



Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

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Service Meets Food Security for Feed the Future Peace Corps Volunteers



Peace Corps

Peace Corps Volunteers Genevieve James and Ryan Ott introduced green peppers for the first time to a village in Ghana.

From grassroots communities to regional markets to the highest echelons of government, Feed the Future is working to improve agricultural production and nutrition around the world. Read on to learn how Feed the Future Peace Corps Volunteers are leveraging their unique talents and building personal and professional connections at the community level that advance the fight to end hunger.

Every day, Peace Corps Volunteers from the United States touch the lives of hundreds of thousands of people worldwide. Each Peace Corps Volunteer dedicates 27 months to living and working in communities abroad, striving to achieve three goals: to help host countries meet their need for trained men and women; to promote a better understanding of Americans among those served; and to help Americans better understand people living in other countries.

Throughout its history, the Peace Corps has adapted and responded to the issues of the times. In a fast-changing world, Volunteers have met new challenges with innovation, creativity, determination and compassion. As the preeminent U.S. international service organization, the Peace Corps sends Americans abroad to tackle the most pressing needs of people around the world.

Today, food insecurity and undernutrition are among the most urgent issues the global community faces. To address these challenges, we need dedicated people working on the frontlines of hunger just as we need others working to improve policy and markets at the national level. As part of the U.S. Government team dedicated to fighting hunger, Peace Corps Volunteers work alongside communities that are the first line of defense against food insecurity, helping drive down the number of hungry people through better agricultural productivity and nutrition training and services.

Genevieve James is an example of the impact that is possible through a grassroots approach to agriculture and nutrition. A Health Volunteer in Ghana, James partnered with nearby Agriculture Volunteer Ryan Ott to help a local school plant a garden to diversify the school's feeding program.

Before the garden was planted, students at James' community school ate rice, maize porridge, beans and gari (a starchy food made of cassava) every day. They didn't get to enjoy any nutritious vegetables in their diets – the school's strict budget and a lengthy dry season made it difficult to grow fresh produce.

But James and Ott were up to the challenge, and they worked together with the school cooks to identify three vegetables to

grow in their garden: tomatoes, green peppers and aleefua, a locally-produced dark leafy green. This combination of crops would allow the students to increase their access to Vitamin A and dietary iron, two common micronutrient deficiencies in Ghana.

With the assistance of a small grant from Feed the Future, James and Ott purchased seeds, watering cans and hoes for the garden. Working side by side, James, Ott, the teachers and students prepared the school grounds for a new garden, creating nursing beds for peppers and tomatoes. While they waited for the rainy season to begin, they tirelessly watered the garden twice a day from a narrow borehole in the ground. When the rains finally came and the group transplanted the pepper and tomato seedlings, their crops grew so much that they had to increase the garden to three times its original size. Today it houses 600 pepper plants, 300 tomato plants and four new beds of aleefu.

For many in the community, the school garden's first crop was the first time they had ever seen a green pepper. James and Ott jumped at the opportunity to introduce this new vegetable and educate more people about how to grow it, harvest its seeds and add it to soups.

Six hundred children now eat food from the school garden every day, resulting in improved dietary diversity. James and Ott are brainstorming ways to help the school continue production through the dry season and the students and teachers are committed to monitoring and maintaining the garden over the long term.

Embedded in communities like this one, Peace Corps Volunteers have a rare opportunity to bring American leadership and ingenuity to the doorsteps of families facing serious challenges. But they also have to build local buy-in, meaningful partnerships and mutual understanding that make long-term food security and broader development possible.

Do you have what it takes to be a Feed the Future Peace Corps Volunteer? [Learn more](#) about volunteering or [read more blogs in this series](#).

This blog was made possible with contributions from Peace Corps Volunteer Genevieve James.