

PFP AND PEACE INITIATIVES: COMMITMENTS AND LIMITS

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During its initial years Partnering for Peace (PFP) has had considerable success in its core mission of helping forge and then supporting the partnership between Peace Corps and Rotary International.¹ At the same time PFP as an organization has steadily grown, from a small group of founders to a global membership of nearly 150 Rotarian RPCVs. It has formally established itself as 501 (c) 4 organization with formal governance, including a board of directors, bylaws and a modest budget.² In the process it has recruited many talented colleagues with a wide range of experience and considerable ambition for PFP and its work.

As all that creative energy has been absorbed there naturally have been new ideas for PFP's mission and operations. Enthusiastic members have, for instance, proposed that PFP become actively involved in partnership projects in the field, that it engage other international organizations and global peace initiatives, and that it undertake fund raising for those and other activities.

To test these and many other ideas, and to chart its future course, PFP has undertaken periodic strategic planning and membership survey work. It has sought to confirm members' understandings of the PFP mission and what steps to take to implement it.

¹ The alliance was initially outlined by RI and Peace Corps in a Letter of Collaboration in 2014 and then formally adopted as a partnership in a Memorandum of Understanding in 2015; the MOU has since been renewed in 2018 and 2021 (see [Peace Corps & Rotary Announce Collaboration to Promote Global Development and Volunteer Service](#) and <https://my.rotary.org/en/rotary-international-and-peace-corps-renew-partnership>).

² Per IRS rules, 501 (c) 4 organizations are non-profits that are able to lobby and raise funds, but donations to them are not tax deductible.

To conduct those reviews, it has reminded itself of the PFP mission, which is stated as follows:

Our mission is to partner Rotary and Rotaract members with past and current Peace Corps volunteers for mutual benefits.

Our vision is to increase service and friendship among Rotarians and former international service volunteers for meeting the goals of both organizations.

Those statements are supplemented by a set of six specific goals for networking, technical support and fellowship aimed at supporting the partnership.³

The planning and survey results have demonstrated a wide range of creative ideas for how to pursue those goals, particularly in communications and outreach. But through it all the members and board have consistently hewed to the core notion of PFP serving as a facilitator, as being responsible for supporting the partnership and carefully measuring its work and ambitions against that basic task.

That is, the members and board have focused on promotion, education and advocacy for the partnership. They have shied away from expanding the mission into activities that would take PFP into more of an operational role whereby it would be actively undertaking aspects of the work of RI, Peace Corps and other agencies.

To some this self-imposed restraint may seem disappointing. So, for instance, in the realm of field work, some would like to see PFP deploying members to work with local Rotary clubs, in-country PC staffs and even PCVs themselves to pursue partnership projects in the field, and to raise funds for that work. The idea would be to bring all the

³ See Appendix A

forces of PFP members and the resources they might generate to bear on the ground.

With regard to peace initiatives, some would like to see PFP partnering with activist peace groups to advance their particular causes and programs. They point to the word “peace” in the PFP name and, of course, in the name Peace Corps itself, arguing that achieving world peace requires PFP to expand beyond supporting the partnership.

The difficulty posed by the idea of direct field work and funding is that it would inject PFP into frontline work that is understood to be the province of Rotary and Peace Corps. PFP efforts could become duplicative and competitive with its partners, thereby confusing and likely undermining its primary role as a facilitator. It also would require a substantial operating budget sufficient to develop field work programs and a management capacity to support them, plus the need to raise the necessary funds.

Likewise, the challenge for the peace initiative linkage concept is that it would take PFP beyond the approach to peace implicit in Peace Corps and Rotary. Both organizations are dedicated primarily to providing service in the field – to engaging in education, health and economic activities that improve the lot of individuals and communities around the world. Their work is founded on the belief that the causes of conflict lie in poverty, illiteracy, disease and poor sanitation and that material stability and economic, educational and social growth are the grounds upon which peace can be built and sustained.⁴

Their approaches to peace are therefore indirect; they try to create conditions in which empowered peoples can generate the prosperous conditions that lead them to avoid conflict and discord. Neither Peace

⁴ See, for instance, <https://www.rotary.org/en/our-causes/promoting-peace> and <https://www.peacecorps.gov/about/>.

Corps nor Rotary are engaged in the “street work” and political efforts that lie at the core of peace activism.

In its efforts to foster the partnership, PFP has modeled its own efforts on the philosophies of the partner organizations, and as a facilitator it has tried to stay out of their way. It has striven to bring the parties together, to help point out their commonality, to encourage their cooperation and to celebrate their successes. But as an organization it has deliberately left the implementation and details to the partners, and in the realm of peace activism it has restricted its role to one of providing information and connections as noted on the PFP website.

Appendix A

PARTNERING FOR PEACE GOALS

Partnering for Peace fosters partnerships between Rotary International and the global Peace Corps community through ongoing networking, technical support and fellowship. It seeks to implement this mission through a variety of efforts:

1. Request that Rotary Districts identify all of their international projects, to share with their liaison to the Peace Corps.
2. Connect Peace Corps Volunteer recruits with a Rotary club to foster mentoring and support while the PCV is in-county.
3. Match Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) with their local Rotary District to seek partnering opportunities.
4. Include Rotary and Rotaract members in meeting with outbound PCVs and their families.
5. Maintain a formal partnership between the US Peace Corps and Rotary International.
6. Establish formal partnerships with other international service volunteer organizations.

Appendix B

OPTIONS FOR DIRECT ACTION BY PFP MEMBERS

There are myriad ways in which individual members of PFP can provide direct support to partnership and peace projects. For example, working through Rotary clubs, RPCV groups and Peace Corps offices, PFP members can:

- Sponsor peace symposia
- Support refugee families
- Create peace monuments
- Participate in Rotary clubs' peace clubs or peace committees
- Engage Rotarians and RPCVs in peace training programs such as that of the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP), the Peace Action Group and the E-Club for World Peace
- Sponsor peace fellows
- Raise funds for such efforts through:
 - Peace Corps grants
 - Applications by PC posts and PCVs for USAID Small Project Assistance (SPA) grants
 - NPCA Community Fund
 - Rotary club, district, RI and Foundation grants
 - Grants from local, national and international foundations with peace missions