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Environmental Health Officer with a love for nature



Tanja Matijevic - Environmental Health Officer, Greece

03 5S Approach

How has COVID-19 impacted your work?

COVID-19 has been added a lot of psychological pressure to our work environment. With the everyday challenges that we are already facing in Moria camp, COVID-19 was last thing that we needed.

We are working to solve the biggest issues that the camp is facing, and we are also implementing activities to achieve a basic level of hygiene awareness through modeling and education. We are working closely with the community. However, with COVID-19, we must develop a reliable remote work strategy, which involves developing mutual trust between us and the beneficiaries.

How are you coping with the stress of COVID-19?

I tell myself that we need to be strong and deal with situation.

Practicing all the safety precautionary measures and developing a remote work system, I feel certain of the safe continuity of our work.

What's a typical day like for you?

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What's your favorite part of your job?

My favorite part is the educational focus with children of any age.

I believe that education is something that stays forever with them and no one can take it from them. Raising their awareness and teaching them best practices and life values is the most important job that we have to do.

What is your greatest achievement/thing you are most proud from your work at the IRC?

The river clean-up that happened on June 26, where 160 resident volunteers, five international volunteers and ten NGO representatives worked for six hours to remove 31,20 kg of general waste and 520 kg of recyclable waste.

This river passes through a camp 500 meters in a length, then through the nearby village, before finally meeting the sea. Through our initiative, other organizations followed our vision, and we finished the clean-up safely and successfully.

It took me a long time to organize it since it was first time that a river clean-up happened at such a scale. However, I had great support from the whole IRC.

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It took me a long time to organize it since it was first time that a river clean-up happened at such a scale. However, I had great support from the whole IRC team in Lesvos, especially Environmental Health (EH) Assistant, Mohammad Kabbani, without whose help I could not have done it.

Local authorities supported the activity by providing the necessary permissions and trucks for waste transportation. Overall, it had a huge positive effect on the environment, camp community, local host community and the IRC's reputation.

What would you like your colleagues to know about your work?

Our EH assistant and I are working hard to implement waste management systems from zero in parts of Moria camp, where the IRC is placing a focus. Our basic activities are:

- We connected local authorities with our volunteer groups to work together every day on waste collection. This includes both general waste and recyclable waste.
- We implement on-the-spot separation of waste in the camp



- We implement a "recycling promotion" activity every day, where volunteers collect only recyclable waste from the communities and also directly clean the living areas. Through this activity, they are sending verbal and non-verbal messages to the community and modeling a best practice. Volunteers cooperate with the local recycling company on this activity.
- We implement "massive clean-ups" two times per week, where volunteers collect all the waste from living areas and separate them into two different bags – general and recycling waste bags
- We implement educational sessions for children and adults two times per week in the local camp school
- We implement a distribution system for bags for general waste and bags for recyclable waste so that separation starts from the first waste producers – camp residents

Do you have any hobbies or favorite pastimes outside of work?

I am scuba diving instructor, so I like to spend my time teaching others how to scuba dive. I am also an environmentalist. I like to be involved in environmental



Who's been your favorite mentor?

My first mentor was my professor and yoga instructor, Prof. Dr. Ante Vujic. After him, Nikola Tesla was an inspiration for me as a scientist and visionary. Now, I believe that everybody with whom we share living, working, personal development and entertainment space becomes our mentor in some way.

What's your favorite book?

"Tesla, Portrait Among Masks" by Vladimir Pisto, "Ace of Hart" by Violeta M. Bagia, and "High Performance Habits" by Brendon Burchard.

What is your favorite quote?

"Nature loves courage. You make the commitment and nature will respond to that commitment by removing impossible obstacles. Dream the impossible dream and the world will not grind you under, it will lift you up. This is the trick. This is what all these teachers and philosophers who really counted, who really touched the alchemical gold, this is what they understood. This is the shamanic dance in the waterfall. This is how magic is done. By hurling yourself into the

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dance in the waterfall. This is how magic is done. By hurling yourself into the abyss and discovering it's a feather bed." - Terence McKenna

Where would you go if you won a "dream vacation"?

Uf, difficult to choose one. So, here are a few – the mountains of Japan, North Mongolia, and the Andes in Peru.

