



# PEACE CORPS

---

---

## Description of Service

Mr Aaron Cass Harris, CHIP PCV  
Republic of Zambia, Southern Africa

### **Project Overview**

Mr Aaron Cass Harris arrived in Zambia on July 20, 2011 to serve as a Peace Corps Volunteer (PCV) under the Community Health Improvement Project (CHIP). The purpose of this project is to promote sustainable development so that rural Zambians can be healthy and empowered to promote appropriate and sustainable strategies that mitigate the effects of locally prioritized health problems. In partnership with the community, the PCVs focus on Zambia's six major "Health Thrusts", which include: HIV/AIDS, TB, malaria, child health and nutrition, safe motherhood, and water and sanitation. In addition to these major health thrusts, the PCVs in CHIP helped to reform and train the local Neighbourhood Health Committees (NHCs) so that the community can continue to educate villagers on proper health practices and to promote the general health of the community.

The project operates under a memorandum of understanding with the Zambian Ministry of Health (MOH). CHIP volunteers work in rural communities teaching, training, and empowering individuals, households, community health workers and local organizations focusing on health. These organizations include, but are not limited to, NHCs, local nutrition groups, and groups for People Living with HIV/AIDS.

### **Formal Training**

Mr Aaron Harris' twenty seven month Peace Corps commitment began with an intensive 11 week community-based Pre-Service Training (PST) in Chongwe, Zambia. During this training, Mr. Harris lived with a host family in the nearby village Chishiko, where language and project related technical trainings were carried out. Training during this period covered the following areas:

**Technical Training (120 hours):** Included information on numerous facets of HIV, malaria and food security issues in the context of Zambian society, community based organization (CBO) formation, non-formal and adult education, general medical information, and safety and security in Zambia.

**Citonga Language Training (120 hours):** Included intensive grammar, vocabulary, and oral and written communication skills training in the local language of Citonga. Mr Harris achieved a proficiency level of Intermediate High at the end of PST.

**Cross-Cultural (30 hours):** Included Zambian history, politics, economics, traditional culture, and personal and professional adaptation skills for working in a foreign culture environment.

**In-Service Training:** After three months of community integration in Dimbwe village, more site-specific and applicable training topics were addressed at In-Service Training (IST). Many topics from PST were expanded on at this training such as small business and budgeting, cross-cultural problem solving, and governmental structural negotiations. Additionally, the introduction of new topics covered during In-Service Training included:

\* Behaviour Change (17 hours): Training on the theory behind adult behaviour change and how to

apply these methods to primary CHIP projects as well as secondary projects.

\* **Permaculture (10 hours):** Training on the theory of permaculture and participation in creating a permagarden. Types of permaculture include alternative techniques of water collection and complementary crop production.

**PEPFAR (40 hours):** A week-long training on all aspects of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Zambia with strategies and techniques for bringing the information back to the community. Participants included Peace Corps Volunteers and their community counterparts.

Mr Harris was sworn in as a United States Peace Corps Volunteer on October 7th, 2011 and on October 11<sup>th</sup>, 2011 was posted in Dimbwe Village, Kalomo District, Southern Province, Zambia. Mr Harris lived in a house constructed in the local style from mud-bricks and a roof of thatched grass built on the compound of the PCV's host family, the Simalimbikas. There was no electricity or running water.

### **Primary Projects**

Mr Aaron Harris' PCV CHIP project achievements in the village included:

- Trained and facilitated a Training of Teachers, whereby the local basic school teachers (18 in total) were trained in the major health thrusts over a two (2) day period. The purpose of this training was to ensure that the teachers at the basic school knew the facts on the 6 health thrusts so that they could effectively teach the students at the basic school.
- Trained eight (8) Neighbourhood Health Committees (NHC) on the basic health thrusts and how to implement health education and village health inspections, as well as basic organizational management. Conducted monthly follow up visits to each NHC.
- Built capacity of the NHCs to provide vital local health outreach and promote health education at the village level through construction of 6 health posts. These were built with the aid of a PCPP grant. The community provided over 55% of the total costs.
- Co-facilitated the training of NHCs and CHWs on how to properly take Rapid Diagnostic Tests (RDTs) for malaria. This gave each health post and NHC the ability to conduct these tests at the local level, reducing the burden on the central Rural Health Clinic (RHC) significantly and increasing access to malaria testing for over 10,000 villagers, who did not have access before due to the great distances they have to travel to the RHC.
- Co-facilitated health education, in both English and the local language of Citonga, at the weekly Under 5/ Growth monitoring clinics in a variety of areas including: HIV/AIDS, Malaria, TB, Water and Sanitation, Nutrition, Child Health and Nutrition, Family Planning.
- Facilitated the distribution of over 1000 insecticide treated nets (ITNs) to households who did not have access to ITNs, facilitating the prevention of malaria in over 1000 households.
- Facilitated the 2012 and 2013 yearly village inspections of each of the ten (10) health posts to obtain vital demographic and health information needed by the RHC and NHCs to effectively design and monitor health interventions.
- Demonstrated appropriate technologies for water purification to the NHCs and individuals.
- Trained the clinic staff and NHC members on how to effectively use health related teaching materials from the Peace Corps This includes a variety of manuals for health talks, as well as a bag of teaching materials from PEPFAR to teach life skills and conduct HIV/AIDS related health talks..

### **Secondary Projects**

Mr Harris also found opportunities to assist his community in ways outside the primary focus of CHIP.

These secondary project achievements include:

- Facilitated the procurement of funds for water source development in the community.
- Wrote and translated into the local language two manuals that detail in an accessible way all health and organizational information needed for Community Health Workers and NHCs to operate effectively. This facilitates the periodic retraining of CHWs and NHCs, as well as providing a reference to the vital technical health information for community health education.
- Assisted the project Smile Train by identifying villagers with cleft lips
- Demonstrated how to create durable bags out of Chitenge material to the NHCs so that they can make and sell these bags as an income generating activity (IGA) to raise funds for projects and general operation.
- Promoted greater cross cultural understanding between Americans and Zambians

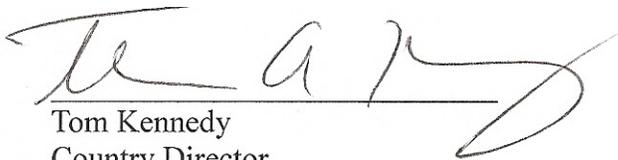
### **Peace Corps Activities**

Mr Harris was engaged in Peace Corps specific activities, including:

- Compiled a comprehensive dictionary in the Citonga language to aid current and future PCTs and PCVs who are learning the Citonga language.
- Assisted the drafting of several Small Grants proposals and Completion Reports for fellow volunteers in Southern Province.
- Facilitated the posting of the LIFE 2012 (three volunteers), the RED 2012 (five volunteers), the CHIP 2012 (five volunteers) and the RAP 2012 (four volunteers) intakes..

*Pursuant to section 5(f) of the Peace Corps Act, 22 U.S.C. 2054(f), as amended, any former Volunteer employed by the United States Government following his/her Peace Corps service is entitled to have any period of satisfactory Peace Corps Volunteer service credited for purposes of retirement, seniority, reduction in force, leave and other privileges based on length of Government service. Peace Corps service shall not be credited toward completion of the probationary or trial period or completion of any service for career appointment.*

*This is to certify that in accordance with the Executive Order No. 11103 of April 10, 1963, **Aaron Cass Harris served satisfactorily as a Peace Corps Volunteer. His service ended September 7th, 2013.** He is therefore eligible to be appointed as a career-conditional employee in the competitive civil service on a non-competitive basis. The benefit under the Executive Order extends for a period of one year after termination of volunteer service, except that the employing agency may extend the period for up to three years for a former volunteer who enters military service, pursues studies at a recognized institution of higher learning, or engages in other activities which, in viewing of the appointed Agency, warrants extension of the period.*

  
Tom Kennedy  
Country Director  
Peace Corps Zambia

09/03/2013  
Date