

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-23-105390](#), a report to the Ranking Member, Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate

Why GAO Did This Study

Trafficking in persons, or human trafficking, is a longstanding problem throughout the world. The United Nations estimates about one third of detected victims of trafficking are children. CPCs are a key State effort to combat international child trafficking. The TIP Office supports CPCs by providing funding to project implementers that assist partner country governments in strengthening their capacity and efforts to combat child trafficking.

GAO was asked to review progress of the CPC program since it began in 2015. This report examines the TIP Office's monitoring of CPC performance, and tracking of partner country CPC contributions and sustainability measures, among other objectives.

GAO analyzed State documentation on CPC country selection, monitoring, and evaluation, and interviewed TIP Office officials. GAO also conducted site visits, virtually or in person, in three countries to interview U.S. embassy officials, partner government officials, and project implementers. GAO selected these countries based on various factors, including the opportunity to observe stakeholder discussions on CPC progress.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making six recommendations to State, including sharing information on key CPC performance indicators at annual dialogues; creating targets for CPC performance indicators; tracking partner country contributions; and discussing CPC sustainability measures with partner governments at annual dialogues. State agreed with the recommendations.

View [GAO-23-105390](#). For more information, contact Chelsa Kenney at (202) 512-2964 or KenneyC@gao.gov.

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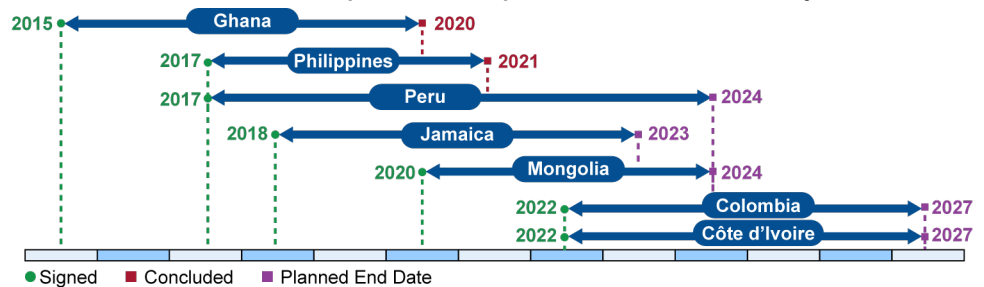
HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Department of State Collaborates with Partner Governments on Child Protection Compacts but Should Strengthen Oversight

What GAO Found

Child Protection Compacts (CPCs) are partnerships, lasting at least 4 years, between the U.S. government and selected partner countries to combat child trafficking. The U.S. and partner governments develop plans to achieve shared objectives through U.S.-funded projects aimed at strengthening countries' efforts to prosecute and convict child traffickers, provide comprehensive care for child victims, and prevent child trafficking. As of January 2023, the Department of State's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (TIP Office), which leads U.S. efforts for the CPCs, had selected and signed partnership documents with seven partner countries (see figure).

Timeline of Child Protection Compact Partnerships, 2015 to 2027, as of January 2023



Source: GAO analysis of Department of State documents. | GAO-23-105390

The TIP Office has tools to help monitor CPC progress, but none of them include discussions of key performance indicator data or indicator targets. According to TIP Office officials, the primary monitoring tool is the annual dialogues, meetings between agency officials, partner governments, and project implementers, to share information on CPC efforts. Participants at the dialogues provide examples of various activities, but they do not identify key CPC performance indicators beforehand to discuss or directly mention any during the dialogues. The TIP Office developed two new tools that include indicators to assist with collecting performance data, a broad CPC framework and a country-specific reporting template, but neither addresses the need for indicator targets. TIP Office officials said they have not focused on indicators or targets because they did not prioritize them, although based on agency guidance, the annual dialogues should include discussions of indicators. By not identifying and discussing key indicators at the dialogues and creating targets, the TIP Office has its limited ability to monitor the performance and better understand the progress of the CPCs.

Stakeholders GAO interviewed described some CPC activities, but the TIP Office does not track partner government contributions or sustainability measures. The activities included creating child-friendly spaces for victims and increasing coordination among agencies addressing child trafficking. However, the TIP Office does not formally track partner government contributions to the CPCs like personnel or funding. Stakeholders also noted the importance of sustainability measures like the sustainability plans called for in the partnership documents, but the partner governments did not provide such plans nor did the TIP Office follow up on them. Without information on partner government contributions and sustainability measures, the TIP Office lacks knowledge on partner country contributions and plans to sustain progress under the CPCs.