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# Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-07-277](#), a report to the Ranking Minority Member, Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives

## Why GAO Did This Study

The negative perceptions of the United States associated with U.S. foreign policy initiatives have underscored the importance of the United States presenting a complete portrayal of the benefits that many in the world derive from U.S. foreign assistance efforts. Congress has expressed concerns that the United States has frequently understated or not publicized information about its foreign assistance programs. As requested, this report (1) describes the policies, regulations, and guidelines that agencies have established to mark and publicize foreign assistance; (2) describes how State, USAID, and other agencies mark and publicize foreign assistance; and (3) identifies key challenges that agencies face in marking and publicizing foreign assistance.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the Secretary of State, in consultation with other U.S. executive agencies, (1) develop a strategy, which appropriately utilizes techniques such as surveys, to better assess the impact of U.S. marking and publicity programs on public awareness, and (2) establish interagency agreements to facilitate implementation of governmentwide guidance for marking and publicizing U.S. foreign assistance. State provided comments and concurred with the report's recommendations.

[www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-07-277](http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-07-277).

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Jess T. Ford at (202) 512-4268 or [fordj@gao.gov](mailto:fordj@gao.gov).

## FOREIGN ASSISTANCE

### Actions Needed to Better Assess the Impact of Agencies' Marking and Publicizing Efforts

#### What GAO Found

Most of the agencies we reviewed involved in foreign assistance activities have established some marking and publicity requirements in policies, regulations, or guidelines. USAID has the most detailed policies and regulations relating to marking and publicity. USAID has also established a network of communications specialists at its missions to publicize its assistance efforts and has issued communications guidelines to promote that assistance. According to State officials, its policy is to allow its program managers and ambassadors to use their discretion when determining which programs and activities to mark or publicize. USDA, DOD, HHS, Treasury, and MCC have also established some policies for marking and publicizing assistance, though these policies vary in their level of formality and detail.

To increase awareness of U.S. assistance abroad, key agencies that we reviewed used various methods to mark and publicize some of their activities and exercised flexibility in deciding when it was appropriate to do so. These agencies used different methods of marking, or visibly acknowledging, their assistance. In addition, agencies generally used embassy public affairs offices for publicizing information about the source of their assistance and, in some cases, augmented these efforts with their own publicity methods.

We identified some challenges to marking and publicizing U.S. foreign assistance, including the lack of (1) a strategy for assessing the impact of marking and publicity efforts on increasing the awareness of U.S. foreign assistance and (2) governmentwide guidance for marking and publicizing U.S. foreign assistance. First, although some agencies conduct surveys in recipient countries that primarily capture information on public opinion of the United States, little reliable work has been done to assess the impact of U.S. assistance on foreign citizens' awareness of the source of U.S. provided assistance. Second, while the newly appointed Director of Foreign Assistance has begun to address the issue of developing a governmentwide policy for marking and publicizing all U.S. foreign assistance, it is unclear to what extent this policy will be implemented by agencies whose foreign assistance programs are not under DFA's direct authority.

#### USAID Marking of Health Clinic in Indonesia



Source: GAO.