



Tracking COVID-19 response through TOSSD

TOSSD Task Force Issues Paper¹- Agenda item 3

6 – 9 October 2020

I. Introduction

1. Global pandemics are not new in human history, but the rapid expansion and scale of the current COVID-19 pandemic, favoured by modern human mobility, poses unprecedented challenges. The crisis, with its devastating social and economic consequences, is a true “global challenge” as defined in TOSSD. It has served as a painful reminder that all countries are interconnected on health issues and that the prevention of diseases is an international public good.

2. The 11th meeting of the TOSSD Task Force is the first that takes place after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. This document invites the Task Force to discuss the relevance of the TOSSD framework for tracking COVID-19 response (Section II), how the TOSSD eligibility criteria apply to COVID-19 related activities (Section III) and how these activities could be reported in the next data collection cycle (Section IV).

II. Relevance of TOSSD as a tool to track support to international public goods, such as COVID-19 response.

3. The TOSSD statistical framework will allow a comprehensive tracking of the global response to COVID-19, mainly through 1) direct, cross-border support to partner countries to control the pandemic and its socio-economic consequences (Pillar I) and 2) contributions to multilateral initiatives and research and development of, for example, COVID-19 vaccines and treatments (Pillar II). TOSSD dual pillar structure allows for a coherent tracking of both kinds of support, resulting in more accurate global estimates covering an important information gap.

4. The added value of TOSSD in this context lies in particular in the development of Pillar II. Before TOSSD, no tracking framework was available to coherently identify and report activities in support of international public goods, which are at the core of the response to COVID-19 pandemic. The international research, the development of treatments and vaccines, their production and global deployment represent a significant part of the global response.

5. TOSSD is still at its infancy as a new global framework, but its effectiveness in providing a comprehensive tracking of the COVID-19 pandemic could be a breakthrough. The Task Force could discuss what specific actions are appropriate to promote the framework and expand its reach, in order to better accomplish its mission of providing greater transparency and better data to support sustainable development and the attainment of the SDGs.

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III. Eligibility of COVID-19 activities in TOSSD

6. The Secretariat has looked at the eligibility of COVID-19 activities in the context of TOSSD. It has interpreted the TOSSD Reporting Instructions for the specific case of COVID-19 related activities and published a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document on the TOSSD website². The main elements of this document are summarised below.

- **Supporting recipient countries to cope with the COVID-19 health and economic crises contributes to several SDG targets (such as SDG target 3.3 on the elimination of other communicable diseases) and is eligible provided that this support meets the general TOSSD sustainability criterion for Pillar I: “an activity is deemed to support sustainable development if it directly contributes to at least one of the SDG targets... and if no substantial detrimental effect is anticipated on one or more of the other targets.”.**
- **International co-operation and co-ordination for COVID-19 response, i.e. activities carried out at the level of multilateral institutions, are eligible to TOSSD Pillar II provided that they are implemented in direct co-operation with TOSSD-eligible countries, or private or public institutions from these countries.**
- **Contributions to the *Coronavirus Global Response*³ count as TOSSD**, since its first aim is “equitable global access to innovative tools for COVID-19 for all”. Therefore, R&D activities carried out under this framework are eligible to TOSSD Pillar II given that they meet the TOSSD eligibility criteria that aim precisely at ensuring that new innovations are accessible to developing countries.
- **R&D activities in the provider country, in a non-TOSSD-eligible country or at the level of a multilateral institution are eligible for reporting under TOSSD Pillar II as contributions to International Public Goods (IPGs) provided that they meet the criteria detailed in Annex E of the [TOSSD Reporting Instructions](#).**
- **Development of COVID-19 products for domestic purposes, which does not meet the criteria specified in the previous point, is not eligible to TOSSD Pillar II.** Support to COVID-19 R&D actions, the applicability of which is mostly national (e.g. resilience of the national health and social security systems to the pandemic), is not eligible to TOSSD. Support for domestic R&D activities aimed at creating new knowledge about COVID-19 is not eligible if there is no requirement that the results of the R&D are openly accessible free of charge (principle of open access).

IV. Tracking COVID-19 activities in TOSSD

7. COVID-19 related activities implemented during the course of 2020 will be reported in the TOSSD data collection of 2021. A special survey on the financing of COVID-19 response is planned to be circulated in Q1 2021 to inform on COVID-19 related amounts disbursed to TOSSD-eligible countries and in support to international public goods.

² See https://www.oecd.org/dac/tossd/TOSSD_eligibility_of_COVID-19_related_activities.pdf

³ For more information on the Coronavirus Global response, consult the European Commission website: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/QANDA_20_958



8. Data on COVID-19 related activities will be critical for the whole international development finance community. Given the interlinkages between TOSSD and both the OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS) and IATI, it is key to take into account how COVID-19 is tracked in these systems.

- In IATI, there are several possibilities to identify COVID-19 related activities⁴. These include a direct mention of COVID-19 in the title or description, identifying COVID-19 activities through a flag in the field ‘Humanitarian Scope element’ and using the “COVID-19” keyword in the ‘tag’ data field.
- Regarding the CRS, the Working Party on Development Finance Statistics (WP-STAT) is currently discussing how to update its Statistical Directives to allow a comprehensive tracking of COVID-19 activities. The two options currently under consideration include: 1) the creation of a sector code for ‘COVID-19 control’ under the health sector, and 2) the creation of a keyword field in the reporting format, where reporters could tag COVID-19 related activities in other sectors. Both changes, if approved, will enter into force in 2021, for the data collection on 2020 activities.

9. The Task Force also needs to discuss a method to track COVID-19-related activities. Without any change to the current codes or TOSSD methodology, TOSSD reporters would only be able to identify COVID-19 related activities mentioning ‘COVID-19’ in the title or description of the activities reported. While this option could represent a first step, data retrieval would be difficult and the production of coherent statistics hampered.

10. The Secretariat proposes the introduction of a new data field to identify COVID-19 related activities, using either a code or a keyword field. This solution would permit to identify activities both in the health sector and in other sectors. A new data field will also allow a good level of data interoperability between the CRS, IATI and TOSSD, allowing data providers that report activities to the CRS or IATI as COVID-19 related, to do so also in TOSSD.

11. The Secretariat proposes to identify activities as COVID-19-related if their main objective is to control the COVID-19 pandemic, or to respond to its socio-economic impacts.

12. To avoid the proliferation of data fields, and keep the TOSSD reporting format simple, the Secretariat proposes the Task Force to consider adopting a multiple-objective field. A multiple-objective field could be used to identify COVID-19-related activities, but also other objectives such as climate change mitigation and adaptation activities, or other themes that the TF would deem of special interest⁵.

13. A multiple-objective field could be technically implemented in different ways. One option could be to implement an alphanumeric field with a code list /vocabulary (e.g. all activities identified with “C19”, or “1”, would be related to COVID-19, all activities identified with “CCA”, or “2”, would be related to climate change adaptation, etc.). Another option could be to tag activities with keywords (e.g. using the keyword “COVID-19” or “ADAPTATION” in the field).

⁴ See: <https://iatistandard.org/en/guidance/standard-guidance/covid-19/>

⁵ Please also see the issues paper for Item 7 on TOSSD statistical classifications of the Agenda of the 11th meeting of the TOSSD Task Force.



Issues for discussion

- Do Task Force members have specific comments on the document about the eligibility of COVID-19 related activities in TOSSD (summarised in section III and referenced in footnote 2)?
- Do Task Force members foresee any difficulties in responding to a COVID-19 survey in early 2021?
- What are Task Force members' views on the introduction of a multiple-objective data field, to track COVID-19 and other themes of special interest, such as climate change? Do they have a preference between the use of codes or keywords?