











The Peace Corps is an international network of Volunteers, community members, host country partners, and staff who each have a unique service journey, defined by an enduring desire to learn and grow.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Message from the Country Director	01
About Peace Corps	02
Service Modalities	03
Projects in South Africa	05
Pre-COVID Snapshot	07
Volunteer Evacuation	08
Peace Corps South Africa at a Glance	09
Quality Assurance & Small Grants Program	11
Success Stories	12



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MESSAGE FROM THE COUNTRY **DIRECTOR**

No one could have predicted the events of 2020 and the global COVID-19 pandemic that resulted in the evacuation of more than 7000 Peace Corps Volunteers worldwide, including nearly 140 Volunteers who were serving in South Africa. With the support of our local staff, Peace Corps South Africa (PCSA) responded to the changing landscape with resilience and fortitude by supporting each other and the communities we partner with. Once the rates of COVID-19 began to abate, PCSA was thrilled to welcome a small, but mighty group of Volunteers in 2022. We could not have done it without the support of the communities in Mpumalanga and Limpopo and the South African government. That first small group of Volunteers closed their service in December 2024. We are grateful to those groundbreaking Volunteers who put their purpose, passion, and skills to work in partnership with host communities.

Since that first group of two-year Volunteers (named SA42 for the 42nd group to serve in South Africa), PCSA has welcomed two additional twoyear cohorts (SA43 and SA44), as well as multiple Response Volunteers. Peace Corps South Africa was also fortunate to expand its service reach through virtual volunteerism. With the next group of two-year Volunteers (SA45), PCSA plans to expand beyond Mpumalanga and Limpopo to KwaZulu-Natal. We look forward to engaging with stakeholders and communities as we rebuild Peace Corps' presence in South Africa.

Thank you for your support as we strive to achieve our mission of promoting world peace and friendship through communitybased development and intercultural understanding.

ABOUT PEACE CORPS

The Peace Corps is an international network of Volunteers, community members, host country partners, and staff who each have a unique service journey, defined by an enduring desire to learn and grow.

The Peace Corps' approach, grounded in mutual respect and collaboration, is a catalyst for grassroots development.

Powering human connection

Peace Corps Volunteers and host community partners advance and embody our mission, values, and three goals in communities around the globe. We invite you to learn more about the Peace Corps and how we promote human connection across cultures and make a lasting impact.

At the invitation of governments around the world, Peace Corps Volunteers work alongside communities. The Peace Corps' entry into South Africa began with President Mandela's state visit to the White House in October 1994, where he invited the Peace Corps to set up a program in South Africa and focus on two of South Africa's highest priorities - education and HIV/AIDS.

Our three goals

To help the countries interested in meeting their need for trained people.

Volunteers exchange skills and knowledge with community members to help create sustainable change through work in six sectors - Agriculture, Community Economic Development, Education, Environment, Health, and Youth in Development.

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

Through their service, Volunteers share America and its values and also learn about local cultures, opportunities, resources, and people in their host countries.

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

Volunteers immerse themselves in local cultures and share their experiences when they return home with family, friends, and the public. This helps promote cultural understanding, volunteerism, and public service.

SERVICE MODALITIES

Within the two sectors of health and education, communities and partner organizations can engage with Peace Corps South Africa through three service modalities described below.

Two-Year Volunteers **Response**Volunteers

Service Pilot Virtual **Participants**



Volunteers learn one of South Africa's 12 languages, depending on their placement throughout the country.

Peace Corps Two-Year Volunteers

Peace Corps two-year Volunteers commit 27 months in either the education or health sector. They go through extensive training to become well-rounded education and health advocates.

Education Volunteers support teachers in public education in Grade R through Grade 4 to improve fundamental literacy skills of learners.

Health Volunteers work with community-based organizations to build their capacity to improve the health and well-being of orphans, vulnerable children, youth, and families to live productive lives free of HIV.

They live in villages with host families to strengthen partnerships between the United States and South Africa, foster cultural exchanges, and build connections with the hope to enhance the impact, reach, and sustainability of their service in their communities.



Peace Corps Response Volunteers possess the technical skills needed to fulfill their assigned role with minimal training.

Peace Corps Response

Peace Corps Response Volunteers build capacity, transfer skills, and offer technical expertise by sending experienced professionals to undertake short-term (typically 12-month), high-impact service assignments in communities around the world.

Response Volunteers develop strong relationships with host country partner organizations and community members and become immersed in cultural traditions. They may serve in a wide variety of environments, from national or regional-level offices of governmental and non-governmental institutions in peri-urban centers or rural communities.



VSPPs engage synchronously and asynchronously for approximately 5-15 hours per week on tasks outlined in their engagement.

Virtual Service Pilot

The Peace Corps Virtual Service Pilot (VSP) is a virtual service opportunity where Virtual Service Pilot Participants (VSPPs) donate time to the agency and engage virtually to support interested Host Country Partners.

Virtual service engagements are between 12-27 weeks long, depending on the request of the Host Country Partner. VSPPs and Host Country Partners identify mutually agreeable meeting times given the difference in their respective time zones and schedules.

PROJECTS IN SOUTH AFRICA



Volunteers in the Literacy Enrichment Project (LEP) partner with educators throughout South Africa to support and improve the culture of teaching, learning, and service for students, teachers, and communities. Reading is one of the most fundamental skills that a child must learn. An individual's literacy ability can impact their economic earning potential, health outcomes, and well-being of families. It is critical for children to develop literacy skills early in life. This includes a robust foundation grounded in learning environments that connect listening, speaking, reading, writing, and critical thinking to the social and emotional development of students.



Peace Corps Volunteers support learners with remedial needs to master **English language learning.**

Volunteers may also work with non-governmental organizations that focus on education.

Literacy programs should also integrate simultaneous, continuous skill building for growth in both "learning to read" and "reading to learn."

Peace Corps works with schools in communities where a significant percentage of learners have not acquired basic reading and literacy skills at the primary level. Peace Corps Volunteers support teachers to strengthen effective literacy teaching and learning techniques to foster long-term outcomes through positive teaching and learning environments.

LEP objectives are to:

- 1 | Increase achievement of students in **English literacy skills**
- 2 | Increase the capacity of teachers in literacy teaching skills
- 3 | Increase students' confidence, participation, and leadership
- 4 Increase students' and teachers' access to teaching/learning materials and resources to support literacy development

PROJECTS IN SOUTH AFRICA



In the context of controlling HIV/AIDS, epidemic control is reached when the total number of new HIV infections falls below the total number of deaths from all causes among people living with HIV.

The HIV Awareness & Prevention Program for Youth (HAPPY) project addresses structural drivers to health inequality, such as poverty, gender inequality, and associated stigma, as well as strengthening organizational capacity, which is critical to successfully reaching epidemic control.

Peace Corps specializes in a people-to-people approach to development that is based on relationships and skills exchange to implement sustainable, low-cost, replicable interventions to support community priorities.



Peace Corps Volunteers work with host organizations to build their capacity for sustainable delivery of services to community members impacted by HIV/AIDS.

Peace Corps Volunteers are uniquely positioned to serve as role models to their communities' youth and train them in HIV prevention through areas such as youth sexual and reproductive education. This is done by increasing knowledge and skills among community members to improve their health and assist families with direct support and linkages to HIV services. Health Volunteers may work with non-governmental organisations focused on HIV/AIDS.

Outcomes of the HAPPY project are to ensure:

- 1 | Youth adopt practices that prevent HIV
- 2 | Youth demonstrate employable skills
- 3 | Youth are supported to remain HIV-free

PRE-COVID SNAPSHOT

(2018-2019)



VOLUNTEERS

308

299 Two-Year Volunteers

10 Response Volunteers





10 037

Youth were trained in **HIV prevention**

7 568

Individuals were trained in

 sexual reproductive health and modern contraceptives

4890

Individuals who showed improved knowledge of health risks associated with over-consumption of alcohol and/or substance abuse



EDUCATION

• 4602

Learners improved in **English literacy**

4802

Learners demonstrated increased confidence and motivation

• 5 581

Learners improved in

English proficiency

8 159

Learners gained access to expanded reading materials and/or electronic resources due to expansion of school libraries and computer centers at Volunteer sites

VOLUNTEER EVACUATION: COVID-19

Virtual Service Pilot

In 2020, the Peace Corps introduced the Virtual Service Pilot (VSP) to enable volunteers to continue their service during the COVID-19 pandemic. Today, VSP continues to support the agency's mission in innovative ways.

In 2021, eleven participants in the Virtual Service Pilot collaborated online with local partner organizations to provide technical assistance and facilitate cultural exchange.

PROVINCES

- Mpumalanga
- KwaZulu-Natal
- Gauteng
- **Northern Cape**
- Limpopo

ORGANIZATIONS

received technical assistance from the VSPP in areas including Grant and Report Writing, Monitoring, and Evaluation

.

Staff-Led Activities

Staff members recognized the significance of nurturing relationships and collaborating with valued partners after Volunteers returned to the United States

During the pandemic, ten staff members from the Peace Corps journeyed to six distinct locations across Limpopo and Mpumalanga over the course of two weeks to carry out the Peace Corps Skills Empowerment Project. This initiative focused on health organizations and schools, aiming to provide support to counterparts in the absence of Volunteers.

THE SESSIONS COVERED THE FOLLOWING TOPICS

- Creating and managing safe spaces
- **Facilitation techniques**
- Reproductive health (My Changing Body)
- Reproductive health (preventing unwanted pregnancy)
- HIV awareness & prevention
- Remaining & returning to school
- Setting goals
- Alcohol and substance abuse
- Gender-based violence
- Standing up to peer pressure

PROVINCES

- Limpopo
- **Mpumalanga**

COUNTERPARTS

were trained on different topics such as reproductive health, HIV prevention strategies, substance abuse, and gender-based violence

PEACE CORPS SOUTH AFRICA AT A GLANCE (2022-2024)



35

Two-Year Volunteers 6

Response Volunteers



•

357

Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief
(PEPFAR) orphans and vulnerable
children (OVC) programs for children
and families affected by HIV with
primary prevention services

205

individuals working in HIV led organizations trained on organizational development topics 133 🖇

priority populations (adolescent girls and young women, adolescent boys and young men, and adult men) reached with standardized

HIV-prevention evidence-based interventions

100

in an **organizational capacity assessment**

55 ¥=

individuals participated in a training to **develop an action plan**

35 🗀

Virtual Service Pilot Participants

35 🝣

organizations received technical assistance from Virtual Service Participants

organizations demonstrate improved performance





students were taught literacy skills in a school setting

recreational activities to improve literacy skills

increased access to libraries

remediation in **English literacy** in a school setting

students demonstrated improvement in literacy skills on a standardized student assessment tool

on how to organize and maintain a library

Participants supported host country education organizations

technical assistance from **Virtual Service Participants**

QUALITY ASSURANCE & SMALL GRANTS PROGRAM

Evolution of the Quality Assurance Program at Peace Corps South Africa

Like an onion with many layers as you peel it, the Quality Assurance Program (QAP) at Peace Corps South Africa is evolving and adding more layers.

The Quality Assurance Specialist (QAS), Pindi Ziki assumed the QAS role in March 2024. She is at the helm of institutionalizing a culture of quality assurance, continuous quality improvement process, and system simplification at PCSA. Quality Assurance is the "process of optimizing a system".

PCSA is assuring high standards and is intensifying efforts by simplifying systems and policies as well as making resources available. As different layers are added to the QAP at Post, PCSA is becoming more responsive operationally, programmatically, and more compliant with the agency requirements.

As a Post, PCSA assures quality all the time, through the steady stream of simplification and standardization of policies, guidelines, related practices and standards, including reporting and accountability. With the support of the Quality Assurance Specialist, the concept of Quality Assurance, or assuring quality, is taking hold in PCSA's culture.

Small Grants Program

The Peace Corps Small Grants Program is an excellent tool for Volunteers and their communities to access support for small-scale development projects.

The focus of Peace Corps' work is developing the capacity of people.

Through the Small Grants Program, Peace Corps Volunteers work with counterparts and community representatives to identify and prioritize what the community would like to change, and to use their strengths or learn new skills to achieve that change. Volunteers direct their capacity-building efforts to several different, but integrated levels: individuals, organizations, and communities.



Peace Corps South Africa resumed the implementation of grants following the return of Volunteers in 2022 with a grant for a Jungle Gym for learners at a Primary School in Mpumalanga.

SUCCESS STORIES



WENDY SCOTT

Wendy is currently serving as a Health Volunteer in Mpumalanga.

Building an AIDS-Free Future:

Health Volunteer Collaborates with the Community for HIV **Prevention and Awareness**

In the fight against the HIV epidemic, community engagement is paramount, particularly when it comes to educating and empowering young people. This belief is at the heart of an initiative led by Peace Corps Health Volunteer Wendy and her counterpart Josephine. Together, they are working tirelessly to bring HIV prevention and awareness to young boys and girls in the communities of Mpumalanga, with the assurance that "Teamwork Makes the Dream Work."

Identifying Community Needs

Recognizing the unique challenges faced by youths aged 17 to 24, Wendy and Josephine initiated a comprehensive community assessment over a threemonth period.

> They engaged with over 33 local community members, shadowed Life Skills teachers, and collaborated with community health workers.

Through these conversations and observations, they identified key factors contributing to the vulnerability of young individuals to HIV.

Supported by the Peace Corps Volunteer Advisory Support Team (VAST) grant, they are ready to implement two evidence-based programs aimed at combating the HIV epidemic. With the endorsement of various local entities - ranging from the Department of Social Development to tribal councils and health institutions - this collaborative effort is positioned to make a measurable impact.

Empowering Young Voices

One of the standout programs in this initiative is Stepping Stone, which empowers young people to become proactive in their health journeys.

By fostering an environment where young men and women can learn about the importance of knowing their HIV status and encourage responsible testing, participants can influence their peers positively.

The program recognizes the unique experiences and voices of young boys and girls, promoting discussions that directly address their concerns and questions.



Community Collaboration and Training

The collaboration doesn't stop at program implementation. One of the initiative's primary goals is capacity building. Wendy and Josephine will spearhead the certification of trainers within their communities. This will lay the groundwork for the Tirisano organization to continue expanding its programs beyond the initial training cohort.

After six months of hands-on training, Master Trainers will assess the success of the staff in both the Stepping Stone and Families Matter! programs. This step is critical not only for ensuring the quality of the training but also for creating an income-generating activity that allows Tirisano to sustain and broaden its outreach.

Sessions are designed to be inclusive and mixed gender, ensuring that both boys and girls can express their perspectives and learn from one another.

In addition to Stepping Stone, the Families Matter! Program (FMP) serves as a parent-focused intervention aimed at enhancing parent-child communication about sex and risk reduction.

This program addresses crucial issues such as child sexual abuse and gender-based violence, equipping families with the tools to discuss sexuality openly and effectively.

Looking Ahead

With the project period slated from October 2024 to February 2025, Wendy has also begun collaborating with fellow Volunteers to ensure the long-term sustainability of the programs.

By integrating Peer-to-Peer initiatives and utilizing proven methods like Grassroots Soccer tools, this enhanced approach aims to cultivate a culture of open discussion and support regarding HIV among young community members.

The journey ahead is filled with challenges, but the unwavering commitment of Wendy, Josephine, and their community partners gives hope for a healthier, more informed future. By combining efforts, they are paving the way toward an AIDS-free future, providing young boys and girls with the knowledge and resources they need to protect their health and the well-being of their families.

Together, through teamwork and collaboration, we can make significant strides against the HIV epidemic. The seeds of awareness and prevention are being planted today, ensuring a brighter, healthier tomorrow for generations to come.

Advancing STEM Education and Innovation

Recognizing the need for transformation, the Mathematics Science Leadership Academy (MSLA) has taken strides to bridge the gap between education and employment. By offering 300 students with opportunities to develop vital skills, MSLA is committed to fostering future leaders who can contribute to the country's economy. Focused primarily on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) subjects, MSLA is enabling students to harness their potential and become drivers of change in their communities.



The contribution of dedicated Peace Corps Response Volunteer Kaylee has significantly enhanced MSLA's outreach efforts. By offering career and university guidance to students in Grades 11 and 12, she plays a crucial role in assisting them with university scholarship applications. This support is especially vital, as a striking 85% of students in the region lack the means for higher education, making her guidance truly transformative.

Kaylee works closely with the MSLA team on programs focused on resume building, which are essential for students applying for bursaries. Her contributions help develop profiles that clearly highlight students' demographics, enabling personalized assistance in their educational journeys.

The storytelling aspect of education cannot be overlooked; Kaylee has spearheaded a journalism program that empowers students to engage in news writing and blogging. This not only hones their communication skills but also encourages them to share their narratives and insights with peers.

As the world continues to evolve, the transformation of education is not a luxury; it is a necessity that prioritizes inclusivity and accessibility.

It is crucial that no generation is left behind in the pursuit of knowledge, skills, and dreams.



KAYLEE HASKELL

Kaylee is currently serving as a Response Volunteer in Kimberly.

PEACE CORPS SOUTH AFRICA DREAM STATEMENT

We are a house built by individuals with unique skill sets. Our foundation is based on the solidarity of our communities and staff members to reach our common goal of world peace and friendship.

We emanate from the African soil that gives birth to the Baobab tree, like its roots we are the base of a strong community of competent, equitable, and diverse people with both local and international reach.

We are Peace Corps South Africa. Simunye, ka botho sizonqoba.

