

National measures in response to the **COVID-19** and its effect on the **SDGs**

*Relationship between the measures taken at national level in **Latin America and the Caribbean** to address the **COVID-19** pandemic and the targets of the **2030 Agenda***



METHODOLOGICAL SCOPE

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I. Introduction

COVID-19 has introduced an unprecedented multidimensional global crisis that will have a significant impact on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially on the 2020 goals, and on the most vulnerable populations ([ECLAC, 2020](#)).

Governments in Latin America and the Caribbean joined other regions of the world in establishing a series of contingency measures in order to mitigate the impact of the pandemic and its consequences on the economic, social, and environmental stability of their countries. In most cases, governments have worked to maintain a balance between the health of their inhabitants and the economic system with the support of the state to help the most vulnerable groups, the strengthening of the health sector, economic incentives, among others.

These actions have been collected and analyzed at the national and sectoral level by the [Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean \(ECLAC\)](#) through the [COVID-19 Observatory](#) that supports the follow-up and monitoring of the progress of the countries of the region in the short, medium and long-term regarding its response to the pandemic.

At the same time, the [Centro de Pensamiento Estratégico Internacional \(Cepei\)](#) has worked to promote the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through the production of digital content that presents the situation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs in the face of the health crisis and how this can affect it compliance. This is done to support the "Build Back Better" proposal made by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, and within the framework of the Decade of Action and the achievement of Results for Sustainable Development.

By being aware of the challenges brought by the pandemic in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in the region, ECLAC and Cepei have joined efforts to show the type of relationships (direct, partial, or indirect) and the possible effects (positive and negative) of the measures taken by the governments to tackle the pandemic in Latin America and the Caribbean, and how they could affect the 169 targets 2030 Agenda. This exercise seeks to be an input for future analysis and research.

The exercise included four stages: the definition of conceptual elements of the COVID-19 measures and the targets of the 2030 Agenda; the establishment



of criteria for the relationship between measures and targets; the identification of possible effects on those targets that were identified as related to COVID-19 measures; and the visualization of the results obtained from the analysis carried out in the previous stages.

The analysis was carried out between April and August 2020 based on the measures taken by 33 countries of the region to face the COVID-19 pandemic and which have been registered,

categorized, and published in the ECLAC COVID-19 Observatory¹, with information collected by ECLAC and its subregional and national offices.

The work was developed by a multidisciplinary group consisting of the Statistics Division of ECLAC and Cepei, with support from the Division for Gender Affairs, the Division for Economic Development, and the Division for Social Development of ECLAC.

II. Definition of conceptual elements

In the first stage, conceptual guidelines were developed to facilitate the evaluation of the relationships between the COVID-19 measures and the targets of the 2030 Agenda and their possible effects, under a unified standard.

II.1. Measures taken to address the COVID-19 pandemic

The analysis examined the 45 measures under which the actions taken by the countries of the region are classified, published in the COVID-19 Observatory of ECLAC. These measures have

been categorized for registration into seven topics: economy², education, employment, gender, movements across and within countries, social protection, and health.

¹ <https://www.cepal.org/es/temas/covid-19>

² The Economy category organizes the measures both in type of public policy and in specific measures, given the high number of reported measures. For example, some of the measures have been classified by type of policy (fiscal, monetary and business) while others have been maintained individually.



Table 1. Topics and measures

<p>A. Economy</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fiscal policy <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1 Public investments 1.2 Tax credits 1.3 Tax deferrals 1.4 Tax reductions 1.5 Financing 2. Monetary policy <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2.1 Interest rate 2.2 Reserve requirements 2.3 Liquidity requirements 2.4 International reserve management 3. Business policy <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3.1 International reserve management 3.2 Subsidies 3.3 Credit 3.4 Exchange rate policy 3.5 SMEs support policies 4. Restriction of economic activity (including shops and shopping centers) 5. Price and quantity controls 6. Economic stimulus (includes the added value of fiscal measures and separately from credit guarantees) 7. Regulation of the personal hygiene and cleaning products market 8. Debt relief and suspension of credit payments (individuals, microentrepreneurs)
<p>B. Education/ Schools</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Suspension of classes 2. Provision of tools for distance learning 3. Maintenance of school feeding programme
<p>C. Gender</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Gender-based violence against women 2. Care economy 3. Employment and income generation 4. Benefits, transfers, and other social protection measures 5. Women's participation in the digital age



<p>D. Health</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Health emergency 2. Mandatory coverage 3. Mandatory quarantine for foreign travelers, confirmed or suspected cases 4. Mandatory general quarantine 5. Type of policy on testing 6. Free test coverage expansion 7. Hospitals (mechanical ventilators, additional ICU beds, protection equipment, temporary hospitals, others)
<p>E. Labor</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Labor protection 2. Elective work leave 3. Reduction of working hours 4. Prohibition of dismissal from work
<p>F. Movements across and within countries</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Restrictions or prohibition on the entry of foreign travelers 2. Border closures and controls 3. Border controls 4. Restriction or closure of public places and mass gatherings
<p>G. Social protection</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cash transfers 2. Food transfers / In-kind transfers 3. Guarantee of basic services

Source: Prepared by the authors, on the basis of [ECLAC, 2020](#)

To examine the 45 measures, elements of the 2030 Agenda and conceptual definitions were specified that considered both theoretical and practical cases registered by the countries in the COVID-19 Observatory³.

(See Glossary)

³ Each topic includes the option "Others", which corresponds to a series of actions that is not possible to categorize in defined subtopics due to their nature. For the purposes of this exercise and due to the diversity of actions reported in this subtopic, this option was not considered.



II.2. Targets of the 2030 Agenda

The 2030 Agenda is a roadmap for countries to move towards achieving sustainable development. Therefore, for this research, it was necessary to disaggregate the 169 targets of the 2030 Agenda, considering the scope and the main topic of each target.

Scope of the target (one-dimensional or multidimensional)

The targets of the 2030 Agenda can cover one or more dimensions according to their scope. For example, target 1.4 states: *“By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology, and financial services, including microfinance.”* This means a specific population group requires more than one measure or action to be covered by multiple rights, while target 1.1 declares: *“By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people and throughout the world”*, which specifies a single dimension.

The main topic of the target

All targets have a general topic that encompasses the different dimensions that compose it. As an example, target 2.3 states the following: *“By 2030, double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, in particular women, indigenous peoples, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers, including through secure and equal access to land, other productive resources, and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets and opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment.”* This target focuses on agricultural productivity and food income for specific population groups, which can be defined as “Small-scale agricultural production.”



II.3. Type of relationships between the measures and the targets of the 2030 Agenda

The targets of the 2030 Agenda represent a conceptual complexity as they are multidimensional and interconnected. Therefore, identifying their relationships with different phenomena, measures or other types of conjunctural situations demands the definition of objective criteria that allow reflecting on its impact and possible effects, in line with the economic, social, environmental, and political dynamics of a territory.

It is important to note that the actions taken by each country are dynamic and respond to the evolution of the pandemic. Therefore, a theoretical exercise was carried out, identifying the relationship between the measures⁴ (in which the actions were categorized) and the targets of the 2030 Agenda, which is not subject to the number of countries that have applied these measures in their territories.

For this analysis, four types of relationships were established between the contingency measures and the targets of the 2030 Agenda. The relationships were assigned 3 different values (directly related) and 0 (unrelated):

Directly related (3):

The measure has a direct impact on the entire targets of the 2030 Agenda (affects all the dimensions that make it up) in the immediate or short term. For example, cash transfers, corresponding to the Social Protection category, are directly related to target 1.1: *“By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere,*

currently measured as people living on less than \$1.25 a day” (one-dimensional). This target is framed positively, given that the delivery of this type of state aid has an immediate impact on citizens' income, reducing the risk that their income will be reduced to US \$ 1.25 per day.

⁴ The measures are fixed by grouping different actions with the same purpose.



Partially related (2):

The applied measure has a direct impact on one or more dimensions of the target, but not on all of them on the short term. For example, the **mandatory general quarantine**, corresponding to the Health category, is partially negatively related to target 10.7: *“Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-*

managed migration policies.” This target encompasses two dimensions. The first one refers to mobility, while the second is related to migration policies. In this case, the measure has led to different migrants returning to their countries of origin en masse due to the lack of job opportunities and the closure of public spaces. Therefore, the measure is associated only with the first dimension.

Indirectly related (1):

The main topics of both the applied measure and the target are isolated from each other at first glance. However, the measure could have a possible effect in the mid-term. For example, the measure **suspension of classes**, corresponding to the Education category, is indirectly related to target 2.2 *“By 2030, end all forms of malnutrition, including achieving, by 2025, the internationally agreed targets on stunting and wasting in children under 5 years of age, and address the nutritional*

needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women and older persons.” Given that a large majority of educational institutions are part of a school feeding programme, the most vulnerable students will not be able to access them due to the closure of these institutions. However, the impact on their health, particularly malnutrition, will not be reflected immediately but will be noticeable in the mid-term.

Unrelated (0):

The measure or action applied has no impact on the target or one of its elements in the short, medium, or long term. For example, the measure **Restriction or closure of public places and mass gatherings**, corresponding to Movements across and within countries, is unrelated

to target 3.1: *“By 2030, reduce the global maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 100,000 live births”,* given that not holding mass meetings or closing public places such as shopping centers does not involve actions focused on protecting the health of pregnant women.



II.4. Possible effects of the measures on the 2030 Agenda targets

In addition to identifying the relationship between contingency measures and targets, the possible effect that these measures could have on the targets of the 2030 Agenda was defined as either “positive” or “negative”. The possible effects do not show a definite relationship of the progress or regression towards the fulfillment of the targets of the 2030 Agenda, but rather, they are identified as an alert system regarding what a measure may imply for fulfilling the objective of each target.

Possible positive effects

Are associated with measures that allow progress towards meeting each of the targets of the 2030 Agenda which can guarantee at least sustaining the same levels achieved before the pandemic. For example, the measure “*Maintenance of the school feeding programme*”, corresponding to Education, has a positive effect on target 2.1 by reducing

the probability that the number of people suffering from hunger will increase: “*By 2030, end hunger and ensure access by all people, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations, including infants, to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round.*”

Possible negative effects

Are related to measures that may represent a risk of regression concerning the progress achieved in

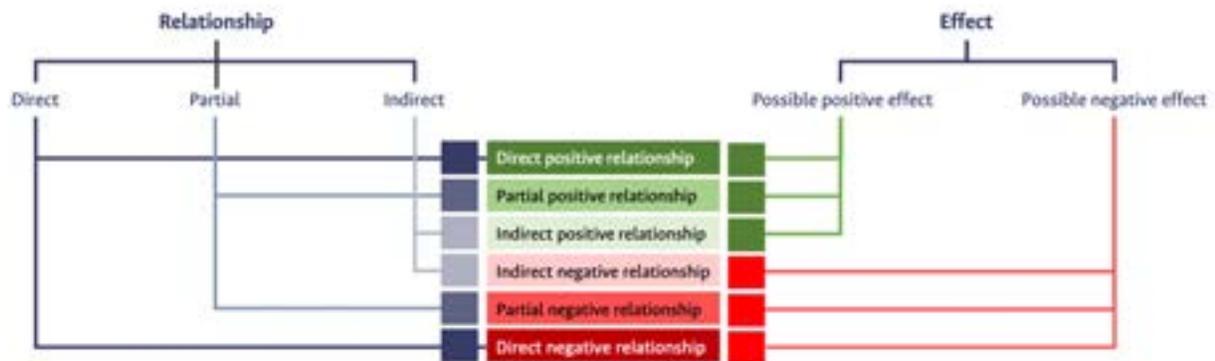
the targets before the pandemic. For example, *suspension from class* affects all SDG 4 targets.



II.5. How to read the results

The relationships and possible effects identified between the measures (in which the COVID-19 actions are classified) and targets of the 2030 Agenda are presented in topic templates, where all 169 targets are displayed in the rows, while the measures are presented in the columns. This brings an opportunity to identify the possible effect at their intersection sorted out by colors while their relationship (Direct, Partial, or Indirect) is displayed by the color tone.

Figure 1. Criteria for the relationship between measures and targets



Source: Prepared by the authors.

The green color is associated with measures that have a possible positive effect and the red color with those that have a possible negative effect on the target. In turn, each tone, from dark to light, indicates the relationship criterion between the measure and the target as described below:

Criteria

Directly related	3
Partially related	2
Indirectly related	1
Unrelated	0

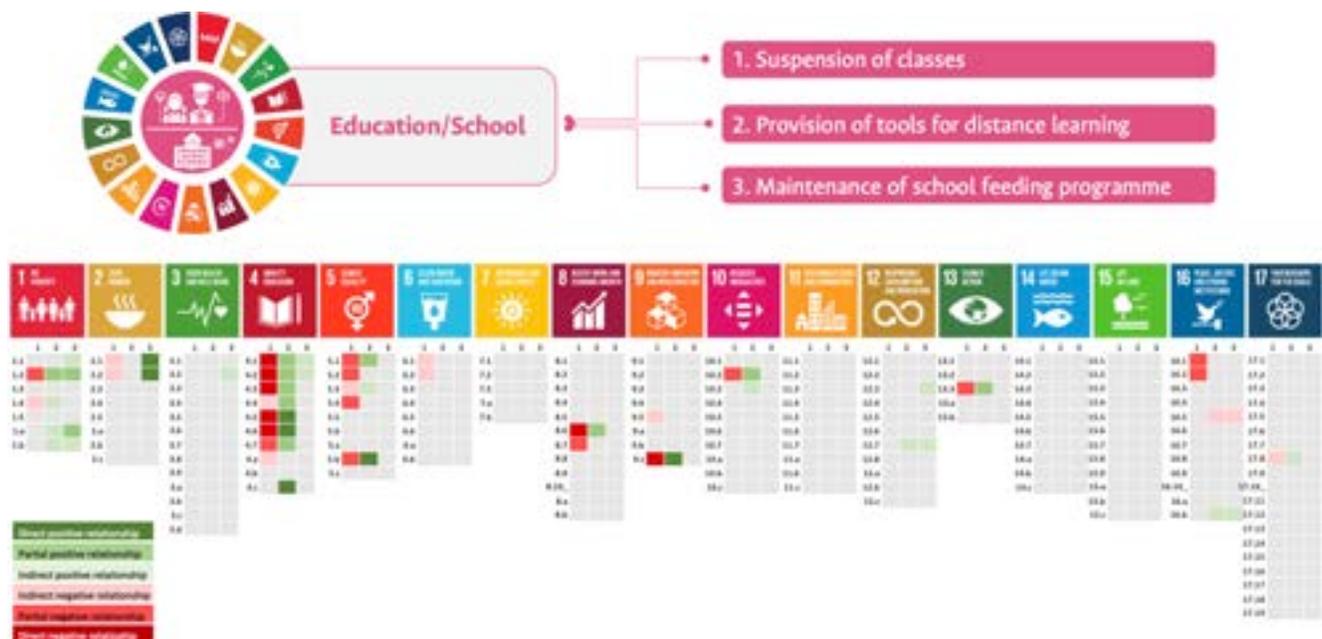
Possible effects

Possible positive effects	■
Possible negative effects	■



Figure 2 is an example of the above description. The topic is Education and it encompasses three measures: Suspension of classes, Provision of tools for distance learning, and Maintenance of school feeding programme, which are identified with the numbers 1 to 3 in each column. Direct relationships are associated with the darkest shades of green and red, while the lighter shades are associated with an indirect relationship. The gray boxes represent no relationships between the measures and the targets of the 2030 Agenda.

Figure 2. Template results - Educación topic



Source: Prepared by the authors.



III. Final thoughts

- This analysis is theoretical and follows a series of criteria designed to be objective regarding the relationship between contingency measures to mitigate the spread of the virus and reduce its negative consequences and the targets of the 2030 Agenda. However, there are different variables at stake that may modify the result of this exercise according to the critical perspective with which it is approached.
- Although the measures may have a positive relationship with the targets of the 2030 Agenda, this does not mean that COVID-19 is favorable for their achievement, much less for sustainable development. However, it does indicate that timely political decision-making can protect and strengthen actions that can help prevent the deterioration of the SDGs of the 2030 Agenda.
- Each measure itself has repercussions in multiple spheres at different times, which complicates its connection with the targets of the 2030 Agenda and the effects it may bring. In fact, each measure may require individual analysis to deepen its relationship with the SDGs.
- The implementation of some measures may imply both positive and negative effects from the perspective of the actor that is evaluated.
- In some cases, the targets can be very broad and may include different purposes for the same period. Therefore, measures can have a different impact on each purpose and hinder a consolidated result for the target.
- Overall, this work contributes to making well-informed decision-making within the “Build Back Better” proposal made by the UN Secretary-General, to create bridges between the targets of the 2030 Agenda and post-pandemic reconstruction measures.



Photo by Marcelo Renda, Pexels

