MS 340 Opening a Post

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1.0 Authority

22 U.S.C. 2501, 2501a

2.0 Purpose

This Manual Section provides a general outline of the process for opening or reopening a Peace Corps post in a country. Procedural guides for opening or re-opening a post are set out in the Peace Corps' New Country Assessment Guide and New Country Entry Guide.

3.0 Responsibilities

3.1 The Director

The Director is responsible for:

(a) Authorizing the initiation of discussions with the Department of State and the host country government regarding possible Peace Corps operations in the country;

(b) Directing senior staff to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the social, political, and security situation in the country to determine the feasibility of operating a Peace Corps program;
(c) Evaluating the country assessment and determining whether, and under what conditions, to proceed with opening a post; and

(d) If the decision is made to open a post, selecting the Country Director.

3.2 Office of the General Counsel

The General Counsel is responsible for:

(a) Providing legal review of and advice on the Director’s decision memo regarding opening of a post, and any required consultation with and notification, including written notification, to Congress regarding the opening of a new post;

(b) If a country agreement does not exist or a country agreement needs to be amended, notifying the Department of State and obtaining Department of State authorization to negotiate and draft a country agreement between the United States and the host country government, regarding the establishment and operation of a Peace Corps program in the country;

(c) Negotiating and drafting the country agreement, and any other agreement, including memoranda of understanding with applicable ministries and interagency agreements with U.S. government agencies, as needed;

(d) Reviewing and providing legal clearance for collocation and setback waivers for office space; and

(e) Providing general legal advice and support, as needed.

3.3 Office of Global Operations

The Associate Director for Global Operations and the appropriate Regional Director are responsible for coordinating the primary activities in opening or re-opening a post in the Region, including:

(a) Overseeing the country assessment;

(b) Working with Regional staff to define the strategic direction for the proposed post;

(c) Discussing with Peace Corps Response whether Peace Corps Response Volunteers should be assigned to the new post;

(d) Working with the Office of Volunteer Recruitment and Selection (VRS) to assess the availability of qualified applicants;

(e) When a decision has been made to open a post, coordinating between Regional staff and VRS to incorporate new Trainee requests into recruitment plans;
(f) In coordination with VRS and/or Peace Corps Response, developing a plan and timetable for the arrival of the first group of Trainees or Peace Corps Response Volunteers, taking into account other support needs of the new post;

(g) Establishing preliminary liaison with:

1. The United States Embassy, other United States agencies, third country agencies, host country ministries and agencies, and other organizations in-country, such as NGOs;

2. Peace Corps support staff at headquarters or overseas; and

3. Appropriate officials of the host country's Embassy in Washington, DC, the Department of State (particularly the desk officer) and other appropriate US public and private organizations;

(h) Coordinating with the Department of State, including the United States Chief of Mission in the host country with respect to:

1. the date for Peace Corps' entry into the country and such other matters as may be appropriate;

2. NSDD-38 approvals for USDH and FSN staff; and

3. Obtaining any required clearances.

(i) Determining the staging and other pre-departure needs of the program;

(j) Working with OCIO, OCFO, OACM, VRS, and other offices as appropriate to support opening the post;

(k) Establishing the staffing patterns for hiring as appropriate for a country entry;

(l) Coordinating and requesting appropriate funding for the opening year and the out year post operating costs; and

(m) Ensuring that all systems necessary to support Volunteers and Trainees (V/Ts), to include safety and security and medical, are properly established and functioning prior to the arrival of the first Trainees or Volunteers (transfer-extensions or PCRV’s).

3.4 Office of Safety and Security

The Associate Director for Safety and Security is responsible for:

(a) In coordination with the Associate Director for Global Operations and the appropriate Regional Director, conducting a comprehensive safety and security assessment for the Director's review and providing recommendations regarding the viability of Peace Corps operations;
(b) Working with Global Operations and the appropriate Regional Director to ensure that necessary security waivers and approvals have been obtained for the Peace Corps office and residences of U.S. Direct Hires, in accordance with the applicable directives in the Foreign Affairs Manual and Foreign Affairs Handbook, prior to the arrival of the first Trainees or Volunteers (transfer-extensions or PCRVs) in country; and

(c) Ensuring that the safety and security policies and programs to support V/Ts are properly established prior to the arrival of Trainees.

3.5 Office of Health Services

The Associate Director for Health Services is responsible for:

(a) In coordination with the Associate Director for Global Operations and the appropriate Regional Director, conducting a medical and health assessment, including advice regarding the medical capabilities, risks and challenges in the country, in order to determine if conditions in the country are conducive for Peace Corps operations;

(b) Recommending the principal components of the medical and health care program required for V/Ts in the country, which should include access to clinical resources, medical supplies, and medical evacuation options; and

(c) Ensuring that an acceptable medical and health care program has been established prior to the arrival of the first V/Ts.

3.6 Office of Congressional Relations

The Director of Congressional Relations is responsible for coordinating with the Associate Director of Global Operations and the appropriate Regional Director, the Office of the General Counsel, the Office of the Director, and other relevant offices, and providing any required prior consultation with, and notification to, Congress regarding the opening of a new post.

4.0 Procedures

Procedures implementing this Manual Section will be proposed by the Office of Global Operations and will become effective when approved by the Office of Global Operations, Office of Safety and Security, Office of Health Services and Office of the General Counsel.

5.0 Effective Date

The effective date of this Manual Section is the date of issuance.