Peace Corps Morocco

Annual Report
2017
Country Regions Served By Peace Corps

Regions Served By Peace Corps Volunteers

Since 1963 in Morocco
Dear friends and partners,

I am pleased to present the 2017 annual report of the United States Peace Corps activities in Morocco. The Kingdom of Morocco has been a welcoming home to Volunteers since 1963. Today we have over 180 Volunteers serving in eight regions. They represent the diversity of the United States in terms of color, socio-economic background, race and religion. These Volunteers work to promote the Peace Corps’ global mission of world peace and friendship in tandem with the Moroccan Ministry of Youth and Sports’ efforts to improve the lives of Moroccan youth.

As we look back over the last year we are enormously grateful to our partners in the Moroccan government at the local, provincial and national levels. The unwavering support of the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the Ministry of Interior has enabled the successful continuation of the Peace Corps’ youth development mission in Morocco. We are also thankful for the support of Youth and Women’s Centers and other local associations, as well as the counterparts and host families who make the Volunteers’ impact possible.

I hope that you will enjoy reading about our shared accomplishments of the last year. They reflect not only the strength of our partnerships, but also the terrific group of Volunteers who commit 27 months of their lives to the people of Morocco through one of the United States most noble and treasured institutions, the Peace Corps. We look forward to the year ahead. If you have any questions on this report or suggestions on how to enhance our impact, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Susan M. Dwyer
Country Director
Peace Corps Morocco

Peace Corps represents some, if not all, of the best virtues in this society. It stands for everything that America has ever stood for. It stands for everything we believe in and hope to achieve in this world.

~ Sargent Shriver, First Peace Corps Director

Susan M. Dwyer
Country Director

Peace Corps Morocco
Overview

The Peace Corps is an independent U.S. Government agency that provides Volunteers to countries requesting assistance. President John F. Kennedy established the Peace Corps in 1961 in an effort to promote world peace and friendship. Since its founding, over 250,000 Americans have served in 139 countries, committing two years of their lives to promote the Peace Corps’ mission. Throughout their service, Volunteers gain a unique cultural understanding and a lifelong commitment to service. They commit to learning from the people with whom they work and serve – and they are impacted as much as those they came to assist. The Peace Corps mission is as relevant today as it was in 1961.

THE PEACE CORPS MISSION

To promote world peace and friendship by fulfilling three goals:

1. To help the people of interested countries in meeting their needs for trained Volunteers,
2. To help promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of peoples served,
3. To help promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans.

PEACE CORPS TODAY

Host Countries: 65
Volunteers and trainees: 7,376
Gender: 63% female, 37% male
Minorities: 28% of Volunteers
Average age: 28
Volunteers over 50: 6% of Volunteers
The first group of Volunteers arrived in Morocco in 1961 at the invitation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Since then, over 5,000 Volunteers have served in the Kingdom. Individuals who serve as Peace Corps Volunteers are carefully selected through a competitive application process. Most Peace Corps Volunteers hold university or advanced degrees.

Upon arrival in Morocco, Peace Corps Volunteers undergo an intensive 11-week language, cultural, health, safety and technical training program. The majority of the training time is spent with Moroccan Language and Cultural Facilitators (LCFs). Throughout their two years of service, Peace Corps provides ongoing training to the Volunteers and their Moroccan counterparts.

Volunteers live with Moroccan families for the duration of the 11-week training program, as well as the first few months of service within their permanent site. These family relationships are the grounding force of a Volunteer’s experience. Often, when Volunteers finish their service and are asked what they appreciated most about their time in Morocco, they state that it is the time spent with their host families.

Volunteers receive a living allowance, which is commensurate with the living standards of their local community.

**PEACE CORPS MOROCCO STATISTICS:**

- Officially Opened: 1963
- Current Volunteers: 180
- Gender: 65% female, 35% male
- Average age: 26
- Volunteers over 50: 2.2% of Volunteers
- Partners: Ministry of Youth and Sports, Ministry of Education, Entraide Nationale, Dar Taleeb/Taleeba (Student Center), Dar Chebab (Youth Center), Nedi Neswi (Women’s Center), and other Associations
Moroccan Government Support

The partnership with the Government of Morocco is the foundation of Peace Corp's work. The Ministry of Youth and Sports guides the strategic direction and geographic reach of Peace Corps Morocco’s work. Regional and provincial level officials in the Ministry assist with determining Volunteer site placement. Directors of Youth Centers, Women Centers, and Associations supervise the Volunteer’s work at their sites.

The Ministry of Education and Entraide Nationale have opened their local institutions (schools, Dar Taleeb/Taleeba) to Peace Corps Volunteers in order to bolster positive youth-development related activities.

The Ministry of Interior and the Gendarmerie Royale actively assist the Peace Corps in keeping Volunteers safe and offer emergency support at both national and local levels.

Peace Corps Morocco is grateful for the guidance, collegiality and encouragement from our partners and friends in the Government of Morocco.

In 2015, His Majesty made a donation of $250,000 to support Volunteer projects in Morocco over five years. We are very thankful for His Majesty the King Mohammed VI's support to Peace Corps Morocco program.
Youth Development Project

The Youth Development program in Morocco aims to positively engage youth and prepare them for their roles within family life, the world of work, and citizenship through activities, projects, and programs geared toward the achievement of three broad yet interconnected goals:

**World of Work:**
Youth will develop employability skills and assets to participate more fully in the global 21st century’s economy.

**Health Life Styles:**
Youth/women will be empowered to adopt positive behaviors to achieve optimal health and well-being

**Positive Youth Development:**
Youth will develop or enhance interests, skills and assets to strengthen their personal development and community engagement.

These three goals align with the three axes highlighted in Ministry of Youth and Sports (MYS) National Integrated Strategy (SNIJ) 2015-2030, namely:

**Axis 1:** Increase economic opportunities and promote youth employability

**Axis 2:** Improve access to basic services and reduce geographic disparities (health, sports, leisure, art and culture)

**Axis 3:** Promote active participation of youth in social life, civic activities and decision making.

PCV Robert Wisniewski with youth outside the Dar Chebab
# Youth Development Project

## Major Youth Development Volunteers’ Activities in 2017

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Format</th>
<th>Theme</th>
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| 57 Camps        | English Immersion  
                  Science  
                  Art  
                  Glow (Girls Leading our World)  
                  Women Empowerment  
                  Healthy Life styles  
                  Dance  
                  Basketball  
                  Environment  |
| 78 Clubs        | Cinema  
                  Art  
                  Library  
                  Girls’ Basketball  
                  Chess  
                  English  
                  Theater  
                  Environment  |
| 23 Training/ Workshops | Girls Education Workshop  
                               Preschool Teachers Training  
                               Life skills (International Youth Foundation Passport for Success)  
                               Gender Advocate Training  
                               Community Leadership  
                               Model United Nations (MUN) Training  
                               Project Soar Training of Trainers  
                               Health and Fitness Teachers Training  
                               Drama Workshop  
                               CLIMB (Creating Leadership in the Mountains and Beyond) |

PCV Naomi Israel – Ouled-M’barek
Achievements in 2017

Goal 1: Life Skills/Community Engagement
Youth will build assets, develop skills, and engage in community development

**Build and Improve Life Skills**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Achievements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Youth demonstrated enhanced skill(s), asset(s) or interest(s)</strong></td>
<td>3772</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Youth exhibited new positive communication or relational skills</strong></td>
<td>2954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Youth demonstrated improved decision making and problem solving skills</strong></td>
<td>2207</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Volunteerism**

Youth assisted by a volunteer/ partner designed and led at least one community-benefiting peer education, or other service-orientated activity

Youth increased their engagement in at least one community-benefiting, peer education, or other service-orientated activity

**Physical Activity**

Youth incorporated new physical exercise and sports activities in their daily/ weekly schedule

**Healthy Environment**

Youth demonstrated or reported having adopted at least one new environmentally-friendly practice

**Substance Abuse Prevention**

Youth were able to explain at least three negative effects that drugs and alcohol can have on one’s body

Youth were capable of articulating at least three strategies to avoid drugs and alcohol

Goal 2: Healthy Lifestyle
Youth will adopt healthy behaviors

**Goal 3: World of Work**
Youth will develop skills and assets to enter the world of work

**Employability Skills**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Achievements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Youth demonstrated improved employability skills</strong></td>
<td>1619</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Youth used improved verbal or written English for work</strong></td>
<td>2344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Youth demonstrated improved computer or other technology related skills for work</strong></td>
<td>975</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Entrepreneurship Skills**

Youth demonstrated improved entrepreneurship skills

Peace Corps Morocco
Small Grants Programs

Small Project Assistance (SPA)

The Peace Corps Small Project Assistance (SPA) Program is sponsored by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and funds small-scale community development projects developed by Peace Corps Volunteers and their community partners. The SPA program works to increase the capabilities of local communities to conduct low-cost, grassroots sustainable development.

Peace Corps Partnership Program (PCPP)

The Peace Corps Partnership Program (PCPP) is designed to identify and accept private donations to support small-scale community-initiated development projects in line with Peace Corps goals. These projects are developed and proposed jointly by Peace Corps Volunteers and their Moroccan community partners and is intended to address basic community needs.

In 2015, King Mohamed VI generously donated $250,000 to be distributed over five years to support volunteer and community projects. This donation is administered through the Peace Corps Partnership Program (PCPP).
Learning English through Art

“Our rural community, Ribat Al Khair, has limited resources for local students to improve their English. This project allowed students to attend English through Art classes and clubs to reinforce the English school curriculum. The classes and clubs improved English listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills in English of youth at the Dar Chebab, Dar Taliba, and Lycée. Students created a variety of art projects throughout the year that supported English lessons. Students visited the local Weaving Cooperative and gained an appreciation for artisans making a living in their own community. Members of the Coop have traveled to the United States several times to sell their products, so students saw how English skills are essential in marketing this traditional craft. Also, a contemporary artist from Culture Vultures in Azrou came to our town and worked with students for a day. Culture Vultures sponsors artists in residence from all over the world. Both are examples of artists using English in their work. In the class we also used the Visual Thinking Strategies technique of teaching critical thinking skills through art. At the end of the school year students exhibited their visual art and written work at the Dar Chebab to mark and celebrate their success with the community.”

PCV Jennifer Williams
Environmental Garden

“It has taken three years, but we’ve finally finished our park project. It all started with a conversation one rainy February evening at the Dar Chebab. My host brother gathered the leaders of a couple associations that shared the same vision.

Every day, masses of youth came down from early morning until late in the evening to help build the park. During Ramadan, workers toiled from dawn until the heat got unbearable every day despite the long hours of fasting to build the amphitheater.

The High Atlas Foundation donated 150 trees for us to plant around the perimeter. Over the course of a week and a half, youths from across the community came out to help break ground and plant each tree.

On the final day of constructing the playground, many girls came to help. I had been surrounded by boys all week. They were doing all the digging, drilling, screwing, painting, etc. Once these girls showed up they helped puncture holes, screwed in the nuts and bolts, and everything else needed to assemble the structure. This showed the boys how capable the girls were and really boosted the girls’ self-confidence.

The last weekend of September, we held one last community project for painting murals and cleaning up the space. Many youths from across the community (and the scouts) gathered in the space to work from sun up to sun down. We had an information session about environmentalism and why it was important to throw trash away or in the recycling in order to take care of this space we had created together, keep it looking nice, and promote healthier environmental behaviors in the community.

After we built the playground dozens of kids came out to play, grateful to finally have such a space. Women sat on the steps of the theater to socialize while they watched the children. Men gathered in the shaded spots of the stairs to sit and watch the world go by. During the project we promoted volunteerism. We instilled skills such as teamwork, staying on budget, and leadership.”

PCV Elizabeth Jay
C.L.I.M.B : Creating Leadership in the Mountains and Beyond

“My counterparts and I completed a successful C.L.I.M.B program in Jamaat Shaim, Safi, in which participating youth climbed Mt. Toubkal after 6 months of classroom and outdoor training sessions. Our desired outcome directly aligned with the 5 goals of the C.L.I.M.B program.

1. To foster an appreciation of the environment amongst the youth in our community.
2. To provide an environment that encourages and supports self-discovery and self-awareness.
3. To develop critical thinking and decision making skills.
4. To teach the youth the necessary skills to safely experience the environment while incorporating sustainable practices.
5. To create opportunity for youth to experience the diversity of Morocco, in terms of the natural environment and the people.

In the first month we focused on team building exercises, leadership activities, problem solving and critical thinking skills. The second month was dedicated to environmental awareness and education. Our third month was on hiking safety in different types of terrain, first aid, nutrition, hydration, and appropriate hiking gear. The fourth month entailed learning best practices such as the «Leave no trail» principles which taught participants to leave minimal negative impact on the environment. Critical topics also included: the prevention/managing of altitude sickness, dealing with potential emergency scenarios, and awareness of not only oneself, but the wellbeing of the entire group. The last month culminated in the transferring of technical skills needed to summit Mt. Toubkal. At the end the youth reflected on their shared accomplishment.

The grit, perseverance, and commitment demonstrated by my students during the project was not surprising, but inspiring to see nonetheless. Seeing different members step up and take on leadership roles and responsibilities when needed throughout the course of the program, was a major indicator that students were not only learning, but had the confidence to then apply what they had learned. Based on conversations with participants and community members, it is clear that the CLIMB program has made an indelible mark on Jemaat Shaim and Safi.”

PCV Neville Sadhoo
Women's Literacy Program

The Women’s Literacy Program began as a vague aspiration to help women living in outlying, under-served neighborhoods in Ain Cheggag where many women are unable to attend school and have limited means to financially support their families. After a year of discussing ideas with community members and wishful “inshallah”s, our program began to progress when an international women’s association offered to sponsor the rental costs a small classroom. With an official classroom established, community volunteers began leading literacy efforts and sewing lessons. However, teaching efforts were stymied by a lack of basic school supplies such as a whiteboards, table, chairs and notebook. To solve this, we applied for a grant to purchase supplies and form an association that will maintain the sustainability of the program.

Since setting up the classroom space, women from around the neighborhood have expressed strong interest in joining the association, and attending lessons for both themselves and their children. Some of the neighborhood children helped to create artistic decorations for the room. Volunteer teachers successfully participated in a 2-day, “Training of Trainers”, and now teach basic literacy lessons with both women and young children. Many of the women who joined the program never thought they would learn to read, but have found a familiar, comfortable environment where they are motivated to begin this journey.

This is just the beginning of the Women’s Literacy Program. As the association develops, they intend to start more youth literacy programs and create a children’s library with weekly story-telling, as well as entrepreneurship training for women to begin their own sewing coop. The association has developed relationships with associations and organization in Fes, Sefrou and Imouzzer to further their programming. There is still a lot of hard work to come in the future. And as they say, everything is shwiya b shwiya. But the community has shown a motivation and commitment that I know will drive this program to do amazing things.

PCV Samantha Mcfaul
Elise Kambou

I sat in the cramped back seat of a grand taxi as I journeyed to my new home. “Some of you,” our Country Director had said, “will only need a few hours to reach your final sites”. Elise Kambou to a friendly face waiting for me on the side of the road: Naima.

Since the time I arrived in Akka Ighane, Naima, my host mother, has loved me as if I were her own daughter. She has shared her world with me and helped me to better understand her perspective in ways that transcend language. Through acts of charades commentary on popular Turkish soap operas or story-telling, I have come to learn who my host mother is. We’ve bonded over racism, the challenges of having natural hair, as well as poverty. Naima is not just my host mother, but she is my friend; someone I can cry and laugh with. I know if i’m ever in need or want for anything, Naima is just a call away.

Recently, Naima and I have been getting misty eyed about the future. She tells me time and time again not to forget her or Akka Ighane. But how could I forget? Naima gave me the confidence to believe I belonged when she pulled me aside and said, “You look like us, it’s good.” I was able to find my place in Akka Ighane because of Naima, and for that I am eternally grateful.

Sofia Ashooh

I have returned to my host family’s house almost every day since moving into my own apartment. One might think this is because I am not a good cook. They’d only be partially right. The truth of the matter is that while my host mom is an amazing cook, I have developed a relationship with my host family here in Morocco that rivals even some of my friendships I have back home. Beyond providing me with a roof over my head and dozens upon dozens of delicious meals, they provide me with a sense of belonging.

My host mother respects me, gives me excellent advice, and makes an effort to understand me despite my weirdly accented Darija. My host dad passes through the post office during the day, he will call me to tell me I’ve received a package, and he will rival my excitement for it. My host sisters’ patience with me is unparalleled, and my host brother brings me amlou from his post in the Sahara because he knows I like it.Perhaps the most valuable thing they have given me is - a place where I can come and relax, be myself, and continue to develop. They are one of the reasons I am able to have an effective Peace Corps service. I’m not sure I’ll ever be able to express in any language how grateful I am for that.
Host Families Stories

William Burriss

The same virtues that create a wonderful family in America are the same virtues that foster a wonderful host family experience abroad. My adopted family in rural Morocco provided me with a safe and warm place to begin a new life in what first felt like an utterly alien land. They taught me how to navigate this new world just as they taught their own children the necessary life skills to survive and thrive. The reassurance of their unwavering support and kindness gave me the courage I needed while immersing myself in our community.

But more than simply supporting my physical and emotional wellbeing, my host family sparked a lifelong passion for learning more about Moroccan culture. My host family and friends have allowed me to learn more about Morocco than any book could teach me, and they provided me with the opportunity to share more about the United States than I ever could have in a classroom. But most importantly, at least for me, it has fueled my desire to make a positive impact in our village. Not for me. Not for some high minded ideal. But for them. The people who poured their hearts and souls into welcoming a stranger into their home, and making that person a part of it.

I hope to give back a fraction of the warmth they have given me through the good works of my service. Even if my Tashlaheet fails to fully express my adoration for them, I hope that my actions will say it clearly.

Aisha Ahmed

I will never forget the excitement on their faces when I first walked into the house -- “you’re Muslim and American?” was one of the very first questions I received. That was when I realized that this was going to be a very different experience, not only for me but also for my host family. After a couple of days of getting to know each other, my host mom was able to understand that an American can also look like me. This gave my host mom the opportunity to educate her community; she would take me on walks to introduce me to new people and tell them that I was Muslim and also from America.

After a month of living with them I decided that I wanted to stay with them for the next two years, not only because they are very accepting, but also because this experience has been a great opportunity for us to exchange cultures and continue to learn from one another. Living with my host family for the past months gave me the opportunity to improve my Darija, learn how to cook incredible Moroccan food, and also meet new people. I am so grateful that my host family has made me feel included and allowed me to become a part of their family.
Host Families Stories

Caleb Griffin and Bethan Owen

When we arrived to Imouzzer, we were greeted by a cheerful older woman who introduced herself as “Mama Ribha”. She introduced us to her husband and five children, as we sat on their ponjes talking in our broken Darija. That became our lives for the next two months. We huddled around the fire, too cold to go out, talking. Mama Ribha would lean forward attentively, a look of intense concentration on her face as we bungled our way through various mispronounced verbs and conjugations. At one point I accidentally used the words “Layla dyali” (my Layla) instead of “L-ailadyaili” (my family), at which point she roared with laughter since Layla was her daughter-in-law and already married.

Mama Ribha’s son Ali became my counterpart and the said Layla became Bethan’s counterpart. They introduced us to the Women’s Center and to the Greenside Development Foundation where we do our work. They also provided most of our contacts in the town. I’m not sure what we could have accomplished without their help over our service. The most important legacy is our continued friendship. We moved into the apartment upstairs and there is seldom a day that goes by without us seeing them. Usually that’ll consist of just a short chat, but often Mama Ribha will insist on making us take freshly baked bread or biscuits or will insist that we eat with them. Our host family has been one of the principle reasons why we’ve loved Peace Corps. We couldn’t have asked for a kinder family.
Voice of Partners

Mbirika Belhaj, President of Women’s Association for Development and Culture in Ain Chouater

Peace Corps Volunteers have left a huge impact on the way I see things as a young woman. Working with and around them changed my perception of being a young woman in today’s world, empowered my self-esteem, enriched my knowledge and strengthened my life skills. All of this has helped me be more active in my community as well as being a role model to my site and classmates. I’m really fortunate to have been around Peace Corps Volunteers and looking forward to learning more from them and sustain the skills I acquired in collaborating with them. Thanks to them I don’t see anymore that woman’s role is tied only to the household and raising children, but can become active leader of a working group that ensures a continuity of youth and women empowerment as I am today.

Mohamed Laghdaf, Director of Dar Chebab Akka

Peace Corps Volunteers show compassion and are an inspiration to all of us. They treat everyone with respect and kindness, no matter what the situation. We know how stressful it can be for the youth. The involvement of these volunteers (words, actions and smiles ...) goes a long way toward helping our youth keep their dignity. I just want to say that their work hasn’t gone unnoticed, and I trust the community will remember their support over the years, their work to make a difference and their spirit of generosity. On behalf of the youth members of Dar Chebab Akka and the Akka Community I want to express our great appreciation for their tireless efforts and all the wholehearted assistance to support our programs and activities. I do hope that they will have gained some inner satisfaction in knowing through their efforts they have made Dar Chebab Akka a better space to live and work.

Rachid Choukri, Director of Dar Chebab “Mohamed Zerktouni” in Azilal

Since its sites opening in Azilal province, the United States Peace Corps Morocco Volunteers demonstrated a high level of skills and efficiency, working in areas of environment, art education, community health, sports, language and leisure activities, as well as teaching English. They have been an added value to the youth and sports sector in Azilal especially to the Dar Chebab. The difficulties of Peace Corps Volunteers’ work cannot be limited to lines or even pages, given the great challenges of development, but they bring entrepreneurship and the exploration of new ideas, effective communication and teamwork... and God is the helper.

Ayoub Naiym, Counterpart in El Ksiba

Growing up, hearing stories from my mother about her experience with volunteers in the 80’s was interesting. It started with the first tenant of our house downstairs, a volunteer who worked as a high school teacher. He and my mother spent time together, doing food exchanges and helping each other learn more about each other’s languages and cultures. Time spent with American volunteers helped my mother to expand her English vocabulary, some of which were my first English words that I learned, and one of the reasons I’m interested in studying English language at University. I also remember Mickey, a Peace Corps volunteer who used to help me with grammar exercises, so I could pass my baccalaureate exam, thanks to him I got an excellent mark. Then as if time was repeating itself, new volunteers rented our house. Jacob and Megan Sayers became our lovely neighbors, spending time with them, attending their youth center classes, and doing more food exchanges has helped me to have the same experience that my mother had - not to mention the benefits from practicing my pronunciation with them which was way better than university classes. Voluntary work is nice work that shows the humanity of people, and after I have been impacted by Peace Corps volunteers; I am now interested in looking for more voluntary work and help others after getting my bachelor’s degree.
Volunteers at Work and Play

PCV America Munoz presenting Fatima Bouroid a certificate of appreciation for her help organizing the Environment Camp: Science and Creativity Urban Camp in Akka, Morocco

PCV Alena Klimas and girls during Happy Valley Girls Hike in Ait Bouguemez, Morocco

PCV Hunter Levy in the community for a Snow Day in Ait Bouguemez, Morocco
The Sahara summer heat did not stop the community and PCV Selomie Yakob and Olena Semenova from hosting a 12 days environment camp in Akka, Morocco

PCV Jesse Altman Teaching Computer Literacy in a Primary School in the Mid-Atlas
Volunteers at Work and Play

During an introductory English class, students joined PCV Fay Cowper in the Dar Chebab for a lesson in common greetings.

PCV Yong Kwon doing Henna to the girls in the oriental region.
PCV Madelene Baker celebrating the Eid Al Fitr when all the kids (and herself) were wearing the new clothes their families bought them.

PCV Nishat Tabassum, Olena Semenova, Cassandra Ernst, Anne Wilson-Siembieda and Bradley Janocha with attendees of the “Tech Camp for Personal and Professional Development» in Akka.