

Peace Corps' Comprehensive Assessment

Background

The Fiscal Year 2010 appropriations language included a provision to conduct a Comprehensive Assessment to identify strategies and recommendations for reforming Peace Corps' operations and a plan to implement that reform, including:

1. Improving the recruitment and selection process to attract a wide diversity of highly and appropriately skilled Volunteers;
2. Training and medical care for Volunteers and staff;
3. Adjusting Volunteer placement to reflect priority United States interests, country needs and commitment to shared goals, and Volunteer skills;
4. Coordinating with international and host country development assistance organizations;
5. Lowering early termination rates;
6. Strengthening management and independent evaluation and oversight; and,
7. Any other steps needed to ensure the effective use of resources and Volunteers, and to prepare for and implement an appropriate expansion of the Peace Corps.

The Director requested the assessment also address how the Peace Corps can best strengthen third goal activities and agency reporting mechanisms.

On June 14, 2010 Director Williams submitted a Comprehensive Agency Assessment Peace Corps [report](#) to the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations outlining a new vision, six strategies, and 63 recommendations focused on quality improvements to guide the Peace Corps over the next decade. In his letter to the Congressional Appropriators the Director stated, "I stand firmly behind the vision and recommendations in this report."

At an all-hands meeting at the Peace Corps on June 22, 2010 the Director delivered the same message to Peace Corps staff and announced the creation of an implementation team, under the leadership of Deputy Director Carrie Hessler Radelet, charged with coordinating the implementation of the strategies and recommendations contained in the report.

Overview of the Vision, Strategies & Recommendations of the Comprehensive Assessment

The agency's mission and three goals are inherent in the strategic vision articulated in the Comprehensive Assessment:

The Peace Corps will be a leader, in partnership with others, in the global effort to further human progress and foster understanding and respect among people.

In order to more fully achieve that vision, the agency adopted the following six strategies:

1. **TARGET OUR RESOURCES**

Allocate Peace Corps' resources and target country presence according to specific selection criteria to maximize grassroots development impact and strengthen relationships with the developing world.

2. **FOCUS ON KEY SECTORS AND TRAIN FOR EXCELLENCE**

Maximize the impact of what Volunteers do best. Focus in and scale-up a limited number of highly effective projects. Provide world-class training and comprehensive support to prepare Volunteers for success. Measure and evaluate our impact to improve performance and better serve the communities in which we work. Focus in/Train Up.

3. **IMPLEMENT A DYNAMIC RECRUITMENT STRATEGY TO ATTRACT THE BEST AND BRIGHTEST OF AMERICA'S DIVERSE POPULATION**

Implement a more streamlined, customer-focused, competitive, state-of-the art strategy for recruitment, selection and placement of Volunteers that reflects the rich diversity of America and recognizes the majority of applicants will be recent college graduates.

4. **INNOVATE TO MEET HOST COUNTRY NEEDS OF TODAY AND TOMORROW**

Leverage the skill sets of experienced applicants, RPCVs and third year extension/transfer Volunteers for special assignments that will expand our presence and technical depth. Through [Peace Corps Response](#), develop an innovative program to incorporate highly skilled Volunteers to meet the needs of host countries.

5. **ELEVATE OUR THIRD GOAL**

Engage Volunteers, returned Volunteers and the American public through strong partnerships with businesses, schools, civil society and government agencies to increase understanding of other cultures and generate a commitment to public service and community development. Elevate our Third Goal.

6. **STRENGTHEN MANAGEMENT AND OPERATIONS**

Strengthen management and operations by using updated technology, innovative approaches and improved business processes that will enable the agency to effectively carry out this new strategic vision.

When implemented, the 63 recommendations in the Assessment will significantly improve the quality and efficiency of Peace Corps operations. The recommendations are not, however, sufficient in and of themselves. Additional reforms will be necessary, including some organizational restructuring, targeting new country entries, phasing out others and improving the efficiency of the way Peace Corps does business.

Implementation

Below are highlights of the implementation effort to date. Peace Corps will be providing a more detailed implementation update as we move towards the one year anniversary of the submission of the Comprehensive Agency Assessment to Congress.

- As of May 13, 2011, of the 63 recommendations included in the 11 chapters of the Comprehensive Assessment report:
 - 12 have been fully implemented
 - Work has begun on 42 others
- Progress has been made on each of the 6 Strategies. Particular highlights include:
 - For the first time in agency history, Peace Corps has conducted a rigorous portfolio review of all our country programs using a standard, transparent set of criteria. The Agency has also reviewed data and information about countries requesting Peace Corps assistance or countries where Peace Corps believes it would be mutually beneficial for the United States and the host country if Peace Corps were to establish a presence. Utilizing the criteria developed in the Comprehensive Agency Assessment, Peace Corps incorporated the input of Volunteers, PC staff, the field, Headquarters and sources outside of the agency in the inaugural portfolio review.
 - The Office of Programming and Training Support has developed a Teaching English and a Foreign Language (TEFL) core curriculum. The Office of AIDS Relief (OAR) is developing an enhanced curriculum for HIV/AIDS education, awareness and prevention funded by the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). The Africa region is advancing a sub-regional focus on malaria prevention. It is based on a successful initiative of Peace Corps Senegal which, in collaboration with national and international partners, led to a measured reduction in deaths from malaria. In the coming months, Peace Corps will incorporate standard outcome indicators across the Peace Corps world to better monitor and evaluate Volunteer and agency impact and develop training packages of high quality, easy to use materials for all posts to provide greater consistency and quality in Volunteer training worldwide.
 - Peace Corps is now conducting its survey of Volunteers every year rather than every two years. Their input through the Annual Volunteer Survey is incorporated into the agency's country review when considering several criteria (including Volunteer safety and security, program impact and program direction). Peace Corps further reports an increase in the response rate to the annual survey, with 80% of Volunteers responding to its 2010 annual survey.
 - To insure that all health care providers meet US standards, a Credentialing Unit has been established. Policy has been developed to establish the processes for the review and verification of the training, expertise, and license of Peace Corps

Medical Officers. The process for evaluating and conducting health units has been greatly enhanced utilizing standards and techniques from a U.S. based accreditation organization. The health unit assessment tools have been enhanced to incorporate direct observation of clinical care, demonstrations, and evidence of documentation.

- In 2010 and 2011, Peace Corps reported a number of strategic partnerships and working agreements with various organizations designed to strengthen collaboration recruitment and programming. These include the following Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) or Partnerships:
 - MOU with [Save the Children](#) (5/3/11)
 - Partnership with the President's [Malaria Initiative](#) (4/26/11)
 - MOU with [Special Olympics](#) (3/17/11)
 - MOU with The [National Human Services Assembly](#) (1/11/11)
 - MOU with [Population Services International](#) (12/17/10)
 - MOU with The [US Environmental Protection Agency](#) (12/14/10)
 - MOU with [CHF International](#) (9/23/10)
 - Partnership with [Teach for America](#) (7/8/10)
 - Partnership with the [Corps Network](#) (4/23/10)
 - Partnership with [City Year](#) (3/10/10)