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Leveraging RCI Knowledge for Greater Development Impact

Session 6: Supporting Operations through RCI Knowledge Work

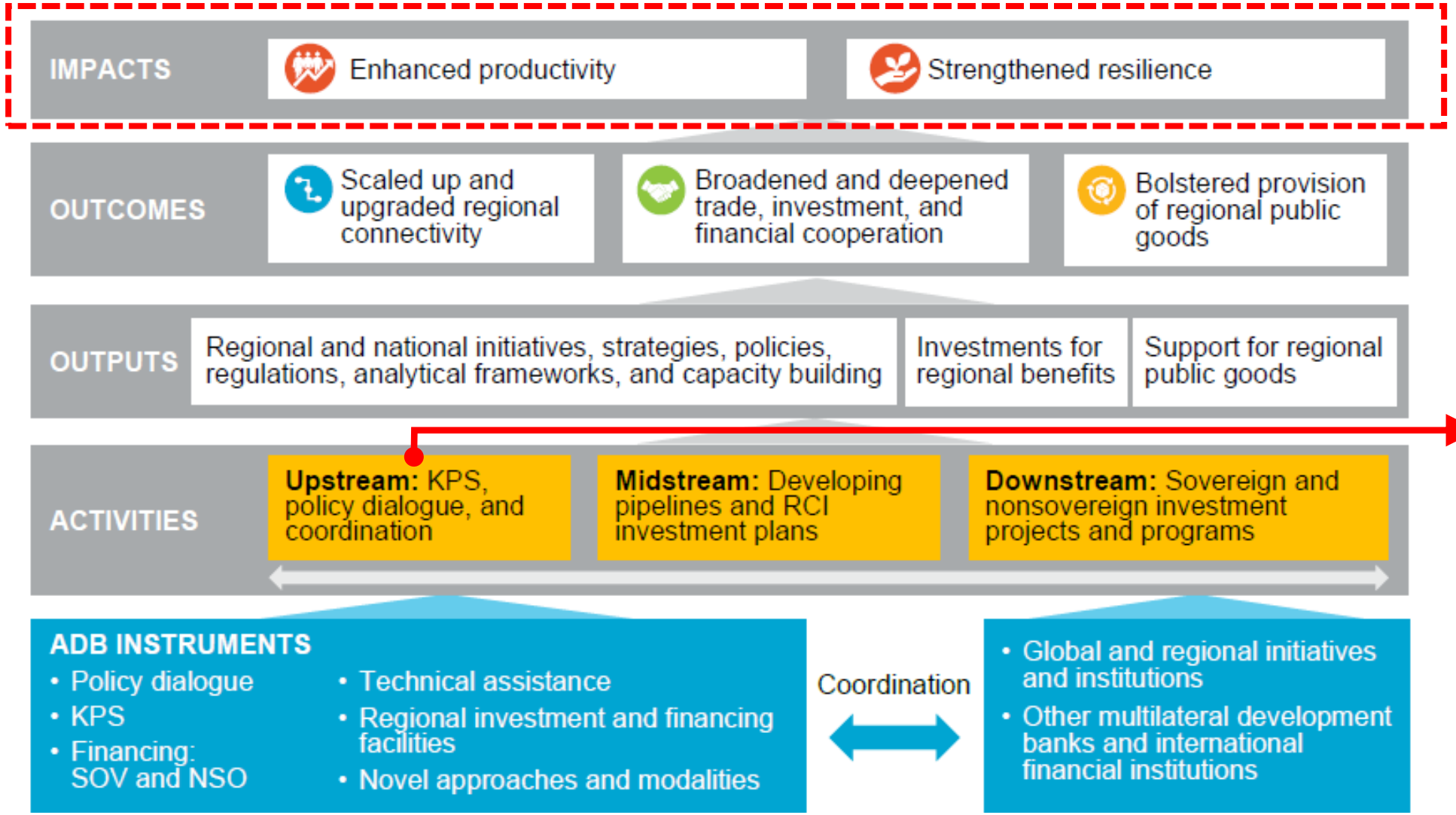
5 November 2026

RCI Operational Approach positions RCI as a core element of CPS and country diagnostics

Para 50. Embed regional cooperation and integration into country partnership strategies and programming. RCI will be a core element of **country partnership strategies**. **Country diagnostics** will assess RCI opportunities and risks and translate findings into strategic priorities and measurable indicators.....

Source: Operational Approach for Revitalizing Regional Cooperation and Integration (approved in Mar 2026)

RCI Operational Approach: Theory of Change



Main question

How can knowledge help identify and prioritize RCI interventions that improve productivity and resilience?

KPS = knowledge products and services, NSO = nonsovereign operations, RCI = regional cooperation and integration, SOV = sovereign.
Source: Operational Approach for Revitalizing Regional Cooperation and Integration (approved in Mar 2026)

Downstream: Emerging Transformative Regional Initiatives in the next 5-10 years

Integrated solutions for transformative impact



Pan-Asia Power Grid

Integrate power systems for energy trade, renewable deployment, and energy security for 1.8 billion people

ASEAN Power Grid

South Asia power connectivity

Caspian Sea Green Corridor

Inter-subregional connectivity



Asia-Pacific Digital Highway

Digital and data infrastructure for regional digital economy

Digital public infrastructure and interoperability

Policy harmonization for shared cybersecurity, data exchange, and digital skills development

CAREC Digital Corridor and Pacific Digital Bridge



Economic corridors

Transform transport routes into cross-border spatial development zones

Almaty-Bishkek Corridor, South Asia's national corridor integration, and GMS corridors

Modernize urban services for urban growth



Regional flyways

East Asian-Australasian Flyway

Coordinated wetland conservation for migratory birds

Expanding projects from PRC to others



Sustainable and inclusive tourism

Huge transformative potential

Fuel entrepreneurship and investment across multiple sectors and spur trade

Rely on well-managed regional natural and cultural public goods

ASEAN, CAREC, GMS, and SASEC

Source: Operational Approach for Revitalizing Regional Cooperation and Integration (approved in Mar 2026)

Evidence: Economic integration can support national and regional development



Openness can support growth

- Cross-border flows in trade, FDI, finance, migration, and remittances are associated with higher productivity, output, and income.
- Trade provides the most robust, causal evidence for growth.



Spillovers are the core mechanism

- Technology, knowledge, and skill spillovers are the primary link from integration to productivity
- Most channels ultimately raise TFP, even when they enter via capital or labor.



Gains are conditional

- Realizing them requires absorptive capacity, including:
- human capital, institutions, infrastructure, and innovation capability.

Sources: TFP (A): Frankel and Romer (1999); Coe and Helpman (1995); Javorcik (2004); Redding and Venables (2004); Donaldson (2018); Feyrer (2019); Campos, Coricelli, and Moretti (2019); World Bank (2020). Capital (K): Borensztein, De Gregorio, and Lee (1998); Kose et al. (2009); Chen and Kim (2023); IFAD and IOM (2025). Labor (L): Peri (2012); Ortega and Peri (2014).

Knowledge Products on RCI in ADB

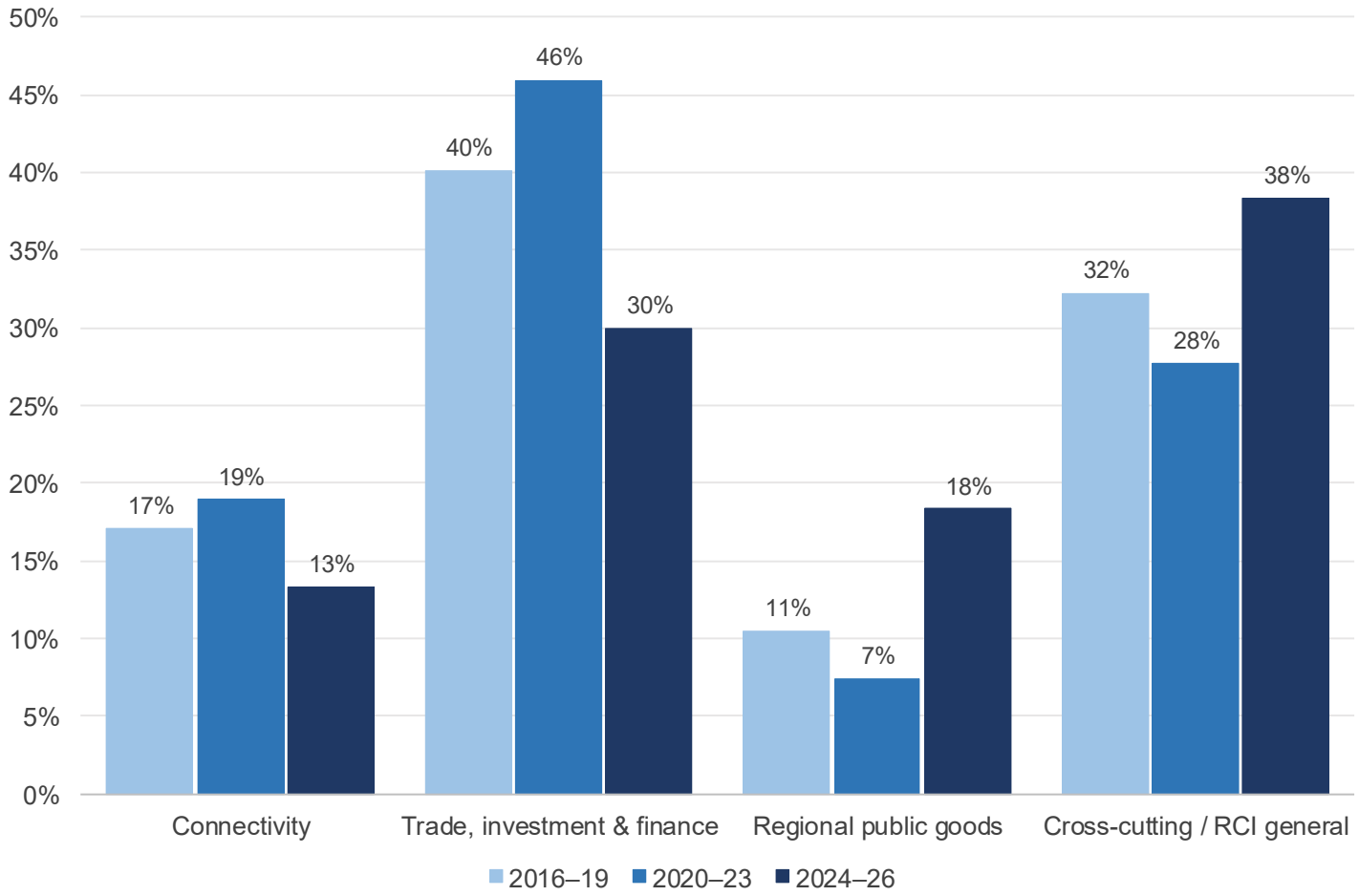
RCI priority areas

Cross-border connectivity
transport, energy, and digital links

Trade, investment, and financial cooperation
market access, FDI, financial integration

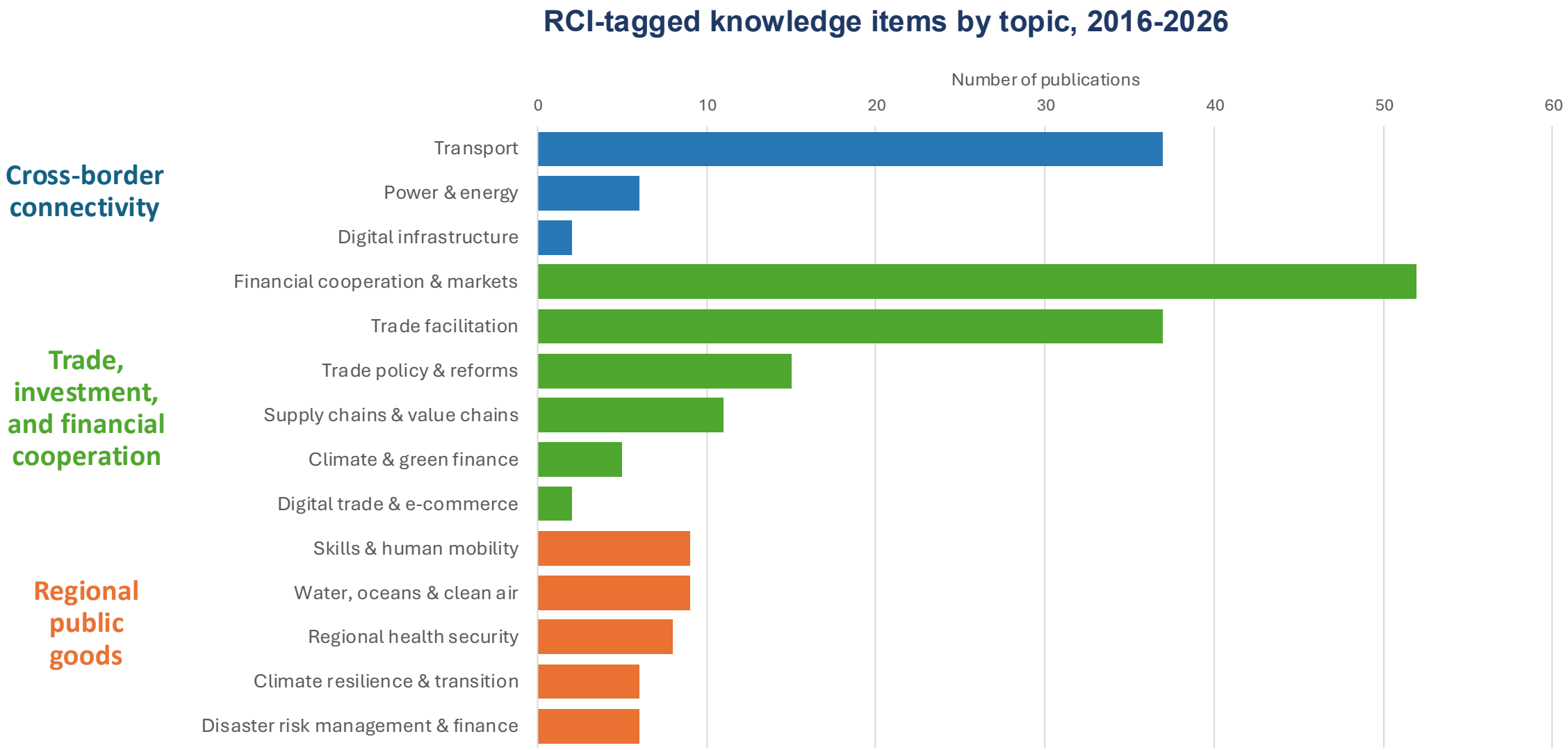
Regional public goods
shared resources and cross-border risks

Share of RCI-tagged items by priority area, 2016-2026



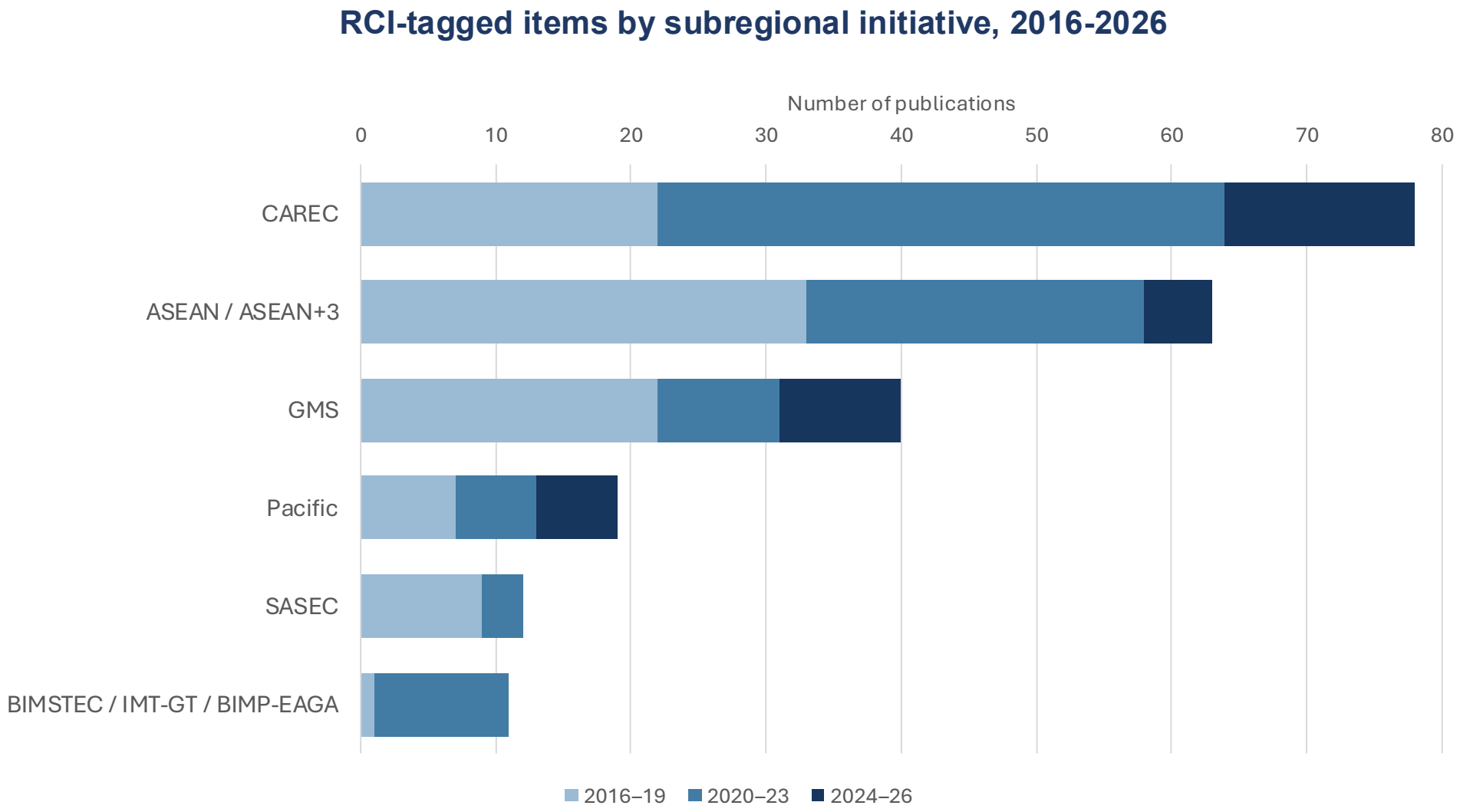
Note: Based on 360 publications and institutional documents tagged "Regional cooperation and integration" from 2016 to Oct 2026; RCI priority areas were further classified based on sub-tags.
Source: Author based on ADB website (adb.org), accessed on 3 October 2026

Knowledge Products on RCI in ADB



Note: Based on 360 publications and institutional documents tagged "Regional cooperation and integration"; RCI priority areas were further classified based on sub-tagging.
Source: Author based on ADB website (adb.org), accessed on 3 October 2026

Knowledge Products on RCI in ADB



CAREC = Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation; GMS = Greater Mekong Subregion; SASEC = South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation; BIMP-EAGA = Brunei Darussalam–Indonesia–Malaysia–Philippines East ASEAN Growth Area; IMT-GT = Indonesia–Malaysia–Thailand Growth Triangle; ASEAN = Association of Southeast Asian Nations; BIMSTEC = Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation.
Note: Based on 360 publications and institutional documents tagged "Regional cooperation and integration"; RCI priority areas were further classified based on sub-tagging.
Source: Author based on ADB website (adb.org), accessed on 3 October 2026

Guiding Principles for RCI Diagnostics

Key Messages from Consultations

Development impact

- Emphasize mechanisms linking RCI to development outcomes
- Help connect analytical findings with operational choices and intended development outcomes.

Demand-based

- Focus on issues with clear operational demand and existing regional traction
- Use a flexible, menu-based approach adapted to country and regional needs.

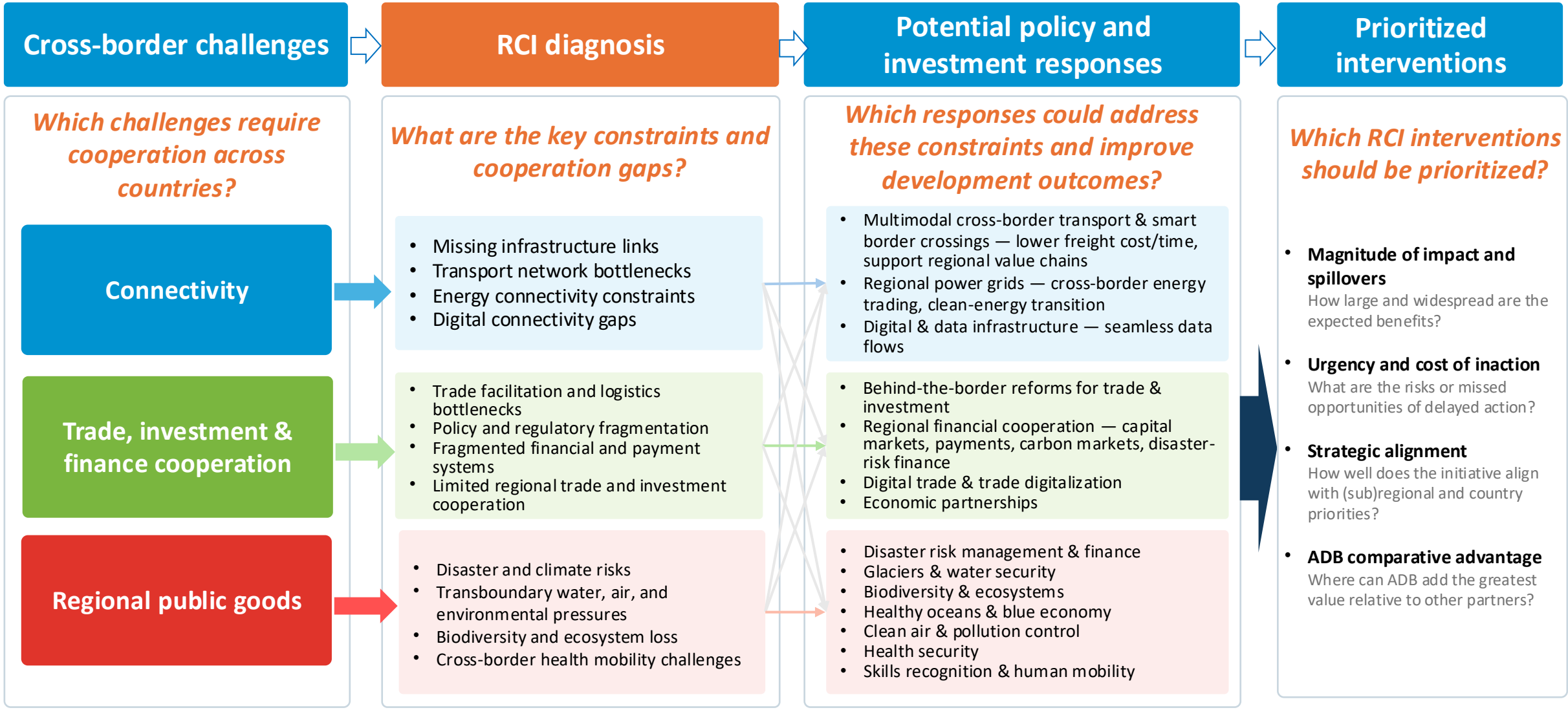
Complementarity

- Integrate RCI into existing diagnostics where relevant
- Build on ongoing sector and country work, rather than starting from scratch

Practical application

- Use practical methods and concrete examples.
- Keep guidance user-friendly and proportionate to available data and analytical capacity

How RCI diagnostics can inform country strategies and operations



Way Forward

Build on strengths and assess gaps

Draw on existing knowledge and identify analytical needs for emerging RCI priorities

Apply diagnostics selectively

Focus on country priorities and operational demand, building on existing analysis

Link evidence to operational priorities

Assess development benefits, spillovers, and complementary policies

Develop practical RCI diagnostic guidelines

Bring these elements together to support country strategies and programming