OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE AND SDG TARGET 8.7

Measuring aid to address forced labour, modern slavery, human trafficking and child labour

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Authors

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In 2015, 193 countries agreed on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Target 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals commits states to take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of all forms of child labour. At present, a number of unanswered questions remain that are essential for determining progress being made to reach Target 8.7. These include: How much aid are states committing to achieve Target 8.7? Where are they committing those resources, and on what?

Official Development Assistance (ODA) commitments addressing the forms of exploitation covered by Target 8.7 increased markedly between 2000 and 2013, but with significant geographic and thematic variations. Using a novel machine learning technique to mine official Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Official Development Assistance (ODA) data between 2000 and 2013, we found that:

- Thirty donor countries committed more than USD 4 billion in ODA funding to address modern slavery, forced labour, human trafficking and child labour (Target 8.7 exploitation) between 2000 and 2013. From around USD 150 million in 2001, total annual ODA commitments had reached USD 433.7 million by 2013.

- The donor committing the largest sum of ODA towards Target 8.7 exploitation was the US: it spent around 60 per cent of the global total. US expenditure was, in aggregate, almost 10 times as much as the next donor (Canada). Norway, Australia, Sweden and the UK were next in the list of ODA commitments towards these issues, ranked by commitment size.

ODA spending on Target 8.7 exploitation was fragmented and increasingly dispersed:

- A handful of countries received the bulk of ODA commitments relevant to Target 8.7, based on yearly average commitments: Afghanistan (USD 23.5 million), India (USD 19.3 million), Colombia (USD 19 million) and Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) (USD 14.5 million). Most countries that received ODA commitments received less than USD 1 million in any given year, and once project administration costs are accounted for, the sums involved are notably small.

- Our research finds that commitments were targeted differently by different donors. The bulk of ODA commitments were received either from the US or from all other countries. Only a few of the top ODA recipients received similar amounts from US and non-US sources, namely DRC, Indonesia, Nepal and Cambodia.

- Some, but not all, countries that received the highest amounts in Target 8.7 ODA commitments feature high in lists of estimated incidence of Target 8.7 exploitation.

- Over time, ODA commitments were increasingly dispersed to a wider range of countries. In 2000, bilateral ODA was dispersed to projects in 29 recipient countries. Beginning in 2006, over 100 countries received this kind of development assistance.
Some types of Target 8.7 exploitation received more ODA than others:

• While in 2000, ODA commitments to projects aimed at eradicating child labour vastly outpaced commitments dealing with other forms of exploitation, by the last few years of the sample, the largest pool of ODA commitments targeted human trafficking. Funding directed at child labour had declined somewhat, and ODA spending addressing other aspects of Target 8.7 was much lower in absolute terms throughout the period studied.

• Given the rise of “modern slavery” as a target area for donors and funds (notably the UK) since 2013, further research is required to determine what impact this increased attention has had on overall ODA spending patterns.

More coordination may be required, especially around ODA commitment strategies, to maximize the impact of Target 8.7 ODA:

• The study identifies how much ODA was committed, by whom, on what and where. It does not tell us anything about the impact or effectiveness of that assistance—or, indeed, any other kinds of development assistance or giving.

• Nevertheless, the mismatch between the list and rank-ordering of recipients of ODA spending on Target 8.7 exploitation and typical estimates of the highest absolute or per capita incidence of Target 8.7 exploitation raises important questions for donors and policy-makers. Is ODA being well-targeted?

• Donors and policy-makers may wish to consider whether they are directing ODA spending on these issues to the places where that expenditure could have the greatest impact, and whether stronger donor coordination around shared needs assessments or priority recipient country assistance strategies is needed to achieve the best results.

• Finally, the research also points to significant volatility in Target 8.7 ODA commitments, which may have a negative impact on the willingness of recipient countries and implementing partners to commit to plan sustained work in this area.

• This suggests a need for donors to consider how Target 8.7 funding streams might be made more stable and predictable, through shared assistance strategies. Alliance 8.7, the Call to Action, the Bali Process, the Global Fund to End Modern Slavery and the UN Sustainable Development system all offer frameworks for such coordination.

• The study closes with two specific suggestions:
  
  1. more comprehensive and precise ODA project purpose codes, giving more complete coverage of Target 8.7 exploitation, aligned with operational definitions emerging through cooperation among the UN and other partners; and

  2. a database on non-ODA spending—including from countries that are not members of the Development Assistance Committee, domestic public expenditure, and private and charitable giving—to allow the analysis provided here to be extended to the full spectrum of funding flows aimed at Target 8.7 exploitation.
INTRODUCTION

In 2015, 193 countries agreed on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Target 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), announced in that Agenda, commits States to take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of all forms of child labour. How much are states spending to achieve Target 8.7? Where are they spending resources, and on what? The answers to these questions will be essential not only in determining what progress is being made to reach Target 8.7, but also in developing a roadmap to accelerate progress towards that target. Yet at present these questions are unanswered. There is no systematic, global accounting of expenditure to achieve Target 8.7.

In this paper, developed as a product of Delta 8.7—a project of United Nations University’s Centre for Policy Research that aims to contribute to Alliance 8.7 by helping states “measure the change” towards Target 8.7—we seek to begin to fill this evidence gap. We do so by focusing on one specific form of public expenditure: official overseas development assistance (ODA)—government aid that promotes and specifically targets the economic development and welfare of developing countries—between 2000 and 2013.1

Our work takes its cue from an important earlier paper on these issues published in 2014 by Martina Ucnikova, during her time with the Walk Free Foundation.2 That research was based on a dataset of almost 2,000 aid projects hand-selected for that purpose. Our research takes a different approach to the question of sizing ODA spending aimed at achieving Target 8.7. We draw on a set of 1,252,036 aid projects in ODA-eligible countries provided by AidData, based on the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Creditor Reporting System (CRS). From this pool we used an innovative natural language processing algorithm to identify more than 6,000 aid projects directly related to Target 8.7 between 2000 and 2013. Our paper explores what this data tells us about who provided ODA, to which countries and to address what forms of Target 8.7 exploitation.

As we explain further below, there are limitations both in our methodology and in the utility of the resulting analysis. Our research sizes aid spending to address forced labour, modern slavery, human trafficking and child labour by OECD countries between 2000 and 2013. It does not incorporate spending by other significant donors who were not OECD DAC members at the time (such as Qatar). It does not cover non-ODA assistance, domestic expenditure, or the growing flows of charitable giving directed at these concerns.

Our research does, however, provide the most robust and granular evidence of ODA spending on Target 8.7 yet available. It suggests that:

• More than USD 4 billion in ODA was spent to address forced labour, modern slavery, human trafficking and child labour (“Target 8.7 exploitation”) between 2000 and 2013, by 30 country donors—or around 0.2 per cent of all ODA spent during that period.

• Average annual global ODA spending increased over the period, from around USD 150 million in 2001, plateauing around USD 450 million by 2010.

• The largest ODA donor addressing Target 8.7 exploitation was the US, which spent around 60 per cent of the total. Its expenditure was, in aggregate, almost 10 times as much as the next donor (Canada).

2 Martina Ucnikova, “OECD and Modern Slavery: How much aid is spent to tackle the issue?”, Anti-Trafficking Review, issue 3 (September 2014), pp.133—150.
SIZING ODA SPENDING ON TARGET 8.7 EXPLOITATION

A growing body of evidence suggests that underdevelopment renders individuals vulnerable to forced labour, modern slavery, human trafficking and child labour (Target 8.7 exploitation). There is also some evidence to suggest that the presence of Target 8.7 exploitation may negatively influence wages, labour productivity and economic growth by perpetuating poor access to education, training, and opportunities to participate in the economy. Both factors suggest an important role for development assistance and programming in addressing Target 8.7 exploitation.

How much are states spending on development assistance programming to achieve Target 8.7? Where are they spending their resources, and on what kinds of interventions? This research seeks to begin to answer those questions, by generating a baseline using ODA DAC data for 2000–2013.

Our work builds on an important first attempt to answer these questions carried out by Martina Ucnikova in 2014. Ucnikova built a bespoke database of more than 2,000 aid projects related to modern slavery between 2003 and 2012, sourced through governments’ reports and direct engagement with 12 OECD donors. This led to an estimated average annual aggregate ODA spend of USD 124 million, with the US, Norway and Japan identified as the major donors. Our approach differs from that employed by Ucnikova in several respects, including data sources and coding. We explain our approach, and its limitations, below.


4 The evidence demonstrating the interrelationship between economic growth/development and child labour is particularly strong, as measurement of child labour has advanced well beyond the measurement of other forms of Target 8.7 exploitation.
Data sources

As Ucnikova points out, it is difficult to count ODA spending aimed at addressing Target 8.7 exploitation because that spending is “rarely disaggregated from broader development spending”. Rather than develop a new database of aid projects by hand, as Ucnikova did in her 2014 article, we took a different tack, employing a coding methodology to automate a process of data selection from a new source of ODA commitment data.

The analysis relies on the data infrastructure that has emerged around the OECD DAC. DAC data is the most reliable, universal and granular data available on development spending. The DAC Creditor Reporting System (CRS) maintains a centralized database of self-reported, country-level bilateral and multilateral ODA project commitments between 1995 and 2016. The database does not provide detailed project descriptions, but does tag projects by donor, recipients, sector and purpose. However, project descriptions have recently begun to be provided through the AidData Institute, based at the University of William and Mary, which also maps ODA commitments in the CRS onto the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). AidData uses human coders to manually tag individual aid projects for relevance to different SDGs, and even splits project funding across SDGs using a published methodology.

A new dataset (Finance to the SDGs Dataset, Version 1.0) published by AidData in November 2017 expands on the existing OECD DAC CRS dataset by making accessible short- and long-form descriptions between 2000 and 2013. This dataset includes 1,252,036 listed projects. By relying on this dataset, rather than a bespoke database such as that used by Ucnikova, we were able to greatly expand the size of the aid project pool being reviewed for relevance to Target 8.7.

Coding methodology

Even with aid project data in hand, researchers seeking to estimate the size of ODA spending focused on Target 8.7 exploitation face challenges in determining whether any given aid project is targeted at a relevant phenomenon.

The DAC Creditor Reporting System provides common codes used by donors to report on ODA-based projects. These codes are determined by an expert committee and used by the 30 DAC Member countries (as well as Associates and Participants, such as Qatar and UAE). They provide a basis for comparison of projects based on donor, recipient, sector and purpose. Ucnikova acknowledges the difficulties in identifying spending relevant to Target 8.7 through the use of these codes (notably code 15261: child soldiers – prevention and demobilization; code 16020.07: combating child labour; and codes 15150/15150.07/15130.06: victims of trafficking). The challenge here is that the DAC Creditor Reporting System codes pre-date the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and do not always align well with the SDGs.

A new dataset (Finance to the SDGs Dataset, Version 1.0) published by AidData in November 2017 expands on the existing OECD DAC CRS dataset by making accessible short- and long-form descriptions between 2000 and 2013. This dataset includes 1,252,036 listed projects. By relying on this dataset, rather than a bespoke database such as that used by Ucnikova, we were able to greatly expand the size of the aid project pool being reviewed for relevance to Target 8.7.

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5 Ucnikova, “OECD and Modern Slavery”, p. 137.
7 Matthew DiLorenzo, Sid Ghose and Jennifer Turner, Estimating Baseline Aid to the Sustainable Development Goals (AidData at the College of William and Mary, 2017).
8 Tanya Sethi, Samantha Custer, Jennifer Turner, Jacob Sims, Matthew DiLorenzo and Rebecca Latourell, Realizing Agenda 2030: Will donor dollars and country priorities align with global goals? (AidData at the College of William & Mary, 2017).
9 The public version of the dataset maps ODA commitments at the SDG Goal level.
11 Tanya Sethi, Samantha Custer, Jennifer Turner, Jacob Sims, Matthew DiLorenzo and Rebecca Latourell, Realizing Agenda 2030: Will donor dollars and country priorities align with global goals? (AidData at the College of William and Mary, 2017).
obviously covered by the DAC CRS purpose codes, including forced labour, forced marriage, slavery and servitude. This means that reliance on the purpose codes alone risks significantly under-counting ODA commitments on Target 8.7.

To address this problem, we drew methodological inspiration from a recent review of ODA to end violence against children. In that review, the research team used key word searches of the CRS Aid Activity database to identify projects focused on protecting children from violence. The key word search was refined through manual analysis, and allowed the authors to identify projects that had at least some component benefiting children through ending violence whether directly or indirectly.

We developed a related methodology, relying however not on manual searches but on algorithm-based automated coding of the project descriptions available through AidData. Starting from the AidData Core Research Release 3.1, we constructed a sample of aid projects that referred to a set list of key root words relating to Target 8.7 (see Appendix 1), in their project descriptions. This list of root terms was designed to create broad categories to capture seven overarching forms of exploitation that fall within Target 8.7: forced labour, child labour, child soldiering, human trafficking, forced marriage, modern slavery, and servitude. We constructed this sample through a simple form of Natural Language Processing (NLP) known as entity extraction, using an algorithm to crawl mechanically through the 1,252,036 project descriptions available through AidData. We supplemented the search with manual verification, as described in Appendix 1.

Limitations

This research methodology has several limitations.

First, the data we relied upon is currently available through 2013, two years before the adoption of Target 8.7. It is quite conceivable that spending patterns have changed since then, particularly as other donors, such as the UK, have become more active on these issues. As more data becomes available, we will be able to repeat our analysis and determine if this is the case.

Second, the data does not cover government expenditure that is not classified as ODA. This includes domestic expenditure on law enforcement, victim assistance and prevention, among other things. It also does not include non-DAC-able development assistance by OECD countries (such as some US Department of Labor spending). Nor does it include foreign spending by non-OECD countries—and it is clear that non-OECD countries spent significantly on addressing Target 8.7 exploitation during the period in question. Qatar, for example, which only joined the OECD DAC in April 2016, was a major contributor to global efforts to fight human trafficking such as the UN.GIFT programme during the years in question. Similarly, our analysis does not cover private expenditures, such as charitable giving. Our analysis should not, therefore, be mistaken for a sizing of overall expenditures to achieve Target 8.7; it is strictly limited to ODA spending between 2000 and 2013.

Third, the reliance on DAC codes means that in some cases it is difficult to determine which countries were the ultimate beneficiaries of ODA spent through multilateral organizations. This is an important caveat to bear in mind when considering the geographical analysis offered in the next section.

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Fourth, we rely on the project descriptions provided by self-reporting ODA donors. Donors may use the same terms to address slightly different phenomena, and may not use pertinent language in their project descriptions, which may impact the reliability of break-downs of aid spending by form of exploitation.\(^{14}\) This is inevitable until new, official purpose codes are agreed upon and in use across the OECD system (and beyond), ensuring more precise reporting on these expenditures. We return to this policy question in the concluding section of the paper.

Fifth, the Target-level AidData dataset indicates that many ODA projects address factors closely-related to Target 8.7 exploitation, but which do not strictly fall within our root-word search list. For example, a project that aims to fund work programmes for at-risk youth or migrants may arguably be said to be contributing to prevent human trafficking, and thus contributing to progress towards Target 8.7; but if it does not use one of the specified root-words in the project description, it is not captured by our methodology. This is a standard problem in sizing spending on prevention and risk reduction projects, especially where the realization of risk is multi-causal. On the other hand, by omitting project spending that does not explicitly refer to one of the core forms of exploitation, we ensure that we are not over-counting, thereby strengthening the reliability of our sizing estimates. This should be understood to mean that our estimates are, if anything, conservative.

RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

The methodology described above produced a sample of 6,409 unique aid projects addressing Target 8.7 exploitation between 2000 and 2013, undertaken by 30 countries and several multilateral organizations. The total ODA commitment involved was USD 4,128,037,703, or an average of just under USD 295 million per year (though this varied significantly over time, as discussed further below). Of these 6,409 projects, some 2,273 had not been officially tagged by self-reporting countries with one of the three primary DAC codes linked to Target 8.7, although the project descriptions made clear that the projects were addressing these phenomena. These ODA commitments would have been missed if we had relied solely on the official purpose code-based counting methodology used in earlier analysis, and they would have provided an inaccurate and incomplete picture of Target 8.7 ODA spending. If, however, we count such projects as under Target 8.7, this means that our estimates are, if anything, conservative.

In this section, we provide an overview of some of the key patterns evident in this sample of ODA projects: by geography, forms of exploitation and funding modality (bilateral v. multilateral).

**Geographic breakdown**

Table 1 shows total ODA commitments addressing Target 8.7 exploitation between 2000 and 2013, by country. Appendix 2 to the paper includes graphs of annual ODA commitments between 2000 and 2013 for selected countries. Our research confirms results from Ucnikova’s analysis\(^{15}\) that the US was far and away the main ODA contributor on these issues during this period, with 10 times the ODA commitment of the next highest donor – Canada. Our results suggest that Canada, Norway and Australia were the next biggest donors using ODA to address these issues.

\(^{14}\) Counting Pennies.

\(^{15}\) Ucnikova, “OECD and Modern Slavery”.
Table 1: OECD Donors Total USD Commitments on Target 8.7 Projects 2000-2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COUNTRY</th>
<th>TOTAL USD</th>
<th>COUNTRY</th>
<th>TOTAL USD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>2,570,426,516</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>23,101,047</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>265,169,346</td>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>13,542,769</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>216,707,788</td>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>12,919,225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>204,814,292</td>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>8,756,419</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>138,940,658</td>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>7,841,764</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>120,290,415</td>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>6,624,197</td>
</tr>
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<td>European Commission</td>
<td>117,091,789</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>2,344,653</td>
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<td>Spain</td>
<td>97,171,052</td>
<td>South Korea</td>
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<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>88,572,651</td>
<td>Estonia</td>
<td>191,867</td>
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<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>66,072,558</td>
<td>Slovak Republic</td>
<td>159,749</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>50,126,031</td>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>36,523,364</td>
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<td>127,950</td>
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<td>Denmark</td>
<td>33,298,208</td>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>64,645</td>
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<td>Belgium</td>
<td>24,460,130</td>
<td>United Arab Emirates</td>
<td>41,053</td>
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<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>23,925,492</td>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>22,728</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Figure 1: Recipients of ODA Commitments, Yearly Average 2000-2013

Recipient Country/Region

- Afghanistan
- India
- Colombo
- Bangladesh
- Pakistan
- Indonesia
- Jordan
- Mexico
- Nigeria
- Nepal
- Philippines
- Cambodia
- Iraq
- Palestinian Admin. Areas
- El Salvador
- Nicaragua
- Viet Nam
- Senegal
- Laos
- Lebanon
- South Africa
- Peru
- Bosnia–Herzegovina
- Guinea
- Ghana
- Yemen
- Macedonia, FYR
- Mozambique
- Togo
- South & Central Asia, Regional Programs
- Lebanon
- Mongolia
- Mali
- Kyrgyz Republic
- Azerbaijan
- Senegal
- Sierra Leone
- South Asia, Regional Programs
- Timor-Leste
- Angola
- Panama
- Central Asia, Regional Programs
- Kazakhstan
- Chad

Average Yearly Commitment

- $0
- $5m
- $10m
- $15m
- $20m

Recipient Country/Region

- America, Regional Programs
- China
- Dominican Republic
- Rwanda
- Ecuador
- Zambia
- North & Central America, Regional Programs
- Moldova
- Armenia
- Belarus
- Malawi
- Bolivia
- Turkey
- Cote D’Ivoire
- Benin
- Bosnia–Herzegovina
- Guinea
- Ghana
- Yemen
- Macedonia, FYR
- Mozambique
- Togo
- South & Central Asia, Regional Programs
- Lebanon
- Mongolia
- Mali
- Kyrgyz Republic
- Azerbaijan
- Senegal
- Sierra Leone
- South Asia, Regional Programs
- Timor-Leste
- Angola
- Panama
- Central Asia, Regional Programs
- Kazakhstan
- Chad

Legend:
- Total Commitments
- US Commitments
- NonUS Commitments
A handful of countries received the bulk of ODA commitments relevant to Target 8.7. Our analysis also reveals, however, that as the US significantly outspends all other donor countries, US commitments heavily influence how we understand ODA flows. To better understand this influence, we split the sample into US and non-US ODA donors. Figure 1, below, charts the total ODA commitment received by a country between 2000 and 2013 (the blue dot), and also shows how that breaks down into commitments from the US (gold dot) and non-US sources (purple dot). The horizontal bar between the US and non-US commitments (the purple and gold dots) shows the difference between commitments made by the US and commitments made by non-US donors.

As Figure 1 shows, the following countries were among the top recipients of ODA, based on yearly average commitments: Afghanistan (USD 23.5 million), India (USD 19.3 million), Colombia (USD 19 million) and DRC (USD 14.5 million). This is notable because some of these countries are regularly identified as being developing countries with especially high incidence of Target 8.7 exploitation (in either absolute or per capita terms), but some are not.

Figure 1 also reveals that for most of the largest recipients of ODA addressing Target 8.7 exploitation during this period, the bulk of ODA commitments were received either from the US, or from all other countries. Only a few of the top recipients received similar amounts from US and non-US sources (i.e. DRC, Indonesia, Nepal, Cambodia). This raises an interesting question: why did the average US and non-US commitments to a specific country tend to differ so significantly? Is this a sign that US and non-US donors tended to consider different factors when making these commitments? Or is it in fact a sign of informal signalling, with donors tending not to direct ODA commitments to countries that they know are already receiving relevant funding from other sources? Is this a sound basis for aid allocation, or are countries more likely to make progress towards Target 8.7 if they are receiving ODA from multiple sources?

Answering these questions is beyond the scope of this paper, but will be important for donors as they think about what this baseline data may mean for strengthening the role of development assistance in achieving Target 8.7.

### Forms of exploitation

As explained earlier, breaking down spending by form of exploitation (i.e. forced labour, child labour, human trafficking, modern slavery) is risky, because our methodology relies on the linguistic choices made by donors in their self-reported project descriptions. The same type of programming may be described in different ways by different donors. And small changes in donors’ subjective choices of how to describe specific projects could have led to different results in our resulting analysis.

To mitigate this concern, we took an inclusive approach when breaking down ODA commitments by form of exploitation: where a donor used more than one term, we counted the project in both categories. This of course produces double counting, which means that the aggregate ODA spending totals in this sub-analysis do not match up with the totals broken down by donor, recipient or year (above).

However, the vast majority of aid projects in our sample listed only one of the seven types of exploitation. Table 2 shows the number of forms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 FORM</th>
<th>2 FORMS</th>
<th>3 FORMS</th>
<th>4 FORMS</th>
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<td>5856</td>
<td>515</td>
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<td>1</td>
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</table>

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16 Compare, for example, the Walk Free Foundation, *Global Slavery Index* 2018, http://www.globalslaveryindex.org/.
of exploitation listed in project descriptions. Only 546 projects out of 6,409 worth a total of USD 293,202,569 for the period between 2000 and 2013, listed more than one form of exploitation. Moreover, this inclusive approach ensures that our analysis reflects donors’ understandings of the objectives of their ODA commitments.

Figure 2 (above) shows how the ODA commitments broke down by forms of exploitation year-on-year. Some interesting trends emerge from this data. While in 2000 ODA commitments to projects aimed at eradicating child labour vastly outpaced commitments dealing with other forms of exploitation, by the last few years of the sample, the largest aggregate pool of ODA commitments targeted human trafficking. Funding directed at child labour had gradually declined since 2004, hitting a low in 2011, with a subsequent uptick from 2012 to 2013. While projects aimed at addressing child labour were the second highest funding priority among all forms of exploitation in 2013, ODA commitments designed to combat human trafficking had by that point far outstripped ODA commitments on other forms of exploitation.

These variations beg the question how ODA spending decisions are made. What factors shape those decisions? We return to this question in the final section of this paper.
Funding modalities

Another question worth exploring is how ODA funds are spent. Almost 28 per cent of the projects identified in our sample involved ODA contributions to multilateral organizations, rather than through bilateral ODA channels. Figure 3 (below) plots this breakdown by year.

Interestingly, multilateral organizations (such as the World Bank) were also less likely to be the sources of ODA commitments, as Figure 4 reveals.

It is important to recall that these figures do not capture all spending on these topics through multilateral organizations, but only DAC-able spending. Spending by non-OECD DAC countries was also not covered. Still, this raises important questions about whether development assistance to achieve Target 8.7 is best routed through bilateral projects or through multilateral funding and programming modalities. There is some evidence that ODA spending through multilateral organizations may be more effective than bilateral spending in countries where rule of law and administrative systems are weak,17 which are likely to be among those countries where vulnerability to Target 8.7 exploitation is high; but multilateral channels may come with other downsides such as high administrative costs.

On Target 8.7, the questions prompted by our research include: why did countries increasingly prefer bilateral over multilateral channels during the sample period? Was this based on an assessment of which modalities were likely to have the greatest impact? Has that trend towards bilateral channels continued since 2013? Why are multilateral instruments (such as ODA-giving multilateral funds) such minor players as sources of ODA? And how do these modality choices relate to the effectiveness of ODA addressing Target 8.7? Again, many of these questions must await further research, but these questions do point to important areas for potential consideration by donors.

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Figure 3: Types of ODA Flows to Recipients

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Figure 4: ODA Commitments by OECD Countries Compared to International Organizations
DISCUSSION

The growth in ODA spending on Target 8.7

The analysis reveals that annual ODA commitments to address the forms of exploitation covered by SDG Target 8.7 grew significantly between 2000 and 2013. The total annual country donor commitment in 2000 was USD 119.4 million; by 2013 it had reached USD 433.7 million. What explains this?

One possibility is that these commitments grew (and fell) in line with ODA commitment patterns more generally. Yet a simple review of the country graphs in Appendix 2, or indeed a plot of Target 8.7 ODA as a proportion of ODA, on one axis, versus ODA as a proportion of GNI on the other, suggests there is little reason to think that there is any correlation here (see Figure 5, below). Expenditure on Target 8.7 exploitation does not seem to increase as a country chooses to spend more on ODA in general.

Figure 5: Comparison of Overall ODA Spending vs. ODA Spending on Target 8.7 in 2013
In fact, a better explanation for these shifts seems to be the overall increase in spending on human trafficking as new donors came into this space later in the sample time frame.

Figure 6, above, shows that the number of donors committing to address Target 8.7 exploitation rose steadily over the sample period. Figure 2, earlier, shows that while in 2000, USD 52.8 million was committed to ODA projects targeting human trafficking, such ODA commitments began to increase significantly around 2008, right around the time that the issue became more prominent in international fora, and with the establishment of the UN.GIFT programme (in 2007). From less than USD 150 million in 2007, by 2013, total ODA spending annually on human trafficking had reached USD 333.6 million.

Figure 6 also makes clear that this increase cannot be explained solely by the increased number of donors focused on these issues in that period. Instead, a deeper dive into the data reveals a major jump in ODA commitments in 2009, with the US commitment jumping from USD 222 million to USD 352 million, and Norway’s commitment doubling from USD 20 million to USD 40 million. That suggests either that there was something that generated increased assistance to address human trafficking by those countries at that time, or that there was an increased use of ODA as the instrument for such assistance.

This analysis also raises important questions for the post-2013 period not covered by the dataset we relied upon, especially with the rising prominence of “modern slavery” as a rubric for international action. Has the rise of modern slavery attracted new donors and new funds (such as the UK, which notably does not figure significantly in the dataset discussed here) as the rise of human trafficking did? Or has spending simply shifted from other forms of Target 8.7 exploitation (such as human trafficking) to modern slavery? Answers to these questions will have to await the release of additional years of ODA project descriptions data from AidData, or agreement by donors to pool this data through some other mechanism.
Is ODA spending on Target 8.7 well organized?

An important policy question unanswered by this research is whether ODA commitments are being coherently organized.

ODA spending on Target 8.7 exploitation between 2000 and 2013 was highly fragmented. Figure 7 below lists the number of countries to which ODA commitments were made for each year. In 2000, when commitments were low (relative to later sample years), bilateral ODA dispersed to projects in 29 recipient countries. Over time, as spending ramped up, so did the number of recipient countries. In the latter portion of the sample time frame, beginning in 2006, ODA was distributed to projects addressing Target 8.7 issues in over 100 recipient countries.

This may be good news: Target 8.7 issues were being addressed in more countries. But it could also be read another way, as an indication that ODA was not being well or systematically targeted. Indeed, during the period studied, the median amount of ODA received by recipient countries varied from a low of USD 230,843 (in 2006) to a high of USD 1,350,139 (in 2012), and was consistently lower than USD 1 million. Given this figure may represent the aggregate funding received in a country for more than one DAC-able project, and the costs usually involved in administering ODA projects, this raises significant questions about the efficiency of ODA giving on Target 8.7 during this period, and how much of this funding ultimately found its way to recipient countries.

It also raises questions about effectiveness, and whether there have been adequate attempts by donors to coordinate or prioritize ODA spending based on shared needs assessment, or, alternatively, a shared analysis of where targeted ODA may have greatest impact. ODA is not the only instrument through which efforts to achieve Target 8.7 can be promoted by governments,
of course. Non-DAC-able assistance, diplomacy, non-concessional lending, trade, technical assistance, foreign direct investment and mutual legal assistance may all offer other avenues. But ODA is an important instrument, and presumably donors want to use it to greatest effect.

Several Asian countries that typically feature prominently in estimates and discussions of global prevalence of forced labour, modern slavery, human trafficking and child labour also figured prominently in the list of countries receiving ODA from non-US countries (Figure 2); but the list and rank-ordering do not align neatly with estimates of the highest absolute or per capita prevalence. The significant variation between the ranking of countries receiving US and non-US ODA commitments related to Target 8.7 (seen in the differential bars in Figure 1) also suggests that different factors or methods are being considered by different donors in determining where to spend ODA resources to reach Target 8.7. Donors and policy-makers may wish to consider whether they are directing ODA spending on these issues to the places where that expenditure could have greatest impact. That is implicitly part of the commitment in Target 8.7 to take “effective measures” to eradicate forced labour, modern slavery and human trafficking, and end the worst forms of child labour.

The effectiveness of these expenditures is, in significant part, a question of project-level evaluation, which goes beyond what was attempted in this research. But at a higher level, this data may at least allow us to begin to identify where ODA commitments on Target 8.7 exploitation are directed, and allow donors to begin to consider whether there are other countries for which ODA may be a useful instrument to promote efforts to reach Target 8.7.

The data reviewed in our research also offers hints that ODA spending on these issues may be driven by factors other than needs or impact assessments. One indicator of this is the significant volatility, year-on-year, in most donors’ expenditure on these issues, as becomes apparent from a quick glance through the year-on-year spending patterns of countries shown in the graphs in Appendix 2. This suggests that factors other than recipient-country-needs assessment, such as domestic and international political considerations, may also have a significant influence over ODA spending on these issues.

The volatility also has significant systemic implications for programming partners: it suggests that resource flows on these issues may be unpredictable, which may limit the willingness and capacity of project implementation partners (including recipient governments) to commit to programming in this area. This suggests a need for donors to consider how development assistance funding streams might be made more predictable, for example through tying ODA funding decisions to a shared needs analysis framework, or shared country assistance strategies.

Steps towards maximizing the impact of Target 8.7 ODA

Some of the obstacles to more effective donor coordination may be political, for example relating to vested interests in particular ways of framing the problem, or in certain types and modalities of response. Political coordination is, in that sense, probably a sine qua non of effective progress towards Target 8.7. At present, there is no deficit of potential mechanisms for that coordination: Alliance 8.7, the UN’s Inter-Agency Coordination Mechanism Against Trafficking (ICAT), the International Labour Organization (ILO) tripartite system, the Call to Action process, the Global Fund to End Modern Slavery, and the Bali Process, just to mention a few, could all play roles here. But other obstacles are more technical, and may perhaps be more easily solved. Two stand out from this research.

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18 See James Cockayne, “Unshackling Development.”
First, the need for a stronger analytical framework underpinning ODA addressing Target 8.7, beginning with more comprehensive and precise ODA project purpose codes. As mentioned earlier, more than one-third of the projects picked up by the automated entity extraction method used in this research had not been officially tagged with one of the three primary DAC codes linked to Target 8.7, and would have been missed if we had relied solely on official purpose codes, providing an inaccurate and incomplete picture of Target 8.7 ODA spending. Updating the official purpose codes to provide more comprehensive and precise coverage of Target 8.7 concerns, would address this problem, and also help to ensure greater comparability between ODA projects than is currently available. These codes could also be aligned with operational definitions of the forms of Target 8.7 exploitation that are emerging through the cooperative efforts of ILO, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), International Organization for Migration (IOM) and others to strengthen the data available for tracking progress towards Target 8.7.

Second, the need for a database on non-ODA spending. The methodology developed and applied in this research could potentially be used to size other aspects of spending on Target 8.7-related projects, such as non-ODA spending, domestic spending or private charitable giving. However, robust and reliable data sets are needed. The absence of a centralized data repository or even reporting system (especially one that brings these different forms of expenditure together) has been an obstacle for both research and effective action for some time.19 There may, therefore, be utility in donors and funders creating a centralized database of not only DAC-able but also non-DAC-able foreign, domestic and private project spending to achieve Target 8.7. This would also help both researchers and policy actors determine how spending is relating to impact and outcomes, and begin to identify the “effective measures” required to reach Target 8.7. Alliance 8.7, with its involvement of government, non-government, inter-governmental, private sector and research partners, seems well poised to provide a framework for such centralized reporting.

Both steps will require care and effort, not least to ensure that any resulting reporting codes or data sets are aligned with the prevalence measurement methodologies likely to emerge from the 2018 International Conference of Labour Statisticians. As national labour statisticians begin to apply this methodology and more robust estimates of national prevalence emerge in the years ahead, there will be greater scope to begin more detailed time-series analysis of how Target 8.7 spending is (or is not) impacting prevalence and vulnerabilities.

Taking steps now to put these data and ODA reporting arrangements in place would help make this future possibility a reality, and thereby help to accelerate progress towards Target 8.7.

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19 Mike Dottridge, “How is the money to combat human trafficking spent?”, Anti-Trafficking Review, No. 3, September 2014).
Official DAC purpose codes were not employed to collect and aggregate project-level aid commitments. Instead, we developed code to analyse the descriptions in AidData’s Finance to the SDGs Dataset (Version 1.0), to identify those projects aimed at addressing forms of exploitation associated with Target 8.7.

While Finance to the SDGs Dataset (Version 1.0) offers data separated at the SDG Goal level, for the sake of robustness, the text extraction method was used across all collected DAC project descriptions in the larger dataset, not just projects that had been selected by AidData as falling under Goal 8.

The code we developed used automated root word searching through simple Natural Language Processing (NLP) techniques. Entity extraction is a sophisticated NLP method of selecting and classifying key elements of text (such as names of organizations or places). The technique for selection used in this research did not require any advanced, deep-learning algorithm, nor was it necessary, at this stage, to draw out further insights from an analysis of the data, such as sentiment. The relevant project description text, provided in the form of short and long project descriptions, is relatively structured and did not require significant transformation.

The code identified and categorized relevant projects. There are many ways to dissect concepts and create categories that represent the forms of exploitation associated with SDG Target 8.7. The coding scheme used for this analysis was designed to produce broad categories capturing seven overarching forms of exploitation (forced labour, child labour, child soldiering, human trafficking, forced marriage, modern slavery and servitude).

Our code had to account for the fact that the dataset is multilingual. The primary source behind AidData’s Financing the SDGs dataset is country-reported data in the OECD CRS dataset. As English and French are the official OECD languages, the survey requires that some part of every project is described in English or French. There is a tiny proportion of projects (perhaps 0.05 per cent of the 1.2 million project descriptions) that combine an English or French language title with a short description in another language (almost all Romance languages).

Armed with that knowledge, we developed the following list of root terms to comb through the project descriptions in multiple languages:

- slavery/slave / esclavage/esclave / schiavitü / schiav / esclavitud
- forced labour/forced/forced lab/forced work / travail forcé
- exploitation/exploit / exploat
- human trafficking/traffic / trafi
- smuggling/smuggl
- child labour/child [lab/work]/children [lab/work]/working children/child domestic work/of minors / travail enfant
- child soldier / soldat
- forced marriage/child marriage/early marriage/marriage / mari
- serv/servitude
- prostitut/prostitution
After the projects were gathered, we manually checked the results. The manual examination of the sample revealed some false positives in project selection, most commonly those dealing with drug trafficking, as opposed to trafficking in persons. These projects were removed from the sample. We also ensured that identified projects dealing with, for example, smuggling or prostitution also met the international legal definitions of Target 8.7 exploitation, before they were included in the final sample.

The resulting dataset categorized the projects into seven categories (though only the first order categories were used in the analysis in this paper):

1. forced labour

2. human trafficking, including sexual exploitation (general category for human trafficking, so when a programme targets both women and children, this code is assigned).

2.1 sexual exploitation

3. child labour

3.1 child sexual exploitation

3.2 hazardous child labour

3.3 child trafficking (when the type of exploitation is not specified or, in a few cases, trafficking for sexual exploitation and child labour)

4. child soldiers

5. forced/child marriage

6. modern slavery

7. servitude

The code developed for this research could be further strengthened through applications to further data, including subsequent years of ODA commitments, and non-ODA datasets. Data mining models improve with training. More data input from more current years of ODA data will allow the algorithm to improve, learning how to better weed out false positives and capture all relevant ODA projects.
APPENDIX 2 – YEAR-ON-YEAR TARGET 8.7 ODA COMMITMENTS OF SELECTED COUNTRIES, 2000-2013

Australia

Austria

Belgium
Development Assistance Spending and SDG Target 8.7

Canada

Czech Republic

Denmark
Development Assistance Spending and SDG Target 8.7

Portugal

Spain

Korea

Sweden
OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE AND SDG TARGET 8.7
Measuring aid to address forced labour, modern slavery, human trafficking and child labour
Dr Kelly A Gleason and Dr James Cockayne