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# Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-07-523](#), a report to congressional committees

## Why GAO Did This Study

Pub. L. No. 109-102, section 567, mandated that GAO analyze U.S. international basic education efforts overseas. In this report, GAO (1) describes U.S. agencies' basic education activities and how the agencies plan them; (2) examines U.S. coordination of basic education efforts among U.S. agencies, and with host governments and international donors; and (3) examines how U.S. agencies assess the results of their basic education programs. In conducting this work, GAO obtained and analyzed relevant agencies' documents and met with U.S. and foreign government officials and nongovernmental organizations, traveling to selected recipient countries.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the Secretary of State work with the heads of other U.S. executive agencies in (1) improving interagency coordination of basic education efforts at headquarters in Washington and in recipient countries and (2) developing a plan to better assess the results of basic education programs, especially those programs aimed at increasing educational quality. We received written comments from State, USAID, and USDA indicating that they generally concurred with our recommendations. We also received technical comments, which we incorporated where appropriate.

[www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-07-523](http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-07-523).

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Jess T. Ford at (202) 512-4128 or [fordj@gao.gov](mailto:fordj@gao.gov).

## FOREIGN ASSISTANCE

# Enhanced Coordination and Better Methods to Assess the Results of U.S. International Basic Education Efforts Are Needed

## What GAO Found

Several U.S. agencies—the Departments of Agriculture (USDA), Defense (DOD), Labor (DOL), and State, as well as the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and the Peace Corps—support basic education activities overseas. State and USAID have strategic goals specific to promoting improved education. Several other U.S. agencies support basic education-related activities as part of programs that address their broader mission goals. For example, DOL supports alternative school programs as a way to remove children from exploitative work, USDA provides school meals or take-home rations to students, and DOD constructs dormitories and schools to provide better access for children who have to travel long distances to attend classes.

GAO found that agencies did not always coordinate in the planning or delivery of basic education-related activities. From 2001 to 2006, there was no government-wide mechanism to facilitate interagency collaboration and, as a result, GAO identified instances where agencies missed opportunities to collaborate and maximize U.S. resources. In addition, GAO found that the level of U.S. coordination with host governments and other donors in the eight visited countries varied. Without effective coordination, donors cannot easily monitor or assess the host government's progress toward achieving international goals, such as Education for All by 2015, one of State-USAID's strategic goals.

While U.S. agencies GAO reviewed conduct basic education-related programs to achieve different goals, most collect and use output measures, such as the numbers of schools built or children enrolled, to assess and report on results. USAID is the only agency with an education-specific goal of increasing access to quality basic education. However, in many instances, USAID faces challenges in collecting valid and reliable data needed to measure improvements in education quality. Without this information, agency officials cannot fully determine if the programs are achieving their strategic goals.



Source: Mercy Corps for USDA.



Source: GAO.

U.S. agencies provided school meals and computers to support basic education overseas.