



**Peace
Corps**
MOROCCO

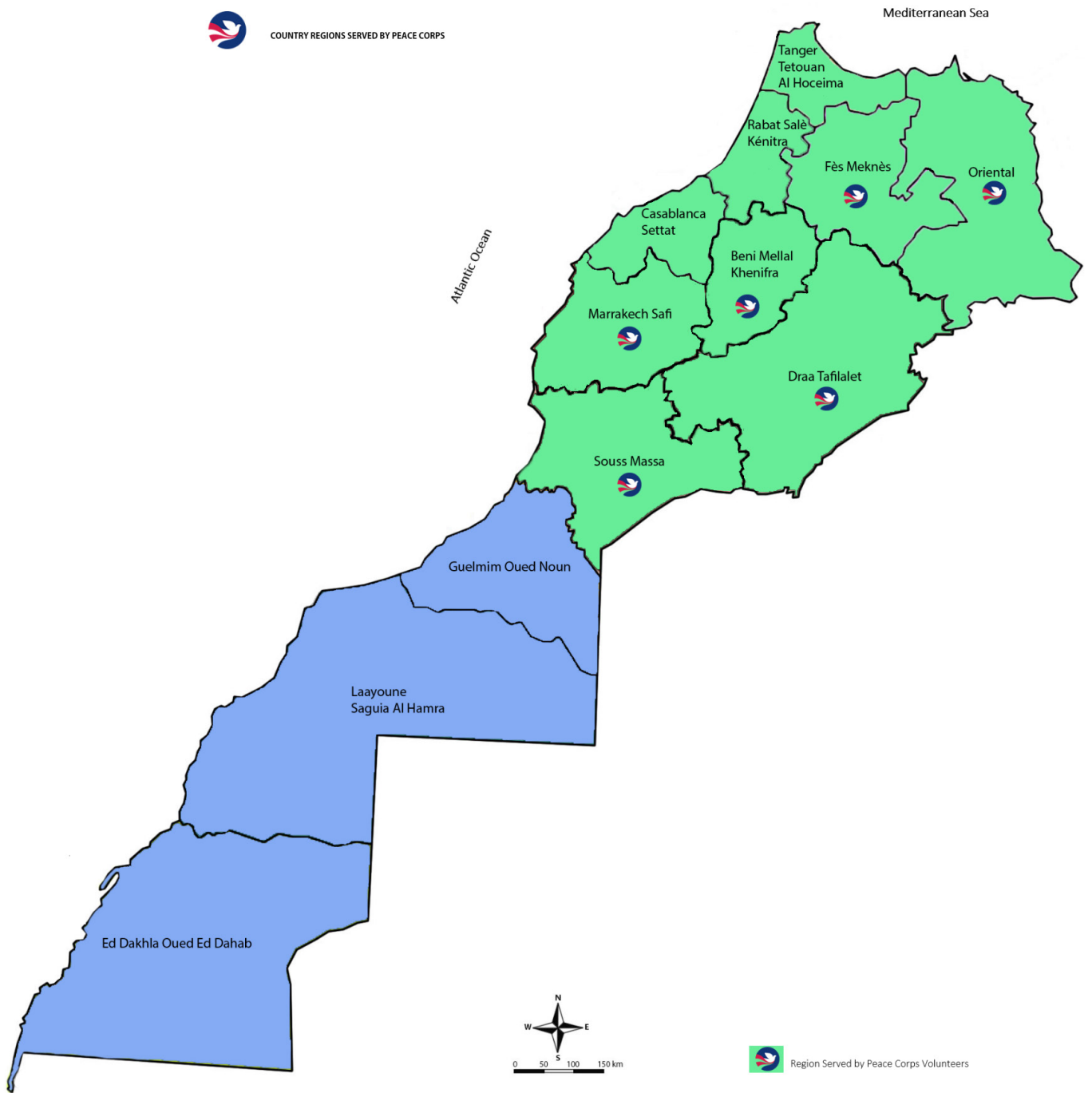


PCV Joi Edwards with children

Annual Report 2018



COUNTRY REGIONS SERVED BY PEACE CORPS



Message from the Director

2018 represented two important milestones for Peace Corps Morocco. We celebrated the 55th anniversary of Peace Corps Volunteers in Morocco and the swearing-in of the 100th cohort. The first 56 Volunteers arrived in Morocco in February 1963 at the invitation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Since then over 5,000 have devoted two years of their lives serving communities across Morocco in a variety of program areas including agriculture, education, environmental protection, fisheries, health, rural water supply, and small business development. And for the last seven years, Peace Corps has worked with the Ministry of Youth and Sports promoting youth development in Morocco.

The 55th anniversary and swearing-in of the 100th cohort are important milestones that would not be possible without the many partners who have supported Volunteers over the years. Volunteers have been invited to endless *casse croutes*, couscous Friday, and *flours*. One departing PCV said to me recently, with tears in her eyes, “I am still amazed how many people in my community welcomed me into their family without hesitation. They embraced me from day one, and I will never forget that.”

Peace Corps represents some, if not all, of the best virtues in this society. It stands for everything that America has ever stood for. It stands for everything we believe in and hope to achieve in this world.
~ Sargent Shriver, First Peace Corps Director

A Volunteer who served 35 years ago wrote us this year with a memorable moment, “I was having a conversation in Darija with my downstairs neighbor at one point and realized that she regarded me as just an ordinary guy who lived upstairs and not some weird foreigner from the other side of the world.” And I am sure this Volunteer also stopped seeing himself as some weird foreigner from the other side world and viewed himself as part of his host community.



Country Director Susan Dwyer served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Uganda from 1992-1994.

The stories are endless, but the theme throughout is one of friendship and service between Moroccans and Americans and the bridges Peace Corps Volunteers and their host communities build between our two countries.

As we celebrate 55 years of friendship and service, I want to thank the thousands of Moroccan families and communities who have supported Volunteers. Your generosity of spirit, friendship, and genuine care for the Volunteers is inspiring. You are the foundation of Peace Corps Morocco, and the last 55 years would not have been possible without you.

I also want to thank the gendarmes and police who have kept Volunteers safe over the last 55 years. I have witnessed and experienced the extraordinary care and security and safety support offered to Peace Corps Volunteers, and I am extremely grateful for all you do for the Peace Corps.

Lastly, to the various ministries who have supported the PCVs work over the last 55 years, thank you for the collegiality, support and supervision you have offered to generations of a Volunteers. Your partnership is the cornerstone of Peace Corps' work in Morocco.

Susan M. Dwyer
Country Director



The Peace Corps is an independent U.S. Government agency that provides Volunteers to countries requesting assistance. President John F. Kennedy established the Peace Corps in 1961 in an effort to promote world peace and friendship. Since its founding, over 250,000 Americans have served in 139 countries, committing two years of their lives to promote the Peace Corps' mission. Throughout their service, Volunteers gain a unique cultural understanding and a lifelong commitment to service. They commit to learning from the people with whom they work and serve – and they are affected as much as those they came to assist. The Peace Corps mission is as relevant today as it was in 1961.

THE PEACE CORPS MISSION

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 peoples served,
3. To help promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans.



President John F. Kennedy and Peace Corps Director Sargent Shriver greet departing Tanganyika and Ghana Peace Corps Volunteers in the Oval Office.

PEACE CORPS TODAY

Host Countries: 62
Volunteers and trainees: 7,376
Gender: 64% female, 36% male
Minorities: 33% of Volunteers
Average age: 27
Volunteers over 50: 4% of Volunteers

Peace Corps in Morocco

The first group of Volunteers arrived in Morocco in 1963 at the invitation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Since then, over 5,000 Volunteers have served in the Kingdom. Individuals who serve as Peace Corps Volunteers are carefully selected through a competitive application process. Most Peace Corps Volunteers hold university or advanced degrees.

Upon arrival in Morocco, Peace Corps Volunteers undergo an intensive 11-week language, cultural, health, safety, and technical training program. The majority of the training time is spent with Moroccan Language and Cultural Facilitators. Throughout their two years of service, Peace Corps provides ongoing training to the Volunteers and their Moroccan counterparts.

Volunteers live with Moroccan families for the duration of the 11-week training program, as well as during the first few months of service within their permanent site. These family relationships are the grounding force of a Volunteer's experience. Often, when Volunteers finish their service and are asked what they appreciated most about their time in Morocco, they state that it is the time spent with their with host families.

Volunteers receive a living allowance commensurate with the living standards of their local community.

PEACE CORPS MOROCCO STATISTICS

Officially Opened:	1963
Current Volunteers:	180
Gender:	66.7% female, 33.3% male
Average age:	25
Volunteers over 50:	2.6 % of Volunteers
Partners:	Ministry of Youth and Sports, Ministry of National Education, Entraide Nationale, Dar Taleeb/Taleeba (Student Center), Dar Chebab (Youth Center), Nedi Neswi (Women's Center), and other Associations



Peace Corps Morocco Staff



Moroccan Government Partnership and Support

As in all Peace Corps programs, Peace Corps Morocco conducts its work at the invitation of the Government of Morocco. The Ministry of Youth and Sports guides the strategic direction and geographic priorities of Peace Corps Morocco's work. Regional and provincial level officials in the Ministry assist with determining Volunteer site placement. Directors of Youth Centers, Women Centers, and Associations supervise Volunteers' work at their sites, and Peace Corps Morocco welcomes these supervisors to training each year to support Volunteers' productive service. This year the Ministry of Youth and Sports and Peace Corps Morocco also signed a new Memorandum of Understanding, further strengthening the partnership and allowing Volunteers' activities to support the Ministry's strategic goals.

In many provinces, the Ministry of National Education, Vocational Training, Higher Education and Scientific Research as well as Entraide Nationale, have opened their local institutions (schools, Dar Taleeb/Taleeba) to Peace Corps Volunteers to bolster positive youth development activities. Peace Corps Morocco looks forward to deepening these relationships at a national level as well.

The Ministry of Interior and the Gendarmerie Royale actively assist the Peace Corps in keeping Volunteers safe and offer emergency support at both national and local levels. Peace Corps Morocco is grateful for the guidance, collegiality and encouragement from our partners and friends in the Government of Morocco.



*Country Director Susan M. Dwyer with
Minister of Youth and Sports Rachid Talbi Alami*

Youth Development Project

2018 was an exciting year for Peace Corps Morocco's youth development work, as the project undertook a comprehensive review process. Drawing on years of project data and through feedback from stakeholders including Government of Morocco partners, community counterparts, Peace Corps Volunteers, and program staff, the project review resulted in a revised project framework to guide Peace Corps Morocco's contributions to the Ministry of Youth and Sports' goals.

The new youth development project (2018-2023) aims at positively engaging youth and preparing them for their roles as productive and civically engaged adults through targeted activities as shown below:

2018-2023 Youth Development Project

Strengthen the life skills of youth:

Youth demonstrate strengthened skills in high-order thinking, self-control, positive self-concept, social skills, communication, empathy, and goal setting.

Build the capacity of youth to engage in their communities:

Volunteers will support expanding opportunities for youth to engage in their communities; youth demonstrate improved capacity to design, plan, and implement community projects.

Increase the ability of youth to communicate in English:

Volunteers focus on supporting youth to enhance their communicative English ability.

The data shared in this report reflects the activities under the former youth development framework, which focused on the following areas:

World of Work

Youth will develop employability skills and assets to participate more fully in the global 21st century's economy.

Healthy Life Styles

Youth/women will be empowered to adopt positive behaviors to achieve optimal health and well-being.

Positive Youth Development

Youth will develop or enhance interests, skills, and assets to strengthen their personal development and community engagement.



Peace Corps Volunteer Jordan Clayton teaching women and girls at the Nadi Niswi



Youth Development Project

The most commonly reported activities in 2018 are English teaching, clubs, camps, and trainings. Through these activities, PCVs promoted physical activity, life skills, volunteerism, and employability. Below are examples of some activities PCVs implemented in the last year. English teaching is highly reported, with 58 percent of Volunteers engaging classes, camps, clubs, and tutoring.

Key Activities Implemented by Volunteers and Counterparts in 2018

Camps

English immersion
Science
Art
Glow (Girls Leading our World)
Women Empowerment
Meditation
Healthy Lifestyles
Dance
Basketball
Model UN
Environment

Clubs

Art
Library
Girls' basketball
Chess
Ping Pong
English
Theater
Environment



Peace Corps Volunteer Cassandra Broadwin

Trainings/Workshops

Girls Education workshop
Life skills (International Youth Foundation Passport to Success, Project SOAR)
Gender Advocate Training
Community Leadership
Health and Fitness Teachers training
Preschool Teachers Training
Drama Workshop
CLIMB (Creating Leadership in the Mountains and Beyond)



Youth Development Project

English Teaching

English Class for Kids
English Tutoring
Women's English Class
Private Advanced English Lessons
English Club
Dar Taliba English
English Association
English for Pre School
English for Beginners
English for BAC
English through Art Class
Informal English Conversation
English Immersion Camp
English Video Exchange



Peace Corps Volunteer Anne Wilson-Siembieda



Volunteers at Work and Play



From left to right, PCVs Amara Wilson, Emily Patterson, Cassandra Broadwin, and Bradley Janocha



PCV Nasro Abbas shopping at a local market

Peace Corps Morocco



Achievements

Objective 1: Strengthen the Life Skills of Youth

Youth demonstrate strengthened skills in higher-order thinking, self-control, positive self-concept, social skills, communication, empathy, and goal-setting.

Build and Improve Life Skills



4606

Youth demonstrated enhanced skill(s), asset(s), or interest(s)



4836

Youth exhibited new positive communication or relational skills



3583

Youth demonstrated improved decision making and problem solving skills

Entrepreneurship Skills



289

Youth demonstrated improved entrepreneurship skills

Objective 2: Build the Capacity of Youth to Engage in Their Communities

Volunteers will support expanding opportunities for youth to engage in their communities; youth demonstrate improved capacity to design, plan, and implement community projects.

Volunteerism



703

Youth assisted by a Volunteer/Partner designed and led at least one community-benefiting peer education, or other service-oriented, activity



1560

Youth increased their engagement in at least one community-benefiting, peer education, or other service-oriented activity

Objective 3: Increase the Ability of Youth to Communicate in English

Volunteers focus on supporting youth to enhance their communicative English ability.

Employability Skills



2626

Youth used improved verbal or written English for work.

Activities

389

English Teaching

152

Clubs

100

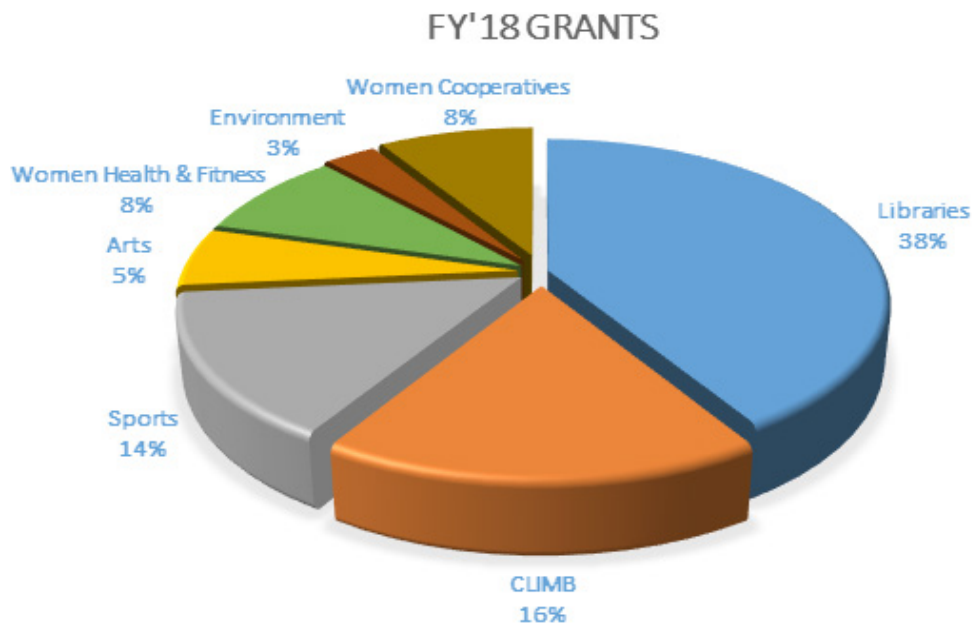
Camps

27

Trainings



Small Grants Programs



Classification of grants by topic for 2018

Small Project Assistance (SPA)

The Peace Corps Small Project Assistance (SPA) Program is sponsored by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and funds small-scale community development projects initiated by communities with support from their Peace Corps Volunteers. The SPA program works to increase the capabilities of local communities to conduct low-cost, grassroots sustainable development.

The SPA agreement between Peace Corps Morocco and USAID went into effect in September 2012. In fiscal year 2013, Peace Corps Morocco started using SPA funds for small grants and training activities.

2018 saw a shift in Peace Corps Morocco's strategy for using SPA funding to support training activities. Whereas in previous years, 37 percent of SPA funding supported small workshops in employability, Model UN, Gender Advocacy and life skills, the new strategy dedicates these SPA resources to providing foundational project design and management training to all Volunteers and their community counterparts.

Peace Corps Partnership Program (PCPP)

The Peace Corps Partnership Program (PCPP) is designed to identify and accept private donations to support small-scale community-initiated development projects in line with Peace Corps goals. These projects are developed and proposed jointly by Peace Corps Volunteers and their Moroccan community partners and is intended to address basic community needs.

PCPP donors might also donate to the Morocco country fund, which Peace Corps Morocco may distribute suitably toward small grants. \$10,507 in Morocco country fund donations supported 24 small grants projects this year.



My experience with Peace Corps

Zouhir El Ouafai –Director of Dar Chebab Moulay Bouaaza, Province of Khenifra

The seven years of experience I have had with Peace Corps and the American Volunteers has been a unique experience in my life. I have worked with four Volunteers, and what they all have in common is their love for the principle of volunteer service.

We have worked together to develop the youth's intellectual abilities and sensory and cognitive skills – in addition to working together to teach them the basic principles of English.

Working together with them day and night, the most impressive quality is their commitment and desire to assist others, despite the obstacles they face with the languages and dialects of Morocco. Indeed this is a challenge but a test they pass.

Thanks to the Peace Corps. Thanks to the American Volunteers. And thank you to everyone who contributes to this unique experience in Morocco.



My experience with Peace Corps

Zakaria Agharmine – Director of Dar Chebab, Province of Berkane

My experience with Peace Corps started in the summer of 2012. I clearly remember the first meeting when I was surprised by a visit from a young man and woman who introduced themselves as Peace Corps Volunteers. From the first meeting, I sensed their love to work, their positive energy, and a lot of ambition.

We established an annual program that has remained the most important and richest in the life of the Dar Chebab. It was based on Peace Corps' "Passport to Success" training conducted in partnership with the International Youth Foundation. Over 200 youth received training through 52 workshops covering life skills, workplace readiness skills, job search skills, resume writing, and interviewing, along with tools for how to be a good employee.

The Volunteers since 2012 created many clubs, most of which are still functioning today and include - Language Club, Environment Club, Girls Club, Volunteer Club, National and International Events Celebration Club, Theater Club, My Future Career Club, Music Club, and Information Technology. The number of beneficiaries are more than 9,500 from the various activities.

The Volunteers demonstrate the human and universal values of tolerance, love, cooperation and volunteering. As Staff of the Ministry of Youth and Sports, we consider these Volunteers as our fellow coworkers. Without them we would not have achieved all this. Thank you Peace Corps Morocco staff and all of the Volunteers.



My experience with Peace Corps

Rachid Ghanimi – Director of Dar Chebab Gourrama, Province of Midelt

When I first heard about the Peace Corps, I did not know what it was and decided to search around in my region for a Volunteer. Soon in a nearby city, I found a Volunteer at the Youth Center/Dar Chebab. I met with the Volunteer and discussed the possibility of having a Volunteer at the Dar Chebab in my village. Ever since that time in 2002, we have had a Volunteer.



The first thing I learned from a Peace Corps Volunteer was the concept of “volunteering”, which is not part of our language. The second is about how girls benefit from the activities offered by the Volunteers. The girls started becoming leaders through a range of activities and workshops such as the GLOW camp. Also, the number of English speaking youth has increased. And for me, as a Director of Dar Chebab, I started using English again.

There are four young people from our Dar Chebab who are now in the United States of America. They did not find any problem integrating thanks to what they learned about American culture from the Volunteers.

My experience with Peace Corps

Farid Bamou – Director of Dar Chebab, Ferkla Al Oulia, Province of Errachidia

I have worked with Peace Corps Volunteers since 2014. My association and I have benefited from their expertise and experiences. The Volunteers have brought many advantages to the region; the most important is the culture of coexistence with others despite the difference of religions, gender, and language.

I have spent many good times with them and shared their joys and celebrations in and outside of the Youth Center. They are good people. They treat people with respect and friendliness. Community members invite them to their tables to share their food. They succeeded in winning people’s hearts and sympathy and at the same time spreading the culture of coexistence and dialogue between different races.

We learned how to communicate in English. I have become proficient in writing and dialogue. We also learned volunteers work in spite of all the human challenges and difficulties we face in these areas.

The Youth Center has also become the place where youth wishing to learn many skills and experiences such as language, development of skills and leadership skills come.

Whenever I receive new Peace Corps Volunteers, my desire is to work with them to share and promote culture, language, and tolerance.

GLOW Camp – Chelsea Mullen

In the past year, a majority of my work has been focused at the local women's center with my counterpart Bouchra. Our work there began with a Girls Leading our World (GLOW) club. When we first started the club, we anticipated participants to be exclusively female youth, but older women persistently voiced their interest in participating. Bouchra and I initially questioned whether the diversity in age would deter younger girls from participating, but the range of experiences the women bring to the club has been formative to the club's success. The women come together each week to share their challenges and views in a supportive space.

Through this GLOW club, members have been empowered to formulate plans for their own future and the future of their community. The members have organized community trash cleanups, transformed the GLOW club into a weekly space for women and girls to share their challenges and discuss solutions, and we're currently planning an exposition series to share their trade skills with the larger community. In addition, younger members of GLOW will participate in a GLOW camp this summer to encourage girls to become confident community leaders.

None of this would be possible without Bouchra. Bouchra is a potent facilitator, and she becomes more confident in her leadership abilities with each club meeting. At the start of this project, she wrote down thorough notes for each session and looked to me frequently for guidance. Over time, her notes became shorter until they disappeared altogether, and now I listen to her lead sessions, offering assistance when she needs it, although it is needed less and less. I've had many incredible opportunities throughout my Peace Corps experience to engage with women in town, but nothing compares to the strong community Bouchra and members of the women's center have built.



Bouchra helping GLOW girls create vision boards

Women's Leadership and Innovation Summit - Caroline Hayes

The past two months have been a whirlwind of meetings and phone calls with local work partners, late-night planning sessions, and many tea breaks. All the while, I have been attached at the hip to Khadija, my incredible counterpart in Zagora, in order to organize a professional development and networking event in my site to celebrate International Women's Day. Women in Zagora face significant limitations regarding professional growth. A 2018 study conducted by USAID and the Moroccan Government showed that in rural areas in the Draa-Tafilalet region, the illiteracy rate for men is 27.5%, while the figure for women is significantly higher at 53.1%. Khadija and I wanted to use this event to respond to this opportunity gap and to acknowledge the power of women and girls to create and accelerate positive change within their own communities.

The "Women's Leadership and Innovation Summit" incorporated entrepreneurship and professional communication workshops, as well as a career fair, where local women from the Draa region who are established leaders in their career fields came to share stories of overcoming obstacles, answer questions, and serve as inspiring role models. By providing participants technical skill-building workshops and the space to grow their professional networks, we hoped to catalyze the potential for collaborative, sustainable impact and female leadership within the community. Participants were able to exchange ideas and discover common interests, rooted in shared experience in Zagora, and strengthen their motivation to invest time and energy back into the community through collaborative efforts.

It has become evident to Khadija and I that when women and girls, as well as all marginalized populations, are given a space to find their voice and a platform to share their ideas – transformation happens. I hope to continue to bring this message to life during my time in Morocco and beyond.



Peace Corps Volunteer Caroline Hayes with participants in the entrepreneurship workshops holding up their plans for their change-making ideas at the Women's Leadership and Innovation Summit in Zagora.

Camp CLIMB – Katie Bercegeay



Creating Leadership in the Mountains and Beyond (CLIMB) is a dynamic outdoor leadership and environmental program developed by Peace Corps Volunteers in Morocco for youth. The idea to implement this program in our communities came directly from youth we serve who recognize that despite clear appreciation for nature in our communities, there remains an apparent need for environmental education and life skills training for youth. Thus, our goals for this program are to promote environmental awareness, life skills & leadership, volunteerism and community service, physical activity, and discovery.

Facilitated by Moroccan volunteers and PCVs, the program benefited 30 youth participants from the Sefrou and Tinghir provinces over a five month period. It consisted of:

- Weekly classes covering topics such as environmentalism, problem solving, decision making, leadership, first aid, and wilderness safety;
- Monthly hiking excursions to offer the opportunity to apply new skills and to foster appreciation for the local environment;
- The planning and implementation of a relevant community service project; and
- A five day culminating trip to climb Mount Toubkal, the highest peak in North Africa, at which both groups will come together for the first time from opposite parts of the country to put their learning to the test and work together toward a common goal.

The hike is tiring, and we naturally had slower and faster movers. Ultimately, every single person on the trip made it to the summit and back again on day two. It was a massive accomplishment for everyone and a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for nearly everyone present. Once everyone was back at the refuge post-summit, we rested and napped in our bunk beds, all of us exhausted. Playing dead in my sleeping bag, I just listened to the conversations the girls were having around me. “When they ask me what I did in my lifetime, I’ll tell them, ‘I climbed Mount Toubkal’,” one of them said. I smiled, knowing in that moment we had accomplished something big, and slept.

Mentoring – Megan Sayers

Last summer, I got a knock at the door around midnight. It was a man, and I was too afraid to open the door so I went to my roof instead and called down to ask him what he needed. He said he had been looking for my house all day, knowing there was a teacher from the Dar Chebab that lived on this street. He wanted me to meet his daughter to tutor her in English. The following day they both arrived at my house to walk me to theirs across town. The daughter, Kaoutar, was shy and nervous. I would find out Kaoutar made nearly perfect scores on her Baccalaureate exams and was given a full ride to an engineering school in Rabat. Her house was always full and bustling with little siblings, which made it challenging for us to practice English, so she would spend afternoons at my house. English tutoring became less focused on grammar and more focused on how to present herself. We would choose topics in engineering and the environment for her to present on, as well as interview questions and debating tips to practice. In these conversations I would always remind her that she is a force to be reckoned with. She comes from humble beginnings, and now the world was at her feet with her education and future internships. She began to say she wanted to find ways to encourage other youth in her community. She hated to see students drop out or feel directionless or unprepared for university because she had found so much confidence in education. I proposed she host a workshop on college and exam preparations and, at first she balked. Who was she to stand in front of a crowd of students? We decided we would work on the presentation and activities through weekly phone calls when she returned to Rabat during the fall.

In January, we hosted the workshop for nearly 50 participants at a local association, where students learned about how to study, how to live away from home, how to apply for international study abroad programs, and how to select a major. Kaoutar presented all of the content, facilitated the activities, contacted the association to secure sponsorship and location, and conducted outreach for participants. At the end of the long day, we were walking home, giddy with such a successful event, and I told Kaoutar how proud of her I was – that this was all her efforts and work poured into making this day a success. She responded that although it was her who may have organized the logistics, it was me who spent the summer encouraging her and reminding her that she was capable of anything she set her mind to, including becoming a community leader or someone for others to look up to. She said she never would have thought this day could have been a possibility without my constant encouragement.

In so many ways, this is Peace Corps to me. A door may open under the assumption it's 'just' English tutoring on a hot summer afternoon, and then the relationship turns into exploring ambitions and dreams, and then onward to taking action to encourage and give back to others. Oftentimes, Peace Corps' impact lies within the relationships we develop with individuals and how that transforms how they see themselves before going on to invest in others in their community. There are so many existing leaders in the communities we walk into, I think we all just need a reminder that we are capable of more than we think, and what we care about matters more than we allow ourselves to believe.



Family and Friendship

Integration – Luke Nelson

I met my shopkeeper Mohammed my second night at my site when I went out to buy watermelon candy. He greeted me with the biggest smile, asked if I was the new Volunteer with Peace Corps, and insisted that I didn't need to pay him. After a few desperate attempts of me all but throwing the money at him, he agreed that I could start and manage my own tab, which is how we still do business to this day.

Most of my free time is spent drinking tea with him at his shop, watching the traffic of our busy *Souika* (marketplace) go by. Marrakchi culture is filled with humor, and he always gets a kick out of naming the new cats and dogs that move to our corner after former PCVs and world leaders. It isn't uncommon to hear phrases like, "Poor Kira, bin Salman scratched her on the nose yesterday."

He is always excited to share his wisdom with me. In the summers here, it's very common to have ants invade your house. When I went to his shop to buy ant poison, he gave me a confused look and said, "Why would you want to kill them? Suleiman al-Hakim stopped his whole army so the ants could cross the road." After explaining that it's shameful in American culture to have insects living inside a building, he laughed and said, "Not here. Don't ever trust a bakery that isn't filled with live bees behind the glass. That's how you know they're using real honey."



Family and Friendship

Integration – Samantha Heffner

I live in a rural, Amazigh mountain village. Although I felt like Mohammed and Aicha had gotten a second small 5'10" child to parent, they never made me feel that way. I was immediately welcomed into their circle of friends. They have helped me celebrate things from my own culture, including things their culture doesn't recognize.

My first Christmas in Morocco was me returning home expecting nothing, only to be presented with a Christmas cake that said "Happy Thanksgiving Day Sam" with a giant, six inch birthday candle on it. There was even a piece of bush in the corner decorated with balloons as my very own Christmas tree. To this day, this is one of my favorite moments of service because of the selfless thoughts behind their actions.

Last summer, when my mom's family visited, Mohammed made a point to tell them that we are all one family. He took us to the UNESCO mosque, to local associations and kiln and not only gifted my mom a tajine but explained how to use it. Mohammed and I spend a lot of time playing cards, and he knew that was something I do with my dad and brother. While they were here, we spent countless hours sitting and teaching them how to play Ronda, a Moroccan card game played with a Spanish deck. When my family left, Mohammed gave my brother his own deck of Spanish cards to take with him.

When I was younger, I never imagined I'd move halfway across the world from life as I knew it. I certainly never imagined that I would gain a new family in this process. To Mohammed, there is no difference between my parents and his parents, my brother or his; we are all one family now and always will be. I will be forever grateful to Peace Corps for placing me in this village, with this family, because never could I have imagined having found a new family to call mine.



Family and Friendship

Integration – Ilana Shapiro

My three-year-old host sister Ritaj sometimes asks me: “*Fin mamak?*” – where is your mother? After three months living with my host family, this question has become difficult to answer. I tell her, “*3ndi tlata dyal mama.*” I have three mamas: my American mother, my host mother from training in Ain Leuh, and my mama here in my site.

Living with my host family for my first four months in site has made the process of transitioning to a new home full of laughter, learning, and friendship. My host mother will always remember the English word “butcher.” My host dad might now be the world champion of Uno. My host sisters taught me to put my blankets out the window to sun and how to dance at a Moroccan baby shower. My host brother takes me on laps of the Sunday souq and names every vegetable in the local dialect, Tarifit, then quizzes me the next Sunday. They’ve gone on runs with me when they could tell I was anxious to get outside, wake me up to eat tagine at 11 p.m., and been patient when I couldn’t find the words I was looking for to express myself.

As I prepare to move into a new apartment and live on my own, I know I’ll be returning to my host family frequently to be fed couscous and to laugh about my new experiences. As my first friends in my site, they took me in and welcomed me before they even met me, though I am the first foreigner to live in this town. They often remind me that when I return to the U.S., I’ll be cooking Moroccan food instead of American food for my family and friends.



Family and Friendship

Integration – Leandro Travieso

I was one of the few people from my group that was lucky enough to be with the same host family through training to final site. I have known them longer than any Moroccan, and for me, they have become more than just a host family. From the time I arrived here they allowed me to be myself just as I would be back home. I learned that in Morocco family is everything and that resonated a lot with me coming from a Latino background where that happens to be the same.



My host mom always tells me that I can cook whatever I feel like, but chances are the meal options will be repetitive, given my not-so-great culinary skills. My host father always checks with me about what I'm doing at the Dar Chebab (activities, projects, etc.) because he is not only interested but also the president of the dar chabab. I have four host brothers, and we all get along through various means from laughing at funny videos online, through popular American music, through English-Darija tutoring exchange classes.

I have had the chance to experience everything with my host family, and through me, they learned new things about America. We celebrated many birthdays, mine included. I fasted all of Ramadan with them, and they respected Lent by not feeding me any kind of meat. During their family troubles, I was there for moral support, and the same was shown to me during mine.

Integration – Adriana Curto

Spending time with family was always something important to me back at home. They're my best friends. I didn't think it'd be possible to feel that with other people in a place so far from home. Preparing *Ftur* with my host mom (one of the strongest, hardest working woman I've met), to staying up with them until 3 a.m. for *Suhur*, plus all those in-between moments of Ramadan, are some of my favorite memories in Morocco so far. We'll share new music, cook dinner together, hike on the weekends, and consider ideas from different viewpoints. My host siblings now have such a strong, first-hand exposure to the path many of us Volunteers have chosen in our lives, whether that be academics, travel, or just un-traditional ways of growing up in society. I see them challenging themselves to do new things and express their interests and goals for the future. When I introduced both my families to each other this past June, it felt as though there was something already connecting them. The similarities between us outnumbered the differences. Coming up on a year and a half in Peace Corps, I've realized it's not just the classroom moments that are important, it's those relationships you build that award you so much more.



Volunteers at Work and Play



PCVs Cassandra Broadwin and Raashnie Gopalrai



PCV Anna Larocco Masi



PCV Jalyn Mcneal



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