

ACTION

1980 ANNUAL REPORT

VISTA

VOLUNTEERS IN
SERVICE
TO AMERICA



VISTA is a unique volunteer program that helps low-income Americans build their capacity for self-improvement and self-reliance. VISTA projects address a diverse spectrum of problems affecting low-income people in America. At the same time, they all support some aspect of the program's major objectives, which include: helping the poor to develop effective leadership and problem-solving abilities; encouraging cooperative action and self-help projects; creating linkages between various economic strata, so that poverty-related problems facing all Americans can be corrected; providing volunteer opportunities for both nationally and locally-recruited volunteers and facilitating the delivery of existing government and private services designed to assist low-income people.

VISTA volunteers are assigned to local, public or private nonprofit sponsoring organizations. The sponsors direct the activities of the volunteers, and involve people from the

community in planning and implementing the projects. Volunteers serve full-time for one year, during which time they are supported at a subsistence level within the communities they serve. They also receive a \$75 monthly end-of-service stipend.

Since the beginning of the program in 1964, more than 70,000 men and women have served as volunteers on nearly 4,500 projects. These volunteers have helped millions of low-income Americans to deal with poverty-related problems defined at the local level, thereby strengthening our nation's efforts to eliminate poverty and enhance the quality of life for a vast segment of the population.

VISTA BUDGET

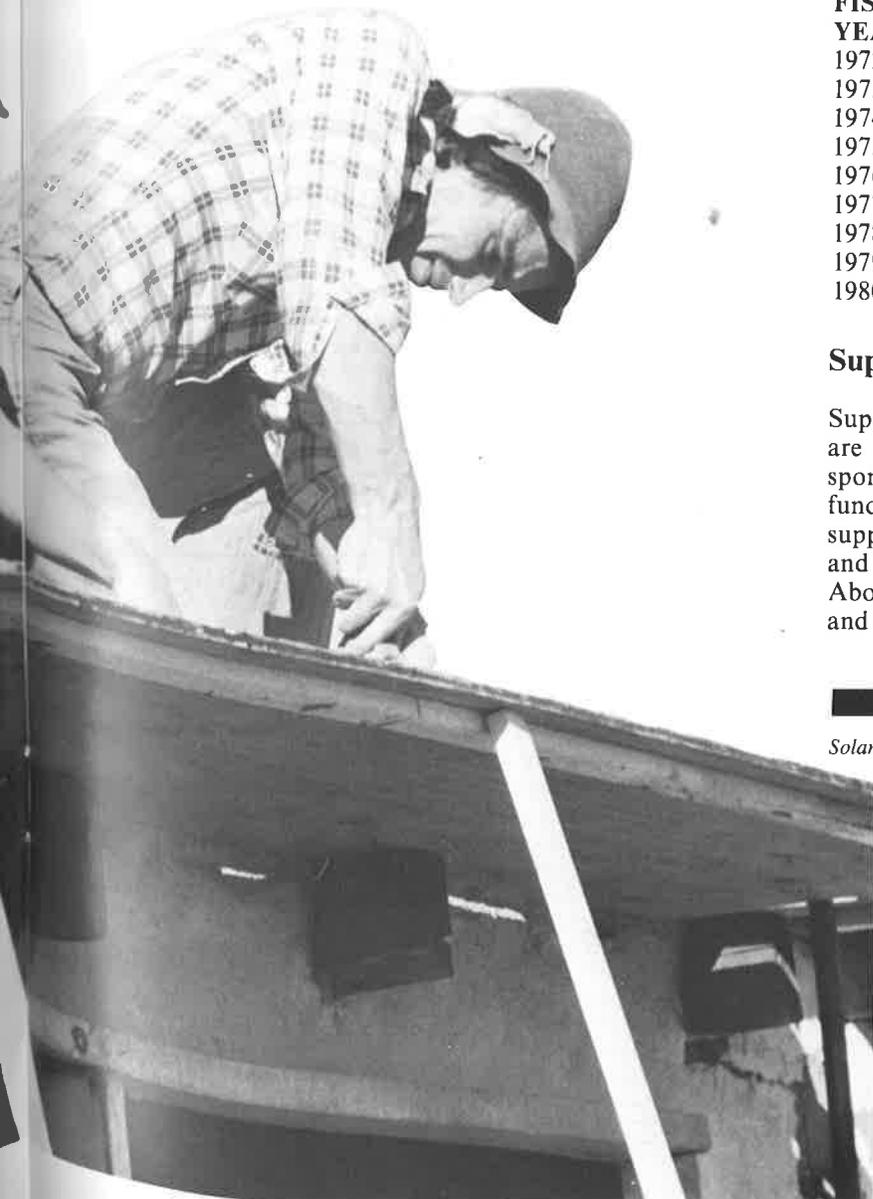
Using 1972 dollars as a base, the buying power of appropriated dollars has gone from a high of \$23.6 million in FY 1973 to a low of \$16.2 million in FY 1977. The FY 1980 level is only nine percent above the level of FY 1977, and is 25 percent below the level of FY 1973.

FISCAL YEAR	APPROPRIATED DOLLARS	CONSTANT DOLLARS
1972	\$22,900,000	\$22,900,000
1973	25,000,000	23,600,000
1974	22,000,000	18,900,000
1975	23,200,000	19,000,000
1976	22,300,000	16,700,000
1977	23,000,000	16,200,000
1978	30,100,000	19,800,000
1979	30,400,000	18,400,000
1980	32,000,000	17,700,000

Support and Training

Support, training and technical assistance for VISTA projects are provided by ACTION in conjunction with project sponsors. During FY 1980, approximately 80 percent of the funds appropriated went directly towards the personal support of volunteers, including allowances, health insurance, and transportation to and from their places of assignment. About ten percent of the funds paid for volunteer supervision and on-the-job transportation. The remaining ten percent was

Solar panel construction on adobe home, Santa Fe, NM



used for all other costs, including training and technical assistance.

In FY 1980, ACTION conducted the first field investigation of VISTA pre-service and in-service training in nearly ten years. Using the evaluation results, as well as the curriculum developed in FY 1979, VISTA established national standards for volunteer pre-service and in-service training, sponsor-supervisor training and volunteer career development.

VISTA in Action

During FY 1980, VISTA directly served or ensured benefits to more than 1.2 million of the nation's poor. A total of 4,005 volunteers served through 810 projects. This year, 334 new projects were opened and 183 projects were phased out. Of those phased out, 135 (or 74 percent) were institutionalized with project activities being continued by the local community.

This year, VISTA volunteers throughout the country participated in a broad range of projects such as: helping low-income people revitalize decaying urban neighborhoods; focusing attention on medically underserved areas; providing low-cost energy alternatives to the poor; securing legal rights for handicapped citizens; expanding the membership of struggling consumer groups and farmers' cooperatives; and enabling older people to obtain greater emotional, physical and financial security.

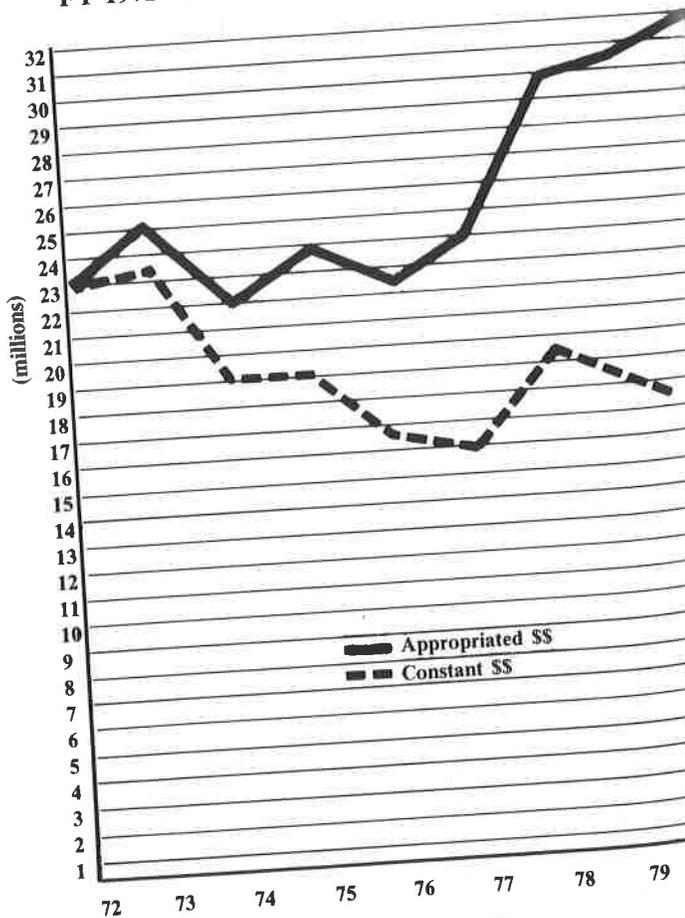


Installing solar energy panels, Santa Fe, NM



Farm cooperative gasohol project, Epes, AL

VISTA BUDGET CONSTANT/APPROPRIATED DOLLARS FY 1972—FY 1980 (using FY 1972 as a base)



The following projects illustrate how VISTA volunteers help promote self-reliance and cooperative efforts:

Community Services (31% of VISTA volunteers)

- VISTA volunteers working with the Chinese Development Council in New York City have been involved with efforts to improve the quality of life for the thousands of poor families in the Chinese community. Volunteers have helped assemble a Consumer Alliance, which enables its low-income members to purchase food and clothing at discount prices. During the first six months of the Alliance, 1800 residents of Chinatown joined the organization, and some 130 businesses agreed to participate by offering discounts of up to 25 percent on some items. In addition to the discount program, the Alliance has also begun a food cooperative. The VISTAs assigned to this project are involved in housing, job training and education.

Knowledge/Skills (17%)

- In East Baton Rouge Parish, Louisiana, more than 2,000 people are totally illiterate; they cannot use the telephone book, read or write simple messages, or read grocery or medicine labels. To help remedy this situation, three VISTA volunteers have been placed in Operation Upgrade. The volunteers work with residents of the Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women, where they serve as coordinators between prison officials and Operation Upgrade. They also tutor residents who read below the fifth grade level, coordinate

a Senior Citizen Program, and tutor non-readers at the site. In addition, the VISTAs have written, edited and published math and reading books for at least 14,000 functionally illiterate adults. These books have been requested by programs in other states, and will continue to be used in Baton Rouge after the VISTA volunteers leave.

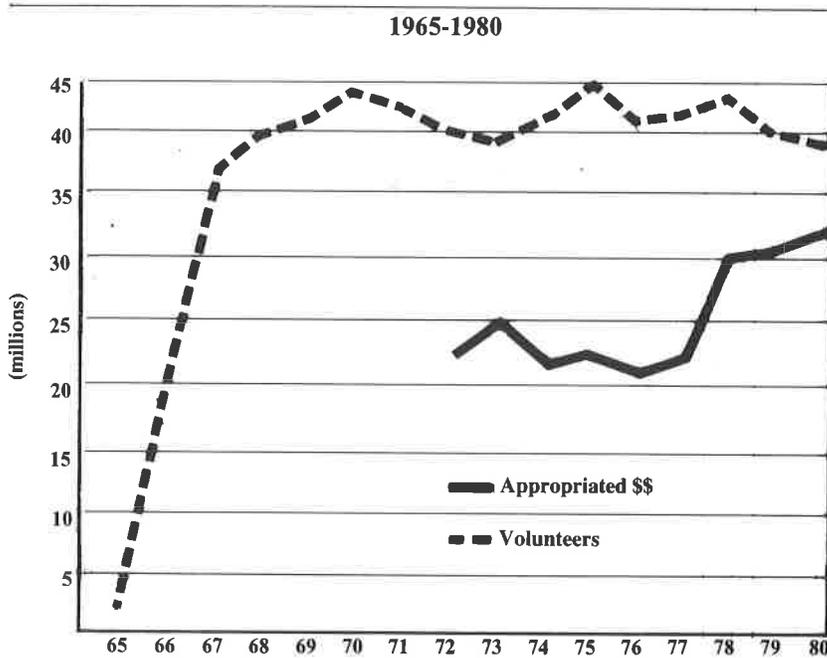
Energy/Conservation (10%)

- VISTA volunteers assigned to the Southwest Alabama Farmer's Association have provided assistance in a number of farming-related areas, including the high cost of energy. The energy goals of SWAFCA are twofold: to become energy self-sufficient and to reduce the farmers' dependence on petroleum products. With the help of the VISTAs, SWAFCA has constructed an alcohol fuel refinery that produces 500 gallons of ethanol per week. The co-op is currently in the process of modifying all vehicles so that they can run on alcohol fuel. Plans are also underway to use grain and the manure from co-op owned hogs to produce methane gas. The methane will then be used to operate electric generators.

Economic Development/Income (7%)

- VISTA volunteers continue to maintain and expand the Eastern Suffolk Rural Development Credit Union in Riverhead, New York. The credit union was originally started by VISTAs in 1974, and has since grown from 13 to 1,000 members. The volunteers have been instrumental in recruiting

VISTA VOLUNTEERS VS APPROPRIATED DOLLARS



members, encouraging deposits from public agencies and businesses, and educating low-income residents about the services available through the organization. In addition, the VISTA volunteers provide members with training in budget and financial management. This credit union, which was able to turn \$360,000 back into the community, has the distinction of being one of 33 low-income unions to receive a \$200,000 loan from the Community Services Administration and technical assistance from the National Credit Union Administration.

Health/Nutrition (7%)

• VISTA volunteers assigned to the Centro del la Raza East Long Beach Neighborhood Center have been instrumental in promoting comprehensive health services to the East Long Beach community, an area declared by HHS to be underserved. In the initial phase of a health strategy plan for the area, four programs related to child and family protective health care have been implemented. VISTAs involved with the prenatal program have successfully negotiated with the hospital for low-cost prenatal care and delivery for low-income and minority residents. The hospital provides the medical services, including delivery at a reduced rate, while supportive services (such as transportation, child care, translation, financial screening and referrals) are provided by the sponsoring agency. Spin-offs from the prenatal program include: prenatal educational classes, a children's screening program, family planning services and a nutrition supplement program for women and their children.



Teaching English to Spanish-speaking senior citizens at a senior center, La Jora, CO

VISTA Statistics

1. Number of VISTA volunteer service years: 3,982^A
2. Minorities (%)^B
 - Black: 21%
 - Hispanic: 5%
 - American Indian/Alaskan Native: 2%
 - Asian/Pacific Islander: 2%
 - TOTAL: 30%
3. Recruitment (%)
 - * NRV: 33%
 - ** LRV: 67% (includes LILRV)
 - *** (LILRV: 30%)
4. Number of standard VISTA projects: 790^C
- 4a. Number of Regional Grants funded: 11
5. Number of national grants projects funded: 9
6. % of VISTA volunteers by Basic Human Need

Community Services	31%
Knowledge/Skills	17
Economic Dev/Income	7
Health/Nutrition	9
Legal Rights	10
Energy/Conservation	10
Housing	16

7.	Budget ^D :		
	Volunteer Support		\$19,938,000
	Training		2,198,000
	Project Support		3,174,000
	Grants		4,507,000
	Evaluation		174,000
	TOTAL		\$29,991,000

8. Sex Ratio^B:
 - Female: 69%
 - Male: 31%

9. Volunteer Age^B Breakdown:
 - 18-27=46%
 - 28-35=19%
 - 36-59=24%
 - 60+ =11%

- * Nationally Recruited Volunteer
- ** Locally Recruited Volunteer
- *** Low-income Locally Recruited Volunteer

Notes: A: Source: FY 1980 Close-Out Report
 B: Source: FY 1979 Activities Survey
 C: Source: FY 1982 ZBB Submission
 D: Source: FY 1980 Final SOF



Design center solar energy project, Knoxville, TN

Legal Rights (10%)

• This year, one VISTA volunteer was assigned to the Legal Center for Handicapped Citizens in Denver, Colorado. Handicapped citizens are often not in a position to defend themselves legally or assert their rights and privileges. The Center helps the handicapped to help themselves, either by individual legal assistance or legal challenges resulting in revision of state regulations. The VISTA assigned to the Center has provided legal assistance to individuals, legal advocacy in terms of important cases, community education, and advocacy in rural schools regarding programs and facilities for the handicapped. The VISTA volunteer has also assisted in the development of a legal rights newsletter that serves the handicapped community.

Housing (16%)

• Two VISTA volunteers were assigned to a project called S.W.A.P. (Stop Wasting Abandoned Property) in Providence, Rhode Island. Providence has a large Hispanic and Black community, as well as a growing number of Asians. Of the 163,000 residents in Providence, 17 percent fall within the poverty guidelines. S.W.A.P. assists moderate and low-income residents to become homeowners through "urban homesteading." The VISTA volunteers help the organization by: conducting initial assessments of properties; counseling potential homeowners regarding the purchase and ownership of reclaimed structures; and by assisting interested residents in

negotiations, obtaining bank financing and securing legal assistance. So far, the VISTAs have helped 200 low-income families find the technical, financial and legal resources needed to refurbish their property. They also worked with S.W.A.P. to develop a tool bank so that costly renovation equipment could be collectively purchased and shared. With the help of the VISTAs, S.W.A.P. was able to convince the City Council to pass legislation that eliminates delinquent city and state taxes in all abandoned houses purchased through the organization.

National Grants

The national grants program was established in 1977 to improve VISTA's ability to have an impact on specific problems of poverty through organizations that have expertise in selected areas. The national grantees use specialized training and technical assistance methods, and have the capacity to assign volunteers to otherwise hard-to-reach grassroots sponsors.

In FY 1980, nine percent of the funds available for VISTA grants was applied to the national grants program. One-third of all the national grants were awarded to minority organizations, and nearly half went to supporting rural projects. During FY 1980, the 10 national grantees involved 150 component projects and approximately 400 volunteers. For example:



Locally recruited VISTA teaches medical techniques at clinic, Epes, AL.

- The Coalition of Indian Controlled School Boards was incorporated in 1971 as a non-profit, educational organization. It now has a membership of more than 160 schools. The Coalition is dedicated to the belief that American Indians must retain, as well as foster, the heritage that is vital to their survival as a people. The Coalition seeks to bring about educational reform in American Indian education by helping Indian people to gain and maintain an active voice in the educational processes that affect their children. Control by Indian groups is emphasized in those educational institutions specifically designed to serve Indian students. For example, in Montana, the Coalition and a group of VISTA volunteers surveyed the educational needs of the Rocky Boy Reservation. This led to the development of an alternative school and a community-approved curriculum. VISTAs working with the Coalition also produced an orientation packet and training session for the Tribal Education Committee, and assisted students in producing a school handbook.

- The Federation of Southern Cooperatives is a non-profit, tax-exempt regional association of more than 130 cooperatives and credit unions serving small scale farmers and other low-income rural people in 11 southern states. The Federation is a service, a resource and an advocacy organization for the 30,000 individual member families affiliated with its cooperatives and credit unions. The goal is to foster self-help community-based economic development through education, organization and cooperation among people. The Federation is based on shared needs for service, technical assistance and resources in several different areas, including: agriculture (collective marketing and purchasing); rural credit unions; handicraft production; housing; health care clinics; and manufacturing. For the past two-and-a-half years, VISTA volunteers have been involved in all of these areas serving as organizers, trainers, fundraisers, proposal writers and advocates. During FY 1980, VISTA assigned 95 volunteers, 89 of whom were locally recruited, to Federation projects in 10 states.

Fifteenth Year Anniversary

FY 1980 marked the 15th anniversary of VISTA. An anniversary celebration was launched by President Carter on December 19, 1979, when he met with 24 current VISTA volunteers at the White House. From January 1980 through June 1980, VISTA recognition events were held in cities across the country, honoring the commitment both former and current volunteers have made towards "Making a Good Place Better."

The anniversary celebration concluded in Washington with a national conference entitled "Self-Help: Strategies for the 1980s." This conference focused on people at the poverty level helping each other through citizen participation and voluntary action. More than 1200 people, including current and former VISTA volunteers, low-income people, community organizers, government officials, local and national legislators, scholars and journalists, gathered for three days and participated in over 60 issue and strategy workshops. These workshops ranged from energy and housing issues to grassroots fund-raising and the problems of the disabled.

By all accounts, the VISTA 15th Anniversary Celebration was highly successful. Based on data acquired in late FY 1980, the six month celebration led to a substantial increase in VISTA's recognition by the general public.



Employment opportunities for the handicapped, Berks County, PA



Weatherization advice, Waco, TX