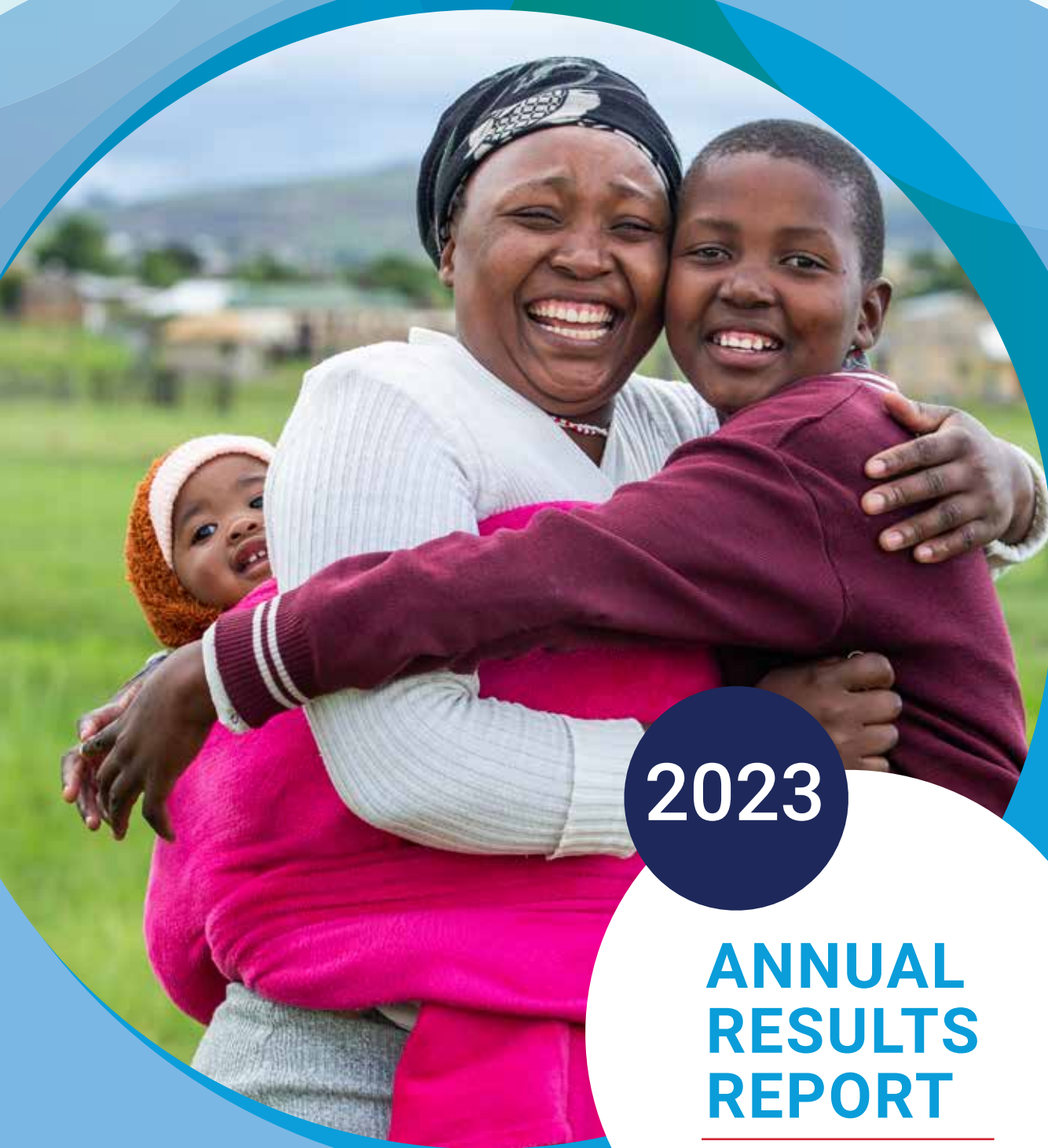




**UNITED NATIONS**  
SOUTH AFRICA



**2023**

**ANNUAL  
RESULTS  
REPORT**

**SOUTH AFRICA**



**UNITED NATIONS**  
SOUTH AFRICA



**2023**

**SOUTH AFRICA**

Annual Results Report



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# COUNTRY PROFILE



## Population<sup>1</sup>

- **62**  
Total population (million)
- **26.40%**  
Percentage of people 0-14 yrs old
- **48.50%**  
Percentage of male
- **51.50%**  
Percentage of female



## Food Security<sup>2</sup>

- **11.60%**  
Percentage of households reporting experiencing hunger



## Water, Sanitation and Hygiene<sup>10</sup>

- **8.70%**  
Percentage of households with no access to piped water
- **70.83%**  
Percentage of households using flush toilets
- **66.30%**  
Percentage of households in the country that have their refuse removed by a local authority once a week



## Economics

- **0.60%**  
Gross domestic product growth (constant prices)<sup>11</sup>
- **32.10%**  
Unemployment<sup>12</sup>



## Maternal and Infant Mortality

- **127**  
Maternal mortality per 100,000 live births<sup>3</sup>
- **34.5**  
Under-5 mortality rates per 1,000 live births<sup>4</sup>



## Gender-Based Violence

- **20.5%**  
Percentage of ever partnered women 18 years and older who experienced physical violence ever by any partner<sup>5</sup>
- **52 694**  
Number of individuals who were victims of sexual offence in the previous 12 months, by type of sexual offence<sup>6</sup>
- **0.019%**  
Percentage of early marriages experienced by girls before the age of 15 years<sup>7</sup>



## Housing<sup>13</sup>

- **85.5%**  
Percentage of households residing in formal dwellings



## Electricity<sup>14</sup>

- **64.9%**  
Percentage of people receiving electricity from mains for cooking
- **94.7%**  
Percentage of people receiving electricity for light



## Biodiversity<sup>15</sup>

- **11,280,684**  
Hectares of protected land accounted



## Nutrition<sup>8</sup>

- **23%**  
Prevalence of stunting among children under 5
- **4%**  
Prevalence of wasting among children under 5



## Education<sup>9</sup>

- **60.2%**  
Percentage of children aged 0–4 years with access to some form of early childhood development programme
- **73.4%**  
Percentage of persons aged 5–24 years attending an educational institution
- **37.6%**  
Percentage of persons aged 20 years and older who completed secondary education

<sup>1</sup><https://census.statssa.gov.za/#/>

<sup>2</sup>[www.statssa.gov.za/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Households-reporting-hunger-final.jpg](https://www.statssa.gov.za/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Households-reporting-hunger-final.jpg)

<sup>3</sup><https://data.who.int/indicators/i/AC597B1>

<sup>4</sup><https://data.unicef.org/country/zaf/>

<sup>5</sup>[www.statssa.gov.za/publications/03-00-18/03-00-182022.pdf](https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/03-00-18/03-00-182022.pdf)

<sup>6</sup>[www.statssa.gov.za/MDG/SDG\\_Country\\_report.pdf](https://www.statssa.gov.za/MDG/SDG_Country_report.pdf)

<sup>7</sup>ibid.

<sup>8</sup><https://data.unicef.org/sdgs/country/zaf/>

<sup>9</sup>[https://census.statssa.gov.za/assets/documents/2022/Census\\_2022\\_SG\\_Presentation\\_10102023.pdf](https://census.statssa.gov.za/assets/documents/2022/Census_2022_SG_Presentation_10102023.pdf)

<sup>10</sup>[https://census.statssa.gov.za/assets/documents/2022/Census\\_2022\\_SG\\_Pres](https://census.statssa.gov.za/assets/documents/2022/Census_2022_SG_Pres)

<sup>11</sup>[www.statssa.gov.za/?p=17053](https://www.statssa.gov.za/?p=17053)

<sup>12</sup>[www.sanews.gov.za/south-africa/stats-sa-records-decrease-number-employed-persons](https://www.sanews.gov.za/south-africa/stats-sa-records-decrease-number-employed-persons)

<sup>13</sup><https://census.statssa.gov.za/#/>

<sup>14</sup>ibid.

<sup>15</sup>ibid.



## RESIDENT COORDINATOR'S FOREWORD

This Annual Country Results Report 2023 encapsulates the United Nations in South Africa's concerted efforts to address national challenges and progress towards sustainable development in the country, against a global landscape marked by economic instability and a national context of high interest rates, escalating food and fuel costs, governance issues and energy limitations. This report details our actions within the framework of our strategic priorities, notably underpinning the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the National Development Plan. The complexities of the current global economic scenario, coupled with local adversities, including the lingering impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and sociopolitical tensions, have posed formidable challenges. Despite this, the resilience and determination of the South African people, supported by unwavering governmental and multisectoral partnerships, have enabled meaningful strides towards inclusive and sustainable development.

Our commitment to the Just Energy Transition and also to advancing rights-based inclusive economic development that leaves no one behind remains a cornerstone of our efforts, ensuring an equitable shift towards sustainable energy solutions and a low-carbon yet inclusive, localized, digitized and sustainable growth trajectory. In 2023, we helped develop various dialogues and policy frameworks to facilitate South Africa's inclusive shift to a low-carbon economy. Advocacy was undertaken, technical insights were provided, a diverse group of stakeholders was engaged to ensure inclusivity and partnerships were advanced to ensure fairness in this crucial transition.

In our fight against gender-based violence, the United Nations has ramped up its initiatives, launching significant interventions and partnerships aimed at eradicating this deep-seated issue across society. Our collaborative efforts have fostered robust multisectoral responses and raised awareness across communities, contributing to a safer environment for all South Africans.

The health and educational support programmes have seen substantial progress this year in building human capabilities and a better life for all. Our health initiatives

have been pivotal in advancing universal health coverage, including substantial support to the National Health Insurance scheme. In education, conscious that access to primary education is close to universal levels, we focused on enhancing the quality of education, from early childhood through tertiary education, and particularly on digital literacy and technological integration, to prepare young South Africans for a competitive global economy.

Longstanding lack of trust in institutions and accountability concerns, against the backdrop of the national elections in May 2024, meant it was critical for us to support inclusive, responsive, accountable, ethical and rights-based governance. Institutional and democratic processes gained additional importance. Our efforts have helped ensure that all South Africans can participate meaningfully and can increasingly trust in the future of our rainbow nation.

Looking ahead, our resolve to support South Africa in its ambitious efforts to achieve its National Development Plan and the Sustainable Development Goals is unwavering. The insights gained, collaborations forged and interventions carried out this year have been invaluable, and will guide our future strategies to maximize impact. We extend our thanks to the Government of South Africa, international and development partners, civil society, local authorities, traditional and faith leaders, the private sector and the dedicated citizens who have made these achievements possible. This tireless support through active citizenry and collaboration is essential as we continue our journey towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals together by 2030.

As Resident Coordinator, I am continually inspired by the guidance and engagement of national authorities and stakeholders as well as by the dedication and growing synergy of the United Nations Country Team and our partners. Our path to 2030 is fraught with challenges but also ripe with opportunities to foster a society that embraces inclusivity, sustainability and resilience. With collective efforts and a shared vision, we are poised to ensure that every South African can realize their full potential in a vibrant, equitable and sustainable nation.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In responding to the first Strategic Priority of the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, on inclusive growth, one of the pivotal achievements in 2023 was the launch of the Just Energy Transition Partnership (JET-P) by the Presidential Climate Commission, with UN backing. This initiative is designed to steer South Africa towards a sustainable, carbon-neutral future. By working closely with universities, government entities and stakeholders, including the Presidential Climate Commission, we led on research, policy dialogues, public forums and influential publications. These efforts have been crucial in guiding policy decisions for a fair energy transition.

The drafting of the National Employment Policy (NEP) by the Government of South Africa, in collaboration with the UN, marked another milestone. Set for public feedback in early 2024, this policy aims to tackle the country's high unemployment rates and achieve the creation of a target of 22.2 million jobs by 2030. Throughout 2023, the UN facilitated consultations on the NEP draft with key clusters and departments.

Additionally, the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) Policy, a vital component of the Government's labour market strategies, aims to boost employment and enhance employability, particularly among youth (55%), women (60%) and persons with disabilities (PWD) (7%). With UN support, the Government developed a policy framework to increase the participation of PWD in the EPWP.

The UN assisted the Government in designing targeted interventions to address challenges hindering vulnerable workers' access to decent working conditions in the construction sector. These interventions included promoting trade union representation for informal workers, implementing effective inspections and compliance mechanisms,

and enhancing business development support services for enterprises. These efforts aim to benefit the 1.2 million people working in the construction sector, of whom 14 per cent are women and 38 per cent are informally employed.

To support the attainment of the second Strategic Priority, on human capital and social transformation, the UN supported the successful clearance of the National Health Insurance (NHI) Bill by the South African National Assembly and the National Council of Provinces. The UN also collaborated with the Department of Health to shape the comprehensive package of health service benefits outlined in the NHI with the aim of addressing inequality and ensuring universal access to high-quality healthcare for all South Africans.

In addition, the UN catalysed urgent action to close the treatment gap for 70,000 children in South Africa by mobilizing partners across sectors. By joining the Global Alliance to End AIDS in Children by 2030, the South African Government, with UN facilitation, developed a National Global Alliance Plan. Launched on World AIDS Day 2023, this will guide implementation and monitoring at all levels.

The UN's technical support was also instrumental in creating the fifth-generation National Strategic Plan for HIV, Sexually Transmitted Infections and Tuberculosis for 2023 to 2028. This plan focuses on evidence-based responses and person-centric strategies, and includes a financial analysis and monitoring framework aligned with the goals of the Global AIDS Strategy.

To enhance quality early learning for young children, the UN supported implementation of the National Curriculum Framework for children from birth to four years of age. The UN also facilitated

the in-service training of 8,800 educators and 200 district officials. The Foundation Phase Initiative saw the enrolment of 86,196 early childhood development (ECD) practitioners and Grades R–3 educators, with 41,691 completions. This improved the quality of ECD programmes for the 3 million attending children.

Moreover, in collaboration with the Department of Social Development (DSD) and civil society partners, the UN directly assisted 222,372 children through a range of social, health and judicial services. Initiatives focusing on violence prevention engaged over 25,000 parents and caregivers, reaching more than 1.2 million individuals with social behaviour change messages. Additionally, the UN supported the HeForShe initiative, enhancing community resilience against HIV/AIDS and violence against women and girls.

In the realm of democratic participation of young people in the electoral process, the UN and the Electoral Commission of South Africa (IEC) orchestrated a transformative knowledge-sharing mission to Zimbabwe, training election observers for the 2024 elections. The #WeAreVoting campaign, launched in partnership with the UN, the IEC and Activate Change Drivers, empowered approximately 1,500 young individuals to register and participate in the upcoming elections.

In support to the third Strategic Priority, on governance, the UN, in collaboration with the Centre for Public Service Innovation, rolled out the Let's Talk Digital platform to 87 additional wards, enhancing citizen engagement in Thabazimbi Municipality. This platform builds on successful pilots in OR Tambo District Municipality and Waterberg District Municipality, fostering real-time communication channels between citizens and authorities.

Lastly, in supporting the Government on advancing the fourth Strategic Priority, on climate resilience, in partnership with the Energy Unity Division and the Frankfurt School of Finance and Management, the UN implemented the Clean Captive Installations for Industrial Clients in Sub-Saharan Africa initiative. Supported by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action, this project demonstrated the economic feasibility of clean energy solutions for industries, promoting sustainable development across the continent.

As the UN South Africa, we are deeply committed to building on the significant achievements of the past 30 years of South Africa's democracy. Our aim is to strengthen the foundations laid over these decades to ensure a future that is equitable, resilient and sustainable for all South Africans. I extend my deepest gratitude to the UN South Africa team, the Government and the people of South Africa, and all our development partners. Your steadfast commitment and support are key as we work together to deliver sustainable development for the people of South Africa.



# UN COUNTRY TEAM



Resident Coordinator Nelson Muffuh heads the UNCT in South Africa as the designated representative of the UN Secretary-General. The UNCT comprises 24 UN agencies, funds and programmes. Currently, this includes 20 resident and four non-resident agencies. The UNCT is an inter-agency forum for joint planning, policy formulation and decision-making. It provides strategic direction and oversight to ensure that the UN Development System agencies deliver coherent, effective and efficient support as one.

The UNCT works with the Government of South Africa, civil society, the private sector, international financial institutions and other development partners to support national development priorities. The UN remains committed to enhancing its performance and impact by contributing to the country's development through accelerating the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This acceleration at the midpoint of the 2030 Agenda is aligned with the Government's National Development Plan (NDP) Vision 2030 and the Medium-Term Strategic Framework 2019–2024.

## Resident Agencies

## Non-Resident Agencies

## KEY DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS OF THE UN IN SOUTH AFRICA

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development leads us towards a world where prosperity, equality and sustainability are not just aspirations but realities for both people and the planet. The 2023 Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Summit reflected the slow progress towards achieving the SDGs globally. South Africa's 10-year review of its NDP and the 2023 SDG Report also highlighted the need for course correction, transitions and acceleration towards the SDGs. The UN in South Africa supported the Government of South Africa to identify areas to strengthen interventions to accelerate and amplify its commitment to implement the SDGs.

Recognizing this urgency, the UN Resident Coordinator and the UNCT undertook analytical policy and advocacy work, forged significant multistakeholder partnerships and convened engagements to demonstrate a commitment to strengthen collaboration. Through joint events and the co-creation of development initiatives, the UN focused on advancing priority areas critical to the success of the SDGs. These efforts, detailed below, are aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2020–2025.





A visit was carried out to Komati, the first coal-fired power station decommissioned in South Africa, followed by a retreat in Mpumalanga and engagement with Eskom, the World Bank, provincial authorities and others to discuss how best to ensure the transition is truly protecting the most vulnerable and giving opportunities for meaningful engagement in the new emerging economy.

A Just Energy Transition Multi-Stakeholder Roundtable, held in Pretoria on 5 July 2023, provided an opportunity for the Government, labour actors, the private sector, international partners, community-based entities, think-tanks and the UN to discuss the impacts and benefits of improved affordable access to energy and a just transition that leaves no one behind.



The Kgalema Motlanthe Foundation's Annual Drakensberg Inclusive Growth Forum shed light on critical issues affecting the continent. The UN supported this esteemed platform, which attracted the diplomatic corps, experts, business leaders, academics, government ministers, officials, labour actors, civil society and youth. The UN Resident Coordinator's keynote address emphasized that, by working together, African nations can help ensure the UN is more representative, effective and responsive to the needs of all nations, including those in Africa. The Resident Coordinator reminded participants that multilateralism is representative of Africa's unique position in the world and works better for the continent.



The UN in six Southern African countries (Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa and Zambia) launched the Regional Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Programme at a roundtable in Pretoria, South Africa, in October 2023. The aim was to encourage and solidify partnerships and collaboration, recognizing that eradicating GBV in the subregion requires an all-of-society approach. Governments, donor representatives, the diplomatic corps, international development partners, the private sector, civil society and the UN family expressed a firm commitment to jointly support the fight against GBV and enhance coordination by breaking siloes, identifying synergies and avoiding duplication.

An Early Warning and Risk Reduction Multi-Stakeholder Roundtable, held on 17 October 2023, explored how South Africa can strengthen its disaster management system and incorporate early warning and anticipatory measures to mitigate the impact of shocks on the most vulnerable.



The UN partnered with the Thabo Mbeki Foundation to curate sessions for the inaugural Cape Town Conversations, which focused on the Global South. The event provided a dynamic platform for global actors to engage in critical discourse on global governance and the future world order. The UN's participation helped shape and influence the policy approach in sharing the stage with numerous thought-leaders and change-makers.

The UNCT and the UN Global Compact introduced the Global Africa Business Initiative (GABI) platform to South African and African businesses along the margins of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Business Forum in Cape Town in April 2023. The launch represented an exchange of ideas and an opportunity to create connections between businesses and UN entities on ways to propel Africa's growth agenda. The event showcased examples of cross-sector commitments and partnerships in food, digitalization, health systems, water, energy, climate and finance.



The Eastern Cape Provincial Initiation Summit took place on 30 October 2023. The UN and other partners concentrated on decreasing fatalities during this sacred rite of passage.

The UN, in collaboration with the Nelson Mandela Foundation, co-created and launched the Mandela SDGs Quote Book. This call-to-action book harnesses the inspiring quotes of Madiba and links them to specific SDGs with examples of actions to galvanize individual and collective efforts. The booklet serves as a clarion call of Mandela's message, "It Is in Your Hands," urging a collective push towards the SDGs in pursuit of equality, sustainability and justice.

The UN supported and contributed to the Desmond and Leah Tutu Legacy Foundation Annual Peace Lecture by collaborating on the 13th Annual Lecture featuring a keynote address by philanthropist Melinda French Gates. The event was a timely reminder of the importance of strategic partnerships in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.



### SYSTEM-WIDE DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

MINISTRIES AND GOVERNMENT AGENCIES	KEY FUNDING PARTNERS	KEY NON-FUNDING PARTNERS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Office of the Presidency</li> <li>Departments of Employment and Labour; Basic Education; Cooperative Governance; Correctional Services; Higher Education and Training; Justice and Constitutional Development; Social Development; Women, Youth and People Living with Disabilities; Community Safety and Liaison in Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal and Western Cape; Health; Public Service and Administration; Sport, Arts and Culture; Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment; International Relations and Cooperation; Mineral Resources and Energy; Science and Innovation; Trade, Industry and Competition; Eastern Cape Economic Development, Environmental Affairs and Tourism</li> <li>South Africa Police Services</li> <li>National Anti-Corruption Advisory Council</li> <li>National School of Government</li> <li>OR Tambo District</li> <li>Waterberg District</li> <li>Public Service Commission</li> <li>South African Human Rights Commission</li> <li>National Prosecuting Authority Presidential Climate Commission</li> <li>South African Local Government Association</li> <li>South African Wind Energy Association</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PwC</li> <li>The LEGO Foundation</li> <li>Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (US)</li> <li>Canadian Embassy</li> <li>European Union</li> <li>Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (Germany)</li> <li>German Development Corporation</li> <li>Federal Republic of Germany</li> <li>Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation</li> <li>Global Environment Facility</li> <li>Government of Japan,</li> <li>United States Agency for International Development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>African Policing Civilian Oversight Forum</li> <li>Fade2Black Production (Western Cape)</li> <li>Frey College (Gauteng)</li> <li>Grounded Media</li> <li>Institute for Security Studies</li> <li>Supersavers Supermarket (Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal)</li> <li>Activate Change Drivers</li> <li>Elections Commission of South Africa</li> <li>Council for Scientific and Industrial Research</li> <li>Stellenbosch University</li> <li>University of Johannesburg</li> <li>University of Pretoria</li> <li>Nelson Mandela Foundation</li> <li>Desmond and Leah Tutu Legacy Foundation</li> <li>Thabo Mbeki Foundation,</li> <li>Kgalema Motlanthe Foundation</li> <li>National House of Traditional and Khoi-San Leaders</li> </ul>



# 01.

## KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN THE COUNTRY AND REGIONAL CONTEXT

2023 was challenging for the South African economy, which closed out the year with an overall 0.6 per cent expansion in real GDP growth. The country's economic growth rate remains weighed down by persisting freight, logistical, governance and energy supply constraints; high interest rates; and rising fuel and food prices. Additionally, adverse weather conditions and climate disasters continue to affect lives and livelihoods and to damage homes and infrastructure.





The interest rate set by the South African Reserve Bank (SARB) at 8.25 per cent in May 2023 remained at that level until the end of 2023. This decision reflected a cautious stance given the possibility of potential new shocks affecting the economy.



The **SARB** kept a close eye on the exchange rate, which depreciated by **11%** against the **US dollar** during the year.

Lower interest rates could cause further rand depreciation, stoking domestic inflation. In addition, global economic conditions and the outlook remained uncertain in the face of geopolitical tensions and climate change, affecting international trade, supply chains, output and prices.

South Africa also faced cascading and interlinked risks to its socioeconomic and political stability. Exposure to climate shocks and an intensified energy crisis that disrupted economic activities and led to joblessness, particularly among youth, were some of the contributing factors. Anti-migrant sentiments alongside reports of xenophobia, corruption, criminality and violence, plus ineffective governance, also contributed to eroding trust in Government and institutions.

On a more positive note, since being placed on the Financial Action Task Force's grey list in February 2023, South Africa has made significant progress in addressing the country's deficiencies in combating crime-related financing. The collaborative efforts of the Government, coupled with a resilient financial sector and continued compliance with international regulatory standards, contributed towards mitigating some of the risks associated with the grey-listing.

These developments took place in a regional context marked by many countries facing high levels of debt distress, the eruption of conflict in Sudan and, closer to home, the devastating El Niño-induced drought


in large parts of Southern Africa. Going forward, implementation of the UN Early Warnings for All Initiative in South Africa, starting in 2024, will have a special focus on a regional approach to building resilience to disasters. In addition, the UN in South Africa is in conversations with close regional partners such as the African Union Development Agency-New Economic Partnership for Africa's Development (AUDA-NEPAD) as well with the Economic Commission for Africa on fostering regional infrastructure; regional energy integration; carbon markets; the beneficiation of critical minerals and the renewables value chain; and the development of human capabilities across the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

The Global Africa Business Initiative (GABI), spearheaded by the UN Global Compact, was introduced in collaboration with the UN in the country to South African and African businesses along the margins of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Business Forum in Cape Town in April 2023. The convening of chief executive officers set the tone for more dialogue around regional trade capacity and investments for more inclusive economies and improved livelihoods across the region. GABI will be supporting the AfCFTA, including through close collaborative efforts with AUDA-NEPAD and SADC, by identifying opportunities for investment on the African continent.



The national unemployment rate declined gradually between the second quarter of 2021 and the third quarter of 2023, from

35.3%  31.9%

However, in the fourth quarter of 2023, the unemployment rate  32.1%

The headline or average inflation rate in 2023 was 6%, lower than the 6.9% rate recorded in 2022, indicating that inflation had reached the upper end of the 3–6% target range.

# 02.

## UN DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM SUPPORT TO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES THROUGH THE COOPERATION FRAMEWORK



## 2.1. OVERVIEW OF COOPERATION FRAMEWORK RESULTS

The Cooperation Framework 2020–2025 outlines the UN Development System’s collective commitment to support sustainable development in South Africa in line with national, regional and global development priorities. The consultative process for designing and developing the Cooperation Framework was an inclusive, whole-of-society approach. The Cooperation Framework is aligned with South Africa’s long-term NDP Vision 2030, which recognizes the environment and science and technology as central drivers of change, and with the Medium-Term Strategic Framework 2019–2024. It is firmly anchored in the UN Charter, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union Agenda 2063.

The Cooperation Framework Theory of Change (ToC) points to the long-term desired change to be achieved by realizing certain mid-term conditions for change over the Framework cycle. The UN in South Africa recognizes that the conditions for change are not within the control of the implementing agencies but are influenced by unpredictable factors embedded in the country’s socioeconomic reality. The identified desired change for the Cooperation Framework is for people in South Africa to live prosperous and healthy lives in a safe and cohesive society that protects and values environmental sustainability. This is based on understanding the interconnectedness of the three dimensions of sustainable development – economy, society and environment – and the role of governance as an overall enabler.

**The Cooperation Framework highlights the UN's support to the Government of South Africa under the following Strategic Priorities:**

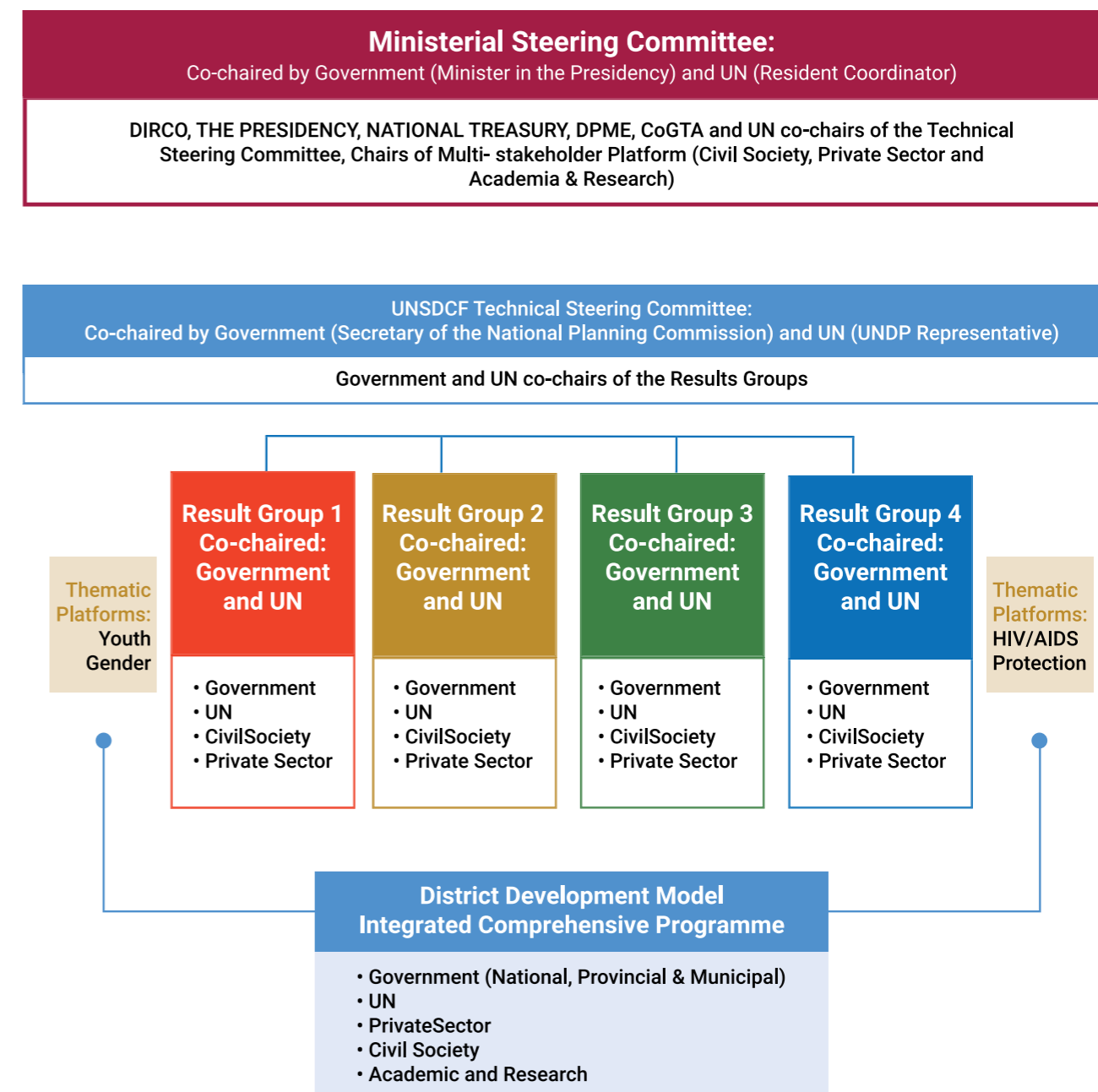
- Inclusive, just, and sustainable economic growth
- Human capital and social transformation
- Effective, efficient and transformative governance
- Climate resilience and sustainably managed natural resources

### GOVERNANCE MECHANISM

The Government has agreed to the governance model of the Cooperation Framework, a much-lauded achievement for the UN–Government partnership in South Africa, as no such mechanism has been put in place before. The overarching principle of the governance model is to reinforce the UN reforms at a country level, through serving as a mechanism that promotes greater collaboration between the Government, the UN and other national partners.



## Cooperation Framework Governance Mechanism



## 2.2. COOPERATION FRAMEWORK PRIORITIES AND DELIVERING FOR RESULTS

In 2023, South Africa compiled the SDG Report, which received support from the UN. The report revealed a mixed picture of progress towards the SDGs:



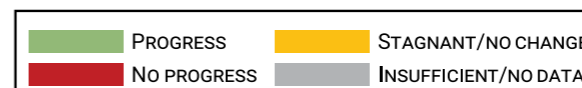
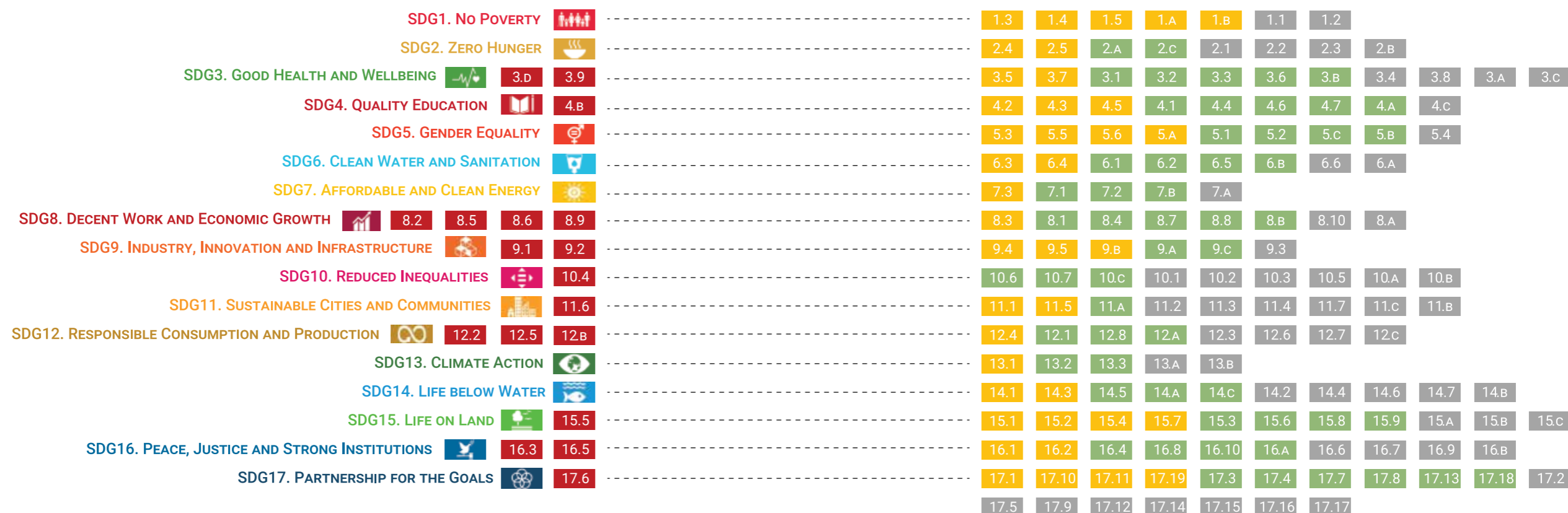
The 2023 SDG Report also highlighted the precarious state of progress in delivering on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as a result of multiple crises, including COVID-19, energy and infrastructural deficiencies, constrained fiscal space and rising debt servicing, climate change and social unrest.

Despite these challenges, the UN took collective action to implement the Cooperation Framework and contribute to South Africa's development agenda. These interventions align with the Cooperation Framework Strategic Priorities.



“Although commercial farming remains male-dominated, I've always been a farmer, dedicated to nurturing the land and feeding communities. Many small-scale women farmers must move into the formal economy, which requires skills, finance, technology and market access. Through the programme, I have learned best agricultural practices, and implementing drip irrigation, crop rotation and intercropping has boosted my yields and product quality. Compliance lessons have formalized my business, enabling supply to major retailers. Today, I manage 68 milk cows, up from 50, and employ 14 on the farm, with more during harvest.”

**Makatsa, one of about 4,560 South African women farmers who have benefited from the Climate-Smart Agriculture programme since 2019**





## STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1

### Inclusive, Just and Sustainable Economic Growth

#### PROSPERITY



#### Key contributions

**7.5 million**  
people receiving the extended and expanded social relief of distress grant shaped with the involvement and advocacy of the UN

**5,180**  
job opportunities created through EPWP with UN support

**320,000**  
job opportunities created through PYEI with UN support

#### Outcomes

By 2025, all people in South Africa, particularly women, youth and other marginalized groups, benefit justly from decent work and other social and economic opportunities

By 2025, South Africa's primary, secondary and tertiary sectors are more productive, diversified, sustainable and employment-intensive

#### JUST TRANSITION

With UN backing, the Presidential Climate Commission initiated the Just Energy Transition Partnership (JET-P) to propel South Africa towards a sustainable, carbon-neutral future. Collaborating with universities, key government entities and stakeholders supporting JET-P, including the Presidential Climate Commission, the UN has spearheaded research, policy dialogues, public forums and influential publications to guide policy decisions for a fair energy transition.

In a bid to foster community ownership and inclusive engagement for a just energy transition (JET), the UN partnered with Women Energy Connect (WE Connect) and Inspiring Women Africa (IWA) to host two workshops. These demystified and led to conversations on complex JET concepts, making them accessible at a community level.

Empowering women in South Africa's townships, the UN facilitated a capacity-building workshop in the Western Cape for 25 women. This community-based initiative enhanced skills within the energy sector, raised awareness on renewable energy benefits and opened doors to valuable skill development opportunities.

UN support to the JET dialogue brought together expertise in addition to technical assistance and advice on how to manage the energy crisis and mitigate its socioeconomic impacts, especially those on the poor and most vulnerable. This contributed to the reduction of loadshedding in the first quarter of 2024.

#### COMBATTING UNEMPLOYMENT

The Government of South Africa, in collaboration with the UN, completed the drafting of the National Employment Policy (NEP), set for a public feedback release in early 2024.



Through 2023, the UN facilitated consultations on the NEP draft with key clusters and departments to combat the country's high unemployment rates and achieve a target of **22.2 million jobs** created by 2030.

Through a joint UN programme, four technical and vocational education and training institutions have strengthened their capabilities by digitizing training services and designing digital skills courses.

- More than 20 trainers from these institutions were equipped to provide digital skills training locally.
- In August 2023, trainers taught **174 NEET (not in education, employment or training) individuals** content creation and drone coding to improve their employability in the digital sector. They can now access the National Pathway Management Network through their respective institutions. Of the 174 trained individuals, **93 were female and 81 were male**, primarily from rural and peri-urban areas in Western Cape, Eastern Cape and Limpopo.
- To combat unemployment, especially among youth and women, the UN, in collaboration with the German Development Corporation (GIZ) and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), provided digital **skills training to 790 young professionals**. Of these, **131 individuals** have secured full-time employment opportunities.

#### SUPPORT TO THE EXPANDED PUBLIC WORKS PROGRAMME

The EPWP Policy is a vital part of the Government's labour market strategies aimed at boosting employment and enhancing employability. It focuses particularly on **youth (55%), women (60%) and persons with disabilities (PWD) (7%)**.





With UN support, the Government crafted a policy framework to increase the involvement of PWD in the EPWP.

- The UN's technical guidance in August 2023 refined the policy framework at a training session on disability inclusion hosted by South African cities. This framework, adopted by the Government in November 2023, targets a significant increase in PWD employment within the EPWP, aiming to raise the percentage from 2 per cent to 7 per cent by 2030. Adjustments in EPWP approaches have already yielded positive outcomes, notably in the Limpopo Department of Public Works, Roads and Infrastructure, where PWD participation surged from **under 1 per cent to over 5 per cent during the 2022/23 fiscal year**.
- The Government of South Africa adopted a business plan for Phase 5 of the EPWP, with UN assistance, in November 2023. This plan will focus on building the capacities of EPWP implementing bodies at national, provincial and district/municipality levels to benefit youth, women, PWD, local community groups and the private sector through pro-employment and green public works.
- With the support of the UN, **693 government officials from the national, provincial and municipal levels**, as well as 47 small-scale entrepreneurs, contractors, state-owned enterprise officials and private sector consultants, were trained in the design and execution of employment-intensive works. The training has had a positive impact, with improved uptake of EPWP in provincial and district municipalities.

## BOOSTING PRODUCTIVITY

Productivity South Africa, in collaboration with the UN, crafted and implemented a critical Statistical Appraisal report, establishing a robust statistical framework for measuring labour and multi-factor productivity. This initiative will augment South Africa's productivity, enhancing its ability to



broaden productivity assessments and elevate the quality of productivity data in the country. The anticipated outcomes include shaping industrial policies, fostering healthy labour dynamics and facilitating more informed wage negotiations for employees and employers.

## INCLUSION OF VULNERABLE GROUPS

With UN support, the Government of South Africa, in consultation with employers and workers' organizations and other stakeholders in the construction sector, designed targeted interventions to address challenges hindering vulnerable workers (among them women and informal workers) in terms of their access to decent working conditions, which are adversely affecting labour productivity. These interventions include promoting trade union representation for informal workers in the sector, applying effective inspections and compliance mechanisms, and improving business development support services for enterprises in construction.



These interventions aim to benefit the **1.2 million** people working in the sector, of whom **14%** are women and **38%** are informally employed.

The UN helped draft the Public Procurement Bill, which the National Assembly passed on 6 December 2023. The bill contains a section outlining key provisions to ensure women-owned businesses, particularly those owned by black women, access business opportunities.

In partnership with the African Agri Council (AAC), the UN empowered the Government to deliver **comprehensive catalytic training to 228 women** in agriculture, agro-processing and agribusiness spanning the nation's nine provinces. This training encompassed fundamental business management principles and engaging discussions to address personal barriers to business growth. The trainees also filled out a profiling questionnaire, contributing valuable insights to shape a guiding framework for incubation programmes to enhance women's participation in these sectors. The National Department of Agriculture and Land Reform and Rural Development assesses the guiding framework.

The UN actively participated in and co-convened multiple policy dialogues alongside the Government and diverse businesswomen networks, championing the inclusion of women in specific value chains such as energy, transport and agriculture. After these advocacy efforts, the UN has collaborated with the South African Local Government Association to enhance gender responsiveness within municipalities' Integrated Development Plans and to advance gender-sensitive procurement practices.

The UN preleased an advocacy brief titled "An Intersectional Approach to Socio-Economic Data in Southern Africa: Leveraging Data for Inclusivity." This will assist the country in fulfilling its human rights responsibilities and promoting the gradual realization of social and economic rights outlined in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, while simultaneously progressing towards the SDGs. The anticipated impact of this study is enhanced data utilization in reporting to the UN Committee on Economic,

Social and Cultural Rights and other UN human rights bodies, to ultimately foster more effective human rights monitoring and advancement.

The UN partnered with the Southern African Association of Youth Clubs (SAAYC) to collaborate with the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities in organizing the 2023 Youth Work Week training. With **100 young participants**, the two-day training, led by SAAYC, established professional recognition for youth work. This initiative provides opportunities to achieve the NDP's Vision 2030 objective by professionalizing youth work.

The UN helps the Government promote sustainable compliance with labour laws in the construction sector. It empowers senior labour inspectors and representatives from business, labour and the community to implement a Strategic Compliance Planning approach, reinforcing labour law adherence within the construction industry. The training includes hands-on guidance on using a Global Compliance Portal. As a result of this





initiative, a comprehensive country action plan has been developed and implemented, marking a significant step towards sustainable labour law compliance within the construction sector. In partnership with the Government, the UN spearheaded the identification and accreditation process for three test laboratories to assess the physical and chemical attributes of essential oils manufactured in South Africa. By October 2023, **one of the three laboratories had achieved accreditation**. Ongoing support will be extended to the remaining two throughout 2024. This accreditation milestone is a significant achievement for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the essential oils sector. It enables them to perform local testing and ensures the

test results will be internationally recognized. Global acceptance of essential oil products from South Africa will be enhanced as a result of the accredited status of these laboratories.

Employing a specialized five-level curriculum to instill a quality-driven ethos, the UN partnered with the Southern African Essential Oil Producers Association to empower 10 trainers representing seven provinces nationwide. These trainers were equipped to extend training sessions to numerous essential and vegetable oil SMEs. The roll-out of training reached many SMEs, expanding the programme's impact across the essential and vegetable oils industry and fostering enhanced quality standards and practices within these businesses.

## SOCIAL PROTECTION

The UN has completed a study on social insurance solutions for South Africa's informal sector, with a particular focus on empowering women and youth. The UN is working closely with local partners to develop a concrete social insurance programme that is designed specifically for informal sector workers, based on the study insights.



Furthermore, **16,333** refugees accessed crucial social assistance via national frameworks, with a notable percentage benefiting from the UN's support.

Of these refugees, 78 per cent were guided in securing the essential Child Support Grant, showcasing the impactful assistance provided to vulnerable populations in need.

The Government has utilized the modelling exercise reports on Basic Income Support (BIS) as a cornerstone to demonstrate the feasibility and necessity of a Basic Income Grant (BIG) programme. A panel of experts has been set up with

the recent support of the UN to oversee modelling efforts, evaluate the viability of a sustainable BIS and assess the impact of the Social Relief of Distress Grant on its extensive beneficiary base. Government officials have acknowledged that these modelling efforts have played a significant role in advocating for the continuous extension of the Social Relief of Distress Grant.

In the 2023 Budget, the Government extended the Social Relief of Distress Grant until 31 March 2024. Subsequently, on 13 March 2023, the Minister of Finance announced the Government's decision to raise the Social Relief of Distress Grant amount from R350 to R370, effective 1 April 2024. Currently, **over 7.5 million people are receiving the grant**.

The UN assisted in enhancing the capacity of marginalized groups, including single mothers, refugees, asylum-seekers and PWD, to claim their right to social protection. To this end, staff nationwide received capacity and sensitization to the Black Sash, focusing on social protection and highlighting entry points for integrating sustainable human rights development.



"After fleeing conflict in Democratic Republic of Congo and enduring trauma, I found refuge in South Africa. I established a thriving salon with support from UNHCR and Refugee Social Services, including a business starter kit and training. Serving local and refugee communities, I'm grateful for the opportunity to rebuild my life. With plans to expand and hire staff, I am confident to create a better future for myself and my children."

**Dela, 41 years, asylum-seeker from Democratic Republic of Congo, part of the programme that assists families to meet basic needs, address GBV risks and improve livelihoods**





## STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2

### Human Capital and Social Transformation

#### PEOPLE



#### Key contributions

**41,000** adolescents and young women reached through UN-supported HIV/AIDS programmes

UN successfully advocated for an increase in PEPFAR funding for Community-Led Monitoring to **US\$7 million**

**400** health facilities reached with financial and technical support

#### Outcomes

By 2025, all people in South Africa, particularly vulnerable and marginalized populations, enjoy improved health, nutrition and well-being

By 2025, all children and young people in South Africa have equitable access to quality education relevant to a changing society

By 2025, all people in South Africa, especially women and girls and vulnerable and marginalized populations, are protected from violence and discrimination

## HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



### TOWARDS UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE

The National Health Insurance (NHI) Bill was successfully cleared by the South African National Assembly and the National Council of Provinces. As a result, by the end of 2023, the bill was approved and awaiting signature by the president. The UN was crucial in collaborating with the Department of Health to shape and create the comprehensive package of health service benefits outlined in the NHI Bill. The NHI Bill seeks to address inequality and ensures universal access to high-quality healthcare for all South Africans.



At present, the private sector caters to just **16%** of the population, while the public sector attends to **84%**. All citizens of the country – that is, **62 million** South Africans – stand to benefit from its implementation.

The UN supported the review of the Policy Framework and Strategy for the Implementation of the Ward-Based Primary Healthcare Outreach Teams to assess progress and to inform work moving forward. The policy framework plays a pivotal role in enhancing community-based healthcare, promoting equity and advancing the overall health and well-being of the population, ultimately contributing towards achieving universal health coverage.

### HIV/AIDS, SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS AND TUBERCULOSIS

While 81 per cent of pregnant women living with HIV and 76 per cent of adults overall received antiretrovirals in 2021, only 52 per cent of children (0–14 years) were accessing antiretroviral treatment. With an estimated **230,000 children** under 15 years living with HIV and **10,000 new infections among children every year**, South Africa has the largest HIV epidemic among children globally.

The UN catalysed urgent action and increased accountability on the part of government leaders to close the treatment gap for **70,000 children in South Africa**. The South African Government joined the Global Alliance to End AIDS in Children by 2030.

- The UN mobilized partners across sectors and formed a South African National AIDS Council-led multisectoral country team, which developed a National Global Alliance Plan to End AIDS in Children.
- The Global Alliance Plan was launched on World AIDS Day 2023 by Deputy President Paul Mashatile and the Second Lady, the Patron for the South Africa chapter of the Global Alliance. The UN helped develop national, provincial and district dashboards to inform on implementation and monitoring at all levels.

The UN provided technical support in creating the fifth-generation National Strategic Plan (NSP) for HIV, STIs and TB for 2023 to 2028. The NSP guides evidence-based HIV responses at national and provincial levels, including resource mobilization efforts. It focuses on person-centric, evidence-based strategies to overcome social and structural barriers to fair access to services. It also includes a financial analysis and monitoring framework with national indicators that are aligned with the goals of the Global AIDS Strategy. It will enhance coordination and integration under the revised HIV Testing Services policy and guidelines. The UN also helped develop a resource mobilization strategy to ensure sustainable financing for the HIV response. The country reached the HIV cascade targets 94-77-92 against the set global targets of 90-90-90.



The UN supported the Government in the coordination, finalization and implementation of the Global Alliance to End AIDS in Children country plan. The adolescent girl and young women peer mentor programme has scaled up its reach and engagement from one district in 2017 to seven in 2023, with the Government now recruiting and providing stipends for peer mentors in KwaZulu-Natal Province, reaching more than 41,000 adolescents and young women.

The health sector established a Multisectoral Accountability Framework for TB (MAF-TB), which guides the engagement of various stakeholders to contribute meaningfully to the TB response. This led to the implementation of a TB epidemiological review as an evidence-based approach to strategic planning and recommendations for improving the TB response.

The UN successfully advocated for an increase in the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) funding for Community-Led Monitoring (CLM) in South Africa, raising it from



- The UN continued to support the Ritshidze CLM consortium of people living with HIV (PLHIV), providing financial backing and technical guidance for CLM activities at over 400 health facilities in South Africa. Data collected through CLM was shared with relevant stakeholders at various levels to address access challenges, leading to the identification of solutions presented to facility managers during feedback sessions. Ritshidze demonstrated positive changes over time, with improvements in 85 (70%) of the 125 key indicators, showcasing the impact of community-led initiatives.



- Notable progress in 2022–2023 included more facility managers reporting adequate staff, PLHIV receiving antiretroviral refills for three or more months, PLHIV using external pickup points and increased treatment literacy levels. These improvements also reflect enhanced understanding among PLHIV regarding the benefits of an undetectable viral load on their health and the reduced risk of HIV transmission associated with this.

The UN's thought leadership on addressing the socioeconomic drivers and determinants of HIV and the vulnerability of young women most left behind remained the focus of 2023. The model was replicated in seven provinces under the Young Women for Life Movement. Young women become active citizens, holding individuals, including themselves, and relevant institutions accountable to them and their communities. This best practice was presented at ICASA as a viable HIV prevention strategy for the region.

## NUTRITION

A bottleneck analysis was conducted on child wasting and maternal nutrition, resulting in the development of nutrition improvement plans in four provinces. Policy dialogues were conducted on transforming food systems to better work for children and opening the space for stakeholder comments on the draft Labelling and Advertising of Foodstuffs Regulations in South Africa. These comments are being compiled and will inform updates to the regulations in 2024.

The modelling of the Blueprint for Improving the South African School Food Environment was conducted in six schools (urban and rural) in KwaZulu-Natal province and benefited 8,335 learners aged 6-16 years. This modelling will inform the scale-up of the programme at a national level.

## IMMUNIZATION

The national immunization system underwent significant improvements to target zero-dose children. An analysis was conducted on children without vaccinations and vaccine stock shortages. Updated cold chain protocols and enhanced vaccine management materials bolstered the Reach Every District strategy. Frontline health workers received training, coaching and mentoring to improve their capabilities.

With support from the UN, South Africa took significant steps to ensure that the country is safe from the polio outbreak. It helped the country attain novel oral polio vaccine type 2 (nOPV2) verification, which led to successful introduction of the nOPV2 and completion of the polio outbreak simulation, a tabletop exercise based on real-life scenarios. The UN also trained 200 healthcare workers across 2,000 healthcare facilities on the polio outbreak preparedness.





## SUBSTANCE ABUSE

According to the World Drug Report by UNODC, around 284 million people aged 15–64 years used drugs worldwide in 2020, a 26 per cent increase over the previous decade. South Africa too has been impacted.

According to the Central Drug Authority (CDA), South Africa is grappling with drug-related issues. Alcohol abuse alone costs the country 12 per cent of its annual GDP, and approximately 62,300 adults die annually from alcohol-attributable causes<sup>16</sup>. Substance abuse also contributes to GBV, HIV/AIDS and other social and health conditions in South African society. The UN has been providing support to South Africa through the following interventions:

- Support has been given to the CDA to promote implementation of the National Drug Control Masterplan through training, technical support and continued advocacy on various platforms on implementing harm reduction programmes for people who use drugs in the community and prisons.

- Capacity of the CDA to establish and deliver evidence-based, high-quality Opioid Substitution Therapy Services in South Africa was enhanced, as part of the harm reduction programme to strengthen the government response to substance abuse.
- To contribute to the country's implementation of standards of treatment for prisoners and among people who use/inject drugs, the UN capacitated correctional officers to ensure the optimal implementation of harm reduction programmes within the Department of Correctional Services.
- The UN also empowered South African civil society representatives to address HIV among stimulant drug users. This training was the first of its kind in Africa focused on combating HIV among users of these drugs.
- The UN collaborated with the African Union and the Ministry of Justice to enhance the understanding of substance abuse as a public health problem and to advocate for the creation of a national network of traditional leaders, given the increased use of psychoactive substances in areas under their jurisdiction.



<sup>16</sup>Reuter H, Jenkins LS, De Jong M, Reid S, Vonk M. Prohibiting alcohol sales during the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic has positive effects on health services in South Africa. *Afr J Prim Health Care Fam Med.* 2020. January 1;12(1):1-4. 10.4102/phcfm.v12i1.2528.




## EDUCATION



**594**  
young people exposed to cutting-edge technologies as part of the STEM initiative

### Key contributions



**86,196**  
early childhood development practitioners and Grades R-3 educators enrolled for the P.L.A.Y. online in-service training courses



**2,871**  
parents trained to support their children with reading



**1,046,167**  
children reached through the UN-supported Siyavula programme

### EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

Poor learning foundations are among the strongest predictors of children dropping out of the education system. When comparing enrolment data between 2020 and 2021, around 19,000 compulsory school-age children discontinued their education. The UN has supported the Government in key areas to improve ECD access and quality.

Enhancing quality early learning and development for young children from birth to school-going age is a top priority and a crucial pillar in achieving SDG 4.

- The UN has played a key role in elevating the quality standards within ECD programmes by implementing the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) for children from birth to four years of age.
- Support has included finalizing NCF Guidelines in a simplified format for individuals with basic qualifications in early learning, incorporating guidance on the inclusion of children with disabilities and establishing protocols for

identifying and addressing child abuse and neglect.

- This initiative is crucial for improving the quality of ECD programmes for the **3 million attending children**.

The Government's National Parenting Programme (NPP) underwent a comprehensive review to incorporate policy updates and broaden its focus on supporting parents in enhancing their children's early learning experiences. This revision used the insights from the UN-supported Knowledge, Practice and Attitudes study, which highlighted the crucial role of play in child development, early learning and education. Completion of the scoping study, aimed at identifying priority regions and criteria for the in-person roll-out of the NPP to reach the most vulnerable populations, has provided valuable insights that will guide the strategic implementation of the programme in 2024. It is recognized that the **key factor influencing the success of quality early learning initiatives is ECD educators and practitioners' knowledge, practices and attitudes**.



The in-service training of ECD practitioners and foundation-phase educators facilitates a focused approach to enhance play-based pedagogies in early learning and Grades R–3.



The UN supported the in-service training of **8,800** educators and **200** district officials through the Foundation Phase Initiative. In comparison, **86,196** ECD practitioners and Grades R–3 educators enrolled for the P.L.A.Y. online in-service training courses, with **41,691 (48%)** completions.

In 2022, the shift of ECD functions from the Department of Social Development (DSD) to the Department of Basic Education (DBE) prompted specific high-level systemic efforts in 2023, with UN support.

- This included reviewing, identifying and aligning laws and policies to adapt to the changes. The process was completed, resulting in a draft discussion paper (currently under review by the DBE) containing suggestions for legislative and policy adjustments to fully integrate ECD (early learning) into the basic education system.
- Additionally, the UN conducted a critical assessment to evaluate progress towards the overarching objectives of the National Integrated ECD Policy and to identify necessary short-term modifications to accommodate the ECD function shift. This is crucial for ensuring a seamless transition in alignment with national plans and goals.

### ADVANCING ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF BASIC EDUCATION

In 2023, the DBE, in collaboration with the UN and other partners, completed the development of the South African National 21st Century Core Competency Framework.

The DBE participated in a cross-regional learning event organized by the UN in Amman, Jordan, focusing on life skills and citizenship education (LSCE) in the Middle East, Northern Africa, East Africa and Southern Africa regions. This event aimed to gather insights and address challenges in enhancing competency-based national education systems.

The UN supported the national consultation on the framework, engaging 680 stakeholders nationwide. The Council of Education Ministers, comprising Ministers of Basic Education and Higher Education & Training, approved the framework in October 2023. It was later designated as a national policy to ensure its effectiveness and sustainability in the years ahead.

The UN supported implementation of the NCF, and its associated Curriculum Monitoring and Management Tools were utilized to facilitate learning recovery efforts.

Around 400 Annual Teaching Plans covering all subjects were finalized and distributed to educators. Additionally, assistance was extended to Siyavula, an online platform for maths and science, to create remedial materials.



Through Siyavula, **1,046,167** accessed online textbooks and **323,273** accessed adaptive practice software, **7,771** teachers monitored their students' digital progress and **37,306,391** practice questions were completed online.



As a result of the programme, more than **3,700 students** improved their academic mastery of concepts.



Prioritization of foundational literacy and numeracy continued as a modality for enhancing quality learning. The UN played a key role in a harmonized approach among key stakeholders under the leadership of the DBE.



The Early Grade Reading Programme trained and coached **769** teachers in **2023**. The EU-funded reading programme helped deliver **67,030** books to **650** schools nationwide. **82,871** parents were trained to support their children with reading.

9,000 members of school governing bodies understood their role in helping learners with reading and homework.

4,000 school management teams were trained and coached on effective leadership during an emergency.

### PREVENTION OF ADOLESCENT PREGNANCY

During the reporting year, over **150,000 young girls became pregnant** (this figure includes those who terminated their pregnancy). Although not the highest in recent years, this figure shows that more support is required to reduce the number of adolescent pregnancies in the country. The UN remained committed to providing this support throughout 2023.

- The UN supported the DBE in introducing the Policy for Preventing and Managing Learner Pregnancy in Schools and producing a condensed version. Additionally, the UN extended support to the Minister of Basic Education to engage in dialogues with students in KwaZulu-Natal to prevent teenage pregnancy, a significant issue affecting learners in the nation. UNESCO further aided in ensuring the delivery of high-quality sex education through the DBE.

- UN helped launch the SADC FutureLife-Now! Initiative, while the Care and Support for Teaching and Learning Framework was consulted in seven of nine provinces.
- The Learner Pregnancy Prevention and Management Guide draft is awaiting final approval from the DBE.
- Additionally, 31 mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) practitioners from all provinces, the majority of them female, participated in the Common Elements Treatment Approach training for MHPSS.
- A Sexuality Education Review Assessment was conducted with support from the UN to measure South African implementation against the International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education and make necessary recommendations.

### SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING AND MATHS

Through the coding and robotics programme launched by the UN, **594 young** individuals (56% females) were exposed to cutting-edge technologies, such as drones, robotics, artificial intelligence, virtual reality, augmented reality and 3D printing. Armed with this knowledge, these youths can now select appropriate subjects to guide them towards pursuing STEM careers. Furthermore, **650 educators (60% females)** from Limpopo and North-West Provinces underwent training in coding and robotics through this initiative. The acquired skills and knowledge will be invaluable when implementing the school curriculum.

A job shadowing and mentorship programme was introduced to **1,818 young individuals (57% girls) aged 15–17 years (Grades 8–12)**. This initiative focuses on personal development, career guidance and acquiring essential skills for employment. It aims to address the high unemployment rates among disadvantaged youth, particularly those not in employment, education or training (NEET), by equipping them with tools and knowledge related to careers and economic activities.

NEET

The programme supported **422** Grade 9 students, **573** Grade 12 students and **823** NEET youth through basic computer literacy courses, personal development plans and information on various STEM career opportunities.

Additionally, to promote gender equality in STEM fields, UNICEF assists girls in obtaining training for drone certification for roles such as drone pilot, crew resource management, drone technician and data analyst. As a result of this programme, **1,460 adolescent** girls have been reached, with 12 of them securing employment as drone pilots. Upon completing the training, these young women received relevant qualifications accredited by the South African Civil Aviation.











**PROTECTION FROM VIOLENCE AND DISCRIMINATION**

**Key contributions**

- 

**12,323**  
vulnerable children on the move reached with essential services
- 

**33,599**  
children indirectly reaped the benefits of enhanced support and protective interventions
- 

Over **25,000**  
parents and caregivers engaged in parenting programmes and disseminating social behaviour change

**COMBATTING VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN**

In an impactful collaborative effort with the DSD and civil society partners, the UN directly assisted **222,372 children** through a spectrum of social, health and judicial services. Embracing the UN's strategic alignment towards combating violence against girls, boys and women, the UN, together with partners, spearheaded initiatives focusing on violence prevention. As a result of this initiative, **over 25,000 parents and caregivers** were engaged in parenting programmes and disseminating social behaviour change messages to more than **1.2 million individuals**. Additionally, **12,323 vulnerable children on the move** were reached with essential services.

Working alongside the DSD, 391 child and youth care workers and 304 social service professionals in four provinces underwent training on the Risiha community-based child protection programme. This initiative bolsters prevention measures and early intervention strategies for orphans and

vulnerable children in jeopardy. As a result of this capacity-building endeavour, **33,599 children** indirectly reaped the benefits of enhanced support and protective interventions.

**PREVENTION OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE**

The UN remained committed to implementing policies aimed at preventing violence against women and girls (VAWG).

- By working with various stakeholders, including government entities, SADC, local communities, faith-based leaders and civil society, the UN fostered coordinated, multisectoral prevention and response strategies. This inclusive approach ensured diverse voices were heard and everyone could work together to address VAWG.
- Noteworthy initiatives include the development of a discussion paper focusing on non-custodial measures for women entangled in legal conflicts and the ongoing drafting of a



Memorandum of Understanding with the South African Chapter of the International Association of Women Judges. This collaboration underscores stakeholders' satisfaction with the calibre of capacity-building efforts and tools provided, demonstrating a collective dedication to advancing women's rights and fostering a more just society.

- The UN continued to support and strengthen the Government's capacity to implement the Comprehensive National GBV and Femicide (GBVF) Prevention Strategy (CNPS) and its National Strategic Plan (NSP GBVF).
- The UN contributed to strengthening implementation of NSP GBVF Pillar 3 (Justice, Safety and Protection) by ensuring that GBV survivors can access efficient and sensitive criminal justice that is quick, accessible, responsive and gender-inclusive, and Pillar 4 (Response, Care Support and Healing) by working with the South African Police Service to prevent secondary victimization and strengthening

community and institutional responses to provide response, care and support to survivors and other vulnerable persons. Capacity-building of police officers improved their knowledge of gender dynamics and the importance of being gender-sensitive and trusted by the communities they serve. Around 171 police officers (65% female and 35% male) from nine police stations in the Western Cape were trained.

- The 100-Day Challenge Capacity-Building Programme has contributed to achieving the objectives set in the NSP GBVF and the CNPS by strengthening the capacity of frontline workers to overcome the systemic obstacles they face in delivering prevention interventions and services to GBV victims and survivors. It has also enabled effective resource allocation and distribution and improved processes, operating procedures, roles, skills and accountabilities within municipalities.
- Technical support in the form of a secondment by UN Women in partnership with Canada strengthened the capacity of the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities to facilitate spaces to share progress while enhancing political will and support for addressing GBVF.
- The UN supported the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities in convening a strategy session of the GBVF Collective to develop an implementing plan and provided technical support in conceptualizing a programme addressing GBVF as a pandemic.

To combat detrimental social norms prevalent at household, community and institutional levels, the UN bolstered the impactful HeForShe initiative. This programme, which the UN spearheads, combats HIV/AIDS and VAWG vulnerabilities, which have particular impacts on young women owing to harmful norms. The community-based HeForShe model has delivered tangible improvements in enhancing community resilience to HIV/AIDS and VAWG. What originated as a platform empowering men to take a stand against these issues has now transformed into an inclusive, gender-transformative

forum where men and women collaborate to devise solutions collectively. Through policy guidance, legislative backing and advocacy efforts, the initiative aims to combat enduring discriminatory patriarchal social norms and stigma through educational initiatives, awareness campaigns and behaviour change programmes, to foster a more equitable and inclusive society.

The UN orchestrated the impactful Third Annual Forensic DNA Symposium in collaboration with DNA for Africa and the International Committee of the Red Cross. This saw the participation of criminal justice practitioners, law enforcement officials, social workers, healthcare professionals, forensic experts and humanitarian workers, who met exchange insights and present innovative solutions to the multifaceted hurdles prevalent across various African nations. Drawing participants from eight SADC member states, with 119 attendees present and 390 joining online, the



symposium highlighted the indispensable role of DNA forensic analysis in tackling GBV cases. Emphasizing a humanitarian perspective that acknowledges the complex interplay between conflict-related sexual violence, sexual exploitation and abuse, and local cultural sensitivities, the event fostered collaboration between public and private sector professionals. This collaborative effort has paved the way for developing an innovative publication set for release in April 2024, showcasing a collective commitment to advancing forensic practices within the region.

A joint endeavour with UNODC, KwaZulu-Natal Members of the Executive Council and other GBV stakeholders led to the development of a Quick Reference Guide (QRG) that shares information with traditional leaders on the issue of violence against women, specifically in the areas of domestic violence and GBVF. It also explains the various roles of critical government stakeholders in responding to violence against women. The QRG recognizes the significant role of traditional leaders in promoting positive and culturally sensitive behaviour change and addressing social and cultural norms and beliefs that fuel the spread of violence and its consequences, such as HIV infection, serious injuries and even death.

The UN also contributed to enhancing the capacities of religious leaders to respond to and address GBVF and VAWG within their communities. Leaders from eight diverse faiths (African traditional religion, the Baha'i faith, Buddhism, the Brahma Kumaris, Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism and Islam) launched the Interfaith Statement of Commitment to end GBVF.



This reached 17 million people through various media platforms and generated an unprecedented commitment from people from diverse faiths to work jointly towards addressing harmful social norms and become key players in the implementation of the NSP GBVF.



### SUPPORT TO THUTHUZELA CARE CENTRES

The UN strengthened the capacity of the Thuthuzela Care Centres (TCCs), the country's network of rape crisis centres, through several interventions. These included combatting cyber-violence, working with women in conflict with the law, introducing the SADC Prosecutors Handbook, managing and handling DNA and strengthening the capacity of civil society organizations supporting identification and referrals to the TCCs. The civil society network is an asset to the district in enhancing wider identification, referrals and community-based support to the TCCs, which often have limited staff and transport.

### ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE

The UN's collaborative efforts focused on enhancing the capabilities of government departments, particularly Community Policing Forums (CPFs) and change agents, to address crisis, violence and xenophobia.

- Through capacity-building workshops in partnership with various organizations, including the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, the African Policing Civilian Oversight Forum and the South African Human Rights Commission, the initiative aimed to empower CPFs to respond effectively to violence, especially that targeting non-nationals.
- These workshops also served as platforms for updates on progress and governance of the National Action Plan (NAP), facilitating interactions between participants and the South African Police to improve communication. The collaboration strengthened community-based initiatives for early warning and rapid response mechanisms outlined in the NAP.
- Participants emphasized a whole-of-society approach and highlighted the significance of multidisciplinary partnerships to combat and address violence in communities.
- To ensure sustainability, the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development is spearheading these efforts by establishing a Rapid Response Task Team at the national level.

To combat community violence, UN agencies partnered with media outlets to launch the #LivingUbuntu campaign, led by Grounded Media, to foster social cohesion and promote peace, diversity and inclusion. Through various platforms and discussions, including community dialogues and social media advocacy, the campaign addressed migration narratives with hashtags like #NoToHate and #Unity. Additionally, the campaign engaged learners from Grades 8–10 in schools across three provinces through interactive theatre productions, and facilitated discussions

encouraging critical thinking about perceptions of migrants and refugees. Feedback from participants highlighted increased awareness of the importance of inclusion in preventing violence and promoting social harmony.

### CUSTOMARY MALE INITIATIONS

The UN has been supporting the National and Eastern Cape House of Traditional Leaders on customary male initiation and on alleviating the loss of lives emanating from the practice. This has included development of a document on policy and programmatic recommendations for

the provisioning of support; the convening of a multisectoral summit involving all stakeholders, including communities, to identify workable solutions; and support to the Provincial Initiations Task Team. UN interventions were geared towards strengthening support on the broad areas of policy implementation and knowledge generation; enhancing standards, guidance and enforcement; support to the provision of materials and the convening and coordinating of stakeholders; community sensitization and mobilization; and mapping and localization of legal and illegal schools.



“The stories of children forced to leave their homes are complex and multifaceted, requiring a deep understanding and empathy in how we describe and write about them. The European Union Global Promotion of Best Practices for Children in Migration stresses the importance of not portraying these children solely as helpless victims. When sharing these narratives, it's crucial to acknowledge the power of memories and the fundamental needs for belonging and safety that shape these children's experiences.

The engaging sessions have served as a reminder that documenting our work can lead to vital support, shape attitudes and truly make a difference in our commitment to leave no child behind.”

**Yasmin Rajah, Refugee Social Services**







## STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3


### Efficient, Effective and Transformative Governance



#### Key contributions

 **27,672,264**  
people registered to vote with UN support

 **100**  
officials trained on the inclusion of the demographic dividend in local planning

 **87**  
wards implementing the Let's Talk Platform to improve service delivery

#### Outcomes

By 2025, women and marginalized groups participate meaningfully in decision-making processes and access justice

By 2025, state institutions deliver effective public services to all and oversight bodies are strengthened

#### FOSTERING INCLUSION OF VULNERABLE GROUPS IN DECISION-MAKING

In a strategic partnership, the UN and the IEC orchestrated a transformative knowledge-sharing and study mission to Zimbabwe. Eight selected election observers (four males and four females) from civil society organizations were trained through pre-election engagements, equipping them to be astute monitors for the forthcoming 2024 national and provincial elections, to ensure transparency and integrity throughout the electoral process.

Collaborating for change, the NDP, the IEC and Activate Change Drivers launched the dynamic #WeAreVoting campaign, igniting a powerful drive among youth to register and participate in the upcoming 2024 elections. This innovative campaign combined entertainment and education, empowering approximately **1,500 young individuals** and urging them to exercise their right to vote and shape the future of their nation.

Under the UK-UN-DSD Multi-Year Programme to leverage the demographic dividend for comprehensive growth and people-centred progress in Africa, the UN organized a pivotal demographic dividend Public Sector Capacity-Building Workshop, supported by the University of Cape Town's Development Policy Research Unit. The workshop enhanced the utilization of population data and evidence for effective policy planning and execution at the grassroots level.

- Over 100 representatives of various government entities, such as the DSD, Provincial Population Units and the Department of Cooperative Governance, attended.
- The workshop educated participants by delving deep into the demographic dividend concept and its policy implications for the country's current demographic dividend status. It also

identified crucial policy considerations for maximizing it.

- By fostering collaboration and leveraging the collective expertise of participants, the workshop achieved remarkable consensus on substantive content, paving the way for impactful policy interventions.
- Following the workshop, a comprehensive booklet, with a detailed exploration of the various indicators identified in previous work as relevant for local government development planning (definitions, calculation methods, data sources, useful disaggregation, published estimates, interpretation), was refined to ensure the successful inclusion of youth in government planning processes.

Empowering children through active participation lies at the heart of child rights governance. In a significant move, the UN backed the Office of the Rights of the Child in hosting the impactful 11th session of the Nelson Mandela Children's Parliament on 14 July 2023, at the Eastern Cape Province legislature. The 45 child parliamentarians elected nationwide delved into critical topics such as climate change, violence against children, education and food security. Their compelling recommendations were presented to key officials, including the Minister of Social Development and the Member of the Executive Committee for Social Development from the Eastern Cape.

With the support of the UN, the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture spearheaded a powerful three-day Orange Day Campaign in Mbombela, rallying students from Mpumalanga Tshwane Universities to join forces in the fight against VAWG, creating a space for communities to openly address the root causes and explore viable solutions. Many community members, particularly women, found their voices, bravely sharing their struggles for the first time and receiving referrals to essential support services.

## STRENGTHENING ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

Addressing and managing corruption risks in the health and wildlife sectors is critical for countries' efforts to attain several of the SDGs, such as SDG 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being, SDG 15: Life on land and SDG 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions. The UN contributed significantly by collaborating with the Free State Department of Health (with the Health Sector Anti-Corruption Forum) and SANParks to identify corruption vulnerabilities, and crafted and implemented robust mitigation strategies to fortify the foundations of transparency and accountability within these crucial sectors.

In a monumental step, the President inaugurated the National Anti-Corruption Advisory Council (NACAC) in September 2022. This pivotal multistakeholder alliance is tasked with developing and advising on the execution of the National Anti-Corruption Strategy (NACS) 2020–2030.

- The UN was crucial in bolstering NACAC by orchestrating a [National Anti-Corruption Dialogue in December 2023](#) engaging all societal stakeholders in a comprehensive discussion regarding NACS implementation, to chart the landscape of anti-corruption partners. South Africa's President, Cyril Ramaphosa, and Chief Justice Raymond Zondo delivered speeches during this event.
- The UN's technical and financial support was instrumental in facilitating the National Anti-Corruption Dialogue and crafting contributions to embed anti-corruption elements in the forthcoming [Public Procurement Bill](#).

## HUMAN RIGHTS

The UN, in collaboration with the South African Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, orchestrated a Southern Africa regional consultation, aptly named Human Rights 75, to mark the [75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights \(UDHR\)](#).



- This gathering bolstered subregional awareness and fostered a deeper commitment to vital human rights instruments, notably the UDHR.
- Member states convened in Pretoria to assess the subregion's role in fortifying both international and regional human rights frameworks, to reflect on the enduring relevance of the UDHR in enhancing national and subregional human rights systems and to strategize on ways to combat inequality through a human rights lens.
- The consultation's theme, "Eradicating Inequality as an Accelerator to Promoting Human Rights in Southern Africa," resonated strongly given the region's prevalent inequality, poverty and unemployment.
- Participants delved into critical discussions, highlighting key concerns and paving the way for impactful pledges and commitments to advance human rights promotion and protection in Southern Africa.

The UN played a pivotal role by offering substantial written contributions to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. As such, it was instrumental in shaping South Africa's pre-reporting list. Additionally, the UN assisted the Government, enabling the timely submission of South Africa's State Party Report to the Committee Against Torture. It also facilitated the successful visit of the Special Rapporteur on Toxics and Human Rights to South Africa in 2023, significantly enhancing the country's collaboration with the UN human rights mechanisms.

In partnership with the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, the UN co-organized the National Inter-Sectoral Committee on Combating Trafficking in Persons, which reviewed and endorsed the expired [National Policy Framework on Combating Trafficking in Persons](#). The workshop culminated in validating and approving the National Policy Framework, formulating the 2023 work plan and a unified agreement on the adoption process by the Justice, Crime Prevention and Security cluster within the Government – marking a significant stride forward in internal government procedures.

## SERVICE DELIVERY ENHANCEMENT

Teaming up with the Centre for Public Service Innovation, the UN continued to roll out the Let's Talk Digital platform, a novel system dedicated to enhancing citizen engagement and citizen-centric communication.



In a significant stride, UNDP extended the application's reach to **12 wards** within Thabazimbi Municipality in 2023, building on successful pilots conducted in **87 wards** across OR Tambo District Municipality and Waterberg District Municipality, along with **nine wards** in Bela Local Municipality in 2022.



This expansion signifies a continued commitment to fostering real-time communication channels between citizens and authorities, thus amplifying participatory governance and public service delivery.

## STRENGTHENING NATIONAL STATISTICS

The 2022 Population and Housing Census marked a ground-breaking achievement, culminating in the release of results in October 2023. Notably, this census represented South Africa's inaugural foray into digital census-taking, featuring cutting-edge real-time data collection through handheld devices. The UN played a pivotal role by offering direct technical assistance and focusing on meticulously evaluating crucial census data elements such as age and sex structures and fertility indicators – an essential step in ensuring the accuracy and reliability of the census outcomes.





## STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4


### Climate Resilience and Sustainably Managed Natural Resources



#### Key contributions

- 

Retained **12 million** hectares of productive and sustainable agricultural land for 10 years through UN support
- 

**6.69** metric tons of CO2 emissions per capita
- 

**5,000** people reached on JET awareness campaign

#### Outcomes

By 2025, South Africa is on a just transition to a low-carbon society and vulnerable and marginalized communities are more resilient to the adverse effects of climate change

By 2025, natural resources are managed and utilized sustainably for improved livelihoods and the well-being of vulnerable communities

#### JUST ENERGY TRANSITION AWARENESS AND ADVOCACY

Communities that rely on workers for economic activity are central to the JET dialogue. Therefore, engaging in community consultations regarding JET is crucial. The UN surveyed 208 mine workers and communities in Sasolburg, revealing insights into awareness, perspectives and attitudes towards JET. Some key findings include that **56.7 per cent of participants were unaware of JET**, with 69 per cent learning about it from Youth Agents for the first time. Despite discussions across various platforms, including mainstream media, awareness levels remained low.

Interestingly, while JET awareness was lacking, only 11.5 per cent of respondents were unfamiliar with climate change, possibly indicating the impact of awareness campaigns and media in recent years. Highlighting the intricate nature of these issues, **81.7 per cent expressed concerns about climate change yet, later, 72 per cent believed coal was not a significant issue for the country.**

The above indicates the need for increased awareness, prompting the expansion of this project in 2024 to reach over 5,000 respondents in Mpumalanga.

Through Digital X support, the UN implemented two online Innovation Challenges to surface circular economy solutions and business plans from youth nationally. The #CircularInnovator and #GreenHustle challenge reached **3.1 million** people, achieved **4.2 million impressions** and had **93,000** external engagements. Over 250 entries were received, with 16 youth were awarded prizes for their circular solutions. In Phase 2 of this project, a three-day hackathon was held, bringing together over 200 youth nationally, with over 120 youth participating in person. The youth were provided knowledge exchange workshops on circular economy and design thinking before

being mentored to develop solutions. Three teams were awarded seed funding to build their circular innovations further.

#### RENEWABLE ENERGY

The UN, working with the Energy Unity Division and the Frankfurt School of Finance and Management, implemented the Clean Captive Installations for Industrial Clients in Sub-Saharan Africa initiative in Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa.

- Supported by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action through the International Climate Initiative, this project aimed to demonstrate the economic feasibility of clean captive energy solutions for industries to encourage widespread adoption through a replicable model, benefiting not only the partner countries but the entire African continent.
- The project included backing each partner nation's solar commercial and industrial pilot projects, fostering sustainable energy practices and financial viability. The project aimed to steer countries towards climate-resilient, resource-efficient and low-carbon development strategies, promoting sustainable development and human well-being on regional and global scales.

#### PRESERVING BIODIVERSITY

Through a strategic alliance with the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE), the National Prosecuting Authority and the Environmental Management Inspectorate of South Africa, the UN has enhanced the capabilities of DFFE Investigators, thus helping improve the quality of biodiversity criminal case investigations nationwide. The ultimate objective is to streamline the prosecution process, resulting in a higher rate of convictions in biodiversity-related criminal cases.

The October 2022 United Nations Biodiversity Conference of the Parties (COP) concluded with a

pioneering accord: nearly every country committed to preserving 30 per cent of the Earth's land and ocean regions as protected areas by 2030.

Given their significant ecological importance, these protected zones restrict human activities and natural resource exploitation. A key result of this COP was the heightened emphasis on nature disclosure, with governments mandated to ensure specific companies disclose their impacts on nature. To this end, the UN collaborated with South African financial institutions through the Nature-Related Financial Disclosure Framework. As a result, the "Nature Financial Disclosure Readiness: Policy and Institutional Review in South Africa" report was launched.

### EARLY WARNING AND DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

In collaboration with the Global Water Partnership, the UN delivered specialized training to 20 individuals (15 males and 5 females) from the Limpopo Watercourse Commission (LIMCOM), representing the Governments of Botswana, Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe. The training focused on Limpopo Flood Forecasting and Early Warning Systems to enhance the technical, institutional and operational capabilities of the LIMCOM Secretariat. This capacity-building initiative aims to facilitate better joint water management within the Limpopo Basin.

The UN was pivotal in advancing the Orange-Senqu River Strategic Action Programme, culminating in successfully establishing two desalination plants at Struizendam and Rappels Pan in Botswana. These facilities are now operational and have been handed over to the Government of Botswana.

This strategic action ensures the sustainable provision of clean water to over 800 individuals and their livestock across four remote villages, addressing critical water scarcity challenges and

improving living conditions. The success of these desalination plants underscores the UN's commitment to fostering resilient solutions and facilitating access to essential resources in remote areas.

### WASTE MANAGEMENT

Within the context of the government partnership to pilot the District Development Model, the UN collaborated with Waterberg District Municipality to assess the state of solid waste management and the circular economy and explore the potential for promoting employment opportunities and sustainable enterprises. The findings of the diagnostic assessment were validated and adopted by stakeholders in Waterberg District in November 2023.

The assessment findings are being used to inform a project aimed at strengthening the transition of youth-owned informal enterprises into businesses in the circular economy to create job opportunities for young people.



"Eskom's Just Energy Transition strategy involves closing the coal-fired Komati power plant and embracing lower-carbon technologies. Through repurposing with 150MW solar, 70MW wind and 150MW storage, funded by the World Bank, we aspire for Komati to set a global benchmark for transitioning fossil-fuel assets."



### 2.3. KEY CHALLENGES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SDGs DURING 2023

Energy security and youth unemployment remain pressing concerns in achieving the SDGs. South Africa still has an unemployment rate of 32.1 per cent, alongside the multifaceted challenges the nation faces. Simultaneously, the country contends with the harsh realities of climate change, experiencing heightened frequency and intensity of climate-induced hazards like floods, heatwaves and droughts, with impacts on lives, food security and infrastructure, particularly in the agricultural value chain. The urgent need for resilience and adaptation strategies to safeguard national food systems is evident, and opportunities to foster cost-sharing mechanisms remain necessary. Addressing structural challenges, particularly in rural communities, informal settlements and townships characterized by high inequality levels, requires a comprehensive whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to foster social cohesion.

Enhancing partnership strategies across district and provincial levels is paramount for subnational development, especially in improving service delivery, which necessitates a thorough social workforce analysis and investment in capacity-building across the service delivery value chain. Moreover, the increased frequency of floods underscores the urgency of bolstering emergency preparedness and capacity, with a focus on vulnerable populations at the district level. This will require a review of processes and programming to ensure readiness within both development and humanitarian contexts. South Africa's upper-middle-income status presents challenges around securing donor funding, with variable economic circumstances influencing resource distribution and sustainability. These constraints hinder the scaling of pilot initiatives, emphasizing the need to diversify strategies around the resource mobilization pool.

The intertwined threats of climate change, biodiversity loss, desertification, land degradation and the COVID-19 pandemic underscore the need for proactive measures to mitigate their combined impact on humanity, particularly for vulnerable groups. Upholding human rights obligations must remain a central tenet in joint programming to maximize impact across development partners and the UNCT.



### 2.4. RESULTS OF THE UN WORKING MORE AND BETTER TOGETHER

#### UN convening, coherence, effectiveness and efficiency

The UN in South Africa convened and supported several engagements bringing together a number of stakeholders to reinforce SDG action. This included a roundtable in collaboration with the National Disaster Management Centre and African Risk Capacity, in consultation with the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs and the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation on early warning and risk reduction. The dialogue explored how South Africa could make its disaster management system as anticipatory as possible. This includes harnessing, pre-arranging and triggering the release of resources ahead of disaster, based on forecasts and early warning, to mitigate the impact of predictable shocks on the poorest and most vulnerable communities.

The UN's collaborative efforts in addressing GBV in the region have yielded significant results. Initiatives led by the UN, particularly within the Gender Theme Group, have focused on various aspects of GBV. This includes facilitating joint programmes across multiple countries, such as the Regional GBV UNCT joint programme's South Africa component while contributing to similar efforts in Botswana, Lesotho and Namibia. These endeavours culminated in high-level presentations at donor roundtables, highlighting the importance of addressing gender norms to enhance women and girls' access to STEM education and careers.

Furthermore, the UN has been proactive in developing frameworks to tackle online and ICT-facilitated GBV and discrimination, safeguarding the rights and agency of women and girls in digital spaces. Collaborative campaigns, such as the #LivingUbuntu campaign, have advocated for migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers, showcasing a unified approach among UN



agencies in addressing health and development issues. Notably, partnerships between UNODC and WHO in South Africa have focused on harm reduction for drug use disorders, exemplifying joint efforts towards public health initiatives.

In addition, UN initiatives have emphasized South-South cooperation, as demonstrated by study tours and knowledge exchange between countries. For example, a South-South study tour supported by UNDP South Africa and UNDP Tanzania aimed to assist the Tanzanian Ministry of Energy in developing and implementing energy performance certification frameworks. This initiative shows the commitment to leveraging cross-learning opportunities to promote sustainable development.

The UN through UNDP South Africa has played an active role in disseminating insights to countries in the Global South, including Bangladesh and Vietnam, particularly regarding South Africa's JET. This engagement has involved bilateral meetings





and the participation of South African government officials in international events, contributing to global knowledge-sharing and collaboration. Another example of the UN in South Africa fostering South-South collaboration included a partnership with the Thabo Mbeki Foundation and the Observer Research Foundation. The Cape Town Conversations provided a platform for global actors to engage in critical discourse on global governance and the future world order. The UN curated panels and topics and helped shape and influence the policy approach by sharing the stage with numerous thought-leaders and change-makers. The Cape Town Conversations spanned diverse themes from women-led development to the just green transition.

The UN also jointly supported the country's response to eradicate the loss of lives emanating from the rite of passage male initiations in the Eastern Cape. Male initiation in South Africa is a

cultural practice that signifies the transition of young men into adulthood. Various communities across the country observe this revered and sacred tradition. The central element of male initiation is circumcision. UNFPA and UNICEF jointly supported convening the Eastern Cape Initiation Summit, which brought together all stakeholders involved in the initiations, including parents and community members. The support also included community-wide sharing of key messages aimed at curbing the utilization of unregulated initiation schools and raising awareness of the safety precautions that should be taken during this period.

An inter-agency Technical Working Group was constituted ahead of the national and provincial elections in 2024, co-chaired by UNDP and OHCHR. Coordinated by the RCO, membership includes UNDP, OHCHR, UNICEF, IOM, UNHCR, UNFPA and the Department of Peacebuilding and Political Affairs (Liaison Team to SADC). The group's main

objectives are to identify emerging risks in the electoral context; help design advocacy messages and scenario planning as part of the UN prevention strategy; and coordinate programmatic responses.

Additional instances of UN coherence demonstrate collaborative efforts. These include joint support for the country's 16 June (Youth Day) career exhibitions focusing on empowering young individuals. Young innovators, change-makers and stakeholders convened during International Youth Day to advance the SDGs. Furthermore, the Prevention of Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Task Force, comprising six agencies, has recently organized a trainer-of-trainers workshop to strengthen initiatives aimed at preventing sexual exploitation and abuse.

### Business operating system

The country's business operating system (BOS) remains a work in progress. The BOS is a dynamic framework designed to improve the quality and cost-effectiveness of business operations at the country level. The UNCT has made firm commitments to strengthen efforts towards fully implementing the BOS in 2024 to improve the efficiency of all UNCT programmes and operations.

### UNCG report on communication and advocacy

UNCG has significantly strengthened its communications strategy. Notably, before the SDG Summit, UNCG supported partnership with the Nelson Mandela Foundation to launch the Nelson Mandela SDGs Quotes Book. This initiative has raised awareness and spurred global action toward achieving the SDGs by 2030, as demonstrated by the translation of the booklet into multiple languages and the growing number of downloads worldwide.

UNCG demonstrated its commitment to sustainable development through initiatives such as the ActNow Youth Initiative, which played a

significant role in activating the SDGs throughout the year among young people. UNCG also organized events during the 16 Days of Activism campaign, fostering community engagement through a youth SDGs boot camp in collaboration with Tshwane University of Technology, the Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa and the Khuthaza Foundation. On Human Rights Day, UNCG hosted a special event featuring a Readout of the UDHR, a film screening session and the unveiling of the 16 Days of Activism mural and sculpture at Tshwane University of Technology. These efforts demonstrated the UN's commitment to youth empowerment, human rights and community awareness and engagement.

During times of crisis, particularly during cholera and measles outbreaks, UNCG played a pivotal role in emergency response communication. Through the strategic dissemination of impactful social media content and concerted collaboration with government vaccination drives, UNCG significantly heightened awareness and facilitated the distribution of essential information, thereby aiding in the management of the outbreaks and bolstering public health endeavours in South Africa. This included active participation in the Department of Health's nationwide measles response plan, which involved extensive mass vaccination campaigns spanning provinces and specifically targeted children aged between six months and 15 years.

Additionally, UNCG supported an engagement with the Veteran Clubs World Championship organization. This engagement hosted renowned football legends as a prelude to the forthcoming 2024 Legends tournament, alongside hosting five Economic Forums and various collaborative partner events. This underscored the significance of sports icons in advocating for the SDGs within the region and the strategic leveraging of sports for societal impact and global development initiatives.

## 2.5. EVALUATION AND LESSONS LEARNT

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented an unparalleled global crisis, impacting healthcare systems, economies and societies worldwide. In response, the UN System has undergone a learning journey, emphasizing the need to enhance efficiency and streamline procedures. This adaptation is ensuring that initiatives are promptly and effectively executed, bolstering our collective impact and responsiveness during global emergencies.

One key lesson learnt relates to the importance of proactively identifying partners through thorough mapping and research to execute planned project activities promptly. Establishing robust internal monitoring and evaluation systems is crucial for effectively gauging incremental progress. Moving forward, prioritizing co-design and co-creation processes with partners is critical to accelerating implementation. To address this, the

UN has expedited the creation of a log frame and institutional diagnosis aimed at professionalizing the public sector.

Additionally, the meaningful participation of young people in democratic processes is pivotal in improving the socioeconomic landscape for future generations.

As climate-related disasters escalate, the UN must respond swiftly and collaborate closely with partners to implement practical climate adaptation measures for disaster risk reduction.

Furthermore, enhancing collaboration among UN agencies is crucial to accelerating progress towards the SDGs while minimizing transaction costs and avoiding duplication. This concerted effort leverages the UN's expertise and global resonance to drive meaningful change on a global scale.



## 2.6. FINANCIAL OVERVIEW AND RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

### Financial overview



	Expenditure (US\$)	Delivery rate
<b>Strategic Priority 1: Inclusive, Just and Sustainable Economic Growth</b>	6,650,161	49%
<b>Strategic Priority 2: Human Capital and Social Transformation</b>	36,918,219	99%
<b>Strategic Priority 3: Effective, Efficient and Transformative Governance</b>	17,441,206	100%
<b>Strategic Priority 4: Climate Resilience and Sustainably Managed Natural Resources</b>	17,332,799	26%

### Resource mobilization

Achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development requires significant financial resources. The South African economy is continuing to recover from the economic fallout caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and other geopolitical conflicts. The fiscal framework has long pursued the SDGs, utilizing public resources to achieve these globally agreed objectives alongside the NDP (Vision 2030). Persistent low growth has meant that the triple challenges of poverty, inequality and unemployment persist, and has failed to meaningfully and expeditiously address the Government's and the public's aspirations. Resource mobilization is critical to help the country overcome these challenges and achieve sustainable development.

In its strategic efforts to mobilize resources for the Cooperation Framework in South Africa, the UN has adopted a multifaceted approach to ensure the effective implementation of Joint Work Plans. Once again, in 2023, the UNCT followed the coordinated approach outlined in the Cooperation Framework Joint Financing and Resource Mobilization Strategy. This strategy has been instrumental in guiding the allocation of resources and maximizing impact. The UNCT continued to identify partners whose profiles align with the strategic priorities of the Cooperation Framework and took a multistakeholder approach to expand partnerships and collaboration with the private sector, civil society, academia, think-tanks, foundations and high-net-worth individuals.



Given its crucial role in advancing the national development agenda, the UNCT prioritized engagements with private sector and financial institutions in South Africa. In 2023, the UN in South Africa accelerated dialogues and convening with the private sector to synchronize corporate strategies with national and global sustainability

goals. Through these coordinated efforts, the UN's resource mobilization strategy for the Cooperation Framework aims to harness diverse funding streams and partnerships to propel South Africa's sustainable development forward, contributing meaningfully to achieving the SDGs.

Multi-year funding framework for the Cooperation Framework 2020–2025 and resource gap (US\$)

Strategic Priorities	Outcome Area	Total funding requirement	Funds available	To be mobilized
Inclusive, Just and Sustainable Economic Growth	Outcome 1.1	13,385,000	6,896,911	6,488,089
	Outcome 1.2	26,626,767	9,577,516	17,457,412
Human Capital and Social Transformation	Outcome 2.1:	20,604,526.85	23,940,356.85	13,407,959
	Outcome 2.2.:	22,469,202.96	18,175,716.96	4,293,486
	Outcome 2.3.:	43,519,069.92	37,393,222.92	14,011,765.34
Effective, Efficient and Transformative Governance	Outcome 3.1:	1,907,100	782,198	1,306,758
	Outcome 3.2.:	17,763,211.53	6,221,141.53	11,542,070
Climate Resilience and Sustainably Managed Natural Resources	Outcome 4.1:	20,549,818.59	16,786,468.12	9,205,350.47
	Outcome 4.2:	40,182,577.38	42,551,291.22	6,915,215



# 03.

## UNCT KEY FOCUS FOR 2024

In taking forward and accelerating delivery of both the SDGs and our Cooperation Framework, the UNCT has identified key spotlight areas and collaborative initiatives for 2024. These priorities will be implemented collaboratively across each result group and with our partners in Government, civil society and the private sector, following the fundamental principle of delivering as one and leveraging a whole-of-society approach for better results and lasting impact. These are some of the identified areas.



## ENHANCING STATE CAPACITY AND ACTIVE CITIZENRY (ELECTIONS)

With the upcoming election in the 30th year of South Africa's democracy, the UN is energized by democratic processes that will empower citizens to participate fully in shaping their future. The UN will continue to enhance civic engagement and support for free and fair elections, paving the way for a vibrant democracy where every voice is heard. 2024 will be marked by a renewed commitment to strategic priorities that promise transformative change. The UN will persist in supporting the Government's efforts to foster ethical leadership throughout society, particularly emphasizing the state. This support will encompass interventions targeting anti-corruption measures, integrity management and the development of best practices for local governance. Another area of focus involves enhancing citizen participation in local governance, implementing evidence-based policy design and planning and promoting digitization to modernize service delivery and foster accountability.

## STRENGTHENING SOCIAL PROTECTION, INCLUDING NATIONAL HEALTH SYSTEMS

The UN has provided advisory work on how best the country can progressively adopt a Basic Income Grant and will reaffirm its support for legislation to set the way for the National Health Insurance Bill, ensuring equitable access to quality care for all. With integrated service delivery models anchored in primary healthcare, the UN stands ready to strengthen health systems. Through advocacy and collaborative efforts, access to essential medicines and services must be accessible to all of society, leaving no one behind. Norms and standards need to be established, empowering communities to combat diseases such as HIV, TB and malaria. Maternal and child health initiatives will be strengthened to reduce mortality rates and ensure every child's right to a healthy start in life. Drawing strength from our collective efforts, South Africa's preparedness for emergencies and

epidemics will be strengthened to ensure swift and effective responses to safeguard the well-being of communities. The UN has also worked towards helping strengthen the country's food system with a focus on smallholder farmers and the development of climate-smart agriculture, for a more productive, inclusive and sustainable agriculture sector.

## EARLY WARNING, RESILIENCE-BUILDING AND JUST ENERGY TRANSITION

The UN aims to enhance resilience to climate-induced disasters through collaborative efforts and a focus on early warning and anticipatory action. We remain committed to supporting South Africa in building climate resilience and sustainable resource management, including through the roll-out of the Early Warning for All Initiative, to start in 2024. In addition, our work includes reducing emissions, transitioning to renewable energy through a just approach, safeguarding biodiversity and improving water resource management to ensure communities emerge more robust and resilient to climate shocks. The JET Investment Plan (JET-IP) represents a significant step forward in South Africa's efforts to decarbonize the economy and minimize the social costs of transitioning to a low-carbon society. It is aligned with the goals and targets of South Africa's NDP 2030, its Integrated Resource Plan of 2019 and its Just Transition Framework of 2022. It includes the participation of all sectors of society and highlights the importance of supporting a transition that is just for all. The UNCT will continue to support the country in advancing the JET-IP, which is critical given the current energy crisis.

We reaffirm our commitment to partnership and collaboration. Through renewed efforts to engage the private sector, we seek to unlock new avenues for sustainable development, harnessing the power of innovation and entrepreneurship to build an inclusive tomorrow. The UN family and its partners will continue pursuing a brighter, more sustainable future for South Africa.



## TACKLING GBV, INCLUDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN AND CUSTOMARY MALE INITIATIONS

The UN will persist in supporting the country's efforts to eliminate the loss of lives associated with male circumcision. Support will include creation of awareness and communication materials on the dos and don'ts during the initiation period. These will be customized for each district. The UN will continue to work closely with the National House of Traditional and Khoisan Leaders, as well as the Provincial Initiation Task Team, to strengthen their response in the build-up to the winter and summer seasons. The UN will continue to support the country in responding to GBV. This will include reinforced advocacy and coordinated action aligned with the GBV Fund and Presidential Initiative.

## HUMAN CAPITAL AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

The Government of South Africa recognizes that a social system that builds human capabilities is necessary to improve citizens' quality of life. This will strengthen ECD and access to quality schooling and universal healthcare. The UN, working with all national partners, will support the Government in ensuring that national and global commitments to transforming education are taken forward in the country to improve access to and quality of education. The UN will also continue to play a central role in supporting government efforts at instituting evidence-based policy interventions for sustainable and inclusive social protection coverage.

## YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

Given the high youth unemployment rate in the country, the UN will also prioritize its support to the Government on expanding opportunities for youth development and employment through digital skills development, SME development, entrepreneurship and, particularly, the empowerment of youth through innovation as well as skills for JET.

## LOCALIZATION OF THE SDGS AND THE DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT MODEL

Recognizing the continued challenges of service delivery at the local government level and noting the need to reposition the sector towards its developmental role, the UN's work in supporting the District Development Model will remain a central pillar of work. Its focus is on the localization of the SDGs, above all those that matter most to help people in their day-to-day lives and needs, and will include strengthening non-state sector partnerships at both local and national levels, aligning UN activities with District One Plans and fully implementing the governance model. In 2024, the UN will embark on acceleration efforts to achieve the above, with emphasis on the six transitions, including food systems strengthening, digital connectivity energy access and affordability, job creation and social protection, as mentioned above.



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