

SDG *lab*

Innovation and multi-actor cooperation
to solve wicked problems





THE SDGS AND THE 2030 AGENDA

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) compose the new global agenda for sustainable development, adopted in September 2015 during the United Nations Summit. In total, there are 17 goals and 169 extremely ambitious and challenging targets, covering issues ranging from poverty eradication to responsible consumption, through gender equality, public health, education, tackling climate change and strengthening institutions.

Sustainable development and the 2030 Agenda are founded on economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection. All three are transdisciplinary themes and require an integrated approach to the establishment of commitments, the investment of resources and the interdependent action between various sectors of society.



**Innovation and multi-actor cooperation
to solve wicked problems**

- Cooperation between actors in the public and private sectors
- Integrated actions and concrete public policies
- Multidisciplinary dialogue
- Creation of Partnerships
- Viable Solutions
- Institutional arrangements for sustainable development

Learn more about this initiative and how to support it!

INNOVATION FOR THE CHALLENGES OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

SDGlab is an innovative initiative that aims to achieve intersectorial cooperation and facilitate the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Created by Agenda Pública, in partnership with the SDG Strategy, this lab is dedicated to solving wicked problems.

Based on real situations, the *SDGlab* facilitates the creation of multi-actor arrangements, making room for leaders and representatives of different sectors of society to gather and cooperate on creating

solutions, alternatives and partnerships to overcome the great challenges that characterize the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Brazil and around the world.

SDGlab deals with real situations and enables the elaboration of responses that are coordinated and, therefore, more effective for local problems. That way, it builds paths to achieve better results within the implementation of the SDGs.

Efforts are undertaken based on a comprehensive view of the situations and their contexts, aiming to amplify the impact of the actions designed.

A better understanding of the problems, inspiration, joint creation of action plans and governance models are the *SDGlab*'s premises.



THE PILLARS

The *SDGlab* is founded on four pillars:

INNOVATION

Partnerships between the public and private sectors and the civil society for the joint creation of solutions that address the most complex public challenges.

COLLABORATION

The lab articulates various fundamental key stakeholders in order to identify paths and implement solutions that will lead to real advances in the fulfillment of the 2030 Agenda.

GOVERNANCE MODEL

With the involvement of key actors, an arrangement proposal for possible solutions to be implemented is built.

CONCRETE ACTIONS

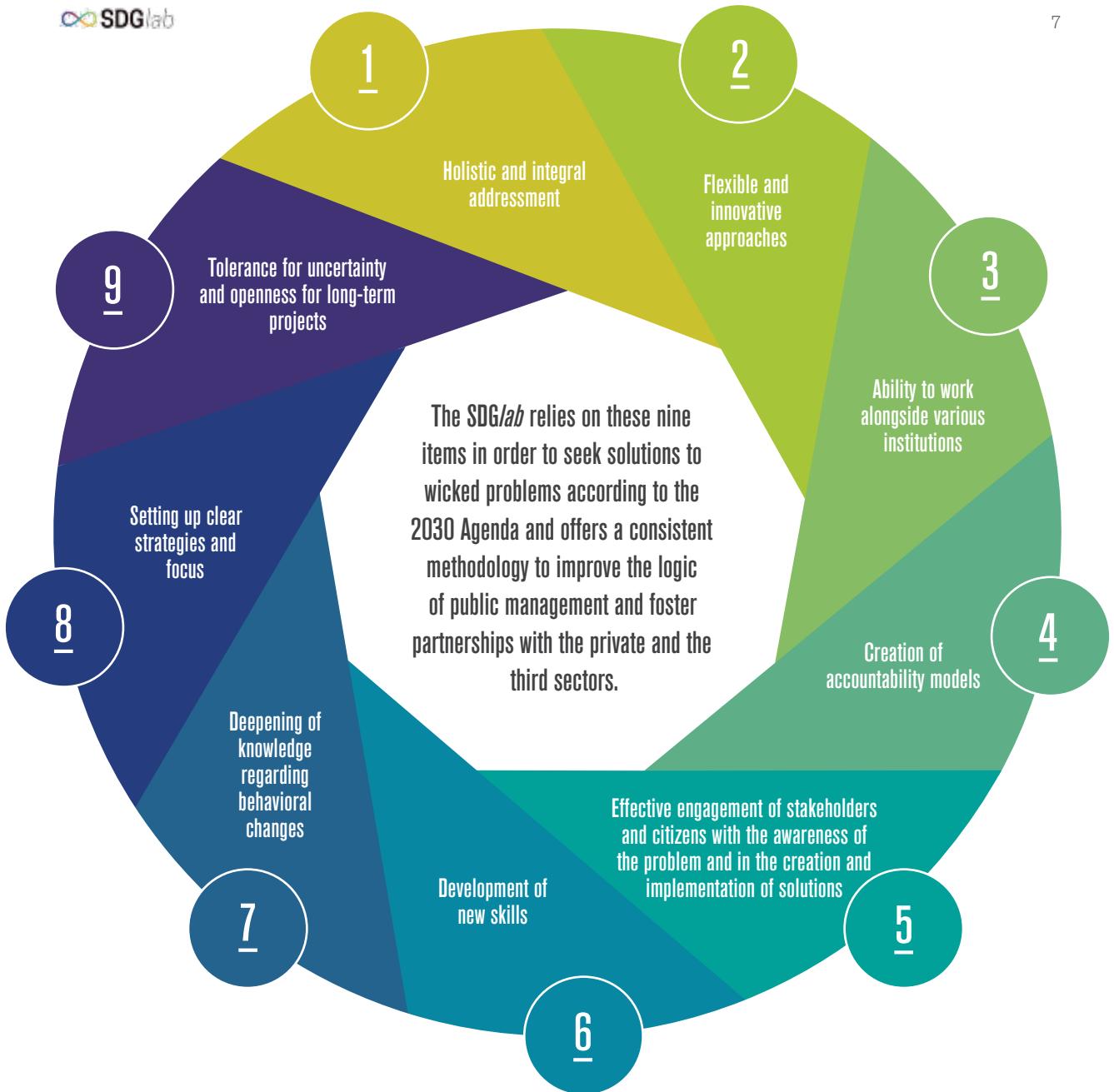
The *SDGlab* prioritizes concrete actions, with potential for implementation and effective change, always according to each context. At the end of the experiment, a diagnosis is made, providing short, medium and long-term coping strategies, as well as Quick Impact Actions.



A METHODOLOGY FOR SOLVING WICKED PROBLEMS

As they are multidimensional, wicked problems require coordinated efforts in order to be addressed – which means a great difficulty for the Brazilian public management, usually fragmented into organs and sectors, granted only with a low capability to establish a dialogue and distant from other stakeholders. In this scenario, solution attempts are usually characterized by overlapping efforts with high degrees of inefficiency.

Beyond complex, public problems are often dynamic as well, changing over time - and it is often impossible to find definitive answers. Solutions to complex problems should not be identified as "right" or "wrong," but as "more" or "less effective." Some assumptions are fundamental to address this kind of challenge:



— AGENDA PÚBLICA: WORKING TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Agenda Pública is committed to the creation, dissemination and implementation of the sustainable development agendas in Brazil. It was a highly relevant organization in the process of municipalization of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), precursors of the SDGs, thus having accumulated a solid repertoire of experiences aimed at improving municipal public policies in pursuit of ambitious goals.

In this context, the creation of the *SDGlab* is one more step further to promote cooperation between governments, society and companies, in order to find the best alternatives for implementing the sustainable development agenda.

The 17 SDGs, which propose the creation of multisectorial partnerships in order to achieve the goals of the 2030 Agenda, was an inspiration for Agenda Pública to create an effective methodology

to an intersectorial approach to public challenges of various natures. An integral addressment of public problems is critical, especially given the difficulty that often characterize the coordination of efforts within their own governments and the collaboration among different sectors of society.

SDGlab proposes recognizing the importance of each key actor directly related to a problem and who is willing to find ways to solve it. Starting from a previous diagnosis with those involved, paths and innovations that can contribute to the improvement of the targeted situations are analyzed.

Thus, the methodology encourages the multiplicity of perspectives to a holistic treatment of the challenges within 2030 Agenda. The work is carried out alongside the formalization of commitments, pacts and partnerships. That way, it is possible to collectively develop consensual and, therefore, much more effective action plans.

Through the *SDGlab*, Agenda Pública has developed an innovative model for building responses to wicked problems. With the adoption of dynamics that promote immersion of the participants, the *SDGlab* activities lead to solutions that go beyond the more traditional, sometimes fragmented ones, which are usually under the responsibility of a single protagonist, and that are no longer satisfactory.

THE LAB DYNAMICS

The *SDGlab* begins long before the actual meeting. Agenda Pública delves into building the diagnosis of the problems to be worked out in the lab and in the selection of actors of maximum relevance to the chosen problem. The criteria for selecting those involved in the lab take into account the plurality of perspectives, capacities and responsibilities, as well as interpersonal features such as willingness to collaborate and dialogue.

The participants of the *SDGlab* act on the public sector, academia, business sector, civil society organizations or are representatives of the community involved in the problem in focus. The location of the lab counts with inviting spaces for the two days of reflection and practice.



THE MEETING

The members of the *SDGlab* get to the laboratory provided with diagnostic information for the problem situation. Then, the dynamics of debates from the parameters of the 2030 Agenda take place. Next, the problem situation begins to be explored by its multiple dimensions.

Agenda Pública's mediation is the foundation for the theoretical concepts to be approached in a clear, precise and, at the same time, light manner. That way, practical decisions are supported by the most current and innovative reflections in the field of public policies.



PROBLEM ASSESSMENT

When tackling wicked problems, Agenda Pública inspires the participants by presenting unique aspects, thus contributing to find new paths and possibilities. It also addresses the challenges to public policies implementation, such as government coordination mechanisms, so that the solutions deal with the overlap and fragmentation of efforts, so characteristic of the public sector.

In addition to recognizing the role of governments, the *SDGlab*'s guests identify stakeholder interests, social actors with veto power and possible constraints in the implementation of actions, whether in communication, leadership, funding, conflict management or server engagement.

OUTCOMES

The *SDGlab* intends to build a plan of action that proposes short, medium and long term measures. Viable models of governance and multisectorial cooperation for planning to take place are also discussed.

The group is invited to elaborate Quick Impact Actions, a set of practices which effects are perceived in the very short term, at the expense of a small amount of resources.

The *SDGlab* demonstrates that it is possible to solve wicked problems, provided that the starting point is a qualified dialogue between the key actors in each situation and that partnerships between the public and private sectors and civil society are generated and cultivated based on models of governance and appropriate strategies for incentives and accountability.



QUICK IMPACT ACTIONS

One of the SDGlab's immediate appeals is the invitation to reflect on the so-called Quick Impact Actions (QIAs), capable of gathering public, private and civil society initiatives for important improvements for society.

The QIAs tend to be of low complexity, which makes it possible to achieve short-term results. That way, they engage, motivate and create the necessary confidence to invest in longer-term, higher-cost policies.

An action can be considered to make a quick impact if it meets the following characteristics:

Low complexity

Short-term results

Easy implementation

Resources already allocated and available

THE FIRST EXPERIENCES

In February 2017, *SDGlab*'s first three editions took place in São Paulo, counting with the participation of representatives from public institutions, universities, private organizations and civil society, all of which show outstanding performance within the debate on sustainable development in the country.

The meetings also sought to inspire reflections on the current implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Brazil. Some of the issues discussed were as follows:

1. What is needed for governments, civil society and the private sector to work together for sustainable development?
2. How to overcome short-term challenges so that the SDGs can have an effective implementation in Brazil?

Within the discussions, it was agreed that poorly qualified public debate and information asymmetry leads to the urgent need to strengthen local governments and develop new mechanisms of social participation, thus overcoming the current discredit and skepticism.

To address these difficulties, several measures were highlighted by the participants, namely: encouraging social innovations at the local level as a response to difficulties at the federal level; encouraging the training and the protagonism of the civil service; non-fragmented treatment of problems, avoiding possible negative impacts on the policies outcome; and creating incentives for different actors to engage in policies.

In order to face these difficulties, several were the measures highlighted by the participants. Next, learn a little about each of these meetings, the problems analyzed, their members, the results and the proposed practices.

3. What are the characteristics of wicked problems and how to address them?
4. What organizational and coordination models are needed to enable solutions?

TRANSPARENCY IN MANAUS

PROBLEM

Transparency indicators in the municipalities of Amazonas State are considered very unsatisfactory: Manaus occupies the 19th position among the 27 capitals in the Transparency Ranking of the Federal Public Ministry, indicating that the way data is produced, made available and used makes an effective and democratic use of public resources very difficult. How to make the municipality more transparent?

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS AND COMPANIES

Center for Sustainability Studies of the Getúlio Vargas Foundation, Ethos Institute, Natura, United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Muda de Ideia/ 24h Sustainable Marathon, Federal University of ABC (UFABC), Lina Galvani Institute.

Results

QUICK IMPACT ACTIONS



Creation of a municipal ombudsmen (popular and institutional)



Actions aiming for popular participation in public data usage projects



Data dissemination regarding the municipal administration



Wikimap featuring popular initiatives on transparency

ACTION PLAN HIGHLIGHTS

Short Term

Create a data guide and make it available

Create a municipal ombudsmen

Articulate civil society and government through an engagement plan

Medium Term

Organize a business transparency pact

Promote the use of free software in the municipality

Computerize secretaries, standardize data and launch user-friendly data access platforms

Long term / continuous

Promote Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) to carry out the solutions

Work alongside the schools on the theme of transparency in organizations and governments

Strengthen civil society organizations so that they are able to monitor the public investments

MOBILITY IN PIRACICABA CITY

PROBLEM

The mobility system in the city of Piracicaba (in the State of São Paulo) does not favor the use of public transport or bicycles. How to create a system that is connected to a sustainable development project, which prioritizes public transport and focuses on the people, especially in the most vulnerable sectors?

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS AND COMPANIES

Agenda Pública, Casa Fluminense, National Front of Mayors (FNP), Fundación Avina, The City Needs You Institute, Ethos Institute, Global Compact Network - Brazil, São Paulo Municipal Secretariat for Environment (SVMA)

Results

QUICK IMPACT ACTIONS



Creation of low-speed zones, enabling roads to be shared with bicycles



Lighting and flexibilization of the public transport stops



Encouraging community participation in reviewing bus routes



Creation of car-free zones



Creation of hiking systems

ACTION PLAN HIGHLIGHTS

Short Term

Establish a governance model to operate mobility plans

Map national and international funding programs

Encourage the creation of alternatives for car sharing

Medium Term

Engage civil society actors and the collectives that work on the theme

Create a policy to score outstanding companies in bidding processes

Develop technologies and management alternatives to make logistics efficient

Long term / Continuous

Explore Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) for the sector (such as bicycle offer)

Stimulate mobility research and broadly disseminate its results

Provide tools to encourage companies to invest in the segment

SANITATION IN MACAPÁ

PROBLEM

The city of Macapá (AP) had, until 2014, only 5% of its area served by sewage treatment and 40% of it served with piped water. How can we change this scenario when household waste is commonly dumped into rivers or land and contamination has negative health impacts?

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS AND COMPANIES

Agenda Pública, Alliance for Water, Brazilian Association of Municipalities (ABM), Fundación Avina, MGov, Programa das United Nations Human Settlements Program (UN-HABITAT).

Results

QUICK IMPACT ACTIONS



Foster joint efforts and awareness-raising in hospitals, schools, health facilities



Carry out public presentations of the sanitation plan, with the participation of society



Create sanitary practices campaigns in the neighborhoods

ACTION PLAN HIGHLIGHTS

Short Term

Define municipal goals to tackle the problem, seeking partners

Check existing funds and ensure that they can be applied to sanitation

Involve the Public Ministry and civil society in monitoring plans

Medium Term

Promote and encourage sustainable business, according to the sanitation plan

Create a regional agency to regulate basic sanitation and water supply

Engage and provide training to community health agents

Long Term / Continuous

Articulate the Public Ministry to evaluate sanitation in occupations

Create a multi-actor forum with citizen audit and control bodies

Elaborate follow-up studies and form working groups

HEADING TOWARDS NEW CHALLENGES

The *SDGlab*'s editions have shown that the lab is effective in promoting a dialogue between actors from various economic and political segments, in developing solutions to real public problems, and in establishing partnerships and institutional models of cooperation.

The *SDGlab* methodology, studied and developed by the Agenda Pública, is based on principles of open innovation, theory of change and models of institutional arrangements, with the participation of multiple actors: governments, civil society and the business sector. This proposal is adaptable to the most varied realities, allowing complex problems of any nature to be addressed from this perspective.

Concrete results can be measured by the quality of the discussions, the capacity to engage the key actors involved and the solutions presented. The implementation of the proposals is based on the arrangements organized within the *SDGlab*, and the group involved determines the next steps to follow-up and monitor the actions.

Through the Quick Impact Actions (QIAs) and the action plans developed during the lab, the changes and improvements take place in the short term.





The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) require articulation between the various key actors of society, whether from governments, companies or the civil society.

In order to meet the challenges of the 2030 Agenda and foster innovation, optimize resources, promote multi-stakeholder dialogue and cooperation, Agenda Pública created the *SDG/lab*.



**If you also want to work for the success
of the SDGs implementation,
please get in touch.
Let's solve problems?**



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SDG/lab is an initiative by Agenda Pública and the SDG Strategy towards the solution of wicked problems through cooperation between governments, companies and the civil society.

Agenda Pública is a nonprofit civil society organization of public interest (OSCIP) that aims to improve public administration and democratic governance, focusing on the development of institutional capacities, on models of cooperation and on gathering teams to solve public problems.

SDG Strategy is a coalition that brings together organizations recognized in Brazil, which represent the civil society, the private sector, local governments and the academy, in order to broaden and qualify the debate on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the country and mobilize, discuss and propose effective ways of implementing this agenda.

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