



*Office of Strategic Information,
Research, and Planning*

Host Country Impact Study Mali



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

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS¹

Several people at Peace Corps/headquarters were instrumental in launching the pilot studies in 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. The country desk officers and sector specialists, Jason Burns, Dawn Hodge, Frances Kambour, Nicole Lewis, Frank Smith, and Peggy Seufert, provided the crucial link between OSIRP researchers and the posts. Thank you.

The interest and support from Peace Corps staff in the countries where the research was conducted were critical in this endeavor. Our sincere appreciation is extended to country directors Lee Lacy, Armenia; Romeo Massey, Dominican Republic; and Michael Simsik, Mali; and their staff: Jason Compy, Diana Sargsyan, and Gayane Zargaryan in Armenia; Martina Barinas, Miguel Leon, and Tamara Simo in the Dominican Republic; and Seydou Coulibaly in Mali. The OSIRP team is especially appreciative of the contributions provided by Dr. Romeo Massey during the initial design phase of the research.

The success of the studies is ultimately due to the work of the local research teams that skillfully encouraged the partners² of Peace Corps Volunteers to share their experiences and perspectives. The teams were headed by senior researchers Zhirayr Edilyan in Armenia, Jose Ricardo Roques in the Dominican Republic, and Mamadou Diallo in Mali.

¹ Although these studies were a team effort by all members of the OSIRP staff, we would like to recognize Alice-Lynn Ryssman for her role as the study lead and the significant support provided by Susan Jenkins.

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

ACRONYMS AND DEFINITIONS

Acronyms

EMA	Europe, the Mediterranean and Asia
HCN	Host Country National
IAP	Inter-America and the Pacific
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OSIRP	Office of Strategic Information, Research and Planning
PC/M	Peace Corps/Mali
SED	Small Enterprise Development

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	People who have a major involvement in the design, implementation or results of the project

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

In 2008, the Peace Corps launched a series of studies to determine the impact of 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.³ While providing critical insight into the Volunteer experience, the survey can only address one side of the Peace Corps' story. The host country impact studies are unique for their focus on learning about the Peace Corps' impact directly from host country nationals who lived and worked with Volunteers.

This report presents the findings from the pilot study which was conducted in Mali during the summer and fall of 2008. The focus of the research was the Small Enterprise Development (SED) Project.

Purpose of the Host Country Impact Studies

Mali's Host Country Impact Study was initiated to assess the degree to which the Peace Corps is able to both meet the needs of the country in developing the capacities of small businesses and to promote a better understanding of Americans among host country nationals. The study will also allow the Peace Corps to have a better picture of the SED Project and address areas where it could be improved.

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

³Peace 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.

Evaluation Methodology

This evaluation report is based on data provided by counterparts and beneficiaries of the Small Enterprise Development Project, including:

- 43 Counterparts
- 41 Beneficiaries
- 22 Host family members

The overall survey reached 106 respondents in 14 urban communities.

Interviews were conducted from August 12 to October 9, 2008 (see Appendix 1 for a full description of the research methodology and contact OSIRP for a copy of the interview questionnaire).

The evaluation studies are designed by Peace Corps/headquarters' Office of Strategic Information, Research and Planning (OSIRP) and were implemented in-country by Malian Senior Researcher Mamadou Diallo and his team of interviewers.

Project Design and Purpose

The goal of the Small Enterprise Development Project is to provide business and organizational development advising/consulting to small business owners and community-based organizations, as well as to expand access to savings and credit institutions.

The intended results are to:

- Increase basic business skills (e.g., literacy, numeracy, management capabilities)
- Increase the ability of small business owners to benefit from the services of micro-finance institutions
- Increase community members' ability to start and run profitable businesses

Evaluation Findings

The evaluation findings confirm the successful implementation of the Small Enterprise Development Project by Peace Corps/Mali (PC/M). While the report provides a detailed description of all the study questions, the key findings are:

Goal 1 Findings

Successful Transfer of Organizational, Technical, and Business Management Skills

“Artisans have woven sustainable and strong commercial relationships with external partners. Our members each have an e-mail address now, which was not the case before. Due to the nature of our market demands, the quality of our products has improved.”
(Counterpart’s observation on the impact of Peace Corps activities.)

- 98% of counterparts and beneficiaries said Peace Corps projects were moderately to greatly beneficial to both their organizations and their communities
- 253 organizational/community changes were reported
- 77% of changes were rated as large changes; 99% of changes were assessed as having been due to the Peace Corps project
- 93% of the changes were maintained after the Volunteer left the community

Individual Changes Occurred

- 91 individual-level changes were reported
- 78% of changes were rated as large changes; 96% of changes were assessed as having been due to the Peace Corps’ project
- 92% of the individual changes were maintained after the Volunteer left the community

Small Business Opportunity Expansion Occurred

- Better business relations formed and new contacts developed

Business Owners Improved Their Access to Microfinance Institutions/services

- Respondents mentioned increased confidence in and utilization of mobile banks

Capacity Building Sustained

- 83% of counterparts said that organizational changes were maintained
- 82% of counterparts said that community changes were maintained
- 56% of beneficiaries said the project was maintained to a large extent

Satisfaction with Peace Corps work

- 98% of counterparts and 100% of beneficiaries were somewhat to very satisfied with the changes in their organizations and communities
- 88% said the Peace Corps’ project met the needs of their organization
- Unmet needs centered on a continuing need for community and organizational support

Goal 2 Findings

More Positive Opinions of Americans

- 100% of counterparts and beneficiaries and 72% of host family members had some prior knowledge of Americans
- 74% of respondents had a more positive view of Americans after interacting with Volunteers
- Volunteers' ability to get along with others and to work hard were the points most frequently mentioned by Malians regarding what they learned about Americans from the 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 AIDS education to information technology to environmental preservation. 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 or urban areas that lack sufficient local capacity. Also, 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 Volunteers⁴; however, it tells only one side of the Peace Corps' story. In 2008, the Peace Corps began a series of studies to determine the impact of its Volunteers. The 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.

⁴Peace 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.

History of the Peace Corps/Mali Small Enterprise Development (SED) Project

In 1994, Peace Corps/Mali reevaluated its Small Enterprise Development Project and decided to make changes, including the expansion of the project into secondary cities through collaboration with its partner organizations, by developing internal markets in seven of Mali's eight regions. The purpose of the new focus was to improve savings mobilization and access to credit, advance small business creation, and promote handicrafts and tourism. The project also supports two major cross-sectoral initiatives: empowering women and youth and expanding the use of information and communication technology (ICT).

Purpose of the Host Country Impact Studies

This report presents the findings from the pilot impact evaluation which was conducted in the Mali during the summer and fall of 2008. The project studied was the Small Enterprise Development Project.

The impact studies document the HCN perspective on the effect 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 these studies 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?

The information gathered through this research will help the Peace Corps 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), in response to a mandate from the Office of Management and Budget that the agency should conduct evaluations of the impact of Volunteers in achieving Goal 2, began a series of evaluation studies. Mali was one of three countries 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 they served. In collaboration with the

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

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 implemented in-country by Mamadou Diallo and team of interviewers, under the supervision of the Peace Corps’ country staff, with technical direction from the OSIRP team. A web-based database was used to manage the questionnaire data and subsequent analysis.

In Mali, the team conducted interviews at 14 SED sites. Thirty-eight SED project placements between 2002 and 2008 were identified for possible participation in the study. The sample was a representative rather than a random sample from the list of Volunteer assignments since 2002. Malian Senior Researcher Mamadou Diallo and his team conducted semi-structured interviews with Malians who had lived and/or worked with Peace Corps Volunteers. (The interview schedule is available upon request from OSIRP and Appendix 1 has a full description of the research methodology.)

Interviews were conducted from August 12 to October 9, 2008 with the following groups of Mali nationals:

- **Project partners/counterparts:** Members of a microfinance institution, non-governmental organization (NGO), local or national government office, and local or regional business associations (43)
- **Project beneficiaries:** Individuals who work with tourism and artisans, municipal or mayor’s offices, NGO/ICT/MFI/entrepreneurs (41)
- **Host family members:** Families that hosted volunteers during at least part of their service (22)

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

Table 1: Number and Type of Host Country Nationals Interviewed: Mali

Categories	Number of People	Number of Sites
Counterparts	43	10
Beneficiaries	41	14
Host family members	22	12
Total	106	-

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 yearly Volunteer Survey and the Close-of-Service Surveys, this information will allow the Peace Corps to better understand its impact and address areas for improvement. 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 the United States Office of Management and Budget 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 Peace Corps presence to measure the promotion of a better understanding of Americans on the part of the peoples served."⁵ Feedback from the original pilots was used to revise the methodology rolled out to nine posts each in Fiscal Year 2009 and 2010, for a total of 18 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.

⁵ Downloaded from : <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/expectmore/summary/10004615.2005.html> 9-10-08

CHAPTER 2: PROJECT DESIGN AND PURPOSE

Sector Overview⁶

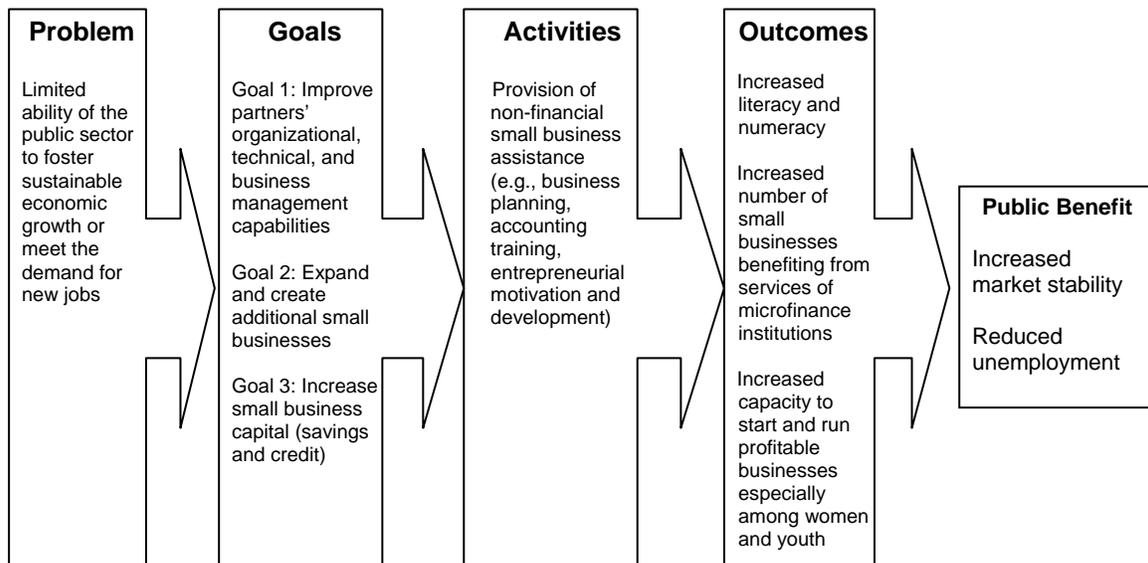
The pilot study in Mali evaluated the Small Enterprise Development Project.

In 1994, Peace Corps/Mali redesigned its Small Enterprise Development Project to improve its effectiveness. When Volunteers reported difficulty finding enough work in rural areas, the post began placing SED Volunteers primarily in urban centers while providing extension services to rural areas. Building upon the previous 12 years of PC/Mali's SED experience, the 2006 project plan focused on providing consulting services to small business owners and community-based organizations on business and organizational development. The new SED project plan also proposed to expand local access to savings and credit institutions.

The **Small Enterprise Development Project** provides business and organizational development advising/consulting to small business owners and community-based organizations, as well as expanded access to savings and credit institutions.

A model of the theory of change underlying the project approach is presented below.

Figure 1: Overview of the Theory of Change for the SED Projects in Mali



This figure was compiled from information in the *Peace Corps/Mali Small Enterprise Development (SED) Project Plan 2006-2012*

⁶ The sector overview was drawn from the *Peace Corps/Mali Small Enterprise Development (SED) Project Plan 2006-2012*

CHAPTER 2: PROJECT DESIGN AND PURPOSE

Small Enterprise Development Volunteers worked to build beneficiaries' capacity in order to increase:

1. Basic business skills, such as literacy, numeracy, and management capabilities
2. The ability of small business owners to benefit from the services of microfinance institutions
3. Community members' ability to start and run profitable businesses

A significant project focus was improving the general business climate in addition to improving the skills among actual and potential small business owners. Volunteers provided non-financial small business assistance such as: business planning, accounting training, entrepreneurial motivation and development, and English language classes.

CHAPTER 3: GOAL ONE FINDINGS

Performance under the Peace Corps' first goal was examined in two ways, by measuring:

1. The extent to which HCNs observed community and personal changes, reported gaining new technical skills, and the capacity to maintain the changes once the community project ended.
2. HCNs' satisfaction with the work of the community project, 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.

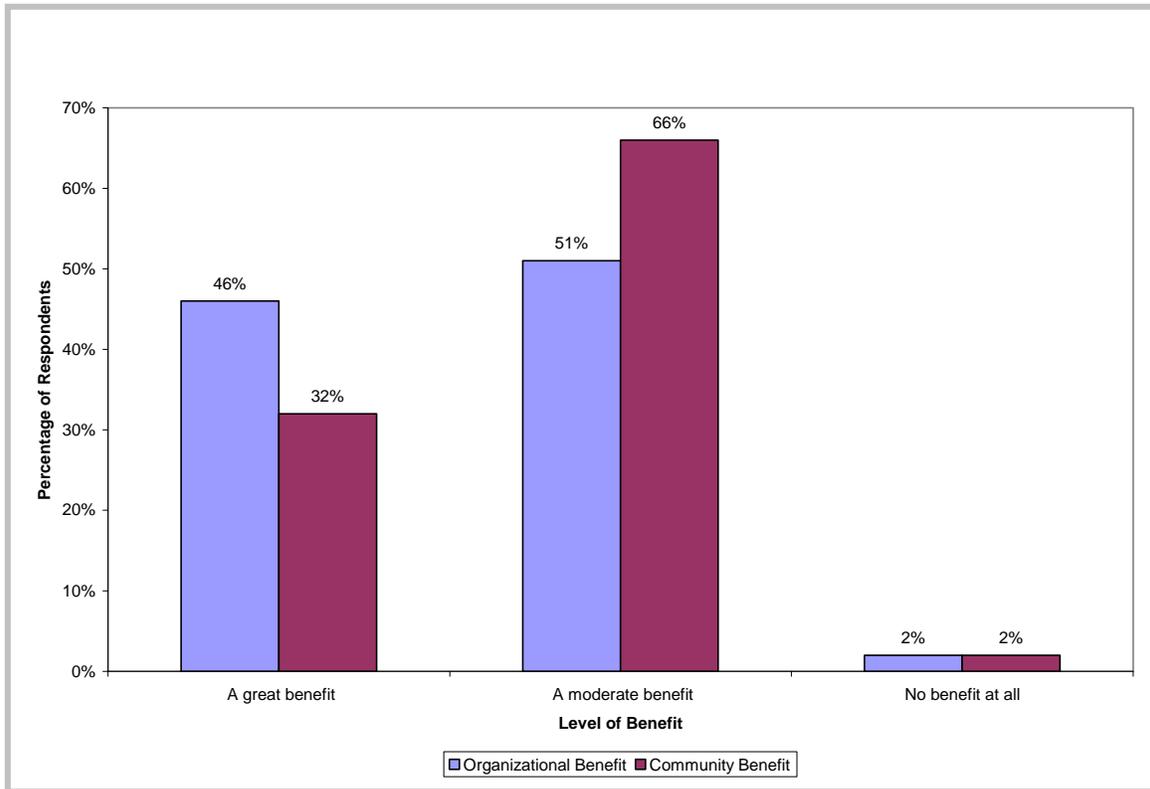
Did the Peace Corps Project Help Businesses and Communities Meet Skills and Capacity Building Needs?

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* when the Volunteer arrived and compare that to *how it is currently*. They were then asked to describe any changes in the community 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.

Ninety-eight percent of counterparts and beneficiaries indicated that the Peace Corps projects in their communities were moderately to greatly beneficial to their organizations and 97 percent indicated that the Peace Corps projects in their communities were moderately to greatly beneficial to their communities (see Figure 2).

Forty-six percent of respondents rated the organizational changes as greatly beneficial. Thirty-two percent of respondents rated the community changes as greatly beneficial. Volunteers were assigned to organizations (NGOs and other organizations that provided direct services to business owners) with the goal of improving their outreach and service to business owners.

Figure 2: Percentage of Counterparts (n=43) and Beneficiaries (n=41) Who Indicated that the Peace Corps' Projects were Beneficial: Mali



Counterpart comments about the benefits of Peace Corps projects:

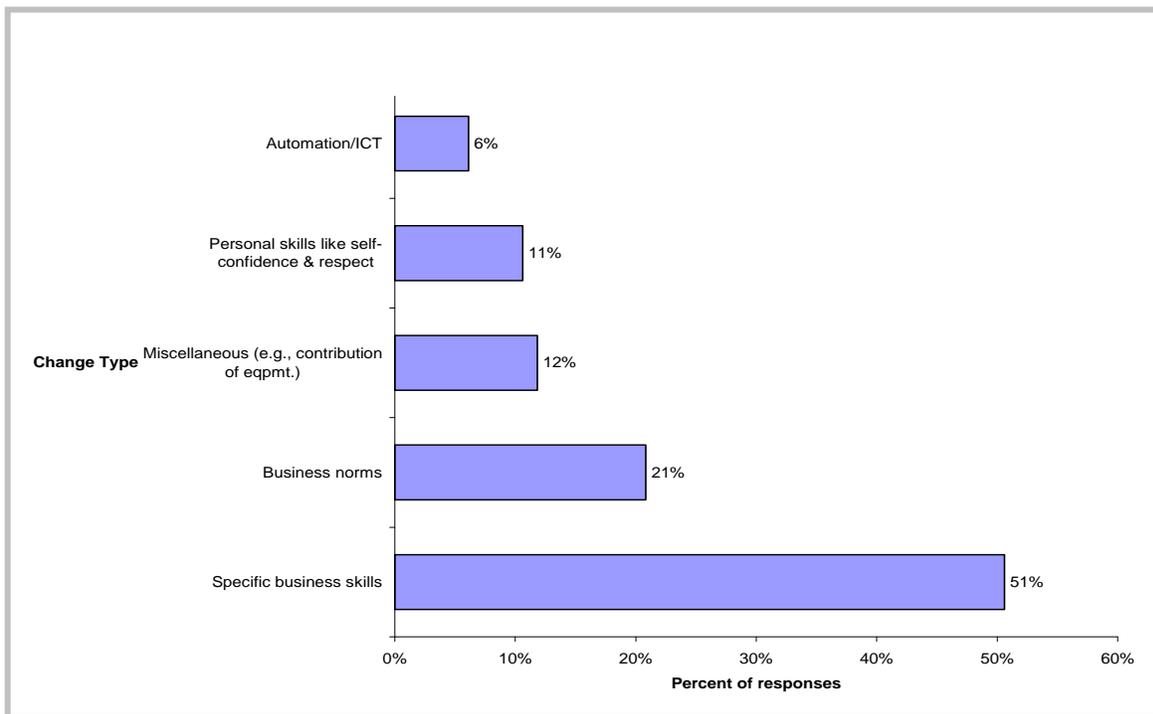
Artisans have woven sustainable and strong commercial relationships with external partners. Our members each have an e-mail address now, which was not the case before. Due to the nature of our market demands, the quality of our products has improved.

Creation of jobs, sensitivity regarding collection techniques, that helped us transport milk from the point of production to the dairy facilities.

Two hundred fifty-three organizational changes were reported. The most frequent category of change mentioned was change in specific business skills (Figure 3). Business owners and counterparts described improvements in product quality (in the use of shea butter and in sewing factories), sales, marketing, and bookkeeping skills.

Of the 253 changes mentioned, 77 percent were self-reported as large changes and 99 percent were assessed as having been due to the Peace Corps projects. According to respondents, 93 percent of the changes were maintained after the Volunteer left the community.

Figure 3: Ways Organizations/Communities Changed Since the Start of the Peace Corps Project: Mali (n=253 changes)



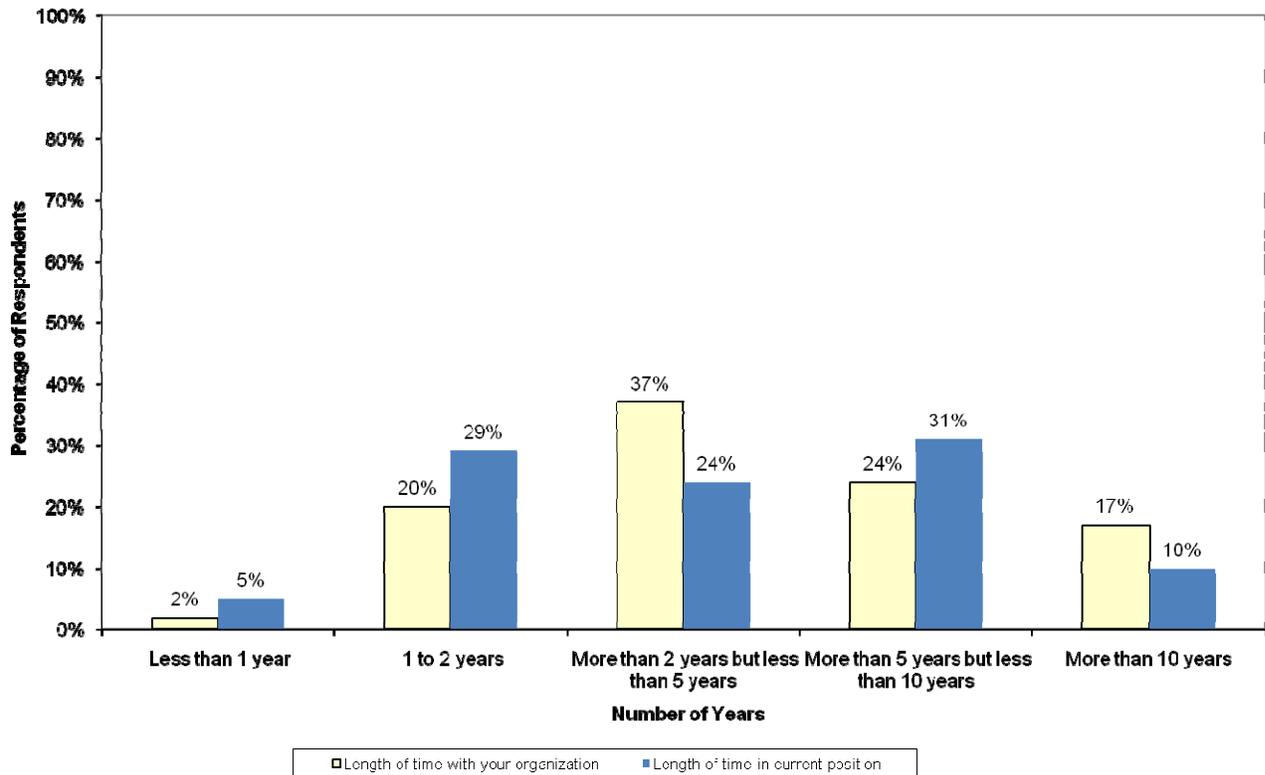
Findings on Individual Changes

Counterpart and beneficiary responses are reported together, as the activities performed with and skills gained by both groups were similar.

Prior Business Experience

Many of the counterparts that Volunteers worked with had prior business experience. Seventy-eight percent of counterparts reported having worked with their current organization for at least two years (see Figure 4), while 41 percent had worked with their organizations for more than five years.

Figure 4: Number of Years Respondents Have Worked in the Field: Mali (n=43)



In What Ways Did Counterparts and Beneficiaries Who Worked with Volunteers Change?

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 compare that to *how they currently see themselves*. They were then asked to report any changes they saw 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.

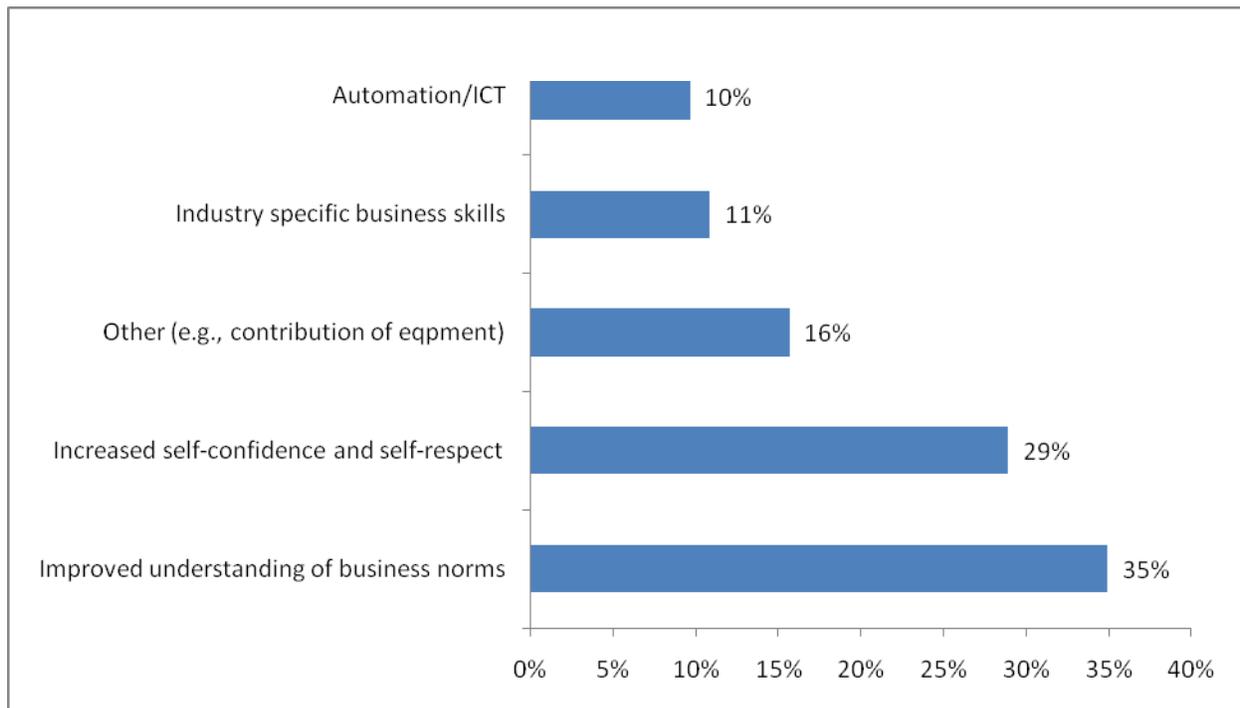
CHAPTER 3: GOAL ONE FINDINGS

A total of 91 changes were reported by the respondents (Figure 5). They were grouped into the following five categories:

- Industry specific business skills
- Improved understanding of business norms
- Increased self-confidence and self-respect
- Automation / Information and Communication Technologies

Thirty-five percent of the changes mentioned referred to increases in a range of business norms.

Figure 5: Ways Individuals Changed Since the Start of the Peace Corps' Project: Mali (n=91 changes)

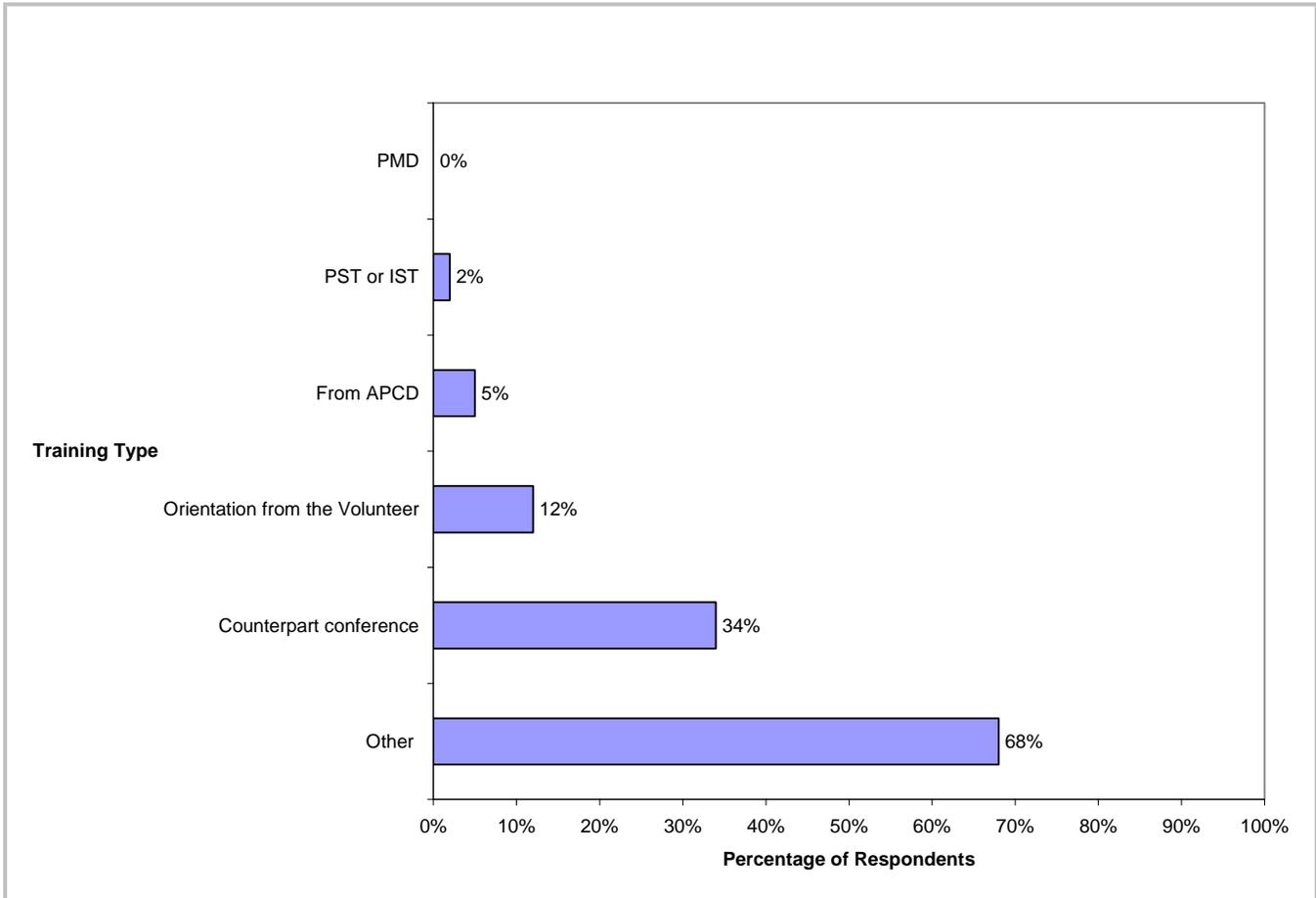


Of the 91 individual-level changes mentioned, 78 percent were rated as large changes and 96 percent were assessed as having been due to the Peace Corps' project. Respondents indicated that 92 percent of the changes they noticed in themselves were maintained after the Volunteer left the community.

How Did Skills Transfer Occur?

Counterparts reported learning from both the ongoing interaction with Volunteers and the training they received throughout the projects. Counterparts reported receiving a range of training related to this project, with approximately one-third receiving training through a counterpart conference (Figure 6). Sixty-six percent of counterparts reported that they were trained in ways other than those asked about (e.g., mobile training).

Figure 6: Counterpart Training: Mali (n=43)



Did the skills transfer lead to sustainable changes?

In many cases, community and individual changes mentioned in the areas of acquisition of skills and relationships will remain useful to the respondent and the business community over time.

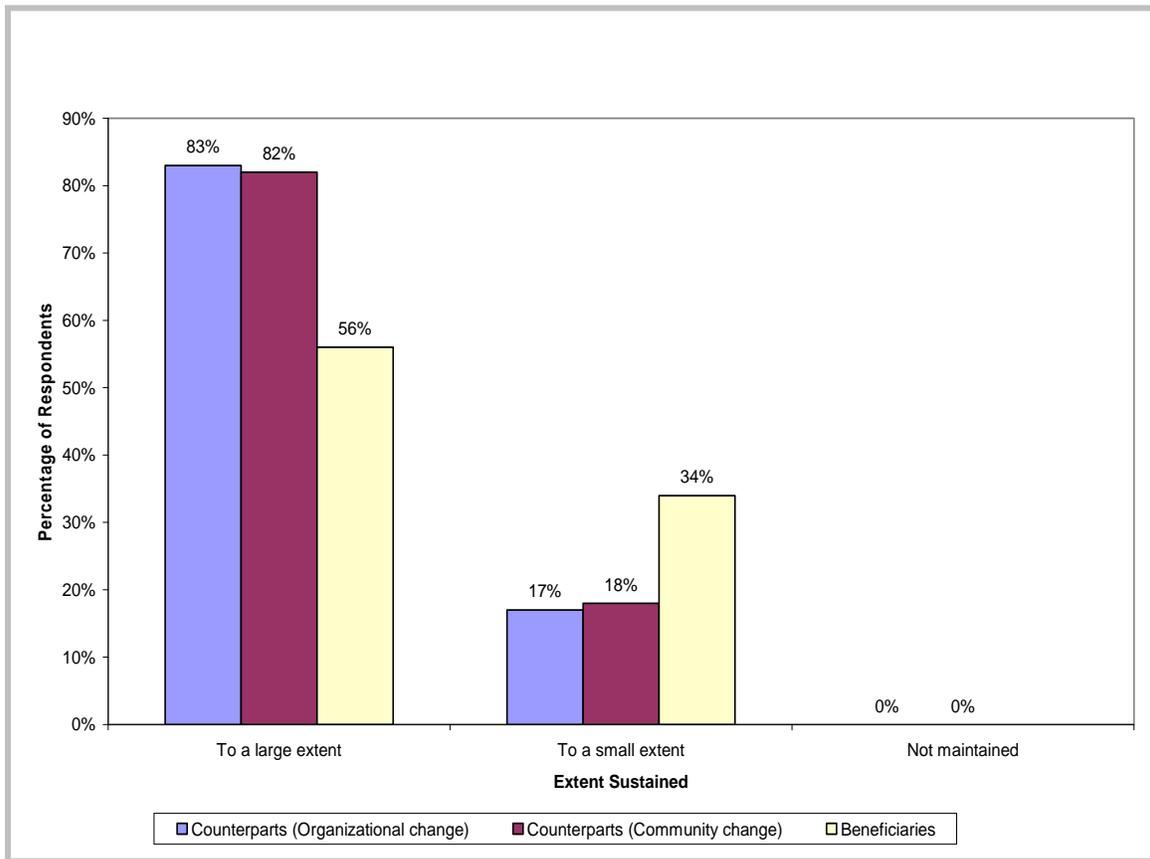
Beneficiary comments about the lasting effects of Peace Corps Volunteers

Reduction of poverty and autonomy of artisans for years to come.

We will be autonomous and will continue the Volunteer's work with the counterparts, if they are well trained.

Counterparts and beneficiaries reported that their organizations and/or communities were able to maintain the work of the Volunteers after the Volunteers left (see Figure 7).

Figure 7: Extent to Which Projects were Sustained After Volunteer Departure: Mali (n=84)



Overall HCN Satisfaction

Three measures of overall satisfaction with the Peace Corps’ projects were mentioned in the interviews, including satisfaction with the:

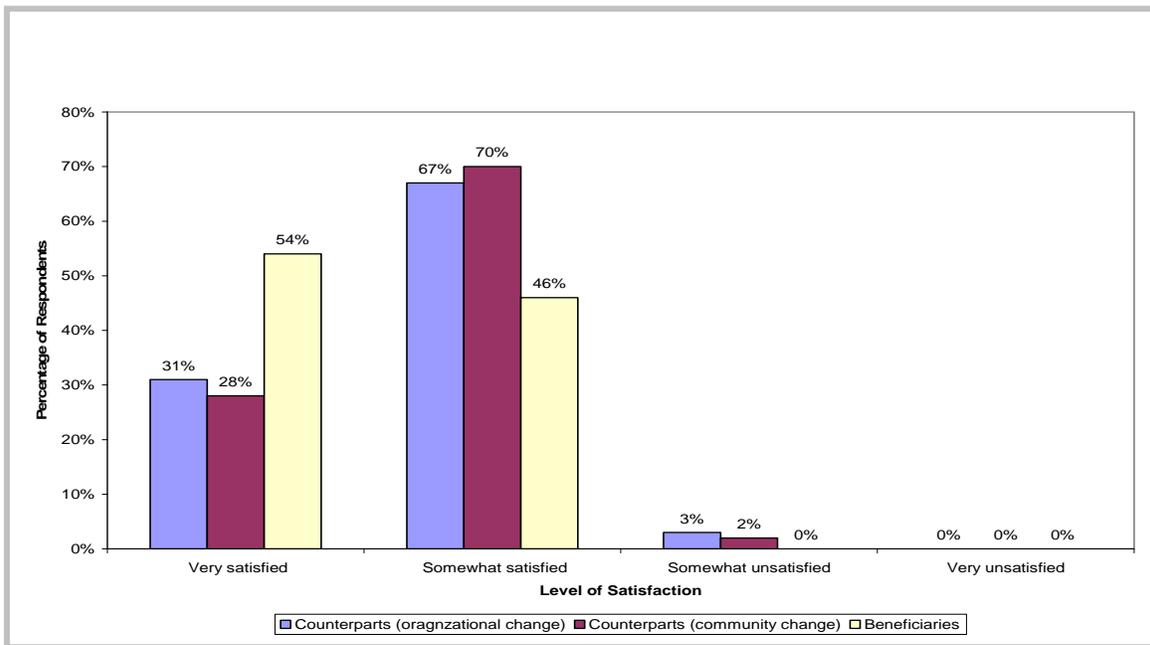
- 1) Reported changes
- 2) Collaboration with Peace Corps Volunteers
- 3) Degree to which the project met their needs

CHAPTER 3: GOAL ONE FINDINGS

The findings on these questions are reported below:

Ninety-eight percent of counterparts and one hundred percent of beneficiaries reported being somewhat to very satisfied with the changes in their organizations and communities that resulted from their work with the Peace Corps (Figure 8). Beneficiaries were more likely to describe themselves as very satisfied (54%) with the changes than were counterparts within organizations (28%).

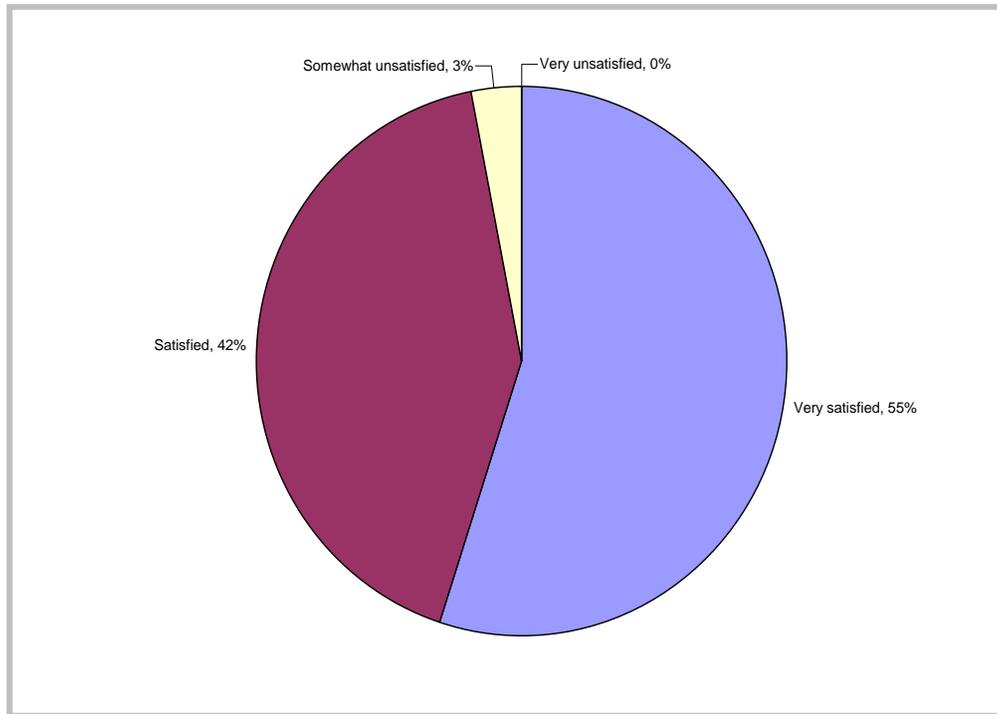
Figure 8: Satisfaction with Organizational/Community Change as a Result of the Peace Corps Projects: Mali (n=84)



Collaboration with the Peace Corps

Ninety-seven percent of counterparts reported that they were either somewhat or very satisfied with the level of collaboration between their organization and the Peace Corps (Figure 9). When examined by respondent type, the data showed that beneficiaries expressed a higher level of satisfaction (54 percent) than the counterparts (31 percent).

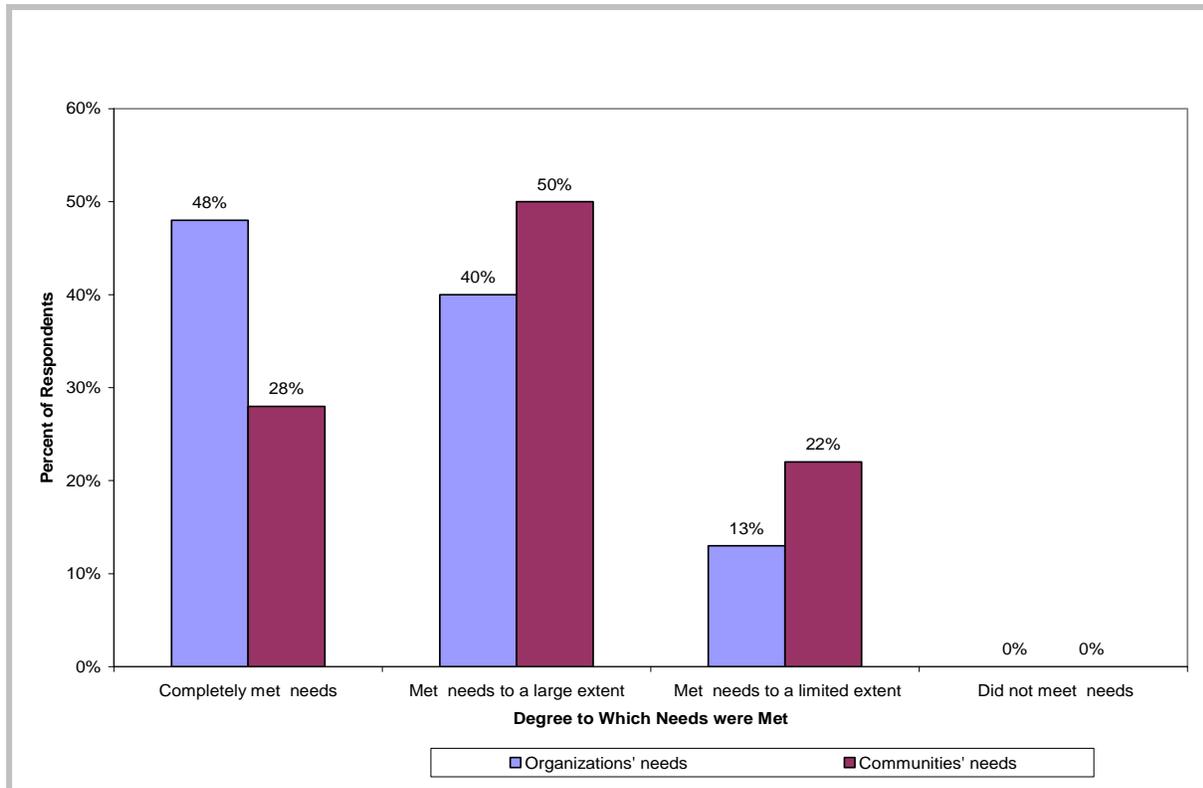
Figure 9: Satisfaction with Level of Collaboration: Mali (n=43)



Did HCNs Think Their Needs Were Met?

Eighty-eight percent of counterparts and beneficiaries indicated that the Peace Corps’ projects met their organizations’ needs completely or to a large extent and seventy-eight percent reported that the community’s needs were met completely or to a large extent (Figure 10).

Figure 10: Extent to Which SED Project Met Respondents' Needs: Mali



The unmet need most discussed by respondents focused on the continual need for community and organizational support.

HCN comments about areas of unmet need:

Often, the artisans are asked to contribute by paying their counterpart money, which is very difficult. Unlike Suisse Contact (an NGO), Peace Corps does not pay counterparts to support Volunteers' projects.

Once a training session is complete, Peace Corps Bamako does not accept that we reorganize it again even though the need is there.

Would HCNs Want to Work with the Peace Corps Again?

Another measure of satisfaction is whether counterparts and beneficiaries would want to work with another Volunteer. All counterparts (100%) indicated that they would welcome another Volunteer.

Counterpart comments on working with another Volunteer

Maliens always welcome [them] and Volunteers bring innovations.

That will fill-up the gap - in terms of human resources, as we move towards rural areas.

They are sincere and ready to help us. They guide us in the right direction.

Support and Barriers to Project Performance

Counterparts offered advice for other sites that planned to implement similar projects, commenting that sites needed to have well-defined roles and expectations before starting the project.

Counterpart advice regarding how sites should prepare for an SED Project

Peace Corps staff should organize groups and /or organizations who will work with the volunteer.

All the stakeholders must be involved in the trainings.

The community should welcome volunteers, bring them to the fields to see and identify real needs, and propose the work to be performed during their stay.

Volunteers should understand the local language (dialect), involve the entire community in decision-making, and “own” the projects. Partner organizations should:

- *Have initiatives before having a volunteer*
- *Have transparent people involved in the management*

Factors related to project success from Counterparts

The involvement of all stakeholders (local and administrative authorities, population) in improving the health of the population on trash management. Create temporary employment.

Availability, curiosity of the counterpart, and the creative mind. The involvement of the schools and women's associations, and mainly the support granted by the Deputy Governor (i.e., the Deputy Governor often comes to see our activities).

Barriers to project success mentioned by counterparts focused on Volunteers’ difficulty with the local language and limited organizational resources.

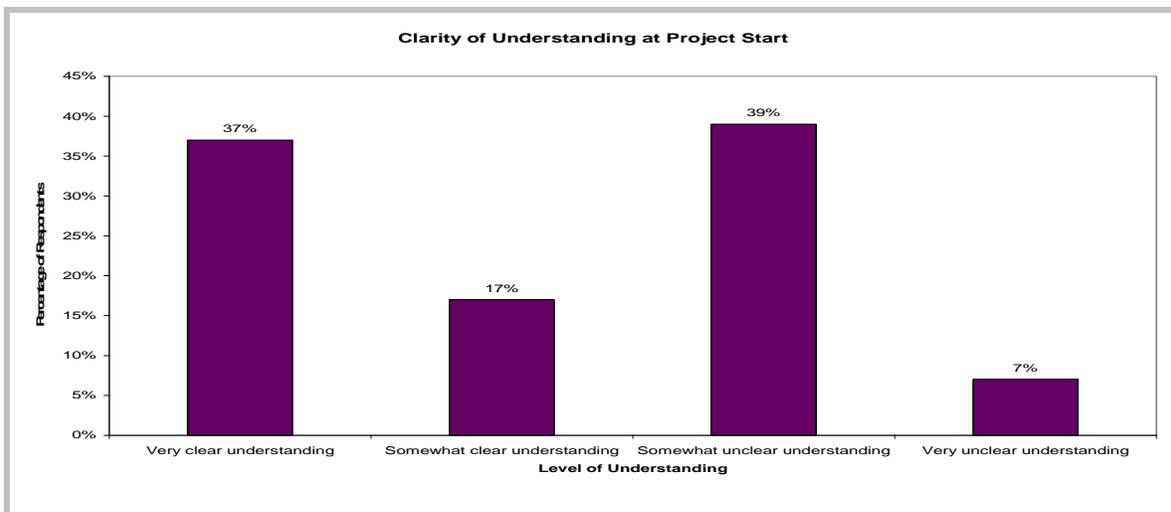
Areas for Further Research

Two main themes for more study emerged:

- Pre-implementation preparation
- Planning for sustainability

Pre-implementation preparation: Forty-six percent of counterparts did not have a clear understanding of the project’s goals and activities at the start of the project (Figure 11). When asked about the basis for their understanding, very few respondents offered detailed answers other than saying that they developed their understanding of the project as it was being implemented.

Figure 11: Pre-implementation Project Clarity: Mali (n=43)



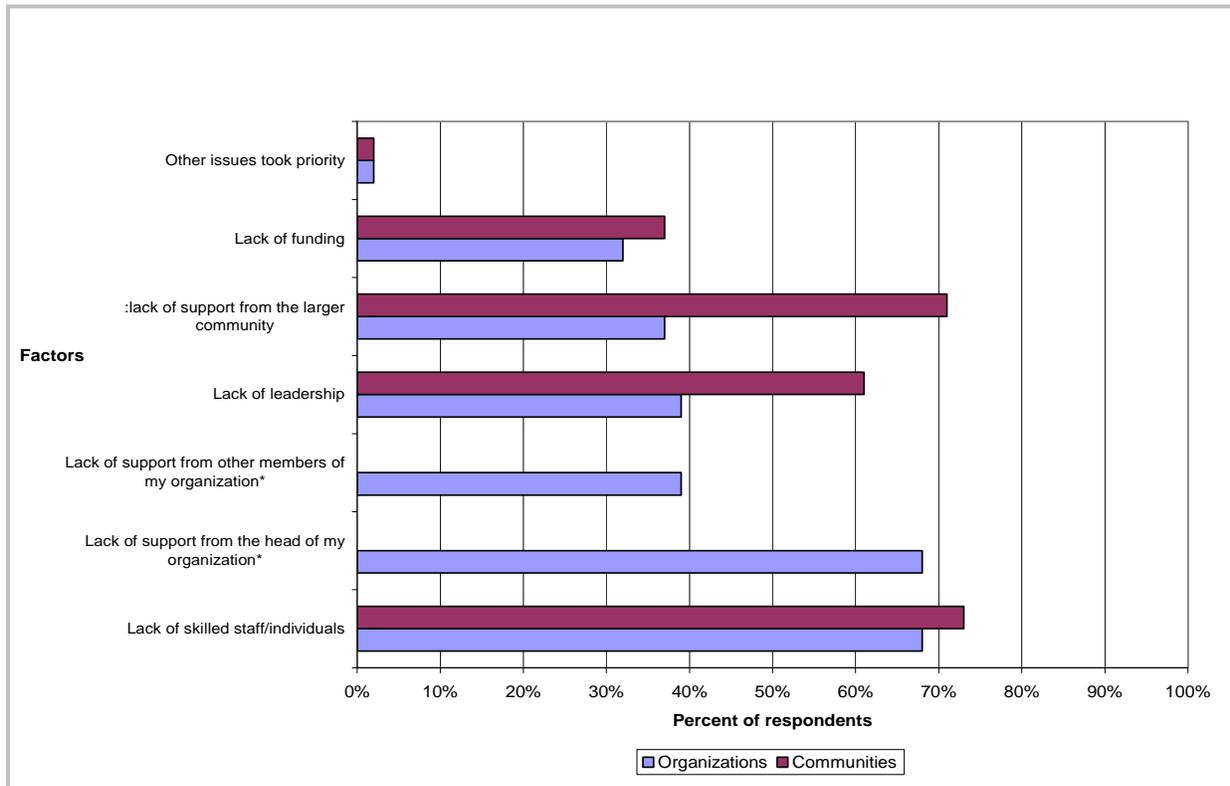
Planning for sustainability: Factors which decreased the sustainability of the project’s organizational-level changes included lack of support from the leadership of the HCN

CHAPTER 3: GOAL ONE FINDINGS

organizations and lack of skilled and/or trained staff. With regard to the sustainability of community-level changes, the primary barriers were a lack of community support and a lack of skilled and/or trained individuals (Figure 12).

All of the respondents, both counterparts and beneficiaries, reported that they would welcome another Volunteer.

Figure 12: Factors that Impeded Maintenance of Project Changes: Mali (n=84)



* These categories were not options when respondents were asked about factors that made it difficult to maintain community changes.

Peace Corps/Mali may want to examine these two factors--the lack of support from the leadership of the HCN organizations and the lack of skilled and/or trained staff—to determine the extent of any problems and to identify ways to address those issues.

CHAPTER 4: GOAL TWO FINDINGS

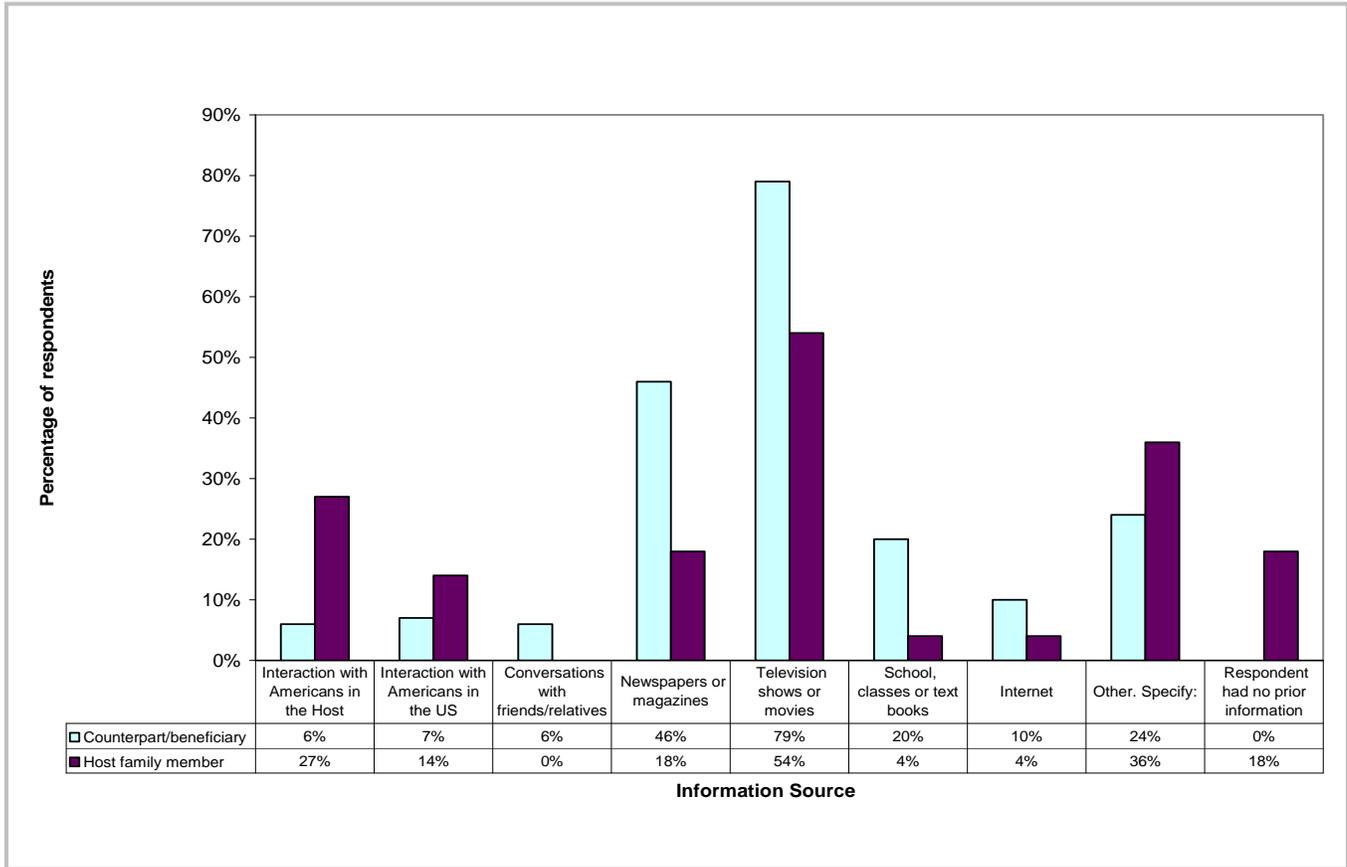
This section addresses how and to what extent Volunteers promoted a better understanding of Americans among the HCNs with whom they lived and worked. The section begins with a description of what Malians thought about Americans prior to working with a Volunteer and how they acquired that information.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

How did Malians Get Information About Americans Prior to Interacting with the Volunteer?

Prior to the assignment of a Peace Corps Volunteer in their community, 100 percent of counterparts and beneficiaries and 72 percent of host family respondents reported that they had some prior knowledge of Americans.

Among counterparts and beneficiaries the most frequently mentioned sources of information were television or movies followed by newspapers (see Figure 13). Among host family members the most frequent source of prior information about Americans was also television. However, among host family members the second most frequently mentioned source of information did not fit into the predefined categories and was coded as other. Radio broadcasts fit into this category, for example. While counterparts and beneficiaries reported having prior information about Americans, 18 percent of host family members reported having no prior information about Americans.

Figure 13: Sources of Information About Americans Prior to Interacting with a Volunteer: Mali (n=106)



What Were Respondent’s Opinions About Americans Prior to Interacting with a Volunteer?

Counterparts, beneficiaries, and host family members were asked for their impressions of a typical person from the United States before working with Peace Corps Volunteers. Respondents held a broad range of views about Americans before their interaction with a Peace Corps Volunteer.

A common theme was a perception that there were significant cultural differences that would make it hard to work together. In addition, several respondents noted suspicions regarding the motivations of Americans that come to Mali.

HCN opinions of Americans prior to interacting with a Volunteer

For me, they were like rebels, bloody killers (exactly as the Tuareg Rebels we have here in Mali).

Wick[ed], because they don't have the same religion and same judgment as we do.

People ready to help us (Africans). So when someone helps you, you should also help that person (to encourage him).

Spies coming to exploit us in a different way.

To What Extent Did Respondents Have Experience with the Peace Corps and Volunteers?

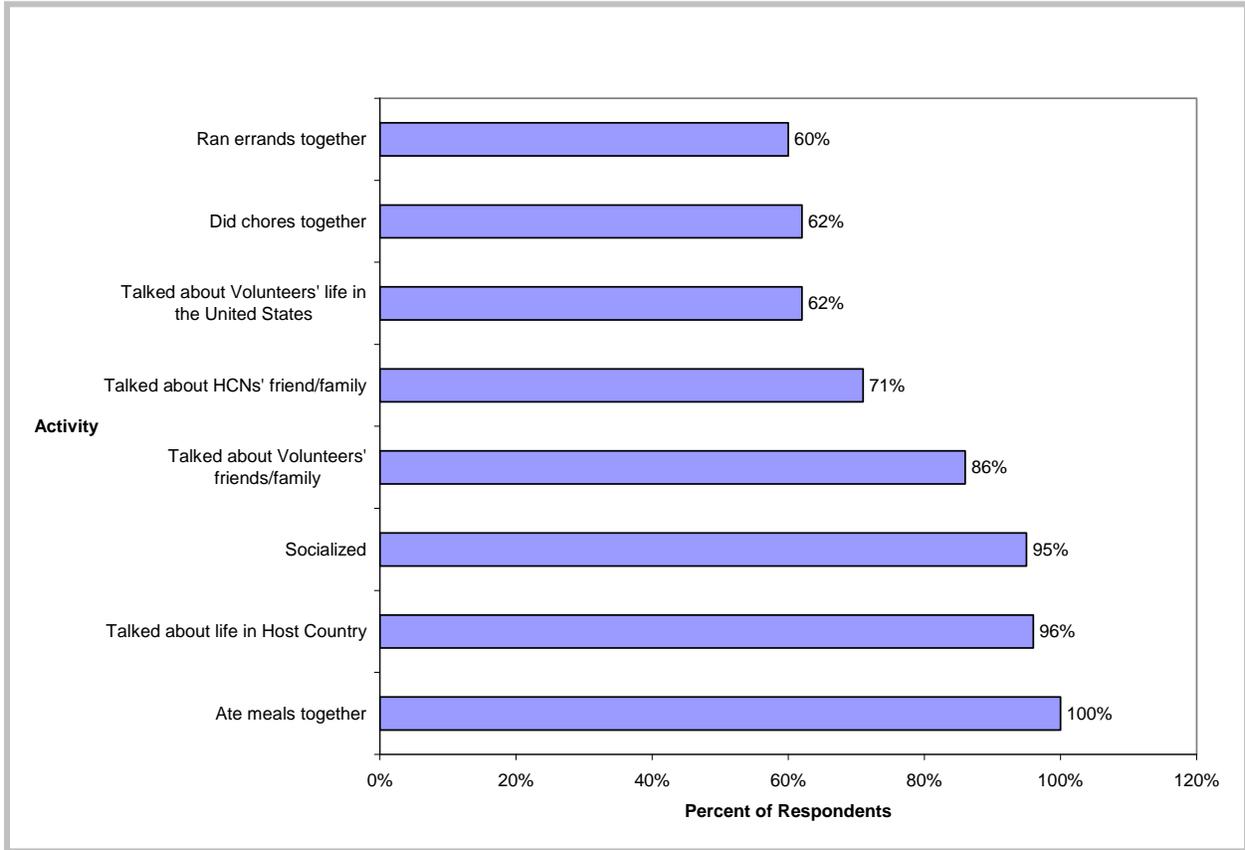
All respondents reported considerable experience with Volunteers. Counterparts reported working with an average of three Volunteers, while beneficiaries had worked with two. On average, the host families interviewed for this study had lived with two Volunteers. The average length of contact was 26 months for counterparts, 18 months for beneficiaries, and 15 months for host families.

How Much and What Types of Contact Did HCNs Have with Volunteers?

Goal 2 of the Peace Corps is based on the idea 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.

Host family members: When asked about the types of things that respondents did with Volunteers that they hosted, all of the respondents said that they ate meals together and almost all said that they talked about life in Mali and socialized together (see Figure 14).

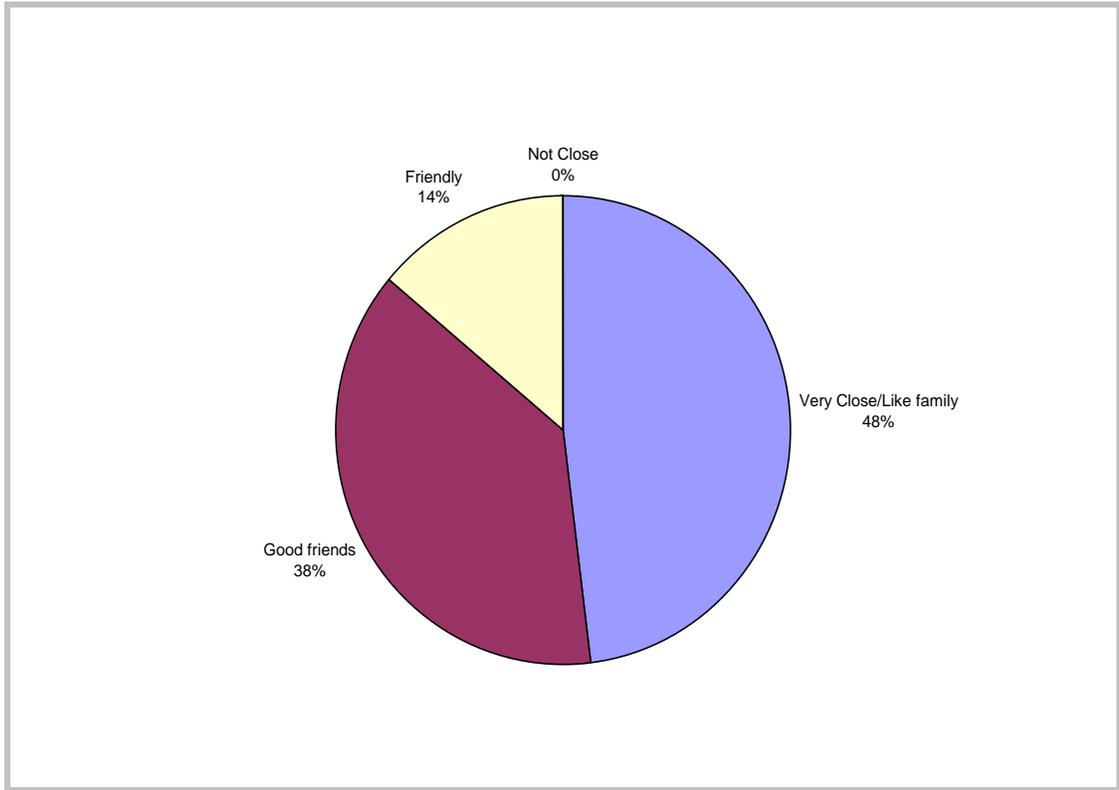
Figure 14: Activities that Host Family Members and Volunteers Shared: Mali



CHAPTER 4: GOAL TWO FINDINGS

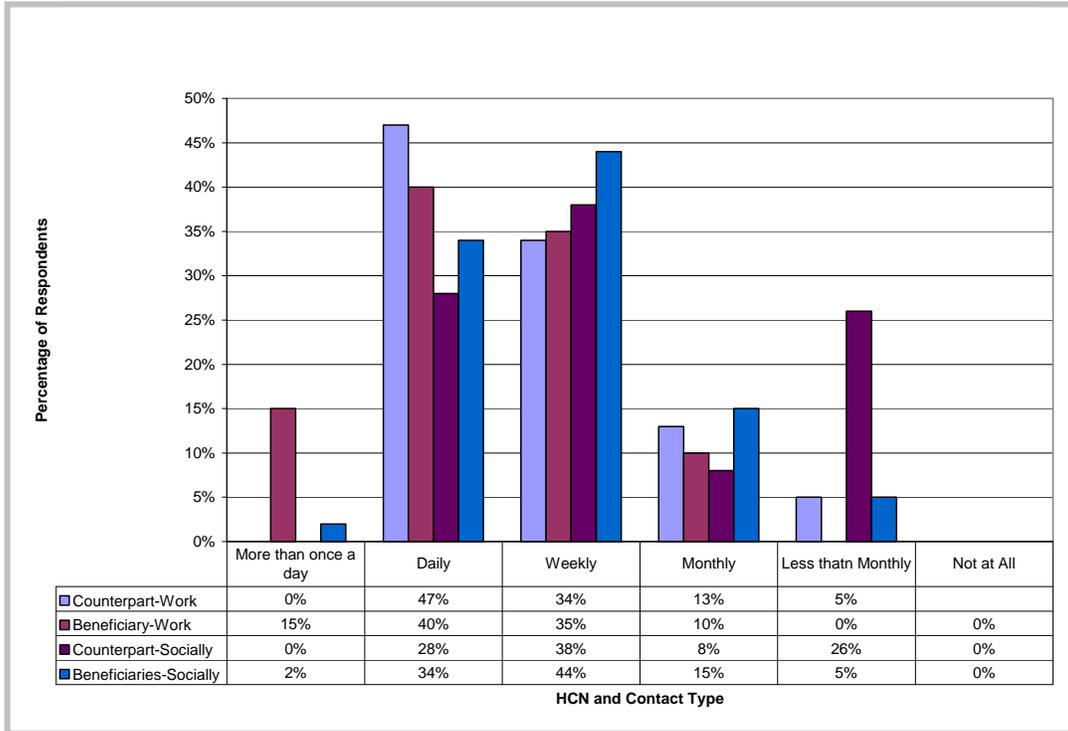
Respondents rated the relationships they formed with the Volunteers they hosted positively, with 48 percent reporting that they were very close to the Volunteer and thought of that Volunteer as part of their family. An additional 38 percent considered the Volunteer a good friend (Figure 15).

Figure 15: Host Family Rating of the Relationship Formed with the Volunteer: Mali



Host country counterparts and beneficiaries: The majority of beneficiaries and counterparts reported seeing Volunteers either daily or weekly, in both social and work-related settings (Figure 16).

Figure 16: Frequency of Volunteer Interaction with Counterparts and Beneficiaries: Mali



Changes in HCNs' Understanding of Americans After Interacting with a Volunteer

This section provides information about changes in HCNs' opinions of Americans as well as some detail about what they learned about Americans from interacting with Volunteers.

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

After working and interacting with the Volunteer, most respondents (74%) had a more positive view of Americans.

How HCNs' Opinion of Americans Changed After Interacting with Volunteers

Counterpart comment

We thought they were very difficult to understand. But they are sociable and have respect for people. They are not shy when doing something. They persevere until they get what they want.

Beneficiary comments

My perception has changed positively.

I thought they were very racists, it was the opposite. They integrate easily.

Host family comment

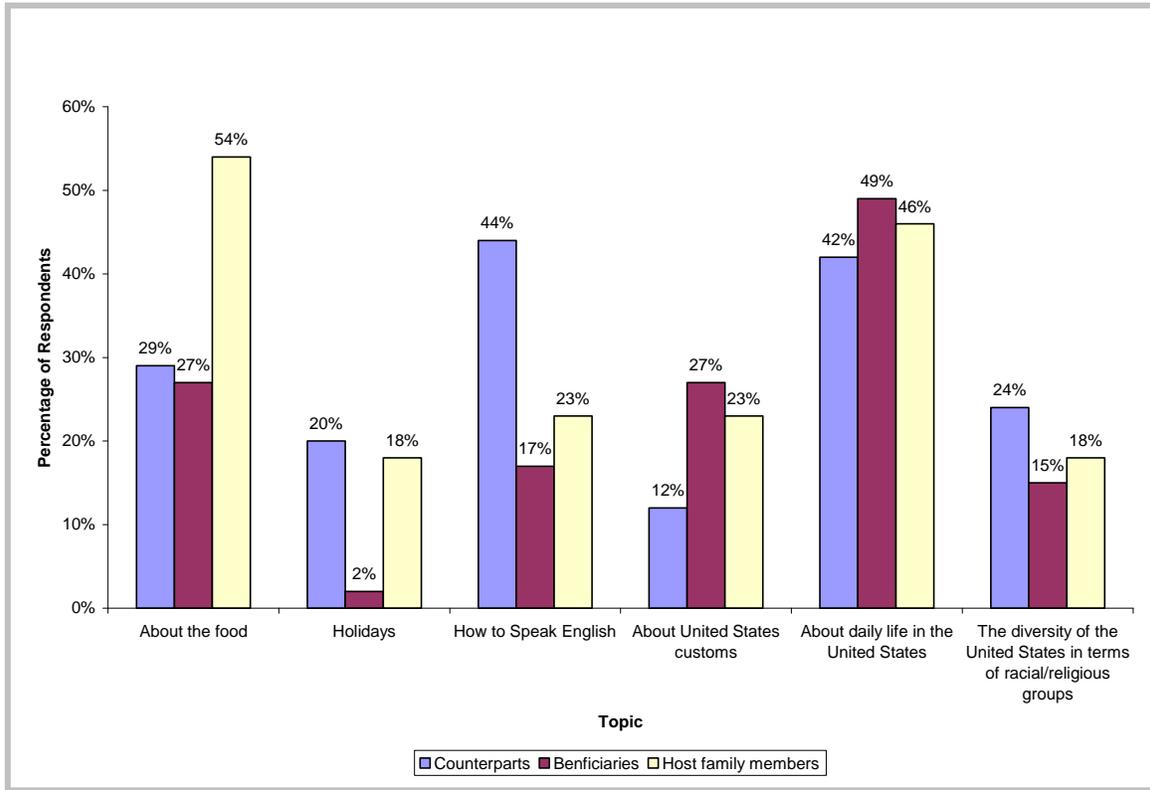
This (my opinion) has totally changed. I saw in them hard workers, people who really want others to get developed.

Findings on What Malians Learned About Americans from Volunteers

Volunteers' ability to get along with others and to work hard were the traits most frequently mentioned when Malians described what they had learned about Americans from the Volunteers.

The host country nationals were asked to indicate how much they had learned from the Volunteer on a standard list of topics about American life (Figure 17). The most frequent category among counterparts was how to speak English, among beneficiaries was about daily life in the United States and among host family members was about American food.

Figure 17: What Host Country Nationals Learned about Americans from Volunteers: Mali (n=106)



When asked about their opinions after interacting with Volunteers, most respondents provided general responses about having more realistic and positive views.

HCNs’ opinions of Americans after interacting with a Volunteer:

Before, we thought they were just tourists who come to gather information; we did not know they could work with us. Now we know they come for our happiness. We are no longer scared to challenge them.

My perception has changed greatly. They are simple and ready to collaborate.

When asked about the types of things they remembered most about working or living with someone from another country, respondents focused on Volunteers’ work ethic and friendliness.

HCN comments about what they remembered most about interacting with someone from another country:

Their work experience; she knew a bit of everything and got interested in everything (she always asked questions to understand things).

They thought we were living badly when they arrived in our country. But, they lived our reality and realized now that we also live well. Even so, they always had negative ideas about our lives their minds.

[They are] people of principle, very regular. [I learned] to change together, eating together from the same plate with our hands.

With regard to particular things the Volunteers did that helped the respondents to learn about Americans, there was no single event that people recalled and few concrete responses. Instead, people focused on how the Volunteers conducted themselves during the time they were in the community.

HCN comments about ways that Volunteers helped promote positive relationships across cultures:

Their availability at all times. They like to tell the truth. They are very serious at work.

The intervention in all areas (advice in all areas) without regard to gender.

How Did Respondents Describe Americans?

After each interview ended, interviewers completed a check list of personality descriptors to indicate whether respondents spontaneously used any of those terms during the interview (Figures 18 and 19).

The most frequently used **positive terms** were:

- Hardworking (100 percent)
- Willing to work together (99 percent)
- Motivated to do the work (97percent)
- Possessing strong technical skills (83 percent)

The most frequently mentioned **negative terms** were:

- Individually oriented (97 percent)
- Lacking in common sense (64 percent)
- Unreliable (62 percent)

CHAPTER 4: GOAL TWO FINDINGS

Figure 18: Positive Terms Spontaneously Used to Describe Americans: Mali (n=106)

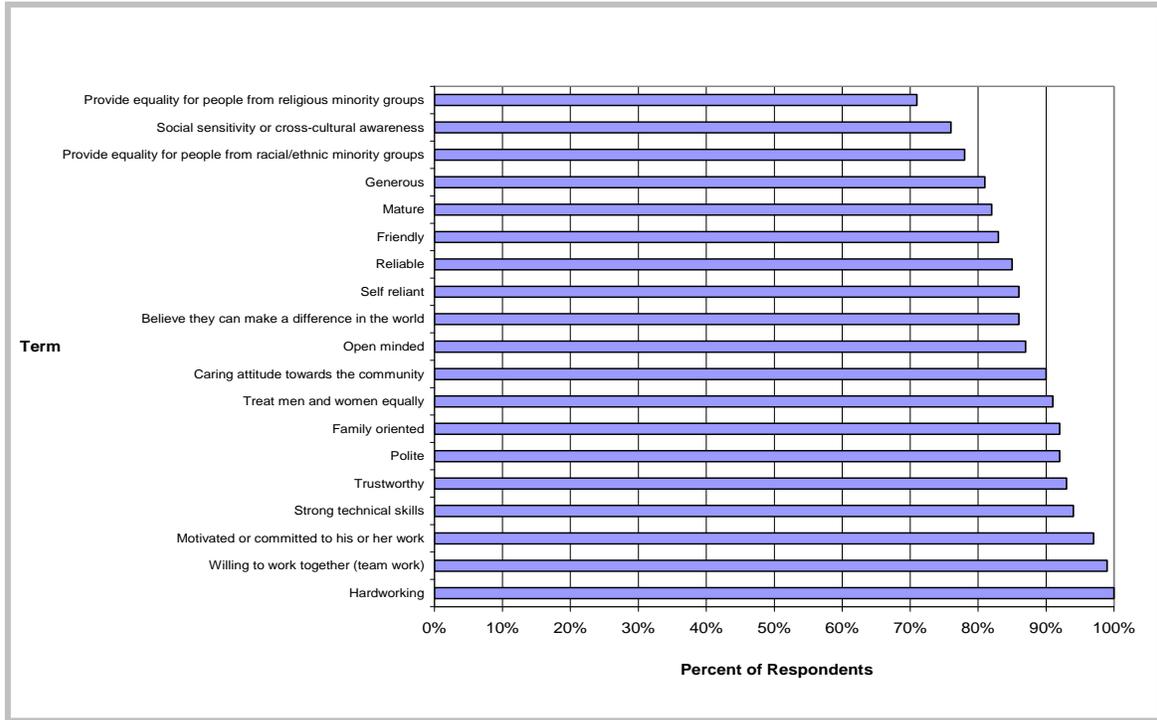
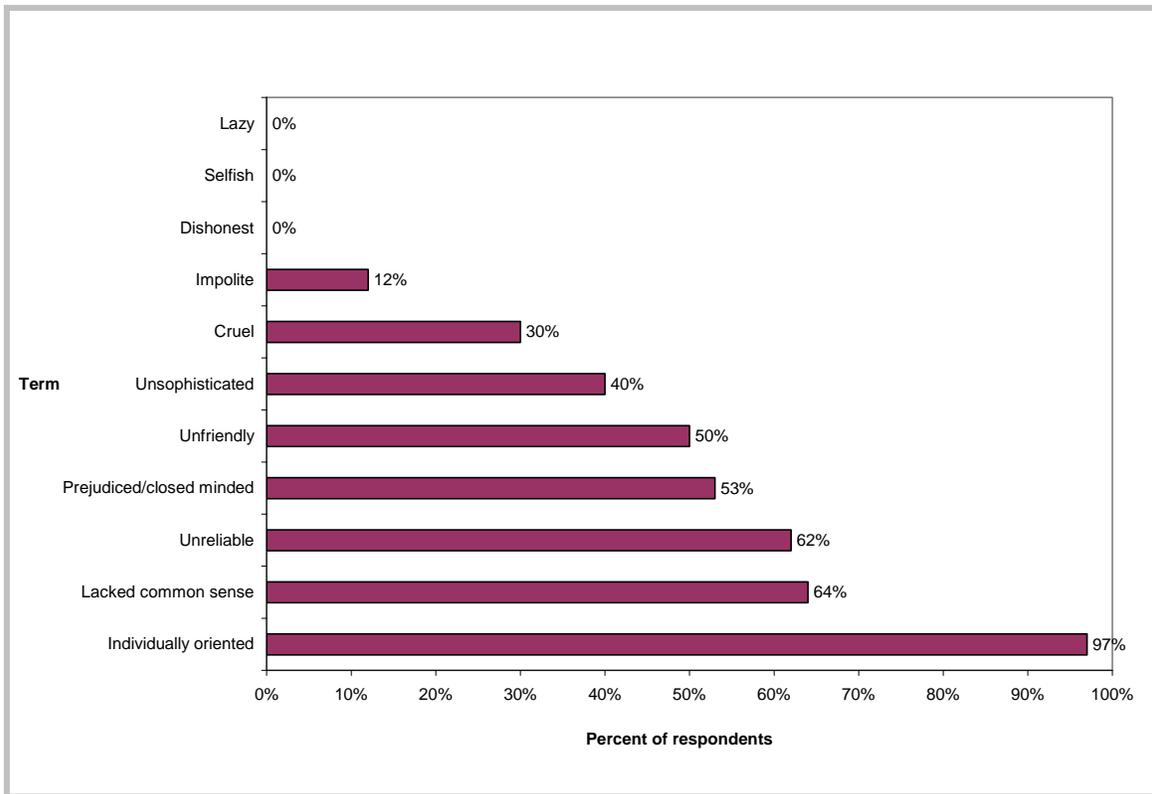


Figure 19: Negative Terms Spontaneously Used to Describe Americans: Mali (n=106)



Lessons Learned Regarding Goal Two Performance

The essence of what respondents learned from the Volunteers was connected to the American work ethic and organizational skills. Less than 50 percent of respondents indicated that they learned about daily life in America and less than 30 percent learned about American customs.

Some of the Malians' perceptions of Americans could be used in pre-service and in-service trainings to explore different meanings of Volunteers' behavior. Specifically, what led the Malians to use the terms "lacking in common sense," "unreliable," "closed-minded," and "unfriendly?"

Equally, Volunteers would benefit from knowing about the positive views that Malians held about their predecessors.

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 element of this service is that Peace Corps Volunteers live in the communities where they work and deliver technical interventions directly to beneficiaries living in areas that lack local professionals. The impact studies are one way the Peace Corps measures the effect of its Volunteers. In particular, these studies document the HCN perspective on the work of Peace Corps Volunteers.

The findings in Mali indicate that there was a successful transfer of organizational, technical, and business management skills; small business opportunity expansion occurred; business owners improved their access to microfinance institutions/services; and capacity building was sustained. Regarding Peace Corps' Goal 2, HCNs who interacted with Volunteers reported more positive opinions of Americans.

A lack of support from the leadership of the HCN organizations and a lack of skilled and/or trained staff were cited as frequent barriers to project sustainability by those interviewed.

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

APPENDIX 1: METHODOLOGY

How were the community sites and interview respondents selected?

In Mali, the team conducted interviews at 14 SED Project sites. The sample of sites at each post was a representative rather than random sample from the list of Volunteer assignments since 2002. Sites that were extremely remote or difficult to reach were excluded. From that list, 14 sites were randomly selected.

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 selected. 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 the data collected?

The research questions and interview protocols were designed by OSIRP staff and refined 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, administered all the interviews. The interviewers conducted face-to-face structured interviews with the following categories of Malian nationals:

- **Project partners/counterparts:** Members of a microfinance institution, non-governmental organization (NGO), local or national government office, or local or regional business associations (43)
- **Project beneficiaries:** Individuals who work with tourism and artisans, municipal or mayor's offices, NGO/ICT/MFI/entrepreneurs (41)
- **Host family members:** Families that hosted volunteers during at least part of their service (22)

APPENDIX 1: METHODOLOGY

Interviewers used written protocols specific to each category of respondent. At the end of each interview, interviewers completed a post-interview assessment to record their perceptions of the respondent's answers and to note non-verbal cues.

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 and Close-of-Service Surveys⁷. The results presented in this report; however, are almost exclusively based on the interview data collected throughout this study.

One hundred six individuals were interviewed in Mali (Tables 2 and 3) for respondent and study characteristics.

Table 2: Description of Study Participants

Interview Type	Number of People	Number of Sites
Counterparts	43	10
Beneficiaries	41	14
Host family members	22	12
Total	106	-

⁷Peace 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 COS survey was discontinued in 2009.

APPENDIX 1: METHODOLOGY

Table 3: Description of Pilot Study Posts

Region	Country	Sector	Volunteer Training Classes	Site Selection Process	Respondent Types	Number of Respondents	Data Collection period	External challenges
EMA	Armenia	Education (TEFL)	4 training classes with start dates between 2004 and 2008	Select all sites that met the criteria of having had a volunteer at least one semester and site being physically accessible	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ministry officials 2. Team teachers and school administrators 3. Students and youth tutored by Volunteers 4. Staff of local NGOs 5. Host family members 	<input type="checkbox"/> 88 individuals <input type="checkbox"/> 24 assignments	August to November October 2008	Received approximately 80 Volunteers displaced from neighboring Georgia; Petrol shortages temporarily limited travel to sites
IAP	Dominican Republic	Water/ Sanitation and Health	3 training classes with start dates between 2003 and 2005	Initial random sample with revisions made based on site accessibility	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Counterparts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Leaders of water brigades o Leaders of youth and women’s groups 2. Beneficiaries 3. Host Family members 	<input type="checkbox"/> 48 individuals <input type="checkbox"/> 16 assignments	August to September 2008	Four hurricanes caused travel difficulties and temporarily closed the PC/DR Offices
Africa	Mali	Small Enterprise Development	5 training classes with start dates between 2002 to 2008	Initial selection based on site accessibility and secondary selection to balance activity tracks and presence of current versus previous Volunteers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ministry officials 2. Members of tourist and artisan boards 3. Small business owners 4. Staff of microfinance organizations 5. Local and regional government officials 6. Staff of local NGOs 7. Host family members 	<input type="checkbox"/> 106 individuals <input type="checkbox"/> 14 assignments	August to October 2008	Electrical storm that caused an outage for post electrical systems; Communication issues with the Senior Researcher; Issues related to translations of protocols and responses from English to French to one of several local languages.

APPENDIX 1: METHODOLOGY

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 4).

Table 4: Summary of Interview Questions by Respondent Type

Respondent Type	Question Categories	Approximate Length of interview
Counterpart	<p>Goal 1</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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 <p>Goal 2</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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 	45 minutes
Beneficiary	<p>Goal 1</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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 <p>Goal 2</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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	Goal 2	30 minutes

APPENDIX 1: METHODOLOGY

Respondent Type	Question Categories	Approximate Length of interview
Member	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Source of information and opinion of Americans prior to the Peace Corps work2. Type of information learned about Americans from interaction with the Volunteer3. Opinion of Americans after interaction with the Volunteer4. Particular things that Volunteers did that helped improve respondent's understanding of Americans5. Behavioral changes based on knowing the Volunteer	