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March 2007

FOREIGN ASSISTANCE

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

GAO-07-523

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

GAO Accountability · Integrity · Reliability

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.

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.

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.

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Abbreviations

AR	Annual Report Application
DFA	Director of Foreign Assistance
DOD	Department of Defense
DOL	Department of Labor
DSCA	Defense Security Cooperation Agency
EGAT	Economic Growth, Agriculture, and Trade Bureau
EI	Child Labor Education Initiative
FACT	Foreign Assistance Coordination and Tracking
FFE	Food for Education
GFEI	Global Food for Education Initiative
GPRA	Government Performance and Results Act
ILAB	Bureau of International Labor Affairs
ILO-IPEC	International Labor Organization's International Program on the Elimination of Child Labor
MCC	Millennium Challenge Corporation
MEPI	Middle East Partnership Initiative
NGO	nongovernmental organization
OCFT	Office of Child Labor, Forced Labor, and Human Trafficking
OHDACA	Overseas Humanitarian, Disaster, and Civic Aid
PPC	Policy and Program Coordination
SPA	Small Project Assistance
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

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United States Government Accountability Office
Washington, D.C. 20548

March 30, 2007

The Honorable Patrick J. Leahy
Chairman
The Honorable Judd Gregg
Ranking Minority Member
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations,
and Related Programs
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate

The Honorable Nita M. Lowey
Chairwoman
The Honorable Frank R. Wolf
Ranking Minority Member
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations,
and Related Programs
Committee on Appropriations
House of Representatives

Education contributes to the advancement of developmental goals worldwide as it impacts individual development, economic growth, poverty reduction, and democratic governance. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the international community has made progress in expanding access to basic education in the past 10 years in every region of the world. However, in 2004, more than 77 million children worldwide, particularly those who live in rural areas and come from poor households, did not attend school. In addition, almost 780 million adults—one in five worldwide—two-thirds of whom are women, lack minimum literacy skills.[1] In some countries, improved access to basic education has been achieved through increasing student to teacher ratios—a factor that can negatively impact the quality of education. According to the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), poor educational quality causes many children to repeat grades and eventually drop out of school, often before gaining basic education skills such as numeracy and literacy.[2]

[1]"Education for All Global Monitoring Report," UNESCO, 2007.

[2]"USAID Education Strategy, Improving Lives Through Learning," USAID, April 2005.

Several U.S. agencies, primarily USAID, fund and implement basic education-related programs overseas, using nongovernmental organizations (NGOs),[3] private organizations, and education service providers (such as universities) to implement the programs in country. These efforts include programs aimed at improving primary education, secondary education, literacy training for adults or out-of-school adolescents, early childhood development, or training for teachers at any of these levels.[4] From fiscal years 2001 through 2006, USAID, the Departments of State (State) and Defense (DOD), and the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) allocated[5] more than $2.2 billion to support U.S. international basic education-related efforts. During this same period, the Departments of Agriculture (USDA) and Labor (DOL) allocated an estimated more than $1 billion to programs that included basic education as a component, along with support to other related aspects such as providing food to maternal health centers and providing job training for older children to combat child labor.

As mandated in Pub. L. No. 109-102, section 567, this report provides an analysis of U.S.-funded international basic education programs. Specifically, this report (1) describes U.S. agencies' basic education activities and how the agencies plan these activities; (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 our work, we analyzed strategic, budget, and programmatic documents describing U.S. international basic education programs and activities provided by State, USAID, USDA, DOD, DOL, the MCC, and the Peace Corps that covered fiscal years 2001 through 2006. In addition, we conducted audit work in Washington, D.C., as well as the Dominican Republic, Egypt, Honduras, Liberia,[6] Mali, Morocco, Peru, South Africa,

[3]A nongovernmental organization (NGO) is any nonprofit, voluntary citizens group, which is organized on a local, national, or international level.

[4]For the purpose of this report, we use USAID's definition of basic education activities.

[5]For the purpose of this report, we use the term "allocations," as defined by State and USAID, to refer to a component of approved appropriations set aside by agencies for specific purposes.

[6]The USAID mission in Liberia was in the initial phase of developing a country strategy and had not implemented any basic education activities at the time of our visit.

and Zambia. We selected a nonprobability sample of foreign countries designed to ensure geographic diversity and representation of basic education programs from multiple U.S. agencies and international donors.[7] We met with representatives from State, USAID, USDA, DOD, DOL, the MCC, and the Peace Corps; officials representing embassies and USAID missions in the countries visited; officials administering international basic education programs; and officials from foreign governments, NGOs, the United Nations (UN), and other international organizations. Furthermore, to assess U.S. mechanisms for monitoring U.S. activities, we analyzed key project agreement documents, performance reports, and evaluations for 40 ongoing basic education projects in the eight countries visited. We performed our work from December 2005 through March 2007 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Appendix I provides a more detailed description of our scope and methodology.

Results in Brief

We identified seven U.S. agencies that support activities—in over 70 countries from fiscal years 2001 through 2006—that are directly or indirectly related to increasing access to or improving the quality of basic education overseas. State and USAID have strategic goals specific to promoting improved education. The other five agencies conduct basic education-related activities in support of programs that address their broader mission goals. Basic education-related activities include, among other things, teacher training, student feeding, school construction, and efforts to raise awareness of the benefits of education. The State and USAID joint strategic plan for fiscal years 2004 to 2009 includes the broad goal of improving education globally, with a particular focus on the Muslim world, as well as support for programs to achieve the UN's Millennium Declaration Goal of universal primary education by 2015. The two agencies have implemented basic education activities that align with these plans. State, for example, through its Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), supports activities that seek to improve access to basic education with a specific emphasis on girls and women in several North African and Middle Eastern countries and territories, while USAID supports various activities to increase access to and improve the quality of basic education and build the institutional capacity of host countries' basic education systems. The

[7]Results from nonprobability samples cannot be used to make inferences about a population because, in a nonprobability sample, some elements of the population being studied have no chance or an unknown chance of being selected as part of the sample.

top recipients of USAID's basic education funding are predominately Muslim countries and countries of strategic interest to U.S. policy goals, including Afghanistan, Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, and Pakistan. Several other U.S. agencies support basic education-related activities as part of their overall mission goals. For example, DOL supports education programs such as 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.

We found that agencies did not always coordinate in the planning or delivery of international basic education-related activities. From 2001 to 2006, there was no government-wide mechanism to facilitate interagency collaboration and, as a result, we identified instances where agencies missed opportunities to collaborate and maximize U.S. resources. For example, USAID officials responsible for planning and managing USAID's basic education programs were not present at key DOL and USDA meetings at which the planning of overseas education-related activities were discussed, or were not aware of some agencies' basic education-related activities. In the eight countries we visited, we noted several instances where project implementers in the countries did not collaborate or take advantage of opportunities to maximize U.S. resources in areas in which they had similar objectives of improving the quality of education. For example, in several of these countries, DOL could have joined USAID's efforts to effect policy reforms directed at rural youth by using USAID's delivery mechanisms of radio and television programming, as well as printed materials to raise public awareness of child labor issues. Although State's Director of Foreign Assistance (DFA) has begun to address the issue of better coordinating all U.S. foreign assistance by bringing together core teams to discuss U.S. development priorities in each recipient country, it is unclear to what extent these efforts will be accepted and implemented by agencies whose foreign assistance programs are not under DFA's direct authority. In addition, we found that the level of U.S. coordination with host governments and other donors in the eight countries we visited also varied. We observed stronger coordination in countries with strong national commitments to education reform and formal donor working groups on education, as well as in those countries implementing activities in support

of the World Bank's Education for All Fast Track Initiative.[8] We observed weaker coordination in countries that lacked a lead donor or host government commitment to convening donor meetings. Most donors that we interviewed acknowledged that further improvements in coordination could result in more efficient delivery of assistance. 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 we reviewed conduct basic education-related programs to achieve different goals, most collect and use output measures to assess and report on the results of their activities. Output measures are the direct products and services delivered by a program, such as numbers of schools built or children enrolled. USAID is the only agency with an education-specific goal of increasing access to quality basic education, and while USAID can measure education access through outputs such as the numbers of students enrolled in primary school programs, it does not, in many instances, measure education quality—a key goal of its programs. Outcome measures are the results of products and services provided, such as increased literacy and numeracy rates, which are indicators of improved education quality. Our analysis showed that USAID can report on some quality-related outcomes, such as primary school retention rates. However, it faces challenges in collecting valid and reliable data on student learning in areas such as math and reading. According to USAID and the UNESCO, student testing results are a good outcome measure of increased educational quality. To better assess its goal of improving access to quality education, USAID is developing a standardized test that could provide data on primary-level reading ability and would be comparable across countries. In addition, State's DFA plans to work toward developing methods to assess whether all foreign assistance programs are achieving their goals; however, these efforts are only in the early discussion phase. Without this information, agency officials cannot determine if the programs are achieving their strategic goals.

[8]Education for All is an international commitment to bring the benefits of education to every citizen in every society. In 2000 in Dakar, Senegal, 189 countries adopted the Education for All goals of (1) universal primary education by 2015 and (2) gender equity in education by 2015 among the eight Millennium Development Goals.

This report contains several recommendations to the Secretary of State. Specifically, it recommends that the Secretary of State work with the heads of other U.S. executive agencies supporting international basic education-related activities in (1) improving interagency coordination of basic education efforts at headquarters in Washington and in recipient countries to facilitate better planning and allocation of U.S. resources and (2) developing a plan to identify indicators that would help U.S. agencies, to the extent practicable, track improvements in access to quality education.

We received written comments on the draft of this report from State, USAID, and USDA (see apps. VI, VII, and VIII) indicating that they generally concurred with our recommendations. We also received technical comments on this draft from State, USAID, DOL, the MCC, and the Peace Corps, which we incorporated where appropriate.

Background

Basic education is defined in this report as all program efforts aimed at improving early childhood development, primary education, and secondary education, as well as training in literacy, numeracy, and other basic skills for adults or out-of-school youth. Basic education also includes efforts that facilitate and support such learning activities, including building host countries' institutional capacity to manage basic education systems and measure results, constructing and rehabilitating schools, training teachers, increasing parent and community involvement in schools, providing learning materials, and developing curricula.

Education for All is a major goal of the international donor community. At Jomtien, Thailand, in March 1990, representatives of the global education community held the "World Conference on Education for All" and declared universal access to education as a fundamental right of all people. In April 2000, the "World Education Forum"[9] met in Dakar, Senegal, where delegates from 181 nations adopted a framework for action committing their governments to achieve quality basic education for all—including ensuring that by 2015, all children--especially girls, children in difficult circumstances, and those from ethnic minorities--have access to completely free primary education of good quality. The framework committed these nations to the attainment of six specific goals dealing with early childhood education, universal primary education, life-skills

[9]The forum is an interagency body established in 1990 by the UN Development Program; UNESCO; the UN Population Fund; the UN Children's Fund; and the World Bank.

programs, adult literacy, gender disparities, and quality assurance. The United States supports this international commitment, as well as the UN's Millennium Development Goal—to achieve universal completion of primary school by 2015.

U.S. Agencies Fund International Basic Education-Related Programs

From fiscal years 2001 through 2006, USAID, State, DOD, and MCC allocated more than $2.2 billion to support U.S. international basic education-related efforts. See table 1 for these agencies' funding allocations specifically for basic education-related programs.

Table 1: Agencies' Funding Allocations for Programs with International Basic Education-Related Activities

Dollars in millions

Agency	FY 2001	FY 2002	FY 2003	FY 2004	FY 2005	FY 2006	Total[d]
USAID[a]	$161.6	$232.0	$339.2	$520.4	$413.0	$504.0	**$2,170.3**
State[b]	0	0.8	14.7	8.9	2.8	2.0	**$29.2**
DOD	2.3	1.6	2.1	6.0	3.9	0.3	**$16.2**
MCC	N/A[c]	N/A	N/A	0	12.9	0	**$12.9**
Total[d]	**$163.9**	**$234.5**	**$356.1**	**$535.3**	**$432.6**	**$506.3**	**$2,228.6**

Source: U.S. agencies' data.

Note: $0 indicates no allocated amounts. The Peace Corps is not included because it does not track funding by program sector.

[a]Figures shown for USAID funding include funds transferred from State for USAID-implemented MEPI programs.

[b]Figures shown for State's funding include funds for State-implemented MEPI programs.

[c]N/A: not applicable because the MCC was not established until 2004.

[d]Totals may not add due to rounding.

During this same period, USDA and DOL allocated an estimated more than $1 billion to programs that included a basic education component that supported their broader mission goals. For example, funding for USDA's Food for Education program includes basic education activities along with other components, such as providing maternal health centers. Similarly, DOL's funding for its programs to combat child labor combines basic education-related efforts and other activities, such as job training for older children and income generation opportunities for parents. In addition, the Peace Corps could not identify funding levels specific to basic education because it does not track funding by individual program sectors, rather by

overall country programs. This is because volunteers sometimes implement projects in multiple program sectors. Furthermore, other than USAID, U.S. agencies do not have a standard, government-wide, formal definition of basic education or a requirement to report their funding of international basic education activities to a central U.S. government source. See table 2 for these agencies' funding allocations for programs with international basic education-related components.

Table 2: Other Agencies' Funding Allocations for Programs with International Basic Education-Related Components That Support Broader Mission Goals

Dollars in millions

Agency	FY 2001	FY 2002	FY 2003	FY 2004	FY 2005	FY 2006	Total[a]
USDA	$178.3	$89.9	$93.1	$49.6	$89.7	$98.7	**$599.3**
DOL	81.0	77.5	80.1	75.9	72.3	53.6	**$440.4**
Total[a]	**$259.3**	**$167.4**	**$173.2**	**$125.5**	**$162.0**	**$152.3**	**$1,039.6**

Source: U.S. agencies' data.

[a]Totals may not add due to rounding.

See appendix II for the countries receiving basic education-related assistance by implementing U.S. agency in fiscal year 2006.

USAID Funded the Vast Majority of International Basic Education Programs

From fiscal years 2001 through 2006, USAID funded the majority of U.S. international basic education programs, allocating more than $2.1 billion to implement programs in about 60 countries worldwide. USAID used appropriated funds designated by Congress for basic education and other supplemental appropriations.[10] In addition to the congressionally

[10]Funds appropriated for "basic education" and utilized by USAID include the: Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2006, Pub. L. No. 109-102, § 567, 119 Stat. 2172, 2227 (2005); Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2005, Pub. L. No. 108-447, § 567, 118 Stat. 2809, 3024 (2004); Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2004, Pub. L. No. 108-199, Division D, Title II, 118 Stat. 3, 147; Consolidated Appropriations Resolution, 2003, Pub. L. No. 108-7, Division E, Title II, 117 Stat. 11, 164; Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2002, Pub. L. No. 107-115, Title II, 115 Stat. 2118, 2122; and Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2001, Pub. L. No. 106-429, Title II, 114 Stat. 1900, 1900A-5 (2000); *see also* H.R. Conf. Rep. No. 109-72 at 132 (2005).

designated basic education funds,[11] USAID used other appropriated funds, including supplemental appropriations[12] and funding for MEPI activities, to fund basic education activities abroad. By region, Asia and the Near East received the highest level of USAID's allocated basic education funds at approximately $1 billion, followed by Africa at almost $750 million, Latin America and the Caribbean at around $272 million, and Europe and Eurasia at about $51 million. See figure 1 for a map of the 60 recipient countries of USAID's basic education funding, ranked by total basic education allocations from fiscal years 2001 through 2006.

[11]For purposes of this report, congressionally designated appropriations covers appropriation specifically set aside by appropriating language for "basic education." For example, the fiscal year 2006 appropriation specified a general provision of $465 million for basic education, of which $365 million of the Development Assistance (DA) account should be allocated for basic education (Pub. L. No. 109-102, 119 Stat. at 2177). Other accounts from which USAID allocated basic education funding from fiscal years 2001 through 2006 include the Andean Counterdrug Initiative (ACI), Assistance for Eastern Europe and the Baltic States (AEEB), Child Survival and Health (CSH), Economic Support Funds (ESF), and Freedom Support Act (FSA).

[12]Supplemental appropriations include funding provided by Congress after the beginning of a fiscal year, such as the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act for Defense and for the Reconstruction of Iraq and Afghanistan (Pub. L. No. 109-234, Title I, sec. 1302, 120 Stat. 418, 435 [2006]), and the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act for Defense, the Global War on Terror, and Hurricane Recovery (Pub. L. No. 108-106, Title II, Ch. 2, 117 Stat. 1209, 1225 [2003]).

Figure 1: Recipient Countries of USAID Basic Education Assistance

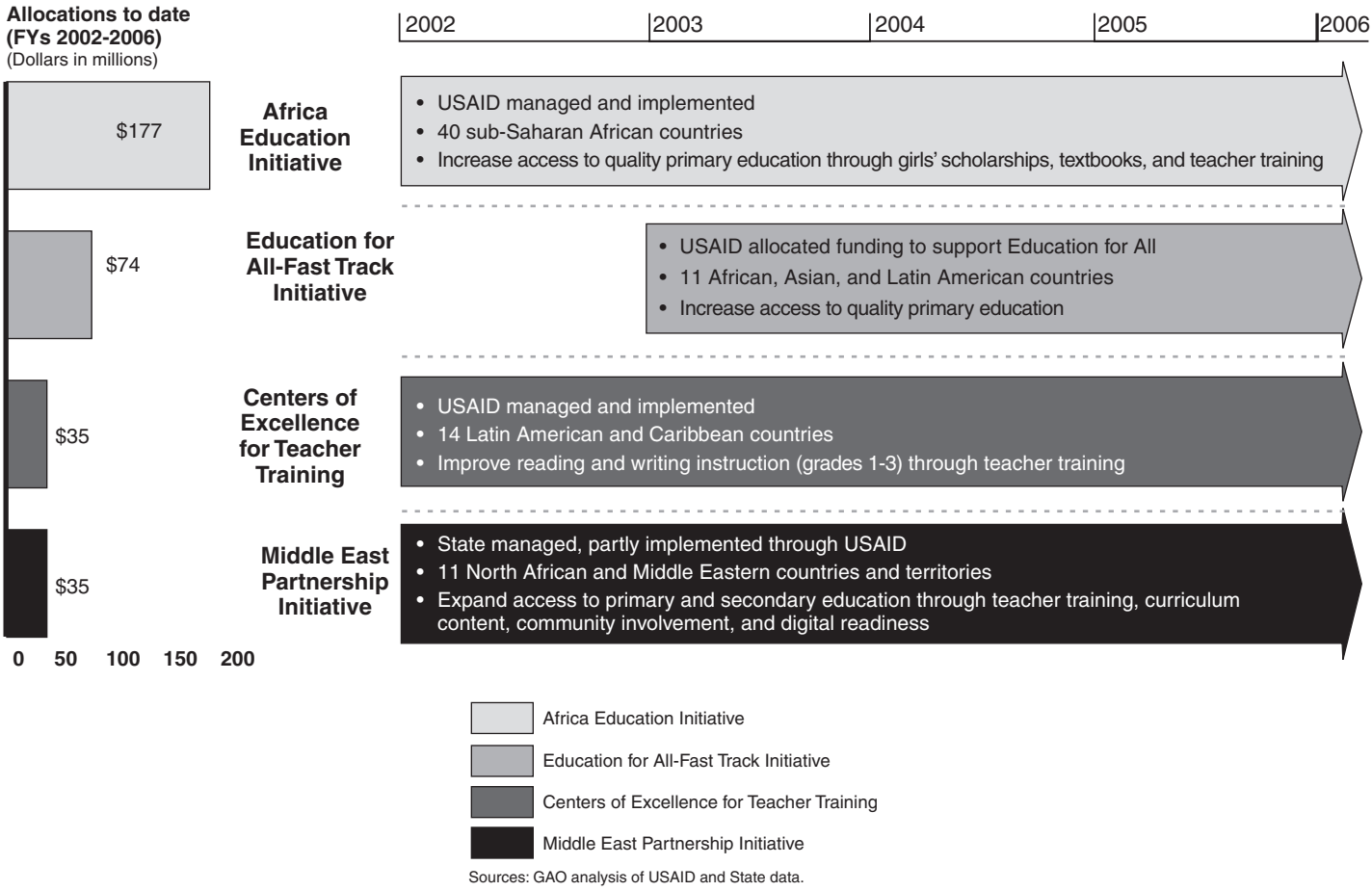
Top 10 countries	Next 10 countries	Other 40 countries			
1. Egypt	11. Haiti	21. India	31. Bangladesh	41. Uzbekistan	51. China
2. Iraq	12. Honduras	22. Nigeria	32. Namibia	42. Tajikistan	52. Lebanon
3. Afghanistan	13. Benin	23. El Salvador	33. Peru	43. Kyrgyzstan	53. Eritrea
4. Pakistan	14. Mali	24. Jamaica	34. Cambodia	44. Mexico	54. Georgia
5. Indonesia	15. Guinea	25. Philippines	35. Djibouti	45. Burma	55. Armenia
6. Ethiopia	16. South Africa	26. Yemen	36. Kenya	46. Nepal	56. Russia
7. Ghana	17. Senegal	27. Macedonia	37. Liberia	47. Somalia	57. Angola
8. Jordan	18. Sudan	28. Morocco	38. Dominican Republic	48. Rwanda	57. Burundi
9. Zambia	19. Malawi	29. Guatemala	39. Tanzania	49. Madagascar	57. Turkmenistan
10. Uganda	20. Nicaragua	30. Congo, Dem.Rep.	40. Turkey	50. Bolivia	60. Kosovo

Sources: USAID (data); Map Resources (map).

Special Initiatives Related to International Basic Education

Since fiscal year 2001, the United States has launched several major education initiatives that direct missions to focus on specific types of basic education activities in certain regions, such as Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Middle East, to address educational challenges in those regions. Figure 2 summarizes these initiatives.

Figure 2: Special Initiatives, Supported by the United States, Related to International Basic Education



Sources: GAO analysis of USAID and State data.

State and USAID Recently Developed Strategic Planning Goals Relating to Basic Education; Other Agencies Support Basic Education-Related Activities to Achieve Agency-Specific Mission Goals

The State and USAID joint strategic plan for fiscal years 2004 to 2009 includes the broad goal of improving education globally, with a particular focus on the Muslim world, as well as support for programs to achieve the United Nations' Millennium Declaration Goal of universal primary education by 2015. State and USAID have implemented basic education activities that align with these goals. Several other U.S. agencies support activities that directly or indirectly relate to increasing access to or improving the quality of international basic education.

State and USAID Strategic Plan Includes Broad Education Goals

State and USAID have strategic goals specific to promoting improved education. Although State and USAID have supported assistance activities relating to education for decades, neither agency had agency-wide strategies to guide these activities until early 2000. Moreover, State's September 2000 strategic plan only included references to improving education as part of the broader goal of promoting broad-based growth in developing and transitioning economies to raise standards of living, reduce poverty, and lessen disparities of wealth within and among countries. The State and USAID joint Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2004 to 2009,[13] includes, for the first time for these agencies, education as a strategic goal. According to the strategic plan, State and USAID will promote improved education globally, with a particular focus on the Muslim world, as well as support the development goals of the UN's Millennium Declaration call for universal primary education by 2015. Working toward this UN goal, the plan calls for State and USAID to support programs that do the following:

- *Promote equal access to quality basic education*. The strategy says that State and USAID would assist and encourage countries to improve their education policies, institutions, and practices in the classroom; give

[13]The State and USAID Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2004 to 2009 sets forth the Secretary of State's direction and priorities for both organizations, including how State and USAID will implement U.S. foreign policy and development assistance. The plan defines the primary aims of U.S. foreign policy and development assistance, as well as the agencies' strategic objectives and associated goals.

families and communities a stronger role in educational decision making; and focus their efforts on reducing barriers to education for girls.

- *Implement international education commitments*. The strategy also states that both agencies will work with donor partners to implement the commitments made at the 2000 World Educational Forum in Dakar, the G–8[14] Summits at Genoa and Kananaskis, and at the UN Conference on Financing for Development in Monterrey. In addition, the agencies are to help developing countries build their capacity to achieve the global Education for All initiative.

State and USAID Have Implemented Basic Education Activities That Align with Their Strategic Plans

Consistent with the joint strategic plan's education goals, State has implemented programs, mainly through MEPI, to target basic education in North Africa and the Middle East. As the largest provider of U.S. basic education assistance, USAID also supports activities that align with the joint strategic plan, as well as its 2005 education strategy that focuses on improving: (1) access to education, (2) quality of education, and (3) host governments' capacity to manage education efforts. In addition, USAID has allocated resources toward strategically important countries, as noted in both strategy documents.

State's Programs Target the Middle East and Muslim Countries

State generally supports education programs that align with the agency's broader foreign policy objectives such as promoting democracy and reform in the Muslim world. Primarily through MEPI, the agency supports international basic education activities aimed at increasing access to basic education, especially for girls and women, and improving the quality of basic education through teacher training, curriculum development, and community involvement in North African and Middle Eastern countries and territories. For example, through MEPI, State's Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs supports a "scholarships for success" program in Morocco to increase access to secondary schools for girls living in remote rural communities through the creation of girls' dormitories (see fig. 3). As an initiative directed by the administration, MEPI allocates resources for basic education programs in North African and Middle Eastern countries and territories. Under MEPI, basic education funds are allocated for country-

[14]The G-8 countries are Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

specific and regional programs based on information from U.S. embassies and other U.S. agencies with regional programs that can identify areas of need, and through conversations with host governments. Between fiscal years 2001 and 2006, the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs allocated about $35 million in MEPI funding for 23 basic education-related projects in 11 North African and Middle Eastern countries and territories. In addition to MEPI, during the same period, State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs funded one basic education project that allocated, in Indonesia, a total of $2.4 million in fiscal years 2004 and 2005 to fund multiyear scholarships for Indonesian teachers at the secondary and university level to study education in the United States.

Figure 3: MEPI Supported Dormitory for Moroccan Middle School Girls

Source: GAO.

USAID Programs Support Education Strategic Objectives; Resources Correspond with U.S. Strategic Priorities

In the eight countries we visited, we found that USAID implemented programs that targeted the agencies' emphasized population of primary-level students and girls and aligned with its three main strategic objectives. USAID's resource allocations of top recipients of basic education funding from fiscal years 2001 through 2006 show consistency with U.S. priorities placed on strategic partner countries.

USAID Programs Support Education Strategy

Prior to 2005, USAID did not have an agency-wide education strategy and its education programming was generally guided over time by several agency strategies, policies, and operational directives. In April 2005, USAID issued an education strategy that prioritizes the broad education objective of increasing equitable access to quality education, with the more specific focuses on primary education and girls' education. The strategy directs that USAID focus on (1) increasing access to basic education, (2) improving the quality of basic education, and (3) building the institutional capacity of the host countries' basic education systems. This strategy also supports the broader State and USAID strategic goals of improving education globally with a particular emphasis on the Muslim world, as it emphasizes the importance of education in strategic countries, as well as implementing international education commitments, such as the Education for All by 2015 initiative.

In the eight countries we visited, we found that USAID generally implemented programs that aligned with its three main strategic objectives and targeted the agencies' emphasized population of primary-level students and girls. According to USAID, as a matter of policy, USAID's efforts focus on increasing children's access to quality primary education because the quality and accessibility of primary education plays a critical role in determining whether children gain core skills, such as literacy and numeracy, and have a chance to gain further education.[15] In addition, USAID has a special focus on girls' education. Missions engaged in basic education are required to assess the extent of educational disadvantage faced by girls at the primary level in the host country and take further steps where this disadvantage is found to be significant. Seven of the eight

[15]This policy may be superseded in a host country that has already resolved serious deficiencies in access and educational quality at the primary level. Likewise, it may be set aside if the mission concludes that agency resources would produce more valuable results in some other area of basic education.

missions we visited implemented projects to increase access and improve the quality of basic education for primary-school youth. However, USAID also recognizes the need for missions to have flexibility in planning and implementing programs, and taking into account both the conditions of the particular host countries and the activities of other donors in the country. For example, while the mission in Morocco continued to focus on girls' education, its basic education assistance shifted more toward middle schools, since the mission determined that high dropout rates among primary-school students were often due to the lack of access to quality secondary schools where those students would have continued with their education and because other donors were already investing significant resources into primary education in the country.

Following are details about USAID's programs to support its three strategic goals: (1) increasing access to basic education, (2) improving the quality of basic education, and (3) building the institutional capacity of the host countries' basic education systems.

- *Access:* To increase access to basic education, USAID supports a wide range of programs, such as distance learning, girls' scholarships, and school construction, that increase the number of boys and girls who enter and remain in school, particularly underserved populations such as girls, the poor, children in rural areas, and out-of-school youth. To increase access, the agency often uses distance learning tools, such as radio, television, and other information and communication technologies, to deliver quality educational content to populations not accommodated by the traditional school system. Agency efforts to increase access to basic education also include, among other things, construction and rehabilitation of school facilities, girls' scholarships, and adult literacy programs. In six of the eight countries we visited (Egypt, Honduras, South Africa, Mali, Morocco, and Zambia), we found that missions implemented programs in support of this strategic goal. For example, in Egypt, Honduras, South Africa, and Zambia, USAID used distance learning programs, such as prerecorded lessons, to deliver educational content to preprimary, primary, and secondary school youth--particularly girls, children from rural areas, and poor children. In Egypt, Mali, Morocco, South Africa, and Zambia, USAID implemented scholarship programs for girls, while the mission in Egypt also supported the construction of primary schools to increase access and enrollment of girls in underserved communities. See figure 4 for an example of a USAID program aimed at increasing education access.

Figure 4: Honduran Volunteer Teacher Using Prerecorded Interactive Compact Disk to Facilitate Seventh Grade Math Lesson

Source: GAO.

- *Quality:* USAID also implements a wide array of programs to improve education quality. These programs are generally designed to improve teachers' subject matter knowledge and pedagogical skills, ensure the curriculum includes specific knowledge and skills relevant to students' lives, and provide learners with access to appropriate workbooks and other learning materials that complement and reinforce teachers' efforts. Typical forms of assistance include training teachers, along with technical assistance to strengthen the capacity of local teacher training institutions; promoting the adoption of teaching methods that involve students in the learning process; promoting improvements in curriculum content; helping host countries develop methods of student assessment; and providing learning materials, such as textbooks and portable libraries. All eight missions we visited implemented programs to improve quality, using a variety of the approaches described above. See

figures 5 to 7 for examples of USAID projects aimed at improving education quality.

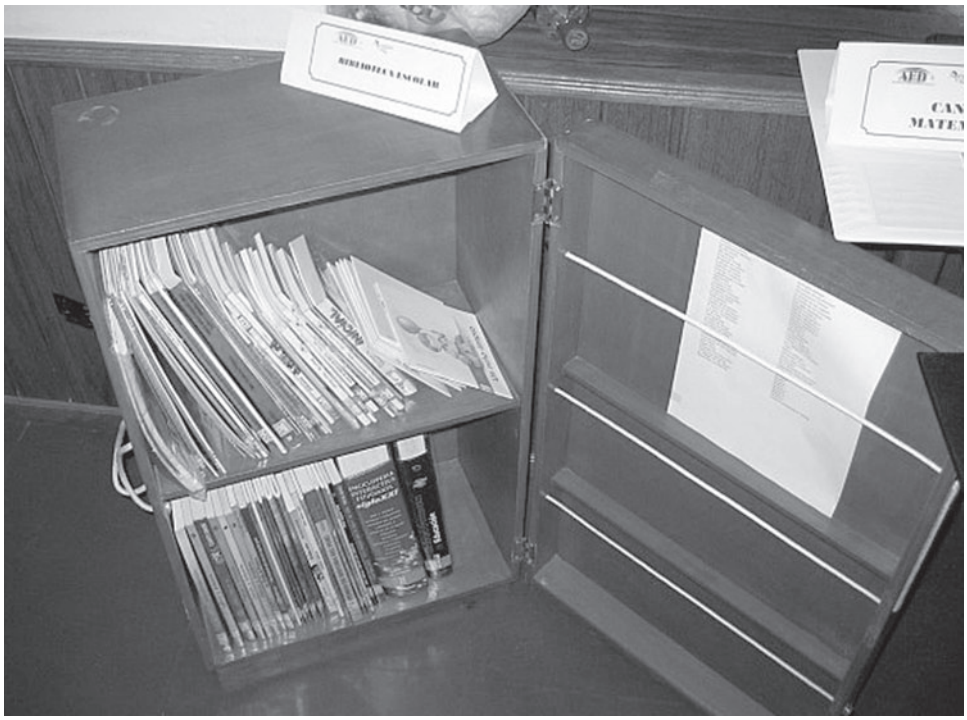
Figure 5: USAID-Funded Primary School Teacher Training in South Africa

Source: GAO.

Figure 6: Malian Teacher Demonstrating USAID-Funded Interactive Learning Method

Source: GAO.

Figure 7: USAID-Funded Portable Library for Sharing Among Peruvian Rural Schools



Source: GAO.

- *Capacity building*: USAID implements a wide variety of basic education programs to build host countries' institutional capacity to manage their basic education systems. Typical forms of assistance include training school principals in educational leadership and management; promoting the active participation by parents and parent associations in supporting school improvement; developing effective policy analysis units within education ministries; supporting the adoption and use of appropriate data and educational management information systems, as well as measures to enhance accountability and transparency in the use of public education funds; and the decentralization of educational decision making to local levels. All eight missions we visited implemented programs that either specifically focused on building the host countries' educational capacity or contained a capacity-building component. For example, in Zambia, USAID implemented a project to decentralize administration of the country's education management information systems. In Egypt, USAID

implemented a project to support the country's decentralization efforts by rewarding schools and surrounding communities that are active in assessing their needs and successful in planning and implementing measures to improve education quality.

Because many USAID programs simultaneously support multiple objectives, USAID could not provide a breakout of funding for its international basic education efforts by strategic objective, such as access or quality, or by program activity, such as teacher training. According to USAID, quality and access are interlinked in important ways, as when quality improvements lead to reduced grade repetition, accelerating children's progress through school and increasing access for subsequent students. Missions decide whether to concentrate their efforts on increasing access or improving quality and which program approaches to use based on their assessment of how they can achieve the most valuable results in light of country conditions. For example, in Mali, a country in which only about 50 percent of primary school-aged children are enrolled in school, USAID decided to focus its strategy on improving the quality of basic education based on the rationale that the greatest impediment to achieving universal access is the poor quality of education.

USAID Resources Directed at Strategic Partners of U.S. Foreign Priorities

USAID's resource allocations for basic education are consistent with USAID and State's efforts to more closely align foreign policy and development goals. According to USAID's April 2005 education strategy and USAID officials, the agency allocates resources based on the host country's needs, commitment, and overall development progress, while acknowledging the importance of geo-strategic states, such as some predominantly Muslim countries. USAID and State's joint strategic plan also states that their education programs will be particularly focused on Muslim countries following the September 11 attacks. For example, in Mali, a predominantly Muslim country, USAID implemented a girls' scholarship program in which it focused on girls in traditional, religious communities and also tried to engage local religious Muslim leaders in discussions on how the scholarship program would be structured and invited them to become members of the local management committee. We found that USAID has implemented programs to target strategic states; specifically, from fiscal years 2001 through 2006, many of the top 10 recipient countries of USAID basic education assistance were strategic partners in achieving U.S. foreign policy objectives, including fighting the war against terrorism

and promoting regional stability and democracy. Among these top 10 recipients were many predominantly Islamic countries, such as Afghanistan, Indonesia, Iraq, Jordan, and Pakistan, which did not receive any USAID basic education funding in fiscal year 2001, but received significant funding beginning in fiscal year 2002. These countries, along with Egypt and Ethiopia, all ranked among the top 10 recipients of basic education funding from fiscal years 2001 through 2006 and were all considered strategically important allies in the global war on terror, according to USAID officials and USAID and State operational plans. See appendix III for a list of recipient countries of USAID basic education funding from fiscal years 2001 through 2006 and selected educational indicators from the World Bank.[16]

USAID began basic education programs in the war-affected countries of Iraq and Afghanistan to support efforts to facilitate their transition to more stable, democratic, and productive states. In 2002, following the defeat of the Taliban, USAID started a basic education program in Afghanistan, which originally focused on four areas: textbook production and distribution, radio-based teacher training, accelerated learning for over-age and out-of-school students, and school construction and rehabilitation. USAID's current efforts in Afghanistan focus on improving the quality of the country's basic education system through teacher training. In May 2003, in the immediate aftermath of initial combat operations in Iraq, USAID program efforts supported the resumption of school through the rehabilitation of classrooms and the provision of educational materials. However, according to USAID officials, the mission's efforts faced many challenges due to attacks on teachers and schools. While the USAID mission in Iraq has rehabilitated 2,962 primary and secondary schools since the conflict began in 2003, the mission does not know whether these schools are currently operating due to the hostile security environment. USAID's basic education efforts in Iraq have also focused on improving the quality of Iraq's basic education system through training primary and secondary school teachers, building the education ministry's capacity to manage and reform its education system, and increasing access to basic education for out-of-school youth through an accelerated learning program. These basic education activities were funded through supplemental appropriations specifically for Iraq. USAID ended its basic education program in Iraq in 2005 due to a change in mission priorities.

[16]We use 2004 data found in World Bank's World Development Indicators: http://devdata.worldbank.org/dataonline.

According to a USAID official, the mission's current priorities are focused on community stabilization, local governance, economic governance, national capacity development, and private sector development.

Other Agencies Conduct Basic Education-Related Activities in Support of Their Missions

In addition to State and USAID, several other agencies implement activities that directly and indirectly support increasing access to and improving the quality of basic education in support of programs that address their broader mission goals.[17] These agencies include USDA, DOD, and DOL, as well as the Peace Corps and MCC.

Department of Agriculture

USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service funds and administers basic education-related activities through the provision of food assistance as part of the agency's broader mission to create economic opportunity for American agriculture by expanding global markets and to support food security worldwide. The agency supports basic education by providing school meals or take-home rations to students overseas and by facilitating the sale of food commodities to support basic education programs in communities. USDA's efforts, which target low-income, food-deficit countries, particularly focus on girls since they tend to have much lower school attendance rates than boys in many of USDA's recipient countries. In fiscal year 2001, USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service administered the Global Food for Education Initiative (GFEI), a pilot program with the overall goal of contributing to universal education by using school meals to attract primary-school children to school, keep them attending once enrolled, and improve learning. Through the program, USDA donated U.S. agricultural commodities and associated technical and financial assistance to the World Food Program, 13 private voluntary organizations, and one national government (the Dominican Republic, see fig. 8). The organizations then used the commodities in 48 school feeding projects in 38 developing countries. For example, in the Dominican Republic, USDA donated wheat and crude soybean oil, which were sold locally, with

[17]While the U.S. Department of Education does not fund or implement international basic education activities, it does conduct some related activities. For example, the Department's international activities typically focus on sharing information on education policies and practices, exchanging educational experts, cooperation between U.S. and foreign educational institutions, and joint research activities, including participation in comparative international assessments of student performance. The Department also works in cooperation with international organizations that are active in the field of education, including UNESCO, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, and the Organization of American States.

proceeds used to carry out community-based school feeding and educational improvement programs managed by local NGOs. In fiscal year 2003, the GFEI was continued under USDA's McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program (Food for Education). The Food for Education (FFE) program also provides nutrition programs for pregnant women, nursing mothers, infants, and preschool children to sustain and improve the health and learning capacity of children before they enter school. USDA allocates basic education resources to low-income, food-deficit countries that are committed to universal education. From fiscal years 2001 through 2006, USDA allocated $599.3 million to implement the GFEI and the FFE program in 42 countries worldwide.

Figure 8: USDA's Global Food for Education Program in the Dominican Republic

Source: USDA.

Department of Defense

DOD funds basic education activities through its Overseas Humanitarian, Disaster, and Civic Aid (OHDACA) program, as part of the program's

broader goal to achieve U.S. security objectives, improve DOD's access to areas not otherwise available to U.S. forces, build local capabilities and cooperative relationships with a host country's civil society, and provide basic humanitarian aid and services to populations in need. DOD supports increased access to basic education through its construction of primary and secondary school buildings and refurbishment of existing school facilities (see fig. 9) in all of the Combatant Commanders' areas of responsibility. According to one DOD command, it often uses the constructed school facilities as centers to manage and coordinate the Department's natural disaster response activities. Recipient countries of DOD humanitarian assistance are identified through DOD guidance and with input from in-country U.S. agencies on host countries' need. From fiscal years 2001 through 2006, DOD allocated $16.2 million to fund 232 basic education projects in 50 countries worldwide.

Figure 9: Restroom in Kyrgyzstan Primary School Prior to and After DOD Refurbishment

Source: DOD.

Before renovation | After renovation

Department of Labor

DOL's Bureau of International Labor Affairs (ILAB) funds and administers international child labor projects with basic education components as part of its broader strategic goal to remove or prevent children from exploitative child labor and provide affected children with education, training, or both. Through its international child labor projects, DOL supports basic education by developing formal and transitional education systems that encourage working children and those at risk to attend school; raising awareness on the importance of education for all children and mobilizing support for improved and expanded educational

infrastructures; and strengthening national institutions and policies on education and child labor (see fig. 10). The ILAB uses two mechanisms to implement these projects: (1) the International Labor Organization's International Program on the Elimination of Child Labor (ILO-IPEC), which removes or prevents exploitative child labor and provides affected children with education or training or both, strengthens the ability of host countries to address child labor, and raises awareness on the hazards of child labor and the benefits of education; and (2) Child Labor Education Initiative (EI), which funds projects that promote access to quality basic education for children at risk or engaging in exploitative child labor. The Bureau allocates basic education resources to countries based on its assessment of where there are child labor needs going unaddressed, and where the agency will have the greatest impact. During fiscal years 2001 through 2006, the Bureau allocated $440.4 million to implement basic education activities in 77 countries worldwide.

Figure 10: DOL-Funded Primary School in Bangladesh

Source: Joel Grimes for DOL.

The Peace Corps

The Peace Corps supports basic education through the activities of its volunteers who work at the local level with host country governments,

NGOs, and communities on projects aimed at promoting sustainable development at the grassroots level and enhancing cross-cultural understanding. The Peace Corps provides volunteers to work in developing countries where they have been invited and determines which programs best address a host country's need by consulting with host country officials. Education is the Peace Corps' largest sector.[18] The volunteers' basic education projects include training and mentoring teachers in K-12 schools, using radios to deliver educational content to HIV/AIDS orphans and vulnerable children, and strengthening preschool programs through teacher training and mentoring. For example, in Zambia, Peace Corps volunteers assist the country's Ministry of Education in implementing a primary school interactive curriculum, which is broadcast over the national radio to increase access to basic education in rural settings (see fig. 11). During fiscal year 2006, 2,674 Peace Corps volunteers provided educational assistance in 52 countries worldwide.[19]

[18]Peace Corps volunteers commit to 2-year assignments in host communities where they work on projects, which fall into six general sectors: agriculture, business development, education, environment, health and HIV/AIDS, and youth.

[19]Peace Corps' education sector activities may include some activities in which volunteers teach English as a second language, which does not fall under USAID's definition of basic education. In addition, the Peace Corps indirectly supports basic education goals through its other sectors, particularly youth development. The Peace Corps sometimes includes, in its number of education volunteers, volunteers who have worked in its youth development sector.

Figure 11: Peace Corps Volunteers Using Interactive Radio Instruction in Teachers' Workshop in Zambia

Source: Peace Corps.

In addition, the Peace Corps supports basic education activities through its Small Project Assistance (SPA) program, which provides hundreds of small grants to volunteers' communities to increase the capabilities of local communities to conduct low-cost, grassroots, sustainable development projects. For example, in Morocco, Peace Corps volunteers used SPA funding to construct latrines to increase children's attendance, particularly girls. This program operates under the terms of an inter-agency agreement between USAID and the Peace Corps. In fiscal year 2005, 57 Peace Corps posts approved about $766,000 to support 354 different SPA education projects.

Millennium Challenge Corporation

MCC supports international basic education as part of its larger mission to reduce poverty through economic growth in developing countries that create and maintain sound policy environments. The MCC provides developing countries with monetary assistance—through compact

agreements and threshold agreements[20]—to support a variety of development projects, including basic education. For a country to be selected as eligible for an MCC assistance program, it must demonstrate a commitment to policies that promote political and economic freedom, investments in education and health, control of corruption, and respect for civil liberties and the rule of law by performing well on 16 different policy indicators. For example, in fiscal year 2005, the MCC allocated $12.9 million to Burkina Faso, through a threshold agreement to fund a USAID-implemented pilot project with the objective to improve access to, and improve the quality of, primary education for girls in 10 provinces that have historically achieved the lowest levels of girls' primary education completion rates. The project entailed the construction of "girl-friendly" schools with canteens and community-managed child care centers; provision of textbooks, supplies, and take-home rations; teacher training; mentoring; literacy training for women; merit awards for teachers; and a societal awareness campaign on the benefits of educating girls. MCC also plans to provide funding for the implementation of basic education activities in Mali, Ghana, and El Salvador.

Agencies Did Not Always Coordinate International Basic Education-Related Activities, Which Resulted in Some Missed Opportunities to Collaborate and Maximize Resources

We found that agencies did not always coordinate in the planning or delivery of international basic education-related activities. From fiscal years 2001 to 2006, there was no government-wide mechanism to facilitate interagency collaboration and, as a result, at the headquarters level we identified instances where agencies missed opportunities to collaborate and maximize U.S. resources. Further, in the eight countries that we visited, we noted several instances where agencies did not collaborate or take advantage of opportunities to maximize U.S. resources in areas in which they had similar objectives of improving the quality of education. In addition, we found that the level of U.S. coordination with host governments and other donors in the eight countries we visited also 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.

[20]A compact is a multiyear agreement between the MCC and an eligible country to fund specific programs targeted at reducing poverty and stimulating economic growth. A threshold program is designed to assist countries that have not yet qualified for MCC compact funding, but are on the "threshold" of doing so, having demonstrated a significant commitment to improve their performance on the eligibility criteria for compact funding.

The United States Lacked a Government-Wide Mechanism to Coordinate International Basic Education Activities

We found that, for international basic education-related activities that we reviewed, between 2001 and 2006 there was no government-wide coordination mechanism to facilitate interagency planning and delivery of U.S. basic education assistance. While some agencies met periodically to discuss and plan specific basic education activities—usually those involving joint- or multiagency agreements—these activities often did not include all cognizant officials or agencies responsible for planning or delivering basic education assistance. As a result, at the headquarters level, interagency coordination was mixed and resulted in some missed opportunities to collaborate on the planning of U.S. basic education assistance. The following are some examples:

- DOD guidance calls for Combatant Commands to coordinate Humanitarian Assistance Program projects with other agencies at the country level before they are submitted to the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA), which then forwards the program descriptions to State for review and concurrence. However, staff we spoke to within USAID's Economic Growth, Agriculture, and Trade Bureau (EGAT), which manages USAID's basic education activities, were not aware of DOD humanitarian assistance projects.

- USDA calls annual meetings with USAID's Food for Peace Office, State, and Office of Management and Budget officials to discuss and coordinate upcoming projects for its McGovern-Dole International Food for Education Program. However, staff from USAID EGAT do not attend these meetings, even though some of USDA's school feeding activities coincide with USAID's basic education activities.

- DOL officials provided several examples of efforts to coordinate programs with other agencies, including USAID and State. For example, DOL's Office of Child Labor, Forced Labor, and Human Trafficking (OCFT) convenes annual meetings with State and USAID to discuss its upcoming programs, including those related to DOL's Child Labor Education Initiative. Until 2004, USAID had an informal focal point who attended these meetings. After this focal point retired in early 2004, DOL sent a letter to USAID in April 2004 requesting a formal point of contact. According to DOL officials, USAID never replied to this letter. Since then, although DOL has regularly requested the attendance of USAID desk officers and technical staff to brief them on its upcoming projects, those USAID staff did not always attend, and those that attended may not have been the most knowledgeable about existing basic education programs. Although one member of USAID EGAT attended the February

2007 coordination meeting, there is still no formal USAID focal point for these meetings. In addition, DOL copies State on letters to foreign governments regarding DOL programming in their countries.

- Peace Corps officials stated that the agency does not coordinate programming priorities with USAID in Washington because programming is determined by host governments, in collaboration with the Peace Corps, once the agency is invited to serve in country.[21]

- Beyond USAID's implementation of the single MCC basic education program in Burkina Faso, coordination between MCC and USAID was characterized by USAID and MCC officials as minimal, namely because MCC is not organized around technical sectors. However, MCC officials said that they share proposals and lessons learned with other U.S. agencies.

- State's coordination of basic education activities with USAID at the headquarters level occurred primarily through the MEPI program, in which USAID serves as an administrative partner and manages over one-third of MEPI's basic education programs. This coordination included formal and informal meetings to discuss the results of joint State and USAID strategic reviews of existing bilateral development assistance in the Middle East and North Africa and the identification of reform areas that were not being addressed by other U.S. agencies.

We have previously reported on the importance of collaboration among executive agencies in maximizing performance.[22] Officials at all of the agencies that we reviewed agreed that coordination of basic education-related activities could be enhanced. USAID officials believe that annual meetings involving all of the U.S. agencies involved in international basic education would produce better U.S. policy coherence. However, USAID does not have the authority to formally convene such a meeting. In June

[21]USAID has a worldwide agreement with the Peace Corps to provide it with Small Project Assistance (SPA) funding to support small, community-based, self-help development activities. Although specific SPA funding is small in comparison to other program activities (for example, $80,000 total fiscal year 2006 SPA funding for Morocco), volunteers had used SPA funding to implement school-related activities in several countries we visited.

[22]GAO, *Results-Oriented Government: Practices That Can Help Enhance and Sustain Collaboration among Federal Agencies*, GAO-06-15 (Washington, D.C.: Oct. 21, 2005).

2004, in response to a fiscal year 2005 congressional directive,[23] USAID informed State it would develop an agenda for such a meeting if State, as a cabinet-level agency, would convene it, but according to USAID, State has not yet convened an interagency meeting on international basic education. Although State's DFA has begun to address the issue of better coordinating all U.S. foreign assistance by bringing together core teams to discuss U.S. development priorities in each recipient country, it is unclear to what extent these efforts will be accepted and implemented by agencies whose foreign assistance programs are not under DFA's direct authority.

Interagency Coordination in the Eight Countries We Visited Varied

During our fieldwork, we found several examples of good coordination among U.S. agencies implementing basic education projects. Among these examples were the following:

- In South Africa, the Peace Corps provided USAID with a volunteer to support the implementation of a USAID distance learning project. The volunteer assisted in improving teacher training models and in utilizing program content, in addition to providing ongoing technical feedback to the project implementer on the function and efficiency of the project's media delivery system. Additionally, DOD and USAID cooperated to provide signs bearing the U.S. and South African flags for display at project sites, including schools.

- In Mali, USAID allocated SPA funding for the implementation of community-based projects in communities where Peace Corps volunteers were working. In addition, the Peace Corps provided USAID with one volunteer to assist in USAID's implementation of a girls' scholarship program in the northern region of the country. Also, the U.S. embassy purchased 750 radios for listening groups in the northern region, and 200 of the radios were distributed directly to a USAID distance-training program for teachers.

- In Morocco, the Peace Corps has used SPA funding to construct a library, school latrines, and residential student housing.

- In Honduras, a regional DOL program seeking to provide educational opportunities to children engaged in, or at risk of, exploitative labor

[23]H.R. Conf. Rep. No. 108-599 at 18 (2004).

incorporated an existing USAID distance-learning program into its set of 14 pilot projects. In the municipality of this particular pilot project, children, aged 13 to 16, were quitting school after the sixth grade in favor of working on the local coffee farms. The objectives of the local DOL implementer were to reduce the working hours of these children and provide them with an opportunity to complete their primary-level education. The USAID distance-learning program was particularly suited to these objectives, as it was capable of targeting children in seventh through ninth grade, was aligned with the national curriculum and certified by the Ministry of Education, came with predesigned materials, and could be tailored to fit participants' scheduling needs.

- In the Dominican Republic, USAID and USDA, along with the local host government, coordinated to provide school lunches in order to increase primary school student enrollment. Originally begun under the GFEI in 2001, the program continued under USDA's FFE program in 2004. In addition to the school lunches, activities under this program included repairs to existing schools, renovation of buildings and water systems, health and nutrition workshops, deworming, vitamin distribution to supplement nutrition, and animal husbandry activities to supplement incomes.

- In Zambia, the Peace Corps supplied over 20 volunteers to work with the USAID-funded implementer of a radio-based, primary-level, distance learning program. The volunteers focused on mentoring and training school committees in leadership and school management, with the hope that communities will become better equipped to support and maintain their own learning institutions. The volunteers also assisted the implementer in piloting new educational initiatives.

Despite these examples of good coordination, we also observed several instances where agencies, particularly USAID and DOL, missed opportunities to collaborate and maximize their program efforts. In some of the countries we visited, we found that USAID and DOL implementers of projects to increase children's access to basic education did not take advantage of opportunities to collaborate and leverage resources when coordination of activities would have been of mutual benefit. In several of these countries, DOL could have joined USAID's efforts to affect policy reforms directed at rural youth by using USAID's delivery mechanisms of radio and television programming as well as printed materials to raise public awareness of child labor issues. Likewise, USAID could have utilized the Student Tracking System developed by DOL to monitor enrollment and

retention rates in its sponsored schools. Additional examples of coordination between USAID and other agencies follow.

USAID and DOL Country Coordination

Unlike USAID, which had education teams in the countries we visited to coordinate and manage implementation of its education-related activities, DOL does not have a physical presence in-country and attempts to coordinate through other means. Specifically, DOL coordinates as follows:

- After holding their annual coordination meeting with USAID and State staff, DOL planners in Washington, D.C., communicate by cable activities planned for the fiscal year to State staff at overseas embassies. These cables list DOL's planned projects, their prospective countries, estimated funding amounts, and a deadline for when the project Requests for Proposal will be made public. Although DOL's fiscal years 2004 and 2005 cables do not mention coordination with USAID in-country, the fiscal year 2006 cable lists one USAID/EGAT staff member as an addressee and requests that the information be passed to the local USAID mission "where applicable."

- DOL is represented in country by selected State embassy staff that it informs of its upcoming projects through cables. State representatives serving in these positions that we interviewed appeared to have general knowledge of DOL's basic education activities in-country but did not appear to have detailed project knowledge that would be required to coordinate effectively with USAID. This means that DOL must rely on either these State embassy staff or its project implementers to coordinate with the local USAID mission.

- In its Solicitation for Grant Applications for basic education projects, DOL informs potential applicants of ongoing USAID efforts and expects applicants to implement programs that complement, and do not duplicate, existing efforts.

Despite these efforts, coordination between local USAID missions and DOL project implementers varied across the countries we visited. For example, in Honduras, DOL's implementer was collaborating with the USAID mission in country to adapt the mission's distance-learning program to a child labor project. However, in Peru, the USAID mission lost its institutional knowledge of an existing DOL program upon the departure of its education team leader. The remaining USAID education team remained unaware of this project until the DOL implementer briefed the new USAID education contact 3 years into the project's implementation. Additionally, in Peru, the

USAID mission was not aware of a public DOL Request for Proposal to conduct new basic education activities in country. In Morocco, USAID and the local DOL implementers were aware of each other's programs but did not directly coordinate beyond minimal information exchanges. By contrast, in South Africa, a DOL implementer was unaware that USAID was also conducting basic education activities in-country. Similarly, in Zambia, the local USAID mission knew of a DOL EI program in country, but was unaware that the ILO-IPEC program also operating in country was DOL-funded. The turnover of agency and implementer staff in overseas locations may lead to challenges in coordination efforts.

USAID and Peace Corps

In Morocco, the USAID mission's strategy stated that projects to create rural dormitories for girls may be implemented in partnership with Peace Corps volunteers who would assist with the community's management of the dormitories and development of after school programs. However, the Peace Corps and USAID senior staff we spoke with in country had not considered such an idea during the actual planning and implementation of the girls' scholarship program.

USAID and DOD

USAID and DOD almost missed an opportunity to coordinate their construction of school dormitories in Morocco. Prior to 1999, the local USAID mission did not know that DOD was implementing humanitarian assistance projects in Morocco. At the time, USAID's basic education program in country had concluded that one reason rural girls were dropping out of school before sixth grade was that the middle schools were too far away from their homes. According to USAID officials, parents had safety concerns about sending their daughters to attend school so far away and were reluctant to make the financial sacrifice of having their daughter finish primary school if she could not also attend secondary school. Subsequently, USAID and DOD coordinated with local communities to build school dormitories for middle school girls in three towns. According to the USAID officer responsible for coordinating this initiative, the coordination between USAID and DOD resulted in DOD building five dormitories.

The Level of U.S. Coordination with Host Governments and Other Donors Varied

Coordination between the United States, host governments, and donors varied in the countries we visited. Coordination was stronger in countries, such as Egypt, Mali, Zambia, and Honduras, that possessed a combination of strong host government commitment to education reform, formal donor-led working groups specifically for education, and systems of mutual

accountability, such as the World Bank's Education for All-Fast Track Initiative. For example, in Egypt, the host government was working closely with international donors to develop a new National Strategic Plan for Education. Under the leadership of USAID, each donor had assumed responsibility for developing a portion of this plan. Additionally, the major education donors in Egypt met monthly to discuss division of responsibilities and upcoming efforts. We observed a similar situation in Mali, where the host government had allocated 30 percent of its budget toward education—60 percent of which went to basic education—and worked with donors to establish a framework through which the donors could invest in specific education sectors. These education donors in Mali held monthly meetings among themselves, as well as separate meetings with the host government, and collaborated on strategic planning, action plans, and common progress indicators, among other issues.

At the time of our review, Mali, Zambia, and Honduras had also implemented, or were in the process of implementing, systems of mutual accountability associated with the World Bank's Education for All-Fast Track Initiative. The Initiative provides for mutual accountability, where international donors provide coordinated and increased financial and technical support in a transparent and predictable manner, while host governments commit to primary education reform through the development of national education strategies in concert with the donors. Donors in Honduras met monthly and pooled their funding to provide direct budget support to the education sector to accelerate progress. According to donors, the pooled funding gave donors a means to ensure that the host government continued to implement the national education strategy. They stated that this is very important in countries where there is frequent political turnover. Although USAID usually does not give funds directly to government institutions, in Zambia, the USAID mission provides some funds to the Ministry of Education to support policy reform. The USAID mission also participates in high-level meetings and contributes to the decision-making process.

Coordination between the United States, host governments, and donors was weaker in countries lacking a lead donor or host government committed to coordinating donor assistance. This included the Dominican Republic, Morocco, South Africa, and Peru. For example, in recent years donors have sought to strengthen local ownership of the education reform process by assigning host governments a key role in the donor coordination process, according to USAID. However, governments in several countries we visited lacked the capacity or will to hold such meetings. In Peru, for

example, officials from bilateral donors and the host government stated that the concentration of donor efforts in rural areas working with regional administrators had isolated those projects from the national government, which tended to view project schools as "donor schools" unconnected to the larger education system. According to these officials, the disconnect between the central government and the bilateral programs inhibited the expansion of these programs to other areas and threatened their long-term sustainability. Similarly, in South Africa, the host government Ministry of Education had not called a donor meeting in almost a year and was not aware of all ongoing donor activities in basic education. In Morocco, one donor was unaware of the details of USAID's basic education activities, and both agencies had independently developed their own matrices of other donors' basic education projects, neither of which were updated or complete. By contrast, the host government in the Dominican Republic did call high-level donor meetings but discouraged the donors from meeting on their own. None of these countries had strong, donor-led coordination groups, with the exception of Peru, where donors had formed a formal coordination group, as well as an informal group of three donors, including the United States, focusing on decentralizing the host government's education system.

According to USAID, host government commitment, the development of sound education strategies, and effective donor coordination are essential to reforming basic education. Most donors we spoke to acknowledged that further improvements in coordination could result in more efficient delivery of assistance. Without good coordination, donors, including the United States, cannot easily monitor or assess host governments' progress toward achieving Education For All by 2015—which is a strategic goal shared by State and USAID.

Assessing Basic Education Programs' Quality Results Is Difficult

While U.S. agencies we reviewed conduct basic education-related activities to achieve different goals, most assess and report on the results of their activities by collecting and using output measures—or the direct products and services delivered by a program, such as numbers of schools built or children enrolled. While USAID can measure education access through outputs such as the numbers of students enrolled in primary school programs, it does not, in many instances, measure education quality, a key program outcome measure—or result of products and services provided, such as increased literacy rates. Our analysis showed that USAID can report on some outcomes such as primary school retention rates but faces challenges in collecting valid and reliable data on student learning in areas

such as math and reading, which, according to USAID, provides the most direct outcome measure of increased educational quality. Furthermore, USAID cannot compare its program results between countries. To better assess its goal of improving education quality, USAID is developing a standardized test that could provide data on primary-level reading ability and would be comparable across countries. Other agencies measure progress in relation to their respective missions. In addition, State's Office of the Director of Foreign Assistance plans to work toward developing methods to assess outcomes of all foreign assistance; however, these efforts are only in the early discussion phase. Without this information, agency officials cannot determine if programs are achieving their strategic goals.

Most Agencies Use Output Measures to Assess Results

We have previously reported that both output and outcome measures are extremely valuable for determining success of federally funded programs. Table 3 shows the measures reported by U.S. agencies in their fiscal year 2006 Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) performance and accountability reports.

Table 3: Agency-Wide Reporting on Basic Education Activities

USAID and State[a]	DOL	USDA	DOD[b]	MCC
• students enrolled in primary school • students completing primary school • adult learners completing basic education	• children removed or prevented from exploitive work • countries with increased capacity to combat child labor	• number of mothers, infants and schoolchildren receiving daily meals and take-home rations through the McGovern-Dole International Food for Education Program	• number of schools built or renovated in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Horn of Africa	Broad "Rate of Reform for Investing in People" calculated through changes in: • total public expenditure on health • total public expenditure on primary education • immunization rates • girls' primary education completion rates

Source: FY 2006 Annual Performance and Accountability Reports.

Note: Peace Corps' small-scale, individual volunteer activities in basic education do not lend themselves to systematic measurement, and are not addressed in the GPRA reporting.

[a]State and USAID share a joint strategy with the same goal of increased access to quality basic education. State assigns responsibility for accomplishing this goal to USAID.

[b]DOD does not have specific goals for, or report on the educational effects of its assistance.

USAID's Process for Collecting and Using Performance Measures

USAID works with its project implementers to establish project performance measures before an activity is approved. These measures vary according to the objectives of the specific activities. The implementers then collect information on the required measures and submit quarterly or annual reports detailing progress against those measures to technical officers at the local USAID mission. Missions are then required to submit annual reports summarizing the progress of their activities, which often contain both specific output and outcome measures. Some of these measures are input to the Annual Report Application (AR) system,[24] which currently serves as the repository of USAID performance data from all USAID missions. Information in the AR system is used in USAID headquarters to support strategic planning, budget preparation, and performance reporting requirements. To report on its agency-wide progress, USAID reports on students enrolled in primary school, students completing primary school, and adult learners completing basic education. These output measures have also been used to determine which education programs have not met, met, or exceeded their output objectives. Some of the programs that have exceeded these output objectives have been terminated. For example, the joint State-USAID Congressional Budget Justification for the 2007 budget request showed that India and South Africa had exceeded their program goals for basic education. These countries were eliminated from the list of countries proposed to receive basic education allocations in the 2008 budget request.

USAID Faces Challenges Assessing Quality-Related Outcomes

USAID, the primary provider of U.S. basic education assistance, is the only agency to track progress toward an agency-wide, education-specific goal—promoting increased access to quality basic education. However, USAID faces challenges collecting data on student learning, such as levels of reading comprehension, and cannot compare the results between countries. As a consequence, USAID is unable to report on the overall results of its basic education activities on the quality of education, which can deny planners valuable information needed to prioritize and fund future programs. Prior GAO work on assessing performance measures for federally funded programs shows that both output and outcome measures are extremely valuable for determining program success. USAID has begun to address this issue by developing systematic methods to compare

[24]The AR system contains a variety of country-level performance indicators such as enrollment rates, number of teachers trained, host-country policy reforms, and qualitative narratives on such things as the impact of USAID capacity building efforts.

education quality across countries and working with donors to identify common indicators for assessing student learning. In addition, USAID is considering the development and administration of new tests to assess learning outcomes in a select number of countries.

Collecting Country-Level Data on Quality Remains a Challenge for USAID

According to USAID and UNESCO, testing of student achievement is a good measure of educational quality—particularly tests that assess learning in core subjects such as reading and basic mathematics. However, obtaining this type of data remains a challenge for various reasons. According to USAID, designing tools to assess student learning and, particularly, deciding on which methodology or standards to apply, can be time-consuming and expensive when done independently by USAID implementers and may also not be cost-effective given the objectives of a program. For example, a USAID official at one mission stated that a change in teacher practices resulting from a teacher training program would be significant in itself and that not all basic education interventions should be expected to result in improved student achievement. Poor host-country infrastructure, unfriendly geography, or both can also make systematic nationwide testing expensive and difficult. In countries where the USAID mission has the benefit of working with an existing national student examination, those exams may not test to existing international standards, and any changes to the national examination and its underlying curriculum can be politically sensitive. However, in some countries such as the Dominican Republic, teachers' unions can be resistant to the use of tests to evaluate student learning for fear that they will be held accountable for the results. Even if a national exam is successfully administered, the host government may not have the methodological expertise necessary to reliably compile and analyze the resulting statistics.

We examined 40 basic education programs in the eight countries we visited—including both USAID basic education programs and DOL programs to combat child labor through the provision of quality primary education—and found that about half of the 40 programs utilized outcome performance measures, or the results of products and services. These included, among other things, increased student performance, improved instructional methods, and increased community participation. Not all of these outcome measures were related to education quality. For example, DOL projects contained outcome measures specific to child labor, such as media coverage and local awareness of child labor issues. Most of the programs that utilized outcome measures set baselines and targets for these measures. All 12 of the Department of Labor programs we examined reported outcome measures compared with approximately one-third of the

28 USAID programs that did so. The remaining 19 USAID programs did not use outcome measures. See appendix V for more details on our analysis.

According to USAID and UNESCO, testing of student achievement is a good measure of educational quality. USAID programs aimed at improving educational quality varied in their measurement of student achievement.[25] Several lacked means to fully gauge student performance. For example,

- In South Africa, one teacher training program could not monitor student achievement in its preservice training component due to insufficient funds, although the program's in-service component did contain student testing. In addition, a distance-learning program in one country province contained no means to assess teacher performance or student achievement, yet was planned to be expanded to a second province.

- In Zambia, a teacher training program contained output indicators mandated by the Africa Education Initiative and the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, such as the number of teachers trained, but these initiatives did not require an evaluation of teacher or student performance. The program independently added an additional measure to evaluate teachers on their implementation of the program materials and used student pass rates on the host-country's seventh grade graduation test as a substitute, or proxy, measure of student achievement. Such graduation tests are designed to identify students who will advance to the next phase of schooling but are not necessarily designed to provide data on trends in student learning.

- In Peru, Honduras, and the Dominican Republic, a regional Latin American teacher training program begun in 2002 did not require implementers to begin measuring impact on student performance until 2005.

Other programs we examined, however, did have or were developing student assessment components, as follows:

[25]Although the DOL projects focused on withdrawing children from exploitative work and promoting host-country capacity to address child labor, several programs tracked quality-related indicators, such as graduation rates, retention rates, and implementation of teaching methodology.

- In Egypt, we observed perhaps the most extensive evaluation component for a program that was working closely with the host-government's Ministry of Education to develop tools for assessing student learning, teacher performance, and school management capacity nationwide. The student learning assessment tool specifically measured critical thinking capacity, problem solving skills, and subject matter knowledge in Arabic, science, and math.

- In Honduras, one program was developing primary school learning standards to strengthen the host government's national student testing process. Additionally, according to USAID, one distance learning program is developing standardized testing to monitor variations in student achievement.

- In the Dominican Republic, a similar program was developing test instruments and analytical techniques to build the evaluation capacity of the host government's educational system.

- In Peru, one pilot program conducted student testing solely in its sponsored schools specifically to demonstrate the effectiveness of the program to the host government's Ministry of Education.

USAID Is Developing Methods to Better Measure Improved Educational Quality

In the absence of an indicator to illustrate improved quality across countries, USAID uses primary school completion rates as a proxy measure in its agency-wide reporting. However, USAID acknowledges that completion rates do not directly correlate to educational quality. As described earlier, according to USAID and UNESCO, testing of student achievement is a good measure of educational quality. However, while national examinations may exist in certain countries, the curricula these tests are based on vary widely in their subject matter and academic standards. Additionally, very few developing countries incorporate existing international standards for student learning in their testing. These factors prevent meaningful comparisons of educational quality between countries, which could inform funding and programmatic decisions at the headquarters level.

For fiscal year 2005, USAID's Bureau for Policy and Program Coordination (PPC) began collecting data to better allow USAID to find an appropriate indicator to measure quality outcomes of its basic education programs. The information that USAID began collecting in its annual reporting system database included, to the extent available, results of host country national-level testing systems and USAID attempts to measure learning

achievement. However, this information was never fully analyzed, and USAID's database for the information will be terminated in fiscal year 2007, and replaced by a new joint State-USAID performance measures database called the Foreign Assistance Coordination and Tracking (FACT) system, which will be managed by the DFA. According to DFA officials, the FACT system is meant to primarily contain numerical output indicators common across State and USAID missions and not include the mission-specific outcome indicators contained in USAID's former annual reporting system. These indicators contained in the FACT system will be used to develop policy priorities, assess performance, and inform resource decisions.

USAID, independent of the DFA process, began a new initiative in September 2006 to develop a better measure of educational quality across countries through the development of new testing instruments. These instruments are designed to provide data on primary-level reading comprehension comparable across countries. This project grew out of a World Bank Initiative in Peru that developed a Spanish-language reading comprehension test. USAID is attempting to build on the World Bank's success by developing a simple screening instrument, which can provide general information on literacy within a given community, and an in-depth assessment instrument intended to provide cross-country comparisons of the degree of reading skill acquisition, determination of the grade at which a country's education system is able to impart the capacity to read, and identification of the specific areas of weakness. According to the contract for the instruments, performance data provided by the new tests should permit comparison across countries and the tracking of changes in performance over time and should also be adaptable across languages and cultures to the degree possible. USAID plans to field test the instruments in English, Spanish, or French and is in negotiations with two host governments to begin pilot testing. USAID plans for the contract implementer to submit a report on the pilot tests' results and their implications by September 30, 2007. According to one USAID official, it is expected that these new instruments, if successful, will allow USAID to better measure and compare educational quality across countries where it conducts basic education activities. USAID has also initiated discussion with other Education for All-Fast Track Initiative donors on how donors can assess the collective impact of their basic education assistance on learning outcomes.

Additionally, in an effort to collect better data on education quality, USAID's Education Office is considering the development and administration of new tests to assess learning outcomes in 10 countries

over 12 months. The goal is to produce an assessment that will better demonstrate the impact of projects to improve educational quality, but that can be adapted by different missions facing different educational circumstances. The proposal recommends identifying two or three countries from each of the new foreign assistance categories,[26] with representatives from Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The tests would cover literacy and mathematics and target fourth and eighth grade students, but would be adjustable for different grades and ages. The 12-month activity would cover initial development, and country applications would occur through mission buy-in into the activity. Although the primary purpose of this assessment would not be to directly compare different programs or countries with respect to what students know, the proposal estimates that, for cost-effectiveness, likely two-thirds of the test materials would be portable across countries, with the remaining items unique to local circumstances.

Other Agencies Measure Progress Related to Their Respective Missions

While USAID, as noted earlier, is the only agency to track progress toward an education-specific goal, other agencies track progress related to their agency-specific missions or do not address their basic education activities in their agency-wide performance reporting because these activities are not directly related to their overall agency objectives.[27] For example, agencies track progress as follows:

- DOL and USDA report performance measures related to their particular agency objectives. For example, DOL primarily uses education activities as a mechanism for alleviating child labor and reports on children removed or prevented from exploitive work. USDA reports on the number of beneficiaries of its school lunch program. Both of these measures are tied to enrollment and attendance rates collected at the

[26]As part of the ongoing reorganization of foreign assistance, the DFA has created new foreign assistance categories that group countries based on characteristics and goals similar to those the United States seeks to achieve. These include Rebuilding, Developing, Transforming, Sustaining Partner, and Reforming countries.

[27]GAO previously noted some deficiencies in USDA assessing the effectiveness of its basic education-related programs. See GAO, *Foreign Assistance: Global Food for Education Initiative Faces Challenges for Successful Implementation*, GAO-02-328 (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 28, 2002). GAO also reported that project monitoring of State's MEPI programs needs improvement. See GAO, *Foreign Assistance: Middle East Partnership Initiative Offers Tools for Supporting Reform, but Project Monitoring Needs Improvement*, GAO-05-711 (Washington, D.C.: Aug. 8, 2005).

project-level and are, therefore, related to educational access. DOL programs include project-level quality indicators, such as primary school completion rates.

- The MCC initially reported a single "rate of reform" measure based on multiple outcome-based health and education-related indicators, including total public expenditure on primary education and girls' primary education completion rates. MCC now breaks these individual indicators to compare performance among countries with threshold programs and compacts, as well as to determine the eligibility of countries for MCC assistance.

- DOD provides basic humanitarian aid and services to avert political and humanitarian crises, as well as promote democratic development and regional stability. It collects information on how many projects it has funded and their costs, but does not address the educational impact of these projects. A DOD official stated that he would like to see the Humanitarian Assistance Program begin to measure its impact on countering terrorism, promoting goodwill, stabilizing the country, and increasing economic growth.

- Although the Peace Corps tracks the number and location of its volunteers, it does not assess the impact of its basic education activities because, according to Peace Corps officials, these activities are too small in scale to be suitable for such monitoring.

State's Office of the DFA Is Planning to Address Improving Interagency Coordination and Performance Measures for All Foreign Assistance

In January 2006, the Secretary of State appointed a DFA and charged him with directing the transformation of the U.S. government's approach to foreign assistance and ensuring that foreign assistance is used as effectively as possible to meet broad foreign policy objectives.[28] Specifically, the DFA:

- has authority over all State and USAID foreign assistance funding and programs, with continued participation in program planning, implementation, and oversight from the various bureaus and offices within State and USAID, as part of the integrated interagency planning, coordination, and implementation mechanisms;

[28]The DFA holds a rank equivalent to Deputy Secretary and serves concurrently as USAID Administrator.

- has created and directed, through a foreign assistance framework, consolidated policy, planning, budget, and implementation mechanisms and staff functions required to provide umbrella leadership to foreign assistance;

- plans to develop a coordinated U.S. government foreign assistance strategy, including multiyear, country-specific assistance strategies and annual country-specific assistance operational plans; and

- plans to provide guidance to foreign assistance delivered through other agencies and entities of the U.S. government, including MCC and the Office of the Global AIDS Coordinator.

According to a DFA official, the DFA's office spent its first year developing the foreign assistance framework, preparing the proposed 2008 consolidated State and USAID budget, and providing guidance for country teams to develop operational plans. The foreign assistance framework includes five objectives: (1) peace and security, (2) governing justly and democratically, (3) investing in people, (4) economic growth, and (5) humanitarian assistance. Basic education falls under the objective of investing in people. According to a State official, the new budget and planning process is intended to give the Secretary of State the ability to evaluate the effectiveness of foreign assistance to improve effectiveness, impact, and efficiency through better coordination, at every level. Looking forward, the DFA is examining ways to improve (1) coordination of foreign assistance, including basic education and (2) measurement of program outcomes.

DFA Plans to Improve Coordination of Foreign Assistance, Including Basic Education

While the DFA has begun to address the issue of better coordinating all U.S. foreign assistance by bringing together core teams to discuss U.S. development priorities in each recipient country, it is unclear to what extent these efforts will be accepted and implemented by agencies whose foreign assistance programs are not under DFA's direct authority. According to DFA officials, during the first phase of coordination efforts, USAID, State, and DOD (as an implementing partner of certain USAID and State programs) have been meeting to discuss coordination of assistance. The DFA plans to engage other agencies such as USDA and DOL in the coordination discussions. However, DFA officials stated that there is no requirement for other agencies to participate in these dialogues.

DFA Is Considering Methods for Measuring Program Outcomes

DFA acknowledges the need for outcome measures to better describe the impact of basic education, as well as other foreign assistance areas.

According to a DFA official, developing outcome indicators for all assistance programs is difficult because of the differing program objectives those programs may possess. For example, some programs may meet the political objectives of the United States, while others may meet purely development objectives. DFA plans to use as many outcome measures as possible generated by third parties, such as World Bank statistics and UNESCO literacy rates. Also, DFA plans for missions to submit "Foreign Assistance Reports" back to Washington, which would combine their FACT data with locally generated outcome measures to demonstrate the cumulative effects of their programs. However, this process and the outcome measures it might contain have not been developed, and DFA does not currently have a timetable for implementing these initiatives. Although an agency can use outputs, outcomes, or some combination of the two to reflect the agency's intended performance, the GPRA is clearly outcome-oriented and thus an agency's performance plan should include outcome goals whenever possible.[29] DFA officials acknowledged that the new performance reporting system as it currently stands will not report the outcome results of basic education programs to managers in headquarters.

Conclusions

Without a government-wide mechanism to systematically coordinate all agency efforts in basic education at the headquarters level, agencies' programs may not maximize the effectiveness of U.S. assistance. The new State DFA efforts to implement a country-wide program planning and budgeting process, which is designed to better manage the delivery of foreign assistance, may improve coordination of basic education programs at the country level, but this process is still evolving, and it is yet to be determined what impact these efforts will have on future strategic planning of education-related assistance. Moreover, having reliable and systematic methods to determine if basic education programs are meeting their goals could help better inform U.S. agencies' decisions regarding the planning and execution of basic education-related assistance. Although the DFA plans to work toward developing methods to assess outcomes of all foreign assistance, these efforts are only in the early discussion phase.

[29]See GAO, *The Results Act: An Evaluator's Guide to Assessing Agency Annual Performance Plans*, GAO/GGD-10.1.20 (Washington, D.C.: April 1998).

Recommendations for Executive Action

To enhance efforts to coordinate and better assess the results of U.S. international basic education-related activities, we are making three recommendations:

- to improve interagency coordination of basic education efforts at headquarters in Washington, we recommend that the Secretary of State work with the heads of executive branch agencies responsible for international basic education-related assistance to convene formal, periodic meetings at the headquarters level amongst cognizant officials;

- to improve interagency coordination in recipient countries, we recommend that the Secretary of State direct the relevant countries' Ambassadors to establish a mechanism to formally coordinate U.S. agencies' implementation of international basic education-related activities in the relevant country; and

- to better assess the results of U.S. basic education assistance, we recommend that the Secretary of State, through the DFA, work with USAID and to the extent practicable, with other U.S. agencies providing basic education related-assistance to develop a plan to identify indicators that would help agencies track improvements in access to quality education. Indicators could include:

    - output measures, such as the numbers of U.S. programs designed to improve curriculum and teacher training, and to develop and validate student tests; and

    - outcome measures, such as literacy and numeracy assessments of student achievement.

Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

We provided a draft of this report to State, USAID, USDA, DOD, DOL, MCC, and the Peace Corps. We obtained written comments on the draft of this report from State, USAID, and USDA (see apps. VI, VII, and VIII). State generally concurred with our recommendations and noted that its Office of the Director of U.S. Foreign Assistance is in the process of developing mechanisms to ensure coordination of U.S. assistance programs with other federal agencies, implementers, and stakeholders. In addition, State's Office of the Director of U.S. Foreign Assistance is working with USAID, State, and others in the international community to develop appropriate measures for learning outcomes. We agree that these are positive steps

toward improving the coordination of U.S. supported basic education programs and the ability to measure whether basic education programs abroad are achieving their goals, and we encourage State to continue to work with the heads of executive agencies to this end. USAID concurred with our recommendations and agreed with the need for greater U.S. government coordination and that more needs to be done in the areas to improve education outcomes in country and to better understand the impact of U.S. support to basic education. USDA concurred with our recommendations and indicated that it will work with the Department of State in the manner which the report recommends. We also received technical comments on this draft from State, USAID, DOL, MCC, and the Peace Corps, which we incorporated where appropriate.

We are sending copies of this report to appropriate Members of Congress, the Secretaries of the Departments of Agriculture, Defense, Labor, and State, as well as the Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development, the Director of the Peace Corps, and the Chief Executive Officer of the Millennium Challenge Corporation. We also will make copies available to others upon request. In addition, this report will be available at no charge on the GAO Web site at http://www.gao.gov.

If you or your staff has any questions concerning this report, please contact me at (202) 512-4128 or fordj@gao.gov. Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report. GAO staff who made major contributions to this report are listed in appendix IX.

Jess T. Ford
Director, International Affairs and Trade

Scope and Methodology

To describe U.S. agencies' basic education activities and how the activities are planned, we obtained and analyzed strategic, budget, and programmatic documents for fiscal years 2001 through 2006 from the Departments of Agriculture (USDA), Defense (DOD), Labor (DOL), and State (State), as well as the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the Peace Corps. The documentation included, when available, strategic plans at the mission, country, regional, and global levels. We also interviewed program officials and requested data from these agencies in Washington, D.C., to identify the types of basic education-related activities, the recipient countries of these activities, and the estimated funding levels of the programs. These included educational activities that corresponded to USAID's definition of basic education, such as primary education, secondary education, early childhood development, and adult literacy. These activities also included those implemented under special or administration-directed initiatives related to basic education. We assessed the reliability of the funding data by reviewing existing information about the data and the system that produced them and interviewing agency officials knowledgeable about the data. USDA and DOL did not disaggregate funds specifically allocated to the basic education components of their larger programs. We found all agencies' data sufficiently reliable for representing the nature and extent of their program funding and activities. We did not assess the reliability of the World Bank's selected indicator data because they were used for background purposes only.

To learn about the implementation of international basic education assistance overseas, we observed ongoing program activity in the following eight countries: Dominican Republic, Egypt, Honduras, Mali, Morocco, Peru, South Africa, and Zambia.[1] We selected a nonprobability sample of foreign countries designed to ensure geographic diversity and representation of basic education programs from multiple U.S. agencies and international donors. In addition to geographic diversity and representation of multiple agencies and international donors, our sample was designed to include countries that implement special or administration-directed initiatives related to basic education. In the countries, we met with representatives from State, USAID, USDA, DOD,

[1]In addition, we visited Liberia. However, the USAID mission in Liberia was in the initial phase of developing a country strategy and had not implemented any basic education activities at the time of our visit.

DOL, the MCC, and the Peace Corps; officials representing embassies and USAID missions in the countries visited; officials administering international basic education programs; and officials from foreign governments, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), the United Nations (UN), and other international organizations. Within each country, we examined all U.S. agency basic education activities ongoing at the time of our visit and discussed these activities with relevant agency officials.

To determine the mechanisms the United States uses to coordinate national and international basic education assistance, we analyzed agency coordination documents and interviewed relevant U.S. agency, host government, and international donor officials in our eight sample countries. Documentation we examined included e-mails, meeting minutes, memoranda of understanding, policy agendas, host government education sector strategies, and other supplemental documentation. We met with officials from State, USAID, USDA, DOL, DOD, the Peace Corps, and the MCC in Washington, D.C., to discuss interagency coordination at the headquarters level. In each of our eight sample countries, we discussed coordination of international basic education assistance with relevant officials from U.S. agencies, U.S. program implementers, host countries' Ministries of Education, and international donors with basic education programs in-country.

To evaluate how U.S. agencies monitor and assess the results of their international basic education programs, we obtained and examined contractual and monitoring and evaluation documents for each of the basic education projects we visited. For each ongoing project, we interviewed officials from the implementing organizations, as well as any U.S. agency official(s) monitoring the implementer's progress. In our interviews, we discussed project monitoring, data baselines, and progress indicators. We supplemented these interviews with a review of reporting documentation associated with 40 of the basic education projects we discussed with program implementers. This sample included all ongoing projects that we visited in our eight sample countries. The documentation that we reviewed included the contracts, cooperative agreements, statements of work (program descriptions), performance monitoring plans, and monitoring reports for the 40 projects. Furthermore, to describe USAID's process for collecting and using performance measures, we interviewed USAID officials and analyzed agency documents. To describe the new planning process for foreign assistance and its impact on collecting indicator data, we interviewed State and USAID officials and analyzed relevant documentation.

To determine the extent to which the projects had outcome measures, used baselines, and set targets, we identified and analyzed the performance measures in the programs' documentation. We coded performance measures as outcomes if they were linked to program objectives and had clearly reported results. We also assessed whether the outcome measures we identified established clear baselines and set targets. To ensure accuracy in our coding, two coders independently reviewed the program documentation and met to reconcile any initial differences in their coding. In addition, another staff member independently reviewed the coding decisions.

Although the findings from our site visits in each country and our review of ongoing basic education projects are not generalizable to the population of basic education programs, we determined that the selection of the countries and programs reviewed was appropriate for our design and objectives.

We conducted our fieldwork in Washington, D.C., and in the Dominican Republic, Egypt, Honduras, Liberia, Mali, Morocco, Peru, South Africa, and Zambia from December 2005 to March 2007 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

Recipient Countries of Activities Related to International Basic Education During Fiscal Year 2006

	USAID	USDOL	USDA	State	Peace Corps	MCC	DOD
Africa							
Angola		x				N/A	
Benin	x	x			x		
Botswana		x				N/A	
Burkina Faso[a]		x			x	x	
Burundi	x	x				N/A	
Cameroon[a]		x			x	N/A	
Cape Verde					x		
Chad						N/A	
Cote d'Ivoire		x	x			N/A	
Democratic Republic Of Congo	x	x				N/A	
Djibouti[a]	x					N/A	
Eritrea			x			N/A	
Ethiopia[a]	x	x				N/A	x
Gabon		x				N/A	
The Gambia[a]					x	N/A	
Ghana[a]	x	x			x		x
Guinea[a]	x	x			x	N/A	
Guinea-Bissau			x				
Kenya[a]	x	x	x		x		
Lesotho[a]		x			x		
Liberia	x	x				N/A	
Madagascar[a]	x	x			x		
Malawi	x	x			x		
Mali[a]	x	x			x		x
Mauritania[a]					x	N/A	
Mozambique[a]		x			x		
Namibia	x	x			x		
Niger[a]		x			x		
Nigeria	x	x				N/A	
Republic of Congo		x				N/A	
Rwanda[a]	x	x					
Senegal[a]	x	x					
Sierra Leone		x				N/A	
Somalia	x					N/A	

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	USAID	USDOL	USDA	State	Peace Corps	MCC	DOD
South Africa	x	x			x	N/A	
Sudan	x					N/A	
Swaziland		x				N/A	
Tanzania	x	x			x		
Togo		x			x	N/A	
Uganda	x	x	x		x		
Zambia	x	x			x		
Asia and the Near East							
Afghanistan	x	x	x			N/A	
Algeria				x		N/A	
Bahrain				x		N/A	
Bangladesh	x	x				N/A	
Cambodia[a]	x	x				N/A	
China	x				x	N/A	
East Timor[a]							
Egypt	x	x		x		N/A	
India	x	x				N/A	
Indonesia	x	x					
Jordan	x	x		x	x		
Kiribati					x	N/A	
Lebanon	x	x	x	x		N/A	
Libya				x		N/A	
Mongolia[a]		x			x		
Morocco	x	x		x	x		
Nepal	x	x	x			N/A	
Oman				x		N/A	
Pakistan	x	x	x			N/A	
Philippines	x	x			x		
Samoa					x	N/A	
Sri Lanka		x					
Thailand		x			x	N/A	
Tonga					x	N/A	
Vanuatu					x		
Vietnam[a]		x	x			N/A	
Yemen[a]	x	x		x			
Europe and Eurasia							
Albania[a]		x			x		

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	USAID	USDOL	USDA	State	Peace Corps	MCC	DOD
Armenia	x				x		
Azerbaijan					x	N/A	
Bulgaria		x			x	N/A	x
Georgia	x				x		
Kosovo		x				N/A	x
Kazakhstan		x			x	N/A	
Kyrgyz Republic[a]	x	x	x		x		
Macedonia	x				x	N/A	x
Moldova[a]		x	x		x		x
Romania		x			x	N/A	
Tajikistan[a]	x	x				N/A	
Turkey		x				N/A	
Turkmenistan					x	N/A	
Ukraine		x			x		
Uzbekistan	x	x				N/A	
Latin America and the Caribbean							
Belize		x			x	N/A	
Bolivia	x	x					
Brazil		x				N/A	
Chile		x				N/A	
Colombia		x				N/A	
Costa Rica		x			x	N/A	
Dominican Republic	x	x			x	N/A	
Ecuador		x				N/A	
El Salvador	x	x					
Guatemala	x	x	x			N/A	
Guyana[a]		x			x		
Haiti	x					N/A	
Honduras[a]	x	x	x				
Jamaica	x				x	N/A	
Mexico	x	x			x	N/A	
Nicaragua[a]	x	x	x		x		
Panama		x				N/A	
Paraguay		x			x		
Peru	x	x					
Suriname					x	N/A	

Legend

N/A=Countries that are not eligible for MCC funding

Source: U.S. agencies' data.

Note: Some of USAID's regional activities are not included.

[a]Fast Track Initiative countries.

Recipient Countries of USAID Basic Education Assistance, Funding Levels, and Selected World Bank's Indicators

	Funding to recipient countries based on USAID's allocations				Selected World Bank's 2004 indicator data		
Recipient country	Total funding levels FY 2001 through 2006	Funding levels for FY 2001	Funding levels for FY 2004	Funding levels for FY 2006	Adult literacy rate (percentage of people aged 15 and above), 2004	Primary completion rate (percentage of relevant age group), 2004	Primary school enrollment (percentage net, using definition of primary school age for all countries), 2004
Afghanistan	**$170,904,000**	$0	$89,205,000	$35,762,000	28%	N/A	N/A
Angola	**$500,000**	0	0	0	67	N/A	N/A
Armenia	**$678,000**	0	328,000	350,000	99	107%	94%
Bangladesh	**$17,810,000**	1,500,000	4,000,000	3,960,000	N/A	76	94
Benin	**$37,470,000**	5,720,000	7,163,000	3,978,000	35	49	83
Bolivia	**$2,773,000**	0	1,000,000	882,000	87	100	95
Burundi	**$500,000**	0	0	500,000	59	33	57
Cambodia	**$14,480,000**	0	2,000,000	1,980,000	74	82	98
China	**$1,980,000**	0	0	1,980,000	91	N/A	N/A
Congo, Dem. Rep.	**$18,245,000**	0	3,243,000	3,672,000	67	N/A	N/A
Djibouti	**$14,400,000**	0	0	3,500,000	N/A	29	33
Dominican Republic	**$8,641,000**	0	2,300,000	1,568,000	87	91	86
Egypt, Arab Rep.	**$186,715,000**	54,981,000	10,489,000	54,408,000	71	95	95
El Salvador	**$23,416,000**	7,788,000	1,543,000	4,257,000	N/A	86	92
Eritrea	**$1,207,000**	0	600,000	0	N/A	44	48
Ethiopia	**$66,135,000**	11,622,000	10,445,000	10,416,000	N/A	51	46
Georgia	**$857,000**	0	0	320,000	N/A	86	93
Ghana	**$59,494,000**	5,857,000	9,420,000	18,689,000	58	65	58
Guatemala	**$18,918,000**	0	3,399,000	4,259,000	69	70	93
Guinea	**$34,815,000**	4,994,000	6,189,000	4,878,000	29	48	64
Haiti	**$39,860,000**	4,057,000	14,500,000	7,973,000	N/A	N/A	N/A
Honduras	**$37,909,000**	3,294,000	5,800,000	11,880,000	80	79	91
India	**$27,526,000**	858,000	8,412,000	4,428,000	61	89	90
Indonesia	**$84,743,000**	0	23,000,000	31,916,000	90	101	94
Iraq	**$176,213,000**	0	110,754,000	0	74	74	88
Jamaica	**$22,412,000**	2,969,000	4,677,000	3,430,000	80	84	91
Jordan	**$58,895,000**	0	5,000,000	14,000,000	90	97	91
Kenya	**$11,747,000**	0	2,914,000	4,019,000	74	92	76

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	Funding to recipient countries based on USAID's allocations				Selected World Bank's 2004 indicator data		
Recipient country	Total funding levels FY 2001 through 2006	Funding levels for FY 2001	Funding levels for FY 2004	Funding levels for FY 2006	Adult literacy rate (percentage of people aged 15 and above), 2004	Primary completion rate (percentage of relevant age group), 2004	Primary school enrollment (percentage net, using definition of primary school age for all countries), 2004
Kosovo	**$111,000**	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	N/A
Kyrgyz Republic	**$5,657,000**	0	155,000	120,000	99	93	90
Lebanon	**$1,900,000**	650,000	0	600,000	N/A	94	93
Liberia	**$10,724,000**	0	0	7,724,000	N/A	N/A	N/A
Macedonia, FYR	**$19,719,000**	126,000	5,300,000	6,539,000	96	96	92
Madagascar	**$3,183,000**	0	500,000	983,000	71	45	89
Malawi	**$30,532,000**	4,011,000	3,632,000	4,738,000	64	58	95
Mali	**$36,937,000**	5,266,000	6,505,000	4,738,000	19	44	46
Mexico	**$5,245,000**	0	1,500,000	2,062,000	91	99	98
Morocco	**$19,196,000**	1,488,000	2,000,000	4,752,000	52	75	86
Myanmar/Burma	**$4,570,000**	993,000	2,257,000	0	90	75	87
Namibia	**$16,332,000**	2,898,000	2,713,000	2,467,000	85	N/A	N/A
Nepal	**$3,750,000**	0	0	3,358,000	49	71	N/A
Nicaragua	**$28,829,000**	1,990,000	5,295,000	5,940,000	77	73	88
Nigeria	**$26,759,000**	3,163,000	4,896,000	6,277,000	N/A	75	60
Pakistan	**$165,642,000**	0	22,000,000	63,380,000	50	N/A	66
Peru	**$15,090,000**	1,507,000	2,624,000	2,700,000	88	100	97
Philippines	**$21,240,000**	0	3,300,000	7,860,000	93	97	94
Russian Federation	**$610,000**	0	310,000	0	99	N/A	91
Rwanda	**$3,614,000**	0	420,000	983,000	65	37	73
Senegal	**$31,068,000**	0	4,070,000	16,485,000	39	45	66
Somalia	**$3,678,000**	0	529,000	500,000	N/A	N/A	N/A
South Africa	**$31,803,000**	3,000,000	6,983,000	7,909,000	82	N/A	N/A
Sudan	**$31,022,000**	0	6,922,000	8,700,000	61	49	N/A
Tajikistan	**$6,740,000**	0	300,000	210,000	99	92	97
Tanzania	**$8,499,000**	0	2,264,000	2,021,000	69	57	86
Turkey	**$7,020,000**	0	7,020,000	0	87	88	89
Turkmenistan	**$500,000**	0	0	0	99	N/A	N/A
Uganda	**$45,006,000**	8,799,000	7,483,000	5,925,000	67	57	N/A
Uzbekistan	**$6,960,000**	0	250,000	250,000	N/A	97	N/A

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	Funding to recipient countries based on USAID's allocations				Selected World Bank's 2004 indicator data		
Recipient country	Total funding levels FY 2001 through 2006	Funding levels for FY 2001	Funding levels for FY 2004	Funding levels for FY 2006	Adult literacy rate (percentage of people aged 15 and above), 2004	Primary completion rate (percentage of relevant age group), 2004	Primary school enrollment (percentage net, using definition of primary school age for all countries), 2004
Yemen, Rep.	**$21,198,000**	2,994,000	3,270,000	2,445,000	N/A	62	75
Zambia	**$46,419,000**	$4,965,000	$5,722,000	$17,393,000	68%	66%	80%

Legend

N/A=Data not available

Source: USAID data from the Annual Report System and World Bank's World Development Indicators data from http://devdata.worldbank.org/dataonline/.

Note: Funding figures include those allocated directly to USAID missions in country. Funding does not include regional funding, which may distribute basic education funds to countries through headquarters.

List of International Basic Education Projects Reviewed

Country	Agency	Project	Implementer	Amount of funding planned to support basic education for the life of the project	Period of performance
Dominican Republic					
	USAID	Invest in Education for Competitiveness Program	American Chamber of Commerce	$250,000	2006
	USAID	Monitoring and Evaluation of Educational Opportunities and Learning in USAID Sponsored Projects in the Dominican Republic	University at Albany-State University of New York	1,781,459	2003-2007
	DOL	Combating the Worst Forms of Child Labor in the Dominican Republic-Supporting the Time-bound Program for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor in the Dominican Republic	International Labor Organization's International Program on the Elimination of Child Labor (ILO/IPEC)	4,400,000	2002-2006
Egypt					
	USAID	Alam Simsim	Sesame Workshop	8,000,000	2004-2007
	USAID	Educational Reform Program	American Institutes for Research and Academy for Educational Development	114,833,279	2004-2009
	USAID	National Book Program for Schools	Academy for Educational Development	98,900,000	2005-2009
	USAID	New Schools Program	CARE	39,000,000	2000-2008
	USAID	School Team Excellence Awards Program	Development Associates	11,268,477	2005-2007
Honduras					
	USAID	Central American and Dominican Republic Centers of Excellence for Teacher Training	Universidad Pedagogica Nacional Francisco Morazan	8,497,683[a]	2002-2007

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Country	Agency	Project	Implementer	Amount of funding planned to support basic education for the life of the project	Period of performance
	USAID	EDUCATODOS Alternative Basic Education Project	Honduran Ministry of Education	22,085,529	1995-2009
	USAID	Measuring Student Achievement Project	Academy for Educational Development, American Institutes for Research, and the National Association of Former Peace Scholarship Recipients	9,173,851	2004-2007
	DOL	Combating Child Labor Through Education in Central America and the Dominican Republic, "Primero Aprendo"	CARE	5,500,000[a]	2004-2008
Mali					
	USAID	Africa Education Initiative-Ambassadors' Girls' Scholarship Program	World Education	3,799,000[b]	2004-2008
	USAID	Improved Quality of Education Activity	World Education	12,475,021	2003-2007
	USAID	Regional Action Planning-Decision-Making	Academy for Educational Development & the Education Development Center	4,028,843	2004-2007
	USAID	Shared Governance Program	Management Systems International	962,000[c]	2003-2007
	USAID	Teacher Training via Radio	Educational Development Center	3,580,555	2004-2007
	DOL	A Better Future for Mali's Children: Combating Child Trafficking through Education	CARE	3,000,000	2003-2007
	DOL	Combating the Trafficking of Children for Labour Exploitation in West and Central Africa	ILO/IPEC	5,000,000	2001-2007
	DOL	Community-based Innovations to Reduce Child Labor through Education	Winrock International	5,000,000[a]	2002-2006
Morocco					
	State Dept.	Scholarships for Success	USAID	40,000	2004-2007

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Country	Agency	Project	Implementer	Amount of funding planned to support basic education for the life of the project	Period of performance
	USAID	Advancing Learning and Employability for a Better Future	Academy for Educational Development	9,872,697	2004-2008
	DOL	ADROS: Combating Child Labor Through Education in Morocco	Management Systems International	3,000,000	2003-2007
	DOL	Combating Child Labour in Morocco by Creating an Enabling National Environment and Developing Direct Action against Worst Forms of Child Labour in Rural Areas	ILO/IPEC	2,081,069	2003-2006
Peru					
	USAID	Andean Centers of Excellence for Teacher Training	Universidad Peruana Cayetano Heredia	5,050,567	2002-2009
	USAID	Innovations in Decentralization and Active Schools (AprenDes)	Academy for Educational Development	10,642,097	2003-2007
	DOL	EduFuturo: Educating Artisanal Mining Children in Peru for a Dignified Future	World Learning	1,500,000	2002-2006
South Africa					
	USAID	Africa Education Initiative-Ambassadors' Girls' Scholarship Program	Winrock International	1,668,000[b]	2004-2008
	USAID	Africa Education Initiative-Textbooks and Learning Materials Program	University of Texas at San Antonio	3,000,000	2005-2008
	USAID	Integrated Education Program	Research Triangle Institute	22,906,334	2004-2008
	USAID	Mindset Primary Schools Channel	Mindset Network	3,550,000	2004-2007
	DOL	Reducing Exploitative Child Labor in South Africa through Education	American Institutes for Research	9,000,000	2004-2008
	DOL	Supporting the Time-Bound Programme to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labour in South Africa's Child Labour Action Programme and Laying the Basis for Concerted Action against Worst Forms of Child Labour in Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia and Swaziland	ILO/IPEC	5,000,000	2003-2006
Zambia					
	USAID	Africa Education Initiative-Ambassadors' Girls' Scholarship Program	Winrock International	1,432,000[b]	2004-2008

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Country	Agency	Project	Implementer	Amount of funding planned to support basic education for the life of the project	Period of performance
	USAID	Africa Education Initiative-Textbooks and Learning Materials Program	Mississippi Consortium for International Development	2,999,614	2005-2008
	USAID	Communities Supporting Health, HIV/AIDS, Nutrition, Gender and Equity Education in Schools 2	American Institutes for Research	21,220,000	2005-2009
	USAID	Educational Quality Improvement Program	Academy for Educational Development	16,473,991	2004-2010
	USAID	Quality Education Services Through Technology	Educational Development Center	12,729,816	2004-2009
	DOL	Combating and Preventing HIV/AIDS-induced Child Labour in Sub-Saharan Africa: Pilot Action in Uganda and Zambia	ILO/IPEC	3,000,000	2004-2007
	DOL	Combating Child Labour Through Education - An Education Initiative (Child and Community Participatory Approach for Impact and Sustainability)	Jesus Cares Ministries	750,000	2005-2008

Source: U.S. agencies' data.

[a]Funding covers global or regional projects.

[b]Funding amounts represent the approximate distribution of scholarship funds across countries.

[c]Funding amounts only cover the basic education component of the project.

Analysis of the Performance Measures in Documentation for Selected International Basic Education Programs

We studied 40 programs from the eight countries visited during fieldwork. The programs had multiple performance measures and often included a mix of outcome and output measures. We identified measures using criteria that required them to be clearly identified as performance measures, have clearly reported results, and be clearly linked to program objectives. See appendix I for more details about how the programs were selected for study and about the methodology we used to analyze their measures. Table 4 below shows the type of measures contained in the programs we examined. Table 5 shows the characteristics of the outcome measures being used by the programs, and Table 6 shows how these outcome measures were used.

Table 4: Performance Measures in the Programs Selected

Disposition	Number
Programs with outcome measures	21
Programs without outcome measures but with output measures	10
Programs with no clear performance measures reported[a]	6
Programs early in implementation with no clearly reported performance measures	3
Total number of programs reviewed	**40**

Source: GAO analysis of USAID and DOL project documentation.

[a]Some of these programs did list activities or provide descriptions of their progress; however, these activities did not meet our criteria for clearly identified performance measures that linked to objectives.

Table 5: Characteristics of the Outcome Measures

Disposition	Number
Programs that used quantitative measures	21
Programs that set baselines	14
Programs that set targets	18

Source: GAO analysis of USAID and DOL project documentation.

Note: We analyzed the 21 programs that we identified as having clear outcome measures. Many programs had multiple outcome measures. For this analysis, we determined that the program had outcome measures that were quantitative, or set baselines or targets, if any one of their outcome measures had that characteristic. See appendix I for more details about how we selected the programs and the methodology we used to analyze the measures.

Table 6: Programs' Use of Outcome Measures

Disposition	Number
Programs with measures that addressed access issues	16
Programs with measures that addressed capacity issues	15
Programs with measures that addressed quality issues	12
Programs with measures that addressed access, capacity, and quality issues	8

Source: GAO analysis of USAID and DOL project documentation.

Note: This analysis was conducted of the 21 programs that we identified as having clear outcome measures. We analyzed the measures according to whether they followed USAID's criteria for access, quality, and capacity. Many programs had multiple outcome measures. For this analysis, we determined that the program had outcome measures that addressed access, capacity, or quality if any one of their outcome measures had that characteristic. As a result, programs can have measures that address more than one dimension; for example, as stated above, eight programs had measures that addressed access, capacity and quality issues. See appendix I for more details about how the programs were selected for study and about the methodology we used to analyze their measures.

Comments from the Department of State

Note: GAO comments supplementing those in the report text appear at the end of this appendix.

United States Department of State

Assistant Secretary for Resource Management and Chief Financial Officer

Washington, D.C. 20520

MAR 26 2007

Ms. Jacquelyn Williams-Bridgers
Managing Director
International Affairs and Trade
Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20548-0001

Dear Ms. Williams-Bridgers:

We appreciate the opportunity to review your draft report, "FOREIGN ASSISTANCE: Enhanced Coordination and Better Methods to Assess the Results of U.S. International Basic Education Efforts Are Needed," GAO Job Code 320399.

The enclosed Department of State comments are provided for incorporation with this letter as an appendix to the final report.

If you have any questions concerning this response, please contact Parrie Henderson-O'Keefe, Program Analyst, Office of the Director of Foreign Assistance at (202) 647-2646.

Sincerely,

S. Kaplan

Sid L. Kaplan (Acting)

cc: GAO – Zina Merritt
F – Amb. Randall Tobias
State/OIG – Mark Duda

U.S. Department of State's Comments on GAO Draft Report
FOREIGN ASSISTANCE: Enhanced Coordination and Better Methods to Assess the Results of U.S. International Basic Education Efforts Are Needed
(GAO-07-523, GAO Code 320399)

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft report *FOREIGN ASSISTANCE: Enhanced Coordination and Better Methods to Assess the Results of U.S. International Basic Education Efforts Are Needed.* The Department of State would like to offer the following comments on the main conclusions and recommendations of the draft audit report referenced above.

Recommendation related to coordination: The report found "that agencies did not always coordinate in the planning or delivery of international basic education-related activities. For the period 2001 and 2006, there was no government-wide mechanism to facilitate interagency collaboration and as a result, we identified instances where agencies missed opportunities to collaborate and maximize U.S. resources." The report also says "Although State's Director of Foreign Assistance has begun to address the issue of better coordinating all U.S. foreign assistance by bringing together core teams to discuss U.S. development priorities in each recipient country, it is unclear to what extent these efforts will be accepted and implemented by agencies whose foreign assistance programs are not under DFA's direct authority." The report "recommends that the Secretary of State work with the heads of other U.S. executive agencies supporting international basic education-related activities in improving interagency coordination of basic education efforts at headquarters in Washington and in recipient countries to facilitate better planning and allocation of U.S. resources."

Comment: The Secretary of State is charged by statute with the overall supervision and general direction of U.S. foreign assistance. This responsibility includes foreign assistance implemented by agencies other than the Department of State and the U.S. Agency for International Development. In fulfilling that responsibility, the Secretary established a single umbrella authority, the Office of the Director of U.S. Foreign Assistance, in January 2006 to develop the processes and mechanisms necessary to ensure the kind of coordination necessary for coherent USG assistance programs in all areas, including basic education. The Office of the U.S. Director of Foreign Assistance has undertaken such processes over the past year, and our experience to date has demonstrated willingness by

See comment 1.

other federal agencies such as the Department of Defense, USTR and the Millennium Challenge Corporation to work with us within the Foreign Assistance framework. The FY 2008 operational planning process is expected to be the first year wherein there is full participation by other agency implementers and stakeholders. We believe that other agencies involved in foreign assistance are likewise committed to coherence and performance and welcome the opportunity to fully engage with their interagency colleagues toward maximizing the resources under their purview.

Recommendation related to performance measurement: The audit found that "To better assess its goal of improving access to quality education; USAID is developing a standardized test that could provide data on primary-level reading ability and would be comparable across countries. In addition, State's office of the Director of Foreign Assistance plans to work toward developing methods to assess whether all foreign assistance are (sic) achieving their goals; however these efforts are only in the early discussion phase. Without this information, agency officials cannot determine if they are achieving their strategic goals or make more fully informed choices about which programs to fund." The audit "recommends that the Secretary of State work with the heads of other U.S. executive agencies supporting international basic education-related activities in "developing a plan to identify indicators that would help U.S. agencies, to the extent practicable, track improvements in access to quality education."

Comment: U.S. agencies supporting international education programs acknowledge the critical importance of ensuring that children not only have access to education but are provided a quality education. Assessing progress toward this goal is challenging for the many less developed countries where foreign assistance is provided, and there is no internationally-accepted standard of measurement. We should not forget that here in the United States – a highly developed nation – it was only within the last ten years that nationwide processes and standards for educational quality were introduced into the education system. USAID, State Department and others in the international community are working together to try to develop appropriate measures for learning outcomes that would address the question of whether a quality education is being provided. However, the lack of such a measure does not mean that we have no sense of whether progress is being made. We and the international community have developed and are using proxy

See comment 2.

indicators to help inform us as to whether or not we are making progress, including primary school retention rates as cited in the report. Together with such other indicators as enrollment rates by gender, curriculum development and teacher training, they provide insight as to the impact of U.S. assistance.

Although the Office of the Director of U.S. Foreign Assistance is indeed in the process of bringing together the key actors from inside and outside the government to refine its selection of indicators to measure overall progress toward U.S. foreign assistance objectives, the office is building on the long history and best practices that USAID and other agencies have accumulated from many years of performance management and thorough evaluation. This enables us to make informed choices about which programs to fund. While our choices are fully informed by these methods, they are also informed by inputs and guidance from other parts of the Administration and Congress.

We look forward to further continued contributions from the GAO to further cross-government coordination.

The following are our comments on the Department of State's letter dated March 26, 2007.

GAO Comments

1. State said that its Office of the Director of U.S. Foreign Assistance over the past year has undertaken a process to ensure the kind of coordination necessary for coherent U.S. government assistance programs in all areas, including basic education. Also, State said that its experience to date has demonstrated willingness by other federal agencies such as the Department of Defense, U.S. Trade Representatives, and the Millennium Challenge Corporation to work with us within the Foreign Assistance framework. In addition, the fiscal year 2008 operational planning process is expected to be the first year wherein there is full participation by other agency implementers and stakeholders. At the time of our review, some of the other agency officials that we met with in Washington said that their respective agencies have not yet been invited to participate in such coordination efforts. Therefore, we believe that State should continue towards this end to improve coordination, both at the headquarters and in recipient countries, among all agencies involved in international basic education-related activities.

2. State said that USAID, State, and others in the international community are working together to try to develop appropriate measures for learning outcomes that would address the question of whether a quality education is being provided. Also, State noted that its Office of the Director of U.S. Foreign Assistance is building on the long history and best practices that USAID and other agencies have accumulated from many years of performance management and thorough evaluation. Our report notes the efforts of State, USAID, and the international community in this regard and that these efforts have just begun. However, we maintain that a plan should be developed to better guide these efforts to help agencies track improvements in the access to quality education.

Comments from the U.S. Agency for International Development

USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

MAR 22 2007

Mr. Jess T. Ford
Director, International Affairs and Trade
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G. Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Ford:

I am pleased to provide the U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID) formal response on the draft GAO report entitled "Foreign Assistance: Enhanced Coordination and Better Methods to Assess the Results of U.S. International Basic Education Efforts are Needed" (GAO-07-523). USAID supports the recommendations and would like to thank the GAO team for their efforts.

We appreciate the GAO's recognition of the need for greater cross-USG coordination and the Agency's efforts to tackle critical issues in basic education, such as an increased focus on improving quality and closing gaps in data. We agree that more needs to be done in these areas to improve education outcomes in-country and to better understand the impact of the USG support to basic education. More detailed technical comments on the report were provided under separate cover.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the GAO draft report and for the courtesies extended by your staff in the conduct of this review.

Sincerely,

Mosina H. Jordan
Counselor to the Agency

U.S. Agency for International Development
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20523
www.usaid.gov

Comments from the U.S. Department of Agriculture

Note: GAO comments supplementing those in the report text appear at the end of this appendix.

United States Department of Agriculture

Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services

Foreign Agricultural Service

1400 Independence Ave, SW
Stop 1060
Washington, DC
20250-1060

MAR 2 2 2007

Ms. Zina Merritt
Assistant Director, International Affairs and Trade
United States Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Ms. Merritt:

Thank you for providing USDA with this opportunity to review and comment on the Government Accountability Office (GAO) draft report entitled "FOREIGN ASSISTANCE: Enhanced Coordination and Better Methods to Assess the Results of U.S. International Basic Education Efforts Are Needed" (GAO-07-523). USDA will work with the Department of State in the manner which the report recommends in order to address the specific issues it identifies.

See comment 1.

The draft report makes the statement that "USDA…can not disaggregate the amount of funds allocated specifically for basic education related activities." The Department considers this conclusion to be the result of alternate points of view arising from differences in missions, rather than an actual inability of USDA to disaggregate the amount of funds allocated specifically for basic education related activities. In fact, USDA did provide GAO with a breakout of the amount of USDA funding allocated to education activities by fiscal year, by country, and by program. This breakout included USDA resources expended for education items such as school supplies, school infrastructure repairs, and school equipment purchases.

As noted during both the entrance and exit conferences, improving child nutrition is the foundation of the Food for Education program. Since -- from the USDA perspective -- school meals enable children to better concentrate on learning, food and education are not considered by the Department to be separate components of the program which might be disaggregated from one another.

See comment 2.

The draft report also notes that "…agencies did not always coordinate in the planning or delivery of international basic education-related activities." USDA does annually coordinate requests for the programs with the Department of State, the U.S. Agency for International Development, and the Office of Management and Budget. However, USDA welcomes wider participation with other U.S. government agencies.

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Again, USDA appreciates this opportunity to share its views regarding this report.

Sincerely,

W. Kirk Miller

for Michael W. Yost
Administrator

The following are our comments on the Department of Agriculture's letter dated March 22, 2007.

GAO Comments

1. We deleted the statement that "USDA. . . can not disaggregate the amount of funds allocated specifically for basic education related activities." from the report. Also, in the report we explain that USDA funding allocations include basic education components that support its broader mission goals and provide examples accordingly.

2. We acknowledge USDA's coordination efforts with State, USAID, and the Office of Management and Budget as a good example of interagency coordination.

GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

GAO Contact

Jess Ford, (202) 512-4128, fordj@gao.gov

Staff Acknowledgments

In addition to the individual named above, Zina Merritt, Assistant Director; Virginia Chanley; Martin de Alteriis; Harriet Ganson; Emily Gupta; David Hancock; Victoria Lin; Grace Lui; Grant Mallie; Patricia Martin; Deborah Owolabi; and Anne Welch made key contributions to this report. The team benefited from the expert advice and assistance of Joseph Carney, Elizabeth Curda, Joyce Evans, Etana Finkler, Bruce Kutnick, Jena Sinkfield, and Cynthia Taylor.

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