

PEACE CORPS
Office *of* Inspector General



FINAL REPORT

Evaluation of Peace Corps/Guatemala:
Volunteer Health, Safety, and Security at Site

IG-26-02-E
August 2026



PEACE CORPS

Office of Inspector General

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

About This Review

The success of the Peace Corps' mission depends on its ability to recruit and place individuals in host countries that have requested Volunteers, and for those Volunteers to be successful during their service. The post's support in keeping Volunteers healthy, safe, and secure at their sites—where they live and work—is a critical feature of a successful Volunteer experience. The Office of Inspector General (OIG) conducted a limited scope evaluation of Peace Corps/Guatemala's compliance with key health, safety and security, and housing standards at Volunteer sites, with a project scope from January 2023 to December 2025. At the time of our evaluation, 75 Volunteers were working across 4 project sectors in Guatemala.

Project Objective

To what extent did the post comply with critical health, safety, and security standards at Volunteer sites?

Evaluation of Peace Corps/Guatemala: Volunteer Health, Safety, and Security at Site

August 6, 2026

What We Found

We determined that the post complied with most of the critical health, safety and security, and housing standards at Volunteer sites, which are important factors for facilitating a successful Volunteer experience.

Health Support for Volunteers at Site

The post complied with key medical policies and procedures for Volunteer site management. Volunteers reported that they had few concerns about health risks and were generally satisfied with the post's provision of healthcare and health training. The post's referral and local medical facilities met key agency requirements, and Volunteers reported positive experiences with them.

Safety and Security Support for Volunteers at Site

The post complied with most agency safety and security policies for site management. Volunteers reported that they felt safe at their homes, sites, and workplaces. We found that the post effectively managed the oversight and maintenance of each site's history, as required. However, some Volunteers said they would not report safety and security incidents to post staff because they did not trust or have confidence in the staff's management of policies and their response to reported safety and security incidents.

Overall, Volunteers were provided with safe and secure homes. We found that Volunteer houses in Peace Corps/Guatemala were at a comparably higher standard than other posts we had assessed in recent years. The post mostly complied with emergency contact, site location, and site contact information requirements. The post also developed and delivered sexual assault and sexual harassment orientation to Volunteer host families and counterparts, as required. While propane gas tanks largely met agency safety standards, we found that Volunteers were not equipped to extinguish fires in their kitchens.

What We Recommend

This report contains one recommendation on Volunteer safety and security and one recommendation for housing. See page 12 for the full list of recommendations.

About this Report

What We Reviewed

On October 14, 2025, we announced our evaluation of Peace Corps/Guatemala (also referred to as “the post”) with the objective to answer the following question: To what extent did the post comply with critical health, safety, and security standards at Volunteer sites?

This report is organized by the following topics:

1 Health Support for Volunteers

2 Safety & Security Support for Volunteers

3 Housing Support for Volunteers

Why We Conducted This Review

Evaluations are a key tool for OIG’s independent oversight of Peace Corps operations and programs. In October 2025, OIG launched three concurrent post evaluations that focused on Volunteers’ health, safety and security, and housing at their sites.¹ We decided to evaluate the posts’ site management because over the years OIG has documented longstanding issues with many posts’ site management, which directly impacted Volunteer health and safety. By conducting concurrent post evaluations, we were able to reach more countries to gain better insight into the systemic issues that are shared across Peace Corps posts.

How We Conducted This Review

Given the importance of site management in facilitating a successful Volunteer experience, we measured the post’s compliance with Peace Corps requirements and post-specific site management standards and guidelines related to Volunteer health, safety and security, and housing. We performed fieldwork in Guatemala from December 1 to December 13, 2025, during which we interviewed post staff and visited 22 Volunteers to conduct interviews and housing inspections.² We conducted this evaluation in accordance with the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency’s *Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation* (December 2020).

A detailed description of our scope, methodology, and criteria is listed in Appendix A of this report.

¹ The other two evaluations were of Peace Corps/Mexico and Peace Corps/Samoa.

² We interviewed a total of 95 Volunteers and inspected 93 houses across all three projects, including: Peace Corps/Samoa, Peace Corps/Mexico, and Peace Corps/Guatemala.

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Guatemala Snapshot

Guatemala is a Central American country between the Pacific Ocean and Caribbean Sea. It borders Mexico and Belize to the north and El Salvador and Honduras to the south. Guatemala has diverse climates with topography that includes mountains reaching nearly 14,000 feet and dozens of volcanoes in the south, three of which are active.

Guatemala's population of nearly 17 million primarily consists of two ethnic groups: Ladinos and Mayans. Approximately 18 percent of the population has at least a 12th grade education and about 10 percent have completed post-secondary or technical/vocational schooling.



Figure 1: Map of Guatemala

Table 1: Overview of Guatemala

Overview of Guatemala	
Population	16,865,000
Official Languages	Spanish
Economy	Gross Domestic Product Per Capita: \$6.85 thousand Unemployment: 2.6%
Health	Life Expectancy: 72.6 years
Human Development Index	Rank: 137; 0.662 Classification "Medium"

Guatemala gained independence from Spain in 1821 and was governed under authoritarian rule and military regimes until forming a democracy in 1985. The country experienced alternating periods of centralized authority, democratic reform, and internal conflict, which culminated in the 1996 Peace Accords that ended its civil war. Regular elections have been held since, but the country continues to experience persistent challenges to its democratic governance.

The Peace Corps' 2023 risk assessment of Guatemala rated the country's current crime level "high,"³ citing robbery, burglary, and theft as "common" crimes. Guatemala is also at high risk for hurricanes and powerful storms, and 75 percent of the country's population is exposed to active volcano eruptions and earthquakes that could impact property and life.

³ The Peace Corps' assessment lists four levels of risk: "very low," "low," "medium," and "high."

Peace Corps/Guatemala

The agency evacuated 168 Volunteers from the post following the global suspension of Peace Corps operations in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 outbreak. In October 2022, 21 Volunteers returned to Guatemala. As of October 2025, there were 75 Volunteers in Guatemala.

Table 2: Overview of Peace Corps/Guatemala

Overview of Peace Corps/Guatemala	
Dates of Operation	1963-current
Volunteers (all time)	5,390
Volunteers at Post	75
Project Sectors	Maternal and Child Health; Youth in Development; Rural Extension; Community Economic Development (CED)*
Post Staffing Positions	3 United States Direct Hires; 30 Personal Service Contractors
Budget	\$3,276,116

**The CED program was phased out of Peace Corps/Guatemala in 2025. While there was a limited number of Volunteers in this program when the in-country evaluation was completed, there are no longer CED Volunteers in country.*

Due to safety and security considerations, Volunteer site placements are limited to regions in the western highlands. The post prohibits Volunteers from traveling to multiple areas of the country, including the capital, Guatemala City, where Volunteers can only visit under special circumstances that have been pre-approved by relevant post staff. The post also limits Volunteer travel along the Inter-American Highway, the main road through the highlands, by requiring Volunteers to only travel using private transportation.

Health Support for Volunteers

Overall, post staff effectively supported Volunteers' health needs at their sites and complied with the selected medical policies and procedures for site management that we assessed. Moreover, we found that Volunteers were satisfied with both the post's and medical referral facilities' provision of healthcare.

The Medical Facilities Used by the Post Met Peace Corps Requirements and Provided Satisfactory Care to Volunteers

The post complied with key requirements in the Peace Corps' Medical Technical Guideline (TG) 204, "Health Care Facility and Consultant Assessments and Surveys, and Volunteer Site Visits." The post documented the three medical referral facilities approved to treat Volunteers in each of the 25 Volunteer Information Database Application (VIDA)⁴ system files that we reviewed. The post had also assessed all three facilities within the 3-year required timeframe. In addition, the post documented the nearest local medical facility for each Volunteer's site—where community members might take a sick or injured Volunteer in an emergency. Finally, the 22 Volunteers we interviewed reported that they were satisfied with the care they received at both the local and referral medical facilities. Additional comments from Volunteers indicated that the facilities they visited were expecting their arrival and that their experience was well-organized and efficiently planned.

Volunteers Reported Few Health Risk Concerns and Overall Satisfaction with Their Healthcare

Nineteen of the 22 Volunteers interviewed had no concerns about health risks at their homes, sites, or workplaces. Two Volunteers cited unclean food as a risk, and a staff member said it was "a battle" ensuring Volunteers had clean water and food. Access to clean water and food is a challenge for Volunteers at many Peace Corps posts, and we determined that the post adequately addressed this challenge with Volunteers at both pre-service training and in-service training. Of the 22 Volunteers we interviewed, 17 reported they were satisfied with the physical healthcare they received from post. During our interviews, we did not specifically ask about health training, however, nearly half of the Volunteers stated that the health training and risk mitigation the post provided were effective.

⁴ VIDA is a system that posts use for Volunteer records and site documentation. For this evaluation, we reviewed the VIDA files of the 25 Volunteers we planned to visit. Due to logistics and scheduling considerations that arose later in the planning stage of this evaluation, we ended up visiting a total of 22 Volunteers at their sites.

Safety and Security Support for Volunteers

Staff generally supported Volunteers' safety and security at their sites and the post complied with the safety and security policies and procedures we assessed. Volunteers informed us that they felt safe at their sites. However, Volunteers reported distrust and a lack of confidence with the post's management of its safety and security policies and operations.

Volunteers Felt Safe in Their Homes, Sites, and Workplaces

We asked the 22 Volunteers we visited about safety and security concerns in their homes, sites, or workplaces, and 16 responded that they had no concerns. A few Volunteers expressed concerns about getting bitten by stray dogs, though we determined that the post's training regarding the risks of stray dogs was sufficient. Other Volunteers were concerned about being harassed, to include sexual harassment, which we address later in this section of the report. However, the generally positive sentiment that most Volunteers had no concerns at their sites was mirrored in the 2025 Annual Volunteer Survey (AVS),⁵ which indicated Peace Corps/Guatemala Volunteers felt safe where they live and work.

Documentation of Safety and Security Incidents Met Key Requirements

We examined the post's safety and security records in VIDA and the Security Incident Management System (SIMS) and found that the post had properly documented any incidents that could impact future site placements, as required by Safety and Security Instruction (SSI)⁶ 401, "Site History Documentation." We learned of three specific safety and security incidents that Volunteers had experienced at their sites. Two of the security incidents involved host families, and one involved a co-worker; all three Volunteers required a site change. We found that each of the three issues had been properly recorded by staff in VIDA and SIMS. Moreover, staff added the appropriate information and details to VIDA for future site placement considerations, as required.

The Kate Puze Peace Corps Volunteer Protect on Act of 2011 requires that the agency evaluate Volunteer reports of safety risks at their sites to determine if these sites are safe for current and future Volunteers.

The post had effective processes in place that helped them comply with agency requirements for documenting and considering safety and security incidents for future site placements. The post staff hold two formal site management meetings every year, which includes the Training Manager, Quality Assurance Specialist, Director of Management and Operations, Director of Programming and Training, and the Safety and Security, Medical, and Programming staff. In addition to the meetings, staff engage in continuous, inclusive discussions on site assessments and Volunteer placement throughout the site management process. Post staff from multiple units told us that the safety and security review during the site assessment process was informed and effective.

⁵ The AVS provides the agency, Congress, and the general public with Volunteer perspectives on the Peace Corps about issues that include, but are not limited to, Volunteer health, safety, and staff support.

⁶ SSIs are developed by the Office of Volunteer Safety and Security and provide guidelines and procedures for safety and security related operations.

Safety and Security Support for Volunteers

The Post Met Agency Site Documentation Requirements

The post documented its site survey forms, site selection criteria checklists, and host family surveys in the site history files we reviewed in VIDA, as required by SSI 401.⁷ This documentation provides assurance that each Volunteer site has been properly vetted for safety and security issues.

Table 3: Site Documentation in VIDA

Required Form in VIDA	Compliance in VIDA Files Reviewed
Site Survey	24 of 25 (96%)
Site Selection Criteria Checklist	23 of 25 (92%)
Host Family Survey	24 of 25 (96%)

The Post Met Most Emergency Contact Information and Site Location Requirements

The post met the majority of the agency's emergency contact information and site location requirements. According to SSI 603, "Volunteer Site Location Management," Volunteers should have the post's contact information posted in their homes, provided to neighbors and counterparts, and in a format that can be carried with them at all times (such as a card or bracelet). All 22 Volunteers we interviewed had the post's emergency contact information in a portable format, although 6 reported that they do not always take it with them. We found that 19 of the 22 Volunteers reported that their neighbors and counterparts have the post's emergency contact information. We also observed that 7 of the 22 Volunteer houses we inspected did not have a copy of the post's emergency contact information posted, as required. Although we did not find significant levels of noncompliance, we encourage the post to remind Volunteers that they must carry the post's contact information at all times and place a copy prominently in their homes.

SSI 603 also requires VIDA site files to include both site contact and site location information. We found that the site contact information was documented in 84 percent (21/25) of the site files we examined, and the site location information was documented at 100 percent of those same sites.

⁷ Other required documents include site contact information, which is addressed later in this section, and the housing criteria checklist, which is in the Housing Support section of this report.

Safety and Security Support for Volunteers

The Post Complied with Host Family and Counterpart Training Requirements

Our review of VIDA found that the post delivered sexual assault and sexual harassment orientation to host families and at Volunteer workplaces, as required by SSI 420, “Guidance for Host Family and Counterpart Orientation/Information on Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment.” Each of the 22 Volunteers we visited lived in a house with a host family, and our assessment revealed that the sexual assault and sexual harassment orientation had been provided to 100 percent of their host families. In addition, the orientation was provided to 100 percent of Volunteer workplaces, as required by the agency.

The Sam Farr and Nick Castle Peace Corps Reform Act of 2018 requires that each Peace Corps post “provide[s] orientation or information regarding the awareness and prevention of sexual assault and sexual harassment” to host families and “a designated person of authority at the Volunteer’s initial workplace.”

The Service Improvement Alliance Has Enhanced Communication Between Volunteers and Staff Regarding Volunteer Safety and Security Concerns

The post formed a Service Improvement Alliance (SIA) group in December 2024. The group includes Volunteers from each cohort who represent Volunteer perspectives, and a staff liaison appointed by the Country Director (CD) who advises senior staff on SIA activities and identifies subject matter experts to address issues brought forward by the SIA.

As defined in the group’s charter, the purpose of the SIA is to improve “communication and responsiveness between Volunteers and staff, fostering a more collaborative and supportive environment.” We determined that the post’s SIA was an effective conduit for staff and Volunteers to hold constructive discussions and direct Volunteer input and concerns to appropriate staff. Volunteers and staff reported that the SIA effectively addressed Volunteer concerns on various topics, including safety and security.

For example, the SIA’s work led to a safety and security-related policy change that permitted less restrictive travel to Antigua and Quetzaltenango, two primary commerce hubs located in the western highlands. The post has also engaged with Volunteers to solicit feedback on possible changes to the Volunteer Service Handbook, which is updated annually. In another example, the post leveraged the SIA to collect feedback about the post’s 2025 AVS results to improve communication and overall support (see Table 4).

Safety and Security Support for Volunteers

Table 4: Volunteer Responses to AVS Questions Regarding Communication

To what extent do you disagree or agree with each of the following statements?*	PC/Guatemala 2025	IAP ⁸ 2025	Global 2025
My Country Director is aware of the issues that Volunteers face in service.	2.59	3.83	3.69
My Country Director fosters open communication with Volunteers.	2.60	4.04	3.89

*The scale for this AVS question was “1-Strongly disagree, 5-Strongly agree.”

SIA members meet virtually and collaborate routinely, and hold scheduled quarterly meetings with the CD. While communication between Volunteers and staff remains a concern, which is addressed further in the next sub-section of this report, we applaud the post’s efforts and success in leveraging the SIA to improve communication between staff and Volunteers. We strongly encourage the post to continue emphasizing and using the SIA to facilitate conversations between staff and Volunteers regarding important issues and concerns.

Volunteers Described a Lack of Trust and Confidence in the Management of Some Safety and Security Policies and Operations

The Volunteers we interviewed disclosed that they did not trust or have confidence in some of the post’s safety and security policies and operations, including incident response and whereabouts reporting, which the post uses to help locate Volunteers in the event of an emergency. This was reflected in the 2025 AVS data. For example, Peace Corps/Guatemala Volunteer response scores to the question, “How satisfied are you with the following types of services provided by in-country staff – Safety and Security” were lower than at any other Peace Corps post.

A few Volunteers voiced their distrust with incident reporting because of the potential adverse outcomes, such as having to change sites, staff overreacting to something that Volunteers think is unimportant, or getting other Volunteers in trouble. Three Volunteers told us they lacked confidence in post staff because when they reported security incidents, staff were slow to respond.

The agency’s AVS data also underscored that Volunteers in Guatemala were less confident in the post’s response to sexual harassment reports compared to other posts. We noticed a significant drop from 2024 to 2025 in Volunteer sentiments of Peace Corps/Guatemala’s ability to address sexual harassment.

⁸ The Peace Corps re-organized in April 2026. Peace Corps/Guatemala was moved from the inter-America and Pacific (IAP) region operational unit, which was eliminated as part of the re-organization, to “The Americas” organizational unit. At the time we interviewed staff and reviewed agency documentation, this re-organization was not completed.

Safety and Security Support for Volunteers

Table 5: Volunteer Responses to AVS Questions on Sexual Harassment

To what extent do you disagree or agree with each of the following statements?*	PC/Guatemala 2025	PC/Guatemala 2024	IAP 2025	IAP 2024	Global 2025	Global 2024
The Peace Corps provides adequate resources and support to those who are affected by sexual harassment.	2.98	3.22	3.64	3.50	3.59	3.40
I am confident in the Peace Corps' ability to effectively address reports of sexual harassment.	3.11	3.84	3.76	3.80	3.74	3.60

*The scale for these AVS questions was “1-Strongly disagree, 5-Strongly agree.”

Some Volunteers stated that their distrust of staff was due to their belief that staff used whereabouts reporting for punitive purposes rather than for its intended purpose—to have information that could be used to locate and/or contact Volunteers during an emergency. Others claimed that their distrust stems from a lack of transparency in the safety and security rules. One Volunteer described how they were being “talked at” by staff who failed to explain what drives safety and security rules and decisions. A staff member we spoke with thought that there were many unexplained safety and security rules and understood why Volunteers were frustrated.

Manual Section (MS) 461, “Crimes Against Volunteers and Trainees” states that the Peace Corps is “committed to creating an environment that encourages V[olunteers]/T[rainees] to report incidents committed against them so that the necessary and proper support can be provided.” We determined that the Volunteers’ lack of trust and confidence resulted in decreased reporting of their whereabouts and any security incidents, which has undermined Volunteer support. Our conclusion was further supported by additional 2025 AVS data that showed Peace Corps/Guatemala Volunteers were far less likely than Volunteers in other posts to follow policies, report whereabouts, or feel comfortable letting post leadership know if they made a mistake.

We recommend:

- 1. The CD works with the SIA to develop and implement a plan that improves Volunteers’ trust and confidence in the post’s safety and security policies and operations.**

Housing Support for Volunteers

We found that Volunteer houses largely met the post's criteria and provided Volunteers with safe and secure homes. Specifically, gas stove placement in Volunteer homes largely met important agency safety standards. However, over 30 percent of Volunteer homes we inspected were not equipped to extinguish a cooking fire as required by agency policy.

Houses Met the Post's Criteria

We reviewed Peace Corps/Guatemala VIDA documentation and inspected 22 Volunteer homes to measure the post's compliance with housing requirements. We found that 23 of the 25 VIDA records we examined included a housing criteria checklist as required by SSI 410, "Housing Standards and Inspection."

Our inspections revealed that the majority of 22 Volunteer houses visited complied with the post's key safety and security criteria. The houses, and the Volunteer living spaces within those houses, were secure from break-ins and intruders.⁹ The homes were also well-constructed and structurally solid, which is important given the high risk of powerful storms and natural disasters occurring. We found that Volunteer houses in Guatemala were at a comparably higher standard than other posts we had assessed in recent years.

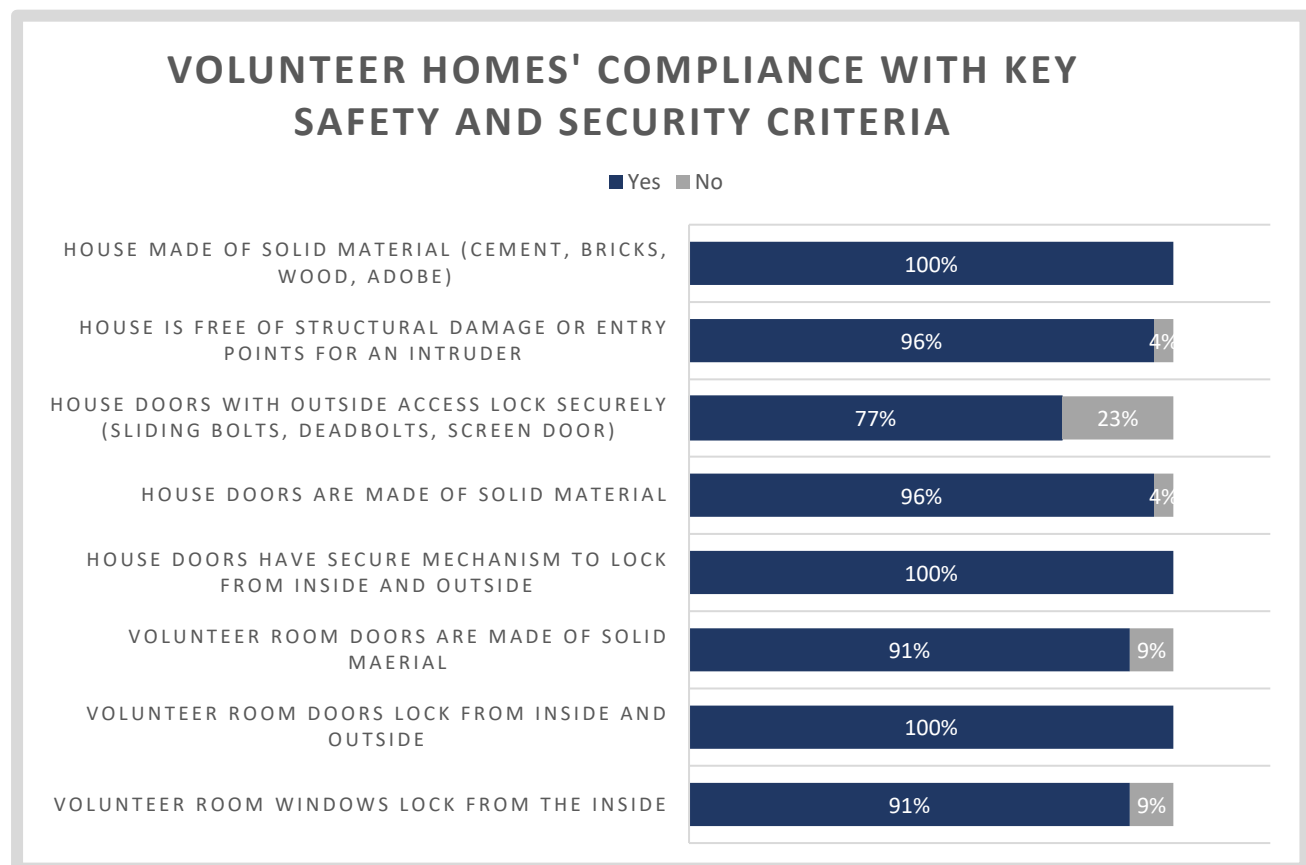


Figure 2: Percent of Volunteer homes in compliance with Peace Corps/Guatemala criteria

⁹ We found that one Volunteer's door was not lockable, which the post fixed promptly after we brought this to their attention.

Housing Support for Volunteers

Volunteer Kitchens Met the Post's Propane Gas Standards

Twenty of the 22 Volunteers we visited used propane gas stoves for cooking. We assess gas stoves carefully due to the unfortunate propane gas tank-related death of a Volunteer in 2019 at a separate post. The agency has developed specific standards to mitigate propane gas accidents. We found that 15 of those 20 Volunteers using gas for cooking had the tank placed in a proper position outside of the home. The five gas tanks located within the kitchens met most of the standards. They were not placed in enclosed cabinets, the kitchens were adequately ventilated, and every kitchen was equipped with plug-in gas detectors.

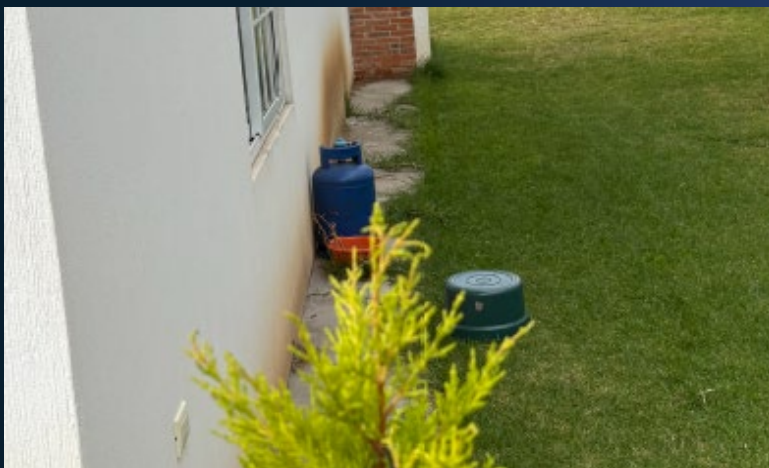


Figure 3: Propane gas tank placed outside of Volunteer home.

We also found three propane gas tanks that were out of compliance because they were positioned within 1.5 meters of the stove. The agency requires that when tanks cannot be placed outdoors, the kitchens must have enough space to be placed at least 5 feet from a stove. We brought this to the attention of post, and the tanks were promptly moved to meet safety requirements.



Figure 4: Gas tank placed within 1.5. meters of stove.

Housing Support for Volunteers

Volunteer Kitchens Were Not Equipped to Extinguish a Fire

From our housing inspections, we observed that 7 of the 22 (32 percent) houses were not equipped to extinguish a fire in the cooking area, which is a requirement for Volunteer houses. Acceptable equipment includes a fire extinguisher or a bucket of sand. In pre-service training, Volunteers were taught how to extinguish a kitchen fire, but Volunteers cannot apply that training without the appropriate equipment.

We recommend:

- 2. The post ensures that Volunteers have a method of extinguishing a cooking fire in their kitchens.**

Additional Information: Volunteer Project Impact

While our evaluation scope did not include an examination of Volunteer project work, we did ask each Volunteer interviewed if they were making a positive impact with their project work, which speaks to the first goal of the Peace Corps mission. All but one of the 22 Volunteers we spoke with reported that they were making a positive impact with their project work. We also heard from multiple Volunteers that their work partners were well-prepared and willing to work with them.

Recommendations

Based on the results of our review and analysis, OIG recommends that:

1. The CD works with the SIA to develop and implement a plan that improves Volunteers' trust and confidence in the post's safety and security policies and operations.
2. The post ensures that Volunteers have a method of extinguishing a cooking fire in their kitchens.

OIG Response To Agency Comments

We appreciate the Peace Corps' collaboration throughout this evaluation. In response to our preliminary report, the Peace Corps concurred with the report's two recommendations. Moreover, the post has already addressed one of the recommendations. We reviewed evidence of completed corrective actions and closed recommendation 2: "The post ensures that Volunteers have a method of extinguishing a cooking fire in their kitchens."

To close the recommendation, the post created a Sand Bucket Challenge contest and awarded a prize to the best decorated sand bucket (see Figure 5). The contest was not only creative, but it also collected evidence that the requirement had been met. We found this to be a best practice for any post that needs to improve compliance with kitchen fire safety, an important housing standard.

We will consider closing the remaining recommendation once the Chief Compliance and Risk Officer confirms that the appropriate corrective actions have been documented and completed.

We wish to note that in closing recommendations, we are not certifying that we have reviewed their effects. For the full text of the agency's comments, see Appendix C.



Figure 5: Post "Sand Bucket Challenge" flyer with guidelines on the acceptable method for Volunteers to extinguish fires in their kitchens.

Appendix A: Objective, Scope, and Methodology

Objective and Scope

We conducted our evaluation of Peace Corps/Guatemala with the objective to answer the following question: To what extent did the post comply with critical health, safety, and security standards at Volunteer sites?

To guide our work, we answered the following researchable questions:

1. Did the post comply with medical policies and procedures for site management?
2. Did the post comply with safety and security policies and procedures for site management?
3. Did the post comply with housing policies and procedures for site management?
4. Did post comply with site location management policies and procedures for site management?
5. Did the post comply with community orientation policies and procedures for site management?

The scope of this evaluation included the post's programs, operations, and activities from January 1, 2023, to December 30, 2025.

Methodology

Interviews and Inspections

We traveled to the post from December 1 to December 13, 2025, and visited 22 sites to inspect Volunteer housing. OIG interviewed 22 Volunteers, with the priority to include the hardest-to-reach Volunteers. We also spoke with post staff, including the CD, Director of Programming and Training, Safety and Security Manager, Peace Corps Medical Officer, Quality Assurance Specialist, and Director of Management and Operations.

Data Review and Analysis

We analyzed the data collected from the post and headquarters to evaluate site management as it relates to Volunteer health, safety and security, and housing. The data we analyzed included, but was not limited to, the AVS, the "Crime, Harassment, and Early Termination Data report for Peace Corps/Guatemala" from the Office of Safety and Security,¹⁰ Peace Corps Safety and Security Officer reports, and handbooks and guidance sent from the post. We also reviewed site history documentation in VIDA and SIMS.

Criteria Review

We reviewed the following Federal laws and agency policies, procedures, and guidance related to the post's program, operations, and activities:

¹⁰ The Office of Safety and Security became the Office of Volunteer Safety and Security following the 2026 agency re-organization.

Appendix A: Objective, Scope, and Methodology

- Sam Farr and Nick Castle Peace Corps Reform Act of 2018
- Kate Puzey Peace Corps Volunteer Protection Act of 2011
- The post’s site survey forms, site selection criteria checklists, housing criteria checklists, host family survey forms, and site contact forms
- The agency’s tri-regional site management guidance documents for 2024 and 2025
- Peace Corps Manual Sections:
 - MS 262, “Peace Corps Medical Services Program”
 - MS 270, “Volunteer/Trainee Safety and Security”
 - MS 461, “Crimes Against Volunteers and Trainees (policy and procedures)”
- Safety and Security Instructions
 - SSI 310, “Safety and Security Volunteer Training Guidelines”
 - SSI 401, “Site History Documentation”
 - SSI 410, “Housing Standards and Inspection Process”
 - SSI 415, “Host Family Selection Criteria and Approval Process”
 - SSI 420, “Guidance for Host Family and Counterpart Orientation/Information on Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment”
 - SSI 603, “Volunteer Site Location Management”
- Medical Technical Guidelines (TG)
 - TG 204, “Health Care Facility and Consultant Assessments and Surveys, and Volunteer Site Visits”
 - TG 240, “Medical Supplies and Equipment”

Inspector General Standards

We conducted this evaluation in accordance with the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency’s *Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation* (December 2020).

Appendix B: List of Acronyms

AVS	Annual Volunteer Survey
CD	Country Director
MS	Manual Section
OIG	Office of Inspector General
PSC	Personal Services Contractor
SIA	Service Improvement Alliance
SIMS	Security Incident Management System
SSI	Safety and Security Instruction
TG	Technical Guidelines
USDH	United States Direct Hire
VIDA	Volunteer Information Database Application

Appendix C: Agency Comments



MEMORANDUM

TO: Joaquin Ferrao, Inspector General

FROM: Kris Besch, Deputy Chief Executive Officer

Kris Besch
Digitally signed by Kris Besch
Date: 2026.07.16 16:35:57 -0400

CC: Richard E. Swartz, Chief of Staff
Emily Haimowitz, Chief Compliance and Risk Officer, Office of Compliance and Risk
Nancy Herbolsheimer, Associate Director, Department of Global Operations
Christine Gottschalk, Acting Director, Office of Post Performance and Support
Kavita Pullapilly, Chief of Operations, The Americas and the Indo-Pacific & Caribbean
Caryl Garcia, Country Director, Peace Corps/Guatemala
David Fleisig, Director, Office of Volunteer Safety and Security
Alexis Fowler, General Counsel
Jennifer Piorkowski, Director, Executive Secretariat Unit
Nafisah Hankins, Compliance Officer, Office of Compliance and Risk

DATE: July 16, 2026

RE: Agency Response to the Evaluation of Peace Corps/Guatemala:
Volunteer Health, Safety, and Security at Site

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to this preliminary report from the Office of Inspector General (OIG). Enclosed please find the agency's response to the recommendations made by the Inspector General as outlined in the OIG's *Evaluation of Peace Corps/Guatemala: Volunteer Health, Safety, and Security at Site*, sent to the agency on June 1, 2026.

Recommendation 1

The CD works with the SIA to develop and implement a plan that improves Volunteers' trust and confidence in the post's safety and security policies and operations.

Concur

Response: Peace Corps/Guatemala is working closely with the Service Improvement Alliance (SIA), a group of Peace Corps Volunteer (PCV) representatives, to improve PCVs' trust and confidence in the post's safety and security policies and procedures. Through the SIA, all PCVs were invited to offer feedback on this topic in February 2026, which was used when making updates to post's *Volunteer Service Handbook* in May and June 2026.

Appendix C: Agency Comments

Post leadership invited all SIA PCV representatives to an in-person workshop in June 2026. The desired outcome of that workshop was to develop—in coordination with and from the PCV experience—an action plan to improve PCVs’ trust and confidence in post’s safety and security policies and operations.

Post leadership has an improvement plan for implementation during the remainder of this calendar year. Post has already begun engagement of both staff and PCVs in plan implementation. The final action item will be to conduct an evaluation in six months to gauge PCVs’ level of trust and confidence in safety and security policies and operations in comparison to sentiments expressed earlier this year.

Documents to be Submitted:

- Agenda of SIA workshop in June 2026
- Plan for improvement of Volunteer confidence in the safety and security policies and operations
- May and June 2026 safety and security-related updates to the Volunteer Service Handbook
- SIA presentation to all staff in June 2026

Status and Timeline for Completion: December 2026

Recommendation 2

The post ensures that Volunteers have a method of extinguishing a cooking fire in their kitchens.

Concur

Response: Post leadership is committed to ensuring that every Volunteer has a method for extinguishing a cooking fire in their kitchen. In Guatemala, the most practical, effective tool is a bucket of sand.

Within post’s *Official Site Visit of a PCV* checklist, post has amended the references under “housing and cooking area” items. The checklist previously required staff to verify a fire extinguishment method only during the first official site visit. The checklist has been amended to reflect that this item will henceforth be verified during each official site visit.

To ensure all PCVs are compliant presently, post launched a “Sand Bucket Challenge,” requesting that all PCVs provide photo documentation of the fire extinguishment method in their cooking area. All Volunteers submitted photos to demonstrate compliance with the requirements.

Appendix C: Agency Comments

Documents Submitted:

- PCV Site Visit Form (a.k.a. official site visit checklist)
- Sand Bucket Challenge graphic
- PCVs' sand bucket confirmation photo catalogue

Status and Timeline for Completion: July 2026

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