

Selected Quotes from Peace Corps Volunteers regarding the five day Positive Deviance Workshop in Burkina Faso

April 12-16, 2010

What did you learn about the PD Approach?

- I learned that PD offers tools to put a philosophy of community development in which I am invested into action. It's a practice that goes along with a good theory. It attempts to remove the facilitators from the process as much as possible in order to give power to the community.
- Since before the workshop I had little to no understanding of what the PD Approach involves, I learned a great deal. In PC so often we use role models in our communities in order to inspire others to overcome challenges, but because the focus is on the outcome of these role models' behaviors and not on the behaviors themselves, it is often very difficult for others to relate to the role models and follow their example. By identifying concrete behaviors and highlighting the fact that they are on a level playing field (in terms of resources and environment), other community members will be able to see and take responsibility for actual specific actions that will help them solve their problems.
- I learned how this approach would theoretically and systematically be applied at my site. I also learned how the larger, over-all idea of finding "positive deviants" within a community can be used to address problems informally, on a more regular basis.
- Through practicing the approach, I learned how valuable group discussions are as a means of learning new information and honest perspectives from the community. But I also realized how it would be difficult to guide such conversations as a volunteer with certain community groups. In implementing the approach my own role would be limited, and perhaps difficult to define.
- I learned many things about the PD approach. Most importantly, I learned a more open, active listening approach to ask questions in my community. I also learned how to approach a problem and allow the community to identify the problem and find a solution themselves. I also like the idea of looking at potential community role models from the perspective the individual behaviors that lead them to a positive outcome. It makes this

outcome seem more attainable for the group at large rather than an anomaly.

What skills did you learn?

- While it isn't a new aptitude, I will be much more cognizant of how well I am listening, and not directing. Silence is golden!
- Practice posing open questions and turning questions back to the people who posed them. I was encouraged by the participation of all the members of this training group, as well as by the interest from the communities that were gracious enough to let us in.
- The skills that I acquired during this workshop include the ability to facilitate sessions with different groups in which the goal is more to listen and to hear their ideas rather than to direct the conversation. Related to this, I also recognized the importance of creating appropriate settings for these conversations and selecting appropriate spokespeople – both of which I feel capable of doing with the help of community counterparts.
- I learned the most (skills) from the “restitution” activities – when we compiled and reviewed the information gathered “in the field” in a concise and effective format. The table we used to present the information was very helpful for me; I liked the way it re-formulated qualitative and subjective information in a useful way. I also improved my skills on forming questions appropriate for this type of information gathering, taking into consideration the group being questions.
- The skills I have acquired are how to be a part of the solution process while also taking a step back and allowing the process to take on a life of its own; how to ask more open ended questions without also sensibilizing/parabolizing at the same time. How to identify individual positive behaviors that can be replicated by a larger group of people.