

OVERSEAS TECHNICAL COOPERATION IMPACT STUDY:
AN EVALUATION OF THE IMPACT OF OVERSEAS
ASSIGNMENTS ON INDIVIDUAL, ORGANIZATIONAL
AND COMMUNITY ATTITUDES, BEHAVIORS AND
SUPPORT FOR INTERNATIONAL INVOLVEMENTS

by

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ABSTRACT

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The Overseas Technical Cooperation Impact Study was conducted from 1996-1998. The purpose of this study was to document the impacts of the Polish-American Extension Project (PAEP) on the U.S. participants and their organizations and communities. The PAEP was a joint education project of the U.S.D.A's Extension Service and the Polish Ministry of Agriculture and Food Economy's Agricultural Advisory Service. During the period of the project from 1989 to 1995, 70 individuals from 26 states served as technical advisors in local Extension Offices in Poland for at least one, six-month assignment. These individuals, employees of the various state Cooperative Extension Services across the U.S., were the population of the study. This study was conducted to estimate the domestic impact of the Polish-American Extension Project. The specific objectives of the project were to document the characteristics and reactions of the participants to their work in Poland, to assess the personal, family and professional impacts of the experience on participants, to assess the impacts of participation on colleagues, near associates and the extension organization in general, and to estimate the depth of awareness, support and involvement generated in the communities where the participants lived. Three different data collection techniques were used--mailed survey questionnaires to all participants, site visits and interviews with participants and key associates in 10 randomly chosen states, and telephone interviews with 28 community members involved in linkages with Polish peoples and organizations as a result of the PAEP.

The results of this study suggest that the PAEP was a success in strengthening the international interests and competencies of personnel and clientele of the U.S. Extension system. Those benefits included

- Extension staff with new knowledge, attitudes and perspectives that raised their status and functioning within Extension and their communities.
- Family members with new skills and commitments to international involvements.
- Extension organizations with greater experience in interacting with international colleagues and in recognizing the importance of an international dimension for Extension.
- Community members with increased enthusiasm for international interaction and increased awareness and support for an international dimension within Extension and among citizens and government agencies.

The model of sending subject matter specialists and field level agents on international assignments that closely parallel their roles in the U.S. proved very effective. U.S. personnel felt comfortable with their assignments and perceived that they were able to contribute to the goals of the project. They also recognized benefits to themselves, their family members and their colleagues. Participants actively integrated their Polish experiences into their work with communities and clientele upon their return. Numerous presentations, linkages, and educational messages were developed to extend the experience to the U.S. A high level of interaction with Poland continues. Citizens and community leaders were found to be extremely supportive of an international dimension for Extension and welcomed interactions with Polish guests and connections. Both citizens and professionals reported high levels of support for international involvements for agencies such as the USDA, and for universities and citizens.

Publications:

Place, Nick T. (1998). Domestic Implications of the Polish-American Extension Project: A Case Study. Ph.D. Dissertation, The Pennsylvania State University.

Crago, Nancy E. (1998). Extension Organizational Factors that Influenced American Participants in the Polish/American Extension Project. Ph.D. Dissertation, The Pennsylvania State University.

Andrews, M.P., Evans, D., Place, N., Crago, N. (1998). Overseas Technical Cooperation Impact Study: An Evaluation of the Impact of Overseas Assignments on Individual, Organizational and Community Attitudes, Behaviors and Support for International Involvements. Final Report, The Pennsylvania State University.

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A very special thanks goes to the 70 PAEP participants who completed and returned the uncommonly long, extensive 19-page questionnaire and who lived and worked in Poland for six months or longer. It is a pleasure to dedicate this study to them.

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