Peace Corps
Forestry and Environment Extension Volunteer

- **Apply By**: July 1, 2016
- **Know By**: September 1, 2016
- **Depart By**: January 8, 2017

**Project Description**

The purpose of Peace Corps/Ethiopia's Resilient Environment, Agriculture and Livelihood (REAL) project is to improve food security and management of natural resources.

All Environment Volunteers will be placed at Farmer Training Centers (FTCs). Volunteers will work to enhance ongoing projects of FTCs as well as initiate new programming. The work varies from FTC to FTC based on regional needs. Your main counterparts will be the development agents (DAs) from the local agricultural and rural development office and community members interested in undertaking reforestation, agroforestry and other natural resource management activities. Food security and natural resource management includes a wide range of activities, from small scale gardening, reforestation, and watershed protection to farming and sustainable food production. Volunteers have an opportunity to work in a variety of areas, including:
- environmental protection,
- forestry,
- tree production,
- agriculture,
- horticulture,
- business,
- environmental education,
- food security,
- gardens, and
- computer technology and Geographic Information System (GIS) support.

The concept of including sustainable agriculture within an environmental framework is that through more sustainable farming practices, natural resources are more likely to be protected and conserved. Depending on your experience, you may also work with non-government organizations (NGOs) to help develop or strengthen alternative livelihood projects in order to ensure that communities sustainably manage and benefit from community forests.

In addition, Forestry and Environment Extension Volunteers will have an opportunity to work on environmental awareness activities both in schools and non-formal settings (i.e. eco-clubs, awareness campaigns, etc.). You might work with teachers to integrate environmental conservation concepts in science classes or you might assist in the establishment of school tree nurseries or gardens as an educational tool and to supplement the need for nutritious food and as a contribution to improve the existing microclimate. You will also work with teachers to lead environment clubs where students will be taught new techniques of delivering environmental concepts. You will also have the opportunity to organize Camp GROW (Growing and Renewing Our World), which is a youth life skills camp focused on delivering environmental education sessions and building the capacity of the students to care for the natural resource they have in the community.
Other example activities that a Volunteer could undertake include:
• Working with local communities to plan, implement, and evaluate reforestation, forest management, or soil conservation projects.
• Helping farmers integrate agriculture and forestry on the same land in order to increase total productivity and long-term sustainability.
• Training local people in technical skills, as well as advising them on how to manage village woodlots, community nurseries and reforestation of degraded lands.
• Demonstrating the use of fuel-efficient stoves to women.
• Providing technical support to other Volunteers who are working in forestry-related activities.

Ethiopia is one of the Peace Corps countries participating in Let Girls Learn, an important initiative promoting gender awareness and girls’ education and empowerment. You will receive in-depth training on incorporating methods of gender analysis into community assessment and development efforts. During your service you will find culturally appropriate ways to incorporate gender awareness and the promotion of youth—especially girls—into your work. As part of the initiative, you will also report on these efforts and their impact.

**Required Skills**

Competitive candidates will have one or more of the following criteria:
• Bachelor of Science/Associate degree in Forestry, Watershed Management, Natural Resources, Environmental Science or Ecology, or other related fields
• Bachelor of Science/Associate degree in any degree plus 3 years work experience in forestry, nursery management, or other related fields

**Desired Skills**

Experience with at least one of the following skill areas:
• vegetable production using organic and low-input methods
• leading educational activities at a park, zoo, museum, or in a school setting
• environmental camp counselor
• tree planting or other local conservation activities
• nursery work/management
• urban forestry
• watershed management
• landscaping
• a high level of comfort working in the outdoors
• natural resource management
• livelihoods and small income generation activities
• use of computer applications such as geographic information systems (GIS) for environmental research and modeling
• experience in large-scale commercial or family-run business including vegetable gardening
• livestock care/management

**Required Language Skills**

There are no pre-requisite language requirements for this position. However, prior experience learning a language will greatly facilitate your ability to learn an Ethiopian language.
**Additional Language Information**

All Volunteers will receive pre-departure Amharic training materials, as well as approximately 10 hours of introductory Amharic survival language skills during pre-service training. After the completion of week 2 of pre-service training and following interviews with your program manager, you will be assigned a regional placement and you will then begin to learn the predominant local language of your future region if it is not Amharic. Oromifa and Tigrinya are the other languages taught by Peace Corps in Ethiopia. Roughly 1/3 of Volunteers will learn each language.

Learning the local language will greatly increase your ability to integrate into your community, form strong relationships with community members, and increase your effectiveness in your work.

**Living Conditions**

Due to its wide range of altitudes, Ethiopia experiences extremely varied climatic conditions, including cold mountains, temperate highlands, and hot deserts. You should be prepared for a placement in any of these regions.

During your service, you will live in accommodations identified by Peace Corps in coordination with local representatives from your host organization. You will have a modest dwelling that may be one or more rooms in a house found on a common compound, as is the local standard. All Volunteer housing meets Peace Corps/Ethiopia's safety and security standards and is approved by Peace Corps staff prior to your arrival at site. Some Volunteer sites are remote and the standard of living is at a basic level (e.g., a mud house with an occasionally unreliable supply of water or electricity). Other Volunteers may be placed in a rural town and live in a cement structure with electricity and running water. Rural sites can be isolated with the closest shopping town being anywhere from 20-150 miles away. Volunteers must be prepared to accept the living conditions to which they are assigned as they will be living under the same conditions as the people with and for whom they work. Pre-service training (PST) will include sessions to help you learn to live with unreliable electricity, water, and other conditions.

All Peace Corps trainees stay with Ethiopian host families during the initial 12-week pre-service training (PST).

Many of the social norms, mores and laws of Ethiopia are inconsistent with those you are accustomed to as Americans. Your personal safety and ability to be received as a professional are dependent upon being mindful and respectful of the cultural traditions and standards. One area for awareness regards LGBT-related issues. Ethiopia has restrictive laws that target certain sexual acts. Consensual same-sex sexual activity between adults is criminalized and punishable by imprisonment. Persons do not identify themselves as LGBTQ due to severe societal stigma. Volunteers will need to be mindful of cultural norms and country-specific laws. Staff and currently serving Volunteers will address this topic during pre-service training and identify support mechanisms for incoming trainees. LGBTQ Volunteers can be out within the Peace Corps Volunteer and staff community and will find an open and inclusive support network within this community. Please refer to the Local Laws and Special Circumstances of the U.S. Department of State’s travel page for more information (http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/country/ethiopia.html).

In further regard to being respectful of cultural traditions and standards, the way in
which you present yourself has considerable bearing on being respected in your community and workplace. As Volunteers and foreigners you are outsiders striving to become participating members of the local culture, and keeping your dress and appearance consistent with the relatively conservative and modest cultural conventions enables you to earn people’s respect far more readily than to challenge what they consider as appropriate within their context.

Gender norms and relations can be a challenge for all Volunteers, but most particularly for women. Women in Ethiopia commonly follow very traditional gender roles that include raising children and performing domestic responsibilities. And while women are increasingly entering the workplace and professional occupations, both Peace Corps staff and Volunteers work together in order to help Volunteers understand the change this places on the social dynamic and enable them to work within the challenges this can present.

**Medical Considerations in Ethiopia**

- Volunteers whose health is maintained with access to care related to any of the following conditions or sub-specialties may not be able to serve: asthma; some types of gynecologic support; hematology; mammography; ongoing behavioral health support; ophthalmology; seizure disorder; urology.
- The following medication(s) are not permitted for legal or cultural reasons: Adderall, Ritalin and Vyvanse.
- Volunteers who should avoid the following food(s) may not be able to serve: eggs.
- After arrival in Ethiopia, Peace Corps provides and applicants are required to have an annual flu shot, to take daily or weekly medication to prevent malaria, and to receive mandatory immunizations.

[Learn more about Peace Corps medical requirements](https://www.peacecorps.gov)

**Learn more about what it's like to serve in Ethiopia.**

[Visit Peace Corps Ethiopia's website.](https://www.peacecorps.gov)