

# Urban Youth Development

## THE PEACE CORPS: CREATING SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS

As a Peace Corps Volunteer, you help translate host country development plans into community level action, thus improving the lives of local people. You arrive, not with funds or equipment, but with skills and knowledge as well the willingness to adapt them to your community. A successful project is one that continues to function effectively after you leave.

Before starting your two-year assignment, you receive up to three months of training that focuses on language, cross-cultural, and technical skills. It is usually provided in the country where you serve. The training focuses on language and cultural training to give you an understanding of the country's governmental system, cultural norms, and interpersonal relations. This assists you in becoming an integral member of the community. Technical training enhances your ability to effectively transfer your skills and knowledge to host-country people.

## YOUR WORK AS A PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEER

As an urban youth Volunteer, you do the hard work that makes a real difference in communities. You work alongside grass-roots leaders, parents, teachers, and youth to motivate young people (between the ages of 10 to 25 years) to become positively involved in family, learning, work, and community. You could be assigned to a government agency, community-based youth center or school center. In collaboration with community members, your job responsibilities may include:

### Community Organizing

- Mobilize young people to initiate activities, such as conservation projects, that involve them in their communities.
- Coordinate a participatory-style community assessment to identify resources and determine programming priorities.
- Form youth groups and develop community campaigns and fairs to create interest in youth programs.
- Strengthen organizational capacity, by developing financial, planning and administrative systems.

### Programming

- Create recreational and cultural activities that serve as alternatives to formal education.
- Develop programs that provide employment skills training, promote income generating activities and entrepreneurship, and promote responsible parenthood.

### Education and Training

- Design educational activities and training materials that facilitate the development of literacy and numeracy competencies, leadership skills, health and independent living skills.
- Engage and train young people to be health educators who can foster good health practices that can decrease the spread of AIDS.
- Provide on-the-job training about issues affecting youth for street educators and parents.
- Promote physical education and sports that can increase skills and self-confidence of youth.

You need to have a variety of organizational skills, much patience and an ability to formulate action plans that can address a myriad of complex problems and scarce resources. The agency with which you work may provide limited guidance and resources. Much of your initial work is to establish direct contact and trust with youth, parents, and community members. To be successful, you need a sense of humor, individual initiative, an open mind and an ability to listen. Your perseverance, caring and hard work will pay off as you build community and set an example for young people to be responsible citizens.

## EXAMPLES OF URBAN YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

**Ecuador.** Over 50 percent of the total Ecuadorian population is under the age of 20. The lack of economic opportunities for Ecuadorians places this segment of society especially at risk. The situation for urban-based females can be even more precarious, therefore, special consideration is given to programs serving young women. Volunteers live and work in squatter settlements. They develop programs that help young people deal more effectively with their problems.

**Nepal.** The urban areas of Nepal are subject to the pressures of explosive growth, especially as youth under the age of 25 move to urban areas in search of jobs. Volunteers are working with government counterparts to involve youth in skill development and community service activities that will lead them to gainful employment and to becoming productive members of society.

**Zimbabwe.** Volunteers support efforts to develop district sports development centers and rural schools. The sports center may be used by students, school-leavers, and the surrounding community. Volunteers set up community based sporting activities and tournaments and also teach health and other life skills.

**Jamaica.** Volunteers work to increase education and vocational opportunities for youth. They help establish activities in clubs that will allow youth to develop talents, self esteem, and leadership skills. They also train youth in conflict resolution and lead seminars to increase awareness of STDs, HIV/AIDS, teen pregnancy, and substance abuse.

## A REWARDING EXPERIENCE

Service as a Peace Corps Volunteer offers you a unique opportunity to learn about critical development issues from the inside by helping people address community problems that they themselves have identified. You can make a tremendous contribution to the lives of others. At the same time, you discover that your experience is as much about your learning as it is about teaching.

Volunteer service develops or accentuates your professional abilities and enhances your personal growth. Virtually all returning Volunteers agree they have received far more than they have given. Recent

college graduates gain hands-on experience and sometimes further define their career goals. Others confirm their commitment to their profession and receive career-boosting international experience. Retirees bring their accumulated life experiences to those that need and respect them.

Many employers place great value on the Peace Corps experience. You will find that your worldview, resourcefulness, and cross-cultural skills set you apart. You can have easier access to federal government jobs or earn college credit or scholarships because of your Peace Corps service. Whatever you decide to do after Peace Corps, you will bring with you a rare knowledge of the world, of people, and of yourself.

While there may be days of frustration and disappointment, there will also be a lifetime of satisfaction. The courage, patience and fortitude you call upon helps you understand why Peace Corps is still the toughest job you'll ever love.

## VOLUNTEER PROFILE

Most Urban Youth Development Volunteers are recent college graduates who have previously studied another language. These Volunteers also have at least six months full-time work experience with at-risk youth (defined as youth who are out of work or school between the ages of 10 and 25) in a youth-oriented organization. This experience may include coordinating volunteers, writing grants, teaching, and counseling. Typical Volunteers in this assignment have several of the following skills:

- a sincere desire to work with youth;
- conflict resolution/mediation skills;
- fundraising experience;
- coaching experience;
- AmeriCorps and /or YMCA experience;
- demonstrated leadership skills;
- street smarts.



*It is the policy of the Peace Corps to provide equal opportunity in all its programs for all persons and to prohibit discrimination based on race, color, national origin, religion, age (over 40), sex, disability, political affiliation, and sexual orientation in the recruitment, selection, placement, service, and termination of Peace Corps Volunteers.*