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# **COMPILATION OF ALL INTERVIEW QUOTES**

## **Kate Puzey Act AND PEACE CORPS SEXUAL ASSAULT RESPONSE AND RISK REDUCTION PROGRAM**

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## 1. BREAKING THROUGH

Widespread agreement that the agency needed change.

- "One of the bright spots – CDs, locals, Volunteers, post staff are all aware of a safety and security environment and the stress on Safety and Security - I do not think we have any difficulty in getting people's attention on Safety and Security. In fact, they come and ask questions all the time. There is no lack of engagement. There is over engagement and overkill. Almost every memo comes out with the first line...'The safety and security of the Volunteer is our #1 goal.' It has become kind of a bad marketing slogan. There is fatigue out there. It is not that everyone is not engaged - they are hyper engaged and might be getting tired."
- "There were problems before Kate Puzey passed. I see how we reacted and what we did..."
- "I've been educated in the last 5 years. The only one responsible for the rape is the rapist. I know I get it now, I think my boss does, I know Kellie does. It's a real shift of mind. My dad taught me, everything is cause and effect. We tend to think that way—especially in law enforcement. The average cop is going to look at a victim and think, 'Idiot, what were you thinking.' I will still look at a report and think, 'Wow, she was drunk, she invited some guy she didn't know to her house at 2am. She started making out with him. And then she tells him to stop and expects him to stop?' I'm not perfect. In my mind I will think "what was she thinking?" but I will not share that. The moment the crime occurs it doesn't matter what happened. People here have a challenge with that. We have to get in a mindset that once the crime occurs, it doesn't matter what came before."
- "Movement is in the right direction. The challenge is someone has to help us fix attitudes about these changes. Some people are kicking and screaming. I think we are moving in the right direction, but it's painful."
- "People say they get it but they do things that show they really don't. It will be difficult. We can have rules in place, but at the end of the day we are reliant of the good judgment of people halfway around the world."
- "People rate safety training very highly-in the upper 80s and 90s. The issue is, 'are we training the right material in the right manner.' The longer you are in a community; you let your guard down. It's human nature to relax. 'Nothing is going to happen.' It's not that they don't know. They drop their guards or reinforce a false sense of security. A year into service we need to hit IST with safety and security again. Most posts do monthly updates. I may be wrong but I don't think its lack of getting the message out there. How do I get people to adopt daily behaviors?"

PC created OVA, hired Kellie and is shifting the culture toward victim-centered.

- "Kellie is really good at her job. She's a wonderful and warm person. If I were a victim I'd want to talk to Kellie and have her advocate for me.
- "We are learning to appreciate 'you don't' blame the Victim.' The Peace Corps should be placing Country Directors in the field that have the compassion. I was careful of the ground I covered. She (the victim) was more worried about the classic shame—she blamed herself."
- "Kellie makes sure that the victim knows her rights."
- "It (a sexual assault) is a person's worst time of their life. With the right care and support, the growth a person can have as an individual, is at a really deep level. Not within a year or two years, but 15 years down the road their life will be really different. My hope is that from the care and support they received from Peace Corps they would say 'It was a really shitty time, but I grew from that experience, it enriched my life in the end.'"
- "There's been a big shift that has translated to the field. Inappropriate comments are rarely made. The field doesn't represent a victim-blaming culture anymore."
- "Another bright spot is that the agency rolled out four safety and security training modules – instead of just sending out the training in electronic format with a directive, which is sometimes our norm. We did a 'train-the-trainer' for PCCSOs, DPTs, SSC, and Training Managers. – all key people were in the same room getting the same messages. It was unusual – very costly – but a very successful kind of approach. There was a lot of synergy and energy came off of all that with everyone working together at the table. They were enthusiastic. They were focused."
- "You will never hear it, but we actually have many victims who are really happy with the support that they have received. I was with a rape victim a couple of days ago who is incredibly supportive of Peace Corps and the help and support she received."
- What is the difference pre/post OVA? The difference is overall positive. In what way? Being a support to the Volunteer. I may have great people at post. But, hey I am a male. Kellie is a female and she was a victim before and she is an American. Those things help the victim identify with her. Kellie has great personal skills – she puts people at ease. She is very competent – knows what you have to collect. The very 1<sup>st</sup> case she was involved in was a model case. The perpetrator was in jail in 48 hours. The victim was brave. Kellie reached out to the victim and at first, the victim did not want to talk to her. She had complete trust in the post staff. The immediate response to a sexual assault is that the victim mostly wants to talk to us at the post. After an initial support phase is where Kellie starts to come in. Kellie plays a role in the extended support phase especially if prosecution is involved. In our country, you may have to confront the perpetrator face-to-face. They might ask you 'why didn't you fight it off?' We all agree that the victim is not to blame, but in the courtroom, they are going to try to blame you."
- "Kellie Greene and I definitely butted heads in our initial interaction. But since that first contact she has been very, very helpful. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Volunteer who was raped has had a number of calls with Kellie and she tells me that Kellie has been very helpful. So after the first bump, I went back to Kellie and she has given me good advice. It's hard to make that marriage when someone has such expertise in her field, but so little experience with Peace Corps. But now that she has been in the job a while,

she is probably fine. There was definitely some rockiness, which I attribute to the hypersensitivity around this issue. There was a great concern that we were not going to do this right."

- The single biggest change is the OVA, Kellie Greene. I think overall it is a positive change in Peace Corps. It makes sense from a quality assurance point of view. I think that Peace Corps can take an honest look at itself and say that in the past, some posts have not handled cases of sexual assault the way that they should have. The VA will be the 1<sup>st</sup> to know if a Victim is not treated well."
- "I don't think it's black or white; either you're a victim-centered culture or you're not. It is a continuum and I think we, as an agency, are farther along in being victim-centered than many think."
- "Successful implementation of the Act is understanding that security and safety are very much an attitude – an attitude that you operate from. Peace Corps needs to create a culture—and I think they are doing that through the training--a culture that says, 'this is something that is important. This is something that I need to think through when I am dealing with Volunteers.'"
- "The materials that have been developed around sexual assault are good. It is good that we have a Victim's Advocate office. I know that victims benefit greatly from a VA."
- "A challenge is finding a role for Kellie that works in the agency. I think that she is doing a great deal. It is just difficult institutionalizing the role of the VA. There is resistance because we have not had a VA. It is difficult because the field has had great authority over Volunteers at post, and they are not used to getting a call from someone new and getting difficult questions. It is not a personality thing – it is more of an organizational thing. Her role is to advocate for the victim. I can see how it is hard for the people in the field, but not disproportionately disempowering."

Some cross-functional bodies are yielding results and others are promising.

- "Here's on positive story. A victim of sexual assault in her residence didn't want to press charges. She was medevaced for several weeks. It was not in her best interest to go back. The team came together to make a decision. She had only 90-100 days left in her service, not enough to warrant developing a new site. The country director asked if she wanted to go back and work in the Peace Corps office. She did. And it meant so much to her."
- "There's a commitment to victim centeredness. Core leadership has led that. We have to work on the coordination of people in the physical structure. We could have the Country Director, Safety and Security Coordinator, and others on board—how do we ensure the culture has reached out to the stakeholders at the periphery—victim, post staff, local law enforcement, community itself—neighbors, embassy, regional security officer?"
- "I truly feel that things are getting better with CARS. When I do get together with the whole team, I feel that OMS is being heard."
- "The system that is kind of in place - CARS - is kind of working well. We do need to define who will be on the call. Right now it's ad hoc in the moment. There needs to be a protocol about who should be on the call. And it's a double-edged sword. The post—the Country Director and PCMO-- unfortunately have to hear the disagreements between the parties at HQ arguing over who gets to decide what." 1c



- I will say the training we received for sexual assault in terms of emergency response was excellent—in terms of the flow charts and protocols. I am a big believer of checklists and protocols and I felt that Peace Corps really thought this one through and I got great support from SS, OVA, PCMO, a local psychologist – they are all critical in making informed decisions.”
- “The CARS meeting takes place based on an Eastern Time zone. One of my observations is that we felt like we had a good handle on the dynamics, a plan to go forward. To the credit of everyone, they were very supportive. There was not a lot of second-guessing about us. This was largely due to medical team and Safety and Security team.”
- “I think we have a tendency to focus on the negative when a vast majority of incidents are dealt with well.”
- “CARS came into place mid-stream— It is an opportunity for all parties to be on the same phone call. In practice it’s a good thing to do. It’s the role of the group in decision-making that needs to be analyzed. Is the Country Director seeking unanimity from the group? Are decisions getting second-guessed? Or is it a consultative group—including Safety and Security, COU, VA, post) to support post to think thorough considerations?”
- “The time CARS worked well, we came together and talked about the incident. The way forward was clear. It worked well because everybody was in the conversation, had voice, made the decision together, and shared well. The one that worked well, Kellie saw quickly what was needed.”

Not stopping at “check the box” but in the field shifting mindset to go deeper when an assault is reported.

- “The director has been a fantastic leader embracing the true meaning of the things we are undertaking. We are not just responding to congressional mandates. That’s critically important—people realize when you are just checking off the boxes.”
- “The key components of Kate Puzey Act working well are:
  - Digging deeper to get to truth underneath the story
  - Following the protocol and practicing it so that when something happens you know what to do. Practicing in team with your country is important.
  - We knew it would be intense with instructions flying from all directions. We realized we would not have a lot of control and were pleasantly surprised by the amount we did have.”
  - “All Country Directors were trained in sexual assault response and we had the pants scared off of us. We heard, ‘there’s the protocol and if you break it you’ll be fired.’ It was with incredible seriousness. You leave training praying it will never happen to you. Because it looked pretty complicated.”
  - “We do risk reduction and we talk about the responsibility of keeping yourself safe in PST—making choices that lower your risks. In life, we all make choices and decisions daily that affect us. For example, if I were a Volunteer, I may decide to visit my friend in the next village, and for whatever reason I don’t leave in time to return home before dark. I know it’s late and it’s a little bit riskier. I’ve been told not to travel past dark. I’ve been in country for a while, have traveled past dark without incident, so I decide to take that risk. On this particular day I get raped. Is it my fault? Is it

the CD's fault? Is it the fault of Peace Corps? No.. The only person responsible is the offender who took advantage of my vulnerability.. Was I taught and warned to not do that? Yeah. Don't you think I'm going to live with that for a long time—second-guessing myself? I knew better. I know I should not have stayed out late or made other arrangements to prevent traveling past dark – they told me this could happen--but I did it anyway. What I need most at this moment is a compassionate response and support. As the victim advocate I'm not going to hold a Country Director or other Peace Corps staff member accountable for a Volunteer becoming the victim of a crime, no matter the circumstance. However, I am going to hold a Country Director accountable for blaming the victim, because it's not the best way to do things."

- "Kate Puzey Act—it's only beginning to be felt and that is because it's only beginning to be implemented. The primary impact is an onerous training burden that we are just beginning to get our heads around. What we do have is a very big training program and a very scripted program that does not leave a lot of room for country-by-country adaption. There is heightened awareness from female Volunteers that if Peace Corps is making a big deal, maybe there's a bigger problem than I know. There is a little bit of anxiety that the very existence of the Kate Puzey Act creates. Recently, in PST, a number of female Volunteers wanted training in self-defense. They independently said, 'if it's so important, why aren't you training us in self defense.' We said, 'it's not Peace Corps policy.' That didn't answer their concerns. So, a number of female Volunteers got the males to teach self-defense. We are creating increased anxiety."
- "We are focused on shifting our behavior and processes to a 'victim centered' approach and consciously away from 'victim blaming.' We think the shift is taking place but there is a lot more to do. The challenge is to fully operationalize a victim-centered approach including: compassionate response in terms of safety and security, response handling and no matter what else might have been a factor in the assault, it can't be considered. This pertains specifically to returning to site and behavior pre-dating the actual event—the immunity policy to victims and others involved. Operationalization of that is still what the field struggles with."
- "When you see someone emotionally hurt, if I could give just two words of advice to other CDs, it would be: "Suspend judgment."
- "The biggest bright spot in all of this is that incidences are down this year--6 months or a year does not make a trend, we are going to have to continue to evaluate. But we are making positive progress in terms of bringing crime down and supporting Volunteers better. That is the biggest bright spot. We are doing good work. There are some frustrations within the agency, but the bottom line is that things are progressing."
- "The role of the Kate Puzey Act is even more evident...when you have a firehouse of issues coming across your desk, when an incident occurs you want to manage it and move on. If you don't have Kate Puzey Act and you only have only what your instincts tell you—it's a whole lot easier to pass over it."
- "There's a lot we don't have control over, such as communications. We are in developing countries. As much as we want to structure response to rapes and sexual assault, it's not as simple as people might think, when communications are not what they should be. The answer is not giving everyone satellite phones. Keeping those up is challenging. Personal beacons—maybe that's where we are going. The ball is already rolling. The Kate Puzey Act should institutionalize some of these things, so when there is a new agency leadership, it doesn't go away."

- "The Kate Puzey Act training was critically important. The fact we didn't do everything perfectly wasn't the fault of the training, or direction or guidance from DC. If we made mistakes, they were human errors or errors that were a results of communication."
- "I don't have a sense that there is much recognition by HQ as to the psycho-emotional impact of these situations have on first responders. Okay, let's dissect this and find out where we screwed up. Okay, that needs to be done. It's a lot of pressure on people. We get close to these Volunteers. I'm not sure there's much in the system back there to give support for PCMOs who have done some gnarly things. I don't know if the Act addresses this. The agency needs to be cognizant that we are human, we are sensitive, and somebody might want to think about support needs for people in the field. It could be 3 years or 3 weeks before the next event happens and you want to keep these people healthy."

Early anecdotal reports indicate Volunteers are noticing the differences.

- "Volunteers who have worked with Kellie love her. She fights for them."
- "You will never hear it, but we actually have many victims who are really happy with the support that they have received. I was with a rape victim a couple of days ago who is incredibly supportive of Peace Corps and the help and support she received."

## 2. A DIFFERENT AND RAPIDLY CHANGING WORLD

Peace Corps is still the "toughest job you'll ever love."

- "Peace Corps is hard. It was hard then, and it is hard now. At the end of the day, it is about you and that village you live in. If you can never disconnect from back home, if you are on Facebook all the time, it makes it harder."
- "There is something about service and 2 years of living in another place, and it's hard. Really what is hard is finding your true self and connecting with other people. The hardest part is that we want results and we want them now, because we are Americans, for God's sake – But really lasting human change is incremental and it's slow, and it's hard slogging work."
- "The Obama administration priority is for the Peace Corps to advance its mission set forth by Sargent Shriver and to support our Volunteers in the field. The safety, security, & support of the Volunteer are the Director's highest priorities. He implements these by ensuring that we have best practice programming in place. The White House policy mirrors the director's priorities."

The agency is undertaking its most aggressive reform agenda since its beginnings, including entitlement to a US standard of health care.

- "I do see a push for standardization and I am not necessarily bothered by that. I think it makes sense to have a core approach and leave latitude for local customization. I think that the Peace Corps does set standards and leave room for local customization. You have to also allow for the sharing of good practices across organizations—and that's a good thing." "In this administration, we have become increasingly rigorous in programmatic aims. We have improved and continued to improve training. We have instituted a number of reforms related to safety and security, and the professionalization of Peace Corps as an experience. These reforms didn't start here—but we are continuing the reforms and keeping the ideals of the Peace Corps firm and using them positively in today's changing world of needs overseas and the different needs of applicants, who are eager to serve but bring different skills. I see a professionalizing organization. Going along with the professionalization and the changes—there are natural tendencies toward rubbing the wrong way as you bring new perspectives, requirements that brought us to the need today."
- "Historically Peace Corps was an inch thin and a mile wide. Today we are much more tightly focused on fewer project areas that catch most of the interest people have. We end up having to put square pegs in round holes. We may not be able to put someone with an agriculture background into an agriculture project, but maybe we can put them in an education job with agricultural aspects. Options for primary assignments are more limited. This is a good change though. Focusing the staff to look for a few big ideas rather than a lot of little ones makes sense."

- "PC is like a franchise except that there is no standardization across the franchises from an operational perspective. We have the parent company and then 77 franchises across the globe. They look the same because of the symbol and types of work but there is no standardization and accountability back to the parent. That is what has been the most difficult because there is a lot of standardization coming from the parent company without explanation or communication."
- "I applaud the effort that has been made to provide more standardized training and to clarify response processes. We need always to continue to improve what we do, HQ does as well."
- "Stakeholders do not share our own cultural values often. It's a different cultural context. In moments of honesty we will say a lot of our events are tragically avoidable—cross-cultural miscues exacerbated by alcohol and other situations. It's difficult for host country nationals who think any time you see a woman leaving a bar it's for one reason. That's what really doesn't compute for them. In terms of prosecution, different countries have different policies. It's difficult to explain to Volunteers that they are being treated that way because that's the way in that country. PC can't say to the people living in that country 'you can't do that with our Volunteers.'"
- "There is change fatigue going on so I would say that the messages are, I would not say lost, but I think that they are not as internalized as we would have liked."
- "An assessment was done that was quite sweeping. The leadership loves the Peace Corps and is committed to make it even better."
- "Problems: Cultural biases that come into play. There are different cultural understandings of what these crimes mean. Most in-country people are host country nationals. There are challenges in making sure that the field is listening to us because they have a great deal of autonomy. It is increasingly not okay for countries to do their own thing and Kate Puzey Act requires standardization and oversight in terms of training, policies and more."
- "Peace Corps is really bad at getting rid of low-performing people. For me to lose my job, I would have to really screw it up. I am far from HQ."
- "The agency has gone through a tremendous amount of change in a short time—best practices in victim rights, support, recovery, care. Just like any organization under public scrutiny with a lot of change going on, it has gone through a lot of stresses and strains of trying to implement a lot in a short span of time."
- "It's like if you had a family where everyone is going their happy way and the kids do what they want to do. Suddenly now we are all expected to be sitting at the dinner table. The rules have changed and people are asking, 'What the hell happened in the house?' It takes a while for the new levels of expectation to take hold."
- "I think we're doing amazingly well with all the change."
- "There is a real movement to centralization – a real attempt to homogenize and standardize in the name of quality control around development work and training and support. Back in the day, your Peace Corps experience was really dependent on the quality of the staff—the particular project, APCD or CD—you could get really great training or really crappy training, great projects or crappy projects. In the past, it was a dice throw. If you were a staff person and you were innovative, you could do some really great stuff. I think standardization is an attempt to fix the issues with lower quality staff and experiences."



- "Today, we have the annual Volunteer surveys. You are getting a lot of information. That's a big change."
- "There's so much change going on which is affecting HQ and field staff. Some of the changes are related to Kate Puzey Act and some are related to centralization and standardization of Agency processes. We are pulling back some power. The Agency is not as decentralized as it used to be. We've learned that by decentralizing, areas such as training and support were not standardized. Some posts would do these tasks well while others did not. For example, in training, we provided a session outline of requirements to be discussed regarding sexual assault response. Posts customized the training based on the cultural context of their post. Even though we had a standard template and the ability to customize to the local culture, ultimately, we ended up with varying standards and sessions that were completely inconsistent in the field on how to respond to sexual assault. Currently, the Agency requires standardized language for the sexual assault sessions to ensure the same message is being given around the world. The people in the field are not happy with this as they feel we're taking away freedom and the session is not as culturally rich as before. But this standardization ensures that all Volunteers get the same messages globally."
- "One of the challenges, I feel, is communicating out to posts all the changes that are happening within this agency right now. There is a tremendous amount of change. It is not all just Kate Puzey Act. There is FITU from the programming and training side – which has been messaged pretty clearly. There is an IG audit from 2010 on safety and security that led to some changes in the way we do business. That was followed up by Kate Puzey Act and a couple of congressional inquiries. This all led to us making changes in how we do business. There has been a tremendous amount of change and it is hard to get all messages out and get people to really listen."
- "I don't have a sense that safety and security conditions have necessarily worsened in the places I have served. It's just now with the focus on communication as it is today, everything is under the spotlight. We are under pressure to make sure we don't mess up more than the past."

#### A post 911 world with constant connectivity

- "Our Congressional shop is always very busy. As you know, Congress has oversight over the Peace Corps in many different ways. In addition to our annual reporting requirements to the Hill, we also receive many Member constituent inquiries. These inquiries range from requests for information about a constituent application to serve in the Peace Corps to information about why someone may have been administratively separated. When we receive a formal inquiry from a Member of Congress, we likewise respond in a formal manner. We want to put our best foot forward to adequately illustrate all the great work we've been doing."
- "The other macro change is that Peace Corps has become more important as part of US foreign policy. The independence is great. The naïveté that Peace Corps is out on its own separate from other agencies is gone. That seems hard. I've been part of the foreign assistance toolkit for a long time. I know the reason that we are in this country has a lot to do with politics."
- "There are lessons from the past to look to in terms of how an external sea change impacts Peace Corps. For example, the national increase in concern around safety and security. This parallels the current sea change around response to sexual assault. We didn't have the Office of Safety and Security when I first came to PC. We didn't have PCSSO in every post—we now do. There was a sea

change in the agency when Safety and Security became a topic of discussion related to everything else—it was no longer just about an emergency prep plan you look at once every year. Safety is now integrated into everything Peace Corps does. Kate Puzey Act will have a similar impact with SARLs. We are struggling with what does a SARL look like? Is it a new FTE for every post? Who is that person? It's similar to the PCSSO. It was not directly related to 9-11 -- we were having some issues around safety and security that pointed up deficiencies in our structures—Volunteer were lost with no whereabouts policy. But, 911 exacerbated the situation. All those things were happening at the same time. The same thing is happening now – things were happening before Kate Puzey Act, but this put new pressure on it.”

- “Changes in Peace Corps over time? The Volunteer experience is quite different. Technology has made a major difference. When I was a Volunteer there was basically no technology – no Internet, no Skype, you were really on your own. Maybe I was not so savvy but I did not expect much in terms of Volunteer support.”
- “The access to resources – to monitor and evaluate your work – to do real development work is much easier now. Our Volunteers are much more sophisticated. They’ve grown up with the expectation of information at their fingertips. They have the ability to solve problems quickly. In some ways, there is an opportunity to be more productive.”
- “9-11 wasn’t the impetus, but there was a shift of mind in our entire country. That made us all think how safe we were and how we took care of others and ourselves. Because of 20/20 and its publicity—I think there is more awareness that we have to pay more attention to sexual assault—it’s not just Congress making it into a law—people don’t want to repeat these things. We want to help people in need.”
- “Before PC contacts a Volunteer about an assault, that person has already contacted a sister or family member. The expectation is no matter where we are in the world, we should be able to react. The reality is that the Volunteer may be 8 hours away in contrast to the immediacy of communication. Anybody going into the Peace Corps today—just out of college or midlife—has the expectation of communication and support groups. College campuses today have a wealth of support groups. All communities have various services available---whether it’s a community or church. We come from a country expectant of having people around that recognize our troubles and can help us.”

There is a heightened focus on sexual assault in our world – in the military, on campuses...

- “Aaron is a very kind guy, he’s a good man. He comes into this thing with some new ideas as an RPCV. The first thing he’s hit with is that Peace Corps is callous, throws victims away, lacks transparency. Congress gets a hold of it and off you go. He puts in standards, scrutiny and expectations—better medical care, more compassionate care. When you do that you expect people to do more because they are required to do more. There is going to be scrutiny and some second-guessing.”
- “In the Peace Corps in the “old days” - say 7-8 years ago - there definitely was an attitude among some staff at post, particularly host country nationals, that if someone squeezed your butt or made annoying statements—the attitude of the post staff was ‘that’s our culture.’ ‘We know it’s unpleasant, but that’s part of what you have to learn to deal with’. When you are dealing with

are here to make the Volunteer experience as pleasant and fun as possible.”

making the life of a Volunteer as easy as possible. Today, there seems to be more of a view that ‘we Volunteer—it was about dealing with adversity and working with communities and not about

“In the past, there seemed to be a belief that being a PC Volunteer wasn’t just being about being a Volunteer—we’re trying to do both without bifurcating the program.”

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but they have very different expectations. The old models of training and support don’t necessarily group of people. For the latter, we don’t have to worry about them getting drunk on a Friday night, Peace Corps—one for the traditional young Volunteer and one for a more experienced senior where we can accommodate people with complicated medical issues, we practically have two Volunteers were classic recent college grads or in their early 20s. Today, at least in my country

“A very important aspect of it is the changing demographic of Volunteers. In my day, 95% of Volunteers were classic recent college grads or in their early 20s. Today, at least in my country where we can accommodate people with complicated medical issues, we practically have two Peace Corps—one for the traditional young Volunteer and one for a more experienced senior group of people. For the latter, we don’t have to worry about them getting drunk on a Friday night, but they have very different expectations. The old models of training and support don’t necessarily apply. We’re trying to do both without bifurcating the program.”

“What I see is that Volunteers today are much more sophisticated than previous years. Applicants are not joining Peace Corps with an expectation of getting on a plane for the first time. Our applicants are sophisticated about how to use and access information. They have an expectation that they will have access to information and support. There is an expectation that they will have support groups, and that their interaction and support will be ongoing.”

“Some people say, ‘we coddle these people like they are broken things,’ I think one of our challenges is we are not setting the right expectations with parents and Volunteers. There is a degree of truth to the idea of ‘coddling.’ Parents don’t see their sons and daughters as adults. They feel like they are still in college years and rescue them. I have been with the PC for a long time and have never seen the amount of parental involvement we see now. I’m dealing with moms and dads who want to co-manage. They can’t express their anger to the assaiant, but it’s easy to express it to Peace Corps. By engaging parents we are creating a bigger problem. I can never imagine the mother of soldier calling the Defense Department or State, yet it happens here. Congress picks up on that. We need to be very clear with people there are inherent risks, bad things can happen. We are trying to train your son or daughter how to eliminate or at least mitigate those risks, but there are inherent risks.”

“The profile of the Volunteers has changed, as have their expectations and their parents’.”

“I think Peace Corps over the decades had been operating not with indifference—that’s not right—Peace Corps is caring and compassionate and people are trying to do the best. This is a very special place. I do think what happened is over time is that the expertise and discipline that supports and relates to crime and victimization grew and refined itself before the Peace Corps culture did. This administration got caught in the perfect storm of many events out of the past. One of the elements of the perfect storm was that many women victimized by crime had coalesced into a voice that tried to bring attention to the fact that they felt that Peace Corps hadn’t properly attended to them as victims. Kate Puzey Act was a focal point for addressing these perspectives.”

rapes and real assault—there shouldn’t be an assumption you had to suck it up. But there was much more blaming the victim. We teach you appropriate conduct in our country. We are sorry this happened to you, we’ll send you to the PCMO, but you know, this is why that happened.”

• “An area very important to Peace Corps today is how we are assisting Volunteers and keeping them safe. We are going from ‘doing your own thing’ to clearly defined projects and more accountability overall. Accountability is the most underlying issue overall.”

• “Not everyone comes out of these things happy. There are many issues and sub-issues, so not everyone gets what they want. I watch the process and in the final analysis the decision is made in terms of what’s best for Volunteer and what’s best for Peace Corps. Those concepts are tightly linked. Peace Corps is its Volunteers. It’s America’s best – Peace Corps Volunteers going overseas with nothing but the desire to help at the grass roots level. What’s good for Peace Corps and what’s best for Volunteer has to be the same thing.”

• “How do you balance the need for support of Volunteer with the needs of the agency? The two are not exclusive. It is a balancing process. Let’s assume the person has received care—physical, medical, psychological and trauma care. The agency has to still ask itself is it safe for this to continue to serve—those are the first considerations. In the new culture, those decisions aren’t made just from an operational point of view—they are not based on what’s best for the agency only, it has to be a holistic decision taking into account wishes and interests of the Volunteer as well as the operational needs of the agency”

Peace Corps has shifted its stance to give more weight to “individual rights”

• “This generation didn’t get entitled in last 4 years. Under this administration there is very little consequence for misdeeds and violation of rules. I tell a Volunteer they have to be seen—“No, I’m too busy” and then we’ll get a note from mom ‘you are not doing anything for their condition.”

• “When I was a Volunteer you went to your site and that was it. Unless you desperately needed help, you were pretty much on your own. Today we deal with Volunteers raised by helicopter parents. So, Peace Corps has become a kind of helicopter agency—for reasons of safety and security even before the Kate Puzey Act. Oversight/support of the Volunteer is much closer and it’s a difficult transition. It is a difficult transition for young people who are accustomed to independence. It is a difficult transition for older people as well. And now people in their 50’s and 60’s have to report where they are on weekends. The most important part of safety and security is always knowing where the Volunteer is. Creating a culture where the Volunteers feel that telling you where they are is critical. You need them to think, ‘this is a real job. In this real job, you have annual leave, vacation days, you need to get approval for vacation like in any real job.’ Yet they are out there in the middle of wherever.”



"The biggest thing for me is how I feel as if the leadership of the agency has been disrespected by people not respecting the expertise that I bring to the OVA. I understand that the field of VA is new, it is only within the last 8 years that the field is moving towards certification. The field of Victim Advocacy has left it up to states and organizations to develop their own certification process."

"People without credentials are making policy decisions for Volunteers. In the immediate acute period, the Volunteer might be happy. But 2-3 years from now, they may have lifelong problems from not going through a stage of grief. Or later they may say, 'Why did Peace Corps send me there or why did I do this or not do this or that?' There are repercussions. We've changed this policy so quickly we have no long-term data. We have no way to know if what we think we are doing is good—we have no way to track the efficacy to see if it's useful."

"There is this growing tension that's not getting defused, that's building as we go on in my region. It's wearing people down. And I don't think it's benefiting the victim. This is not getting any better."

"The first thing we do in an emergency is that we try to calm things down. Kellie ramps things up. She's learning on the job to be a one-on-one victim advocate. At this point, she's probably a pretty decent Victim's Advocate. I'm concerned that there are going to be two more new Victim's Advocates learning on the job. Then we will see that 'ramp up' that happens again and everyone will be running around. In the acute situation that's not what needs to happen. This ramping up drives us crazy. This intimate involvement in the first 24 hours—immediately starts muddling up what's going on."

"Also, another source of frustration, early on when I was having troubles with VS, I was aware of people saying things that undermined my credibility. For example, people were saying that I base my decision making from my own personal experience as a victim. That is very unprofessional of them to talk about a fellow coworker in this manner. As a VA I'm very conscious of not doing that and not projecting my personal beliefs or judgments onto a victim. What has given me the credibility at the national level is that I can be objective and not make rash decisions or jump to judgment. I was really offended by those statements and actions and it undermined my ability to effectively interact with others in the agency."

"The job description for one of the new Victim's Advocate positions has no educational requirement, no previous experience required (preferred) and no requirement with data collection (preferred). We also looked at a help wanted ad for Victim's Advocate at a small police department in Colorado. It required a BS in criminal justice or social work or 1 years experience working as Victim's Advocate. If we are saying we are providing the best possible care we can, how does this make sense?"

"Kellie has never worked as an individual victim's advocate. I believe that we needed someone who was known nationally, to give some political cover while the firestorm was going on. I think that Kellie should be working in the Director's office on-policy, as a congressional liaison and interacting with the public. Kellie has never taken training or never worked one-on-one as a victim's advocate. She has been figuring it out as she goes. Call me a degree snob. We have the tail wagging the dog with someone who has no educational or professional experience as individual victim advocate."



• "Everything else we do here is totally collaborative. We meet every morning, we talk, we decide, it's all discussed—nobody makes decisions on their own in our unit."

Out of the lane

• This week we had 3 male Volunteers get into a bar fight. Local police took them to the police station. They Volunteers did not call PC post, but Post was notified by the local police. The VA got involved, and she started to ask about the administrative separation process. No one in the room—including the Regional Safety Officers or the Country Director felt it was her purview. Administrative separation and Volunteer behavior is not her responsibility. Yet, there was no one who felt comfortable saying that this is not in your ballpark. The Volunteers had made their own safety plan and had a pretty good ability to advocate for themselves. We went through a series of e-mail exchanges with the VA saying they should not go back to site. "I want to look at your PIP" There was no one willing to say "Stop, back off." Genuinely, we don't want to step between Victim and the Advocate, but someone needs to set some boundaries for what the Advocate is allowed to do."

• "The other thing that comes up a lot is the idea that people think I jump into their lanes. I understand roles and responsibilities very much. I am all for staying in lanes. The role of Safety and Security is to develop the risk reduction strategy and provide the response from an agency and country point of view. The role of OVS is to provide counseling and medical services and they do case management for when the Volunteer has been medevac'd as it relates to medical case management and counseling needs. Post has their role within medical, within safety and security. They have their role to watch after the Volunteer. The role of the advocate is to be a resource to the Volunteer to ensure that they have access to services and to let each office know what the Volunteer wants and to be able to respond to any requests the Volunteer has that are reasonable. If a Volunteer wants a counselor in-country then it's my responsibility to make sure post and COU know the Volunteer wants to receive counseling in country. It's not my job to get it for them, but to let them know that's what the Volunteer wants."

• "I attended SANE training to learn how the sexual assault response system works in America. The SANE nurse does the exam, the advocate supports the victim before, during and after the exam, and then the police work with the victim if she wants to report. It is not a perfect system as roles can sometimes be crossed and cause conflict. At Peace Corps, staff involved do not always stay in their lane/work within their scope, so we are experiencing the same conflict that occurs in SART teams in the US."

• "The players involved are all so competent in what they do. Medical people questioning is a cultural thing—everything has to be evidence based. Kellie doesn't come from that background. She's been put in a position of authority. I think Kellie is terrific at what she does. She needs help staying in her lane. She pushes this agency to think about doing things differently. She needs to be better about practicing inside her scope. She's trying to be a counselor when she's not. That's the big issue. This is your role and this is not your role. What we need from leadership is respect and permission to say, 'stay in your lane, you are not the counselor.' If we could do that it would be great. The second nurse or a doctor to change his or her plans." 7

- "Clarifying roles is huge and important. We need clarity so people will stay in their own lane. Sometimes, when a victim is talking to Kellie maybe what is going on is that they think they are talking to a counselor."

#### Political correctness

- "I feel passionately that Peace Corps needs to make a course correction or we run serious risk of damaging both the culture that supports honest discussion and disagreement and the operational response when a Volunteer is a victim of assault."

- "A lot of changes related to victim advocacy were already started prior to 2020. How would this rollout have been different if it hadn't been a reaction of bad PR? As a result of our culture, our reaction has been 'If the Victims Advocate says this we have to do that.' We wouldn't have ceded that power if we had just been able to roll out the change without the bad PR. I think we are good at rolling things out. Behavior change is our business. That's not the issue—that we're not good at changing."

- "We would have looked at Restrictive Reporting and protocols and systems and we would have sorted those out in a collegial way. In a way of shared power. But there's an imbalance. We are a very collegial senior team. This is the only thing where there is one dominating role—the Victim's Advocate. PR is driving this."

- "I don't want to even imagine how traumatic a sexual assault is to a victim. I understand in my gut—I have 2 daughters—which we need to supply nothing but support. That has to be the initial response. As we get on into the management of the incident and the recovery—if the incident involved risky behavior—I'm not saying it is the victim's fault but, if we can't use it as a learning moment and then we put them back into a village without addressing any of those issues—alcohol abuse, multiple relationships—that is not ok. We are not protecting the Volunteer's safety. Yet, the conversations after that degenerate into 'you are blaming the victim.' It does not foster a culture where people can have honest differences without accusations. 'Don't blame victim' becomes a club. We never want to blame the Volunteer but we want to safeguard them from repeat occurrences." If we are taking the Kate Puzey Act seriously, then we need to be able to address the behavior of the Volunteer/where it may not have been causative but was coincident and put the Volunteer in a position of danger. There was a dampening of conversation on conference calls because of the quickness of the accusation that 'you are blaming the victim.' Once I spoke up, then others also jumped in." "I am really concerned that we create a culture where people cannot voice honest differences. When I talk about Kate Puzey Act – and the kind of compassion we want to bring to dealing with victims of SA – there are some contradictions in that. If there is risky behavior, we don't want to blame the victim, but how do we ignore the behavior? Doesn't the experience of Kate Puzey tell us that we don't want to put Volunteers in risky situations?" "The notion of having to keep two contradictory ideas at once—we want to show compassion AND keep the victim safe in the future. It is a polarity. F. Scott Fitzgerald said, 'The ability to hold two opposing ideas in your mind' at the same time and still be able to function is the sign of an intelligent person.' It is also the sign of a truly intelligent organization. I recently read an article in the Harvard Business Review about the fact that the best leaders take opposing ideas and figure out how to integrate the two, not choose between both to get the best solutions."

- "I don't want to confuse the lesson learned from Kate Puzey Act with the lessons for victims of sexual assault. But when we create a climate that shuts down conversations—where the subject matter experts are disempowered—we shut down good supportive discussions that lead to good decisions. That puts us at risk of putting a Volunteer in an unsafe position and I'm not willing to do that. My PCMO and other staff are females and were equally or more outraged by some of the conversations that we had with OVA."

#### Cleavage

- "In some cases the Victim's Advocate serves as a cleavage between those on the ground to support the Volunteer and the Volunteer. It's not clear what the support roles are. In the past that has been the job of the PCMO."

#### Inequity

- "The legislation was very focused on sexual assault. They were bringing in an advocate to be a sexual assault advocate for a population of 9000 Volunteers, where maybe 450 are victims of sexual assault and 30 of those are victims of rape. They were bringing in one advocate to only address a small percentage of the crimes within the Volunteer population. Why shouldn't other Volunteers being victimized have an advocate? I was clear this was needed for violent crime and others affected by the crime."
- "Victim rights are very important, but very spotlighted right now. We see so many sad and tragic cases outside of the sexual assault arena. We have Volunteers that are beat up in accidents, with cancer, and from all sorts of circumstances that we feel are as tragic as a sexual assault – but these people are not getting same treatment or regard. And that bugs us. There is no bright light shining on them. They don't get the moms staying with them in the hotel. Someone with a newly diagnosed brain tumor or somebody in a rollover accident--they have needs too—it's the disparity that's concerning. Either other Volunteers need the kind of voice that sexual assault victims have or we need to de-escalate the attention on this one subject—if that's even possible in this environment."
- "We can raise the bar in terms of the quality of support that we provide – that is for sure. But the extraordinary measures we take sometimes seem unreasonable and are not available to other victims of crime or victims of an evacuation."
- "It is definitely better now that CARS is in place. The main emphasis of the agency was to avoid bad press. The way we chose to do this was not putting policies and standards into place but rather give the victim of sexual assault what they want. Other victims of crime (not SA) are not given the same kind of treatment. That is inherent unfairness."

#### 4. DRAWING LINES

##### Role of the Victim Advocate

- The role of VA has been written out and disseminated. The unclear part is how we mesh with that - that is what has not been worked out. How decisions are made."
- "Everybody has operated in silos. COU works from information from the Medical Officer, not necessarily the country director and not the SSC. The Victim Advocate is the one with the full picture. I don't feel that is the counselor's role to explain why a decision is made. Their role is to help the Volunteer process the emotions to the decision that was made. The role of the VA is to explain the facts of how the decision is made."
- "Kellie Greene does her job well. But people can't get past, 'but what about the agency? That is not be what is best for the agency.' She is not here to champion for the rights of the agency. She is here to champion the rights of the victim. The challenge is that she wears two hats—policy and direct support. Kellie Greene needs to do one or the other. A Victim's Advocate should do what Kellie does—champion the rights of the victim. I definitely think that they need leadership within that office and she needs more advocates. Her caseload is way too heavy. But either she needs to be an advocate or management. She should be helping the agency develop policy on how we manage these things."
- "The rationale for having Kellie report to the Director was that the position would be cross-cutting and hold people accountable to provide service to victims. In effect, that makes the Victim's Advocate a hammer to make people do things. What you are asking for is an ombudsman. DO NOT compromise Kellie's role."
- "I am not sure that as an agency that we have integrated the lessons of the Kate Puzey Act and what it means to be compassionate and effective in supporting victims of sexual assault. I am concerned that because we have not successfully integrated the lessons, we have the potential of putting a Volunteer in a position of potential danger. I think that is something that the Peace Corps really needs to think through. What was not clear in the aftermath of the Kate Puzey Act was the Victim Advocate's role. I have not seen the job description of the Victim Advocate and have not seen operating guidelines. It was not clear to me who was in charge. It was clear to Kellie what her role was - but not clear to anyone else. That creates a lot of unnecessary tension."
- "The VA is a very critical role and the way the role of VA has been rolled out—the lack of communication, clarity and role definition—it is undermining the success of the program - which is in fact very, very critical role. It has not gone well. Some CDs are feeling like they have been burned. Some CDs are ok with how it has gone. But the perceived confusion and overstepping of bounds of the Victim's Advocate is very serious and has not been well received by many."
- "A good victim advocate knows how to challenge bad decisions."
- "I feel as if people within the agency forget why I was hired. I was hired for my expertise. I went through a very rigorous hiring process and a lot of people had a say in the decision. I feel like I am always being second-guessed, which is disrespectful to my expertise and also to the leadership of this agency. I get frustrated that I am always getting questioned about my expertise. Victim



advocacy is a new and growing field. There is not a Victim Advocacy degree. I am highly respected among my peers in the field and bring a certain level of credibility to the agency because of my professional reputation. I wish people would trust that."

- "There is also some confusion about the VA's role in decision-making in individual cases. There is some perception that the VA does not just advocate on behalf of a Volunteer victim, but that at the end of day, the VA makes the decisions for the agency. While this may not necessarily be true, the perception exists."
- "One thing I learned early here—there are things we can or cannot do or choose not to do. It's important to control expectations. So we need to speak with a single voice to the victim, to the Country Director and to others. Every time we don't, we get burned. The OVA is a wild card. The professionals should come together, including OVA, decide the messaging and stick to the message."
- "The institutional role of the Victim's Advocate is not completely clear. The Victim Advocate is advocating for individual Volunteer victims, but the VA is also right in the middle of the agency's policy-making on sexual assault. It ends up creating somewhat of an organizational conflict. Where the VA is involved in policymaking, the VA should have the best interests of agency in mind. But, at the same time, the VA is advocating on behalf of the Volunteers, even though the victim's interest may not coincide with the agency's best interests. Even where the VA has indicated privately that what the victim wants 'is nuts,' when the decision is being made she sticks with what the Volunteer wants. That may be appropriate because that is her job, but the role should be clarified."
- "When you set up a new unit/role and you don't carefully define what their role is, the first thing people do is do things that people are already doing. I wonder if some of that is going on in the absence of clear operational plans. If it's not clear how the OVA is operating as it relates to Medical or to counseling or to the Country Director. It's a natural tendency to do what is already being done."

#### OVA/OVS Friction

- "Is it any surprise that an office called Volunteer Support should have some adjustment to a new office called Victim Advocacy. The new office in town is the VA— we have to figure out the role of that office in making decisions—there's the friction that has not been addressed."
- "There is no problem with the law- just the processes within this institution. We cannot make a medical decision. We are constantly over-ruled regardless of our opinion /experience."
- "I put forth my opinion as a Victim Advocate and am accused of making a clinical diagnosis, but I am not in any position to do that and never want to do that. There is a difference between making a clinical diagnosis and saying that someone has been impacted by a trauma and could benefit from a session with a counselor. I feel that because of the crime they have experienced I can state from that standpoint they would benefit from being medevac'd for counseling. That is not giving a clinical diagnosis. That is being responsive to someone saying they want to receive counseling."
- "I understand and respect that different professions have unique sets of ethics and practices that differ from others. For a Victim Advocate, the philosophy is that the victim is never to blame, regardless of circumstances. For the agency to have a survivor centered approach it needs to have



the same fundamental philosophy.. That's where the struggle comes in—the various offices at Peace Corps have different priorities within the different roles."

- "COU's fights used to be with Safety and Security and Medical Services (they control who gets medevac'd and when, even if it's for mental health). Sometimes, there's a genuine argument for delaying a victim coming home for a few days—it helps us line up services for them on the ground. This is an area of where COU makes a recommendation, but it is their (OMS's) decision. I don't know that OMS has ever over-ridden us."

"Kellie has contacts outside of Peace Corps and so will send Volunteers to people outside of Peace Corps. There are a few problems. We have counselors here who know Peace Corps and know sexual assault, so they might be cut out of the equation. We have a belief that being a Peace Corps Volunteer adds a layer of complexity over being a regular US citizen. An outside provider might say a person with cancer can serve in Peace Corps, but knowing what's involved in the post, we know what the conditions in the country are. With sexual assault, we don't get to bring our Peace Corps expertise in if we are excluded."

- If I were the Peace Corps dealing with what they were dealing with after 20/20 and after the Congressional hearings, if you did not have a Victim's Advocate or a Kellie Green, you would have had to invent one. It was very smart. But, now you need to make it work. That is where I am concerned. The role of VA vs. COU is not clear to me. It seemed that the Victim's Advocate was taking on the role of counseling, without that background to do that— at least I am not aware she has the proper background. It became adversarial. distinguish between tw.

Kellie Greene is not a counselor, but when we talk to Volunteers, they think of her as a counselor and as part of the care team. The Volunteers refer to her as a counselor. She acts as an intermediary between those of us who provide direct care and the Volunteer. We need to go through her and she tells us what our limited part should be. It would help a whole bunch of people to define what an advocate does—that could help facilitate the relationship. Congress says we have to have a Victim Advocate and define it for ourselves. That is well and good, but it needs to be defined. Senior staff is trying to define advocacy based on what the Advocate is saying her role is.

"There is a continued perception that Volunteers consider Kellie as a counselor. She said she makes it very clear the first time she meets with a victim that she is not counselor, but does she say it the 2nd or 3rd time? If you say that to a victim an hour after she was raped, she might not remember later. Does the OVA standard address keeping the roles clear? Where the VA goes out of lane, it is into the counseling lane."

- "My other observation was that there was evident tension between the members of the CARS team. The conversations we listened to among parts of the CARS were very uncomfortable. It sounded like people were gritting their teeth. It was not clear who was driving the group. We needed one voice, not six different voices. I don't know when the OVA closes a case. We're planning on another conversation with CARS in the next week as we follow up on the victim. It's going all right with the victim but not great."

"I have been told I am not to say anything like, 'these are the things that made you vulnerable.' I believe that these things should be said at the appropriate time. I feel extremely put upon that I have lost the ability to use my professional judgment."

- "The price of the tension between VA/OVS--What I do understand is that it creates friction – a discordant feeling. The victim does not suffer - maybe we are too lenient – but that is a judgment call. It prevents a harmonious professional relationship that can lead to a free exchange of ideas without guarding. We're making strides and then something will blow up and we will go back to square one. We have strong personalities with a lot of experience behind them, and we need that. It would be nice to be respected and understand we both are advocating for the victim,"

JMS  
 IS  
 FROM  
 REGIONAL  
 PERSONNEL

One of the challenging dynamics here is that we have regional directors and SS and VA and OMS and at some point each has to opine and make a particular decisions about Volunteers. Certain people will say the VA is asking for things that are unrealistic or outside of her purview. For example, a Volunteer wants to be MedEvaced. OMS says, 'it's late Friday and we we'll handle that Monday.' Kellie will say, 'No, she wants to get out of there now.' OMS will say, 'She's not at a critical state— are you making a medical diagnosis?' Little things like that tend to build. Or a Volunteer wants to go home after getting to DC for their MedEvac. Who will pay for that? We all have functions; we all have opinions. Everyone gets into the fray. But we have a bad habit of working on assumptions. We need to go out and do an assessment of the situation. The number one question is, 'Can we mitigate the risk enough to make it safe?' Let's mitigate if we can and so we do everything in our power to get a Volunteer back. People will say it is a liability issue—something else could happen. Sometimes I am more in agreement with the advocate. I want facts to guide the decisions we are making. If there really is not on-going risk, we should try to get the Volunteer back to be able to do what they are here to do."



#### Functional Leadership/Inner Circle

- "This is a cultural shift – people feel like they need to be included in the formulation of policy-setting. It shouldn't be confined to the OVA and GC's offices."
- "People are so angry that they have been excluded from decisions. A small group of top leaders make a decision and arbitrarily knock out a whole bunch of work that has been done. This leadership group is very worried about image."
- "We will sit around and talk as a leadership team, but the issue is decision-making. We are told a decision about a strategy will occur and we will get back to you. Then it will get changed--there will be an end run. Implementing offices are often waiting around a long time or we are given guidance to go down this road only to be told to go back. And then, offices are in limbo for long periods of time."

#### OVA/Post

- "There's a theme—what is the role of the Country Director? Peace Corps is having this issue not just in this area. In terms of victim advocacy, the Country Director has had tremendous gamut of responsibility and accountability. As decisions are taken away, it makes the job more difficult to manage. It becomes responsibility without authority."
- "There is a lot of clarity needed around roles, responsibilities and authority—who has the 'D'—the final decision. Key decisions are: whether a victim returns to the country, whether they return to the original site, how long will it take to develop that site. All of these questions we struggle with."

We are not sure who decides. From our perspective, it's the Country Director ultimately responsible for safety and security of the Volunteer. But it doesn't always play out that way."

- "Of course Country Director's are, at times, guided by supervisors in Headquarters, but in regard to staff and Volunteer- programmatic and operational management, the country director is the boss on the ground."
- "The other part of successful implementation is if there is an incident, what kind of support do we provide to that Volunteer—both in-country (CD, PCMO) and in DC (COU, OMS, OVA, SS)? There becomes a range of people that I want to call upon for advice. I don't want to be in a position where I am making decisions in a vacuum, even though in the end, I know it is a decision I have to make. I want consultation for my decision-making and support for the Volunteer."
- "The Country Director has to be the point of contact for post. Every Country Director spends time with the PCMO, believes in PC and loves what they do. It's a tremendous feeling of community—this is a crisis not just for a victim but also for the post. It's a breach of the trust that has been created. It feels very personal and emotional. You need to have that energy for victim. How do we ensure we don't lose that?"
- "Being a Country Director is like running a marathon. There's no real training for it. The key to it is just being on board and predictable and steady and dependable through the ups and downs. There hasn't been a slow time since I've been here, and I am beginning to realize that there never will be with the different things that get thrown at you. Volunteer support includes, in our country, dealing with natural disasters such as flooding and evacuating dozens of Volunteers. You can't predict from one day to the next. It's a very human job. Day to day you are working with people, from the embassy to Volunteers to HQ."
- "All of HQs scrutiny—all of our attempts to make things better, actually made things worse. I had posts call us and say that when the VA calls they think, 'Oh crap, what do I do now?' The tone of the conversation—the tone of voice and the nature of the questions leave the CD to stop looking at the victim in front of them and turn towards the VA and HQ to see how to keep my bosses happy. So, in that, we have lost the victim-centered approach."
- "I was left with the impression that the prevailing attitude in some offices at HQ was that 'we are here to make sure you don't screw it up, because we are pretty sure you are going to screw up.' I get the feeling that OSS and OVA's position was that 'we can't trust our country staff to do it right.'"
- "The Country Director and Peace Corps post staff—they know the Volunteers best—they know the strong and weak points. We have a really good sense of the person. If the Volunteer seeks out the Country Director after an assault you are in a pretty good position to provide support. The role of the Victim Advocate intervenes directly between victim and Country Director and, in fact, pulls away that role. Then it goes out of CD's control and into some 10/12 time zone that you are not directly involved in. A) You don't know what's going on. B) You do not if what is going on is better for the Volunteer and C) you question what exactly are you there for."
- "What we absolutely need is a team approach (OSS, OVA, Director's Office) that really has to be connected to the post. It is an illusion that it can be controlled completely by HQ, because the victim's reality is very different from the reality of people who are living in DC. In their hearts, most people in Peace Corps know that. If there is some concern we are not doing it right, we need to find

the right people to do it. And then we need to work closely together. I don't think the answer is to bypass us."

- "There are a lot of blurry lines that are leading to these problems and will get worse as the office grows. We were excited when the position was created. It's morphed into a big power struggle. There's a lack of protocol, overstepping, going out of the lane, and a backdrop of fear. Whoever does this role has to have a clear understanding of what it's like to work in developing countries and the reality of the systems in those places. CDs need to have decision making power at their post."
- "A country director needs to be trained and to pull themselves out of the '80s and 'get with the program' in terms of the issue of responding to sexual assault today. Instead of finding a way around the Country Director for restricted reporting, train the Country Director and hold him/her accountable."
- "We can't take away the autonomy of the on-the-ground staff. Otherwise they feel completely disempowered. When someone gets raped, they have to call from the country to DC to get direction from one office. How do you retain the feeling of safety and value, respect and honor what the staff on the ground offers?"

#### Need For Clearly Defined Process

- What is essential to put in place? A PLAN. What we have are some individual activities that actually have been well put together and do what we want them to do. We have new positions – an example, is the VA who actually started without a position description. Nobody knows how these pieces fit together. There has been no communication or plan about how all the pieces fit together. There are people who put things together, but they've been overruled."
- "A recent incident at one post is an example of how some things are still being handled poorly in country. Kellie made promises that the PCMO and CD could not keep and she did not inform them what she told the PCV. There were multiple calls to the victim from headquarters when she had been told that only the VA would contact her. The PCV stated that if she had known how PC would handle her case, she would have never asked the PCMO for help. This was just 2 months ago, and it was not dealt with any better in terms of confidentiality, roles, conflicting messages etc."
- "CARS is really a train. It's the agency--the PC train. Each office has one representative in the Engine. Each train car represents a separate office within Peace Corps. For instance in the Volunteer Support car you have compartments for OMS, COU, IHC, and Post. Then there is the OVA car, Region, SS, Post, etc. Each of the cars is connected by a link. . Regardless where the victim enters this train, they can go from car to car and get the services they need. It's imperative that we are all sharing information and staying connected to ensure continuity of services. To stay linked we must work together, trust and understand each other's roles and responsibilities. When we fail to work together, a car gets left off, and the victim is unable to move forward."
- "Three areas need attention:
  - Relationships—there needs to be communication, boundaries and roles—there needs to be no end running.
  - Leadership needs to communicate the change and get input from throughout.



- We need to set up a full OVA. Kellie is working as a victim's advocate at the same time as she is setting up an office and she is stretched thin."
- "Safety and security has been a little bit confusing. We have so many different levels of safety and security reporting at HQ. When I've managed crisis situations, there are a lot of people who get involved and a lot who want the latest updates. It's not always clear what the priorities are in terms of who I talk to first." "The people who are most successful are those who know how to work across silos."
- "We have a lot of turnover, so we need to make sure everyone has training and updates. That's pretty important for us. I don't know if we need to throw more people at it. We have enough people, but the system could be streamlined and clearer."
- "I was humbled by the things we didn't do as well as we should have. That's why we scheduled a refresher. That's why every staff has an understanding of importance of responding appropriately. Every staff knows what we pledged to Volunteers. There are all sorts of cultural issues and we continue to address those."
- "The response from HQ was disjointed. It took them a few days to realize there was a delay in communications getting to people they are supposed to contact. I don't have the sense that people are singing from the same song sheet. There is difference in process. People's own opinions or difference of opinions should become unimportant." Process
- "VA is supposed to work within existing policy. With every other rape, we are asked to change agency policy to fit the specific conditions of what the victim wants even though many people are opposed to the changes in policy. VAs within police departments work within the system. We think the one-offs in many cases are unreasonable and are creating unrealistic expectations in terms of what Peace Corps can do for the victims."
- "Prior to CARS, all the players were involved. Now we have a process that is politically driven. There is a sense of disrespect. I don't think the process is victim-centered – rather, it's 'let's pat ourselves on the back and avoid the front page.' CARS is a standard process for non-standard issues. There is no evidence that this process is better than the past. With CARS, you need to decide within 48 hours – maybe that is way too fast."
- "The most important thing is for everyone to know whose job is what. That would solve a lot of problems. IF HQ can specify who is reporting to who, that would make implementation much easier from our perspective."



## 5. LOOKING DEEPER.

### "Victim advocacy"

- "The biggest problem is that neither the advocate or the agency know what an advocate is supposed to do. Many of us have worked with patient advocates in other realms. An advocate is not a decision maker; they don't provide care. The role of advocate here is decision-maker and counselor."
- "For someone with no experience of sexual assault, a pinch on the butt might not mean anything. If someone has been molested as a child or has been raped, that could be a triggering event for them. It's about listening to a person. We can't minimize someone's reaction. If someone is crying or feels unsafe because someone pinched them on the butt then we need to provide counseling for them. We need to be able to build coping skills to continue as a Peace Corps Volunteer. We want to do it as soon as possible so they don't turn to self-medicating – like drinking – which puts them at more risk."
- "There's a similar rub and lack of clarity for the country director. Country directors are given a lot of training regarding dealing with crisis, Volunteers with serious medical issues, Volunteers with safety issues. Into that comes medical confidentiality where they get good training. They are mystified by the lack of clarity about what they should be doing. This is all done with good will. The outcome is lack of good will. The outcome is mixing of roles and anger. The emotions that arise when various offices have duties in which the duties are simply not clear enough or accepted by all the parties—and the resulting confusion or anger and frustration."
- "Since the VA came, there's a sense that if you are a victim, and no matter what the rules are, you get whatever you want - even if no one else will get it, even if the rules are there to help you be safe."
- "We don't want to look at what a real advocate is supposed to do. We want to say, 'Look, we have one.' We don't want to look at what an advocate should do. An advocate is someone who can come beside the Volunteer and see that person as a thinking person able to make decisions for themselves. An advocate says, 'Here are the services that are available and I will help you to advocate for those.' Instead we have, 'I am mama. Here's the transatlantic breast. Let's suckle it.'"
- "The VA has to figure out how to interact with all the players on the ground. We have to have a clear understanding of what a victim advocate is, have accountabilities for and supervision of that role."
- "On the topic of setting expectations for Volunteers—the 'coddling' thing—sometimes we do it to excess and sometimes not enough. Are we offering more support? Finally us doing the right thing—giving the right to medevac to sexual assault victim/ separating from service—that is just the right thing. There is no fund for a Volunteer whose time is cut short—not everyone can go home to mom and dad. If you can't continue in service through no fault of your own, shouldn't we support that Volunteer? We need to take more ownership for victims of crime who can't complete service."

- "Coddling—taken to an extreme, is when a Volunteer insists on picking their post, or insists on changing sites, and the post gives in. I don't see too much coddling. I see us finally doing what's right."

"Counseling"

- "There's the science and care of a traumatized Victim. To a degree, the medical care will defer to the credentials of licensed clinicians. They've been trained on dealing with different diseases and illness—without personalizing them. *Sometimes doing what's right for a person is not popular—it's not what they want right now.*"
- "What happens with the majority of the cases in Peace Corps and in states – is after the medical care and bruising has been taken care of, the psychological and social aspects begin. People respond differently depending on their history of trauma and other factors. When people are ready to make a decision varies. We are trained in the stages of grief after an assault. People can stay in one stage of grief for years. *This is part of counseling and medical training.* We try to work with the Volunteer. It has been taken out of our hands, because now the Victim Advocate or the Volunteer gets to decide what they are going to do. Now the Victims Advocate and the Volunteer gets to decide – am I staying, going home, etc.—which is a huge part of the process of support."

"Volunteer support vs. coddling vs. your on your own"

- "The Peace Corps is like an overprotective parent who waited until they were 45 to have a child. Instead, it should act like an agency that employs adults. You are a person who took a job...You are an adult."
- "Volunteers expect that they can do almost anything and that they will be able to get away with it. They do not take responsibility for their "negative or bad" behaviors, since there are virtually no consequences for these actions (breaking PC rules, excessive alcohol use, suspected use of drugs, lack of respect for others – PC or HCN, etc.) in this agency at this time. If they are reprimanded in any way, they immediately appeal to higher authorities."
- "Volunteers recognize that when someone becomes a victim of crime, it is impactful, but it does not mean they cannot continue their service and be a successful Volunteer. It might take the agency giving a little extra support or doing things a little differently than the past that could be seen as 'coddling.' But in the long run we have invested so much time and energy into a Volunteer that we need to go the extra mile."
- "Things can always get better. 2020 helped us look at ourselves. The way it has been communicated is that all we did in the past was bad. We have shifted to the other extreme. We have gone from victim-centered to victim-controlled."
- "To Volunteers today we say—'we have to have a transatlantic breast.' or 'Oh you have a boo boo? Ok.' Or 'you want what? Ok.' ... There is a difference in the Volunteers of today and involvement of their parents."

"I know I am placating if a Volunteer has threatened to go to Congress or the media. If I'm doing it for that reason alone, it's not the right thing to do."

- "It gets down to is PC a development organization or a Volunteer organization? If we are Volunteer organization, you do whatever you can to support the Volunteer—you can pour all sorts of resources to the Volunteer. If it is a development organization you are focused on your mission. You do what you are there to do. Can you teach the student? Can you help the farmer? What is our work? It's support of the mission rather than support the Volunteer. If they are in the counselor's office or the medical office two days a week, they are not doing their work. So, what business are we in?"
- "I've heard CDs express the concern that, even though Volunteer safety is supposed to be "our number one concern," it is difficult to enforce rules to keep Volunteers safe. One person's safety rule is another person's unreasonable restrictions."
- "It's been quite an experience here. It's different than the real world. In certain cases, Peace Corps is very patriarchal and needs to make all the decisions for the Peace Corps Volunteer. In other cases, Peace Corps is laissez faire—the Volunteer can do whatever he or she wants."
- "The negative from the psychologist's point of view is even if we think that she is being taken advantage by a Volunteer, she does not care. We read a Volunteer blog that said 'just tell Kellie you were sexually assault, and you will get free ride home.' She does not care. She said, 'sometimes that will happen.' But, there are lots of positives as well."
- "The majority of Volunteers find a way to maneuver between one foot at home and one in the country. We don't look at the healthier and more adaptable Volunteer. We look at the ones who have a real hard time. We look at them as the norm and build the support model on the exception. We don't want anyone to be unhappy."
- "How did we implement the sea change that came with safety and security? Raising the awareness of the matter we are talking about. What is Volunteer support? How much is the right amount and what is not enough? You hear about 'coddling' Volunteers. People say that they need to tough it out. Should we have all these support groups? Should we be calling them once a week or once a quarter? We don't have the definition. We have been visiting posts the last 2 years. In general we've been looking at the ups and downs of a Volunteer life in the field. What are the expectations our current population brings? What should we do it with standards? This larger question is embedded in the sexual assault questions. We've said and stand by the fact that it is an extraordinary and terrible event and we pull out all stops to give support. Does the Volunteer who is robbed get the same level of support? There is not an agreed upon definition of support—that is somewhat the heart of it—our ability to define it."

"Empowerment of the Volunteer vs. taking their voice away"

- "'I am here if there's a problem' as opposed to 'I am going to fix it—tell you what to do, and be the voice of the Volunteer.' It is not empowering."
- "It's hard to have the victim play a central role in her own recovery, when everyone needs to be in on it."
- "The Victim's Advocate is the hub to direct the person to the services available to them. The IHC arranges for payment for counseling, for medevac, for when they go back to post. The VA should be directing the individual to the correct person. If the Victim is not receiving services, go hound and

advocate for that person. Instead, there is a lot of control of information. Instead the Advocate holds the victim's hand and does things for them. The Victim should take responsibility for what they need to do and we should treat people like adults."

- "A lot of this is victimizing the victim – With all that's going on, having the Volunteer make important decisions within 24 or 48 hours isn't right. In the US you don't have to decide whether you are staying at your college campus or going to leave your home in NY. In Peace Corps that becomes one of the layers. After the trauma, to have a person make that decision is unfair. We don't want to victimize them, so we let them make the decision. There is evidence to show that this is overwhelming at that time. People need to make simple yes/no decisions. You let them decide simple matters. Clothes on or clothes off? Bring a friend for the exam or not? Stay here/go to Washington? It's a yes/no decision. But it's a big decision—it adds a layer of stress. The contentiousness is worse because of the lack of clarity of Kellie's role. The fact that a year in there is not a well-defined role or procedures is problematic. Each situation we are recreating the wheel."

"Blaming the victim vs education and behavior change"

- "We are tripping over ourselves in order to not 'blame the victim.' There is a relationship between drinking and sexual assault. And we are into prevention."
- "There is a strain in communication between post and the victim. Sometimes, the victim shuts down because she feels she is being talked *at*. She hears, 'these are the things we want you to improve upon, what are your thoughts about that?' The perception by the Volunteer is that Post has already made the decisions so, why should she say anything? She shuts down because she feels that people are talking *at* her instead of *with* her. People need better communication skills. Part of the healing process includes a phase where you begin to recognize patterns within your decision making process that have placed you in high risk situations. It doesn't mean you are to blame for what happened, but you realize there are better choices for yourself. That is part of the growth that happens. This happens over time, not immediately following an assault. You cannot just force somebody into that way of thinking. You have to let it play out within the individuals unique healing process."
- "But characteristics that made you adapt poorly to the Peace Corps environment—maybe risk-taking, failure to think ahead--put you at risk. Most of us in Medical are older and have children of Peace Corps age. Our reaction is, 'what were you thinking?' so we want to say to Volunteers, 'maybe you need some time out before you go back.' But trying to predict the future is not hard science. A victim might do okay and she might do poorly. A lot is judgment. Some of these parental protective feelings encroach."
- "There is an absolute 'you don't blame the victim.' I agree that no one ever deserves being sexually assaulted or otherwise victimized, but I have some concerns about being required to completely ignore the extent that a victim may have engaged in conduct that has enhanced their risk. Supporting them and providing assistance is totally appropriate and necessary. But, that does seem a separate question from 'should this person go back to or remain in country.' If they have a history of drinking too much or if they have consistently put themselves in situations of high risk—to me that is relevant as to whether if they stay in or go back to their country, or not."



## 6. FLASH POINTS

### Current flashpoints

#### First Interaction with the victim

- "That's the rub. Who talks to the Volunteer first? What does that person say? What can that person offer? How does that affect other offices?"
- "I don't understand why Kellie has to be involved in the first 24 hours—right now the medical officer and safety officer are most involved. In the midst of the chaos it gets ramped up with Kellie. There's a mindset of 'you've got to do this right now.' The Victim's Advocate on the ground is the Medical Officer. Its not like we don't have a "small a" Victim's Advocate at post. They deal with the whole picture at the onset—ensure a safe situation, be absolutely any physical injuries are taken care of, give a hug, provide initial counseling, do interview techniques, do the forensics appropriately. They do not need to really be having a discussion with HQ other than saying it's appropriate to medevac. That's not an *urgent discussion, but it becomes the focus.*
- "In most posts, the PCMO knows the Volunteers really well. Some are not warm and fuzzy. It might be an issue that we need to get that person out of dodge right now. The medical officer needs to do what he or she needs to do acutely, to calm the situation right away. The people supporting the victim can't be hysterical."

#### Medevac timing/decision

- "There is another myth around whether people need to automatically be medevaced. The lack of Volunteer/victim input in any of the decision process is real – victim input has been rare. There is not a Victim 'Bill of Rights.' If you go anywhere else in the United States - to college campuses or law enforcement, you will find a Victim's Bill of Rights. We don't have that here. The best we can do is that we have a commitment. The difference is that a Bill of Rights outlines what a victim, in all cases, has a right to. A commitment says 'we will make this happen' vs. 'we are going to do our best.'"
- "We need more time to 'work out' the issues. We needed to better define the role and responsibilities of the victim advocate and hone in the ones that cause the most conflict. Areas of conflict have to do with decision-making authority. For example, Medevac, DMS has authority to make a decision for Medevac. Does the VA have authority to say to a Volunteer who has been assaulted 'I am going to get you MedEvaced?' Does PCMO have that authority? That's one issue."

#### Decision to send Volunteer/Victim back to post and/or site

- "I err on the side of caution. Depending on the case, the cautious decision for a rape victim is that most often: I am not going to return the victim to the site."
- "The Country Director should be the one who decides if it's the right thing to stay at the site or if the Volunteer should be transferred to another site. The Country Director should have the best feel

for the whole picture. If we are hiring Country Directors who would have a personal vendetta, then we are doing something wrong to select those sorts of people. The Country Director needs to be the one who factors everything in, everything that other people would know. I believe—not because I'm a Country Director—but because the Country Director needs to be in the middle and the point person."

- "The decision to let them go back to the site was based on what we knew, when we were comfortable, to send them back to their site. It seems to have improved over time. Maybe because they have more confidence in our staff. They gave us more authority to make the decision. Even though we are confused by who does what back there, it felt like they were giving us a lot of ground to work from."
- "When thinking about returning a Volunteer, the question is what's really best for a Volunteer—not wanting to return them to a high risk situation. Based on research a victim will either really change or become higher risk. That's data. No director wants a victim to be a victim again. Can you return a Volunteer or can you find a safe place in the country? Part of the process of healing and empowerment is giving Volunteer say over the situation. 'A say' or 'the say'? They come and sit in my office and say 'I want to go back to my site.' I know that the accused rapist is still running loose and I am told from the Volunteer, 'I want to go back there.' I am thinking, 'It's my responsibility if you get hurt again.' I want to give the Volunteers some options."
- "Health and safety supersedes everything else when it comes to the decision whether a Volunteer can go back to his/her site. But it has to be based on factual information. Some Country Directors say she can't ever go back to that site because she was raped, regardless of the circumstances. You have to assess the risk of the situation. Who is the offender? Is there a continued threat? Part of our safety model is integration. If you automatically move someone from their site, you are removing them from the safety of the community they've built. You are going to put them in a new site that's stressful at a time of trauma. Unless there is a real threat from an offender or other persons related to the offender, we should be leaving them in their site, if they want to stay. If they want to move, we are happy to move them."
- "The most important decision was if and when the Victim/Volunteer could go back to the site. I was very afraid that we would not have control and the Victim Advocate would decree that the victim had to go back. When that did not happen it was a great relief to all of us."
- "'Innocents abroad' means that the Volunteer does not fully understand the culture in which they are living. For example, gender relations in our country are very different than in the U.S. It is my job to help PCVs make 'informed choices.' When it comes to a site change, there are limits to what a traumatized person can decide just for themselves. PC hires me and my staff to understand in-country practices and culture. For example, whether or not there is to be a site change needs to be decided on a case-by-case basis and in keeping with the local staff and I know about the culture. Anything less is a disservice to the PCV, to Peace Corps, and to our sense of integrity and professionalism."
- "CDs ask who gets to make the decision. From my experience, victims did not want to go back to the scene of the crime. Victims domestically would never go back to the scene of the rape—they would move to get away from the parking lot where it happened. Volunteers are an amazing crowd of people that they want to go back to their site. So, we cannot say that the domestic model necessarily translates to Peace Corps. Posts have a protocol to discern if it's safe to go back to site."

And they don't know if that protocol has any standing in this system. The Victims Advocate will say the Volunteer has to go back because that's what they want. Country directors are genuinely confused about who has the authority here. "

- "When you boil down the Kate Puzey Act, it comes to recognizing that we never want to put a Volunteer in a position where we can anticipate harm coming to that Volunteer. There are no guarantees in life. You worry about all sorts of things – but nothing is more important to me than the safety of Volunteers and staff. I believe that the Peace Corps did a really good job in training in talking about mindset. When there is an incident at any site, you have to look at it from many points of view, but the primary view is 'in my best judgment is that Volunteer going to be safe?' If there is any question, I err on the side of safety even if it is going to be disruptive."
- "My only other thing is that Peace Corps needs to respect the Country Director role and they need to understand that the Country Director knows and understands the culture. I asked, 'who is responsible for the decision about site change?' OSS and the RD said, 'the RD and the Country Director make the decision.' If not, we will be on 20/20 again and they will ask, 'who made the decision?' And if we say someone in America – we will get slammed. I would not want my daughter to join Peace Corps if people in DC who don't know the site or the culture make decisions about a site change."
- "What is that instance when I would allow that Volunteer to remain at site after a rape? First, if the offender is not there. Second, How many people know about the incident? It needs to be few. The reality is there is background sexual harassment in all of the country. If you stay in your site even when the offender is not there, others who know about it will talk. Your reputation will be affected, your ability to heal will be affected, your credibility and ability to work will be affected. This is a big country and other sites exist. PCVs are guests in this country and every home is temporary – that is just the reality."
- "There will need to be some limits on how much power we give to victims, for example, if we think it is unsafe for them to return to their site."
- "It's a balancing act. A Volunteer wanting to go back cannot be the deciding factor – Peace Corps is not rehab. If you can not function in your role as a Volunteer, you don't belong there –you need time to regroup and get strong-- whether it's a broken leg or a broken spirit – you need that time to heal. If we put them back just because it empowers them it is a big consequence on the system. That is not the way it has been designed or staffed or monetarily supported."
- "One victim couldn't recall the conditions of her sexual assault. The assumption is she was so intoxicated she passed out. The medical team was assuming this was a behavioral issue. There was no blood test. She didn't ask to be raped. Whether she was drunk or not was irrelevant. She was brought back to DC. A local clinician decided she was suicidal. He put her in a mental ward. She was put on a plane and had no idea where she was going. Once out, she wants to go back to service. The country director says nowhere is safe at the post. They do an assessment. There is no ongoing threat, but they tell her it will take 4-6 weeks to find her a new site. She asked if she could go home while the site was being prepared. She's told, 'Sure, but we're not paying for it. You're paying for hotel and per diem--\$279 each day.' And people are bickering about who pays? The Victim's Advocate is pushing everyone to get her back. I agree 100 percent with the Advocate."



- “The agency has made a commitment to try to do what is best what is best for the Volunteer and the agency and find ways in which those interests overlap. What is needed a “whole system approach” and then the criteria are:
  - What do doctors say about post-traumatic stress?
  - Does the individual have the ability to continue to serve away from home? (A trauma care provider can determine that.)
  - If the Volunteer wants to continue—will he or she be safe?
- “Posts have genuine concern about a repeat victim. But it’s a dogfight between the post and the Victim’s Advocate and there’s a perception the VA trumps. Given the incidence of repeat victims in the US, this is a legitimate concern.”

#### Safety planning (esp if “behavior” issues)

- “Victims feel terrible when a ‘friend’ breaks the trust and is forceful and does not hear ‘no.’ These Volunteers do not want to prosecute because they feel embarrassed.”
- “Part of the process, before they go back to Country or site is safety planning with a victim. There is no guarantee that Volunteers will be safe 100 percent all of the time. The best we can do is to address the safety concerns. The Victim Advocate can do that. COU can do that. SS and the VA developed a tool called the Safety Planning tool. There needs to be a conversation with the victim - not requiring them to sign a safety plan. Now it’s a conversation driven by the Volunteer, making them a participant in the process, and that increases their sense of personal responsibility.”

#### Confidentiality---at HQ particularly

- “Because of our licensure, we have access to records. We would like to try to make shared decisions. We cannot share counseling information with the Advocate. We are trying to get GC to make a decision that allows us to give info to Kellie. I would like to be able to share info with OVA because Kellie can help to explain our decisions. I’m not sure if the GC will allow this. Also, don’t know even if he does if it will protect my license. But not all of COU would like this – some would like to keep the information confidential for legitimate, ethical reasons.”
- “There are some things Kellie can do in terms of communication with the Victim and her family that COU can’t do. We can’t communicate with families because we are bound by confidentiality and she is not. So she can communicate very realistically with families in a way that COU cannot.”
- “The 2<sup>nd</sup> rape was quite disconcerting. The folks in Safety and Security and OVA were trying to assure that we follow the guidelines. We had well laid out responses. If you missed a step it was a problem. When a sexual assault occurs, the first thing you are supposed to do is call the duty officer to alert the Office of Safety and Security in DC. I did not do that immediately because I was dealing with the victim and had the PCCSO involved, who was a representative of Safety and Security, and she had a call scheduled with OSS within a few hours. We also submitted a CIRS report very quickly. OSS was very upset I did not follow the protocol of immediately calling the DO. At the same time, we were finding out all this information that we did not know. When we filed the CIRS report and we did not know that VA and a large number of other people at HQ were going to get it, including



the victim's PIP. We told the Volunteer that the PCMO, PCCSO and I were the only people who knew her identity and it turned out to be just not true."

- "If one person doesn't tell the other all of the details for fear of breaching confidentiality, our response is not what it could be."
- "Those decisions we are making scare the hell out of me from an ethical standpoint. People think that if the VA asks you a question, you have to tell her. Heck no. Just because you are VA doesn't mean I will give you the information. You don't have access to the files just because you are an advocate. I have to protect the client's information. If there's a safety issue I have to be up front. That privacy of information is important. When I have my door closed, I am cool."

#### Services offered that require changes in policy

- "We are basically saying to victims of sexual assault, 'What do you want and we will give it to you.' Even when this involves promises we cannot keep. All this bending for a small group."
- "It takes people wanting to change. Change is difficult – nobody likes to change. Our system is kind of stuck because now we have Kate Puzey Act, which mandates certain changes, so some want to stick with that instead of making a few minor tweaks that would make our response as an agency much better. Like, for example, the per diem rate when a Volunteer is medevac'd is \$32 per day, whereas the federal government rate is \$96. When someone is medevac'd, they need to eat healthy because they are sick, that's why they are here, so \$32 per day doesn't make sense. Just because they go to their home of record doesn't mean they can or should rely on their mom or dad—they are adults. People get frustrated with me. But, it is the little things that make a big difference in people's lives."

#### Future flashpoints

##### Restricted reporting

- "I think country directors currently are accorded the extension of confidentiality by PCMO as needed. That took some time to be understood and accepted. The reasons are that the CD is totally responsible for running an operation. The details of one individual will impact others. Only the CD can make the connections and make decisions. I feel strongly the Country Director needs to part of the Restrictive Reporting process. I can't see any compelling reason why they should not."
- "Restricted reporting is too much burden to be put exclusively on the PCMO."
- "Restricted reporting means that you may lose CARS – or at least some of CARS."
- "The Volunteer has to be in the middle of the process. After a major sexual assault, the Victim is not always thinking rationally. We can't leave the decision-making just in the hands of the PCMO—there is no perfect answer. Not involving the Country Director is a big mistake. Maybe in a bigger program with 200 staff you could eliminate the Country Director in restricted reporting but with 30 Volunteers and 15 staff I don't know if that makes sense."
- "Restricted reporting is very important. That came up on a number of occasions. We would explain to the victim that a very limited number of people would ever know about this. It seemed that the

number of people knew in HQ grew and grew and it was hard to make a convincing case to the victim that few would know. The fear is that a lot of people have access to the full information. I don't know what to do about it, but we should be careful about promising that there were be *limited knowledge when we don't know if that is true.*"

- I am surprised that the method of restricted reporting in the PC has not yet been defined and it appears to be so challenging from a safety aspect that the implications are scary."
- "As Country Director, I definitely had a voice at the table with CARR. My management style is the team approach and consensus. Ultimately someone has to make the decision. I think that as the Peace Corps considers the military model for sexual assault reporting, I hope we look at what's not working with the military. *I'm looking at some stories from San Diego and I'm not convinced that's what's best for us.*"
- "In terms of restricted reporting, I don't think you can apply that standard of care in the Peace Corps setting. It is different. I would not like to see PCMOs put in a position to make safety decisions. I just don't see how restricted reporting works in Peace Corps – but I know it is mandated. Maybe we should go back to Congress and tell them it's not feasible."
- "On restrictive reporting, it's very difficult for the Country Director to have responsibility for outcomes and have no idea what's going on. Traditionally, the 1st person to call with any crime is the Country Director. The assumption has been that the CD is the point of contact with HQs and local law enforcement to make sure victim is safe right now. After a sexual assault that very conversation between the Country Director and the Volunteer no longer happens. Once the Volunteer becomes a victim, the VA becomes the interlocutor with CD. It's not just a disempowerment of the Country Director but also a breakdown of the fabric of the Peace Corps community. How does a Volunteer return to post and feels like she's part of that post anymore?"
- "Best practices—we've really learned a ton on the best practices and from our colleagues in other agencies. Most best practices are in a domestic or DOD context. We are struggling with how you adapt with our 'last mile' situation? Are there are limitations? Yes, we think so. Specifically 'restricted reporting' where Country Directors would not have information on a case. We're not sure that's feasible for a Peace Corps model. I am concerned there are not enough voices at the table to point to the dangers of Country Directors not being in that loop."
- "The Ambassador is accountable for all USG employees here, not someone at State in D.C.; and I am accountable for the safe and productive service of all PCVs." Role of CD
- "Do you think I would not know what my PCMOs and SSC are spending all their time on? Don't I do their evaluations? Would they not tell me what is going on? Is that fair to them? Who coordinates with the RSO? Who is the extra to call the police – to call the prosecutor – to coordinate the response in country? That is my role as CD."
- "I have a 3rd year Volunteer who said to me, "After my sexual assault, I did not want to report. I did not want to leave my site. I only did after my friend encouraged me to. At the time, the SSC said, 'Washington said you need to change sites' – and looking back, I am so glad I did. Being a victim in this country is different than in the US. Maybe a victim and an offender can live in same town in the US – not in this country. In the US legal system, you can get a protective order and you don't stick out like a goldfish. Also, law enforcement in this country may not be held accountable in the same way as in the U.S. Here, especially early in your service, you don't know the community and the

community doesn't know you. There are underlying issues of gossip, sexual harassment, and machismo. Had I stayed, people would have talked and I would have had more trouble healing and my reputation, credibility, and work would have been affected.. Staff can involve a PCV in the decision to change sites, but you (staff) should decide... Let me be clear: Don't give the PCV a choice; she is going through too much. You let her think she is deciding, but you decide."

- When a new group is sent to a country, there could be medical accommodations requiring placement of a Volunteer a certain distance from the office, if a Volunteer needs for medications on a frequent basis. It's now accepted that the PCMO can discuss with the CD those medical conditions that may impact placement and support of Vs. I can remember discussions of that. 'You can't have non-medical people knowing about the medications of a Volunteer.' If you extended medical confidentiality and expect integrity to carry it out in a similar way, I see Restrictive Reporting for assaults in the same way. I think it's a severe mistake to think only 1 or 2 people can carry out decisions without biases coming in."
- "I would be interested to know what the Volunteer would want to restrict—I think it's everyone in HQ knowing. Some would ideally only go to the PCMO, get checked out and they make the decision of whether it's safe or not safe."
- "I've come full circle on restrictive reporting. My initial reaction was that as a PCMO, I would provide the care the Volunteer needs and then alone, would be required to determine the safety of the Volunteer and her return to site. There would be a burden placed on the PCMO to make that decision alone. In the context of sexual assault, sending the Volunteer back to site knowing that the perpetrator is still at large is a huge concern for staff, potentially dangerous, and irresponsible on behalf of the agency. But in the US, ER staff treat victims of sexual assault and release people to their homes. Our system is paternalistic and oftentimes makes decisions without input from the Volunteer. I know we are working on improving this."
- "In regards to the applying the DOD model of restrictive reporting, I was a soldier before I was a PCV. I lived in a barracks and it is not the same as being a PCV. In the military, other soldiers are always around you and your basic needs are taken care of. I asked one of my PCVs who was a soldier before joining PC, 'What do you think is tougher? Being PCV or a soldier?' He said, 'being a PCV is harder. In the military, I had other soldiers around me all the time.' From his perspective it was harder being a PCV. I would tell my Congressman "AVOID SIMPLISTIC PARALLELSS. WE WILL END UP ON 20/20 AGAIN."
- "It is unacceptable for a Country Director to punish a victim. There ought to be standards of how a Country Director reacts to a sexual assault and the Country Director should be held accountable. I don't have problems with the way the sexual assault manual is written."
- "I can work with the RSO, call the police, get others involved if I have to. I have to coordinate. Seeing my PCMO and SSC running around, how am I not going to know what they are spending their time on? I don't know why this (taking the CD out of restricted reporting) even comes up. If the Country Director screws up, they need to be dealt with. To make a policy that excludes them is just adding more bureaucracy to existing bureaucracy. You want me to work with the Victim Advocate – great - I believe that OVA can be a support both to post and to the victim."
- "In terms of restricted reporting, we are not the first ones to do it . DOD set up their own office of sexual response at the Pentagon. They had to deal with situations like, 'I'm on a base in Afghanistan

and you're telling me I don't get to know if one of my people has been raped.' But It was what Congress mandated. I could understand why people would ask, 'How am I supposed to deal with the safety of the rest of my troops.' But, the victim has a right to be treated and cared for without their business known by anyone. The law says you are having a Restrictive Reporting system.. A lot of people are saying, 'I don't know how this is going to work.'

- "So, I now feel that if a Volunteer chooses restrictive reporting, I would be okay if the Volunteer understands the support services available and the limitations in place by choosing restricted reporting. The PCMO will provide the health care needed. In the US, if a victim chooses restricted reporting, the victim signs a waiver that fully explains restricted reporting and the services available under restricted reporting. I would like for PC to develop such a system as well."
- "What I'm confident will happen, we'll come up with the right policy and if it's not right we'll tweak it until we get it right. That's one thing we do in the PC. "(Restricted Reporting)
- "If the CD were going to know, would Volunteers report a sexual assault? I think that if a victim is going to report, she is going to report. Would we probably have more reporting without the CD? Yes. But, the Country Director is the person who is ultimately responsible for post. For a PCMO, the CD is usually the trusted person in which to turn for logistical support in times of medical emergencies. Our culture would have to change if the PCMO started dictating "
- "It is clear that Congress made a decision for us that certain people (CDs) for example should not know the identity of a sexual assault victim who chooses restricted reporting. But on the positive side, it is more likely that victims will report. There are pros and cons but the decision was made by Congress."
- "With DOD there are a limited pool of people in restricted reporting– VA, SARCs, MO – if you go outside that group, all bets are off and then DOD can't assure confidentiality. The idea is that the victim gets to choose – gets empowerment."
- "Excluding the Country Director from restricted reporting would be a horrible mistake and I don't even know how that would work, given that the Country Director is responsible for safety and security of all Volunteers. There are so many things going on here beyond the victim herself. There are issues around that site and the community. Every site is different. We moved our Volunteers from their site. But, I have heard of situations where victims don't want to leave their site, whether that makes sense or not. That's a decision that should not, in every case be left only to the Volunteer. There are all sorts of things going on that are cultural – how, why it happened, what might come next – lessons learned that you can share with Volunteers. And staff may have crucial information that neither the PCV or HQ knows. We can use the information to improve training. It is not like being the head of a corporation – we know our Volunteers. We care about them. We are here to sit down and say, 'what is it you need from us?' We can help them make good choices. Peace Corps is so much about relationships – between a Volunteer and community, between Volunteer and staff and between Volunteer and other Volunteers. I know that I am good as a country director because I am good at relationships."
- "I can understand that we really want Volunteers to report an assault – but everything at post goes through me, the CD, for good reasons. I may not know why a Volunteer is medically evacuated but I know that he/she is being medically evacuated. I am not sure how HQ is going to make decisions in situations where I would normally control the information flow or other resources. I don't know



how it could happen in a realistic and meaningful way. Maybe what it comes down to is that Peace Corps should be managing their Country Directors better – maybe it is just the case that there are a few people who are not so good at their jobs. We should consider whether we are making blanket policies in an attempt to work around what might, at heart, be a personnel issue.”

- “We have not heard to much from DC about restricted reporting, so I don’t know enough about that to understand what it means. But certainly at our post we have struggled with the issue of how we report sexual assault within the agency. At our post we have disagreed with OSS about who sees the CIRS report (Crime Incident Report), with who has access to PII and with what we should say to PCVs about that. At post, I can control who gets the report and PII and the distribution is very limited because we are committed to protecting our PCVs’ confidentiality. But I cannot control who gets the report at HQ. And even though a CIRS report may not have the Volunteer’s name, it will say where they are located, what they do, their sex, their training class, etc., so in a small post it would not be hard to figure out the identity of the Volunteer. And, that is really important information to Volunteers. Each of our victims has made an incredible journey and talked about what happened to them. But, before they were ready to share that experience, that information was critically sensitive for them. As an agency we don’t do a very good job of managing who gets the information and what happens to it. Moreover we are not totally transparent with Volunteers about the distribution of that information. These Volunteers live in the information age. Why wouldn’t we tell them who gets the information? We need to be honest and transparent. If we are going to say to them that we are really going to try to keep this confidential, we need to do better. Volunteers know that if you get the CIRS report especially in a small country, in 10 minutes you could narrow it down to 3 people. You have to be able to look at it from the Volunteer point of view.”

- "Restricted reporting is about giving a victim control over who is told about the assault. Giving control to the victim is itself an important part of the healing process."
- "We need to be able to provide what is needed for the victim to be able to heal and be able to go back and do the work that they were chosen to do. That doesn't require dozens of people knowing about an assault as is the case now. Right now a wide range of people know and it is not as confidential as the law intends."
- "Country Directors should not be included in Restrictive Reporting because 1.) You want to protect against Volunteers fearing that intimate details of their lives will be spread far and wide. It comes from the logic of not wanting your boss to know intimate details. Victims will only report if they can control where the information goes. 2) It gives power back to the victim. The Country Director, Regional Director, IG, PCSSO will all want to know. Now information is distributed to an incredible amount of people and the victim has no control over that. That is the reasoning—and this goes against a culture that the Country Director is 'sovereign' in their domain. They complain about mandates, but they pretty much are perceived by Volunteers as having total authority over Volunteers. Peace Corps is a decentralized organization. CDs have a great deal of responsibility and authority."
- "Based on DOD experience, a certain number of restricted reports (20%) will get converted into unrestricted reports after a period of time. One-third of all sexual assaults in DOD are restricted. Restricted reporting seems to have had the effect of encouraging reporting of sexual assault."
- "For country directors, there is a fear of accountability – it is hard to get people to think about 'what no one else knows won't hurt me.'"
- "CDs say they can't provide help to a victim if they don't know about an assault. But, if a victim doesn't report an assault because we don't have restricted reporting, the victim gets no help at all. If out of 100 sexual assaults, 50 don't report now, we don't provide any help to those 50. Maybe under restricted reporting 20 or 30 additional victims will report. We will be able to provide at least some support to those additional victims, even if the support is limited due to the nature of restricted reporting."
- "We need to explain the purpose behind restrictive reporting– the best way to accomplish it is not to write a legal opinion on it."
- "The Country Director has staff that responsible for specific roles. Why do they feel those 2 positions (PCMO and CCD) aren't competent enough to provide the services they are tasked to provide to receive restricted reports? As CD they need to respect and have trust that their staff will respond and provide the right services."
- "When we go to restricted reporting, CARS would be a 'baby CARS.' We are going to have a SARL at each post—they are an extension of the VA. The 'mini CARS' would include the SARL, PCMO and SSC at post. If they were Medevac'd here at HQ it would include COU, IHC, and if they wanted the services of the VA. Safety and Security at HQ would not be involved unless there was a safety and security concern."
- "From where we sit, the concern about Country Directors and Restrictive Reporting is a Change Management issue."

- "I haven't seen many situations where others at a site are at great risk from a perpetrator. I feel the issue of Country Directors needing to know for this reason is overblown. But it would be part of conversation with Kellie. If the Victim Advocate is going to breach confidentiality, she would talk to a lawyer."
- "Country directors are not directly providing support. If Country Directors are in the circle, I believe restricted reporting won't work at all. It will defeat the purpose."
- "I think Country Directors should know there is an incident. They do not need to know the details of the incident. They should know only if the Volunteer asks to speak to the Country Director. There is an imbalance of power in these positions and people don't fully realize that at Peace Corps. At post people become family. Country directors want to help them and mentor them. That's still an imbalance of power—because they are seen as having control over their future. The Country Director is going to be the one if they need recommendations and they are going to be the one signing off on their description of service. They're going to be the one writing those recommendations for fellowships."
- "Focus groups say Volunteers don't share because don't want their 'boss' (the Country Director) to know. They have the power."
- "I just do not know operationally how you cut the Country Director out of restricted reporting. When the shit hits the fan, I am the guy they are coming for. And I should believe I have to be involved in planning for ongoing safety of the Volunteer. I do not think that the Victim's Advocate gets it that we are not sending these Volunteers back to their home in Arlington, VA. We are sending them back to a village in South Africa or in Indonesia. We are putting them in places that are not their own country. Their other networks of support are not necessarily there. If you take the Country Director out of the conversation, you are now taking that knowledge that the Country Director has about the local situation out of the conversation. So, someone else is making a judgment call without all the knowledge available. I am all for giving the Volunteer another chance as long as we do all we can to keep them safe. *blame*
- "On restrictive reporting, I think the two positions at post that should be designated as restricted reporters are PCMO and SSC. I think it should be only those two positions. PCMO, because of medical care needed, also because they provide crisis counseling in country. PCMO is the only position that has the ability to say 'I need a car' without explaining why—it's medical and protected under the HIPPA. They are the only ones at post who can facilitate medevac. PCMO has greatest confidentiality and can put things into action—to get the Volunteer, for the medical and safety and to get them medevac'd without anyone else at post knowing the issue. The SSC because they are able to assess the safety of the site, working along with PCMO. Those 2 positions in tandem for a restricted report can provide all of the services necessary without others knowing what's going on."
- "Again one of the realities of the Peace Corps country existence is that information spreads very quickly. I had to play an important role in quelling speculation and rumors. Somebody knows something and the information spreads like wildfire that something happened to the Volunteer—that would become a source of stress to the victim. She wasn't going to talk about it. I had to send a message to all the Volunteers that very obliquely referred to a safety and security incident with a Volunteer, and that the most caring thing all of us could do was to provide the victim privacy—and avoid rumors. That had a limited impact. If one left the Country Director role out of restrictive reporting, that emasculates the role in a damaging way. If you don't trust Country Directors, it's a

telling statement about Country Directors.”

#### SARL role

- “When you talk about victim advocate at the HQ level and what its introduction has done to shake things up here—multiply that in the 75 countries with a SARL. Expect a mirroring of role confusion, power struggle, and decision-making. If we don’t think through the role of the SARL, we are setting ourselves up for a re-creation for the tension all over the place.”
- “I have concerns for who trains the SARL. If we are going to provide the best possible care, we ought to be getting the best possible people to do it. And then we need very clear processes and procedures that we all agree to and then follow. My concern is that what is considered most important is that the person knows how Peace Corps operates. Bull. To me, that’s not important. If you know your field you’ll figure out our idiosyncrasies.”
- “The biggest thing is strict confidentiality. We are really, really conscious and tight about confidentiality. Plus, there is the issue of communication and avoiding duplication. SARL is a duplication of the PCMO. We need to avoid the mentality that the solution is always to find room for another person from HQ or to measure our success by investment of resources in a problem. Volunteer support should be measured by results and the result we have most control over is response to a rape, as opposed to prevention since choices made by PCVs heavily influence vulnerability and complicate risk reduction and prevention.”
- The SARL role is so ill-defined. I like the idea of more people being trained. It is not rocket science – It’s really personality based—if you have good analytic skills and interpersonal skills. But I am afraid that they will train people up before we figure out what to do with them. That’s what we did with the Advocate—we plopped her in and then figured out what to do with her.”
- There are some countries where sexual assault is nonexistent. What will the SARL do? Yet it’s a mandate. We have to address all of this and we have to include in that the role of the SARL in the post. And it will be worse in a way. At post you have a small group and you work toward cohesion in a nice workable team. You don’t want a setup for discord. ”



- "In the law, the SARL cannot be the PCMO, the CD or the SSC. We've talked about the Program and Training Officer at post for the SARL as that person is an American, a direct hire—subject to the 5-year rule. They would receive training to be a victim advocate before going overseas and would know before accepting the position of PTO that this would be part of the position. If we have a training system up front—people will know that's your role. There are other thoughts of other people taking on the SARL role: People wouldn't sign up for that position if they don't want to do the SARL's piece."
- "Our system is different because we don't have a Victim's Advocate at every post and we must work within a system of laws that may differ than the US. We have host country staff that we train on how to manage sexual assault in a US cultural context. The response we are teaching may be in conflict culturally. Overseas, they have different laws, definitions, and responses to rape. It's a different arena culturally and clinically."

#### Organizational structure

- "It's unfair to that office (of the Volunteer Advocate) to have no supervision and no training. It's a recipe for disaster and burnout. If there's ultimate authority in one place and no real supervision, I don't know how you work with lateral colleagues and those under you."
- "Are you looking for a macro person or someone on the ground? I don't understand what we are looking for. Are we are looking for someone who can do the work on the ground or are we looking for someone giving you policy? When the role of the VA was first advertised, it started off not being a high level position and then became one."
- "The Safety and Security Coordinator had a minor role in the past—their roles are becoming more prominent and competent."

## 7. ROUGH BEGINNINGS

Peace Corps is made up of good and competent people who care and see themselves as "small a" advocates

- "I am not a bleeder. I am not a RPCV. I am not an apologist for Peace Corps. The reason I love my job is I never have worked with such a professional group of people. I am overwhelmed every day by the degree of commitment, the intelligence of people. It's just such a pleasure, even when we bang heads."
- "We bend over backwards to support the Volunteers. The level of dedication that staff has gets lost."
- "We did a lot of the stuff that the Victim's Advocate does—at least it was on our plate to do those things—before she came."
- "The Director sees positive things happening and I feel he attributes this to the Victim Advocate only and not to everyone that is working so hard to implement and improve. He seems to give the Victim Advocate full freedom to implement and is unaware of the implementation issues and role blurring that is occurring in the process."
- "Prior to 20/20, some of the very same people who were 1st responders had been working very hard – 99% of them are very good and kindhearted people with good intentions. They try to do what is best thing for the Volunteers and the agency. They might not get it 100% right. The Victim Advocate was brought in and the frustration of a lot of people was that no acknowledgement was made of all the work that they'd done for all those years. When the Victim Advocate was brought on, the implication was that the rest of us don't know what we are doing."
- "We have continued to do a good job. The Victim's Advocate has been a flashpoint, which is sad because we are all on the same side. The MO and COU staffs feel like 'Hey, we are advocates too.' This is not a role that belongs solely to you.' The VA is a very strong advocate and she has totally embraced that role and I can't fault her for that – but, that role inadvertently is driving a wedge between the PCMO and the Volunteer or our medical staff at headquarters (including the counselor) and the Volunteer. Why does she hold the information to disseminate? Why is she the voice of the Volunteer? We are also advocates. That is part of our profession—that we help Volunteers and patients find their voice. It has been an unfortunate, frictional relationship. Everyone thinks they are working in the best interest – but when you have a therapeutic plan laid out or a timeline laid out and the VA re-writes that, re-arranges that and says that, 'no the person will be MedEvaced Friday instead of Monday' that is hard - how does the VA get to trump the plan?"
- "When I look at some of what the Kate Puzey Act requires around confidentiality and giving the PCV options, etc. – that just seems like good Peace Corps post management. None of it is anything that a good Country Director would not do anyway. It is like codifying best practices of Peace Corps. What has been lost in the public discussion of these issues is that we have been doing this for a long time and we have done it very, very well for a very long time. Peace Corps has handled crimes against Volunteers for many years and many staff have done it well for a long time – with confidentiality, compassion."
- "Post staff is really concerned. They view the perception that they are 'less caring' than the VA as a bit of a slap."

- "I applaud the level of dedication of local national staff. I don't know if the staff here even has that level of dedication. US staff has the weight of the US government behind us; the local national staff doesn't. In Benin, one local national woman who was fired is someone who had told her husband that she would not have another child because she did not have enough time and energy to both do her job well and have an other child. For a West African woman to say that is incredible—and she lost her job. I don't know that type of dedication. I don't even know if it's healthy, but it is what it is."
- "At the end of the day, we have to trust each other to do what is best. Peace Corps puts a CD out here in charge of these Volunteers because it has faith that he or she is a reasonably intelligent, compassionate and competent person. If you forget to cross one t, let's not freak out. That was just one event. Let's really communicate about what matters."
- "Aaron is a very personable man. You can hear his laugh a mile away."

Many feel that they were thrown under the bus.

- "And then at the hearings to hear 'I know we suck.' It felt like a complete slap in the face. There is a lack of leadership. They feel that no one wants to hear that we have been doing a good job so they don't say it. No one came to our defense. We are human. Can we do better? Did bad things happen? You betcha. But no one provided the other side, 'Here's the reality of the situation.' Nobody wants to hear that. So, you don't say it? You bend over and say, 'give me more.'"
- "During the Congressional hearings, I sat in rooms with people and heard the Director throw us under the bus. I felt that I had an agency that was not supporting us. Lip service was given to us and we were told that we 'had to say that politically. We are all victims' advocates – we are patient advocates – that is what we do for a living. The Congressional hearings are where it began and we have never recovered."
- "We were told by the White House to never contradict anything said by the women on 20/20. Lynn Rosenthal came over to help us manage this. If Congress had said they wanted a full hearing, they could have subpoenaed records. They did not. What the Director said and did not say in front of Congress had a huge impact on COU staff, who felt the Director did not support the Peace Corps staff. It served Peace Corps well to keep the message to 'we are sorry and we are going to do better.' "I'm not sure that all COU staff has gotten over this."
- "When leadership gathered us together for a meeting, staff all thought the Director was going to thank us for our work. Instead, the Director was sticking up for Kellie and her role and did not say, 'I know you were doing a fabulous job and that everything Kellie is doing you were doing.'"
- "Offices in great stress who have been carrying out Volunteer services for so many years naturally feel 'dissed.' Even people who left the agency said 'I didn't think we were doing such a bad job.'"
- There is a lot of well-founded professional pride – these are professionals with codes of ethics who are proud of the services they deliver. They don't deliver these services because they are mandated, but because of who they are and the profession they have dedicated themselves to. The Congressional hearings and 20/20 was particularly hurtful because we so care for these Volunteers. We are trying to do the right thing in every way and many people felt thrown under the bus because the Director – and I am sure that he was advised how to respond—didn't say things like, 'In many cases, we are doing a great job. And, it's not because we are callous and uncaring and unknowing.'

These Volunteers are cared for.' Maybe the White House said don't try to defend yourself. But there was a lot of *personal and professional hurt. We looked unfeeling, uncaring and unprofessional* and that is so very different than the way we view ourselves. Not that there was not room for improvement – there was. But, that was tough."

- "At the Congressional hearings, staff got thrown under the bus—answers came from fear and a lack of leadership. There was a lot of good old boy posturing." (To be shared with Leadership Only)
- "Under the last administration, there was a unity among staff—camaraderie, good morale, and a sense of pride. That has eroded. This is born out by surveys about workplace satisfaction. They consistently show a decline in the morale."
- "The Communication infrastructure was horrible at the time of the Kate Puzey Act and 20/20. It was a mindset of 'heads down.' The communications stance that was taken was very apologetic and so the field felt betrayed—country directors, the training staff, everyone at post."
- "At a recent OST ceremony an African HCN APCD gave a beautiful graduation speech and she finished it by saying, 'And I just want to say that we have never blamed the victim.' You could have heard a pin drop.
- There was a lot of talk—it felt like lip service—'we so appreciate our staff.' 'We know how hard you are working.' 'We couldn't do it without you.' And in public, 'I know we suck. They suck, I'm sorry.' I shut off. I don't trust anything that is said."



## 8. SHADOW OF THE LEADER

- "Director Williams is a strong leader who has done an effective job communicating agency reforms to staff. Every week he leads a senior staff meeting with every office represented to discuss agency operations. He has addressed all staff several times and has provided them with an overview of agency operations and strategy for the future. He has asked staff to lead small field and hq focused strategy sessions to inform the crafting of his reform policies, and in regard to the implementation of these policies, he has personally led many conference calls to our country directors to thank them for their service and to explain to them the intent and substance of the reforms he is asking them to implement. The director has led public "town hall" discussions and has traveled to all regional recruitment offices to meet with staff and discuss reforms with staff and local community members. He also has sent messages to staff in the field detailing the substance, purpose, and effect of these reforms. In addition, the director has tasked his senior staff with taking his messages to their staff. For example, under Aaron's leadership OMS, S&S, and Global Ops have increased the prevalence of and have updated the substance of staff training around the world."
- "The sexual assault issue is getting a lot of high level attention – dominating high level attention for the last year."
- "As it relates to the formulation of the Peace Corps budget, Director Williams has always emphasized quality over quantity. He has worked to ensure effectiveness and best practices are incorporated into every aspect of Peace Corps operations. This is true irrespective of our budget climate."
- "Top leadership is very committed to dealing with this issue. They mean well. The debate we are going to have on restrictive reporting will relate to it being different than how we do things in Peace Corps."
- "I think that the agency is at a critical juncture and we could go the wrong way for the wrong reasons and out of fear and that would be a real tragedy."
- "Leadership has not been good in communicating the changes and in appreciation. They need to trust that staff know what they are doing and cooperate more. And leadership needs to appreciate staff more."
- "The biggest thing for me is how I feel as if the leadership of the agency has been disrespected by people not respecting the expertise that I bring to the OVA. I understand that the field of VA is new. It is only within the last 8 years that the field is moving towards certification. The field of Victim Advocacy has left it up to states and organizations to develop their own certification process."
- "In the past, when Volunteers were not happy about agency decisions and complained to the Director or through their congressperson, the managers' decisions were generally supported unless something was really out of the norm. In the last few years, however, even before the arrival of the Victim Advocate, there has been a change in how complaints are addressed. In many cases, if someone complains, they often get what they asked for, even if it means they get special treatment compared to other people who didn't complain. There's a perception among the staff that their professional decisions are not supported. And, the word seems to be out that complaining is very effective in getting what you want."

- "It is my perception that OVS feels that its professional decisions are being second guessed and that agency decisions are being made based on PR or what the Volunteer wants more than for medical reasons—to keep Volunteers and their parents happy. The medical professionals believe that their jobs also involve being responsible for supporting Volunteers, in ways that are in the best interests of the individual Volunteer. Yet those efforts are sometimes being undercut because the desires of the Volunteer win out over what may be in the Volunteer's best longer-term interest."
- "At the end of the day, we are all here for the Volunteers and if not for them there would be no Peace Corps. We would not have the jobs that we have if not for them. I have standards that I live up to and I want the agency to live up to as well. I don't think they are that high. I think they are achievable."
- "I would like the agency to set a goal of creating a set of standardized ethics that is universal for all offices within Peace Corps. We have to be respectful of each other's professional ethics, but for the agency to be successful we really need a set of agency-wide ethics."
- Because the agency took such a PR hit over how Volunteer victims have been treated, at this point, the policy is we are going to do absolutely everything to prevent our being criticized for not treating our sexually assaulted Volunteers properly. While a change in approach absolutely was needed, many have the perception that the pendulum has swung too far."
- "Communication—I don't think that there is much of it. I don't think that there is a strong communication plan for disseminating this information. People are expected to know just because an email goes out. I get 500+ emails a day, so when I get many emails I just glance at them. When there are these big changes that need to happen, there needs to be more of a plan. When all of the stuff was happening in the news around the Kate Puzey Act there should have been internal communication rather than finding out and reading about it in the media."
- "Today, parents' expectations are different than they were in the past and the way that PC responds to those parent expectations is also different. The attitude seems to be that if parents are unhappy, that could result in adverse publicity and could interfere with ability of agency to get Volunteers. We do not realize what we cannot make everyone happy. By trying to make one person happy, you make a lot of other people unhappy. That's what's happening."
- "When the first criticisms were being levied against us in the summer of 2010, the agency was very dismissive of them and did not take them seriously, did not want to confront and challenge them. The agency got back on our heels – we had a shocking meeting between representatives of First Response and the agency. A few of us had a strategy and a plan on how to communicate and to demonstrate why the things they were alleging weren't correct. At the very last minute, we were told that we could not give our presentation, and that we should just listen. FRA walked in totally prepared. We were outgunned. It felt like Mohammed Ali against Sunny Liston. When you are dealing with a crisis situation, the worst thing that you can do is take a step back. Once you give ground, the opponent becomes emboldened and you lose traction. That is where it went downhill."
- "Messaging about what we are doing needs to be coordinated and it needs to be the same message—who is doing what. Crafting the messages and then getting agreement by all the parties this is how we do things—say and do."
- "What I think would be useful from an "All Hands" meeting is to explain what the decision-making is—to explain how different groups, not just the chosen few, were brought in to the decision. A

useful "All Hands" meeting would explain, 'this is where we are at now, why we came to where we came to'—not just that experts came in to change things."

- I will say that with the current administration—there's a strong desire to make things right. In that sense, there's a break from the past. I don't doubt our leadership – the Director and the Deputy Director - they want to do what's right for victims. But, we can't seem to as senior management seem to agreement on how we get there."
- "Having worked for big organizations over the last 30 years – I have lived through a great deal of *organizational change – some imposed by external events (9/11) and some imposed from political change*. I was at Newark Airport during 9/11. I have seen organizations respond out of fear, not having completely thought things through. It's hard to turn some of those changes back. Especially when you are under public scrutiny and I think that the Peace Corps is. You have to think very hard about what you set up, because then you are stuck with what you have created. It becomes very difficult to walk things back"
- "I'll admit that some of the changes that have happened over the years are a bit frustrating. I have complete trust in our leadership back in Washington. From 30,000 feet- the broad sweeping changes reflect the environment where we have to think very carefully about everything we say, everything we do, not that we shouldn't have been doing that before. The stakes are higher. There's quite a bit of pressure. Sometimes I get concerned when I am away from my blackberry, or where there is a coverage shadow. As Country Director I have to be on and ready to respond 24/7. That kind of wears on you. There is a lot more focus and attention on safety and security and ensuring we do everything just right."
- "The other thing I wanted to say was at least from the perspective that I had before my own experience, I thought that the cards were stacked against the CD—it was your game to lose. That was based on the way the information was imparted in the first place and then on the experience of my colleague. That did not prove to be true. As a CD—that was the reason we are all so nervous. So many things to do wrong and so few you can do right because you do not have that much authority"
- "Although a lot is happening, the people who work on Kate Puzey Act do not get to sit in on policy decisions, but they are greatly affected by the decisions. There is discontent, frustration, anger, sometimes disappointment and feelings of disrespect—and those people don't have a venue to talk to Carrie or someone in leadership about all this. They may be removed by several levels. If folks in the organization who are the prime stakeholders are resentful and aren't buying into what's going on, you are losing the battle."
- "Under the previous administration all policy was written out of the General Counsel's office. Here currently—some policies are drafted directly in GC, some outside the GC. Not a single policy doesn't go through the Senior Policy Committee, where debate is recorded. A memo goes to the Director summarizing how everyone voted. Our GC developed and designed this system, which has much more process and transparency."
- 'You have the silos that have been created. The safest place for me is 'this is my role. This is what I know how to do.' All the other crap we have going on with meetings—it's too confusing and muddy. So I stay and do my thing. It's a silo unfortunately."

- "The shift of behavior I see that needs to happen is that people who are responsible for making change coordinate and share information."
- "Kellie and Claudia currently report to the Director on Kate Puzey Act implementation progress and sexual assault issues. I think that that group meeting should be expanded to include the leaders from the key units that address Volunteer sexual assaults."
- Peace Corps staff work closely with different White House offices for a variety of reasons. These offices include, but are not limited to Cabinet Affairs, National Security Staff, and Presidential Personnel. Peace Corps staff work closely with White House staff to facilitate our inter-agency relationships and to provide one another with information about agency and administration reforms. "
- "What guidance and advice would I give you concerning dealing with all the unstoppable change? There are many silos working on different components of the Kate Puzey Act. However, it seems a small group of people are making the decisions with little input from others. –The Director, the Director of Safety and Security, Victim Advocate, General Counsel. However, I do see that HQ is starting to get input from the field, which is paramount for their alignment and implementation of the Kate Puzey Act. We need to work across our silos."
- Director Williams plans to bring relevant office chiefs together for an offsite retreat. This will provide the director with the opportunity to thank everyone for their commitment to strengthen Peace Corps' support to our Volunteers in the field and will also provide agency leadership with the forum to discuss operational challenges and opportunities among one another.



## 9. INTENT

- "In terms of success measures, the most important indicator is encouraging of reporting."
- "What I want to come out of this effort: 1. Internally we need to define decision-making and the roles of the VA and COU, VS and other roles as part of a comprehensive sexual assault program. We need to lie out the responsibility of each person, including the victim/Volunteer in the decision-making process. One of the problems is that this is all being done top-down. We need a survivor as part of the decision-making when we are NOT in the crisis—and not just Kellie, but perhaps other Volunteer-victims. 2. Find a way to recommend that the senior staff communicate changes and processes— not only when the decision is made—'love it or leave it.' Stakeholders need to be able to weigh in before a decision is made."
- "Success means:
  - Everyone (leadership who represents staff) feels like they have had input into the creation of areas that relate to their constituencies.
  - That everything related to the Sexual Assault program (Kate Puzey Act and other commitments) actually happens. This is a huge global program so it will take a while to happen.
  - Volunteers are engaging in behavior that reduces the incidences of sexual assault.
  - Victims get the assistance they need.
  - Victims report sexual assault so they can get the medical and other care they need.
  - Staff works cooperatively.
  - Staff can quantify the results."
- "For implementation to be successful, I would have to believe that:
  - Country Directors do not feel as if they are responsible when someone becomes a victim. It is not a reflection of their ability to be a country director or of their performance. If that were so, there would be no blaming of the victim.
  - Volunteers recognize that when someone becomes a victim of crime, it is impactful, but it does not mean they cannot continue their service and be a successful Volunteer. It might take the agency giving a little extra support or doing things a little differently than the past that could be seen as 'coddling.' But in the long run we have invested so much time and energy into a Volunteer that we need to go the extra mile."
- "How do I define success? It absolutely requires that you take any incident and tease it out to whatever the truth is. Who knows what another Country Director or Medical officer would have done. Maybe they would have said, 'okay the victim was mugged, let's move on.' We insisted— knowing the sensitivity of Kate Puzey Act—that we were going to run this rabbit down and find out what happened. It's easy for me to understand in the absence of that legislation, some people would pursue the truth and some wouldn't. The Kate Puzey Act is a success because it forces us to

explore any possible incident to make sure we haven't overlooked something. And that is what got us into trouble in the past."

- "For this change to happen, everyone (staff and Volunteers) would buy-into the change and understand and accept their roles in the areas that affect them."
- "Success: I want to be able to say that we have effectively implemented all provisions of the law in a timely manner and in a lasting way. Some members of Congress have a broader concern about the agency's culture. They felt that this was not a culture that embraced victims of sexual assault."
- "Success means the Peace Corps carries out the same mission for 50 years, but with 100% commitment to the wellbeing, safety and security and care of Volunteers. And, when things go wrong they get the best, most compassionate care possible. The best that can come out of this is even more enhanced safety and security and compassionate care. It means being able to carry out Peace Corps' obligations—without having to fundamentally alter the Volunteer experience."
- "Success for me is 1) First and foremost, every Volunteer who has been a victim of crime feels the agency has supported them 100 percent—that they were not dismissed or minimized. Not just a status quo response, 'I reported, I got support.' But rather that it was exceptional support—that what happened to them was a priority. No matter what else is going on--PSTs, site visits—at that particular moment they are the priority of the agency. Their well-being, care, support, needs, continued service (including a new site if applicable) are at the top of the priority list. Volunteers should not be made to feel replaceable or as if they are a burden when it comes to staff providing services following a sexual assault or other violent crime.. That would be success in the response. 2) Success is also about the agency having the same philosophy as Victim Advocates that the victim is never to blame. There are no shades of grey in that. Law enforcement can have an attitude of 'there are no innocent victims.' Not us."
- "Successful implementation of the Kate Puzey Act is:
  - Increased number of sexual assaults that are reported. As ironic as it sounds, the first indication that the policy is working is that we see an increase in the number of reported sexual assaults. This will tell us that the policies aimed at encouraging reporting of sexual assault are working.
  - The level of 'satisfaction' of victims in terms of how the victim feels about how Peace Corps has supported them in providing medical care and counseling, trying to help them continue their service, if that is what they want.
  - There are two parts to this: how well we provide support and how well Volunteers think they are being supported."
  - "Whatever change we make needs to be deeply embedded in the agency and I believe that there is a cultural issue that has prevented the Peace Corps (which is made up of motivated, compassionate people) from dealing with this issue in a compassionate and Victim-centered way. We are not just making superficial changes. Until we get the cultural change – we won't get success in following the rules. What we are undertaking is a long-term change. Because of the 5-year rule and other reasons – it is hard to make changes and have them stick. This is not the 1st time sexual assault has been addressed. We have to change the culture so it is sufficiently supportive of the Victim and it is sustained." Culture Change Needed

- “Success is 1) when Volunteers reach out for help, they get the help that they need in a timely fashion without judgment. And 2) I will know that we have reached success when our model becomes a model for other organizations that have Volunteers or workers overseas. It will then start to have an impact at the grass roots level to create change for women and children around the globe.
- “What needs to happen for successful implementation?
  - Foundational is a mind shift from victim blame
  - Our goal should be doing what’s right by the victim
  - If the mindset were there, what we need additionally is more intense training for all overseas and HQ staff. They all need victim’s sensitivity training. They need to understand the emotional and physical impact of crimes on PCVs. They need to understand pitfalls of responding to Volunteers.
  - Also we need people held accountable—there is no measure of accountability—when posts violate policy and practice. Someone ‘talks to them’ vs. stern talking to. Never seen anyone fired for not doing the right thing. I get biannual performance reviews. For country directors, no one is taken to task. If someone mismanages a situation, nothing happens.”