



Photo: Through SSC, the National Institute for Research on Glaciers and Mountain Ecosystems of Peru (INAIGEM by its Spanish acronym) and the Environmental Fund for Water Protection of Ecuador (FONAG by its Spanish acronym), exchange experiences to strengthen strategies for the conservation and recovery of water services in mountain ecosystems. Image bank on South-South and Triangular Cooperation in Ibero-America. SEGIB-PIFCSS. 2024.

1 Ibero-America and Bilateral South-South Cooperation in the New Global Context

The 2022-2023 period was expected to be a turning point to overcome the crisis caused by COVID-19. In this context of a sustainable and inclusive return to normality, South-South Cooperation (SSC), severely hit by this pandemic, needed to recover and renew its strength as an instrument for development. This chapter analyzes whether the Bilateral SSC in which Ibero-America has participated over the last two years has contributed to recovery while enabling further progress to achieve the 2030 Agenda. The above-mentioned approach focuses on Ibero-American countries and their partners of the South as the main stakeholders that actually make SSC possible.

1.1 Bilateral SSC in Ibero-America in 2022 and 2023: facing the challenge of recovery

During 2022 and 2023, and after the 2020-2021 period, when the COVID-19 crisis forced the cancellation and/or rescheduling of a large number of exchanges, Ibero-American countries' South-South Cooperation was expected to regain its strength.

Indeed, it should be recalled that the measures taken in 2020 and 2021 in response to the pandemic — especially strict confinement and mobility restrictions— forced a significant part of the SSC projects that were scheduled for that period to be put on hold

(temporarily or even completely). This had a significant impact (initiatives decreased by 25% compared to 2018 and 2019) partly because SSC heavily relies on the mobilization of professionals and officials between countries, which was clearly not feasible.

These adverse conditions, however, did not hinder Ibero-American countries from trying, on the one hand, to adapt and, on the other, to look for alternatives both to continue executing part of the planned cooperation and to promote new initiatives that would allow SSC to become a tool to respond to the crisis, especially in health-related topics. As a result of these efforts, countries chose to carry out more specific actions —rather than other types of initiatives—, as these proved to be easier to implement in a virtual format. In this context, and as the previous edition of this Report shows, actions explained 1 out of 5 of the total number of initiatives executed during the 2020-2021 period (they accounted for 1 out of 10 in 2018 and 2019). Likewise, initiatives related to Health registered an unprecedented increase, accounting for 25% of all the exchanges of the period, a figure almost 10 percentage points higher than that of the years before the pandemic (SEGIB; 2023).

Subsequently, in the 2022-2023 period and as Graph 1.1 suggests, a turning point that can be associated with a recovery dynamic began to show. More specifically, this graph displays the evolution of Bilateral SSC initiatives, actions and projects exchanged by Ibero-American countries —not only among themselves but also with partners around the world—, between 2007 and 2023, the first and the last year for which records are available. A sequence of stages with different growth dynamics can be identified:

- a) On the one hand, a period of intense growth between 2007 and 2013, with annual averages over 7%, when an all-time high of more than 1,400 initiatives was reached.
- b) On the other hand, successive drops of different levels of intensity from 2014 onwards, resulting in a fall of -20% —the largest on record—, between 2019 and 2020, when the COVID-19 crisis pushed the total volume of initiatives below 700.
- c) From then on, in 2021 and 2022, the registered dynamics continued to push the number of exchanges down to a historic minimum of 626 actions and projects. However, a change in this trend can already be foreseen: the rates of these declines are progressively slower (-7.1% and -2.9%, respectively) and, in 2023, a positive growth of around 12% can be seen, which brings the final number of initiatives back to the threshold of 700.

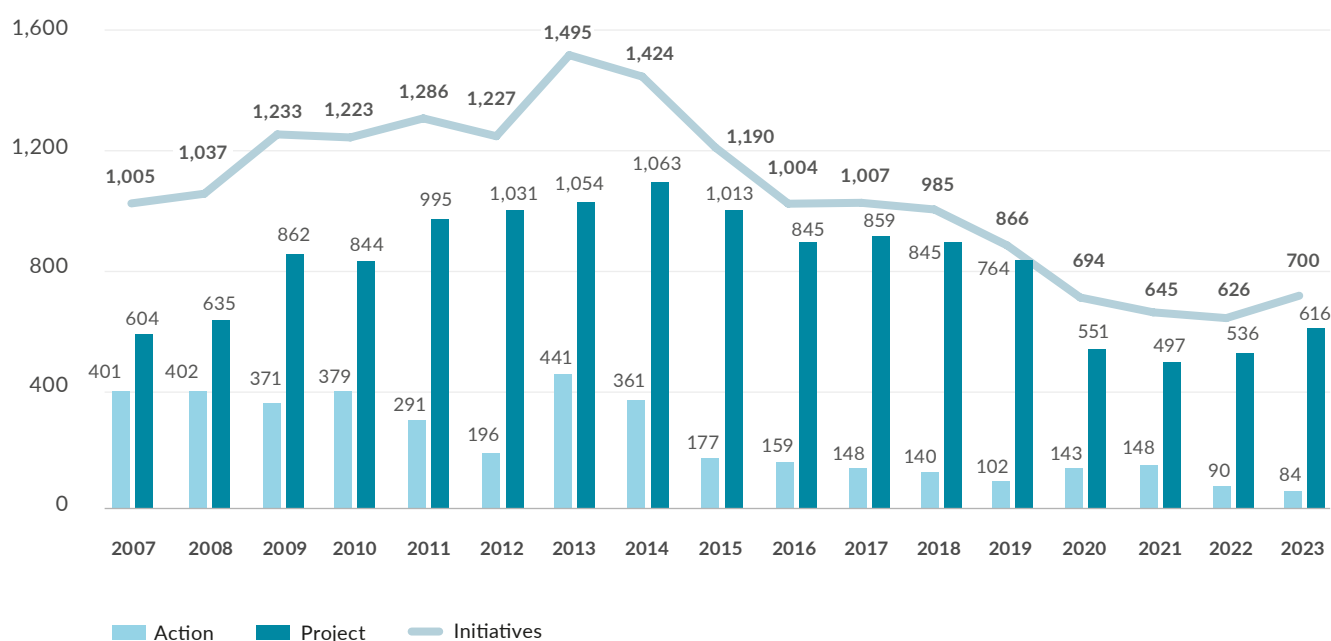
In addition, Graph 1.2, which shows the evolution of the total number of initiatives that were implemented in the pre- and post-COVID crisis stage (from 2018-2019 to 2022-2023), by year and period, was plotted to further explain the impact that the pandemic had on the Bilateral SSC carried out by Ibero-American countries, as well as the recovery path that figures suggest.

The analysis of Graph 1.2 confirms the dynamics described above. Thus, the trend line that links the values annually recorded from 2018 to 2023 clearly shows a curve which, after a series of drops that gradually tend to slow down between 2018 and 2022, makes its first upward inflection in 2023. This change has a positive impact on the total number of initiatives implemented in the different two-year periods, from 944 in the two years that coincide with the crisis to 956 in 2022-2023. This increase suggests a positive trend; however, it is still clearly not enough to fully recover pre-pandemic levels, when the number of initiatives stood at 1,256 (300 more than in the most recent period).

// Graph 1.1

Evolution of all Bilateral SSC actions, projects and initiatives exchanged by Ibero-American countries with all partners. 2007-2023

In units

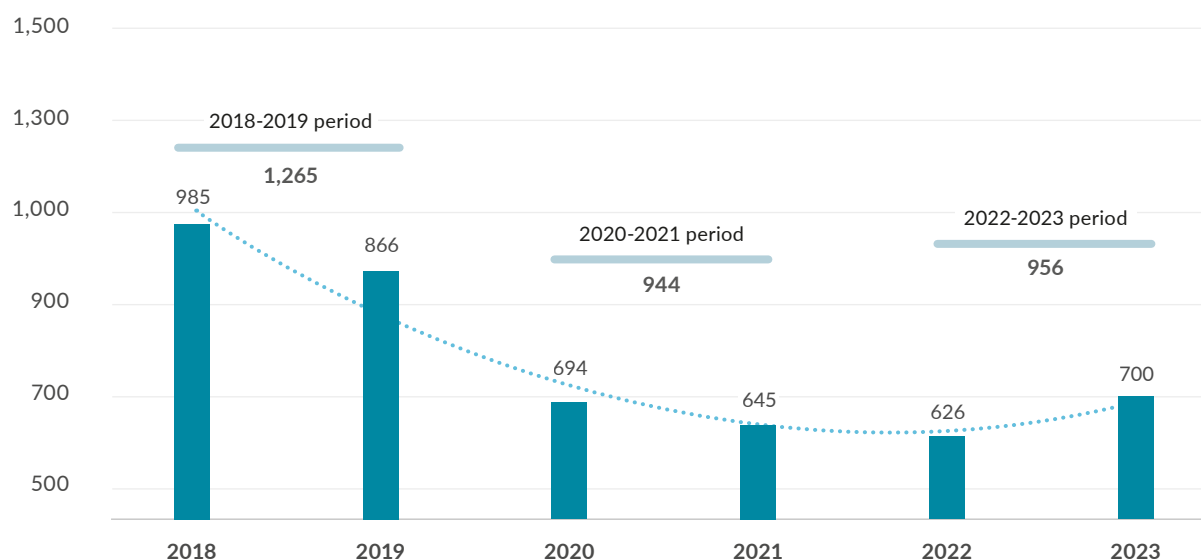


Source: SEGIB based on Agencies and Directorates-General for Cooperation

// Graph 1.2

Bilateral SSC initiatives implemented in the pre- and post-COVID crisis, by year and two-year period. 2018-2023

In units



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

Finally, the analysis requires a closer look at the evolution of another equally important fact: the way in which the distribution of these initiatives —implemented through two instruments (actions and projects) of very different relative scope— has changed. This difference can be seen, for example, in the average time taken to ensure the full implementation of these instruments, which, in turn, suggests the need to destine different kinds of resources (human, technical and financial) and efforts to carry them out.

In this sense, according to available data, during the 2022-2023 period, actions required, on average, 37.5 days for their full implementation. In contrast, the time taken to ensure the conclusion of a project cycle was more than two years.¹

Considering the above, it is possible to make a better interpretation of Graph 1.3, which shows the evolution of the relative importance that projects and actions have

had over the total number of Bilateral SSC initiatives that were annually carried out by Ibero-American countries in the 2007-2023 period. It should be expected that, as time goes by and countries strengthen their capacities to carry out SSC, the implementation of projects should increase, to the detriment of actions, which should become less important in relative terms.

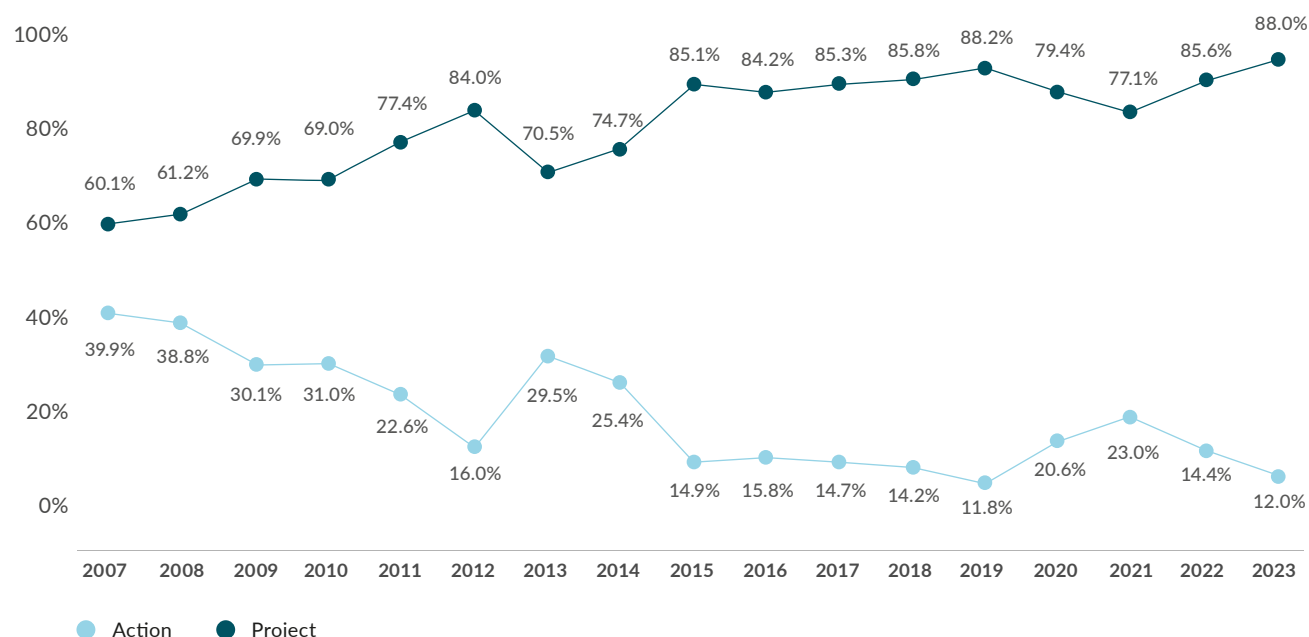
Indeed, this seems to be confirmed by Graph 1.3, which shows that, between 2007 and 2019, projects and actions' shares follow diverging trajectories, projects-actions ratio going from 60%-40% in the early years to almost 90%-10% at the end of the decade. In 2020 and 2021, the conditions imposed by the COVID-19 crisis and the need to recur once again to the use of actions, break this trend and lead to a convergence of the relative importance of the two instruments (75%-25%). However, the gap between the two percentages widens again in the following two years, returning to a scenario in which projects account for almost 9 out of 10 initiatives in 2023.

¹ In order to estimate the average duration of an initiative, it is necessary to know the starting and completion dates. In the case of the actions carried out in the 2022-2023 period, both dates are available in 93% of the records. In the case of projects, this coverage is reduced to 25%. Therefore, the duration of projects is calculated in two ways: 1) by comparing the starting and completion dates; and 2) by comparing the starting and completion years (25% and 100% of the records, respectively). The respective results do not differ substantially when using each of these formulas (2.1 and 2.5 years). Hence, it is possible to state that the average duration of projects is higher than two years.

// Graph 1.3

Evolution of projects' and actions' weight in the total number of Bilateral SSC initiatives exchanged by Ibero-American countries with all partners. 2007-2023

In percentage



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

In short, the coincidence of different and positive dynamics in the 2022-2023 period confirms that SSC in the region is on the path to recovery. First, after years of successive drops, initiatives' growth rates are beginning to show positive values. Second, the number of total exchanges has increased and, although it is still a long way from pre-crisis levels, is slightly above that registered during the COVID-19 pandemic. Third and finally, the variation of the distribution of total exchanges by instrument in favor of projects suggests that SSC is once again gaining strength, having the capacity to fully overcome the crisis.

In the 2022- 2023 period, the combination of different and positive dynamics confirms that SSC in the region is on the road to recovery

1.2

Ibero-American countries and their partners in Bilateral SSC in the 2022-2023 period

A better understanding of Bilateral SSC in Ibero-America in 2022 and 2023 also requires a closer examination of Ibero-American countries and other regions' partners of the Global South, which, through different dynamics, determine the main characteristics and trends of all the exchanges.

This section precisely analyzes the main features of this participation and its intensity. In the specific case of Ibero-American countries, it also describes the extent to which each country's Bilateral SSC is showing signs of recovery.

It should be added that a distinction will be made, in methodological terms, between intra- and interregional cooperation. Thus, three levels of analysis will be combined: the first one will refer to all cooperation; the second one will refer to exchanges between Ibero-American countries themselves; and, the third one will refer to SSC carried out by Ibero-American countries with partners of other regions of the South.

1.2.1

Ibero-America and the Global South: intra- and interregional SSC

As Graph 1.4 shows, during the 2022-2023 period, Ibero-American countries implemented 956 Bilateral SSC initiatives with partners around the world. More than 75% of these (738) are explained by exchanges that took place between Ibero-American countries themselves. Meanwhile, around 23% (218) corresponded to cooperation between Ibero-American countries and others of the Global South.

The same graph complements the above information with a breakdown, by region, of the 218 Bilateral SSC initiatives exchanged by Ibero-America, in 2022 and 2023, at the interregional level. Thus, 80% of the initiatives that Ibero-American countries carried out with partners of the Global South involved both Sub-Saharan Africa (43.1%) and the non-Ibero-American



In 2022-2023, Ibero-American countries exchanged 956 Bilateral SSC initiatives with partners around the world

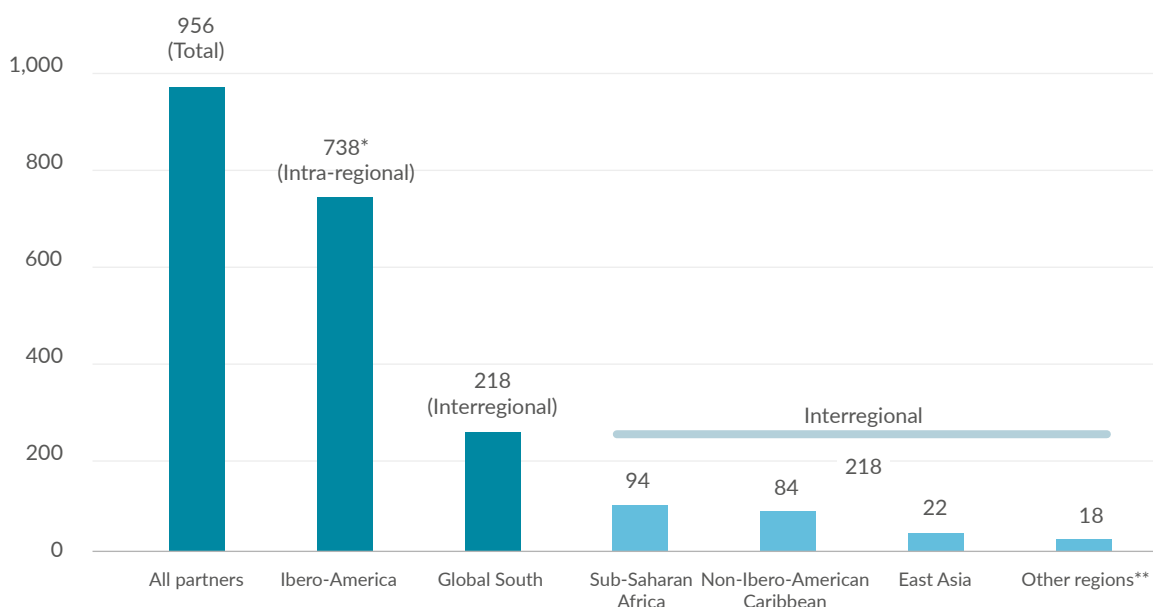


Caribbean (38.5%). The remaining percentage (almost another 20%) was related to exchanges with East Asia (1 out of 10) and with countries that belong to a range of other regions (8.3%), Central and South Asia, North Africa and the Middle East being the most important.

// Graph 1.4

Bilateral SSC initiatives exchanged by Ibero-American countries with all partners, at intra- and interregional levels, by region. 2022-2023

In units



* Includes 4 initiatives in which one of the roles is shared between Ibero-American countries and other regions' countries. These initiatives could be counted both at the intra- and at the interregional level, but only one option is chosen to avoid double counting.

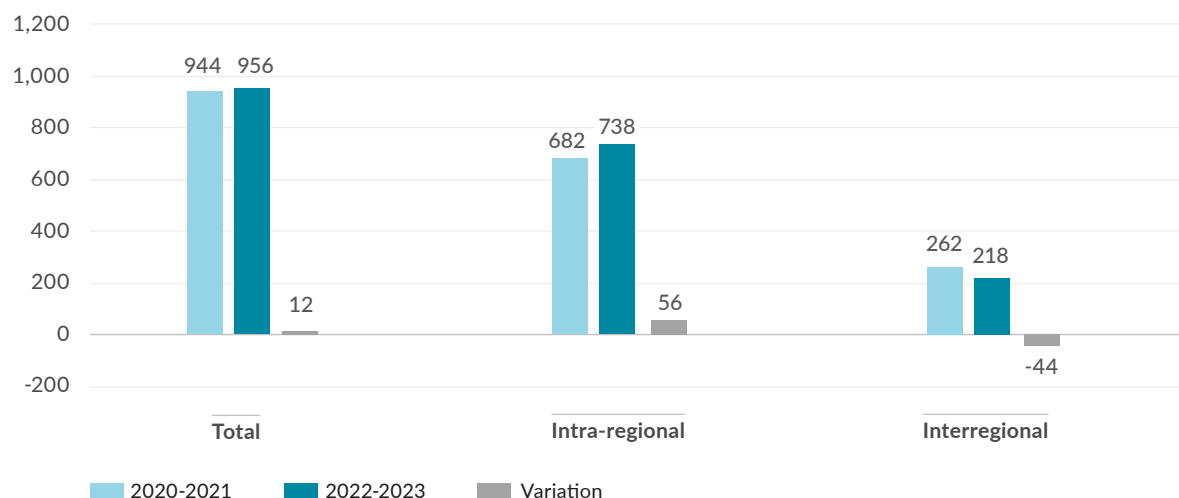
** Adds data from Central and South Asia, North Africa and the Middle East (including Turkey).

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

// Graph 1.5

Variation in the number of Ibero-American Bilateral SSC initiatives with all partners, by total, intra- and interregional exchanges. 2020-2021 and 2022-2023

In units

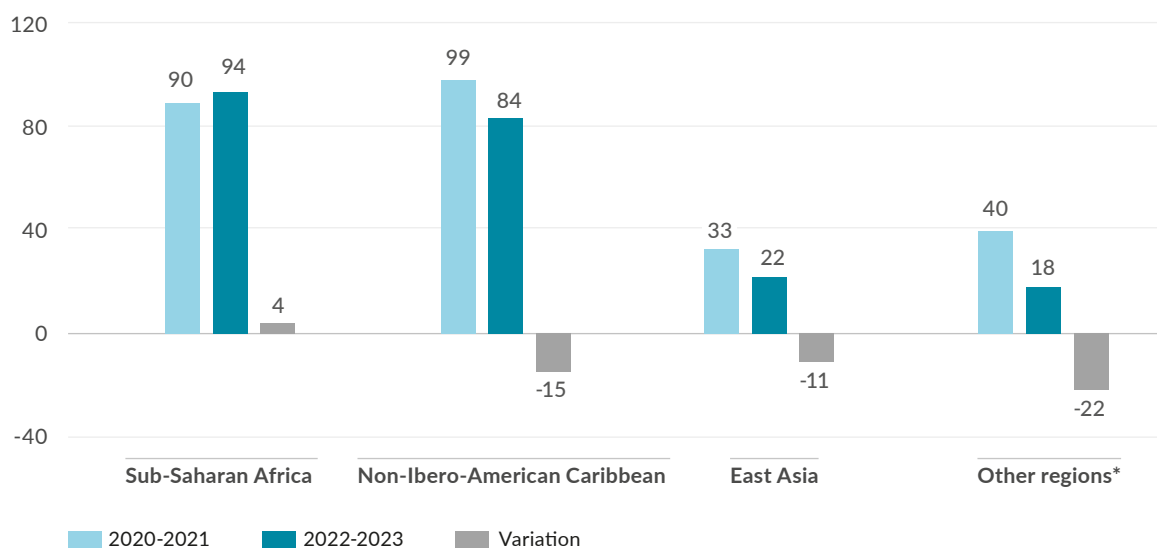


Source: SEGIB based on Agencies and Directorates-General for Cooperation

// Graph 1.6

Variation in the number of Bilateral SSC initiatives exchanged at the interregional level (Ibero-America with other regions of the Global South), by region. 2020-2021 and 2022-2023

In units



* Adds data from Central and South Asia, North Africa and the Middle East (including Turkey).

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

When comparing this data with that of the previous period (2020-2021), it is possible to state that the slight increase in the total number of Bilateral SSC initiatives carried out

by Ibero-American countries with all partners (from 944 to 956) responds to a certain redistribution in favor of intra-regional exchanges, which displace interregional ones.

Indeed, Graphs 1.5 and 1.6 compare the two periods and show the variation in the number of initiatives exchanged at all levels –total, intra-, and interregional– (Graph 1.5), as well as the variation experienced by the exchanges that Ibero-American countries implemented with each of the different regions of the Global South (Graph 1.6). A combined analysis of both graphs confirms that the reduction in the number of initiatives exchanged with other regions (-44) is more than offset by the increase in those within Ibero-America (+56). In addition, the graphs show that the drop of the exchanges at the interregional level affects all regions, with the exception of Sub-Saharan Africa, the only one that registers a positive variation.

1.2.2.
Ibero-American countries’
participation in Bilateral
SSC in 2022-2023

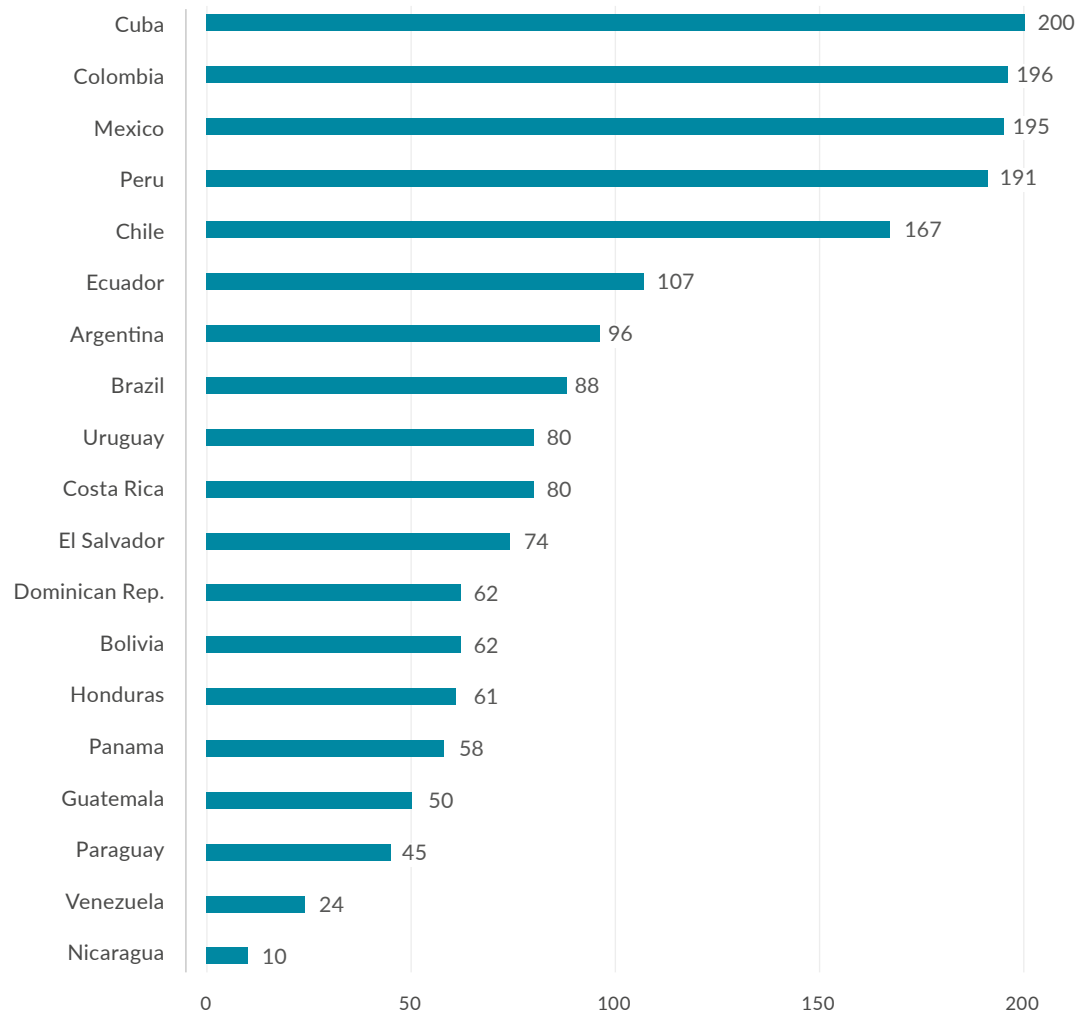
During the 2022-2023 period, the number of Bilateral SSC initiatives in which each Ibero-American country participated with partners around the world tended to be very diverse. At least this is suggested by Graph 1.7, which ranks the 19 Ibero-American countries that participated in this modality in descending order, according to the number of exchanges.

As the graph shows, five countries were particularly dynamic throughout 2022 and 2023: Cuba (with a

// Graph 1.7

Bilateral SSC initiatives in which Ibero-American countries participated with all partners, by country. 2022-2023

In units



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

maximum of 200 initiatives), followed closely by Colombia, Mexico and Peru (all with more than 190 exchanges). According to these figures, it can be stated that each of these countries was involved in at least 1 out of 5 of the 956 Bilateral SSC initiatives that the region as a whole carried out with partners all over the world. Chile was also a very active country with more than 150 initiatives.

Ecuador, the only Ibero-American country among the remaining ones that surpassed the barrier of 100 Bilateral SSC initiatives, comes after these five. Additionally, a large group of up to ten countries implemented between

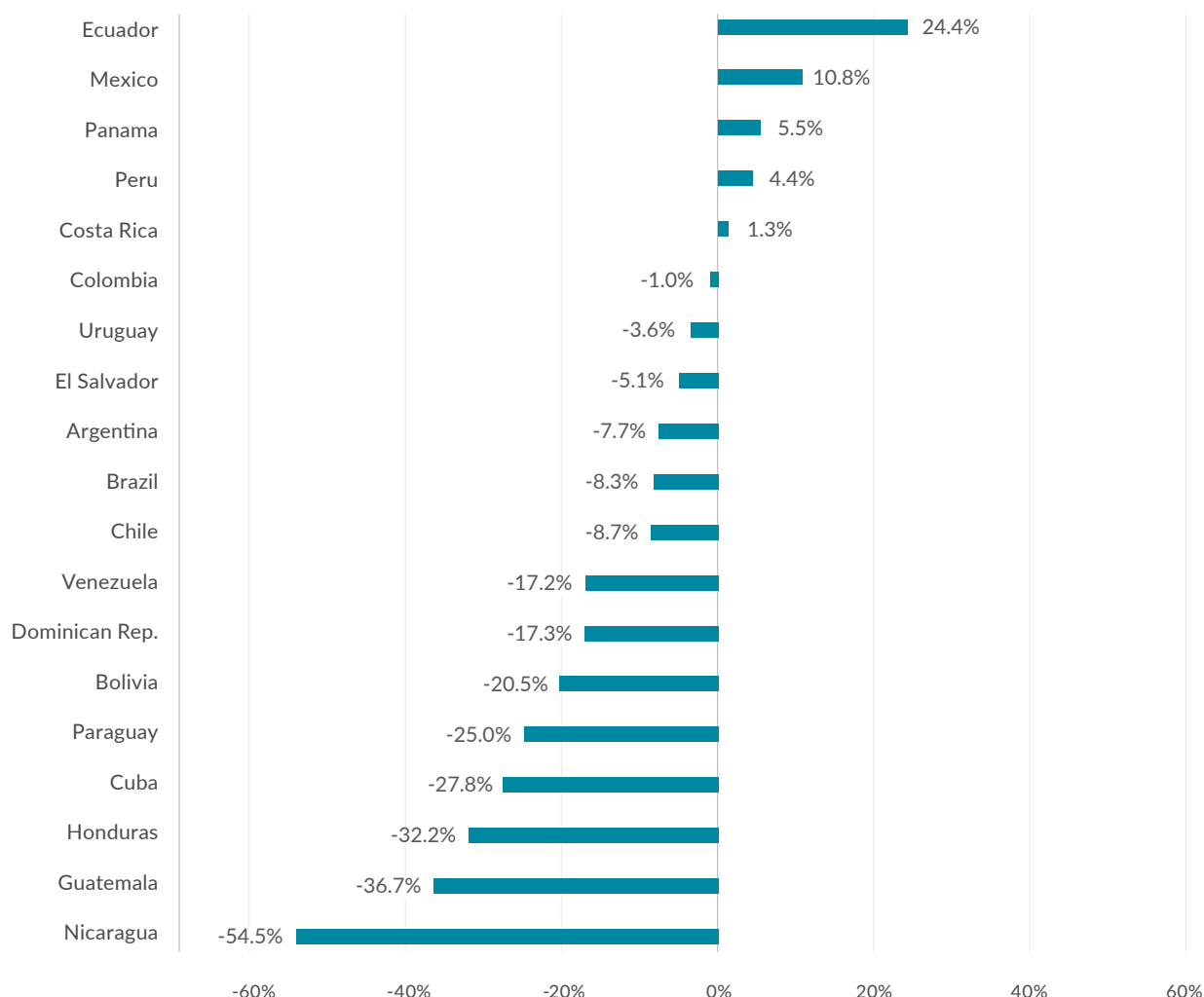
50 and 100 exchanges. Among these, a distinction can be made between those that had a more intense participation (above 75 initiatives: Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay and Costa Rica) and those that registered values below this threshold (El Salvador, Honduras, Panama, Guatemala, the Dominican Republic and Bolivia).

Meanwhile, during 2022 and 2023, three countries registered a lower participation with less than 50 Bilateral SSC initiatives: Paraguay (45 exchanges), followed by Venezuela and Nicaragua, which remained below these figures, with 24 and 10 initiatives respectively.

// Graph 1.8

Growth in the number of Bilateral SSC initiatives exchanged by Ibero-American countries, between the pandemic and post-pandemic two-year periods. 2020-2021 and 2022-2023

In percentage



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

Graph 1.8 sheds light on the evolution of Ibero-American countries participation in 2020-2021 and 2022-2023, by comparing the data of both two-year periods and showing

the positive or negative growth of their Bilateral SSC initiatives. As the graph reveals, five countries regained dynamism and implemented a higher number of initiatives.

However, the majority were less dynamic, experiencing a certain fall in the total number of exchanges. In this sense, countries' different behaviors seem to offset the final figure of the total number of Ibero-American Bilateral SSC initiatives. Indeed, and given that the rise of this total was still minimal (barely 1.3%), the final result suggests a sort of 'zero-sum game', in which some gained at the expense of the loss of others.

Specifically, Ecuador registered the highest variation in terms of total exchanges (close to 25%), increasing its participation from 86 initiatives in 2020-2021 to 107 in 2022-2023. Mexico and Peru, two of the most active countries in the period, also experienced a positive turnaround: with more than 190 exchanges, they both increased their participation around 10% and 5% respectively. Panama and Costa Rica complete the group of countries with positive variations: situated in the

intermediate range of values (from 50 to 100 initiatives), their participation raised 5.5% and 1.3% respectively.

The rest of the countries experienced negative changes, although with very different intensities: between -1% and -54.5% (Colombia and Nicaragua, respectively, two countries that, in turn, belong to the group of those that registered the highest and lowest volume of exchanges). Argentina, Brazil and Chile, despite being among the traditionally more dynamic countries, reduced their activity at rates around -8%. Venezuela's, the Dominican Republic's and Bolivia's variation was more intense, with rates close or equal to -20%, as well as Paraguay's, Cuba's, Honduras' and Guatemala's (more than -25% in all cases). Finally, Uruguay and El Salvador did not register significant drops, which allowed them to maintain total values very close to those of 2020-2021.



Photo: The Otomí gastronomy of the Mezquital Valley has its origins in a deep and intimate tradition with the ecosystem which includes collecting flora, fauna and insects. Traditional cooks from Santiago de Anaya recreate this legacy, inherited from mothers and grandmothers, and prepare dishes with natural ingredients, without preservatives and with high nutritional value. *Ibercocinas* promotes the design of policies, programs, strategies and initiatives aimed at safeguarding, protecting and promoting Ibero-American cuisine as a tool for sustainable development. Image bank on South-South and Triangular Cooperation in Ibero-America. SEGIB-PIFCSS. 2021.

However, as seen above, this change, related to the total number of initiatives, is only one of many variables to assess a possible recovery from the impact of the COVID-19 crisis. In the current context, it is equally important to analyze countries' capacities to implement SSC, which suggests a necessary review of how projects are evolving with respect to actions.

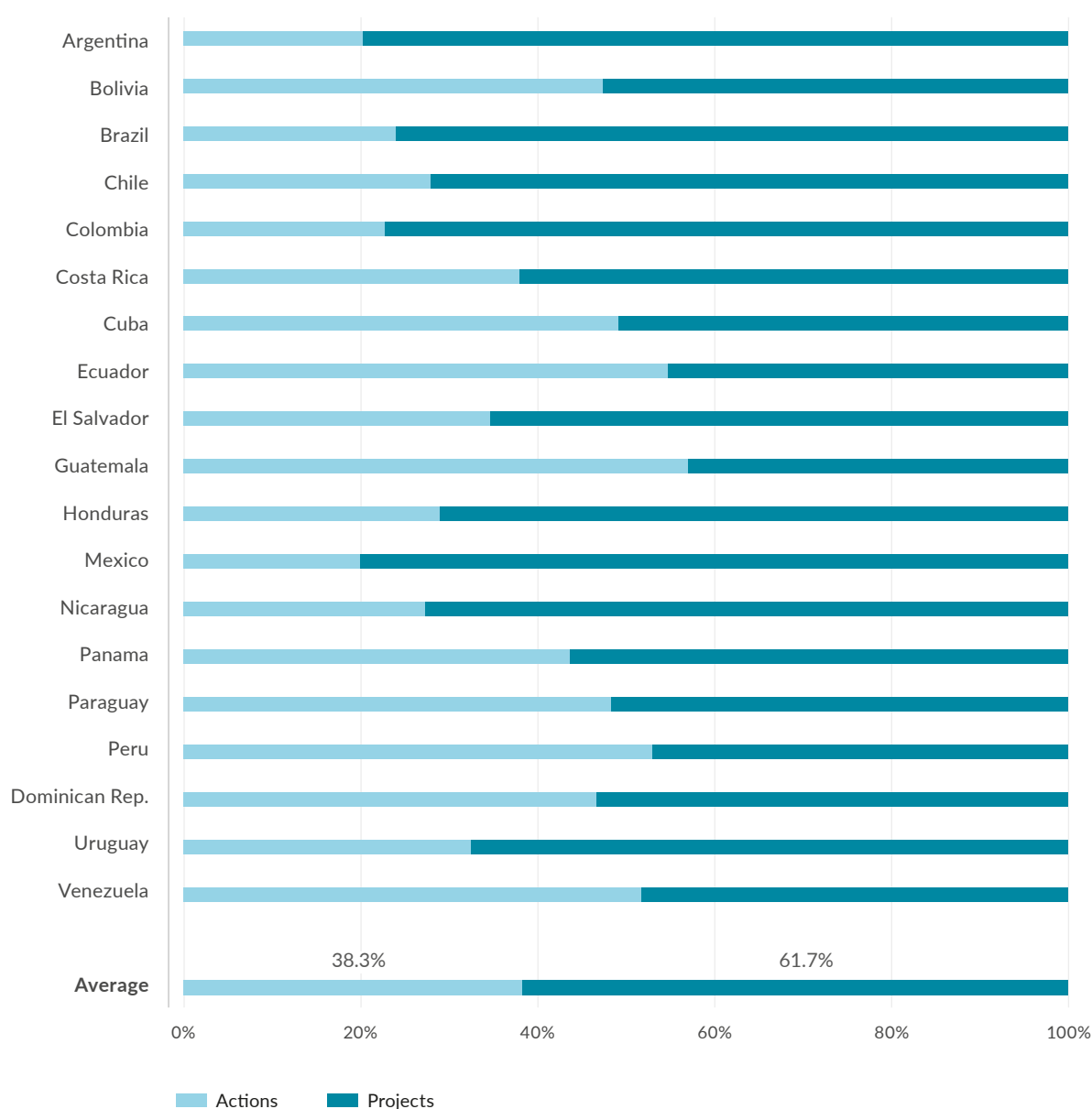
Indeed, in the 2020-2021 period, 6 out of 10 of the Bilateral SSC initiatives the region implemented were carried out through projects. In the following years (2022 and 2023), this proportion increased to 8 out of 10. This being the case, it is interesting to analyze whether the execution of a higher number of projects to the detriment of actions was a trend that was equally shared by all countries.

// Graph 1.9

Distribution of Bilateral SSC initiatives in which Ibero-American countries participated, by actions and projects, by country. 2020-2021 and 2022-2023

In percentage

A. 2020-2021

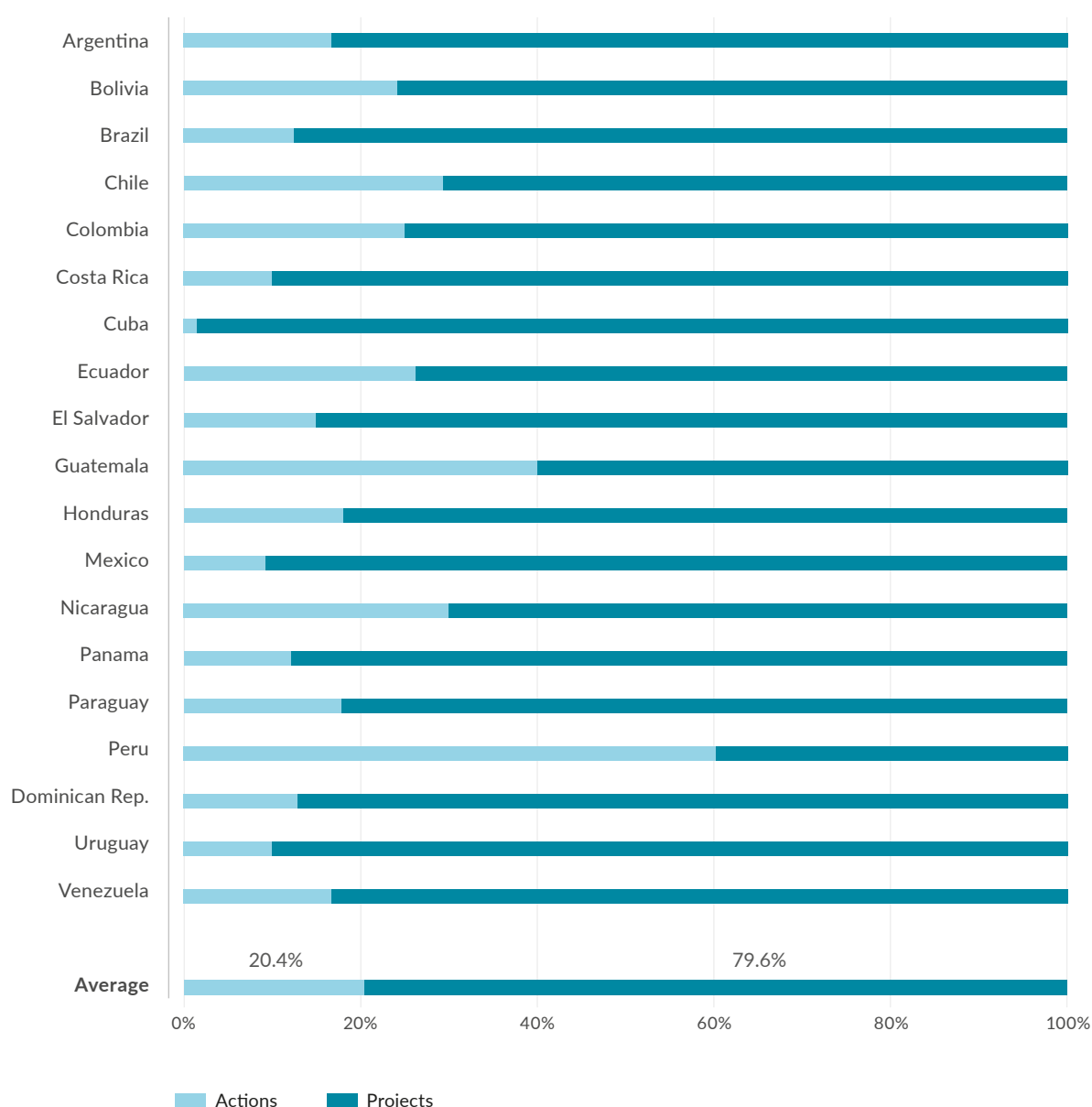


Graphs 1.9 A, 1.9 B and 1.10 were prepared to confirm the above:

- a) Graphs 1.9 A and 1.9 B, respectively refer to the 2020-2021 and 2022-2023 periods. They both show the distribution of actions and projects in the total number of initiatives exchanged by each Ibero-American country and by the region as a whole.
- b) On the other hand, Graph 1.10, places the 19 Ibero-American countries on the scatter chart that results from analyzing two types of information: the first, on the horizontal axis, refers to the importance of projects in the total number of Bilateral SSC

initiatives in the 2022-2023 period; the second, on the vertical axis, is associated with the way in which this percentage has changed from one two-year period to the other. Twenty (20) points are plotted in the chart, 1 for each of the 19 countries and 1 for the region's average. The latter explains that, in 2022-2023, projects account for 80% of the total initiatives after registering an increase of almost 18 points in their participation, compared to 2020-2021. This 'average' acts as a reference value and facilitates the analysis because: 1) it divides the graph into four quadrants; and 2) it allows countries to be grouped in each of these quadrants according to whether their values are below or above the regional average.

B. 2022-2023

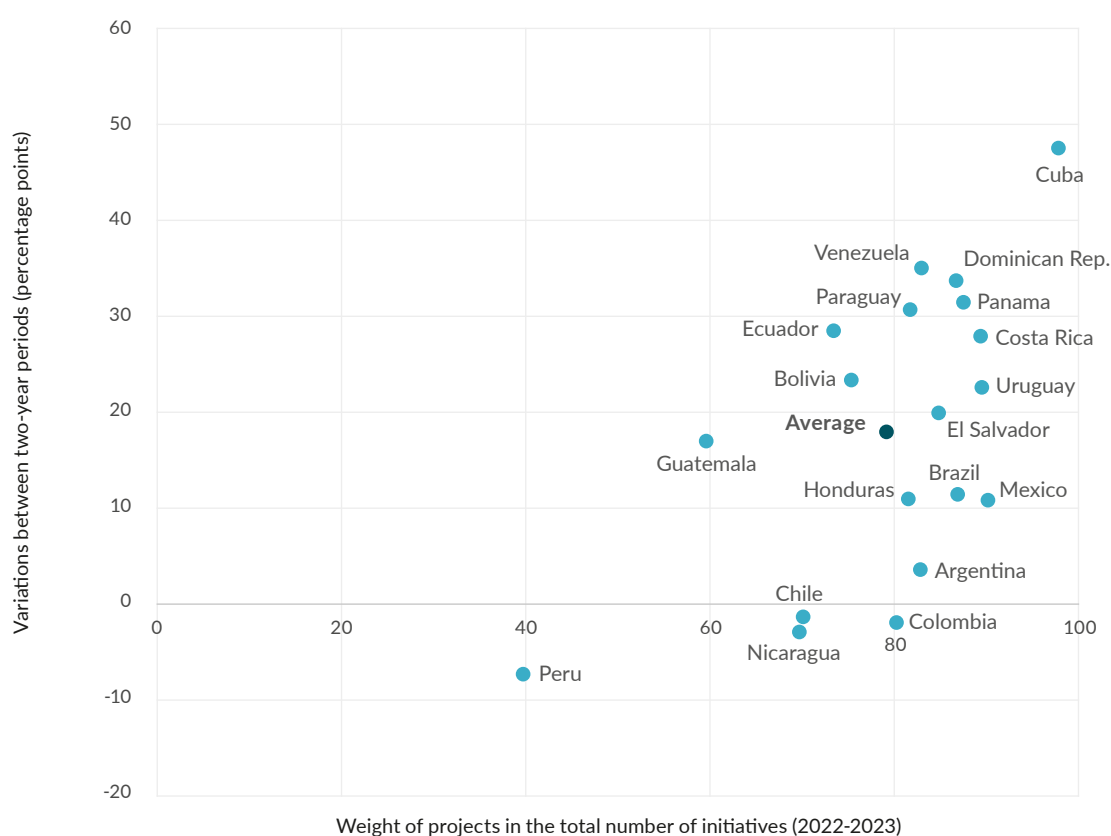


Source: SEGIB based on Agencies and Directorates-General for Cooperation

// Graph 1.10

Variation in projects' weight in the total number of Bilateral SSC initiatives exchanged by Ibero-American countries with all partners, by country. 2020-2021 and 2022-2023

In percentage and percentage points



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

Graphs 1.9 (A and B) clearly show that, from one period to the next, the proportion of the horizontal bars that correspond to actions' relative share in the total number of exchanges of each Ibero-American country has tended to fall, while that of projects has tended to increase. This first confirmation thus indicates a generalized recovery in countries' capacity to implement projects. The same graph, however, points out some exceptions, suggesting that these changes were not the same for all countries. Graph 1.10 allows an in-depth analysis of the aforementioned.

Indeed, as discussed above, the division of Graph 1.10 by quadrants enables the identification of four different behavioral patterns, depending on whether the country is below or above the average value. Thus, the eight countries which participation increased more than 18 percentage points and which projects represent more than 80% of their total number of exchanges, are situated in the upper right quadrant. These are: Cuba and the

Dominican Republic; Costa Rica, El Salvador and Panama; and Paraguay, Uruguay and Venezuela. Mexico, Brazil, Argentina and Honduras are located in the same quadrant, but at the bottom. Despite experiencing a below-average variation between the two periods, these four countries managed to have projects account for between 80% and up to 90% of the Bilateral SSC initiatives they implemented throughout the 2022-2023 period.

Bolivia and Ecuador, meanwhile, are located at the top left of Graph 1.10 as their participation increased in the range of 20 to 30 percentage points, above the regional average. This remarkable boost brought them closer to the average figure, but kept them at slightly lower values of around 75%. Finally, the five countries located to the left but at the bottom, had diverse performances and combined values below the average. Within this group, Guatemala is the only one that increased its participation. Colombia's, Chile's and Nicaragua's projects decreased, still accounting for more than 70% of their cooperation.



Photo: Scientists and students from universities and research centers; high school teachers and students; and agricultural producers, work together to promote agriculture and food security through improved resource management. Image bank on South-South and Triangular Cooperation in Ibero-America. SEGIB-PIFCSS. 2021.

A special mention should be made of Peru, which was still committed to actions' dynamism, increasing their share, with a relative importance of 40% of its initiatives, a value 20 points higher than the average.

All of the above seems to confirm that, for most Ibero-American countries, the recovery from the impact of the COVID-19 crisis is still in its early stages. In fact, during the 2022-2023 period, most countries did not register an increase in the total number of exchanges. However, it is indeed possible to identify a generalized shift towards projects (of a greater relative size), a dynamic that points to a renewed strengthening of countries' capacities to maintain this trend and meet the challenge of returning to pre-crisis levels.

However, Ibero-American countries were not the only stakeholders of the Bilateral SSC that took place during 2022 and 2023. As noted, 218 initiatives, corresponding to almost 1 out of 4 of the 956 registered, were explained by exchanges between Ibero-American countries and those of other regions of the Global South. Seventy-nine (79) countries were indeed involved in these initiatives, geographically distributed between Sub-Saharan Africa (37), the non-Ibero-American Caribbean (14), East Asia (9) and several other regions, 25% of these spread across North Africa, the Middle East and Central and South Asia.

Four graphs were prepared—one for each of the regions—to make a deeper analysis of the aforementioned. Each of them shows a selection of countries according to the number of Bilateral SSC initiatives exchanged with Ibero-American partners during 2022-2023.

As Graph 1.11 portrays, most countries (more than 70%) carried out exchanges of a rather specific nature, always below 5 initiatives. Among these, Dominica and Guyana in the non-Ibero-American Caribbean; China and Malaysia in East Asia; and Namibia, Cape Verde and Nigeria, on the one hand, along with Tunisia and Algeria, on the other, in Sub-Saharan and North Africa, respectively, stood out with 4-5 initiatives.



Up to 218 initiatives –almost 1 out of 4– were implemented between Ibero-American countries and 79 countries of other regions of the Global South



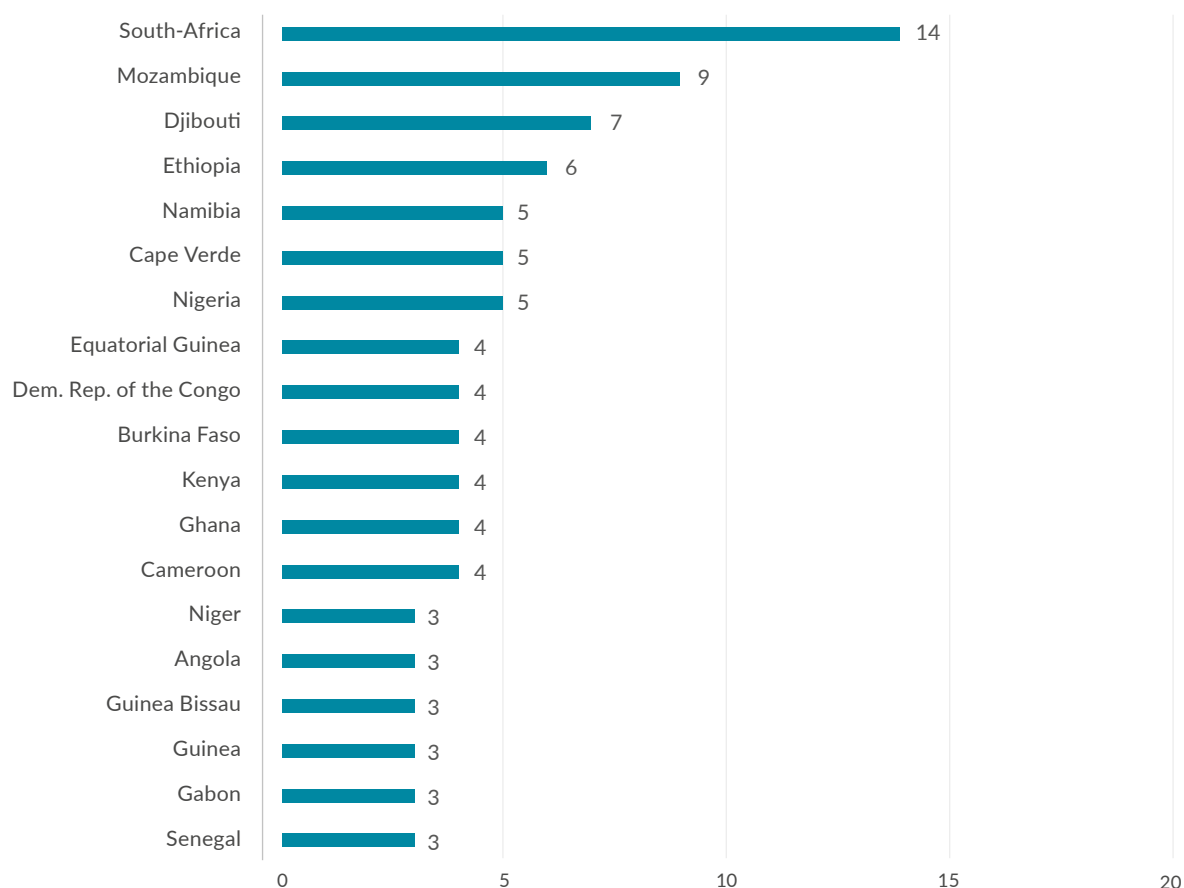
Meanwhile, around twenty countries participated in between 6 and 10 Bilateral SSC exchanges. Up to 8 non-Ibero-American Caribbean countries took part in these initiatives, Saint Lucia (10 actions and projects), Haiti, Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago (7 initiatives in each case) standing out. Mozambique, Djibouti and Ethiopia, in sub-Saharan Africa; and Vietnam and Thailand, in East Asia, were also in this range. Finally, the cases of South Africa in Sub-Saharan Africa and Jamaica and Belize in the non-Ibero-American Caribbean deserve a special mention, as the only three countries that executed 15 Bilateral SSC exchanges or more.

// Graph 1.11

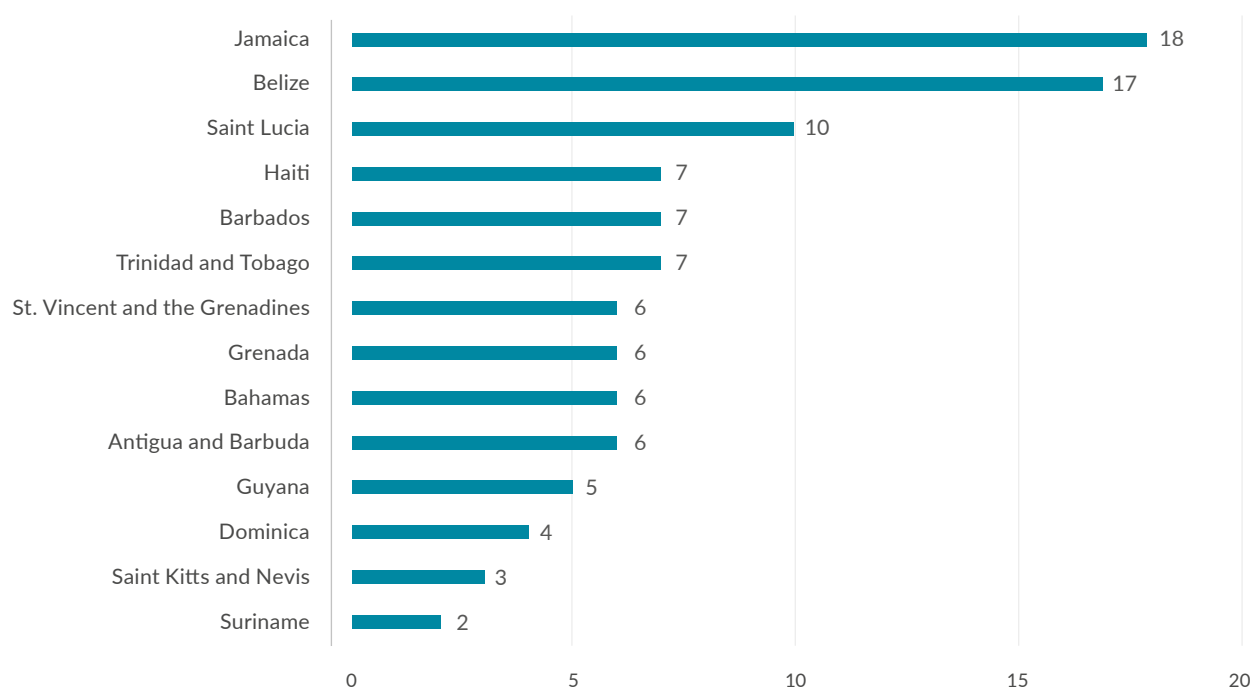
Bilateral SSC initiatives in which selected countries from the Global South participated with Ibero-American partners, by region. 2022-2023

In units

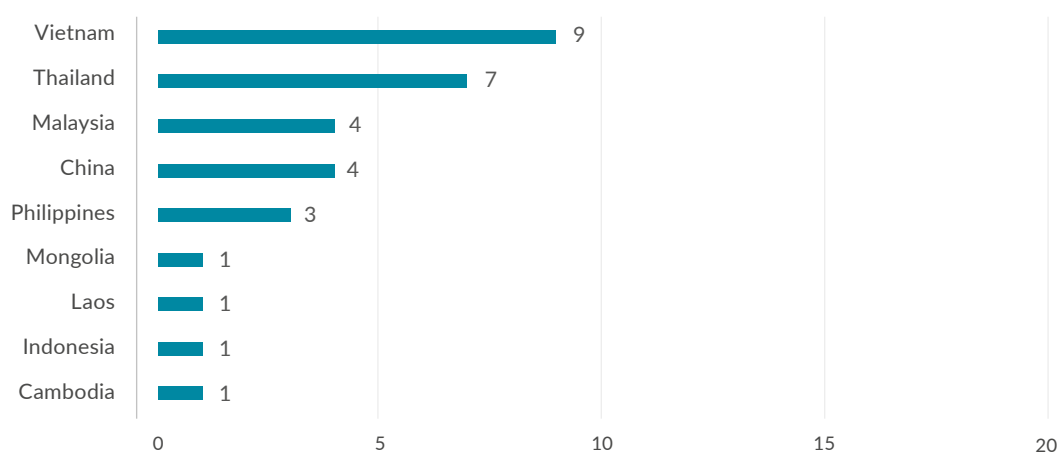
A. Sub-Saharan Africa



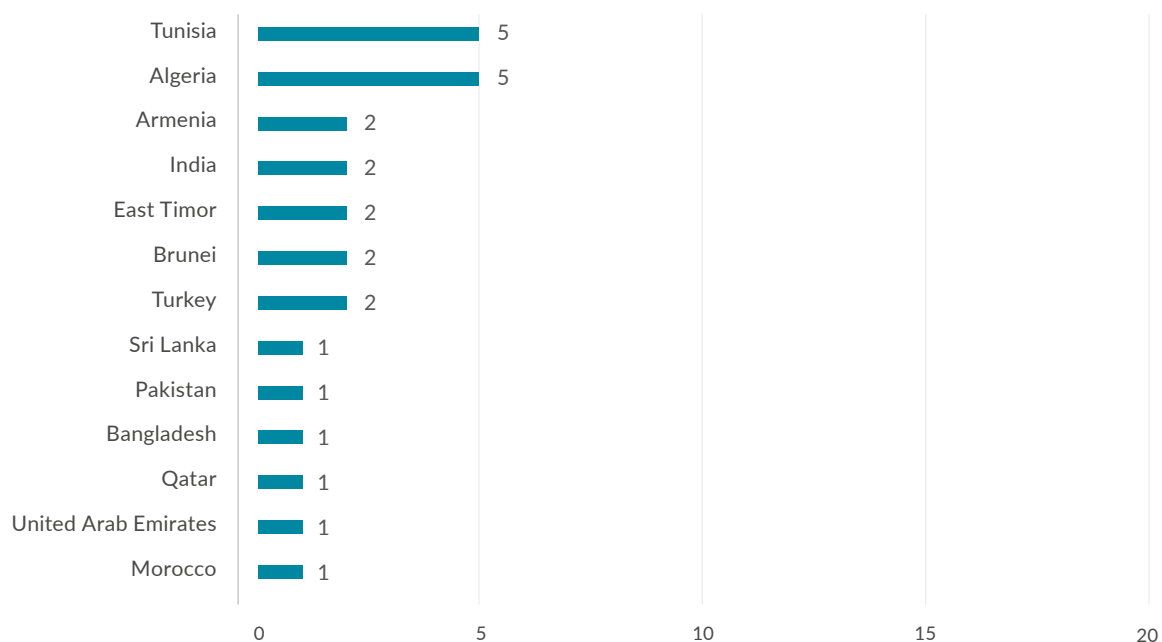
B. Non-Ibero-American Caribbean



C. East Asia



D. Other regions*



*Adds data from Central and South Asia, North Africa and the Middle East (including Turkey).

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

1.3

Ibero-American countries' exchanges with other regions

In this section, an analysis is made of the partnerships that took place between countries to implement the 956 Bilateral SSC exchanges registered in the 2022-2023 period. Special focus is made on their relations, the volume of initiatives and the roles. This review is carried out by differentiating between the associations that were made at the intra-regional level —when Ibero-American countries exchanged with each other—, and those that took place at the interregional level, when Ibero-American countries interacted with other regions' partners.

1.3.1.

Intra-regional exchanges

Graph 1.12 is a very visual resource with which to approach the way in which Ibero-American countries exchanged the 738 Bilateral SSC initiatives implemented at the intra-regional level during 2022 and 2023. This graph sheds light on several aspects at one glance: first, on the different partnerships between countries; second, on the number of initiatives that took place in the framework of these associations; and third, on the different combination of roles.

Indeed, and for this purpose, this graph is plotted as a matrix. The values in the top row and in the left-hand column coincide and correspond to the 19 Ibero-American countries that participate in this modality. Countries are arranged in ascending order according to the total number of initiatives in which they participated in 2022-2023, as shown in Graph 1.7. Recipient countries are situated in the top row and providers are located in the left-hand column. Each of the resulting intersections shows a possible pair of partners with their corresponding distribution of roles.

It should be added that there is a bubble in each of the intersections in which exchanges actually took place. Bubbles' size and color (as referred in the legend) show the range of values in which the number of initiatives exchanged between the two countries fluctuated. Meanwhile, the outer circle that (sometimes) surrounds the bubbles (its size being proportional to the total number of initiatives between these countries) is associated with the cooperation in which the two countries played the role "both".

A first analysis of Ibero-American countries' exchanges among themselves during 2022-2023 requires focusing on two aspects of Graph 1.12. On the one hand, it is necessary to take a closer look at the bubbles' location. On the other, it is important to consider the way in which the intensity of their size and color increases, as well as the presence (or not) and proportion of the outer circles. The number of bubbles will reveal the extent to which all possible partnerships have actually materialized into effective exchanges, also revealing the extent to which the region has been able to take advantage of its full potential. The latter will provide more detail on the dynamics of the different association patterns which, in turn, will allow countries to be grouped according to similar or dissimilar features.

It should first be noted that, potentially, and considering the number of countries and the possible combinations of provider-recipient roles, Bilateral SSC at the intra-regional level can reach a maximum of up to 342 different partnerships.² This figure coincides with the total number of intersections shown in Graph 1.12. As can be seen, about half of all these possible partnerships (159, corresponding to 46.5%) were actually materialized during the 2022-2023 period.

The location of these partnerships on the matrix should also be considered. These associations, symbolized by the bubbles, follow a diagonal trajectory in a southward and eastward direction. This is consistent with the fact that exchanges are concentrated where the most dynamic countries coincide, which, in turn, are those that have been able to cooperate with the largest number of partners.

² Given that 19 Ibero-American countries participate in the Bilateral SSC modality, the total of 342 is calculated by multiplying 19 by 19, and then subtracting the impossible 19 combinations in which the country would associate with itself.



Photo: Lithium extraction and the implementation of industrialization processes to add value to the raw material is the main activity of the state-owned company Yacimientos de Litio Bolivianos. Through SSC with Argentina, Bolivia improves the yield of this metal and the quality of its by-products. Image bank on South-South and Triangular Cooperation in Ibero-America. SEGIB-PIFCSS. 2023.

// Graph 1.12

Bilateral SSC initiatives exchanged between Ibero-American countries according to the different pairs of partners, by role (provider, recipient, both). 2022-2023

In units



Number of initiatives

0

1-2

3-5

6-10

11-20

More than 20



Bidirectional projects



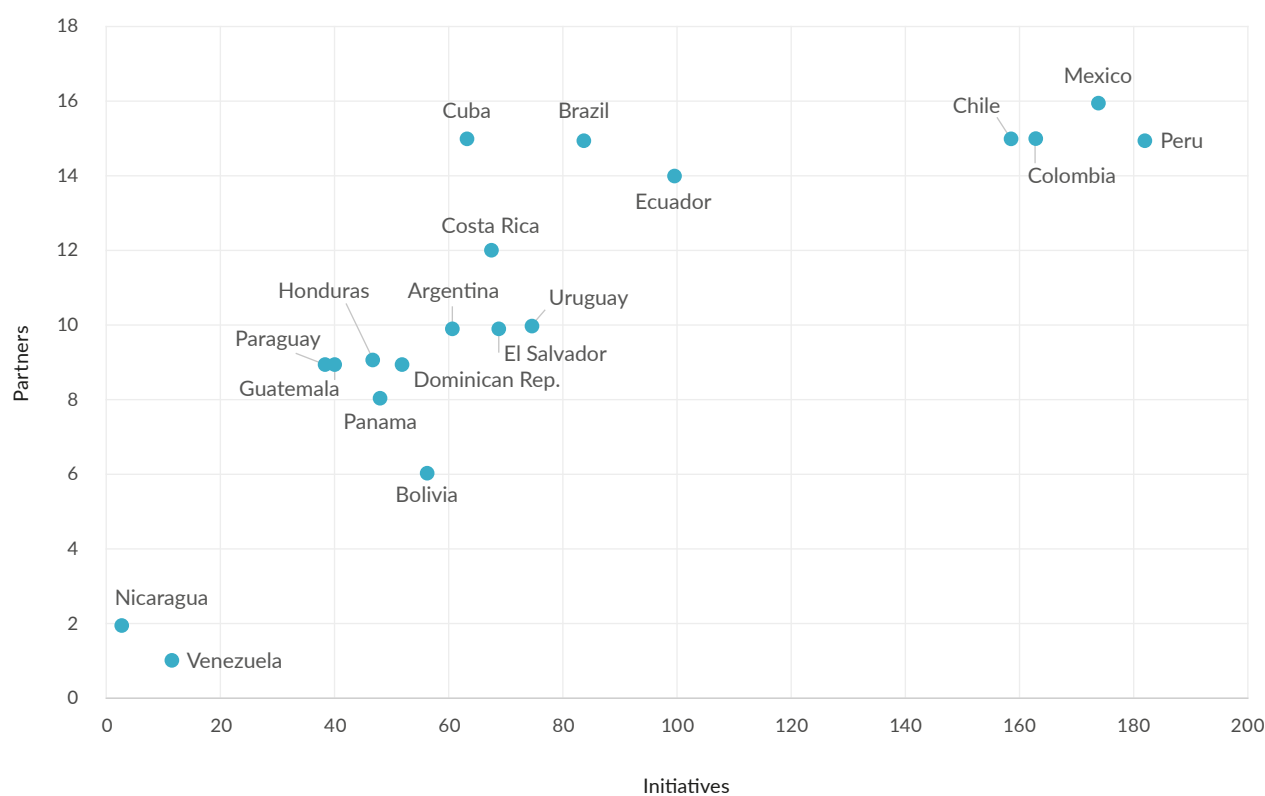
Note: Countries are arranged as the total number of projects in which they participated increases, based on the total number of Bilateral SSC projects executed in the 2022-2023 period.

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

// Graph 1.13

Characterization of Ibero-American countries' intra-regional exchanges, according to the initiatives in which they participate and the partners with which they exchange. 2022-2023

In units



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

Graph 1.13 was prepared to better illustrate the positive correlation between the number of initiatives and the number of partners. This scatter plot arranges the 19 Ibero-American countries according to this combination of variables. As expected, the result is an ascending dispersion of dots. However, several behavioral patterns can be identified as a result of how countries are grouped together. Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Peru have implemented more than 150 initiatives with 15-16 partners. Cuba, Brazil and Ecuador (between 60 and 100 exchanges with 14-15 partners) can be distinguished from Argentina, El Salvador, Uruguay and Costa Rica (10-12). Paraguay, Guatemala, Honduras, Panama and the Dominican Republic, each associating with 8-9 countries, and Bolivia (6 partners), carried out 40-50 actions and projects. Finally, Nicaragua's and Venezuela's less than 10 initiatives, are explained by their relations with 1-2 countries.

In Graph 1.12, it is also important to analyze how the size and color of the bubbles that are associated with the exchanges between countries change. An increasing progression can be identified, once again, towards the lower right-hand corner. For example, there is a clear contrast between the 1-2 initiatives

exchanged by Honduras, together with Guatemala and Panama, or by Paraguay, together with the Dominican Republic and Costa Rica—in the upper left quadrant—and the more than 20 exchanges registered by Peru, together with Ecuador, Chile and Colombia—in the opposite quadrant (bottom right)—.

Indeed, different intensities have been identified in these exchanges: 30% of the cases correspond to 1-2 initiatives (i.e. specific exchanges); and 3-10 actions and projects account for 56%. Meanwhile, around 15% involve the implementation of a significant number of initiatives (between 11 and 20, and between 20 and even 40 on the most exceptional occasions), suggesting a very solid and dynamic relationship that is likely to be consolidated over time.

It is also worth noting that the most dynamic countries, which have been traditionally associated with the provider role, are increasingly tending to participate as recipients as well. This suggests that these countries are consolidating an increasingly dual role, and it is clearly visible in the significant number of exchanges shown in the last columns of Graph 1.12.

The fact that increasingly more countries —not only the most dynamic ones— are executing the so-called role “both” (which refers to the simultaneous exercise, in the same exchange, of the roles of provider and recipient) also confirms the above, graphically illustrated, in Graph 1.12, by the circles surrounding the bubbles. Indeed, it can be stated that, in 2022-2023 and in about 60% of the partnerships between countries, at least 1 exchange was carried out in the framework of the role “both”. The more dynamic the countries, the higher the proportion of initiatives implemented in this role.

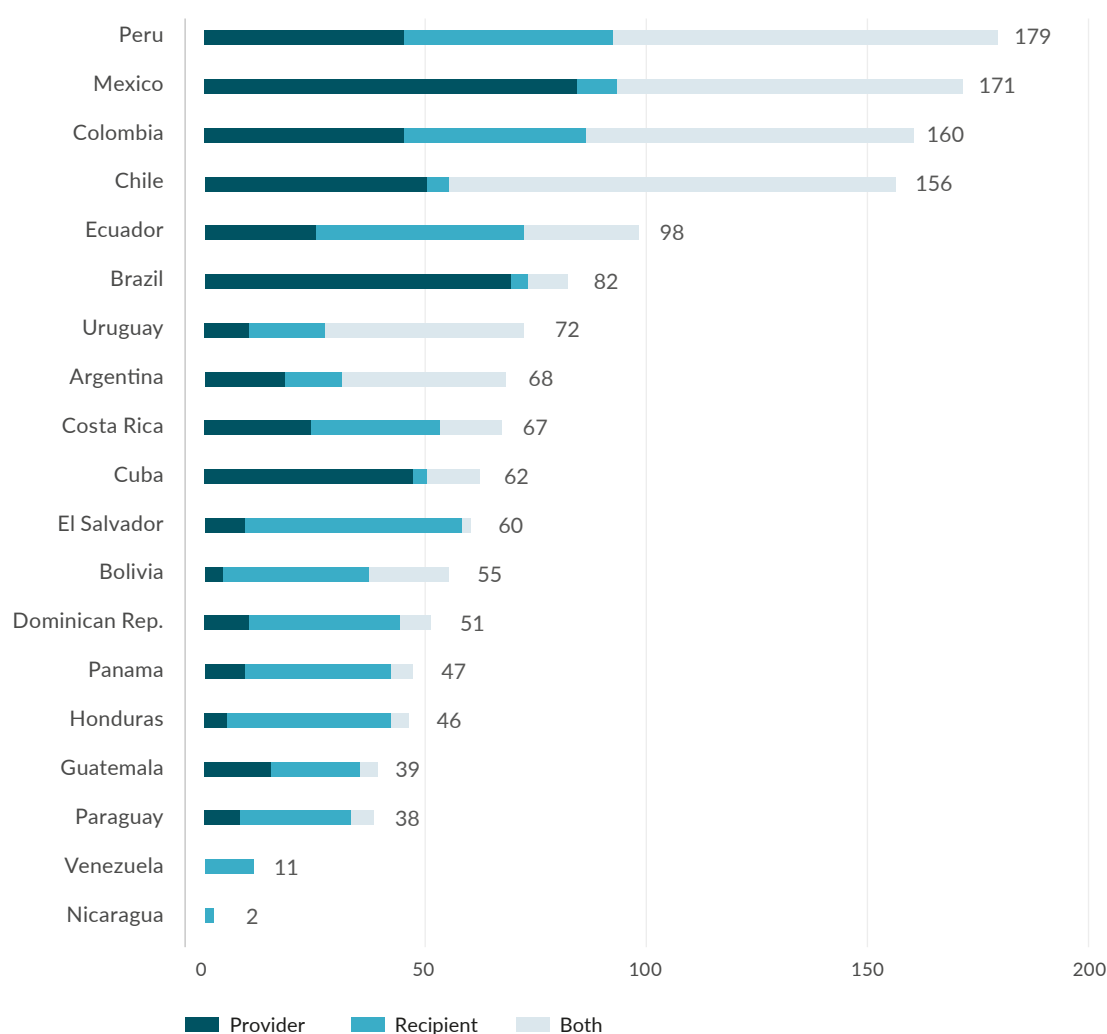
The importance of the different roles (provider, recipient, both) in the total number of Bilateral SSC initiatives intra-regionally exchanged by Ibero-American countries is shown in Graph 1.14. In fact, the analysis of this graph, in which countries are arranged in decreasing order

according to the number of initiatives exchanged with other partners of the region, suggests three different behavioral patterns. The first involves those countries that participated in up to 60 exchanges —Nicaragua, Venezuela, Paraguay, Guatemala, Honduras, Panama, the Dominican Republic, Bolivia and El Salvador—, for which the recipient role prevailed. The second corresponds to the most dynamic group of countries (those that were active in more than 100 initiatives) —Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Peru—, for which the role “both” prevailed. Meanwhile, different dynamics coexisted in a third group of countries, which initiatives fluctuated in the range of intermediate values (from 60 to 100): the provider role prevailed in the case of Brazil and Cuba; the recipient role was predominant in Ecuador’s and Costa Rica’s cooperation; and the role “both” stood out for Argentina and Uruguay.

// Graph 1.14

Bilateral SSC initiatives exchanged by Ibero-American countries at the intra-regional level, by role (provider, recipient, both). 2022-2023

In units



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

In short, the specific pattern adopted by a country's participation in Bilateral SSC exchanges is determined by the interaction of a series of elements, including: the number of countries with which it associated; the volume of initiatives exchanged in each case; and the combination of roles through which these exchanges were carried out. The analysis can result in very different relationship patterns. However, the fact that countries may share similar dynamics in terms of the above-mentioned aspects also enables the systematization of the most common types of associations.

Three countries (Peru, Brazil and El Salvador) were chosen to illustrate the above as it was considered they could be representative of the different relationship patterns, according to the possible combinations of the elements that were previously described. They are differentiated by the volume of initiatives in which they participate (over 100, between 60 and 100, and up to 60, respectively) and by the predominance of one role (mainly dual - Peru; predominantly provider - Brazil; and with a significant

importance of the recipient role - El Salvador). The number of countries with which they associated coincides for Peru and Brazil (15), and is lower in El Salvador's case (10).

Thus, a Sankey diagram was plotted for each of them (Graphs 1.15, 1.16 and 1.17 for Peru, Brazil and El Salvador, respectively). This graphic resource enables a quick visualization of the initiatives exchanged between the different partners and the roles played by each of them in these exchanges. In these diagrams, initiatives "flow" from providers (left side) towards recipients (right side). When the two partners play the role "both", the names of the two countries appear together and twice, both on the left and on the right side.

The comparison of the resulting diagrams confirms that it is possible to identify very different relationship patterns, and that the most important difference lies in where countries are situated, and in the direction and dispersion of the initiatives exchanged with other partners.

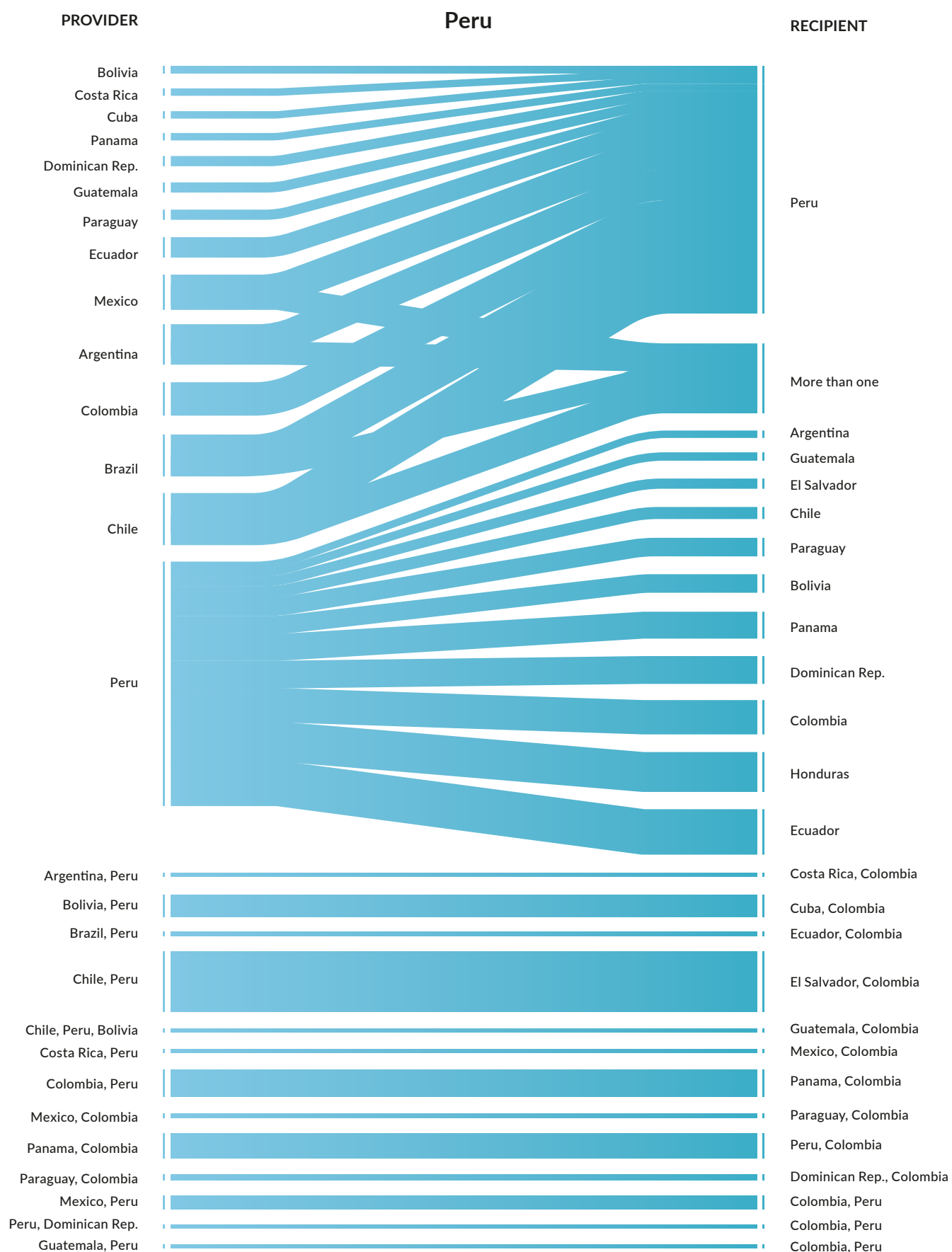


Photo: The objective of this regional cooperation project in which the Dominican Republic participates, is to promote the coconut industry so that Caribbean farmers can diversify their production. Public and private stakeholders are working to strengthen its value chain and open up new commercial opportunities for this product to compete in the international market. Image bank on South-South and Triangular Cooperation in Ibero-America. SEGIB-PIFCSS. 2022.

// Graph 1.15

Distribution of Bilateral SSC initiatives exchanged by Peru at the intra-regional level, by partner and role. 2022-2023

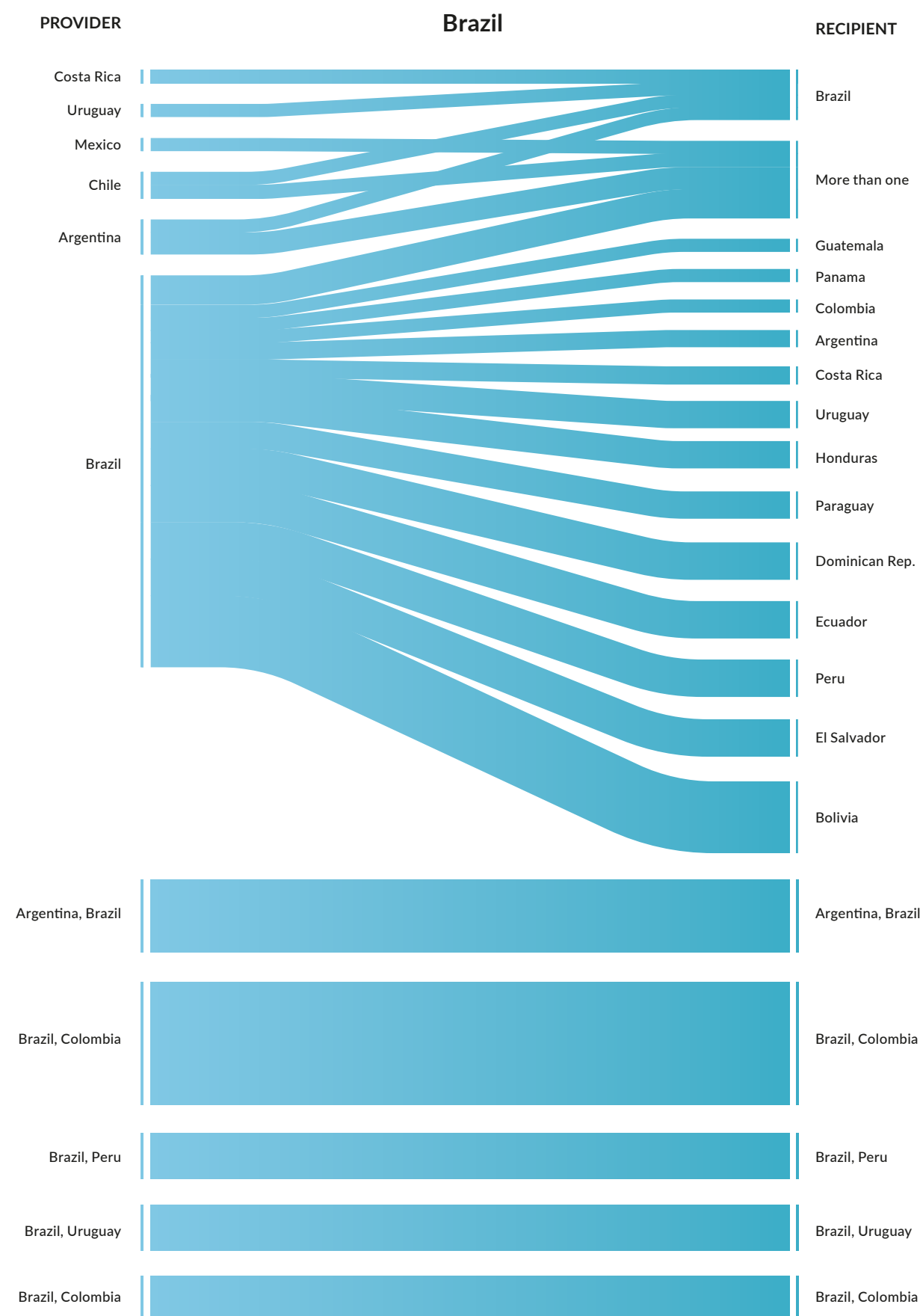
In units



// Graph 1.16

Distribution of Bilateral SSC initiatives exchanged by Brazil at the intra-regional level, by partner and role. 2022-2023

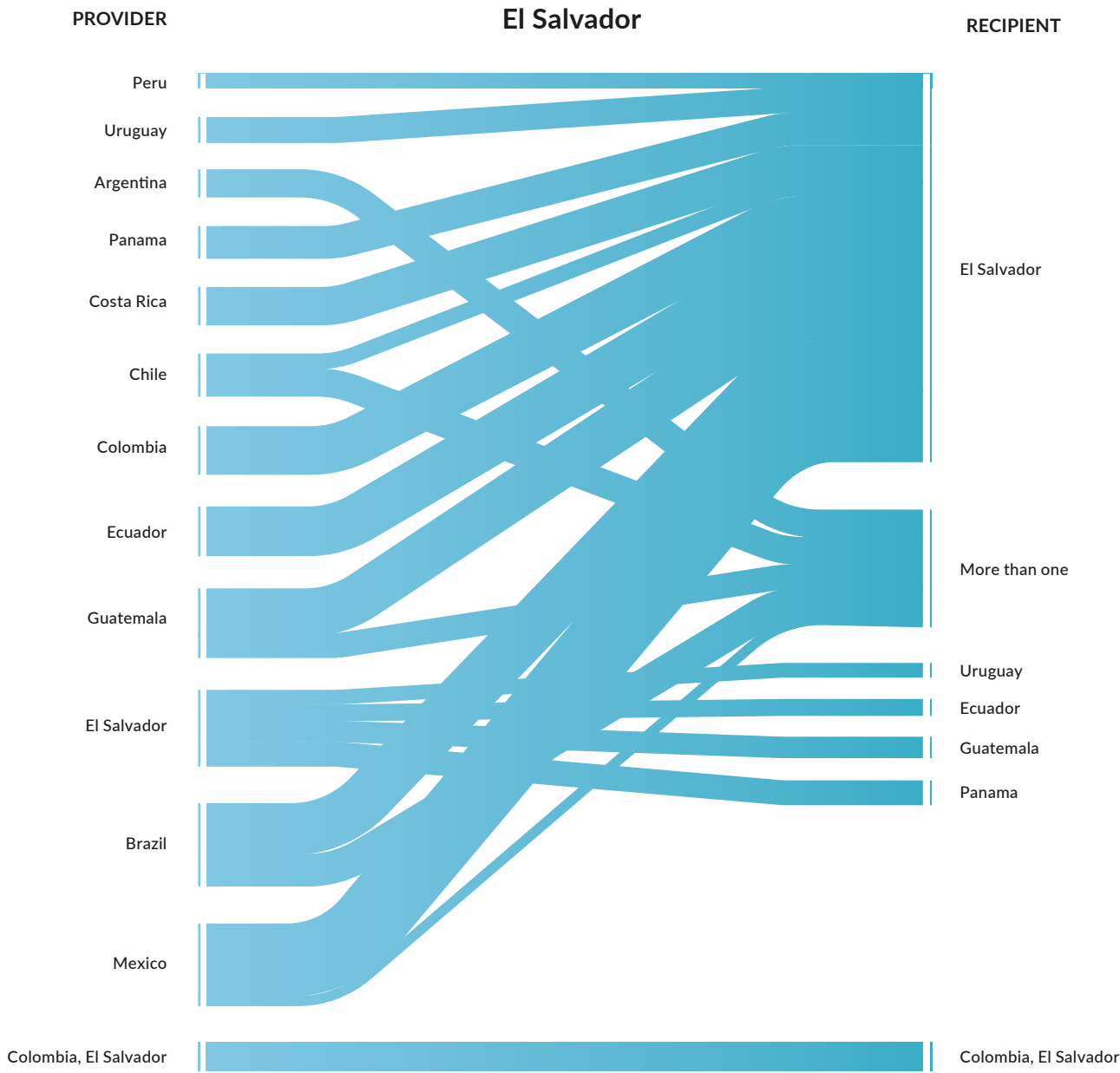
In units



// Graph 1.17

Distribution of Bilateral SSC initiatives exchanged by El Salvador at the intra-regional level, by partner and role. 2022-2023

In units



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

1.3.2.

Interregional exchanges

Graph 1.18, which distributes the 218 initiatives carried out in 2022-2023 according to the region and its role (provider, recipient, both), was plotted to characterize the exchanges that took place at the interregional level.

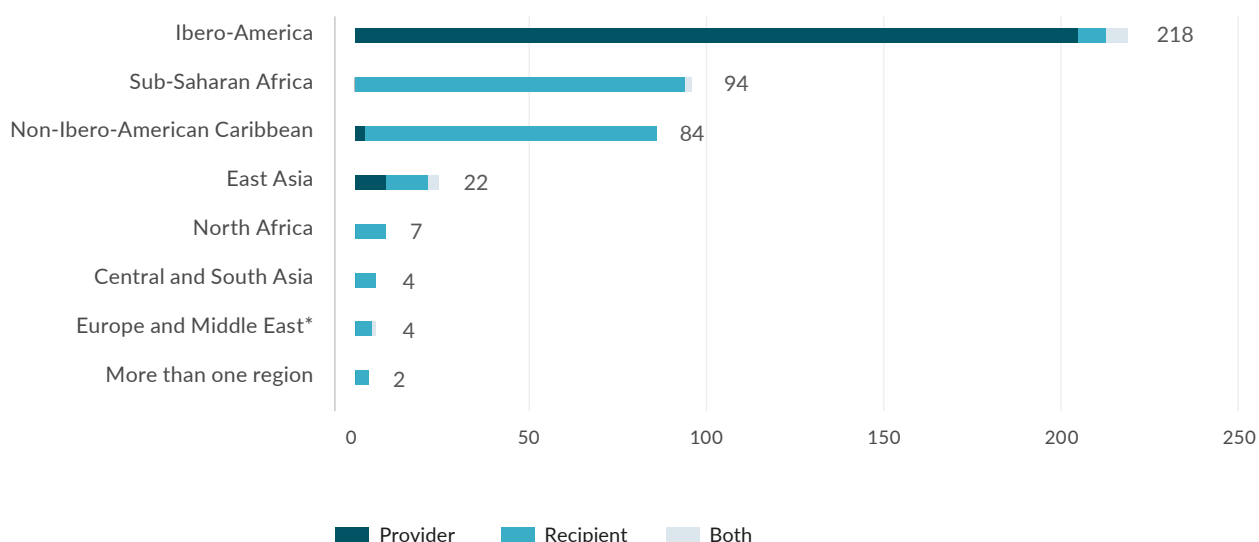
The analysis of this graph shows that, in nearly 95% of the exchanges (204), the distribution of roles was highly polarized, Ibero-America basically acting as provider and

other regions of the Global South acting as recipients of SSC. This pattern was particularly significant with Sub-Saharan and North Africa, the non-Ibero-American Caribbean, Central and South Asia and the Middle East, regions for which the reception of initiatives accounted for almost 100% of their cooperation.³ The only exception was East Asia: nearly 75% of the initiatives in which Ibero-America participated in the roles of recipient (8) and “both” (6) are precisely explained by exchanges with this region of Asia.

// Graph 1.18

Bilateral SSC initiatives exchanged at the inter-regional level, by region and role (provider, recipient, both). 2022-2023

In units



*Includes Turkey, which in SIDICSS is considered as part of Europe (South) but, in other categories, is considered Middle East. In this case, both regions are combined.

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

Additionally, it should be noted that not all Ibero-American countries were equally involved in these exchanges. In fact, only a few carried out SSC with other regions. At least this is suggested by Graph 1.19, which shows the relative importance that intra- and interregional cooperation had on the total number of Bilateral SSC initiatives that each of the Ibero-American

countries executed with partners from all over the world during the 2022-2023 period. As the graph shows, and according to available data, more than half of the countries only registered intra-regional Bilateral SSC, while the rest also implemented cooperation with other regions, albeit with different dynamics.⁴

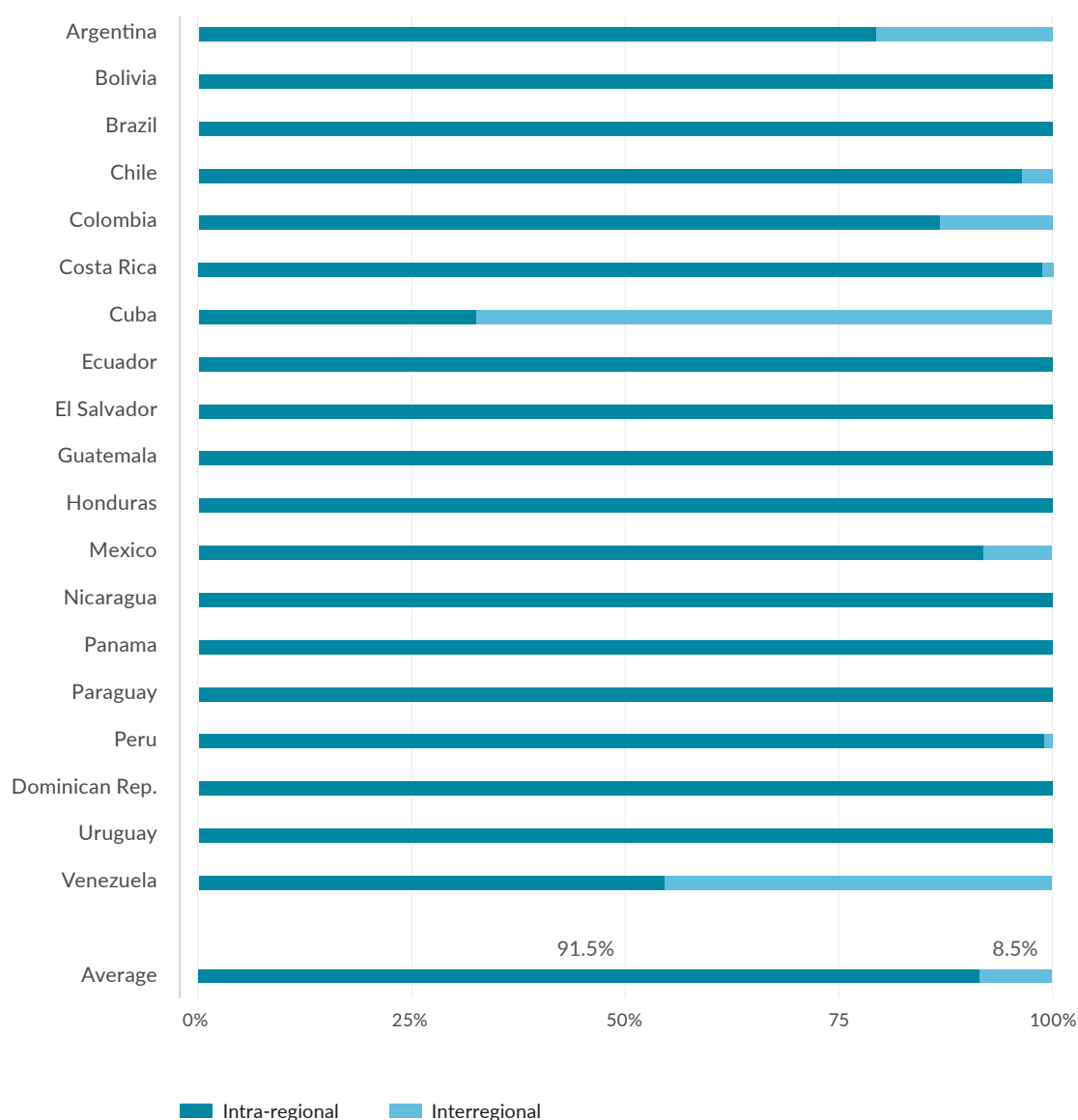
³ Includes Turkey (see methodological note in Graph 1.18).

⁴ It should be noted that some Ibero-American countries only register information on their Bilateral SSC at the intra-regional level. In this sense, data related to interregional SSC is partial and may be underestimated.

// Graph 1.19

Distribution of Ibero-American countries' Bilateral SSC initiatives, by intra- or inter-regional exchanges. 2022-2023

In percentage



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

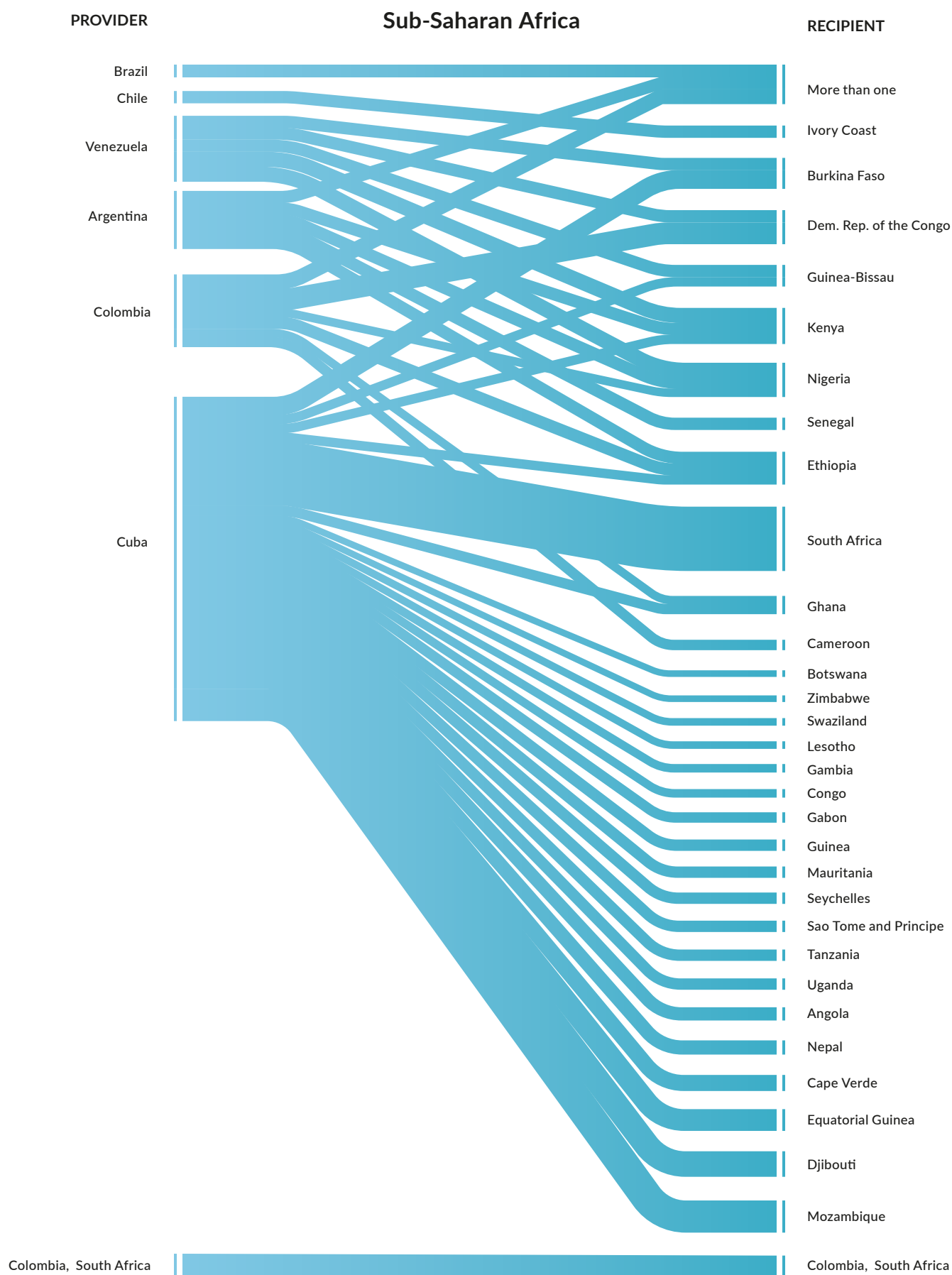
Indeed, during 2022 and 2023, Peru's, Costa Rica's and Chile's interregional exchanges were rather specific, corresponding to less than 3.5% of their total Bilateral SSC. This ratio was more significant in the cases of Mexico, Argentina and Colombia, with percentages of up to 8.2%, 13.3% and 20.8%, respectively. Venezuela and Cuba, however, deserve a special mention. The former

carried out 11 initiatives, a relatively low number but that represents a participation of more than 45% considering the total number its initiatives (24). The case of Cuba is the most exceptional, since almost 2 out of 3 (136) of its 200 initiatives were implemented with partners of other regions of the Global South, including Sub-Saharan Africa and the non-Ibero-American Caribbean.

// Graph 1.20

Distribution of Bilateral SSC initiatives exchanged between Ibero-American and Sub-Saharan African countries at the interregional level, by partner and role. 2022-2023

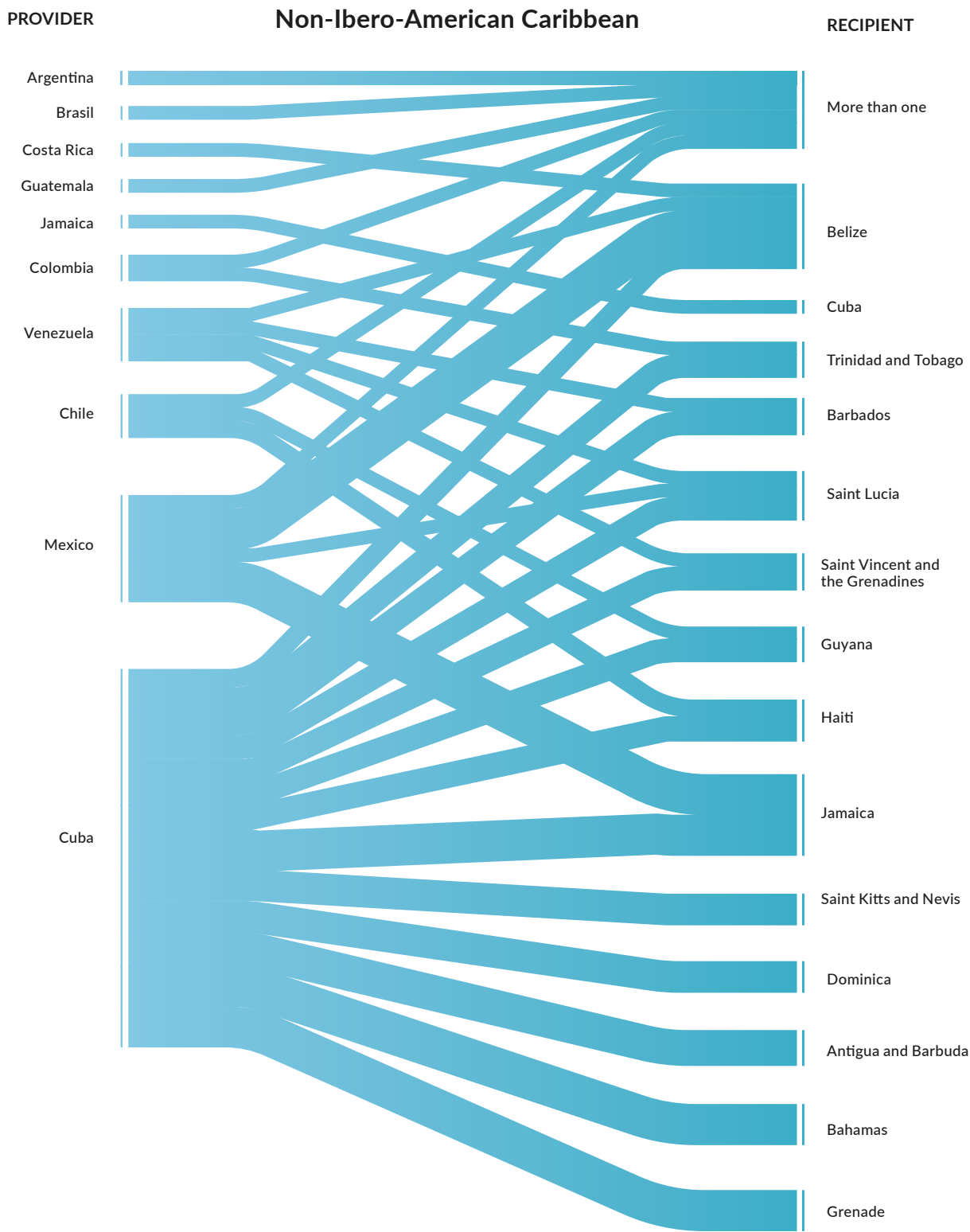
In units



// Graph 1.21

Distribution of Bilateral SSC initiatives exchanged between Ibero-American and non-Ibero-American Caribbean countries at the interregional level, by partner and role. 2022-2023

In units

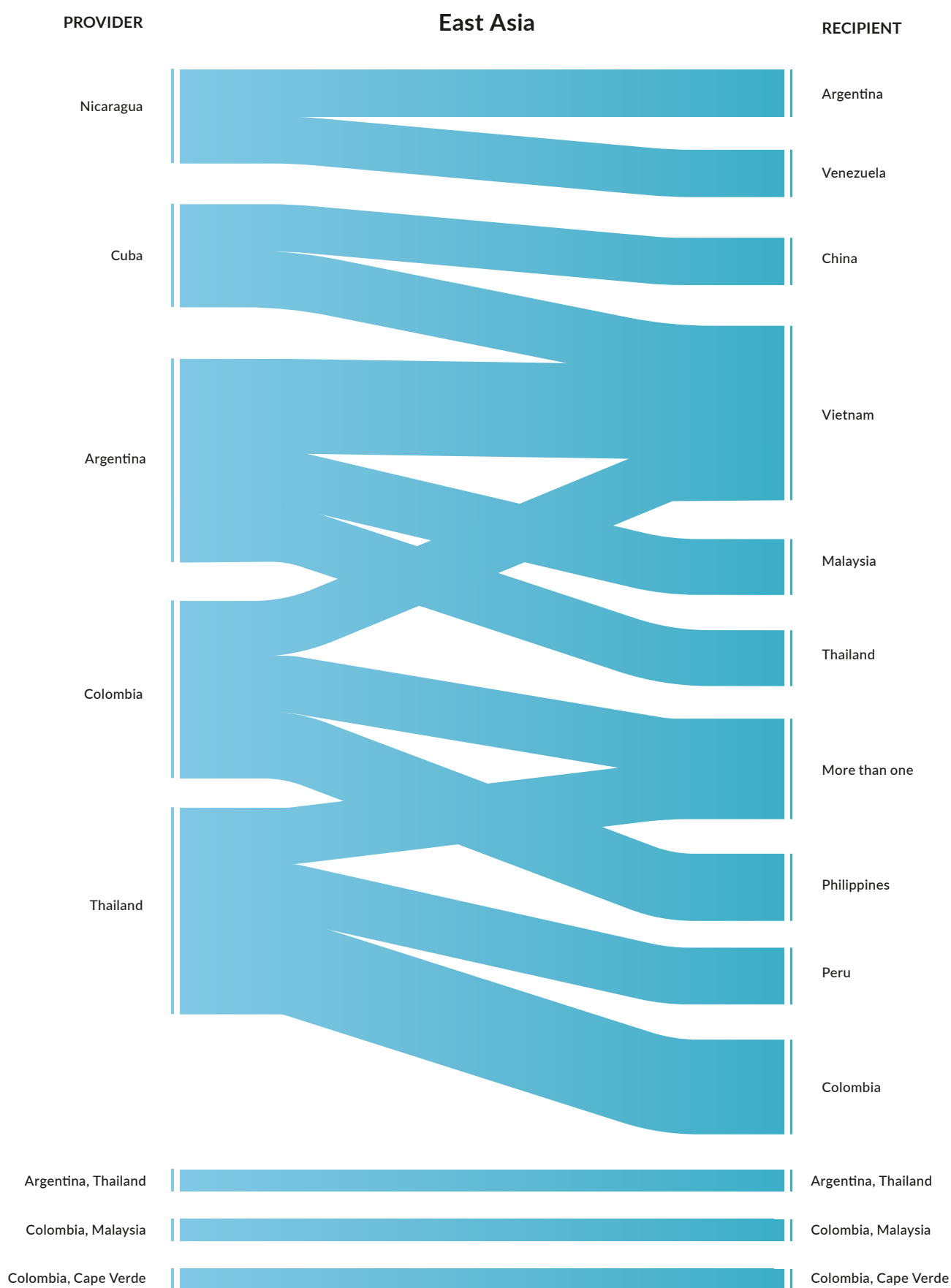


Source: SEGIB based on Agencies and Directorates-General for Cooperation

// Graph 1.22

Distribution of Bilateral SSC initiatives exchanged between Ibero-American and East Asian countries at the interregional level, by partner and role. 2022-2023

In units



Graphs 1.20, 1.21 and 1.22 were prepared to illustrate the way in which these interregional exchanges took place and, specifically, to identify the most active countries, its partners, the number of initiatives in which they participated, and their roles. Once again, these Sankey diagrams are an extremely visual resource, based, in this case, on the distribution of Bilateral SSC initiatives exchanged between Ibero-American countries and their partners in Sub-Saharan Africa (Graph 1.20), the non-Ibero-American Caribbean (1.21) and East Asia (1.22).

1.4

Sectoral analysis of Bilateral South-South Cooperation in 2022-2023

The health emergency of the 2020-2021 period changed the region's South-South Cooperation priorities. In this regard, and in an attempt to overcome these difficult conditions, Ibero-America focused its efforts on taking advantage of the potential of this modality to respond to the crisis, especially in the health field. This explains the fact that more than 30% of the Bilateral SSC initiatives promoted by Ibero-America in that period had *Health-related* problems as their main purpose.

However, the appearance of the first signs of recovery from the crisis caused by the pandemic should be reflected in a new shift of priorities in the 2022-2023 period. This section precisely analyses this issue, in order to understand the focus of the region's SSC efforts once the COVID-19 crisis was over.

To this end, a sectoral analysis of the 956 Bilateral SSC initiatives exchanged by Ibero-America with all its partners in the 2022-2023 period is carried out at two levels: one related to the region as a whole; and the other related to countries' SSC according to the different roles.⁵ This examination is important in order to understand, on the one hand, the region's sectoral strengths and, on the other, the necessities that tended to be addressed. The comparison between the pre- and post-pandemic periods will help identify the main changes. Findings and trends will be complemented by and described through specific experiences (*Cases*), as well as thematic analyses that may be of particular interest (*Boxes*).

1.4.1

Strengthened capacities

Graph 1.23 distributes the 956 Bilateral SSC initiatives in which Ibero-American countries participated during 2022 and 2023, according to the main activity sectors in which they were classified. The analysis of this graph provides a first relevant insight: more than 300 of these initiatives (1 out of 3) aimed to strengthen capacities related to *Health* (17.5%) and *Agriculture and livestock* (another 16.0%).

The high concentration of exchanges in these sectors contrasts with the dispersion of initiatives in others. In fact, other 300 initiatives involve 6 activity sectors of a very diverse nature such as (from highest to lowest relative importance): *Strengthening institutions and public policies* (7.3%) and *Legal and judicial development and Human Rights* (6.2%); *Education* (6.1%) and *Other services and social policies* (4.9%); *Environment* (6.2%); and *Culture* (4.1%). The last third is related to 22 different sectors, only three of which have shares above 3% of the total (*Tourism*; *Disaster management*; and *Peace, public and national security and defense*).



More than 300 of the 956 initiatives (1 out of 3) were aimed at capacity strengthening related to *Health* (17.5%) and *Agriculture and livestock* (another 16.0%)

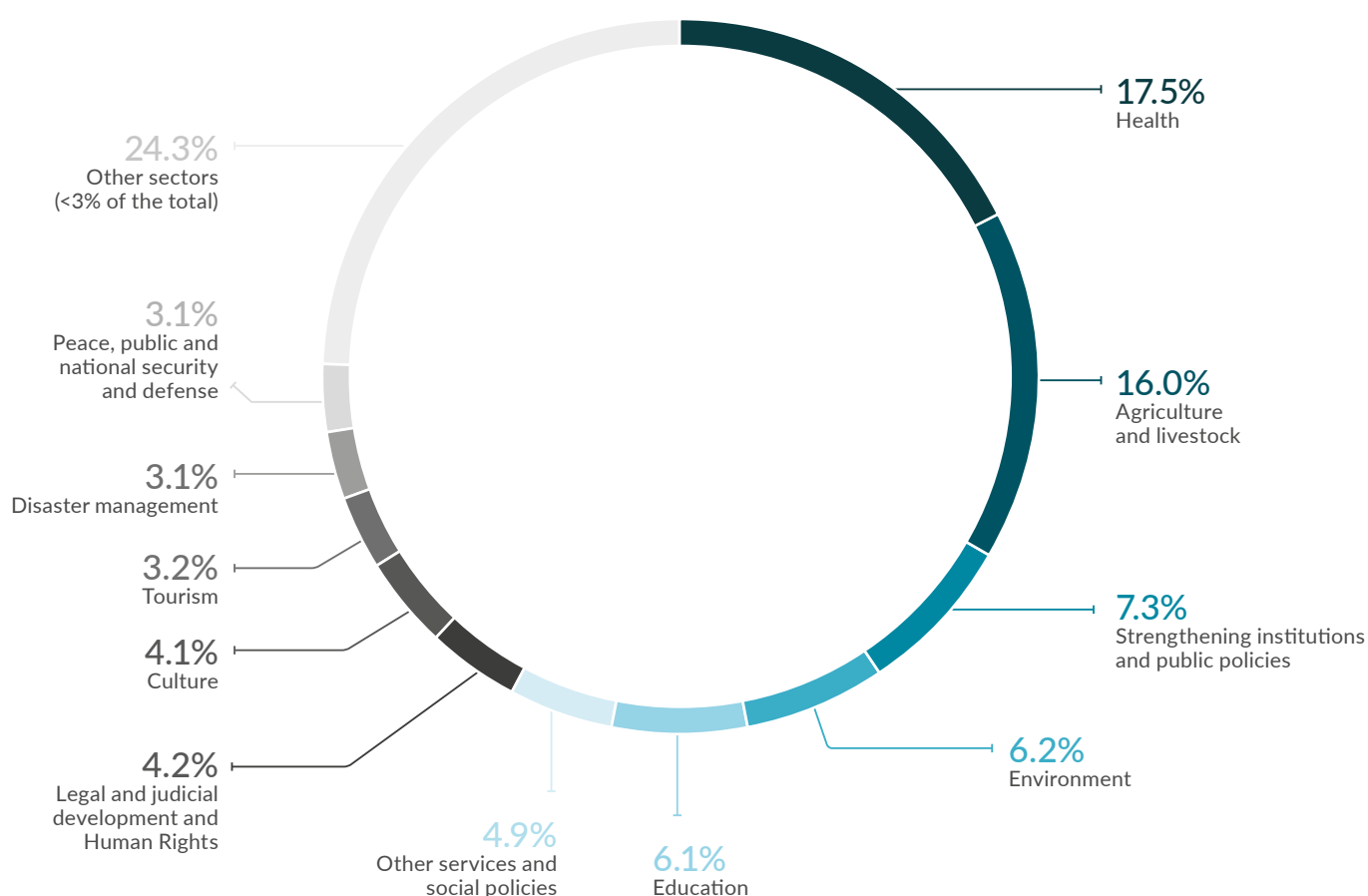


⁵ This section takes the 30 activity sectors recognized in the Ibero-American as a reference, as well as their classification into 6 areas of action (see methodological note at the end of this Report).

// Graph 1.23

Distribution of Ibero-American Bilateral SSC initiatives with all partners, by main activity sectors. 2022-2023

In percentage



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

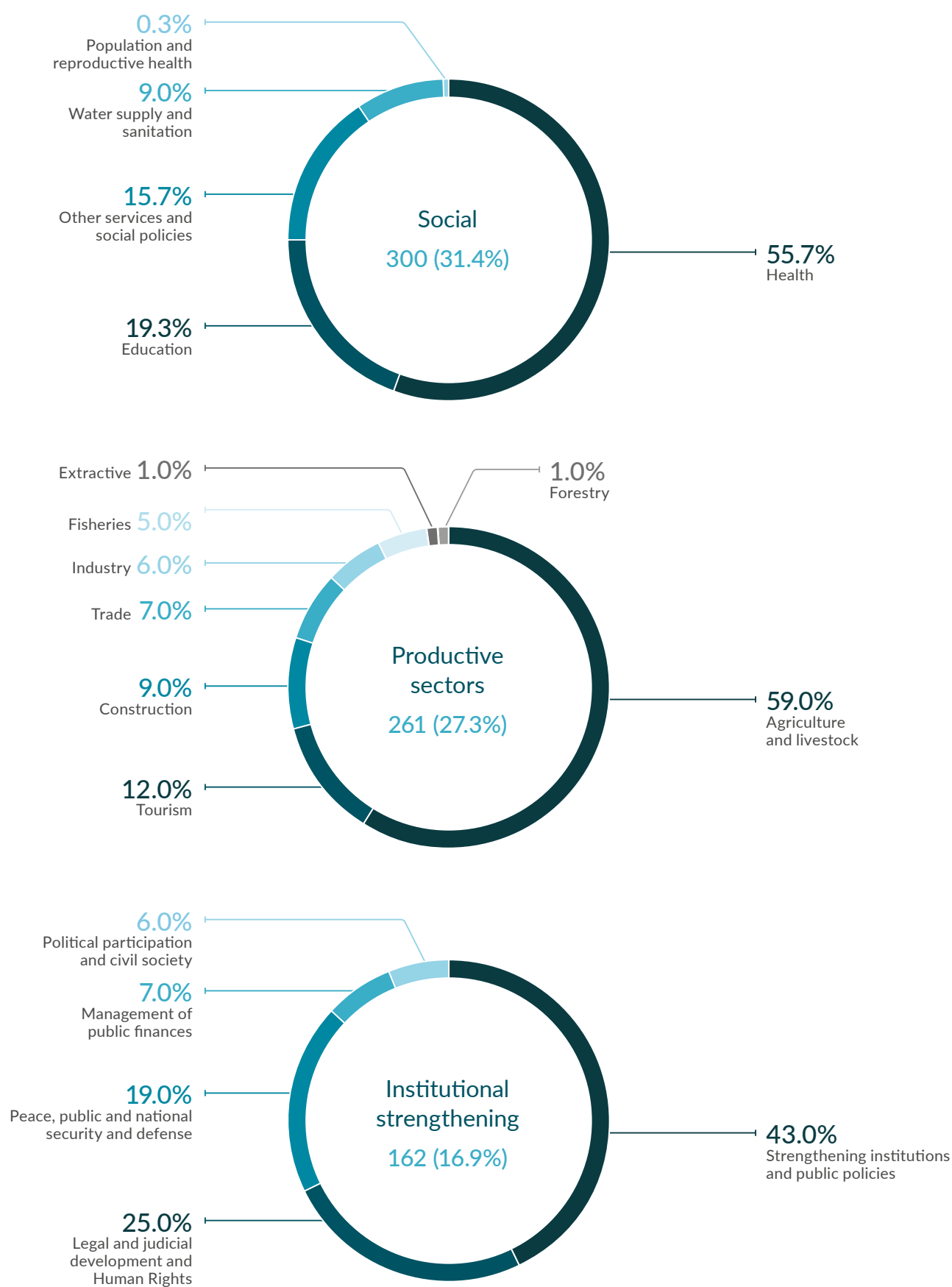
These results find a correlation in Chart 1.24, which once again classifies the 956 Bilateral SSC initiatives of the 2022-2023 period by their activity sector, this time according to their relative importance in the framework of their corresponding area of action. The sectoral distribution described above explains the fact that 60% of the Bilateral SSC initiatives registered for these two years are focused on strengthening the Social (31.4%) and Productive sectors (27.3%) area, in which initiatives aimed at *Health* and *Agriculture and livestock* are classified.

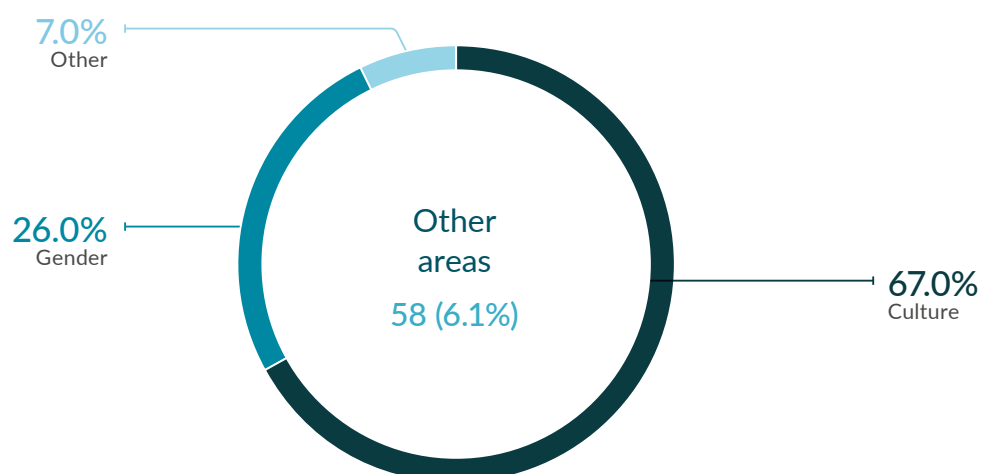
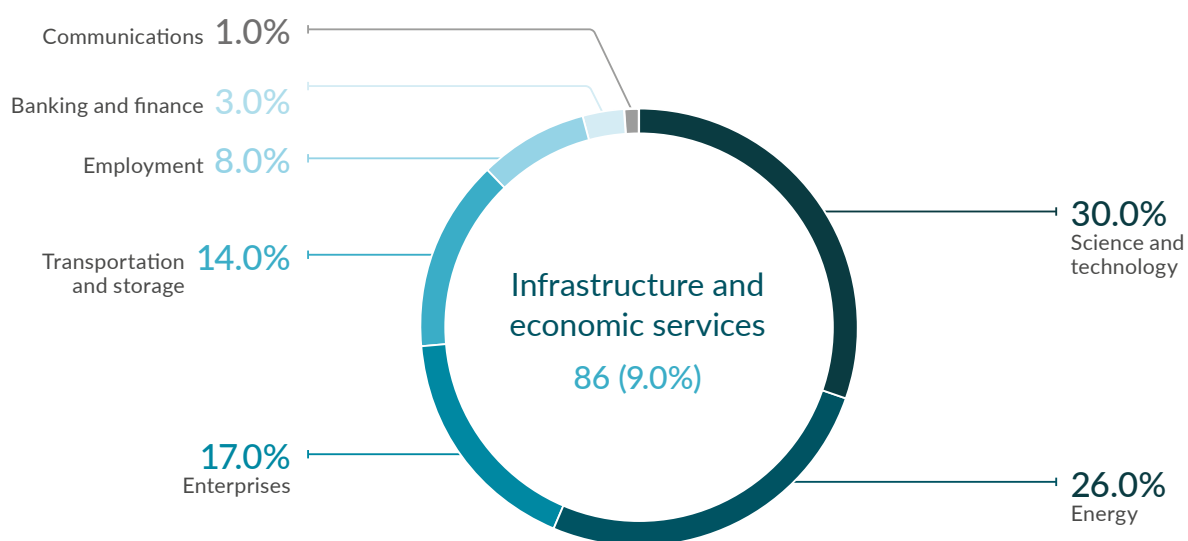
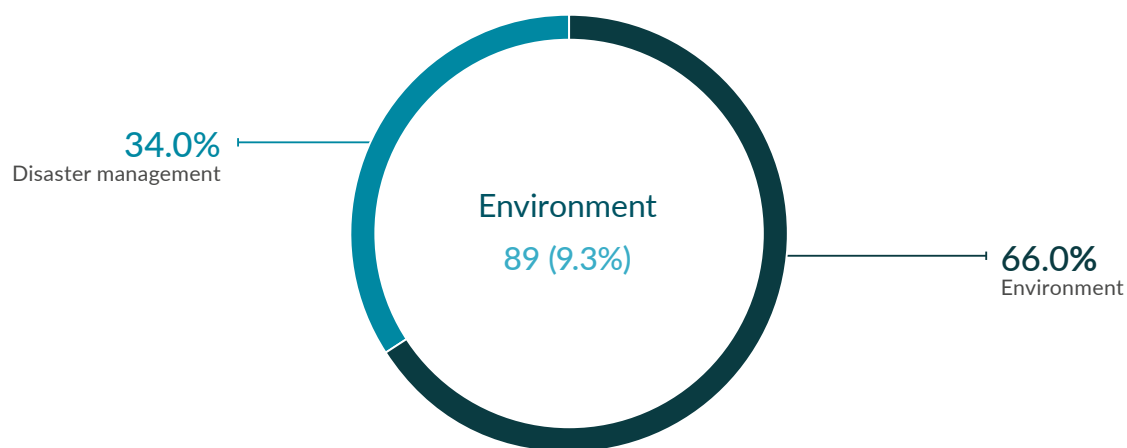
When exchanges related to Institutional strengthening are added to this analysis, 3 out of 4 of the exchanges in which Ibero-America participated in 2022 and 2023 are explained. The remaining 25% refers to Bilateral SSC that supported the generation of Infrastructure and economic services and addressed Environment issues (9% in each case), in addition to focusing on Other areas (6%).

// Graph 1.24

Distribution of Ibero-American Bilateral SSC initiatives with all partners, by activity sector, in the framework of the different areas of action. 2022-2023

In units and percentage





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

As mentioned above, and given the extraordinary circumstances related to the pandemic, it is interesting to analyze to what extent the current distribution of SSC efforts and priorities suggests that the region has overcome the crisis. Graphs 1.25 and 1.26 were prepared for this purpose, comparing data of the pre- and post-pandemic years. The first one shows the evolution of the number of Bilateral SSC initiatives that addressed *Health*—both annually and in two-year periods—, between 2018 and 2023. The second shows the variation of the different sectors' relative share over the total number of initiatives, comparing 2022-2023 with 2020-2021. A combined analysis of both graphs suggests a change in priorities, which is materialized by making less focus on the *Health* sector and progressively allocating more resources to other areas, among which *Agriculture and livestock* stands out.

Indeed, Graph 1.25 confirms how the COVID-19 crisis brought the number of Bilateral SSC initiatives dedicated to *Health* to an all-time high, surpassing the threshold of 200 initiatives, in 2020 only, and 300 in the 2020-2021 period. Since then, and as the trend curve suggests, it is possible to identify a clear downward trajectory of successive drops that results in values which are even lower than those of the pre-pandemic period: 126 in 2023 and 167 in 2022-2023.

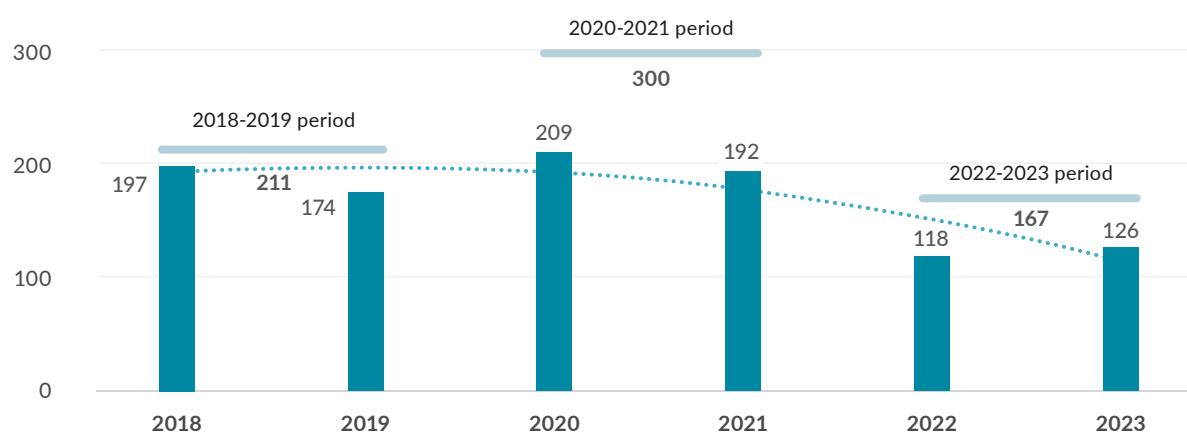
This dynamic leads to a decline of the relative importance of the *Health* sector of more than 14 percentage points comparing the 2022-2023 and 2020-2021 periods. Indeed, and as Graph 1.26 shows, this is the only sector that has experienced a loss in its intensity. The remaining sectors have barely changed their relative share—both in terms of positive and negative variations— by one percentage point. *Culture* and *Construction* were the only exceptions (each gaining 2 percentage points) and *Agriculture and livestock*, which importance increases by up to 5 points, partially offsetting the *Health* sector.

This reorganization of priorities in a new post-pandemic context closes the gap between the two sectors that characterized the most severe period of the COVID-19 crisis. In fact, during 2020 and 2021, *Agriculture and livestock* only accounted for 10% of exchanges, a figure 20 percentage points lower than that of the *Health* sector at the time. Meanwhile, in 2022-2023, the gap was reduced to just 1.5 points (from 16% to 17.5%), which, as already mentioned, placed the strengthening of *Health* and *Agriculture and livestock* at the same level in terms of priorities.

// Graph 1.25

Bilateral SSC initiatives on *Health* implemented during the pandemic crisis, by year and by two-year periods. 2018-2023

In units

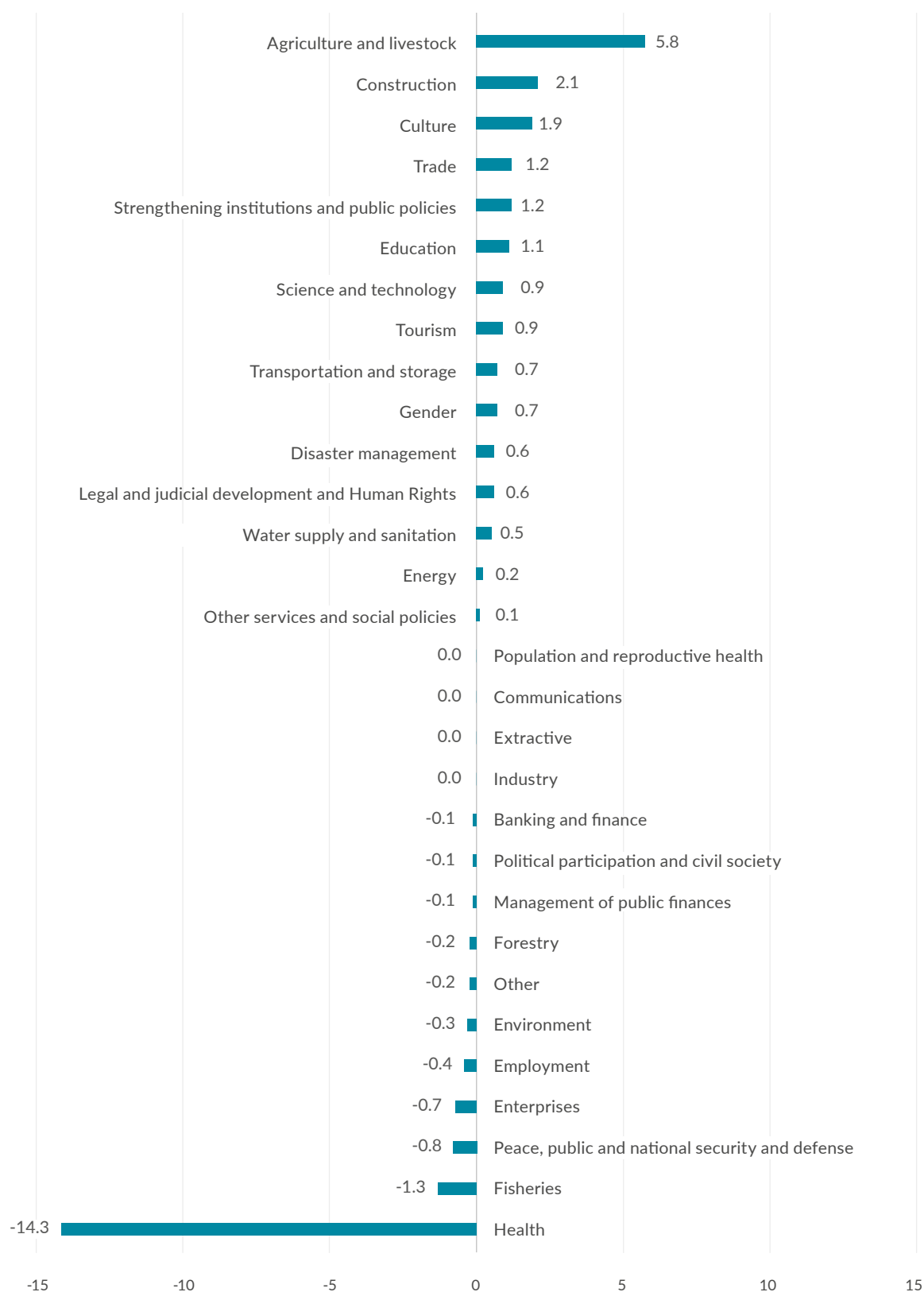


Source: SEGIB based on Agencies and Directorates-General for Cooperation

// Graph 1.26

Variation in activity sectors' weight in the total number of Ibero-American Bilateral SSC initiatives with all partners, between the pandemic and post-pandemic two-year periods. 2020-2021 and 2022-2023

In percentage points



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

Finally, a detailed analysis of the topics that were specifically addressed through the Bilateral SSC in which the region participated during the 2022-2023 period gives a more precise idea of the priorities that were set in the new context and the extent to which these have or have not been influenced by the response to the COVID-19 crisis. In fact, this examination provides a better understanding of the capacities that countries transferred in this new stage, as well as the types of necessities that could be addressed as a result of this cooperation.



The analysis of the 167 Bilateral SSC initiatives classified in the Health sector reveals the continued importance of the response to the COVID-19 crisis



Specifically, and once again taking the combined interpretation of Graphs 1.23 and 1.24 as a reference, the thematic analysis begins with the 167 Bilateral SSC initiatives classified in the *Health* sector. As a result of this detailed review, it is important to highlight two aspects: 1) the role played by Cuba (which accounts for more than 60% of the records); and 2) the importance of the response to the COVID-19 crisis, which was still very present, not only in terms of this country's cooperation, but also in at least 15% of the rest of the health-related initiatives.

Indeed, during the 2022-2023 period, and as will be described in the next section —especially through Graph 1.30—, the total number of exchanges in the *Health* sector are determined by the more than 100 initiatives that Cuba carried out with countries of all regions, especially those of the non-Ibero-American Caribbean, Sub-Saharan Africa and North Africa. Through them, Cuba shared its recognized experience in this area, for example, by giving continuity to long-standing projects, such as the Comprehensive Health Program or Operación Milagro, dedicated to ophthalmologic surgeries for people with limited resources.

Also in this period, Cuba's Henry Reeve Brigade, precisely dedicated to medical care in crisis and emergency situations caused by natural disasters and epidemics, had a remarkable activity. In this sense, and as mentioned above, the way in which the response to COVID-19 continued to determine Bilateral SSC in *Health* is expressed not only through Cuban cooperation, but also through that of other countries in the region. Thus, at least 10 other initiatives have been identified —mainly from

Chile and Mexico and, more specifically, from Uruguay, Ecuador, Colombia, Peru and Venezuela— which, from multiple perspectives, continued to address the pandemic and its impact, including those that aimed to develop therapeutic alternatives, sharing experiences in treating patients and coordinating clinical trials, among others.

In addition, knowledge continued to be exchanged in other traditional areas associated with the *Health* sector. In this sense, initiatives aimed at strengthening institutions (General Directorates and Superintendencies), providing them with better management tools (regulation and oversight models) and supporting the training of their professionals, are worth mentioning. Another important group of initiatives in this period focused on the development of specific therapies to respond to different types of diseases related to kidneys and lungs, cancer and tuberculosis. Others also addressed malnutrition and other eating disorders. A special reference should be made of the permanent strengthening of Human Milk Banks, experience that Brazil shared with almost all the countries of the region, and which, since the Millennium Agenda, has been a benchmark in the fight against infant mortality.

Almost 90% of the exchanges in the Social area and almost 30% of the total number of exchanges are explained when initiatives related to *Education and Other services and social policies* are added to those of the *Health* sector. Part of this cooperation is, once again, determined by Cuba's participation, which promotes numerous educational projects in Ibero-American countries as well as in other regions, including its literacy program, Yo Sí Puedo, which has won several UNESCO awards. Additionally, initiatives dedicated to the exchange of new tools for educational and pedagogical innovation, as well as those that support the development of professional competencies, should be highlighted among other experiences supported by several countries. In all of these cases, it is also possible to conclude that those initiatives which addressed education play an important role as a key instrument to close social gaps and tackle inequalities.

Several topics can be identified in the framework of those initiatives that are classified in the *Other services and social policies* sector. On the one hand, exchanges related to the specific care of certain groups, seeking to guarantee their rights and their full social integration, should be highlighted. This includes cooperation dedicated to early childhood, the elderly, people with disabilities, migrants and indigenous peoples. On the other hand, this sector also includes initiatives related to housing policies and the rehabilitation and recovery of vulnerable neighborhoods. Finally, actions and projects dedicated to the promotion of sports as an instrument for social inclusion, should also be mentioned.

Case 1.1 was prepared in order to provide a detailed description of the above. This example summarizes an initiative between Colombia and Chile in which Colombia shares its experience in a policy that

promotes the recognition of care work performed by women, as well as co-responsibility, ensuring the reconciliation with other aspects of their lives.



Photo: The implementation of the Kangaroo Mother Care Method in hospitals of the Ministry of Public Health of Ecuador requires support and actions for its sustainability and strengthening in the technical, administrative and financial areas. As a result of this SSC with Colombia, the Ministry of Health has initiated its implementation in hospitals in order to institutionalize the care for premature or low weight newborns through this mechanism. Image bank on South-South and Triangular Cooperation in Ibero-America. SEIGB-PIFCSS. 2024.

// CASE 1.1

Colombia and Chile cooperate to promote co-responsibility in care work



Caretaking is vital for development. These activities are mostly performed by women in an unpaid manner and they result in the sacrifice of other educational, work and social priorities. In fact, in Latin-America, women dedicate more than twice as much time to (unpaid) domestic and care work than men (ECLAC, 2021).

Some Latin-American countries have designed public policies in order to multidimensionally address this problem. For example, the District Care System of Bogota, in Colombia, has set the strategy *Manzanas del Cuidado*, through which caretakers have time to carry out other activities or can access different services while professionals take care of the people of which they are responsible, all free of charge.

Taking advantage of this experience, Colombia and Chile approved the SSC project *Inhabiting Neighborhood Civic Care Centers*, through which Chile had the opportunity to advance co-responsibility associated with care work by incorporating this approach in its lines of action and programs. This initiative's objective is to place people at the center, through the support and consolidation of various community networks in neighborhoods and territories.

In early 2023, the Neighborhood Recovery Program of the Ministry of Housing and Urbanism of Chile (MINVU by its Spanish acronym), supported by the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA), had developed an action plan in

Colombia in which a partnership was established with the Secretariat for Women in Bogota. As a result of this process, Chilean authorities became familiar with the experience of the Colombian capital and the opportunity for bilateral technical exchanges based on that city's experience was considered an opportunity (AGCID and APC-Colombia internal documents).

The project began at the end of November 2023, when the first technical visit of the Chilean Ministry of Housing and Urban Development to six *Manzanas de Cuidado* in Bogota took place, and workshops were held on the management, replicability and evaluation of these initiatives.

Source: SEGIB based on Agencies and Directorates-General for Cooperation, Colombian Presidential Agency for International Cooperation (APC-Colombia by its Spanish acronym), Chilean Agency for International Cooperation for Development (AGCID by its Spanish acronym) and Economic Commission for Latin-America and the Caribbean (ECLAC, 2021).

In turn, 36% of the 956 Bilateral SSC initiatives promoted by the region during the 2022-2023 period addressed different economic fields: in fact, 3 out of 4 (27.3% of the total) were aimed at strengthening Productive sectors; while 1 out of 4 (another 9%) was dedicated to support the generation of Infrastructure and economic services. As mentioned above, *Agriculture and livestock* was the second most important sector, accounting for 60% of the initiatives that had a productive focus. At a great distance, exchanges to strengthen the development of *Science and technology*, *Energy* and *Trade*, as well as *Tourism* —the only one of these four which importance in the total number of initiatives exceeded the 3% threshold—, are also worth mentioning.

Furthermore, and as Graph 1.31 will show, initiatives classified in the *Agriculture and livestock* sector mainly corresponded to exchanges between Ibero-American countries themselves, projects with other regions being more specific. Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil, countries

with extensive and recognized experience in this field, were among the most active partners. Mexico, Colombia, Peru and Bolivia, among others, were also remarkably dynamic, combining the provider and recipient roles.

With regard to the topics that were specifically addressed, most of this SSC aimed to strengthen agriculture, especially in terms of the entire agricultural production cycle, from sowing and cultivation to the distribution and marketing of final products, both at the level of domestic and foreign markets. However, other initiatives were related to livestock (genomic evaluations; traceability; dairy products) and, occasionally, to fields such as beekeeping.

Thus, Bilateral SSC in agriculture was mainly dedicated to providing producers with a wide range of tools and knowledge (innovative cultivation practices; the use of biotechnology; pest management; the search for food safety to ensure food security but also market insertion; agribusiness management models, among others). It should be added that two recurring lines of action could be identified in most cases: on the one hand, a focus on small-scale producers and family farming; and, on the other, an emphasis on the the generation of instruments to promote greater capacity to adapt and respond to the adverse effects of climate change. The objective was twofold in this sense: to advance an agriculture that ensures livelihoods for producers, and to do so in an environmentally sustainable manner.

All the above was complemented by other SSC initiatives that provided agriculture with a stronger institutional framework. To this end, these exchanges also addressed legal development; Ministries' digital transformation; the adoption of satellite technologies for crop monitoring; and the promotion of phytosanitary certifications, among others.

Finally, another common feature was the frequent emphasis on regional crops such as sweet potato, coffee, cocoa, potato, corn, soybeans, rice and quinoa, to name a few. In fact, Case 1.2. provides further details on cooperation in the agricultural sector, based on a project that illustrates some of the above, making references to quinoa, small producers, food security and adaptation to climate change. This is also one of the few example of exchanges between regions, in this case involving Argentina and Morocco.

// CASE 1.2

Growing quinoa under extreme conditions for food security



Quinoa is recognized for its nutritional value, but also for its ability to adapt to different environmental conditions. For this reason, and as it can develop under extreme climatic and soil conditions, it is important for present and future food security (FAO, 2023).

Although native to the Andean region, quinoa is currently cultivated in different parts of the world. For example, it was introduced into Morocco in 1999, in the area of Khénifra, through a project of the Institute of Agronomy and Veterinary Medicine Hassan II (IAV) (FAO, 2013). Nowadays, this country's rural area is facing serious food security problems due to climate change and land desertification, challenges which quinoa cultivation could help to counteract.

In this context, Argentina has supported Morocco to develop quinoa as a complementary food and non-traditional cash crop, as it adapts to environments that suffer from drought and salinity stress. This South-South Cooperation initiative also aimed to increase small farmers' income, alleviate poverty, generate new employment opportunities and integrate women into the value chain of this seed.

Since 2019, the Argentinian technical team has carried out three missions to Morocco in which *"field experiments were developed in order to learn about and innovate in the management of quinoa cultivation in marginal areas of Morocco (Bouchane and Rabat)"* and *"progress was made with the development of a Field Manual on quinoa cultivation for small producers in French and Arabic"* (INTA, 2022).

During 2021, due to mobility restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the project continued virtually with the socialization of harvest results from experimental plots of land (INTA, 2022). The fourth stage took place in April 2023, with the mission of two IAV technicians to different Argentinian provinces (Tucumán, Catamarca, La Rioja and San Juan), where they were able to visit experimental fields and participate in seminars and technical training. Two more stages are yet to be carried out in 2024.

The project was financed by the Argentine Fund for International Cooperation (FOAR by its Spanish acronym) and is executed by INTA and the Miguel Lillo Foundation (FML by its Spanish acronym). The technical counterpart in Morocco is IAV Hassan II.

Source: SEGIB based on Agencies and Directorates-General for Cooperation, Zonda de San Juan Newspaper (2023), FAO (2013) (2023) and INTA (2022).

On the other hand, and in order to continue the analysis of the economic area, initiatives aimed at supporting the development of *Tourism* also deserve a special mention. Part of the Bilateral SSC that was classified in this sector was dedicated to develop tourism as a product —based on the use of natural and historical resources—, by achieving quality and sustainability standards that even sought to position tourism branding. In fact, this SSC was based on the exchange of strategies; staff training and education; and the promotion of quality seals and certifications, among others. Other exchanges in this sector aimed to strengthen public institutions to support several stakeholders. It should be added that, due to the nature of this activity, this cooperation is closely linked to territories, to the local and municipal levels, and even to the cross-border level, as suggested by the initiatives on tourism corridors that involve, for example, Argentina and Chile.

Finally, the Bilateral SSC that in 2022-2023 was associated with *Trade, Science and Technology* and *Energy*, addressed different topics. First, initiatives related to Trade focused on customs, from very diverse but complementary perspectives, for example, the regulation of the entry and exit of products; the fight against illicit trafficking; the management of information platforms; and improvements in tariff systems, which are, in turn, part of States' collection and taxation systems. Second, SSC in *Science and Technology* focused on two main areas: the strengthening of institutions and public policies (national technological development programs; the promotion of innovation environments; science and technology observatories; metrology and standard classifications); and the exchange of innovative practices for different branches of the economy (nanotechnology and quality control techniques for irradiated products with applications in the productive and health sectors). Third, SSC in *Energy* covered from generation to final distribution, always focusing on the transition to renewable and sustainable energies (solar photovoltaic systems; wind farms; thermoelectric plants; lithium treatment; biofuels; energy management; and electricity market models, among others).

Yet, the combined analysis of Graphs 1.23 and 1.24 should be resumed to understand the type of capacities that were strengthened in the Institutional strengthening area. Specifically, these diagrams shed light on the exchanges classified in three sectors, which aggregately account for another 15% of the cooperation that Ibero-American countries carried out in the period: *Strengthening institutions and public policies* (the third most important after *Health and Agriculture and livestock*); *Legal and judicial development and Human Rights*; and *Peace, public and national security and defense*.

Indeed, the 70 initiatives that aimed to contribute to *Strengthening institutions and public policies* addressed three major topics: first, the generation and management of the information needed to guide decision-making

(population and housing censuses; the development of cartography and data systems; the management of public documents and archives and their digitization); second, the provision of a quality public service (e-government; training for civil servants; improvements in data protection); and third, the strengthening of International, South-South and Triangular Cooperation (methodologies for the evaluation of programs and projects; the exchange of experiences on SSC and TC Funds; and activities among Agencies themselves).



Other exchanges that focused on the promotion of human rights, with a strong emphasis on the protection of minors, the fight against the worst forms of child labor, sexual exploitation and the prevention of torture, were also important



Additionally, the different initiatives that were promoted in *Legal and judicial development and Human Rights* aimed, on the one hand, to work on guaranteeing access to justice; and, on the other, to improve its quality, seeking to alleviate the system by, for example, promoting out-of-court dispute resolution. Other exchanges focused on the promotion of human rights, with a strong emphasis on child protection; the fight against the worst forms of child labor; sexual exploitation; and the prevention of torture. Several initiatives addressed forensic anthropology, including those in which Argentina exchanged its recognized experience in this field with countries from both the Ibero-American region and other regions, especially French-speaking Africa.

In order to complete the analysis of this area of action, mention should be made of the Bilateral SSC initiatives (around 30) that sought to contribute to *Peace, public and national security and defense*. In this sense, experiences related to community police training and education, and those related to historical memory; reintegration; normalization; attention to victims of conflict; and peace-building, stood out. For example, Colombia's exchanges with countries in other regions, such as Cambodia and Vietnam, in this sector, deserve to be highlighted.

The fourth sector in terms of relative importance in Bilateral SSC in the 2022-2023 period is *Environment*, which, together with *Disaster management*, accounts for almost another 10% of all the exchanges. In fact, a wide variety of initiatives that address two major lines of action which are, in turn, complementary, are associated with the former. For example, the protection of biodiversity and the fight against, adaptation to and mitigation of the worst effects of global warming.

Accordingly, a significant part of the Bilateral SSC initiatives promoted by Ibero-American countries in the 2022-2023 period aimed to contribute to the preservation of biodiversity. Specifically, exchanges focused on the artificial and natural restoration of reefs, soils, mountain and high Andean ecosystems; the implementation of financial mechanisms for the payment for environmental services; and the development

of regulations and protocols for the management of natural resources, among others. In this framework, it is worth noticing an increasing number of exchanges that highlight the important contribution that traditional and indigenous peoples' knowledge can make to this sector (for example, initiatives that use this knowledge for forestry and genetic resource management).

// CASE 1.3

Mexico and Honduras cooperate to protect and conserve forests



"Forest ecosystems provide food, timber, fuel and medical resources; in addition, they serve as tourist and scenic recreation sites and are also important for the socio-cultural activities of their inhabitants" (AMEXCID, 2020). They also contribute to the conservation of water and to biological diversity, climate regulation and carbon sequestration (AMEXCID, 2020).

According to ECLAC (2023), 34% of the planet's primary forests are located in Latin-America and the Caribbean and, at the regional level, Ibero-American countries also work through South-South Cooperation (SSC) to protect this ecosystems. The project *Institutional Strengthening of the Forest Conservation Institute of Honduras in Sustainable Forest Development, Management and Conservation* has

been one of the most representative examples. This Bilateral SSC initiative between Mexico and Honduras has been developed in 3 phases (2013-2015) (2016-2018) (2019-2023).

The last one was approved in 2019 in the framework of the Bilateral Cooperation Program between the two countries, and it was implemented with the support of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources of Mexico (SEMARNAT by its Spanish acronym), through the National Forestry Commission (CONAFOR by its Spanish acronym), and the Institute of Forest Conservation of Honduras (ICF by its Spanish acronym).

According to AMEXCID, 8 activities were carried out during the course of the project, benefiting 216 officials and technical and academic

specialists. Participants included experts from the Secretariats of Environment and Agrarian Institutes, as well as universities and forestry and agricultural professional associations, among others (internal document, 2023).

Exchanges in the framework of this third phase addressed best practices in forest restoration and health, and field visits were also carried out to reinforce knowledge and skills in the maintenance of forest germplasm production units, nursery management, mangrove restoration and plant health (AMEXCID, 2022). As a result of the outcomes and of Honduras' interest in continuing to consolidate the exchange, a fourth phase will be included in the 13th Bilateral Cooperation Program with Mexico, in order to continue training in this area.

Source: SEBIG based on Agencies and Directorates-General for Cooperation, Mexican Agency for International Development Cooperation (AMEXCID by its Spanish acronym) (2022) (2020), and Economic Commission for Latin-America and the Caribbean (ECLAC, 2023).

Cases 1.3 and 1.4 were precisely prepared to illustrate the different approaches through which countries worked together to protect biodiversity and the environment. The first focuses on a project that Mexico and Honduras have been promoting for years to strengthen this Central-American country's Forest Conservation Institute. Case 1.4, which details an exchange between Panama and El Salvador, highlights the importance of training to protect ecosystems.

The above is complemented by cooperation to face global warming, which combines initiatives to mitigate and adapt to its worst effects (drought risk management), with the promotion of technological and institutional resources that provide information for a better management of the climate crisis (satellite platforms and observatories to monitor its impact).

With regard to *Disaster management*, numerous exchanges focused on fire management and firefighter's education and training, partly based on the experience accumulated by Brazil. Training for better risk management and emergency response was also registered. As has been the case, Bilateral SSC in this sector also addressed the development of information systems, in this case focused on the record of damages and losses due to extreme events. Finally, from a damage prevention and minimization perspective, initiatives related to the resilience of infrastructures, especially in the face of fires and seismic movements, should also be mentioned.

Finally, Bilateral SSC that in 2022-2023 was classified in the *Culture* sector accounted for 4.1% of the 956 initiatives. A wide range of exchanges took place in this sense, including those related to the management and conservation of cultural heritage; the fight against illicit trafficking of goods; the promotion of cultural industries; and the development of satellite accounts, among others. Those initiatives that have revalued the culture of indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples and those that, for example, through youth orchestras, have used culture to promote social inclusion, stood out. Given its importance precisely as an instrument for cohesion

// CASE 1.4

Panama and El Salvador promote the training of environmental leaders



Taking care of the environment is a priority in most Ibero-American countries. In addition to the work carried out by the public and the private sector, it is necessary to involve communities in the protection of nature and the generation of sustainable practices. In this sense, progress can be made towards the preservation of ecosystems through environmental education and community empowerment.

In this regard, in the framework of their 2022-2024 Technical and Scientific Cooperation Program, Panama and El Salvador approved the Bilateral SSC project *Knowledge and technology transfer for environmental volunteers and community leaders*, implemented by the Ministries of Environment of both countries.

The project had 7 activities. These included workshops for volunteers and environmental leaders, and for community organizations, on topics related to environmental management and the implementation of projects on

integrated solid waste management/3R principles (reduce, reuse, recycle), single-use plastics, and watershed conservation, among others. These activities were carried out online between April 2022 and January 2023. During the second phase, technical exchanges are expected to be carried out on-site, in order to approach the implementation of the initiatives in the field. The design of diploma courses to further strengthen knowledge is also planned.

According to the project's document, the initiative was estimated to directly benefit communities that are involved in the protection and improvement of their environments and, additionally, to protect the region's watershed. It also important to mention that this was planned to support the work of fourteen Regional Directorates of the Ministry of the Environment of Panama, which included two indigenous communities that were also interested in joining the Virtual Environmental School of the Ministry of the Environment (MARN by its Spanish

acronym) of El Salvador. This platform was launched in January 2023, in order to provide public access to training, and to strengthen good practices for the conservation of natural resources (*Diario El Salvador*, 2023).

The work carried out in Parque Forestal Los Andes in San Miguelito (near Panama City), where environmental volunteers developed reforestation initiatives and created firebreaks so that fires do not spread and residents are not exposed to soot should specially be highlighted. This group of citizens organized activities to increase protection and awareness on environmental care, in order to preserve the ecosystem of the park.

Through this initiative, Panamá and El Salvador contributed to the alignment of Ibero-American SSC with SDG 6 (Clean water and sanitation) —main SDG— and with SDG 13 (Climate action), 14 (Life below water) and 15 (Life on land) —second SDGs—.

Source: SEGIB based on Agencies and Directorates-General for Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Panama, Agency for International Cooperation of El Salvador (ESCO by its Spanish acronym) and *Diario El Salvador* (2023).

among peoples, Box 1.1 was prepared to provide an in-depth understanding of the capacities that have been actually strengthened in the *Culture* sector through the exchanges carried out between 2007 and 2023.

The *Culture* sector is included in Other areas, together with *Gender* and the generic sector “*Other*” which together account for 2% of the total number of initiatives that

took place in the 2022-2023 period. The 15 initiatives that promoted gender equality tended to focus on two main topics: the prevention and eradication of violence against women; and the promotion of women's access to economic entrepreneurship. The projects that worked on education from this egalitarian perspective should also be mentioned as they have a significant impact on every society.

→ BOX 1.1

Cooperation on *Culture* as a multidimensional tool for development

Culture is recognized for its important contribution to individual and social transformation. Although no specific Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) is dedicated to *Culture*, the 2030 Agenda makes a cross-cutting recognition of its role to broaden the scope of social, economic and environmental policies, hence, to “leave no one behind” (SEGIB, 2021a, p. 128). Specifically, *culture* is explicitly identified in SDG 11 (Sustainable cities and communities), which refers to the cultural heritage associated with cities, seen as symbolic spaces for the preservation of tangible and intangible assets.

Ibero-American South-South and Triangular Cooperation also strengthens the *Culture* sector in this regard. Specifically, 715 initiatives were implemented between 2007 and 2023, which accounted for about 7% of the region's total cooperation in that period. Eighty-eight percent (88%) of this cooperation was implemented in the Bilateral SSC modality (632), while the remaining 12% was carried out through Regional (46) and Triangular (37) Cooperation.

In terms of its evolution over time, the first graph shows initiatives that were associated with *Culture* by cooperation

modality, and their share in the total number of exchanges in the analyzed period. The graph confirms the clear prevalence of Bilateral SSC over the Triangular and Regional modalities. It also shows a steady growth in cooperation to strengthen this sector: specifically, from 2007 to 2023, its participation increased from 4% in 2007 to almost 8% in 2023. This trend has remained constant throughout the entire period, with the exception of the most severe years of the COVID-19 pandemic (2020-2021).

Evolution of SSC initiatives on *Culture*, by modality. 2007-2023

In units and percentage



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

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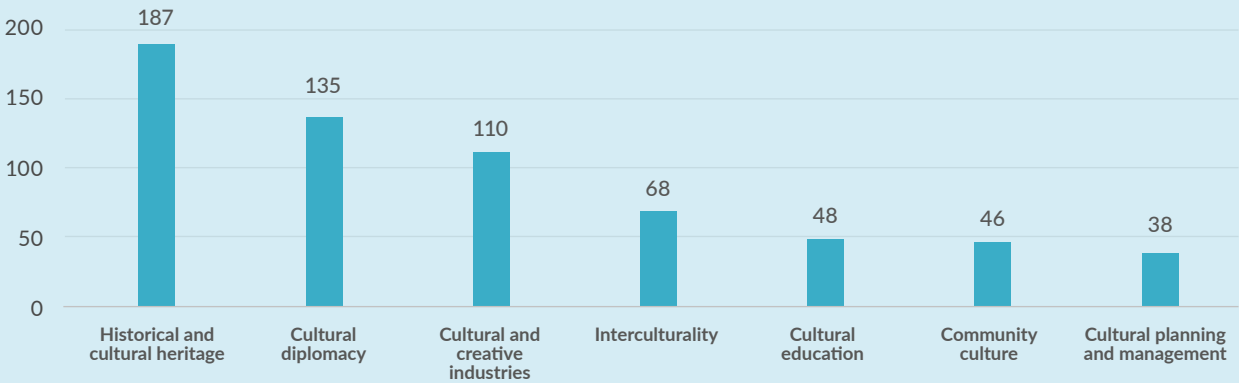
It is also important to understand the specific topics that were addressed by the Bilateral SSC that was classified in the *Culture* sector, and the type of public policies that the different initiatives have strengthened. The second graph shows that almost

30% of Bilateral SSC corresponds to actions, projects or programs related to Historical and cultural heritage. Of this total, the majority specifically contribute to the conservation of tangible heritage, which, according to UNESCO, is considered “impossible to

estimate and irreplaceable because of its historical and cultural value”. This also includes architectural, archaeological, artistic and historical heritage (UNESCO in Institute for Cultural and Artistic Management, 2021).

Thematic categories addressed by Bilateral SSC initiatives on Culture. 2007-2023

In units



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

Initiatives related to Heritage are followed by those on Cultural diplomacy (21%), understood as an instrument to promote intercultural dialogue and to strengthen relations between countries. It should be pointed out that the majority correspond to specific actions in the framework of *Escuelas Chile* and *Escuelas México*. This category also includes exchanges to teach Spanish to public officials, as Colombia does with countries in Asia or the Caribbean Basin.

Initiatives on Cultural and creative industries rank third (around 17%). These address various topics such as arts (cinematography; dance; and theater), crafts (design and marketing of handicraft products; leather goods systems; dyeing of textile and vegetable fibers, etc.), music

(direction of symphonic orchestras and choirs; making and repairing stringed musical instruments; and national music plans), cultural tourism (promotion of cultural tourism routes), and intellectual property.

These are followed by cooperation on Interculturality, which objective is the dialogue between different cultural groups to overcome social asymmetries and cultural discrimination (SEGIB, 2021b, p.15). These exchanges show how *culture* contributes to a greater recognition of the rights and identity of indigenous peoples, with emphasis on the promotion of linguistic diversity; the philosophy of “living well” (“*buen vivir*” in Spanish) and racial equity; and different social programs in health, gender and food security, among others. In this regard, for example,

bilingual intercultural education should be highlighted, as it allows children and indigenous young people to “*learn in contexts of greater equality, in conditions that are adapted to their cultural characteristics, their language, and their conception of the world*” (Ministry of Education of Chile, 2024).

Other initiatives focus on Cultural education, promoting Spanish teaching; the training of teachers in cultural management; institutional strengthening of cultural government institutions; and training in librarianship, among others. It should be noted that many of these exchanges correspond to the training of human capital and cultural advisory services provided by Cuba to various countries (of 48 initiatives, 18 were from this country).

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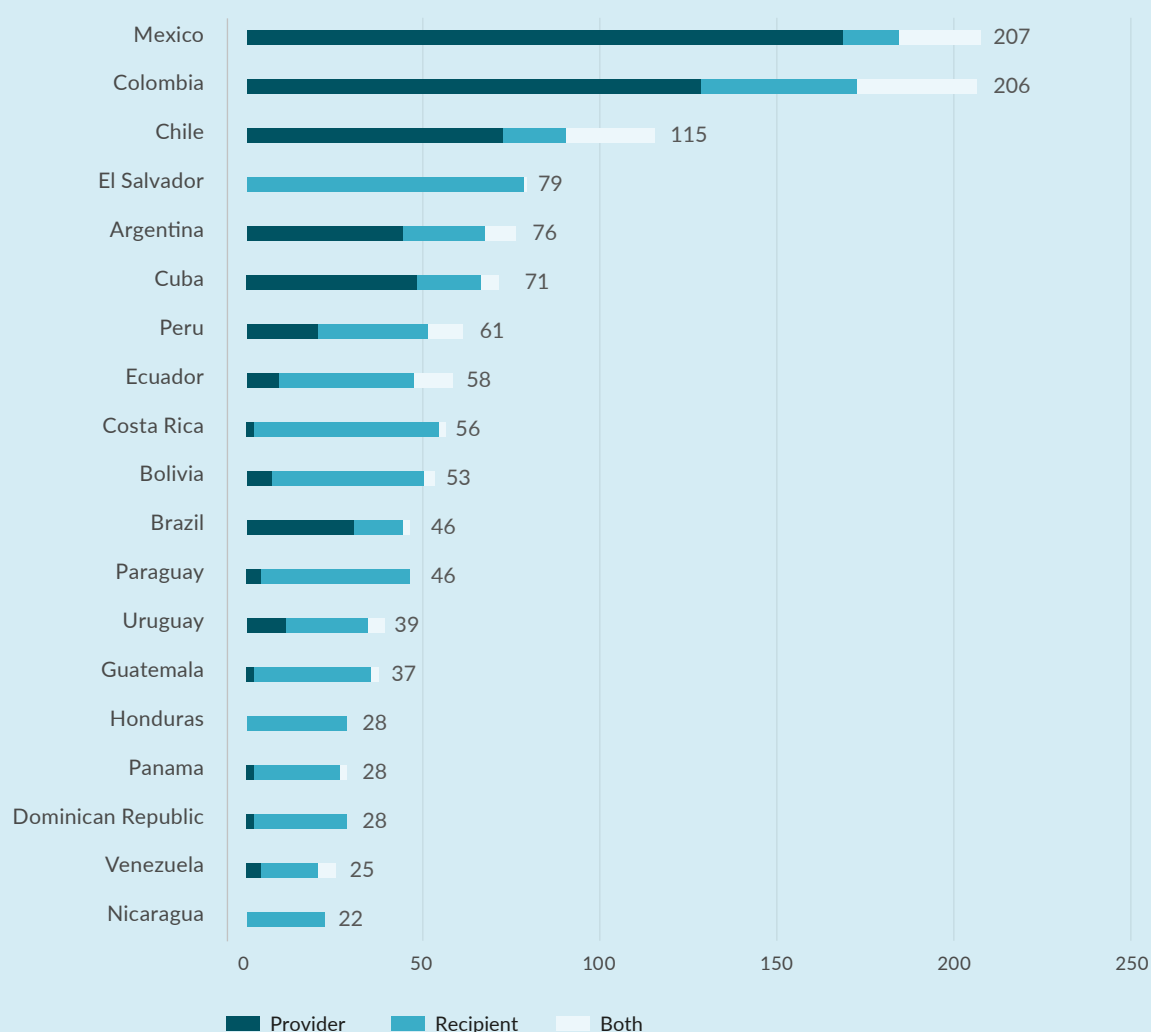
In addition, it is important to highlight those initiatives related to the transforming power of culture for social change and the reduction of gaps and inequality. These include, for example, the strengthening of community libraries, youth choirs and orchestras, and the use of art to prevent violence and promote coexistence.

Finally, other exchanges were related to Cultural planning and management. These, for example, seek to consolidate satellite accounts for culture; optimize legislation in this area; and generate decentralization processes that strengthen culture at the local level.

The third graph shows countries' participation in Bilateral SSC initiatives in the *Culture* sector and their role in this cooperation. The list is led by Mexico and Colombia, for which the provider role prevailed, in most cases.

Ibero-American countries' participation in Bilateral SSC initiatives on *Culture*, by role. 2007-2023

In units



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

Specifically, Mexico focused much of its Bilateral SSC on the preservation of Cultural heritage (tangible and intangible), particularly on the protection of indigenous languages

and cultures; the assessment of the impact of archaeological sites declared as world heritage; and the restoration of murals. It also had a great dynamism fostered by actions

on Cultural diplomacy, where Escuelas México stand out, contributing to the improvement of higher education in several countries of the region.

[Continues >>](#)

Colombia's cooperation especially strengthened Historical and cultural heritage (museums, archives, traditions, etc.); Cultural and creative industries (strengthening craft production chains; performing arts; and music); and Cultural diplomacy (bilingualism programs with countries in the Caribbean Basin). Its cooperation was particularly intense with El Salvador, in community culture, for example, by strengthening choir and youth orchestra systems' capacities.

On the other hand, one third of Chile's cooperation focused on Cultural diplomacy initiatives through the work done by *Escuelas Chile*, which seek to promote the development of a learning and collaboration community for school improvement in Latin-America and the Caribbean (*Escuelas Chile*, 2023). Its participation in Historical and cultural heritage initiatives was also noteworthy, addressing very heterogeneous topics such as the preservation of murals; the recovery and conservation of national monuments and archaeological heritage, among others. Those exchanges that contributed to Interculturality (access of Indigenous peoples to goods and services) and to Cultural and creative industries (music; cinema; ballet; handicrafts; dance) were also significant.

El Salvador, in turn, stands out for its cooperation in terms of Historical and cultural heritage.

These initiatives seek, for example, to preserve monuments and traditional architecture and strengthen museums and archives, among others. In addition, this country was one of the greatest beneficiaries of *Escuelas Mexico* and *Escuelas Chile* (Cultural Diplomacy) and of handicrafts production (Cultural and creative industries).

Argentina stands out as provider in various areas such as the management of Historical and cultural heritage; the strengthening of museums of memory, archeology and forensic anthropology; and in enhancing cinematography, dance, design and innovation in the camelid textile industry (Cultural and creative industries). This country also participated in actions in the framework of *Escuelas Chile* and *Escuelas México* (Cultural diplomacy).

Cuba, in turn, also played an important role in this sector, mainly because of its historical and recognized cooperation in Cultural education (training of human capital and cultural advisory services in general), as well as in Cultural and creative industries, specifically through the strengthening of the audiovisual and music fields. Finally, initiatives on Historical and cultural heritage also stand out in the framework of Cuba's cooperation, such as those that preserve and promote traditional knowledge and strengthen national archives and historical centers.

Regarding the contribution of projects on *Culture* to the 2030 Agenda, from 2015 to 2023, around 40% of the Bilateral SSC exchanges were mainly aligned with SDG 11 (Sustainable cities and communities). As mentioned at the beginning of this Box, the prevalence of this SDG is related to heritage conservation, specifically associated with target 11.4 related to "strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard it".

On the other hand, 20% was aligned with SDG 4 (Quality education), through *Escuelas Chile* and *Escuelas México*, the programs to strengthen Spanish teaching, and the scholarships granted by Cuba to Ibero-American students.

Finally, 12% of Bilateral SSC on *Culture* was aligned with SDG 8 (Decent work and economic growth). These initiatives were mainly associated with Cultural and creative industries, which includes projects to strengthen the value chain of the handicraft industry —especially—; the promotion of gastronomic tourism; and the safeguarding of traditional cuisines, as well as the support for SMEs and mini-SMEs in the ceramics, wood, stone, jewelry and leather fields.

Methodological note: The Ibero-American Integrated Data System on South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SIDICSS) was used to carry out this exercise. Based on available data, a first filter was applied in order to search for cooperation initiatives associated with the *Culture* sector and, in addition, a broader search was then carried out by using keywords related to the sector (both in Spanish and Portuguese). This ensured a greater coverage to include information that could also be associated with other sectors. Finally, a review was carried out to check whether these initiatives did indeed contribute to *Culture* and in order to group them into more refined categories. These were prepared by SEGIB based on the *Ibero-American Strategy for Culture and Sustainable Development* and the *2009 UNESCO Framework for Cultural Statistics*.

Source: SEGIB based on Agencies and Directorates-General for Cooperation, Ministry of Education of Chile (2024), *Escuelas Chile* (2023), SEGIB (2021a) (2021b), *Somos Iberoamérica* (2021) and UNESCO in Institute for Cultural and Artistic Management (2021) (2009).



Photo: The project *Studying lithium carbonate crystallization through advanced analysis and characterization techniques*, between Argentina and Bolivia, aims to improve the yield and quality of products derived from this metal. Image bank on South-South and Triangular Cooperation in Ibero-America. SEGIB-PIFCSS. 2023.

1.4.2 Countries' profile

An aggregated analysis of Ibero-American countries specific contributions determines the characteristics of the Bilateral SSC in which the region participated during the 2022-2023 period. In fact, the final result reveals the combinations of the different profiles and the way capacities were exchanged.

The first step in order to define the profile of Ibero-American countries' capacities (transferred, strengthened and shared), is to categorize them according to their role: provider (transferring capacities); recipient (strengthening their own); and both (strengthening and transferring in the same exchange).

A radial/radar chart was plotted for each of these groups of countries: Graph 1.27 for countries that mainly acted as recipients (El Salvador, Ecuador, Honduras, the Dominican Republic, Bolivia, Panama, Costa Rica, Paraguay, Guatemala and Venezuela⁶); Graph 1.28 for countries that mostly participated as providers (Cuba and Brazil); and Graph 1.29 for countries that mainly had a dual role (Chile, Peru, Mexico, Colombia, Uruguay and Argentina).

All three graphs have the shape of an hexagon where each vertex is associated with one of the six areas of action recognized in the Ibero-American space. In this type of diagram, values are represented on quantitative axes (as radii) which origin is the same point at the center. The relative importance of the 6 areas of action in the total number of Bilateral SSC initiatives in which each country

⁶ Nicaragua is excluded from the analysis as it registered less than 10 initiatives.

participated—in the role being specifically analyzed—, is represented in each of these axes. The connection of the resulting points (i.e. the values of the different axes) shapes a figure that defines the profile of the capacities

that were exchanged, by country and role. It is also possible to identify similarities and differences between the different profiles by comparing these figures.

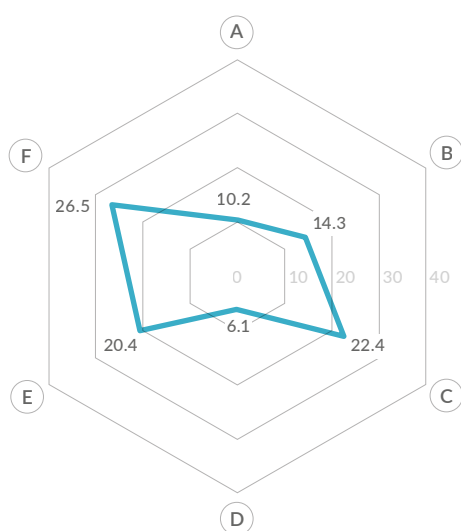
// Graph 1.27

Distribution of Bilateral SSC initiatives of the Ibero-American countries that mainly acted as recipients, by area of action. 2022-2023

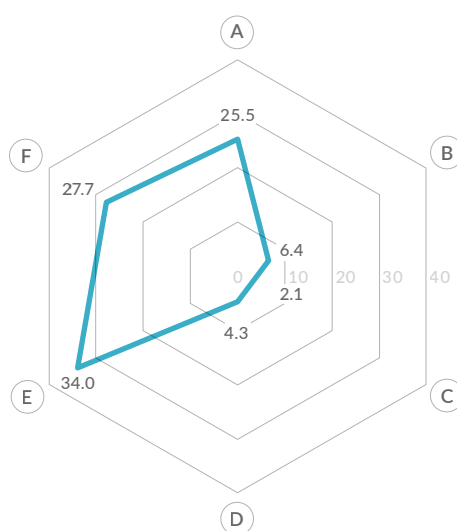
In percentage

- (A) Institutional strengthening
- (B) Infrastructure and economic services
- (C) Environment
- (D) Other areas
- (E) Productive sectors
- (F) Social

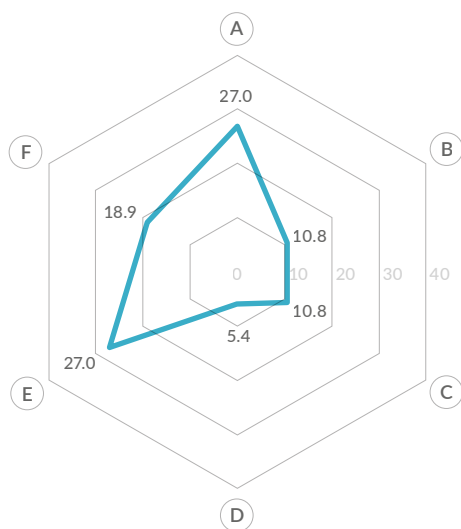
A. El Salvador (49)



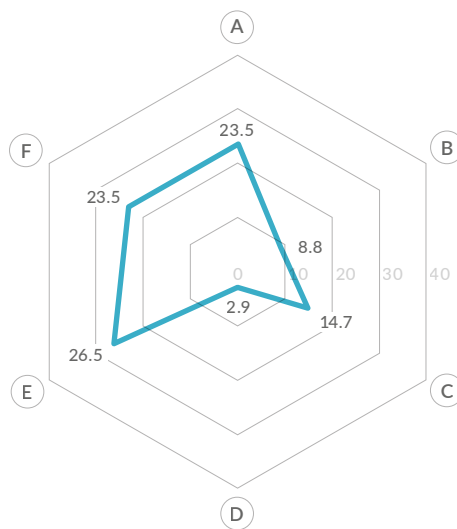
B. Ecuador (47)



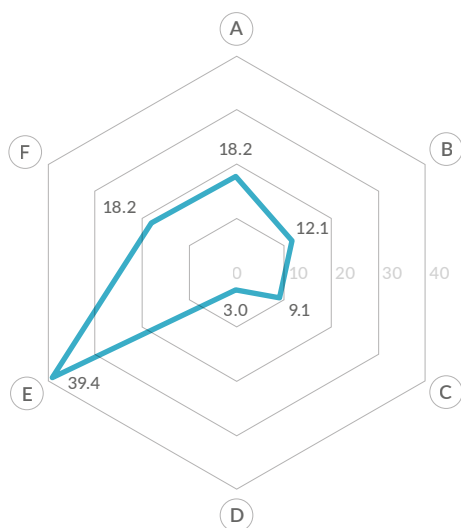
C. Honduras (37)



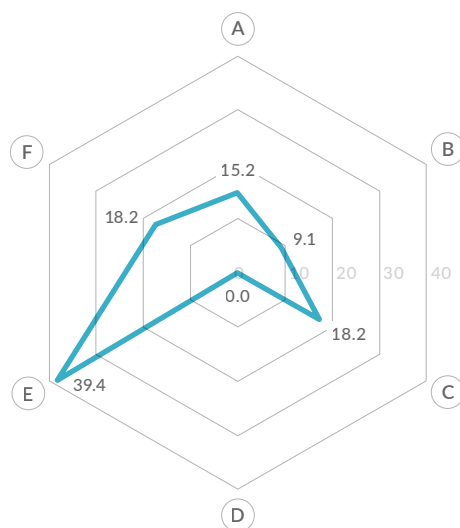
D. Dominican Republic (34)



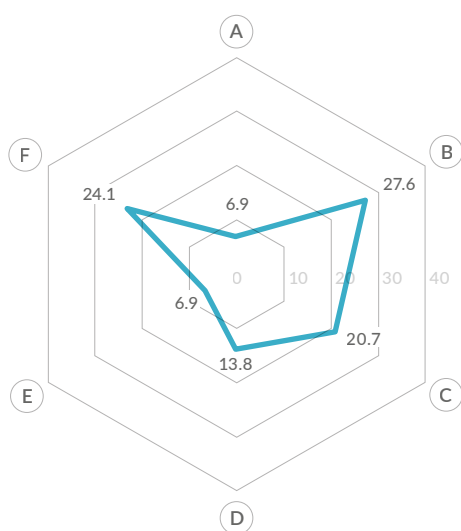
E. Bolivia (33)



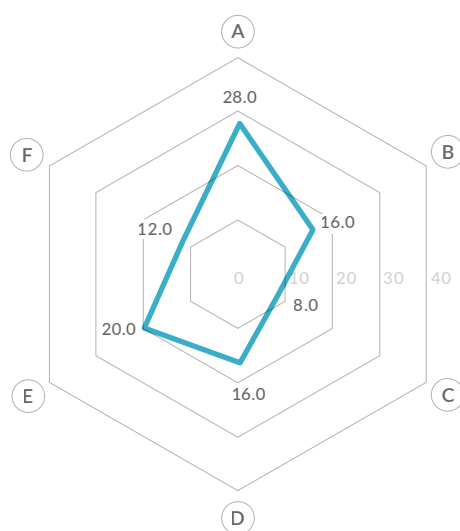
F. Panama (33)



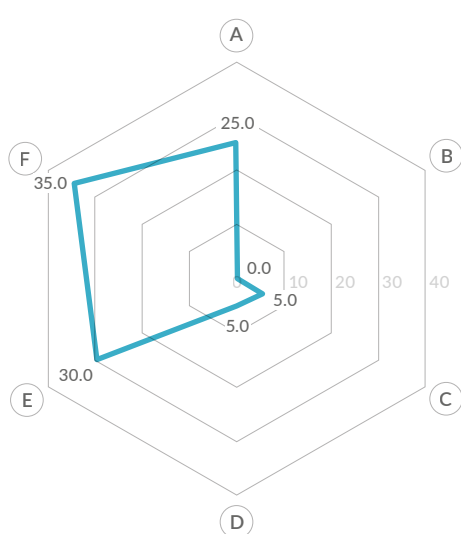
G. Costa Rica (20)



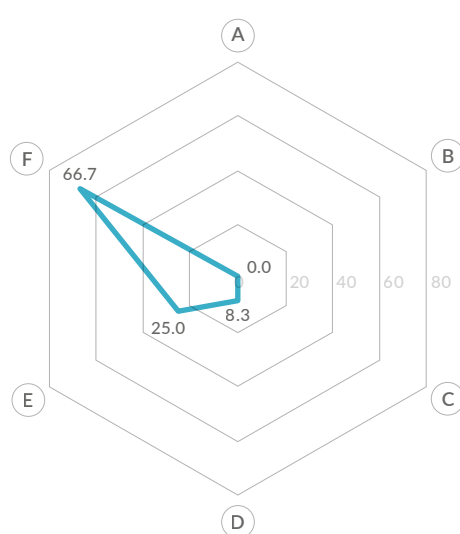
H. Paraguay (25)



I. Guatemala (20)



J. Venezuela (12)



Note: In all charts, the axis ranges from 0% to 40% with the exception of Venezuela. In this case, it ranges from 0% to 80%.

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

Graph 1.27 provides a first approach to the recipient profile of 10 countries. Thus, although with different intensities, three countries prioritized capacity strengthening in the Social area: El Salvador (26.5% of the initiatives in which it participates as recipient), Guatemala (35%), and Venezuela (almost two out of three). In all cases, as expected, the majority of exchanges are focused on the *Health* sector and, to a less extent, on *Education* and *Other services and social policies*. However, it is interesting to make a special reference to El Salvador's case and the importance of this country's initiatives related to *Water supply and sanitation* (in the Social area), but also to the Environment and the Productive sectors areas (an aggregate 40%).

Other countries have a different profile, mainly focused on strengthening the Productive sectors area: Bolivia and Panama (around 40% of the initiatives in which they participated as recipients, respectively); and the Dominican Republic, Honduras and Ecuador (between 25% and 35% of the cooperation they received, in each case). For all these countries, it was essential to receive Bilateral SSC to strengthen their *Agriculture and livestock* sector, which accounts for more than half of the cooperation that was

classified in this area. Initiatives focused on *Fisheries* (Panama) and *Trade* (Ecuador) also stood out.

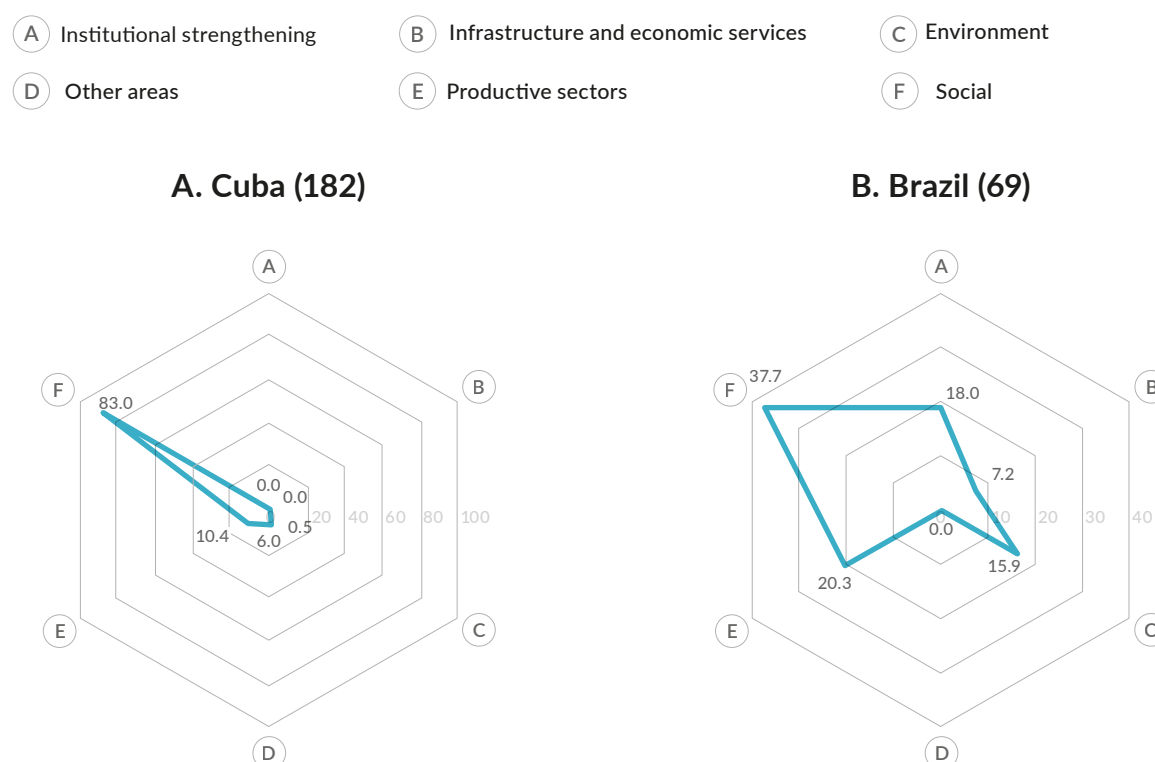
Finally, Costa Rica and Paraguay had the most diverse profiles. Although their cooperation was diversified around different areas of action, half of the Bilateral SSC received by Costa Rica tended to focus on the generation of Infrastructure and economic services (27.6%) together with the strengthening of the Social area (24.1%). Meanwhile, Paraguay placed emphasis on Institutional strengthening (28%) and Productive sectors (another 20%). In terms of sectors, cooperation in *Energy*; *Transportation and storage*; and *Education* stood out in Costa Rica's case. On the other hand, Paraguay's initiatives focused on *Strengthening institutions and public policies*; *Legal and judicial development and human rights*; *Agriculture and livestock*; and *Industry*.

As Graph 1.28 suggests, the profiles of the two countries that mainly acted as providers (Cuba and Brazil) are significantly different. As seen in the previous section, Cuba had a very specialized profile in the Social area (83% of the more than 183 initiatives in which it transfers capacities to other partners). More than 100 of these are associated with the *Health* sector, in the framework of

// Graph 1.28

Distribution of Bilateral SSC initiatives of the Ibero-American countries that mainly acted as providers, by area of action. 2022-2023

In percentage



Note: The axis ranges from 0% to 100% in Cuba's case, and from 0% to 40% in Brazil's.

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

which Cuba shared its recognized experience. However, those exchanges related to *Education* stood out among the rest. On the other hand, Brazil's profile is more diversified. In spite of this, capacities transferred in the Social area also prevail (more than 35%), complemented by knowledge

sharing in Productive Sectors (20.3%), Institutional Strengthening (18.8%) and Environment (15.9%). Through this, Brazil's shared its recognized experience in *Health*; *Water supply and sanitation*; and in *Agriculture and livestock*.

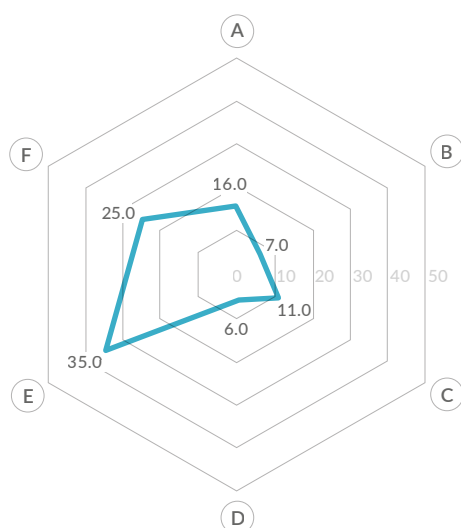
// Graph 1.29

Distribution of Bilateral SSC initiatives, by countries for which the role “both” prevailed, by area of action. 2022-2023

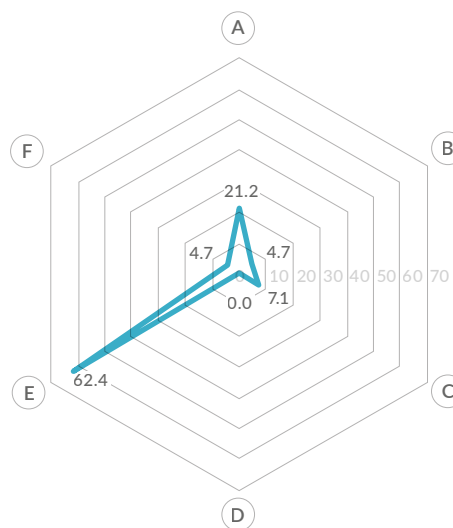
In percentage

- (A) Institutional strengthening
- (B) Infrastructure and economic services
- (C) Environment
- (D) Other areas
- (E) Productive sectors
- (F) Social

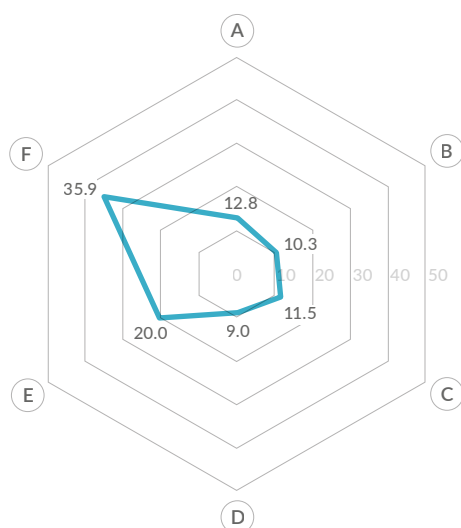
A. Chile (100)



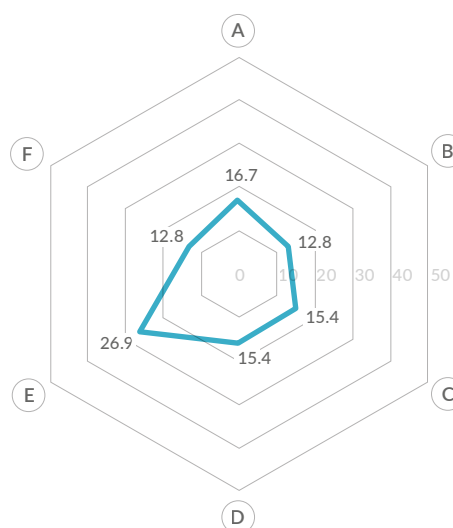
B. Peru (85)



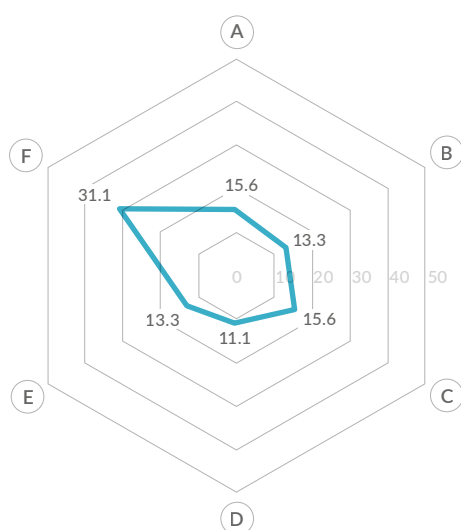
C. Mexico (78)



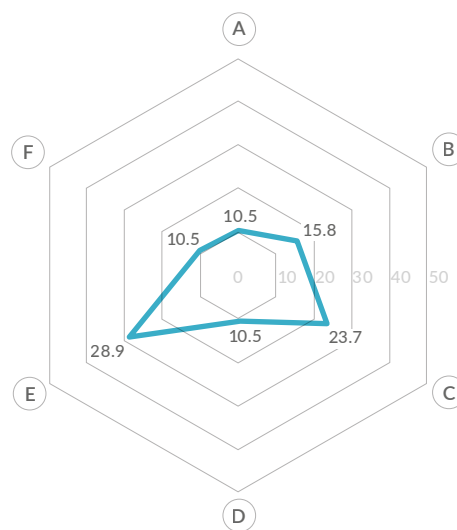
D. Colombia (78)



E. Uruguay (45)



F. Argentina (38)



Note: In all charts, the axis ranges from 0% to 50% with the exception of Peru. In this case, it ranges from 0% to 70%.

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

Finally, Graph 1.29 shows the profile of capacities exchanged by the six countries for which the exercise of the role “both” prevailed. In this sense, it is possible to identify two contrasting patterns: that of the countries which main strength lies in the Social area (Mexico and Uruguay); and that of those which mainly shared its experience in the Productive sectors area (Colombia, Argentina, Chile and Peru). In Mexico’s and Uruguay’s cooperation, the Social area accounts for around 1 out of 3 of the initiatives in which they participated in a dual role. In both cases, the main specialization is associated with the *Health* sector. In fact, some of these exchanges are highly technical and specialized (HIFU technology; the use of biomarkers; therapeutic vectors; serological and molecular tools, among others) and, most importantly, these exchanges are carried out among themselves (Mexico is Uruguay’s partner in 10 out of the 14 initiatives in which it plays the role “both”).

On the other hand, the profile of the capacities shared by Colombia, Argentina and Chile, tended to predominantly focus on the Productive sectors area, which, in each case, accounted for between 25% and 35% of the initiatives in which these countries participated in a dual role. The most relevant sector for Colombia and Chile was *Agriculture and livestock*, followed by *Industry* and *Tourism*.

The importance of the Productive sectors area should also be highlighted in Mexico’s case (20% of the initiatives in the role “both”). Meanwhile, Argentina prioritized Environment (almost another 25% of these exchanges), and Chile focused on the Social area, mainly through a significant number of initiatives in the *Health* sector.

In the role “both”, Mexico and Uruguay prioritized the strengthening of the Social area, while Colombia, Argentina, Chile and Peru prioritized the Productive sectors area

Peru’s case deserves a special mention: this country’s cooperation in the Productive sectors area accounted for more than 60% of the Bilateral SSC in which it participated simultaneously acting as provider and recipient. In 80% of these cases, Peru shared its experience in the *Agriculture and livestock* sector. Additionally, although with a relatively lower intensity (20% of the total under the dual role), those initiatives by which Peru addressed Institutional Strengthening are also worth mentioning.

Finally, Graphs 1.30 and 1.31 were prepared to illustrate how these profiles complemented each other. These two sectoral Sankey diagrams, distribute the total number of Bilateral SSC initiatives implemented during the 2022-2023 period in the *Health* and *Agriculture and livestock* sectors, respectively, according to countries and roles. It should be recalled that, in these graphs, initiatives “flow” from providers (left side) towards recipients (right side), and that when the two countries play the role “both”, the names of the two partners appear both on the left and on the right side.



Photo: Through SSC with Colombia, nutritionists and agronomists work together so that children in the Province of Veraguas in Panama can improve their nutrition and thus promote and enhance their development. Image bank on South-South and Triangular Cooperation in Ibero-America. SEGIB-PIFCSS. 2024.



The analysis of both graphs shows two different exchange patterns for each of the two sectors that account for almost one third of the initiatives of the region as a whole. Indeed, as already mentioned, the *Health* sector was clearly determined by the role played by Cuba and by its exchanges with countries in other regions. Therefore, these exchanges have a strong interregional component

and an evident provider-recipient profile. In contrast, the pattern of the *Agriculture and livestock* sector is much more diversified and associated with several countries including Mexico, Argentina, Colombia and Brazil. Intra-regional exchanges prevail in this sector, as well as a greater number of bidirectional initiatives --those in which countries simultaneously act as provider and

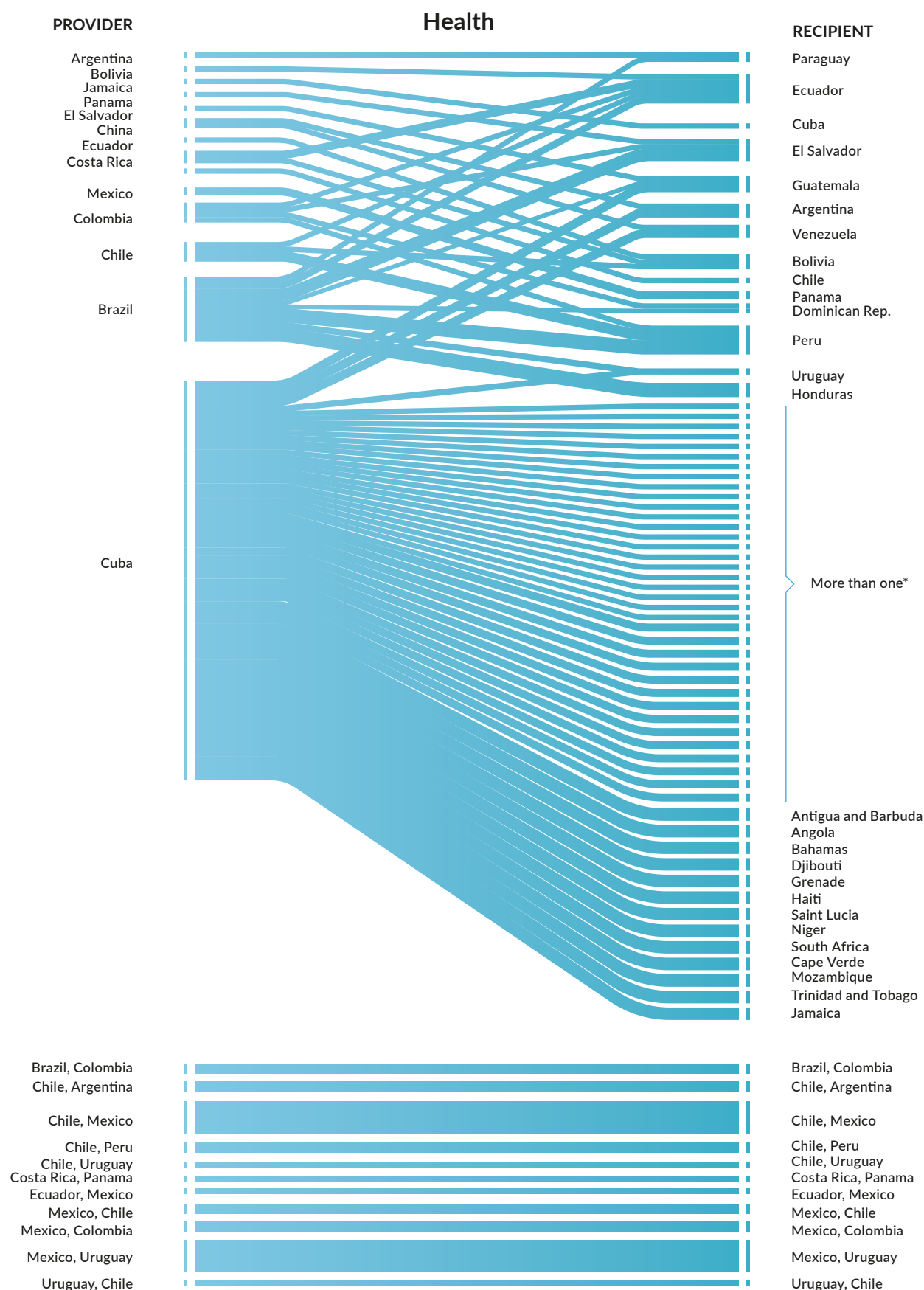


recipient—, precisely led by countries for which, along with those mentioned, a dual role prevails. This last statement suggests that the Agriculture and livestock sector has, as *Health*, a more technical and specialized exchange profile.

// Graph 1.30

Distribution of Bilateral SSC initiatives exchanged between Ibero-American countries and all partners in the *Health* sector, by partner and role. 2022-2023

In units

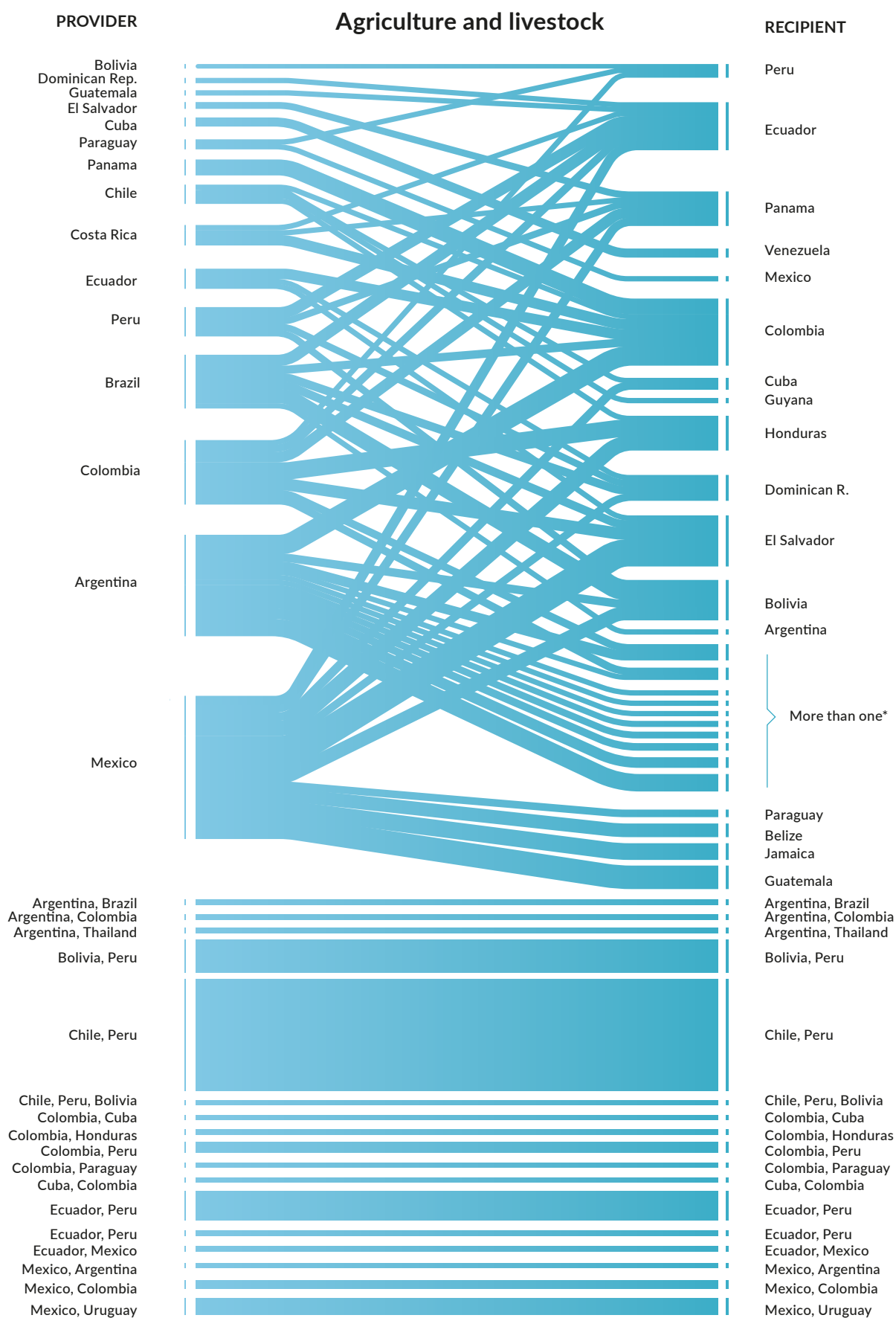


* Algeria, Barbados, Belize, Botswana, Burkina Faso, China, Congo, Dominica, United Arab Emirates, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Equatorial Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Kenya, Lesotho, Maldives, Mauritania, Namibia, Qatar, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Sao Tome and Principe, Seychelles, Swaziland, Tanzania, Timor-Leste, Türkiye, Uganda, Vietnam, Zimbabwe.

// Graph 1.31

Distribution of Bilateral SSC initiatives exchanged between Ibero-American countries and all partners in the *Agriculture and livestock* sector, by partner and role. 2022-2023

In units



* Armenia, Ethiopia, Kenya, Marruecos, Nigeria, Senegal, Thailand, Tunisia, Vietnam.


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

1.5


Bilateral South-South Cooperation in 2022-2023 and the Sustainable Development Goals

The complementarity between the capacities that were transferred and strengthened through the Bilateral SSC of the 2022-2023 period enables another interpretation in order to understand how, through these exchanges, the region contributed to close gaps between countries and, ultimately, to “leave no one behind”. Therefore, a final analysis of Bilateral SSC requires focusing on its contribution to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, specifically by studying initiatives’ potential alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Graph 1.32, which distributes the 956 Bilateral SSC initiatives in which Ibero-American countries participated with all their partners during 2022 and 2023, by the main and second SDG with which they were potentially aligned, was plotted for this purpose. In fact, according to the records, Ibero-American countries reported that 100% of the initiatives are potentially aligned with a main SDG and that 75% of these (720) are also aligned with one (or up to two) second SDGs. The distinction between main and second SDGs is intended to reflect cooperation’s multidimensional nature by which a single initiative can serve several simultaneous purposes and have an impact on the achievement of more than one Goal.



Ibero-American countries reported that 100% of the 956 initiatives were potentially aligned with a Main SDG and that 75% of these (720) contributed to one (or even two) Second SDGs



The analysis of Graph 1.23 suggests that more than half of these 956 Bilateral SSC initiatives are potentially aligned with the achievement of four SDGs, which are the following (in terms of relative importance): SDG 3 (Good health and well-being), with which up to 18% of exchanges are aligned; SDG 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions) and SDG 2 (Zero hunger), with around 14% each; and SDG 4 (Quality education), which accounts for 1 out of 10 initiatives. According to these data, and

considering the United Nations' classification of the 17 SDGs into the 5Ps, it can be stated that the Bilateral SSC in which Ibero-America participated during the 2022-2023 period paid special attention to advance those Goals that have a more direct impact on People and Peace.

Case 1.4 was prepared in order to describe how Ibero-American Bilateral SSC could be contributing to the achievement of SDG 3 (Good health and well-being). Through this project, Colombia shares an innovative strategy to reduce maternal and newborn mortality rates with Ecuador.

Another 20% of the Bilateral SSC initiatives carried out by Ibero-American countries during the 2022-2023 period were aimed at achieving three SDGs, all of which are associated with Prosperity: SDG 8 (Decent work and economic growth); SDG 9 (Industry, innovation and infrastructure); and SDG 11 (Sustainable cities and communities), each with between 41 and 78 initiatives, depending on the case, corresponding to between 4.3% and 8.1% of the total. Almost another 25% of the Bilateral SSC implemented in recent years is explained when the more specific initiatives related to other two Goals classified in this “P” (SDG 7, Affordable and clean Energy; and SDG 10, Reduced inequalities) are added to the analysis. Case 1.5, which explains the experience of Bolivia and Argentina with regard to an increasingly critical metal as lithium, is an example of the above.

Según se desprende del mismo Graph 1.32, el último 20% de la CSS Bilateral de 2022-2023 se encuentra disperso en torno a la consecución de hasta ocho ODS distintos, la mayor parte de los cuáles tienen una participación sobre el total de las iniciativas inferior al 3%. Las únicas excepciones son el ODS 6 (Agua limpia y saneamiento) y el ODS 17 (Alianzas para lograr los Objetivos), con entre 30 y 35 iniciativas en cada caso, equivalentes al 3,7% y 3,0% de las totales.

As Graph 1.32 shows, the last 20% of the 2022-2023 Bilateral SSC is distributed in the achievement of up to eight different SDGs, most of which have a participation of less than 3% in the total number of initiatives. SDG 6 (Clean water and sanitation) and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the goals), with between 30 and 35 initiatives in each case, corresponding to 3.7% and 3.0% of the total, are the only exceptions.

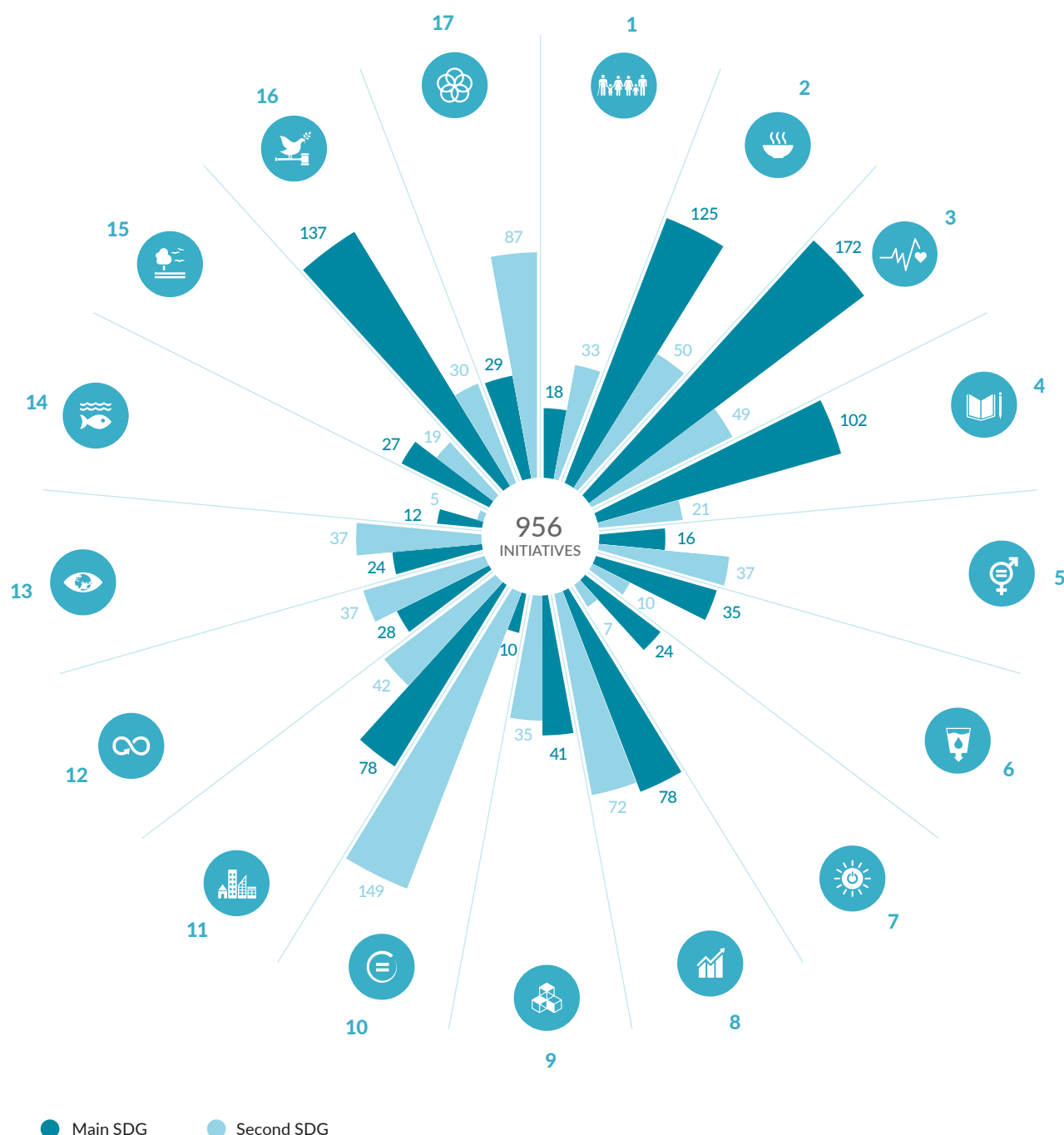
Finally, the analysis of Graph 1.32 confirms that some Goals are being strongly considered second SDGs, a fact that suggests their highly cross-cutting nature. SDG 10 (Reduced inequalities) is the best example of the above:

⁷ The 17 SDGs can be categorized into the 5Ps to better assess them: Planet (SDG 6, 12, 13, 14 and 15), People (SDG 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5), Prosperity (SDG 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11), Peace (SDG 16) and Partnerships (SDG 17).

// Graph 1.32

Bilateral SSC initiatives exchanged by Ibero-American countries with all partners, by their potential alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). 2022-2023

In units



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

this Goal is considered to be the main SDG in 10 initiatives (1.7% of the total) and it is selected as the second SDG in 149 occasions (20% of the 720 exchanges with which this Goal is associated). This SDG tends to be combined with SDG 3 (Good health and well-being) and SDG 4

(Quality education) and, to a less extent, with SDG 2 (Zero hunger) and SDG 8 (Decent work and economic growth). In other words, this means that, by supporting the achievement of certain goals classified as main SDGs, countries are also contributing to reduce inequality.

// CASE 1.5

Ecuador and Colombia cooperate to reduce neonatal mortality



According to the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO), “in Latin America and the Caribbean, 57% of estimated under-five deaths are concentrated in the first 28 days of life, while globally this figure is 47%” (PAHO, 2024). Although from 2000 to 2022 the number of deaths of children under the age of five decreased 60%, infant mortality, specifically that affecting newborns, is still present in several countries of the region. However, some of them have managed to generate innovative strategies to mitigate its impact.

For example, four decades ago, the rate of newborn deaths reached 70% in Colombia (Rotary, 2023). The lack of neonatal units for the care of babies led a group of doctors to develop the Kangaroo Mother Care Method (KMC or MMC by its Spanish acronym) to take care of premature or low birth weight babies, which is based on skin-to-skin contact between the child and the mother, exclusive

breastfeeding (as far as possible) and early discharge from the medical center (Kangaroo Foundation, 2024).

The 2021-2025 National Opportunities Plan of Ecuador, in turn, aims to reduce maternal and neonatal morbidity and mortality, focusing on lowering the neonatal mortality rate from 4.6 to 4.0 every 1,000 births. In the framework of this national priority, a partnership was created with the Susan Thompson Buffett Foundation and the government of Colombia to transfer knowledge and accumulated capacity from one country to the other, and to support the implementation of the Kangaroo Care Network at the national level in Ecuador, strengthening outpatient neonatal care services.

In addition to providing technical assistance and training for health professionals and awarding the Certification of Excellence to two specialized third-level hospitals, the

initiative also planned to strengthen infrastructure through the provision of 20 positional chairs, 5,000 brochures to advise parents on home care, and a virtual toolbox for training (Ministry of Public Health of Ecuador, internal document, 2022).

At the end of this initiative, recommendations were made to government authorities and hospitals, including: continue with the process of standardizing and strengthening the model in health centers; monitor and periodically provide feedback on the program in hospitals; and strengthen administrative support and budgetary planning.

It should be noted that the Kangaroo Mother Care Method has already been shared by Colombia with countries of other developing regions such as Bhutan, the Philippines, Indonesia and Pakistan (in 2020) and with Kenya and Ghana (in 2015).

Source: SEGIB based on Agencies and Directorates-General for Cooperation, Kangaroo Foundation Colombia (2024), Ministry of Public Health of Ecuador (internal document, 2022), PAHO (2024) and Rotary (2023).

Another remarkable case is that of SDG 5 (Gender equality): in fact, the number of initiatives in which this Goal is considered to be the second SDG (37, corresponding to 5% of those associated with this purpose), more than doubles that in which it considered to be the main SDG (16, corresponding to just 1.7% of the 956 initiatives for the 2022-2023 period). Once again, this difference can be interpreted from a cross-cutting perspective, and as an alternative to support projects that, while serving other purposes, also promote gender equality. Indeed, it is usually related to cooperation that addresses economic empowerment and SDG 8 (Decent work and economic growth); training as a instrument for inclusion through SDG 4 (Quality education); and the attention to women who are victims of conflict or violence, through SDG 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions).

SDG 1 (No poverty) shows a similar dynamic, as its share multiplies when considered a second SDG (from 18 to 33 Bilateral SSC initiatives).

In addition, a final mention to other Goals that, as they are usually considered second SDGs, suggest an important cross-cutting component, should be made. For example, the SDGs that have an impact on sustainability (SDG 12, Responsible production and consumption; and SDG 13, Climate action); those that support economic recovery (SDG 8, Decent work and economic growth; and SDG 9, Industry, innovation and infrastructure); as well as those that favor partnership and joint efforts for shared purposes, such as SDG 17 (Partnerships for the goals).

// CASE 1.6

Strengthening the production of lithium carbonate



In the framework of the 2030 Agenda, SDG 7 focuses on promoting the use of sustainable, affordable and secure energy. Latin-America is very rich in strategic natural resources to make the transition to clean energy, and lithium is currently a commodity which is highly demanded worldwide to drive this transition (UNDP, 2022).

Lithium is a metal than can be found —among other places— in saline deposits, as is the case of Argentina, Bolivia and Chile. These countries have large reserves of this metal and are known as the Lithium Triangle. Lithium carbonate has many applications; thus, it has great potential for countries' economic growth (ECLAC, 2017).

In the framework of the Fourth Meeting of the Bilateral Commission for Cultural, Scientific and Technical Cooperation between Argentina and the Plurinational State of Bolivia, held in 2022, the National University

of La Plata (UNLP, 2022), through the Center for Inorganic Chemistry (CEQUINOR by its Spanish acronym), reached a strategic South-South Cooperation (SSC) agreement with the state-owned Bolivian company Yacimientos de Litio Bolivianos (YLB by its Spanish acronym), to study the nucleation and growth of lithium carbonate crystals. Hence, the project *Studying lithium carbonate crystallization through advanced analysis and characterization techniques* will work to strengthen its production.

The first stage of the initiative has been already implemented; a team of CEQUINOR experts visited YLB facilities both in Llapi (Uyuni) and La Palca (Department of Potosi), with the aim of understanding evaporite processes, the variables that affect the crystallization of lithium carbonate and the subsequent analysis techniques. This first activity was a great success, since it not only allowed a technical

approach, but also enabled the Argentine team to present the research lines developed at CEQUINOR.

The start-up of this project is especially relevant since the process of lithium industrialization developed by YLB in terms of lithium carbonate production entails technical-scientific challenges to guarantee products with certified quality and to understand the crystallization stage in greater depth, which is essential for productive development (CEQUINOR, 2023).

It is expected that, through training and knowledge exchange between technical teams, the project will result in the definition of techniques to be used for the crystallization of lithium carbonate, the determination of the optimum conditions for this process and the study of on-line monitoring techniques to strengthen the production of this metal.

Source: SEGIB based on Agencies and Directorates-General for Cooperation, Economic Commission for Latin-America and the Caribbean (ECLAC, 2017), United Nations Development Program (UNDP, 2022) and National University of La Plata (UNLP, 2022), through the Center for Inorganic Chemistry (CEQUINOR, 2023).