



PEACE CORPS

Dominican Republic



Annual Report

2010

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A message from the Country Director

Dear Partners and Friends of Peace Corps DR,

During 2010, Peace Corps Volunteers and their partners continued our 49-year collaboration to build individual and organizational capacities in rural areas, towns and cities of the Dominican Republic. Our work always begins with a description of a need and an invitation by a Dominican Governmental or non-governmental agency to work together to solve a specific problem.

Our Peace Corps Volunteers live where they work, so that at the same time that we contribute in specific ways to the development of the Dominican Republic, we also create linkages and build the kind of cultural understanding that brings people together in lifelong friendships. When our Volunteers go home, many of them feel that they have two families, one in the USA and one in the DR.

This report documents some of the accomplishments that Peace Corps Volunteers and their Dominican work partners accomplished during the past year. Although they are impressive, the fact that we did it together is the greatest accomplishment of all.

Arthur Flanagan

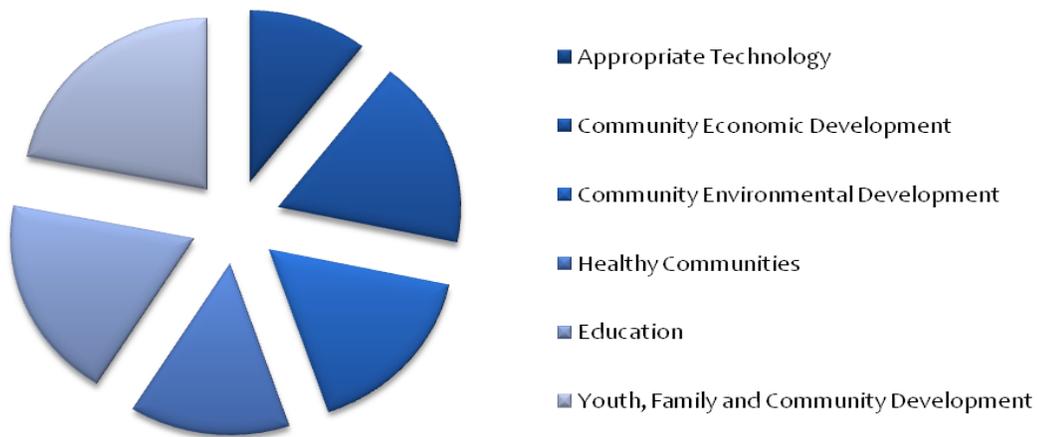


Our projects and their impact in the Dominican Republic

The first group of Peace Corps Volunteers came to the Dominican Republic in 1962. Since then, over 4,150 Volunteers have served in the country.

In 2010, our Peace Corps Volunteers and their work partners continued this pattern by working in specific areas of Appropriate Technologies, Community Economic Development, Community Environmental Development, Healthy Communities, Education, and Youth and Family Development.

Peace Corps Volunteers in the Dominican Republic



Appropriate Technology

With 23 Peace Corps Volunteers currently working in the field, the goal of the PCDR Appropriate Technology Sector is to organize Dominican agencies, communities, and families to bring appropriate, cost-effective technologies to rural families that will improve their lifestyles, ameliorate health and environmental problems, and raise both economic and educational productivity.

Project Achievements for 2010

- ▲ 47 hygiene promoters trained.
- ▲ 22 community members completed the Water Committee Management training.
- ▲ 12 Ferrocement tanks built nationwide.
- ▲ 6 small gravity-flow aqueducts completed, benefitting 100 families in rural areas.
- ▲ 6 water committees trained to manage their own aqueducts.

Ferrocement tanks, beyond the Peace Corps

In the spring of 2010, Water Safe to Drink Volunteers from the Dominican Republic held an in-service training in the community of Las Aguas, Altamira. The goal of the training was to provide a water tank for the gravity-fed water system of Las Aguas, which the community and volunteer Iain Hunt were constructing. Of greater consequence, the training was also a chance to begin training other volunteers and community counterparts in the use of a new technology called ferrocement for constructing water tanks.

Ferrocement was widely used in Bolivia where Associate Project Director Tim McFarren had previously worked in the Peace Corps. Ten volunteers and eight community partners attended the training. In five days, the group constructed a 5000 Gallon tank that costs half the price of a traditional block tank of the same size. Volunteers and Dominicans returned to their communities determined to implement the ferrocement tanks in their own systems and to learn more about the construction process. In the months since then, over a dozen water tanks have been constructed for Peace Corps water system projects. The Peace Corps is developing a certification process for skilled masons who are eager to learn appropriate technology construction methods and who wish to continue promoting the highly advantageous ferrocemento concept. The first masons trained are already constructing tanks completely on their own, independent of Peace Corps.



One of the masons trained is Papote, from a small, rural community where volunteer Ryan Biehl recently completed one year of service. Ryan first invited him to participate in the construction of a spring-fed intake works in a neighboring community. There, he learned about key components and rules of building an intake works. Shortly thereafter, Papote constructed two functioning intake works for the community water project where Ryan serves. Excited to learn more, Papote went with Ryan to the construction of a 12,000 gallon ferrocement water tank in another water volunteer's site.

Only weeks after attending the tank construction there, the civil engineer employed by the government of Altamira, approached Papote. He was helping a non-Peace Corps community to build their own water system. Tired of extreme water shortages, the community council is funding its own water system through user fees, municipal funding, and donations from Dominicans living in the USA. The engineer had visited the initial Tank Construction Training and also knew that Papote was learning to build ferrocement tanks. The community agreed to contract Papote to build the intake works and water tank for their private water system. With the help of local labor hired by the water committee, Papote constructed the intake works in July of 2010 and the 10,000 gallon water tank in September of 2010. Ryan Biehl provided technical support as needed to Papote, however these construction projects were clearly initiated, funded, and managed by the Dominicans involved.

Community Economic Development

The Community Economic Development (CED) project seeks to strengthen the capacity of organizations, entrepreneurs and families throughout the Dominican Republic to determine and manage their economic opportunities and to enhance the socio-economic quality of life. There are currently 39 Peace Corps Volunteers working in the project sector.



Project Achievements for 2010

- ▲ 237 business owners/ employees using improved business administration techniques.
- ▲ 47 community leaders practiced leadership and management techniques.
- ▲ 7 youth business were funded under the Business Plan Competition.
- ▲ 3 community banks established.

The Cacao Block and the Chocolate Tour

“For the past few months we have been collaborating with the ice cream company Ben & Jerry's; after one of their reps visited our Chocolate Tour in December '08, she asked us if they could bring winners of an international competition from 15 different countries to take our tour. Not only did this group, Ben & Jerry's staff, and Ben and Jerry themselves do that, but they also expressed their desire to collaborate with us on a community "build" project. Through meetings with them, my project partner organization, and reps from my local community groups, we decided upon a playground and park space. The Cacao Cooperative donated the land, Ben & Jerry's donated US\$20,000 in equipment and construction materials, and community members in voluntary labor.”

“Two days after their tour, the international winners, Ben, Jerry, their staff, community members, cacao block staff, other Peace Corps Volunteers and I finished up the build and inaugurated a community playground. Since its construction, we have also received free media attention for the Tour courtesy of Ben & Jerry's publicity, have established a park cleaning and maintenance board with reps from different community groups (the President being the main leader among community youth), established rules and norms for the public space, and have received another visit from Ben & Jerry's in which their social missions director and Jerry expressed their desire to stay involved and help our Tour develop in whatever way that they can!!”

– Alanna Hughes, El Seibo

Community environmental Development

The Community Environmental Development (CEDE) project seeks to promote environmental awareness and hands-on skill development among poor Dominicans which can be used to implement projects that improve the quality of their lives and create appreciation for the environment and rational use of natural resources. This project has 36 Peace Corps Volunteers currently working in the field.

Project Achievements for 2010

- ▲ 308 improved stoves built.
- ▲ 114 farmers trained in sustainable agriculture practices, including reforestation and soil conservation methods.
- ▲ 79 farmers received orientation in organic coffee and cacao farming practices.
- ▲ 78 gardening projects implemented.
- ▲ 8 community nurseries implemented.
- ▲ 4 eco-tourism projects initiated.

Improved stoves project

During her first two years of Peace Corps service, Claire Clugston lived and worked in Francisco Mateo, a small farming community of 50 households in San Cristobal, west of Santo Domingo. In her community diagnostic, Claire noted that every household in her community cooked its food on open fires. The women stated that they had many health problems due to the cook smoke that they inhaled and that sometimes they could not find enough wood to cook the family's food. In this same diagnostic, Claire also determined that the community did not have any functional community organizations. Claire therefore focused her attention on forming a women's group to conduct an improved cook stove project.

She spent her first year of service building the capacity of the women in the group to plan and implement project activities, facilitating the group's first elections, and writing grant proposals for the stove project. In collaboration with the women in the community, Claire selected and trained two local masons to build 41 cook stoves.



The project was met with great enthusiasm and demand for the stoves spread across the region. In response to this demand, Claire brought the cook stove project to two neighboring communities, where she strengthened and worked with women's groups to construct 58 more stoves.

Claire also collaborated with the farmers in her community to plant 3,000 citrus trees, which she and her project partner solicited from CODOCAFE, a government organization created to help coffee farmers. When asked about Claire's impact on the community, her project partner, Manual Antonio Lara, stated that the fruit tree project had been the most important for him. Lara said that by working with him to solicit the plants from the Dominican government, Claire taught him how to be independent and obtain resources for his community.

Healthy Communities

With 31 Peace Corps Volunteers currently working in the field, the purpose of the Healthy Communities (HC) project is that low-income families living in small rural villages of the Dominican Republic have increased health education opportunities and access to resources that will result in healthier lives.



Project Achievements for 2010

- ▲ 534 families in nine communities have improved their nutrition as a result of their participation in the Small-Scale Food Production project
- ▲ 509 youth in 12 rural communities received Basic orientation in life skills, sexually transmitted diseases and teen pregnancy prevention.
- ▲ 415 mothers empowered to access reproductive health services.
- ▲ 159 health promoters trained in nine communities.
- ▲ 105 women were trained as reproductive health promoters in eight communities.

Health education and community strengthening

When Connie Alfaro arrived in her community in Puerto Plata rural zone, the Centro de Madres was nonfunctional. With the help of some of the women in the community they started to have weekly meetings and elected officers for the center.

Connie also started the "Healthy Homes" program which provided health instructions to mothers via charlas and home visits. Additionally, she started a healthy eating course with women and youth, which is educational and fun; and an Escojo Group to train youth in HIV/AIDS, STD and teen pregnancy prevention.

Also, she formed a group of men that are meeting on Fridays. She hopes that this group will eventually become the Junta de Vecinos. They are exploring ways to bring industry into the community.

While conducting a community diagnostic, one of the needs Connie identified was planned activities for youth 7-16. With the help of member of the community, soccer practices were started with the hope of eventually starting girls and boys' soccer teams.

Education

The Education project seeks to improve the availability and quality of education in rural and marginal urban schools through training teachers, students and community members in information technology (ICT), to teach and learn more effectively, as well as to generate greater income. This project sector has 42 Peace Corps Volunteers working in the field.



Project Achievements for 2010

- ▲ 260 youth trained in advanced uses of office and specialty software and/or hardware.
- ▲ 74 Community Technology Center teachers and lab managers trained
- ▲ 48 ICT workers PC-certified in improved techniques and materials.
- ▲ 48 Project Partners trained to provide ICT workshops and courses.

Training teachers in Imbert, Puerto Plata

“In the months of September and October, we held teacher training workshops in the high school laboratory. A lab that was once collecting yellow jacket hives in CPUs, was filled on Saturday mornings and afternoons with the high school and night school teachers eager to obtain the skills necessary to begin using IT in the classes. It is now more imperative than ever that our teachers learn to integrate IT in their teaching methods because the Ministry of Education has removed computer classes from the school curriculum. Instead, teachers are required to plan a certain amount of classes in the lab.”

“Teachers chose to come either in the morning or the afternoon for 2 hours. I pulled together materials from existing IT courses and adapted it to add activities relevant to the teachers work. Each Saturday we added a tool to their IT belt: formatting exams and lesson plans in Word, creating presentations in PowerPoint, finding didactic materials and educational videos online, and simply learning the interface and file system of Windows. The workshops have also created more interest among teachers who didn’t attend the training.”

“Schools in the Dominican Republic lack many resources. In overcrowded, hot classrooms, teachers battle an environment not conducive to learning with nothing more than a black board and some chalk. But with their new IT skills, they can now bring their class to the lab, show a video, use an educational program, or teach with a PowerPoint presentation.”
– Amanda Meng, Imbert, Puerto Plata.

Youth, Families and Community Development

The purpose of the Youth, Family & Community Development (YFCD) Project is to have Young people in the Dominican Republic empowered to create a positive impact in their personal lives and within their communities using knowledge, skills and proactive decision making. There are currently 48 Peace Corps Volunteers working in the YFCD project sector.



Project Achievements for 2010

- ▲ 203 children improved their basic literacy skills.
- ▲ 166 Girls, Boys and Youth have played key roles in Service Learning projects.
- ▲ 46 youth are using their English skills to teach others, and 40 are benefitting economically from their English skills
- ▲ 28 communities have a school/community library facility available for use.



Sports and life skills

"The greatest success that I have seen so far in my community is how animated and engaged the youth have become over the last few months. Between the PC and Save the Children projects, the youth in the community have many more opportunities to become engaged in their community and to participate in activities that they have not previously been able to. I have seen this through my reading groups, English classes, Escojo group, and volleyball team in particular."

"When I first arrived in my community, it was very difficult to get anything going. Following the laws of inertia, the youth, who had been at rest for quite some time, more or less stayed at rest. A group of girls in the community expressed to me early on that they would like to start a volleyball team. Excited, I went out and got a volleyball and met with the girls to set up a time to practice. The girls all said that they wanted to play and seemed excited by the prospect, but whenever it came time for practice, no one was ever ready. Instead, I found myself walking around the community for 45 minutes, rounding up the 6 players. By the time that we finally reached the court in the neighboring community, I would normally be so annoyed that I found it difficult to find the energy to play. What I didn't realize at the time, however, was that the youth in my community had been so disengaged that they didn't have any real planning skills to help them figure out their days. As time wore on, we worked more on scheduling and incentives--namely, those who came to practice on time and participated regularly would have priority to participate in exchanges with other teams. Between these incentives and getting used to the simple routine of practicing regularly, the situation is now very different. Not only are the girls ready on time, they are often eager to go early, and sometimes even practice on their own. I consider this a success because the youth are learning how to go out and get what they want, and to adjust to a regular routine. We still have a long way to go, but it's been a comfort to see that something that was at first so frustrating could become not only a success, but enjoyable as well." – Kerry Magee, Consuelo, San Pedro de Macorís

Special Initiatives

Escojo Mi Vida (I Choose my Life)

PCDR initiated the Escojo HIV/AIDS project in 2004. Since that time, with the support of the Presidential Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), the project has grown into a national program, with over 210 groups nationwide.

The Peace Corps Dominican Republic HIV/AIDS Prevention (Escojo) Initiative focuses on promoting healthy sexual decisions by individuals. Peace Corps volunteers train groups of peer educators in their communities using a life skills approach that focuses on values, self-esteem, decision making skills, as well as the skills and knowledge necessary to make healthy sexual decisions.

These peer educators are trained using a curriculum developed by Peace Corps staff, volunteers and project partners in the Dominican Republic. The curriculum focuses on teaching strategies to promote healthy decision making and effecting positive behavior change as it relates to sexual health among young people in the cultural context of the country. The sessions are developed using interactive, non-formal education training methodologies that are easily trained and replicated by the peer educators.

Escojo and the HIV/AIDS clubs have become the largest functioning Dominican Volunteer organization in the country. The national infrastructure that is being constructed and the continuing support of the Dominican Volunteers will provide the kind of sustainability and impact that was envisioned by the PEPFAR program. It is a new model for PEPFAR and one that may have implications for possible replication in other countries.





Escojo Initiative achievements for 2010

- ▲ 3,233 youth reached with messages on HIV/AIDS, STI and teen pregnancy prevention through the Escojo Initiative.
- ▲ 268 HIV/AIDS prevention peer educators trained at a National Conference, where Escojo participants received further training on maintaining the level of quality information, to continue social marketing and to promote sustainability of the Escojo groups.
- ▲ Three Regional Conferences (60 participants each) to train youth in the basic Escojo curriculum which includes healthy decision making, HIV/AIDS prevention, avoiding adolescent pregnancies, building self-esteem, and focusing on creating positive futures.
- ▲ Nine Sub-regional Follow-up meetings (50 participants each), small scale, one-day meetings to focus on forming networks between Escojo groups working in the same geographic areas.
- ▲ Two Certification Workshops, gathering approximately 80 youth who have demonstrated outstanding leadership skills, a commitment to service, and dedication to the Escojo Initiative. These youth will serve as regional or sub-regional coordinators of Escojo. They will be responsible for support, monitoring, evaluation and follow-up of Escojo groups in their area. They will also be responsible for coordinating various sub-regional activities to promote Escojo and reporting back to Peace Corps about their activities.
- ▲ Two sustainability workshops (totaling 451 participants) to give support to active Escojo groups who are no longer working directly with a Peace Corps Volunteer in their community.
- ▲ Three management workshops (35 participants) to train peer educators on how to coordinate the sub-regional follow-up meetings.
- ▲ Two executive conferences: The purpose of these conferences is to promote the Escojo methodology as a viable model for organizations seeking to reach at-risk youth populations in the Dominican Republic. The conferences are aimed at policy advisers and managers from the Ministries of Education, Health, and Youth. Additional participants include members of local and international non-governmental organizations and other international donor organizations including USAID, World Bank, and Inter-American Development Bank. The conferences also provide an opportunity for the recently certified youth trainers to demonstrate their leadership and facilitation skills to these agencies and organizations. Each conference hosted 20 participants.
- ▲ Two evaluation & monitoring workshops. The purpose of these events was to improve the reporting capacity of the existing group of Escojo trainers. They learned basic monitoring, reporting, and evaluation concepts and how to collect and process data from Escojo-related activities and report according to the Peace Corps procedures and guidelines provided by the PEPFAR initiative for monitoring.
- ▲ A sports activity, to use sports as incentives for young women and men in their communities to attend workshops about sexual health and HIV/AIDS prevention.

Construye tus sueños (Build Your Dreams)

This program, established in 2006, addresses two main challenges facing youth in the Dominican Republic:

- High unemployment rates
- A lack of basic business knowledge in poor rural and urban communities that hampers the creation of successful micro-enterprises.

Build Your Dreams addresses these difficulties by directly engaging at-risk youth in the communities in which they live, providing them with the training and assisting them to acquire resources necessary to start and manage a micro-enterprise in their respective communities.



Construye tus sueños achievements for 2010

- ▲ The program operated in over 45 communities.
- ▲ 330 youth trained with the Build Your Dreams curriculum.
- ▲ A national business competition, where 19 finalist groups presented their business plans to panels of Dominican business executives.
- ▲ Seven groups received funding for their business plans.



Brigada Verde (Green Brigade)

Brigada Verde (Green Brigade) was started in February, 2004. It is a national a network of environmental youth groups that allows young people to be involved in serving their community and promoting a harmonious relationship between humans and the environment. Brigada Verde members work at community level to take action and raise awareness about environmental issues. The network seeks to train facilitators in environmental education to reduce environmental degradation in the country. At the same time, it provides a structure to channel the energies of Dominican youth into activities directed at environment protection. Brigada Verde has four main goals:

- To develop leadership among the youth of the Dominican Republic
- To facilitate and encourage interest in and the exploration of the environment and nature.
- To promote the spirit of volunteering
- To create a national support network for youth working for the environment.



Brigada Verde achievements for 2010

- ▲ 899 youth reached with environment conservation messages.
- ▲ 13 new Brigada Verde Groups formed
- ▲ Two field study trips where Volunteers and their groups exchanged experiences and ideas
- ▲ Two Regional Conferences
- ▲ A National Conference
- ▲ A Marine Conference

Encargados del Futuro (ICT youth groups)

This initiative was started in 2007 as a National Conference to train Youth on Community Tech Center Management. It has evolved in a tech based community service movement. The mission of Encargados del Futuro is to train youth serve their communities through educational experiences and practical projects that encourage leadership and professional development. ICT youth groups provide constructive learning opportunities to treat unmet needs in their communities.

Encargados del Futuro achievements for 2010

- ▲ Over 60 youth attended the National Conference to learn about team work, leadership, teaching methodologies, computer/lab maintenance, successful community projects and professional development.
- ▲ Currently, there are 7 ICT groups working with a locally developed manual.



GLOW (Girls Leading Our World / Camp Superman)

The first girls' empowerment Camp GLOW in the DR was held in July 2005 and has been held each consecutive year since then with approximately 60 girls between 14 and 18, and 20-25 Peace Corps Volunteers attending each time. The original manual in English was translated into Spanish and culturally adapted by DR Peace Corps Volunteers.

The aim is to create a safe space where young women can learn and grow together, in a supportive environment, to



provide them with training to promote them as leaders; training in self esteem and leadership skills, sexual health including HIV/AIDS prevention, positive decision making, and planning the future and career development. The focus of GLOW is gender based and aims to work with young women to help them become assertive female leaders and role models for other young women in their communities. One of the objectives of the camp is that the girls will be better equipped to resist social pressure to start a relationship ("marry") and leave school. A further objective is that emerging leaders will present the information to other girls in their community when they return.

The girls' empowerment initiative has continued to grow, with 20 girls' groups currently established, meeting regularly and working with Peace Corps Volunteers. As part of the growth plan for this initiative, this year (2010), the first two regional GLOW camps and three follow-up activities for International women's day were held.

Obviously girls' empowerment has to go hand in hand with gender training and a focus on boys and masculinity. Youth Peace Corps Volunteers held a pilot boys' camp in 2007, this was further developed in 2009 as the YFCD first "Camp Superman" or GLOW for Guys, and repeated this year in 2010 with the participation of 32 boys between 11 and 14 years old, together with 15 Peace Corps Volunteers. The idea of the Camp is to create a space where pre-adolescent and adolescent boys can learn and grow together, in a supportive environment away from the social pressures of a male dominated society. The focus is again gender based and aims to work with young men to help them become positive leaders and role models for other young men in their communities. Gender awareness and masculinity, and how that is reflected in friendship, leadership, working in groups, life skills, reproductive health and HIV-AIDS prevention were key themes. Sessions were interactive and included sports, adventure hikes, and other creative activities including science projects and painting personalized Superman plaques.



One of the objectives is that the boys will realize there are alternative ways of doing things that involve positive communication and working together. A further objective is that emerging leaders will present the information to other boys in their community when they return. A highlight of Camp Superman 2010 was the strength of the camp's central message: "How to be a Superman." The campers demonstrated a clear understanding of the characteristics of a superman; healthy body, open mind, positive communication and equal treatment, during the four days of camp.

Peace Corps Goals

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

