

## Aligning libraries' performance with Sustainable Development Goals: a methodological proposal

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### 1 Abstract / Introduction

In September 2015, the United Nations (UN) Member States adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development setting the global, national and local framework for putting that responsibility into action (United Nations, 2015). The new global Agenda is formed by 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which must be implemented by all countries until 2030, so that "no one will stay behind". The 169 associated targets are monitored and reviewed using a set of global indicators (Sustainable Development Solutions Network, 2015).

Sectorial organizations worked on bringing their potential contributions to sustainable development to the attention of Member States and the UN. In the post-2015 process, the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) continued its active engagement towards promoting libraries within the UN 2030 Agenda and consolidated it in one of the Key Initiatives under the Strategic Directions set for 2016-2021 (IFLA, 2015). It should be stressed that access to information has been recognized as a target under SDG16 (target 16.10), culture and ICT have also been included in the SDGs (target 11.4 and targets 5b, 9c, 17.8, respectively) and universal literacy is recognized in the vision for the UN 2030 Agenda (IFLA, 2018a).

In Portugal, initiatives to promote library and information services within the 2030 Agenda are still modest, as research intersecting Information Science with Performance Evaluation and Sustainable Development is not yet sufficiently developed (Ochôa & Pinto, 2019). However, in November 2016, a team of researchers at the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities of Universidade NOVA de Lisboa (NOVA FCSH, Portugal) started a research project entitled Public Libraries and Sustainability: Gathering Evidences of Contribution to SDGs (Project PLS) aimed at the development of a framework for evaluating libraries' contribution to SDGs and tailor it to Portuguese public libraries (Pinto & Ochôa, 2018a).

Based on the methodology developed on this Project, this paper discusses the role of strategy alignment and impact evaluation practices in the processes of gathering evidence and advocacy towards libraries' contribution to the UN 2030 Agenda.

### 2 Strategy Alignment for Sustainability

#### 2.1 General methodological aspects

An integrated and holistic approach was used to build the Model for the Alignment and Evidence Gathering of Libraries' Contribution to Sustainable Development. It is important to clarify the underpinning concept of evidence: it can be any type of information or data used to help answering a question; the information / data collected becomes evidence when it is used to demonstrate library's contribution(s) to sustainable development, to determine goal or target achievement, to show the



alignment initiatives adopted or to understand its various impacts on stakeholders (adapt. from Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2015). In the alignment process, the use/adaptation of library assessment data was valued: UN Global Indicators and the corresponding Portuguese national indicators (whenever possible), as well as of ISO 11620 - *Library performance indicators* and ISO 16439 - *Methods and procedures for assessing the impact of libraries*, complemented by the *Global Libraries Impact Planning and Assessment Guide* (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2015), the *Generic Learning Outcomes* and *Generic Social Outcomes* (Arts Council England).

The Model was consolidated and expanded within another project ran by B.A.D. in conjunction with IFLA (2018b), under IAP - the Project Libraries for Development and the UN 2030 Agenda (April- July 2018). In order to accelerate library and information professionals' involvement in the systematic process of evaluating and promoting libraries' contribution to SGDs, a step-by-step *Guide for Libraries* (Pinto & Ochôa, 2018b) was built on this Model and made available through B.A.D.'s website.

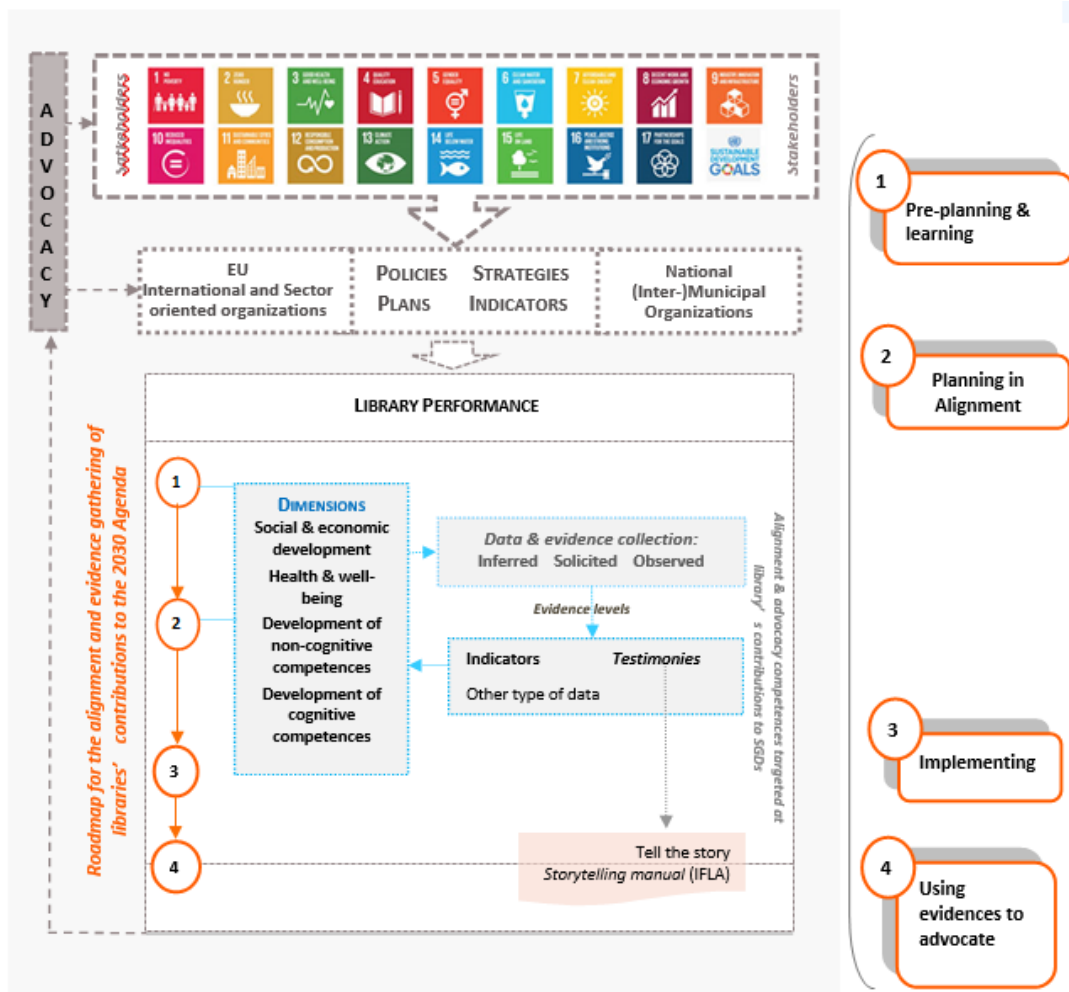


Figure 1. Model for the Alignment and Evidence Gathering of Libraries' Contribution to Sustainable Development



One of the Model's tools – the Roadmap for the Alignment and Evidence Gathering of Libraries' Contributions to the 2030 Agenda – was tested in two workshops targeted at Portuguese public libraries' professionals (July 2018) and provided the framework for creating a national award related to sustainable development best practices in libraries of all types (October 2018).

## 2.2 The Roadmap: a four-step process

The cornerstone of the Model is a Roadmap that is anchored in the identification of potential (inter)relations between the Dimensions that frame impacts of library activities/ projects and the SDGs. The Roadmap supports the alignment cycles in four steps:

*Step 1 - Pre-planning and learning:* it intends to create the conditions for the implementation of the process that will allow libraries to obtain evidence of their contribution to drive forward the UN 2030 Agenda. Library and Information professionals need to develop basic competences (e.g. to understand the architecture and main concepts of the Model).

*Step 2 - Planning in the face of alignment:* based on the information collected in the previous step, it is now time to take the decisions that will determine what evidence will come out of the alignment process. This step requires several actions like, for example, to define the SMART indicators and to choose the adequate methods to gather data / evidence.

*Step 3 – Implementing:* what was planned needs to be put into practice. Data is gathered and analyzed and then the information that will be communicated is prepared.

*Step 4 – Using evidence to advocate for libraries:* it is focused on the effective use of a narrative tool that values the use of anecdotal evidence for impact assessment obtained from users, staff and other stakeholders. The SDGs story must provide answers to three questions: Why?, Who did what, how and when? and So what?

## 3 Conclusions

The Model for the Alignment and Evidence Gathering of Libraries' Contribution to Sustainable Development fosters a set of tools that values strategy alignment and impact evaluation practices and competencies in the processes of gathering evidence and advocacy towards libraries' contribution to the UN 2030 Agenda. One of those tools - the Roadmap - proved to be particularly useful in developing library and information professionals' alignment and assessment competencies, as well as in supporting libraries' advocacy efforts towards their recognition as active and valuable partners in the development and implementation of national, regional and local strategies that will help delivering on SDGs.

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