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Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-05-803](#), a report to the Chairman, Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate

Why GAO Did This Study

Independent media development led by the Department of State and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) supports the national security goal of developing sustainable democracies around the world. Independent media institutions play a role in supporting commerce, improving public health efforts, reducing corruption, and providing civic education. According to the Freedom House's Freedom of the Press 2005 survey, despite important gains in some countries, the overall level of press freedom worldwide continued to worsen in 2004.

GAO was asked to examine (1) U.S. government funding for independent media development overseas; (2) the extent to which U.S. agencies measure performance toward achieving results; and (3) the challenges the United States faces in achieving results.

The Department of State generally concurred with our report and USAID offered technical comments that were incorporated, as appropriate. In addition, State indicated that it plans to develop additional performance indicators and promote best practices in the future.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-05-803.

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.

INDEPENDENT MEDIA DEVELOPMENT ABROAD

Challenges Exist in Implementing U.S. Efforts and Measuring Results

What GAO Found

The Department of State and the U.S. Agency for International Development obligated at least \$40 million in fiscal year 2004 for the development of independent media, including activities such as journalism and business management training and support for legal and regulatory frameworks. About 60 percent of the fiscal year 2004 USAID and State obligations we identified supported independent media development projects in Europe and Eurasia. However, precise funding levels are difficult to identify due to a lack of agencywide budget codes to track media development obligations, differing definitions of independent media development, and complex funding patterns.

State and USAID face challenges in designing performance indicators and accurately measuring and reporting results directly tied to the performance of U.S. independent media efforts. The tools most frequently used by State and USAID as performance indicators—Freedom House's Freedom of the Press survey and the IREX Media Sustainability Index—are useful for determining the status of the media in selected countries but are of limited utility in measuring the specific contributions of U.S.-sponsored programs and activities toward developing independent media in countries when used alone.

Several country-specific and programmatic challenges can impede the implementation of media development efforts, including a changing political condition, sustainability of local media outlets, and coordination between donors and providers. Specifically, a country's changing political condition or lack of adequate civic and legal institutions can create challenges for a mission to plan, implement, and measure the results of its efforts. The sustainability of program recipients can also impede the overall success of efforts or specific activities at the country level. In addition, when coordination of activities is unstructured or informal, redundancies and confusion of responsibilities can impact project implementation.

U.S. Independent Media Development Journalism Training Program in Ukraine



Source: GAO.