HAITI RECONSTRUCTION

USAID Has Achieved Mixed Results and Should Enhance Sustainability Planning

Why GAO Did This Study
On January 12, 2010, an earthquake struck Haiti, the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, causing an estimated 230,000 deaths and displacing about 2 million persons. According to the Department of State, U.S. government agencies have allocated $4 billion to earthquake-related efforts, including $2.7 billion for reconstruction. USAID, which is responsible for over half of reconstruction funding, has directed its efforts to eight sectors: energy, shelter, ports, education, governance and rule of law, economic security, health, and food security.

GAO was asked to review U.S. reconstruction efforts in Haiti. This report examines (1) USAID’s allocations, obligations, and disbursements of reconstruction funding; (2) USAID/Haiti’s progress in implementing planned reconstruction activities; and (3) USAID/Haiti’s efforts to ensure the sustainability of these activities. GAO analyzed funding data; reviewed documents; interviewed U.S. officials in Washington, D.C., and Haiti; and visited reconstruction activity sites. GAO focused its review on 23 key activities, each with allocations exceeding $10 million.

What GAO Found
As of September 30, 2014, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) had allocated $1.7 billion to the Haiti reconstruction effort, directing more than half of this funding to the health and food security sectors. USAID had obligated two-thirds and disbursed more than half of all allocated funding.

| USAID Funding for Haiti Earthquake Reconstruction as of September 30, 2014 |
|-----------------------|--------|--------|--------|
|                      | Allocated | Obligated | Disbursed |
| U.S. dollars (in millions) | 1,699 | 1,139 (67%) | 911 (54%) |

Most of the 23 reconstruction activities that GAO reviewed have achieved mixed results and some have faced delays, leading USAID’s Haiti mission (USAID/Haiti) to extend its reconstruction time frame. The mission reduced planned outcomes for 5 of the 6 key infrastructure activities and encountered delays in 4 of these activities, including port improvements. USAID/Haiti also reduced planned outcomes for 3 of the 17 key noninfrastructure activities, including providing access to basic health care. Key noninfrastructure activities met or exceeded the target for half of all performance indicators and met at least 75 percent of the target for nearly a quarter of all indicators. Mission officials said that factors affecting results and causing delays included inadequate staffing and unrealistic initial plans. As a result, USAID/Haiti has increased staffing and extended its reconstruction time frame by 3 years, to 2018.

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What GAO Recommends
GAO recommends that USAID/Haiti perform sustainability analyses for noninfrastructure activities during design. GAO also recommends that USAID provide guidance for indentifying projects for which sustainability must be certified and specifying information that these certifications should include. USAID agreed with GAO’s recommendations.