

README

Global Chinese Official Finance Dataset (Version 1.0)

October 11, 2017

The dataset captures the known universe of officially-financed Chinese projects in 5 regions of the world from 2000-2014 (including Africa, the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Central and Eastern Europe). Chinese Official Finance refers to concessional and non-concessional sources of funding from Chinese government institutions (including central, state or local government institutions) with development, commercial, or representational intent. More specifically, it captures (a) highly concessional, Chinese development projects that meet the OECD's criteria for ODA; and (b) officially-financed Chinese projects that lack development intent or are provided with higher interest rates and lower grant elements (i.e. projects that fall within the OECD's criteria for "Other Official Flows", or OOF.) Chinese ODA represents "Chinese aid" in the strictest sense of the term, but Chinese official finance (ODA and Other Official Flows) is sometimes used as a broader definition of aid. AidData's dataset allows users to disaggregate Chinese official finance into its constituent parts and determine if they wish to use a narrow or broad definition of aid. This dataset builds off of previous work to track Chinese Official Finance in Africa (versions 1.0, 1.1, and 1.2).

The data was collected using [AidData's Tracking Underreported Financial Flows \(TUFF\) methodology, version 1.3](#). TUFF is a rigorous, replicable methodology that triangulates open-source information to systematically create project-level data detailing official finance from opaque donors and lenders (see the TUFF Methodology document for more details).

Since this project was launched in 2013, we have benefited from the generous support of Humanity United, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the Academic Research Fund of Singapore's Ministry of Education, the United Nations University World Institute for Development Economics Research (UNU-WIDER), and the College of William and Mary.

Citation

For academic purposes, please cite AidData's "Global Chinese Official Finance Dataset" dataset in the following manner:

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AidData. 2017. Global Chinese Official Finance Dataset, Version 1.0. Retrieved from <http://aiddata.org/data/chinese-global-official-finance-dataset>

Data Coverage

Scope: Official Finance from China

Flow Class Covered: Official Development Assistance and Other Official Flows

Year Coverage: 2000-2014

Geographical Coverage: 140 countries and territories in Africa, the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Central and Eastern Europe

Project Count: 5,466

Total Commitment Amount (2014 USD): \$877,655,767,899.49

Field Definitions

Field Name	Definition
project_id	Unique identification number assigned to every project in the dataset. Within the dynamic, online version of the dataset (at china.aiddata.org), projects can be accessed with their unique identification numbers by using the "Access project by ID" function.
recommended_for_research	This field identifies projects that AidData recommends including for normal research & financial analysis. It is equal to "TRUE" for all projects except for those that are marked as umbrella projects, pledges, cancelled, or suspended projects. We recommend excluding the projects marked "FALSE" because the umbrella projects and projects with a status of pledged, cancelled, or suspended likely represent double counting or would lead to including flows that were never fully committed/implemented. This field is meant to make it easier for users to clearly identify the set of projects that we recommend using to better understand the volume and composition of Chinese Official Finance.
umbrella	This field identifies projects where some agreement was signed between two countries but the funds were not allocated at the original agreement date, only to be allocated through smaller projects later on. Given the nature of TUFF data collection, it is likely that the smaller projects that relate to these umbrella projects were captured elsewhere in the dataset. To avoid double counting, we suggest users do not include records that are marked as umbrella projects in financial analysis. All general lines of credit are also marked as umbrella projects.
year	The year in which an agreement was reportedly made between a supplier of development finance and a recipient for a project. If available, the agreement year is the year of the formal signed commitment for a project; if commitment year is unavailable, or if a commitment has not been made, the year of the informal pledge is the agreement year for a project.
donor	Entity providing assistance to recipient country. This can be a sovereign state or multilateral organization providing assistance to a recipient country. For this dataset, the donor will always be China.
funding_agency	Donor agency that provided the funding.
implementing_agency	Agency that implemented the project. Could be from the donor, recipient or other parties.
recipient_condensed	Recipient country. If multiple countries were identified as recipients, this field identifies the smallest regional grouping that all specified countries belong to.
title	Short phrase describing the nature of a given project
description	1-2 paragraph comprehensive summary of the activities supported by the project. See page 15 of the methodology for a detailed explanation of how this variable is recorded.

status	Tracks the progression of a project. Labels include: Pipeline: Pledge, Pipeline: Commitment, Implementation, Completed, Suspended, Cancelled.
flow	Details on how financial flows, goods or services are transferred from the donor to recipient for a project. Flow types include: Debt Forgiveness, Debt Rescheduling, Export Credits, Foreign Direct Investment, Freestanding Technical Assistance, Grant, Loan, Joint Venture with Recipient, Scholarships/Training in Donor Country, and Strategic/Supplier Credit
flow_class	Coders are also instructed to assign all projects to one of the following flow class categories: ODA-like, OOF-like, Vague (Official Finance), Official Investment, Official Religious Aid 1, and Official Religious Aid 2. More details on these flow categorizations can be found in Tuff Methodology 1.3 document. If the goal is to estimate Chinese Official Development Assistance in the strictest sense, include only projects with this field as ODA-like. However, if the goal is to estimate a more comprehensive measure of concessional and non-concessional Chinese Official Finance, then include ODA-like, OOF-like and Vague (Official Finance).
intent	Perceived intent of the finance provider. Categories covered by “donor intent” include: Development, Commercial, Representational, Mixed (encompassing any combination of the other three intents).
amount	Monetary amount pledged or committed by the donor entity for the completion of a project.
currency	Currency associated with the monetary amount for a project.
usd_defl_2014	Deflated monetary equivalent of reported monetary amount in reported currency to 2014 U.S. Dollars
usd_current	Nominal USD value of the amount specified for the project
crs_sector_code	3-digit sector classification based on OECD sector codes
crs_sector_name	Name of the 3-digit sector classification based on OECD sector codes
sources	Links to all the sources attached to one project.
end_planned	The announced completion date for a project.
sources_count	Number of sources attached to one project.
cofinancing_agency	Cofinancing agencies or other agencies involved in the project
recipient_agencies	Recipient agencies that are involved in the project.
recipient_agencies_count	Number of recipient agencies that are involved in the project.
deflators_used	Deflator value calculated based on AidData methodology (which mimics OECD deflation methodology) using World Bank sources. Deflator is calculated using donor country inflation and change in buying power.
exchange_rates_used	Exchange rate used to change the specified currency of the original amount into USD.
start_actual	The actual date that the implementation of a project began on.
start_planned	The announced start date for a project.
end_actual	The actual date that a project was completed on.
year_uncertain	Marker for projects without any sources reporting a specific pledge or commitment year. In these cases, the year of the earliest media report serves is coded as “agreement year.”
all_recipients	The recipient entity or entities receiving official finance from a donor entity. A project record can have multiple recipients in cases where a donor entity is providing financing, goods or services to more than one country through a single project. This field provides a pipe-delimited list of all recipients specified as receiving official finance from a donor entity.
recipient_count	number of recipient countries identified
recipient_cow_code	Code of recipient country according to COW standard
recipient_oecd_code	Code of recipient country according to OECD standard
recipient_oecd_name	Name of recipient country according to OECD standard
recipient_iso3	Code of recipient country according to ISO3 standard
recipient_iso2	Code of recipient country according to ISO2 standard
recipient_un_code	Code of recipient country according to UN standard

recipient_imf_code	Code of recipient country according to IMF standard
recipient_region	Region of the recipient country.
line_of_credit	Denotes a project or financial arrangement where the donor extended a line of credit to a recipient entity. This credit may or may not be used in its entirety by the recipient.
is_cofinanced	Denotes projects with multiple countries acting as donor (including the donor of investigation), where the financial amount provided by each donor separately could not distinguished.
is_ground_truthing	A binary marker that indicates when a project has been verified with in-country field research.
loan_type	Represents the general nature of the loan. Categories covered include: interest-free; concessional; non-concessional; no information and some information.
interest_rate	Reported interest rate of the project loan, in percent
maturity	Reported duration of the project loan, in years
grace_period	Interval to first repayment of capital in years
grant_element	Grant element of the loan, in percent. Uses grant element reported by project sources, unless it can be calculated independently with the OECD grant element calculator (assumes 10 percent rate of discount, 2 payments per annum, and equity principal payment).
location_details	The subnational locations where projects occurred.
contacts	Name and position of people who were involved in the project if available.
source_triangulation	Rates projects based on the types of sources (media, academic, donor/recipient government, other official, NGO). The source triangulation measure varies from 0 to 19, with higher values representing a project record that draws upon a diverse set of information sources. For more information, see http://china.aiddata.org/content/improving_the_data .
field_completeness	Rates projects based on the number of missing data fields critical to understanding the project. It also penalized projects with "Vague" makers like "Vague Official Finance" for flow class or "Vague TBD" for flow type. The field completeness measure varies from 0 to 9; higher values indicate that a higher percentage of the "fields" (i.e. variables such as transaction amount, flow type, and commitment year) for a given project record are complete. For more information, see http://china.aiddata.org/content/improving_the_data .

Files Included

The Chinese Global Official Finance Research Release (version 1.0) is made available in a zipped file with the following files:

File Name	Description
GlobalChineseOfficialFinanceDataset_v1.0.xlsx	Excel spreadsheet containing the research release data covering China's Official Finance to 5 regions.
Readme_GlobalChinaOfficialFinanceDataset.pdf	The accompanying readme file (or codebook) describing the parameters of the dataset, caveats, and suggested uses.
AidDataTUFF_Methodology_1.3.pdf	Methodology document detailing how the data was collected, categorized, and quality assured.

Sources and Methodology

AidData uses the [Tracking Underreported Financial Flows \(TUFF\) methodology](#) to collect detailed financial, operational, and locational information about China's overseas investments. The TUFF methodology involves a systematic, transparent, and replicable process of triangulating information from four primary sources: (1) English, Chinese, and local-language news

reports; (2) Chinese ministries, embassies, and economic and commercial counselor offices; (3) the aid and debt information management systems of finance and planning ministries in counterpart countries; and (4) case studies and field research undertaken by scholars and NGOs. A dedicated research team synthesizes and standardizes the information from these various sources into discrete project records.

In total, AidData drew upon more than 15,000 distinct information sources to assemble the global dataset. On average, each project record is informed and confirmed by three independent sources. Human data collectors were also assisted by a machine learning algorithm (called the TUFF Robot) to help automate the early stages of the data collection process.

China has formally opted out of international reporting systems like the OECD's Creditor Reporting System and the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI). Beijing has published aggregated numbers on foreign aid in the State Council White papers of 2011 and 2014, but it is unclear how they define and measure foreign aid. China does not publish a bilateral, country-by-country breakdown of its international development finance activities. Nor does it publish project-level data or detailed information about the less concessional and more commercially oriented financing that it provides. AidData provides details on all three.

Please see the [AidDataTUFF_methodology_1.3.pdf](#) document for a detailed description of the data collection and quality control procedures used to collect data on Chinese Official Finance.

Data Use Recommendations

Carefully consider which projects are relevant to answer your question and include only those projects in your analysis. For most types of analysis that require aggregate estimates of Chinese official financing, we recommend only including records that have been marked "TRUE" in the 'recommended for research' field. This field marks projects that are in the commitment, implementation, or completion stages of the project cycle, and are not umbrella projects. Using projects marked recommended for research will ensure that: (1) financial values are not double-counted; (2) all selected projects have moved beyond the pledge stage, and (3) all suspended or cancelled projects are excluded. We have included umbrella projects as well as pledged, cancelled, or suspended projects in the full dataset for those who may have relevant research questions regarding these types of projects.

When comparing China to other donors, keep in mind the flow classification of projects in our dataset. Most statistics reported as "aid" only include flows classified as Official Development Assistance (ODA) as defined by the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC). AidData's China global dataset, however, includes a broader set of development finance activities, including both ODA and Other Official Flows (OOF). We have applied the OECD's criteria (as set out in the DAC Directives for 2013-2015) to classify projects into ODA-like and OOF-like categories to enable more direct and accurate comparisons to other donors. We also use a third residual category (called 'Vague Official Finance') to capture officially-financed Chinese projects where there is insufficient information to make an ODA-like or OOF-like determination. These are projects that are known to be officially-financed, so they can be included in comparisons of Chinese and Western official finance.

Generally, each record in this dataset represents a unique project. However, if disaggregated financial data is available for individual activities in a project, then each activity will have its own record. The field "title" indicates the specific activity that each record represents as well as the project IDs of any linked projects related to that record.

The financial amounts in this dataset most closely represent commitment amounts. Aggregate financial amounts across sectors, recipients, and other categories using this dataset provide useful *estimates* of total Chinese official finance commitments. These financial values have been deflated to USD 2014 constant dollars using the AidData deflation methodology.

Users should pay extra attention to debt forgiveness/rescheduling projects. We have included debt forgiveness/rescheduling projects in the 'recommended_for_research' field, but there may be some overlap if the original loan is captured elsewhere in the dataset. Users may choose to exclude these projects if they so desire, as there is insufficient information to identify whether forgiven debts are already captured by other loan project rows.

Familiarize yourself with the key fields in the dataset and the various categorizations they offer. These fields include: donor intent, flow, flow class, status, umbrella, sector, and recommended for research. See the dataset readme file for detailed descriptions, as well as the TUFF Methodology 1.3 document for examples and explanations to responsibly use the data for analysis.

We recommend using the most recent official research release dataset for analysis. AidData makes our China data available through two mediums: (1) a static, finalized official research release; and (2) a dynamic, searchable interface available at china.aiddata.org/projects. The research release provides a replicable, stable source of data, whereas the online data is subject to change based on our own internal data collection and quality assurance cycles. To conduct analysis, we recommend users use the static dataset with content that is been fully vetted and consistent.

We strongly recommend researchers exclude North Korean projects from statistical models to avoid bias and note this exception in their analysis. ***There are reports of significant official financing flows to North Korea, but at least some of these flows are kept secret by the Chinese government and the North Korean government. Our dataset uncovered 20 projects to North Korea totaling \$272.65 million (including pledges), but we have reason to believe that this is a substantial underestimate of total Chinese official financing to North Korea. Based on research, China has given large scale food and fuel aid to North Korea that largely exceeds the captured projects. Given the secrecy of these financial flows (Sutter 2015), it is not possible for TUFF methodology to produce close-to-complete coverage of concessional and non-concessional Chinese government financing to North Korea. *Researchers interested in flows to North Korea should therefore treat these data with significant caution and consider excluding North Korea from their analysis.*

The data is only as good as the underlying information. AidData's China TUFF dataset represents the most comprehensive and detailed source of project-level information on Chinese official finance (and official development finance) globally. However, the dataset was compiled using open-source data collection and triangulation methods, which means that the data are only as good as the underlying information that is publicly available (e.g., via English and Chinese-language news reports; Chinese ministries, embassies, and economic and commercial counselor offices; aid and debt information management systems of finance and planning ministries in counterpart countries; and case study and field research undertaken by scholars and NGOs).

There are inevitably some errors and omissions in the dataset. AidData's TUFF methodology is a systematic, replicable, and transparent methodology that seeks to reduce the likelihood of errors and omissions. Over the last five years, it has been stress-tested, refined, codified, and subjected to scientific peer-review, resulting in dozens of scholarly publications. AidData also has a track record of updating individual project records whenever errors, omissions, or new sources of information are identified. We have taken great care to learn from the past mistakes of previous open source data collection efforts that have run into major challenges such as: heavy reliance on individual sources (particularly English language news sources), insufficient attention to duplicate projects, over-counting as a result of not following projects from announcement to implementation, and opaque methods and sources.

Our approach is a second-best solution in the absence of transparent reporting. We would prefer to use official, project-level data from the Chinese Government that is both accurate and complete, but this is simply not possible at present. The Chinese Government does not yet disclose comprehensive or detailed information about its overseas development program. Nor does it publish a bilateral breakdown of its international development finance activities. It has also opted out of international reporting systems, including the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) and the OECD's Creditor Reporting System (CRS). Therefore, the the open source data collected through the TUFF methodology is the best available solution to gain a reasonably comprehensive and detailed picture of China's global development footprint. China plays an increasingly central role in the global development finance regime and its overseas investments are simply too important to ignore.

Glossary

Chinese Official Finance: Concessional and non-concessional funding from Chinese government institutions (including central, state or local government institutions) with development, commercial, or representational intent.

Official Development Assistance (ODA): A project that is primarily aimed at development, has a concessionality level (e.g. grant element) of at least 25%, and the recipient is ODA eligible (as defined by the OECD, based on country income level). This definition is aligned with the OECD Development Assistance Committee Directives. For a project to be categorized as ODA in our database, the intent field must be set to "Development", and the flow type field must be a grant, grant-like (e.g. scholarships, technical cooperation), or a concessional loan. In our dataset, these flows are categorized as "ODA-like".

Other Official Flows (OOF): A project that does not meet the criteria for ODA, because it is not primarily focused on development, it is insufficiently concessional (e.g. grant element less than 25%), or is being provided to a country that is not eligible for ODA. This definition is aligned with the OECD Development Assistance Committee 2014-2015 Directives. Projects in this category include those where the intent is primarily commercial or representational, and/or projects that are not concessional enough to qualify as ODA. This category includes export credits. In our dataset, these flows are categorized as "OOF-like".

Vague Official Finance: This flow class captures officially financed projects where there was not enough information about the project's concessionality level or intent to make a clear ODA or OOF determination. The OECD-DAC does not require this type of residual category because its members systematically report the intent and concessionality level of their officially-financed projects.

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