

Peace Corps Albania & Montenegro

January 2021- September 2022

Reimagined and
Innovative
Service



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Message from U.S. Ambassador to Albania, Yuri Kim

Dear Friends,

I have been eager to write this letter for two years. I am thrilled to welcome Peace Corps Volunteers back to Albania.

Peace Corps Volunteers' return to Albania comes as we celebrate two significant milestones in U.S.-Albanian history: the 100th anniversary of our diplomatic ties, and the 30th anniversary since the establishment of the Peace Corps in Albania.

In 1992, Peace Corps Albania was born amid the Albanian people's renewal of their country as a democratic nation after decades under one of the world's most oppressive dictatorships. During that time, the communist regime kept Albanians and Americans apart through force and fear. The regime hoped to extinguish a deep and enduring friendship that had existed since President Woodrow Wilson made clear the United States' support for a free and independent Albania. Not only did Americans and Albanians reconnect after the fall of communism – our people now share a partnership that is deeper than ever.

Peace Corps Albania is a large part of that reason. During the last 30 years, Peace Corps Volunteers have mastered the Albanian language, lived in communities throughout the country, and made long-lasting friendships all while advancing health education, English language learning, and working side by side with community members on local projects. Volunteers came to Albania, usually as the first Americans that an Albanian had ever met, with the aim of promoting peace and friendship through a helping hand and open heart.

The pandemic's interruption of our Volunteer program in Albania was exceptionally difficult because our bond through Peace Corps was so strong. However, Peace Corps Albania created innovative ways to stay connected to Albanian communities. Peace Corps Albania sustained friendships and made an impact by piloting a virtual service program, in which U.S. experts partnered with Albanian institutions remotely. And Peace Corps Albania never stopped planning for Volunteers' safe return.

I congratulate Peace Corps Albania and its partners for your efforts to contribute to the friendship between the United States and Albania. One of the best ways we can celebrate our 100th and 30th anniversaries is the return of Peace Corps Volunteers to Albania. I am certain the Volunteers will have a wonderful, rewarding experience in this beautiful country, working alongside the Albanian people, and I look forward to meeting them across Albania.

Sincerely,



Yuri Kim
U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Albania



Message from U.S. Ambassador to Montenegro, Judy Rising Reinke

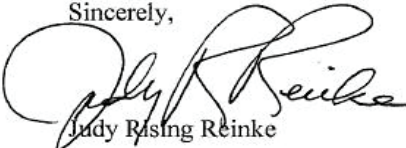
Dear Friends, Partners, and Colleagues,

While the pandemic has continued to pose challenges for all of us over this past year, I have been impressed and inspired by the resilience and commitment of the Peace Corps in Montenegro. Even though Volunteers were not able to be present in Montenegro during the darkest days of COVID, these past months have been incredibly fruitful. The Peace Corps has taken unprecedented measures to ensure the safety of its volunteers, while also conducting innovative projects. As part of a Virtual Service Pilot, this creativity was amply evident, such as the successful engagement of an American expert who worked online with a Montenegrin school to offer English language teaching from a distance. I applaud those Peace Corps Volunteers who are driven to service, even when connecting remotely!

As conditions in Montenegro returned to normal, I was pleased to welcome Peace Corps Regional Director Rebecca Gong Sharp's visit to the country, where she met many of the Peace Corps' valuable partners here in Montenegro, such as the representatives from the Ministry of Education, the English Language Teachers Association of Montenegro, and civil society organizations. I am deeply appreciative of the perseverance that the Peace Corps and its partners have shown throughout this pandemic; rather than allow their great work to stagnate, they handled the situation with prowess and continued to find new opportunities to engage and build relationships.

I also take this opportunity to encourage my fellow Americans to answer the call to serve by applying to the Peace Corps Volunteer service in Montenegro. I know from experience that Montenegro provides all its visitors the most beautiful environment in which to learn, grow, and engage in meaningful cultural exchange. It is a unique time to serve as a Peace Corps Volunteer here and an exciting opportunity to promote our shared values and strengthen people-to-people ties between our two countries.

While the Peace Corps program in Montenegro is still new, I have already seen the impact of the Volunteers and professional staff in growing stronger relationships between the United States and the people of this country. I am eager to welcome the Volunteers back to Montenegro and can only imagine what great things that they will be able to achieve when they have their feet on the ground of this beautiful country once again.

Sincerely,

Judy Rising Reinke



Message From Country Director, Megan Wilson

Dear Friends and Partners of Peace Corps Albania & Montenegro,

It has been a long two years as Peace Corps Albania and Montenegro (PCAM) worked to bring American Volunteers back to the beautiful countries of Albania and Montenegro after their evacuation in 2020. Although it was unfortunate not to have Peace Corps volunteers serving in communities around Albania & Montenegro, these years did not go idly by. This time enabled Peace Corps to work to further offer a **Reimagined and Innovative Service** for volunteers and their communities.

In August 2022, PCAM was thrilled to announce the return to service of volunteers in the fall of 2022 in conjunction with the Governments of Albania & Montenegro. We particularly thank our host governments, agencies & families who worked with us to make this a reality. We know that communities are excited to have volunteers back on the ground, as their energy and contributions have been deeply missed.

During the last two years, Peace Corps Albania and Montenegro reimagined service through innovations including piloting **virtual service opportunities, developing, and executing staff-led initiatives, and revamping policies and procedures** all while remaining fully engaged with host governments, agencies and families. PCVs will continue to be placed in communities with host agencies and families. This strategy is beneficial in terms of their cultural integration, their ability to learn Albanian or Montenegrin, and their security as well as increasing their ability work with their host communities more effectively.

Virtual service opportunities: The global evacuation of Peace Corps Volunteers in March 2020 prompted an agency-wide reflection on how to expand service opportunities, even during the current global pandemic. Based on these conversations, Peace Corps launched the Virtual Service Pilot in posts around the globe. Since March 2022, PCAM participated in this pilot with 8 participants partnering with organizations in Albania and Montenegro. Through these virtual engagements, the participants have remotely supported local organizations that align with PCAM's mission.



Peace Corps Albania and Montenegro Country Director Megan Wilson and Minister of Education, Sport and Youth of Albania Evis Kushi

Message From Country Director, Megan Wilson

Developing and executing staff-led initiatives: In 2021 and 2022, PCAM also innovated by supporting numerous partners with capacity building efforts, including developing & executing 5 staff-led projects, funded by US Agency for International Development & Peace Corps. They included a:

- #YouthagainstCOVID19 social media campaign;
- Training for 1st grade English Teachers;
- Training to further develop teachers' capacity to increase student resilience;
- Training on Project Management for over 22 organizations; and
- Media Literacy Training for Teachers.

Revamping policies and procedures: Given the COVID-19 context and the need to enact further measures that improve safety and health & increase learning, PCAM has developed new health, security, and training policies and procedures such as an updated travel and transportation policy with Covid-19 considerations. PCAM also developed innovative hybrid training model, leveraging both a center-based and community-based training. To this end, the team developed additional online learning resources on language, culture, safety, health and technical training utilizing a platform called *Learning Space* and developed a plan to leverage the use of tablets for PCV training, health and security communication. Trainees in Albania will be grouped by sector in villages near the Pre -Service Training hub, in central Albania. In Montenegro, trainees will be placed close to the Albanian border, the same Montenegrin community as the previous PST.

The Peace Corps Albania and Montenegro team and I look forward to continuing to work with you and all our partners to celebrate this historic return and further the work that Peace Corps has done for over 60 years around the world.



With deep thanks for your support,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Megan Wilson', followed by a horizontal line.

Megan Wilson

Peace Corps Albania and Montenegro
Country Director

U.S. Peace Corps Mission and Goals

In 1961, US 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. Since then, more than **240,000** Americans have served in the Peace Corps in **142 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.

For over sixty years, Peace Corps Volunteers have served the cause of freedom. They have immersed in local cultures, worked alongside their community partners, learned many world languages, met peoples' need for training, and ultimately contributed to friendships between Americans and peoples of the world.

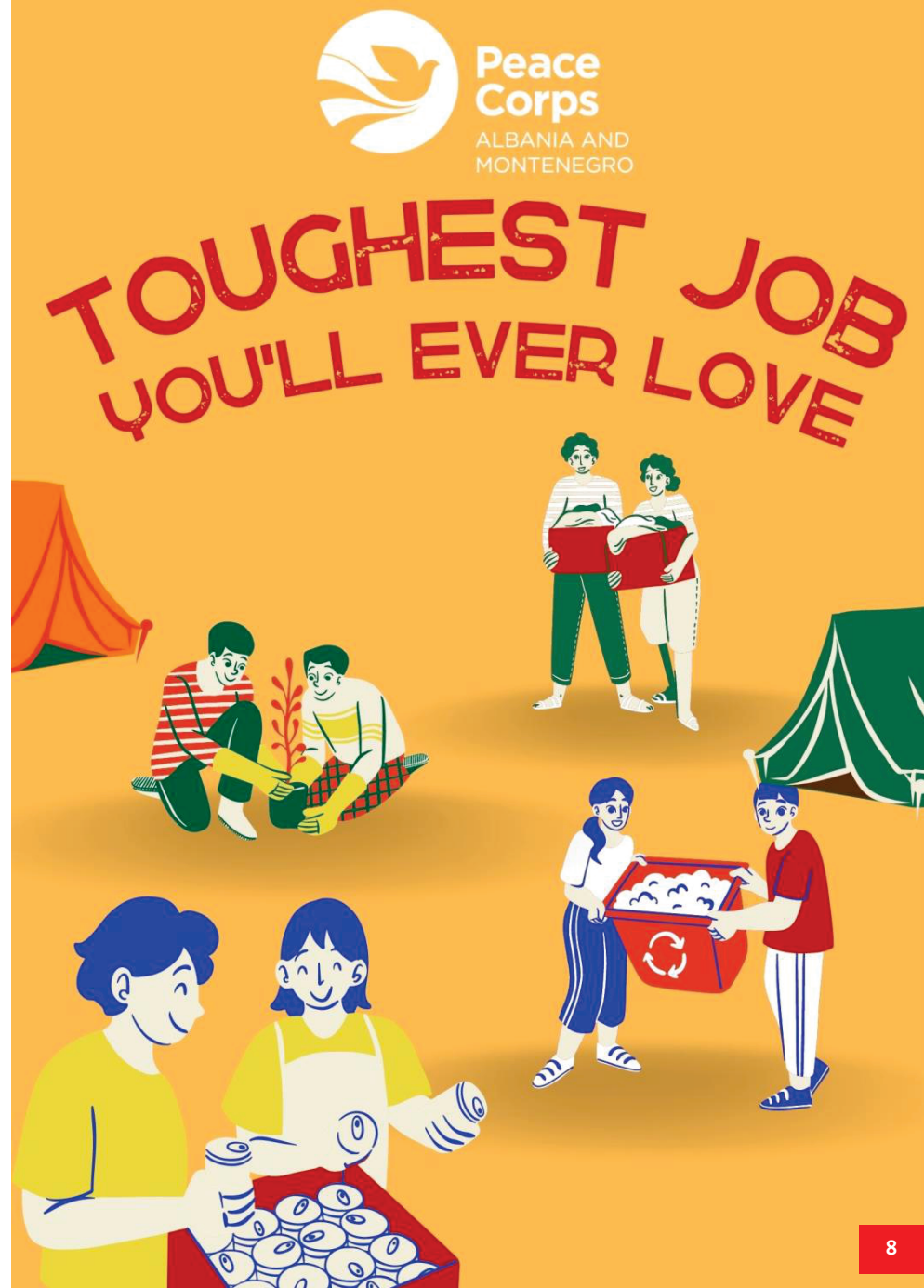


Peace Corps continued to deliver during the COVID-19 Pandemic

In 2021 and 2022, the Peace Corps has continued to deliver on its mission through a virtual service pilot, the domestic deployment of volunteers to aid in the United States' COVID-19 response and the continued work of the agency's many overseas staff members and partners during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"During this historic time, in which we are all called upon to challenge the status quo, lean in and adapt, the Peace Corps has stepped up to meet the moment." said the Peace Corps CEO Carol Spahn. "We look forward to joining hands with communities around the world, in the spirit of world peace and friendship, to meet their expressed needs for support following the massive disruptions caused by COVID-19."

After more than six decades since its founding, the Peace Corps' mission to promote world peace and friendship remains more relevant than ever. The Peace Corps, at its core, is about celebrating diversity around the world, building relationships and opportunities, and fostering equity and inclusion.



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 due to 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, Peace Corps staff returned in March 2003 to set up an office and re-establish programs.

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

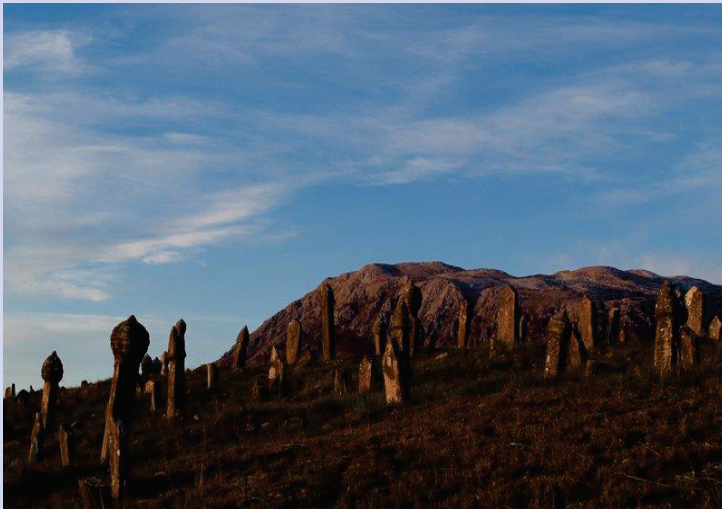
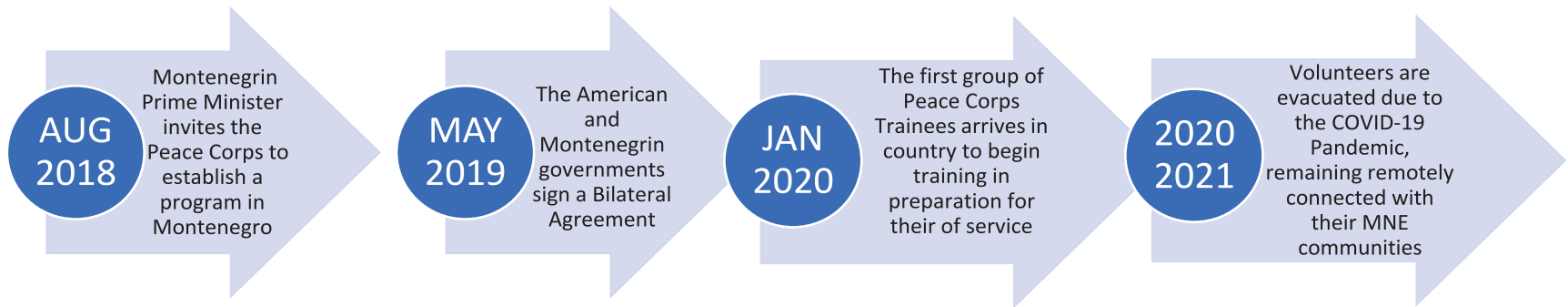
- English education
- Health, now with a focus on Youth Health & Well-being
- Organizational development

The Peace Corps program is in Albania 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.

Since September 1992, over 900 Volunteers have served in Albania.



Peace Corps in Montenegro



PCV Wiley Reid and Darijan visited Ottoman cemeteries (above) and other areas of the village in search of interesting things to draw.

Just before the evacuation flight **Volunteer Wiley Reid** wrote about his time in Montenegro, reflecting on his relationship with Darijan, a young artist and member of his host family :

“...as I spent my last evening under the Balkan moon, the messages coming in from Darijan showed me that perhaps my two-month stay in Montenegro was more impactful than I realized. He told me what I didn’t know I needed to hear – that the expectations, dreams, and visions I had hoped would unfold for me in Montenegro had already begun to sprout.

He told me that the sense of wonder I’d encouraged him to feel about the landscape we walked through would be lasting. He told me that the freedom to take risks in art would stay with him. He told me that the sense of humor about our land, our art, and our lives—humor that I held as sacred—would follow him in his memory. He told me directly that “this campaign has changed [his] life.”

Peace Corps Albania and Montenegro (PCAM) projects

- Volunteers serve in communities with access to fewer resources. Volunteers focus on one of three sectors:
 - English Language Learning (in Albania and Montenegro)
 - Youth Health & Wellbeing (in Albania)
 - Organization Development (in Albania)
- Our Volunteers partner with schools, municipalities, ministries, and NGOs, and can focus on different issues in addition to their primary project. Some of these include women empowerment, environmental issues, tourism development, and increasing project sustainability through local ownership.

English Education in Albania

Youth Health and Wellbeing

Organizational Development

ENGLISH EDUCATION IN MONTENEGRO



Peace Corps
ALBANIA AND
MONTENEGRO



PCAM projects: TEFL in Albania

Teaching English as a Foreign Language: The TEFL program supports professional development of English teachers with language proficiency and instructional methodology aligned with communicative language teaching. Volunteers also support the need for extracurricular activities and projects aimed at providing students with leadership and life skills. In addition, through youth-related activities, camps and clubs, or complex activities, Volunteers teach critical thinking skills to solve problems. Volunteers train and support school and community projects, such as library or gym development, school beautification and the creation of English rooms, which aim to equip school and community members with project development and community collaboration skills.

Activities – In 2022 while preparing to bring Volunteers back, our TEFL team has worked closely with our main public partners, the Ministry of Education and Sport and ASCAP, to implement a 1st grade English teacher training project with an emphasis on the methodologies and practices of teaching young learners. In addition, the team connected 35 students from our partner schools with students in other Peace Corps countries in a Pen Pal program aimed at practicing English language and cultural exchange.

Impact – Through PCAM's support 253 First Grade English teachers and 27 Chairs of Professional Development Networks are better equipped with knowledge and skills on general and English teaching skills, especially on teaching young learners.



Group work during trainings delivered for first grade English teachers.

PCAM projects: TEFL in Montenegro

Teaching English as a foreign Language – The TEFL Program in Montenegro aims to provide support to students and teachers throughout Montenegro, with an emphasis on rural areas, through Volunteer work in the field of English language learning and teaching. Namely, Peace Corps Volunteers (PCVs) dedicate their time and knowledge to teach Montenegrin students the English language, alongside Montenegrin teachers at schools, using communicative approach. They also support Montenegrin teachers in their professional development through sharing experiences in communicative language teaching methodologies. In addition, PCVs, in line with the identified needs, organize extracurricular activities, community actions, clubs, camps and similar. This altogether serves as an excellent platform for teaching problem-solving and critical thinking to young people, as well as to provide them with leadership and life skills.

Activities – In preparation for the return of Volunteers, the TEFL Program organized a number of meetings with governmental and nongovernmental stakeholders, met with schools and Host Families, expanded the network of partners and provided trainings to Montenegrin English language teachers in the communicative approach, and blended learning and media literacy domain. Also, the program joined the Peace Corps Virtual Service Pilot, through which one school and one NGO was provided with online support in line with their needs. The TEFL Program continues to work hard to bring Volunteers back on the ground, as the first group ever to serve in Montenegro.

Impact – Montenegrin teachers are provided with some new teaching skills and tools when it comes to media literacy in the classroom, as well as communicative approach and blended learning skills in general. In this way, Montenegrin students will be able to experience innovative activities in their classrooms.

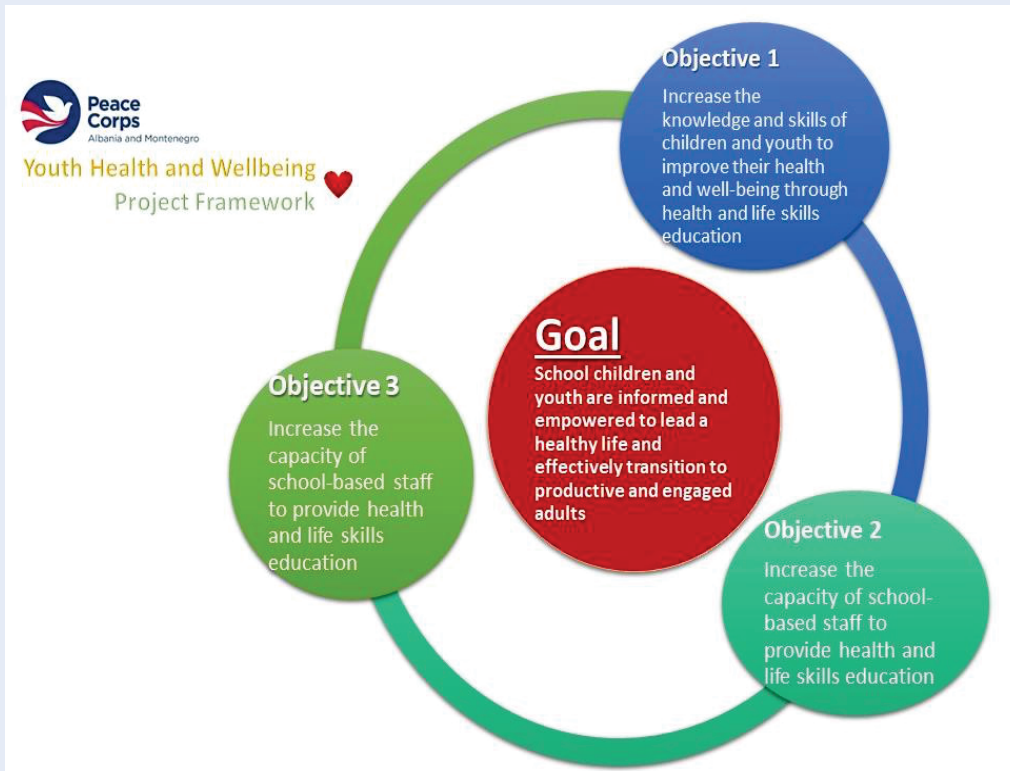


Meeting with the Lubnice school, a partner in Peace Corps' Virtual Service Pilot Program

- 120** Approximate number of English language teachers who attended our workshops in the past year and a half
- 90** Meetings with a variety of stakeholders from governmental and nongovernmental sphere
- 250** Phone calls with schools, Counterparts and Host Families to maintain developed relationships with our core partners

PCAM projects:

Youth Health & Wellbeing in Albania



The new HE-YHW Logical Project Framework, endorsed in 2020

Youth Health and Well-being – HE-YHW PCVs work closely with their school-based counterparts/CPs (Pre-school teachers, Elementary teachers, Biology, Civic Education, Physical Education, Psycho-social workers and/or school nurse) to co-develop curricular and extra-curricular activities and projects.

Activities – The activities that HE-YHW PCVs co-organize and co-develop in their schools and communities include (but are not limited): classroom lessons, educative classes, afterschool clubs, camps, school as community center projects, awareness days and peer educators and support groups.

Impact – The Youth Health and Well-being Project supports children and youth (ages 5-18) to develop their health and life skills, by applying gender equitable practices, student-centered approach and inclusive techniques.

PCAM projects:

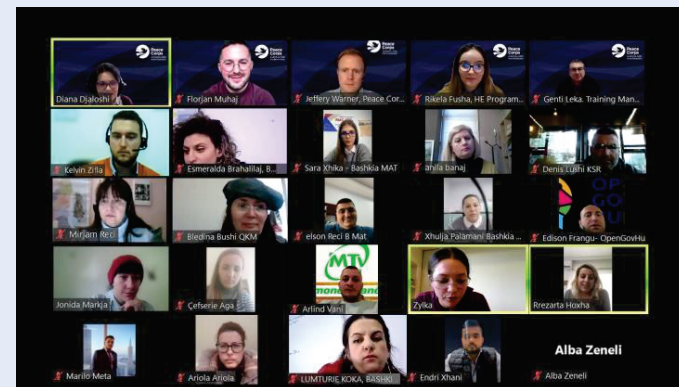
Organizational Development in Albania

Organization Development

The Organizational Development project seeks to strengthen organizational capacity at the local level. Volunteers under this project are assigned to work alongside governmental agencies and community-based organizations in gradually enhancing their capacity to effectively manage community development efforts. Volunteers promote asset-based approaches to community development, civil society engagement, good governance and networking among stakeholders.

Activities

- **Partnership building and maintaining** – the Organizational Development (OD) program has kept continual communication with partner agencies using different channels of communication such as phone calls, Zoom Calls and Site Visits.
- **Site identification and preparation** – OD team is working to prepare sites for the upcoming group focusing on new needs and priorities while keeping in consideration the new COVID 19 safety and mitigation standards and procedures. OD program is proud of the unwavering interest and commitment of OD program counterparts and supervisors to continue collaboration with Peace Corps.
- **Country Needs Assessment** – To understand the new needs brought about by the pandemic crisis, and to prepare Volunteers for meaningful service upon their return, the OD Program conducted a two-phase needs assessment process to better understand how partner organizations and communities have been impacted by the pandemic and subsequent economic changes.



Virtual Project Design and Management training conducted following an OD partner needs assessment

PCAM projects:

Organizational Development in Albania

Impact:

- **First Phase (April – May 2021)** – The Needs Assessment process aimed to assess the new needs and priorities of the OD program's main partner agencies (20 Municipalities and 20 NGOs) in the post-COVID 19 pandemic context. The most pressing needs identified were: project design and management (PDM); youth mobilization; youth engagement in volunteerism, professional skills development, employability and income generation; technology development and adjusting to a virtual workplace; revitalizing the tourism sector, designing and developing risk mitigation strategies and plans.

- **Second phase September 2021** – In the second phase of the needs assessment, the OD program outreached 20 Partner Agencies to assess more in depth their immediate needs for Training, Coaching and Technical Assistance. Partner agencies shared that their immediate needs relate to needs for training on PDM, monitoring and evaluation and fundraising.



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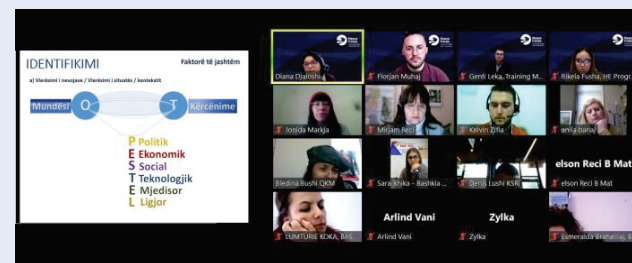
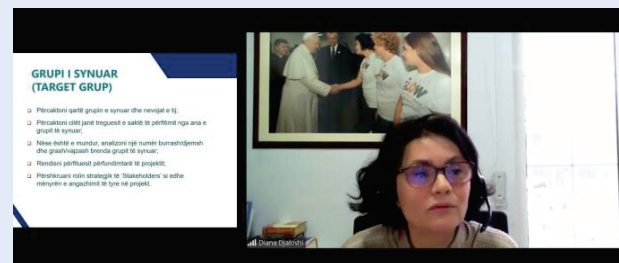


Innovations – Responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic Context: Organizational Development Training series

The Need – From January 31- March 4 2022 the Organizational Development Program conducted 15 days of training (divided into 3 rounds), for partner organizations and municipalities on “Project Cycle Management”. The team designed these trainings based on the findings of an in-depth needs assessment among partner communities and organizations.

Activities — The goals of the trainings were to improve knowledge on Project Cycle Management and support partner organizations to draft a complete project proposal package. The training was filled with energizers, breakout rooms, and group presentations, in order to maximize participation among participants. It ended successfully with the drafting of 9-project proposals created by teams of participants in the fields of gender based violence, women empowerment, youth empowerment and wellbeing, environment protection, rural and seasonal tourism, providing the community with resources (Library Project), and Life skills for women and girls.

Impact — These virtual training sessions brought together 83 representatives from 22 NGOs and 5 municipalities from all over Albania, who worked together in teams to create 9 complete project proposals. These trainings also marked the first time PCAM staff offered virtual Project Cycle Management Training. Given the positive feedback from participants and measurable impact, the team plans to explore further opportunities for future virtual trainings.



Project Cycle Management training series were organized by the Organizational Development colleagues

83 Participants trained from 27 organizations

9 Project proposal packages created by training participants

Innovations – Responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic Context:

TEFL Albania – Training first grade English school teachers

The Need – In October 2021 meeting with the Minister of Education, the training of the 1st grade English teachers, especially the novice teachers, emerged as one of the priorities of the Ministry of Education and Sport. Following up, the Country Director together with TEFL team agreed to prioritize cooperation on the most recent initiative, by supporting novice English teachers of 1st graders with hands-on trainings.

Activities – The highlight of this past year has been the direct in-person training of 253 first grade English teachers. To increase the scale of capacity building and sustainability, 27 chairs of professional development networks participated, who in turn trained teachers who are members of their networks.

Such training was made possible due to fantastic cooperation with our two close partners, the Ministry of Education and ASCAP, and with funding from USAID. Our teams, the coordination one with members from the three agencies, and the training team with two American experienced teachers and two local trainers and experts made possible to design, organize and deliver 26 engaging workshops to teachers from all over Albania

Impact – approximately 7200 students in 135 [mostly rural] communities are currently being taught by the 253 teachers who participated in the trainings by utilizing classroom management techniques, as well as strategies on how to manage young learners for them to engage and enjoy English language learning.



Closing ceremony Group photo of the participating teachers with peace Corps, USAID representatives and the US Ambassador to Albania and the Minister of Education and Sport.

Innovations – Responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic Context: Students and teachers' resiliency boost in Albania

The Need: The COVID 19 Pandemic helped spread misinformation and strained student's and teacher's mental health. This teacher training pilot sought to help address this.

Activities:

- **Training of Trainers (TOT) event.** 24 education professionals (teachers, psycho-social staff, and parents' board members) who represented 17 schools from Bajram Curri region actively participated in this training.
- PC Staff monitored the **follow-up activities** in two schools, one located in the urban area/town and the other one in the rural area/remote village of Bajram Curri region with 50 students as participants.
- PC Staff co-organized with schools **a final exhibition** with art work of students (paintings, essays, poetries) where 40 students participated.

Impact:

- 24 trained education professionals (teachers, psycho-social staff & parents' board members) on how to build resilience and better support students' well-being;
- 5 training sessions and resources are tailored to address the needs of the education professionals and delivered to them..
- Students trained on resilience and addressing misinformation caused by Covid-19 pandemic presented 40 different art work.



Moments from Training of Trainers (TOT), follow-up activities and exhibition

24 Trained education professionals: teachers, psycho-social staff & parents' board members

5 Training sessions and resources tailored to address the needs

40 Students trained on resilience and addressing misinformation

Innovations – Responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic Context: #LoveWipesCOVIDAway Challenge



COVID-19 vaccination campaign

Project's Logo

The Need: The spread of COVID-19 disease seriously impacted vulnerable communities, exacerbating inequalities as well as social mistrust in societies. Unfortunately, misinformation and rumors about COVID-19 are prevalent, especially among youth. With the support of the Institute of Public Health and USAID, the #YouthAgainstCOVID-19 campaign aims to shift perceptions, build youth knowledge and skills to make health oriented decisions, combat rumors and create positive peer pressure to encourage vaccination against COVID-19 in Albania.

Activities: This challenge-based viral campaign sought to encourage youth to:

- **Get vaccinated today!** Once vaccinated, teens, youth, students can further focus on their well-being, studies, and becoming successful in life.
- **Create a Movement** among youth and to combat vaccine myths and misconceptions, by promoting healthy behaviors to mitigate youth's COVID-19 risk through the #LoveWipesCovidAway challenge.
- **Create a replicable model of a youth led campaign**, by engaging top line youth influencers (Albanian VIPs) and regional influencers (youth from across the country) to carry out the challenge of filming and posting a video of themselves explaining why they got vaccinated, hopefully sparking a chain reaction of videos of people getting vaccinated and challenging other youth to do the same.

3 Capacity building Workshops with Regional Influencers throughout Albania addressing:

- Vaccine hesitancy in youth and its impact;
- Scientific evidence on the global and local impact of COVID-19 on youth;
- How to create communication content, public speaking, outfit, and so on;
- How to make a Viral Campaign.

Impact:

- Increased capacities of 35+ youngsters, regional influencers to design and implement effective youth-led campaigns in the area of behavioral change;
- Increased young people's awareness about Covid-19 transmission and their role on the fight against COVID-19 misinformation through innovative techniques and tools;
- Increased capacities of 35+ youngsters, regional influencers on utilizing social media platforms and technology tools/applications to raise awareness on COVID-19 vaccination.



Innovations – Responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic Context: TEFL Montenegro: ELTAM Literacy Trainings

The Need – In December 2021 we held a meeting with the English Language Teachers' Association of Montenegro ELTAM in order to explore areas of collaboration in the pandemic context. ELTAM's leadership identified the need for a *Media Literacy Workshop* for English language teachers that would provide them with necessary skills and knowledge to teach this topic in the classroom. The spread of fake news and conspiracy theories during the pandemic has increased. Therefore, this type of workshop was deemed especially important as it sought to increase teachers' capacity to teach media literacy as a way to positively influence critical thinking around public health issues.

Activities – In order to respond to ELTAM's needs, we organized an online PCAM staff-led two-day *Media Literacy Workshop*. In addition, we invited two guest speakers, a prominent epidemiologist and a psychologist, to speak about topics within their field of expertise. This workshop, which was implemented in March 2022, was attended by 30 English teachers who had the opportunity to learn about media literacy in general and to obtain some practical activities and tools to implement the topic in the classroom.

As a follow up, the PCAM team participated in "ELTAM Days 2022" in May 2022, a conference for national and international English teachers. During the conference we hosted a *Media Literacy in the Classroom Workshop* attended by both local and international English language teachers.

Impact – Over 60 Teachers obtained new knowledge and skills in teaching media literacy in the classroom, which enabled them to impact hundreds of their students when addressing this topic of great importance.



Around 30 English teachers participated in the Peace Corps organized workshop to learn about media literacy.

60 Teachers obtained new knowledge and skills in teaching media literacy in the classroom

Hundreds of Students impacted by their teachers

A Reimagined and Innovative Service: Virtual Service Pilot

The global evacuation of Peace Corps Volunteers in March 2020 prompted an agency-wide reflection on how to expand service opportunities, even during the current global pandemic. Based on these conversations, Peace Corps launched the Virtual Service Pilot in posts around the globe.

Since March 2022, PCAM has participated in this pilot with 8 participants partnering with organizations in Albania and Montenegro. Through these virtual engagements, the participants (all returned Peace Corps Volunteers) have remotely supported local organizations in a number of areas aligned with PCAMs three programmatic sectors. Some of the support participants are providing includes:

- Co-teaching elementary English lessons
- Co-developing a curriculum on healthy eating and food safety
- Presenting American Culture and educational opportunities to university students
- Supporting the development of a strategic plan for a youth agency
- Co-designing guidelines for fundraising for an NGO



Virtual Service Participant speaking to English Students at Tirana University.

Virtual Service Partner Organizations:

Albania

- The National Youth Agency of Albania
- The Albanian Consumer Center
- The Agency for Quality Assurance, Pre-University Education
- The University of Tirana Department of English
- Children are the future
- Free to Travel Youth Center

Montenegro

- Lubnice Elementary School, Berane, Montenegro
- Forum MNE

A Reimagined and Innovative Service: Preparing the ground for the Volunteers return

Preparing for the Return of Volunteers

Since the global evacuation of Volunteers in March 2020, the PCAM team has been focused on preparing for their return. This means not only addressing the new health and safety environment brought on by the pandemic, but also using this time to develop and build upon partnerships, strengthen programming and training, and keep evacuated Volunteers engaged with their communities and PC Staff.

Language and Culture

Over these last two years PCAM's training team has completed several projects aimed at developing new language and culture materials and adapting existing materials to a virtual environment. These resources will allow Volunteers to strengthen their language and intercultural skills throughout the entirety of their training and service. The projects included:

- Developing technical language materials that will support Volunteers in their work assignments
- Developing language materials that will equip Volunteers to navigate conversations related to their health and safety
- Expanding on the already existing language and culture resources available on Peace Corps' online learning platform, Learning Space
- Increasing the resources and training materials available for Montenegrin



An Albanian language resource for Health Education Volunteers

A Reimagined and Innovative Service: Preparing the ground for the Volunteers return

Volunteer Competency Model and Training Continuum

PCAM's Programming and Training team has been heavily engaged in reviewing the programming and training systems and practices at post. Among the several projects the team worked on is the global Peace Corps initiative of Training Design and Assessment (TDA). The TDA project introduced a Volunteer Competency Model and accompanying learning continuum with a set of benchmarks and assessments during the 27-month Volunteer service cycle. By adapting this project to the context in Albania and Montenegro, the team has strengthened training processes, making them more practical, understandable and applicable for Volunteers.

The Programming and Training team has also developed several interactive online courses utilizing the LearningSpace system. These Moodle-based courses cover topics related to language and culture, sector specific technical training, project design and management, aimed at making Volunteer service safer and more effective.

Building and developing Partnerships

A key component of the preparations for the return of Volunteers to Albania and Montenegro is developing and building upon PCAM's partnerships. Without partners, we would not be able to effectively work towards the Peace Corps mission of world peace and friendship.

Over the last two years the PCAM team has worked to maintain connections with host families and partners organizations in both countries, even in the absence of Volunteers. The team has also found innovative ways to engage with partners through staff led activities, further strengthening our mutual work. When Volunteers return to Albania and Montenegro, they will be greeted by partners who are more eager than ever to connect!



Meeting with the American Corner in Podgorica



Visiting with a Host Family in Albania

A Reimagined and Innovative Service: Draft and adopt Policy to match new reality

PCAM was thrilled to receive preliminary approval to return to service on March 17, 2022. As such PC staff, Embassy colleagues, host governments, partners, and Volunteer Communities look forward to welcoming back the PCVs. The Peace Corps Albania and Montenegro team has a proven track record of managing complex challenges, such as the opening of the Montenegro program and responding to the 2019 earthquake in Albania and is prepared to overcome this new re-entry challenge.

Activities – For our one input of 2022, PCAM requested 21 Albania PCVs and 7 Montenegro PCVs in September 2022. PCAM will continue to focus on quality and consistency, as was the priority in our FY20 strategic plan, while testing out our new policies and procedures with this first group of pandemic PCVs. We will also work to incorporate intercultural competence, diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (ICDEIA) into all aspects of PCAM's operations.

Impact – In 2021 & 2022 PCAM has prepared for an innovative hybrid training model, leveraging both a center-based and community-based training. Post will work with training communities in both countries that have a proven capacity to host trainees. New policies include updated health, security, and training guidelines such as an updated travel and transportation policy with Covid-19 considerations



Volunteer Health and Wellbeing

PCMOS UPDATE MEDICAL ACTION PLAN

A strong medical support model for volunteers is needed to achieve Peace Corps' Mission. The assurance of high- quality medical care for the Volunteer is our top priority. We have been constantly visiting and evaluating the medical facilities in both our countries; keeping the good relationship with all of them and developing new ones.

PCAM Medical Action Plan has been updated during this year in order to provide information about the resources available throughout both countries. Capacities of the hospitals, private clinics and laboratories are growing and PCAM is continuously monitoring the development of new resources.



PCAM STAFF IN CONTINUED TRAINING

Peace Corps Albania & Montenegro has further strengthened the systems, programming and staff capacity to support the volunteers. To assist this effort, by the end of April 2022 all PCAM staff members participated in a training offered by PC Regional Mental Health Officer, Dr. Kibour, to further develop skills including listening & validation. This training reinforced the Agency's global commitment to offering trauma-informed approaches in our support to Volunteers. This training will further develop a supportive environment for Volunteers and ensure that their return will be as safe and healthy as possible.

TEAM REINFORCED BY BACK UP PCMOS

In January the Peace Corps Albania & Montenegro team launched a series of online trainings for six backup medical providers. These trainings, which ran through July 2022, were based on PC's Technical Guidelines. The intent of the training sessions was to give the back-up providers an overview of the Peace Corps Health Program, orient them to the Health Unit, provide introductions to key staff, review important resources and discuss relevant policies. This series of trainings has been very useful to grow the team's ability to offer consistent quality care following PC guidelines while building a strong sense of team.

Staff trained in Safety and Security response

The Need: Prepare and train the PCAM staff for supporting Volunteers *in all safety and security matters during their service*. The safety and security of Volunteers is the agency's highest priority. All Peace Corps staff play an important role in the support of safety and security of Volunteers. While Peace Corps service involves some inherent risk, comprehensive policies, procedures and training are designed to mitigate risk by reducing the likelihood and/or impact of a safety and security incident involving a Volunteer. Safety and security is a shared responsibility undertaken by all staff, whether in the field, or at headquarters, host country authorities and communities and Volunteers.

Activity

Refresher training on PC's Emergency Action Plans. The Emergency Action Plan (EAP) provides a detailed country-specific plan that will be used by PC Albania and Montenegro Response Team, staff, Volunteers and Trainees to prepare for and respond to an emergency situations, or in the event of a crisis at Post that has the potential to affect Volunteers, staff or general operations. The EAP is developed and updated annually to prepare for, manage and recover from a variety of crises such as natural disasters. PCAM Staff participated in EAP refresher training facilitated by the Safety and Security Team.

Impact – Staff is familiar with EAP; know their individual responsibilities and ready to provide all possible support to Volunteers/ Trainees during any emergency.

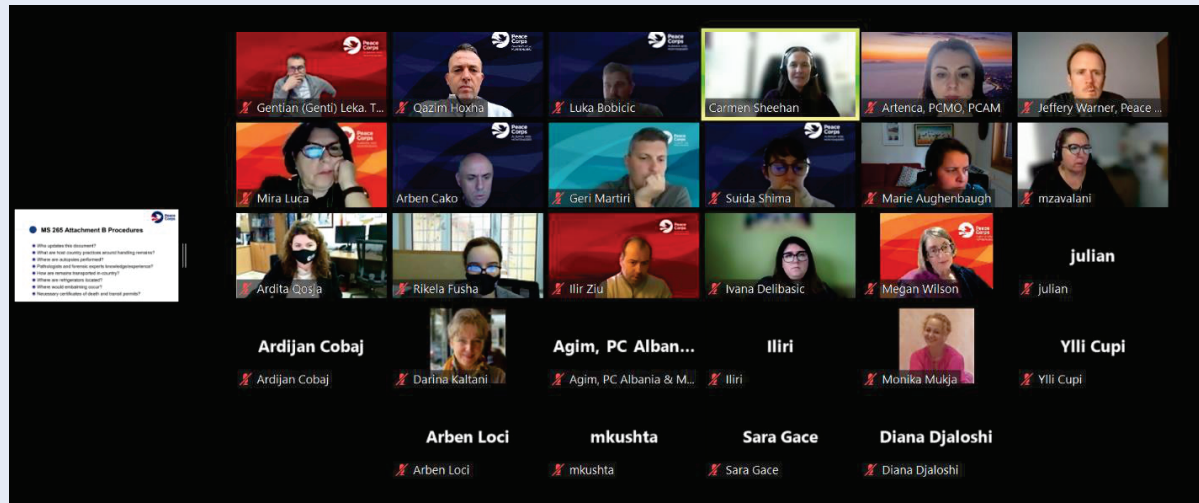
Sexual Assault Risk Reduction and Response. PCAM staff participated in Sexual Assault Risk Reduction and Response training with focus on Culturally Informed Support lead by the Safety and Security Manager) and the Director of Programing and Training. All Peace Corps staff play an important role in the Sexual Assault Risk Reduction and Response program. Staff involvement may range from training Volunteers on risk reduction and response, directly receiving reports of sexual assault from Volunteers, being involved in providing Volunteer victims of sexual assault support and medical care, or ensuring staff have the funds and transportation to provide this support.

Impact – By the end of this training, staff is familiar with the major components and goals of Peace Corps' Sexual Assault Risk Reduction and Response Program; committed to providing interpersonal support to Volunteers in difficult situations that they are not comfortable with; improved communication skills to provide support to a Volunteer in a difficult situation.

Staff trained in Safety and Security response

Activities – Earthquake Safety- PCAM Staff took part in Earthquake safety training facilitated by Safety and Security Team. Albania and Montenegro are countries prone to earthquakes and regular seismic events, which justifies the need to plan, to prepare and to be trained for destructive earthquakes in the future. During this training, the staff was fitted out with information and guidance on preparing for and responding to a seismic event that disrupts or potentially destroys the ability of a Post and the official community to function in a normal manner

Impact – By end of the training, staff is familiar with all procedures in preparation for and response to an earthquake.



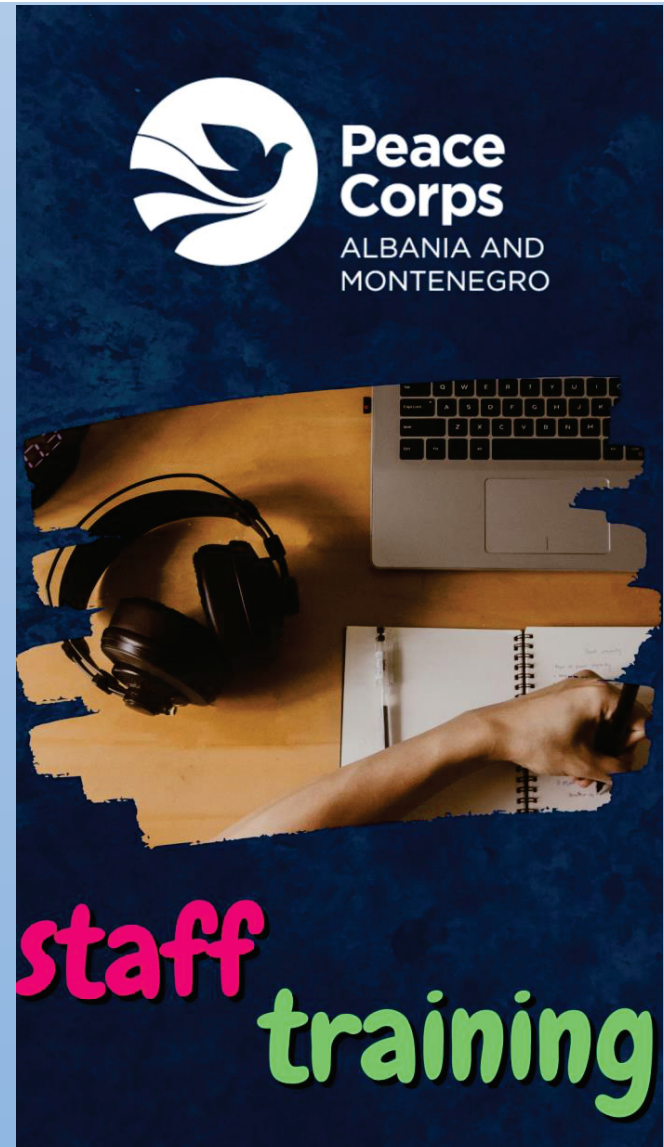
Staff members participating in safety and security trainings .

PCAM Staff Development

PCAM has continued to support staff members through a robust Staff Professional Development Program, through which staff can pursue personal, professional development, and career orientated goals. Staff also have the ability to further develop and strengthen certain skills, abilities, and their professional knowledge in their areas of expertise, through these training and educational opportunities.

Throughout this year, PCAM staff have engaged in the Staff Development Program at nearly a 50% rate, which is remarkable, considering these courses were taken in addition to their regular day to day work duties and responsibilities. Some staff have taken their courses after working hours, which demonstrates how dedicated and committed they are in achieving their professional development goals.

The staff have completed courses and trainings in the areas of communication capacity building, language courses in English, Albanian, and Montenegrin, graphic design, IT professional training, Albanian tax legislation, contracting, and leadership skills development. Staff participation in the Staff Development Program has come from all PCAM internal sectors, including the Medical Unit, Programming and Training, Executive Communications, and Administration since December 2020, and these staff development training opportunities are ongoing. The feedback and outcome of PCAM staff who have participated these courses has been extremely positive, and staff are applying the new skills and knowledge they have acquired in the preparatory work they have been engaged in, with the return of Volunteers.



Our Permanent Staff in 2022

Peace Corps Albania and Montenegro is proud to have a dedicated staff comprised of Americans, Albanians, and Montenegrins. Our team boasts some of the best talent in the two countries we serve. The team is focused on helping our Volunteers to achieve their greatest potential during their service. They are passionate about their work and about making a difference for children, communities, and people throughout Albania and Montenegro. This team exemplifies Peace Corps and the values for which we stand. This is the team that is responsible for the good work we have achieved in Albania since 1992, but also the team that was asked to lead and manage the new opportunity to serve in Montenegro.

| | |
|--------------------|------------------|
| Agim Dyrmishi | Julian Pando |
| Arben Cako | Luka Bobicic |
| Arben Loci | Lumturi Piciri |
| Ardijan Cobaj | Marie |
| Ardita Qosja | Aughenbaugh |
| Artenca Collaku | Marjeta Zavalani |
| Besa Arapi | Megan Wilson |
| Darina Kaltani | Mira Luca |
| Diana Djaloshi | Milena Pejovic |
| Dorontine Berishaj | Mirela Tahiraj |
| Elsona Cupi | Monika Mukja |
| Florian Muhaj | Qazim Hoxha |
| Gentian Leka | Rikela Fusha |
| Geri Martiri | Sara Gaçe |
| Illir Memlikaj | Suida Shima |
| Illir Ziu | Ylli Cupi |
| Iris Dollia | |
| Ivana Delibasic | |
| Jeffery Warner | |



Staff members with the Minister of Education of Albania during her visit to the Tirana office

A Reimagined and Innovative Service - Partner Organizations

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

- Agro-Puka
- Albanian Local Capacity Development Foundation
- American Councils
- ARKA Center—Shkodër
- CSDC Durrës
- Darien Book Aid
- English Language Teachers Association
- ESU – English Speaking Union
- Foundation Food Bank Albania
- Friends of Albania
- Mary Ward Loreto
- Children are the future (CAF Albania)
- Albanian Consumer Center (ACC)
- New Bridges
- Qendra Marredhenie
- Regional Development Agency—Korçë
- Sidi Education
- Terre des Hommes
- Touristic Dibra
- Water Charity
- World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts
- World Central Kitchen
- World Connect
- World Vision
- Youth Center—Vlorë
- Youth in Free Enterprise

Municipalities

- | | | |
|---------------|-----------|----------|
| • Belsh | • Krujë | • Patos |
| • Berat | • Mat | • Përmet |
| • Fushë Arrëz | • Mirditë | • Shijak |

Government and Independent Organizations

- Ministry of Education and Sports
- ASCAP (Quality Ensuring Agency for Pre-University Education - Albania)
- DPAP (General Directorate of Pre-University Education - Albania)
- Regional Education Directorate for North, Albania
- HAP (Health for All Project - Albania)
- Association of Paraplegics of Montenegro
- Institute of Public Health
- Ministry of Education of Montenegro
- Forum MNE
- English Learning Teachers Association of Montenegro
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Montenegro
- Ministry of Interior of Montenegro
- United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) in Albania and in Montenegro
- United Nations Population Fund
- United States Agency for International Development (USAID)
- United States Embassies in Albania and in Montenegro and American Corners
- University of Shkodër, English Department
- University of Tirana, English Department

Regional and District Offices of Education

- | | | |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| • Berat | • Lezhë | • Tropoje |
| • Durrës | • Lushnjë | • Përmet |
| • Fier | • Mat | |
| • Kajave | • Shkoder | |
| • Korçë | • Skrapar | |

A Reimagined and Innovative Service - Partner Organizations

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

- New Epoch Center - Fier
- Environmental Center for Studies and Implementation- Librazhd
- SOS Village of Children - Tiranë and Shkodër
- Another Vision - Elbasan
- Open Gov Hub Albania
- Leadership Development Association Balkan
- YEC
- Psycho-Social Center “Vatra” - Vlorë
- Regional Development Agency - Vlorë
- Argonaut - Tepelenë
- Social Inclusion for Development – Lezhë
- Youth Movement Center - Pukë
- The International Association for Solidarity – Tiranë
- Youth of Ura
- Community Center Nish Tulla – Durrës
- Liberi di Viaggiare – Udhëtimi i Lirë-Durrës
- “With a community for a change” – Vlorë
- Roma Gate, Fushë Krujë
- American Corner, Vlorë
- Institute of Book and Promotion – ILP TOENA - Tiranë

