

PEACE CORPS RESPONSE VOLUNTEER POSITION DESCRIPTION

Country: Liberia
Program: Post Conflict Reconstruction
Assignment Title: Parent Teacher Association Organizer
Partnering Organization: World Food Program
PCRVs Requested: 1
Desired Start Date: September, 2008
Length of Assignment: 9 Months
Location: Zwedru
Funding: PCR Appropriated

Project Background:

Between 1989 and 2003, intermittent civil war in Liberia claimed the lives of more than 200,000 Liberians and further displaced a million others into refugee camps in neighboring countries.

Peaceful elections held in 2005 and the inauguration of the first female Head of State in Africa in 2006, ushered in a period of hope and high expectations for recovery and development after decades of poor governance and destabilization. The consequences of 14 years of brutal conflict constitute high challenges to Liberia's recovery, reform and rebuilding process. The government of Liberia, with the aid of international partners – of which the United States is the largest bilateral donor – is slowly restoring public confidence in political, social, economic, and judicial institutions while addressing the regional disparity and bad governance that contributed to the conflict.¹

The war devastated the infrastructure (poor and dilapidated roads, water, electricity, health and education services) resulting in widespread poverty, complete lack of, or extremely limited agricultural production and breakdown of family and community coping mechanisms. Internally Displaced People (IDPs) have been most affected; some of them have been displaced seven times since 1999. As a result, Liberia remains among the world's most food insecure countries.

The entire population of Liberia was affected by fourteen years of protracted civil conflict. World Food Program (WFP) has been providing food rations to about a third of the population (870,000 beneficiaries) every month since 2003. A national nutrition survey conducted in 1999-2000 indicated long-term nutritional problems among children, with 39% of children stunted, 26% underweight and some 6% wasted. Iron and vitamin A deficiencies are also extremely high at 86% and 53% respectively among children. The nutrition situation is expected to have deteriorated since then. Mortality rates are also one of the highest in the world.²

□ USAID country notes: www.usaid.gov/locations/sub-saharan_africa/countries/liberia/index.html

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□ WFP Discussion Paper: Food Security in Liberia, December, 2005

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The conflict in Liberia impacted many sectors of society including the education sector, having a devastating impact on the education system. Schooling was badly disrupted, and only a quarter of primary school age children were reported to be in school in 2004. Food-insecure families often employ children into income activities instead of sending them to school. Girls are more severely affected because many families make a trade-off between investment in the future and immediate survival by sending boys to school and putting girls to work³.

Since 2004, a large proportion of schools have reopened. Although 84% of school-age children between 6 and 18 are enrolled, many are in a catch up phase. However, in the rural areas the enrolment rates were still low: 30% of boys and 37% of girls in the age group 6 – 18 were still not enrolled in any education institution owing partly to the inability of parents to meet associated costs and poor infrastructure. School drop-out rates have remained high for girls.

The 2006 Comprehensive Food Security and Nutrition Survey shows that due to security restrictions, the majority of children did not attend school regularly or were forced to leave as their families were displaced. Since the conflict ended, both children and young adults are able to attend school on a regular basis. 69% of school age children (6-18 years) have been enrolled in some formal level of schooling. The percentage of enrolment varies by counties, ranging from a low 40% in Grand Basses to a relatively high 81% in Grand Gedeh. Across all counties girls are disadvantaged compared to boys. Overall, 73% of the boys and only 64% of the girls aged 6-18 are enrolled. Large gender gaps were found in some counties; for instance, females are enrolled at similar rates as males until they reach approximately 14 years of age when female enrolment begins to lag behind male enrolment, with this difference in enrolment increasing with age. In total, 31% of school –age children were not enrolled at all.

History of Peace Corps in Liberia:

More than 3,800 Volunteers have served in Liberia between 1962 and close of operations in 1990, when the program was suspended due to the civil war. During those 28 years, Volunteers served in every facet of Liberia's development efforts. Program emphasis was on education, agriculture, rural development and health. Peace Corps is fondly remembered and well loved in Liberia, and most people over the age of 35 had a Peace Corps teacher during their education.

Partner Background:

World Food Program (WFP) is a United Nations food assistance agency. WFP is involved in life-saving emergency aid and also emphasizes eradicating the root cause of hunger. WFP looks for programs to protect livelihoods in emergencies; invests in disaster preparedness and mitigation measures; and helps countries build capacity to develop food policies.

WFP, in association with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), plans to mobilize Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) and create awareness of community leaders to support the school feeding program at the community level in the five South East counties.

Project Description:

- UN- Critical Humanitarian Gaps in Liberia – March 2008
- UN- Critical Humanitarian Gaps in Liberia – March 2008

WFP, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education (MOE), implemented the school feeding program in Liberia in the early 1970s. The program was interrupted by the outbreak of the civil war in 1989 but resumed in 2003 to reinforce the government's "Back to School" program. "Back to School" was launched to support the MOE and local communities to rehabilitate and revive the country's shattered educational system.

In mid 2007, WFP approved a two-year (July 2007 to June 2009) project which coincided with the shift of WFP intervention in Liberia from "emergency" to "relief and recovery" activities to be implemented in the 15 counties. In June 2008 a school feeding project in the five southeast counties was approved. The school feeding project will be implemented in the 2008/2009 school year in the chronically food insecure areas that require a longer-term development approach.

The creation of viable and active Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) is an important goal of the MOE. As schools are re-established, there is a desire to involve parents in the welfare of their children through effective and transparent feeding programs, quality teaching, and well run schools, as well as to have the school become a focal point for the community. It is also hoped that PTAs can encourage school enrolment and attendance. Moreover, PTAs will help to instill the notion of volunteerism in the nation. There have been a number of independent efforts to organize PTAs, so the MOE has created a handbook to unify and coordinate the work of PTAs throughout Liberia.

In the school feeding project, provision is made for eventual handover to the government by building MOE capacity in project management, logistics and monitoring. For the 2008/2009 school year, it is planned that partners will gradually hand over their role to District Education Officers (DEOs). It is expected in the long term that the monitoring activities will be under MOE responsibility with WFP support through the Sub Office Field monitors. During the 2007/2008 school year, WFP faced some challenges in the implementation of the school feeding project. MOE has limited human and logistical capacity in the implementation and monitoring of the school feeding project and community and PTA participation is very low. Due to these constraints, WFP decided to work with specialized partners (including Peace Corps and NGOs) to collaborate in PTA mobilization and to create awareness of community authorities to support the school feeding program in the five southeast counties.

The Peace Corps Response Volunteer (PCR/V) will work jointly with the school feeding sections of MOE and WFP at the county level as well as in consultation with MOE and WFP school units at the regional and national level to mobilize community members to support the school feeding program in all targeted primary schools. All of Peace Corps' activities hereunder is subject to the availability of funds.

Upon execution of a worldwide implementing instrument ("Implementing Instrument") by WFP and Peace Corps pursuant to that certain Memorandum of Understanding signed on November 12, 2007, by WFP and Peace Corps, the terms and conditions of such Implementing Instrument shall govern the parties' relationship and the PCR/V assignments.

Project Goal:

To provide leadership mentoring to Parent Teacher Associations and community members and build the capacity to develop transparent and open systems of communication and administration of the school feeding program and to improve the representation of women at all levels.

Duties & Responsibilities:

Under the direct Supervision of the WFP Head of Sub Office and in close collaboration with the School Feeding Unit of the MOE and WFP, the PCRV will be responsible for building the capacity of individual PTAs and their leadership. The PCRV will support the development of transparent, open communication and procedures among PTAs and community members as well as with WFP and school staff who are employed by the MOE.

This will involve the following activities:

- Work in close collaboration with WFP and partners to establish a strategy to mobilize PTAs and create awareness to the community leaders;
- Provide information to PTAs and community leaders on food storage, handling and cooking on a voluntary and rotational basis at the school level;
- Train local youth as focal points to mobilize the PTAs and the community;
- Provide information to PTAs and the community on hygiene and food ration scales and to monitor the food preparation at the school level;
- Conduct training and meetings for all community and PTA members of the targeted schools and follow up visits to the schools;
- Carry out joint training along with WFP to link County and District Education Officers (CEOs and DEOs) on the activities of PTAs and community mobilization;
- Serve as liaison for community leaders, school authorities and WFP to define clear roles and responsibilities for the school feeding activities;
- Design, in collaboration with NGO partners and with the PTA division of MOE, a training package for PTAs as well as community awareness campaigns about the school feeding project (training and mobilization);
- Participate with NGO partners in developing a simple guideline using the MOE PTA manual;
- [Join monitoring field trips as needed (but will not monitor)], coordinating with the WFP Sub Office Education Officers, School Feeding focal person at county level and NGO partners;
- Promote the representation and involvement of women at all levels.

The Peace Corps Response Volunteer will advise and mentor PTAs, as appropriate, in such areas as:

- Open, transparent leadership;
- Participatory decision-making;
- Promoting an inclusive strategic planning process;
- Effective coordination between PTAs and schools;
- Address systemic issues jointly;
- Transparent and accountable monitoring;
- Promote the representation of and participation by women ; and
- Develop practical open linkages between PTAs/MOE/Schools/Community/WFP.

PCRVs shall not be engaged in any kind of direct services to final beneficiaries (e.g., food distribution to final beneficiaries) or any activity involving the recruitment, selection or award of benefits to local recipients, or other activity outside the scope of this Position Description.

Recruitment and Selection:

The Peace Corps, through its Peace Corps Response Program, will recruit and select PCRVs with the skills outlined in the Position Description(s) who have already served successfully as Peace Corps Volunteers. Peace Corps' selection of PCRVs for this project will be made after screening for language and technical skills, regional work experience, professional references, suitability for service, and legal and medical evaluations. The WFP will fully entrust recruitment and selection of the PCRVs to the Peace Corps.

Mandatory Qualifications:

- Experience in working with community based volunteer organizations
- Leadership experience in organizing volunteers through schools or NGOs
- Public speaking skills
- Experience in training youth or adults
- Ability to plan and lead meetings
- Ability to organize and implement projects
- Experience in team-oriented approaches to ensure a well-operated institution
- Good communication and personal skills
- Strong organizational and planning skills
- Ability to work in a challenging environment
- Creative problem solving skills

Desired Qualifications:

- Experience in a PTA as a member, a leadership position preferred
- Knowledge of handling and storing food
- Knowledge of project design and management
- Able to actively promote the use of participatory methods
- Experience in inclusive, open leadership and team-orientation
- Experience working in sub-Saharan Africa
- Understanding of a post-conflict environment
- Creativity in working in an environment with limited resources

Working Conditions:

The WFP Zwedru Sub Office covers three counties in the southeast (Sinoe, River Gee and Grand Gedeh). The Peace Corps Response Volunteer will be based in Zwedru in Grand Gedeh County, with frequent trips to the others counties to support the PTA and community mobilization. WFP will be responsible for providing or funding all work-related, WFP-approved, travel and other work-related expenses.

The PCRV will have work space in the WFP Sub office. It will be equipped with phone and internet service. The Sub Office is composed by field monitors, logistics and warehouse staff.

The Peace Corps Response Volunteer will work in close coordination with the WFP School Feeding Unit Program Officer at the central level and key NGO partners to create awareness and mobilize PTAs and community leaders.

The normal period of a PCRV assignment to a particular project or activity of WFP shall be up to 1 year. However, the PC may, at its sole discretion, terminate the service of a PCRV pursuant to Peace Corps Manual Section 284, but will immediately notify WFP thereof. WFP may request that the Peace Corps terminate a PCRV's assignment to a particular project or activity for poor performance or other good cause, including suitability for that particular project or activity. Pertinent information or supporting documentation must be supplied to PC by WFP in support of any request for termination of a PCRV's assignment to a particular project or activity. PC and the WFP may enter into such consultations as may be required in connection with the implementation of any PCRV assignment.

WFP acknowledges that service in the Peace Corps is voluntary, and that a PCRV may resign at any time. If a PCRV is unable or chooses not to complete the assignment, and resigns mid-service, standard Peace Corps policies apply. The Peace Corps will be under no obligation at any time to WFP to replace a PCRV who resigns or whose assignment is terminated at WFP's request or is terminated at Peace Corps' election. Peace Corps retains sole authority over any disciplinary action to be taken against the PCRV.

Supervision & Reporting Requirements:

All PCRVs are to remain Peace Corps Volunteers at all times and the relevant policies and regulations of Peace Corps shall apply thereto. In the event of a conflict between Peace Corps regulations and policies and those of WFP, the former shall control. Under no circumstances will any PCRV be considered as being WFP staff. Furthermore, PCRV assignments carry no expectation of conversation into any type of employment contract or appointment with WFP.

Under no circumstances shall the PCRVs assume managerial and/or financial or administrative responsibilities within WFP normally assigned to WFP staff, nor will they be authorized to commit or to represent WFP.

PCRVs will be supervised and report (a) during working hours and while working on a WFP project, by WFP personnel, and (b) at any other time, by Peace Corps staff. Volunteers will also report to the Peace Corps Country Director and will be expected to abide by Peace Corps rules and regulations while working as a Peace Corps Response Volunteer. Any periods of leave will be agreed upon in advance with WFP; at no time will PCRVs be required to sign documentation or contract regarding any aspect of their assignment to a WFP project.

Peace Corps/Liberia requires that PCRVs complete a final report, evaluations, and Description of Service (DOS). Either WFP or the PCRV, at PCR's request, will provide a copy of any and all materials created by the PCRV during the period of service.

Housing & Living Conditions:

Zwedru is the capital of Grand Gedeh County and it is located in the southeast part of Liberia. Most of the food crops come from the north of Liberia or the capitol city. For this reason, food is expensive and more so in the rainy season (June – September) as the supply is reduced and transportation becomes more expensive.

Housing will be provided by WFP Liberia and will be consistent with Peace Corps Liberia requirements for Volunteer housing. The PCRV will live in the WFP guest house in Zwedru. The guest house is used to accommodate WFP staff, other UN staff and approved NGO staff by the head of the Sub Office. The guest house has five bedrooms with individual air conditioning units and a shared living room and kitchen with cooking utensils, fridge, and electric stove available. There is one shared bathroom. The PCRV must be flexible and willing to share the common spaces of the house.

The guest house has access to 24 hour power supply and water is carried from a nearby pump. The Guest house is within WFP Compound that houses all WFP facilities. The offices, warehouses, garage, and vehicles are all within a secure compound that is protected 24 hours a day. There is the possibility that, during the period of the PCRV's service, the WFP may consolidate its compound with those of other UN agencies. Should this happen, then the PCRV may have to move to another house.

The PCRV will have access to the WFP computers but may bring a laptop should he/she wish, but must be aware that potential theft could be a problem. A computer will be available for Volunteers at the Peace Corps office in Monrovia and there are a few wireless internet cafes in Monrovia as well. A result of the war was the destruction of all phone lines. All telephone communication is cellular and internet connectivity is wireless.

It is advised that volunteers be prepared to bring clothes that can be hand washed. Dry cleaning is difficult to find and very expensive. Some people report that their clothing has been damaged by the dry cleaning. Loose-fitting clothing of natural fabrics will be most comfortable in the hot, humid climate. For the work environment, business casual clothing will be best, woven cloth shirts or polo shirts and long trousers for men and cotton dresses for women. In Liberia, slacks for women are acceptable, but Liberian women usually wear skirts or dresses. Sandals and closed-toe shoes are best. In the rainy season, there is a lot of mud, and in the dry season a lot of dust, so shoes that can be washed are ideal.

Liberia is a cash economy and credit cards are not accepted and traveler's checks are only accepted at select banks in Monrovia. Liberia is a US dollar economy and US currency (bills only) is accepted in most restaurants and shops in Monrovia, but less so up-country. The Liberian Liberty dollar sometimes will be given as change (the current rate is about L\$60:US\$1).

Orientation:

Before going to the worksite, there will be a four-day orientation for all PCRVs to receive information on:

- Overview of PC Response Liberia and the program;
- History and culture of Liberia;
- Medical information;
- Safety and Security (including the Emergency Action Plan);

- Administrative overview; and
- Swearing in.

A brief orientation will be provided by the partner organization upon arrival at the Zwedru Sub Office which will include

- Security briefing;
- Sub Office Orientation;
- Introduction to MOE officials and appropriate government officials in all the counties; and
- Introduction to all UN agencies and NGOs affiliated with the project

Safety and Security:

The safety of all Peace Corps Response Volunteers is the highest priority for Peace Corps Liberia. Liberia has been rated as a high crime country and there exists the potential for political violence. Peace Corps will have strict security protocols to minimize risks. The greatest incidents of crime occur in the capital city of Monrovia, so Volunteer travel to Monrovia will be closely monitored and regulated.

There is a high level of unemployment and poverty, so theft may occur. Volunteers should be careful with their personal property and not bring with them items of great value or items that may be irreplaceable. Any watches and jewelry should be modest and not of precious metals or stones.

Transportation will be a challenge as vehicles are frequently overloaded and in poor repair. The overcrowding also leads to pick pocketing, so Volunteers should not carry large sums of cash. Transportation information will be provided to Volunteers during their initial orientation.

As Liberia recovers from 14 years of civil war, the entire population has been affected in one way or another. PCRVs should be mindful in crowds as an unexpected event may trigger an emotional response that can quickly escalate.

Peace Corps will provide a safety and security briefing at orientation upon arrival in Liberia. This will include a briefing on best practices and will further detail procedures designed to reduce risks to staff and volunteers. It is critical that PCRVs use caution and common sense and follow the security guidelines developed by Peace Corps. Volunteers who violate safety and security or other policies may be administratively separated.

For WFP:

NAME: Louis J. Imbleau

TITLE: Country Director

SIGNATURE: 

DATE: Sept 11, 2008

For the U.S. Peace Corps / Liberia:

NAME: Henry McKoy

TITLE: Regional Director for Africa

SIGNATURE: 

DATE: 11/9/08