

Environment and Agriculture Extension Volunteer

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Company: Peace Corps

Location: Zambia

Category: other-general

Project Description

Volunteers who have served in Zambia consider it to be the “quintessential Peace Corps experience” due to the rural nature of their placements and the enthusiasm typically shown to Volunteers for collaboration to address environmental needs. From their brightly colored chitenge fabric to the spectacular Victoria Falls, Zambia embraces their country’s philosophy of “One Zambia, One Nation.” Volunteers serving in Zambia as an Environment and Agriculture Extension Agent under the Linking Income, Food, and Environment (LIFE) project have an opportunity to collaborate with host country community counterparts to work in rural communities to boost their food and nutrition security with sustainable agriculture while working to protect one of Zambia’s greatest resources: the forests that cover more than two-thirds of Zambia’s land area.

Volunteers focus on working side by side with host country counterparts in building the capacity of rural community members to be food secure in ways that do not destroy natural resources. Volunteers also work with community partners to promote the incorporation of agroforestry technologies in the farming system, help to enhance soil and water management practices, and highlight useful gardening and tree planting techniques. They assist training in basic business skills, such as planning, record keeping, and marketing for farmers who are interested in scaling up their activities. Volunteers and local counterparts work together to co-promote increasing dietary diversity by conducting trainings and cooking demonstrations at the household level.

The most successful Volunteers in Zambia are flexible and adaptable and have a passion for supporting host community members in building upon established strengths by offering their knowledge and skills in service of community-prioritized projects. Peace Corps Zambia offers exceptional technical training during Pre-Service Training for those with the motivation to learn about the Environment and Food Security.

Please note that the Government of Zambia requires all Volunteers to hold a college degree upon arrival in the country. If you have not completed your degree at the time of departure, you will not be able to serve in Zambia.

Peace Corps Zambia promotes gender awareness and girls' education and empowerment. You will receive training on gender challenges in Zambia, and you will also have the opportunity to implement gender-related activities that are contextually appropriate. During your service, you will look for ways to work with community members to promote gender-equitable norms and increase girls' sense of agency. As part of your work, you will also report on these efforts and their impact.

Climate Change Activities

As the impacts of climate change become ever more evident, the social, economic, and environmental context within which smallholder farmers seek to maintain and improve their livelihood and support their families will continue to change. This will add significantly to the challenges of smallholder farming, particularly for the most disadvantaged communities. As a Peace Corps Volunteer, you will be trained to use a participatory approach and tools to identify locally determined priorities and conditions, including those related to the impacts of climate change. As an Agriculture Volunteer, you will be trained to use this local knowledge in engaging smallholder farmers in a climate-smart approach that:

- promotes the adoption of improved, appropriate, and adaptive agricultural practices and technologies that sustainably increase productivity;
- builds and strengthens household resilience by integrating and diversifying existing and new agriculture-related income-generating opportunities; and
- reduces greenhouse gas emissions attributable to ineffective and carbon intensive farming practices and encourages adoption of agricultural practices and activities that sequester

carbon.

COVID-19 Volunteer Activities

As a Volunteer, you will be trained in how to best protect yourself from COVID-19 exposure and understand the impact of and steps to reduce stigma related to COVID-19. You may also have the opportunity to engage with your community on implementing or enhancing COVID-19 mitigation activities, such as COVID-19 prevention and risk reduction strategies including social distancing, hand washing, mask wearing, addressing myths and misconceptions related to these practices, and vaccine hesitancy. Activities will be tailored to address the COVID-19 circumstances in the communities where you will serve.

Required Skills

Qualified candidates will have an expressed interest in working in agriculture or forestry and must have a Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Science degree in any field.

Desired Skills

- Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Science degree in any field.
- Experience in organizing/leading environmental education activities.
- 1 to 3 years farm, forestry, or nursery management experience.

Required Language Skills

There are no pre-requisite language requirements for this position.

While English is the official language of Zambia, Volunteers will need to speak the local language in order to effectively communicate in their communities. Very few community members may have intermediate or advanced levels of English, most will not. Therefore, Volunteers will be most effective when conversing and working in the local language, and all trainees must come prepared to learn a local Zambian language during Pre-Service Training (PST). Trainees are provided with a comprehensive language immersion program throughout their service. Initially, they will receive three months of language instruction from native speakers in the predominant language in their permanent community of two years. Volunteers will be required to attain communication skills in listening and speaking. They will also receive a survival language kit for the dialect found in their community and be encouraged to engage the services of a tutor once they get to their site (community).

Living Conditions

Becoming an Environment and Agriculture Extension Agent in Zambia requires commitment to working in remote areas with mentally and physically challenging environments. Volunteers must be prepared to bike long distances (up to 12 miles in one

direction) and to work and live in rural Zambian settings. Houses are typically made of mud bricks, with cemented floors, thatched or tin roofs, and no electricity. Water will be from a nearby well, stream, or borehole, which is then filtered through a Peace Corps-issued water filter. Cell phone call coverage may be weak or not exist in your community, but all Volunteers are able to send or receive text messages.

Volunteers typically live on a large housing compound with two or three other families but have their own housing structure, cooking area, private washing area, and latrine. Volunteers may choose to share meals with their host neighbors or cook on their own.

Peace Corps Zambia supports its Volunteers in this uniquely rural environment through a strong regional office model. In each province where Volunteers serve, Peace Corps Zambia operates a Provincial Office, which is staffed year-round and serves as a rest and resource center for work, collaboration and training. Further, having Peace Corps Staff and resources nearby allows for more comprehensive and timely support of Volunteers, especially in terms of their health and safety, which are Peace Corps' top priorities. Provincial Offices are a unique feature of Volunteer service and only found in a few Peace Corps countries.

Volunteers may face challenges due to various aspects of their identity. This could be due to ethnicity, race, physical attributes, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, or other traits. There are peer support networks and diversity trainings in place for assistance in navigating these challenges.

For Volunteers, the range of responses to their skin color may vary greatly: from being mistaken for a host country national to being questioned about their citizenship. Some Zambians may expect all U.S. citizens to be white. These encounters can be turned into positive intercultural exchanges for the Volunteer and the host country national.

Many countries have restrictive cultures regarding sexual orientation and non-conforming gender identities. While people in Zambia are generally accepting, values and morals concerning sexual orientation and gender identity may be different from those in some parts of the U.S. Volunteers will need to implement a high degree of discretion, be mindful of cultural norms, and

use their judgment to determine the best way to approach sexual orientation and gender identity in their communities. Staff and currently serving Volunteers will address this topic during Pre-Service Training and identify support mechanisms for incoming Trainees. While LGBTQI+ Volunteers are welcomed within Peace Corps Zambia, and many have served here successfully, it is recommended that applicants review State Department cautions for LGBTQI+ travelers (<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/International-Travel-Country-Information-Pages/Zambia.html>), and be aware that it is an environment that requires caution.

All Volunteers should be mindful of the issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion in the Peace Corps context. You will receive training on intercultural competence, diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility during your Peace Corps training and encouraged to be an ally to your fellow Volunteers.

Serving in Zambia

Learn more about the : Get detailed information on culture, communications, housing, health, and safety -- including health and crime statistics -- in order to make a well-informed decision about serving.

Couples Information

Peace Corps Zambia can accept couples serving in the same sector only.

During Pre-Service Training, couples will train at the same Training Center in the same language class. At the end of Pre-Service Training, couples will live in the same community where they work.

Medical Considerations

Before you apply, please review Medical Information for Applicants to learn about the medical clearance process.

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