



June 4, 2009

Congratulations on your decision to join Peace Corps Ghana. As you may know, Peace Corps Ghana enjoys the distinction of being the first Peace Corps program established by President John F. Kennedy in 1961. As we like to say: "Peace Corps was born in America, but it took its first steps in Ghana."

You are joining an elite organization. Fewer than 200,000 men and women have served as Peace Corps Volunteers worldwide since 1961. To put that number in perspective, the University of Michigan hosts that many people during two home football games. Moreover, fewer than 5,000 men and women have served as Peace Corps Volunteers in Ghana. One aircraft carrier carries the same number of service members at any given time.

I can think of very few paths that are as honorable and as challenging as the path that you have chosen to travel for the next twenty-seven months. You will develop your character; you will explore the depths of your creativity; you will evaluate your level of commitment; you will experience humility; you will exhaust your patience; you will test your resilience; you will experience the rewards of true dedication; and perhaps most importantly, you will do all of this with a sense of humor.

Perhaps the most valuable piece of advice that I can offer is: **BE FLEXIBLE!** Volunteers come in all shapes, colors, ages and sizes and we encourage everyone to use their individual skill sets in all sorts of different ways. However, happy, productive and successful Volunteers all share one quality: the ability to approach their service with an open mind and a positive attitude. We all tend to see what we expect to see. In other words, if you expect to enjoy your experience in Ghana, make friends, integrate into your community and achieve personal growth through this experience, you probably will! Conversely, if you expect to be miserable throughout much of your service, you probably will! Be prepared to redefine success. You are not perfect and you will make mistakes. However, if you become a better person for having given, and if Ghanaians are better off for having known you, then you will have been successful.

You will likely live as a community member in small to medium community, working with counterparts and activity partners on various projects. I find the analogy of the confluence of two rivers helpful in discussing the collaborative engagement opportunities that await you. Each river has carved out its own history and its own path. Each carries its own water. At the confluence where they meet, all of the deposits and sediment get stirred up and mixed together. That stirring and mixing creates a fertile environment where before there may have been nothing. The daily routines of life go on. At some point, maybe soon or maybe later, amazingly, things begin to grow where nothing grew before. You are one of those rivers and your ideas are deposits. It is up to you to mix it up and see what grows.

Our staff works to ensure that you are safe, secure and supported in order to maximize the likelihood of your safe, enjoyable and productive service. We work extremely hard and we are very good at our jobs. Ultimately, however, responsibility for your safe, enjoyable and productive service rests with you. You must be self-motivated, self-determined, self-reliant and self-aware and you must exercise sound judgment at all times. We will provide you with technical, cross-cultural and language training. It will be up to you to use this knowledge.

In closing, I would like to say that it is my privilege to serve as your Country Director. I look forward to meeting you and supporting you throughout your service and I remind you to be safe, be smart and remember that the keys to a safe, enjoyable and productive service lie within you.

Sincerely,

Michael Koffman  
Country Director  
Peace Corps Ghana