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### Home Economists

Peace Corps (U.S.)

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## HOME ECONOMISTS

Teaching

Volunteer home economists are helping to alleviate the acute shortage of professionally-trained teachers in the developing nations. Some Volunteers have had previous teaching experience or education courses. Many have note.

The subjects include: human relations (personal appearance, community relations, the family), foods and nutrition (balanced diets, nutrition, food preservation and preparation), clothing (textiles, sewing), child care, home improvement (cleaning and decorating the home, sanitation in the home and environment), home management (planning expenditures, budgeting), and health (hygiene, first aid, health problems of children).

Extension Work

Extension work in developing nations often has a different emphasis than in the U. S. A Volunteer in Bolivia writes:

In the United States, the Extension Service of the Department of Agriculture does not come under the heading of social work in the minds of most people. However, in Bolivia I think it can be classified as such--a part of the work of extension is to create a desire in the people for change and to make this change possible by suggesting ways to improve health and living by using available materials.

The home demonstration agent works principally with groups--homemakers' clubs and 4-S clubs. The basic program includes foods and nutrition, home management, health and sanitation, child care, and care and construction of clothing.

I began my work with extension by traveling with the home agent and conducting classes with her clubs. Later, I worked less with clubs and more with the home agent. We worked together to develop new teaching techniques to make the classes more interesting and more understandable to the people.



In other parts of Latin America, Africa and Asia, Volunteer extension workers are organizing women's clubs, teaching sewing, pre-natal child care, child rearing, embroidering, and food preservation and preparation, home decoration, hygiene and sanitation.

### Community Development

For the Peace Corps home economist, community development means helping the women of a community solve their own problems by group effort. The problem may be in clothing for the children, infant care, food preservation, or the variety of other problems which women in the home face.

But the Volunteer's task is complicated by the lack of awareness which women in developing nations may have about these problems. They may not realize that some illnesses are caused by poor food preparation, and they are not eager to change methods of food preparation which their mothers, grandmothers, and great-grandmothers used for years. Or they may be too tired from arduous chores of the day to think about such superfluous subjects as balanced diets or home improvement.

It is the job of the Volunteer home economist to point out some of these problems to the local women and try to interest them in getting together with their neighbors to solve them. This is more difficult than it sounds, for these women have never solved a problem by group effort. They have never experienced a local town council, a PTA, a 4-H Club, or an adult education class.

### DIETITIANS AND NUTRITIONISTS

#### Food Service Administration

In schools, hospitals and other large institutions, dietitians and nutritionists are using their understanding of the vitamin and mineral



content of foods and food administration. They are planning, preparing and supervising meals for hospital patients and boarding school students. In one school, Volunteers plan all the meals, supervise the preparation of the food, control everything concerned with the service of food. They have introduced a balanced diet, involving more fruit, vegetables, eggs, meat and fish, and have greatly improved the sanitary conditions in the kitchen and pantry.

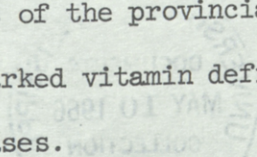
In school feeding programs, Volunteers are called upon to use their administrative skills to insure the proper preparation, distribution and storage of foods. These programs provide school children with at least one hot, nourishing meal each day. It is hoped that these programs will increase school attendance, decrease drop-outs, and eventually eliminate illiteracy.

#### Dietetic Therapy

In many hospitals, Volunteers are helping to introduce dietetic therapy. They are outlining special meals for patients who have been placed on modified diets and counseling families of convalescing patients on the need for special dietetic care. Very often they make home visits to see that these special diets are being followed. They also instruct hospital personnel on the preparation of these meals.

#### Research

Some Volunteers are engaged in surveys of food and nutrition. In East Pakistan, for example, a Volunteer is assisting a nutrition study of a province. Data compiled in this study will lead to many remedial programs to improve the diets of the provincial population. Results from the study already indicate marked vitamin deficiencies which cause high incidence of children's diseases.





Community Nutrition

Volunteers with training in nutrition are being assigned to local public health departments, community development organizations and private agencies to help educate rural and urban populations in the field of nutrition.

They are organizing adult education classes for women, instructing them in buying, preparing and serving food and in planning for the nutritional needs for the family. Other nutritionists are working with local extension services to develop improved teaching pamphlets and techniques; organizing nutrition classes for teenagers; and helping to training local leaders to carry on nutrition education programs in their communities.



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