

THE PEACE CORPS WELCOMES YOU TO

MALI



A PEACE CORPS PUBLICATION
FOR NEW VOLUNTEERS



October 2011



A WELCOME LETTER

Congratulations on your invitation to join the Peace Corps! The staff of Peace Corps/Mali and I are pleased to welcome you.

For the past several months, the programming and training team has been working hard preparing for your training needs. Homestay families are being organized, language trainers are developing language sessions, cross-cultural trainers are preparing your cultural orientation, and villages are being organized. This will assure that you have a culturally realistic training and opportunities for hands-on learning to help you qualify to officially swear in as Peace Corps Volunteers and assume all the responsibilities that come with the job. The team will provide you with all the necessary support to make your stay in Mali productive and safe.

I have no doubt that your experience as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Mali will exceed your expectations. I have lived and worked throughout Africa for more than a decade and find Mali to be a wonderful place with wonderful people. The hospitality and friendliness of Malians is unmatched in Africa. I am also continually amazed by the number of Peace Corps Mali Volunteers who stay on or come back in other capacities because they fall in love with the country and want to continue to make a difference in people's lives here. I suspect many of you will also be as enchanted. Serving as a Peace Corps Volunteer still remains one of the finest ways to contribute to Mali's development process, as well as your own. Likewise, working as a Volunteer here will also lend itself to being a part of cross-cultural sharing that is so important and needed in our world today.

As you embark on the journey of a lifetime, serving as a Volunteer in Mali, I want to take this opportunity to clarify what is expected of a Peace Corps Mali Volunteer so you

can contribute most effectively to Peace Corps's three goals. Consider this a guide for you to reflect on as you prepare for your journey, engage in training activities, and conduct your day-to-day work as a Volunteer.

Regardless of your assignment, there is a core set of 10 expectations for all Peace Corps Volunteers that you will find in the following section. These are derived from the Peace Corps' mission and goals and time-tested principles of development. These expectations affirm the concept that while technical skills are essential for making a contribution, they are not the only thing, nor are they enough.

It is really important that you read, understand, and internalize these expectations because they will guide you through a successful Peace Corps service. We will also ask that you sign to acknowledge acceptance of these expectations once you arrive in-country.

The staff and I promise you two years full of challenge that you will not forget. We can hardly wait for your arrival. Have a safe journey to Mali. See you at the airport, and once again, *Aw Bissmilla!*

Michael J. Simsik, Ed.D.
Country Director, Peace Corps/Mali
RPCV/Benin, 1986-1989

NOTES

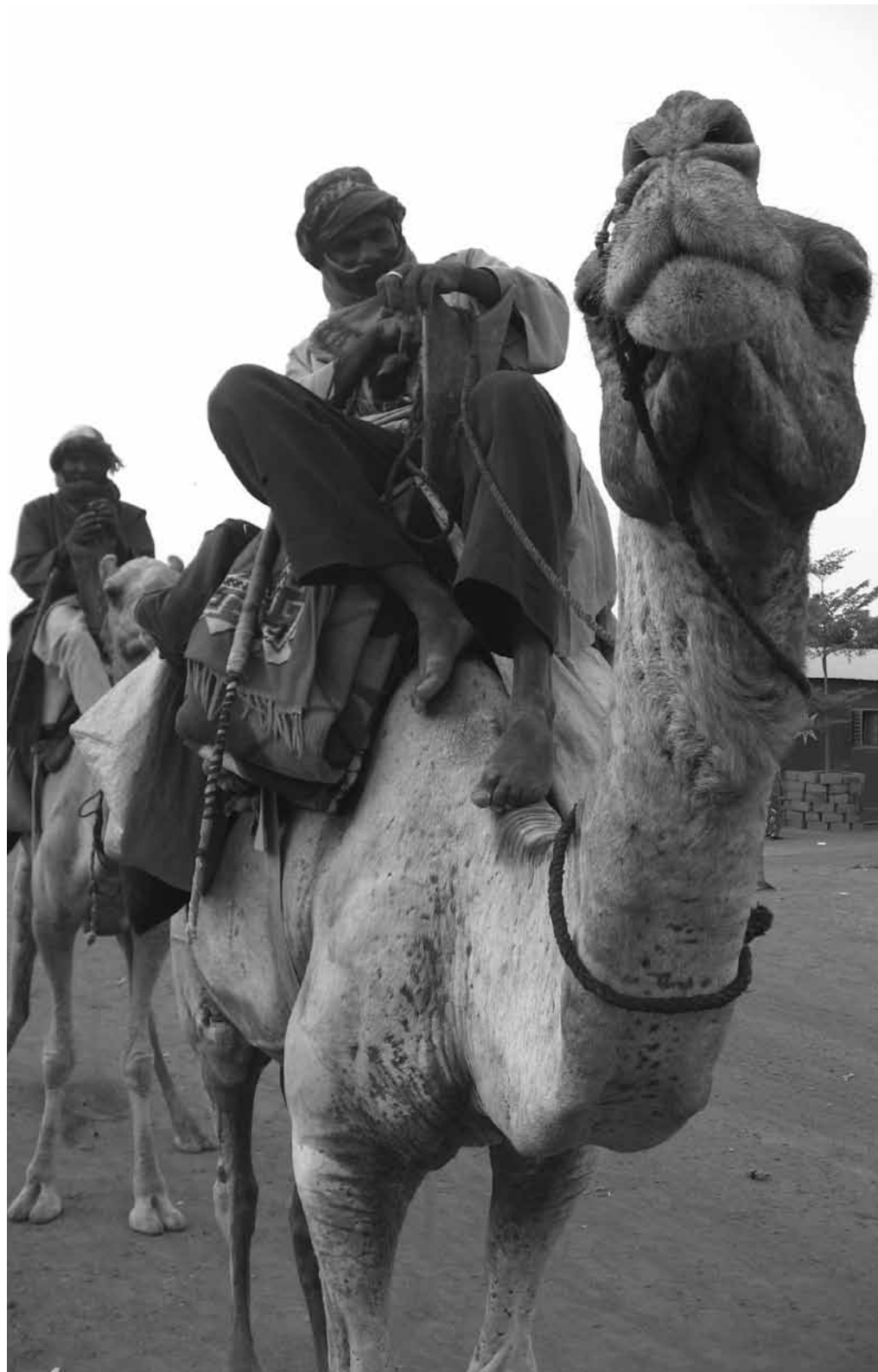


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CORE EXPECTATIONS FOR PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS

In working toward fulfilling the Peace Corps Mission of promoting world peace and friendship, as a trainee and Volunteer, you are expected to:

1. Prepare your personal and professional life to make a commitment to serve abroad for a full term of 27 months
2. Commit to improving the quality of life of the people with whom you live and work; and, in doing so, share your skills, adapt them, and learn new skills as needed
3. Serve where the Peace Corps asks you to go, under conditions of hardship, if necessary, and with the flexibility needed for effective service
4. Recognize that your successful and sustainable development work is based on the local trust and confidence you build by living in, and respectfully integrating yourself into, your host community and culture
5. Recognize that you are responsible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for your personal conduct and professional performance
6. Engage with host country partners in a spirit of cooperation, mutual learning, and respect
7. Work within the rules and regulations of the Peace Corps and the local and national laws of the country where you serve
8. Exercise judgment and personal responsibility to protect your health, safety, and well-being and that of others

9. Recognize that you will be perceived, in your host country and community, as a representative of the people, cultures, values, and traditions of the United States of America
10. Represent responsively the people, cultures, values, and traditions of your host country and community to people in the United States both during and following your service

NOTES



PEACE CORPS/MALI HISTORY AND PROGRAMS



History of the Peace Corps in Mali

In August 1969, Mali made a formal request for Peace Corps' assistance. That same year, a Peace Corps representative arrived in Bamako, the capital of Mali, to assist the government in planning Volunteers' activities, primarily in the area of agricultural development. The first Volunteers arrived in April 1971 to help allay hardships caused by a severe drought. Twenty-five Volunteers developed projects in poultry raising, vegetable production, water resources management, and agricultural extension. Since that time, nearly 3,000 Volunteers have served in roughly 1,000 communities throughout the country.

History and Future of Peace Corps Programming in Mali

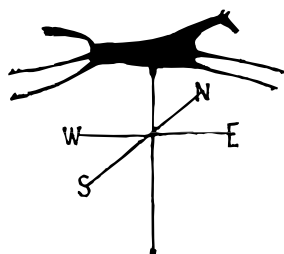
Volunteers currently serve in five of Mali's eight administrative regions, as well as in the district of Bamako. Volunteers work in five technical sectors: education, environment, health, small enterprise development, and water and sanitation management. Peace Corps' current programming aims to achieve the government of Mali's priority goal of food security while eliminating poverty and responding to other development needs.

Currently, about 140 Volunteers are addressing the priority development needs of Mali as identified by Malians themselves: food security; access to clean drinking water; sound natural resource stewardship and improved agricultural production; basic education and literacy; income generation; and preventive health care.

All Volunteers in Mali also work on secondary projects that address any one of four agencywide initiatives: gender and development, HIV/AIDS prevention, ICT, and youth development.



COUNTRY OVERVIEW: MALI AT A GLANCE



History

Malians take great pride in their ancestry. Mali is the heir to the succession of ancient African empires—Ghana, Mande (Malinke) and Songhai—that occupied the West African savannah. These empires controlled Saharan trade and were in touch with Mediterranean and Middle Eastern centers of civilization.

The Ghana empire, dominated by the Soninke or Sarakole people, was centered in the area along the modern-day Mali-Mauritania border. It was a powerful trading state from 700 to 1075 A.D.

In 1235, the Malinke people of the small state of Kangaba became involved in a struggle for independence. Their leader, a young man named Sundiata Keita, fielded an impressive army to meet the intruding Tekrur forces. The decisive battle was fought on a plain just north of present-day Bamako, and Sundiata emerged victorious. Building on this success, Sundiata established the Mali Empire, one of the great empires of that era. After his death, his successors continued the expansion of the empire in both wealth and territory.

The zenith of Mali's power and prestige occurred during the reign of Mansa Kankan Musa from 1307 to 1332. Covering more than 3 million square kilometers, the empire centered around the great bend of the Niger River and dominated the profitable trade between North and sub-Saharan Africa.

The rulers of Mali and their followers were converts to Islam, and Mansa Musa became one of the legendary leaders of

that faith. Timbuktu, the empire's capital, became a center of Muslim scholarship, with a university containing libraries unequaled anywhere in Africa or Europe at that time. The Mali Empire began a slow decline after Mansa Musa's reign but remained powerful into the middle of the 16th century.

The Songhai Empire, with its capital in Gao, predominated throughout the 16th century. Its great builders, Sunni Ali and Askia Mohamed, were equal in historical importance to Sundiata and Mansa Musa. At its peak, under Askia Mohamed, the Songhai Empire encompassed the Hausa States as far as Kano (in modern-day Nigeria) and northern Cameroon. Timbuktu remained a center of commerce and Islamic faith throughout the period. The Songhai Empire was destroyed in 1591 by a Moroccan invasion directed by Djoudder.

French intrusions into present-day Mali began in about 1854. It took approximately 50 years of battles and broken treaties for the French to finally subjugate the Malian people. The campaign ended with the capture of the Malinke leader Samory in 1898. Colonialism broke up traditional African patterns, replacing egalitarian relationships with those of dependence on European powers. It also set in motion some negative forces, such as one-crop economics, and established unrealistic political boundaries that have created significant challenges for today's independent African governments.

Following Mali's independence from France in 1960, the new government, under the leadership of Modibo Keita, moved quickly to place Malians in charge of all public institutions.

In November 1968, a military coup put Lieutenant Moussa Traoré in power, a position he held until 1991. At that point, a democratic revolution led to the creation of a new Constitution, and the first democratically-elected president (Alpha Oumar Konaré), in 1992 and again in 1997.

Government

Since the democratic revolution of 1991, the Malian government has become a model of democracy and peace in an otherwise troubled area of West Africa. The current president, Amadou Toumani Touré, was elected in 2002 and re-elected in April 2007.

The government of Mali has struggled to address many problems, most notably the prolonged Tuareg rebellion. Despite a 1992 peace treaty, clashes continued in the northern provinces of Timbuktu and Gao. Since 1995, however, there has been a marked decrease in Tuareg-related violence, thanks in part to former Prime Minister Ibrahim Boubacar Keita's efforts to establish a lasting peace. The 1994 devaluation of the Malian currency, the CFA franc, coincided with a series of droughts, floods, and student strikes to lower the standard of living of many Malians, putting pressure on the government to address the country's development needs.

Economy

Mali is among the poorest countries in the world, and is heavily dependent on foreign aid. Roughly 75 percent of the population is earning less than \$1 per day. Nearly 80 percent of the labor force is engaged in subsistence agriculture, including farming and fishing, mostly along the Niger River Delta. Industrial activities include gold extraction, cash crop production (cotton and rice), and processing of farm commodities. The economy is expected to grow 5 percent per year for the next several years. In 2010 the per capita gross domestic product stood at \$380. The composition of GDP by sector is 36 percent agriculture, 22 percent industry, and 33 percent services.

People and Culture

There are more than 20 major ethnic groups in Mali, each with a distinct language, geographic region, and social infrastructure. Approximately 50 percent of the population belongs to the Mandé group, which include the Bambara, Malinké, and Sarakolé. Other groups include the Peul (17 percent), Voltaic (12 percent), Songhai (6 percent), and Tuareg and Moor (10 percent). Ninety percent of the population is Muslim, with about 9 percent following traditional African beliefs and 1 percent practicing Christianity. Though the country's official language is French, the most widely spoken languages belong to the Mande group, with 60 percent of the population speaking Bambara. Other languages, such as Fulani and Songhai, are also widely spoken in certain geographical areas.

Joking Cousins

Mali is rich in social capital, with great importance placed on social relationships and kinship. Soon after you arrive in Mali, you will be exposed to the national kinship system of “joking cousins,” a social tradition between families and groups that eases tensions and facilitates peaceful conflict resolution while giving all a good laugh!

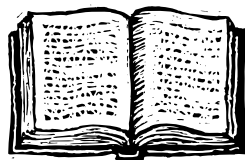
Environment

Mali covers an area greater than New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas combined. It is landlocked, bounded by Algeria and Mauritania to the north, Senegal to the west, Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, and Burkina Faso to the south, and Niger to the east. The country is mostly flat, except in the south where the Manding Mountains rise; and in the east, featuring the

Bandiagara plateau and the Hombori Mountains. Central Mali consists of flood plains of the Niger Delta, while the northern part of the country lies within the Sahara Desert. Mali has two major rivers, the Niger and the Senegal.



RESOURCES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION



Following is a list of websites for additional information about the Peace Corps and Mali 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.

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 experience, 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 Mali

www.countrywatch.com/

On this site, you can learn anything from what time it is in the capital of Mali to how to convert from the dollar to the Mali currency. Just click on Mali and go from there.

www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations

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

www.state.gov

The State Department's website issues background notes periodically about countries around the world. Find Mali and learn more about its social and political history. You can also go to the site's international travel section to check on conditions that may affect your safety.

www.psr.keele.ac.uk/official.htm

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

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

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

www.worldinformation.com

This site provides an additional source of current and historical information about countries around the world.

Connect With Returned Volunteers and Other Invitees**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, comprised of former Volunteers who served in those countries. There are also regional groups that frequently get together for social events and local volunteer activities. Or go straight to the Friends of Mali site: www.friendsofmali.org

www.PeaceCorpsWorldwide.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.

International Development Sites About Mali

<http://www.eldis.org/go/country-profiles&country=1134>

<http://www.fao.org/countryprofiles/index.asp?lang=en&ISO3=MLI>

http://www.measuredhs.com/pubs/Search/search_results.cfm?newSrch=1&srchTp=advanced&Country=Mali

<http://www.mcc.gov/mcc/countries/mali/index.shtml>

http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/country_fact_sheets/cty_fs_MLI.html

Recommended Books

Books About the History of the Peace Corps

1. Hoffman, Elizabeth Cobbs. *All You Need is Love: The Peace Corps and the Spirit of the 1960s*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2000.
2. Rice, Gerald T. *The Bold Experiment: JFK's Peace Corps*. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985.
3. Stossel, Scott. Sarge: *The Life and Times of Sargent Shriver*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2004.
4. Meisler, Stanley. *When the World Calls: The Inside Story of the Peace Corps and its First 50 Years*. Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 2011.

Books on the Volunteer Experience

1. Dirlam, Sharon. *Beyond Siberia: Two Years in a Forgotten Place*. Santa Barbara, Calif.: McSeas Books, 2004.
2. Casebolt, Marjorie DeMoss. *Margarita: A Guatemalan Peace Corps Experience*. Gig Harbor, Wash.: Red Apple Publishing, 2000.
3. Erdman, Sarah. *Nine Hills to Nambonkaha: Two Years in the Heart of an African Village*. New York, N.Y.: Picador, 2003.
4. Hessler, Peter. *River Town: Two Years on the Yangtze*. New York, N.Y.: Perennial, 2001.
5. Kennedy, Geraldine ed. *From the Center of the Earth: Stories out of the Peace Corps*. Santa Monica, Calif.: Clover Park Press, 1991.
6. Thompsen, Moritz. *Living Poor: A Peace Corps Chronicle*. Seattle, Wash.: University of Washington Press, 1997 (reprint).

NOTES



LIVING CONDITIONS AND VOLUNTEER LIFESTYLE



Communications

You should be prepared for a significant reduction in the frequency and reliability of communications with friends and family. It is a good idea to prepare your family and friends for the reality of lengthy delays between letters, the lack of regular access to a telephone, and uncertain access to email.

Mail

The postal system in Mali is relatively reliable by African standards. Few Volunteers report problems with receiving letters and packages sent from the United States by airmail, but the mail can take three to four weeks to arrive. Volunteers recommend visiting your local post office for advice on international flat rate shipments. Surface mail is slightly less reliable, significantly less expensive, and takes much longer—six months to a year or more. Mail within the country takes a few days to two weeks. Volunteers can have important documents sent from the U.S. via DHL. Be aware that all packages will be subject to import fees and may be searched.

You can choose to receive mail at the Peace Corps office or at your site. Most Volunteers share a local post office box in their regional capital once they have moved to their sites. During pre-service training, mail should be sent to you at the Peace Corps office. Mail will be forwarded to the training site once a week.

Your address at the Peace Corps office will be:

“Your Name,” PCT

Corps de la Paix

B.P. 85

Bamako, Mali

Telephones

Telephone service in Mali, like the postal system, is relatively reliable. However, Volunteers do not have fixed telephones in their homes, whether they live in small villages or large towns. An expanding cellphone network covers most cities and large towns, and some Volunteers have access to a phone at their workplace. However, it is not appropriate to make long-distance calls from these phones. Most towns have commercial phone centers that offer phone and fax services, but outgoing calls can be expensive. Many Volunteers arrange times to receive calls from home. Peace Corps regional and transit houses have telephones from which Volunteers can receive but not make calls.

Volunteers are not permitted to use the telephones at the Peace Corps office to call family or friends unless the call pertains to an emergency and is approved in advance by the country director.

A cellphone is provided by Peace Corps only if you are the only Volunteer at a site with service (most Volunteers have cell service). If desired, you and your family may want to figure out an international calling plan (e.g., Skype).

Computer, Internet, and Email Access

Use and ownership of computers are rapidly expanding, but primarily among better-funded government offices and wealthy individuals and companies. There are Internet cafés in Bamako and the regional capitals. Connection speeds are slow, but improving with growing demand and more private-

sector entrepreneurs. Some of the commercial phone centers offer computer and Internet access on an hourly basis (around 1,000 to 2,500 CFA francs per hour), and this is the route by which most Volunteers access the Internet.

Currently serving Volunteers are telling us they are glad they brought laptops with them. They often use laptops to complete electronic quarterly reports and create project and activity documents related to their work. While laptops are convenient, they are not provided by Peace Corps. Whether or not you bring a personal laptop is voluntary and, ultimately, a personal choice. You should consider that laptops can get stolen, lost, damaged and have to survive extreme conditions. However, it is also important to consider that, should you want one, it is very difficult and expensive to receive a laptop once you are already in Mali. Peace Corps cannot receive laptop shipments on your behalf once you are in-country; therefore, think carefully before making your decision. At a minimum, it would be helpful to bring a good-sized flash drive.

Housing and Site Location

The community to which you are assigned will provide safe and adequate housing in accordance with the Peace Corps' site selection criteria. Housing is typically a small house made of mud or cement bricks with a thatch roof. Some Volunteers in urban sites live in cement houses with two or three rooms. Most Volunteers do not have running water or electricity; water comes from a pump or a well, and light is provided by kerosene lanterns or candles. Nearly all Volunteers are within one hour of another Volunteer and most are within a 10- to 12-hour drive of the Peace Corps office in Bamako.

Living Allowance and Money Management

Volunteers' living allowance is approximately 105,000 CFA francs (about \$210) per month, not including a vacation allowance equivalent to \$24 per month. Volunteers also receive a quarterly work-travel allowance ranging from \$20 to \$100, depending on the location of their sites. All of these allowances are paid in local currency and deposited directly into a bank account that each Volunteer must establish at or near their sites. The amount of the living allowance is based on an annual survey of Volunteers' financial needs. Most Volunteers report they can live comfortably with this allowance and have extra money for regional travel, as well as occasional nights on the town. You are expected to live at the level of your Malian counterparts, so you are discouraged from bringing or receiving extra money from home to spend in-country.

Food and Diet

Water generally needs to be treated through boiling, bleach treatment, or filtering to be potable. The availability of fruits and vegetables is somewhat limited, but Mali produces some of the best mangoes and papayas in the world. Garlic, onions, tomatoes, and a local type of eggplant are available year-round. Other fruits and vegetables, available seasonally, include oranges, grapefruits, bananas, carrots, cabbages, potatoes, lettuce, and cucumbers. Staple meals include rice and tô (a thick porridge made of millet, sorghum, corn, or yams), served with a sauce made from peanuts, okra, greens (i.e., spinach or baobab leaves), or tomatoes with meat or fish. French bread is available in larger towns and villages. Pre-packaged spaghetti and macaroni noodles are available in larger villages, towns, and cities.

Transportation

Paved roads connect regional capitals and large towns in Mali, and fairly well-maintained buses operate on a regular daily schedule. Smaller towns and villages are served by “bush taxis”—typically overcrowded and poorly maintained minibuses that do not run on a fixed schedule. Most Volunteers do not live near paved roads and, thus, do not have daily access to motorized transportation from their villages.

Volunteers can choose between receiving a transportation allowance or receiving a bike to use for work and recreation purposes. Peace Corps/Mali will provide you with a bicycle helmet, which is required for bicycle use. However, if you have any special helmet needs (for example, a hard-to-find size), we encourage you to purchase a high-quality helmet in the United States, as the quality and selection of helmets available in-country are limited. Peace Corps/Mali will reimburse you for the cost if you provide the receipt.

For safety reasons, Peace Corps/Mali prohibits Volunteers from driving motorized vehicles (such as a motorcycle) except in a life-threatening emergency. Moreover, Volunteers are not permitted to ride as a passenger on motorcycles.

Geography and Climate

Mali stretches across three climatic zones: savanna, steppe, and desert. The savanna features wooded grasslands broken occasionally by cliff and rock formations and is watered by the Niger and Senegal rivers and their tributaries. This area lies south of a rough line drawn from Kayes in the west to a point just south of Mopti in the east. The steppe, or the Sahelian, zone is between the savanna and the desert, stretching north from Mopti to roughly 50 miles beyond the great bend of the Niger River. It consists of dry, sandy plains sparsely wooded

by trees. The third zone, north of these plains, is part of the Sahara Desert and is characterized by rocky outcrops dotted by vegetation and small villages wherever water is close to the surface. The harshness, vastness, and romance of the desert exert an influence that is felt throughout the country and has helped shape the culture.

Nomadic herdsman and camel drivers inhabit the northern half of Mali, where they haul salt and other commodities from Taoudeni to Timbuktu and Gao.

The Sahel provides grazing land for more than half of the country's 5 million to 6 million cattle. The savanna is the most densely populated and most heavily cultivated area, furnishing most of the cereal, cotton, and peanuts produced in Mali. The richest farming area is in and around the Niger River basin.

Mali's climate is similar to that of Arizona. The rainy season extends from June to October in the south, but starts later and ends earlier as one goes north. The period between November and early March is characterized by moderate daytime temperatures, cool nights, and cloudless skies. In April and May, the humidity drops to about 10 percent, and temperatures rise to as high as 110 or 120 degrees Fahrenheit. June brings rains that slowly ease the intensity of the heat. The climate becomes hotter and drier farther north.

Social Activities

Social activities vary according to where you are located. They might include relaxing and talking with friends and neighbors, going to the market, or taking part in local festivals. The cultural diversity of Mali means there is always something of interest taking place nearby from which you can learn, be it drumming and dancing or planting peanuts. Many Volunteers meet periodically in regional market towns to share ideas

and experiences. However, in keeping with its goal of cross-cultural exchange, the Peace Corps expects Volunteers to establish social networks with Malian friends and colleagues at their sites rather than seek out other Volunteers for social activities. Such networks enhance Volunteers' ability to be effective in their work.

Professionalism, Dress, and Behavior

One of the biggest challenges faced by Volunteers in Mali is defining their role as professionals in the Malian context while maintaining a sense of their own work ethic and cultural identity. The tendency of Malian counterparts to blur (from a Western perspective) the distinction between professional and personal time and space adds another layer of complexity to the challenge of establishing yourself as a professional in this context. Cultivating work relationships is not something that happens exclusively during working hours; behavior and activities outside the work setting will have an impact on your professional relationships.

Malians generally consider it important to dress appropriately whenever they are going to be seen in public—whether at work, in the market, or at a bar. It is almost unheard of, for example, for a Malian man or woman to wear shorts unless he or she is taking part in some kind of sporting event. Nor would a professional man or woman ever be seen in public wearing dirty, disheveled, wrinkled, or torn clothing. Dressing appropriately will greatly enhance your credibility, improve your ability to integrate into your community, and increase your odds of having a safe Peace Corps service. Aside from following Malian norms for dress, however, Volunteers need to be aware of other unwritten rules of the culture, such as the fact that Malian women never go to a bar on their own.

Serving in the Peace Corps often requires sacrificing personal preferences regarding dress and behavior. There will be ample discussion of this subject during cross-cultural sessions in pre-service training.

Peace Corps/Mali has instituted a dress code that must be followed by Volunteers, trainees, and staff at the Bamako office, the Tubaniso training center, and at any function where a staff member, Volunteer, or trainee could reasonably be considered to be representing the Peace Corps. The code is also suggested for any Volunteer with an office-type work assignment, anyone attending a professional meeting, or attending a meeting with someone to whom one is expected (as per Malian mores) to show deference.

- Shirts with buttons, sleeves, and collars for men (must cover midriff)
- Shirts with sleeves for women (nothing too tight or revealing and must cover midriff)
- Any kind of shoes or sandals (except rubber/plastic shower flip-flops)
- Long pants for men and at least mid-calf length for women (if worn by women, they should never be tight or transparent and are best accompanied by a long shirt)
- Skirts (opaque and at least knee-length), dresses, veils (dampé), Malian-style outfits for men and women, or boubous (robes worn by local men or women)

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 thefts and burglaries are not uncommon, and incidents of physical and sexual assault do occur, although most Mali Volunteers complete their two years of service without incident. The Peace Corps has established procedures and policies designed to help you reduce your risks and enhance your safety and security. These procedures and policies, in addition to safety training, will be provided once you arrive in Mali. Using these tools, you are expected to take responsibility for your safety and well-being.

Each staff member at the Peace Corps is committed to providing Volunteers with the support they need to successfully meet the challenges they will face in order to have a safe, healthy, and productive service. We encourage Volunteers and families to look at our safety and security information on the Peace Corps website at www.peacecorps.gov/safety.

Information on these pages gives messages on Volunteer health and Volunteer safety. There is a section titled “Safety and Security in Depth.” Among topics addressed are the risks of serving as a Volunteer, posts’ safety support systems, and emergency planning and communications.

Rewards and Frustrations

Although the potential for job satisfaction in Mali is quite high, like all Volunteers, you will encounter frustrations. Because of financial constraints, inefficient management, and an often contradictory incentive system, collaborating agencies do not always provide the support they may have promised.

In addition, the pace of work and life is slower than that of which most Americans are accustomed. 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.

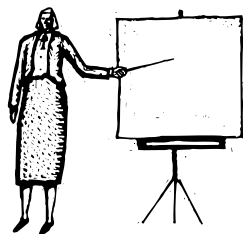
You will be given a high degree of responsibility and independence in your work—perhaps more than in any other job you have had or will have. You will often find yourself in situations that require an ability to motivate yourself and your co-workers with little guidance from supervisors. You might work for months without seeing any visible impact from, or without receiving feedback on, your work. Development anywhere in the world—including disadvantaged areas in the United States—is slow work that requires perseverance. 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. The Peace Corps staff, your Malian 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 Mali feeling they have gained much more than they sacrificed during their service. If you are able to make the commitment to integrate into your community and work hard, you will be a successful Volunteer.

NOTES



PEACE CORPS TRAINING



Overview of Pre-Service Training

Training is an essential part of Peace Corps service. The goal of the 10-week program is to give you the skills and information you need to live and work effectively in Mali. In doing that, we build upon the experiences and expertise you bring to the Peace Corps. The program also gives you the opportunity to practice new skills as they apply to your work in Mali. We anticipate that you will approach training with an open mind, a desire to learn, and a willingness to become involved. Trainees officially become Volunteers only after successful completion of training.

You will receive training and orientation in components of language, cross-cultural communication, development issues, health and personal safety, and technical skills pertinent to your specific assignment. The skills you learn will serve as the foundation upon which you build your experience as a Peace Corps Volunteer.

Upon arrival in Mali, you will go to Tubaniso, the Peace Corps training center about 30 minutes outside of Bamako. After a brief orientation period, you will move into a host village within an hour of the training center. In the host village, you and other trainees (about 15 to a village) will live with a Malian host family for the majority of your training period, allowing you to gain hands-on experience in some of the new skills you are expected to acquire.

Training combines structured classroom study and independent study, with the maximum possible number of training hours spent out of the classroom. At the beginning of training, the training staff outlines the goals each trainee must

achieve before becoming a Volunteer and the assessment criteria that will be used to evaluate progress toward those goals. Evaluation of your performance during training is a continual process of dialogue between you and the training staff. After successful completion of pre-service training, you will be sworn in as a Volunteer and make final preparations for departure to your site.

Technical Training

Technical training will prepare you to work in Mali by building on the skills you already have and helping you develop new skills in a manner appropriate to the needs of the country. The Peace Corps staff, Mali 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 Mali and strategies for working within such a framework. You will review your technical sector's goals and will meet with the Mali agencies and organizations that invited the Peace Corps to assist them. You will be supported and evaluated throughout the training to build the confidence and skills you need to undertake your project activities and be a productive member of your community.

Language Training

As a Peace Corps Volunteer, you will find that language skills are 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 the new surroundings. Therefore, language training is at the heart of the training program. You must successfully meet minimum language requirements to complete training and become a Volunteer. Mali language

instructors teach formal language classes five days a week in small groups of four to five people.

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 you can practice and develop language skills further once you are at your site. Prior to being sworn in as a Volunteer, you will work on strategies to continue language studies during your service.

Cross-Cultural Training

As part of your pre-service training, you will live with a Mali 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 Mali. 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 political structures.

Health Training

During pre-service training, you will be given basic medical training and information. You will be expected to practice preventive health care 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 Mali. Nutrition,

mental health, 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 your 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.
- *Regional Trainings*: These trainings are held annually and are designed to meet the specific technical and resource needs of Volunteers serving in different and diverse regions.
- *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 MALI



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. The Peace Corps in Mali maintains a clinic with a full-time medical officer, who takes care of Volunteers' primary health care needs. Additional medical services, such as testing and basic treatment, are also available in Mali at local hospitals. If you become seriously ill, you will be transported either to an American-standard medical facility in the region or to the United States.

Health Issues in Mali

Major health problems among Volunteers in Mali are rare and are often the result of a Volunteer's failure to take preventive measures to stay healthy. The most common health problems in Mali are minor ones that are also found in the United States, such as colds, diarrhea, headaches, dental problems, sinus infections, skin infections, minor injuries, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), emotional problems, and alcohol abuse. These problems may be more frequent or compounded by life in Mali because environmental factors raise the risk or exacerbate the severity of certain illnesses and injuries.

The most common major health concerns in Mali are malaria, amoebic dysentery, hepatitis, meningitis, and HIV/AIDS. Because malaria is endemic in Mali, Volunteers are required to take antimalarial pills. You will also be vaccinated against hepatitis A and B, influenza, meningitis, MMR (measles,

mumps, and rubella), polio, rabies, tetanus and diphtheria, typhoid fever, and yellow fever.

Helping You Stay Healthy

The Peace Corps will provide you with all the necessary inoculations, medications, and information to stay healthy. Upon your arrival in Mali, 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 chapter.

During pre-service training, you will have access to basic medical supplies through the medical officer. However, you will be responsible for your own supply of prescription drugs and any other specific medical supplies you require, as the 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 here and it may take several months for shipments to arrive.

You will have physicals at midservice and at the end of your service. If you develop a serious medical problem during your service, the medical officer in Mali will consult with the Office of Medical Services in Washington, D.C. If it is determined that your condition cannot be treated in Mali, 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 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. The most important of your responsibilities in Mali is to take the following preventive measures:

Malaria is a major health issue in most parts of Africa, including Mali. The most important step in preventing malaria and many other tropical diseases is to avoid mosquito and other insect bites. The best ways to avoid insect bites are to sleep under a mosquito net (provided by Peace Corps), wear long sleeves and pants whenever possible, use insect repellent, and be sure there are functional screens on your windows and doors. Mosquitoes bite primarily from dusk until dawn. *Since no one can entirely prevent all mosquito bites, Volunteers in Mali must take anti-malarial pills; failure to do so is grounds for administrative separation from the Peace Corps.*

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

Abstinence is the only certain choice for preventing infection with HIV/AIDS 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 your medical officer know immediately of significant illnesses and injuries.

Women's Health Information

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

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

Your Peace Corps Medical Kit

The Peace Corps medical officer will provide you with a kit that contains basic items necessary to prevent and treat illnesses that may occur during service. 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
Tetrahydrozaline 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.

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 to 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 Mali. You do not need to begin taking malaria medication prior to departure.

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, it 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 nonprescribed 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—a pair and a spare. If a pair breaks, the Peace Corps will replace them, using the information your doctor in the United States

provided on the eyeglasses form during your examination. The Peace Corps discourages 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 health care plans, you may wish to consult an insurance specialist about unique coverage needs before your departure. The Peace Corps will provide all necessary health care 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 health care 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 pre-existing conditions might prevent you from re-enrolling 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. Property theft 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.

Beyond knowing that Peace Corps approaches safety and security as a partnership with you, it might be helpful to see how this partnership works. Peace Corps has policies, procedures, and training in place to promote your safety. We depend on you to follow those policies and to put into practice what you have learned. An example of how this works in practice—in this case to help manage the risk of burglary—is:

- Peace Corps assesses the security environment where you will live and work
- Peace Corps inspects the house where you will live according to established security criteria
- Peace Corp provides you with resources to take measures such as installing new locks
- Peace Corps ensures you are welcomed by host country authorities and families in your new community
- Peace Corps responds to security concerns that you raise
- You lock your doors and windows
- You adopt a lifestyle appropriate to the community where you live, including appropriate dress and behavior
- You get to know your neighbors
- You decide if purchasing personal articles insurance is appropriate for you
- You don't change residences before being authorized by Peace Corps
- You communicate concerns that you have to Peace Corps staff

This *Welcome Book* contains sections on: Living Conditions and Volunteer Lifestyle; Peace Corps Training; and Your Health Care and Safety that all include important safety and security information to help you understand this partnership. The Peace Corps makes every effort to give Volunteers the tools they need to function in the safest 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, reduce, 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 within the Volunteer's control. By far the most common crime that Volunteers experience is theft. Thefts often occur when Volunteers are away from their sites, in crowded locations (such as markets or on public transportation), and when leaving items unattended.

Before you depart for Mali there are several measures you can take to reduce your risk:

- Leave valuable objects in U.S.
- Leave copies of important documents and account numbers with someone you trust in the U.S.
- Purchase a hidden money pouch or "dummy" wallet as decoy
- Purchase personal articles insurance

After you arrive in Mali, you will receive more detailed information about common crimes, factors that contribute to Volunteer risk, and local strategies to reduce that risk. For example, Volunteers in Mali learn to:

- Choose safe routes and times for travel, and travel with someone trusted by the community whenever possible
- Make sure one's personal appearance is respectful of local customs
- Avoid high-crime areas
- Know the local language to get help in an emergency
- Make friends with local people who are respected in the community
- Limit alcohol consumption

As you can see from this list, you must be willing to work hard and adapt your lifestyle to minimize the potential for being a target for crime. As with anywhere in the world, crime does exist in Mali. You can reduce your risk by avoiding situations that place you at risk and by taking precautions. Crime at the village or town level is less frequent than in the large cities; people know each other and generally are less likely to steal from their neighbors. Tourist attractions in large towns are favorite worksites for pickpockets.

While whistles and exclamations may be fairly common on the street, this behavior can be reduced if you dress conservatively, abide by local cultural norms, and respond according to the training you will receive.

Staying Safe: Don't Be a Target for Crime

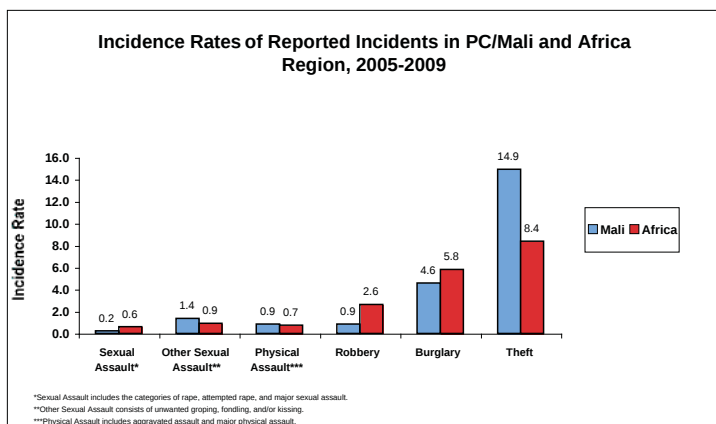
You must be prepared to take on a large degree of responsibility for your own safety. You can make yourself less of a target, ensure that your home is secure, and develop relationships in your community that will make you an unlikely victim of crime. While the factors that contribute to your risk in Mali may be different, in many ways you can do what you would do if you moved to a new city anywhere: 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 Mali will require that you accept some restrictions on your current lifestyle.

Support from Staff

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 the Volunteer is safe and receiving medical treatment as needed. After assuring the safety of the Volunteer, Peace Corps staff response may include reassessing the Volunteer's worksite 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.

Crime Data for Mali

The country-specific data chart below shows the average annual rates of the major types of crimes reported by Peace Corps Volunteers/trainees in Mali compared to all other Region programs as a whole. It can be understood as an approximation of the number of reported incidents per 100 Volunteers in a year.



¹Incidence 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 years are calculated in sexual assaults and other sexual assaults.

²Due to the small number of V/T years, incidence rates should be interpreted with caution.

Source data on incidents are drawn from Assault Notification Surveillance System (ANSS), Epidemiologic Surveillance System (ESS), Crime Incident Reporting Form (CIRF), and Consolidated Incident Reporting System; the information is accurate as of 6/18/10.

Prior to CIRF and prior to 2006, Other Sexual Assaults were termed Minor Sexual Assault.

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.

Few Peace Corps Volunteers are victims of serious crimes and crimes that do occur overseas are investigated and prosecuted by local authorities through the local courts system. If you are the victim of a crime, you will decide if you wish to pursue prosecution. If you decide to prosecute, Peace Corps will be there to assist you. One of our tasks is to ensure you are fully informed of your options and understand how the local legal process works. Peace Corps will help you ensure your rights are protected to the fullest extent possible under the laws of the country.

If you are the victim of a serious crime, you will learn how to get to a safe location as quickly as possible and contact your Peace Corps office. It's important that you notify Peace Corps as soon as you can so Peace Corps can provide you with the help you need.

Volunteer Safety Support in Mali

The Peace Corps' approach to safety is a five-pronged plan to help you stay safe during your 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. Mali's in-country safety program is outlined below.

The Peace Corps/Mali office will keep you informed of any issues that may impact Volunteer safety through information sharing. Regular updates will be provided in Volunteer newsletters, memorandums, and electronic postings from the country director. In the event of a critical situation or emergency, you will be contacted through the emergency communication network. An important component of the capacity of Peace Corps to keep you informed is your buy-in to the partnership concept with the Peace Corps staff. It is expected that you will do your part in ensuring that Peace Corps staff members are kept apprised of your movements in-country so they are able to inform you.

Volunteer training will include sessions on specific safety and security issues in Mali. 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 aspects, health, and other components of training. You will be

expected to successfully complete all training competencies in a variety of areas, including safety and security, as a condition of service.

Certain site selection criteria are used to determine safe housing for Volunteers before their arrival. The Peace Corps staff works 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 worksites. 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/Mali'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, you will gather with other Volunteers in Mali 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 office. 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.

NOTES



DIVERSITY AND CROSS-CULTURAL ISSUES



In fulfilling its mandate to share the face of America with host countries, the Peace Corps is making special efforts to assure 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 history. 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 Mali, 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 Mali.

Outside of Mali's capital, Bamako, 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 Mali 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 Mali, 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 Mali

The Peace Corps staff in Mali recognizes the 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

Mali has a traditional, patriarchal society. Female Volunteers may be surprised by the extent to which community and domestic roles are defined along gender lines and how little control they have over this. Although women are becoming more visible, men generally hold positions of greater authority

in the workplace, in the community, and in the home. This strong tradition can present challenges for female Volunteers, especially those in agriculture and natural resource management projects, where they may be seen as taking on a typically “male” role. In addition, single people, especially women, generally do not have the status and respect that come with marriage and parenthood. Thus, female Volunteers may find it challenging to have their ideas recognized and respected by both women and men.

Possible Issues for Volunteers of Color

Although Malian society can be conservative, Volunteers generally find Malians to be hospitable and accepting of people with a wide variety of backgrounds. Nevertheless, Malians may have preconceived notions of Americans based on the kind of information available in Mali about Westerners, which comes mainly from television, movies, magazines, and local news reports, which often represent a limited view of American diversity. For example, Asian Americans are often called Chinois (Chinese) regardless of their actual background, and African Americans may not be considered Americans.

Possible Issues for Senior Volunteers

The high regard for seniors in Malian society lends support to senior Volunteers’ effectiveness at work. They, in turn, are able to find ways to use their extensive experience to assist their communities. However, seniors often comment that they feel a lack of camaraderie with other, mostly much younger, Volunteers. And the three months of pre-service training can be particularly frustrating for seniors because of the rigid schedule, classroom setting, and issues of integration with other trainees in the group. Language learning may present an additional challenge. However, most senior Volunteers find living and working at their sites to be very rewarding.

Possible Issues for Gay, Lesbian, or Bisexual Volunteers

Given their conservative values, homosexuality is not likely to be tolerated by the general Malian population. It will probably be impossible to be open about your sexual orientation and maintain a positive working relationship with members of your community. Disclosure of gay, lesbian, or bisexual orientation in Mali could compromise your safety and security, and impact your relationship with others in the community in a negative way. Other Volunteers and the Peace Corps staff will provide support, but you will find it very difficult to be open outside of that circle.

You can find more information at www.geocities.com/~lgbrpcv/, a website created by lesbian, gay, and bisexual returned Peace Corps Volunteers. Peace Corps recruiters can also send you a packet of helpful information.

Possible Religious Issues for Volunteers

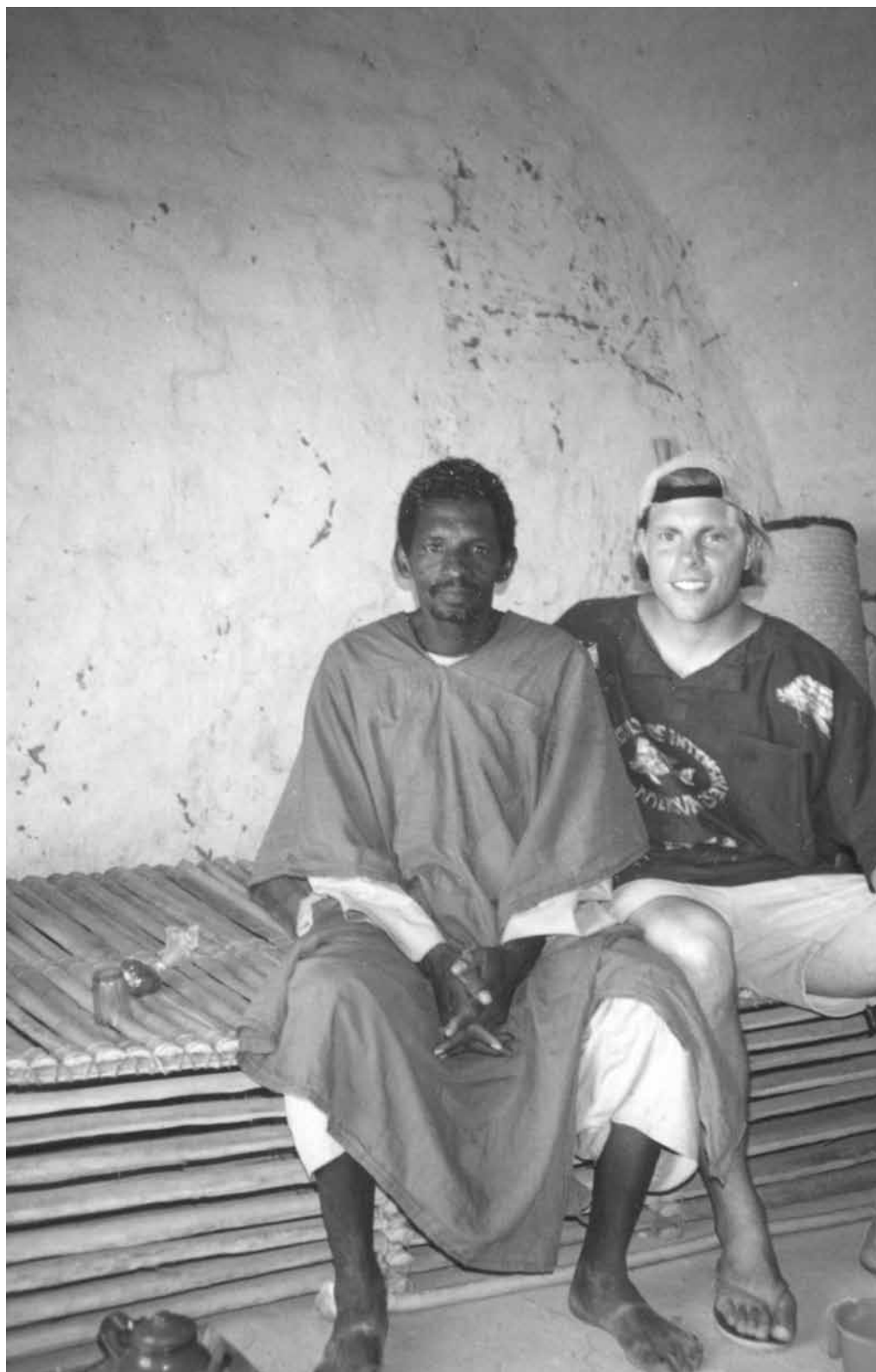
Volunteers do not report negative reactions from their Malian colleagues about their religious beliefs. The majority of Malians are generally very tolerant of religions other than Islam.

Proselytizing by Volunteers is not permitted, and it is wise to avoid confrontations over religious issues.

Possible Issues for Volunteers With Disabilities

As part of the medical clearance process, the Peace Corps Office of Medical Services determined that you were physically and emotionally capable, with or without reasonable accommodations, to perform a full tour of Volunteer service in Mali without unreasonable risk of harm to yourself or interruption of service. The Peace Corps/Mali staff will work with disabled Volunteers to make reasonable accommodations for them in training, housing, jobsites, or other areas to enable them to serve safely and effectively.

NOTES



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS?

How much luggage am I allowed to bring to Mali?

Most airlines have baggage size and weight limits and assess charges for transport of baggage that exceeds those limits. The Peace Corps has its own size and weight limits and will not pay the cost of transport for baggage that exceeds these 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. Checked baggage should not exceed 80 pounds total with a maximum weight of 50 pounds for any one bag.

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. This is an important safety precaution.

What is the electric current in Mali?

It is 220 volts, 50 cycles. However, not many Volunteers have electricity in their homes and where electricity does exist, power cuts and surges are common, putting a real strain on power supplies and voltage transformers or regulators. (The Peace Corps does not provide transformers or regulators.) For battery-powered appliances, such as tape players and radios, we suggest D batteries, since these are readily available at markets. Many Volunteers use rechargeable batteries with a solar charger, which is a good alternative to disposable batteries.

How much money should I bring?

Volunteers are expected to live at the same level as the people in their community. You will be given a settling-in allowance and a monthly living allowance, which should cover your expenses. Volunteers often 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 (excluding training). 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, and we encourage you to consider them carefully. Volunteers should not ship or take valuable items overseas. 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 Mali do not need 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 trucks, bicycles, and lots of walking. On very rare occasions, a Volunteer may be asked to drive a sponsor's vehicle, but this can occur only with prior written permission from the country director. Should this occur, the Volunteer may obtain a local driver's license. A U.S. driver's license will facilitate the process, so bring it with you just in case.

What should I bring as gifts for Mali friends and my host family?

This is not a requirement. A token of friendship is sufficient. Some gift suggestions include knickknacks 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 trainees are not assigned to individual sites until after they have completed pre-service training. 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. There is at least one Volunteer based in each of the regional capitals and about five to six Volunteers in the capital city.

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 the above number. For non-emergency questions, your family can get information from your country desk staff at the Peace Corps by calling 800.424.8580.

Can I call home from Mali?

International phone service to and from Mali is relatively good. SOTELMA, the national telephone company, has offices in all administrative towns. Calls to the United States cost approximately 200 CFA francs (40 cents) per minute. Volunteers prearrange calls from the United States or limit their calls to giving the party in the United States a number at which to return the call. U.S. calling cards cannot be used in Mali at this time, and calling collect is not possible.

Should I bring a cellular phone with me?

There are several cellular service providers in Mali. Service has been limited to cities and larger towns, but network coverage is rapidly expanding. Peace Corps staff members with emergency responsibilities are equipped with cellphones. Differences in technology make U.S. cellphones incompatible

with the Malian cellular systems. For these reasons, we recommend that you not bring a cellphone with you. For safety and security reasons, Peace Corps has a “one site-one phone” policy whereby Volunteers who are alone in sites with network coverage will receive cellphones. Some Volunteers purchase their own cellphones after they arrive in Mali, although not all Volunteer sites are within cellphone network range.

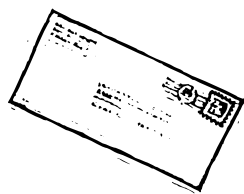
Will there be email and Internet access?

Should I bring my computer?

As mentioned in the Living Conditions and Volunteer Lifestyle chapter, Volunteers do have occasional access to email and the Internet. For example, trainees can access email at Tubaniso, the Peace Corps training center in Mali. The decision of whether to bring a laptop computer depends on your own needs. Few Volunteers have electricity at their sites, and the Peace Corps cannot provide technical support or insurance for personal computers. You can use the computers available through Internet cafes and, for work-related purposes, the Peace Corps office and regional houses. While laptops are convenient, they are not provided by Peace Corps. Remember, whether or not you bring a personal laptop is voluntary and, ultimately, a personal choice. You need to consider that laptops can get stolen, lost, damaged and have to survive extreme conditions. At a minimum, it would be helpful to bring a good-sized flash drive.



WELCOME LETTER FROM MALI VOLUNTEERS



Congratulations on being invited to serve in Mali! You've been selected to go to a beautiful and challenging place that's provided a rewarding two (or three) years of service to many Volunteers before you.

I live in a small village where my work is focused on gardening, field crops, and resource management. I garden with my village friends, and I hold presentations to help them better understand composting and natural pesticides. We are also in the process of finding land and materials to start a community garden for the village women's association.

During the rainy season much of my time is devoted to working with local farmer's cooperatives. I've helped them to start a farmer's field school and established relationships with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and research institutions like ICRISAT, which help farmers acquire and test new varieties of seeds. Resource management involves deforestation awareness and working with local shea butter producers to protect parklands. These are just examples of things I do, and Volunteers across the country work alongside a variety of local and international organizations.

Other Volunteers in my training group are working on projects covering everything from natural medicines to ecotourism, not to mention secondary activities outside their sector (health, sanitation, education, etc.). Our responsibility as Volunteers and agents of change is to work with communities by helping them identify their assets and by informing them of the opportunities and options that are out there.

Whether you're placed in the smallest of villages or a medium-sized town, adjusting to life in Mali is a difficult task. You'll be expected to familiarize yourself with new customs, new foods, and a new climate. Add these to the challenge of mastering a new language and it seems like a daunting task.

However, these are exactly the kinds of challenges that make your service so rewarding.

Adjusting to the slow pace of life here takes time, but you will learn to enjoy those quiet moments that allow you to connect with the people around you. Whether you're practicing Bambara or just enjoying a cup of tea, time together with co-workers and neighbors helps you through the necessary integration process. Then one day, gradually or suddenly, you will realize you are no longer just a face or a name; you have become a person in the eyes of those around you. This newly-seen depth of character is the cornerstone of trust, and what could be more necessary when you are helping people to change?

So enjoy your remaining time in the States while you can, and try not to worry too much beforehand. Recognize that we all arrive in new places as empty vessels, and allow yourself to gain much during your service here.

You have an amazing experience waiting for you!

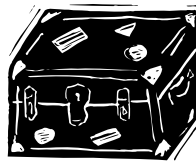
Aw bisimila,

Jonathan Burgess
PCV/2008-2010
Koni-Koulikoro Region

NOTES



PACKING LIST



This list has been compiled by Volunteers serving in Mali and is based on their experience. Use it as an informal guide in making your own list, bearing in mind that each experience is individual. There is no perfect list! You obviously cannot bring everything on the list, so consider those items that make the most sense to you personally and professionally. You can always have things sent to you later. As you decide what to bring, keep in mind that you have a weight limit on baggage. And remember, you can get almost everything you need in Mali.

General Clothing

You can get almost everything you need in Mali. However, some items you may want to consider buying before coming over are:

- Music system (portable CD player or iPod/MP3 player, good portable speakers)
- Durable shoes (sandals like Tevas/Chacos and running/sports shoes)
- Good kitchen knife

Packing for Training

Most of the information below is oriented toward your life as a Volunteer. However, it is important to remember that for your first two months you will be in training. While in training, your meals, transport, and lodging will be provided. Be sure to bring enough appropriate clothing to last you for at least a week, as finding time to do laundry during training will be difficult.

Clothing

(both men and women)

- Two pairs of pants in good condition (not too tight, too loose, or too low cut)
- Three to five cotton T-shirts
- A few pairs of socks (avoid white due to sand and dust)
- Sweatpants and a sweatshirt or sweater (it can get cool...really!)
- Lightweight rain jacket
- Cotton bandannas
- Baseball cap or broad-rimmed hat
- Swimsuit
- Clothing for sleeping in common areas (boxer shorts, pajama pants, tank tops)

Note that shorts are not worn by men or women in public except to play sports.

For Men

- “Casual dress” clothes: shirts with collars and slacks (preferably lightweight cotton)
- Two-week supply of underwear
- One dressy outfit and one tie for official functions
- One or two pairs of shorts for sports

For Women

- One slip (preferably cotton), if your skirts are sheer
- A good supply of bras and underwear, including sports bras
- Two nice outfits for official functions (calf length or longer)
- Several dressy shirts

- Several nice, comfortable pairs of cotton pants
- One or two pairs of longer shorts or loose capris for sports
- Cosmetics, if you wear them
- Your favorite jewelry (but nothing too expensive or that you would be devastated to lose)

Note: all skirts/dresses/pants must fall below the knees even when sitting down (preferably calf-length or longer). Shirts should not be tight, low cut, or sleeveless and cannot show your stomach or lower back (even bending over and raising your arms above your head).

A reminder about clothing: Malians, while not excessively formal, put a great deal of emphasis on a professional appearance. Dressing appropriately will greatly enhance your credibility at work, improve your ability to integrate into your community, and increase your odds of having a safe Peace Corps service. Men should expect to wear shirts with a collar and casual slacks; women should wear below-the-knee skirts and dresses or casual slacks with shirts that do not reveal too much of their chest or back. This means, for both men and women, no tight or see-through clothing that shows underwear lines, no outfits that show the knees when you are sitting down, and no torn or worn clothing. There are communities in Mali where you are expected to be even more modestly dressed (i.e., covering arms, legs, hair). You are expected to dress appropriately at all times when you are in public. That said, it is fine to dress down when you are relaxing with other Volunteers or while you are at home.

Note: There are a lot of talented tailors and a wide variety of fabric in Mali. You will be able to have clothes made here. Bring things that you can have copied. Also, you can buy secondhand Western-style clothing in most Malian markets. Do not worry about bringing enough clothes for two years

Personal Hygiene and Toiletry Items

The Peace Corps medical kit contains almost everything you will need, though not necessarily in the brands you are accustomed to. You may want to bring a two-month supply of the following items to use during pre-service training.

- Shampoo and conditioner
- Deodorant
- Good razor and supply of blades (very expensive in Mali)
- Body lotion
- Sunscreen
- Special vitamins (multivitamins are provided by the Peace Corps)
- Allergy medication
- Tampons or sanitary napkins
- Two pairs of prescription glasses or contact lenses and solution
- Three-month supply of any prescription medication you take (including birth control pills)
- Nail clippers or nail care kit
- Earplugs
- Heat rash powder

Miscellaneous

You can find almost any kitchen item in Mali. You will not need any kitchen supplies during training, so you may want to have any items you choose to bring sent to you later. Following are a few items we recommend bringing:

- Good can opener or corkscrew
- Good frying pan (Non-stick is highly recommended, and bring a plastic spatula for it)

- Dry sauce mixes and instant drink mixes (available in Mali, but much more expensive)
- Favorite spices (e.g., Mrs. Dash, Italian seasonings, Mexican spices)
- Seeds for spices and veggies to start your own garden
- Your favorite snack foods from America
- Sturdy backpacks (Day packs for work and bike rides; medium packs for short trips; large packs for long trips)
- Leatherman, Swiss army knife, or other multipurpose tool
- Alarm clock
- Rechargeable batteries and charger (solar batteries may be a good alternative; AAA and C batteries are difficult to find in Mali)
- Two sturdy water bottles
- A portable music player (e.g., Walkman/Discman/MP3, etc.) with minispeakers (While most Volunteers do not have electricity in their homes, they do have occasional access to electricity, during which time they can charge items)
- Plenty of your favorite music
- Anything from home that will make you feel more comfortable (e.g., pictures, posters, books, journals) Malians will enjoy looking at your photos
- Camera and film (200- and 400-speed film is hard to find locally) or digital with extra flash cards and extra batteries
- Shortwave radio or WorldSpace satellite receiver (see www.worldspace.com)
- Flashlight and headlamp
- Towel
- One or two flat sheets and a pillowcase
- Combination lock (key locks are available in Mali)

- Duct tape (for fixing everything)
- Plastic bags (e.g., Ziplocs) and containers—to protect your camera, tapes, food, etc.
- Good scissors (hair-cutting scissors optional)
- Sturdy sunglasses
- Sturdy but inexpensive watch, preferably waterproof

Additional Items to Consider Bringing

- Sports equipment (e.g., soccer ball, football, frisbee, baseball mitt)
- U.S. and world maps
- Travel games (e.g., cards, chess, checkers, Frisbee, backgammon, Scrabble, Monopoly, Taboo, Trivial Pursuit, Risk)
- Pocket-size French-English dictionary
- Musical instrument
- Calendar
- Digital thermometer
- Compact sleeping pad
- Notecards, stationery, good writing pens, address book, books of U.S. stamps (Volunteers traveling to the United States can mail letters for you)
- Small toolkit
- Light, highly compactable sleeping bag
- Eyeglass repair kit
- Your favorite movies on DVD or videocassette (there are DVD players and VCRs at Peace Corps regional houses)
- Laptop computer

Items You Do Not Need to Bring

- Heavy coat
- A large quantity of clothes
- Camouflage or military-style clothing
- A lot of language materials
- A lot of cash
- A two-year supply of toiletries
- Kitchen items (e.g., silverware, flatware not mentioned in packing)
- Water filter (provided by the Peace Corps if needed)
- Business suit
- Nylons
- Veils

Remember, items that exceed the 80-pound weight limit or that you can't fit in your suitcase can always be shipped to:

Your name, PCT
Corps de la Paix
B.P. 85
Bamako, Mali, West Africa



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 (24-hour telephone number: 800.424.8580, extension 1470).
- 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 your 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 three-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 pre-existing conditions to arrange for the continuation of their supplemental health coverage. If there is a lapse in 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

- Keep a bank account in your name in the U.S.
- 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



This list of numbers will help connect you with the appropriate office at Peace Corps headquarters to answer various questions. You can use the toll-free number and extension or dial directly using the local numbers provided. Be sure to leave the toll-free number and extensions with your family so they can contact you in the event of an emergency.

Peace Corps Headquarters

Toll-free Number:

800.424.8580, 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

For Questions About:	Staff	Toll-free Extension	Direct/ Local Number
Responding to an Invitation	Office of Placement Africa Region	Ext. 1840	202.692.1840
Programming or Country Information	Nicole Lewis Country Desk Officer E-mail: nlewis2@peacecorps.gov	Ext. 2327	202.692.2327
	Daryn J. Warner Country Desk Assistant E-mail: dwarner@peacecorps.gov	Ext. 2328	202.692.2328

PEACE CORPS

Paul D. Coverdell Peace Corps Headquarters

1111 20th Street NW · Washington, DC 20526 · www.peacecorps.gov · 1-800-424-8580

For Questions About:	Staff	Toll-free Extension	Direct/ Local Number
Plane Tickets, Passports, Visas, or Other Travel Matters	Travel Officer (Sato Travel)	Ext. 1170	202.692.1170
Legal Clearance	Office of Placement	Ext. 1840	202.692.1840
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	Office of Staging	Ext. 1865	202.692.1865
<i>Note: You will receive comprehensive information (hotel and flight arrangements) three to five weeks before departure. This information is not available sooner.</i>			
Family Emergencies (to get information to a Volunteer overseas)	Office of Special Services	Ext. 1470	202.692.1470 (24 hours)