

a note from the
DIRECTOR'S OFFICE



45th
Peace Corps
Anniversary



A LEGACY OF SERVICE
AT HOME AND ABROAD

To: Country Directors
From:
Subject: Volunteer Blogs
Date: February 9, 2006

As Country Directors, you are the Peace Corps leaders in our 69 posts around the world. We want to ensure that you are receiving the support and the guidance you need to carry out your work. Country directors will ask for clarity on policy issues or seek additional guidance on specific situations from time to time that would be beneficial to all posts. In an effort to be helpful, the Director's Office will start providing periodic information to you on some of those specific areas. We hope you will find this information useful and that you will feel free to recommend other issues you may wish us to address in future guidances. Today we are taking this opportunity to address an issue, emerging in importance, which many of you have asked about: weblogs or blogs.

Weblogs or blogs are a fast growing medium of personal publishing and individual expression on the Internet. According to a blog search engine, BlogPulse, which tracks this topic, about 60,000 new blogs are posted every 24 hours. Peace Corps Volunteers are surely among those thousands who use this technology as a way to communicate with family and friends all over the world and to record their experiences in the Peace Corps. This represents a wealth of stories and insights that has the potential to bring the Peace Corps message home even while the Volunteer or Trainee is still at post.

Although the overwhelming majority of Volunteer blogs present insightful and positive experiences, some Volunteers have written statements in blogs that could potentially put themselves or the reputation of Peace Corps at risk. Blogs and websites are public information, easily found through Internet search engines. When detailed personal information and inappropriate or culturally insensitive comments are posted, this is of concern to us as such information has the potential to harm the Volunteer or put the Peace Corps' reputation in jeopardy.

Peace Corps Volunteers/Trainees are subject to guidelines **ON THE USE OF NON-PEACE CORPS IT EQUIPMENT** outlined in current Peace Corps policy (see attached Policy). As country directors, you are responsible for developing the expectations we have of our Volunteers and enforcing proper conduct where blogs and other types of electronic communication are concerned.

Volunteers must discuss with you in advance the content and format of any information they are developing for personal websites and blogs to ensure the materials are in compliance with

agency guidelines, are sensitive to the culture of the host country, and most importantly, protect the safety and security of the Volunteers.

Thank you in advance for your attention to this sensitive matter. As always, the Regional Directors and the General Counsel's Office are available to discuss your concerns and answer any questions that you may have.