



PEACE
CORPS

Fiji 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 Fijian research team conducted this study in the winter of 2010, interviewing 189 respondents in 19 communities, and submitted a final report to the post. The Peace Corps Office of Strategic Information, Research, and Planning developed the methods and protocols, trained the local researchers, and has produced a series of standard format reports from this and other Host Country Impact Studies.

Study Focus: Integrated Environmental Resource Management Project

As of 2011, 2,294 Volunteers have served in Fiji since Peace Corps opened in 1968. The goal of the Integrated Environmental Resource Management project was to build community members' capacity to maintain their environmental resources and improve their livelihoods by learning more about the environment and acquiring management skills.

Peace Corps Goal One

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

Findings

Environmental objectives achieved:

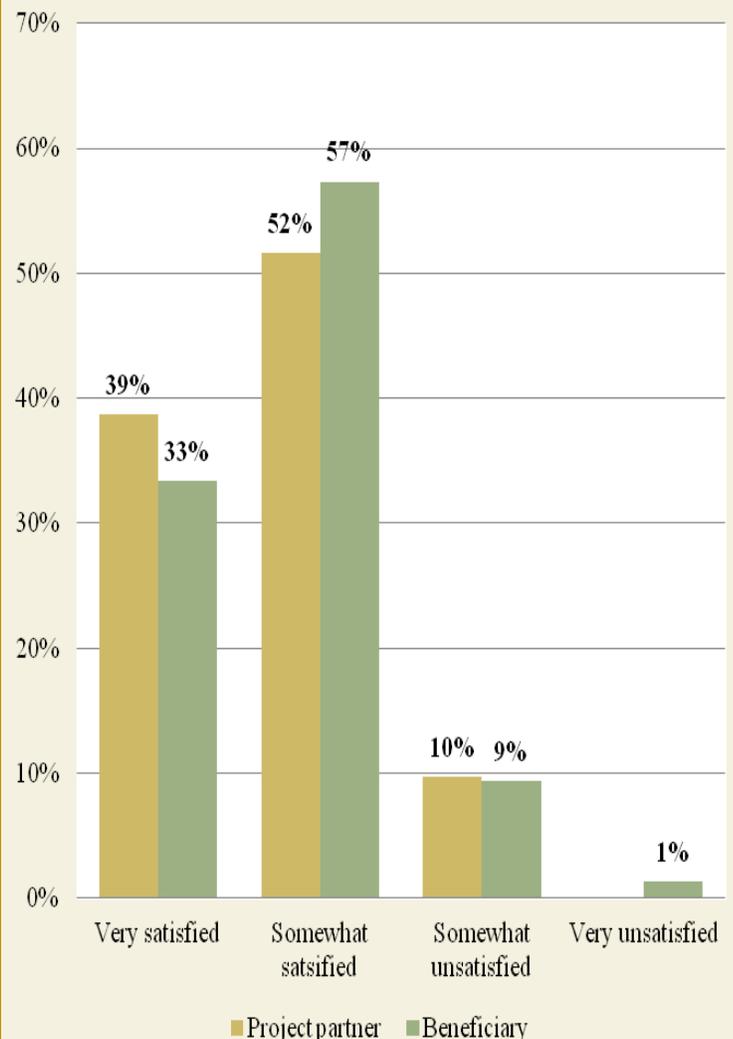
- One of the most significant outcomes of the project was an increase in marine diversity and the return of fish species to coastal waters through Marine Protected Areas created by Volunteers and villagers.
- 97 percent of project partners and 87 percent of beneficiaries said communities improved their capacity in waste management, water, and sanitation practices.
- 90 percent of project partners saw improvements in environmental and livelihood security and natural resource management practices.
- 85 percent of beneficiaries reported taking more responsibility for the environment.

Sustainability:

- 61 percent of partners and 68 percent of beneficiaries reported using the environmental skills they learned from the Volunteer on a daily basis.
- The most sustained activities were in the areas of waste management, sanitation, and natural resource management practices.

Project partner: *"The marine survey gave us information about the types of marine species we have and the ones we lost. The Marine Protected Area brought back those missing fish species."*

Satisfaction with Changes Resulting from Peace Corps Project





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 participants learned about Americans from the internet, friends and relatives, and school text books.
- Fijian respondents described Americans as independent, smart and hard-working. Many recalled positive experiences with American soldiers in Fiji during WWII.
- Americans were also described by respondents as rude, exploitative, violent, rich, and white, opinions they said were based on television shows, movies, and tourists who visit Fiji.

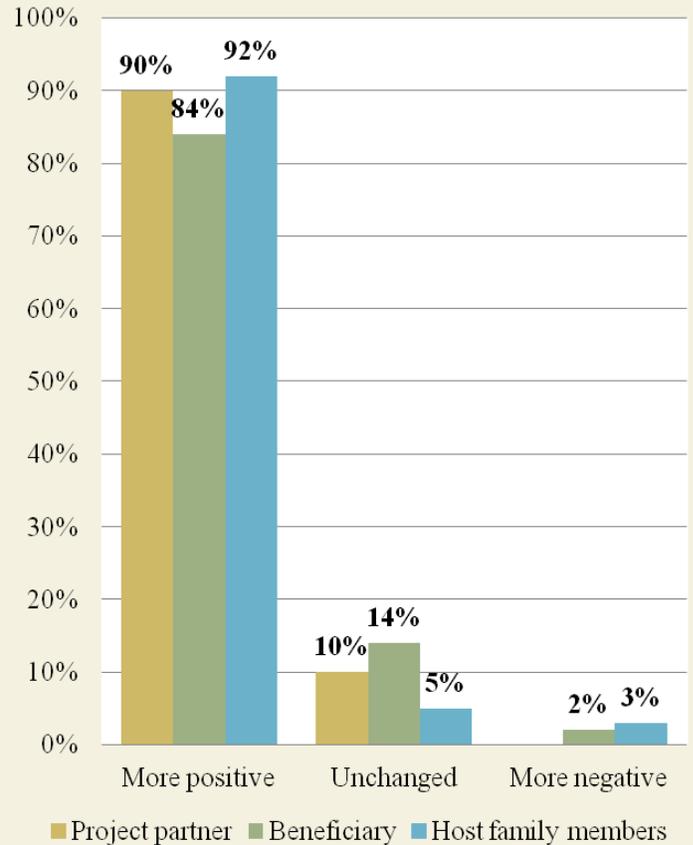
After interacting with Volunteers:

- Project partners and beneficiaries described Americans as honest and caring, and as people who were transparent in communication and participatory in practice.
- Many respondents said the Volunteers were able to “live like us” and did not discriminate against villagers.
- Project partners and beneficiaries said they worked better as a team and in the community; were more respectful, responsible, and honest with others; and better able to work across cultures after interacting with a Volunteer.

Host family member: *“I never thought about Americans in particular, but now I feel that if there are more like her, the world would be a friendlier place.”*

Beneficiary: *“He lived the Fijian way of life—he joined the church, attended funerals, learned to share his belongings, and forgot about his racial identity.”*

Opinion of Americans After Interacting with Volunteers



Overall, participants improved their local environments by adopting better waste management, water, and sanitation practices, and creating the Marine Protected Areas. Mosquitoes and sanitation-related illness decreased and fish species returned to coastal waters. The vast majority of participants reported more positive opinions of Americans after working with a Volunteer.