

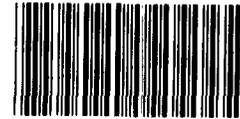
GAO

Report to the Chairman, Legislation and  
National Security Subcommittee,  
Committee on Government Operations,  
House of Representatives

January 1992

# PEACE CORPS

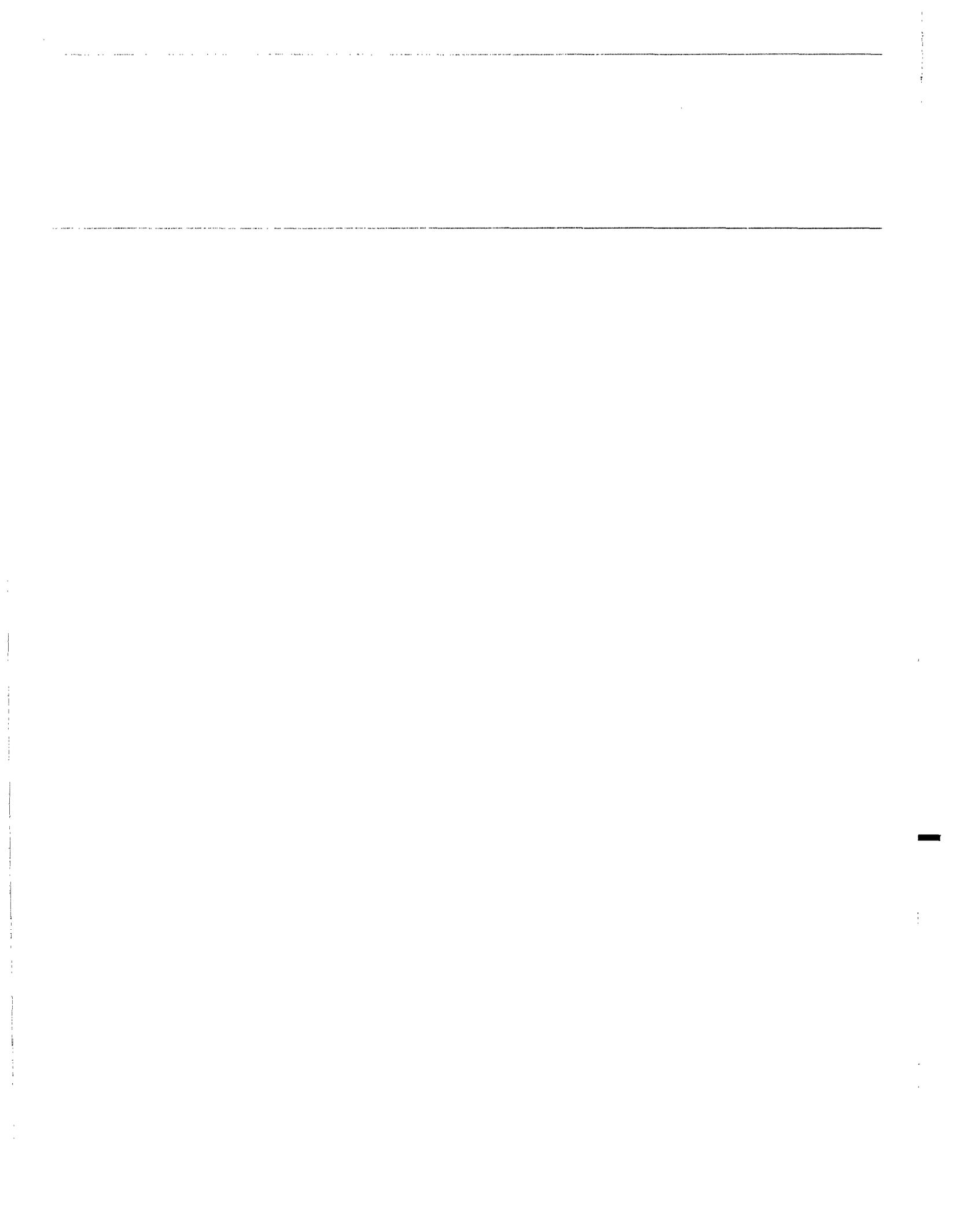
## Progress in Minority Representation



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**National Security and  
International Affairs Division**

B-244137

January 13, 1992

The Honorable John Conyers, Jr.  
Chairman, Legislation and National  
Security Subcommittee  
Committee on Government Operations  
House of Representatives

Dear Mr. Chairman:

In a May 1990 report, we stated that only about 7 percent of Peace Corps volunteers were minorities and that recruiters had not been provided the incentives or tools to achieve minority recruitment goals.<sup>1</sup> We also reported that until recently there had been few minorities in policy-making positions to serve as recruitment role models.

This report responds to your request that we review the Peace Corps' progress in increasing its minority representation—both for volunteers and staff—since our 1990 report. We also assessed the extent to which programs have been implemented to improve minority representation and obtained information on cross-cultural and diversity training provided to volunteers.

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**Results in Brief**

Minority representation among volunteers has increased from about 7 percent in May 1990 to about 12 percent in July 1991. This increase can be attributed, at least in part, to the Peace Corps' strong commitment to attracting more minorities and to programs such as targeted recruitment at predominantly minority colleges and universities. Volunteers are receiving cross-cultural and diversity training.

While minority representation among volunteers has improved, the Peace Corps had not developed demographic and market data to assist in setting realistic area office recruiting goals and for use by recruiters in identifying where qualified minorities were located. Also, recruiters' performance was still evaluated primarily by the number of volunteers recruited. Performance did not adequately consider factors such as conducting minority outreach activities that may lead to recruitment of more minorities.

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<sup>1</sup>Peace Corps: Meeting the Challenges of the 1990s (GAO/NSIAD-90-122, May 18, 1990).

Minority representation among Peace Corps staff has changed very little, although there have been increases of minorities in targeted job categories such as area office managers, recruiters, and country directors. Peace Corps officials attribute this slow progress to the low number of minorities among returned volunteers, historically the source of most staff employees.

In commenting on this report, Peace Corps officials said that since the completion of our fieldwork in September 1991, several actions have been taken to address issues raised in the report. These actions include (1) establishing a task force of area managers to revise recruiters' performance standards to give greater consideration to factors such as conducting minority outreach activities and (2) awarding a contract to assist with the development of demographics information pertaining to the individual area offices. Other demographic and market data research is planned. Peace Corps officials also said that nontraditional sources for staff employees will be given greater consideration.

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## Minority Representation Among Volunteers Has Improved

Before fiscal year 1990, the number of minority volunteers had been about 7 percent or less.<sup>2</sup> The Peace Corps has undertaken a number of initiatives to improve its minority profile among volunteers to more closely reflect America's diversity. Among these initiatives are (1) nationwide and area office minority recruitment goals, (2) advertising campaigns aimed at minority groups, (3) links with colleges and universities having large minority enrollments, (4) establishment of the American Diversity Committee to identify and address minority concerns, (5) cooperative efforts with the National Council of Returned Peace Corps Volunteers, and (6) educational programs aimed at increasing awareness of the Peace Corps. As shown in figure 1, these efforts have begun to show results, with minority representation increasing to 10 percent for recruitment production year 1990 and to nearly 12 percent for 1991 (as of July).<sup>3</sup>

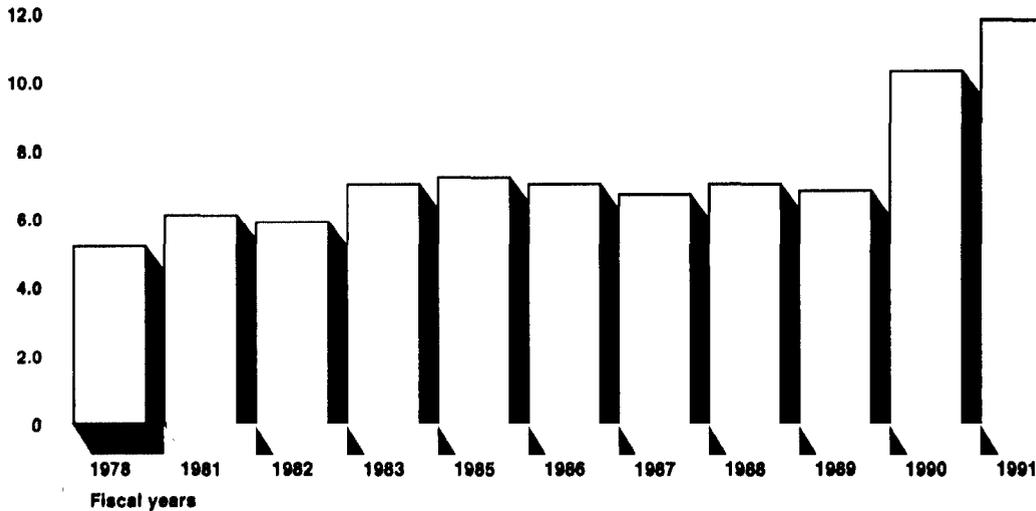
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<sup>2</sup>"Minorities" are defined as American Indian or Alaskan Native; Asian or Pacific Islander; Black, not of Hispanic origin; and Hispanic.

<sup>3</sup>The Peace Corps' recruitment production year is from April through March.

**Figure 1: Minority Representation of Peace Corps Volunteers**

14.0 Percent of total trainees



Note: Data for some years was not available. Data through 1989 is by fiscal year. Data for 1990 and 1991 is by recruitment production year. Data for 1991 is as of July 1991.

Source: Peace Corps.

## Recruitment Goals

Our May 1990 report recommended that the Peace Corps develop a long-term strategy to attract more minority volunteers, including establishing realistic minority recruitment goals and developing targeted advertising campaigns to attract minorities. The Peace Corps has emphasized minority recruitment as an agencywide initiative and has established specific nationwide and area office minority recruitment goals. The Peace Corps established, and slightly exceeded, a nationwide minority recruitment goal of 10 percent for production year 1990. It established an overall 13-percent goal for production year 1991, which ends in March 1992, and 9 of 15 area offices had met or exceeded their individual minority recruitment goals as of December 1991.<sup>4</sup> However, these goals were not based on studies, analyses, or specific demographic and market data, but on what the Peace Corps believed to be achievable based on

<sup>4</sup>Area offices that met or exceeded 1991 production goals are Atlanta, Boston, Denver, Miami, Minneapolis, New York, San Francisco, Seattle, and Washington, D.C. Offices that had not achieved their minority recruitment goals as of December 1991 were Los Angeles, Dallas, Kansas City, Philadelphia, Chicago, and Detroit.

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prior recruiting results. Peace Corps officials informed us that the agency had set a minority recruitment goal of 15 percent for 1993.

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## Advertising Campaigns

In 1989, the Peace Corps established a Minority Recruitment Office to coordinate minority recruiting within the agency. The office, headed by the Minority Recruitment Coordinator, has developed strategies and budgets for recruiting minorities. The office's budgets, \$200,000 for fiscal year 1990 and \$203,000 for fiscal year 1991, include funds for the regional area offices as well as the Coordinator's office.<sup>5</sup>

The office's recruitment strategy includes advertising campaigns targeted at minorities and distribution of advertising material and information to the area offices. The office's fiscal year 1991 budget included \$40,400 for classified advertisements among the area offices and \$9,700 at the headquarters office. The funds used at the headquarters office supported area office activities and included the development of advertising strategies, advertising placements, and direct mailings to minority students and faculty. The Minority Recruitment Office also works closely with the area offices on minority recruitment campaigns.

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## Links With Colleges and Universities Are Being Developed

The Peace Corps is developing a wide variety of programs with colleges and universities, some of which focus on minority volunteer recruitment efforts and others on increasing awareness of the Peace Corps in minority communities. Responsibility for managing programs with universities falls under the Deputy Director of the Peace Corps. The programs are new, and therefore the Peace Corps has not had the opportunity to evaluate them. In addition, the programs focusing on increasing awareness are long-term efforts and therefore necessitate a long-term evaluation. Examples of the programs include the following:

- For the Masters Internationalist program, in which 12 universities currently participate, a student completes 1 year of academic work and 2 years of volunteer service and, on his or her return, is awarded a masters' degree in one of several disciplines. Several of the participating universities have large minority enrollments.
- A pilot program negotiated with the City University of New York system and Bronx Community College enables community college graduates with

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<sup>5</sup>According to the Peace Corps, the Minority Recruitment Office received an additional \$53,400 at the end of fiscal year 1991, allocated as follows: \$26,000 for minority strategy contracts, \$15,000 for minority demographic and market research, and \$12,400 for advertising.

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2 years of Peace Corps volunteer service, to return as seniors to 4-year colleges. The Deputy Director told us the intent was to expand this program to include community colleges with high minority enrollments.

- In the Peace Corps Fellows program, returning volunteers who taught during their tours of service can work toward their teaching degrees at participating colleges and universities by completing academic work and teaching primarily in minority or isolated communities. Currently, 13 colleges and universities participate in the program, and 11 additional universities are expected to be active in the program by September 1992. As of December 1991, Fellows had taught over 40,000 students, most of them minorities. To further expand the program, the Peace Corps recently signed a Letter of Cooperation with the Bureau of Indian Affairs to help fill teaching jobs on Indian reservations.

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### A Committee to Identify and Address Minority Concerns Established

Peace Corps officials agree that diversification must be an agencywide initiative. Consequently, the Peace Corps Director created a minority task force, which has evolved into the American Diversity Committee, to focus on (1) gender discrimination and racial and ethnic minorities and (2) handicapped volunteers and staff employees. This new high-level committee, headed by the Deputy Director of the Peace Corps, meets regularly to address minority issues. It is currently revising the Peace Corps' manual and organizational structure.

The Peace Corps has changed its organizational structure to better address equal employment opportunity (EEO) concerns of both volunteers and staff employees. A consultant hired by the Peace Corps recommended that the EEO office be moved from the Assistant Director for Management's responsibility to the Director's responsibility to avoid any perception that the Director was not concerned with EEO issues and to improve the management of EEO programs. The Peace Corps implemented this recommendation in late 1991.

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### Cooperative Projects With Returned Volunteers

In recent years, there has been little cooperation between the National Council of Returned Peace Corps Volunteers and the Peace Corps. In June 1991, however, the National Council and the Peace Corps proposed a series of cooperative projects. One proposal involves getting former volunteers who are engaged in careers with scarce skills to assist in recruiting scarce-skilled and minority volunteers.<sup>6</sup> A cooperative

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<sup>6</sup>A "scarce skill," usually a technical skill, is an assignment area for which the Peace Corps has difficulty finding volunteers.

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agreement between the National Council and the Peace Corps was formalized on September 30, 1991, and \$50,000 was made available to carry out the purposes of the agreement.

The Peace Corps also contracts with selected colleges and universities to hire former volunteers to recruit on a part-time, but year-round basis. The Peace Corps had contracts with 44 colleges and universities, many of which have large minority enrollments. In addition, the Minority Recruitment Coordinator is developing new contracts with three minority institutions in the Dallas area office and one in the Atlanta area office.<sup>7</sup>

At the area office level, the relationship between returned volunteer affiliate organizations and the Peace Corps has been cooperative. Area offices contact the affiliate organizations to assist both in general and minority recruiting efforts. In addition, area office managers and recruiters informally refer applicants to returned volunteers, whether they belong to the affiliate organization or not, for opinions about service in the Peace Corps or for information about specific countries. We were not able to determine how many returned volunteers were involved, because many of the former volunteers cooperated informally with area office personnel.

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### **New Programs Contribute to Minority Awareness of the Peace Corps**

The Peace Corps has begun a new program, called "World Wise Schools," designed to contribute to minority awareness of the Peace Corps. The Peace Corps provides textbooks for the appropriate grade levels and former volunteers from different countries. The program has been in place for more than 1 year, and Peace Corps officials told us they planned to focus its growth in minority communities.

Many returned-volunteer groups also operate educational programs to increase awareness of the Peace Corps in minority communities. For example, one group of former volunteers in Atlanta, Georgia, implements the World Map Project, which provides local schools, some of which have large minority enrollments, with an educational program on the geography, culture, and other aspects of foreign countries. Another group of former volunteers in Los Angeles, California, implements the Global Awareness program, in which winners of essay contests at local high schools visit Peace Corps volunteers in foreign countries.

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<sup>7</sup>According to the Peace Corps, as of December 1991, the number of colleges and universities with recruitment contracts had increased to 71, and 8 contracts had been established with minority institutions.

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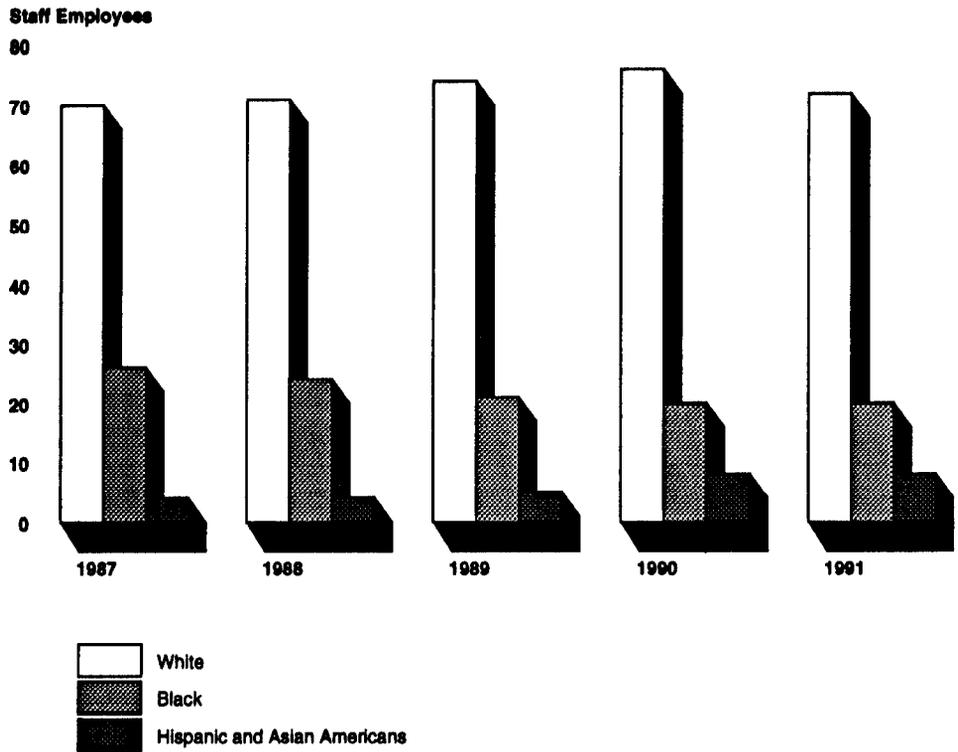
## Minority Representation Among Staff Employees Has Shown Little Improvement

Diversity among Peace Corps' staff employees has changed little since 1987, the earliest year an employee profile was available. Although minority representation has increased in some targeted jobs, such as area office managers, recruiters, and country directors, Peace Corps officials acknowledge that much work still needs to be done to make Peace Corps staff levels more representative of U.S. society.

Of the 856 staff employees with the Peace Corps as of October 31, 1991, 30 percent were minorities. Minority groups, particularly Blacks, were generally overrepresented in clerical positions (67 percent), whereas there were only 18 percent minorities in professional positions. Peace Corps officials acknowledged that minorities were underrepresented in some staff occupational categories, particularly American Indians, and that more effort was needed on minority hiring and retention.

Figure 2 and table 1 show the proportional representation of minorities among Peace Corps' staff and minority representation by occupational category.

**Figure 2: Proportional Minority Representation Among Staff Employees at the Peace Corps**



Note: Figures for fiscal year 1991 were as of July 1991. The percentage for Native Americans was zero for fiscal years 1987 through 1991.

Source: Peace Corps.

**Table 1: Minority Representation Among Peace Corps Staff (as of October 31, 1991)**

Occupational category	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian American	American Indian	Total
Administrative	436	86	31	19	2	574
Clerical	23	42	5	0	0	70
Professional	101	17	1	4	0	123
Technical	43	36	5	3	1	88
Other	0	1	0	0	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>603</b>	<b>182</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>856</b>

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## The Peace Corps Lacks Demographic Data

Most Peace Corps officials with whom we spoke said they believed the Peace Corps needed reliable demographic and market data to maximize their minority recruitment efforts. Such data would permit the Peace Corps to target minorities and special skills in the recruiting process. Peace Corps managers had only limited demographic and market data and were not trained on how to gather such data or on how to use it to develop a comprehensive, strategic approach to minority recruitment. Area office personnel collected data during the course of their recruiting efforts but did not do so systematically. Their recruiting efforts were based largely on trial and error. The Peace Corps' past performance indicates that the trial-and-error method logically favors recruiting campaigns on majority university campuses.

In commenting on this report, the Peace Corps agreed that this was the situation at the time we completed fieldwork in September 1991. However, officials stated that as of late December 1991, progress had been made to obtain demographic and market data for use by area offices and that training on the use of such data had already been provided to some staff and was planned for all area office managers in January 1992. Peace Corps officials said that a contract had been awarded to assist with the development of demographic data for each area office and that planning was underway to contract for market information pertaining to recruitment approaches and messages to potential applicants. Other research is being planned to study minority applicants who initiated but subsequently withdrew from the recruitment process and to study potential minority applicants who do not apply to the Peace Corps but possess all the necessary skills and qualifications.

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## Greater Outreach to Minority Communities Needed

According to Peace Corps officials, the agency is often viewed by the minority community as a predominantly white middle-class organization with little to offer minorities. Recruiting officials we spoke with said that if the Peace Corps was to achieve its long-term minority recruiting goals, it must improve the minority community's awareness of the Peace Corps and the opportunities it affords volunteers. This improvement is particularly needed if the Peace Corps expects to recruit more minorities with scarce skills.

The Minority Recruiting Coordinator has advocated increased awareness campaigns in minority communities. However, the burden of planning and conducting them falls largely on the area offices. While area offices

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conduct minority recruitment campaigns, few conduct awareness campaigns in minority communities. Peace Corps officials told us that recruiters must spend all their time recruiting to meet applicant and volunteer goals, especially for scarce-skills slots, and therefore do not have time to conduct awareness campaigns. In addition, recruiters' performance is assessed primarily on how well they implement recruitment campaigns and how many applicants and volunteers, including those with scarce skills, they produce.

The managers of the three area offices we visited emphasized the need for increased minority community outreach activities to achieve their long-term minority recruiting goals. They also said they had conducted some awareness campaigns in minority communities and, while they would like to do more of them, they did not have sufficient staff to do so.

In December 1991, Peace Corps officials informed us that a task force of area office managers had been formed to revise recruiters' performance standards. Among the performance standards to be considered are minority recruitment and outreach activities. Officials also informed us that in light of personnel ceilings and budget constraints, each area office had established minority advisory boards composed of minority community leaders to assist and advise on minority recruitment matters.

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## Racial/Ethnic Diversity and Cross-cultural Training Is Provided

Trainees and some staff employees are given racial/ethnic training designed to enhance awareness of the diversity of ethnic groups. This training, while too new to have been evaluated, is an indicator of the Peace Corps' approach to diversifying its volunteers and work force. In addition, the Peace Corps provides volunteers with cross-cultural training.

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### Diversity Training

In our May 1990 assessment, we reported that minority volunteers faced culturally insensitive attitudes and behaviors within the Peace Corps community and that they occasionally had negative experiences during their service in host countries because of differences in cultural attitudes. Volunteers are now provided training, before going overseas, designed to help them become more sensitive to the needs of minorities and to help them create an awareness among the peoples served that Americans come from widely varied backgrounds. The training, called "diversity training," has been provided for about a year to all volunteers. Similar training is planned for overseas staff employees, though no funds have yet been

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allocated. Peace Corps officials have not yet evaluated the impact of diversity training in the field.

Since January 1990, the Peace Corps, as part of its new recruiters' training, has also provided a diversity training session designed to enhance recruiters' awareness of ethnic minority groups. In August 1990, the Peace Corps began, as a pilot training program, a separate minority awareness training for recruiters. This training addressed cultural values and socioeconomic conditions of ethnic minority groups.

Peace Corps officials also told us that in September 1991 they began augmenting training for public affairs specialists to include training on gathering demographic and market data for use in developing strategic approaches to minority recruitment.

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## Cross-cultural Training

Cross-cultural training is an integral part of preservice training, which includes language, technical, and cultural training. Since preservice training is decentralized, overseas Peace Corps posts utilize different approaches and material for their training. The overseas posts are responsible for ensuring the quality of training, but the Peace Corps has established training guidance and standards. At the conclusion of preservice training, the overseas posts submit final reports, which are reviewed by headquarters staff. The reports also serve as a reference for future training.

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## Recommendations

We recommend that the Peace Corps Director (1) continue to develop demographic and market data for the area offices to use in recruiting minorities and conducting minority outreach activities and (2) ensure that performance evaluations for area office recruiters reflect such factors as minority recruitment and outreach activities.

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## Scope and Methodology

To conduct our review, we interviewed and collected documents from officials at the Peace Corps, the National Council of Returned Peace Corps Volunteers and its affiliate organizations, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the U.S. Department of Commerce/Bureau of the Census, and the U.S. Department of Education. We compiled statistical data on representations of minorities and documented the degree to which the Peace Corps had institutionalized changes. We conducted our review

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We did not evaluate the effectiveness of either diversity or cross-cultural training, nor did we determine the numbers of returned volunteers used for minority recruitment efforts.

Our review was performed from June through September 1991 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. We did not obtain written comments on this report; however, Peace Corps officials provided oral comments that have been included where appropriate.

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As arranged with your office, unless you publicly announce this report's contents earlier, no further distribution will be made until 30 days from its issue date. At that time, we will send copies to the appropriate congressional committees, the Director of the Peace Corps, and other interested parties.

Please call me on (202) 275-5790 if you or your staff have any questions concerning this report. Major contributors to this report were David R. Martin, Assistant Director; Robert E. Sanchez, Evaluator-in-Charge; and Jesus A. Martinez, Evaluator.

Sincerely yours,



Harold J. Johnson  
Director, Foreign Economic  
Assistance Issues

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