

FOREIGN SERVICE SPOUSES OF THE FUTURE

In our community of the future, two career partnerships will likely be the rule; follower/leader couples, the exception.

FS spouses, therefore, will have to be better recognized as both a "support system" for the employee (which is the generic, uncompensated recognition they now have), and as independent economic actors in their own right, with their own relationship with the Department.

We will have to make the leap, in other words, from seeing spouses as "dependents" to dealing with them, when they wish, as partners and colleagues.

Elements of such an approach:

We must **intensify, systematize and communicate existing efforts to assist with local employment at posts where inhibitions on employment (language, laws) are not a factor**, and make HOM's accountable for supporting spouses in their job searches. They must make negotiation of appropriate agreements a priority where they do not exist, and engage local professional recruiting services to help identify work opportunities.

We should also consider more radical approaches. One would be to provide more systematic employment at posts i.e. **establish "away" careers for spouses who**

- **wish** to have such assignments as part of their career when they accompany an employee spouse
- **have** the requisite qualifications and training
- **accept** normal appraisals and the consequences

To do so, we must develop a **generic job category** that can be filled by qualified spouses i.e. information management, consular and administrative services. Reserved positions would be identified where a need existed. They would only be filled when a qualified spouse was available. The availability (or lack) of such positions would be part of the calculation employees would make in seeking postings.

We should also develop and pay for **training programs** to provide qualifications for spouses in these areas, as well as others (health care, hospitality, industry, physiotherapy, ESL, FSL) ie areas that should be "marketable" and give spouses opportunities for mobility in the NCR and the broader job market, independent of the Department.

Lastly, **we should establish and staff an HR office responsible only for spousal employment, and fund the program adequately.**