

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-22-104612](#), a report to the Acting Ranking Member; Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies; House Committee on Appropriations

Why GAO Did This Study

The number of food-insecure people has increased since 2014, and an estimated 768 million people were undernourished in 2020, according to the United Nations. The Global Food Security Act of 2016 required the President to coordinate the development and implementation of a whole-of-government global food security strategy. According to the GFSS, increased interagency engagement is intended to build effective coordination among agencies that contribute to global food security.

GAO was asked to review U.S. global food security assistance. This report examines (1) U.S. agency coordination of global food security assistance at the global level and in selected countries; (2) the extent to which U.S. agencies coordinate this assistance in accordance with leading collaboration practices; and (3) U.S. agencies' management of any duplication, overlap, or fragmentation of assistance in the selected countries. GAO reviewed GFSS documents and interviewed representatives of GFSS agencies and other stakeholders, including implementing partners and host governments in Bangladesh, Guatemala, Kenya, and Niger. GAO selected these countries using criteria such as geographic diversity and high levels of U.S. food security funding.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making two recommendations to USAID to ensure all relevant agencies are included in planning and coordination of food security assistance and can readily access information about each other's current and planned assistance. USAID concurred with both recommendations.

View [GAO-22-104612](#). For more information, contact Chelsa Kenney at (202) 512-2964 or kenney@gao.gov.

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GLOBAL FOOD SECURITY

Coordination of U.S. Assistance Can Be Improved

What GAO Found

The agencies responsible for implementing the U.S. Government Global Food Security Strategy (GFSS)—collectively known as the GFSS Interagency—have established mechanisms for coordinating assistance at the global and country levels. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) leads the coordination of these agencies' efforts to implement the strategy. At the global level, GFSS Interagency working groups meet to coordinate assistance efforts. At the country level, a country coordinator facilitates a whole-of-government strategy and plan in each country where agencies provide food security assistance. Agencies providing assistance in the four countries GAO selected for its review reported using a variety of mechanisms to coordinate with one another and key stakeholders. Agency officials and key stakeholders generally reported favorably on the quality of this coordination.

GAO found that the GFSS Interagency's mechanisms for coordinating food security assistance generally address four of seven leading practices GAO has identified as important for collaboration. However, this coordination can be improved. For example, agencies without in-country personnel are not always included in country-level planning of U.S. food security assistance. In addition, the GFSS Interagency has not established a mechanism to ensure all relevant agencies can readily access information about each other's current and planned spending. As a result, they have limited ability to leverage each other's planned assistance and promote a whole-of-government approach.

Selected Leading Collaboration Practices Partially Addressed by Agencies Implementing the U.S. Global Food Security Strategy

 Outcomes and accountability	 Participants	 Resources
Have short-term and long-term outcomes been clearly defined? Is there a way to track and monitor their progress?	Have all relevant participants been included? Do they have the ability to commit resources for their agency?	How will the collaborative mechanism be funded and staffed? Have online collaboration tools been developed?

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-104612

U.S. agencies reported taking steps to mitigate potential negative effects of any duplication, overlap, and fragmentation of food security assistance in the four selected countries, where multiple agencies target similar broad objectives. Agency officials and key stakeholder representatives in the countries observed some duplication, overlap, and fragmentation but also reported coordinating to mitigate potential negative effects. For example, USAID officials in Bangladesh told GAO they try to engage monthly or quarterly with the host government and other bilateral donors to review activities; identify any duplication, overlap, or fragmentation; and devise plans to ensure the activities are complementary. U.S. officials and key stakeholders reported some duplication, overlap, and fragmentation of food security assistance in the four countries—for example, overlapping assistance provided by U.S. agencies, the World Food Program, and the Kenyan government—but generally said this has had positive effects. GAO has previously reported that it may be beneficial for multiple agencies or entities to be involved in the same programmatic area of large or complex federal efforts.