

Position Classification Standard for International Cooperation Series, GS-0136

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SERIES DEFINITION

This series includes all classes of positions the duties of which are to advise on, administer, supervise, or perform research and operational work in the planning, development, and implementation of foreign economic assistance programs undertaken by the United States. These duties require a knowledge of economic, social, cultural, and political conditions in the country of assignment and of United States foreign policy.

This series includes positions which were formerly classified in the International Relations Series GS-0131. Since the GS-0131 series was not designed to cover positions requiring special knowledge and abilities in the carrying out of foreign economic assistance programs, this new series (GS-0136) has been established for such positions. The International Relations Series GS-0131 has not been superseded.

The grade level descriptions in these standards discuss the work of International Cooperation Officers who are assigned as desk officers and perform the full range of duties described below.

(**Note:** This standard was prepared in collaboration with the International Cooperation Administration.)

Since the nature of the qualifications required is reflected in the discussion of the responsibilities of International Cooperation Officers in the grade level descriptions, no separate qualifications statements are included at each grade level. All of the positions require a knowledge of the economic, social, cultural and political factors in the country of assignment, a knowledge of United States foreign policy, and the ability to meet and deal successfully with important political and diplomatic figures.

THE MUTUAL SECURITY PROGRAM

Under the Mutual Security Program, the United States undertakes to promote world peace and its own security by the development of economic, political, and military strength among friendly nations. The Mutual Security program is an integral part of the foreign policy of the United States; as such the formulation and coordination of broad policies for this program are a function of the State Department. The agency which administers the Mutual Security Program is responsible for implementing these policies and objectives through the formulation, development and administration of technical cooperation, and economic assistance programs.

These programs are undertaken on the basis of formal agreements and arrangements with the governments concerned. The agreements cover mutual commitments as to the kinds of aid and assistance to be provided by the United States, and the nature and extent of the host country's participation.

The agency administering the Mutual Security Program establishes missions within the host country. These missions, which include technically trained personnel, plan and formulate the

assistance program in conjunction with officials of the host country, subject to approval by headquarters, and conduct operations for the effective execution of the program.

For each mission operating in a host country there is established at headquarters a desk officer position which is the operating link between the overseas mission, the technical and operating divisions of the parent agency, other government agencies, national and international financing and service agencies, the host country embassy, etc.

THE PROGRAMMING PROCESS

Annual guidelines are issued to each overseas mission. These include (1) guidance on such matters as the basic assumptions on world conditions, policy and objectives, on the nature, form, size, and execution of the assistance program etc., and (2) procedural instructions on format, time schedule, etc. for annual submittal of programs for each country.

On the basis of these guides, a mission prepares its program proposals for the coming year.

These proposals are reviewed, modified, and approved by the headquarters agency and other interested agencies. The modifications are sent back to the mission which then prepares a detailed budget submission. Program adjustments are made, as called for by the President's budget, new developments, changes in policy etc., and the Congressional presentation document is prepared.

The economic assistance programs are developed to accomplish specific objectives of the United States and of the free world which are based upon an analysis of their interests in the country involved. The program development process starts with the identification and precise statement of United States and free world country objectives; then the problems which must be solved in order to attain those objectives are defined and analyzed; and, finally, programs are developed to solve these problems and thereby to make possible the attainment of such objectives. The total program, however, must also go beyond this point; the aid level proposed must take into account other country-wide factors; such as the aggregate demand for resources of these and other activities in relation to the resources from all sources which, it is anticipated, will be available to the country. Other factors taken into consideration in planning aid programs are: limited resources, political considerations, ability of the host country eventually to take over and operate the facilities and institutions to be created, etc.

WORK OF THE DESK OFFICER

The desk officer (who is referred to in the grade level distinctions as International Cooperation Officer) serves as the operating contact point between the overseas mission and the headquarters agency, and, through the headquarters agency, with all other interested United States foreign and international technical and finance agencies, and foundations. Utilizing the technical services available to him, he is the focal point through which all of these resources are brought to bear

upon his country of assignment. At the same time he is the means through which the plans, objectives, and problems of the mission are made known to the headquarters agency.

The desk officer participates in the development of the basic policies and guides which are furnished to the mission for developing its project proposals. He reviews and analyzes the mission proposals and formulates and recommends programs and projects that encompass the total mutual security program for the country. This requires examination of the total country program from the point of view of (1) its applicability to critical sectors of the country's economy, (2) program balance, (3) ability of the United States to provide effective assistance in the particular country, (4) absorptive capacity of the country's economy, and (5) the accuracy and reasonableness of cost estimates. He collaborates with all other interested Government agencies at each major step in the program process to make certain that the country program will be consistent with United States foreign policy objectives. He may participate in the negotiation of agreements for the conduct of programs in the country.

He recommends approval of the proposals submitted by the mission as revised and is responsible for justifying them to other segments of the headquarters agency. In all of the activities described above, he works closely with the United States Operations Mission in the country.

The desk officer is responsible for the continuing review and evaluation of the country programs in relation to their effectiveness in (1) supporting United States and free world policies and objectives and (2) in meeting the needs and requirements of the country. He accomplishes this through review of progress reports, statistical data, and material emanating from the mission or from other sources within the country, through discussion with mission personnel called in for consultation in Washington, and through official trips to the mission for purposes of consultation, inspection and review. He provides advice and assistance to the mission director in problems of internal mission management, staffing, and operations, and assures that the mission is receiving adequate management support from the appropriate headquarters offices.

The desk officer also reviews and evaluates reports of special program reviews conducted by Congressional groups, agency evaluation teams, the General Accounting Office etc., drafts responses, and recommends and follows up on appropriate corrective action to strengthen operations or staffing, change program emphasis, etc.

GRADE-DISTINGUISHING ELEMENTS

The difficulty of the assignments of desk officers is influenced by

1. The characteristics of the country's program for economic development,
2. The political, economic, or military importance of the country, and
3. The internal political situation of the country.

These elements and the ways in which they affect the difficulty of the desk officer's position are described below.

1. *THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE COUNTRY'S PROGRAM FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT*

In practically all the countries receiving U. S. economic assistance the major objectives are to establish programs designed to develop and expand the economic potential of the country and the well-being of its inhabitants by such means as increasing agricultural production, improving public health and sanitation, diversifying industry, introducing improved techniques and methods to established industries, constructing public works such as dams, roads and bridges, reclaiming land, improving the quality of public administration, and, in all of these fields, creating a core of technically trained nationals able to participate in the economic development of the country. *Technical cooperation* is the principal type of assistance designed to achieve this objective.

Presence of technical cooperation projects in the country requires the desk officer to be completely familiar with the economy of the country, to consider the impact of each specific proposed project on the total national economy and their effect on each other; to consider such problems as, for example, the result that an improvement in environmental sanitation will have upon agricultural production and the consequent necessity for the country to import less foodstuffs. He must assess the relative priorities of proposed projects on the economic development of the country.

In some countries normal economic development is being impeded by a heavy military drain on the economy. Such a country may receive defense support assistance which is economic aid to enable the country's economy to maintain its military forces and U. S. and allied military bases, and to produce military equipment. When a country receives defense support assistance there are more factors for the desk officer to consider in dealing with projects to improve the country's economic well-being and to bolster the civilian economy.

The International Cooperation Officer must work closely with defense authorities in order to assess defense support needs and to take into consideration the impact of the country's military commitments on its total economic position. Many of the problems involved can be resolved only at headquarters and involve factors which are unknown to the mission at the time it prepares proposals for economic assistance programs.

Some countries may be faced with economic or fiscal problems which are so vital to the country's economic growth and development that they must be solved before any long range solutions may be undertaken. Such crises may result from problems of inflation, currency stabilization, fall in world market prices of the country's major exports, extensive war damage, or large refugee population, etc.

Economic aid to alleviate these conditions may be in the form of loans, direct dollar grants, or other forms of cash assistance. Presence in the country of situations such as these requires that the desk officer recognize the problems and identify methods of solving them. He must consider the effect of their impact on the economic development of the country and be alert to identify ways and means of solving the immediate problem while, at the same time, instituting programs designed to prevent their recurrence.

Solution of these problems requires coordination and consultation with United States and international lending institutions in order to determine any other loan resources available to the country for economic development or solution of economic problems. Consequently the personal contacts of the desk officer are thereby increased, and his judgments and recommendations have an impact on the programs and activities of these other agencies and upon the economic stability of the country.

2. *THE POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, OR MILITARY IMPORTANCE OF THE COUNTRY*

The difficulty and responsibility of the work of the desk officer may be affected by the importance of the country in terms of the aims and objectives of the mutual security program.

A country may be important (1) because it is a leader in its region of the world, (2) because it is just emerging from colonial status and may therefore serve as an example to other nations of what such a new country can achieve, or (3) because of historic or geographic circumstances.

It may be important economically (1) as a source of strategic raw materials or (2) as a market for other countries.

It may be important militarily (1) because of its geographical relation to the United States, her allies, and other countries, (2) because it has important military bases, or (3) because it is allied with the United States in military defense pacts.

Because of the country's importance the consequences of the desk officer's recommendations and judgments are more serious, and could have more serious implications with respect to foreign policy relationships and program operations.

3. *THE INTERNAL POLITICAL SITUATION OF THE COUNTRY*

This element covers such conditions as (1) the stability of the country's government, (2) its degree of popular acceptance, (3) the presence in the country of important factions suspicious of or hostile to the United States and United States programs for the development of the country's

economy, and (4) the country's willingness to accept aid from nations whose aims and objectives differ from those of the United States.

Conditions such as these may (1) affect the institution of long-range development programs or (2) create additional considerations besides those of a purely economic nature in the development of economic assistance programs.

The desk officer must therefore be closely attuned to the political situation in the country and must consider, in addition to economic factors affecting the growth and development of the country, other factors that may justify institution of projects or programs on other than a purely economic basis.

Application of the Grade-Distinguishing Elements to the Evaluation of Positions

Each desk officer assignment is affected by different combinations of the elements described above. It is not possible to establish a pattern of grade distinctions which will cover all of the possible assignments. Therefore, typical grade-distinguishing elements are described at each of the grade levels covered below.

It is not necessary, unless otherwise stated in the grade-level description, for a country to possess all of the characteristics described at a given grade level in order for a desk officer position to be classified at that grade level nor should undue weight be given to purely temporary situations.

In evaluating specific positions consideration must be given to the relative importance of these elements to the duties and responsibilities of the desk officer's position. It is necessary to take into consideration not only the presence or absence of these elements in the country of assignment but also the extent to which they affect the work of the desk officer as described.

These standards describe only the work of the desk officer responsible for a single country desk. Some International Cooperation Officers serve as desk officer for more than one country and may have subordinate staff assistants who perform for a single country some or all of the duties characteristic of the desk officer position. Both types of positions should be evaluated with reference to these standards on the basis of their duties and responsibilities with respect to the country of assignment, and the kind of supervision received. Subordinate, assistant and staff positions are not described. They are to be evaluated by reference to these standards and to such other appropriate series as the [International Relations Series GS-0131](#).

The standards describe only those desk officer positions which are assigned to countries where there is an established and operating mutual security program. From time to time, desk officer positions may be assigned to countries where (1) a formal agreement has not yet been reached between the country and the United States or (2) where the assistance program is in the process of being terminated. Since there is not a fully operating program in such situations these incumbents do not usually perform all of the duties of a desk officer as described here and are to be evaluated by reference to these standards and to such other classification standards as the [International Relations Series GS-0131](#).

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION OFFICER, GS-0136-13

A typical assignment for an International Cooperation Officer at this level is to serve as desk officer for a country which may be characterized in the following manner.

1. *The Characteristics of the Country's Program for Economic Development*

The country program is designed for long-range economic development and growth. There is a technical cooperation program in a majority of technical fields. The specific projects undertaken, considered as a whole, affect the major facets of the country's economy. At this level there may also be found limited defense support and other economic assistance programs which do not affect the work of the desk officer to the extent described at the GS-14 level.

The desk officer utilizes a familiarity with the total economic situation and prospects of the country in formulating and analyzing the technical cooperation projects and in evaluating their progress. He considers the impact of each specific project on the economic plan for the country as a whole and on the basis of its degree of success calls to the attention of the Mission Director the adjustments to be made in other projects, and the establishment of additional projects. The desk officer's judgments and recommendations in this regard have a significant effect on the economic development and progress of the country and the well-being of its people.

Characteristically the technical cooperation program is not complicated by the presence of defense support or other economic assistance programs as defined in the introduction.

2. *Political, Economic, or Military Importance of the Country*

Countries at this level are typically not generally recognized as leaders in their geographic region. The country may be a source of strategic raw materials or provide military bases for the United States, but the effect of its withdrawal from the mutual security system would be limited to its neighboring countries.

The consequences of the judgments and recommendations of the International Cooperation Officer GS-13, are therefore usually not felt to any great degree beyond the country's own borders.

3. *Internal Political Situation of the Country*

While the country may have a politically unstable government which creates difficult problems in negotiating agreements from a long-range point of view, it has shown its ability to resist economic pressures from other nations that would be detrimental to the objectives of the United States and the free world.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION OFFICER, GS-0136-14

A typical assignment of an International Cooperation Officer at this level is to serve as desk officer for a country which may be characterized as follows:

1. *The Characteristics of the Country's Program for Economic Development*

Because the economic growth and development of the country are adversely affected (1) by the abnormal strain on the country's resources of a large defense establishment *or* (2) by the presence of a severe economic crisis such as inflation, lack of a stabilized currency, a fall in prices for the country's major exports, etc., the country receives in addition to technical cooperation defense support or other economic aid.

The presence of defense support or other economic aid programs affects the work of the desk officer in reviewing, formulating, and evaluating the country's total assistance programs. These aid programs require desk officers to have contacts and negotiations with either defense officials or representatives of international or United States fiscal agencies in order to take into consideration in determining the types and levels of United States assistance required, (1) the proposed programs of these other agencies, (2) the effects such programs might have upon the total economic development of the country, and (3) the country's ability to obtain other public or private financial assistance.

2. *Political, Economic, and Military Importance of the Country*

Countries at this level are typically among the political leaders in their parts of the world and have a strong influence upon their neighbors. The country may be an important foreign market of the United States or a major supplier of strategic raw materials. It may be such a factor in the mutual security system that a major change in its foreign policy would necessitate a radical revision of United States defense strategy. Consequently the judgments and recommendations of the International Cooperation Officer GS-14 not only affect the economy of the country itself, the mission programs and the military plans of the United States, but have significant repercussions on its neighboring countries.

3. *Internal Political Situation of the Country*

In addition to an unstable government characteristic of the next lower level, the country may also have strong political groups suspicious of the intentions of the United States and opposed to their country's accepting assistance from the United States.

In reviewing, formulating, and evaluating projects proposed by the mission for the optimum economic growth and development of the country, the International Cooperation Officer GS-14 must consider not only the economic factors governing these plans, as at the GS-13 level, but also such additional considerations as the degree to which projects must be delayed or postponed or different projects instituted in the light of the current views, influence, etc., of these groups.

In some instances, the country may also be accepting assistance from other countries with objectives differing from those of the United States. In these instances, in addition to purely economic considerations, the desk officer must consider the effect upon important groups within the country of projects proposed to be undertaken with United States support compared to those undertaken with support of countries with different aims and objectives.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION OFFICER, GS-0136-15

The level of work of the International Cooperation Officer GS-15 is characterized by assignment to a country of outstanding importance to the Mutual Security Program. Usually such a country's economic development is affected by (1) a heavy military drain on the economy *and* (2) economic or fiscal problems such as inflation, unstable currency, a fall in world market prices of the country's major exports, extensive war damage, a large refugee population, etc.

The country may be characterized as follows:

1. *The Characteristics of the Country's Program for Economic Development*

Countries at this level differ from those described at GS-14 in that typically their program for economic development is impeded by heavy military drains on the economy, *and in addition* serious economic or fiscal problems. Consequently they receive both defense support and other types of assistance such as grants, loans, or other economic aid. Presence in the country program of this combination of problems requires the International Cooperation Officer GS-15, to consider in his formulation, review and evaluation of mission proposals and operations of the interrelationships of the various types of assistance programs proposed and their joint impact upon the total economic development of the country.

When this combination of problems exists it is usually indicative of an extremely grave situation for the country's economy with consequent impact upon the interests of the United States and the free world. Therefore the contacts and discussions of the international cooperation officer with defense activities and with fiscal and lending agencies are increased and his judgments and recommendations may have a more serious effect upon the country's economic development and United States policies than those of the International Cooperation Officer GS-14.

Some countries at this level may not have a defense support component in their economic development program. In these cases, the severe fiscal and economic problems affecting the country create difficulties for the International Cooperation Officer equivalent to those created by a combination of defense support and other economic problems, as described earlier at this level.

In addition, some International Cooperation Officers may be assigned to countries whose world-wide importance, economic needs, development potential, and strategic importance are of such great magnitude that they create difficulties and complexities for the International Cooperation Officer which are equivalent to those described at this level.

2. *Political, Economic, or Military Importance of the Country*

The position of the country in relation to either the military or political aspects of the mutual security system is such that reorientation of its foreign policy away from the free world would almost certainly serve as a stimulus to several other nations to reappraise their own policies.

As a consequence the judgments and recommendations of the International Cooperation Officer GS-15 affect not only the country and its neighbors but also many other leading nations of the world.

In many instances the country may be in constant danger of direct aggression or subversion from countries which are not sympathetic to the aims and objectives of the free world.

Because of the country's world status there is considerable widespread public, and Congressional, and official interest in the economic assistance program. Consequently, the International Cooperation Officer GS-15 must be especially sensitive to public reaction to the program; he is frequently called upon to prepare justifications, analyses, or reports on the program because of the unusual and widespread interest.

3. *Internal Political Situation of the Country*

Generally speaking at this level the internal political situation of the country and the problems arising from it are similar to those described at the GS-14 level, and, in themselves, are not sufficient to warrant classification to GS-15.