

KHOTSO

January 2010



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In this issue

- PCV News Corner on Page 3
- Staff Corner, Admin Corner & Education Corners on Page 4
- CHED Corner on Page 6
- PCV Life on Page 7
- General Peace Corps News on Page 14

Message from the Acting Country Director

Happy New Year! It seems like yesterday that I was in Guyana, sending out New Year's greetings to our Volunteers there. The end of the year is usually time for us to reflect back on the happenings of the past twelve months, as we prepare to welcome yet another year.

Personally, my family experienced lots of change over the course of the last year. Prince joined me in Guyana last March and by August we were packing up, preparing to move to the Mountain Kingdom. In March, Prince made his first trip to the USA – where we reunited in a very snowy New York City, bringing awe and wonder to Prince's first experience with cold weather. Together we saw several shows on Broadway and participated in one of our favorite pastimes in The Big Apple – shopping. July brought the news of my father's declining health, but also the redeeming headline that I'd be joining the Peace Corps Lesotho team. My first few weeks and months in Lesotho demonstrated how welcoming the Basotho and some of the world's finest Volunteers can be as I was welcomed with open arms, and wonderful singing sure to brighten the worst of days.

Peace Corps Lesotho has also seen its share of changes over the last 365 days, with staff goings/comings (Ted, Maria/Charles, Arlene/Mantiti, Kompi, Mamothe/Masechaba, Fumane/Victoria, Selloane, and Mamotena). Additionally, we've said goodbye to CHED and ED 07s, while welcoming CHED 09s and ED 10s. We've been fortunate to have extending Volunteers in our midst, but only to realize that soon we will be bidding each of them the best of future endeavors. Fortunately, and I knock loudly on wood, our Volunteers and staff have remained healthy and safe for the most part. We've withstood

many challenges, and have welcomed many new opportunities in 2009, and are stronger for having done so.

We can only hope that 2010 brings us strength, a renewed sense of vigor to address the challenges and opportunities that development work poses, good health, safe and fun times, and yes, a continental win for the 2010 World Cup.

Thank you all for your efforts in 2009. I wish each and every one of you a happy, safe and secure 2010.

Charles Miller
Acting Country Director

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Editor – Deepak Pullanikkatil

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Administration – Richard Carlson

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Community Health And Economic Development - Charles Miller

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Safety & Security – Mpiti Thamae

Distribution – Lebohang Ranooe

All other staff and PCVs who contribute

From the Editor's Desk

Articles must be received by the 4th Monday of the month to be included in the following month's edition of the Khotso. **When submitting articles, please provide the name of the person making the submission and a contact person for follow-up questions.** The Newsletter will be emailed and a hardcopy made available in the office on or about the 1st of each month. Please make sure that your email address is on file with Peace Corps.

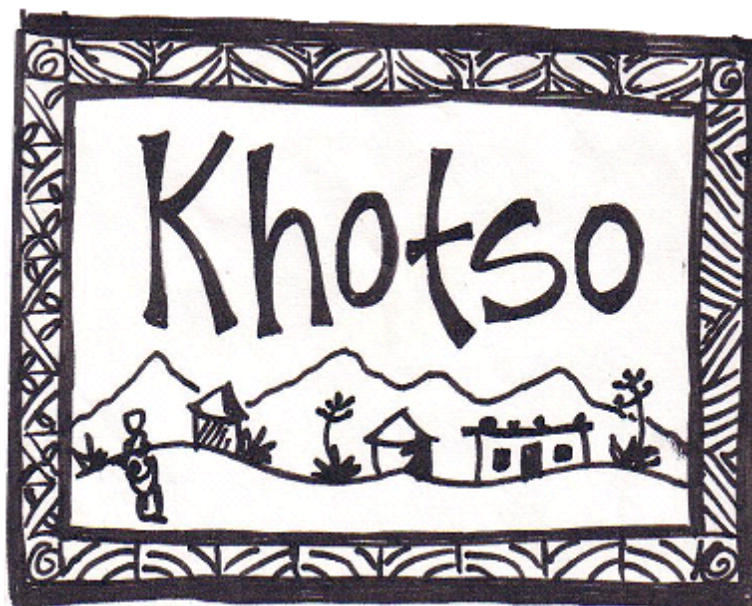
The editorial staff would like feedback from PCVs regarding the content. It is our desire to provide you with information that is useful, helpful, and encouraging. We would appreciate receiving constructive feedback from you as to whether the information contained in this newsletter met your needs.

By submitting articles, you are providing Peace Corps Lesotho with the right to reprint your article in full or part in any publication.

Deepak Pullanikkatil
Editor



Editorial





PCV Birthdays

Birthday greetings go out to the following PCVs. The Peace Corps Lesotho staff sends you greeting and hope that you have a very prosperous year.



January

Stapleton, Janice	January 1
Bryant, John	January 7
Weiss, Tamara	January 10
Kaufman, Elissa	January 11
Nichols, Natalie	January 18
Burk, Brett	January 19
Bradford, Barbara	January 28
Banton, Rebecca	January 29
Kalaw, Michelle	January 29

February

Holmen, Andrea	February 1
Dissen, Michael	February 3
Birhanu, Nathan	February 9
Pulvino, Rory	February 11
Tipsword, Jacqueline	February 11
Movalli, Kristine	February 13
Maresco, Thomas	February 15
Landrum, Nathan	February 21

March

Kremnitzer, Kelly	March 8
Orazio, Margaret	March 10
Leaf, Kaitlin	March 16
Thompson, Kaye	March 20
Green, Sara	March 25
Gordon, Ellen	March 26
Hall, Eric	March 29
Scheunemann, Ann	March 31

GRANT MONEY FOR LIBRARIES

eIFL.net has been awarded a three-year \$1.4 million grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to spark the development of innovative public library services using technology in transitioning and developing countries.

The Public Library Innovation Program <http://plip.eifl.net> encourages public libraries to reach out to their communities, partnering with local government, business and other organizations to assess local needs and develop new services. Technology has transformed

public libraries throughout the world, providing access to critical education materials and communication services.

Round 1: 10 grants of up to \$30,000 USD

Deadline: February 28, 2010

Grants awarded: April 2010

The first round of grants will be open to applicants from Lesotho and certain other countries.

For further information contact:

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Email: plip@eifl.net

Program website: <http://plip.eifl.net/>

Summer Vacations and the Border

Remember, when you cross the border into South Africa, especially from Maseru, you may only get a seven-day visa. Most other border crossings still give thirty-days if you ask. The customs agents in Maseru may tell you to get an extension at any South African Home Affairs Office in Cape Town, Durban, Johannesburg, etc. Yes, in theory you could get a visa extension, but only if you have a return airline ticket to the USA! The fine for exceeding your visa stay is M 1,000.00. Should you only get a seven day visa and want to stay longer, you have a couple of options:

1. Before the seven days has expired cross into Swaziland, Mozambique, etc. and you will get another visa when you return to South Africa.
2. Cross the border at other border crossing where they are still giving 30-day visas.

DO NOT GET ANGRY WITH THE CUSTOMS OFFICIAL. It only makes our job harder to help you out. We have checked the South African law and they are correct. As an American coming from a country other than the USA you are only entitled to seven days.

Staff Birthdays



January

Deepak Pullanikkatil January 22
Margaret Putsoa January 23

February

Johnson Fatokun February 21

March

Bernard Letsella March 15

Peace Corps Lesotho Holidays

January

January 1— New Year Day (US, LS Holiday)*
January 18— Martin Luther King Jr. Day (US Holiday)*

February

February 16— President's Day (US Holiday)*

March

March 11— Moshoeshoe Day (LS Holiday)*

*PC Lesotho remains closed on this day.

Admin Corner By Rich Carlson

LIVING ALLOWANCE SURVEYS

We are in the process of tabulating the Living Allowance Surveys. We finally received the 75% needed. And also, Congress just passed a fiscal year 2010 Peace Corps budget and it has been approved by President Obama. We will keep you posted on what changes to your living allowance can be expected, if at all any. Hopefully you will be

notified in the next Khotso if you are getting a raise. Those of you who will be in Maseru are free to drop by my office to get any scoop on this.

JO'BURG TAXI RANK

The answer is NO! NO! NO! Do NOT use the Johannesburg Taxi Rank! Guaranteed you will be robbed of everything, including your backpack. No one will help you! It doesn't

matter how big and strong you are. If you're going to Jo'burg get off public transport at least two stops before the Taxi Rank or hire a bush taxi. If you get off before the Taxi Rank you will need to hail a passing private taxi to your destination. This still doesn't guarantee you won't be robbed, but it lowers the chances. Jo'burg can be a dangerous destination.



Staff Corner
Admin Corner
Education Corner

Education Corner

By Clement & Malitaba

Khotsong,

Once again welcome to the new year and we hope 2010 will be both enjoyable and productive as you continue to apply yourselves in your various projects. We would like to congratulate the TC09 for completion of their first year: Flowers to Mike, Nicole, Meg, Melody, Karen, John, Janice, Jackie, Kelly, Ellen, Cullen, Kaitlin, Gwen, Brett, Ro, Vic and Jack. Peace Corps provides a unique experience to all of us and we are sharing with you some of the perceptions from RPCVs and you may find them interesting.

[PC service] "is like a journey of self awareness and awareness of others.

It was one of the most difficult things I have ever done but it was the most fulfilling..."

"It was a life changing experience and I will never forget".

"My PC experience was challenging and rewarding and has changed my life for ever".

"My service has changed my ability to cope with personal struggles and enhance my

view of other cultures and has taught me the importance of education in young people's lives especially in developing countries".

With that we wish all the best as you begin this final stretch...

The new group (TC2010) is in the process of settling in. By now we are confident that they have received a warm welcome from our hosting schools/agencies and from Peace Corps family at large. We wish them well.

Site Visits

We are glad to announce that this year we will be able to conduct site visits. The primary purpose of site visits is to give staff an opportunity to see Volunteers at their sites, observe their work in progress, and meet with their counterparts and supervisors. The visits endorse Volunteers' work and community commitment activities. We hope to visit each one of you this year. Please take a look at our calendar of activities for January

– March to give you an idea of our whereabouts.

Volunteer Reporting Forms (VRF)

Please take note of the submission periods for FY2010.
VRF1- Oct 2009–Jan 2010
VRF2- Feb 2010–May 2010
VRF3- Jun 2010–Sep 2010

The forms should be submitted by last month of each reporting period. Again thank you for taking time to fill up these important forms!

English Teaching FORUM!

Latest edition Vol 47, No. 2009 is here! The edition contains 'Tools for Activating Materials and Tasks in the English Language Classroom; The Formeaning Response Approach: Poetry in the EFL Classroom; Learning to Learn Cooperatively; Journals in the Language Classroom' and if you are from or anywhere near the state of Michigan, there are interesting lessons on the "Great Lakes State." A few copies are available, check bo-'m'e 'Makhauta, 'Malitaba or Ntate Clement.



Welcome to 'Me' Selloane Pitikoe, CHED Program Assistant

Personal background

I am 'Me' 'Mantai Mokheseng Khau born Selloane Florence Pitikoe but I am so much attached to my roots I do not want to let go off my maiden names so still prefer to be called 'Me' Selloane Pitikoe. I was born in Lekokoaneng in the Berea District on April 22 1968, and I am 41years old. I am happily married to the most handsome and loving husband in the world Ntate Mokheseng Khau from Masitise in Quthing – the district with many languages (English, Sesotho, Ndebele, Xhosa and Phuthi). I am a mother of two; the cute ausi Moleboheng aged 20 years and the most charming abuti Teboho aged 12 years. When I am in Maseru I stay at Sekoting Ha Leqele. My husband and I are both double orphans.

Educational background

I did my primary education in Fusi Primary school in Lekokoaneng from 1974-1980 and obtained a first class pass. I was then admitted at St Agnes High School in Ty. I did my secondary education from 1981 – 1983 and again obtained a first class pass. In 1984-1985 I did my Cambridge Overseas Senior Certificate in the same high school and obtained a second class pass. In 1986 I enrolled for a Diploma in Nursing at Maluti Adventist School of Nursing and despite passing my probation with an A I had to leave due to some internal family problems. In 1987 I enrolled with the Lesotho Agricultural College for a Diploma in Forestry and obtained a "pass". In 1993 I did an evening course with the Lerotholi Polytechnic for a computer appreciation course and obtained an A. I further enrolled for an evening course on Computerized Accounting using Accpac with the Quadrant computers and obtained an A. I also enrolled for a distance education course on practical bookkeeping with the Damelin Correspondence College and obtained a pass. In 1999-2001 I enrolled for a part-time Diploma in Adult Education with the Institute of Extra Mural Activities of the National University of Lesotho and obtained a Distinction. In 2001-2005 I enrolled for a BEd Degree in Adult Education and obtained a 2nd class first division pass. I am currently pursuing two part-time courses – a Masters Degree in Adult Education with the Institute of Extra Mural Studies from 2009-2012 and a fully sponsored Certificate in Advanced Health Management with the Foundation for Professional Development in Pretoria, a one year course which is an equivalent of a First Degree from August 2009-2010. I will graduate in November 2010 in Pretoria upon completion of the course.

Professional background

I have just resigned from the National AIDS Commission as the Technical Support Officer for the Quthing district, the position which I held from December 1, 2007. My key responsibilities for this position were management of both the human and material resources of the organization, advocacy on the role of NAC and on HIV and AIDS prevention, treatment care and support as well as impact mitigation, provision of technical support for the HIV and AIDS implementing partners, ensuring the coordination of the District HIV and AIDS response and ensuring that the district response was in line with the National HIV and AIDS policy and the National Strategic Framework. I also worked as a part-time lecturer for the Institute of Extra Mural Studies in Maseru and Leribe campuses facilitating pedagogy in adult education, health issues in adult education and communication media in adult education for the first year learners' and third year learners from 2007-2008. I have done a lot of consultancy work in HIV and AIDS education at the grassroots/workplace levels. I worked for CARE International in Lesotho and South Africa for eight years. From 1997 to 2005, I worked in different projects including livelihoods and food security, rights-based approaches, participatory learning approaches and HIV and AIDS, both with the workplace and grassroots programmes. I worked in different capacities which ranged from designing training/learning materials, carrying out needs assessments, management of the field operations staff, management of training staff, coordination and implementation of training/learning activities for adults, and the management of the HIV and AIDS Resource center.

Oh! I was a Primary Teacher at some point in time, teaching class 4 at the Lords' New Church Primary School in Ha Foso for one year.

Extra-mural activities

Reading – newspapers, books

- Watching TV – soapies, news
- Aerobics
- Being with my family
- Church
- Carrying out research and writing
- Bringing out the positive out of other people

Special characteristics

- Active listening
- Patience
- A lot of Smiling and laughing
- Sense of humour

I can be reached on SPitikoe@peacecorps.gov or phone +266 22313871 Ext. 121. You will find me sitting in Ntate Kompfi's old office, just outside Charles' Office. I look forward to working with all of you and am happy to be part of the Peace Corps Lesotho team.



CHED Corner

Peace Corps Launches Digital Library

WASHINGTON, D.C., December 18, 2009 – Director Aaron S. Williams is pleased to announce the launch of Peace Corps' Digital Library – a searchable collection of electronic Peace Corps materials from 1961 to the present – and invites current and returned Peace Corps volunteers (RPCVs) to share their unique service experiences through firsthand narratives and personal photos.

As the Peace Corps approaches its 50th anniversary in 2011, the Digital Library is a living collection that represents the agency's legacy of public service. Since 1961, nearly 200,000 Americans have served with the Peace Corps to promote a better understanding between Americans and the people of 139 host countries. The digital library can be accessed at <http://collection.peacecorps.gov>.

"The Peace Corps has always been an agency rooted in shared experiences – the volunteers share their perspective and expertise while our host-country communities share their languages, friendship and culture," said Director Williams. "This unique collection will educate and inspire the next generation of volunteers. I look forward to watching the collection grow in scope and depth as the nearly 200,000 Americans who have served with the Peace Corps share their photos and stories."

Current volunteers and RPCVs can contribute up to five photos and one story to the Digital Library via online submission forms. The Digital Library is searchable through several built-in features. Visitors can either browse the Digital Library's individual collections or search by keyword, the host country name, or a specific period of time. The individual collections include press briefings; congressional reports and legislation; posters and graphics; speeches essays and letters; newsletters; volunteer stories; volunteer photos; brochures; and agency photos.

The Digital Library is a work in progress. In addition to the submissions from volunteers, Peace Corps is digitizing historic materials like speeches, reports, press releases and photos to add to the library. The Digital Library is not a comprehensive archive of Peace Corps historical materials. For additional in-depth research, resources are available through The National Archives and Records Administration, and The John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

This website is a valuable educational resource in the commemoration of the Peace Corps's 50th anniversary. With the exception of a few items on the library marked with copyright restrictions, the materials of the digital library can be used for publications, exhibits, and events.

As Peace Corps approaches its 50th anniversary, its service legacy continues to promote peace and friendship around the world with 7,671 volunteers serving in 76 host countries. Historically, nearly 200,000 Americans have served with the Peace Corps to promote a better understanding between Americans and the people of 139 host countries. Peace Corps Volunteers must be U.S. citizens and at least 18 years of age. Peace Corps service is a 27-month commitment. To learn more about the Peace Corps, please visit our website www.peacecorps.gov

PCV Life



Freetown resident shares Peace Corps tales Story published in South Coast Today By PCV Tarsha Veiga

"As a Peace Corps Volunteer, life is always an adventure. Just about a month ago I had planned a trip to the top of this Mountain Kingdom – Sani Pass, the highest point in Southern Africa. The goals were to mix work with some recreation.

Goal 1: Hike and hitch to Sani Pass while reaching out to herd boys (young and old men who look after cattle) to teach them about HIV/AIDS, as the disease is so rampant here.

Goal 2: Take a mini holiday and relish in the great work that I am doing here.

The journey started out not as planned, typical for this country. My counterpart/coworker and I sat off thinking that we would borrow a truck from one of the villagers or even two other people. On the morning of the trip, all three options didn't show up. No truck meant that we caught a hitch down to the next point – eight hours from the end destination. So much for my Dad's way of living, "Tarsha, you always need a backup plan and ... to be on the safe side have three, no less!" Well, I have come to learn that my American ways of living can't always be extended to this third-world society.

Our hitch dropped us in Hltose (our camp town) and there we sat wondering how the day should continue on. We were still (slightly) hopeful that locals would come through and lend us the truck from that point in our destination, but four hours later Mr. Sekhele and I came to the realization



PCV Life

that our reality didn't exist as we wished.

At that point, we started looking into getting to Butha Butha – five hours from our outreach destination. We went in search for a local bus. The Kombi driver assured us that we could make it to Sani with no problem. In time, Mr. Sekhele and I realized that the Kombi driver, Mr. Unknown, had fooled us. We sat in the Butha Butha taxi rank eating local food, consisting of corn meal, fried spinach and fried chicken, not my ideal food – but desperate needs call for desperate matters. All the food was cooked from one of the metal shacks in the rank and only cost us \$2.50 U.S. I suppose it did the job because after all I summoned enough patience and energy to sit for another two hours. By 5 o' clock we headed up the mountain in a Kombi stuffed like sardines. The music blared through my headphones and I just couldn't wait until the driver finally told me that we had reached the next stop – that I realized would be 4 hours more.

Slowly we climbed the mountain to Mokhotlong experiencing the sun fall and watching the local people fall asleep sitting up. The higher and higher we got, the colder and colder the kombi became. It is typical that public transport here doesn't have heat, and most of the windows leak air more than I would like to tolerate, but I knew that an end was in sight and that my goals were for the greater good.

By this time, it started getting dark, and I started to worry about where Mr. Sekhele and I would stay. Once we got cell phone coverage, I texted a volunteer (phone calls are too expensive and the only way to communicate is via text) and she set Mr. Sekhele and I off in the right direction. The kombi driver dropped us at this random backpackers' (hostel) in Mokhotlong, and we searched for a guard yelling out, "Ntate, Ntate Nate" – man.

Twenty minutes later, a man in his PJs came out wondering what a local and a Lekhoa – "white" person – were doing wandering and yelling toward his facilities at 9 p.m.

I quickly explained that I was a Peace Corps Volunteer and was in the area to work on some AIDS outreach in the rural areas of Mokhotlong and that Mr. Sekhele was my counterpart and would be my translator in order for me to be effective. A few moments later, he set us up in the empty hostel and we unloaded and discussed our plan for the following day while munching on warm yogurt, muesli and Smucker's Peanut Butter.

Together, we strategized that our wakeup would be 6 a.m. and how we would continue our journey so that we could get a head start on our first goal. By 7:30 the next morning, we were out the door – walking up the dirt path and catching another lift to the taxi rank, whereby we had missed the first taxi out to the rural area.

At that point, we decided to hitch to the rural area, complete our first goal and then hitch to Sani. We got out past the Camp town (the city area of the districts) and met a few herd boys, (whom) we began to ask what they knew about HIV/AIDS.

I took out my notebook and began talking with Mr. Sekhele, which he then translated, "Abuti, are you aware of the disease AIDS?" Abuti replied, "you mean the disease that kills?" ... I was floored and thought maybe, after all this has been worth the trouble. From boy to boy, Mr. Sekhele continued to ask about contraception, one partner, love, gender roles and the use of condoms. When we felt that we had walked long enough, hitched to far enough rural areas and met at least 15 boys, we decided that we would move forward on our journey and reach Sani Pass.

At that point, we stood on the side of the deserted road and wondered if we would EVER catch a lift or even a kombi. Two hours later, not one car had passed and I began worrying. However, I knew that Mr. Sekhele could ask a local for room and board on the floor for one night. When only herd boys were passing, Mr. Sekhele realized that it was possible that we would only have the option to literally hike to Sani. He then asked a herd boy hailing donkeys to give us a lift. Moments later, however, desperation set in and I came back to him with, "Are you truly serious about hitching with the herd boy, because at this point it seems to be the only option?" He said, "Yes, Abuti says that we can get to Sani in five hours if we are hiking the whole way!"

Quickly, we ran (with our bags) toward the boy that was just ahead herding his donkey. Moments later, we loaded our bags to the sides of one donkey. We hung two (large) bags and a small tote bag with uncooked rice and beans via a carabineer. Slowly we walked on.

At this point, I doubted that we would ever really make it there by nightfall, but in the back of my mind, I was thinking meanwhile I could continue doing HIV/AIDS outreach. We continued and still three hours later only one kombi had passed us and was unwilling to stuff us on the roof rack, so I was destined to walk at a snail's pace until we reached the Sani Pass.

Finally, I heard roaring tires from afar and with great pleasure I realized it was a Land Cruiser. A

Khotso

PCV Life



LAND CRUISER! I let Mr. Sekhele go ahead while I waited on the side of the dirt road with my hands in prayer. The car came to a halt. I ran over to the passenger side of the window and begged to get a lift for my counterpart and with some reluctance — I think because nobody in their right mind would try to hitch in such a rural area — we were let aboard. I explained why we were stranded and the importance of my work. The men then let us in, that is after I showed my Peace Corps ID. We waved goodbye to the Abuti herd boy.

While in the car with Bo Ntate (men), we came to the conclusion that it would have taken 10 or more hours to hike the whole way. Ntate Teller and John were great men to get a lift from, as they were college-educated and this made our conversations flow so easily. We discussed the economy of America, my work as a Peace Corps Volunteer and Mr. Sekhele's job as a counterpart.

One hour later, we were at Sani Pass! It was beautiful and it truly felt like we were in the sky. Mr. Sekhele and I were scheduled to stay at the bottom of Sani, but when we realized transport prices and all the travel we would have to continue to do, Bo Ntate offered us a sweet exchange — "You guys can stay here with us until QN (south of where we were) and in the morning we can deliver you to Maseru (capital). Without much hesitation we took the offer. After all, our first goal was attained. We sat back in the luxury SUV and enjoyed the "good life" with no qualms.

Three hours later, we arrived in QN. I was dropped off at Kylie's house, another Peace Corps volunteer, and she and I spent the evening together, whereby we shared so many stories about our time as volunteers in Lesotho. The next day, I was fetched by the Bo Ntate and headed to Maseru discussing what Mr. Sekhele had learned from the trip.

Mr. Sekhele had noted that he learned the very importance of person-to-person contact for his people. He also noted how there is HIV education in this country, but it fails to reach those in the rural areas. He was proud to walk to the forgotten areas of his country to help educate those left behind. I am realizing more and more — every day — that there is honestly no end.

As a volunteer, my work is a constant matter, whether I am trekking the rural areas of Mahtolog or discussing the need for ARVs with my host mother. When I try to plan, I also realize that any outcome is feasible. When I think that my work isn't helping as much as I'd like, Bo Ntate help me understand that it is those individual encounters that make a difference. I am not reaching out. My job as a volunteer doesn't always make sense, but I know that it is meaningful to me and those that I serve. After all, this is the toughest job I will ever love."

Editor's note: Tarsha Veiga of East Freetown has been a Peace Corps volunteer in Lesotho, a small country landlocked within South Africa. This story recounts some of her efforts as an elementary resource teacher to bring information about AIDS to the countryside. Accompanying her on this trek was a 23-year-old Lesotho man, Khotso Sekhele. His family worked very hard to make sure Khotso received his middle school and high school education. Now he wants to attend college, but the family cannot afford it. Ms. Veiga and the Peace Corps, working with the local Cooperative Association started a scholarship project for Khotso. If enough funds are raised, Khotso will be able to attend Damelin College in South Africa, where he will be able to earn an associates degree in business management. Money is being funded through a non-profit organization called Friends of Lesotho. Tax deductible donations may be made by check or online. To pay online, go to www.friendsoflesotho.org/donate.html and indicate in your message line "Tarsha Veiga." To donate by check, send a donation made out to "Friends of Lesotho" to: Friends of Lesotho, Attn. Tarsha Veiga, 4110 Denfeld Ave., Kensington, MD 20895 USA

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Season 1, 5 discs, 697 min, 17 episodes. Season 2, 7 discs, 1107 min, 27 episodes. Season 3, 6 discs, 982 min, 24 episodes. Season 4, 5 discs, 846 min, 20 episodes. Season 5, 4 discs, 535 min, 12 episodes

Total 27 discs
Total 4167 min (over 69 hours)

Purchased Nov 2009 @ R1499 in Bloem, watched once, DVDs in perfect condition.
Important: These are Region 2 (South Africa & UK) Format DVDs.

Peer Support Network 2010

To empower PCV's by supporting their emotional needs in a nonjudgmental, safe, confidential atmosphere; while offering information and resources to enhance your Peace Corps experience.



Gwen Kehr 5946-6855
ED 09



Megan Kelly 5905-4564



Karen Lindquist 5911-4838
ED 09



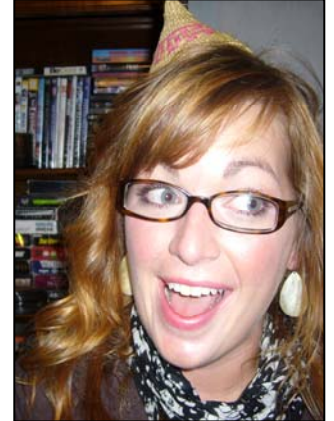
PCV Life



Jack Murphy 5943-2873
ED 09



Kristan Reed 5907-0760
CHED 08



Allison Schmale 5905-4563



Oscar Sinclair 5905-4566
CHED 08



Kaye Thompson 5912-5037
(Co-chair) CHED 08



Jackie Tipsword 5916-7853



Time and Agwen By PCV Ellen Gordon

The original author of this column, PCV Gwen Kher is on vacation and the temporary vacancy is being filled by PCV Ellen Gordon

AREA MAN WEARS SEAT BELT ON TAXI

Ha Maphohloane, Mohale's Hoek

For decades now, nobody has been able to identify a use for the strange densely stitched piece of fabric along the sides of the seats on taxis. Were they decoration? But last Tuesday, Rantsane Mokote, a farmer from the Mohale's Hoek district, clarified all misconceptions regarding these strange contraptions by snapping the metal fitting on one side into the plastic component on the opposite side around his waist.

"In the unlikely event of sudden deceleration of this vehicle," he explained, "I would be harnessed to the seat as opposed to thrust forward through the windshield."

As the other passengers stared blankly at him, Mokote quickly added, "and they make a good fashion statement."

Nteboheleng Shlaele, a passenger on the kombi holding five infants in her lap, says this new device would look better in pink, but the standard grey will do for now. Also aboard the taxi, Clucky the hen and Bubba the sheep felt that new animal models would be a wanted feature added to the roofs of the kombis.

Thato Thaboholo, another woman aboard the kombi, adds that really, seat belts are not all they are cracked up to be. "It interferes with my breast feeding and money storage. Who needs any hindrances to get to my breasts?"

Despite the opposition, Mokote hopes to see this fashion trend spread like wildfire across Lesotho and even into South Africa. Only time will tell how Basotho will respond to this fad.

VAST Guidance Update

By 'M'e Jimi and 'M'e Malisema

Lumelang,

VAST (Volunteer Activity Support and Training) is a Peace Corps granting program funded through the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). For the past several years, Peace Corps/Lesotho Volunteers and their community counterparts have had the opportunity to submit applications for VAST grants for small community-initiated HIV prevention- and care-related projects. Recently, Volunteers have complained of the confusing approval process and Peace Corps/Washington has advised us that some of the grants that have been approved were not appropriate for VAST.

As a result, PC/L staff and Volunteers, in consultation with PC/W, have reviewed and revised some of the requirements for VAST grants to ensure adherence to Peace Corps and PEPFAR policies, facilitate the submission and approval of proposals, and promote appropriate and effective HIV prevention and care projects at the community level. We hope that this will motivate and make it easier for PCVs and their communities to initiate projects and access funds.

Changes made:

- According to Peace Corps VAST guidance, the preferred methods of payment is to a community organization or directly to a vendor. The least preferred method is to a Volunteer. If the latter is the only viable option, PC staff will provide assistance to the Volunteers in opening separate VAST fund bank accounts for the VAST grant project.
- In their trimester reports, Volunteers are required to report on all of their HIV-related activities using standardized indicators. In addition, separate reporting (using the same indicators) is required for any VAST-funded activities. PC Staff will provide training on monitoring and reporting to all PCVs, with a "refresher training" to Volunteers and counterparts receiving VAST grants.
- Whereas previously grants were awarded in US Dollars, which presented problems with exchange rates, grants will now be awarded in Maloti in the amount approved.
- VAST grants should be a last resort when the community needs a little help to get an activity going or to ramp up an activity that they have initiated. The maximum grant requested cannot exceed \$5,000 and as a general rule, grants of this size should be the exception. In addition, while grants under \$100 may be considered, the administrative and reporting burden (for Peace Corps, the Volunteer and their counterparts) may not be worth the effort. For all grants, but particularly very small amounts, Volunteers and their counterparts must show that they have exhausted all

PCV Life





PCV Life

local sources of funding (e.g., donations from private businesses, pooling of funds from community members, etc.) before requesting VAST funds.

VAST Prohibitions

- The VAST program is meant for community-initiated, not Volunteer-initiated, projects and does not allow PCVs to sub-grant to other PCVs (e.g., as was previously the practice with Speak Aloud grants). More than one Volunteer and their counterparts may submit separate proposals for similar types of projects, but the proposals should be tailored to the specific needs of the Volunteers' individual communities.
- If several Volunteers wish to initiate an activity (e.g., a regional camp), it may be an appropriate PEPFAR-funded activity but can not be funded through VAST. In this case, Peace Corps would fund the activity directly and PC/L staff would work with the Volunteers and their counterparts to organize and implement the activity. Such activities should be planned and budgeted for in PC/L's annual PEPFAR plan.

In order for a project to qualify:

- The idea should originate and/or have significant buy-in from the community. In some cases, a Volunteer may plant the seed of an idea, which is then pursued by the community.
- Before applying for a grant, the Volunteer and community counterparts must have completed at least one other project/activity of any size together. To ensure sustainability, the community counterparts should be the primary implementers of the project.
- Volunteers should have spent a minimum of four months at site before applying for a grant and are not permitted to apply for a grant within the last six months of their service.
- The Volunteer and his/her Counterpart must have successfully completed the VAST grant training (usually presented at Phase Three Training).

Full applications and guidance can be accessed from the PC/L share point at: PCV files-PEPFAR folder- VAST grants applications, or by contacting 'M'e Jimi if you have problems locating the correct file.

Before submitting a proposal, you should have it reviewed first by your District AIDS Representative (DAR), your respective APCD/PA, or the HIV/AIDS Coordinator to ensure that it is complete and meets the minimum requirements. Failure to do so could hold up the review and approval process. It is also a good idea to discuss preliminary ideas with one or more of these individuals before completing a proposal.

Dates for application submissions, notification and disbursements of funds for 2010:

Application due dates:	Notification Dates:	Disbursements of funds:
February 1, 2010	2 nd week of March	Last week of March.
May 1, 2010	2 nd week of June	Last week of June
August 1, 2010	1 st week of September	Last week of September
November 1, 2010	1 st week of December	Last week of December

Note:

You are advised to submit proposals at least three working days prior to the due dates specified above to ensure that the proposal is received and that we are able to open all attachments.

The process, from receiving the application, to the reviewing and potentially successful funding (meaning cash in hand) can take up to eight weeks. Consider this in the planning of your project.

World AIDS Day (WAD):

2009 WAD was observed in remembrance of those who have died of AIDS, and those infected and affected by HIV and AIDS. This commemoration was carried out in Thaba-tseka district. Both the Prime Minister and Minister of Health made speeches that recognized this year's theme "Universal Access and Human Rights". This theme has been enhanced by the national specific theme "Male involvement in issues of HIV and AIDS". Men need to take the front line in the response to the disease. The Prime Minister made it clear that sexual prevention and the prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) should be prioritized. We see Volunteers playing an important role in each of these areas: Volunteers and their counterparts can promote male involvement in prevention and care and behavior change, particularly related to multiple concurrent partnerships. Related to PMTCT, Volunteers can identify and mobilize women to attend ante-natal clinics and advocating for improved behaviors in various activities.

Remember that World AIDS Day should be every day, not merely a one-day event. WAD can serve as a "kick-off" for the forthcoming year to enable individuals, communities, organizations and businesses to be involved in issues surrounding HIV/AIDS and for the promotion of new or existing HIV/AIDS awareness, prevention, testing and care programs. This should also be a time to reflect, memorialize and show compassion for those infected or affected by HIV/AIDS.

Not every community or agency managed to attend the WAD event in Thaba-tseka. There are still opportunities for you and your community or school to organize events to raise awareness about HIV/AIDS and its impact on the Basotho.

We encourage you and your respective communities to use locally available resources for planning such events, however if your activity needs financial support, remember that VAST grants can be applied for and awarded for as little as \$100.

Please see attached suggested WAD activities from Kiribati, where our own Ntate Charles worked previously.

Suggested steps for carrying out an activity:

- Explore possibilities of an activity with your counterpart/supervisor/group which you work with.
- Discuss the possibilities with traditional leaders, Chiefs, and council members and ask them to invite representatives from each community group such as youth, elderly, men, and women, to an information sharing discussion.
- Formulate a planning team.
- Define your goals, objectives and tasks.
- Develop budget, timeline plans, list of responsibilities, etc.
- Invite people!
- Do it! Raise awareness!
- Take photos.
- Evaluate and report!

Have wonderful holidays and be safe!

PCV Life





General Peace Corps News

Peace Corps 2010 Budget Passed by Congress; Signed by President Obama

WASHINGTON, D.C., December 17, 2009 – President Barack Obama signed H.R. 3288 – an omnibus appropriations package that includes a \$400 million fiscal year 2010 budget for the Peace Corps – on December 16, 2009. In addition to Peace Corps's budget, the bill provides appropriations for the Departments of Commerce, Defense, Education, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, Justice, Labor, State, Transportation, the Treasury, Veterans Affairs and other agencies.

Peace Corps Establishes Program in Indonesia

WASHINGTON, D.C., December 11, 2009 – United States and Republic of Indonesia government officials have signed an agreement to create a Peace Corps program in Indonesia. U.S. Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs William J. Burns and Deputy to the State Minister for the Indonesian National Development Planning/The National Development Planning Agency (Bappenas) for Political, Legal, Defense and Security Affairs Bambang Sutedjo signed the agreement today in Jakarta. Incoming Peace Corps/Indonesia Country Director Ken Puvak represented Peace Corps at the signing.

“On behalf of the entire Peace Corps, it is an honor to be invited by the Republic of Indonesia to cooperate on Peace Corps service opportunities in Indonesian communities,” said Peace Corps Director Aaron S. Williams. “This partnership in technical cooperation will encourage Americans and Indonesians to work side-by-side on Indonesia's education initiatives while advancing a greater understanding of both countries on the part of all involved. “I share President Obama's commitment to increase education and public service opportunities around the world. I look forward to working with our Indonesian partners with the Ministry of National Education and Ministry of Religious Affairs on education and teacher training initiatives.” Indonesia is one of 76 current Peace Corps host-countries. Other Peace Corps host-countries in the region include China, Cambodia, Mongolia, The Philippines and Thailand. The first group of approximately 25 Peace Corps volunteers is expected to arrive in Indonesia by mid-2010. They will work as English teachers in high schools and teacher training institutions and will join a legacy of service first created by President John F. Kennedy in 1961.

Peace Corps Celebrates International Volunteer Day

WASHINGTON, D.C., December 8, 2009 – The Peace Corps honored International Volunteer Day by hosting a symposium with Peace Corps staff and leaders from the domestic and international service community on December 4. The symposium addressed how service can be made a universal experience for young people worldwide. The symposium featured a panel that included Senator Harris Wofford, a founding architect of The Peace Corps; Steven Rosenthal, Director of the Building Bridges Coalition and Founder of Cross-Cultural Solutions; Sonal Shah, Director of the White House's newly-created Office on Social Innovation and Civic Participation; and Elena Suarez, Chief of Special Programs in the Office of External Relations at the Inter-American Development Bank.

“Peace Corps Volunteers represent a legacy of public service that has become a significant part of America's history and positive image abroad,” said Peace Corps Director Aaron S. Williams in his opening remarks to the symposium. “There is a flourishing and growing network of international agencies and groups working to expand opportunities and capacity for service among a global citizenry. Peace Corps aims to be a partner of choice in this movement, bringing to the table our nearly 50 years of experience in designing, managing, and delivering a corps of volunteers which has, in effect, been successful because of its partnership with and engagement of host community members in their own development.” Director Williams' remarks can be found in their entirety here. Senator Wofford facilitated the panel discussion. He said, “Imagine if volunteering – citizen initiated volunteer service – became the common experience of young people everywhere. We need to crack the atom of civic power – of people power – and find a way to tap the power of young people.”

The event celebrated the role of Peace Corps Volunteers, host country partners and other agencies in enhancing volunteer opportunities for young people worldwide. The panelists discussed opportunities for growth, and innovation and the ways that government, international organizations, NGOs and the private sector can support volunteerism in countries worldwide. White House Director of Social Innovation and Civic Participation Sonal Shah discussed how volunteer-related groups can share their resources and tools through open source solutions. “This is a time where convergence of the corporate, nonprofit, civil society and government are coming together,” Ms. Shah said. “No one group can do it on its own but we can figure out how to build the strengths of different groups to bring together solutions.”

In late 2008, The Peace Corps launched the V2 Volunteerism initiative, which seeks to support youth and community volunteers in the host countries where Peace Corps Volunteers serve. Peace Corps distributes the “V2 Volunteerism Action Guide” to Peace Corps volunteers worldwide. The document provides a framework to help Peace Corps volunteers and their partners assist young people to plan and implement change in their own local communities.