



## DESCRIPTION OF PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEER SERVICE

Vitoria Fonseca

Healthy Schools

Guatemala

After a competitive application process stressing technical capacities, motivation, adaptability, and cross-cultural understanding, Peace Corps invited Vitoria Fonseca to serve as Coordinator for the Healthy Schools Project in the Central American nation of Guatemala.

### Pre-Service Training

Ms. Fonseca began Peace Corps training in Guatemala on September 17, 2019 at the Peace Corps office in Santa Lucía Milpas Altas, Sacatepéquez, and completed an intensive 9-week program which included:

- 112 hours of intensive Spanish language and Cultural training.
- 85 hours of training in rural community health and development with a focus in adult education and participatory assessment, half of this was hands on training.
- 60 hours of core training including gender, behavior change and intercultural competence.
- 36 hours of training in personal safety and preventive health.
- 8 hours of Mayan language instruction.

### In-Service Trainings

- 75 hours of training on topics such as strengthening local health committees, leadership, monitoring reporting and evaluation.

### Primary Assignment

Ms. Fonseca took the Oath of Enlistment in the Peace Corps on November 22, 2019. She worked in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health for the duration of her service in Guatemala. She served as a Coordinator for the Healthy Schools Project, a role created to support the implementation of the National Healthy Schools Strategy to improve the basic health and hygiene of elementary school students and develop the health-promotion capacities of members in the educational community. Ms. Fonseca worked primarily with the directors and teachers of 24 schools, in the district of El Palmar, Quetzaltenango actively pursuing opportunities to collaborate with community actors in the municipality.

### Healthy Schools Coordinator

- Promoted inter-institutional networking through coordination with the Municipal Healthy Schools Commission.
- Conducted a Healthy Schools Assessment, guided by Peace Corps approach to community development, at each of the 24 schools she worked with in order to gain a better understanding and context of the status of the students' hygiene, sanitary infrastructure

on school grounds, teaching practices most commonly used by teachers, and parent involvement with the educational community.

- Planned and co-facilitated one workshop of two hours to increase mastery of gender equitable practices in the classroom for 30 students; three workshops of one hour to increase mastery of specific health topics including hand washing, nutrition, oral health for 30 students and 40 mothers; one workshop of one hour to increase mastery of physical and emotional changes during puberty for 40 mothers; one workshop of two hour to increase mastery of HIV/AIDS education and prevention, sexually transmitted infections, sexuality, family planning and contraceptive methods, and other sexual & reproductive health puberty for 50 students, one school director, and three teachers; one workshop of one hour to increase mastery of self-esteem and identity for two school directors and teachers.
- Formed one group of Student Health Promoters in one school (total of 30 students) that met bi-weekly over three months to learn and discuss diverse health topics and take part in leadership-building exercises in preparation for planning student lead health promotion activities.
- Helped strengthen Parents' Associations groups through co-facilitated health workshops of one hour over a three-month time frame addressing diverse health topics, including hygiene, nutrition, sexual health, and mental health, in six schools.
- Organized, with the Municipal Healthy School Commission, a Municipal Health & Hygiene Corner competition between six schools to incentivize the creation and elaboration of these designated areas for the safekeeping of hygiene-related toiletries.
- Assisted in the formation of a Municipal Healthy Schools Committee, members of the committee included: the district superintendent, a professional nurse from the Ministry of Health, the local hospital's social worker, representatives of the local food security organization, and a representative from local government. In addition, Ms. Fonseca co-facilitated trainings to familiarize committee members with the National Healthy Schools Strategy and provided support to the committee to develop objectives and actions to further the implementation of the strategy in their area.

### **Secondary and Other Projects**

- Co-taught English classes twice a week to students in a public middle school.

### **Language Skills**

Ms. Fonseca conducted all primary and complementary work activities in Spanish and her mastery of the language was critical to the success of her work. At the end of service, she was tested by Peace Corps certified examiners through a Language Proficiency Interview and achieved a rating of Advanced High.

**Vitoria Fonseca completed Peace Corps service in Guatemala on March 18, 2020.**

Pursuant to Section 5(f) of the Peace Corps Act, 22 U.S.C. 2504(f), as amended, any former Volunteer employed by the United States Government following his/her Peace Corps Volunteer Service is entitled to have any period of satisfactory Peace Corps service credited for purposes of retirement, seniority, reduction in force, leave, and other privileges based on length of federal

government service. Peace Corps service shall not be credited toward completion of the probationary or trial period of any service requirement for career appointment.

This is to certify in accordance with Executive Order 11103 of April 10, 1963, that Vitoria Fonseca served satisfactorily as a Peace Corps Volunteer. Her service ended on March 18, 2020. She is therefore eligible to be appointed as a career-conditional employee in the competitive civil service on a non-competitive basis. This benefit under the Executive Order extends for a period of one year after termination of the Volunteer's service, except that the employing agency may extend the period for up to three years for a former volunteer who enters military service, pursues studies at a recognized institution of higher learning, or engages in other activities that, in the view of the appointing agency, warrant extension of the period.

Vitoria Fonseca has earned lifetime eligibility for the Paul D. Coverdell Fellows graduate school fellowship program.

Geralyn Sheehan, Country Director  
Peace Corps/Guatemala  
May 2020