



Peace Corps Swaziland

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Community Health (HIV/AIDS) Education Project Stakeholders Report

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Overview

The first group of U.S. Peace Corps Volunteers arrived in Swaziland in January 1969, a few months after its independence from Britain. During the following 28 years Peace Corps provided Swaziland with a total of 1,400 Volunteers. The primary focus throughout most of this period was in secondary education (mathematics, science, English, agriculture and vocational training) and agricultural cooperatives. Due to budgetary constraints, in 1996 Peace Corps regrettably closed its program in Swaziland as it did in several other countries.

In 2002, Peace Corps returned to Swaziland at the request of King Mswati III to assist in countering the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The Peace Corps Swaziland Post reopened in early 2003 and the first group of Volunteers to implement the Community Health Project began their service in November 2003. Since re-opening the program nearly 300 Volunteers have served in Swaziland.

During the current phase of the Health Project (2008-2013), the Post is strengthening collaboration and partnership with the Swazi government's HIV/AIDS coordinating body, the National Emergency Response Council for HIV/AIDS (NERCHA). NERCHA is the coordinating and facilitating agency of the national multi-sectoral response to HIV and AIDS prevention, care and support including impact mitigation. In collaboration with the former Ministry of Regional Development and Youth Affairs, NERCHA created 291 *KaGogo Social Centres* throughout Swaziland to promote local ownership and response to the pandemic. Peace Corps supports this initiative by posting Volunteers in communities to assist with the development of the KaGogo centres. Each centre's activities are coordinated by a KaGogo Clerk, who is the Volunteer's initial counterpart. In the Volunteer's first three months of service, he or she works with the KaGogo Clerk to develop a community assessment that includes an analysis of community priorities and potential work opportunities for the Volunteer to address collaboratively with his/her community.

Beyond this collaboration with KaGogo Centres, Volunteers work with a broad range of counterparts and beneficiaries in the health, education, and youth development sectors. During service, Volunteers form partnerships with traditional and elected leaders, schools, non-governmental organizations, informal community groups, churches, and others. Depending upon the needs of each community and the skills of the Volunteer posted there, a Volunteer may teach, mobilize resources, write proposals, coach youth, build organizational capacity, or provide other assistance.

About Peace Corps

In 1961, President John F. Kennedy established the Peace Corps to promote world peace and friendship.

The Peace Corps' mission has three simple goals:

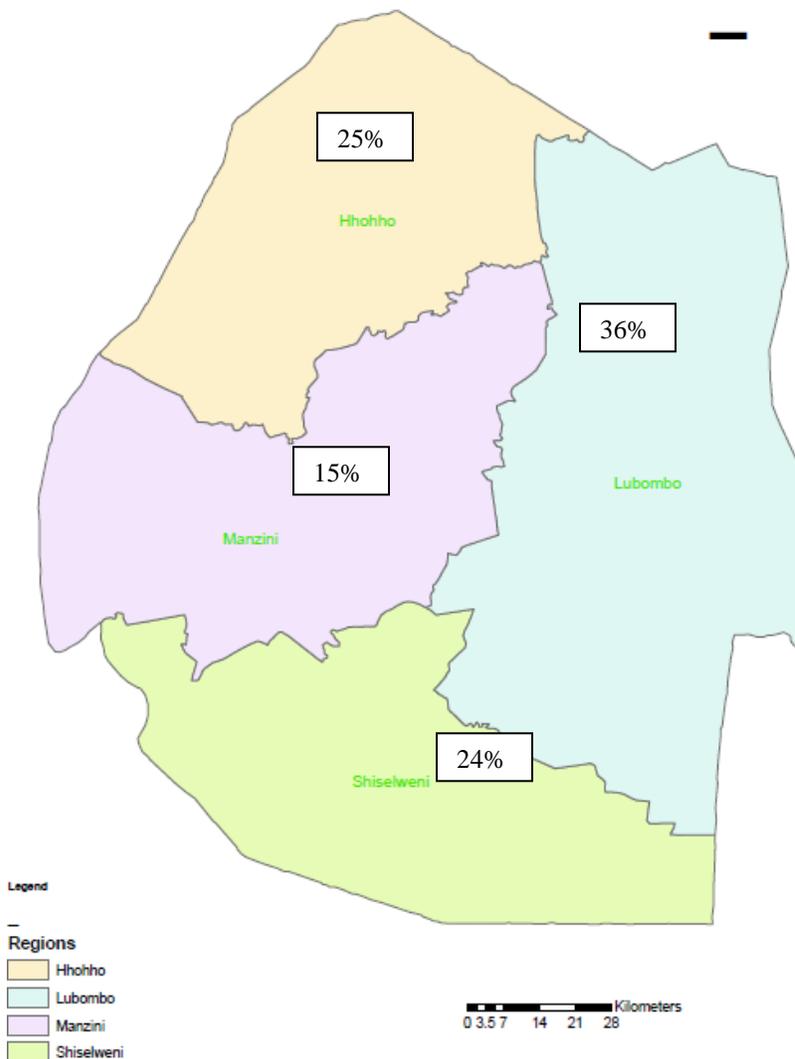
1. Helping the people of interested countries in meeting their need for trained men and women.

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 Americans.

Since 1961, nearly 200,000 Peace Corps Volunteers have served in 139 host countries to work on issues ranging from AIDS education to information technology and environmental preservation. Today's Peace Corps is more vital than ever, working in emerging and essential areas such as information technology and business development, and contributing to the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). Peace Corps Volunteers continue to help countless individuals who want to build a better life for themselves, their children, and their communities.

Map of Volunteer Placements by Region

Peace Corps Swaziland Volunteers 2010



Volunteers are placed in all four regions in Swaziland. In recent years, the Lubombo region has hosted the largest proportion of Volunteers - or about 36% of the Volunteers. Hhohho and Shiselweni Regions have each received about a quarter of Peace Corps Swaziland Volunteers. Manzini Region has been home to about 15% of the Volunteers.

Peace Corps Swaziland's Community Health Project Plan

Purpose:

Swazi youth, adults, and community organizations will be engaged in activities that will positively contribute to a society responding proactively to the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

The three goals of the project are:

- Goal 1: Community members will adopt positive behaviors to ensure their own health;
- Goal 2: Partner organizations will have enhanced capacity to achieve their missions; and
- Goal 3: Service providers will have enhanced technical capacity to provide HIV/AIDS prevention, education, care, and support.

Status of Project's Objectives

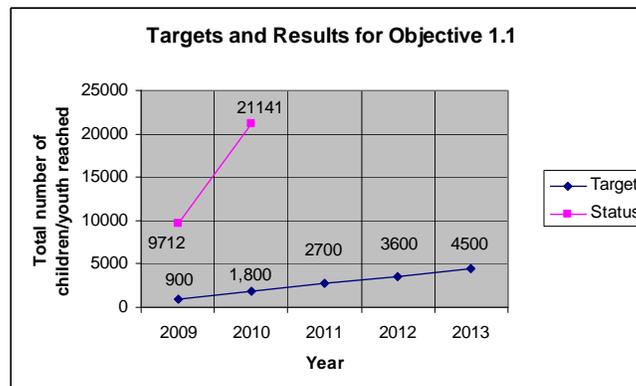
Objective 1.1: By October 2013, 225 Volunteers and their collaborators will educate 4500 children (2250 girls and 2250 boys under 15) and 9000 youth (4500 girls and 4500 boys ages 15-24) on knowledge and skills necessary to reduce high risk behaviors and live healthier lives (Life Skills¹ and HIV/AIDS prevention², care³, and support⁴).

Results:

To date, Volunteers and their counterparts have educated 21,141 children or youth on knowledge and skills necessary to reduce high risk behaviors and live healthier lives.

Analysis:

Peace Corps Swaziland has exceeded the initial target set for this objective; however Volunteers and their counterparts will continue to educate this target group.



¹ **Life skills** may include communication skills, values clarification, decision making, self-esteem, non-violent conflict resolution, gender issues, puberty, value of education, employment options, career development, reproductive health, prevention of STIs, drug and alcohol abuse, relationship skills.

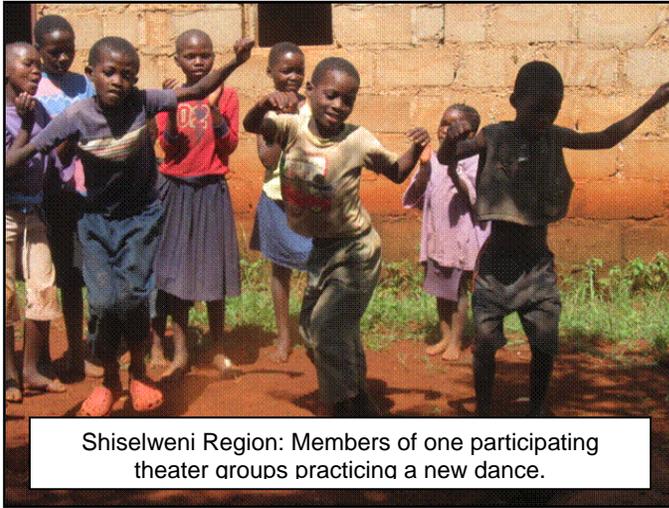
² **Prevention** may include HIV/AIDS myths and facts, modes of transmission, modes of protection, refusal skills and prevention for HIV positives.

³ **Care** may include knowledge of disease progression and positive behaviors, accessing and maintaining treatment, hygiene practices, nutrition, and knowledge of opportunistic infections.

⁴ **Support** may include emotional support, stigma reduction, or support for caregivers and PLWHA.

Objective 1.1 Volunteer Success Story – Theater Competition

In recent years, Volunteers began increasing their involvement in local theater to educate, encourage behavioral change, and stimulate creative thinking. Volunteers found theater to be a powerful tool in the Peace Corps Swaziland setting especially among youth populations. From 2009-2010, Volunteers, a young theater group and 210 youth organized a national theater program that was meant to: 1) Empower young people with basic theatrical skills as a tool of expressing issues of concern to them, including how to avoid the dangers of HIV/AIDS and respond to sexual abuse and gender-based violence; 2) Create awareness around the pertinent issues affecting young people, especially regarding sexual abuse and gender-based violence; and 3) Contribute to the improvement of access to high quality sexual and reproductive health information by young people.



Shiselweni Region: Members of one participating theater groups practicing a new dance.

This project included the planning and implementation of a week-long workshop designed to train two representatives from each participating group in basic theater skills and health education. After the workshop participating groups entered a 12-week rehearsal period with weekly health lessons led by the two representatives who attended the workshop and were assisted by participating Peace Corps Volunteers in the area. Groups that successfully completed the rehearsal period were asked to attend a competition at the Swaziland Theater Club in the capital, Mbabane. All of the ten plays in the

competition focused on themes of sexual abuse, sexual coercion and gender-based violence and all participants demonstrated improved knowledge of these complex issues. According to the organizing Volunteer, "The youth who participated in this project are now able to use theater as a tool to educate about sexual and reproductive health issues. This is a skill we hope will stay with and benefit them in the future both on stage and in their personal lives. In the long term, we hope this will build their confidence in negotiating healthy sexual behaviors and also raise their awareness on reproductive health issues."



Hhohho Region: A youth group uses theater to teach children about gender-based violence.

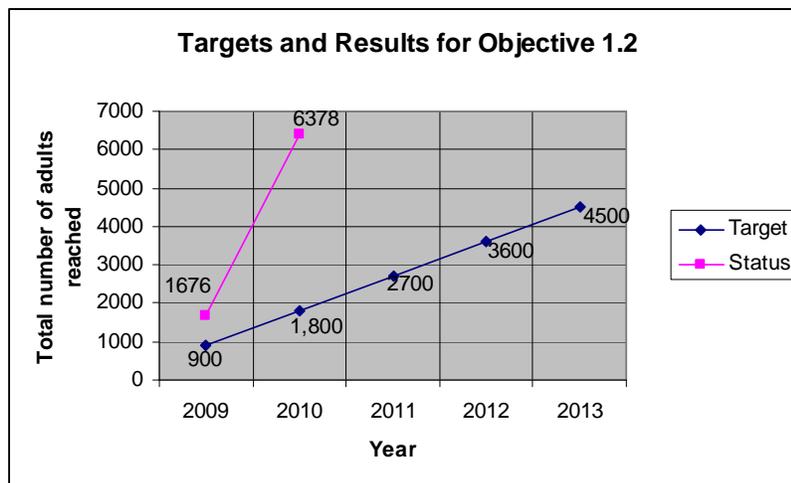
Objective 1.2: By October 2013, 225 Volunteers and their collaborators will educate 4500 adults (2250 women and 2250 men ages 25 and older) on knowledge and skills necessary to reduce high risk behavior, live healthier lives and improve family health (Life Skills and HIV/AIDS prevention, care and support).

Results:

To date, Volunteers and their counterparts have educated 6,378 adults on knowledge and skills necessary to reduce high risk behaviors, live healthier lives and improve family health.

Analysis:

Peace Corps Swaziland has exceeded the initial target set for this objective; however Volunteers and their counterparts will continue to educate this target group.



Objective 1.2 Volunteer Success Story – Community Health Day for Men

A Volunteer and her KaGogo Center Manager counterpart in the Shiselweni Region received an outpouring of requests from men in their community for a health day focusing on male issues. This Volunteer worked with her counterpart to organize, plan, and monitor two day-long health events at the community’s animal dip tanks. The Volunteer and her counterpart secured facilitation support from local and international NGOs (LATICC and PSI) to provided information on current HIV prevention methods for males including male circumcision, being faithful, condom use and abstinence. The events also included on-site HIV testing, stigma reduction activities, circumcision opportunities, and church support. During these events, 93 older male youth and adults were encouraged to place a condom on a teaching model. This gave the presenters and audience members the opportunity to correct any mistakes that were made. It also helped the participants gain confidence to use this skill consistently at home. Health information boards were placed at each dip tank site, serving as a community resource. Some of the resources placed at each information board included condom dispensers and other health-related materials. A total of 28 individuals were tested for HIV, and 20 males signed-up to get circumcised in Lavumisa the following week. The Volunteer’s counterpart relayed that this was the first time he had given a formal health education presentation, collaborated to write a successful grant proposal, and liaised with international NGOs.

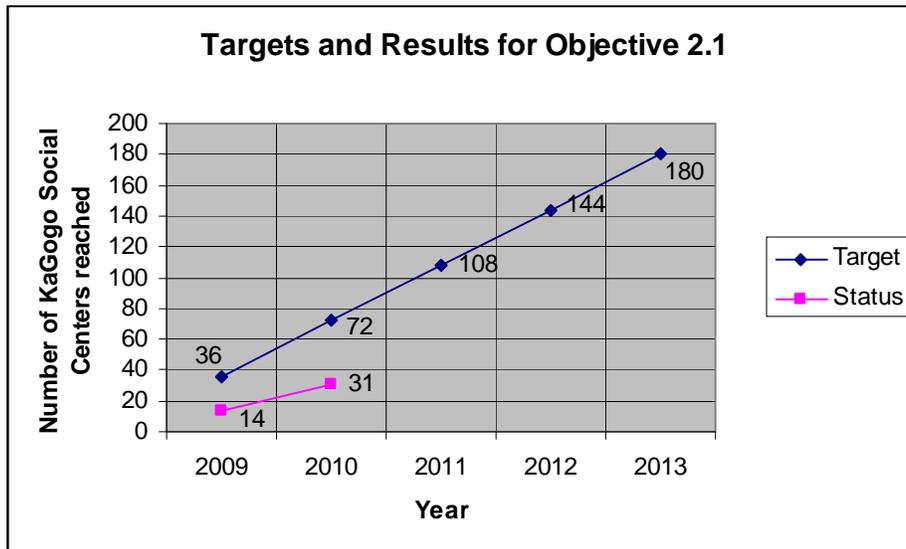
Objective 2.1 By October 2013, 225 Volunteers will have assisted 180 *KaGogo Social Centres* with strategic planning, mobilizing and distributing resources, monitoring and evaluating community HIV/AIDS activities, and sharing information.

Results:

To date, Volunteers have assisted 31 *KaGogo Social Centres* with strategic planning, mobilizing and distributing resources, or monitoring and evaluating community HIV/AIDS activities.

Analysis:

While *KaGogo Center Managers* have served as important initial counterparts, Volunteers have increasingly sought out partnerships with neighborhood care points (NCPs), community-based organizations and service providers in the community. The successes observed in Objectives 2.1 and 3.1 may help to explain why Peace Corps Swaziland has not yet met the targets for Objective 2.1.



Objective 2.1 Volunteer Success Story – *Strengthening Local Capacity*

In 2008, a Volunteer and her *Kagogo Center Manager (GCM)* counterpart in the Shiselweni Region engaged their community in a participatory needs assessment. Prior to the assessment, the Volunteer trained the GCM in qualitative research, including formal interviewing and focus group discussions. The Volunteer and GCM organized and conducted eight focus groups across the community and compiled data for a report. This report was presented to community stakeholders in an effort to solicit solutions for community-identified problems. The Volunteer then assisted the GCM in creating a two-year strategic plan to fight HIV and meet the eight UN Millennium Development Goals.

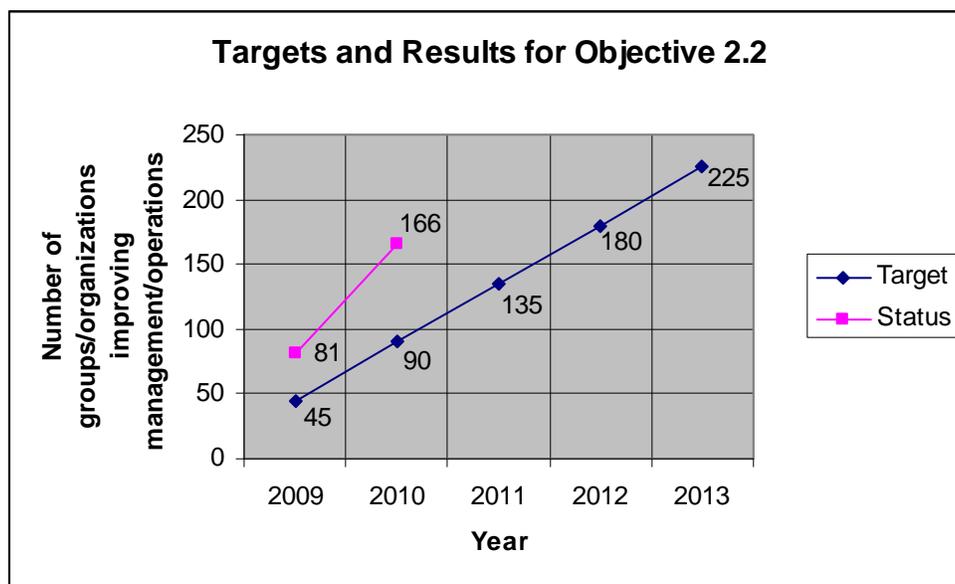
Objective 2.2 By October 2013, 225 Volunteers will have assisted 225 groups/organizations to improve their management and operations.

Results:

To date, Volunteers have assisted 166 groups or organizations to improve their management and operations.

Analysis:

Volunteers have had success working with community-based groups and organizations throughout Swaziland. Results from the past two years have exceeded the Post's yearly targets for this objective. The Post anticipates that the overall target will be fully achieved by 2013.



Objective 2.2 Volunteer Success Story – “The Wealth of the Youth”

Volunteers in Swaziland sometimes access small grants to hold workshops, improve neighborhood care points (NCPs) or begin and improve income generating activities.

In 2008 a group of women in the Manzini region organized the Ingcebo Yalabasha (“the wealth of youth”), a women’s sewing cooperative currently providing technical training and psychosocial support to 23 orphaned or vulnerable children (OVCs). In 2010 a Volunteer partnered with this group to write a project proposal securing funds to improve the operations of this organization. Additional sewing machines were purchased with these funds, and are being used to teach the children basic sewing skills using scraps of used cloth. When the children are competent with hand skills, they move on to machine sewing using remnant material purchased by the sewing cooperative at discount from clothing factories in town. Using this low cost material, the children first learn to produce clothing articles, like skirts and tops, and then learn to make household items such as clothespin holders and table dressings. Some of the children have even been able to sew the skirt for their school uniform, reducing the overall cost of their school attendance.

Objective 2.2 Volunteer Success Story Continued: The project will also provide construction materials for completion of a partially built structure, which will become a sewing center. The group will now have a secure building in which to sew and secure their machines during the week. They will also have space to teach and mentor older, more advanced children (especially girls) who want to work on sewing projects after school. The sewing center will provide these children with a comfortable, safe environment with constant adult supervision where they may receive mentoring not only with sewing skills but with general life skills as well.



Manzini Region, 2010: Women and girls from Inqcebo Yalabasha with their crafts.

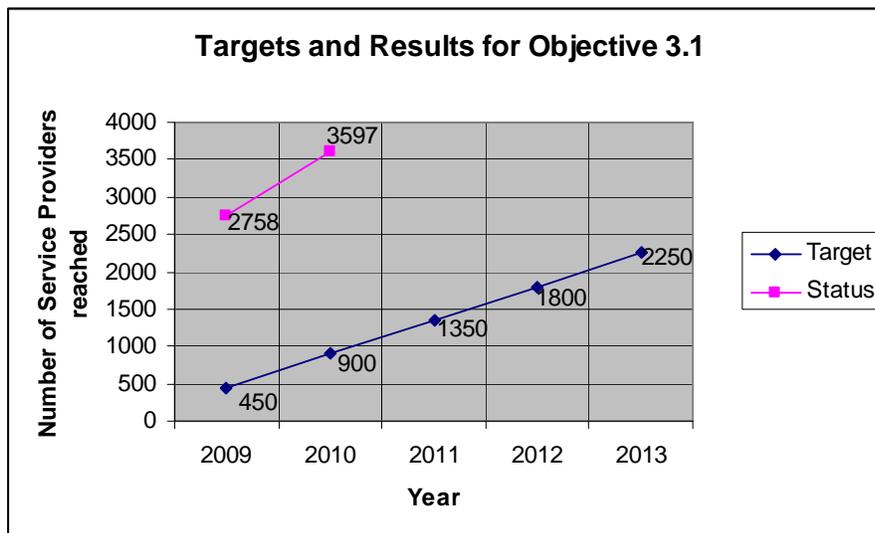
Objective 3.1 By October 2013, 225 Volunteers will have assisted 2250 Service Providers to improve their HIV/AIDS technical capacity to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS, care for those infected and support those impacted by the disease.

Results:

To date, Volunteers have assisted 3,597 Service Providers to improve their HIV/AIDS technical capacity to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS, care for those infected and support those impacted by the disease.

Analysis:

Peace Corps Swaziland has exceeded the initial target set for this objective; however Volunteers and their counterparts have had great success in the past few years with this group and will continue with targeted assistance.



Objective 3.1 Volunteer Success Story – “Books for Swaziland”



“Books for Swaziland” began in 2009 and is a partnership between Peace Corps Volunteers and their local communities designed to establish and provide training on maintaining small school libraries. With 30 schools participating, organizers expect these libraries to reach more than 75,000 students over their 10 year projected lifetime. This represents over 7 percent of the overall population of Swaziland. The project was partially funded by a Peace Corps Partnership Program with 93 international donors contributing to the project. Each participating community contributed \$200 towards the project, accounting for 36 percent of the

money raised. Each school was also responsible for providing a library room and shelves as well as transporting the books from the capital to their community. The library books were provided by Books for Africa, an American organization dedicated to ending the “book famine” in Africa. In addition to the books, each school also received 10 reams of paper donated by the US Embassy in Mbabane.

Volunteers trained their teacher-librarians on the basics of library science and with the help of their counterparts have established library committees and literacy plans for their schools. A passing English score on the end-of-year exams is the limiting factor for most students in attending university. In participating schools, organizers expect that these English medium libraries will have a significant impact on both the quality of education and on future markers of success.

Volunteer efforts were rewarded by the incredible response by school head masters and teachers responsible for picking up the books. One teacher shared with organizers his feeling that “If you give a child the idea that they



can succeed, you give them a reason to make good decisions.” As health Volunteers, this sentiment resonated deeply with participating Volunteers, giving hope that the benefits of this project would spread beyond the classroom.



Program Direction

Peace Corps Swaziland has experienced many successes in recent years with the Community Health project and will continue to place Volunteers in this area. Additionally, Peace Corps Swaziland will move forward with an education project that will begin with 17 Volunteers in June 2011. With this initiative, Post is partnering with the Ministry of Education and UNICEF's *Schools are Centers for Care and Support* project, which targets OVCs and their caregivers as primary beneficiaries.

Strengths and Challenges

Program Strengths:

Peace Corps Swaziland has a well-developed training program for Volunteers and their host country counterparts. During the Volunteers' 27 months in Swaziland Volunteers participate in five large training activities including: Pre-Service Training, In-Service Training, Mid-Service Training, Grief and Loss Training and Close of Service Training. The Volunteers' counterparts are invited to attend two of these training events and some additional training activities that occur throughout the year. During training activities, Peace Corps partners and stakeholders join the training team to provide Volunteers with the most up-to-date information and strategies for community health interventions.

The success of the training program is observed in the results of outreach activities. In FY 2010 Peace Corps Swaziland Volunteers reached 3,382 community members through "abstinence or be-faithful" prevention activities and 3,542 individuals through other prevention activities. Volunteers also reached 5,825 individuals in WID/GAD (women in development/gender and development) activities and 28,821 through youth development activities. Additionally, as a subset to the numbers above, in the past twelve months Volunteers developed the capacity of service providers, training 3,170 individuals including rural health motivators, care givers and HIV/AIDS peer educators on HIV/AIDS-related issues.

Volunteer have reported growing satisfaction with their place in Peace Corps Swaziland and more Volunteers are participating in third-year extension options. The number of Volunteers who extended their service beyond the 27-month mark in 2010 was seven, including two that chose to extend for a full year. Peace Corps Swaziland experienced a secondary benefit in this process as Volunteers continue sharing their acquired knowledge and skills in-country, as well as contributing to the project goal 3.1.

Program Challenges:

Volunteers continue to struggle with the challenge of "AIDS Fatigue" at the community level. To overcome this challenge, Peace Corps Swaziland is providing Volunteers with more resources and program-related ideas to engage community members through more creative 'edu-tainment' methods.

Communities often do not understand that the role of Volunteers in the community is to develop capacity and foster sustainable development. In some cases, communities look to Volunteers to bring in large-scale projects such as drilling boreholes for water and constructing new buildings. To overcome this, Peace Corps Swaziland has and will continue to orient communities and counterparts better in an effort to build capacity and reduce dependency.

Conclusion

In the two years since the Community Health Project Plan has been revised, Peace Corps Swaziland has met or exceeded the targets set for 80% of the objectives. Volunteers and their counterparts have educated 21,141 children or youth and 6,378 adults on knowledge and skills necessary to reduce high risk behaviors and live healthier lives.

Additionally, Volunteers have assisted 166 groups or organizations to improve their management and operations and assisted 3,597 Service Providers to improve their HIV/AIDS technical capacity to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS, care for those infected and support those impacted by the disease. Though not meeting the targets for the objective yet, Volunteers have assisted 31 *KaGogo Social Centres* with strategic planning, mobilizing and distributing resources, or monitoring and evaluating community HIV/AIDS activities. Volunteers have established productive partnerships with neighborhood care points (NCPs), community-based organizations and service providers in the community.

Peace Corps Swaziland's Community Health Project will continue until 2013, at which time it will be reviewed by an outside evaluator for re-tooling, continuation or completion. The Goals and Objectives are periodically reviewed and adjusted according to evolving circumstances within the country, new opportunities as well as host country priorities.