



Highlights of [GAO-07-1034](#), a report to congressional requesters

## Why GAO Did This Study

Human trafficking—a worldwide crime involving the exploitation of men, women, and children for others' financial gain—is a violation of human rights. Victims are often lured or abducted and forced to work in involuntary servitude. Since 2001, the U.S. government has provided about \$447 million to combat global human trafficking. As GAO previously reported, estimates of the number of trafficking victims are questionable. In this report, GAO examines (1) collaboration among organizations involved in international antitrafficking efforts, (2) U.S. government monitoring of antitrafficking projects and difficulties in evaluating these projects, and (3) suggestions for strengthening monitoring and evaluation. GAO analyzed agency documents; convened an expert panel; interviewed officials; and conducted fieldwork in Indonesia, Thailand, and Mexico.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the Secretaries of State and Labor and the Administrator of USAID consider taking actions to (1) improve information about project impact on human trafficking and (2) address monitoring and evaluation in project design. In their comments, State agreed to implement the recommendations. While agreeing that monitoring and evaluation are important, Labor and USAID did not directly respond to GAO's recommendations.

[www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-07-1034](http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-07-1034).

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Thomas Melito at (202) 512-9601 or [melitot@gao.gov](mailto:melitot@gao.gov).

# HUMAN TRAFFICKING

## Monitoring and Evaluation of International Projects Are Limited, but Experts Suggest Improvements

### What GAO Found

While governments, international organizations, and nongovernmental organizations have recognized the importance of collaborating and have established some coordination mechanisms and practices, they will need to overcome challenges that have impeded collaboration in the past for their efforts to be successful. In two of the three countries GAO visited, it found that host governments—which bear ultimate responsibility for combating trafficking within their borders—have passed national antitrafficking laws and enacted national action plans. However, organizations continue to face numerous challenges when collaborating to combat human trafficking, including varying levels of government commitment and capacity. For example, some governments treat foreign trafficking victims as illegal immigrants and deport rather than protect them. In addition, according to officials in two of the three countries GAO visited, the ministries responsible for coordinating antitrafficking efforts have limited authority and capacity.

U.S. government-funded antitrafficking projects often lack some important elements that allow projects to be monitored, and little is known about project impact due to difficulties in conducting evaluations. Project documents GAO reviewed generally include monitoring elements, such as an overarching goal and related activities, but often lack other monitoring elements, such as targets for measuring performance. To oversee projects, State officials supplement their efforts with assistance from U.S. embassy staff, but have not established written guidance for oversight. Officials said that they are working to improve performance measures and develop monitoring guidance. Conducting impact evaluations of antitrafficking projects is difficult due to several factors, including questionable project-level estimates of the number of trafficking victims. These estimates are needed for baselines by which to evaluate how effectively specific interventions are reducing trafficking. Elements in the design of certain projects, such as objectives that are too broad, further impede evaluation. Because of these difficulties, few impact evaluations have been completed, and little is known about the impact of antitrafficking interventions.

A GAO-convened panel of experts identified and discussed ways to address the factors that make it difficult to monitor and evaluate antitrafficking projects. Panelists' suggested approaches included improving information on the nature and severity of trafficking and addressing monitoring and evaluation in project design. To improve information on trafficking, panelists suggested methods that have been used to sample other hard-to-reach populations, including domestic violence victims. One suggested method is sampling of "hot spots"—an intensive search for victims in areas known to have high concentrations of victims. To address weaknesses in project design that impede monitoring and evaluation, panelists suggested that officials design projects that clearly link activities to intended outcomes, identify measurable indicators, and establish procedures for setting and modifying targets.