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ENCOUNTERING PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS IN OVERSEAS MISSIONS

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The Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences' (USU's) Center for Global Health Engagement (CGHE) is pleased to share the tenth issue of the Department of Defense Global Health Engagement (DoD GHE) Snapshot. The DoD GHE Snapshot is intended to create self-publishing opportunities for GHE professionals to share knowledge and experiences and learn from one another in real time. We hope you enjoy and please refer to our social media and website for real time updates.

ENCOUNTERING PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS IN OVERSEAS MISSIONS



In the realm of international aid and development, the paths of Peace Corps Volunteers (PCVs) and military health professionals may seem disparate at first glance. Yet, upon closer examination, the intersections between the two reveal a profound synergy in their shared commitment to service and global engagement.

The Peace Corps is an independent agency of the United States (U.S.) government that sends skilled volunteers to promote world peace and friendship through three main goals:

- 1 Helping countries interested in meeting their need for trained people*
- 2 Helping promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of the peoples served*
- 3 Helping promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans*

PCVs spend two to three months in training centers when they first arrive in their host country. They learn a local language, culture, and background for the sector they've been assigned. The main sectors are agriculture, community economic development, education, environment, health, and youth development. A mix of host country nationals and Peace Corps staff members lead trainings to ensure volunteers are culturally competent and able to navigate their work and living environments independently.

WHAT SHOULD A DOD GLOBAL HEALTH ENGAGEMENT PRACTITIONER KNOW ABOUT PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS?

THEY ARE YOUR FUTURE COLLEAGUES!

- Following their Peace Corps service, many PCVs continue working in global health, education, and development, and quite a few join the U.S. Military. A great example is my predecessor in Senegal, who is currently an Air Force surgeon in San Antonio TX, reflecting a shared trajectory between us. In short, the Peace Corps serves as a launch pad for individuals who aspire to contribute to international aid and development work.

01

THEY ARE VOLUNTEERS

- The U.S. government provides comprehensive support for PCVs, covering health, safety, and travel expenses associated with their service. Additionally, volunteers receive a modest monthly stipend intended to align with the standard of living in their host communities. While joining the Peace Corps entails minimal financial burden, volunteers typically adopt a frugal lifestyle during their service tenure.

02

THEY KNOW THE LANGUAGE, THE CULTURE, AND THE CUSTOMS. TRUST THEIR JUDGMENT!

- PCVs spend 27 months in their host country living with a local family. They quickly learn the language, customs, and best practices. They can help ease communications, navigate local transportation, and avoid any rude or culturally insensitive errors.

03





THEIR IMMUNE SYSTEMS ARE BETTER THAN YOURS

04

- During a pilot program in Senegal, college students had the opportunity to spend a week with PCVs in their respective villages. In my case, the college student I was paired with was a former Marine. Despite sharing similar dietary habits and hygiene practices, he had an unfortunate experience during the bus ride into my village. As we approached a security checkpoint, I asked if the student assigned to me could use their latrine. When I explained to the members of the Gendarm¹e that the student had been a Marine, they enthusiastically welcomed him and helped him get cleaned up, even providing him with a pair of camo pants for added comfort during his village experience. This incident epitomized the hospitality of the Senegalese people and showcased inter-military camaraderie.

THEY EAT WHAT THEIR COMMUNITY EATS.

05

- This is my plug to feed your local PCV! While local cuisine is usually both delicious and nutritious, it can also be subject to seasonal availability and repetition. If you buy PCVs a meal, you will have earned their goodwill and affection for all eternity.

CONCLUSION

Peace Corps Volunteers are some of the United States' best ambassadors. If you're fortunate enough to cross paths with them, try to spend some time and learn more about the country you're in from their perspective. You might be fortunate enough to have some experiences off the beaten path.



For questions or additional information,
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REFERENCES

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