

DESCRIPTION OF SERVICE

John Steven Shealy

100543639

Swaziland, Africa

[Full official name]

[HQ Volunteer ID #]

[Country of service]

After a competitive application process stressing applicant skills, adaptability and cross-cultural understanding, John Shealy was invited to serve as a Volunteer with Peace Corps. John was assigned to be a Community HIV/AIDS Education Volunteer in the rural community of eMhlangeni in the Manzini region of Swaziland.

John entered pre-service training on June 29, 2009, participating in an intensive nine-week homestay-based training program, while living with a Swazi family in the community of Vuvusweni in the Hhohho region. John completed 80 hours of siSwati language training (spoken and written), 15.5 hours of cross culture training in the history, economics and cultural norms of Swaziland, 149 hours of technical training, 63 hours of medical training, 11 hours of safety and security training and 12 hours of diversity training. He successfully completed training and was sworn-in as a Peace Corps Volunteer on August 27, 2009.

John was a member of the seventh group of Peace Corps volunteers in Swaziland whose mandate, by the invitation of King Mswati III, was to help with the mitigation of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Swaziland has the world's highest adult HIV/AIDS prevalence with approximately 26 percent, among persons aged 15-49 years, being infected with the virus and one of the lowest life expectancy rates, approximately 33 years. Within the next five years, it is expected that ten percent of Swazi children will be orphaned as a result of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Working in an environment such as this is extremely difficult, particularly in rural communities, such as John's, which are characterized by severe poverty and inadequate health and educational services. The HIV/AIDS pandemic provided unique challenges for Peace Corps Volunteers, in a relatively new program, in which the volunteer's roles and project responsibilities are defined by community specific needs and to a large degree, self-directed by the Volunteer. John's Peace Corps service was extremely valuable as it allowed him to live on a traditional homestead in an isolated rural community while serving some of the most underserved and vulnerable members of Swazi society.

John's Peace Corps service as a Community Health Educator was diverse and addressed various aspects of prevention, mitigation and care related to the HIV pandemic. While a primary consideration was strengthening prevention and treatment efforts, his overarching goal was capacity building of key leaders and the empowerment of individual community members to address some of their most pressing needs. His involvement extended beyond his own community of 2,400 residents to include key community leaders from three nearby communities as well as a host of individuals from the surrounding area. While perhaps only several hundred individuals were directly supported through his work, many others experienced a positive impact indirectly through the enhanced effectiveness of their community's leadership. John's interventions could be grouped into six general areas:

HIV Prevention and Life-Skills Education: John provided information both in didactic and interactive formats on topics related to HIV prevention, voluntary counseling and testing (VCT) and anti-retroviral treatment (ART) and life skills. These training programs were conducted both individually and through collaborative, capacity-building presentations with a peer counselor from the NGO, Population Services International (PSI). John engaged Swazi co-facilitators in his training programs whenever possible. This included several prison inmates in a women's correctional institution where he and a fellow Peace Corps volunteer taught life skills. Through his mentorship, John helped empower these young women who gained self-confidence while providing a positive role model for their fellow inmates.

Supporting Community Development Projects: John was instrumental in empowering key community leaders through training in development project design, funding and implementation. He assisted in preparing successful grant applications totaling US\$16,200 which came through four funding sources: the Peace Corps Partnership Program (PCPP), Peace Corps Volunteer Activities Support and Training (VAST) and the U.S. Embassy's Self-Help Fund (SHF) and, through the U. S. Embassy, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

- In his primary development project, John helped to mobilize the community around the issue of Neighborhood Care Points (NCPs). NCPs serve as essential points of contact for government agencies and NGOs seeking to provide for the basic needs of orphans and vulnerable children (OVCs). Lacking NCPs, a community does not have access to much needed donations of food, clothing and health services provided by these agencies. When he arrived in eMhlangeni, there were no NCPs. John was successful in organizing and encouraging the community to begin serving food to the 275 OVCs in the community and to establish a working relationship with World Vision, the NGO responsible for food donations in this area. During the process, he worked with key community leaders to write a PCPP grant that provided \$4,046.22 for the purchase of building materials for constructing temporary NCP structures, a small home for a polio survivor and garden fencing for each of the five NCPs. The project sent a clear message to the community that when community members organize themselves around a worthwhile project that targets the most needy among them, help will be provided.

Working along side another Peace Corps volunteer (PCV), John was involved in three other projects that received grant funding:

- A sewing center project of a women's cooperative that received a VAST grant of US\$4,832. The grant completed the construction of the building, providing doors, burglar bars, windowpanes, paint, and electrical wiring and hook-up. It also purchased six sewing machines and tables and chairs for the cooperative.
- A HIV support group's sewing project where a USAID grant of \$5,820 provided two industrial-grade and eight regular straight-line sewing machines, cloth and business skills training.
- A women's co-operative that received a U. S. Embassy grant of US\$1,500 to help in their development of a candle-making business.

All of these groups are active in supporting OVCs and others impacted by HIV/AIDS in their community. Therefore the positive impact of these grants extended well beyond the individuals involved.

Income Generation Activities:

- At both his Umphakatsi (local governing body) and at his Inkhundla (analogous to a county government), John conducted a variety of workshops and gave presentations about the basics of creating and managing a small business or income generation project. After attending one of his grant-writing workshops, two groups were successful in securing funding totaling US\$7,320 for their projects (see USAID and US Embassy grants above).
- John routinely met with individual community members to provide support in creating concise and clear resumes, in preparing employment applications and in offering guidance in expanding and improving existing businesses.
- He taught computer skills and mentored a young woman in the creation of an attractive and effective business brochure for her employer, a building contractor whose business has grown rapidly over the past months.

John, working with a fellow PCV, assisted community members in obtaining skills training and support for a variety of income generation projects.

- TechnoServe, an American NGO, provided training and support for bee-keeping, small-scale dairy and truck farming as well as handcraft marketing.
- Women in Development, a Swazi government organization, provided training in sewing skills, clothing and household item design and small business management.

Leadership and Organizational Capacity Building:

- John's counterpart was the community Bucopho, the elected official who is the liaison between community members and both bodies of government (the Umphakatsi and Inkhundla levels). Many activities were conducted in an effort to build this key community leader's capacity. These included arranging and facilitating meetings with: the physician in charge of ART and VCT as well as the hospital administrator at the area hospital (Mankayane), the country director and area managers for World Vision, the U. S. Embassy official in charge of self-help grants and others.
- John also worked to increase the project design, fund-raising and implementation capacity of the leaders of the Umsimisi Community Project, an NGO that mentors youth whose theater productions address issues related to HIV, gender equality and respect for self and others.

Providing Support to Fellow Volunteers:

- John was elected with six other PCVs in his group to serve in the Peer Support Network. He provided his fellow Group 7 PCVs with emotional support and assisted in the pre-service training of the incoming Group 8 PCVs.
- He worked with the Language and Culture Facilitators to improve their effectiveness in teaching siSwati to older volunteers.

- He wrote articles addressing common issues faced by married and older volunteers, prepared the Grief and Loss section of the Group 8 handbook and participated in the four-day training for incoming Group 8 PSN members.
- He was chosen to attend a five-day training in Botswana offered by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on designing effective behavioral change interventions and shared what he learned through a presentation during an in-service training event and by publishing an article in the post newspaper.
- John was invited to participate in a PC office planning retreat where he worked with key PC office staff in formulating goals for the coming year.

Peace Corps Third Goal Activities: Peace Corps has three over-arching goals. The first is to provide host countries with technical assistance. The second is to promote understanding of America on the part of host country nationals. Peace Corps' third goal is to promote understanding of the host country by Americans back home. John was quite active in educating Americans about Swaziland, exposing them to the beauty of its landscape and culture as well as the harsh reality of its many challenges. These activities included a range of creative activities that reached not only his friends and family, but also the blog-browsing public and some Americans who were visiting or studying in Swaziland.

- John regularly posted informative and entertaining blogs on the internet. These postings often included videos and slideshows to complement written stories drawn from his daily experiences in his rural community.
- He hosted American friends for a visit and shared his Swazi community with them, providing an up-close-and-personal glimpse of life in this corner of the world.
- Engaging two American high school students from a local boarding school, John shared his experiences as a Peace Corps volunteer and hosted one of the students at his rural homestead, touring the community and on-going development projects. By engaging in conversation with some of his neighbors, this student was able to practice the siSwati she was studying at school.
- John participated in the World Wise Schools Program where he corresponded with four classroom teachers and their students. These classes were diverse, ranging from an elementary school in his hometown of Tampa, Florida, to a nursing school in California. Sharing highlights of his Peace Corps service provided these students with a glimpse of the lives and challenges faced by many of those living in Southern Africa.

During his twenty-seven months of service, John was a valuable asset to his rural Swazi community, his fellow Peace Corps volunteers and to the post staff. Always ready to offer physical or technical support and words of encouragement, John was a model of professionalism, dedication and clear purpose. His trimester reports and other writings were timely and thorough. Having a naturally easy-going and peaceful manner, John will be a welcomed asset to whatever organization he joins in the future.

Pursuant to Section 5(f) of the Peace Corps Act, 22 U.S.C. 2504(f), as amended, any former Volunteer employed by the United States Government following his/her Peace Corps Volunteer Service is entitled to have any period of satisfactory Peace Corps service credited for purposes of retirement, seniority, reduction in force, leave, and other privileges based on length of federal government service. Peace Corps service shall not be credited toward completion of the probationary or trial period of any service requirement for career appointment.

This is to certify in accordance with Executive Order 11103 of April 10, 1963, that John Steven Shealy served satisfactorily as a Peace Corps Volunteer. His service ended on Sept. 15, 2011. He is therefore eligible to be appointed as a career-conditional employee in the competitive civil service on a non-competitive basis. This benefit under the Executive Order extends for a period of one year after termination of the Volunteer's service, except that the employing agency may extend the period for up to three years for a former volunteer who enters military service, pursues studies at a recognized institution of higher learning, or engages in other activities that, in the view of the appointing agency, warrant extension of the period.

Volunteer	<u>John S. Shealy</u>	Group	<u>Seven (7)</u>
	Signature		
Reviewed by	<u>Steve Driehaus</u>		<u>Sept 7, 2011</u>
Country Director	Signature		Date