

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-21-14](#), a report to the Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere, Transnational Crime, Civilian Security, Democracy, Human Rights, and Global Women's Issues, Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate

Why GAO Did This Study

Rule of law strengthens protection of fundamental rights and serves as a foundation for democratic governance and economic growth. According to State, strengthening judicial and legal systems in certain countries is vital to U.S. national security interests. State and USAID allocated over \$2.7 billion for rule of law assistance overseas from fiscal years 2014 through 2018.

GAO was asked to review monitoring and evaluation of U.S. rule of law assistance around the world. This report examines, among other objectives, the extent to which the agencies followed key practices for monitoring rule of law projects in selected countries, and processes agencies have in place to use evaluations to inform future rule of law assistance. GAO analyzed relevant laws and agency policies and other documents, and interviewed officials in Washington, D.C., and four countries—Colombia, Kosovo, Liberia, and the Philippines—selected based on funding amounts and other factors.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that State/INL establish procedures to ensure project goals, objectives, and risks are identified in monitoring plans. GAO also recommends that State/INL establish and USAID enhance procedures to ensure project staff assess and approve monitoring reports. State and USAID concurred with GAO's recommendations.

View [GAO-21-14](#). For more information, contact Chelsa Kenney Gurkin at (202) 512-2964 or gurkin@gao.gov.

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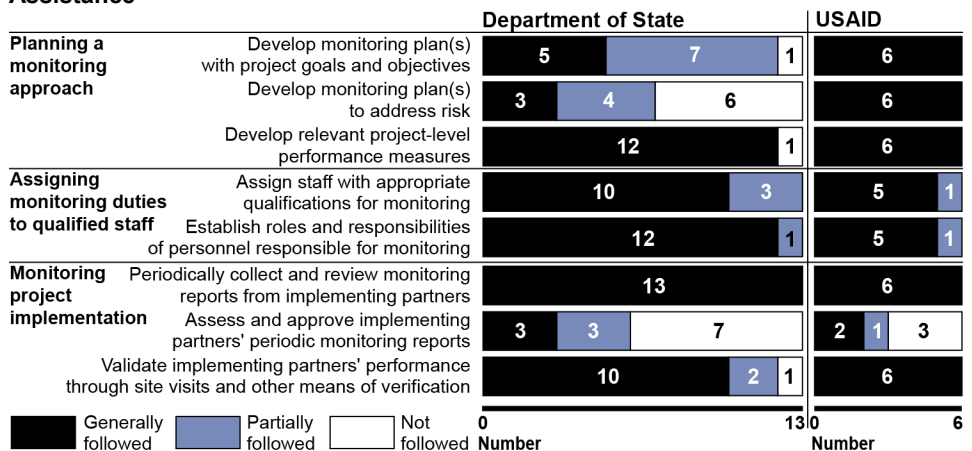
RULE OF LAW ASSISTANCE

State and USAID Could Improve Monitoring Efforts

What GAO Found

The Department of State (State) Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (State/INL) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) provided sufficient documentation for GAO to conclude that they followed most key practices for monitoring rule of law assistance for the awards we reviewed from selected countries. However, the agencies did not provide sufficient documentation demonstrating that they followed other key practices. Overall, State/INL followed these practices in most cases and USAID did so in almost all cases. Specifically, GAO's review of 19 State/INL and USAID projects found that USAID in all cases, and State/INL in most cases, followed key practices for planning a monitoring approach, such as developing project goals, objectives, and performance indicators. However, State/INL did not consistently demonstrate that project representatives included project goals and objectives in monitoring plans, and did not consistently identify risks in those plans (see fig.). Furthermore, neither agency could demonstrate that project representatives consistently assessed and approved monitoring reports from implementing partners. Following key monitoring practices helps to ensure that agencies stay well-informed of project performance and take corrective action when necessary, and that projects achieve their intended results. Without complete documentation, management cannot be sure that these practices are being followed.

State/INL and USAID Alignment with Key Practices for Monitoring Rule of Law Assistance



Source: GAO analysis of Department of State/Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (State/INL) and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) documents. | GAO-21-14

State and USAID have various processes to conduct, share, and use rule of law project evaluations to improve future efforts. Both agencies disseminate evaluations through online systems, briefings, and presentations, and have established approaches to track the implementation of evaluation recommendations, such as through spreadsheets or other documentation. The agencies use these evaluations in various ways to inform project design and strategic planning.