



PEACE  
CORPS

# El Salvador HOST COUNTRY IMPACT STUDY

## Purpose

In 2008, the Peace Corps launched a series of studies to determine the impact of Volunteers in meeting two of the agency's three goals: building local capacity and promoting a better understanding of Americans among local people in host countries. These Host Country Impact Studies are unique in providing feedback from the people who lived and worked with Peace Corps Volunteers. A local research team conducted this study in November and December of 2011, interviewing 126 respondents in 20 communities, and submitted a final report to the post upon completion of the fieldwork. The Peace Corps Office of Strategic Information, Research, and Planning developed the methods and protocols, trained the local researchers, and produced a series of reports from this and other Host Country Impact Studies.

## Study Focus: Youth Development Program in El Salvador

As of 2013, 2,223 Volunteers have served in El Salvador since Peace Corps opened in 1961. The goal of the Youth Development Project is to provide Salvadoran youth with the necessary tools and resources to become active community members and have success in family life and their work. Data for this study were collected from project participants (including counterparts and adult beneficiaries) and from students.

### Peace Corps Goal One

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

## Findings

Youth Development objectives achieved:

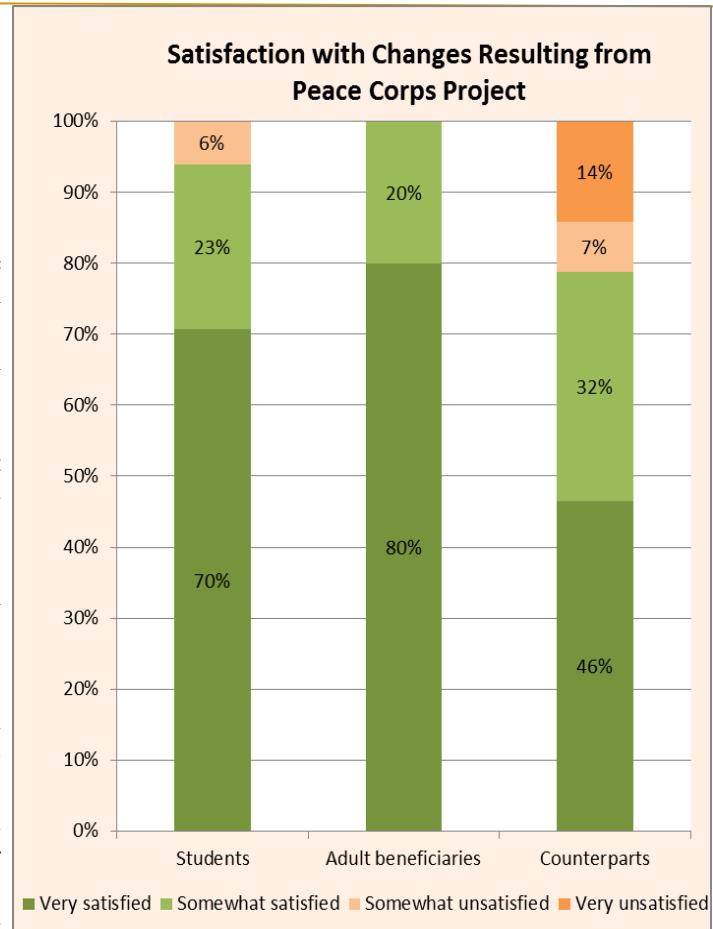
- 87 percent of project participants stated that Peace Corps' work was more effective than that of other youth development groups operating in their communities.
- 96 percent of project participants reported that youth were taking more active leadership roles in their communities.
- 95 percent of project participants reported improvement in teachers' strategies to create a more participatory classroom, and 65 percent of students reported more participation and better attendance in class.
- 90 percent of project participants reported that youth were choosing healthier lifestyles.

Changes were sustained:

- Of the 88 percent of project participants who reported more youth participation in extracurricular activities, 73 percent reported that this change was sustained.
- Of the 96 percent of project participants who reported positive change related to serving as a role model for youth, 83 percent sustained the change.
- 64 percent of counterparts and 58 percent of adult beneficiaries use their new skills daily in their professional life.

Secondary School Student: *"Classes are more participatory now. We are motivated to attend classes and have a greater desire to learn."*

Youth group member: *"It was different because it was very dynamic. [The Volunteer] got excited about teaching, which was contagious, so we got all excited about learning."*



Secondary School Student: *"I have followed the [Volunteer's] road by volunteering. I told myself, If they come this far to help our community, why can't I do the same?"*

Youth group leader: *"[I am] very satisfied because I have learned about new places and I have shared with other youth new things like technology, development, leadership, and why we should appreciate the environment."*



## Peace Corps Goal Two

*"To help promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of the people served."*

### Findings

Before interacting with Volunteers:

- Project partners and beneficiaries stated they had previous knowledge of Americans, primarily from conversations with family members living in the United States.
- 54 percent of counterparts, 50 percent of the adult beneficiaries, 22 percent of students, and 29 percent of host family members had a very positive opinion of Americans.

After interacting with Volunteers:

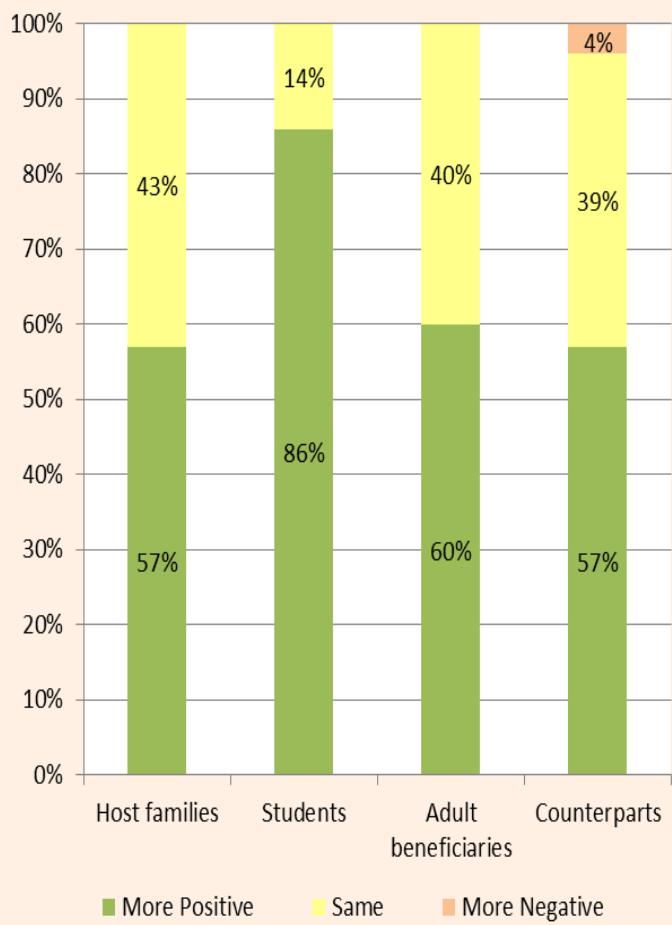
- 57 percent of counterparts, 60 percent of adult beneficiaries, 86 percent of students, and 57 percent of host family members indicated that they had a more positive opinion of Americans.
- Project participants and beneficiaries described Americans as good, friendly, kind, and social people who are willing to share their knowledge and are helpful, altruistic, and collaborative.
- Students stated that they now try to emulate the Volunteers' positive approach to life, kindness, respect, and easygoing manner in terms of making friends regardless of race, age, gender, or economic class.

Secondary school student *"I am very participatory—I am a volunteer at my school. I am motivated to continue with my studies. All of this is thanks to the values the Volunteer instilled in me."*

Secondary School Student: *"My opinion has had a radical change because I realized that they were good people. They liked our town and our food. They are very kind and they collaborated with us."*

Counterpart: *"They [Volunteers] are special people. They came here and taught us something that we didn't know about the gringos: that they are our friends not just for the moment but for life."*

Opinion of Americans After Interacting with Volunteers



Overall, teachers learned to create more participatory classrooms, and adults reported becoming role models for youth. Students increased their participation and attendance in their classes as well as in extracurricular activities. Participants' opinions about Americans became more positive.