

Why GAO Did This Study

Since 2003, minority groups in Iraq have experienced religiously and ethnically motivated attacks, killings, and forced displacements. Concern for Iraqi religious and ethnic minorities led various congressional committees and Congress as a whole to issue a series of directives to provide assistance to these groups.

The 2008 directive directed that \$10 million of unobligated ESF funds from prior years be provided to assist religious minorities in the Ninewa plain region of Iraq. The 2008 supplemental and 2010 directives directed that up to \$10 million be provided to assist religious and ethnic minority groups in Iraq for each directive. USAID and State reported to Congress that they met the provisions of these three directives by providing \$40 million in assistance to Iraqi minority groups.

Congressional requesters asked GAO to examine the extent to which (1) USAID demonstrated that the assistance it reported to Congress met the 2008 directive and (2) USAID and State demonstrated that the assistance they reported to Congress met the 2008 supplemental and 2010 directives. To address these objectives, GAO analyzed documents and interviewed officials from State and USAID in Washington, D.C., and Iraq. This report is a public version of a Sensitive But Unclassified report issued in May 2012.

GAO is not making recommendations. Both agencies provided technical comments on the draft that were incorporated, as appropriate. State did not submit an agency comment letter in response to the draft. In its agency comment letter, USAID stated that it met minority groups' needs to a greater extent than is presented in the report. GAO continues to believe that USAID could not demonstrate how its reported assistance met the provisions of the 2008 directive.

To view the full product, click on [GAO-12-834](#). For more information, contact David Gootnick at (202) 512-3149 or gootnickd@gao.gov.

IRAQ

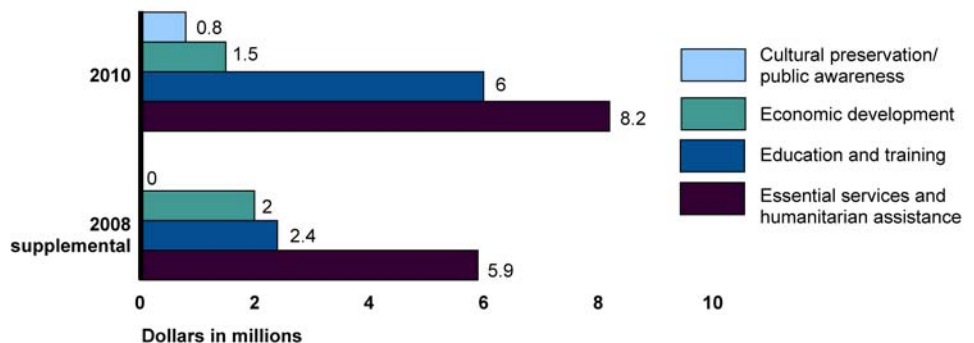
U.S. Assistance to Iraq's Minority Groups in Response to Congressional Directives

What GAO Found

GAO found that the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) could not demonstrate how the projects that it reported to Congress met the provisions of the 2008 directive because of three weaknesses. First, USAID documents—specifically, the list of projects the agency submitted to Congress—linked only \$3.8 million of the \$14.8 million in assistance (26 percent) directly to the Ninewa plain region. Second, USAID documents generally did not show whether the projects included minority groups among the beneficiaries of the assistance and specifically whether \$8 million of assistance was provided for internally displaced families. Third, USAID officials and documents did not demonstrate that the agency used unobligated prior year Economic Support Fund (ESF) funds to initiate projects in response to the 2008 directive.

USAID and the Department of State (State) generally could demonstrate how they met the 2008 supplemental and 2010 directives. According to USAID and State documents, the agencies approved \$26.9 million in assistance—primarily in essential services and humanitarian assistance—to meet the 2008 supplemental and 2010 directives' provisions to spend up to \$10 million for each directive to assist religious and ethnic minority groups in Iraq (see figure below). In addition, as directed by Congress, the U.S. embassy in Baghdad designated staff at the embassy to oversee and coordinate assistance to minority groups in 2008.

Assistance Provided to Iraq's Minority Groups, by Category, in Response to the 2008 Supplemental and 2010 Directives



Sources: GAO analysis of State and USAID data.

Note: The total does not add up to \$26.9 million due to rounding.

Using the Quick Response Fund (QRF) program, USAID and State took five steps that generally demonstrated how they met the 2008 supplemental and 2010 directives. First, the U.S. embassy in Baghdad directed that support of minority groups be made one of the thematic goals of the QRF program in 2008. Second, USAID and State categorized projects in their respective QRF databases by thematic goal. Third, the U.S. embassy in Baghdad and its Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) conducted outreach to inform potential beneficiaries of the availability of assistance through the QRF program. Fourth, PRTs or the QRF implementing partner conducted final site visits and prepared project close-out reports. Fifth, both USAID and State conducted third-party assessments at the close of their respective components of the QRF program. The QRF program closed and the PRTs ceased their operations by the end of 2011, as planned. According to USAID and State officials, the two agencies continue to assist minority groups through the obligation of an additional \$28 million in reprogrammed ESF funds from previous years.