



Report to the Ranking Member,
Committee on Foreign Relations,
U.S. Senate

April 2023

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

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

GAO Highlights

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

Why GAO Did This Study

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

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

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

What GAO Recommends

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

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

April 2023

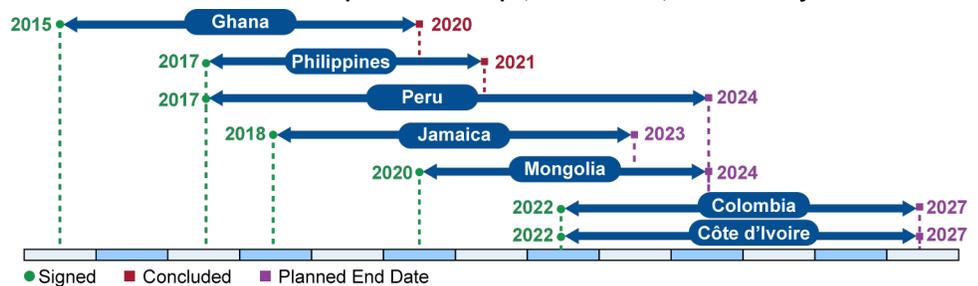
HUMAN TRAFFICKING

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

What GAO Found

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

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



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

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

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

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Abbreviations

CPC	Child Protection Compacts
DOL	Department of Labor
SOPs	Standard Operating Procedures
TIP Office	Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development

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April 6, 2023

The Honorable James E. Risch
Ranking Member
Committee on Foreign Relations
United States Senate

Dear Mr. Risch:

Trafficking in persons, or human trafficking, is a longstanding problem throughout the world. While it is difficult to reliably estimate the extent of human trafficking, the International Labour Organization estimates there were about 25 million victims worldwide in 2016.¹ According to the Department of State, human trafficking is a grave crime and human rights abuse that compromises national and economic security, undermines the rule of law, and harms the well-being of individuals and communities everywhere.

Congress enacted the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 to combat trafficking in persons, and has reauthorized this act six times.² The act, as amended, defines severe forms of trafficking in persons as (1) sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such an act has not attained 18 years of age; or (2) the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery.³

A United Nations report estimates that children make up about one third of detected victims of human trafficking overall, although this percentage

¹We have previously reported that estimates of the number of trafficking victims are often questionable because of data and methodological weaknesses. See GAO, *Human Trafficking: Better Data, Strategy, and Reporting Needed to Enhance U.S. Antitrafficking Efforts Abroad*, [GAO-06-825](#) (Washington, D.C.: July 18, 2006).

²Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, Pub. L. No. 106-386, Div. A, 114 Stat. 1464, 1466-91 (2000).

³22 U.S.C. § 7102(11).

is higher in low-income countries.⁴ Through the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013, Congress authorized Child Protection Compacts (CPC) Partnerships.⁵ These are multiyear bilateral partnerships between the U.S. government and selected partner country governments⁶ to combat child trafficking overseas.⁷ The act authorizes State, in consultation with other relevant agencies, to provide assistance to countries that enter in a CPC with the United States to support policies and programs that (1) prevent and respond to violence, exploitation, and abuse against children; and (2) measurably reduce the trafficking of minors by building sustainable and effective systems of justice, prevention, and protection.⁸ State has negotiated and implemented CPCs with partner governments through its Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (TIP Office).

You asked us to review progress of the CPC program since it began in 2015. This report (1) describes State’s selection of CPC partner countries, development of goals, and funding of CPCs; (2) assesses State’s monitoring of CPC implementation; (3) reviews CPC activities and State’s tracking of partner government contributions to CPC efforts and sustainability measures; and (4) describes observations from stakeholders we interviewed on the CPC partnership structure.

To address these objectives, we reviewed each signed CPC partnership document, analyzed relevant State data and other documentation, and interviewed TIP Office officials.⁹ We also conducted site visits with a non-generalizable sample of three countries, virtually with two countries (Ghana and the Philippines) and in person with one country (Jamaica) to interview U.S. embassy officials, partner government officials, and

⁴United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2020* (New York, NY: United Nations publication, 2020).

⁵For this report, we refer to CPC Partnerships as “CPCs.”

⁶For this report, we refer to partner country governments as “partner governments.”

⁷Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013, Pub. L. No. 113-4, 127 Stat. 54, 136-38 (2013).

⁸22 U.S.C. § 7103a(d).

⁹For this report, we refer to the documents signed by the TIP Office and partner governments as “partnership documents.”

implementing partners.¹⁰ We selected these countries based on various factors, including the completion of final evaluations for the two concluded CPCs and the opportunity to observe bilateral discussions in Jamaica.

To describe State's selection, goal development, and funding of CPCs, we reviewed TIP Office documents, such as Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for CPCs,¹¹ country selection checklists, and TIP Office data specifying funding obligation amounts for CPCs.¹² To assess how State monitors CPCs, we reviewed documents addressing the monitoring process of each CPC, such as the SOPs, regular progress reports, and U.S. embassy cables summarizing annual discussions between the TIP Office, partner governments, and implementing partners. To review CPC activities and the TIP Office's tracking of partner government contributions and sustainability measures, we interviewed officials from the TIP Office, partner governments, and implementing partners, and examined evaluation reports. To describe observations on the CPC partnership structure, we interviewed these same officials on their perspectives, including the benefits and challenges, and examined evaluation reports. See appendix I for more details on our scope and methodology.

We conducted this performance audit from August 2021 to April 2023 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 the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Background

¹⁰For this report, we refer to the primary non-government organizations, international organizations, or private entities that receive funding to implement CPC projects as "implementing partners."

¹¹The SOPs for CPCs, completed in 2022, is an internal TIP Office document that provides guidelines on CPC country selection, monitoring, and evaluation, among other things.

¹²According to TIP Office officials, funds are obligated when an award is made to an implementing partner.

Department of State's Efforts to Combat International Human Trafficking

State's TIP Office leads the department's global efforts to combat human trafficking overseas, including implementation of the CPCs. The TIP Office was established pursuant to the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000. According to State, the TIP Office is responsible for bilateral and multilateral diplomacy, targeted foreign assistance, and public engagement on trafficking in persons. The TIP Office also prepares and issues the annual *Trafficking in Persons Report* to Congress, which assesses the anti-trafficking efforts of all countries, assigns them tier rankings based on those efforts, and guides the department's engagement with foreign governments on human trafficking issues.¹³

According to State, the "3P" paradigm—prosecution, protection, and prevention—continues to serve as the fundamental framework used around the world to combat human trafficking. The TIP Office follows the 3P paradigm to assess government efforts, advocate for more effective responses, and support non-governmental organizations and international organizations dedicated to combatting human trafficking around the world. The 3Ps focus on the following efforts:

- **Prosecution:** Investigate and prosecute human trafficking crimes, and convict and sentence traffickers, by providing training and technical assistance for law enforcement officials such as police, prosecutors, and judges. Promote laws and policies that enable governments to hold traffickers accountable.
- **Protection:** Identify, protect, and assist victims by using a trauma-informed approach and providing comprehensive services, including shelters as well as health, psychological, legal, and vocational services.
- **Prevention:** Prevent trafficking in persons through public awareness, outreach, education, and advocacy campaigns across a range of stakeholders.

According to State, in addition to the 3Ps, a fourth "P"—partnership—focuses on achieving progress across the 3Ps and enlisting all segments of society in the fight against human trafficking.

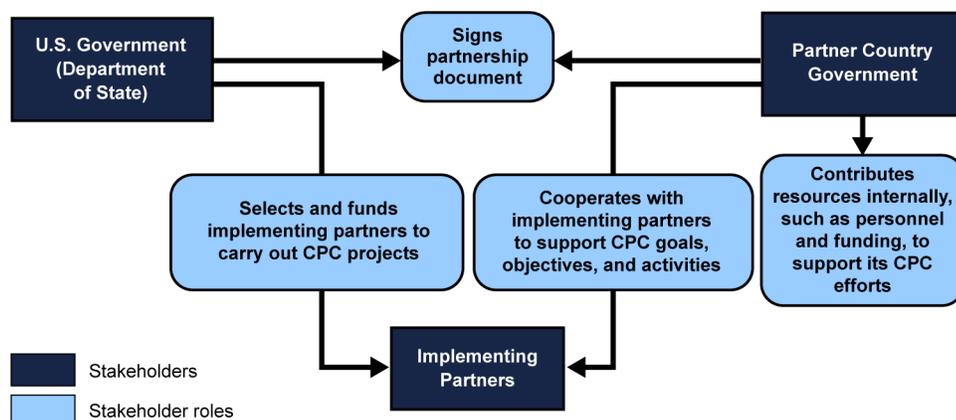
CPC Design and Timelines

According to State, a CPC is a multiyear plan developed jointly by the TIP Office and the selected partner government to achieve shared objectives aimed at strengthening the country's efforts to effectively prosecute and

¹³For more information on State's *Trafficking in Persons Report*, see GAO, *Human Trafficking: State Has Made Improvements in Its Annual Report but Does Not Explicitly Explain Certain Tier Rankings or Changes*, [GAO-17-56](#) (Washington, D.C.: Dec. 5, 2016).

convict child traffickers, provide comprehensive trauma-informed care for child victims, and prevent child trafficking in all forms. The partnership documents, while signed by both governments, are not legally binding, according to TIP Office officials.¹⁴ The purpose of a CPC is to work collaboratively with a partner government through a joint commitment and by providing assistance through CPC projects. CPCs are unique from other U.S. foreign assistance programs because of the TIP Office’s engagement with partner governments, including through negotiating the partnership commitment, and its funding for implementing partners to manage CPC projects in the country, according to TIP Office officials (see fig. 1).

Figure 1: Child Protection Compact (CPC) Partnership Stakeholders and Roles



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

According to the partnership documents, partner governments indicate what resources they intend to provide to fulfill the CPC. These resources can include contributions such as funding, additional agency personnel to assist in combatting child trafficking, or strengthened anti-trafficking efforts. The TIP Office awards CPC funding to implementing partners with expertise in combatting human trafficking for projects through cooperative

¹⁴According to TIP Office officials, none of the partnership documents are legally binding. Signed partnership documents we reviewed included language explicitly stating that the CPC does “not constitute an international agreement and does not create any binding obligations between the Participants under either international or domestic law.”

agreements, according to TIP Office documentation.¹⁵ The TIP Office officials stated that each cooperative agreement signed with implementing partners under a CPC constitutes a project, while each CPC is considered a program.¹⁶

CPCs last at least 4 or 5 years. As of January 2023, the TIP Office has selected and signed partnership documents with seven countries: Ghana (2015), the Philippines (2017), Peru (2017), Jamaica (2018), Mongolia (2020), Colombia (2022), and Côte d'Ivoire (2022) (see fig. 2).¹⁷ The CPCs for Ghana and the Philippines concluded in 2020 and 2021, respectively, while those for Jamaica, Peru, and Mongolia are ongoing.¹⁸ The Colombia and Côte d'Ivoire CPCs are just starting, as the partnership documents were recently signed.

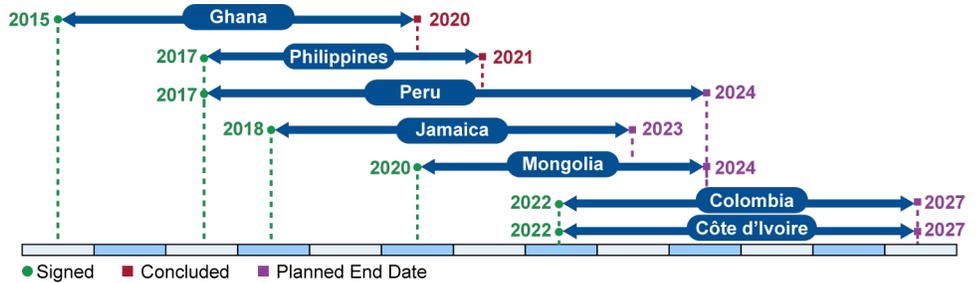
¹⁵For the first five CPCs, the TIP Office has awarded CPC funding to implementing partners almost exclusively through cooperative agreements. According to TIP Office officials, cooperative agreements are intended to entail substantial involvement between State and the prime award recipients. This involvement includes reviewing and approving training material, hosting bi-weekly calls with prime award recipients, and approving methodologies for monitoring and evaluation.

¹⁶According to State's Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM), 18 FAM 301.4-1(B), *Department of State Program and Project Design, Monitoring, and Evaluation*, a program is defined as a set of activities, processes, or projects aimed at achieving a goal or objective that is typically implemented by several parties over a specified period of time. Multiple projects often make up the portfolio of a program and support achieving a goal or objective.

¹⁷The 2022 Department of State *Trafficking in Persons Report* lists CPC countries Philippines and Colombia as Tier 1 countries, and Ghana, Peru, Jamaica, Mongolia, and Côte d'Ivoire as Tier 2 countries. Tier 1 represents the strongest efforts to combat human trafficking and Tier 2 represents weaker efforts to combat human trafficking. The report also has a Tier 3, which is assigned to countries with the weakest anti-trafficking efforts.

¹⁸The CPC with Peru was extended by 3 years from 2021 to 2024, and the one with Jamaica by 1 year from 2022 to 2023.

Figure 2: Timeline of Child Protection Compact Partnerships, 2015 to 2027, as of January 2023



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

The TIP Office Has Tools for Monitoring and Evaluation at the Project and the CPC Levels

Monitoring is the ongoing and systematic tracking of data and information relevant to policies, strategies, programs, projects, and activities, and is used to determine whether desired results are occurring as expected during program, project, or activity implementation. TIP Office officials stated they monitor CPCs at the project and the CPC program level. At the project level, the TIP Office monitors the performance of all of its anti-trafficking projects, including those implemented under CPCs, through tools such as monitoring plans, performance indicators and targets, site visits, periodic progress reports, and final progress reports.¹⁹ At the CPC program level, TIP Office officials stated that they primarily monitor CPCs through annual dialogues, which are meetings held each year to discuss CPC progress with partner governments and implementing partners. All of the past CPC partnership documents also called for partner governments to provide regular progress reports, including data corresponding to CPC performance indicators.²⁰

Evaluation is the systematic collection and analysis of information about the characteristics and outcomes of the program—including projects

¹⁹GAO previously reviewed the monitoring of State’s, U.S. Agency for International Development’s (USAID), and the Department of Labor’s (DOL) international counter-trafficking projects and made four recommendations to State, all of which it implemented. See GAO, *Human Trafficking: State and USAID Should Improve Their Monitoring of International Counter-trafficking Projects*, [GAO-19-77](#), (Washington, D.C.: December 4, 2018).

²⁰According to State’s Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM), 18 FAM 301.4-1(B), *Department of State Program and Project Design, Monitoring, and Evaluation*, a performance indicator is a particular characteristic or dimension used to measure intended changes resulting from U.S. foreign assistance.

conducted under such program—as a basis for making judgments regarding the program, improving program effectiveness, and informing decisions about current and future programming. The TIP Office uses evaluations at the project and CPC program levels as a tool to better understand project results and guide decision-making.²¹ For the CPCs, the TIP Office has used external evaluators to conduct a baseline assessment after the start and a final evaluation at the end of each CPC.²² The purpose of baseline assessments, which have been completed for the first five CPCs as of January 2023, was to collect data measuring key factors in the partner government’s response to child trafficking. Evaluators have also completed final evaluations for the two completed CPCs, Ghana and the Philippines, and a midline evaluation for the Ghana CPC.²³ The stated purpose of the two final evaluations was to determine if the CPC contributed to the partner government’s response to child trafficking.

The TIP Office Uses a Multistep Process to Select CPC Countries, Negotiates Objectives with Partner Countries, and Provides Funding to Implement Projects

In 2021, the TIP Office established a multistep process to select a CPC country. The process includes reviewing potential countries against a standardized checklist, holding internal State discussions, and conducting feasibility assessments to review the potential suitability of a country for a CPC. Following the selection of a country, the TIP Office collaborates with the partner government to establish goals, objectives, activities, and performance indicators for the CPC and then awards funds to implementing partners for projects under the CPC. For the first five CPCs, the TIP Office increased funding levels for implementing partners beyond what was originally established.

²¹GAO previously reviewed evaluations of State, USAID, and DOL international anti-trafficking projects. See GAO, *Human Trafficking: Agencies Have Taken Steps to Strengthen International Anti-trafficking Projects*, [GAO-21-53](#), (Washington, D.C.: November 9, 2020).

²²TIP Office officials stated they are considering a shift away from using external evaluations to assess CPCs and instead having the implementing partner conduct the evaluations or conducting a separate formative assessment research study that serves as a baseline assessment for the CPC.

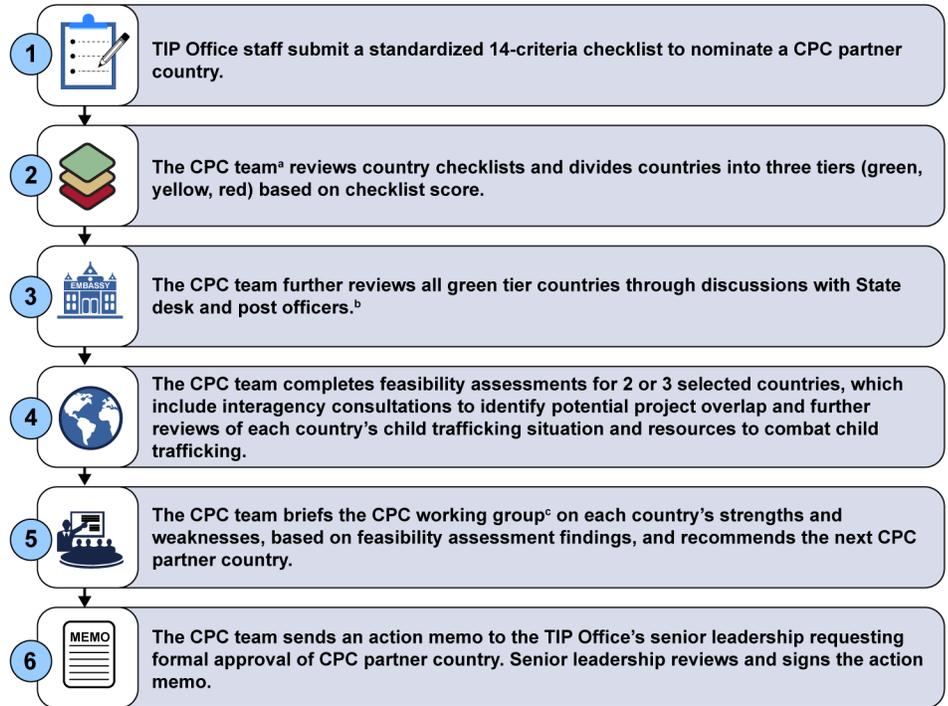
²³Final evaluations have also been completed for the Jamaica and Peru CPCs. GAO did not review these two final evaluations, both of which were completed in June 2022. The Jamaica CPC’s planned end date is 2023, while the Peru CPC’s planned end date is 2024. According to TIP Office officials, they conducted the midline evaluation for the Ghana CPC, which was the first CPC, to determine the direction of CPCs. TIP Office officials determined that by the time they completed the midline evaluation, the CPC was nearing its conclusion and so the evaluation served a limited purpose.

The TIP Office's Current Process to Select CPC Countries Includes a Standardized Checklist

Since 2021, the TIP Office has used a standardized process to select CPC countries that includes criteria, a checklist, and timeframes. From 2015 to 2020, the TIP Office used a non-standardized process to select the first five CPC countries that did not include standardized criteria or review timeframes, according to TIP Office officials. These officials said this process instead relied on a variety of factors, such as political will, the presence of civil society groups in the country, geographic location, and congressional funding decisions. For example, TIP Office officials stated that their search for the first CPC partner country coincided with the 2014 United States-Africa Leaders Summit. Subsequently, TIP Office officials said that following feasibility assessments for several countries in Africa, the TIP Office selected Ghana in 2015. Since 2021, the TIP Office has used a bi-annual process that follows six key steps to select CPC countries. These steps include country reviews against a standardized 14-criteria checklist, discussions within various State offices, and feasibility assessments that include interagency consultations, according to TIP Office officials and documentation (see fig. 3). The CPC team within the TIP Office manages the selection process, which has lasted on average 6 to 8 months, according to TIP Office officials and documentation.²⁴

²⁴The CPC team is a collaborative effort within the TIP Office. It consists of three officers from the International Programs section, with support of team members from staff of the Reports and Political Affairs; Public Engagement; Intergovernmental Affairs; and Resource, Management, and Planning sections. According to TIP Office officials, they have shortened the current selection process timeframe to 5 to 6 months, on average.

Figure 3: Summary of Department of State’s Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (TIP Office) Selection Process for Child Protection Compact (CPC) Partnership Countries



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

^aThe CPC team is a cross-section collaboration within the TIP Office, led by the International Programs section.

^bDesk officer refers to State staff stationed in Washington D.C., and assigned to work on issues related to a specific country or country group through a Regional bureau. Post officer refers to State staff stationed at a U.S. embassy or consulate in a specific country as part of a U.S. diplomatic mission.

^cThe CPC working group, chaired by the International Program’s Senior Coordinator, consists of members of various TIP Office sections such as International Programs and Reports and Political Affairs.

1) **Selection Checklist:** According to the CPC Primer²⁵ and the SOPs, the first step to nominate a prospective CPC partner country is for TIP Office staff to submit completed standardized checklists that assess

²⁵The CPC Primer provides instruction to TIP Office staff on how to identify and select potential CPC countries and information on criteria for CPC country selection. It includes sample guiding questions for officials for use during diplomatic discussions with foreign governments.

countries against 14 criteria (see table 1). The TIP Office requires a prospective country to meet the first five of these 14 criteria (see bolded text in table 1) at a minimum to be considered as a prospective CPC nominee.²⁶ Officers from the Reports and Political Affairs and International Programs sections within the TIP Office usually submit country selections for nomination, according to TIP Office officials.

Table 1: Department of State’s Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (TIP Office) Checklist Criteria for Child Protection Compact (CPC) Partnerships Country Selection

1. Demonstrated political will	8. No major or contentious elections or anticipated changes in government during negotiation period
2. Prevalence of forced child labor and sex trafficking	9. Robust civil society working on trafficking or related issues in-country and conducive environment for government-civil society collaboration
3. Existing U.S. embassy engagement on trafficking in persons-related issues and capacity to support the TIP Office with a CPC negotiation and implementation	10. Need for foreign assistance on child trafficking issues/lack of other like-minded donors funding anti-trafficking programs
4. Has anti-trafficking law that prohibits all forms of human trafficking	11. Low- or middle-income country
5. Has geopolitical significance or is an administration priority	12. Government/country is politically stable and does not pose high security risks
6. Child trafficking is a TIP Office policy priority relative to other trafficking in persons challenges in country	13. Effective national leadership on trafficking matters via a government entity willing and able to work with the TIP Office and civil society organizations to address child trafficking in the country
7. Established inter-ministerial or inter-agency trafficking in persons committee or council	14. Party to the Palermo Protocol ⁹

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

Note: Prospective CPC countries are required to meet the first five criteria.

²⁶Two of these required criteria reflect the CPC authorizing legislation, which requires that the criteria for country selection include: (1) documented high prevalence of trafficking in persons, and (2) demonstrated political motivation to undertake meaningful measures to address severe forms of trafficking in persons, including prevention, protection of victims, and the enactment and enforcement of anti-trafficking laws against perpetrators.

^aThe Palermo Protocol is the first binding instrument with an internationally recognized definition of human trafficking, according to the United Nations, and is intended to prevent, suppress, and punish human trafficking. Also known as *United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime*, G.A. res. 55/25, annex II, 55 U.N. GAOR Supp. (No. 49) at 60, U.N. Doc. A/45/49 (Vol. I) (2001), it entered into force in 2003. The United States ratified the protocol on December 3, 2005.

2) Country Review and Placement: For the second step, the CPC team reviews all of the submitted checklists and divides the prospective countries into three tiers—green, yellow, or red—based on their checklist scores ranging from zero to 14, according to TIP Office officials and documentation. Countries receive one point for each criterion they meet during the checklist reviews. TIP Office officials stated that these reviews can also include updated checklists of countries nominated from previous selection rounds. The CPC team reviews submitted checklists twice a year in June and December.

- **Green tier** countries have met all five of the required criteria and obtained an overall checklist score of 11 or above. The TIP Office then considers these countries for a CPC feasibility assessment,²⁷ or prioritizes them for one possibly in the following year.
- **Yellow tier** countries have not met one of the required criteria and scored a five to 10 on the checklist. Reports and Political Affairs officers will continue discussions with these countries through regular diplomatic interventions (such as diplomatic visits for the annual *Trafficking in Persons Report*) for possible CPC consideration in 1 to 3 years.
- **Red tier** countries have met four or fewer criteria. These countries will not be further considered or engaged diplomatically as possible CPC nominees at this point.

3) Internal State Discussions: For the third step, the CPC team holds internal discussions with State desk and post officers,²⁸ using a standard

²⁷The CPC team leads a feasibility assessment with participation from a Reports and Political Affairs officer. According to the SOPs for CPCs, the CPC team uses a standard list of questions in all meetings with government officials, interagency officials, non-government organizations, and civil society organizations in potential CPC partner countries. Feasibility assessments are conducted in-person or virtually.

²⁸Desk officer refers to State staff stationed in Washington D.C., and assigned to work on issues related to a specific country or country group through a regional bureau. Post officer refers to State staff stationed at a U.S. embassy or consulate in a specific country as part of a U.S. diplomatic mission.

question set, to gather additional information on green tier countries, according to the SOPs for CPCs. TIP Office officials stated that State desk and post officers provide analysis on the suitability of the countries, such as their political stability, for further consideration as a CPC partner. After the discussions, the CPC team reaches agreement with the CPC working group on two or three countries that will receive full feasibility assessments.²⁹

4) Feasibility Assessments: For the fourth step, TIP Office officials stated that the CPC team completes feasibility assessments for two to three of the green tier countries. The CPC team uses another standard question set to assess the child trafficking situation in each country and identify stakeholders' involvement and capacity in combating trafficking in persons. The CPC team receives this information from various country stakeholders, such as law enforcement, civil society groups, and non-government organizations. As part of the feasibility assessment, the CPC team also holds consultations with other State bureaus and other federal agencies³⁰ to identify potential overlap with other anti-trafficking efforts in the candidate countries, according to TIP Office officials.

5) Briefing and Recommendation: For the fifth step, the CPC team briefs the CPC working group on each country's strengths and weaknesses based on the findings of the feasibility assessments, and notifies the group of its recommendation for the next CPC partner country, according to TIP Office officials and the SOPs for CPCs.

6) Selection and Approval: For the sixth and final step, the CPC team sends an action memo to the TIP Office senior leadership to request formal approval of the proposed CPC country. Senior leadership then reviews and signs the action memo, according to the SOPs for CPCs.³¹

²⁹The CPC working group, chaired by the International Program's Senior Coordinator, consists of members of various TIP Office sections, such as International Programs and Reports and Political Affairs.

³⁰These State bureaus could include those reporting to State's Under Secretary for Civilian Security, Democracy and Human Rights, such as the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs and the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration. Other federal agencies could include those that manage overseas anti-trafficking programs, such as USAID, DOL, and the Department of Justice.

³¹After signing the action memo, the TIP Office notifies the new partner government's ambassador to the United States of the CPC selection.

The TIP Office first used the new selection process to select Colombia and Côte d'Ivoire in 2022. According to TIP office officials, Colombia and Côte d'Ivoire met all required criteria and demonstrated the presence of strong civil society groups working on child trafficking, political will of the partner government, and strong U.S. embassy support.

The TIP Office Collaborates with Partner Governments to Develop CPC Goals and Objectives

Following the CPC selection process, TIP Office officials negotiate with partner governments over the course of several weeks to develop each CPC partnership document and to establish broad goals and objectives, according to TIP Office officials.³² The CPC team initiates the negotiations by drafting the first version of a Theory of Change document, which identifies the country's major trafficking challenges and policy gaps, and proposes suggested potential CPC activities to improve the country's anti-trafficking efforts. These suggestions are based on information from the earlier feasibility assessment.

During the negotiations, TIP Office officials discuss the draft document with the partner government and work with it to develop CPC goals and objectives for the partnership, according to TIP Office officials. Officials stated that they exchange drafts of the partnership document with the partner government and propose edits until they both agree with the final terms of the partnership. The negotiation process to establish the CPC is similar across partner countries. During these negotiations, the TIP Office often works with an interagency coordinating body for combating trafficking in persons within the partner government to develop the partnership document, according to TIP Office officials.

All of the CPC partnership documents have objectives for combating child trafficking that address the 3P paradigm of prosecution, prevention, and protection.³³ Three of the seven CPCs, Mongolia, Colombia, and Côte d'Ivoire, also have objectives that include the fourth P of partnership. A CPC objective is a broad statement of the long-term impact the CPC intends to achieve, according to TIP Office documentation. For example, the protection objective for the Jamaica CPC is to "strengthen government and civil society capacity to identify and provide comprehensive services

³²Several factors determine the length and substance of the CPC negotiations, such as the amount of time remaining before CPC funds must be obligated for CPC awards, and the availability of embassy staff and partner government officials to participate in negotiations.

³³TIP Office officials said that after the Ghana CPC, which had eight objectives, they reduced the number of objectives for subsequent CPCs to align with the 3Ps or 4Ps.

to more child trafficking victims, from identification through protective care, community reintegration, and long-term follow-up services.”

TIP Office officials and partner governments also worked together to develop a CPC implementation plan for the first five CPCs, according to TIP Office documentation.³⁴ CPC implementation plans include objectives, activities that align with each objective, such as strengthening and maintaining data systems, and related performance indicators.³⁵ Each activity generally has one to two indicators to monitor progress of CPC activities. According to the CPC authorizing legislation, a CPC shall include a description of “regular outcome indicators to monitor and measure progress toward achieving such objectives.” For example, an activity for the Jamaica CPC focuses on using existing infrastructure to “expand the availability of shelter spaces that are appropriately staged and equipped to provide quality care to all child trafficking victims.” A performance indicator for this activity is “an increased number of shelter spaces that are appropriately staffed and equipped to provide quality care to all child trafficking victims is available.” The Jamaica CPC includes 23 activities and 39 associated performance indicators across its three objectives (see table 2).

Table 2: Implementation Plan for Jamaica Child Protection Compact Partnership: Number of Objectives, Activities, and Performance Indicators

Objectives	Activities	Performance Indicators
Prosecution	7	12
Protection	10	17
Prevention	6	10
Total	23	39

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

³⁴TIP Office officials stated that implementing partners will be involved in the drafting of the implementation plan starting with the Colombia CPC. Implementing partners will engage in the goal development process, which includes developing key activities and performance indicators.

³⁵According to TIP Office officials, the implementation plan is also referred to as the work plan. For this report, we refer to these plans as “implementation plans.”

The TIP Office Has Reported Increases in Funding for CPC Awards under the First Five CPCs

As of September 30, 2022, the TIP Office had obligated over \$37 million to support awards under the first five CPCs, according to TIP Office officials and documentation (see table 3). The obligated amount is more than 60 percent above the approximately \$23 million the TIP Office initially indicated it intended to provide.³⁶ Funding for the Peru CPC had the greatest increase, more than doubling from the original project funding level. The TIP Office indicated that it intended to provide \$5 million in support of the Peru CPC, and then provided an additional \$6 million in award funding for a total investment of over \$11 million. TIP Office officials stated the award amounts for the first five CPCs were not sufficient to achieve the objectives of each CPC. The Colombia and Côte d'Ivoire CPC partnership documents both indicate that the TIP Office intends to provide up to \$10 million for each of those CPCs, which is twice the amount of funding provided for in the partnership documents of most of the prior CPCs.³⁷

Table 3: Department of State's Child Protection Compact (CPC) Partnerships Initial U.S. Funding and Reported Obligations for CPC Awards, as of September 30, 2022

Country	CPC Timeframe	Initial U.S. Funding Levels ^b	Total U.S. Award Obligations
Ghana	2015-2020 ^a	\$5,000,000	\$8,552,000
The Philippines	2017-2021 ^a	\$3,500,000	\$4,923,000
Peru	2017-2024	\$5,000,000	\$11,083,000
Jamaica	2018-2023	\$5,000,000 ^c	\$7,664,094
Mongolia	2020-2024	\$5,000,000	\$5,500,000
Total		\$23,500,000	\$37,722,094^d

Source: Department of State data. | GAO-23-105390

^aThese countries' CPCs have concluded.

^bThe initial funding amount represents a total of the amounts State indicated that it intended to provide for the first five CPCs in the partnership documents for four CPCs. The funding amount for

³⁶The initial funding amount represents a total of the amounts the TIP Office indicated that it intended to provide for the first five CPCs in the partnership documents for four CPCs. The funding amount for the fifth CPC is based on information provided in a State press release. The TIP Office indicated it intended to provide funding "up to" \$3.5 million for the Philippines CPC, and approximately \$5 million for the Mongolia CPC.

³⁷Congress increased funding for CPCs from \$5 million to \$10 million per year in 2021, directing that \$10 million of International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement funds be used for CPCs in both the 2021 and 2022 appropriations acts. In 2023, Congress increased funding for CPCs to \$12.5 million per year. As of September 30, 2022, the TIP Office had obligated \$10 million provided for the Colombia CPC, including \$9,661,000 towards CPC programming.

the fifth CPC is based on information provided in a State press release. TIP Office indicated it intended to provide funding “up to” \$3.5 million for the Philippines CPC, and about \$5 million for the Mongolia CPC.

^cThe \$5 million for the Jamaica CPC includes \$500,000 awarded to an organization to conduct a baseline assessment, according to TIP Office officials.

^dThe total amount of U.S. award obligations used to support CPCs come from the International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement funding and includes \$43,161,00 million in funds directed for CPCs and \$4,222,094 million in other available funds, according to TIP Office officials.

According to TIP Office officials, funding was increased for several reasons, including project adjustments and extended timeframes to expand efforts, in order to achieve desired institutional change.³⁸ In addition, TIP Office officials stated that project adjustments made to adapt to changing contexts and realities in the operating environment, as well as what the TIP Office learned over time about the time needed to achieve CPC goals. For example, an award under the Jamaica CPC received increased funding and extended timeframes to accommodate a decision to construct additional child-friendly spaces. An award under the Ghana CPC also received increased funding to expand the CPC’s geographical scope.

TIP Office officials also noted they increased award funds for existing CPCs in 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic, which prevented their office staff from traveling to potential countries to conduct interviews and selecting a new CPC partner country. Instead, officials redistributed funds for prospective CPC countries to ongoing ones with Peru, Jamaica, and Mongolia.³⁹

Annual Dialogues and Other CPC Monitoring Efforts Lack Key Performance Information

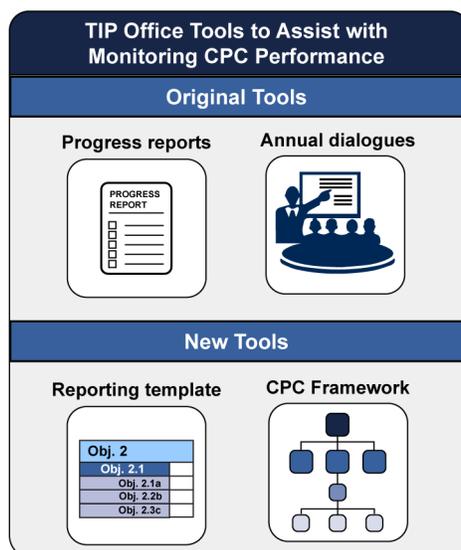
The TIP Office has four tools to assist with monitoring CPC performance. Two tools, regular progress reports and annual dialogues, have been part of CPC efforts since the program began, while two others, a reporting template and the CPC framework, are newly developed (see fig. 4). However, the TIP Office and partner governments have not identified key indicators for discussion prior to the annual dialogues or directly mentioned CPC performance indicators at them. In addition, the reporting template and CPC framework do not include, or refer to, the need to establish targets for these indicators. These gaps in indicators and targets

³⁸After identifying funding gaps, the CPC team made the recommendation to increase funding to TIP Office senior officials, who made the final decision.

³⁹TIP Office officials noted that the Peruvian government’s innovative efforts—such as using government-seized properties for trafficking victim protection centers—led them to provide an additional \$2.5 million to the Peru CPC.

have limited the ability of the TIP Office and partner governments to more fully understand CPC performance.

Figure 4: Department of State’s Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (TIP Office) Tools to Assist with Monitoring Child Protection Compact (CPC) Partnerships



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

TIP Office’s Original Monitoring Tools Have Not Been Fully Utilized

Since the selection of the first CPC country in 2015, CPC partnership documents have included provisions for two tools that the TIP Office uses to monitor CPCs: regular progress reports and annual dialogues. However, the TIP Office has not fully utilized these monitoring tools. All of the CPC partnership documents called for regular (annual or semi-annual) partner government progress reports, but the TIP Office only received two such reports, one each from two partner governments, and both of them were partial. In addition, annual dialogues did not directly address performance indicators.

Regular Progress Reports: All of the CPC partnership documents have called for partner governments to submit regular progress reports.⁴⁰ For

⁴⁰Four of the seven CPC partnership documents (Ghana, the Philippines, Jamaica, and Peru) stated that the partner governments were to submit progress reports on a semi-annual basis, while the other three (Mongolia, Colombia, and Côte d’Ivoire) cite an annual submission.

example, the Peru document indicates the Peruvian government will provide semi-annual reports to the TIP Office describing progress toward meeting the objectives and completing CPC activities, including quantitative and qualitative data corresponding to associated performance indicators. In addition, the SOPs for CPCs provide guidelines for government reporting. Specifically, these SOPs note that all the partnership documents include a requirement that partner governments regularly report on progress under the CPC. TIP Office officials stated that they can remind partner governments of the CPC provision to submit regular progress reports at the annual dialogues. However, for the first five CPCs, the TIP Office received one report each from the Ghana and the Philippine governments, and did not receive any reports from the other three partner governments. For the two progress reports the TIP Office received, the data were incomplete and spanned part of the CPC timeframe.

Several factors contributed to the lack of regular progress reports, according to partner government and TIP Office officials. Partner government officials said they had incomplete national data collection systems or limited capacity to support the dedicated collection of performance indicator data for CPC monitoring. TIP Office officials also noted the challenges partner governments have experienced in providing progress data,⁴¹ and added that the CPCs are not legally binding, which has affected the TIP Office's ability to collect these reports.

TIP Office officials have stated that they intend to continue to request regular progress reports from Jamaica and Peru. However, starting with the Mongolia CPC, the reporting template, a new monitoring tool that is discussed below, will replace the regular progress reports.

Annual Dialogues: Most CPC partnership documents contained a provision that the TIP Office, the partner government, and implementing partners meet annually to share information about the CPCs.⁴² According to the SOPs for CPCs, all CPCs include annual dialogues with the partner

⁴¹ TIP Office officials also stated that partner governments are responsible for providing data for State's annual *Trafficking in Persons Report*, and can also experience difficulties providing this information.

⁴² While the Philippines CPC partnership document did not include this provision, the CPC still held regular annual dialogues.

governments and implementing partners.⁴³ TIP Office officials said that the annual dialogues are the primary CPC monitoring tool, but participants at past meetings did not discuss key performance indicators or directly address performance indicators. Our review of U.S. embassy summary cables and other summary documents of past annual dialogues, as well as GAO attendance at one dialogue in July 2022, indicated that partner government officials and implementing partners presented updates on CPC activities, such as anecdotal examples of achievements and challenges, and discussed next steps (see fig. 5). For example, a U.S. embassy cable summarizing the 2021 annual dialogue for the Peru CPC described anecdotal examples of overall CPC progress under the prosecution objective. Presenters highlighted successful anti-trafficking efforts, such as “the completion of child trafficking case management training for more than 120 criminal judges” as well as challenges, such as “significant case delays and a large number of rescheduled hearings” due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, prior to annual dialogues each year, participants did not determine the key CPC performance indicators that best aligned with the needs or goals of the CPCs to provide a stronger focus to the discussions. Our review of annual dialogue agendas also indicates these meetings typically last a few hours over 1 or 2 days, while the number of performance indicators for each CPC has ranged from 23 to 39, making any attempt to discuss all indicators a challenge.

In addition, the CPC progress updates were not directly linked to CPC performance indicators. For example, a 2020 U.S. embassy cable summarizing a Jamaica CPC annual dialogue noted a presenter had mentioned that the “police have become more skilled in identifying child TIP victims in the tourist areas, which has led to police interventions.” However, the presenter did not align the achievement with any related performance indicator for the CPC, such as the indicator of “an increased number of stakeholders demonstrate the knowledge to identify cases of child sex and labor trafficking in their community.”

⁴³TIP Office officials noted that the COVID-19 pandemic affected their ability to hold the annual dialogues in 2020 and 2021. The TIP Office had to delay or cancel the annual dialogues and other in-person engagement, such as feasibility assessments, because of the pandemic.

Figure 5: Photographs from Child Protection Compact Partnership Annual Dialogue in Kingston, Jamaica, July 2022



Source: GAO. Banner with permission from the Jamaican government. | GAO-23-105390

TIP Office officials stated that partner governments and implementing partners did not discuss CPC performance indicators at the annual dialogues, despite TIP Office guidance that calls for them to be on the agenda. Officials said that the lack of discussion of performance indicator data was because partner governments did not provide such information and the TIP office did not follow-up to obtain it from them. TIP Office officials stated that relying on quantitative indicators at the annual meetings does not provide the full scope of institutional change and achievements. Annual dialogues are often grounded in personal experiences and understanding of the complexities of this crime, which is where a qualitative approach to capturing and synthesizing information is beneficial, according to TIP Office officials. For example, officials noted that the child-friendly space created in Mongolia has helped to reduce the number of times law enforcement interviewed child victims, which has created a better situation for victims that is difficult to quantify. Officials also stated they believed that anecdotal examples like these are beneficial because they allow victims to describe their personal experiences and provide insights on pressing issues in the country.

According to the SOPs for CPCs, the annual dialogue agendas should center on the CPC implementation plan.⁴⁴ These plans include broad

⁴⁴TIP Office officials do not share the SOPs for CPCs, which is an internal guidance document, with the partner governments. Officials noted that partner governments are made aware of the annual dialogue purpose during CPC negotiations and this information is included in the CPC partnership documents.

objectives, activities, and associated performance indicators. The TIP Office has also said it plans to work with the partner government to develop reporting templates, a new monitoring tool discussed below, to collect and share data on the CPC performance indicators and incorporate them into the discussions at the annual dialogues. In addition, Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government state that agencies should use quality information to achieve their objectives and obtain timely, relevant data from reliable internal and external sources based on identified information requirements.⁴⁵

The annual dialogues are a critical monitoring tool to collect relevant and important information on CPC progress. TIP Office officials said that annual dialogues are an opportunity for CPC stakeholders to discuss the myriad of ways to combat child trafficking in a particular country. However, focusing on anecdotal information is not representative of overall CPC performance and may present an incomplete picture of progress. By not identifying key performance indicators from the implementation plan for review at each annual dialogue, the TIP Office and partner government officials may not be addressing the most important and relevant indicators for assessing yearly progress, or making the best use of their limited time at the dialogues. Moreover, by not directly addressing indicator data during the dialogues, they may be missing an important and a regular opportunity to review and discuss performance data on CPC progress. They may also be missing an opportunity to identify areas that need improvement and adjustments that may be beneficial over the course of a CPC.

The New CPC Monitoring Tools Do Not Address Performance Indicator Targets

In 2022, the TIP Office developed two new tools to assist in monitoring CPC progress: a country-specific reporting template and the CPC framework. According to TIP Office officials, the TIP office plans to use the reporting template to assist in monitoring the CPCs for Mongolia, Colombia, and Côte d'Ivoire, as well as future ones, and the CPC framework to assist in monitoring across all CPCs. However, neither tool addresses performance indicator targets.

Reporting Template: In response to the lack of regular progress reports, the TIP Office designed a reporting template for the Mongolia CPC to facilitate the reporting of performance indicator data, which it will adapt for subsequent CPCs, according to a TIP Office official. The reporting

⁴⁵GAO, *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*, [GAO-14-704G](#) (Washington, D.C.: September 10, 2014).

template tracks performance indicators identified in the implementation plan over a 12-month period. It does so by listing each country-specific CPC objective and associated performance indicators and providing blank cells for the partner government to complete each year with data for each CPC performance indicator during the current performance period (see table 4 for an excerpt from the Mongolia CPC reporting template). TIP Office officials have noted that starting with the Mongolia CPC, implementing partners will assist partner governments in completing the reporting template and addressing challenges faced in collecting data.⁴⁶

Table 4: Excerpt of Performance Indicators from Mongolia Child Protection Compact Partnership Reporting Template

Objective 2: Improve the quality of victim-centered investigations and prosecutions with the goal of increasing the number of effective prosecutions and convictions of child trafficking cases.	
2.12: Number of additional investigators assigned to:	
• Organized Crime Group	
• Anti-Trafficking Unit	
2.13: Number of personnel working on trafficking in persons cases:	
• # Police	
• # Prosecutors	
• # Social workers	
• # Victim's Attorneys	
• # Other personnel—Specify:	

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

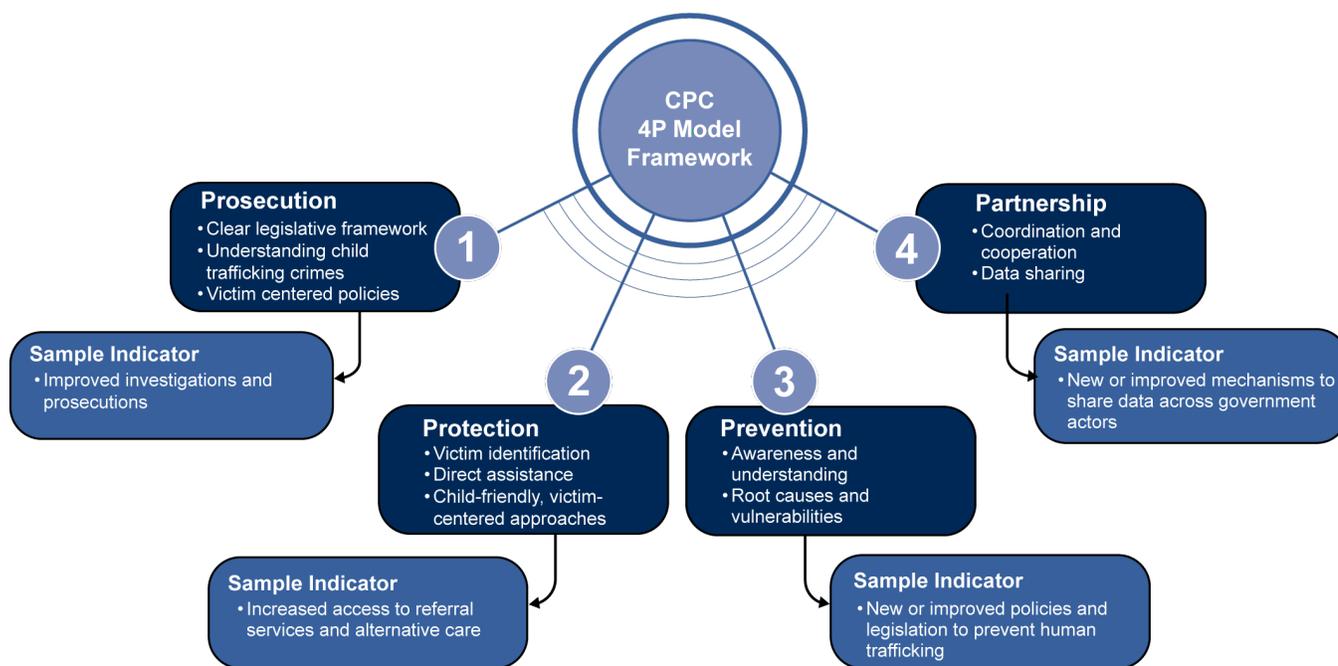
TIP Office officials will request that partner governments complete the CPC reporting template each year as part of the annual data call for the *Trafficking in Persons Report*. This data call goes out to all U.S. posts in November for information on anti-trafficking efforts. Officials confirmed they sent the reporting template for the Mongolia CPC through the U.S. embassy as part of the 2022 *Trafficking in Persons Report* data call.

CPC Framework: The CPC framework is a broad management tool intended to guide the design, monitoring, and evaluation of CPCs, according to TIP Office documentation (see fig. 6). The framework

⁴⁶The SOPs for CPCs also note that implementing partners can assist governments with their reporting. According to a TIP Office official, CPC implementing partners are uniquely qualified to assist governments in completing the reporting template as these partners usually have internal monitoring and evaluation staff to do so, along with strong internal processes and procedures to ensure data quality.

includes an illustrative, but not exhaustive, list of performance indicators that U.S. and partner governments may use when developing implementation plans for a CPC. The CPC framework provides guidance on CPC monitoring at the CPC level, and specifically states that performance results will be measured against the overall CPC goal, as well as each country's unique objectives and proposed activities.

Figure 6: Department of State's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons Child Protection Compact (CPC) Partnership 4P Paradigm (4P) Model Framework with Summarized Approaches and Sample Indicators



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

Neither the reporting template nor the CPC framework includes or addresses targets for performance indicators. The Mongolia CPC reporting template lists performance indicators but does not include corresponding targets for them. The CPC framework also lists some illustrative performance indicators under the four strategic objectives to include in the CPCs, which could facilitate the analysis of results across CPCs, but it does not mention a need for corresponding targets for the indicators.

According to TIP Office officials, they did not consider targets for performance indicators while developing the Mongolia CPC reporting

template or the new CPC framework. Officials acknowledged the importance of targets, but the TIP Office did not prioritize targets for the first five CPCs.⁴⁷ Officials also stated they believed certain indicators, such as the number of prosecutions and convictions for child trafficking, are conducive for targets, while other indicators, such as improved victim interactions with government agencies and relevant organizations, are not if they do not have a baseline to measure against.

Performance measurement is the ongoing monitoring and reporting of program accomplishments, particularly progress toward established goals.⁴⁸ Previous GAO work has identified that successful organizations use results-oriented management tools, including performance measures with targets, to achieve desired program outcomes.⁴⁹ Performance measures should translate goals into observable conditions, such as targets with measurable values, which determine what data to collect to determine whether progress was made toward achieving goals.⁵⁰ Organizations can set targets for performance indicators to indicate the expected results over the course of each period of performance to compare projected performance and actual results.⁵¹

While the TIP Office and the partner governments establish performance indicators for each CPC, the indicators lacked corresponding targets in the Mongolia CPC reporting template, which was the first template created. Without such targets for CPC performance indicators, the TIP Office and partner governments have a limited ability to fully monitor and measure individual CPC progress. Specifically, the TIP Office and the partner government officials will be less able to compare planned and actual CPC progress, understand real-time individual CPC performance

⁴⁷TIP Office officials have noted that the Colombia CPC may include targets for performance indicators where such measures are appropriate.

⁴⁸GAO, *Performance Measurement and Evaluation: Definitions and Relationships*, [GAO-11-646SP](#) (Washington, D.C.: May 2, 2011).

⁴⁹U.S. General Accounting Office, *Executive Guide: Effectively Implementing the Government Performance and Results Act*, [GAO/GGD-96-118](#) (Washington, D.C.: June 1, 1996); GAO, *Military Transformation: Clear Leadership, Accountability, and Management Tools Are Needed to Enhance DOD's Efforts to Transform Military Capabilities*, [GAO-05-70](#) (Washington, D.C.: December 17, 2004).

⁵⁰GAO, *Tax Administration: IRS Needs to Further Refine Its Tax Filing Season Performance Measures*, [GAO-03-143](#) (Washington, D.C.: November 22, 2002).

⁵¹GAO, *Human Trafficking: State and USAID Should Improve Their Monitoring of International Counter-trafficking Projects*, [GAO-19-77](#) (Washington, D.C.: December 4, 2018); [GAO-03-143](#).

in more detail, and use measurable results to make needed adjustments to program efforts. For example, the Mongolia CPC reporting template asks partner governments to list the yearly number of child trafficking prevention community activities, but does not provide a target for how many of them to conduct during this time frame. Without targets, the numbers included in the reporting template cannot be interpreted as meeting, falling below, or exceeding an established number of activities to be undertaken.

In addition, while the TIP Office has developed a CPC framework to assist with monitoring within and across CPCs, this tool does not reference a need for the inclusion and continued assessment of targets that correspond to CPC performance indicators. Without reference to such targets in the framework, the TIP Office will lack standard guidance on this issue and may have a reduced assurance that targets will be included in future CPCs. As a result, the TIP Office may obtain performance information for future CPCs that does not provide insights on whether performance is meeting expected results. According to TIP Office officials they also plan to compare progress across all the CPCs through the performance indicators listed in the framework, but the ability to do so may be limited if those performance indicators lack targets for future comparative analysis.

Stakeholders Highlighted Many CPC Activities, but Partner Government Contributions and Sustainability Plans Are Not Tracked

Officials from the TIP Office, partner governments, and implementing partners we interviewed, as well as final evaluations, highlighted various examples of CPC activities occurring under the objectives of prosecution, protection, and prevention since instituting this approach to combat child trafficking. However, the TIP Office does not track contributions from partner governments, which reduces its ability to obtain information on partner government engagement. Moreover, partner governments have not provided information on sustainability measures to the TIP Office, which limits the ability of both the TIP Office and the partner governments to determine whether or how CPC efforts will continue or what their potential impact may be in the long term.

CPCs Addressed Child Trafficking through Prosecution, Protection, and Prevention Activities

Since the CPC was launched, a range of activities have been organized under the CPC objectives of prosecution, protection, and prevention. Such activities include training to strengthen partner government capacity, improving victim access to services, and increasing awareness of child trafficking. CPC stakeholders we spoke with and final evaluations identified CPC activities under each of the three objectives. The final evaluations for the two completed CPCs—Ghana and Philippines—highlighted overall outcomes in efforts to combat child trafficking at the

Prosecution

conclusion of the CPCs, such as an improvement in the protection of child trafficking victims, as well as limitations, including a lack of reliable data.

According to the CPC framework, the prosecution objective focuses on applying anti-trafficking laws to identify and investigate potential cases of child trafficking in child-friendly, victim-centered, and trauma-informed manners, and using evidence and building successful cases against perpetrators to secure convictions. These efforts can address establishing a clear legislative framework to implement trafficking laws, providing trainings to understand child trafficking crimes, and promoting victim-centered practices and policies. Examples of prosecution activities under the CPCs have included:

- **Child-friendly Spaces:** Implementing partners assisted the partner governments in Jamaica and Mongolia to renovate and develop child-friendly spaces using dedicated spaces provided by partner governments. CPC stakeholders stressed the importance of these spaces in assisting and interviewing child victims. For example, in Jamaica, the implementing partners and the government renovated a section of the Falmouth police station to create medical examination, interview, and waiting rooms specifically for children (see fig. 7).⁵² Police officers stated they use this space for all children entering the police station to tend to the needs of victims and avoid retraumatizing them during interviews.

Figure 7: Child-Friendly Space in Police Station in Falmouth, Jamaica, Created under the Child Protection Compact Partnership (Medical Examination, Interview, and Waiting Rooms)



Source: GAO. Mural by Monique Kidd, with permission from Warnath Group. | GAO-23-105390

- **Training:** Implementing partners provided guidance and training to law enforcement, prosecutors, and judges on investigating and

⁵²An implementing partner plans to assist the Jamaican government in developing eight child-friendly spaces in Jamaica, according to their quarterly report.

prosecuting child trafficking cases. For example, in Peru an implementing partner supported development of guidelines for police and prosecutors to investigate human trafficking cases and provided training on this guidance. An implementing partner also integrated mental health evaluators into the judicial process to train criminal judges on adjudicating child trafficking cases, according to TIP Office officials.

The overall outcomes under the prosecution objective varied, according to the final evaluations for the Ghana and Philippines CPCs. For example, the Ghana CPC final evaluation noted the development of a TIP data collection system, but stated that the database was not in common use and the government lacked data on trafficking cases. This limited the government's ability to assess how the CPC may have affected these case outcomes. For the Philippines CPC, the final evaluation stated that the number of investigations and prosecutions of online sexual exploitation of children steadily and significantly increased over the CPC period. It also noted that the various types of data collected led to deeper analysis of prosecution statistics and possibly better prosecutions.⁵³

Protection

According to the CPC framework, the protection objective focuses on identifying, referring, and providing readily accessible care to child trafficking victims. These efforts can address victim identification, direct assistance to child trafficking victims, and provide child-friendly, victim-centered approaches. Examples of protection activities under the CPCs have included:

- **Victim-centered Care:** Stakeholders stated that implementing partners provided ways to increase direct, victim-centered care to survivors. For example, the Peruvian government provided properties to convert into dedicated shelter spaces to house child trafficking victims, according to CPC stakeholders. In addition, an implementing partner worked with the Philippine government to develop a foster and kinship care model in specific regions with the goal of protecting and providing a supportive environment for survivors.
- **Referral Systems:** CPC stakeholders stated that implementing partners and partner governments coordinated on identifying and referring potential victims to services across agencies. For example, in Ghana and Jamaica, implementing partners worked with the

⁵³The final evaluation also stated that for child labor trafficking, the number of investigations and convictions decreased over the CPC period. According to those involved in the Philippines CPC, the CPC focused on online sexual exploitation of children and had less of a focus on child labor trafficking.

partner governments to develop an interagency referral mechanism intended to improve victim quality of care and streamline victim access to government services across agencies, according to CPC stakeholders. However, an implementing partner in Jamaica noted that it is up to the Jamaican government to make use of this system in the future.

The final evaluations for the Philippines and Ghana CPCs highlighted improvements and limitations in overall outcomes to protection of victims of child trafficking. The Philippines final evaluation stated that a range of CPC interventions were effective in increasing the adherence to victim-centered approaches and case identification. The Ghana final evaluation noted improved interagency and civil society coordination, as well as increased referrals for timely interagency response, for suspected cases of child trafficking. It also noted that stakeholders, including service providers, were better informed about victim trauma and trauma-informed approaches at the end of the CPC efforts. However, the Ghana final evaluation found that services for survivors had not changed significantly since the baseline assessment because resources were limited or not available at all locations.

Prevention

According to the CPC framework, the prevention objective focuses on, among other things, awareness and understanding of child trafficking crimes in targeted communities, and addressing the key factors leading to child trafficking. These efforts can address building awareness of child trafficking and understanding and conducting research to identify root causes and vulnerabilities. Examples of prevention activities under the CPCs have included:

- **Community-based Mechanisms:** The CPCs worked to strengthen community-based mechanisms against child trafficking. For example, a Jamaican agency stated they worked with multiple community organizations to educate on child trafficking issues, according to partner government officials. In Peru, an implementing partner developed community support groups to assist in the prevention of human trafficking in the community.
- **Cultural Awareness:** Implementing partners worked with local communities to develop culturally relevant materials, such as posters and brochures, and to increase awareness of child trafficking issues. For example, according to an implementing partner in the Philippines, it worked with youth leaders from the community to create materials on how to address online exploitation of children as a crime. In addition, an implementing partner in Ghana worked with communities

and local authorities on child trafficking awareness campaigns, according to TIP Office officials.

The final evaluations for the Ghana and the Philippines CPCs highlighted mixed outcomes in improving awareness of trafficking in persons. In the Ghana final evaluation, respondents noted an increased awareness within both the public and government agencies, including better cultural acceptance of human trafficking as a crime. Conversely, the Philippines final evaluation noted that community members, families, and survivors were unaware that the online exploitation of children, the focus of the Philippines CPC, is a crime, which was a barrier to reporting such activity.

The TIP Office Does Not Track Partner Government Contributions to the CPC

All of the CPC partnership documents establish the intended contributions of the TIP Office and the partner government. Most partnership documents indicate the specific level of funding the TIP Office intends to provide, and all describe the type of resources the partner government intends to provide, such as personnel and, in some cases, funding.⁵⁴ While the TIP Office identified some examples of partner government contributions, including increased or dedicated personnel focused on child trafficking, according to officials, it did not track partner government contributions in a systematic way.

TIP Office officials acknowledged that they did not follow up with the partner governments on their contributions to the CPCs and noted difficulties in tracking contributions, such as challenges related to tracking increases in time spent on child trafficking issues by partner government personnel. Officials from partner governments we interviewed also stated they do not formally collect information on their contributions to the CPC, although they may informally discuss their contributions at the annual dialogues. Conversely, the TIP Office's funding contributions to CPCs are tracked through cooperative agreement reporting requirements and project monitoring efforts, according to TIP Office officials.

Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government indicates that agencies should use quality information to achieve their objectives and obtain relevant data from reliable internal and external sources in a timely manner based on identified information requirements.⁵⁵ The CPC authorizing legislation also calls for CPCs to describe multiyear financial

⁵⁴The Philippines and Peru CPC partnership documents include specific financial contributions that the partner government intend to provide.

⁵⁵[GAO-14-704G](#).

plans that include the estimated amount of contributions by the U.S. government and the foreign government.⁵⁶

While the partnership documents establish the intended contributions of the TIP Office and the partner governments, the TIP Office has limited information on the CPC contributions of partner governments to help build knowledge, establish processes or tools, or create resources to combat child trafficking. Without such information, the TIP Office and the partner governments lack insights into how partner governments are engaging and committing to improve ongoing CPC efforts and making efforts to facilitate sustainability after the CPCs end.

Partner Governments Have Not Shared Measures to Sustain CPC Anti-Child Trafficking Efforts

According to TIP Office officials, they design sustainability components into the CPCs. The partnership documents address the sustainability of CPC efforts. TIP Office officials stated that the partnership documents definitively state as a purpose for the CPCs to increase and sustain the capacity of the partner governments to combat child trafficking well after the partnerships conclude.⁵⁷ In addition, officials noted that increased institutional capacity and awareness can help to further sustainability. They also stated that they can discuss sustainability measures at the annual dialogues. However, documentation of summaries from those annual dialogues show the discussions did not always specifically address sustainability.

None of the partner governments have provided sustainability measures, such as sustainability plans, to identify how they will continue anti-trafficking efforts after the CPC ends. Moreover, TIP Office officials stated that they did not follow up with the partner governments on the sustainability plans described in the partnership documents. TIP Office officials noted that while they would prefer written sustainability plans, they do not have an enforcement mechanism to require the partner government to develop such plans, as CPC partnership documents are not legally binding. Officials stated they intended to work more closely with the governments on sustainability measures for the Peru and

⁵⁶22 U.S.C. § 7103a(d)(2)(E).

⁵⁷Projects in Ghana and the Philippines also extended beyond the conclusion of the CPCs. For example, the TIP Office extended a project in the Philippines, where the CPC ended in 2021, with an implementing partner that is providing services to victims of online sexual exploitation of children into spring 2023.

Jamaica CPCs as they conclude their efforts, as well as focusing on the issue for subsequent CPCs.

The CPC authorizing legislation, partnership documents, and framework tool all address the sustainability of the CPC efforts following the conclusion of a partnership. The CPC authorizing legislation states that the CPCs “shall describe how a country strategy will be developed to sustain progress made toward achieving such objectives after expiration of the compact.”⁵⁸ It also notes that State is authorized to provide assistance to CPC countries to support programs and policies that “measurably reduce the trafficking of minors by building sustainable and effective systems of justice, prevention, and protection.”⁵⁹ CPC partnership documents typically reference the development of sustainable policies and procedures, with the first five specifically noting the intent of having policy and operational improvements achieved during the CPC continue at the end of the partnership. For example, the partnership document for the Peru CPC states that the partners “intend for the policy and operational improvements in Peru’s response to all forms of child trafficking achieved with the support and during the course of this CPC Partnership to continue after the end of this Partnership.” Partnership documents for the first five CPCs also indicate that the partner governments should develop a sustainability plan, typically within 2 years after the start of the CPC. Finally, the newly-developed CPC framework states that the goal of the CPCs is to “advance and strengthen responses to combat child trafficking using a coordinated, sustainable, and multi-sectoral approach.”

According to stakeholders, sustaining CPC efforts to combat child trafficking is a key component of the CPCs. However, the partner governments have not provided information on sustainability measures following the conclusion of the CPCs and the TIP Office did not follow up on them. As a result, the governments have limited ability to determine whether or how CPC efforts will continue. In addition, the TIP Office is unable to assess whether CPC efforts may be successful in creating long-term practices and resources in CPC countries to combat child trafficking. Nor will it be able to assess what the potential and impact of continued efforts from CPCs might be in the future.

⁵⁸22 U.S.C. § 7103a(d)(2)(F).

⁵⁹22 U.S.C. § 7103a(d)(1)(B).

Stakeholders Made Generally Positive Observations on the CPC Partnership Structure

Officials from the TIP Office, partner governments, and implementing partners we interviewed, as well as final evaluations, provided generally positive observations on the CPC partnership structure as a unique tool to combat child trafficking. Specifically, the partnership structure involves a signed bilateral partnership between the U.S. government and a partner government supported by U.S.-funded projects and partner government efforts. Observations on the benefits of this structure included (1) partner government support for CPC efforts, (2) partner government interagency coordination, (3) improved communication between CPC stakeholders, and (4) multiyear stability and expertise. Stakeholders also noted other observations, such as fragmented efforts among implementing partners.

Partner Government Support for CPC Efforts

TIP Office officials and implementing partners highlighted that partner government support for the CPCs has been a key benefit of the partnership structure. TIP Office officials stated that negotiations with the partner government allow CPC stakeholders to build a consensus on, and commit to, anti-trafficking efforts. In addition, CPC stakeholders stated that because partner governments sign the CPC partnership documents, which establish goals and objectives, they and their relevant agencies are committed and accountable to CPC efforts from the beginning. Implementing partners stated that partner government engagement with and ownership of the CPC are significant factors, given that some partner government agency officials did not acknowledge child trafficking issues prior to their CPCs. The buy-in of partner governments from the start of efforts translated to continued support throughout the span of the CPCs. Implementing partners would also be unable to work on certain CPC goals, such as strengthening government capacity, without government support. In contrast, implementing partners stated that when non-CPC anti-trafficking projects are awarded without government involvement and support, the governments have less awareness of and engagement with the projects, which can inhibit progress.

CPC stakeholders also noted that despite efforts to clarify the funding structure, some partner governments initially believed that the TIP Office would provide CPC funding directly to them rather than the implementing partners. According to an implementing partner, partner government officials expressed frustration over this funding structure. TIP Office officials stated that they mention the funding structure to partner government officials at the first assessment meeting before the country is selected for a CPC, and at subsequent meetings. The Ghana final evaluation recommended that for future CPCs, the TIP Office should provide additional clarification on how it will distribute funding so the partner government clearly understands the restrictions.

Partner Government Interagency Coordination

Stakeholders and final evaluations noted an increase in partner government interagency coordination to combat child trafficking. CPC efforts involve multiple agencies across the partner government. These agencies can play a role in combatting trafficking ranging from prosecution to victim services. Under the CPCs, partner governments created new interagency coordinating bodies focused on combatting trafficking in persons or incorporated CPC efforts into their existing interagency coordinating bodies. For example, the Ghana final evaluation highlighted the creation of a new interagency working group in the government to coordinate efforts to address child trafficking. Under the Mongolia CPC, the government created a task force to coordinate its anti-trafficking and child protection policies, according to TIP Office officials. Partner government officials stated the CPC partnership structure strengthened interagency coordination. These agencies also built trust as they coordinated efforts, according to a TIP Office official.

However, CPC stakeholders noted that interagency coordinating bodies do not have authority over the individual governmental agencies involved. They said this fact made it more difficult to address challenges, such as a lack of responsiveness from some agencies on data requests. For example, obtaining key CPC performance data can require information from multiple partner government agencies, but the interagency coordinating body does not have the authority to collect such information.⁶⁰ In addition, TIP Office officials noted that some interagency coordinating bodies are not codified into law, which could affect their ability to coordinate in the future.

Improved Communication between CPC Stakeholders

Stakeholders noted that CPC efforts allowed for improved stakeholder communication, including among implementing partners and between them and the partner governments. The partnership structure also provided a broader collaborative approach to addressing child trafficking issues. Implementing partners highlighted that the CPCs allowed them to regularly communicate and build relationships with a wide range of partner government agencies, as well as to participate in government discussions. According to these implementing partners, this collaborative approach helped them to coordinate and streamline CPC efforts. For example, in the Philippines, an implementing partner stated they worked with the interagency coordinating body to address gaps of services for

⁶⁰According to TIP Office officials, the TIP Office and partner government will develop the new reporting templates together, which is intended to improve data collection and sharing. Implementing partners will support the partner governments in their efforts to submit data.

survivors of online sexual exploitation of children and advocate for more resources. Implementing partners stated that this collaborative approach between them and the partner governments continued even after CPC efforts ended, which benefitted other related projects.

The CPC partnership structure also allowed implementing partners to collaborate across the CPC goals and with local governments and organizations. Most CPCs have two or more implementing partners focused on separate objectives, but the CPCs have provided opportunities for them to share information and collaborate. However, while implementing partners stated that the CPC partnership structure drew together many stakeholders and different entities, they noted that CPC efforts can be siloed at times, with implementing partners engaged solely on their specific efforts.

Multiyear Stability and Expertise

Stakeholders noted that because the CPCs are multiyear partnerships, they provided greater stability in project funding and longer periods of engagement with the partner governments and the TIP Office. This stability allowed partner governments to address broader, longer-term goals, such as building government capacity, focusing on institutional change, and strengthening cultural awareness of trafficking. For example, CPCs provided opportunities for relevant agency officials to take training and to train others in their respective agencies on combatting child trafficking. They also provided the partner government opportunities to address broader institutional issues tailored to the context of the country. For example, in developing a national referral mechanism to support victims under the CPC, the Jamaican government recognized a broader need for a national identification number to follow victims through the referral process, according to an implementing partner. However, implementing partners also noted that the length of the CPCs was still not long enough to address these issues fully and to institutionalize changes.

In addition, CPCs allowed partner governments to benefit from implementing partners with expertise in combatting human trafficking. Partner government officials emphasized the benefits of working with these knowledgeable implementing partners, who could provide expertise and support to the partner governments during several years of CPC efforts.

Conclusions

CPCs are a new and unique tool through a partnership between the United States and partner governments, which State uses to support a variety of activities to combat child trafficking. However, we identified potential improvements in several key areas to make CPCs more

effective mechanisms for achieving and understanding long-term progress in combatting child trafficking. While the TIP Office has taken some steps to monitor the CPCs, it does not identify key CPC performance indicators for discussion or directly address them at the annual dialogues, a primary monitoring tool. In addition, the TIP Office does not have targets for CPC performance indicators in its reporting templates or reference the need to establish targets in the CPC framework. By discussing key indicator results at the dialogues and developing targets for these indicators, the TIP Office and partner governments will have a better understanding of CPC performance and challenges and the changes that might be beneficial for current or future CPCs.

The TIP Office also does not regularly track partner government contributions to the CPCs or discuss sustainability at the annual dialogues. By tracking such contributions and discussing sustainability at the dialogues, the TIP office could improve its understanding of partner government engagement with CPC efforts. These changes would also strengthen this unique approach to foreign assistance by providing useful insights into the partner government commitments, the impact of the CPCs, and the value of continuing them.

Recommendations for Executive Action

We are making the following six recommendations to the Department of State:

The Secretary of State should ensure that the Director of the TIP Office, in collaboration with partner country governments, identifies, in advance of each annual dialogue, key CPC performance indicators to discuss at these meetings. (Recommendation 1)

The Secretary of State should ensure that the Director of the TIP Office, in collaboration with partner country governments, discusses CPC performance indicator data at each annual dialogue. (Recommendation 2)

The Secretary of State should ensure that the Director of the TIP Office, in collaboration with partner country governments, creates annual targets for performance indicators in each CPC reporting template for ongoing and future CPCs. (Recommendation 3)

The Secretary of State should ensure that the Director of the TIP Office references the need to establish CPC performance indicator targets in key guidance documents, such as the CPC framework. (Recommendation 4)

The Secretary of State should ensure that the Director of the TIP Office, in collaboration with partner country governments, annually tracks partner government contributions to the CPCs, such as personnel, funding, or other types of contributions. (Recommendation 5)

The Secretary of State should ensure that the Director of the TIP Office, in collaboration with partner country governments, discusses CPC sustainability measures of partner country governments, such as at each annual dialogue. (Recommendation 6)

Agency Comments

We provided a draft of this report to the Department of State for review and comment. In its formal comments, reproduced in appendix II, State concurred with our recommendations. Specifically, State said the recommendations are appropriate and it is working to incorporate solutions into the Child Protection Compact partnerships. State described the steps planned or underway to address the six recommendations. For example, in response to the recommendation for the TIP Office to annually track partner government contributions to the Child Protection Compacts, State plans to systematically collect and document such information, and will develop a standard template to better collect these data.

State also provided technical comments, which we incorporated as appropriate. State commented that the draft report's original title did not fully reflect the overall report, and we modified the title accordingly.

As agreed with your office, unless you publicly announce the contents of this report earlier, we plan no further distribution until 11 days from the report date. At that time, we will send copies to appropriate congressional committees and the Secretary of State. In addition, the report will be available at no charge on the GAO website at <http://www.gao.gov>.

If you or your staff have any questions about this report, please contact me at (202) 512-2964 or KenneyC@gao.gov. 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 key contributions to this report are listed in appendix III.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chelsa Kenney". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Chelsa Kenney
Director, International Affairs and Trade

Appendix I: Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

This report (1) describes the Department of State's selection of Child Protection Compact (CPC) partner countries, development of goals, and funding of CPCs; (2) assesses State's monitoring of CPC implementation; (3) reviews CPC activities and State's tracking of partner government contributions to CPC efforts and sustainability measures; and (4) describes observations from stakeholders we interviewed on the CPC partnership structure.

To address all four objectives, we interviewed officials from State's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (TIP Office) who are responsible for selecting, funding, implementing, monitoring, and assessing each CPC. We reviewed relevant information such as the partnership document of each CPC as well as CPC award documentation. We also reviewed the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013,¹ which authorized the CPCs, for language related to CPC selection, funding, planning, and reporting. We conducted fieldwork with a non-generalizable sample of three CPC countries (Ghana, the Philippines, and Jamaica) to conduct semi-structured interviews with officials from partner governments and implementing partners, as well as U.S. embassy officials present during the period of the CPC efforts. We selected these countries based on several factors to achieve a range of ongoing and concluded CPCs. These factors included: (1) the two CPCs that had conducted final evaluations; (2) the earlier start date of the first CPCs, which allowed our assessment to include several years of CPC efforts; and (3) TIP Office feedback on which ongoing CPC provided useful insights on CPC activities as well as an opportunity to observe an annual dialogue. We held virtual site visits with Ghana and Philippines CPC stakeholders, and conducted fieldwork in Jamaica to meet with stakeholders and observe an annual dialogue between the U.S. and Jamaican governments and implementing partners.

To address the first objective, we reviewed relevant State and TIP Office documents and interviewed TIP Office officials. Specifically, we reviewed documents such as the Department of State's *Standard Operating Procedures for Child Protection Compact Partnerships* as of September 2022, the TIP Office's *Primer for Diplomatic Engagement on Potential CPC Countries* as of June 2022, and the CPC partnership documents. We also reviewed 20 country checklists to understand the new selection process and the 14 criteria used to select a CPC country. We interviewed

¹Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013, Pub. L. No. 113-4, 127 Stat. 54, 136-38 (2013).

TIP Office points-of-contact for the first five CPCs to understand how the office selected these CPC countries and how the selection process changed over time. Further, we reviewed the first five CPC implementation plans and spoke to TIP Office officials to understand how CPC goals are developed and structured. To describe State's planned and obligated funding for CPC awards, we identified funding described in the partnership documents and additional documents, such as State press releases, and reviewed award funding obligations data by fiscal year for each CPC, as of September 30, 2022, provided by the TIP Office. We assessed the reliability of the funding data obligated by year by corroborating the data in interviews with TIP Office officials who collect and maintain the data. We determined that the data we used were sufficiently reliable for our purpose of identifying the State planned and obligated funding of CPCs.

To address the second objective, we assessed relevant documents to determine the monitoring policies applicable to each CPC, including: State's Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM), 18 FAM 301.4-1(B), *Department of State Program and Project Design, Monitoring, and Evaluation* as of April 2018; *Guidance for the Design, Monitoring and Evaluation Policy at the Department of State* as of January 2019; and the CPC partnership documents.² We also provided TIP Office officials with a list of monitoring requirements we identified and asked them to confirm which were applicable to CPCs at the CPC level. These officials confirmed that two original monitoring tools apply to CPCs at the CPC level, progress reports and annual dialogues, both of which are cited in CPC partnership documents.

For the progress reports, we then reviewed the two partial reports submitted by two partner government countries (no other partner governments provided regular progress reports) to identify the data provided. For the annual dialogues, we reviewed related documents, including annual dialogue agendas, partner government annual dialogue presentations, and U.S. embassy cables that summarized the discussions. We reviewed these documents for any direct annual dialogue discussions on CPC performance indicators and statements on CPC achievements, challenges, and next steps. We also incorporated observations from our attendance at an annual dialogue in Kingston, Jamaica, in July 2022. In addition, we spoke with TIP Office officials to

²TIP Office officials stated that each CPC is considered a program, while awards under each CPC are considered projects.

gather more information on CPC monitoring tools, to include why regular progress reports were not received and why annual dialogues did not address performance indicators. Finally, we assessed two CPC monitoring tools established in 2022, the Mongolia CPC reporting template and the TIP Office's CPC 4P Model Framework. We assessed these two documents for the presence of, or reference to, CPC performance indicator targets and discussed the absence of such targets with TIP Office officials. We did not assess the TIP Office's monitoring of its CPC awards to implementing partners at the project level as a previous GAO report addressed this issue.³

To address our third objective, we assessed CPC evaluation reports. The reports included baseline evaluations for each of the first five CPCs,⁴ a mid-line evaluation for the Ghana CPC, and final evaluations for the Ghana and Philippines CPCs. We worked with GAO methodologists to conduct a review of the two final evaluations. One methodologist noted findings in each evaluation related to key CPC outcomes, along with data considerations that may limit the conclusions drawn, as appropriate. A second methodologist reviewed the evaluations and the documentation provided by the first methodologist, and the two discussed and resolved any discrepancies. We did not assess the TIP Office's evaluation of its CPC awards to implementing partners at the project level as a previous GAO report addressed this issue.⁵

To address the third objective and to identify and describe examples of CPC activities, we interviewed 53 stakeholders involved in CPC efforts, including State officials from the TIP Office and U.S. embassies, partner government officials, and implementing partners. We also visited a child-friendly space in Jamaica and met with Jamaican law enforcement officials. In addition, we assessed key CPC documents, such as the CPC partnership documents, to identify provisions related to contributions from the TIP Office and the partner government, and partner government plans for sustainability. We also interviewed TIP Office officials to understand how State evaluates the CPCs, and to determine whether or how the TIP

³GAO, *State and USAID Should Improve Their Monitoring of International Counter-trafficking Projects*, [GAO-19-77](#), (Washington, D.C.: December 4, 2018).

⁴Ghana, the Philippines, Jamaica, Peru, and Mongolia.

⁵GAO, *Human Trafficking: Agencies Have Taken Steps to Strengthen International Anti-trafficking Projects*, [GAO-21-53](#), (Washington, D.C.: November 9, 2020).

Office tracks partner government contributions and country plans for sustainability.

To address the fourth objective, we interviewed TIP Office officials, partner government officials, and implementing partners on their perspectives on the CPC partnership structure, including benefits, challenges, and other observations to the structure. We reviewed their observations and categorized them into four broader themes: (1) partner government support of CPC efforts, (2) partner government interagency coordination, (3) improved communication between CPC stakeholders, and (4) multiyear stability and expertise. We incorporated the benefits, challenges, and other observations under these themes. We also reviewed the Ghana and Philippines final evaluations for observations on the CPC partnership structure.

We conducted this performance audit from August 2021 to April 2023 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 the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Appendix II: Comments from the Department of State



United States Department of State
Comptroller
Washington, D.C. 20520

March 10, 2023

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

Dear Mr. Bair:

We appreciate the opportunity to review your draft report, "HUMAN TRAFFICKING: Department of State and Partner Governments Collaborate on Child Protection Compacts but State Should Strengthen Oversight." GAO Job Code 105390.

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

Sincerely,

James A Walsh Digitally signed by James A Walsh
Date: 2023.03.10 16:08:34 -0500

James A. Walsh

Enclosure:
As stated

**Appendix II: Comments from the Department
of State**

cc: GAO – Chelsa Kenney
J/TIP – Susan Snyder
OIG - Norman Brown

Department of State's Comments on GAO Draft Report

**HUMAN TRAFFICKING: Department of State and Partner Governments
Collaborate on Child Protection Compacts but State Should Strengthen
Oversight**

(GAO 23-105390, GAO Code 105390)

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the GAO draft report "*Human Trafficking: Department of State and Partner Governments Collaborate on Child Protection Compacts but State Should Strengthen Oversight*". The Department provided several technical edits to the draft report and thanks the GAO for considering them. The Department appreciates the examination of one of our flagship anti-trafficking programs, the Child Protection Compact (CPC) Partnerships, as they have demonstrated the benefits of working closely, over an extended period with, a partner government to combat child trafficking issues. The recommendations made by the GAO are appropriate, and the Department is already working to incorporate solutions into the Partnerships.

Recommendation 1: The Secretary of State should ensure that the Director of the TIP Office in collaboration with partner country governments, identifies in advance of each annual dialogue, key performance indicators to discuss at these meetings.

Department Response: The Department of State agrees with the recommendation and is actively working to address it by adding key performance indicators to the implementation plan for each partnership. These indicators will be supplemented with project specific indicators that the TIP Office already collects quarterly via CPC implementing partners. Data from these key Partnership-level performance indicators will be collected annually from the partner government and shared at the annual dialogue.

2

Recommendation 2: The Secretary of State should ensure that the Director of the TIP Office in collaboration with partner country governments, discusses CPC performance indicator data at each annual dialogue.

Department Response: The Department of State agrees with the recommendation and will build in time during each annual dialogue to discuss partnership level performance indicator data.

Recommendation 3: The Secretary of State should ensure that the Director of the TIP Office in collaboration with partner country governments creates annual targets for performance indicators in each CPC reporting template for ongoing and future CPCs.

Department Response: The Department of State agrees with the recommendation and will create targets for each of the key performance indicators, which will be codified in the implementation plan for each partnership. These targets will be created in collaboration with the partner government, as well as with input from civil society implementing partners. We have recently done this with the Colombia partnership and implementation plan.

Recommendation 4: The Secretary of State should ensure that the Director of the TIP Office references the need to establish performance indicator targets in key guidance documents like the CPC framework.

Department Response: The Department of State agrees with the recommendation and will edit the CPC Framework to incorporate this feedback.

Recommendation 5: The Secretary of State should ensure that the Director of the TIP Office in collaboration with partner country governments, annually tracks partner government contributions to the CPCs such as personnel, funding, or other types of contributions.

3

Department Response: The Department of State agrees with the recommendation. The TIP Office will systematically collect and document this data, which was previously gathered via implementers' quarterly reports, to better track partner government contributions. Along with any financial contributions, in-kind contributions will be included with the ability to quantify resources, if needed. The TIP Office will develop a standard template to better collect this information.

Recommendation 6: The Secretary of State should ensure that the Director of the TIP Office in collaboration with partner country governments, discusses sustainability measures of partner governments at the annual dialogues.

Department Response: The Department of State agrees with the recommendation and will continue to include a discussion of sustainability. Additionally, we will document in our CPC program SOPs, that a discussion of sustainability is a required element during all annual dialogues.

Appendix III: GAO Contacts and Staff Acknowledgements

GAO Contact

Chelsa Kenney, (202) 512-2964 or KenneyC@gao.gov.

Staff

Acknowledgements

In addition to the contact named above, Leslie Holen (Assistant Director), Joyce YunSun Kang (Analyst in Charge), Herrica Telus, Hunter Graff, Aldo Salerno, Suzanne Kaasa, K. Nicole Willems, Chris Keblitis, Alana Miller and Andy Payne made key contributions to this report.

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