

# GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-16-81](#), a report to congressional requesters

## Why GAO Did This Study

Millions of people in developing countries lack access to safe water and improved sanitation. Congress passed the Senator Paul Simon Water for the Poor Act of 2005 to improve access to safe water and sanitation for developing countries. In 2013, USAID released its first *Water and Development Strategy*, which includes the objective of improving health through sustainable WASH.

GAO was asked to review USAID's WASH efforts. Focusing on WASH activities in 9 selected countries, this report (1) describes recent activities and funding, (2) assesses USAID missions' efforts to plan and implement activities, and (3) assesses USAID's monitoring of activities. GAO selected a nongeneralizable sample of 9 countries from USAID's list of 22 priority WASH countries. These 9 countries received about 53 percent of funding attributed to WASH for fiscal years 2012 and 2013. GAO also selected 16 activities for detailed review in the 9 countries, primarily on the basis of levels of funding. GAO analyzed USAID WASH funding data for fiscal years 2012 through 2014 and reviewed agency documents, interviewed mission officials, and visited sites in 2 African countries.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that USAID take steps to improve monitoring and reporting of WASH activities, by identifying and addressing reasons for missions' inconsistent adherence with agency guidance. USAID generally concurred with the recommendations and, in particular, outlined steps it is taking to address the report's second recommendation.

View [GAO-16-81](#). For more information, contact David Gootnick at (202) 512-3149 or [gootnickd@gao.gov](mailto:gootnickd@gao.gov).

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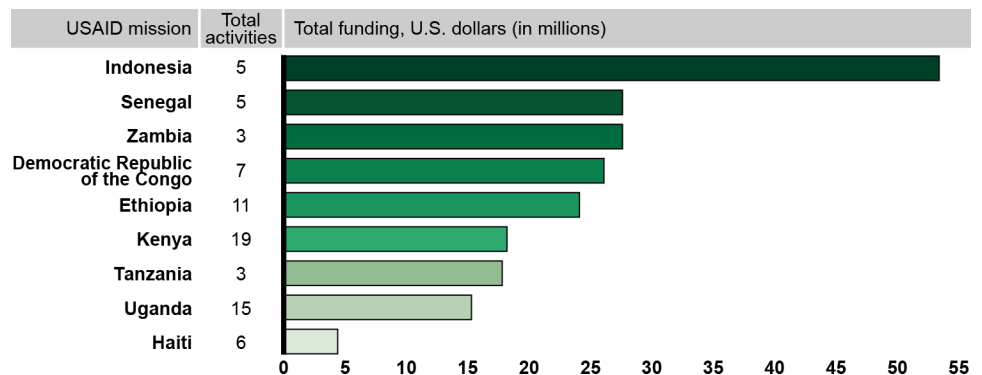
## WATER AND SANITATION ASSISTANCE

### USAID Has Increased Strategic Focus but Should Improve Monitoring

## What GAO Found

U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) missions in the 9 countries GAO selected for its review reported implementing a variety of water supply, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) activities in fiscal years 2012 through 2014. WASH activities included capacity building, behavior-change communication, infrastructure construction, technical assistance, policy and governance, and financing. The missions' funding for WASH activities in these countries ranged from \$4.4 million to \$53.4 million.

**Funding for Water Supply, Sanitation, and Hygiene Activities Implemented by Nine USAID Missions in Fiscal Years 2012-2014**



Source: GAO analysis of U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) data. | GAO-16-81

Note: Funding shown generally represents allocations for activities through Sept. 2014.

USAID missions in these 9 countries are taking steps to develop and implement plans for WASH activities, with some missions making more progress than others. These missions are also generally taking steps to address long-term sustainability when planning WASH activities, as directed by USAID guidance, including the *Water and Development Strategy*. USAID is in the process of developing additional guidance to help all its missions address the sustainability of WASH activities.

The completeness and accuracy of USAID's monitoring of WASH activities varied in the 9 selected countries. GAO found that, inconsistent with agency guidance, these missions did not (1) consistently set annual targets for 6 of 16 WASH activities, (2) disaggregate beneficiaries by gender for 6 of 10 water supply and sanitation activities, (3) verify the accuracy of beneficiary data for 3 of 10 water supply activities, and (4) report accurate numbers of beneficiaries for 6 of 8 sanitation activities. Mission officials cited a variety of reasons for adhering inconsistently with agency guidance in some instances and in others the reasons for inconsistent adherence were not clear. These limitations in the completeness and accuracy of monitoring information for WASH activities may inhibit the effectiveness of USAID's oversight of such activities and affect its ability to accurately report on progress in increasing access to safe water and sanitation.