



Highlights of [GAO-06-825](#), a report to the Chairman, Committee on the Judiciary and the Chairman, Committee on International Relations, House of Representatives

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Better Data, Strategy, and Reporting Needed to Enhance U.S. Antitrafficking Efforts Abroad

Why GAO Did This Study

Human trafficking is a worldwide form of exploitation in which men, women, and children are bought, sold, and held against their will in involuntary servitude. In addition to the tremendous personal damage suffered by individual trafficking victims, this global crime has broad societal repercussions, such as fueling criminal networks and imposing public health costs. In 2000, Congress enacted the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) to combat trafficking and reauthorized this act twice. This report reviews U.S. international antitrafficking efforts by examining (1) estimates of the extent of global trafficking, (2) the U.S. government's strategy for combating the problem abroad, and (3) the Department of State's process for evaluating foreign governments' antitrafficking efforts.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the Secretary of State (1) improve information on trafficking, (2) develop and implement a strategy that clarifies agencies' roles and responsibilities and establishes a way to gauge results abroad, and (3) clearly document the rationale and support for country rankings.

In their comments, the agencies primarily responsible for these activities generally concurred with our recommendations.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-06-825.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Thomas Melito, 202-512-9601, melitot@gao.gov.

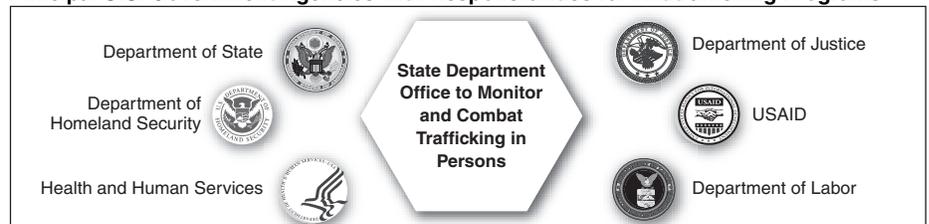
What GAO Found

The U.S. government estimates that 600,000 to 800,000 persons are trafficked across international borders annually. However, such estimates of global human trafficking are questionable. The accuracy of the estimates is in doubt because of methodological weaknesses, gaps in data, and numerical discrepancies. For example, the U.S. government's estimate was developed by one person who did not document all his work, so the estimate may not be replicable, casting doubt on its reliability. Moreover, country data are not available, reliable, or comparable. There is also a considerable discrepancy between the numbers of observed and estimated victims of human trafficking. The U.S. government has not yet established an effective mechanism for estimating the number of victims or for conducting ongoing analysis of trafficking related data that resides within government entities.

While federal agencies have undertaken antitrafficking activities, the U.S. government has not developed a coordinated strategy for combating trafficking abroad or developed a way to gauge results and target its overall assistance. The U.S. government has established coordination mechanisms, but they do not include a systematic way for agencies to clearly delineate roles and responsibilities in relation to each other, identify needs, or leverage activities to achieve greater results. Further, the U.S. government has not established performance measures or conducted evaluations to gauge the overall impact of antitrafficking programs abroad, thus preventing the U.S. government from determining the effectiveness of its efforts or adjusting its assistance to better meet needs.

The Department of State assesses foreign governments' compliance with minimum standards to eliminate trafficking in persons; but the explanations for ranking decisions in its annual *Trafficking in Persons Report* are incomplete, and the report is not used consistently to develop antitrafficking programs. It has increased global awareness, encouraged government action, and raised the risk of sanctions against governments who did not make significant efforts to comply with the standards. However, State does not comprehensively describe compliance with the standards, lessening the report's credibility and usefulness as a diplomatic tool. Further, incomplete country narratives reduce the report's utility as a guide to help focus U.S. government resources on antitrafficking programming priorities.

Principal U.S. Government Agencies with Responsibilities for Antitrafficking Programs



Sources: U.S. agencies listed in figure (data) and Corel (logos).