



1900 L Street NW, Suite 404 Washington DC 20036
phone 202.293.7728 fax 202.293.7554 web PeaceCorpsConnect.org

The Next Step in Changing the World

March 29, 2012

TO: The Honorable Kay Granger
The Honorable Nita Lowey
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs
HT-2 Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20515

FROM: Kevin F. F. Quigley
President
National Peace Corps Association

Dear Chairwoman Granger and Ranking Member Lowey,

I am pleased to submit this testimony and urge the subcommittee to support an appropriation of \$400 million for the Peace Corps in Fiscal Year 2013. This 6.6 percent increase would return Peace Corps to FY 2010 funding levels.

We realize you face difficult choices in funding the various programs in the international affairs account. Funding for the Peace Corps is one such difficult choice: Will the subcommittee support a modest increase that will allow the Peace Corps to sustain recent, measurable progress on many fronts and respond to growing demand, or will the subcommittee approve funding levels that will lead to a marked rollback on this progress?

- **Progress – Volunteers in the Field:** Because of the strong bi-partisan support of this subcommittee, Peace Corps has reached a 40 year high, with more than 9,000 volunteers and trainees in the field. These volunteers are slated to serve for a 27-month period, meaning that approximately half the volunteers finish their service in any given year, as a new contingent replaces them. As volunteers that were selected in FY 2010 begin to conclude their service, Peace Corps is projecting that they will not be replaced with the same number of volunteers. This is not because of a lack of interest among potential volunteers or lack of requests for volunteers from other countries. Rather, it is simply a decision based on projected funding levels. Based on current projections of level funding in FY 2013, Peace Corps foresees a reduction in volunteers in the hundreds – if not 1,000 or more – over the next 12 to 24 months.

- **Progress – Country Selection:** Peace Corps continues to make important advances in addressing a key congressional concern related to country selection. The agency's Country Portfolio Review is now fully implemented. The recent review has led to plans to phase out programs in five countries over the next two years (Kazakhstan, Antigua and St. Kitts, Romania, Bulgaria and Suriname) and focus on higher priorities. For example, the agency plans to resume programs in Tunisia and Nepal in 2012. This progress with the country selection process is only partial. Unfortunately, far too many countries (more than 20) requesting volunteers continue to see those requests go unfulfilled. In many instances, those requests have been unfulfilled for years.
- **Progress – Safety and Security:** Peace Corps is in the process of implementing all phases of the Kate Puzey Peace Corps Volunteer Protection Act, which Congress approved in late 2011. This includes the establishment of an Office of Victim Advocacy which is designed to "ensure that each Volunteer is made aware of, and receives access to, services provided by Peace Corps in cases of sexual assault, stalking or other crimes." Improved training materials, coordination with leaders in the field on best practices and the formation of an advisory council are other elements of implementation. These provisions, while critical, do not come without significant costs. Putting them into operation with level funding means a reduction in funding for other important project areas. At the same time, another provision of the legislation which is underway involves a study by the Government Accountability Office concerning Peace Corps' relationship with the Department of Labor involving support for volunteers who return home with serious injury or illness. Our organization is hearing from a growing number of individuals who claim serious difficulties in the servicing and support in relationship to these claims. As these concerns should be adequately addressed, we believe there is a strong likelihood this will require necessary financial support.
- **Progress – Development Partnerships:** In 2011, the Peace Corps announced at least ten additional strategic partnerships and collaborations with a variety of public and private organizations. Most of these partnerships are designed to strengthen the capabilities of volunteers to successfully perform grassroots development assignments that meet critical country needs. Some recent announcements and program successes are a prelude to the growing potential of these partnerships. For example, Peace Corps volunteers were recognized by the Carter Center in 2011 for their role in Guinea Worm eradication in Ghana. In Senegal, the grassroots involvement of Peace Corps volunteers contributed to 100% bed net coverage in a district in Senegal, leading to a significant expansion of collaborative efforts with leading institutions across the African continent working to prevent malaria. Volunteers also continue to be active contributors to the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), which provided vital support to more than 50 million individuals in 2011. The success of effective partnerships involves agency commitment to provide resources that allow for the necessary relationship building, planning and collaboration. An investment in these agreements will ensure that ongoing and future partnerships lead to continued effective development.

- **Progress – Volunteer Diversity:** For the first time in its history, Peace Corps is reporting that 20% of its current volunteers are minorities, with a significant portion of this volunteer pool coming from volunteers recruited through universities. Some of the strategies to advance this goal were highlighted in the June, 2010 agency assessment, which noted in part, “To be effective at schools that have not traditionally produced many Volunteers - including many Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic Serving Institutions, and Tribal Colleges – recruiters will need to do more than visit the school once or twice a year. Recruiters have to spend a significant amount of time cultivating relationships with administration and faculty, explain what the Peace Corps is and what it does, and demonstrate that the agency is an involved partner.” Sustaining such a recommendation will be significantly challenged under the current budget projections, which calls for reducing funding for volunteer recruitment and placement by 6 percent compared to two years ago (\$18.4 million in Fiscal Year 2011 to a projected \$17.3 million in FY 2013).

We are deeply concerned that the measurable progress outlined above will be threatened if we continue to trend downward from the resources Congress provided to Peace Corps in Fiscal Year 2010.

In addition to this progress, there are a number of other reasons why returning Peace Corps funding to Fiscal Year 2010 levels are warranted:

- **Rewarding Excellence:** 2011 marked the fourth consecutive year the Peace Corps received the Association of Government Accountants Certificate of Excellence in Accountability Reporting, one of only 18 federal agencies to receive this recognition for demonstrated commitment to strong financial management and accountability.
- **Ongoing Benefits From Two Year Peace Corps Investment:** An independent survey in 2011 commissioned by the National Peace Corps Association and Civic Enterprises further confirmed that Peace Corps service is beneficial to our nation far beyond the two years of service. In the survey of more than 11,000 Returned Peace Corps Volunteers, key findings included the following: 1) citizens who served in the Peace Corps regularly volunteer in their local communities at more than twice the national average; and 2) The survey also found that 30 percent of Returned Volunteers donate to community projects at home and/or abroad. Some of these contributions come from the nearly 150 member groups of the National Peace Corps Association. As private fundraising and service organizations, these groups contribute tens of thousands of hours of community service and hundreds of thousands of dollars in contributions to address key domestic and international needs.
- **Meaningful Jobs/Meaningful Skills:** It is always important to note, especially at a time of high unemployment, that Peace Corps volunteers who are serving our nation overseas are American citizens who are at work and who are not competing for limited job opportunities. Furthermore, the Peace Corps experience provides

volunteers with many significant technical and interpersonal skills that benefit the individual, not to mention the future employer, when s/he joins our workforce.

Many of these volunteers enter professions that serve our communities. Our 2011 commissioned survey found that 33% of Returned Peace Corps Volunteers in the last decade became involved in education. An equal number entered the non-profit sector, while 15% of RPCVs entered the field of health care.

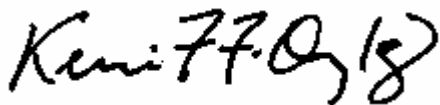
This should be a time to celebrate these many achievements. Sadly, the 6.5% decrease in funding in FY 2011, level funding in FY 2012 and President Obama's proposed level funding for FY 2013 is now creating an environment where many of these recent advances will begin to be rolled back.

In comprising less than one percent of our already modest International Affairs Budget, further reductions in our Peace Corps budget have no meaningful impact in addressing our federal deficit. However, the restoration of Peace Corps to \$400 million would literally make all the difference in the world to thousands of our fellow citizens who directly touch the lives of millions, who are at work for America overseas, and who are proudly serving our nation.

Thank you for seriously considering this request.

With very best regards,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Kevin F. F. Quigley" with a stylized flourish at the end.

Kevin F. F. Quigley
President