

MS 320 Peace Corps Publicity in the United States and Overseas

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Responsible Office: D/OMR

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1.0 Purpose

The purpose of this Manual Section is to establish guidelines for all Agency personnel when publicizing Peace Corps programs.

2.0 Policy

Because the Peace Corps wants to keep Americans and host country citizens informed about its accomplishments, it maintains a policy of openness and willingness to respond to inquiries from journalists and to provide information about programs.

3.0 U.S. Publicity

3.1 Responsibility of Media Relations

The Office of Media Relations (D/OMR) is responsible for publicizing Peace Corps activities in the United States through direct reporting of programs to the media and by encouraging media representatives to develop original material. The Office of Creative Services is responsible for Public Service Announcements.

All information given to media should be timely, accurate, and consistent. To achieve this goal, all media inquiries should first be routed to the Office of Media Relations.

3.2 Responsibility of Volunteers and Staff

Peace Corps news and features prepared by the Office of Media Relations from material submitted by Volunteers and Staff overseas are major sources of information for the U.S. public; therefore, all Peace Corps staff both here and abroad, should assist this office in gathering material, and should encourage Volunteers to respond to periodic requests for information.

NOTE: Volunteers may discuss their role in Peace Corps with media representatives; however, they should, if possible, notify their Country Director of such discussions before they take place. (See MS-204, "Volunteer Conduct," for additional details.)

Situations may occur abroad that, although not threatening to the well-being of Peace Corps Volunteers, may be perceived as such by the American public. Therefore, once Peace Corps/Washington receives official notification of emergencies, i.e., natural disasters, Volunteer deaths, political changes, the information should be forwarded immediately to the Peace Corps Press Officer.

3.3 Responsibility of the Country Director

Country Directors are encouraged to develop and maintain cordial relations with U.S. media representatives.

Direct coverage of Peace Corps activities by U.S. journalists visiting overseas is particularly effective in reaching a wide public audience. Media Relations is to be notified of such occurrences.

Where opportune, Country Directors should request U.S. Embassy public affairs officials to inform them when U.S. reporters are in the country.

Country Directors should assist Peace Corps media relations correspondents and photographers who visit overseas programs and training sites to collect first-hand information for the U.S. public media and for Peace Corps publications such as *Peace Corps Times* and the annual report.

4.0 Publicity in the Host Country

Publicizing the Peace Corps in a host country is a complex and sensitive task. Good press coverage of Peace Corps activities enables host country citizens to learn more about the United States, and may inspire them to cooperate with Volunteers in development projects.

4.1 Responsibility of Country Director

The Country Director is responsible for obtaining adequate publicity within his or her country through U.S. and international reporters and other sources.

Country Directors, in consultation with USIA staff members, should follow the lead of host country officials in determining how best to work with the local media.

Publicity efforts with media representatives in a host country are frequently best handled through the personal contact of the Country Director or designated Peace Corps staff person.

4.2 Responsibility of Staff

In determining what material to present and how to present it, Peace Corps staff should:

- (a) Consider the level of sophistication of the audience;
- (b) Not take undue credit for accomplishments involving host country agencies; and,
- (c) Be sensitive to the geopolitical impact of statements.

5.0 Peace Corps Relationship With USIA

The United States Information Agency (USIA) is willing to assist in publicizing the Peace Corps overseas. (The initiative for such publicity must rest with the Country Director, since the publicizing of Volunteers' work must be balanced with the efforts of co-workers and supervisors.) USIA may have no direct official contact with Volunteers except for purposes approved on a case-by-case basis by the Country Director. Such approval will not oblige any Volunteer to cooperate with USIA.

To ensure that the Peace Corps' people-to-people programs are not thought to be a part of the day-to-day management of United States foreign relations, USIA may not use Volunteers as identifiable sources of news in official information releases. Nor may USIA use Peace Corps

Volunteers as distributors of official USIA tapes, films, or publications.

6.0 Consideration of Privacy

Disclosure of information concerning staff, Volunteers, and other U.S. citizens is subject to certain constraints contained in the Privacy Act and some parts of the Freedom of Information Act. In general, personal information about Volunteers and staff members, other than their names, places of assignment, project descriptions, and salaries or allowances, cannot be made available outside the Peace Corps without the written consent of the individual to whom the information relates. For further details and applicable exceptions, see MS-893, "Freedom of Information Act" and MS-897, "Privacy Act Implementation."

7.0 Effective Date

This Manual Section takes effect on the date of issuance.