



**Peace
Corps**

NORTH MACEDONIA

Annual Report

2020





Peace Corps

Director's Message



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In 2020, after a little over two short months of normal programming the Peace Corps embarked on an unprecedented global evacuation of Peace Corps Volunteers and of those, 105 were from North Macedonia. In December 2019, the MAK 24 group was sworn in and were at their sites for only 98 days. I want to thank all the people that supported these 105 volunteers go through such a stressful and life-changing event. I also want to thank the previous Peace Corps Country Director Mark Hannifin and the other key staff that participated in this extremely well managed PCV evacuation. We depended on host families, communities, counterparts, local NGOs and our Government of North Macedonia partners. Thank you all!

The two main Peace Corps projects, Community Development and English and Inclusive Education, remain strong. As a result of a program review in 2020 the English Education Program and the Special Needs Program were combined to become English and Inclusive Education. In addition to improving English teaching and English learning, the schools and communities PC partners with are supported to improve their capacity to assimilate special needs students into their schools and into broader community life.

The Peace Corps North Macedonia office remains a global leader in their ability to develop, utilize and implement online trainings and workshops. Before the evacuation, Peace Corps staff were very experienced in the process of incorporating multiple modalities for Pre-Departure, Pre-Service, In-service and Close of Service trainings. Peace Corps Program and Training Staff had developed on-line trainings that Peace Corps Trainees and Peace Corps Volunteers could complete over time in addition to the creative in-person sessions already being implemented. Utilizing this multi-faceted expertise they were able to quickly shift their focus outward to working exclusively through online trainings and workshops to offer learning opportunities for the people of North Macedonia. These were successfully attended by teachers, civil society leaders, NGO managers, private citizens, municipality leadership and counterparts, enabling Peace Corps in North Macedonia to maintain much of the programming momentum established before the pandemic hit.

Staff in the Peace Corps North Macedonia Office have embraced this extremely challenging environment and thrived while developing and demonstrating new skills and talents. They have supported each other and laid the groundwork for the return of the PCVs who are very missed. I am so proud to have joined such a talented and committed group of people and look forward to playing my part in achieving our mission. My thoughts and prayers are with the people of North Macedonia, especially those that have been so negatively affected by this horrendous pandemic. We are putting 2020 behind us with bittersweet memories and are looking forward to 2021 with excitement and a renewed commitment to the Peace Corps mission in North Macedonia.

Peace Corps Overview

In 1961, United States President John F. Kennedy established the Peace Corps to promote world peace and friendship by challenging Americans to live and work in developing countries. More than fifty-eight years have passed since the Peace Corps was established, but the mission and role of the Peace Corps has withstood the test of time. The three goals of the Peace Corps remain as important today as they were at our founding:



Goal 1: To help the people of interested countries in meeting their need for trained men and women.

Goal 2: To help promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of the peoples served.

Goal 3: To help promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans.

Since 1961, more than 240,000 Peace Corps Volunteers have served in 142 countries, leaving a legacy of shared values, improved relations, and sustainable community-based development. In 2020, more than 7,334 Americans volunteered in 61 countries worldwide, before the global evacuation.

Peace Corps in North Macedonia

Peace Corps established its program in North Macedonia in 1996, following an invitation by the Government of North Macedonia. Since then, more than 800 Volunteers have worked with schools, local municipalities, civil society organizations, and public institutions to meet the diverse needs of communities throughout the country. As an acknowledgment of the importance of Peace Corps in improving the North Macedonia - American friendship and of the commitment



Group: MAK 1, 1996

and dedication of Volunteers in North Macedonia society, the President of North Macedonia previously awarded Peace Corps with the Order of Merit in 2011.

In 2020, during the first few months before the evacuation, a total of 105 Volunteers served in one of two Peace Corps North Macedonia projects: *English and Inclusive Education Project* and *Community Development Project*, with a special focus on youth and special needs.

While serving in North Macedonia, Volunteers immerse in local cultures, learn the local languages, and take an active part in social life. Upon arrival in North Macedonia, Volunteers undergo extensive language, cultural, and technical training. To further their integration in the local communities, Volunteers live with local host families, both during the initial training and after for between six to 24-months of their service. Peace Corps implements its program in North Macedonia in close collaboration with a variety of national and local stakeholders active in the fields of education, community development, youth, and special needs.

Volunteer's evacuation

Peace Corps is grateful to have such dedicated host families, counterparts, supervisors and all Peace Corps friends, who offered their help and support to our Volunteers during the time of the evacuation. In March 2020, in accordance with national and



worldwide recommendations, 105 Volunteers were evacuated due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Since then, the Peace Corps staff have continued to work and stay engaged with local and national partners through online educational workshops, Peace Corps' Small Grants program, and individual collaborations with various organizations. Currently, Peace Corps is working to prepare for the return of the Volunteers. We are eager for Volunteers to return to service as soon as the health and safety of Volunteers, staff, and host communities can be assured.

In 2020, Peace Corps North Macedonia had collaboration with the following national partners: Ministry of Local Self Government, Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, Ministry of Education and Science, Bureau for Development of Education, Agency for Youth and Sports, Red Cross, National Youth Council and Coalition of Youth Organizations SEGA, Scout Association of Macedonia, and the Association of Rotary Clubs of North Macedonia.



Peace Corps at a glance




105 Peace Corps
Volunteers in 2020

48 English
Education
Volunteers

50 Community
Development
Volunteers

7 Inclusive Education
Volunteers



15 Virtual
Capacity
Building
Workshops

7 Community
Development
Workshops

8 English and
Inclusive
Education
Workshops

831 participants



9 Small Grants
Project
Completed

6 SPA
Projects

2 Peace Corps
Partnership
Program

1 Let Girls Learn Project



121 Work Sites
in total

47 Primary Schools

11 Secondary Schools



34 NGOs, Scout
Organizations,
Youth Centers,
Civic Associations
and Rotary Clubs



5 Red Cross
Organizations



15 Municipalities
and Institutions



2 Universities



6 Daily Centers
and NGO's for
people with
disabilities



Years in
North
Macedonia

Projects of Peace Corps

Community Development Project



The Community Development (CD) project in North Macedonia supports communities and organizations of North Macedonia to effectively manage sustainable community development. In 2020, Peace Corps Volunteers worked closely with civil society organizations (CSOs), local municipalities and public institutions throughout the country.

Working with local partners, the CD project goal is to have actively engaged citizens and community organizations in North Macedonia lead sustainable community development efforts that are inclusive and benefit all categories of citizens.

In 2020, Peace Corps in North Macedonia deepened its collaboration with the National Scout Association of Macedonia and celebrated the first Anniversary of the collaboration with the Association of Rotary Club of North Macedonia. The early results of this collaboration are positive with an increase in the number of direct collaboration between Clubs and Volunteers across eight different communities.



At the beginning of 2020, Peace Corps in North Macedonia drafted a collaboration plan with the Agency of Youth and Sports and the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO) in Skopje to support both teams in their efforts and activities connected to youth development in the country.

North Macedonia Community Development Volunteers and their local counterparts prioritized the following activities in 2020:

- Supporting organizations in community needs assessment by introducing and using participatory and inclusive approach;
- Building partnerships between different organizations in a community;

Co-facilitating and co-organizing activities, such as youth camps and clubs, for life skills and leadership development for young people.

Projects of Peace Corps

English and Inclusive Education Project

In the period between January and March 2020, Volunteers in the English Education project worked in primary and secondary public schools around the country, with an emphasis on rural and marginalized communities. English Education Volunteers assisted English teachers in the classroom by introducing student-centered classroom methodologies, new approaches in classroom management and assisting with multilevel classrooms. Additionally, there were seven Special Needs Volunteers placed in primary schools that collaborated with the special educators in the schools on the efforts of inclusion practices in the school.



With the comprehensive review from last year, the English Education Program and the Special Needs Program were merged into one: the English and Inclusive Education Project. As a result of this, Peace Corps is placing Volunteers in under two separate goals, one for helping students learn English Language, and another, in supporting special needs students' inclusion in the schools.

Peace Corps North Macedonia is implementing the English and Inclusion Education Project in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Science of North Macedonia and the Bureau for Development of Education, as well as other agencies and organizations dedicated to improving educational opportunities for these marginalized students.

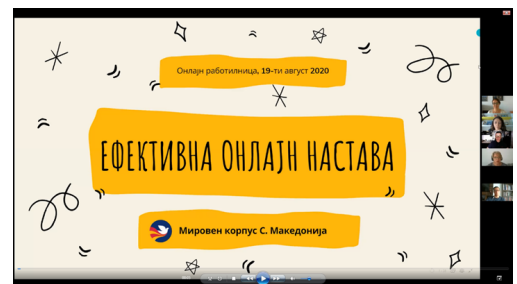
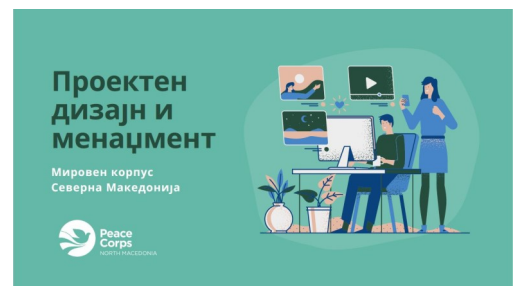


The English and Inclusive Education project goals are to: improve teaching in the schools, increase student success in English language learning, strengthen life skills of students, improve the school community, as well as increase capacity of schools to apply inclusion classroom practices, increase life skills and vocational practices and improve community members' capacity in supporting inclusion in the community.

Online training workshops

From June – December 2020, Peace Corps North Macedonia organized 15 online workshops for the Education and Community Development sector participants. The workshops covered various topics such as: effective online teaching, English language methodologies, introductory and advanced project design and management and foundations of youth development. In total, the workshops brought together 831 participants from different sectors. The **Community Development Workshop Series** brought together 327 participants from different Municipalities, civil society sector, institutions, teachers and private citizens. The feedback and participation from the participants during the workshops have been amazing and we are looking forward to welcoming new participants as well as our long-term valued counterparts to the new set of workshops next year. We believe that the workshops are useful, because in addition to the new skills that are shared, the workshops are another great opportunity to expand participant's network by meeting new people and organizations, and collaborate with them in the future.

The **English and Inclusive Education Workshops Series** were very popular among both teachers and professionals from other sectors too. In total, these workshops brought together around 500 education professionals from different Primary and Secondary Schools. Our most popular education workshop was conducted in September, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Science. In response to the COVID pandemic and the need for increased skills development for teaching in a virtual environment, Peace Corps North Macedonia organized two online teacher workshops available for all teachers in North Macedonia on the topic of *Effective Online Teaching*, covering basics of *Blended learning*, *Using Zoom* and *Google Classroom* as effective tools in teaching.



The workshop was attended by 310 participants from 101 schools and 26 communities, and even more teachers received the recording of the event as well as the materials from the training. Attendance of the teachers was from different parts of the country, such as Skopje (43 schools), Bitola (10 schools), Kumanovo (7 schools), Kicevo, Veles, Gostivar, Prilep, Debar, and some rural communities such as Mogila, Bosilovo, Bogdanci, Negorci, Krivogashtani, Staro Nagoricani, Stajkovo, Gradsko.

Participants recommend that trainings of this type are very useful and needed, especially in this period of change where they are teaching online. Teachers expressed need for support in their respective subject areas by providing them with tools that work for their subjects. Another area of need expressed is opportunity to exchange experiences and ideas in their work. Finally, this type of trainings need to be organized in local languages, such as Macedonian and Albanian.

Small Grants Projects

Environmental Virtual Conference

Even in this turbulent time of pandemic, it is very important to remember that climate change, food security and diversity, and environmental health. Starting in 2010, the Peace Corps Volunteers began the Environmental Working Group and has been working closely with *Ajde Makedonija* and *Apolonia Foundation* and together hosted an annual Environmental Conference. In September 2020, our partners *Ajde Makedonija* and *Apolonia Foundation* continued the tradition and hosted an online 3-day conference on the topic “**Potentials for preservation, maintenance and promotion of agrobiodiversity**”. The conference brought together around 50 participants each day to discuss the critical issue of agrobiodiversity and the importance of Heirloom Seed preservation. The conference speakers consisted of academia, civil society sector representatives, businesses and non-affiliated activists/volunteers.



This work did not end with these three days; our partners continue it through the creation of a strong network of committed organizations and individuals that will push to advance this topic in both your local communities, and with national policies. The conference and network creation contributed to increasing of public awareness for the potentials that agrobiodiversity has for the development of the economy and communities in North Macedonia.

Life Skills Training Camp in central North Macedonia

This is just one example of how SPA funds enhance public awareness of special needs children and the needs of their parents and caregivers. This grant was also focused on supporting and encouraging special needs educators, expanding their knowledge and developing new tools that they can use in their everyday work. The project was supported by the community.

This grant had two key elements:

- Training about developing life skills in children with special needs
- Five day camp for students with special needs and their guardians

School staff and the parents of students with special needs were invited to a life skills training taught by a special educator. The objectives of the training increased awareness and the practice of parents teaching life skills at home, to train staff on methodologies of teaching life skills in the classroom, and to build relationships between staff and parents.



The camp took place at the Mihajlovo resort for 18 students and their parents, and three special educators. The training and camp was incredibly successful. From the first snowy day on the mountain of Mihajlovo everyone was so excited and ready to participate. Every day consisted of multiple activities, including art, games, music/dance, and outdoors activities such as sports, hiking, and winter activities in the snow, all with a focus on life skills and incorporating teaching life skills in daily activities and through play. The camp had a huge impact on student's life skills, self-care, and community involvement, but also helped parents to see the full potential of their children's' skills. In North Macedonia there is a lack of motivation when it comes to

teaching people with special needs, and this camp helped to change that perspective for many of the parents and staff members as they saw multiple adapted activities that can be done to increase skills in people with any kind of disability. Furthermore, including the participation of parents at the camp and life skills training made them feel more involved and heard in their child's education. The camp and training also made the special educators felt more excited about teaching life skills at school.

This was first grant of its kind and Peace Corps North Macedonia plans to use it as an example (idea) for future Peace Corps Volunteers working with people with special needs. This project was implemented and finished right before the evacuation of the Volunteers.

Improving Youth Folklore Opportunities through Intercultural Education

A small rural community hopes to improve cultural opportunities for its youth, especially in the area of folklore. The House of Culture of “Mirka Ginova”, a Macedonian cultural institution, is the driving force for all cultural activities and partners with the Municipality of Demir Kapija, to celebrate the community’s heritage by hosting the *Saint Trifun Manifestation* on February 14th. Through interviews



with stakeholders and conversations with youth, members of the community identified the need to create an intercultural experience around the *Saint Trifun Manifestation* to sustainably expand local youth folklore opportunities and improve the cultural awareness of youth by partnering with the Turkish cultural institution “Yeni Yol” from Skopje.

The activities of the project include a Cultural Awareness Week at the primary school “Dimche Angelov-Gaberot” before the manifestation, a joint folklore performance and intercultural workshop with Macedonian and Turkish youth at the *Saint Trifun Manifestation*, and open trainings for traditional Turkish folklore dancing in the town after the manifestation. The principal of the primary school, a local Turkish teacher, the Director of the House of Culture, and an employee at the Municipality lead the activities, demonstrating the community’s widespread support. These activities along with a new projector and traditional Macedonian outfits will give the staff of the House of Culture the educational tools and organizational capacity to teach Turkish culture and Macedonian folklore to future generations of local youth, strengthening cultural unity and preserving local Macedonian culture in their small town.

The project improved the cultural awareness and knowledge of local youth in the town by exposing youth to Turkish and Bosnian customs and traditional choreography. In total, over 40 youth members from the House of Culture participated in the project activities, surpassing the initial goal of 25.

Surveys were disseminated to youth in the primary school following the intercultural folklore event with traditional dancing and poetry highlighting both Macedonian and Turkish culture. A high majority of the responders of the survey stated that positive feedback for the activities.

This event along with all other cultural activities from the project were well-received by the community with parents, teachers, and local government officials in attendance.



Ambassador Kate Byrnes Hosts Peace Corps Partners Reception

On March 10th, the U.S. Ambassador Kate Byrnes hosted a reception for Peace Corps partners. Among the invited guests were current and prospective partners of Peace Corps North Macedonia. Peace Corps partner organizations in attendance have multiple chapters, offices, and/or clubs throughout the country. The reception provided Ambassador

Byrnes and Country Director Mark Hannafin with the opportunity to express appreciation to current partners for their support and commitment throughout the years. The event helped increase Peace Corps' visibility with national partners working within the development field. It also provided a prime opportunity to promote the opportunities for local organizations (municipalities, civil society organization and grass-root youth organizations) to work with new groups of Peace Corps Volunteers.





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