



Tracking COVID-19 response through TOSSD

With 2 million people confirmed to be affected to date, covering almost all countries in the world,¹ no country is immune to the health, social and economic damage of the COVID-19 pandemic. While the international community is currently assessing how it can best respond, the crisis reminds us of the global nature of infectious diseases, as well as the interlinkages between the Sustainable Development Goals. The COVID-19 pandemic calls for an international financial response that addresses the specific needs of developing countries, in the short term to cope with the pandemic and in the long term to facilitate economic recovery. At the same time, it demonstrates the necessity to invest in health as a global public good. The new measure of total official support for sustainable development (TOSSD) aims to capture these expenditures. It is comprised of two “pillars”: Pillar I to track cross-border resource flows to developing countries and Pillar II to track investments in global public goods

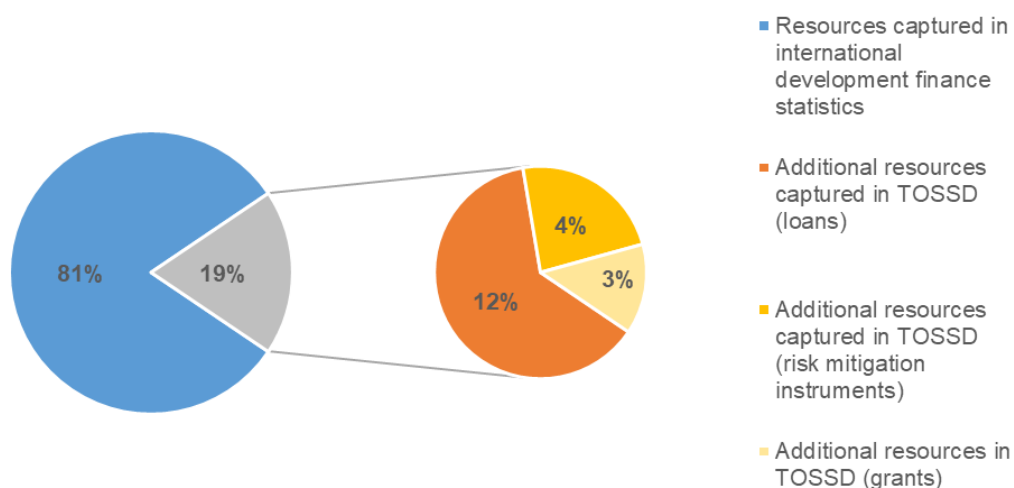
I. Development co-operation as a tool to support the specific needs of developing countries: TOSSD Pillar I

The capacity of a number of developing countries to resist a global pandemic is limited by the weakness of their national health systems. Without significant support, they are likely to pay a high cost if hit by the COVID-19 or any future global pandemic.

Development co-operation can help them meet their national health priorities. Official development assistance (ODA) is the main source of concessional international development finance and as such will be fundamental. Resources made available to help combat the pandemic in developing countries can be counted as ODA².

As the current crisis shows, South-South co-operation providers also have a key role to play in supporting other countries’ health sectors. The People’s Republic of China offered assistance to many countries and Cuba sent doctors to help other countries fight the disease. Pillar I of TOSSD aims to capture these South-South efforts alongside traditional development finance to offer a global picture of the support provided to developing countries.

Figure 1. TOSSD Pillar I: Estimated share of additional resources captured in TOSSD as support to developing countries in the health sector in 2017.



Source: TOSSD data survey (data collected from a sample of providers of financing for sustainable development, including DAC providers, South-South co-operation providers and multilateral institutions).

¹ <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html>

² Research for a vaccine for COVID-19 in provider countries would not count as ODA (such a vaccine would benefit developed countries as much as developing countries, and should therefore be considered as addressing a global challenge).



The impact of the pandemic crisis on some developing countries' health sector is exacerbated by gaps in access to other basic infrastructure (e.g. handwashing facilities or energy that is critical to a good functioning of health care facilities) that need to be addressed. In addition, the recovery from its economic impact will depend on the capacity of the private sector to invest and create jobs. Given the limited availability of concessional finance, non-concessional public resources, risk mitigation instruments and innovative financing mechanisms will be key to support infrastructure investments as well the recovery of the private sector. TOSSD will also capture these resources (see Figure 1).

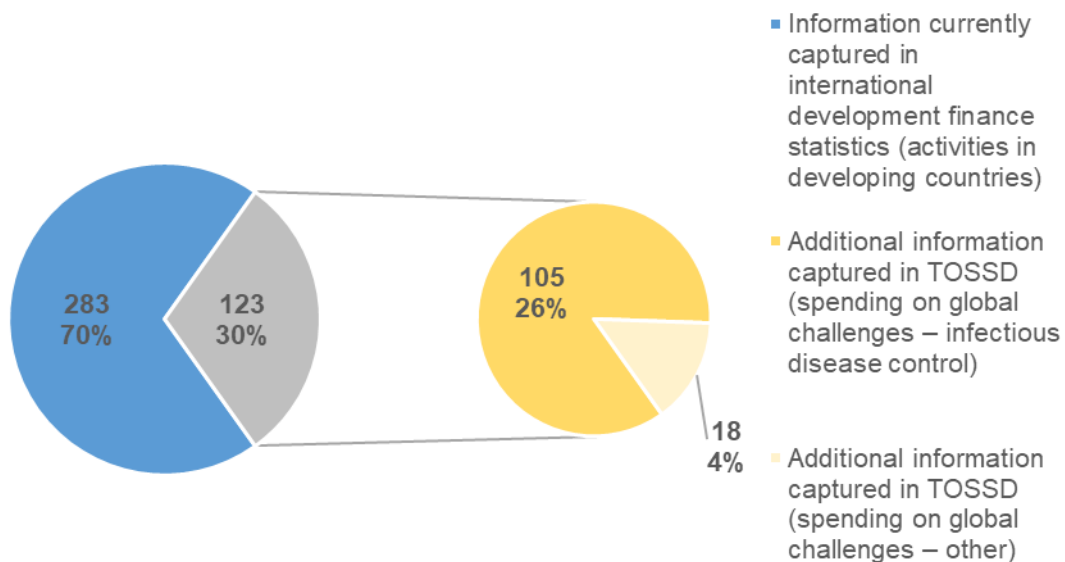
II. A greater visibility of investments in global public goods through TOSSD Pillar II

The new pandemic has shown once again the globalised nature of health and sustainable development. Ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all ages (SDG 3) in one country depends on actions taken within its national boundaries but also on actions in other countries. Given this global nature, the international financial response also needs to consider the financing of health as a global public good.

The Pillar II of the TOSSD measure aims to track and valorise investments in global public goods, based on the premise that they are key for the achievement of the SDGs. The COVID-19 crisis confirms that domestic financing for medical research and support to international health co-operation are an integral part of the global financing for sustainable development. TOSSD will track expenditures not captured before, for example all expenses by norm-setting organisations such as the World Health Organisation. It will also provide more granular information on activities already captured in international statistics (see Figure 2).

As regards research and development (R&D) expenditures in health, to be considered as a global public good and counted in TOSSD, the benefits of the R&D activity need to be of transnational reach, i.e. its results need to be made available worldwide and/or it is accompanied or followed by conditions that promote the access to new medicines or vaccines in developing countries.

Figure 2. TOSSD Pillar II: International health co-operation by the WHO in 2017, disbursements, USD million.



Source: TOSSD data survey.