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© 1993 Joanie Budzileni

Paraguay World Map Project at School

Completed in 1993 on the front wall of the school kitchen in San Antonio-Guazu, Paraguay, this world map was most likely the largest (about 10' x 22') in the country at the time. Two Peace Corps volunteers, together with local villagers, cemented over a brick wall and built a scaffold. As part of a geography awareness lesson, every child and teacher of the school participated in the project, either by helping draw or paint the map.

News about the big world map spread to nearby villages. Passersby, whether on foot or on a bus, looked forward to seeing the mural and enjoyed it as well.

— Joanie Budzileni, *Peace Corps/Paraguay, 1991-93*

Paraguay (Republic of Paraguay)

Capital Asuncion

Population 6,995,655 (2009 est.)

Life Expectancy 75.77 years

Literacy 94% (age 15 and over and read and write)

Languages Spanish (official), Guarani (official)

Religions Roman Catholic 89.6%, Protestant 6.2%, other or unspecified 3%

Government constitutional republic

Source: The World Factbook, 2009



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© 1992 Abigail Rome

Ecuador Dedicating Time to Homework

In Saraguru, youth in modern dress study diligently in Spanish, letting no idle moment pass unused. Yet their culture and traditions remain and even intensify under increased contact with the greater world.

The Saraguru were brought by the Incans from Peru to colonize the southern Ecuadorean Andes. Quechua speakers, they maintain much of the original culture through their language, dress, and daily activities. They always wear black, said to be in mourning for Atahualpa, the last Indian chief, killed by Pizarro in 1533.

The Saraguru are master silversmiths. They visit the Amazon regularly and maintain crops and herds of cattle there. Proud and serious-minded people, their ancestral practice of community cooperation has allowed them to succeed in a changing world.

— *Abigail Rome, Peace Corps/Ecuador, 1990-92*

Ecuador (Republic of Ecuador)

Capital Quito

Population 14,573,101 (2009 est.)

Life Expectancy 75.3 years

Literacy 91% (age 15 and over can read and write)

Languages Spanish (official), Amerindian languages (especially Quechua)

Religions Roman Catholic 95%, other 5%

Government republic

Source: The World Factbook, 2009



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© 1991 Rochelle Goedken

Lesotho Performing an Original Dance

High in the Maluti Mountains, the Lesobeng community has gathered to say farewell to me. For over three years, I worked with the teachers and students in eighteen different primary schools in the area.

This was one of my favorite spots in all of Lesotho. It was from here that I first set eyes on my little round house (rondavel), and the valley and mountains that would be my home. When darkness fell, I would often wrap in a wool blanket and climb the short distance from my cozy rondavel to this special place. I could feel the peace of the valley as the distant villages lit cooking fires, and the stars appeared in this real-life planetarium, undisturbed by light pollution.

In the photo, the students, teachers, and parents of Lesobeng Primary School are singing and clapping in Lesotho's rhythmic style. But the dance was original, one that nobody had ever seen before. The performance was flawless and remains vividly etched in my mind.

— Rochelle Goedken, *Peace Corps/Lesotho, 1987-91*

Lesotho (Kingdom of Lesotho)

Capital Maseru

Population 2,130,819 (2009 est.)

Life Expectancy 40.38 years

Literacy 84.8% (age 15 and over can read and write)

Languages Sesotho (southern Sotho), English (official), Zulu, Xhosa

Religions Christian 80%, indigenous beliefs 20%

Government parliamentary constitutional monarchy

Source: The World Factbook, 2009



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© 2000 Claire Harlan

Mauritania Enthusiastic Students

Excitement and enthusiasm shine in the eyes of these Mauritanian girls. Unfortunately, most of them will never finish school because of early marriage, poverty, long distances to school, lack of materials, and a low value placed on education for females. Still, it was always a pleasure to work with the girls and women as they embarked on their journey.

In the women I came to know, I observed strength and confidence, respect and love for family and community, and a desire to learn. So many strong, beautiful women shared friendship, their families, and their country with me.

— Claire Harlan, *Peace Corps/Mauritania, 1999-2001*

Mauritania (Islamic Republic of Mauritania)

Capital Nouakchott

Population 3,129,486 (July 2009 est.)

Life Expectancy 60.37 years

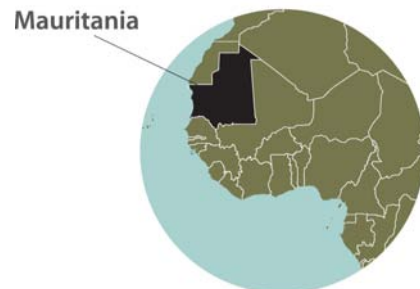
Literacy 51.2% (age 15 and over can read and write)

Languages Arabic, Pulaar, Soninke, Wolof, French, Hassaniya

Religions Muslim 100%

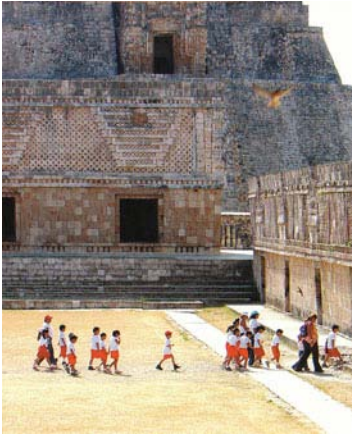
Government military junta

Source: The World Factbook, 2010



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© 2006 Amber Davis Collins

Mexico Field Trip to Mayan Ruins

Mexico is a country deeply aware of its indigenous heritage. A thousand years after the fall of the Mayan empire, traditional Mayan communities still dot the landscape of the Yucatan peninsula.

Here a group of Mexican school children explores the ruins of Uxmal, the greatest metropolitan and religious center of the Yucatan, a city that flourished from the 7th to 10th century A.D. Marching through the courtyard of the Governor's Palace, the children's voices echo through the ruins, bringing life to this treasured piece of history. This moment in time served as a reminder that even as Mexico moves towards the future, the past is not forgotten.

— Amber Davis Collins, *Peace Corps/Honduras, 2002-04*

Mexico (United Mexican States)

Capital Mexico City (Distrito Federal)

Population 111,211,789 (July 2009 est.)

Life Expectancy 76.06 years

Literacy 91% (age 15 and over can read and write)

Languages Spanish only 92.7%, Spanish & indigenous languages 5.7%, indigenous only .8%

Religions Roman Catholic 76.5%, Protestant 6.3%

Government federal republic

Source: *The World Factbook, 2010*



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© 2007 Karen Ramsey

Cambodia Studying a Cell Phone Catalog

Cambodia presents the visitor with an oft-surprising blend of the modern and the traditional. Just outside the Mekong river city of Kampong Cham, the grey stones of Wat Nokor, an 11th century Buddhist shrine, stand in stark contrast to the more recent, neon-colored wall paintings of this still active Wat.

Here, in this scene, the old and new combine in a yet more unexpected way as a young saffron-robed monk lounges lazily in a hammock and studies... a cell phone catalogue.

— Karen Ramsey, *Peace Corps/Cameroon 1991-94, 2004-08*

Cambodia (Kingdom of Cambodia)

Capital Phnom Penh

Population 14,494,293 (July 2009 est.)

Life Expectancy 62.1 years

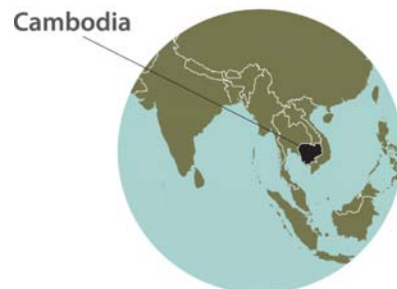
Literacy 73.6% (age 15 and over can read and write)

Languages Khmer (official) 95%, French, English

Religions Buddhist 96.4%, Muslim 2.1%, other 1.3%

Government multiparty democracy under a constitutional monarchy

Source: The World Factbook, 2010



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© 2005 Deb Parker

China School in Beijing

Fifth graders read a play and practice conversational English in this Beijing school, which is nestled in one of the city's many *hutongs*. *Hutongs* are old, narrow lanes or alleys formed by courtyard homes (compounds with houses around a courtyard) that traditionally covered all of Beijing. Although *hutongs* survive today, many have been replaced by high-rise buildings for businesses and apartments.

Chinese children who live in cities learn English in school. While school uniforms are often required, this school has a more relaxed policy — students wear uniforms, but not everyday. The red scarf of the uniform signifies the country's Communist political party. The students were typical fifth graders — quiet and attentive when their principal was speaking, but relaxed and talkative (even noisy) during their break.

— Deb Parker, *Peace Corps/Niger, 1977-79*

China (People's Republic of China)

Capital Beijing

Population 1,338,612,968 (2009 est.)

Life Expectancy 73.47 years

Literacy 90.9% (age 15 and over can read and write)

Languages Mandarin, Cantonese, Shanghainese, Fuzhou, others

Religions (officially atheist), Taoist, Buddhist,

Christian 3%-4%, Muslim 1%-2%

Government Communist State

Source: *The World Factbook, 2009*



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© 2008 Michael Gravelle

Botswana In Front of Anti-alcohol Poster at Youth Forum

On the edge of the Central Kalahari Game Reserve in the village of Salajwe, the Lempu Junior Secondary School was hosting the Kweneng District Youth Forum. On this particular day of the Forum, the school gym resonated with heartwarming laughter of children, their impassioned debates over school fees, a theater production about faithfulness to one's partner, and traditional dance beats. The Youth Forum also included an advocacy campaign against alcohol abuse. The campaign developed this warning poster in front of which these six youth gathered to have their picture taken.

— *Michael Gravelle, Peace Corps/Cape Verde 2005-07, Botswana 2007-08*

Botswana (Republic of Botswana)

Capital Gaborone

Population 1,990,876 (July 2009 est.)

Life Expectancy 61.85 years

Literacy 81.2%% (age 15 and over can read and write)

Languages Setswana 78.2%, Kalanga 7.9%, Sekgalagadi 2.8%, English 2.1%, others

Religions Christian 71.6%, Badimo 6%, other 1.4%, none 20.6%

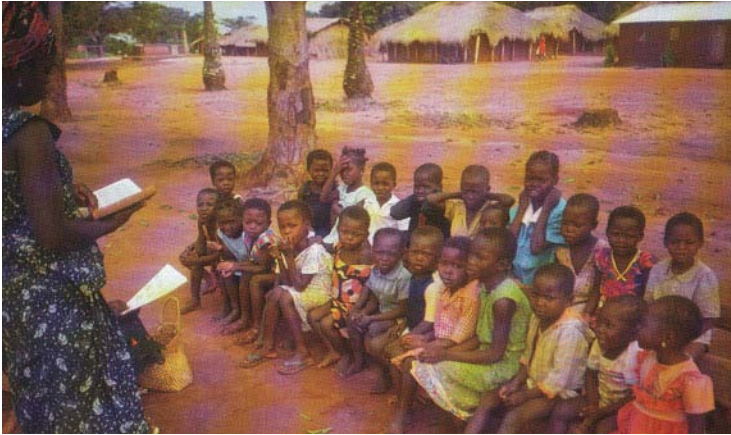
Government parliamentary republic

Source: The World Factbook, 2010



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© 1984 Jeff Cochrane

Central African Republic Class Outdoors

Children silently listen as their teacher recites the week's memory verse from the Sangho Bible. A century ago, missionaries adopted Sangho as the language of church and Bible; it's now widely spoken as a second language, and used in primary school.

The Central African Republic has a short history as a nation and many tribal languages. The existence of a widely-understood, easily learned language like Sangho is an important force for national unity.

— *Jeff Cochrane, Peace Corps/Central African Republic, 1982-84*

Central African Republic

Capital Bangui

Population 4,511,488 (July 2009 est.)

Life Expectancy 44.47 years

Literacy 48.6% (age 15 and over can read and write)

Languages French (official), Sangho (lingua franca and national language), tribal languages

Religions indigenous beliefs 35%, Protestant 25%, Roman Catholic 25%, Muslim 15%

Government republic

Source: The World Factbook, 2010

Central African Republic



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© 2006 Hayley Piper

Peru School Trip to National Park in the Andes

The mystic green waters of the Llanganucco Lakes glisten at the mouth of Huascarán National Park high in the Andes of Central Peru. The lakes, one female, *embra*, and one male, *macho*, frame the entry to one of the most raw and rugged landscapes in the world. Many villagers who spend their lives farming at the base of the park, however, never experience the lake's magnificence due to an entry fee beyond their means.

Recently, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as Uripicallay have provided support to schools and communities near the park. As a result, these fourth graders from the village of Vicos are taking their first boat ride on the lakes their parents have only dreamed of. Before setting out, the children made a traditional offering of fruit, flowers, dried leaves, and locks of hair to mother earth, *la pachamama*. The offering is a way to thank the earth for receiving their visit and to ask for protection on the journey home.

— Hayley Piper

Peru (Republic of Peru)

Capital Lima

Population 29,546,964 (2009 est.)

Life Expectancy 70.74 years

Literacy 87.7% (age 15 and over can read and write)

Languages Spanish (official), Quechua (official), Aymara, others

Religions Roman Catholic 81%, other Christian 2.1%, unspecified 16.3%

Government constitutional republic

Source: *The World Factbook*, 2009

