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REPORT BY THE U.S.

General Accounting Office

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Changes Needed For A Better Peace Corps

GAO's review of Peace Corps activities in five countries and volunteer responses to its questionnaire identified many conditions warranting attention and corrective measures.

- Some programs and projects are of questionable value and lack accord with Peace Corps goals and objectives.
- Host-country commitments to provide supervision and financial and material support to projects should be strengthened and periodically reviewed.
- Volunteer recruitment and placement procedures have shortcomings.
- Many volunteers lack commitment and terminate service before their scheduled completion, often within the first months of service. Peace Corps pays volunteer return transportation costs regardless of the period served.
- Personnel problems include high turnover of employees, and time-consuming employment processes.
- ACTION and Peace Corps have taken, or plan to take, actions to correct most problems.



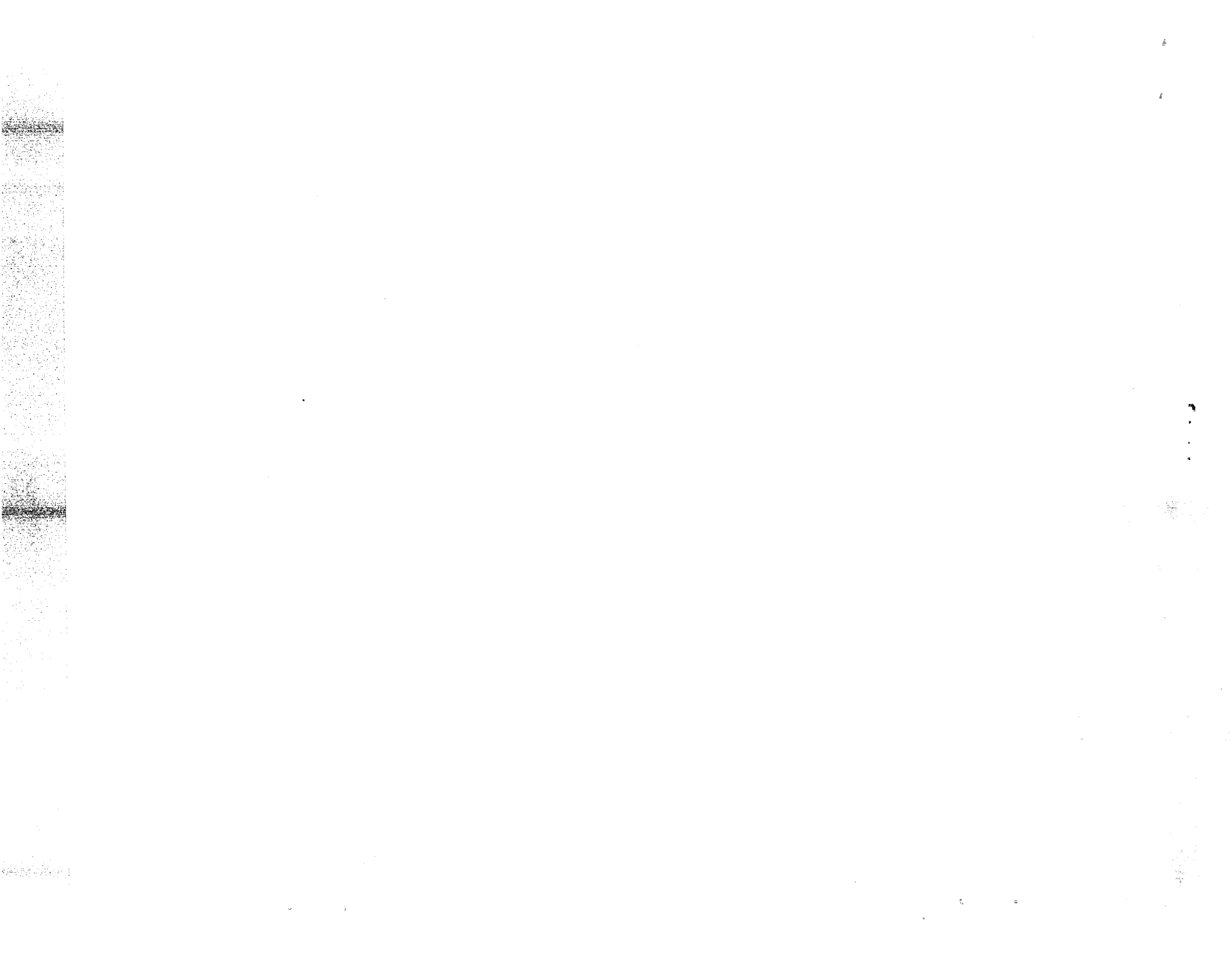
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Report

ID-78-26
FEBRUARY 6, 1979





UNITED STATES GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

INTERNATIONAL DIVISION

B-145883

The Honorable Sam Brown
Director, ACTION

Dear Mr. Brown:

This report presents observations resulting from our review of the Peace Corps. It identifies areas in which continuing efforts of ACTION and Peace Corps management are recommended to improve and correct the described conditions and thus lead to a better Peace Corps.

As you know, we have had several discussions about the results of our review with (1) you, (2) the then-Peace Corps Director, and (3) other top ACTION and Peace Corps officials. We have included your formal comments in the report where appropriate.

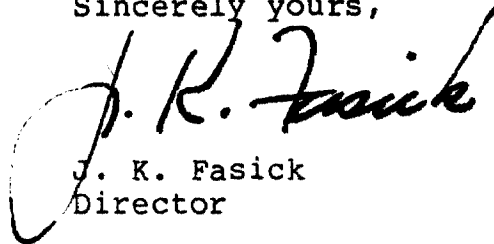
We believe that there is substantial agreement with our findings and we are aware of the corrective actions you have already taken and which you plan to continue to strengthen and improve Peace Corps.

As you know, section 236 of the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1970 requires the head of a Federal Agency to submit a written statement on actions taken on our recommendations to the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs and the House Committee on Government Operations not later than 60 days after the date of the report and to the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations with the Agency's first request for appropriations made more than 60 days after the date of the report.

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We are sending copies of this report to the Director, Office of Management and Budget; the Chairmen, House Committees on Government Operations, International Relations and Appropriations; the Senate Committees on Governmental Affairs and Appropriations; and to interested subcommittees and members of the Congress. We are also sending a copy of the report to the Acting Director, Peace Corps.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "J. K. Fasick". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "J".

J. K. Fasick
Director

D I G E S T

Since its creation in 1961, Peace Corps has worked to promote world peace and friendship by helping people in many foreign countries. Since then some 73,000 volunteers have served in 88 countries. The Peace Corps volunteer force numbered about 7,000 on September 30, 1978.

The GAO review of Peace Corps activities in five selected countries and volunteer responses to its questionnaire identified many problems which need correcting to make Peace Corps more effective.

Peace Corps programs in two of the five countries GAO reviewed, as well as ACTION program evaluations in three other countries,

--raise questions about the soundness of Peace Corps programing and

--suggest a need for Peace Corps to examine and evaluate its programs to assure that its resources are used most productively, and on the greatest development needs of the host countries. (See pp. 5 to 11.)

Peace Corps should continue to explore possibilities to participate in multilateral and other international volunteer organizations such as the UN Volunteer Program. (See pp. 12 to 15.)

GAO regards the provision of adequate host-country supervision, support, and contributions as important indications of host-country interest and commitment. Volunteer responses to the GAO questionnaire, however, revealed

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dissatisfaction concerning these areas. Enough volunteer dissatisfaction was reflected in the questionnaire for GAO to recommend that Peace Corps strengthen its requirements for host-country support. (See pp. 16 to 18.) In addition, while each of the countries was making contributions in cash and/or in kind, GAO noted the reluctance of some country directors to approach host-country officials to seek increased contributions or to request fulfillment of existing support agreements. Criteria were absent for the levels of host-country contributions. (See pp. 19 to 25.)

Weaknesses exist in ACTION recruitment and placement of Peace Corps volunteers. As a result, many volunteers are entering Peace Corps inadequately screened for suitability and poorly informed about the conditions under which they will serve. Many volunteers are terminating service before their scheduled completion dates--many within the first few months of service. In addition, volunteers are under no obligation to complete 2-year service tours, and many do not. Peace Corps bears volunteer return transportation costs regardless of the time served. (See pp. 26 to 39.)

Peace Corps has significant personnel problems, including (1) a personnel turnover rate--triple that of other Federal agencies and (2) an inability to fill staff vacancies quickly because of time-consuming employment processes. These problems have resulted in inadequate supervisory staff-to-volunteer ratios and inadequate staff support for some volunteers. The 5-year rule, whereby Peace Corps staff employment is limited to two 2-1/2-year contracts, is the cause of much of this turnover. (See pp. 40 to 44.)

RECOMMENDATIONS

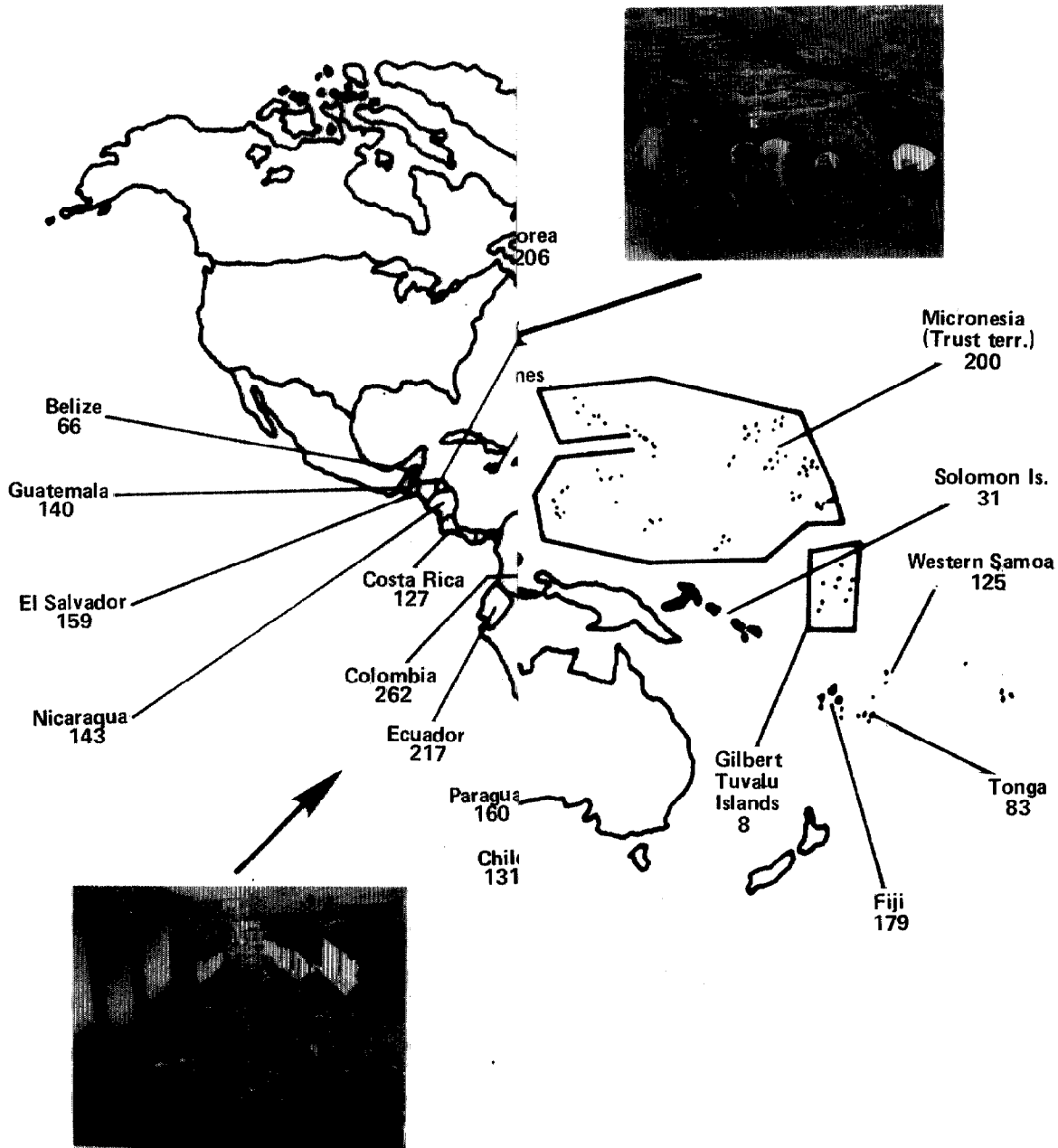
During the course of this review the agency initiated several actions

designed to overcome the problems discussed in this report. (See pp. 14, 15, 28, 29, 31, 32, and 45.) GAO believes further measures are needed, however, and recommends that you:

1. Closely monitor Peace Corps implementation of program reforms, especially as applied to Afghanistan and Malaysia.
2. Adopt a policy requiring assurance of a continuing host-country commitment to Peace Corps programs and projects-- including moral and financial support-- as well as adequate supervision.
3. Establish criteria to guide country directors in obtaining host-country support.
4. Require
 - signed formal agreements between Peace Corps and the host countries, committing each host country to support the Peace Corps program and providing for contributions in cash and/or in kind as well as support through the country's infrastructure, to assist the volunteers in implementing programs;
 - agreements for all sectors and/or projects before Peace Corps takes action to recruit, train, and place volunteers; and
 - periodic (annual if possible) renegotiation of all support agreements.
5. Instruct country directors to more actively and aggressively encourage host countries to fulfill existing material and volunteer support obligations.
6. Continue efforts to improve volunteer recruitment and placement procedures and training.

7. Require incoming volunteers, before going overseas, to execute formal agreements for a minimum period of service in which the obligations of volunteer and Peace Corps would be stated.
8. Perform a study of the 5-year rule as soon as possible to determine if recommendations to the Congress are desirable.
9. Continue efforts to reduce the time required to fill overseas positions.

Peace Corps Present and Volunteer Levels August 31, 1978



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ABBREVIATIONS

AID	Agency for International Development
APCD	Associate Peace Corps Director
GAO	General Accounting Office
GNP	Gross National Product
GOA	Government of Afghanistan
GOM	Government of Malaysia
HCC	Host-Country Contributions
PCV	Peace Corps Volunteer
TEFL	Teaching English as a Foreign Language
UNV	United Nations Volunteer

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Peace Corps was created in 1961. Legislation stipulated that

"* * * it is the policy of the United States and the purpose of this Act to promote world peace and friendship through a Peace Corps, which shall make available to interested countries and areas men and women of the United States qualified for service abroad and willing to serve, under conditions of hardship if necessary, to help the peoples of such countries and areas in meeting their needs for trained manpower, particularly in meeting the basic needs of those living in the poorest areas of such countries and to help promote better understanding of the American people on the part of the peoples served and a better understanding of other peoples on the part of the American people."

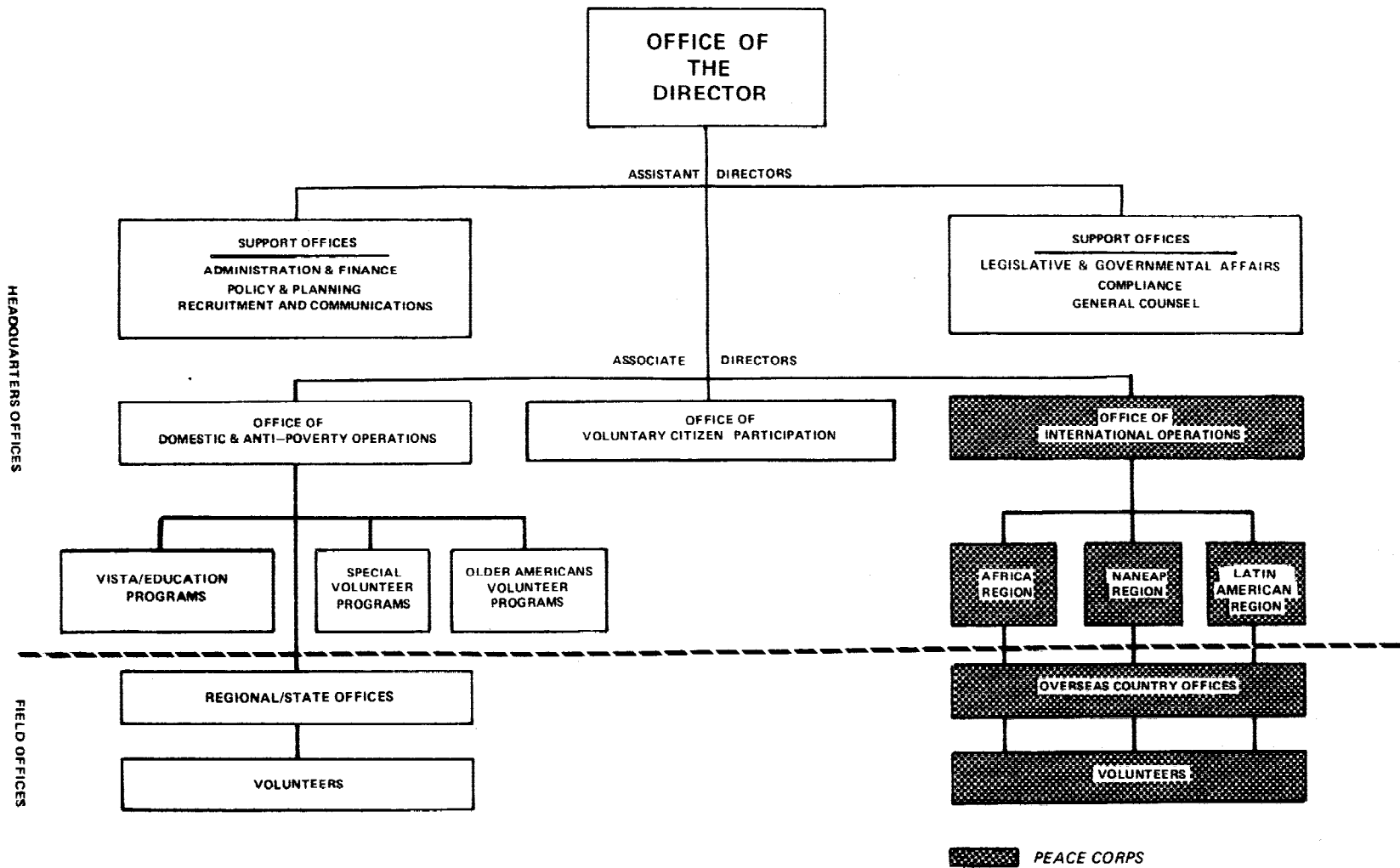
(Underscoring added by P.L. 95-331, August 2, 1978.)

Under the original Peace Corps Act (22 U.S.C. 2503), the Director of the Peace Corps was responsible--under the general guidance of the Secretary of State--for the control, supervision, and implementation of all Peace Corps activities and programs. On July 1, 1971, the responsibility for Peace Corps programs was transferred to the Director of ACTION, a new agency created on that date pursuant to Reorganization Plan No. 1 of 1971.

ACTION, the Federal volunteer agency, is divided into two major organizational units--International Operations, more commonly referred to as Peace Corps, and Domestic and Anti-Poverty Operations. International Operations has all program functions relating to Peace Corps except for volunteer recruitment and selection, which ACTION performs centrally for all its programs. ACTION also supports Peace Corps through its offices of general counsel, administration and finance, legislative affairs, etc. An organizational chart is on page 2.

International Operations has three Peace Corps regional offices. Each office is headed by a regional director responsible for all training, overseas volunteers, and staff activities for that region. Country directors are appointed to

ACTION



assist the regional directors with these responsibilities in foreign countries where Peace Corps is serving.

PROGRAM LEVELS

Since 1961 Peace Corps has sent about 73,000 volunteers abroad to serve in 88 countries. At its peak in the mid-1960s, Peace Corps had about 15,000 volunteers serving around the world and a budget of over \$114 million. The Peace Corps staff however, subsequently declined, and by September 30, 1978, it had about 7,000 volunteers, a budget of about \$84 million, and an authorized personnel ceiling of 767 permanent employees. The Peace Corps appropriation for fiscal year 1979 is \$95 million.

The latest available profile (June 30, 1977) shows that Peace Corps volunteers continue to be mostly college-educated men and women, with men outnumbering women almost two-to-one. Seventy-three percent of serving volunteers had at least 4 years of college, and forty-one percent were assigned to educational projects. Another 30 percent were working in agriculture and rural development. The remainder of serving volunteers were in health (19 percent), business and public management (8 percent), and urban development and public works (2 percent).

SCOPE OF REVIEW

Our review involved work at ACTION and Peace Corps headquarters in Washington, D.C., and five foreign countries-- Colombia, Honduras, Malaysia, Afghanistan, and Kenya. We used a questionnaire to seek volunteer views and experiences in these countries. Their responses, which we received from July through September 1977, are reflected in this report. Questionnaires were also sent to and responses were received from volunteers in Liberia; however, we did not review the Peace Corps program in that country. We did in-country work during the summer and fall 1977, while the headquarters portion was done between June 1977 and October 1978.

We reviewed many management issues, with particular emphasis on programing, volunteer support, host-country support and commitment, staff hiring, and volunteer recruitment. We held discussions with responsible U.S. and host-country officials and numerous volunteers. Our review work included examination of historical and current ACTION and Peace Corps data and records, an analysis of congressional hearings and reports, and other pertinent documentation. We also considered country evaluation work done in 1977 by the ACTION Evaluation Division.

We obtained ACTION and Peace Corps comments on this report and have reflected them in the text where appropriate.

CHAPTER 2

SOME PROGRAMS ARE OF QUESTIONABLE VALUE

Peace Corps programs in two of the five countries we visited in the summer and fall of 1977 have raised questions about their appropriateness to Peace Corps goals and objectives. Limited opportunity for projects that directly benefit the needy and constraints imposed on volunteers were both hampering the potential usefulness of Peace Corps programs in Afghanistan. Whether to continue to maintain a large Peace Corps presence in Malaysia was a critical question of Peace Corps programming in view of continuing economic growth and Peace Corps difficulties in placing volunteers in projects which directly benefit Malaysia's poorer population. Additionally, ACTION evaluations of Peace Corps programs during 1977 identified other countries where the continuation and value of the programs were questionable.

Afghanistan

After our fieldwork in Afghanistan was completed, there was a change in the Government of that country. When this report was prepared, senior agency officials advised us that it was too soon to evaluate the effect of the change on the Peace Corps presence in Afghanistan. Consequently, those portions of this report concerning Afghanistan reflect the results of our work before the change in Government.

Peace Corps presence appeared only marginally effective in Afghanistan because (1) its program is largely involved in education and the teaching of English to university students, (2) the Afghanistan Government constrained the volunteers to the capital city area of Kabul, and (3) the country was providing only about 7 percent of its promised contributions to support the program.

The Government of Afghanistan (GOA), which came into power in 1973, questioned the value of the Peace Corps program. Two years later, GOA would not allow Peace Corps to replace volunteers serving in the outlying provinces who had completed their tours--in effect restricting its efforts to the capital city of Kabul. From a peak number of volunteers of about 230 during 1966-67, the number of volunteers serving in Afghanistan had been reduced to less than 40 by early 1977. As of August 1977 only 53 volunteers were serving, with most teaching English and engineering-related courses at Kabul University. Restricting the volunteers to Kabul has isolated them from rural areas and villages, where they would normally expect to be serving.

This isolation concerned the Peace Corps staff and volunteers. It was accepted according to ACTION management, however, because Afghanistan is one of the poorest countries in the world and the Peace Corps staff believed it would again be possible to place volunteers in the rural areas.

One volunteer wrote:

"P.C. shouldn't be buffeted by the whims of host-country governments. If, as in our case, much of the work we should be doing is in the provinces, we shouldn't be back at the host gov't.'s insistence and carry on halfhearted projects in the capital city. If they don't want our help where it is needed, why let them hold us on a string here. Get some guts, P.C."

As of August 1977, 30 volunteers were assigned to Kabul University to help engineering students read English-printed textbooks and understand English-conducted lectures to achieve engineering and related degrees. Twenty-two volunteers taught English as a foreign language (TEFL) and eight taught architecture and mathematics in the higher education project. Peace Corps has justified its concentration of resources at Kabul University through (1) indirectly benefiting the rural poor, (2) reestablishing credibility within GOA, and (3) discovering an apparent willingness of certain GOA sources to reconsider the possible volunteer service in provincial areas.

Volunteers and staff cite teaching English to Afghan students rather than to Afghan teachers as a TEFL program weakness. Only about one-fourth of TEFL program volunteers are training teachers. The Country Director agreed that any long-range support of the Kabul University program must include redirecting TEFL program emphasis toward teaching Afghans to teach English.

In responding to our questionnaire, many volunteers had comments about the usefulness of their efforts and of the Peace Corps Afghanistan program. Two of these comments follow:

"Afghans are available to do my job--teaching reading to agriculture students. My students constantly and sincerely thank me for helping to train them so they can go to America--this bothers me very much * * * The host government has a different objective: To train elites

at the University. I think we are fulfilling this, and this makes the government happy-- we're training their children at no cost * * * Peace Corps Volunteers, sooner or later, will refuse to do this job."

"There are currently two Afghan sanitary engineers capable of teaching my courses * * * I question the University's effort in recruiting or training nationals to fill some of their staff positions. This might be because Peace Corps is providing 'free' labor."

The regional director responsible for Peace Corps/ Afghanistan agreed that the volunteers are largely restricted to university education in Kabul. He pointed out, however, that university education is a high priority of GOA. Peace Corps decided, he said, that since the program was restricted to education, they would make it the best education program possible, demonstrating to GOA that Peace Corps could do a job well.

The Peace Corps Director was aware of the problems in Afghanistan and told us that under the new emphasis on basic human needs, university education has a low priority. Accordingly, the Afghanistan program may be reduced or even eliminated if resources prove insufficient. The Deputy Director noted there are now four volunteers working outside Kabul--all in health projects.

Malaysia

Whether a substantial Peace Corps program can be continued in Malaysia, in view of the country's continuing economic growth and Peace Corps difficulties in placing volunteers in projects which directly benefit Malaysia's poorer population, has been given extensive consideration by Peace Corps officials. In 1977 the Country Director told us that by redirecting resources toward the rural areas of the country and the poorer populations, the Malaysia program can be consistent with the new Peace Corps objectives and the current Malaysia economic development plan.

To justify the new direction in Peace Corps/Malaysia programming, the Country Director noted the following deficiencies in past programs:

--Two-thirds of the volunteers were in education, mostly in teaching positions.

--The only other significant program was agriculture. Nearly half of these volunteers were in the capital city with another one-quarter in other urban areas. Most of the volunteers were in high-level technocratic or office-bound positions. Clearly, Peace Corps/ Malaysia agriculture efforts did not "touch the people."

--The Government of Malaysia (GOM) did not want Peace Corps in villages or rural areas because of religious and political factors and past volunteer performance in those areas.

--Volunteers questioned if Peace Corps was serving the country's needs.

Because of these shortcomings, the programing in Malaysia was projected to change over the next planning period so that education programs did not dominate. In addition, the number of volunteers was scheduled to increase from the 1977 figure of 204 to 290 by the year 1979. The increase was based on the following considerations:

--Peace Corps would like to restart projects in the State of Sarawak if the Government should become receptive.

--Political factors influence programing in the State of Sabah, where an unofficial ceiling on the number of Peace Corps volunteers is imposed by local government policy to keep international volunteer programs operating in the State at approximately equal size.

--The successful placement of skill-trained volunteers is essential to future programs as a way to bring requested skills to recruitable levels.

With respect to these matters we learned that several volunteer programs had been implemented in the past although the State of Sarawak currently does not allow Peace Corps volunteers. According to one staff member, Malaysia's basic needs exist there (if they exist at all); and if Sarawak does not allow placement of volunteers in the future, it will be difficult to place volunteers in projects which benefit poor people. Also, the State of Sabah has restricted programs to balance the number of volunteer programs in the State. At one time, over 100 Peace Corps volunteers served in Sabah. At the time of our review, however, there were less than 10. Further, the

Malaysian social and economic development plans are so ambitious and far-reaching that requests have frequently been made for such specific skills and experience that Peace Corps could not meet them.

Agency officials have told us that by mid-1978 the number of volunteers in the Sabah province had increased to 40. They have also decided to decrease the number of volunteers in Malaysia to 192 by the year 1979.

Because of difficulties in meeting host-country requests and the new programming directions planned for Malaysia, Peace Corps plans to extensively use skill-trained volunteers; a program in which generalists will be trained in the United States to levels of expertise requested by host countries. Technical and/or language training is to be provided to trainees whose skills are not adequate for proposed assignments. According to the former country director, the ability to successfully redirect programs toward basic needs in Malaysia would depend largely on the acceptance of these trainees by the Government. The Peace Corps Director does not believe this will be a problem. She believes volunteers can be trained to acceptable levels for GOM, and any other programs.

The question may be academic. Worldwide, the skill-trained volunteer program is not being implemented as quickly as originally planned. About 400 volunteers were trained in the program during summer 1978 as compared to the goal of 800. One agency official blamed budget constraints for the difference.

Peace Corps/Malaysia staff members had varying opinions on the new program direction. Two members stated that the Peace Corps presence in Malaysia (1) benefits Peace Corps since Malaysia is a stable country that appreciates volunteers and has an effective infrastructure for utilizing them and (2) serves the political interests of the United States because it has no other assistance programs in the country. Another believes that the Peace Corps policy of directly serving basic human needs considerably narrows the spectrum of potential programming in Malaysia compared with other countries. He felt that the Malaysian Peace Corps program (1) should be no larger than it is now assuming that Peace Corps presence is continued for political or other reasons or (2) would be phased out by 1979 if it could be objectively compared to the basic needs of poorer countries.

Many U.S. volunteers serving in Malaysia questioned Peace Corps usefulness there. One volunteer stated:

"Malaysia does not need and does not seem to be able to use the large number of volunteers that are now in the country. The staff that is here is not very effective and there are way too many of them. It is rather an 'old volunteers club' affair. The best thing you could do for the Peace Corps is bring back the word quality and have a small, effective staff that is interested in the correct match of job and qualified person instead of the 'we want as many volunteers in as many agencies as possible' approach."

Another felt that "* * * the [education] system here in West Malaysia could get along without Peace Corps at all." When asked what Peace Corps/Malaysia's objectives were, one volunteer said:

"I'm not really sure--to fill teaching positions to allow the government to train Malays so that they won't have to hire non-Malays. The American government should not assist Malaysia's unfair racial policies but should independently insist on equally assisting the most needy of all races. If this is unacceptable by the Malaysian government, Peace Corps should be pulled out."

The regional director responsible for Peace Corps/Malaysia said that several changes have occurred since our fieldwork. There is a new country director, he said, and a renewed effort to program in the basic human needs area. In this connection, Peace Corps/Malaysia is phasing out of university education and TEFL (from about 125 volunteers to about 40 or 50) and is switching to health projects which will use about 50 to 60 volunteers. In addition, there is now a suboffice and about 40 volunteers in Sabah province.

ACTION identified other questionable programs

During calendar year 1977, the ACTION Evaluation Division identified similar programming problems in Gabon, Thailand, and Tunisia. The continuing need and value of Peace Corps programs was considered. Exerpts from the evaluation reports of these countries follow.

Gabon (June 1977)

"* * * most PCVs in Gabon question the need for and value of their work in Gabon. They are aware that although the country lacks trained manpower, it is

also able to pay for imported labor. The volunteers are generally not contributing in any significant way to the development of an internal capability by training Gabonese or effecting a transfer of their skills or methods to the nationals * * * [The] volunteers did not believe that the Gabonese people had benefited from their association with PCVs."

Thailand (October 1977)

"The role of Peace Corps in the development of Thailand is a diminishing one as Thailand's needs become more technical and specialized * * * projects demonstrate only modest gains, the result of many programming deficiencies and indifferent support and interest by host country agency personnel * * * with many Thais studying and graduating from American universities (10,000 presently studying in the United States), the role of the volunteer as a spokesman for American culture and values is a lot less important than it has been previously."

"The evaluation team in considering these [and other] factors feels that they led inevitably to two important policy questions which should be addressed very soon. They are: (1) Given the present, relatively advanced development status of Thailand, the limited manpower resources of the Peace Corps, and the acute, often basic survival needs of so many countries in the developing world, should the Peace Corps continue to have a program in Thailand?"

"If Peace Corps decides against a total phase-out of the Thai program, it seems that a second question must then be addressed: (2) Given the same factors stated in the first question, what should be the shape, size, priorities, project criteria and general thrust of the Peace Corps program in Thailand for the future?"

Tunisia (September 1977)

"* * * the PCVs perceive that Peace Corps has responded inadequately to Tunisia's development needs and that their jobs are not meeting the manpower needs of Tunisia * * * [They] question the

presence of Peace Corps in a country which is almost out of the 'under-developed' tunnel."

Peace Corps made no formal response to the conclusions and recommendations in these reports because ACTION regulations do not require a response. Further, ACTION and Peace Corps officials told us the reports, in general, do not contain information useful to managers. You told us that efforts are being made to improve the usefulness of the evaluation reports.

INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEERISM--AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE PEACE CORPS BILATERAL PROGRAM?

The Peace Corps Act authorizes Peace Corps to provide volunteers and money to support international volunteerism. The United Nations Volunteer (UNV) program, a part of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), is currently the only international volunteer organization receiving Peace Corps support. To qualify for the UNV program, a U.S. citizen must apply to and be accepted by both Peace Corps and UNV. Peace Corps pays volunteer costs incurred outside the host country including recruitment, travel to and from the country, and readjustment allowance. The United Nations pays in-country costs.

UNVs work only on UN-funded projects which may be sponsored by UN agencies, such as Food and Agriculture Organization, United Nations Children's Fund, and UNDP. In-country there is no UNV staff. On-the-project supervision is provided by UN project personnel, usually UNDP.

Peace Corps participation in international voluntary agencies was quite limited until recently. Section 10(a)(2) of the Peace Corps Act limited the number of U.S. volunteers to 125. In addition, UNV had an unwritten rule restricting the number of U.S. volunteers to 20 percent of total volunteers provided by all industrial (developed) countries. Since industrial countries were limited to 50 percent of total UNV, the U.S. share could be restated as 10 percent of the total. As of September 1978 Peace Corps had 19 volunteers in the UNV program out of a 330 total.

Peace Corps was also limited in its financial participation in international organizations. Title III of the Peace Corps Act limited Peace Corps contributions to international voluntary service programs and activities to \$350,000 per year. Peace Corps planned to contribute \$200,000 during fiscal year 1978 which would represent about 25 percent of the UNV budget.

These restrictions, however, were recently lifted and/or modified. In spring 1978, the newly appointed coordinator of UNV told ACTION officials informally that the 10/20-percent rule had been lifted. Also, the fiscal year 1979 Peace Corps authorization act eliminated the 125 limit and changed the \$350,000 limit to 2 percent of the Peace Corps annual authorization. (Two percent of the fiscal year 1978 appropriation would be \$1.7 million.)

Thus, most of the previous constraints to expanding Peace Corps participation in UNV have been removed; however, Peace Corps future role in UNV is uncertain. You advised us that you would like to see more Peace Corps volunteers in UNV but not until substantial reforms are made. Further, you said

"In general, ACTION believes that the UNVP has too frequently assigned volunteers only to U.N.-funded projects. As a consequence of this rather inflexible model, efforts such as the Food Corps, proposed to be sponsored by FAO, seem to anticipate the formation of a separate multi-national volunteer corps rather than inclusion within the larger UNVP. Another concern has been the tendency of UNVP to deemphasize the 'voluntary' character which we believe to be the most important distinguishing characteristic and justification of the program. In its stead, the UNVP has pursued a kind of 'junior expert' orientation where service as a volunteer is frequently regarded as the lowest end of the U.N. personnel ladder and thus as point of entry into the U.N. system. It is ACTION's belief that the volunteer effort is most effective at the grass roots level of development, not in national or international bureaucracies, no matter how small. U.N. volunteers are sometimes placed in positions which have no direct contact with the people most in need of assistance. This has resulted in an attitude which seems to demean the spirit underlying voluntary service."

Until reforms are made it is our understanding that you do not believe the U.S. role should be expanded.

We believe the lack of interest in Peace Corps programs shown by some countries, notably Afghanistan and perhaps others (see ch. 3), could be partially offset by placing more volunteers in multilateral organizations whose programs, because of host-country nationalism, may be more acceptable to less-developed countries than are bilateral programs.

For example, the travel constraints imposed on Peace Corps volunteers did not apply to UNVs in Afghanistan. We believe efforts should be continued to expand U.S. participation in multilateral volunteerism. If the UNV program proves unacceptable to ACTION, we believe possibilities should be explored for participation in other international volunteer organizations.

AGENCY ACTION

ACTION has attempted to improve the effectiveness of Peace Corps programs and projects.

ACTION management instituted new program priorities during 1977 aimed at directing more Peace Corps programs toward the basic human needs of each country, particularly health and nutrition, and food and water. Since January 1978, Peace Corps has been actively implementing the new program. All less-developed countries, including those without Peace Corps programs, have been ranked according to relative need. Need is determined by certain socioeconomic factors including life expectancy, infant mortality, literacy, and gross national product.

As a result of this review, ACTION officials said that 135 projects clearly identified as not meeting the criteria were marked for immediate phaseout, and other projects were approved for a transition period. The latter recognizes the problems that host governments would face should there be a sudden pullout of volunteer assistance. Following this review, the agency said, Peace Corps began systematically both to phaseout the projects which did not meet the criteria and to provide assistance to field staff to develop new projects more directly serving basic needs.

In addition, during fiscal year 1979, ACTION plans to continue the shift in program emphasis. The more significant efforts will be aimed at

- shift of volunteers out of middle-level jobs into programs developed to meet basic needs of the majority poor, and out of settings where the proximity of PCVs to the poor is limited;
- concentration of resources on the neediest countries and neediest populations;
- new country programs in Bangladesh, Tanzania, Congo, and Malawi;

--reduction of volunteers in relatively more-developed countries such as Korea and Malaysia; and

--increased fielding of volunteers with the UNVs and other multilateral assistance groups when their work will serve basic needs of poor people.

Regarding the countries we visited, ACTION said that in Afghanistan, Peace Corps and the new Government are currently reassessing possibilities for continuation of a Peace Corps program which operates under basic human needs criteria, and considering placement of volunteers in rural areas to supplement or replace volunteers who teach English in the capital city. We are still waiting for the outcome of these discussions. In Malaysia, Peace Corps has, as noted earlier, reduced the number of volunteers from a projected 290 in 1979 to 192 and has increased the number of volunteers in the State of Sabah from fewer than 10 to over 40. Also, the agency said it has redirected volunteer efforts (1) away from education to health and agriculture and (2) out of urban areas to assignments among the rural poor.

ACTION officials have also decided to strengthen the internal evaluation function. Systematic country program evaluations will be undertaken in fiscal year 1979, with required followup response and action by Peace Corps.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

We believe the Peace Corps programs in two of the five countries we reviewed and the ACTION program evaluations in other countries (1) raise questions about the soundness of Peace Corps programming and (2) suggest a need for Peace Corps to examine and evaluate its programs to assure that its resources are used most productively and on the greatest development needs of the host countries.

ACTION and Peace Corps agree that substantial weaknesses existed in Peace Corps programs and have attempted to correct the deficiencies. Although it is too soon to ascertain the full effect of these actions, they should, if properly implemented, lead to a shift in Peace Corps programs and should also alleviate the concerns identified in our review. We therefore recommend that you closely monitor the Peace Corps implementation of the program reforms, especially as applied to Afghanistan and Malaysia.

CHAPTER 3

HOST-COUNTRY SUPPORT OF PEACE CORPS

To carry out its programs in countries around the world, Peace Corps depends on the host countries for material support and supervision of assigned volunteers as well as for cash and contributions in kind to help defray Peace Corps expenses. Peace Corps regards the provision of adequate host-country supervision, support, and contributions as an important indication of host-country interest and commitment.

Volunteer responses to our questionnaire regarding host-country material support and supervision pointed to inadequacies in all countries where the questionnaire was used. These responses, although not conclusive, revealed considerable dissatisfaction with supervision and/or material support in the countries our questionnaire covered. Peace Corps officials should, therefore, investigate further to determine what action is needed to improve conditions.

Although each country was making cash and/or in-kind contributions, we noted reluctance of some country directors to approach host-country officials for increased contributions or fulfillment of existing support agreements. There are no existing criteria which prescribe the level of contribution host countries should provide.

SUPPORT AND SUPERVISION

In Afghanistan, most volunteers commented that host-country material support and supervision were either insufficient or, in many cases, nonexistent. The Peace Corps Country Director agreed that material support and supervision provided by Afghanistan had not met expectations, increasing the burden of Peace Corps. Two volunteers made the following comments.

Material support--"Sporadically insufficient to fair (e.g., despite 3 askings a first aid kit or supplies for chemistry laboratory have yet to be provided.)"

Host-country supervision--"Technically the dean of the Faculty of Letters is my [host country supervisor] but I rarely ever see him. I was told * * * that I was not to bother them for the semester."

In Colombia, 50 percent of the responding volunteers believed their host-country supervision to be worthwhile and

over 70 percent were satisfied with material support. On the other hand, one program coordinator told us that volunteers are frequently viewed as employees of the agency, receiving no more or less supervision than the host-country nationals. One negative volunteer comment follows.

"* * * I hope to get to the point of not referring to Peace Corps as my agency of work but rather my Colombia agency. This has many benefits especially when working with the people in the country and in gaining support and materials. The agency with whom I am working, at times, believes I can receive anything I want from Peace Corps, but, of course, this isn't true."

Another volunteer commented:

"I have received very little in this regard, agency personnel are very helpful but reluctant to provide any financial support. The feeling is that if they hold out long enough, Peace Corps will eventually produce the money in order to keep the project going."

In commenting on their supervision and support received in Honduras

--46 percent of the volunteers believed their host-country supervisor visits were worthwhile, while 16 percent did not;

--48 percent of the volunteers believed the host-country supervisor's contributions were helpful, while 33 percent did not; and

--46 percent of the volunteers were positive about host-country material support, while 38 percent were dissatisfied.

Thus, while almost half of the responding volunteers were satisfied with their host-country supervision and material support, a sizable volunteer group was not satisfied, especially regarding material support. One volunteer said, for example, "In all honesty, I do not feel that I have received any support." The agriculture program coordinator added that host-country supervision is notably poor in Honduras, including supervision of their own employees. Two reasons for the planned termination of the Peace Corps Public Health Nurse Program, according to the health program coordinator, are (1) a general lack of cooperation and (2) a lack of administrative support from the Ministry of Health. Another Peace Corps staff person commented that

agencies in Honduras requiring the greatest Peace Corps assistance provide the poorest administrative and material support.

Another volunteer stated,

"Volunteers need more support. Not only do I feel that the host country is not interested in my work, but I also feel that Peace Corps is not interested. Sometimes it is difficult to remain enthusiastic when you feel that no one cares about you or your activities."

Host-country material support in Kenya was rated very favorably--74 percent of the responding volunteers rated it adequate. In judging supervision, however, most volunteers said they had never been visited, and several said they did not know who their host supervisor was.

In Malaysia, 9 of every 10 responding volunteers rated host-country supervision satisfactory. Almost 40 percent of these volunteers, however, were critical of the host-country material support. Some of the comments follow.

"Host country support poor--I believe PCVs are being used as free labor by Malaysia."

"Host country support nonexistent--they use PCVs as cheap labor."

"In terms of moral support the situation is frustrating."

In Liberia, volunteer responses revealed dissatisfaction with their living and working conditions. Thirty-six percent of the volunteers were negative about host-country supervision, and 60 percent indicated dissatisfaction with host-country material support. Some comments of Liberia volunteers included:

Host-country supervision: "[The host country supervisor is] not very helpful at all. The supervisor does not support my school."

Material support: "PC/Liberia should make it clearer to this country that we are not the same type of agency as AID and need physical support to volunteers in order to utilize their expertise more fully."

"It's a good thing this job doesn't require much in the way of support."

That the problems exist worldwide is indicated by a 1976 survey of volunteers by the ACTION Office of Policy and Planning. The survey disclosed that only about 53 percent of the volunteers had work-related contacts--at least one a month--with host-country supervisors. Further, only 35 percent of the volunteers were positive about the availability of equipment and supplies.

Peace Corps officials in Washington were not generally concerned with volunteer responses concerning poor host-country supervision and material support. They agreed with the in-country staff comments that the volunteers, as employees of host-country agencies, could not expect supervision and material support better than that received by host-country employees. Peace Corps top management agreed that adequate support is necessary for successful projects, but believed the problem is typical of conditions found in many less-developed countries. One agency official thinks the volunteer dissatisfaction we found stemmed from a former agency policy of recruiting highly skilled volunteers who needed more support than the generalists now being recruited.

CONTRIBUTIONS CRITERIA

Host-government and local contributions are important aspects of Peace Corps in-country programs. Such contributions indicate host-country support for Peace Corps, and they also help defray program expenses, thereby expanding uses of the budget. Currently, total host-country contributions aggregate slightly over \$4 million and equal about 5 percent of the annual Peace Corps appropriation.

Although Peace Corps has a formal policy of soliciting maximum cash and in-kind contributions, it has not established the criteria for (1) judging funding adequacy or (2) outlining the efforts that should be made to obtain these contributions. Peace Corps headquarters defers to the judgment of its country directors as to whether contributions are attainable and how much should be requested.

Individual country contributions ranged from zero to a high in fiscal year 1977 of \$577,739. They accounted for as little as 1.7 percent of the Peace Corps/Phillippines budget--which has the largest number of PCVs--to as much as 67 percent of the Peace Corps/Gabon budget which covers only 40 PCVs.

The amount of contributions per volunteer varies greatly for each country. Contributions appear to have little relation to a country's ability to pay as measured by per capita gross national product (GNP), admittedly only one indicator. The following schedules--based on Peace Corps data--show the amount contributed per volunteer and the per capita GNP for the 10 largest and 10 smallest contributor countries.

<u>Largest contributors (note a)</u>	<u>Contribution per volunteer</u>	<u>Per capita GNP</u>
Ivory Coast	\$ 2,590	\$ 460
Zaire	2,523	150
Tunisia	1,963	650
Senegal	1,700	330
Botswana	1,577	290
Swaziland	1,451	390
Chad	1,392	100
Morocco	1,293	430
Central African Empire	1,171	210
Liberia	1,110	390

<u>Smallest contributors (note a)</u>	<u>Contribution per volunteer</u>	<u>Per capita GNP</u>
Tonga	\$ 0	\$ 210
Mali	4	80
Upper Volta	8	90
Afghanistan	16	110
Chile	22	830
El Salvador	55	410
Costa Rica	58	840
Colombia	88	500
Ecuador	92	500
Philippines	96	330

a/Countries with 50 or more volunteers.

As noted above, Costa Rica, with the highest per capita GNP (\$840) contributes only \$58 per volunteer. Chad, with a per capita GNP of \$100, contributes \$1,392 per volunteer. Zaire contributed about 14 percent of all contributions the Peace Corps received in fiscal year 1977--\$2,523 per volunteer --yet its per capita GNP is only \$150.

A Peace Corps report by a 1974 study group examining host-country contributions concluded that Peace Corps should consider the feasibility and appropriateness of establishing

contributions in terms of particular programs, countries, and budgetary capabilities. The Peace Corps Director at that time concurred with the study group findings and ordered their immediate implementation. The Director did, however, temper the group's qualification that a country's economic status not be linked to their contribution levels.

"While I do not wish HCCs to be specifically linked to economic indicators, I do feel strongly that the CDs [Country Directors] need a stimulus (beyond accident or self-interest) and would allude to HCCs as being one criterion we will use in determining our allocation of scarce resources."

Although more than 4 years have elapsed, we found no indication that Peace Corps resource allocation has been appreciably altered by the level of a country's program contributions.

RELUCTANCE TO SEEK CONTRIBUTIONS

Each Peace Corps country director has responsibility for soliciting host-country contributions (HCC). We noted reluctance of the Afghanistan, Colombian, and Malaysian country directors to approach host-government officials for contributions to support new and existing programs. In Afghanistan in the 1960s, for example, Peace Corps negotiated a support agreement whereby Afghanistan was to contribute approximately \$22 per month (at the current exchange rate) for each in-country volunteer. Their actual contributions for fiscal year 1977, however, were only approximately \$1,200--about \$16 per volunteer.

The Country Director said the agreement is still considered valid. The previous Country Director suggested in a 1974 letter to Afghanistan that the agreement be reevaluated and renegotiated. He also offered to channel part of the contribution back into the Afghan economy through general program support and volunteer projects. As of January 1978, Afghanistan had not agreed to renegotiate the agreement.

The present Country Director plans to inform Afghanistan officials that, in view of recent requests for volunteers, expansion should depend on definite support commitments from the Government. He believed, however, that Afghanistan will prefer to terminate the current agreement without provision for a new one and reduce the current level of support.

In Colombia, the Country Director advised us that contributions have not been a priority matter. He has been reluctant, he said, to press the Colombian agencies for contributions due to the Government's uncertain attitude toward bilateral assistance; such as Peace Corps. This same attitude was reflected in the 1976 Peace Corps Country Management Plan for Colombia which said that "* * * formal actions to press for HCC's in Colombia could be steps for reducing PC/C's volunteer strength in short order." The current director holds the same view, stating that the lack of support does not indicate a lack of need.

A second reason cited for the Country Director's reluctance to press for contributions is the lack of resources available to most Colombian agencies. Therefore, contributions will not be overtly pursued, but will be solicited when the opportunity presents itself, according to the Director.

The level of financial support provided by Malaysia has been a controversial issue for many years. In this connection, a 1976 ACTION evaluation report stated that the previous American Ambassador

"* * * apparently deciding to force the issue of host country contributions, is apparently preparing a proposal that Peace Corps costs be reduced by 20% for each of the next five years either by increasing host country financial support or by decreasing the number of volunteers. His rationale is that (1) the Peace Corps should get out of Malaysia while it is still a success and (2) Malaysia has a high level of development and standard of living compared with other Peace Corps countries."

In Peace Corps/Malaysia, HCC represented only about 6.5 percent of the 1975 Peace Corps fiscal year budget. In fiscal years 1976 and 1977 this proportion rose to 8.5 percent and 9.4 percent, respectively, of the declining Peace Corps budget. The Malaysian Government has not responded to recent Peace Corps requests for more support. Peace Corps/Washington officials agreed Malaysia could afford to pay more.

In Kenya, however, we found a different situation. Contributions for fiscal year 1977 amounted to over \$240,000 --slightly more than \$1,000 per volunteer. When planning a specific project, Peace Corps/Kenya staff members meet with officials of the requesting Ministry to ensure that volunteers

will be given adequate support. Once the Peace Corps and the Ministry agree concerning what the volunteers will do and how support will be provided, a recruitment request is sent to Peace Corps headquarters in Washington, D.C. Not surprisingly, most volunteers in Kenya (74 percent) rate host-country support as adequate or better.

Peace Corps/Kenya is also aware of the need to renegotiate sector-support agreements. In April 1977, the agreement with the Kenyan Ministry of Cooperatives was renegotiated with a HCC increase of about \$50,000. Because of a lack of staff, however, Peace Corps/Kenya has not been able to renegotiate the other sector-support agreements, the Country Director said. He believes the agreements should be renegotiated annually.

AGENCY COMMENTS

Peace Corps does not agree that it should adopt a policy requiring a host-country commitment to financial support and "adequate" project supervision. It believes such a policy would be inappropriate and unrealistic. The Director, Peace Corps, stated her belief that the volunteer complaints about lack of support and supervision which we received are the result of the Peace Corps use of high-skilled technicians as volunteers. She believes that such volunteers are accustomed to U.S. standards of support and supervision and are, therefore, unable to accept less when they become volunteers working on a host-country project.

The Director further believes the complaints reflected (1) inadequate volunteer orientation and training, (2) unrealistic expectations, and (3) poor understanding of their roles in Third World countries. She expected revamped Peace Corps training now underway to deal with these deficiencies. Our suggestion that host-country support and supervision be strengthened was rejected as being "unusual * * * support," "special support," "extra resources," and "a temporary quick-fix of material and staff."

Peace Corps does not agree that contribution criteria are needed for the guidance of country directors. It believes it has appointed overseas staff capable of dealing with issues "sensitively and appropriately."

Agency officials see nothing wrong or unusual with the wide variation in HCC per volunteer. They believe different countries have different needs, and different ministries have different abilities to pay. Accordingly, the disparities are acceptable to Peace Corps. The Peace Corps Director

said that one of the basic operating procedures is to establish a partnership with the host country. When a host-country agency contributes--no matter the amount--a partnership is established, and Peace Corps does not press for more. The Director told us it may be "a point of pride" with some countries to contribute less.

Peace Corps agreed that review of HCC "is entirely appropriate" but did not agree that either host-country contributions or support agreements should be renegotiated "annually, if possible." They believed this would be an administrative burden, and suggested instead that reviews be scheduled "when necessary" or "when conditions change significantly."

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Our review disclosed that volunteers frequently describe the support and supervision provided by host countries as insufficient and, in many cases, nonexistent. Also, the contributions (cash and/or in kind) provided Peace Corps by host governments vary greatly for each country, and appear to bear little relation to a country's ability to pay. In addition, we noted a reluctance by some country directors to seek increased contributions or fulfillment of existing support agreements. We believe these problems are caused, in part, because Peace Corps does not have contributions criteria to guide country directors.

Peace Corps disagrees with our findings and recommendations. Officials dismiss volunteer complaints of poor support and supervision as being partially the result of poor training. They do not believe contributions criteria are necessary because they consider their overseas staff capable of dealing with the issue. Further, they do not believe sector-support agreements should be renegotiated.

Although we agree with the Peace Corps view that it should not be a fee-for-service organization, we believe that host-country support and commitment to Peace Corps projects and programs should be mandatory. Adequate supervision and close involvement with the volunteers, as well as cash and/or in-kind contributions, are evidence of this support.

It is true that many host countries and/or ministries are poor and cannot afford to provide support and supervision similar to that in the United States. However, the Peace Corps Manual, section 342, states that "Each Volunteer assignment should * * * have necessary host-country material support and/or supervisory support." Our review disclosed that too

many volunteers believe they are not receiving this support and supervision. Although this is not a problem for all volunteers we contacted, or even a majority, it is a problem for enough volunteers to support our belief that Peace Corps should take corrective action.

We believe more needs to be done to insure adequate supervision and support, particularly at sector and project levels. Country directors need to actively seek contributions from those host-country agencies which can more directly support volunteers. This could be done by renegotiating existing support agreements more frequently and by insuring that each new project submission indicates the level of support to be provided by the host-country agency.

We recommend that Peace Corps:

1. Adopt a policy requiring assurance of each host-country's continuing commitment to Peace Corps programs and projects, including moral and financial support, as well as adequate supervision.
2. Establish criteria to guide country directors in obtaining host-country support.
3. Require
 - a signed, formal agreement between Peace Corps and each host country, committing host countries to support the Peace Corps program and providing for cash and/or in-kind contributions, as well as support through country's infrastructure, to assist volunteers in implementing the program;
 - agreements for all sectors and/or projects before the Peace Corps recruits, trains, and places volunteers; and
 - periodic renegotiation (annual if possible) of all support agreements.
4. Instruct country directors to more actively encourage host countries to fulfill existing material and volunteer support obligations.

CHAPTER 4

VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT AND PLACEMENT

Weaknesses and shortcomings exist in the ACTION recruitment and placement of Peace Corps volunteers. Recruitment and placement processes do not

- insure that applicants are adequately informed of overseas living and working conditions to enable them to decide whether they can commit themselves for 2 years or
- require indepth scrutiny to identify unsuitable applicants and provide guidance for placing volunteers in compatible environments.

In addition, ACTION recruiters and Peace Corps placement officers are not often sufficiently trained nor provided uniform standards and guidance for making informed decisions about Peace Corps applicants.

As a result, a large number of volunteers are entering Peace Corps (1) inadequately screened for suitability and (2) poorly informed of conditions under which they will be expected to serve. As a further and more costly result, many volunteers are terminating service before scheduled completion--frequently within the first months of service.

Currently, volunteers are not obligated to complete a 2-year service tour; many do not. As an operating policy, Peace Corps pays for volunteer return-transportation costs regardless of the period served.

Agency management has made, or plans to make, substantial improvements to deal with the problems raised. These improvements which began during our review, are discussed in the sections which follow.

APPLICANTS PROVIDED INADEQUATE INFORMATION

When volunteering for service, applicants depend almost solely on Peace Corps publicity and job descriptions for information about job placement and general living and working conditions. The volunteers responding to our questionnaire, however, frequently complained about the lack of such information.

"The recruiter in Denver told us we would know about our acceptance within 24 hours--it took 2-1/2 months. He knew nothing about Afghanistan."

"It would be helpful if recruiters knew more about the job and country they were recruiting for."

"It was not made clear to me that Kabul volunteers have servants, big houses, and generally live in the foreign community."

"I was not recruited; just applied by myself. I chose my country of placement, but it seemed that U.S. Peace Corps recruiters and placement officials knew little or nothing about particular countries or jobs."

In a March 22, 1977, internal audit report on one of its regional recruitment centers, ACTION found that because it had received no training for 18 months from ACTION headquarters, the communications staff could not provide accurate information on ACTION programs, including Peace Corps. In addition, job descriptions were written for specific countries for which applicants could apply. Volunteers complained that these descriptions were often inaccurate. Attempts are now being made within Peace Corps to write generic descriptions which, although more accurate, may reduce the amount of specific information applicants receive about potential jobs or the geographic and social environments in which they are located.

Interviews are generally considered a basic part of recruiting, yet Peace Corps has not routinely provided applicants opportunities to ask questions to correct false impressions they may have about Peace Corps. Records show that in spring 1977, between 5 and 20 percent of applicants had no interviews with recruiters. Further, in two recruitment centers over 50 percent of the interviews were by telephone. Peace Corps recruiting officials stated that when interviews are held, they are brief, usually lasting no more than 1 hour.

Volunteers complained to us about the lack of face-to-face interviews. For example, of the 107 volunteers returning our questionnaires in Liberia, 34 complained of poor volunteer screening, and 9 specifically mentioned the need for personal interviews. In a 1977 ACTION volunteers survey, only 39 percent felt positive about the accuracy of pre-service information and over half (56 percent) said they

received too little of it. Many volunteers responding to our questionnaire, commented on ACTION recruiting.

"Recruitment is entirely slipshod at almost every instance * * * Certainly no other organization but that of the Government could afford to operate in such a manner."

"Recruitment was screwed--the process was slow and I was left up in the air for a long period of time which made it difficult for me as I had other job offers in the States. I felt that staging was a waste of time."

"Viewed from this end, it is hard to understand what takes place in Washington. My own experience has been matched by several others I talked to: letters were unanswered and not acknowledged; my application was lost, so I had to duplicate everything, including fingerprints * * *"

Placement officers match applicants to jobs appearing suitable. Applicants are then sent a job description, a summary on the host country, a Peace Corps handbook, and a paper on adapting to the Peace Corps overseas. No opportunity is provided for the applicant to have a face-to-face interview with the placement officer before deciding to accept training. The first time accepted applicants are able to discuss in detail the work they will be doing or the quality of life they will have to endure is a 2-day medical and administrative orientation immediately before being sent overseas. Unless there are serious problems, it is usually too late for applicants to change their decision because at that point they have already prepared to leave the country.

The importance of personal contact with applicants was also affirmed by an ACTION recruitment work group in 1977. They stated in their report that

"An essential part of this screening process will be personal interviews with recruiters, whose evaluation of an applicant's basic suitability, personal qualities, experience and background will play a major role in final acceptance and placement decisions."

Agency action

ACTION and Peace Corps agreed that major problems existed in recruiting motivated volunteers and these agencies have

taken a number of corrective actions. The Office of Recruitment and Communications has been pulled out of Domestic Operations and has been reestablished as an organization serving both Domestic Operations and Peace Corps. The new Office is to emphasize recruitment of volunteers "who have the desire to serve, emotional maturity, and cultural empathy" as well as motivation. To achieve this goal, ACTION created a recruitment task force which studied a wide range of problems and made 95 recommendations to improve recruitment. All but 10 of these recommendations have been implemented. Some of those not yet accomplished, ACTION said, include the production of materials for which funds are not available.

New Peace Corps public service radio announcements and a TV film, as well as recruitment literature, are now in use. According to ACTION officials, the materials emphasize commitment to volunteer service.

ACTION has also begun coordinating recruitment activities with its former volunteer project so that applicants can contact former volunteers from countries about which they desire further information. Additionally, the Office of Recruitment and Communication now routinely involves Peace Corps desk officers and other Peace Corps overseas and Washington staff in recruitment training sessions so recruiters can develop greater familiarity with countries and programs. Most importantly, Peace Corps has agreed to have personal interviews with all applicants selected for overseas training. (See p. 31.)

UNSUITABLE APPLICANTS ACCEPTED

Peace Corps volunteers are expected to possess strong commitment, independence, flexibility, sensitivity, and perception. Applications and references presently used often do not provide enough information to enable recruiters, evaluators, and placement personnel to screen out applicants who do not possess these characteristics. Applicants are often chosen, however, solely on the basis of data contained in these documents.

In a study of applications drawn at random, we compared records of 10 volunteers who had completed 2-year terms of service with records of 10 who had dropped out during the first 6 months. For the latter group, information from their references and application forms raises many questions as to the volunteers' suitability.

For example, one applicant who withdrew from Peace Corps when offered a good job in Canada reapplied when the

job fell through. He was accepted again, but later dropped out after 1 month. His behavior, we believe, suggested he was using Peace Corps as an employer of last resort. Another man's references indicated he was intolerant of meaningless activity in others and needed to become more openminded. He was accepted, but lasted only 3 months. One woman had moved from job to job and four of her references indicated reservations regarding suitability. She also terminated after only 3 months. The volunteers also noted the effects of poor screening.

"Quite a few of the new volunteers had emotional or psychiatric problems, obvious to us at first meeting."

"P.C. needs to recruit better qualified people with a desire to do their job. Too many terminate early, transfer, etc. Many don't have the professionalism to stick to their jobs. Basic lack of commitment."

"In regards to recruitment I feel prospective P.C.V.'s should be screened better. The majority are competent dedicated individuals but there is a small minority who seem to be here for a free ride and find nothing better to do than complain about every little thing under the sun."

Previous screening methods

During the 1960s Peace Corps conducted intensive orientations for prospective volunteers which were also used for screening unsuitable candidates. These orientations took place just before candidates were sent to their host countries, however, and they may have already given up jobs or homes. In 1970, a preinvitational staging, PRIST, was initiated to cut the number of early terminations.

PRIST was both a selection and pretraining orientation process for Peace Corps applicants. It was a 3-1/2-day meeting of almost 30 applicants to provide them with detailed information regarding the program, the country, overseas living, and Peace Corps policy to help them decide whether to accept or reject the program.

At the same time, Peace Corps could evaluate potential volunteers as to how well they might fit into the program. PRIST was conducted at centralized U.S. sites generally about 30 days before training.

In December 1973, an internal ACTION study group determined that PRIST was not worth its cost and was discontinued for most countries. It is now being held only for two countries--Mali and Jamaica.

Considering the many volunteers who complained to us about the lack of information, and the high rates of attrition for volunteers, we recommend that Peace Corps reconsider using PRIST (or a similar method) to obtain volunteers having stronger commitments. A successful PRIST program should result in more committed volunteers and better program operations.

Agency action

Peace Corps agreed that better screening is needed, and told us that plans are underway to reinstitute the PRIST. Beginning in fiscal year 1979, all Peace Corps applicants considered to be suitable candidates for training programs, based on references and information from recruiters, will undergo a 7- to 10-day U.S. orientation and screening. The purpose of this, Peace Corps said, is to personally interview the applicants, provide them a realistic understanding of the demands and requirements of Peace Corps service, and select only those candidates judged to be suitable for further training. Trainees will not be sent overseas until after this initial selection occurs, agency officials said.

We believe this action is a significant improvement and, if properly implemented, will be a major tool for insuring recruitment of motivated and committed volunteers.

RECRUITMENT AND PLACEMENT OFFICERS NEED MORE TRAINING

The recruitment work group report also said:

"Recruiters will * * * not only be required to evaluate such things as an applicant's basic flexibility, motivation, maturity and adaptability, but will also have to be capable of recommending the type of assignment in which a suitable applicant will be best placed."

Many ACTION recruiters are ex-volunteers who may be well informed about Peace Corps but know little about the assessment of recruits. Of a 2-day orientation given to recruiters upon employment, only 1/2 day is devoted to the applicant assessment role of their job. Although some follow-on training is provided by the regional centers, there is no uniform

curriculum for such training. It is our judgment that if recruiters are expected to (1) screen applicants with personality or motivation problems and (2) make judgments regarding the most suitable social and work environments for those they accept, more training is needed. If some of these decisions are left with placement officers, they too require training.

Agency action

Agency placement and recruitment officials agree that more training is necessary. ACTION said that its Office of Recruitment and Communications has developed a uniform training curriculum this year, which will be used in all ACTION Service Centers around the country in fiscal year 1979.

UNIFORM STANDARDS FOR ASSESSING APPLICANTS NEEDED

At the present time no uniform evaluation standards are available to guide staff in the recruitment, selection, and placement of volunteers.

A 1967 Peace Corps study identified five character traits as critical for successful volunteers: competence, maturity, emotional stability, motivation, and morale. A subsequent study developed a six-point scale which included interpersonal relationships, motivation, emotional maturity, productive competence, language ability, and aptitude for structured or nonstructured environment. The study also developed key words and attitudes relating to these traits. We could not determine whether either scale was ever tested or used in the Peace Corps.

It is our view that such efforts to develop standards should be supported and validated, particularly if ex-volunteers and other nonprofessionals are to be employed. The recruitment work group also supported the development of uniform suitability standards placement factors.

Agency comments

Peace Corps officials agreed that suitability standards were needed. As a result, a task force was created in May 1978 to develop criteria using those characteristics which indicate a high probability of volunteer success. The task force has developed a profile of successful volunteers, similar to that mentioned above, for use by recruitment and placement officers in the assessment of potential volunteers. ACTION also informed us that the Peace Corps application and

reference forms are being revised to permit better initial screening techniques of prospective volunteers.

EARLY TERMINATION IS HIGH,
DISRUPTIVE, AND COSTLY

In 1961, the first year of the Peace Corps, early termination was 10.9 percent; by 1967 termination had risen to 27.7 percent. Our review of calendar year 1975 recruits shows that 38 percent terminated early. Of those volunteers who did not complete, 22 percent terminated in the first 6 months and 9 percent in the first 8 weeks.

Peace Corps officials believe several kinds of problems contribute to early termination. Many of these problems, such as work, personal, or environmental problems, are viewed as being under Peace Corps control. Officials believe poor selection and orientation of volunteers, such as lack of commitment, inability to tolerate frustration, and cultural and physical incompatibility, all contribute to early terminations.

In a study of Peace Corps early terminations from fiscal year 1972 through May 1, 1976, Peace Corps tabulated the primary reasons for termination given by about 8,440 volunteers and trainees. Many reasons seemed to reflect inadequate recruitment and placement procedures, including lack of commitment, lack of information about and orientation to Peace Corps life, personality problems related to frustration, and lack of flexibility and initiative. Some of the reasons most frequently given for early termination are listed here.

Lack of interest in program	466
Marriage/romantic involvement	453
Termination due to spouse's termination	432
Not accomplishing enough to justify 2-years stay	373
Family obligations required leaving Peace Corps	367
Disliked type of work	299
Wished to pursue educational goals	267
Host country unable to provide necessary support	230
Job completed before end of service	225

Early termination problems are illustrated in the results of the 1977 rural animation (animal labor) program in Senegal. Twenty-two trainees started the program, one dropped out

during stateside training, 9 more left by the end of pre-service in-country training, leaving only 12 to start the program. Reasons given for early termination were insufficient interest in the program, incompatible personality traits, sites too isolated, and in one case disagreement with program policies. The Country Director later made the following comments.

"If we could eliminate the people who feel that a trip to an African village is a romantic adventure or the people who have come to spend a few months travelling before returning home, and if we could have replaced at least some of the casual applicants with serious candidates, our program would be strengthened considerably. I know that my suggestion sounds like the old PRIST, but for a high risk program of this nature, this approach may be very sound."

Such early terminations contribute to loss of good will in the host countries and poor feelings about Peace Corps among the volunteers. Early terminations also make it difficult to fulfill commitments to the countries and are wasteful. In Malaysia, Peace Corps officials estimate the cost of early terminations--airline tickets, baggage, and per diem--to be about \$72,000 from September 1976 through August 1977. Although these costs would have been incurred in any event, Peace Corps received little benefit from the short-service periods.

Examples on the following page which occurred from July to October 1977, show costs (air fare and per diem) and list reasons volunteers gave for terminating service.

<u>Case no.</u>	<u>Entered-on-duty date</u>	<u>Termination date</u>	<u>Air fare and per diem</u>	<u>Volunteers' reasons for termination</u>
1	10/8/77	10/18/77	\$ 768	Lack of self preparation in deciding to take on a 2-year job abroad.
2	9/20/77	10/22/77	743	Program would not give enough challenge.
3	9/19/77	9/26/77	1003	Personal problems overwhelming.
4	10/22/77	10/27/77	1033	Romantic involvement.
5	9/12/77	9/23/77	456	Motivation deteriorated while sick.
6	7/11/77	7/29/77	Costs not given	Program country changed and person wanted to learn language of original country. Went to graduate school.
7	10/7/77	10/21/77	372	Wanted more sophisticated, career-related assignment.
8	7/6/77	7/18/77	128	Had to resolve a personal relationship problem.
9	7/17/77	7/26/77	229	Given misleading information by recruiting office. Had no face-to-face meeting with recruiter until after selection. Wanted to go to Africa rather than Near East.
10	10/17/77	10/20/77	333	Unable to adjust to host country.

We believe early terminations would be reduced significantly if Peace Corps and volunteers had a binding service agreement before volunteers went overseas. The following section reviews such agreements.

MUTUAL SERVICE OBLIGATION

Peace Corps volunteers are not legally obligated to complete specified lengths of service. Although expected to complete a 2-year tour, volunteers can quit at any time for any reason. Of the volunteers who entered Peace Corps in 1975, about 22 percent of those terminated did so within 6 or less months of entering. In these cases, not only did volunteer placement and return prove costly, but Peace Corps derived little benefit from their service.

We believe that a number of terminating volunteers might have remained in service had they been formally obligated to serve a minimum duty period. Such a requirement would cause volunteer applicants to (1) give greater thought to their personal commitments before going overseas and (2) make extra efforts to adjust to their new environments after entering on duty as volunteers in order to serve full tours.

In our questionnaire to volunteers we proposed the following:

"A volunteer is not legally obligated to any specific tour of service. Some believe the volunteer should be obligated to a minimum period, say, one year. If the volunteer terminated early before that minimum length of time, and there were not an extenuating reason; i.e., death in the family, injury to the volunteer, etc., she/he would be required to reimburse Peace Corps for the cost of the transportation to and from the host country."

We then asked, "If you had been required to sign such a statement, would you have still volunteered? Please explain."

About half said "yes," but stressed that Peace Corps, in return, would have to recognize its obligation to insure that volunteers would be properly screened and placed, adequately trained, would have a viable project, and would receive good in-country support. They contended that Peace Corps should do its job properly, and that only then would they become obligated. Typical comments drawn from our questionnaire follow:

"* * * If all terms in job description were clear enough and a year 'contract' was made up, I think more volunteers would seriously consider what they were volunteering for and become responsible for their decisions * * *"

"Yes but * * * screen the volunteer more, make the Peace Corps meaningful, and take a honest, hard look at programing. (Don't just keep plugging people in!)"

"Peace Corps should consider that many volunteers are invited to fill a job that does not exist * * *"

During the 1960s Peace Corps did not bear the return costs of early terminating volunteers unless their reasons were considered beyond their control. One Peace Corps official told us that this practice was discontinued because country directors objected to making this determination.

AGENCY COMMENTS

ACTION and Peace Corps agree that the early termination problem is serious and costly, but are not convinced that the proposed mutual service obligation is necessary. Peace Corps believes its new preinvitational screening and orientation will significantly reduce the number of early terminations because it will screen unsuitable candidates before they go overseas. The Agency also said it is directing overseas trainers to more selectively decide which trainees will become volunteers ready to commit themselves to 2 years of service. In addition, efforts are underway to stress to trainees (1) the seriousness of their commitments to serve and (2) the harmful effects to the host countries and to Peace Corps of early terminations.

Peace Corps believes that no selection system can detect all unsuitable volunteers. There will continue to be volunteers who need to be sent home by the Peace Corps as early terminations when a determination is made that they are, in fact, unsuitable. Other early terminations are unavoidable, because of poor health, disease, family situations, and other factors. ACTION and Peace Corps management therefore believe the matter of mutual service obligations deserves further study.

Peace Corps officials said the practice requiring volunteers--those who resigned or were terminated--to pay their return trips to the United States was abandoned. One reason this practice was dropped was because poorly performing or unsuitable volunteers stayed on, under that system, to the detriment of host-country relations and the morale of other volunteers. The practice was also deemed to be unfair because volunteers from Latin America could return home at a much lower cost than, for example, those

in Nepal. Peace Corps suggested a uniform financial penalty as a more equitable alternative.

Peace Corps also believes that our recommendation that early terminating volunteers should pay the entire cost of both their return transportation and the cost of their tickets to the assignment countries may be unrealistic. Peace Corps officials said that most volunteers would not have these funds available, nor would their readjustment allowances be sufficient in all cases to cover the amount. The Agency is concerned that such a policy might encourage recruitment of volunteers who have personal funds to compensate for this type of contingency while volunteers without these resources might be deterred from service.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

Volunteers who terminate early are costly and of reduced benefit to Peace Corps programs. We believe early terminations of trainees and volunteers could be significantly reduced if recruitment and placement procedures and training were improved. As noted above, ACTION and Peace Corps have taken, or plan to take, several actions which, when fully implemented, should greatly improve recruitment. We recommend these actions be implemented as soon as possible.

Peace Corps and ACTION agree that early termination of volunteers is a serious and costly problem, but they believe the actions taken (and planned) significantly reduce the problem, especially the new preinvitational screening and orientation. Peace Corps management believes the matter of mutual service obligations deserves further study. We note, however, that Peace Corps has already produced several major studies of early terminations but none have had any noticeable effect.

It is true, as Peace Corps notes, that no selection system will screen out all unsuitable volunteers. It is also true that some early terminations are unavoidable, because of injury, disease, family situations, and other factors. We anticipate these would be exempt cases. Nor do we believe that volunteers should be forced to remain at their project sites "to the detriment of host country relations and the morale of other volunteers," if the volunteer has made a sincere and honest attempt to adjust to host-country living and working. The in-country Peace Corps staff would make this determination.

We believe the mutual service obligation and its reimbursement feature should be invoked against those volunteers

who show indifference to their host country and responsibilities to Peace Corps. On the other hand, the volunteer should not be penalized if the project failed due to factors such as poor training or insufficient support. We anticipate that reimbursement will need to be invoked in few cases once recruitment is improved.

Therefore, we recommend that you require that before going overseas, incoming volunteers execute formal agreements for a minimum period of service--1 year, for example--in which the obligations of the volunteers and Peace Corps are stated. If the volunteers were to terminate without a valid reason before expiration of the minimum period, they would pay the return transportation cost and would reimburse Peace Corps for the transportation cost to the country.

CHAPTER 5

PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT AND VOLUNTEER SUPPORT

The Peace Corps has significant problems including (1) a personnel turnover rate that triples rates experienced by other Federal agencies and (2) an inability to fill staff vacancies quickly because of cumbersome employment processes. These problems have resulted in inadequate supervisory staff-to-volunteer ratios in almost all countries and have prevented adequate staff support of the volunteers.

The experience in Honduras shows some of the difficulties. The Peace Corps in-country management staff consists of a country director, five associate directors, and a program training officer. Of these positions, the following were vacant for the periods shown:

Country Director

January 9, 1974, to July 20, 1974	6 months
July 8, 1976, to December 18, 1976	5 months

Associate Director (Health)

September 1, 1974, to November 2, 1975	14 months
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Program Training Officer

December 19, 1976, to September 1977	9 months
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The Country Director told us that the absence of a program training officer had been sorely felt. The incumbent has full-time responsibility for monitoring training and for coordinating the program staff and the training center. When the position was not occupied, the associate directors had to monitor the center in addition to their other duties. The Country Director did not feel that Peace Corps/Honduras had been in control of the training center. In turn, the training center lacked the feedback on training normally provided by a training officer.

STAFF TURNOVER

Since its inception, high staff turnover has been a problem to Peace Corps. Our analysis of personnel data disclosed that 578 foreign service personnel separated between fiscal years 1974 and 1977. Fifty-two percent of these personnel served 3 years or less. We also checked 19 upper management positions for the period June 1975 through December 31, 1977, and found there had been 38 occupants of these positions in addition to those occupying the positions as of June 1975--200-percent

turnover rate. It should be noted that included in these was one position, the Country Director for Liberia, which had six occupants. The position of Peace Corps Director, which had three occupants during this period, was not included.

We believe the 5-year rule, whereby Peace Corps staff employment is limited to two 2-1/2-year contracts with an optional extension of 1 year, is the cause of much of this personnel turnover. The 5-year rule was responsible for causing about 40 percent of the turnover in our sample. Since 1965 when the Congress made it part of the Peace Corps Act, the rule has applied to all Peace Corps employees. Before 1965, the Peace Corps Director applied the rule as administrative policy for overseas personnel, with the intent of making Peace Corps staff service similar to volunteer service--short term.

We discussed the application of the 5-year rule with seven upper-level officials in Peace Corps headquarters who had left or were soon leaving as a result of the rule. Two officials favored the rule. Five officials contended that the rule hindered the orderly operation of Peace Corps and was causing many capable and experienced people to leave. One official said that the Peace Corps institutional memory was at best 2 years because of the high staff turnover.

In August 1977, the Director, ACTION, created a Commission on Workplace Democracy within ACTION. The Commission was scheduled to review the effects of the 5-year rule, among other things. In February 1978, we were told that the Commission might look at the rule in Spring 1978 with the possibility of making recommendations in 6 months. The Commission has not yet reviewed the rule.

An administrative consequence of this rule is reflected in a statement by the ACTION Personnel Management Division that it could significantly reduce the amount of paperwork it prepares annually were it not for the rule.

We also noted that Peace Corps employees serve under the 5-year rule overseas alongside of, and doing similar jobs to, local national employees who are exempt from the rule and can have careers with Peace Corps. (ACTION employees engaged in its domestic and support activities are under the U.S. Civil Service Commission and are not subject to the 5-year rule). However, we were told by the Director, Peace Corps, and the Deputy Director, ACTION, that they are considering extending provisions of the 5-year rule to all U.S. and foreign Peace Corps employees.

Some Peace Corps officials we interviewed believed that the 5-year rule should be either revised or abolished. Suggested alternatives include

- eliminating the rule and continuing using renewable 2-1/2-year contracts, but without a limit on the number of renewals;
- restricting the rule's application to selected upper level management positions, rather than to all Peace Corps staff positions;
- changing the 5-year limit to 7-1/2 years, thereby mitigating some of the rule's adverse effects; and
- removing the rule entirely and employing Peace Corps personnel in the same manner as ACTION's Domestic Operations personnel--a career service system.

A 1974 National Academy of Sciences study cited the 5-year rule (and poor records) as responsible for their inability to obtain detailed data about Peace Corps. The Academy agreed to the merit of obtaining fresh talent, but felt that there was also merit "in keeping a limited number of experienced and capable people in the organization for longer periods." The Academy recommended that the 5-year limitation be reevaluated, but this was not done.

AGENCY COMMENTS

ACTION officials agreed that there had been insufficient study of the 5-year rule and its impact on Peace Corps operations, and said that such a study would be made. According to these officials, this analysis will include effects of the program, including

- numbers and levels of staff who return,
- strengths and weaknesses of the system,
- staff morale, and
- historical information.

If the study indicates that changes are desirable, ACTION officials said it will consult appropriate congressional committees about revision of the Peace Corps Act.

ACTION claimed the 5-year rule has benefits and advantages apart from the costs and disadvantages found in our review. The Agency acknowledged that the rule causes staff turnovers, but said it also attracts dedicated people to Peace Corps; employees characterized by their zeal, spirit of innovation, and desire to serve.

RECOMMENDATION

We recommend that the Director, ACTION, make a study of the 5-year rule as soon as possible to determine if recommendations to the Congress should be made.

LENGTHY EMPLOYMENT PROCESS

The authorized Peace Corps permanent personnel ceiling was 767 on September 30, 1978. The number of full-time permanent employees was 684, augmented by the 76 temporary, part-time, and/or expert/consultant personnel. An additional 273 personnel are used through personal service contracts in various staff and training positions.

Overseas positions are filled very slowly even though Peace Corps management is regularly provided a report showing when each employee 5-year tenure will expire. One Peace Corps region described its problem of personnel recruitment as follows.

"To document our contention that the personnel problems are hindering existing programs and have become barriers to expanding into new areas, we have kept records on each recruit action initiated to determine the length of time required to actually deliver a new staff member to country. The average time, from initiation of the recruit action in the Region to arrival in country, is 30 weeks, seven months. Some actions, of course, take less time; others, the hard-to-fill positions in hard-to-fill countries, require more. One training officer position has been vacant for 45 weeks, and we still have no candidates available for interviews."

This region's view of the problem is not unique. The timespan, from the time personnel began to recruit for an overseas position until the person arrived in-country averaged 9 months before November 1977. According to ACTION personnel officials, delays are caused by

- Peace Corps failure to select candidates in a reasonable time from qualified candidates furnished by ACTION,
- Peace Corps and applicant tardiness in initiating and completing required paperwork, and
- long processing times for security and medical clearances.

One region, for example, had rosters of applicants from August to October 1977 for four positions. The region expected to have the positions filled by October 31, 1977. Peace Corps did not make its selections, however, until the last week of September. One personnel official said it would be impossible to have the people cleared, trained, and in-country in the short time remaining. In another case, an applicant was told he was hired but no action was initiated to begin a security investigation for about 6 months. In another case, an Associate Peace Corps Director (APCD) in Honduras advised Peace Corps/Washington several times that his tour was about to end and that a replacement was needed. No action was taken and he left without being replaced by a permanent employee. The Country Director had to hire a volunteer under a personal service contract as temporary replacement.

Staff-to-volunteer ratio

In 1977, officials in one Peace Corps region stated:

"* * * Increasing Volunteer numbers or increasing Volunteer effectiveness are both impossible if there is no staff to provide leadership and direction."

High staff turnover and positions which are vacant for long periods exacerbate the problem of volunteer supervision. This is particularly true of APCD. Although country directors have ultimate program responsibility, APCDs are a key part of Peace Corps in-country staff. Each APCD (usually one APCD for each program sector) is responsible for volunteer training, programing, surveying volunteer living and job sites, and insuring that volunteers receive necessary support. Peace Corps country officials have informed us that one APCD position can provide adequate supervisory services to between 25 to 35 volunteers at most. As the following figures show, the ratio was higher in the countries we visited.

Kenya	1:80
Malaysia	1:55
Liberia	1:45
Honduras	1:41
Afghanistan	1:38
Colombia	1:36

It should be noted that these are averages; the actual ratios vary by program sector. In Colombia, for example, ratios vary from 1:23 (education) to 1:47 (business). In Kenya the APCD situation was so critical that the Country Director had to take over these duties for 61 volunteers, detracting from the time required for his primary duties.

AGENCY ACTION

Peace Corps and ACTION recognized the problems created by vacant positions and, during the course of review, instituted procedures designed to fill positions sooner. First, a permanent position, special assistant to the Peace Corps Director, was established to identify qualified candidates for country director positions and to promote the timely processing of selections and appointments.

Second, a permanent Overseas Staff Recruitment section was established within the ACTION Office of Personnel Management, to fill all other overseas positions. This section (1) established "a recruitment and selection plan for overseas positions," (2) developed qualifying criteria for the positions, and (3) instituted changes to ACTION personnel regulations. All procedures were intended to reduce the time required to fill vacancies given top priority from the previous 302 days to 90 days.

The new system went into effect November 17, 1977. We reviewed 22 employees hired under the new procedures and found it took an average of 137 workdays--about 6 months--to fill overseas positions. Two were hired and onboard in less than 90 days but most cases took from 126 to 150 days. Thus, there was an improvement in the time needed to fill overseas positions, but ACTION still had not reached its goal of 90 days.

ACTION disagreed with our computation of about 137 days to fill an overseas position and noted that when

the new procedures began, there was a backlog of all types: critical vacancies, normal replacement recruit actions, recruitments for new positions, and long-range projected recruiting needs. ACTION believed we did not adequately take into account the existence of the various types of recruitment which are going on simultaneously and that therefore our use of statistics in evaluating the progress made to date was misleading and in error.

To resolve the matter, we returned during September and October 1978 and reviewed all 47 staff selections made from November 17, 1977 through June 30, 1978. These 47 selections (the original 22 plus 25 more) pertain to 42 positions scattered throughout all 3 Peace Corps regions. Not all 47 persons were hired, however, because 11 declined job offers and 2 failed their medical clearances. Recruiting for 3 of the positions was canceled because of job refusals and medical failures. Of the remaining 39 positions, we found an average of 122 workdays were required to fill each. Nine of the positions were filled within 110 days or less--the agency target of 90 days plus 20 days for training.

Also, of the 39 positions, 16 were filled by the date requested by Peace Corps despite the required long lead time. However, 9 were filled late. There were no deadlines for the remaining 14 positions. There has been improvement in the time required to fill overseas positions, but further improvement is needed.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The high turnover of the Peace Corps staff and the lengthy employment process have resulted in positions being vacant for extended periods and in undesirable ratios of staff to volunteers. The corrective actions taken by ACTION, however, should remedy many of the underlying causes. We recommend that ACTION and Peace Corps continue efforts to reduce the time required to fill overseas positions.

OTHER ASPECTS OF PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEER SUPPORT

In addition to the support received from host-country agencies and organizations, the volunteers also receive support from Peace Corps in-country staffs. As part of this review, we obtained volunteer views and comments regarding this support; particularly, the adequacy of volunteer living allowance and health care. Although there were instances of dissatisfaction, on the whole we found volunteers to be satisfied with the support they receive from Peace Corps.

Living allowances

Most volunteers felt that the living allowances provided each month were adequate. However, some said that they had to supplement the allowance with either personal funds, vacation allowances or supplemental employment--the latter being forbidden by the Peace Corps.

Health care

The volunteers in all countries but Liberia said that they were satisfied with their health care. There was notable skepticism about the ability of host-country medical personnel.

In Liberia 49 percent of the volunteers were concerned about health care, particularly the confidentiality of their records, the quality of care, and their relations with the medical staff. We could not determine if these concerns were based on actual experience or a further manifestation of a severe staff and PCV morale problem in Liberia which Peace Corps is trying to solve. We discussed the situation with the Director of the ACTION Health Services Division and the Director, Peace Corps. They confirmed what we had learned and have attempted to resolve the problem.

Readjustment Allowance

All Peace Corps volunteers receive a readjustment allowance upon completion of their service. The allowance accrues at the rate of \$125 for each month of service. We reviewed the timeliness of payment and the accounting for the allowance.

Timeliness of Payment

The agency has progressed in making timely final payments. Two-thirds of the account balance was paid while the volunteer was still in-country due to long final payment processing. In 1975 it instituted a new system and reduced in-country payment to one-third the balance.

From a sample of 103 volunteers who returned between July 1, 1975, and June 9, 1977, we found that 38 percent had to wait longer than 6 weeks for their final payment check. However, most delays occurred in 1975 and 1976 while the new system was being implemented. Also, 41 percent of those paid late had terminated early, which may have caused the long delay. We could not readily determine from available agency records, however, precisely when or why delays occur.

Agency officials have told us that the average payment time for a 3-month period in spring 1978 was 33 days, and that in the period May to August 1978 the waiting period had decreased to an average of 31 days.

Accounting for the
Readjustment Allowance

The ACTION Accounting Division receives all data for the readjustment allowance account from the International Volunteer Support Services Branch, which is responsible for the daily accounting. The Accounting Division handles the gross account balances, transfers funds from the Peace Corps appropriation to the readjustment allowance account, and reconciles the account balance with the Department of the Treasury's monthly statement.

For over a year, the Accounting Division was not able to reconcile the account to the Treasury balance. The account was finally reconciled, however, and the differences resolved in May 1978. Agency officials assured us that the monthly reconciliations have been made regularly since May 1978.

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