing them that their input is needed. Post staff agreed that this method would yield more responses from Volunteers and are currently researching options for disseminating information to Volunteers by text message. Multiple means of communication would facilitate Volunteers responding in time for post staff to incorporate their feedback into training.

We recommend:

5. **That post staff use multiple means of communication to obtain needs assessments from Volunteers in time for IST planning.**

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

In reviewing Volunteer safety and security and the living allowance, the OIG found no significant areas of concern that would warrant action by the post. Ninety-three percent of the Volunteers interviewed stated that they would report a future crime to Peace Corps. This may partially be a reflection of the Volunteers' confidence in the safety and security coordinator (SSC), and Volunteers who have experienced a crime stated that they were satisfied with the way Peace Corps handled the situation. In addition, Volunteers stated that they are familiar with their EAP, and 87% of the Volunteers interviewed correctly identified their consolidation point. Regarding the living allowance, most Volunteers stated that they receive enough money to maintain a safe and healthy lifestyle. However, several Volunteers noted that recent inflation is impacting food prices and making it harder to subsist on their living allowance.

Overall, Volunteers in PC/Ghana report that they are well supported by staff. Ninety-six percent of the Volunteers interviewed rated PC/Ghana staff as "effective" or better at helping them adjust to life as a Volunteer, with an average rating of 3.9 (1 = ineffective, 5 = very effective). For overall support, the average ratings for staff on a five-point scale (1 = not supportive, 5 = highly supportive) are as follows:

Table 3: Responses on Perception of Volunteer Support[1]

Area	Average Rating for Support	% of Volunteers rating "average support" or better
Leadership	3.9	96%
Programming	3.8	92%
Training	3.7	93%
Safety and Security	3.9	97%
Medical	3.9	90%
Administrative	4.1	100%

Source: OIG Volunteer Interviews, 2009

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1 The Leadership score was derived from the score for the country director; the Programming score was derived by averaging the scores for the PTO and APCD; the Training score was derived by averaging the scores for the training manager and PST director; the Safety and Security score was derived from the score for the safety and security coordinator; the Medical score was derived from the collective Peace Corps Medical Officer score; the Administrative score was derived from the score for the administrative officer.

The quality of APCD support varied, and some Volunteers reported that they did not view their APCD as a helpful resource.

Indicators of a High Performance Post states that APCD are often the main communication link between Volunteers and the rest of the Peace Corps staff in-country, and Volunteer support is one of their most constant and challenging duties. It further explains:

> With regard to the Volunteers, APCD/PMs [Associate Peace Corps Directors/Program Managers] must find an effective combination of site visits, correspondence, ISTs and workshops, coordination with PCVLs, personal contact with individual Volunteers, and everything else that is required to gain a full understanding of the Volunteers' conditions, problems, needs, and points of view.

Although PC/Ghana Volunteers stated on average that they receive adequate support from their APCD, Volunteer interviews indicate that some APCDs are more supportive than others. In particular, Volunteers in the Small Enterprise Development and Science and ICT Education sectors rated their APCD lower than other Volunteers in a few areas, including overall support, quality of quarterly report feedback, and site visit effectiveness. The table below depicts APCD ratings by sector, which is how PC/Ghana assigns APCDs.

Table 4: Volunteer Responses to Select APCD Support Interview Questions

Sector	Overall APCD support		Quality of quarterly report feedback		Site visit effectiveness	
	% rating "avg. support" or better	Avg.	% rating "avg. support" or better	Avg.	% rating "avg. support" or better	Avg.
All Sectors[2]	87%	3.7	83%	3.4	79%	3.4
Environment	100%	4.0	100%	3.0	100%	4.0
Small Enterprise Development	100%	3.3	**50%**	**2.5**	**50%**	**3.0**
Water and Sanitation	100%	4.0	100%	4.0	100%	3.8
Education (Science and ICT)	**50%**	**2.8**	100%	4.0	**50%**	**2.8**
Education (Math and Visual Arts)	89%	4.0	78%	3.3	89%	3.3

Source: OIG Volunteer Interviews, 2009

Typical support problems mentioned by Volunteers include failure to respond quickly and effectively to problems, brief site visits, and quarterly report feedback that is untimely or unhelpful. Sample comments from Volunteers include:

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[2] N = 30

"The response that I get is variable and unpredictable. Sometimes it's very supportive and excited but other times I feel like I'm going to be placed in some 'demanding volunteer' category. [My APCD is] not someone who I go to for support with problems at site."

"I don't feel comfortable going to [my APCD] . . . Everything has made the situation worse and [my APCD] doesn't know how to solve things or give advice."

"With the last [site visit my APCD wasn't] there long enough to do anything about [my problem]. How are they going to solve it only being there for 20 minutes? They didn't understand that there are deeper issues driving the surface ones . . . And I feel like [my APCD] came because [he/she] was forced to. Nothing was accomplished."

As a result, some Volunteers reported that they stopped communicating with their APCDs on a regular basis and did not enlist their help in solving problems; this can lead to isolated, disengaged Volunteers.

We recommend:

> **6. That post and programming leadership work with APCDs to clarify the post's expectations for Volunteer support.**

Volunteers reported that they did not know how to get help when their APCD is unresponsive.

Some Volunteers stated that they were not aware that they can escalate the support problems they encounter with their APCD. Although PC/Ghana has resources available, such as a Volunteer Advisory Committee (VAC) and other programming support roles such as the programming and training Officer (PTO) and Peace Corps Volunteer Leaders (PCVLs), they are not operating effectively or Volunteers are unsure how to use those resources to get needed support.

PC/Ghana's PTO oversees the APCDs. One hundred percent of the Volunteers who have interacted with the PTO rated the support as "average" or better, with an average of 4.1 (1= not supportive, 5 = very supportive). However, many Volunteers said that they were not familiar with the role and did not know how the PTO can be used to resolve problems with APCDs. One Volunteer stated, "I didn't know he was the PTO. But so far the way he's presented himself makes him approachable. If I knew he was our PTO I'd contact him more. He's integrated into the culture . . . but he comes from America so he understands us."

Although the Volunteer handbook briefly mentions the role, it provides no description of the kind of support Volunteers can expect to receive. Clarifying the PTO role and communicating how he/she can help resolve problems could provide Volunteers with additional support.

PC/Ghana has two Peace Corps Volunteer Leaders (PCVLs), one in Kumasi and the other in Tamale. *Indicators of a High Performance Post* notes that PCVLs can be useful for listening and offering personal support to Volunteers, sometimes in ways APCDs cannot achieve, and providing feedback to staff on support areas that need attention. Although PC/Ghana has two PCVLs, some Volunteers said that they did not know what is expected of these individuals. Others reported that they did not know who their PCVL is, and some incorrectly identified their PCVL, often confusing them with the VAC leader or an emergency contact. Of the Volunteers who could correctly identify and assess their PCVL, 100% rated their support as "average" or better, with an average rating of 4.5 (1 = not supportive, 5 = very supportive). This indicates that PCVLs could be another helpful support tool for resolving Volunteers' problems if they were more aware of these individuals and their responsibilities. However, the post needs to find the appropriate balance between PCVLs' staff responsibilities and Volunteer duties and make sure the PCVLs are participating in primary projects. This is discussed further in the Management Controls section of the report.

Finally, *Indicators of a High Performance Post* recommends that posts have "a Volunteer Advisory Council [VAC] or some other mechanism that gathers, analyzes, and funnels Volunteer concerns and suggestions to staff." Although PC/Ghana has a VAC, it has not met regularly, and some Volunteers stated that it lacked communication and follow-up. One Volunteer commented, "[The VAC is] good because we get to meet with people and vent. But it doesn't seem like a lot happens through it. You talk and discuss things but . . . you don't get the feedback from your input." The country director has established an annual schedule for the VAC and has published recent meeting minutes and follow-up actions in the monthly newsletter. This improvement to the VAC should provide Volunteers with an avenue to communicate problems that need staff's attention.

> **We recommend:**
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> 7. **That the country director determine the process for Volunteers to escalate support issues and communicate it to staff and Volunteers.**
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> 8. **That the country director define the PTO's role in resolving Volunteer support problems and communicate expectations to staff and Volunteers.**
>
> 9. **That the post disseminate VAC meeting minutes, follow-up items, and issue resolution to all**

PC/Ghana Volunteers using an effective means of communication.

Some Volunteers reported that they were not satisfied with medical diagnosis and follow-up care.

PC/Ghana has two full-time Peace Corps Medical Officers (PCMOs). Even though the majority of the Volunteers interviewed rated their overall medical support as adequate or better, they indicated that the level of support varies. Some Volunteers reported that they were more comfortable with one PCMO than the other due to perceived differences in the accuracy and thoroughness of diagnosis and follow up.

Some Volunteers reported that they were concerned about their medical follow-up care and provided examples when the PCMO did not follow up regularly to make sure they were receiving proper care and check on their status. Other Volunteers told us that they did not believe that their medical conditions were thoroughly diagnosed before a PCMO prescribed treatment. As a result, the Volunteer may receive multiple medications and/or treatment methods, which could prolong the illness. A few Volunteers mentioned in interviews that they were prescribed the wrong medications and/or dosages. One PCMO mentioned the challenges associated with diagnosing Volunteers' medical conditions over the phone and would like to visit the sub-regional offices to diagnose Volunteers in person.

We recommend:

> **10. That the country director work with PCMOs to clarify the post's and Volunteers' expectations for Volunteer diagnosis and follow up.**

The post's out-of-site policy is unclear.

According to the PC/Ghana Volunteer handbook, Peace Corps must be able to reach Volunteers at all times. The "Informal Leave" portion of the handbook states:

> PCVs must notify (verbally or in writing) your (a) community contact and (b) PC Ghana (your APCD, Duty Officer, or PCVL) of your destination and contact information while away from your site. Notification to your community contact must be done prior to travel. Notification to PC Ghana may be done prior to departure or, in cases of difficult communication, en route, or, on arrival at your destination.

Although the handbook provides some guidance for reporting time away from site, the OIG determined that the out-of-site policy[3] is unclear and could be misinterpreted by

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[3] Also referred to as the "whereabouts" policy in the Peace Corps Manual.

Volunteers. For example, although the "Vacation, Informal Leave and Out of Site" section of the handbook has separate policies and sub-sections for "Informal Leave," "Vacation Leave," and "Peace Corps Work-Related Travel," the information is often overlapping or discussed in an un-related section. This led to confusion about the use requirements and notification policies for the different types of leave authorized by PC/Ghana. Also, the handbook does not define "out-of-site" – it does not clarify if day trips for either personal or professional activities require notification and does not state whether there are reasons for spending time away from the community that would not be counted as informal leave or vacation. Furthermore, the handbook does not instruct Volunteers how to communicate unplanned overnight stays and whether vacation or informal leave will need to be used in those instances.

This confusion with the post's policy could be contributing to Volunteers' failure to communicate time away from site. Only 41% of Volunteers interviewed stated that they always reported time away from site to PC/Ghana. Some Volunteers reported that they did not think that they need to report trips to nearby villages, regardless of the duration of the stay. Other Volunteers reported that they were unclear if they should report daytrips to their APCD. A few Volunteers mentioned that they encounter unplanned nights out of their site when travel makes it impossible for them to return home in the same day. In these instances, Volunteers reported that they did not think that they needed to contact post staff since they were unable to get advance approval.

Although the Volunteer handbook does not state that advance notification is required for overnight stays, some Volunteers and staff members referred to a 24-hour notification policy. This lack of clarity and failure to notify Peace Corps of absences from site could result in a safety and security problem if Peace Corps is not able to locate and communicate with Volunteers in the event of an emergency.

> **We recommend:**
>
> > **11. That the post clarify the out-of-site policy, update related documentation, and communicate this to staff and Volunteers.**

Some Volunteers' Site Locator Forms were missing medical and police contact information.

Indicators of a High Performance Post encourages posts to maintain emergency site locator forms and update them regularly. PC/Ghana uses Site Locator Forms (SLFs) that require Volunteers to provide this important information. As part of the evaluation, the OIG reviewed the SLFs for 28 of the Volunteers in the interview sample.[4] Most of the SLFs had accurate maps and directions to the Volunteer's home as well as multiple means of contacting the Volunteer, including at least one non-cellular telephone number.

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[4] SLFs were not provided for the two PCVLs.

However, 39% (11 of 28) of the SLFs reviewed by the evaluation team were missing information about the nearest medical facilities, and 46% (13 of 28) did not have contact information for local police. As a result, it is unclear whether PC/Ghana verified whether Volunteers have identified their local police department and are aware of and have access to medical facilities that have been approved by the PCMOs.

> **We recommend:**
>
> **12. That the country director require post staff to review the accuracy and completeness of the most critical sections of site locator forms.**

MANAGEMENT CONTROLS

Another key objective of the post evaluation is to assess the extent to which (1) the post's resources are effectively aligned with the post's mission and program and agency priorities and (2) the agency supports and oversees the post's mission and program. To address these questions, we assess a number of factors, including the post's planning and oversight of operations, staff management and training, relationships with headquarters offices, and performance reporting.

In reviewing staff performance appraisals and the post's relationship with headquarters and the U.S. Embassy in Ghana, the OIG found no significant areas of concern that would warrant action by the post. Although performance appraisals have not been consistently conducted in the past, senior staff is putting more emphasis on this, and most employees have received an evaluation within the past year. In addition, PC/Ghana staff stated that they are well-supported by Peace Corps headquarters, and the post has a good relationship and communicates regularly with the Embassy. Furthermore, most of the post's medical controls were in place, with the exception of assigning a Medical Supply Inventory Clerk and an Acceptance Point Clerk, which is discussed later in the section.

Use and oversight of PC/Ghana's regional sub-offices has improved.

PC/Ghana operates two regional sub-offices,[5] one in Kumasi and another in Tamale, to support Volunteers in the field. PC/Ghana's sub-offices are intended to be used as a resource center, office, meeting space, and sickbay for Volunteers. They are also residences for the Peace Corps Volunteer Leaders (PCVLs) and can provide temporary lodging for Volunteers with medical needs, in transit, or on official business. The sub-offices are managed by the PCVLs, with additional oversight provided by the country director and programming staff. PCMOs also provide permission to Volunteers who need to stay at the sub-offices for medical reasons.

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[5] Although PC/Ghana refers to these locations as "regional sub-offices" they are considered hostels by the agency and require annual re-approval by Peace Corps' Chief of Staff.

According to PCM section 218.6, Peace Corps has determined that hostels draw Volunteers away from their communities and can be a venue for excessive and dangerous behavior when poorly managed. The Peace Corps' policy on the use of hostels by Volunteers is intended to ensure that:

      (a) Volunteers are safe when away from their sites;
      (b) Hostels used by Volunteers are not venues for excessive, illegal, or potentially dangerous behavior;
      (c) Hostels are not overused by Volunteers or become magnets that unduly draw them from their sites and the local culture; and
      (d) Hostels are well-managed (e.g., secure, guarded, clean).

A 2007 OIG investigation determined that PC/Ghana's sub-offices were used excessively, Volunteers were not obtaining proper approval to use the sub-offices, and Volunteer activities at these locations violated the post's alcohol and drug use policies. In light of the investigation, the post changed its policies regarding sub-office use. Visitors must now sign in and state the purpose of their visit. Volunteers must also indicate whether they have received permission from Peace Corps staff members to use the sub-office. The PCVLs are responsible for sending the guard logs to the PC/Ghana office where APCDs and other staff can access them and analyze the frequency of Volunteer visits.

The OIG evaluation collected and analyzed sign-in sheets for both sub-offices covering the one-week period January 24 – January 30, 2009. Data from this analysis is included in the tables below:

Table 5: Summary of Nightly Sub-office Occupancy

Sub-office	Date						
	1/24 (Sat)	1/25 (Sun)	1/26 (Mon)	1/27 (Tues)	1/28 (Wed)	1/29 (Thurs)	1/30 (Fri)
Tamale	2	1	0	0	0	4	6
Kumasi	3	1	0	3	1	2	2

Table 6: Sub-office Use Analysis

	Number of non-Volunteer overnight guests	Number of overnight visitors in one week	Average duration of visit	Average number of people staying per night
Tamale	1	9	1.7 nights	1.9 people
Kumasi	1	9[6]	1.9 nights	1.7 people

Although the sub-regional office sign-in sheets indicate that some Volunteers stayed without receiving prior permission, Volunteer use of the sub-offices did not appear to be

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[6] One visitor, a non-Volunteer caretaker, was not included in the calculation since his/her length of stay was unknown.

excessive. APCDs stated that they frequently receive prior notification from Volunteers who want to stay in the sub-offices. No concerns were noted with the use of the sub-offices, and it appears they are currently being used properly by Volunteers in PC/Ghana.

PCVLs were not consistently participating in primary projects as required by Peace Corps.

PC/Ghana has two PCVLs: one is located in the Kumasi sub-office and the other is in the Tamale sub-office. According to the Kumasi and Tamale PCVL manuals, "The Volunteer Leader serves to enhance the effectiveness of support provided to Volunteers in the field. S/he walks a delicate balance between staff and Volunteers." Some of the PCVLs' tasks outlined in the PCVL manuals include visiting Volunteers and providing them support, technical assistance, and guidance; serving as a liaison among Volunteers and Peace Corps staff; aiding in site selection; managing a sub-office, including a resource library; and serving as an imprest fund sub-cashier.

PCM section 202.3.2 states:

> As a matter of law, a Volunteer Leader is first and foremost a Volunteer. Thus, except as specified in this manual section, all other Peace Corps policies and responsibilities applicable to Volunteers and Trainees also apply to Volunteer Leaders. Accordingly, Volunteer Leaders must, in addition to their special Volunteer Leader services, be involved in at least one substantive Volunteer program or activity with an assigned counterpart.

Despite PCM guidance, one PCVL stated that he/she does not have a Volunteer assignment or counterpart, and the other PCVL stated that he/she does not have a counterpart but is currently working on a primary project. While both the Kumasi and Tamale PCVL manuals state that "The Volunteer Leader should spend part of his/her time in project related activity," the Tamale PCVL manual provides conflicting information about the PCVL's priorities. This document states, "While the Tamale PCVL is often able to take on substantial primary and secondary projects outside of his or her sub-office specific Peace Corps duties – official Peace Corps business should always be his or her first priority."

The last OIG evaluation report for PC/Ghana was issued in March 2002 and cited a similar problem with the post's use of PCVLs. The report found that PCVLs did not have time to work on project activities due to their sub-office administrative duties and recommended "that the post reduce the administrative duties assigned to the Volunteer leaders and to allow them more time to work on project-related and Volunteer training activities."

We recommend:

> **13. That the post assign PCVLs to a primary project that includes a counterpart and/or supervisor and require the PCVLs to submit performance reports.**

Volunteers were not regularly submitting performance reports.

Volunteers in PC/Ghana are required to submit written quarterly reports, except for Education Volunteers who submit reports three times a year at the end of each school term. Programming staff compile the data from Volunteers' reports and send it to Peace Corps headquarters, where it goes through the project status review process and is reported annually to Congress. Two indicators that rely on input from Volunteers' performance reports and are presented to the Congress in the Peace Corps annual Performance and Accountability Report are: (1) individuals assisted by Volunteers and (2) service providers trained by Volunteers. Despite the post's requirement that all Volunteers submit performance reports, some are not submitting them in a timely manner.

The OIG reviewed the quarterly report submissions for the 30 Volunteers interviewed as part of this evaluation. Twenty-one Volunteers should have submitted a report for the fourth quarter of 2008.[7] Nine of these Volunteers (43%) had not submitted a report at the time this review was conducted. Several APCDs mentioned that it can be difficult to get Volunteers to submit their reports on time. One APCD commented, "Sometimes we need to coax them a little to get their quarterly reports. . . The biggest challenge is getting them to give timely, thoughtful submissions." Given the significance of this data, it is important for all Volunteers who are contributing to a primary project, including PCVLs, to submit accurate, timely reports. The OIG notes that PC/Ghana is in the process of implementing the Volunteer Reporting Tool to Volunteers, which may further improve the post's performance reporting.

We recommend:

> **14. That the post reinforce to Volunteers the importance of submitting accurate and timely performance data.**

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[7] Seven Volunteers were sworn-in in December 2008 and were not required to submit a report for Q4 2008. The two PCVLs are not required by PC/Ghana to submit a quarterly report.

Adding full-time grants management responsibilities to the APCD role is too burdensome for a single staff position in PC/Ghana.

PC/Ghana operates Small Project Assistance (SPA), Peace Corps Partnership Program (PCPP), and Volunteer Activities Support and Training (VAST) grant programs that Volunteers can apply to for primary or secondary project funding. Due to a staff vacancy in the training department, grants have been managed by one of the APCDs. Responsibilities for VAST grants are being transitioned to the PEPFAR Program Assistant, a new staff member who joined in February 2009. Senior management at the post stated that the SPA and PCPP grant management responsibilities will be transitioned to another staff member once the vacancy is filled and training staff roles and responsibilities have been redefined. In the meantime, the workload appears to be too burdensome for one staff member who is also responsible for managing over twenty Volunteers. This has resulted in less support for these Volunteers, particularly in the areas of communication and quarterly report feedback. Sample comments from affected Volunteers include:

> "He works so hard . . . and does all the grants. . . Sometimes I don't receive all the feedback but I understand why."

> "I've been told there's a lot of work piled up on him. SPA and PEPFAR. I feel like it's not his fault."

A few Volunteers stated that the APCD's workload has also resulted in slower grant review times. One Volunteer who applied for a grant commented, "[The] APCD has been busy. He has to look at proposals from all Volunteers. That slows things down a little bit."

We recommend:

15. That the post reassign grants management responsibilities to non-APCD staff member.

The post has not identified a Medical Supply Inventory Clerk and an Acceptance Point Clerk.

PCM section 734.3.4 states:

> The Medical Supply Inventory Control Clerk (MSIC Clerk) is designated by the Country Director. The MSIC Clerk maintains the Medical Inventory Control Log, which houses the inventory status of all medical supplies that are specially designated or controlled substances purchased, received, and stocked at post. The MSIC Clerk must be a person from outside the Medical Unit staff.

The Acceptance Point Clerk (APC) is responsible for receiving medical supplies at post and coordinating their initial inventory and transfer to the Medical Unit. The APC works with both the MSIC Clerk and the PCMO to ensure that medical supplies are delivered and inventoried. The APC must not be an individual assigned to the Medical Unit staff, and cannot serve as the MSIC Clerk. Further, the APC may not perform the quarterly inventory of medical supplies.

PC/Ghana maintains two medical inventories – one for controlled substances and another for all other medical supplies. According to the PCMOs, both inventories are updated as supplies are used and are reconciled once a month. However, both inventories were maintained and updated by the PCMOs and not someone outside the Medical Unit serving as MSIC Clerk. The PCMOs also indicated that an APC still needs to be appointed in order to comply with PCM section 734.3.4.

We recommend:

16. That the country director assign a Medical Supply Inventory Control Clerk and Acceptance Point Clerk in accordance with the Peace Corps policy and provide any training necessary for the staff in these roles.

Although region leadership supports an office move, the post has encountered obstacles that have prevented securing a new office facility.

PC/Ghana is currently operating in a facility that was built as a private residence. A fire marshal from the Department of State conducted a courtesy inspection of the facility in January 2009 and found that the facility "is bad" and "aged." Problems with the facility include electrical devices that place the office at risk of fire, an inadequate alarm system and firewall, and insufficient escape routes.

Peace Corps headquarters, the Embassy, and post staff acknowledge that PC/Ghana needs an improved facility and would like PC/Ghana to have a new office by the 50th anniversary celebration in 2011. The region has agreed to help the post secure a new office location. Like all Peace Corps office locations, a new facility requires inspection and approval by the Regional Security Officer and signed collocation and setback waivers from the Department of State.

In the past, the post has identified possible new office spaces but has encountered obstacles to obtaining the necessary approvals. According to post staff, other organizations seeking office space occupy vacant locations before PC/Ghana is able to complete its process. The process needs to move faster in order for the post to successfully secure a new facility.

We recommend:

17. That the region and post develop a strategy to obtain an improved facility and engage stakeholders needed for timely approval.

PRESIDENT'S EMERGENCY PLAN FOR AIDS RELIEF (PEPFAR)

The final objective of this post evaluation is to answer the question "to what extent is the post able to adequately administer the PEPFAR program, support Volunteers, and meet its PEPFAR objectives?" To answer this question, we evaluate:

- Whether the post is implementing its PEPFAR objectives as laid out in the annual implementation plan.
- Relationships between the post and coordinating partners.
- Whether Volunteers are fulfilling HIV/AIDS-related assignments and handling related challenges.

In reviewing the post's PEPFAR objectives and Volunteers' assignments and related challenges, the OIG found no significant areas of concern that would warrant action by the post.

Regional management anticipates that post's PEPFAR funding will increase and expects post to plan accordingly. The post has just hired a PEPFAR Coordinator, which will help to strengthen relationships between post and its coordinating partners—other U.S. government partners that share PEPFAR funds in country.

In interviews, USAID representatives stated that PC/Ghana's focus on anti-stigma programs and education and awareness activities are helping to stop the spread of HIV/AIDS to the general population, while other U.S. partners focus on Ghana's high-risk populations. One USAID representative responsible for PEPFAR implementation in country described Volunteers as an asset particularly at the community level; he described their unique position as a diverse group that contributes innovative ideas they have tested in the field—something the other U.S. government partners do not have the flexibility to do.

POST STAFFING

At the time of our field visit, PC/Ghana had 34 staff positions, one of which was vacant. The positions included three U.S. direct hire employees (USDH), six foreign service national (FSN), and 25 personal services contractors (PSC). The post also employs temporary staff/contractors to assist with PST. Given the time of our visit, these positions were not staffed. We interviewed 12 staff members.

PC/Ghana Positions

Position	Status	Interviewed
Country Director	USDH	X
Programming and Training Officer	USDH	X
Administrative Officer	USDH	X
Safety and Security Coordinator	PSC	X
PCMO (2)	PSC	X
Medical Secretary	PSC	
Executive Secretary	PSC	
IT Specialist	PSC	
APCD/Water/Sanitation and Health Education	FSN	X
APCD/Forestry/Environment	FSN	X
APCD/Small Enterprise Development	PSC[8]	X
APCD/Mathematics and Visual Art Education	FSN	X
APCD/Science and Computer Education	FSN	X
Training Manager (vacant)	PSC	
PEPFAR Program Assistant	PSC	
PST Director	PSC	X
Financial Assistant	FSN	
Administrative Assistant (2)	PSC	
Cashier	FSN	
General Services Officer	PSC	
Assistant GSO/Mail Clerk	PSC	
Motor Pool Supervisor	PSC	
General Services Assistant/North	PSC	
Program Secretary/Receptionist	PSC	
Janitor (2)	PSC	
Maintenance Personnel	PSC	
Driver (4)	PSC	
Driver/Mechanic	PSC	

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[8] Due to limitations on the number of FSNs a post can have, PC/Ghana is in the process of converting the APCD position to PSCs. Future APCDs will be hired as PSCs.

INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED

As part of this post evaluation, interviews were conducted with 30 Volunteers, 12 in-country staff members, and 23 representatives from Peace Corps headquarters in DC, the U.S. Embassy in Ghana, and key project partners.

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

Position	Organization
Regional Director	PC/Headquarters
Regional Chief Administrative Officer	PC/Headquarters
Regional Programming and Training Advisor	PC/Headquarters
Regional Chief of Operations	PC/Headquarters
Country Desk Officer	PC/Headquarters
Safety & Security Desk Officer	PC/Headquarters
AIDS Relief Coordinator	PC/Headquarters
HIV/AIDS Programming and Training Advisor	PC/Headquarters
SPA Program Coordinator	PC/Headquarters
Sub-Regional Programming and Training Coordinator	PC/Headquarters
Peace Corps Safety & Security Officer	PC/Headquarters
Chief, Field Assistance Division	PC/Headquarters
Education Specialist	PC/Headquarters
Small Enterprise Development Specialist	PC/Headquarters
Agriculture and Environment Specialist	PC/Headquarters
Health Specialist	PC/Headquarters
Language Training Specialist	PC/Headquarters
Fire Marshal	U.S. Department of State
PEPFAR Core Team Leader	Office of the U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator (OGAC)
Ambassador	U.S. Embassy in Ghana
Acting Regional Security Officer	U.S. Embassy in Ghana
Program Management Specialist	USAID in Ghana
Director General	Ghana Education Service
Deputy Executive Director/Operations	Ghana Tourist Board
Marketing Manager	Ghana Tourist Board

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

WE RECOMMEND:

1. That post staff physically observe housing to ensure it meets the post's minimum housing criteria before a Volunteer arrives at site.

2. That post staff include the purpose of collecting information on languages spoken in the community on the Site Survey Form.

3. That post staff update its site development process to include follow up in the community to determine which language the Trainee should learn during PST for the purposes of working on their primary assignment and for community integration.

4. That post staff better communicate the timeframe and purpose of the community needs assessment with community members during site development.

5. That post staff use multiple means of communication to obtain needs assessments from Volunteers in time for IST planning.

6. That post and programming leadership work with APCDs to clarify the post's expectations for Volunteer support.

7. That the country director determine the process for Volunteers to escalate support issues and communicate it to staff and Volunteers.

8. That the country director define the PTO's role in resolving Volunteer support problems and communicate expectations to staff and Volunteers.

9. That the post disseminate VAC meeting minutes, follow-up items, and issue resolution to all PC/Ghana Volunteers using an effective means of communication.

10. That the country director work with PCMOs to clarify the post's and Volunteers' expectations for Volunteer diagnosis and follow up.

11. That the post clarify the out-of-site policy, update related documentation, and communicate this to staff and Volunteers.

12. That the country director require post staff to review the accuracy and completeness of the most critical sections of site locator forms.

13. That the post assign PCVLs to a primary project that includes a counterpart and/or supervisor and require the PCVLs to submit performance reports.

14. That the post reinforce to Volunteers the importance of submitting accurate and timely performance data.

15. That the post reassign grants management responsibilities to non-APCD staff member.

16. That the country director assign a Medical Supply Inventory Control Clerk and Acceptance Point Clerk in accordance with the Peace Corps policy and provide any training necessary for the staff in these roles.

17. That the region and post develop a strategy to obtain an improved facility and engage stakeholders needed for timely approval.

MANAGEMENT'S RESPONSE TO
THE PRELIMINARY REPORT

Memorandum

DATE: July 10, 2009

TO: Kathy Buller, Inspector General

FROM: Lynn Foden, Acting Director, Africa Region

CC: Kathy Rulon, Acting Chief of Staff
                Michael Koffman, Country Director, Peace Corps/Ghana
                Pam Martin, AIDS Relief Coordinator, OAR
                Howard Anderson, Chief, Field Assistance Division, OPATS
                Jeffrey West, Acting Confidential Assistant
                Jennifer Brown, Country Desk Officer, Africa Region
                Evan Baker, Country Desk Officer, Africa Region
                Lori Carruthers, Executive Assistant, OIG

SUBJECT: Africa Region's Response to the OIG Preliminary Report on the
                Program Evaluation of Peace Corps/Ghana

The Africa Region thanks the Office of the Inspector General for the Preliminary Report
on the Program Evaluation of Peace Corps/Ghana. Post is appreciative of the feedback
presented in this evaluation.

Post's responses have been reviewed and integrated into this response. Region will
continue to work with post to ensure full implementation of the OIG recommendations.
The Region concurs with 17 of the 17 recommendations.

Attached please find our responses to the Preliminary Report on Peace Corps/Ghana.
Please let me know if you have any questions or comments on any of our responses.

Memorandum

DATE: July 10, 2009

TO: Kathy Buller, Inspector General

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Lori Carruthers, Executive Assistant, OIG

SUBJECT: Africa Region's Response to the OIG Preliminary Report on the
Program Evaluation of Peace Corps/Ghana

The Africa Region thanks the Office of the Inspector General for the Preliminary Report on the Program Evaluation of Peace Corps/Ghana. Post is appreciative of the feedback presented in this evaluation.

Post's responses have been reviewed and integrated into this response. Region will continue to work with post to ensure full implementation of the OIG recommendations. The Region concurs with 17 of the 17 recommendations.

Attached please find our responses to the Preliminary Report on Peace Corps/Ghana. Please let me know if you have any questions or comments on any of our responses.

Response to Preliminary Report
Program Evaluation of Peace Corps/Ghana
April 2009

Recommendation 1   That post staff physically observe housing to ensure it meets the post's minimum housing criteria before a Volunteer arrives at site.

Concur[1]

The current practice of Peace Corps/Ghana is that APCDs visit each Volunteer site at least twice, including looking at housing, before a Volunteer arrives at that site. The communities provide housing for the Volunteers, and APCDs use a housing checklist with host country counterparts in order to clearly explain the housing requirements.

While Peace Corps/Ghana staff already physically observe housing for Volunteers, there are several challenges. Some communities struggle to provide adequate Volunteer housing. Sometimes final work or repair on houses is not done until just before a Volunteer arrives, and the housing is not ready at the time of the final APCD visit to the site. As many of these sites are multi-day travel distance from the main Peace Corps office, it is impossible for APCDs to make additional visits to all of these communities just before the time that Trainees are to be sent to site.

In response to this recommendation, post expanded its APCD site and housing inspection protocol by integrating staff members and Volunteers into the process. Post provided each staff member and Volunteer with updated housing checklists and guidance within the checklist concerning how to assess Volunteer housing (See Attachment 1A: Housing Checklist; and Attachment 1B: Memorandum from CD to Ghana Staff and PCVs). Post then provided individual training to staff and Volunteers as they were identified to conduct follow-up housing inspections (See Attachment 1C: Memo regarding Volunteer Housing and Housing Inspection Training). Post then implemented a system where the Volunteer or staff "inspector" forwards the completed inspection sheet as a report to the responsible APCD.

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[1] Attachment 1A. Housing Checklist: Standard Accommodation For Peace Corps Volunteers
Attachment 1B. Memorandum from Country Director to Ghana staff and Volunteers clarifying minimum housing requirements for Volunteers
Attachment 1C. Memo to the File regarding Volunteer Housing and Housing Inspection Training

Beginning in May 2009, post implemented the expanded Volunteer housing inspection system. As a result, post expects to conduct more follow-up inspections on houses in those communities struggling to comply with Peace Corps minimum requirements.

Date of Completion: May 15, 2009

Recommendation 2   That post staff include the purpose of collecting information on languages spoken in the community on the Site Survey Form.

Concur[2]

Peace Corps/Ghana has a separate site survey/volunteer request form for each project area (Please see Attachments 2A-2D: Site Survey Forms). Each of these forms has been amended since the IG evaluation, to include the following question:

Which Ghanaian language(s) should we teach or should a Volunteer learn in order to work effectively in the community?

Date of completion: APCDs have been using the updated forms since May 4, 2009.

Recommendation 3   That post update its site development process to include follow up in the community to determine which language the Trainee should learn during PST for the purposes of working on their primary assignment and for community integration.

Concur[3]

Post's site development process currently includes the suggested community follow-up and is adequate to determine which language a Trainee should learn during PST. Post bases its decisions

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[2] Attachment 2A. Peace Corps Ghana Education Site Survey Form
Attachment 2B. Peace Corps/Ghana Health/Water and Sanitation Site Survey Form
Attachment 2C. Peace Corps Ghana Environment Sector Volunteer Placement Site Survey Form
Attachment 2D. Peace Corps Small Enterprise Development Project Request Form for a Business Advisor Volunteer

[3] Attachments 2A-2D. Site Survey Forms
Attachment 3A. Language Tutoring Memorandum
Attachment 3B Statement of Work for Language Coordinator
Attachment 3C-3I. VADS for ICT, Math, Science, Art, Environment, Wat/San, SED
Attachment 3J. Bridge to PST 2009

concerning which languages to teach individual Trainees upon input solicited and obtained from the hosting communities (See Attachments 2A-2D, Site Survey Forms). Many communities contain speakers of many different languages. Often, post must make a judgment call as to which language to teach in situations where multiple groups in one community speak different languages.

In addition to resolving this issue through the site development process, post has addressed Volunteer expectations concerning the ability to communicate with community members in settings where multiple languages are spoken by taking the following actions described below.

First, post publicized its existing policy of making language tutoring funds available to all Volunteers interested in improving language skills in any Ghanaian language of their choice. Currently, fewer than 5% of Volunteers take advantage of this program (See Attachment 3A: Language Tutoring Memorandum).

Secondly, post has requested that a full time language coordinator be added to its current staff structure to assist in all areas of Volunteer language training, language materials development and language instructor hiring and development. The Region will approve this request, pending adequate budget allocation (See Attachment 3B: Statement of Work for Language Coordinator).

Post has amended its Volunteer Assignment Descriptions (VADs) by adding language concerning some of the language challenges that Volunteers can expect to face during their two year service in Ghana and the availability of tutoring funds to address the issue (See Attachments 3C-3I: Sector VADS, section entitled Training For Your Job: Cross Culture and Language Training). Post also added language to clarify expectations around language training in the Bridge to PST document, which trainees receive prior to Staging (See Attachment 3J: Bridge to PST, section entitled Language Training).

Date of completion: The language tutoring policy has been clarified to current Volunteers in Ghana as of May 15, 2009. New Trainees received the updated Bridge to PST on May 21, 2009. Placement will begin sending out the new VADs in December 2009 when invitation season begins for the FY10 input.

Recommendation 4 That post staff better communicate the timeframe and purpose of the community needs assessment with community members during site development.

Concur[4]

The most commonly reported frustration by Volunteers is that community members mistakenly view them primarily as funding sources for community projects and become disappointed when Volunteers engage in building capacity and relationships as opposed to providing "stuff" immediately upon arrival. Africa Region and Peace Corps/Ghana both instruct our Volunteers to use their first three months at site to form relationships and conduct needs assessments. We also inform communities of this timeline during site development. In fact, Peace Corps/Ghana conducts counterpart/supervisor workshops as part of PST, in which they bring counterparts and supervisors for each Trainee to PST and address this issue specifically. Peace Corps/Ghana will continue to educate host communities about this issue during site development.

Peace Corps/Ghana invests significant time and effort in educating and training counterparts and supervisors about Peace Corps, its abilities and its limitations. We then expect the counterparts and supervisors to serve as Ambassadors, assisting in Volunteer community integration. Thus, in response to this recommendation, Peace Corps/Ghana updated the Counterpart Handbook to specifically address a Volunteer's first three months at site in a needs assessment role (See Attachment 4A: *Supervisor/ Counterpart Manual*, pp. 9 and 28). Additionally, post has re-designed the Counterpart Workshop at PST to specifically address a Volunteer's first three months at site and conducting needs assessments (See Attachment 4B: Counterpart Workshop Schedule).

Date of Completion: May 15, 2009

Recommendation 5 That post use multiple means of communication to obtain needs assessments from Volunteers in time for IST planning.

Concur[5]

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[4] Attachment 4A. *Supervisor/Counterpart Manual*
Attachment 4B. Counterpart Workshop Schedule

[5] Attachment 5A. SMS Memorandum
Attachment 5B. Peace Corps Ghana July 2009 Newsletter

Post is now using and will continue to use the following multiple/redundant means of communication to obtain needs assessments from Volunteers for IST planning: e-mail, newsletter and text messaging. Additionally, post has contracted with an SMS provider to increase Volunteer support in this area (See Attachment 5, SMS Memorandum).

Post's next IST will take place in September 2009. In anticipation of this IST (and for other efficiency purposes) post has contracted with an SMS provider to give them an additional method of communication with Volunteers. Post staff will send an SMS reminder message to all involved Volunteers in July and also included a reminder in the July newsletter (See Attachment 5B: July 2009 newsletter, pages 24-26).

Date of completion: July 2009 and ongoing. Post included the 2009 PEPFAR IST Needs Assessment in the July 2009 newsletter and will begin sending SMS and e-mail reminders for the IST on an ongoing basis.

Recommendation 6   That post and programming leadership work with APCDs to clarify the post's expectations for Volunteer support.

Concur[6]

The support issues underlying this recommendation stem from the ever present challenges of communication between APCDs and Volunteers. In January 2009, post conducted a multi-day staff training targeting Volunteer Support. Additionally, in March 2009, post conducted a two day All Staff workshop targeting communication with Volunteers as it relates to Volunteer support. Moreover, post leadership continues to work with APCDs informally on a daily basis on issues of Volunteer support (See Attachments 6A-6M for specific trainings given to APCDs to clarify Post expectations in the areas of Volunteer Support during January and March workshops).

Date of Completion: March 31, 2009.

Recommendation 7   That the country director determine the process for Volunteers to escalate support issues and communicate it to staff and Volunteers.

[6] Attachments 6A-6M. Training documents from APCD volunteer support workshops.

Concur[7]

Post has distributed the attached Memorandum to all Volunteers and Staff in May 2009 regarding Volunteer support options (Attachment 7A). This memo was also published in the June 2009 Newsletter (Attachment 7B, pages 4-6) and in the revised *Peace Corps Ghana Volunteer Handbook* (Attachment 7C, pages 10-11 and 17-19). Post will also include the language in the Staff Handbook when it is revised in Q1 2010.

Date of Completion: May 18, 2009 and ongoing.

Recommendation 8 That the country director define the PTO's role in resolving Volunteer support problems and communicate expectations to staff and Volunteers.

Concur[8]

Post has distributed the attached Memorandum to all Volunteers and staff, which clarifies how Volunteers can use the PTO in resolving support problems (see Attachment 8A). This policy was also published in the updated *Peace Corps Ghana Volunteer Handbook* (see Attachment 8B, pages 17-19).

Date of Completion: May 18, 2009

Recommendation 9 That the post disseminate VAC meeting minutes, follow-up items, and issue resolution to all PC/Ghana Volunteers using an effective means of communication.

Concur[9]

Post began disseminating VAC meeting minutes, follow-up items and issue resolution to each Volunteer via the monthly newsletter in February 2009 and will continue to do so. The newsletter is sent

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[7] Attachment 7A. Memorandum to PCVs about support options.
Attachment 7B. June 2009 newsletter, including above memorandum.
Attachment 7C. *Peace Corps Ghana Volunteer Handbook, July 2009* (page 17-19)

[8] Attachment 8A. Memorandum to PCVs about support options.
Attachment 8B. *Peace Corps Ghana Volunteer Handbook, July 2009* (page 17-19)

[9] Attachment 9A. PC/Ghana newsletter, February 2009 (pages 22-26)
Attachment 9B. PC/Ghana newsletter, April 2009 (pages 4-9)

out electronically and via hard copy on or about the first of each month (See Attachments 9A and 9B, Peace Corps Ghana newsletters from February 2009 and April 2009, containing quarterly VAC meeting notes from the December 2008 and March 2009 meetings, respectively).

Date of Completion: February 2009 and on-going

Recommendation 10 That the country director work with PCMOs to clarify the post's and Volunteers' expectations for Volunteer diagnosis and follow-up.

Concur[10]

Post has updated its training materials in order to clarify post and Volunteer expectations for Volunteer diagnosis and follow-up. Post is conducting PST trainings using the updated attachments to this recommendation. Additionally, PCMOs will conduct follow-on sessions at each IST, using these updated materials (See Attachments 10A: Policies and Procedures for PST 2009, 10B: Medical Handbook May 2009, 10C: PCV Rights and Responsibilities, and 10D: OMS Rights and Responsibilities). In addition, many medical procedures are addressed in the *Peace Corps Ghana Volunteer Handbook* (See Attachment 10E, pages 80-88).

Date of Completion: May 2009 and on-going

Recommendation 11 That the post clarify the out-of-site policy, update related documentation, and communicate this to staff and Volunteers.

Concur[11]

Post has updated the out-of-site policy and shared it with Volunteers and staff as of July 2009 (See Attachment 11A: *Ghana Revised Time Away From Community Policy).*

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[10] Attachment 10A. Policies and Procedures PST 2009
Attachment 10B. Medical Handbook, May 2009
Attachment 10C. PCV Rights and Responsibilities
Attachment 10D. OMS Rights and Responsibilities
Attachment 10E. *Peace Corps Ghana Volunteer Handbook, June 2009*

[11] Attachment 11A. *Ghana Revised Time Away From Community Policy.*
Attachment 11B: *Peace Corps Ghana Volunteer Handbook, June 2009*

The new policy is printed in the updated PCV handbook which was distributed to PCVs on July 6, 2009 (See Attachment 11B: *Peace Corps Ghana Volunteer Handbook,* pages 19-29).

Date of completion: July 6, 2009

Recommendation 12 That the country director require post staff to review the accuracy and completeness of the most critical sections of site locator forms.

Concur[12]

The country director has issued a Site Locator Form Policy memo clarifying the APCD and Volunteer roles and deadlines in completing site locator forms. The Site Locator Form Policy memo was distributed to Volunteers on July 1, 2009 (See Attachment 12A: Site Locator Memo).

The country director has also implemented a "quarterly stand down" policy in order to update and ensure the accuracy of safety and security-related information not only on site locator forms, but in VIDA as well. The first four hour stand down took place on May 4th with excellent results. See sample Updated Site Locator Form (Attachment 12B) and May 4, 2009 Senior Staff Meeting Minutes (Attachment 12C) regarding VIDA stand down.

Date of Completion: July 1, 2009 and on-going

Recommendation 13 That the post assign PCVLs to a primary project that includes a counterpart and/or supervisor and require the PCVLs to submit performance reports.

Concur[13]

Post currently has two PCVLs, and complete job descriptions have been developed for them. In addition, the APCDs supporting those PCVLs will require them to submit performance/quarterly reports (Please see attachments 13A: Job Description for PCVL in Kumasi; and 13B: Job Description for PCVL in Tamale).

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[12] Attachment 12A. Site Locator Memo.
Attachment 12B. Sample of Updated Site Locator Form
Attachment 12C. Senior Staff Meeting Notes from May 4, 2009

[13] Attachment 13A. Job Description for PCVL in Kumasi.
Attachment 13B. Job Description for PCVL in Tamale.

Date of Completion: June 29, 2009

Recommendation 14 That the post reinforce to Volunteers the importance of submitting accurate and timely performance data.

Concur[14]

The country director has facilitated a session at every IST since his arrival in November, 2008. A major focus of these presentations is communication between staff and Volunteers and the importance of submitting accurate and timely performance data. The need for Volunteer submission of accurate and timely performance data and receipt of timely APCD feedback has been and will continue to be a highlight of these sessions.

Additionally, SRPTC Carolina Cardona did multiple sessions with PCVs on the new Volunteer Reporting Tool (VRT) during a TDE workshop in Ghana which took place January 26-30, 2009. The VRT/VRF training outlines from that workshop are attached (Attachments 14A-14E). Post has been rolling out the new Volunteer Reporting Tool (VRT) at ISTs and has engaged Volunteers in designing the report. With the exception of the Volunteers who will be COSing within the next three to four months, all Volunteers are now using the new reporting format.

Date of Completion: June 1, 2009

Recommendation 15 That the post reassign grants management responsibilities to non-APCD staff member.

Concur[15]

In February, post hired Daniel Omane as an assistant program manager to administer the PEPFAR program and its significant grants component. Mr. Omane now administers all PEPFAR, VAST and Mini-VAST grants from the Volunteer proposal stage to the final reporting phase. His hiring has freed up APCDs from

[14] Attachment 14A. Volunteer Training Session for VRF
Attachment 14B. Volunteer Instructions on VRF
Attachment 14C. Ghana MRE
Attachment 14D. Ghana MRE WebEx
Attachment 14E. Ghana SRPTC Plan January 2009

[15] Attachment 15A. Statement of Work, PEPFAR PA
Attachment 15B. Final Offer Letter for Daniel Omane

significant grants management activities. See attached offer letter and statement of work, with relevant grants management duties highlighted (Attachments 15A and 15B).

In addition to hiring Mr. Omane, post will request additional funds for a "small grants administrator" position during the Ops process. The Region supports this request, pending adequate budget allocation.

Recommendation 16 That the country director assign a Medical Supply Inventory Control Clerk and Acceptance Point Clerk in accordance with the Peace Corps policy and provide any training necessary for the staff in these roles.

Concur[16]

The country director has assigned a Medical Supply Inventory Clerk and Acceptance Point Clerk in accordance with Peace Corps policy and has provided appropriate training (See Attachments 16A and 16B).

Date of Completion: June 2, 2009

Recommendation 17 That the region and post develop a strategy to obtain an improved facility and engage stakeholders needed for timely approval.

Concur[17]

The Region and Post have established a strategy and timeline for a new office. Post will:
- identify an improved facility by December 31, 2009
- engage and finalize negotiations of the move during the first half of calendar year 2010
- complete the move to the new property by December 31, 2010
- be fully operational by March 2011

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[16] Attachment 16A. Memo of Assignment of Medical Supply Inventory Clerk and Acceptance Clerk
Attachment 16B. Inventory of Medical Supplies

[17] Attachment 17A. 50th Anniversary Office Move Memo.
Attachment 17B. UFR for Office Move (submitted during IPBS 2009)
Attachment 17C. Budget for Ghana Office Move (submitted during IPBS 2009)
Attachment 17D. Ghana UFR Contextual Memorandum and Rationale for Office Move

The country director has had multiple preliminary discussions with the U.S. Ambassador in Ghana regarding this office move. He has also met with the RSO regarding co-location issues. Post is actively engaged in searching for properties and is currently negotiating with the Government of Ghana for financial or in-kind support. Region is supportive of this request. Once property is identified, post will then obtain co-location and other waivers (as necessary) from the RSO.

Post plans to occupy its improved facility prior to the Peace Corps 50th Anniversary Celebration in 2011. This office move is a high priority for both post and the Region (See Attachment 17A: 50th Anniversary Office Move Memo; Attachments 17B-C: UFR and Budget for Office Move; and Attachment 17D: UFR Contextual Memorandum and Rationale for Office Move).

Expected Date of Completion: March 2011 (prior to the 50th Anniversary of Peace Corps Ghana).

OIG COMMENTS

Regional management concurred with all 17 recommendations and we have closed all recommendations.

In their response, management described actions they are taking or intend to take to address the issues that prompted each of our recommendations. We wish to note that in closing recommendations, we are not certifying that the region or post has taken these actions nor that we have reviewed their effect. Certifying compliance and verifying effectiveness are management's responsibilities. However, when warranted, we may conduct a follow-up review to confirm that action has been taken and to evaluate the impact.

APPENDIX C

PROGRAM EVALUATION COMPLETION
AND OIG CONTACT

OIG CONTACT

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

STAFF ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This program evaluation was conducted under the direction of Shelley Elbert, Assistant Inspector General for Evaluations and by Evaluators Heather Robinson and April Thompson.

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