

**THE PEACE CORPS
WELCOMES YOU TO
NEPAL**



**A PEACE CORPS PUBLICATION FOR NEW VOLUNTEERS
SEPTEMBER 2015**

MAP OF NEPAL



A WELCOME LETTER

Dear Prospective Volunteer,

On behalf of Peace Corps/Nepal, congratulations on your invitation to serve as a Peace Corps Volunteer.

We are delighted with your choice of Nepal as the country in which you have chosen to serve and consider your selection to be a significant accomplishment! We look forward to meeting you next April, when you arrive in Kathmandu, and to working with you throughout your Peace Corps service.

Peace Corps/Nepal is one of the oldest and most beloved of the Peace Corps' programs. Since 1962, over 4,000 Volunteers have contributed to the development of this country. In so doing, they have made lifelong impressions and friendships with the Nepali people. The heritage they have left behind for you is significant and you will be amazed at the warm welcome you will undoubtedly receive from the moment you step off the plane to the day you are placed at your worksite and throughout your service.

This book has been prepared to provide you with some information and friendly advice to help you start on your path to discovery. It will not answer all your questions, but at least it will be a good start.

Following the April 25th earthquake, which had a significant impact on Nepal and the Peace Corps in its immediate aftermath, our Volunteers and trainees returned to the U.S. for about six weeks on administrative hold in early May, as we needed time to evaluate and replace if necessary their host family living arrangements. That task was completed by the middle of June and Volunteers are now back at their sites at work. The trainees have completed their training and are now actively getting started with their Peace Corps service at their assigned work locations. I assure you they are all eager to meet and work with you once you arrive!

For your first 11 weeks, you will participate in pre-service training covering Nepali language, cross-cultural adaptation, health and safety training, and technical skills. We look forward to swearing in all of you who complete the training, and assigning you to villages in the western hill regions of Nepal. Once you become Volunteers, subsequent training sessions will build your language and technical expertise.

As you know, Peace Corps/Nepal is working now in food security to promote improved agricultural and nutritional practices to address critical food and health needs for the neediest families in the food insecure areas in the west, mid-west and far west development regions of Nepal, where all of our Volunteers are currently working. You will be placed at the grassroots level and will reside in Nepali households where you will quickly find yourself to be a member of a new extended family.

A two-year commitment to the Peace Corps is not made easily or casually. It is a commitment you will make repeatedly and in many ways throughout your service. You will be challenged in every way imaginable, and your strength of character and determination will be tested. But if you come to Nepal with an open mind, a warm heart, and a good sense of humor, you will do well.

If you feel you have the right motivation and sufficient fortitude and flexibility, we invite you to join the next group of Volunteers since our return in 2012, to serve as America's grassroots ambassadors to Nepal. The needs here now are significant and your contributions will be invaluable. You will find the combination of the Peace Corps and Nepal an unparalleled experience.

Nelson Chase
Country Director, Nepal

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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 do the following:

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 responsibly the people, cultures, values, and traditions of your host country and community to people in the United States both during and following your service

PEACE CORPS/NEPAL HISTORY AND PROGRAMS

History of the Peace Corps in Nepal

At the invitation of the government of Nepal, the Peace Corps began operations in the country in 1962. More than 4,000 Peace Corps Volunteers served in schools, government agencies, and nongovernment organizations (NGOs) between 1962 and 2004. Due to security concerns, Peace Corps operations were suspended in Nepal in September 2004. At the request of the government of Nepal, Peace Corps deployed an evaluation team in June 2011 to determine the feasibility of returning operations to Nepal. The evaluation team's report recommended that the agency return and specifically recommended Volunteer activities in health, agriculture, and education.

In light of this positive assessment of a potential return to Nepal, the Peace Corps sought U.S. Congressional approval and funding to support the return of the program. Funds were identified in the form of two USAID supported programs: the Global Health Initiative (GHI) and the Feed the Future (FtF) initiative. In January 2012, the Peace Corps held re-launch ceremonies in both Kathmandu and Washington, D.C.

Peace Corps Programming in Nepal

With a population of 26.6 million, Nepal remains the poorest country in South Asia and the 13th poorest country in the world. The economic growth of the country (GDP) is 3.6 percent per year. About one fourth of the population (23.8 percent) lives below poverty line earning less than \$1.25 a day. The Gini coefficient of the country is 0.328, which indicates high income inequality in the country. The country is in political transition. A second Constituent Assembly election was held in November 2013 and formulation of a new constitution is in progress. The Constituent Assembly previously elected in 2008 was finally "expired" in May 2012 without completing its task of writing a new constitution.

Nearly 74 percent of the population is dependent on subsistence agriculture for its livelihood. Nepal is a severely food-deficit country: 41 of 75 districts of the country are food-insecure. Agricultural production is in decline and an increase in population, with the rate of 1.4 percent, has resulted in increased and widespread hunger in the country. At least one out of four members of household is absent or is living out of the country.

The Peace Corps program in Nepal opened with a stand-alone food security project that is supported financially via an interagency agreement with USAID. Food security is a priority program for Nepal. PCVs work with counterparts to build the capacity of communities, focusing mainly on promotion of agriculture production, organic farming, construction of improved cookstoves, and fruit tree propagation.

A project advisory committee (PAC) has been created comprised of all project stakeholders. The PAC helps to ensure that the project is relevant, meeting a need in Nepal, and that the training is credible, realistic, and responsive to the needs of PCVs. Partners, including Nepal ministry and department officials, will carry out monitoring of Volunteers work periodically, and provide strategic input for the improvement of the food security project. A mid-project evaluation will be carried out in 2015 and a final evaluation is planned at the end of the project in 2018.

COUNTRY OVERVIEW: NEPAL AT A GLANCE

History

The first civilizations in Nepal flourished around the sixth century B.C. and were confined to the fertile Kathmandu Valley. It was in this region that Prince Siddhartha Gautama was born around 563 B.C. Gautama achieved enlightenment as Buddha and spawned Buddhism. Thus Nepal is often referred to as the “birthplace of Buddhism.” Hinduism, however, is the predominant religion in Nepal, reflecting the increased influence of India, around the 12th century.

Formerly comprised of separate smaller kingdoms, the successive dynasties of the Gopals, the Kiratis, and the Licchavis continuously expanded their rule, but it was not until the reign of the Malla kings from 1200–1769 that Nepal assumed the approximate dimensions of the current country.

The kingdom of Nepal was unified in 1768 by King Prithvi Narayan Shah, who had fled India following the Moghul conquests of the subcontinent. Under Shah and his successors, Nepal's borders expanded as far west as Kashmir and as far east as Sikkim (now part of India).

Britain recognized the absolute independence of Nepal in 1923. Between 1846–1951, the country was ruled by the Rana family, which always held the office of prime minister. In 1951, however, the king took over all power and proclaimed a constitutional monarchy. Mahendra Bir Bikram Shah became king in 1955. Since then, the history of Nepal has been dominated by the dynamics of the government.

Government

For quite some time the government was a constitutional monarchy; however, a pro-democracy movement in 1990 led the king to allow for democratic elections. A regicide in 2001 caused destabilization in the monarchy and a Maoist-led “people’s war,” which began on February 14, 1996, created drastic change in the country and its government. In 2006, the 10-year rebellion which had claimed more than 12,000 lives ended and, through a series of elections, the Maoist party joined the political system.

In September 2015, a new constitution was adopted by the Constitutional Assembly—the first time the country adopted a constitution written by representatives of the people.

Economy

Nepal is one of the poorest countries in the world. Its population is at almost 30 million and its per capita gross domestic product is \$1,200 per year. Ninety percent of the population is dependent on agriculture. About a quarter of the population lives below the poverty line. The low per capita income, the lack of capital, technology and skills, the fragmented market, the country’s landlocked status, and the Maoist rebellion and destabilization of the government have all impeded Nepal’s industrial development.

Nepal’s poor economic base and lack of resources have made the economy very dependent on other countries, especially India and China, not only for capital and technology, but also for raw materials and consumer goods. The result is that these external forces exert a great deal of influence over the direction of the economy. Now that the country has stabilized, tourism is again one of the major sources of foreign currency.

People and Culture

The Nepalis are descendants of migrants from India, Tibet, and Central Asia, and communities exhibit a unique blend of these cultures. This is especially apparent in Kathmandu, where urban migration has resulted in a diverse mix of Nepal's people.

Nepal is predominantly Hindu. The breakdown of religions is as follows: 80.62 percent Hindus, 10.74 percent Buddhists, 4.20 percent Muslims, 3.60 percent Kirats, 0.45 percent Christians, 0.03 percent Sikhs, 0.02 percent Jains, 0.01 percent Bahais, and 0.35 percent other religions.

Rural villages and towns are likely to be composed of a variety of ethnic groups of either Hindu or Buddhist faith. Adherence to customs such as caste rules and rigid roles for men and women vary according to ethnic group and location. The people in the far western region are more traditional and conservative than the people in eastern Nepal.

For Volunteers, working within the confines of centuries-old customs while maintaining their personal perspective will be an ongoing challenge. In general, Nepalis are friendly, helpful, honest, and generous.

RESOURCES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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

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

General Information About Nepal

State.gov

The Department of State's website issues background notes periodically about countries around the world. Find Nepal 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.

Gpo.gov/libraries/public/

The U.S. Government Printing Office publishes country studies intermittently.

lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/cshome.html

The Library of Congress provides historical and sociological data on numerous countries.

http://unstats.un.org/unsd/pocketbook/World_Statistics_Pocketbook_2013_edition.pdf

United Nations resource book with 2013 statistical country data

Data.un.org

United Nations site with links to data from U.N. member countries

Wikipedia.org

Search for Nepal to find encyclopedia-type information. Note: As Wikipedia content is user-generated, information may be biased and/or not verified.

Worldbank.org

The World Bank Group's mission is to fight poverty and improve the living standards of people in the developing world. It is a development bank that provides loans, policy advice, technical assistance, and knowledge-sharing services to developing countries to reduce poverty. This site contains a lot of information and resources regarding development.

Data.worldbank.org/country

Provides information on development indicators on countries, including population, gender, financial, and education, and climate change statistics.

Connect With Returned Volunteers and Other Invitees

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 Nepal site: www.friendsofnepal.com

PeaceCorpsWorldwide.org

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

Online Articles/Current News Sites About Nepal

UN.org/News/

The United Nations news service provides coverage of its member states and information about the international peacekeeping organization’s actions and positions.

VOAnews.com

Voice of America, the U.S. government’s multimedia broadcaster, features coverage of news around the world.

ekantipur.com/en

This is an English language news portal that collects news about Nepal on various topics and from various resources.

thehimalayantimes.com

This is the major English language print newspaper in Nepal.

International Development Sites About Nepal

usaid.gov/nepal

USAID is the lead U.S. government agency that works to end extreme global poverty and enable resilient, democratic societies to realize their potential.

icimod.org/?q=abt

The International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development is a regional intergovernmental learning and knowledge sharing center serving the eight regional member countries of the Hindu Kush Himalayas.

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, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000.
2. Rice, Gerald T. "The Bold Experiment: JFK's Peace Corps." Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985.
3. Stossel, Scott. "Sarge: The Life and Times of Sargent Shriver." Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2004.
4. Meisler, Stanley. "When the World Calls: The Inside Story of the Peace Corps and its First 50 Years." Boston: Beacon Press, 2011.

Books on the Volunteer Experience

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

Books About Nepal

1. Scot, Barbara J. "The Violet Shyness of Their Eyes: Notes from Nepal." Corvallis, Ore.: Calyx Books, 2005.
2. Upadhyay, Samrat. "Arresting God in Kathmandu." New York, N.Y.: Houghton Mifflin, 2001.
3. Thapa, Manjushree. "Forget Kathmandu." Motilal UK Books of India, 2005.

Books/Movies on Nepal RPCVs

1. Fisher, James F. "At Home in the World: Globalization and the Peace Corps in Nepal." Thailand, Orchid Press, 2013
2. Goyal, Rajeev. "The Springs of Namje: A Ten-Year Journey from the Villages of Nepal to the Halls of Congress." Boston, Beacon Press, 2012
3. Coburn, Brot. "Nepali Aama: Life Lessons of Himalayan Woman."
4. Coburn, Brot. "Aama in America: A Pilgrimage of the Heart." India, Pilgrims, 1995
5. "Jimi Sir." A highly regarded one-hour documentary about Jim Park, a Peace Corps Volunteer who served in Nepal in the early 1980s. www.jimisir.com.

LIVING CONDITIONS AND VOLUNTEER LIFESTYLE

Communications

“Snail” Mail

Mail takes a minimum of two to three weeks to arrive in Nepal. Though it is rare, some mail may simply not arrive or may arrive with clipped edges because someone has tried to see if any money was inside. Advise family and friends that mail service is sporadic and unreliable.

During pre-service training Peace Corps/Nepal office mailing address can be used:

Peace Corps /Nepal Office
P.O. Box 15150
Chakrapath, Maharajgunj,
Kathmandu, Nepal

After you are assigned to your permanent site, you will use your site mailing address..

Landline Telephones

Long-distance telephone service is available but expensive and is not very reliable. If your assigned site is in a very remote area, there may not be a telephone facility close by. More details on this situation will be provided during pre-service training.

Cellphones

There are essentially two domestic cellphone companies that have good coverage to the areas outside Kathmandu Valley, where Volunteers serve. Reception may vary from site to site. For an extra fee, Volunteers may also use cellphones for international calls. Cellphone calls from Kathmandu to the U.S. are very inexpensive, costing pennies per minute.

Computer, Internet, and Email Access

Internet facilities and locations with Wi-Fi can be found in major towns in Nepal. The Peace Corps provides a limited number of computers in the Information Resource Center of the Peace Corps office for Volunteers to use to aid them in their work.

Cellphone companies sell USB modems that Volunteers may purchase to access Internet at their sites (where available). The cost of a USB modem is approximately \$30. One GB 3G + unlimited monthly Internet for Smart phones costs approximately \$8 per month. Current Volunteers recommend this option.

Please note that in emergencies, your family can call the Counseling and Outreach Unit in Washington, D.C. at 855.855.1961, option 1, ext. 1470. This office will then immediately contact Peace Corps/Nepal.

Housing and Site Location

Most of the Volunteer worksites are limited to the Hill regions of the western half of the country. The communities that PCVs live in will be relatively small agricultural villages or trading towns. Volunteers are not posted to the higher elevations of the Himalayan range where a significant amount of snow falls, nor will they be in the tropical Terai region.

Volunteers live in the communities where they serve and at the level of the people with whom they work. This means Volunteers often do without most of the amenities that they may be used to. Living conditions will be simple, thus flexibility and a sense of humor regarding living conditions will ease transition to the

PCV lifestyle. There is no guarantee of continuous electricity or running water in Kathmandu, much less the more rural areas of the country.

Volunteers are required to live with a Nepali family throughout their service. This level of immersion promotes Volunteer inclusion in the daily life of the community, facilitates language learning, is a key factor in ensuring safety and security, and is essential for productive work at the grassroots level.

It is vital that Volunteers form close bonds with individuals and families in the community so they clearly know who you are and what you are doing. They will also help keep you apprised of changing community issues or help you when you have a problem. Building good relationships with the Nepalis in your community is essential. As most Nepalis are very welcoming, all it takes is your commitment to make it happen.

At the same time, we want to stress that the Peace Corps/Nepal staff is here to help you and is confident that the support we provide will enable you to be healthy, happy, and productive during your time in Nepal.

Living Allowance and Money Management

Volunteers receive a monthly allowance in Nepali rupees that is sufficient to live at the level of the local people. The allowance covers food, housing, household supplies, clothing, transportation to and from work, utilities, recreation and entertainment, and incidental expenses. Peace Corps Volunteers are expected to live at a level that is comparable with that of their host country counterparts. The Peace Corps discourages Volunteers from supplementing their living allowance with funds from home.

During training, the Peace Corps takes care of most expenses and provides a small “walk around” allowance.

After PST, Volunteers receive a “settling-in” allowance, intended to support the purchase of household items for long-term use (e.g., towels, linens, etc.).

Volunteers receive their allowances via electronic funds transfers into local bank accounts, which are accessible by traveling to local bank branches. ATMs are also limited to larger cities and towns.

Credit cards can be used in Kathmandu and some tourist areas. There is a risk of potential identity theft associated with using credit cards in Nepal. Volunteers who travel in the region, however, find that having a credit card is essential.

Food and Diet

Trainees will live with host families to assist them in adapting to Nepali daily life, which includes diet. The daily diet of Nepalis is very different from the typical U.S. diet and adapting to it is one of the challenges Volunteers face. The daily staple in Nepal is *daal bhaat*: a plate of rice, a lentil sauce, and side dishes of vegetable greens and spicy chutneys. Each household’s *daal bhaat* is slightly different, but for Americans, eating *daal bhaat* twice a day (the Nepali norm) can get monotonous. *Daal bhaat* is a fact of daily life, and one that can be accommodated but not completely dispensed with.

Eggs, milk, meat, and some fruits may be difficult to obtain, particularly in more remote locations. Volunteers suggest bringing protein powder to supplement your diet. Crops grown in the Hill region include potatoes, corn, millet, pears, apples, peaches, oranges, and apricots. Imported foods such as cookies, canned fruits, fresh fruits and vegetables, and packaged soup may be available in some of the larger towns. The main meats are mutton (goat), water buffalo, and chicken. Fish is available throughout

the country, but mainly in the *terai*. Cheese and ice cream are available in major towns. Vegetarians should have little difficulty in Nepal.

Transportation

Public buses and airplanes are the modes of transportation for long-distance travel in Nepal. Bicycles, taxis, buses, rickshaws, and tempos (three-wheeled motorized vehicles) are the modes for local transportation. Volunteers are not allowed to operate cars and motorcycles. Some PCVs choose to ride bicycles. Volunteers are required to wear helmets when riding bicycles.

Travel in Nepal, whether by foot, bicycle, taxi, bus, or airplane, is potentially hazardous and therefore can be very stressful. Delays and cancellations due to bad weather, road or airport conditions, mechanical failures, or lack of personnel are to be expected. Bus travel is particularly difficult, as buses can be dirty and overcrowded and often are not properly maintained. More information on transportation within Nepal will be given during pre-service training.

Geography and Climate

Nepal is a landlocked country that borders China (Tibet) on the north and India on the west, south, and east. Nepal is at approximately the same latitude as Florida and is about the size of Tennessee—90 miles wide and about 500 miles long. Its topography is quite diverse, which influences lifestyles, climate and transportation.

The Himalayan range is one of three major geographical divisions in Nepal; the other two are the Hills/Middle Hills region and the *terai* region. Generally defining the northern border with Tibet, the Himalayan range contains some of the world's largest peaks, including Mount Everest at 29,028 feet. Only a tiny portion of Nepal's population lives permanently in the Himalayan region.

The Mahabharat and Siwalik ranges form the Hills/Middle Hills region, which is much lower than the main Himalayan range. This region constitutes 68 percent of Nepal's land area and is where Volunteer sites are.

The *terai* region, with a total area of 8,969 square miles, consists mainly of a narrow belt of flat, alluvial land on the border with India. It accounts for 17 percent of Nepal's land area. The *terai* is crossed by numerous streams that flood during the annual monsoon season, carrying tons of silt, sand, gravel, and huge boulders from the northern mountains.

Nepal can be divided into three broad climatic zones: subtropical, temperate, and alpine. The *terai*, the inner *terai*, and the lower foothills have a subtropical climate with three seasons—a hot and dry summer from March to May; a rainy season (monsoon) from June to October, with annual rainfall of between 80 and 100 inches (200 to 250 centimeters); and a cool winter from November to February, with temperatures ranging from 40 to 115 degrees Fahrenheit (5 to 47 degrees Celsius).

Social Activities

Nepal is a small country with an abundance of cultural diversity. There are more than 100 ethnic groups and castes in Nepal, and each has its own customs, festivals, rituals, and other social practices. There are also regional differences. Despite these differences, relationships are very important in Nepali culture. No matter where you live, people will want you to participate in their social activities. If you are invited to attend a festival or other social event, it is an indicator that you have been accepted into the community. Such events can be a very good opportunity to build trust, enhance social bonds with your community, and help fulfill the Second and Third Goals of the Peace Corps.

Trainees and Volunteers are expected to adapt themselves to Nepali social conditions and interact with this new culture with respect. Trainees and Volunteers come to Nepal on the Peace Corps' passports, not as tourists or ex-patriates, but as representatives of America in Nepal.

Professionalism, Dress, and Behavior

Appearance plays a vital role in gaining the respect of, and showing respect to, people in Nepal. Trainees and Volunteers should respect the dress traditions in Nepal. Nepalis are relatively conservative in their dress and Volunteers are expected to dress as their working counterparts do. While some counterparts and lower-level staff might dress in seemingly worn or shabby clothes, this will be because of economics rather than choice. Professional dress is expected in offices and in other community settings. Ties and suits, however, are not necessary. Pants and shirts for men and long skirts or dresses (ankle-length and nontransparent) and Nepali clothes for women are appropriate as professional wear.

Volunteers who wear ragged, unmended clothing are likely to be mistaken as disrespectful tourists. If a Volunteer's appearance becomes a matter of concern to local people or to Peace Corps staff, Peace Corps/Nepal reserves the right to request changes in dress that respect the local culture.

Exposing one's body by wearing scanty clothing is distasteful to traditional Nepalis. In a city or on the trail, women wearing short shorts or revealing tops and shirtless men will no doubt offend the modest Nepali people of those regions. When bathing in a stream or at a public water tap, women use a *loongi* (a long cloth) to cover themselves from chest to knees. Volunteers will learn these customs during pre-service training.

Personal Safety

More detailed information about the Peace Corps' approach to safety is contained in the Safety and Security section, 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 Nepal Volunteers complete their two years of service without incident. The Peace Corps has established procedures and policies designed to help reduce the risks and enhance your safety and security. These procedures and policies, in addition to safety training, will be provided once you arrive in Nepal. Using these tools, one can be empowered to take responsibility for his or her 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 to have a safe, healthy, and productive service. Volunteers and families are encouraged to look at safety and security information on the Peace Corps website at peacecorps.gov/safety.

Information on these pages gives messages on Volunteer health and 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

There are both challenges and rewards in being a Peace Corps Volunteer in Nepal. You can expect to have very little privacy, which can be quite challenging for a Westerner. On the other hand, relationships in Nepal are extremely important, and you will find that you will very quickly, with just a little effort on your part, be welcomed into your community as a respected guest and as a community and family

member. The open arms and warmth with which Nepalis receive visitors are one of the great gifts of living and working in Nepal.

At work, you may encounter a lack of motivation or a sense of apathy among your colleagues. This can be frustrating, and may remain so even after you have gained an understanding of some of the underlying causes. At the same time, however, you will meet extremely committed and talented people who are working very hard to improve conditions in Nepal. Change is slow, and in Nepal, as in many parts of the world, you may work for months without seeing any visible results of your efforts. The more your community feels ownership of its goals and the work involved in achieving them, the more likely it is that the goals will be achieved. An open mind, flexibility (even in your own expectations), patience, and a sense of humor will help you a great deal in sustaining your vision, commitment, and enthusiasm for your work as a Volunteer in Nepal.

PEACE CORPS TRAINING

Overview of Pre-Service Training

The Peace Corps uses a competency-based training approach throughout the continuum of learning, supporting you from arrival in Nepal to your departure. Pre-service training (PST) is the first event within this continuum of learning and ensures that you are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to effectively perform your job. Pre-service training is conducted in Nepal by Peace Corps staff, most of whom are locally hired trainers. Peace Corps staff measure achievement of learning and determine if you have successfully achieved competencies, including language standards, for swearing-in as a Peace Corps Volunteer.

Peace Corps training incorporates widely accepted principles of adult learning and is structured around the experiential learning cycle. Successful training results in competence in various technical, linguistic, cross-cultural, health, and safety and security areas.

Integrating into the community is one of the core competencies you will strive to achieve both in PST and during the first several months of service. Successful sustainable development work is based on the relationships you build by respectfully integrating into the host country community and culture.

You will be prepared for this through a homestay experience, which often requires trainees to live with host families during PST. Integration into the community fosters language and cross-cultural learning and ensures your health, safety, and security.

During PST there will be several opportunities for trainees to assess their own learning needs and take responsibility for addressing them. Peace Corps/Nepal's PST is 11 weeks long and covers language and culture, safety and security, health, and technical topics. The skills acquired through these training activities will serve as the foundation of the Peace Corps Volunteer experience in Nepal.

Immediately upon arrival in Kathmandu, trainees will undergo prioritized orientation sessions. After these sessions, trainee groups will travel to their training sites where they will live with host families for the duration of PST.

The PST training staff known as language and cultural facilitators (LCFs) and technical and cultural facilitators (TCFs) will live in the training sites as well. The LCFs are responsible for helping trainees with language and cross-cultural skills and provide support in completing self-directed cross-cultural and community assignments. The TCFs share their technical expertise and support trainees in completing technical assignments and identifying technical resources in the area.

Throughout PST, trainees study the Nepali language—in both basic spoken language and technical language. Cross-cultural training will focus on successfully building a rewarding life in Nepal.

Formal training will be held six days per week. This weekly schedule follows the Nepali government's work schedule, which is six days a week with Saturdays off.

Technical Training

Technical training will prepare you to work in Nepal 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, Nepal 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 Nepal and strategies for working within such a framework. You will review your project's goals and objectives and will meet with the Nepalese agencies and organizations that invited the Peace Corps to assist them. You will be supported and evaluated throughout training to build the confidence and skills you need to undertake your project activities, report your progress, and serve as a productive member of your community.

The main objective of the technical training component is to familiarize you with the issues that you will be attempting to address and provide you with skills to address them. While this may be challenging, it will help you better prepare for any difficult or ambiguous situations that you may later encounter at your workplace.

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, help you integrate into your community, and 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. Nepali language instructors usually teach formal language classes five days a week in small groups.

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 develop strategies to continue studying language during your service.

Nepali language training is also integrated in the health, culture, and technical components of PST.

Cross-Cultural Training

Cross-cultural training will provide opportunities for you to reflect on your own cultural values and how they influence your behavior in Nepal. You will also discuss the questions you have about the behaviors and practices you observe in Nepal, exploring the underlying reasons for these behaviors and practices.

Cross-cultural and community development training will help you improve your communication skills and understand your role as a facilitator of development. Training will cover topics such as the concept of time, power and hierarchy, gender roles, communication styles, and the concept of self and relationships. Because adjusting to a new culture can be very challenging, you will participate in resiliency training which provides a framework and tools to help with adjustment issues.

The host family experience provides a unique context for cross-cultural learning, and 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 PST and to assist them in helping you adapt to living in Nepal. Many Volunteers form strong and lasting friendships with their host families.

As with language, cross-cultural training is also integrated with the other topics of health, safety, and technical training.

Health Training

During pre-service training, you will be trained in health prevention, basic first aid, and treatment of medical illnesses found in Nepal. You will be expected to practice preventive health and to take

responsibility for your own health by adhering to all medical policies. Trainees are required to attend all medical sessions. Health education topics will nutrition, food and water preparation, emotional health, alcohol awareness, prevention of HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and common illnesses, domestic and intimate partner violence, emergencies, and medical policies in Nepal.

Safety and Security Training

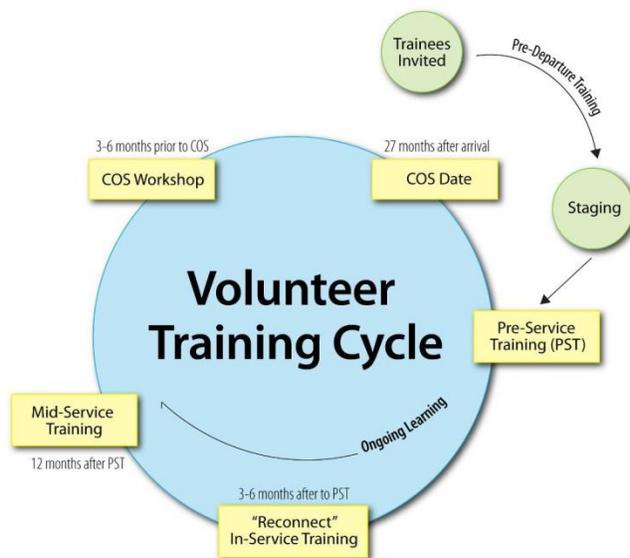
During the safety and security training sessions, you will learn how to adopt a lifestyle that reduces your risks at home, at work, and during your travels. You will also learn appropriate, effective strategies for coping with unwanted attention, how to identify safety risks in-country and about Peace Corps’ emergency response and support systems. During training, you will be expected to demonstrate your skills in dealing with a variety of safety-related issues.

Additional Trainings During Volunteer Service

The Peace Corps’ training system 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.
- **Midservice training** (done in conjunction with technical sector in-service): Assists Volunteers in reviewing their first year, reassessing their personal and project objectives, and planning for their second year of service.
- **Close-of-service conference:** Prepares Volunteers for their 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 IN NEPAL

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 Nepal maintains a clinic with a full-time medical officer who takes care of Volunteers' primary health-care needs, including evaluation and treatment of most medical conditions. Additional medical services are also available in Nepal at local hospitals. If you become seriously ill and cannot receive the care you need in Nepal, you will be transported to a Peace Corps-approved regional medical facility. If the Office of Health Services (OHS) determines that the care is not optimal for your condition at the regional facility, you will be transported to the United States.

Health Issues in Nepal

Major health problems among Peace Corps Volunteers in Nepal are infrequent and can sometimes be the result of Volunteers not taking preventive measures to stay healthy. The most common problems here are minor ones that are also found in the United States, such as colds, diarrhea, sinus infections, skin infections and rashes, minor injuries, sexually transmitted infections, and emotional problems. Some of these problems may be compounded by living in Nepal because certain environmental factors increase the risk or exacerbate the severity of illnesses and injuries.

The most common major health concerns in Nepal are dysentery, hepatitis, rabies, meningitis, typhoid fever, and to a lesser extent, malaria. You will be vaccinated against hepatitis A and B, meningitis, tetanus, diphtheria, Japanese encephalitis, typhoid, and rabies.

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 Nepal, you will receive a country-specific medical handbook. By the end of training, you will receive a medical kit with supplies to take care of mild illnesses and first aid needs. The contents of the kit are listed later in this section.

During pre-service training, you will have access to basic medical supplies through the medical officer. However, during this time, 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 mid-service and at the end of your service. If you develop a serious medical problem during your service, the medical officer in Nepal will consult with the Office of Health Services in Washington, D.C., or a regional medical officer. If it is determined that your condition cannot be treated in Nepal, 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 is worth a pound of cure" 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 Nepal is to take preventive measures:

Many illnesses that afflict Volunteers worldwide are preventable if proper food and water precautions are taken. These illnesses include food poisoning, parasitic infections, hepatitis A, dysentery, Guinea worms,

tapeworms, and typhoid fever. Your medical officer will discuss specific standards for water and food preparation in Nepal during pre-service training.

Rabies is present all over Nepal, and exposure can occur through animal bites, scratches from animals' teeth, and contact with animal saliva. The medical officer will take into consideration many factors in deciding the appropriate course of therapy necessary to prevent rabies, which is fatal if contracted. The Peace Corps medical officer will give the necessary rabies immunizations to all trainees.

Malaria, a mosquito-borne illness, is spreading due to warmer temperatures in regions that formerly stayed cool. Strict adherence to the recommended drug regimen for prevention of malaria is required for all Volunteers serving or traveling in these areas. The Peace Corps medical officer will discuss Nepal-specific recommendations for the prevention of malaria and steps that PCVs should take if they think they may have it, including prompt reporting to the medical office.

Abstinence is the most effective way to prevent infection with HIV and other STIs. 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 STIs. You will receive more information from the medical officer about this important issue.

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

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

Women's Health Information

If feminine hygiene products are not available for you to purchase on the local market, the Peace Corps medical officer in Nepal will provide them. If you require a specific product, please bring a three-month supply with you. Many female Volunteers take menstrual cups (The Diva Cup, The Keeper, The Moon Cup, etc.) to avoid potential problems with availability or disposal of feminine hygiene products.

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

The Peace Corps follows the 2012 U.S. Preventive Services Task Force guidelines for screening PAP smears, which recommend women aged 21–29 receive screening PAPs every three years and women aged 30–65 receive screening PAPs every five years. As such, most Volunteers will not receive a PAP during their service, but can use Peace Corps supplied health insurance after service to have an exam.

Your Peace Corps Medical Kit

The Peace Corps medical officer will provide you with a kit containing basic items to prevent and treat illnesses that may occur during service. Kit items can be periodically restocked at the medical office.

Medical Kit Contents

First Aid Handbook	Decongestant
Ace bandages	Dental floss
Acetaminophen (Tylenol)	Gloves
Adhesive tape	Hydrocortisone cream
Antacid tablets	Ibuprofen
Anti-diarrheal (Imodium)	Insect repellent
Antibiotic ointment	Iodine tablets (for water purification)
Antifungal cream	Lip balm
Antihistamine	Oral rehydration salts
Antiseptic antimicrobial skin cleaner	Scissors
Band-Aids	Sore throat lozenges
Bismuth Subsalicylate (Pepto-Bismol)	Sterile eye drops
Butterfly closures	Sterile gauze pads
Calagel anti-itch gel	Sunscreen
Condoms	Thermometer (Temp-a-dots)
Cough lozenges	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 Health Services (OHS). Failure to disclose new illnesses, injuries, allergies, or pregnancy can endanger your health and may jeopardize your eligibility to serve.

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 Health Services.

If you wish to avoid having duplicate vaccinations, bring a copy of your immunization record to your pre-departure orientation. If you purchase any immunizations prior to Peace Corps service that are not listed as requirement in your Medical Applicant Portal, the Peace Corps cannot reimburse you for the cost. The Peace Corps will provide all the immunizations necessary for your overseas assignment. Volunteers must be willing to get all required vaccinations unless there is a documented medical contraindication. Failure to accept required vaccination is grounds for administrative separation from the Peace Corps. 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. Medications supplied may be generic or equivalent to your current medications.

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 (of the current prescription) with you. 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 Office of Health Services strongly

discourages Volunteers from wearing contact lenses while overseas unless there is a true medical indication documented by your ophthalmologist. Contact lenses, particularly extended use soft contacts, are associated with a variety of eye infections and other inflammatory problems. One of the most serious of these problems is infectious keratitis which can lead to severe cornea damage which could result in permanent blindness requiring corneal transplantation. These risks of permanent eye damage are exacerbated in the Peace Corps environment where the Volunteer's ability to properly clean the lenses is compromised due to limited access to sterile water as well as decreased effectiveness of cleaning solutions due to prolonged storage in unsatisfactory conditions. In addition, when bacterial eye infections occur, assessment and treatment within hours by a competent ophthalmologist is indicated. This is virtually impossible in the Peace Corps setting. If you feel that you simply must be able to use your contacts occasionally, please consider using single use, daily disposable lenses which do not require cleaning.

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 IN DEPTH

Ensuring the safety and security of Volunteers is Peace Corps' highest priority. 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 most Volunteers complete their two years of service without a serious safety and security incident. Together, the Peace Corps and Volunteers can reduce risk, but cannot truly eliminate all risk.

Beyond knowing that the Peace Corps approaches safety and security as a partnership with you, it might be helpful to see how this partnership works. The Peace Corps has policies, procedures, and training in place to promote your safety. The Peace Corps depends 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 and impact of burglary—follows:

- The Peace Corps assesses the security environment where you will live and work.
- The Peace Corps inspects the house where you will live according to established security criteria.
- The Peace Corps ensures you are welcomed by host country counterparts or other community leaders in your new community.
- The 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.
- 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 the Peace Corps.
- You communicate your concerns to Peace Corps staff.

This welcome book contains sections on Living Conditions and Volunteer Lifestyle, Peace Corps Training, Your Health Care, and Safety and Security, all of which include important safety and security information to help you understand this partnership. The Peace Corps makes every effort to give Volunteers the training and tools they need to function in the safest way possible and prepare for the unexpected, teaching 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 Nepal there are several measures you can take to reduce your risk:

- Leave valuable objects in the United States, particularly those that are irreplaceable or have sentimental value
- Leave copies of important documents and account numbers with someone you trust in the States
- Purchase a hidden money pouch or "dummy" wallet as a decoy
- Purchase personal articles insurance

After you arrive in Nepal, 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 Nepal learn to do the following:

- 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
- Be careful and conscientious about using electronics (phones, cameras, laptops, iPods, etc.) in public or leaving them unattended
- 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 occurs in Nepal. You can reduce the risks 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.

The following are other security concerns in Nepal of which you should be aware:

- As indicated earlier, traveling in Nepal—whether by foot, bicycle, taxi, bus, or airplane—may be the most potentially hazardous part of the Volunteer experience. This is especially true of buses. Hiking trails between villages are not marked and can be perplexing. They can also be arduous, and crossing waterways without bridges may require the help of a local guide.
- Political instability also exists. For safety reasons, Peace Corps/Nepal does not place Volunteers in certain areas, and some of these areas have been designated “off limits.” Details will be shared during PST, but trainees should know that violation of this guidance may mean termination of service. The Peace Corps places its highest priority on the safety of Volunteers and continually assesses the conditions based on specific criteria.
- While whistles and verbal harassment based on race or gender may be fairly common on the street, this behavior may be reduced if you abide by local cultural norms, dress conservatively, and respond according to the training you will receive.

Staying Safe: Don't Be a Target for Crime

Because many Volunteer sites are in rural, isolated settings, you must be prepared to take on a large degree of responsibility for your own safety. To reduce the likelihood that you will become a victim of crime, you can take steps to make yourself less of a target such as ensuring your home is secure and developing relationships in your community. While the factors that contribute to your risk in Nepal 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 Nepal 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 and security 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 support and assist Volunteers who choose to make a formal complaint with local law enforcement. It is very important that a Volunteer reports an incident when it occurs. The reasons for this include obtaining medical care and emotional support, enabling Peace Corps staff to assess the situation to determine if there is an ongoing safety and security concern, protecting peer Volunteers and preserving the right to file a complaint. Should a Volunteer decide later in the process to file a complaint with law enforcement, this option may be compromised if evidence was not preserved at the time of the incident.

Office of Victim Advocacy

The Office of Victim Advocacy (OVA) is a resource to Volunteers who are victims of crime, including sexual assault and stalking. Victim advocates are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to help Volunteers understand their emotional, medical, and legal options so they may make informed decisions to meet their specific needs. The OVA provides a compassionate, coordinated, and supportive response to Volunteers who wish to access Peace Corps support services.

Contact information for the Office of Victim Advocacy

Direct phone number: 202.692.1753

Toll-free: 855.855.1961 ext. 1753

Duty phone: 202.409.2704 (available 24/7, call or text)

Email: victimadvocate@peacecorps.gov

Crime Data for Nepal

Crime data and statistics for Nepal, which are updated yearly, are available at the following link: <http://www.peacecorps.gov/volunteer/learn/safety/safeandsec/>

Please take the time to review this important information.

Few Peace Corps Volunteers are victims of serious crimes. Crimes that do occur abroad are investigated and prosecuted by local jurisdictional authorities. If you are the victim of a crime, you will decide if you wish to file a complaint with law enforcement, who will then determine whether to prosecute. If you decide to file a complaint, the Peace Corps will help through the process. The Peace Corps staff will ensure you are fully informed of your options and understand how the local legal process works. Further, the Peace Corps will help you exercise your rights to the fullest extent possible under the laws of your host country.

The Peace Corps will train you on how to respond if you are the victim of a serious crime, including how to get to a safe location quickly and contact your Peace Corps office. It's important that you notify the Peace Corps as soon as you can so Peace Corps staff can provide assistance.

Volunteer Safety Support in Nepal

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

The Peace Corps/Nepal office will keep you informed of any issues that may impact Volunteer safety through **information sharing**. Regular updates will be provided in Volunteer newsletters and in memorandums 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 to ensure 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 Nepal. 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/Nepal'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 Nepal 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 safety and security incidents 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 current and future Volunteers.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION OVERVIEW

The Peace Corps mission is to promote world peace and friendship and to improve people’s lives in the communities where Volunteers serve. Instituting policies and practices to support a diverse and inclusive work and Volunteer environment is essential to achieving this mission.

Through inclusive recruitment and retention of staff and Volunteers, the Peace Corps seeks to reflect the rich diversity of the United States and bring diverse perspectives and solutions to development issues. Additionally, ensuring diversity among staff and Volunteers enriches interpersonal relations and communications for the staff work environment, the Volunteer experience, and the communities in which Volunteers serve.

The Peace Corps defines diversity as a “collection of individual attributes that together help agencies pursue organizational objectives efficiently and effectively. These include, but are not limited to, characteristics such as national origin, language, race, color, disability, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, socioeconomic status, veteran status, and family structures. Diversity also encompasses differences among people concerning where they are from and where they have lived and their differences of thought and life experiences.”

We define inclusion as a “culture that connects each [staff member and Volunteer] to the organization; encourages collaboration, flexibility, and fairness; and leverages diversity throughout the organization so that all individuals are able to participate and contribute to their full potential.” The Peace Corps promotes inclusion throughout the lifecycle of Volunteers and staff. When staff and Volunteers are able to share their rich diversity in an inclusive work environment, the Peace Corps mission is better fulfilled. More information about diversity and inclusion can be found in the Volunteer Handbook.

An inclusive agency is one that seeks input from everyone in an effort to find the best ideas and strategies possible to execute its objectives. When input is solicited, heard, and considered from a rich multitude of individuals the best course of action usually emerges. The Peace Corps seeks to improve its operations and effectiveness by ensuring that all voices and ideas are heard and that all Volunteers and staff feel welcome and appreciated. When each person’s voice is heard, the agency is stronger and the impact of Volunteers is strengthened.

Diversity and Inclusion at Your Site

Once Volunteers arrive at their sites, diversity and inclusion principles remain the same but take on a different shape, in which your host community may share a common culture and you—the Volunteer—are the outsider. You may be in the minority, if not the sole American like you, at your site. You will begin to notice diversity in perspectives, ethnicity, age, depth of conversation, and degree of support you may receive. For example, elders, youth, and middle-aged individuals all have unique points of views on topics you may discuss, from perspectives on work, new projects, and social engagements to the way community issues are addressed.

Peace Corps staff in your host country recognize the additional adjustment issues that come with living and working in new environments and will provide support and guidance to Volunteers. During pre-service training, a session will be held to discuss diversity and inclusion and how you can serve as an ally for your peers, honoring diversity, seeking inclusion, challenging prejudice and exclusion, exploring your own biases, and learning mechanisms to cope with these adjustment issues. The Peace Corps looks forward to having Volunteers from varied backgrounds that include a variety of races, ethnic groups, ages, religions, sexual orientations and gender identities. The agency expects you to work collaboratively to create an inclusive environment that transcends differences and finds common ground.

Cross-Cultural Considerations

Outside of Nepal's capital, residents of rural communities might have had little direct exposure to other cultures, races, religions, and lifestyles. What people view as typical U.S. 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 Nepal are known for their generous hospitality to foreigners; however, members of the community where you will live may display a range of reactions to cultural differences that you present.

As a Volunteer and representative of the United States, you are responsible not only for sharing the diversity of U.S. culture (to include your individual culture and the culture of other Americans) with your host country national counterparts, but also for learning from the diversity of your host country. An important aspect of this cultural exchange will be to demonstrate inclusiveness within your community in a sensitive manner. Additionally, you will share the responsibility of learning about the diversity of your fellow Peace Corps Volunteers and exploring how best to respect differences while serving as supportive allies as you go through this challenging new experience.

To ease the transition and adapt to life in your host country, 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 they have in the United States; male Volunteers may be expected to not perform chores or other tasks ascribed to women; 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 a diversity, inclusion, and sensitivity discussion during pre-service training and will be on call to provide support. This training covers how to adapt personal choices and behavior to be respectful of the host country culture, which can have a direct impact on how Volunteers are viewed and treated by their new communities. The Peace Corps emphasizes professional behavior and cross-cultural sensitivity among volunteers and within their communities to help integrate and be successful during service.

An ideal way to view the pursuit of cross-cultural adaptation and/or cultural integration is to recognize that everything done in your host country has both a specific reason for why it is done and an expected outcome. Trust that your host country counterparts are acting with positive intentions and work to mutually seek understanding and commonality. Language differences may add a communication barrier and lead to misunderstandings. Listen more than you speak and seek clarity. Remember that having the ability to laugh at yourself and at life's little surprises goes a long way—laughter is universal.

What Might a Volunteer Face?

Possible Gender Role Issues

Gender is a set of socially constructed roles, responsibilities, behaviors, and opportunities. Gender differs from sex, which refers specifically to biological and physiological characteristics of males and females. Gender roles and expectations are learned, change over time, and vary within and among cultures. Volunteers are trained in gender awareness as they approach their work in the host country. Gender roles in the United States may differ greatly from those in your country of service. It is important to absorb and to attempt to understand the cultural nuances of gender where you are. For example, in many cultures males are held in higher regard than females and females may manage the households. In some places, females are encouraged to attend school, while in other countries females are discouraged from engaging in such activities and instead work inside or outside of the home.

During the pre-service training, trainees receive an introduction to gender awareness in their country of service, and examine their own thinking about gender roles and how this thinking has impacted them.

They then learn how to analyze development projects using a gender lens to better understand gender roles in their host country and to understand how these gender roles can benefit or limit what females and males may or may not do. During their 27 months of service, Volunteers will further engage in gender trainings to understand better how their gender identity impacts who they are as females or males in the host country and how this perception influences their work and relationships.

A female Volunteer in Nepal may face a variety of issues during her two years of service. One possible challenge is overly protective communities and host families. It may feel like a loss of freedom in comparison to what the average American woman is used to. Women are expected to be home by dusk, dress conservatively, and travel in groups. A similar problem may be present at the office, leaving the Volunteer feeling like she is being treated like a child or possibly that her work is taken less seriously. Another issue that female Volunteers should expect while in large cities is harassment. Nepali culture is not overly confrontational, so the most common form of harassment is catcalls and unwanted contact/touching, generally in crowded conditions like buses. From a distance, men will whistle, call out names, or, in rare cases, proposition Western women.

Possible Issues for Volunteers of Color

Volunteers of color sometimes, but not always, have a different Peace Corps experience than white Volunteers. Because of limited exposure, some foreign nationals will expect to see U.S. citizens who are white. Cultures of the world do not typically envision the States as a place of rich diversity with various culturally acceptable perspectives, personalities, and characteristics. Thus, a Volunteer of color may be questioned as about their U.S. citizenship.

In places where American stereotypes and/or caste system dynamics influence perception, Volunteers of color should be mindful of the reasons for these views without creating contentious environments. All too often, host country nationals are simply unaware of the diversity of the United States and require additional information and dialogue. Direct interactions with someone new or something different can take time to get used to, but those who take the time tend to be better off. Although host country nationals may assert that the United States is made up of predominately one race, we know that is not true. If a member of your community knows of compatriots living in the United States or of notable U.S. citizens of color, you can build on this knowledge as a point of reference for discussing diversity within the States.

For Volunteers of color, the range of responses to their skin color may vary from the extremely kind to the very insensitive. In African and Latin American countries, host country nationals may say “welcome home” to African Americans or Hispanic Americans. Sometimes Volunteers expect to be “welcomed home” but are disappointed when they are not. More commonly, if a Volunteer is mistaken for a host-country national citizen, he or she is expected to behave as a male or female in that culture behaves, and to speak the local language fluently. Host country nationals are sometimes frustrated when the Volunteer does not speak the local language with ease. Conversely, some in the same country may call you a “sell out” because they feel the United States has not done enough to help with social issues. These instances can be turned into teachable moments for the Volunteer and the host country national, in which the Volunteer can ask questions surrounding perception and collaborate with respect to issues and projects at hand, while engaging in cross-cultural exchanges. All Volunteers, to include white Volunteers and those of color, should be mindful of the issues of race that are embedded in U.S. culture and within the culture in your country of service. These issues may significantly affect how Volunteers interact with fellow Volunteers and host country nationals. Being open and inclusive to everyone will improve your experience in interacting with fellow Volunteers and members of your host community.

Volunteers may find that some Nepalis believe that all Asian Americans are Japanese, that some Nepalis openly refer to African Americans as “habsis” (a derogatory word for black people), and that some are convinced that Native Americans and Hispanic Americans originate from everywhere but the United States. All Volunteers, however, may experience annoying curiosity or hostility stemming from ignorance, resentment, or jealousy.

Possible Issues for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning/Queer, Ally (LGBTQA) Volunteers

For LGBTQ Volunteers: Given Nepal’s traditional values, sexual orientation and non-conforming gender identities might not be discussed openly. In some cases, the LGBTQ community may be stigmatized. Mindful of the cultural norms and country-specific laws, the decision to serve openly is left to each individual Peace Corps Volunteer. Many LGBTQ Volunteers have chosen to be discreet about their sexual orientation and/or gender identity within their host communities. Some LGBTQ Volunteers have chosen to come out to community members, with a result of positive and negative reactions, while some have come out only to select Peace Corps staff and Volunteers. Dealing with questions about boyfriends, girlfriends, marriage, and children may, at times, be stressful for LGBTQ Volunteers. You may find that Nepal is a less open and inclusive environment than you have previously experienced. Please know, however, that Peace Corps is supportive of you and Peace Corps staff welcomes dialogue about how to ensure your success as an LGBTQ Volunteer. More information about serving as an LGBTQ Volunteer is available at the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Peace Corps Alumni website at lgbpcv.org. Additionally, the Peace Corps’ LGBTQ employee resource group, Spectrum, can be reached at spectrum@peacecorps.gov.

For Ally Volunteers: Peace Corps staff intends to create open, inclusive, and accepting environments. As an agency, the Peace Corps encourages Volunteers to serve as allies to their LGBTQ colleagues in order to create a safe environment.

Many LGBTQ Volunteers have served successfully in Nepal and have very fond memories of their community and service. LGBTQ support groups may be available in your country of service, providing a network to support the needs of the Peace Corps LGBTQ community. Peace Corps staff will work with Volunteers to provide them with locally informed perspectives.

Gay, lesbian, and bisexual Volunteers who are used to being open about their sexual orientation indicate that homosexuality is not talked about or openly recognized in rural Nepali culture. Nepal has strong traditional values and religious customs, but that does not mean there are no gay, lesbian, or bisexual Nepalis. There has been considerable development in the LGBT community in Nepal, and marriage between same-sex couples is legal. An openly gay parliament member was elected and he spearheaded the idea of a “third gender” being included in the census. Neither of these would have been conceivable in Nepal just 10 years ago.

Possible Issues for Volunteers with Disabilities

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

Possible Issues for Volunteer Couples

Before committing to Peace Corps service, couples should consider how different degrees of enthusiasm about Peace Corps service, adaptation to the physical and cultural environment, and homesickness will affect their lives. It can be helpful to recognize that your reactions to these issues will change throughout

your service, and you may not always feel the same as your partner. You and your partner will have different jobs, different schedules, and difference societal pressures. One partner may learn the language faster than the other or have a more satisfying assignment. This can create competition and put different kinds of stress on each person. Anticipating how these pressures will affect you and your partner differently throughout your service can help you remain a source of support for each other. Making friends with other Volunteers is a critical part of fitting into the larger volunteer culture and can also be a good way to expand your support network.

While couples will live together during their service, they may live in separate towns during their pre-service training. This is a stressful time for most Volunteers, and it can be helpful to discuss in advance how you will deal with this potential separation. Your partner can be an important source of stability but can also add stress to your training experience. You may feel torn between traveling to visit your partner and focusing on your training, your host family, and friends you have made at your training site.

Couples often face pressure from host country nationals to change their roles to conform better with traditional Nepal relationships. Nepal men and women alike will often not understand American relationship dynamics and may be outwardly critical of relationships that do not adhere to traditional gender roles. It is also helpful to think about how pressures to conform to Nepal culture can be challenging to men and women in very different ways. Considering how your partner is being affected and discussing what, if any, aspects of your relationship should be changed can help reduce stress for you both.

Possible Issues for 50+ Volunteers

Older Volunteers may find their age an asset in Nepal. They will often have access to individuals and insights that are not available to younger Volunteers. On the other hand, they will be in a distinct minority within the Volunteer population and could find themselves feeling isolated, looked up to, or ignored.

Older Volunteers are often accustomed to a greater degree of independence and freedom of movement than the Peace Corps' program focus and safety and security practices allow. Pre-service training can be particularly stressful for older trainees, whose lifelong learning styles and habits may or may not lend themselves to the techniques used. A 50+ individual may be the only older person in a group of Volunteers and initially may not feel part of the group. Younger Volunteers may look to an older Volunteer for advice and support; some find this to be an enjoyable experience, while others choose not to fill this role. Some 50+ Volunteers may find it difficult to adapt to a lack of structure and clarity in their role after having worked for many years in a very structured and demanding job.

More than younger Volunteers, older Volunteers may have challenges in maintaining lifelong friendships and dealing with financial matters from afar. They may want to consider assigning power of attorney to someone in the States.

Older people are greatly respected in Nepali culture, which can sometimes translate into older Volunteers feeling that their communities are overprotective. Similar to issues that single women face, older Volunteers will feel a loss of independence as people scramble to meet their needs.

The legal retirement age is 55, though this may be deferred until a person is 60, which is the mandatory retirement age. Volunteers over 60 years old may sense resentment from community members who were forced to retire at that age.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How much luggage am I allowed to bring to Nepal?

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 100 pounds total with a maximum weight of 50 pounds per 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 Nepal?

The electric current is 220 volts. The outlets in Nepal vary considerably and may be one of four different types. Plug adapters may be purchased locally. Electricity is not reliable in Nepal, even in Kathmandu, and may not be available in all places or at all times. If you bring battery-operated items, please be aware that "C" batteries are hard to find in Nepal; "D" and "AA" batteries are more easily found, but are of generally poor quality.

The lack of reliable electricity may make it very difficult to recharge the batteries of cameras, cellphones, and laptops. Some people invest in solar rechargers for batteries and small electronics, and have had good success as there is plenty of sun in Nepal. There is no need to bring a large solar battery charger, but small solar/portable battery chargers are great for recharging music/phones on long bus rides.

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 (contact your insurance company for information). Volunteers should not ship or take valuable items overseas. Jewelry, watches, radios, cameras, electronics, 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 Nepal 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 Nepal 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. Some sites may require more than a 12-hour drive from the capital to reach the Peace Corps/Nepal office.

How can my family contact me in an emergency?

The Peace Corps Counseling and Outreach Unit provides assistance in handling emergencies affecting trainees and Volunteers or their families. Before leaving the United States, instruct your family to notify the Counseling and Outreach Unit immediately if an emergency arises, such as a serious illness or death of a family member. The Counseling and Outreach Unit can be reached at 855.855.1961, select option 1, ext. 1470. After business hours, on weekends, and on holidays, the COU duty officer can be reached at the same number. For non-emergency questions, your family can contact your country desk staff through the main Peace Corps number: 855.855.1961.

How easy is it to call home from Nepal?

It is easy for most Volunteers to call home from Nepal. International phone service is generally available in towns and most sites are within one hour of cellphone coverage. More and more, people use Web-based calling services, though the video option for these will rarely work due to the slow Internet speed in many places.

Should I bring a cellphone with me?

Peace Corps/Nepal will issue you a simple cellphone for safety and security purposes, however Volunteers suggest "if you want to easily contact your family and other Volunteers, a GSM/ unlocked cell phone is invaluable."

Will there be email and Internet access? Should I bring my computer?

Some towns have email access, and use of the Internet is common in the capital. Volunteers at remote sites will have limited access to email and the Internet. These days, almost all Volunteers bring portable laptop computers and find them to be very helpful in both their work and for recreation. A computer is required for Peace Corps-related work. Volunteers are responsible for the cost of insuring and maintaining them. The Peace Corps will not replace stolen computers and encourages those who bring them to get personal property insurance. If you bring a laptop, you might want to buy a high-quality surge protector (for 220 volts) to protect your computer from the ups and downs of the electricity here.

More and more places offer Wi-Fi and, in rural areas, some people must rely on cellphone provider USB modems for Internet access. These are relatively slow, so it is unlikely that Volunteers will be able to watch streaming videos or download extremely large files, but they should allow for Web-surfing and emailing.

WELCOME LETTERS FROM NEPAL VOLUNTEERS

Dear Peace Corps/Nepal Invitees,

Welcome to your first steps of your latest and greatest journey into the world of Nepal. I am excited for you to begin eating daal bhaat with your right hand, using the *charpi* with your left, and making the decision to do it oppositely if you are left-handed. You are in great hands with the training team during PST (pre-service training) and beyond, so not to worry. However, I'd say it's best to equip yourself with as much Nepali knowledge as possible before you enter the country. Listen to Nepalese music if you can find some CDs, or look up vocabulary and practice the basic useful phrases. Language is a key part to the journey ahead. Another word of advice I'd like to lay down for future reference is "shake off the little things" and as Nike and my dad always said, "Just do it!" From my own experience, Health Volunteers are challenged to learn a great depth of language to communicate nutrition and sanitation trainings, however thinking creatively about project ideas and finding motivated community partners can aid you on your path to productivity. Keep in mind your own personal motives for joining the Peace Corps and your decision to live in Nepal, and remind yourself of it often. We are all in this together; however, every Volunteer has their own reasons and motivations for their commitment and it's best to stick to your own and not be challenged by someone else's! Enjoy the fresh air of the village and the beautiful night skies. When you find yourself in Kathmandu or Pokhara, splurge on good food: You deserve it. From the States, pack yourself some dark chocolate-covered almonds and banana chips (Doritos and Poptarts for those who need their comfort snacks) and stock up on protein bars and jerky (vegan jerky, turkey jerky, beef jerky, all the jerky!). Bring a durable trekking backpack, a headlamp, lots of comfortable underwear, and silica gel packs (to fight monsoon molding of your precious items and electronics).

Enjoy the ride and I wish you all nothing but great adventures and memories. I hope you find and relish new perspectives on work, life, and happiness while serving in the Peace Corps.

Namaste,
N200 Volunteer

Namaste!

I am an N200 Health Volunteer serving in the district of Parbat located in the western region of Nepal.

My village is situated on top of a mountain, an hour and a half to walk from the nearest bazaar. I have worked on building improved cookstoves and have given trainings addressing mental health, basic nutrition, and sanitation. However, over the course of my service I have shifted more and more toward the agriculture sector, forming an agricultural co-operative, two farmer's groups, and working with these to give trainings on plastic houses, ground apples, and off-seasonal vegetables.

Nepal is a phenomenal country. The land and the people are beautiful and I could not have asked for a better placement. While there are ups and downs, when the cool mountain breeze from the Himalayas crowning the horizon sweeps down, I know that I have been incredibly lucky to have this opportunity and experience. So, congratulations! Make the most of it and blaze your own path. Each experience is unique you'll have fun writing your own story.

Cheers!
N 200 Volunteer

Dear Peace Corps/Nepal Invitees,

Namaste!

I live in the Far West region of Nepal. I am in group PCN 201 and have been in Nepal for eight months now. My village is located along a river in a beautiful valley. I was fortunate to have the site I have. The weather here is actually fairly similar to my home in California: not too hot, not too cold. The hills resemble California as well, although it's more jungly here than back home. My village is located along a river in a beautiful valley.

I have four goals for my service:

1. Improve the nutrition education of the health post where I work.
2. Do a mushroom project in which I would use funding from a Peace Corps grant to grow mushrooms in a village that is a six-hour walk from the main bazaar. People from that village can get more money per pound from selling mushrooms than other vegetables.
3. My third goal is to restart and reprogram the collection center in my village. The collection center will be a place in the main bazaar that people can bring their vegetables to sell. Whatever is not sold locally will be brought to larger wholesale buyers in other towns.
4. Do a Camp GLOW (Girls Leading Our World) in the Far West. Camp GLOW is done in many Peace Corps countries and is a great girls' empowerment program.

As I am sure you know by now, Nepal has a wide range of climate so be prepared for anything! I packed a little more than I needed, but I was happy to be prepared. The one thing I wish I had packed was a down jacket for the winter.

Also, for the ladies, I brought some reusable pads for that special time of the month and I really like them! I wash them every month. I feel it's way better than using disposable things that you need to burn, and, in my opinion, more sanitary than the Diva Cup.

The best part of my life here is that every day is different. I also like being able to control my own schedule and decide what projects I want to be involved with. I am also pretty easy going. I also am happier when there is a certain degree of challenge. I have great friends at the health post where I work and my family has a fun sense of humor. Just know that no matter what you read, or hear, from past Volunteers, your experience will be very unique!

I remember how excited I was to hear about my placement in Nepal and I hope you are happy with your placement too! Nepal is a very welcoming country to Peace Corps Volunteers and they will be so happy to have you! Don't be afraid to step outside your comfort zone and accept invitations as you never know what surprises lie ahead. Also, remember to get some time every day to yourself. Nepali culture is very communal (which is awesome), but I have found I am much happier when I get at least a little time every day to myself.

Enjoy the journey!

Sincerely,

N 201 Volunteer

Hello Nepal Invitees,

Congrats on selecting (and being selected by; it's a prestigious group, no big deal) Nepal as your country of service! As a Volunteer who's got just about two months left here, I have say that you are in for a pretty good time. If you were expecting me to say "the most amazing time of your life," sorry, but I tend to err on the side of hyperbole and have been trying to dial it back. But this is a great and definitely unique country to experience, especially since you'll be continuing the work others have started by building up this fairly new program.

You'll see breathtaking sights, eat both delicious food as well as food so bad it'll haunt you for what I expect to be years to come (but in a good way), make some insanely close friends, learn an outrageous amount about yourself and the world around you, wait for the bus, go through a ridiculous number of flip-flops, speak a different language, cut grass, live curiously close to livestock, go to endless festivals, travel like a pro, more waiting for bus, discover that crabs exist in the mountains, hopefully do some of the best hiking in the world, have your love/hate of rice staunchly define you as a person, eat weird and wonderful fruits and vegetables (except bitter gourd; it is pretty polarizing, but try it anyway), study tube meatology (as in, the study of tube meats and how you feel about them being in your life), possibly eat the giant land snails and horrify your host family, continue to wait for that bus, aaaaand you'll also do a healthy amount of Peace Corps projects and programs in the areas of agriculture and nutrition. In my time here, among other projects, I was lucky enough to get to work with several other Volunteers on a GLOW (Girls Leading Our World) Camp and it was the most rewarding program I worked on. I sincerely hope you will value your service, through all the dizzying highs and lows, as I and my fellow PCVs have.

Cheers,

N200 Volunteer

PACKING LIST

This list has been compiled by Volunteers serving in Nepal 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 100-pound weight limit on baggage. And remember, you can get almost everything you need in Nepal.

General Clothing

- Two or three pairs of cotton pants (some Volunteers bring one pair that zips off at the knee level or lower)
- Two or three long-sleeved shirts and two or three short-sleeved shirts
- Two or three polo shirts (if you wear them)
- Three or four T-shirts
- One or two pairs of shorts/capris for sports (knee-length is recommended for women)
- One or two wool sweaters
- A pair of sweatpants, or warm, comfortable pants to wear at home when it's cold
- Six to 12 pairs of cotton socks of varying thicknesses (for different temperatures and purposes—from office wear to hiking)
- Cotton underwear (bring a two-year supply or arrange for someone to send you some replacements later); quick-dry items can be very nice to have here (especially underwear)
- One or two sets of thermal underwear (bigger sizes may not be available for purchase in Nepal) if you plan on trekking in the winter or above 3,000 meters
- One or two pairs of jeans (to wear when visiting Kathmandu). Generally also acceptable at office.
- Pajama pants (can be made almost anywhere in Nepal)
- One or two swimsuits

For Women

- One or two cotton dresses
- Two or three cotton shirts
- Two or three long-sleeved blouses
- Cotton bras and jogging bras for bumpy bus rides (good quality bras are hard to find in Nepal)

Note: You can get clothes tailored/repared very cheaply here with fabric of varying quality. Some of your clothes will probably mold/break. Don't bring things that cannot be replaced.

Shoes

- One pair of casual shoes, which can also be used for dressy occasions
- One pair of walking shoes (and running shoes if you jog)
- One pair of hiking boots of light to medium weight
- One pair of sturdy sandals (e.g., Tevas)

Volunteer note: You can simplify with one sandal + one pair trail shoe/boot.

Notes: Since you will be spending so much time on your feet, you should bring sturdy shoes that fit well and are broken in. Although shoes can be bought here, they generally are of poor quality and the selection of larger sizes may be limited (up to size 10 for men and size 8 for women).

All these items can be found in Kathmandu, but remember, you get what you pay for.

Personal Hygiene and Toiletry Items

- Toothbrushes and toothpaste—bring one or two of your favorite brands, although many are available. Colgate with fluoride can be found here.
- Shampoo and conditioner (leave-in conditioner is not available but familiar brands are in larger cities)
- Deodorant (stick deodorant can't be found in developing Asian countries, if you need it, stock up, if not, you can find roll on)
- Nail clippers
- Skin lotion
- Contact lens solutions (the medical office discourages the use of lenses and does not provide supplies, so disposable ones are best; bring eyeglasses as a backup)
- Diva cup (female PCVs consider this essential), or tampons and pads (a three-month supply to last through training; after training the Peace Corps supplies a limited variety)
- Pumice stone

Note: All of these items can be purchased locally at a reasonable cost, but certain brands may not be available. Most Volunteers find that they can get along with what they find here, but bringing your favorite brands will help you transition.

Electronics

The ability to entertain yourself and friends is very important in Nepal because you will be left to your own resources for entertainment. Below are some items to consider bringing, some of which may be available in Kathmandu, though perhaps of lower quality than what you are used to.

- MP3 player
- Laptop (PCs are easier to repair in-country and are compatible with Peace Corps reporting software)
- External hard drive for movies, TV shows /music/podcasts
- Portable rechargeable or battery-powered speakers
- Books or an ebook reader
- Camera (or multiple cameras—Nepal is extremely photogenic)
- Extra batteries for electronic gear (rechargeable batteries and a solar or electric recharger are recommended, even though the upfront cost is high; also available here)
- Wristwatch (a digital watch with an alarm is recommended; replacement batteries and watchbands are available locally)
- Plug adaptors (Nepali outlets seem to correspond to Northern European-style plugs)
- Surge protector (if you bring a laptop)

Kitchen

- Plastic food storage containers (available in Nepal, but expensive)
- Re-sealable plastic bags of assorted sizes for storing spices, etc. (Volunteers recommend “freezer” quality)
- Knife sharpener

Miscellaneous

- Medium-size backpack with a waist belt
- Day pack for short trips and walking around town
- Sleeping bag (extremely useful—see note below)
- Water bottle

- Swiss Army knife with standard attachments or a Leatherman tool
- Small durable flashlight
- Headlamp (essential for late-night trips to the *charpi*)
- Polarized sunglasses
- Combination locks: small ones for luggage or hostel lockers if you plan to travel
- Sewing kit
- Silica gel packs to protect cameras and film during the monsoon season (available but very expensive): great with those freezer bags
- Earplugs (to block out barking dogs at night)
- Duct tape
- One or two bath and hand towels (darker colors are better, quick-dry towel recommended)
- Good hiking belt (light and thin only for hardcore trekking)
- Small musical instruments
- Pictures of family and friends (neighbors and friends at your worksite will enjoy seeing pictures of your life in the United States)
- Travel games such as Scrabble, Uno, or Bananagrams
- Hobby supplies (art, writing, music, etc.)

Note: Of the above-mentioned items, a majority of Peace Corps/Nepal Volunteers strongly endorsed the following: (1) Nalgene water bottles, which are truly unbreakable, are used by Volunteers on a daily basis. The quality of all drinking water in Nepal is not only poor but dangerous; therefore, most Volunteers carry their own filtered and boiled or iodized water to ensure its quality. Bring two one-liter bottles. (2) Many Volunteers who have brought large backpacks have found them to be of little use in traveling. Generally 65 liters and less, anything bigger will make you pack things you don't really need and make moving all your stuff difficult. If you chronically overpack and are OK with it disregard this, but two bags around 65 liters and 40 liters would be more than enough. Remember quality over quantity. Medium-size packs with waist belts or large day packs are the most practical. (3) Almost every Volunteer who brought a sleeping bag was glad that he or she did. But bags that are rated for temperatures below 0 degrees Fahrenheit are too warm on most occasions. It is best to bring a bag rated to around 20 F. Mummy-style and lightweight bags are best.

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 are relevant to everyone, and the list is not comprehensive.

Family

- Notify family that they can call the Counseling and Outreach Unit at any time if there is a critical illness or death of a family member (24-hour phone number: 855.855.1961 ext. 1470).
- Give family and friends the Peace Corps [On the Home Front](#) handbook.

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 service; 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 abroad, 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 United States.
- Obtain student loan deferment forms from the lender or loan service. Information about loan deferment is at peacecorps.gov/loans.
- 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 855.855.1961 ext. 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: 855.855.1961, press 1, then extension number (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
Responding to an invitation	Office of Placement	ext. 1840	202.692.1840
Country information	Country Desk Officer	ext. 2316 nepal@peacecorps.gov	202.692.2316
Plane tickets, passports, visas, or other travel matters	CWT SATO Travel	ext. 1170	202.692.1170
Legal clearance:	Office of Placement	ext. 1840	202.692.1840
Medical clearance and forms processing (includes dental)	Screening Nurse	ext. 1500	202.692.1500
Medical Applicant Portal questions		amsadmin@peacecorps.gov	
Medical reimbursements (handled by a subcontractor)			800.544.1802
Loan deferments, taxes, financial operations		ext. 1770	202.692.1770
Readjustment allowance withdrawals, power of attorney, staging (pre-departure orientation), and reporting instructions	Office of Staging	ext. 1865	202.692.1865
New Volunteer Portal questions		staging@peacecorps.gov	
<i>Note: You will receive comprehensive information (hotel and flight arrangements) three to five weeks prior to departure. This information is not available sooner.</i>			
Family emergencies (to get information to a Volunteer overseas) 24 hours	Counseling and Outreach Unit	ext. 1470	202.692.1470
Office of Victim Advocacy		ext. 1753 24 hours (call or text)	202.692.1753 202.409.2704