

Peace Corps Interview Notes



Table of Contents

Core Expectations

Job Description

- Hours
- Compensation
- Required Skills
- Desired Skills
- Language Information
- Living Conditions
- Medical Considerations

Namibia Country Overview

- History
- Government and Administration
- Regions/Languages/People
- Issues

Interview Prep Suggestions from Email

Potential Interview Questions and Responses

Potential Questions to Ask Interviewer

Core Expectations

1. Prepare your personal and professional life to make a commitment to serve abroad for a full term of 27 months
2. Commit to improving the quality of life of the people with whom you live and work and, in doing so, share your skills, adapt them, and learn new skills as needed
3. Serve where the Peace Corps asks you to go, under conditions of hardship if necessary, and with the flexibility for effective service
4. Recognize that your successful and sustainable development work is based on the local trust and confidence you build by living in, and respectfully integrating yourself into your host community and culture
5. Recognize that you are responsible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for your personal conduct and professional performance
6. Engage with host country partners in a spirit of cooperation, mutual learning, and respect
7. Work within the rules and regulations of the Peace Corps and the local and national laws of the country where you serve
8. Exercise judgment and personal responsibility to protect your health, safety, and well-being and that of others
9. Recognize that you will be perceived, in your host country and community, as a representative of the people, cultures, values, and traditions of the United States of America
10. Represent responsibility of the people, cultures, values, and traditions of your host country and community to people in the United States both during and following your service

Job Description

Peace Corps Education Volunteers are placed in schools in all of Namibia's 13 regions. Volunteers teach in upper primary, junior secondary (middle school) or senior secondary (high school) schools. Volunteers are placed in a variety of school settings, such as schools with few physical resources, in remote settings, or with a shortage of qualified teachers. Invitees should come prepared to accept any assignment, in schools that differ greatly in terms of their resource availability. To ensure sustainability, Peace Corps/Namibia would ideally want each Volunteer to have a counterpart who is teaching the same subject as them. However, due to the shortage of teachers, they might find themselves teaching without a counterpart, but with the support of their school supervisor.

○ **Work Hours**

- Peace Corps is a 24/7 job. As cultural ambassadors, Volunteers still carry the responsibility of their commitment to service during their off hours and free time. The Namibian school calendar runs from January – December with three terms a year delineated by official breaks in May, August, and December. Please note that Volunteers are not allowed to take vacation

during the school term. A volunteer's daily schedule may vary significantly due to evening and weekend activities. A typical work day would be from 7:00 AM to 4:30 PM, Monday through Friday, but would often include afterschool activities.

- Some sites will be in regional capitals, though the majority will be in communities and villages within an hour of a regional capital. Public transportation to/from regional capitals may be on a limited schedule. Volunteers also have the opportunity to work with schools, youth groups, community groups, and nongovernmental organizations (NGO) on secondary projects.
- Volunteers will be serving in one of the Peace Corps countries participating in Let Girls Learn, an important agency initiative promoting gender awareness and girls' education and empowerment. Volunteers will be encouraged to find culturally appropriate ways to incorporate gender awareness and the promotion of youth, especially girls, into their work and report on these efforts and their impact.
- **Required Skills**
 - BA/BS degree in any discipline and a strong desire to teach English
- **Desired Skills**
 - Experience in the following areas preferred:
 - Ability to research, design, and deliver instructional materials
 - Experience working with youth and adult learners in any leadership capacity
 - Experience working in classrooms, particularly at the secondary or adult level
 - At least 3 months, 10 hours/month, or 30 hours of English, foreign language, or tutoring experience with primary, middle, or high school students or adults
 - The most competitive candidates will have, and continue to gain, hands on experience related to teaching English, TEFL, or ESL.
- **Language Information**
 - There are no prerequisite language requirements for this position.
 - English is the official national language and the medium of instruction, but Namibia also has 28 local languages, which vary greatly in degree of difficulty.
- **Living Conditions**
 - Altitude ranges—highest being ~8,500 feet. There are two deserts—the Namib and Kalahari— temperatures can exceed 100 degrees Fahrenheit during parts of the year.

- At the beginning of service, volunteers will stay in a hostile, then move in with host families for 3 weeks, and then go to Community Based Training where they will be placed with another host family. If the host family does not have all the facilities required to host for the entire duration of training, alternative accommodation will be arranged with another host family.
- Housing conditions vary according to area. Volunteers may live in traditional or more modern, western style housing. Most have no running water or electricity. Peace Corps will provide Volunteers with a modest monthly living allowance. The Ministry or the hosting agencies to which Volunteers are assigned are usually responsible for paying monthly utilities and providing basic furniture (such as a bed, table, chairs, etc.). Education Volunteers may share a site or housing with another Volunteer.
- Basic foodstuffs can be bought in most communities, with a wide variety of items available in the larger towns. Most of Namibia is sparsely populated with vast expanses punctuated by urban areas.
- **Medical Considerations in Namibia**
 - The following medication(s) are not permitted for legal or cultural reasons: Adderall and Vyvanse.
 - Volunteers who should avoid the following food(s) may not be able to serve: none.
 - After arrival in Namibia, Peace Corps provides and applicants are required to have flu shots, to take medication to prevent malaria, and to receive mandatory immunizations.

Namibia Country Overview

A. History

- 1885: Colony of Germany
- 1947: Annexed by South Africa and Namibia was known as South West Africa
- Gained independence in 1990 & First PCVs arrived September 9, 1990
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Namibia

B. Government and Administration

- <http://www.gov.na/about-government>

C. Regions/Language/People

- **Regions:** Erongo, Hardap, Kavango, Karas, Khomas, Kunene, Omaheke, Omusati, Ohangwena, Oshana, Otjozondjupa, Zambezi, !Karas

- Changed language from Afrikaans to English
- Indigenous ethnic groups include: Aawambo, Vakavango, Caprivian, Ovaherero (including Ovahimba), Colored, Baster, Damara, Nama, San, and Tswana.
- Religion: Most Namibian Christians are Lutherans

D. Issues in Namibia

- HIV/AIDS (https://www.npc.gov.na/?wpfb_dl=31)

Email Prep

- Fulfilling an important, but difficult commitment
- Living or working with people from another culture
- Background in working with an especially unstructured environment
- History of working with others
- Experience transferring knowledge or skills
- Failing to achieve a desired goal

Interview Questions:

Section 1

- **Why do you want to join the Peace Corps?**
 - I would like to serve in the Peace Corps because I want to make a difference in the lives of others. I believe that the Peace Corps provides a platform for people like myself to be catalysts of change in the world, which is something I want to be a part of. Also, I want to make sure I am spending my time going after opportunities, developing meaningful relationships and experiences, and thinking of others instead of just myself. I have wanted to join the Peace Corps since I was in high school and now as a college graduate; I believe that this is where I am supposed to be and what I am supposed to be doing.
- **Why do you want to serve in the education sector?**
 - I would like to work as a teacher because I believe education is one of the most important tools you could give someone. I know I am being considered for a position as a secondary school English teacher, which I believe also puts me in a position of helping students prepare for life after school. I want to ensure these students that it is possible to pursue these goals and possibly introduce them to opportunities that they may not have known existed. I want them to leave secondary school, ready to be productive members of society,

- to be fearless when pursuing their goals, and to feel empowered to be problem solvers and creators of change within their communities and nation.
- **Why do you want to serve in Africa?**
 - I think my passion for Africa began when I was about ten or twelve—I was watching TV with my mom and there was a feature about Oprah creating a school for girls in South Africa. I believe this is what led me to join a club called A for Africa, which I was a member of for two years and then president for the remaining two years of high school. The goals of this club consisted of us bringing awareness of issues countries within Africa were facing and raising funds for the non-profit organizations that were working to address those issues. Then when I got to college, I was able to take a course on Rwanda, which I believe reignited that desire to join the Peace Corps and serving in Africa.
 - **Would you be willing to serve in other parts of the world and sectors?**
 - I would prefer to work in Africa, specifically in education. However, my goal of joining the Peace Corps remains the same and if there is a position in another country that needs to be filled, I would be willing to go there. I would still like to work in education because I feel like I am most passionate about this area and would therefore be more effective.
 - **If so, what countries or sectors?**
 - I would still prefer to work in a country within Africa, but am willing to serve where I am needed.

Section 2

- **Tell me about a time you had to adapt to living or working with people from another culture? Have you stayed in touch or visited them?**
 - Foreign exchange students my family hosted while I was in high school.
- **Tell me about a time when you worked in an unstructured situation. Were you effective or successful?**
 - Working as an RA and in a business environment
- **Tell me about the most meaningful situation you have experienced helping others. What motivated you?**
 - I first went to community college and then transferred to Saint Mary's, which is what led me to become a resident advisor. I had a relatively difficult time transitioning at Saint Mary's so I wanted to make the process for future transfer students easier. I wanted to create a community within my building where they felt like it was their home away from home. I felt

like I needed to provide a comfortable, inclusive, and safe environment so the residents felt confident enough to develop relationships with others living in the building. Throughout my time as an RA, I created opportunities for them to meet each other during social and educational events, developed personal relationships with them so they felt comfortable enough to come to me when they needed help. I believe that this would translate into my time as a volunteer in the Peace Corps because it allowed me to develop an awareness and open-mindedness to other's beliefs, perspectives, etc., and giving me the confidence to go create relationships with others and help them work through whatever difficulties they may be going through.

- **Tell me about the most challenging experience you've had working on a team.**
 - While I was a student in the business school at Saint Mary's, many of my classes required us to work in teams because that is what we would be doing in a real work place. I actually really liked working in teams because I enjoyed brainstorming with people and listening to their ideas—I feel like it was a really good opportunity to work with people, especially when you would disagree with others because you had to learn how to communicate effectively why you felt that maybe the team should use a different approach or go another way with the project. I think the most difficult experience I have had on a team was when we weren't actually functioning as a team and you still had to find a way to make it through to the end. Usually, we would outline and identify who was responsible for certain areas, so we knew what we expected of each other and we were able to talk things out. And by doing this, we were able to identify any problems, work better together, and avoid negativity within the group. I believe that I was able to learn how to better work in a group and actually create constructive dialogue even when there is disagreement.
- **Tell me about a time when you were able to transfer knowledge or skills to others. Walk me through your lesson plan. What challenges did you face?**
 - Two examples: Figure skating coach and tutoring
- **Tell about a challenge you faced with little support?**
 - While I was an RA, I was put in many situations that required my independent judgment and the ability to form plans to address those situations quickly while keeping in mind the ideals of our school and working on their behalf as a representative. I also think while I was working for my family's business, I had to figure many things out on my own. I had to address problems as they arose while being resourceful and quick to identify methods of

achieving goals with only the end objective guiding me. Overall, I think this demonstrates that I can address issues independently while maintaining a positive image for the institution or company I am working for.

- **Tell about a stressful time in your life. How'd you cope?**
 - Examples of times where my plate was overloaded and I coped through making time to take care of myself, such as exercising, sleeping, making time to eat properly, yoga, and/or talking it out.

Section 3:

- Topics covered:
 - Foods: Pap, Mopane worms, diet consists of a lot of meat
 - Health issues
 - Living without electricity and water
 - Privacy
 - Geographic Isolation
 - Gender Roles , Minority Challenges, Religion
 - Alcohol
- Other Questions:
 - How will you fill your downtime?
 - Work on secondary programs such as: recreational sports, debate club, Girl's Club, peer tutoring, adult English classes, financial literacy, library development, HIV and AIDs awareness activities, community development, etc.
 - Many education volunteers have said they spend their time marking homework/exams and reading papers.
 - Participate in community events and hopefully integrate well enough into the community to spend time with individuals and learn how to cook some Namibian meals.

Questions to Ask During Interview

- A. How did your experience differ from your expectations?
- B. What were some of the difficult challenges you faced?
- C. What do you wish you had known going in?
- D. If you were also in the education sector, what activities or lessons did you find effective?
- E. What secondary projects did you work on?