



# Development through civic service: the Peace Corps and national service programmes in Ghana

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**Abstract:** This study expands the limited academic literature on development through civic service in Africa by examining national service programmes in Ghana. Peace Corps publications, volunteer memoirs and archival research were used to examine intra-organizational learning in Ghana's national service programmes and the Peace Corps. The Peace Corps and Ghana's National Service Scheme have generally met educational, cross-cultural understanding and self-development objectives, but, due to overriding organizational concerns with public image, have rarely enhanced patriotism or Ghanaian national development, despite abundant comments from individual volunteers. Improved organizational learning could enhance programme assessment and the effectiveness of development assistance at the national level.

**Key words:** civic service, development, Ghana, organizations, Peace Corps

The Peace Corps was established by United States' President, John F. Kennedy, in 1961, to assist poorer countries in their development and to promote cross-cultural understanding and personal growth among the generally young volunteers who agreed to live and work in those countries for two years. Kennedy hoped that Peace Corps Volunteers (PCVs) would serve as models for non-aligned countries to adopt a capitalist approach to socio-economic development (Rice, 1985). Potential host governments expressed concern over the use of

cross-national collaboration for neo-colonial purposes, and to allay these concerns Kennedy sent his brother-in-law, Sargent Shriver, the Peace Corps' first director, on a 26-day, eight country tour of key non-aligned countries. Ghana was Shriver's first stop, on 22 April 1961 (Cobbs Hoffman, 1998; Fischer, 1998).

Only a few years earlier, on 6 March 1957, Ghana had become the first sub-Saharan African country to gain independence (Amin, 1992). While President Kwame Nkrumah expressed interest in socialism, he had studied

in the United States (US) between 1935–45 and his respect for education in the US led him to call the Peace Corps a 'bold, splendid idea', helping the programme gain widespread acceptance (Amin, 1992; Cobbs Hoffman, 1998: 155). By the end of the 1960s, over 70,000 had served as PCVs (Fischer, 1998) – several hundred in Ghana – and by the Peace Corps' twenty-fifth anniversary, in 1986, 120,000 had served in 90 countries (*Peace Corps Times*, 1986a).

Since independence from Britain, Ghana has initiated several national service programmes to promote development and patriotism. Ghana's most significant national service programme, the National Service Scheme (NSS), was created in 1973, with PCVs' assistance. Initially, all secondary school graduates were required to give one year of service and university graduates, two years. In 1982, the Parliament Act 426 required national service from all able-bodied Ghanaian adults and increased the service to two years. The change increased NSS participants from around 2,000 in 1973 to nearly 20,000 in the mid-1990s (Benson, 1996). There were 300,000 potential NSS participants in the mid-1990s, in a scheme targeting 18-year-old secondary school graduates. This mandatory NSS service is often resisted by many Ghanaians (Benson, 1996).

This article is an examination of development through government-run civic service programmes in Ghana, including the Peace Corps and Ghana's NSS. The aim is to better understand the extent to which individual development-through-service experiences have been incorporated into organizational learning in national service programmes in the country.

### **I Rationale and approach**

There is a dearth of scholarly research on civic service outside of the US and Canada (Arenas *et al.*, 2006) and government-run civic service

as a means of development (McBride *et al.*, 2003). Studies of civic service tend to be broad samplings of service programmes (McBride *et al.*, 2003; Patel *et al.*, 2007), focus on service among particular age groups, ethnicities or genders (Jenkins, 2003; Morrow-Howell, 2006) and overlook Africa as a region of study (Patel *et al.*, 2007). Few studies (Moskos, 1988; de Oliveira, 2005) offer an in-depth look at civic service in one country, especially an African one (Molefe and Weeks, 2001).

Civic service may be defined as 'an organized period of substantial engagement and contribution to the local, national, or world community, recognized and valued by society, with minimal monetary compensation to the participant' (Sherraden, 2001: 2). Globally, 75–80 percent of civic service programmes focus on education and community development (McBride *et al.*, 2003). More than 90 percent of the world's civic service programmes are voluntary, though youth national service programmes, in Africa, are generally compulsory (McBride *et al.*, 2003). Approximately, 20 percent of the civic service programmes are government-run (McBride *et al.*, 2003) – they are the focus of this study.

Most academic works on the Peace Corps – a civic service programme of the US government – focus on trends within the organization and how these reflected societal changes in the US and the Cold War politics (Ashabranner, 1971; Rice, 1985; Redmon, 1986; Viorst, 1986; Amin, 1998; Cobbs Hoffman, 1998; Fischer, 1998; Amin, 1999), or are collections of PCV experiences used to analyze the effectiveness of Peace Corps training, challenges of cross-cultural understanding and individual lessons learned in the global context (Luce, 1964; Textor, 1966; Peace Corps, 1995, 1996, 2002, 2006). Other academic articles are often limited to the dissemination of medicinal advances (Moran and Bernard, 1989; Khan *et al.*, 1998; Outwater and Mpangala, 2005). Additional key sources of PCV experiences

are memoirs (considered among the best are Tidwell, 1996 and Thomsen, 1997). Missing from the Peace Corps' literature, with few exceptions (Amin, 1992; Searles, 1997), are studies which move well beyond the individual memoir to provide a country-level composite of decades of PCV experiences. Using memoirs and e-journals, Peace Corps publications and archival research, the authors provide the first composite of PCV experiences in Ghana, from 1961 to 2007; such a synthesis can help fill the current gap in learning from the experiences of individual volunteers to their own development organizations that define aid policy and implementation in their country of service (Takahashi, 2006).

There has been little comparative analysis of the Peace Corps and similar organizations based in other countries. Comparative studies tend to contrast the Peace Corps with other US agencies (Reeves, 1988; Galley, 2002). Thus, another aim of this article is to offer insights into the relative effectiveness of host and foreign government approaches to development through civic service in Ghana.

## II Background of the Peace Corps in Ghana

President Nkrumah welcomed the first PCVs on 31 August 1961 because he lacked the skilled personnel to rapidly train teachers and the masses, but warned that he would expel all 52 PCVs if they became too involved in politics (Cobbs Hoffman, 1998). In 1963, after rumours of PCVs being Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) operatives, Nkrumah banned PCVs, but not Canadian volunteers, from teaching English and history (Cobbs Hoffman, 1998; Amin, 1999). By 1966, Ghana's deteriorating economy and corruption allegations led to Nkrumah being overthrown in a bloodless coup, in which the CIA was implicated (Gocking, 2005). Ghana's new president expelled Russian volunteers and asked the US to send 50 additional PCVs (Cobbs Hoffman, 1998).

In 1969, Ghanaians requested in-country training for PCVs to increase local participation in the programme. The same year, Richard Nixon assumed the US presidency and appointed Joseph Blatchford to address the Peace Corps' image of having many 'hippie types', calling for more mature, professional volunteers than the Bachelors degree generalists of the 1960s (Reeves, 1988; Cobbs Hoffman, 1998: 173). Ghana's often corrupt administrations of the 1970s prompted many newly trained teachers to flee the country, thus, bolstering not only the demand for PCV teachers but also shared interest in government collaboration.

In terms of completing their overseas assignments and building trust with partner schools and agencies, PCVs performed well in Ghana and throughout West Africa; from 1961 to 1990 the Peace Corps placed volunteers in more than 100 countries, of which only 14 had PCVs for all 30 years and 'six (or 43 percent were) were on the fringe of West Africa' (Cobbs Hoffman, 1998: 165). Whereas Peace Corps' early termination rates were 30 percent, only 20 percent did not complete their training or assignment in Ghana and from 1961 to 1991, approximately 675,000 Ghanaians had an American teacher (Cobbs Hoffman, 1998).

For the first three decades, 50–80 percent of PCVs in Ghana, as throughout West Africa, worked in education (Cobbs Hoffman, 1998). The large number of teaching positions may have given PCVs clearer project objectives in Ghana than elsewhere (Cobbs Hoffman, 1998), but they experienced problems typical of PCVs everywhere and many finished their assignments questioning whether they had contributed meaningfully to the country's socio-economic development because their 'lessons learned' in the field did not appear to translate into changes at the organizational level, which might have improved the Peace Corps' aid delivery. The opportunities for organizational learning from PCV experiences in Ghana and the extent to which such learning

appears to have taken place is the subject of the next section.

### III Peace Corps volunteers' experiences in Ghana

Glaring resource asymmetry is a challenge in many development partnerships (Kuada and Sorensen, 2005). Although most early PCVs in Ghana lived in relative comfort in the former homes of British colonizers and had servants and occasional access to vehicles, these relatively posh living circumstances reflected Ghanaians' desire to demonstrate hospitality, not PCVs unwillingness to live like local people. Ed Smith, a PCV, estimated that '90 percent of the volunteers in Ghana had a steward to wash clothes' (Fischer, 1998: 121). These early PCVs' unanimous opinion was that Ghana was less primitive than suggested by 'Tarzan movies, museum exhibits, and *National Geographic* photo displays' (Cobbs Hoffman, 1998: 167).

Even though Ghana was physically more comfortable than expected, pre-assignment training left many volunteers unprepared for situations arising from international or programme politics. Ghanaians asked PCVs if they were spies (Hart, 1962; Zeitlin, 1965), to explain US activities in Vietnam and racial tensions in the US, showcased in the *Ghanaian Times* (Amin, 1992, 1999).

The Peace Corps policy prohibited involvement in local politics and discouraged PCV actions which could impact the programme's image (Smith, 1967). A PCV and journalist, Arnold Zeitlin (1965), reported being admonished by Peace Corps/Washington for sharing stories of his comfortable PCV existence with a friend at *Newsweek*, who published them. A PCV, Ed Smith (1967), reported his anxiety over keeping a diary, even burning one out of concern that the Peace Corps would deem its content too political.

Inadequate pre-assignment language training caused the 1960s PCVs to give greater attention to teaching than cross-cultural understanding. Zeitlin (1965: 54) described an outing with Ghana Broadcasting Company

staff throughout which 'they really did not feel entirely comfortable in English, and we were impossible in Twi'.

Volunteers' focus on teaching led to the establishment of a commendable secondary school science curriculum that was pivotal to Ghana's technological advancement. President Nkrumah applauded the Peace Corps as 'the only good thing the United States had done for Africa' (Amin, 1992: 182). Unfortunately, notable gains at the national level which could be attributed to PCVs' presence were largely restricted to the programme's early years, when fewer countries received volunteers and host countries had only fledgling formal educational systems.

Organizational learning was limited in the relatively newly created Peace Corps as demonstrated by the 1962 inspection of PCVs' assignments in Ghana by Director Shriver; as elsewhere, Shriver asked PCVs to reject elite accommodations and servant use even though PCVs argued that they provided the needed income to those they employed and simultaneously avoided time-consuming activities which could detract from teaching (Fischer, 1998). The PCVs insisted that vehicular access was 'the most important thing' for their success given the uncertain, even treacherous, local transportation (Fischer, 1998: 78). Nevertheless, after Shriver's visit, PCV stipends were reduced to align PCVs' lifestyles with the official image of roughing it (Cobbs Hoffman, 1998).

Whereas Ghana and its citizenry expressed appreciation for PCVs efforts to enhance the country's socio-economic development, especially in often-neglected rural areas, Peace Corps/Washington rarely seemed satisfied with PCV efforts. By the mid- to late-1960s, the dissonance between the PCVs' reality and the public 'Super Volunteer' image that Washington put forth was the greatest complaint of PCVs in Ghana and elsewhere (Cobbs Hoffman, 1998: 171). Invariably, the *Peace Corps Volunteer Magazine*, or as most referred to it, the *Volunteer*, featured PCV

educators not for teaching, but for secondary projects such as building libraries, community gardens or latrines. Virtually all PCVs disagreed with Peace Corps/Washington that teaching without additional community work was insufficient.

As the Peace Corps expanded, 'community development' became the second most common assignment after teaching, but many volunteers were uncertain how to enact this amorphously defined assignment. The PCVs reported being bored, drinking excessively and lacking intellectual stimulation (Smith, 1967; Stevens, 1993; Fischer, 1998). Consequently, lacking clear direction from Washington, many PCVs decided that they understood their host country's needs more than the Washington staff (Cobbs Hoffman, 1998). Some PCVs began to pursue what they viewed as more realistic goals, including cross-cultural understanding and concrete accomplishments like the creation of an improved mathematics syllabus, rather than the ill-defined community development objectives of their official assignments.

The PCVs' impression that development policies from the head office did not adequately reflect their input continued in the 1970s, even though there were many Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) working for the Peace Corps in Washington (Searles, 1997). Washington cut the Peace Corps budget and promoted an unpopular 'New Directions' initiative encouraging PCVs to place greater emphasis on measurable socio-economic development and the use of special skills and technology appropriate to the host country (Searles, 1997). The PCVs used their special skills to host a national lawn tennis clinic for Ghanaians (*Peace Corps Times*, 1986b), musical events and basketball tournaments (Reedy, 1975; Heberer 2005), but most did not appreciate the New Directions relative disinterest in cross-cultural understanding and focus on Peace Corps' image and documenting achievements. The PCVs' resistance resulted in New Directives meeting only a few of its objectives, though widespread volunteer willingness to ignore directives from

Washington may have contributed to higher retention rates in West Africa than in other regions.

In the late 1970s, the Peace Corps enjoyed a positive reputation as an organization which collaborated well with host governments, and RPCV surveys indicated that 93 percent PCVs serving in any country found their experience positive or extremely positive. The Peace Corps' purported ties to the CIA still tainted the organization's image somewhat and a new threat to its image emerged when surveys revealed that most RPCV admitted to not benefiting the poorest while on assignment (Randall, 1993; Schwimmer, 1993). Ghana's RPCVs reported that their students 'emerged from lower-middle to upper-class life' (Zeitlin, 1965: 87).

By 1978, the Congress had amended the Peace Corps Act to require PCVs to support their host country's poorest (Smith, 1986), a modification reflecting more an attempt to maintain the 'toughest job you'll ever love' public image gained through a tremendously successful Ad Council campaign than lessons learned from programme participants. At its height, the Ad Council's public service message was directly responsible for drawing half of all Peace Corps recruits (Advertising Educational Foundation, 2003).

As with previous volunteers, the 1970s Ghana RPCVs reported that the Peace Corps was an effective organization in providing opportunities for personal growth, which shaped their career choices and lives. David Schneider (2005) – who served in Wenchi, Ghana, beginning in 1972 – returned to Ghana to teach for seven years after his 1972–75 assignment. A RPCV, John Lee (2003), worked for the Peace Corps in Washington. Bettie Ivanochko (2003) met her Canadian volunteer husband while serving in the late 1970s.

Budget cuts continued to plague the Peace Corps. In the mid-1980s, volunteer numbers dropped by more than half from the 1960s while costs soared (Smith, 1986). Ghana's PCV population similarly dropped from a high of over



400 in the 1960s to less than 100 for the first time in programme history in June 1983 (*Peace Corps Times*, 1986b and 1991). Ghana's political and economic difficulties also contributed to the drop in PCVs (*Peace Corps Times*, 1991).

Nonetheless, by early 1986, more than 2,000 PCVs had served in Ghana (*Peace Corps Times*, 1986a). Whereas Ghana PCVs' main contributions were still in education, a shift was underway to move from math and science teachers in secondary schools to less traditional classroom settings, incorporating indigenous herbal medicine into health education and participating in special education (Smith, 1986; *Peace Corps Times*, 1986a). The shift paralleled changing interests in development organizations rather than a response to specific requests from the host government or Ghana PCVs.

Africa's food crisis of the mid-1980s prompted Peace Corps/Washington to place more PCVs in agricultural projects, such that 25 percent of all PCVs or around 1,500 people in 61 countries, were engaged in agriculture (*Peace Corps Times*, 1986a, 1986b). Agricultural assignments, although less amorphous than those in community development, left many PCVs feeling ill-qualified to take on the seemingly insurmountable problem of world hunger after only three months of training. Satisfaction with assignments remained greatest among PCVs improving Ghanaians' access to education by serving as teachers.

Opportunities for RPCVs expanded as some graduate schools began to create programmes which targeted returnees. In California Polytechnic's International Agricultural Development Programme, 90 percent of the graduate students were RPCVs due, in part, to application requirements which included two years of overseas service (*Peace Corps Times*, 1985). Such programmes, although valuable, largely benefited organizations other than the Peace Corps to obtain more competent development workers.

By 1991, Peace Corps/Ghana was celebrating 30 years and more than 3,000 having served (Flanigan and Musich, 1991). After the

Reagan administration, which de-emphasized community development projects, Ghana PCVs' goals were to contribute to secondary school students' education; establish tree nurseries to halt deforestation, especially in Ghana's north; provide safe water; increase the productivity of small businesses, especially among women; and expand Guinea worm eradication (Smith, 1986; Flanigan and Musich, 1991). By the mid-1990s, the PCVs were also assisting Ghana's considerable number of refugees from Liberia and Togo (Owusu, 2000) and supporting technological development through the establishment of computing centres (*Peace Corps Online*, 1998). These multiple initiatives were to be carried out by a cadre of PCVs who, as in the 1980s, numbered only one-fourth of Ghana's 1960s PCV population. When asked to assess the PCVs contributions to Ghana, Renee Karbin – a PCV who worked on the construction of a health clinic – gave a reply typical of the 1990s Ghana PCVs who believed that their 'most important contributions' had been on the personal level, simply making friendships (Flanigan and Musich, 1991: 11).

On the home front, in the early 1990s, a Peace Corps Fellows Programme was rapidly expanding which enabled RPCVs to continue their education while teaching full-time in US schools. Another relatively new Peace Corps programme was World Wise Schools which matched RPCVs with classrooms near their hometowns for the purpose of sharing volunteers' experiences and raising interest in other cultures. The Fellows and World Wise programmes provided opportunities for former PCVs' self-development, but did not offer mechanisms whereby RPCVs could further socio-economic development in the countries or communities in which they had served overseas.

In the twenty-first century, PCVs continued with special projects such as assisting refugees (*Peace Corps Online*, 2004b, 2005a), but their primary foci remained education and agriculture, including new initiatives in these

fields. Ghana was the first African country where PCVs initiated school art projects and by 2005, a student art exhibit opened at Ghana's National Museum (Peace Corps Online, 2005b).

Today's RPCVs, like those of years past, report that their assignments shaped their career choices. Thomas Hart served as Ghana's Olympic track and field coach and became a physical education professor (Hart, 1962). The RPCVs, Alicia Henry and Christopher Thomas, became art and math professors respectively, after teaching in Ghana (Knowles, 2004; Peace Corps Online, 2004a).

Twenty-first century Ghana PCVs have the benefit of participating in a long-standing programme which has a positive history of promoting cross-cultural understanding and providing external finance, technology and skills. The PCVs go in anticipating challenges, personal growth, a life-altering experience and holding relatively modest expectations for improving the lives of Ghanaians. A PCV, Liz Gharst (2007), commented 'that despite the challenges, of which there are many, I really love it here'. Her comments stand in contrast to those of Ghanaians performing national service.

#### **IV National service in Ghana: the Builders Brigade to the National Service Scheme**

In 1957, in response to protests over unemployment, Ghana's Department of Social Welfare and Community Development initiated the Builders Brigade, a civic service programme with the aim of providing 'useful occupation to the unemployed' (Hodge, 1964: 115). The Builders Brigade was to supplement, on a larger scale, vocational centres and the Youth Employment Service. The Builders Brigade also sought to 'afford the youth of the country an opportunity to give patriotic service in the development of the country...especially in rural areas' (Hodge, 1964: 115).

The Builder's Brigade, which was renamed the Workers Brigade, was voluntary and open

to males under 45 years of age, with preference given to ex-servicemen, those unemployed for more than one year, men with trades needed for Brigade work and middle-school dropouts (Hodge, 1964). The Brigade stood in contrast to the British colonizers' post-World War II ideas of compulsory service for Ghanaian boys entering secondary school (Hodge, 1964). By 1960, there were more than 11,000 in the Brigade. The early Brigade focused on patriotism and agricultural development, but, expanding rapidly and viewed by Nkrumah as an instrument to favour supporters and punish opponents, suffered problems with discipline, including public drunkenness and absenteeism. *Time* magazine (1959) referred to the Brigade as 'ostensibly a kind of Civilian Conservation Corps, but actually an army of young toughs in yellow shirts, green trousers and red caps'.

In an effort to improve the Brigade's public image, Nkrumah invited Israel to assist in reorganizing the Brigade along the lines of the Israeli Youth Movement, including collective farm creation. Nonetheless, the Brigade continued to struggle with misbehaviour among the male and newly admitted female Brigaders and, nepotism and political favours directing the hiring of staff (Hodge, 1964). By 1961, the Brigade had succeeded in creating several dozen collective farms, but not a sense of patriotism among its members. Nkrumah decided that the Brigaders were too old to instil with patriotism and created the Ghana Young Pioneers from school children for this purpose.

By 1962, top-down measures to address the Brigade's image had improved its productivity and organization. Increasingly, those serving two consecutive years were going through leadership, physical fitness, first aid and technical training of up to eight months. These measures made the Brigade more expensive to run and the organization now supported fewer than 8,000 volunteers. These recruits, like the earlier ones, planted bananas, sugar cane and cocoa, but they also paved streets, assisted with flood control, built homes, made crafts

and through their appreciation for their training and regular meals, helped bring a more positive image to the organization (Hodge, 1964).

By 1965, Workers Brigade funds were increasingly misappropriated and directed at a few politically connected, but unproductive, employees, and of the 280,877 acres the Brigade had acquired, only 7 percent had been planted with crops (Due, 1969). The Workers Brigade initiative was abandoned when Nkrumah was overthrown in 1966 (Amedahe, 2007).

Several years after the Peace Corps' arrival, and unrelated to the demise of the Brigade, Ghana started planning a mandatory version of a youth targeted initiative to address the technological, educational and agricultural needs of the country, the National Service Scheme (NSS). By 1973, the government of Ghana was selecting NSS participants from lists of graduates generated by secondary schools and universities, issuing service notices and informing potential NSS participants of their duties. Failure to provide service for the period mandated could result in up to five years imprisonment (War Registers' International, 1998). As in the Peace Corps, those selected to participate in the NSS were initially posted primarily in teaching positions, but over time some worked in accounting, development planning or in a secretarial capacity (Ministry of Education, Science and Sports, n.d.).

Although the NSS's primary focus was to put young educated Ghanaians to service in the country's most underdeveloped areas, NSS participants were also expected to learn about their country to enhance their sense of patriotism and obtain an appreciation for volunteerism (Ministry of Education, Science and Sports, n.d.). Additionally, preparation for NSS service included eight weeks of military training for conditioning and to instil a sense of accomplishment (National Service Scheme, 2006).

In 1980, the National Service Secretariat, a public development organization under the

Ministry of Education, Science and Sports, was established to administer the NSS (Benson, 1996; Ministry of Education, Science and Sports, n.d.). Although the NSS had sufficient numbers of participants, there were logistical and financial concerns, including participants not receiving timely information about their posts, having to wait up to three months after being posted for their first pay and being sent to communities uninformed of their arrival (Amedahe, 2007). The NSS participants' complaints did not translate into improved conditions; in Ghana, it was relatively common for non-NSS educators and agricultural workers to experience delays in receiving payment or the needed information. Nonetheless, there were also attitudinal challenges; not all selected for the NSS wanted to serve, especially in remote, rural areas (Ministry of Education, Science and Sports, n.d.).

By 2004, though the problems which had plagued the NSS had not disappeared, new opportunities for the participants had been created. A National Volunteer Programme had been instituted for former NSS participants seeking additional service opportunities; there were service awards, a celebratory annual National Service week and service opportunities existed country wide (Ministry of Education, Science and Sports, n.d.). The NSS participants believed that their service contributed to the strengthening of bonds among far flung ethnic groups and enabled them to better understand problems outside of their home areas, potentially positioning them to more effectively address national needs (Benson, 1996).

## **V Conclusion**

Although Ghana has a rich history of relatively long-standing civic service programmes, studies of civic service in Ghana have been limited. As in other African countries, Ghana's early service programmes focused on nation building, but were marred by corruption and



their use for political purposes (Patel *et al.*, 2007). Unlike early post-independence civic service programmes in many African countries, Ghana's Builders/Workers Brigade was voluntary. Independent Ghana's early civic service programmes resembled those elsewhere in Africa in that they were paramilitary, Israeli-assisted and were used as a means of political control (Molefe and Weeks, 2001); they resembled those in Southern Africa in that those serving were of similar socio-economic background to those they served (Patel *et al.*, 2007). Ghana's more recent National Service Scheme resembles civic service programmes in much of Africa in as much that those formally educated 'pay back' to society their government's investment in their education (Molefe and Weeks, 2001: 108).

Ghana's reasons for creating or inviting civic service programmes were similar to other countries on the continent and elsewhere – to promote self and national development, have participants learn more about other cultures in their own country, and offer constructive work and socialization for educated youths who might otherwise be unemployed (Sekhar, 2002). Similar to civic service programmes in other developing countries, Ghana's NSS has been unable to consistently meet its educational and rural development objectives due to budget constraints arising from trying to meet the needs of a growing population and the demands of the World Bank's Structural Adjustment Programme (Molefe and Weeks, 2001; Patel *et al.*, 2007).

Peace Corps activities in developing countries have reflected ideological motives and broader US concerns, from gaining a foothold in a non-aligned country during the Cold War, to stepping up agricultural initiatives when 'the development community realize[d] that the green revolution, which resulted in great gains in production in India...may not be duplicated in Africa' (*Peace Corps Times*, 1986b).

The Peace Corps helped establish Ghana's NSS, and the Peace Corps and NSS continue

to share several directives and approaches towards furthering development in Ghana. Peace Corps/Ghana and the NSS place a primary emphasis on teaching, recognize individuals for exceptional service, require candidates to hold a degree, offer pre-service training and seek improved cross-cultural understanding. Each is government-run and has had its budget adjusted, based on the reigning government's interest in the programme. As government-run programmes, they face the challenge of not eroding the service ethos in communities which might come to rely on government assistance (Patel *et al.*, 2007).

Peace Corps/Ghana and Ghana's Builders/Workers Brigade each struggled with their public image and issues arising from alcohol abuse among participants; some rough Brigaders frightened those they were meant to benefit and a vast majority of Peace Corps volunteers failed to live up to the official 'Super Volunteer' image.

Over the years, participants in both the NSS and the Peace Corps/Ghana have resented seemingly meaningless placements which do not fit with career goals, community needs or the participants' abilities. In Peace Corps/Ghana, such placements have led to dropping out of the programme or expressing discontent via letters to the Washington office and in post-service surveys. The NSS participants, like those performing compulsory civic service in other countries, frequently resist service through falsified medical reports and legal appeals when assignments are in remote, rural areas (Levy *et al.*, 2007; Amedahe, 2007). In the early 1990s, graduates of Ghana's three universities with sciences departments were required to perform national service as science teachers, but many resisted, preferring to go directly into more lucrative fields like engineering or medicine (Flanigan and Musich, 1991).

Government-run civic service programmes in Ghana do appear to meet the goal of

personal development among participants, although evidence appears greater for PCVs than those performing in-country services. A common assessment of the PCV experience was that it was life altering, affecting major life choices from career to marriage (Searles, 1997). Although Ghanaians are far less likely to describe their national service experience as life altering, a majority of both Ghanaians and PCVs performing civic service find it to be a valuable experience in terms of maturation, self-development and learning about other cultures (Cobbs Hoffman, 1998; Molefe and Weeks, 2001; Sekhar, 2002).

Goals less likely to be met than personal development are those of increased socio-economic development or sense of patriotism through civic service. The most common attitudinal change among PCVs was a more *negative* view of the US (Fischer, 1998) and, overall, PCVs believed that relative to personal growth, the Peace Corps did relatively little for Ghana's national development. Congressman Richard Ottinger, a former Peace Corps staffer believed that the Peace Corps may be as or more important to public relations than actual development (Smith, 1986; Fischer, 1998). Historian Cobbs Hoffman (1998) suggested that the PCVs' main contribution was simply being there, letting Ghanaians know that the powerful US had not forgotten them. The NSS participants believed they had learned about their country, but had not gained in patriotism, and like PCVs they questioned the impact that their service had on national development due to poorly defined assignments or limited training, numbers or term of service.

Although PCVs and NSS participants question the impact that their individual services make on national development, collectively the recruits do provide ongoing support to educational development, especially in rural areas. Such services are in great need in Ghana, where many rural communities remain in need of secondary schools, and

World Bank remedies for school shortages have had mixed results (Uemura, 1999). Furthermore, government-run civic service programmes, due to their focus on educational development nationally, fill a development gap in Ghana not generally addressed by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) which are more likely to work at a regional or local level when addressing education, and civil society organizations (CSOs) which stress human rights, hunger alleviation, democratization, micro-credit loans, environmental issues and other needs, but are not focused on the provision of basic educational services.

Civic service in Peace Corps/Ghana and Ghana's NSS could be enhanced through improved mechanisms for and greater openness to organizational learning via recruits' experiences. Overall, the NSS and Peace Corps/Ghana provide valuable services, but the goals least likely to be met by government-run civic service programmes in Ghana are those which rely on effective organizational learning. One possible approach to improved assessment via intra-organizational learning might be to use Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) or related techniques which allow for relatively rapid feedback from those engaged in service as well as community members, including illiterate ones (Bar-on and Prinsen, 1999). Assessment findings might help address development needs such as whether the Peace Corps and other non-Ghanaian civic service programmes could help offset the large number of medically trained Ghanaians who leave for higher pay in Britain and the US (Horton, 2001) or, akin to South Africa (Patel *et al.*, 2007), whether the NSS should focus on mandatory service for those with a medical education rather than 18-year-olds obtaining degrees. In countries such as Ghana, with democratic governance and strong religious beliefs there is relatively good potential for voluntary civic service sector development (Salm and Falola, 2002; Patel *et al.*, 2007).

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