



## Handout 3: VRF Frequently Asked Questions & Tips

The Volunteer Report Form (VRF) is the primary mechanism that Peace Corps Volunteers use to report on their work, show the progress of their contributions to their primary project, and share other information with staff about their experiences as Volunteers in their communities.

### Frequently Asked Questions:

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### Why won't the Peace Corps VRF application open?

- ↳ **Check if your Microsoft Silverlight version is up to date.** The Peace Corps VRF application runs on Silverlight, version 5.1.20125.0 or later.
- ↳ **Silverlight is not compatible with tablets and mobile devices.** Since the Peace Corps VRF application is an offline device, it currently requires Microsoft Silverlight to run and Silverlight is not compatible with tablets and mobile devices.
- ↳ **Newer Mac operating systems require additional steps.** See complete steps for your specific Mac operating systems at the VRF Resource webpage ([vrf.peacecorps.gov](http://vrf.peacecorps.gov)). In addition, as Silverlight is a Microsoft product, downloading the plug-in might require additional support from the Microsoft website to overcome security settings on new Macs.
- ↳ **Use the web browsers Internet Explorer, Safari, or Mozilla Firefox.** Do not use Google Chrome or Microsoft Edge browsers, as these do not support Microsoft Silverlight.
- ↳ **Check that the Internet café allows downloads.** If you are downloading from an Internet café, or other non-personal computer, the computer administrators may have blocked the computer from downloading applications without permission. Contact the computer administrator to explain what you are trying to download.



## How will I get my VRF file?

- ➔ Peace Corps staff **[insert name of staff member(s)]** will email your VRF file approximately **two months** before the end of the next reporting period due date. If you have limited access to email, please work with **[insert name of staff member(s)]** to arrange **[traveling to a location with Internet access/receiving your VRF on a USB]**.

## How will I return my VRF file? How often do I need to submit my VRF?

- ➔ Email your VRF file and any supporting documents (e.g., copy of data collection tools, photos of success stories or noteworthy activities) to **[insert name of staff member(s)]** at the end of the reporting period. Remember your VRF has a separate file for each reporting period. When you attach the VRF to an email (or save it to a USB) to send to staff, double check that you select the correct file by the dates included on the VRF file name.

Note: Do not change the VRF file name. Your VRF will not import if the name changes.

## What is an activity?

- ➔ **An activity is a group of tasks undertaken to achieve a specified result.** Activities can be one-time events or a recurring series of events, conducted with the same people and for the same purpose. When you collaborate with community or external partners to conduct longer-term projects that involve and benefit different groups of people, you should enter the project's different components as separate activities.

Similarly, you do not need to report each step done to implement an activity as a separate entry (e.g., preliminary meetings, each class taught, each blog entry written). The VRF is also not intended to capture all the routine, or daily, tasks that you do. Activities entered should be the work that you do intentionally to contribute to the Peace Corps' goals.

## Should I report on the meetings I attend with my counterparts or the Peace Corps Volunteer trainings that I facilitate or participate in?

- ➔ Report activities when you had a clear and substantial role in organizing them and which directly benefited host country nationals. Do not report numbers for events or activities that you only participate in or which target solely fellow Peace Corps Volunteers (e.g., GenEq training for trainees, local association meetings, ministry meetings). Explain the role you played in the activity description.

## What if I already reported my activity using the Small Grants Reporting System?

- ➔ You should also report the activities conducted using Small Grant funding in your VRF so your efforts can be included in our overall project results, in addition to being documented in your activity records. The Small Grants Reporting System keeps track of work conducted using external funding sources as a separate process so the Peace Corps can account to stakeholders what was accomplished with the specific funds that were used. Because the Small Grants Reporting System is separate from the VRF, activities should be reported in both systems.

## What if I entered an activity by mistake?

- ➔ **Volunteers can delete new Activity entries.** If the activity is new for the current reporting period, the Volunteer can permanently delete the activity using the red "Delete this Activity" button. Activities that were originally entered in a previous reporting period cannot be deleted.
- ➔ **Staff also has the ability to delete an Activity from a Volunteer's VRF for the current reporting period.**



## How does double-counting occur? How do I prevent double-counting?

### ↳ Double-counting can occur in two ways:

- Counting the same individual who attends *different activities* that are reported against the same indicator.
- Counting the same individual as having achieved an indicator in *different reporting periods* (an individual can only be counted once towards the same indicator).

### ↳ You can prevent double-counting by following these instructions:

- Count unique subjects only once per indicator. The same subject can only be reported once, even if they participated in more than one activity related to the indicator. If a subject was counted in a previous reporting period, they should not be included in the count for subsequent reporting periods for that indicator. Only enter additional or new subjects that have since joined the activity and/or achieved the indicator's outcome. To prevent double-counting you will need to use simple data collections tools to help track the indicator results of all of your activities both between reporting periods and across activities.

## Do I report on all the indicators displayed on the Indicators tab of the VRF?

- ↳ **Not necessarily. You should only report on the indicator(s) that are applicable to the activities conducted**, which, depending on the activities conducted and objective(s) they support may be only 2-3 indicators. The Indicator section displays any indicators that may be relevant to the activities you reported. Particularly when reporting activities that support multiple CSPP and/or Initiative areas, there may be a number of different indicators displayed. You should not report on indicators that fall outside the purpose and scope of the work you conducted.
- ↳ **For outcome indicators, only report outcomes that have occurred and which you have measured.** You can report on the Total Number possible once you begin the activity/event, but do not report individuals as having Achieved the outcome until you have observed or measured the outcome (e.g., change in knowledge, attitudes, skills, or behavior). Review the indicator and its accompanying data sheet to determine what qualifies as a change for the particular outcome you are reporting.

## What's the difference between reporting on the participants versus reporting on output or outcome indicators (e.g., the number of individuals trained versus the number of individuals demonstrating knowledge gained out of the total number trained)? Should the numbers I report be the same or are they different?

- ↳ **The Participant section allows us to determine the total number of individuals, organizations, and communities that are reached by Peace Corps.** For each activity entry that is not a mass media event, the VRF will ask you to report on the number of participants attending. The general participant results also allow us to share information about the types of activities we conduct, such as the total number of 10- to 17-year-old girls reached with activities that leveraged information and communication technologies (i.e., Technology for Development CSPP activity) or the total number of 25-plus males participating in activities that promote gender equality and women's empowerment (i.e., GenEq CSPP activity).
- ↳ **The Indicators section captures results about the number of individuals involved (e.g., outputs) and the number of those affected by the activity (e.g., a change occurred in their knowledge, skills, attitudes or behaviors).** When an activity contributes to one of our projects, such as your primary project assignment, the VRF will also ask you to report on indicators associated with the objective(s) that the



activity supports. ***In these situations, the number of participants reported should be equivalent to the number of individuals reported under any output indicators or the total number for any outcome indicators***, unless the indicator measures a more specific group or unit than simply individuals (e.g., number of children under 5, number of organizations).

## What if I observe or measure changes after conducting multiple activities with the same group of people?

- ↳ Under the Activities tab, these people should be listed as Participants for each activity you report in the VRF. Under the Indicators tab, each individual person should be counted only once for each indicator.

## How do I report on the number of participants when I do not know the number of males versus females or specific ages, particularly when working with large crowds or training groups?

- ↳ When working with large groups of people, plan ahead to determine how best to count the size of the group, including sex and age breakdowns. Use a sign-in sheet with age categories and gender columns with pictures or icons to help participants. You can also create your handouts (pre/post-test quizzes or other materials) with special colors or specially marked for the gender and age categories. Pre-count the handouts prior to the event, then pass them out to the appropriate gender/age as best as you can, and count what you have left to determine what to report. Coordinate to take a group picture at the end of the event and reference it when reporting.

Note: If the event and beneficiaries are too large to count, such as a mass media activity (e.g., radio or television broadcasts, public theater, or printed materials distributed at a market), then select “Yes” on the Mass Media question on the activity entry. When reporting a mass media activity, you will be asked to estimate the audience reached and will not be asked to report participant and indicator results.

## What if my activity supports Peace Corps’ Goal 1, but doesn’t contribute to a project at post?

- ↳ You can certainly conduct and report activities that “help the people of interested countries in meeting their need for trained men and women” (e.g., transfer knowledge, build skills, promote attitude or behavior change) but do not contribute directly to your assigned primary project.

If applicable, you can report activities done in collaboration with Volunteers from other sectors at post, or those using resources or practices from these other projects. You can conduct an activity that does not contribute directly to any project at post (i.e., do not check a box under the Project section), but which does contribute to a CSPP and/or Initiative area listed on the CSPP/Initiative section. *Further, we have also identified secondary project areas that you can select on the Project section when your activity contributes generally to one of these secondary project sector or topic areas. These secondary projects may display some “sub-topic” areas on the Objective section to select and optional indicators to review and report on if applicable to your activity. Please contact a designated staff member at post for more information on reporting on Peace Corps’ Goal 1 activities that fall outside the scope of your primary project.*

- ↳ You should only respond “Yes,” or check the box to indicate that an activity supports a project, objective, CSPP, or initiative when it is actually relevant or applicable. If you are unsure, reach out to the *designated staff member* at post to confirm.



## What if I see “(Inactive)” next to an Objective or Indicator?

- ↳ **Inactive indicates that the objective or indicator was previously an option in an earlier reporting period, but has been removed from the project framework and no longer needs to be reported on.** A new objective or indicator may be added in its place. You should only see inactive objectives or indicators on activities that were previously entered in earlier reporting periods. All new activity entries should display only the current objectives and indicators being used.
- ↳ You should report only on active objectives and indicators to ensure your results are captured under areas that we are currently monitoring and reporting on at post.

## Who uses the data I report?

- ↳ **Your VRF collects data to be shared with a variety of stakeholders vested in the work that Peace Corps Volunteers accomplish**, from your local community members and counterparts to ministry officials in *[insert post name]* to PC/Washington, Congress, and the greater American public. The information you report is not confidential and should, therefore, not include any sensitive information that should not be shared publicly.
- ↳ **While the primary reader of your VRF will be your APCD/PM and other program support staff – additional staff at post may review parts of your report.** Activity results, descriptions, and success stories may be shared with our key stakeholders to demonstrate the results of your collective efforts. The VRFs help post staff to understand how you are doing and this enables the Peace Corps to better support you and your fellow and future Volunteers.
- ↳ **Finally, your VRF is a record for YOU** of the work that you accomplish during your service as a Volunteer. We may share it with future Volunteers who follow in your efforts and hope you share your results and reflections with your counterparts and community members.

