

**Peace Corps**  
**Office of Strategic Information Research and Planning**  
**OMB Control Number XXXX-XXXX**  
**Supporting Statement**

**Section A: Justification**

**1. Circumstances that make the collection of information necessary.**

The Peace Corps is seeking an emergency authorization to collect information from Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs), including Volunteers, Trainees, and Response Volunteers, who were recently evacuated from their countries of service in response to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID 19) pandemic. Evacuated RPCVs are currently members of the public. These individuals served in host country communities around the world, prior to their evacuation and return to the homes of record necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic. This evacuation abruptly changed the status of the approximate 7,000 Peace Corps Volunteers, Trainees, and Response Volunteers to members of the public.

The purpose of the survey is to obtain lessons learned from the impacted RPCVs about the Peace Corps' evacuation process; so as to better inform the agency emergency preparedness and response in the future; gauge their interest for re-enrolling or re-instatement to Peace Corps service; and obtain insights on how the Peace Corps can better continue working with the evacuated RPCVs, consistent with the Peace Corps Act. It is important to keep the recent evacuees engaged with the Peace Corps at this time, as the Peace Corps is actively working on options to return to service. Keeping evacuated RPCVs engaged by gaining insights on their interests in re-enrollment or re-instatement opportunities will assist the agency with its efforts to quickly return to service when the time is right.

Under the terms of the Farr-Castle Act, the Peace Corps is required to survey returned Peace Corps Volunteers in order to measure the impact of the Peace Corps service on RPCVs. The survey of evacuated RPCVs would help fulfill that mandate, in particular, with respect to the impact of the Peace Corps service immediately before the COVID-19 pandemic, the COVID-19 evacuation, and the impact of the Peace Corps service on the subset of RPCVs affected by this pandemic. In addition, the survey of evacuated RPCVs would also help the Peace Corps fulfill the mandate of the Kate Puzey Act (KPA). The KPA authorizes the Peace Corps to survey currently serving Volunteers in order to identify areas for operational improvement. The Peace Corps is unable to conduct its regularly scheduled Annual Volunteer Survey (AVS) to fulfill the KPA mandate because there are no currently serving Volunteers as a result of the COVID-19 evacuation. However, the survey of evacuated RPCVs would still allow these individuals an opportunity to provide important and useful feedback on the agency operations. For these reasons, we are seeking an emergency clearance to engage the Returned Peace Corps Volunteers in support of the Peace Corps Act (22 USC 2501, et seq.).

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**2. By whom, how, and for what purpose the information is to be used.**

This data collection is an opportunity to gain insights that cannot be obtained from existing agency information sources and will strengthen quantitative data coverage of the Returned Volunteer experience related to the agency’s emergency preparedness and post-service support. The information gathered will allow the agency to generate insight into the lasting direct and indirect impacts the Peace Corps evacuation may have on Returned Volunteers’ lives, their future service intentions, and how the Peace Corps can better support them. These insights will provide the Peace Corps greater capability in making data-informed decisions to improve future operations and optimize the agency’s resource effectiveness.

**Exhibit A1: Questions and Purpose**

Questions	Purpose and use of the data
<p>Did you experience any harassment or unwanted attention in your Peace Corps country related to COVID-19 (i.e. foreigners brought COVID-19, host families not comfortable having you at their home, etc.)</p>	<p>The purpose of this question is to help gather information specific to the level of harassment that PCVs may have experienced due to this virus which will help focus agency attention during the reassessment for reentry. This is consistent with the intent of the Kate Puzey Act.</p>
<p>During the time you were being evacuated, did you wish to report a crime to post staff <u>but were not able</u> to do so? If yes, please contact the Office of Victim Advocacy at (insert duty number and duty email) for service and support.</p>	<p>To encourage Volunteers to report incidents that they may not have been able to report during the evacuation that have not been reported to Peace Corps. This is consistent with the intent of the Kate Puzey Act.</p>
<p>Since you [were notified you were evacuating] [during the process of evacuation], did anyone (mark all that apply):</p> <p>Take or attempt to take your money or property?</p> <p>Have any type of unwanted sexual contact with you (touching, kissing, unwanted intercourse) or attempt to do so?</p> <p>Act physically aggressive toward or threaten physical aggressing (pushing, shoving, hitting, kicking, use of a weapon)?</p>	<p>To encourage Volunteers to report incidents that they may not have been able to report during the evacuation reported to Peace Corps but under normal operations would have been more likely reported. This is consistent with the intent of the Kate Puzey Act.</p>

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<p>Please choose the response that best fits your experience with the following statement:  I received pertinent updates from post staff regarding COVID-19 throughout the evacuation process?</p>	<p>To assess how well the Peace Corps provided pertinent information for volunteers during an emergency process, like this evacuation. To determine if volunteers were actually receiving information when needed.</p>
<p>Please mark all that apply of Peace Corps' communication and resources during the evacuation process?  Mark all that apply [Useful, Clear, Accessible, and Timely] :</p> <p>Communication about the health reasons to evacuate  Communications about the 14-day self-quarantine to avoid the spread of COVID-19  Communications about medications  Communications about close of service medical examinations  Communications about health insurance and obtaining care in the United States  General communications about the evacuation  Peace Corps resources about the evacuation</p>	<p>To assess the content of the general and health communication information delivered to RPCVs. Without this data, Peace Corps will be unable to assess the utility of the content it developed about COVID-19. We plan on collecting and analyzing the data to determine how useful the content of the health communication was for RPCVs.</p>
<p>Rate your experience using LearningSpace as the main portal for Evacuated Peace Corps Volunteer information</p>	<p>This information will be used to understand how RPCVs engaged with the Peace Corps during the agency's response to COVID-19 on this specific platform. The information will be used to make changes to the platform that will encourage future use.</p>
<p>Which source of information did you find most reliable during the evacuation?</p>	<p>The purpose of this question is to improve the agency's Emergency Action Plan (EAP) process, in particular notifications and communications.</p>
<p>Did you have any COVID-19 symptoms in the first 14 days after leaving your country of service?</p>	<p>This question is designed to assess the prevalence of COVID-19 symptoms among RPCVs. Without this data, Peace Corps will not be able to determine how many RPCVs experience COVID-19 symptoms.</p>
<p>In the 14 day period after you arrived in the United States, did you have a positive laboratory test for COVID-19, or did a doctor or nurse inform you that based on your</p>	<p>This question is designed to assess the number of RPCVs who had a positive COVID-19 test or received a clinical diagnosis of COVID-19. Without this data, Peace Corps will not be able</p>

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<p>symptoms and exposures, you were a clinically-confirmed case of COVID-19?</p>	<p>to determine how many RPCVs had COVID-19. Review the data to determine the number of RPCVs who had a positive COVID-19 laboratory test or were clinically confirmed COVID-19 and compare with the estimate based on the passive surveillance efforts.</p>
<p>As a Returned Peace Corps Volunteer please select two of the following 3rd goal activities that would be most beneficial to you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Career Fairs – virtual (at this point)</li> <li>b. One-one career advice</li> <li>c. Virtual training sessions (Office of Personnel Management (OPM), others)</li> <li>d. Support in connecting to other RPCVs</li> <li>e. Explaining NCE</li> <li>f. Webinars spotlighting employers (Employer Spotlights)</li> <li>g. Other: Please Specify</li> </ul>	<p>This will help prioritize the Peace Corps limited resources to the activities evacuated Peace Corps Volunteers (ePCV) would like to receive.</p>
<p>Have you used Peace Corps resources for any of the following:</p> <p>If employed: Obtaining a job          If unemployed: Searching for a job          Understanding NCE          Learning how to use NCE on USAJOBS</p>	<p>This will help prioritize the Peace Corps limited resources to the activities ePCV would like to receive and to gain an understanding of ePCV priorities for post-service services.</p>
<p>Please rate the effectiveness of the following Peace Corps resources in helping you find a job. [very effective, effective, neither effective or ineffective, ineffective, very ineffective]</p> <p>Jobs Board (Career Link)          Webinars (Employer Spotlights)          Virtual training (OPM session on resumes, interviewing, navigating USA jobs)</p>	<p>This will help prioritize the Peace Corps limited resources to the activities ePCV would like to receive and to gain an understanding of ePCV priorities for post-service services.</p>
<p>Given the definitions above, how likely are you to</p>	<p>This information is critical for the Peace Corps</p>

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<p>re-apply to Peace Corps under these different circumstances: [definitely not, probably not, undecided, probably yes, definitely yes]</p> <p>Reinstatement 6 months from now  Reinstatement 12 months from now  Re-enrollment 6 months from now  Re-enrollment 12 months from now</p>	<p>planning efforts for returning to host countries.</p>
<p>Looking back to your evacuation experience what would you change? [open-ended]</p>	<p>The purpose of this question is to improve the agency's Emergency Action Plan (EAP) process.</p>
<p>How many times did your post practice their emergency action plan (EAP) during your service?</p>	<p>The purpose of this question is to improve the agency's Emergency Action Plan (EAP) process, in particular to understand if RPCVs felt prepared and comfortable with the evacuation plan.</p>
<p>Before the evacuation, were you aware that post had an emergency action plan?</p>	<p>The purpose of this question is to improve the agency's Emergency Action Plan (EAP) process, in particular to understand if RPCVs felt prepared and comfortable with the evacuation plan.</p>

**3. Consideration of the use of improved information technology.**

The *Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Evacuation Survey* will be administered online, with invitations distributed via email. We anticipate that an online survey will be considered less invasive for prospective participants compared to other formats and will be the most convenient for them to complete. Furthermore, using online surveys will allow for skip patterns to be employed where appropriate, reducing the total number of items that a respondent has to read and answer. In an effort to make the survey process as convenient as possible, eligible participants will be sent an email invitation that includes a brief description of the survey and an accompanying survey link. Respondents will also be provided the link to a dedicated *Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Evacuation Survey* email address where they will be able to reach out with questions, comments, or concerns.

**4. Efforts to identify duplication. Why similar information cannot be used.**

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The Peace Corps has limited its questions to areas where information is not otherwise available to the agency and concerns the COVID-19 evacuation. Due to the comprehensive nature and uniqueness of the evacuation a systematic and comprehensive collection of data concerning this particular type of a Peace Corps emergency response has never been conducted.

**5. Methods to minimize the burden to small business if involved.**

Participation in the *Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Evacuation Survey* data collection will not involve small businesses or small entities, or their workforces.

**6. Consequences to the Federal program if collection were conducted less frequently.**

Failure to collect this information would substantially impede the mission of the Peace Corps by removing the ability to systematically and comprehensively gain lessons learned from evacuated Returned Peace Corps Volunteers. The survey data will be used to assess the impact of the Peace Corps evacuation on Returned Volunteers' well-being and desire for future service – the information that is critical for post re-entry planning. The survey will also help the Peace Corps maintain the professional connection with the Returned Peace Corps Volunteers whose service in the Peace Corps was interrupted by the COVID-19 evacuation. This continued connection is also essential as the evacuated RPCVs are considering return to Peace Corps service.

The *Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Evacuation Survey* is designed to be administered to each respondent one time.

**7. Explain any special circumstances that would cause the information collection to be conducted in a manner inconsistent with guidelines.**

No special circumstances exist that require the collection to be conducted in a manner inconsistent with the guidelines in 5 CFR Subsection 1320.6.

**8. Consultation.**

We are requesting simultaneous publication of the Federal Register Notice for emergency processing. We have not consulted with other agencies to obtain this information because the information is primarily about Peace Corps operations and Volunteer well-being, and therefore other agencies are not likely to have this information. We are testing this with nine RPCVs to ensure that the survey is understandable and accessible, and provides the agency with the needed information.

**9. Explain any decision to provide any payment or gift to respondents.**

No payment or gift is provided to respondents for this participation.

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**10. Describe any assurance of confidentiality provided to respondents.**

It is the policy of the Peace Corps to comply with the *Privacy Act of 1974* as outlined in *22 CFR Part 308*. Respondents will be advised that the *Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Evacuation Survey* is entirely voluntary and that any information they provide will be combined and summarized with information provided by others, and no individually identifiable information will be released. All Returned Volunteers will be assured that no adverse consequences will accrue to non-respondents, and that their comments and opinions will be kept private. In addition, survey invitation letters that will link to the online survey will indicate the Peace Corps' federal status and the purpose of the survey.

The survey will be administered by the Peace Corps, utilizing a specialized survey management software platform supplied by a *FISMA ACT of 2002* and *FIPS Publication 200*-compliant vendor contracted by the Peace Corps. During the administration process, collected data will be stored on a vendor server that has redundancies implemented in the event of system failure and is protected by high-end firewall systems which are scanned regularly for vulnerabilities.

Upon completion of the survey administration period, data stored on the vendor server will be removed and transferred to the Peace Corps using a compliant encryption standard. The entire dataset will be encrypted so that any data stored will be further protected. Finally, access to any data with identifying information will be limited to Peace Corps staff directly working on the survey. Upon completion of the study, the Peace Corps will destroy the dataset with individuals' names and any other identifying information.

**11. Additional justification for any questions of a sensitive nature.**

The survey asks the respondents about COVID-19 symptoms, diagnoses, tests, and test results. We have made the question binary to confirm diagnosis while phrasing the question in the least intrusive manner possible. Peace Corps needs to be able to evaluate the accuracy of the passive surveillance (for COVID-19 cases) set up during COVID-19 response so that we can improve our capabilities for monitoring in cases of future disease outbreaks. Being able to survey the RPCVs in order to determine the true prevalence of COVID-19 would allow us to identify gaps in our approach and improve those efforts once we know the true number of Volunteers whose health was impacted by COVID-19. Passive surveillance results in underreporting of cases, and therefore an underestimation of true incidence of disease. It is complicated by the fact that COVID-19 infections may be asymptomatic. COVID-19 symptoms and symptom onset were self-reported and based on the CDC case definition, therefore our surveillance may not have identified cases with absent, delayed, rare or atypical symptoms.

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By asking RPCVs whether they were confirmed positive, we intend to capture cases that were not reported through the passive surveillance system.

Future outbreaks are inevitable and being able to assess Peace Corps’ ability to accurately determine the true prevalence of cases in any situation is critically important. Knowing the true prevalence will allow us to respond to any Congressional inquiries about whether it was safe to conduct a global evacuation of our Volunteers – both for them, and for US citizens who may have had exposure to repatriated Volunteers after an evacuation. Based on the survey findings, interventions and strategies can be developed to improve our capabilities for the future.

The safety and security questions being asked in this survey will be used to understand how many volunteers experienced a crime or security incident during the evacuation but did not have the opportunity to report it. This will help the Office of Safety and Security determine if changes need to be made to the currently available options for volunteers to report incidents during abnormal circumstances and to offer more specialized support to volunteers during evacuations. The information will be used to inform the agency review process for this event which will contribute to a continued improvement of the emergency response plan and to an overall report on the agency’s response and evacuation.

All questions on this survey are voluntary so if a respondent does not feel comfortable giving us this information they do not have the obligation to do so.

**12. Estimates of reporting and recordkeeping hour and cost burdens of the collection of information.**

There are no direct costs to respondents other than their time to participate in the study. The total annual costs of the time the minimum amount of respondents spend completing these surveys is \$19,232.64, calculated as the number of respondent hours, which is 672, multiplied by the estimated average hourly wages for individuals working in all occupations in March 2020, \$28.62, as published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020). Exhibit A2 contains estimated response burdens for the target audience included in this survey.

**Exhibit A2: Data Collection Burden for *Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Evacuation Survey***

Components of Burden Estimation	Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Evacuation Survey
Minimum Number of Respondents	2,688
Frequency of Response	1
Average Hours per Respondent	0.25



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Total Annual and Total Aggregate Hours Burden	672
Estimated Annual Cost per Respondent	\$28.62 x 0.25
Annualized Cost to Respondents for the Hours Burden*	\$19,232.64

\* Respondents' total annualized cost are calculated as hourly wage x time spent on survey x number of participants

**13. Estimates of annualized capital and start-up costs.**

No capital, startup, or operational and maintenance costs are incurred by study participants in this information collection activity.

**14. Estimates of annualized Federal Government costs.**

There are no incremental costs for the survey to the agency.

**15. Explanation of change in burden.**

This is a new, one-time data collection.

**16. Information collections data planned to be published for statistical use.**

This information will not be published for statistical purposes.

**17. Explanation for seeking not to display the expiration date for OMB approval of the information collection.**

The expiration date will be displayed on all instruments approved for this study.

**18. Exception to the certification statement.**

The agency is able to certify compliance with all provisions under Item 19 of OMB Form 83-I.

B. This collection of information does employ statistical methods.