

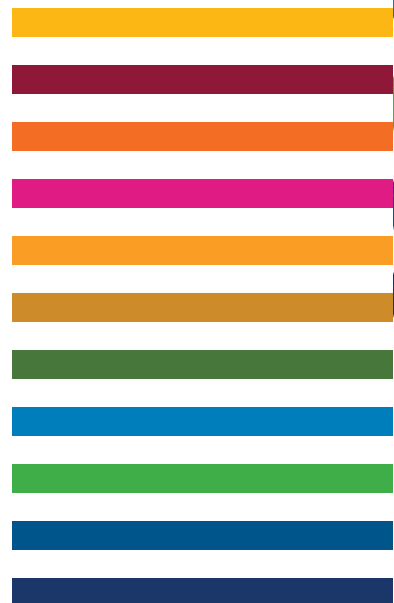


**SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
GOALS**

THE PEOPLE'S REPORT ON THE
2030 AGENDA
FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

A CIVIL SOCIETY COMPLEMENTARY REPORT TO
THE SOUTH AFRICA'S NATIONAL VNR REPORT 2024

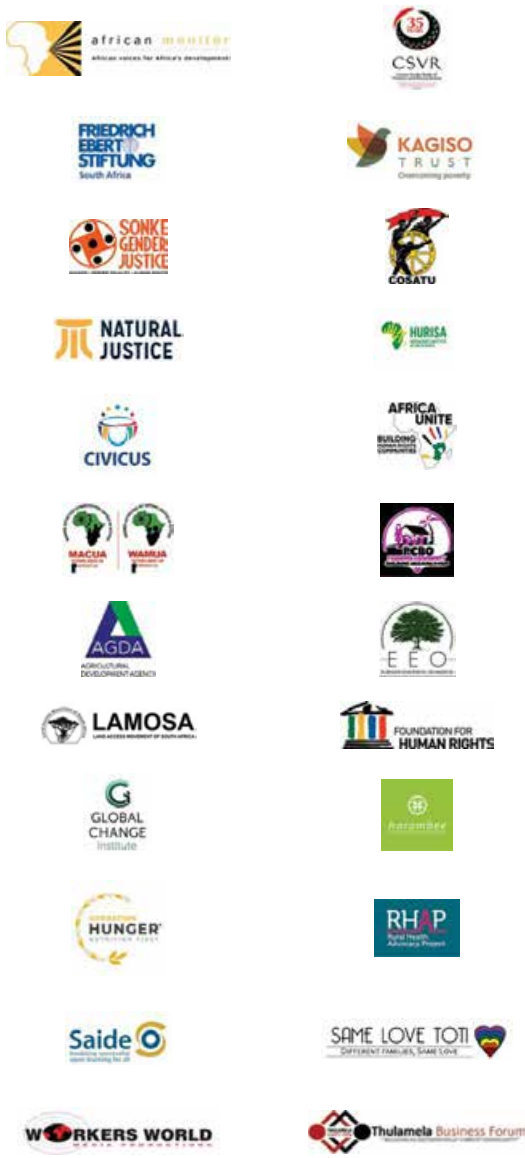
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SDG PEOPLE'S REPORT @ 2024

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The contents of this report, incorporating the results of an independent evaluation undertaken by civil society organisations, are the sole responsibility of the South African Working Group on SDGs.



ACRONYMS

COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions	NPFNS	National Policy on Food and Nutrition Security
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility	NSFAS	National Student Financial Aid Scheme
CTF	Counter-terrorist financing	NSNP	National School Nutrition Programme
DAARLD	Department of Agriculture, Land Reform, and Rural Development	NSO	National Statistics Office
DAFF	Department Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries	NSP-GBVF	National Strategic Plan on Gender Based Violence and Femicide
DBE	The Department of Basic Education	PACOTIP	Prevention and Combating of Trafficking in Persons Act 7 of 2013
DHET	The Department of Higher Education and Training	PEDs	Provincial education departments
DoJ	Department of Justice and Constitutional Development	PEPUDA	Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act 4 of 2000
DPME	Department of Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation	PES	Presidential Employment Stimulus
DSD	Department of Social Development of South Africa	PFMA	Public Finance Management Act 1 of 1999
ECD	Early childhood development	PIT	Personal income tax
EEA	Employment Equity Act 55 of 1988	PPPs	Public-private partnerships
EEAA	Employment Equity Amendment Act (2022)	R&D	Research and development
ELP	Early Learning Programme	REIPPPP	Renewable Energy Independent Power Producer Procurement Programme
EPWP	Extended Public Works Programme	SADC	Southern African Development Community
ERRP	The Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan	SAFSC	South African Food Sovereignty Campaign
FATF	Financial Action Task Force	SALGA	South African Local Government Association
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment	SAPS	South African Police Service
FES	The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung	SAREM	South African Renewable Energy Master Plan
FIES	Food Insecurity Experience Scale	SARIS	South African Research and Innovation Strategy
G20	Group of 20	SARS	South African Revenue Service
GBVF	Gender-based violence and femicide	SASA	South African Schools Act 84 of 1996
GDP	Gross domestic product	SASSA	South African Social Security Agency
GHG	Greenhouse gasses	SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
GVA	Gross Value Added	SDs	Sectoral Determinations
ICMs	Intermediate City Municipalities	SEFA	Small enterprises funding
IDPs	Integrated Development Plans	SLPs	Social and labour plans
ILO C190	International Labour Organisation Violence and Harassment Convention (No. 190)	SMEs	Small and Medium Enterprises
IRP	Integrated Resource Plan	SOEs	State-owned enterprise
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal	SPP	Surplus People Project
LBPL	Lower-bound poverty line	SRD	Social Relief of Distress
LGBTQI+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer or questioning	Stats SA	Statistics South Africa
LTSM	Learning and teaching support material	TERS	Temporary Employer-Employee Relief Scheme
MTEF	Medium-Term Expenditure Framework	TIA	Technology Innovation Agency
NCCAS	The National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy	TVET	Technical and vocational education and training
NCDs	Non-communicable diseases	UIF	Unemployment Insurance Fund
NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
NDP	National Development Plan	UNFCCC	The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
NDSF	National Development Stakeholders Forum	USAID	United States Agency for International Development
NEDLAC	National Economic Development and Labour Council	USD	United States Dollar
NEMA	National Environmental Management Act 107 of 1988	VAT	Value-added Tax
NEPA	The National Education Policy Act 27 of 1996	VLR	Voluntary Local Review
NFNSP	National Food and Nutrition Security Plan for South Africa	VNR	Voluntary National Review
NGM	National gender machinery	WCSSF	West Coast Food Sovereignty and Solidarity Forum
NGO	Non-governmental organisation	WHO	World Health Organisation
s	National Gender Policy Framework for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality	WJP	World Justice Project
NGPF	National minimum wage		



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INTRODUCTION POLITICAL OVERVIEW



The second CSOs People’s report on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) implementation in South Africa is part of the Voluntary National Review (VNR) process that countries committed to during the adoption of Agenda 2030.

This report, together with the complementary report from the business sector, serve as annexures to the country’s official VNR report, and aims to track South Africa’s progress in achieving Agenda 2030 through the lens of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), and will spotlight specific aspects of SDG delivery.

The report draws attention to the halfway point of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, underscoring the substantial divergence from the intended course. This is evident in the figure that summarises the current status of the Sustainable Development Goals. Without urgent course correction and acceleration, humanity will face prolonged periods of crisis and uncertainty—triggered by and reinforcing poverty, inequality, hunger, disease, conflict, and disaster. At a global level, the “Leave no one behind” principle is at significant risk.

The 2023 Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR),¹ themed “Times of Crisis, Times of Change: Science for Accelerating Transformations to Sustainable Development”, finds that at this critical juncture—midway to 2030—incremental and fragmented change is insufficient to achieve the SDGs in the remaining seven years.

The 2023 report says that implementation of the 2030 Agenda requires the active mobilisation of political leadership and ambition for science-based transformations. It is crucial to achieve this globally, with no country, society, or person left behind. The

report is an invitation to embrace transformations with the urgency needed to accelerate progress towards the SDGs.

This civil society report aims to review the country’s progress of the Sustainable Development Goals from the people’s perspective, providing an independent assessment of progress. It seeks to amplify the voices of grassroots and marginalised communities, foster multi-stakeholder engagement, and highlight key challenges and opportunities, with the principle of Leaving No One Behind as a cross-cutting agenda. The report is intended to complement the government’s Voluntary National Review report, not compete with it. Policy and institutional enabling environment.

South Africa has aligned, as far as possible, the implementation of the SDGs and Agenda 2063 with that of its National Development Plan (NDP). The NDP, enacted in 2012, has had a significant influence on South Africa’s position and adaption of Agenda 2063 and the SDGs. In addition to the NDP, in South Africa, all three spheres of government conduct development planning: the Provincial Growth and Development Strategies (PGDS) at a provincial level, and the Integrated Development Plans (IDP), set by each municipality to ensure effective service delivery. This alignment means that efforts to achieve the SDGs have the potential to significantly impact the achievement of the country’s national priorities as expressed in the NDP, and vice versa. An analysis of the NDP objectives and the SDGs shows a 74% convergence between the NDP and the SDG agenda.²

The Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) posits that the Medium-Term

1 Independent Group of Scientists appointed by the Secretary-General, Global Sustainable Development Report 2023: Times of crisis, times of change: Science for accelerating transformations to sustainable development, (United Nations, New York, 2023).

2 NPC & UNDP SA. (2021). Mapping the National Development Plan to the United Nations and the African Union Sustainable Development Agendas.



Strategic Framework (MTSF) 2019–2024³ is informed by several key international and regional policies and commitments, including the United Nations (UN) SDGs, the African Union’s (AU) Agenda 2063, and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Regional Instruments, all which provide an important context for developing this five-year implementation plan.

The MTSF 2019-2024, which is also the second 5-year implementation plan for the NDP, sets out the package of interventions and programmes that will advance the seven priorities adopted by the government for the sixth administration: building a capable, ethical, and developmental state; economic transformation and job creation; education, skills, and health; consolidating the social wage; spatial transformation, environmental affairs, local government, and basic services; social cohesion and safe communities; and a better Africa and world.

Despite a comprehensive plan under the NDP and the MTSF, as well as the provincial and local planning, progress in delivering the NDP and SDGs remains a challenge.

NDP TEN-YEAR REVIEW

The National Planning Commission (NPC) conducted a Ten-Year Review of the National Development Plan in 2023. This review provides an update on the core NDP targets over the last ten years, forms the basis for recommendations for implementation in the remaining eight years, and identifies corrective measures based on the changing circumstances over the past decade.

According to the review, South Africa had the highest number of Covid-19 infections on the African continent.

The deterioration of the policy environment, leadership challenges across society, lack of cohesion in executing the NDP, and poor implementation—all amidst a turbulent regional and global environment—resulted in the inability to achieve crucial NDP targets. The following challenges were further found to have impeded NDP implementation: weakening government and

eroding societal trust, blurred lines between political and administrative functions exacerbating governance issues, systemic corruption in both public and private sectors, severe fiscal constraints worsened by state-owned enterprises (SOEs), persistent and brutal crime including gender-based violence, and political leadership failing to prioritise the NDP, leading to inadequate advocacy and implementation. The review found that the interim phase did not achieve the implementation of the NDP, as set out in the vision and priorities.

The deterioration of the policy environment, leadership challenges across society, lack of cohesion in executing the NDP, and poor implementation—all amidst a turbulent regional and global environment—resulted in the inability to achieve crucial NDP targets. The following challenges were further found to have impeded NDP implementation: weakening government and state institutions, poor public service performance eroding societal trust, blurred lines between political and administrative functions exacerbating governance issues, systemic corruption in both public and private sectors, severe fiscal constraints worsened by state-owned enterprises (SOEs), persistent and brutal crime including gender-based violence, and political leadership failing to prioritise the NDP, leading to inadequate advocacy and implementation. The review found that the interim phase did not achieve the implementation of the NDP, as set out in the vision and priorities.

RESILIENCE AND RESPONSE TO UNEXPECTED DISASTERS

Covid-19 and climate-related disasters have had an adverse impact on the country’s progress on SDGs. The pandemic’s social impact on South Africa has been high, with many South Africans having lost their jobs and being at risk of falling into poverty due to labour market disruptions. The Covid-19 social protection response package, which cushioned 1.9 million people against this impact, came at a high economic cost. Public finances—which had been on a deteriorating trajectory for several years—was additionally pressured, making it more urgent to restore fiscal sustainability. In 2020, the deficit reached 12.9% of gross domestic product (GDP),

3 Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME). (2019). The Medium-Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) 2019-2024. Government of South Africa. Retrieved from https://www.dpme.gov.za/keyfocusareas/outcomesSite/MTSF_2019_2024/2019-2024%20MTSF%20Comprehensive%20Document.pdf



resulting in public debt of 78.8% of GDP— with GDP having contracted by 7% for the same period.

South Africa is currently confronting a climate crisis, as demonstrated through multiple disasters, due to a warming rate that is double the global average. For instance, in 2021 alone, all nine provinces had experienced floods, with some provinces experiencing large wildfires as well. In April 2022, severe flooding in KwaZulu-Natal Province resulted in over 400 fatalities, with over 12,000 houses destroyed and more than 40,000 people displaced.

In 2022, South Africa adopted the Climate Change Bill⁴ to enable the development of an effective climate change response and a long-term, just transition to a low-carbon and climate-resilient economy and society in the context of sustainable development, and to provide financing for matters connected therewith.

ACCELERATION MECHANISMS

Global scenario projections by the 2023 Global Sustainable Development Report show that business-as-usual strategies will not deliver the SDGs by 2030—or even 2050—but working through key entry points to leverage interlinkages in line with national circumstances and priorities could

The 30-Year Review⁵ acknowledges both the progress made and the challenges faced by a growing democracy like South Africa. These challenges include an underperforming economy, high unemployment rates, persistent poverty, stubbornly high and racially biased inequality, and threats to human development gains due to energy and water security issues, as well as gaps in service delivery that impact the most vulnerable.

The SA VNR 2024 report proposes the following mechanisms for acceleration of the implementation

1. Prioritise human well-being and enhanced capabilities through sustainable development.
2. Invest in young people to participate in those fields with a high job growth potential, such as the green and digital economies.
3. Create economic growth and opportunities by increasing sustainable energy sources.
4. Unblock infrastructure constraints and invest in green and resilient infrastructure.
5. Rebuild trust through effective and responsive institutions.



4 Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, 2022. Republic of South Africa Climate Change Bill. Available at https://www.parliament.gov.za/storage/app/media/Bills/2022/B9_2022_Climate_Change_Bill/B9_2022_Climate_Change_Bill.pdf

5 Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation. (2023) "Towards a 30 Year Review of South Africa's Democracy (1994 – 2024)", Pretoria: Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation. <https://www.dpme.gov.za/publications/30-Year/30%20Year%20Review/30%20Year%20Review%20Synthesis%20Report.pdf>



METHODOLOGY

The People’s Report provides a civil society perspective on South Africa’s progress on goals currently being reviewed under the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF): SDG 1 - No Poverty, SDG 2 - Zero Hunger, SDG 13 - Climate Action, SDG 16 - Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions, and SDG 17 - Partnerships for the Goals. Civil society has also identified the following additional goals for review: SDG 4 - Quality Education, SDG 5 - Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment, and SDG 8 - inclusive growth and decent work. The report also includes civil society’s reflection on the voluntary local review processes.

Eight sector-specific writing groups conducted the South African civil society review, with support from technical researchers. The review processes included desktop review with particular emphasis on civil society produced body of knowledge and conducted multiple consultative workshops with broader civil society groups. The writing groups used the adapted Civil Society scorecards developed by Action for Sustainable Development for their assessments (see below).

The civil society writing groups also made submissions to the official country VNR Report and formed part of the national VNR drafting team, which comprised both state and non-state

CIVIL SOCIETY SCORECARDS

The scorecard provides an assessment of the current level of implementation of the selected goals. By taking into consideration the following parameters: (1) National Policy Framework, (2) Sectoral Plans, Strategies and Programs, (3) Institution, (4) Budgets, (5) Implementation and Service Delivery, (6) Awareness, (7) Transparency and Accountability (8) Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships (9) Citizen and Civil Society Engagement. The final score is computed once the group rates each target relevant for the country or constituency on a scale of 1-5 based on the parameters provided in the matrix. An average is calculated to determine the final score.



RATING	PARAMETERS
Very low progress (1)	Policy frameworks are being developed or updated in light of the SDGs for most targets; progress on this SDG is still minimal but showing positive early trends
Low progress (2)	Policy frameworks are starting to be meaningfully implemented; progress is slowly starting to be seen for some of the targets in this SDG
Medium progress(3)	Policy frameworks are starting to show positive outcomes for most targets; progress for this SDG shows a positive trend
High progress (4)	Policy frameworks are consolidating, and their implementation shows continuous positive outcomes for most targets; most of the targets for this SDG are on track to be achieved
Very high progress (5)	Strong and successful policy frameworks guide government programs effectively and in line with SD principles. Statistical indicators show that all of the targets for this SD will be achieved



1

END POVERTY IN ALL ITS FORMS EVERYWHERE



1.1 INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

Goal 1 of the SDGs aims to end poverty in all its forms everywhere by 2030.⁶ It is a pivotal goal of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

South Africa's progress on Goal 1 has been slow, and early gains have been largely reversed. Poverty declined from 1990 to 2015, but recent estimates show an increase. According to a Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) report, as of 2022, approximately 40% of the population lives below the lower-bound poverty line of ZAR 1 058.00, and a further 55% live below the upper-bound poverty line of ZAR1 558. Moreover, 13.8 million people (25%) experience food poverty (set at 760 in 2023).⁷

In South Africa, poverty is mainly intertwined with inequality and unemployment, collectively known as the "triple challenge". The historical legacy of Apartheid, income inequality, unemployment, limited access to livelihood capital, education, social exclusion, and vulnerability contribute to poverty in South Africa.⁸ Livelihood capital, which had been stripped from the majority of people during the colonial and apartheid eras, has not been restored, but there are signs of households rebuilding it through social protection and other measures.

The National Development Plan (NDP) had set a poverty alleviation target of "have no people living both under the food poverty line (FPL) and the lower-bound poverty line (LBPL) by 2030".⁹ The Medium Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) 2019-2024 sets

28% by 2024.¹⁰ The strategic framework addresses this through social protection, capability building measures, labour market activation programmes for under- and unemployed individuals, and protection for nutritional and food security.

South Africa's government developed a poverty alleviation plan that focuses on enhancing capabilities, providing pathways out of poverty, and improving coordination and integration to ensure that the interventions are successful. This approach promises to tackle the root causes of poverty by rebuilding productive livelihoods capital and enabling households to pursue multiple strategies



6 Writing group contributors: Puseletso Maile (African Monitor), Hooda Fayker (Black Sash), Lynette Maart, Kwanele Sishi, Mashile Phalane (Batlhabane Foundation), Caroline Pieterse (Hands on Bafazi) Basetsana Esther Meletse (Passover Community Building Organisation), Mncedi Nxadi (Ekurhuleni Environmental Organisation), Sabelo Mnguni and Mduzuzi Mthembu (Mining Affected Communities United in Action), Esperance Sibatu (SARW Youth), Tebogole Maleke (Africa Unite) and Mbali Nkosi (Samin).

7 Stats SA. (2023). National Poverty Lines. Stats SA. <https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P03101/P031012023.pdf>

8 Trading Economics. (2023). South Africa Unemployment Rate. Trading Economics. <https://tradingeconomics.com/south-africa/unemployment-rate>

9 National Planning Commission. (2019). Medium term strategic framework 2019-2024. DPME. https://www.dpme.gov.za/keyfocusareas/outcomesSite/MTSF_2019_2024/2019-2024%20MTSF%20Comprehensive%20Document.pdf

10 National Planning Commission. (2019). Medium term strategic framework 2019-2024. DPME. https://www.dpme.gov.za/keyfocusareas/outcomesSite/MTSF_2019_2024/2019-2024%20MTSF%20Comprehensive%20Document.pdf



BOX 1 CIVIL SOCIETY SCORE CARD

The CSO technical writing group considered 4 targets including ending extreme poverty (1.1), reduce poverty by 50% (1.2), national social protection coverage (1.3), and equal rights to economic resources (1.4). Based on the review of the above targets and using the scorecard developed for this study, the CSO working group rated South Africa's performance on Goal 1 as **Level 2: low progress**.

AREAS	RATING
1. Governance and policy framework	3
2. Plans and strategies	3
3. Institutional support	2
4. Budgets	2
5. Implementation	2
6. Public Awareness	2
7. Transparency and accountability	1
8. Multi-stakeholder partnerships	2
9. Citizen participation and civil society engagement	2
TOTAL	2.1

South Africa has policies, strategies, and plans in place for implementing SDG 1, including the National Poverty Alleviation Acceleration Plan of 2023, which brings coherence on poverty alleviation strategies and responds to root causes of poverty. There is, though, a lack of alignment in the institutional support between national and local governments, as well as across departments. The coverage in social protection and the social wage has been improving over time, addressing multidimensional poverty in South Africa. While there have been some improvements, South Africa is still far from achieving productive and sustainable livelihoods for poor and marginalised communities. Updated data on poverty rates and livelihoods asset ownership is lacking, hindering insight into the country's poverty reduction efforts. There is a pressing need to enhance transparency and accountability mechanisms in the execution of poverty reduction policies and programs. Multistakeholder partnerships exist, but greater collaboration is needed among civil society, the private sector, and government to achieve the goal. Citizen participation and engagement are present, but financial constraints limit support for grassroots communities.

1.2 PERFORMANCE ON TARGETS

Target 1.2: By 2030, reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women, and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions.

Progress on poverty reduction has been slow or reversed. As of 2022, approximately 40% of the population lives below the lower-bound poverty line of ZAR1,058.00, and a further 55% live below the upper-bound poverty line of ZAR1,558. Moreover,

a total of 13.8 million people (25%) experience food poverty (set at 760 in 2023),¹¹ meaning they are unable to purchase enough food to give them a sufficient nutritional diet. In 2021, it was estimated that 6.3% of South Africans are multi-dimensionally poor, with an additional 12.2% classified as vulnerable to multidimensional poverty.¹² This encompasses poor health, hunger, lack of clean water, insufficient access to healthcare, and substandard housing.

The Covid-19 pandemic undid progress on poverty reduction, resulting in increased poverty levels. The

11 Stats SA. (2023). Sustainable Development Goals Country Report 2023 South Africa. Stats SA https://www.statssa.gov.za/MDG/SDG_Country_report.pdf

12 UNDP. (2023). Briefing note for countries on the 2023 Multidimensional Poverty Index South Africa.



South African economy declined by 6.3% in 2020, during the Covid-19-induced hard shutdown; over 2 million jobs were shed, and many South Africans lost their income.

Social protection has provided relief to 27.3 million South Africans living in poverty, and the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) has provided many South Africans with income and temporary work opportunities, creating 938,688 work opportunities in 2020/21.¹³ However, the EPWP work opportunities do not address the approximately 10 million jobs needed. Its long-term impact on sustainable livelihoods and skills development remains debated.

Target 1.3: Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable.

According to Stats SA, the percentage of individuals who benefited from social grants consistently increased from 12.7% in 2003 to 30.1% in 2015.¹⁴ Children covered by the child-support grant account for 70% of all people covered by social welfare transfers. The child-support grant accounts for 36% of total grant expenditure and, since 2011, includes children up to the age of 18.¹⁵

Currently, 27.3 million individuals receive grants, comprising roughly 45% of the total population, with a financial outlay of ZAR232 billion. Of these, 18.825 million people receive traditional social grants, while approximately 8.5 million receive Covid-19 Social Relief of Distress (SRD) grants. However, this assistance is not a permanent, sustainable solution to poverty.¹⁶

The Department of Social Development introduced the Social Relief of Distress grant during the Covid-19 pandemic to support unemployed individuals affected by the lockdowns. A report on the rapid assessment of the implementation and utilisation of the SRD grant indicates that recipients

mainly used the grant to buy food. 70% of applicants in the survey undertaken were below 34 years old and had matric and higher education qualifications (degree or diploma). Black Africans made up 82.8% of grant applicants. Gauteng had the highest number of respondents (28.2%), followed by KZN (18.7%).¹⁷ Initially introduced in May 2020, the grant has been extended until March 2025.

Target 1.4: By 2030, ensure that all, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including microfinance.

Poor South African households have limited access to livelihood capital such as social, human, financial and physical assets. These assets include access to land and other productive assets, social networks, knowledge and skills that can generate income, access to basic services, transport, a home from which they may run their businesses, and a safe environment. Public investment is needed for households to build back the capital and engage in multiple livelihoods strategies.

Since 2001, access to basic services in South Africa has increased significantly. Over 80% of households now have access to piped water, either inside their dwellings or within their yards. The reliance on piped water sources outside yards or community stands has decreased over time; in 1996, 19.6% of households depended on such sources, but by 2022, this figure had dropped to 8.9%.¹⁸ Despite these improvements, the persistent lack of essential services such as clean water, sanitation, electricity, and waste collection disproportionately affects marginalised and impoverished communities. These groups often cannot afford alternative private solutions, leading to significant negative consequences for their development and overall well-being.

13 SA Cities Network. (2022). The Expanded Public Works Program. SA Cities Network https://www.sacities.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/EPWP-2020_2021-Report_0405_electronic.pdf

14 Stats SA. (2017). Poverty Trends in South Africa: An examination of absolute poverty between 2006 and 2015. Stats Sa <http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/Report-03-10-06/Report-03-10-062015.pdf>.

15 Department of Social Development. (2021). Annual Report 2020/21. Gov.za. https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/202111/dsd-annual-report-2021-final.pdf

16 Department of Social Development. (2023). SASSA Annual Performance Report, 2022 – 2023. Department of Social Development. <https://www.sassa.gov.za/annual%20reports/Documents/SASSA%20ANNUAL%20REPORT%202022-23.pdf>.

17 Department of Social Development. (2021). Rapid Assessment of the Implementation and Utilisation of the Special Covid-19 SRD. Department of Social Development. <https://www.dsd.gov.za/index.php/component/jdownloads/?task=download.send&id=316:the-rapid-assessment-of-the-implementation-and-utilisation-of-the-special-covid-19-srd-grant&catid=7&m=0&Itemid=101>

18 Water and sanitation. (2023). South African Government <https://www.gov.za/about-sa/water-affairs>



1.3 POLICY AND INSTITUTIONAL READINESS TO DELIVER ON 2030 AGENDA

As a policy reaction to Covid-19, the President of South Africa launched the Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan (ERRP) in October 2020. ERRP is a strategic framework to revive and create conditions for economic recovery following the economic downturn exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. Key focus areas of the framework include infrastructure development, employment creation, industrialisation and manufacturing, and support for small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

The government provided unemployment relief with an investment of ZAR23.5 billion during the Covid-19 pandemic. This was accomplished through the Presidential Employment Stimulus (PES), a government response to the pandemic's devastating economic impact on jobs and livelihoods. The PES is part of the ERRP.

As of 2022, the initiative has benefited 960,972 people, with 84% of them being young people and 58% being women. A total of 726,638 (83% of target) jobs were generated, 23,592 (75% of target) livelihoods supported, and 40,526 (67% of target) positions retained.¹⁹ The PES, through direct public investment, promotes job creation, employment protection, and livelihood assistance programmes as part of a larger economic recovery effort. All this progress is



South Africa is currently finalising the drafting process of the Poverty Alleviation Acceleration Plan and, in 2023, the Presidency proposed an annual budget of up to ZAR88.5 billion for an Anti-Poverty Plan. The plan includes measures like food aid, job development efforts, and a permanent basic income support grant. The projected costs are estimated to be between ZAR36 billion and ZAR50 billion per year, with contributions expected from the business sector. Additionally, ZAR2 billion of the proposed budget would be allocated towards food subsidies specifically targeting children's nutrition.

1.4 GAPS AND ACCELERATORS

Civil society's assessment of South Africa's performance on Goal 1 has revealed the gaps and identified accelerators listed below.

- Lack of policy coherence in poverty reduction strategies and lack of coordination of the government's national, provincial, and local spheres.
- Misalignment of legislative, policy, and institutional frameworks.
- Lack of updated poverty statistics to inform policy and implementation.
- Lack of adequate finance for integrated and coordinated poverty alleviation efforts.

Accelerator

- Enable productive livelihoods by redefining informal work as a legitimate source of livelihood, manage hostilities from authorities, and ensure decriminalisation of such work. There is a need to build an ecosystem of social and economic services to improve productivity in the informal sector. This must be linked to township economy initiatives and should enhance economic opportunities, access to essential and social services, and improve governance. Additionally, a comprehensive livelihood strategy and plan should be developed considering rural and urban poverty, which would require different pathways out of poverty. The initiative must

¹⁹ Department of Tourism. (2022). Economic Reconstruction & Recovery Plan Progress Report. Department of Tourism <https://www.tourism.gov.za/AboutNDT/Publications/Economic%20Reconstruction%20%26%20Recovery%20Plan%20Progress%20Report.pdf>



consider building livelihood assets, which are a resource base of the marginalised and historically disadvantaged groups, including human, natural, financial, physical, and social capital. The strategy should include a special focus on rural poverty among small landholders, particularly indigenous populations, that addresses the question of land ownership and transfer resources.

- Beneficiation of minerals is critical if we are to economically empower our communities, as we are 'exporting jobs' by not implementing it. Implementing mineral beneficiation locally will create numerous job opportunities by establishing processing plants and related industries, which in turn require a skilled workforce for various stages of the beneficiation process. This leads to direct employment in the plants and indirect employment in supporting sectors such as equipment manufacturing, logistics, and maintenance. By generating these jobs, local communities will gain steady incomes, reducing poverty levels. The increased economic activity will also stimulate local businesses, further promoting economic development and improving living standards.
- Many workers live far from their workplaces and end up spending a significant portion of their earnings on transportation, which perpetuates the cycle of poverty. By investing in proper and reliable infrastructure, such as efficient public transportation systems and affordable housing closer to employment hubs, the burden of high transport costs can be alleviated. This not only increases workers' disposable income but also improves their quality of life. Enhanced infrastructure can lead to more equitable access to job opportunities, education, and healthcare, all of which are critical for reducing poverty and fostering sustainable economic growth.
- Ensure sustainable human settlements by developing a National Indigency Policy that provides a basis for delivering free basic services to the indigent, enhancing current indigent policies applied by municipalities. Strengthening the existing human settlement programmes (national and provincial) to target the progressive realisation of the right to housing within a timeline proposed to reduce existing backlogs, serve the qualifying growing population, and secure the

- Comprehensive social protection floor by converting the Social Relief of Distress grant into a Basic Income Support grant for those aged 18 to 59 years with no or little income. The means test of this grant must be pegged at the food poverty line, currently ZAR711. Credible research from various sources indicates that most recipients use the ZAR350 SRD grant to buy food. The DSD and the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) must increase the grant amount to the food poverty level. The government must ensure the allocation of adequate financing towards strengthening the Basic Income Support grant.
- The government, through IDPs and Skills Development Plans (SLPs) needs to invest more in skills development focusing more on the needed relevant 21st Century digital skills to ensure the employability of local communities considering modernization in

1.5 LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND

Poverty remains concentrated in previously disadvantaged areas, such as the former homelands—areas that were set aside for black South Africans along ethnic lines during Apartheid. It also affects female-headed households rather than male-headed households. Marginalised groups such as black people, females, children, and people living in rural areas therefore remain left behind in South Africa.

1.6 INTERLINKAGES

As mentioned above, poverty in South Africa is closely linked with inequality and unemployment. South Africa is one of the most unequal societies globally, with historical factors like apartheid contributing significantly to persistent inequality. In South Africa, SDG 1 is therefore interlinked with SDG 10.

Gender inequality is another dimension that impacts poverty. Women in South Africa often face higher rates of poverty and unemployment, and promoting gender equality is crucial for reducing overall poverty and links this SDG to SDG 5 (gender equality and women's empowerment). High unemployment rates are a critical factor contributing to poverty in South Africa.

Poverty is also a symptom of an inadequate and unjust education system, which traps many



individuals in circumstances of deprivation; SDG 1 is therefore also linked to SDG 4. As Kumi Naidoo (2010:111) argues, education provides a chance to break free from poverty. He added that it's the absence of education opportunities that trap people in a lifetime of poverty.

Creating decent jobs and fostering economic growth are vital to lifting people out of poverty; this links this SDG to SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth).

Food insecurity is a significant aspect of poverty. Many South Africans struggle with hunger due to unemployment and economic challenges. SDG 2 and SDG1 are therefore also interlinked.

1.7 CONCLUSION

South Africa has made limited progress on ending poverty by 2030. There is marginal progress on multidimensional poverty due to the increased access to social wages, including health care, education, and housing. The root causes of poverty in South Africa is lack of livelihood capital for households to engage in livelihoods activities. Communities depend on the labour market for their livelihoods, with limited access to land and livelihood assets. The national strategy to reduce poverty includes provision of social protection; a social wage comprising access to health, education, and housing; as well the expanded public works program.

It is important to consider enabling productive livelihoods by redefining informal work as a legitimate source of livelihood and build an ecosystem of social and economic services to improve productivity in the informal sector. This must be linked to township economy initiatives and should enhance economic opportunities, access to essential and social services, and improve governance. A comprehensive livelihood strategy and plan must consider rural and urban poverty, which would require different pathways out of poverty.

Introducing a comprehensive social protection floor or permanent Basic Income Support grant for individuals aged 18-59 with minimal or no income should align with the progressive realization of the right to social assistance. This grant should at least be at the current food poverty line of ZAR760, working toward the upper-bound poverty line, reflecting its primary use for essential food purchases, as evidenced

We cannot end poverty without talking about the elephant in the room—the land issue. Land can play a pivotal role in enhancing productive assets and achieving economic justice through land restitution. Currently, the black majority, who were historically dispossessed of their land, hold a disproportionately small share of the country's land. By returning land to this majority, beneficiaries can engage in agriculture, start businesses, and secure loans, transforming the land into productive assets. This can lead to increased food production, job creation, and poverty reduction. Additionally, developing industrial zones and affordable housing on restituted land can stimulate local economies, create employment, and reduce transport costs for workers. This dual approach addresses historical injustices and promotes sustainable development, ultimately contributing to a more equitable and prosperous society.



2

ZERO HUNGER



2.1 INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

SDG 2²⁰ seeks to end hunger, achieve security, improve nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture. This report aims to complement South Africa's Report on the SDGs 2024 and incorporates perspectives from non-governmental organisations, community groups, and other civil society stakeholders involved in food security and agricultural sustainability in South Africa.

While the country has been characterised as being nationally food secure, there are concerning pockets of food insecurity expressed through hunger. According to the 2020 Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) data, 17.3% of South Africans experienced moderate-to-severe food insecurity, while 7% experienced extreme food insecurity.²¹ Although South Africa allocates a higher percentage of its GDP to social assistance (3%)²² compared to other countries on the continent, there is little to no access to nutritious food for low-income households.

In 2023, South Africa faced notable food price increases driven by inflationary pressures stemming from global geopolitical tensions and export restrictions by major grain producers. It is expected

that by 2025, nearly half of South Africa's population will be food insecure, with 48.96% potentially not having enough to eat.²³

South Africa has a well-developed commercial agricultural sector that is globally competitive. Its commercial food sector comprises 40,000 farms and vibrant agro-industries that produce 80% of food. The maturity of the commercial agricultural sector is reflected in the increase in South Africa's total agricultural production over the past 10 years. This sector produces high-quality food that is exported to countries around the world, accounting for approximately 5% of GDP and 14% of total merchandise exports.²⁴ Statistics South Africa reports a rise in the gross value added (GVA) of agriculture, forestry, and fishing from ZAR165.2 billion in 2014 to ZAR210.4 billion in 2023 (nominal value).

The NDP states that "The strategy should ensure access to basic services, food security and the empowerment of farmworkers".²⁵ Thus, central to the achievement of food security is the exploration of sustainable agricultural practices to deal with the challenges of climate change. The government has tried to ensure that there are frameworks that ensure that it meets the goal of promoting access

20 Writing group contributors: Zanele Matebula (FES), Dr Mbuso Nkosi (University of Witwatersrand), Zanele Mabaso (Kagiso Trust), Lynette Maart, Gijs Boor, Yared Tsegay and Puseletso Maile (African Monitor), Adela Ndlovu (Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator), Jessica Williams, Angelina Mdakanevi, Awande Nxumalo, Isabella Liba, Lebohlang Mothapo, Lesedi Malemela Luvuyo Sandi, Nyeleti Mlambo, Neliswa Fuku and Rakgadi Mangweta (Kagiso Trust), Bakang Enele, Batlhalifi Nkgothoe (Global Change Institute), Bongani Mkhize, Christopher Matshidzula (Uthando Primary School), Cornelius Sibusiso Mpinga (Iketleng Primary School), Dladla Mokeki, Emily Tjale (Land Access Movement of South Africa), Faiza Abraham-Smith (Institute for the Advocacy of Journalism), Gladys Ndebele, Goodboy Cyril Gumede, Itumeleng Tau, Iyedi Mashifane, Jane Mabaso (Imperial & Motus Community Trust), Kat Yassim, Kedibone Ditshego, Kgotso Letsoko, Lemogang Senna (Thulamela Business Forum), Leona Archary (Agricultural Development Agency), Mamashoabathe Noko (Foundation for Human Rights), Masivelane Sweleka (Engcobo Men As Partners), Matlodi Mashifane, Michael Chauke (Moretele Community Foundation), Moeketsi Koahela, Mpho Nchabeleng, Mthandeki Calvin (Makhanga YouthSA), Naphtali Ng'uni (Operation Hunger), Nomkhosi Khumalo, Ntokozo Zondi (The Foundation for Human Rights), Ntsoaki Phali (Food Empowerment Zone), Palesa Madito, Patricia Mokgosi (The Department of Educational Foundation-Tshwane University of Technology), Pinkie Malepe, Robert Langa, Sihle Mahonga (Rural Health Advocacy Project), Simon Ramapuputla (Workers World), Smanga Mgida, Tamsin Mzozoyana (Krystal Consulting) and Tlotliso Nhlapo (Food Empowerment Zone).

21 Stats SA. (2020). Measuring Food Security in South Africa: Applying the Food Insecurity Experience Scale. Stats SA <https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/Report-03-00-19/Report-03-00-192020.pdf>

22 World Bank. (2021). South Africa Social Assistance Programs and Systems Review. World Bank. <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/238611633430611402/pdf/South-Africa-Social-Assistance-Programs-and-Systems-Review.pdf>

23 Shoprite Holdings. (2023). Calls for action to counter food insecurity. Shoprite Holdings <https://www.shopriteholdings.co.za/newsroom/2023/world-food-day-2023.html#:~:text=By%202025%20nearly%20half%20of,next%20meal%20will%20come%20from>

24 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations; European Union; Agriculture Research for Development. (2022). Food systems profile. Food Security. <https://foodsecurity.ac.za/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Food-Systems-Profile-South-Africa-Catalysing-the-sustainable-and-inclusive-transformation-of-food-systems.pdf>

25 National Planning Commission. (2012). National Development Plan 2030: Our Future - Make it Work. DPME https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201409/ndp-2030-our-future-make-it-workr.pdf



BOX 2 CIVIL SOCIETY SCORE CARD

The CSO technical writing group considered five of the eight targets including (2.1) end hunger and ensure access by all people; (2.2) end all forms of malnutrition; (2.3) double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers; (2.5) maintain the genetic diversity of seeds, cultivated plants and farmed and domesticated animals and their related wild species; and (2.A) increase investments in rural agriculture, research, and technology.

Based on the above targets and using the scorecard developed for this study, the CSO working group rated South Africa's performance on Goal 2 as **Level 2: low progress**.

AREAS	RATING
1. Governance and policy framework	3
2. Plans and strategies	3
3. Institutional support	3
4. Budgets	3
5. Implementation	3
6. Public Awareness	2
7. Transparency and accountability	2
8. Multi-stakeholder partnerships	2
9. Citizen participation and civil society engagement	3
TOTAL	2.7

The working group acknowledges that South Africa has policies in place and that there is alignment between the SDG agenda and the national plan, with budgets in place. However, the budgets are not standardised and the plans in place do not align with processes at the local level.

Transparency and accountability mechanisms are being planned, but government accountability to citizens must be strengthened according to Agenda 2030. Strengthening multi-stakeholder partnerships is essential to ensure collaboration, capacity building, and coherence of programmes between and amongst departments and various stakeholders.

There is some citizen participation and civil society engagement with non-state actors through government departments that are responsible for the implementation of the targets and goals. Public hearings are an example of government inviting civil society for its contributions in crafting policies – but without supporting participation.

to food. This finds expression in the 2014 National Policy on Food and Nutrition Security and the 2017 National Food and Nutrition Security Plan.

Civil society holds the view that food security in South Africa can be only addressed by reforming the food system through adopting an agroecological approach to agriculture. This transformative framework is inclusive and green—an alternative

to the prevailing market-driven approach, is a key lever for achieving food sovereignty, is sustainable, and has the potential to address inequalities and hunger. Civil society groups led by South African Food Sovereignty Campaign (SAFSC) has initiated a process to develop a People's Food Sovereignty Act to transform the country's unjust and unsustainable food system.²⁶

26 Food Sovereignty Campaign. (2018). Food Sovereignty Campaign.



2.2 PERFORMANCE ON TARGETS

The civil society technical writing group reviewed South Africa's performance on Goal 2, considering the national context and features of the food systems, policy frameworks, food insecurity, and access to land and support.

Target 2.1: By 2030, end hunger and ensure access by all people, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations, including infants, to safe, nutritious, and sufficient food all year around.

Access to land is one of the principal contributors to food security in South Africa. The data below shows that households engaged in agricultural activities are less likely to consider themselves as having inadequate access to food. A Stats SA report shows that in 2021, 20.9% of households nationally considered their access to food as inadequate or severely inadequate. In certain areas, such as the Northern Cape (35.8%), Mpumalanga (32.6%), and the North West (30.9%), inadequate access to food was more common. In contrast, only 5.7% of households in Limpopo, which had the highest number of households (37.9%) involved in agricultural activities in 2021, reported inadequate access to food. In Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal, 14.9% and 14.2% of households respectively reported food inadequacy.²⁷ Limpopo also had the lowest percentage of people experiencing food inadequacy.

Research shows that poor households allocate 40% of their income on food, compared to 5% for wealthy households. The 28-item urban food basket increased by 9.6% from December 2022 (ZAR1,131.01) to December 2023 (ZAR1,239.59), with a monthly increase of 0.6% during that period.²⁸ As a result, a large proportion of poor South African households are struggling to afford a basic healthy food basket. South Africa has further encountered

South Africa has a range of food and social safety nets. These include social assistance grants, school feeding programmes, community food gardens, food banks, emergency relief efforts, nutrition education, subsidised food programmes, unemployment insurance, healthcare access through the National Health Insurance (NHI), social housing, skills development, and community-based support services. However, these initiatives do not provide the comprehensive support needed to combat malnutrition and hunger effectively.³⁰

Target 2.2: By 2030, end all forms of malnutrition, including achieving, by 2025, the internationally agreed targets on stunting and wasting in children under 5 years of age, and address the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women and older persons.

South Africa is 'on course' to meet two of the global nutrition targets for which there was sufficient data to assess progress: wasting, with 3.4% of children under 5 years of age affected (lower than the 6% average for the African region); and the prevalence of overweight children under 5 years of age, which in 2020 stood at 11.6%.³¹

No progress has been made towards achieving the target of reducing anaemia among women of reproductive age. The low-birth-weight target remains unachieved, with 14.2% of infants having a low weight at birth, and there is insufficient data to assess progress towards the exclusive breastfeeding target.

The nutritional status of children and young people in South Africa is poor and linked to inequities.³² Stunting—an indicator of chronic undernutrition—affects around 27% of the country's children, with coexisting challenges of wasting, micronutrient deficiencies, and obesity.³³ While self-reported hunger of children has declined, stunting remains exceptionally high for an upper middle-income country. The accompanying

27 Stats SA. (2021). Assessing Food Inadequacy and Hunger in South Africa 2021: Using the General Household Survey. Stats SA. <https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/03-00-20/03-00-202021.pdf>

28 NAMC. (2024). Food basket monthly. NAMC. <https://www.namc.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Food-Basket-Price-Monthly-Report-January-2024.pdf>.

29 Business Tech. (2023). Competition Commission launches inquiry into food prices in South Africa. BusinessTech.

<https://businesstech.co.za/news/government/664917/competition-commission-launches-inquiry-into-food-prices-in-south-africa/>

30 Food and Agricultural Organization. (2023). National Food and Nutrition Security Plan. FAO. <https://www.fao.org/faolex/results/details/en/c/LEX-FAOC211944>

31 Global Nutrition Report. (2020). South Africa: The burden of malnutrition at a glance. Global Nutrition Report.

<https://globalnutritionreport.org/resources/nutrition-profiles/africa/southern-africa/south-africa/>

32 Food and nutrition security. (2020). South African Child Gauge. Innovation Edge.

https://innovationedge.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/ChildGauge_2020_screen_final.pdf

33 Ibid





adolescent obesity has resulted in more diet-related non-communicable diseases (NCDs), with 42.9% of adult (aged 18 years and over) women and 18.2% of adult men living with obesity.³⁴

One way in which the government has tried to deal with nutrition and stunted growth is by promoting the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP). Data gathered between 2009 and 2021 indicates that “three-quarters (77,3%) of learners who attended public schools benefitted from school feeding schemes in 2021, compared to 63,1% in 2009. Learners in Limpopo (91,9%) and Mpumalanga (89,1%) most commonly benefitted from this programme, while only 55,2% of learners in Western Cape and 61,2% of learners in Gauteng benefitted from this type of programme”.³⁵

The NSNP needs to be expanded to factor in the needs of the community, especially women and those living with disabilities. Schools with available hectares of land should embark on agroecological farming through the Sovereignty Hubs suggested above. Involving unskilled and semi-skilled community members in these initiatives ensures that the NSNP safety net extends beyond learners.

Target 2.3 By 2030, double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, in particular women, indigenous peoples, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers, including through secure and equal access to land, other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets and opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment.

At the household level, South Africa has low agricultural production. In 2021, 3.1 million (17.3%) households were involved in agricultural activities. Most of these households are located in non-metro and rural areas: Limpopo (37,9%), Eastern Cape (33,4%) and Mpumalanga (32,2%) were most involved, while only 2,9% of households in Western Cape, and 6,4% of households in Gauteng engaged in some agricultural activity.³⁶ About 12% of the households involved in agricultural

Small-scale farmers in South Africa confront numerous obstacles, including difficulties in accessing suitable land, finance, and markets. Climate change-induced challenges exacerbate their struggles, as erratic weather patterns and environmental degradation impact crop yields and livestock productivity. Moreover, limited access to technical support, inputs, and modern farming technologies hinder their ability to adopt efficient agricultural practices. Policy and institutional constraints, coupled with social and economic marginalisation, further compound their vulnerability.

The 1913 Land Act initiated the process of confinement of the black population of South Africa into specific areas that represented less than 10% of the country’s land. Land redistribution has been very slow. A Quality-of-Life Survey commissioned by the Department of Land Affairs identified food security as the primary determinant of the well-being of people directly affected by land reform. Vulnerable and disadvantaged South Africans, in particular black South Africans, continue to face the effects of land dispossession. This challenge is exacerbated by a lack of adequate attention to finalising land restitution claims and addressing issues pertaining to the access, use, and management of land as afforded by the Spatial Planning and Land Use Management Act of 2013, Restitution of Land Rights Act of 1994 and Provision of Land and Assistance Act of 1993, amongst other provisions. In 1994, the new government set a target of redistributing 30% of the 77 million hectares within the first five years in government. Over the years, the government has consistently adjusted this target, and now their aim is to achieve 30% by 2030.

Through the acquisition of 115 467 hectares of strategically located land, the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD) stated in its 2023 Budget Vote that it would concentrate on promoting fair land redistribution and agricultural development over the medium term.³⁸ Of this land, 50% is to be allocated

34 Ibid

35 Statistics South Africa. (2021). General Household Survey 2021. Stats SA. <https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0318/P03182021.pdf>

36 Ibid.

37 Statistics South Africa. (2023). Focus on food inadequacy and hunger in South Africa in 2021. Stats SA. <https://www.statssa.gov.za/?p=16235>

38 National Treasury. (2023). Budget Vote 29 of the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development. DARRLD. <https://www.treasury.gov.za/documents/national%20budget/2023/ene/Vote%2029%20Agriculture,%20Land%20Reform%20and%20Rural%20Development.pdf>



Target 2.5: By 2020, maintain the genetic diversity of seeds, cultivated plants, and farmed and domesticated animals and their related wild species, including through soundly managed and diversified seed and plant banks at the national, regional, and international levels and promote access to and fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilisation of generic resources and associated traditional knowledge, as internationally agreed.

Land degradation in South Africa is a significant environmental issue with severe impacts on the country's ecosystems and agricultural productivity. Soil degradation affects 70% of the country's land, with sheet and gully erosion covering an area of 0.72 million hectares. Vegetation degradation is also widespread, with areas of severe degradation corresponding closely with the distribution of communal rangelands in provinces like Limpopo, KwaZulu-Natal, and the Eastern Cape. Land degradation is primarily driven by land tenure, inappropriate land use, and management practices within unique ecosystems.

The South African government, through the Department of Agriculture Land Reform and Rural Development, operates a seed distribution programme that provides communities with vegetable seeds for farming. The seeds provided though are genetically modified, making it hard to rehabilitate the soil in future and creating conditions where many communities end up farming a single crop (monocropping). Many communities are struggling with the distribution and sharing of seeds, which is why we recommend the creation of food hubs.

DAARLD is seeking to become a party to the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, which ensures that farmers and plant breeders can easily access the raw genetic material needed to develop new crop varieties, including those with higher yields and those that are resilient to climate change. South Africa is requesting entry to jointly share information in an effort to benchmark and obtain the highest calibre plant material.³⁹ Additionally, it is for security purposes as materials are registered upon South Africa's ratification of the treaty, granting protection.

This means that South Africa can rely on other nations for research and access to existing material in the unlikely event that all maize varieties are lost.

Civil society advocates for food sovereignty because of its potential to address unemployment in rural areas, and because it also gives South Africa the right to protect its local producers from cheap imports and controls production. It also ensures that the right to use and manage lands, territories, water, seeds, livestock and biodiversity are in the hands of those who produce food — and not the corporate sector.⁴⁰ According to Surplus People Project (SPP), additional to land reform, a comprehensive agrarian reform policy/strategy is required to address broader issues of the rural economy (e.g. housing, infrastructure, roads, health care, education, inputs, research, extension, markets, processing, and infrastructure, etc.). Access to land creates livelihood opportunities for the poor and vulnerable in the areas that we work and enhanced the opportunities of residents.⁴¹

In the West Coast of South Africa, in Lutzville, we saw the community forming the West Coast Food Sovereignty and Solidarity Forum (WCFSSF) in 2016. The women-led WCFSSF started community gardens by using indigenous seeds which they collected by visiting various community gardens and farms. WCFSSF prides itself in practising agroecology and, during the Covid-19 lockdowns, they were able to distribute cultural seeds and seedlings in the community and shared the produce within the community to combat hunger.

2.3 POLICY AND INSTITUTIONAL READINESS TO DELIVER ON 2030 AGENDA

South Africa introduced the National Policy on Food and Nutrition Security (NPFNS) in 2014 and the National Food and Nutrition Security Plan for South Africa (NFNSP) in 2017.

The Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries introduced the NPFNS and recognises the policy's role as a key pillar in delivering the objectives of the National Development Plan. The aim of the NPFNS is to provide a broad framework

39 Statistics South Africa. (2023). Focus on food inadequacy and hunger in South Africa in 2021. Stats SA. <https://www.statssa.gov.za/?p=16235>

40 Surplus People Project. (n.d). SPP and Agrarian Transformation. SPP. <https://spp.org.za/impact-areas/agrarian-transformation/>

41 Surplus Peoples Project. (2018). Submission to the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) on The Impact of Rural Land Use and Ownership Patterns on Human Rights From the Surplus People Project. SPP. <https://spp.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Submission-to-the-South-African-Human-Rights-Commission-SAHRC.pdf>



which guides national, provincial, and local governments in pursuing food security at every level. Its strategic goal is to ensure the availability, accessibility of safe and nutritious food at national and household levels, with the policy centred around the following five pillars: the availability of improved nutritional safety nets which include NGO interventions, improved nutrition education, aligning investment in agriculture towards local economic development in rural areas, improve market participation of the emerging agricultural sector through public-private partnerships, and food and nutrition security risk management in response to the (production) challenges.⁴²

National Food and Nutrition Security Plan for South Africa (NFNSP) followed three years after the NPFNS was first introduced. By this time, South Africa had almost 60 different policies, strategies, plans and programmes targeting hunger and malnutrition, but still lacked a single integrated national plan to achieve food security.

The NFNSP was therefore introduced to serve ‘as a coherent framework to harness all these [different] efforts towards a common direction. Its vision is to achieve optimal food security and enhanced nutritional status for all South Africans, and its mission is to significantly improve food security and reduce malnutrition in all its forms to enable healthy and productive lives for the people of South Africa.

2.4 GAPS AND ACCELERATORS

Civil society’s assessment of the country’s performance on Goal 2 revealed the gaps and accelerators listed below.

Gaps

- The slow progress on land reform in South Africa is having significant implications for marginalised communities, particularly in terms of their access

- A few retailers control the distribution of food, with the market dominating it. The lack of capital restricts many community farming projects, further limiting their access to food and making them reliant on large agribusiness and commercial retailers.
- Inflation and price fixing by retailers significantly exacerbate food insecurity among the vulnerable by eroding their purchasing power and making it increasingly difficult to afford nutritious food.
- Limited access to financial resources, technical support, and land for marginalised groups and lack of acknowledgment of urban food insecurity, and low agricultural output of subsistence farming at the household level, especially in urban areas.

Accelerator

- To bolster land ownership in rural areas, particularly under tribal control in South Africa, expedited land restitution processes, community engagement, and adequate budget allocations are essential. Additionally, investing in capacity building and ensuring transparency and accountability will accelerate land restitution, promote rural development, and foster greater social and economic inclusion for historically marginalised groups.

2.5 LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND

In general, food insecurity and malnutrition are more common in poor black homes than in white households. Women-headed households suffer more from food insecurity than male-headed households. Moreover, socioeconomic inequalities contribute to poor health as more females (55.1%) than males (41.1%) develop non-communicable disease comorbidities. NCD prevalence is also higher in urban (57%) than rural areas (43%).⁴³ Women and young people, especially those from a lower socioeconomic status and young people not in school, are at the

42 Ibid.

43 Ajaero, C. K., De Wet, N., & Odimegwu, C. O. (2020). Integrating rural–urban differentials in the appraisal of prevalence and risk factors of non-communicable diseases in South Africa. *GeoJournal*, 1-15. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10708-020-10282-5>





- The Competition Commission requires increased capacity to tackle price-fixing in the food industry. This involves leveraging advanced data analysis and surveillance techniques, implementing whistleblower programmes, gathering market intelligence, collaborating with industry stakeholders, conducting compliance audits, enforcing stringent penalties, adopting technology and automation, and fostering cross-agency collaboration.
- The government should consider implementing a Food Security Act to oversee the entire agricultural value chain, ensuring equitable and affordable access to food for all citizens. This legislation aims to address issues of food scarcity, accessibility, and affordability by monitoring and regulating farming, food production, processing, and distribution. Through this comprehensive approach, the government can work towards achieving sustainable food security and reducing food insecurity among its citizens.
- The decrease in emerging black farmers highlights the crucial need to address barriers such as limited access to financial resources, technical support, and land. Solutions include providing tailored financial assistance, comprehensive training programs, and equitable access to land through redistribution efforts. These measures aim to empower emerging farmers, revitalise the agricultural sector, and promote inclusive rural development in South Africa.

2.6 INTERLINKAGES

In the context of South Africa, food security links to Goal 1 (No Poverty), Goal 8 (Decent Work), Goal 10 (Reduced Inequality), Goal 13 (Climate Action), and Goal 5 (Gender Equality). This is because the current state of food insecurity in South Africa is equally exacerbated by load shedding, rising cost of living, high unemployment, climate change, and sluggish agricultural growth, putting vulnerable and historically disadvantaged groups at risk.⁴⁴ For instance, climate change can cause crop and water scarcity, and livestock damage leading to higher food expenses and increased prices for essential food items. In such conditions, food insecurity becomes imminent.

2.7 CONCLUSION

While South Africa has put social protection systems in place to ensure that people have food on the table, it is still far from achieving food security, instead more of its population is at risk of being food insecure. There is a lot more still needs to be done to ensure that people have access to nutritious food. The ZAR350 SRD grant is insufficient for food and should be raised to the monthly food poverty line of ZAR760. Moreover, access to land for marginalised groups should be fast-tracked. There is also a need to open the agricultural commercial sector to be more inclusive and supportive of emerging black farmers. Given issues around land degradation in the country, there is also a need to encourage and support at community level and increase the number of households and communities involved in farming through agriculture practices such as agroecology.

44 Ibid.



3

QUALITY EDUCATION



3.1 INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

Goal 4⁴⁵ of the SDG agenda aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

South Africa's education system faces significant challenges related to quality and performance. South African learners' reading proficiency is a major concern, with 81% of grade 4 learners unable to read for meaning in 2021 (up from 78% in 2016). Brazilian grade 4 students scored 419 points, while South Africa scored 288 points, putting the average South African student 3.3 years behind. Despite similar GDP per capita, Brazilian grade 4 students have a 61% basic reading level, compared to 19% in South Africa.

Racial, economic, and social disparities persist in South Africa's education system. The top 200 schools in the country achieve more distinctions in mathematics than the next 6,600 schools combined.⁴⁶ The test score gap between the top 20% of schools and the rest is the widest globally

The education system in South Africa also continues to be characterised by inadequate and unsafe infrastructure in public schools, lack of learning and teaching support material (LTSM), unqualified and underqualified teachers, overcrowded classrooms, and inequalities. There continue to be great disparities in implementation between the nine Provincial Education Departments (PEDs), reflecting the socio-economic status.⁴⁷

Covid-19 disruptions in 2020 and 2021 had a detrimental effect on the education field, resulting in learning losses due to school closures, online teaching, and rotational timetables. Covid-19 laid bare the inequalities that the education system still faces in terms of the availability of water, sanitation, and connectivity. At the same time, it also showed a resilient system able to respond to challenges and able to develop guidelines to remove uncertainty in the shortest possible time.⁴⁸

South Africa's education system involves various key players who contribute to policymaking, implementation, oversight, and support. The Department of Basic Education (DBE) is responsible for primary and secondary education in South Africa and develops policies, curriculum standards, and oversees implementation at the provincial and national levels. The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) oversees post-secondary education, including universities, technical and vocational education and training (TVET) colleges, and other institutions of higher education. The National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) provides financial assistance to eligible students from low-income families to pursue higher education. Other key players include the Provincial Education Departments, the school governing body/ bodies (SGB), teacher unions, civil society, businesses, etc.

South Africa has both prior to and in the aftermath of the adoption of 2030 Agenda passed laws and

45 This working group was composed of Zanele Mabaso, Jessica Williams and Boichoko Dithake (Kagiso Trust), Ashton Mahery (Saide), Amaha Naidu (Learning Roads Solutions Academy), Puseletso Maile and Joseph Maniragena (African Monitor), Sabelo Mnguni (Mining Affected Communities United in Action), Desiree Letshuh, Lwanele Ndayi and Tshepo Nchabeleng (Tsogang Youth), Kevin Mahlobogoane, Dion Mahlangu and Mfundo Moyo (Tasty Tours), and Innocentia Mgyima.

46 Amnesty International. (2020). South Africa: Broken and unequal education perpetuating poverty and inequality. Amnesty International.

47 World Bank. (2018). Overcoming poverty and inequality in South Africa: An assessment of drivers, constraints and opportunities. World Bank. <https://elibrary.worldbank.org/doi/abs/10.1596/29614>

48 Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation. (2023). Towards a 30 Year Review of South Africa's Democracy. DPME. <https://www.dpme.gov.za/publications/30-Year/30%20Year%20Review/30%20Year%20Review%20Synthesis%20Report.pdf>.



BOX 3 CIVIL SOCIETY SCORE CARD

In reviewing South Africa’s progress and performance on SDG 4, the CSO working group considered the progress the country has made towards achieving the 3 targets under SDG 4 namely: universal primary and secondary education; early childhood development (ECD) and universal pre-primary education; equal access to technical/vocational and higher education; relevant skills for decent work; gender equality and inclusion; universal youth literacy and education for sustainable development and global citizenship.

Based on the above targets and using the scorecard developed for this study, the CSO working group rated South Africa’s performance on Goal 4 as **Level 2: low progress.**

AREAS	RATING
1. Governance and policy framework	3
2. Plans and strategies	3
3. Institutional support	2
4. Budgets	3
5. Implementation	2
6. Public Awareness	2
7. Transparency and accountability	2
8. Multi-stakeholder partnerships	3
9. Citizen participation and civil society engagement	2
TOTAL	2.4

The working group acknowledged that the country has developed some crucial policies and legislation together with related plans, strategies, programmes to deliver inclusive and quality education and its targets in line with the 2030 Agenda. South Africa has also allocated a budget and resources to deliver on these goals. However, implementing these policies, laws, plans, and strategies has been slow and protracted. The lack of clear mandate, capacity, and resources in underdeveloped state institutions and agencies contributes to the slow start of implementation for inclusive and quality education. In addition, although some mechanisms have been created to ensure transparency and accountability, they have yet to deliver on their mandate.

Public awareness of the agenda 2030 in the country remains relatively little, affecting citizen participation and civil society engagement on the goal. There is a significant lack of public awareness about the SDGs-including SDG4-amongst certain sectors of the population, such as rural communities and the youth. The existence of multi-stakeholder partnerships at different levels will aid in continuing to steer the implementation of this goal.

education and improve the quality of its education in line with the aims of SDG 4. Key education policies adopted by the country over the years cover access to schools, curriculum and assessment, school management and funding. These include the National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy published in 1995; the South African Schools Act (No.84 of 1996); the Policy on Adult Basic Education Training adopted in December 1997;

Draft Policy on Rural Education released for public comment in 2017; and the National Policy on an Equitable Provision of an Enabling School Physical Teaching and Learning Environment published in June 2010. There is close alignment between the SDG goals and the South African National Development Plan 2030, which sets out the country’s overall development strategy.



3.2 PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

Target 4.1: By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education, leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.

Access to and participation in education has increased. Recent statistics from 2022 place the total number of learners in school in South Africa at 13.4 million, meaning the majority (nearly 98%) of children of school going age (7-17) attend school. Of those, 12.7 million learners (95%) attend public schools. Many of the public schools in the country are “no fee schools” in line with the goal of free education.⁴⁹ The percentage of school learners in basic education not required to pay fees has increased from 71% in 2018 to 75% in 2021. These schools are not, however, automatically free, undermining the realisation of free education for some.

Completion rate of learners in primary education, lower secondary education, and upper secondary education have increased. The national completion rate for grade 7 has increased from 92.2% in 2010 to 96.6% in 2021.⁵⁰ The 2023 Stats SA SDG Country Report also shows a steady increase in grade 12 completion rates since 2010, going up from 45.6% to 61.3% in 2021.⁵¹ While the report highlights an overall improvement in reducing dropout rates for the youth population, the specific figures for 2021 reveal variations among different age groups. Data indicates that efforts may need to be targeted at certain age cohorts, such as 19-year-olds, to address and prevent higher dropout rates.

South Africa’s performance on quality education measured by proficiency levels in reading and mathematics, has over the years shown a slight improvement. The 2023 Stats SA SDG Country Report notes that grade 3 learner reading proficiency on PIRLS improved from 2006 to 2016.⁵² The report highlights an improvement in grade 9 learner mathematics proficiency, from 11.0% in 2002 to

41% in 2019.⁵³ Though improvement in literacy and numeracy skills both at primary and secondary school levels are welcome, they continue to fall far below the targets set by the government, reinforcing the fact that the country is making slower progress than expected on providing quality education.

Pregnancy is a major cause of school disruption, particularly among secondary students, often leading to the end of their education. In South Africa, only a third of pregnant adolescent girls return to school, with each passing year after childbirth decreasing the likelihood of their return. This cycle of disadvantage highlights the urgent need for targeted interventions to support pregnant and parenting teenagers in accessing education and breaking the cycle of poverty.⁵⁴

Education has received one of the greatest shares of government spending over the years. This trend is set to continue. The World Bank reported that the government allocated 6.1835% of GDP for education in South Africa in 2022.⁵⁵ The 2023 budget speech stated that government aims to allocate at least ZAR1.4 trillion to higher and basic education over the next three years.⁵⁶

The DPME report highlights pro-poor policies that have made attending school more accessible, leading to significant changes in education, including:

- The National School Nutrition Program that successfully fed over 9.6 million learners daily, but requires efficiency improvements amid rising food prices.
- Scholar transport enhances access and safety, but needs better resource allocation and coverage.
- The expansion of no-fee schools, support for learners with special needs, and school connectivity efforts have also contributed, though challenges in infrastructure and technology remain.

49 Department of Education. (2023). Education. South Africa Government. <https://www.gov.za/about-sa/education>

50 Ibid.

51 Stats SA. (2023). Sustainable Development Goals Country Report 2023 South Africa., Stats SA. https://www.statssa.gov.za/MDG/SDG_Country_report.pdf

52 Ibid.

53 Ibid.

54 Commission for Gender Equality. (2023). Learner Pregnancy-Policy Interplay: School Dropout of Adolescent Girls During Pregnancy and in the Postpartum Period in Selected South African Provinces. CGE <https://cge.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/cge-teenage-pregnacy-report.pdf>

55 South African Government News Agency. (24 February 2021). Education to remain a priority in 2021. SAnews. <https://www.sanews.gov.za/south-africa/education-remain-priority-2021>

56 Godogwana, E. (2023). Budget 2023 speech. National Treasury. <https://www.treasury.gov.za/documents/national%20budget/2023/speech/speech.pdf>





- The Accelerated Schools Infrastructure Delivery Initiative (ASIDI) and the SAFE initiative which have improved school facilities, but face persistent challenges due to slow progress, poor management, and maintenance issues.

Target 4.2: By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education.

Despite some progress in recent years, many children in South Africa still lack access to quality Early Childhood Development (ECD) services. According to the Thrive by Five Index 2022, only 45-55% of the approximately 1.2 million children in South Africa aged 4 to 5 years attend an Early Learning Programme (ELP), and two-thirds of these children live in households with a per capita income below the poverty line.

Before they even enter their first school classroom, most poor children in South Africa face significant barriers to success. As a result, about 57% of children enrolled in ELPs in South Africa fail to thrive by age five. In a typical group of 20 children starting Grade R, only eight will begin their formal education with the appropriate foundations in place. These children are likely to start school “On Track” and are more likely to stay “On Track”. Conversely, 11 out of these 20 children (more than half) will start school already struggling, either because of physical stunting or a lack of basic learning foundations. Of great concern is that one in every 20 children will enter Grade R at a significant disadvantage.

To improve equity, the government introduced the ECD conditional grant in 2017/18, to allow provinces to subsidise a larger number of children from poor households. Even though there is no data on the number of ECD subsidy recipients based on specific ages, implementing the grant resulted in a real increase in expenditure on ECD programmes. However, there has not been a statistically significant concurrent increase in nationwide enrolment. Total expenditure on early learning, family support, and early nutrition interventions

included in this review stood at ZAR36.1 billion in 2021/2022, the equivalent of 1.7% of total public expenditure, or 0.6% of GDP.⁵⁷

Early Childhood Development shifted from the Department of Social Development to the Department of Basic Education in 2022. The Department of Basic Education now leads a coordinated strategy across departments for this sector.⁵⁸ This significant step ensures that a proper foundation is laid for children to develop their capabilities. The World Health Organisation’s Nurturing care framework progress report states that a child’s first five years of life are crucial for development when most brain growth occurs. Therefore, children need care during this stage of Early Childhood Development. The appropriate care must include suitable healthcare and nutrition, stimulation, stress relief, and chances for play and learning⁵⁹.

Target 4.3: By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational, and tertiary education, including university.

More than 25% of young adults aged 18-25 in South Africa are not in employment, education, or training.

South Africa has universities, FET colleges, and adult education and training colleges in its higher education system, totaling over 4,000 institutes. In 2015, 6% of South Africans had a degree and 5.9% had a diploma. By 2023, these numbers increased to 7.3% and 6%, respectively.

The gender gap in tertiary education attainment almost closed in 2022, with females surpassing males at 13.1% compared to 12.3%. This marks a significant advancement from 1996, when only 6,7% of females and 8,6% of males had obtained tertiary education.⁶⁰ Of the 23 universities in South Africa, all but three enrolled more women than men in 2013, leading to a gender imbalance in favour of women of over 163,000.⁶¹

57 World Bank. (2023). South Africa public expenditure and institutional review for early childhood development 2023. World Bank <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099192001242341964/pdf/P1756791e5e59bde1ad6714d311b6261dd284d0e6d65.pdf>

58 Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation. (2023). Towards a 30 Year Review of South Africa’s Democracy (1994 – 2024). Pretoria: Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation. <https://www.dpme.gov.za/publications/30-Year/30%20Year%20Review/30%20Year%20Review%20Synthesis%20Report.pdf>

59 World Health Organization, & United Nations Children’s Fund. (2023). Nurturing care framework progress report 2018-2023: reflections and looking forward. World Health Organization. <https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/369449/9789240074460-eng.pdf?sequence=1>

60 Stats SA (2024). Census 2022: A profile of education enrolment, attainment and progression in South Africa. Stats SA. https://www.statssa.gov.za/?page_id=1854&PPN=Report-03-01-81&SCH=73904

61 Ibid.





NSFAS funding for economically disadvantaged students in universities and TVET colleges has doubled from ZAR21 billion in 2018 to nearly ZAR50 billion in 2023. The funding covers registration, tuition, food, accommodation, transport, learning materials, and personal care allowances for approved students. A new loan scheme assists the ‘missing middle’, benefiting an extra 30,000 students annually, aiming to enhance access to higher education and promote inclusivity. The new direct payment system introduced by NSFAS has faced controversy and payment delays, marring its success. Corruption allegations surround the appointment of service providers by NSFAS leaders for fund disbursement and accommodation.

3.3 POLICY AND INSTITUTIONAL READINESS TO DELIVER ON 2030 AGENDA

Several key policies and legislation govern education in South Africa. The fundamental policy framework is outlined in the Ministry of Basic Education’s White Paper on Education and Training published in February 1995. This document emphasises the importance of lifelong learning and the need for an integrated approach to education and training.

The National Education Policy Act (NEPA) (Act 27 of 1996) established the policies, responsibilities, and relations between national and provincial

authorities in education. To ensure that all learners have equal access to quality education without any form of discrimination, the South African Schools Act (SASA), passed in 1996 (Act 84 of 1996), makes it mandatory for children aged seven to 15 to attend school. Public adult learning centres are regulated by the Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) Act (Act 52 of 2000) for their establishment, governance, funding, and quality assurance.

Cabinet approved the white paper for post-school education and training, which was set out to transform the post-school system, on 20 November 2013. The white paper sets out guidelines to improve the capacity of the post-school education and training system to meet the country’s needs, as well as to integrate the various components of the post-school system. Some objectives of the white

- Dramatically increasing enrolments in Technical and Vocational Education and Training colleges from 400,000 in 2012 to 2.5 million students by 2030;
- Establishing 12 additional TVET Colleges by 2030; and
- Absorbing millions of youth and adults who have never attended school or dropped out into the new Community Colleges, aiming for 1 million enrolments by 2030.





3.4 GAPS AND ACCELERATORS

The civil society assessment of the goal has identified the following major challenges (gaps) and accelerators:

Gaps

- The education system continues to be characterised by inadequate and unsafe infrastructure in public schools, lack of learning and teaching support material (LTSM), unqualified and underqualified teachers, overcrowded classrooms, and inequalities. There continue to be great disparities in implementation between the nine Provincial Education Departments, reflecting the socio-economic status.
- The Auditor General of South Africa (AGSA) audit reports show irregular and wasteful expenditure on portions of the budget allocated to education. Reports by Corruption Watch and others echo these findings. The Sound the Alarm report⁶² released by Corruption Watch highlights 3,667 reports of education-related corruption received between 2012 and 2021. This problem is most prevalent at the provincial government level, where policy implementation occurs, but where the responsibilities and mandates are unclear. In addition, these policies do not always contain robust accountability, monitoring, and evaluation measures.

- The Schools Act has some gaps and needs to be amended urgently. Some court judgments have already highlighted and addressed some of these gaps, serving as a legal precedent that contributes to strengthening the legal framework on education. The formulation of this and other laws (and policies) related to education has some gaps and weaknesses, which some stakeholders attribute to the continued inadequate consultation of citizens and civil society during their development.

Accelerator

- The government of South Africa needs to ensure that the proposed amendments to the Schools Act (the Basic Education Laws Amendment Bill) strengthen governance and accountability in a manner that complies with the Constitution. The amendments should include clear measures to monitor progress and hold all stakeholders accountable for achieving educational goals.
- Promoting equitable learning by including LGBTQ+, disabled, and other vulnerable learners—including those from indigent households—in education services.
- In terms of digitisation, civil society advocates for access to free technological skills and resources in disadvantaged communities. This will help resolve the labour market mismatch.

62 Ncala, M. (2022). Sound the Alarm. Corruption Watch. https://www.corruptionwatch.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Sound-the-Alarm-Sectoral-Report-Education_Aug2022.pdf



- Scaling up successful pilot programs that are changing the landscape of education, such as the Beyers Naude District Whole School Development programme (DSWP), which is a holistic model-based intervention that addresses infrastructure development, curriculum support through educator capacitation and training, learner development, social welfare, as well as instructional leadership and governance in the schools including youth leadership development.

The Funza Lushaka Bursary Scheme, a government-funded multi-year programme aimed at promoting teaching as a career choice, remains crucial, especially as nearly half of current teachers are set to retire within this decade. It enables eligible students to complete teaching qualifications in

3.5 LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND

Poverty and exclusion are perpetuated among poor children in South Africa due to their challenging early years, affecting their education and long-term economic inclusion. Poverty also exacerbates the extra costs associated with disability, reducing families' ability to pay for education. Although there has been progress, people with disabilities, migrants and refugees, and those from poor socio-economic backgrounds are still left behind in accessing quality education.

3.6 INTERLINKAGES

Goal 4 (quality education) links to Goal 1 (no poverty), Goal 2 (zero hunger), Goal 5 (gender equality), Goal 8 (decent work and economic growth), and Goal 16—especially in its target 16.1, Reduce Violence Everywhere. The inadequate and unequal provision of learning opportunities for young children and youth in South Africa contributes to the high levels of unemployment and inequality faced by the country. As previously indicated, poverty affects young children's educational outcomes. A child's ability to learn effectively is hindered when they are sick or hungry, and chronic malnutrition compromises neurological and cognitive development.

3.7 CONCLUSION

While South Africa has made significant strides in increasing access to education at the primary and secondary levels, substantial challenges remain in ensuring the quality and equity of education. Profound disparities and inequalities mar the education system, with the top-performing schools achieving far greater results than the majority, highlighting a pronounced achievement gap. Issues such as inadequate infrastructure, insufficient learning materials, unqualified teachers, and overcrowded classrooms further exacerbate these challenges.

Efforts to improve the quality of education through policy reforms and increased government spending have shown some progress but do not meet the targets set by SDG 4. The legal and policy frameworks in place, while robust, require urgent amendments and better implementation to address gaps and ensure more effective governance and accountability.

To truly realize the goals of SDG 4, South Africa must address these multifaceted challenges through comprehensive, inclusive, and sustainable education reforms that leave no one behind. This requires the active participation of all stakeholders, including government, civil society, and the private sector, to create a fair and high-quality education system that can drive the nation's socio-economic development.

Finally, investing more in Early Childhood Development is essential, as it lays a proper foundation for children's development. The first five years of a child's life are crucial, as most brain growth occurs during this period. Therefore, children need comprehensive care that includes suitable healthcare and nutrition, stimulation, stress relief, and opportunities for play and learning. By prioritizing investments in ECD, we will ensure that children develop their full capabilities, setting them on a path for success in life.



4

ACHIEVE GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWER WOMEN AND GIRLS



4.1 INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

South Africa has made significant strides to accelerate gender equality and women's empowerment⁶³ through legislation, policies, and programmes. Despite this progress, more efforts are needed to achieve gender equality by 2030.

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa promotes non-discrimination, including that based on gender. The 2012 National Development Plan aims to achieve inclusive growth, prosperity, and development for all citizens of the country—including marginalised groups like LGBTQI+, People with Disability, and the girl-child—through social, economic, and political transformation. However, South Africa remains the most unequal society in the world, with inequality manifesting in skewed income distribution, unequal access to opportunities, gender disparities, and regional gaps that leave rural inhabitants significantly poorer than their urban counterparts.

South Africa has developed legislation and policies to ensure women's full and effective participation in the economy and equal leadership opportunities across political, economic, and public life. Women's socio-economic development is supported by specific plans, strategies, and programmes across all the three spheres of government. These include, amongst others, the National Gender Policy Framework (NGPF) for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality.

Globally, labour markets disadvantage women and young people, who often bear the brunt of inequalities. This is also the case for South Africa. The General Household Survey (GHS) conducted by

Statistics South Africa in 2021 reveals that women in the country face higher unemployment rates and lower workforce participation compared to men. In 2023, women had a labour force participation rate of 54.3% while men had a rate of 64.9%, creating a gap of 10.6 percentage points. Moreover, the female labour force participation rate has risen by only 4 percentage points in a decade, from 50.3% in 2013 to 54.3% in 2023.⁶⁴

South Africa's struggle with women's equal participation in the economy persists, despite the existence of laws supporting gender equality. Most women depend on grants and remittances as their main income sources. When employed, women are more likely to work in low-paying jobs under vulnerable conditions. Furthermore, 51.1% of South Africans are female, and women head 42% of households.⁶⁵



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64 Stats SA. (2023). Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS), 2nd Quarter 2023. Stats SA. <https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0211/P02112ndQuarter2023.pdf>

65 Stats SA. (2022). General Household Survey 2021. Stats SA. <https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0318/P03182021.pdf>.



BOX 4 GOAL 5 PERFORMANCE SCORECARD

Drawing on their vast experience in project implementation and research on gender equality and women’s empowerment, the CSO working group on Goal 5 assessed progress on specific targets (5.1, 5.2, 5.4, 5.5 and 5.A) by considering policy and institutional frameworks, resource allocation, and progress on delivery on the ground.

Participants included individuals working at grassroots level through community-based organisations, as well as those involved in policy advocacy and assessing gender equality at higher levels. This facilitated robust discussions that went beyond conventional research and surveys, incorporating the experiences and perspectives of individuals at the coalface of gender inequality in South Africa. Based on the above targets, the CSO working group rated South Africa’s performance on Goal 5 as **Level 1: very**

AREAS	RATING
1. Governance and policy framework	3
2. Plans and strategies	3
3. Institutional support	2
4. Budgets	2
5. Implementation	1
6. Public Awareness	1
7. Transparency and accountability	1
8. Multi-stakeholder partnerships	1
9. Citizen participation and civil society engagement	1
TOTAL	1.6

South Africa has comprehensive policies, laws, programmes, frameworks, and strategies to address gender inequalities and empower women. Despite this, there are still significant gaps in policy implementation. For instance, the National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence 2020-2030 (GBVF-NSP) is yet to be localised. There is a lack of coordination between the different spheres of government in terms of implementation at the local level.

Government agencies have not been cohesive in responding to policies related to gender equality and GBV. The government’s failure to estimate the costs of GBV-related Bills and Acts of Parliament has an impact on GBV. This is underscored by the absence of budgets for these initiatives in Municipal Integrated Development Plans. GBV is therefore not given priority by municipalities as it is an unfunded mandate. While there are local level frameworks in place, the lack of political will hampers the enforcement of adopted laws and policies across all levels of government.

The SDGs are not known by communities, rather in more high-level policy advocacy platforms. There is also a lack of transparency with respect to data. For example, the annual crime statistics from the Minister of Police do not provide specific details about different kinds of sexual offences reported in the various localities, making it difficult to clarify rape cases.

Collaboration among the private sector, government, civil society, and academia is essential for effectively addressing GBV in South Africa and fulfilling our collective responsibility. Civil society organises and coordinates citizen participation initiatives, inviting key stakeholders to engage, yet more must be done to educate and empower citizens.



4.2 ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS ON DELIVERY

Target 5.1: End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere.

South Africa has ratified and domesticated various international, continental, and regional instruments, conventions, protocols, and declarations aimed at addressing gender-based discrimination, including the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act (PEPUDA) 4 of 2000.⁶⁶ The lived reality of South African women does not align with these laws. The Covid-19 pandemic and resulting lockdown measures, for example, not only worsened gender-based violence (GBV) but also hindered women's economic participation, leading to increased poverty among female-headed households. Women emerged from the Covid-19 pandemic as the most socio-economically affected of the marginalised groups, notwithstanding the fact that women-owned businesses (fully owned as well as partially owned), also received Covid-19 funds.

Target 5.2: Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.

Gender-based violence and femicide (GBVF) is one of the most prevalent forms of violence in South Africa.⁶⁷ According to 2020 estimates from the World Health Organisation (WHO), 12.1 in every 100,000 women in South Africa are killed by an intimate partner annually, exceeding the global average (2.6) by more than five times.⁶⁸

In 2020, South Africa enacted the National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (NSP-GBVF), a comprehensive and multi-sectoral policy framework, as a national response to the crisis of GBVF. Despite the

yet to be established. The lack of resources poses a significant obstacle to fully and effectively implementing the NSP-GBVF.

Target 5.4: Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure, and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate.

The distribution of unpaid care work is unequal between genders, with women shouldering a significantly larger burden.⁶⁹ Women in South Africa do eight times more unpaid care work than men, as per the 2010 Stats SA Time Use Survey.⁷⁰ Women's employment prospects are impacted by the amount of time dedicated to unpaid care work.⁷¹ Studies show that a higher number of children per household significantly decreases labour force engagement.⁷² The restriction of women's participation in the labour market often stems from traditional gender norms, which place expectations for women to perform unpaid care work.⁷³

In 2023, the Johannesburg High Court ruled that certain sections of the Basic Conditions of Employment Act 75 of 1997 and Unemployment Insurance Fund Act 63 of 2001—specifically provisions for maternity, parental, adoption and commissioning parent leave—were unconstitutional due to their unequal treatment of mothers and fathers, among others.⁷⁴ While Parliament has until 2025 to rectify the defects of the provisions, the recent ruling grants all parents the right to share parental leave, a significant advancement towards gender equality.

Target 5.5: Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public life.

66 Department of Justice and Constitutional Development [Promotion of equality and prevention of unfair discrimination act 4 of 2000]. (2023). Justice.

67 World Bank. (2019). Gender-based violence: Violence against women and girls. World Bank. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/socialsustainability/brief/violence-against-women-and-girls>

68 Africa Centre for HIV/AIDS Management. (08 August 2023). Always on the alert: Has this become 'normal' for women? Stellenbosch University. <https://www.aidscentre.sun.ac.za/always-on-the-alert-has-this-become-normal-for-women/#:::text=According%20to%202020%20estimates%20from,in%20dodgy%20areas%20at%20night.>

69 Stats SA. (2010). Time use survey 2010. Stats SA. <https://www.datafirst.uct.ac.za/dataportal/index.php/catalog/497>

70 Ibid.

71 Statistics South Africa. (2022). Gender Series Volume IX: Women Empowerment, 2017–2022. Stats SA.

https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/Report-03-10-26/WE_Gender%20Presentation%2018-10_22_%20Final%20for%20SG%20.pdf

72 Ibid.

73 Ibid.

74 The Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (2023). Van Wyk & Others v Minister of Labour and Employment. CCMA. <https://www.ccm.org.za/labourlaws/breaking-the-mold-equal-parental-leave-for-all/>





South Africa has made strides in enacting gender equality and women’s empowerment legislation, but practical implementation is still needed to achieve true equity. In April 2023, President Cyril Ramaphosa signed the Employment Equity Amendment Act of 2022 (EEAA), intended to strengthen the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 (EEA), into law. Section 15A of the EEAA introduces sectoral numerical targets to the equitable representation of people from designated groups at all occupational levels in the workforce.

In terms of the workforce representation in South Africa, the 2023 Employment Equity Report revealed the following percentages of females compared to men: 26.5% in top management, 37.2% in senior management, 48.2% in professional qualifications, 49.4% in technical skills, 44.8% in semi-skilled roles, and 43.5% in unskilled roles.⁷⁵

By 2021, South Africa’s municipal workforce numbered 282,286 individuals, of which 13,492 were at senior-level posts, encompassing directors and managers. According to Stats SA’s latest report, 5,312 of these senior-level positions were occupied by women, accounting for only 39% - falling well below the 50% target for gender representation.⁷⁶ However, in aggregate, municipalities are doing better than the general labour force. In 2021, women held 32% of managerial posts in the South African

A 2021 Commission for Gender Equality (CGE) report reveals a concerning outlook on gender mainstreaming and implementation of the Women’s Charter in municipalities.⁷⁸ Local government is struggling with the target of enabling women’s participation and decision-making roles at all levels. The situation is far from ideal. In a male-dominated workforce, women cannot simply become leaders out of nowhere.

4.3 POLICY AND INSTITUTIONAL READINESS TO DELIVER ON 2030 AGENDA

South Africa has subscribed to several frameworks that are aimed at improving the quality of life of women. Nationally, women’s empowerment has found its expression in the National Development Plan (NDP 2030), a blueprint of the country’s developmental agenda. Key enabling elements of empowerment include increasing the participation of women in education and the labour market and implementing the principle of equal pay for work of equal value. Empowerment of women is also a cornerstone of the National Strategic Plan of Gender-Based Violence and Femicide 2020-2030, which argues that if women’s economic situations are improved, their susceptibility to abuse and violence becomes less.

75 Department of Employment and Labour. (2023). About a quarter of females sit in the top management level in SA labour market – Employment Equity. Labour. <https://www.labour.gov.za/Media-Desk/Media-Statements/Pages/About-a-quarter-of-females,-sit-in-the-top-management-level-in-SA-labour-market-%E2%80%93-Employment-Equity.aspx>

76 Statistics South Africa. (2023). Gender Equality in local government: an update. Stats SA. <https://www.statssa.gov.za/?p=16582>

77 CCMA 2023.

78 Ibid.



The Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdown measures further compounded GBV in South Africa. In 2020, the South African government amended three existing GBV laws to respond to the GBV trends in South Africa, namely the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act; the Criminal and Related Matters Amendment Act; and the Domestic Violence Amendment Act.

To improve the conditions and environment for the participation of women in the economy, South Africa has domesticated the International Labour Organisation's Violence and Harassment Convention (ILO C190) through the gazetting of the Code of Good Practice on the Prevention and Elimination of Harassment in the Workplace. The National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC) drove public participation, including a social dialogue between government, business, labour, and civil society which eventually resulted in the domestication of ILO C190.

4.4 GAPS AND ACCELERATORS

Civil society's assessment of the country's performance on Goal 5 has identified the following gaps and accelerators:

- The continued lack of gender (sex) disaggregated data
- The implementation of recently amended GBV laws faces the following gaps: (1) Staff training, particularly in the South African Police Service, where training manuals for new recruits need to be revised to align with the amendments. (2) Building the capacity of in-service police officials to ensure awareness of the amendments. (3) Public awareness campaigns in communities to raise awareness about the new changes.
- The lack of coordination within the Gender Machinery and lack of leadership cooperation with the CGE at all levels, linked to an absence of an enabling environment, hinders the promotion of women, youth, PWD, and non-gender

Accelerators / Solutions

The civil society review identified the following accelerators which need to be considered:

- Stats SA is to take the lead in a heightened effort to collect gender-disaggregated data, partnering with both state and non-state actors, such as CGE, academic institutions, and civil society.
- Strengthening the monitoring and reporting framework is crucial to improve the performance of the GBVF Response Fund and enhance coordination, transparency, and accountability fundraising and allocation, ensuring impactful support for community-based organisations working to combat gender-based violence.
- Government has ongoing efforts to deliver on the goals and respective targets of SDG 5. For example, a gender-responsive implementation approach is seen in the current Medium-Term Strategic Framework 2019-2024, which incorporates gender as a cross-cutting mainstreaming criteria. This was made possible by the adoption of a Gender Responsive Planning, Budgeting, Monitoring, Evaluation and Auditing framework by the Cabinet in 2019.

4.5 LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND

South Africa continues to grapple with persistently high levels of unemployment, with the burden falling heavily on women and young people. Resources should be redirected to black women, who have long borne the brunt of economic hardships. One approach is gender budgeting, which considers black women in the informal sector. This includes ensuring that GBV responders, particularly in rural areas, receive adequate resources and funding to effectively assist victims of violence. Economic empowerment of women through resource redirection can lead to a decrease in gender-based violence, as economic independence decreases vulnerability. Gender mainstreaming and integration, grounded in sound gender analysis, ensure women are not left behind.



4.6 INTERLINKAGES

Gender equality is central to the realisation of the SDGs and is interlinked to all the goals. The face of poverty in South Africa is gendered and young, with the highest gender gaps observed among individuals aged 25 to 34. Women of this age group are more likely to live in extreme poverty than their male counterparts. Achieving zero poverty for all women and girls by 2030 necessitates taking action on long-standing gender disparities in access to land, healthcare, and political and economic representation. Gender equality is a cross-cutting objective, a gender-responsive budgeting should be costed separately but in conjunction with all other goals.

4.7 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

South Africa's progress towards achieving SDG 5 by 2030 remains challenging, despite three decades of democracy and significant strides in establishing gender equality laws, policies, and programmes. Women and young people remain disproportionately affected by poverty, unemployment, and inequality. The labour force participation rate for women is significantly lower than that for men, and women are more likely to work in low-paying jobs under vulnerable conditions. Gender-based violence remains a pervasive issue.

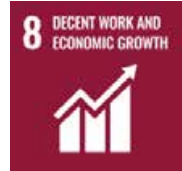
Addressing GBV in South Africa necessitates collaboration and partnership between the public and private sectors. Domestic violence and sexual harassment, among other forms of GBV, impede women and girls from fully and equally participating in the workforce and school. The GBVF Fund, despite being primarily supported by the private sector, does not ensure workplace safety. Female employees who experience this form of violence endure negative effects on their physical and mental health, resulting in stress, anxiety, decreased self-esteem, motivation, and even unemployment. Additionally, this worsens the gender pay disparity, limiting women's opportunities for advancement and career progression.

A comprehensive approach is necessary to address the inequalities faced by women, especially in rural areas, which involve gender mainstreaming and the redistribution of resources to marginalized groups. South Africa must enhance coordination, transparency, and accountability in its efforts to deliver on the SDG 5 targets, ensuring no one is left behind on the journey toward gender equality and



5

SDG 8: DECENT WORK AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH



5.1 INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

SDG 8⁷⁹ focuses on sustained and inclusive economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work. This involves addressing unemployment challenges, improving working conditions, and fostering economic opportunities to enhance well-being.

The progress on Goal 8 has been slow and uneven, as economic growth has slowed down and limited new employment opportunities. South Africa's economic growth averaged 0.9% between 2019 and 2023, with a significant slowdown from 1.9% in 2022 to 0.6% in 2023. While 2023's growth was affected by logistical and energy constraints and lower global and domestic demand, the economy was 0.9% higher than 2019's pre-pandemic level. In the last five years, employment has increased from 10,288 million in December 2019 to 10,705 million in December 2023, a 417,000 increase in employment.⁸⁰ And in the context of its colonial and apartheid past, unemployment and inequality remain persistently high. A mismatch of skills required in the economy and limited employment opportunities exacerbates youth unemployment.

South Africa's economy's key sectors include agriculture (and forestry), mining, manufacturing, automotive, tourism, retail and financial services. Areas identified for economic transformation by the 2018 Presidential Jobs Summit include agriculture and agro-processing, manufacturing, the automotive industry, and the green industries, i.e. power generation, renewable energy, waste management and reducing greenhouse gas emission. Several

The footprint of small and medium enterprises increased between 2013 to 2019, contributing to some form of diversification of the economy. Small businesses in 2013 generated 16% of total turnover in the formal business sector, expanding to 22% (ZAR2,3 trillion of ZAR10.5 trillion) in 2019, while the contribution of large businesses waned over the same period, from 75% to 68%.⁸¹ The collective impact of the Covid pandemic, energy crisis, and cost-of-living increase has dampened the prospects in 2023.

South Africa has a comprehensive set of labour legislation that protects workers' rights, namely the Basic Conditions of Employment Act, Labour Relations Act, National Minimum Wage Act, Unemployment Insurance Act and Occupational Health and Safety. The Employment Equity Amendment Act (2022), signed into law in April 2023, aims to promote diversity and equality in the workplace and applies to companies with more than 50 people.



79 Working group contributors: Matthew Parks (COSATU), Lynette Maart, Yared Tsegay (African Monitor).

80 Statistics South Africa. (2024). Quarterly employment statistics (QES)- Statistical release. Stats SA. <https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0277/P0277December2023.pdf>

81 Statistics South Africa. (2020). , Three facts about small business turnover in South Africa. Stats SA. <https://www.statssa.gov.za/?p=13900>



BOX 5 CIVIL SOCIETY SCORE CARD

The CSO working group considered four of the eight targets; based on assessment of delivery on the targets and using the scorecard developed for this study, the CSO working group rated South Africa's performance on Goal 8 as **Level 3: medium progress**.

AREAS	RATING
1. Governance and policy framework	3.0
2. Plans and strategies	2
3. Institutional support	3.0
4. Budgets	2.0
5. Implementation	3.0
6. Public Awareness	3.0
7. Transparency and accountability	4.0
8. Multi-stakeholder partnerships	3.0
9. Citizen participation and civil society engagement	3.5
TOTAL	3.1

The economy grew 0.9% per year from 2019 to 2023. Total employment rose by 417,000 between December 2019 and December 2023. While progress has been made in the National Minimum Wage

policy and legislative framework, the absence of an effective growth strategy raises doubts about how the South African economy will move towards accelerated growth. There are programmes and plans to rebuild the economic infrastructure in response to energy and network challenges, but these investments might not be adequate. SOEs' contribution to the economy has been diminished because of governance challenges.

South Africa has made progress on multi-stakeholder partnerships through social compacts and a Job summit. While NEDLAC continues to function as a platform for engagement between government, business, labour, and civil society on labour and economic policy, strengthening collaboration between all stakeholders is vital for coherent programmes.

5.2 ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS ON DELIVERY

Slow economic growth and high levels of unemployment, which was impacted by logistical and energy constraints as well as lower global and domestic demand, have impeded progress on Goal 8.

Target 8.2: Diversify, innovate and upgrade for economic productivity

The national government has developed a package of support to address key obstacles to growing the economy, some of which are supported by trade unions and businesses. Challenges include

commuter rail problems, and varying public and municipal services.

In July 2022, an Energy Action Plan was developed to attain energy security. After years of load shedding, a five pillars national energy plan is in place comprising 1) fixing Eskom, 2) accelerating private investment, 3) sourcing new energy capacity, 4) investing in rooftop solar, and 5) working towards long-term energy security.⁸² An Energy Minister appointed an independent board for the National Transmission Company of South Africa. Weeks away from the 2024 general election, on 16 May 2024, Parliament passed the Electricity Regulation Amendment Bill.⁸³

⁸² Republic of South Africa. (2024). Progress on Energy Action Plan. South Africa Government. https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/progress_on_EAP.pdf

⁸³ Energy Council of South Africa. (2024). Parliament Passes the Electricity Regulations Amendment (ERA) Bill. Energy Council of South Africa. <https://www.energycouncil.org.za/news/parliament-passes-the-electricity-regulations-amendment-era-bill>





Other economic infrastructure interventions include a rail transportation plan, as expressed in the Department of Transport’s 2022 white paper on the National Rail Policy.⁸⁴ Creating a decisive break from the past, the policy directs rail transport to contribute more meaningfully to the economy and reduce greenhouse gas emissions within an integrated transport value chain.

Target 8.3 Promote development-oriented policies that support productive activities

The NDP had set a target of nine million jobs to be created through SMMEs, which is an ambitious target for the small business sector. During the 2022/23 financial year, only 104,547 jobs were facilitated via 74,762 MSMEs. The slow growth in job creation was further exacerbated by barriers, particularly for township enterprises, such as access to value chains markets and credit.

Programmes such as the Presidential Employment Stimulus programme provided 1.7 million unemployed, especially young people, with opportunities to earn an income, skills, and experience towards long-term employment. These opportunities are not decent jobs, and the number

SMEs struggle with regulations, market access, and credit availability. The Small Enterprises Funding Agency (SEFA), during 2022/23, approved loans to the value of R1.706 billion and disbursed R2.4 billion. In the same period, SEFA was able to impact 74 762 MSMEs, which facilitated 104 547 jobs. However, at this rate, South Africa will not reach its target of 9 million jobs via SSMEs by 2030.

Target 8.5: Employment and decent work with equal pay

The Basic Conditions of Employment Act, 75 of 1997 (BCEA) made provision for the establishment of an Employment Conditions Commission (ECC), which replaced the Wage Board.⁸⁵ However, the Act did not provide for a mechanism to amend existing wage determinations either in the main Act or in the schedules thereto. Amendments to the BCEA, in 2002, created a vehicle to deal with wage determinations through sectoral determinations. Thirteen Sectoral Determinations (SDs)⁸⁶ are in place to regulate employment conditions for specific vulnerable sectors based on the Basic Conditions of Employment Act. Despite these sectoral determinations, there are still high wage violations, attributed to the complexity of wage levels.

⁸⁴ National Land Transport Act: White Paper on the National Rail Policy. (2022). South Africa. <https://www.gov.za/documents/notices/national-land-transport-act-white-paper-national-rail-policy-march-2022-12-may>

⁸⁵ Department of Labour. (2022). Sectoral Determinations: Historical Overview. Department of Labour. <https://www.labour.gov.za/DocumentCenter/Publications/Employment%20Equity/Sectoral%20Determinations%20Historical%20Overview/20yrssectoral.pdf>

⁸⁶ These are Forestry, Agriculture, Contract Cleaning, Children in the Performance of Advertising, Artistic and Cultural Activities (under fifteen years of age), Taxi Operators, Civil Engineering, Learnerships, Private Security, Domestic Workers, Wholesale and Retail, and Hospitality. The minimum wage in these industries are updated for inflation through a formal gazetting process.



The government, supported by trade unions, introduced a legislated National Minimum Wage (NMW) Act in 2018,⁸⁷ which raised the wages of nearly half (50%) of the workforce approximately 6 million workers in the most vulnerable sectors of the economy. Minimum wages, for example, for domestic and farm workers, nearly doubled as these categories are no longer pegged at 75% of the NMW, which has consistently increased above the inflation rate. In March 2024, it raised from ZAR25,42 to ZAR27,58 for each ordinary hour worked, helping vulnerable workers survive while simultaneously stimulating the economy.⁸⁸

The NMW is an important tool not only to measure the eradication of poverty (SDG 1) but also to monitor the reduction of income inequality (SDG 10). For the NMW to have a high impact, enforcement is crucial. Trade unions are experiencing challenges to ensure full compliance, especially amongst unorganised sectors. An important spinoff is that public procurement policy now requires companies doing business with the government to be in compliance with the NMW.

Target 8.8: Protect labour rights and promote safe working environments

In an effort to reduce unemployment and counter the Covid-19 pandemic's impact, the government closely collaborated with labour and civil society to provide relief to workers and the unemployed.

Since 2019, at least three measures have been implemented:

- The Unemployment Insurance Amendment Act (Act 10 of 2016) allows the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) to provide financial support to schemes that aim to retain the employment of workers. Covid-19 Temporary Employer-Employee Relief Scheme (TERS) was initiated during the pandemic, in concurrence with labour and social partners at the National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC). By 31 March 2021, the UIF disbursed more than R64 billion to 5.7 million workers

This figure surpassed its initial budget by R24 billion. The Auditor-General of South Africa report exposed irregular payments, including monies not paid to workers. Stringent security controls were introduced, including verification of salaries and blocking all underage from applying.

- Social Relief of Distress (SRD) Grant of R350 per month was introduced in 2020 for those aged 18 to 59, which increased by R20 in April 2024.⁹⁰ This means-tested grant provides relief to approximately eight million unemployed persons and has laid the foundation for a basic income grant.
- Legislation, supported by trade unions, is in place enabling workers experiencing financial distress to access their pension funds earlier. Under the current system, some members resign to access their retirement fund savings to pay off debt, which may be detrimental from economic, financial planning, and retirement provision point of view. The two-pot retirement system,⁹¹ effective from September 2024, will provide significant relief for millions of workers and help stimulate the economy, whilst in the longer term preserving pension funds to reduce the levels of workers retiring in poverty.

In summary, South Africa's social protection system is resilient and has expanded to include the 18 to 59 age cohort. It is offering some respite from shocks of particularly the Covid-19 pandemic and persistent unemployment. Through Covid-19 TERS, the UIF disbursed R64 billion to 5.7 million workers. The new SRD grant provides relief to approximately 8 million unemployed persons, laying the basis for a permanent basic income grant. The two-pot retirement system will enable workers in financial distress to access to their pension funds earlier.

87 Department of Employment and labour. (2021). National minimum wage act no 9 of 2018 Investigation into the national minimum wage. Department of Employment and Labour. https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/202112/45649gon1616.pdf

88 Department of Employment and Labour. (2024). National Minimum Wage Act, 2024. Labour. <https://www.labour.gov.za/DocumentCenter/Regulations%20and%20Notices/Regulations/Basic%20Conditions%20of%20Employment/National%20Minimum%20Wages%20Wage%20increase%201%20March%202024.pdf>

89 Department of Labour. (2022). Two year Anniversary of the UIF's Covid-19 TERS. Labour. <https://www.labour.gov.za/two-year-anniversary-of-the-uif%E2%80%99s-covid-19-TERS>

90 SA News. (2024). Social grants to increase in 2024. SA News. <https://www.sanews.gov.za/south-africa/social-grants-increase-2024>

91 Treasury. (2024). Two pot retirement system. Treasury. <https://www.treasury.gov.za/2024%20Two-Pot%20System%20-%20FAQ.pdf>



5.3 POLICY AND INSTITUTIONAL READINESS TO DELIVER ON 2030 AGENDA

South Africa has a comprehensive set of labour legislation that protects the rights of workers, as well as a well-developed labour policy framework aligned with Agenda 2030. However, implementation remains a challenge. It is necessary to put in more effort to ensure the protection of labour rights for precarious workers, including those in casual employment or working in the informal sector. An inclusive model is needed for continuous contributions and monitoring of policy implementation by all social partners.

Some industries, such as construction, retail, and hospitality, have made precarious employment the 'norm', where employment is casual or considered informal work.⁹² For example, estimates indicate that a large percentage of the construction labour force are casual workers.

During the pandemic (2020 – 2022), NEDLAC established a Covid Rapid Response Task Team, to consider the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan.⁹³ This new mechanism enabled better cooperation between government, business, labour and civil society. Policy frameworks discussed included UIF, Covid-19 TERS, pension fund provisions, Social Relief of Distress grant/ Basic Income Grant, gender-based violence, as well as a response to the pandemic including vaccine delivery and the safe reopening of workplaces.⁹⁴

NEDLAC also considered the four-pillar Decent Work Country Programme, which involves strengthening fundamental principles and rights at work; promotion of employment creation; strengthening and broadening social protection coverage; and strengthening tripartism-plus and social dialogue. These engagements, to some degree, accelerated the implementation of SDGs 1,2,3,5 and 8.

A Presidential Jobs Summit in October 2018 took stock of the economy and job creation. Since 2019,

include the commercial forestry, poultry, automotive, sugar, steel, and metal industries; as well as for the furniture, retail, clothing, textile, footwear and leather value chains.^{95,96}

South Africa's delivery of SDG 8 is crawling at a slow pace. However, legislation and programmes alone cannot create decent jobs or grow the economy. Sectoral economic plans require resources, leadership, political will, and commitment from all sectors.

5.4 GAPS AND ACCELERATORS

Civil society's assessment of South Africa's performance on Goal 8 has revealed the gaps and identified accelerators listed below.

Gaps

- Deteriorating infrastructure in energy and transport limits economic growth.
- There are various employment programmes including the EPWP and PES. However, these efforts often provide questionable skills training, low wages, and limited paths to employment.
- The government funds industrialisation and export programmes, but they are insufficient due to high unemployment and lack of economic growth.
- Skills shortages and mismatches remain prevailing bottlenecks to growth and inclusiveness.

Accelerator

- Address the crises in electricity, rail, ports, roads, and water and sanitation.
- Review and consolidate existing employment programs.
- Promote and decriminalise black women-led businesses, particularly in the informal sector, to reduce inequality.

92 Casual Workers Advice Office. (2023). Labour Flexibility. CWAO. <https://www.cwao.org.za/about-context.html>

93 NEDLAC. (2023). The Covid-19 pandemic: Learning the lessons, creating a legacy. NEDLAC. <https://nedlac.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/COVID19-PANDEMIC-NEDLAC-REPORT.pdf>

94 Ibid.

95 Institute for Economic Justice. (2019). Job Summit Policy Briefs. Institute for Economic Justice. <https://iej.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/IEJ-Jobs-Summit-Policy-Briefs-compilation-Final.pdf>

96 Department of Trade, Industry and Competition. (2023). Annual Performance Plan 2023/24. Department of Trade, Industry and Competition. <https://www.thedtic.gov.za/wp-content/uploads/Revised-DTIC-APP-202324.pdf>



- Retool the private sector, nurture collaboration, and leverage incentives for job growth.
- Consultation with the South African retail industry is crucial for manufacturing localisation within the “Presidential Jobs Summit.” South African private sector and big businesses need to commit to this agenda.
- Fair remuneration and working conditions for particularly low-income employees should be prioritised.
- Massify upskilling, particularly of youth and women, not only through the SETAs but equally through tailored programs that involve the private sector and civil society.
- Enforce decent working conditions and fair wages for all employees, respecting minimum national wage regulations and addressing the impact of inflation.
- Invest in high-demand (i.e. technical) skills through education and training, especially in-service training at technical and vocational training beginning at secondary school. This will alleviate the ‘mismatch’ problem in the economy, where

- Massify job creation in the green economy and energy sector through the localisation of the value chain and integrating the imperative job creation in the just energy transition plan.

5.5 CONCLUSION

The progress on decent work and inclusive growth has been slow and uneven. The South African economy has slowed down, and is faced with energy crises and deteriorating transport network infrastructure including ports and railways, due to years of under-investment and maintenance. Additionally, the mismanagement of the state-owned enterprises has further exacerbated the infrastructure challenges.

The last five years have witnessed limited job creation under such an economic context, with employment surpassing pre-pandemic levels only in the third quarter of 2023, and the unemployment rate reaching 32% in the first quarter of 2024. The rise in precarious employment is a growing concern in South Africa’s labour market.



6

SDG 13: CLIMATE ACTION



6.1 INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

Goal 13⁹⁷ of the SDG agenda aims to take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts. It calls for climate action in terms of both mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions and adaptation to climate impacts, as well as education and capacity building to effectively pursue mitigation and adaptation goals.

Though the climate crisis is global, South Africa is importantly situated as both a major greenhouse gas (GHG) emitter—the twelfth-highest emitter per capita globally—and as a nation that is particularly vulnerable to the climate crisis’ most devastating effects. Notably, South Africa has already warmed at a rate that is twice the global average.⁹⁸

South Africa is also a significant contributor to global greenhouse gas emissions. 92% of the country’s energy comes from coal-fired power stations.⁹⁹ This, combined with the race for oil and gas in the country and the international focus on South Africa as a key just transition country, makes progress on climate action even more critical to South Africa’s overall sustainable development.

Recurring droughts in Limpopo have resulted in severe water shortages, sky-rocketing food prices, and the loss of thousands of agricultural jobs.¹⁰⁰ In March 2020, the second national state of disaster

Limpopo, Northern Cape, Western Cape, and Eastern Cape.¹⁰¹ Meanwhile, climate-induced droughts have sparked increased wildfires in the Eastern and Western Cape.¹⁰² In 2021 alone, all nine provinces had experienced floods, as well as some provinces experiencing large wildfires.¹⁰³ In April 2022, severe flooding in KwaZulu-Natal Province resulted in over 400 fatalities, over 12,000 houses destroyed, and more than 40,000 people displaced.¹⁰⁴ This is just a small sampling of illustrative climate impacts.

South Africa is currently taking steps to establish a policy framework aimed at addressing climate change. This includes the development of various initiatives such as the Climate Change Bill, the Just Energy Transition Framework, the Carbon Tax Act, the Renewable Energy Masterplan, and the Low Emission Development Strategy. Furthermore, South Africa has outlined its goals through the submission of its Nationally Determined



97 Writing group contributors: Jacqueline Rukanda (Natural Justice), Shannon Marcoux, Yared Tsegay, Puseletso Maile (African Monitor) and Dr Janet Munakanwe (Wits Mining Institute).

98 Mail & Guardian. (2019). For Communities in South Africa, Climate Change is Now. HRW. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/09/17/communities-south-africa-climate-change-now>.

99 Trading Economics. (2023). South Africa-Electricity Production From Coal Sources (% of Total). <https://tradingeconomics.com/south-africa/electricity-production-from-coal-sources-percent-of-total-wb-data.html>

100 SABC Digital News. (2019). Drought leaves Limpopo’s Mopani district without clean water. SABC. <https://www.sabcnews.com/sabcnews/drought-leaves-limpopos-mopani-district-without-clean-water>

101 World Bank. (2022). South Africa: Disaster Risk Finance Diagnostic. World Bank. South Africa: Disaster Risk Finance Diagnostic, 2022, World Bank <https://documents.worldbank.org/pt/publication/documentsreports/documentdetail/099742311072334460/du075f77db50660c0401e087780c7d7beb1447c>

102 UNDP. (n.d.). Reducing Disaster Risks from Wildlife Hazards Associated with Climate Change in South Africa. UNDP. <https://www.adaptation-undp.org/projects/reducing-disaster-risks-wildfire-hazards-associated-climate-change-south-africa>

103 Institute for Security Studies. (2021). Urban South Africa Is Ill-Prepared for the Coming Climate Change Storm. ISS Africa. <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/urbansouth-africa-is-ill-prepared-for-the-coming-climate-change-storm>

104 CIVICUS. (2022). South Africa: The Deadly Impacts of Climate Change. CIVICUS. <https://lens.civicus.org/south-africa-the-deadly-impacts-of-climate-change/>.



BOX 6 CIVIL SOCIETY SCORE CARD

While the CSO technical writing group considered three of the five targets, due to the broad scope of SDG 13, this report focuses primarily on adaptation (target 13.1) and mitigation (target 13.2). Based on the assessment of the above targets and using the scorecard developed for this study, the CSO working group rated South Africa’s performance on Goal 2 as **Level 2: low progress**.

AREAS	RATING
1. Governance and policy framework	4
2. Plans and strategies	3
3. Institutional support	3
4. Budgets	2
5. Implementation	2.5
6. Public Awareness	2.5
7. Transparency and accountability	3
8. Multi-stakeholder partnerships	3.5
9. Citizen participation and civil society engagement	3
TOTAL	2.9

South Africa has developed a set of policies which includes the Climate Change Bill, Just Transition Framework, South Africa Renewable Energy Masterplan, and Low Emissions Development Strategy 2050. It has set up a Presidential Climate Commission and in 2021 submitted an updated NDC that aims at a 17% reduction in the upper end of the target range in 2025 and a 32% reduction in the upper end of the target range in 2030, as well as a 12% reduction in the lower end of the target range. There have been instances of positive engagement between government and stakeholders outside of government, but there have also been concerning trends in the exclusion of outside stakeholders—civil society in particular—from important climate policy and climate finance decision-making processes.

6.2 ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS ON DELIVERY

Due to the broad scope of SDG 13, this report focuses primarily on the adaptation target (13.1) and mitigation target (13.2) and does not as thoroughly analyse South Africa’s progress on Target 13.3—improving education and awareness on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction, and early warning. This report does, however, analyse progress on Target 13.3 in terms of its relevance to improving human and institutional capacity to deliver on Targets 13.1 and 13.2.

Target 13.1 Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related disasters

South Africa has adopted several national and local disaster risk reduction strategies. It approaches disaster risk management through adaptation, prevention, and mitigation. The Disaster Management Act (Act 57 of 2002) and Amendment Bill (2015), along with the National Disaster Management Framework (2005), provide guidelines for more effective disaster prevention, mitigation, and preparedness.¹⁰⁵

105 Statistics South Africa. (2023). Sustainable Development Goals Country Report 2023 South Africa., Statistics South Africa. https://www.statssa.gov.za/MDG/SDG_Country_report.pdf



South African law requires that, in addition to the National Disaster Risk Management Centre, a disaster risk management centre be established in every province, district, and metropolitan municipality to coordinate disaster management within their respective spheres of responsibility.¹⁰⁶ Provincial and municipal administrations must also prepare and implement a disaster management framework¹⁰⁷ and plan.¹⁰⁸

Climate-related natural disasters have been on the rise in recent years. In 2021 alone, floods affected all nine provinces, while some provinces experienced significant wildfires.¹⁰⁹ In April 2022, severe flooding in KwaZulu-Natal Province resulted in over 400 fatalities, more than 12,000 houses destroyed, and more than 40,000 people displaced.¹¹⁰

In October 2019, the Eastern Cape declared a state of disaster due to drought.¹¹¹ In January 2020, the Northern Cape declared a provincial state of disaster after five years of compounding droughts.¹¹² In March 2020, a national state of disaster was declared for drought affecting Limpopo, Northern Cape, Western Cape, and Eastern Cape – the second in three years.¹¹³

Drought and water insecurity are two of the climate impacts that are projected to most adversely impact South Africa. In response to this, some municipalities have engaged in water security assessments and planning processes. For example, through the Urban Water Resilience Initiative, Johannesburg and Gqeberha have partnered with the World Resources Institute to develop a City Characterisation Report that maps key water, climate, and development risks, and a Water Profile

Target 13.2 Integrate climate change measures into policies and planning

South Africa's first Nationally Determined Contribution under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) took the form of a “peak, plateau, and decline” emissions trajectory. The initial NDC set the following ambition: South Africa's emissions by 2025 and 2030 will be in a range between 398 and 614 Mt CO₂-eq.¹¹⁵ In 2021, South Africa updated its NDC according to the Paris Agreement.

The updated mitigation targets are as follows:

YEAR	TARGET	IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD
2025	National annual emissions between 398-510 Mt CO ₂ -eq	2021-2025
2030	National annual emissions between 350-420 Mt CO ₂ -eq	2026-2030

The updated NDC constitutes a 17% reduction in the upper end of the target range in 2025 and a 32% reduction in the upper end of the target range in 2030, as well as a 12% reduction in the lower end of the target range.¹¹⁶ While the lower bound of the updated emissions target is 1.5°C compatible when compared to modelled emissions pathways, the upper bound of the target range is only ranked as “Almost sufficient” by the Climate Action Tracker¹¹⁷ and “Not on Track for a 1.5°C World” by Climate Transparency.¹¹⁸

South Africa submitted its National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy (NCCAS) in August 2020, its Low Emission Development Strategy 2050 in

106 Government Gazette 24252. (2002). Disaster Management Act, Act No. 57 of 2002.

https://www.cogta.gov.za/cgta_2016/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/disaster-management-act.pdf.

107 Ibid.

108 Ibid.

109 Institute for Security Studies 2021.

110 CIVICUS 2022

111 World Bank. (2022). South Africa: Disaster Risk Finance Diagnostic. World Bank.

<https://documents.worldbank.org/pt/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/099742311072334460/du075f77db50660c0401e087780c7d7beb1447c>

112 Ibid.

113 Ibid.

114 World Resources Institute. (2023). South African Cities Show Commitment to Accelerate Water Resilience at 2023 UN Water Conference. WRI.

<https://www.wri.org/update/south-african-cities-show-commitment-accelerate-water-resilience-2023-un-water-conference>

115 UNFCCC. (2021). First Nationally Determined Contribution Under the Paris Agreement: Updated September 2021.

First Nationally Determined Contribution Under the Paris Agreement: Updated September 2021, pg 15, UNFCCC

<https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/NDC/2022-06/South%20Africa%20updated%20first%20NDC%20September%202021.pdf>

116 Ibid.

117 Climate Action Tracker. (2023). South Africa country targets. Climate Action Tracker. <https://climateactiontracker.org/countries/south-africa/targets/>.

118 Climate Transparency. (2022). Comparing G20 Climate Action: South Africa. Climate Transparency.

<https://www.climate-transparency.org/countries/africa/south-africa>.



February 2020, and its first NDC in 2016, as well as an updated NDC in September 2021.¹¹⁹ South Africa remains uninvolved in the four Glasgow sectoral initiatives: methane, the coal exit, 100% electric vehicles, and forestry.¹²⁰ The targets listed in the proposed NDC for Adaptation include enhancing adaptation governance and legal frameworks, developing an understanding of climate impacts, implementing NCCAS adaptation interventions, mobilising funding through multilateral mechanisms, and quantifying adaptation efforts.¹²¹

South Africa ranks 11th globally as the highest emitter of greenhouse gases and is the largest greenhouse gas emitter in Africa.¹²² It is one of the world's least energy-efficient nations.¹²³ South Africa's annual greenhouse gas emissions increased between 2000 and 2009 before beginning to decrease,¹²⁴ albeit with ups and downs thereafter.

Looking in particular at the period between 2015 and 2022, South Africa has shown some progress in terms of overall reductions in annual greenhouse gas emissions, but certain years, such as 2019, show significant spikes in emissions. Post 2019, South Africa's annual emissions do appear to be on the decline, though South Africa is not on pace to meet its Nationally Determined Contribution under the UNFCCC (more on this in subsequent sections). One promising development is that South Africa's per capita greenhouse gas emissions have been in a far more apparent and steady decline since their height in 2008-09. However, as the last column makes clear, South Africa's per capita greenhouse gas emissions are still significantly higher than the global average.

6.3 POLICY AND INSTITUTIONAL READINESS TO DELIVER ON 2030 AGENDA

South Africa has implemented policies and legislation to comply with international climate agreements and address climate change through sector-specific policies.¹²⁵

Climate Change Bill (2022)

The main objective of the Climate Bill is to create a sustainable and low-carbon economy in South Africa, while ensuring a just transition. It aims to achieve this by regulating greenhouse gas mitigation, managing climate adaptation, and assigning responsibilities to various government departments at the national, provincial, and local levels, including municipalities. The Bill, once passed, will establish a legal framework for the country's commitments under the Paris Agreement.

The Climate Change Bill affirms the principles espoused in the National Environmental Management Act (Act No 107 of 1998) (NEMA). It also affirms the principles of inclusive decision-making (including the special needs and circumstances of people particularly vulnerable groups), science-based decision-making (that climate change mitigation and adaptation responses are based on scientific knowledge and that decisions be based on the best available science); and accountability (those responsible for the adverse effects of climate must pay for the cost of responding). It therefore aligns with the concept of accountability enforced by the Carbon Tax Act 2019.

In Section 7, the Climate Change Bill requires any government body either affected by climate change or involved in sustainable development to align its policies, laws, measures, programs, and decisions to ensure that the risks of climate change impacts and vulnerabilities are considered and to give effect to the principles and objects of the Climate Change Act. The goal is to ensure that climate action is aligned across all sectors of industry and government, achieving South Africa's climate change goals.

Importantly, the Bill also defines a just transition as "[A] shift towards a low-carbon, climate-resilient

119 Statistics South Africa. (2023). Sustainable Development Goals Country Report 2023 South Africa. Statistics South Africa. https://www.statssa.gov.za/MDG/SDG_Country_report.pdf

120 Climate Action Tracker. (2023). South Africa: Policies & Action. Climate Action Tracker. <https://climateactiontracker.org/countries/south-africa/policies-action/>.

121 UNFCCC. (2021).

122 Qu, M. H., Suphachalasai, S., Thube, S. D., & Walker, M. S. (2023). South Africa carbon pricing and climate mitigation policy. International Monetary Fund.

123 New Development Bank. (2023). South Africa Greenhouse Gas Emission Reduction and Energy Sector Development Project Approach Paper: Methodology and Process. New Development Bank. https://www.ndb.int/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/South-Africa-Project-Evaluation-18ZA02-Approach-Paper_.pdf

124 Statistics South Africa. (2023). Sustainable Development Goals Country Report 2023 South Africa. Statistics South Africa. https://www.statssa.gov.za/MDG/SDG_Country_report.pdf

125 Department of Science and Innovation. (2021). South Africa Hydrogen Society Roadmap Sets forth national ambitions, sector prioritisation, and the policy framework for the hydrogen economy in South Africa. DST.

https://www.dst.gov.za/images/South_African_Hydrogen_Society_RoadmapV1.pdf

Low Emissions Development Strategy 2050 (LEDS), 2020, Department of Environmental Affairs

https://www.dffe.gov.za/sites/default/files/docs/2020lowemission_developmentstrategy.pdf



economies and societies which contribute toward the creation of decent work for all, social inclusion and the eradication of poverty.”¹²⁶

Just Transition Framework (2022)

The Just Transition Framework establishes the basis for a unified national policy statement which guides the just transition. Government established the Presidential Climate Commission (PCC) “to oversee and facilitate a just transition to a low-emissions and climate resilient economy.”¹²⁷

This tool sets forth actions the government and its social partners will take to minimise the social and economic impacts of the climate transition and improve the livelihoods of South Africans most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. The Just Transition Framework, like the Climate Change Bill, acknowledges and affirms the Bill of Rights and NEMA principles. Both the National Climate Change Response White Paper (2011) and the National Development Plan (2012) are emphasised as policies to achieve a just transition in South Africa.

The Just Transition Framework holds that three main principles should guide the just transition: distributive justice, restorative justice, and procedural justice. Part of distributive justice involves national economic and social policies that address who benefits and who bears the burden economically and socially. Restorative justice prioritises redressing past harms and supporting the constitutional right to a healthy environment. This includes raising awareness about the health and environmental impacts of coal and other fossil fuels, transitioning away from them, and building a decentralised, net-zero emissions economy. The significance of procedural justice lies in its role in fostering active participation in just transition policy-making processes.

The Carbon Tax Act (2019) gives effect to the ‘polluter pays’ principle for large emitters and helps to ensure that firms and consumers take the negative adverse costs into account in their future production, consumption, and investment decisions. The Carbon Tax Act is aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions by placing a price on carbon emissions

from fuel combustion, industrial processes, and fugitive emissions that exceed set GHG thresholds. The tax was introduced in 2019 and is being implemented in phases, with specific allowances in the first phase (1 June 2019 to 31 December 2022). A carbon tax was initially levied at R120 per ton of CO₂ equivalent to GHG emission per taxpayer and this amount was increased in 2021 to R134 per ton.

The Draft South Africa Renewable Energy Masterplan (SAREM) (2023) seeks to establish a comprehensive and inclusive development blueprint for renewable energy storage and value chains, with a clear vision for 2030. The link between the draft SAREM and the Just Transition is acknowledged, with a deliberate prioritisation of coal areas like the Mpumalanga Highveld. The draft however excludes areas affected by the decline of the petrochemical industry, such as South Durban, Sasolburg, Mossel Bay, and Milnerton. Moreover, the draft SAREM has no constitutional or human rights framework. SAREM missed the opportunity to flag section 24(b)(iii) of the Constitution and “ecologically sustainable development”, which should be the framing throughout.

6.4 GAPS AND ACCELERATORS

Civil society’s assessment of South Africa’s performance on Goal 13 has revealed the gaps and identified accelerators listed below.

Gaps

- South Africa is meeting its UNFCCC reporting obligations, but its current policy framework does not support the country in fulfilling its UNFCCC mitigation and adaptation obligations. South Africa submitted its National Climate Change Adaptation Plan in August 2020, its Low Emission Development Strategy 2050 in February 2020, its first Nationally Determined Contribution in 2016, and its updated NDC under the Paris Agreement in September 2021. South African officials confirmed that South Africa will not achieve even the upper bound of its 2030 NDC target in large part due to delays in coal power

126 Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment. (2022). Climate Change Bill. PMG. https://static.pmg.org.za/B9B-2022_Climate_Change.pdf

127 Presidential Climate Commission. (2022). Framework for a Just Transition. Presidential Climate Commission. https://pcccommissioninfo.imgix.net/uploads/images/22_PAPER_Framework-for-a-Just-Transition_revised_242.pdf

128 Reuters. (2023). South Africa to miss 2030 emissions goal as it keeps coal plants burning. Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/sustainability/south-africa-miss-2030-emissions-goal-it-keeps-coal-plants-burning-2023-11-09/>



CLIMATE
ACTION
NOW

- Key policy instruments to enable climate action have been introduced or are in place, but improved implementation is necessary for their potential impact to be realised. South Africa’s Climate Change Bill, once finally enacted into law, will make South Africa’s NDC legally binding under domestic law and establish key bodies to foster interdepartmental cooperation, as well as cooperation across national, provincial, and municipal governments.¹²⁹ Other legislation, such as the Carbon Tax Act, provides critical legislative infrastructure to achieve greenhouse gas mitigation goals.¹³⁰ However, many of these policies are not being adequately implemented. For example, delayed implementation of key provisions of the Carbon Tax Act will also prevent South Africa from meeting its NDC.¹³¹ The Climate Change Bill, though it makes the NDC legally binding at the national level, lacks the necessary implementation and enforcement provisions to meet South Africa’s greenhouse gas mitigation obligations.¹³²

The rapid growth of investment and interest in renewable energy have been impeded by grid capacity constraints and regulatory issues, hampering the country’s energy security and mitigation goals. By implementing strategies to accelerate renewable energy procurements and encourage self-generation of renewable energy, South Africa achieved a new solar energy investment record in 2023.¹³³ However, due to grid capacity constraints, planned renewable energy projects were cancelled and the commissioning of new renewables capacity through the Independent Power Producer programmes delayed.¹³⁴

Budget allocation for disaster response is

funds available. The average annual cost of disaster response is R3.7 billion, with a 1-in-50-year shock costing up to R22.5 billion.¹³⁵ Existing instruments to finance disaster response only provide R1.4 billion, leaving an annual funding gap of R2.3 billion.¹³⁶

- South Africa has secured key just transition financing commitments, but there are concerns about exacerbating South Africa’s debt crisis, and lack of transparency makes it difficult to assess the efficacy of this funding in achieving SDG 13. The Just Energy Transition Investment Plan identifies US\$98 billion in financial requirements to come from the public and private sector over the next five years.¹³⁷ While some financing commitments have been secured through international agreements, such as the South African Just Transition Partnership which has garnered US\$12.5 billion in financial commitments to date, very little of that promised financing has come to fruition.¹³⁸ Furthermore, there has not yet been a consolidated disclosure of grant-funded projects arising from the South Africa Just Energy Transition Partnership, and there has been no transparency in the selection of

Accelerator

- There is a need to expedite the decommissioning of coal-fired power plants. The estimated consequences of delaying the decommissioning, as outlined in Eskom’s 2022 Emissions Reduction Plan, include 2,800 excess deaths and a ZAR 61 billion economic cost.¹⁴⁰ The 2023 Draft IRP further delays coal power plant decommissioning, which will lead to more excess deaths and economic costs, and it will also prevent South Africa from meeting even the upper bound of its NDC 2030 target, as officials confirmed in late 2023.

129 UNFCCC. (2021).

130 Qu, M. H., Suphachalasai, S., Thube, S. D., & Walker, M. S. (2023). South Africa carbon pricing and climate mitigation policy. International Monetary Fund.

131 Ibid.

132 Climate Action Tracker. (2023)

133 Ibid.

134 Khavhagali, V., Reckien, D., Biesbroek, R., Mantlana, B., & Pfeffer, K. (2023).

Understanding the climate change adaptation policy landscape in South Africa. *Climate Policy*, 24(4), 458–472. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14693062.2023.2268576>

135 Ibid.

136 Ibid.

137 World Economic Forum. (2023). *Fostering Effective Energy Transition*. World Economic Forum.

<https://www.weforum.org/publications/fostering-effective-energy-transition-2023/>

138 News24. (2023). Renée Bonorchis, SA takes on an extra R34 billion in loans to help fund transition to renewable energy. News24.

https://www.news24.com/fin24/climate_future/energy/sa-takes-on-an-extra-r34-billion-in-loans-to-help-fund-transition-to-renewable-energy-20231121

139 Financial Mail. (2024). JET funding fuels concerns. BusinessLive.

<https://www.businesslive.co.za/fm/opinion/on-my-mind/2024-02-15-tracey-davies-jet-funding-fuels-concerns/>

140 Myllyvirta, L & Kelly, J. (2023). Health impacts of delaying coal power plant decommissioning in South Africa. The Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air.

https://energyandcleanair.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/CREA_Health-impacts-of-delaying-coal-power-plant-decommissioning-in-South-Africa_10.2023.pdf



- There is a need to prioritise renewable energy over gas in the 2023 IRP. Investments in gas power infrastructure and production, as called for in both the 2019 IRP and the 2023 Draft IRP, are not cost-effective, will lock South Africa into infrastructure investments that will soon be outdated, and will prevent South Africa from meeting its international emissions reduction obligations. The proposed expansion of gas power must be removed from South Africa's 2023 IRP in favour of prioritising renewable energy production.

South Africa must improve transparency and community engagement in energy transition policy decisions and just transition financing. Much of South Africa's energy policy, including just energy transition policies that are intended to benefit the public, is shrouded in a lack of transparency. South Africa must make the data, studies, and analysis underpinning its Draft IRP available for public scrutiny. Without making the underlying data and analysis available, the public's ability to meaningfully participate and comment on important energy policy through the Draft IRP is compromised. Further, the lack of transparency around just transition financing will prevent these funds from being used in a manner that maximises sustainable development outcomes. The failure to disclose current funding recipients and projects, as well as the failure to publish the criteria the government is using to select projects to fund, is unacceptable and will

6.5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

South Africa has put in place policy instruments to enable climate action, but effective implementation is necessary to fully realise their potential impact. South Africa's Climate Change Bill, once finally enacted into law, will make South Africa's NDC legally binding under domestic law and establish key bodies to foster interdepartmental cooperation, as well as cooperation across national, provincial, and municipal governments. Other legislation, such as the Carbon Tax Act, provides critical legislative infrastructure to achieve greenhouse gas mitigation goals. However, many of these policies are not being adequately implemented. For example, delayed implementation of key provisions of the Carbon Tax Act will also prevent South Africa from meeting its NDC. The Climate Change Bill, though it makes the NDC legally binding at the national level, lacks the necessary implementation and enforcement provisions to meet South Africa's greenhouse gas mitigation obligations.

South Africa is meeting its UNFCCC reporting obligations, but its current policy framework will not enable it to fulfil its UNFCCC mitigation and



7

SDG 16 PEACE, JUSTICE, AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



7.1 INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

The 2030 Agenda recognises the need to build peaceful, just, and inclusive societies that provide equal access to justice and that are based on respect for human rights (including the right to development), on effective rule of law and good governance at all levels, and transparent, effective and accountable institutions.¹⁴¹

South Africa faces complex social challenges that impact the prevalence of violence. Historical inequalities rooted in apartheid have left a legacy of social fragmentation. High levels of poverty, unemployment, and inadequate access to education contribute to a sense of disenfranchisement among specific segments of the population. These factors create a fertile ground for social tensions and contribute to various forms of violence, including interpersonal violence and crime.

Civil society organisations must actively engage in the SDGs to promote various strategies as advocates for marginalised groups like women, persons with disabilities, youth, and other marginalized communities. The private sector is also key in contributing towards good governance structures to eliminate graft, fraud, and poverty as fundamental to accountable business practice and a thriving economy. Local government, parliamentarians, and academia are the other critical stakeholders in implementing SDG 16 and the 2030 Agenda as a whole. The state together with international actors should be encouraged to strengthen their commitments and their actions on these interlinkages, to avoid the risk of falling further behind.

The political context in South Africa is

significant strides have been made in establishing inclusive institutions, some challenges persist. Economic disparities play a substantial role in shaping the violence landscape. High levels of unemployment, particularly among the youth, contribute to frustration and social unrest. Economic inequality is often linked to crime rates, as individuals facing financial hardships may resort to illegal activities. Addressing economic disparities through inclusive economic policies and job creation is essential for reducing violence in the South African context.

Even though South Africa is considered peaceful due to the absence of war, the country remains fragile. The unprecedented social unrest of July 2021, which tragically claimed over 300 lives and caused billions of Rands in damage, exposed the underlying issues of poverty and the risks threatening the social fabric of South Africa as a rainbow nation.

South Africa has demonstrated a commitment to building inclusive and accountable institutions. Establishing anti-corruption bodies, transparency measures, and efforts to strengthen democratic institutions contribute to progress. However, challenges remain in ensuring uniform implementation and addressing corruption at all levels of government.



¹⁴¹ This working group was composed of Liezelle Khumalo and Lindokuhle Malambe (CSVR); Cathy Kodiemoka (HURISA); Paul Mulindwa and David Kode (CIVICUS); Kim Lithgow (Same Love Toti) Sixolile Ngcobo, Joseph Maniragena, and Puseletso Maile (African Monitor); and Mashile Phalane (Batlhabane Foundation).



BOX 7 CIVIL SOCIETY SCORE CARD

The civil society technical working group on Goal 16 assessed progress by focusing on five targets (16.1, 16.2, 16.3, 16.7 and 16.9) that cover enabling policy and institutional framework resources allocation, and progress on delivery.

AREAS	RATING
1. Governance and policy framework	3
2. Plans and strategies	3
3. Institutional support	2
4. Budgets	2
5. Implementation	2
6. Public Awareness	2
7. Transparency and accountability	1
8. Multi-stakeholder partnerships	2
9. Citizen participation and civil society engagement	1
TOTAL	2

The CSO working group rated South Africa's performance on Goal 16 as **Level 2: low progress**.

South Africa faces significant challenges in implementing Sustainable Development Goal 16, despite having some of the best policy frameworks globally. The country has the highest crime index in Africa and ranks fifth most dangerous worldwide. Violence against women and children continues to impede inclusive participation and social cohesion. Moreover, issues such as discrimination, repression of civic space, corruption, poor governance, and a weak judiciary system further hinder the implementation of SDG 16. South Africa has taken several steps to address these challenges and strengthen its legal frameworks. It has implemented plans and strategies to combat crime, human trafficking, and restrictions on civic

space. This is through the establishment of the National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide.

Despite progress in budget allocation, there is a noticeable lack of visibility regarding funding for civil society organisations (CSOs) working on GBV and human trafficking against children, even in the implementation of the National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security (NAP on WPS). The government has not allocated funding for the NAP on WPS, with most funding sourced from the international community.

Public services and institutions in South Africa can deliver on SDG 16, with the DPME in the Presidency overseeing the implementation of Agenda 2030. This department ensures that the agenda is incorporated into the work of directorial departments and provincial and local governments. The UNDP and SALGA have been assisting municipalities in conducting VLRs to contribute to the national report. Ten municipalities, including five metropolitan areas and five Intermediate City Municipalities (ICMs), have committed to conducting VLRs, reflecting a growing commitment to localising SDG implementation.

Despite these efforts, awareness of Agenda 2030 remains minimal, with greater knowledge concentrated among those involved at higher levels, while grassroots awareness is significantly lacking. Launching public awareness campaigns to educate communities about the goals of SDG 16 and the role they can play by utilising various media platforms to disseminate information widely and engage the public in discussions about Goal 16 is needed. Existing policies must be reviewed, and new ones must be developed to promote peace, justice, and strong institutions. Initiatives that promote transparency in governance and establish mechanisms for holding institutions accountable, including independent audits and citizen feedback



7.2 PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT PER SELECTED TARGET

Target 16.1: Reduce Violence Everywhere

South Africa's crime levels have continued to increase, encompassing both violent and non-violent offences within its jurisdiction. The country's murder rate in 2022 was reported as the second highest in the world among countries with reliable data. Murder has increased by 62% from 15,554 deaths in 2011/12 to 25,181 in 2021/22 and, based on SAPS statistics for April to September 2022, indicate that the 2022/23 annual murder rate may be over 44 murders per 100,000 people.¹⁴² Making it a country with the highest murder rate.

Efforts to reduce violence and death rates have seen mixed results. While there have been improvements in certain areas, particularly urban centres, challenges persist in high-crime areas and specific regions. Comprehensive community-based initiatives, law enforcement strategies, and socio-economic interventions are ongoing to address these challenges.

Crimes against women and children remain a deeply disturbing issue in the country. In March 2019, President Cyril Ramaphosa launched the Presidential Summit Declaration against Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (GBV-F). The Declaration sets out specific actions that the country must undertake to prevent GBV-F. In May 2020, the President further launched the National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (2020-2030), intended to guide the country in implementing the Presidential Summit Declaration.

The Department of Justice aims to enhance access to justice for women, particularly victims of gender-based violence and femicide. This includes implementing the National Strategic Plan on GBV-F, maintaining a 70% conviction rate for sexual offences, and establishing 70 additional sexual offences courts. Furthermore, efforts will focus on improving the management of the national register for sex offenders to enhance vetting processes for

individuals working with vulnerable groups. The Department plans to modernise and digitise its services, moving 14 services, such as maintenance and protection order applications, online. As part of their plans, the Department will extend virtual court facilities to 156 courts, ensuring enhanced access to justice.

Target 16.2: End abuse, exploitation, trafficking, and forms of violence against and torture of children.

Human trafficking syndicates continue to thrive in South Africa; they are well-funded, organised, protected, and ruthless. Syndicates are known to threaten the lives of prosecutors, victims and their families, community members, law enforcement agencies, NGOs, and government members, which results in people being less likely to take a stand against them.¹⁴³ According to a recent report, the police service's Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation—commonly known as the Hawks—received 91 human trafficking cases between 9 August 2015 and 17 January 2022. These cases involved 522 adults and 102 children, and, in six of the cases, victim ages were unknown. The South African Police Service (SAPS) recorded 781 South African children as victims of child trafficking between 2028 and 2021.¹⁴⁴

There are currently not enough countermeasures in place in South Africa to address human trafficking, which prevents coordinated and efficient responses. While the South African government has taken steps to address human trafficking and protect children through legislation, enforcement, and awareness campaigns, challenges remain. These challenges include the vastness of the problem, limited resources, and difficulties in identifying and prosecuting traffickers. In addition, there is a lack of reliable statistics about the extent and nature of human trafficking in South Africa, making it hard to address and prevent the issue. Trafficked children and adults, both nationals and foreigners, are victims of serious human rights violations and are entitled to protection, assistance, and redress under international human rights and

142 Institute for Security Studies. (2023). Soaring murder rates underline the lack of sound direction for policing. <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/soaring-murder-rates-underline-the-lack-of-sound-direction-for-policing>

143 The Southern Cross. (2018). The Reality of Human Trafficking in South Africa. <https://www.scross.co.za/2017/08/reality-human-trafficking-south-africa/>

144 Van der Watt, M. (2022). Research into the Nature and Scope of Trafficking in Persons in South Africa: Prevalence insights from the criminal justice system and relevant reporting mechanisms. Supplement to agreement no AID-7200AA18CA00009 (July 2022) Laser Pulse. <https://laserpulse.org/publication/research-into-the-nature-and-scope-of-trafficking-in-persons-in-south-africa-prevalence-insights-from-the-criminal-justice-system-and-relevant-reporting-mechanisms/>

145 Department of Justice and constitutional development. (2013). Prevention and combating of trafficking in persons national framework. Department of Justice.



South Africa's Prevention and Combating of Trafficking in Persons Act (PACOTIP) of 2013 criminalises sex trafficking and labour trafficking, with penalties including life imprisonment and significant fines. However, important provisions of the Act have remained dormant for ten years as a result of parliament's delays in formally adopting them. Despite having various laws in place to combat trafficking, including provisions in addressing the exploitation of children, implementing these laws is lacking, leading to gaps in enforcement. The Act is comprehensive and, if properly implemented, human trafficking in South Africa will be combated successfully. To achieve this, it is imperative to have a capable police service for law enforcement and resilient border control units to apprehend both suspected traffickers and victims of trafficking.¹⁴⁶

Target 16.3: Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice.

While South Africa upholds human rights principles and operates under the rule of law as a constitutional democracy, there have been limited advancements in promoting the rule of law and guaranteeing equal access to justice. Available data highlight stark inequalities, gun violence, corruption, weak judiciary, shrinking civic space and divergent trends in some indicators, especially between men and women.

The 2023 World Justice Project (WJP) Rule of Law Index ranks South Africa 56th out of 142 countries, highlighting strengths in judicial and legislative oversight, reflecting effective safeguard of government powers. However, the country faces significant challenges with corruption, which impacts various sectors, including public services and the judiciary.

Despite its moderate success in protecting fundamental rights, South Africa continues to grapple with issues like police violence and minority rights. High crime rates undermine order and security, and access to civil justice is hindered by barriers such as cost and procedural complexity. Additionally, the criminal justice system struggles with efficiency, due

There are programmes focused on ensuring access to justice for all. Over the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) period, the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development (DoJ) is planning to convert more periodical and/or branch courts into full services courts. This initiative will significantly enhance access to justice, bringing more services to communities and thereby reducing the travelling costs they had to incur when they want to resolve legal disputes.¹⁴⁸

Corruption has become entrenched and systemic in South African politics, economy, and business. This was particularly evident in the state capture inquiry, which revealed that corruption has eroded state institutions. The inquiry into state capture, chaired by Justice Raymond Zondo from August 2018 to August 2021, highlighted the extent of this problem and its threat to democratic institutions. Responding to the commission's recommendations, the government submitted the Public Procurement Bill to parliament in 2023 to increase transparency and accountability in procurement processes. Additionally, the State-Owned Enterprises Bill aims to enhance oversight and accountability in SOEs.¹⁴⁹

Target 16.7 Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representation decision-making at all levels.

Regarding gender equality in local government, the boundaries for the current municipal structure, consisting of 257 municipalities, were adopted during the 2016 local government elections and were first reported on in the non-financial census of municipalities report for 2017. This allows for meaningful comparisons over the 2017–2021 period. In 2017, women occupied 36% of senior-level posts across local government, rising to 39% in 2021 according to Stats SA's non-financial census of municipalities report.¹⁵⁰

Women in South Africa continue to encounter substantial obstacles in achieving leadership positions, despite the country's progressive constitution and efforts to advance gender equality. These concerns are likely due to restrictive laws, cultural diversities and practices, institutional

146 Yesufu, S. (2020). Human trafficking: a South African perspective. *e-BANGI*, 17(6), 103-120.

147 Department of Justice and Constitutional Development. (2022). Strategic Plan 2021 – 2025. Department of Justice and Constitutional Development. <https://www.justice.gov.za/mtsf/dojcd-strat-2021-2025.pdf>

148 Parliamentary Monitoring Group. (2024). Revised Annual Performance Plan 2022 –2023. Parliamentary Monitoring Group. <https://static.pmg.org.za/dojcd-app-2021-2023.pdf>.

149 South African Government. (2023). Working to prevent state capture now and into the future. <https://www.gov.za/blog/working-prevent-state-capture-now-and-future>

150 Statistics SA. (2023). Gender equality in local government: an update. Stats SA. <https://www.statssa.gov.za/?p=16582>



barriers, and disproportionate access to quality education, healthcare, and resources.¹⁵¹

The Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Act 41 of 2003 makes provision for women to constitute at least 30% of the National House of Traditional Leaders. Transforming traditional leadership poses significant challenges, necessitating substantial changes in the sector. Despite some improvements, women in these leadership structures continue to encounter unequal treatment compared to their male counterparts.¹⁵²

Target 16.9: By 2023, provide legal identity for all including birth registration.

In accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), every child is entitled to a name, nationality, and official birth registration. Birth registration is essential for legitimising a child's existence and failure to do so limits their future opportunities in education, economic participation, and the exercise of human rights. Sustainable Development Goal 16.9 emphasises the need for legal identity, including birth registration, to prevent abuse, exploitation, trafficking, and violence against children.¹⁵³ According to the UN, Census data from 2001 to 2011, women—representing 55% of residents in certain areas—are disproportionately affected by statelessness, particularly black African women accounting for 32.2% of this group.

The Department of Home Affairs has set up 'offices' at major hospitals and clinics to issue birth certificates directly. However, this is not always accessible to parents—especially those parents who are not South African.

Travelling to the closest Home Affairs office or clinic poses a challenge for people living in remote areas of the country and those with very low incomes. Moreover, there are instances in South Africa where children were abandoned by their parents at a very early age (between five and seven years old). Consequently, these individuals face obstacles in obtaining an identity document in adulthood as they lack any form of documentation to verify their

parental heritage. This has resulted in many children not being issued a birth certificate in South Africa.¹⁵⁴

7.3 POLICY AND INSTITUTIONAL READINESS TO DELIVER ON 2030 AGENDA

In efforts to create a policy and institutional enabling environment, South Africa has developed a comprehensive policy framework to address the goals outlined in SDG 16. Specific policies like the National Crime Prevention Strategy focus on reducing crime rates and improving community safety.

The South African Police Service has implemented community policing initiatives to enhance collaboration between law enforcement and communities, fostering a safer environment. While South Africa has established a robust policy framework, challenges persist in achieving complete coherence. There is a need for improved coordination across various government departments and agencies to ensure a unified approach to addressing the root causes of violence.

The South African government has put measures in place to ensure that the Medium-Term Strategic Framework includes targets, indicators, and intervention measures that are gender responsive, and which must be achieved within the period 2019-2024. This demonstrates that gender mainstreaming is possible for all government programmes and interventions.

The South African government passed the Prevention and Combating Torture of Persons Act in 2013, which characterises torture as a crime and made punishable by law. Although the act allows torture to be prosecuted, there is a gap between legal protection and the implementation of the law. The Children's Amendment Act 17 (2022) aims to close gaps and resolve problems in the childcare and protection system, develop solutions for these problems, and improve the protection of vulnerable children through a coordinated provision of care and protection services.

151 Frontiers. (2018). Womens visibility in decision making processes in Africa – progress, challenges and way forward. Frontiers.

<https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fsoc.2018.00038/full>

152 COGTA. (2003). TRADITIONAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK ACT 41 OF 2003. COGTA.

https://www.cogta.gov.za/cgta_2016/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/TLGFA-Traditional-Leadership-and-Governance-Framework-Act-2003-Act-No-41-of-2003.pdf

153 United Nations. (2015). Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. United Nations

<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>

154 Department of Justice and Constitutional Development. (2019). Prevention and combating of trafficking in persons national framework. Justice.

<https://www.justice.gov.za/docs/other-docs/2019-TIP-NPF-10April2019.pdf>





NO
JUSTICE
NO PEACE

Civil society organisations have played a crucial role in supporting the government's implementation of activities under the National Gender Machinery (NGM), which serves as a mechanism and strategy to tackle women's inequalities in all aspects of life, whether private or public. The NGM calls for the collection of data on the status of women to address their socio-economic development and ensure their integration into the future we want.

7.4 GAPS AND ACCELERATORS

Civil society's assessment of South Africa's performance on Goal 16 has revealed the gaps and identified accelerators listed below.

Gaps

- Limited government coordination, insufficient resources, and infrastructure hamper the holistic implementation of violence reduction strategies and the effective functioning of the justice system.
- Legal system delays, disparities in access, and persisting violence in certain regions. Additionally, varying legislative approaches by states, including the exclusion of internal trafficking of citizens in some jurisdictions, further complicate the understanding and resolution of human trafficking.
- Femicide rates are high, and data limitations hinder accurate measurement of non-lethal violence.

Accelerator

- Strengthening inter-agency coordination, increasing justice sector budget allocations, and implementing socio-economic interventions.
- Comprehensive, multi-faceted approaches are needed to combat child trafficking, including legislation enforcement, awareness, education, and victim support.
- Efforts are needed to tackle inequalities, increase awareness of laws combating gender-based violence (GBV), and invest in a robust, independent judiciary.

7.5 LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND

Underreporting, especially in cases of violence against children, women, and LGBTIQ+, remains a significant challenge due to fear of reprisal, parental involvement, and secondary victimisation during the reporting process. Although victimisation surveys provide alternative insights, they also have limitations in terms of recall and disclosure. Additionally, the lack of a dedicated mechanism to identify stateless individuals complicates policy responses and the protection of human rights for these populations.

7.6 INTERLINKAGES

Achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls (SDG 5) is crucial for promoting peaceful and inclusive societies (SDG 16), and women's participation in decision-making, peacebuilding, and conflict resolution processes is essential for sustainable peace and development. Conflict, violence, and lack of access to justice disproportionately affect the poor, trapping them in a cycle of poverty. Achieving peaceful and inclusive societies (SDG 16) is essential for ending poverty (SDG 1). Inequalities, discrimination, and exclusion can fuel conflict and violence, undermining efforts to build peaceful and inclusive societies (SDG 16). Reducing inequalities (SDG 10) is therefore essential.

7.7 CONCLUSION

Addressing the multifaceted challenges of violence and injustice in South Africa requires a coordinated and holistic approach. Implementing targeted socio-economic programmes in vulnerable communities, alongside private sector collaboration for mentorship and opportunity creation, is essential to mitigate factors contributing to violence, such as unemployment and lack of educational opportunities.

Strengthening the legislative framework to address emerging forms of violence and criminal activities, particularly gender-based violence, domestic violence, and hate crimes, is critical. Continuous review and enforcement of laws, aligned with international best practices, are necessary to ensure effective protection and justice for all citizens.





Public awareness campaigns are crucial in educating the population about the impact of violence, advocating for conflict resolution, and incorporating peace education into school curricula. Media partnerships are crucial for responsible reporting and fostering a culture of respect and non-violence.

To combat child trafficking and exploitation effectively, it is imperative to strengthen laws and establish comprehensive support services for victims, including shelters, counselling, and medical assistance. Collaborating with NGOs for rehabilitation and reintegration programs is essential for survivors' recovery and reintegration into society.

Enhancing the rule of law in South Africa demands robust legal and policy reforms to address inequalities and ensure compliance with human rights standards. This includes strengthening the capacity of the judiciary and justice system bodies, along with establishing effective monitoring mechanisms for accountability.

In essence, a comprehensive and integrated approach encompassing legislative reform, socio-economic empowerment, public awareness, and protection of rights is necessary to foster a safer, more just society for all South Africans.



8

GOAL 17: PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS



8.1 INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

This report reviews South Africa's progress on Sustainable Development Goal 17¹⁵⁵, which focuses on strengthening the means of implementation and revitalizing the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.

South Africa has also made limited progress in mobilizing partnerships and strengthening means of implementation. These include strengthening the domestic resource mobilisation, attracting foreign direct investment, establishing partnerships with bilateral and multilateral institutions, negotiating trade agreements, securing development assistance, and leveraging diaspora remittances. Issuing sovereign bonds, collaborating with development finance institutions, and active participation in international organisations have bolstered resource mobilisation efforts.

South Africa continues actively participating in multilateral forums- including the Group of Twenty (G20) and the Brazil, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) bloc- to foster multilateralism, equitable global and intra-African trade, sustainable development, and regional integration.¹⁵⁶ These multilateral groups provide platforms for South Africa to collaborate with other countries on key issues affecting the continent and the world, such as sustainable development, trade, development, and peacekeeping.

Significant challenges in strengthening means for implementation include increasing the financing gap and rising debt levels. In the 2023/24-year, South Africa's budget deficit reached ZAR347 billion, and its debt stock accounted for 73.9% of GDP. The debt

service costs amounted to ZAR356 billion, which is 5.1% of GDP or 20.8% of primary budget revenue.¹⁵⁷ Tax revenue growth in the 2023/24 fiscal year was impeded by global geopolitical tensions, energy supply uncertainties, logistical challenges, weak global and domestic economic growth prospects, and rising inflation.



155 This working group was composed of Puseletso Maile and Yared Tsegay (African Monitor); Kwanele Sishi, Dr Dineo Seabe and Glenn Farred, Thamsanqa Dlabulolo (Mpumelelo Youth Movement), Mahadi Ramotsamai (Africa Unite), Cathy Kodiemoka (HURISA), and Norman Mapela (Isiziba Constituency).

156 Department of International Relations and Cooperation. (2023). Multilateral Relations. DIRCO.

<https://dirco.gov.za/multilateral/#:~:text=Multilateralism%2C%20and%20by%20implication%20the,existence%20on%2024%20October%201945.>

157 National Treasury. (2024). Budget review government debt and contingent liabilities. Treasury.

<https://www.treasury.gov.za/documents/National%20Budget/2024/review/Chapter%207.pdf>



BOX 8 CIVIL SOCIETY SCORE CARD

The CSO technical writing group evaluated progress on nine targets (17.1, 17.2, 17.3, 17.4, 17.7, 17.8, 17.12, 17.7, 17,7) and, using the scorecard developed for this study, rated South Africa’s performance on Goal 17 as **Level 3: medium progress**.

AREAS	RATING
1. Governance and policy framework	3
2. Plans and strategies	3
3. Institutional support	2
4. Budgets	2
5. Implementation	2
6. Public Awareness	2
7. Transparency and accountability	1
8. Multi-stakeholder partnerships	2
9. Citizen participation and civil society engagement	1
TOTAL	2

South Africa has policies, plans, and strategies in place to achieve this goal. The country is also making notable progress across several thematic areas of SDG 17, including finance, technology, capacity building, and trade. South Africa’s commitment to SDG 17 is evident through its establishment of partnerships at both national and international levels. These partnerships involve collaboration with United Nations (UN) agencies, civil society organizations, the private sector, and international entities to advance sustainable development initiatives. However, there is rising financing gap: national debt levels are rising, tax justice issues need to be address, and illicit outflows and profit shifting abase erosion continues weaken domestic resources mobilisation efforts.

There are ongoing endeavors to mobilize multi-stakeholder partnerships, and the government has expressed its intention to establish the National Development Stakeholder Forum as a key component of the national SDG framework. Nevertheless, the formalisation of the multi-stakeholder partnership has yet to be realised.

8.2 PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

Target 17.1: Strengthen domestic resource mobilization, including through international support to developing countries, to improve domestic capacity for tax and other revenue collection.

South Africa’s tax-to-GDP ratio for the 2022/23 fiscal year was 25.1%, the highest ratio attained since 1994/95.

Tax collection initiatives have also yielded positive results. The fiscal year ending on March 31, 2022, saw tax revenue surge by ZAR314.1 billion, reaching at total of ZAR 1,563.8, thanks to a healthy post-pandemic economic recovery. SARS noted a significant surge in total tax revenue collection, with the figures climbing from rising from ZAR1,216.5 billion in 2017/18 to ZAR1,563.8 billion in 2021/22.

Personal Income Tax (PIT) continues to be the largest contributor to tax revenue at 35.5%, followed by Value Added Tax (VAT) at 25%, and Corporate Income Tax (CIT) at 20.7%. When combined, these sources contribute 81.2% of total tax revenue collections. Following a decrease from 23.8% in 2019/20 to 22.3% in 2020/21, the tax-to-GDP ratio rebounded to 24.9% in 2022.

In February 2023, the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) placed South Africa on its “grey list,” subjecting the country to heightened monitoring. This decision followed the FATF’s 2021 Report, which evaluated South Africa’s compliance with the FATF 40 Recommendations and the effectiveness of its anti-money laundering (AML) and counter-terrorist financing (CTF) system. Greylisting has diverse implications for South Africa, impacting its reputation and economy.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁸ National Treasury. (2023). What does FATF greylisting mean for a country. Treasury. https://www.treasury.gov.za/comm_media/press/2023/2023022501%20FATF%20Grey%20Listing%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf



Tax justice issues persist. The tax system, although progressive in theory, places heavy tax burdens on middle- and lower-income groups due to enforcement and compliance issues and tax loopholes. Value added tax and similar indirect taxes disproportionately affect the poor. Tax avoidance is prevalent among corporations and high-net-worth individuals. Base erosion and profit shifting, as well as illicit outflows, continue to erode South Africa's tax base. According to Global Financial Integrity,¹⁵⁹ illicit outflows averaged around USD20 billion annually from 2009 to 2018,

Targets 17.2 and 17.3: Official development assistance and mobilisation of financial resources for developing countries

South Africa has demonstrated a positive trend in achieving the targets for mobilising additional financial resources for developing countries through diverse channels. Across the Southern African Development Community (SADC), many households rely on cross-border remittances as a vital source of income. The pivotal role of these remittances cannot be underestimated. They facilitate access to essential services for recipients and play a significant role in bolstering micro-economies within various SADC communities, fostering regional socio-economic advancement. The total value of formal outbound remittances from South Africa in 2022, facilitated by authorised dealers or dealers with limited authority, was approximately USD991 million. This amount is closely mirrored by the estimated value of informal remittances closely mirrors this amount.¹³ The volume of remittances, measured as a percentage of total GDP, showed a consistent upward trajectory, peaking at USD1.27 billion in 2020 due to increased financial support amid the global Covid-19 pandemic. However, in 2021, it decreased to USD1.1 billion and 2022 saw a further decline to USD991 million. Formal outbound remittances from South Africa in 2022 amounted to approximately USD991 million, with informal remittances estimated to be of similar value.

South Africa's development agenda relies heavily on FDI to drive economic prosperity, social welfare, and global competitiveness. South Africa has traditionally been a hub for significant FDI. However, in 2022, FDI inflows decreased by a significant

78.68% from USD40.6 billion in 2021 to USD9.1 billion. The remarkable increase in 2021 was primarily attributed to a single Naspers deal, yet the overall trend has historically shown stability.¹²

Target 17.4: Assist developing countries in attaining debt sustainability

In 2023/24, South Africa's debt stock hit ZAR5.21 trillion (73.9% of GDP), while debt service cost¹⁶⁰ amounted to ZAR356 billion, which is 5.1% of GDP or 20.8% of primary budget revenue. The average foreign currency debt will average ZAR606.9 billion or 10.2% of total debt. Guarantees to state-owned companies, independent power producers, and public-private partnerships have contributed to the government contingent liability, which had reached ZAR1.07 trillion in 2022/23.

The cost of borrowing has increased as South Africa's credit rating has deteriorated over the last five years. In 2023, Moody's and S&P maintained South Africa's sovereign credit rating at sub-investment grade with a stable outlook. In January 2024, Fitch affirmed the country's long-term debt ratings at "BB-" and maintained a stable outlook, attributing it to low real GDP growth, high inequality, a high and rising government debt-to-GDP ratio, and a modest fiscal consolidation plan. Over the medium term, the government will focus on raising GDP growth through structural reforms and stabilising debt and debt service costs.

Target 17.7: Promote sustainable technologies to developing countries

South Africa has significantly advanced its efforts to strengthen regional and international cooperation, including North-South, South-South, and triangular partnerships, to improve access to and collaboration in science, technology, and innovation. By January 2023, South Africa had 43.48 million active internet users, with around 25.8 million people social media platforms, representing approximately 43% of the total population.¹⁶ Most South Africans (78.7%) utilised mobile devices to access the internet in 2022. These efforts facilitate knowledge sharing, technology access, policy coordination, joint research and development, supporting inclusive growth and sustainable growth in the region.¹⁷

159 Global Financial Integrity. (2021). Trade-Related Illicit Financial Flows in 134 Developing Countries 2009-2018. Global Financial Integrity. <https://gfintegrity.org/report/trade-related-illicit-financial-flows-in-134-developing-countries-2009-2018/>

160 National Treasury. (2024). Budget review government debt and contingent liabilities. Treasury. <https://www.treasury.gov.za/documents/National%20Budget/2024/review/Chapter%207.pdf>



Target 17.8: Strengthen the science, technology and innovation capacity

Investment in research, science, technology, and innovation is a priority for the South African government. This commitment is essential for progress in multiple economic sectors, promoting sustainability, and enhancing global competitiveness.

South Africa has recognised the importance of research, science, and technology in achieving its developmental goals outlined in strategies such as the National Development Plan (NDP) and the South African Research and Innovation Strategy (SARIS). These strategies aim to harness the potential of science, technology, and innovation to address socio-economic challenges, stimulate economic growth, and enhance the country's global competitiveness.

The government has established various institutions and initiatives to support research, innovation, and technology development, such as the Department of Science and Innovation (DSI), the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), and the Technology Innovation Agency (TIA). These organisations provide funding, infrastructure, and support for research and innovation activities across different sectors.

The South African government prioritises funding for research and innovation as a crucial driver of socio-economic development and global competitiveness. By allocating resources and fostering collaboration with academia and industry, it aims to harness creative potential and advance in key areas such as renewable energy and biotechnology. South Africa aims to construct a knowledge-based economy, tackle societal challenges, and position itself as a leader in global innovation through policies, incentives, and strategic partnerships.

Despite a decline in GDP by 6.4% in 2021 because of the pandemic, gross domestic expenditure on R&D for 2020/21 was ZAR33.541 billion. However, adjusted for constant 2015 prices, it decreased by 7.6% from the previous year. Government funding mainly benefits higher education and science councils, but there is a call for increased private-sector investment. Medical and health sciences receive the most R&D expenditure (22.1%). The corporate sector reported the largest nominal expenditure decrease for 2020/21 (-6.1%). Despite this, the government remains the primary contributor

to R&D spending (56.3%), followed by businesses (26.9%). Foreign funding decreased, while domestic sources increased slightly.¹⁹

Target 17.12: Remove trade barriers for least developed countries

The signing of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) by South Africa presents significant potential for economic and sustainable development. By reducing trade barriers and fostering intra-African trade, AfCFTA can stimulate economic growth, create jobs, and diversify export markets for South Africa. In 2022, South Africa's intra-African merchandise trade was valued at approximately US\$ 40 billion, accounting for only 17% of the country's total merchandise trade. Between 2021 and 2022, intra-African merchandise trade increased by 13%, with Mozambique, Botswana, Namibia, and Zimbabwe accounting for 51% of the total. South Africa's main intra-African trading partners are Southern African Customs Union (SACU) and SADC members, except for Nigeria.

In 2022, South Africa's intra-African exports amounted to about USD30 billion, comprising 24% of its total exports – a 14% rise from the previous year. South Africa's main intra-African exports are light oils, bituminous coal, ferrochromium, chromium ores, electrical energy, goods vehicles, and non-agglomerated iron ores. Mozambique, Botswana, Namibia, Zimbabwe, and Zambia are the top destination markets for South Africa's intra-African exports, making up 67% of the total.

In 2022, South Africa's intra-African imports were valued at about USD10 billion, making up just 9% of the country's total imports, but showing a 7% growth compared to the previous year. South Africa mainly imports petroleum oils, gold, natural gas, mixtures of odoriferous substances, electrical energy, and non-industrial diamonds from other African countries, with the bulk (64%) sourced from Nigeria, Eswatini, Mozambique, Namibia, and Botswana.¹⁰

Target 17.16: Enhance the global partnership for sustainable development, and 17.17: Encourage effective partnerships

South Africa has made significant achievements towards the achievement of Goals 17.16 and 17.17, which focus on forming multi-stakeholder partnerships for SDGs in the country. Government has laid the foundation to build strong alliances



the SDG Coordination Mechanism, which included provisions for the National Development Stakeholder Forum (NDSF), a multi-stakeholder partnership on the SDGs aimed at ensuring coordinated collaboration on the planning, implementation, and monitoring of the goals, as well as resource mobilisation to ensure their achievement in the country.¹⁶¹ By collaborating with government, civil society organisations, academia, labour, private sector, and Chapter 9 institutions, the NDSF created Principles and Modalities in 2020 to guide its work.

The slow progress in establishing the National SDG Coordination Mechanism has hindered the mobilisation of political support for the National Development Stakeholders Forum, which is crucial for driving action on the SDGs in the country. The MSPs mentioned above are just a few examples of the numerous multi-stakeholder partnerships in the country that focus on SDG-related issues. Insufficient research in this field makes it difficult to evaluate the scope and impact of these partnerships, impeding our understanding of progress on targets 17.16 and 17.17.

South Africa's statistical legislation, plan, and census

South Africa's National Statistics Office (NSO) operates under the statutory framework provided by the Statistics Act no. 6 of 1999, aligning its practices with the internationally recognised United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics. The NSO further adheres to the guidelines outlined in the African Charter of Statistics, emphasising the importance of accurate and reliable data collection and analysis.

Fully funded by the government, the NSO serves as the cornerstone of South Africa's statistical planning and implementation efforts. It plays a pivotal role in collecting, analysing, and disseminating essential data vital for informed decision-making across various sectors of the economy and society. The NSO receives robust support from the Ministry of Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation, which contributes to the effectiveness and efficiency of statistical initiatives. Through this collaboration, statistical data is effectively used to inform policy formulation, programme planning, and evaluation,

Updating birth and death registration records through surveys is a vital aspect of the NSO's activities, as it ensures accurate demographic databases for analysis, public health planning, and social welfare programmes. Supported by government funding and the Ministry of Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation, the NSO plays a vital role in promoting evidence-based decision-making and fostering socio-economic development in South Africa.

8.3 GAPS AND ACCELERATORS

In its assessment of South Africa's performance on Goal 17, the civil society working group identified the following gaps and accelerators.

Gaps

- There is growing concern about a host of political, economic, and regulatory factors that affect foreign businesses adversely. These include reports about corruption and mismanagement in government, significant unemployment, violent crime, insufficient infrastructure, and poor government service delivery to impoverished communities; these factors were exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic.
- State-Owned Enterprises face significant challenges, such as financial mismanagement, governance deficiencies, operational inefficiencies, high debt, limited competition, economic distortions, and declining public trust. Over ZAR308 billion has been spent bailing out failing SOEs, reducing funds available for essential services and infrastructure by ZAR257 billion²². Restoring public confidence and improving SOE performance may require considering options such as restructuring, privatisation, or partnerships with the private sector.
- Mismanagement of public spending, including low value for money, corruption, and wasteful expenditure, is a critical challenge. This has exacerbated increased public wage bills, putting pressure on the budget and limiting spending in other areas. Finding a balance between fair wages and fiscal sustainability is a crucial challenge.

161 Tsegay, Y., & Seabe, D. (2022). "South Africa: Promising preconditions calling for recognition and a roadmap". Nachhaltigkeitsrat. https://www.nachhaltigkeitsrat.de/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Global-Forum-Study_Pieces-of-a-Puzzle_March-2022.pdf



Accelerators

The civil society review identified the following accelerators which need to be considered:

- South Africa has to deal with Energy Crisis, which has become a bottleneck for accelerated growth. The South African government has implemented a comprehensive plan to address the nation's energy crisis. Key initiatives include optimising Eskom's coal-fired power stations, combating corruption and theft within the energy sector, restructuring Eskom to improve efficiency, promoting the adoption of solar power through incentives and financing adjustments, and facilitating private investment to expand electricity generation capacity. These efforts aim to diversify energy sources, enhance reliability, and ensure long-term energy security for the nation. Effective coordination and decisive action are crucial for the successful implementation of these measures.
- Improving public expenditure management entails implementing key measures such as transparent budgeting processes, open procurement data, and public participation in budget discussions. Strengthening anti-corruption institutions, enforcing stricter penalties for malfeasance, and protecting whistle-blowers are essential. Revising the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA) and implementing a Spending Efficiency Framework proposed by the National Treasury are vital steps. These efforts aim to enhance accountability, mitigate corruption risks, and ensure effective and equitable use of public resources for the benefit of all citizens.
- Operationalisation of the National SDG coordination mechanism and the establishment and institutionalisation of the National Development Stakeholders Forum (NDSF) must be prioritised. The NDSF could facilitate synergies and links between state and non-state actors working on the SDGs in South Africa, through better communication, coordination, dialogue and interaction between government and the relevant stakeholders from the various sectors of South African society. Incorporating the voices of all citizens in development planning and implementation ensures that no one is left behind, taking a

- Strengthening oversight and accountability to improve public expenditure, which involves transparent budgeting, open procurement data, increased public participation in budget discussions, strengthening anti-corruption institutions, enforcing stricter penalties for malfeasance, and protecting whistleblowers.
- Revising the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA) to achieve more sustainable and equitable public expenditure to safeguard against corruption as an immediate policy intervention.
- Immediate implementation of the "Framework for Achieving Spending Efficiency in a Fiscally Constrained Environment" proposed by the National Treasury in 2021.

8.4 CONCLUSION

This report highlighted South Africa's commitment to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 17, focusing on strengthening implementation means and revitalising global partnerships for sustainable development.

The country has made significant progress in finance, technology, capacity building, and trade through active national and international collaborations. Despite facing challenges such as rising debt levels, mismanagement of public spending, and energy crises, South Africa has shown resilience by mobilising international resources, enhancing tax revenue collection, and participating in multilateral forums like G20 and BRICS.



9

REFLECTION ON THE VOLUNTARY LOCAL REVIEWS

9.1 INTRODUCTION

For the 2024 Voluntary National Review (VNR), ten out of 13 municipalities initially selected successfully participated in compiling supplementary baseline VLR reports. Participating metropolitan municipalities included Buffalo City, Johannesburg, Tshwane, and eThekweni. At the local level, participation came from Mogale City, uMhlathuze, Mossel Bay, Mogale City, Rustenburg, and Koukamma.

The VLR process offers several advantages:

- Creating baseline reports that track actual progress towards SDG implementation.
- Identifying and capitalising on linkages between SDG indicators, the NDP, and IDPs to guide planning and resource allocation.
- Facilitating mutual learning among municipalities to enhance their capacity and knowledge.
- Connecting local insights with national, regional, and international platforms.

This section reflects on the collaborative efforts of the South African Civil Society Organisations Working Group (SAWG), led by African Monitor, with four municipalities. It focuses on both the process and content, particularly emphasising the goal of leaving no one behind.

9.2 PROCESS

Following United Nation department in Economic and Social affairs (UNDESA) guidelines, the VLR process encompassed four phases.

Phase 1: Preparation

Initial organisation included developing work plans and setting up institutional arrangements. These were developed at a series of workshops held in 2023.

- A National Capacity Building workshop was convened in March 2023, Jointly organised by UNDESA and DMPE, which brought together representatives from Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, South African local government association, Municipalities, and Civil society.
- Regional workshops were held on:
 - 29 - 31 August 2023, in Ekurhuleni
 - 27 - 29 September 2023, in Gqeberha
 - 25 - 27 October 2023, in Gauteng
 - 28 - 30 November 2023, in Ethekewini

These training workshops aimed to assist municipalities in integrating SDGs into municipal planning and budgeting systems. The objectives included:

- Enhancing local governance through VLR implementation.
- Strengthen awareness and multi-stakeholder partnerships for sub-national implementation and monitoring of the 2030 Agenda.
- Building capacity for comprehensive sub-national reviews of SDG implementation that complement national processes.
- Addressing urban-rural disparities through improved data gathering and analysis.

Phase 2: Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder engagement involved identifying stakeholders, developing engagement plans, organising consultations, and conducting workshops. SAWG participated in six engagements and facilitated four, responding to requests from SALGA or directly from the municipalities.



Reasons for engagement requests included:

- broadening stakeholder engagement, particularly with civil society and other government department actors;
- addressing trust deficits with communities as a result of perceived and real service delivery challenges – or promises made by councillors and political leaders;
- augmenting municipal external stakeholder databases;
- lack of funding to convene consultation workshops; and
- securing independent facilitators.

Multistakeholder engagements attended by a total of 277 participants were held as follows:

- City of Tshwane, 19 March 2024
- City of Johannesburg, 10 April 2024
- Mogale City, 11 April 2024
- Koukamma, 10 May 2024

These sessions provided platforms for facilitated discussions on SDG progress, challenges, and interventions. Participants were requested to provide input per SDG on the following:

1. Policy frameworks put in place to achieve SDGs in the municipalities.
2. Significant advancements made towards specific SDGs, supported by relevant data.
3. Obstacles impeding SDG progress, supported by relevant data.
4. Recommend interventions that would significantly accelerate progress towards achieving the SDGs in the municipality.

Phase 3: Gathering Inputs and Data

This phase focused on collecting, analysing, and synthesising stakeholder inputs for the VLR report, using administrative data as the primary source for ongoing progress assessment. Therefore, the current reports serve as baseline

Phase 4: Preparing the VLR Report

The final phase involved synthesising inputs, review and quality control measures, validation, approval, and publication.

At a finalisation and validation workshop, held from 27 February to 1 March 2024 at Birchwood Hotel & OR Tambo Conference Centre, municipalities and other stakeholders had the opportunity to provide inputs into the draft reports and used it as a writing retreat to strengthen their drafts. Additionally, municipalities were able to draft their key messages.

9.3 CHALLENGES

1. Data sources

The availability of credible data sources was an initial challenge for most municipalities. The Koukamma Local Municipality, for instance, uses multiple data sources for its VLR report, including information provided by consultants who help generate technical municipal reports.

The transition to using Stats SA as the primary source remains a challenge because:

- Stats SA data is not always available at the sub-regional level.
- Municipalities generate their own information, often available publicly: they have information on households benefitting from free utility services; and technical reports on water quality and services, sanitation, housing, etc.
- Municipalities also draw on qualitative data sources such as stakeholder engagement workshops and quality assessments on transport or other services conducted by the municipality or with the help of academia or other entities.

2. Human resources

Municipalities were required to work in teams of three. However, some could only send one or two people to attend the workshops and work on the reports. Some municipal staff lacked the capacity to write the reports, with local municipalities experiencing the most difficulty.



3. Interface with communities

Some communities are not involved in municipal processes, resulting in little to no communication between the municipalities and the writing teams. Consequently, coordinating stakeholder engagements was challenging for some writing teams.

4. Competing priorities

Some writing team members work on multiple portfolios, and this made it difficult for them to dedicate all their time on the writing of the report. The training workshops and the writing retreat assisted to some level.

5. Location of the VLR and support

The degree of support extended to the VLR process and staff was contingent on their positions. In municipalities where senior executives were involved, the process received more support, making it easier for the writing team to complete their tasks. In municipalities where the municipal managers and mayors supported the process, progress was swifter.

9.4 CIVIL SOCIETY'S REFLECTION ON SDG DELIVERY AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

In the sample of four municipalities:

- All municipalities selected goals that encompass its core mandate namely SDG 11 (Sustainable Communities and Cities) with interlinkages to SDGs 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy) and, in metros, to SDG 13 (Climate Action).
- A few also included SDG 1 (End to Poverty) and SDG 2 (Zero Hunger). Selected goals are also interlinked with SDG 5 to ensure gender equality.
- One of the municipalities also included SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth). While IDPs contain a Local Economic Development (LED) component to deal with the high local unemployment rates and poverty, it is often an unfunded mandate. Apart from national

programmes like the Expanded Public Works Programme, it is unclear who is accountable for driving local economic activities that lead to job creation.

Below is a reflection on two critical content issues affecting service delivery to vulnerable groups in these municipalities: SDG 6 with an emphasis on water, and SDG 11 focusing on housing and basic services.

SDG 6: CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION

The NDP Vision 2030 strives for all citizens to have drinking water, while municipalities aim for universal access to water. The assessment focused on selected targets and indicators for SDG 6, Agenda 2030.

- Target 6.1: By 2030, achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all.
- Target 6.2: By 2030, achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations.
- Target 6.3: By 2030, improve water quality by reducing pollution, eliminating dumping and minimizing the release of hazardous chemicals and materials, halving the proportion of untreated wastewater and substantially increasing recycling and safe reuse globally.

South Africa has limited water resources and is ranked 29th out of 193 countries surveyed by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC),¹⁶² with an average annual rainfall of 450 mm/annum, or about 50% of the world average. South Africa imports nearly 25% of its water from Lesotho through the Integrated Vaal River Water System.

The National Water Act (36 of 1998) furthers the constitutional right to water and governs the conservation, allocation and management of the country's water resources.¹⁶³ Throughout South

162 Maluleke, L. (2023, September 27). South Africa's water security crisis worsens. Mail & Guardian. <https://mg.co.za/thought-leader/opinion/2023-09-27-south-africas-water-security-crisis-worsens/#:~:text=South%20Africa%20is%20one%20of,50%25%20of%20the%20world%20average.>

163 Office of the President of South Africa. (1998). National Water Act. Government Gazette 19182. https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201409/a36-98.pdf





required to report monthly on the quality of drinking water. The Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS), supported by the Institute of Municipal Engineering of Southern Africa (IMESA) and Water Institute of Southern Africa (WISA), has in place a Water Quality Management System to provide useful information on water quality, trends and other data. Water users have recourse to the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) if their right to water is compromised.

Achievements across the four municipalities

In the Sarah Baartman district (Eastern Cape) piped (tap) water inside the dwelling has improved by 13,4% from 51% in 2011 to 64% in 2022 (Census 2022). Koukamma Local Municipality, with the highest percentage in the district of households with piped water inside the dwelling, increased by 16% from 68,2% in 2011 to 84,2% in 2022.

Mogale City Local Municipality (MCLM) reflects that 98.6% of the population has safely managed drinking water services (Census 2022).¹⁶⁴ However, no Blue Drop analysis¹⁶⁵ was provided.

For the City of Johannesburg (COJ) access to improved water facilities has increased by 3.8% from 91,60% in 2011 to 95.40% in 2022 (Census 2022). The quality of water provided by the CoJ

is excellent according to Blue Drop Watch Report (status of drinking water) and scored 99.43% on Microbiological Compliance and 99.54% on Chemical Compliance.¹⁶⁶ A total of 1,453 households gained access to basic water services, and 806.36 million litres of water were delivered to stationary tanks in informal settlements (City of Johannesburg, 2023). A total of 19.14 kilometres of water pipes were replaced during the 2022/23 financial year and 21,670 water pipe bursts were fixed within 48 hours of notification.

Challenges across the four municipalities

A major challenge for the Mogale City Local Municipality (MCLM) remains restricted access to portable drinking water, particularly for informal settlements and rural regions via standpipes and tinkering trucks.¹⁶⁷

The Koukamma Local Municipality made progress in improving the quality of drinking water since 2012 when the blue drop score was below 6%. It reached a higher score of 25.77% in 2014 but dropped to 24.05 % in 2023. A major challenge for the municipality is retaining equal access to high-quality drinking water.

The City of Tshwane has a challenge with maintaining its wastewater treatment works resulting in unsafe

164 African Monitor; Mogale City. (2024). Mogale City VLR notes.

165 Department of Water Sanitation. (2023). Blue Drop Watch Report. BDWR. <https://ws.dws.gov.za/IRIS/releases/BDWR.pdf>

166 African Monitor; Johannesburg. (2024). City of Johannesburg VLR notes.

167 African Monitor; Mogale City. (2024). Mogale City VLR notes.



CASE STUDY 1: CITY OF TSHWANE

The City of Tshwane is water insecure and highly dependent on water transfers from Rand Water and Magalies Water. The demand for water (and sanitation services) continues to grow due to economic activity and migration.

In December 2018, the Department of Water and Sanitation approached the courts for the City of Tshwane to comply with remedial actions to stop pollution emanating from water treatment plants within its jurisdiction.¹⁶⁸ DWS initiated the action following complaints from the South African Human Rights Commission in August 2018, to ensure that water pollution stopped immediately. The situation since 2010, however, deteriorated due to the metro's non-cooperation, which impacted directly on DWS's ability to deliver on its obligation to provide safe and drinkable water to affected communities. A July 2018 Action Plan was rejected since the City of Tshwane failed to deal with the crisis.

"Freshwater sources in Tshwane, including the Hennops River and Roodeplaat Dam, are being polluted with untreated and partially treated sewage and sludge with devastating effects because of a failure to maintain wastewater treatment works (WWTWs) in Pretoria".¹⁶⁹ Water samples from the Magalies Water Board showed high levels of faecal coliforms and E.coli which expose people and animals to illnesses such as bilharzia, cholera and hepatitis. Management failures, caused a regression in standards of delivery i.e. poor planning and implementation with insufficient WWTWs to provide for the growing metro population. The SAHRC recommended that the municipal managers, who oversaw the failed wastewater treatment works, be held to account.

The City of Tshwane entered into a Water Resilient Cities partnership agreement with the City of Aarhus (Denmark) that commenced in 2015. A

strategic priority was the electrical grid and water infrastructure. Recognising the significance of water and energy as critical drivers for growth and development, the City of Tshwane is working towards a water security strategy (or vision), placing water at the centre of its development, planning and decision-making.

The City of Tshwane is currently working on a partnership with a Water Forum in Finland to cooperate on water resource management focussing on scientific, technological, training and economic aspects as well as facilitate exchange programmes between the entities.

Fast forward, to June 2024, DWS and the City of Tshwane signed a MoU to collaborate on various strategic areas, such as infrastructure planning and development, water resource planning and infrastructure solutions, and capacity-building of City of Tshwane officials.¹⁷⁰ A flagship engineering candidacy development programme, and secondment of candidate engineers as well as professional engineers to be contracted to the City for three years are on the cards. At the signing ceremony, the City of Tshwane noted that it was facing significant water challenges that negatively impacted some residents for a long period which has been linked to ageing infrastructure and maintenance challenges at treatment plants.



168 South African Government. (2018). Water and Sanitation takes Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality to court for pollution of rivers. Water and Sanitation. <https://www.gov.za/news/media-statements/water-and-sanitation-takes-tshwane-metropolitan>

169 Tshwane failed to maintain wastewater plants, leading to pollution of rivers, dams - SAHRC. (2021, October 26). News 24. <https://www.news24.com/news24/southafrica/news/tshwane-failed-to-maintain-wastewater-plants-leading-to-pollution-of-rivers-dams-sahrc-20211026>

170 City of Tshwane. (2024). City of Tshwane and the Department of Water and Sanitation sign a Memorandum of Understanding to address the City's water constraints. City of Tshwane. <https://www.tshwane.gov.za/?p=73964>



For the City of Johannesburg (CoJ) 46.1%, of its water supply is non-revenue generating as it is lost to leaks, theft, or non-payment (City of Johannesburg, 2023). Ageing infrastructure and leaking pipes are also challenges for the Koukamma Local Municipality, Mogale City Municipality and the City of Tshwane (as indicated in Case Study 1). The 2023 Blue Drop Watch report indicates that 13 water supply systems have no water quality data reported, indicating a clear lack of monitoring.¹⁷¹ It points to the failure of governance at both national and local levels to uphold water, sanitation and hygiene standards as well as sustainable development goal six, clean water and sanitation for all. Upgrading ageing water infrastructure, such as pipes and water meters, would contribute towards a sustainable solution.

The Public Affairs Research Institute (PARI) notes “Municipal services — electricity, water, sanitation and waste removal — were intended to be a tool to reduce poverty and inequality, raise living standards and facilitate economic opportunities.”¹⁷² Furthermore, “when services are unaffordable for poor households, the value of the social wage is eroded.” Affordability is a key factor in achieving universal access to basic services. As only a small percentage of households currently benefit, the policy of free basic service has little impact.

Public affaires research institute (PARI) notes urgent action is required to ensure universal access to services, both physical access and genuine affordability.

SDG 11: SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

Selected Target

Target 11.1: By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe, and affordable housing and basic services.

Achievements (across the four municipalities)

The City of Tshwane (CoT) has 1 322 252 households, with 13.1% in informal dwellings (Census 2022). Progress made in servicing informal dwellings are:

- 91 informal settlements are re-arranged or re-blocked with upgrading plans in place, at various stages of formalization.
- 30 informal settlements were formalised in 2023 compared to only one in 2018. Where upgrading plans must still start or are in the process of implementation, the households receive rudimentary or interim services i.e. water and sanitation.
- 56 informal settlements are currently at the township establishment stage (Phase 2).

More households in Koukamma Local Municipal (KKLM) live in formal dwellings (Census 2022). Between 1996 and 2022 the percentage grew by 15% from 79,2% to 94,1%. Informal housing also reduced from 17,7% to 4,8% as well as traditional housing from 2,5% to 0,5%.

In 2011, Mogale City Local Municipality (MCLM) had 85% formal housing and 25% informal dwelling (Census 2011). Informal housing dropped to 14% (2022 Census). MCLM benefits from the Intermediate Cities Support Programme. It is developing a long-term infrastructure investment plan which enables the MCLM to better plan for the future. To further reduce informal settlements, several housing projects are under construction and upgrades to four hostels are in the planning phase.

Challenges across the four municipalities

In the May 2024 Koukamma Local Municipal stakeholder engagement workshop, civil society asked about vulnerable groups excluded from housing and utility services provision. These include backyard dwellers, farm dwellers currently residing on privately owned property, restitution claimants living on trust land, as well as those living on state-owned farms. In Case Study 2 we describe challenges faced by these excluded sections of the

171 Maluleke, L. (2023, September 27). South Africa's water security crisis worsens. Mail & Gaurdian. <https://mg.co.za/thought-leader/opinion/2023-09-27-south-africas-water-security-crisis-worsens/#:~:text=South%20Africa%20is%20one%20of,50%25%20of%20the%20world%20average.>

172 Public Affairs Research Institute. (2021). Access to Basic Services: Enabling Progressive Transformation or Entrenching Poverty and Inequality? PARI. <https://pari.org.za/press-release-are-basic-services-entrenching-poverty-and-inequality/>



CASE STUDY 2: KOUKAMMA

Farm dwellers While individual farm dwellers have rights to housing and services under the Extension of Security of Tenure (ESTA), families are often evicted by private landowners without providing alternative accommodation. Civil society expressed the view that taking these cases to the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA) seems futile.

Currently, the municipality does not have a programme to serve evicted farm dwellers nor available land to accommodate them. While the Koukamma Municipality is engaging a local farm owner to secure land, it will apply to the Department of Human Settlement (DHS) for emergency alternative accommodation of such vulnerable groups as part of the Disaster Relief Programme. Public education is essential as evictees, and civil society organisations supporting them, are unaware of these mechanisms and how to access them. In future, the Koukamma Municipality ought to ensure the projected housing needs of farm and backyard dwellers are registered on the municipal waiting list, integrated into the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) and with adequate funding.

Housing backlog and quality

Civil society, citing the Louterwater example, noted that no land appears to be available for future housing development. The KKLMM has not built any new housing for the past 15 years.

- Some housing stock is old and has asbestos roofing, gutters, and underground water pipes.
- Housing built post-1994 is often of poor quality and too small to accommodate the needs of an average size family.
- Furthermore, while municipalities are compelled to use local Small Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs) on housing and infrastructure projects, their lack of skills and the general lack of quality control of contractors by the municipality have resulted in poor quality housing and services.

Civil society was informed that the Spatial Development Framework, in progress, should take account of the 12 informal settlements and the needs of other vulnerable groups. The municipality noted that the construction of poor-quality social housing is a national crisis. Going forward, the Koukamma Municipality need to work in partnerships to ensure quality assurance throughout the housing and infrastructure construction projects.

Land Restitution

Another category that is excluded is previously disadvantaged people living on land secured through the national government's restitution programme which is managed by a Trust or a Communal Property Associations. A reason is that the municipality does not have jurisdiction over the land, and is therefore 'unable' to supply housing and basic services to citizens. It is encouraging to note that in the case of Amanfengu (Tsitsikamma), negotiations are underway between different government departments including the Department of Human Settlements and Koukamma Municipality to conclude a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that will facilitate the provision of housing and basic services. There are many restitution cases in the Eastern Cape and across the country where claimants are waiting for at least a decade. Many have become impatient. A future case study on the resolution of the Amanfengu will help other municipalities with similar challenges.

The enormous growth of backyard dwellings and informal settlements in Gauteng province, is placing enormous strain on the bulk utility infrastructure with the added challenge of inequality in accessing basic services.¹⁷³

173 City of Johannesburg. (2024). City of Johannesburg VLR Report.



Informal Settlements

The percentage of households in informal dwellings in the City of Johannesburg (CoJ) decreased between 2016 and 2021 from 21.5% to 17.3% but increased in 2022 to 19% (Census 2022). As many residents living in informal settlements lack basic services, poverty and inequality persist. In response to poor service delivery, residents in informal settlements installed their own household connections to electricity and water, else connected to services illegally.¹⁷⁴

Backyard dwellings

In Gauteng, backyard dwellings saw a faster growth rate (205%) compared to informal settlements (51%) between 2001 and 2016 (GCRO, 2018).

The increase in backyard dwelling is particularly notable in disadvantaged areas such as Soweto, Orange Farm, and Diepsloot, as well as inner city neighbourhoods and new Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) settlements. While cheap and convenient for young persons, backyard dwellings put pressure on the delivery of bulk utility services.

During the stakeholder engagement, civil society offered three recommendations with opportunities for partnerships, namely rental housing for backyard dwellers (PlanAct); encouraging people to build their own houses (Habitat for Humanity); and considering a “transit camp” as temporary accommodation while housing is being upgraded.



Rapid urbanization - due to natural population growth, country and international migration - is not a phenomenon unique to Gauteng, but a trend experienced in other cities chiefly in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The densification of existing suburbs; the sprawl of new formal housing developments; the explosion of backyard dwellings coupled with the growing number of informal settlements and the occupation of vacant buildings and land present the province with serious challenges of water, sanitation, electricity, and housing provision and service delivery. Demand outstrips the pace of formal supply. An additional challenge for metros is competition for limited arable land which is being used for housing and to expand industry, instead of agriculture.

Citizens are more aware of their human rights, enshrined in the Constitution, and are demanding these rights. Some continue to ‘wait’ in the queue for their turn to access a formal dwelling with piped water and sanitation.

As outlined in the case studies above, several vulnerable groups remain ‘invisible’ and are excluded from the waiting list and housing provision. Yet, others have become impatient and appropriated buildings and land through occupation. Opportunities exist for better communication and working in partnerships with all stakeholders.

174 African Monitor. (2024). City of Johannesburg VLR slides and stakeholder feedback report.



9.5 CONCLUSION

Recommendations on the Process

In the future, local municipalities could benefit from:

- a) Comprehensive capacity training for officials to effectively navigate the Stats SA data system;
- b) Introducing qualitative survey(s) to regularly gather feedback on service delivery, especially at the local level;
- c) Developing a comprehensive municipal database accessible by authorised personnel, facilitating instant generating of reports on the SDGs, NDP, and the IDP.
- d) Provision of research and report writing resources by SALGA to support the VLR (and other) processes.

Moving forward, municipalities should prioritise and integrate external stakeholder participation throughout the VLR process. This proactive approach will help identify issues affecting vulnerable groups early on and uncover new solutions for persistent challenges. It is crucial to ensure the active involvement of vulnerable groups in the VLR process. Furthermore, while municipalities may have reservations about including businesses as stakeholders, overlooking them could mean missing out on valuable insights and opportunities.

Recommendations on the Content

South Africa has adequate water infrastructure, but it requires consistent maintenance and upgrades. Municipalities, supported by the national government, must stop violating citizens' constitutional right to have access to clean water. There is a critical need to improve water quality, monitored through initiatives like the Blue Drop Watch, and to prevent pollution from water treatment plants. Sustainable, long-term plans are essential to replace ageing water infrastructure such as pipes and water meters.

The challenge of housing with services persists, adversely affecting vulnerable groups such as backyard dwellers, informal settlements, farm dwellers, and restitution claimants. It is crucial for metros and civil society organisations to collaborate in seeking sustainable solutions, particularly for vulnerable groups highlighted in Cases 4 and 5. Additionally, SALGA, in partnership with municipalities, could establish thematic focus areas to address the needs of these communities and develop lasting sustainable solutions.





1

CONCLUSION

As South Africa submits its second Voluntary National Review report, it is important to appreciate the opportunity this process brings for the collective assessment of countries' progress against targets. This review tracks the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, including the goals and their targets, with a particular focus on the poorest, most vulnerable, and marginalised groups. VNRs are expected to facilitate concrete and tangible actions to ensure the realisation of the 2030 Agenda.

As one of the major stakeholders in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, civil society organisations through the SAWG and led by African Monitor contributed to the National VNR report coordinated by the National Planning Commission. Parallel to our participation in the national process, CSOs produced this complimentary report to ensure that elements not included in the national VNR are expressed.

In addition to this report, civil society organisations arranged stakeholder engagements in at least four local municipalities to contribute to the Voluntary Local Reviews. Only 13 municipalities opted to participate in the VLR process, suggesting that while strides have been made, increased resources and support are required to broaden participation across the country.

While national alignment is well-addressed, understanding and mainstreaming SDGs into local plans is crucial. Local governments need to feel ownership and see their role in SDG implementation. Currently, many view SDGs as extra work rather than integrated into their activities. They need to understand that SDGs complement and align with their existing efforts, not create new ones.

There is a lack of a Whole Society approach at the local level, which calls for local government to collaborate with the private sector, labour, civil society, and other stakeholders including academia

to co-define solutions. While the SDGs are global, their achievement depends on our ability to make them a reality in our cities and municipalities. As stressed in the Synthesis Report of the UN Secretary-General, "many of the investments to achieve the sustainable development goals will take place at the subnational level and be led by local authorities". Public participation and collaboration are lacking in many municipalities and, where attempted, it has been more of a ticking boxes approach. This should be rectified.

One positive element of VNR 2024 is that was inclusive and collaborative, ensuring that diverse voices were heard from a range of stakeholders including academia, civil society organisations, and the private sector. Engagement in the VNR process and inclusion in the drafting team have strengthened civil society's capacity to monitor and evaluate SDG implementation effectively, enhancing efforts to hold the government accountable.

Challenges identified—and which we would like to see improved—include a lack of understanding of the SDGs across all stakeholders, incoherent policy, and inadequate data. Furthermore, the involvement of CSOs has been constrained in certain cases due to inadequate allocation of time and resources for meaningful participation. Limited funding and resources for CSOs in South Africa restrict our ability to fully engage in the VNR process and contribute effectively.

With this rich experience, we have outlined gaps in the implementation of specific SDGs and made recommendations for each goal. We also identified accelerators—or key priorities with a multiplier effect on society—per goal that need to be extended to the local level with appropriate budgeting. There should be an enabling environment in local municipalities that fosters collaboration, strategic alliances, and stakeholder partnerships for the SDGs at both local and national levels.



We are calling government and all stakeholders, including academia, to invest in robust data collection mechanisms at the local level to address data gaps and provide a clearer picture of SDG implementation. As CSOs, we are ready to contribute our part, including our experience in citizen-generated data (CGD).

CIVILE SOCIETY'S REFLECTION ON SDG DELIVERY

As we conclude this report, allow us to reiterate some of the recommendations under the Sectoral Working Groups (SWG), namely social, economic, environmental and governance, peace and security.

PRIORITISE HUMAN WELL-BEING AND CAPABILITIES (GOALS 1, 2, 4, AND 5)

South Africa has made limited progress in attempting to end poverty by 2030. While there has been some improvement in multidimensional poverty due to increased access to healthcare, education, and housing, the root causes remain local human and social capital, as well as limited access to land and livelihood assets. Communities rely heavily on the labour market for their livelihoods. The national strategy to reduce poverty includes social protection, access to health, education, and housing, along with expanded public works programmes. Government and the private sector should invest in the productive assets essential for massive industrialisation, particularly in industries like manufacturing, renewable energy, and information technology. This includes advanced machinery, technology, and skilled labour.

Civil society stresses that addressing land issues is crucial to ending poverty in South Africa due to historical and racial disparities in land ownership. Equitable land reform is essential for redressing past injustices, providing economic empowerment, and fostering sustainable development. Without resolving the land issue, poverty eradication efforts will remain incomplete.

With regard to education, there has been progress in access to education in South Africa, but the quality remains a significant challenge. Reading proficiency is particularly concerning. The education system continues to be characterised by inadequate and unsafe infrastructure in public

schools, lack of learning and teaching support material (LTSM), unqualified and underqualified teachers, overcrowded classrooms, and other inequalities. There continue to be great disparities in implementation between the nine Provincial Education Departments (PEDs), reflecting the socio-economic status.

To achieve SDG 4 effectively, South Africa must tackle these complex challenges through comprehensive education reforms that are inclusive and sustainable. Investing significantly in Early Childhood Development (ECD) is paramount to building an equitable and high-quality education system, as it establishes a crucial foundation for children's development. The first five years are critical for brain growth, requiring comprehensive care including healthcare, nutrition, stimulation, stress relief, and learning opportunities. Prioritizing ECD investments in South Africa will ensure that children can reach their full potential, paving the way for lifelong success.

On Goal 5, South Africa has introduced a set of legislations, policies, programmes, frameworks, and strategies to address gender inequalities and promote women's empowerment at various levels. However, significant gaps remain in policy implementation, revealing a disconnect between different government spheres, particularly at the local level. Government agencies have struggled to respond cohesively to gender equality and policies addressing gender-based violence (GBV), and inadequate funding hampers the effectiveness of Bills and Acts of Parliament related to this scourge.

Robust gender budgeting is necessary to achieve gender equality by ensuring effective allocation of resources to support women's empowerment initiatives. Policies must be aligned with practical actions to translate theoretical commitments into tangible improvements in women's lives. By ensuring adequate funding and effectively implementing policies, we can make significant progress towards gender equality. Addressing the inequalities faced by women, especially in rural areas, necessitates a comprehensive approach that includes gender



BROAD-BASED AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH (GOALS 7 AND 8)

South Africa struggles with achieving SDG 7 primarily due to persistent load shedding, resulting in job losses across energy-intensive sectors like mining, manufacturing, hospitality, and agriculture. This issue intersects closely with SDGs 1 and 2, as unreliable energy undermines inclusive development and social equity, contradicting the principle of leaving no one behind in the transition to green energy. Vulnerable communities, unable to afford renewable energy solutions, bear the brunt of this energy crisis, exacerbating social disparities and hindering a fair transition to clean energy.

The country needs to address energy challenges through policies that promote equitable access to renewable energy, support economic resilience, and prioritise the needs of marginalised communities. This will involve substantial investments in renewable energy infrastructure and innovative solutions to ensure energy security for all.

HUMAN SETTLEMENT AND CLIMATE ACTION (GOALS 11 AND 13)

South Africa has established a comprehensive suite of policies, including the Climate Change Bill, Just Transition Framework, South Africa Renewable Energy Masterplan, and Low Emissions Development Strategy 2050. Additionally, a presidential climate commission has been instituted. While these key policy instruments lay the groundwork for climate action, their effective implementation is crucial to realising their full potential impact.

It is essential for South Africa to enhance transparency and community involvement in energy transition policy decisions and just transition financing. The current lack of transparency in the country's energy policies, particularly those related to a just energy transition, hinders their ability to deliver intended benefits to the public. Making the data, studies, and analyses supporting the Draft Integrated Resource Plan (IRP) readily accessible for public scrutiny is critical to fostering trust and informed participation in

IMPROVED GOVERNANCE AND INCLUSIVE INSTITUTIONS (GOAL 16 AND 17)

South Africa faces complex social challenges that impact the prevalence of violence. Historical inequalities rooted in apartheid have left a legacy of social fragmentation. High levels of poverty, unemployment, and inadequate access to education contribute to a sense of disenfranchisement among specific segments of the population. These factors create a fertile ground for social tensions and contribute to various forms of violence, including interpersonal violence and crime.

To effectively address crime, collaboration is essential across sectors, emphasising that government alone cannot achieve this goal. As advocates for marginalised groups—including women, persons with disabilities, youth, and other vulnerable communities—civil society organisations play a crucial role in advancing multiple strategies. The private sector's involvement is pivotal in promoting good governance structures to combat corruption, fraud, and poverty; essential for accountable business practices and a thriving economy. Local governments, parliamentarians, and academia are equally critical stakeholders in the implementation of SDG 16 and the broader 2030 Agenda.

Currently, despite legislative efforts, enforcement actions, and awareness campaigns by the government to protect children and address human trafficking, significant challenges persist. These include the widespread nature of trafficking, resource constraints, and difficulties in identifying and prosecuting traffickers. Moreover, the absence of reliable data on the scope and characteristics of trafficking complicates prevention efforts. Trafficked individuals, including children and adults of both national and foreign origin, endure severe human rights abuses and are entitled to protection, support, and justice under international laws against trafficking and human rights violations.

To combat child trafficking and exploitation effectively, it is imperative to strengthen laws and establish comprehensive support services for victims, including shelters, counselling, and medical assistance. Collaborating with NGOs for rehabilitation and reintegration programs is essential for survivors' recovery and reintegration



We strongly request the need to address the issue of prolonged court cases in South Africa and implement measures for judicial reform aimed at improving efficiency and reducing delays. There is a need to increase judicial resources, such as appointing more judges and court personnel, improving case management systems to streamline proceedings, and investing in technology to facilitate faster processing of cases. Additionally, training for judicial officers and legal professionals on effective case handling could definitely help expedite justice delivery and ensure that delays do not result in justice being denied.

We recommend that the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) implements dedicated and accessible mobile registration units, similar to those used during election mobilisation efforts. These units should be strategically deployed to remote and underserved communities, making it easier for children, young people, adults without birth certificates, and stateless individuals to obtain vital documentation. This approach will ensure that legal recognition and access to essential services are extended to all, reducing barriers and promoting inclusivity across South Africa.

The DHA need to address the backlog and consistent denial of documentation for foreign nationals, including asylum seekers and refugees. There is a need to streamline and expedite the application and processing procedures. This can be achieved by increasing staffing levels and resources dedicated to handling asylum and refugee applications, implementing clear and transparent guidelines, and ensuring timely and fair adjudication of cases. Additionally, Home Affairs should prioritise training for staff on international human rights standards and refugee protection principles to ensure that decisions are made in accordance with these standards.

With regards to Goal 17, South Africa has made significant progress in finance, technology, capacity building, and trade through active national and international collaborations. Despite facing challenges such as rising debt levels, mismanagement of public spending, and energy crises, South Africa has shown resilience by mobilising international resources, enhancing tax revenue collection, and participating in multilateral forums like G20 and BRICS. The civil society recommends putting the National SDG coordination mechanism into operation and establishing and institutionalising the National Development Stakeholders Forum (NDSF).

The primary objective of the NDSF is to expedite efforts towards the attainment of the sustainable development agenda by means of continuous engagement, and deliberation on policy priorities, goals, and strategic interventions. Consequently, the NDSF will function as a platform to pinpoint urgent development priorities, informed by comprehensive research, and to facilitate the pooling of resources for concrete action from various sectors of South African society through collaborative efforts and shared leadership.

Civil society has conducted stakeholder mapping and presented a business case for NDSF; it is over to the government to implement. The right time is now—or never.

In conclusion, as South Africa commemorates 30 years of democracy and anticipates a new government of unity following the recent general election, we are presented with an opportunity to reassess how we can better support the most underprivileged in our society.

We would like to conclude this report by drawing on the stirring message that Njongo Ndungane, former Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town and founder of African Monitor, delivered at the UN General Assembly on the eve of the SDGs adoption. Archbishop Ndungane emphasised the need to shift away from outdated and ineffective development approaches and transform the culture of our development institutions. He advocated for a people-centred agenda where citizens are not just beneficiaries but also legitimate participants in planning, implementing, and monitoring development outcomes. According to him, governments should exist to serve citizens, with citizen satisfaction being the ultimate measure of government success. He stressed that effective development programmes should focus on creating opportunities for all segments of society, particularly youth, women, and the less privileged, to realize their full potential as productive members of society.

Archbishop Ndungane's words resonate strongly today, urging us not to fail our people and to strive towards achieving these goals in our generation.









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