

THE PEACE CORPS WELCOMES YOU TO

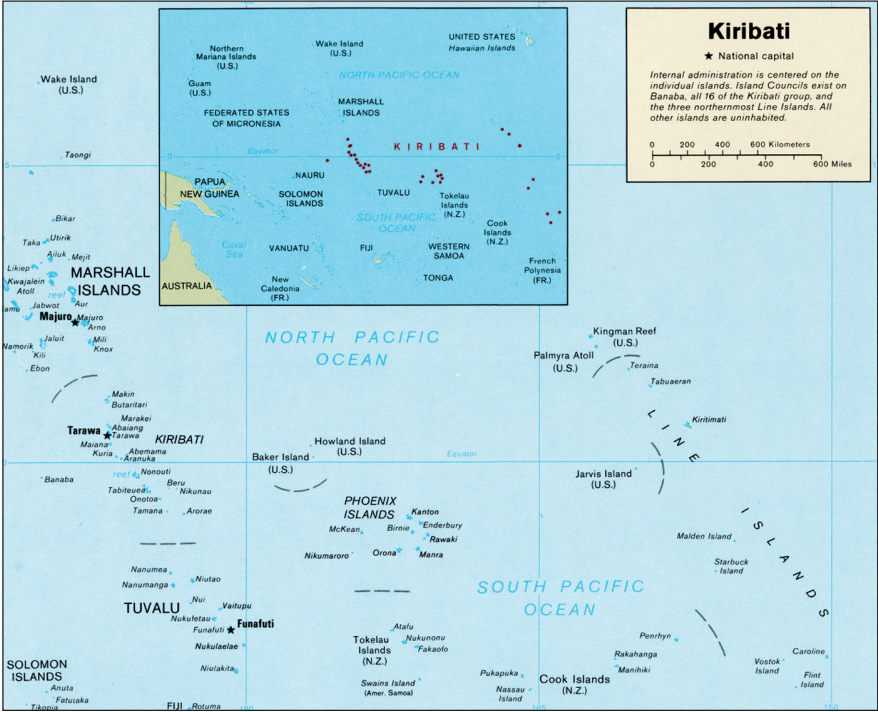
KIRIBATI



A PEACE CORPS PUBLICATION
FOR NEW VOLUNTEERS



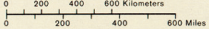
May 2007



Kiribati

★ National capital

Internal administration is centered on the individual islands. Island Councils exist on Banaba, all 16 of the Kiribati group, and the three northernmost Line Islands. All other islands are uninhabited.



A WELCOME LETTER

Dear Peace Corps Invitee:

Congratulations on your invitation to serve in the Republic of Kiribati! I recognize that the application process has probably been long and somewhat frustrating. Moreover, it would not be uncommon for you to be experiencing any number of conflicting emotions at this point: elation, fear, relief or just a fleeting query: “Am I out of my mind?” I want you to know that we are excited about your arrival here... and no, you are not out of your mind. You are what makes the Peace Corps a success: someone who cares about others and who wants to make a difference in this world. We hope that this *Welcome Book* will answer some of your many questions. Please take the time to read it cover to cover.

By now you’ve probably found this island nation on a map, done some Internet searches, found what little information there is out there, and maybe even learned how to pronounce this wonderful nation’s name (not “Kiribati” but “Ki-ree-bahs”).

The people of Kiribati (the I-Kiribati), from the president on down, are wonderfully supportive of the Peace Corps’ mission and its most valuable asset, the Volunteers. The I-Kiribati are warm, generous, good-natured, resilient, and very proud of their culture. This country and its people provide Volunteers with a wonderful opportunity to help, to learn, and to experience a place that is truly unique.

Nearly all Volunteers in Kiribati serve on remote outer islands where electricity, phone service, and Internet access are not available. Successful completion of your service is no easy task. This experience is not for everyone. Kiribati presents you with an opportunity to truly experience a different life,

where Western commercial franchises and pop culture are not available to you. There are very few places left on the planet where you can have an experience like this. I guarantee that you will have the opportunity to test the limits of your flexibility, to stretch the boundaries of your comfort zone, and to experience the joys of giving. The rewards will be great: experiencing the ocean and its many treasures, marveling at the stars in the night sky, and most importantly, building relationships that will last a lifetime.

We have a wonderful group of Volunteers in Kiribati and a dedicated staff here to assist you. We ask you to carefully and thoughtfully evaluate all the information presented to you in this Welcome Book and in your individual Volunteer Assignment Description to determine whether Peace Corps/ Kiribati is the right fit for you. Should you decide to join us, I extend heartfelt congratulations and a warm Kiribati greeting of "*Mauri*" on behalf of all of our Volunteers and staff. I look forward to meeting you soon in Kiribati.

Michael Koffman
Country Director

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PEACE CORPS



PEACE CORPS/KIRIBATI HISTORY AND PROGRAMS



History of the Peace Corps in Kiribati

The Peace Corps presence in what would become the Republic of Kiribati began with the placement of a single Volunteer in 1973. Until 1988 the program was administered from the Peace Corps office in the Solomon Islands. During the early years, the number of Volunteers remained under 10 per year and assignments included a wide variety of projects. The first major expansion occurred in 1979 when the Republic of Kiribati was formed. Twelve health and water sanitation Volunteers began their service that year. Until 1987 Volunteers numbered between 12 and 18, and programming concentrated on education assignments. With the arrival of the first country director in 1988, the Peace Corps established an independently administered post on Tarawa, the capital of the Republic of Kiribati. From 1990 until 1997 about 15 to 20 Volunteers worked as teacher trainers, focusing on outer island primary schools.

History and Future of Peace Corps Programming in Kiribati

The second major expansion occurred in 1997, with the launching of the rural community health promotion project. Twenty-seven trainees arrived in the first group, raising the total number of Volunteers in Kiribati to about 40.

Current Volunteer primary assignments are in education and in health and community development. Volunteers have been assigned to all 18 islands of the Gilbert group. (There are 16 named islands, but Tarawa and Tabiteuea are divided into north and south.)

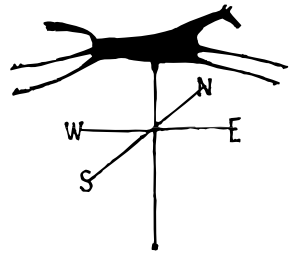
Most Volunteers are assigned to one of the outer islands. Some limited opportunities exist in the capital on South Tarawa to work at the national government level. These opportunities are best suited to third-year extension Volunteers with previous experience in the outer islands. Two Peace Corps Volunteer leaders (third-year extension Volunteers) are based in South Tarawa where they combine project work with helping to support the current Volunteers in their respective areas.

The government and people of Kiribati have warmly embraced the Peace Corps' presence in their nation. The work of the Volunteers is requested, accepted, and appreciated. Peace Corps/Kiribati will continue working in the core areas of education and health and community development, but will also explore new opportunities as resources become available.

NOTES



COUNTRY OVERVIEW: KIRIBATI AT A GLANCE



History

The first settlers of Kiribati probably came from Southeast Asia and Samoa in the 14th and 15th centuries. Europeans first visited the islands in 1537 when Christmas Island was sighted by Spanish explorers. Modern exploration of the islands began in 1765 when Commodore John Byron visited Nikunau. In 1788 Captain Thomas Gilbert and Captain John Marshall visited several more islands. The remaining islands were first visited by Europeans between 1799 and 1826.

Commercial activity in the islands began in the early 19th century. The Gilberts were a favorite whaling ground and deserting crews began to settle there around 1830. In 1888 Christmas, Fanning, and Washington Islands were annexed by the British, and the Phoenix Islands were placed under British protection. In 1892 the Gilbert and Ellice Islands became a British protectorate, and in 1900, following the discovery of valuable phosphate deposits, Ocean Island (Banaba) also was annexed. From 1916 through 1937, Gilbert and Ellice islands, Christmas Island, and the Phoenix Islands were declared British colonies. In 1974 the Ellice Islands voted for independence, becoming Tuvalu, and in 1977 an internal self-government was established in the Gilberts. The islands became the independent Republic of Kiribati in 1979.

Government

Today Kiribati is a democratic republic within the British Commonwealth. The president (*beretitenti*), elected nationally from among members of parliament, is head of state and

government. There are 41 members of parliament elected from each island and two national nominated members. The clerk and chief councilor act as liaisons between the central and local governments, keep the island people informed of central government policy, and supply the government with information about the people's needs and problems. All permanently inhabited islands have councils that provide services for the general health, security, and well-being of the people.

Economy

A remote nation of scattered coral atolls, Kiribati has few natural resources. Commercially viable phosphate deposits on Banaba Island were exhausted at the time of independence from the U.K. in 1979. Since the decline of the phosphate industry, the economy of Kiribati has been based on the export of copra (dried coconut) and fish. Fishing is especially important, and programs have been developed to upgrade subsistence fisheries to small commercial enterprises. The country also hopes to increase income by developing seaweed farming. Some revenue is generated by the sale of fishing rights to other nations. (Although the land area of the Kiribati islands is smaller than Rhode Island, the surrounding ocean in which the islands are located is almost as big as the continental United States.) Economic development is constrained by a shortage of skilled workers, weak infrastructure, and remoteness from international markets. Foreign financial aid, largely from Taiwan, Australia, New Zealand, and Japan, is a critical supplement to the gross domestic product (ranging from 25 percent to 50 percent of GDP in recent years). Remittances from workers abroad (primarily merchant seamen) account for more than \$5 million each year.

Agriculture in Kiribati is hampered by poor soil and rodent infestations on some islands. There are some commercial copra plantations, but small holdings are more common. Other agricultural products include breadfruit, pandanus, bananas, papayas, a few root crops, pigs, and poultry.

People and Culture

Life for many of the 90,000 people of Kiribati remains relatively unchanged, with society organized and structured by traditional customs. The majority of the population still holds fast to village life and the extended family system. The eldest male member of the family is the head and represents his family in village matters. Sometimes parents arrange marriages, but today youth have more say about whom they will marry. Owning land is an important tradition—it is the most valuable possession parents can pass on to their children. Most people live in small villages of 10 to 150 houses. Generally built of thatch, houses are sturdy, are rainproof, and provide good air circulation.

The way of life in Kiribati is simple. Most islanders fish locally, grow their own food, and raise livestock. Life is changing, however, in the rapidly urbanizing South Tarawa area, where immigration and the influence of missionaries are the principal agents of change.

Ninety-eight percent of I-Kiribati are Micronesian and live on the Gilbert Islands; there is also a small number of Polynesians. Although English is the official language, Gilbertese (I-Kiribati) is spoken everywhere. Virtually the entire population is Christian, evenly divided between Protestants and Roman Catholics. There are other religions with smaller followings, including the Church of God, Seventh-Day Adventist, Bahai, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormon), and Assembly of God.

Individuals may not own guns and there is very little homelessness. Street crime in Kiribati is not high; however, burglary is on the rise.

Environment

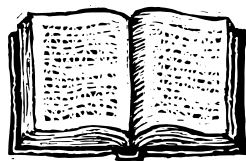
Kiribati is composed of 33 beautiful coral atolls, most of which have a lagoon (except for Banaba and Ocean Islands, which are raised limestone islands). The maximum height above sea level is only about 10 feet. Coral reefs surround most of the islands, providing outstanding snorkeling and diving opportunities. Sea breezes keep the air constantly clean.

Overcrowding, lack of sanitation infrastructure, and primitive health practices have led to degradation of the environment on South Tarawa. Swimming and snorkeling near the sites that are heavily populated in South Tarawa (and, increasingly, on some of the outer islands) are not recommended. Water for drinking and food preparation should be boiled. The best water is obtained from rain-catchment systems and stored in tanks. Kiribati is subject to irregular and unpredictable rainfall and consequently has occasional droughts. During droughts, life is hard in South Tarawa and extremely challenging on the outer islands, as water supplies and food sources dry up. Vegetables and fruits do not grow well in the sandy soil of Kiribati. Imported fruits and vegetables can occasionally be purchased in the South Tarawa markets, but they are expensive. South Tarawa has electricity and running water, but the outer islands do not, except for occasional generators and solar-powered lighting systems. Broadcast television was introduced to South Tarawa in December 2004. Many households, even on the outer islands, have long had television sets with VCRs or DVD players. Community groups may gather in the evening to watch a movie in the *mwaneaba* (a village meeting house) with a generator running in the background to power the television and DVD player.

Songbirds and almost all other forms of wildlife have long since vanished from Tarawa and most of the outer islands of the Gilbert group. Coconut crabs can still be found, but they are an endangered species. The coral reefs are in generally fair-to-good condition, teeming with tropical fish of all description.



RESOURCES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION



Following is a list of websites for additional information about the Peace Corps and Kiribati and to connect you to returned Volunteers and other invitees. A simple search on one of the many Internet search engines such as Google using the words “Peace Corps Kiribati” will yield many results. Please keep in mind that although we try to make sure all these links are active and current, we cannot guarantee it.

A note of caution: As you surf the Internet, be aware that you may find bulletin boards and chat rooms in which people are free to express opinions about the Peace Corps based on their own experiences, including comments by those who were unhappy with their choice to serve in the Peace Corps. These opinions are not those of the Peace Corps or the U.S. government, and we hope you will keep in mind that no two people experience their service in the same way.

General Information About Kiribati

www.countrywatch.com

On this site, you can learn anything from what time it is in Kiribati to how to convert from the U.S. dollar to the Australian dollar. Just click on Kiribati and go from there.

www.lonelyplanet.com/worldguide/destinations/pacific/kiribati

Visit this site to learn all you need to know about Kiribati.

www.state.gov/p/eap/ci/kr/

The U.S. State Department's website issues background notes periodically about countries around the world. Learn more about Kiribati's social and political history.

www.geography.about.com/library/maps/blkiribati.htm

This online world atlas includes maps and geographical information about countries around the world. Each country page contains links to other sites, such as the Library of Congress, that contain comprehensive historical, social, and political background.

www.cyberschoolbus.un.org/infonation/info.asp

This United Nations site allows you to search for statistical information for member states of the U.N.

Connect With Returned Volunteers and Other Invitees

www.rpcv.org

This is the site of the National Peace Corps Association, made up of returned Volunteers. On this site you can find links to all the Web pages of the "friends of" groups for most countries of service, made up of former Volunteers who served in those countries. There are also regional groups who frequently get together for social events and local Volunteer activities.

www.rpcvwebring.org

This site is known as the returned Peace Corps Volunteer Web ring. Browse the Web ring and see what former Volunteers are saying about their service.

www.peacecorpswriters.org

This site is hosted by a group of returned Volunteer writers. It is a monthly online publication of essays and Volunteer accounts from countries around the world.

Online Articles/Current News Sites About Kiribati

www.angelfire.com/co/dbrummel/

A Volunteer's father put this site together. It describes many Peace Corps/Kiribati experiences, and has links to many other Kiribati sites.

www.trussel.com/kir/apemama.htm

Chapter 1, part 4 of Robert Louis Stevenson's *In the South Seas: The King of Apemama*.

www.trussel.com/kir/becke.htm

Louis Becke's *Deschard of Oneaka*.

International Development Sites About Kiribati

www.ausaid.gov.au

Australia's overseas aid program

www.counterpart.org/

Counterpart Foundation International, formerly called the Foundation for the Peoples of the South Pacific

www.vso.org.uk

The United Kingdom's Voluntary Service Overseas

www.australianvolunteers.com/

Australian Volunteers International

Recommended Books

1. Grimble, Arthur. *A Pattern of Islands*. New York: Penguin Books, 1981.
2. Hunt, Errol, and Tony Wheeler. *Lonely Planet South Pacific*. Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet, 2000.

3. Levy, Neil M. *Moon Handbooks: Micronesia*. Emeryville, CA: Avalon Travel Publishing, 1999.
4. Martini, Frederic. "*The Gilbert and Ellice Islands*" in *Exploring Tropical Isles and Seas*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1984.
5. Sherrod, Robert. *Tarawa: The Story of a Battle*. Fredericksburg, TX: Admiral Nimitz Foundation, 1973.

Books About the History of the Peace Corps

1. Hoffman, Elizabeth Cobbs. *All You Need is Love: The Peace Corps and the Spirit of the 1960's*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000.
2. Rice, Gerald T. *The Bold Experiment: JFK's Peace Corps*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985.
3. Stossel, Scott. *Sarge: The Life and Times of Sargent Shriver*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2004.

Books on the Volunteer Experience

1. Dirlam, Sharon. *Beyond Siberia: Two Years in a Forgotten Place*. Santa Barbara, CA: McSeas Books, 2004.
2. Casebolt, Marjorie DeMoss. *Margarita: A Guatemalan Peace Corps Experience*. Gig Harbor, WA: Red Apple Publishing, 2000.
3. Erdman, Sarah. *Nine Hills to Nambonkaha: Two Years in the Heart of an African Village*. New York, NY: Picador, 2003.

4. Hessler, Peter. *River Town: Two Years on the Yangtze*. New York, NY: Perennial, 2001.
5. Kennedy, Geraldine ed. *From the Center of the Earth: Stories out of the Peace Corps*. Santa Monica, CA: Clover Park Press, 1991.
6. Thompsen, Moritz. *Living Poor: A Peace Corps Chronicle*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1997 (reprint).



LIVING CONDITIONS AND VOLUNTEER LIFESTYLE



Communications

Mail

Few countries in the world offer the level of mail service we consider normal in the United States. If you come here expecting U.S. standards, you will be in for a lot of frustration. Mail can take weeks or even months to arrive in Kiribati, though mail leaving Kiribati seems to be more reliable than mail arriving in Kiribati. Some mail may simply not arrive. Often mail is delayed because of a canceled flight or weight restrictions on international and domestic carriers. Although we do not want to sound too discouraging, communication can become a very sensitive issue when one is thousands of miles from family and friends. We think it is best to forewarn you about the reality of mail service in this part of the world. Advise your family and friends to number their letters and to write “Airmail—via Fiji” on envelopes.

Despite the potential delays, we strongly encourage you to write to your family regularly (perhaps weekly or biweekly) and to number your letters. Family members typically become worried when they do not hear from you, so advise them that mail is sporadic and that they shouldn’t worry if they don’t receive your letters regularly. (If a serious problem were to occur, Peace Corps/Kiribati would notify the Peace Corps Office of Special Services in Washington, D.C., which would contact your family.)

Airmail packages sometimes take weeks to arrive and occasionally don’t arrive at all. Surface mail takes anywhere from four months to one year or longer. Packing items in

plastic containers, aluminum foil, or sturdy plastic bags is prudent because of rats, ants, heat, and humidity. You are responsible for paying any customs charges for personal items.

Past Volunteers have enjoyed receiving candy, dried fruit, homemade cookies packed in tins, spices, canned potato chips, anything dehydrated, nuts, small packages of condiments and other foods (soup mix, powdered eggs, and macaroni and cheese), books, tapes, batteries, balloons, trinkets for kids, card games, newspapers, comic books, magazines, beach toys, photos, personal voice recordings, hair-care products, underwear, film, clothing, teacher stickers for students' work, good pens, and fish recipes.

It is difficult to receive packages sent via airmail from the U.S. directly on the outer islands. To increase the likelihood of getting through, packages should be in large envelopes (NOT BOXES) and weigh no more than two pounds. Otherwise, the package will be held up in South Tarawa. Larger boxes can be forwarded to your island from Tarawa, but you will be responsible for the additional costs incurred.

Your mailing address during pre-service training will be the main Peace Corps Office mailbox:

“Your Name,” PCT
PO Box 260
Bikenibeu, Tarawa
Republic of Kiribati, Central Pacific

Mail can be sent to you at this address during your entire two years of service. However, once you have a site placement, you will have a local address on your island and it is generally better to have your mail sent directly to you there rather than depend on the Peace Corps/Kiribati office to forward it.

Telephones

Local and overseas telephone, fax, and e-mail services are available on the capital island of South Tarawa. Public phones in South Tarawa operate only with a locally purchased phone card. All of the outer islands have some form of electronic communication with South Tarawa, but it varies widely from place to place and is not always easily accessible to Volunteers. The government is expanding phone service to the outer islands and has completed the installation on at least five of them, but it will take some time before all of the islands have this service.

The government maintains a CB radio-telephone link with each island, located at the government council station. Volunteers can place calls to the Peace Corps office or other locations in South Tarawa by CB radio-telephone at certain times of the day, but these calls are not private. The police station and the health clinic on each island have CB (shortwave) radios, which can be used by Volunteers in an emergency. There are also private or church-owned CB radios on many islands that will be made available for emergency communication if needed. The Peace Corps provides satellite telephones on the most isolated islands for Volunteers. Not every Volunteer has one, but most islands do. These phones can only be used for official communication. In many places on the outer islands, it is not possible to call the United States. However, in an emergency, Volunteers may be authorized to travel to South Tarawa to communicate with family members.

Computer, Internet, and E-mail Access

Internet services became available in Tarawa in 1998. The Peace Corps office has two computers with reliable Internet access available for Volunteer use.

The few Volunteers assigned to Tarawa can make use of a personal computer and may want to bring a laptop computer. Volunteers stationed on the outer islands will need an alternate power source (e.g., solar panels) as the outer islands generally do not have electricity. For this reason, and since you will not know your island of assignment before you arrive, we don't recommend that Volunteers bring laptop computers.

Housing and Site Location

All Volunteers in Kiribati are required to live with a host family during training. Volunteers are also assigned a host family, with whom they will live for the entire two years of service. This includes Volunteers living in South Tarawa. Understandably, many Volunteers have difficulty adjusting to this because it means giving up the independent living to which they are accustomed. Household rules, especially for women, are likely to be completely different and feel very restrictive compared to life in the United States. Yet, in most instances, the rewards are great. Living with a family makes it easier to learn the language, offers a much greater understanding of the culture, and ensures a safer and more secure environment for the Volunteer. Much of a Volunteer's life in Kiribati will be based on interactions with his or her host family, which provide an entrance into the community.

Volunteers in Kiribati are placed on all of the islands in the Gilbert group. The greatest need is on the outer islands, and that is where almost all Volunteers are assigned. Most of the houses on the outer islands are made from local materials. Houses have stick walls supported by larger posts in the ground and a thatched roof. Windows have no glass and are cut from sticks. There is usually a socializing *buia* (a raised platform) next to the house. All houses also have a *roki* (bathroom), which is either inside the house or nearby. The

roki will have a water-sealed pit latrine. Bathing consists of dipping a cup in a bucket and pouring it over you. Clothes are washed by hand in buckets. Water is drawn from a nearby well. Volunteers sleep under mosquito nets. Peace Corps/Kiribati provides heavy-duty wire fencing (referred to as security wire) to be installed in the Volunteers' housing.

Living Allowance and Money Management

The local currency is the Australian dollar (AUD). The current exchange rate is approximately \$1.33 AUD to the U.S. dollar. As a trainee, you will receive a walk-around allowance in the local currency that will be just enough money to buy some stamps, a snack, and an occasional soft drink. Your host family will provide all of your meals. Once you are sworn-in as a Volunteer, you will receive a modest monthly living allowance paid in the local currency. Included in this is the equivalency of \$24 (USD) for two days' leave. Volunteers accrue two days of annual leave for each month of active service as a Peace Corps Volunteer. Since the amount of the leave allowance is legally fixed in U.S. dollars, it must be adjusted monthly to reflect any changes in the exchange rate; therefore, the exact amount may vary slightly.

Directly after you are sworn-in, you will receive a settling-in allowance to purchase household items such as pots, pans, and a stove.

Traveler's checks and U.S. dollars may be exchanged for local currency at the Bank of Kiribati or at a hotel on South Tarawa. (The bank offers a better rate for converting traveler's checks than U.S. currency.) There is no restriction on importing currency into Kiribati via traveler's checks, foreign bank notes, or other instruments. There are several branches of the bank and three operating ATMs in the country where access to local and

U.S. bank accounts is possible. These are all located on South Tarawa. As the ATM machines are sometimes down, the bank can also process cash advances on credit cards and debit cards.

Trainees and Volunteers may not accept payment for any services or work done other than the allowances received from the Peace Corps. They may not engage in any activity for personal financial gain, and they may not receive payment for photographs or writing while serving in the Peace Corps.

Food and Diet

The diet in Kiribati consists mainly of locally available products (fish, coconut, breadfruit, chicken, pork, and occasionally eggs) and imported rice. Most Volunteers have a diet that is very high in carbohydrates and quite repetitive. On the outer islands, other imported foods are available, such as corned beef, curried chicken, limited canned vegetables, cheap cookies, and basics such as flour, sugar, and rice. The closer the outer island is to Tarawa, the more variety is typically found in the stores. In Tarawa there are a number of stores with imports from Australia, U.S., Fiji, and Indonesia. These items tend to be very expensive, sometimes three or four times what they might cost in the U.S., but most Volunteers are willing to spend a little extra money for some specialty items. Since eating in Kiribati is a significant social activity and a vehicle to personal relations, you may find it necessary to demonstrate your friendliness and willingness to accept local customs by eating food that you would prefer not to eat. It is often difficult to refuse food in Kiribati without offending your hosts. They will watch you eat and wait for you to announce that the food is delicious.

Kiribati is not an easy place for vegetarians. Local dishes are often filled with fish, pork, or chicken. Many dishes are prepared with canned meat. Most vegetarians who come to

Kiribati add some fish to their diet, and some eat chicken. Finding other sources of protein is often difficult or expensive. However, some vegetarian Volunteers have managed to find food to their liking and have taught their communities about their eating habits. This helps alleviate awkward situations when someone offers food that you do not eat. During food shortages on the islands resulting from drought or waiting for the next boat to arrive, the choices for vegetarians are even more limited.

Transportation

Transportation in developing countries is not the same as in the U.S. International flights to Kiribati and domestic flights to the outer islands are subject to frequent delays and cancellations. As of January 2007, Air Pacific flies twice a week from/to Fiji. Our Airlines also flies from Brisbane to Majuro and back twice a week, stopping in Tarawa to collect passengers for Majuro on the way up and for the Solomon Islands and Brisbane on the way down. Air Kiribati is the national airline and has at least one scheduled flight a week to each of the Gilbert Islands. At the time of this writing, there is only one Air Kiribati plane in operation and often this plane is down for service or unable to fly due to poor weather. It is hoped that Air Kiribati will have another plane in operation soon.

On Tarawa, minibuses provide transportation from one end of the island to the other for a fare that varies from 55 cents to \$1.40 (AUD) depending on the length of the ride. On the outer islands, trucks can be hired for groups or for longer distances. Most Volunteers purchase a bicycle in Tarawa, which is shipped to their outer island. The Peace Corps will provide each Volunteer with a safety helmet. Though there are a number of boats that service the islands, Volunteers rarely travel by boat any more. For safety reasons, Volunteers

are only permitted to travel between islands on vessels of the Kiribati Shipping Line or the SuperCat (a large catamaran). Volunteers must have advance authorization from the country director to travel by sea and must always bring a life vest (provided by Peace Corps).

Air transportation costs for official purposes, such as scheduled in-service trainings, during your two years of service are calculated based on your site and included in your living allowance. Approved travel costs for medical purposes or other unforeseen official travel will be reimbursed separately.

Geography and Climate

The Republic of Kiribati is one of the smallest countries in the world. It is composed of 33 atolls scattered over more than 2 million square miles of ocean, yet its total land area is only 264 square miles. Kiribati is located in the central Pacific, near the point at which the international dateline intersects the equator. The islands are in three main groups: the Gilbert, Phoenix, and Line Islands and Banaba Island.

Kiribati is tropical, with an average daytime temperature of 91 degrees Fahrenheit that varies little from season to season. Rainfall varies greatly, ranging from 40 inches yearly near the equator to 120 inches in the extreme north and south. Banaba Island, the central and southern Gilbert Islands, the Phoenix Islands, and Kiritimati Island are also subject to severe droughts that may last many months.

Social Activities

Just about any social gathering in Kiribati is called a *botaki*. These range from having a few friends over for dinner to a week-long island-wide festival. The average *botaki* is held in a *mwaneaba* (meeting house) where people sit in a large circle

around the floor. The older men and guests usually sit in front with the women and children sitting around the edge of the mwaneaba behind the men. Almost always, speeches are given, some prayers are said, and large amounts of food are eaten. Groups of people also stand up and sing songs. Often, Volunteers are asked to sing as a group. If there is a generator or other power source available, loud music is played and people are invited to dance in the middle of the mwaneaba. If you are asked to dance, it is typically considered an insult if you decline. *Botakis* are held for a variety of reasons, including a first or 21st birthday, first menstruation, engagement, wedding, anniversaries of buildings or people's arrival on the island, and any holiday. The biggest national holiday is in July when Kiribati celebrates its independence from Britain. This is a week-long national holiday. Other holidays include International Women's Day, Easter, National Youth Day, Human Rights Day, National Health Day, Christmas, Boxing Day, and New Year's.

You will not have much privacy in Kiribati. Because you are new and different, people will constantly be curious about what you are doing. Often a neighbor or child will just stop by your house to say hello or to watch you. This is not viewed as offensive in Kiribati culture; people are curious and often want to get to know you better. Through training and time, you will learn how to deal with social interactions and still keep some time for yourself, although this is not always easy to do.

Friendships and relationships are viewed differently in Kiribati than in the United States. Men and women who are not married are never supposed to be alone together and do not display affection in public. You will be required to observe these cultural norms. It is very unusual for anyone to live alone outside of a family group. This is another reason that Volunteers are assigned to live with families.

Professionalism, Dress, and Behavior

There are different standards of professionalism on Tarawa and on the outer islands, but they are still not the standards you are probably used to at home. One of the difficulties of finding your place as a Peace Corps Volunteer is fitting into the local culture while maintaining your own cultural identity. In time, you will realize you are an *I-Matang* (all foreigners are from *Matang*, the mythical land where the sun sets); you are no longer just an American nor are you an I-Kiribati. You are something different, something new, made up of elements of both cultures plus your own psyche.

You will be working as a representative of a government ministry and you will be expected to dress and behave accordingly. While some of your counterparts may dress in worn or shabby clothes, it is probably a result of economics rather than choice. The likelihood is that they are wearing their “best.” A foreigner wearing ragged, unmended clothing is likely to be considered rude and ill-mannered.

Personal Safety

More information about the Peace Corps’ approach to safety is outlined in the Health Care and Safety chapter, but it is an important issue and cannot be overemphasized. As stated in the *Volunteer Handbook*, becoming a Peace Corps Volunteer entails certain safety risks. Living and traveling in an unfamiliar environment (oftentimes alone), having a limited understanding of local language and culture, and being perceived as well-off are some of the factors that can put a Volunteer at risk. Kiribati is generally a country with a very low crime rate compared to most other countries in the world. But alcohol changes the behavior and the rules in many ways. Some I-Kiribati will drink to excess rather than in moderation.

Because alcohol consumption can be a significant factor affecting individual safety, Volunteers need to be cautious of others who are inebriated and aware of their own behavior.

Many Volunteers experience varying degrees of unwanted attention and harassment. Petty thefts and burglaries are not uncommon, and incidents of physical and sexual assault do occur, although most Kiribati Volunteers complete their two years of service without major personal security incidents. The Peace Corps has established procedures and policies designed to help Volunteers reduce their risks and enhance their safety and security. These procedures and policies, in addition to safety training, will be provided once you arrive in Kiribati. At the same time, you are expected to take responsibility for your own safety and well-being. Women should never travel alone after dark in the outer islands—even walking from one village to another or to your school. Women should also not go biking or jogging by themselves in isolated areas, and should never go walking in the bush alone.

Rewards and Frustrations

One of the few predictions one can safely make about being a Peace Corps Volunteer is that it will never be entirely predictable. You can learn from the experience of former Volunteers, but there are certain to be times when you are confronted by situations that are completely new and wholly your own. How can you prepare yourself for this? There are no easy tricks for dealing with the unexpected, but we can tell you something about the kinds of situations you are likely to encounter and how other Volunteers have handled them. Psychologists have shown that people do better in unfamiliar situations if they prepare themselves by imagining how they will feel and starting to adapt to the probable tensions and frustrations.

Cultural adaptation is one of the most important aspects of your service. Here are some characteristics that are critical for adapting to a new culture.

A good sense of humor. A sense of humor is important because there will be much to cry or get angry, annoyed, embarrassed, or discouraged about, and the ability to laugh about things will be your ultimate weapon against despair.

Lowered expectations. Americans abroad too often undertake tasks that are unrealistic. If you set your goals too high and refuse to adjust them to the realities of what can actually be accomplished in a foreign environment, you are going to be disappointed. Experience shows that Americans who are less goal-oriented or task-driven, and more able to relax and ride with events, tend to be more effective and enjoy themselves more overseas.

The ability to fail. The ability to tolerate failure is critical because everyone fails at something overseas. Ironically, however, those most likely to be selected to go overseas are those who have been most successful at home. Some people sent abroad will have never before experienced failure. If you have little tolerance for failure, you will be in trouble, as will those who work or live with you.

Patience, flexibility, and self-reliance. Although the Peace Corps staff will work hard to support you in your service, resolving the many challenges you will face will often depend on your own ability, determination, and strength of commitment to Peace Corps service.

If you have all or most of these characteristics, you are likely to do well. However, there will be other adjustments for you to make. People who thrive on an urban lifestyle of restaurants, bars, plays, movies, concerts, and shopping will likely find the calm and quiet of Kiribati life somewhat difficult.

The pre-service training staff, composed of I-Kiribati language and cultural instructors and some American staff, will give you a detailed picture of what to expect once you move to your permanent assignment. You will also meet former and current Volunteers who have worked in both the education and health projects in Kiribati. Following are some of the issues that may arise once you have settled in.

Isolation. The name “Peace Corps” is somewhat misleading. It implies a coherent company of Americans who work together when, in fact, most Volunteers work with citizens of the host country rather than other Volunteers. A Volunteer’s work is often solitary, without the support one gets from working with people who share a common background. There will be times when you will feel very much alone, especially in contrast with the intense togetherness of most training programs.

Constant scrutiny. Paradoxically, although you will often feel alone, you might also feel that you are never alone—that you are always under scrutiny, and that there is never a moment when you are not representing the “image” of the Peace Corps. In the United States, we work at a job, and then we go home and take off our shoes and relax. But from the moment you begin Peace Corps training, it may seem as if you live in a fishbowl. Even those who initially find this exhilarating eventually can find it irritating and burdensome.

Privacy vs. intimacy. While some Volunteers live in the same village as other Volunteers, all Volunteers are assigned a Kiribati host family. Such an arrangement has the advantages of companionship and support, but it also places you in intense relationships with people not entirely of your own choosing. You may have had a similar experience with a college roommate, but then you were able to get away from each other for periods of time. This will not be possible in Kiribati, and the enforced intimacy, even with a compatible colleague, could wear on both of you.

Homesickness. If you have formed warm attachments to other people, you may react to separation from family and friends by becoming sad and lonely. This feeling is not unique to the Peace Corps. One may have gotten homesick after going away to college or joining the military. And because you are so far away, any trouble at home—such as the illness of a parent or the dissolution of a romance—can become magnified and distorted. Sometimes the opposite occurs. Disturbing news from home may be minimized as a Volunteer attributes feelings of tension to problems in the immediate environment, when the real source of the distress is thousands of miles away.

Unfamiliar customs. Ideally, meals are a time of relaxation, but in a new country they may be a perpetually unsettling challenge. The available food may not only be strange in type and appearance but it may be unpalatable. Yet since eating is a significant social function and a vehicle to personal relations, you may feel obligated to demonstrate your friendliness and willingness to accept local customs by eating food that you don't want. What you decide in each case will be the result of balancing several factors—the requirement for courtesy, the limits of your own tolerance for new foods, and realistic concerns for your health.

Procedures for washing, sleeping, and elimination may also differ dramatically from what you are used to. Sexual customs and accepted dress may appear excessively strict in some respects or embarrassingly free in others. You might find your tolerance of noise and dirt different from what you imagined it to be.

In all these aspects of daily life, you may feel yourself pulled in opposite directions between your accustomed life and that of your hosts. At times, your life may seem to consist of a series of minor nagging frustrations. Such frustrations can accumulate, and you might finish a long day of hard

work feeling exhilarated and happy and yet be inexplicably exasperated because you don't have a paper napkin to wipe your mouth.

Culture shock. Your initial reaction to Kiribati is likely to be one of delight and curiosity, similar to how a tourist would react. But working in a foreign country is another matter. The differences that strike you as fascinating at first will become commonplace and invisible, and you might become aware of more profound differences between you and the people with whom you work. For example, when talking to an I-Kiribati in English or the local tongue, you might suddenly realize that although you are using the same language, you do not understand each other. Words like “democratic” or “clean” or “soon” may have different meanings for each of you. You might be mystified to find that local people who consider themselves democratic and who talk with sincerity about their struggle for freedom and independence can, at the same time, treat subordinates, women, children, or other people in what strikes you as a harshly authoritarian manner.

Such a breakdown in communication may be heightened by misperceptions you and your host may have of each other. You may feel that the host is not talking to you but to a fantasy of what Americans are like. Similarly, you may be addressing a preconceived image of your host derived from cross-cultural area studies. In either case, the result is a failure to understand each other and a consequent sense of frustration.

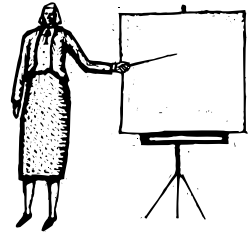
At times it is difficult to remember that all people have a common humanity, and that merely knowing a person's nationality does not tell you whether the person is skillful or inept, constant or mercurial, honest or dishonest, industrious or lazy. There is a temptation to fall back on glib cultural stereotypes, but much of the success or failure of a

Volunteer's work depends on his or her ability to understand the language and culture sufficiently well to make an accurate assessment of individuals. It is not an exaggeration to state that every successful Peace Corps project begins by identifying a particular host country national who is competent, reliable, understanding, and dedicated. A deep conviction that you share a common humanity with your host that transcends any cultural differences will be a big help.

NOTES



PEACE CORPS TRAINING



Overview of Pre-Service Training

Your first stop after leaving your home will be staging, where you will receive last-minute information about service in Kiribati and have the chance to rethink your commitment to Peace Corps service. Your flight to Kiribati may involve a one-night stopover in Fiji. Don't unpack; you are not there yet! Once you arrive in Kiribati, you will begin the nine-and-one-half-week pre-service training program. One purpose of this training is to help trainees make an informed commitment before they are sworn-in as Peace Corps Volunteers.

Week one takes place on South Tarawa, where you may stay in a modest local hotel. The week includes an initial orientation to Kiribati and Peace Corps staff, along with completion of some preliminary medical and administrative paperwork. There will also be language, cross-cultural, and project overview sessions. During week two, you will visit a current Volunteer at his or her site on an outer island to gain a realistic perspective of Volunteer life and work. This will help you take full advantage of the learning opportunities presented during training. The rest of the training occurs on North Tarawa, where you will be dispersed in small groups to villages away from the training center and live with a host family. Language and cross-cultural instructors accompany each small group and will live and work with you in the community. They will be staying with other host families. Your host family will provide you with lodging and food throughout training. You will come to the training center about once a week as a group for technical, medical, and core training (which covers safety and security, administration, and Peace Corps policies).

Training will cover language, culture, history, government, preventive health practices, and safety and security. Although some sessions will be attended by all trainees, technical training sessions generally will be separated by project (primary or junior secondary education or health and community development). There will be changes of instructors during training to expose you to a wider group of I-Kiribati.

North Tarawa is an ideal setting in which to get a taste of what your life will be like when you become a Volunteer. Remember that it is only a taste, however, as living on rural North Tarawa with other trainees is very different from living on an island by yourself. Although living with a host family may be awkward at times, such an arrangement is valuable for learning the I-Kiribati language and culture. Your host family will make every effort to see that you are comfortable and have what you need.

Young female trainees will face a particular challenge that they will have to deal with throughout their service. Villagers will not want you to be alone in the house or to go anywhere alone or with a single male. This practice is meant to preserve your reputation as a “good” woman, since you are considered part of their family, as well as to protect you against the possibility of sexual harassment. Such loss of privacy and independence is one of the hardest adaptations Volunteers—especially young females—have to make.

At the end of pre-service training, there will be a formal ceremony to swear you in as a Peace Corps Volunteer. Special guests including the president of Kiribati and the U.S. ambassador are usually invited, and sometimes attend.

Technical Training

Technical training prepares you to work in Kiribati by building on the skills you already have and by helping you develop new

skills in a manner appropriate to the needs of the country. The Peace Corps training staff, I-Kiribati guest presenters, and current Volunteers will conduct the training program. Training places great emphasis on learning how to transfer the skills you have to the community in which you will serve as a Volunteer.

Technical training will include sessions on the environment, economics, and politics in Kiribati and strategies for working within such a framework. You will review your project's goals and will meet with the Kiribati ministries and organizations that invited the Peace Corps to assist them. You will be supported and evaluated throughout the training to build the confidence and skills you need to undertake your project activities and be a productive member of your community.

Language Training

As a Peace Corps Volunteer, you will find that language skills are the key to personal and professional satisfaction during your service. These skills are critical to your job performance, they help you integrate into your community, and they can ease your personal adaptation to the new surroundings. Therefore, language training is the heart of the training program, and you must successfully meet minimum language requirements to complete training and become a Volunteer. Kiribati language instructors teach formal language classes five days a week in small groups of four to five people.

Your language training will incorporate a community-based approach. In addition to classroom time, you will be given assignments to work on outside of the classroom and with your host family. The goal is to get you to a point of basic social communication skills so that you can practice and develop language skills further on your own. Prior to your swearing-in as a Volunteer, you will work on strategies to continue language studies during your two years of service.

Cross-Cultural Training

As part of your pre-service training, you will live with an I-Kiribati host family. This experience is designed to ease your transition to life at your site. Host families have gone through an orientation conducted by Peace Corps staff to explain the purpose of the pre-service training program and to assist them in helping you adapt to living in Kiribati. Many Volunteers form strong and lasting friendships with their host families.

Cross-cultural and community development will be covered to help improve your skills of perception, communication, and facilitation. Topics such as community mobilization, conflict resolution, gender and development, and traditional and political structures are also addressed.

Health Training

During pre-service training, you will be given basic medical training and information. You will be expected to practice preventive healthcare and to take responsibility for your own health by adhering to all medical policies. Trainees are required to attend all medical sessions. The topics include preventive health measures and minor and major medical issues that you might encounter while in Kiribati. Nutrition, mental health, safety and security, setting up a safe living compound, and how to avoid HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) are also covered.

Safety and Security Training

During the safety and security training sessions, you will learn how to adopt a lifestyle that reduces risk in your home, at work, and during your travels. You will also learn appropriate, effective strategies for coping with unwanted attention and about your individual responsibility for promoting safety and security throughout your service.

Additional Trainings during Volunteer Service

In its commitment to institutionalize quality training, the Peace Corps has implemented a training system that provides trainees and Volunteers with continuing opportunities to examine their commitment to Peace Corps service while increasing their technical and cross-cultural skills. During your service, there are usually four in-service training (IST) events. The titles and objectives for those events follow.

- *Reconnect/IST*: Provides an opportunity for Volunteers to upgrade their technical, language, and project development skills while sharing their experiences and reaffirming their commitment after having served for four months.
- *Technical/IST*: Provides Volunteers with an opportunity for dialogue, information sharing, and skills upgrading. This event is conducted approximately eight months into service.
- *Mid-service conference*: Assists Volunteers in reviewing their first year, reassessing their personal and project objectives, and planning for their second year of service.
- *Close-of-service conference*: Prepares Volunteers for the future after Peace Corps service and reviews their respective projects and personal experiences. This event is held three to four months prior to the end of your service.

The number, length, and design of these training events are adapted to country-specific needs and conditions. The key to the training system is that training events are integrated and interrelated, from the pre-departure orientation through the end of your service, and are planned, implemented, and evaluated cooperatively by the training staff, Peace Corps staff, and the Volunteers.



YOUR HEALTH CARE AND SAFETY IN KIRIBATI



The Peace Corps' highest priority is maintaining the good health and safety of every Volunteer. Peace Corps medical programs emphasize the preventive, rather than the curative, approach to disease. The Peace Corps in Kiribati maintains a clinic with a full-time medical officer, who takes care of Volunteers' primary healthcare needs. Additional limited medical services, such as evaluation and treatments, are also available in Kiribati at Tungaru Central Hospital. If you become seriously ill, you will be transported to an American-standard medical facility in the region, to Australia, or to the United States.

Health Issues in Kiribati

Among the health issues of the I-Kiribati people are smoking, HIV/AIDS and other STDs, alcohol abuse, diabetes and heart disease, malnutrition, dehydration, and infections from cuts, sores, and insect bites. You will work on some of these issues if you are a health Volunteer, and you will need to know about others in order to maintain your own health. Past Kiribati Volunteers have required medical evacuation as a result of seemingly minor cuts that were not kept clean and properly managed. There is also a risk of injury in traffic accidents in South Tarawa and in mishaps on the coral reef.

The prevalence of smoking is declining in developed countries, but increasing in developing countries. Eighty-five percent of I-Kiribati smoke. Many host country nationals will undoubtedly view you as an authority and role model in the

healthcare field and may see smoking as a benefit or a sign of being more modern and acceptable. Smoking not only significantly increases the likelihood of premature death and disability, but engenders an image that contradicts the goals of the Peace Corps' health programs. By choosing not to smoke, you may help others decide not to smoke. If you are currently a smoker, but want to stop, the Peace Corps will help you quit. Smoking is not allowed inside any Peace Corps building or vehicle worldwide.

The Peace Corps has adopted medical policies and practices worldwide to help protect Volunteers and staff from infection with HIV, but the behavior of each Volunteer will have the greatest impact on preventing infection. It is important to emphasize that while AIDS in the United States has occurred primarily in certain high-risk groups, in parts of the developing world the disease affects men and women equally, regardless of sexual preference.

The keys to reducing the risk of exposure to AIDS are knowledge and prevention. Your Peace Corps medical officer will provide you with more specific information about Kiribati and will keep you informed of measures you can take to reduce your risk of exposure. Measures include abstinence, monogamous relationships, consistent and correct use of condoms; avoiding any injections not provided by the Peace Corps medical officer; avoiding blood transfusions except under the supervision of the medical officer; not sharing toothbrushes and razors (which may be contaminated with blood); and avoiding any penetration of skin surfaces (such as acupuncture, ear piercing, tattooing, or incisions of the skin during traditional ceremonial or healing practices).

Alcoholism and drunkenness are major health and social issues for I-Kiribati. People who are friendly and kind when sober may become dangerous and reckless menaces to themselves

and others when drunk. Intoxicated bus drivers have caused serious accidents on the main road through South Tarawa. Spousal abuse is not uncommon when alcohol is involved. Volunteers have a dual responsibility to be role models themselves by not abusing alcohol and to avoid people who are drinking too much. Volunteers should not go out alone at night or get on any bus if the driver seems impaired. Volunteers might also consider working in alcohol and smoking awareness campaigns as secondary (or primary) projects. Volunteers should avoid drinking irresponsibly. A Volunteer who is unable to control compulsive drinking habits needs to see the medical officer. If the alcohol abuse persists, the Volunteer may need to be administratively separated from the Peace Corps.

Helping You Stay Healthy

The Peace Corps will provide you with all the necessary inoculations, medications, and information to stay healthy. Upon your arrival in Kiribati, you will receive a medical handbook. At the end of training, you will receive a medical kit with supplies to take care of mild illnesses and first-aid needs. The contents of the kit are listed later in this chapter.

During pre-service training, you will have access to basic medical supplies through the medical officer. However, you will be responsible for your own supply of prescription drugs and any other specific medical supplies you require, as we will not order these items during training. Please bring a three-month supply of any prescription drugs you use, since they will not be available here and it takes several months for new shipments to arrive.

You will have physicals at mid-service and at the end of your service. If you develop a serious medical problem during your service, the medical officer in Kiribati will consult with

the Office of Medical Services in Washington, D.C. If it is determined that your condition cannot be treated in Kiribati, you may be sent out of the country for further evaluation and care. The decision to medically evacuate a Volunteer or trainee to Washington, D.C., is made by the Office of Medical Services at Peace Corps headquarters.

Maintaining Your Health

As a Volunteer, you must accept a certain amount of responsibility for your own health. Proper precautions will significantly reduce your risk of serious illness or injury. The old adage “An ounce of prevention Is worth a pound of cure” becomes extremely important in areas where diagnostic and treatment facilities are not up to the standards of the United States and transport from island to island and to the Peace Corps office for medical evaluation and treatment may be difficult and time consuming.

It is critical to your health that you promptly report to the medical office or other designated facility for scheduled immunizations, and that you let your medical officer know immediately of significant illnesses and injuries, including any possible exposure to rabies while traveling (there is no rabies in Kiribati).

Volunteers are prohibited from driving or riding on motorcycles. All Volunteers riding bicycles are required to wear bike helmets, and the Peace Corps will provide these. Failure to comply may result in administrative separation.

Many illnesses that afflict Volunteers worldwide are entirely preventable if proper food and water precautions are taken. These diseases include food poisoning; parasitic infections; hepatitis A, B, and C; dysentery; Guinea worms; tapeworms;

and typhoid fever. Your medical officer will discuss specific standards for water and food preparation in Kiribati during pre-service training.

Abstinence is the only certain choice for preventing infection with HIV and other STDs. You are taking risks if you choose to be sexually active. To lessen risk, use a condom every time you have sex. Whether your partner is a host country citizen, a fellow Volunteer, or anyone else, do not assume this person is free of HIV/AIDS or other STDs. You will receive more information from your medical officer about this important issue.

Volunteers are expected to adhere to an effective means of birth control to prevent unplanned pregnancies. Your medical officer can help you decide on the most appropriate method to suit your individual needs. Contraceptive methods are available without charge from the medical officer.

Women's Health Information

Pregnancy is treated in the same manner as other Volunteer health conditions that require medical attention but also have programmatic ramifications. The Peace Corps is responsible for determining the medical risk and the availability of appropriate medical care if the Volunteer remains in-country. Due to the increased medical risk to the fetus and mother and the lack of appropriate obstetric and perinatal care at post Volunteers wishing to continue their pregnancy will be medically separated.

If feminine hygiene products are not available for you to purchase on the local market, the Peace Corps medical officer in Kiribati will provide them. If you require a specific product, please bring a six-month supply with you.

Your Peace Corps Medical Kit

The Peace Corps medical officer provides Volunteers with a medical kit that contains basic items necessary to prevent and treat illnesses that may occur during service. Kit items can be periodically restocked at the medical office.

Medical Kit Contents

Ace bandages
Acetaminophen
Adhesive tape (Durapore)
American Red Cross First Aid & Safety Handbook
Antacid tablets (Tums)
Antibiotic ointment (Bacitracin/Neomycin/Polymycin B)
Antiseptic antimicrobial skin cleaner (Hibiclens)
Baby powder
Band-Aids
Benzoyl peroxide (for acne)
Butterfly closures
Caladryl lotion
Condoms
Cotton balls and swabs (Q-Tips)
Dental floss
Diphenhydramine HCL 25 mg (Benadryl)
Fostex soap
Hydrocortisone cream
Hydrogen peroxide
Ibuprofen
Insect repellent stick (Cutter's)
Iodine tablets (for water purification)
Lip balm (Chapstick)
Lozenges (Cepacol/Sucrets/Robitussin-DM)
Motion sickness medication
Multivitamins, including calcium and vitamin C
Mycelex (for vaginal yeast infections)

Oral rehydration salts and Gatorade
Oral thermometer (Fahrenheit)
Pseudoephedrine HCL 30 mg (Sudafed)
Rubbing alcohol
Scissors
Sterile gauze pads
Stool softener
Sunscreen
Tetrahydrozaline eyedrops (Visine)
Tinactin (antifungal cream)
Treatment for body and head lice
Tweezers
Vosol eardrops
Witch hazel

Before You Leave: A Medical Checklist

If there has been any change in your health—physical, mental, or dental—since the time you submitted your examination reports to the Peace Corps, you must immediately notify the Office of Medical Services. Failure to disclose new illnesses, injuries, allergies, or pregnancy can endanger your health and may jeopardize your eligibility to serve.

If your dental exam was done more than a year ago, or if your physical exam is more than two years old, contact the Office of Medical Services to find out whether you need to update your records. If your dentist or Peace Corps dental consultant has recommended that you undergo dental treatment or repair, you must complete that work and make sure your dentist sends requested confirmation reports or X-rays to the Office of Medical Services.

If you wish to avoid having duplicate vaccinations, you should contact your physician's office, obtain a copy of your immunization record, and bring it to your pre-departure orientation. If you have any immunizations prior to Peace Corps service, the Peace Corps cannot reimburse you for the cost. The Peace Corps will provide all the immunizations necessary for your overseas assignment, either at your pre-departure orientation or shortly after you arrive in Kiribati. You do not need to begin taking malaria medication prior to departure.

Bring a three-month supply of any prescription or over-the-counter medication you use on a regular basis, including birth control pills. Although the Peace Corps cannot reimburse you for this three-month supply, we will order refills during your service. While awaiting shipment—which can take several months—you will be dependent on your own medication supply. The Peace Corps will not pay for herbal or non-prescribed medications, such as St. John's wort, glucosamine, selenium, or antioxidant supplements.

You are encouraged to bring copies of medical prescriptions signed by your physician. This is not a requirement, but they might come in handy if you are questioned in transit about carrying a three-month supply of prescription drugs.

If you wear eyeglasses, bring two pairs with you—a pair and a spare. If a pair breaks, the Peace Corps will replace it, using the information your doctor in the United States provided on the eyeglasses form during your examination. To reduce your risk of developing a serious infection or other eye disease, we discourage you from using contact lenses during your Peace Corps service. Most Peace Corps countries do not have appropriate water and sanitation to support eye care with the use of contact lenses. The Peace Corps will not supply or replace contact lenses or associated solutions unless their use

has been recommended by an ophthalmologist for a specific medical condition and the Peace Corps' Office of Medical Services has given approval.

If you are eligible for Medicare, are over 50 years of age, or have a health condition that may restrict your future participation in healthcare plans, you may wish to consult an insurance specialist about unique coverage needs before your departure. The Peace Corps will provide all necessary healthcare from the time you leave for your pre-departure orientation until you complete your service. When you finish, you will be entitled to the post-service healthcare benefits described in the Peace Corps *Volunteer Handbook*. You may wish to consider keeping an existing health plan in effect during your service if you think age and/or preexisting conditions might prevent you from reenrolling in your current plan when you return home.

Safety and Security—Our Partnership

Serving as a Volunteer overseas entails certain safety and security risks. Living and traveling in an unfamiliar environment, a limited understanding of the local language and culture, and the perception of being a wealthy American are some of the factors that can put a Volunteer at risk. Property thefts and burglaries are not uncommon. Incidents of physical and sexual assault do occur, although almost all Volunteers complete their two years of service without serious personal safety problems. In addition, more than 84 percent of Volunteers surveyed in the 2004 Peace Corps Volunteer Survey say they would join the Peace Corps again.

The Peace Corps approaches safety and security as a partnership with you. This *Welcome Book* contains sections on: Living Conditions and Volunteer Lifestyle; Peace Corps Training; and Your Health Care and Safety. All of these sections include important safety and security information.

The Peace Corps makes every effort to give Volunteers the tools they need to function in the safest and most secure way possible, because working to maximize the safety and security of Volunteers is our highest priority. Not only do we provide you with training and tools to prepare for the unexpected, but we teach you to identify and manage the risks you may encounter.

Factors that Contribute to Volunteer Risk

There are several factors that can heighten a Volunteer's risk, many of which are within the Volunteer's control.

Based on information gathered from incident reports worldwide in 2004, the following factors stand out as risk characteristics for assaults. Assaults consist of personal crimes committed against Volunteers, and do not include property crimes (such as vandalism or theft).

- Location: Most crimes occurred when Volunteers were in public areas (e.g., street, park, beach, public buildings). Specifically, 43 percent of assaults took place when Volunteers were away from their sites.
- Time of day: Assaults usually took place on the weekend during the evening between 5:00 p.m. and 2:00 a.m.— with most assaults occurring around 1:00 a.m.
- Absence of others: Assaults usually occurred when the Volunteer was unaccompanied. In 82 percent of the sexual assaults the Volunteer was unaccompanied and in 55 percent of physical assaults the Volunteer was unaccompanied.

- Relationship to assailant: In most assaults, the Volunteer did not know the assailant.
- Consumption of alcohol: Forty percent of all assaults involved alcohol consumption by Volunteers and/or assailants.

Summary Strategies to Reduce Risk

Before and during service, your training will address these areas of concern so that you can reduce the risks you face. For example, here are some strategies Volunteers employ:

Strategies to reduce the risk/impact of theft:

- Know the environment and choose safe routes/times for travel
- Avoid high-crime areas per Peace Corps guidance
- Know the vocabulary to get help in an emergency
- Carry valuables in different pockets/places
- Carry a “dummy” wallet as a decoy

Strategies to reduce the risk/impact of burglary:

- Live with a local family or on a family compound
- Put strong locks on doors and keep valuables in a lock box or trunk
- Leave irreplaceable objects at home in the U.S.
- Follow Peace Corps guidelines on maintaining home security

Strategies to reduce the risk/impact of assault:

- Make local friends
- Make sure your appearance is respectful of local customs; don't draw negative attention to yourself by wearing inappropriate clothing
- Get to know local officials, police, and neighbors

- Travel with someone whenever possible
- Avoid known high crime areas
- Limit alcohol consumption

Support from Staff

In March 2003, the Peace Corps created the Office of Safety and Security with its mission to “foster improved communication, coordination, oversight, and accountability of all Peace Corps’ safety and security efforts.” The new office is led by an Associate Director for Safety and Security who reports to the Peace Corps Director and includes the following divisions: Volunteer Safety and Overseas Security; Information and Personnel Security; Emergency Preparedness, Plans, Training and Exercise; and Crime Statistics and Analysis.

The major responsibilities of the Volunteer Safety and Overseas Security Division are to coordinate the office’s overseas operations and direct the Peace Corps’ safety and security officers who are located in various regions around the world that have Peace Corps programs. The safety and security officers conduct security assessments; review safety trainings; train trainers and managers; train Volunteer safety wardens, local guards, and staff; develop security incident response procedures; and provide crisis management support.

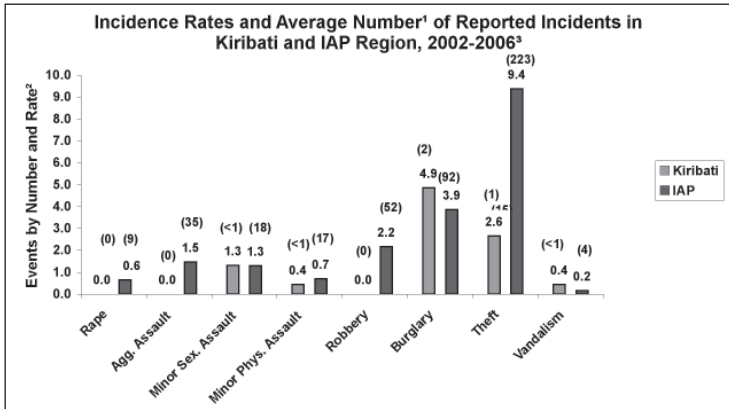
If a trainee or Volunteer is the victim of a safety incident, Peace Corps staff is prepared to provide support. All Peace Corps posts have procedures in place to respond to incidents of crime committed against Volunteers. The first priority for all posts in the aftermath of an incident is to ensure that the Volunteer is safe and receiving medical treatment as needed. After assuring the safety of the Volunteer, Peace Corps staff provides support by reassessing the Volunteer’s work site and housing arrangements and making any adjustments,

as needed. In some cases, the nature of the incident may necessitate a site or housing transfer. Peace Corps staff will also assist Volunteers with preserving their rights to pursue legal sanctions against the perpetrators of the crime. It is very important that Volunteers report incidents as they occur, not only to protect their peer Volunteers, but also to preserve the future right to prosecute. Should Volunteers decide later in the process that they want to proceed with the prosecution of their assailant, this option may no longer exist if the evidence of the event has not been preserved at the time of the incident.

The country-specific data chart below shows the incidence rates and the average number of incidents of the major types of safety incidents reported by Peace Corps Volunteers/trainees in Kiribati as compared to all other Inter-America and Pacific (IAP) region programs as a whole, from 2002–2006. It is presented to you in a somewhat technical manner for statistical accuracy.

To fully appreciate the collected data below, an explanation of the graph is provided as follows:

The incidence rate for each type of crime is the number of crime events relative to the Volunteer/trainee population. It is expressed on the chart as a ratio of crime to Volunteer and trainee years (or V/T years, which is a measure of 12 full months of V/T service) to allow for a statistically valid way to compare crime data across countries. An “incident” is a specific offense, per Peace Corps’ classification of offenses, and may involve one or more Volunteer/trainee victims. For example, if two Volunteers are robbed at the same time and place, this is classified as one robbery incident.



¹The average numbers of incidents are in parenthesis and equal the average reported assaults for each year between 2002–2006.

²Incident rates equal the number of assaults per 100 Volunteers and trainees per year (V/T years). Since most sexual assaults occur against females, only female V/Ts are calculated in rapes and minor sexual assaults. Numbers of incidents are approximate due to rounding.

³Data collection for Kiribati began as of 2002

Source data on incidents are drawn from Assault Notification Surveillance System (ANSS) Epidemiologic Surveillance System (ESS), and Crime Incident Reporting Form (CIRF); the information is accurate as of 03/22/2007.

The chart is separated into eight crime categories. These include vandalism (malicious defacement or damage of property); theft (taking without force or illegal entry); burglary (forcible entry of a residence); robbery (taking something by force); minor physical assault (attacking without a weapon with minor injuries); minor sexual assault (fondling, groping, etc.); aggravated assault (attacking with a weapon, and/or without a weapon when serious injury results); and rape (sexual intercourse without consent).

When anticipating Peace Corps Volunteer service, you should review all of the safety and security information provided to you, including the strategies to reduce risk. Throughout your training and Volunteer service, you will be expected to successfully complete all training competencies in a variety of

areas including safety and security. Once in-country, use the tools and information shared with you to remain as safe and secure as possible.

What if you become a victim of a violent crime?

Few Peace Corps Volunteers are victims of violent crimes. The Peace Corps will give you information and training in how to be safe. But, just as in the U.S., crime happens, and Volunteers can become victims. When this happens, the investigative team of the Office of Inspector General (OIG) is charged with helping pursue prosecution of those who perpetrate a violent crime against a Volunteer. If you become a victim of a violent crime, the decision to prosecute or not to prosecute is entirely yours, and one of the tasks of the OIG is to make sure that you are fully informed of your options and help you through the process and procedures involved in going forward with prosecution should you wish to do so. If you decide to prosecute, we are here to assist you in every way we can.

Crimes that occur overseas, of course, are investigated and prosecuted by local authorities in local courts. Our role is to coordinate the investigation and evidence collection with the regional security officers (RSOs) at the U.S. embassy, local police, and local prosecutors and others to ensure that your rights are protected to the fullest extent possible under the laws of the country. OIG investigative staff has extensive experience in criminal investigation, in working sensitively with victims, and as advocates for victims. We also, may, in certain limited circumstances, arrange for the retention of a local lawyer to assist the local public prosecutor in making the case against the individual who perpetrated the violent crime.

If you do become a victim of a violent crime, first, make sure you are in a safe place and with people you trust and second, contact the country director or the Peace Corps medical

officer. Immediate reporting is important to the preservation of evidence and the chances of apprehending the suspect. Country directors and medical officers are required to report all violent crimes to the Inspector General and the RSO. This information is protected from unauthorized further disclosure by the Privacy Act. Reporting the crime also helps prevent your further victimization and protects your fellow Volunteers.

In conjunction with the RSO, the OIG does a preliminary investigation of all violent crimes against Volunteers regardless of whether the crime has been reported to local authorities or of the decision you may ultimately make to prosecute. If you are a victim of a crime, our staff will work with you through final disposition of the case. OIG staff is available 24 hours-a-day, 7 days-a-week. We may be contacted through our 24-hour violent crime hotline via telephone at 202.692.2911, or by e-mail at violentcrimeline@peacecorps.gov.

Security Issues in Kiribati

Unfortunately, as elsewhere, crime does exist in Kiribati. Because you are a foreigner and probably considered “rich,” your new home may be more prone to break-ins than those of your neighbors. Normal precautions will usually reduce most risks. Crime at the village or town level is much less frequent than in cities, but risks increase in proportion to population size. Living with a host family also significantly reduces risks. Make sure you have a lock on your door and that you keep it locked when you are away and after dark. Fortunately violent street crime is not a major threat. Although Kiribati is considered safe, women should always be escorted at night or travel in groups. The main reasons for this are that it is culturally mandated, and some people drink too much at night and get out of control. To avoid trouble, do not talk with men who have been drinking excessively and make sure you have

co-workers, another Volunteer, or neighbors close by. Peace Corps staff members visit every site before a Volunteer is assigned there to identify a host family and to make certain that housing and other circumstances meet the agency's safety standards. If the circumstances change later on, it is up to the Volunteer to take appropriate action, such as moving or staying with neighbors, and then contacting the Peace Corps office in Tarawa to schedule a new safety and security visit.

Staying Safe: Don't Be a Target for Crime

You must be prepared to take on a large responsibility for your own safety. Only you can make yourself less of a target, ensure that your house is secure, and develop relations in your community that will make you an unlikely victim of crime. In coming to Kiribati, do what you would do if you moved to a large city in the United States: be cautious, check things out, ask questions, learn about your neighborhood, know where the more risky locations are, use common sense, and be aware. You can reduce your vulnerability to crime by integrating into your host family and community, learning the Kiribati language, acting responsibly, and abiding by Peace Corps policies and procedures. Serving safely and effectively in Kiribati may require that you accept some restrictions on your current lifestyle.

Volunteers attract a lot of attention in South Tarawa and on outer islands. While traveling in Kiribati or other countries of the Pacific region, you can reduce unwanted attention if you dress conservatively, avoid eye contact, and do not respond to people you don't want to talk to. Keep your money out of sight. Do not keep your money in outside pockets of backpacks, in coat pockets, or in fanny packs. You should always walk with a companion at night. For women, it may be helpful to wear an engagement ring or wedding band.

It is generally recommended that women not travel alone, even during the daytime, between communities on the outer islands. Try to find a friend, a counterpart, or a host family member to accompany you.

Preparing for the Unexpected: Safety Training and Volunteer Support in Kiribati

The Peace Corps' approach to safety is a five-pronged plan to help you stay safe during your two-year service and includes the following: information sharing, Volunteer training, site selection criteria, a detailed emergency action plan, and protocols for addressing safety and security incidents. Kiribati's in-country safety program is outlined below.

The Peace Corps office in Kiribati will keep Volunteers informed of any issues that may impact Volunteer safety through **information sharing**. Regular updates will be provided in Volunteer newsletters and in memorandums from the country director and staff. In the event of a critical situation or emergency, Volunteers will be contacted through the emergency communication network. At least one Volunteer from each island is required to contact the Peace Corps Office every Wednesday and this is a good opportunity to share any important news in either direction.

Volunteer training will include sessions to prepare you for specific safety and security issues in Kiribati. This training will prepare you to adopt a culturally appropriate lifestyle and exercise judgment that promotes safety and reduces risk in your home, at work, and while traveling. Safety training is offered throughout your two-year service and is integrated into the language, cross-cultural, health, and other components of training.

Certain **site selection criteria** are used to determine safe housing for Volunteers before their arrival. The Peace Corps staff works closely with host communities and counterpart agencies to help prepare them for a Volunteer's arrival and to establish expectations of their respective roles in supporting the Volunteer. Each site is inspected before the Volunteer's arrival to ensure placement in appropriate, safe, and secure housing and work sites. Site selection criteria are based in part on relevant site history; access to medical, postal, and other essential services; availability of communications, transportation, and markets; identification of a responsible host family; and other support needs.

You will also learn about the country's **detailed emergency action plan** in the event of civil or political unrest or a natural disaster. When you arrive at your site, you will complete and submit a site locator form with your address, contact information, and a map to your house. If there is a security threat, Volunteers in Kiribati will gather at predetermined locations until the situation resolves itself or the Peace Corps decides to evacuate.

Finally, in order for the Peace Corps to be fully responsive to the needs of Volunteers, it is imperative that Volunteers **immediately report** any security incident to the Peace Corps medical officer. The Peace Corps has established **protocols for addressing safety and security incidents** in a timely and appropriate manner, and it collects and evaluates safety and security data to track trends and develop strategies to minimize risks to future Volunteers.



DIVERSITY AND CROSS-CULTURAL ISSUES



In fulfilling the Peace Corps' mandate to share the face of America with our host countries, we are making special efforts to see that all of America's richness is reflected in the Volunteer corps. More Americans of different races, ethnic backgrounds, ages, religions, and sexual orientations are serving in today's Peace Corps than any time in recent years. These diversities are expected and welcomed among our Volunteers. Part of the Peace Corps' mission is to help dispel any notion that Americans are all of one origin or race and to establish that each of us is as thoroughly American as the other despite our many differences.

Our diversity helps us accomplish that goal. In other ways, however, it poses challenges. In Kiribati, as in other Peace Corps host countries, Volunteers' behavior, lifestyles, background, and beliefs will be judged in a cultural context very different from our own. Certain personal perspectives or characteristics commonly accepted in the United States may be quite uncommon, unacceptable, or even repressed.

Outside of Tarawa, residents of the outer islands have had relatively little direct exposure to other cultures, races, religions, and lifestyles. What is viewed as "typical" cultural behavior or norms may be a narrow and selective interpretation, such as the perception in some countries that all Americans are rich and have blond hair and blue eyes. The people of Kiribati are justly known for their generous hospitality to foreigners; however, members of the community in which you will live may display a range of reactions to differences that you present.

In order to ease the transition and adapt to life in Kiribati, you may need to make some temporary, yet fundamental compromises in how you present yourself as an American and as an individual. For example, female trainees and Volunteers may not be able to exercise the independence available to them in the United States; political discussions need to be handled with great care; and some of your personal beliefs may best remain undisclosed. You will need to develop techniques and personal strategies for coping with these and other limitations. The Peace Corps staff will lead diversity and sensitivity discussions during your pre-service training and will be on call to provide support, but the challenge ultimately will be your own.

Overview of Diversity in Kiribati

The Peace Corps staff in Kiribati recognizes adjustment issues that come with diversity and will endeavor to provide support and guidance. During pre-service training, several sessions will be held to discuss diversity and coping mechanisms. We look forward to having male and female Volunteers from a variety of cultures, backgrounds, religions, ethnic groups, and ages and hope that you will become part of a diverse group of Americans who take pride in supporting one another and demonstrating the richness of American culture.

What Might a Volunteer Face?

Possible Issues for Female Volunteers

Female Volunteers encounter different and more cultural challenges in Kiribati than male Volunteers. There is a distinct lack of the independence and freedom that you have in the U.S. You cannot go to most places alone, and you may not be able to walk around outside without others in tow.

But these restrictions are for your own safety, and they apply to I-Kiribati women as well. When away from home, female Volunteers should walk with other Volunteers or with neighbors, especially at night, to increase their safety.

Volunteer Comment:

“There are so many differences between American and the I-Kiribati culture. One that stands out the most is probably gender inequality. Men are much more respected than women, and they are most definitely not treated equally. That has been something that I have had to really work hard at accepting while I am here.”

Possible Issues for Volunteers of Color

The I-Kiribati are very tolerant of and even curious about racial differences, but they do tend to group people into categories based on appearance. All Caucasians are thought to be from America or Australia. All African Americans are thought to be from Africa, the Solomon Islands, or other Pacific countries. All Asians are thought to be from China. All Hispanic people are usually thought to be half-Caucasian and half I-Kiribati. It may take some effort to explain that some countries have many races and cultures and that people who look similar may come from different continents. There are still some negative feelings among older I-Kiribati toward the Japanese, which date back to the Japanese occupation of some of the Gilbert Islands in World War II. However, this animosity is diminishing, and the Japanese now living in Kiribati have helped ease the tensions created by the war.

Volunteer Comments:

“I have been fortunate to have spent the last year and a half of my Peace Corps service in a country where the local people welcome and warmly embrace foreign visitors of all nationalities into their communities. As a Nepalese-American in Kiribati, I am aware that I may not look like

the conventional Peace Corps Volunteer that the people of my community are accustomed to seeing. That being said, I have never once felt that I have been treated differently than other foreign visitors. As a matter of fact, I have never in my life experienced such warmth and openness from a group of people that didn't know me than I have in Kiribati. Although my complexion is similar to those of I-Kiribati descent, I am most commonly mistaken for being of Indian descent. I am grateful for having the opportunity to be able to talk about both my Nepalese and American heritages to my community. I really do feel that being Nepalese-American in Kiribati gives the people of my community a better understanding of the diversity that exists in America.”

“As a Mexican-American serving in Kiribati, I am often asked if I am from India or from another Pacific Island group. I take such comments in stride because the I-Kiribati are very curious about foreigners and I welcome such an opportunity as an ‘icebreaker.’ Such conversations can last hours over a cup of tea or even dinner at the homes of my new friends. As a result, I feel I am not only connecting United States ties, but also those of my beloved Mexican roots.”

Possible Issues for Senior Volunteers

Age is greatly respected in Kiribati. Older Volunteers in Kiribati are often very successful because the people respect their wisdom and experience. One difficulty for senior Volunteers (as for many younger Volunteers) is getting used to sitting on a hard floor for hours on end. Chairs are not used on outer islands. But the I-Kiribati generally understand that some people have physical restrictions and may need to shift positions regularly.

Volunteer Comment:

“Being a 58-year-old female in a country where the average life expectancy is 60 makes me a *unaine*. And I love it!! Unaine is a title that connotes honor and wisdom; therefore, I can get away with doing things that for others are *tabuaki* (taboo). Life as a unaine in Kiribati is a fun, rejuvenating, and unique experience that I highly recommend to all mature ladies looking for a fulfilling experience. When I am old, I will not only wear purple but a *tibuta* and a lava lava!”

Possible Issues for Gay, Lesbian, or Bisexual Volunteers

While the I-Kiribati are very tolerant where race is concerned, homosexuality is not well understood. Homosexuality is not viewed as negatively in Kiribati as it is in some other cultures. They acknowledge there are homosexuals in their society, but these individuals are not always well accepted. There are both lesbians and gay men in Kiribati, and although some aspects of their behaviors are acceptable, there is no acknowledgement of their sexual orientation. Gay men tend to be treated as women in Kiribati culture and can be seen performing “women’s” tasks. Being open with your sexuality can affect your ability to integrate into a Kiribati community. Therefore, gay or lesbian Volunteers need be willing to adhere to cultural norms, which likely means that being “out” publicly is not advised.

Possible Religious Issues for Volunteers

Most I-Kiribati are affiliated with a Christian denomination and go to church most Sundays. They respect other religions, although they do not generally know much about them. If you are asked to attend a celebration at a church, it does not mean you are being recruited as a new member—just that you have been invited to celebrate a special day with friends. It is recommended that you attend different churches to keep yourself accessible to all groups and not be seen as preferring one group over another.

Possible Issues for Volunteers with Disabilities

As part of the medical clearance process, the Peace Corps' Office of Medical Services determined that you were physically and emotionally capable, with or without reasonable accommodations, of performing a full tour of Volunteer service in Kiribati without reasonable risk of harm to yourself or interruption of your service. Peace Corps/Kiribati staff will work with disabled Volunteers to make reasonable accommodations in training, housing, job sites, and other areas to enable them to serve safely and effectively.

There have not been many Volunteers in Kiribati with a disability, although a past group included a Volunteer with cerebral palsy. Because of the I-Kiribatis' natural curiosity about differences, she was frequently stared at. Although this made her uncomfortable, she learned to accept it with time and began to create the first organization for people with disabilities in Kiribati.

Possible Issues for Married Volunteers

Being a married couple in the Peace Corps has its advantages and challenges. It helps to have someone by your side to share your experience with, but there are also cultural expectations that can cause stress in a marriage. The most important thing to remember is that you are in a foreign country with new rules. As long as you remain open-minded, you will have a successful service. The possible issues listed below will also depend on the size of the community you will be living in. Sometimes, one spouse may be more enthusiastic about joining Peace Corps, be better able to adapt to the new physical and/or cultural environment, or be less or more homesick than the other.

Your roles may be different in a new culture. A married man may be encouraged to be the more dominant member in the relationship or to make decisions independent of his spouse's

views or to have his wife serve him. He may be ridiculed if he performs domestic tasks. On the other hand, a married woman may find herself in a less independent role than that to which she is accustomed. She may experience a more limited social life in the community than single Volunteers (since it may be assumed that she will be busy taking care of her husband). She may also be expected to perform “traditional” domestic chores such as cooking or cleaning.

Competition may cause difficulties for couples as one spouse may learn faster than the other (e.g., language or job skills). There may be differences in job satisfaction and/or different needs.

Younger Volunteers may look to couples for advice and support. Married couples are likely to be treated with more respect because the community sees marriage as a responsibility. You may be asked why you do not have children.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



How much luggage am I allowed to bring to Kiribati?

Most airlines have baggage size and weight limits and assess charges for transport of baggage that exceeds this allowance. The Peace Corps has its own size and weight limits, and will not pay the cost of transport for baggage that exceeds these limits. The authorized baggage allowance is two checked pieces of luggage with combined dimensions of both pieces not to exceed 107 inches (length + width + height) and a carry-on bag with dimensions of no more than 45 inches. Checked baggage should not exceed 80 pounds total with a maximum weight allowance of 50 pounds for any one bag.

As you get closer to Kiribati, you may encounter a more restrictive baggage allowance by airlines. When you pack, try to put all things of value and everything you will need for the first week in one bag because there is a chance that not all of your checked baggage will arrive on your flight with you.

Air Pacific, the airline you are likely to fly into Kiribati, has begun to more strictly enforce its limit on carry-on items. You are allowed one carry-on item weighing not more than five kilograms. If you have more than one carry-on item, you can probably check it and pay any excess baggage charge. Bring enough cash (or a credit card) to pay the charge, and the Peace Corps will reimburse you later up to the approved amount. Please carry all valuables on your person as luggage has been vandalized in Fiji and Tarawa airports.

Peace Corps Volunteers are not allowed to take pets, weapons, explosives, radio transmitters (shortwave radio receivers are permitted), automobiles, or motorcycles to their

overseas assignments. Do not pack flammable materials or liquids such as lighter fluid, cleaning solvents, hair spray, or aerosol containers. This is an important safety precaution.

Please check the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) website for a detailed list of permitted and prohibited items at <http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/airtravel/prohibited/permitted-prohibited-items.shtm>.

What is the electric current in Kiribati?

The electric current on the main island of Tarawa is 240 volts. The outer islands do not have electricity, except for occasional generators (also 240 volts). There are also some solar-powered lighting systems on the islands, which some Volunteers have been able to connect to. Most Volunteers do not have electricity.

How much money should I bring?

Volunteers are expected to live at the same level as the people in their community. You will be given a settling-in allowance and a monthly living allowance, which should cover your expenses. Often Volunteers wish to bring additional money for vacation travel to other countries. Credit cards and traveler's checks are preferable to cash. If you choose to bring extra money, bring the amount that suits your own travel plans and needs.

When can I take vacation and have people visit me?

Each Volunteer accrues two annual leave (vacation) days per month of service (excluding training). Leave may not be taken during training, the first three months of service, or the last three months of service, except in conjunction with an authorized emergency leave. Family and friends are welcome to visit you after pre-service training and the first three months of service as long as their stay does not interfere with your work. Extended stays at your site are not encouraged and may require permission from your country director. The Peace Corps is not able to provide your visitors with visa or travel assistance.

Volunteers in the education project have additional vacation restrictions based on school terms. No one is permitted to take vacation during Peace Corps/Kiribati's conference dates.

Will my belongings be covered by insurance?

The Peace Corps does not provide insurance coverage for personal effects; Volunteers are ultimately responsible for the safekeeping of their personal belongings. However, such insurance can be purchased before you leave. If you wish, you may contact your own insurance company; additionally, insurance application forms will be provided, and we encourage you to consider them carefully. Additional information about insurance can be obtained by calling the company directly.

You should not ship or take valuable items overseas, unless you are willing to take the risk of losing them. Jewelry, watches, radios, cameras, and expensive appliances are subject to loss, theft, and breakage. Moreover, satisfactory maintenance and repair services are not available in Kiribati.

Do I need an international driver's license?

You don't need an international driver's license in Kiribati because Volunteers are not allowed to drive motor vehicles. Most urban travel is by bus. Outer island travel is by truck, bicycle, or foot. Driving an automobile, and driving or riding as a passenger on a motorbike in Kiribati are grounds for administrative separation from the Peace Corps.

However, it may be useful to have an international driver's license when you are on vacation in another country.

What should I bring as gifts for Kiribati friends and my host family?

At the end of training, you will be expected to give a few gifts to your host family. Some gift suggestions include knickknacks for the house; pictures, books, or calendars of American scenes; souvenirs from your area; hard candies that

will not melt or spoil; toys for children (all Kiribati families have children around); cards; balloons; bubble gum; stickers; perfume or cologne; cassette tapes; good can openers; tools or pocket knives; nail polish; T-shirts; and or photos to give away. Families in Kiribati have many members. You will probably need a variety of gifts. You could always make them more personal by creating them yourself. Appropriate gift items are also available in the stores in South Tarawa.

Where will my site assignment be when I finish training and how isolated will I be?

Most trainees will be assigned to one of the outer islands of Kiribati, where they will work in the schools or in communities. Assignments are made by the Peace Corps staff based on requests from the government ministries. All sites are visited and surveyed for safety and security, community cooperation, and other factors before a Volunteer is assigned. There are 16 possible islands of assignment. Each island typically has one to four Volunteers assigned to it, though not all islands will have Volunteers at any given time. Except for South Tarawa, all the islands are isolated and offer a simplified way of life not seen in the developed world. In all cases, you will be connected to Tarawa by one, two, or three Air Kiribati flights each week, weekly mail delivery, and radio-telephone from the national telecom service. There are also high-frequency police and health clinic radios that Volunteers can use in an emergency, as well as private CB radios. A few islands have direct telephone service and others are being added. Volunteers on the most isolated islands may be issued a satellite phone for official communication. Boats carry cargo and passengers to all the islands, but on irregular schedules. All forms of transport and communications in Kiribati are subject to technical difficulties, delays, and cancellation.

How can my family contact me in an emergency?

The Peace Corps Office of Special Services provides assistance in handling emergencies affecting trainees and Volunteers or their families. Before leaving the United States, you should instruct your family to notify the Office of Special Services immediately if an emergency arises, such as a serious illness or death of a family member. During normal business hours, the number for the Office of Special Services is 800.424.8580, extension 1470. After normal business hours and on weekends and holidays, the Special Services duty officer can be reached at 202.638.2574.

For non-emergency questions, your family can get information from your country desk staff at the Peace Corps by calling 800.424.8580.

Can I call home from Kiribati?

You can call home from Kiribati, but only if you are in Tarawa or on one of the few outer islands that has a telephone. There is no way of calling home “collect” from Kiribati. You can buy calling cards here, but overseas calls are expensive. There is one phone in the Volunteer transit house that your family can call, although you cannot call out. We recommend that families look into a good international calling plan before receiving that first bill. In a serious family emergency, the country director will authorize a Volunteer to contact his or her family by any available means.

Should I bring a cellular phone with me?

No. Cellular phones from the United States do not work in Kiribati. There is a local cellphone network that works only on South Tarawa, and only with phones that are programmed by the local phone company. Some satellite phones may work in Kiribati, but they are very expensive, are difficult to maintain, and may not be used except with special authorization.

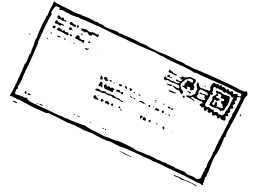
Will there be e-mail and Internet access? Should I bring my computer?

Peace Corps/Kiribati maintains two computers with Internet access for Volunteers in the information resource center in the Peace Corps office. These computers are for official use, but limited personal use is allowed. Trainees may not use these computers until they have been sworn-in as Volunteers. Unless your assignment is in South Tarawa, bringing your own computer is not recommended because of the lack of electricity and the moist, salty air on the outer islands.

NOTES



WELCOME LETTERS FROM KIRIBATI VOLUNTEERS



Mauri!

Congratulations on making your first step in becoming a Peace Corps Volunteer. I am a health Volunteer serving on the outer island Kuria. I remember reading these welcome letters before I came here trying to figure out if I could see myself living here for the next two years. What would I eat? What kind of work would I do? What kind of social life would I have? Hopefully I can answer some of these questions, but please remember that every Volunteer has a different experience. Make of it what you will, and you will soon find out that Kiribati is an amazing place!

Living situation: I live with a host family. Originally, when I came here I thought I would have my own Kiribati “house,” since no Volunteers prior to my arrival lived with host families. Since I love my independence, living with a host family was the hardest thing to adjust to, but it has also become one of the most rewarding aspects of my experience. Living with a host family is like renting a room (with your own bathroom/*roki*) in a house. You do have some privacy, but you also become part of the family. You can be chillin’ in your house, but your host mom will need you to help with cooking, for instance, or to go buy sugar. Your host dad will want you to go to a *botaki* with him, or your sisters will want to go swimming with you. And do it! Get involved with your family. It is the best way to learn about the culture. To get some alone time, I go on morning walks where I listen to my iPod and I escape my thoughts for a few moments.

Food: I eat all my meals with my host family. Every day I start the morning with bread/buns and tea. Sometimes I have fish and rice for breakfast or just rice and *toddy* (sap of a coconut tree). Whatever is served for lunch, my family will usually eat for dinner as well. Lunch is always fish and rice. If

my host father didn't catch any fish for the day, than we eat tinned meat or my personal favorite: papaya, *chia* (greens), coconut cream, and curry. I cook for my family sometimes; they love pizza and soups of any kind.

Work: As a health Volunteer, we do not have a nine-to-five job, nor do we have a measurable way to define our work. It is very grassroots health promotion. My work life interweaves with my social life. For example, I will go and visit families and just spend the afternoon talking to them, and in our conversations I throw in information about AIDS or diabetes. You will do workshops and more structured presentations, especially in the schools, but your everyday activities depend on your own motivation.

Night life: If you love to dance, sing, or play music, Kiribati is the place for you! There are always social nights and *botakis* going on. If I am not at a *botaki*, I am playing cards and sometimes they have a movie playing in the *maneaba*. Fishing or catching crabs is a big activity at night as well.

Contact with home: I have no phone or e-mail on my island. I get to talk with my family about every three and one-half months when I come into Tarawa. That is why letters are crucial! For those of you in relationships, your time here is your opportunity to grow independently. The first couple of months are so hard, but just keep reminding yourself why you joined and it will get easier. Focus on yourself and let your significant other back home do the same.

Few packing tips: All my electronics (camera, iPod, radio) run on AA batteries. I bought some rechargeable batteries and when I need to recharge them I give my neighbor two liters of benzene and he charges them with his generator. I bought a solar rechargeable battery box and it never works.

Good luck with everything.

Love and breadfruit,

—Kristen Bilanko

I remember that first *botaki* (social gathering) like it was yesterday. Trying to cut my fish with a spoon, the anticipation of standing up and giving my first speech in I-Kiribati, the pain shooting through my knees because I was incapable of sitting cross-legged for more than an hour, and, of course, the dancing—trying hard to remember the laws governing the dance that we had been taught during training. No eye contact, no gyrating hip movements and, of course, never entering my partner’s personal space. After the first night, I vowed I would never *botaki* again. Then I was placed on Nikunau, a southern island known for their love of *botakis*. I was devastated. How could I survive two years and come out of it all without permanent knee damage? Then it happened... I grew my sixth toes. Also known as *botaki* bump, the extra appendages represented how far I had come since first arriving in Kiribati and all it took was time and patience.

The *botaki* is one of the many parts that make up the beautiful culture of Kiribati. It is a time for the community to come together and celebrate: the birth of a child, a girl entering womanhood, or the death of a loved one. *Botakis* have afforded me the opportunity to become a member of my community rather than remain an outsider. I am able to practice my language and interact with my family and neighbors. As for the I-Kiribati, they just want to know us, which fits the second goal of the Peace Corps—to promote a better understanding of Americans. I have spent many hours in the *maneaba* (local meeting house) explaining that what they see in the movies is not real.

These days I find myself disappointed if on a Friday night I have to dine alone because there is no *botaki*. I miss the opportunity to socialize with the women, play with the kids, and I miss being the first to stand up to *tuiti* (dance). I also realized that I was no longer incapable of sitting cross-legged for long periods of time. As for the “*botaki* bumps,” they have become sources of pride.

Welcome to Kiribati!

—Danielle Gilbert

Dear Peace Corps/Kiribati Invitee,

Mauri! Congratulations on your invitation to serve here in the beautiful country of Kiribati! I imagine at this point in your application and paperwork process you are feeling relieved and excited to finally know where you will be serving. I know I certainly was. You also probably have many questions about this place and what it is like here. That is precisely why I am writing this letter—in the hopes of giving you a little more information and an idea of what it is like to live and work here.

Being that Kiribati is considered one of the smallest and most isolated countries in the world, there are many challenges. Life is also very slow compared to what we are used to in most cities in the U.S. There are two things that I think are extremely important to keep in mind before coming here. The first is to maintain a good sense of humor and the second is to be patient. We are so used to immediate gratification and for everything to go as planned. That is not the case here. We must learn to adapt and to be flexible.

While there are challenges, there are also so many more rewards and amazing things to look forward to in your time here. It is, by far, a once-in-a-lifetime experience. The I-Kiribati are so hospitable and kind and it is aesthetically one of the most beautiful countries in the world. Life as a Volunteer takes a lot of work, patience, and flexibility, but will be something you will never forget.

—Sarah Larson

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Hi there. I just saw another beautiful Pacific sunset while I was climbing a coconut tree and cutting *toddy!* Welcome to Kiribati! I am an education Volunteer on the great island of Onotoa. I work at the middle-grades level, here known as JSS. I don't teach English, science, math, social studies, etc., rather I co-teach and co-plan with fellow Kiribati teachers. Co-planning and co-teaching is the sharing and exchanging of teaching strategies that work most effectively off the books and in the

classroom. This can be quite the challenge because previous Volunteers taught English only. However, without challenges there are no rewards and this is a very rewarding experience.

Outside of school I tutor those who want to improve their English skills for various reasons. I am also learning Kiribati culture and the language every day. In my spare time I try to dispel myths about America that come from watching DVDs (such as “No, I don’t know Rambo or carry a gun everywhere I go”). I also play volleyball and soccer with the youth and adults.

Island life resembles more *Gilligan’s Island* than *Lost*. Kiribati people laugh a lot; at first it is unnerving, but you soon learn that their hearts are in the right spot. At least once a week you might have to give a speech to 40-plus people. Fear not, for you will have an island mate—a fellow Peace Corps Volunteer, so you will not be the only Peace Corps Volunteer on the island. Kiribati is a great country, they need you and you have a lot to offer.

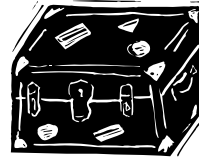
Before departing for this island in the Pacific, spend less time worrying about what to bring and what not to bring and more time with family and friends, just being together. Some packing essentials I would suggest are: patience, understanding, and your sense of humor.

Well, volleyball starts soon, so I must go. Welcome to the rewarding experience of being a Volunteer.

—John Bowsher



PACKING LIST



This list has been compiled by Volunteers serving in Kiribati and is based on their experiences. Use it as an informal guide in making your own list, bearing in mind that experience is individual. There is no perfect list! You obviously cannot bring everything we mention, so consider those items that make the most sense to you personally and professionally. You can always have things sent to you later. As you decide what to bring, keep in mind that you have an 80-pound weight restriction on baggage as far as Peace Corps' official reimbursement. Air Pacific, which you will take for the last leg of your trip has a 20 kg. (44 lbs.) checked baggage allowance and doesn't allow large carry-on items. If you are charged extra, Peace Corps/Kiribati will reimburse you, but only up to your 80-pound Peace Corps' limit. Remember, you can get almost everything you need in Kiribati.

General Clothing

Men

- Cotton underwear (some people find boxers are cooler in the heat)
- One pair of long pants
- Three or four dark colored khaki shorts (to or below the knee)
- Two or three pairs of exercise shorts (any variety, to the knee)
- Four 100-percent cotton, short-sleeved, button-down dress shirts
- Three or four T-shirts or tank tops for informal wear
- Swim trunks

Women

- Cotton underwear (some female Volunteers find cotton boxers cooler) and bras, two or three sports bras for exercise or swimming
- Three or four long, light cotton skirts or dresses (something you can sit cross-legged in on the floor without showing anything above your knee)
- One or two slips to wear under skirts
- Three or four light cotton blouses or shirts (sleeveless is okay, tight is not! (Shoulders should be covered and no spaghetti straps!))
- Two or three T-shirts or tank tops for informal wear
- Three or four pairs of loose, long, lightweight below-the-knee/mid-calf length shorts (cropped pants/pedal pushers that are loose)
- Swimwear (typically long shorts, a T-shirt, and sports bra)
- Clothes for going out on South Tarawa

Optional: loose, long pants for evening wear in your house or for vacations; swimsuit (mainly for international vacations).

(You will get several locally made shirts that are lightweight and more comfortable in the heat so do not worry too much about T-shirts.)

Note to women: With clothes, the issue isn't necessarily seeing skin, it is seeing the shape of the body. In particular, it is not acceptable for people to be able to determine the shape of the legs and crotch area. That is why you have to wear something under any skirt that might be even remotely transparent. Shop accordingly.

Shoes

- One pair or two pairs of sturdy sports sandals (e.g., Tevas); keep in mind that you'll be putting shoes on and taking them off constantly and many Volunteers prefer flip-flops or slip-on sandals)
- One pair of dive booties/reef shoes or other surf/swimming shoes
- Two pair of high-quality flip-flops (cheap ones can be purchased in Tarawa)
- Exercise shoes, if you plan to exercise (do not forget your socks if you bring shoes); turf cleats are great for soccer
- Socks (to protect your cut-up and bandaged feet while they heal during the natural adjustment to walking on a coral atoll.)

Personal Hygiene and Toiletry Items

- Hair conditioner, especially if you like a certain brand
- Good toothbrushes (you can get toothpaste here)
- Deodorant
- Shaving cream, a good razor, and extra blades

Optional: Nice-smelling lotions, nail clippers, makeup (although this is rarely worn in Kiribati, you might want it for vacations), a month's supply of tampons, Q-Tips, contact lens solution.

Note: Almost all standard personal hygiene items are available in South Tarawa (often imported from Australia), so you do not need to bring most items unless you prefer particular brands.

Kitchen

- One decent non-stick frying pan (you can get a cheap one here)
- One good-quality fish fillet knife (you can get a cheap one here)
- One good-quality all-purpose kitchen knife (you can get a cheap one here)
- Plastic spatula
- Thin cutting board
- Good can opener
- Measuring cups and spoons
- Spices

Note: The above kitchen utensils can all be purchased in Tarawa. Though there are some spices, if you are a creative cook you may want to bring your own.

Educational Materials

The following are particularly important for education Volunteers, but will prove useful no matter your sector or project.

- A good English dictionary
- Plenty of stickers...then get a few MORE stickers
- Markers (colored, scented, sparkling, etc.)
- Crayons
- Pencils
- Art supplies (if you like to be creative—and that helps here)
- A bottle of glue
- Nice pens

Miscellaneous

- Gifts for your host family
- Two sturdy bottles that can hold recently boiled water (e.g., Nalgene)
- Duct tape
- Therm-a-Rest or sleeping mat (some people prefer not to use them because they are warm; others find them very comfortable)
- Deck of cards
- Pictures of friends and family (laminated or copies are best)
- Leatherman or other utility tool
- Two water-resistant flashlights (with extra bulbs and easily accessible batteries)
- A head lamp (for keeping hands free if riding a bike or going to the toilet at night)
- Snorkel, mask, and fins (can be purchased here); note that there are currently no SCUBA facilities in the country, so there's no need to bring any SCUBA gear
- Walkman/Discman with small speakers or a small, self-contained unit, or iPod with battery charger/battery pack
- Plastic bags (e.g., ziploc bags) and/or containers of different sizes
- A good day pack
- Two pairs of UV-protection sunglasses
- Two cotton pillowcases and a flat sheet
- Waterproof watch with an extra battery and band
- Travel alarm clock
- Two lightweight towels
- Camera and film
- Hats, caps, visors (several)
- Radio, preferably hand cranking

- A few small or medium-size combination locks
- Index cards and file folders (good for making flash cards)
- U.S. postage stamps to send mail back with travelers
- Batteries (see below)

Optional: Rechargeable batteries and solar battery charger, five-gallon collapsible water jug, silica gel packets (to help prevent moisture in electronics), games, books, videos, hammock, camping chair, shortwave radio and antenna extension, bicycle tire patches (available in Tarawa), musical instruments, songbooks, inflatable globe or maps.

Note about batteries: The batteries in Kiribati are not of good quality, but are not as harmful to the environment as U.S. batteries. You will have to take whatever batteries you bring into the country with you when you leave, as there is no environmentally friendly way to dispose of batteries in Kiribati. It is recommended that you run all your battery-powered equipment using the same size of batteries. Some Volunteers recommend lithium batteries for their long life.

A note about surfing in Kiribati: Surf is very inconsistent here and waves do not have good shape. It can also be dangerous because it breaks on the coral reef. Please keep these points in mind if you are considering bringing a surfboard.

Peace Corps will provide you with a mosquito net, life vest, water filter, bike helmet, and medical kit. With your settling-in allowance, you will purchase a gas stove, tin oven, buckets, basins, plates, and a bicycle.

NOTES



PRE-DEPARTURE CHECKLIST



The following list consists of suggestions for you to consider as you prepare to live outside the United States for two years. Not all items will be relevant to everyone and the list does not include everything you should make arrangements for.

Family

- Notify family that they can call the Peace Corps' Office of Special Services at any time if there is a critical illness or death of a family member (telephone number: 800.424.8580, extension 1470; 24-hour duty officer: 202.638.2574).
- Give the Peace Corps' *On the Home Front* handbook to family and friends.

Passport/Travel

- Forward to the Peace Corps travel office all paperwork for the Peace Corps passport and visas.
- Verify that luggage meets the size and weight limits for international travel.
- Obtain a personal passport if you plan to travel after your service ends. (Your Peace Corps passport will expire three months after you finish your service, so if you plan to travel longer, you will need a regular passport.)

Medical/Health

- Complete any needed dental and medical work.
- If you wear glasses, bring two pairs.
- Arrange to take a three-month supply of all medications (including birth control pills) you are currently taking.

Insurance

- Make arrangements to maintain life insurance coverage.
- Arrange to maintain supplemental health coverage while away. (Even though the Peace Corps is responsible for your health care during Peace Corps service overseas, it is advisable for people who have preexisting conditions to arrange for the continuation of their supplemental health coverage. If there is a lapse in supplemental health coverage, it is difficult and expensive to be reinstated for insurance. This is especially true when insurance companies know you have predictable expenses and are in an upper age bracket.)
- Arrange to continue Medicare coverage if applicable.

Personal Papers

- Bring a copy of your certificate of marriage or divorce.

Voting

- Register to vote in the state of your home of record. (Many state universities consider voting and payment of state taxes as evidence of residence in that state.)
- Obtain a voter registration card and take it with you overseas.
- Arrange to have an absentee ballot forwarded to you overseas.

Personal Effects

- Purchase personal property insurance for the time you leave your home for service overseas until the time you complete your service and return to the United States.

Financial Management

- Obtain student loan deferment forms from the lender or loan service.
- Execute a power of attorney for the management of your property and business.
- Arrange for deductions from your readjustment allowance to pay alimony, child support, and other debts through the Office of Volunteer Financial Operations at 800.424.8580, extension 1770.
- Place all important papers—mortgages, deeds, stocks, and bonds—in a safe deposit box or with an attorney or other caretaker.



CONTACTING PEACE CORPS HEADQUARTERS



The following list of numbers will help you contact the appropriate office at Peace Corps headquarters with various questions. You may use the toll-free number and extension or dial directly using the local numbers provided. Be sure to leave the Peace Corps toll-free number and extensions with your family so they have them in the event of an emergency during your service overseas.

Peace Corps Headquarters

Toll-free Number:

800.424.8580, Press 2, then
Ext. # (see below)

Peace Corps' Mailing Address:

Peace Corps
Paul D. Coverdell Peace Corps Headquarters
1111 20th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20526

| For Questions About: | Staff | Toll-free Extension | Direct/Local Number |
|------------------------------------|---|---------------------|---------------------|
| Responding to an Invitation | Office of Placement Inter-America and the Pacific | Ext. 1835 | 202.692.1835 |
| Programming or Country Information | Leah Tafara-Maddox Desk Officer E-mail: kiribati@peacecorps.gov | Ext. 2522 | 202.692.2522 |
| | Robert Reese Desk Assistant E-mail: kiribati@peacecorps.gov | Ext. 2502 | 202.692.2502 |

| For Questions About: | Staff | Toll-free Extension | Direct/ Local Number |
|---|--------------------------------|----------------------------|--|
| Plane Tickets, Passports, Visas, or Other Travel Matters | Travel Officer (Sato Travel) | Ext. 1170 | 202.692.1170 |
| Legal Clearance | Office of Placement | Ext. 1845 | 202.692.1845 |
| Medical Clearance and Forms Processing (including dental) | Screening Nurse | Ext. 1500 | 202.692.1500 |
| Medical Reimbursements | Handled by a Subcontractor | | 800.818.8772 |
| Loan Deferments, Taxes, Readjustment Allowance Withdrawals, Power of Attorney | Volunteer Financial Operations | Ext. 1770 | 202.692.1770 |
| Staging (Pre-departure Orientation) and Reporting Instructions <i>Note: You will receive comprehensive information (hotel and flight arrangements) three to five weeks before departure. This information is not available sooner.</i> | Office of Staging | Ext. 1865 | 202.692.1865 |
| Family Emergencies (to get information to a Volunteer overseas) | Office of Special Services | Ext. 1470 | 202.692.1470 9-5 EST 202.638.2574 (after-hours answering service) |

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