

## Special Series on Statistical Issues in Response to COVID-19

This is one of a series of notes produced by the Statistics Department to help members address the COVID-19 emergency. The views expressed in this note are those of IMF staff and do not necessarily represent the views of the IMF, its Executive Board, or IMF management.

# **COVID-19: How to Record Government Policy Interventions in Fiscal Statistics**

Governments across the world are introducing different forms of policy interventions in their battle against COVID-19, trying to keep their citizens safe and well, and to reduce the financial impact on corporations and households. Nevertheless, there is a lot of commonality between the different measures from a fiscal statistics perspective. Therefore, this note advises on how to record in the government accounts the financial impact of the most commonly observed types of COVID-19 related government interventions, grouped into eight broad categories:

- A. Increased healthcare spending
- B. Provision of assistance to households
- C. Relaxation of tax obligations for households and corporations
- D. Provision of financial assistance to corporations (and other units other than households)
- E. Capital injections, establishment of new, or extended, lending facilities and provision of guarantees
- F. Emergency assistance from international organizations and foreign governments
- G. Liquidity and quasi-fiscal operations by public financial institutions
- H. Debt reorganization

Our advice on how a wide range of government interventions related to COVID-19 should be recorded in fiscal statistics are summarized in Table 1, grouped by the above eight categories. The guidance is in accordance with the *Government Finance Statistics Manual 2014* (*GFSM 2014*). Applying the recommended recording will help to ensure the accuracy of both key fiscal indicators, such as government deficit, as well as other key macroeconomic indicators, such as GDP. Even for countries which have not yet implemented the *GFSM 2014*, applying the classification of events consistently is important to collect comparable data over time and across countries, and to estimate aggregate data which capture the global responses. For cross-reference purposes, a generic Statement of Operations is attached as Table 2.

This note is obviously not able to cover every specific government policy, particularly as the number of these policies varies across countries and are still growing. Therefore, this document

provides general guidelines based on GFS principles. At this stage the guidance must be considered provisional, but we intend to keep this note as a living document, with periodic updates when new information become available. It should also be noted that while the principles set out in this note are helpful as a guideline, each case is likely to be different in details. As such, when analyzing a country policy, care should be taken to look beyond the scheme labels and terminology to understand the specifics and economic substance of the scheme in order to identify its correct treatment.

Please direct any questions and comments on this note, as well as requests for further guidance on country specific government interventions, to <a href="mailto:STAGOMGMT@IMF.org">STAGOMGMT@IMF.org</a>.

### TABLE 1. RECOMMENDED RECORDING OF COVID-19 RELATED GOVERNMENT INTERVENTIONS

Government Intervention	Intervention GFS Recording <sup>1</sup>			
A. Increased Healthcare Spending				
Additional spending on more healthcare workers or increased spending on existing healthcare workers.	<ul> <li>Recorded as Expense/Compensation of employees (21), in general.</li> <li>However, if the government is buying the services from private healthcare contractors then this would be recorded in Expense/Use of Goods and Services (22).</li> </ul>	<u>†</u>		
Additional spending on medical supplies (such as antiviral masks, antiseptics and pharmaceuticals).	<ul> <li>Recorded as Expense/Use of Goods and Services (22), in general, where the supplies are being purchased for use by government healthcare providers.</li> <li>However, where general government purchases the supplies to distribute for use by households then the recording in Item B3 (below) should be followed.</li> </ul>	<b>↑</b>		
3. Construction of new health facilities (including quarantine facilities and new or extended medical facilities) that meet the definition of a fixed asset and acquisition of medical machinery and equipment (such as respiratory ventilators).	<ul> <li>These costs will be recorded as acquisitions of nonfinancial assets, specifically transactions in nonfinancial fixed assets. Depending on the type of asset, either:</li> <li>Transactions in Nonfinancial Assets/Fixed Assets/Buildings other than dwellings (31112), or</li> <li>Transactions in Nonfinancial Assets/Fixed Assets/Machinery and equipment (3112).</li> <li>However, if the government unit is only making a payment to another entity, who will construct/purchase the asset and become the economic owner of that asset then this will be recorded as:</li> <li>Expense/Grants/Capital grants to other general government units (2632), if the payment is to a government unit in another level of government.</li> <li>Expense/Other Expense/Capital transfers not elsewhere classified (2822), in other circumstances.</li> <li>Note. Constructions that don't meet the definition of a fixed asset (such as temporary tents used for testing, which are not intended to be used for multiple years) should be recorded as goods and the guidance in item A2 followed.</li> </ul>	1		

Go	vernment Intervention	GFS Recording <sup>1</sup>	Fiscal Deficit Impact <sup>2</sup>
В.	Provision of Assistance to Households		
1.	Cash payments designed to address social needs arising from social risks (i.e., the amounts paid depend on specific conditions such as the level of income, whether the recipients lost their jobs, etc.) - for example, government schemes to pay sickness benefit while an individual is in quarantine and unable to work, or unemployment benefits to those temporarily unable to work and not in receipt of salaries.	Recorded as Expense/Social Benefits/Social assistance benefits (272), in most cases.  However,  (i) if the payments are made through a social insurance scheme, and the recipients are limited to those households which have contributed to the scheme, then they should be recorded as Expense/Social Benefits/Social security benefits (271);  (ii) if the payments are social benefits payable by governments to their own employees for short periods of absence (due to sickness, isolation etc) they should be recorded as Expense/Social Benefits/Employment related social benefits (273). Where it is difficult to separate these payments from other payments of wages and salaries, the payments will remain included in Expense/Compensation of Employees/Wages and salaries (211).	<b>↑</b>
2.	Fixed-amount cash payments <u>not</u> based on social needs arising from social risks (i.e., the amounts paid do not depend on specific conditions but instead are distributed to all).	Recorded as Expense/Other Expense/Current transfers not elsewhere classified (2821).	1
3.	Provision of food, medicines and other household goods for free by governments.	<ul> <li>Recorded as Expense/Other Expense/Current transfers not elsewhere classified (2821), in general.</li> <li>However, if the goods are provided by governments solely to their employees, they will be recorded as Expense/Social Benefits/Employment-related social benefits in kind (2732).</li> <li>Note, that if the goods are being provided under the terms of a social protection scheme then the recording in Item B1 (above) should be followed.</li> </ul>	Î

Government Intervention		GFS Recording <sup>1</sup>	Fiscal Deficit Impact <sup>2</sup>	
		Although these transactions are in-kind and not in-cash, cash reporting countries are strongly encouraged to identify and report these transactions separately.		
food, me goods pr (these do governm organiza	distribution by government of dicines and other household ovided by donors onors could be foreign ents, international tions, other subsectors of the ent or other donors).	<ul> <li>The redistribution by government of the goods should be recorded as Expense/Other Expense/Current transfers not elsewhere classified (2821).</li> <li>In addition, the receipt of the goods from donors should be recorded as:</li> <li>Revenue/Grants/Current grants in kind from foreign governments (1311), where they are received from foreign governments,</li> <li>Revenue/Grants/Current grants in kind from international organizations (1321), where they are received from international organizations,</li> <li>Revenue/Grants/Current grants in kind from other general government units (1331), where they are received from other subsectors of government (for example, central government providing goods to local government to distribute), or</li> <li>Revenue/Other Revenue/Current transfers not elsewhere classified (1441) where they are received from other donors.</li> <li>Although these transactions are in-kind and not in-cash, cash reporting countries are strongly encouraged to identify and report these transactions separately.</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>(unless the donor is another general government unit, in which case there will be an increase in the general government deficit)</li> </ul>	
C. Relaxation	on of Tax Obligations for House	eholds and Corporations³		
to reduce (such as	ary changes to tax scheme rules e tax obligations changes to the tax rate, tax ds or even elimination of the tax	<ul> <li>Reflected as a reduction in the expected revenue under the relevant tax category.</li> <li>The impact of the reduction in tax obligations will be reflected by replacing the level of reported revenue with the tax actually collected, or expected to be collected, after the changes in tax scheme rules.</li> </ul>	relative to deficit	

Government Intervention	GFS Recording <sup>1</sup>	
entirely – the latter often being referred to as a tax holiday).		expected revenue)
Temporary changes to increase the level of payments and/or number of beneficiaries for tax credits.	<ul> <li>Recorded as reduction in the expected revenue (in the relevant tax category) where the tax credit scheme is non-payable*.</li> <li>Recorded on a gross basis with the tax credits included as Expense where the tax credit is payable*.</li> <li>In the case of payable tax credits*, these are recorded as Expense/Subsidies (25), Expense/Social benefits/Social assistance benefits (272) or Expense/Other Expense/Current transfers not elsewhere classified (2821) depending on the nature of the tax credit. [More information is available in GFSM 2014 paras. 5.29 to 5.32]</li> <li>* Tax credits are amounts subtracted directly from the tax liability due by the beneficiary household or corporation after the tax liability has been computed. Payable tax credits are where any credit that exceeds the tax liability is still paid to the beneficiary. All other tax credits are non-payable.</li> </ul>	1
3. Deferral of tax payments (such as allowing taxpayers to pay their tax obligations in the next tax year instead of this one).	<ul> <li>As a general accrual principle, tax should be recorded when the tax obligation arises. This means for accrual reporting countries that deferred taxes should ideally continue to be recorded when the tax obligation is established even though the cash payment of that tax obligation will be receivable (and recorded) later than previously anticipated.</li> <li>In practice, application of this approach can be difficult, particularly for taxes such as corporate taxes where there are a lot of factors that may impact the amount of tax that will be payable in the following year.</li> <li>Countries that use an adjusted cash estimate for accrual reporting purposes are therefore advised to only make adjustments to the time-lags applied to the cash where it is clear that there has been a change in the lag between when the tax obligation is established and the related cash receipts are received.</li> </ul>	↔ accrual recording  ↑ cash recording

Government Intervention	GFS Recording <sup>1</sup>	Fiscal Deficit Impact <sup>2</sup>
	Cash reporting countries will continue to report the actual cash tax receipts, at the time of receipt, without any adjustment required. However, forward estimates of such taxes need to be adjusted with the impact of the deferral.	(relative to deficit based on expected revenue)
D. Provision of financial assistance to corp	porations <sup>3</sup> (and other units other than households)	
Increased subsidies (either new or existing) equally applicable to public and/or private corporations.	<ul> <li>Recorded as Expense/Subsidies (25), where government makes unrequited payments to corporations to support the productive activities of the corporations based on scheme rules which apply equally to all corporations working within an industry/region.</li> <li>However, where government makes targeted ('bespoke') payments to individual corporations then these should be reviewed as described against the guidance for capital injections (see Items E1 and E2 (below)).</li> </ul>	1
Payments from governments to corporations to support them in keeping part, or all of their workforce temporarily idle ('furloughed') due to a downturn as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.	Recording of these payments will depend whether the predominant intent of the payment is to support the income of households, and the employer is largely acting as a conduit for the payment, or whether the predominant intent of the payment is to support the employer and ensure a quick return to full production after the crisis abates. This assessment can be difficult to make and the Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts (ISWGNA) has published a note regarding some of the issues and principles to consider.  By the way of general guidance:	1
	Record as Expense/Social Benefits/Social assistance benefits (272) or     Expense/Other Expense/Current transfers not elsewhere classified (2821), between the government and the household sector, where the predominant intent is to support the income of households, and the full amount of the government payment is directly linked to the payment of non-working employee salaries and the employer is only	

Government Intervention	GFS Recording <sup>1</sup>	Fiscal Deficit Impact <sup>2</sup>
	acting as a conduit for the payment with no discretion to use any of the funds to defray other business expenses.  • Record as Expense/Subsidies (25), between the government and employer, then as wages and salaries between the employer and employee, where the predominant intent is to support the employer and the funds are provided to the employer with some discretion as to how the funds are used (even in those cases where the payments may be based on employee salaries).  Note 1. Any GFS recording adopted should be consistent with the statistical reporting in both National Accounts and labor market statistics.  Note 2. Similar payments to the self-employed, with the intention of providing support to the self-employed during a downturn experienced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, should also be recorded following the above guidance. That is, if the intent of the payment is to support the business it should be recorded as Expense/Subsidies (25), but if it is predominantly to support the household income it should be recorded as Expense/Current transfers not elsewhere classified (2821).	
<ol> <li>Payments from governments to corporations to help them cover exceptional losses due to factors outside the control of the corporations in relation to the COVID-19.</li> </ol>	<ul> <li>Recorded as Expense/Other Expense/Capital transfers not elsewhere classified (2822), in general.</li> <li>However, if the losses incurred by the corporation are as a result of charging prices that are lower than their average costs of production as a matter of deliberate government policy, to help tackle the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g., to provide free COVID-19 testing by market providers), then the payments from government should be recorded as Expense/Subsidies (25).</li> </ul>	1
Unrequited payments from governments to other governments, domestic or	Recorded as Expense/Grants/Grants to other levels of government (263), where one level of government makes payments to other levels of government (e.g., central government providing funds for local government run public hospitals). Note, that the	$\leftrightarrow$

Government Intervention	GFS Recording <sup>1</sup>	Fiscal Deficit Impact <sup>2</sup>
external, where there is no financial claim established.	<ul> <li>payments are eliminated in consolidation when reporting general government data, to avoid double-counting.</li> <li>Recorded as Expense/Grants/Grants to foreign governments (261), where a country makes a payment to another country.</li> </ul>	(where payments are to another level of government)
		<b>↑</b>
		(where payments are to a foreign government)
E. Capital Injections, Establishment of Ne	w, or Extended, Lending Facilities and Provision of Guarantees	
Capital injections by government into corporations (public and/or private).	<ul> <li>Recorded as an Expense/Other Expense/Capital transfer not elsewhere classified (2822) where government cannot reasonably expect a realistic return* on its investment and the capital injection is not legally in the form of a loan (see item E2 for lending schemes).</li> <li>If there is evidence that the government can expect a realistic return* on its investment, then the payment should be recorded as Net Acquisition of Financial Assets/Equity (3205), with no impact on the deficit.</li> <li>In some cases, such as equity injections above the prevailing market price, then the payments can be partitioned into Net Acquisition of Financial Assets/Equity (3205) element and an Expense/Other Expense/Capital transfer not elsewhere classified (2822) element.</li> <li>* More information can be found in GFSM 2014 paras. A3.47 to A3.53. It is recognized that a realistic rate of return can be difficult to assess during a time of crisis. Where there is</li> </ul>	↑ (where capital transfers are recorded)  ↔ (where equity acquisitions are
	significant doubt about the likely viability of the corporation and so return on the investment then the payment should be reported as an Expense/Other expense/Capital transfer not elsewhere classified (2822).	recorded)

Government Intervention	vention GFS Recording <sup>1</sup>	
Direct government lending schemes to public and/or private corporations (often at favorable interest rates).	<ul> <li>In general, recorded as Net Acquisition of Financial Assets/Loans (3204), and shown in the balance sheet at nominal value. The recording is not influenced by whether the lending is concessional or non-concessional.</li> <li>However, if there is evidence that the government does not acquire an effective financial slaim, and the debter and so the lean is unlikely to be repaid than the</li> </ul>	(where capital transfers are
	financial claim* on the debtor and so the loan is unlikely to be repaid, then the government payments should be recorded as Expense/Other Expense/Capital transfers not elsewhere classified (2822).	recorded)
	* More information can be found in GFSM 2014 paras. A3.47 to A3.53. It is recognized that the establishment of an effective financial claim can be difficult to assess during a time of crisis. In the case of corporations, where there is significant doubt about the likely viability of the corporation and so effectiveness of the financial claim then the payment should be reported as an Expense/Capital transfer not elsewhere classified (2822).	↔ (where loan acquisitions are recorded)
Direct government lending schemes to households     (often at favorable interest rates).	<ul> <li>Recorded as Net Acquisition of Financial Assets/Loans (3204) and shown in the balance sheet at nominal value. The recording is not influenced by whether the lending is concessional or non-concessional.</li> <li>However, if it is clear at inception that the "loans" will never be repaid by the households then they should be recorded as Expense/Other Expense/Capital transfers not elsewhere classified (2822) from inception.</li> </ul>	↔ (where loan acquisitions are recorded)
		† (where capital transfers are
		recorded)

Go	vernment Intervention	GFS Recording <sup>1</sup>	Fiscal Deficit Impact <sup>2</sup>
4.	Government initiatives to support lending by banks, and other financial corporations, through provision of guarantees on the loans they have extended.	<ul> <li>Guarantees are contingent liabilities and so not recorded as government debt (or as transactions) within GFS, although countries are encouraged to record them as memo items.</li> <li>Where government is receiving fees for the provision of guarantees then these should be recorded as Revenue/Other Revenue/Administrative fees (1422). When a government guarantee is called then this is treated as government assuming the debt of the original debtor. The treatment of debt assumption is described in <i>GFSM 2014</i> paras. A3.26 to A3.29.</li> <li>Note that if the government provides a guarantee where there is a very high likelihood that it will be regularly called, then the entire amount of debt should be treated from inception as debt assumption by government.</li> </ul>	(in general)  (where there are administrative fees)  (the deficit impact of guarantee calls is explained in <i>GFSM 2014</i> paras. A3.26 to A3.29)
5.	Government initiatives to support lending by banks, and other financial corporations, through provision of lending to banks.	Recorded as Net Acquisition of Financial Assets/Loans (3204) and shown in the balance sheet at nominal value. The recording is not influenced by whether the lending is backed by collateral or not.	↔
F.	Emergency Assistance from Internation	nal Organizations and Foreign Governments	•
1.	Emergency lending by international organizations (such as disbursements	Recorded in general as Net Incurrence of Liabilities/Loans (3304) and shown in the balance sheet at nominal value.	$\leftrightarrow$

Government Intervention	GFS Recording <sup>1</sup>	Fiscal Deficit Impact <sup>2</sup>
from the IMF's lending facilities) or foreign governments.	When disbursements from the IMF's lending facilities are made to the country's Central Bank which passes on proceeds of the borrowing to government, or the government directly receives the loans, a Net Incurrence of Liabilities/Loans (3304) is recorded in the government accounts. This can be further separated into domestic liabilities (in the case of on-lending from the Central Bank) and external liabilities (in the case of a direct loan to the government).	
Payments from international organizations and foreign governments (such as foreign aid payments), where there is no financial claim established.	<ul> <li>Recorded as Revenue/Grants/Grants from foreign governments (131), where the cash donation is from a foreign government (see item D3 for the situation where the government is the donor).</li> <li>Recorded as Revenue/Grants/Grants from international organizations (132), where the cash donation is from an international organization.</li> </ul>	<b>↓</b>
Donations of goods and assets from international organizations and foreign governments (such as food and medical supply donations).	<ul> <li>Recorded as Revenue/Grants/Grants in-kind from foreign governments (131), where donation is from a foreign government.</li> <li>Recorded as Revenue/Grants/Grants in-kind from international organizations (132), where the donation is from an international organization.</li> <li>See item B4 for the recording related to the onward distribution of the donated goods or assets to households/corporations. Goods (or supplies) should be recorded as current grants, while assets should be recorded as capital grants.</li> </ul>	assets  (no impact as the asset transaction offsets the revenue, and later expense if distributed)
		↔ goods

C. Lie	quidity and Quasi-Fiscal Operations by	v Dublic Financial Institutions	(no impact under the assumption that all received goods are immediately distributed onwards or consumed)
1. Th the ma	the purchase of government bonds by e Central Bank from the secondary arket, as part of a quantitative easing rogram.	<ul> <li>No GFS transaction is recorded and there is no direct government debt impact (at the time of purchase).</li> <li>However, public sector debt will reduce as government bonds are bought by the Central Bank and are therefore eliminated in consolidation when looking at the public sector.</li> </ul>	$\leftrightarrow$
de (ei fin no	overnment provision of government ebt securities either directly or through a public nancial corporation) to financial or onfinancial corporations in exchange or other financial assets.	<ul> <li>Recorded as Net Acquisition of Financial Assets in the relevant asset category because it is an exchange of financial assets. If the financial assets received by government are of equal value to the assets exchanged then there is no other transaction to record and not impact on the deficit, but if assessed to be of lower value then an Expense/Other Expense/Capital transfer not elsewhere classified (2822) should be recorded for the difference between the two asset valuations.</li> </ul>	← (in general)  ↑ (where a capital transfer is recorded)

Government Intervention		GFS Recording <sup>1</sup>		Fiscal Deficit Impact <sup>2</sup>
1.	Government forgives (i.e., cancels) debt which is owed to it by other units in the economy.	•	Recorded as Expense/Grants/Capital grants to other levels of government (2632) where the debtor unit is another unit of government (for example, the central government forgiving debt owed to it by a local government). An equal reduction in government financial assets and liabilities will also be recorded, although at the general government level there will be no debt impact due to consolidation.	(where debt forgiven is of another level of government)
		•	Recorded as Expense/Other Expense/Capital transfer not elsewhere classified (2822) where the debtor unit is outside of government. A reduction in government financial assets is also recorded. The type of assets involved will depend on the nature of the debt.	↑ (where debt forgiven is of a non-government unit)
2.	Government reschedules debt which is owed to it by other units in the economy, by either postponing repayment or lowering debt service costs.	•	Recorded as repayment of the original debt instrument simultaneously with creation of the renegotiated new debt instrument. Debt levels at the point of debt rescheduling will be unchanged (any reduction being treated as debt forgiveness – see Item H1 (above)) but future interest payable and/or debt repayment dates will change.	↔ (at time of reschedule)

#### Notes:

- 1. The recommended recording relates to the economic category of transactions, and is based on the <u>Government Finance Statistics Manual 2014 (GFSM 2014)</u>, where numbers in parentheses refer to the *GFSM 2014* transaction codes. The assignment of functional categories to expenditure should be done in accordance with the Classification of Functions of Government (COFOG) described in the Annex to Chapter 6 of the <u>GFSM 2014</u>.
- 2. Column labelled "fiscal deficit impact" relates to direct impacts on government deficit (net borrowing) from the interventions, but not indirect impacts (such as, future debt servicing of loans received). The government deficit is defined as total government expenditure less total government revenue. The symbol key is: ↑ increase in deficit, ↓ decrease in deficit, ↔ no impact in deficit.
- 3. The term corporations is used throughout to refer to all units that are market producers in accordance with GFSM 2014 definitions.

#### **TABLE 2. STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS 1/**

1	Revenue
11	Taxes
12	Social contributions
13	Grants
14	Other revenue
2	Expense
21	Compensation of employees
22	Use of goods and services
23	Consumption of fixed capital
24	Interest
25	Subsidies
26	Grants
27	Social benefits
28	Other expense
GOB	Gross Operating Balance (1-2+23)
NOB	Net Operating Balance (1-2)
31	Transactions (Net/Gross Investment) in Nonfinancial Assets
311	Fixed assets
312	
313	Inventories  Valuables
314	
314	Nonproduced assets
2M	Expenditure (2+31)
NLB	Net Lending / Net Borrowing (1-2M and 32-33)
32	Net Acquisition of Financial Assets
3201	Monetary gold and Special Drawing Rights (SDRs)
3202	Currency and deposits
3203	Debt securities
3204	Loans
3205	Equity and investment fund shares
3206	Insurance, pension, and standardized guarantee schemes
3207	Financial derivatives and employee stock options
3208	Other accounts receivable
321	Domestic financial assets
322	External financial assets
33	Net Incurrence of Liabilities
3301	Special Drawing Rights (SDRs)
3302	Currency and deposits
3303	Debt securities
3304	Loans
3305	Equity and investment fund shares
3306	Insurance, pension, and standardized guarantee schemes
3307	Financial derivatives and employee stock options
3308	Other accounts payable
331	Domestic liabilities
332	External liabilities
502	External industries

<sup>1/</sup> Based on the economic classification of <u>Government Finance Statistics Manual 2014 (GFSM 2014)</u>. Codes for subcategories start with the code of the main category and then add additional digits as required.