

# GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-23-105178](#), a report to the Chairman, Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate

## Why GAO Did This Study

The Bureau supports U.S. efforts to save lives, protect the people most vulnerable to disease, and promote the stability of communities and nations throughout the world. From fiscal years 2019 through 2022, the Bureau had an annual budget between \$1 billion and \$1.4 billion. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of the Bureau's work to U.S. foreign policy. To respond to disease outbreaks and support existing health programming, the Bureau requires a workforce with a variety of skill sets. Its ability to assess its performance is important to its preparation for future health crises.

GAO was asked to review the Bureau's operations. This report examines (1) the Bureau's staffing and its workforce plans; (2) its performance assessments; and (3) key factors that affect the Bureau's ability to execute its mission and priorities, and the steps it has taken to address them. GAO analyzed USAID staffing data and global health reports. GAO also interviewed USAID officials in Washington, D.C., and at five overseas missions, selected based on factors such as geography, amount of funding, and number of health program areas.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO is making six recommendations, including that USAID ensure the Bureau develops a workforce plan, improves performance assessments and reporting, documents lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic, and institutionalizes efforts to address negative behaviors identified by the Bureau as affecting its culture. USAID concurred with all of GAO's recommendations.

View [GAO-23-105178](#). For more information, contact Chelsa Kenney at (202) 512-2964 or [kenneyc@gao.gov](mailto:kenneyc@gao.gov).

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## USAID

# Management Improvements Needed to Better Meet Global Health Mission

## What GAO Found

The U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID) Bureau for Global Health's (Bureau) staffing is not aligned with its mission and priorities. More than half of the Bureau's workforce consists of contractors who USAID has determined cannot perform inherently governmental functions. These functions include overseeing the Bureau's contracts and grants—its primary mechanisms for implementing its programming. In addition, the distribution of the Bureau's staff is inconsistent with its program funding levels. Specifically, the Bureau has the greatest number of staff working on HIV/AIDS programming, but receives less funding for this programming compared with its other strategic priorities—preventing child and maternal deaths and combating infectious diseases. Despite these challenges, the Bureau lacks a workforce plan, leaving it with limited ability to address its current and future staffing needs.

Bureau performance assessments have gaps at the Bureau and program levels. The Bureau does not have indicators for bureau-wide performance that measure progress for each of its strategic priorities, or across them. Communicating the Bureau's overall performance is also challenging due to variations in its data. While the Bureau assesses program level performance for its health program areas, its reports to Congress in some of these areas do not always include key information. For example, reports on maternal and child health do not contain results for 18 countries that received more than \$200 million between fiscal years 2019 and 2021. By assessing its bureau-wide performance, harmonizing its data, and improving its reports, the Bureau can better evaluate and communicate its results and enhance the quality of the information it is providing to Congress.

## Examples of Programming Funded by the Bureau for Global Health



Sources: Amy Fowler/U.S. Agency for International Development (left) and the President's Malaria Initiative Impact Malaria Project. | [GAO-23-105178](#)

The Bureau has recently faced several challenges to its ability to execute its mission and priorities. These have included challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, including disruptions to existing health services. The Bureau took steps to address COVID-related challenges, such as by providing lengthier supplies of medications during lockdowns. However, while some USAID missions have documented lessons learned from the pandemic, the Bureau has not. Doing so could help the Bureau better respond to future global health emergencies. Finally, though the Bureau has identified negative behaviors that affect its culture, it has not yet institutionalized its efforts to address them.