

Focus Group Discussion (FGD) on Requirements of AIMS Software in Providing Data to Various Global Stages Including TOSSD Stage Draft Outcome Document

A Focus Group Discussion (FGD) on ‘Requirements of AIMS Software in providing data to various global stages including TOSSD Stage’ took place at ERD on 19 February 2023. Support to Sustainable Graduation Project of ERD organized the side event. Additional Secretary and Wing Chief of the Development Effectiveness Wing of ERD Mr. Farid Aziz chaired the event while Additional Secretary and Wing Chief of the FABAWing of ERD Mr. Md. Mostafizur Rahman co-chaired it. Major discussions, feedbacks and recommendations coming from the event are documented below.

Remarks from the Chair: Mr. Farid Aziz, Additional Secretary and Wing Chief, Development Effectiveness Wing of ERD

Mr. Farid Aziz, in his remarks, highlighted the background and objective of organizing the meeting. He noted that platforms like Aid Information Management System or AIMS are essential for better transparency in ODA utilization as well as for enhancing the overseas image of the country. He called for opinions and comments from the participants to revitalize AIMS and other similar databases. Afterwards, he asked the Deputy Secretary of ERD Mr. Abul Kalam Azad to deliver a keynote presentation on the topic of the event.

Keynote Presentation from Mr. Abul Kalam Azad, Deputy Secretary, DE Wing, ERD:

Explaining the background of the TOSSD concept, Mr. Abul Kalam Azad in his presentation, mentioned that the concept first emerged in 2014 in response to the need for a new international statistical measure to reflect the changing development finance landscape, the emergence of new development actors, new financial instruments and greater focus on sustainable development. He also informed that Bangladesh is one of the 25 member countries of TOSSD and had also agreed to participate in the TOSSD pilot study. It was also mentioned that although TOSSD taskforce had asked to provide data for 28 fields—Bangladesh had been able to provide data for 6 fields from AIMS. He also mentioned that an AIMS like database is needed to respond to various studies or surveys like DCF Survey, TOSSD, Global Partnership Monitoring Survey as well as to comply with international agreements, campaigns or schemes like International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) and Bern Call to Action.

Remarks from Co-Chair: Mr. Md. Mostafizur Rahman, Additional Secretary and Wing Chief of the Development Effectiveness Wing of ERD:

Additional Secretary and Wing Chief of the FABAWing of ERD Mr. Md. Mostafizur Rahman, in his statement, emphasized on better interoperability between AIMS, Foreign Aid Management System (FAMS), Debt Management and Financial Analysis System (DMFAS) and other similar software so that it becomes easier to access and transfer the relevant data using a single platform. Regarding DMFAS, he mentioned that Bangladesh is currently able to use only 30 to 40 percent capacity of this software. Recalling that Bangladesh is currently using version 6.3 of DMFAS, he said that the country should upgrade to version 7 so that it can capture the entire gamut of data related to external financing.

Open Discussion:

At this stage, the floor was opened for feedback and opinion from participants. During this session, the following major recommendations and observations came from them:

- Experts present in the meeting opined that it would be technically possible to reactivate AIMS, and merge AIMS and FAMS. In such case, it was opined that necessary measures should be taken to reactivate AIMS at first and then merge AIMS and FAMS.
- SSGP may examine whether it would be possible to finance the reactivation of AIMS and merger of AIMS and FAMS from its own budget and whether the activity can be linked with the scope and objective of the project.
- UNRC Office was also requested to explore whether the UN agencies would be interested in financing the reactivation and merger of AIMS and FAMS.
- A short-term project could also be initiated to finance the reactivation process of AIMS.
- Although DMFAS is quite an advanced platform—it is actually an accounting software which is not available in public domain.
- The data requirements related to SDGs should be considered during the revitalization process of these online ODA databases.
- Access to data stored by various relevant agencies and coordination between these agencies would be essential to make this platform more comprehensive and functional.
- The long-term national requirements and benefits should be analysed to ensure the sustainability of the system.

Major Recommendations:

The event came up with the following major recommendations:

- Necessary measures would be at first taken to reactivate AIMS, and then merge AIMS and FAMS.
- SSGP would examine whether it would be possible to finance the reactivation of AIMS and merging of AIMS and FAMS from its own budget and whether the activity can be linked with its scopes and objectives.
- UNRC Office will also explore whether the UN agencies would be interested in financing the reactivation and merger of AIMS and FAMS.
- A short-term project could be initiated to finance and steer the reactivation and merging process of AIMS and FAMS.
- Bangladesh should upgrade to version 7 of DMFAS so that it can capture all data related to external financing.