



Highlights of [GAO-04-726](#), a report to the Honorable Charles E. Grassley, Chairman, Caucus on International Narcotics Control, U.S. Senate

DRUG CONTROL

U.S. Nonmilitary Assistance to Colombia Is Beginning to Show Intended Results, but Programs Are Not Readily Sustainable

Why GAO Did This Study

Since 2000, the U.S. government has provided a total of \$3.3 billion to Colombia, making it the fifth largest recipient of U.S. assistance. Part of this funding has gone toward nonmilitary assistance to Colombia, including programs to (1) promote legitimate economic alternatives to coca and opium poppy; (2) assist Colombia's vulnerable groups, particularly internally displaced persons; and (3) strengthen the country's democratic, legal, and security institutional capabilities. GAO examined these programs' objectives, reported accomplishments, and identified the factors, if any, that limit project implementation and sustainability. We also examined the challenges faced by Colombia and the United States in continuing to support these programs.

What GAO Recommends

We recommend that the Secretary of State, in consultation with the Attorney General and the Administrator, USAID, develop a detailed plan for improving systematic coordination among the three nonmilitary assistance programs in Colombia. This plan should include a timeline for achieving stated objectives, future funding requirements, and a strategy for sustaining the results achieved. In commenting on this report, State, Justice, and USAID generally found the report helpful. State and USAID noted that they are exploring ways to improve coordination.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-04-726.

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

What GAO Found

Although U.S. nonmilitary assistance programs have begun to produce some results, individual projects reach a relatively small number of beneficiaries, face implementation challenges, and may not be sustainable. For example:

- Projects designed to promote legitimate economic alternatives to illicit crop cultivation have helped about 33,400 families. However, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) estimated in 2000 and 2001 that as many as 136,600 families needed assistance, and these projects face implementation obstacles, such as difficulty marketing licit products and operating in conflictive areas.
- U.S. assistance to Colombia's vulnerable groups has provided support to many internally displaced persons, but these program beneficiaries do not receive all of the assistance they need, and there is no systematic way for beneficiaries to transition from emergency aid to longer-term development assistance.
- The U.S. government has made some progress toward facilitating democratic reform in Colombia, but projects face certain obstacles, such as limited funding and security constraints.

Despite the progress made by the three nonmilitary assistance programs, Colombia and the United States continue to face long-standing management and financial challenges. The Colombian government's ability to contribute funds for nonmilitary assistance programs is limited by a number of domestic and foreign factors, and Colombia's longstanding conflict poses additional challenges to implementing and sustaining nonmilitary assistance efforts. The U.S. government has not maximized the mutual benefits of its nonmilitary assistance programs and has not established a mechanism for vulnerable groups to transition from emergency aid to longer-term assistance. Furthermore, the Departments of State and Justice and USAID have not established timelines for achieving their stated objectives, nor have State and USAID developed a strategy to turn programs over to the Colombian government or to the private sector.

U.S. Nonmilitary Assistance to Colombia Programmed in Fiscal Years 2000-2004 (dollars in millions)

Program	Fiscal years					Total
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	
Alternative Development	\$43	0	\$52	\$56	\$56	\$207
Vulnerable Groups	30	0	24	57	38	149
Democracy/ Rule of Law	51	88	28	19	24	210
Total	\$124	\$88	\$104	\$113	\$118	\$566

Sources: State, Justice, and USAID.

Note: State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement did not provide complete funding data.