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## THE PEACE CORPS MISSION

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Since 1961, when President John F. Kennedy challenged students at the University of Michigan to serve their country in the cause of peace by living and working in developing countries, more than 170,000 Peace Corps Volunteers have served in 136 countries all over the globe. They've been teachers and mentors to countless children. They've helped farmers grow crops, worked with small businesses to market products, and shown women how to care for their babies. More recently, they've helped schools develop computer skills, and trained on the prevention of HIV/AIDS. Throughout its history, Peace Corps has adapted and responded to the issues of the times. In an ever-changing world, Peace Corps Volunteers meet new challenges with innovation, creativity, determination, and compassion. These are the qualities that have allowed the Peace Corps to achieve its mission since 1961, and they remain the keys to achieving that mission today.

President Kennedy established Peace Corps to promote world peace and friendship. Three simple goals comprise the Peace Corps mission:

- 1. Helping the people of interested countries in meeting their need for trained men and women.**
- 2. Helping promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of the peoples served.**
- 3. Helping promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of all Americans.**

Peace Corps Volunteers have worked within the three goals of Peace Corps to help others address needs and priorities in ways that are sensitive to the cultural values and appropriate to the available resources of their communities. Volunteers work with the goal of reducing dependency, serving only at the invitation of host nations interested in defining their own development goals. Peace Corps understands development in human, people to people terms: helping people to develop the capacity to improve their own lives. This capacity-building approach focuses on helping our Thai community partners identify what they would like to see changed, use their own strengths and assets, and learn new skills to achieve what they believe is most important.

The developmental and human accomplishments of Peace Corps are frequently not tangible or easily measured. Volunteers should always partner with the community to get the work done so that genuine capacity building takes place. This can be especially hard when the planning process is moving more slowly than you anticipated. Volunteers often have to remind themselves, "It's the community's project, not mine."

A Volunteer's lifestyle and work-role merge. In both daily life and in work, Volunteers must take care to avoid the inherent appearance of arrogance in the posture of an outsider who has come to bring "change" and "improvements." Volunteers find that as

they live and work, they learn many valuable lessons from the people of their host country.

Through service in Peace Corps, thousands of American Volunteers have been given the opportunity to share in the action of a rapidly changing world. At the same time, through Peace Corps, the world has been allowed a very personal view of individual Americans putting their ideals to work.