



PEACE  
CORPS

# Mali HOST COUNTRY IMPACT STUDY

## Purpose

In 2008, the Peace Corps launched a series of studies to determine the impact of Volunteers in meeting two of the agency’s three goals: building local capacity and promoting a better understanding of Americans among local people in host countries. These Host Country Impact Studies are unique in providing feedback from the people who lived and worked with Peace Corps Volunteers. A team of Malian researchers conducted this study in the summer and fall of 2008, interviewing 106 respondents in 14 diverse communities. The Peace Corps Office of Strategic Information, Research, and Planning developed the methods and protocols, trained the local researchers, and produced a series of reports from this and other Host Country Impact Studies.

## Study Focus: Small Enterprise Development Project in Mali

As of 2011, 2,555 Volunteers have served in Mali since the Peace Corps opened in 1971. The goals of the Small Enterprise Development Project are to increase market stability and reduce unemployment in Mali. Volunteers advise small business owners and community-based organizations on basic business skills in order to start and run profitable businesses.

### Peace Corps Goal One

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

### Findings

Organizational, technical, and business management skills improved:

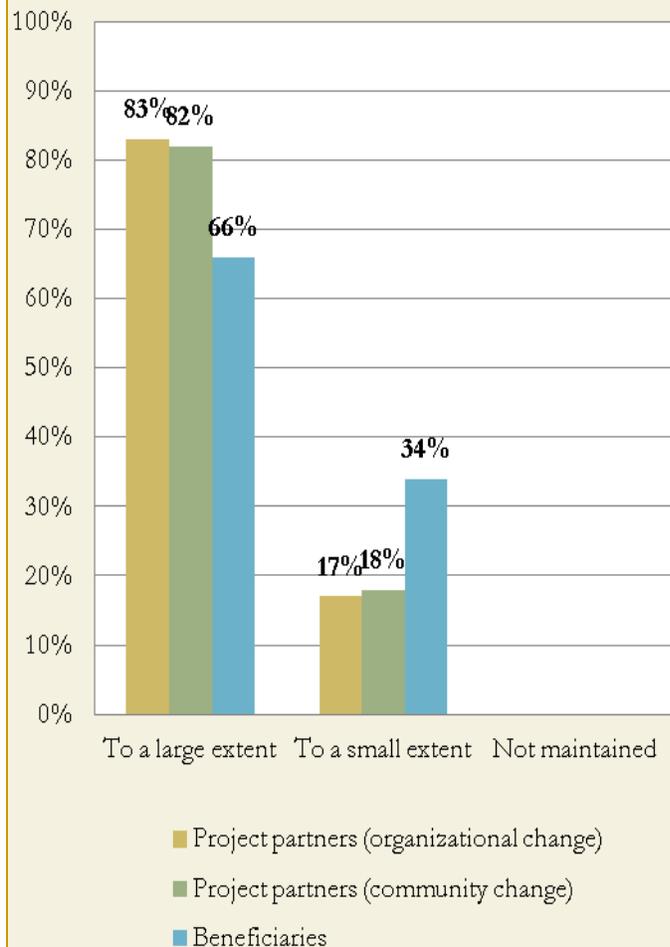
- 98 percent of project partners and beneficiaries (entrepreneurs, local officials, and artisans) said the project was moderately to greatly beneficial to both their organizations and their communities.
- 77 percent of organizational and community changes were rated as large changes.
- 35 percent of respondents reported improved understanding of business norms.
- 29 percent of respondents reported increased self-confidence and self-respect.
- 99 percent of changes were attributed to the Peace Corps project.

Sustainability:

- 83 percent of project partners said organizational changes were sustained.
- 82 percent of project partners said community changes were sustained.

Project partner: *“Artisans have woven sustainable and strong commercial relationships with external partners. Our members each have an email address now, which was not the case before. Due to the nature of our market demands, the quality of our products has improved.”*

### Extent to Which Projects were Sustained After Volunteer Departure





## Peace Corps Goal Two

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

### Findings

*Before* interacting with Volunteers:

- 79 percent of project partners and beneficiaries had learned about Americans from television and movies.
- Malian respondents described Americans as “Spies coming to exploit us” and “Wicked, because they don’t have the same religion and judgment as we do.”

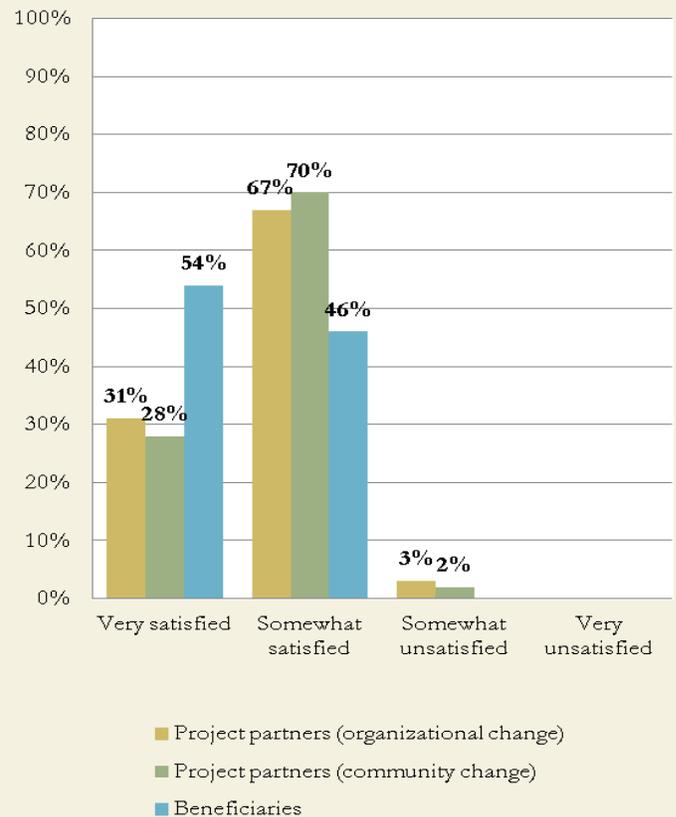
*After* interacting with Volunteers:

- Malian respondents thought of Americans as hardworking (100%), willing to work together (99%), possessing strong technical skills (83%), and individually oriented (97%).

Project partner: *“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: *“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.”*

Project Partners' Satisfaction with Results



Overall, Volunteers helped small businesses improve their products, marketing, and access to microfinance. Project participants were able to sustain and build on these changes after Volunteers departed. Although most participants had prior knowledge of Americans, opinions about Americans became more positive after working with a Volunteer.