

Peace Corps Albania

2017 ANNUAL
REPORT

CELEBRATING
20 YEARS OF
IMPACT



Message from U.S. Ambassador Donald Lu

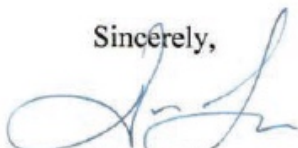
Dear Volunteers, Albanian citizens, and Peace Corps Staff:

Allow me to offer my congratulations to the Peace Corps program in Albania for its remarkable work over the past year. I have had the pleasure of visiting Volunteers in Puke, in Përmet, in Shkodër, and in Vlorë. I love that the Volunteers not only speak beautiful Albanian, but they have even learned the local accents and dialects. It has also been impressive to see the deep relationships between the Volunteers and their Albanian Counterparts.

Being a Peace Corps Volunteer requires courage and sacrifice. They are away from their families and friends for two years. They must navigate challenges, find learning in failure, and inspire others to persevere. They must open themselves up to new experiences and seize opportunities.

Many of our Volunteers spend the majority of their time with Albanian young people. All I can say is, *Bravo!* This is the generation that deserves our time and attention. These young people are the future of this beautiful country.

Sincerely,



Donald Lu



Message from Country Director Kate Becker

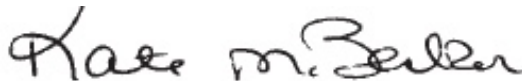
Dear Friends, Partners, Colleagues, and Peace Corps Volunteers:

2017 was another incredible year for Peace Corps Albania. We built upon our 20-year history and we had a meaningful impact throughout the country. Our work is the result of five important inputs:

1. A talented, passionate Peace Corps staff-team that serves the Peace Corps mission year over year;
2. Work agencies that are progressive and push themselves to expand their reach and impact;
3. Caring, committed counterparts in communities across the country who work side by side with our Volunteers, giving their time and their skill to move their communities forward;
4. The warmth and welcome of host families who give shelter and a sense of belonging to our Volunteers while sharing meals, the Albanian culture, and language; and,
5. The Americans who paused careers, left family and friends and their comfort zones, traveled thousands of miles to live, work, serve, and learn while living in communities throughout Albania. These Americans, our Peace Corps Volunteers, are committed to making the world a better place.

Volunteers will tell you that the most pivotal aspect of their work is the Albanian people—teachers, civil servants, and committed NGO employees who are community champions—as well as the bright, innovative, and entrepreneurial youth throughout this country. No impact is greater than the personal relationships and the true bonds that form during a Volunteer's two years of service. And that is what underscores the incredibly bright horizon that is Albania.

We are proud to be Peace Corps in Albania,



Kate M Becker



Peace Corps Mission and Goals

In 1961, U.S. President John F. Kennedy established the Peace Corps to foster a better understanding between, and to promote friendship among, Americans and people of other countries.

The Peace Corps mission is to promote world peace and friendship by fulfilling three goals:

1. To help the people of interested countries in meeting their needs for trained men and women.
2. To help promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of the peoples served.
3. To help promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans.

Peace Corps changes lives—the lives of people in communities around the world and the lives of volunteers.

- More than 230,000 Americans have served in the Peace Corps in 141 countries.
- More than 790 Peace Corps Volunteers have served in Albania since 1992.



Peace Corps in Albania

In 1991, the Albanian government invited the Peace Corps to establish a program in the country. The first group of volunteers arrived in 1992 to spend two years teaching English in secondary schools and universities. From 1993 to 1996, four additional groups of volunteers arrived to teach English, support the development of small businesses, or support the management of agriculture and forests. Peace Corps closed its Albania program in 1997 because of political unrest and concerns about the safety of volunteers.

The Albanian government invited Peace Corps to re-establish a program in 2002 and participated in an assessment conducted by Peace Corps. Based on this assessment, the first Peace Corps staff members arrived in March 2003 to set up an office and re-establish programs.

Since September 2003, 624 Volunteers have worked with local governments, NGOs, schools, and health institutions in three project areas:

- English education
- Health education
- Community and organization development

The Peace Corps program is here at the invitation of the Albanian government and operates according to an agreement between the United States and Albania that recognizes the importance of developing mutually advantageous relationships and cooperation.



Celebrating 20 Years in Albania

1991-1999

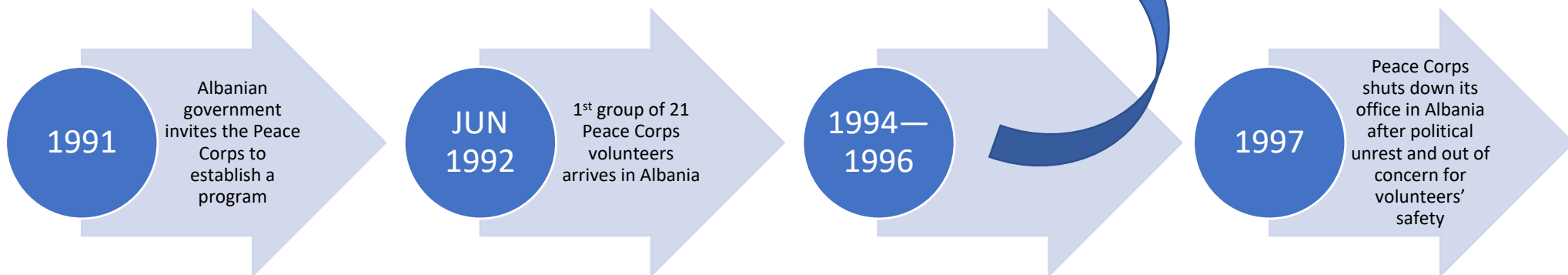


Kevin McLaughlin (left) and Altin Veshti (right) in 2014, 20 years after first meeting as a Peace Corps Albania volunteer and student.

Supporting Youth—Kevin McLaughlin served as a Peace Corps Volunteer (PCV) from 1994–1996. He was from Vermont and served in Albania in the town of Lezha. As an English teacher, Kevin experienced the challenges of working in a newly emerging Albania.

Activities—Kevin formed a debate club that taught critical thinking skills. Club members, including Altin Veshti, participated in regional competitions. Kevin urged Altin “to be bold and brave” and pursue his dreams.

Impact—Altin and his family moved to Italy. Altin eventually earned a medical degree, returned to Albania, and became one of the country’s leading pediatric heart surgeons. Today, Altin volunteers with *Doctors Without Borders* in Africa, remembering Kevin as his first example of the impact a volunteer had in his own life and paying it forward.



Celebrating 20 Years in Albania 2003-2009

Reducing Domestic Violence and Empowering Women—PCV Juliet Kosarzycki, from Wisconsin, served in Albania from 2006–2008. She wanted to tackle the issues of women empowerment and domestic violence in her community of Kuçove. As the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women approached, she considered how to focus attention on this problem.

Activities—Juliet worked with members of the Kuçove Youth Center to organize activities in the community. Working together, they informed the men of Kuçove about the International Day and its purpose. Men were asked to trace an outline of their hand on a sheet of paper labeled, “This hand will never hurt you.”

Impact—A significant number of men in Kuçove participated. They signed the paper, wrote a few kind words, and handed it to a loved one.



Men in Kuçove trace an outline of their hand in PCV Juliet Kosarzycki's campaign to stop domestic violence.

2002

Albanian government invites the Peace Corps to re-establish a program in Albania

SEP
2003

New group of Community Development PCVs arrives in Albania

2004

Program grows to include English Education and Health Education

2007



Celebrating 20 Years in Albania 2010-2017



Pregnant women in Shkodra attend a childbirth education class taught by Peace Corps Albania volunteers.

Childbirth Education—Traditionally, expectant mothers in Shkodra received little education about childbirth from skilled professionals. Misinformation was common, which increased fear and anxiety in these mothers-to-be.

Activities—PCV Barbara Stallings, from New Mexico, who served as a volunteer from 2009–2011, introduced childbirth education to the community. An Albanian “Childbirth Educator” with a background in nursing and physical therapy was trained to teach the classes. The following year, PCV Jessica Goodell (2010–2012, from Florida) expanded the project’s scope by developing a training program to increase the number of qualified educators.

Impact—11 expectant mothers and 1 soon-to-be father participated in the first series. In Phase 2, 20 educators were trained to conduct childbirth education courses.

2011

2012

Peace Corps Albania receives the “Mother Teresa Order” by the President of Albania for the priceless assistance and contributions of the Volunteers to Albania

2017

Peace Corps celebrates 20 years of service in Albania

20th-Anniversary Celebration Highlights



ALL-VOLUNTEER CONFERENCE

At the annual All-Volunteer Conference, a Skype conversation was organized with retired U.S. Senator Harris Wofford. He served as President Kennedy's Special Assistant for Civil Rights and helped establish the Peace Corps. Later, under President Clinton, Wofford helped create AmeriCorps. Senator Wofford personifies the ideals of service and civic engagement.



SERVICE PROJECT

Peace Corps Albania, in cooperation with the Tirana Parks Department and about 70 Albanian youth, worked on a service project in Tirana's Lake Park. Peace Corps Albania recruited youth to support the project as part of an initiative to inspire volunteerism and civic engagement.

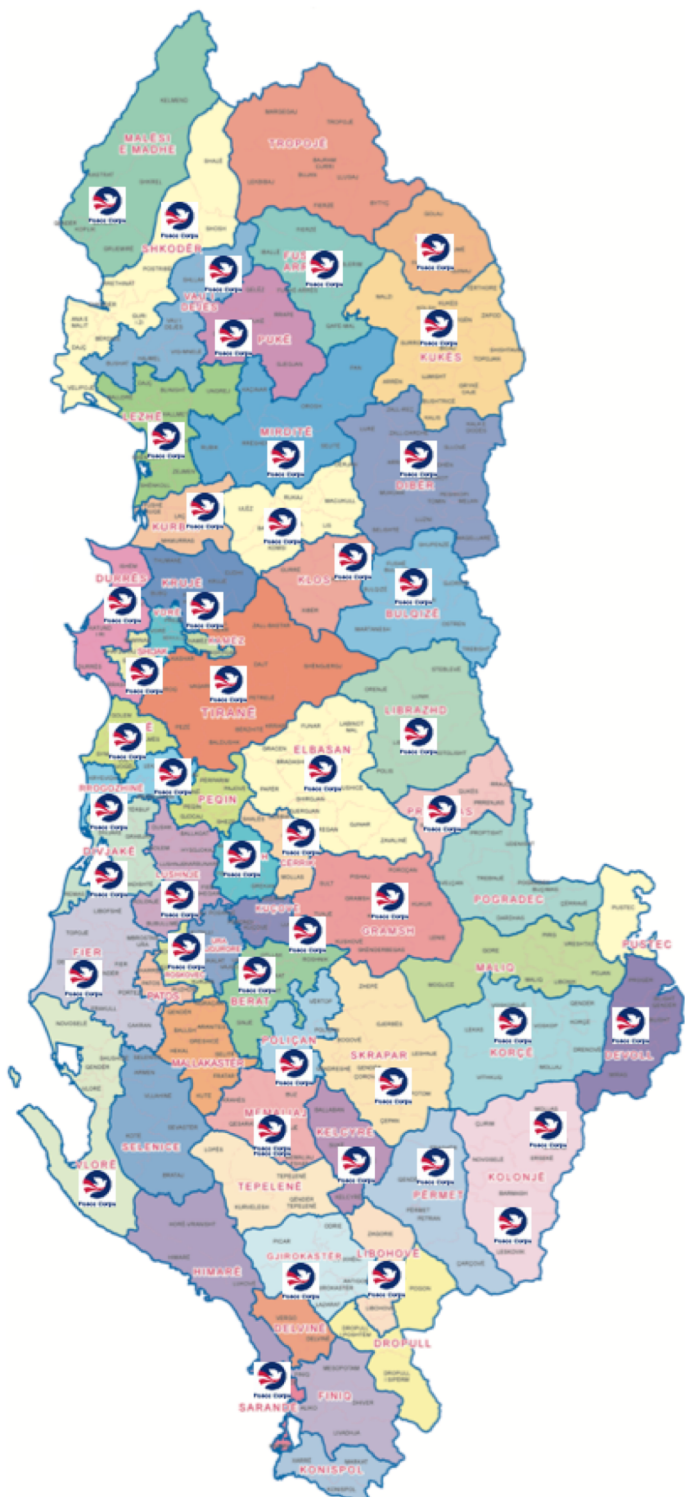
VOLUNTEERISM PANEL

A town hall panel was organized on the topic of volunteerism. Speakers included Blendi Gonxhe, director of parks for the city of Tirana and one of the students who led uprisings in 1990 that contributed to the fall of communism in Albania; Arber Hajdari, founder of A Different Weekend volunteerism NGO; Manjola Gega, a teacher from Rreshen and board member of Girl Scouts of Albania; Ola Keci, a Tirana University student and Shijak native who was inspired to volunteer by a former PCV in 2010; and U.S. Ambassador Donald Lu.





Peace Corps Albania in 2017



- 148 PCVs
- 3 sectors
 - English education
 - Health education
 - Community and organization development
- Continuing to partner with bashkias, ministries, and NGOs—and shifting to assignments in smaller communities that have fewer resources
- Increased emphasis on environmental issues, tourism development, and project sustainability through local buy-in and ownership

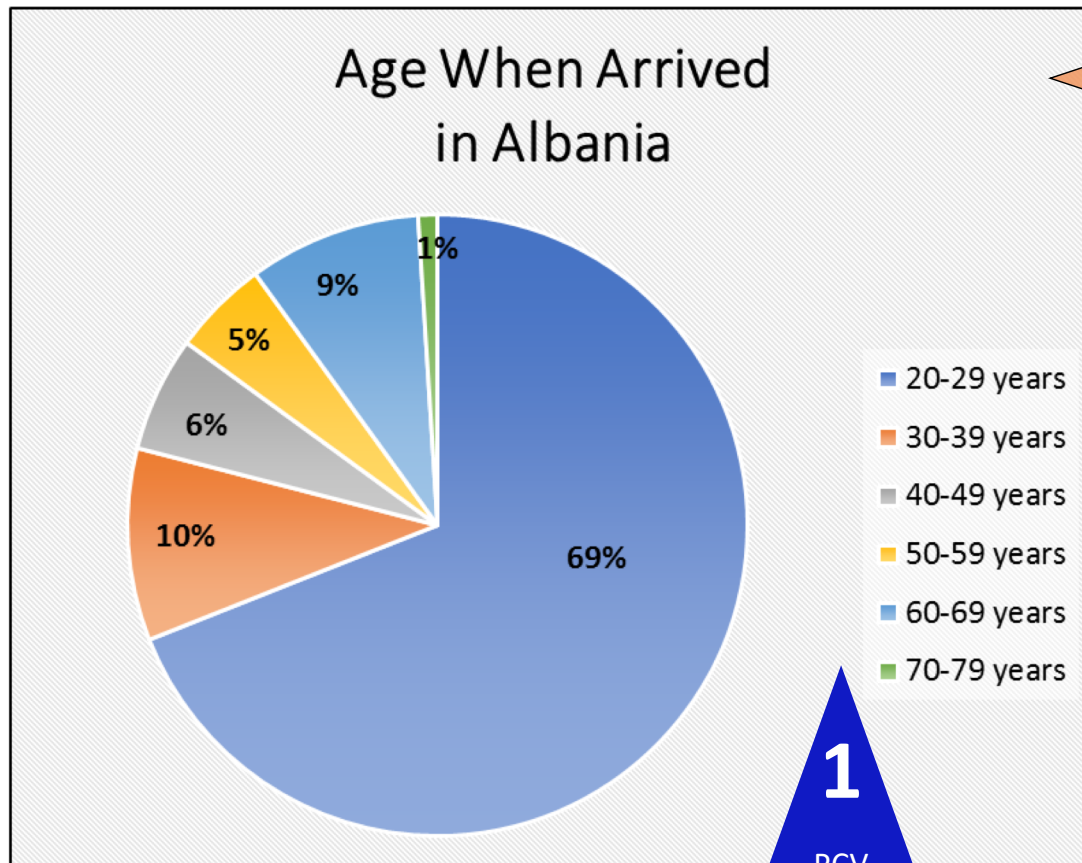
Who are these Peace Corps Albania Volunteers?



Peace Corps volunteers come from all corners of the United States to create grassroots-level change in Albania. Volunteers share their hometown values and perspectives with the host communities in which they serve—an intercultural exchange that leaves a legacy of peace and friendship.



Who are these Peace Corps Albania Volunteers?



1

PCV
became a U.S. citizen
in order to
join the
Peace Corps

3

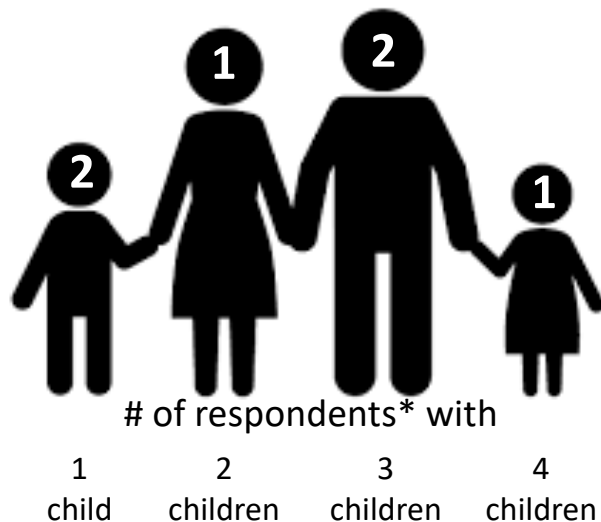
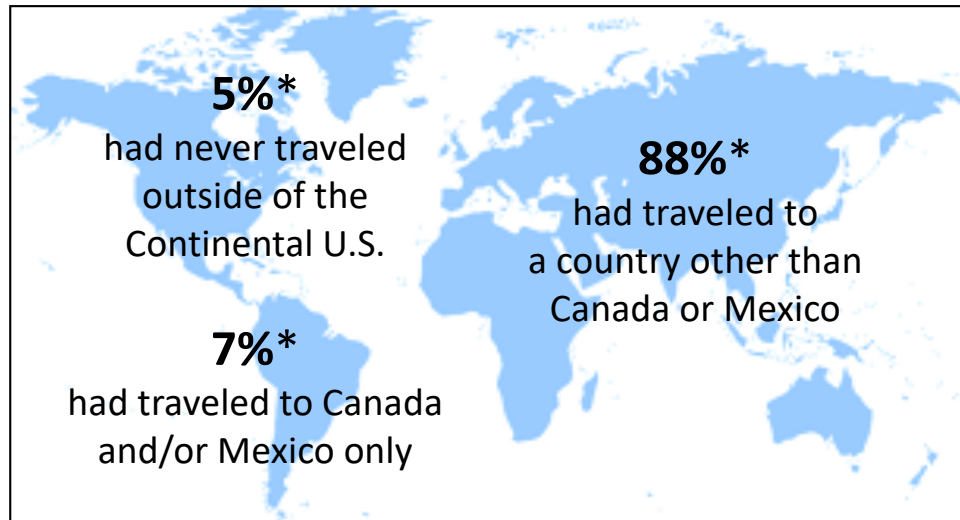
PCVs had served as a
PCV before!

Mary Lou Surgi, Malaysia, 1978-1980
Marilyn Matt, Armenia, 2008-2010
Mike Bailey, China, 2013-2015

EDUCATION



Who are these Peace Corps Albania Volunteers?



Languages

English was not
the native
language of
8%
of respondents*

48%
of respondents*
speak 1 other
language besides
English and Shqip

3 respondents* speak 2 additional languages
2 respondents* speak 3 additional languages
1 respondent* speaks 4 additional languages

of respondents* whose

• Parent	1
• Child	2
• Aunt/uncle	4
• Cousin	1
• Friend or close colleague	33

was or is a PCV



2017 Goals by Sector

Health Education

1: Sexual and Reproductive Health

Youth will adopt behaviors and practices that contribute to improved sexual and reproductive health.

2: Healthy Lifestyles and Life Skills

Youth will develop the life skills necessary to make responsible and healthy decisions and take actions that positively impact their lives and the lives of those around them.



English Education

1: Improve Teaching

English teachers and instructors will improve their English language proficiency, teaching methods, and resource development skills.

2: Increase Student Success

Students will improve their English proficiency, communication, and life skills through English instruction in the classroom or through extracurricular activities.

3: Strengthen School and Community

Teachers, school staff and administrators, and members of the broader community will strengthen collaboration and be more active participants and leaders of their school community.

Community and Organization Development

1: Organization Development

Local organizations and community groups will strengthen their management/operational and organizational skills and processes.

2: Civil Society Building

Individuals will increase their capacity to participate in local civil society and community development.

Puka Youth Trained in Beekeeping

Community & Organization Development—In 2016, youth in Puka observed the popularity of the region’s famous honey and understood it could be a means to generating family income. They approached Agro-Puka, a local agriculture and farming NGO, to help them learn the art of beekeeping. The youth formed a study circle to share knowledge, gain access to information, and learn together. They called their group “As Sweet as Honey.” PCV Mary Lou Surgi is a volunteer at Agro-Puka.

Activities—With guidance from a local bee expert, the youth studied beekeeping. Mary Lou provided technical support and applied for a Peace Corps Small Projects Assistance grant funded by USAID/Albania. In 2017, this grant supplied the group with basic kits of bees, bee houses, and beekeeping supplies as well as other support throughout the year.

Impact—In September, “As Sweet as Honey” produced its first jars of honey and was represented at the 2017 Fall Fair of Agro-Puka.



PCV Mary Lou Surgi (right) watches as an Agro-Puka youth leader inspects some of the group’s bees.

8,240

Individuals in Albania who increased their capacity to participate in local civil society and community development in 2017 because of Peace Corps Albania’s Community and Organization Development program.

Under-Served Kids in Kamez Experience Leadership Summer Camp

English Education—Bathore-Kamez is an under-served neighborhood comprised primarily of migrants from the north of Albania who came to the area seeking work in the 1990s. Parents within this poor suburban area often lack access to funds that could provide their children with organized, fun learning activities during the summer.

Activities—PCV Eric Fowler, an English teacher volunteer at the school in Kamez, helped organize an “Active Citizens Summer Camp” to teach leadership skills and provide organized activities. Peace Corps Albania partner, World Vision, supported the camp with materials, lunches, and curriculum. Eric helped coordinate activities such as publicizing the camp, training student leaders to prepare each day’s activities, being the liaison with World Vision, and facilitating activities on the ground.

Impact— Daily attendance at the camp was between 40 and 80 children. They learned about inclusion, problem solving, collaboration, planning strategies, and citizen responsibilities while having fun.



*Four boys from PCV Eric Fowler's
“Active Citizens Summer Camp”
make their way outdoors in Bathore-Kamez.*

- 360** Teachers worked with PCVs to improve teaching and develop resources.
- 6,600** Students were taught English and leadership by PCVs and their teacher counterparts.
- 400** School and community members engaged in activities that strengthened their schools and communities.

Permet Students Enjoy Healthy, Safe Outdoor Environment

Health Education—Barbara Grant, a PCV health educator in Permet, noticed that children at her school, Meleq Gosnishti 9-vjeçare, had no clean, safe outdoor space to eat during meal breaks or for after-school activities.

Activities—With support from a Peace Corps Small Projects Assistance grant funded by USAID/Albania, Barbara coordinated the procurement and installation of several tables and stools. Each was designed to be durable, withstand the weather, and to fit in with nature. The tables were built of concrete and iron; the stools were topped with wood. Inset into the tabletops were mosaics created by girls who had regularly attended “Girls Lead Our World” (GLOW) clubs led by PCV Barbara. Trash bins were also installed throughout the area.

Impact—About 400 students at the school now have the ability to sit, eat, or do activities outdoors using 6 tables and 30 stools installed as a result of Barbara’s efforts.



Permet girls from PCV Barbara Grant's GLOW club put the finishing touches on a tabletop at Meleq Gosnishti 9-vjeçare school.

12,187

Individuals in Albania who were reached in summer camps, clubs, sports activities, and formal trainings to learn about substance abuse, life skills, and reproductive health in 2017 by Peace Corps Albania's Health Education program.

2017 Small Grants Program

Peace Corps Partnership Program

PCPP connects volunteers and their communities with the private sector in the U.S. and around the world to fund community-initiated and led projects.

\$5,629

Awarded to Peace Corps Albania in 2017

2

Projects

2

Communities



* LET GIRLS LEARN

\$13,070

Amount provided
by LGL to Peace Corps
Albania in 2017

8

Projects

7

Communities

Small Projects Assistance

Overview

180

Total projects funded and implemented in Albania since program inception in 2004

\$2,000–\$4,000

Range of funding available
per project through SPA grants

25%

Amount of matching funds required
as the community's contribution

In 2017

\$60,000

Amount provided by
USAID/Albania for SPA grants

9

Small-scale community projects funded

4

Project Design & Management workshops
funded for PCVs and counterparts

Our Partner Organizations in 2017

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

- Agro-Puka
- American Councils
- ARKA Center—Shkodër
- CSDC Durrës
- Darien Book Aid
- English Language Teachers Association
- Epoka e Re
- Food Bank
- Friends of Albania
- Lerda
- Mary Ward Loreto
- Regional Development Agency—Korçë
- Sidi Education
- Terre des Hommes
- Water Charity
- World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts
- World Connect
- World Vision
- Youth Center—Vlorë
- Youth in Free Enterprise

Government and Independent Organizations

- Albanian Red Cross
- Chamber of Commerce—Vlorë
- Directorates of Public Health
- Institute of Education Development
- Institute of Public Health
- Ministry of Education, Sports, and Youth
- Ministry of Health and Social Protection
- Planning and Local Governance Project
- Regional Development Agencies of Vlorë, Korçë, and Tiranë
- Regional Directorate of National Culture—Gjirokastrë
- Regional Directorates of State Social Services—Berat
- Regional Directorates of State Social Services—Durrës
- United Nations Albania
- United Nations Population Fund
- United States Agency for International Development (USAID)
- United States Embassy and American Corners
- University of Tirana, English Department

Municipalities

- | | | |
|-----------|------------------|---------------|
| • Berat | • Korçë | • Mirditë |
| • Elbasan | • Kruje | • Roskovec |
| • Ersekë | • Kuçovë | • Shijak |
| • Fier | • Lushnje | • Vau i Dejës |
| • Kavaje | • Malesi e Madhe | |

Regional and District Offices of Education

- | | |
|---------------|-------------------|
| • Berat | • Kukes |
| • Diber | • Lezhe |
| • Durrës | • Shkoder |
| • Elbasan | • Tirane City |
| • Fier | • Tirane District |
| • Gjirokastrë | • Vlorë |
| • Korçë | |

Our Full-Time Regular Staff in 2017

Peace Corps Albania is proud to have a dedicated staff comprised of Americans and Albanians. Together, they support our volunteers every day of the year to help them meet their service goals. In 2017, our staff remained professional and positive during a lengthy office-building renovation, two Pre-Service Trainings for new volunteers within a 12-month period, and implementing new policies that required additional work—all on top of their regular responsibilities. Their efforts make Peace Corps Albania the successful post that it is.



Agim Dyrmishi
Alsida Myrtaj
Anida Tulo
Arben Cako
Arben Loci
Ardiana Brahja
Besa Arapi
Cale Wagner
Darina Kaltani
Diana Djaloshi
Dritan Gjoshi
Dritan Kamberi
Elsona Cupi
Gentian Leka
Gentian Mano
Ilir Memlikaj
Ilir Ziu
Iris Dollia
Iva Sinani

Jason Kane
Kate Becker*
Kyle Olsen*
Kenneth Johnson
Marie Aughenbaugh*
Marjeta Zavalani
Marsela Loci
Mira Luca
Mirela Tahiraj
Monika Mukja
Poleta Luka
Rudina Lubonja
Ylli Cupi

*Executive Team



Our Full-Time Temporary Staff in 2017

Each year, Peace Corps Albania hires about 20 temporary staff to play a crucial role in Pre-Service Training (PST) of our new volunteers. These individuals are as dedicated to the ideals and mission of Peace Corps as our Regular staff. They are part of our family and every year, when PST concludes, it is difficult to tell them goodbye. They teach our volunteers a new language, they keep us safe, healthy, and organized. Peace Corps Albania is what it is today thanks to their efforts.



Ali Gjiriti
Altina Peshkatari
Ana Harja
Besmira Rrumbullaku
Brunilda Peqini
Diamanta Vito
Elona Kafexhiu (Pajova)
Elvana Stambolli
Erion Kumuria
Ervin Bebeti
Esmeralda Dogani
Imelda Celibashi
Ina Tollumi
Ledion Veshi
Marsida Rrupulli
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Ymer Leksi
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