

SUBJECT: Difficult To Staff Incentive Differential

NEW MATERIAL: The Agency is implementing a financial recruitment and retention incentive to Foreign Service Officers accepting three-year assignments to positions at selected posts. For this purpose the Agency will implement the "Difficult to Staff Incentive Differential," as authorized in 5 USC 5925(b).

EFFECTIVE DATE: 05/01/2001

POLICY

**USAID/General Notice
M/HR/PPIM/PP
02/01/2001**

Subject: Difficult To Staff Incentive Differential

USAID is pleased to announce a trial program for the upcoming assignment cycle. The Agency is implementing a financial recruitment and retention incentive to Foreign Service Officers accepting three-year (3 year) assignments to positions at selected posts (see list below). For this purpose the Agency will implement the "Difficult to Staff Incentive Differential," as authorized in 5 USC 5925(b).

The Difficult to Staff Incentive Differential allows agencies to provide up to an additional fifteen percent (15%) for selected posts that already qualify for a "post differential" of up to twenty five percent (25%). (Post differential is based on environmental conditions that differ substantially from conditions of environment in the continental United States, and is a pre-requirement for authorizing the Difficult to Staff Incentive Differential.) The posts listed below currently qualify for a post differential, and have been determined to have such especially adverse conditions as to warrant additional pay as a recruitment and retention incentive to fill vacant positions.

Any direct-hire Officer assigned to one of the listed posts in this assignment cycle will be entitled to an additional fifteen percent (15%) Difficult to Staff Incentive Differential, subject to the following requirements:

1. An Officer who bids on and is selected for a position at any of the posts listed below - and who accepts a three-year tour, in lieu of the usual two-year obligation, will be eligible for the Difficult to Staff Incentive Differential. The Difficult to Staff Incentive Differential would begin to accrue upon arrival at post, but not before the date the Differential becomes effective (tentatively scheduled to be May 1, 2001). Selected Officers may still bid for and accept a normal tour,

in which case they will not be eligible for the Difficult to Staff Incentive Differential.

2. An eligible bidder who occupies a position at any of the posts listed below, and who bids on his/her own position and is extended for an additional year (to make three consecutive years at post), will be eligible for the Difficult to Staff Incentive Differential for the third year of the assignment. The Difficult to Staff Incentive Differential would begin to accrue on the date the continuation at post is approved, but not before the date the Differential becomes effective.
3. An eligible bidder who occupies a position at any of the posts listed below, who bids on - is selected for - and is reassigned to another position at the same post, when such reassignment results in a combined tour of duty of three years or more at the same post, will be eligible for the Difficult to Staff Incentive Differential for the remainder of the assignment. In this case, the Difficult to Staff Incentive Differential would begin to accrue on the date the assignment is approved, but not before the date the Differential becomes effective. And,
4. Any Officer currently serving at any of the posts listed below may request extension of his/her tour to three consecutive years. If the extension is approved, the Difficult to Staff Incentive Differential would begin to accrue on the date the extension is approved, but not before the date the Differential becomes effective.

Officers may receive the Difficult to Staff Incentive Differential for each assignment to a post determined to meet the stated requirements, the payment will be paid in a lump sum at the end of each one-year period in the assignment; the Difficult to Staff Incentive Differential may not exceed fifteen percent (15%) of the basic pay of the Officer for the period served under the assignment; and, the combination of Difficult to Staff Incentive Differential and Danger Pay (if any) may not exceed twenty five percent (25%) of basic pay for the period served under the assignment. (For example: at posts where the Post Differential is twenty five percent (25%), the combination of the Post Differential and the proposed Difficult to Staff Incentive Differential would be forty percent (40%). If the post also qualified for Danger Pay of twenty percent (20%) the ceiling would be reached and the combination the three allowances would be capped at fifty percent (50%) of the Officer's base pay.) In addition, the Difficult to Staff Incentive Differential may be reduced for some Officers to comply with the Executive Schedule Level II salary ceiling.

USAID posts currently included for Difficult to Staff Incentive Differential are as follows:

Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Haiti, Angola, Congo (Kinshasa), Eritrea, Guinea (Conakry), Nigeria (Abuja), Rwanda. (NB: The list is tentative at this time and will be finalized before the global announcement cable is released. Further, this list is based on the needs of USAID and is not the same as the list of "hard-to-fill" posts determined by the Department of State and/or any other Foreign Affairs agency.)

The list of posts where Officers will be eligible for the Difficult to Staff Incentive Differential will be reviewed at least annually, and posts may be added or deleted based on the needs of the service. All of the above posts are currently being considered for the full fifteen percent (15%) Difficult to Staff Incentive Differential. However, the percentage of Differential will also be reviewed from time to time, and posts on the list now, or posts that may be considered for inclusion on the list in the future, could be placed at a lower percentage of an Officer's base pay.

Interested Officers will be required to sign an agreement to stay at post for the full three years. At the end of each year at post the employee will receive a lump-sum payment equivalent to fifteen percent (15%) of basic pay - in addition to the Post Differential mentioned above. Officers are requested to carefully consider their personal situation prior to applying for the of Difficult to Staff Incentive Differential, as failure to complete the full three-year tour (except for needs of the service, involuntary separation, or compelling compassionate reasons) will result in a requirement for the Officer to repay the entire amount of the of Difficult to Staff Incentive Differential paid to date. If there is a question as to whether or not a particular position is included in the trial program, Officers should consult their Personnel Management Specialist in M/HR/POD.

Specific implementing regulations, forms, and employee certification (agreement) formats are still being developed. These additional supporting documents will be completed prior to the proposed implementation date of May 1, 2001.

EXOs and principal officers, please assure that this information is made available to all eligible bidders and all direct-hire Officers currently assigned to the posts listed above.

DIFFICULT TO STAFF INCENTIVE DIFFERENTIAL Q'S AND A'S

What is the Difficult to Staff Incentive Differential?

The Difficult to Staff Incentive Differential is authorized by 5 USC 5925(b). The Differential provides Foreign Affairs Agencies with an additional tool for use in encouraging Foreign Service Officers to accept assignments to, and stay longer in, positions at selected posts. The Difficult to Staff Incentive Differential may only be used in cases where a Post Differential is already in place, and where the Agency has determined that there are such especially adverse conditions that additional pay is warranted as a recruitment and retention incentive.

How much is the Difficult to Staff Incentive Differential?

The amount of the Difficult to Staff Incentive Differential is determined by the Agency, and does not need to be the same at every post where the Agency implements the Differential. The maximum amount of the Difficult to Staff Incentive Differential is fifteen

percent (15%) of an Officer's base pay. Currently, the Difficult to Staff Incentive Differential is fifteen percent (15%) for all of the listed posts.

Who may receive the Difficult to Staff Incentive Differential?

Any Officer who bids on and is selected for a position at any of the listed posts, and who accepts a three-year tour, in lieu of the usual two-year obligation, will be eligible for the Difficult to Staff Incentive Differential. The Difficult to Staff Incentive Differential would begin to accrue upon arrival at post, but not before the date the Differential becomes effective (tentatively scheduled to be May 1, 2001).

May an officer be assigned to a two-year tour at one of the listed posts, without the Difficult to Staff Incentive Differential, if he/she prefers?

Yes. Officers may still bid for and accept a normal tour, in which case they will not be eligible for the Difficult to Staff Incentive Differential.

If an officer already serving at one of the listed posts decides to extend in his/her own position, will he/she be entitled to the Difficult to Staff Incentive Differential? Beginning what date?

Yes. There are two situations where this may apply:

1. An eligible bidder who occupies a position at any of the listed posts, and who bids on his/her own position and is extended for an additional year (to make three consecutive years at post), will be eligible for the Difficult to Staff Incentive Differential for the third year of the assignment. The Difficult to Staff Incentive Differential would begin to accrue on the date the continuation at post is approved, but not before the date the Differential becomes effective.
2. An Officer currently serving at any of the listed posts may request extension of his/her tour to three consecutive years. If the extension is approved, the Difficult to Staff Incentive Differential would begin to accrue on the date the extension is approved, but not before the date the Differential becomes effective.

If an Officer already serving at one of the listed posts decides to accept a reassignment at post to another position for a tour of duty in that position of less than three years, but a combined tour of duty at post of three years or more, will he/she be entitled to the Difficult to Staff Incentive Differential? Beginning what date?

Yes. An eligible bidder who occupies a position at any of the listed posts, who bids on - is selected for - and is reassigned to another position at the same post, when such reassignment results in a combined tour of duty of three years or more at the same post, will be eligible for the Difficult to Staff Incentive Differential for the remainder of the assignment. In this case, the Difficult to Staff Incentive Differential would begin to

accrue on the date the assignment is approved, but not before the date the Differential becomes effective.

If an Officer who is receiving the Difficult to Staff Incentive Differential curtails his/her tour to less than three years, what happens?

If the Officer's tour of duty is shortened for any of the following reasons, no repayment of Service Need Differential is required:

1. needs of the service
2. involuntary separation of the employee
3. compassionate reasons (requires concurrence of the Bureau AA and the DAA/M/HR)

If the Officer's tour of duty is shortened for his/her convenience, the employee will be required to repay all Difficult to Staff Incentive Differential received at that assignment. The Officer may request a waiver of repayment through his/her Mission Director and M/HR/POD, to the Bureau AA and the DAA/M/HR.

How will the Difficult to Staff Incentive Differential be paid?

The details of payment are still being worked out; however, it is expected that payment of the Difficult to Staff Incentive Differential will take place on an annual basis. It is planned that the payment will take place at the completion of each full twelve (12) months at post, and be based on the Officer's basic pay of record on that date. Payments will be for each full twelve (12) months; therefore if the tentative schedule is maintained the first payment will be in May, 2002.

What happens if a post designated for Difficult to Staff Incentive Differential is currently, or later, also designated for Danger Pay?

The combination of the Difficult to Staff Incentive Differential and Danger Pay may not exceed twenty five percent (25%) of basic salary. Though none of the listed posts are currently designated as Danger Pay posts, Difficult to Staff Incentive Differential payments will be reduced accordingly if the post is later designated for danger pay.

Are there any other restrictions?

Yes. The Difficult to Staff Incentive Differential may also be reduced to comply with the Executive Schedule Level II ceiling.

The announcement describing the Difficult to Staff Incentive Differential states this is a "trial program," if an Officer makes an assignment decision based on this program and is assigned to a listed position - what will happen if the program is terminated?

Any Officer approved for the Difficult to Staff Incentive Differential, who is assigned to a listed post or extended at a listed post because of participation in this program will receive the Differential for the duration of the period they agreed to serve.

What will the impact be if the Difficult to Staff Incentive Differential is reduced from fifteen percent (15%) to a lower percentage?

Any Officer approved for the Difficult to Staff Incentive Differential at fifteen percent (15%) will receive the Differential at that level for the duration of the period they agreed to serve. Any change in the level of the Differential would be on a prospective basis.

Point of Contact: Any questions concerning this Notice may be directed to Cecilia Pitas, M/HR/POD/SP, (202) 712-1468. Questions concerning announcement, please contact Timothy Beaty, M/HR/PPIM/PP, (202) 712-0265.

Notice 0201

File name	Notice Date	Effective Date	Editorial Revision Date	ADS CD No.	Remarks
iu4_0101_020501_cd23	02/01/2001	05/01/2001	N/A	ADS CD 23	New