

PEACE CORPS ARMENIA

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER



WINTER 2012

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Raise Money for
Disadvantaged Families



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PEACE CORPS MISSION

1. Helping the people of interested countries in meeting their need for trained men and women.
2. Helping promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of the Armenian peoples served.
3. Helping promote a better understanding of Armenians on the part of Americans.

PEACE CORPS MINISTRY

- Ministry of Education and Science
- Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs
- Ministry of Territorial Administration
- Ministry of Diaspora
- Ministry of Economy
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs

ABOUT PEACE CORPS

In 1961, President John F. Kennedy established the Peace Corps to promote world peace and friendship by challenging Americans to live and work in developing countries. Since then more than 200,000 Peace Corps Volunteers have served in 139 host countries.

Volunteers serve for 27 months in their host countries, learning language and culture and living at the same level as the people they serve.

The Peace Corps Armenia program was established in 1992. Since that time over 780 Volunteers have served in villages, towns, and cities around Armenia. Currently 94 Volunteers work in the following areas:

- Teaching English as Foreign Language
- Community and Business Development
- Community Health Education
- Environmental Education

Peace Corps is an independent agency of the United States Government.

KENNEDY'S PROMISE

We will only send abroad Americans who are wanted by the host country, who have a real job to do, and who are qualified to do that job. Programs will be developed with care, and after full negotiation, in order to make sure that the Peace Corps is wanted and will contribute to the welfare of the other people. Our Peace Corps is not designed as an instrument of diplomacy or propaganda or ideological conflict. It is designed to permit our people to exercise more fully their responsibilities in the great common cause of world development.

U.S. President John F. Kennedy
March 1, 1961

PEACE CORPS ARMENIA PROJECTS

Community & Youth Development

- Organizational Development
- Youth Development

English Education

- Teaching English
- Teacher professional development
- Resources development
- Community development projects

Community Health Education

- Healthy Lifestyles & Sports
- HIV/AIDS awareness seminars
- Resources development
- Community development projects

Environmental Education

- Environmental awareness seminars
- Summer camps & after school clubs
- Resources development
- Community development projects



LETTER FROM THE COUNTRY DIRECTOR

Dear Ministers and Staff of the Republic of Armenia, staff of Non-Government Organizations and Volunteers:

I am pleased to report that Peace Corps Volunteers and their Armenian counterparts have been working very hard over the last year to improve schools, non-government organizations, and businesses. I hope you will enjoy reading this report which highlights some stories of their successes. Currently 94 Volunteers serve across the country, largely in rural communities where they work with schools teaching English, leading environmental and health clubs, and working with local NGOs and businesses. They strengthen nongovernmental organizations and help to expand the range of community services.

Peace Corps wants to thank our partners and other stakeholders especially the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Nature Protection, the Ministry of Healthcare, the Ministry of Economy, and the Ministry of Sport and Youth.

Thank you for your support of our programs. We would also like to thank the many teachers, school directors, community leaders, and host families that give so generously of their time to make these Americans feel welcomed and at home in Armenia.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "David Lillie".

David Lillie
Country Director

PCV: Austin Sherwindt
Reporting Period: Winter 2011-12
Third-Party Media Involvement: None

PCV HELPS STUDENT COUNCILS RAISE MONEY FOR DISADVANTAGED FAMILIES

This past holiday season, 12 disadvantaged families had a little more to celebrate. In the communities of Goris, Khndzoresk, and Verishen, representatives from the student councils of seven schools participated in the “*One School, One Family, One Month*” initiative, which was designed by PCV, Austin Sherwindt, and implemented with his partner organization, Partnership and Teaching NGO (P&T NGO). The goal of the program was to teach student councils about fundraising and charity, and then to put this practice into action by raising money for local families that are socioeconomically impoverished.

In the school hallways, putting up decorated posters and announcements around the school, selling paper ornaments and Christmas trees in exchange for student donations, organizing daily raffles, and writing letters to local stores explaining the project and asking for small donations. P&T NGO and the PCV visited schools on a daily basis to observe progress and help the student councils with any problems encountered.

Each student council was given a fundraising target of 30,000 AMD (about \$79), which would be sufficient to support one disadvantaged family during the 2011 holiday season. During the two-week project implementation period, with the generous support of the community these seven schools raised a total of 345,000 dram (about \$900) - 164% of the initial target amount. The result was that, rather than just seven families benefitting, a total of 12 families in the area received food, pre-



At the onset of the project, trainers from P&T NGO and the PCV provided training sessions to student councils on the goals of fundraising, fundraising strategies, and specific tactics that could be implemented in communities where fundraising and charity are often foreign and misunderstood. Student councils carried these actions into their schools and neighborhoods, passing on the message to friends, families, and local business owners. Examples of tools utilized include: creating special charity boxes

sents for their children, and the payment of utility bills (gas and electricity). The project further benefited the entire community as it introduced the importance of charity work, as well as illustrating how small, individual contributions can make a meaningful improvement for the collective. Every family was very thankful for the efforts of their local student council members, who have pioneered what we hope, will become an annual holiday tradition in the region.

PROJECT DESIGN AND MANAGEMENT WORKSHOP HELPS ARMENIANS AND VOLUNTEERS PLAN FOR A BETTER FUTURE

PCV: Evelyn Helminen
Reporting Period: Winter 2011-12

From February 7 through 9, 2012, Peace Corps held a Project Design and Management (PDM) workshop in Tsaghkadzor, Armenia, a town located 50 kilometers north of Yerevan. First-year Peace Corps volunteers came from all over Armenia with their Armenian counterparts or community partners to learn about systematic project development.



The goal of the workshop was to give volunteers and counterparts a shared understanding of concepts, strategies, and skills for project design and management, in order to use them with their communities.

The group of 88 participants was divided into eight teams, keeping each volunteer with his/her Armenian counterpart. The instructors were in pairs: a second-year American volunteer who participated in PDM last year, along with a fluent English-speaking Armenian to help lead and to translate between English and Armenian.

The three days were jam-packed with learning sessions and activities intended to illustrate the need for, and usefulness of, project planning. In one exercise, participants were asked to name every asset in the room. The lists generated were astounding and the participants were surprised to see how much is available in outwardly simple surroundings. In another exercise, the Armenians and the Americans were separated, and told to put project planning steps in the order that they thought was most logical. In this exercise, they were able to see the cultural similarities and differences that both sides would have to face when working together on a project.

During the course of the workshop, the volunteer-counterpart pairs worked on a community project idea they had brought with them, applying the strategies they were taught. They created concrete goals and objectives, and looked at the feasibility of their project

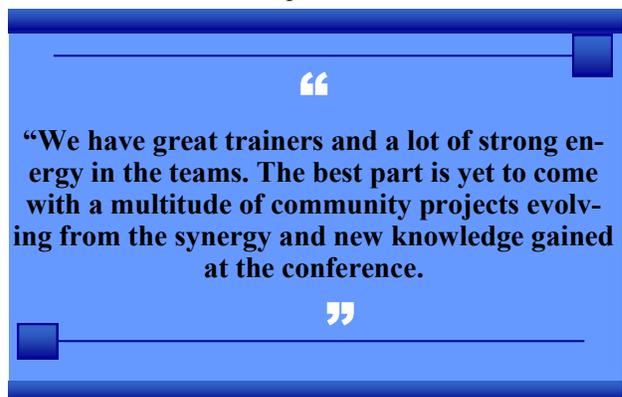
from a number of different perspectives. Some sample projects empowerment program, included a youth an English center, a sports complex, and an environmental awareness program.

Halfway through the second day, the 8 to 10 members of each group focused on one project, pretending as though they were applying for a grant to make the project come to realization. They created action plans, assigned plausible roles and responsibilities, came up with a budget, and thought of ways to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the project. This helped the participants see how much work goes into project planning.

At the end of the third day, each group presented its project to a panel of judges. The judges critiqued the projects based on eleven criteria. They were able to learn what kinds of things they needed to think about before starting a project. They also got feedback about what information was missing, and what they might need to focus more on, if they want to move the project forward once they get back to their community. By the end of the workshop, participants were able to:

1. Describe characteristics of successful projects and explain their expectations for their own project.
2. Develop a means of implementing a successful project through improved planning, communication, and monitoring
3. Work out the steps of project planning and develop a potential project plan for their community.
4. Develop a plan for how they will apply the skills and knowledge learned in the workshop and share them with others.

David Lillie, Director for Peace Corps Armenia, said about the PDM workshop,



Many others shared his sentiments, and returned home, ready to start working on new projects to better their communities.

PCV: Samuel Dolgin-Gardner
Reporting Period: Winter 2011-12
PCVs involved: Patricia Fecher

ENGLISH RESOURCE ROOM ROOM OF THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION (NIE)

It's one of the coldest days of the year in Artashat, the capital of Ararat Marz, and the skies outside are gray. But the English Resource Room of the National Institute of Education (NIE) is warm, brightly lit and cheerful, thanks to the efforts of PCV Pat Fecher (A18 TEFL) and her Armenian counterpart, Artashat NIE English Specialist Bela Kurghinyan. Thanks to funding from a Small Projects Assistance (SPA) Grant from USAID, Pat and Bella have brought in four computers and hundreds of books. They've also refurbished a conference room, where they hold seminars for 130 English teachers from throughout Ararat Marz.

"There's no other English language resource in Ararat Marz," explains Pat. "There's an American Corner in Kapan [in Syunik Marz], but before this project, there was no way for English Teachers to get additional books or resources. Teachers can come in for seminars and then borrow books." At seminars funded by the grant, teachers learned how to make and use visual aids in their classroom and how to find language-teaching resources online.



Captions for photos: Pat stands next to a bookshelf filled with books sent by her friends and family in America.

For Pat and Bella, it wasn't easy to write the grant. "We had to go all over Yerevan, running from store to store to get the best prices for computers," says Bella. Their first grant proposal was rejected, so they reworked it and applied again.

"For three months, we spent every day working on the grant." Luckily, the two share a strong bond. For Bella, Pat has become like a member of the family. Pat says, "When I came to Armenia, I thought this would be a professional relationship, but it's turned into a friendship."

"Pat is the best Peace Corps Volunteer in Armenia," says Bella.

"And Bella is the best counterpart," replies Pat.

“Teachers are so excited to come here now. They say, ‘Oh, it’s just like I’m in America.’”

PCV: Tom H Cyrs
Reporting Period: Winter 2011-12
PCVs Involved: Lizzie Noonan, Emily Yost

WORLD AIDS DAY POSTER CONTEST MUCH MORE THAN JUST A COMPETITION

Some of the most valuable work a Peace Corps Volunteer can do, at times, is a simple matter of spreading knowledge that is often taken for granted in places, such as America. Done in a creative way, this can help dispel misconceptions and myths held by those in the countries where the volunteers serve and help make the world a more enlightened place. During this year's World AIDS Day Poster Contest, PCVs in Armenia did just that.

At a judging held in Yerevan at the end of last fall, volunteers gathered together to view a total of 55 poster submissions, each designed by Armenian students of different age groups from various regions. Sitting in an auditorium, the judges went through the myriad Armenian teenagers' interpretations of the deadly and often stigmatized global disease, each displaying the student's individual understanding and impressions on the topic.

For the contest, which is held on an annual basis by PCVs in Armenia, no artistic restrictions are placed on the posters' designs, except that they be based loosely on the contest theme (this year "AIDS and the World").

According to PCV Lizzie Noonan, who helped organize this year's contest, the only other criteria for judging the posters were creativity and how much the students were able to express through their art.

Such designs showed a big step in understanding among youth in Armenia, a country where the spread of AIDS is fueled in part by migrant



workers who contract the disease in countries where there are greater employment opportunities, such as Russia, and unwittingly

transmit the disease to loved ones when they return home. Getting communities to acknowledge that the problem exists, as well as to see it in the broader scope of the world around Armenia, can be difficult to do.

"It was great to see Armenia being seen as part of the global AIDS picture and part of the problem, and therefore part of the solution, too," said Noonan.

Before the final judging in Yerevan, the volunteers who had students participating in the contest were encouraged to give brief lessons in their local schools on HIV/AIDS, how it is transmitted, and how it can be prevented. On her students' first day of working on their posters, the value of such a lesson was made quite clear to PCV Emily Yost, who works at a school in the town of Sisian, in Armenia's Syunik Region.

"They had drawn a lot of mosquitoes, a lot of sharing clothes and hair-brushes, and a lot of kissing," said Yost, who soon realized she'd need to give a lesson on HIV/AIDS for her students before they continued on the posters any further.

She halted their work, gathered educational movies and prepared a presentation, and then allowed them to continue only after the common misconceptions had been cleared up. After the lesson, many of her students ended up using their original, myth-inspired drawings as part of their final designs to show the misconceptions that are often associated with AIDS and then later to show the reality of AIDS and how it is actually transmitted.

The annual AIDS poster contest is a part of the Peace Corps Armenia HIV/AIDS Awareness Initiative. Several projects and seminars are conducted by the initiative annually, including a ToT (Training of Trainers) that will be held in late March of this year, during which volunteers and Armenian counterparts will learn together how to give HIV/AIDS seminars in their communities throughout Armenia.

“Some of the best ones included a map of Armenia, and so they were representing that HIV is present in Armenia,” said Noonan.

PCV: Erin Malewicki

Reporting Period: Winter 2011-12

PCVs Involved: Robyn Burrows, Hannah Wells

Third-Party Media Involvement: N/A

ESSAY AND POSTER CONTEST RAISES AWARENESS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN ARMENIA

The Peace Corps Gender and Development (GAD) Initiative and psychologist Sona Grigoryan co-organized this year's GAD Domestic Violence Awareness Essay and Poster Contest. The theme of this year's contest was "A World Without Violence." Boys and girls in 9th through 12th form, as well as first course university students, were invited to participate in either writing an essay or creating a poster that reflects this year's theme. There were two main goals for this contest. First, the contest acted as an incentive for Peace Corps volunteers to conduct domestic violence awareness seminars in their communities and then present information about the contest while the topic was still fresh in the audience's minds. The second goal was for Armenian youth to reflect on three questions: Can you imagine a world without violence? Is it possible to live in a society without violence? Why do people often resort to violence as a way to solve problems?

The contest was announced in late September to local organizations and Peace Corps volunteers in Yerevan and the regions. Over 50 submissions were collected, of which many were very impressive; it was clear that students dedicated a lot of

thought and effort into their submissions. Grigoryan, along with Peace Corps volunteers Robyn Burrows and Hannah Wells, and Peace Corps regional manager Liana Mikayelyan were judges for the contest. They chose 1st, 2nd and 3rd place winners for the essays and posters as well as an honorable mention for the posters. The winners were from Sevan, Kapan, villages near Goris and Sisian, and one winner was from the Abovyan Juvenile Detention Facility.

An awards ceremony was held in early December at the Essence Psychological Center in Yerevan. Six of the seven winners attended the ceremony and were awarded prizes and certificates. During the ceremony, the posters were displayed and students read their winning essays aloud. The awards ceremony got very emotional during the essay reading, bringing some of the audience members to tears. Burrows says, "Poster and essay contests are a great medium in which you can engage Armenian students to reflect creatively on serious issues such as domestic violence and HIV/AIDS." She thinks this contest will continue as long as the GAD initiative is still active, however, next year's contest theme will be different.

Peace Corps' GAD Initiative has been running this type of contest for many years now, but this is the first year working with Grigoryan. Burrows decided to work with Grigoryan on this contest after collaborating on the Girls Leading Our World (GLOW) camp this past summer. It was a very successful partnership that they hope continues for a long time for GAD.



PCV: Austin Sherwindt
Reporting Period: Winter 2011-12
Third-Party Media Involvement: None

VOLUNTEERS LEAD SPELLING BEES IN SYUNIK MARZ



SYUNIK MARZ, ARMENIA (November / December 2011) – During the final weeks of autumn, Armenian youth from across Syunik marz traveled and competed in local English spelling competitions in the towns of Sisian, Goris, Kapan, and Meghri. Each year, Peace Corps Volunteers from the Syunik region organize competitions for youth in the 7th – 12th forms to practice and hone their English spelling skills. This is one of the few events each year that allow Armenian children to demonstrate their knowledge of the English language. In total, 168 Armenian children from 33 different communities participated in the local spelling bees.

Similar to the contests organized in American schools, students from each grade are given a list of words to study and memorize. During the competition, the students take turns spelling words from the list. If spelled correctly, the student moves on to the next round; if not, they are expelled from the competition. From the local contests organized in Syunik's main towns, the first- and second-place students of each form – 48 children in total – will advance to a regional event held during the spring.

During the events, Peace Corps Volunteers were recruited to serve as judges and recorders, and to help with registration and other logistics. In total, 26 volunteers collaborated to organize and implement these four events. Certificates of participation and small prizes were donated by the British Council and the American Councils for the first, second, and third place winners. Matt Oakley, the volunteer who organized the Kapan event, shared the following, “I was very pleased by the village turnout and how many new schools we were able to include this year. The competition was very successful in my eyes, which was confirmed by the positive feedback from parents, teachers, and school directors.

PCV: Kellianne Lauer
Reporting Period: Winter 2012
PCVs involved: Matthew Forgue, Evelyn Helminen, Brian Bohkart
Third-Party Media Involvement: None

GRAPHIC DESIGN WORKSHOP EMPOWERS LOCAL YOUTH

Vanadzor, Armenia (January 2012) – A group of young adults gathered at Peace Dialogue NGO to participate in a graphic design workshop. The participants of the workshop all work with local youth groups created by Peace Dialogue's “Let's See, Let's Choose, Let's Change” project. The workshop was organized by Peace Corps Volunteer, Matthew Forgue who currently works with Peace Dialogue NGO. Leaders of the workshop itself were Peace Corps Volunteers, Brian Bokhart and Evelyn Helminen who travelled from the towns of Talin and Vardenis.

The workshop was conducted over three days in January and taught design principles for printed materials. Adobe Photoshop and InDesign were taught along with basic design concepts. As part of the workshop, participants were asked to design their own printed item. Participants chose to design brochures, business cards, and calendars.

Not only did this PCV-led workshop teach technical skills concerning print design, its aim was also to empower youth and encourage social expression. By teaching participants print design principles, Peace Corps volunteers were able to transfer skills that will allow the participants to make their own voices better heard in society. This directly supports Peace Dialogue's aim to create a culture of youth who feel responsible for their role and are empowered to take action with regard to the peaceful resolution of conflicts.

Helminen and Bokhart were pleased to see participants take a keen interest in the programs and design principles and to work hard throughout the workshop. The success of this workshop has made Helminen and Bokhart more interested in holding workshops of this kind throughout Armenia. Forgue and Peace Dialogue also considered the workshop successful and are excited to see the participants put their skills to work..



PCV: Evelyn Helmine

PCV: Kellianne Lauer

Reporting Period: Winter 2011-12

PCVs involved: Kellianne Lauer, Judy Smith

Third-Party Media Involvement: None

ARMENIAN STUDENTS STUDY MARTIN LUTHER KING JUNIOR

Dilijan, Armenia (January 2012)—As Martin Luther King Day was being celebrated in the United States on January 15, Armenian students from Dilijan’s School Number Four returned to school from Winter break and spent the week learning about Martin Luther King Jr. and the civil rights movement of the 1960s.

The students’ first lesson was one about discrimination and segregation. As sixth, seventh, and eighth graders entered their English lessons, they were all handed colored cards and told to find a place to sit. Those holding green cards were allowed to sit in chairs placed in the front of the room marked off by signs stating “Greens Only.” The rest of the students holding blue, red and yellow cards were told to find places to stand or sit in the back of the room. After the kids were settled they discussed whether or not these rules were fair and what might be the possible reasons behind the rules. As the discussion concluded, students were informed that this activity was done to highlight the treatment of African Americans in the early 1900s.



After the initial activity, the students watched a slideshow of pictures connected with segregation in American during the 1950s and 1960s. The pictures depicted segregated water fountains, bathrooms, pools, buses, and schools. The slideshow also depicted various actions taken during the civil rights movement including sit-ins, marches and other protests. Students discussed the pictures that they saw with English teacher, Marine Asatryan and Peace Corps Volunteer, Kellianne Lauer. Lauer and Asatryan also led the students in a discussion about segregation and discrimination in Armenian. Students were very eager to discuss the topics and were curious about the treatment of African Americans before and during the Civil Rights Movement. They also asked many questions about race relations in the United States today.

Judy Smith, another Peace Corps Volunteer living in Dilijan, who lived in Memphis during the 1960s, came to School Number Four to share stories with the students of what Memphis was like during the Civil Rights Movement. She spoke, as well, about the events leading up to and the assassination of Martin Luther King and the National Civil Rights Museum that was established at the Lorraine Motel where King was shot.

After the activities and discussions, students heard an excerpt from Martin Luther King Jr.’s famous “I have a Dream” speech and translated his words into Armenian. Students were asked to think of their own dreams that they have for Armenia and Armenians. Over the next week, the students recorded their dreams in both English and Armenian. Their dreams were compiled into a short video which can soon be found on School Number Four’s blog. The video will be shared with the National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis, Tennessee.

Peace Corps Volunteers Smith and Lauer, and English teacher Asatryan, were happy to see students take such an interest in an important issue and were very pleased with the students’ reflections while creating their own “Dream” speeches. For more information about other activities at Dilijan School Number Four visit their website: <http://dilijan4.blogspot.com/>

PCV: Evelyn Helminen

Reporting Period: Winter 2011-12

PCVs Involved: Matthew Crowley-Miano, Alex Lord, Maggie Woznicki, and Kevin Crookshank

DANCE CAMP HELD IN VARDENIS

On December 8 through 10, 2011, a dance camp was held at the YMCA in Vardenis, Armenia, a town on the Southeast side of Lake Sevan. The camp was put on by three Peace Corps volunteers from different parts of Armenia: Matthew Crowley-Miano (Idjevan), Alex Lord (Sisian), and Maggie Woznicki (Sevan), and was hosted by volunteer Kevin Crookshank (Vardenis).



* Photo credit to John Hart, Peace Corps volunteer, Berd

Most of the participants were members of the YMCA Ten-Sing club. Ten-Sing stands for “Teenagers Singing,” and, in Vardenis, is composed of 15 to 20 boys and girls from ages 13 to 17, who love to sing and dance. There are Ten-Sing groups at YMCAs all over Armenia.

The camp lasted three days. Each day started out with stretching and then a warm-up circle of dancing to get everyone ready for the day’s dancing instruction.

Each day was broken up into two parts. In the first part, Crowley-Miano taught b-boying, which is also known as breakdancing. None of the students had done this type of dancing before, and were hesitant at first, because in the moves, it looked difficult. But, according to Crowley-Miano, “If you practice and work hard, anyone can do this.” And that proved to

be the case, as one by one, they got better at the different elements of the dance.

During the second part of each day, Lord and Woznicki taught a dance routine they had choreographed to the song *DJ Got Us Falling in Love Again*, by Usher Ft. Pitbull. They taught the routine in eight-count increments. By the end of the three days, the participants had the dance down fairly well.

Stepan Sargsyan, a local Vardenis boy who participated in the camp, but was not a Ten-Sing member, said, “I am very grateful to you because I couldn’t dance at all, at first, and now I can dance a little.”

Everyone at the camp had a great time, and they hope for the opportunity to do it again in the fu-

INITIATIVES:

Peace Corps Volunteers work on a variety of initiatives in Armenia:

HIV/AIDS EDUCATION

Volunteers and their counterparts raise HIV/AIDS awareness in the communities through various activities, developing cultural-sensitive curriculum, and collaborating with national and international organizations on HIV/AIDS education and prevention.

GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT

Volunteers train community and NGO members on gender analysis and organize Girls Leading Our World and Boys’ Leadership camps.

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Volunteers organize various youth camps & other activities with local partners for environmental awareness, healthy lifestyles, sports, leadership, and career development.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES

Volunteers train Armenian counterparts and students in using IT and have established internet access sites and computer centers.

This journal is not intended to cover all volunteer activities, and merely represents a snapshot of Peace Corps Armenia's in-country programs and activities.

For more information about Peace Corps Armenia, its activities, its volunteers, its programs or related information, please contact Mariam Arzumanyan at 010-513.511.

Graphic design services provided by Mariam Arzumanyan, PR Coordinator and PCV Evelyn Helminen

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Photos are provide by Peace Corps Volunteers



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