**GAO**

# DEMOCRACY ASSISTANCE

# State Should Improve Information Sharing with Embassies

Accessible Version

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## State Should Improve Information Sharing with Embassies

## Why GAO Did This Study

Congress made at least $2 billion available to agencies annually for democracy assistance abroad in fiscal years 2015 through 2018. State and USAID are the primary U.S. agencies funding democracy assistance. This assistance supports activities related to enhancing rule of law, good governance, political competition and consensus building, civil society, independent media, and human rights.

Congress included a provision in the Joint Explanatory Statement accompanying the fiscal year 2015 Continuing Appropriations Act for GAO to review agencies' roles and responsibilities in promoting democracy abroad. This report examines (1) State's and USAID's democracy assistance allocations, (2) State's and USAID's roles in providing democracy assistance and the extent to which their projects in selected countries are consistent with their defined roles, and (3) how State and USAID coordinate on democracy assistance. GAO reviewed State and USAID data and documents for fiscal years 2015 through 2018 and interviewed officials in Washington, D.C., and in the DRC, Nigeria, Tunisia, and Ukraine. GAO selected these countries because they received relatively high amounts of democracy assistance funding from State and USAID, among other factors.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the Secretary of State direct DRL to develop a mechanism for the sharing of democracy assistance project information between DRL and relevant embassy staff. State concurred with GAO's recommendation.

View GAO-20-173. For more information, contact David Gootnick at (202) 512-3149 or gootnickd@gao.gov.

## What GAO Found

The Department of State (State) and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) allocated more than $8.8 billion for democracy assistance in fiscal years 2015 through 2018.

**State and USAID Allocations for Democracy Assistance, Fiscal Years 2015-2018**



Legend: State = Department of State; USAID = U.S. Agency for International Development.
Source: GAO analysis of State data. | GAO-20-173
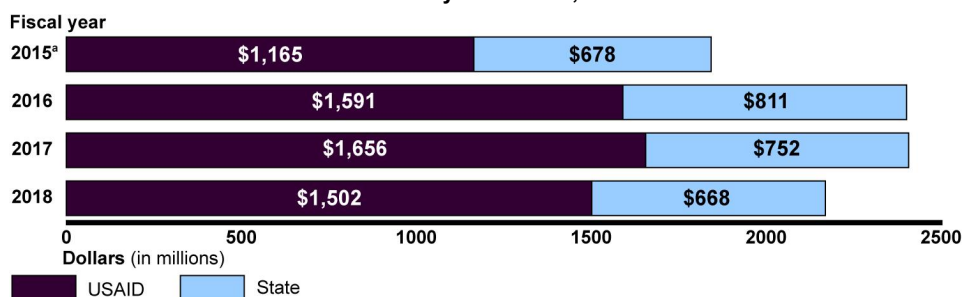
[a]According to agency officials, language in the 2015 appropriations act permitted State and USAID to allocate less than the full amount directed to democracy programs by the act.

State and USAID have defined roles for democracy assistance and have obligated funding for projects in selected countries accordingly. State has identified its Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL) as the U.S. lead for promoting democracy and protecting human rights abroad and has identified its Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) as the lead for promoting the rule of law. In fiscal years 2015 through 2018, DRL's and INL's obligated funding for democracy assistance in the countries GAO reviewed—the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Nigeria, Tunisia, and Ukraine—generally reflected their defined roles. For example, 24 to 77 percent of DRL's obligated funding in these countries supported human rights, and at least 90 percent of INL's obligated funding for democracy assistance in the countries supported the rule of law. USAID's democracy assistance strategy states that USAID has the leading role in U.S. development assistance. USAID's obligations for democracy assistance in the four countries supported multiyear, multimillion-dollar projects, consistent with what USAID officials told GAO was needed for long-term development.

State and USAID coordinate on democracy assistance in various ways, but embassy officials reported gaps in information about DRL assistance. Examples of coordination mechanisms include budget allocation discussions at headquarters and working groups at embassies to help avoid project duplication. However, State officials in all four selected countries said they generally lacked information about DRL democracy assistance projects, including project descriptions and funding amounts. State's existing information-sharing mechanisms, including data systems and strategies, do not consistently address these gaps. Overseas officials' lack of complete information about DRL's projects may inhibit State's efforts to coordinate with other agencies, implementing partners, and other donors.

_____ **United States Government Accountability Office**

# Contents

**Abbreviations**

| | |
|---|---|
| AF | Bureau of African Affairs |
| DRC | Democratic Republic of the Congo |
| DRL | Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor |
| EUR | Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs |
| INL | Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs |
| NEA | Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs |
| NED | National Endowment for Democracy |
| NSC | National Security Council |
| State | Department of State |
| USAID | U.S. Agency for International Development |

January 28, 2020

The Honorable Lindsey Graham
Chairman
The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Chairwoman
The Honorable Hal Rogers
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs
Committee on Appropriations
House of Representatives

In fiscal years 2015 through 2018, Congress made available to agencies at least $2 billion annually for democracy assistance programs[1] abroad as a way to promote American values, national security, and economic opportunity overseas.[2] Democracy assistance is provided primarily through the Department of State (State) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), which support activities designed to promote human rights, good governance, the rule of law, political

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[1]For the purposes of this report, the goal of U.S. democracy assistance is defined in accordance with State and USAID's *Updated Foreign Assistance Standardized Program Structure and Definitions (*April 2016): "To advance freedom and dignity by assisting governments and citizens to establish, consolidate, and protect democratic institutions, processes, and values, including participatory and accountable governance, rule of law, authentic political competition, civil society, human rights, and the free flow of information." Also in this report, "democracy assistance" refers to programs and projects that State and USAID categorize under the democracy, human rights, and governance portfolio.

[2]For fiscal year 2015, Congress directed in section 7032 of the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2015, that "not less than $2,264,986,000 should be made available for democracy programs." In fiscal years 2016 through 2018, Congress mandated in the same section of the respective annual appropriations acts that "not less than $2,308,517,000 shall be made available for democracy programs." According to agency officials, the wording used in the fiscal year 2015 act permitted the allocation in that fiscal year of less than the directed amount for State and USAID democracy programs but mandated that this minimum amount be allocated for this purpose in subsequent years.

competition and consensus building, civil society, and independent media. In addition, the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), a nongovernmental, nonprofit organization, uses congressionally appropriated funds to support democracy promotion activities. Congress has sought clarification of agencies' roles and responsibilities related to democracy assistance.

The Joint Explanatory Statement accompanying the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2015, includes a provision for us to review agencies' roles and responsibilities in promoting democracy abroad.[3] This report examines (1) State's and USAID's allocations of funding for democracy assistance in fiscal years 2015 through 2018, (2) State's and USAID's roles in providing democracy assistance and the extent to which their projects in selected countries during this period were consistent with these defined roles, and (3) the extent to which State and USAID coordinate in providing democracy assistance.[4] In addition, appendix I of this report provides information about NED's democracy assistance in fiscal years 2015 through 2018.

To examine State's and USAID's allocations of funding for democracy assistance, we analyzed State and USAID allocations data for fiscal years 2015 through 2018.[5] We assessed the reliability of the data that agencies reported by reviewing information from agency officials regarding the underlying data systems; we determined that the data were sufficiently reliable for the purposes of reporting allocations data. We took similar steps for data on democracy assistance projects in selected countries in fiscal years 2015 through 2018.

To identify State's and USAID's roles in providing democracy assistance, we reviewed strategies and other documents that included democracy-related goals and objectives. For State, we focused our review on the roles and projects of two bureaus that State identified as leading its provision of democracy assistance: the Bureau of Democracy, Human

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[3]160 Cong. Rec. H9955 (2014); see also S.2499, 113th Cong. § 7032(c)(2)(B) (2014).

[4]Agencies may use various terms to describe their assistance, including "programs," "projects," and "activities." In this report, "projects" refers to assistance funded by U.S. agencies that is implemented directly by the agencies or through awards made to project implementers, including contractors, international organizations, and grantees.

[5]State's and USAID's allocations for democracy assistance were funded through various accounts, including the Development Assistance, Democracy Fund, Economic Support Fund, and International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement accounts.

Rights, and Labor (DRL) and the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL). While State's regional bureaus also provide some democracy assistance, we did not include them in our analysis. To examine the extent to which State's and USAID's projects in selected countries were consistent with their defined roles, we selected four countries where DRL, INL, and USAID recently provided democracy assistance: the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Nigeria, Tunisia, and Ukraine.[6] We selected these countries on the basis of, among other factors, State's and USAID's relatively large allocations for democracy assistance in the countries in fiscal years 2015 through 2017, the most recent data available. We analyzed obligations data[7] for democracy assistance projects that DRL, INL, and USAID funded in the selected countries in fiscal years 2015 through 2018.[8] We also reviewed project documents, including award agreements, for selected projects.[9]

To examine the extent to which State and USAID coordinated in providing democracy assistance, we reviewed relevant documents, such as State's and USAID's standard operating procedures, to identify the agencies' coordination mechanisms and practices. We also drew on our prior work identifying key practices that can enhance and sustain collaboration at

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[6]NED also provided democracy assistance in these four countries; see app. I.

[7]An obligation is a definite commitment that creates a legal liability of the government for the payment of goods and services ordered or received, or a legal duty on the part of the United States that could mature into a legal liability by virtue of actions on the part of the other party beyond the control of the United States. Payment may be made immediately or in the future. An agency incurs an obligation, for example, when it places an order, signs a contract, awards a grant, purchases a service, or takes other actions that require the government to make payments to the public or from one government account to another.

[8]These projects were active at any point from fiscal year 2015 through the end of fiscal year 2018, including some projects that started before, and ended after, this period. For USAID, we included projects that were active at any point in fiscal years 2015 through 2018, including some projects that started before, and ended after, this period owing to the nature of their democracy assistance funding. For DRL, we included projects for which funding was obligated in fiscal years 2015 through 2018, given that DRL's democracy assistance projects comprised grants and cooperative agreements that the bureau funded entirely during this period. For INL, we included funding in fiscal years 2015 through 2018, because INL democracy assistance is not always project based. We included the project data that agencies identified for these selected countries, and we did not include funding for regional or multicountry projects.

[9]We also analyzed NED documents and data; see app. I.

federal agencies.[10] In addition, to address each of our objectives, we interviewed agency officials in Washington, D.C., and the four selected countries and conducted fieldwork in the DRC in May 2019. For more information about our scope and methodology, see appendix II.

We conducted this performance audit from September 2018 to January 2020 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

# Background

## Democracy Assistance Program Areas

The U.S. government supports various types of democracy assistance, which State and USAID categorize under their democracy, human rights, and governance portfolios. State and USAID use the *Updated Foreign Assistance Standardized Program Structure and Definitions* to categorize democracy assistance activities in six program areas: rule of law, good governance, political competition and consensus building, civil society, independent media and free flow of information, and human rights. Table 1 shows these six program areas and their elements.

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[10]Agencies can enhance and sustain their collaborative efforts by engaging in eight practices that we previously identified: define and articulate a common outcome; establish mutually reinforcing or joint strategies; identify and address needs by leveraging resources; agree on roles and responsibilities; establish compatible policies, procedures, and other means to operate across agency boundaries; develop mechanisms to monitor, evaluate, and report on results; reinforce agency accountability for collaborative efforts through agency plans and reports; and reinforce individual accountability through performance management systems. See GAO, *Managing for Results: Key Considerations for Implementing Interagency Collaborative Mechanisms*, GAO-12-1022 (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 27, 2012). We focus on roles and responsibilities in this report, given congressional interest.

**Table 1: U.S. Democracy Assistance Program Areas and Program Area Elements**

| Program areas[a] | Program area elements |
|---|---|
| **Rule of law**<br><br>To promote accountability by all persons, institutions, and entities—public and private, including the state itself—to laws that are publicly promulgated, independently adjudicated, equally applied and enforced, and consistent with international treaties and customary law. | • Constitutions, laws, and legal systems<br>• Culture of lawfulness<br>• Checks and balances with judicial independence and supremacy of law<br>• Judicial systems and institutions<br>• Fairness and access to justice |
| **Good governance**<br><br>To promote the exercise of political, economic, and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels, including the capacity to formulate, implement, and enforce public policies and deliver services. | • Functions and processes of legislative authority<br>• Functions and processes of nonsecurity executive authority<br>• Local government and decentralization<br>• Anticorruption reforms<br>• Executive authority over civilian security institutions |
| **Political competition and consensus building**<br><br>To promote legitimate contestation for ideas and political power through democratic political processes that reflect the will of the people. | • Consensus-building processes<br>• Elections and political processes<br>• Political parties |
| **Civil society**<br><br>To support civil society as an effective arena that empowers citizens to advance the democratic values of citizen participation and governmental accountability. | • Enabling the environment for civil society<br>• Civil society organizational capacity development<br>• Civic education, citizen participation, and public accountability<br>• Civic education and democratic culture<br>• Democratic labor and trade unions |
| **Independent media and free flow of information**<br><br>To strengthen information and media-related legal and regulatory frameworks and associated freedom of expression protections, including self-regulatory mechanisms and legislation to ensure access to, and freedom of, information. | • Enabling environment for media and free flow of information<br>• Professional and institutional capacities of media<br>• Outlets and infrastructure |
| **Human rights**<br><br>To promote human rights that protect the inherent dignity of individuals and are enjoyed by all and without distinction as to race, color, sex, language, religion, national or social origin, property, birth, sexual orientation, gender identity, or other status. | • Human rights systems, policies, and protection<br>• Transitional justice<br>• Equal rights for marginalized communities |

Source: GAO analysis of Department of State documents. | GAO-20-173

[a]In April 2016, the Department of State and the U.S. Agency for International Development began using an *Updated Foreign Assistance Standardized Program Structure and Definitions* that includes six program areas under democracy, human rights, and governance. After April 2016, the rule of law and human rights program area was divided into two separate program areas—one for rule of law and one for human rights. The civil society program area was also divided into two separate program areas—one for civil society and one for independent media and free flow of information.

## State and USAID Entities Providing U.S. Democracy Assistance

State bureaus and offices—in particular, DRL and INL—and USAID provide funding for democracy assistance.[11]

**State.** State's democracy assistance is provided by DRL, INL, and other State bureaus and offices.

- **DRL.** As the U.S. government's primary foreign policy entity advocating for democracy globally, DRL funds programs in every region of the world to promote human rights, democracy, and transparent and accountable governance.

- **INL.** INL provides funding for programs that combat crime and narcotics trafficking, including democracy assistance to promote the rule of law, combat corruption, and promote good governance.

- **Other bureaus and offices.** Other State bureaus and offices, such as the regional bureaus and the Bureau of International Organization Affairs, provide democracy assistance related to their geographic or functional areas.[12]

**USAID.** As the lead U.S. government agency for international development, USAID considers democracy, human rights, and governance to be central to its core mission. USAID missions overseas play a primary role in providing democracy assistance, and the regional bureaus in Washington, D.C., provide oversight of this assistance. USAID's Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance, headquartered in Washington, D.C., consists of several offices, including two that support the bureau's mission to promote democratic and resilient

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[11]According to the 2015 *Department of State Report to Congress on Promotion of Democracy Abroad*, more than 100 State and USAID operating units in Washington, D.C., and overseas are involved in promoting democracy abroad. The report highlighted DRL's role in democracy assistance at State and mentioned INL and regional bureaus as other relevant State units based in Washington, D.C. The Joint Explanatory Statement accompanying the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2015, stated that State and USAID were to submit the report regarding clarification of roles and responsibilities of State and USAID in the promotion of democracy abroad, including coordinating mechanisms among and between bureaus, offices, and funding accounts.

[12]See apps. III through VI for data on these other bureaus' and offices' obligations for democracy assistance in selected countries.

societies: the Center of Excellence on Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance and the Office of Transition Initiatives.

# State and USAID Allocated Over $8.8 Billion for Democracy Assistance in Many of the Same Countries in Fiscal Years 2015-2018

## State and USAID Allocated Over $8.8 Billion in Democracy Assistance, with USAID Providing 67 Percent

State and USAID allocated a total of more than $8.8 billion for democracy assistance in fiscal years 2015 through 2018.[13] State allocated 33 percent of this amount—a total of $2.9 billion, averaging approximately $727 million annually—to DRL, INL, and other bureaus to provide democracy assistance. USAID allocated the remaining 67 percent—$5.9 billion, averaging approximately $1.5 billion annually. Figure 1 shows the total amounts that State and USAID allocated for democracy assistance in fiscal years 2015 through 2018.

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[13]For the purpose of this report, an allocation is defined as authority to incur obligations within a specified amount for a particular purpose. According to State and USAID officials, in fiscal year 2015, the wording used in the Consolidated and Continuing Appropriations Act, 2015, did not require that State and USAID allocate the entire amount made available for democracy assistance for that purpose.

**Figure 1: State's and USAID's Global Allocations for Democracy Assistance, Fiscal Years 2015-2018**
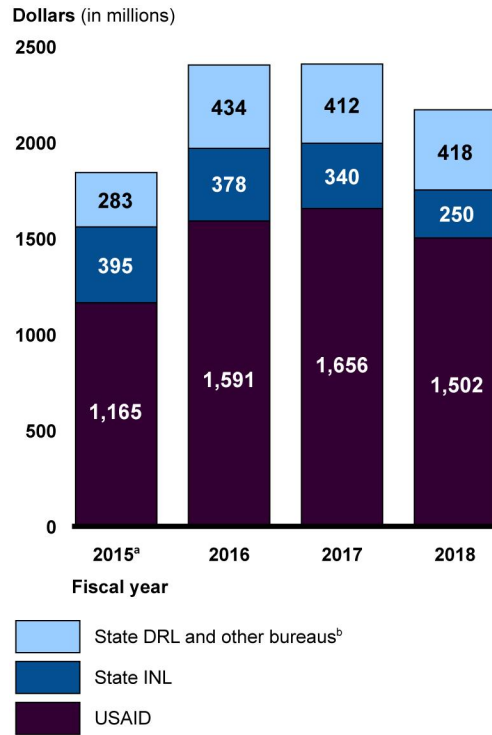


Legend: DRL = Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor;
INL = Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs;
State = Department of State; USAID = U.S. Agency for International Development.

Source: GAO analysis of State data. | GAO-20-173

Notes: For fiscal year 2015, Congress directed in section 7032 of the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2015, that "not less than $2,264,986,000 should be made available for democracy programs." In fiscal years 2016 through 2018, Congress mandated in the same section of the respective annual appropriations acts that "not less than $2,308,517,000 shall be made available for democracy programs." According to agency officials, the wording used in the fiscal year 2015 act permitted the allocation in that fiscal year of less than the directed amount for State and USAID democracy programs but mandated that this minimum amount be allocated for this purpose in subsequent years.

State and USAID data shown include allocations categorized as primarily democracy assistance but not allocations cross-categorized as democracy assistance and another category. Beginning in fiscal year 2017, State and USAID allocations could be cross-categorized as democracy assistance if it was a key focus of the program. In fiscal year 2017, allocations that were cross-categorized as democracy assistance and another category totaled $6 million. In fiscal year 2018, these allocations totaled approximately $157 million.

Data that State provided were disaggregated by agency (i.e., State and USAID) and funding account, including the International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement account, which is wholly managed by INL. We were not able to determine State's democracy assistance allocations for other bureaus, because State's allocations data were not disaggregated by the bureaus or units managing particular accounts. Those data are included under "State DRL and other bureaus."

[a]Data shown do not include State democracy assistance allocations of approximately $7 million in fiscal year 2015 that State did not specifically assign at the time to either itself or USAID.

b"Other bureaus" refers to State regional and functional bureaus that may also provide democracy assistance. Amounts shown for DRL and other bureaus were allocated by State to these bureaus for democracy assistance.

## DRL, INL, and USAID Directed Democracy Assistance Allocations to Many of the Same Countries, although Program Areas Varied

In fiscal years 2015 through 2018, DRL, INL, and USAID directed allocations for democracy assistance to many of the same countries, although the program areas they supported varied.[14] DRL, INL, and USAID directed democracy assistance allocations to a combined total of 100 countries, including 33 countries where all three entities provided such assistance (see fig. 2). DRL directed democracy assistance allocations to 67 countries; INL, to 45 countries; and USAID, to 84 countries. State officials said that, because the countries have serious democracy-related challenges, the agencies providing this assistance may address these challenges from different perspectives and with different objectives.

[14]State provided democracy assistance allocations data disaggregated by funding account and agency. This allowed us to identify allocations, by country and program area, for INL (which manages the entire International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement account) and USAID. We separately obtained from DRL data showing its allocated funding by country and by program area. We were not able to determine State's democracy assistance allocations, by country and program area, for regional bureaus and other State units, because State's allocations data were not disaggregated by the State bureaus or units managing particular accounts.

**Figure 2: Countries Where DRL, INL, and USAID Directed Allocations for Democracy Assistance, Fiscal Years 2015-2018**
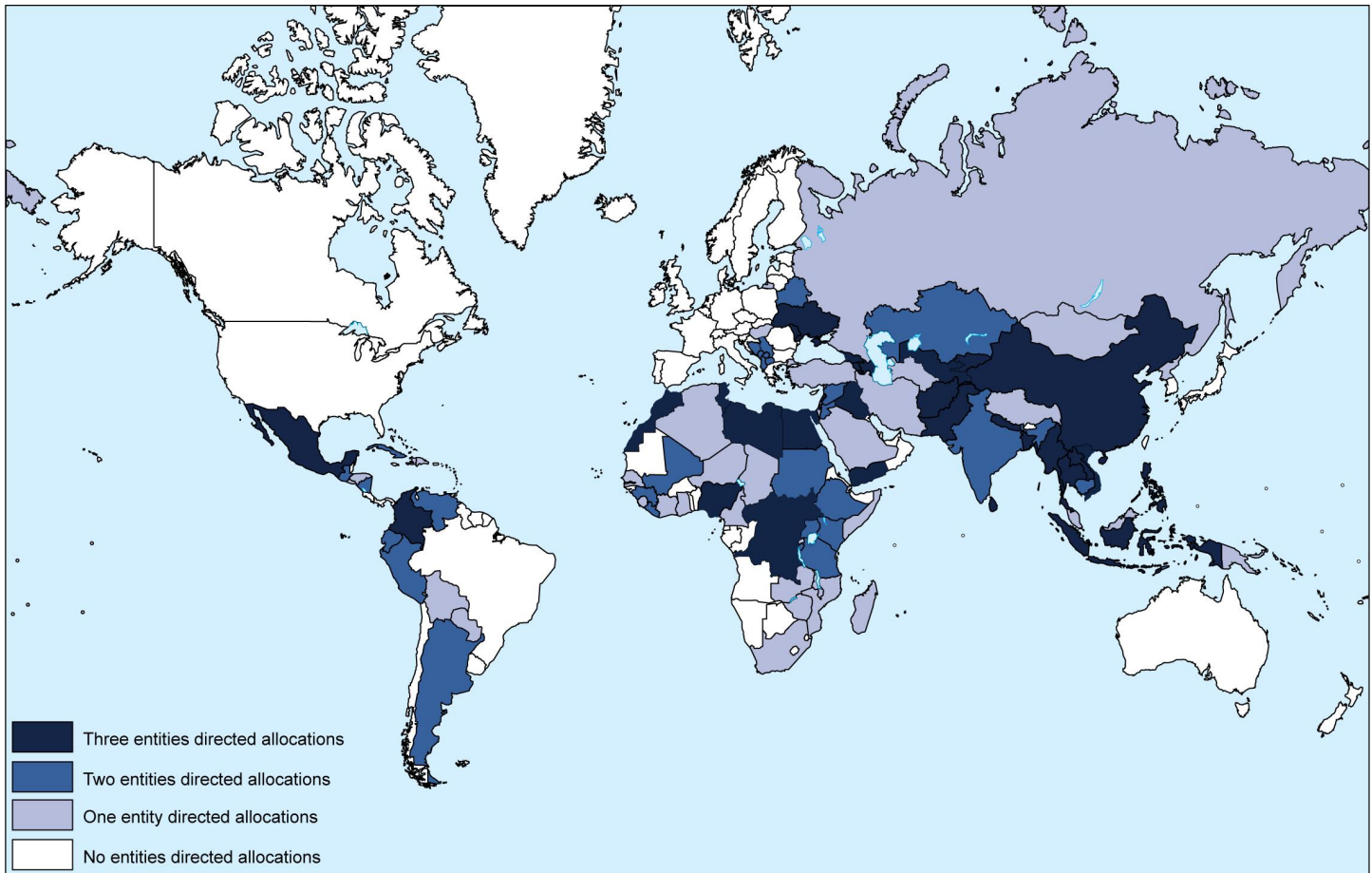


Legend: DRL = Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor; INL = Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs;
State = Department of State; USAID = U.S. Agency for International Development.

Sources: GAO analysis of State data (data); Map Resources (map). | GAO-20-173

Notes: DRL and INL are State bureaus. Countries shown do not include those that may have been included in regional, global, or multicountry democracy assistance allocations.

Although DRL and USAID directed democracy assistance allocations to many of the same countries, DRL focused a greater percentage of its funding in countries where citizens enjoy fewer democratic freedoms.[15] DRL directed 70 percent of its allocations for democracy assistance in fiscal years 2015 through 2018 to less democratic countries—those rated

[15]According to INL officials, INL does not consider countries' democratic status when considering its role or approach to democracy assistance.

as "not free" by Freedom House's 2018 "Freedom in the World" survey.[16] In contrast, USAID directed about half of its allocations for democracy assistance during this period to "not free" countries.

Similarly, although DRL, INL, and USAID directed their allocations for democracy assistance to many of the same countries, the entities concentrated funding in different program areas. In fiscal years 2017 and 2018,[17] DRL and INL directed the largest percentages of democracy assistance allocations to encouraging human rights[18] and promoting the rule of law, respectively, while USAID directed about half of its democracy assistance allocations to promoting good governance (see fig. 3).

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[16]Freedom House, an independent watchdog organization focused on freedom and democracy, conducts an annual survey to assess the rights and freedoms enjoyed by individuals. Freedom House uses the survey results to measure freedom according to two broad categories—political rights and civil liberties—and determine whether a country has an overall status of "free," "partly free," or "not free." The 2018 "Freedom in the World" report evaluated 195 countries and 14 territories during calendar year 2017 and categorized 45 percent of countries as free, 30 percent as partly free, and 25 percent as not free.

[17]State's Office of U.S. Foreign Assistance Resources updated its categories of democracy assistance in fiscal year 2016. Because State and USAID allocations of democracy assistance funding before fiscal year 2017 were identified under different program area categories, we focused our analysis on the most recent 2 years of allocations data within the scope of our review that had consistent democracy assistance categories.

[18]In addition to allocating funds from the Human Rights and Democracy Fund, DRL manages funds transferred from State's regional and functional bureaus. State does not have an automated method of identifying the program areas for allocations that were transferred from State's regional and functional bureaus and offices to DRL; however, officials told us that these funds were all categorized as democracy assistance.

**Figure 3: DRL, INL, and USAID Distribution of Total Democracy Assistance Allocations, by Program Area, Fiscal Years 2017-2018**

In millions



**DRL**
$565.9

$22.5
$39.0
$76.1
$42.0
$106.8
$203.1
$76.4

**INL**
$588.8

$6.3 — $2.5
$580

**USAID**
$3,157

$181
$128
$339
$603
$1,553
$353

Legend:
- Rule of law
- Good governance
- Political competition and consensus building
- Civil society
- Independent media and free flow of information
- Human rights
- Unknown[a]
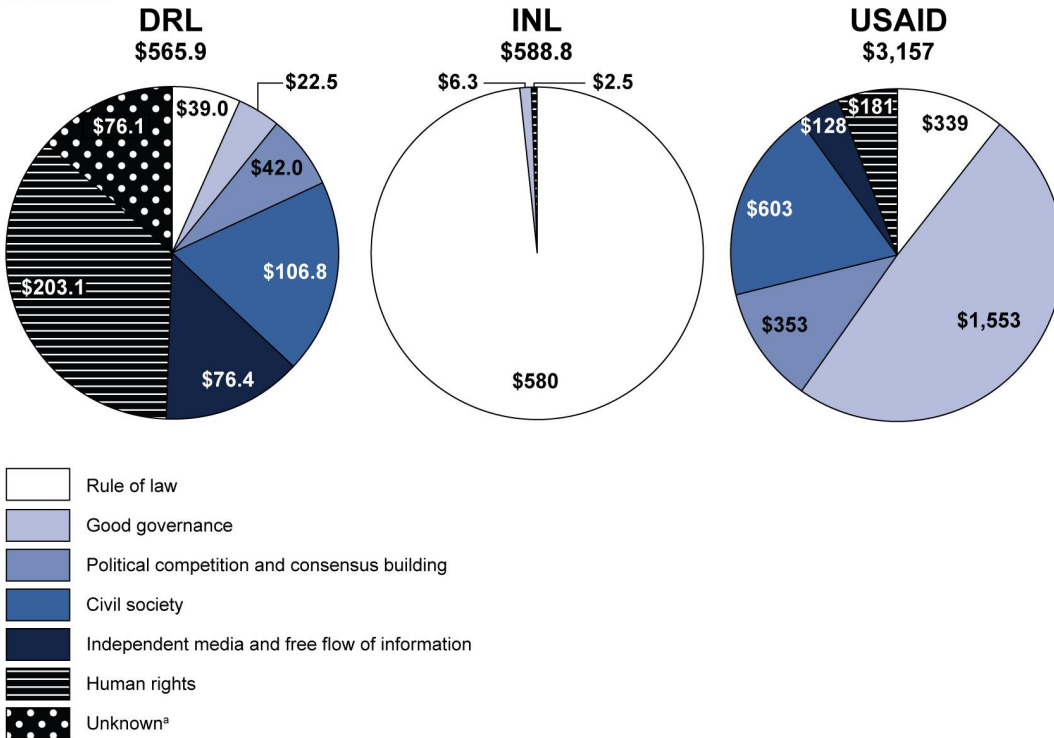
Legend: DRL = Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor; INL = Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs; State = Department of State; USAID = U.S. Agency for International Development.

Source: GAO analysis of State data. | GAO-20-173

Note: DRL and INL are State bureaus.

[a]Data that State provided did not identify the program areas for allocations that were transferred from State's regional and functional bureaus and offices to DRL. State identified program areas for the largest country-specific transfers (those greater than $9 million) and transfers for thematic projects.

As figure 3 shows:

- DRL directed 36 percent (about $203 million) of democracy assistance allocations to projects supporting human rights, 19 percent (about $107 million) to projects supporting civil society, and 14 percent (about $76.4 million) to projects supporting independent media and free flow of information. DRL directed the smallest amounts to projects supporting rule of law, political competition and consensus building, and good governance.

- INL directed more than 98 percent (about $580 million) of democracy assistance allocations to promote the rule of law.[19]

- USAID directed 49 percent (about $1.5 billion) of its democracy assistance allocations to projects promoting good governance and 19 percent (about $600 million) to projects supporting civil society. USAID distributed the remainder across the other four democracy assistance program areas, allocating the smallest amounts to projects supporting human rights and independent media and free flow of information.

# State's DRL and INL and USAID Have Defined Roles for Democracy Assistance and Funded Projects in Selected Countries Accordingly

State's DRL and INL and USAID have strategies that define their roles in democracy assistance, and their funding obligations in the selected countries in fiscal years 2015 through 2018 generally aligned with these roles. DRL and INL strategies identify various program areas as aspects of the bureaus' respective roles in providing democracy assistance. For example, DRL supports a range of democracy program areas and emphasizes human rights, while INL focuses on the rule of law. In fiscal years 2015 through 2018, DRL's and INL's funding obligations for democracy assistance in the countries we selected for our review—the DRC, Nigeria, Tunisia, and Ukraine—generally aligned with the roles defined in bureau strategies and described by bureau officials. USAID plays the leading role in U.S. development assistance overseas, including democracy assistance, according to its 2013 strategy on democracy, human rights, and governance. We found that USAID's democracy assistance in the four selected countries generally aligned with its strategic goal of supporting democratic change to achieve broader development goals.

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[19]INL's assistance is not always project based. INL supports host governments through bilateral agreements, which can include directly providing equipment or contracting advisers.

## DRL and INL Have Defined Roles for Democracy Assistance and Obligated Funding Accordingly

### DRL's Role Includes Human Rights and Other Democracy Assistance Program Areas, While INL Focuses on Rule of Law

DRL's 2018 bureau strategy states that the bureau's mission is to "champion American ideals as a means of combating the spread of authoritarianism, terrorism, and subversion of sovereign democracies."[20] According to the strategy, DRL works through diplomatic channels to support democracy-related areas; support human rights, labor, and democracy defenders; and publish reports on human rights in all countries, among other activities. In a 2015 report to Congress, State noted that 90 percent of DRL's programs operate in restrictive or challenging environments.[21] Although the report did not define restrictive or challenging environments, DRL officials said that the bureau's assistance focuses on building civil society and supporting diplomatic initiatives to improve governance, particularly in repressive and closed societies. According to the officials, the bureau supports democracy and human rights globally, including in areas where such programs face threats from host governments, and is not constrained to working in countries with a U.S. presence. DRL designs and manages all of its democracy assistance projects from Washington, D.C. DRL officials noted that DRL projects typically receive total allocations of at least $500,000, have a duration of 1 to 5 years, and are implemented by U.S.-based or other large organizations.

INL's most recent bureau strategy states that INL is at the forefront of responding to international security challenges and that INL promotes U.S. leadership by advancing rule-of-law principles.[22] INL officials said that the bureau conducts democracy assistance work to support its provision of security assistance and that INL programming helps

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[20]Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, *Functional Bureau Strategy* (Washington, D.C.: June 26, 2018).

[21]Department of State, *Department of State Report to Congress on Promotion of Democracy Abroad* (Washington, D.C.: 2015).

[22]Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, *Functional Bureau Strategy* (Washington, D.C.: June 22, 2018).

governments provide accountability to their citizens.[23] According to agency officials, INL's funding for democracy assistance generally supports host-country governments through bilateral agreements and is not always project based. INL programs can be managed by INL staff at State's headquarters in Washington, D.C., and at embassies overseas. INL's democracy assistance is implemented by its own staff, other U.S. agencies, and U.S.-based or international organizations.

DRL and INL officials told us that they ensure consistency between their democracy-related strategic goals and the goals in overarching strategies, such as the government-wide National Security Strategy[24] and State and USAID's Joint Strategic Plan.[25] The most recent Joint Strategic Plan notes that State and USAID will work to "counter instability, transnational crime, and violence that threaten U.S. interests by strengthening citizen-responsive governance, security, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law."[26] The Joint Strategic Plan also notes

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[23]We have also previously identified INL as one of State's key bureaus involved in democracy assistance. See GAO, *Democracy Assistance: State Should Improve Accountability Over Funding; USAID Should Assess Whether New Processes Have Improved Award Documentation,* GAO-18-136 (Washington, D.C.: Dec. 14, 2017).

[24]The White House, *National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, D.C.: December 2017).

[25]Department of State and U.S. Agency for International Development, *Joint Strategic Plan, FY2018-2022* (Washington, D.C.: February 2018). The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2017, required the Secretary of State, in consultation with the relevant heads of other U.S. government agencies, to provide a report to congressional committees on a comprehensive, multiyear strategy for the promotion of democracy abroad, to include the identification of the national interest served by such activity and the specific roles and responsibilities of such agencies in implementing the strategy. In its *Report to Congress: Multi-year Strategy for the Promotion of Democracy Abroad* (Nov. 28, 2017), State described in general terms the U.S. goals for democracy assistance program areas, including rule of law and good governance, and stated that the Joint Strategic Plan would provide the foundation for the multiyear strategy for democracy promotion. USAID officials also noted that they align other strategies, including those for democracy assistance, with the Joint Strategic Plan.

[26]Department of State and U.S. Agency for International Development, *Joint Strategic Plan, FY2018-2022.*

that State and USAID will focus on places that pose the greatest threat to U.S. interests.[27]

## DRL's and INL's Obligations in Selected Countries Reflected Their Defined Roles

DRL's and INL's total obligations of funding for democracy assistance in the four selected countries for fiscal years 2015 through 2018 generally reflected their defined roles. DRL's obligations for projects in the selected countries generally reflected the bureau's focus on supporting democracy and human rights, as defined in DRL's bureau strategy and described by officials. Overall, the majority of DRL obligations in the four selected countries focused on projects supporting civil society, human rights, and independent media and the free flow of information. In fiscal years 2015 through 2018, 60 to 100 percent of project-level funding was dedicated to these program areas. DRL obligations for democracy assistance projects in the selected countries averaged more than $800,000 for 2 years. Consistent with its stated role of protecting human rights globally, DRL obligated at least a quarter of this funding in three of the four countries to projects that supported human rights (see fig. 4).

[27]According to agency officials, State does not have an agency-wide democracy assistance strategy. However, several State and USAID officials said that they used an interagency National Security Council (NSC) democracy assistance strategy to inform their democracy assistance programs, and they described it as the only government-wide strategy on U.S. democracy assistance. However, according to an NSC official, that strategy is not operational, because it is in draft form and has not been finalized for use by agencies.

**Figure 4: DRL's Total Obligations for Democracy Assistance in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria, Tunisia, and Ukraine, by Program Area, Fiscal Years 2015-2018**

**In millions**
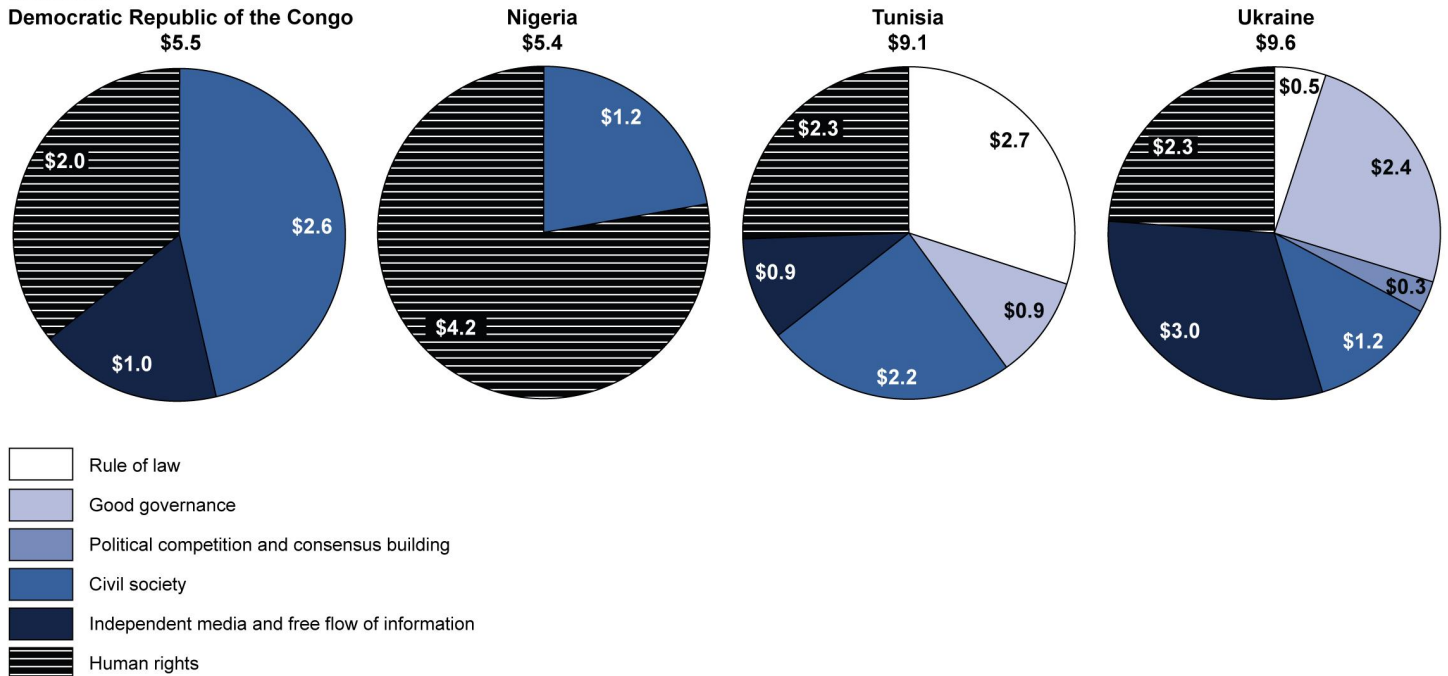


Source: GAO analysis of Department of State's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL) data. | GAO-20-173

Notes: Amounts shown may not sum precisely to totals because of rounding. Data do not include funding obligated for regional or multicountry projects.

Similarly, INL's democracy assistance obligations in the selected countries during the same period generally reflected the bureau's focus on supporting the rule of law, as defined in its bureau strategy and described by officials. Data for the four countries show that INL obligated $3.2 million in the DRC, $12.5 million in Nigeria, $$3.9 million in Tunisia, and $5 million in Ukraine for democracy assistance for fiscal years 2015 through 2018. In Nigeria, Tunisia, and Ukraine, 100 percent of INL's democracy-related obligations supported the rule of law. In the DRC, 92 percent of INL's democracy-related obligations supported the rule of law and the remaining 8 percent supported good governance.[28] (See apps. III

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[28]INL's assistance cannot be described in terms of project-level characteristics, because the bureau's assistance is not always project based. INL supports the host government through bilateral agreements, which can include directly providing equipment or contracting advisers.

through VI for more information on State's democracy assistance in the DRC, Nigeria, Tunisia, and Ukraine, respectively.)

## USAID's Democracy Assistance Strategies and Projects in Selected Countries Generally Reflected the Agency's Development Focus

### USAID Provides Democracy Assistance Primarily through Overseas Missions to Support Country Development

The 2013 *USAID Strategy on Democracy, Human Rights and Governance* states that USAID plays the leading role in U.S. development assistance overseas, including democracy assistance.[29] The strategy explains that support for democracy, human rights, and governance is essential to achieving the agency's broader social and economic development goals, which, USAID has noted, contribute to self-reliance. USAID officials told us that, to support democracy from a development perspective, USAID generally funds multiyear, multimillion-dollar democracy assistance projects that are implemented by U.S.-based or international organizations.

USAID's democracy strategy also identifies the roles of various USAID units involved in implementing U.S. democracy assistance.[30] For example, according to the strategy, USAID missions are to play the primary role in implementing it by both designing and managing democracy-focused programs, while USAID's Center of Excellence on Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance is to provide technical and other assistance to the missions and manage some mechanisms to support programs, among other things.[31] Further, the strategy clarifies relationships in terms of leading and supporting units in areas of

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[29]U.S. Agency for International Development, *USAID Strategy on Democracy, Human Rights and Governance* (Washington, D.C.: June 2013). According to agency officials, the strategy is still in use.

[30]We have previously reported that USAID's democracy assistance strategy identified roles and responsibilities of the agency as well as USAID offices involved in the implementation of U.S. democracy assistance. See GAO, *Foreign Assistance: Better Guidance for Strategy Development Could Help Agencies Align Their Efforts*, GAO-18-449 (Washington, D.C.: July 12, 2018).

[31]According to its officials, USAID's Center of Excellence on Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance also organizes and generalizes information about best practices gathered from USAID democracy officers in the field.

democracy assistance and identifies roles of various other agencies, including State.

## USAID's Democracy Assistance in Selected Countries Generally Aligned with Its Defined Role

In all four selected countries, USAID's democracy assistance, as reflected in country-level strategies and projects, generally aligned with the Joint Strategic Plan and with the agency's democracy strategy to support democratic change in order to achieve broader development goals. We found that the USAID country development cooperation strategy for each of the selected countries articulated democracy assistance objectives to support the country's overall development. According to USAID officials, these strategies guide the type of democracy assistance provided in a particular country on the basis of the country's needs and generally focus on supporting sectoral change, such as through policy reform or institution building. For example, the 2016 USAID strategy for Tunisia included a development objective to promote social cohesion through democratic consolidation. Objectives for selected USAID projects in the four countries also reflected the agency's goal of effecting long-term, development-based change through democracy assistance.[32] For instance, consistent with its country strategy for Tunisia, USAID obligated nearly $22 million in fiscal years 2017 and 2018 for a project designed to improve the relationship between Tunisians and their civic and government institutions, in part by enhancing the responsiveness of government institutions (see fig. 5).

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[32]We selected projects from different program areas in each country: rule of law and human rights in the DRC, civil society in Nigeria, good governance in Tunisia, and independent media and free flow of information in Ukraine, among other things. For more information on project selection, see app. II.

**Figure 5: USAID-Funded Democracy Assistance Project in Tunisia**



The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) funded the Tunisia Accountability, Decentralization, and Effective Municipalities (TADAEEM or "Consolidation") project, which aims to develop more effective ways to provide public services through collaboration between institutions and citizens for a more democratic and inclusive society. Left: Municipal staff place USAID-provided waste containers in underserved areas identified by citizens. Right: Newly installed lights brighten a main street.

Source: USAID.  |  GAO-20-173

Other characteristics of USAID's democracy assistance projects in the selected countries also reflected the agency's defined role. In each of the four countries, a democracy office in USAID's mission in the country managed democracy assistance, consistent with USAID's democracy strategy. Overall, USAID's democracy assistance projects in the selected countries demonstrated that the agency implemented multiyear, multimillion-dollar projects, consistent with what USAID officials told us was needed to support long-term development. Data for the four countries showed that USAID's total obligations for democracy assistance ranged from $49.5 million to $126 million for fiscal years 2015 through 2018 (see fig. 6). Per project, USAID's obligations in the four countries averaged about $7.2 million,[33] with each project's implementation period averaging just over 4 years.[34] USAID's implementing partners were, for the most part, U.S.-based or international organizations.

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[33]To determine the average annualized funding amount of USAID projects that were active during the period of our review, including projects that started before October 1, 2014, we annualized project obligations by dividing total obligations by the length of the project as of September 30, 2018. We then multiplied the average annualized funding by the average project length.

[34]Implementation of the projects we assessed may have begun before fiscal year 2015 and ended after fiscal year 2018. We averaged project duration as of September 30, 2018.

**Figure 6: USAID's Total Obligations for Democracy Assistance in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria, Tunisia, and Ukraine, by Program Area, Fiscal Years 2015-2018**

In millions



Legend:
- Rule of law
- Good governance
- Political competition and consensus building
- Civil society
- Independent media and free flow of information
- Human rights
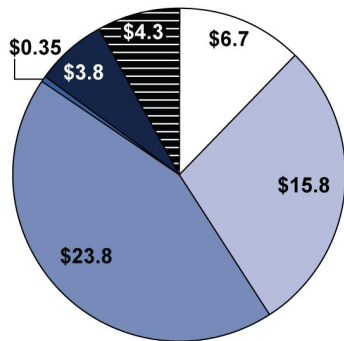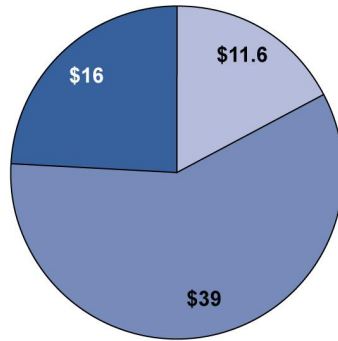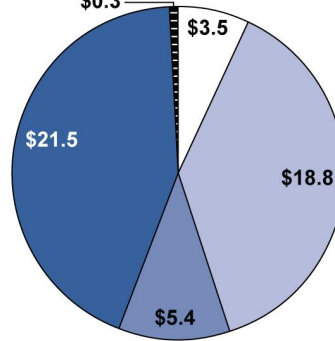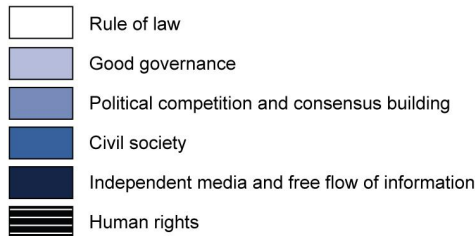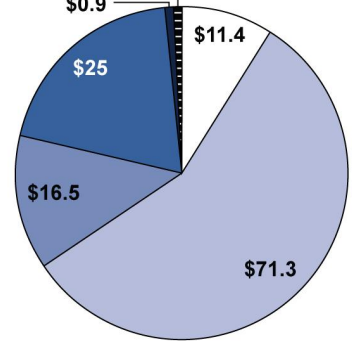
Source: GAO analysis of U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) data. | GAO-20-173

Note: Amounts shown may not sum precisely to totals because of rounding. Data shown include obligations for country-specific projects.

Although USAID democracy assistance obligations in the selected countries covered a variety of program areas, they concentrated on political competition and consensus building, good governance, and civil society. As figure 6 shows, USAID's obligations for rule-of-law and human rights projects made up less than a quarter of total project-level funding obligated in each country in fiscal years 2015 through 2018. See appendixes III through VI for more information about USAID's democracy assistance projects in the DRC, Nigeria, Tunisia, and Ukraine, respectively.

# State and USAID Coordinate on Democracy Assistance in Various Ways, but Embassy Officials Reported Gaps in Information about DRL Projects

State and USAID use various mechanisms to coordinate democracy assistance at the headquarters level, such as interagency roundtable discussions of budget allocations. Officials at embassies in the selected countries described interagency coordination efforts at the country level, such as working groups, and provided examples of how coordination helped avoid duplication and improved the effectiveness of democracy assistance efforts. Despite the use of these mechanisms and other steps that DRL takes to coordinate with embassies, embassy officials in all four selected countries reported having incomplete information about DRL's projects in those countries.

## State and USAID Coordinate Democracy Assistance through Various Mechanisms at Headquarters and Overseas

State and USAID use various mechanisms, including budget roundtables and proposal review panels, to coordinate democracy assistance between the agencies at headquarters. For instance, State's Office of U.S. Foreign Assistance Resources manages the annual allocations budget process, which facilitates interagency coordination through structured conversations about democracy assistance and various bureaus' priorities, according to State and USAID officials. These annual democracy discussions also enable the participants to identify policy changes and share lessons learned. USAID officials added that USAID's Center of Excellence on Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance serves as the technical lead on democracy assistance issues during these interagency budget discussions. INL officials told us that they take the lead in democracy assistance discussions concerning security sector assistance.

In addition, some of State's regional bureaus, including the Bureaus of Near Eastern Affairs and of European and Eurasian Affairs, maintain assistance coordination offices to coordinate U.S. foreign assistance to countries in those regions, including through strategic planning and budget formulation processes. These offices, based in Washington, D.C.,

coordinate with embassies, other State bureaus, and USAID at various stages of strategic planning and budget formulation. For example, country coordinators from the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs' assistance coordination office are to lead roundtable discussions at least annually to share information among U.S. government agencies and contribute to improved planning and implementation. Some U.S. embassies in these regions, including those in Tunisia and Ukraine, have an assistance coordination unit to coordinate all U.S. foreign assistance in the country, and these units work with State regional bureaus' Washington, D.C.–based offices.

Further, when considering potential democracy assistance projects, DRL coordinates with State and USAID counterparts both in Washington, D.C., and overseas through its proposal review process. DRL proposal review panels include representatives from USAID, State regional bureaus, and other agencies that may have relevant expertise.

State and USAID also use various interagency mechanisms to coordinate democracy assistance at the country level within embassies overseas. Examples of coordination mechanisms include the following.

- **Working groups.** According to State and USAID officials in the four selected countries, interagency working groups facilitate formal discussions about democracy assistance projects and provide opportunities to identify areas where agencies' projects might complement or duplicate one another. Working groups at each embassy vary in number, theme, and meeting frequency, depending on the country context and U.S. government priorities. For example, the U.S. embassy in Ukraine has about 10 democracy-related working groups, focused on themes including elections, anticorruption, human rights, and the justice sector. At the U.S. embassies in the DRC and Nigeria, agency officials told us they convened working groups on elections, given the U.S. government's interest in the countries' recent and upcoming elections. In Tunisia, where USAID reestablished a presence in 2012 and a mission in June 2019, an interagency development assistance working group that addresses democracy issues, among other things, began meeting in September 2018, according to agency officials.[35] The officials also said that a security assistance working group coordinated assistance related to rule-of-law issues. These working groups meet bimonthly, monthly, or

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[35]According to USAID officials, after closing its overseas mission in 1994, USAID did not have a presence in Tunisia until 2012 and initially relied on locally hired staff and those in Washington, D.C.

weekly, according to officials. State and USAID officials generally said that they found the working groups were effective in helping to coordinate democracy assistance.

- **Assistance coordination units.** U.S. embassies in Tunisia and Ukraine have assistance coordination units designed to coordinate U.S. foreign assistance, including democracy assistance. Unlike the assistance coordination unit in Ukraine, State's Foreign Assistance Unit in Tunisia managed democracy assistance projects in fiscal years 2015 through 2018 while also coordinating other State and USAID assistance in the country (see app. V for more information about democracy assistance in Tunisia during this period).[36] According to a State document, the assistance coordinator at an embassy in Europe or Eurasia can be a "touch point" for agencies at the embassy to work together on assistance issues and communicate effectively with Washington.[37] The assistance coordination units in both Tunisia and Ukraine have established mechanisms to coordinate U.S. foreign assistance within the embassies, according to officials. For instance, the foreign assistance unit in Tunisia formalized a process by which the ambassador's office approves all State and USAID assistance projects in the country. Additionally, in both countries, the assistance coordinator participates in working groups and is involved in the design or review of all assistance projects, according to officials. USAID and State officials in these countries expressed varying opinions about the units' usefulness for coordination.

State and USAID officials in the selected countries provided the following additional examples of coordination that, according to the officials, helped avoid duplication and improved the effectiveness of democracy assistance efforts.

- According to State and USAID, informal coordination and information sharing among agency officials at the embassies occur during regularly scheduled meetings, such as weekly meetings of USAID staff, State's political unit staff, or embassy senior staff, and through daily interaction.

- State has developed a tool kit to help embassies with strategic planning, including the development of action plans to document units' roles. For

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[36]According to State and USAID officials, State began implementing democracy assistance projects in Tunisia through various units, including its Foreign Assistance Unit, after the country's democratic uprising in 2011 and has continued since USAID began its operations there. USAID became a formal mission in Tunisia in June 2019.

[37]State's Office of the Coordinator of U.S. Assistance to Europe and Eurasia issued a guide that encourages assistance coordinators at embassies to coordinate with other international donors. According to officials, the assistance coordination unit at the U.S. embassy in Ukraine coordinates with the international donor community in that country.

example, agencies at the U.S. embassy in Nigeria created an action plan that identified the various units supporting assistance for elections to help prevent duplication of efforts. (Fig. 7 shows citizens participating in Nigeria's elections.)

**Figure 7: Citizens Participating in Nigerian Elections**



State and USAID coordinated democracy assistance to support elections in Nigeria. Left: A line of citizens waiting to vote in the state of Osun in Nigeria. Right: A woman placing her vote in the ballot box in the state of Osun in Nigeria.

Source: Jessica J. Springer, Department of State (State). | GAO-20-173

- State and USAID officials at embassies described other coordination of the agencies' democracy assistance. For example, in Nigeria, USAID does not fund any rule-of-law projects because, according to USAID officials, they and INL officials have decided on a clear division of labor: INL manages all rule-of-law projects, including judicial strengthening, judicial reforms, and anticorruption, while USAID manages all other aspects of democracy assistance. In Ukraine, USAID and INL developed a concept paper to guide their collaboration to help the government establish the country's High Anti-Corruption Court.[38] The concept paper outlined the key roles of USAID and INL and designed complementary

[38]Formally established in April 2019, Ukraine's High Anti-Corruption Court is a specialized judicial body with nationwide jurisdiction over corruption-related cases.

projects based on each agency's strengths. For example, USAID was responsible for developing training programs for judges and INL was responsible for vetting potential judges. Officials told us that this concept paper helped agencies maximize the potential impact of their limited resources.

## State Officials at Embassies Reported Gaps in Information about DRL's Democracy Assistance in Selected Countries

Although DRL takes steps to coordinate with embassies in countries where it funds democracy assistance projects, embassy officials in all four selected countries reported having incomplete information about DRL's projects in those countries. DRL has various practices and processes to coordinate with embassies. For example, DRL established a standard operating procedure to clarify methods for coordination between itself and State's regional bureaus, which includes defined steps on engaging with embassies. The procedure outlines steps in DRL's annual planning process, during which priorities and program strategies are set; in the process for submitting proposed projects and awards; and in the process for proposal review panels.

DRL officials in Washington, D.C., also pointed to various methods that they use to coordinate with embassies. Such methods include distributing a description of DRL's projects by country on an annual basis, training new Foreign Service officers in DRL's funding mechanisms and awards process, and providing contact information for DRL staff at headquarters to embassy personnel. Additionally, DRL officials said that embassy officials have at least four opportunities to provide official input during the approximately 18-month process of designing and awarding a project. According to DRL officials, embassy personnel designated as human rights officers serve as DRL's overseas points of contact.

However, at the embassies in all four countries, human rights officers or other officials from the political units told us that they were not actively engaged in DRL's projects and generally lacked updated information about DRL projects in their countries, including descriptions and funding amounts. Embassy officials also said that, although DRL sought their input during the process of selecting proposed democracy assistance projects, DRL did not subsequently communicate its final selection of projects. DRL officials said that sharing complete information can be

difficult because of the sensitivity of some DRL projects and the need to safeguard the identities of some local partners.[39]

In addition, DRL officials said that managing projects from Washington, D.C., instead of overseas may affect their ability to collaborate with embassy officials. DRL officials commented that embassy personnel's colocation facilitates their collaborating with one another and that the political and other State officers who may function as in-country DRL points of contact have numerous other duties, with limited capacity to focus on DRL projects. DRL officials also said that frequent turnover among State personnel makes it challenging to maintain embassy officials' awareness of DRL's in-country projects. In addition, they said that DRL is sometimes unaware of democracy assistance projects that embassies may be funding.

Moreover, we found that existing information-sharing mechanisms, including data systems and strategies, do not consistently address embassy personnel's information gaps. DRL and other State officials said that embassy personnel may not be able to use State's data systems to retrieve information on projects, partly because some personnel lack sufficient training or the permissions to access project data in certain systems. Furthermore, the Office of Management and Budget has found the quality of State's publicly reported data to be low in terms of completeness and accuracy.[40] State's Office of Inspector General found that, while State has standardized and centralized its foreign assistance budget planning and request processes, State's inability to provide authoritative foreign assistance financial information is a program

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[39]DRL officials emphasized that they take steps to ensure that information is disseminated and is available at the request of overseas personnel.

[40]Office of Management and Budget, *OMB Report to the Congress on Implementation of the Foreign Aid Transparency and Accountability Act (FATAA)* (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 15, 2019). We have previously recommended that the Secretary of State, in consultation with the Director of the Office of Management and Budget and USAID Administrator, undertake a review of efforts to date on ensuring data quality of publicly available foreign assistance data. See GAO, *Foreign Assistance: Actions Needed to Improve Transparency and Quality of Data on ForeignAssistance.gov*, GAO-16-768 (Washington, D.C.: Aug. 24, 2016).

management challenge.[41] In addition, the integrated country strategies for the four selected countries for fiscal years 2015 through 2018 do not mention DRL's projects or general goals when discussing U.S. government democracy-related objectives for each country.[42]

Overseas officials' lack of complete information about DRL's projects could lead to potential duplication in U.S. democracy assistance and may inhibit State's efforts to coordinate with other agencies, implementing partners, and other donors. We have previously found that it is helpful when participants in a collaborative effort have full knowledge about the relevant resources available and have the appropriate knowledge, skills, and abilities to contribute.[43]

## Conclusions

Since 2015, Congress has made available to agencies at least $2 billion annually for democracy assistance programs abroad. State's DRL and INL, as well as USAID, have articulated their roles in democracy assistance through strategies that include specific democracy-related goals. Although State and USAID use various mechanisms to coordinate democracy assistance at headquarters and in the field, we found that relevant embassy officials in each of the four selected countries did not have ready access to information about DRL projects. As a result, embassy officials lacked an understanding of the full scope of U.S. democracy assistance in their countries. Ensuring access to information about DRL projects could improve State's overseas coordination, both internally and with other U.S. agencies, implementing partners, and donors, as well as State's ability to achieve important democracy assistance goals.

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[41]Department of State, Office of Inspector General, *Compliance Follow-up Review: Department of State is Still Unable to Accurately Track and Report on Foreign Assistance Funds*, ISP-C-17-27 (Washington, D.C.: June 2017). We have previously found that agencies can use technological applications to enhance and sustain joint activities, and that compatible data systems can facilitate collaboration and provide a way to work across agency boundaries. See GAO-12-1022.

[42]According to State guidance, integrated country strategies serve as policy and management tools for embassies, bureaus, and interagency partners and as the tools through which the embassy directs office activities, measures progress, and conducts regular reviews.

[43]GAO-12-1022.

# Recommendation for Executive Action

The Secretary of State should direct the Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor to develop a mechanism to facilitate the active sharing of information about democracy assistance projects between DRL and relevant staff at embassies.

# Agency Comments

We provided a draft of this report to State, USAID, and NED for their review and comment. In its written comments, reproduced in appendix VII, State agreed with our recommendation and noted steps that it plans to take to implement it. USAID also provided written comments, which are reproduced in appendix VIII, as well as technical comments that we incorporated as appropriate. NED officials reviewed our draft but did not provide any comments.

We are sending copies of this report to the appropriate congressional committees and to the Secretary of State, the Administrator of USAID, the President of NED, and other interested parties. In addition, the report is available at no charge on the GAO website at https://www.gao.gov.

If you or your staff have any questions about this report, please contact me at (202) 512-3149 or gootnickd@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.

David Gootnick
Director, International Affairs and Trade

# Appendix I: National Endowment for Democracy's Democracy Assistance

The National Endowment for Democracy (NED) is a private, nonprofit, nongovernmental organization based in Washington, D.C., whose stated purpose is to encourage democracy throughout the world by supporting nongovernmental organizations and actors that are working for democratic goals.[1] NED is funded through a grant from the Department of State (State) pursuant to an annual congressional appropriation and receives additional funding from State to support congressionally directed or discretionary programs. In addition to providing grants to local organizations in other countries, NED provides grants to its four affiliated organizations known as the "core institutes": the Center for International Private Enterprise, the International Republican Institute, the National Democratic Institute, and the Solidarity Center.[2]

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[1]In 1983, Congress authorized initial funding for NED and also passed the National Endowment for Democracy Act, which created NED and lists six purposes for the endowment: encouraging free and democratic institutions throughout the world through private sector initiatives; facilitating exchanges between U.S. private sector groups and democratic groups abroad; promoting U.S. nongovernmental participation in democratic training programs and democratic institution-building abroad; strengthening democratic electoral processes abroad in cooperation with indigenous democratic forces; supporting the participation of the two major American political parties, labor, business, and other U.S. private sector groups in fostering cooperation with those abroad "dedicated to the cultural values, institutions, and organizations of democratic pluralism"; and encouraging democratic development consistent with both the interests of the United States and the specific requirements of democratic groups in other countries receiving assistance from programs funded by NED. 22 U.S.C. § 4411.

[2]The core institutes may also receive funding from State and the U.S. Agency for International Development that is not overseen by NED.

## NED Allocated More Than $500 Million for Democracy Assistance Projects in 100 Countries in Fiscal Years 2015-2018

In fiscal years 2015 through 2018, NED allocated a total of about $541 million for democracy assistance projects in 100 countries—approximately $114 million in fiscal year 2015, $141 million in fiscal year 2016, $144 million in fiscal year 2017, and $142 million in fiscal year 2018.[3] During this period, NED directed 55 percent of its funding for local organizations[4] to groups in countries rated "not free" by Freedom House's 2018 "Freedom in the World" survey.[5] Figure 8 shows the countries where NED allocated funding for democracy assistance in fiscal years 2015 through 2018.

[3]The NED allocations data that we analyzed include only funds that NED received from State pursuant to an annual congressional appropriation and do not include additional funds that State provided for congressionally directed or other programs.

[4]In addition to providing grants to local organizations in other countries, NED provides funding for its core institutes to work abroad. Our analysis of NED allocations by country does not include $20.2 million per year in fiscal years 2016, 2017, and 2018 to address mid- to long-term threats, such as combating kleptocracy, or to respond to urgent or unanticipated challenges or opportunities without diverting resources from ongoing grants. Decisions about where to direct these additional funds are made in response to needs identified after NED allocates its initial funds by country, according to officials.

[5]Freedom House, an independent watchdog organization focused on freedom and democracy, conducts an annual survey to assess the rights and freedoms enjoyed by individuals. Freedom House uses the survey results to measure freedom according to two broad categories—political rights and civil liberties—and determine whether a country has an overall status of "free," "partly free," or "not free." The 2018 "Freedom in the World" report evaluated 195 countries and 14 territories during calendar year 2017 and categorized 45 percent of countries as free, 30 percent as partly free, and 25 percent as not free.

**Figure 8: Countries Where NED Allocated Funding for Democracy Assistance, Fiscal Years 2015-2018**



Countries where NED allocated democracy assistance funds

Countries where NED did not allocate democracy assistance funds
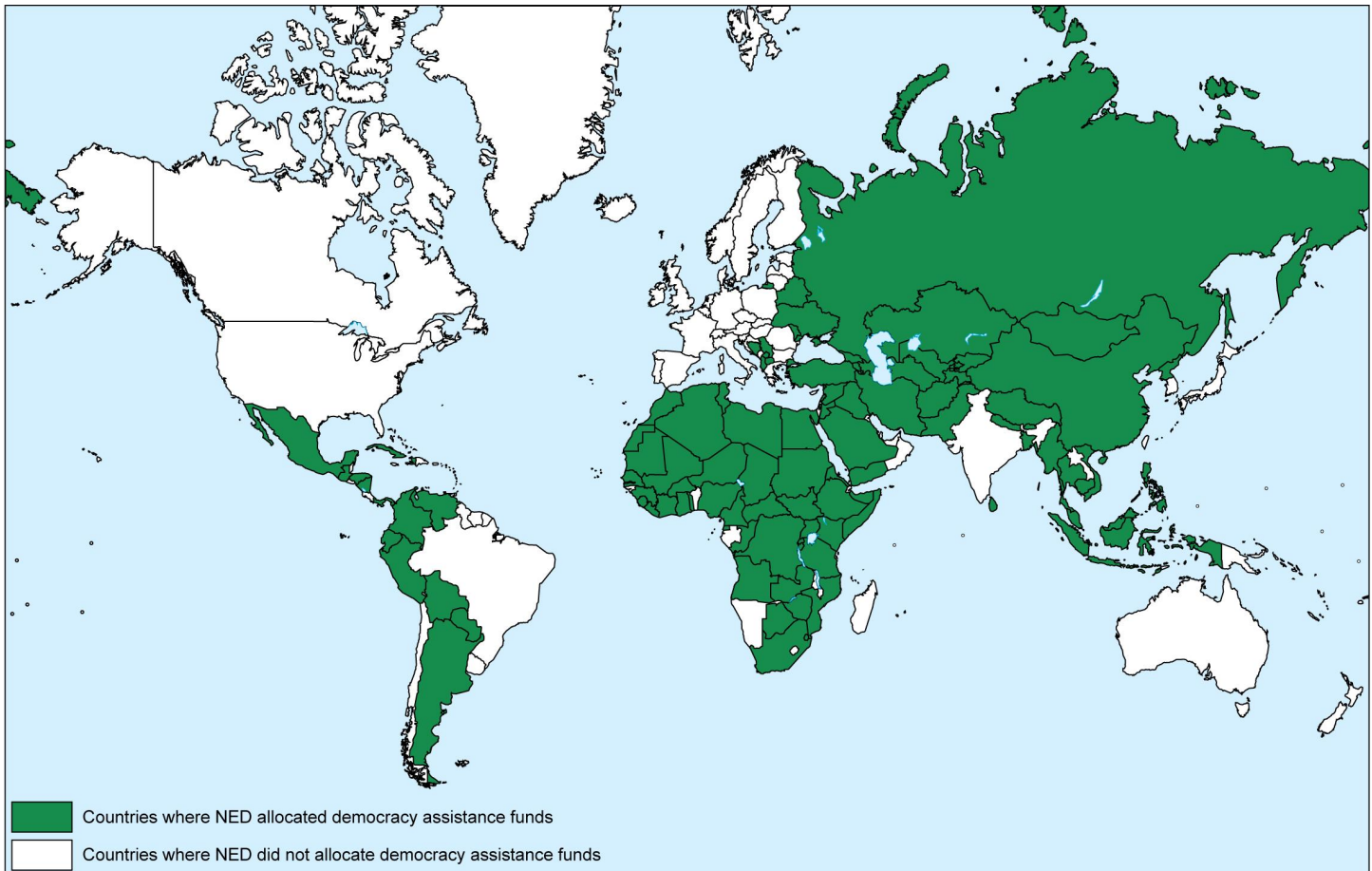
Sources: GAO analysis of National Endowment for Democracy (NED) data (data); Map Resources (map).   |   GAO-20-173

Note: Countries shown do not include those that may have been included in regional, global, or multicountry democracy assistance allocations.

As figure 9 shows, in fiscal years 2017 and 2018, NED directed funding to projects in six democracy assistance program areas.[6] NED allocated the largest amount during that period—about $100 million (36 percent)—to

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[6]NED categorizes its democracy assistance activities using its own program definitions. However, for this report, NED officials provided information to help categorize each of NED's democracy assistance awards into the program areas used to categorize U.S. government democracy assistance. State's Office of U.S. Foreign Assistance Resources updated its categories of democracy assistance in fiscal year 2016. Because U.S. government allocations of democracy assistance funding before fiscal year 2017 were categorized under different program areas, we focused our analysis on the most recent 2 years of allocations data within the scope of our review that had consistent democracy assistance categories.

promote good governance and allocated the next largest amount—about
$72.5 million (26 percent)—to promote political competition and
consensus building. NED allocated the smallest amount—about $8.5
million (3 percent)—to support the rule of law.

**Figure 9: NED's Distribution of Total Democracy Assistance Allocations, by
Program Area, Fiscal Years 2017-2018**
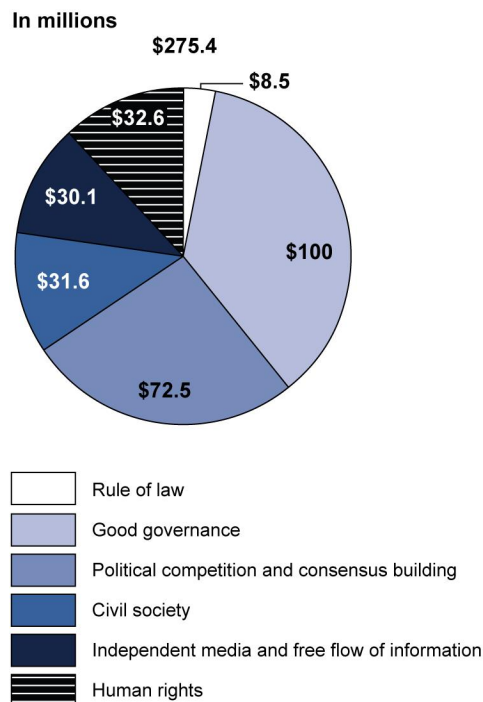
In millions



Source: GAO analysis of National Endowment for Democracy (NED) data. | GAO-20-173

Notes: Amounts shown may not sum precisely to the total because of rounding. NED's distribution of
allocations by program area does not include $20.2 million per year to address mid- to long-term
threats, such as combating kleptocracy, or to respond to urgent or unanticipated challenges or
opportunities without diverting resources from ongoing grants. NED categorizes its democracy
assistance activities using its own program definitions. However, for this report, NED officials helped
to categorize each of NED's democracy assistance awards into the program areas used to categorize
U.S. government democracy assistance.

# NED's Strategy Identifies NED's Role as Providing Democracy Assistance to Local Organizations

According to NED's 2012 strategy, the organization focuses on providing
grants to grassroots activists in response to local needs and "seeks out
newly-emerging groups in both democratizing and authoritarian countries
around the world, helping to empower the most effective grassroots

activists."[7] The strategy notes that NED is guided by its founding legislation, which established NED as an independent institution whose mission is to promote democracy through grants to nongovernmental organizations. These include the core institutes, whose key roles NED's strategy also defines.

NED officials said that the organization focuses on building the institutional capacity of local civil society organizations, which contributes to building democratic societies. Such capacity building can include institutional support, including funding for basic functions such as operational costs, and management assistance such as budget training, which other donors tend not to provide. NED officials commented that the organization is "demand driven" and responds to funding requests for projects proposed by nongovernmental organizations. According to NED documents, it supports approximately 1,500 organizations in 90 countries with grants averaging $50,000.

NED officials noted other elements that distinguish NED's support from that of U.S. agencies, including continuity in its staff composition; the significant linguistic ability of its staff, enabling close ties with local organizations in other countries; and the relative stability of its mission and priorities, which facilitates long-term engagement on countries' democratic issues. In addition, NED's nongovernmental status allows it to provide democracy assistance in difficult environments, where, according to NED officials, staff of local grantees face risks as a result of their work in challenging the government and status quo. The officials said that such risks range from detention and harassment to being killed or "disappeared."

## NED's Democracy Assistance Projects in Selected Countries Generally Aligned with Its Defined Role

NED's democracy assistance projects in the countries we selected for our review—the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Nigeria, Tunisia, and Ukraine—generally aligned with the organization's strategy of supporting democracy by providing funds for indigenous civil society organizations. (Fig. 10 shows examples of NED's democracy assistance projects in the DRC and Ukraine.)

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[7]National Endowment for Democracy, *2012 Strategy Document* (January 2012). According to NED officials, this strategy remains current and in use.

**Figure 10: Examples of Democracy Assistance Projects Funded by NED in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Ukraine**



Left: NED grantee "Actions et Initiatives de Développement pour la Protection de la Femme et de l'Enfant" (Development Actions and Initiatives for the Protection of Women and Children) hosted a dialogue between youth activists and the police to discuss the protection of civilians in the months leading up to elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Right: NED grantee "Patients of Ukraine" staged a direct action to encourage legislators to pass a law designed to increase the transparency of medical procurement.

Source: Left: National Endowment for Democracy (NED). Right: Alina Shmatko, Patients of Ukraine.  |  GAO-20-173

Consistent with NED's strategy of providing grants to grassroots activists, data for projects in the four selected countries show that NED provided grants primarily to local civil society organizations in addition to its core institutes. NED grants to civil society organizations in the selected countries averaged approximately $46,000 for year-long projects, and NED renewed support for nearly all organizations on an annual basis, reflecting the long-term support that officials said was necessary to strengthen civil society. Grantees in the DRC told us that NED worked closely with local partners to identify needs and design programs and that this helped to build the partners' organizational capacity. Consistent with NED's mission to support democracy in general, grantees in the selected countries worked on projects that included all democracy assistance program areas. NED primarily supported projects to promote political competition and consensus building and good governance, obligating an average of 40 percent and 36 percent of its funding for these two program areas, respectively, across the four countries (see fig. 11).

Figure 11: NED's Total Obligations for Democracy Assistance in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria, Tunisia, and Ukraine, by Program Area, Fiscal Years 2015-2018

**In millions**



Democratic Republic of the Congo
$9.6

$0.8
$0.5
$0.4
$0.3
$7.6

Nigeria
$8.2

$0.1
$0.6
$0.6
$0.8
$1.2
$5.0

Tunisia
$8.7

$0.1
$0.2
$0.1
$0.9
$2.9
$4.4

Ukraine
$16.3

$1.6
$2.4
$1.6
$6.9
$3.8

Rule of law

Good governance

Political competition and consensus building

Civil society

Independent media and free flow of information

Human rights
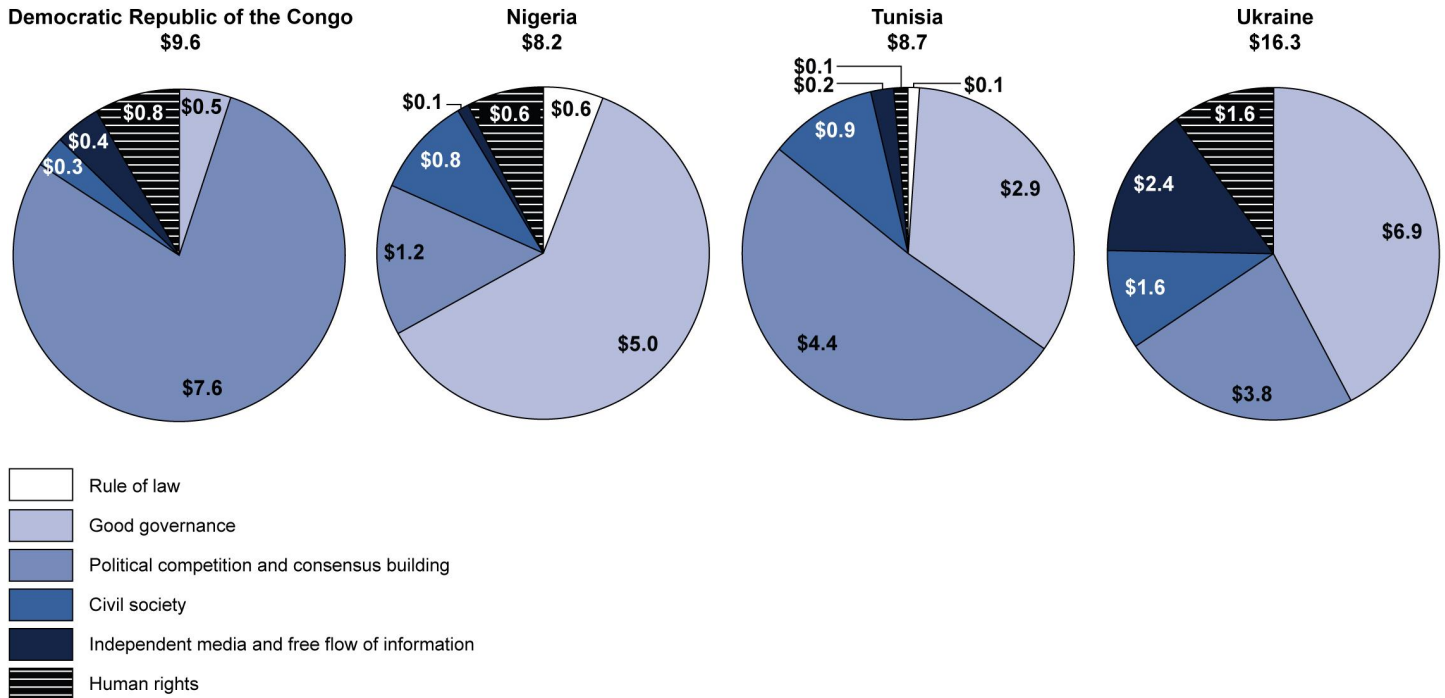
Source: GAO analysis of National Endowment for Democracy (NED) data.  |  GAO-20-173

Notes: Amounts shown may not sum precisely to totals because of rounding. Data shown are for country-specific projects. NED categorizes its democracy assistance activities using its own program definitions. However, for this report, NED officials provided information to help categorize each of NED's democracy assistance awards into the program areas used to categorize U.S. government democracy assistance.

NED's country priorities are articulated in country summaries that it updates each year on the basis of each country's political context and democratic challenges. For example, NED's 2018 Tunisia summary included a priority of supporting civil society to promote effective, democratic governance and advocate for the transparency and accountability of public institutions. The NED project that we reviewed in Tunisia aimed to "enhance the capacity of civil society to advocate for transparency, good governance, and promote social accountability in the six southern governorates of Tunisia."[8] See appendixes III through VI for

[8]We selected projects from different program areas in each country: rule of law and human rights in the DRC, civil society in Nigeria, good governance in Tunisia, and independent media and free flow of information in Ukraine. For more information on project selection, see app. II.

more information about NED's democracy assistance projects in the
DRC, Nigeria, Tunisia, and Ukraine.

## NED Documents and Officials Described Coordination and Collaboration Practices

NED's annual planning documents, which generally outline objectives for
each country where NED provides funding, include some statements
about coordination and collaboration with other donors. NED officials said
that NED senior leaders typically have standing relationships with senior
leaders at State's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL)
because NED receives funding from DRL for particular countries. NED
officials also told us that the U.S. Agency for International Development
(USAID) has reached out to them to strategically coordinate, although
NED does not receive funds from USAID. NED officials added that
coordination and collaboration on specific countries largely occur between
officials at the regional and country levels. For example, officials said that
NED consults with counterparts at State and USAID in the regional
bureaus and DRL and shares its list of grantees with DRL. Furthermore,
officials said that NED is aware of funding that its grantees receive from
State or USAID, because NED obtains information from potential
grantees about other funding sources during the grant proposal process.

According to NED, State, and USAID officials, additional collaboration
occurs between headquarters and overseas officials. NED, which does
not have staff overseas, manages its grants in Washington, D.C., but
collaborates with overseas counterparts. NED, State, and USAID officials
told us that when NED officials conduct site visits, which occur at least
annually, they often meet with State and USAID officials at embassies to
share information.

# Appendix II: Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

This report examines (1) the Department of State's (State) and the U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID) allocations of funding for democracy assistance in fiscal years 2015 through 2018, (2) State's and USAID's roles in providing democracy assistance and the extent to which their projects in selected countries during this period were consistent with defined roles, and (3) the extent to which State and USAID coordinate in providing democracy assistance.[1] In addition, appendix I provides information about the National Endowment for Democracy's (NED) democracy assistance allocations, role, and coordination.

To examine aspects of State's, USAID's, and NED's democracy assistance roles and coordination efforts, we selected a nongeneralizable sample of four countries—the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Nigeria, Tunisia, and Ukraine—where the three entities provided democracy assistance in fiscal years 2015 through 2018.[2] In selecting these countries as illustrative examples, we considered the following factors, among others: (1) countries to which all three entities allocated or obligated democracy assistance funding in fiscal years 2015 through 2017, the most recent period for which data were available; (2) democracy assistance allocation amounts that were in the top quartile for each entity for the same period for USAID and State, according to data from State's Office of U.S. Foreign Assistance, and for NED; (3) democracy assistance obligation amounts that were in the top half of such obligations for the same period for State's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL), according to data from USAID's Foreign Aid Explorer; (4) democracy assistance obligations data that confirmed the presence of the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) in those countries for the same period; (5) geographical dispersion of the countries; (6) ratings that countries

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[1]Agencies may use different terms to describe their assistance, including "programs," "projects," and "activities." In this report, "projects" refers to assistance funded by U.S. agencies that is implemented directly by the agencies or through awards made to project implementers, including contractors, international organizations, and grantees.

[2]We initially included NED in our review, and we selected countries where NED also provided grants. See app. I for our analysis of NED documents and data.

received from Freedom House's 2018 "Freedom in the World" survey; and (7) suggestions from State, USAID, and NED officials as well as others with relevant expertise.[3] We excluded countries where we had recently reviewed U.S. democracy assistance for other reports.[4]

We traveled to the DRC in May 2019, where we met with officials from State, USAID, nongovernmental organizations that had implemented U.S.-funded democracy assistance projects, and the United Kingdom's Department of Foreign and International Development regarding its coordination with U.S. agencies. We conducted interviews with State and USAID officials who were knowledgeable about democracy assistance, interviewing officials at the embassies in Nigeria, Tunisia, and Ukraine by phone and interviewing officials in Washington, D.C., in person.

To examine allocations for democracy assistance, we analyzed State, USAID, and NED global democracy assistance data for fiscal years 2015 through 2018, including the total allocations, the allocations for specific program areas, and the countries for which funding was allocated. We used the six democracy assistance program areas included in USAID's and State's *Updated Foreign Assistance Standardized Program Structure and Definitions*—rule of law, good governance, political competition and consensus building, civil society, independent media and free flow of information, and human rights. Because NED categorizes its democracy assistance using its own program definitions, we cross-referenced NED's democracy assistance awards with the U.S. government's six program areas, using information that NED provided. We assessed the reliability of State's, USAID's, and NED's data and determined the data to be sufficiently reliable for reporting the total amount of democracy assistance allocated by each entity as well as the program areas and countries for which the funding was allocated. We also compared funding allocations with the country's ratings in Freedom House's 2018 "Freedom in the

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[3]We interviewed individuals from several nongovernmental "think tanks" and academic institutions who had expertise in U.S.-funded democracy assistance.

[4]For example, see GAO, *U.S. Democracy Assistance in Burma: USAID and State Could Strengthen Oversight of Partners' Due Diligence Procedures,* GAO-17-648 (Washington, D.C.: July 28, 2017).

World" survey to determine the amount of funding that the entities
allocated to countries rated as free, partly free, or not free.[5]

To identify State's, USAID's, and NED's roles in providing democracy
assistance and the extent to which their projects in the selected countries
were consistent with their defined roles, we reviewed documents,
assessed information on democracy assistance projects, and interviewed
officials. While State's regional bureaus provide some democracy
assistance, we focused on State's democracy assistance roles and
projects for DRL and INL, both of which State has identified as leading
the provision of its democracy assistance. See appendixes III through VI
for regional bureaus' obligations data for the four selected countries.

- We reviewed State's and USAID's *Joint Strategic Plan, FY2018-2022*;
  functional bureau strategies for DRL and INL; the 2013 *USAID Strategy
  on Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance;* integrated country
  strategies and country development cooperation strategies for the four
  selected countries; and NED's *2012 Strategy Document.* We also
  reviewed other documents that described aspects of State's and USAID's
  roles, including agencies' democracy-related reports to Congress and
  standard operating procedures. We assessed these documents for clarity
  of roles and responsibilities, based on leading collaboration practices that
  we have previously identified,[6] and we reviewed agencies' overarching
  goals related to democracy and governance.[7]

- We reviewed information about State, USAID, and NED democracy
  assistance projects in the DRC, Nigeria, Tunisia, and Ukraine. We
  reviewed project documents, including award agreements, for selected

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[5]Freedom House, an independent watchdog organization focused on freedom and
democracy, conducts an annual survey to assess the rights and freedoms enjoyed by
individuals. Freedom House uses the survey results to measure freedom according to two
broad categories—political rights and civil liberties—and determine whether a country has
an overall status of "free," "partly free," or "not free."

[6]GAO, *Results-Oriented Government: Practices That Can Help Enhance and Sustain
Collaboration among Federal Agencies,* GAO-06-15 (Washington, D.C.: Oct. 21, 2005);
*Managing for Results: Key Considerations for Implementing Interagency Collaborative
Mechanisms*, GAO-12-1022 (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 27, 2012).

[7]Two analysts independently reviewed each of these documents to determine the extent
to which they identified the entity's roles in providing democracy assistance as well as any
distinct roles of the entity's operating units, if relevant; other U.S. agencies; and external
partners. The analysts also reviewed the documents for information about the entity's
relationships with other entities, in terms of leading, supporting, and partnering with those
entities, and about any coordination mechanisms or processes identified. The analysts
then came to consensus on any areas where their assessments differed.

State, USAID, and NED projects that supported a variety of democracy program areas, among other factors.[8] We assessed State, USAID, and NED obligations data for projects that they funded in the selected countries in fiscal years 2015 through 2018.[9] We determined that these data were sufficiently reliable for reporting the total obligations, by entity and country, for fiscal years 2015 through 2018 and for reporting types of democracy assistance. We also determined these data to be sufficiently reliable for reporting the number of active projects during this time period; the average award amount or average annualized award amount; and the average duration of projects for DRL, USAID, and NED. Because INL's democracy assistance generally supports the host government through bilateral agreements and is not always project based, we were unable to report these project characteristics for INL. In prior work, we have recommended that State identify and address factors that affect the reliability of INL's democracy assistance data.[10] State reported that as of July 2019, INL was continuing efforts to improve data reliability; however, because of missing data, we determined that data for INL democracy assistance in the selected countries were unreliable for reporting project

[8]We reviewed award agreements for a nongeneralizable sample of State, USAID, and NED democracy assistance projects that were active during fiscal years 2015 through 2018 in each of the selected countries, to identify any overlap, complementarity, or duplication in the entities' projects. Award instruments include contracts, grants, cooperative agreements, and interagency agreements, among others. We selected projects for which obligations data indicated that DRL, USAID, and NED implemented democracy assistance projects categorized under the same program area in each country. Specifically, we reviewed projects categorized as rule of law and human rights in the DRC, as civil society in Nigeria, as good governance in Tunisia, and as independent media and free flow of information in Ukraine. We also reviewed an INL project categorized as rule of law and human rights in the DRC. We did not review any political competition and consensus-building projects, because DRL did not fund any projects categorized as such in the selected countries during the period under review. On the basis of the project titles, descriptions, and implementing organizations, two analysts selected specific projects to review.

[9]These projects were active at any point during fiscal years 2015 through 2018, including some projects that started before and ended after this period. For USAID, we included projects that were active at any point during fiscal years 2015 through 2018, including some projects that started before and ended after this period owing to the nature of their democracy assistance funding. For DRL and NED, we included projects for which funding was obligated in fiscal years 2015 through 2018, because funding for DRL and NED democracy assistance projects comprised grants and cooperative agreements that were funded entirely during this period. For INL, we included all obligations for democracy assistance in fiscal years 2015 through 2018, because INL democracy assistance is not always project based. We included the project data that agencies identified for these selected countries and did not include funding for regional or multicountry projects.

[10]GAO, *Democracy Assistance: State Should Improve Accountability Over Funding; USAID Should Assess Whether New Processes Have Improved Award Documentation*, GAO-18-136 (Washington, D.C.: Dec. 14, 2017).

characteristics. We also determined that because of missing data, such as project end dates, the data from State's Bureau of African Affairs were unreliable for reporting some project information for Nigeria; however, the bureau's project data for the DRC were sufficiently reliable for reporting on democracy assistance and obligations in that country. In addition, we determined the data from the Bureaus of European and Eurasian Affairs and Near Eastern Affairs were sufficiently reliable for reporting on State's democracy assistance obligations and projects in Ukraine and Tunisia.

- We interviewed officials in Washington, D.C., and in the four selected countries regarding State's, USAID's, and NED's roles defined in strategies and other documents and regarding democracy assistance projects. In addition, we interviewed agency officials regarding democracy assistance program areas; implementation methods (such as managing programs from headquarters or overseas as well as types of implementing partners); and other features, including typical scale of project funding.

To examine the extent to which the agencies coordinated their democracy assistance, we reviewed relevant documents, such as State's and USAID's standard operating procedures, to identify the agencies' mechanisms and practices for coordinating democracy assistance. We drew on our prior work identifying key practices that can enhance and sustain collaboration at federal agencies.[11] We interviewed officials in Washington, D.C., and in the four selected countries to describe any mechanisms that agencies use to coordinate democracy assistance.

We conducted this performance audit from September 2018 to January 2020, in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

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[11]GAO-12-1022.

# Appendix III: U.S.-Funded Democracy Assistance in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Fiscal Years 2015-2018

**Democratic Republic of the Congo**



Source: GAO; Map Resources (map). | GAO-20-173

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has experienced more than 2 decades of violence and war, exacerbated by the failure of President Joseph Kabila to hold elections when his term ended in 2016. In this context, the U.S. government's key policy priority was to encourage the DRC's government to support credible and peaceful elections in December 2018, according to the Department of State

(State).[1] U.S. government democracy assistance projects aimed to build the capacity of the DRC government, political parties, civil society, armed forces, civilian law enforcement, and justice systems to support credible elections and improve governance. (Fig. 12 shows examples of U.S.-funded government assistance to support the DRC's 2018 elections.) Other U.S. government democracy-related priorities included promoting the rule of law and fighting corruption.

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[1]Department of State, *Integrated Country Strategy: Democratic Republic of the Congo* (Aug. 3, 2018).

**Figure 12: U.S.-Funded Support for Elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo**



The U.S. Agency for International Development provided democracy assistance support for elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.
Left: Citizens at a civic and voter education session. Right: An electoral official assisting a voter.
Source: International Republican Institute, Robert Carrubba.  | GAO-20-173

The National Endowment for Democracy's (NED) 2018 country summary for the DRC noted that NED should support DRC civil society's ability to retain its independence and to continue advocating for a peaceful and democratic transition of power. The summary states that NED's 2018 priorities for the DRC included supporting civil society's engagement in elections and ability to promote freedom of information before, during, and after the elections.

In fiscal years 2015 through 2018, State, the U.S. Agency for International Assistance (USAID), and NED obligated over $73 million for democracy assistance in the DRC. State's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor obligated $5.5 million (8 percent) of this assistance, while State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs obligated $3.2 million (4 percent). State's Bureau of African Affairs also obligated about $500,000, for one project, through the Africa Women Peace Security Initiative.[2] USAID obligated the majority of U.S. democracy assistance—$54.7 million (74 percent). In addition, NED obligated $9.6 million (13 percent). Figure 13 shows State's, USAID's, and NED's total obligations, by program area, in the DRC during this period.

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[2]The Africa Women Peace and Security Initiative aims to increase women's participation in peacemaking, peacebuilding, and reconstruction processes.

**Figure 13: State's, USAID's, and NED's Total Obligations for Democracy Assistance in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, by Program Area, Fiscal Years 2015-2018**

In millions



Legend for pie chart categories:
- Rule of law
- Rule of law and human rights
- Good governance
- Political competition and consensus building
- Civil society
- Independent media and free flow of information
- Human rights

Legend: AF = Bureau of African Affairs; DRL = Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor; INL = Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs; NED = National Endowment for Democracy; State = Department of State; USAID = U.S. Agency for International Development.

Source: GAO analysis of State, USAID, and NED data. | GAO-20-173

Notes: AF, DRL, and INL are State bureaus. Amounts shown may not sum precisely to totals because of rounding. Data shown are for country-specific projects. On the basis of information provided by State, we cross-referenced AF obligations for fiscal years 2015 and 2016 to U.S. government democracy assistance program area categories updated in April 2016. INL's democracy assistance obligations are categorized by the program areas used before April 2016. USAID and DRL provided data based on the updated program areas even if the project began prior to April 2016, when the updated program areas came into effect. NED categorizes its democracy assistance activities using its own program definitions; however, for this report, NED officials provided information to help categorize each of NED's democracy assistance awards into the program areas used to categorize U.S. government democracy assistance.

Table 2 shows characteristics of projects funded by State's Bureau of African Affairs, DRL, USAID, and NED.[3] Three of DRL's five projects were implemented by organizations that also implemented USAID projects, and the Bureau of African Affairs' project was implemented by an organization that also implemented USAID and DRL projects.

**Table 2: Characteristics of State, USAID, and NED Democracy Assistance Projects in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Fiscal Years 2015-2018**

| Category | AF (State) | DRL (State) | USAID | NED |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Number of active projects**[a] | 1 | 5 | 9 | 175 |
| **Average project obligation** | $500,000 | $1.1 million | $7.2 million[b] | $48,495[c] |
| **Average project duration, in years**[d] | 2.0 | 2.0 | 4.0 | 1.1 |

Legend: AF = Bureau of African Affairs; DRL = Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor; NED = National Endowment for Democracy; State = Department of State; USAID = U.S. Agency for International Development.

Source: GAO analysis of State, USAID, and NED data. | GAO-20-173

Note: INL's funding for democracy assistance generally supports host country governments through bilateral agreements and is not always project based.

[a]Projects were active at any point during fiscal years 2015 through 2018, including some projects that started before, and ended after, this period.

[b]The average obligation for USAID projects is based on average annualized funding and average project duration as of September 30, 2018. To annualize funding, we divided the total project obligations as of September 30, 2018, by the project duration in years for each project.

[c]Includes NED's grants to civil society organizations and does not include grants to NED's core institutes.

[d]Average project duration as of September 30, 2018.

[3]INL's funding for democracy assistance generally supports host country governments through bilateral agreements and is not always project based.

Table 3 shows examples of democracy assistance projects funded by
State, USAID, and NED in the DRC in fiscal years 2015 through 2018.

**Table 3: Examples of State, USAID, and NED Democracy Assistance Projects in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Fiscal Years 2015-2018**

| Entity | Project title | Implementing organization | Amount obligated[a] | Duration | Program area(s) | Purpose |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| AF (State) | Women's Voices for Peaceful Democratic Dialogue | Internews | $498,854 | 2 years | Political competition and consensus building | To improve women's knowledge of their political rights and opportunities to participate in public decision making, among other things. |
| DRL (State) | Early Warning System to Prevent Atrocities | Freedom House | $350,000 | 2.3 years | Human rights | To develop an early warning system to track outbreaks of threats to, and attacks on, human rights defenders and civil society organizations. |
| INL (State) | A Cross-sectoral Initiative to Strengthen Capacity to Prosecute Sexual Violence Crimes | Physicians for Human Rights | $823,000 | 1 year | Rule of law and human rights[b] | To encourage adoption of the Medical Certificate and MediCapt application and to conduct basic and advanced training on forensic and MediCapt application, among other things. |
| USAID | Advancing Human Rights and Promoting Electoral Justice | Freedom House | $11 million | 3 years | Rule of law Human rights | To protect and promote universally recognized human rights by bolstering the capacity of civil society actors and human rights defenders to monitor, report, and document human rights abuses, among other things. |
| NED | Human Rights Violations Monitoring during the Electoral Process | Centre de Recherche sur L'Environnement, la Democratie et les Droits de l'Homme | $63,816 | 1 year | Human rights | To contribute to credible and peaceful 2016 elections and to respect for civil liberties and human rights during those elections in three territories in North Kivu Province. |

Legend: AF = Bureau of African Affairs; DRL = Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor; INL = Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs; NED = National Endowment for Democracy; State = Department of State; USAID = U.S. Agency for International Development

Source: GAO analysis of State, USAID, and NED project data and documents.  |  GAO-20-173

Note: For our review of democracy assistance in the DRC, we primarily selected projects that were categorized under the "human rights" program area.

[a]Funding obligated as of September 30, 2018.

[b]INL's democracy assistance obligations are categorized by the U.S. government democracy assistance program areas used before April 2016, when the program areas were updated.
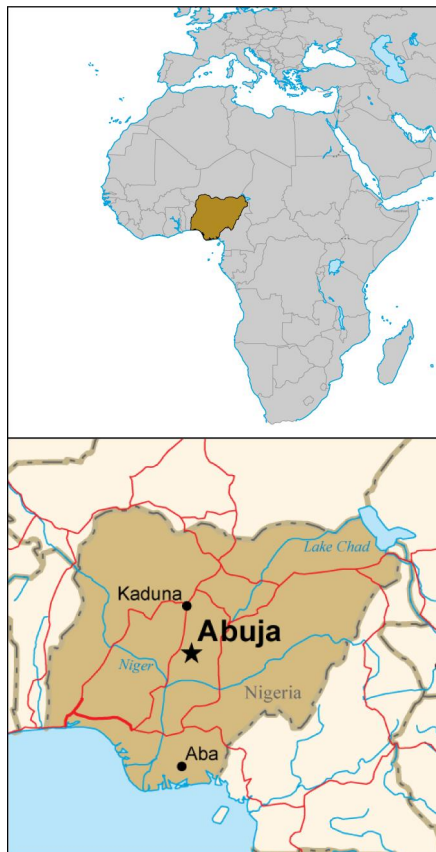
# Appendix IV: U.S.-Funded Democracy Assistance in Nigeria, Fiscal Years 2015-2018

**Nigeria**



Source: GAO; Map Resources (map). | GAO-20-173

While Nigeria has made important gains in democracy and institution building, those gains are fragile, according to the U.S. Department of State (State). The U.S. government's recent priorities with regard to Nigeria have included helping to strengthen the country's democratic governance.[1] Challenges to democratic governance in Nigeria include widespread intercommunal violence, terrorism, poverty, and corruption. At the same time, Nigeria has a free press and a political environment that is largely committed to civilian leadership, and the 2015 elections resulted in the first peaceful transfer of power to an opposition party. In this context, the U.S. government's goals include strengthening Nigerian democratic institutions, governance, and respect for human rights, such as by assisting Nigerians to conduct credible national elections in 2019. To achieve this goal, the U.S. government's objectives are to (1) strengthen good governance; (2) strengthen democratic institutions, including rule of law, respect for human rights, and transparency and accountability in government; and (3) reduce corruption at all levels of government.

Similarly, the National Endowment for Democracy's (NED) 2018 country summary for Nigeria notes the success of the country's 2015 elections while also acknowledging challenges including corruption, economic stagnation, insecurity, and the political marginalization of minority groups. NED's 2018 priorities in Nigeria were to expand political inclusion and

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[1]Department of State, *Integrated Country Strategy: Nigeria* (Sept. 28, 2018).

strengthen rule of law by supporting NED's core institutes and local organizations.[2]

In fiscal years 2015 through 2018, State, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and NED obligated nearly $95 million for democracy assistance projects in Nigeria. State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs obligated $12.5 million (13 percent), while State's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor obligated $5.4 million (6 percent). State's Bureau of African Affairs also obligated $1.8 million for six projects. According to officials, the Bureau of African Affairs funded these projects through the Africa Regional Democracy Fund[3] and the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership program.[4] USAID obligated the majority of U.S. democracy assistance— $66.6 million (70 percent). In addition, NED obligated $8.2 million (9 percent). Figure 14 shows State's, USAID's, and NED's total obligations for democracy assistance, by program area, in Nigeria during this period.

[2]The NED's core institutes refer to four affiliated organizations: the Center for International Private Enterprise, the International Republican Institute, the National Democratic Institute, and the Solidarity Center.

[3]According to Bureau of African Affairs officials, the Africa Regional Democracy Fund is used primarily in countries where USAID does not have a mission. The officials said that, to address critical gaps in existing programming, the bureau also may use the fund in countries where USAID has a mission.

[4]The Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership program incorporates democracy assistance activities focused primarily on strengthening civil society, civic education, and media freedom as strategies for reducing conflict and countering violent extremism in partner countries.

**Figure 14: State's, USAID's, and NED's Total Obligations for Democracy Assistance in Nigeria, by Program Area, Fiscal Years 2015-2018**

In millions



Legend: AF = Bureau of African Affairs; DRL = Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor; INL = Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs; NED = National Endowment for Democracy; State = Department of State; USAID = U.S. Agency for International Development.

Source: GAO analysis of State, USAID, and NED data. | GAO-20-173

Notes: AF, DRL, and INL are State bureaus. Amounts shown may not sum precisely to totals because of rounding. Data shown do not include funding obligated for regional or multicountry projects. On the basis of information provided by State, we cross-referenced AF obligations for fiscal years 2015 and 2016 to the U.S. government democracy assistance program areas updated in April 2016. INL's democracy assistance obligations are categorized by the program areas used before April 2016. USAID and DRL provided data based on the updated program areas even if the project began prior to April 2016, when the updated program areas came into effect. NED categorizes its democracy assistance activities using its own program definitions. However, for this report, NED officials provided information to help categorize each of NED's democracy assistance awards into the program areas used to categorize U.S. government democracy assistance.

Table 4 shows characteristics of projects funded by the Bureau of African Affairs, DRL, USAID, and NED in Nigeria during fiscal years 2015 through 2018.[5]

**Table 4: Characteristics of State, USAID, and NED Democracy Assistance Projects in Nigeria, Fiscal Years 2015-2018**

| Category | AF (State) | DRL (State) | USAID | NED |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Number of active projects[a]** | 6 | 4 | 7 | 105 |
| **Average project obligation** | $300,000 | $1.3 million | $11.2 million[b] | $45,351[c] |
| **Average project duration, in years[d]** | Unknown | 2.7 | 4.6 | 1.1 |

Legend: AF = Bureau of African Affairs; DRL = Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor; NED = National Endowment for Democracy; State = Department of State; USAID = U.S. Agency for International Development.

Source: GAO analysis of State, USAID, and NED data. | GAO-20-173

Notes: INL's funding for democracy assistance generally supports host country governments through bilateral agreements and is not always project based. Some AF democracy assistance projects were managed by staff of the U.S. Embassy in Nigeria. Because of some missing data, we are unable to report the average duration of AF's democracy assistance projects.

[a]Projects were active at any point during fiscal years 2015 through 2018, including some projects that started before, and ended after, this period.

[b]The average obligation for USAID projects is based on average annualized funding and average project duration as of September 30, 2018. To annualize funding, we divided total project obligations as of September 30, 2018, by the project duration in years for each project.

[c]Includes NED's grants to civil society organizations and does not include grants to NED's core institutes.

[d]Average project duration of September 30, 2018.

[5]INL's funding for democracy assistance generally supports host country governments through bilateral agreements and is not always project based.

Table 5 shows examples of democracy assistance projects funded by State, USAID, and NED in Nigeria during fiscal years 2015 through 2018.

**Table 5: Examples of State, USAID, and NED Democracy Assistance Projects in Nigeria, Fiscal Years 2015-2018**

| Entity | Project title | Implementing organization | Amount obligated[a] | Duration | Program area | Purpose |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **AF (State)** | AREWA24: Hausa-language Media Platform for West Africa | Equal Access | $1 million | 1 year | Independent media and free flow of information | To establish a sustainable, free-to-air Hausa-language satellite TV channel and media platform that counters narratives of violent extremism. |
| **DRL (State)** | Promoting Labor Rights and Government Accountability | Solidarity Center | $543,209 | 2.7 years | Civil society | To build organizing and worker rights advocacy capacity in 2 unions in the agriculture and telecommunications sectors as the basis for creating workplace transparency structures and advancing workplace and national accountability. |
| **INL[b] (State)** | Not specified | Partners Global | $1.9 million | Not specified | Rule of law and human rights | Not specified |
| **USAID** | Strengthening Advocacy and Civic Engagement | Chemonics | $16.8 million | 5 years | Civil society | To strengthen civil society's ability to influence the development and implementation of key democratic reforms at the national, state, and local levels. |
| **NED** | Strengthening Youth Political Participation in Northwest Nigeria | Organization for Community Civic Engagement | $39,125 | 1 year | Civil society | To strengthen the capacity of youth to engage with political actors to promote public accountability in 3 states. |

Legend: AF = Bureau of African Affairs; DRL = Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor; INL = Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs; NED = National Endowment for Democracy; State = Department of State; USAID = U.S. Agency for International Development.

Source: GAO analysis of State, USAID, and NED project data and documents. | GAO-20-173

Note: For our review of democracy assistance projects in Nigeria, we primarily selected projects that were categorized under the "civil society" program area.

[a]Funding obligated as of September 30, 2018.

[b]Because some INL project data were missing, we are unable to report certain characteristics of INL democracy assistance projects. In prior work, we recommended that State identify and address factors affecting the reliability of INL's democracy assistance data. See GAO, *Democracy Assistance: State Should Improve Accountability Over Funding; USAID Should Assess Whether New Processes Have Improved Award Documentation*, GAO-18-136 (Washington, D.C.: Dec. 14, 2017). INL's democracy assistance is categorized in the U.S. government democracy assistance program areas used before April 2016, when the program areas were updated.

**Tunisia**
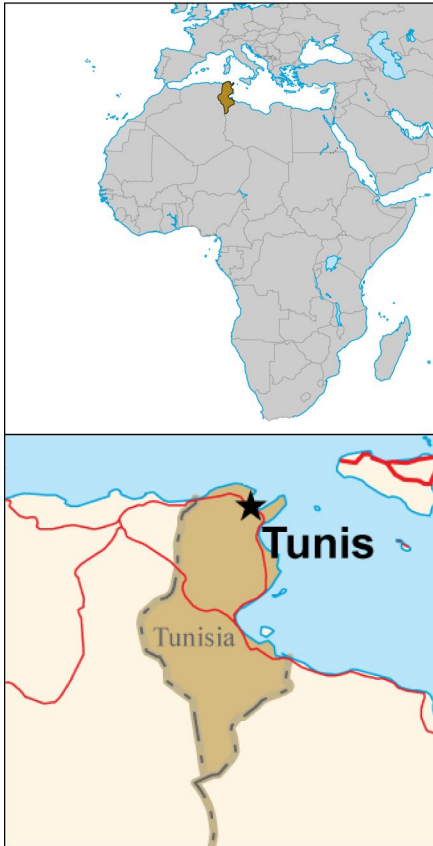


Source: GAO; Map Resources (map).  |  GAO-20-173

# Appendix V: U.S.-Funded Democracy Assistance in Tunisia, Fiscal Years 2015-2018

Since its 2011 revolution, Tunisia has been on a steady path toward consolidating its democratic transition, but it still needs to establish critical institutions, advance human rights, counter corruption, and improve government transparency, according to the U.S. Department of State (State).[1] In this context, the U.S. government's goals include helping

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[1]Department of State, *Integrated Country Strategy: Tunisia* (Sept. 5, 2018).

Tunisia consolidate and advance its democracy.[2] To achieve this goal, the U.S. government's objectives are to (1) assist Tunisian government institutions to become more transparent, accountable, and responsive to citizens; (2) help Tunisian citizens understand and exercise their rights and responsibilities in a democratic system; and (3) promote social cohesion through democratic consolidation.

The National Endowment for Democracy's (NED) 2018 country summary for Tunisia similarly notes the country's democratic progress since the 2011 revolution and adds that Tunisian civil society has been developing quickly and freely and seeks to engage with elected officials as they continue to consolidate democracy. NED's 2018 priorities in Tunisia were to (1) support civil society to promote effective, democratic governance and advocate for transparency and accountability; (2) encourage citizens to influence policymaking; (3) foster political inclusion of marginalized groups; and (4) enhance the role of independent media.

In fiscal years 2015 through 2018, State, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and NED obligated over $90 million for democracy assistance projects in Tunisia. State's Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs obligated $20.7 million (23 percent) of these funds; the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor obligated $9.1 million (10 percent); and the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs obligated $3.9 million (4 percent). USAID obligated the majority of U.S. democracy assistance—$49.5 million (54 percent). In addition, NED obligated $8.7 million (9 percent). Figure 15 shows State's, USAID's, and NED's total obligations for democracy assistance, by program area, in Tunisia in fiscal years 2015 through 2018.

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[2]According to USAID officials, after closing its overseas mission in 1994, USAID did not have a presence in Tunisia until 2012. USAID became a formal mission in Tunisia in June 2019.

**Figure 15: State's, USAID's, and NED's Total Obligations for Democracy Assistance in Tunisia, by Program Area, Fiscal Years 2015-2018**

In millions



Legend:
- Rule of law
- Rule of law and human rights
- Good governance
- Political competition and consensus building
- Civil society
- Independent media and free flow of information
- Human rights
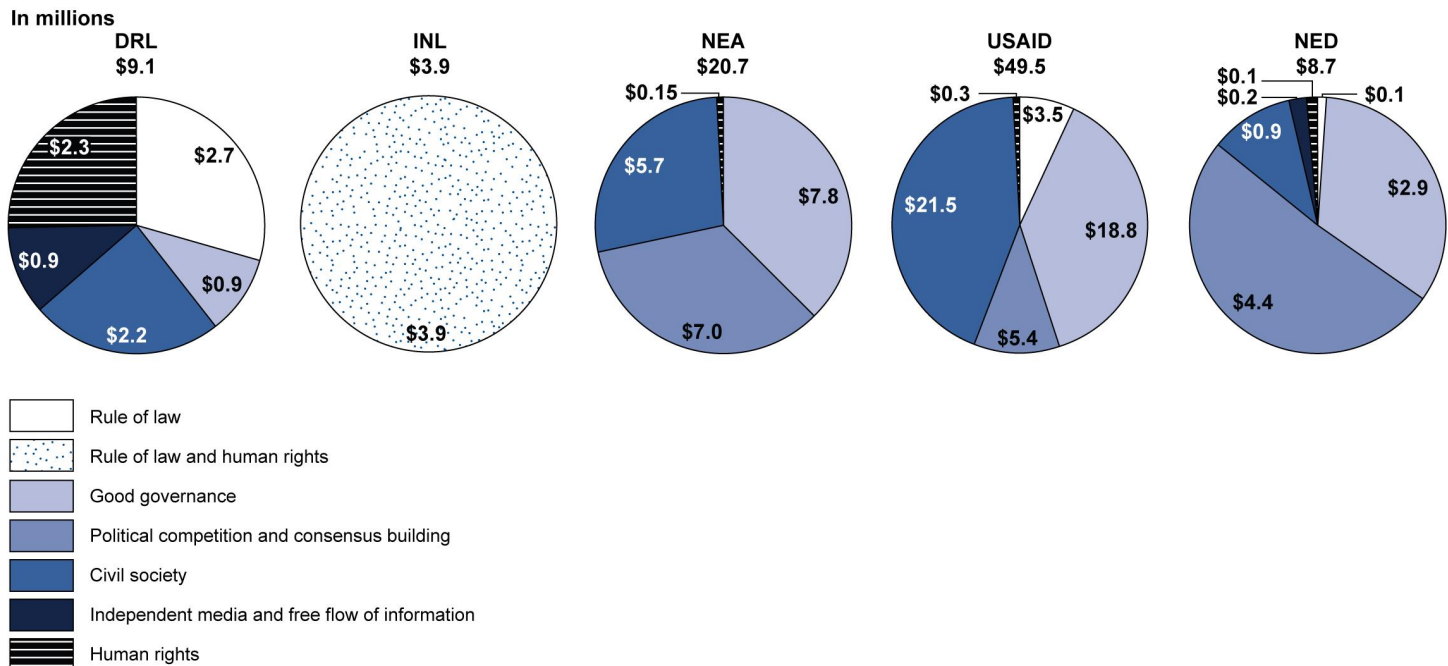
Legend: DRL = Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor; INL = Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs; NEA = Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs; NED = National Endowment for Democracy; State = Department of State; USAID = U.S. Agency for International Development.

Source: GAO analysis of State, USAID, and NED data. | GAO-20-173

Notes: DRL, INL, and NEA are State bureaus. Amounts shown may not sum precisely to totals because of rounding. Data shown are for country-specific projects. On the basis of information provided by State, we cross-referenced fiscal year 2015 and 2016 NEA obligations to the U.S. government democracy assistance program areas, updated as of April 2016. INL's democracy assistance obligations are categorized by the program areas used before April 2016. USAID and DRL provided data based on the updated program areas even if the project began before April 2016, when the updated program areas came into effect. NED categorizes its democracy assistance activities using its own program definitions. However, for the purposes of this report, NED officials provided information to help categorize each of NED's democracy assistance awards into the program areas used to categorize U.S. government democracy assistance.

State's Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs provided the majority of its democracy assistance through the U.S.–Middle East Partnership Initiative, which generally aims to improve governance and economic opportunity.[3] Many of the 11 projects funded by the bureau supported objectives that were similar to those typically supported by DRL, INL, and

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[3]Established in 2002 as part of NEA, the U.S.–Middle East Partnership Initiative aims to advance stability and prosperity in the Middle East and North Africa by fostering partnerships between citizens, civil society, the private sector, and governments to resolve local challenges and promote shared interests in the areas of participatory governance and economic opportunity and reform.

USAID projects, including promoting human rights, supporting anticorruption institutions, and strengthening political parties. The Bureau of Near Eastern Affair's Foreign Assistance Unit at the embassy managed these projects.[4]

Table 6 shows information on the characteristics of the projects funded by DRL, the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, USAID, and NED.[5]

**Table 6: Characteristics of State, USAID, and NED Democracy Assistance Projects in Tunisia, Fiscal Years 2015-2018**

| Category | DRL (State) | NEA (State) | USAID | NED |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Number of active projects**[a] | 9 | 11 | 10 | 104 |
| **Average project obligation** | $1.0 million | $1.9 million | $3.9 million[b] | $38,520[c] |
| **Average project duration, in years**[d] | 2.1 | 2.6 | 2.6 | 1.2 |

Legend: DRL = Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor; NEA = Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs; NED = National Endowment for Democracy; State = Department of State; USAID = U.S. Agency for International Development.

Source: GAO analysis of State, USAID, and NED data. | GAO-20-173

Notes: INL's funding for democracy assistance generally supports host country governments through bilateral agreements and is not always project based. The Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs' democracy assistance projects were managed by staff of NEA's foreign assistance unit at the U.S. Embassy in Tunisia.

[a]Projects were active at any point during fiscal years 2015 through 2018, including some projects that started before, and ended after, this period.

[b]The average obligation for USAID projects is based on annualized funding and average duration of projects as of September 30, 2018. To annualize funding, we divided total project obligations as of September 30, 2018, by the project duration in years for each project.

[c]Includes NED's grants to civil society organizations and does not include grants to NED's core institutes.

[d]Average project duration is as of September 30, 2018.

Table 7 shows examples of democracy assistance projects funded by State, USAID, and NED in Tunisia during fiscal years 2015 through 2018.

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[4]According to State officials, the Foreign Assistance Unit in Tunisia plays a lead role coordinating all assistance at the embassy, including democracy assistance.

[5]INL's funding for democracy assistance generally supports host country governments through bilateral agreements and is not always project based.

**Table 7: Examples of State, USAID, and NED Democracy Assistance Projects in Tunisia, Fiscal Years 2015-2018**

| Entity | Project title | Implementing organization | Amount obligated[a] | Duration | Program area | Purpose |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **DRL (State)** | Supporting Parliamentary Strengthening | Research Foundation of State University of New York | $495,050 | 2.5 years | Good governance | To strengthen the capacity of the Tunisian parliament by providing relevant, objective, and credible information from international and Tunisian experts on policy issues of national importance. |
| **INL[b] (State)** | Not specified | Penal Reform International | $262,212 | Not specified | Rule of law and human rights | To improve the justice system through support for implementation of alternatives to incarceration. |
| **NEA (State)** | Encouraging Legislative Transparency and Accountability | National Democratic Institute | $3.5 million | 3.5 years | Good governance | To support members of parliament and increase the capacity of the parliament to fulfill its representative, legislative, and oversight roles. |
| **USAID** | Tunisia Accountable Governance Activity (TADAEEM) | Deloitte | $22 million | 4 years | Good governance / Political competition and consensus building / Civil society / Rule of law | To improve the relationship between Tunisians and their civic and government institutions (particularly underserved populations). |
| **NED** | Promoting Accountability and Good Governance | Association Tunisienne de l'Environnement et de la Nature de GABES | $29,000 | 1 year | Good governance | To enhance the capacity of civil society to advocate for transparency and good governance and to promote social accountability in the six southern governorates of Tunisia. |

Legend: DRL = Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor; INL = Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs; NEA = Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs; NED = National Endowment for Democracy; State = Department of State; USAID = U.S. Agency for International Development.

Source: GAO analysis of State, USAID, and NED project data and documents. | GAO-20-173

Note: For our review of democracy assistance in Tunisia, we primarily selected projects that were categorized under the "good governance" program area.

[a]Funding obligated as of September 30, 2018.

[b]Because some INL project data were missing, we are unable to report certain characteristics of INL democracy assistance projects. In prior work, we recommended that State identify and address factors affecting the reliability of INL's democracy assistance data. See GAO, *Democracy Assistance: State Should Improve Accountability Over Funding; USAID Should Assess Whether New Processes Have Improved Award Documentation*, GAO-18-136 (Washington, D.C.: Dec.14, 2017). INL's democracy assistance is categorized by the democracy assistance program areas used before April 2016, when the program areas were updated.

# Appendix VI: U.S.-Funded Democracy Assistance in Ukraine, Fiscal Years 2015-2018

**Ukraine**



Source: GAO; Map Resources (map).  |  GAO-20-173

Ukraine's various democratic challenges include overcoming the legacy of Soviet authoritarian rule, addressing mismanagement, and responding to Russian aggression, according to the Department of State (State).[1] In this context, the U.S. government aims to support Ukraine's democracy by helping the country combat corruption, advance justice reforms, bolster civil society, create responsive government, and encourage independent media. Overall, the U.S. government seeks to help Ukraine advance its political reforms with more transparent, responsive, and accountable governance, becoming less corrupt and more democratic. U.S. objectives to accomplish this goal include enhancing anticorruption and rule-of-law processes and improving governance processes and outcomes.

The National Endowment for Democracy's (NED) 2018 country summary for Ukraine noted similar challenges to the country's democracy—Russian aggression, corruption, and a government that is not responsive to its citizens. NED's 2018 priorities in Ukraine included strengthening the capacity of civil society groups, promoting reconciliation, and fostering the development of new media.

In fiscal years 2015 through 2018, State, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and NED obligated more than $170 million for democracy assistance projects in Ukraine. State's Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs obligated $16.7 million (10 percent) of this assistance; the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor obligated $9.6 million (6 percent); and the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs obligated $5.0 million (3 percent). USAID obligated the majority of U.S. democracy assistance—$126 million (73 percent). In addition, NED obligated $16.3 million (9 percent). Figure 16 shows State's, USAID's, and NED's total obligations for democracy

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[1]Department of State, *Integrated Country Strategy: Ukraine* (Aug. 10, 2018).

assistance, by program area, in Ukraine during fiscal years 2015 through 2018.

**Figure 16: State's, USAID's, and NED's Total Democracy Assistance Obligations in Ukraine, by Program Area, Fiscal Years 2015-2018**

In millions
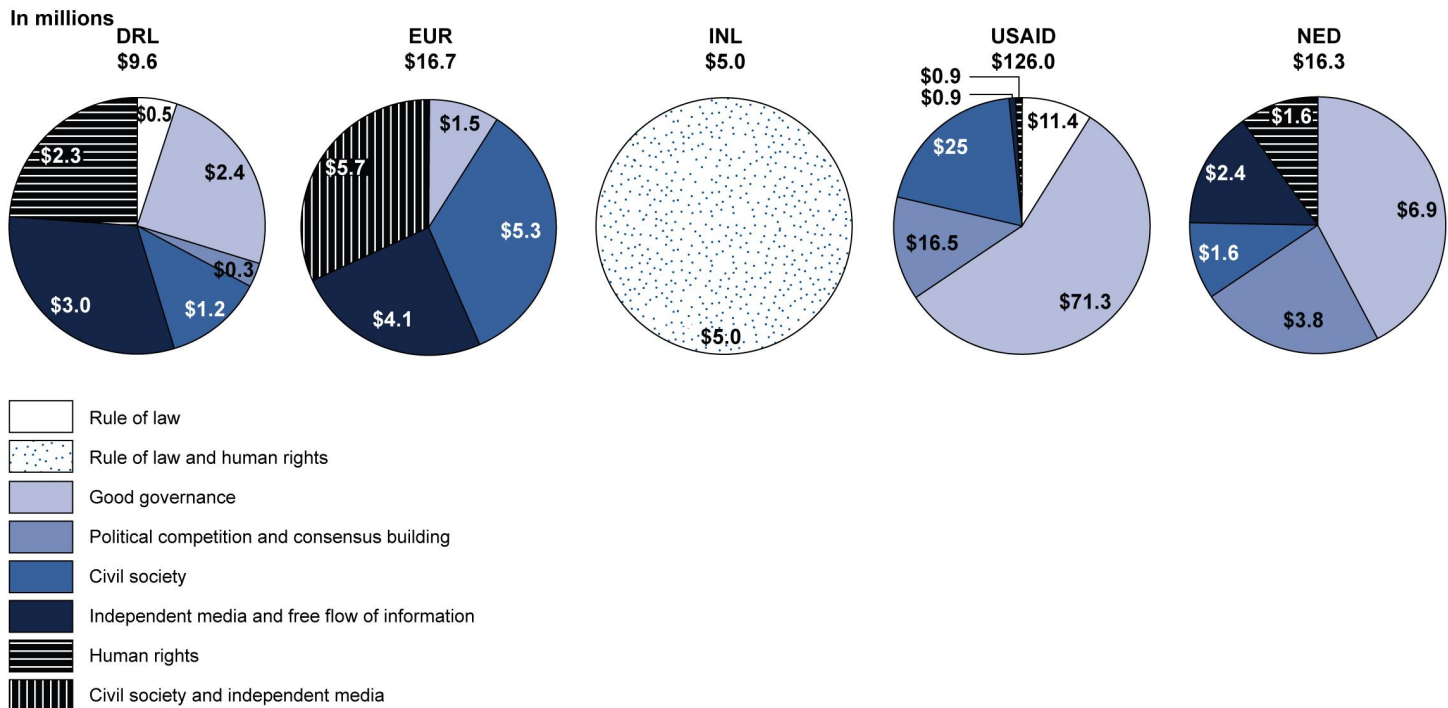


Legend: DRL = Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor; EUR = Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs; INL = Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs; NED = National Endowment for Democracy; State = Department of State; USAID = U.S. Agency for International Development.

Source: GAO analysis of State, USAID, and NED data. | GAO-20-173

Notes: DRL, EUR, and INL are State bureaus. Amounts shown may not sum precisely to totals because of rounding. Data shown are for country-specific projects and do not include funding obligated for regional or multicountry projects. For fiscal years 2015 and 2016, all EUR democracy assistance obligations were categorized under the "civil society" program area, which included projects to promote independent media. INL's democracy assistance obligations are categorized by the program areas used before April 2016. USAID and DRL provided data based on the updated program areas even if the project began before April 2016, when the updated program areas came into effect. NED categorizes its democracy assistance activities using its own program definitions. However, for the purposes of this report, NED officials provided information to help categorize each of NED's democracy assistance awards into the program areas used to categorize U.S. government democracy assistance.

State's public affairs unit at the embassy in Ukraine obligated funding for, and managed, all but one of the 613 democracy assistance projects supported by funds from the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs. State's public affairs unit awarded the projects through funding mechanisms that were intended to support civil society and independent media and were specifically designed for locally based implementing organizations.

Table 8 shows characteristics of democracy assistance projects funded by DRL, State's Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, USAID, and NED.[2]

**Table 8: Characteristics of State, USAID, and NED Democracy Assistance Projects in Ukraine, Fiscal Years 2015-2018**

| Category | DRL (State) | EUR (State) | USAID | NED |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Number of active projects**[a] | 18 | 613 | 20 | 263 |
| **Average project obligation** | $534,376 | $27,188 | $7.5 million[b] | $47,492[c] |
| **Average project duration, in years**[d] | 1.9 | 0.6 | 5.1 | 1.0 |

Legend: DRL = Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor; EUR = Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs; NED = National Endowment for Democracy; State = Department of State; USAID = U.S. Agency for International Development.

Source: GAO analysis of State, USAID, and NED data. | GAO-20-173

Note: INL's funding for democracy assistance generally supports host country governments through bilateral agreements and is not always project based.

[a]Projects were active at any point during fiscal years 2015 through 2018, including some projects that started before, and ended after, this period.

[b]The average obligation for USAID projects is based on annualized funding and average duration of projects as of September 30, 2018. To annualize funding, we divided total project obligations as of September 30, 2018, by the project duration in years for each project.

[c]Includes NED's grants to local organizations and does not include grants to NED's core institutes.

[d]Average project duration as of September 30, 2018.

Table 9 shows examples of democracy assistance projects funded by State, USAID, and NED in Ukraine during fiscal years 2015 through 2018.

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[2]INL's funding for democracy assistance generally supports host country governments through bilateral agreements and is not always project based.

**Table 9: Examples of USAID, State, and NED Democracy Assistance Projects in Ukraine, Fiscal Years 2015-2018**

| Entity | Project title | Implementing organization | Amount obligated[a] | Duration | Program area(s) | Purpose |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| DRL (State) | Defending Media Freedom in Ukraine | Internews | $194,730 | 11 months | Independent media and free flow of information | To provide guidance on protections of freedom of speech, expression, and the media during a period of conflict and to create civil society consensus and public action around the protection of these freedoms. |
| EUR (State) | Creative Tools to Promote Media Literacy | Detector Media | $14,173 | 6 months | Independent media and free flow of information | To improve media literacy through the use of new and interactive products and caricatures. |
| INL[b] (State) | Ukrainian Legal Aid | Not specified | $24,945 | Not specified | Rule of law and human rights | To raise awareness of the rights of witnesses, victims, and detainees. |
| USAID | Ukraine Media Project (U-Media) | Internews | $20,750,000 | 7 years | Independent media and free flow of information  Political competition and consensus building  Civil society | To support freedom of speech and media independence, increase the variety of news sources and improve news quality, improve the enabling environment for media, and support local civil society organizations. |
| NED | Fostering Freedom and Transparency in the Media | Detector Media | $198,317 | 2 years | Independent media and free flow of information | To foster freedom of the media and promote transparency in the media sector, among other things. |

Legend: DRL = Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor; EUR = Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs; INL = Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs; NED = National Endowment for Democracy; State = Department of State; USAID = U.S. Agency for International Development.

Source: GAO analysis of State, USAID, and NED project data and documents.  |  GAO-20-173

Note: For our review of democracy assistance in Ukraine, we primarily selected projects that were categorized under the "independent media and free flow of information" program area.

[a]Funding obligated as of September 30, 2018.

[b]Because some INL project data were missing, we are unable to report certain characteristics of INL democracy assistance projects. In prior work, we recommended that State identify and address factors affecting the reliability of INL's democracy assistance data. See GAO, *Democracy Assistance: State Should Improve Accountability Over Funding; USAID Should Assess Whether New Processes Have Improved Award Documentation*, GAO-18-136 (Washington, D.C.: Dec. 14, 2017). INL's democracy assistance is categorized by the democracy assistance program areas used before April 2016, when the program areas were updated.

# Appendix VII: Comments from the Department of State

United States Department of State
*Comptroller*
Washington, DC 20520

JAN = 9 2020

Thomas Melito
Managing Director
International Affairs and Trade
Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20548-0001

Dear Mr. Melito:

We appreciate the opportunity to review your draft report,
"DEMOCRACY ASSISTANCE: State Should Improve Information Sharing
for Some Headquarters-Funded Projects" GAO Job Code 102995.

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

Sincerely,

Jeffrey C. Mounts (Acting)

Enclosure:
    As stated

cc:    GAO – David Gootnick
       DRL – Robert A. Destro
       OIG - Norman Brown

**Department of State Comments on GAO Draft Report**

<u>**DEMOCRACY ASSISTANCE: State Should Improve Information Sharing for Some Headquarters-Funded Projects**</u>
**(GAO-20-173, GAO Code 102995)**

The Department of State appreciates the opportunity to comment on the GAO draft report, *"Democracy Assistance: State Should Improve Information Sharing for Some Headquarters-Funded Projects."*

**Recommendation 1:** GAO recommends that the Secretary of State direct DRL to develop a mechanism for sharing of democracy assistance project information between DRL and relevant embassy staff.

**Response:** State concurs with the recommendation. The GAO's report explains why the study was done and how State and USAID have defined roles for democracy assistance projects globally. The GAO study looked at four countries in their study – Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Nigeria, Tunisia, and Ukraine. In general, while DRL and USAID often obligate assistance in the same countries, the programs are varied and fall within the respective DRL and USAID policy and program objectives. The GAO found that DRL has well defined standard operating procedures and that DRL and USAID have various other mechanisms to coordinate democracy assistance at the headquarters level. The embassies also described interagency coordination efforts at the country level through mechanisms such as working groups in country.

DRL has shared its standard operating procedures with the GAO to document that DRL takes great efforts to coordinate with all democracy assistance stakeholders, both in Washington, DC and at embassies around the world. Embassy staff, often times the Human Rights Officer, or staff in the political section of the embassy, are involved in multiple steps of the assistance lifecycle. Specifically, DRL includes staff during the Operational Plan drafting and review phase, the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) drafting and clearance process, the DRL Review Panels for each NOFO, and throughout the post-award phase where DRL provides updates to the Embassy on relevant program activities that the embassy should be aware. DRL also travels to many of the countries where DRL programs and routinely meets with Embassy staff to update them on programs in progress, strategically plan future programs, and further coordinate with each embassy.

One of the greatest challenges DRL and State in general faces is Foreign Service Officer (FSO) turnover. While the GAO notes that each of the four embassies they talked to lacked knowledge of DRL programming, it is important to note that each of those embassies also experienced staff turn over within the normal cycle of the Foreign Service between the time decisions were made on grants and their implementation. Additionally, most embassies do not have Human Rights Officers (HROs) who are exclusively dedicated to those issues. Those duties are often just one of the many job duties a typical FSO may be responsible for at Post.

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To better serve embassies and the need to share information, DRL consistently works to share more information with Embassies, while keeping a keen eye on implementer safety and security. To meet those needs, DRL will do the following:

1.  Implement an updated formal notification, such as a record email, of each approved project after the Assistant Secretary has approved the formal Funding Rec Memo that allows DRL to move forward with the formal obligation of funding to an approved implementer. This record email will be made available on the Class Net system.
2.  DRL will seek to use data visualization tools to better communicate with embassies and other relevant internal stakeholders on DRL programs globally.
3.  DRL will work with the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) to engage more actively in the various classes offered to help ensure that all FSOs are aware of what it does. This will enable DRL to better educate FSOs on how to work with DRL throughout their Tours of Duty.

# Appendix VIII: Comments from the U.S. Agency for International Development

January 14, 2020

David Gootnick
Director, International Affairs and Trade
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20226

Re: *DEMOCRACY ASSISTANCE: State Should Improve Information Sharing for Some
    Headquarters-Funded Projects* (GAO-20-173).

Dear Mr. Gootnick:

      I am pleased to provide the formal response of the U.S. Agency for International
Development (USAID) to the draft report produced by the U.S. Government Accountability
Office (GAO) titled, *DEMOCRACY ASSISTANCE: State Should Improve Information Sharing
for Some Headquarters-Funded Projects* (GAO-20-173).

      USAID supports all efforts that advance coordination with our field Missions and U.S.
Embassies to plan and execute democracy assistance. As the draft report notes, USAID's
democracy assistance, as reflected in country-level strategies and projects, aligns with the *Joint
Strategic Plan FY 2018–2022* of USAID and the U.S. Department of State, and with the
Agency's strategy to support democratic change and achieve broader development goals.
Further, our field-based presence ensures we can coordinate our democracy-assistance programs
with other U.S. Government Departments and Agencies that operate around the world. We look
forward to continuing our efforts with our colleagues from the State Department to enhance our
working relationships and programmatic coordination even further to avoid duplication of
efforts.

      I am transmitting this letter for inclusion in the GAO's final report. Thank you for the
opportunity to respond to the draft report, and for the courtesies extended by your staff while
conducting this engagement.

Sincerely,

Frederick Nutt
Assistant Administrator
Bureau for Management

Enclosure: a/s

# Appendix IX: GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgements

## GAO Contact

David Gootnick at (202) 512-3149 or gootnickd@gao.gov

## Staff Acknowledgements

In addition to the contact named above, Mona Sehgal (Assistant Director), Farhanaz Kermalli (Analyst-in-Charge), Daniela Rudstein, Tom Zingale, Neil Doherty, Reid Lowe, and Alex Welsh made key contributions to this report. Justin Fisher and Sarah Veale provided technical assistance.

# Appendix X: Accessible Data

## Data Tables

**Accessible Data for State and USAID Allocations for Democracy Assistance, Fiscal Years 2015-2018**

| Agency | FY2015 (Dollars in millions) | FY2016 (Dollars in millions) | FY2017 (Dollars in millions) | FY2018 (Dollars in millions) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| USAID | $1,165 | $1,591 | $1,656 | $1,502 |
| State | $678 | $811 | $752 | $668 |

**Accessible Data for Figure 1: State's and USAID's Global Allocations for Democracy Assistance, Fiscal Years 2015-2018**

| Agency | FY2015 (Dollars in millions) | FY2016 (Dollars in millions) | FY2017 (Dollars in millions) | FY2018 (Dollars in millions) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| USAID | $1,165 | $1,591 | $1,656 | $1,502 |
| State, INL | $395 | $378 | $340 | $250 |
| State, DRL and other bureaus | $283 | $434 | $412 | $418 |

**Accessible Data for Figure 2: Countries Where DRL, INL, and USAID Directed Allocations for Democracy Assistance, Fiscal Years 2015-2018**

| Countries where 3 entities directed allocations | Countries where 2 entities directed allocations | Countries where 1 entity directed allocations |
|---|---|---|
| Afghanistan | Albania | Algeria |
| Azerbaijan | Argentina | Bolivia |
| Bangladesh | Burundi | Bahrain |
| Burma | Belarus | Cameroon |
| Central African Republic | Bosnia and Herzegovina | Chad |
| China | Cambodia | Cote d'Ivoire |
| Colombia | Cuba | Djibouti |
| Democratic Republic of Congo | Ecuador | Dominican Republic |
| Egypt | Ethiopia | El Salvador |
| Georgia | Guatemala | Gambia |
| Indonesia | Guinea | Ghana |
| Iraq | India | Haiti |
| Laos | Jordan | Honduras |
| Libya | Kenya | Hungary |
| Mexico | Kosovo | Iran |
| Moldova | Kazakhstan | Israel |
| Morocco | Liberia | Papua New Guinea |
| Nigeria | Mali | Madagascar |
| Pakistan | Montenegro | Malaysia |
| Philippines | Nicaragua | Malawi |
| South Sudan | North Macedonia | Mongolia |
| Sri Lanka | Peru | Mozambique |
| Tajikistan | Serbia | Niger |
| Thailand | Sudan | North Korea |
| Tunisia | Syria | Paraguay |
| Ukraine | Tanzania | Russia |
| Uzbekistan | Timor-Leste | Rwanda |
| Vietnam | Uganda | Saudi Arabia |
| Yemen | Venezuela | Senegal |
| Armenia | West Bank and Gaza | Sierra Leone |
| Lebanon | | Somalia |
| Nepal | | South Africa |

| Countries where 3 entities directed allocations | Countries where 2 entities directed allocations | Countries where 1 entity directed allocations |
|---|---|---|
| Kyrgyz Republic | | Turkey |
| | | Turkmenistan |
| | | Zambia |
| | | Zimbabwe |
| | | Tibet |

**Accessible Data for Figure 3: DRL, INL, and USAID Distribution of Total Democracy Assistance Allocations, by Program Area, Fiscal Years 2017-2018**

| Agency | Total, FY17-FY18 (Dollars in millions) |
| --- | --- |
| **USAID:** Rule of Law | $339 |
| **USAID:** Good Governance | $1,553 |
| **USAID:** Political Competition and Consensus Building | $353 |
| **USAID:** Civil Society | $603 |
| **USAID:** Independent Media and Free Flow of Information | $128 |
| **USAID:** Human Rights | $181 |
| **USAID:** Total | $3,157 |
| **State DRL:** Rule of Law | $39.9 |
| **State DRL:** Good Governance | $22.5 |
| **State DRL:** Political Competition and Consensus Building | $42.0 |
| **State DRL:** Civil Society | $106.8 |
| **State DRL:** Independent Media and Free Flow of Information | $76.4 |
| **State DRL:** Human Rights | $203.1 |
| **State DRL:** Unknown | $76.1 |
| **State DRL:** Total | $565.9 |
| **State INL:** Rule of Law | $580.0 |
| **State INL:** Good Governance | $6.3 |
| **State INL:** Political Competition and Consensus Building | $0 |
| **State INL:** Civil Society | $0 |
| **State INL:** Media | $0 |
| **State INL:** Human Rights | $2.5 |
| **State INL:** Total | 588.8 |

**Accessible Data for Figure 4: DRL's Total Obligations for Democracy Assistance in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria, Tunisia, and Ukraine, by Program Area, Fiscal Years 2015-2018**

| Program Area | Total, FY2015-2018 |
| --- | --- |
| **Democratic Republic of the Congo:** Rule of law | $0.0 |
| **Democratic Republic of the Congo:** Good governance | $0.0 |
| **Democratic Republic of the Congo:** Political competition and consensus building | $0.0 |
| **Democratic Republic of the Congo:** Civil society | $2.6 |
| **Democratic Republic of the Congo:** Independent media & free flow of information | $1.0 |
| **Democratic Republic of the Congo:** Human rights | $2.0 |
| **Democratic Republic of the Congo:** Grand Total | $5.5 |
| **Nigeria:** Rule of law | $0.0 |
| **Nigeria:** Good governance | $0.0 |
| **Nigeria:** Political competition and consensus-building | $0.0 |
| **Nigeria:** Civil society | $1.2 |
| **Nigeria:** Independent media & free flow of information | $0.0 |
| **Nigeria:** Human rights | $4.2 |
| **Nigeria:** Grand Total | $5.4 |
| **Tunisia:** Program Area | Total, FY2015-2018 |
| **Tunisia:** Rule of law | $2.7 |
| **Tunisia:** Good governance | $0.9 |
| **Tunisia:** Political competition and consensus-building | $0.0 |
| **Tunisia:** Civil society | $2.2 |
| **Tunisia:** Independent media & free flow of information | $0.9 |
| **Tunisia:** Human rights | $2.3 |
| **Tunisia:** Grand Total | $9.1 |
| **Ukraine:** Program Area | Total, FY2015-2018 |
| **Ukraine:** Rule of law | $0.5 |
| **Ukraine:** Good governance | $2.4 |
| **Ukraine:** Political competition and consensus-building | $0.3 |
| **Ukraine:** Civil society | $1.2 |

| Program Area | Total, FY2015-2018 |
| --- | --- |
| **Ukraine:** Independent media & free flow of information | $3.0 |
| **Ukraine:** Human rights | $2.3 |
| **Ukraine:** Grand Total | $9.6 |

**Accessible Data for Figure 6: USAID's Total Obligations for Democracy Assistance in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria, Tunisia, and Ukraine, by Program Area, Fiscal Years 2015-2018**

| Program Area | Total, FY2015-2018 |
|---|---|
| **Democratic Republic of the Congo:** Rule of law | $6.7 |
| **Democratic Republic of the Congo:** Good governance | $15.8 |
| **Democratic Republic of the Congo:** Political competition and consensus building | $23.8 |
| **Democratic Republic of the Congo:** Civil society | $0.35 |
| **Democratic Republic of the Congo:** Independent media & free flow of information | $3.8 |
| **Democratic Republic of the Congo:** Human rights | $4.3 |
| **Democratic Republic of the Congo:** Grand Total | $54.7 |
| **Nigeria:** Rule of law | $0 |
| **Nigeria:** Good governance | $11.6 |
| **Nigeria:** Political competition and consensus-building | $39.0 |
| **Nigeria:** Civil society | $16.0 |
| **Nigeria:** Independent media & free flow of information | $0 |
| **Nigeria:** Human rights | $0 |
| **Nigeria:** Grand Total | $66.6 |
| **Tunisia:** Rule of law | $3.5 |
| **Tunisia:** Good governance | $18.8 |
| **Tunisia:** Political competition and consensus-building | $5.4 |
| **Tunisia:** Civil society | $21.5 |
| **Tunisia:** Independent media & free flow of information | $0 |
| **Tunisia:** Human rights | $0.3 |
| **Tunisia:** Grand Total | $49.5 |
| **Ukraine:** Rule of law | $11.4 |
| **Ukraine:** Good governance | $71.3 |

| Program Area | Total, FY2015-2018 |
|---|---|
| **Ukraine:** Political competition and consensus-building | $16.5 |
| **Ukraine:** Civil society | $25.0 |
| **Ukraine:** Independent media & free flow of information | $0.9 |
| **Ukraine:** Human rights | $0.9 |
| **Ukraine:** Grand Total | $126.0 |

**Accessible Data for Figure 8: Countries Where NED Allocated Funding for Democracy Assistance, Fiscal Years 2015-2018**

| Countries Where the National Endowment for Democracy Allocated Democracy Assistance Funds, Fiscal Years 2015 - 2018 |
|---|
| Afghanistan |
| Albania |
| Algeria |
| Angola |
| Argentina |
| Armenia |
| Azerbaijan |
| Bahrain |
| Bangladesh |
| Belarus |
| Bhutan |
| Bolivia |
| Bosnia & Herzegovina |
| Botswana |
| Burkina Faso |
| Burma |
| Burundi |
| Cambodia |
| Cameroon |
| Central African Republic |
| Chad |
| China (Mainland, HK, Inner Mongolia & Xinjiang) |
| Colombia |
| Cote d'Ivoire |
| Cuba |

**Countries Where the National Endowment for Democracy Allocated Democracy Assistance Funds, Fiscal Years 2015 - 2018**

| |
|---|
| Democratic Republic of Congo |
| Ecuador |
| Egypt |
| Equatorial Guinea |
| Eritrea |
| Ethiopia |
| Gambia |
| Georgia |
| Ghana |
| Guatemala |
| Guinea |
| Haiti |
| Honduras |
| Indonesia |
| Iran |
| Iraq |
| Jordan |
| Kazakhstan |
| Kenya |
| Kosovo |
| Kyrgyzstan |
| Lebanon |
| Liberia |
| Libya |
| Macedonia |
| Malaysia |
| Mali |
| Mauritania |
| Mexico |
| Moldova |
| Mongolia |
| Morocco |
| Mozambique |
| Nepal |
| Nicaragua |
| Niger |

**Countries Where the National Endowment for Democracy Allocated Democracy Assistance Funds, Fiscal Years 2015 - 2018**

Nigeria

North Korea

Pakistan

Panama

Paraguay

Peru

Philippines

Republic of Congo

Russia

Rwanda

Saudi Arabia

Senegal

Serbia

Sierra Leone

Somalia

Somaliland

South Africa

South Sudan

Sri Lanka

Sudan

Swaziland

Syria

Tajikistan

Tanzania

Thailand

Tibet

Togo

Tunisia

Turkey

Turkmenistan

Uganda

Ukraine

Uzbekistan

Venezuela

Vietnam

West Bank & Gaza

**Countries Where the National Endowment for Democracy Allocated Democracy Assistance Funds, Fiscal Years 2015 - 2018**

| |
| --- |
| Yemen |
| Zambia |
| Zimbabwe |

**Accessible Data for Figure 9: NED's Distribution of Total Democracy Assistance Allocations, by Program Area, Fiscal Years 2017-2018**

| National Endowment for Democracy | FY2017-2018 dollars in millions |
| --- | --- |
| Rule of Law | $8.5 |
| Good Governance | $100.0 |
| Political Competition and Consensus Building | $72.5 |
| Civil Society | $31.6 |
| Independent Media and Free Flow of Information | $30.1 |
| Human Rights | $32.6 |
| Total | $275.4 |

Accessible Data for Figure 11: NED's Total Obligations for Democracy Assistance in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria, Tunisia, and Ukraine, by Program Area, Fiscal Years 2015-2018

| Program Area | Total, FY2015-2018 |
|---|---|
| **Democratic Republic of the Congo:** Rule of law | $0 |
| **Democratic Republic of the Congo:** Good governance | 0.5 |
| **Democratic Republic of the Congo:** Political competition and consensus building | $7.6 |
| **Democratic Republic of the Congo:** Civil society | $0.3 |
| **Democratic Republic of the Congo:** Independent media & free flow of information | $0.4 |
| **Democratic Republic of the Congo:** Human rights | $0.8 |
| **Democratic Republic of the Congo:** Grand Total | $9.6 |
| **Nigeria:** Rule of law | $0.5 |
| **Nigeria:** Good governance | $5.0 |
| **Nigeria:** Political competition and consensus-building | $1.2 |
| **Nigeria:** Civil society | $0.8 |
| **Nigeria:** Independent media & free flow of information | $0.1 |
| **Nigeria:** Human rights | $0.6 |
| **Nigeria:** Grand Total | $8.2 |
| **Tunisia:** Rule of law | $0.1 |
| **Tunisia:** Good governance | $2.9 |
| **Tunisia:** Political competition and consensus-building | $4.4 |
| **Tunisia:** Civil society | $0.9 |
| **Tunisia:** Independent media & free flow of information | $0.2 |
| **Tunisia:** Human rights | $0.1 |
| **Tunisia:** Grand Total | $8.7 |
| **Ukraine:** Rule of law | $0 |
| **Ukraine:** Good governance | $6.9 |
| **Ukraine:** Political competition and consensus-building | $3.8 |

| Program Area | Total, FY2015-2018 |
| --- | --- |
| **Ukraine:** Civil society | $1.6 |
| **Ukraine:** Independent media & free flow of information | $2.4 |
| **Ukraine:** Human rights | $1.6 |
| **Ukraine:** Grand Total | $16.3 |

**Accessible Data for Figure 13: State's, USAID's, and NED's Total Obligations for Democracy Assistance in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, by Program Area, Fiscal Years 2015-2018**

| Program Area | Total, FY2015-2018 |
| --- | --- |
| **AF:** Rule of law | $0.0 |
| **AF:** Good governance | $0.0 |
| **AF:** Political competition and consensus building | $0.0 |
| **AF:** Civil society | $0.5 |
| **AF:** Independent media & free flow of information | $0.0 |
| **AF:** Human rights | $0.0 |
| **AF:** Grand Total | $0.5 |
| **DRL:** Rule of law | $0.0 |
| **DRL:** Good governance | $0.0 |
| **DRL:** Political competition and consensus building | $0.0 |
| **DRL:** Civil society | $2.6 |
| **DRL:** Independent media & free flow of information | $1.0 |
| **DRL:** Human rights | $2.0 |
| **DRL:** Grand Total | $5.5 |
| **INL:** Rule of law and human rights | $2.9 |
| **INL:** Good governance | $0.3 |
| **INL:** Political competition and consensus building | $0.0 |
| **INL:** Civil society | $0.0 |
| **INL:** Independent media & free flow of information | $0.0 |
| **INL:** Human rights | $0.0 |
| **INL:** Grand Total | $3.2 |
| **USAID:** Rule of law | $6.7 |
| **USAID:** Good governance | $15.8 |
| **USAID:** Political competition and consensus building | $23.8 |
| **USAID:** Civil society | $0.35 |
| **USAID:** Independent media & free flow of information | $3.8 |
| **USAID:** Human rights | $4.3 |
| **USAID:** Grand Total | $54.7 |
| **NED:** Rule of law | $0 |

| Program Area | Total, FY2015-2018 |
|---|---|
| **NED:** Good governance | $0.5 |
| **NED:** Political competition and consensus building | $7.6 |
| **NED:** Civil society | $0.3 |
| **NED:** Independent media & free flow of information | $0.4 |
| **NED:** Human rights | $0.8 |
| **NED:** Grand Total | $9.6 |

Accessible Data for Figure 14: State's, USAID's, and NED's Total Obligations for Democracy Assistance in Nigeria, by Program Area, Fiscal Years 2015-2018

| Program Area | Total, FY2015-2018 |
| --- | --- |
| **AF:** Rule of law | $0 |
| **AF:** Good governance | $0 |
| **AF:** Political competition and consensus-building | $0 |
| **AF:** Civil society | $0.3 |
| **AF:** Independent media & free flow of information | $1.0 |
| **AF:** Human rights | $0.5 |
| **AF:** Grand Total | $1.8 |
| **DRL:** Rule of law | $0 |
| **DRL:** Good governance | $0 |
| **DRL:** Political competition and consensus-building | $0 |
| **DRL:** Civil society | $1.2 |
| **DRL:** Independent media & free flow of information | $0 |
| **DRL:** Human rights | $4.2 |
| **DRL:** Grand Total | $5.4 |
| **INL:** Rule of law and human rights | $12.5 |
| **INL:** Good governance | $0 |
| **INL:** Political competition and consensus-building | $0 |
| **INL:** Civil society | $0 |
| **INL:** Grand Total | $12.5 |
| **USAID:** Rule of law | $0 |
| **USAID:** Good governance | $11.6 |
| **USAID:** Political competition and consensus-building | $39.0 |
| **USAID:** Civil society | $16.0 |
| **USAID:** Independent media & free flow of information | $0 |
| **USAID:** Human rights | $0 |
| **USAID:** Grand Total | $66.6 |
| **NED:** Rule of law | $0.5 |
| **NED:** Good governance | $5.0 |

| Program Area | Total, FY2015-2018 |
| --- | --- |
| **NED:** Political competition and consensus-building | $1.2 |
| **NED:** Civil society | $0.8 |
| **NED:** Independent media & free flow of information | $0.1 |
| **NED:** Human rights | $0.6 |
| **NED:** Grand Total | $8.2 |

**Accessible Data for Figure 15: State's, USAID's, and NED's Total Obligations for Democracy Assistance in Tunisia, by Program Area, Fiscal Years 2015-2018**

| Program Area | Total, FY2015-2018 |
| --- | --- |
| **DRL:** Rule of law | $2.7 |
| **DRL:** Good governance | $0.9 |
| **DRL:** Political competition and consensus-building | $0 |
| **DRL:** Civil society | $ 2.2 |
| **DRL:** Independent media & free flow of information | $1.0 |
| **DRL:** Human rights | $2.3 |
| **DRL:** Grand Total | $9.1 |
| **INL:** Rule of law and human rights | $ 3.9 |
| **INL:** Good governance | $0 |
| **INL:** Political competition and consensus-building | $0 |
| **INL:** Civil society | $0 |
| **INL:** Grand Total | $3.9 |
| **NEA:** Rule of law | $0 |
| **NEA:** Good governance | $7.8 |
| **NEA:** Political competition and consensus-building | $7.0 |
| **NEA:** Civil society | $5.7 |
| **NEA:** Independent media & free flow of information | $0 |
| **NEA:** Human rights | $0.15 |
| **NEA:** Grand Total | $20.7 |
| **USAID:** Rule of law | $3.5 |
| **USAID:** Good governance | $18.8 |
| **USAID:** Political competition and consensus-building | $5.4 |
| **USAID:** Civil society | $21.5 |
| **USAID:** Independent media & free flow of information | $0 |
| **USAID:** Human rights | $0.3 |
| **USAID:** Grand Total | $49.5 |
| **NED:** Rule of law | $0.1 |
| **NED:** Good governance | $2.9 |

| Program Area | Total, FY2015-2018 |
|---|---|
| **NED:** Political competition and consensus-building | $4.4 |
| **NED:** Civil society | $0.9 |
| **NED:** Independent media & free flow of information | $0.2 |
| **NED:** Human rights | $0.1 |
| **NED:** Grand Total | $8.7 |

**Accessible Data for Figure 16: State's, USAID's, and NED's Total Democracy Assistance Obligations in Ukraine, by Program Area, Fiscal Years 2015-2018**

| Program Area | Total, FY2015-2018 |
|---|---|
| **DRL:** Rule of law | $0.5 |
| **DRL:** Good governance | $2.4 |
| **DRL:** Political competition and consensus-building | $0.3 |
| **DRL:** Civil society | $1.2 |
| **DRL:** Independent media & free flow of information | $3.0 |
| **DRL:** Human rights | $2.3 |
| **DRL:** Grand Total | $9.6 |
| **EUR:** Rule of law | $0 |
| **EUR:** Good governance | $1.5 |
| **EUR:** Political competition and consensus-building | $0 |
| **EUR:** Civil society | $5.3 |
| **EUR:** Independent media & free flow of information | $4.1 |
| **EUR:** Human rights | $0 |
| **EUR:** Civil society and independent media | $5.7 |
| **EUR:** Grand Total | $16.7 |
| **INL:** Rule of law and human rights | $5.0 |
| **INL:** Good governance | $0 |
| **INL:** Political competition and consensus-building | $0 |
| **INL:** Civil society | $0 |
| **INL:** Grand Total | $5.0 |
| **USAID:** Rule of law | $11.4 |
| **USAID:** Good governance | $71.3 |
| **USAID:** Political competition and consensus-building | $16.5 |
| **USAID:** Civil society | $25.0 |
| **USAID:** Independent media & free flow of information | $0.9 |
| **USAID:** Human rights | $0.9 |
| **USAID:** Grand Total | $126.0 |
| **NED:** Rule of law | $0 |

| Program Area | Total, FY2015-2018 |
|---|---|
| **NED:** Good governance | $6.9 |
| **NED:** Political competition and consensus-building | $3.8 |
| **NED:** Civil society | $1.6 |
| **NED:** Independent media & free flow of information | $2.4 |
| **NED:** Human rights | $1.6 |
| **NED:** Grand Total | $16.3 |

# Agency Comment Letters

## Accessible Text for Appendix VII Comments from the Department of State

<u>Page 1</u>

JAN 9 2020

Thomas Melito

Managing Director

International Affairs and Trade

Government Accountability Office

441 G Street, N.W.

Washington, D.C. 20548-0001

Dear Mr. Melito:

We appreciate the opportunity to review your draft report, "DEMOCRACY ASSISTANCE: State Should Improve Information Sharing for Some Headquarters-Funded Projects" GAO Job Code 102995.

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

Sincerely,

Jeffrey C. Mounts (Acting)

Enclosure:

As stated

cc: GAO - David Gootnick

DRL - Robert A. Destro

OIG - Norman Brown

Page 2

Department of State Comments on GAO Draft Report

DEMOCRACY ASSISTANCE: State Should Improve Information Sharing for Some Headquarters-Funded Projects

(GAO-20-173, GAO Code 102995)

The Department of State appreciates the opportunity to comment on the GAO draft report, "Democracy Assistance: State Should Improve Information Sharing for Some Headquarters- Funded Projects."

Recommendation 1: GAO recommends that the Secretary of State direct DRL to develop a mechanism for sharing of democracy assistance project information between DRL and relevant embassy staff.

Response: State concurs with the recommendation. The GAO's report explains why the study was done and how State and USAID have defined roles for democracy assistance projects globally. The GAO study looked at four countries in their study – Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Nigeria, Tunisia, and Ukraine. In general, while DRL and USAID often obligate assistance in the same countries, the programs are varied and fall within the respective DRL and USAID policy and program objectives. The GAO found that DRL has well defined standard operating procedures and that DRL and USAID have various other mechanisms to coordinate democracy assistance at the headquarters level. The embassies also described interagency coordination efforts at the country level through mechanisms such as working groups in country.

DRL has shared its standard operating procedures with the GAO to document that DRL takes great efforts to coordinate with all democracy assistance stakeholders, both in Washington, DC and at embassies around the world. Embassy staff, often times the Human Rights Officer, or staff in the political section of the embassy, are involved in multiple steps of the assistance lifecycle. Specifically, DRL includes staff during the Operational Plan drafting and review phase, the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) drafting and clearance process, the DRL Review Panels for each NOFO, and throughout the post-award phase where DRL provides updates to the Embassy on relevant program activities that the embassy should be aware. DRL also travels to many of the countries where DRL programs and routinely meets with Embassy staff to update them on programs in progress, strategically plan future programs, and further coordinate with each embassy.

One of the greatest challenges DRL and State in general faces is Foreign Service Officer (FSO) turnover. While the GAO notes that each of the four embassies they talked to lacked knowledge of DRL programming, it is important to note that each of those embassies also experienced staff turn over within the normal cycle of the Foreign Service between the time decisions were made on grants and their implementation. Additionally, most embassies do not have Human Rights Officers (HROs) who are exclusively dedicated to those issues. Those duties are often just one of the many job duties a typical FSO may be responsible for at Post.

Page 3

To better serve embassies and the need to share information, DRL consistently works to share more information with Embassies, while keeping a keen eye on implementer safety and security. To meet those needs, DRL will do the following:

1. Implement an updated formal notification, such as a record email, of each approved project after the Assistant Secretary has approved the formal Funding Rec Memo that allows DRL to move forward with the formal obligation of funding to an approved implementer. This record email will be made available on the Class Net system.

2. DRL will seek to use data visualization tools to better communicate with embassies and other relevant internal stakeholders on DRL programs globally.

3. DRL will work with the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) to engage more actively in the various classes offered to help ensure that all FSOs are aware of what it does. This will enable DRL to better educate FSOs on how to work with DRL throughout their Tours of Duty.

# Accessible Text for Appendix VIII Comments from the U.S. Agency for International Development

January 14, 2020

David Gootnick

Director, International Affairs and Trade

U.S. Government Accountability Office

441 G Street, N.W.

Washington, D.C. 20226

Re: DEMOCRACY ASSISTANCE: State Should Improve Information Sharing for Some Headquarters-Funded Projects (GAO-20-173).

Dear Mr. Gootnick:

I am pleased to provide the formal response of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to the draft report produced by the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) titled, DEMOCRACY ASSISTANCE: State Should Improve Information Sharing for Some Headquarters-Funded Projects (GAO-20-173).

USAID supports all efforts that advance coordination with our field Missions and U.S. Embassies to plan and execute democracy assistance. As the draft report notes, USAID's democracy assistance, as reflected in country-level strategies and projects, aligns with the Joint Strategic Plan FY 2018-2022 of USAID and the U.S. Department of State, and with the Agency's strategy to support democratic change and achieve broader development goals. Further, our field-based presence ensures we can coordinate our democracy-assistance programs with other U.S. Government Departments and Agencies that operate around the world. We look forward to continuing our efforts with our colleagues from the

State Department to enhance our working relationships and programmatic coordination even further to avoid duplication of efforts.

I am transmitting this letter for inclusion in the GAO's final report. Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the draft report, and for the courtesies extended by your staff while conducting this engagement.

Sincerely,

Frederick Nutt

Assistant Administrator

Bureau for Management

Enclosure: a/s

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