

KHOTSO

November 2011

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Message from the Country Director



ED 12 Trainees—Day 2!

A big welcome to the ED 12 trainees who arrived on October 14. They just completed their second week of training and returned from a 4-day Host Volunteer Visit on Friday. In their HVV presentations they revealed that they are now even more excited about being Volunteers in Lesotho. Thanks to all the hosts!

We also welcome Ileana Mateescu who is the PCMO in Romania. She will be here while Dr. Victor is attending Medical Overseas Staff Training at Peace Corps/Washington. Ileana is a family doctor who has worked for PC for 12 years. She is a specialist in general ultra sound, cognitive behavioral therapy and occupational health. She has a daughter who is 11, a son who is 15, a husband and a cat. Welcome to the Mountain Kingdom, Ileana!

I'd like to send a plea to all Volunteers to submit articles, photos, stories to Deepak for publishing in the *Khotso*. The monthly *Khotso* (along with the weekly DSR message) is the primary means of disseminating information to Volunteers. Staff focus primarily on including announcements and reminders, but we count on individual Volunteers and committee members to come up with the creative stuff to make it a more interesting read. It'd be great if we could get a few submissions each month. Let's see what you've got!

Speaking of announcements and reminders, here are a few from staff:

Contact List: Staff have compiled contact info for loads of government ministries and NGOs. It can be found on Share Point and the PC-Lesotho website. We will be adding some of the contacts that Volunteers have shared in their VRFs.

Portfolio Review: As you know earlier this year we began conducting reviews of the CHED and ED projects. These reviews have included stakeholders meetings in all 10 districts; surveys of and interviews with Volunteers, supervisors and counterparts; a national stakeholders meeting and PAC meetings. We anticipate that draft revised project frameworks and plans will be completed for submission to PC/Washington for review by December 31st.

Health Concerns: We hope to be able to address all your health care needs in Lesotho, but if you have a concern about your care that is not resolved in country, you may contact PC/Washington at QualityNurse@peacecorps.gov.

Leave Policy: Be sure to review the PC Lesotho Volunteer Handbook (updated in August 2011) or the Out of Site, Whereabouts and Leave Policy Update that was emailed and sent in hard copy to all Volunteers on January 6, 2011. If traveling out of site within Lesotho for purely leisure purposes, leave must be taken including on weekends and American holidays. You will note that since updating the policy, we have not required Volunteers to take leave for occasional short trips to visit other Volunteers as we understand that these can be opportunities to share work experiences and ideas. We do, however, count on Volunteers to follow PC policy and make the distinction when the absence from site constitutes leave. If in doubt, please contact your APCD.

Dress at the PC Office: Please don't forget that professional dress is expected at the PC office even if you're in Maseru for medical reasons, and yes, even if you think you're only going to be in the VRC. Nice jeans and sneakers are allowed on Fridays and weekends.

Khotso,
Kathy

Editorial Staff

Managing Editor – Kathy Jacquart Dill, Country Director

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Community Health & Economic Development - Charles Miller— Associate Peace Corps Director & Selloane Pitikoe—Program Assistant

Training – Masechaba Mapena—Training Manager, Mamokola Matlanyane—Language, Cross Culture and Homestay Coordinator
Letsatsi Mohale—Programming and Training Secretary

Safety & Security – Nthoalo Masiphole

Medical—Dr. Victor Inegbedion

Distribution – Lebohang Ranooe

All other staff and PCVs who contribute

From the Editor

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. Remember that it is your responsibility to read the Khotso Newsletter for updates from Peace Corps Lesotho.

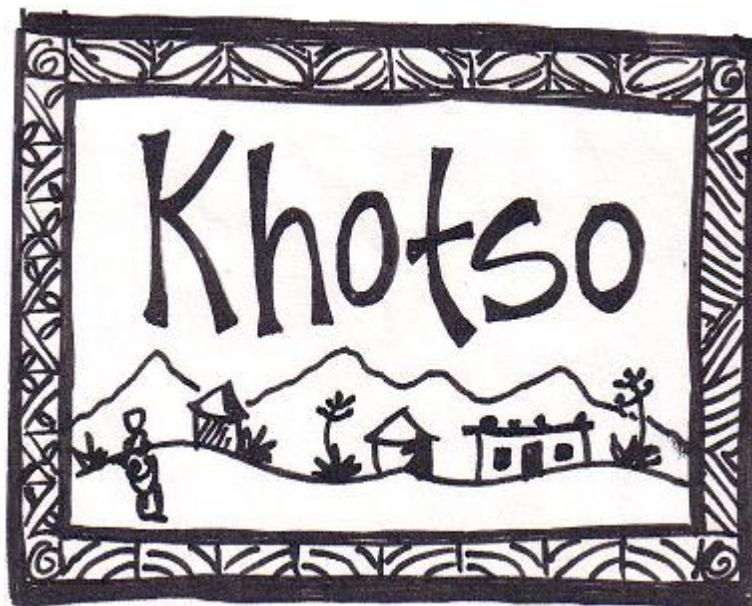
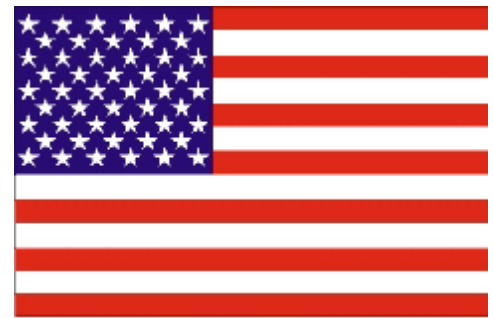
The editorial staff would like feedback from PCVs regarding the content. It is our desire to provide you with information that is useful, helpful, and encouraging. We would appreciate receiving constructive feedback from you.

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 & Staff Birthdays

Birthday greetings go out to the following Volunteers and staff!

November

Ellard, Terry	1
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Philips, Shanthi	19
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Ranooe, Lebohang	20
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Miller, Charles	24

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Bechtold, Kali	19
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Peace Corps Lesotho Holidays

(PC office remains closed on these days)

November

Veteran's Day (US Holiday)	11
Thanksgiving (US Holiday)	24

December

Christmas Day (LS Holiday)	25
Boxing Day (LS Holiday)	26

Calendar of Events and Staff Travel

Oct 27 – Nov 18	Romania PCMO Ileana filling in for Dr. Victor
Oct 30 – Nov 12	'me Malitaba at TEFL workshop in Benin
Oct 30 – Nov 20	Dr. Victor at training in Washington
Nov 1-4	Charles on site visits in Qacha's Nek
Nov 2-4	Kathy on site visits to Andrea, Adam S, Nate L & Ryan
Nov 4-18	Deepak in Indonesia to train new PC ITS
Nov 8-9	Nt. Nthoalo and Charles on site visits to Kate & Jess
Nov 14-25	Charles leading PC Zambia staff retreat and on leave
Nov 12	'M'e Selloane & Nt. Mohale at Zenon H.S. & Ha Mali Community Center Opening
Nov 16	'M'e Selloane on site visit to Lewis
Nov 17	'M'e Selloane on site visit to Jenny
Nov 21-23	'M'e Selloane on site visits to Cassie, Tab, Anne, Jasmine & Jessalynne
Nov 24-27	Kathy on leave
Dec 3	Training for new PSN members
Dec 5-9	CHED Phase III Training
Dec 12	ED12 Swearing-in
Dec 13-14	ED 12 Supervisor Workshop
Dec 14-15	CHED Project Advisory Committee Meeting
Dec 19-23	Nt. Tsatsi on leave

Dec 19-30	'M'e Victoria on leave
Dec 23 – Jan 1	Kathy on leave
Dec 27-31	'M'e Selloane on leave
Dec 29 – Jan 6	Nt. Clement on leave

Duty Officer Schedule

Oct – Nov 6	Nt. Clement
Nov 7-13	'M'e Masechaba
Nov 14-20	'M'e Jimi
Nov 21-27	'M'e Malitaba
Nov 28 – Dec 4	'M'e Selloane
Dec 5-11	Nt. Nthoalo
Dec 12-18	Deepak
Dec 19-25	'M'e Victoria
Dec 26 – Jan 1	Nt. Lereko

STAFF MEMBER OF THE MONTH

This month the Administrative and Medical Units were acknowledged for their efforts in preparing for and participating in a recent audit. The auditor gave staff high praise for their cooperation in facilitating the audit. In particular, the following staff are recognized: Director of Management and Operations Jim McCormick, Financial Assistant Victoria Mofolo, Administrative Assistant Malisema Makhele, General Services Officer Lereko Mofokeng, General Services Assistant Tsatsi Sefefo, PCMO Dr. Victor Inegbedion and Medical Secretary Itumeleng Notsi. Great job, everyone!

ADMIN CORNER by Jim

Welcome to the ED 12s!!! They are a great group of trainees and should make the departing ED 10s (as well as all the staff) proud. On that note, it is always difficult to say goodbye to COSing PCVs. I have a special place in my heart for the ED 10s since I met them all at their mid-service conference roughly 24 hours after arriving in Lesotho in December 2010. Godspeed to all of them (including those that have decided to extend their service)!

Audit: Last week we completed our first financial audit (by the Office of the Inspector General) since 2005. When the results were in, I was reminded of the Bill Murray character in the movie "Stripes" when he uttered..."Convicted? No, never convicted..." Seriously it went quite well, which is a credit to the staff. As is true in every audit there are things we can be doing better and we will continue to work on those, but for the most part we were pleased with the results and believe that PC HQ will be as well.

Office Move: We took a "huge" step forward this week regarding our proposed office move to the "Pink Palace." We received the final approval from HQ on the various documents and waivers we submitted to Washington months ago. We are now in the process of negotiating the lease with the landlord. Because he has to build a new residence (he and his wife currently live in the PP), it will still be some months before our physical move takes place but having all the HQ paperwork finalized will now allow us to put together a timetable for the move.

US Bank Accounts: The next time any of you are in the office, please stop by and see me. I want to make sure that we have accurate data for your bank account in the States. As you come

closer to your COS date there will be money (Cash In Lieu and part of your Readjustment Allowance) that will need to be deposited. (We have accurate data for all the ED 10s).

Reimbursement Requests: When you are in Maseru for an official purpose and you fill out a request for reimbursement for travel, please make sure either your APCD or Dr. Victor (if it is for medical) signs it before it comes to me. Several unsigned forms have popped up in my mail slot lately and it only delays how quickly we can get you the money.

Don't forget that if you are in Maseru for official reasons, you are entitled to request reimbursement for taxis, including "specials".

Settling-in Allowance Survey: Only three CHED 11s have submitted the Settling-in Allowance Survey. Please take the time to fill it out and get it back to us ASAP.

Auction: The US Embassy will be holding an auction on Saturday, November 26, 2011. We will be giving them our replaced IT equipment, copiers and other assets for them to auction on our behalf. Please inform your counterparts, friends or anyone else you know who might be interested in bidding on items. The auction will be held at the Embassy warehouse in Maseru.

EDUCATION CORNER by Nt. Clement & M'e Malitaba

As we rejoice over the arrival of the newest group of Volunteers, we are also sadly bidding farewell to some of the ED10s due to depart these shores in December. Once again we would like to salute you and wish you the best as you embark in the next chapters of your lives. Rea leboha haholo and tsamaeang hantle!

We would like to specially recognize our PAC members, Eric, Erica, 'm'e Rusty and Sara for their immense support in guiding the direction of this project throughout these two years. We will continue to harness on the experiences of 'm'e Rusty and Andrea as we forge forward in the upcoming year. We can only grow from here!

Gold Star Activities

ED 10 'M'e Rusty De Lucia: The first thing that comes to mind is my helping teachers who are, themselves, in school. In all three of my schools there are young Basotho teachers who are trying to get certified, either in Roma or Maseru. Since I have come to Tabola, I have probably helped every one of them with homework assignments...that would be at least 15-20 teachers!

Questions used to begin with, "I don't understand this; can you just read it and write down the answer for me?" After their initial shock at my saying, "No", they have begun to trust the fact that I will really help them to understand what they are reading and processing rather than just give answers to copy.

I feel that they are beginning to realize that rote work is not always the best way to gain understanding. Now we discuss each problem which is brought my way...we've even gotten to the point where we debate answers and they question what I've said! This is wonderful. I always end each "session" with, "Isn't it great that you've come up with this all by yourself? This would

be so fine if you could do the same for your kids in the classroom...let them question and think for themselves!!"

ED 10 Shanthi Philips: Over the winter break, we had all the form Cs coming back to school to get additional help on some subjects. The other Form C math teacher and I talked about the fact that the classes were too big to just split into 2 (we would have had about 60 kids in each class). There is a college student who lives in our village who helped with last year's winter classes and we thought we could get him to help with winter classes again.

We talked to the principal about allowing Tumelo, the college kid, to help us. She was initially very resistant. She cited lack of funds to pay him as the main reason he couldn't be allowed to teach. However, I talked to Tumelo a lot, and he said he really didn't mind not being paid; he just wanted to do something worthwhile over the break instead of sitting at home. It took four conversations with my principal before I finally wore her down on the topic and she agreed to let him teach classes.

We split the Forms into 3 classes based on ability (something not normally done at my school). We gave them homework and quizzes over the 3 weeks they attended classes. We saw remarkable improvement in the bottom level class as well as the intermediate class.

After the winter classes were over, I talked to Sr. Catherine about how well our strategy worked. I think she is starting to consider streaming students by ability now, something I've long been advocating.

CHED CORNER by Charles & M'e Selloane

Hi CHEDers. I woke up this morning and couldn't find where October had gone....time flies when you're trying to save the world, eh? 'M'e Selloane and I have been busy reading and giving feedback on your trimester reports and Phase II assignments for CHED 11, and we're continually impressed with your positivity, creativity and passion for development. Keep up the great work! J

CHED 11 Phase II Assignments and Phase III Training

Don't forget to send in your Phase II assignments - remember that leave requests will not be approved for those who haven't turned in all of their assignments. Phase III Training is scheduled for December 5 - 9. CHED 11s should make their way to their respective villages (where you stayed during PST) on Sunday, December 4. Training will begin on Monday, December 5. During the Phase III Training, Volunteers will be accommodated with their host families. Additionally, host families will prepare meals for the Volunteers during this time. Please remember to travel with your passports in case of an emergency.

Trimester III Reports

We are reviewing and giving feedback on your trimester reports. Thus far, we have been VERY IMPRESSED with your accomplishments and with your approaches to problem-solving. In reading your reports, it is also evident that we need to provide more training for completing the reports, and must make a few small changes to the template to ensure you are able to report your

activities correctly. We've also added a Monitoring and Evaluation Corner in the Khotso, so please review this for important tips and reminders.

Gold Star Activities

Thanks to all Volunteers for your hard work. Below are a few "Gold Star" activities we've pulled from the VRFs over the last few weeks which helps to illustrate the importance of persistence, patience, and creativity. Stay tuned for more "Gold Star" activities in the next edition of The Khotso!

CHED 11 Amanda Lawrence has begun holding monthly Life Skills workshops for the teachers, which started with familiarizing the teachers with the life skills curriculum and reviewing topics which the teachers felt were important to teach the students. Together, the teachers and Amanda decided to focus the first life skills lessons on HIV/AIDS, peer pressure, and health education. Way to get the teachers involved, Amanda!

CHED 10 Kelsey Marsh and Benja Davies led training for the teachers of Leqooa Primary School on how to make beaded angels. This allowed the teachers to get an idea of the materials needed, design ideas, and to be able to train their students. Leqooa Primary School is planning to create and sell student made angels to community members, tourists, as well as other organizations in order to raise money for the school garden. Great work, Benja and Kelsey!

CHED 10 Juliana Fulton's counterpart, who worked closely with Juliana in going door-to-door conducting surveys at every household in the village just got elected to the community council using the same door-to-door technique that she learned from Juliana! Congratulations Juliana and 'M'e Mafusi!

MONITORING & EVALUATION CORNER

Welcome to the first M&E/VRF Corner for the Khotso. It is our intention that the information included here will help to demystify the VRF and to ensure you are reporting all of your hard work more accurately. Please feel free to email your APCDs and PAs with any questions you have about the VRF or how to report any of your activities.

Big things come in small packages: Whenever possible, try to focus your activities intended to change behavior (e.g., HIV prevention, life skills) on smaller target groups (i.e., 25 participants or less). We want to try our best to ensure that the activity provided ample interpersonal attention that can enable behavior change. Research has shown that activities with more than 25 participants are much less likely to promote behavior change. Of course you can still report all activities although those targeting more than 25 people should be reported as mass media activities.

Secondary Activities: Secondary projects and/or activities are those that fall completely outside of your normal project framework. For example, if a CHED Volunteer teaches an English class at the local high school, it would be considered a secondary project as reported as such. Such activities should NOT be reported under the ED project framework as CHED Volunteers have not been trained on this framework. If the CHED Volun-

teer's primary job is working with a farmers' cooperative, but they also teach life skills at the local high school, the life skills activity should be reported under CHED Project Goal 1 (life skills), not as a secondary project. CHED Volunteers stay tuned for an update in your VRFs and instructions on how to report secondary activities appropriately.

Education Volunteers have a goal, objectives and indicators (Goal 4) for reporting community-focused activities (sometimes mistakenly referred to as "secondary projects") within their project framework. Therefore, it is likely that most of your community activities can be reported under this goal.

Indicators: Remember to add the numbers for only those indicators that are relevant to your activity. For those indicators that aren't relevant to your activity, simply leave it blank. Some Volunteers are mistakenly putting "0" in the box for the number of participants who achieved the indicator, and entering the total number of participants in the second box, even for those indicators that aren't relevant to the activity. This makes it seem as if the activity DID focus on this indicator but that none of the participants were deemed to have "passed" or achieved the indicator. Again, if the indicator is not relevant, leave it blank.

Also, it is important that you assess which participants have achieved the indicator/s. Many of you are holding multiple life skills classes for large numbers of participants and ALL of your participants are being shown to have met the indicator. Now, while we know that you all are excellent teachers, we doubt that all of your total participants are achieving the indicator. Are you sure that all 70 participants demonstrated the acquisition of new life skills? If so, how did you determine this? Pre- or post-test? Demonstrating how to correctly put on and remove a condom? Even if someone has sat through a one-hour session on condom use, it does not necessarily mean they have demonstrated an increased knowledge of HIV/AIDS prevention and mitigation. If possible, please include in your activity description one line stating how you measured your achievement of the given indicator/s.

Total Participants: In this future, this tab will be disabled since the VRF now has the capability of totaling the participants for you.

Thanks much and stay tuned next month for more helpful VRF tidbits.

50th ANNIVERSARY CORNER

Thanks to CHED 10s Zach Rosen and Wes Helm for taking great photos at the 50th Anniversary event in Morija in September.



Amb. Bond swearing in the newest CHED Volunteers.



Peace Corps Volunteers and staff at the Peace Corps 50th anniversary celebration in Morija on September 16, 2011. The 2011 CHED group volunteers were also sworn-in on this day.



PCVs Ryan McClaine, Dustin Tamsen, Matt Deakin, Kimiko Ebata, Sara Green and Evan Anderman Hahn orchestrated and sang a few American songs to entertain the attendees.



His Majesty King Letsie III graced the occasion. His Majesty is seen here congratulating PCV Terry Ellard on swearing-in as Peace Corps Volunteer.



PCV Jess Wilhelm addressing the gathering in Sesotho. At every Peace Corps Lesotho swearing-in ceremony, a volunteer gives a speech in Sesotho with excellent fluency amazing the attendees.

PCV CORNER

Peace Corps Core Expectation Haikus

Remember the Peace Corps Core Expectations? Trainees from the CHED 11 and ED 12 groups wrote the following creative haikus as a way of making them a bit more personal...and fun!

CHED 11s

1. Trusted by all here, part of this community. We are the Peace Corps.
2. Peace Corps is a change. Twenty seven months is long. Prepare and commit.
3. First learn to speak. Then we learn to speak and teach.
4. Then we share and give.
5. Trust, learn and respect. Work always, even when hard. Lesotho U.S
6. Always on duty. Toughest job you will ever love. Monday through Sunday.
7. Will follow the laws. Commit to the Peace Corps rules. Stand for Peace Corps values.
8. Take care of your health. Always be responsible for yourself and all.
9. Say lumela, 'M'e. Eat well, boil metsi ausi. See 'M'e le ntate.
10. Share red, white and blue. Through our food, norms and stories. While in Lesotho.
11. Lots of song and dance helps bring people together. Rethabile!

ED 12s

1. Months twenty seven. That's all that they ask from us. Isn't that just heaven?
2. Importing knowledge, be open and respectful every single day!
3. Open mindedness, hardships build strong character. Have perseverance. Be flexible, expect hardships.
4. Make new village friends for community is love you will be amazed.
5. You are ready now. You are ready tomorrow. The Peace Corps owns you.
6. With host counterparts, respect and cooperate. Rata Baso-

tho!

7. Don't do wrong, stay right. Follow the expectations. Keep your goals in sight.
8. Make smart decisions dude, don't wander off alone. Boil your water now.
9. "Represent" be red, white and blue. But live and learn Sesotho and always behave.
10. From America I will be in Lesotho, bring life back to you.

Following are the actual Core Expectations:

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

How Good Is Sex Education in Schools?

A new report says that young people [in the UK] find their sex and relationship education lacking. So what can be done to improve it?

By Emine Saner, *The Guardian*, 10/10/2011

There was definitely a sense, says 19-year-old Andre Anderson, that the [sex](#) education teachers at his secondary school "viewed us as 'just kids' and thought 'they shouldn't be doing it, so they don't need to know'. They tell you how a baby is made, but there were loads of teenage pregnancies around so we knew that. The media teaches you a lot about sex, but it's like education tries to hide it from you."

With experiences like this, it's hardly surprising that a new study commissioned by [Brook](#), the sexual advice service for [young people](#), found nearly half of secondary-school pupils find their sex and relationship education (SRE) lacking, while just 6% of young people said they got the information about relationships they need from SRE lessons.

Shockingly, the study of more than 2,000 14- to 18-year-olds

revealed that worrying myths still prevailed: 59% have heard that a woman can't get pregnant if the man doesn't ejaculate inside her, 33% have heard that you can't get pregnant the first time you have sex and a quarter of young people have heard you can only catch HIV if you are gay. Meanwhile, one in four pupils get no SRE in school, and a quarter of those who do say they don't think it is taught well.

Simon Blake, national director of Brook, isn't surprised. "We are told by the young people who access our services it is too little, too late, too biological," he says. "And what they really want is emotions, real life dilemmas and much more about relationships."

Is it a peculiarly British affliction to be so inept when it comes to talking about sex? "We certainly do have a British approach to young people and this topic unfortunately does still get politicized, rather than it just being another area of learning."

You only have to look at the controversy whipped up by groups such as the Christian Institute, whose recent report *Too Much, Too Young* complained that [children](#) were being shown "explicit" images in primary school sex education, or the Conservative MP Nadine Dorries' recent bill to teach abstinence in [schools](#) – but only for girls – to see what a battleground SRE can become. And in the meantime, say organizations such as Brook, sex education is patchy and young people rely on their friends for information (while frighteningly, the study shows, 5% – around the same level who learn most from asking their parents – of it comes from internet porn).

Brook's research follows [a study published last month](#), which found a rise, over the last two years, in the number of 16- to 19-year-olds having unprotected sex with a new partner. In that survey, 19% of young women, and 16% of young men, said they had not received any kind of sex education in school. And last year, the Health Protection Agency reported record levels of the numbers of STIs, with two thirds of the cases in young women. It is compulsory for schools to teach the biology of reproduction, but not sex and relationships education, although government guidance is that they should as part of personal, social and health education (PSHE). "There isn't enough curriculum time, and because it is not compulsory, sex education classes are largely left to chance," says Blake. "We hear all the time that teachers would like to teach it better but they don't have the training and support to do so."

He thinks it is ridiculous that there is any controversy about sex education in primary school. "[Those lessons] are not about teaching them about sex, it's teaching them about body parts, relationships, teaching them about being a boy or a girl, how to be nice to each other. It is shocking that there are girls starting their periods without anybody explaining it to them."

To counteract this, Brook is launching a campaign to encourage teenagers to have their say about SRE teaching, and will present the findings to the Department of Education, which is conducting a review of PSHE, due to be published later this year.

Sophie Wilson, 17, remembers a couple of SRE lessons in primary school, then a couple during her first years in secondary school. "Those were mostly about different STIs and condoms, but there wasn't a lot about what to do if you got an STI. There was nothing about different relationships like same-sex." It wasn't until she was 17 that there was a lesson on how to get tested for an STI. It would be useful, she says, if lessons could cover wider issues, such as rape or abusive relationships too.

Wilson says her SRE didn't prepare her for adulthood. Most of

the information about sex she has got comes from "my friends, from general things that have happened to them. The Sex Education show [on Channel 4] was good because it was quite direct. I guess it's just stuff I've heard around." The danger of that, she acknowledges, is you don't know how reliable it is. "The other danger is people might think they should just get [sex] over with and see what happens and learn from experience."

NEWS FROM AROUND THE PEACE CORPS WORLD **Everything Makes Sense One Year into Peace Corps Service**

By Ross Szabo, Peace Corps Volunteer serving in Maun, Botswana, *Huffington Post*, 10/06/2011

When I first met other Peace Corps volunteers who had been in Botswana for over a year, every single one of them told me to just wait until the one-year mark and I would be so busy I wouldn't know what to do.

I can be pretty cynical at times. I am not always a big fan of just taking blind advice. There's something inside of me that wants to carve my own path, be different and prove others wrong. However, the advice I constantly received couldn't have been truer. There are a lot of reasons it can take one year for most Peace Corps volunteers to find themselves overwhelmed with work. Here's a short list:

Adjusting to the Culture: In an ideal volunteer dream, you land in a foreign country, move to a village, immediately fit in, learn the language, eat the local foods and begin a program that changes everyone you touch just by trying to make a difference. OK let's wake up from that dream and face reality.

I've been in Botswana for a year and a half. The first two months consisted of [pre-service training](#) and then volunteers move to a village to work for two years. In my experience it took at least [two months](#) just to figure out how the community/organization works and what the processes are and begin to make the connections to become a part of the system.

It took an even longer amount of time to understand how programs are planned, the history of anything similar in the past and how to move things forward. Not to mention, while one is adjusting to a job, they are also moving into a new home, making new friends, figuring out what to eat and dealing with the emotions/work/other issues that come with change. There are certain projects to work on as soon as you start, but it's likely that a volunteer will have more work after one year.

In the first month at my workplace I was asked to be a part of the planning committee for People With Disabilities Awareness Day. I invested myself fully, thinking it would be my first chance to make an impact. I learned invaluable lessons during the five-month planning process about how events work in Botswana that greatly affected my understanding of how to implement programs in the future.

Identifying Needs: Peace Corps volunteers need to begin to examine the needs for programs in two main areas – their workplace and the community. Peace Corps asks each volunteer to do a community assessment during the first two months in their village. The assessment consists of talking to everyone you can in order to see what programs are needed and who a volunteer may want to work with.

Each volunteer has a daily job. In Botswana volunteers work at NGO's, clinics, District AIDS Coordination offices and schools. Some volunteers are able to find a lot of opportunities in their main work sites and can stay busy fixing loopholes, enhancing

already existing programs or working with motivated people to create new ones. Other volunteers don't find as big of a need at their primary work site and go into the community to work with other people/organizations/groups that need help.

The best-case scenario is matching the needs of a worksite with the community. My wife helped organize an inter-high school poetry competition about violence against women and its connection to HIV and AIDS. The end result was a local group teaching teenage girls how to detail their horrors and hopes in a brutally cathartic manner that also educated the community.

Knowing Who to Work With: This title speaks for itself. In any job someone can be given a list of people to contact or go to meetings led by different individuals, but it often takes a little more investigative work to find the best people to help accomplish programs. Volunteering in a foreign country is no different. You need to weed out who is just saying the right things and who is taking action.

Trust: It can't be assumed that just because someone decided to volunteer in a foreign country for two years that trust is a definite. If someone suddenly moved into your neighborhood from a different country and said they were just there to help, how long would it take for you to trust them?

Taking the time to build relationships, spending time with others and proving you care are vital for the success of any program. Not surprisingly trust is a whole lot easier to gain after being in a community for a year. People know more about you – what your goals are and what kinds of work you can handle.

When I went away to a meeting for two weeks and came back, a lot of people I work with said they thought I had left for good. It's important for people to know you're committed to two years. Trust is a two-way street and after a year each volunteer also has a better idea who they can trust in the community.

Sustainability: This is a mutual goal. Most local people don't want to start a program that is just a flavor of the month and ends. All volunteers dream of having a program last well beyond their time in a country. Sustainability is the most difficult component for everyone. Taking one year to establish every detail that is possible in the hopes of something lasting is well worth it. Sometimes programs/projects don't reach the sustainability a volunteer hopes for, but the message was successful in impacting someone's life for even a moment, which opened a door that led to a result no one can measure.

After being at my organization for four months I started developing a sports program for kids with disabilities. I organized a day at the stadium for the students to play all kinds of sports. I had the ground cleared at the organization for a soccer field. I got donations from the community to help. I continued to meet with a sports committee to take over the operations of the sports program.

Around my eighth month at the organization the sports committee didn't need me. The soccer team had a coach. A makeshift volleyball court was constructed. Most importantly, people started supporting the students and having meetings on their own.

Conclusion: It can be hard to hear that after one year of service things will make more sense and come together, but the statement has rung true for many Peace Corps volunteers. I'm not saying there's nothing to do in the first year. As I outlined above there are a lot of things happening in that first year to keep people really busy.

Sometimes taking a year to identify what to do in the last year of service is as taxing as doing all of the work. I've learned to let the cynicism go and embrace the knowledge of fellow volunteers who have walked the path before me.

Peace Corps a 'Natural Fit' for Science Teacher

By Erick Bengel, *The Daily Astorian*, Clatsop County, Oregon, 9/30/2011



Jacqueline Velzy, of Clatsop Plains, caught a fierce case of wanderlust after graduating from Oregon State University with a degree in education and general science, specializing in biology and ecology. The year was 1976, America's Bicentennial.

With 10 years of the Vietnam War still an uncomfortably recent memory, Velzy, then 26, wanted to do international peace work to help "balance out the universe." The Peace Corps was a natural fit.

"It was all about diplomacy for me," Velzy recalled. "When you travel to another country, you learn real fast what the people think of us."

Officially deployed in June 1977, Velzy spent the first third of her overseas expedition teaching physical science at a large government-run school in Maseru, the capital city of Lesotho, in Africa. Working for the Ministry of Education, she taught her Basotho students the principles of electricity.

But for an expert camper and "Walden" reader like Velzy, Maseru wasn't far enough away from city life.

"I wanted to have the village experience," she said. "I wanted to get back to the basics, walk the foothills, forage for water and experience the earthly joy of the Basotho."

She transferred to a small, remote village called Mapoteng, situated 5,200 feet above sea level. There, she inhabited a rondavel, an earthen mud hut with a thatched roof and insulated with sand, clay and cow dung. At the local Catholic school run by native nuns, she taught English as a second language to kids already literate in their first language, Sesotho.

"Lesotho was a matriarchal place," she said. "The men had the titles, but the women ran the country and did the heavy work while their husbands went across the border into South Africa to work in the diamond mines."

The most difficult adjustment to Lesotho Velzy said, was "the extreme temperature changes and the shoeless children, many of whom lost toes to frostbite during the harsh winters."

The mountainous topography of the region made the scientist in her supremely giddy, and it furnished her with unsurpassed hiking opportunities. The air was dry in winter, but after the rainy season, the village blossomed into a disarmingly green and lush oasis.

"Cosmos, the prevalent wildflower in Lesotho, would burst out of the ground and grow to over 6 feet tall and sometimes up to 10 feet, covering whole hillsides near the school," she remem-

bered. "It was like I had stepped into Oz."

But with apartheid brewing in the neighboring nation of South Africa, the villagers were wary at first of this fair-faced American outsider. They listened to the BBC almost religiously, and Velzy was impressed by their grasp of world politics.

"Halfway around the world, all that the natives have are radios, and they stay informed," she said. "They asked me if I was a white South African or worked for the CIA."

The day finally came when she knew the Basotho had accepted her into their tribe.

On the first winter morning, a neighbor noticed her shivering on her way to her pit latrine and immediately threw blankets over her. Velzy wore them throughout the piercingly cold season, as the natives do.

"Every time I think of those people I light up," she said. "They were fun and funny, had great senses of humor, and they were always respectful to me."

The independent Belgium-sized nation also happened to be celebrating the 10-year anniversary of its liberation from the United Kingdom. The national mood was a festive one indeed, and Velzy was beguiled by the cultural jubilation of the Basotho. With the Maloti Mountains behind them, she watched this "gregarious, fun-loving, spiritual" people sing every morning in perfect four- to six-part harmony without an instrument to guide them.

"They didn't seem to notice their poverty because they had enough to eat and the people were so darn happy," she said. "In spite of all their adversities, the kids were always smiling. I never knew a grumpy Basotho."

Along with teaching volleyball, her extracurricular duties consisted of designing the new school library with the village elders and organizing it by the Dewey Decimal System, which she taught to students and incoming librarians.

In her spare time, she mentored students who came from unfavorable home lives. These children visited her hut and ate breakfast with her almost every day, and Velzy gladly shared her Peace Corps rations of porridge, cans of soft cheese and peanut butter.

When a family's rondavel roof caved in after a rainstorm, Velzy invited the four of them to live with her in her own modest hut. "I loved those people," she said. "They became like my extended family."

Velzy's acts of kindness started adding up. Before too long, everybody in the village knew her. They nicknamed her "aussie lerato" - sister with love - which they would call out to her across the "dunga" ravines in their signature sing-song language.

When she left the country in June 1978, her village friends gave her a commemorative Lesotho wool blanket, which she carries around to this day.

"The experience made me realize the importance of having a sense of place and community," she said. "You see that people are people and a smile is universal. Spiritually, we're all one."

Velzy is a science teacher at Astoria Middle School.

Education PCTs October 2011



Brunk, Katie



Bruno, Maria



Buechel, Katie



Campbell, Hannah



Feraco, Nancy



Fisher, Caitlin



Forte, James



France, Shanelle



Heckel, Maryjane



Hood, Norma Lynn



Jayaraman, Aparna



Kang, Peggy



Koryto, Kevin



Leza, Janelle



Mangan, Heather



Mast, Nicholas



Nelson, Sadie



Okegbe, Tishina



Parks, Lauren



Severson, Teresa



Stocki, Edward



Taylor, Tahira



Vincent, Caitlin

Welcome to the Mountain Kingdom

