

**Symposium: Measurement, Action, Freedom to Achieve SDG Target 8.7**

Nesrien Hamid, Research and Editorial Consultant, Delta 8.7

2 December 2019

In its latest report—*Measurement, Action, Freedom*—Minderoo Foundation’s Walk Free Initiative provides a detailed assessment of the action of 183 governments to eradicate modern slavery and achieve Target 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals. The report illustrates the present state of government-led anti-slavery initiatives, and points to activities that should be prioritized given the current evidence and knowledge base.

In this Symposium, Delta 8.7 asked Katharine Bryant, Manager of Global Research at Walk Free, to provide an overview of the report’s central findings. To respond, we invited Dr Jan van Dijk from Tilburg University, the United Kingdom’s Office for National Statistics Centre for Crime and Justice, as well as our Programme Manager, Alice Eckstein, to reflect on the report and its most important takeaways.

All the contributions to the symposium can be found below:

An Introduction to Assessing Government Action to Achieve SDG Target 8.7

Katharine Bryant, Minderoo Foundation’s Walk Free Initiative

2 December 2019

S.O.S., Better Statistics on Slavery Urgently Required

Dr J.J.M. van Dijk, Tilburg University

3 December 2019

Measuring Modern Slavery in the UK Office for National Statistics Centre for Crime and Justice

UK Office for National Statistics Centre for Crime and Justice

4 December 2019

Effective Measurements for Change

Alice Eckstein, United Nations University Centre for Policy Research

5 December 2019

Improving Government Action to Achieve SDG Target 8.7 | A Response

Katharine Bryant, Minderoo Foundation’s Walk Free Initiative

6 December 2019



**Symposium: An Introduction to Assessing Government Action to  
Achieve Sustainable Development Goal Target 8.7**

Katharine Bryant, Manager of Global Research, the Walk Free initiative  
of the Minderoo Foundation  
2 December 2019

In July 2019, the Minderoo Foundation’s Walk Free Initiative released *Measurement, Action, Freedom*, which provides an overview of government action—and inaction—in responding to modern slavery under Target 8.7 of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals set an agenda to [build a better world for people and planet](#) by 2030. The SDGs are the first time that forms of modern slavery have been included in global goals. Primarily covered by Target 8.7, but also under 5.2, 5.3, 10.7 and 16.2, the SDGs represent a commitment by governments to tackle modern slavery, forced labour, human trafficking and forced marriage.

Governments currently report on their own progress towards the SDGs against a global indicator framework. These “Voluntary National Reviews” are hampered by the limited set of official indicators: there is an indicator for child labour under 8.7, and another for human trafficking under 16.2, but no indicators for modern slavery, forced labour or forced marriage are yet in place.

Without clear indicators to measure progress towards the 2030 Global Goals, governments are not able to report consistently, nor can they be held to account. And accountability is further limited by the voluntary nature of current reporting.

In the absence of robust reporting against SDG Target 8.7 and the eradication of modern slavery, the *Measurement, Action, Freedom* report provides an independent assessment of 183 governments and their responses to modern slavery. The findings shine a light on those taking strong action, identify those that are lagging and highlight the activities that, based on current understanding, should be prioritized.

*How we assess governments*

The assessments presented in the report provide a comparative measure of the legal, policy and programmatic actions that 183 governments are taking to respond to modern slavery. This is based on a conceptual framework—initially developed for the 2014 Global Slavery Index (GSI) and included in three subsequent editions—that sets out the activities that constitute a strong response to modern slavery. Using international frameworks such as the [UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children](#), the [European Convention on Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings](#) and the [Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labour Convention](#), as well as the input of an expert working group and survivors, governments are assessed against their ability to:



- Identify and support survivors;
- Establish effective criminal justice systems;
- Strengthen coordination and accountability mechanisms;
- Address underlying risk factors; and
- Clean up government and business supply chains.

Behind these milestones are 88 indicators of what constitutes good practice. These are supplemented by 14 “negative” indicators—that is indicators measuring government action that facilitates or causes modern slavery, such as persistent corruption and complicity. Data presented in the report refer to the reporting period of 1 July 2017 through to 15 February 2019, building on data collected for previous GSIs.

### *Key findings from the report*

In 2016 an estimated [40.3 million people were in modern slavery](#), affecting every country in the world. Despite the magnitude and the universal nature of the problem, overall progress to eradicate modern slavery and achieve Target 8.7 continues to be slow. Our report shows that **legislation does exist in many countries, but it is by no means comprehensive or implemented effectively**. As of February 2019, only 31 countries have ratified the 2014 ILO Forced Labour Protocol. Forty-seven countries have still not criminalized human trafficking in accordance with definitions in the UN Trafficking Protocol, and a further 133 countries have not criminalized forced marriage.

If we are to achieve the eradication of modern slavery by 2030, the number of those trapped in modern slavery needs to be reduced by approximately 10,000 people per day. However, **the pace of identification of those affected remains glacial**. Most countries provide training for police or other first responders, but only a fraction of victims is ever identified. Governments cannot extend protection to victims they cannot reach and, at present, they are failing at the first step: identification.

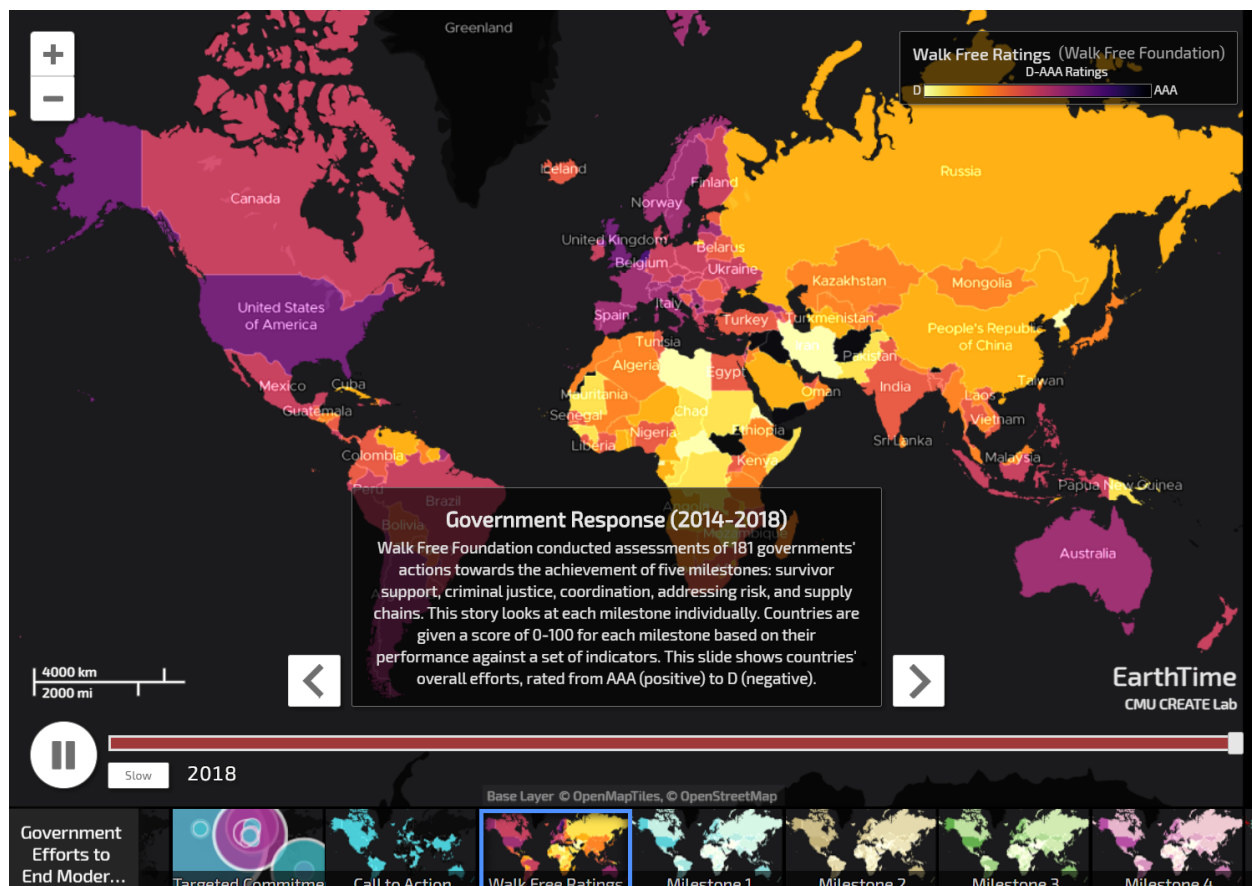
Once identified, **survivors are being let down by a lack of services**, with limited options for men, children, and migrant populations in 95 countries. In 71 countries, victims face criminal charges for crimes committed while exploited, and in 60 countries, victims are deported or detained for immigration violations rather than provided with protection. Survivors are largely excluded from policymaking, with few governments engaging directly with them to strengthen their policy responses.

Despite there being an estimated 16 million people in forced labour exploitation in the private economy worldwide, **engagement with business is limited**. Only 40 countries have required examining, or reporting on, public or business supply chains to tackle labour exploitation.

### *Government action and inaction*



Our research shows that the countries taking the most action to respond to modern slavery include the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and the United States, among others. These countries are characterized by strong political will, high levels of resources and a strong civil society that holds government to account. **However, not all of these countries have matched good policy with effective enforcement.** For instance, there are few prosecutions for labour exploitation in the Netherlands. Countries with otherwise strong responses may have restrictive immigration policies, as is the case in Europe, the US, and Australia. The link between restrictive immigration policies and vulnerability to modern slavery is well-documented, most recently in [a report released by IOM and Walk Free](#).



## Modern Slavery Data Stories | Government Efforts to End Modern Slavery

The countries taking the least action to respond to modern slavery include the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Eritrea and Libya. These countries' responses (or lack thereof) are characterized by government complicity, low levels of political will, high levels of corruption or widespread conflict. **In these countries, few victims are being identified, and there are even fewer, if any, prosecutions.** There is evidence that some of these governments are actively enslaving part of their population, as shown by forced labour in prison camps in Democratic People's Republic of Korea.



**Strong action is not necessarily found in the strongest economies.** When correlated against their gross domestic product at purchasing power parity (GDP PPP), some countries stand out as taking relatively robust action when compared with those that have stronger economies and may have a greater capacity to act. Countries such as Georgia, Nigeria, Ukraine, Moldova, Ethiopia and Mozambique are notable for taking steps to respond to modern slavery despite fewer resources. In contrast, Qatar, Singapore, Kuwait, Brunei, Hong Kong and Russia stand out as taking relatively limited action despite the national resources at their disposal.

### *The way forward*

At the current rate of progress, we believe that achieving SDG Target 8.7 by 2030 is impossible. Without renewed commitment from every country and effective measurement, millions will continue to be enslaved. As a result, we are calling on all Member States and the UN Statistical Commission to work together to develop and adopt indicators to track progress in eradicating all forms of modern slavery under SDG Target 8.7.

Based on our analysis of current government responses to SDG Target 8.7, we urge all governments, at a minimum, to:

- Increase identification of, and improve assistance for, modern slavery victims.
- Ratify the ILO Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labour Convention, 1930.
- Strengthen existing modern slavery legislation to ensure that all forms of exploitation are criminalized and penalties are severe.
- Empower women and girls by providing primary education for all.
- Strengthen national laws to protect labour rights for all workers in both the formal and informal economy.

Beyond these minimum requirements, we recommend that governments:

- Ensure survivor voices are included in all aspects of the response by consulting with victims and providing avenues for their input.
- Enforce legislation by providing training and resources for police, prosecutors, judges, and defense attorneys.
- Remove barriers to victim participation in the criminal justice system, such as ensuring access to visas, compensation and restitution.
- Develop evidence-based National Action Plans or strategies.
- Engage with business and strengthen strategic partnerships to tackle modern slavery.

The SDGs were not meant to be divisible nor achieved by a single government acting alone. Therefore, cooperation and coordination are crucial. Governments should participate in regional and bilateral fora to share resources and expertise. International organizations should provide technical capacity to implement the above recommendations, while civil society should work together to hold governments to account. The time for action is now if we are to achieve SDG Target 8.7 by 2030.



*This article has been prepared by Katharine Bryant as a contributor to Delta 8.7. As provided for in the Terms and Conditions of Use of Delta 8.7, the opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of UNU or its partners.*

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### **Symposium: S.O.S., Better Statistics on Slavery Urgently Required**

J.J.M. van Dijk, Emeritus Professor, Tilburg University

3 December 2019

Progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Targets relating to forced labour, human trafficking, modern slavery and child labour can only be assessed with valid indicators of both performance and outcome.

Scores on the Government Response Index presented in the Walk Free Initiative's latest report show great variation. The Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States received triple-A (AAA) ratings. North Korea, Eritrea and Libya linger at the bottom. But how valid are these ratings? The Walk Free ratings have been cross-validated against the ratings of the U.S. Department of State as well as those of GRETA— the monitoring body of the Council of Europe's Convention on Action against Human Trafficking. The ratings from these three independent agencies, applying roughly similar standards, are intercorrelated to a surprising extent (in technical terms, with coefficients of .60 or more). This finding lends credence to each. Walk Free's Index is arguably the most detailed and up-to-date of the three. Governments are well advised to take the scores in this Index very seriously indeed. Almost all governments are underperforming in some vital aspects and some have yet to make serious effort to address modern slavery at all.

In the final analysis, however, the only measure that really counts is the trend in the scale of the problem: the number of people living in conditions of modern slavery per country. What is the rate per 100,000 inhabitants of individuals in slave-like conditions in each country and have these rates started to decline?

Many United Nations Member States regularly report to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) how many victims of human trafficking [have been identified by the authorities](#). Most countries report fewer than 1 victim per 100,000 inhabitants. It is extremely unlikely that modern slavery hardly exists in these countries. If governments seriously believe their official counts of identified victims reflect the prevalence of modern slavery in their country, they resemble Humpty Dumpty in Alice's Wonderland: "When I use a word, it means what I choose it to mean – neither more nor less."

Do official statistics on identified victims reflect the scale of the phenomenon or simply the strength of the governments' response to it? Most experts will opt for the latter interpretation. Low numbers of identified victims are more likely to point to weak policies of detection than to low prevalence of modern slavery in the country, and vice versa. In line with this, North Korea,



Eritrea and Libya have not reported any identified victims to UNODC. As was the case with almost all countries at the low end of Walk Free's Government Response Index. The two European countries with stellar performance ratings, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, are other cases in point. Their reported identified victims per capita are consistently among the highest in UNODC's Global Reports.

Some true believers in official crime statistics cling to the belief that official counts of identified victims may not reflect true prevalence but at least provide valuable insight into the trend over time. Let us test this idea by looking at the trend data from the top performers, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. In the United Kingdom, the official numbers of identified victims have gone up from fewer than 2,000 in 2013 to 7,000 in 2018. Is it logical that the scale of modern slavery in the United Kingdom tripled in just five years? Or is it not more plausible that during this period of improved policies a larger proportion of existing cases was picked up by the British police than before, and the rise in numbers was largely due to better recording? And let us also take a look at the official statistics on human trafficking of the other top performer, the Netherlands. Do the rates of identified victims in this country show a steady downward trend? Far from it. The absolute numbers of identified victims first went up from less than 1,000 in 2010 to 1,500 in 2014. Thereafter, they dropped to 700 in 2017, only to reportedly jump up again in 2019. That the high volatility of the numbers of identified victims in the Netherlands reflects rapid movements in the phenomenon of human trafficking beggars belief. Rather, it reflects rapid changes in the Netherlands's efforts at detection and registration.

### *The way forward*

In the meantime, Walk Free, the ILO and UNODC have invested in the development of methods to estimate the true scale of the phenomenon through either standardized survey research among national populations or through the technique of **Multiple Systems Estimation (MSE)**, which involves extrapolating from the overlaps between official lists of recorded victims from various organizations to arrive at more accurate estimates.

The estimated rates of modern slavery according to these studies have not, to put it diplomatically, been universally embraced by governments. And, admittedly, these alternative estimates leave room for further technical improvement too. However, rather than putting their heads in the sand, and continuing to rely on their official counts of identified victims as the sole source of information, governments should take the initiative to promote more research on true prevalence. Only a few governments have taken up this challenge so far. For example, the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics has carried out a large-scale nationwide survey into experiences of forced labour. In Europe, the governments of the Netherlands, Romania, Ireland, Serbia and Slovakia have allowed external experts—commissioned by UNODC and Walk Free—to apply MSE to their databases on trafficking victims. The governments of the United Kingdom, the United States and Australia have invested their own resources in conducting similar Multiple Systems Estimations on their national databases of identified



victims, and the Dutch government has recently pledged to make such extrapolations a regular exercise.

These governments take their task of monitoring progress towards achieving SDG Target 8.7 and other relevant SDGs seriously indeed. All governments committed to achieving the SDGs are called upon to follow suit. To this end, UNODC has produced a manual on how to apply MSE to human trafficking data. Also, the standardized questionnaires of ILO, Walk Free and Brazil for surveying modern slavery are available in the public domain. It is time for governments to start opening up their anti-trafficking policies to public scrutiny by producing proper statistics. Time to stop fluffing around in statistical Wonderland.

*Jan van Dijk, emeritus professor of victimology, Tilburg University, the Netherlands, winner of the Stockholm Award in Criminology 2012.*

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### **Symposium: Measuring Modern Slavery in the UK, Office for National Statistics Centre for Crime and Justice**

Office for National Statistics

4 December 2019

To contribute towards achieving Target 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Centre for Crime and Justice is currently exploring ways of collating and producing data relevant to the measurement of modern slavery in the United Kingdom. The hidden nature of this relatively small-scale crime in the United Kingdom makes producing an accurate prevalence measure difficult. ONS does not intend to use methods such as Multiple Systems Estimation or survey sampling to estimate prevalence directly as neither will reflect the actual extent of modern slavery in the United Kingdom. Instead, the emphasis will be on measuring or quantifying indicators and factors known to be linked to modern slavery.

These indicators will include data sources from a wide variety of organizations, such as government bodies, service providers and charities. For example, data relating to criminal proceedings of modern slavery cases in the United Kingdom will give an indication of how the criminal justice system is responding to modern slavery victims and perpetrators. Additionally, data sources showing public awareness and willingness to report modern slavery will also be important.

Monitoring known factors will help the United Kingdom measure its progress towards combating modern slavery. This approach may also be particularly relevant in other countries where the prevalence of modern slavery is low. ONS welcomes thoughts on this approach and





would like to receive information about methods used in other countries with similar circumstances.

ONS plans to publish a report in Spring 2020 discussing the approach in detail and bringing together indicators to quantify modern slavery.

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### Symposium: Effective Measurements for Change

Alice Eckstein, Project Director - Delta 8.7

5 December 2019

The [Measurement, Action, Freedom report](#) released by the Minderoo Foundation's Walk Free Initiative [assesses government progress](#) in addressing Target 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals. In doing this, Walk Free examines the current state of country-level engagement with international treaties, national legislation and measurements of modern slavery prevalence. The resulting report establishes a broad and detailed global landscape of anti-slavery measurement and response.

The ability to accurately measure the number of people who are either vulnerable to or are currently living in conditions of modern slavery is critical to implementing and analysing the effectiveness of policy measures taken by governments, the private sector and civil society.

Among the factors hampering anti-trafficking efforts has been the lack of data identifying potential or current victims, and Katharine Bryant notes the "glacial" pace of victim identification at the country level. Delta 8.7 works to highlight existing data and new research in its Forum and through symposia such as this one. Additionally, Delta 8.7 country dashboards use data visualization to provide an overview of the best available data on the national prevalence of child labour, forced labour and human trafficking. In doing this, the project compiles baseline data against which countries can measure their progress in ascertaining the numbers of victims within their borders as well as in creating policies to reduce those numbers and protect vulnerable populations. By highlighting the existing data, this project points to the same significant gaps in measurement identified by *Measurement, Action, Freedom*: the lack of indicators in many countries for forced labour, human trafficking or forced marriage.

Exactly how are these gaps to be addressed? The UK Office for National Statistics (ONS) Centre for Crime and Justice proposes an approach they believe might be suitable for governments where overall prevalence of slavery is low. Their goal is not to measure the "hidden" numbers



of people living in conditions of slavery using Multiple Systems Estimation (MSE) or survey sampling. Rather, they will quantify indicators linked to slavery that include, for example, government and public response by studying criminal cases and data indicating public awareness and engagement. ONS intends for this data to support the United Kingdom to measure its progress toward achieving Target 8.7 of the SDGs.

Jan van Dijk identifies some risks inherent in reading official statistics as reflecting the actual prevalence of slavery within a country. He argues that the number of recorded victims rises along with that government's attention to the abuse. However, and more critically, he notes significant inconsistencies among countries' methodologies to measure levels of slavery, forced labour or human trafficking within their borders. Many countries only count identified victims and as a result significantly underestimate the actual population in need of intervention. Dr van Dijk calls upon these countries to develop research to more accurately measure prevalence.

These tensions in deciding what data is "good" can be inherent in any process involving multiple actors from national statistics offices, multilateral agencies and foundations invested in a variety of methodologies to gather data. Ongoing conversations about various methodologies used by researchers, whether MSE or other techniques, indicate a lively engagement with sourcing the best data possible. Ultimately, the goal of these conversations must be the improvement of methodologies for data collection. Policymakers must have credible research available in order to know both the numbers of people affected and the efficacy of any measures to prevent or end conditions of slavery.

The Walk Free Initiative notes that the international community is not currently on track to achieve Target 8.7 of the SDGs by 2030. This assessment is widely shared, as is the recommendation that all countries adopt standardized indicators on modern slavery. The difficulty of accurately and consistently counting the number of affected populations remains an ongoing challenge to accelerating the policy response to modern slavery. Delta 8.7 has focused on measuring the prevalence of slavery with this exact challenge in mind. Whatever methodology is employed (estimating hidden populations, tracking numbers of reported victims, or measuring other indicators linked to modern slavery) the value of this measurement will be in fostering an ongoing dialogue among the research and policy-making communities to understand where we are in modern slavery prevalence and what actions can be proven to reduce these numbers.

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### **Symposium: Improving Measurement for SDG Target 8.7 | A Response**

Katharine Bryant, Manager of Global Research, the Walk Free initiative of the Minderoo Foundation



6 December 2019

*Measurement, Action, Freedom (MAF)* aimed to provide an assessment of government action to achieve SDG Target 8.7 by 2030. In the absence of agreed upon comprehensive indicators at the international level to track progress towards SDG Target 8.7 and the subsequent lack of official government reporting through Voluntary National Reporting (VNR) on this issue, this report gives a snapshot of government action to combat modern slavery. It does not make for promising reading—as Alice Eckstein from UNU notes it is widely agreed that we are not on track to achieve SDG Target 8.7 by 2030.

Beyond an independent measure of government action, the MAF report also calls on governments to support the development of modern slavery indicators under SDG Target 8.7. The only current 8.7 indicator relates to child labour, “Proportion and number of children aged 5–17 years engaged in child labour, by sex and age.” There are other complementary SDG Targets and indicators [under 5.3 on early, child and forced marriage](#), or [16.2 on trafficking](#), or [10.3 on safe migration](#). However, there remain no indicators covering all forms of modern slavery—forced marriage, forced labour, worst forms of child labour, child prostitution and use of child soldiers.

The need for modern slavery indicators under SDG Target 8.7 is well recognized. When Walk Free released the MAF report, 33 individuals and organizations signed up to join an informal coalition to discuss ways in which we, as civil society representatives and independent bodies, could support the development of indicators.

The work of Alliance 8.7 will be critical here. Already there have been great efforts by the ILO to establish indicators for measuring prevalence of forced labour. The [International Conference of Labour Statisticians \(ICLS\)](#) agreed last year to a framework to measure forced labour, for example. The [Alliance 8.7 Global Coordinating Group](#) also discussed potential indicators as recently as November 2019.

However, the next time the introduction of new indicators for the SDGs will be discussed is in 2025—five years before the proposed achievement of this goal. Clearly, this is far too late. Jan van Dijk is correct to highlight that the only measure that really counts is “the number of people living in conditions of modern slavery per country”. However, governments remain tentative and skeptical of prevalence measures. The article from the UK Office for National Statistics (ONS) confirms this—the UK government, despite having the strongest response to modern slavery, will not be repeating Multiple Systems Estimation (MSE) (the technique they piloted) nor look at survey methods. As Jan van Dijk notes, official statistics are also a poor proxy. At best, these give you an indication of how the criminal justice system is functioning, but not how well the government is tackling this issue.

*The Way Forward*



So, how do we measure the impact of our laws, policies and programmes to eradicate modern slavery?

While measuring prevalence is the ultimate goal for tracking our progress, there are alternative methods to highlight the “glacial” rate of change. ONS points out these alternatives where their emphasis will be on “measuring or quantifying indicators and factors known to be linked to modern slavery.”

This is where measurement frameworks like *Measurement, Action, Freedom* come into play. Tracking government policy can give us some indication of political will and highlight those governments taking strong action to respond. Combined with official statistics, it also tells us whether policies being implemented, and give some indication as to their effectiveness at arresting perpetrators and identifying victims.

At the UN level, developing indicators such as SDG Target 8.2 “Level of national compliance with labour rights (freedom of association and collective bargaining) based on International Labour Organization (ILO) textual sources and national legislation, by sex and migrant status” provides an alternative to a focus on prevalence. Tracking level of national compliance with the 2014 Forced Labour Protocol or the Trafficking Protocol keeps SDG Target 8.7 firmly on the agenda and means that governments will be reporting on this through their VNRs.

In the interim, we will continue to advocate for the inclusion of indicators under SDG Target 8.7 related to modern slavery, and release independent national measures of government activity, prevalence, and vulnerability through the MAF report and the next edition of the [Global Slavery Index](#). Measuring government responses is but one piece of the puzzle, but a critical one nonetheless. Ultimately each of these measures has a role to play if we are to get better at measuring modern slavery, taking action to tackle it, in order to ensure the freedom of 40.3 million men, women and children in modern slavery.

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