

Annual Report 2020 Albania & Montenegro

**Transformation,
Challenge and
Commitment**



**Peace
Corps**



Content:

Message from the US Ambassador to Albania.....	2
Message from the US Ambassador to Montenegro.....	3
Greeting from the Country Director.....	4
60 Years of Peace Corps.....	7
Peace Corps in Albania.....	8
Peace Corps in Montenegro.....	9
Evacuation of Volunteers.....	10
In 2020, where did Volunteers serve?.....	11
In 2020, where did Volunteers live in their communities?.....	12
▪ <i>Homestay highlight</i>	13
Overview of Projects.....	14
▪ <i>Youth Health and Wellbeing; Activities & Project highlight</i>	15
▪ <i>Organizational Development; Activities & Project highlight</i>	17
▪ <i>English Education in Albania; Activities & Project highlight</i>	19
▪ <i>English Education in Montenegro; Activities & Project highlight</i>	21
Designing COVID mitigation measures; Staff development; Post leadership transitions.....	23
Partner Organizations.....	25
Our Pre Service Training Staff and our Permanent Staff.....	26-27

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

Dear Friends, Colleagues, and Partners,

Throughout 23 years of Peace Corps in Albania, we have seen the tremendous good that has come when Volunteers and their Albanian counterparts join forces to contribute to sustainable change in their communities. Generations of Albanian students and youth throughout the country have learned English and developed life skills thanks to Peace Corps, creating a legacy that will forever be part of U.S.-Albania ties. More than 900 Volunteers and thousands of caring Albanian citizens have tackled complex challenges and created long-lasting relationships in the process. Volunteers return to the United States as Albanian-American friendship ambassadors, having gained unique cross-cultural perspectives as well as leadership, language, and technical skills that provide them with a competitive advantage in today's interconnected economy.

These connections have never waned, even after Peace Corps made the difficult decision in 2020 to evacuate Volunteers worldwide to the United States due to the global pandemic. Throughout this unique time without volunteers in country, Peace Corps Albania has worked hand-in-hand with partners and stakeholders, reflecting on progress to date and envisioning how volunteerism must develop and be ready for the pandemic reality. Students, parents, teachers, community members, and government partners have expressed different needs due to the "new normal" that Peace Corps now seeks to help address. Volunteer service will also continue to be invigorated by diversity and plurality, as Peace Corps actively supports a culture of inclusion that embraces diversity—both from the United States and from the incredible nuances of people and life in Albania.

I join you in thanking and congratulating the Peace Corps staff and their Albanian partners as they lay the groundwork for the return of Peace Corps Volunteers. I look forward to seeing Peace Corps Volunteers again as they serve their Albanian communities by striving to deliver quality support in the areas of English Education, Organizational Development, and Youth Health and Well-being. The return of Peace Corps Volunteers to Albania will be a historic moment for us all, and a reminder of the enduring partnership between the American and Albanian people.

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,

Dramatic moments marked many of our lives in 2020. One that sticks out in my mind was the moment I learned that the COVID-19 pandemic had come to Montenegro. Of course, the pandemic triggered many disruptions to normal life across the globe. In Montenegro one additional impact was the unfortunate change in plans for our Peace Corps Volunteers and their host communities. As you may know, in March 2020, Peace Corps made the difficult decision to send all Volunteers back to the United States, and this included 13 individuals newly sworn in to serve in Montenegro, who had just finished their training.

Although a necessary precaution to ensure the safety of our Volunteers, it was sad to see the Volunteers go shortly after I had the opportunity to welcome them in person. The Volunteers impressed me with their energy, which they dedicated to the work of learning the local language and culture of this beautiful country, as well as deepening their skills in English Language teaching. This first group of Volunteers had quickly developed many connections with the Montenegrin people - from their host families to their fellow teachers. During our first meeting in early March, the dedicated group told me they felt honored to be the first set of Volunteers to serve Montenegrin schools and represent the beginning of what I am sure will be a long relationship.

Since the Volunteers' departure, Peace Corps colleagues and with their Montenegrin partners have been working hard to develop a comprehensive process to welcome volunteers back as safely as possible. I am thankful for the work and support of the Montenegrin Ministry of Education and many schools from across the country, which have shown strong interest in partnering with Peace Corps Volunteers. I am also deeply thankful for the incredible care and generosity that the Montenegrin host families and communities have shown towards the Volunteers.

In response to the changed context, the Peace Corps has reimagined service to adapt to Montenegrin and U.S. needs during this critical time. For the second time in history, Peace Corps Response Volunteers have been deployed domestically, putting their skills to work at vaccination centers across the United States, and I am very proud that some Returned Peace Corps Volunteers from Montenegro have joined this effort. These Americans are answering the call to serve, and I look forward to the time when these and other dedicated individuals will be able to return to Montenegro to continue building people-to-people ties between our two countries.

Sincerely,


Judy Rising Reinke
U.S. Ambassador to Montenegro



Message From Country Director

Dear Friends of Peace Corps Albania & Montenegro,

It is an understatement to say it has been a challenging year. The pandemic, social upheaval, and the uncertainty that ensued has made life difficult for everyone and traumatic for many. It required rapid changes in everyone's lives. Even with all the difficulties, I recognize this is the type of time and challenge for which Peace Corps is made. The US Peace Corps is a service opportunity for motivated change makers to immerse themselves in a community abroad, working side by side with local leaders to tackle the most pressing challenges of our generation. For six decades, Peace Corps Volunteers, alongside community leaders in 142 countries, have demonstrated ingenuity, creativity, and grit to solve critical challenges.

Peace Corps' approach to development is focused on capacity building. The mission is threefold:

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

Now, with over 20 years of activity in Albania and one in Montenegro, over 900 Peace Corps Volunteers have served in hundreds of communities across these diverse and beautiful nations. Thank you to every single community member, counterpart, government official, partner, and staff member that has made this happen.



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

Message From Country Director

In 2020, over 100 dynamic Volunteers dedicated themselves to community integration, developing local language skills, and an understanding of the Albanian and Montenegrin cultures. Our Volunteers start off their journey as Trainees, in which they undertake an intensive 8 to 10-week program that provides language training, technical instruction, and cross-cultural information that is critical for integration and adjustment. This pre-service training is conducted entirely in rural villages away from the capital region during which trainees live with host families.

Once they successfully complete their training, Trainees are sworn-in to become Volunteers and move to their permanent sites, the majority of which are in small villages. Once at site, Volunteers work closely with their communities, counterparts and local partners to assess basic needs and develop a joint work plan in one of three areas of specialty:

- Youth Health & Well-being
- Organizational Development
- English Language Learning

For Peace Corps Albania and Montenegro, 2020 was a particular year of *transformation, challenge and continued commitment to the people we serve.*

In terms of transformation, 2020 brought some exciting developments, including the launch of **Peace Corps in Montenegro**. In January 2020, our Montenegro trainees joined over 50 other Albania Trainees for their two-country, three-month pre-service training at the new training hubs in Lezhe, Albania, and Pecurice, Montenegro. All 13 Trainees successfully finished their training and were sworn in as English Education Volunteers in March 2020. We are very proud of our first class, and we thank everyone who helped with this significant achievement! In particular, thanks to then Country Director, Kate Becker, and Director of Programming and Training, Kyle Olsen, who had the vision and the drive to help make this happen.

For me, as incoming Country Director, I was thrilled to arrive in Albania and Montenegro with my family in November of 2020. It has been a joy and honor to meet such dedicated colleagues, and supportive governmental, multilateral, and NGO partners in these two beautiful and vibrant countries. It was also my real pleasure to welcome new colleagues to the team including Jeffery Warner, our Director of Programming and Training.

Message From Country Director

In terms of challenge, in March 2020, then Peace Corps Director Jody Olsen made the difficult decision to evacuate all volunteers worldwide, including our volunteers in Albania and Montenegro. This was to protect the health and safety of all Volunteers due to the COVID- 19 outbreak. By March 14, all 108 Peace Corps Volunteers from Albania and Montenegro had received their medical and administrative out processing and safely flew home. This all-hands-on-deck effort by the entire Peace Corps Team and Embassy Community led to the safe and healthy return of the volunteers back to their families and friends in the US. THANK YOU!

Since the evacuation our continued commitment to the people we serve has never wavered. Since April 2020, the Peace Corps Albania and Montenegro team has been working to prepare for the return of Peace Corps Volunteers. This has included a ***revamping of many of our post's policies and protocols*** to take into consideration COVID-19 mitigation measures and working with our host agencies, host families and counterparts to ensure that these protocols can be effectively implemented. In addition, the Peace Corps team has sought to further ***leverage remote learning for our post's training needs***, which previously had been done mainly in person. To this end, the team developed a number of online learning resources on language, culture, safety, health and technical training utilizing a platform called *Learning Space*. We also sought to ***recruit, hire, and further train key personnel*** including Back-Up Medical Providers in Montenegro and two new Peace Corps Medical Officers.



We hope to have our volunteers back in country as soon as global conditions will permit. The Peace Corps Albania and Montenegro team and I look forward to continuing to work with you and all our partners to make that a reality.

With deep thanks for your support,



Megan Wilson

Peace Corps Albania and Montenegro
Country Director

60 Years of the Peace Corps Mission and Goals

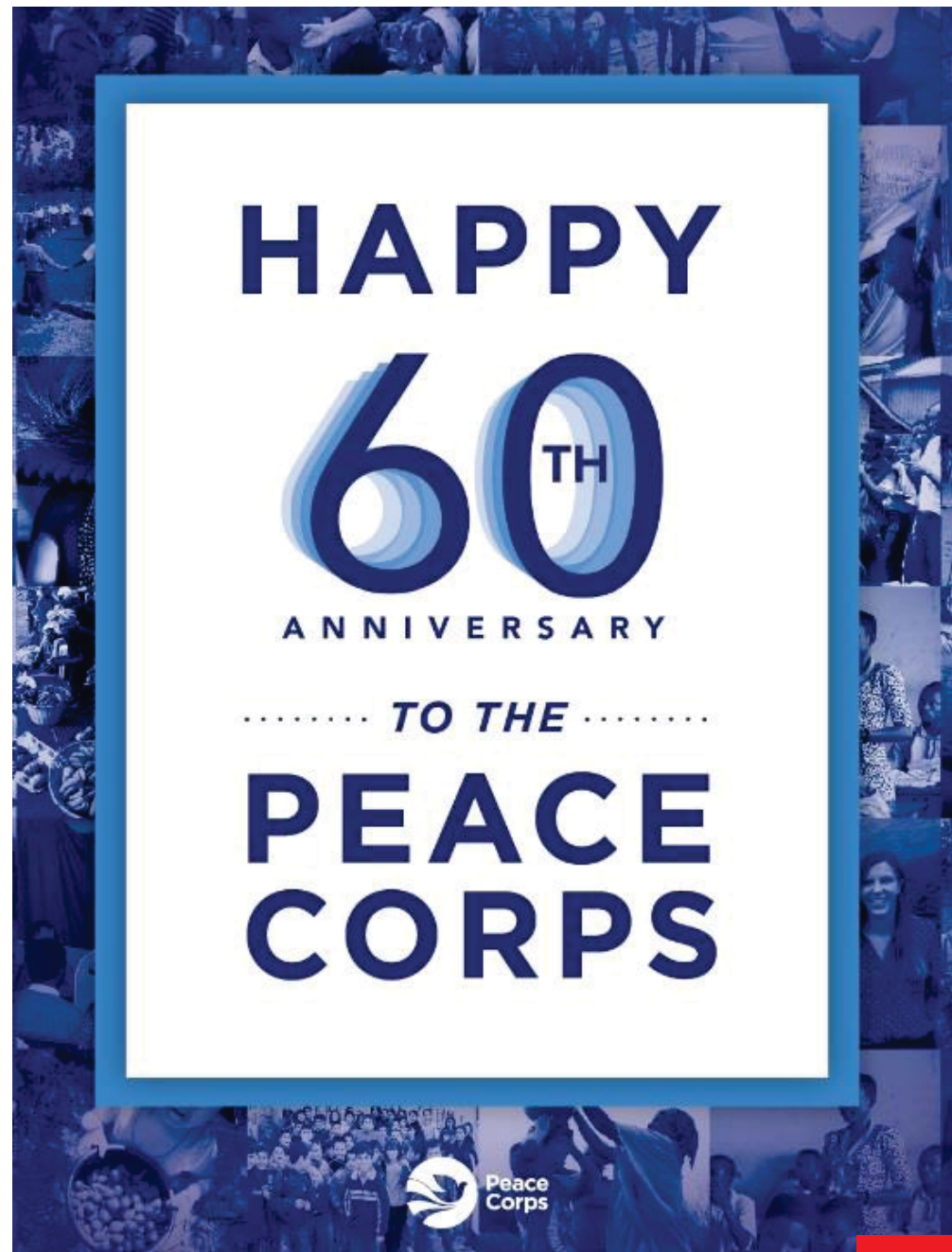
This year we commemorate our founding moment, when sixty years ago in 1961, US President John F. Kennedy established the Peace Corps to foster a better understanding between, and to promote friendship among, Americans and people of other countries.

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

- More than 235,000 Americans have served in the Peace Corps in 142 countries.



Peace Corps in Albania

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

The Albanian government invited Peace Corps to re-establish a program in 2002 and participated in an assessment conducted by Peace Corps. Based on this assessment, 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

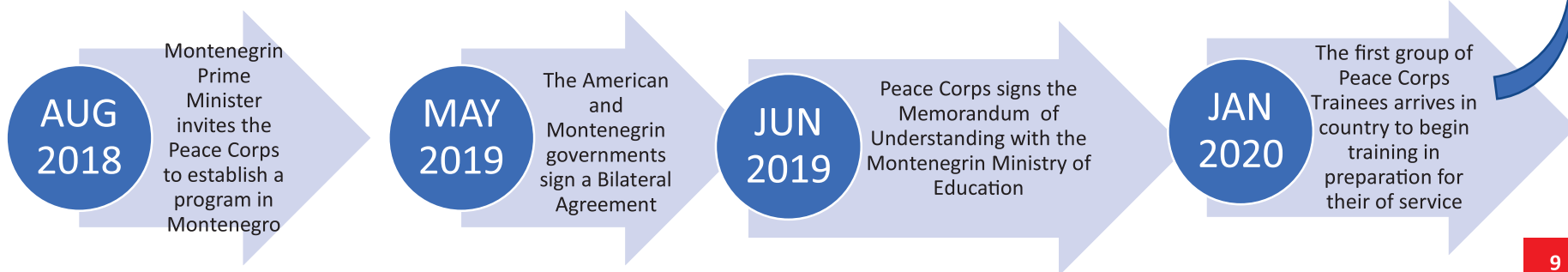


Peace Corps Trainees meeting their Montenegrin Host Families in 2020

Pre Service Training in Montenegro—In January 2020, the first group of Peace Corps Trainees arrived in Montenegro and were introduced to Montenegrin people and culture.

Activities—Immediately following their arrival the Peace Corps Trainees embarked on their Pre-Service Training (PST), a period when they learned Montenegrin language, received technical training, and learned how to fulfill the goals and objectives of Peace Corps Albania and Montenegro.

Impact— This first training in Montenegro paved the way for future Volunteers to serve in Montenegro as English Education Volunteers and allowed Montenegrin communities to get to know the work of the Peace Corps in Montenegro up close.



2020: Evacuation of Volunteers

- **As of March 16, 2020, due to COVID -19, Peace Corps temporarily recalled Peace Corps Volunteers from around the world including those serving in Albania and Montenegro.** The health, safety, and well-being of our Volunteers is a priority. This decision was triggered by the ever-increasing number of travel restrictions throughout the world that affected the ability to later evacuate Volunteers if necessary.
- **We are grateful to the Governments of Albania and of Montenegro, and to our host families, partners and communities, for their incredible care and generosity towards our Volunteers.** Families and communities support our Volunteers every day, working alongside them, giving them a sense of belonging, keeping them healthy, supporting them as they learn the language and skills in preparation for their service. Peace Corps Volunteers love their host families and invest deeply in their communities. This relationship is extremely meaningful to both Peace Corps and Peace Corps Volunteers.
- **Peace Corps is committed to the return of our Volunteers.** Our staff will continue to work with our partners and our communities to prepare for the return of Volunteers to Albania and Montenegro as soon as global conditions permit.



Before her evacuation, PCV Hailey received a thank you Card from her school colleagues and students.

[illegible]

- English Language Learning;
- Youth Health & Wellbeing; and
- Organizational Development

11

Where did Volunteers live in their communities in 2020?

Volunteers are placed with host families during their pre-service training period and for a minimum of six months in the town or village where they serve for two years. Volunteers are considered a new family member, but not necessarily in the same ways that family members are treated in the United States, as Albanian and Montenegrin family life can be different. The period of adjustment requires patience, understanding and flexibility on both sides. Peace Corps wants host families who can help Volunteers understand the traditions and norms of the community where they live. We do not expect host families to change habits or adapt to American values – our aim is mutual respect and understanding.

In March 2020, a survey asked Volunteers to describe their experience living with a host family in Albania. Volunteers shared that their families helped improve their skills and knowledge in a number of areas: building good relationships, gender roles in the community, how to stay safe and healthy in their community, how to access public transportation, and much more – all very important life skills!



Peace Corps Trainee, Michael, playing chess with his homestay family in Montenegro.

68%

of surveyed Volunteers agreed that their Homestay was a very good opportunity to connect with their community.

76%

agreed that Homestay helped them in language learning and practice.

Pride is taking less than you need; generosity is giving more than you can. Albanians then are a very proud and generous people.

It's 7pm and I just got back home. Classes ended at 4:30 and we went to a cafe afterwards to unwind and then explored the town. My host mom tells me that dinner will be ready in half an hour, and I, being brain-dead, tired, and cold take the time to relax and read. Once I'm at the table, I am shocked at how much food there is. Their family has four members and I make five, but there's enough food to feed eight or nine people and enough bread for two to three meals. I ask them if we're going to have guests, and they look confused and say no, should they expect any? I say no as well and that I only thought so because of how much food there is. They ask if I don't like it. I tell them that I do, but I could never eat this much in a day, let alone in one meal. They laugh and simply tell me to eat as much as I'd like. About half an hour later, I clear my plate. While I'm talking to my host dad about his business and Asian martial arts films (the guy likes Jet Lee and Jackie Chan), my host mom puts another helping of food on my plate.

I look at her and say "I don't want any more." [nuk dua më]
She looks at me, smiles, and says "Just a little." [edhe pak]

I smile back and say "No thank you, I'm full." [Jo, faleminderit. U ngopa]

She says "It's okay, don't be shy." [s'ka gjë, mos ki turp]

I tell her "I'm not shy, I'm just not hungry." [nuk jam i turpshëm, vetëm nuk dua më]
"No really, it's not a problem," she insists. [jo, vertetë, nuk ka problem]

"No, it is a problem, because I don't want anymore." I respond. [jo, është një problem, sepse nuk dua më.]

At this point, she finally acquiesces. I look around the table and everyone is shocked by how 'rude' I was. I then have to clarify that in America, we have no issue helping ourselves. When we are full, we say as much and we mean it. If we want more, we will happily ask for more.

I would learn later that there is a little dance in Albanian culture: If someone offers you food, you first decline. Then they offer again. You say no a second time. Then they insist. THEN you say yes. That's the game she was playing with me, only I wasn't playing a game: I didn't want any food. By Peace Corps Volunteer Ari



Peace Corps Volunteers discover new favorite dishes, while sharing Albanian food with their Host Families.

Transformation, Challenge and Commitment: Overview of Projects

Youth Health and Well-being

Project Goal

School children and youth are informed and empowered to lead a healthy life and effectively transition to productive and engaged adults

The Youth Health and Well-being project supports 5-19 years old school-aged children and youth to lead healthy lives, and to effectively transition to healthy, productive and engaged adults. Volunteers in this project are placed in schools to co-facilitate classroom health and physical education lessons, following the national health curriculum. Outside of the classroom, Volunteers coordinate extracurricular activities and camps with a focus on health and well-being.



Peace Corps Volunteer teacher and her Albanian counterpart

Organizational Development

Project Goal

Empowered Albanian communities, organizations, and individuals effectively manage community 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.

English Education

Project Goal

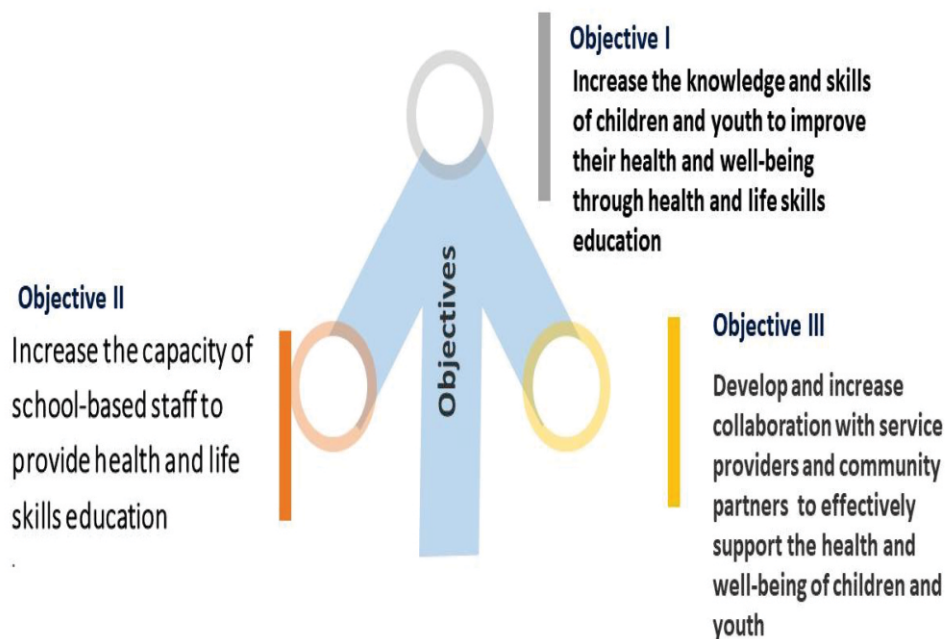
Develop teaching and learning capacities in English language

The TEFL program, through the work of its school-based Volunteers, supports student language acquisition and the professional development of English teachers through improved language proficiency and instructional methodology aligned with communicative language teaching. TEFL Volunteers co-teach English lessons with their English teacher counterparts and coordinate clubs, camps and other extracurricular activities aimed at developing youth leadership and life skills.

Youth Health and Wellbeing (YHW) in Albania

HE-Youth Health and Wellbeing Project

Project Goal: School children and youth are informed and empowered to lead a healthy life and effectively transition to productive and engaged adults.



New Logical Project Framework.

Youth Health and the Ministry of Education's National Curricula (for **Well-being** – In 2020, Peace Corps Albania initiated an extensive project review process under Peace Corps' global Logical Project Framework, a project planning framework. The project review was designed to support on Comprehensive Sexual Education and Life Skills) and the Ministry of Health and Social Protection's "Action Plan for Health Promotion," while following Peace Corps guidance from Washington.

Activities – The Project Review process required a thorough analysis of the Albanian Government's Strategies and Policies, and community needs and priorities, with a focus on Health Education and Promotion. Many resources and statistical data were consulted in the process in order to gain a deeper understanding of youth education in schools, and to what extent it's enabling youth to develop the necessary life skills to make responsible and healthy decisions in life.

Impact – The revised Health Project will focus on supporting children and youth (ages 5-18) to develop the life skills necessary to make responsible and healthy decisions and to take actions that positively impact their lives and the lives of those around them. Volunteers and their counterparts will empower youth with the necessary life skills and strategies to support emotional and physical health and promote gender-equitable practices through activities such as camps, afterschool clubs, sports, peer educators and support groups.

11300

Beneficiaries have been trained by Volunteers and their counterparts at camps and clubs in personal and professional development, life skills and leadership.

1839

Individuals have been reached with group trainings on sexual and reproductive health and modern contraceptive methods.

YHW Project Highlight: GLOW Clubs

Before Volunteers were evacuated, Neda served as a Health Education volunteer in Tropojë and launched the **first GLOW club (Girls Leading Our World)** in her host town, beginning with seven members.

Activities – GLOW was led by Neda as the Volunteer counselor, alongside the Albanian Club Director (an adult) and youth leaders who served as club President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer and Historian. They invited guest speakers and role models from the community to provide trainings and to lead discussions during the meetings. Topics included: Leadership, Teamwork, Sisterhood, Motivation, Empowerment, Entrepreneurship, Career Development, English Lessons, Healthy Lifestyles, Personal Discovery, Gender Issues, Personal Reflection, and other important topics for women’s and girls’ awareness.

Impact – GLOW is an ongoing program that brought together over 32 Tropojan girls aged 14-18 for weekly leadership experiences. Almost one year after the PCVs’ evacuation, the Bajram Curri’s GLOW club continues its mission to empower and increase the capacities of girls in Tropojë. They are engaged and eager to bring constructive change to their communities, for example by contributing to environmental clean-ups, book clubs, and mental health awareness initiatives. Neda was able to remotely support and continue motivating these amazing leaders.



First photo above is from the GLOW book club 'Beyond the cover' and the second is from the Thanksgiving celebration in 2019

Organizational Development (OD) in Albania

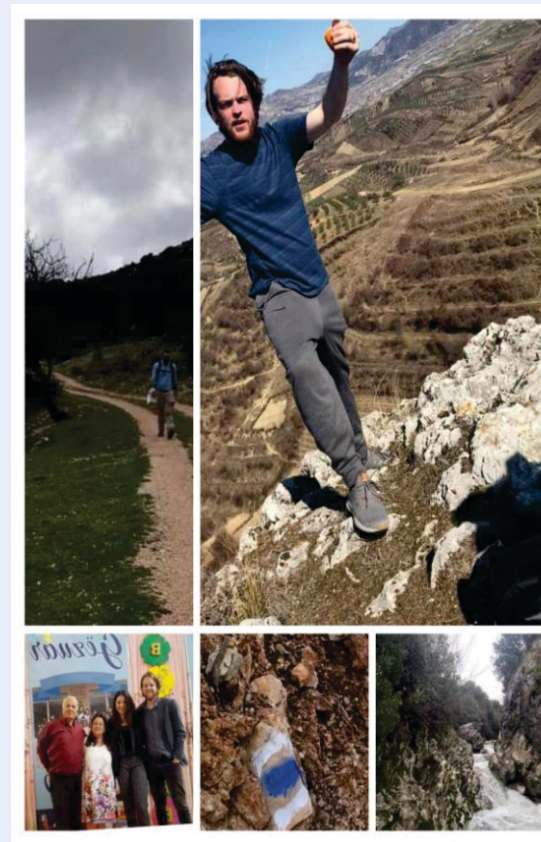
Organization Development— Project Goal

Empowered Albanian communities, organizations, and individuals effectively manage community development

Activities—After the 2020 evacuation of the Volunteers, Peace Corps staff continued to maintain communication with partners in order to keep their interest high, exchange information and show support and empathy, especially to organizations that were on the frontline of the COVID response such as municipalities and NGOs.

OD staff learned that partners remain very enthusiastic to have PCVs back and they are able to articulate the impact that Volunteers had in their organizations and communities. Staff also learned that there are many cases of collaboration where returned Volunteers continued to support their organizations remotely. Some examples include: Responding to the COVID situation (Pogradec, Belsh), Designing Projects (Kruje), Maintaining Webpages (Konispol), Supporting Youth Development Activities (Tropoje) and Finalizing Projects That Were Left Unfinished (Rubik).

Impact— A series of ZOOM calls was organized with representatives of municipalities and NGOs to assess the readiness of our partner organizations to have Volunteers return, address any new priorities or needs and to learn what measures were taken at the local level regarding health safety.



PCVs Cole and Callum have worked to improve tourism potential in two areas (Konispol and Finiq) where PC worked for the first time.

152

Service providers were coached and trained in the areas of Service Provision, PDM, Advocacy, Tourism Promotion, Youth

1554

Development. Individuals engaged in civil society building, leadership, professional skills, service learning and volunteerism and advocacy skills.

OD Project Highlight: Tourism Promotion

The cooperation of Peace Corps Volunteer Ryan and the Tourism Development and Agribusiness Office in the municipality of Fushë Arrëz was very successful.

Activities—Even after Ryan's service ended in March 2020, the 'Touristic Tables' project which he and his counterparts launched has continued. This includes a trail marking project in the village of Kryezi, where the Aliaj-Kalipjeter trail was marked. This remains one of the most important projects for the development of tourism in the area, as it allows for tourists to successfully and safely navigate and hike the region.

It also included the "Wine Canteen Project" in cooperation with the association Agro Puka and the women farmers of Kryeziu. This project continues to produce positive results and has influenced the improvement of the local socio-economic situation, especially for women farmers involved in the project. Since the establishment of this canteen, the municipality and community has helped to promote wine products, raki, and other products from the mostly female farmers of the area, securing a market for them for sales.

Impact—Peace Corps is proud to see the sustainable work of Volunteers continue even after Volunteers have left the country. Peace Corps looks forward to welcoming back Volunteers as soon as global conditions allow.



Peace Corps Volunteer Ryan, during the trail marking project.

English Language Learning (ELL) in Albania

English Education project in Albania – Project Goal

Develop teaching and learning capacities in English language

Activities – In recent months, our English Education staff has connected with partners from over 50 schools across Albania. Although Volunteers were evacuated in March 2020 due to the pandemic, staff and evacuated Volunteers continued their cooperation and were able to virtually support and finalize some of the projects that were already started. In addition, staff utilized this opportunity to connect with over 120 teachers and directors of schools to explore how to further deepen the impact of our collaboration.

In a December 2020 meeting with the Minister of Education, the Country Director together with other Peace Corps staff agreed to prioritize our cooperation in light of the COVID-19 situation. Peace Corps is working to address the Ministry priorities regarding supporting teachers and students, and Volunteers are expected to thrive in the newly emerged teaching environment.

Impact – Albanian teachers will be better equipped to tackle challenges in the wake of COVID-19.



School library built by Peace Corps Volunteers in Albania.

275 Teachers engaged in co-teaching and planning, and creating resources, resource rooms and libraries from Oct 2019 to March 2020.

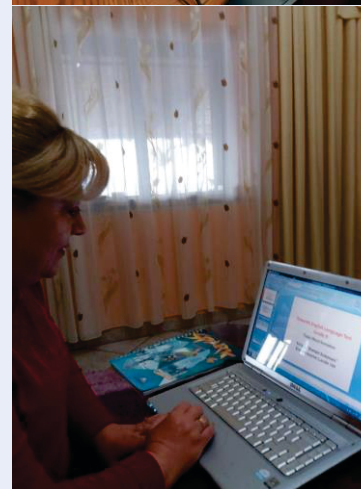
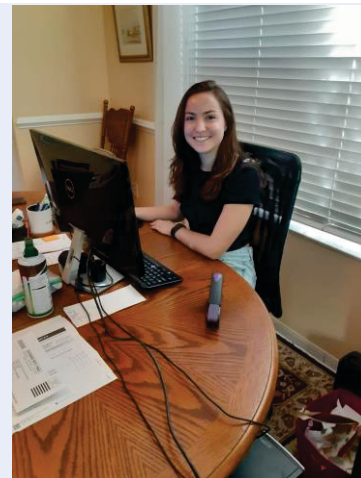
9153 Students learned English in the classroom and increased their participation in extracurricular activities from Oct 2019 to March 2020.

ELL Project Highlight: Teaching Continues after Departure

Since Natalia completed her Peace Corps service in Albania, she has continued the meaningful partnership established with her Albanian colleague and co-teacher and their students.

Activities –Natalia has valued the opportunity to stay connected with her Albanian students and continues to support her classes from the US through lively collaboration with her friend and teacher counterpart. Like so many other teachers during this challenging year, Lavdie, the English language teacher with whom Natalia worked, found herself extremely busy with online teaching. Teaching through video and online resources is not easy, but the American and Albanian co-teachers have developed an effective ‘virtual’ collaboration. Lavdie focuses mostly on video development to explain grammar and vocabulary, while Natalia produces complementary audio files where she reads passages and dialogues. One of their students said that her “listening skills and comprehension has improved” as a result of the online classes, and the student said she appreciates both teachers’ support. Lavdie and Natalia have a very strong friendship and work relationship. The two recently reviewed and consulted on a video project for the Local Education Office.

Impact –This project demonstrates that Lavdie and Natalia’s partnership goes beyond benefiting the students and further supports teachers in the region. These two demonstrate the impact and value of committed and excellent teachers.



Teachers Natalia from the US and Lavdie from Albania virtually support their students.

English Language Learning (ELL) in Montenegro

English Education project in Montenegro

Project Goal

Develop teaching and learning capacities in English language

Activities – Prior to the pandemic, Peace Corps carried out a number of meetings with schools, communities and various stakeholders where they introduced the Peace Corps program and its potential for significant impact. Since the evacuation, we have continued discussions with our Montenegrin partners, teachers, school directors, host family members and other relevant stakeholders.

Thirteen Volunteers were placed with Montenegrin Host Families during their Pre-Service training (PST), which was carried out partially in Pečurice, a small Montenegrin village. Volunteers spent two months in a village school, where their training was conducted. To prepare for service, they studied the local language while learning about Montenegrin culture, its educational system, history, etc.

Impact – According to PST host families, the school director, teachers and students in the village school, Volunteers brought a new life to the village, resulting in friendships that will last a long time!



Volunteers during PST, learning language and culture, Pečurice, Montenegro, February 2020.

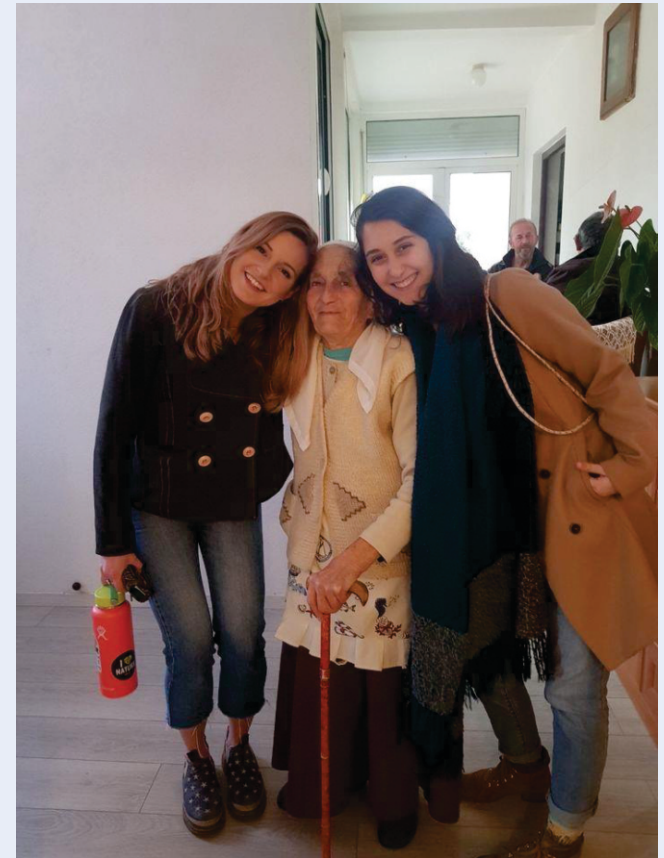
- 107** Meetings with a variety of stakeholders during Site Development, such as school directors, teachers, host families, local officials, community members.
- 1070** Approximate number of persons directly met with during meetings with stakeholders throughout Site Development.
- 457** Post-evacuation phone calls with school directors, teachers, host families, and other stakeholders.

ELL Project Highlight: Deep Connections created & continued

Dina was the Montenegrin Host Sister of Volunteer Sage and a former FLEX scholarship recipient. She talks warmly about this experience.

Activities – “Sage, a Volunteer who spent some time with us, very quickly became an indispensable part of our family. As someone who was in a similar position, when I lived with my American family during the exchange, I wanted her to feel comfortable and as a part of the family from the very beginning. Nevertheless, with Sage, the process of adaptation was so easy and pleasant, that after only a week we had the feeling that she was with us all of our life. As I grew up with two brothers, I always wanted to have a sister, and during the two months that Sage was there, every time I went back home gave me that exact feeling.”

Impact – “In the short time that the Volunteers were with us, they managed to bring freshness to our place, and to encourage people to get to know new cultures. Although there is a large diaspora community in the United States, people from our town rarely have the opportunity to get to know American culture, therefore, this was a great opportunity. Also, Volunteers encouraged children from the school to be more open, practice their English by talking to them and learn in an unconventional way.”



Peace Corps Volunteer Sage with her Montenegrin host sister Dina and her host grandmother .

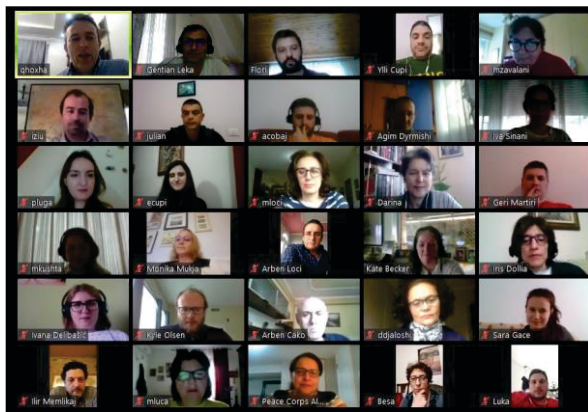
Transformation, Challenge & Commitment

DESIGNING COVID MITIGATION MEASURES

Fundamental to our PCVs' return is working closely with our partners in Albania and in Montenegro to ensure that we are making informed plans for COVID-19 mitigation. In 2020, we actively engaged in the development of a comprehensive plan to address COVID-19 related risks.

Starting in March 2020, Albania and Montenegro staff members began teleworking from home. Whenever they are required to be in the office, they adhere to all necessary risk reduction protocols regarding COVID-19 transmission.

MITIGATION METHODS



STAFF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In 2020, all staff members participated in training programs, benefitting from Peace Corps staff support and learning initiatives.

Staff members were encouraged by the Country Director to develop and implement a professional development plan, including identification of five SMART and one personal professional development objectives.

Staff have planned a number of online training activities and brainstorming sessions related to strategy and skills.

POST LEADERSHIP TRANSITIONS

In 2020, Peace Corps Albania and Montenegro welcomed a new Country Director (CD) and new Director of Program and Training (DPT). The new leadership team and all staff continue to be focused on our core values of service, quality, and impact; Volunteer well-being; and supporting a culture of inclusion, equity and diversity.

We would like to thank our former CD Kate Becker and DPT Kyle Olsen who departed the post after completing their service. Volunteers, partners, and staff enjoyed working with such dedicated colleagues.



Peace Corps Albania and Montenegro welcomes new staff in 2020

MEGAN WILSON

Country Director

Megan Wilson is a tri-lingual leader with 20 years of international development experience with a focus on health and environment.

Ms. Wilson's experience in development started in a small village in Guinea, where as a Peace Corps Volunteer she taught math and built a community library. This love of empowering others to improve their lives continued and grew during her previous posts as a Congressional aid, then as an EPA, USAID, and State Department staffer, and her time with Population Services International, as the Executive Director for PSI's network member in Benin. Leveraging an annual budget of \$8 million in Benin, she worked with a team of 100+ people including Peace Corps Volunteers each year to improve the health of the people of Benin. Megan joined Peace Corps from Medentech where she worked to develop innovative partnerships to increase access to safe drinking water for women and children around the world. Before joining colleagues in Albania and Montenegro, she was PC Country Director in The Gambia.

Ms. Wilson has a Master's Degree in International Development from Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, and Bachelor's Degree in Chemistry and International Affairs from the University of Colorado. In addition to English, Megan speaks French and Dutch fluently, and a smattering of African languages.

JEFFREY WARNER

Director of Programming and training

A native of Dearborn, Michigan, Jeffery Warner has a passion for service that brought him to Bulgaria in 2007 as a Peace Corps English Education Volunteer. During his three years of service, Jeffery taught English and led a range of education projects in Kardzhali, Bulgaria. Jeffery returned to Bulgaria upon completing his graduate studies to serve as a Peace Corps Response volunteer at the newly founded organization Teach for Bulgaria (TFB).

He subsequently joined the TFB team full time, working in the area of teacher training and support, leading the teacher support team, which oversaw the professional and personal development of program participants.

Jeffery's latest professional experience prior to joining the Peace Corps was at the Trust for Social Achievement (TSA), a foundation dedicated to reducing poverty and decreasing achievement gaps in Bulgaria, with a particular focus on Roma communities. Jeffery served as TSA's Evaluation Officer from 2019-2020. In this role, Jeffery oversaw TSA's ongoing project design, monitoring and evaluation efforts.

Jeffery holds a Master of Public Policy from the Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy at the University of Michigan, as well as a Bachelor of Arts in History (cum laude) from Western Michigan University.

Transformation, Challenge and Commitment - 2020 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
- 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

- | | | |
|---------------|------------|------------|
| • Berat | • Kavajë | • Lushnjë |
| • Bulqizë | • Klos | • Mirditë |
| • Elbasan | • Korçë | • Përmet |
| • Ersekë | • Krujë | • Roskovec |
| • Fushë Arrëz | • Kuçovë | • Shijak |
| • Gjirokastrë | • Librazhd | • Dimal |

Government and Independent Organizations

- ASCAP (Quality Ensuring Agency for Pre-University Education - Albania)
- DPCAC (General department of Pre-University Education - Albania)
- HAP (Health for All Project - Albania)
- 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
- Ministry of Education, Sports, and Youth of Albania
- Planning and Local Governance Project
- QSHA (Center for Education Services)
- United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF)
- 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 | |

Our Pre-Service Training Staff in 2020

In 2020, Peace Corps in Albania and Montenegro hired 22 temporary staff to play a crucial role in Pre-Service Training (PST) for our Trainees. These individuals are as dedicated to the ideals and mission of Peace Corps as our fulltime staff. They are part of our family, and every year, when PST concludes, it is difficult to tell them goodbye. They teach our Trainees a new language, new culture, and technical skills; they help keep them safe and healthy; and they prepare them for their two years of service as Peace Corps Volunteers. Peace Corps Albania and Montenegro is what it is today thanks to their efforts.



Admir Gjoni
AisheTufa
Arben Brahimi
Armanda John
BesartaStafa
Brikena Marku
Doris Pavićević
EmarildaLeti
ErionKumuria
EtlevaSula
Griselda Marini
JolandaGjoni
JolandaHila
LedionVeshi
Leonora Bibaj
PashkaGjini
Rafaela Palushi
Rikela Fusha
Tiana Čović
Vjollca Merdani
ZamirMero
ZerinaZeneli

Our Permanent Staff in 2020

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	Kate Becker
Arben Cako	Kyle Olsen
Arben Loci	Luka Bobicic
Ardijan Cobaj	Lumturi Piciri
Artenca Collaku	Marie
BesaArapi	Aughenbaugh
Carmen Sheehan	Marjeta Zavalani
Darina Kaltani	Marsela Loci
Diana Djaloshi	Megan Wilson
Elsona Cupi	Mira Luca
Gentian Leka	Mirela Tahiraj
Geri Martiri	Monika Mukja
Ilir Memlikaj	Poleta Luga
Ilir Ziu	Qazim Hoxha
Iris Dollia	Rikela Fusha
Iva Sinani	Sara Gaçe
Ivana Delibasic	Suida Shima
Jeffery Warner	Ylli Cupi
Julian Pando	






Peace Corps

ALBANIA AND MONTENEGRO




Peace Corps Office Albania
Rr. Besnik Sykja, Godina 2
Hyrja 1, P.O. Box 8180
Tirana, Albania


 +355 42 365 5033

Peace Corps Office Montenegro
Vaka Đurovića bb, Podgorica,
Montenegro


 +382 (0) 20674509

 AL-information@peacecorps.gov

 peacecorps.gov/albania/

 peacecorps.gov/montenegro/

 facebook.com/albania.peacecorps

 facebook.com/peacecorpsinmontenegro

 search for us via: [@peacecorpsalbania](https://www.instagram.com/peacecorpsalbania)