

Highlights of [GAO-07-1186](#), a report to congressional requesters

Why GAO Did This Study

The rapid spread of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) in 2003 shows that disease outbreaks pose a threat beyond the borders of the country where they originate. Over the past decade, the United States has initiated a broad effort to ensure that countries can detect any disease outbreaks that may constitute a public health emergency of international concern. Three U.S. agencies—the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and the Department of Defense (DOD)—support programs aimed at building this broader capacity to detect a variety of infectious diseases.

This report describes (1) the obligations, goals, and activities of these programs and (2) the U.S. agencies’ monitoring of the programs’ progress. To address these objectives, GAO reviewed budgets and other funding documents, examined strategic plans and program monitoring and progress reports, and interviewed U.S. agency officials. GAO did not review capacity-building efforts in programs that focus on specific diseases, namely polio, tuberculosis, malaria, avian influenza, or HIV/AIDS. GAO is not making any recommendations.

The U.S. agencies whose programs we describe reviewed a draft of this report and generally concurred with our findings. They also provided technical comments, which we incorporated as appropriate.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on [GAO-07-1186](#). For more information, contact David Gootnick at (202) 512-3149 or gootnickd@gao.gov.

GLOBAL HEALTH

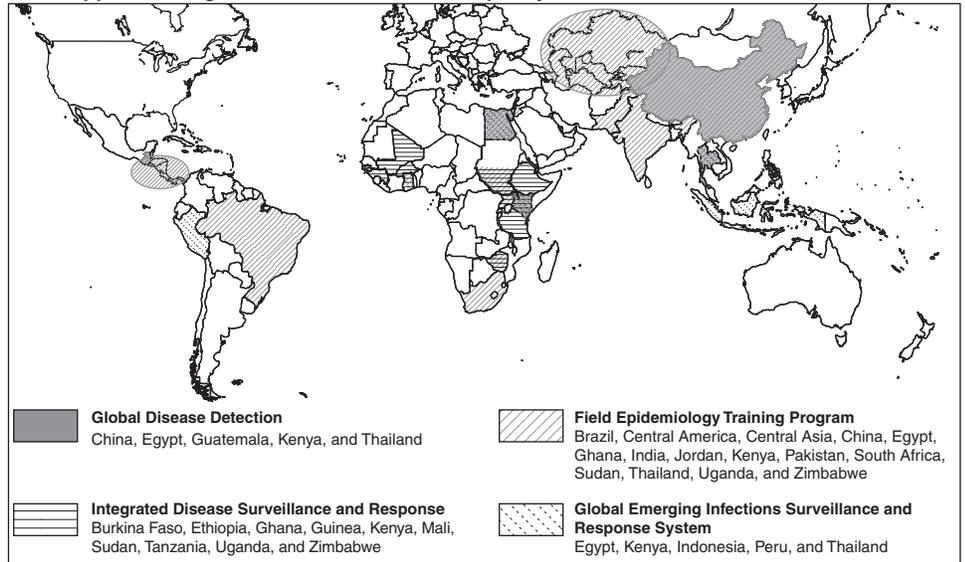
U.S. Agencies Support Programs to Build Overseas Capacity for Infectious Disease Surveillance

What GAO Found

The U.S. government operates or supports four key programs aimed at building overseas surveillance capacity for infectious diseases. In fiscal years 2004-2006, U.S. agencies obligated approximately \$84 million for these programs, which operate in developing countries around the world. Global Disease Detection is CDC’s main effort to build capacity for infectious disease surveillance in developing countries. The Field Epidemiology Training Programs, which CDC and USAID support, are another tool used to build infectious disease surveillance capacity worldwide. Additionally, USAID supports CDC and the World Health Organization’s Regional Office for Africa in designing and implementing Integrated Disease Surveillance and Response in 46 countries in Africa, with additional technical assistance to 8 African countries. DOD’s Global Emerging Infections Surveillance and Response System also contributes to capacity building through projects undertaken at DOD overseas research laboratories. USAID supports additional capacity-building projects in various developing countries. The responsible agencies coordinate with each other to limit duplication of their overseas efforts.

For each of the four key surveillance capacity-building programs, the U.S. agencies monitor activities such as the number of epidemiologists trained, the number of outbreak investigations conducted, and types of laboratory training completed. In addition, CDC and USAID recently began systematic efforts to evaluate the impact of their programs; however, because no evaluations had been completed as of July 2007, it is too early to assess whether these evaluation efforts will demonstrate progress in building surveillance capacity.

U.S.-Supported Programs to Build Overseas Capacity for Surveillance of Infectious Disease



Sources: GAO; Map Resources (map clip art).