INTERNATIONAL FOOD ASSISTANCE

USAID Should Systematically Assess the Effectiveness of Key Conditional Food Aid Activities

Why GAO Did This Study
In fiscal year 2014, USAID awarded about $1.3 billion for emergency and development food aid under Title II of the Food for Peace Act. USAID’s implementing partners may provide what is known as conditional food aid—that is, food in exchange for beneficiaries’ participation in activities intended to support development. For example, food-for-assets activities are intended to address beneficiaries’ immediate food needs while building assets to improve longer-term food security. Questions have arisen about whether the dual goals of addressing both immediate and long-term needs may compromise the ability to achieve either goal, underscoring the need to understand conditional food aid.

This report examines, among other things, (1) USAID’s use of conditional food aid through Title II development and emergency awards in fiscal years 2013 and 2014 and (2) the extent to which USAID has assessed the effectiveness of food-for-assets activities in development projects. GAO analyzed agency and partner documents and interviewed agency and partner officials in Washington, D.C., and in three countries selected on the basis of project type and representing a variety of partners.

What GAO Recommends
GAO recommends that USAID (1) establish a mechanism to readily identify all Title II programs that include conditional food aid activities and (2) systematically assess the effectiveness of food-for-assets activities in development projects. USAID concurred with the recommendations but disagreed with some aspects of GAO’s findings. GAO continues to believe its findings are valid, as discussed in the report.

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