



Highlights of [GAO-09-993](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

In fiscal years 2006-2008, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), which has primary responsibility for promoting democracy abroad, implemented democracy assistance projects in about 90 countries. The Department of State's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (State DRL) and the private, nonprofit National Endowment for Democracy (NED) also fund democracy programs in many of these countries.

Partly to lessen the risk of duplicative programs, State recently initiated efforts to reform and consolidate State and USAID foreign assistance processes. GAO reviewed (1) democracy assistance funding provided by USAID, State DRL, and NED in fiscal year 2008; (2) USAID, State DRL, and NED efforts to coordinate their democracy assistance; and (3) USAID efforts to assess results and evaluate the impact of its democracy assistance. GAO analyzed U.S. funding and evaluation documents, interviewed USAID, State, and NED officials in the United States and abroad, and reviewed specific democracy projects in 10 countries.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that, to enhance coordination of U.S.-funded democracy assistance, the Secretary of State and the USAID Administrator work jointly with NED to establish a mechanism to routinely collect information about NED's current projects in countries where NED and State or USAID provide democracy assistance. These entities concurred with our recommendation.

[View GAO-09-993 or key components.](#)

For more information, contact David Gootnick at (202) 512-3149 or goodnickd@gao.gov.

DEMOCRACY ASSISTANCE

U.S. Agencies Take Steps to Coordinate International Programs but Lack Information on Some U.S.-funded Activities

What GAO Found

Data available from State show total democracy assistance allocations of about \$2.25 billion for fiscal year 2008. More than \$1.95 billion, or about 85 percent of the total allocation, was provided to field-based operating units, primarily country missions. Although complete data on USAID funding per country were not available, USAID mission data, compiled by State and USAID at GAO's request, show that in a sample of 10 countries, most democracy funds are programmed by USAID. In the 10 countries, annual funding per project averaged more than \$2 million for USAID, \$350,000 for State DRL, and \$100,000 for NED. In fiscal year 2008, more than half of State funding for democracy assistance went to Iraq, followed by China, Cuba, Iran, and North Korea, and NED funding for democracy programs was highest for China, Iraq, Russia, Burma, and Pakistan.

USAID and State DRL coordinate to help ensure complementary assistance but are often not aware of NED grants. To prevent duplicative programs, State DRL obtains feedback from USAID missions and embassies on project proposals before awarding democracy assistance grants. State DRL officials generally do not participate in USAID missions' planning efforts; some State and USAID officials told GAO that geographic distances between State DRL's centrally managed program and USAID's country mission-based programs would make such participation difficult. Several USAID and State DRL officials responsible for planning and managing democracy assistance told GAO that they lacked information on NED's current projects, which they believed would help inform their own programming decisions. Although NED is not required to report on all of its democracy assistance efforts to State and there currently is no mechanism for regular information sharing, NED told GAO that it has shared information with State and USAID and would routinely provide them with information on current projects if asked.

USAID uses standard and custom indicators to assess and report on immediate program results; USAID also conducts some, but relatively infrequent, independent evaluations of longer-term programs. The standard indicators, developed by State, generally focus on numbers of activities or immediate results of a program, while custom indicators measure additional program results. USAID commissions a limited number of independent evaluations of program impact. USAID mission officials told GAO that they did not conduct many independent evaluations of democracy assistance because of the resources involved in the undertaking and the difficulty of measuring impact in the area of democracy assistance. In response to a 2008 National Research Council report on USAID's democracy evaluation capacity, USAID has reported initiating several steps—for example, designing impact evaluations for six missions as part of a pilot program.