

# WorldView

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CAMPING IN SOWETO

CLINIC WITH TOO MANY DOORS

TRUCKERS , SEX WORKERS

& OTHER HEALTH REPORTS

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A magazine of news and comment about the Peace Corps world

SIPHIWE SIBEKOREUTERS



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# WorldView

A magazine for the greater Peace Corps community

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## OUR EMERGING STRENGTH

Inspired new leadership rises from Connect conference

By Glenn Blumhorst

I've said it before and I'll say it again. These are exciting times for your National Peace Corps Association.

Coming off an exhilarating annual Peace Corps Connect conference in the beautiful Poconos Mountains at Shawnee Institute, we are demonstrating our leadership as a united and vibrant Peace Corps community.

The speakers challenged us all. National Teacher of the Year Mandy Manning served in Armenia from 1999 to 2001 and gained national attention for her years of innovative work at a small school for refugees and migrants in Spokane's public school system. At Shawnee, Mandy implored our Peace Corps community to continue our collective action to support the vulnerable refugee and immigrant community in the United States.

Global Citizen Award Winner Kul Chandra Gautam reflected on his advocacy work with us in the halls of Congress and the story he shared with our nation's lawmakers about his

... the next generation is stepping up to provide leadership for the future, bringing fresh perspectives, new ideas, and a keen understanding of today's Peace Corps

"...rise from humble beginnings to the halls of the United Nations..." His career was first inspired by the encouraging work of several PCVs who taught him English at Janata Vidyalaya High School in the Nepalese village of Gulmi. Kul rose to become deputy executive director at UNICEF and assistant secretary-general of the United Nations.

A full house of affiliate group leaders from across the country gathered for the Affiliate Group Network Annual Meeting to exchange best practices and

to share insights that will guide and inform NPCA's emerging strategic plan for 2019-21. The Community Builder membership platform continues to be a vital capacity-building tool for our affiliates, dramatically enhancing the connectivity and engagement of our Peace Corps community.

With an eye to the future, NPCA's

board of directors has elected Maricarmen Smith-Martinez, who served in Costa Rica from 2006 to 2008, as our board chair for 2018-19. I'm elated with the opportunity to continue to work in partnership with Maricarmen, building on her four years of stellar leadership as a member of the NPCA board of directors and as coordinator of the annual gatherings of the leadership of our more than 180 affiliate groups. She now brings to her position as board chair an increased sensitivity to the needs and goals of the core of our greater Peace Corps community.

Maricarmen's new appointment signals to our Peace Corps community that the next generation is stepping up to provide leadership for the future, bringing fresh perspectives, new ideas, and a keen understanding of today's Peace Corps. It reinforces the fact that there is a new, more inclusive NPCA that serves our broader community and its diverse interests and needs.

As we enter this new era, my fellow board directors and I are committed to ensuring that NPCA is truly a social impact organization driven by the Peace Corps community—all of you. We've built on a proud history of nearly 40 years serving the Peace Corps community and we've emerged transformed as a more relevant and visible organization capable of providing us with exciting plans to build our Peace Corps community. Stay tuned!

With great respect,  
Glenn Blumhorst

*The author is NPCA's president and chief executive officer. He served in Guatemala from 1988 to 1991. Glenn welcomes your comments at [president@peacecorpsconnect.org](mailto:president@peacecorpsconnect.org)*



The newly elected chair of the NPCA board of directors is Maricarmen Smith-Martinez, proudly wearing the colors of her country of service during Peace Corps Connect's Walk for Peace in Washington, D.C. in 2016.

## HUNGRY FARMERS

To the Editor: I was impressed by Tony Kalm's article in the Spring 2018 issue on "No More Hungry Farmers." The *campesinos* we worked with in Colombia back in the 1960s shared many of the frustrations experienced by those African farmers in the many nations served by Kalm's One Acre Fund.

After my experience as a Volunteer developing co-ops in Colombia 1963 to 1965, I began a business career, first with Procter & Gamble in Cincinnati and then with my own small manufacturing company in Toronto. My Peace Corps experience uniquely equipped me to deal with the many challenges I managed in that career. I loved my Peace Corps year and married a wonderful woman who had served in the Peace Corps in Peru. Three of our children have made overseas service part of their lives, as well.

Thanks to *WorldView*, we re-live our Peace Corps experience and I'm sure it helps currently serving Peace Corps Volunteers do their work throughout the world.

Jack Swenson, Colombia, 63-65

## MORE GROUP NEWS

To the Editor: RPCV Groups—country, regional, program—are of significant value. For the past 50 years, RPCV groups have had a very positive impact on Peace Corps, host countries, NPCA, and.... RPCVs and staff. Yet, if you scan *WorldView* these days, you don't find much about them—the "Our Impact" column being a welcome exception in the Summer 2018 issue. In my view, this is a missed opportunity for NPCA.

For myself and many of my colleagues who make up Arkadaslar (Friends of Turkey) this matter has particular relevance. Over 1400 of us served in

Turkey before the program closed in 1970. But Arkadaslar is still active and doing very positive things. We have some 300 paying members. We've contributed many thousands of dollars to worthy causes in Turkey, participated in earthquake relief, published a regular newsletter, held frequent reunions, and kept alive a very valuable spirit. Time takes its toll, however, and our numbers dwindle. Arkadaslar will cease its formal operations at the end of this year but it has served a very valuable purpose.

In spite of the relevance and success of RPCV groups that have been important in the history of Peace Corps and the NPCA, they are too seldom highlighted in *WorldView*. This is an opportunity missed. RPCV groups should get

far more attention in *WorldView*.  
Ken Hill, Turkey, 65-67

## A GOOD RECRUITER

At the October 1963 groundbreaking of the Robert Frost Library on the hilltop campus of Amherst College, John F. Kennedy gave a speech about public service and the arts. Robert Frost, who was a favorite poet of the President and a member of the faculty, had died a year earlier. Kennedy was assassinated three weeks later.

A documentary about the president's speech, "JFK: The Last Speech," premiered at the Kennedy Library in Boston in May of this year and was later broadcast on many PBS stations.

While some have called it one of Kennedy's best speeches, what he said afterward had a direct impact on the lives and futures of many of the Amherst students present that day.

Jan Worth-Nelson, the editor of *East Village Magazine* in Flint, Michigan wrote a summary for Peace Corps Worldwide

about the documentary and the lives of some of those men (that was a decade before women were admitted to the college) who met the President that day as he passed through the crowd, asking what their plans were after graduation. Her husband, Ted Nelson, was one of a small group of undergraduates who chatted with Kennedy about their plans for entering medical school and law school.

"No, no, no you're not," Kennedy replied. "You're all going to join the Peace Corps." Those are the words that Ted Nelson remembers changed his future. Several of those students did eventually follow Kennedy's advice: five percent of the elite school's graduating class joined the Peace Corps. Nelson spent three and a half years in Turkey. Stephen Downs went to India. The rest ended up in Brazil, Kenya, Niger, Nigeria, Panama, and a training program in Hawaii. The Nelsons met in the Kingdom of Tonga a decade later where Jan was a volunteer and Ted was a trainer.

Decades later, these RPCVs returned to that hilltop campus in Massachusetts as part of a committee from the Amherst Class of '64 to create the documentary, produced by Northern Light Productions, a book of the same title, and a website about how the President changed the course of their lives.

See [jfkthelastspeech.org](http://jfkthelastspeech.org) for more.  
The Editors

## CORRECTIONS

In the Summer 2018 article, "International Book Recycling," the magazine incorrectly reported the location of International Book Project. The 52-year-old nonprofit, which sends recycled and new books to schools and libraries in many of the world's underserved communities, is in Lexington, Kentucky.

The article in the Spring, 2018 issue, "The Back of the Mosque," published the wrong years of Peace Corps service of the author, Jade Wu. She served in Malawi from 1995 to 1997 and is now an independent contractor in Washington, D.C.



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# RAISING YOUR VOICE

## Affiliates join media debate, launch new web sites

By Meisha Robinson

It's not just a promise in our mission statement. NPCA champions a lifelong commitment to Peace Corps ideals. Bringing that mission to life, we actively and successfully engage in community-based projects that produce global giving that's efficient, transparent and effective. NPCA operates through many touchpoints, including to make the world a better place with our Community Builder Platform and a special media engagement grant.

### Advocates appeal through the press

Two affiliates are engaging in public debates on issues that concern them greatly. They received guidance by an NPCA consultant whose work is funded by a grant to raise public awareness and increase engagement with the media by the greater Peace Corps Community.

The media consultant helped Peace Corps Iran Association members launch a campaign to oppose U.S. withdrawal from

the Iran Nuclear Agreement by writing letters to their U.S. senators and local newspapers. Three op-eds and 10 letters to the editor were published, two of them in *The Washington Post*. A group video that focused on the respect they have as RPCVs for the people, history and culture of Iran received more than 4,500 views on Facebook and YouTube.

Meanwhile, the Peace Corps Community for Refugees gave media support to Mandy Manning, an RPCV who was chosen National Teacher of the Year for her success teaching immigrant and refugee high school students in Spokane, Washington. These media efforts further promoted her as a spokesperson for refugee and immigrant students in our schools. PCC4Refugees also organized a national media conference call on June 18 to focus public attention on the Trump administration's severe cutbacks in refugee admissions. The briefing featured experts from three

refugee agencies and was attended by seven media representatives including reporters from the Associated Press, National Public Radio, Reuters, and CBS Radio.

Following the media call, AP conducted a follow-up interview with one of the experts, Kay Bellor, from Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services. The story quoting Bellor ran the next day on more than

1,000 news websites. The PCC4Refugees also mobilized its membership to oppose the nomination of Ronald Mortensen as assistant secretary of state for refugee and migration affairs. More than 100 RPCVs from 27 states wrote letters to their U.S. senators in opposition to the nomination. An important letter to the editor opposing Mortensen also appeared in Mortensen's home state of Utah.

## These media efforts further promoted her as this year's national spokesperson for refugee and immigrant students in our schools.

Also through the grant, NPCA Advocacy Director Jonathan Pearson traveled to Kentucky and conducted four workshops across the state, training Returned Peace Corps Volunteers on advocacy strategies to engage citizens on local, national, and global issues. The Kentucky Peace Corps Association initiated a mini-grant program to promote the importance of international diplomacy, development and cooperation. Six projects being planned this fall in five Kentucky cities have been approved for funding.

RPCVs attending the August 23-25 Peace Corps Connect gathering at the Shawnee Institute participated in two media training workshops conducted by the consultant, Michael Kiernan, a former journalist with 25 years of experience directing media relations and public affairs for major non-government organizations.

### Expanding our Internet

NPCA's Community Builder Platform is an online association management system that was designed specifically for NPCA's more than 180 affiliate groups. The platform increases their



RPCVs in Covington, Kentucky, reviewed strategies for effective advocacy during a Global Issues Advocacy 101 training at the Center for Great Neighborhoods. The session was led by NPCA advocacy director Jonathan Pearson during one of his four July meetings with Kentucky affiliates to hone their citizen advocacy skills for pending campaigns.

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visibility, engagement, capacity, and impact and features a customizable website, membership database, fundraising and payment processing center, communications tools, and events calendar. With 36 groups now connected through this nation-wide, integrated platform, all groups that have launched their new websites thus far have increased their membership, engagement, and donations. These groups have also increased their productivity and lightened their workload while using our platform's dynamic mailing lists and reports, customizable automatic notifications, and real-time membership updates.

With training and support from NPCA's community technology systems coordinator, Elizabeth (Ella) Dowell, these groups are producing beautiful, modern, mobile-friendly websites. Susan Robinson, communications director for NPCA's 2018 Ruppe Award-winning group Cincinnati Area Returned Volunteers (CARV), had never made a website before, but thanks to the user-friendliness of the platform, she created CARV's new website. Now she's blogging the steps in CARV's promising journey to resettling a Syrian refugee family.

Our website's new platform fostered an alliance between Peace Corps Alliance for Intercultural Understanding and Friends of Afghanistan to partner with Code to Inspire, a coding school for women in Afghanistan, to develop a website on NPCA's Community Builder Platform. These groups are now getting development assistance from talented young coders in Afghanistan and providing these young women real-world application of their new skills.

To learn more about these projects visit [www.peacecorpsconnect.org](http://www.peacecorpsconnect.org)

*Meisha Robinson is NPCA communications director and founding director of I Am. We Are, a youth empowerment organization in South Africa's Royal Bafokeng Nation. She served in Benin (00-02) and as a Peace Corps Response Volunteer for Special Olympics South Africa in in 2012.*

## FOUR STORIES FROM AFRICA

Serving in Peace Corps is an awakening, but sometimes it takes decades to make something happen. It took that long for Phil Lilienthal, a Washington, D.C. lawyer, to build his summer camp for South African children. He writes that even with a couple of shopping malls and a few good roads, Soweto is still a sprawling former township with a large number of residents who "still live in squatter shacks without sewage, electricity, or running water."

Lilienthal's hope to create a camp in Soweto came true in 2003. Over eight days at Camp Sizanani, thousands of children of Soweto have learned to cope with the emotional, physical and social challenges of HIV/AIDS and a host of health problems. His camp is one of several stories we offer in this report on global health.

Bronx emergency room technician Aaron Hochman-Zimmerman decided to study medicine in Beersheva, Israel and on three continents and in other languages. "Muslim and Jewish doctors and nurses eat lunch together at the hospital cafeteria," he writes. "They speak Hebrew even though their original languages may be English and Arabic, Russian or Amharic."

In 1985 Taryn Vian organized fundraising for a health clinic in Ndzandouan, Cameroon. "There were 13 wooden doors stacked on the large truck, but the blueprints for the health center only showed eight doors," she recalls. This experience led her to an academic and activist career searching and calling out the varieties of greed and corruption that undermine the promise of better health care in many countries.

When major trucking firms in Africa discovered their drivers were dying of AIDS, Robin Landis writes that she and some colleagues at the UN's World Food Programme retrofitted 50 shipping containers to build awareness and to treat the epidemic. The blue steel boxes eventually became roadside health clinics for larger populations.

*The Editors*

Action Image/Bob Martin/REUTERS



# CAMPING SKILLS

## Inventing a summer camp in Soweto

By *Phil Lilienthal*

I was 62 years old and had already given up my law practice for the life of a camp director when, in 2003, I took off for the month of May to travel through South Africa, Botswana, and Kenya to look for a partner on the ground with whom to start youth camps for local kids.

I grew up a camp brat. My father was made a junior partner at Camp Winnebago in Maine and I grew up there.

I loved that camp and Maine, spent two summers as a counselor and always pointed to that as a lifestyle and career. Our camp was too small to occupy my father full-time so he was a part-time lawyer when he wasn't engaged in camp. I would follow suit.

After I graduated from law school and my wife, Lynn, graduated with a master's in social work, we went to Ethiopia as Peace Corps Volunteers. I was assigned to government ministries, ostensibly to replace local lawyers who would be attending law school under a Ford Foundation program

to teach the newly consolidated and codified laws to local lawyers. Lynn made her own program, working at the local prison, the Cheshire Home for mentally and physically disabled children, and the mental hospital.

Six months after we got there, the Ethiopian government asked Peace Corps for help in starting a summer camp. When our associate Peace Corps director,

John Coyne, told me, I jumped at the opportunity. Thinking how brilliant I was, I did a straight transfer from my Winnebago experience with all the same traditions, substituted "Camp Langan" for "Winnebago" and even kept the same college fight song melodies. The results were surprisingly powerful, especially to one who thought summer camps were a U.S. preserve and they might not be adaptable to Ethiopia. Little did

the Peace Corps, had three children born in different countries, and opened a law practice. When my father died a few years later, I became Camp Winnebago's third owner and director.

For many years I insisted I would return to Africa and open youth development camps. Finally, a good friend said, "Are you going to do it or just talk about it?" My oldest son, Andy, who was born in Ethiopia, said he would run Winnebago.

Three years later, I was on a plane to find business partners and sites in Africa. I had a friend in Botswana who worked with me in Thailand, a friend of a friend in Kenya, and a sense that the financial

engine of South Africa should not be ignored.

### In the time of AIDS

In 2003 HIV/AIDS had emerged as a major health crisis for South Africa's 50 million people with more HIV positive people than any country in the world, an unenviable honor. The epidemic was made worse by family taboos on talking about it. We knew we had to break that taboo and avoid parent/family groups rising up in arms against us but I also worried about local repercussions.

My South African counterpart, Michelle Schirn, said not to worry. She was right. After 15 years, 8,700 kids have gone through our program and we have yet to have any pushback regarding subject material.

At Global Camps Africa we focus on HIV/AIDS, sexuality, and a list of other crucial life skills: gender bias, abusive behaviors, alcohol, drugs, crime, self-esteem, teen pregnancy and parenting,



Counselor Odette Mgidi greets a session of Soweto children to Camp Sizanani's eight-day life skills camp. The residential camp uses the grounds of six schools in the region. Ross Coleman is a counselor from the United States. Some South African counselors work at U.S. camps.

I realize how universal camp principles of teamwork, cooperation, trust, skill development, and living simply could be.

I ran Camp Langan for two years and gave it to the local YMCA when I left. They ran it for seven more years until a violent Marxist revolution shut down any independent youth development projects.

My wife and I returned home and worked in Washington, DC and abroad for

and xenophobia. In addition to HIV infections, we discuss other sexually transmitted diseases such as chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis. This is all in just eight days. It often takes evening sessions to handle all the questions we face once we open the door.

We also have sports, swimming, arts and crafts, theater, nutrition, and yoga every day for an hour for each activity.

We opened Camp Sizanani with our first partner in Soweto. We transported the campers and counselors to a camp site about 90 minutes away.

A word about Soweto. A sprawling former township in the mining belt of Gauteng Province and once the political hotbed of the anti-apartheid movement, Soweto has a reputation akin to New York City's Harlem. There are many elements in this Baltimore-sized area. Like Harlem, Soweto has its upper crust and has become more gentrified. Soweto has two large shopping malls and paved roads. It has a population of three to four million. Even with these signs of economic progress in Soweto, a large number of residents still live in squatter shacks without sewage, electricity, or running water.

Soweto is comprised of many neighborhoods with their own characteristics and hundreds of thousands of underserved kids, more than we could ever serve—and it remains the base from which we draw most of our campers and counselors. We invite kids from the most

disadvantaged schools, youth centers, and orphanages. We limit our campers to one eight-day session and most sessions are residential though we offer occasional day camps. Because they can't qualify for another eight-day camp, we offer youth clubs that meet in their neighborhoods every other Saturday throughout the year. We offer a full year's curriculum of life skills, but they can stay after the year. The clubs as well as camp are free for the campers.

For many years I insisted I would return to Africa and open youth development camps. Finally, a good friend said, "Are you going to do it or just talk about it?"



PHIL LILIENTHAL

Like many U.S. camps, Sizanani creates a joyful atmosphere for learning and to address crucial Soweto concerns such as HIV/AIDS, sexuality, gender bias, abusive behaviors, alcohol, drugs, crime, self-esteem, teen pregnancy, parenting, and xenophobia.

Many of these campers have turned their expectations of life around as a result of what they discovered they can do during a camp experience. Once blinders are taken away, the campers learn what can be available if they apply themselves and learn how the system works.

Phili completed our camp in 2004, got financial aid to a private school, college,

and a graduate degree. She works in the public affairs office of a large nonprofit.

Many campers have carved lives for themselves beyond what they or their families thought was possible. Because of resiliency and self-empowerment, they learn initially from their camp experience and know that their future is in their own hands. Most have acted accordingly.

Dennis is an orphan who survived a tough childhood—even by South African standards. Adults punished him by

pouring boiling water on his feet. Despite this, he has become one of the more sensitive counselors. He has also started his own clothing manufacturing business. Although barely able to support himself, he buys shoes for needy children.

### Relying on local counselors

I have learned more than ever that staff quality determines the power of camp. Leadership must be strong, but the policies can't be conveyed without a strong counselor staff. Over the years, we have achieved a staff I am proud of. Most of them are from Soweto and had no camp experience

before coming to us.

Many of our counselors are former campers. We have a chance to evaluate them as they go through our Youth Club program and can employ those most effective as counselors.

Whether we are tapping into a need or simply providing a modest source of temporary employment and income,

counselors sometimes pass up permanent jobs in order to work at camp. At most this would give them three-session camps of 12 days: four days of training and eight days of camp, in addition to 18 days at Youth Club.

Global Camps Africa also offer counselors the chance for international experience. Many U.S. camps look for counselors from other countries and will pay all expenses and a good salary by South African standards. We provide those camps with trained and experienced counselors from South Africa. For our counselors, getting to the U.S. can be a dream come true. Some have been back several times. They truly find a home away from home.

### Camp operation gets complicated

Management of the camp and club programs remains the responsibility of South Africans. We hired a country director, backed by a strong local board of directors. We raise the bulk of our funding in the United States but want to change that.

Our Saturday youth clubs were designed as clubs for those who had completed the eight-day camp. However, many needed to care for younger siblings and brought them to clubs. When we saw the numbers of non-campers exceed the camp graduates, we decided to apply for a grant to develop a life skills curriculum for younger children. With a grant from LinkedIn, we developed a curriculum for

younger children. When these children age up to 13 to 15 years of age, they come to camp. We find that there is little difference between what they get from camp compared to campers completely new to the program.

We have received three AIDS-reduction contracts under PEPFAR, the marvelous U.S. government effort. The

At Global Camps Africa we focus on HIV/AIDS and sexuality and a list of other crucial life skills: gender bias, abusive behaviors, alcohol, drugs, crime, self-esteem, teen pregnancy and parenting, and xenophobia.



Lilienthal's non-profit Global Camps Africa uses the grounds of Bekker School and five other schools outside of Soweto for sessions of Sizanani's residential camp program.

two training programs and nine camps that operated around South Africa were all great successes.

We hope to have the camp and club operation run with South African money in the next two years. This presents interesting and unforeseen challenges for us. The South African government has established an accreditation program to vet NGOs, thereby avoiding and stopping the flood of financial scams by some organizations in South Africa.

To be accredited, we must have only counselors who have passed a nationwide 12th-grade exam. Many of our counselors had to drop out of high school for a variety of reasons, so we need to make it attractive for them to return to school to pass the exam. This is proving more difficult than we had thought it would be.

We have worked with groups in Zambia, Lesotho, Zimbabwe and Uganda. We are also considering requests to work with girls and boys traumatized by many years of violence and displacement during the Boko Haram insurgency in Niger and Nigeria.

We believe camps have a prime role to play in the future of youth development. The power to influence lives of young people in a positive way has great potential. The possibilities are limitless and the opportunities are attractive for anyone who has ever been to camp or worked in a camp. Using a good camping experience to change the course of children's lives is a

powerful way to make one's life more full.

*Phil Lilienthal served as a PCV in Ethiopia from 1965 to 1967, was staff in Washington headquarters and in the Philippines and Thailand between 1968 and 1974, and is president and founder of Global Camps Africa, an independent South Africa non-profit.*

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GARETH BENTLEY/NORTH STAR ALLIANCE

In a truck yard in Tunduma, Tanzania, a young mother and her children receive comprehensive medical care at the Blue Box Clinic. The clinic is one of 50 operated by North Star Alliance along African roads where HIV prevention for truck drivers has expanded to more health services for African populations.

# HEALTHY TRUCKERS

## Fighting HIV on the road led to 50 mobile clinics across Africa

By Robin Landis

In 2003, the southern Africa region was facing an unprecedented humanitarian crisis caused by widespread drought, fueled by weak governance, and an extraordinarily high HIV prevalence; up to 40 percent in some countries. An estimated 14 million people across six countries—Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe—faced food shortages and six million of those urgently needed food relief.

The U.N. World Food Programme geared up to deliver massive amounts of emergency food relief to these communities, but for the first time ever

the agency struggled to find enough healthy truck drivers. At the same time, one of WFP's corporate partners, TNT, the global transport and logistics company, was attempting to expand its business in the region. They soon found that the road transport sector suffered from a lack of workers. Some transport companies in the region reported that they had lost 50 percent of their workforce to AIDS. Long-distance truck drivers were especially impacted.

The link between truck drivers and sex workers was long known as a contributing factor in the high rates of HIV transmission along the corridors

throughout Africa. Men who were away from their wives and on the road for weeks at a stretch often fought boredom and loneliness in the company of local sex workers. Many women facing hunger and poverty with no other way to feed their family had turned to sex work to make ends meet.

While research revealed the relationship between food insecurity and HIV infection, a gap remained in accessible healthcare for these two populations. Truck drivers and sex workers were frequently deemed hard to reach for HIV prevention because of their constant mobility. The associated

social stigma of AIDS made health service delivery challenging, if not impossible.

By joining forces to tackle a common problem, the commercial and humanitarian transport actors—TNT and WFP—took the first step on the road to potentially change the course of public health for mobile populations.

### At the crossroads of health and mobility

North Star Alliance is a public-private partnership that provides quality healthcare to mobile workers and the communities with whom they interact. It started in 2006 as a practical workplace response to the impact of the AIDS epidemic in southern Africa. It has matured into a multinational organization and recognized leader in delivering frontline health services that meet industry, public health, and individual needs.

From the pilot roadside ‘wellness center’ in Malawi in 2005 that offered little more than free condoms and information, the North Star network currently consists of nearly 50 clinics across 13 African countries offering a mix of prevention, treatment and referrals, community outreach, and outpatient care. Stand alone ‘blue box’ clinics made from converted shipping containers outfitted with equipment for testing and screening are strategically placed at busy truck stops.

### Listening and responding

It wasn’t long after the first clinics were up and running that health staff reported their male clients were requesting treatment for occupational

GARETH BENTLEY/NORTH STAR ALLIANCE



## They soon found that the road transport sector in general suffered from a lack of workers.

concerns like flu and colds, headaches, hemorrhoids, hypertension, and malaria. Many of the female sex workers who came to the clinics quickly took responsibility for telling others and distributing condoms and prevention information. As the number of clients rapidly increased, it became apparent that the clinics were drawing from the surrounding communities. In some cases, community members outnumbered truck drivers and sex workers. Instead of turning people away, North Star strengthened their partner referrals, created links to other local services, and added community outreach.

What began as a way to get HIV prevention into the hands of truck drivers now provides an expanded package of primary healthcare including malaria, tuberculosis, and emerging non-communicable diseases; STI testing

and treatment; HIV counseling, testing, PrEP and antiretroviral therapy; male and female condoms; laboratory testing; referrals to partner healthcare providers; information on sexual and reproductive health and rights; Star Driver Loyalty Program for truck drivers; education and behavior change communication; outreach activities; and training of peer educators. An encrypted health database that makes patient records available at every clinic in the network ensures individual continuity of care.

As more and more people move for work, recreation, and safety reasons, the risk of communicable diseases spreading across national borders increases. People who leave their homes behind and are away for prolonged periods of time are often beyond the reach of traditional health services—making them more vulnerable to illness and more likely to take health risks.

Of course, it is not only HIV and other STIs that move freely across borders. While the most recent Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo is now contained with no indication that anyone carried the virus out of the country, taking services to where people are rather than waiting for them to come presents a highly relevant approach to Ebola control and pandemic planning in general.

### Lead from the ground up

North Star likes to say that one of its strengths is recognizing their weakness: it cannot achieve its mission alone. Bringing essential healthcare to mobile populations and the communities with which it interacts requires all hands on deck.

What began as a way to get HIV prevention into the hands of truck drivers now provides ... primary healthcare, including malaria, tuberculosis, and emerging non-communicable diseases... information on sexual and reproductive health and rights...

The U.N. World Health Organization's HIV strategy addresses a range of health challenges and provides direction for ending the AIDS epidemic by 2030. To achieve this ambitious target throughout the transport sector, regional, national, and local health authorities, transport owners, trade unions, academia, civil society and, of course, the key populations themselves, must work together.

From the outset, North Star aligned its activities with public health authorities and relied on hiring local expertise to

deliver services. But the investment in the community goes well beyond that. Through dedicated programs such as Star Driver and Hands Off!, thousands of truck drivers and sex workers have received education and training with many taking on roles as peer educators, outreach workers, and role models.

Now in its second decade, North Star Alliance has shown that communities, peers, and partners can create a powerful response that continually adapts to the health needs of mobile populations and

those they encounter along the way. And in doing so, the same people who once were heavily subjected to judgment and blame are now leading the way to healthier communities.

### Change can be hard

The partnership between WFP and TNT began as an unconventional cooperation between a large humanitarian agency and one of the world's largest logistics companies trying to spread a successful health delivery innovation via a small South African NGO, Ikaheng. TNT's charismatic chief executive officer hit it off with WFP's executive director and a blended project team was created to test the concept. Momentum grew fast from early success, which sparked a commitment to expand the model and drew the attention of massive health and

DAVE CHIDLEY/NORTH STAR ALLIANCE



A North Star clinician in Maai Mahiu, Kenya, conducts daily outreach among truck drivers and sex workers along one of dozens of Africa's busiest freight routes.

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development partners. The name came from a midnight teleconference call. North Star Foundation (later changed to North Star Alliance) was announced the next morning and within 48 hours, President Bill Clinton launched the official partnership at the first Clinton Global Initiative conference.

It was not long before the road got bumpy as the partners struggled to learn each other's "language" and build trust. Initially, TNT didn't fully comprehend the social, cultural, and political aspects of HIV and of AIDS. It was eager to take a calculated risk and had the funds to get the project off and running. TNT became impatient with WFP's comparatively slow action and lengthy consultation with field staff and others on the ground. Endless discussions turned into debates, debates became heated arguments. A meeting to identify the sources of the conflict degenerated into a yelling match that forced an almost-fatal walkout. The social entrepreneur in South Africa grew impatient with it all and threatened to pull out.

At the outset, the involved institutions shared a commitment to protect the transport workforce. It was a touchstone when things got wobbly. At each turn, they took the time to understand each other's perspectives. They forgave each other... a lot. They learned to trust each other's motives. WFP's humanitarian mission, TNT's business acumen, and Ikaheng's innovative experience created a winning partnership. All parties kept in mind a popular saying adopted by South African rights advocates: *Nothing about us without us*. It reminded them of whom they wanted to serve, how to reach them, and who would lead the way. Just short of 10 years of operation, WFP and TNT recognized North Star needed to evolve without them, and that the power of many is the key to sustainability.

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*Robin Landis (Sierra Leone, 83-86) was an HIV/AIDS policy advisor for WFP and part of the original team from which the partnership began.*

# MED SCHOOL ACROSS BORDERS

It started on Long Island and in the High Atlas

By Aaron Hochman-Zimmerman

A few years ago, I worked nights and weekends on an ambulance crew as an Emergency Medical Technician in Manhattan and the Bronx in New York City. One rainy night, an elderly lady was hit by a car crossing Amsterdam Avenue. We took the call in the last minutes of our shift and got there seconds before a range of other first-responders arrived. My adrenalin was high, the patient was moaning, unable to speak, and the family was desperate.

Wiping rain out of my eyes, I tried to stabilize an exposed-bone femur fracture while receiving instruction and encouragement at a rather high volume from a fire department lieutenant. He pushed us to move faster and faster while members of the victim's family kept asking questions and trying to help. Finally, we had done what we could and were on the road to the hospital, the injured woman and her family in the back of the ambulance with us.

I don't know what happened to the woman. Ambulance crews almost never hear the end of the story. We hope for the best but once the hospital doctors take over, we clean up our ambulance and head back out on the street.

However, my chosen career was that of a journalist. I'd been a copywriter and a reporter struggling through the early years of freelancing and working for a small financial news website. But the problem was that every time I thought I had something to write, I couldn't figure out how to make the story interesting to strangers, how to market the manuscripts, or how to monetize my journalism.

## Exit the reporter

Peace Corps service was also something that I had always wanted to

do. I thought it would fit well with my journalism career. But when the Peace Corps recruiter asked how I handled a stressful situation, I thought about that rainy night on Amsterdam Avenue.

That seemed more interesting to my Peace Corps interviewer than my job writing financial news, so I became a health volunteer in the High Atlas village of Ait Boulli, Morocco. That was the first step on my struggle to decide if I could give up journalism for something else.

One day in Ait Boulli, I felt I needed some fresh air, so I went out back, hiked up the mountain that rose behind the village, and changed my mind about writing. I needed a better view... of everything. I climbed as high as I could.



From high on that mountain in Morocco, untethered from the world below, I experienced a level of clear thought that was unattainable elsewhere. My village's backyard mountains made for a staggeringly beautiful backdrop. The sky was pure blue, but the mountains began

with white at the top and changed shades on the way down as exposed sediment of reds, tans and browns gave way to small grasses and then almond and apple trees along the river valley. Above, where the mud brick houses were built, little water sources trickled right out of the rock, as if by some miracle water could come straight from rocks. I hoped it was as much a source for pure thought as it was for pure water.

I loved being an EMT. I loved training and learning from the Moroccan Red Crescent and the local ambulance drivers. Maybe I should stick to medicine, I thought, but it would mean years more of school and a ton of money. Adding up the pros and cons, only one path was clear for me to follow.

The decision made itself—med school. I would grit my teeth and prepared to become a science and math guy. I desperately wanted to nurture what I had learned in Morocco: that not everyone sees life or good health the same way. Some people think that 'less is more' when it comes to medical treatment and some people want the whole menu of medications and therapies.

Then there was another interview, but this time with a woman staffing a booth at a Columbia University career fair. She described the global health curriculum at the Medical School for International Health at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, in Beersheva, Israel. The school offered a two-month training clerkship in low/mid-income countries like India, Sri Lanka, Peru, or Mexico where medical students would learn from staff doctors and, when language and medical knowledge permitted, would actually practice medicine. The idea of the overseas clerkship made me appreciate that they were serious about global health, that it would be more than just a few hollow lectures.

She asked in a skeptical tone, "...is that something you think you could handle?"

With what I hope wasn't too cocky a smile, I told her: "I think I can manage."

### Complex of cultures

I felt drawn to the thought of studying medicine overseas, in Israel, and on the campus at Ben-Gurion University at Soroka Hospital where the patients receive treatment for especially rare congenital and infectious diseases and speak such languages as Hebrew, Arabic, Russian, and Amharic.

Ben-Gurion accepted my application to study medicine. It all seemed like a Peace Corps dream. But something concerned me that I was embarrassed to admit to myself. I was concerned that studying in Israel would make it difficult for me to work in Muslim countries and that non-government organizations and the embassy officers who issue visas to other countries would object to an Israeli

Despite my early fears that it could be difficult to work with Muslim patients ... I taught English to Bedouin high school students, I've worked in Jordan, presented research at a conference in Cairo and worked with doctors at training seminars in the West Bank and Gaza.

degree. Still, I applied and accepted Ben-Gurion's invitation to study there.

It turned out that many cultural differences come together to make a medical degree from this small city of Beersheva what it is. Muslim and Jewish doctors and nurses eat lunch together at the hospital cafeteria. They speak Hebrew even though their original languages may be English and Arabic, Russian or Amharic. The food they eat rotates between Russian, Moroccan, and other cuisines.

Beyond the difficulties and headlines of Middle Eastern conflict, day-to-day life here is calm and friendly. Down the street from my apartment, I visit a café that would fit in perfectly in New York and order coffee and a sandwich in Hebrew. In Arabic I order shisha with my coffee at a café a few doors down that would fit in perfectly in Cairo.

Our classroom lectures are all in English, but we've learned to work with patients and staff in several languages. My Arabic is better than it was in Morocco. I often speak in French and my parents are proud that my Hebrew is better than theirs ever was.

Working day to day at Beersheva's Soroka Hospital, we can see very clearly how culture influences medicine, what good health means to different people, and how doctors constantly find ways to weave science and faith, finance, and circumstance together. Some patients make greater demands of the staff and have challenging questions and high expectations. Others take a fatalist approach, have no questions, and quietly accept whatever we recommend along with its result, including their deaths or that of family members.

Despite my early fears that I would be unable to work with Muslim patients, I have worked with the local Bedouin

communities, on weekends I have taught English to Bedouin high school students, I have worked in Jordan, presented research at a conference in Cairo and worked with doctors at training seminars in the West Bank and Gaza.

Once in a while, a few of us in the medical program take an overnight bus through Nazareth to Jordan to offer triage care to Syrian refugees staying outside the U.N. camps. Our Iraqi and Jordanian colleagues caution us not to say we have come from Israel. They want to avoid the wrong kind of rumors that might make life more stressful for the refugees, the medical team, and ourselves.

The few days we were in that sleepy little town in the north of Jordan were marked by bustling people who had not seen doctors in a long time. They had no fresh war wounds to be treated but these refugees had been chased from

their homes by violence and felt lost without food, shelter, and medical care. Without regular, long-term supplies of their medicines, most of them suffered from diabetes and hypertension. Some had conditions we could treat. For others, all we could do is provide advice. Still, we wanted them to know we were concerned about their well-being.

We were not fluent in Arabic so we worked with interpreters. It was a frustrating experience but I think these refugees wanted someone to listen. And we listened to a lot of stories.

### Your left is my right

Occasionally, it is a medical student's duty to act as a model patient so other students can learn. It was my turn when a few dozen Palestinian doctors visited Soroka Hospital to train in echocardiography. They poked me in the ribs with an ultrasound probe so many times I started showing bruises. When they realized I was uncomfortable, each of them apologized.

I smiled and said, "Mafey mushkile." No problem, in Arabic. They chuckled and smiled.

I worked for three weeks with a group of Italian medical students in the understaffed emergency department of a hospital in Kampala, Uganda. Many of our patients had suffered deep lacerations from accidents riding on *boda boda*, motorcycles, that required sutures.

Two of us created our own specialty suturing team. Roberta spoke excellent English but she was having trouble keeping her left hand and right hand straight in English. So I reminded her with my best Italian "sinistra" and "destra."

For the doctor and the patient, sutures can be difficult and uncomfortable, especially if the patient can see the needle. I had to push hard with the needle to finally poke through the firmer outer layer of epidermis into the juicier skin layers and fat tissue below. I was comforted only by the thought that it was a necessary thing to do.

I also spent one of my school holidays riding along with paramedics in Cape Town, South Africa. Most of the work was surprisingly familiar and it was good to

feel 'at home' in that way. After so many years of classrooms and basic sciences, it was good to get out on the street again and what a location, by the beach with the mountains towering in the back. One thing was different though. Our first

I loved being an EMT. I loved training and learning from the Moroccan Red Crescent and the local ambulance drivers.

call was to do a 'declaration of death,' something I'd never heard of ambulance crews doing. We did it to help ease the workload of the police and coroners' office. So we turned up at a very middle-class home where we were pointed down a dark corridor off of the garage. The deceased was there, in an unfortunate condition on the floor. It was obvious that quite some time had passed. I had never seen anything like that before. Scratching our heads and rubbing our foreheads a bit, we confirmed the death to the police officer and went back in service. It took a moment before we started to talk about what we had just seen and it turned out that coping with dark humor was another thing that New York City crews have in common with our South African counterparts.

I haven't graduated from medical school yet, so I'll absolutely have to say *insha Allah*. But I know I would not have gotten this far without Peace Corps. My service gave me a view of so many more possibilities than I'd ever seen growing up on Long Island or working in New York City. As a public health worker in the High Atlas, I learned that living the life you envision doesn't necessarily mean being reckless. Anything worth having takes an uphill fight.

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*Aaron Hochman-Zimmerman (Morocco '10-'12) is rotating at hospitals in Brooklyn and Manhattan during his fourth year in the Medical School for International Health at Ben-Gurion University's global health medical program. He will continue his studies with a two-month global health clerkship in Mexico City, Mexico.*

# THE CENTER WITH TOO MANY DOORS

Corruption indirectly kills 140,000 children every year

By Taryn Vian

I helped a village request funds from the Canadian embassy to build a health center that was built in Ndzandouan, Cameroon in 1985. I was a community development volunteer based in the Méfou Department, Central Province. The village committee was concerned that children were getting sick and dying of preventable or treatable diseases including diarrhea, malaria, acute respiratory infections, measles, and malnutrition. In addition, pregnant women had to travel hours on bad roads to reach a facility where they could have an assisted delivery. A health center was greatly needed, and the Ministry of Health agreed to staff the facility once it was built.

I learned a lot about corruption through that project. The first contractor took a 20 percent advance to buy supplies, and went on a drinking binge. So we hired a new contractor.

Then, as I drove in a truck to Yaoundé with the village development committee to buy the supplies for the center, I noticed an excessive number of doors had been loaded onto the truck. There were 13 wooden doors stacked on the large truck, but the blueprints for the health center only showed 8 doors.

"We added a few doors for the chief's house," said the committee vice-chairman. "It's important to keep the chief happy. Besides," he said, "a donor was paying anyway."

With our new contractor, the construction project began in earnest, but then I noticed the villagers becoming more distant and unfriendly. I took one of them aside to ask what the matter was.

The village appreciated I needed to "get my part" of the project budget, he

said, but they thought I was taking too much.

It turned out that the second contractor had been siphoning off funds and telling the villagers that I had demanded a large kickback.

We got through all the false starts and eventually the health center was finished. But I learned that transparency, accountability, and the fight against corruption are critically important to the goals of public health. Since that time, I have worked in global health management consulting and as a professor at the Boston University School of Public Health. One of my main goals is to help people see that corruption is a social determinant of health that hurts the most vulnerable, and that we must try to fight corruption to improve health outcomes.

## Corruption and health

More than 7 million young children die each year, many from diseases that could be prevented or treated if families had access to good quality health care services. In many cases the low quality of care is due to lack of accountability of health care providers and corruption. A study published in the journal *PLOS One* estimates that corruption is indirectly responsible for more than 140,000 child deaths per year.

Problems include absent staff, providers who steal publicly-procured drugs to sell, providers who extort informal payments for services that should be free, and clinicians who refer patients to particular pharmacies to earn a kickback for themselves. Corruption includes embezzlement, bribes and kickbacks during the procurement process, and even sextortion, or coerced

sexual favors, in exchange for health services.

These problems affect countries at all income levels, but the impact is especially damaging in low- and middle-income countries where resources for health are already limited. For example, procurement fraud, diversion, and over-invoicing were detected in more than half of municipalities audited in Brazil, while private firms paid millions of dollars in bribes to doctors and hospitals in China and Vietnam to influence prescribing and drug purchasing. These practices result in inflated costs and lower quality of care. Corruption is also linked to other problems such as counterfeit and substandard medicines. The stakes are high, and corruption in the health sector cannot be ignored.

### Culture and corruption

Though most people agree that corruption is wrong, in many countries corruption has become normalized. Why does this happen? In part, it is because corrupt practices are close neighbors to cultural “practical logics” engrained in social life. Examples

from my experience in Cameroon include the practice of bargaining for just about everything, and the use of brokers or intermediaries to resolve problems. These practices make it seem normal to negotiate bribes and use “fixers.”

In his book *The Village of Waiting*, New Yorker writer George Packer—who served in Togo from 1982 to 1984—wrote about solidarity networks and the web of personal relationships that is so critical to life in African communities. In my village in Cameroon, the idea of using the Canadian grant to give a gift to the village chief did not seem, to my neighbors, to be an abuse of power. Rather, it was a way to strengthen personal ties. But favoritism based on personal ties can be problematic,

especially when it involves an official who is duty-bound to put the needs of the public first.

In a workshop I led in Rwanda in February 2010, on Corruption in the Health Sector, we discussed the need for public health officers to objectively review requests for permit approvals. One of participants pulled me aside after class to say, “This makes sense. But what do I do if the person requesting the permit has given me a cow?”

In Rwanda, cows are the most respected gift you can give to a friend,

Gawande once expressed an empathy for those who naively imitate their neighbors. I explain what I have learned this way: Yes, truly venal and kleptocratic leaders exist, but so do people who are simply doing what they see others doing, and trying to cope within a system where incentives are misaligned and government promises of entitlements exceed resources. These systemic weaknesses fuel corruption. If donors want to save children’s lives, they need to invest not only in vaccines, but in stronger public accounting and procurement systems.

The World Health Organization is developing guidelines for integrating anti-corruption, transparency, and accountability measures into health systems assessments and national health planning and policy-making processes. Other systems changes include using electronic cash registers in hospitals in Kenya to reduce theft of user fees, and the ProZorro e-procurement system for purchasing medicine in Ukraine which is lowering prices and deterring bid-rigging. Implementing complaint mechanisms

and creating active facility health boards also have been shown to reduce informal payments and prices paid for health commodities in Latin America.

It is important to change incentives to make corruption more costly, and to make it easier to do what is right. This includes increasing pay of health workers and making sure people have the tools they need to do their jobs well and are appreciated. At the same time, increasing pay alone will not reduce corruption. Disciplinary systems must ensure that workers who engage in malfeasance face repercussions, and that workers who blow the whistle on abuses are protected.

Non-governmental organizations can put bottom-up pressure on governments

KEARSLEY STEWART



A billboard created by Stephen Gwokcho reminds Ugandans that corruption in health services can be fatal for patients. These criminal practices have the greatest impact on the poor.

and you are indebted to someone who has given you a cow. For this official, the cultural obligation to favor his cow friend was in direct opposition to his need to act objectively in the interest of the anonymous “general public.” These challenges are real, and need to be considered when promoting accountability and transparency strategies adapted to context.

### Systematic solutions

Policy-makers, development partners, and individuals can take actions to reduce risks of corruption. First, it is important to recognize that corruption is a systems problem in addition to a moral issue. Surgeon and health researcher Atul

to control corruption. In Ukraine, for example, the Anti-Corruption Center—known as AntAC—worked to identify corruption affecting public procurement of HIV/AIDS and TB medicines. Patients were not getting needed treatment because government budgets were running out. AntAC staff examined the ownership structure of companies that participated in 39 public bids and won tenders. They found that prices were 150-300 percent higher than a Ukrainian organization was able to pay on the local market. A handful of companies had won all the tenders, and AntAC staff identified how these companies were linked through a chain of shell corporations. AntAC shared their findings with members of Parliament, triggering investigations leading to prosecutions and financial savings.

### Serbia, Uganda & Tanzania

Serbian on the Move implemented an anti-corruption project in five hospitals which included educating doctors and patients about the negative consequences of under-the-table payments. The project also helped to support investigative journalism and web portals where citizens could post comments on quality of care provided by specific doctors.

A program in Uganda increased the quantity and quality of primary health care provision in rural communities through increased monitoring. Community-based organizations collected data to contrast community members' perceptions of quality with the views of health workers. They also collected objective data on health outcomes and health facility performance, and summarized these findings in a report card. The community-based organizations then facilitated meetings allowing

community members and health workers to work together to create a shared action plan or "community contract" to address the identified weaknesses using their own resources. After one year, the communities that implemented the intervention had 33 percent lower child death rates and 20 percent higher



After the chief received the gift of a few doors and the first contractor skimmed their Canadian government grant to get drunk, the author (center) supervised construction of the Edzandouan health clinic in Central Province, Cameroon in 1985.

utilization of services compared to non-intervention communities. Absence rates were 13 percent lower, waiting time was 10 percent lower, and drug stock-outs were less frequent even though utilization had increased.

Members of the community engaged in monitoring health workers after the contract was developed and without the facilitator from the community-based organizations. Tools like numbered cards to monitor wait time, suggestion boxes, and duty rosters were more often

used in the intervention communities than in other communities. The process of developing the report cards also helped communities to improve existing governance structures such as health unit management committees that had previously been ineffective. Similar programs are being implemented in communities in Tanzania and Indonesia with funding from the Hewlett Foundation, Gates Foundation, and the UK Department for International Development.

In his 800-page opus, *Bribes: The Intellectual History of a Moral Idea*, John Noonan likened corruption to a disease that we need more than one way to cure. The diverse ways in which abuse of power can manifest, and the normalization of corruption in some cultures, mean that multiple strategies for prevention and control are warranted.

We need to use the tools of economics and social behavior to figure out how best to change incentives and strengthen institutions, and we need to work with many stakeholders: government, civil society, patients, to tackle this problem and achieve the goal of public health, which is to create conditions for populations to live healthier lives. It seems daunting, but to paraphrase former President Obama: we don't have to re-make the world

entirely; we just have to try to get our paragraph right.

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*Taryn Vian is a clinical professor and associate chair of the Boston University School of Public Health and has constructed research in more than a dozen countries with funding from the U.S. Agency for International Development, WHO, the UN Development Programme, the Council of Europe and Transparency International.*

# OUR IRAN ADVOCATES

## After a late start, Iran RPCVs found their voice

By Carolyn Yale

Americans who have visited Iran are few. Rarer still are Americans who have lived and worked in Iran, learned the language, and made friends there. Images of Iran are often negative these days: many people would be surprised to know that Iran was one of the first countries to welcome Peace Corps volunteers. Between 1962 and 1976, the year the program closed, over 1740 volunteers served in Iran. Getting to know this rich culture was, for many volunteers, a revelation and an opportunity that is sadly impossible today given the political situation. Returned volunteers can, nonetheless, share our experiences.

Today our goal is to advance relations between our two countries through “advocacy” that encompasses both cultural diplomacy and political issues. We

are putting our legacy to use by helping Americans understand and appreciate Iranian culture and see the merits of improving relations with Iran.

Peace Corps Iran Association has faced and overcome challenges: a late start 36 years after Peace Corps closed its program in Iran; aging membership; difficult politics. We rely almost entirely on donations. The work is conducted by its volunteers. Our vision of returning to peaceful diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Iran can seem impossibly remote. But this vision, and the fact that we continue our efforts in the face of such challenges, is the best evidence of how deeply we care about Iran and the people of Iran.

This message is difficult to convey when U.S. public opinion is so polarized and attention so fragmented by

impressions, perceptions, and opinions. We are determined, nonetheless, to continue the effort.

Returned Peace Corps Iran volunteers tried to organize several times in the 1980s without lasting success. When NPCA began planning Peace Corp’s 50th anniversary celebration in 2011, two Iran RPCVs, Doug Schermer and Jackie Spurlock, decided to hold an Iran reunion that year in Portland, Oregon, timed to coincide with an annual Iran festival. With no funds and a very short list of RPCVs, aggressive networking ended up attracting about 300 participants.

The strength of those numbers gave us the momentum to incorporate, write bylaws and elect a governing board. Thanks to the efforts of Genna Wangsness to “find friends,” we’ve located about three-quarters of the PCVs who served in Iran during the program’s 14 years. Our membership now exceeds 700, and is growing. Most, but not all, members are returned volunteers or Peace Corps staff, but we also have members who simply share our mission.

CAROLYN YALE



Panelists for a political discussion at the Annapolis conference are, left to right: RPCV John Limbert, a former U.S. ambassador who was taken hostage while a political officer in Tehran in 1979 and now teaches political science at the U.S. Naval Academy; the Atlantic Council’s Future on Iran Project director, Barbara Slavin; and Trita Parsi, a founder of the National Iranian American Council and a close observer of the nuclear agreement.

At first we just wanted to reconnect with friends from the Peace Corps years and document those years, but it soon became apparent that our new organization had an opportunity, and a responsibility, to do more than stage reunions. The two main threads of our mission emerged: legacy and advocacy.

Our legacy program aims to preserve the record of Peace Corps in Iran. John Krauskopf has collected and will soon publish a compilation of volunteers' stories. Genna is writing a history of the Peace Corps in Iran. Both documents will contribute to our Third Goal advocacy.

**A voice for Iran in America**

Educating Americans about Iran is critical in today's world. Our leadership and many of our members believe that we have a role in the political arena to speak for peace and diplomatic solutions

to our country's disagreements with Iran. We have refined our mission statement and adopted a statement of core values, guiding principles, and organizational purpose that declare that Peace Corps Iran Association advocates peace, diplomacy, negotiation, and understanding as tools for resolving international disagreements.

When it touches on political issues, this advocacy role has not been without controversy. Iran RPCVs are exceptionally well-informed and hold strong opinions about Iran. During the group's formation, it quickly became apparent that members did not all agree on what position, if any, we should take as an organization. We respect the wide range of political views of our membership and encourage members to speak from their own perspectives. Ultimately, the board has not shied away from taking positions in line with our mission, supporting diplomacy and

peaceful resolution of conflicts, such as endorsement of the Iran Nuclear Agreement.

Taking positions, however, is not outreach. Neither is simply documenting our experiences in Iran. We have expanded our use of media -- internet, e-newsletters, bulletins and social media -- to reach a variety of audiences. Our website [www.peacecorpsiran.org](http://www.peacecorpsiran.org) is visited an average of 800 times each month by people in over 100 countries. Our quarterly 'flagship' newsletter, KhabarNameh, is free by mail, email or online. We're planning another conference in 2019, the publication of the book of volunteer stories, and new outreach materials for local distribution.

KhabarNameh is especially directed to our members and features news about volunteers and a wide range of cultural articles. The board's monthly From the



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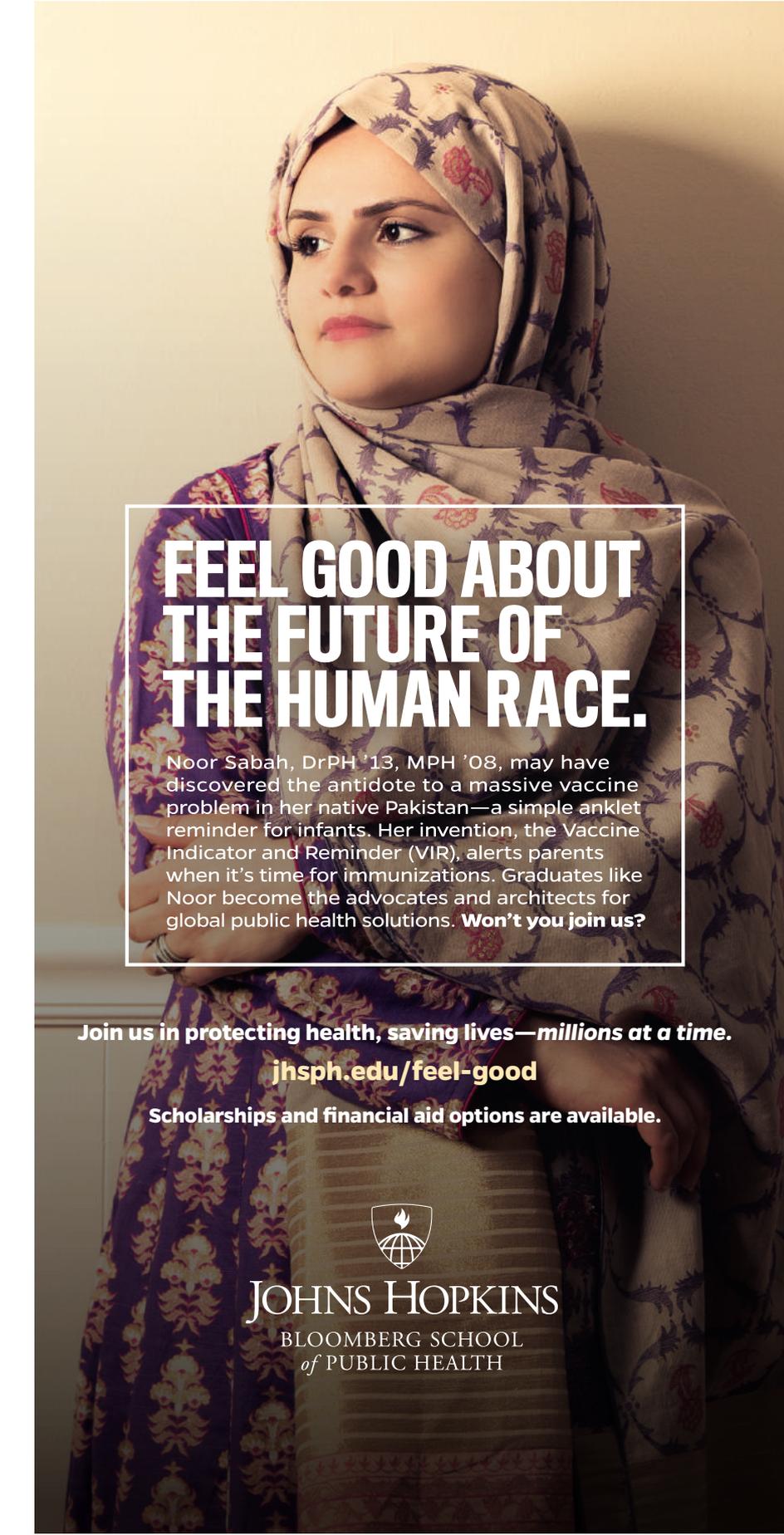
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Field publishes news of our activities and cultural events. Our monthly Advocacy Bulletin includes up-to-date discussions and political events. Our Facebook page posts an exchange of news, comments, and opinions from participants in the United States and overseas.

As the U.S. administration now doubles down in opposition to the Nuclear Agreement and rejects dialog with Iran, our advocacy activities have intensified. We have reached out to members and other Peace Corps affiliates to argue to Congress and the media for continuing diplomacy with Iran. We have been heartened by the support that has come from RPCVs who served in other countries.

This outreach campaign has also strengthened our collaboration with organizations that share our message. The authenticity of our Peace Corps experience lends credibility to our views. Our membership is small and our resources limited, but our voice carries weight.

Our members enthusiastically support reunions that bring members together to share memories, connect with local Iranian-Americans, and discuss current events. After our launch in Portland in 2011, we established a biennial meeting tradition: Boston in 2013, in Austin in 2015, and in Annapolis in 2017. These events are ambitious undertakings that help to solidify our identify. Our two-day reunion-conference in Annapolis featured a reception with Iranian music and dance; panels on Iranian art and literature, cultural exchanges, and the politics surrounding the Nuclear Agreement; poetry readings; displays of books on Iran by Peace Corps authors; a story-telling session; and more.

We welcome new members and new alliances with other organizations and affiliates. We hope to be around when the barriers between Iran and our country come down.

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*Carolyn Yale served as a rural planner in the Office of Planning and Budget of Fars Province, Shiraz, Iran from 1974 to 1975 and is a member and past president of the Peace Corps Iran Association board of directors. They welcome reader comments and support on their website.*



The north face of Mt. Kailash

## KAILASH YATRA

### Change reaches a holy mountain beyond the Himalayas

*Photographs and text by Kevin Bubriski*

**H**heavy monsoon clouds of late afternoon hung dark and forbidding over Nepal's northwestern border with Tibet. It was 1977 and I was 22 years old. On a high mountain pass in Humla district, my traveling companions and I were surrounded by large rocks upended by pilgrims who had borne witness to the view of Mount Kailash and Lake Manasarovar, sites of sacred geography many miles away in Tibet, beyond the northern fringe of the Himalayas. The upturned rocks honored the view of Kailash and the *darshan*, the blessing, that the mountain's presence brings to the pilgrim.

Four decades later, an old friend, Sonam Gyalgen, recalled to me how the dark clouds parted as we sat together on that high mountain pass, the snows of Mount Kailash and the blue waters of Lake Mansarovar revealing themselves in the distant north.

For 39 years, I had a quiet longing to make the *kora* circumambulation and to experience fully in all ways the scale of the mountain, its visual beauty, and its rarefied air. The sacred landscape of Kailash is a gift to each person who reaches it. With the right awareness and intention, one can feel the deep power and beauty of the sacred landscape that is brought to life by the human presence of those on pilgrimage.

In the summer of 2016, an eclectic group of 18 scholars, artists, geographers and anthropologists from Nepal, India, the United States, and China traveled together on the sacred pilgrims' route through the remote monsoon rain-soaked mountains of Humla and the landscape of Kailash. Each of us was tasked with independent and collective research inquiry.

For several days, we walked through a changing landscape of diminishing economies and evidence of resilient traditional cultures threatened by

change. It is hard to measure the variety of environmental, psychological, social, cultural, and economic impacts the road will continue to bring to what has always been one of the most remote regions of Nepal.

There is a delicacy and strength to the extreme environment and the resilient people who inhabit it. One comes away with a humbling sense of the toughness of daily life and an appreciation of the deep traditions and complex interconnectedness of man and nature that are unfortunately falling out of balance. The preservation of this sacred landscape and the sustainability of the people who inhabit it demands reclaiming that delicate balance.

#### **Changes along the trail**

In the 1970s the existence of motorable roads in Nepal's northwest region was unimaginable. The foot trails are now greatly improved along the





Pilgrims wind their way up to the Dolma La Pass at 18,537 feet above sea level. This is the highest point on the Kailash kora. The final few hundred meters to the pass lie thickly festooned with prayer flags partially blanketed with snow.



A young girl climbs down a network of ladders carved from pine trees to reach the lower levels and shared porches of her neighbors' homes in Thehe. More than 500 mud-and-stone households make this one of the largest villages in Nyin Valley.

Humla Karnali River and in Limi's high altitude landscape but now motor roads also extend from the Tibet/China border into Nepal's northwest once pristine landscape. New, wide, modern roads cut across the mountains and the steep river valleys, altering watershed resources, creating landslides and breaking the patterns of human and livestock migration and travel.

Many in the Limi community have sold their herds of *yak* and *dzo* and relocated to Taklakot, Kathmandu, Simikot, and even New York City. The agricultural and pastoral life of a generation ago is disappearing. Pani Palbang was once a busy place for shepherds and traders with their herds of saddlebag-laden sheep, goats, yak, *dzo*, horses, donkeys or mules to spend the night on their way north to Hilsa or

Taklakot. Pani Palbang is now abandoned.

We passed more villages now abandoned, other villages thriving with solar panels, mini hydro-electric dams and public cement water taps, but many others struggle with poor sanitation facilities and diminishing sources of water.

The motor road to Tumkot from the Hilsa is a major change. It is remarkable to ride a truck through the mountains for three to four hours and cover what used to take two days of strenuous walking. The vehicle bridge now provides the motor road linkage between Nepal and China.

### Over the Chinese border

The disparity of resources on either side of the Nepal China border and the immense inequity and imbalance of

political, economic, social power, and resources is staggering. It is especially alarming when one considers the remoteness of Nepal's Humla district from the central government in Kathmandu and the close proximity of the large Chinese city of Taklakot to Nepal's Humla district. As the strong Chinese economy and the expanding urban centers in western Tibet draw Nepali visiting workers across the border, it is essential to consider the positive and negative impact this out-migration has on the indigenous communities throughout Humla.

A visitor center pavilion at the sacred Lake Manasarovar now looms large as a striking foil against the simple solitude and wide-open western Tibetan landscape. The spacious gift shop of stainless steel and glass walls is filled

with wood tables, upholstered couches, Tibetan carpets, and large photo murals of traditional Tibetan culture and landscapes. One member of our group joked. "Where's the espresso bar?" Wifi and the café offering espresso were just around the corner from the gift shop.

Before reaching the town of Darchen, travelers must stop at another visitor's center for the Kailash region where permits, tickets, and passports are checked. Then the exit leads visitors to a bus that takes them to their hotel. Once a tent encampment, Darchen is a meteorically growing Chinese town where Tibetans on motorcycle taxis ferry their passengers on the wide new main streets all while playing loud festive Tibetan pop, rock and folk tunes on their portable stereo speaker systems. Darchen, with its Chinese shops and Szechuan restaurants with wifi, will surely keep expanding as the Kailash region attracts greater numbers of pilgrims and tourists.

The Kailash *kora* route is an extraordinary place of geological and meteorological diversity that unfolds over the circumambulation. The massive black mountain and its cover of snow is a powerful and striking sight as are the surrounding mountains, valleys and rivers that envelope the sacred mountain. The Kailash *kora* is replete with the powerful presence of nature. Long stretches of silent solitary walking on the *kora* let one admire the constantly changing sacred landscape as one moves through it.

Except for the steep areas on either side of the Dolma La Pass motor roads encircle the entire *kora* route. Stories from our fellow traveler scholars Shekar Pathak and Tsewang Lama, who made the Kailash *kora* two decades ago when there was no habitation at Darchen other than a tent and no settlements at all elsewhere on the *kora* except for seasonal tents, are all a testament to the human impact on the *kora* route in two brief decades.

### Sacred and profane

The seasonal settlement of Diraphuk, a blend of the sacred and the profane

below the northwest face of Kailash, is where pilgrims often overnight before crossing over the high-altitude Dolma La Pass at 18,600 feet. Diraphuk is also where pilgrims begin the walk to the glacier on the north face of Kailash. Hindu pilgrims consider this glacier the feet of deity Shiva and drink from its sacred waters.

In the evenings, Diraphuk is busy with pilgrims on foot approaching in the last light at dusk. Jubilant trekkers from China and elsewhere in the world walk amidst grazing horses that will carry Indian pilgrims over the Dolma La



A middle-school student visits the upper gallery of the monastery in Jang village.

Pass the next morning. Traffic of jeeps, trucks, luxury cars, and motorcycles ferry people, products, and supplies to this busy settlement. Plastic tarps cover large piles of garbage. How big will Diraphuk become? How will it balance the sacred landscape with sustainable livelihoods? These are vital questions for now and the future.

All the monasteries along the Kailash *kora* route are in a state of rapid transformation. New frescoes are being painted on the concrete walls and upgraded, new pitch highways are being

constructed to lead to other rebuilt monasteries in the Kailash region. Ideally, the monasteries could become a vital aspect of cultural resurgence yet very few monks, lamas or practitioners are in evidence.

We approached Dolma La Pass on the wide motor road path in the early morning under heavy dark clouds. Around us was the parade of stylish young teenage Tibetans and Tibetan families in the dress of their indigenous region of Ngari in the far west of Tibet. Due to current restrictions on travel for Tibetans, no longer are large numbers of Tibetans coming from further and diverse regions of Tibet as there were years before. The trail around Kailash is, at times, crowded with pilgrims, trekkers, and locals, especially during the early morning climb up to Dolma La. A very festive atmosphere is created by the mixed company of Hindu pilgrims on horseback with their Tibetan guides, Tibetan families of multiple generations, gregarious trekking groups, and the sound of voices singing accompanied by the rhythmic cadence of the horse and yak bells ringing with each step.

The trail narrows and switches back through steep boulder fields, while the sounds of Hindu *mantras* of Om Namoh Shivaya, and the songs of young and old Tibetans fill the space with a lively warmth and soothing sounds that comfort and take one out of personal meditative introspection or fixation on the physical exertion of the climb.

As the mist rose out of the valley, the sun played hide and seek with the peaks around us. We walked over rocky slopes on a thin blanket of snow that created intricate spider web tracery clinging to the thin ropes and prayer flags that covered the Dolma La. We never had a glimpse of Kailash on the climb over the Dolma La that day, but we felt no sense of regret or absence as we walked through the sacred landscape.

The morning after crossing the Dolma La Pass in the seasonal pilgrims' settlement of Zutruphuk, a Bonpo pilgrim



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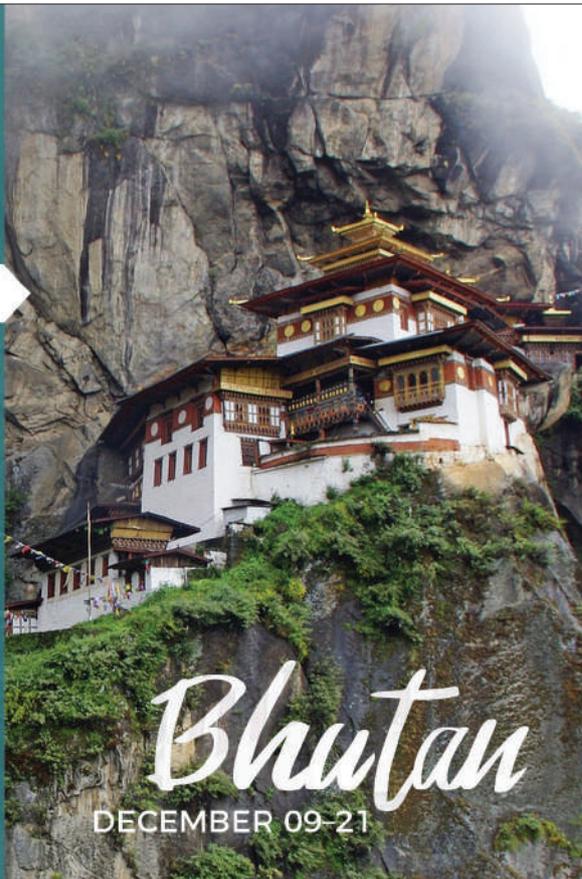
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*Bhutan*

DECEMBER 09-21

quickly approached. He went straight to a tea shop where he drank numerous cups of tea from a small bowl he carried in a compact canvas bag that was slung across his chest. Then he ate roasted barley flour *tsampa* and spoke with everyone in the comfort and very dim light of the teashop.

Forty minutes later, he packed up his small canvas bag and adjusted the sling in which he rested the bottom stub of his large prayer wheel. He humbly bid farewell to all in the teashop, stepped into the bright daylight, revved up his prayer wheel in a Bonpo counterclockwise spin, and walked up the mountain at a jogger's pace. The circumambulation of Kailash is his daily ritual and practice. In just over three years, he has completed the super human feat of over 800 circumambulations of the sacred mountain. For most pilgrims, a single journey to Kailash is the dream of a lifetime. May the Kailash communities on both sides of the border find ways to sustain their lives and livelihoods in this remarkable transboundary region.

*Kevin Bubriski is a fine-art photographer whose work is in the permanent collections of the Museum of Modern Art, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Bibliothèque National de Paris. He served in Nepal from 1975 to 1978. The photographs and an adaptation of his text from Kailash Yatra, A Long Walk to Mt Kailash through Humla, published by Penguin India, Ltd. appear with permission. Supported by a grant from the International Center for Integrated Mountain Development, the publication is also available in electronic form at [www.icimod.org/himaldoc](http://www.icimod.org/himaldoc) The trek was supported by the Henry Luce Foundation in New York and organized by the India-China Institute, the New School, and the Kailash Sacred Landscape Conservation Development Initiative at ICIMOD in Kathmandu, Nepal.*

# BOLD WEAVERS

## Captivated by Morocco's strong women and delicate designs

By Susan Schaefer Davis

**M**oroccan artisans lead a hard life. In addition to practicing their craft, they cook three meals a day, feed the cows and sheep in rural areas, wash clothes by hand, and some haul water from the village well. But these Moroccan women do enjoy many freedoms. They can drive, attend school, and work outside the home. From my first contact with Moroccan women in the 1960s, I was struck by their openness, intelligence, and wit. They did not sit quietly and wait to be given orders or lessons. They laughed, told ribald jokes, and sometimes got into hair-pulling fights.

Women in Morocco do not live under many bans and when left to themselves are far from submissive. Universally, single-sex groups are empowering. In women's colleges in the United States, women fill all the leadership roles. In women's associations in Morocco, talents also come to the fore. There is the best organizer, the best informed about the neighborhood, the one who travels and knows her way around the capital, or the one who can sell embroidery or rugs through her connections.

How do Moroccan women react to male dominance? All too often I've heard men say, "Women are worthless." Moroccan women are always quick to react, often saying, "Men are worthless." One woman told her son-in-law, "You're

like that watch you wear: it gives the time, but it's never right."

### Morocco women

Morocco changed my life. I fell in love with the country and the people, especially the warmth and connection of a vibrant women's society. The experience turned me into an anthropologist. I wanted to understand why the women were so fun and feisty, not the passive, submissive beings I had read about in the pages of *National Geographic*. I went back to the United States and

the field with Moroccan women rather than in a classroom with undergraduates. So I became a consultant on economic development for the World Bank, the Peace Corps, and USAID. My work focused on potable water projects, education programs for girls, microcredit for women, and child labor and youth activism issues in Morocco, Egypt, Jordan, Palestine, and Israel.

I began collecting Moroccan rugs. Friends in the States admired them, and soon I was buying and selling rugs to people back home. My husband was an

early computer geek, and when I had the idea of selling online, he helped me set up a website, Marrakesh Express and in 1994 I became one of the first cyber-merchants.

I moved on to the next step: selling rugs directly, and pro bono, from weavers in two villages, N'kob and Ben Smim. By selling online the women could bypass the middlemen in the market and receive higher prices for their work, and reach a worldwide audience. The site shows photos of the rugs, along with a photo and brief

biography of each weaver. In a way, I was still teaching about Moroccan culture, this time online to clients, and was still "in" the Peace Corps, helping the women.

I worked with these women until 2016, when I encouraged them to join a new online group. Anou ("The Well"; [www.theanou.com](http://www.theanou.com)) takes my idea of online marketing to more expansive levels



JOE COCA  
Fatima Lrhachi of Ben Smim in the Middle Atlas spins the wool for flatweave carpets and clothing from the fleeces of sheep in the neighborhood.

eventually explored that contradiction for my doctoral dissertation, which was later published as *Patience and Power*. I have been making the case for women's strength and agency since the 1970s and hope this book will contribute to that effort.

I taught at the university level for ten years, but found I preferred being in

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and was founded by another RPCV from Morocco, Dan Driscoll. Since marketing is so important for artisans, a full description of this innovative enterprise appears in the concluding chapter of this book.

Even though I have handed over Marrakesh Express, I am still teaching about Morocco by leading cultural and textile tours. My husband says they should be called “American friends of Susan meet Moroccan friends of Susan,” because that’s what we do. In addition to touring the major sites, we encourage social interchanges by visiting artisans and activists in their homes.

I was thrilled to be asked to write my new book, *Artisans of Morocco; Their Stories and Their Lives*, because it gave me an opportunity to increase my knowledge about crafts and their roles in women’s lives. Some of the artisans are good friends, some are members of my “Moroccan family” dating back to Peace Corps days when their grandparents befriended me, and some are dynamic women whom I greatly admire. It was a joy to travel with photographer Joe Coca,

## If given an inch, Moroccan women will take a mile.

whose curiosity, sensibility, and fortitude never wavered as we moved through a strange land. His photographs capture the beauty of the women, their work, and Morocco. In photos and in interviews—even when I had to rely on a translator when speaking to Berber artisans—the women’s personalities shine through.

Years ago, my friend who has compared her son-in-law to a watch in slight disrepair had been promised to an older man she didn’t like. When he brought her family a wedding gift of grapes, henna, and a few chickens, she dumped them on the ground. The chickens pecked at the grapes and mixed them with the henna, ruining the lot. Her angry father shackled her ankles as

punishment. Instead of submitting, she and a girlfriend worked off one shackle, which she slung over her shoulder, and ran off to the farm of a French colonist. When her father came looking for her, the Frenchman told him that if he forced his daughter to marry, he’d report him to the authorities. The young woman ended up marrying a man of her choosing.

The typical Moroccan family is still headed by a strong, macho father, but Mama runs the household behind the scenes. This is similar to Southern U.S. women, who are often described as the iron fist in the velvet glove. Moroccan women have independent ideas, and like many women, rely on skillful management rather than confrontation.

JOE COCA





Neighbors in N’Kob hold up a glaoui rug woven in flatweave, pile and twining with a meteedareen—it means diamonds with little feet—border motif, chickens on a gray background and brooches surrounding a blue center.

If given an inch, Moroccan women will take a mile. Increasingly, women are assuming an active role in fighting abuses. In the face of domestic violence, many women’s groups are working to change the laws. In 2004, Morocco was the regional poster child for the reform of laws related to family, such as raising

the age of marriage and granting women greater rights in divorce and child custody cases. Although these laws are not yet fully implemented, women are taking matters into their own hands and groups are working for change.

The struggle for equality is taking place on many levels. In 2012, 56 years

after independence, 17 percent of the Moroccan parliament was composed of female members, almost as many as in the U.S. Congress after more than 200 years. You’ll find concrete examples in this book. A few years earlier, Amina Yabis, the button maker, ran for local office, just to show that it could be done. Aicha Duha

# COS'ING SOON?



That Doesn't Mean We  
Can't Still Be Friends

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supports a family of four by serving as a middlewoman in a male domain. As a little girl, Fadma Wadal stole wool off the sheep she was herding and hid it under a gravestone at night, because she was so eager to learn to spin and weave. These actions belie the stereotype of passive, submissive Muslim women.

### The women I know

Images of Morocco have been shaped by the media and by a generation of American writers like Paul Bowles and Tennessee Williams, who were drawn to the exotic yet kept their distance from the culture. By contrast, my book presents a close-up of its people. Storytellers like Fadma Wadal and her granddaughter Aziza provide an intimate view of

Images of Morocco have been shaped by the media and by a generation of American writers like Paul Bowles and Tennessee Williams, who were drawn to the exotic yet kept their distance from the culture

desert life as it was 60 years ago. Over the mountains in Marrakesh, Samira Benayad, a traditional seamstress and also a teacher, offers a glimpse of a married woman's life in the modern world.

Along the way the women explain the technical aspects of their crafts, the meaning of the designs, and their attitudes toward their work. Fatima Fdil of Ben Smim, who has been weaving for more than 50 years, tells us that a rug on the loom has a soul, and when it is cut off, the soul dies and is reborn into a new life in someone's home. For Jamila Samaa of N'kob, weaving is a creative act, and she sees her rugs as art. Most weavers in N'kob are more pragmatic and regard rug sales as an important way to help or even support their families with household expenses. Women like Fatima El Mennouny have earned enough to help build a new home.

These artisans are models of strength, and their power is increased when they work in groups. The Assabirate Cooperative is composed of women with disabilities whose superb embroidery affords greater self-reliance. Amina

Yabis is a tireless grassroots feminist who organizes button makers into self-sufficient cooperatives. After Kheira Ilahiane organized a weaving association, she became involved in local politics as another way to help women achieve economic and social status. "Thank God that the king gave us our rights. And praise God that we're going to go further."

The delicate designs hidden in rugs, embroidery, and buttons represent flowers, insects, foodstuffs, tools, and more. It's almost impossible for the average eye to recognize these objects, much less learn their deeper meanings. As Kenza Oulaghda tells us, handsaws and horse bridles wood symbolize the complementary relationship between men and women: they need each other

to function. In the changing society of modern-day Morocco, the overall pattern stands for pride and independence.

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*Susan Davis is an anthropologist who has taught and conducted research on economic development and women artisans at several universities and has published widely on gender in Morocco. As a Peace Corps Volunteer in Morocco from 1965 to 1967 she worked in a rural women's center. She consults with the American Friends Service Committee, the World Bank, USAID, and several NGOs and leads cultural and textile tours through Morocco. This text is excerpted from her new clothbound trade paperback, *Artisans of Morocco: Their Stories and Their Lives*, with photographs by Joe Coca, and published by Thrums Books and is available on Amazon at <http://amzn.to/2FrbMNe>. To learn more about purchasing Moroccan rugs directly from the artisans go to [MarrakeshExpress.org](http://MarrakeshExpress.org) or [TheAnou.com](http://TheAnou.com).*

# MY LITTLE RADIOS

## Broadcasting diplomacy in Castro's Cuba

By Vicki Huddleston

I began distributing my little AM/FM/shortwave radios about one year after I arrived in Havana. Initially I had used these small radios as party favors at the annual American Fourth of July celebration. As the several hundred guests departed, they received a transparent plastic bag tied with red, white, and blue ribbons and containing a compact radio along with a pamphlet featuring quotations from José Martí, Cuba's national hero. The guests—which included Cuban artists and musicians as well as members of the diplomatic community—were delighted, and there was no protest from the Cuban government.

A few months later, a USAID contractor sent many more radios and pamphlets, but I had no way to distribute them. I could not include them with the books we provided to the independent libraries that were run by dissidents and the Catholic Church because the government would confiscate the radios and close the libraries. So, I began to randomly distribute radios to Cubans that I met during the course of my travels. During one such trip, my family and I were visiting Santa Clara, where Che Guevara defeated the last remnants of Fulgencio Batista's army, paving the way to Havana. After touring the massive mausoleum dedicated to Che, we returned to the city center.

On one of the small backstreets in a seemingly deserted neighborhood, I spotted a boy on a bicycle and gave him a radio. Before I could close the trunk and get back in the car, I was mobbed. Twenty or more kids suddenly appeared, all demanding radios. As I did my best to fairly distribute them to the unruly crowd, my Cuban state security minders watched closely from their white Lada parked nearby.

My special assistant for the outreach

program, Peter Corsell, helped me develop and execute a plan to distribute the radios. During the next two years we gave them to dissidents, to people we met while traveling around the island, and to other diplomats who wished to distribute them to their contacts. By the beginning of 2002, we were handing out several hundred radios per month. It was amazing to see how popular the radios were among ordinary Cubans who were literally starved for accurate news and information. Of course, the dissident community also clamored for the radios. And it was their access to the subversive



A Chinese company produced the little Tecsun R9701 for about \$10. Through an Tecsun Radio Australia and USAID, Ambassador Vicki Huddleston and her Havana staff passed out more than 1,000 units during her Cuba posting.

little devices that angered then-President Fidel Castro because it frustrated his efforts to keep them isolated and uninformed.

The radios gave the dissidents information and connected them to one another. Radio Martí broadcast interviews with the dissidents, so the radios enabled them to keep their followers and sympathizers around the island informed of their activities as well as the government's continued repression. Castro falsely claimed that the radios only received Radio Martí transmissions, but listeners were free to listen to whatever

they wanted, whether international news, popular music, or Cuban state radio. What Castro really disliked was that my little radios defeated his efforts to jam Radio Martí broadcasts. The fortunate owner of the little radio could change locations to find a place with little or no interference. He also could tune into a myriad of international stations as well as frequent Cuban broadcasts that denounced the radio distribution itself.

Cubans loved these little radios which were universally seen both as a symbol of freedom and a quiet form of opposition to the Cuban government. Castro blamed the U.S. embargo for all of the island's scarcities and to some degree he was right. The embargo reinforced Castro's efforts to restrict access to communications devices that would have given Cubans greater access to news and information. They could only purchase radios, computers, cell phones, and other communications equipment in "dollar stores," that dealt exclusively in U.S. dollars not in Cuban pesos, but even then, the selection was severely limited. Most Cubans didn't have the resources to buy a new radio, and could only lament that their cheap Chinese radios had limited range and picked up only local frequencies. According to my friend Ana Maria González, when older radios that were initially capable of accessing signals from beyond Cuba's shores were taken in for repairs, they were "fixed" so that they could no longer access stations broadcasting from off the island.

Castro had become increasingly unhappy with our radio distribution program. He began by complaining to visiting American VIPs, some of whom agreed with him. Wayne Smith, a former head of the U.S. Interests Section, said, "I think it's a terrible idea. Passing out these radios can only look like subverting Cuban internal affairs and trying to undermine the government." I replied that in Africa, US assistance programs distributed radios, and both the people and the government were delighted.

### Radios for the resistance

I ultimately couldn't bring myself to curtail support for the dissidents. My not-so-subtle solution was only to

provide dissidents with radios when I invited them to the residence. Yet since there were many dissidents outside Havana, I decided to bring the radios to them personally. Elizardo Sánchez, who ran a human rights group, provided me with a list of names and locations of dissidents who lived throughout the island. I began by meeting with allies of Oswaldo Payá in a small town outside Matanzas, a port city to the east. They were collecting signatures for Payá's Project Varela, a petition they hoped would trigger a referendum on the Cuban Constitution. Knowing that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs wouldn't approve my travel if I indicated that I would be visiting dissidents, I sought and obtained permission for the human rights officer Victor Vockerodt and me to visit Communist Party officials in Matanzas. (All our travel outside of Havana had to be approved seventy-two hours in advance, in the form of a detailed travel plan, so state security could prepare to monitor our activities.)

After meeting with the regional party hierarchy, we did not return on the main highway as I had indicated in the approved plan. Rather, we set out to find the small rural town where Payá's partisans lived. Arriving late, having lost our way on the backcountry dirt roads, we found six men patiently waiting for us and the radios. They told us that none of their members had been arrested for circulating the petition, but one member had narrowly escaped having the signatures he had collected from towns around the area confiscated. In their small town, some citizens who had signed the petition had been threatened with jail or losing their jobs if they didn't remove their names. But they bravely refused to back down.

It was a strange town, almost a hotbed of resistance. It attracted dissidents and those who had been blacklisted from jobs in tourism after attempting to flee to the United States. It made sense that those who had been cast out by the system might choose to live in close proximity to one another. The Cuban government built towns in the countryside that were exclusively for retired military, security, and police forces. I was amused

to imagine that scattered throughout the countryside were a few towns that catered to dissidents as well as the many that were home to loyal military retirees. It also made me realize that we knew very little about rural Cuba.

Castro hoped to derail Payá's Project Varela without attracting attention from the media or international human rights groups. If successful, his cat and mouse game would defeat the initiative by making it impossible to collect signatures and deliver the petitions to Cuba's National Assembly. Castro could have quickly ended Project Varela by jailing the organizers, but he evidently did not want to risk curtailing American travel, which would be the most obvious form of retaliation. Even more worrisome was the possibility that negative publicity would lead former president Jimmy Carter to cancel his upcoming visit to Cuba.

### Drawing chalk lines

It wasn't simply the loss of a job or Communist Party position that made life difficult for those Cubans who defied authority; rather, it was unkind neighbors who would ostracize their entire family. It was not unusual for those with independent views, whether or not they were labeled dissidents, to be expelled from their jobs and the party. We visited a former party official who had lost her job as a schoolteacher and been expelled from the party for a perceived failure to conform strictly to party orthodoxy. To make her life even more miserable, local officials moved another family into her home. The male head of the new family harassed her and her daughters, calling them putas (whores). She had no way to stop the abusive new occupant of her

RAFAEL PEREZ/REUTERS



Ambassador Huddleston met frequently with the Cuban Foreign Ministry during the delicate U.S.-Cuban negotiations over custody of a five-year-old Elian Gonzalez who was found drifting along in an inner tube in the Florida Straits. The child's return to Cuba angered the Cuban-American population of Miami and influenced the next U.S. presidential election.

home. To maintain a modicum of peace, she drew a chalk line down the middle of the living room, over which no member of either family could pass. We dropped off books for her library and left a few radios. We also visited a small library established by a physical education teacher who had lost his job and now instructed neighborhood children in basketball and other sports.

We were scheduled to make one last stop, just off the principal highway. I parked the car on a steep incline, a few feet from the door of a house that looked as if it would tumble off its perch in a strong wind. Our host had been the leader of an independent farmers' union that had called a nationwide strike. He and the other strike leaders were jailed and the strike squelched. After serving their prison terms, the farmers were released, but still harassed, and often denied the right to purchase seeds or fertilizer for their small plots of land. Although his wife had divorced him and his neighbors avoided him, the farmer did not regret his opposition to the government.

As we wound down the hill, a small white Lada waited to bid us farewell. Undoubtedly its occupants were relieved that no more radios would be given out in their region.

It seemed to me that if we were going to appease Castro, we would have to stop

defending the dissidents, which was something I was unwilling to do. I also felt strongly that too often those who advocate on either side of our Cuba policy become polarized, perceiving every issue and incident in black and white rather than shades of gray.

Being an outspoken diplomat who tested the limits of Castro's patience meant there was no middle ground. To those who opposed U.S. policy toward Cuba I was a troublemaker and antagonist, and to those who hated Castro I was a conquering heroine. This binary distinction bothered me because I was not a fervent anti-Castro crusader. I rejected and lamented Fidel's absolute control over Cuba, but I very much wanted to foster better relations between our countries.

In February 2002, I briefed a delegation of Democratic congressional representatives from California. This was well before Castro condemned my radio distribution in April, but after he had bitterly criticized my press conference about Guantanamo Bay. We met the delegation at the grand old Hotel Nacional, which overlooks Havana's seafront as well as the Interests Section.

My husband Bob and I entered a small room that had been reserved for the meeting. Three men and a woman sat around a large, polished wooden table in the center of the room. Having been appointed by President Bill Clinton, I was unconsciously expecting a warm welcome, but the congresspersons did not seem friendly; they merely nodded, not bothering to stand or shake hands. I smiled, welcomed them to Cuba, and began to deliver my standard briefing.

Only a few minutes passed before a large red-faced congressman interrupted. "Who do you think you are representing here in Cuba?" he snarled. I replied that I had been sent by President Clinton but now represented the Bush administration.

Then another member of the delegation, a large woman with very red lipstick averred, "You are not fit to represent our country," adding haughtily, "I am a former ambassador, and I am ashamed of you." One of the men chimed in, "I'll get you fired."

I told them that I was doing my best

and then left. I had been summoned not to give a briefing but to receive a scolding.

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*Vicki Huddleston was chief of the U.S. interests section in Havana from 1999 to 2002 and has led American diplomatic missions in Cuba, Ethiopia, Mali, and Madagascar for the U.S. State Department. She later served as deputy assistant secretary for Africa in both the State and Defense departments. She has been a visiting fellow at the Brookings Institution, the Institute of Politics at Harvard's Kennedy School*

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*of Government, and for former Senator Jeff Bingaman of New Mexico. She served finance of housing coops as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Arequipa, Peru from 1964 to 1966. This article is adapted from Our Woman in Havana: A Diplomat's Chronicle of America's Long Struggle with Castro's Cuba, by Ambassador Vicki Huddleston. Copyright © 2018 by Vicki Huddleston. Published by arrangement with The Overlook Press, Peter Mayer Publishers, Inc.*

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# ON CAMELS & COBBLESTONES

## Next Step Goes to Morocco

By Angene Wilson

**W**e went to Morocco with NPCA's Next Step Travel because we had never been to North Africa. We wanted to ride camels on the Sahara. We had seen camel caravans in northern Nigeria and gotten as far as Bamako, Mali on our aborted trip to Timbuktu when we served with Peace Corps in Liberia. We wanted to buy a leather hassock to replace the Moroccan one we had bought from a Hausa trader when we lived in Sierra Leone. We wanted to visit Tangier at the northern tip of the continent of Africa to bookend our visit to the southern tip in Cape Town, South Africa, including Robben Island.

We did ride camels at the erg Chebbi desert camp, 4000 kilometers north of Timbuktu, on the orange Sahara sand. We did haggle for a new leather hassock in Fes. We did wake up our second morning in Tangier in an old hotel on the Mediterranean waterfront with the nearby mosque loudspeaker calling the faithful to prayer.

But there was much, much more! We found Morocco to be a wonderful combination of past, present, and future with surprises in all three. Our excellent RPCV leaders Tim Resch and Kristy Larsen, occasional Moroccan guides, current and past Moroccan Volunteers, and leaders of NGOs all educated us. As a bonus, we enjoyed sharing the journey with RPCVs

Camels take Next Step travelers on sunset and sunrise rides into the erg Chebbi desert outside of Merzouga near the Algerian border. The author and her husband, Jack, (right) enjoy Moroccan dinner with travel companions in Meknes, one of Morocco's four imperial cities and a UNESCO World Heritage Centre.

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and their friends from all over the U.S., from Alaska to Virginia. Our lodgings were varied, always interesting, occasionally sumptuous, occasionally necessitating pulling one's suitcase for "a ways" on cobblestones to a *riad*—a bed and breakfast inside the *medina*, the old Arab quarter of a North African city. Moroccan food was excellent. Our favorite tagine was beef with quince and pickled lemon.

The past: We had read about the *medinas* but walking the narrow streets was special, whether in the blue and white Asilah community on the Atlantic coast with iconic doors and painted walls from the 2017 international cultural festival, or in the famous city of Fes. The *medina* in Fes included an Islamic university and shops; we visited a tannery, a pharmacy, and a rug emporium. In the *medina* we also

saw people just going about their lives, schoolgirls with pink backpacks, men leading donkeys or riding motorcycles, a baby crying behind a closed door.

We hadn't expected the impressive Roman ruins at Volubilis, a granary for the ancient empire. We hadn't known that the American Legation in Tangier had been given to the United States in 1821 by Sultan Moulay Suleiman. It is the only National Historic Trust beyond U.S. borders, now rented to an independent research center that hosts a library, exhibits, and guest speakers, and has organized an outreach program that serves local marginalized women and children. Of the exhibits, I particularly appreciated the lead soldier diorama of the 1591 battle of Tondibi in which Moroccan forces defeated the famed Songhai Empire. As a teacher of African history, I have long taught about that battle, mid-point in the long centuries of connection of North and West Africa across the Sahara.

The present: Tim explained that Morocco is to the European Union as Mexico is to the U.S. in tourism and industry; both manufacture auto parts and provide agricultural products. Driving between Rabat and Tangier, we passed cork oak forests and greenhouses growing bananas for export. Later we walked in markets offering prickly pears, dates, pomegranates, citrus, and piles of olives. We were impressed by the rural electrification and by the tree planting. We learned that as a non-petrol state, Morocco is committed to renewable energy, that Morocco hosted the Climate Change Convention after the Paris Climate Agreement, that it has banned plastic bags,





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has wind farms, and will soon have the largest solar farm in the world. We were surprised by the excellent roads, including rest stops on one toll road that outshone most in the U.S. One day, after seeing Berber villages hugging an incredible rock landscape, we saw the future in road construction when we drove over the 9,525-foot Tizi-n'Ouadi pass of the High Atlas Mountains.

The future: Youth are the future of any country so the focus of Peace Corps Morocco on youth development seems sensible although not always an easy assignment for Volunteers. I especially enjoyed following Volunteer Brittani through a checkerboard of date palm fields as she talked about her girls' club. On another evening we listened to Jessica, who had recently completed her Peace Corps assignment, describe plans for her wedding to Mohammed. Tim estimated there have been at least 200 Peace Corps-Moroccan marriages over the decades. NGOs are also part of the future: in Marrakesh we heard about the High Atlas Foundation's planting millions of trees and plans for getting organic certification for fruit and processing citrus. One way Morocco is dealing humanely with both present and future is their migration policy that allows for legalized migrants. Family law has also been reformed and more females than males hold Ph.Ds.

On the last day of the trip, in Essaouira on the Atlantic Ocean, we strolled through its *medina*. At one shop we saw cloth that reminded us of cloth in Liberia.

The shopkeeper urged us to buy it. I said, "I don't need."

He replied, "But maybe it needs you." We did not buy the cloth but thought that perhaps Morocco needs us to "take the world back home" and share what we have learned. Affordable, less touristy Next Step Travel in Morocco enables that and leaves one wanting to know more.

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*Angene Wilson taught secondary social studies in Liberia from 1962 to 1964 as a Peace Corps Volunteer, and then at teacher training colleges in Sierra Leone (66-68) and Fiji (70-72) while her husband Jack was associate Peace Corps director and Peace Corps director. She is professor emerita of education at the University of Kentucky.*

# AGILE IN PERU

## Translating Lima for three Johnson & Johnson corporate volunteers

By Emily McGinnis

**A**lmost three years ago on a drizzly gray day, I stood in a crowd at Jorge Chavez International Airport with colleagues from the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations, waiting for strangers arriving as delegates from all over Latin America for a policy summit of the Organization of American States in Lima. I was a fourth-year Peace Corps Volunteer working full time for the Peruvian government, holding a sign with the names of women arriving from across the region. It was an October day in Lima's spring, a time of year in which Lima is affectionately referred to as Lima la gris—Lima the gray.

A year ago, I was back at the airport again during la gris, wading through another crowd holding a balloon mounted on a plastic stick with colorful letters spelling 'WELCOME' splashed across it. I was waiting for three more women, Anisha Mohan from New Jersey, Gabriela Lopez Lairer from Caracas, and Jennifer Smith from Toronto, none of whom I had yet met. This time, I was a volunteer cultural coach for NPCA's Cultural Agility Leadership Lab program (CALL) operated in partnership with Northeastern University's D'Amore-McKim School of Business. I was there to greet these three women from Johnson & Johnson's Talent for Good Global Pro Bono Program to support INMED Andes, a non-governmental public health organization that's been running programs for children in Peru since the 1980s.

INMED Partnerships for Children is a U.S. humanitarian organization with operations in five countries. Their

original 1980's mission to provide medical care for children has expanded to meet evolving needs. In Peru, their mission is to rescue children from the immediate and irreversible dangers of sickness, hunger, abuse, neglect, violence, or instability. Their largest project is a deworming campaign in all of Peru's 24 regions, distributing donated medications from Johnson & Johnson as part of a new partnership with the government of Peru. With a small team of about 10 people in country, INMED needed support for improving communications, managing



After a few days of orientation Gabriela Lopez Lairer and Anisha Mohan polished their work plans for marketing and mapping the distribution of a deworming drug called Vermox in their final three weeks.

the supply chain, and tracking coverage of distribution in their new national campaign.

When NPCA's president, Glenn Blumhorst, invited me to volunteer for a week in Peru, I was definitely game. Who wouldn't accept an expense-paid opportunity to help improve children's health across Peru and revisit the beauty and culture of a country I love so much?

### Jack of all trades

The title of 'cultural coach' is a bit more monolithic than the role really was. What I didn't know at the time is that in addition to guiding the work of three international Johnson & Johnson employees in all things Peruvian, I would be resident problem-solver, logistics coordinator, just about full-time translator, bill-payer, picture-taker, and jack-of-all-trades for the introduction to their month-long pro bono program. True to the skills I had honed during an extended Peace Corps service, I remained as flexible and adaptable as always—and had a ton of fun wearing all of those hats.

Other RPCVs were being sent as cultural coaches for Johnson & Johnson volunteers headed to Mexico and Guatemala. Glenn, NPCA program coordinator Cooper Roberts, and Dr. Paula

Caligiuri at Northeastern discussed the role of cultural coaches with the three of us in a series of telephone calls. Next, I had more than two hours on a video call with the three Johnson & Johnson employees I would be meeting in Lima. My enthusiasm for Peru, their abundant questions, and the task of translation—Gabriela spoke very little English, and Anisha spoke very little Spanish—meant the call ran long. Even when I said our allotted time was up, they were not ready to hang up. It was most certainly a good sign that we were all fully committed. We started a WhatsApp group chat and I fielded packing and cultural questions as our departure

drew near such as what to bring as gifts for our hosts.

I landed in country a day before the Johnson & Johnson volunteers and met with INMED staff to review logistics. We bounced between hotel, conference center, and lunch venues, reserving and paying for the accommodations we would need during a week of orientation. By the time the evening rolled around, I was ready to get to the airport to finally meet the volunteers. Since their flights

were staggered and they were sure to be tired after a long day of travel, I asked my partner Martín Vega Orrego, who lives in Lima, to help collect large suitcases and accompany the first two to arrive to the airport's Tanta restaurant, an outpost of famous Peruvian chef Gaston Acurio's culinary empire. No better way exists to truly become acquainted with Peru than through its exquisite cuisine and Martín, like most Peruvians, is an expert at ordering and combining just the right flavors to excite and delight.

Our van picked us up at the airport and gave our Johnson & Johnson guests their first dark, drizzly peek into Lima's grimier side as we navigated the peripheral neighborhoods that separate the airport from the posh part of town. It was a good glimpse into the complicated and multi-faceted inequalities of Peru before they received their week of orientation in the comforts of Miraflores, Lima's modern, tourist-friendly, and more cosmopolitan area.

During one week, these corporate volunteers would be working on INMED programs in the marginalized parts of an Amazon jungle region called Ucayali.

### Learning Peru

After a chance to catch some rest in our swanky Courtyard by Marriott hotel, the corporate volunteers had a big first day meeting the INMED Andes team. Kristin Callahan, INMED's international programs director in Seattle, who served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Paraguay from 1993 to 1996, arrived to help facilitate the orientation. After gathering in the hotel lobby, we walked several blocks to an upscale all-you-can-eat restaurant with a Pacific Ocean view because INMED local staff also thought the best way to introduce their

corporate guests to the country was through spectacular food, showing off the Lima coastline, and a pisco sour or two. After a typically large lunch, we explored some of the more exotic fruits at a local grocery store (try Googling "aguaymanto," "chirimoya," or "granadilla"). As we attempted to take out local currency, an ATM machine swallowed Jennifer's debit card and presented us with the first trouble-shooting exercise of what proved to be a lively week. The bank was Canada's Scotia Bank and Scotia deemed Jennifer's Canadian debit card irretrievable.

converted turn-of-the-century hacienda, we enjoyed grilled octopus in along with skewers of barbecued cow hearts or anticuchos on a stick. The Johnson & Johnson volunteers learned how seriously Peruvians celebrate a cumpleaños when INMED's staff all stayed late one evening to help celebrate Gabriela's. The teams quickly made fast friends.

Because Anisha spoke very little Spanish, I interpreted everything the INMED team presented and vice versa when it was her turn to present. I also found myself interpreting the acronyms of Peruvian government agencies, their programs, and the regions where they operated. From my Peace Corps years, I was well-acquainted with them all. Our mornings filled up with the alphabet soup of Peru's bureaucracy well before we had even started our first course of lunch.

In preparation for meeting with Peruvian counterparts, Jennifer had

concerns about whether a handshake or a customary Peruvian kiss on the cheek was appropriate. I shared with her that it can depend on circumstance, so it is important to try to read the situation and follow other person's cues. Cultural competence does not always provide a clear answer and navigating its ambiguities was a skill the CALL program allowed the volunteers to improve.

The cold weather was a bit of a surprise for Gabriela from tropical Venezuela, so I loaned her an extra jacket and scarf. Her home country is also experiencing serious medication shortages due to the ongoing political crisis there, so we had to scramble to find the right anti-malarial meds to prepare her for her trip to a jungle site the following week. Unfortunately, what we needed in our short timeframe was not readily accessible in Peru either.

GABRIELA LOPEZ LAIRET



Gabriela snapped this selfie of INMED country director Dr. Fernando Perez (center) hosting a welcome lunch for his team and his Johnson & Johnson guests. To his left are Martín Vega Orrego, Emily McGinnis, Jennifer Smith, and Anisha Mohan from Johnson & Johnson.

We spent our orientation days intently sharing knowledge and strategizing support for each of the volunteers' projects over the coming weeks. The three Johnson & Johnson experts were offering their skills: Gabriela conducts marketing and communications as part of her sales role in Caracas, Jennifer manages operations and supply chain distribution in Toronto, and Anisha is a software analyst with global information mapping and app development skills in the New Jersey IT department.

We spent our evenings devoted to Peruvian culture and food-filled nights. We walked around Lima's artsy Barranco district and admired the prolific street art. During one evening, we took a spin around the historic colonial center. After each tour, we ate well. In the park, we enjoyed fried dough rings of picarones made from sweet potato and squash; in a

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Eventually, we ended up making do with Jennifer's excess supply. Aside from a couple of upset stomachs and some minor communication hiccups, the rest of the week went well.

**Full Belly, Fuller Heart**

True to Peace Corps service in its many forms, that week in Lima kept me on my toes. It reminded me of the power and impact of multi-stakeholder

partnerships in international work. It was a week working on a national level health program in a place that means so much to me, and presented me with new challenges, relationships, and opportunities along the way.

My week back in Lima confirmed that Peru is still the rich, varied, and delicious place that I remembered. I left it again with a full belly and an even fuller heart. I hope that others also have the

chance to savor all of its many beauties, complexities, and flavors at some point as well. I am grateful for the opportunity to have met all the folks in the Cultural Agility Leadership Lab program. If you are given the chance, I recommend it. I was extremely fortunate to have the opportunity to participate and I have NPCA to thank for that.

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*Emily McGinnis went to Peru as a youth development facilitator in June 2012. She spent two years in Cabanaconde, a small, rural Andean town in the Colca Valley of Arequipa, and the next two years in Lima, serving first as coordinator with Peace Corps Peru's Youth Development program and supporting the Gender Equality and Education programs of CARE Peru. She spent her last six months working at Peru's Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations, in its Directorate for the Prevention of Gender-Based Violence. Currently, Emily manages the Citizen Experience Lab at the Business Innovation Factory, a non-profit human-centered design firm in Providence, Rhode Island.*



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## How to be a cultural coach

The NPCA has posted RPCVs as cultural coaches for language and cultural support to corporate clients Cigna and Johnson & Johnson as they offer pro bono consulting on assignments in Guatemala, Indonesia, Mexico, Peru, and Thailand. Coaches are being sent soon to Colombia.

Cultural Agility Leadership Lab is an opportunity to deploy to your country of service for one or more weeks with all expenses paid. NPCA's partner in the Cultural Agility Leadership Lab is Northeastern University. NPCA vets the non-government organizations, the proposed projects, and the nature of the corporate support offered.

If you are interested in future short-term assignments, email [callcoordinator@peacecorpsconnect.org](mailto:callcoordinator@peacecorpsconnect.org).

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