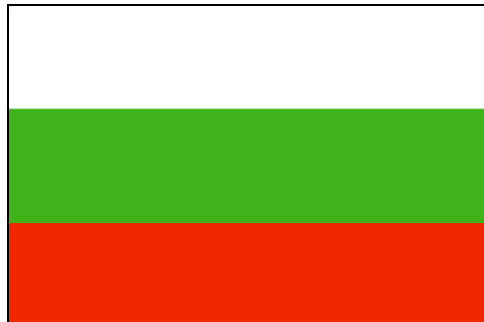




*Office of Strategic Information,  
Research and Planning*

## **Host Country Impact Study Bulgaria**



**Final Report prepared by the Office of Strategic Information,  
Research and Planning**



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>LIST OF TABLES .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>ACRONYMS AND DEFINITIONS.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>8</b>
Introduction .....	8
Purpose of the Host Country Impact Studies .....	8
Evaluation Methodology .....	8
Project Design and Purpose.....	9
Evaluation Findings.....	9
<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>12</b>
Background .....	12
The History of the Peace Corps/Bulgaria Education Project .....	13
Purpose of the Host Country Impact Studies .....	13
Evaluation Methodology .....	14
How Will the Information be Used? .....	15
<b>CHAPTER 2: PROJECT DESIGN AND PURPOSE .....</b>	<b>17</b>
Sector Overview .....	17
<b>CHAPTER 3: GOAL ONE FINDINGS.....</b>	<b>19</b>
Did Peace Corps Projects Help Project Partners Meet Skill and Capacity Building Needs? .....	19
Findings on Individual Changes.....	23
How Did Skills Transfer Occur? .....	29
Some beneficiaries noted that some changes that depended upon the Volunteer’s presence, such as celebrating Halloween, or maintaining a level of excitement because of the newness of having a Peace Corps Volunteer, were not sustained when the Volunteer left.....	32
Overall HCN Satisfaction.....	33
Support and Barriers to Project Performance.....	37
Comparing Changes in Secondary Education Project Communities and Matched Comparison Group Communities .....	40
Lessons Learned Regarding Goal 1 Performance .....	46
<b>CHAPTER 4: GOAL TWO FINDINGS.....</b>	<b>47</b>
How Did Bulgarians Acquire Information About Americans Prior to Interacting With a Volunteer(s)? .....	47
What Were Respondents’ Opinions About Americans Prior to Interacting With a Volunteer?. ..	49
To What Extent Did Respondents Have Experience With the Peace Corps and Volunteers?....	53
Changes in HCNs’ Understanding of Americans After Knowing a Volunteer .....	56
Findings on What Bulgarians Learned About Americans from Volunteers .....	61
Lessons Learned Regarding Goal 2 Performance .....	63
<b>CONCLUSIONS .....</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>APPENDIX 1: METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>66</b>

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Number and Type of Host Country Nationals Interviewed in Bulgaria.....	15
Table 2: Description of Study Participants .....	67
Table 3: Summary of Interview Questions by Respondent Type .....	67

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Overview of the Theory of Change for the Education Project in Bulgaria.....	18
Figure 2: Percentage of Counterparts and Beneficiaries that Rated the Change as At Least Somewhat Better: Community/School Level (n=56 beneficiaries and 22 counterparts) .....	20
Figure 3: Number of Stakeholders that Rated the Change as At Least Somewhat Better: Community/School Level (n=5) .....	21
Figure 4: Ways Communities and Schools Changed Since the Start of the Peace Corps Project: Bulgaria (n=290 changes) .....	23
Figure 5: Number of Years Counterparts Have Worked in the Field: Bulgaria (n=22) .....	24
Figure 6: Percentage of Counterparts and Beneficiaries that Rated the Change as At Least Somewhat Better: Individual Level .....	25
Figure 7: Ways Counterparts and Beneficiaries Changed Since the Start of the Peace Corps' Project: Bulgaria (n=194 changes) .....	26
Figure 8: Frequency with Which Counterparts and Beneficiaries Report Using Skills Learned Through the Peace Corps' Project: Bulgaria .....	27
Figure 9: Counterpart Training: Bulgaria (n=20) .....	29
Figure 10: Technical Training Received: Bulgaria (n=20).....	30
Figure 11: Usefulness of Training for Project Success, Technical Skills, and Project Sustainability: Bulgaria.....	31
Figure 12: Extent to Which Projects were Sustained After Volunteer Departure: Bulgaria (n=70) .....	32
Figure 13: Counterpart and Beneficiary Satisfaction with Project Outcomes: Bulgaria (n=75)..	33
Figure 14: Counterpart Rating of Local Capacity Building: Bulgaria (n=21).....	35
Figure 15: Factors Counterparts and Beneficiaries Credited with Project Success: Bulgaria (n=76).....	37
Figure 16: Barriers to Project Sustainability Among Counterparts and Beneficiaries: Bulgaria (n=78) .....	39
Figure 17: Length of time in the Education Field: Project Group Compared to Comparison Group (n=27).....	41
Figure 18: Respondent Rating of Local Ability to Mobilize Local and Non-local Resources: Project Group Compared to Comparison Group (n=88) .....	42
Figure 19: Respondent Rating of the Amount and Quality of Programming by Groups, Organizations or Institutions: Project Group Compared to Comparison Group (n=88).....	43
Figure 20: Satisfaction with Changes in the School Project Group Compared to Comparison Group (n=85) .....	44
Figure 21: Barriers to Improving English Language Program: Project Group Compared to Comparison Group (n=88).....	45

Figure 22: Counterpart and Beneficiary Sources of Information about Americans Prior to Interacting with a Volunteer: Bulgaria (n=78).....	47
Figure 23: Host Family Member Sources of Information About Americans Prior to Interacting with a Volunteer: Bulgaria (n=5).....	48
Figure 24: Counterpart and Beneficiary Levels of Understanding of Americans Before Interaction: Bulgaria (n=78) .....	49
Figure 25: Host Family Member Level of Understanding of Americans Before Interaction: Bulgaria (n=5).....	50
Figure 26: Counterpart and Beneficiary Opinions of Americans Before Interaction: Bulgaria (n=78).....	51
Figure 27: Host Family Member Opinion of Americans Before Interaction (n=5).....	52
Figure 28: Activities That Host Family Members Shared with Volunteers: Bulgaria (n=5).....	54
Figure 29: Host Family Rating of their Relationship with the Volunteer: Bulgaria (n=5).....	55
Figure 30: Frequency of Volunteer Interaction with Counterparts and Beneficiaries: Bulgaria (n=78).....	56
Figure 31: Counterpart and Beneficiaries' Change in Level of Understanding of Americans after Contact with Volunteers: Bulgaria (n=78).....	57
Figure 32: Counterparts' and Beneficiaries' Change in Opinion of Americans After Contact with Volunteers: Bulgaria (n=78) .....	59
Figure 33: Host Family Members' Change in Opinion of Americans After Contact with Volunteers: Bulgaria (n=4) .....	60
Figure 34: What Host Country Nationals Report Learning from Volunteers: Bulgaria (n=5).....	61

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS<sup>1</sup>

Several people at Peace Corps/headquarters were instrumental in the work of the impact evaluation series. Three regional program and training advisers, Barbara Brown, Michael McCabe, and Margaret McLaughlin, shepherded the studies from initial concept to implementation in their regions. Valuable support and input also came from Bulgaria Country Desk Officer Rebecca Gross.

The interest and support from Peace Corps' staff in the countries where the research was conducted were critical in the endeavor. Our sincere appreciation is extended to Country Director Lesley Duncan, Administrative Officer Jason Bennett, Youth Development Project Manager Zhana Zagorova, and Education Project Program Assistant Chavdar Peinirdjiev.

The success of the studies is ultimately due to the work of the local research team headed by Senior Researcher Michele Fedor. Her team skillfully encouraged the partners<sup>2</sup> of Peace Corps Volunteers to share their experiences and perspectives.

---

<sup>1</sup> Although these studies were a team effort by all members of the OSIRP staff, we would like to recognize Susan Jenkins for her role as the study lead and the significant support provided by OSIRP's Chief of Evaluation, Janet Kerley. John Bryan copyedited and proofread the paper and OSIRP Director Cathryn L. Thorup reviewed and made substantive edits to the paper.

<sup>2</sup> Partners include any individuals who may have lived or worked with a Peace Corps Volunteer.

# ACRONYMS AND DEFINITIONS

## Acronyms

HCN	Host Country National
OMB	Office of Management and Budget
OSIRP	Office of Strategic Information, Research and Planning
PC/B	Peace Corps/Bulgaria
PCV	Peace Corps Volunteer
TEFL	Teaching English as a Foreign Language

## Definitions

Beneficiaries	Individuals who receive assistance and help from the project; the people that the project is primarily designed to advantage
Counterparts/Project partners	Individuals who work with Peace Corps Volunteers; Volunteers may work with multiple partners and counterparts during their service. Project partners also benefit from the projects, but when they are paired with Volunteers in a professional relationship or based on their position in an organization or community (e.g., community leader), they are considered counterparts or project partners
Host family members	Families with whom a Volunteer lived during all or part of his/her training and/or service
Project stakeholders <sup>3</sup>	Host country agency sponsors and partners

---

<sup>3</sup> This definition, while narrower than the one commonly used in the development field, was taken from the indicator data sheet developed for Peace Corps Performance Indicator 1.1.1b.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Introduction

In 2008, the Peace Corps launched a series of studies to determine the impact of its Volunteers on two of the agency's three goals: building local capacity and promoting a better understanding of Americans among host country nationals (HCNs). The Peace Corps conducts an annual survey that captures the perspective of currently serving Volunteers.<sup>4</sup> While providing critical insight into the Volunteer experience, the survey can only address one side of the Peace Corps' story. The agency's host country impact studies are unique for their focus on learning about Peace Corps' impact directly from host country nationals who lived and worked with the Volunteers.

This report presents the findings from the study conducted in Bulgaria during June and July of 2009. The focus of the research was the Education Project.

## Purpose of the Host Country Impact Studies

Bulgaria's Host Country Impact Study was initiated to assess the degree to which the Peace Corps is able to contribute to the country's need to develop English language skills and participatory teaching capacities, as well as to promote a better understanding of Americans among host country nationals. The study would provide Peace Corps with a better understanding of the Education Project and identify areas for improvement.

The major research questions addressed in the study are:

- Did skills transfer and capacity building occur?
- What skills were transferred to organizations/communities and individuals as a result of Volunteers' work?
- Were the skills and capacities sustained past the end of the project?
- How satisfied were HCNs with the project work?
- What did HCNs learn about Americans?
- Did HCNs report that their opinions of Americans had changed after interacting with the Peace Corps and Peace Corps Volunteers (PCVs)?

## Evaluation Methodology

This evaluation report is based on data provided by counterparts, beneficiaries, and stakeholders of the Education Project including:

- 22 Counterparts/project partners
- 56 Beneficiaries
- 5 Host family members

---

<sup>4</sup>Peace Corps surveyed Volunteers periodically from 1973 to 2002, when a biennial survey was instituted. The survey became an annual survey in 2009 to meet agency reporting requirements.



## *EXECUTIVE SUMMARY*

- 5 Stakeholders
- 10 Comparison Group respondents

In addition to interviewing HCNs who interacted with PCVs, the research team in Bulgaria also conducted interviews with teachers or school directors in sites that had applied for, but not been assigned a Volunteer. Ten teachers and school directors were interviewed in five comparison communities. Their responses were compared to those from the 22 counterparts and 56 beneficiaries who had worked with PCVs in the Education Project.

Interviews were conducted from June 2, 2009 to July 31, 2009 (see Appendix 1 for a full description of the research methodology).

### **Project Design and Purpose**

In 1991, Peace Corps/Bulgaria launched its English Language Education Project based on a Memorandum of Understanding with the Bulgarian government. Bulgaria's engagement with European and world markets, and its entry into the European Union, necessitated an increase in the number of English speaking professionals. Expanding English language fluency within the country became a priority for the government (Ministry of Education and Science), the business community, and civil society.

The Peace Corps' Education Project addresses needs in the following areas:

- English language instructors
- Development and enhancement of educational materials
- Teacher-to-teacher skills transfer between native-speaking educators and Bulgarian English teachers
- Extra-curricular activities for students to strengthen their capacity and motivation to initiate outreach projects that address community needs, especially with disadvantaged or overlooked peoples

### **Evaluation Findings**

#### **Goal 1 Findings**

##### **Improved English Language Achieved**

- 97% of counterparts and beneficiaries, as well as four of five stakeholders, reported improvements in English language fluency among students
- 91% of counterparts and beneficiaries, and three of five stakeholders, reported an increase in the ability of schools to deliver high-quality English language instruction

##### **Educational Services Improved**

- New teaching methods were implemented

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- A frequently mentioned change was the acquisition of new resources (e.g., books, computers, white boards)

### **Individual Capacity was Built**

- More than 80% of counterparts and beneficiaries reported improvements in their own English language ability, their capacity to mobilize local resources, and their ability to identify and address local problems
- The most frequently mentioned individual-level change among beneficiaries was becoming more open-minded and/or culturally aware, and among counterparts it was learning specific skills

### **Capacity Building was Sustained**

- 90% of counterparts reported at least weekly use of the professional skills developed through the project after the Volunteer's departure, with more than 60% reporting daily use of those skills
- 92% of respondents reported that project-related changes were maintained at the 50 percent level or higher after the departure of the Volunteer
- 29% of respondents said that changes were maintained at the 100% level
- All of the respondents said that the project was at least somewhat effective in building English language skills and in improving the ability of schools to provide high-quality English language instruction

### **Satisfaction with Peace Corps' Work**

- All of the respondents were at least somewhat satisfied with the Peace Corps' work; 83% reported being very satisfied. All five stakeholders reported being very satisfied

### **Similarities and Differences between the Comparison Group and the Peace Corps Volunteer Project Group**

- A major difference was observed between the two groups in terms of satisfaction with the changes that had occurred in their schools' English language programs. The comparison group described a series of unmet needs in their schools' English language program: "different teaching methods and practices. The classes must be more interactive and the students need more exercises with listening and speaking"
- The respondents who had worked with Volunteers described improvements in the schools' ability to deliver a quality English Language program, in teachers' skills and use of new methods, and teachers' improved English language fluency (Figures 2 and 4)
- Respondents from the communities where Peace Corps Volunteers served were more likely to report being very satisfied (83%) with their schools' English language programs during the five year period studied than were respondents from the comparison communities that did not receive Volunteers (30%)
- Peace Corps Volunteer project group members most frequently mentioned that the capacity of local community members to mobilize resources had improved somewhat

## *EXECUTIVE SUMMARY*

over the five year period. Comparison group members were more likely to report that their capacity had stayed the same (Figure 18)

- Respondents from the comparison group and Peace Corps Volunteer Group were similar in educational level and experience

### **Factors Contributing to the Project Success**

- The most frequently mentioned factor in the success of projects was the hands-on work of the Volunteer

### **Barriers to Project Success**

- A lack of funding was the most frequently mentioned barrier to project success, but was mentioned by only 26% of respondents

## **Goal 2 Findings**

### **HCNs Developed More Positive Opinions of Americans**

- 64% of respondents reported having limited to no understanding of Americans before interacting with Peace Corps Volunteers
- After interacting with Volunteers, 94% of counterparts and beneficiaries reported having a moderate or thorough understanding of Americans
- 67% of counterparts and beneficiaries, and three of four host family members, reported more positive views of Americans after interacting with Volunteers

# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

## Background

The Peace Corps traces its roots and mission to 1960, when then-Senator John F. Kennedy challenged students at the University of Michigan to serve their country in the cause of peace by living and working in developing countries. From that inspiration grew an agency of the federal government devoted to world peace and friendship.

By the end of 1961, Peace Corps Volunteers were serving in seven countries. Since then, more than 200,000 men and women have served in 139 countries. Peace Corps activities cover issues ranging from education to work in the areas of health and HIV/AIDS to business development . Peace Corps Volunteers continue to help countless individuals who want to build a better life for themselves, their children, and their communities.

In carrying out the agency's three core goals, Peace Corps Volunteers make a difference by building local capacity and promoting a better understanding of Americans among the host country nationals. A major contribution of Peace Corps Volunteers, who live in the communities where they work, stems from their ability to deliver technical interventions directly to beneficiaries living in rural areas that lack sufficient local capacity. Volunteers operate from a development principle that promotes sustainable projects and strategies.

The interdependence of Goal 1 and Goal 2 is central to the Peace Corps experience, as HCNs develop relationships with Volunteers who communicate in the local language, share everyday experiences, and work collaboratively.

The Peace Corps conducts an annual survey of currently serving Volunteers;<sup>5</sup> however, it tells only one side of the Peace Corps' story. In 2008, the Peace Corps began a series of studies to better assess the impact of its Volunteers. These studies are unique for their focus on learning about the Peace Corps' impact directly from the host country nationals who lived and worked with Volunteers.

### Peace Corps' Core Goals

**Goal 1-** To help the people of interested countries in meeting their need for trained men and women.

**Goal 2-** To help promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of the peoples served.

**Goal 3-** To help promote a better understanding of other people on the part of Americans.

---

<sup>5</sup>Peace Corps surveyed Volunteers periodically from 1973 to 2002 when a biennial survey was instituted. The survey became an annual survey in 2009 to meet agency reporting requirements.

## **The History of the Peace Corps/Bulgaria Education Project**

In 1991, Peace Corps/Bulgaria launched its English Language Education Project based on a Memorandum of Understanding with the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science. Bulgaria's growing engagement with European and world markets, and its entry into the European Union in 2007, necessitated an increase in the number of English-speaking professionals. Thus, expanding English language fluency within the country became a priority for the government (Ministry of Education and Science), the business community, and civil society.

The first group of 26 Volunteers arrived in country to teach English at secondary schools and universities. Since that time, 301 *Teaching English as a Foreign Language* (TEFL) Volunteers have served as teachers in 211 Bulgarian schools. In response to Bulgaria's expressed needs, Volunteers now work in English language education, youth development, and community and organizational development. As of September 2008, there were 71 TEFL Volunteers serving in 71 schools in 63 communities teaching approximately 10,000 students. Of these, 33 Volunteers serve in primary schools and 38 in secondary schools.

The Peace Corps' Education Project addresses needs in the following areas:

- English language instructors
- Development and enhancement of educational materials
- Teacher-to-teacher skills transfer between native-speaking educators and Bulgarian English teachers
- Extra-curricular activities for students to strengthen their capacity and motivation to initiate outreach projects that address community needs, especially with disadvantaged or underserved peoples

## **Purpose of the Host Country Impact Studies**

This report presents the findings from the impact evaluation conducted in Bulgaria during June and July of 2009. The project studied was the Education Project.

The impact study documents the HCN perspective on the impact of Peace Corps Volunteers on skills transfer to and capacity building of host country counterparts and community members, and on changes in host country nationals' understanding of Americans.

The major research questions addressed in the study are:

- Did skills transfer and capacity building occur?
- What skills were transferred to organizations/communities and individuals as a result of Volunteers' work?
- Were the skills and capacities sustained past the end of the project?
- How satisfied were HCNs with the project work?
- What did HCNs learn about Americans?

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

- Did HCNs report that their opinions of Americans had changed after interacting with the Peace Corps and Peace Corps Volunteers?

The information gathered through this research will help Peace Corps to answer questions about the degree to which the agency is able—across posts, sectors, and sites—to meet the needs of host countries for trained men and women and to promote a better understanding of Americans among HCNs. This information complements the information provided by Peace Corps Volunteers in their Project Status Reports and the Annual Volunteer Survey.

### **Evaluation Methodology**

In 2008, the Peace Corps' Office of Strategic Information, Research and Planning (OSIRP) initiated a series of evaluation studies in response to a mandate from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) that the agency conduct evaluations of the impact of its Volunteers on Goal 2.

Three countries were selected to pilot a methodology that would examine the impact of the technical work of Volunteers, and their corollary work of promoting a better understanding of Americans among the people with whom the Volunteers lived and worked. In collaboration with the Peace Corps' country director at each post, OSIRP piloted a methodology to collect information *directly from host country nationals* about skills transfer and capacity building, as well as changes in their understanding of Americans.

The research was designed by OSIRP social scientists and would be implemented in-country by a local research team under the supervision of the Peace Corps' country staff, with technical direction from the OSIRP team. A web-based database would be used to manage the questionnaire data and subsequent analysis.

In Bulgaria, under the direction of Senior Researcher Michele Fedor, the team conducted interviews in 18 communities where Volunteers worked. Two hundred sixty-five Volunteer placements between 2003 and 2009 were identified for possible participation in the study. A representative, rather than a random, sample was drawn from the list of Volunteer assignments since 2003. The Bulgarian team conducted semi-structured interviews with host country nationals who had lived and/or worked with Peace Corps Volunteers. (The interview schedule is available upon request from OSIRP and Appendix 1 contains a full description of the research methodology.)

In addition to interviewing HCNs who interacted with PCVs, the research team in Bulgaria also conducted interviews with teachers or school directors in sites that had applied for, but not been assigned a Volunteer. Ten teachers and school directors were interviewed in five comparison communities. Their responses were compared to those from the 22 counterparts and 56 beneficiaries who had worked with PCVs in the Education Project.

Members of the comparison group were teachers or school directors, while the group who worked with Volunteers included teachers, school administrators, school directors, and municipality officers. The length of time the respondents had worked in the field of education

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

was similar; the majority in both groups had at least five years of education experience. A larger number of the respondents who worked with Volunteers had over ten years of experience in education.

Sites were selected to be as representative of Bulgaria as possible, taking geographic diversity and traditionally underserved groups into consideration.

Interviews were conducted from June 2 through July 31, 2009 with five groups of Bulgarians (Table 1):

- **Project partners/counterparts:** Teachers in either primary or secondary schools
- **Project beneficiaries:** President of the school board, teachers, school directors, students, municipality officers
- **Host family members:** Families that hosted Volunteers during all or part of their service
- **Project stakeholders:** Representatives from the Ministry of Education and Science and the Regional Inspectorate Offices (RIO) (e.g., Senior Inspector of Policy in Secondary Education)
- **Comparison group respondents:** Teachers or school directors who had applied for, but not been assigned a PCV at their sites

Interviewers recorded the respondents' comments, coded the answers, and entered the data into a web-based database maintained by OSIRP. The data were then analyzed by OSIRP researchers and the local senior researcher.

**Table 1: Number and Type of Host Country Nationals Interviewed in Bulgaria**

<b>Interview Type</b>	<b>Number of People</b>	<b>Number of Sites</b>
Project counterparts	22	18
Project beneficiaries*	56	18
Host family members	5	-
Project stakeholders	5	-
Comparison group respondents	10	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>-</b>

\*The majority of the beneficiaries were school directors and teachers; eleven were students and three were community members.

### How Will the Information be Used?

The information gathered will inform Peace Corps staff at post and headquarters about host country nationals' perceptions of the community projects and the Volunteers. In conjunction with Volunteer feedback from the Annual Volunteer Survey, this information will allow Peace

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Corps to better understand its impact, identify areas for improvement, and move to address those findings. For example, the information may be useful for Volunteer training and outreach to host families and project partners.

This information is also needed to provide performance information to OMB and the United States Congress. As part of the Peace Corps Improvement Plan, drafted in response to its 2005 Program Assessment Rating Tool review, the Peace Corps proposed the creation of “baselines to measure results including survey data in countries with a Peace Corps presence to measure the promotion of a better understanding of Americans on the part of the peoples served.”<sup>6</sup> Feedback from the original pilots was used to revise the methodology rolled out to nine posts in Fiscal Year 2009 and eight posts in FY 2010, for a total of 17 posts across Peace Corps’ three geographic regions: Africa; Inter-America and the Pacific; and Europe, Mediterranean and Asia. Taken together, these studies contribute to Peace Corps’ ability to document the degree to which the agency is able to both meet the needs of host countries for trained men and women and to promote a better understanding of Americans among the peoples served.

---

<sup>6</sup> Downloaded from : <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/expectmore/summary/10004615.2005.html> 9-10-08



## CHAPTER 2: PROJECT DESIGN AND PURPOSE

### Sector Overview<sup>7</sup>

In 1991, Peace Corps/Bulgaria launched its English Language Education Project based on a Memorandum of Understanding with the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science. Bulgaria's growing engagement with European and world markets, and its entry into the European Union in 2007, necessitated an increase in the number of English speaking professionals. Thus, expanding English language fluency within the country became a priority for the government (Ministry of Education and Science), the business community, and civil society.

The Peace Corps' Education Project addresses needs in the following areas:

- English language instructors
- Educational materials development and enhancement
- Teacher-to-teacher skills transfer between native-speaking educators and Bulgarian English teachers
- Extra-curricular activities for students to strengthen their capacity and provide motivation to initiate outreach projects to address community needs, especially with disadvantaged and/or underserved peoples

Peace Corps Volunteers teach English an average of 18 hours per week, support extra-curricular activities, and work on community outreach projects. Bulgarian English teachers have informal and daily contact with Volunteers, and are expected to coordinate efforts in lesson planning, test preparation, and other job-related activities. Volunteers help Bulgarian students and staff members further develop their English language abilities by exposing them to new ideas and problem-solving approaches. Cooperation with a Volunteer provides teachers the opportunity to learn about interactive and conversational teaching methods that are often new to Bulgarian teachers.

### Project Goals:

1. To improve English language skills and communication in English.
2. To enhance professional and personal development of Bulgarian teachers, youth, and community members.
3. To support community development and capacity building of schools, institutions, and minority groups.

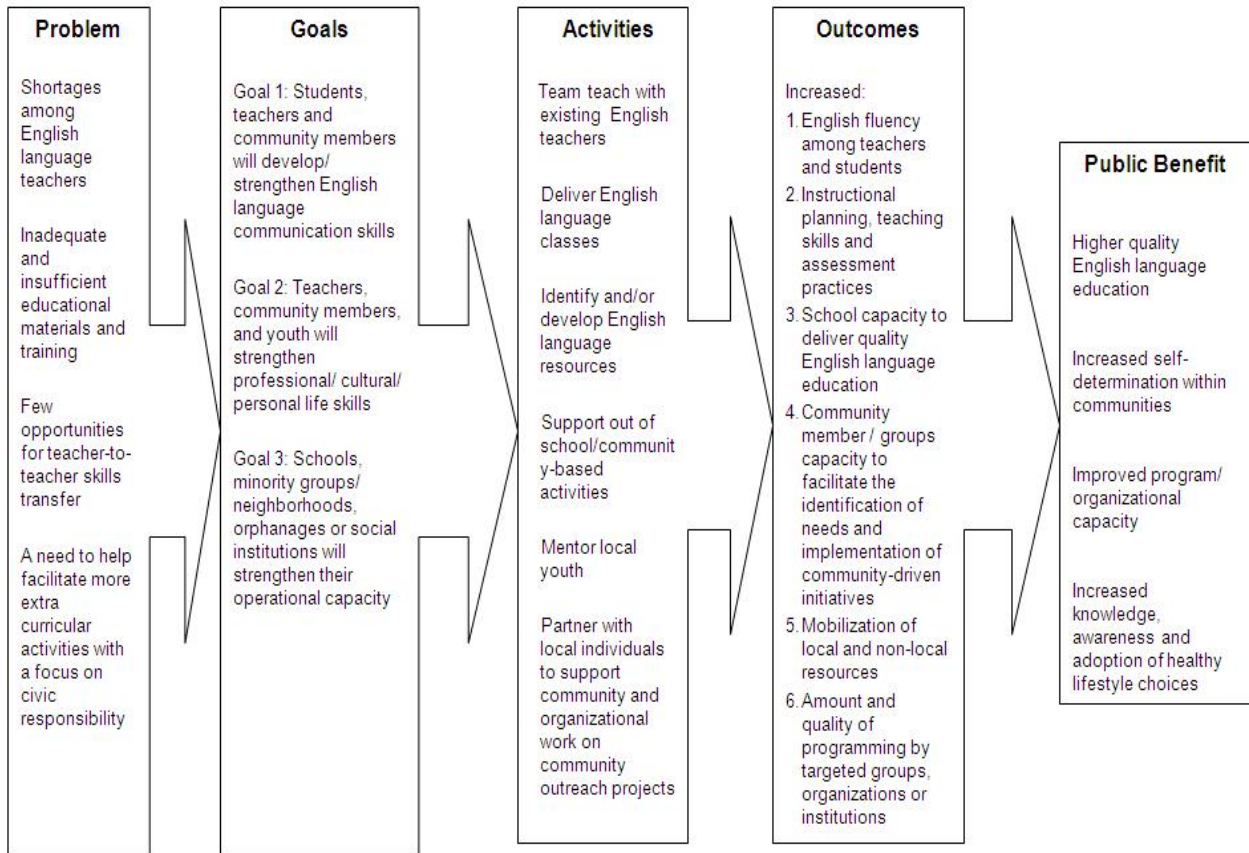
---

<sup>7</sup> The Sector Overview is based on the *Education Project Plan Peace Corps Bulgaria 2009 – 2014*, finalized in February 2009.

CHAPTER 2: PROJECT DESIGN AND PURPOSE

A model of the theory of change for Bulgaria’s Education Project is shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Overview of the Theory of Change for the Education Project in Bulgaria**



\* This figure was compiled from information in the Education Project Plan, Peace Corps Bulgaria, 2009 – 2014. Finalized February 2009.

## **CHAPTER 3: GOAL ONE FINDINGS**

Performance under the Peace Corps' first goal was examined by measuring:

1. The extent to which HCNs observed community changes and personal changes and reported gaining new technical skills and the capacity for maintaining the changes once the community project ended.
2. HCNs' satisfaction with the work of the community project and, in particular, satisfaction with the extent to which their needs had been met.

The community-level changes observed by the project partners are presented first, followed by the individual changes respondents reported.

### **Did Peace Corps Projects Help Project Partners Meet Skill and Capacity Building Needs?**

Counterparts, beneficiaries, and stakeholders were asked about project outcomes in two ways:

1. For each of a list of predefined project outcomes derived from the project plan, respondents were asked about whether they saw a change, whether the community's and school's needs were met, and--where applicable--whether the change was maintained after the Volunteer departed.
2. Respondents were also asked to generate a list of changes in either the community or the school during the period of the PCV's assignment. For each change listed, the respondent was then asked about the size of the change, the extent to which the PCV was responsible for the change, and--where applicable--whether the change was still evident after the departure of the Volunteer.

### **Degree to Which the Project Plan Outcomes Were Met: Community/School Level**

Through the process of developing the project theory of change, shown in Figure 1, a list of project outcomes was created. Respondents were asked about the extent to which they saw changes in their communities or schools related to each outcome. The study measured changes in the following community/school-level outcomes:

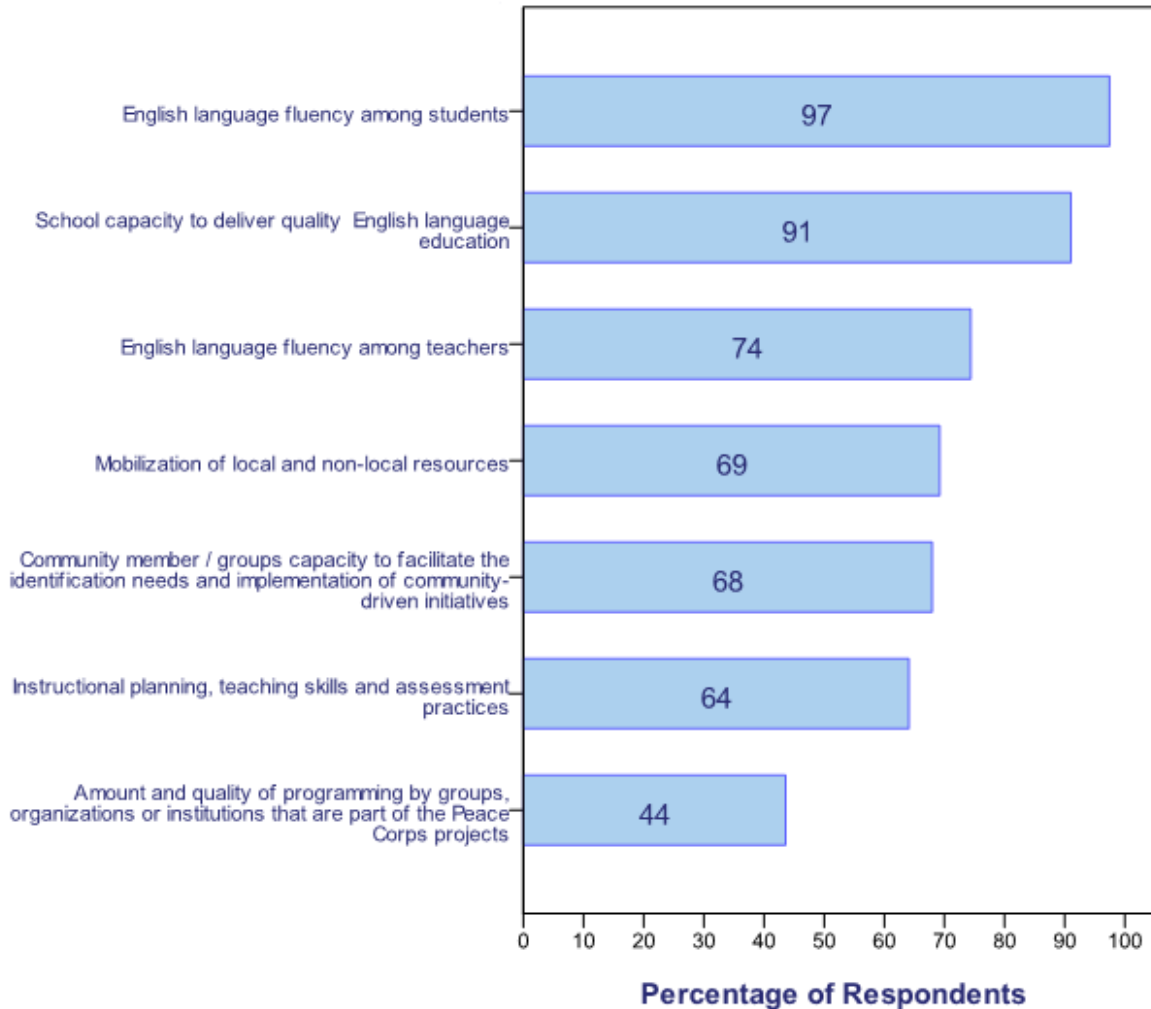
1. English language fluency among teachers.
2. English language fluency among students.
3. The quality of instructional planning, teaching skills, and assessment practices.
4. Schools' capacity to deliver quality English language education.
5. Community members'/groups' capacity to facilitate the identification of needs and the implementation of community-driven initiatives.
6. The mobilization of local and non-local resources.

### CHAPTER 3: GOAL ONE FINDINGS

7. The amount and quality of programming by local groups, organizations, or institutions.

Ninety-seven percent of the counterparts and beneficiaries rated English language fluency among students as the outcome most frequently improved (Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Percentage of Counterparts and Beneficiaries that Rated the Change as At Least Somewhat Better: Community/School Level (n=56 beneficiaries and 22 counterparts)**



The Bulgarian researchers reported that “the stakeholders feel the project is successful and are very satisfied with their partnership with Peace Corps/Bulgaria.”

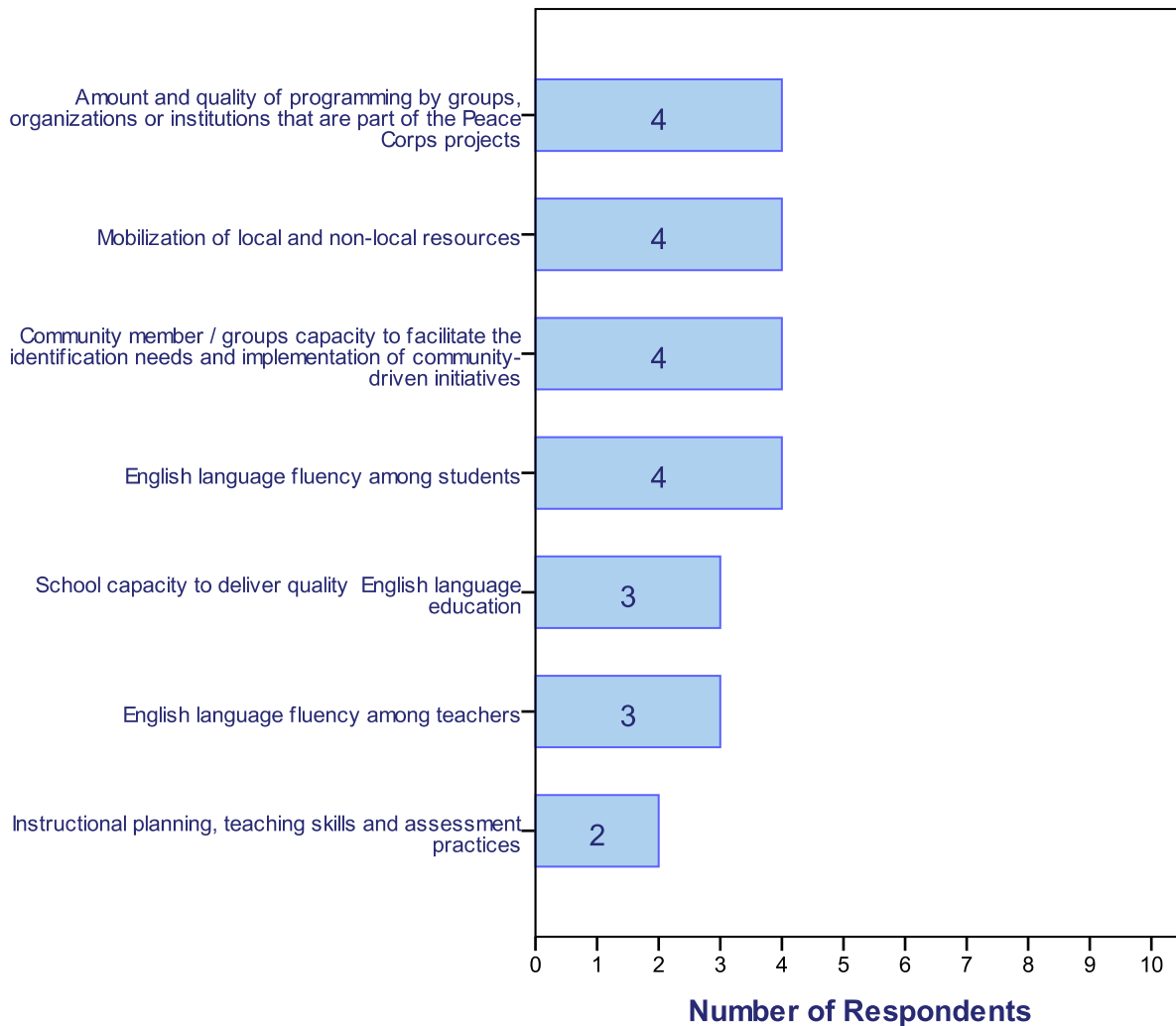
The stakeholders:

- Recognize an improvement in student’s English and in the use of new teaching methods by the teachers
- Are particularly happy with the transfer of project skills
- Still see work to be done and perceive a need for more Volunteers throughout the country

### CHAPTER 3: GOAL ONE FINDINGS

According to the local researchers, the stakeholders “felt that the project had been successful in improving students’ English language skills,” as well as having improved the teachers’ English language skills. They noted that “stakeholders also felt that the mobilization of local and non-local resources was meeting the needs of the country, but [that] there was still a great need for this skills transfer.”<sup>8</sup> Four of the five stakeholders noted improvement in the amount and quality of programming, the mobilization of resources, and the community members’ ability to identify and address local needs (Figure 3).

**Figure 3: Number of Stakeholders that Rated the Change as At Least Somewhat Better: Community/School Level (n=5)**



<sup>8</sup> Synovate. *U.S. Peace Corps Host Country Impact Study Bulgaria*. July-August 2009. Executive Summary.

### Community/School-Level Outcomes

In the absence of data about conditions before the arrival of the Volunteers, counterparts and beneficiaries were asked to think back to *how they saw their community and/or school* when the Volunteer arrived and compare that to the *current situation*. They were then asked to describe any changes in the community or school they believed had occurred during that period. For each change mentioned, the counterparts and beneficiaries were asked if they viewed the change as small, medium, or large, and the extent to which they attributed the change to the interaction with the Volunteer.

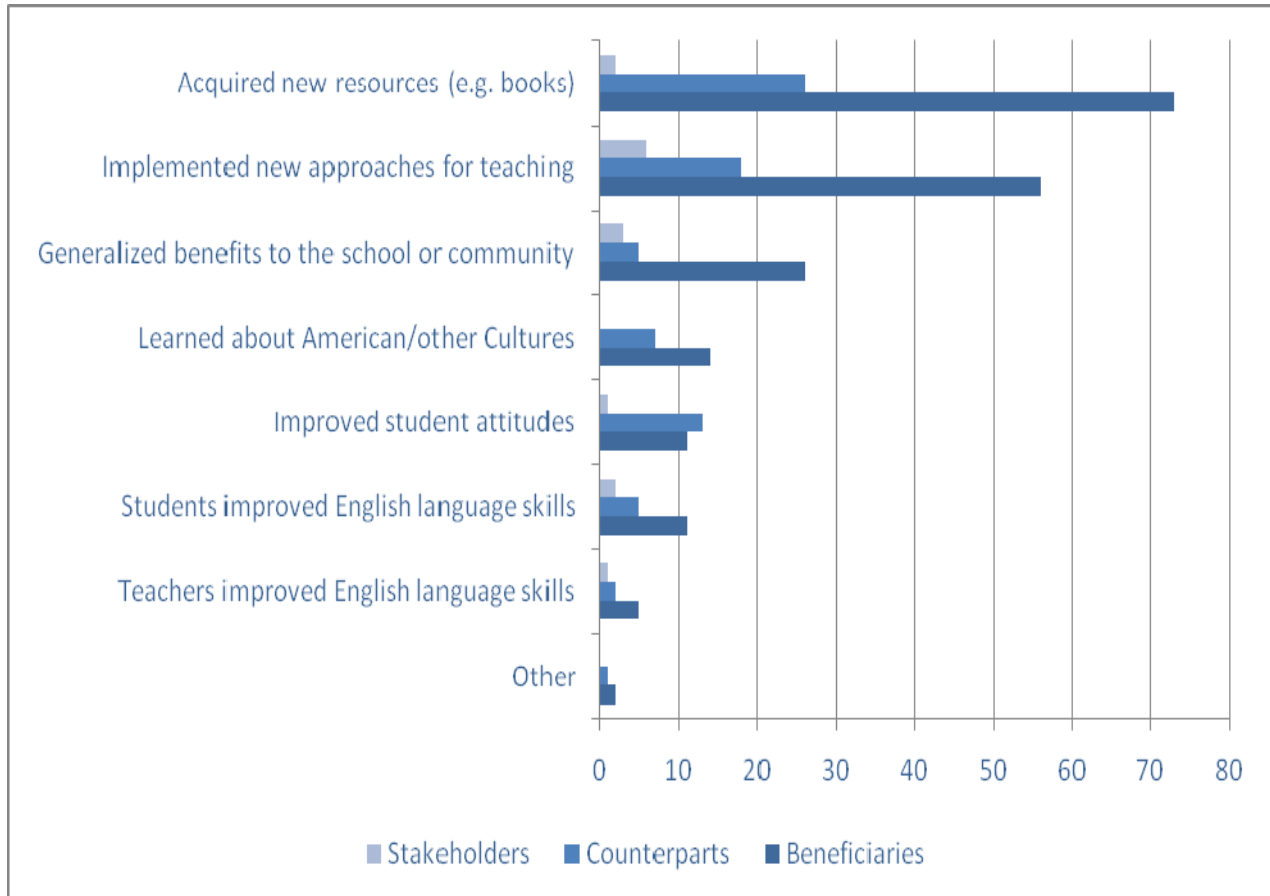
These changes were grouped into the following eight categories:

1. Improved English language skills among teachers.
2. Improved English language skills among students.
3. Improved student attitudes toward learning/school.
4. Increased knowledge of American/other cultures.
5. Generalized benefits to the school or community.
6. Implementation of new approaches for teaching.
7. Acquisition of new resources (e.g., books).
8. Other outcomes not captured in another category.

Acquiring new resources, such as books, computers and white boards, was the most frequently mentioned change (Figure 4). Sixty-four percent of the 290 total changes mentioned by counterparts, beneficiaries, and stakeholders were rated as large changes. Eighty-eight percent of the total changes were assessed as having been largely due to the Peace Corps' project.

According to respondents, 52 percent of the changes were maintained to at least some extent after the Volunteer left the community.

**Figure 4: Ways Communities and Schools Changed Since the Start of the Peace Corps Project: Bulgaria (n=290 changes)**



### Findings on Individual Changes

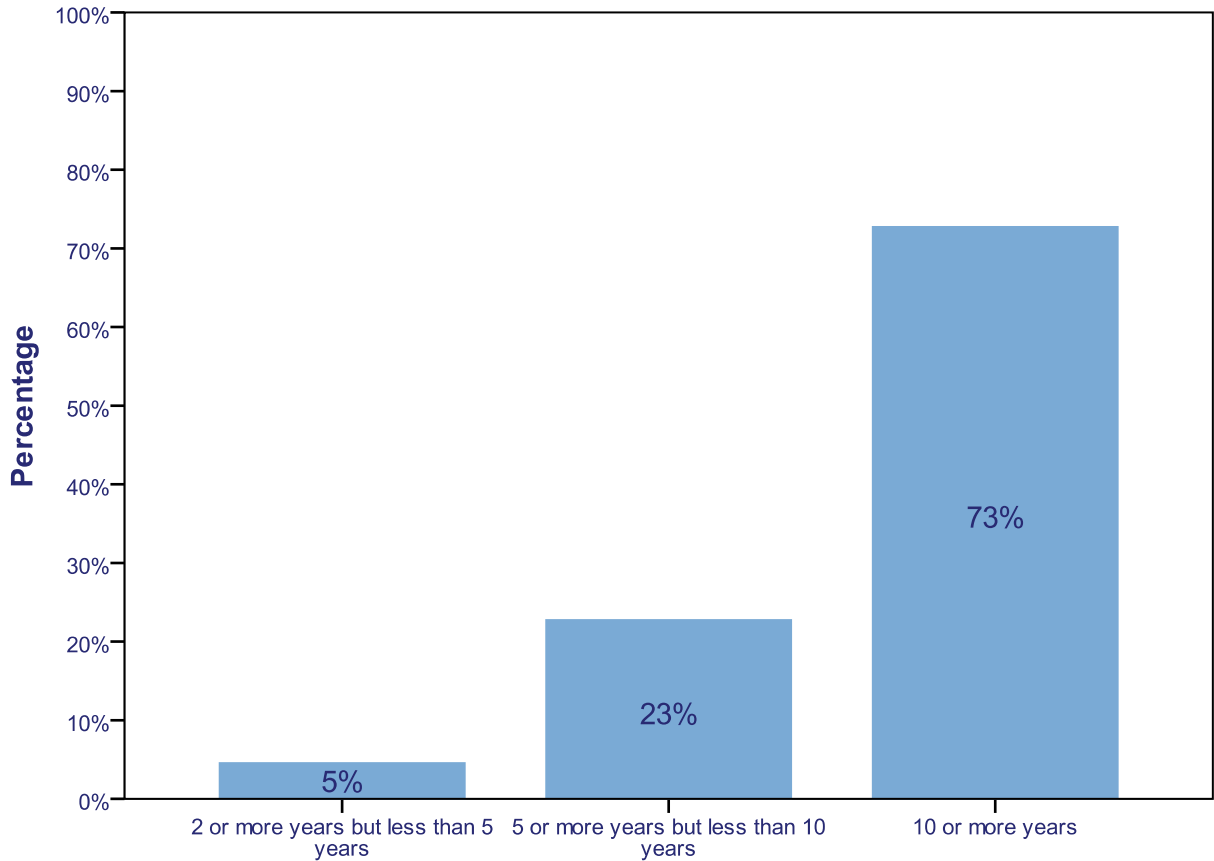
In order to provide the context for the individual-level changes reported, this section starts with an overview of counterparts’ prior professional experience. It continues with their opinions about areas in which they have changed, information about how that change occurred, and the extent to which they have been able to maintain those changes after the departure of the Volunteer.

#### Counterparts’ Prior Professional Educational Experience

Seventy-three percent of counterparts reported having worked in the education field for 10 or more years. No respondents reported working in the education field for less than two years (Figure 5). Within the Bulgarian educational context, the researchers noted these teachers who have been in the educational field for many years “have certain beliefs and practices they strongly feel befit the status of a teacher or school director,” including: maintaining a distant student-teacher relationship; dressing for the position is important; casual is not an option; and “it is impossible to give the highest grade available, that level of perfection doesn’t exist.”<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup>Synovate. *U.S. Peace Corps Host Country Impact Study Bulgaria*. July-August 2009. Counterpart Chapter.

Figure 5: Number of Years Counterparts Have Worked in the Field: Bulgaria (n=22)



### Degree to Which the Project Plan Outcomes Were Met: Individual Level

Through the process of developing the project theory of change (Figure 1), a list of individual-level project outcomes was created. Respondents were asked about the extent to which they saw changes in themselves related to each outcome. The study measured the changes in the following individual-level outcomes:

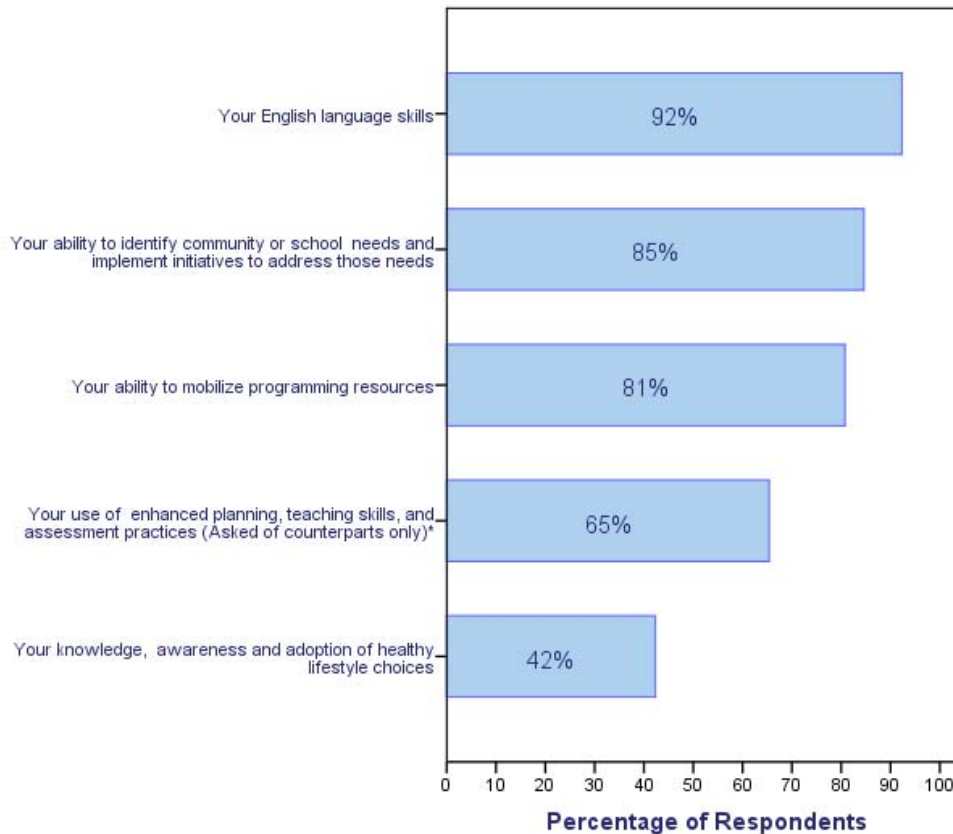
1. English language skills.
2. Use of enhanced planning, teaching skills, and assessment practices (asked only of counterparts).
3. Ability to identify community or school needs and implement initiatives to address those needs.
4. Knowledge, awareness, and adoption of healthy lifestyle choices.
5. Ability to mobilize programming resources.



## CHAPTER 3: GOAL ONE FINDINGS

With regard to the individual-level project outcomes asked about, the change that was most frequently rated as improved was English language skills (Figure 6).

**Figure 6: Percentage of Counterparts and Beneficiaries that Rated the Change as At Least Somewhat Better: Individual Level (n=77-78)**



\* The question on *use of enhanced planning, teaching skills, and assessment practices* was asked only of counterparts and the number of people who responded was 28, as six beneficiaries also responded. The response rate for the other categories ranged from 77-78.

### Individual-level Outcomes

In the absence of data about conditions before the arrival of the Volunteers, counterparts and beneficiaries were asked to think back *to how they saw themselves* when they started working with a Volunteer and to compare that to *how they currently see themselves*. They were then asked to report any *changes in themselves* during that period. For each change mentioned, the counterparts and beneficiaries were asked whether they viewed the change as small, medium, or large, and the extent to which they attributed the change to their interaction with the Volunteer.

Counterparts and beneficiaries reported a total of 194 personal changes.

The changes were grouped into the following five categories:

1. Gained new opportunities.

### CHAPTER 3: GOAL ONE FINDINGS

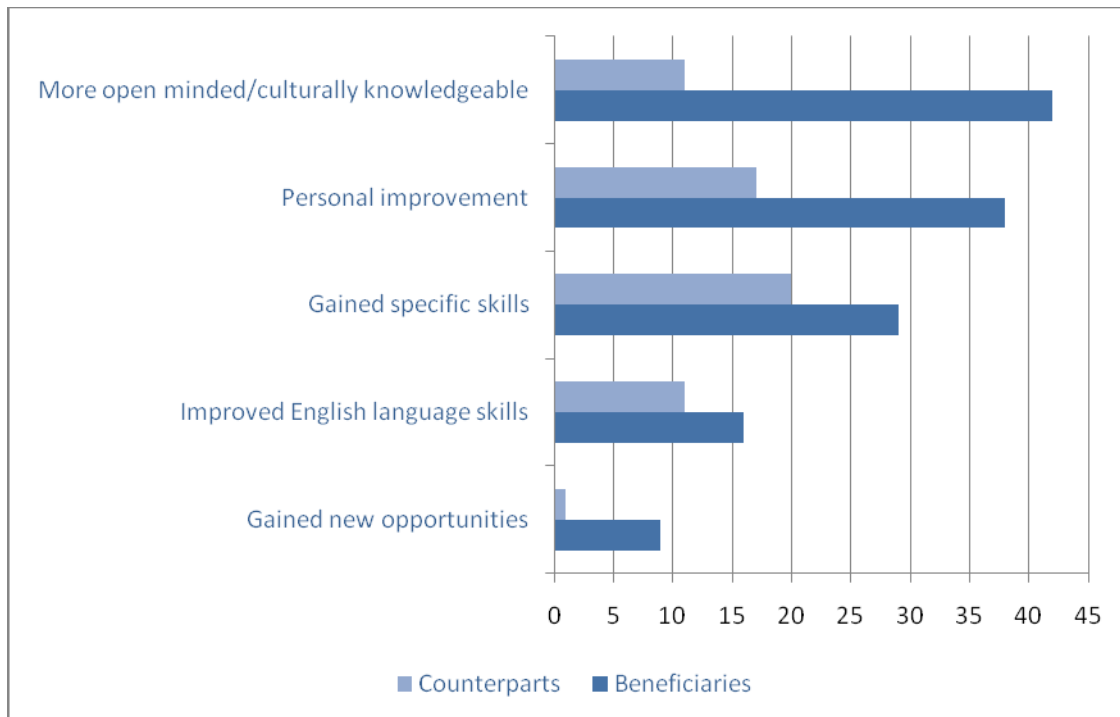
2. Improved English language skills.
3. Gained specific skills (e.g., computer or organizational skills).
4. Personal improvement.
5. More open-minded/culturally knowledgeable.

The type of change most frequently mentioned by beneficiaries was becoming more open-minded toward, knowledgeable about, and tolerant of other cultures. They said that “communicating and working together with a person from a different culture” was the most significant personal change. Volunteers provided “the opportunity to see the world with different eyes and to become aware of the differences that exist between the cultures.”

The beneficiaries also described personal changes as “changes from the inside. I have worked for them to happen, but at the same time, they were provoked from the outside, from the presence of the Volunteer and her personality.”

The most frequently mentioned change by counterparts was learning a specific skill (Figure 7), particularly learning new teaching methods and project work. One comment sums up many counterparts’ opinions, “There wasn’t anything useless. Everything was answering my needs.”

**Figure 7: Ways Counterparts and Beneficiaries Changed Since the Start of the Peace Corps’ Project: Bulgaria (n=194 changes)**



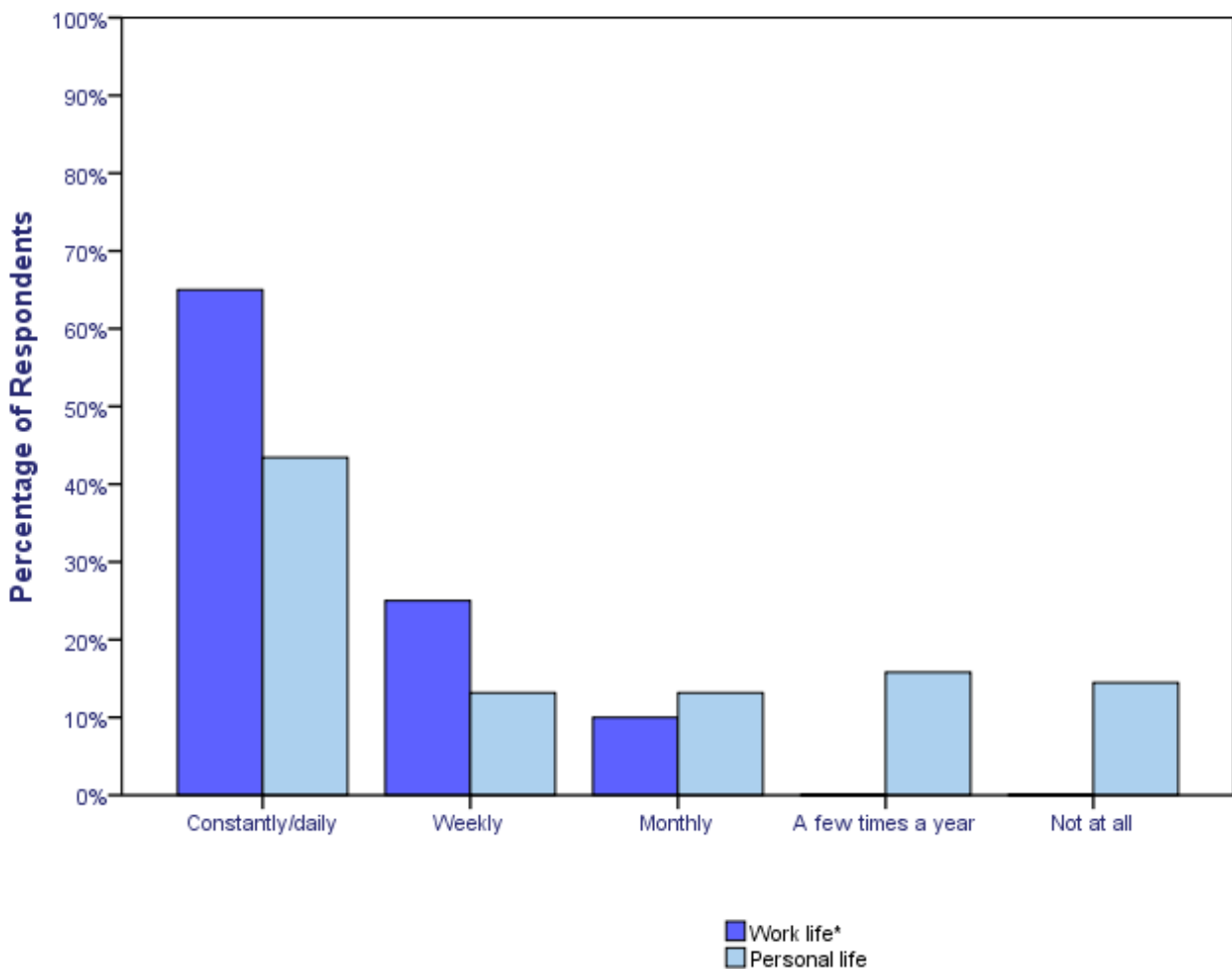
Fifty-nine percent of the 194 individual-level changes mentioned by counterparts and beneficiaries were rated as large changes. Eight percent of the total number of changes were

### CHAPTER 3: GOAL ONE FINDINGS

assessed as having been largely due to the Peace Corps' project. Counterparts and beneficiaries reported that 60 percent of the changes they noticed in themselves were maintained to at least some extent, after the Volunteer left the community.

The frequency with which respondents reported using the skills learned through the project in both their work and personal lives suggests that the skills transmitted were practical, useful, and much needed. Over sixty percent used new skills at work on a daily basis and over forty percent used them daily in their personal life (Figure 8).

**Figure 8: Frequency with Which Counterparts and Beneficiaries Report Using Skills Learned Through the Peace Corps' Project: Bulgaria**



\* Work life was asked only of Counterparts, n=20, response rate for personal life was 76.

The Bulgarian researchers noted that, “The personal changes that counterparts labeled both as large and sustained were mostly about improved work and language skills. Secondly, counterparts mentioned a change in attitude and character. Other changes mentioned included learning more about different cultures and becoming more open and tolerant.” They also noted

## CHAPTER 3: GOAL ONE FINDINGS

that “some counterparts were uncomfortable when discussing personal changes and sometimes said their personal lives had not been affected.”<sup>10</sup>

### **Ways Counterparts Use Project Skills in Their Work Life**

*I try to provoke [stimulate] the students every day with something new. I try to include more variety in my classes. I introduce questionnaires with psychological questions that concern topics of social significance such as drugs, alcohol, cigarettes etc.*

*I use interactive techniques with the children to teach vocabulary more effectively. I use methods I learned ...to make the lesson more interesting.*

*Every day. I use interactive techniques and music during classes.*

*I haven't learned anything new about teaching but I improved my spoken English and this helps me every day.*

### **Ways Counterparts and Beneficiaries Use Project Skills in their Personal Lives**

#### **Counterparts**

*I tried to adopt a positive way of thinking that contrasts [with] the Bulgarians' negativism and use it every day.*

*I have used English during excursions abroad.*

*Very often—I never woke up to exercise before. I like her [the PCV's] daily routine and I try to follow her example.*

*I communicate more freely with foreigners and I find better balance between work and free time.*

#### **Beneficiaries**

*I can help my son with English language now.*

*I use English language 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*

---

<sup>10</sup> Synovate. *U.S. Peace Corps Host Country Impact Study Bulgaria*. Goal 1 Counterparts. July-August 2009.

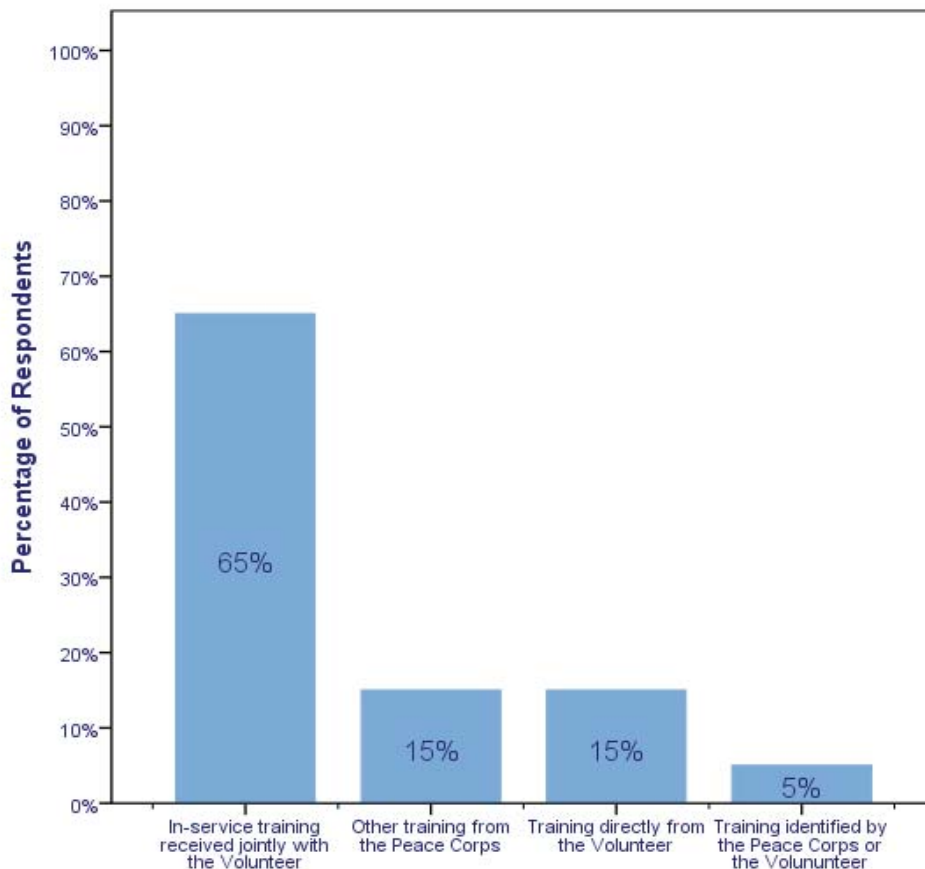
Counterparts also noted that they are using what they learned from their Volunteers in their personal life, especially in meeting and dealing with other foreigners. One counterpart said, “I communicate more freely with foreigners and I find a better balance between work and free time.”

### How Did Skills Transfer Occur?

Sixty-five percent of counterparts reported receiving in-service training (Figure 9) over the course of the project with Peace Corps. However, only one-third of the teachers and school directors said they had received formal training. Those respondents described “three to four seminars organized by Peace Corps in Sofia, one of which was on project writing and another where we discussed problems related to the work and everyday life of the Volunteers.”

Another described the importance of both the formal and informal training by saying, “a meeting in Plovdiv with other directors and Volunteers strongly influenced my relationship with the Volunteer; the contact with Peace Corps in Sofia and their visits to the school provided both me and the Volunteer with directions on the work.”

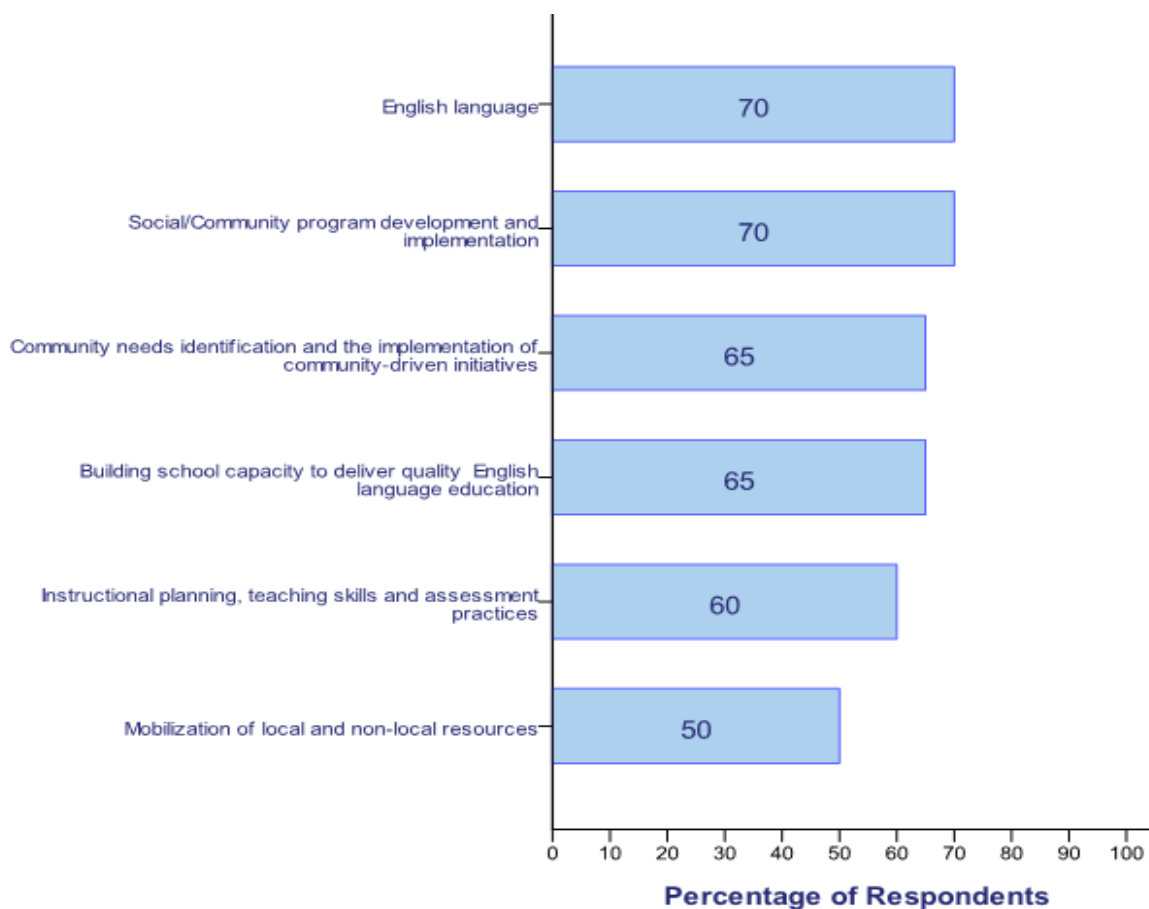
Figure 9: Counterpart Training: Bulgaria (n=20)



### CHAPTER 3: GOAL ONE FINDINGS

A majority of counterparts reported receiving technical training in the focus areas of the project (Figure 10). Training related to English language skills and to social/community program development were each mentioned by seventy percent of respondents.

**Figure 10: Technical Training Received: Bulgaria (n=20)**



Of those that received training, 53 percent felt it significantly contributed to improving their technical skills, while 38 percent said it contributed “somewhat.” Participants said:

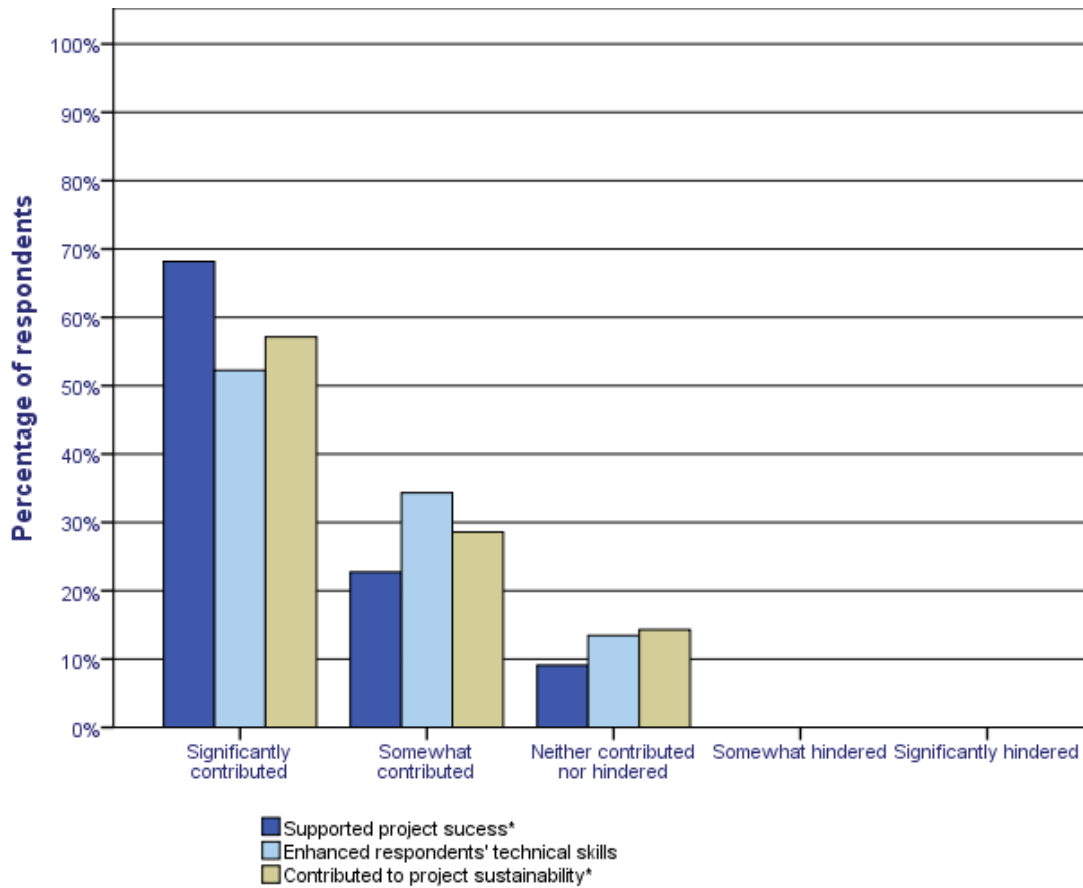
- “It was very useful for me as we prepare and apply for a lot of projects and I use a lot of what I learned in these trainings”
- “The training for the projects was very beneficial because I learned how to find additional funding for the school. And this knowledge I have [gained] from Peace Corps, not from [the] Bulgarian government or Bulgarian institutions”
- “It was useful to the extent that their methods of work can be applied in our classes – the more varied methods of teaching, the games”

CHAPTER 3: GOAL ONE FINDINGS

- “It didn’t have any influence on my technical and professional skills, but it had a great influence on the process of working with the Volunteer as a whole”<sup>11</sup>

When asked about the value of the training, respondents were largely positive, with more than half of the respondents saying that the training contributed positively to the project (Figure 11).

Figure 11: Usefulness of Training for Project Success, Technical Skills, and Project Sustainability: Bulgaria



\* These items were asked only of Counterparts, n=22 and n=21 respectively; 87 people answered the question on

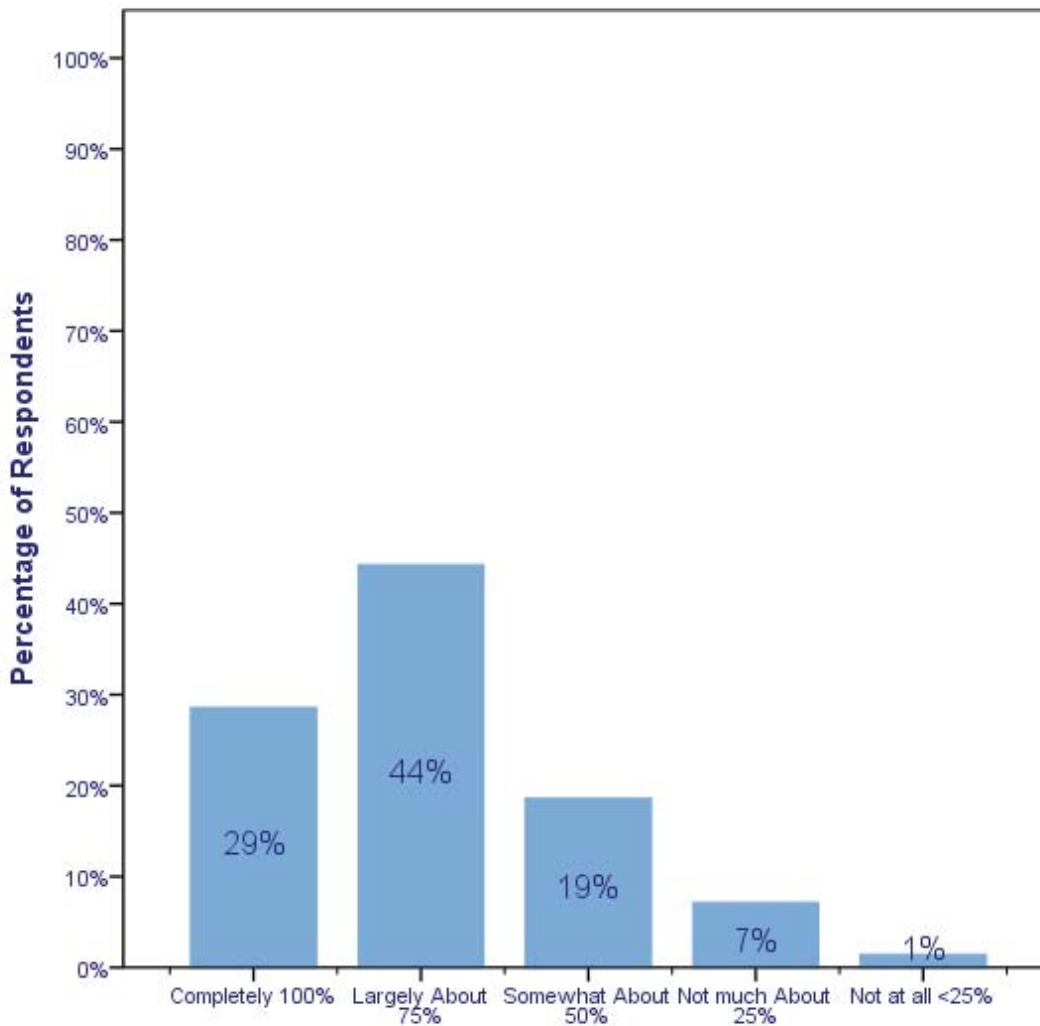
Of the three stakeholders who answered this question, one said that training significantly contributed to project success, and two said that it made some contribution. With regard to the effect of training on project sustainability, one stakeholder reported that training significantly contributed to project success and two reported that it made some contribution.

<sup>11</sup> Synovate. *U.S. Peace Corps Host Country Impact Study Bulgaria*. July-August 2009. Executive Summary.

### Did Skills Transfer Lead to Sustainable Changes?

Ninety-two percent of counterparts and beneficiaries reported that the changes realized in their communities and schools were maintained to at least the fifty percent level after the end of the project (Figure 12). Among stakeholders, three of the five reported that projects were maintained at about the 50 percent level after the departure of the Volunteer, and two reported that projects were maintained at about the 75 percent level.

Figure 12: Extent to Which Projects were Sustained After Volunteer Departure: Bulgaria (n=70)



Some beneficiaries noted that some changes that depended upon the Volunteer's presence, such as celebrating Halloween, or maintaining a level of excitement because of the newness of having a Peace Corps Volunteer, were not sustained when the Volunteer left.



## Overall HCN Satisfaction

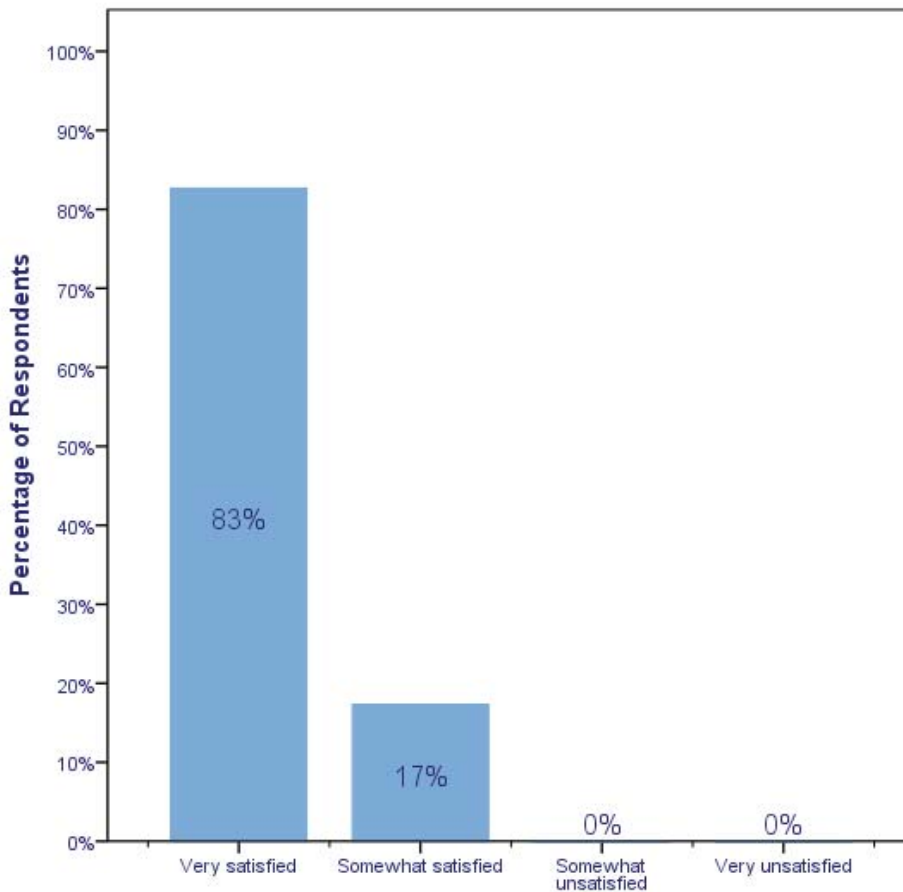
Two measures of overall satisfaction with the Peace Corps’ project were included in the interviews. These were satisfaction with:

- 1) Reported changes.
- 2) Degree to which the project met their needs.

### Overall HCN Satisfaction with Reported Changes

Counterparts and beneficiaries expressed satisfaction with the changes in the community and school resulting from their work with Peace Corps. Eighty-three percent of respondents reported being “very satisfied” and the remaining seventeen percent reported being “somewhat satisfied” (Figure 13). Among stakeholders, all five reported being “very satisfied.”

Figure 13: Counterpart and Beneficiary Satisfaction with Project Outcomes: Bulgaria (n=75)



**HCNs' Comments About Overall Satisfaction with the Project Work:**

**Counterparts**

*I am very happy with the work of all three volunteers. We got to know their culture and they got to know ours. They motivated the kids to learn English, some of the kids even applied for university with an exam in English.*

*I am very satisfied! He got close to all the teachers and students so quickly and he motivated them all to work and learn better. This PC program needs to be a regular practice in Bulgarian schools.*

*I am very satisfied. Children increased their interest in studying English. They are constantly trying to speak; they ask for new words and they really have very good listening comprehension now. The assessment practices have changed as well.*

**Beneficiaries**

*I am very happy because a lot of things changed. Even when the Volunteer is gone, the school still conducts the work. We got used to communicating with foreigners and we learned new things about different cultures, people with different folklore and holidays.*

*The Volunteers helped develop the facilities in the school; they were very responsible in their work and succeeded in provoking the interest of the teachers and the students. They gave additional English literature to their colleagues.*

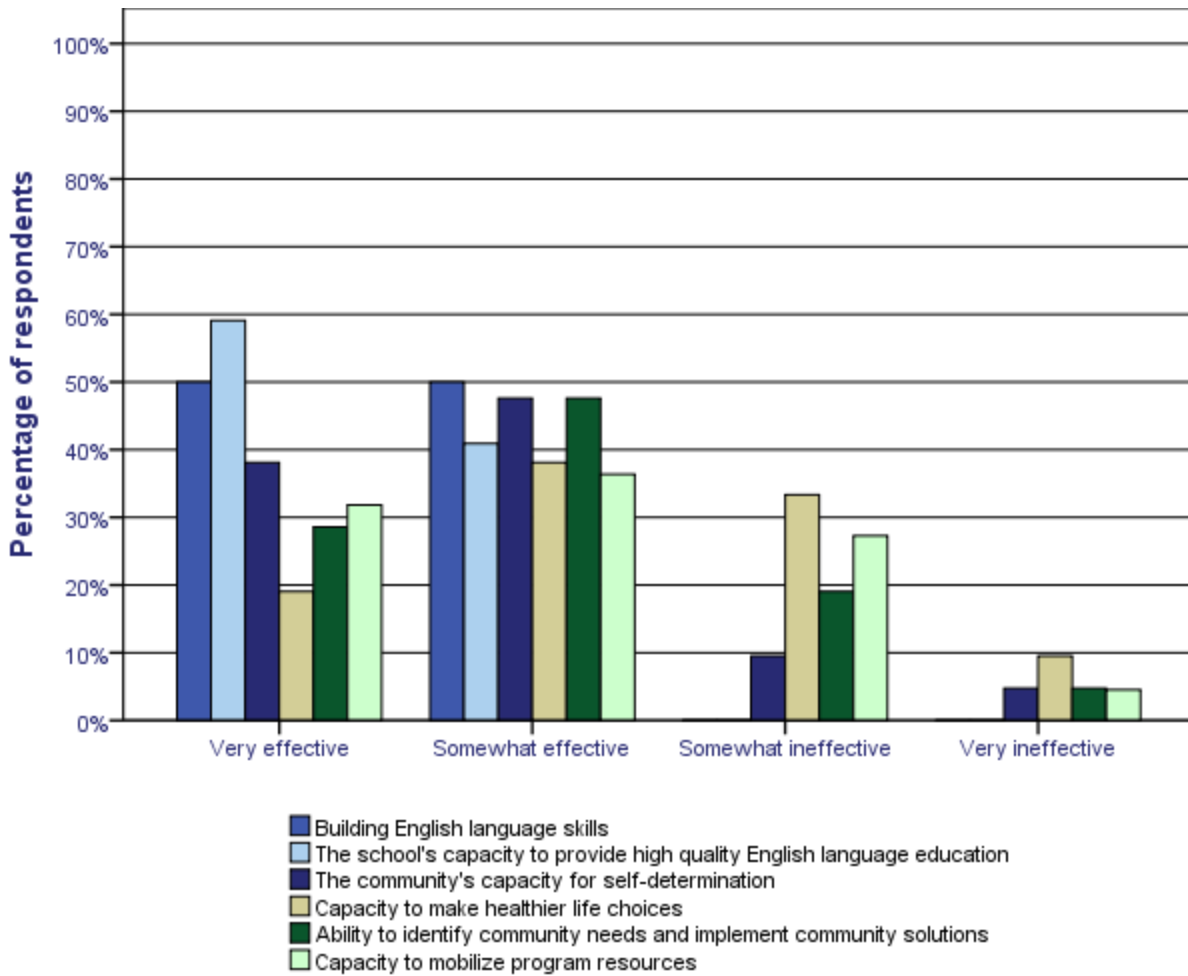
**Stakeholders**

*I am very satisfied. It was very useful for the small towns which follow the example of the bigger ones. The Volunteers came with their catholic morals and that changed our understanding of American people. They have critical thinking and creativity.*

**Did HCNs Think Their Needs Were Met?**

The Peace Corps project’s ability to build local capacity was rated highest in the following areas: individuals’ English language skills (nearly 100% of the respondents rated this as very or somewhat effective), the schools’ ability to provide high-quality English language instruction (98%), and individuals’ ability to identify community’s problems and solutions. The area most frequently rated as ineffective was capacity building in the areas of individuals’ ability to make healthier life choices (less than 20% rated this very effective) and to mobilize community resources (Figure 14).

**Figure 14: Counterpart Rating of Local Capacity Building: Bulgaria (n=21)**



The degree to which the Volunteers’ work met the HCNs' needs is expressed in this answer from one teacher: “The focus of the work of Volunteers is to teach English, mainly at the school, but our Volunteer did more than this; she changed our lives.”

### Would HCNs Want to Work with the Peace Corps Again?

Another measure of satisfaction with the results of the work conducted through the Peace Corps's project is whether counterparts and beneficiaries would want to work with another Volunteer. Ninety-one percent of both counterparts and beneficiaries reported that they would welcome another Volunteer. The approach of the Volunteers and their ability to serve as native speakers of the language they are teaching were highlighted by the respondents.

#### **HCNs' Responses About Why They Would Welcome Another Volunteer:**

##### **Counterparts**

*Yes [I would welcome another Volunteer] as the Volunteers we had so far were very useful and they really changed our community life and views in a very positive way.*

*I want another volunteer because the students need to practice English language with a native speaker.*

*Yes, I want [another Volunteer] because they provide us with diversity, novelty, and make the students more motivated and eager to work.*

##### **Beneficiaries**

*We all think that it's very useful to have a Volunteer. For the kids it makes a difference whether the teacher is a native speaker or not. The kids see the difference between our teachers (who speak British English) and the Volunteers (who speak American English).*

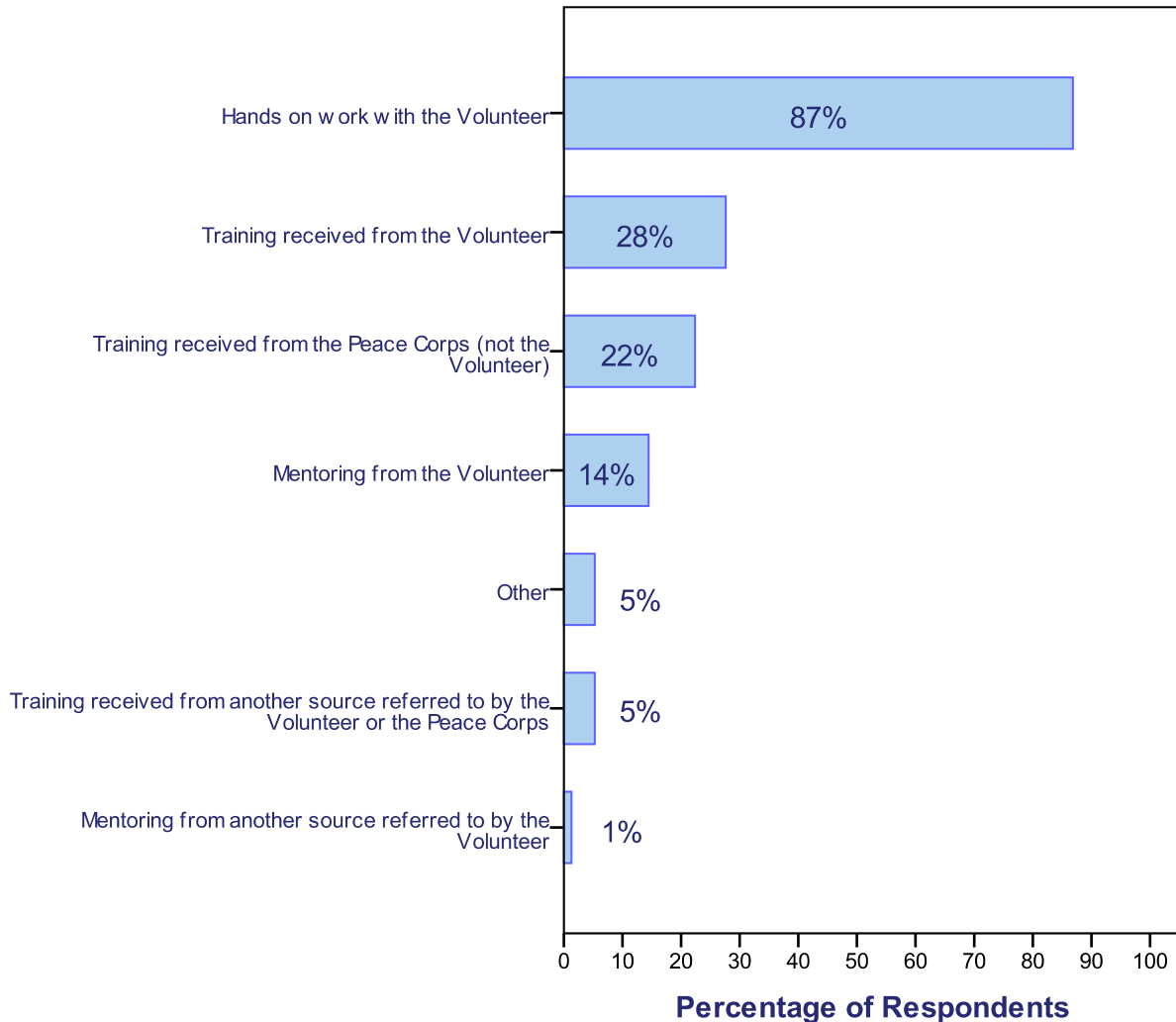
*The Volunteers are very beneficial for the students as they teach them a lot. They are also very motivated and make the students more motivated to go to school and learn.*

*I don't know. We already have a good language teacher and the kids like her. I don't think it's so necessary to have a Volunteer in the school now.*

## Support and Barriers to Project Performance

Beneficiaries and counterparts observed that the main factor contributing to the success of the projects was the hands-on work of the Volunteer (Figure 15).

**Figure 15: Percent of Counterparts and Beneficiaries Credited with Project Success: Bulgaria (n=76)**



In addition, the Bulgarian researchers noted that “the counterparts acknowledged the positive attitudes of all the people involved as the reason for the success of the program, along with the training” provided by Peace Corps.

- “The school director plays a major role”
- “We are here – a counterpart, a director, and vice director – always ready to discuss the work with the Volunteers”

### CHAPTER 3: GOAL ONE FINDINGS

- “The positive attitude of the local people and the support they provided”
- “The collaboration process with the Volunteers [is] a very important factor for the success of the program as well as the coordination process with Peace Corps being very smooth”
- “Everyone tries to be useful. The people are motivated and energized. The mayor is very positive about starting different initiatives in town – it turns out that everybody could be useful with something”<sup>12</sup>

No one barrier to project sustainability (after the Volunteer left) was singled out by a majority of the respondents (Figure 16). Half of the counterparts said “there were no issues that made the work difficult.” Other counterparts, however, noted that “the Volunteers’ lack of a teaching degree, [as well as] the lack of discipline among students”<sup>13</sup> were factors that contributed to the difficulty of the project. They also noted that “the language barrier and the housing requirements” were secondary factors. These same factors were also discussed by the beneficiaries.

Among stakeholders, one mentioned that a lack of skilled individuals was a barrier to maintaining project-related changes, while another mentioned a lack of staff support. Three stakeholders also mentioned other factors, such as overall education policy and cultural issues.

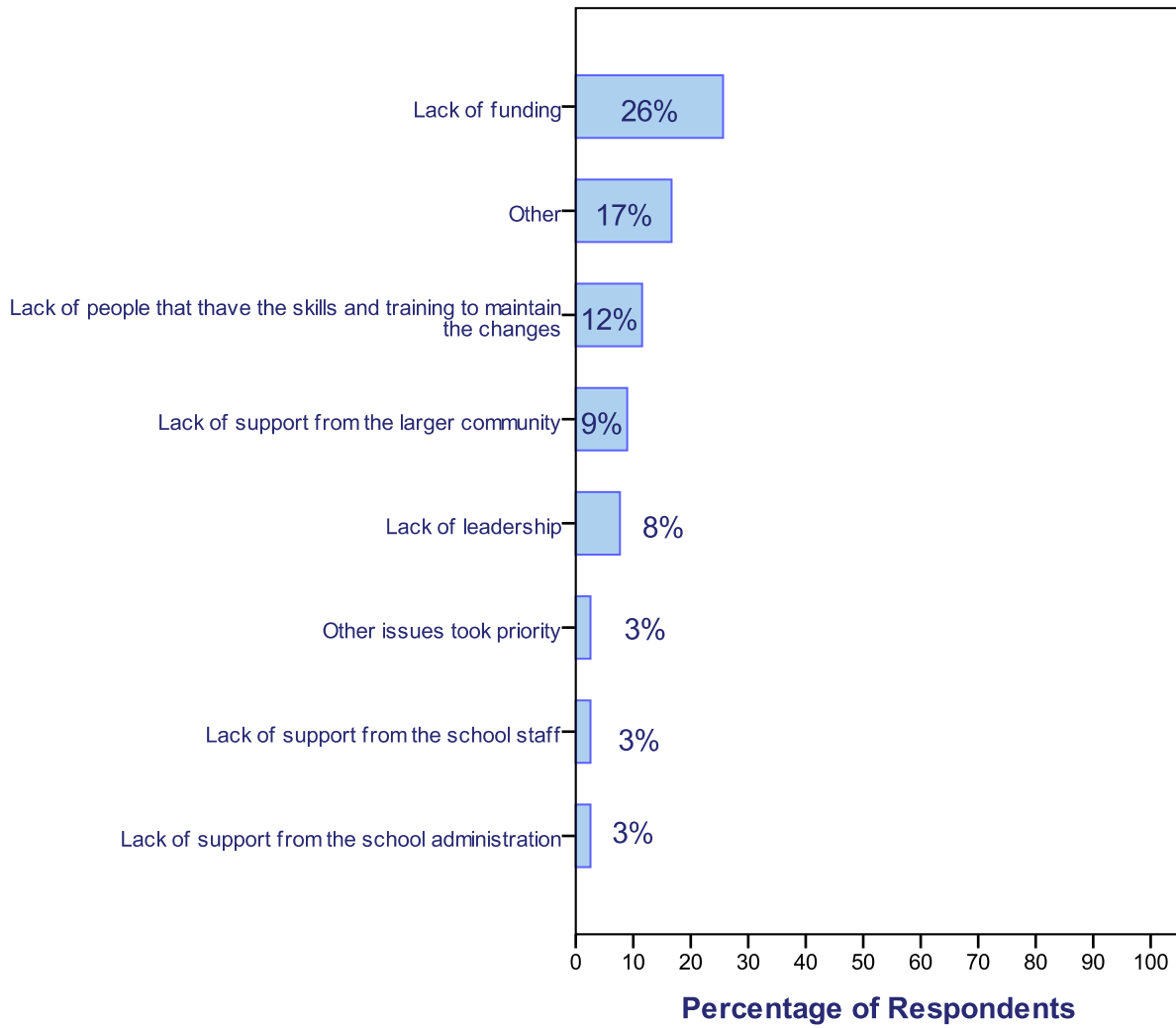
---

<sup>12</sup> Synovate. *U.S. Peace Corps Host Country Impact Study Bulgaria. Goal 1. Counterparts*. July-August 2009.

<sup>13</sup> Synovate. *U.S. Peace Corps Host Country Impact Study. Goal 1. Counterparts*. Bulgaria. July-August 2009.

CHAPTER 3: GOAL ONE FINDINGS

Figure 16: Barriers to Project Sustainability Among Counterparts and Beneficiaries: Bulgaria (n= 78)



**HCNs' Comments About Barriers to Project Sustainability**

*The policy of the Bulgarian government makes it hard for us to maintain positive changes. They are planning to close schools. This endangers our school as well as making it difficult for us to plan for improvements.*

*I think that there weren't enough people who were ready to get involved and work on the projects that the Volunteer started.*

*We try to maintain all the changes, our desire is to change the way of teaching. The problem is that the schooling of some of the Bulgarian teachers is not very good and they cannot maintain the new way of work.*

**Comparing Changes in Secondary Education Project Communities and Matched Comparison Group Communities**

In addition to interviewing HCNs who interacted with PCVs, the research team in Bulgaria also conducted interviews with teachers or school directors in sites that had applied for, but not been assigned a Volunteer. Ten teachers and school directors were interviewed in five comparison communities. Their responses were compared to those from the 22 counterparts and 56 beneficiaries who had worked with PCVs in the Education Project.

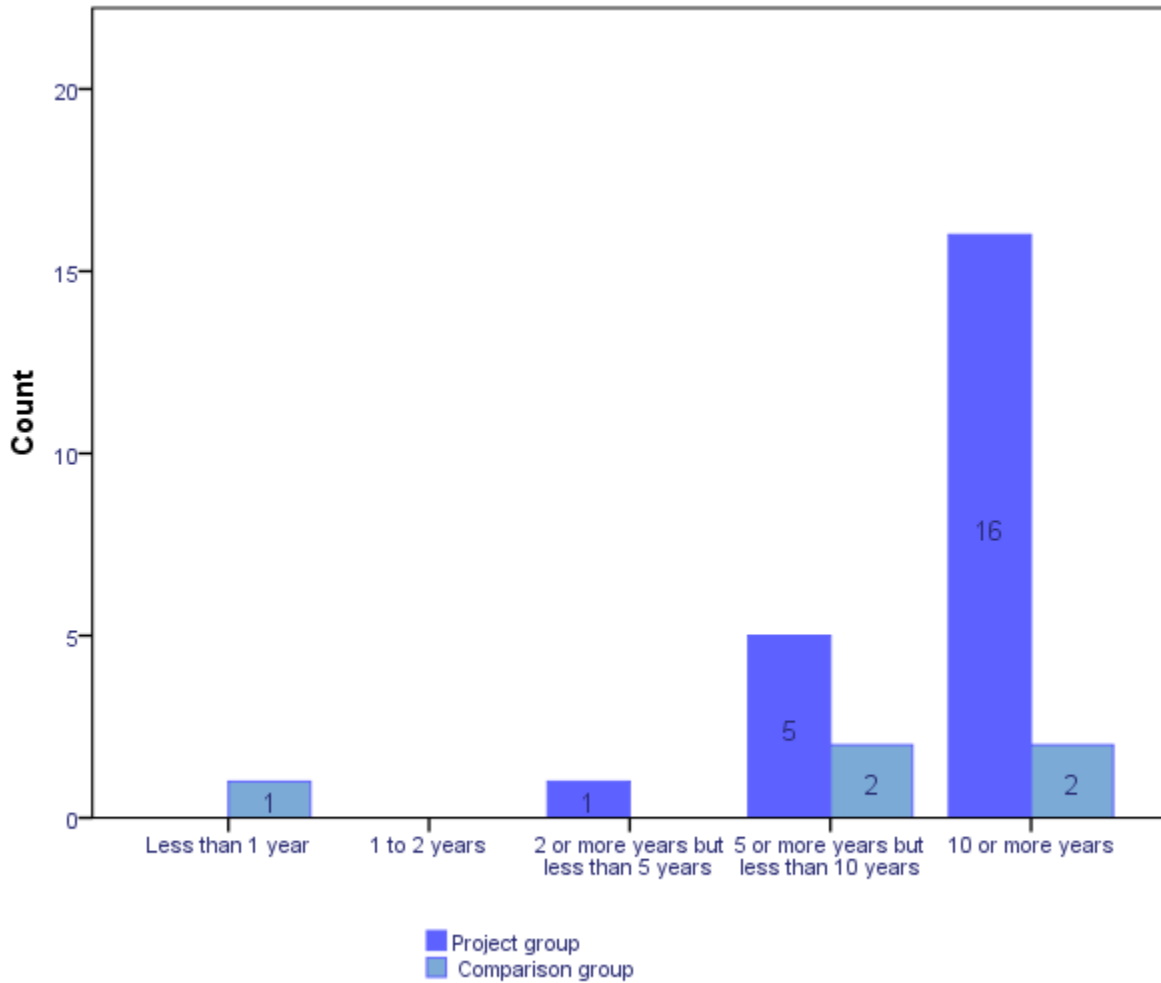
**Comparison of the Control Group with the Group That Worked with Volunteers**

Members of the comparison group were teachers or school directors, while the group who worked with Volunteers included teachers, school administrators, school directors, and municipality officers. The length of time the respondents had worked in the field of education was similar; the majority in both groups had at least five years of education experience. A larger number of the respondents who worked with Volunteers had over ten years of experience in education (Figure 17).

Additionally, most of the comparison respondents had received some type of training in English language instruction and in community development work.



Figure 17: Length of time in the Education Field: Project Group Compared to Comparison Group (n=27)



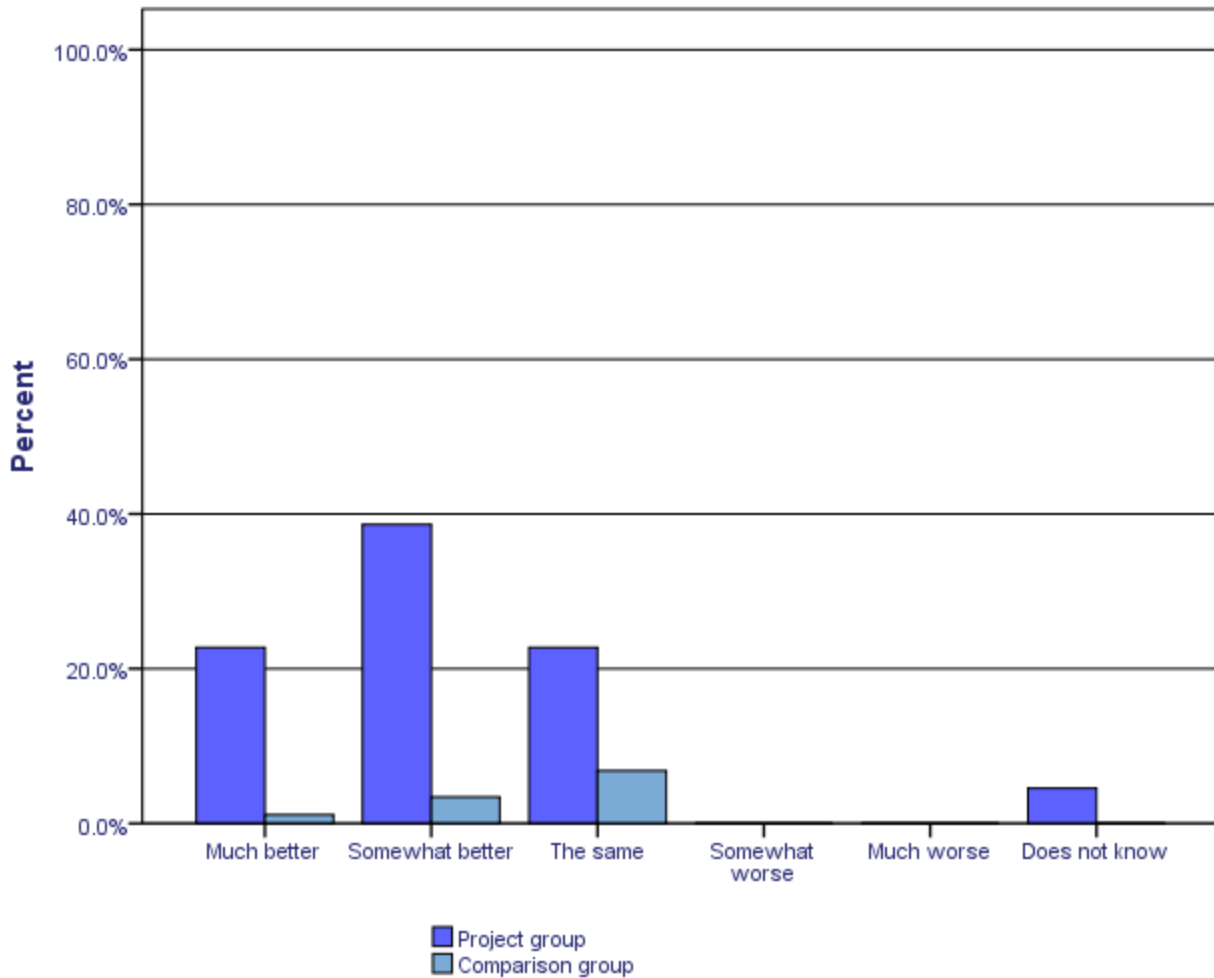
### Organizational-Level Changes

In the absence of data about prior conditions, both the project group and the comparison group were asked about changes in their schools over time. Both groups of respondents were asked to reflect on the changes that occurred in the same five-year timeframe. Respondents who had worked with Volunteers were asked to reflect on the period between the time that the Volunteer arrived and the time when they were answering the questions for the survey.

### CHAPTER 3: GOAL ONE FINDINGS

When asked about the local ability to mobilize resources, Peace Corps Volunteer project group members most frequently mentioned that their capacity was somewhat better over the five year period. Comparison group members were more likely to report that their capacity had stayed the same (Figure 18).

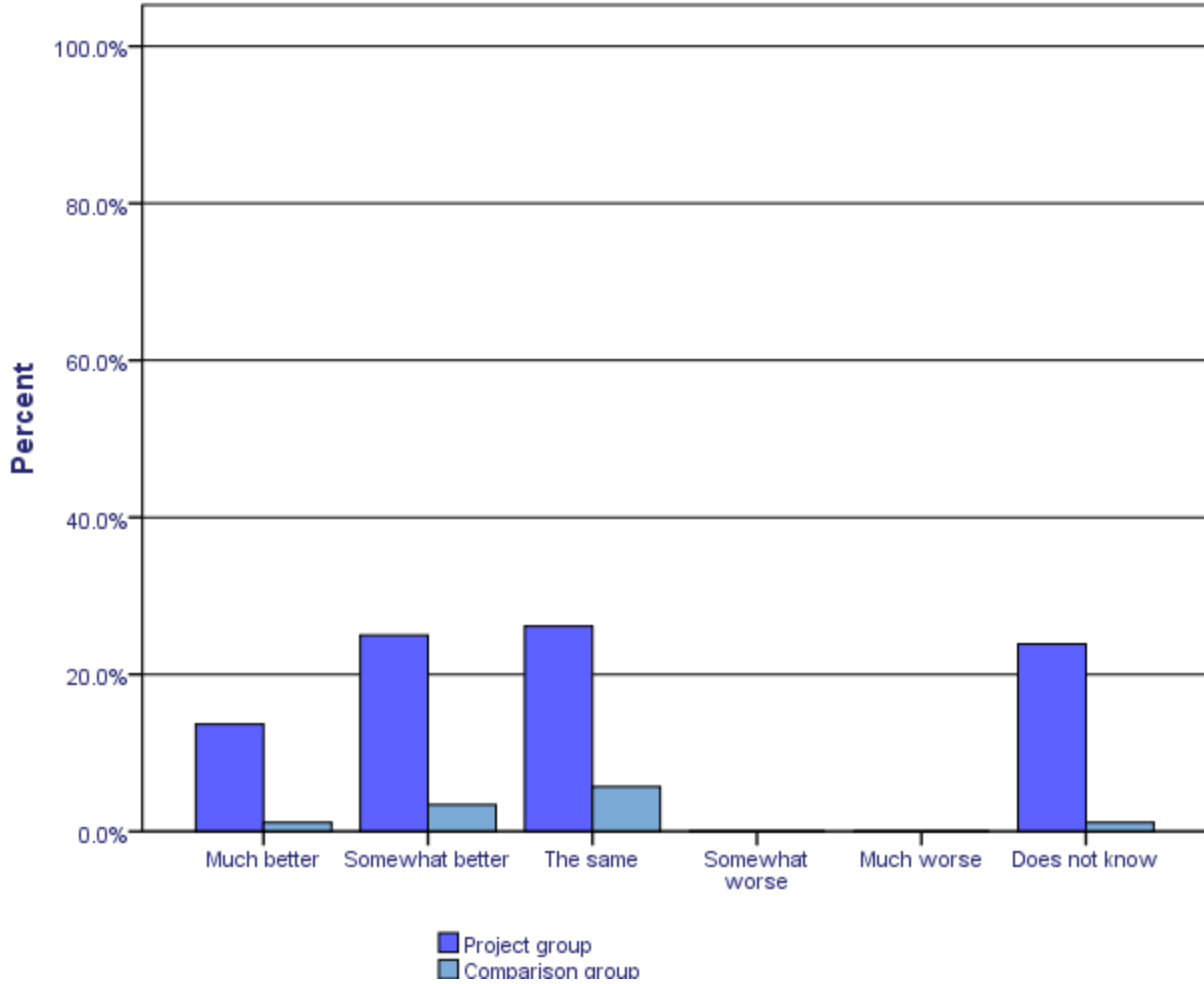
**Figure 18: Respondent Rating of Local Ability to Mobilize Local and Non-local Resources: Project Group Compared to Comparison Group (n=88)**



CHAPTER 3: GOAL ONE FINDINGS

Both groups of beneficiaries reported that no change had occurred within the community groups and organization in terms of the type, quantity, and quality of the programs they were doing (Figure 19). In addition, a large number of project group members indicated that they did not know whether there had been a change in programming.

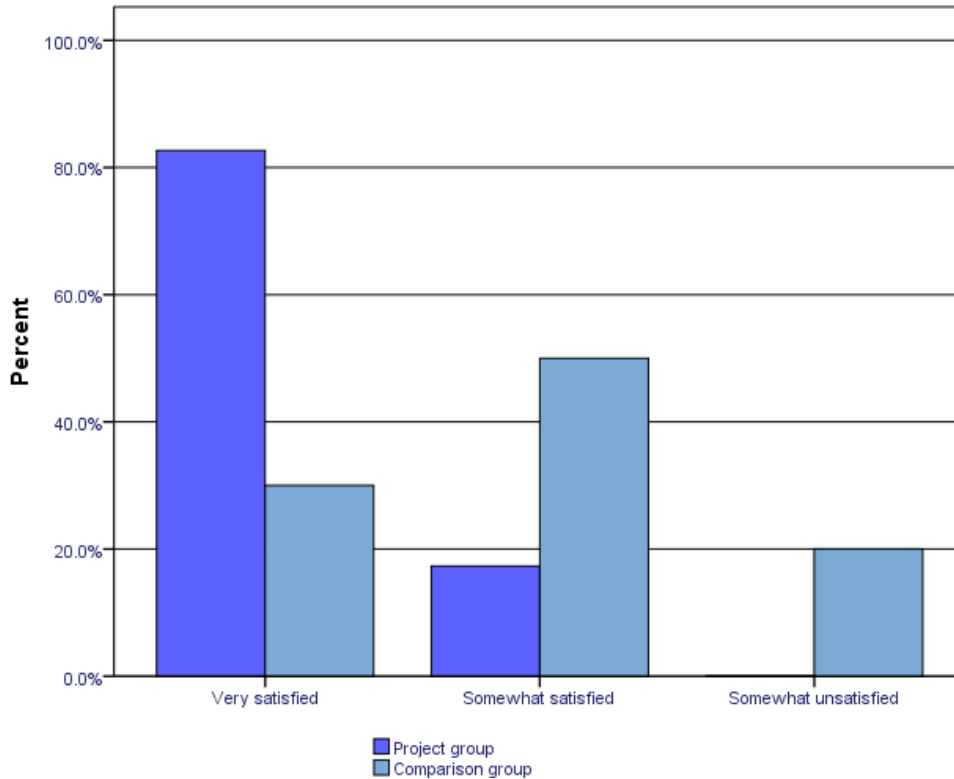
Figure 19: Respondents' Rating of the Quality of the English Language Program conducted by outside groups, by Peace Corps Volunteer Project Group Compared to Comparison Group (n=88)



### CHAPTER 3: GOAL ONE FINDINGS

A major difference was observed between the two groups in terms of satisfaction with the changes that had occurred in their schools' English language programs. Eighty-three percent of the members of the Peace Corps project group reported being very satisfied with the changes that had occurred in their schools' English language programs, compared with thirty percent of the respondents that were members of the comparison group (Figure 20).

**Figure 20: Satisfaction with Changes in the School Project Group Compared to Comparison Group (n=85)**



In spite of the lack of changes observed over the last five years, the comparison group respondents reported being satisfied with their current English language program. In fact, 30 percent were very satisfied with their current program. Nearly fifty percent were somewhat satisfied and only 20 percent were somewhat unsatisfied.

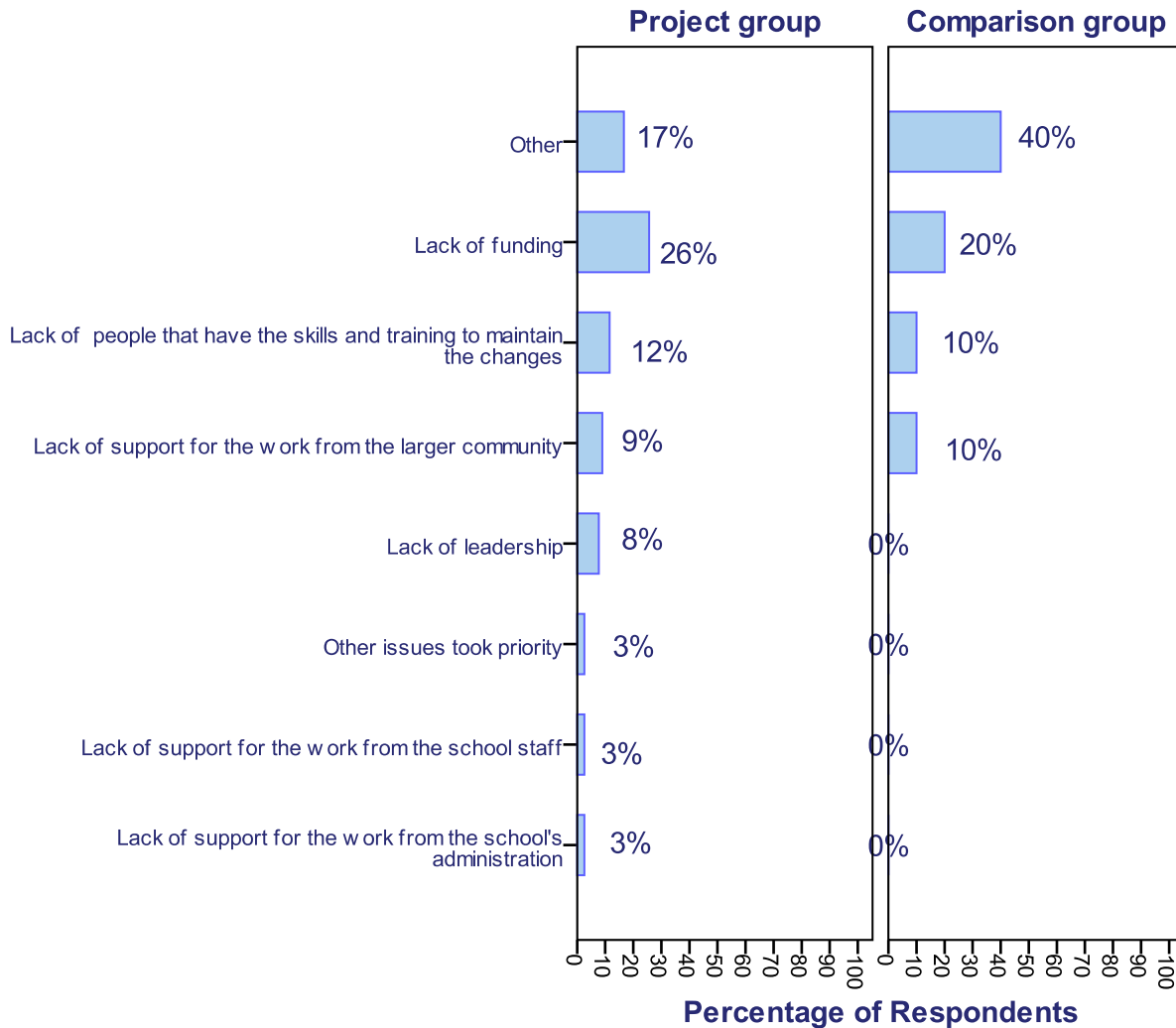
The barriers described by both groups of respondents (respondents who worked with the Volunteers and comparison group respondents) to improving their English language program (Figure 21) were nearly identical in the following areas:

- A lack of English language materials/resources
- Unmotivated students
- Structural problems arising from schools merging as other barriers to improving their English language programs

CHAPTER 3: GOAL ONE FINDINGS

Lack of funding was mentioned by close to a quarter of the Peace Corps Volunteer project group respondents (26%). Comparison group members most frequently cited other barriers (40%) (Figure 21).

**Figure 21: Barriers to Improving English Language Program: Peace Corps Volunteer Project Group Compared to Comparison Group (n=88)**



The critical difference between the two groups is the comparison group teachers’ description of the “unmet needs” of their current English program. They described the need for “different teaching methods and practices. The classes must be more interactive and the students need more exercises with listening and speaking.”

Those unmet needs are precisely the contributions being provided by Peace Corps Volunteers in Bulgarian Schools.

## Lessons Learned Regarding Goal 1 Performance

Several themes meriting additional analysis emerged from the research:

**Volunteer impact on the quantity and quality of programming by project partners.**

The quantity and quality of programming among groups involved in the project was rated as improved by 44 percent of respondents. This is lower than the other areas and should be examined to determine if Volunteers are doing enough or if there are structural problems, such as national education policy, that preclude changing the schools' curricula and programming. Alternately, the majority of the stakeholders (four out of five) reported that the programming at the school level has improved, so the issue may be one of perspective. Teachers may have more direct contact with the challenges created by policies than the stakeholders.

**Structural barriers.** Several comments referenced the current educational policy acting as a barrier to sustaining projects following the departure of the Volunteer(s). This may be an issue to take into account when the agency considers its approach to improving the educational system and/or site selection.

**Increased resources.** While the primary goal of Peace Corps is to increase human and organizational capacity, the most frequently mentioned impact of Volunteers was the acquisition of resources, such as white boards and books. It may be that the resources made the greatest impression on the individuals interviewed or that they were tangible things that were easier to remember and report as changes. One concern about this impact is that there were also several comments that the resources were not useful over time as replacement supplies were not available or the libraries or other resource rooms were later repurposed by the schools, thus erasing the short-term benefit.

**Individuals becoming more open-minded.** Individuals reported becoming more open-minded. The fact that respondents gained a better understanding of other cultures was mentioned frequently as one of the significant project impacts (Goal 2). Further analysis about how and why this is occurring would be of general benefit to the Peace Corps.

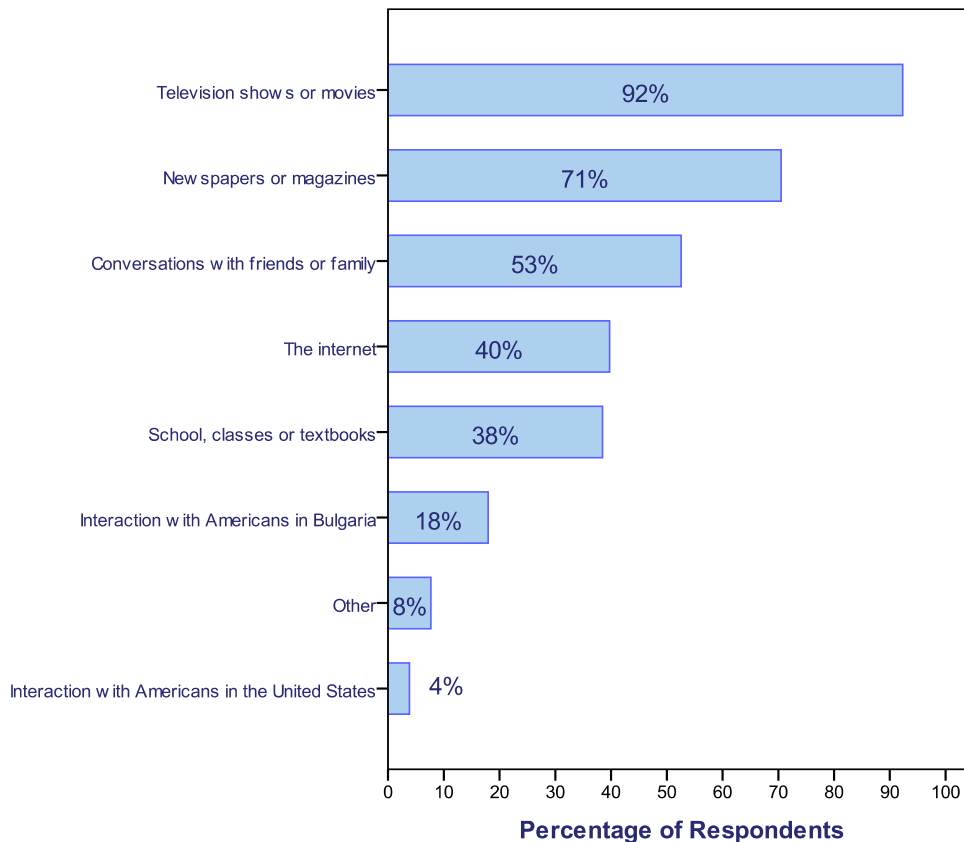
## CHAPTER 4: GOAL TWO FINDINGS

This section addresses how and to what extent Volunteers promoted a better understanding of Americans among the HCNs with whom they worked and lived. The section begins with a description of what Bulgarians thought about Americans prior to interacting with a Volunteer and how they acquired that information. The section continues with a description of how much and in what ways Bulgarians interacted with Volunteers and concludes with their opinions of Americans after interacting with Volunteers.

### How Did Bulgarians Acquire Information About Americans Prior to Interacting With a Volunteer(s)?

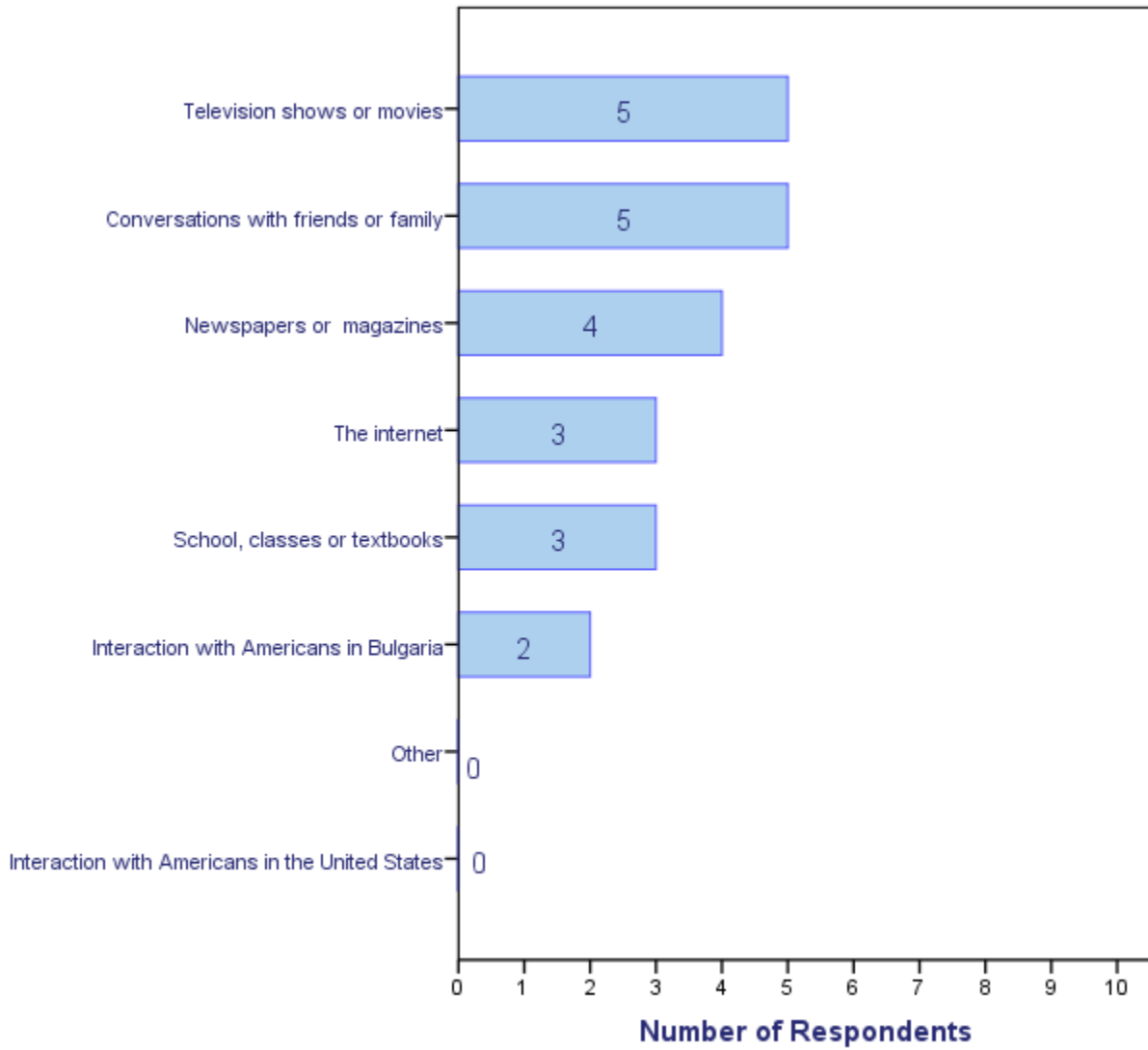
Among counterparts and beneficiaries, 92 percent mentioned television or movies as a source of information about people from the United States (Figure 22). All five host family respondents reported acquiring information about Americans from television and movies, as well as from conversations with friends or relatives (Figure 23).

**Figure 22: Counterpart and Beneficiary Sources of Information about Americans Prior to Interacting with a Volunteer: Bulgaria (n=78)**



CHAPTER 4: GOAL TWO FINDINGS

Figure 23: Host Family Member Sources of Information About Americans Prior to Interacting with a Volunteer: Bulgaria (n=5)

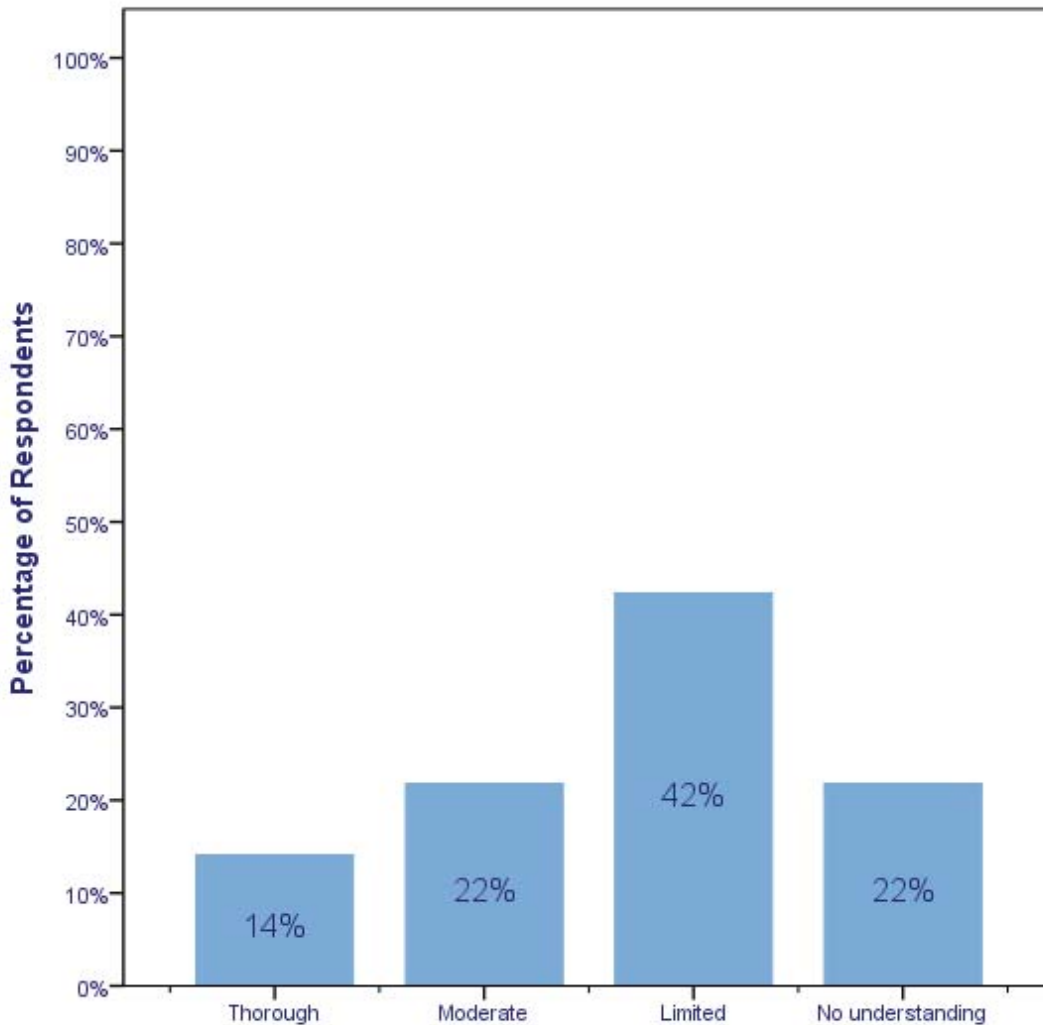




### What Were Respondents' Opinions About Americans Prior to Interacting With a Volunteer?

Most Bulgarians, counterparts and beneficiaries (64%), had a limited understanding (42%) or no understanding (22%) of Americans before working and living with the Volunteers (Figure 24).

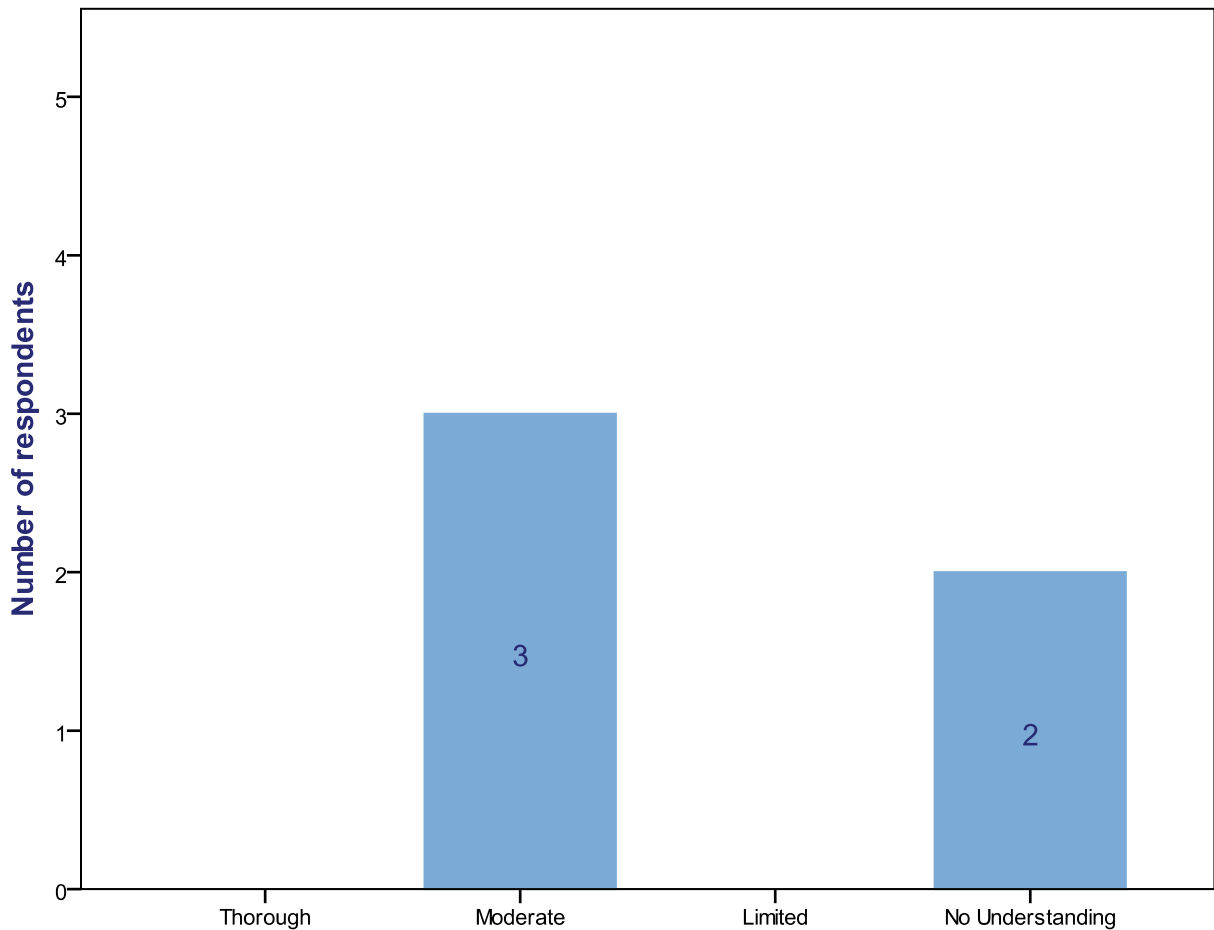
Figure 24: Counterpart and Beneficiary Levels of Understanding of Americans Before Interaction: Bulgaria (n=78)



## CHAPTER 4: GOAL TWO FINDINGS

Before interacting with Volunteers, the host family members interviewed had either a moderate-level or no understanding of Americans (Figure 25). The Bulgarian researchers suggested that “host families felt they had a slightly better understanding, possibly because they had been better briefed by Peace Corps/Bulgaria. The comparison group had a slightly higher-level of understanding, possibly saying this because they wanted to give [a]favorable answer so they would be assured of [receiving] a Volunteer<sup>14</sup>.

**Figure 25: Host Family Member Level of Understanding of Americans Before Interaction: Bulgaria (n=5)**

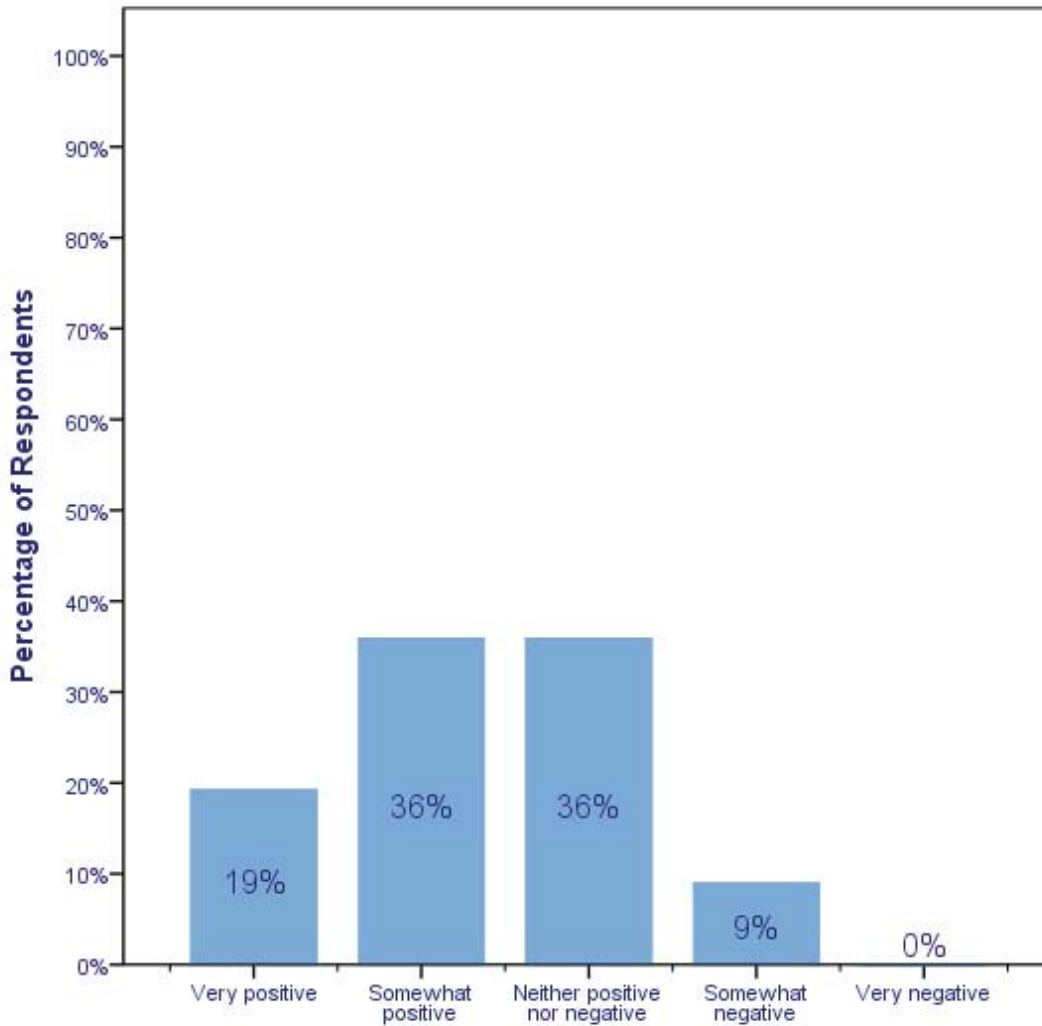


<sup>14</sup> Synovate. *U.S. Peace Corps Host Country Impact Study Bulgaria*. July-August 2009.Goal 2 Chapter.

CHAPTER 4: GOAL TWO FINDINGS

Respondents' opinions of people from the United States were high and most were either positive or neutral. Over half (55%) of respondents had a positive opinion; 36 percent of counterparts and beneficiaries reported having a neutral opinion of Americans, 36 percent reported an opinion that was somewhat positive toward Americans, and 19 percent had a very positive opinion (Figure 26).

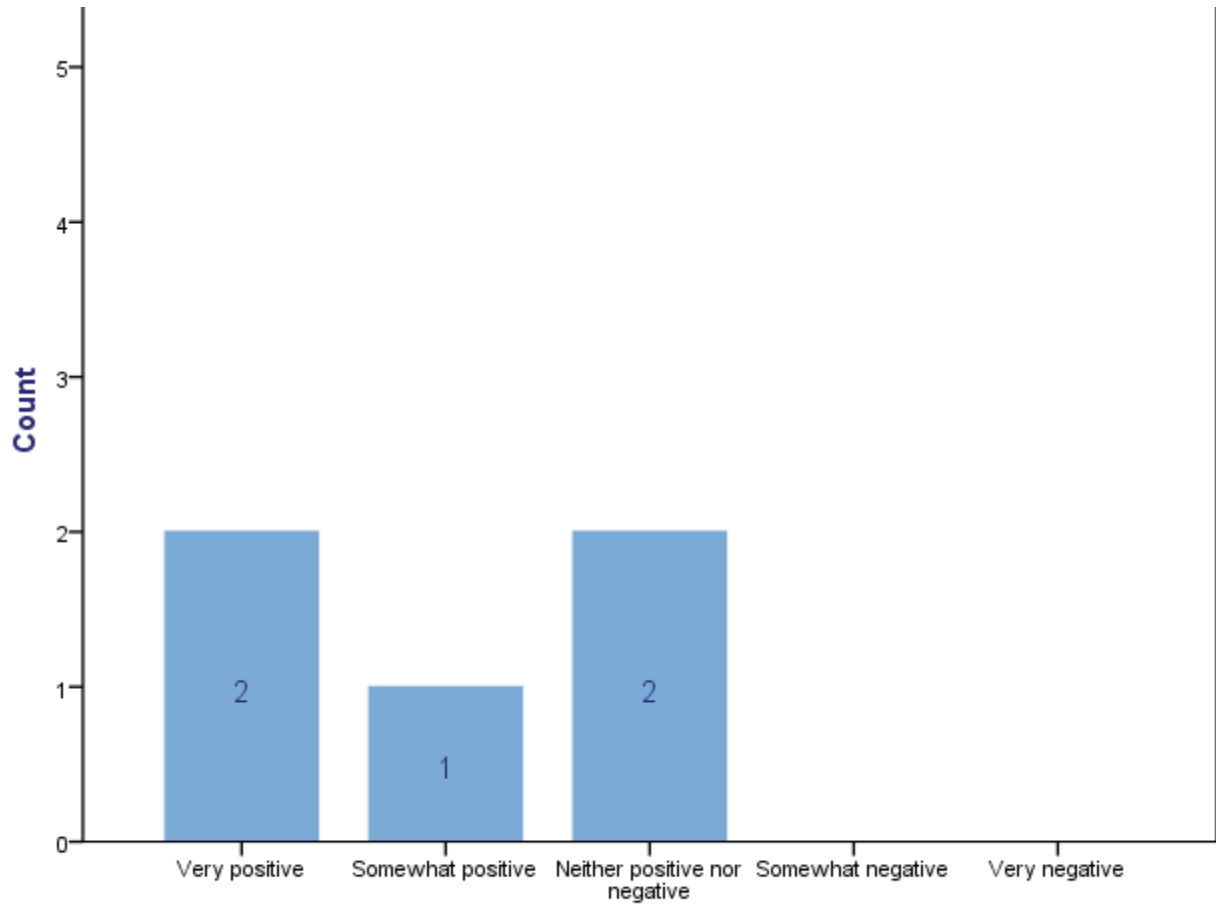
Figure 26: Counterpart and Beneficiary Opinions of Americans Before Interaction: Bulgaria (n=78)



## CHAPTER 4: GOAL TWO FINDINGS

Among host family members, all respondents indicated either a neutral or positive opinion toward Americans (Figure 27).

**Figure 27: Host Family Member Opinion of Americans Before Interaction (n=5)**



When the Bulgarians were asked about their opinions of Americans before working with the Peace Corps, they mentioned a number of characteristics, both positive and negative:

- Positive: friendly, open-minded, hard-working, positive, tolerant, and rich
- Negative: cold, narrow-minded, and workaholics

As reported by the Bulgarian researchers, some of the respondents' comments included:

- "They are proud to be Americans"
- "Normal people, with positive and negative qualities"

## CHAPTER 4: GOAL TWO FINDINGS

- “Very positive and reasonable; everybody helps the other no matter the color of the skin”<sup>15</sup>

### **HCNs’ Opinions of Americans Prior to Interacting with Volunteers:**

[I thought they were] *open-minded, outgoing, hard-working, positive, smiling and friendly.*

*I thought they were workaholics who don't pay attention to other people, don't know how to have fun or entertain themselves, and that they were cold people.*

*I thought that their educational system was worse than ours (I still think that). I thought that they were very swell-headed and that they think that everybody should know their language when in fact they make no effort to get to know other cultures.*

[I thought they were] *very open-minded people and that they try to support and help smaller communities. The USA is a big country; it's not self-contained, or only for itself; it is eager to help other countries to develop.*

## **To What Extent Did Respondents Have Experience With the Peace Corps and Volunteers?**

Both counterparts and beneficiaries reported having known an average of two Volunteers over a period of two and a half years. Host family members reported hosting an average of two Volunteers and hosting the most recent of those Volunteers for approximately three months.

## **How Much and What Kinds of Contact Did HCNs Have with Volunteers?**

Goal 2 of the Peace Corps is based on the belief that through frequent and varied interaction with Volunteers, HCNs will better understand Americans. This section describes the number and types of interactions that HCNs had with Volunteers.

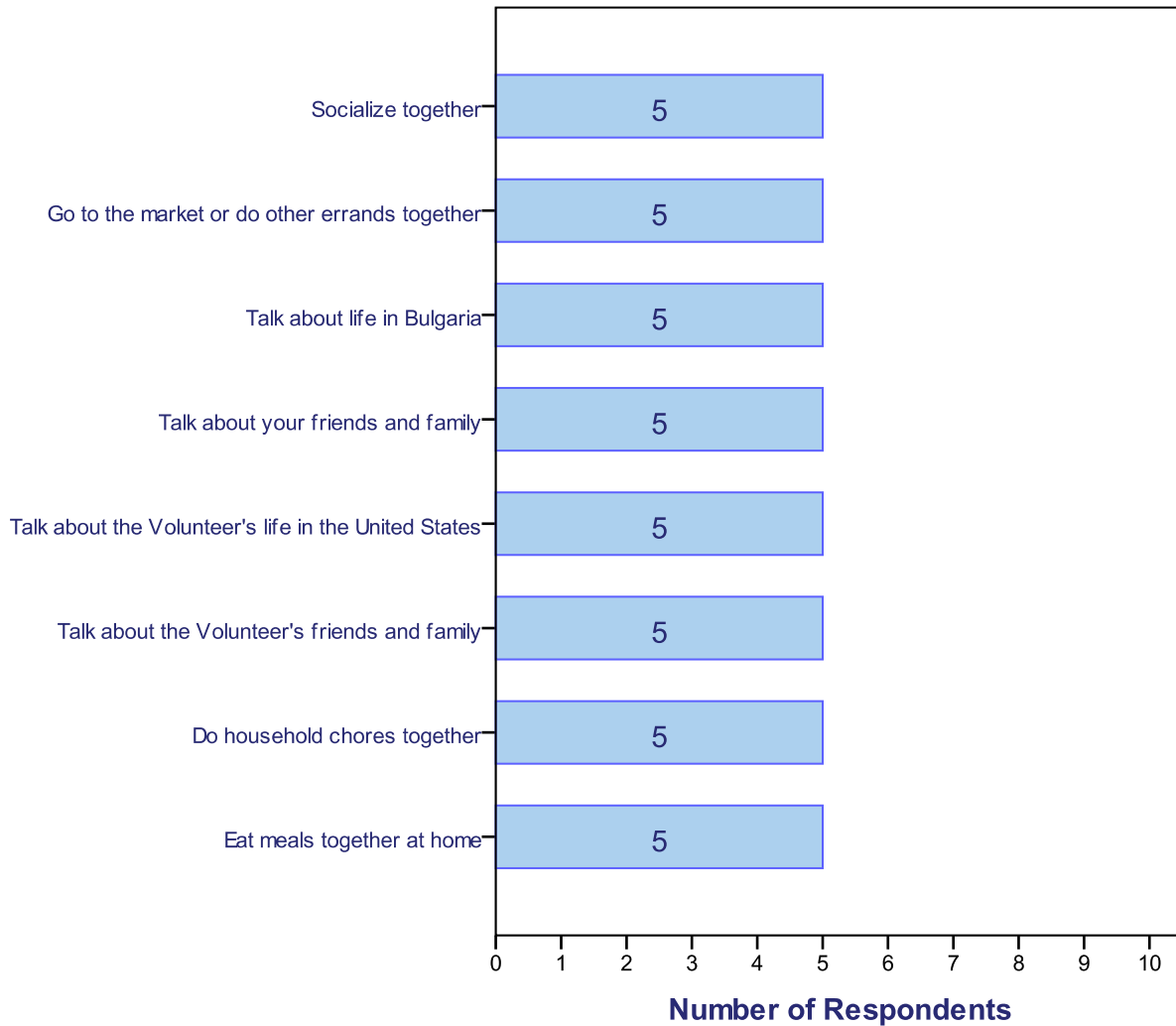
---

<sup>15</sup> Synovate. *U.S. Peace Corps Host Country Impact Study Bulgaria*. July-August 2009. Goal 2 Chapter.

CHAPTER 4: GOAL TWO FINDINGS

All of the host family members interviewed reported engaging in the common household activities asked about (Figure 28).

Figure 28: Activities That Host Family Members Shared with Volunteers: Bulgaria (n=5)

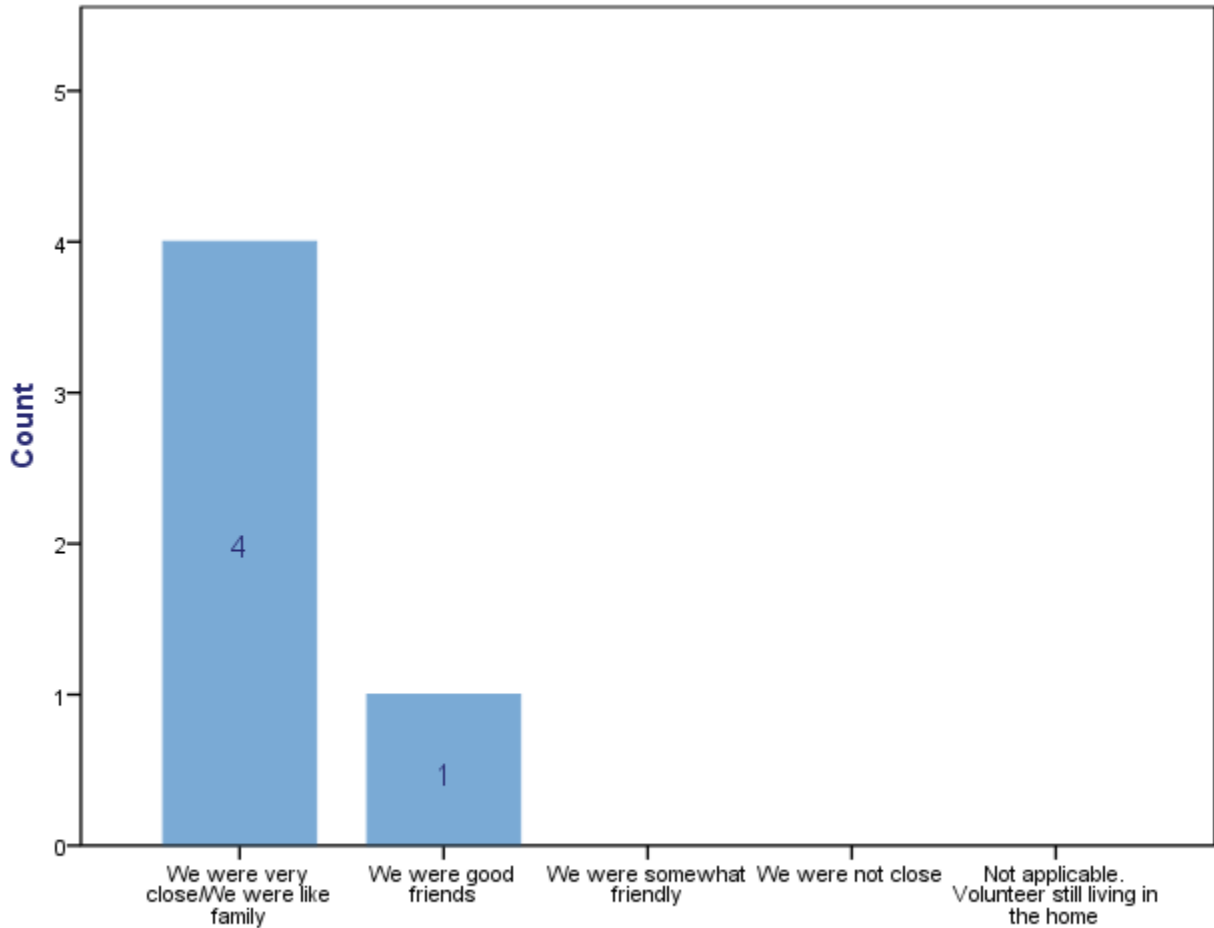


One host mother noted that “he [the Volunteer] did everything that my sons were doing; he took part in repair works, he was cutting wood, he was taking part in the preparation of winter supplies.”

CHAPTER 4: GOAL TWO FINDINGS

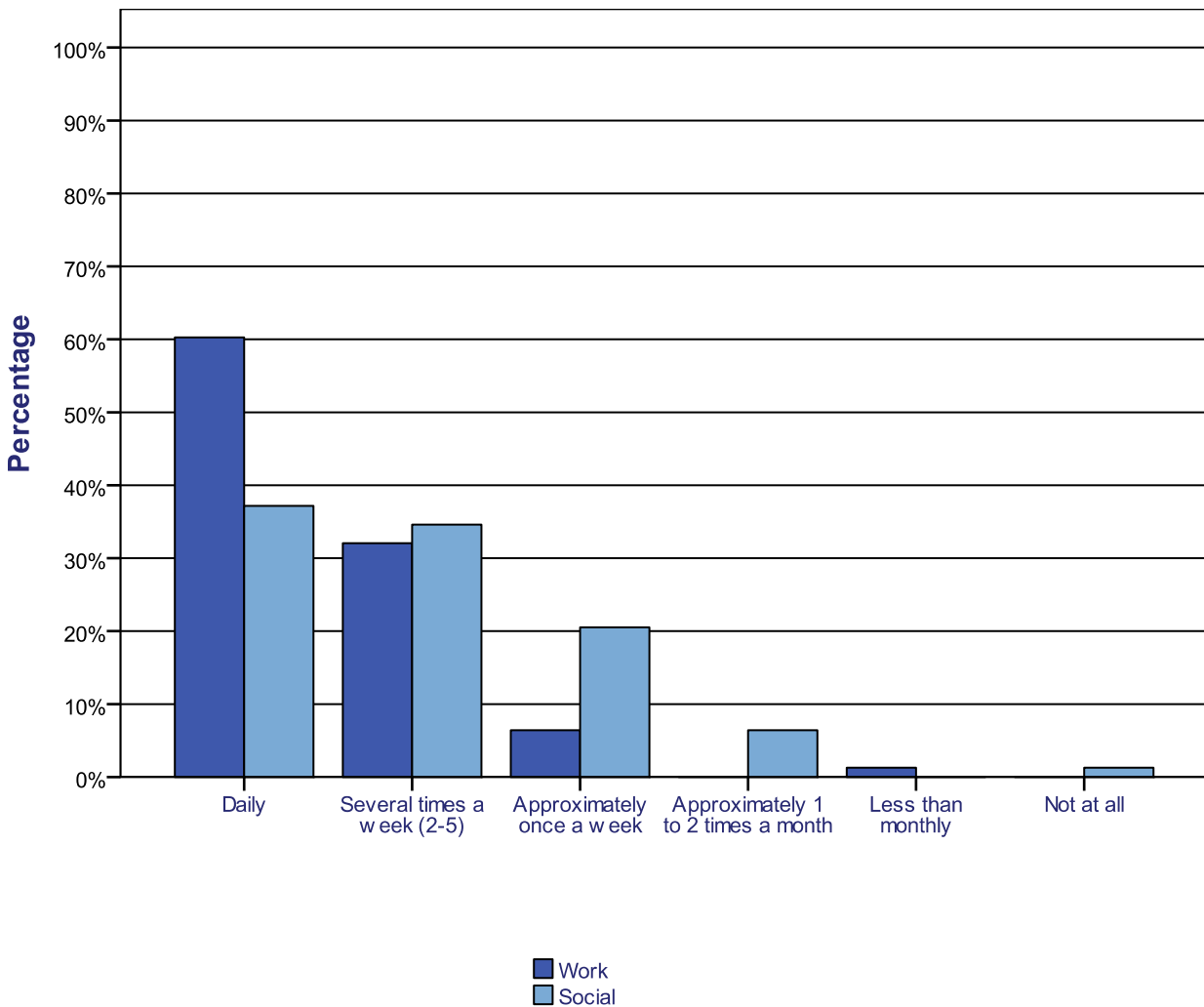
Host family members rated their relationships with the Volunteers they hosted positively, with four of the five reporting that they were very close and thought of the Volunteer as family (Figure 29). “He was as my own son; I still feel he is my own kid, even now,” said one host family member and another added, “[I think of him] as a friend and as a family member.”

Figure 29: Host Family Rating of their Relationship with the Volunteer: Bulgaria (n=5)



**Host country counterparts and beneficiaries:** When contacts were *work-related*, nearly 99 percent of beneficiaries and counterparts saw the Volunteer at least weekly, with 60 percent reporting daily contact at work. When contacts were *social* (defined as *outside of work*), nearly 40 percent reported daily contact and 92 percent reported social contact at least weekly (Figure 30).

**Figure 30: Frequency of Volunteer Interaction with Counterparts and Beneficiaries: Bulgaria (n=78)**



### Changes in HCNs’ Understanding of Americans After Knowing a Volunteer

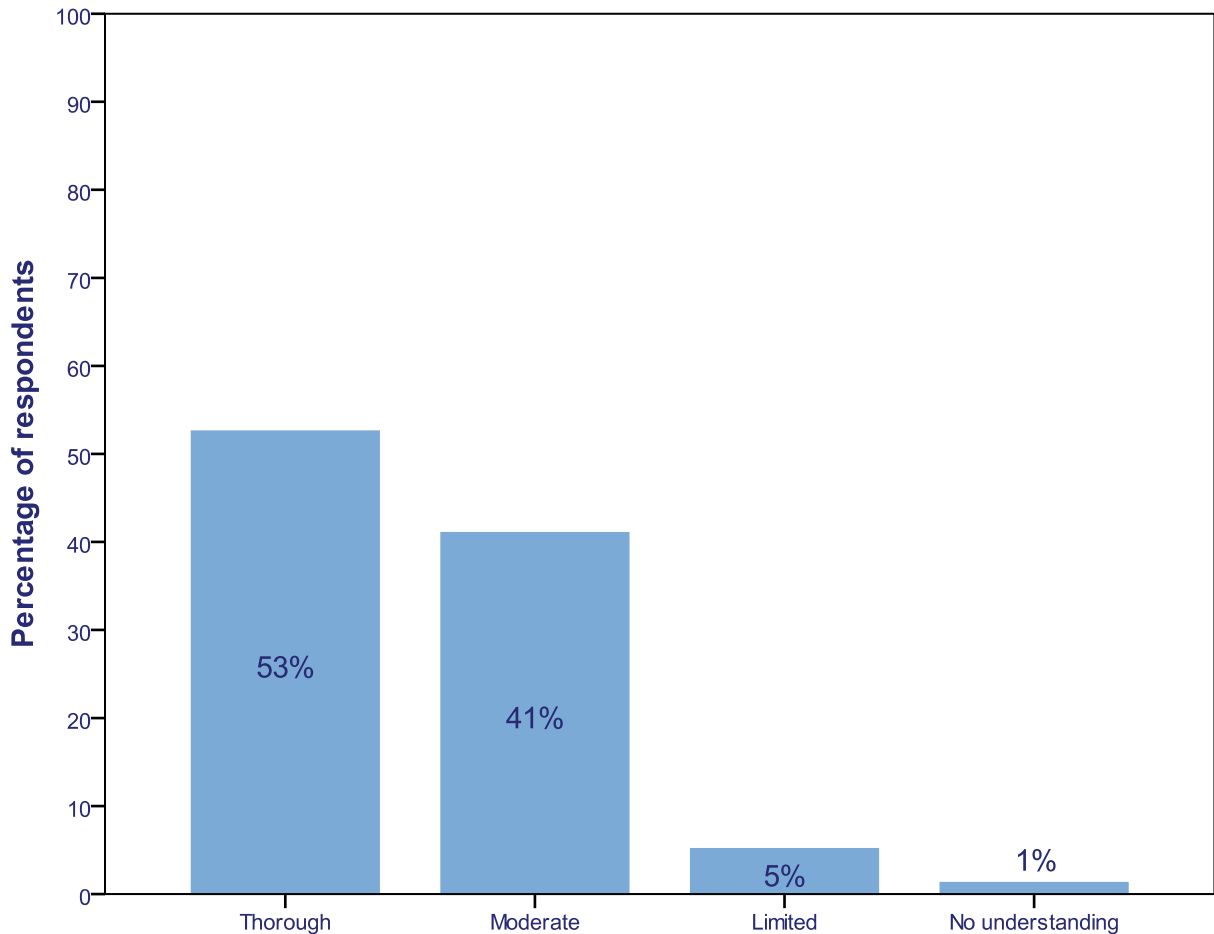
This section provides information about changes in HCNs’ opinions of Americans as well as some detail about the types of things they learned about Americans from interacting with Volunteers.



### Were Respondents' Opinions of Americans Better or Worse After Interacting with a Volunteer?

After interacting with Volunteers, 94 percent of counterparts and beneficiaries reported having a moderate or thorough understanding of Americans (Figure 31). All five of the host family members reported a thorough understanding of Americans after interacting with Volunteers.

**Figure 31: Counterpart and Beneficiaries' Change in Level of Understanding of Americans after Contact with Volunteers: Bulgaria (n=78)**



When asked what Volunteers did to change their understanding, many said there was no single thing. Others said they could not judge all Americans from a few people, while others mentioned the Volunteers' friendliness, energy, and dress habits. On the positive side, one observed:

- “He was full of initiative. He loved the students; he loved to be with them; he was organizing activities with the students all the time, like picnics... his overall attitude towards his job and the students”

## CHAPTER 4: GOAL TWO FINDINGS

On the negative side, one person observed:

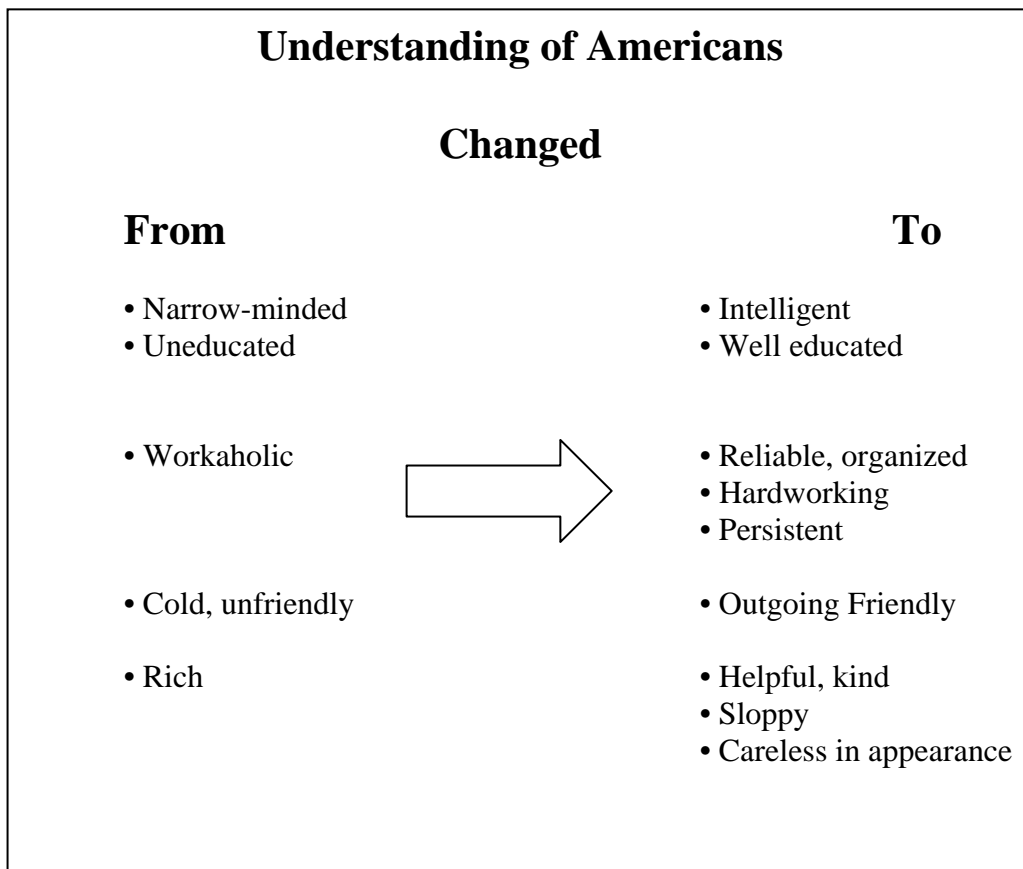
- “They were negligent in their dress and appearance. They were coming dressed in shorts to official meetings”

And on the puzzling side, a humorous comment highlights cultural differences:

- “Then they have different habits that I find quite strange - for example, they leave their bags on the floor and put their legs on the table”

One quote sums up the general attitude of the respondents:

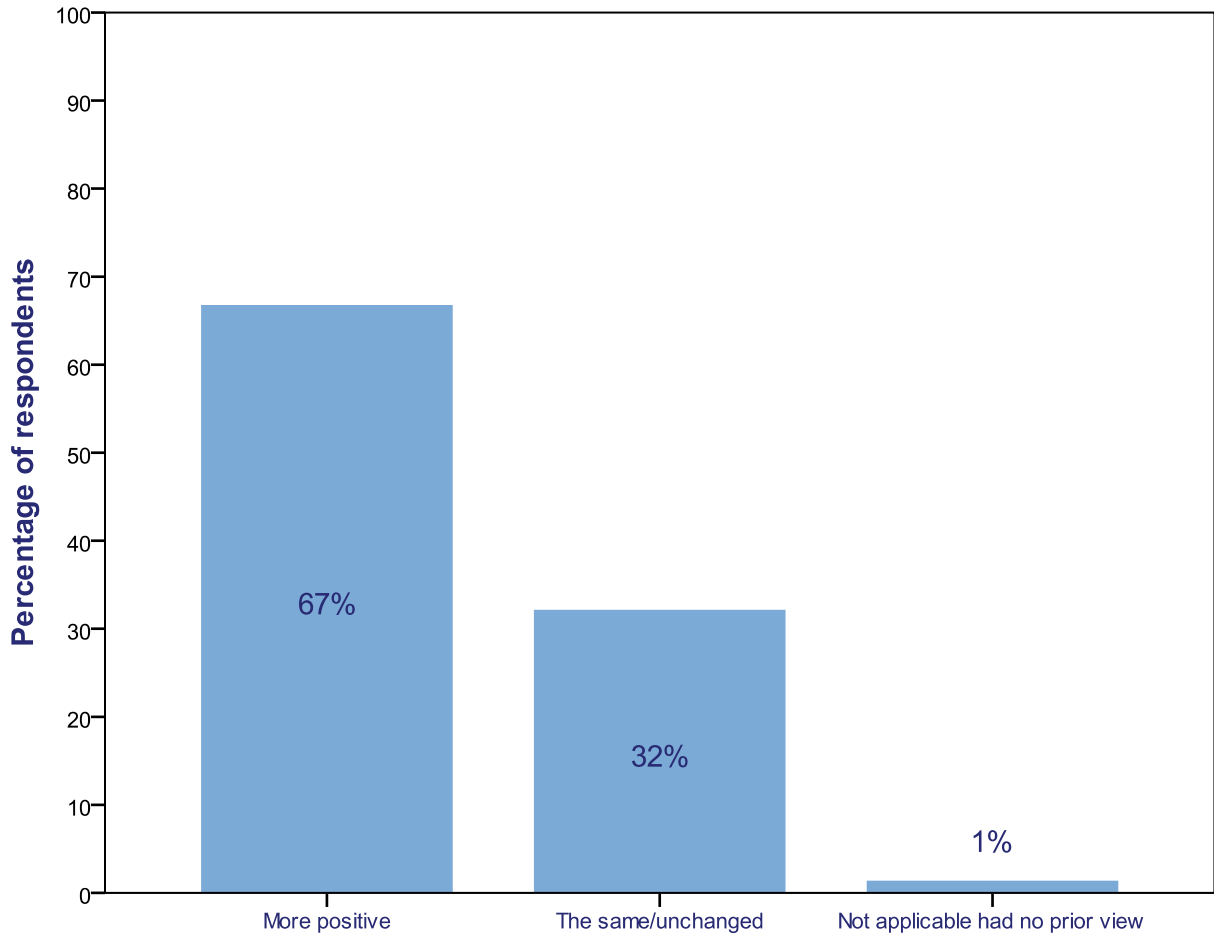
- “Every person is an individual; you cannot generalize about a nation”



CHAPTER 4: GOAL TWO FINDINGS

After interacting with Peace Corps Volunteers, 67 percent of counterparts and beneficiaries (Figure 32) and four of the five stakeholders rated their opinions of Americans as more positive. No respondent reported developing a more negative opinion.

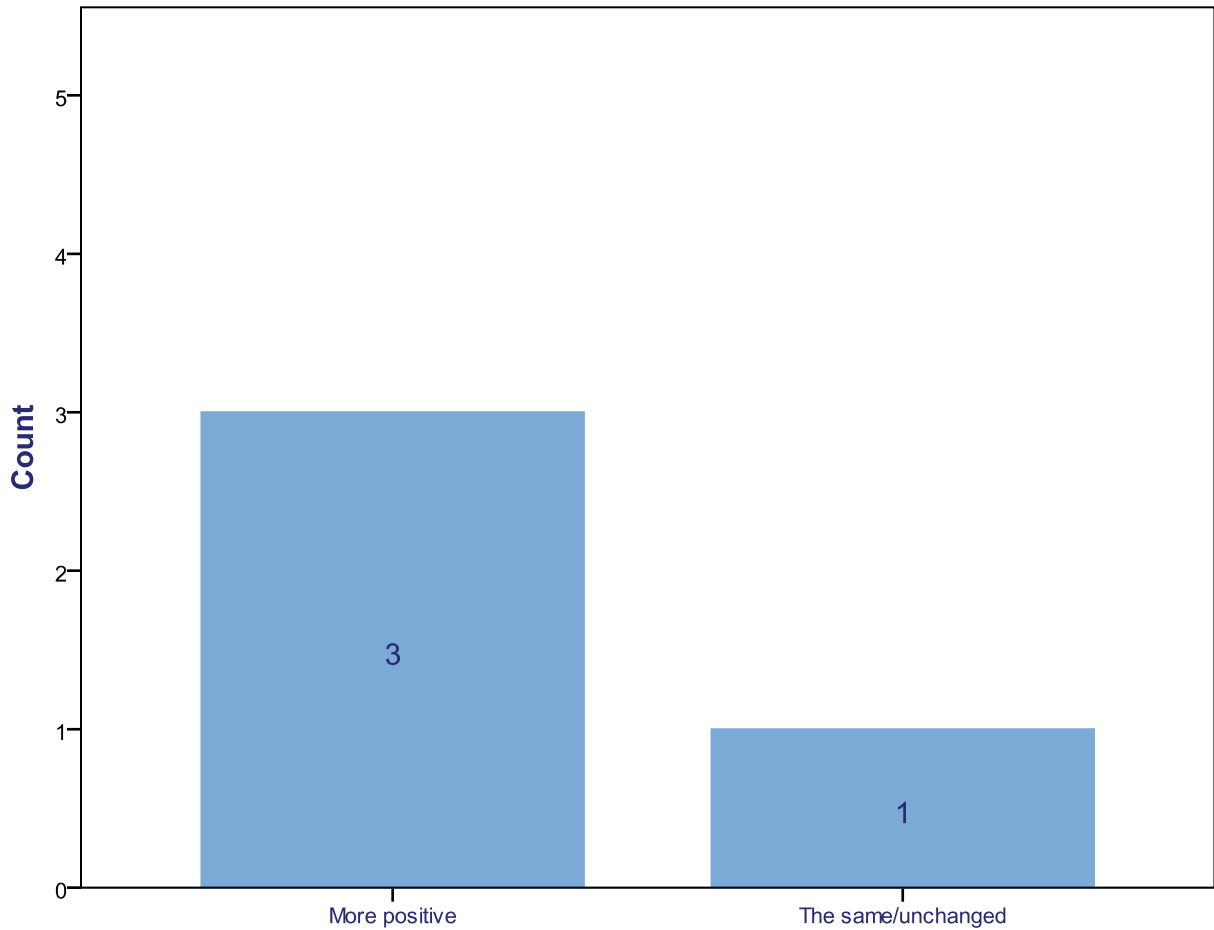
**Figure 32: Counterparts' and Beneficiaries' Change in Opinion of Americans After Contact with Volunteers: Bulgaria (n=78)**



CHAPTER 4: GOAL TWO FINDINGS

Three of the four host family members reported an improved opinion of Americans; one family's opinion remained the same (Figure 33).

**Figure 33: Host Family Members' Change in Opinion of Americans After Contact with Volunteers: Bulgaria (n=4)**

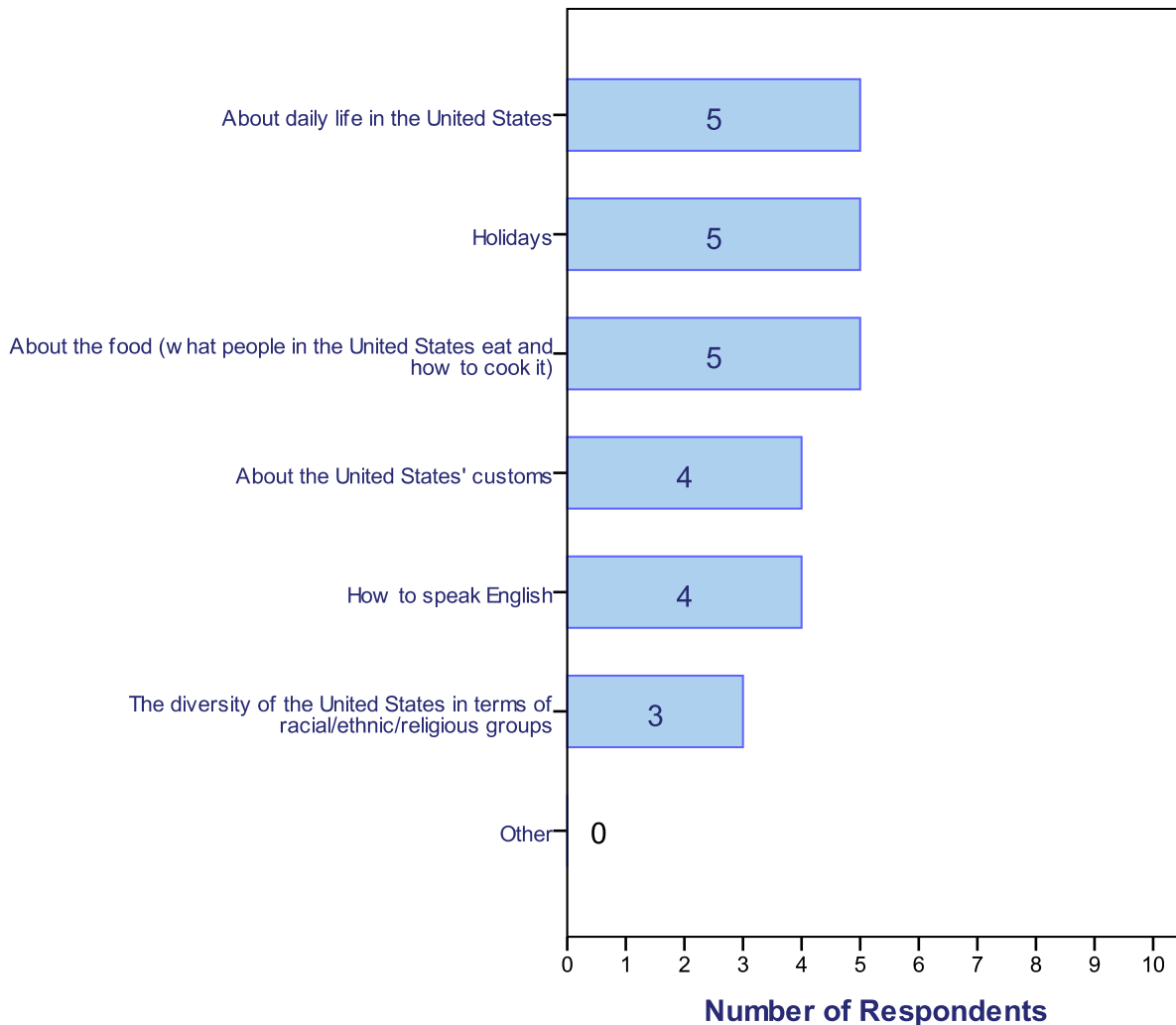


## Findings on What Bulgarians Learned About Americans from Volunteers

When asked what they learned about Americans from their interaction with Volunteers, host family members generally mentioned aspects of daily life, from both cultures (Figure 34).

- “[I learned]...about the family, work, standard of living, and education”
- “We were making comparisons between Bulgaria and the USA all the time”

Figure 34: What Host Country Nationals Report Learning from Volunteers: Bulgaria (n=5)



The host families noted that the Volunteers helped them increase their understanding of Americans because of their adherence to rules and punctuality, as well as their sense of humor. One person commented on “how strict they were – they had very precise timing for everything.”

## CHAPTER 4: GOAL TWO FINDINGS

When asked about their opinions after interacting with Volunteers, most respondents provided responses that suggested that they had enhanced their understanding and developed more realistic views of Americans. This theme emerged in responses from counterparts and beneficiaries, as well as host family members.

### **HCNs' Opinions About Americans After Interacting with Volunteers**

#### **Counterparts**

*I think that they are people just like us. The Volunteers were very different from each other. We had very simple and ordinary connections.*

*They are responsive, helpful, diligent, and have a sense of humor. They are good listeners. They appreciate your help. They don't like for others to waste their time. They are a bit negligent about their looks.*

#### **Beneficiaries**

*My ideas became clearer and more realistic.*

*My thoughts about Americans remain the same as before. I know that they are very disciplined, active, and always searching for something new and something more they can do.*

*[They are] ambitious, with a positive way of thinking, [well-meaning], communicative, friendly, open. They are not inhibited and afraid that they might be wrong; don't care much for the opinion of others.*

#### **Host family members**

*I think now that they are warmer, cordial, emotional, energetic, friendly, diligent and painstaking, open to new things and curious.*

*We can't judge the whole of America just by one kid. If all the Americans were like him, it would be great, but they are not. There are very different people, some good and some bad. We do not learn from the media about the ordinary, everyday people.*

## Lessons Learned Regarding Goal 2 Performance

One additional area for future analysis is listed below and may help to inform the training of both host families and Volunteers.

**Individual-level changes.** A frequently mentioned individual-level change among beneficiaries was becoming more open-minded and/or culturally aware.

**Volunteer attitudes and behavior.** The Bulgarians learned and increased their understanding of Americans through their interaction with Volunteers which were reported as positive. Several comments were made about the self-centered attitude of Volunteers, their intensive focus on work, and their casual and/or untidy appearance. These are issues worthy of additional analysis and might be a useful topic of conversation with Volunteers during PST.

## CONCLUSIONS

Peace Corps meets its goals of building local capacity (Goal 1) and promoting a better understanding of Americans among host country nationals (Goal 2) primarily through the service of its Volunteers. A key characteristic of this service is that Peace Corps Volunteers live in the communities where they work and deliver technical interventions directly to beneficiaries living in rural and urban areas that lack sufficient local professionals. The Host Country Impact Studies are one way Peace Corps measures the impact of its Volunteers. In particular, these studies document the HCN perspective on the work of Peace Corps Volunteers.

The findings in Bulgaria indicate that the English language-related goals were largely reached. Beneficiaries were most positive about the project's impact on students' English language skills, on the ability of the teachers to deliver high-quality English language instruction, and the increased ability to mobilize local and non-local resources.

English language fluency among students improved. Respondents also reported an increase in schools' ability to deliver high-quality English language instruction. They credited Peace Corps' projects with their acquisition of new resources (e.g., books, computers, white boards) and the implementation of new teaching approaches.

Most counterparts and beneficiaries reported improvements in their own English language ability, their capacity to mobilize local resources, and their ability to identify and address local problems. Interviewers suggested that the improvements in teachers' English language skills may have been downplayed, possibly because this would have meant admitting to inadequacies in previous performance.

One frequently mentioned impact was the acquisition of resources, such as white boards and books. It may be that these material resources made the greatest impression on the individuals interviewed or that they were tangible things that were easier to remember and report as changes. One concern about this particular finding is that there were also several comments that the resources were not useful over time as replacement supplies were not available or because the libraries or resource rooms were later repurposed by the schools, thus erasing the benefit.

In addition to interviewing HCNs who interacted with PCVs, the research team in Bulgaria also conducted interviews with teachers or school directors in sites that had applied for, but not been assigned a Volunteer in order to compare their responses to those of respondents at schools where Peace Corps Volunteers had served.

A major difference was observed between the two groups in terms of satisfaction with the changes that had occurred in their schools' English language programs. The comparison group described a series of unmet needs in their schools' English language program, including "different teaching methods and practices. The classes must be more interactive and the students need more exercises with listening and speaking."



## *CONCLUSIONS*

The respondents who had worked with Volunteers described improvements in the ability of schools to deliver quality English Language programs, in teachers' skills and use of new methods, and teachers' improved English language fluency (Figures 2 and 4).

Respondents from the communities where Peace Corps Volunteers served were more likely to report being very satisfied (83%) with their schools' English language programs during the five year period studied than were respondents from the comparison communities that did not receive Volunteers (30%).

Peace Corps Volunteer project respondents most frequently mentioned that the capacity of the local community members to mobilize resources had improved somewhat over the five year period. Comparison group members were more likely to report that their capacity had stayed the same (Figure 18).

Most respondents reported that project-related changes were maintained after the departure of the Volunteer, although some changes evident during the Volunteers' stay were discontinued, such as celebrating distinctly American holidays. All of the respondents were at least somewhat satisfied with the Peace Corps' work.

Regarding Peace Corps' Goal 2, HCNs who interacted with Volunteers reported more positive opinions of Americans. A frequently mentioned individual-level change among beneficiaries was becoming more open-minded and/or culturally aware. Some comments about the Volunteer's extremely intense focus on work and their casual and/or untidy appearance suggest increased cross-cultural awareness on the part of the Peace Corps Volunteers about societal norms in Bulgaria would be appropriate.

Most respondents, however, spoke positively about what they learned from the Volunteers and how that had increased their understanding of Americans.

The Peace Corps will continue its efforts to assess its impact and to use these findings to improve its operations and programming.

# APPENDIX 1: METHODOLOGY

## How Were the Community Sites and Interview Respondents Selected?

In Bulgaria, the team conducted interviews at 18 education placements. At post, a representative, rather than a random, sample was selected from the list of Volunteer assignments since 2003. Sites that were extremely remote were excluded. Study sites were randomly selected from the remaining list. Individual respondents were then selected in one of three ways:

1. In many sites, only one counterpart had worked with a Volunteer. In those cases, once the site was selected, so was the counterpart.
2. With regard to the selection of beneficiaries and host family members and in cases where more than one possible counterpart was available, post staff and /or the Volunteer proposed individuals known to have had significant involvement in the project or with the Volunteer. Within a host family, the person with the most experience with the Volunteer was asked for an interview.
3. In cases where there were still multiple possible respondents, the research team randomly selected the respondents.

## How Were Data Collected?

The research questions and interview protocols were designed by OSIRP staff and refined in the pilot studies through consultations with the country directors and regional staff at the Peace Corps.

A team of local interviewers, trained and supervised by a host country senior researcher contracted in-country, conducted all the interviews. Interviewers used written protocols specific to each category of respondent. The interviewers conducted face-to-face structured interviews with the following groups of Bulgarian nationals:

- **Project partners/counterparts:** Teachers in either primary or secondary schools
- **Project beneficiaries:** President of the School Board, teachers, school directors, students, municipality officers
- **Host family members:** families that hosted or served as landlords to Volunteers during all or part of their service
- **Project stakeholders:** Ministers of education and education experts (e.g., the Senior Inspector of Policy in Secondary Education)
- **Comparison group respondents:** Teachers or school directors in sites that had applied for, but not been assigned a PCV

## APPENDIX 1: METHODOLOGY

The research teams also reviewed existing performance data routinely reported by posts in the Project Status Reports, as well as the results of the Peace Corps' Volunteer Surveys. However, the results presented in this report are almost exclusively based on the interview data collected through this study.

Ninety-eight individuals were interviewed in Bulgaria (Table 2) for this study.

**Table 2: Description of Study Participants**

<b>Interview Type</b>	<b>Number of People</b>	<b>Number of Sites</b>
Project counterparts	56	18
Project beneficiaries	22	18
Host family members	5	-
Project stakeholders	5	-
Comparison group respondents	10	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>-</b>

### What Data Were Collected?

Interviewers used written protocols specific to each category of respondent. The counterparts and beneficiaries were asked questions related to both Goal 1 and Goal 2. Host family members were asked only questions related to Goal 2. The categories covered for each of the three groups are shown below (Table 3).

**Table 3: Summary of Interview Questions by Respondent Type**

<b>Respondent Type</b>	<b>Question Categories</b>	<b>Approximate Length of interview</b>
Counterpart  <i>Stakeholder and comparison group questions were adapted from the counterpart questions.</i>	Goal 1 1. Clarification of the project purpose 2. Respondent's work history in the field and with the Peace Corps 3. Frequency of contact with the Volunteer 4. Project orientation 5. Project outcomes and satisfaction with the project 6. Community and individual-level changes 7. Maintenance of project outcomes Goal 2 1. Source of information and opinion of Americans prior to the Peace Corps work 2. Type of information learned about Americans from	45 minutes

APPENDIX 1: METHODOLOGY

Respondent Type	Question Categories	Approximate Length of interview
	interaction with the Volunteer 3. Opinion of Americans after interaction with the Volunteer 4. Particular things that Volunteers did that helped improve respondent’s understanding of Americans	
Beneficiary	Goal 1 1. Clarification of the project purpose 2. Frequency of contact with the Volunteer 3. Project outcomes and satisfaction with the project 4. Community and individual-level changes 5. Maintenance of project outcomes Goal 2 1. Source of information and opinion of Americans prior to the Peace Corps work 2. Type of information learned about Americans from interaction with the Volunteer 3. Opinion of Americans after interaction with the Volunteer 4. Particular things that Volunteers did that helped improve respondent’s understanding of Americans	30 minutes
Host Family Member	Goal 2 1. Source of information and opinion of Americans prior to the Peace Corps work 2. Type of information learned about Americans from interaction with the Volunteer 3. Opinion of Americans after interaction with the Volunteer 4. Particular things that Volunteers did that helped improve respondent’s understanding of Americans 5. Behavioral changes based on knowing the Volunteer	30 minutes

**How Will the Information Be Used?**

The information gathered will inform Peace Corps staff at post and headquarters about host country nationals’ perceptions of the community projects and the Volunteers. In conjunction with Volunteer feedback from the Annual Volunteer Survey, this information will allow Peace Corps to better understand its impact, identify areas for improvement, and move to address those findings. For example, the information may be useful for Volunteer training and outreach to host families and project partners.

This information is also needed to provide performance information to OMB and the United States Congress. As part of the Peace Corps Improvement Plan, drafted in response to its 2005 Program Assessment Rating Tool review, the Peace Corps proposed the creation of “baselines

## APPENDIX 1: METHODOLOGY

to measure results including survey data in countries with Peace Corps presence to measure the promotion of a better understanding of Americans on the part of the peoples served.”<sup>16</sup> Feedback from the original pilots was used to revise the methodology rolled out to nine posts in Fiscal Year 2009 and eight posts in FY 2010, for a total of 17 posts across Peace Corps’ three geographic regions: Africa; Inter-America and the Pacific; and Europe, Mediterranean and Asia. Taken together, these studies contribute to Peace Corps’ ability to document the degree to which the agency is able to both meet the needs of host countries for trained men and women and to promote a better understanding of Americans among the peoples served.

---

<sup>16</sup> Downloaded from : <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/expectmore/summary/10004615.2005.html> 9-10-08