Implementation of the SDG in the Strategic Planning at the Simón Bolívar University in Colombia as a good practice for sustainable development.

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Summary:
The objective of this document is to show how Higher Education Institutions can achieve high quality standards by aligning their Strategic Planning and substantive functions with the Sustainable Development Objectives. We analysed the case of the Simón Bolívar University in Colombia to offer guidelines for implementation and follow-up.

1 How to become a SDG committed University

Universities can engage with the SDGs on three different levels:

- Recognition: Identifying what they are already doing to contribute to the SDGs
- Opportunities: Acknowledging the usefulness and importance of the SDG framework, but without an overall strategy
- Organising principle: The SDGs become part of the DNA of the organisation, integrating them as the framework within all relevant University governance structures and plans

According to the metrics of the Times Higher Education (THE) impact rankings in Colombia, by 2019 the Simón Bolívar University is the second best classified in the country, evaluating the average impact each Higher Education institute generate, aligned with the SDGs.

2 The SDGs as the essence of the strategic planning at Simón Bolívar University in Colombia

The SDGs are made the Organising Principle of the University through an adjustment in the structure of the institutional strategic planning, that consacrates them to be the framework and cornerstone in all task for the achievement of the Institutional Educational Project, the fulfillment of the missionary objectives and the concretion of the vision.

As a result, Simón Bolívar University has managed to strengthen its own internal processes in various ways, among which we can highlight:

- From Teaching: Alignment of the educational offer with the SDG and attention to the closing of educational gaps, without female gender disparity in the population.
- From Research: Positioning of teachers and research groups by aligning their work and approach with the SDG.
- From Extension: consolidation of strategic alliances and partnerships with public and private, national and international entities for the fulfillment of the SDG.

In addition to this, the Simón Bolívar University has also been able to measure its impact thanks to the use of SDG as an international reference framework.

3. Most important findings:

Articulating the SDGs with university activities is a voluntary step that can serve, both for enhancing Higher Education institution processes and also for the achievement of global goals. As more and more organizations worldwide join this framework we will be able to construct an active “network of solutions” to help governments, businesses and civil society chart the path to success.

Universidad Simón Bolívar has managed to implement improvements to its own overall academic structure, which has avoided a guaranteed high quality education to students from the most vulnerable socioeconomic strata by:

- Developing programs and projects that support the creation of sustainable enterprises (SDG 1, SDG 4, SDG 10).
- Contributing to the improvement and promotion of health and social well-being of the community in alliance with local, national and international entities (SDG 3).
- Reducing gender disparities in work and education (SDG 4, SDG 5, SDG 8, SDG 10).
- Developing research and innovation projects that address the current problems of sustainable development (SDG 9).
- Facilitating mobility within the University grounds for those disabled (SDG 10).
- Strengthening alliances with various sectors for the creation and implementation of policies and strategies which contribute to sustainable development (SDG 17).

As such, other key points requiring improvement have been identified, such as the inclusion in education, the increase of international students, gender equality, among others.