

# NOUAKCHOTT NOTES

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## FROM THE DIR DESK: INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY IN CHINGUETTI

Hello All,

The last thing I want is commentary at the next COS feedback session on how late our newsletter is getting. I would be obliged to print the recommendation in the next newsletter and that one just might be late too and well ... how embarrassing would that be. So I am giving up waiting for my muse and am just going to sit here and get something written. Here it is.

Hope you are well and staying as poised as possible in these stressful times. Here at the office we are doing remarkably well considering the global uncertainty. It is reassuring to me that the staff and volunteers are so well trained and well practiced in emergency preparedness and reporting. I hope you also feel more secure knowing this. Of course, if you don't or have any particular worries, please do not hesitate to call me or Maciré to discuss them. I was impressed at the full participation and results of the January consolidation test and security workshop. You may have noticed that we now have US embassy guards at our office. So far they have been doing a fantastic job and I am particularly pleased to see a few women guards out there. This change is part of our continued efforts to improve physical security around the office. We have also put in an alarm system (tested with more than a little hilarity the other day), and improved our locks and door bars. The embassy is working on mail security and has asked me to ask all of you if you would object to having your packages opened and screened by the



*Country Director's Speech Chinguetti Crafts Fair*

embassy mailroom staff. I have my suspicions about how well that is going to go over, so I have asked them to hold off for. Since the war has broken out we have had 100% cooperation from the volunteers and staff of Peace Corps Mauritania. Al Hamdoulila. Even the rumor problem seems to have been calmed with new strategy of increased communication between staff and volunteers. Of course there is a tradeoff to this focus on safety and security and right now the APCD's are feeling it most. They have not been allowed to travel up-country and they are starting to get worried that site assessment and volunteer visits are falling behind.

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## Play Ball!

### 30th Annual West African Invitational Softball Tournament

Mauritanian PCVs had the opportunity to play in only four match-ups. How did they do?

**Game 1:** RIM Invaders vs. The French. The French took an early run at the top of the first inning as volunteers spent their time at defense deciding where to field their beer. Nevertheless, RIM I. responded with a run to tie up the game in the bottom of the first. Defense tightened up on both teams and only The French managed to score a run until the end of the final

inning when Tom Flemming came flying home on an RBI. Both teams performed weakly and this was highlighted by a dash to first base by Liz after a soft bunt. Liz stumbled and fell halfway to base and some thought she was attempting to slide a little too early. Seconds passed yet she managed to pick herself up with Meagan's help and made it safely after the pitcher fumbled around with the ball thinking Liz was already at first. The First match-up ended tied at two. Despite hopes in our team that we might do well in the tournament, this was to be the Invaders most solid performance. Unfortunately the first game was practice and didn't count.

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# FROM THE SED

**SED Update:** As usual, this will be short and to the point. First of all, thank you all for submitting your FY03Q01 Quarterly Reports. I am happy to report that as a sector, we are at 100%. They were very helpful in keeping me up-to-date on your activities in the field. I especially enjoyed some of your more creative "Words of Wisdom" submissions. Some of you should seriously consider a career in stand-up comedy after Peace Corps. By the way, your FY03Q02 quarterly report (JAN/FEB/MAR) was due on April 15, 2003. Thank you to all who

## New Sites

**Site Selection:** Site selection is in progress through the end of April. To date the following communities are being considered for SED and ICT placement. If you have any suggestions for SED or ICT placements, please write up a brief description and send it in to me. Please remember this is a tentative list and it is sure to change in the coming weeks. Also, some sites will have more than one position open.

Aioun	Atar	Boghe
Chinguitti	Diadjibine	Kaedi
Kankossa	Kiffa	Nouadhibou
Nouakchott	Rosso	Selibaby
Tidjikja	Toulde	

## Speaking of Training...

**PST:** The interview process went well and we made a decision on the SED and ICT Training Coordinators.

The SED Coordinator will be El Wely Etghana. He is a recent graduate of the University of Louisville in Louisville, KY with a Masters Degree in Civil and Environmental Engineering. While at school, he also worked in a management position with United Parcel Service (UPS) and has worked on a number of engineering projects in Algeria.

The ICT Coordinator will be, Ahmed Ould Adda Ould Abdelkader. Ahmed studies Mathematics and Physics at university in Syria and Information Technology in Morocco.

As for Second Year PCVs who are interested in working at Stage, please keep your eyes open for a formal job announcement/solicitation later this month. We will be making PCV decisions in early April. Some of the PCV positions you might consider are one of the Sector Training Coordinators; Admin Coordinator; PH&S Coordinator; Cross-Cultural Coordinator.

## New Volunteers

**TI Input:** As of 08 March 2003, Peace Corps Washington reports that 15 of 17 SED/ICT slots have been filled. With this news, I am confident that we will have a full complement of trainees for SED/ICT come June 28, 2003. We had requested 13 SED trainees and 4 ICT trainees. To date, we have 14 SED and 5 ICT on board (some are still "on hold" for various reasons). The invitation process will be closed on May 1<sup>st</sup>. The following are names of the confirmed trainees for SED and ICT:

Mr. Kyle Ambrosino; Portland, OR; Purdue University/English Literature & Italian  
 Ms. Audrey Bottjen; N/A  
 Ms. Miriam Edwards; N/A  
 Mr. Scott Eidson; San Francisco, CA; Wesleyan University/Economics  
 Mr. Nicolas Gale; San Diego, CA; CSU at Chico/International Relations  
 Ms. Mariam Haider; Kenmore, WA; University of WA/Business Administration  
 Mr. Hector Hernandez; N/A  
 Ms. Catherine Horn; Riverside, CT; Binghamton University, NY/Political Science  
 Ms. Jennifer Justus; Willoughby, OH; Ohio State/Business Management & Marketing  
 Mr. Mark Lang; N/A  
 Ms. Virginia March; Alexandria, VA; George Mason University/Finance  
 Ms. Rebecca McKnight; San Antonio, TX; UT at Austin/Business Administration  
 Ms. Lisa Michael; Braddock Heights, MD; Tufts University/International Business & Technology  
 Mr. Marc Valentin; Birmingham, AL; N/A - Anthropology

### **ICT: (Name; Home of Record; University/Background)**

Mr. William Holcomb; Bluff City, TN; Tennessee Technological University/Computer Science  
 Mr. Matthew Mills; Portola Valley, CA; Purdue University/Italian Studies  
 Mr. Robert Salita; N/A  
 Mr. Jason Standring; Fort Collins, CO; Colorado State Univ./Spanish Culture & Literature  
 Mr. Carl Strolle; N/A

# FROM THE HEALTH CORNER

ALASSANE DIAKITE, APCD/HEALTH

1. The Trarza Campaign
2. The Polio Social Mobilization for Health project
3. PACA in Boghé

## 1. The Trarza HIV/AIDS Campaign, January 13-24, 2004

Kudos for the Trarza Health Volunteers and their Mauritanian Counterparts who have implemented the Traza HIV/AIDS Campaign. I am sure that you all remember when we sat down that hot evening during stage and started to brainstorm about ways we can articulate the project and how we are going to set objectives and implement them. That was in August 2002. Well, in January 2003, the project was implemented as planned and without a hitch.

Thanks to the leadership of Nkechi Eneh, Dam Ba, Aminetou Mint Saleck, Dany Carman and the boys and girls of AMPF and the volunteers of the Friends of Nature. The activities far surpassed everything we have thought about back in August, both in terms of public turn out and quality of programmed sessions.

This campaign was divided in two phases: phase one (January 13-15, 2003) was implemented in Rosso. It consisted on a formal training of trainers, sports and cultural activities featuring HIV/AIDS themes. The training of trainers was geared at 30 participants coming from the following villages: Breun, Garack, Fass, Mederdra, Gani, and Rosso. The Training was facilitated by a pool of trainers comprised of the UNAIDS Country Advisor, Dr Elhadj, two Trainers from the SOS Pairs Educateurs, Aminata Kane and Aissata Ba, a Representative of the Trarza DRPSS, Mr Hemet and the APCD Health. I was most impressed with the sequencing of the sessions and the nice

addition of a human rights session. The sports and cultural activities were comprised of a basketball game, a karate demonstration, poetry recitation, skits, and rap concerts with songs consistent with HIV/AIDS prevention efforts. It was just incredible!!!

Phase two was implemented in Mederdra with Danny Carman and Aminetou Mint Saleck as qualified MCs. The choice of Mederdra as the last leg and the closing stage for the campaign was meant to help decentralizing important HIV/AIDS activities from the National and regional capitals to the departmental ones in an effort to enhance the advocacy component of the struggle against the disease. In that aspect, our expectations were also surpassed. In addition to the attendance of the Hakem, the Mayor, the communal council as well as quite all the notables of Mederdra, we were also honored by the presence of three ambassadors: the US ambassador, the UNICEF representative, who is also the chairman of the UNAIDS Thematic Group the WHO representative, the PCD and the technical advisors to the representatives of UNICEF and WHO.

Activities in Merderdra evolved around a conference for the larger public, a soccer game, theater skits, poetry recitation and the top of the tops a concert by the artist Cheikh Ould Lebiadh who sang songs on HIV/AIDS.

Do not be surprised if from now on you hear everybody singing 'Stop SIDA, STOP SIDA!!!!'



Trarza Volunteers and counterpart at the AIDS Conference in Mederdra

The Volunteers and Counterparts are still working on the project report and it will be available to you as soon as I get it.

## 2. Polio Eradication Social Mobilization Projects

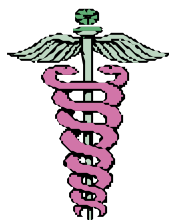
This project was a result of conversations I had with the MSAS and PC Washington. Polio is one of the Agency Initiative, meaning initiatives that get special attention from the Peace Corps Director, such as HIV/AIDS, Information Technology, Girls' Education to name a few.

Volunteers, Counterparts, Dr Khalef of the EPI and myself met to lay the groundwork for the project whose objectives will be to promote the eradication of the disease in Mauritania. The project will seek an 80 % coverage of polio immunization in sites where Volunteers are serving. Volunteers and Counterparts will also initiate social mobilization activities aimed at raising awareness on the importance of immunizing children age 0-5 in general and against polio in particular. Last but not least, a manual will be designed to help community members have a clear understanding of the different diseases targeted by the PEV and combined with an immunization calendar. The manual will be designed in French, Arabic and local languages. PCV Adriane Lella is coordinating this project.

## 3. PACA and PDM in Boghé

I was very excited when PCV Nicholas Oliphant asked to facilitate a PACA training for Boghé community members in an attempt to prioritize needs in the commune and draft action plans. The reason is simple: I am obsessed by participatory training generally, and appreciative inquiry, particularly.

The exercise was incredibly well organized, the participants motivated. The group came up with a list of priorities and agreed to meet later to draft plans of action. They have by now finalized that plan of action and I will be facilitating again a mini PDM workshop for them on my way back from site assessment in the Tagant and the Assaba. Congratulations, Nicholas for your hard work and leadership.



## Medical Musings

As most of you already know we have recently hired new staff. Bechir Sow is our lab technician, Amel Kane is our PCMO and Ghallat Mint Mohamed is our nurse. I'm happy to have such a well trained staff. Now that we are fully staffed we'd like to work on improving our system for health monitoring. We will begin having all patients check in with Ghallat in her office/waiting room. She will take blood pressures and temperatures as needed and pull your chart. She will then direct you to either myself or Amel. If you have a preference you can let Ghallat know. We think this will allow us to identify any disease patterns more quickly as well as providing us with all your medical information. If anyone has any questions or suggestions on how to improve things, please drop it in our mailbox. Also, please remember to label all lab specimens before leaving them at the lab.

## SPA and Peace Corps Partnerships Update First Quarter 03

Volunteer Name	Project	Amount
Matt Gould	Wall for the Bababe Highschool	5,000
Jenise Plourde	Djeol School Enclosure	2,195
Liz Broogaard	Chinguetti Women's Week	577.70
Brett Southworth	Computer Training	4,598.86
Jason Ko Nkechi Eneh	Trachoma Training	2,663.09
Erin B.	Cultural Exchange, Mbout/Diadiebenni	1,045.96
Nicolas Allen	Robinet System	312,006
Liz Kenton	Moringa Promotion	



## From The Green Corner

By Aw Mohamedou & Kane Oumar

Hello everyone from the greenest part of the office. And don't let anyone make you think differently (Smile © ©for Kateri).

As you have noticed, the year has already started to be a tough one. All the reports indicate that there is already an acute food shortage in many places in the country for both human and animal consumption. I hope that your respective communities are not already suffering greatly from this food shortage. The government, in collaboration with different organizations (World Food Program, Commissariat à la Sécurité Alimentaire (CSA) World Vision, Lutheran World Federation (FLM)) has started distributing food. As Agroforestry/EE volunteers our biggest contribution to these communities is to help them with their gardening techniques to improve their production and to promote Moringa as a nutrient supplement. I know most of you are involved with Moringa promotion at your sites and in surrounding communities.

I have already visited all of you once and even twice for some of you. It is always a pleasure to visit you and to discuss work and integration in your respective communities. Most of you are doing well and are engaged or have planned activities for the next year and half. Moringa seems to be the subject that every one is interested in. Fruit tree promotion, biogas, setting up EE committees, developing EE lesson plans etc are also other subjects that some of you are doing. Reforestation activities:

The normal period for tree planting is still months away (August or September) but now is the time to think about it. Tree nurseries need to be established in April or May to be outplanted during the rainy season. Talk with your delegation, the Agriculture inspection and your cooperatives about it now so you all take the necessary steps to get ready for it. Most of the delegations should have tree sacks, ask them. If not we should have some in Boghé.

PRA/PACA: In November 2002, Kane Oumar has helped PCV Heather DeLong and RPCV Kristianna Gehant conduct a PRA in Joulom. The activity was very successful with minimal cost (for flipchart papers, markers etc.) The community formed a committee to implement the action plan drawn from the PRA. Let me know if you are interested in holding a similar event in your community or with another volunteer so we can discuss how or the delegate). This is very important to keep them informed about your activities. You don't have to translate the whole report but just the activities accomplished during the past quarter and how it went and the ones planned for the next quarter.

Environmental Assessment IST: As explained in the memo sent to all EE volunteers, this IST has been postponed until sometimes in August or September as part of PST due to the unavailability of the trainer. With this new set up we will be able to include the trainees and their counterparts. The goal of this training is to

teach EE volunteers and their counterparts the process of conducting community-level environmental assessment or diagnostic. Once the volunteers and their counterparts return to sites they will conduct the same training for other community members and school personnel. They will complete an environmental assessment of their respective communities and develop plans of action (both at school and community levels) to address local environmental issues through education/sensitization and agroforestry action. The training will happen in two phases: One theoretical in class and another practical in a community setting where participants will practice what they have learned in class.

### Agroforestry project revision and Returnee project final evaluation:

I am glad to announce that this request has been approved. The only other issue we are facing now is finding someone to conduct the evaluation. So this will probably not happen in April as planned but I will keep you posted when I know more. With the agroforestry review we hope to have recommendations on the future direction of the sector, the new areas we need to focus on, on how we can strengthen our collaboration with our partner organizations and what new partners we can seek collaboration with. After the recommendations from the consultant, we will craft the new agroforestry sector project plan.

### ETR/IST :

Thank you all for attending the IST and the ETR. I think it all went well. Your feedback was very positive.

### PST:

As we have announced in Kaédi we would like to have volunteer helpers for the PST. Kane will be the lead coordinator for the training and we would like to have for each phase one or two volunteers to help with the training. The volunteer will spend at least a week or so before the phase to work with Kane on sessions preparations on field visits preparation, session write up and evaluation and end of phase recommendations. Kane will send a more detailed memo about the phases and the competencies that will be covered during each phase. The first volunteer helpers (for the first phase) need to be ready to spend a little bit more time out of site. They will be working with Kane to help with the first phase and also to map out the whole PST.

Book resources: See Racey's sections on what is available on Moringa and EE. Thank you Racey for putting this together and for typing up volunteers' words of wisdom.

And until next edition of the NKTT Notes stay well and cool and keep up the good work!

That's all from us in the greenest sec-

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## How To Get There !

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Coordinate with Aw "Abu" Mohamedou about your travel plans. Coordinate with Lowell Fuglie ("Fyoo-gee") about visit dates because Caroline alternates living in Dakar and in Keur Momar Sarr. His email address is fuglie@telecomplus.sn. Caroline's is olivcaro@sento.sn. Taxi to Rosso and cross the Senegal River to Rosso Senegal. You will need your passport and Green Card. The border is open 8-12am and 3-6pm daily. From Rosso, Senegal take a taxi to Richard Toll which is approx. 20km away. Ask Rosso PCVs for taxi details. Get our and walk east from the taxi garage. Cross the bridge, and look for a small garage about 10m up the road on your right. Ask for Papa Gueye and the car that goes to Keur Momar Sarr. He leaves Keur Momar Sarr for Richard Toll every day at 7am, and leaves Richard Toll to return around 4pm. The ride cost us 2500CFA (we probably got ripped off), and takes about 3 hours.

## TO KEUR MOMAR SARR, SENEGAL CHURCH WORLD SERVICE MORINGA PLANTATION BY RACEY

Following the recommendation of Frank Hillbrands at FLM SIDA, Liz and I made a trip to Keur Momar Sarr, Senegal to observe Church World Service's Moringa powder production plantation. We contacted Caroline Olivier to coordinate our trip with her as she is the supervisor of the project as well as the wife of Lowell Fuglie, Director of Church World Service in West Africa. Our plans to leave Dakar coincided with hers to visit Keur Momar Sarr, so we left together on 18 February. During the five hour trip north we discussed her experience with

Moringa, general successes and failures of the tree and the origins of the Keur Momar Sarr plantation. Initially, Caroline and her counterparts were doubtful of the success of Moringa so far north in Senegal, but with a reed windbreak set up and plenty of water from a Israeli drip irrigation system it has worked well.

In November 2001, she along with a team of counterparts who work for a Keur Momar Sarr based NGO, AS-READ (Association Senegalais pour le Recherche d'Etude et d'Appui de Développement) direct seeded one

hectare (an eighth of a hectare each week) at a site approximately 20km from Keur Momar Sarr at the end of a 4km canal. The same million trees are to this day producing leaves at the same speed and quality as a year and a half ago.

Due to the efficacy of drip irrigation, she was able to plant the trees 10cm apart. Without drip irrigation it would be necessary to space the trees farther apart. Each tree gets one liter of water over an hour each day. This changes ac

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## GAD News

During the past three months we have been visiting GAD centers for the semi-yearly monitoring visit. Unfortunately Mariem has been ill and wasn't able to visit each site. Each center has its own special offerings and atmosphere. For most visits we were able to bring guest speakers who talked to the girls about the challenges they face in continuing their studies and strategies for combating them. I was impressed with the amount of community support in Bogh é, the in-depth questions for our speakers in Kaédi, the artwork in Atar, and the camaraderie in Rosso. I've heard good things from Mariem about Kiffa and Aioun as well. Selibaby is up and running opening with a Girl's camp organized by Vivian and Beth. Tidjikja will be open soon, Inshallah, and we hope to make it up to Nouadibou before too long with some guest speakers and their center's dictionaries.

The GMC's are coming along wonderfully after initial growing pains and have become quite a successful element of the Peace Corps program in Mauritania. A recent visit to the Aioun, Kiffa, Atar, and Rosso centers left the new EDDI/AGSP funds manager, Debra Egan, quite impressed with Peace Corps Mauritania's accomplishments. It is the only project of its kind in Africa.

Three projects funded with addition GAD money received last year have been completed with great success:

- Selibaby Girls' Camp - Vivian & Beth
- Rosso Teachers' Conference - Jason
- Nouakchott Women's Computer Training - Vivian

We're looking forward to hearing how the other projects turned out. Don't forget to take pictures. I'm putting a brief description of your events on the web-site. You can see a photo of the quilt the girls made during the Selibaby Girls Camp at: <http://www.geocities.com/pcmauritania/gad/selibcamp.htm>. And of course we're waiting for your receipts!

Our next GAD event will be International Women's Day. We will have a booth at the Women's Fair in Nouakchott and Kaédi plans to have a poetry contest. We would love to hear what you've done in the other regions.

It's also time to start preparing for this year's Big Sister/Little Sister event. Please let me know if you did not receive an email with 'suggested planning' ideas sent out recently. Last year each region participated with great success. Please stop by the GAD office on the third floor if you would like to see what your region has done in the past. Our new phone number is 44.

## EDUCATION CORNER BY BAGGA

Hello all and Happy New Year 2003

Here we are again sharing with you news and ideas through the channel of the indisputably regular NKC Newsletter-hey it is always better to be than not to be at all! Also being sometimes irregular is healthy, as wisdom has it.

### Model School in Mederdra

This is one of the major events of the quarter. This SPA funded activity is taking place in two phases.

The first phase is the training of trainers scheduled for March 7&8 in NKC. The workshop, which will bring together 6 PCVs along with their counterparts, aims at providing participants with working tools on how to render teaching a more interactive process and to break away from the traditional teacher-centered approach. Ways on how to enhance learner participation both in process and product will be addressed in lesson planning/implementation. The second phase is the actual teaching practice and is taking place in Mederdra for the period March 9<sup>th</sup> through the 14<sup>th</sup>.

Prep. Work for the event is going smoothly thanks to the synchronized efforts of our ED Trarza duo, Paul and Matt. Congratulations to both. And we will share



some of the training highlights in the next issue.

### School Exams and Vacation Dates

I shared this information previously via e-mail but I think our shuttle is in some instances still more viable. So...

Second term exams: Sunday, March 23<sup>rd</sup> to Thursday, March 27, 03.

Final exams: Sunday, June 8<sup>th</sup> to Thursday, June 12<sup>th</sup>, 03

Second term break: Thursday, March 27 after classes to Sunday, April 6<sup>th</sup> at 8:00.

Summer vacation: Thursday, June 26<sup>th</sup> after classes to Wednesday, October 1<sup>st</sup> at 8:00

## Training Program Update By Sidna and Daouda

### PST Preparation Dates

This major event is inexorably approaching. Dates are March 30 thru April 1<sup>st</sup> in the MKT resort in Nouadhibou. So we will be seeing the COSing group very shortly to SED may have a PCV trainer who will co-lead the component with a HCN trainer. If not a HCN trainer will be hired and assisted by rotating permanent PCVs.

HCN trainers assisted by rotating permanent PCVs will lead ED and CHWS.

The Advantages to doing so are threefold:

First of all, it will help build capacity and prepare newly recruited HCN co-trainers to take the lead next year.

With new trainers having a modest command of English language, the presence of PCVs will help smooth the session delivery and minimize frustrations on both sides.

Third, the implication of PCVs gives trainees more confidence and diminishes the stressful level of cultural over immersion during PST.

*NB: Because we are not using PCVs full time during training, we may not be confronted with payment issues.*

Soon after contract will have started, new HCN trainers will be given an orientation at the office to familiarize them

with PC philosophy and a few language classes /handouts on basic technical expressions used during training will be provided between May 26 and June 3.

### **2. CENTERS.**

Two main centers will be the focus of training this year:

**Kaédi.** The *Lycée de Kaédi* will host the SED and ED programs. A permanent PST staff (**Daouda**) will be appointed there to coordinate the training activities. A homestay staff, the SED&ED coordinators and a PH&S staff will permanently be there to monitor their programs training.

There will be a vehicle at their disposal to run logistical errands and deal with safety and security issues (Med evacuations)

### **3. ADMIN.**

a)- Lessons learned from last years' experience reveal that going back to the former system will minimize frustrations and improve working relationships between staff. Our idea is to deduce last year's 20% increase from salaries and provide per diem, lodging, food and transportation from training sites to training centers for facilitators since they all live in CBT sites with trainees. For the remaining staff, we can give either per diem or food and lodging.

b)- Regarding food issues, **Sindibad restaurant plus** has requested to offer its catering facilities. (We have their proposition with detailed prices).

c)- Center MOU (We have details on prep steps done so far)

# Volunteer Perspectives

## WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?

BY MAITE URANGA

Before I arrived in Africa I carried with me moral beliefs which were rock solid., one being slavery is wrong regardless of the context. I would guess there are few Americans that would argue against this. A counter-argument would go against the ingrained American assumption that all people are created equal. It is from this assumption that our system of justice, government and culture are based on in their present forms. Everyday in kindergarten we would all stand up with our hands over our hearts and say the Pledge of Allegiance to a flag and a country. And for those that have forgotten, this pledge ends with "justice for all." Our Civil War history created heroes such as Harriet Tubman pitted against the unnamed evil slave owners.

After I found out about my Peace Corps assignment there were very few things I could find about the Islamic Republic of Mauritania. One of the websites that I kept finding in my searches was for a non-government organization whose entire purpose was to free the slaves in Mauritania. Alarms and bells went off in my moral consciousness. I could not believe that such behavior still existed in 2001. During training we had one session about slavery. The speakers talked about how it was not the way American slavery had been and that it did exist but not like we thought. The Peace Corps trainees with all of our American ideals disqualified everything the speakers said as unenlightened.

With this arrogance I moved to my village. People were poor some more than others, but all were generally happy people. Their laughter infected me. I started to eat at different families' houses. I saw everyone in the village get together for weddings and baptisms and eat piles of food. Slavery was something that I did not think about. I assumed after my first four months in my village that it probably happened in the other ethnic groups within Mauritania but not with my people.

This crashed down within two days. I was in my friend's village and there was a problem with the taxi driver. He wanted to leave, but we had not eaten yet. He started to make a scene in some language I did not understand. Everything was solved after we gave him a little more money. As we walked back to my friend's house her host mom said, "Don't worry about it. He used to be our slave. He shouldn't have acted like that." Although again the denial set in as I told myself that even though both of our villages were the same ethnic group my was much more socially advanced.

The next day this assumption also crashed. I sat with my sister as we talked about nothing in particular. I asked about the family that lived across the compound from us. They were one of the poorest families in my village. They lived in a stereotypical African mud house with a stick roof. My sister was a little more diplomatic than the woman the previous day as she said, "They used to work for us, but now they only cook at our weddings and baptisms."

Despite the subtly I understood the true meaning. I lived across the compound from former or depending on definitions

current slaves. I belonged to a family that had slaves.

I never talked about it with anyone. I did not know what to say. I did not know how to feel. It is now a year later and I just read two documents about slavery in Mauritania. One was in a popular American magazine and the second was a fifty page report from an international human rights group. They outlined a culture embedded with slavery. They had lists of human rights violations within the society, government and legal system. One wrote about the daily life of three different "slaves".

A year ago this would have been an easy moral case for me. Simply slavery is wrong in any form, but now there are a lot of statements to qualify this. Many of the hardships both of these texts outlined are not only hardships for "slaves", but for everyone that lives in Mauritania. One talked about a "slave" living in one room with a small light. That is how I live here. I consider it luxury in the context of Africa that I have electricity and do not live in a tent like many of the nomads. Another "slave" had to cook at their family's weddings and baptisms like the family across the compound from me; that is all they do. They may even call it a social obligation. In my moral bedrock slavery is still wrong. But different definitions and cultural situations create many cracks and fissures.

## IN THE BEGINNING

BY AMY HELMICK

How did I get to Mauritania? Good question. When the plane landed and I first stepped off, I took a deep breath. I had reached my destination. The air was hot and muggy, which I anticipated, although it had a certain scent that was very unfamiliar– the smell of poverty. I asked myself if this was really the country I had accepted for my Peace Corps assignment. Was this the place I was going to spend twenty-seven months, with hopes *not* of reforming the entire country but of making a difference is just a few lives? It appeared to be so. There had been no mistake – we had, in fact, landed in Mauritania. This land was to become my first 'office'; these people were to become my first colleagues. Two weeks earlier I had graduated from college, and I was now out in what people like to call "the real world". I don't think it gets much more real than this.

When I arrived in Mauritania, my travels elsewhere provided me with very little in terms of preparation for what I have experienced since my arrival in the Islamic Republic of Mauritania. All throughout my childhood, we traveled as a family – clear down to the southern tip of Florida and up to our Canadian neighbors in the North. After high school, I spent eleven months in Belgium as a Rotary exchange student before beginning my studies at Wittenberg University in Springfield, Ohio. My junior year was spent studying in Lausanne, Switzerland, and I traveled about with friends I met during my year there. I fearlessly flew to California to visit an amazing friend I made in Switzerland, and I had no doubts this is how I wanted to spend my life: traveling, seeing the world, experiencing cultures and participating in other people's lives.

I had long-before decided I wanted to join Peace Corps. I had my moments of doubt, but deep down, I knew this grassroots experience was one that genuinely interested me. It seemed it was the logical 'next step' for me post-college, but then September 11<sup>th</sup> became a date to be remembered in our history. The reality that life – even in America – was unpredictable and could instantly change from one day to the next scared me. Throughout my life, I had met people who challenged me and my views, as an American, although I never anticipated an attack such as the one that shocked us all in September 2001. I know that because of the 9-11 events, many people disapproved of my decision to join Peace Corps. They objected – sometimes silently – out of

*Continued on page 11*

## Book Review from Naruth

For those of us who came to the RIM equipped with only a vague idea of what Islam is all about, there are two books that are highly recommended reading: *Understanding Islam*, by Thomas Lippman, and *The Last Great Revolution*, by Robin Wright. The two authors are American journalists with years of experience in the Middle East. In Lippman's case, it might be puzzling at first why a reporter would be an authority on a major world religion. The answer is that the book is not intended to be an academic study of Islam, but rather as a concise and straightforward summary of what Islam is. Lippman writes in his introduc-

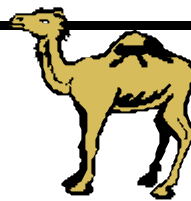
tion: "My purpose is to give a brief account of who the Muslims are, what their faith teaches, and what their world is like, in the hopes that others will be spared the burden of misconceptions and misinformation that weighed upon me when I first arrived in the Middle East." What applies to Lippman's intended readers heading to the Middle East could just as easily be said for PeaceCorps volunteers arriving in Mauritania. For the most part the book does an admirable job of explaining the basics of the religion, its tumultuous history, and the challenges it faces today.

If for nothing else, the section on the meaning of the word *jihad* alone

justifies a close look at this book. "In the words of Khalil Abdel Alim, Washington leader of the American Muslim Mission, 'Jihad does not mean fighting a war; it means to struggle for what is required of one in obedience to God.' Getting out of bed for dawn prayer, he said, is jihad. Amen to that."

By contrast, Robin Wright's book is about how one country has been transformed by a particular interpretation of Islam and how its people are trying to reconcile democratic ideas with the tenets of their religion, especially given an entrenched theocracy that is increasing finding itself at odds with most of the

*Continued on page 11*



PLAY BALL CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

**Game 2:** RIM Invaders vs. Dakar Academy. "Ah we gotta beat these guys, it's a bunch high school girls," said one team member as indeed high-school aged girls took the field against the volunteers. The final score was 9 to 1. The high school girls were victorious. "What happened?" asked Barton who caused the outfield to back way up with his intimidating size. This was team RIM Invaders' second consecutive game and by now the alcohol had begun to affect the volunteers. Barton struck out and Matt Cerny kept losing his mitt. Paul got into a heated debate with an umpire over a contested out at first and threw down the batting line-up. Only Racey Bingham managed to score on an RBI from Anton Jongeneel. The defeated team on the ride back from the French field was demoralized, but not thwarted from celebrating with a drink or two, and a row of shots. Paul summed it up by saying, "this game was so not fair, they weren't even drunk!"

**Game 3:** RIM Invaders vs. The Gambia G-Spots. This game came against another team of volunteers at eight the next morning after a night of partying. Regulations demanded that at least eight players show up from each team or else be forced to forfeit, unless the other team also does not have enough players in which case the winner is the team with the most players. With two groggy and hung-over team members arriving with only a few minutes to spare, the RIM Invaders won their only game at 6 team members present to 5 team members present. Jean-Christophe said he did his part by keeping two of the opposing team members from showing up to the game. Both were female.

**Game 4:** RIM Invaders vs. Dakar Academy. To the shock of the Mauritanian team, the high school

girls lost their game in the morning and were pushed down to the losers bracket to face Mauritania again. "That's so not right," said Racey, "we already lost to this team, we shouldn't have to play them again." This time they

"This game was so not fair...they weren't even drunk!"

Paul Wooldridge

would be facing the Dakar Academy at an even greater disadvantage as the main strength of the Invaders were still asleep.

The score was 7 nothing when Mauritania started to Rally back in a great inning. The bases were loaded

with Tom Flemming on third, Liz Kenton on second, and Anton Jongeneel on First. It was Racey at the bat. She let the first pitch go by without even a twitch. Then she let the second go by while the crowd started jeering. Then that calculating eye of hers fixed on the pitcher, watching. To make a long story short, two more pitches went by and she was walked to first as Flemming went

home. Jason Ko brought Anton home on a grounder while Racey was forced out at third. The score was 7-3 and hope returned. Unfortunately the final score would be 14-3 as the Rim Invaders scored their final run of the tournament, and played in their final game. Defensive MVP went to pitcher Liz Kenton for her many strikeouts. With a cigarette in hand and a beer next to the pitcher's mound, Liz was remarkable.

## Admin Notice

The coverage will start on Wednesday or Thursday at 4:30pm and last until Sunday or Monday at 8am, depending on the weekend. The rotational schedule has been revised as follows. Please destroy previous schedules to avoid any confusion.

P.A. SCOTT SIMPSON – CALL SIGN "KODIAK 1" AND CELL PHONE # 648-0598

Apr. 30 at 4:30 p.m. - May 4 to 8 a.m. \* (Mauritanian Holiday)

R.N. JOCELYNE BABY - CALL SIGN "ANTELOPE", HOME PHONE # 525-1587, CELL PHONE # 631-0216

R.N. JOCELYNE BABY - CALL SIGN "ANTELOPE", HOME PHONE # 525-1587, CELL PHONE # 631-0216

In addition, if any emergency medical service is required, you can proceed directly to the Clinic CHIVA where there is a doctor on duty 24 hours during week and weekends. The Clinic CHIVA is located three (3) streets past the MONOTEL. Traveling in the direction of Pizza Lina, turn right and it is the large building on your left side. Tel: 525-1325 or 525-8080.

If the emergency medical staff member cannot be reached by telephone or radio, please contact the Duty Officer for assistance.

Please utilize these services for TRUE EMERGENCIES only. Thank you.

## INTERNET SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP

Just a quick note to inform you that you (and your colleagues/students/GMC members) are eligible for a free "Global" membership with the Internet Society (ISOC). This non-profit organization focuses on: standards, education, and policy issues. The goal of the Internet Society is to enhance the availability and use of the Internet for the benefit of all people throughout the world. They are engaged in a number of grassroots development initiatives in Africa and there is a chapter established in Mauritania. If you have a chance, check them out on the WWW at [www.isoc.org](http://www.isoc.org).



Dinner under palm grove

From the dir desk continued from page 1

Since I have returned from vacation in mid-January, I was able to get out and see the volunteers in the Adrar and the Assaba.

I had a wonderful time and thank all the volunteers for their

gracious hosting. The dwindled-down team in the Assaba are going to great lengths to keep the programs of the past up and running. There dedication is commendable. The farm that Naruth works made for a very interesting day trip. He is trying

to keep much of the produce a secret, good luck! All the way up in Chinguetti, Beth and Caroline put on a fantastic women's day celebration. I was honored to speak and proud to see how well they both are integrated

into that community. The mayor of Chinguetti is working on a campaign to keep Beth there and told

"I like eating with my hands, it's a more direct connection with the food."

Jessica Larabee

me he plans to call her parents. The mayor also put on quite a delicious spread for us. My favorite part of the dinner conversation with many of the Adrar volunteer was a comment from Jessica Larabee who said something like; 'I like eating with my hands, it's a more direct connection with the food.'

Next stop for me is lovely Nouadibou and the COS conference. I know the volunteers and especially

make this one the best ever. I wish them every success. There it is, now on to the rest of the newsletter. Happy reading and special thanks to Khady who is braving Microsoft publisher to get it to you.

## VOLUNTEER WORD ON THE STREET

### COS Reflections

By Maite Uranga

I just got back from our final conference in Peace Corps. Most of it focused on the transition from life in an African village to life in an American city. And of course we talked about the government logistical nightmare of completion. It was also wonderful to spend time with the eighteen people left in my group away from the stress of Mauritania. The realization also hit as I looked around the room that I made it. I made it through a difficult country to begin with, then there was 9-11 and now it is Iraq. I have seen an incredible outpouring of support for America and I have also experienced hatred. My parents stress levels mirrored mine as they ask every time we have contact the exact date I will get home.

The answer is I still do not know. It still depends on international relations. It depends on if there are anymore accidental bombing of civilians. It depends on if the protests in Cairo continue to grow. It depends on if I actually listen to my parents. It depends on if I let myself see how tired I am from two years here in this time. It breaks my heart.

I came here with the desire to save the world. I know that everyone says that is impossible, but deep down everyone wants to do that. I saw the 9-11 attacks and the embrace of America by countries, kings and people who did not really like us. I talked to people at home about life for an American in an Islamic Republic. We joked among Peace

Corps volunteers about fighting the war on terrorism one girl's soccer game or computer center at a time. And in a sense I believed that and still do.

Now we are the only Peace Corps representatives left in an Islamic republic and again they are giving us the option to leave. And again I do not want to. Tomorrow is the big meeting with details and options explained. Now there is a lot of speculation. Whatever happens tomorrow will be difficult because it will not be on my terms. Throughout my whole service I planned how and when I would leave site and return to the United States. Maybe that will happen. But probably lots of people who have been with me from the beginning will go.

Most likely I will go. A small part safety and a very large part exhaustion with uncertainty and a need to go to the next phase of life. In a month I could be in a coffee shop or in a car on a freeway. It sounds so safe and secure. It sounds so boring and average. Here I feel like I am doing something for the United States and also the Arab world, some days positively and some days negatively. In America I will feel helpless. I will watch the 24 hour coverage of the war from a couch and complain about the state of the world. Here when I walk down the street to buy bread in the morning I am doing some-

**In a month I could be in a coffee shop or in a car on a freeway. It sounds so safe and secure. It sounds so boring and average.**

thing. Home to me represents passivity.

I am sure after a few weeks at home I will have found some way to change that. And as I start law school I will imagine all of the things that I can do with a law degree just as I imagined all the things that could be done with a Notre Dame undergraduate degree. I used to laugh at the people that said going home is harder than leaving home. I did not worry about it at all until I

watched CNN on satellite TV and later a television program try to explain all of Islam in five minutes. Also from the other side I have heard my friends here defame America. The same friends that begged for help to get an American visa and praised everything American only six months ago.

My thoughts since my last column are a little more coherent, but that is all relative. I am still very, very excited to go home. Although the closer it gets the less I complain about Mauritania and the more I worry what life in America will really be like now. It is a different place than when I left. My group finished our close of service conference and drove between the two main cities of Mauritania, which there is no road between. Our three SUVs spread out across the open sand, dunes, beaches and rocks,



### Keur Massene

#### Reflections

By Caroline Handschuh

Spent a good solid week down at camp Keur Macene  
To take a mental break from this world we live in

I replaced thoughts on Iraq with talks on proactivity  
Went for long nature walks and spent a day by the sea

We ate our fill of good food  
The baking committee was key  
We all owe our thanks to Adriane, Megan and Whitney.

What is there to say,  
t was a week of repose  
A safe little haven to relax and just doze.

Some of us slept while others preferred to play  
Perfect spring weather, slightly windy during the day.

I really must say  
the speakers were a plus  
The music presentation amused most of us.

All the speakers were animated and quite personable  
Lots of new topics to bring up at the dinner table.

Time to go back to site now,  
Get back in the groove  
Convince my host family that I really didn't move.

I admit I'm a bit nervous to head back to site  
My Hassaniya is weak,  
no more comfy beds at night

No more meals with utensils or instant hot showers  
No more staring at the river to while away the hours

Of course I'm sure we're all ready to get back to our lives  
Some of us are heading home soon, now two years more wise

I wish all of us luck, those staying and leaving  
And hope camp Keur Macene gave us some pause or at least left our heads ringing.

## Famine Dans La Sous Region

Agence France Presse (AFP)

Le Programme alimentaire mondial des Nations unies (PAM) a lancé mardi un appel à la communauté internationale, pour venir en aide à 580.000 personnes menacées par la faim dans cinq pays de l'ouest du Sahel, en particulier en Mauritanie.

"Pour éviter une catastrophe humanitaire", le PAM a besoin de 28 millions de dollars pour acheter rapidement des vivres destinés à 420.000 personnes "affectées par trois années consécutives de sécheresse dans le sud de la

Mauritanie", ainsi qu'à 160.000 autres au Cap-Vert, en Gambie, au Mali et au Sénégal, précise dans

un communiqué le bureau régional du PAM pour l'Afrique de l'Ouest, basé à Dakar.

"Le pays le plus touché dans la région est la Mauritanie, où les populations rurales les plus pauvres sont confrontées à la pire situation alimentaire qu'elles aient connue depuis des années", déclare dans le texte Manuel Da Silva, directeur régional du PAM.

La Mauritanie, pays largement désertique de 2,7 millions d'habitants, "constitue l'épicentre de la crise alimentaire et des centaines de milliers de personnes vont y souffrir de la faim, à moins que l'aide n'ar-

rive rapidement", ajoute-t-il, en rappelant qu'en plus de la sécheresse, le pays a connu en janvier 2001 des pluies hors saison catastrophiques pour les récoltes et le cheptel.

Selon le PAM, des cas de malnutrition aiguë ont déjà été constatés parmi les enfants et, dans certains villages de la région de l'Aftout (sud), des familles en sont réduites à manger des baies sauvages sans aucune valeur nutritive, qui ne perdent leur toxicité qu'après plusieurs jours de trempage...





## Blast from the PAST

### Interview with Robert Susann.

*Rob sat slouched in a chair pushing up his thin-rimmed glasses as he spoke. Much was censured due to the nature of this publication, especially comments concerning events at the Marine Party.*

#### What was the best Part of WAIST?

"Definitely the Team Spirit on and off the field by Peace Corps Mauritania. We're a team, man."

#### What Possessed you to steal food from the Marines?

"Well, Barton led the pack on that one. That and the alcohol had something to do with it. This Marine just walked into the kitchen and Barton and I just kinda looked at each other with wandering eyes, so I pulled out my card and tried to pay for it... He told us to get the hell out of the kitchen. That the kitchen wasn't part of the party."

#### What was the craziest part of WAIST?

"I'll tell you what it was. Cerny was nice enough to pay for me on the last night and so I figured I had to pull one for the team. So I went around the neighborhood at night and picked out of the trash all the ripped up dirty

clothes people had thrown away and wore it to the Ball. I think I have to get a check-up with Dr. Scott because I wore some really dirty underwear."

#### What were people's reactions?

"They freaked! I had Security jump on me 'cause they thought I was some homeless guy off the street and I had to struggle with them. I was saved only by Karen Lass who recognized me."

#### What were you doing with the Chicken Ladies at the Bonfire?

"It's all about proximity. They were cooking the chicken right next to the beer and so I became their friend to be right next to the beer."

#### Where do you get all your energy?

"I was on Ritalin as a kid and now I'm not."

#### Anything to add?

"Yes. Norm Bates is hard-core. He is absolutely hilarious. He got himself a suit from PimpDaddy.Com and it was so awesome. And you know what I think was so cool. That Peace Corps was partying with the Marine Corps, cause you know they're such the opposite end of the spectrum. It's great!"

## SED's Expense

### Teachers and SED PCV's on a Train

Three teachers and three SED volunteers are traveling by train to vacation in a nearby country. At the station, the three SEDs each buy a ticket and watch as the three teachers buy only a single ticket.

"How are three people going to travel on only one ticket?" asks a SED PCV. "Watch and you'll see," answers the teacher. They all board the train. The SEDs take their respective seats but all three teachers cram into a restroom and close the door behind them.

Shortly after the train has departed, the conductor comes around collecting tickets. He knocks on the restroom door and says, "Ticket, please." The door opens just a crack and a single arm emerges with a ticket in hand. The conductor takes it and moves on.

The SEDs saw this and agreed it was quite a clever idea. So after their vacation, the SED PCVs decide to copy the teachers on the return trip and save some money (being clever with money, and all). When they get to the station they buy a single ticket for the return trip.

"You'll see," answers a teacher. When they board the train the three SED PCVs cram into a restroom and the three teachers cram into another one nearby. The train departs.

To their astonishment, the teachers don't buy a ticket at all. "How are you going to travel without a ticket?" says one perplexed SED PCV. "Watch and see."

Shortly afterward, one of the teachers leaves his restroom and walks over to the restroom where the SED PCVs are hiding. He knocks on the door and says, "Ticket, please."

## Caption Contest

What is Aw doing in this picture?

Send responses to [rimnews2003@yahoo.com](mailto:rimnews2003@yahoo.com)

The best response (as decided by us) will be published in the next issue.





## Lessons from the Baking Committee

*The baking committee is glad to share some of the knowledge it gained while cooking in Keur Macen.*

**When in doubt, leave it out.** Substitutions are not always worth it. This goes for using Brie instead of cream cheese in cheesecake, using white sugar instead of brown in cookies, and Gorgol men instead of Trarza men by a cute female English teacher.

**No bake is the best,** not only were the no bake creations some of the most popular of the week, but also no bake seems to bring out people's inhibitions. I imagine our surprise when the "no bake pause" was followed by a rousing game of psychiatrist that revealed many PCV secrets. We were shocked to learn of the debauchery that occurred at the COS conference between two and sometimes even three volunteers. And may we add, Justin was quite disturbed by Vivian's, "Walahi" to the question, "Do you like girls?"

**Cinnamon spice and everything nice that's what little girls are made of...**except when they have had too much to drink and are cursing like a sailor after emptying the contents of their stomach at 9:00 pm. If you don't get that one, just ask the new copy editor.

**Stamina is essential when taking on big projects.** The baking committee often started with great enthusiasm only to run out of steam. Similarly, a Gorgol volunteer's drinking commenced with such enthusiasm that by 9:00 pm, all she could do was mutter, "Good times great oldies, WSKI!!!" from her bed.

**Sometimes you have make a mess while having a lot of fun.** This lesson was demonstrated every day in the kitchen and every night in Room 17.

**Too many baked goods can ruin a figure** and everyone wants to be in "good form", especially if they loose a Euchre game. Two Trarza men were hoping to show "good form" when they were fulfilling their Euchre obligations. And did they?! You have to ask them.



## AND THE WINNERS ARE...

### 2003 COS UNDER GROUND AWARDS

-  **Most likely to be Country Director – in Mauritania**  
Beth B.
-  **Least likely to be Country Director**  
Kathy Fallon
-  **Most likely to bring their children to Mauritania**  
JC
-  **Most likely to return to Mauritania to see their children**  
Barton
-  **Most likely to return to his old job as "receptionist" at a massage parlor**  
Ron
-  **Most likely to be getting a massage**  
Paul
-  **Most likely to bitchslap her counterpart**  
Oralia
-  **Most likely to bring a little bit of Mauritania to Atlanta**  
Rhonda
-  **Most likely to have the patch**  
John O.
-  **Most likely to want the patch**  
Anton
-  **Most likely to marry Kathy Fallon**  
Nick
-  **Least likely to marry Kathy Fallon**  
Jenise
-  **Most likely to marry Jenise**  
Paul
-  **Most likely to have been the secret hookup**  
Kat Wiley and Matt G.
-  **Least likely to have been the secret hookup**  
Vivian and Justin
-  **Most likely to have hooked up without knowing it**  
Paul
-  **Most likely to live in Chicago**  
Laura
-  **Least likely to be a psychiatrist**  
Matt C.
-  **Most likely to be seeing psychiatrists**



My...What nice shoulders you have...

*Senegal Trip**Continued from Page 4*

cording to season with more given in the summer and less in the colder months. In addition, she made it clear that Moringa does not tolerate salty water in the least.

Her experience has shown that the leaf harvest should be done before the plants grow taller than one meter. If not, the thick trunks make harvesting by hand with a rice hook too difficult. 1/8<sup>th</sup> of the hectare is harvested each week; thus a "rolling harvest" of the entire hectare takes two months. The hectare produces 20 tons of powder a year on this schedule.

To assure that the powder produced is clean they have set up a washing system with two half drums (cut the long way) filled with robinet water in which bunches of leaves are dunked twice. The branches are then laid on a screen table and the leaves stripped off. 1kg of powder is produced from 8kg of leaves. The drying room is kept immaculate, and no shoes are allowed inside. The leaves are ground in a traditional millet grinder with the addition of a mesh ring around the blade that makes a finer powder. Powder bags are heat sealed in clear plastic bags.

We learned that she encountered a number of problems since 2001. First, one of the most devastating pests for Moringas are aphids, and therefore tomatoes and Moringas should be kept at a good distance from each other. During this attack she treated the trees and has not had problems since.

She has also had major problems with fungus attacking the roots of the trees. Normally, this causes the leaves to yellow over a period of a few days to a week. If the attack is wide spread it will eventually kill the tree, or make its leaves yellow-white and inedible. Fungus can be prevented by solarization of the soil for one week before planting, i.e. watering the cleared ground and then covering it with a plastic sheet to kill microorganisms. Yellowing of the leaves can also be caused by drastic changes in temperature or by lack of Nitrogen. Symptoms of this are a rapid yellowing, over a night or two of the lowest branches; this does not kill the trees. She also suggested fertilizing the trees with 10-10-20 or well-decomposed manure.

So, you ask, how can we Peace Corps Volunteers use this information? First of all, simple technical information will be beneficial to volunteers in their smaller scale projects. The fact that trees can be cut continuously for over a year, and will still produce, is encouraging, especially in a place where the hardest step is getting healthy trees to survive. The need to avoid salty water is also essential for volunteers to know since many areas of RIM have salty water sources. In terms of fertilization and pest management, Caroline encouraged us to use the manure and natural pesticides (neem, hot pepper) saying that this would be possible for small plantations.

Keur Momar Sarr would be an excellent place for volunteers and their counterparts to visit in the future. As the project grows and more research is done, this will be the key source of Moringa technical information.

*In the Beginning**Continued from page 5*

fear, uncertainty, love, and hope. Likewise, I joined out of fear, uncertainty, love, and hope: fear for the tensions I might experience while abroad and fear for the possibility of war; uncertainty of the changes that might occur while I am gone – in myself, in my family, in my homeland – and uncertainty of what hardships I would encounter in Mauritania; love for cultures, understanding, exchanges, and travel, all parts of who I grown to be; and hope for making even a marginal difference in the lives of the people I came into contact with, be it an American or a Mauritania and hope to give insight about the misconceptions we have about Africans and Muslims.

I did not join Peace Corps in reaction to September 11<sup>th</sup>. I did not join to be a 'hero' of sorts. I did not join to make my family or friends worry or to cause them anguish. I joined because inside I felt this was what I needed to do and wanted to do. I realize that even today, I might not have the support of everyone I wish to have the support from, and I realize that even after it is all said and done, some people still might not understand why I came here. Honestly, I am not certain that after two years I will know why I came here either. Words might not be sufficient enough to explain my decision, but I hope they are enough to relay a bit of my life here as a Peace Corps volunteer in West Africa. I hope that through these articles, I can share with you a piece of Mauritania and increase your interest of the land of nomads, rolling dunes, and enchanting cups of mint tea.

## **Safety and Security**

### **Travel to Kenya:**

from: McCoy, Henry  
Regional Director for Africa

Date : February 28, 2003

#### **Africa Country Directors**

Please be advised that vacations to Kenya by PCV's during March be restricted. This is being done at the request of Country Director Winne Emoungou.

I appreciate your compliance with this request.

### **TDY Restriction:**

At our Country Team meeting this morning, the Ambassador and the DCM announced a restriction on all TDYs for at least two weeks. Only "Mission Critical" TDYs will be excepted from this restriction, which the DCM will review on a case-by-case basis.

I will keep you advised of any changes to this restriction. In the meantime, please do not allow any of your PCVs to travel to Tanzania on vacation or otherwise. If you view such a trip as critical, please let me know and we can make a determination (in consultation with the DCM) on whether to approve the trip.

Regards,

Ron Campbell  
Country Director—Peace Corps Tanzania

*Book Review**Continued from page 5*

Population. Although that story of often times combative struggle between the conservatives and the liberals for the future and soul of Iran is in itself fascinating, the lesson for us PCVs is that Islam is an interpretive religion, much like Christianity, with different factions and variations in beliefs even within the same sect, and that it is adaptable and flexible.

That diversity of ideas -- or discrepancy, depending on how you look at it -- can even be in the same person, so you can have the late Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini saying, "There is no fun in Islam," while at the same time counselling his daughter, "...just because [your] brother was a boy doesn't mean he was better or smarter or stronger." Revolutionary stuff, indeed.

Finally, as a point of interest, Ambassador Limbert is listed in the acknowledgements and his book, *Iran: At War with History*, is in the list of select bibliography. Now you can go and schmooze with the best of them at the next embassy party.

## **Attention AGFO Vols**

By PCV Naruth Phadungchai, Agfo, Kiffa

World Vision is operating an agriculture resource center (ARC) in Kiffa. Its purpose is to try out a variety of gardening and agricultural techniques before promoting them to the local population.

Currently we have set up several *Moringa oleifera* plantations in a bed system to test out intensive cultivation methods. We've also some stenapotela that are seeding.

We've also set up a biogas system introduced at the IST in Kaedi in April 2002 and again in January 2003. It has been producing a study volume of methane for the past several months.

In addition, we have been using manure tea made from primarily donkey manure on parts of our vegetable garden. A controlled study on its effects is planned for the near future.

If you, your counterparts, or anyone else whom you know are interested in coming out to Kiffa to check out the ARC, please contact Aw and then me. We can probably set up an informal visit for a small group.

### **State Dept. Travel Warning for Zimbabwe:**

Just wanted to inform you of a travel warning that came out from State yesterday for Zimbabwe. As many PCVs in the region travel to Zimbabwe, please share this info. with your Volunteers.

The link is: [http://travel.state.gov/zimbabwe\\_warning.html](http://travel.state.gov/zimbabwe_warning.html)

Regards,

Allison A. Lange  
Safety and Security Desk Officer  
Peace Corps Africa Region  
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# More from the Desk of Mr. Shaw

**PSR:** The following are some excerpts from the review of the Project Status Report (PSR) we received from the Africa Region and the Center at Peace Corps Washington:

## Comments, Suggestions and Resources:

- To strengthen the impact of PCV and Counterpart interventions in providing effective training and technical assistance to businesses and organizations, we look forward to learning more about how PC/RIM tracks the profitability and sustainability of businesses with which it works. This type of information will likely come through the data collection included in the Monitoring and Evaluation plan, but should remain a focus throughout project activities.
- PC/RIM's SED project is commended for leveraging in-country resources and collaborating effectively with organizations such as GTZ, EDDI Girls' Mentoring Centers, and MFI associations. Furthermore, the use of AOL Peace Packs to complement ICT efforts and the government's national strategy maximizes their effectiveness. These approaches not only deepen the impact of PCV and Counterpart activities, but also contribute to their sustainability.
- SED PCVs involved in training MFI staff to improve accounting practices, management and reporting provides an excellent example of skills transfer and capacity building for these organizations. Great job of adhering to the basic principles of SED sustainability!
- Post may want to consider conducting a study on business training at vocational schools by surveying graduates of these schools. This type of information is essential to ensuring the relevance of the training, while contributing to the continual improvement of the curriculum.
- Pending budget approval, the AF SED Specialist supports the suggestion to hire a full-time PTA who will serve as the lead technical trainer at PST. As mentioned, it contributes to the integration of programming and training, as well as long-term consistency in the project.
- This project is an excellent example of the use of ICTs to empower women's groups and organizations as well as to promote and support girls' education.
- Programming around the use of ICT to reach development goals is definitely a strength for this post, and particularly for the SED project. The strategic use of AA143s certainly makes sense for this project; hopefully the supply of these scarce skills Volunteers will be able to meet post's demand.
- Your PCVs are to be commended for their efforts to increase organizational efficiency through computerized "productivity tools" such as word processing, spread sheets, and database design. To add to your Volunteers' ICT skills transfer "tool kit" you may wish to direct them to the following online resource which focuses on e-commerce: *Chances and Risks for SMEs: E-business in Developing Countries* (<http://www.gtz.de/e-business/englisch/index.asp>). *ICT for Economic Opportunity* (<http://www.opt-init.org/framework/pages/2.2.3.html>) also provides examples for how computers and the Internet can be used to broaden economic development.
- Thank you for the report on your Center-Funded Information Technology IST. It appears that there were many positive outcomes from this event. The decision to continue offering ICT technical sessions in ISTs also makes sense. Post may also wish to consider adding ICT technical sessions to PST, as Volunteer assignments increasingly focus on ICT integration.
- Many thanks for the wonderful Volunteer Vignette! Please congratulate PCV Vivian Castro on her work to build capacity using computers and the Internet. Applause is also warranted for the strong work PCVs and their communities are carrying out through the many Peace Pack projects in Mauritania, which are certainly helping to bridge the "digital divide".
- This is one of the best small enterprise development project frameworks we have read to date. Post is commended. The objectives are clearly written using the suggested model from P & T Booklet 2. Consequently, the project is now beginning to report specific outcomes as a result of the project effort.

## Resources

- To stay current on the latest developments in microfinance/microcredit, as well as best practices, please refer to the Consultative Group to Assist the Poorest or CGAP's website called the Microfinance Gateway (<http://www.microfinancegateway.org/>), a clearinghouse for most microfinance activities from all the major multi- and bi-lateral donors.
- For more information on e-commerce for arts and crafts, please refer to a section of the Development Gateway, <http://www.developmentgateway.com/node/161523/>, on this particular topic. The Crafts Center (<http://www.craftscenter.org/>) is another great resource for information on this topic.