July 2015

CENTRAL AMERICA

Improved Evaluation Efforts Could Enhance Agency Programs to Reduce Unaccompanied Child Migration

Accessible Version

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Why GAO Did This Study

According to DHS, the number of UAC apprehended at the U.S.-Mexican border climbed from nearly 28,000 in fiscal year 2012 to more than 73,000 in fiscal year 2014, with nearly three-fourths of those apprehended nationals of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. Children from these three countries face a host of challenges, such as extreme violence and persistent poverty. Those who migrate can encounter even more dangers, such as robbery and abuse.

GAO was asked to review issues related to UAC migration. In February 2015, GAO reported on U.S. assistance to Central America addressing the rapid increase in UAC migration. This report reviews (1) U.S. assistance in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras addressing agency-identified causes of UAC migration; (2) how agencies have determined where to locate these assistance efforts; and (3) the extent to which agencies have developed processes to assess the effectiveness of programs seeking to address UAC migration. GAO reviewed agency documents and interviewed officials in Washington, D.C., and in Central America.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that DHS and State take steps to integrate evaluations into their planning for, and implementation of, future information campaigns intended to deter migration. GAO also recommends that DHS establish performance targets for its investigative units. DHS concurred with both recommendations, and State concurred with the one recommendation directed to it.

View GAO-15-707. For more information, contact Kimberly Gianopoulos at (202)-512-8612 or gianopoulosk@gao.gov
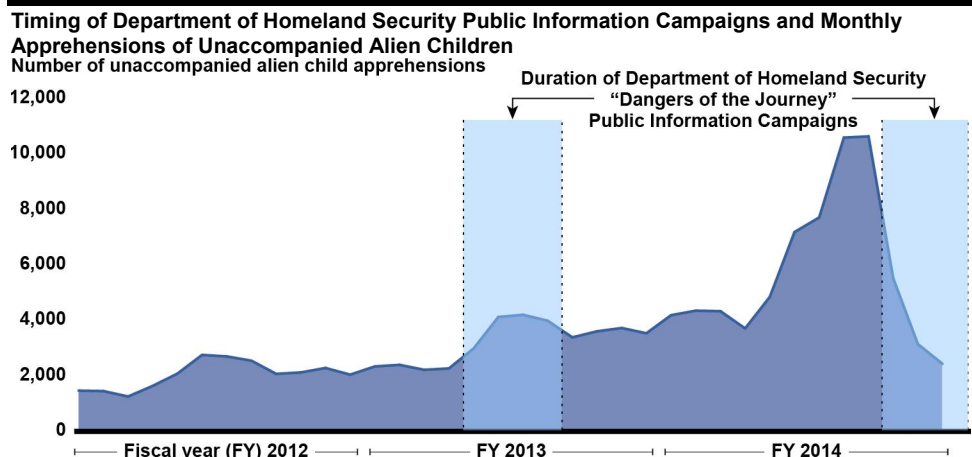
What GAO Found

U.S. agencies have sought to address causes of unaccompanied alien child (UAC) migration through recent programs, such as information campaigns to deter migration, developed in response to the migration increase and other long-standing efforts. The recent migration increase was likely triggered, according to U.S. officials, by several emergent factors such as the increased presence and sophistication of human smugglers (known as coyotes) and confusion over U.S. immigration policy. Officials also noted that certain persistent conditions such as violence and poverty have worsened in certain countries. In addition to long-standing efforts, such as U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) antipoverty programs, agencies have taken new actions. For example, Department of Homeland Security (DHS)-led investigative units have increasingly sought to disrupt human smuggling operations.

U.S. agencies have located programs based on various factors, including long-term priorities such as targeting high-poverty and -crime areas, but have adjusted to locate more programs in high-migration communities. For example, Department of State (State) officials in Guatemala said they moved programs enhancing police anticrime capabilities into such communities, and USAID officials in El Salvador said they expanded to UAC-migration-affected locations.

Most agencies have developed processes to assess the effectiveness of programs seeking to address UAC migration, but weaknesses exist in these processes for some antismuggling programs. For example, DHS has established performance measures, such as arrests, for units combating UAC smuggling, but has not established numeric or other types of targets for these measures, which would enable DHS to measure the units' progress. In addition, DHS and State have not always evaluated information campaigns intended to combat coyote misinformation. DHS launched its 2013 campaign in April, but launched its 2014 campaign in late June after migration levels peaked. Neither agency evaluated its 2014 campaign. Collecting performance information on media campaigns can have value in informing future campaign efforts to reduce child migration.

Timing of Department of Homeland Security Public Information Campaigns and Monthly Apprehensions of Unaccompanied Alien Children

Source: GAO analysis of Department of Homeland Security data. | GAO-15-707

Contents

Figures

Abbreviations

CARSI	Central America Regional Security Initiative
CBP	U.S. Customs and Border Protection
CDCS	Country Development Cooperation Strategy
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
DOJ	Department of Justice
IAF	Inter-American Foundation
ICE	U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
INL	Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs
MCC	Millennium Challenge Corporation
NGO	nongovernmental organization
PMP	Performance Management Plan
PPR	Performance Plan and Report
State	Department of State
TCIU	Transnational Criminal Investigative Unit
UAC	unaccompanied alien child(ren)
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
WHA	Western Hemisphere Affairs

July 29, 2015

Congressional Requesters

Since 2012, there has been a rapid increase in the number of apprehensions at the U.S.-Mexican border of unaccompanied alien children (UAC)—foreign nationals under the age of 18 who are neither with a parent nor with a legal guardian at the time they are apprehended.[1] According to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the number of UAC from any country apprehended at the U.S. border climbed from nearly 28,000 in fiscal year 2012 to more than 42,000 in fiscal year 2013, and to more than 73,000 in fiscal year 2014. Prior to fiscal year 2012, most UAC apprehended at the border were Mexican nationals. However, starting in fiscal year 2013, the total number of UAC from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras surpassed the number of UAC from Mexico and, in fiscal year 2014, far surpassed the number of UAC from Mexico.

Children from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras face a host of perils both within their countries and along the migration route to the United States. In February, we reported that U.S. officials in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras most commonly identified crime and violence and economic concerns as among the primary causes of UAC migration to the United States.[2] These three countries have among the world's highest murder rates, according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, along with a widespread presence of gangs in each, as well as high poverty rates and a number of other persistent problems that diminish living conditions. Children who migrate, however, can encounter further risks, with some having to travel over a thousand miles to the U.S. border, sometimes crossing the desert by foot or riding on top of trains. Along the way, they can encounter numerous dangers, including robbery, extortion, abandonment, rape, or murder.

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[1]U.S. law defines an unaccompanied alien child, or UAC, as "a child who has no lawful immigration status in the United States; has not attained 18 years of age; and with respect to whom there is no parent or legal guardian in the United States or no parent or legal guardian in the United States available to provide care and physical custody." 6 U.S.C. § 279(g)(2).

[2]GAO, *Central America: Information on Migration of Unaccompanied Children from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras*, GAO-15-362 (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 27, 2015).

GAO-15-707 Unaccompanied Children from Central America

A number of U.S. agencies provide assistance intended to improve living conditions and strengthen rule of law in the three countries, including the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID); the Departments of State (State), Homeland Security (DHS) and Justice (DOJ), the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC);[3] and the Inter-American Foundation (IAF).[4] The U.S. government also provides additional assistance through the Central America Regional Security Initiative (CARSI). In its fiscal year 2016 budget request, the administration requested an additional $1 billion for Central America to support assistance efforts intended to address underlying causes of migration.

We were asked to review a number of issues related to UAC migration. We recently reported on U.S. efforts to screen and care for UAC migrants who safely arrive at the border,[5] and we plan to report in 2016 on efforts to care for UAC once in U.S. custody. This report reviews (1) U.S. assistance in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras addressing agency-identified causes of UAC migration; (2) how agencies have determined where to locate these assistance efforts; and (3) the extent to which agencies have developed processes to assess the effectiveness of programs seeking to address UAC migration.

To address the objectives for this review, we obtained written responses from agency officials outlining what they identified as the causes of UAC migration, and actions taken in response to the migration increase. To assess these responses, we reviewed agency documents for programs agencies identified as addressing causes of UAC migration, including country and program strategies, operational plans, project proposal and appraisal documents, and progress reports, among others. We also interviewed U.S. and nongovernment officials in Washington, D.C., and

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[3]MCC was created by Congress in 2004. It forms partnerships with poor countries that have committed to good governance, economic freedom, and investments in their citizens by providing them with large-scale grants to reduce poverty through sustainable economic growth.

[4]IAF, which was created by Congress in 1969, seeks to complement the work of other U.S. agencies in Central America by investing directly in projects that are designed, led, and implemented by the affected communities. According to IAF, it invests only in the most promising proposals it receives and requires grantee partners to contribute significant resources to their projects—on average, $1.3 for every $1 from IAF.

[5]GAO, *Unaccompanied Alien Children: Actions Needed to Ensure Children Receive Required Care in DHS Custody*, GAO-15-521 (Washington, D.C.: July 14, 2015).

U.S., host government, and nongovernment officials in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, where we also visited U.S. agency-supported projects and met with children in each country. For more information on our scope and methodology, see appendix I.

We conducted this performance audit from September 2014 to July 2015 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Background

Since 2012, there has been a rapid increase in the number of UAC apprehended at the U.S.-Mexican border. According to DHS's U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), the number of UAC from any country apprehended at the border climbed from nearly 28,000 in fiscal year 2012 to more than 42,000 in fiscal year 2013, and to more than 73,000 in fiscal year 2014. Prior to fiscal year 2012, the majority of UAC apprehended at the border were Mexican nationals.[6] However, as figure 1 shows, more than half of the UAC apprehended at the border in fiscal year 2013, and nearly three-fourths of UAC apprehended in fiscal year 2014, were nationals of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras.[7]

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[6]Within DHS, CBP and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) apprehend, process, temporarily detain, and care for UAC who attempt to illegally enter the United States.

[7]Border Patrol apprehension data for fiscal year 2009 through July 2014 were obtained in August 2014, and data for August and September 2014 were obtained in October 2014. Office of Field Operations apprehension data for fiscal years 2012 and 2013 were queried as of August 2014, and data for fiscal year 2014 were queried as of October 2014. The Office of Field Operations was not able to provide the number of UAC apprehended during fiscal years 2009 through 2011 because it had data only for the number of children apprehended and could not break out how many were UAC and how many were accompanied children. ICE apprehension data for fiscal years 2009 through 2014 were queried as of October 2015.

Figure 1: Apprehensions of Unaccompanied Alien Children by Country of Citizenship, Fiscal Years 2009 through 2014

Unaccompanied children (in thousands)
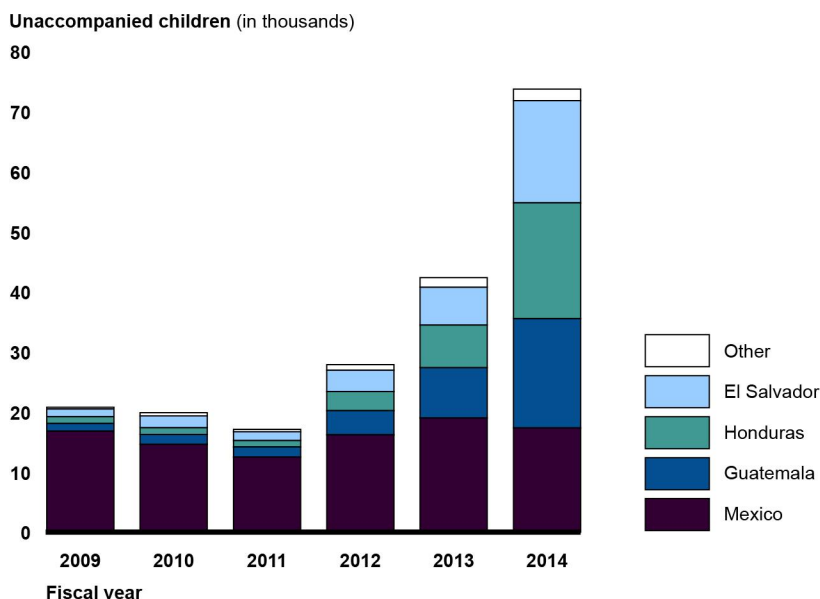
Source: GAO analysis of Department of Homeland Security data. | GAO-15-707

Recent data indicate the pace of migration from Central America remains high, though fewer migrants are being apprehended in the United States. According to DHS's Border Patrol—a component of CBP—through May 2015, there have been nearly 23,000 UAC apprehensions at the southwest border in fiscal year 2015—compared with about 24,500 through May of fiscal year 2013 and nearly 47,000 through May of fiscal year 2014. However, according to research from the nongovernmental organization (NGO) the Washington Office on Latin America, Central American migrants are being detained in Mexico at a higher rate this year compared with last year, with more than 90,000 Central American migrants detained in Mexico during the first 7 months of fiscal year 2015 compared with around 50,000 during the same period of fiscal year 2014. Since 2012, apprehensions of UAC at the U.S.-Mexican border have generally increased between January and May, as shown in figure 2, according to data from DHS's Border Patrol.

Figure 2: Apprehensions of Unaccompanied Alien Children at the U.S-Mexican Border, by Month, Fiscal Years 2012-2014

Number of children apprehended
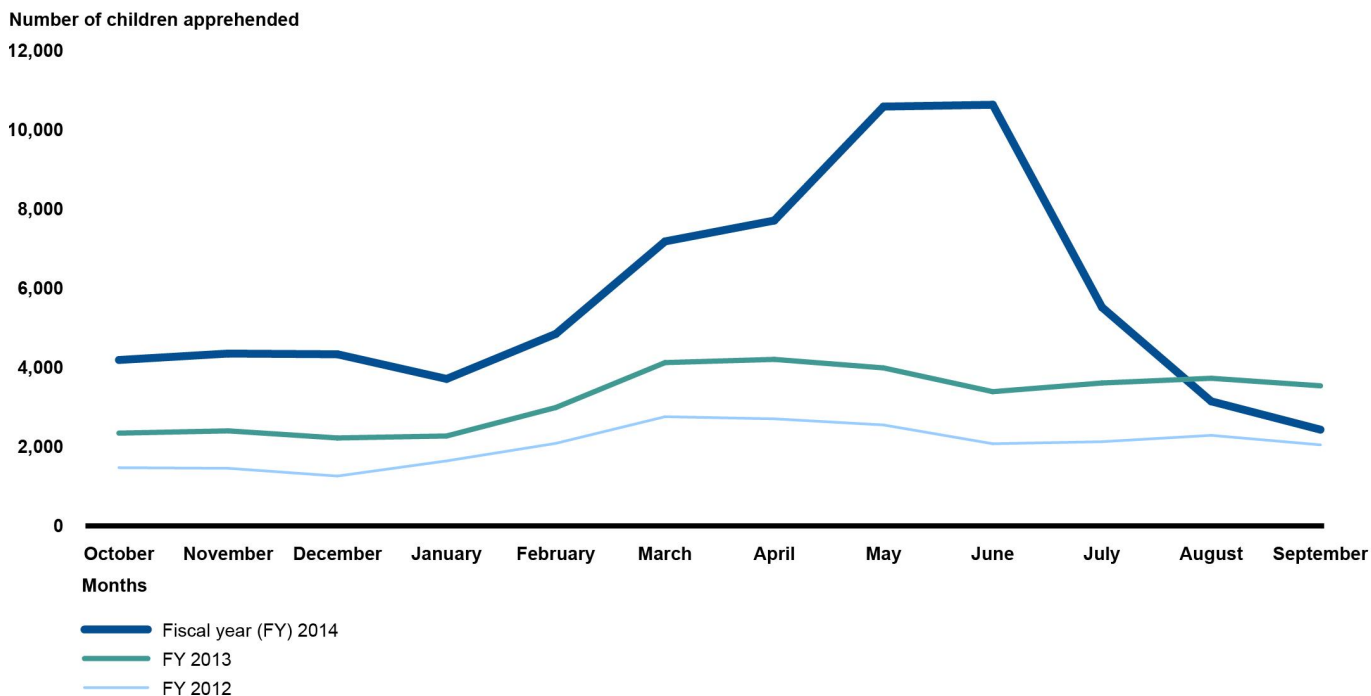
Source: GAO analysis of Department of Homeland Security data. | GAO-15-707

These three countries face a variety of socioeconomic challenges. In February 2015, we reported that U.S. officials in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras identified crime and violence, and economic and educational concerns, as among the primary causes of UAC migration to the United States.[8] According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, these countries had among the top five highest homicide rates worldwide in 2012, the most recent year for which these statistics were available for all three countries, with Honduras ranking first, with a homicide rate of 90.4 per 100,000 inhabitants; El Salvador fourth, with a rate of 41.2; and Guatemala fifth, with a rate of 39.9. According to this UN office, the surge in homicide levels in Central America in recent years is largely a result of violence related to the control of drug trafficking routes, turf wars between criminal groups, and conflict between organized

[8]GAO-15-362.

criminal groups and the host government.[9] A 2014 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees study on UAC from Central America and Mexico noted that nearly half of the UAC interviewed for the study reported being affected by violence committed by gangs or drug cartels, while about a fifth reported being victims of domestic abuse.[10] In addition, according to 2011 World Bank data, more than 60 percent of Hondurans, more than 50 percent of Guatemalans, and 30 percent of Salvadorans live below the poverty level. According to a Wilson Center publication, nearly 2 million Central Americans between the ages of 15 and 25 do not have a job or go to school,[11] and the highest proportion of these youth come from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras.[12] In addition, all three countries rank below the regional average on Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index.[13]

In September 2014, the governments of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras issued a regional plan in response to the recent migration increase.[14] The plan, referred to as the *Plan of the Alliance for Prosperity in the Northern Triangle: A Road Map*, outlines four strategic actions, which seek to stimulate the productive sector to create economic opportunities, develop opportunities for people, improve public safety and enhance access to the legal system, and strengthen institutions to increase people's trust in the state. The plan notes that income inequality presents a major challenge to the three countries, as 20 percent of the

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[9]United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Global Study on Homicide, 2013* (Vienna, March 2014).

[10]United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *Children on the Run: Unaccompanied Children Leaving Central America and Mexico and the Need for International Protection* (Washington, D.C.: March 2014).

[11]The Wilson Center, established by Congress, is a non-partisan policy forum, which seeks to address global issues through independent research and dialogue.

[12]Eric Olsen, *How to Address Child Migration from Central America*, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, (Washington, D.C.: August 2014).

[13]Transparency International is an NGO that monitors corporate and political corruption in international development. The Corruption Perception Index ranks countries around the world according to the degree of corruption that is perceived to exist among public officials and politicians on an annual basis. A lower ranking means a higher degree of corruption is perceived to exist.

[14]*Plan of the Alliance for Prosperity in the Northern Triangle: A Road Map.* Regional Plan Prepared by El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. September 2014.

wealthiest segments of the population account for more than half of overall income. In addition, the plan identifies a limited supply and quality of services in housing, early childhood health care, nutrition, and child development as among the main challenges to development, while also noting that weaknesses in the countries' educational systems have resulted in workforces with less schooling and more limited skills as compared with those of other countries in the region.

In addition to the problems within these countries, children who migrate illegally can encounter other risks during the journey to the United States. The journey to the United States may be hundreds or over a thousand miles, and some make this journey on foot over desert terrain, where daytime summer temperatures can exceed 110 degrees Fahrenheit. Others travel on top of trains, such as La Bestia, or "the Beast," the name given to the cargo trains that transport goods through Mexico to the United States. According to NGO reports, whether traveling by foot or on trains, child migrants are exposed to various dangers, including robbery, extortion, forced recruitment into gangs, abandonment, rape, and murder.

A number of U.S. agencies provide assistance to the three countries. For example, USAID, State,[15] DHS,[16] IAF, and MCC have programs providing assistance in areas such as economic development, rule of law, citizen security, law enforcement, education, community development, and others. In fiscal year 2014, USAID, State, DHS, and IAF allocated a combined $44.5 million for El Salvador, $88.1 million for Guatemala, and $78 million for Honduras. In addition, MCC signed a threshold program agreement with Honduras in fiscal year 2013 totaling $15.6 million, a compact agreement with El Salvador in fiscal year 2014 totaling $277 million, and a threshold program agreement with Guatemala in fiscal year 2015 totaling $28 million.[17] The U.S. government also provides additional assistance through CARSI, which funds activities to improve law enforcement and justice sector capabilities, prevent crime and violence,

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[15]This includes programs managed by State's Bureaus of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement; Population, Refugees, and Migration; and Western Hemisphere Affairs.

[16]This includes programs managed by DHS's CBP and ICE.

[17]A compact is a multiyear agreement between MCC and an eligible country to fund specific programs targeted at reducing poverty and stimulating economic growth. MCC's threshold program is designed to assist countries that have not yet qualified for compact assistance but have demonstrated a significant commitment to improving their performance on the corporation's eligibility criteria.

and deter and detect border criminal activity, among other efforts in these three countries as well as in Belize, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, and Panama. Between fiscal years 2008 and 2014, U.S. agencies allocated more than $800 million for CARSI activities from various accounts. We previously reported that, through June 2013, more than 50 percent of funds allocated for CARSI activities had been designated for activities in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras.[18] Additional information on agency funding to the three countries is provided in appendix II.

The administration has taken several recent actions related to these three countries. In December 2014, the administration started an in-country refugee and parole program, which is intended to allow certain parents who are lawfully present in the United States to request access to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program for their children still living in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. In addition, in March 2015, the administration issued the U.S. Strategy for Engagement in Central America, which includes the primary objectives of prosperity, governance, and security, and goals of an economically integrated Central America that is fully democratic; provides economic opportunities to its people; enjoys more accountable, transparent, and effective public institutions; and ensures a safe environment for its citizens.[19] According to the strategy, important successes would include the establishment of strong regional coordination mechanisms and institutions; reducing violence to a point where no Central American country is among the top 10 countries in terms of homicide rates; a 50 percent reduction of the youth unemployment rate in Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala; full implementation of ongoing electrical interconnection projects and other initiatives aimed at making energy more affordable, cleaner, and more sustainable; and steady economic growth throughout the region such that the poverty rate is pushed to below 40 percent over the next decade.

In its fiscal year 2016 budget request, the administration requested $1 billion for Central America, an increase of more than 200 percent from fiscal year 2014 levels. State and USAID have stated that the funding

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[18]GAO, *Central America: U.S. Agencies Considered Various Factors in Funding Security Activities, but Need to Assess Progress in Achieving Interagency Objectives,* GAO-13-771 (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 25, 2013).

[19] The White House, *Our Central American Strategy* (posted March 16, 2015), accessed July 14, 2015, https://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2015/03/16/our-central-american-strategy.

would support the U.S. Strategy for Engagement in Central America and the priority objectives identified in the Alliance for Prosperity Plan. According to agency budget documents, funding would seek to address the underlying factors of undocumented migration from Central America, among other priorities.

Agencies Seek to Address Causes of UAC Migration with Recently Developed and Long-standing Efforts

Agency officials noted that the rapid increase in UAC migration is due to several emergent factors, including the proliferation of human smugglers, or coyotes. Agencies have taken some actions in response to the rapid increase in migration, including several intended to directly reduce illegal migration and combat coyotes. In addition, agencies have a number of long-standing efforts, developed prior to the increase in migration, that seek to address pervasive violence, poverty, and other conditions agencies also identified as contributing to migration.

A Mixture of Emergent Factors and Pervasive Problems Likely Triggered the Rapid Increase in Migration, According to Officials

Agency officials noted that a variety of factors likely caused the recent rapid increase in UAC migration, including the increased presence of coyotes, perceptions concerning U.S. immigration law, and recent improvements in the U.S. economy. In addition, agency officials noted that some pervasive problems have recently intensified in some places, including rising levels of violence and insecurity and worsening economic and social conditions.

Emergent Factors

All agency officials we spoke with from all three countries identified several emergent factors as likely triggering the rapid increase in migration, including the growing presence of coyotes as one of the top factors. Agency officials from all three countries that we spoke to said that coyotes had proliferated and grown more influential and sophisticated in recent years. Officials from USAID and State in all three countries noted that coyotes were often well known and trusted in communities. According to USAID officials, when they conducted focus group interviews in Honduras with youth and outreach center coordinators in high-risk communities, including San Pedro Sula,[20] participants noted that coyotes were easy to access. In addition, agency officials we spoke to in all three countries noted that coyotes had instituted new marketing and messaging tactics. For example, numerous officials in all three countries

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[20]San Pedro Sula was named the world's most violent city, outside of war zones, in 2013, according to Consejo Ciudadano para la Seguridad Publica y la Justicia Penal A.C, a Latin American think tank.

told us that coyotes offered package deals, such as offering three attempts to migrate to the United States for one fee—known as a "three-for-one" deal. Coyotes have also intentionally spread rumors and misinformation about U.S. immigration policy. For example, agency officials told us that, in some cases, in an effort to drive smuggling business, coyotes led many people to believe children could migrate to the United States and receive permission to stay indefinitely, if they arrived by a certain date.

According to agency officials, general perceptions concerning U.S. immigration policy have played a growing role in UAC migration. Agency officials noted they relied on outreach efforts, focus groups, and other information sources to try to understand this factor. According to State officials in El Salvador and Guatemala, local media outlets have optimistically discussed comprehensive immigration reform efforts in the United States and sometimes failed to discuss the complexity of immigration reform. According to State officials, many Guatemalan citizens believe undocumented migrants in the United States will be encouraged to send for their children from Guatemala so they can come to the United States and they can benefit together for any upcoming comprehensive immigration reform, or even be eligible for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals.[21] In addition, according to USAID officials, Honduran youth and coordinators of community centers who were interviewed as part of a USAID focus group indicated they believed the United States would allow migrant minors, mothers traveling with minors, and pregnant women to stay for a period of time upon arrival in the United States.

Agency officials also noted that recent improvements in the U.S. economy had fueled increased UAC migration, enabling family reunification in the United States. In particular, State and USAID officials in Honduras noted that the improving economy had enabled parents who immigrated to the United States to send money back to their home country to pay coyotes so their children could migrate and reunify the family in the United States.

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[21]Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals was announced by the Secretary of Homeland Security on June 15, 2012. Certain people already in the United States who came to the United States before they were 16 and meet guidelines established by DHS may request consideration of deferred action, which defers their removal from the United States for a certain period of time. It does not provide lawful status, but recipients are eligible for work authorization.

According to officials in El Salvador, as the economy improved there, more Salvadorans have attempted to migrate to the United States to reunify with family. Agency officials noted that many children have spent years apart from their parents, being raised by a grandparent or another family member, and that in some cases, aging grandparents were no longer able to care for the children. This dynamic is further illustrated by examples from an internal USAID analysis of migration causes in Honduras, which highlighted migration-related risk factors associated with children living with extended family or non-family members in Honduras.

Some agency officials also noted that the increased use of social media has enabled migrating families to be in more regular contact and to confirm if and when family members or friends arrive in the United States. Additionally, according to a study performed by State contractors in El Salvador, many people advertise immigration services through social media and offer travel services to ensure safe arrival in the United States. The use of social media can encourage migration, according to some agency officials. For example, officials in Guatemala noted that social media outlets enable migrants who have arrived in the United States to share messages and pictures with families in their home countries, an act that can serve as a powerful and influential endorsement of the decision to migrate. Agency officials in El Salvador similarly noted that when a potential migrant hears from someone in the United States who has managed to arrive and remain there undocumented, the communication can strongly influence their decision on whether to migrate.

Worsening of Pervasive Socio-economic Problems

Violence, poverty, and poor access to education and other services have been pervasive development challenges in all three countries, predating the UAC migration increase. However, according to agency officials we spoke to in all three countries, some of these problems have grown worse in recent years and could have contributed to the rise of UAC migration. For example, in Honduras, agency officials noted that levels and perceptions of violence had grown worse, in part because of the rise in extortions. Worsening security concerns also negatively affect access to education. For example, agency officials in El Salvador noted that many children will not attend school after the seventh grade because traveling to some schools requires crossing gang borders, and that girls in particular face the risk of being attacked or raped en route. In Guatemala, agency officials stated that poor economic and social conditions in the

Western Highlands had declined even further in recent years.[22] In addition, agency officials noted that deteriorating climate conditions, including several consecutive years of drought and a coffee rust blight that has hurt coffee production and cost jobs in Honduras and Guatemala, exacerbated long-standing economic concerns in many communities. Agency officials told us that, on the basis of their outreach efforts, reporting from NGOs, academics, and government officials, and focus groups, they had determined that these longstanding problems had intensified.

In addition, we met with children from all three countries who offered similar insights concerning the causes of migration.[23] For example, children at a USAID outreach center in San Pedro Sula, Honduras, noted the lack of educational and job opportunities in their communities as a reason for migrating. Children from a particularly violent neighborhood told us it was even more difficult for them to obtain a job because potential employers would sometimes choose not to hire them because of where they live. Children also described the ways in which violence leads to migration, such as by making it difficult for them to attend school if doing so requires them to travel from one neighborhood to another and cross a gang border. Children at an outreach center in El Salvador also noted that sometimes, even with an education, one cannot find work in El Salvador and that there are more opportunities and chances to succeed in the United States. Children at this same center indicated that the desire to migrate is even stronger for children with parents in the United States. Children from a youth center in Guatemala also noted violence and economic factors as motivations for migration, and many of these children already had family or knew someone who had migrated.

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[22]The Western Highlands are a remote, mountainous area in the western part of Guatemala, inhabited by over 20 different indigenous groups. According to USAID and State officials in Guatemala, this is an area of high UAC migration.

[23]These children do not represent a generalizable sample.

GAO-15-707 Unaccompanied Children from Central America

Agency Actions Taken in Response to the Migration Increase Include Several Efforts to Combat Child Smuggling

Among the various agency actions taken in response to UAC migration, several seek to directly combat coyotes, which agency officials identified as a key emergent factor causing migration. Agencies also have established efforts to increase legal migration and improve migrant return centers.

Antismuggling Law Enforcement and Legislative Efforts

In response to the increase in UAC migration, DHS and State have supported several law enforcement and legislative outreach efforts that have marked an increased focus on investigating and dismantling smuggling operations in all three countries. For example:

- According to DHS officials from Homeland Security Investigations, in response to the rapid increase in UAC migration in 2014, DHS shifted the investigative priorities of its Transnational Criminal Investigative Units (TCIU) to target child-smuggling operations in all three countries. The units include host government police, customs officers, and prosecutors, among others, and are intended to facilitate information sharing and rapid bilateral investigations involving trafficking of people, money, drugs, and weapons, and other priorities. The units have focused their efforts on seeking to identify and dismantle criminal organizations involved in smuggling. According to DHS and DOJ officials, TCIUs across the three countries coordinate efforts given the transnational nature of the smuggling rings. A DHS official in Guatemala told us the unit there was able to dismantle two of the seven criminal organizations it was investigating that were actively smuggling children. DHS, with State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INL) funding, has indicated it plans to increase the size of these units.[24]

- State/INL in Honduras is working with a DOJ resident legal advisor to assist the Honduran attorney general's office in prosecuting trafficking and alien-smuggling cases. This assistance includes, among other things, providing training to Honduran prosecutors on developing cases against smuggling organizations.

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[24]Funding for INL programs is generally provided through the International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement account. For the most recent appropriation of this account, see Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2015, Pub. L. No. 113-235, 128 Stat. 2130, 2592.

- State/INL support in Guatemala has included assistance to reform police training, with a new emphasis on UAC-related issues in the community policing techniques, criminal investigations, and human rights curricula.

- State has participated in legislative and political outreach efforts to combat smuggling. For example, in Guatemala, State has advocated modifying certain laws that would better enable Guatemalan law enforcement to investigate and prosecute these cases and, if applicable, carry out appropriate penalties for the crimes.

Public Information Campaigns to Deter Migration

DHS and State carried out several public information campaigns between 2013 and 2015 intended to dissuade citizens of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras from migrating to the United States. Between the aforementioned years, DHS carried out three public information campaigns. The campaigns in 2013 and 2014 focused on warning potential migrants of the dangers of the journey, while the 2015 campaign sought to increase awareness of requirements under the executive action on immigration, including Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, how it will be implemented, and who is eligible. This campaign was launched in January 2015 but was stopped February 16, 2015, because of a federal court ruling that granted a preliminary injunction to prevent expansion of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, among other things.[25] The campaigns ran in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico, with ads placed on radio and TV stations, and on billboards, bus stops, and in and on buses (see fig. 3). According to an official from DHS CBP's Office of Public Affairs, in developing the 2013 dangers of the journey campaign, DHS incorporated feedback from various U.S. agencies and a working group composed of several DHS components; the embassies of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras; and other international and nongovernmental organizations. DHS does not currently have an active campaign. The DHS official also noted DHS would like to develop a new campaign for early 2016 if funding is available.

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[25]The federal government's most recent motion to stay the preliminary injunction or narrow its scope pending appeal was denied. See *Texas v. United States*, No. 15-40238, 2015 WL 3386436 (5th Cir., May 26, 2015).

Figure 3: Images from Department of Homeland Security's Dangers of the Journey Campaign

Source: Department of Homeland Security. | GAO-15-707

(Left) DHS Dangers of the Journey Campaign Poster. (Translation: "I thought it would be easy for my son to get papers in the North… That wasn't true. Our children are the future: We (must) protect them.") (Right) Photos of campaign posters placed on the back of a bus and on a billboard in Central America.

State public affairs officials we spoke to at the U.S embassies in all three countries told us they used the DHS campaign materials and developed their own materials to launch related public information campaigns in-country while also supporting similar host government campaigns. For example, in Honduras the U.S embassy's public affairs section used social media and webinars to provide information on migration, while in Guatemala the public affairs section at the U.S. embassy there placed ads on newspapers, the radio, and buses. In El Salvador, public affairs officials from the U.S embassy collaborated with the host government to develop its message intended to deter migration. In addition, State officials from the consular affairs sections from the U.S. embassies in Guatemala and El Salvador have also made efforts to counter misinformation. In Guatemala, State consular officials from the U.S embassy incorporated UAC-related messages into their regular community presentations, such as by adding Power Point slides addressing the dangers of the journey and the importance of being aware

of coyotes, while State consular officers from the U.S. embassy in El Salvador distributed information in consular waiting areas.

In-Country Refugee/Parole Program Intended to Increase Legal Migration

In an effort to increase legal migration and reduce the number of children attempting to migrate to the United States, State and DHS have collaborated to implement a new in-country refugee/parole processing program. The program was announced in November 2014 and began accepting applications the following month. There is currently no deadline for filing an application through this program. Through this program, qualifying parents in the United States can petition on behalf of their children for refugee[26] status and if the child is ineligible for refugee admission but still at risk of harm, the child may be considered for parole on a case-by-case basis.[27] The child must be unmarried; under the age of 21; a national of El Salvador, Guatemala, or Honduras; and residing in his or her country of nationality. Once a parent submits an application through a designated resettlement agency, DNA tests are conducted to prove the biological relationship and the child is interviewed in country by a DHS official to determine whether the child qualifies for refugee status. As of June 2015, State officials in Washington D.C. reported that the program had received 1,385 applications. Of those applications, 1,139 are from El Salvador, 225 from Honduras, and 21 from Guatemala. State officials also reported no interviews have yet been conducted. A DHS official in Guatemala noted DHS needed to improve their advertising of the program to Guatemalan citizens. A State official in Washington, D.C., noted in particular that more information advertising the program in indigenous languages was needed.

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[26]Section 101(a)(42)(B) of the Immigration and Nationality Act defines a refugee, in part, as any person who is within the country of such person's nationality or, in the case of a person having no nationality, within the country in which such person is habitually residing, and who is persecuted or who has a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion

[27]To qualify for the refugee/parole program, parents must be at least 18 years old and lawfully present in the United States in one of the following categories: permanent resident status, temporary protected status, or withholding of removal; or who have been issued parole or deferred action for a minimum of 1 year. In some cases, the qualifying parent may also apply for other eligible family members, including the in-country parent if that parent lives with the child and is legally married to the qualifying parent in the United States.

Efforts to Strengthen Migrant Return and Repatriation Centers

USAID and State have an interagency agreement to provide assistance to strengthen migrant reception and repatriation efforts in all three countries. Efforts under this program have included providing immediate, basic assistance to returnees (see fig. 4); undertaking construction efforts to expand and improve existing facilities; and working with host governments to systemize data gathered from the returned migrants. According to officials from the International Organization for Migration, an intergovernmental organization that is implementing the program, this improved data collection should enable better long-term tracking of migrants—including the causes of their migration—and their ability to return to and reintegrate with their communities of origin.

Figure 4: Assistance Provided at Reception and Repatriation Center in Honduras

Source: GAO. | GAO-15-707

Basic supplies provided to returned migrants (left) and preparation of a meal (right) at a USAID-supported repatriation and return center near San Pedro Sula, Honduras.

Agencies' Long-standing Efforts Have Sought to Address Persistent Conditions Identified as Contributors to Migration

USAID, State, IAF, and MCC programs have long sought to address what officials have identified as underlying causes of migration, including persistent development challenges such as violence, poverty, and lack of educational opportunities. For example, USAID's Country Development Cooperation Strategies (CDCS) for each country identify citizen security and economic growth as strategic objectives. The agency supports programs in each country seeking to reduce violence, improve economic opportunities through improved agricultural practices and other efforts, and increase access to education and health services, among others. For example, the USAID crime and violence prevention project in El Salvador, which focuses on expanding community-based crime and violence prevention efforts and supporting the government of El Salvador's National Strategy on Violence prevention, includes capacity building for municipalities to prevent violence and establishes outreach centers for youth and children. The agency also supports similar efforts in Guatemala and Honduras (see fig. 5).

Figure 5: U.S. Agency for International Development-Supported Outreach Center in Honduras

Source: GAO. | GAO-15-707

A USAID-sponsored outreach center near Tegucigalpa, Honduras, (left), and an ad inside the center for employment opportunities (right).

State has supported programs in each of the three countries we reviewed seeking to reduce violence and improve citizen security by offering

training and technical support to prosecutors, the police, and border patrol units, among others (see fig. 6). For example, in Honduras, State officials at the U.S embassy described justice sector capacity-building efforts including strengthening host government judicial personnel's ability to develop cases against criminal organizations and other efforts. This includes support for DOJ advisors in Honduras.

Figure 6: Department of State-Supported Police Programs in Guatemala

Source: GAO. | GAO-15-707

Trainees at a Guatemalan police academy supported by State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) advisors (left); a police surveillance center using equipment donated by State/INL (center); and children participating in a State/INL-supported Police Athletic League (right).

IAF officials said that IAF supports local initiatives in more than 880 communities in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, with nearly half of its investment in the three countries intended to directly benefit youth through job creation and other community-based activities. For example, IAF provided training and technical assistance to help a farmer's cooperative in El Salvador improve its production and marketing of organic coffee. Finally, MCC's compact in El Salvador and threshold

program in Guatemala—each in development prior to the recent migration increase—include programs to improve the quality of secondary education to assist youth in finding employment.[28]

USAID, State, and IAF outlined plans to modify some of these longstanding efforts in response to the rise in UAC migration. For example, in Guatemala, USAID outlined plans to increasingly target youth at risk of migration through various programs and to introduce agricultural programming, including coffee rust-resistant seedlings, and to provide nonagricultural economic opportunities for youth. State and DHS have outlined plans to strengthen border security efforts through their vetted units to stem migration, and to increase the size of antigang units in an effort to reduce violence. In addition, USAID, State, and IAF have each outlined plans to expand various programs to additional communities identified as having high levels of UAC migration. These efforts are discussed in more detail later in the report.

Agencies Have Aligned Program Locations with Long-Term Strategic Objectives and Made Some Adjustments to Reach More Communities Affected by UAC Migration

Agencies have generally located programs in alignment with long-term objectives for El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, such as addressing areas of high poverty and violence. In response to the rapid increase in UAC migration to the United States, agency officials said that they reviewed program locations and determined that most programs were already located in areas that had experienced high levels of UAC out-migration. However, officials also indicated that they have made some adjustments and plan to locate more programs in communities with high levels of UAC migration.

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[28] MCC officials noted that MCC's current threshold program with Honduras, which aims to improve public financial management and the effectiveness and transparency of public-private partnerships, was not directly relevant to causes of UAC migration.

Agencies Generally Aligned Program Locations with Long-Term Strategic Objectives

Most of the agencies in our review have established development objectives for Central America, some of which predate the rapid increase in UAC migration. These objectives are outlined in various strategy and planning documents. In some cases, the development objectives outline priority geographic locations for programs that agencies have identified as addressing underlying causes of UAC migration, such as crime and poverty.[29] USAID's CDCS documents, for example, outline development objectives for each country that focus on specific locations. For example, in Honduras, the CDCS contains two development objectives. The first development objective seeks to increase citizen security for vulnerable populations in high-density urban areas with high crime rates, and specifies two cities—Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula—and municipalities in an area referred to as the Northern Corridor as the geographic focus.[30] The second development objective, to reduce extreme poverty in western Honduras, specifies the six western departments, which all have severe rates of poverty and undernutrition, as the focus of programming. Similarly, the CDCS for Guatemala, which contains an overarching goal of developing a more secure Guatemala that fosters greater socioeconomic development in the Western Highlands and sustainably manages its natural resources, states that the majority of USAID resources will be allocated to programming in the Western Highlands, while USAID officials noted most of the remainder was dedicated to security efforts in urban areas. In El Salvador, where USAID aims to increase citizen security, rule of law, and economic opportunity, the CDCS states that the government of El Salvador has identified 54 of 262 municipalities as "high crime," where USAID will focus its crime prevention and education activities.

State country planning documents similarly highlight strategic priorities for the three countries, and in some cases outline priority geographic locations. State Integrated Country Strategy documents, which are multi-year mission planning documents, outline strategic priorities, but do not specify geographic locations to the same extent as USAID's CDCS documents. State/INL's country plans indicate that they are aligned with U.S strategies. In addition, these plans outline various program areas and

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[29]According to DHS, the department is developing an international engagement strategy, which will include regional priorities for Central America, but not country-level priorities.

[30]The municipalities include Choloma, Tela, and La Ceiba, which are near the northern coast of Honduras.

goals associated with these program areas. The plans specify priority geographic locations for some programs associated with these program area goals. For example, in support of the INL goal in El Salvador of building the government's ability to mitigate the influence of gangs and improve citizen security, the INL country plan outlines plans to launch the Model Police Precinct program in Quetaltepeque, Sonsonate, San Martin, Antiguo Cuscatlan, and La Libertad.

MCC and IAF documents do not outline specific geographic priorities for programs in the three countries, but MCC and IAF officials offered examples of factors the agencies consider in determining where to locate programs.[31] For example, according to IAF officials, IAF awards its grants to grassroots and community-based groups in communities with economic and social disadvantages, often with a history of and increased risk for migration. Geographic location is considered one element of the selection strategy for each country. Also, according to an MCC official in El Salvador, as part of a full-time inclusive school approach, the program may invest in science labs in certain schools in order for other schools in the vicinity to also access them.

Agencies Determined Many Programs Were Already Located in UAC Communities of Origin

Agency officials told us they drew on various sources of information to understand which areas in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras had high levels of UAC migration. In particular, they told us a key point of reference was a DHS-produced map that showed the number of UAC by location of origin based upon Border Patrol apprehension data from January 1 to May 15, 2014. We previously reported that agency officials used this map and DHS data on UAC locations of origin, along with other sources of information, to understand underlying causes of UAC migration and inform programming decisions.[32] During our fieldwork for this review, agency officials provided similar responses, noting that they used this map and DHS data to understand UAC origins or to cross-reference data on UAC origins derived from other sources of information produced by entities such as the International Organization for Migration,

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[31]In September 2012, MCC completed a $461 million compact focused on economic development in the northern zone of El Salvador. In September 2014, MCC signed another $277 million compact with the government of El Salvador. This compact will enter into force once the United States and El Salvador complete certain specified requirements.

[32]GAO-15-362.

USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives, host government agencies, and other local organizations.[33]

Agency officials told us that while the DHS-produced map may have limitations, they believed it to be generally accurate. As we previously reported, CBP officials identified various challenges to obtaining UAC location information, including the inability of children to accurately relay information on their origins, lack of documentation, and inability of border agents interacting with children to collect or record their information accurately.[34] State/INL officials in El Salvador, in particular, stated they did not believe that current available data on UAC origins were reliable as a basis for locating programs as some INL staff who have previously worked in the border regions believe that UAC provide false information because they are concerned about being traced back to their communities. In addition, some agency officials stated that the DHS map lacked specificity or detail, such as identifying neighborhoods associated with high UAC migration within the major cities. Nonetheless, USAID and State officials in the three countries told us that the top UAC locations of origin identified in the map were generally consistent, with a few exceptions, with their understanding of the top UAC locations of origin.

Further, agency officials stated that their established programs were already located in these areas. In Honduras, where over half of the DHS-identified top 20 municipalities in terms of UAC locations of origin are situated, agency officials told us the DHS map confirmed for them that programs already existed in those locations. In Guatemala, USAID and State officials said that they consulted the DHS map and other available information about UAC origin locations and determined that there was a general overlap between those locations and agency programs. USAID officials in Guatemala noted that about 60 percent of the agency's resources in Guatemala are used for activities in the Western Highlands, which these officials said they have identified as the primary area of UAC migration in that country. In El Salvador, USAID officials stated that, according to their review of the DHS map, their programs were already located in areas of high UAC migration. Finally, according to IAF, the

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[33]Operating within the USAID Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance, the Office of Transition Initiatives provides short-term assistance targeted at agency-identified key political transition and stabilization needs.

[34]GAO-15-362.

DHS map illustrated a general overlap between the location of its grantees and locations with high levels of UAC migration.

We obtained information on the location of USAID and State/INL-funded programs in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras; the location of IAF grantees in these countries; and the top UAC locations of origin in each country, as identified by DHS. Figure 7 shows the number of UAC apprehended by U.S. Border Patrol between January and May 15, 2014, by location of origin in each department across the three countries. Figure 8 shows the total the number of State and USAID programs and IAF grantees in each department across the three countries. See appendix III for figures that disaggregate the number of program locations by country and by agency.

Figure 7: Number of Apprehended Unaccompanied Alien Children (UAC) between January and May 15, 2014, by Location of Origin, in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras

Source: GAO analysis of Department of Homeland Security data; Mapinfo (maps). | GAO-15-707

Note: Data reflect aggregated totals at the department level of UAC by municipality of origin.

Figure 8: Number of Department of State and U.S. Agency for International Development Programs and Inter-American Foundation Grantees in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras

Source: GAO analysis of Department of State, U.S. Agency for International Development, and Inter-American Foundation data; Mapinfo (maps). | GAO-15-707

Note: Data reflect aggregated totals at the department level of U.S. Agency for International Development and State International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs programs and Inter-American Foundation grantees by municipality.

Agencies Plan to Locate More Programs in Communities Affected by High Levels of UAC Migration

Agencies have outlined plans and taken some steps in the three countries since the recent rise in UAC migration by adding or expanding activities in locations identified as having high levels of UAC migration. For example, according to State/INL's current country plan for Honduras, State plans to expand violence prevention programs, such as the Gang Resistance Education and Training Program, to reach three new police metropolitan areas in Tegucigalpa and six police metropolitan areas in San Pedro Sula, two areas in the country agencies have identified as having among the highest levels of UAC migration. In El Salvador, USAID outlined plans to expand educational opportunities to youth in additional municipalities with high levels of migration. For example, the Adopt-A-School program, which aims to support the efforts of the private sector, individuals, or institutions who wish to provide financial and other support to schools, has already been extended and expanded to reach additional beneficiaries, including those in municipalities with high numbers of UAC who have been repatriated to their communities of origin. In Guatemala, USAID has outlined plans to expand citizen security efforts to areas outside Guatemala City with high levels of violence and UAC migration, and to expand crime prevention programs to departments in the Western Highlands affected by high levels of migration. USAID has also outlined planned programs that would target agriculture and small business development activities to departments in the Western Highlands with high migration levels. In addition, State/INL has outlined plans to expand municipal policing efforts to the Western Highlands in response to high levels of out-migration from those communities. Also, according to IAF officials, IAF issued grants to several organizations in recent years to support projects in migrant-sending communities or to address migrant issues. As of June 2015, IAF officials indicated IAF had identified at least 19 new programs and 14 modified programs in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras that will seek to address underlying causes of migration in areas with high levels of UAC migration.

However, agency officials also noted the importance of other factors in locating programs. Agency officials suggested that long-term strategic objectives, such as promoting economic growth and social development, remain the focus of their work as they create and locate programs. Moreover, other agency responses to the rise in UAC migration have sought to address UAC migration but have not necessarily been located in areas of high UAC migration. For example, efforts to rehabilitate repatriation centers are located near borders or transit points; legal technical assistance seeks to strengthen government institutional capacity to combat smuggling; countersmuggling operations target key migration routes; and public information campaign activities, such as

radio, television, and social media placements do not necessarily target areas associated with high UAC migration.

Most Agencies Have Some Evaluation Processes in Place, but Weaknesses Exist in Performance Measurement of Some Antismuggling Programs

Most agencies have established evaluation processes to measure progress of programs identified as addressing causes of UAC migration. Agency processes to evaluate program effectiveness vary in approach, though DHS and State have not always obtained timely feedback on information campaigns intended to reduce migration, making it difficult to know the effectiveness of these efforts. Agencies have outlined challenges to and approaches for sustaining programs that seek to address the causes of UAC migration.

Most Agencies Have Processes in Place to Measure Progress of Efforts Intended to Address Causes of UAC Migration

Most agencies we reviewed have processes in place to track the progress of programs they have identified as addressing causes of UAC migration. However, DHS has not established performance targets against which to measure units that combat child smuggling, making it difficult to track the progress of these efforts.

USAID and State Use Both Shared and Agency-Specific Mechanisms to Guide Performance Measurement

USAID has developed several documents to assist its missions in developing and managing monitoring and evaluation efforts, which include guidance on establishing performance indicators, baselines, and targets, and on planning and managing evaluations. USAID missions also articulate monitoring and evaluation plans through other key documents, including CDCS documents and Performance Management Plans (PMP). The three countries' CDCS documents also outline illustrative evaluation questions, which can be used to guide long-term program evaluations. [35] Table 1 provides examples of CDCS development objectives, performance indicators, and evaluation questions for El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras.

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[35]Guatemala's CDCS covers fiscal years 2012-2016, El Salvador's CDCS covers fiscal years 2013-2017, and Honduras's CDCS covers fiscal years 2015-2019.

Table 1: Examples of U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Country Development Cooperation Strategy Development Objectives, Performance Indicators, and Evaluation Questions for El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras

Country	Development objectives	Performance indicators	Evaluation questions
El Salvador	Citizen security and rule of law in targeted areas improved.	Incidence of selected violent crimes in targeted municipalities. Number of municipalities implementing community policing programs.	To what extent did program activities increase equitable access to educational opportunities for participating in-school and out-of-school youth in targeted municipalities?
Guatemala	Improved levels of economic growth and social development in the Western Highlands.	Prevalence of poverty in target regions. Percentage of underweight children less than 5 years old in targeted areas.	What are the elements that need to be incorporated into income generating activities to achieve a reduction of malnutrition rates in targeted communities?
Honduras	Citizen security increased for vulnerable populations in urban, high crime areas.	Percentage of at-risk youth who express an ability to deflect a life of crime. Secondary school (grades 7 to 9) access rate.	Have there been changes in perceptions of violence indicating that communities feel safer?

Source: GAO analysis of USAID data. | GAO 15-707

Mission PMPs outline monitoring and evaluation plans—including performance indicators, baseline data, and performance targets—to assess progress toward the achievement of CDCS goals. USAID established a PMP for Guatemala that was approved, according to the agency, in October 2013, covering fiscal years 2012 through 2016, which outlines targets by performance indicator by fiscal year for each development objective. For example, for the mission goal of improving levels of economic growth and social development in the Western Highlands, one performance indicator is the prevalence of stunted children under 5 years of age in target regions, with, according to USAID officials, a goal of 63 percent in fiscal year 2013 and 54 percent in fiscal year 2017. USAID anticipates the PMP for El Salvador will be completed in October 2015, and the PMP for Honduras will be completed by late summer 2015.

State's INL bureau uses several documents to guide performance planning and country-specific measurement of programs it has identified as addressing causes of UAC migration. In 2013, State/INL developed several documents to assist INL personnel with designing, monitoring, and evaluating programs. INL country plans for these three countries outline priority areas for INL programs in each country as well as metrics for evaluation under these areas. These documents outline selected activities, indicators, and performance targets for the three countries across each INL program area. For example, the INL plan for El Salvador outlines an objective of establishing model police precincts, with

performance targets such as establishing eight new model police precincts within 2 years, and with homicides decreased by 10 percent in these new model police precincts within 4 years. The INL plan for Honduras outlines an objective of embedding a resident legal advisor to improve case management capacity for complex crimes involving human trafficking, with performance targets such as prosecutors increasing their rate of case closure in each of the first 2 years.

State and USAID use various reporting mechanisms to monitor the progress of activities identified as addressing causes of UAC migration. Both State and USAID use State's Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs (WHA) annual Performance Plan and Report (PPR) to track the performance of CARSI activities. The fiscal year 2013 WHA PPR, which was the most recent PPR available at the time of our review, provides information on USAID and State performance outputs against established targets. The WHA PPR provides some mission-specific performance information, but generally measures progress at an aggregated regional level.[36] USAID and State also receive progress reports, such as weekly and quarterly reports, that track outputs, activities, and accomplishments during the reporting period. For example, weekly reports on State/INL-funded efforts to strengthen the Honduran border patrol provide updated information on activities such as the number of UAC encountered, as well as seizures, arrests, and inspections, with specific information on coyote arrests. INL quarterly CARSI reports provide updated program information on various CARSI efforts.

IAF Has Established Standard Indicators to Measure Programs

IAF has developed an approach, which it refers to as the Grassroots Development Framework, to monitor its efforts, including selecting project-specific performance indicators and progress reporting. At the onset of specific projects, IAF works with grantee partners to select, from a standard set of 41 indicators, a subset of indicators considered most relevant to measuring the project's desired objectives. Indicators cover areas such as how projects provide for basic needs, training, jobs and income, or how they improve organizational culture and capacity, among others. According to IAF officials, IAF works with grantees to ensure they know how each indicator is defined, to establish baseline conditions against which to measure progress, and to assist them in collecting

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[36] We do not provide more detailed information on results discussed in the report because that information is considered "Sensitive but Unclassified."

performance data. Grantees are then required, according to IAF officials, to report every 6 months throughout the grant period on their progress against the selected indicators. IAF's office of evaluation verifies and aggregates results reported by grantees for its annual grant results report, which provides information on basic activity outputs, such as the number of beneficiaries receiving better access to health care as a result of a project, as well as on what it refers to as intangible results, such as the number of grantee partners reporting that individuals had improved their self-esteem as a result of the project. IAF outlined many performance indicators that would be used to measure the 17 projects it identified as having been developed or modified in response to the rapid increase in UAC migration in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. Among the most commonly used indicators for these 17 projects include the acquisition and application of knowledge and skills and the mobilization of resources.

MCC Plans to Develop Project Monitoring and Evaluation Plans for Compacts and Threshold Agreements

MCC has not yet developed monitoring and evaluation plans for its compact with El Salvador or threshold program with Guatemala but expects to do so in the near future. According to MCC's compact with El Salvador, MCC and the Salvadoran entity managing the compact will develop a plan to monitor whether projects are on track to achieve their intended results and evaluate to assess project implementation strategies, provide lessons learned, determine cost-effectiveness, and estimate the compact's impact. The compact also notes that the results of these activities will be made publicly available on MCC's website. According to MCC officials, a monitoring and evaluation plan for the El Salvador compact will be developed 90 days after the compact enters into force.[37] According to MCC officials, MCC plans for the compact to enter into force no later than September 30, 2015. According to MCC officials, MCC expects to develop a monitoring and evaluation plan for its threshold program with Guatemala sometime between September 2015 and March 2016.

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[37]MCC's compact with El Salvador outlines various requirements the host government must meet before the compact enters into force.

DHS Has Not Established Performance Targets against Which to Assess Progress of Transnational Criminal Investigative Units

DHS/ICE has established performance indicators for its TCIUs, but has not established performance targets, making it difficult to track progress of these units' efforts to combat UAC smuggling and other priorities. We have previously reported that performance measurement allows organizations to track progress in achieving their goals and gives managers crucial information to identify gaps in program performance and plan any needed improvements.[38] In addition, according to *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*, managers need to compare actual performance against planned or expected results and analyze significant differences.[39] DHS's *Transnational Criminal Investigative Unit Executive Report* provides overviews of TCIU efforts by country, including country-specific priorities. The report also outlines basic performance indicators used to track TCIU success. These measures are divided into three performance categories—enforcement, capacity building, and intelligence—with various types of outputs by category. The report also outlines success stories and enforcement statistics by country, such as the number of arrests and seizures. However, DHS/ICE has not set targets for these performance measures.

A DHS official told us that State/INL, which provides funding for these units, has lead responsibility for measuring their performance. State/INL country plans for all three countries include a performance indicator of the number of unit investigations conducted, and performance targets for the number of investigations conducted within 2 and 4 years. According to DHS/ICE officials, however, DHS was not involved in the development of State/INL's performance indicators and targets related to these units. When asked, DHS officials did not indicate to us why they had not established performance targets to accompany the performance indicators DHS has already outlined in its *Transnational Criminal Investigative Unit Executive Report*. Such targets would enable DHS to compare outputs—such as arrests made, investigations conducted, or foreign counterpart operations—against the pre-established targets, and to better assess TCIU efforts.

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[38]GAO, *Executive Guide: Effectively Implementing the Government Performance and Results Act*, GGD-96-118 (Washington, D.C.: June 1996).

[39]GAO, *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*, GAO/AIMD-00-21.3.1 (Washington, D.C.: November 1999).

Agencies Have Various Evaluation Processes, but DHS and State Have Collected Limited Information on the Impact of Public Information Campaigns

USAID, State, and IAF have established processes to evaluate the effectiveness of their programs. However, DHS and State have not consistently evaluated their information campaigns intended to reduce migration, making it difficult to know the effectiveness of these efforts.

USAID Has Recently Evaluated Several of its Programs Intended to Address Causes of UAC Migration

USAID conducted several recent evaluations of its programs developed before the rapid increase in UAC migration but identified as addressing the causes of migration.[40] These included evaluations of programs addressing crime and violence prevention and workforce development. For example, in July 2014, USAID published an evaluation of a workforce readiness program, which seeks to strengthen the basic workforce competencies of Honduran youth. The study, which was intended to understand the characteristics of youth participating in the program and the extent to which they had improved perceptions of their employability after participating in it, concluded that youth saw significant gains in job-seeking behaviors, soft-skills development, and number of internships obtained. The study also noted more work needed to be done with youth to understand the skills necessary to compete for their desired jobs. In addition, in October 2014, a study requested by USAID evaluating the impact of community-based crime and violence prevention programs in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Panama was published. The evaluation, which gauged perceptions over time of crime victimization and citizen security, found that, as a result of USAID's community-based prevention programs, residents feel safer, perceive less crime and fewer murders, and express greater trust in police. The study also found a decline in reported murders and extortions in participating communities across the four countries.

According to a USAID official, the findings from these evaluations inform future programming in several ways. First, USAID used these studies to inform the design of the current CDCS for Honduras, which was approved in December 2014. Second, the official noted that the workforce readiness program assessment led USAID to more systematically pre-assess students before enrolling them in workforce readiness training

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[40]USAID's Automated Directives System outlines agency evaluation policies.

programs, which has led to improved certification rates among enrollees. The USAID official also noted that the workforce readiness evaluation is assisting the agency in developing a new workforce development activity intended to better link training and employment for at-risk youth. Third, the evaluation of the community-based crime and violence prevention programs led to a broader commitment from USAID to apply community policing principles to improve law enforcement and reduce violence and homicides in Honduras, according to the official.

USAID officials and documents indicate that USAID plans to measure the impact on migration of some future programs. USAID officials in Honduras and Guatemala noted the agency has considered developing indicators that could measure the effect of programs on migration, such as whether a program affected a person's decision to migrate. Two documents for planned USAID projects in Guatemala outline efforts to measure programs' impact on migration. One document, for a proposed youth employment project, notes that the program's failure would be judged when a youth drops out of the program because he or she migrated to the United States, moved, or became involved in criminal activities. Another document for a planned community-level violence reduction project outlines a series of proposed results and performance indicators, including one result of a reduced number of under-aged migration from targeted communities with a related indicator of percentage of households that report having sent under-aged youth to the United States in the last 12 months. USAID officials in El Salvador, however, noted that it would be difficult to measure the impact agency programs have on decisions to migrate, in part because some migrate for purposes of family reunification.

State Has Efforts Under Way to Evaluate INL-Funded Programs in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras

State/INL awarded a contract to evaluate all countries under the CARSI program, including programs in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, which began in September 2014, according to State/INL.[41] According to State/INL, in addition to other oversight mechanisms, this contract will evaluate projects that are designed to address causes of UAC migration. This evaluation, which according to State/INL is scheduled to be completed in September 2016, is expected to examine whether all planned activities are being implemented and on schedule, whether

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[41]The State/INL bureau evaluation plan notes that the State/INL bureau has significantly increased the number of its evaluations since State announced its new program evaluation policy in 2012.

activities are sustainable, what impact the programs have had, and whether programs have led to any unintended consequences, among other things.

IAF Evaluates Projects at Several Points in Time

IAF conducts two types of project evaluations. First, IAF conducts an end-of-project assessment for all projects. According to IAF officials, upon the completion of the grant, IAF conducts a close out visit to assess the extent to which the project's objectives have been achieved. According to IAF officials, for this process the grantee partner compiles a narrative that details the project's design, implementation, results, and expected sustainability and impact, and identifies what worked and what did not and key lessons learned. IAF also compiles summaries of best practices relevant to each project, according to IAF officials. Second, each year IAF evaluates a smaller selection of projects that ended 5 years earlier. According to IAF officials, IAF conducts these evaluations, which it refers to as ex-post assessments, to determine the extent to which projects proved to be sustainable subsequent to IAF's involvement. IAF began conducting ex-post assessments in 2009, according to IAF officials. These evaluations provide information such as project results, sustainability, and lessons learned. According to IAF officials, IAF has thus far conducted two ex-post assessments of projects in El Salvador, including an evaluation of a project intended to strengthen civic engagement and an evaluation of an agricultural assistance project. IAF has also conducted an ex-post assessment of a project to train midwives in Guatemala. IAF has not evaluated a project in Honduras. According to IAF officials, in 2015, IAF plans to evaluate projects with a focus on youth engagement, including two projects in El Salvador and one in Guatemala. IAF expects these evaluations to be available in 2016.

IAF is considering adjusting evaluations in response to the increase in UAC migration. According to IAF officials, IAF is examining whether it could adapt its grassroots development framework to capture migration data, such as by developing a new indicator related to migration. IAF officials also noted that IAF may add questions to focus group sessions— which IAF conducts to obtain qualitative information about programs— about why people decide to migrate from or stay in their home countries.

DHS and State Have Not Consistently Evaluated Public Information Campaigns

DHS has not evaluated all of its public information campaigns intended to reduce migration. As we noted earlier, DHS carried out campaigns in 2013 and 2014 focused on the dangers of migration, and in 2015 to increase awareness of requirements under the President's executive action on immigration. DHS's Assistant Secretary for International Affairs and Chief Diplomatic Officer has referred to these campaigns as essential

in combating the misinformation promoted by smuggling organizations, and stated in March 2015 that DHS will continue to support them. DHS ran its 2013 Dangers of the Journey campaign between February and May, a peak migration period that year and in recent years. Specifically, according to UAC apprehension data from DHS's Border Patrol, the months with the most UAC apprehensions between fiscal years 2010 and 2013 were, in order, March, April, and May. In fiscal year 2014 the top four months were, in order, June, May, April, and March.

At the conclusion of the 2013 campaign's first phase, in April 2013, DHS evaluated the campaign, contracting for a survey of 1,800 citizens in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras (600 per country), including an equal mix of youth and parents, to assess the campaign's impact. Among the survey's findings were that 72 percent of youth and adults recalled seeing the campaign and 43 percent recalled the campaign's tagline. The survey results concluded that the campaign was highly credible, as it reinforced information respondents had experienced firsthand. However, according to a DHS/CBP official, CBP reporting and State research indicates individuals in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras give more credence to what they hear from relatives and friends than to what they hear on the radio and television. Despite this reporting, DHS has not conducted any subsequent campaign evaluations. Instead DHS launched its 2014 campaign at the end of June, by which point migration levels had already peaked and reached record levels, as shown in figure 9. Although DHS tracked the total number of campaign spots, it did not evaluate the campaign's effectiveness.

GAO-15-707 Unaccompanied Children from Central America

Figure 9: Timing of Department of Homeland Security Information Campaigns and Apprehensions of Unaccompanied Alien Children at the U.S-Mexican Border, Fiscal Years 2012-2014
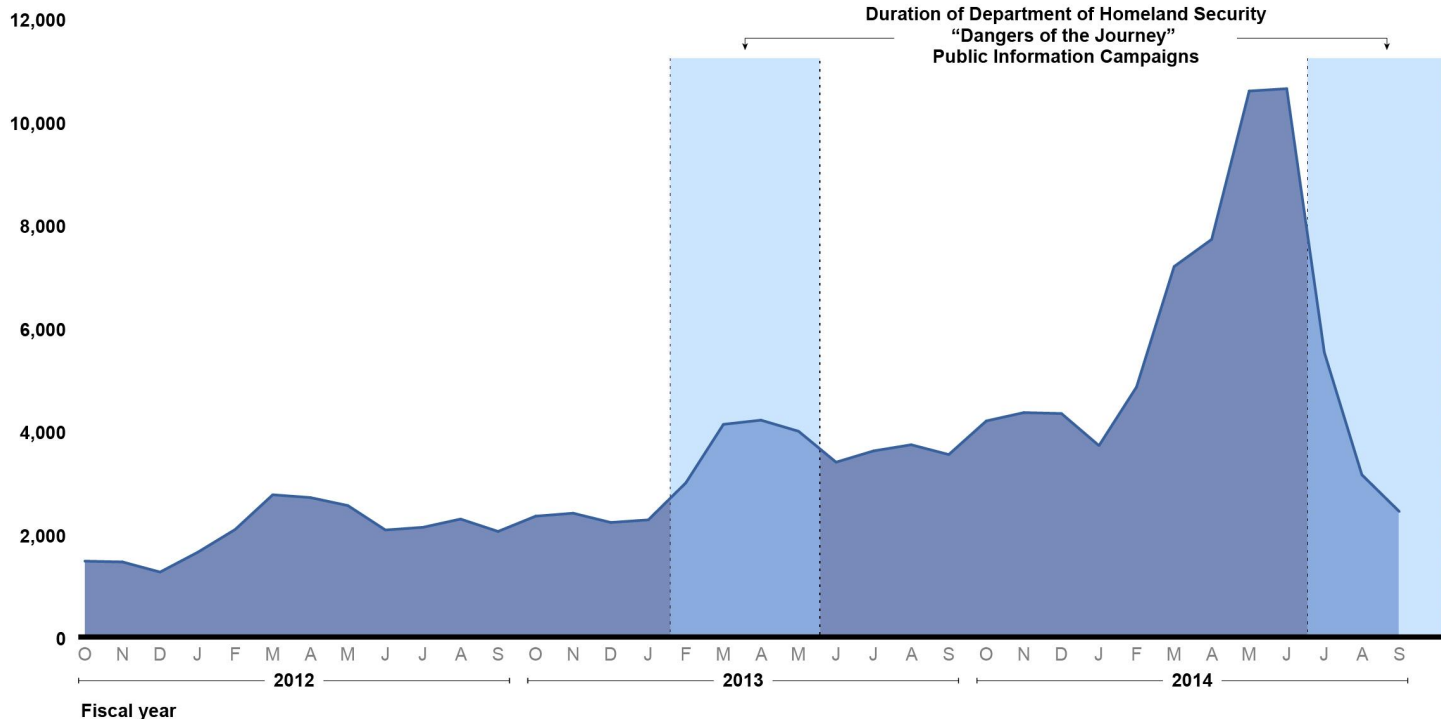
Source: GAO analysis of Department of Homeland Security data. | GAO-15-707

A DHS document outlining the 2013 and 2014 campaigns indicates DHS intended to evaluate the second campaign following its conclusion in October 2014. However, an official from DHS's office of public affairs told us that DHS did not conduct the evaluation because of funding constraints. While evaluations certainly add cost, they are an important investment toward ensuring a campaign's success. DHS therefore did not obtain feedback on the effectiveness of its efforts to dissuade migration during a year of record migration levels. Moreover, given that DHS does not currently have an active campaign, and does not plan to launch a new campaign until 2016 at the earliest, as much as 3 years or more may pass between DHS campaign evaluations.

Similarly, while State has collected some information on its public outreach efforts, it has not evaluated the effectiveness of its information campaigns. As we noted earlier, State public affairs offices in all three countries used the DHS campaign materials and developed their own

GAO-15-707 Unaccompanied Children from Central America

materials to launch related in-country public information campaigns. In Honduras, the public affairs office tracked how many Facebook users the campaigns reached, and how many of these users posted shares, likes, and comments. For example, the office conducted a campaign on Facebook and Twitter to discourage the public from hiring coyotes. According to the embassy's public affairs office, the campaign reached more than 28,000 Facebook users, of which 1,765 posted shares, likes, or comments. In addition, State has conducted in-country focus groups and surveys that have informed some embassy public outreach efforts, particularly concerning the likely impact of certain public messages. However, according to public affairs officers we spoke to in all three countries, State has not evaluated the effectiveness of its actual in-country information campaigns. These public affairs officers told us they did not know what the impact of the campaigns was and believed it would be difficult to measure their impact. One public affairs officer said that the only information available on the campaigns' impact is anecdotal. All three of these officers expressed either uncertainty or doubt concerning the effectiveness of past campaigns centered on the dangers of migration, indicating that it is uncertain whether such campaigns resonated with citizens of the three countries since the dangers were already well known or would not dictate a person's decision to migrate.

As we reported in the past, evaluating information campaigns on a regular basis is a good practice that leading organizations follow, as doing so is considered integral to a campaign's success.[42] Collecting this sort of performance information on media campaigns can provide value in informing future campaign efforts, particularly given DHS's desire to launch a new campaign early next year. Moreover, despite their cost, evaluations are a key investment toward program success.

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[42]GAO, *U.S. Public Diplomacy: State Department Expands Efforts but Faces Significant Challenges,* GAO-03-951 (Washington, D.C.: September 2003), and *U.S. Public Diplomacy: Actions Needed to Improve strategic Use and Coordination of Research*, GAO-07-904 (Washington, D.C.: July 2007).

Agencies Have Outlined Challenges to and Approaches for Sustaining Programs Addressing the Causes of UAC Migration

Agencies have identified various challenges to sustaining programs intended to address the underlying causes of UAC migration. USAID, State, and IAF project documents outline various factors that can hamper the long-term sustainability of projects, such as lack of accountability within government institutions, lack of political will, low tax collection, poor market conditions, and limited private sector engagement. For example, one State/INL country plan notes the host government's limited political will to combat corruption, which is included as a key assumption underlying police professionalization and reform efforts. Similarly, several USAID project documents acknowledge that certain efforts may be only partially sustainable over time because of challenges relating to the host government, such as limited funds or weakened public institutions. In addition, agency officials told us corruption within police and other institutions and extortion against local businesses challenge the sustainability of certain projects.

We observed examples of how some of these factors have the potential to hamper assistance programs. For example, an interagency agreement between State and DOJ outlining efforts to train Honduran prosecutors includes an assumption that the government of Honduras would commit to having a certain number of prosecutors available for at least 18 months to participate in the program. However, at the time of our visit to the country, there were no active prosecutors participating in Tegucigalpa. In El Salvador, where we visited a vocational school that, according to USAID officials, had been established in a joint partnership between USAID and a Salvadoran private company, we observed a computer lab filled with computers recently provided by USAID but with no teacher present. According to USAID officials in El Salvador, the school had asked the Salvadoran Ministry of Education to provide a salary for the teacher, but it had not yet done so at the time of our visit.[43]

Agencies have outlined approaches for seeking to ensure program sustainability despite the challenges described above. State, USAID, IAF, and MCC project documents emphasize the importance of prioritizing improvements to government institutions; identifying sustainable funding

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[43]Subsequent to our visit, USAID officials in Washington, D.C., noted that while the ministry had not provided the salary for the requested information management teacher, it had provided salary for two other staff that had been requested at the same time, and that the school has drawn on other teachers in an effort to manage the lab and teach basic computer skills.

sources, such as the private sector; and advocating for legislative and policy reforms that support program objectives. In addition, agency officials have noted the importance of involving communities, the private sector, and the police in program design to ensure they are invested in and supportive of programs' objectives. For example, MCC's compact with El Salvador outlines how MCC assistance over the duration of the compact will decrease to ensure that the government of El Salvador assumes an increasing percentage of related costs. IAF requires that its grantee partners contribute and mobilize their own resources for their projects and, according to IAF, it frequently works with its grantee partners to put in place strategic and financial plans beyond the period of the IAF grant. Some agency performance indicators seek to gauge progress toward meeting sustainability goals, such as by tracking the amount of private funds or other resources invested in community programs in target municipalities, the passage of laws that can facilitate key reforms, and the number of institutions with improved capacity as a result of the program.

Conclusions

In recent years, the rapid increase in migration of unaccompanied alien children from Central America has highlighted the crises these children and their families face. U.S. agencies have efforts in place that seek to bring about lasting improvements in these countries and have taken actions with the goal of reducing migration. These actions include DHS's and State's support to Transnational Criminal Investigative Units that seek to disrupt and dismantle smuggling operations and to public information campaigns warning citizens of the dangers of migration and countering misinformation on U.S. immigration policy.

The agencies have limited information, however, on the effectiveness of their efforts to reduce migration. While DHS/ICE has established categories of performance measures for its investigative units, and tracks basic statistical outputs associated with these categories, such as number of arrests, it has not established performance targets that could be used to gauge progress against preestablished goals for these important efforts to combat smugglers.

In addition, DHS and State have collected limited information on the effectiveness of their public information campaigns, with DHS evaluating one of two campaigns and State evaluating none. In not evaluating its 2014 campaign in particular, DHS missed an opportunity to obtain valuable feedback on its efforts to dissuade migration during a year of record migration levels. Because DHS does not have an active campaign,

it could go 3 years or longer between campaign evaluations. Such feedback could have offered insight on the effectiveness of past DHS campaign messages, and on their timing, particularly given migration levels had already peaked and reached record highs by the time DHS launched its 2014 Dangers of the Journey campaign in late June. This information would have been particularly valuable in informing any future DHS campaigns. State has conducted research that has informed its public outreach efforts. However, State has not evaluated its campaigns' effectiveness. Timely feedback is critical as campaigns intended to deter migration that is cyclical in nature are time-sensitive. Moreover, given the increased presence of children in recent migration cycles, these campaigns need to be timed right and deliver appropriate messages. Carrying out ineffective campaigns could lead to higher levels of migration to the United States, which is not only potentially costly in terms of U.S. taxpayer resources but costly and dangerous to the migrants and their families.

Recommendations for Executive Action

We recommend the following two actions to strengthen agency performance measurement related to deterring child smuggling. Specifically, we recommend that:

- The Secretaries of State and Homeland Security instruct appropriate agency public affairs officers to integrate evaluation into their planning for, and implementation of, future public information campaigns intended to dissuade migration, such as campaigns warning of the dangers of migration, providing facts on U.S. immigration policy, or conveying other messages. This could include ensuring that available migration data, such as DHS's monthly data on UAC apprehensions, is used to inform the timing of these campaigns, and that the results of campaign evaluations are used to inform future campaigns to enhance their effectiveness.

- The Secretary of Homeland Security instruct DHS's U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement to establish annual performance targets associated with the performance measures it has established for its Transnational Criminal Investigative Units.

Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

We provided State, USAID, DHS, IAF, MCC, and DOJ a draft of this report. State, USAID, DHS, and MCC provided written comments on the draft (see appendixes IV, V, VI, and VII, respectively). State concurred with the one recommendation directed to it, and DHS concurred with both

recommendations. Specifically, State concurred with our recommendation that DHS and State integrate evaluation into their planning for, and implementation of, future public information campaigns intended to dissuade migration. State noted that it uses a variety of methods to determine the effectiveness and reach of information campaigns and will integrate evaluations into these methods. DHS also concurred with this recommendation and noted that it would consider and evaluate possible markers and metrics of success relevant to each campaign's specific goals and target audiences. In addition, DHS concurred with our recommendation to establish annual performance targets associated with the performance measures it has established for its TCIUs. DHS also noted that it would work with host nation partners to establish goals to measure TCIU investigative activities and capacity development.

State, DHS, IAF, and DOJ provided technical comments, which we have incorporated, as appropriate.

We are sending copies of this report to the appropriate congressional committees, the Secretaries of State and Homeland Security, the Acting Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development, the President of the Inter-American Foundation, the Chief Executive Officer of the Millennium Challenge Corporation, and the Attorney General of the United States. In addition, this report will be available at no charge on the GAO web site at http://www.gao.gov.

If you or your staff has any questions about this report, please contact me at GianopoulosK@gao.gov or 202-512-8612. Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report. GAO staff who made major contributions to this report are listed in appendix VIII.

Kimberly Gianopoulos
Director, International Affairs and Trade

The Honorable Eliot L. Engel
Ranking Member
Committee on Foreign Affairs
House of Representatives

The Honorable Christopher Smith
Chairman
Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human
  Rights, and International Organizations
Committee on Foreign Affairs
House of Representatives

The Honorable Jeff Duncan
Chairman
The Honorable Albio Sires
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere
Committee on Foreign Affairs
House of Representatives

The Honorable Joaquin Castro
House of Representatives

The Honorable Sean Duffy
House of Representatives

Appendix I: Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

In this report, we reviewed (1) U.S. assistance in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras addressing agency-identified causes of unaccompanied alien child (UAC) migration, (2) how agencies have determined where to locate these assistance efforts, and (3) the extent to which agencies have developed processes to assess the effectiveness of programs seeking to address UAC migration.

To address our objectives, we obtained written responses from agency officials identifying programs targeted at addressing agency-identified causes of the rapid increase in UAC migration. We then obtained and analyzed documentation for these programs. To understand broader strategies underlying these programs, we reviewed various strategic and planning documents specific to El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, including the Department of State (State) and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Integrated Country Strategies , USAID Country Development Cooperation Strategies (CDCS), State annual operating plans, and State Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) country plans for each country; the Partnership for Growth El Salvador—United States Joint Country Action Plan; and the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) compact with El Salvador. We also reviewed several interagency strategic and planning documents regarding U.S. engagement with Central America, including the U.S. Strategy for Engagement in Central America, and the U.S. Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime.

We also interviewed U.S. agency officials in Washington, including officials from State, the Departments of Homeland Security (DHS) and Justice (DOJ), USAID, MCC, and the Inter-American Foundation (IAF). We also conducted fieldwork in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, where we interviewed officials from State, DHS, and USAID in each country, including the ambassadors and deputy chiefs of mission, the USAID mission directors, and DHS country attachés, and met with each embassy's interagency UAC working group. In addition, we met with DOJ officials in El Salvador and Honduras, IAF officials and grantees in El Salvador and Guatemala, and an MCC official in El Salvador. During our fieldwork, we also interviewed representatives from host government agencies in each country, and from nongovernmental organizations in Washington and in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. We also visited U.S.-funded programs in Central America, including migration reception centers in El Salvador and Honduras. In addition, we met with children in all three countries who discussed their perspectives on causes of UAC migration, experiences, and participation in U.S.-supported programs. Their responses are nongeneralizable.

To address our first objective on U.S. assistance in El Salvador,
Guatemala, and Honduras addressing agency-identified causes of UAC
migration, we reviewed agency responses to a set of questions we
developed concerning what agencies identified as causes of the rapid
increase in UAC migration, and agency actions taken in response. In
addition, we asked officials we interviewed in Washington and in Central
America to discuss the causes of the rapid increase in UAC migration,
particularly seeking their perspective on what factors may have changed
or emerged in recent years to cause the rapid increase. We reviewed all
agency responses to determine the causes agency officials identified. We
also asked these officials to discuss agency responses to UAC migration,
including programs developed, modified, or planned in response, or
programs that predated the increase in migration but that agencies
identified as seeking to address underlying causes of migration. We also
reviewed agency documents concerning these programs, including
project concept papers and appraisal documents, progress-reporting
documents including weekly and quarterly reports, and embassy reporting
cables, among others. In addition, we obtained funding data from State,
USAID, DHS, and IAF on agency funding to El Salvador, Guatemala, and
Honduras from fiscal years 2012 through 2014 and funding for specific
programs agencies identified as developed or modified in response to the
rapid increase in UAC migration. We asked agencies a series of
questions on how the funding data were produced, selected, and checked
for accuracy, among other things. We determined these data were
sufficiently reliable for our purposes.

To address our second objective, on how agencies have determined
where to locate programs that seek to address underlying causes of
migration, we reviewed agency strategy documents, including those
described earlier such as USAID and State country strategies, to
determine agency strategic development objectives and, where
applicable, priority geographic locations for these objectives. We also
reviewed agency strategy and project documents to determine the
locations of certain programs developed or modified in response to the
rapid increase in UAC migration, including whether such programs were
located in areas affected by high levels of UAC migration. We asked
agency officials to discuss the factors they considered and prioritized in
determining where to locate programs, including programs predating the
rapid increase in UAC migration and programs developed in response to
the rapid increase in migration, and the extent to which agencies
considered communities identified as having high levels of UAC migration
in locating such programs. In addition, we asked agency officials how
they identified locations with high levels of UAC migration and their

perspectives on the accuracy of available information on UAC locations of
origin.

We also obtained information, for each country, on the location of UAC
communities of origin, of USAID and State/INL programs, and of IAF
grantees. In particular, we obtained DHS data on communities DHS
identified as having the highest levels of UAC migration between January
1, 2014, and May 15, 2014, for each country. These data included
information on UAC locations of origin at the municipal level, and were
used by DHS to create a map showing these DHS-identified top UAC
locations of origin. DHS officials noted that there were inherent limitations
in the accuracy of DHS apprehension data, which we discuss in this
report and the report we issued on this subject in February 2015.[1] To
assess these data, we had a series of interviews with DHS officials to
discuss the process and methodology by which they obtained these data
on UAC apprehensions and used them to identify communities with the
highest levels of UAC migration and create maps showing these results.
We also discussed these DHS data with U.S. agency officials in
Washington and Central America. These officials noted they found the
DHS data to be generally accurate representations of their understanding
of the top UAC locations of origin. Moreover, some of these officials noted
that agencies also used the DHS maps in part to determine the extent to
which their programs aligned with these top UAC locations of origin.
Therefore, we determined that the DHS data on top UAC locations of
origin were contextually relevant to the agencies' own understanding of
how the locations of their programs aligned with top UAC locations of
origin. In order to analyze the locations from the DHS data, we combined
the files to create a single master list of locations. We then matched this
list to the GeoNet Names Server file from the National Geospatial
Intelligence Agency to create a standardized list of names. We then
aggregated the locations by department, and presented them in broad
ranges. By aggregating these data by department and presenting them in
map form in broad ranges, we believe they provide a reliable indication of
the relative distribution of UAC-sending locations. We also obtained from
USAID and State/INL the locations of all programs in each country, and,
from IAF, the locations of IAF grantees in each country. As with the DHS
data, we matched this list of programs and grantees to the GeoNet

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[1]GAO, *Central America: Information on Migration of Unaccompanied Children from El
Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras*, GAO-15-362 (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 27, 2015).

Names Server file from the National Geospatial Intelligence Agency to
create a standardized list of names, then aggregated the locations by
department, and presented them in broad ranges. We did not include
some program locations in our data due to a lack of specificity in agency
documents on the locations of certain programs. We provided this
information to offer context on the location of UAC communities of origin
and of U.S. agency programs and grantees.

To address our third objective, on the extent to which agencies have
developed performance indicators to assess the effectiveness of efforts
responsive to UAC migration, we reviewed agency documents on
programs agencies identified as responsive to the rapid increase in UAC
migration, including agency evaluation policies and guides, country
strategy and planning documents for each country, monitoring and
evaluation plans, standard operating procedures, program evaluations,
and quarterly and other progress reports. We also interviewed agency
officials in Washington, D.C., and in El Salvador, Guatemala, and
Honduras concerning steps they have taken to monitor and evaluate
programs that seek to address causes of UAC migration. We also
reviewed *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*, and
prior GAO work on performance measurement.[2] In determining the
importance of evaluating media campaigns as a good practice that
leading organizations follow, we assessed various sources, including
federal policies, *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal
Government*, prior GAO reports on U.S. public diplomacy, and literature
on practices for evaluating media campaigns. These sources outlined the
importance of integrating evaluations into media campaigns and noted
that while evaluations add cost, they are a worthwhile investment in
campaign success.

We conducted this performance audit from September 2014 to July 2015
in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.
Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain
sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our
findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that
the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and
conclusions based on our audit objectives.

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[2]GAO, *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*, GAO/AIMD-00-21.3.1
(Washington, D.C.: November 1999).

Appendix II: Agency Funding to El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras Overall and for Programs Addressing Child Migration

Agencies we reviewed, including the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the Departments of State (State) and Homeland Security (DHS), and the Inter-American Foundation (IAF), identified overall funding allocated for programs in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras for fiscal years 2012 through 2014 (see table 2). In addition to the funding information provided in table 2, the MCC signed a threshold program agreement with Honduras in fiscal year 2013 totaling $15.6 million, a compact agreement with El Salvador in fiscal year 2014 total $277 million, and a threshold program agreement with Guatemala in fiscal year 2015 totaling $28 million.

Table 2: U.S. Agency for International Development, Department of State, Department of Homeland Security, and Inter-American Foundation Funding Allocated for Programs in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, Fiscal Years 2012-2014

Dollars in thousands

	Country	2012	2013	2014	Total
U.S. Agency for International Development [Note A]	El Salvador	37,704	35,354	30,631	**103,689**
	Guatemala	77,167	73,397	73, 285	**223,849**
	Honduras	72,786	67,005	56,700	**196,491**
Department of State [Note B]	El Salvador	12,437	12,208	10,207	**34,852**
	Guatemala	22,166	15,042	11,249	**48,458**
	Honduras	19,048	23,357	18,208	**60,612**
Department of Homeland Security	El Salvador	1,042	758	1,462	**3,262**
	Guatemala	961	1,180	1,176	**3,317**
	Honduras	750	515	702	**1,967**
Inter-American Foundation [Note C]	El Salvador	2,204	1,693	2,196	**6,094**
	Guatemala	2,264	1,544	2,379	**6,187**
	Honduras	613	685	2,414	**3,713**

Source: GAO analysis of U.S. Agency for International Development, Department of State, Department of Homeland Security, and Inter-American Foundation data. | GAO-15-707

Notes:

Amounts have been rounded to the nearest thousand and therefore may not sum to totals.

Data include total amounts allocated by fiscal year.

Note A: Data represent funding from the following accounts: Development Assistance, Economic Support Fund, and Global Health Programs.

Note B: Data represent funding from the following accounts: International Military Education and Training; Foreign Military Financing; Nonproliferation, Antiterrorism, Demining and Related Programs; International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement; and Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs. Data do not include Migration and Refugee Assistance funding that was appropriated globally to support arrival assistance for repatriated migrants and other activities. Total funding appropriated globally for this account was $1,200,000 in fiscal year 2012 and $10,311,876 in fiscal year 2014.

Note C: Data represent funding from Inter-American Foundation appropriations, the Social Progress Trust Fund, the Inter-American Social Protection Network, and counterpart funding.

Agencies we reviewed also provided funding information on programs they identified as most relevant to addressing unaccompanied alien child (UAC) migration. Specifically, agencies identified programs that were either developed or modified in response to the rapid increase in UAC migration, and provided information on total obligations and disbursements for these programs between fiscal years 2012 and 2014. As is indicated in table 3, State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement noted it was unable to disaggregate UAC-targeted aspects of ongoing funding streams, and instead provided funding information for overall program areas that have been or will be used to address root causes and instances of UAC migration from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. Funding information for USAID, DHS, and IAF are provided in tables 4 through 6.

Table 3: Department of State Funding for Programs and Program Areas Identified by State as Addressing Unaccompanied Alien Child Migration, Fiscal Years 2012-2014

Country	Program area		2012	2013	2014	Total
El Salvador	Improved Border Inspection [Note A]	Total obligations	$500,000	0	0	**$500,000**
		Disbursements	$272,966	0	0	**$272,966**
	Community Policing [Note A]	Total obligations	$1,000,000	$1,500,000	$1,500,000	**$4,000,000**
		Disbursements	$643,134	$46,312	0	**$689,446**
	Criminal Youth Gang Initiative [Note A]	Total obligations	$2,365,000	$730,000	0	**$3,095,000**
		Disbursements	$406,267	0	0	**$406,267**
	Capacity Enhancement [Note A]	Total obligations	$3,400,000	$3,000,000	$1,100,000	**$7,500,000**
		Disbursements	$923,395	$184,282	0	**$1,107,677**
	Partial funding for Government of El Salvador's Public Information Campaign	Total obligations	N/A	N/A	$140,000	**$140,000**
		Disbursements	N/A	N/A	$140,000	**$140,000**
Guatemala [Note B]	Improved Border Inspection [Note A]	Total obligations	$800,000	$800,000	0	**$1,600,000**
		Disbursements	$19,347	0	0	**$19,347.00**
	Vetted Units [Note A]	Total obligations	$1,850,000	$500,000	0	**$2,350,000**
		Disbursements	$1,489,794	$56,749	0	**$1,546,543**
	Regional Maritime and Land Interdiction [Note A]	Total obligations	$1,000,000	$1,100,000	0	**$2,100,000**
		Disbursements	$103,155	0	0	**$103,155**
	Community Policing [Note A]	Total obligations	$1,000,000	$1,000,000	0	**$2,000,000**
		Disbursements	$179,866	0	0	**$179,866**
	Criminal Youth Gang Initiative [Note A]	Total obligations	$1,845,000	0	0	**$1,845,000**
		Disbursements	0	0	0	**$0**
	Capacity Enhancement [Note A]	Total obligations	$2,000,000	$1,350,000	0	**$3,350,000**
		Disbursements	$70,271	0	0	**$70,271**

Country	Program area		2012	2013	2014	Total
	Public Outreach Radio Campaigns	Total obligations	N/A	N/A	$10,000	**$10,000**
		Disbursements	N/A	N/A	$10,000	**$10,000**
	Public Outreach Newspaper Ads	Total obligations	N/A	N/A	$14,100	**$14,100**
		Disbursements	N/A	N/A	$14,100	**$14,100**
	Public Outreach Ads on Public Buses	Total obligations	N/A	N/A	$21,114	**$21,114**
		Disbursements	N/A	N/A	$21,114	**$21,114**
Honduras [Note B]	Improved Border Inspection [Note A]	Total obligations	$800,000	$1,100,000	0	**$1,900,000**
		Disbursements	$433,663	0	0	**$433,663**
	Vetted Units [Note A]	Total obligations	$2,880,000	$2,000,000	0	**$4,880,000**
		Disbursements	$1,553,269	$1,022,546	0	**$2,575,815**
	Justice Sector Reform [Note A]	Total obligations	0	$1,000,000	0	**$1,000,000**
		Disbursements	0	$100,260	0	**$100,260**
	Community Policing [Note A]	Total obligations	$1,000,000	$1,000,000	0	**$2,000,000**
		Disbursements	$311,251	0	0	**$311,251**
	Criminal Youth Gang Initiative [Note A]	Total obligations	$1,840,000	0	0	**$1,840,000**
		Disbursements	$221,542	0	0	**$221,542**
	Capacity Enhancement [Note A]	Total obligations	$11,000,000	$9,300,000	0	**$20,300,000**
		Disbursements	$7,146,948	$5,507	0	**$7,152,455**
	Protecting Most Vulnerable Youth Often Targeted by Traffickers	Total obligations	N/A	N/A	$750,000	**$750,000**
		Disbursements	N/A	N/A	$750,000	**$750,000**
Regional	Justice Sector Reform [Note A]	Total obligations	$1,500,000	$2,500,000	0	**$4,000,000**
		Disbursements	$337,916	$133,800	0	**$471,716**
	Capacity Enhancement [Note A]	Total obligations	$2,800,000	$4,246,006	$1,000,000	**$8,046,006**
		Disbursements	$2,579,444	$3,479,450	0	**$6,058,894**
	Mesoamerica Regional Migration Program	Total obligations	$1,200,000	0	$1,953,376	**$3,153,376**
		Disbursements	$1,200,000	0	$1,953,376	**$3,153,376**
	Reception and Repatriation Assistance to Returning Families	Total obligations	N/A	N/A	$7,583,500	**$7,583,500**
		Disbursements	N/A	N/A	$7,583,500	**$7,583,500**
	United Nationals High Commissioner for Refugees	Total obligations	N/A	N/A	$775,000	**$775,000**
		Disbursements	N/A	N/A	$775,000	**$775,000**

Source: GAO analysis of State Department data. | GAO-15-707

Abbreviation: N/A = Not applicable.

Note A: Program area identified by State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs as one that has been or will be used to address root causes and instances of unaccompanied alien child migration (UAC) from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. The bureau noted it was unable to disaggregate UAC-targeted aspects of ongoing funding streams, and instead provided funding information for overall program areas it identified as most relevant to UAC migration.

Note B: According to State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, Honduras and Guatemala funds require congressional notification, and fiscal year 2014 funds are on hold for obligation pending congressional consultations.

Table 4: U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Funding for Programs Identified by USAID as Developed or Modified in Response to Increase in Unaccompanied Alien Child Migration, Fiscal Years 2012-2014

Country	Program area		2012	2013	2014	Total
El Salvador	Adopt-a-School Improvements to Public School Infrastructure	Total obligations	$1,250,000	$577,164	$280,000	**$2,107,164**
		Disbursements	$779,253	0	0	**$779,253**
	Crime and Violence Prevention Program	Total obligations	$6,660,983	$2,000,000	0	**$8,660,983**
		Disbursements	$3,625,607	0	0	**$3,625,607**
	SUPERATE Education and Workforce Readiness	Total obligations	$410,000	0	$ 500,000	**$910,000**
		Disbursements	$324,651	0	0	**$324,651**
	Development for Small and Medium Enterprises	Total obligations	$2,766,870	$2,908,460	0	**$5,675,330**
		Disbursements	$2,766,870	$1,890,631	0	**$4,657,501**
Guatemala	Adjustments to Rural Value Chains	Total obligations	$6,259,232	$3,029,668	$3,715,526	**$13,004,426**
		Disbursements	$3,826,268	0	0	**$3,826.268**
	Adjustments to Sanitary and Phytosanitary Standards	Total obligations	$500,000	$500,000	0	**$1,000,000**
		Disbursements	$500,000	0	0	**$500,000**
	Adjustments to Cooperative Development Program	Total obligations	$200,000	$1,091,588	0	**$1,291,588**
		Disbursements	$94,085	$613,588	0	**$707,673**
	Security and Justice Sector Reform Project	Total obligations	$7,828,154	$1,290,347	0	**$9,118,501**
		Disbursements	$5,932,000	$ 242,035	0	**$6,174,035**
Honduras	Improving Education for Work, Learning and Success	Total obligations	$1,250,000	$1,658,852	$4,714,021	**$7,622,873**
		Disbursements	$1,830,266	$3,529,296	$3,878,038	**$9,237,600**

Source: GAO analysis of USAID data. | GAO-15-707

Notes:

Does not include planned programs or programs that have not received funding between fiscal years 2012 and 2014.

Obligation and disbursement totals reflect those for fiscal years 2012-2014 and not necessarily the overall project.

Table 5: Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Funding for Programs and Salaries Identified by DHS as Developed or Modified in Response to Increase in Unaccompanied Alien Child Migration, Fiscal Years 2012-2014

Country	Program		2012	2013	2014	Total
El Salvador	Dangers of the Journey Public Information Campaign	Total obligations	0	$192,220	$264,799	**$457,019**
		Disbursements	0	$192,220	$264,799	**$457,019**
	Operation Coyote	Total obligations	0	0	$50,743	**$50,743**
		Disbursements	0	0	$47,655	**$47,655**
	Transnational Criminal Investigative Unit	Total obligations	$460,408	$22,442	$650,097	**$1,132,947**
		Disbursements	$460,408	$22,442	$530,774	**$1,013,624**
Guatemala	Dangers of the Journey Public Information Campaign	Total obligations	0	$306,226	$456,186	**$762,412**
		Disbursements	0	$306,226	$456,186	**$762,412**

Country	Program		2012	2013	2014	Total
	Operation Coyote	Total obligations	0	0	$41,652	**$41,652**
		Disbursements	0	0	$31,262	**$31,262**
	Transnational Criminal Investigative Unit	Total obligations	0	0	$675,868	**$675,868**
		Disbursements	0	0	$466,001	**$466,001**
Honduras	Dangers of the Journey Public Information Campaign	Total obligations	0	$118,451	$214,660	**$333,111**
		Disbursements	0	$118,451	$214,660	**$333,111**
	Operation Coyote	Total obligations	0	0	$47,050	**$47,050**
		Disbursements	0	0	$37,050	**$37,050**
	Transnational Criminal Investigative Unit	Total obligations	$183,200	$18,265	$432,615	**$634,080**
		Disbursements	$183,200	$18,265	$419,528	**$620,993**

Source: GAO analysis of DHS data. | GAO-15-707

Table 6: Inter-American Foundation (IAF) Funding for Programs Identified by IAF as Developed or Modified in Response to Increase in Unaccompanied Alien Child Migration, Fiscal Years 2012-2014

Country	Grantee (Project description)		2012	2013	2014	Total [Note A]
El Salvador	Instituto Salvadoreño del Migrante (Migrant Reintegration)	Total obligations	0	0	$49,740	**$49,740**
		Disbursements	0	0	$24,168	**$24,168**
	Museo de la Palabra y la Imagen (Migration, Women, and Environmental Issues)	Total obligations	0	0	$300,805	**$300,805**
		Disbursements	0	0	0 [Note B]	**$0**
	Asociación de Desarrollo Comunal Milagro de Dios (Crop Diversification)	Total obligations	0	0	$33,550 [Note C]	**$33,550**
		Disbursements	0	0	$16,126 [Note C]	**$16,126**
	Fundación Red de Sobrevivientes y Personas con Discapacidad (Assistance to Disabled Salvadorans)	Total obligations	0	0	$321,510	**$321,510**
		Disbursements	0	0	$91,490	**$91,490**
	Sociedad Cooperativa Marías Noventa y Tres (Assistance to Coffee Cooperative)	Total obligations	0	0	$130,000[c]	**$130,000**
		Disbursements [Note D]	$10,000	$9,148	$81,850[c]	**$100,998**
	Asociación Pro-Búsqueda de Niñas y Niños Desaparecidos (Employment and Vocational Training)	Total obligations	$27,895	$256,085	$41,560	**$325,540**
		Disbursements [Note D]	$58,094	$106,355	$68,956	**$233,405**
	Fundación para la Educación Social, Económico y Cultural (Assistance to Microbusinesses)	Total obligations	0	0	$255,000 [Note E]	**$255,000**
		Disbursements [Note D]	$211,554	$45,636	$138,528	**$395,718**
	Instituto para el Rescate Ancestral Indígena Salvadoreño (Assistance Marketing Traditional Crafts)	Total obligations	0	0	$34,955	**$34,955**
		Disbursements [Note D]	$53,901	$106,161	$51,561	**$211,623**
Guatemala	Asociación Semilla Nueva	Total obligations	0	0	$272,500 [Note F]	**$272,500**

Country	Grantee (Project description)		2012	2013	2014	Total [Note A]
	(Agricultural Assistance)	Disbursements	0	0	$34,249	**$34,249**
	Coordinadora de Asociaciones Campesinas Agropecuarias de Petén (Crop Diversification)	Total obligations	0	0	$161,210 [Note F]	$16**1,210**
		Disbursements	0	0	0 [Note B]	**$0**
	Asociación Rxiin Tnamet (Expansion of Clinic)	Total obligations	0	0	$25,985	**$25,985**
		Disbursements	0	0	0 [Note B]	**$0**
	Fundación ProPetén (Technical Assistance Growing and Selling Coffee)	Total obligations	0	0	$119,535 [Note E]	**$119,5352**
		Disbursements [Note D]	$180,775	$35,633	$15,847	**$232,255**
Honduras	Asociación de Desarrollo Pespirense (Support to Youth Microenterprises)	Total obligations	0	0	$250,000 [Note F]	**$250,000**
		Disbursements	0	0	0 [Note B]	**$0**
	Asociación de Desarrollo Triunfeña (Support to Youth Microenterprises)	Total obligations	0	0	$267,540 [Note F]	**$267,540**
		Disbursements	0	0	0 [Note B]	**$0**
	Fundación Hondureña de Ambiente y Desarrollo Vida (Agricultural Assistance)	Total obligations	0	0	$157,000 [Note C]	**$157,0001**
		Disbursements	0	0	0[b]	**$0**
	Vecinos Honduras (Crop Diversification	Total obligations	0	0	$133,4502	**$133,4502**
		Disbursements	0	0	0 [Note B]	**$0**

Source: GAO analysis of IAF data. | GAO-15-707

Note: IAF obligates grant funds upon approval of each grant. Disbursements are made at 6-month intervals during the period of the grant. Obligations, disbursements, and totals do not include counterpart contributions.

Note A: Obligation and disbursement totals reflect those for fiscal years 2012-2014 and not necessarily the overall project.

Note B: According to IAF, the first disbursements for this project occurred in fiscal year 2015.

Note C: Over 18 months.

Note D: These values include disbursements for grants obligated prior to fiscal year 2012 and modified with an award of additional funds during the fiscal year 2012-2014 period.

Note E: Over 2 years.

Note F: Over 3 years.

Appendix III: Information on Agency Program Locations and Unaccompanied Alien Child Apprehensions by Location of Origin

Figures 10 through 21 provide country-level information on the number of apprehensions of unaccompanied alien children (UAC), by location of origin, as identified by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) between January and May 15, 2014, and on the number of U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Department of State (State) and its Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL), and Inter-American Foundation (IAF) programs and grantees in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras. Each agency provided these data by municipality. These figures present these data aggregated at the departmental level. Some locations are not represented in these figures because of a lack of specificity in agency documents regarding the location of the program. Further, the programs were not weighted in any way, such as by number of beneficiaries or population served, or resources allocated to the program location. See appendix I for more information on how we obtained, analyzed, and presented this information.

Figure 10: Number of Apprehended Unaccompanied Alien Children (UAC) between January and May 15, 2014, by Department Location of Origin, in Guatemala

Source: GAO analysis of Department of Homeland Security data; Mapinfo (maps). | GAO-15-707

Figure 11: Number of U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Programs, by Department, in Guatemala

Source: GAO analysis of USAID data; Mapinfo (maps). | GAO-15-707

Figure 12: Number of Department of State (State) Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) Programs, by Department, in Guatemala

Source: GAO analysis of State data; Mapinfo (maps). | GAO-15-707

GAO-15-707 Unaccompanied Children from Central America

Figure 13: Number of Inter-American Foundation (IAF) Grantees, by Department, in Guatemala

Source: GAO analysis of IAF data. | GAO-15-707

Figure 14: Number of Apprehended Unaccompanied Alien Children (UAC) between January and May 15, 2014, by Department Location of Origin, in El Salvador

Source: GAO analysis of Department of Homeland Security data. | GAO-15-707

Figure 15: Number of U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Programs, by Department, in El Salvador

Number of USAID programs
- 0
- 1 to 5
- 6 to 19
- 20 to 49
- 50 or more

Source: GAO analysis of USAID data; Mapinfo (maps). | GAO-15-707

Figure 16: Number of Department of State (State) Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) Programs, by Department, in El Salvador

Source: GAO analysis of State data. | GAO-15-707

Figure 17: Number of Inter-American Foundation (IAF) Grantees, by Department, in El Salvador

Source: GAO analysis of IAF data. | GAO-15-707

Figure 18: Number of Apprehended Unaccompanied Alien Children (UAC) between January and May 15, 2014, by Department Location of Origin, in Honduras

Source: GAO analysis of Department of Homeland Security data; Mapinfo (maps). | GAO-15-707

Figure 19: Number of U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Programs, by Department, in Honduras
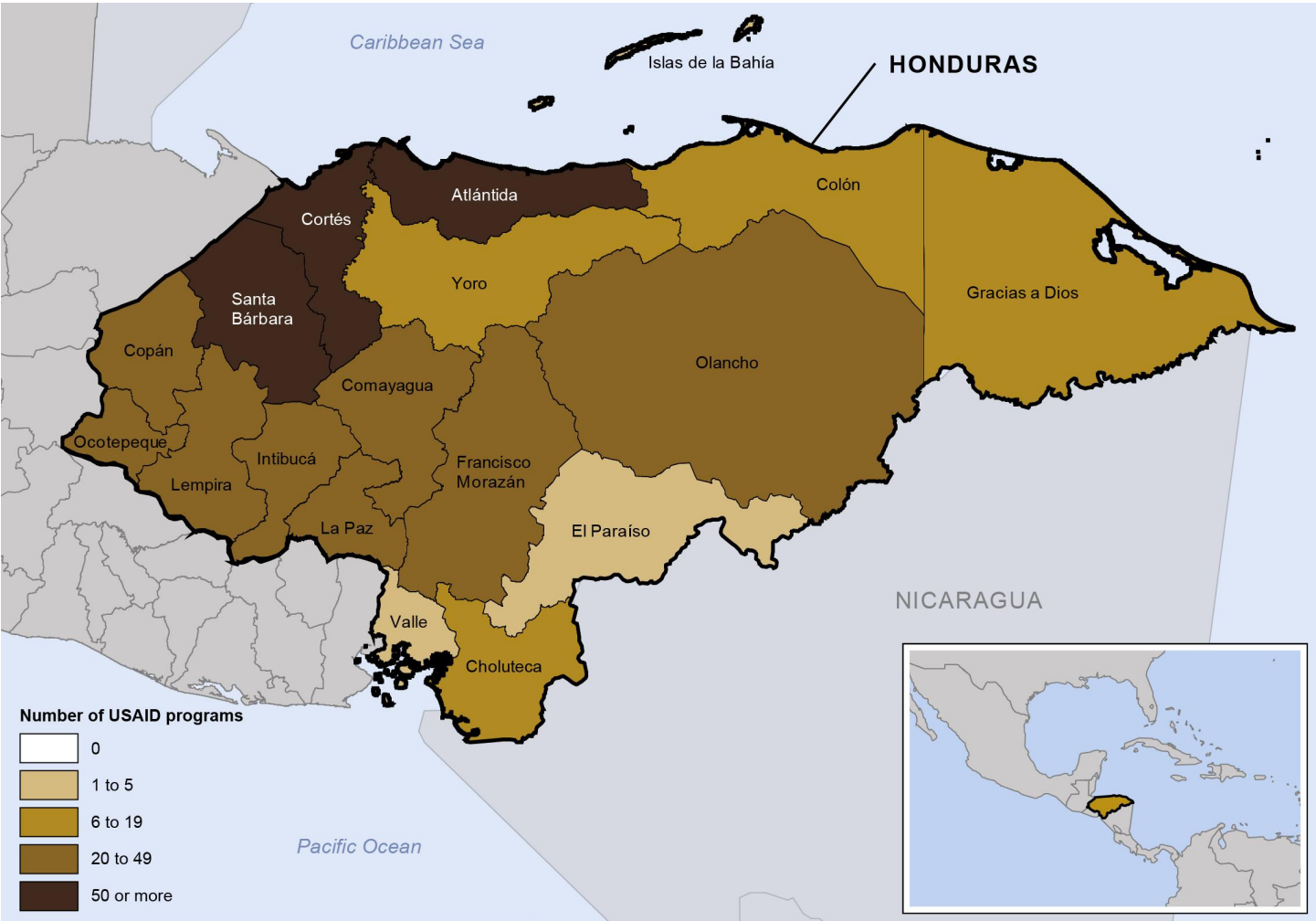
Source: GAO analysis of USAID data; Mapinfo (maps). | GAO-15-707

**Figure 20: Number of Department of State (State) Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL)
Programs, by Department, in Honduras**

Source: GAO analysis of State data; Mapinfo (maps). | GAO-15-707

Figure 21: Number of Inter-American Foundation (IAF) Grantees, by Department, in Honduras

Source: GAO analysis of IAF data. | GAO-15-707

Appendix IV: Comments from the Department of State

United States Department of State

Washington D.C. 20520

JUL 14 2015

Dr. Loren Yager
Managing Director
International Affairs and Trade
Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20548-0001

Dear Dr. Yager:

We appreciate the opportunity to review your draft report, "CENTRAL AMERICA: Improved Evaluation Efforts Could Enhance Agency Programs to Reduce Unaccompanied Child Migration." GAO Job Code 321047.

The enclosed Department of State comments are provided for incorporation with this letter as an appendix to the final report.

If you have any questions concerning this response, please contact Emily Mendrala, CARSI Coordinator, Office of Central America Regional Security Initiative (CARSI), Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs at (202) 736-7660.

Sincerely,

Christopher H. Flaggs

Enclosure:
    As stated.

cc: GAO – Kimberly Gianopoulos
        WHA – Francisco Palmieri, Acting
        State/OIG - Norman Brown

Department of State Comments on Draft Report

<u>CENTRAL AMERICA: Improved Evaluation Efforts Could Enhance
Agency Programs to Reduce Unaccompanied Child Migration</u>
(GAO-15-707SU GAO Code 321047)

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on draft report, *Central America:
Improved Evaluation Efforts Could Enhance Agency Programs to Reduce
Unaccompanied Child Migration.* The Department appreciates the professionalism
of GAO officers and the collegial way in which the audit was conducted.

The Department concurs with the recommendation: That the Department and DHS
take steps to integrate evaluations into their planning for, and implementation of,
future information campaigns intended to deter migrants. The Department uses a
variety of methods to determine the effectiveness and reach of information
campaigns, and will integrate evaluations into these methods. For example, the
July 2014 Supplemental FY 2014 budget request for $300 million included $5
million for media campaigns and public diplomacy outreach. The additional
requested resources would have enabled the Department to devote additional
resources to and better evaluate awareness campaigns. Going forward, the
Department is convinced that the most effective way to deter illegal migration is to
address underlying factors of migration in Central America. The U.S. Strategy for
Engagement in Central America prioritizes prosperity, governance, and security.
A secure, democratic, and prosperous Central America will provide an
environment in which all of its citizens may choose to remain and thrive.

Appendix V: Comments from the Department of Homeland Security

U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

Homeland Security

July 21, 2015

Kimberly Gianopoulos
Director, International Affairs and Trade
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20548

Re: Draft Report GAO-15-707, "CENTRAL AMERICA: Improved Evaluation Efforts Could Enhance Agency Programs to Reduce Unaccompanied Child Migration"

Dear Ms. Gianopoulos:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this draft report. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) appreciates the U.S. Government Accountability Office's (GAO) work in planning and conducting its review and issuing this report.

During the past few years, there was a substantial increase in the number of unaccompanied children (UC)[1] apprehended at the U.S.-Mexican border. Similar to the way it addresses other security issues, DHS utilized a risk-based strategy for border security in its response to the surge of UC reaching our border in 2014.

According to U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), the number of UC from all countries apprehended at the U.S.-Mexican border climbed from more than 24,000 in fiscal year (FY) 2012 to nearly 39,000 in FY 2013, and to nearly 69,000 in FY 2014. Prior to FY 2012, the majority of UCs apprehended at the border were Mexican nationals. However, more than half of the UCs apprehended at the border in FY 2013, and 75 percent apprehended in FY 2014 were nationals of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. UC apprehensions for FY 2015 to date have decreased, owing in large part to a comprehensive, whole of government and international partner approach that DHS led in the summer of 2014. Separately, DHS has been taking steps to ensure we are prepared in the event of another influx.

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[1] As defined by 6 U.S.C. § 279(g)(2), an "unaccompanied alien child" means a child who (A) has no lawful immigration status in the United States; (B) has not attained 18 years of age; and (C) with respect to whom (i) there is no parent or legal guardian in the United States; or (ii) no parent or legal guardian in the United States is available to provide care and physical custody.

More specifically, during last summer's surge, DHS worked closely with the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), to whom DHS is mandated by law to transfer custody of these children, to resolve issues related to HHS' ability to absorb the increase in UCs. These efforts build on several years of increased and strengthened coordination between DHS and HHS. The U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) also had an important role in providing temporary shelter for UCs and family units at the beginning of the increase in 2014. DHS will continue to (1) ensure the proper care of UC when they are temporarily in its custody and coordinate closely with HHS, the Department of State (DOS), DOD, the General Services Administration, and other agencies, and (2) plan for a coordinated and rapid government-wide response in the short-term in the event of another surge and to undertake broader, longer-term reforms to address the root causes behind these recent migration trends. DHS will also continue to work closely with the governments of Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador.

Looking to the future, DHS will continue to support U.S. government economic and security objectives. The Department will continue to promote information campaigns through radio, television, and print media, targeted at potential migrants and their families, to dissuade them from embarking on the dangerous trek north to attempt to enter the U.S. illegally or assisting family members in doing so. These campaigns are essential in combating the misinformation promoted by smuggling organizations. In addition, DHS will strengthen its already excellent bilateral partnerships with our Central American partners to further enhance the quick, efficient, and safe repatriations of children and families who are apprehended in the United States. This includes bilateral cooperation on travel document issuance, the number of permitted repatriation flights, the availability of consular interviews, and infrastructure at reception centers.

To promote investigative capacity-building and anti-smuggling efforts, DHS, with DOS funding, will increase the presence of the Transnational Criminal Investigative Units (TCIU), which are sponsored by U.S. Immigration Customs and Enforcement in Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Panama. DHS also plans to expand border-focused vetted units, such as the Special Tactics Operations Group or *Grupo de Operaciones Especiales Tacticas* (GOET) in Honduras, to El Salvador and Guatemala in partnership with CBP. Through these vetted units, DHS provides training and capacity building to foreign counterparts, empowering them to investigate, identify, disrupt, and dismantle transnational criminal organizations that are engaging in illicit activities in the host country.

DHS will also support increased passenger and cargo information sharing via programs designed to collect and verify information through U.S. databases, as well as information regarding transnational criminal organization smuggling routes. Finally, to encourage economic development, DHS will pursue efforts to promote trade, travel and commerce through trade facilitation, port infrastructure assistance, and information sharing.

2

The draft report contained two recommendations with which the Department concurs. Specifically, GAO recommended that the:

Recommendation 1: Secretaries of State and Homeland Security instruct appropriate agency public affairs officers to integrate evaluation into their planning for, and implementation of, future public information campaigns intended to dissuade migration, such as campaigns warning of the dangers of migration, providing facts on U.S. immigration policy, or conveying other messages.

Response: Concur. DHS Office of Public Affairs (OPA) will regularly provide guidance, assistance, and in some cases, directly oversee the development and implementation of public information campaigns originating from or involving DHS. Such projects may encompass the efforts of multiple DHS components or be part of an interagency campaign. As directed by the Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs, OPA officers are assigned based on portfolio coverage as liaisons to the component or interagency group responsible for managing each public information campaign. Primary and secondary portfolio assignments, including individual public information campaigns, will be documented and maintained by OPA staff. This will help ensure continuous coverage during an employee absence or staff turnover. Acknowledging that a one-size-fits-all approach to evaluation is impractical given the unique nature of each public information campaign, assigned OPA staff will consider and evaluate possible markers and metrics of success relevant to each campaign's specific goals and target audiences. Coordination at the OPA level helps ensure that all Department-wide resources (for example, current statistics maintained at the component level or up-to-date messaging) are made available to campaign officers as appropriate, resulting in good stewardship of resources and best positioning campaigns for success. Estimated Completion Date (ECD): September 30, 2015.

Recommendation 2: Secretary of Homeland Security instruct DHS's U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement to establish annual performance targets associated with the performance measures it has established for its Transnational Criminal Investigative Units.

Response: Concur. ICE Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) will develop collaborative performance goals for the TCIUs aligned with joint priorities between the HSI International Attachés and partner nations. ICE/HSI will partner with host nation TCIU leadership and develop goals which incorporate Agency case management metrics utilized to record investigative activities as well as TCIU capacity developmental measures. HSI International Operations currently has 8 TCIUs. HSI will seek to have 1 to 2 TCIUs confer every four to six months to meet the performance goals set forth by HSI Attaches and partner nations. ECD: July 31, 2016.

3

Again, thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on this draft report.
Technical comments were previously provided under a separate cover. Please feel free to
contact me if you have any questions. We look forward to working with you in the
future.

Sincerely,

Jim H. Crumpacker, CIA, CFE
Director
Departmental GAO-OIG Liaison Office

4

USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Ms. Kimberly Gianopoulos
Director, International Affairs and Trade
U.S Government Accountability Office
Washington, DC 20548

07/14/2015

Dear Ms. Gianopoulos:

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Government Accountability Office (GAO) draft report, entitled, "Central America: Improved Evaluation Efforts Could Enhance Agency Programs to Reduce Unaccompanied Child Migration" (GAO-15-707SU).

This report does not contain any recommendations to the U.S Agency for International Development for improvement or action. We have separately provided factual corrections to information in the report.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the GAO draft report and for the courtesies extended by your staff in the conduct of this audit review.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth A. Hogan
Acting Assistant Administrator
Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean

U.S. Agency for International Development
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20523
www.usaid.gov

July 15, 2015

Kimberly Gianopoulos
Director, International Affairs and Trade
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Ms. Gianopoulos,

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the U.S. Government Accountability Office's (GAO) draft report entitled *"Central America: Improved Evaluation Efforts Could Enhance Agency Programs to Reduce Unaccompanied Child Migration, GAO-15-707SU."*

Your report correctly identifies the interventions that MCC is funding, or will fund, in the three northern triangle countries of Central America, all of which are expected to contribute to poverty reduction by promoting economic growth and, therefore, may contribute significantly to the goals outlined in your report. As the report correctly notes, MCC requires strict monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plans for our programs.

MCC's rigorous M&E approach starts with tracking performance on processes and outputs at the beginning of a program, and then continues to track high-level outcomes and impacts at the end to concretely assess how its activities have affected poverty and economic growth. In order to fulfill MCC's commitment to tracking results all the way through high-level impacts on poverty and economic growth, M&E is integrated into all phases of program operations from development of a compact through implementation. The results are tracked and become part of a feedback loop used to improve performance during implementation and apply lessons learned to future programs.

All compact agreements between MCC and partner countries include an M&E annex, which identifies key indicators, baselines, and targets related to the program. The El Salvador II Compact has such an M&E annex, which will feed into the M&E plan estimated to be completed by the end of calendar year 2015. The M&E plan for the Guatemala Threshold Program is also expected to be completed by the end of calendar year 2015.

MCC staff have appreciated the collegiality and hard work of your staff in compiling this report. MCC looks forward to engagement with GAO on future projects.

Sincerely,

James A. Mazzarella
Managing Director, Congressional Affairs

Appendix VIII: GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

GAO Contact

Kimberly Gianopoulos, (202) 512-8612 or gianopoulosk@gao.gov

Staff Acknowledgments

In addition to the contact named above, Judith Williams, Assistant Director; Joe Carney; Rachel Girshick; Claudia Rodriguez; Dina Shorafa; Ashley Alley; Martin De Alteriis; Seyda Wentworth; John Mingus; Oziel Trevino; and Lynn Cothern made key contributions to this report.

Accessible Text and Data Tables

Data Table for Highlights Figure: Timing of Department of Homeland Security Public Information Campaigns and Monthly Apprehensions of Unaccompanied Alien Children

Fiscal year	Month	Number of unaccompanied alien child apprehensions
2012	October	1,470
	November	1,454
	December	1,258
	January	1,641
	February	2,084
	March	2,757
	April	2703
	May	2,548
	June	2,074
	July	2,126
	August	2,286
	September	2,046
2013	October	2,342
	November	2,399
	December	2,220
	January	2,270
	February [Note A]	2,989
	March [Note A]	4,123
	April [Note A]	4,204
	May [Note A]	3,989
	June	3,389
	July	3,608
	August	3,727
	September	3,537
2014	October	4,189
	November	4,351
	December	4,333
	January	3,711
	February	4,848
	March	7,183
	April	7,710
	May	10,587
	June	10,633

Fiscal year	Month	Number of unaccompanied alien child apprehensions
	July [Note A]	5,519
	August [Note A]	3,145
	September [Note A]	2,430

Source: GAO analysis of Department of Homeland Security data. | GAO-15-707

Note A: Duration of Department of Homeland Security "Dangers of the Journey" Public Information Campaigns.

Data Table for Figure 1: Apprehensions of Unaccompanied Alien Children by Country of Citizenship, Fiscal Years 2009 through 2014

Unaccompanied children (in thousands)

Country	Fiscal year (FY) 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014
Mexico	16,813	14,610	12,482	16,204	18,995	17,341
Guatemala	1,271	1,643	1,702	4,037	8,376	18,202
Honduras	1,123	1,122	1,051	3,167	7,106	19,272
El Salvador	1,292	1,979	1,466	3,532	6,279	17,019
Other	296	527	408	928	1,593	1,907

Source: GAO analysis of Department of Homeland Security data. | GAO-15-707

Data Table for Figure 2: Apprehensions of Unaccompanied Alien Children at the U.S-Mexican Border, by Month, Fiscal Years 2012-2014

Number of children apprehended

	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September
FY 2012	1,470	1,454	1,258	1,641	2,084	2,757	2,703	2,548	2,074	2,126	2,286	2,046
FY 2013	2,342	2,399	2,220	2,270	2,989	4,123	4,204	3,989	3,389	3,608	3,727	3,537
FY 2014	4,189	4,351	4,333	3,711	4,848	7,183	7,710	1,0587	10,633	5,519	3,145	2,430

Source: GAO analysis of Department of Homeland Security data. | GAO-15-707

Data Table for Figure 7: Number of Apprehended Unaccompanied Alien Children (UAC) between January and May 15, 2014, by Location of Origin, in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras

Number of UAC apprehensions	Departments of El Salvador	Departments of Guatemala	Departments of Honduras
0	None	El Progreso, Sacatepéquez,	Gracias a Dios
1 to 99	None	Alta Verapaz, Baja Verapaz, Chimaltenango, Jalapa, Jutiapa, Retalhuleu, Santa Rosa, Sololá, Suchitepéquez, Zacapa	Islas de la Bahía, La Paz

Number of UAC apprehensions	Departments of El Salvador	Departments of Guatemala	Departments of Honduras
100 to 399	Ahuachapán, Cabañas, Chalatenango, Cuscatlán, La Libertad, La Paz, Morazán, San Vicente, Santa Ana, Sonsonate	Chiquimula, Escuintla, Izabal, Petén, Totonicapán,	El Paraíso, Intibucá, Lempira, Ocotepeque, Santa Bárbara, Valle
400 to 799	La Unión, San Miguel	Guatemala, Quetzaltenango, Quiché	Choluteca, Copán, Comayagua, Francisco Morazán
800 or more	San Salvador, Usulután	Huehuetenango, San Marcos	Atlántida, Colón, Cortés, Olancho, Yoro

Source: GAO analysis of Department of Homeland Security data; Mapinfo (maps). | GAO-15-707

Note: Data reflect aggregated totals at the department level of UAC by municipality of origin.

Data Table for Figure 8: Number of Department of State and U.S. Agency for International Development Programs and Inter-American Foundation Grantees in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras

Number of total programs	Departments of El Salvador	Departments of Guatemala	Departments of Honduras
0	None	None	Islas de la Bahía
1 to 5	None	Baja Verapaz, Chimaltenango, Chiquimula, El Progreso, Izabal, Jalapa, Jutiapa, Sacatepéquez, Santa Rosa, Sololá, Zacapa	None
6 to 19	Ahuachapán, Cabañas, Chalatenango, Cuscatlán, La Unión, Morazán, San Miguel, San Vicente	Alta Verapaz, Escuintla, Petén, Retalhuleu, Suchitepéquez	Choluteca, Colón, El Paraíso, Gracias a Dios, Valle, Yoro
20 to 49	La Libertad, La Paz, San Salvador, Santa Ana, Sonsonate, Usulután	Guatemala, Quetzaltenango, Totonicapán	Copán, Comayagua, Francisco Morazán, Intibucá, La Paz, Lempira, Ocotepeque, Olancho
50 or more	None	Huehuetenango, Quiché, San Marcos	Atlántida, Cortés, Santa Bárbara

Source: GAO analysis of Department of State, U.S. Agency for International Development, and Inter-American Foundation data; Mapinfo (maps). | GAO-15-707

Note: Data reflect aggregated totals at the department level of U.S. Agency for International Development and State International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs programs and Inter-American Foundation grantees by municipality.

Data Table for Figure 9: Timing of Department of Homeland Security Information Campaigns and Apprehensions of Unaccompanied Alien Children at the U.S-Mexican Border, Fiscal Years 2012-2014

Fiscal year	Month	Number of unaccompanied alien child apprehensions
2012	October	1,470
	November	1,454
	December	1,258

Fiscal year	Month	Number of unaccompanied alien child apprehensions
	January	1,641
	February	2,084
	March	2,757
	April	2703
	May	2,548
	June	2,074
	July	2,126
	August	2,286
	September	2,046
2013	October	2,342
	November	2,399
	December	2,220
	January	2,270
	February [Note A]	2,989
	March [Note A]	4,123
	April [Note A]	4,204
	May [Note A]	3,989
	June	3,389
	July	3,608
	August	3,727
	September	3,537
2014	October	4,189
	November	4,351
	December	4,333
	January	3,711
	February	4,848
	March	7,183
	April	7,710
	May	10,587
	June	10,633
	July [Note A]	5,519
	August [Note A]	3,145
	September [Note A]	2,430

Source: GAO analysis of Department of Homeland Security data. | GAO-15-707

Note A: Duration of Department of Homeland Security "Dangers of the Journey" Public Information Campaigns.

Data Table for Figure 10: Number of Apprehended Unaccompanied Alien Children (UAC) between January and May 15, 2014, by Department Location of Origin, in Guatemala

Number of UAC apprehensions	Departments of Guatemala
0	El Progreso, Sacatepéquez,
1 to 99	Alta Verapaz, Baja Verapaz, Chimaltenango, Jalapa, Jutiapa, Retalhuleu, Santa Rosa, Sololá, Suchitepéquez, Zacapa
100 to 399	Chiquimula, Escuintla, Izabal, Petén, Totonicapán,
400 to 799	Guatemala, Quetzaltenango, Quiché
800 or more	Huehuetenango, San Marcos

Source: GAO analysis of Department of Homeland Security data; Mapinfo (maps). | GAO-15-707

Data Table for Figure 11: Number of U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Programs, by Department, in Guatemala

Number of USAID programs	Departments of Guatemala
0	None
1 to 5	Alta Verapaz, Baja Verapaz, Chimaltenango, Chiquimula, El Progreso, Escuintla, Izabal, Jalapa, Jutiapa, Petén, Sacatepéquez, Santa Rosa, Sololá, Zacapa
6 to 19	Guatemala, Retalhuleu, Suchitepéquez
20 to 49	Quetzaltenango, Totonicapán
50 or more	Huehuetenango, Quiché, San Marcos

Source: GAO analysis of USAID data. Mapinfo (maps). | GAO-15-707

Data Table for Figure 12: Number of Department of State (State) Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) Programs, by Department, in Guatemala

Number of State/INL programs	Departments of Guatemala
0	Chiquimula, El Progreso, Quiché, Retalhuleu, Sololá, Totonicapán
1 to 5	Alta Verapaz, Baja Verapaz, Chimaltenango, Huehuetenango, Izabal, Jalapa, Jutiapa, Petén, Quetzaltenango, Sacatepéquez, San Marcos, Santa Rosa, Suchitepéquez, Zacapa
6 to 19	Escuintla, Guatemala

Source: GAO analysis of State data. Mapinfo (maps). | GAO-15-707

Data Table for Figure 13: Number of Inter-American Foundation (IAF) Grantees, by Department, in Guatemala

Number of State/INL programs	Departments of Guatemala
0	Baja Verapaz, Chiquimula, El Progreso, Escuintla, Izabal, Jalapa, Jutiapa, Retalhuleu, Totonicapán, Sacatepéquez, San Marcos, Santa Rosa, Zacapa
1 to 5	Alta Verapaz, Chimaltenango, Guatemala, Huehuetenango, Petén, Quetzaltenango, Quiché, Sololá, Suchitepéquez
6 to 19	None

Source: GAO analysis of IAF data. Mapinfo (maps). | GAO-15-707

Data Table for Figure 14: Number of Apprehended Unaccompanied Alien Children (UAC) between January and May 15, 2014, by Department Location of Origin, in El Salvador

Number of UAC apprehensions	Departments of El Salvador
0	None
1 to 99	None
100 to 399	Ahuachapán, Cabañas, Chalatenango, Cuscatlán, La Libertad, La Paz, Morazán, San Vicente, Santa Ana, Sonsonate
400 to 799	La Unión, San Miguel
800 or more	San Salvador, Usulután

Source: GAO analysis of Department of Homeland Security data; Mapinfo (maps). | GAO-15-707

Data Table for Figure 15: Number of U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Programs, by Department, in El Salvador

Number of USAID programs	Departments of El Salvador
0	None
1 to 5	Chalatenango, La Unión, Morazán, San Miguel,
6 to 19	Ahuachapán, Cabañas, Cuscatlán, La Libertad, La Paz, San Vicente, Santa Ana,
20 to 49	San Salvador, Sonsonate, Usulután
50 or more	None

Source: GAO analysis of USAID data. Mapinfo (maps). | GAO-15-707

Data Table for Figure 16: Number of Department of State (State) Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) Programs, by Department, in El Salvador

Number of State/INL programs	Departments of El Salvador
0	Chalatenango, San Vicente
1 to 5	Ahuachapán, Cabañas, Cuscatlán, La Libertad, La Paz, Morazán, San Miguel, Santa Ana, Sonsonate, Usulután
6 to 19	La Unión, San Salvador

Source: GAO analysis of State data. Mapinfo (maps). | GAO-15-707

Data Table for Figure 17: Number of Inter-American Foundation (IAF) Grantees, by Department, in El Salvador

Number of IAF grantees	Departments of El Salvador
0	None
1 to 5	Ahuachapán, Cabañas, La Unión, Morazán, San Miguel, San Vicente, Santa Ana, Sonsonate
6 to 19	Chalatenango, Cuscatlán, La Libertad, La Paz, San Salvador, Usulután

Source: GAO analysis of IAF data. Mapinfo (maps). | GAO-15-707

Data Table for Figure 18: Number of Apprehended Unaccompanied Alien Children (UAC) between January and May 15, 2014, by Department Location of Origin, in Honduras

Number of UAC apprehensions	Departments of Honduras
0	Gracias a Dios
1 to 99	Islas de la Bahía, La Paz
100 to 399	El Paraíso, Intibucá, Lempira, Ocotepeque, Santa Bárbara, Valle
400 to 799	Choluteca, Copán, Comayagua, Francisco Morazán
800 or more	Atlántida, Colón, Cortés, Olancho, Yoro

Source: GAO analysis of Department of Homeland Security data; Mapinfo (maps). | GAO-15-707

Data Table for Figure 19: Number of U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Programs, by Department, in Honduras

Number of USAID programs	Departments of Honduras
0	None
1 to 5	El Paraíso, Islas de la Bahía, Valle

Number of USAID programs	Departments of Honduras
6 to 19	Colón, Gracias a Dios, Choluteca, Yoro
20 to 49	Copán, Comayagua, Francisco Morazán, Intibucá, La Paz, Lempira, Ocotepeque, Olancho
50 or more	Atlántida, Cortés, Santa Bárbara

Source: GAO analysis of USAID data. Mapinfo (maps). | GAO-15-707

Data Table for Figure 20: Number of Department of State (State) Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) Programs, by Department, in Honduras

Number of State/INL programs	Departments of Honduras
0	Choluteca, Colón, Copán, Gracias a Dios, Intibucá, Islas de la Bahía, La Paz, Lempira, Ocotepeque, Olancho, Santa Bárbara, Valle, Yoro
1 to 5	Atlántida, Comayagua, El Paraíso
6 to 19	Cortés, Francisco Morazán

Source: GAO analysis of State data. Mapinfo (maps). | GAO-15-707

Data Table for Figure 21: Number of Inter-American Foundation (IAF) Grantees, by Department, in Honduras

Number of State/INL programs	Departments of Honduras
0	Atlántida, Comayagua, Colón, Copán, Gracias a Dios, Islas de la Bahía, Lempira, Ocotepeque, Santa Bárbara
1 to 5	Cortés, Choluteca, El Paraíso, Francisco Morazán, Intibucá, La Paz, Olancho, Valle, Yoro
6 to 19	None

Source: GAO analysis of State data. Mapinfo (maps). | GAO-15-707

Agency Comments

Department of State

Accessible Text for Appendix IV: Comments from the Department of State

Page 1

United States Department of State
Washington D.C. 20520

July 14, 2015

Dr. Loren Yager
Managing Director
International Affairs and Trade
Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20548-0001

Dear Dr. Yager:

We appreciate the opportunity to review your draft report, "CENTRAL AMERICA: Improved Evaluation Efforts Could Enhance Agency Programs to Reduce Unaccompanied Child Migration." GAO Job Code 321047.

The enclosed Department of State comments are provided for incorporation with this letter as an appendix to the final report.

If you have any questions concerning this response, please contact Emily Mendrala, CARSI Coordinator, Office of Central America Regional Security Initiative (CARS), Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs at (202) 736-7660.

Sincerely,

Signed by
Christopher H. Flaggs

Enclosure: As stated.

cc: GAO - Kimberly Gianopoulos
WHA - Francisco Palmieri, Acting
State/OIG - Norman Brown

Page 2

Department of State Comments on Draft Report

CENTRAL AMERICA: Improved Evaluation Efforts Could Enhance Agency Programs to Reduce Unaccompanied Child Migration (GAO-15-707SU GAO Code 321047)

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on draft report, *Central America: Improved Evaluation Efforts Could Enhance Agency Programs to Reduce Unaccompanied Child Migration.* The Department appreciates the professionalism of GAO officers and the collegial way in which the audit was conducted.

The Department concurs with the recommendation: That the Department and DHS take steps to integrate evaluations into their planning for, and implementation of, future information campaigns intended to deter migrants. The Department uses a variety of methods to determine the effectiveness and reach of information campaigns, and will integrate evaluations into these methods. For example, the July 2014 Supplemental FY 2014 budget request for $300 million included $5 million for media campaigns and public diplomacy outreach. The additional requested resources would have enabled the Department to devote additional resources to and better evaluate awareness campaigns. Going forward, the Department is convinced that the most effective way to deter illegal migration is to address underlying factors of migration in Central America. The U.S. Strategy for Engagement in Central America prioritizes prosperity, governance, and security.

A secure, democratic, and prosperous Central America will provide an environment in which all of its citizens may choose to remain and thrive.

Department of Homeland Security

Page 1

Accessible Text for Appendix V: Comments from the Department of Homeland Security

U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

July 21, 2015

Kimberly Gianopoulos
Director, International Affairs and Trade
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20548

Re: Draft Report GAO-15-707, "CENTRAL AMERICA: Improved Evaluation Efforts Could Enhance Agency Programs to Reduce Unaccompanied Child Migration"

Dear Ms. Gianopoulos:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this draft report. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) appreciates the U.S. Government Accountability Office's (GAO) work in planning and conducting its review and issuing this report.

During the past few years, there was a substantial increase in the number of unaccompanied children (UC) [Note 1] apprehended at the U.S.-Mexican border. Similar to the way it addresses other security issues, DHS utilized a risk-based strategy for border security in its response to the surge of UC reaching our border in 2014.

According to U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), the number of UC from all countries apprehended at the U.S.-Mexican border climbed from more than 24,000 in fiscal year (FY) 2012 to nearly 39,000 in FY 2013, and to nearly 69,000 in FY 2014. Prior to FY 2012, the majority of UCs apprehended at the border were Mexican nationals. However, more than half of the UCs apprehended at the border in FY 2013, and 75 percent apprehended in FY 2014 were nationals of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. UC apprehensions for FY 2015 to date have decreased, owing in large part to a comprehensive, whole of government and international partner approach that DHS led in the summer of 2014. Separately, DHS has been taking steps to ensure we are prepared in the event of another influx.

Note 1: As defined by 6 U.S.C. § 279(g)(2), an "unaccompanied alien child" means a child who (A) has no lawful immigration status in the United States; (B) has not attained 18 years of age; and (C) with respect to whom (i) there is no parent or legal guardian in the United States; or (ii) no parent or legal guardian in the United States is available to provide care and physical custody.

Page 2

More specifically, during last summer's surge, DHS worked closely with the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), to whom DHS is mandated by law to transfer custody of these children, to resolve issues related to HHS' ability to absorb the increase in UCs. These effo1is build on several years of increased and strengthened coordination between DHS and HHS. The U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) also had an important role in providing temporary shelter for UCs and family units at the beginning of the increase in 2014. DHS will continue to (1) ensure the proper care of UC when they are temporarily in its custody and coordinate closely with HHS, the Department of State (DOS), DOD, the General Services Administration, and other agencies, and (2) plan for a coordinated and rapid government-wide response in the short-term in the event of another surge and to undertake broader, longer-term reforms to address the root causes behind these recent migration trends. DHS will also continue to work closely with the governments of Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador.

Looking to the future, DHS will continue to support U.S. government economic and security objectives. The Department will continue to promote information campaigns through radio, television, and print media, targeted at potential migrants and their families, to dissuade them from embarking on the dangerous trek north to attempt to enter the U.S. illegally or assisting family members in doing so. These campaigns are essential in combating the misinformation promoted by smuggling organizations. In addition, DHS will strengthen its already excellent bilateral partnerships with our Central American partners to further enhance the quick, efficient, and safe repatriations of children and families who are apprehended in the United States. This includes bilateral cooperation on travel document issuance, the number of permitted repatriation flights, the availability of consular interviews, and infrastructure at reception centers.

To promote investigative capacity-building and anti-smuggling efforts, DHS, with DOS funding, will increase the presence of the Transnational Criminal Investigative Units (TCIU), which are sponsored by U.S. Immigration Customs and Enforcement in Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Panama. DHS also plans to expand border- focused vetted units, such as the Special Tactics Operations Group or *Grupo de Operaciones Especiales Tacticas* (GOET) in Honduras, to El Salvador and Guatemala in partnership with CBP. Through these vetted units, DHS provides training and capacity building to foreign counterparts, empowering them to investigate, identify, disrupt, and dismantle transnational criminal organizations that are engaging in illicit activities in the host country.

DHS will also support increased passenger and cargo information sharing via programs designed to collect and verify information through U.S. databases, as well as information regarding transnational criminal organization smuggling routes. Finally, to encourage economic development, DHS will pursue efforts to promote trade, travel and commerce through trade facilitation, port infrastructure assistance, and information sharing.

Page 3

The draft report contained two recommendations with which the Department concurs. Specifically, GAO recommended that the:

Recommendation 1: Secretaries of State and Homeland Security instruct appropriate agency public affairs officers to integrate evaluation into their planning for, and implementation of, future public information campaigns intended to dissuade migration, such as campaigns warning of the dangers of migration, providing facts on U.S. immigration policy, or conveying other messages.

Response: Concur. DHS Office of Public Affairs (OPA) will regularly provide guidance, assistance, and in some cases, directly oversee the development and implementation of public information campaigns originating from or involving DHS. Such projects may encompass the effo1is of multiple DHS components or be part of an interagency campaign. As directed by the Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs, OPA officers are assigned based on portfolio coverage as liaisons to the component or interagency group responsible for managing each public information campaign. Primary and secondary portfolio assignments, including individual public information campaigns, will be documented and maintained by OPA staff. This will help ensure continuous coverage during an employee absence or staff turnover. Acknowledging that a one-size- fits-all approach to evaluation is impractical given the unique nature of each public information campaign, assigned OPA staff will consider and evaluate possible markers and metrics of success relevant to each campaign's specific goals and target audiences. Coordination at the OPA level helps ensure that all Department-wide resources (for example, current statistics maintained at the component level or up-to-date messaging) are made available to campaign officers as appropriate, resulting in good stewardship of resources and best positioning campaigns for success. Estimated Completion Date (ECD): September 30, 2015.

Recommendation 2: Secretary of Homeland Security instruct DHS's U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement to establish annual performance targets associated with the performance measures it has established for its Transnational Criminal Investigative Units.

Response: Concur. ICE Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) will develop collaborative performance goals for the TCIUs aligned with joint priorities between the HSI International Attaches and partner nations. ICE/HSI will partner with host nation TCIU leadership and develop goals which incorporate Agency case management metrics utilized to record investigative activities as well as TCIU capacity developmental measures. HSI International Operations currently has 8 TCIUs. HSI will seek to have 1 to 2 TCIUs confer every four to six months to meet the performance goals set f01ih by HSI Attaches and partner nations. ECD: July 31, 2016.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on this draft report. Technical comments were previously provided under a separate cover. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions. We look forward to working with you in the future.

Sincerely,

Signed by
Jim H. Crumpacker, CIA, CFE
Director
Departmental GAO-OIG Liaison Office

Page 4

U.S. Agency for International Development

Accessible Text for Appendix VI: Comments from the U.S. Agency for International Development

USAID
U.S. Agency for International Development
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20523
www.usaid.gov

July 14, 2015

Ms. Kimberly Gianopoulos
Director, International Affairs and Trade
U.S Government Accountability Office
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Ms. Gianopoulos:

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Government Accountability Office (GAO) draft report, entitled, "Central America: Improved Evaluation Efforts Could Enhance Agency Programs to Reduce Unaccompanied Child Migration" (GAO-15-707SU).

This report does not contain any recommendations to the U.S Agency for International Development for improvement or action. We have separately provided factual corrections to information in the report.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the GAO draft report and for the courtesies extended by your staff in the conduct of this audit review.

Sincerely,

Signed by
Elizabeth A. Hogan
Acting Assistant Administrator
Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean

Millennium Challenge Corporation

Accessible Text for Appendix VII: Comments from the Millennium Challenge Corporation

MILLENIUM CHALLENGE CORPORATION
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

July 15, 2015

Kimberly Gianopoulos

Director, International Affairs and Trade

U.S. Government Accountability Office 441 G Street, NW

Washington, DC 20548 Dear Ms. Gianopoulos,

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the U.S. Government Accountability Office's (GAO) draft report entitled "*Central America: Improved Evaluation Efforts Could Enhance Agency Programs to Reduce Unaccompanied Child Migration, GAO-15-707SU.*"

Your report correctly identifies the interventions that MCC is funding, or will fund, in the three northern triangle countries of Central America, all of which are expected to contribute to poverty reduction by promoting economic growth and, therefore, may contribute significantly to the goals outlined in your report. As the report correctly notes, MCC requires strict monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plans for our programs.

MCC's rigorous M&E approach starts with tracking performance on processes and outputs at the beginning of a program, and then continues to track high-level outcomes and impacts at the end to concretely assess how its activities have affected poverty and economic growth. In order to fulfill MCC's commitment to tracking results all the way through high-level impacts on poverty and economic growth, M&E is integrated into all phases of program operations from development of a compact through implementation. The results are tracked and become part of a feedback loop used to improve performance during implementation and apply lessons learned to future programs.

All compact agreements between MCC and partner countries include an M&E annex, which identifies key indicators, baselines, and targets related to the program. The El Salvador II Compact has such an M&E annex, which will feed into the M&E plan estimated to be completed by the end of calendar year 2015. The M&E plan for the Guatemala Threshold Program is also expected to be completed by the end of calendar year 2015.

MCC staff have appreciated the collegiality and hard work of your staff in compiling this report. MCC looks forward to engagement with GAO on future projects.

Sincerely,

James A. Mazzarella

Managing Director, Congressional Affairs

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