

# **A methodology to identify the alignment of South-South and Triangular Cooperation with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**



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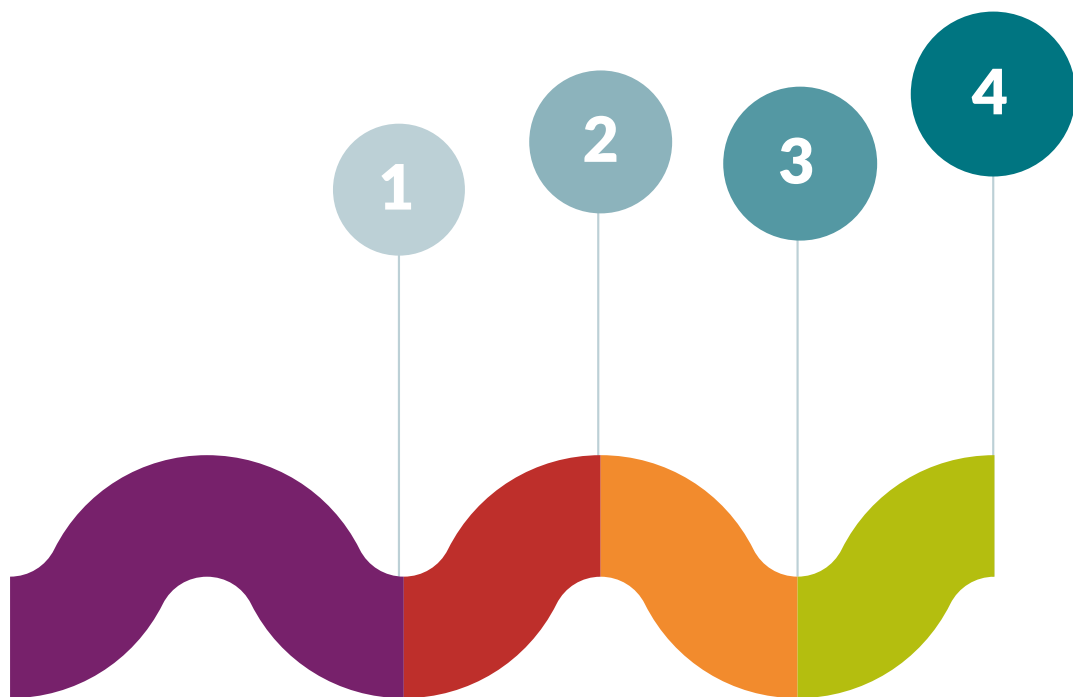
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I.

## INTRODUCTION

Ever since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, in the framework of the Millennium Agenda, to the present day, when the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development has laid the foundations that will guide national efforts until 2030 in the economic, social and environmental dimensions to achieve sustainable development, the Ibero-American space has made its commitment to these development agendas more than evident. From a very early stage, the region has included them as part of its documents, statements and practical exercises.

The 2030 Agenda has summoned the entire international community to place high value on its capacities and resources in pursuit of the achievement of multidimensional development, which is complex and ambitious. Ibero-America's broad experience in South-South Cooperation (SSC), its accumulated knowledge and shared capacities, as well as a horizontal working method based on consensus, certainly represent a distinctive asset for the implementation and achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) proposed in this agenda.



In this framework, and for over a decade, Ibero-American countries have been making significant progress on registering and reporting their SSC, demonstrating their commitment to development and revealing how the region can contribute to solve the new challenges each context demands. Thus, the Ibero-American space has worked, at the technical and political levels, in the development of both conceptual and methodological instruments aimed at improving SSC's management. At the same time, countries have made great efforts to make this type of cooperation visible, and to reveal how it contributes to development through its modalities, arrangements and features.

Ever since 2007, through the *Report on South-South and Triangular Cooperation in Ibero-America*, prepared by the Ibero-American General Secretariat (SEGIB by its Spanish acronym), supported by the Ibero-American Program for the Strengthening of South-South Cooperation (PIFCSS by its Spanish acronym), and financed by the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation for Development (AECID by its Spanish acronym), the region has been able to account for its work in this area, systematizing an enormous amount of information related to the number of projects they have implemented, capacities that have been strengthened, participating countries and SSC modalities, among other aspects.

Today, the new development agenda recognizes SSC as a means to advance the achievement of the SDGs, challenging the region to be able to account for the potential alignment of this cooperation with the SDGs. Completely consistent with its work trajectory, Ibero-America rises to this challenge and starts working on a methodology through which this task can be accomplished.

As a result of the political will and the technical efforts of the 22 Ibero-American countries supported by SEGIB and PIFCSS, this methodology was designed to guide the identification of the potential alignment of SSC and TC with the Sustainable Development Goals.

The following pages aim to describe the framework in which this decision was made, the collective work process that resulted in this product, its main characteristics, as well as its most significant strengths and the challenges that lie ahead.





## II.

# SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION IN IBERO-AMERICA AND ITS COMMITMENT TO DEVELOPMENT

For over a decade, Ibero-America has been one of the most experienced and dynamic regions in terms of SSC. Through this modality, Ibero-American countries found a way to establish effective partnerships in order to come up with their own solutions to common development problems, based on their national and collective capacities and on the principles of equality, solidarity, respect for sovereignty and non-interference in domestic affairs.

Already in the late 1970s, the countries of the South conceived Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (TCDC) as a powerful instru-



ment with the capacity to promote the exchange of experiences among nations with similar socio-historical characteristics and with common challenges. Therefore, from that moment on, and together with economic cooperation, financial cooperation and political dialogue, TCDC consolidated as one of the constituent elements of SSC, becoming the framework for collaborative work between countries of the global South.

During the decades after the 1970s to the present day, SSC has been gaining greater importance through a wide range of exchanges between States, in the framework of programs, projects and actions that have contributed to the resolution of specific problems in developing countries. This prominence is reflected in the acknowledgment this cooperation modality has gained in various global and regional development fora, and in the leading role it has played in the foreign policy agendas of the countries that carry it out.

In Ibero-America, this cooperation shows an essentially technical profile, focused on capacity building, on the exchange of experiences and institutional strengthening, making significant contributions to regional integration and to the strengthening of national public policies for development. This cooperation is based on horizontality and mutual benefit, and it has become a valuable instrument to identify shared challenges and to come up with common solutions.

Made-up of 19 countries from Latin-America and the Caribbean and 3 from the Iberian Peninsula, this region was able account for the richness and power horizontal partnerships between nations with different cooperation trajectories and development levels have. This distinctive characteristic, added to their dynamism and innovation, allowed these countries to create a platform for regional political and technical dialogue, unprecedented in other latitudes, and which, already at a very early stage, gave the region the capacity to have a voice in ongoing development agenda debates.

Thus, Ibero-America has been at the forefront of promoting a reflective dialogue between the international agenda and the agenda of the Ibero-American region, seeking a dialectical interpretation of both narratives. This way, both at the political and technical levels, the Ibero-American space has shown the greatest dynamism in terms of the generation of documents and conceptual debates on SSC, Triangular Cooperation and development, in the development of methodological instruments for cooperation management and instruments to register and systematize initiatives. Especially, the region has played a leading role in a huge diversity of exchanges of

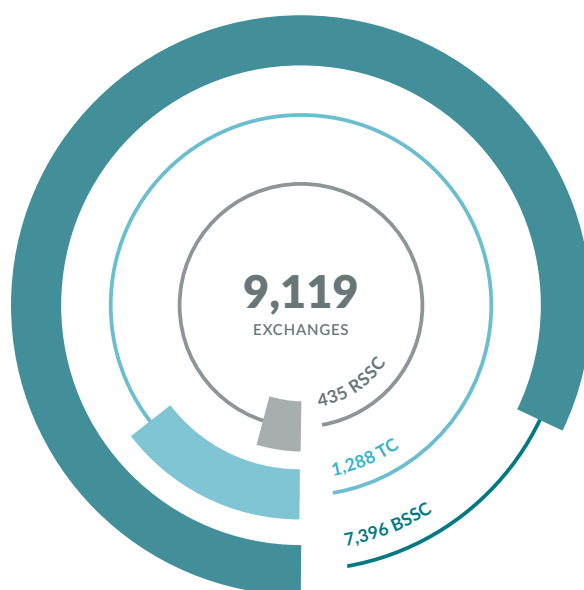
experiences among its member countries and with countries of other regions, such as Asia, Africa and the non-Ibero-American Caribbean.

The *Report on South-South and Triangular Cooperation in Ibero-America*, prepared by SEGIB, supported by PIFCSS and financed by AECID, stands out among the region's main attributes. This instrument to register, systematize, analyze and disseminate SSC has been a groundbreaker at the international level and has served as an inspiration for other regions, such as Africa, in their efforts to generate their own information and systematize their experiences.

The Report was originally launched in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century as the region's response to the new framework imposed by the Millennium Agenda. As a result of its publication, Ibero-American countries have managed not only to make the initiatives they implement and their contribution to development visible, but have also shed light on common positions and visions on SSC and the International Development Agenda.

Ever since its first edition in 2007, the Report has accounted for more than 9,000 South-South, Triangular and Regional cooperation initiatives implemented in the region (Graph 1). These are based on respect for each country's values, culture, history and local features, and on their national policies and priorities.

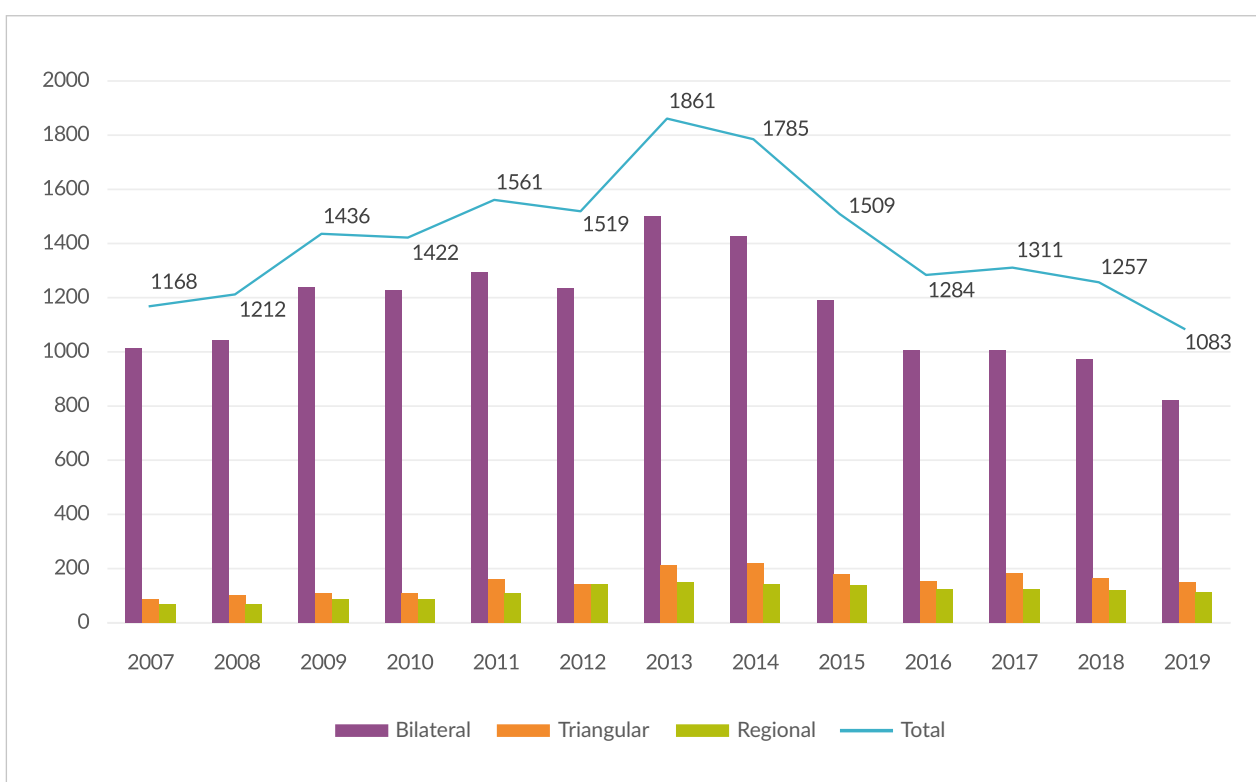
**Graph 1.** South-South and Triangular Cooperation initiatives in which Ibero-American countries have participated together with the rest of the world, by modality (2006-2019). In units.



Source: [www.informesursur.org](http://www.informesursur.org)

Each edition of the Report has made progress in terms of indicators, resources, and statistical and graphic techniques, enabling a more precise and sophisticated characterization of the cooperation executed by Ibero-American countries. Since 2007, when this registration and systematization exercise began, this cooperation has shown an irregular but sustained behavior (Graph 2). All the programs, projects and actions that have been executed over the years, in each of the SSC modalities recognized in this space (Bilateral, Triangular and Regional), are evidence of these countries' commitment to this type of partnerships.

**Graph 2.** Evolution of South-South and Triangular Cooperation initiatives in which Ibero-American countries participated, by modality (2007-2019). In units.



Source: SEGIB based on Agencies and Directorates-General for Cooperation.

Since 2015, when the 2030 Agenda, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction were adopted, Ibero-American countries have been working, at the political and technical levels, to include SSC in the general framework of international cooperation, and to analyze its alignment with the new development agenda.



In recent years, and to demonstrate the region's firm commitment to make SSC visible and account for its contribution to solve development problems, Ibero-American countries, together with SEGIB and PIFCSS, focused their efforts on designing and implementing an online and regional data platform on SSC. The Ibero-American Integrated Data System on South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SIDICSS by its Spanish acronym) is the first and only online platform designed by a developing region that enables data registration, storage, analysis and reporting.

Among other features, SIDICSS allows the association of each SSC initiative implemented over the past ten years (and after) with one of the 30 activity sectors recognized in the Ibero-American space: *Education, Health, Population and reproductive health, Water supply and sanitation, Other services and social policies, Energy, Transportation and storage, Communications, Science and technology, Banking and finance, Employment, Enterprises, Extractive, Agriculture and livestock, Forestry, Fisheries, Construction, Industry, Tourism, Trade, Strengthening institutions and public policies, Management of public finances, Legal and judicial development and Human Rights, Political participation and civil society, Peace, public and national security and defense, Environment, Disaster management, Culture, Gender and Other*. It also provides information regarding the sectors on which cooperation is mostly focused and on those which do not receive as much attention, while it is also possible to identify countries with the greatest accumulation of experience in certain matters.

Both SIDICSS and the *Report on South-South and Triangular Cooperation in Ibero-America* have a great potential to analyze initiatives implemented by the region in light of the new development agenda. Accordingly, through these two instruments, it is possible to make progress on the identification of the possible contribution Ibero-America can make, through its SSC, to the achievement of the SDGs.

Indeed, Ibero-American countries have been accumulating a great amount of experiences, shared through SSC, which represent a differential asset for the implementation of the SDGs. The areas addressed by the 17 SDGs are sectors in which Ibero-American countries have been working together for decades. This calls them to identify their greatest strengths and those strategic matters that have high impact on sustainable development in the region, in order to stress the role of SSC and TC in those areas in which they have comparative advantages for the achievement of the SDGs.

In short, the region was summoned to account for its contribution to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, and Ibero-America is committed to face this challenge.



### III.

## WHY WAS AN IBERO-AMERICAN METHODOLOGY DESIGNED?

As mentioned in the previous section, the Ibero-American space has been at the forefront of establishing a productive dialogue between the international agenda and the Ibero-American agenda. Through the consecutive cooperation Reports, and by playing a leading role in various technical and political fora, this region has been innovative on debates on matters such as the principles on which South-South and Triangular Cooperation are based, and the contribution of middle-income countries to development. It has also questioned the economic-based criterion of per capita income to measure development, and has promoted the need to not exclude mid-



le-income, high-income and “graduated” countries from official development assistance, among others aspects.

Once the 2030 Agenda was adopted in 2015, Ibero-American countries rapidly recognized the narrative on development was starting to change, and they dedicated their efforts to work on what this new context required. Thus, in the *Report on South-South Cooperation in Ibero-America 2016*, the region suggests an assessment of the results and lessons learned after the Millennium Agenda, which was in force between 2000 and 2015. This exercise already lays the foundations to reconsider the region’s role in the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. Ibero-American countries’ longstanding and fruitful experience in South-South and Triangular Cooperation places the region in a privileged position to start a reflective exercise to analyze the contribution of this type of cooperation to the achievement of the Agenda and its 17 SDGs.

The Development Agenda adopted in 2015 recognizes SSC as a means of implementation and, therefore, as an effective instrument for the achievement of the SDGs. Accordingly, in 2019, on the 40th anniversary of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action (BAPA), the founding milestone of SSC, the international community highlighted the contribution of this cooperation modality to countries’ development.

These acknowledgements further enhanced the region’s already clear will to develop a common position, to have a collective voice in terms of the role Ibero-American countries play in the new international context, and to provide evidence of this commitment.

Since 2016, during different political meetings (Ordinary Meeting of Ibero-American Heads of Cooperation and PIFCSS Intergovernmental Council) countries focused on translating this will into a specific methodological instrument, compatible with SIDICSS, to support countries and SEGIB in the identification of the possible contribution of SSC initiatives to the SDGs. To this end, and to start working on the development of an innovative methodology, aligned with the new 2030 Agenda, a Working Group was initially formed. Argentina, Spain, Guatemala, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay took part of this group, together with PIFCSS and SEGIB.

In addition, two technical workshops (“The contribution of South-South Cooperation to the Sustainable Development Goals - SDGs: defining a methodology from Ibero-America”) were organized, based on the results of this Group’s work. The first

one was held in Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic), in September 2018, and the second one, in Montevideo (Uruguay), in April 2019.

The purpose of these meetings was to make concrete progress on defining an Ibero-American methodology to determine the possible alignment/contribution of South-South cooperation projects, programs and actions in which the region participates, with/to the achievement of the SDGs. This task was collectively undertaken from the very beginning and, as usual, was based on consensus. In this sense, countries began a first reflection on the SDGs, the 2030 Agenda and SSC, its characteristics and defining features.

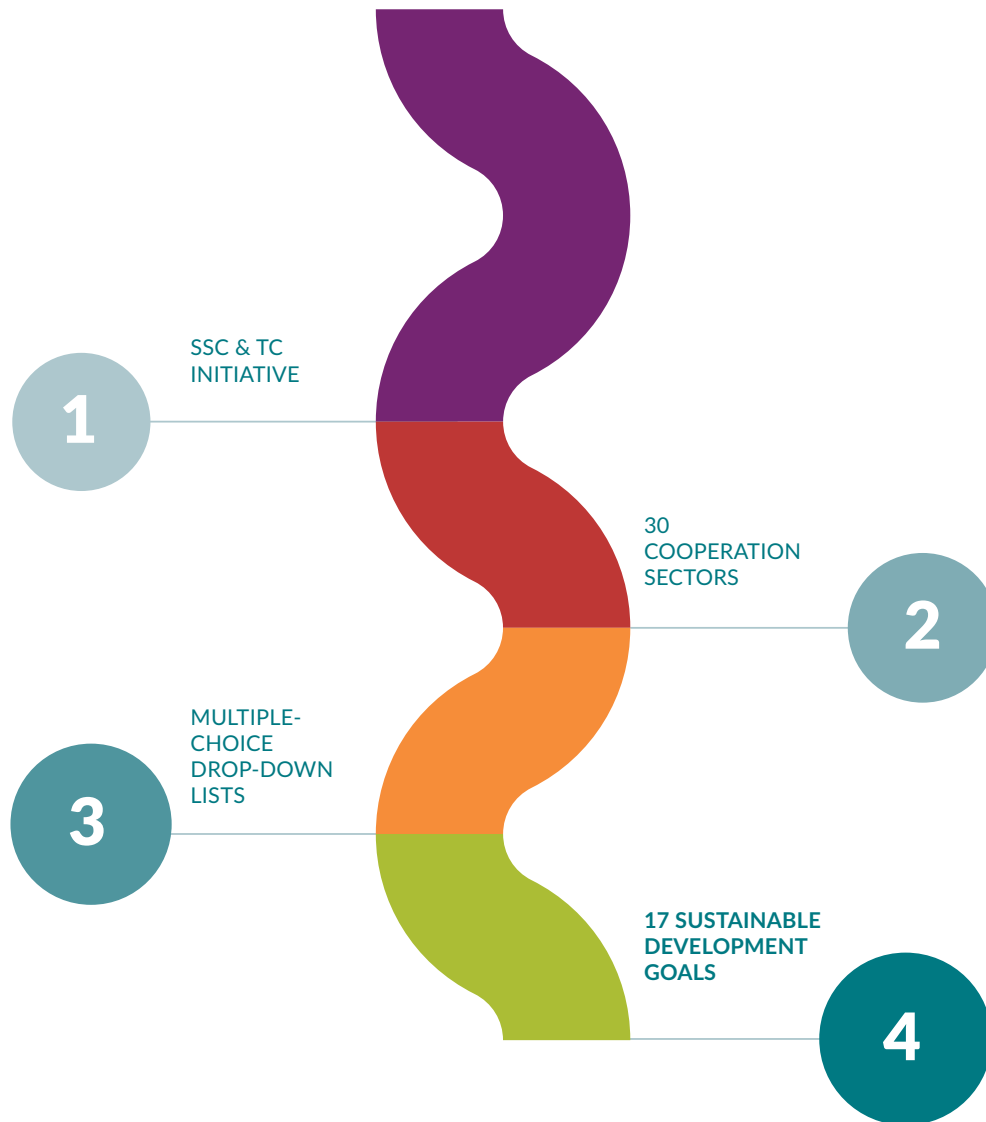
Throughout the whole process, a consensus was reached on certain conditions and characteristics this instrument should comply with. First, it was decided to work on a methodology that would *guide* and facilitate the identification of the SDG(s) that could potentially be aligned with ongoing initiatives. For this reason, this methodology would not become an instrument to assess or measure SSC's contribution or impact on the SDGs. The aim was to develop a methodology that could be applied to initiatives that were still under execution and which final impact was unknown.

In addition, and as the region has always done, work was constantly carried out in a collective and horizontal manner, agreeing that those who sovereignly define the potential link between SSC initiatives and the SDGs are the countries themselves. Ultimately, this methodology facilitates this association through a standardized method.

Likewise, during all the process and in order to easily identify the related SDG, countries recognized the need to design a logical and simple methodology, where cooperation "initiatives" were the starting point. This process is shown in Graph 3 below and will be described in detail in the next section. On the other hand, and considering the complexity of the 2030 Agenda, the aim was to design a methodology that was as intuitive as possible, so that whoever is associating the initiative with the SDGs can do so without the need of a thorough knowledge of the Agenda.

As a result of this process, an Ibero-American methodology was developed which not only meets the initially proposed objectives, but that can also be used for other exercises to align national plans, budgets, programs, etc., with the 2030 Agenda, and it can also serve as support for national experiences which are currently underway in the region.

Graph 3. Steps of the guiding methodology.



Source: SEGIB (2020).

In short, and consistent with their usual practice, Ibero-American countries collectively defined an **Ibero-American methodology** which has the following main features:

**Chart 1:** Main features of the Ibero-American methodology.

<p><b>A GUIDING METHODOLOGY</b></p>	<p>The purpose is to guide and/or facilitate the association of South-South and Triangular Cooperation initiatives with the SDG(s) with which they could potentially be aligned. It can be applied to cooperation that has already been implemented, but it is generally recommended for initiatives that are under execution, where an SDG has not previously been associated.</p>
<p><b>COUNTRIES ARE ITS MAIN USERS</b></p>	<p>The use of this methodology does not affect or modify any categorization made by countries themselves, but rather provides them with an instrument to make this exercise easier, with standardized information which may not be available when initiatives are being registered in SIDICSS.</p>
<p><b>BASED ON A PERMANENT COLLECTIVE WORK</b></p>	<p>Collective work, ongoing dialogue and the necessary adoption of consensus allow countries to feel identified with the methodology, ensuring appropriation.</p>
<p><b>AN INTUITIVE INSTRUMENT</b></p>	<p>This instrument guides the identification of the association between cooperation and SDGs in the most intuitive way. The person who carries out this exercise does not need to have a thorough knowledge of the specificities of the 2030 Agenda.</p>
<p><b>DESIGNED TO FOLLOW LOGICAL STEPS</b></p>	<p>Given that SSC initiatives are the starting point, it is relatively easy to follow the different steps to identify the SDG(s) with which cooperation could potentially be aligned.</p>
<p><b>REPLICABLE</b></p>	<p>The methodology can be used for other national and regional exercises to identify, for example, the alignment of a budget or a national development plan with the SDGs. Thus, it can support some national efforts that are already underway.</p>

Source: SEGIB





## IV.

# THE ROAD TO AN IBERO-AMERICAN METHODOLOGY

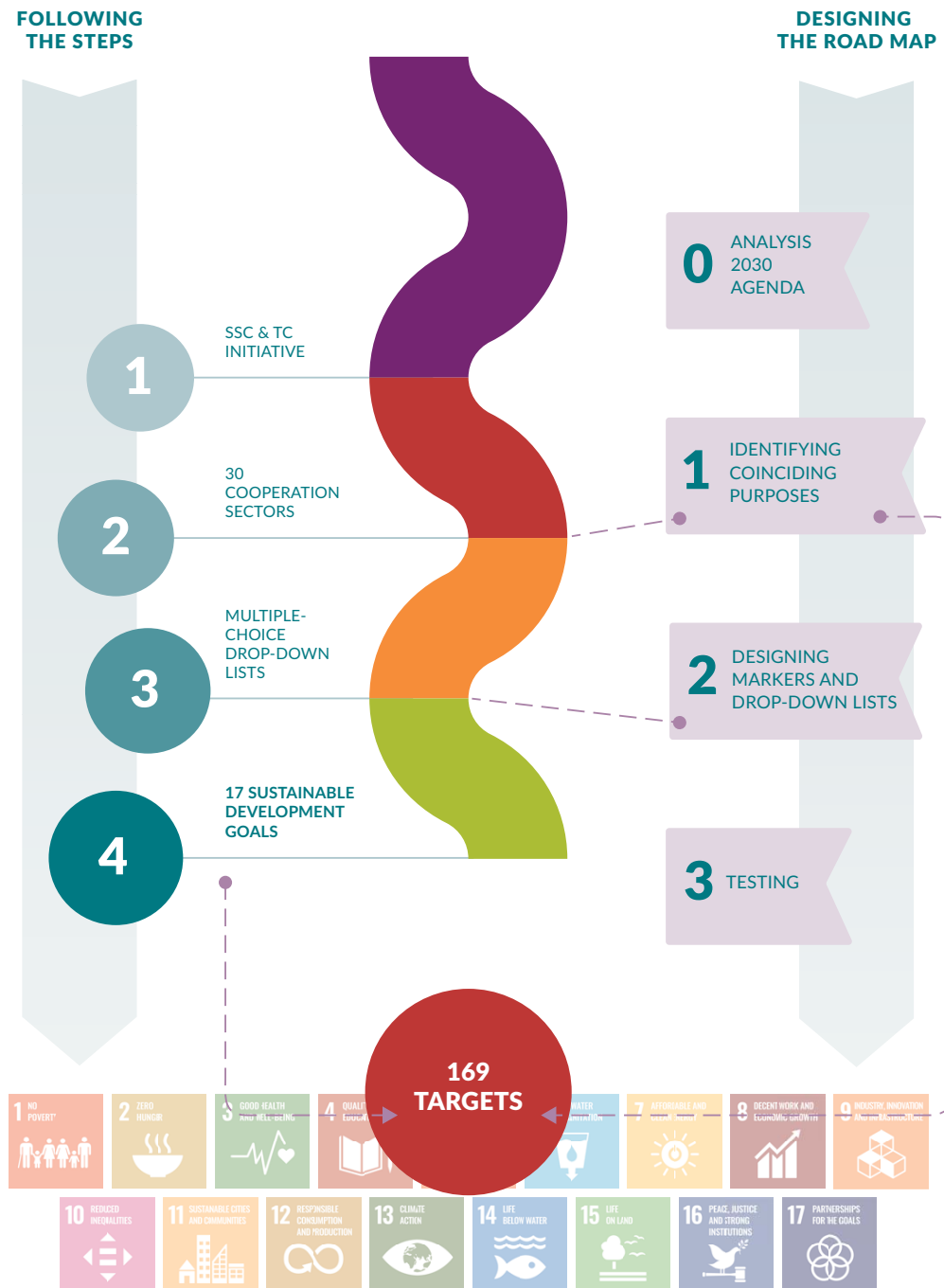
The methodology on which Ibero-American countries worked was developed on the basis of a shared process organized around a series of **stages**, **tasks** and **outcomes**. In this sense, and considering the collective nature of the exercise, it is relevant to describe the characteristics of each of these stages, the tasks that were developed throughout them, how these tasks were distributed among the different stakeholders, and what the final outcomes were. The purpose of this fruitful work process was to provide an instrument to facilitate the identification of possible alignments of South-South and Triangular Cooperation with the SDGs.



## STAGES AND TASKS OF A COLLECTIVE PROCESS

Graph 4 shows the “steps” that should be followed when using the methodology. It also describes the stages that were defined to design it and to generate the following sequence: **(1) SSC initiative - (2) activity sector - (3) drop-down list - (4) SDGs.**

**Graph 4.** Stages for the collective design.



Source: SEGIB (2020).

The design of this road map, together with its stages, tasks and outcomes, was decided, agreed upon and validated by the Ibero-American countries in the framework of the work carried out by the Working Group and during the two technical workshops “The contribution of South-South Cooperation to the Sustainable Development Goals - SDGs: defining a methodology from Ibero-America”, respectively held in September 2018, in Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic), and in April 2019, in Montevideo (Uruguay).

The stages that were developed as part of the exercise are detailed below.

## Stage 0. Understanding and interpreting the 2030 agenda

As mentioned above, the complexity of the 2030 Agenda, the interrelationship between the SDGs and the role played by the Targets are so important that the process to design the methodology required a Stage 0, when both the Targets and the SDGs that make-up the 2030 Agenda were analyzed in order to define the most appropriate methodological criteria for the exercise.

Indeed, the 2030 Agenda is highly complex, consisting of 17 SDGs and 169 targets which are strongly interrelated. Both Goals and Targets aim to convey the multidimensional approach (economic, social and environmental) to development and the necessary and permanent dialogue between these multiple dimensions. This is why the SDGs and their targets are so interconnected.

This preliminary phase was carried out by analyzing the different components of the Agenda from a dual perspective. On the one hand, by addressing the **interconnection between the targets, between these and the SDGs, and between the SDGs themselves**. This is an analysis that has been intensively implemented in the framework of the United Nations itself; the document prepared by Le Blanc in 2015 for UNDESA, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, confirms the above.

In fact, the most common case is that targets are only associated with the SDG for which they were conceived. On other occasions, however, they are connected with each other and with several SDGs at the same time. As a result, the 17 SDGs also appear to be interrelated, to different extents.

On the other hand, this stage included the analysis of matters related to Targets' contents and their wording. In this sense, it is essential not only to consider the important role they play, but also to address the methodological challenge of inter-

preting the 169 targets associated with the SDGs. For example, some targets focus their purpose on what to achieve, while others concentrate on how to achieve it. Some emphasize their qualitative nature, while others stand out for their quantitative features; some are very restrictive, as they apply only to a certain group of countries or people, and some others fail to clearly relate to the SDG with which they are associated.

Based on the above, the implementation of this preliminary phase, or Stage 0, enabled to reach a consensus on a series of **methodological criteria**, which should be mentioned.

First, in order to reflect the complexity and specificities of cooperation initiatives, it was concluded that it would be appropriate to try to **identify not only the main SDG with which initiatives could be aligned, but to also chose a second one**. As will be further detailed, choosing a “second” SDG will enable a deeper and more accurate analysis of the association between SSC initiatives and the SDGs.

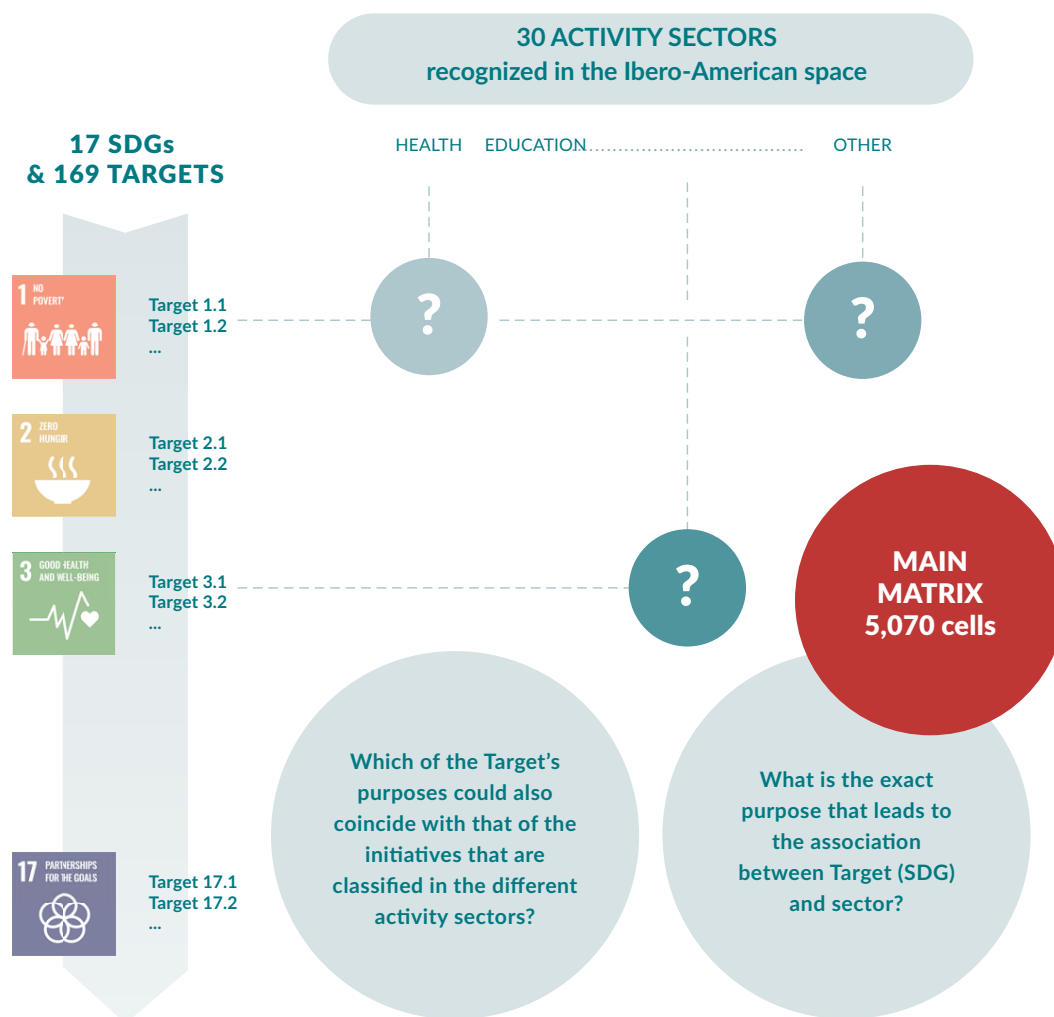
Second, the interpretation of the Targets was carried out, on the one hand, **by focusing on the end (what) and not on the means (how)**; and, on the other hand, by **flexibly interpreting the restrictions they include**, thus, adjusting their interpretation to the reality of the region and its cooperation processes.

## Stage 1: identifying “coincidences” between targets and sectors

The purpose of this first stage is to identify coincidences between the 169 Targets, interpreted according to the criteria that was described above, and the 30 activity sectors which are recognized in the Ibero-American space and were mentioned in section 2.

The aim is to design a “**coincidences matrix**” which, as shown in Graph 5, is plotted by vertically arranging the 169 Targets and horizontally enlisting the 30 activity sectors which are recognized in the Ibero-American space. The exercise is carried out by analyzing each Target and each Sector while answering the following question: *Can the purpose of Target X potentially match that of the SSC initiative that is categorized in Sector Y?* If there is no match, the cell remains empty. If, however, there is a match, it is necessary to specify the exact purpose that leads to this association between the Target (SDG) and the Sector.

Graph 5. Stage 1. How to identify coinciding purposes





Source: SEGIB (2020)

Thus, if a Target's main purpose is "to ensure access by all people (...) to safe, nutritious and sufficient food", it could be possible to identify SSC initiatives in the *Health, Agriculture and livestock, Fisheries and Industry* sectors which might have the same aim.

However, it is necessary to mention that some SDGs deserve a specific approach to avoid possibly "over-dimensioning" their potential alignment, either because of their nature or due to their particular association with SSC. Specifically, **SDG 1 No poverty; SDG 16 Peace, justice and strong institutions and SDG 17 Partnerships for the goals**, meet both these criteria. Chart 2 explains why a special approach was needed for each of these SDGs, as well as the adopted criteria for their analysis.

**Chart 2.** Criteria to analyze SDG 1, 16 and 17.

SDG	WHY IT REQUIRES A DIFFERENT APPROACH?	AGREED CRITERIA
	<p>This is a very broad and cross-cutting goal that can be related to almost any sector.</p>	<p>So as to avoid “over-dimensioning” this SDG, countries chose to be restrictive in its analysis. In order to establish the potential alignment of a SSC initiative with SDG 1, the initiative’s main aim must be very explicitly related to the fight against poverty and/or be directly addressing the poor population.</p>
	<p>Strengthening public institutions is one of the main aims of our region’s SSC. The question that therefore arises is: Is SSC always having an impact on SDG 16 when it contributes to strengthen public institutions (although this might not be its main purpose)?</p>	<p>Countries considered that automatically associating SSC initiatives which contribute to strengthen public institutions with SDG 16 could generate an “over-dimension” of this connection. Thus, they chose to be “restrictive”, once again, and consider Target 16.6, which explicitly refers to the development and strengthening of “effective institutions”, as a guideline.</p>

	<p>This SDG includes all aspects related to the strengthening of South-South and Triangular Cooperation and International Cooperation itself, and it recognizes them as Means of Implementation.</p>	<p>Once again, to avoid “over-dimensioning” this SDG, and given that its Targets are organized in different areas, countries decided that efforts should be focused on the potential alignment of SSC with the Targets that are related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finance</li> <li>• Technology</li> <li>• Capacity building</li> <li>• Partnerships</li> <li>• Data and Accountability</li> </ul>
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Source: SEGIB (2020)

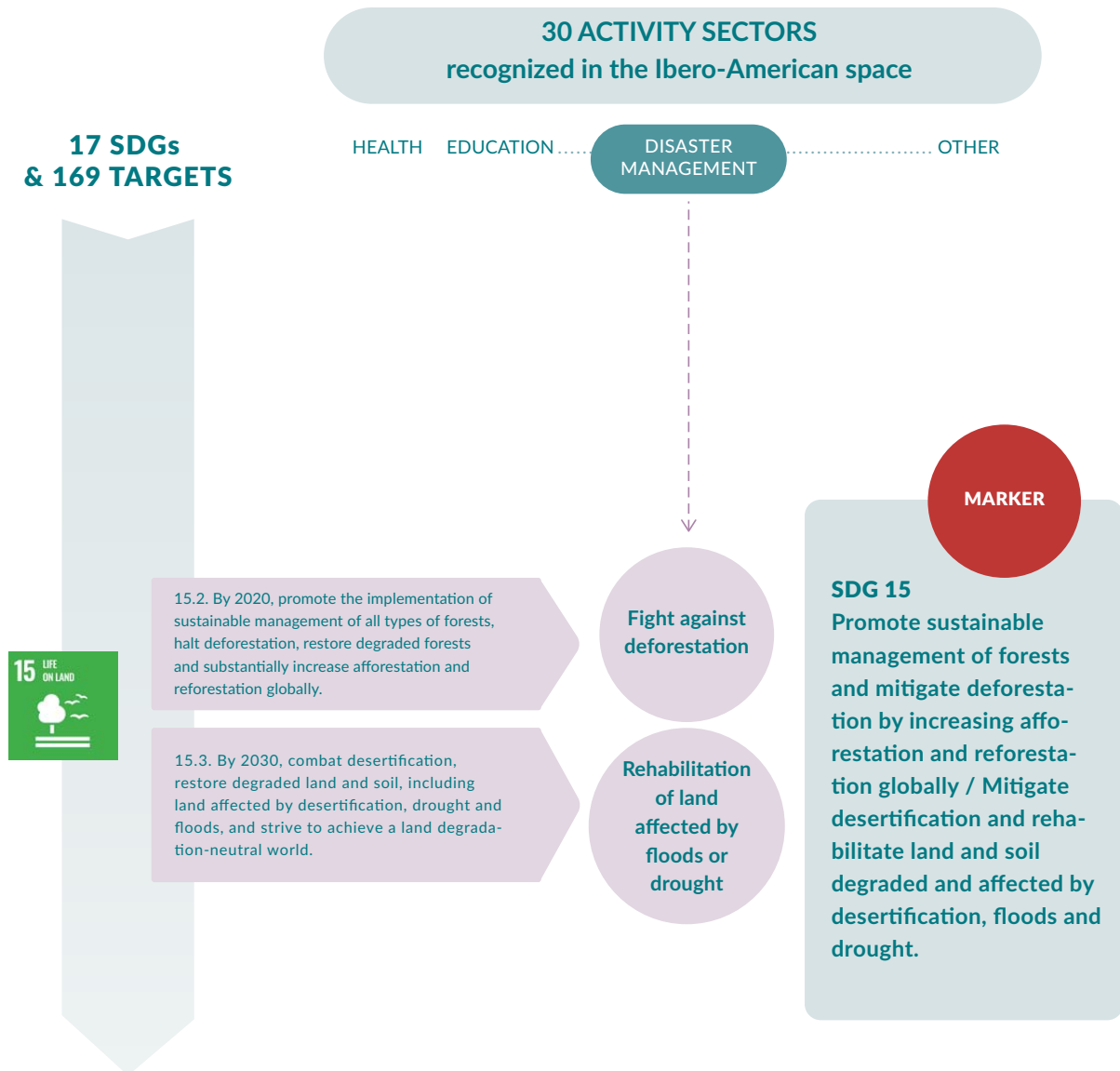
It should be noted that this was one of the most demanding stages of this whole process, since matching each target with each sector required plotting a matrix of more than 5,000 cells.

## Stage 2. Designing multiple-choice drop-down lists

The exercise carried out during this stage was based on the matrix that was designed in the previous phase. The aim was to set a series of **markers and 30 multiple-choice drop-down lists, which are associated with the 30 activity sectors** that are recognized in Ibero-America. Graph 6 illustrates and summarizes the process very clearly.

The first step of this exercise was to create the different “markers”. Graph 6 shows the example of the *Disaster management* sector, where one of the coincidences can be identified in Targets 15.2 and 15.3, associated with SDG 15, Life on land. This link can be established through those SSC initiatives that, classified in the Disaster management sector, could be potentially contributing to “fight against deforestation” (Target 15.2) and/or to the “rehabilitation of land affected by floods or drought” (Target 15.3).

**Graph 6.** Setting a “marker”: the case of Disaster management and SDG 15.



Source: SEGIB (2020)

In line with the above, the “marker” is the result of the combination of both Targets. Each “marker” is unique and, in this case, it must provide the option to identify the potential alignment of a SSC initiative with SDG 15. The final wording that would reflect this potential alignment would be that shown in Graph 7, “*Promote sustainable management of forests and mitigate deforestation by increasing afforestation and reforestation globally / Mitigate desertification and rehabilitate land and soil degraded and affected by desertification, floods and drought*”. As demonstrated, what is sought is for the marker **to recreate the wording of the target, in a way that the existing alignment can be clearly identified.**



The next step of the process is to design the multiple-choice drop-down lists for each sector. In other words, all the markers that were set for each sector (up to a maximum of 17, since there are 17 SDGs) are grouped together, as shown in Graph 7.

**Graph 7.** Multiple-choice drop-down list: an example based on the Disaster management sector.

**DISASTER MANAGEMENT**

The initiative can potentially be aligned with...

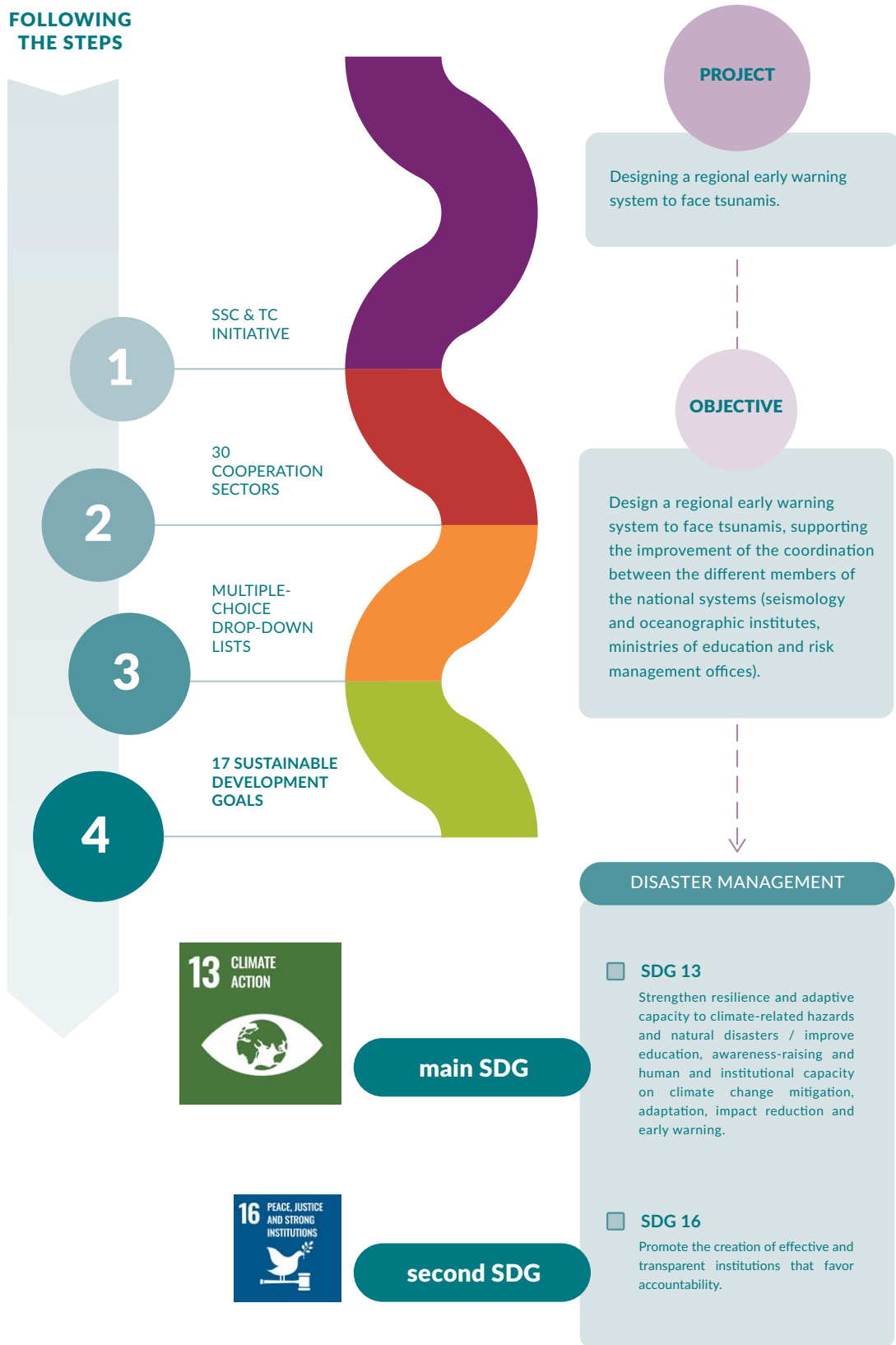
- SDG 1**  
Promote the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations in the face of extreme events.
- SDG 2**  
Ensure sustainable food production and resilience in the face of extreme events, and improve land and soil quality.
- SDG 4**  
Increase the technical and professional skills of youth and adults to access employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship / promote access to higher education programs, especially through scholarships.
- SDG 5**  
Reduce inequality in women's access to prevention and resilience measures in the face of extreme events.
- SDG 9**  
Develop resilient infrastructure and affordable and equitable access for all.
- SDG 10**  
Reduce inequality within and among countries.
- SDG 11**  
Ensure access to safe and resilient housing and upgrade slums / contribute to reduce the number of deaths and economic losses caused by disasters, with a focus on protecting the poor and people in vulnerable situations.
- SDG 13**  
Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters / improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning.
- SDG 14**  
Manage and protect marine and coastal ecosystems, including by strengthening their resilience and restoration.
- SDG 15**  
Promote sustainable management of forests and mitigate deforestation by increasing afforestation and reforestation globally / Mitigate desertification and rehabilitate land and soil degraded and affected by desertification, floods and drought.
- SDG 16**  
Promote the creation of effective and transparent institutions that favor accountability.

Source: SEGIB (2020)

### Stage 3. Testing, application and methodological adjustments

Once the markers have been set and associated with the 30 multiple-choice drop-down lists, it is possible to test the methodology in order to verify how it operates, to check its coherence and review the adopted criteria, making the necessary adjustments and modifications

**Graph 8.** Multiple-choice drop-down list: an example based on the Disaster management sector.



Source: SEGIB (2020)

Graph 8 illustrates the different steps to apply the methodology using the same case as an example. It shows how the project's key objective (*Design a regional early warning system to face tsunamis*), is potentially aligned with SDG 13, Climate Action, which thus becomes the main SDG. On the other hand, the project also aims at strengthening national institutions related to early warning systems. Hence, it could also be potentially aligned with a second SDG: SDG 16 Peace, justice and strong institutions.

Although choosing a second SDG is not necessarily required during the process, the *Report on South-South Cooperation in Ibero-America 2018* revealed that almost 60% of SSC initiatives were potentially aligned with more than one SDG. In this sense, considering a second SDG will allow a more accurate analysis of the implemented initiatives.



V.

## THE METHODOLOGY: STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES AHEAD

The design of the methodology that has been described throughout these pages, which aim is to guide the identification of the potential alignment of South-South and Triangular Cooperation with the Sustainable Development Goals, has been a collective process led by the Ibero-American countries together with SEGIB and PIFCSS.

Along the way, it was possible to identify some of its main strengths, as well as the challenges its implementation and application still face, which are further detailed in Chart 3.



The strengths that were identified are based on three main concepts.

First, **users**. The intuitive application of the methodology, together with the fact that no additional information is required and that it focuses on SSC initiatives and not on the 2030 Agenda, make this methodology not only useful but also user-friendly.

Second, **results**. The proposed alternative to identify not only the main SDG but also a second one, enables a better and deeper understanding of SSC initiative's particular features. This means moving forwards towards multidimensional development.

Finally, the **collective process** behind the design of this methodology provides it with a high degree of legitimacy and robustness, facilitating countries' appropriation.

As for the challenges, it is also possible to identify two differentiated categories.

First, those which directly affect the methodology. As this process is essentially a systematization exercise, one of the challenges this methodology might face is that its design and application may not be suitable for all cases, although it should cover as many as possible. The very essence of cooperation may lead to the existence of initiatives that, due to their particular or innovative characteristics, do not fit this methodology's logic. In this sense, alternatives should be generated to allow and facilitate flexibility in its application.

Second, there are other challenges, which can be considered external. In this case, it is very important to consider the quality of the information related to SSC initiatives, a challenge that transcends all methodologies and represents a key element for the Ibero-American space.

**Chart 3. Main strengths and challenges.**

<p><b>STRENGTHS</b></p>	<p>The information regarding the sector in which SSC initiatives are classified is required for their registration in SIDICSS, so it is always available.</p>
	<p>The use of “markers” represents a methodological resource, as they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make the methodology intuitive and user-friendly.</li> <li>• Reduce the options (Targets) to choose from, as well as the degree of subjectivity with which the alignment is established.</li> <li>• Ensure the user is not required to have a thorough knowledge of the 2030 Agenda, but rather of the SSC initiative.</li> </ul>
	<p>The use of a multiple-choice system means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is no need to provide “new information” regarding the SSC initiative. It allows users to decide considering the available options and based on data they already have.</li> <li>• The analysis is not limited to the alignment of the initiatives with a single SDG. It is also possible to identify a second one, which adds new perspectives and enriches the final interpretation of the result.</li> </ul>
	<p>Legitimacy and robustness given by its collective design process.</p>
<p><b>CHALLENGES</b></p>	<p>As this process is essentially a systematization exercise, one of the challenges this methodology might face is that its design and application may not be suitable for all cases, although it should cover as many as possible. The very essence of cooperation may lead to the existence of initiatives that, due to their particular or innovative characteristics, do not fit this methodology’s logic. In this sense, alternatives should be generated to allow and facilitate flexibility in its application.</p>
	<p>It is essential to improve the quality of the information on SSC initiatives, especially in terms of the title and the objectives they address.</p>

	<p>The correct application of the methodology is highly dependent on how SSC is categorized in the different activity sectors. In this sense, it is especially relevant to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Improve the association between SSC and sector, which is not always direct and does not always coincide with that made by the country, which might have its own classification at the national level.</li><li>• Continue working to limit the contents of the sectoral classification used in the Ibero-American space which, like almost all these classifications and in spite of having been agreed upon by all countries, can always be improved.</li></ul>
	<p>The need to agree on its transition to the Ibero-American Integrated Data System on South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SIDICSS).</p>

Source: SEGIB (2020)

Apart from those mentioned above, transferring the methodology to the Ibero-American Integrated Data System on South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SIDICSS) was the most outstanding challenge.

Although the methodology was conceived already bearing in mind its potential implementation in SIDICSS and considering the resources provided by the system itself, its transition to the platform posed a major challenge, without great technical difficulties, but which implied a large number of IT development hours. It should be added that, when this document was published, the methodology had been successfully implemented in SIDICSS and was already being used by the countries.

Likewise, it is essential to consider one of the key elements that has been mentioned throughout this document: this methodology is meant to be a guideline to be used and implemented in a flexible way, so users can feel free to apply it and select the SDG with which SSC initiatives are potentially aligned.

In this sense, SIDICSS offers two possibilities to apply the methodology, i.e. two possible options. The first and direct option is meant to be used by countries that have already made progress on identifying the possible SDG and can therefore specify it without further complications. On the other hand, there is an indirect option, which



could be used by those countries that have not yet done this analysis but can use the methodology as a guide.

Finally, it is important to mention that both the strengths and the challenges that were detailed above were specifically identified from a technical perspective. However, they also allow a necessary political assessment. In this sense, despite the collective process to design this methodology is considered to be an asset and should be highlighted, it is necessary keep up efforts to ensure all Ibero-American countries can be able to apply it on equal terms. Hence, this methodology also has the challenge of “leaving no one behind”.



# VI.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Previous pages have sought to present and facilitate a better understanding of this new methodology, designed by Ibero-America, which propose is to guide the identification of the potential alignment of South-South and Triangular Cooperation with the SDGs.

A review of the original context and the political framework in which the decision to move forward was made, reveals this is not an isolated exercise, but is rather part of Ibero-America's traditional commitment to development and of its constant effort to account for the work that the 22 countries carry out, through SSC, in all its modalities.

Today, the region counts with an unprecedented and innovative instrument that will strengthen the dialogue between SSC and the 2030 Agenda by facilitating the generation of data, information and reports that provide quality evidence for any analysis of Ibero-American SSC and its contribution to development.



This instrument is the result of a conscious, collective and horizontal work carried out by all Ibero-America. Its design process is certainly its added value. However, there are still great challenges ahead, challenges that appear as we move forward. The *Report on South-South and Triangular Cooperation in Ibero-America*, SIDICSS, this methodology and its recent incorporation into SIDICSS, represent more than substantial progress.

This progress poses new challenges. The necessary improvement in terms of the quality of the information and the possibility for all countries to apply this methodology on equal terms could be identified among the most urgent ones.

There is no doubt that Ibero-America is once again at the forefront of expressing a political will that interprets the current development narrative and transforms it into a concrete methodological instrument at the service of its member countries. This instrument represents *fine-tuning* in terms of linking SSC and the SDGs, and it will probably serve as an inspiration for other developing regions seeking to follow this same path.







## **A methodology to identify the alignment of South-South and Triangular Cooperation with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**

In July 2020, the 22 Ibero-American countries gave the green light to the Ibero-American methodology that guides the identification of the potential alignment of South-South and Triangular Cooperation with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This concluded a collective exercise which took more than two years, throughout which these countries, led by the Ibero-American General Secretariat (SEGIB), together with the Ibero-American Program for the Strengthening of South-South Cooperation (PIFCSS), worked to design new and innovative instruments that can contribute to support their commitment to achieve the 2030 Agenda.

This document, *A methodology to identify the alignment of South-South and Triangular Cooperation with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)*, describes the framework in which the political decision to implement this exercise was adopted, the collective work process that resulted in this instrument and its main features, as well as its key strengths and the challenges that lie ahead.

**Collaboration:**



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