



**Peace
Corps**
NORTH
MACEDONIA

Annual Report 2022





Peace Corps

Director's Message



Deborah Conner - Country Director
Peace Corps North Macedonia

I will start at the end of the year - the big news for 2022 is Peace Corps North Macedonia has welcomed back Peace Corps Volunteers! Fifteen PCVs were sworn in on December 7th by Ambassador Angela Aggeler. The PCVs arrived as Trainees on September 26th and participated in eleven weeks of cultural, technical and language training before being sworn-in as Volunteers. They are assigned to sites in towns and cities within one and a half hours of Skopje. There are eleven English Language Volunteers who co-teach English in primary and secondary schools and four Community Development Volunteers who work with organizations in their communities.

Prior to the arrival of PCVs we had our newly appointed Regional Director Becca Gong Sharp visit us in June. We were part of a four-country visit; in addition to North Macedonia, she visited Montenegro, Albania, and Kosovo. Director Sharp met with our partners, counterparts, and resource families to discuss their experiences with PCVs. She also was able to spend in person time with PC Staff to learn about their history with the organization; many have worked with Peace Corps for over 15 years.

We were also able to get out and meet with our organizational partners and signed two new five-year Memoranda of Understandings: the first with the Red Cross of the Republic of North Macedonia and the second with the Agency for Youth and Sport. We also met with technical organizations and represented Peace Corps at meetings and events in Kumanovo, Veles and Skopje.

Both the Community Development and English and Inclusive Education programs continued their work engaging organizations and people who participated in their online technical skill building trainings. Over 160 members of organizations attended sessions on project design, implementation, and management. Peace Corps also partnered with RYCO and 27 young people attended the second Youth Leadership 2.0 training. Sessions included leadership, communication, intercultural dialogue, youth engagement and volunteering. The English and Inclusive Education program held many virtual professional development workshops. Almost 1,000 teachers participated in the Macedonian and Albanian languages where many topics were covered during the four sessions.

This year with the introduction of the Virtual Service Pilot Program we were able to offer schools and organizations a different type of service option. A person in the US was able to participate in a program in North Macedonia by utilizing Zoom technology. These people were previously PCVs in North Macedonia, so they were able to use their language skills and work with a Community Center and a School to facilitate activities with young people. Both experiences were very positive, therefore, we have been able to increase the number of virtual service participants to five for 2023.

Finally, we supported a four-month training project for five organizations called 'Initiative to Support the Development of Volunteer Programs for Civic Society Organizations'. This came about because of our 2021 research study titled 'COVID-19 and Youth in North Macedonia: needs, challenges, and consequences'. A clear outcome of the survey was the need for more opportunities for youth. We hope because of this program these youth focused organizations will be able to add or expand volunteer opportunities for young people.

Please read about the above activities and more highlights in this 2022 Annual Report. We are so honored to have PCVs in country and we look forward to expanding their number and increasing the opportunities for schools and organizations to participate by requesting a Peace Corps Volunteer.

Peace Corps Overview

The history of the Peace Corps is rooted in a shared vision for what is possible by working with, living alongside, and celebrating the diversity of cultures around the world. On October 14, 1960, in a campaign speech, then-Senator John F. Kennedy challenged University of Michigan students to contribute two years of their lives to help people in countries of the developing world. *"How many of you who are going to be doctors, are willing to spend your days in Ghana?"*



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.

In 2021 Peace Corps celebrated its 60th anniversary, 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.

Peace Corps in North Macedonia

Peace Corps established its program in North Macedonia in 1996, following an invitation by the Government of North Macedonia. Seven Volunteers arrived in June 1996 and had their three-month Training during the summer in Skopje. Six Volunteers served in secondary schools in different towns in North Macedonia and one Volunteer took the role of Volunteer leader. Since then, more than 800 Volunteers have collaborated with schools, local municipalities, civil society organizations, and public institutions to meet the diverse needs of communities throughout the country.

In 2003 President Boris Trajkovski visited our new office building on Oslo street in Taftalidze, wishing Peace Corps staff successful work. He officially opened the new office by releasing two white doves in the sky together with Kim Green, Peace Corps Country Director at the time.

As an acknowledgment of the importance of Peace Corps in improving the friendship between North Macedonia and the United States, and of the commitment and dedication of Volunteers to the society of North Macedonia, the President of North Macedonia George Ivanov awarded Peace Corps with the Order of Merit in 2011.



Group: MAK 1, 1996

Peace Corps North Macedonia Today

Peace Corps Volunteers serve in one of two projects: English and Inclusive Education and Community Development, with a special focus on youth and special needs. While serving in North Macedonia, Volunteers immerse themselves in the local culture, learn the local language, and take part in the social life of the community. Upon arrival in North Macedonia, Volunteers undergo extensive language, cultural, and technical training. Peace Corps implements its program in close collaboration with a variety of local and national stakeholders active in the fields of education, community development, youth, and special needs.



Picture from the Presidential award

Achievements: What marked 2022

15

Volunteers
arrived

18

sites where
Volunteers serve

9

primary schools in
which Volunteers
work

2

high schools in
which Volunteers
serve

4

NGOs in which
Volunteers serve

2

youth centers in
which Volunteers
serve

1

university in
which
Volunteers
serve

11

towns where
Volunteers are
present

11

virtual
workshops
series held

1695

participants in
workshops

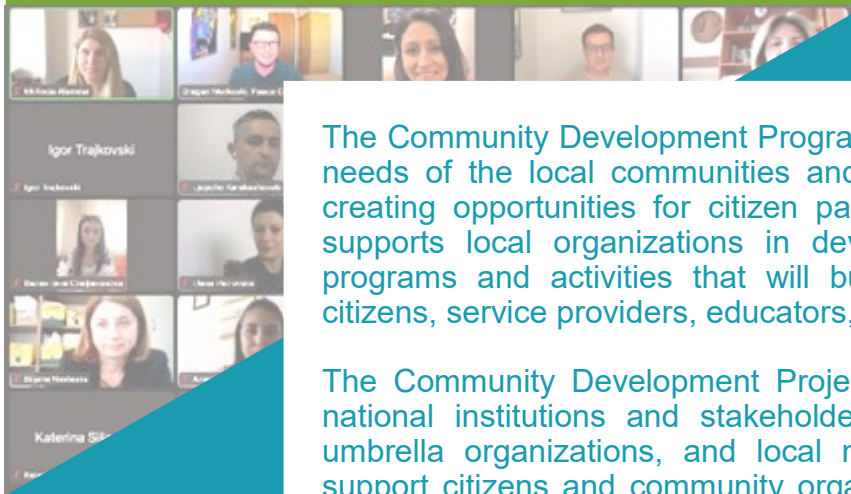
1

Small Project
Assistance funded
project

26

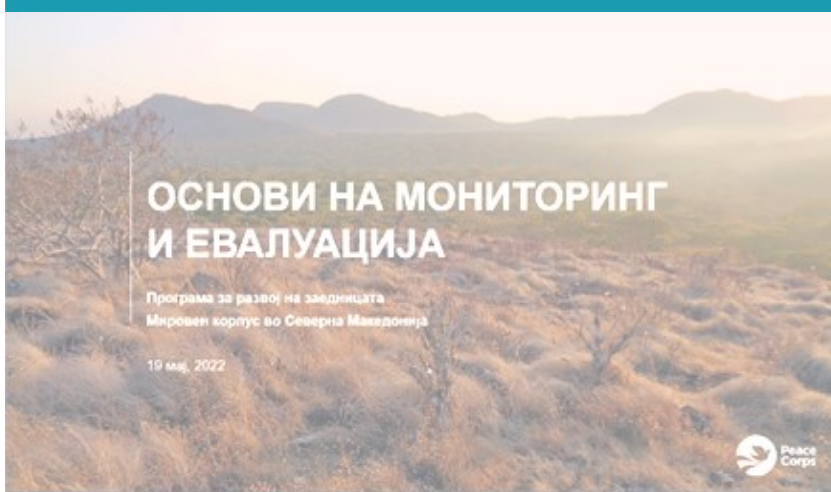
Years Peace
Corps in North
Macedonia

Community Development Project



The Community Development Program in North Macedonia responds to the needs of the local communities and main stakeholders in collaboratively creating opportunities for citizen participation, in particular youth. It also supports local organizations in developing sustainable and meaningful programs and activities that will build the capacities of young people, citizens, service providers, educators, and marginalized groups.

The Community Development Project was developed in partnership with national institutions and stakeholders, civil society organizations, youth umbrella organizations, and local municipalities. The project goal is to support citizens and community organizations in North Macedonia to lead sustainable community development efforts that are inclusive and benefit all citizens. The project activities are designed to meet three main objectives: improve the capacity of organizations and community groups to address identified community needs; strengthen the life skills of youth; and expand opportunities for community engagement, especially for youth.



“It has been a long time since a virtual workshop has gotten my full attention like this series of PC workshops! All the topics are very relevant for my work and are presented in such a clear and understandable manner.” – Evaluation feedback from a participant from a local municipality.

During the last year the Community Development Program held multiple rounds of on-line professional development workshops for local and national organizations, municipalities, and youth organizations. These included sessions on Project Design and Management, Monitoring and Evaluation, Volunteerism, and Building Youth Resilience in the time of COVID. More than 160 participants attended these workshops. In addition, the Community Development Team organized a four-month program with technical consultants from five local organizations. The *“Initiative to Support the Development of Volunteer Programs for Civil Society Organizations”*, enabled them to increase the number of volunteer opportunities for youth, which was an issue highlighted in the research study *“COVID-19 and Youth in North Macedonia: needs, challenges and consequences”*. Read more about this on page 14.

English and Inclusive Education Project

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

The English and Inclusive Education Program has two goals. The first goal is supporting students to attain communication skills in English necessary to access academic and/or professional opportunities. The second goal refers to special needs students' access and participation in academic and professional opportunities.

Under the English and Inclusive Education Program, Peace Corps North Macedonia organized professional development workshops for teachers throughout the year. This workshop series was conducted over a period of four months, starting in November 2021.. Four important topics were covered in both Macedonian and Albanian languages:

1. Student Centered Methodology,
2. Classroom Management,
3. Diversity in the Classroom,
4. Managing Stress for teachers and students in the time of COVID.

КРЕИРАЊЕ ТЕСТОВИ НА ЗНАЕЊЕ И ОЦЕНУВАЊЕ

Практични совети за наставници

Мировен корпус Северна Македонија продолжува со обуките за професионален развој на наставниците. Овој пат, Трајанка Аврамоска, советник за испити и оценување од Државниот испитен центар ќе сподели практични совети и примери за наставниците во однос на успешно креирање тестови на знаење и оценување. Работилницата е бесплатна. Учесниците ќе добијат сертификат за учество.

Настанот ќе се одржи два пати на следните датуми:

- ✓ 28 јуни, 15:00 часот
- ✓ 30 јуни, 17:30 часот (со албански превод)

Мировен корпус Северна Македонија

1,000 teachers participated in the workshop series, 112 in the Albanian language and 880 in the Macedonian language.

The purpose of the workshop series was to:

- Support teachers in delivering quality education to students who have faced disruptions to their education due to COVID-19;
- Support teachers in developing coping mechanisms, for themselves and their students, to help mitigate the negative impact of COVID-19 has had on mental well-being;
- Promote Peace Corps and its Education program to ensure schools and teachers are invested in Volunteer return.



2022 Peace Corps Highlights

In September 2022, 15 US citizens arrived in North Macedonia to serve as Peace Corps Volunteers for the next two years. This is the first group of Volunteers to arrive in our country after the global COVID-19 evacuation in March 2022.



Many of the sites where the Volunteers live and work for two years have eagerly waited for the opportunity to host a Volunteer. Our Volunteers work in nine primary schools, two high schools, four NGOs, two youth centers, and one university. The selected sites represent the diversity of the country, as we have rural and urban sites with diverse ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds.

Upon arrival in North Macedonia, Volunteers went through a three-month training to prepare for their service. This training included Macedonian and Albanian language lessons, cultural, technical, safety and health training. This year the training was different from the previous years due to COVID-19. Most of the training was done virtually, with Volunteers attending virtual classes on ZOOM and meeting in-person once per week. We are especially grateful for being able to implement this training model and having the opportunity to experiment with virtual training.

After the completion of the training period, Volunteers were officially sworn in and began their service. The Swearing In ceremony was attended by the US Ambassador to North Macedonia Angela P. Aggeler, Deputy Minister of Education and Science, Mr. Lulzim Aliu, representatives from our partnering organizations, counterparts, and resource families as well as other collaborators from the international community.

"Volunteers represent the best of what America has to offer to the world, and at the same time, they bring back with them the best of what North Macedonia has to offer to the world, and especially to America. They build lasting bridges between the people of our two countries over the years, which even time does not break" said Ambassador Angela P. Aggeler.



Regional Directors Visit

From June 11-15, 2022, Peace Corps North Macedonia had the honor to welcome Rebecca Gong Sharp - the Peace Corps Regional Director for Europe, Mediterranean, and Asia.

Rebecca met with the Peace Corps North Macedonia staff to discuss Peace Corps priorities and strategic development plans. During the visit, Rebecca met with a host family and a primary school in the rural area of Bukovikj, Skopje, as well as several national partners and organizations: the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO), Youth Community Center Gostivar, the Bureau for Development of Education, and a field visit to sites in the city of Kumanovo.



"I just returned from a fruitful trip to the Balkans, where I met incredible counterparts, co-teachers, students, non-profit leaders, ministry officials, Ambassadors, and our dedicated staff across four countries and three posts – Albania, Montenegro, Kosovo, and North Macedonia. The message that I heard from communities is that the deleterious impacts of COVID-19 are wide-reaching, and therefore so is the usefulness of Peace Corps in helping with recovery. The COVID-19 pandemic has indeed brought many social ailments into starker light, including widening economic inequality, education gaps, lack of digital literacy, social isolation, and domestic violence. Therefore, the role of Peace Corps and support PCVs will play in recovery is key." - Rebecca Gong Sharp, July 1, 2022

Partnerships

Building on the successful history of mutual collaboration, Peace Corps North Macedonia renewed the Memorandums of Understanding with several national partners. Peace Corps staff attended multiple events, activities and meetings with various organizations and institutions including: the National Youth Council of Macedonia, the Union of Youth Work, Nansen Dialogue Centre Skopje, Regional Youth Cooperation Office, Red Cross, Scout Association, ARNO, Ministry of Local Self Government, Ministry of Education and Science, Bureau for Development of Education, State Examination Center, local municipalities, etc.

In March Peace Corps North Macedonia and the Red Cross of the Republic of North Macedonia signed a new Memorandum of Understanding for the next five years. The Memorandum is a result of the successful cooperation in the past few years and the intention to continue this collaboration in developing projects and activities in the Community Development sector identified by the Red Cross.



In April 2022, Peace Corps North Macedonia and the Agency of Youth and Sport signed a new Memorandum of Understanding continuing the long lasting successful cooperation. During the meeting, the Director of the Agency, Mr. Naumche Mojsovski and Peace Corps North Macedonia Country Director Deborah Conner discussed future plans and acknowledged the cooperation, support and enthusiasm from both sides. The two sides share many goals of working with the country's youth.

In July, Peace Corps North Macedonia Country Director Deborah Conner, Program Managers Nadica Georgieva and Mirlinda Alemdar and the Language Coordinator Ivana Trandafilovska had a productive meeting with representatives from Nansen Dialogue Center. Peace Corps North Macedonia received some phrasebooks, dictionaries, and publications that the Volunteers will use in the future. The two organizations discussed future cooperation and joint activities.



In August Peace Corps North Macedonia Director of Programming and Training Rebecca Steenbergen and Regional Manager Teuta Saljii had a meeting with the Mayor of Kumanovo, Mr. Maksim Dimitrievski. They talked about the successful collaboration and plans for the future.

In 2023, Peace Corps North Macedonia plans to renew the Memorandums of Understanding with the Ministry of Local Self Government, the National Youth Council of Macedonia and deepen the collaboration with the existing network of partners and as well as expand the network of collaborators.

Other Activities

In March 2022 Peace Corps North Macedonia, in collaboration with the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO), organized a second round of the online workshop “Youth Leadership 2.0”. The workshop was open to all young people who were interested in improving their skills in the areas of leadership, communication, intercultural dialogue, active youth engagement, volunteering, and conflict management. 27 young people from all over North Macedonia were part of this online workshop and successfully completed six days of training and received a Certificate of Completion.

Youth Leadership 2.0

“

From this activity, I now understand a lot of new things that maybe I had heard but didn't know the meaning after it. I think that is great and helps you a lot with a lot of things, you start to understand how things work. You start to see that we as young need to start take part in a lot more things like this. – Quote from participant.

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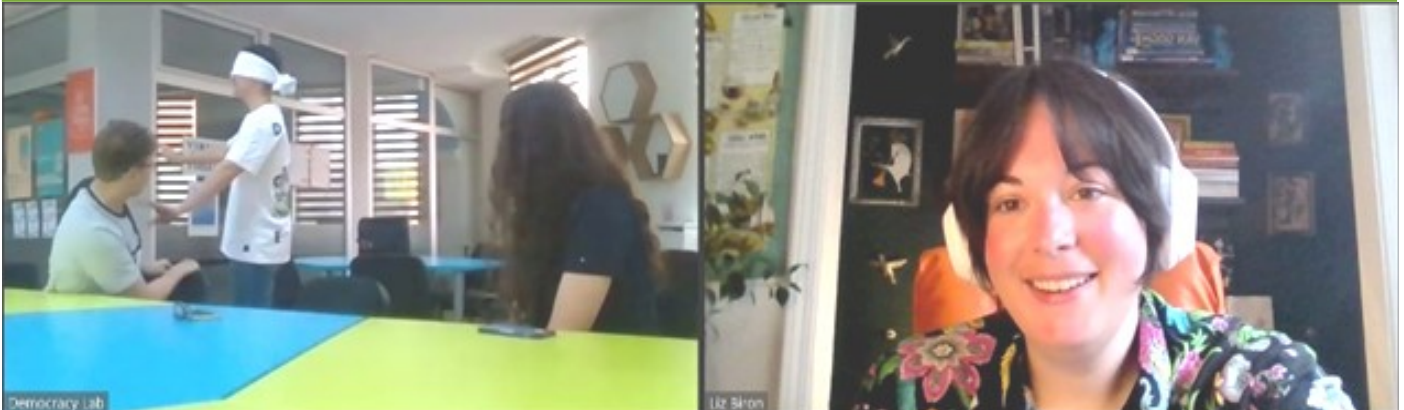


Virtual Service Pilot Program

Virtual Service Pilot (VSP) Participants contribute to the mission of Peace Corps through short-term, part-time engagements using technology to support host country partner projects. Virtual service is distinct from Peace Corps Volunteer service and Peace Corps Response service. VSP Participants contribute to the mission of the Peace Corps as private citizens while maintaining their other commitments such as work and school.

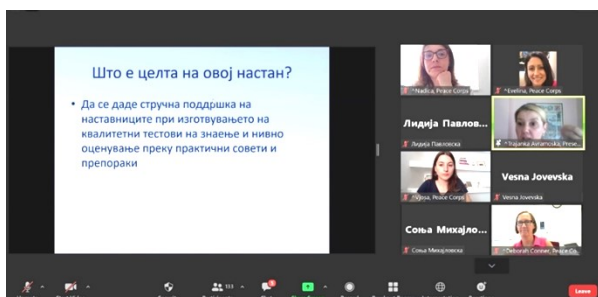
From April to June 2022 Peace Corps North Macedonia was pleased to launch the VSP program with two distinguished participants: Liz Biron a Returned Peace Corps Volunteer who supported the Youth and Community Center – Gostivar, and Steven Barkdoll who supported education initiatives in Primary School “Elpida Karamandi” – Bitola through Virtual Service.

Participants spent 5-15 hours per week collaborating with their counterparts on tasks and advancing the mission of the Peace Corps through meaningful virtual engagement. They worked hand-in-hand with partners and counterparts to advance learning and improve the classroom experience of learners. This has been a creative way for communities that were unable to get a Volunteer this cycle and those in the United States unable to travel - to work together to implement projects in schools and organizations in North Macedonia.



Online Workshops

During the school summer vacation, Peace Corps North Macedonia continued the professional development opportunities for the teachers in the country. Ms. Trajanka Avramoska, Exam Officer from the National Examination Center presented on the topic of “Creating Knowledge Tests and Grading”. The event was attended by 508 teachers from different parts of the country, and it was repeated two times, with Albanian language translation provided.



Earth Day

To mark Earth Day on April 22, Peace Corps staff and the NGO American Councils for International Education North Macedonia did a cleanup activity by the river Vardar bordering Skopje Park. The clean-up team removed fifteen large bags of trash which were disposed of properly and left a much cleaner area.



Small Project Assistance Funds

In 2021 Peace Corps North Macedonia conducted a research study “COVID-19 and Youth in North Macedonia: needs, challenges and consequences” to learn more about youth in the country and how their lives were impacted by COVID-19.

One of the challenges highlighted was that the youth were facing a lack of volunteering opportunities. As a result, Peace Corps North Macedonia started working with five local organizations that are focused on youth on the “Initiative to Support the Development of Volunteer Programs for Civic Society Organizations”.

The goal of this USAID funded project, was to work with organizations, through training and mentoring, to establish or strengthen their existing volunteer programs.

Five organizations (ARNO Organization for Social Innovation - Skopje, Center for Equal Opportunities Mollëkuqja - Tetovo, Center for research and analysis NOVUS - Strumica, Youth Center – Kavadarci, and Youth Center - Veles) went through an intensive training program in June and July, which included topics such as the legal framework for volunteering, the rights and obligations of volunteers, strategies for promoting and recruiting volunteers, and monitoring volunteer work.



In September a closing event was held for the project and representatives from the civil society sector, public institutions and other Peace Corps partners. All five organizations gave presentations about their work and activities to demonstrate how this training has enabled them to improve their volunteer programs.



4th of July Celebration

Peace Corps North Macedonia presented our work to the public at the 4th of July celebration at the US Embassy in Skopje. More than 800 visitors were introduced to the work of Peace Corps North Macedonia and had an opportunity to answer questions and win a tote bag. During the celebration, the team also had an opportunity to meet local partners of Peace Corps.



Future Plans

The call for applications for Peace Corps Volunteers for 2023 was launched in February 2023. All primary and secondary schools, universities, NGOs, public institutions, and municipalities are encouraged to apply.

Peace Corps staff are planning to host several promotional meetings in different communities where we will talk about the benefits of hosting Peace Corps Volunteer. If you are interested in learning more about Peace Corps and the work of Peace Corps Volunteers, please check our Facebook and Instagram, or feel free to contact us at mk-info@peacecorps.gov.



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