



**Peace Corps**  
THE GAMBIA

ANNUAL REVIEW *for* 2016



## CONTENTS

Director's Letter	2
Peace Corps The Gambia	3
Sector Reviews	5-10
From Global to Local	11
Gender, Developing	13
Cultural Context	15
2016 in Pictures	17

To the Government of The Gambia and to all of our Valued Partners,

I am pleased to present Peace Corps The Gambia's 2016 Annual Review which highlights the contributions of Peace Corps Volunteers and their Gambian counterparts in the areas of education, health, and agriculture. The report reflects the collective accomplishments of the many institutions, families, communities, and individuals who have contributed to our combined success.

In 1961, the Peace Corps was created by John F. Kennedy with the mission to promote world peace and friendship, by sending American volunteers to live and work side by side with local communities and to bring what they have learned back to the United States to enrich the lives of those around them. Since then, Peace Corps Volunteers have served in 140 countries, demonstrating ingenuity, creativity, and motivation to address critical challenges alongside community members.

Through shared dialogue and skills transfer, Peace Corps Volunteers across The Gambia are contributing to sustainable development priorities in partnership with the communities they serve.

### **The transformative impact of the Peace Corps can be seen in many ways.**

Among other activities, our Volunteers and their community counterparts create community gardens, start school libraries, and promote malaria awareness and prevention. They may develop peer health programs, teach students about planting trees, or train school staff to improve classroom management. They share traditions and life events, learning together to bridge differences in language and culture to promote cross-cultural understanding.

We are honored to work in The Gambia at the invitation of the Government, in support of their development goals. Peace Corps The Gambia is strengthened by the ongoing support of the United States Embassy, and in particular, the leadership of the U.S. Ambassador to The Gambia, C. Patricia Alsup.

We extend our warmest appreciation for all of the support, encouragement, and partnership, and look forward to continued collaboration.

-Jennifer Goette,  
Country Director,  
Peace Corps The  
Gambia



As one of the largest international service organizations based in the United States, Peace Corps serves in local communities around the globe, helping to create lasting differences that improve lives and promote peace and friendship. Committing to two years of service, Volunteers work to become citizens of the world by serving their country through the transfer of skills and cross-cultural exchange. Along with sharing their own American culture with people in their host country, Peace Corps Volunteers adapt to the local culture and integrate into their respective host communities. And after their time abroad, Volunteers work to share their diverse and rich perspectives of other cultures with their family and friends in America.

## Since 1967, Peace Corps The Gambia Volunteers have worked alongside Gambian men and women to make a lasting impact in The Gambia

Be it on the forefront of the country's malaria epidemic, in the stabilization of pressing environmental trends, or addressing the education of The Gambia's future leaders, Volunteers work in Gambian villages, fields, towns, hospitals, and schools, striving to positively impact the lives of others.

PEACE CORPS  
BEGAN WORKING  
IN THE GAMBIA  
IN 1967

OVER 1,800  
PEACE CORPS  
VOLUNTEERS  
HAVE SERVED  
IN THE GAMBIA

VOLUNTEERS  
SPEAK 5  
DIFFERENT  
LOCAL  
LANGUAGES



132  
VOLUNTEERS  
SERVED IN  
THE GAMBIA  
IN 2016

PEACE CORPS  
THE GAMBIA  
WORKS IN 3  
DIFFERENT  
SECTORS

OUR  
VOLUNTEERS  
COME FROM 39  
DIFFERENT  
U.S. STATES

# AGRICULTURE

## SECTOR REVIEW

I am a first generation Volunteer; I am the first Peace Corps Volunteer to live and work in my village. This fact comes with its difficulties—every day I am a cultural pioneer, looking for new ways to work with people who come from a very different background than myself. But every challenge comes with its own group of rewards.

What is interesting about my service as an agriculture Volunteer, as with that of many Peace Corps Volunteers, is that while my own participation in projects is important—going to the women's garden and cultivating my own garden bed, developing my own

compost pile, planting new and different trees around my house—my work in motivating others to do the same is even more important. One of my projects has been to work with the women of my village to found and expand a women's garden. And yes, I go to the garden every day, and in that I am an example to my community. But a lot of the work for the garden happens not while my hands are in the dirt, but in conversations around the village, and in working hand-in-hand with community counterparts to sensitize others about the benefits of having a well-functioning, sustainable garden.

And people have responded. The women's garden is set to double in size in the coming year. Members of my village are composting for the first time. We're planting trees many of the people in my village have never seen before. I'm teaching people how to build clean-burning brick stoves. Though my village is small, and very new to working with external development agencies, any successes we have accomplished together have been due to the trust I've fostered in the community as a first-generation Volunteer.

-Cody Heche 15'-17'

IN 2016,  
VOLUNTEERS  
ASSISTED IN  
PLANTING  
15,217  
TREES

VOLUNTEERS  
HELPED IN  
ESTABLISHING AND  
MAINTAINING 32  
TREE NURSERIES

VOLUNTEERS  
ARE WORKING  
WITH 4  
DIFFERENT  
MASTER FARMS  
AS PART OF  
THE WEST  
AFRICAN FOOD  
SECURITY  
PARTNERSHIP

VOLUNTEERS  
HELPED  
ESTABLISH 200  
NEW GARDENS

IN 2016,  
131 MORE  
COMMUNITY  
PARTNERS USED  
IMPROVED  
AGRICULTURE  
PRACTICES ON  
THEIR FARMS

OF THOSE WORKING  
WITH VOLUNTEERS,  
82% CULTIVATED  
ONE OR MORE NEW  
CROPS



# HEALTH

## SECTOR REVIEW

For a little over a year, I have worked as a Community Health Volunteer with my village health center, one of five small health centers in the Lower River Region of The Gambia. I work with the staff of the center to promote community health and wellness, specifically nutrition, maternal health, and youth health education.

One of my favorite parts of my service is my involvement with Reproductive and Child Health (RCH) treks. Each month I go on an RCH trek to 20 villages in the surrounding area. My role on these treks has been to work with the public health officers at the various health centers to

ensure that statistics are accurately and properly kept. With the help of another Peace Corps Volunteer, I created a basic statistics course and presented it to the staff of three nurses, a public health officer, and two community nurse attendants over several sessions. We now use this basic statistical knowledge to analyze our RCH data and other information together every month, instead of the public health officer doing all of the analysis himself.

In addition to my work with the clinic, I also help organize the Peer Health Club. Working closely with a nurse, a public health officer, and a

science teacher, I helped to put together an enhanced curriculum for 40 senior-secondary school students. As part of this curriculum we organized Red Cross instructors to give a two-day seminar, covering topics from malaria to malnutrition to sexual education. In the future, we are planning to have the Nova Scotia Gambia Association come and train the students to start a health drama group. After the training, the Health Center will bring several youth with us on trek to present health related dramas to the mothers that attend RCH clinics.

-Aaron Pomerantz 15'-17'

IN 2016,  
VOLUNTEERS  
HELPED TEACH  
610 WOMEN  
ABOUT  
ESSENTIAL  
MATERNAL CARE

VOLUNTEERS  
HELPED  
ENCOURAGE 280  
NEW MOTHERS  
TO EXCLUSIVELY  
BREASTFEED  
FOR THE FIRST

99% OF  
FAMILIES  
HOSTING A  
VOLUNTEER  
USE HAND  
WASHING  
STATIONS

1,091 PEOPLE  
WERE TRAINED  
ON HOW  
TO PURIFY  
AND STORE  
DRINKING  
AND COOKING  
WATER

91% OF PEOPLE  
VOLUNTEERS  
TAUGHT TO BUILT  
TIPPY TAPS OR  
WATER SANITON  
STATIONS DID SO  
ON THEIR OWN

VOLUNTEERS  
TRAINED 902  
COMMUNITY  
MEMBERS TO  
PROMOTE  
MALARIA  
PREVENTION  
AND CARE



**IN 2016, VOLUNTEERS  
WORKED WITH 319  
TEACHERS WHO IMPROVED  
THEIR LITERACY TEACHING  
TECHNIQUES**

**NOW 1,624  
MORE  
STUDENTS  
ARE IN  
CLASSES  
TAUGHT  
WITH THESE  
TECHNIQUES**

# EDUCATION

## SECTOR REVIEW

One day as I was walking along Kairaba Avenue, I heard a cry from across the traffic-filled street, "Sally! Hey, Sally!" I immediately turned to see who would know my Gambian name in Serrekunda. Though I did not recognize her, a woman in her mid-20's was waving frantically and looking both ways to cross over to my side of the street.

As she came closer, I recognized the familiar teacher trainee uniform—white shirt, black pants—and I realized she was one of the more than 600 teachers I had taught at The Gambia College. Over several school holidays, I had the chance to teach mathematics at The Gambia College to aspiring teachers,

which touched approximately 600 students.

Expanding my focus to The Gambia College has truly allowed me to extend my reach far beyond the small school where I was assigned in rural Gambia. As an Education Volunteer, I work in a rural school as a Primary Teacher Trainer. In this role, I have worked closely with teachers to promote student-centered methodology, improve literacy instruction, and promote behavior management.

Teachers in The Gambia are in such high demand that the teacher certification process is a combination of instruction and practical experience. During school

holidays, all teacher trainees come to the city to learn instructional practices for all core subjects. When school resumes, they disperse throughout the country to their respective postings. The program lasts three years, after which time they receive their teaching certification.

Having the opportunity to working in these various roles, in the classroom alongside teachers, and then in turn acting as their lecturer for their courses, has allowed me to gain a unique perspective on every aspect of what it's like to be a teacher in The Gambia.

-Kimia Pakdaman 14'-16'

**215  
TEACHERS  
INCREASED  
THEIR  
USE OF  
CLASSROOM  
LEARNING  
RESOURCES**

**216 TEACHERS  
NOW USE  
IMPROVED  
GENDER  
EQUITABLE  
CLASSROOM  
PRACTICES**

**86% OF TEACHER  
COUNTERPARTS  
NOW USE IMPROVED  
GENERAL TEACHING  
TECHNIQUES**

**7,903  
STUDENTS  
GAINED  
ACCESS TO  
READING  
MATERIALS  
OR  
ELECTRONIC  
RESOURCES**



# FROM GLOBAL TO LOCAL

## VOLUNTEERS BRING GLOBAL INITIATIVES TO THE GAMBIA

Peace Corps The Gambia Volunteers participate in global initiatives that make them more effective at working with their community counterparts to transfer skills and build capacity. Volunteers from Peace Corps programs around the world have opportunities to gather to discuss ways to address development issues, which range from new malaria prevention methods to discussions about the role of gender in different societies. After they return from these international workshops and training opportunities, Peace Corps The Gambia Volunteers bring The Gambia into these global conversations through their lives and work with community members.

## LET GIRLS LEARN SUMMIT ACCRA, GHANA

In February, Peace Corps The Gambia sent two Volunteers and one staff member to The Let Girls Learn Summit in Accra, Ghana. Gathering with Volunteers and staff from all over Africa, they discussed different ways of better implementing national gender initiatives at a grassroots, community level. These Volunteers returned to The Gambia and have been integral in gender-based projects with other Volunteers and in their local communities.



## STOMP OUT MALARIA BOOT CAMP THIÈS, SENEGAL

On multiple occasions throughout 2016, various Peace Corps The Gambia Volunteers traveled to Thiès, Senegal, to be a part of the STOMP Out Malaria Bootcamp. Volunteers came from different countries around Africa where malaria is endemic to discuss innovative new ways to help combat the disease. After coming back to The Gambia, these Volunteers help share their training with other Volunteers and local community members looking to help stop the spread of malaria.



## LITERACY LAB MASAKA, UGANDA

Peace Corps The Gambia recently sent representatives to Masaka, Uganda for an Africa-wide literacy initiative. At the Literacy Lab, Volunteers gathered to develop ideas on how to address literacy needs of different countries and cultures from around the continent. Since returning, Peace Corps The Gambia's Volunteers and staff have introduced these ideas into trainings and in their own schools.





# GENDER, DEVELOPING

## OPENING THE DISCUSSION ON GENDER ROLES IN THE GAMBIA

Peace Corps The Gambia promotes conscious engagement and dialogue around the role gender plays in political, economic, and ethical values. Focusing on gender equality and empowerment, Volunteers engage in activities that emphasize the importance of girls' education and increasing gender equality in access to quality learning.

In 2016, Peace Corps The Gambia celebrated its second year of the Explore Your Country program, an initiative that brings young women from up-country villages to the capital area of Banjul for a week of discussions on professionalism, higher education opportunities, and leadership.

Explore Your Country provides an opportunity for Gambian girls who live in villages and towns with limited schooling and career opportunities to learn about life outside of their village. The Explore Your Country program aims to provide participants a broader view of future options and encourage them to think about setting personal and professional goals.

In 2016, Education, Health, and Agriculture/Environment Peace Corps Volunteers nominated 24 participants from 18 different communities to attend the week-long program. Peace Corps Volunteers led sessions about professionalism, goal writing, resume and cover letter writing, employer expectations, interview skills, barriers to girls' education, menstrual hygiene management, and reusable menstrual pad making.

The goal of Explore Your Country is also to introduce self-reflection and relaxation. For many of the participants, life at home consists of chores and child care, in addition to studying for school. In conjunction with each day's events, evening activities facilitated open conversation about challenges and barriers they have faced in their families, schools, and villages. They found commonalities through these discussions, building friendships and empowering each other to overcome adversity.

A variety of aspects pushed the girls to experience new things during the week: the busy schedule necessitated good time management; the introduction of new food required them to expand their comfort zone; for many of the participants, it was the first

time they had been asked to reflect on their own feelings and goals.

Explore Your Country also exposed girls to places in The Gambia they had never seen: such as The Gambia College, the Atlantic Ocean, and urban restaurants. By visiting a wide range of locations, participants were able to envision themselves in professional roles, ask important questions, and find attainable options for their individual desires.

**At the end of the program, girls who were previously timid were beaming with confidence and excitement about the future.**

In the words of one participant, "I learned to overcome challenges and to develop myself with motivation and determination to work toward my goals."

-Kelsey McCall 14'-16'

# CULTURAL CONTEXT

## A REFLECTION ON GAMBIAN CULTURE

The 3rd Goal of Peace Corps is to share the culture of host nations with others back in America. One way Volunteers do this is by sharing essays on the internet through blogs posts like this one with contemplative insight into a ubiquitous part of Gambian life: sharing tea

On the side of a dusty Gambian road, Peace Corps Volunteer Tré Giles sits outside of a bitik on a hand-carved wooden stool.

Legs crossed, he sweats through his clothes under the heat of an African sun and performs with deontic precision a form of libation. Though cars drive past – honking and sputtering and revving their engines – he remains committed to his task. In one hand, he holds a small glass; in the other, a tray and a matching cup, alternately pouring out a viscous, amber-colored liquid from one glass to the other. His pouring hand rises until the distance the

liquid must travel without spilling becomes implausibly great, and yet, with each pour he hits the bottom of each glass with robotic accuracy, conjuring, slowly and steadily, a blanket of white foam.

When asked what he is doing, Tré says, “Brewing attaya.” When asked why, he says, “People see that I can make it and it shows them I’m not a Toubab.”

Like many Volunteers, Tré has adopted a Gambian name, wears Gambian clothes and eats Gambian food while working in a rural African community for his two-year assignment.

As if called by an unheard dictate, a Gambian man appears at the precise moment when, satisfied with the volume of foam, Tré pours the liquid into a small, ceramic tea kettle at his feet. He picks up the kettle and redistributes the amber liquid into both glasses until they are half full before standing and offering the tray and its glasses to the man who takes one glass, says, Bissimilah, in prayer, and drinks it.

On nearly every Gambian street corner, outside nearly every Gambian compound, underneath mango trees, beside taxi stands, between school class periods and

during lunches, teenagers, mothers, brothers, taxi drivers, teachers, working men and women and even Peace Corps Volunteers are brewing and consuming the ultra-potent, saccharine form of green tea called attaya.

The differentiation between attaya and normal green tea is how it is made. A normal green tea takes five minutes; the attaya process can take hours. While some believe attaya to be as caffeinated as coffee, if one were to compare the caffeine content of regular green tea to that of attaya, the difference would be negligible (a simple black tea would be an even better – and faster – choice); and, if caffeine consumption were the desired goal, coffee would still remain far above attaya, green tea or black tea for sheer caffeine efficacy.

But while some people in The Gambia do use attaya as their caffeine fix, that’s not the point.

“It’s a social beacon for people who are free,” said Alpha Jallow, Peace Corps The Gambia’s safety and security manager, as he explained the milieu of pan-African attaya. “A beacon for bringing people around.”

And certainly there is an almost mystical magnetism around attaya. If someone starts brewing, it only takes a few moments before someone else has been seemingly summoned to the compound, street corner or taxi stand to share in the drinking process. The attaya kettle has the ability to pull people in and hold them in place.

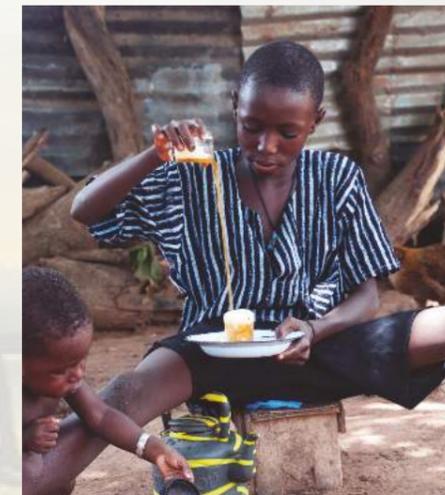
Haruna Jallow, Peace Corps The Gambia’s education program assistant, explained the idea behind the brewing process via homonym. For him the borrowed word

attaya sounds like the two Fula words, waa and taya, meaning “don’t go.” And this is the locus of what attaya is: a shared moment in time.

Ephemeral, subdued. A caesura from the tempo of daily life.

And, Haruna says, whoever is brewing attaya has the ability to slow down the process to hold his companions in place for a few more moments, to tell his friends to spend a little more time there, to tell them “waa taya.” “Don’t go.”

The relative silence and calm



of attaya runs counter to what most Peace Corps Volunteers want to do. They want to show their families and friends back home something large and imposing: a new school, or a barren wasteland turned into Edenic fertility. Spending a moment of time with a host country national and connecting with him or her on a personal, cultural and spiritual level is hard to show and even harder to explain.

For Volunteers, physicality dominates. Building a library for a school is demonstrable; it is something that exists and is tangible. Even if the shelves sag under the weight of their books, the library exists, and that is rationale enough for the work put into it. Having that physical something,

Volunteers can fall back on the object as justification for time well-spent and hide behind it.

The converse to physical structures or projects is harder to explain and even harder to hide behind. Being a-physical it has no palpable object one can point to as validation for the time, money and sweat that went into it, which often causes explanations of what the Volunteer has done to be prefaced or postscripted with self-effacing comments about “not having done all that much.”

Although it’s tempting to latch onto and desire something physical, the moment many Volunteers really feel connected comes from a moment of cessation, not physical action.

For Tré and many Volunteers like him, it wasn’t until he was invited to sit and drink attaya with a group of people and then encouraged to brew his own that he really felt like he had been accepted into his community.

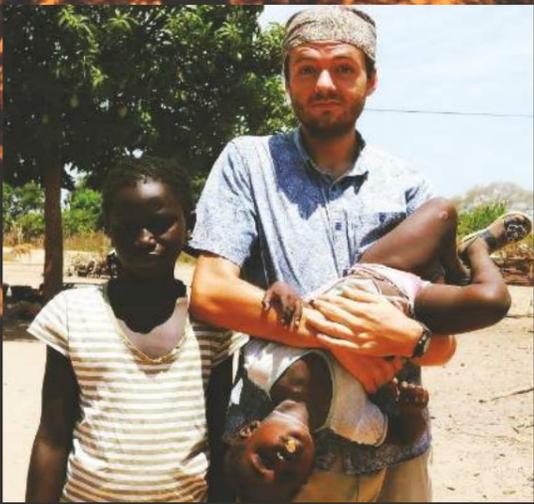
“The key to good attaya is the conversation,” Tré says. “As soon as they see me making it, it shows I’m trying to be a part of their culture.” It is tempting, when faced with impressive photos of new buildings, lush gardens or freshly painted informative murals, to ask, “What am I doing wasting time brewing attaya when I could be out doing something grandiose?” But buildings, gardens and murals are simply coordinates in physical space where people can meet, converse and enjoy a moment in time with others while sharing attaya.

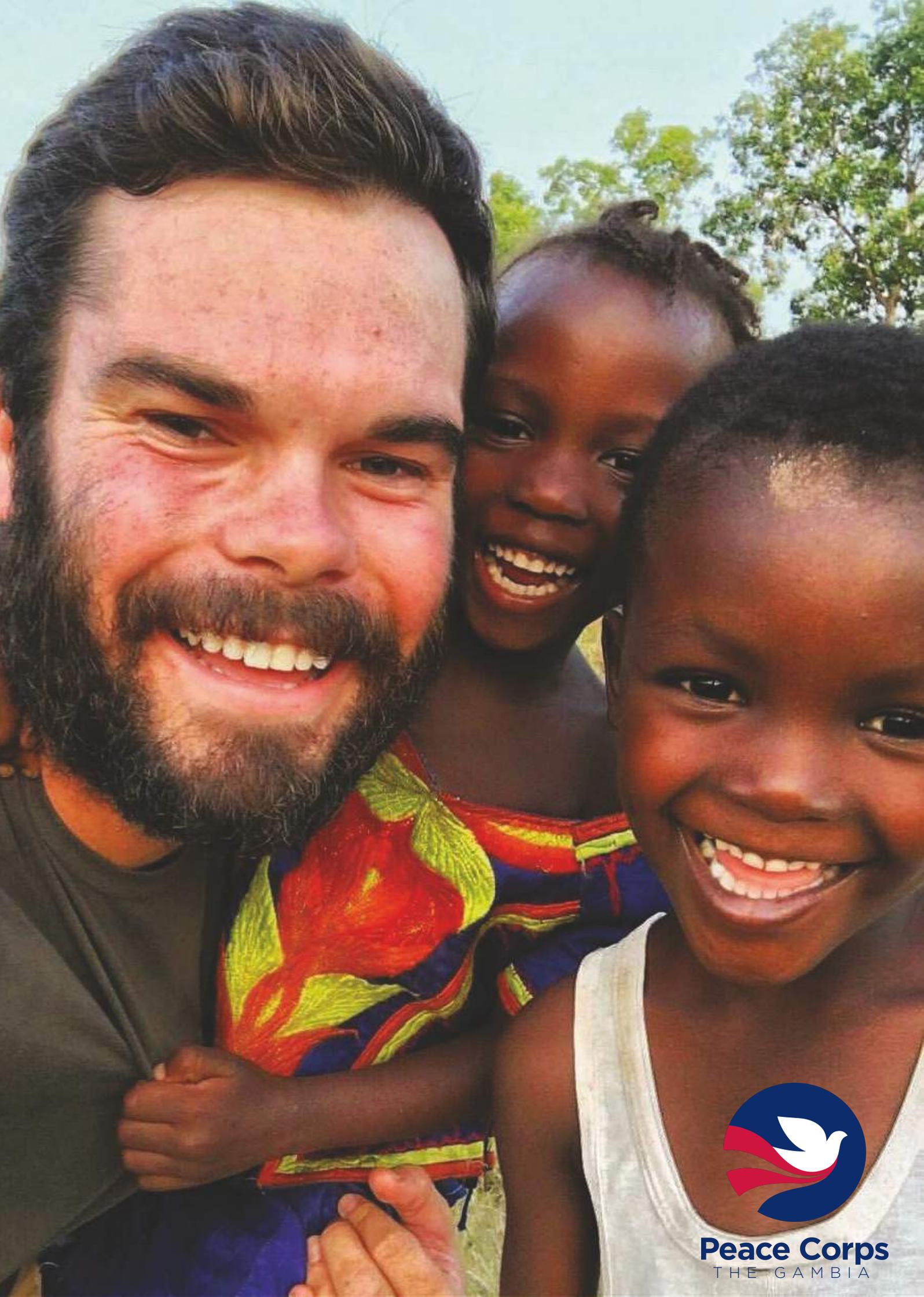
Let’s sit then, you and I, and spend a moment of time together brewing attaya.

- Steven Pihoda 15’-17’

# 2016 IN PICTURES

A LOOK BACK AT THE YEAR THROUGH  
THE CAMERAS OF OUR VOLUNTEERS





**Peace Corps**  
THE GAMBIA