

Aid Information Management Systems

Draft Principles for Somalia

1. Objectives of Paper

The 5 year Somali Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) means that there is now one national development framework for Somalia for which key partners both national and international have aligned to. However without an Aid Information Management System, it has been difficult to determine the preliminary success of the implementation of the RDP, or to provide tools for determining funding allocations, gaps, coordination of aid flows or mutual accountability with Somali partners.

A prerequisite for the effective coordination and management of aid is easily accessible and timely availability of up-to-date information on planned and ongoing aid flows and monitoring of planned results and progress towards achieving these results. The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness recalls the commitments made at Monterrey to increase the volume of aid and recognizes that without improved systems of aid management the anticipated impact of increased aid levels is unlikely to materialize in terms of accelerated growth and reduced levels of poverty.

This paper was initially developed as an options paper and was discussed at the 9 March M&E working group, where partners agreed on a reduced set of concepts from a set of options on key components of what an AIMS should comprise for Somalia.

This paper has been redrafted to provide clear principles for decision makers to decide and finalize an applicable and mutually agreed to Aid Information Management System. A summary of this paper will be presented at the next CISS EXCOM meeting scheduled for the end of March.

The paper lays out the suggested functions and features of an AIMS; the options for different types of AIMS software applications; options for management structures and the related costs. Technical Annexes are attached to the paper which provides more detailed information.

2. Background

Following on from the Somali post conflict needs assessment and the subsequent 5 year Reconstruction and Development Programme, a consultant was hired, on behalf of all constituencies to look at RDP Indicators and possible options for Aid Information Management Systems¹. At this time, stakeholders suggested that the indicators were too many and that at this time, whilst some constituencies, such as the UNCT were (and are still) ready to move forward with an AIMS, others primarily one donor, suggested that a smaller AIMS would be applicable in the short-term.

The SSS self-developed a basic data gathering automated tool for Somaliland (which has not become operational) and further developed an in-house on-line pilot database for tracking of all donor aid flows to Somalia². This system monitors donor aid flows, mapped against the RDP pillars, but does not monitor progress of the RDP in terms of outputs or impact, MDG's or Paris Aid Effectiveness, nor does it allow for Somali leadership or involvement. Results from this pilot system are yet to be forthcoming.

¹ The Monitoring of common Outcome Indicators - an Aid Information Management system for Somalia – A Discussion of Issues & Requirements by Alan Taylor

² The SSS has monitored basic donor Aid Flow information since 2001.

UNDP have the worldwide mandate for building national capacity for Aid Information Systems and Aid Coordination. UNDP have contracted an Aid Coordination Expert during 2007 to-date to support the Somaliland Ministry of Planning.

Worldwide, most developing and transitional countries either have, or are in the process of obtaining an AIMS. Different countries have taken different approaches to AIMS and various studies have been carried out on AIMS or on monitoring mutual accountability. This paper draws on the findings of these reports³ and highlight some of the recommend key principles that could be applied for Somalia within the 'Principles' section of this paper.

Since the 2003 Rome Declaration, stakeholders have been concerned that the proliferation of donors and the fragmentation of aid across too many activities. Under the 2005 Paris Declaration, partners commit to developing common arrangements for planning, funding, monitoring, evaluating and reporting on aid flows, and to reducing the number of duplicative field missions and diagnostic reviews. An AIMS would greatly support eh Paris Declaration with respect to Alignment; Harmonization; Ownership; Managing for Results and Mutual Accountability.

At the Somali Donor Group Retreat⁴ in November 2009, donors agreed to enact during 2009 the below commitments. These will prove difficult to enact without an appropriate AIMS.

- Explore creative ways of monitoring programmes and progress .
- Make public the amount, allocation and impact of resources put into Somalia in a timely manner.
- Improve our Aid Information Management System (AIMS).
- Put in place a system of peer accountability.
- Publish and explain publicly: impact of our collective activity and ensure that we feed back what works into future actions; and on progress on priority aspects of Paris Declaration, Fragile States Principles, and Accra Agenda for Action.
- Agree an annual plan of donor prioritization and implementation against the RDP, and assess resource availability.

The Somali Transitional Federal Government for Somalia and the Alliance for the Re-Liberation of Somalia both insisted that they are part of the decision making process for recovery, reconstruction and development prioritization of strategies, programmes, projects and activities in 2009 forward.⁵

The Somaliland Authority has recently undertaken an exercise of mapping partner programmes and donor aid flows, but without having any database or computerized system supporting such an initiative. The Somaliland Minister of Planning and Coordination has formally requested an AIMS to be on the agenda for a first High Level Aid Coordination Forum, tentatively scheduled for April 2009. The former Minister of Planning in Puntland had endorsed and agreed to move forward a similar process and it is expected that the new Puntland Government will be interested in engaging as well.

³

- OECD-UNDP Role of AIMS in Implementing the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, June 2006
- A Review of Consultative Group and Roundtable Processes to Promote Mutual Accountability and Scale Up Aid Delivery
- Review of Aid Management and Reporting Data Systems, IT4DEV, 2004
- Lessons Learnt from Establishing Aid Information Management Systems to Support Nationally-Led Aid Coordination & Management, Jorg Nadoll, UNDP, 2006
- Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness: Study of Existing Mechanisms to Promote Mutual Accountability between donors and partner countries at the international level by Oxford Policy Management

⁴ Drawn from the International Community Retreat Draft Report

⁵ Drawn from meeting summary with the ARS and TFG on 8-12 October 2008.

3. Functionality and features of an AIMS

The 9 March meeting suggested that an AIMS for Somalia have the below functions:-

- Provides a common collaboration platform for various stakeholders and the public to share information on individual projects, programs and aid flows in general.
- Play a critical role in decision-making on the allocation of resources by providing an overall picture of aid flows, arranged according to customizable criteria;
- Assists in identifying funding gaps, alerting both government and donors to upcoming financial needs
- Tracks output-level results and Key Performance Indicators deriving from a National Development Plan
- Eventually link to the bigger, national Monitoring and Evaluation Framework
- Eventually support the MDGs by making information relative to flows contributing to specific indicators available for cost analysis;
- Present the international community with accurate and up-to-date information of the status of aid activities in a country through online web-based reporting;
- Potentially, through planning and management tools, allow government to process higher levels of aid than ever before, while making aid more effective and decreasing duplication or overlap of aid-funded activities; and
- Assists in multi-year programming through providing a clear picture of pledges and commitments juxtaposed against future needs.
- Can additionally track Paris Aid Effectiveness Indicators
- Is normally administered by the national government (to ensure its ownership and leadership over aid information sharing policies and procedures), or on a custodial basis, by an alternate lead agency or through a joint⁶ agency initiative (where government capacity is initially weak).

A more detailed list of functions and features can be found in Annex 1.

Samples of AIMS reports from various countries can be found in Annex 2.

4. The 9 March meeting proposed the following principles for an AIMS for Somalia

- The M&E working group endorsed and proposed that an AIMS was necessary and essential for Somalia
- The end-state objective of an **AIMS is for it to be owned and led by national stakeholders**
- Capacity transfer must be a principle foundation in the development of an AIMS for Somalia
- It is recognized that currently Somali partners at the national and regional level do not currently have the necessary capacity⁷ and/or the prerequisite human, technical and internet environment in which to host an AIMS. It is also recognized that partner countries exercise effective leadership over their development policies and strategies, and co-ordinate development actions. As such, it is recommended that an **AIMS** for Somalia should initially be **managed externally, on a custodial basis with capacity transfer built into** the project.
- The AIMS should be **web-based** to enable **easy access** to all key stakeholders both Somali and international, in-country and out of country to ensure broad based participation.

⁶ An example of a joint initiative is in Ethiopia, where the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, OECD-DAC, UNDP and the World Bank, the Development Gateway Foundation has developed an Aid Management Platform (AMP) pilot. The pilot provides an innovative solution to aid harmonization and coordination,

⁷ Somaliland has the necessary capacity but may not currently have the right technical environment

- The AIMS should be **accessible** to all constituents. For Somaliland where feasible, the system should be hosted or at least full access from Hargeisa.
- Key stakeholders to Somalia must endorse the AIMS and its functions. The AIMS system should **not leave out any major player** and likewise partners to Somalia should find ways to support and feed into the AIMS.
- All partners would work within **Standard Operations Procedures**.
- The AIMS should not be a ‘stand-alone’ system – it must be **part of broader framework** – from planning, coordination to, eventually budget preparation
- The AIMS should be **aligned to the Somali Reconstruction and Development Programme**
- There should be **one AIMS** covering recovery, reconstruction and development and not several versions of AIMS.
- The AIMS should **conform to terminology** of the **RDP** indicators, **OECD DAC** Sector classification and **MDG** indicators.
- The AIMS should produce **transparent, timely and comprehensive reports**
- The AIMS should be used to improve **decision making** for Somalia and with Somali partners, **within the broader coordination framework(s)**.
- The choice of **software** for the AIMS should be **decided based on functional needs, ease of use and price**.
- The institutions managing the AIMS need to have **adequate mandate, resources and institutional linkages**.
- **Data** will **provided** by partners **on a timely and regular basis**.
- Partners should get something back for the system - partners have immediate access to their data and that of other partners, which provides an incentive to share information in the first place
- The **AIMS** should have clear structural and strategic links to SOM-INFO and where feasible **link to the broader impact level surveys** (MICS, FSAU, Household Surveys etc)
- The system should have a powerful analytical and reporting module - The main reason for collecting data is to prepare analysis that influence decision making. Data processing and presentation are important elements in this respect. The system should **allow cutting and dicing the data in the most flexible way**.
- The initial AIMS should not be comprehensive, but start with essential functions of project/program financial tracking, monitoring of project outputs and physical progress, analysis, reporting, and on-line user and data administration. If the situation permits, scaling up with additional functions could take place in the future as and when appropriate.
- After discussion at the 9th March meeting, the participants suggested that software (off-the-shelf) be utilized that had already been tried and tested in other countries.

5. Options and Costs – AIMS Software

After careful research there appears to be three main options for an AIMS, the first two, are off-the-shelf software⁸ tried and tested in many different countries and the third options is a locally development system. The following table indicates in more detail the various functions and costs of these three systems:-

⁸ Analysis has been undertaken to highlight the differences and comparative advantages between IDM and AMP. See Annex 3 for more details.

Software Analysis

Characteristics	Synergy International Systems	Development Gateway Foundation	In-house development	Comments
	1	2	3	
Technology	Intelligent Data Manager (IDM)	Aid Management Platform (AMP)	No customizable solutions known	
Countries	Afghanistan, Kenya Iraq, Lebanon, Russia, Thailand, Indonesia, Maldives, Vietnam, India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Central African Republic, Rwanda, Zambia, Guatemala, Honduras, Armenia, Uzbekistan,	Ethiopia, Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Democratic Republic of Congo, Tanzania.	Syria, Fiji, Sudan and now Somalia	2,3- no system is accessible on the web
Costs⁹	\$ 100,000-300,000	\$ 100,000- 300,000	\$15,000 - \$25,000	3- Known as initial start up costs ¹⁰
Time	8-12 weeks	8-12 weeks	On-going development	3-Sudan: started in 2005
Functions				
Project/program financial tracking	yes	yes	yes	
Monitoring of project outputs and physical progress	yes	yes	no	
Linking to National budget	yes	yes	no	
Multi-year planning	yes	yes	no	
Off-line data entry and reporting	yes	no	no	
On-line system administration	yes	yes	no	
Web-based	yes	yes	no	
Major Features				
Reporting	highly advanced	Advanced	Low	
Charts	highly advanced	no	no	
GIS	yes	no	no	
Document management	yes	yes	Information n/a	
Report exports	yes	yes	Information n/a	
Off-line report building	yes	no	n/a	
On-line administration	Highly effective and secure	Information not available	n/a	

5. Proposed phased implementation and cost estimates.

Implementation of AIMS should be phased, first deploying basic functionality, such as project financial progress tracking and monitoring, reporting module and administration and then, when the progress is positively recorded, adding up more sophisticated functions, such as monitoring of expenditures towards Paris and MDG indicators, outcome indicators, multi-year planning etc. below is the proposed implementation schedule with cost estimates for AISM software (please, refer to Annex 1).

The estimated budget for an AIMS, is approximately USD 2 million over 4 years, however this amount could be reduced to approximately USD 1.2 million over the five years if capacity building were funded from on-going programmes and if server connectivity and hardware were managed at the server location.

⁹ The costs do not include the on-going labor costs of a dedicated AIMS Manager or database clerk

¹⁰ In the costs of mid 90s. Information is not up to date and not validated recently

COMPONENT	PHASE I		ASSESSMENT (end of Year 2)	PHASE 2		Total
	Year 1	Year 2		Year 3	Year 4	
AIMS basic functions, \$	150,000	0	Decision on upgrading AIMS with advanced functions	50,000	50,000	250,000
Hardware, \$	25,000	0		0	0	25,000
Connectivity ¹¹ , \$	50,000	50,000	Decision to continue support	50,000	50,000	200,000
Aid management expert\$	150,000	150,000	Decisions to continue support	150,000	150,000	600,000
Capacity building ¹² , \$	300,000	100,000	Decision to continue support	100,000	100,000	600,000
National officers	100,000	100,000		100,000	100,000	
Total, \$	775,000**	400,000		450,000	450,000	2,075,000

** Amount could be reduced to USD 475,000 for first year (see paragraph above table)

Notes on Costs

Apart from the AIMS software cost, other expenditures both capital and operational should be envisaged:

Capital costs¹¹:

The connectivity and server hardware to host the system would be substantially reduced if the hosting was done where the server is located

Operational costs¹²:

The capacity building cost includes of training, travel institutional development, however, UNDP have stated that this cost component may already be covered through the Somalia Institutional Support Programme for year 1.

Proposed Phases of an AIMS

Phases	Functions
I – Year one	Tracking, M& E of financial and physical progress
II – Year 2	Monitoring Paris and MDG indicators
III – Year 3 forward	Multi-year planning and linking to NB and/or MTEF

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6. Management Structure

3 options for the management of an AIMS were discussed at the 8 March meeting as follows:-

- National / regional partner leadership and management
- One institutional lead – such as the Somalia Support Secretariat or the UN Development Programme or the UN Statistical Working Group or the World Bank
- A joint initiative incorporating the comparative advantages of 2-3 institutions

Instead of making a recommendation for one particular management option, the 9th March meeting agreed to follow up with a circular to obtain informal expressions of interest to relevant partners with respect to an AIMS management, administration, capacity transfer and financing.

¹¹ Capital costs can be avoided if AIMS is hosted by professional hosting companies or AIMS vendors

7. Conclusion

This paper has been redrafted to provide clear principles for decision makers to decide and finalize an applicable and mutually agreed to Aid Information Management System for Somalia. A summary of this paper will be presented at the next CISS EXCOM meeting scheduled for the end of March.

In the interim, this paper serves as a basis for those interested in the informal expression of interest and can eventually be drawn from to develop a more detailed project proposal.

Summary of the M&E group recommendations to the CISS EXCOM:-

- An AIMS is necessary and essential for Somalia
- Capacity transfer must be a principle foundation in the development of an AIMS for Somalia
- An AIMS for Somalia should initially be **managed externally, on a custodial basis with capacity transfer built into** the project.
- An AIMS should be **web-based** to enable **easy access** and application to **all** key stakeholders
- The AIMS should not be a 'stand-alone' system – it must be **part of broader framework** – from planning, coordination to, eventually budget preparation and used as a tool to improve decision making for and with Somali partners
- The AIMS should be **aligned to the Somali Reconstruction and Development Programme**
- There should be **one AIMS** covering recovery, reconstruction and development and not several versions of AIMS.
- The AIMS should **conform to terminology** of the **RDP** indicators, **OECD DAC** Sector classification and **MDG** indicators.
- The AIMS should produce **transparent, timely and comprehensive reports**
- The choice of **software** for the AIMS should be **decided based on functional needs, ease of use and price**.
- The institutions managing the AIMS need to have **adequate mandate, resources and institutional linkages**.
- The **AIMS** should have clear structural and strategic links to Somalia statistical data collection, SOM-INFO and where feasible **link to the broader impact level surveys**
- An AIMS should **allow cutting and dicing the data in the most flexible way**.
- The initial AIMS should not be comprehensive, but start with essential functions of project/program financial tracking, monitoring of project outputs and physical progress, analysis, reporting, and on-line user and data administration.
- An AIMS software that is already designed and tested in other countries (off-the-shelf) be procured.
- DFID to discuss financing options for an AIMS at the next SDG meeting.
- Informal expressions of interest be obtained to clarify which partners are interested in being involved with an AIMS for Somalia (management, financing, capacity transfer)

Annex 1

Detailed Information on Functions and Features of an AIMS

The main functions and features of AIMS are drafted below, representing both the description of the ultimate product, as well as its phased implementation by first deploying the system with basic functions, with further enhancements and modifications as the capacity and needs of the Government and donor community evolve to use, operate, maintain and manage a more and more sophisticated system linked to National Budget, PFM and other Government owned financial tools.

The below table depicts a phased approach towards implementation of AIMS.

	Functions and objectives	Phase I	Phase II	Further	Complexity
1	Project/program financial tracking	X			Basic
2	Tracking and Paris indicators		X		Intermediate
3	Tracking progress towards MDGs		X		
2	Monitoring of project outputs and physical progress	X			Intermediate
3	Linking to National budget		X		Advanced
4	Multi-year planning			X	Advanced +
5	Off-line data entry and reporting	X			Basic
6	On-line system administration	X			Basic

General features and services of AIMS should allow for:

1. Modifiable list view of the development activities
2. Chart and geographical presentation of aid flows
3. Filtering and aggregated presentation of activities by various project specific information, including but not limited to, sectors/sub-sectors, donors, implementing partners, recipient agencies and entities, targeted RDP pillars, outcomes, outputs
4. Compliance with OECD/DAC sector codes
5. Compliance with NB accounts for project expenditures
6. Recording of project status, types, modality
7. Disaggregated recording of pledges, commitments, disbursements and expenditures for multi-donor, sector, implementer, recipient projects
8. Modifiable databases of donors, implementing partners, recipient agencies and entities
9. On-line and off-line report building with modifiable grouping of parameters, rows and columns
10. Monitoring of physical progress in delivery of project outputs through key performance indicators against sector, program and project targets
11. Tracking of expenditures made towards MDGs and Paris declaration indicators
12. Internal data linkage between all modules listed in the table above (data integrity)
13. Exporting reports into common data management platforms, such as MS Word, Excel, Adobe PDF
14. Document management to allow storage and retrieval of project implementation related documents, such as Project document, approval to closure statements, monitoring reports etc.
15. Ensuring that no duplication of project records takes place
16. Automatic recording and review of updates and generating reports/notifications
17. User friendly easy-to-learn environment for non-professional users
18. On-line user and data administration, with possibility of modification of the system's main tables (sectors, locations, donors etc.) and secure and robust permission granting for access to data by eligible users

Data sets:

To enable the above described functions and features of the AIMS, the following raw data has to be captured. The entire data fields are conditionally grouped into three main categories: Project Implementation, Financial and Monitoring. The proposed data fields are closely linked to the functions and their introduction can be likewise phased out.

	Field name	Phase I	Phase II	Further
1	<i>Project implementation information</i>			
	• Donor/implementer coding	X		
	• Title, description, objectives	X		
	• Sector/sub-sector (OECD/DAC)	X		
	• RDP target pillar/outcome/output	X		
	• Location (as per the official map)	X		
	• Status (values tbd)	X		
	• Implementation modality (DEX/NEX)	X		
	• Type of assistance (values tbd, e.g. project support, program approach, SWAp, budget support, etc.)	X		
	• Dates	X		
	• Type of activity (values tbd)	X		
	• Type of funding (grant/loan)	X		
	• Contact details	X		
	• Documentation archive	X		
	• Other (tbd)	X		
	• On/Off budget and amounts	X		
2	<i>Financial information</i>			
	• Pledges by sectors and dates			X
	• Total project cost (by years)	X		
	• Commitments, dates (donor to implementer)	X		
	• Disbursements, dates (donor to implementer)	X		
	• Expenditures, dates (implementer to recipient or procurements)	X		
	• Breakdown of expenditures		X	
	• Government co-funding	X		
	• Expected recurrent costs in the future			X
	• Donor(s), implementer(s), recipient(s)	X		
3	<i>Monitoring of project outputs</i>			
	• Performance indicators (tbd)		X	
	• Sector and program targets		X	
	• Evaluation fields (tbd)		X	
	• Outcome indicators (tbd)			
	• MDGs (tbd)			X
	• Paris indicators (tbd)			X
4	<i>Other information (tbd)</i>			