



PEACE
CORPS

Bulgaria HOST COUNTRY IMPACT STUDY

Purpose

In 2008, the Peace Corps launched a series of studies to determine the impact of Volunteers in meeting two of the agency's three goals: building local capacity and promoting a better understanding of Americans among local people in host countries. These Host Country Impact Studies are unique in providing feedback from the people who lived and worked with Peace Corps Volunteers. A team of Bulgarian researchers conducted this study in the summer of 2009, interviewing 98 respondents in 23 diverse communities. The Peace Corps Office of Strategic Information, Research, and Planning developed the methods and protocols, trained the local researchers, and produced a series of reports from this and other Host Country Impact Studies.

Study Focus: English Language Education Project in Bulgaria

As of 2011, 1,294 Volunteers have served in Bulgaria since the Peace Corps opened in 1991. The goal of the English Language education project is to increase English language proficiency in Bulgaria. The project provides Bulgarian schools with English language instructors, educational materials, and extracurricular activities designed to address community needs. Bulgaria's program will come to a close in 2013, after 23 years of building successful community partnerships.

Peace Corps Goal One

"To help the people of interested countries in meeting their need for trained men and women."

Findings

Improved English Language and educational services:

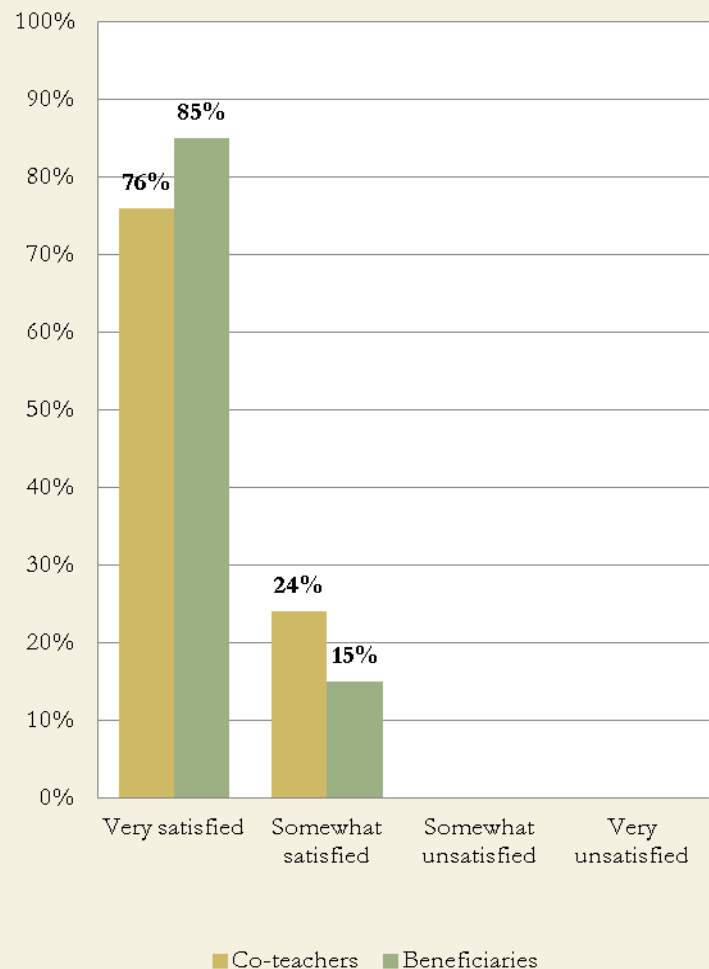
- 97 percent of co-teachers and beneficiaries (students, teachers, and members of school and local administrations) reported improvements in English language fluency among students.
- 91 percent of co-teachers and beneficiaries reported an increase in the ability of schools to deliver high-quality English instruction.
- More than 80 percent of co-teachers and beneficiaries reported they improved their own capacity to mobilize resources and identify and address local problems.

Beneficiary: *"I use English all the time. I have to read different things in English; I help the kids with lessons. I started to communicate better with different people."*

Sustainability:

- 90 percent of co-teachers reported at least weekly use of the professional skills developed through the project after the Volunteer's departure.
- 74 percent of co-teachers and 72 percent of beneficiaries reported that positive changes in the community were either completely or largely maintained after the departure of the Volunteer.

Satisfaction with Changes Resulting from Peace Corps Projects





Peace Corps Goal Two

“To help promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of the people served.”

Findings

Before interacting with Volunteers:

- 92 percent of project partners and beneficiaries had learned about Americans from television and movies.
- Bulgarian respondents described Americans as friendly, open-minded, hardworking, positive, and tolerant.
- They also described them as cold, narrow-minded, workaholics, and rich.

Beneficiary: *“I thought they were workaholics who don't know how to have fun or entertain themselves, and that they were cold people.”*

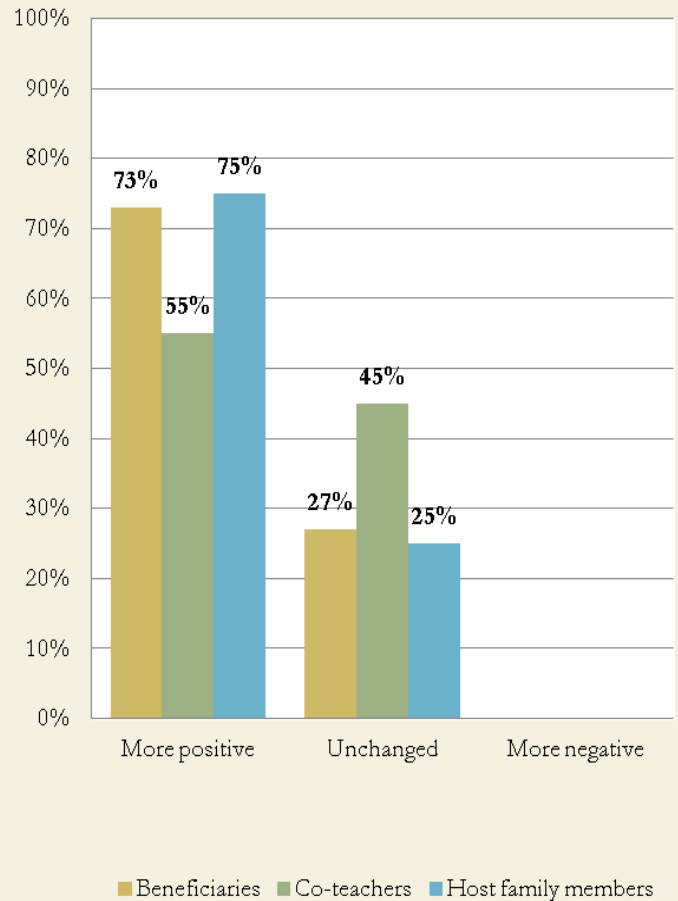
After interacting with Volunteers:

- 94 percent of co-teachers and beneficiaries said they had either a thorough or moderate understanding of Americans.
- Bulgarian respondents described Americans as intelligent, well-educated, reliable, hardworking, outgoing, and helpful.
- They also described them as “sloppy” and “careless in appearance” for a teacher.

Beneficiary: *“My opinion of them changed... I think they are warm and sincere, not workaholics and cold.”*

Co-teacher: *“The focus of the Volunteers is to teach English, mainly at the school, but our Volunteer did more than this; she changed our lives.”*

Opinion of Americans After Interacting with Volunteers



Overall, participants improved their English language skills and teachers improved their access to teaching resources. Teachers continue to use professional skills learned from the Volunteer, and almost all participants had a more positive opinion of Americans.