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Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-06-645](#), a report to the Chairman, Subcommittee on Foreign Operations, Export Financing and Related Programs, Committee on Appropriations, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

In September 2004, Hurricane Ivan and Tropical Storm Jeanne passed through the Caribbean, taking lives and causing widespread damage in several countries. After initial U.S. emergency relief, in October 2004 Congress appropriated \$100 million in supplemental funding, primarily for Grenada, Jamaica, and Haiti, which were significantly affected. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), leader of the U.S. recovery programs, agreed, in consultation with the Office of Management and Budget, to complete the programs by December 31, 2005, giving the agency a 1-year time frame. GAO was asked to (1) review the nature and status of the programs in Grenada, Jamaica, and Haiti as of December 31, 2005; (2) identify factors that affected the programs' progress; and (3) assess USAID's use of guidance and lessons learned from previous similar programs and efforts to draw lessons from the current programs.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the USAID Administrator (1) develop disaster recovery and reconstruction guidance that incorporates lessons learned from the current and previous programs and (2) revise staffing procedures to facilitate the rapid reassignment or hiring of needed personnel for postdisaster recovery and reconstruction programs. USAID agreed with our recommendations.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-06-645.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact David Gootnick at (202) 512-3149 or gootnickd@gao.gov.

FOREIGN ASSISTANCE

USAID Completed Many Caribbean Disaster Recovery Activities, but Several Challenges Hampered Efforts

What GAO Found

As of December 31, 2005, USAID had spent about 77 percent of funds allocated for assistance in Grenada, Jamaica, and Haiti and completed many disaster recovery activities, such as providing business and agriculture grants. However, the agency significantly reduced its targets for building and repairing houses, in part because of cost increases, and granted contractors extensions to complete some of these projects.

Severe weather delayed the progress of recovery activities in Jamaica and Haiti—for example, two hurricanes in the summer of 2005 disrupted Jamaican housing repairs. In addition, difficulty coordinating activities with the Grenadian and Jamaican governments hampered housing construction. Further, other construction-related challenges—for example, shortages of cement—delayed projects in Grenada and Jamaica. Finally, frequent security problems in Haiti hindered contractors' progress.

USAID has not issued guidance that incorporates lessons learned from previous recovery and reconstruction programs, such as ways to mitigate challenges commonly faced in rebuilding after disasters. USAID staff inexperienced with disaster recovery efforts said that this made it difficult to design and implement the programs. Further, in agreeing to complete the programs within 1 year, USAID faced challenges in designing a broad spectrum of activities that would help rebuild residents' lives and that could be sustained after the programs ended. In addition, the agency did not adopt recommendations from GAO and USAID reviews of past recovery programs that could have helped it more rapidly hire and transfer staff for the Caribbean programs. Although the agency contracted with a management firm to quickly staff its program in Grenada and Jamaica, this led to additional challenges, such as confusion about the management firm's roles and responsibilities in relation to USAID staff and other contractors. USAID staff and contractors are recording lessons learned from the programs in each country.

New Housing Construction in Jamaica (left) and Grenada



Source: GAO.