



# Peace corps solar tender in ghana

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She was joined by the Deputy Minister of Communications, Charles Acheampong, and traditional leaders to swear-in the volunteers, after the new cohorts were taken through eleven weeks of language training.

"Among you are experienced agri-culturists and health professionals who embody diversity of thought and practice that the world needs. We expect you to contribute to your community's needs through the farmland and each clinic," Virginia added.

Mrs Palmer further said the United States and Ghana have cultivated and maintained a strong partnership, and that the Peace Corp Volunteers was "a significant marker of our deep and resilient partnership, as Presidents John F. Kennedy and Dr Kwame Nkrumah welcomed the world's very first volunteers in Ghana."

She also said the impact of the Peace Corps Volunteers cannot be underestimated and recalled former President, John Dramani Mahama's, testimony on a volunteer who taught science in his school and inspired his peers to pursue careers as doctors and engineers.

The Deputy Minister of Communications, Mr Charles Acheampong, in a speech for Mrs Ursula Owusu Ekufu, said the relationship between the two countries was built on mutual respect and shared goals.

The swearing-in of the 20 new volunteers brings the total number of Peace Corps Volunteers in Ghana to 55, as 35 volunteers are currently serving in six regions across the country (Bono East, Eastern, Greater Accra, Northern, Oti, and the Volta Region).

But neither of them will be at home with my family. I've been in the Peace Corps since October of 2014, stationed in Ghana's Northern Region. On Thursday, I'll spend the day in northern Ghana with three friends, also Peace Corps volunteers. We plan to indulge ourselves by buying a few fried chicken legs from a roadside stand.

Then on Saturday, about 16 of us volunteers will gather, cook a feast and belatedly celebrate. We won't be serving turkey, stuffing or apple pie, because key ingredients are not available or too expensive on our budgets. Instead, we'll probably roast a guinea fowl or eat one of Ghana's favorite dishes -- fufu. It's a ball of carbohydrates that nestles in soups and stews. In northern Ghana, it is often made from vigorously mashed yams. It's a staple and a comfort food.

Living in a village without running water or electricity for the last year has made me realize the vast privileges so many of us take for granted. At first, I cried with happiness when I saw rain after a five-month dry season.

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It cooled down the savannah and filled the buckets I use to fetch water from the community water spigot. But I also cried real tears when it rained almost every day; I couldn't charge my phone via solar charger, severing my tenuous connection back home for a short while.

And I've also learned that even when you don't have a lot, you can still share what little you have. My host family in Ghana has at least 12 members (not counting the huge extended family that is considered the same as immediate family here). Much of their food comes from their few acres of corn and hot peppers and small gardens of tomatoes and okra. Every night, we gather under the stars, sitting on the ground in the center of our open-air compound to share a meal. We dip fingers into tuo zaafi, a thick corn-porridge, then dip again into an accompanying soup.

If a visitor or two come by, members of my Ghanaian family will jump up and offer a stool and a hot bowl of tuo zaafi. They're visibly disappointed if visitors are too full to eat but will literally clap their hands together if the guests dip their fingers into our bowls of tuo zaafi.

Over that meal, we laugh about the day's challenges and successes, the baby's newfound walking (or stumbling) skills or the seven-year-old's hilarious dance moves. There are no smartphones to distract us. We don't gather in front of the TV to watch the big game.

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