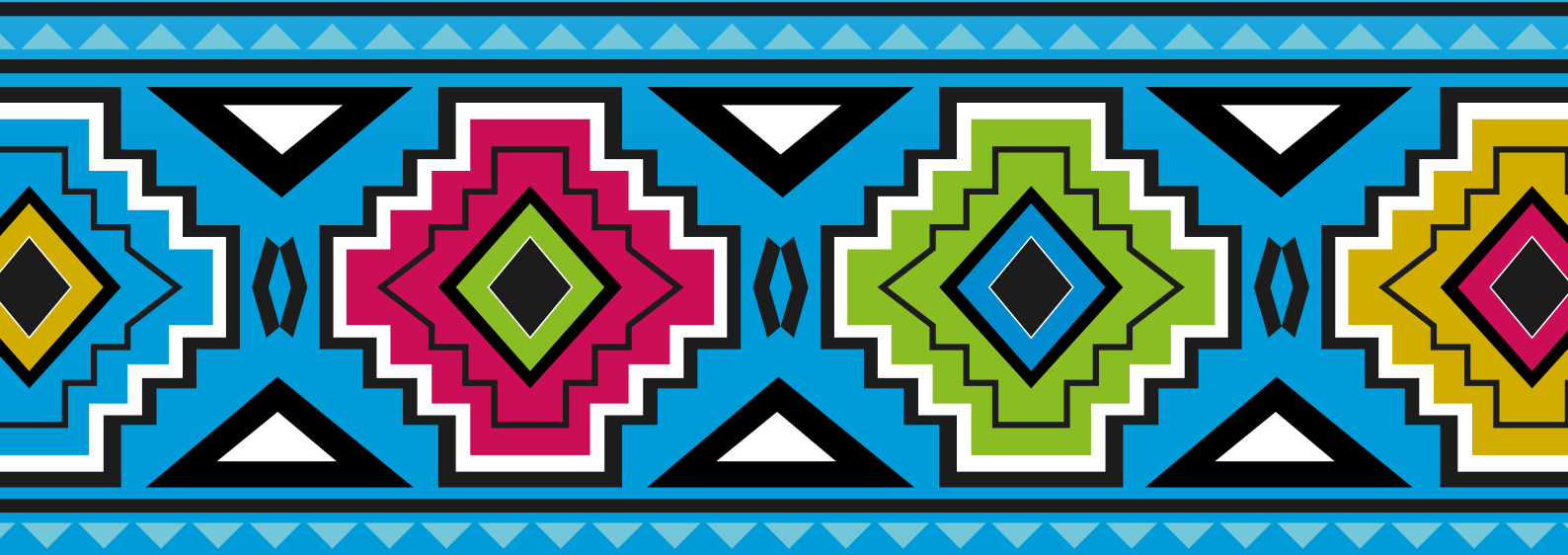




UNITED NATIONS  
SOUTH AFRICA



# ANNUAL RESULTS REPORT 2025



# Table of Contents

Foreword.....	4
From Vision to Action: UN Partnership Supporting South Africa as G20 Host.....	6
UN Country Team .....	10
South Africa at a Glance .....	12
Chapter 1   Key Developments in the Country and Regional Context.....	14
Chapter 2   UN Development System Support to National Development Priorities Through the Cooperation Framework.....	16
2.1. Cooperation Framework Priorities and Results.....	16
2.2. Key Challenges in the Implementation of the SDGs During 2025 .....	54
2.3. Results of the UN Working More and Better Together: UN Coherence, Effectiveness and Efficiency.....	56
2.4. Evaluations and Lessons Learned .....	62
2.5. Financial Overview and Resource Mobilisation.....	64
Chapter 3   Priority Pathways for 2026.....	66
Acronyms.....	70



# Foreword by the Resident Coordinator

**Nelson Muffuh**  
UN Resident Coordinator  
in South Africa



The year 2025 was both symbolic and substantive for South Africa and the United Nations. It coincided with South Africa's assumption of the G20 Presidency and the commemoration of 80 years of the United Nations, two milestones that invited reflection on leadership, solidarity and multilateral action at a time of profound global and national transition.

This Annual Results Report reflects the cumulative results, outcomes and lessons of the 2020–2025 Cooperation Framework, with particular attention to progress, shifts and foundations evident by the close of 2025.

For South Africa, this period marked a discernible shift in trajectory. Following several years of economic stress, institutional strain and social pressure, including the lingering health and socio-economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, growing resilience and early momentum became evident. While structural challenges persist, the latter part of the cycle was characterised by renewed reform efforts, strengthening institutional responses and a cautious but tangible movement away from negativism towards opportunity and renewal. It has been my privilege, as United Nations Resident Coordinator and with the UN Country Team, to accompany national partners during this phase of emergence, supporting efforts to translate resilience into practical, people-centred outcomes.

Across the Cooperation Framework cycle, the United Nations Country Team worked alongside the Government and people of South Africa to advance priorities aligned with the National Development Plan and the Sustainable Development Goals. This cooperation supported strengthened policy and institutional frameworks, improved coordination and delivery in key social sectors, expanded access to essential health, education and livelihood services, and reinforced national and community-level resilience. UN support spanned health and recovery responses in the wake of COVID-19, reinforced social protection and food security measures, and engagement at provincial and local levels, including through the District Development Model, to improve coherence and delivery on the ground.

The results presented in this report reflect outcomes achieved across several interconnected SDG transitions. Social protection systems were strengthened and, in some areas, expanded to better reach individuals and communities most at risk of exclusion. Governance and policy reforms were supported to enhance accountability, planning and evidence-based decision-making across sectors. Economic recovery efforts increasingly prioritised inclusion, with greater emphasis on youth, women and local capacity. In parallel, national efforts to stabilise the energy system and address load shedding, alongside advancing the Just Energy Transition, were accompanied through

policy support, analytical work and partnership building to support a more resilient and sustainable development pathway.

Climate resilience and disaster risk management also remained central. Support for disaster preparedness, response and recovery contributed to strengthened coordination and management capacities in the face of increasingly frequent climate-related shocks. While progress varied across sectors and regions, these developments collectively laid important foundations for longer-term resilience and sustainable growth.

South Africa's G20 Presidency provided a timely platform to elevate these priorities within global debates on inequality, development financing, climate action and inclusive growth. The United Nations supported national leadership through policy advice, data and analysis, convening support and global linkage, helping to align domestic reform efforts with international commitments and shared solutions at a moment when the relevance of multilateralism required clear demonstration.

The marking of the United Nations' 80th anniversary reinforced this sense of renewal. In South Africa, UN80 was not a moment of retrospection, but an affirmation of purpose. It underscored the importance of a multilateral system that is results-focused, responsive and grounded in national realities. Throughout 2025, UN reform principles translated into more integrated programming, stronger partnerships and clearer collective outcomes, strengthening the UN's ability to support nationally led development priorities more effectively.

The cycle also yielded important lessons. Fiscal constraints, implementation bottlenecks and external shocks highlighted the limits of fragmented approaches and short-term solutions. In response, greater emphasis was placed on integration, policy coherence and systems strengthening, including closer alignment across sectors and levels of government. These lessons have shaped both the

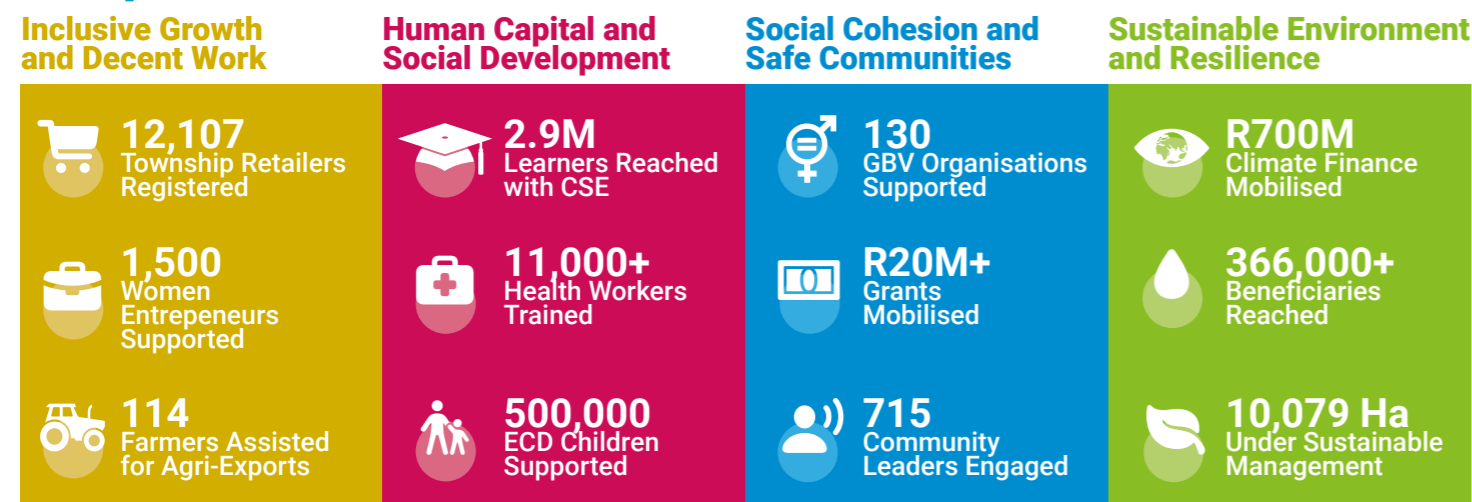
substance of our engagement and the way in which we work, placing sustainability, national capacity and partnership at the centre of results delivery.

Looking ahead to 2026 and beyond, the task is to consolidate green shoots into durable progress. The next phase of cooperation will focus on accelerating SDG transitions by scaling what works, addressing persistent structural barriers and supporting flagship initiatives capable of driving system-wide change. The United Nations remains committed to supporting South Africa's efforts to advance inclusive growth, deepen the just transition, strengthen social compacts and build resilience in the face of future risks.

The achievements presented in this report are the result of partnership between Government, the United Nations system, civil society, the private sector and development partners. I extend my sincere appreciation to the Government of South Africa for its leadership and collaboration, and to colleagues across the United Nations Country Team for their dedication, professionalism and adaptability during a demanding period.

As South Africa exercises global leadership through the BRICS, G20, SADC, the African Union and as the United Nations marks eight decades of service, this report tells a story of transition, of progress achieved, confidence gradually restored, and foundations laid for the next chapter. Together, we move forward with a shared responsibility to translate resilience into lasting development gains and to ensure that progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals remains inclusive, credible and sustained.

## Cooperation Framework Results 2020-2025



# From Vision to Action UN Partnership Supporting South Africa as G20 Host

South Africa's 2025 G20 Presidency – its first and the first on African soil – was framed by the theme "Solidarity, Equality, Sustainability." The Presidency focused on global issues central to Africa's development aspirations, including reform of the international financial architecture, financing for sustainable development, a just energy transition, debt sustainability, food security, inclusive growth, digital transformation and ethical AI governance, gender equality, and the use of critical minerals and indigenous knowledge systems. These priorities closely reflected both the African Union's Agenda 2063 and the global 2030 Agenda.

Throughout the Presidency, the UN in South Africa played a central role in coordinating and aligning contributions across the wider UN system. The United Nations Country Team (UNCT) adopted a unified, human rights-based and people-centred approach organized around seven thematic pillars: digital transformation and AI; financing for development and reform of the international financial architecture; governance and state capacity; climate action and just transition; industrial development; social protection and inclusion; and job creation and youth employment. This enabled coherent messaging, joint policy and technical support, and structured engagement with government counterparts, civil society, the private sector and G20 engagement groups.



In digital transformation and artificial intelligence, UNESCO led the High-Level Taskforce on AI and launched the Technology Policy Assistance Facility. UNDP, OHCHR and UNICEF supported ethical AI policy development and digital inclusion. In financing for development, UNECA and UNDP advocated debt sustainability and cost-of-capital reform, while IFAD promoted remittance-based financial inclusion and contributed to the Financial Inclusion Action.



In climate action and energy transition, UNEP co-founded the Africa Energy Efficiency Facility and supported decentralized energy systems and circular economy initiatives. UNEP and UNDP contributed to climate finance and biodiversity strategies, while ILO promoted just transitions and socio-economic safeguards for coal-dependent regions. In food security and agriculture, FAO delivered policy papers on food price volatility and agrifood systems resilience, and IFAD led technical work to empower youth and women in agriculture, contributing to the Ubuntu approaches to food security.



In employment and youth empowerment, ILO advanced youth employment targets and Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) reduction, promoted Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and STEAM education, and supported youth participation in Y20 and policy dialogues. UNFPA, UNESCO and UNICEF also contributed to youth-led initiatives and digital skills development. In anti-corruption and transparency, UNODC drafted High-Level Principles on asset recovery, supported ministerial declarations, and promoted integrity systems and whistleblower protection.



In health and social protection, UNAIDS, ILO and WHO advocated primary health care-centred universal health coverage and community-led responses, while UNFPA and UNDP supported health workforce resilience and gender-transformative financing. These agencies participated in health ministerial meetings and organized side events to promote equity and access. In migration and inclusion, IOM will launch the Southern Migration Routes Report and highlighted migrant protection, while UNHCR advocated refugee inclusion in development declarations. OHCHR and UNFPA supported disability inclusion and the proposed Disability Working Group.

In governance and human rights, OHCHR developed position papers on human rights in AI, energy and care economies, supported civic participation and media freedom, and contributed to judicial transformation efforts. In gender equality and women's empowerment, UN Women shaped the Empowerment of Women Working Group and its outcome documents, promoted financial inclusion and GBV prevention, and supported youth and W20 engagement. UNODC, ILO and UNAIDS also contributed to gender equality initiatives through technical support and policy advocacy.



In industrial development, UNIDO emphasized the role of industrialization in strengthening social protection systems; co-led the launch of the Global Coalition on Sustainable Industrialization Hubs; and presented a policy brief on gender equality in industrial development. UNIDO also advocated sustainable agri-food systems and value chains and provided technical input to the Trade and Investment Working Group and the Task Force on Inclusive Economic Growth, supporting frameworks for sustainable industrialization and responsible mineral sourcing.



These forms of participation – ranging from co-chairing meetings, drafting declarations, hosting side events, seconding experts and providing technical papers – demonstrate the UN's deep and strategic involvement in shaping the G20 agenda and outcomes under South Africa's leadership. Through strategic coordination, thematic leadership and technical expertise, the UN in South Africa contributed to a G20 agenda that is inclusive, sustainable and responsive to African priorities.

UNESCO was appointed as a privileged knowledge partner to the G20 and served as Secretariat of the High-Level Taskforce on AI, Data Governance, and Innovation. It hosted capacity-building workshops, co-organized webinars, and led discussions in the Culture Working Group. UNDP seconded experts to multiple working groups, including the Sustainable Finance, Environment and Climate Sustainability, and Development Working Groups, and provided logistical and technical support to the Foreign Ministers' Meetings and the Leaders' Declaration drafting process. UNEP deployed consultants to the G20 Secretariat to support the Energy Transition and Environment Working Groups; and the Africa Energy Efficiency Facility it co-founded is a legacy initiative endorsed at ministerial level. UNIDO participated in high-level events, including the G20 Africa Outreach Event in Abuja and a side event at the World Bank/IMF Meetings, reinforcing its commitment to advancing industrialization in Africa and shaping global industrial policy discourse.



The UN Resident Coordinator's Office (RCO) in South Africa coordinated UN engagement and participated in high-level G20 meetings. The Resident Coordinator and the RCO represented the UN in the Development Working Group, the International Financial Architecture Working Group, and in Sherpa, Deputy Ministers and Ministerial meetings, as well as the impactful Social Summit, Business 20 Summit, Think Tank 20, Urban 20, Parliament 20, and the Youth 20 Summit. It also co-chaired meetings, including those focused on the bioeconomy. The RCO actively supported South Africa's G20 priorities, advocated for the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FFD4), and expressed full support for the establishment of the Africa Engagement Framework, ensuring that African interests were well represented in future G20 presidencies. Several leaders from the United Nations system including the Secretary-General and the Deputy Secretary-General also engaged at different levels in the South African G20 Presidency underpinned by the aspiration to reinforce multilateral cooperation, advance sustainable development, and reform of the global financial and governance architecture.



UN Women provided financial and technical support to the Empowerment of Women Working Group and co-hosted side events, including one on Positive Masculinities, and participated in drafting the Ministerial Declaration and supporting the W20 and Y20 engagement processes. UNAIDS contributed to the Health Working Group and co-organized side events with WHO and civil society partners. ILO participated in all four Energy Transition Working Group meetings and co-hosted side events on just transitions. UNODC supported the Anti-Corruption Working Group by drafting key documents and presenting at technical sessions, while IFAD led technical work in the Agriculture Working Group and co-authored studies with FAO for the Food Security Task Force.

# UN COUNTRY TEAM

## Resident Agencies



## Non-Resident Agencies



Under the leadership of Resident Coordinator, Nelson Muffuh, the UN Country Team (UNCT) in South Africa has played a pivotal role in advancing the Cooperation Framework, ensuring a coherent, effective, and impact-driven UN response to national development priorities.

Comprising 24 UN entities, including 20 resident and four non-resident agencies, the UNCT functions as a key inter-agency platform for joint planning, policy coordination, and strategic decision-making.

Through strengthened collaboration, the UNCT has delivered integrated support to accelerate progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), deepen government partnerships, and promote inclusive and sustainable development. By aligning expertise, resources, and policy guidance, the UN system in South Africa continues to operate as One UN, maximizing its impact and ensuring that no one is left behind.



UNITED NATIONS SOUTH AFRICA

<https://southafrica.un.org> @UNinSouthAfrica @UNinSouthAfrica

# South Africa at a Glance



## Population<sup>1</sup>

**63.02**

Total population (million)



## Youth Population



## Biodiversity<sup>2</sup>

**11,280,684**

Hectares of protected land accounted



## Gender-Based Violence



**+52,000**

Sexual offences reported annually<sup>4</sup>



## Maternal and Infant Mortality

**100**

Maternal mortality per 100,000 live births<sup>6</sup>

**23**

Under-five mortality rates per 1,000 live births<sup>7</sup>



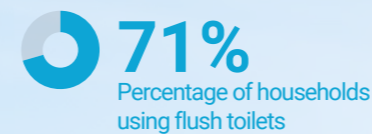
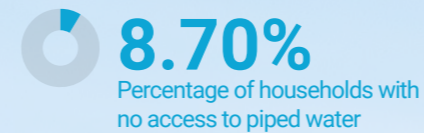
## Education<sup>8</sup>



## Electricity<sup>8</sup>



## Water, Sanitation and Hygiene<sup>8</sup>



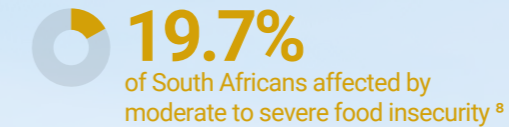
## Inequality

Gini Coefficient<sup>9</sup> **0.67**

**28**  
million people receiving social grants<sup>10</sup>



## Food Security

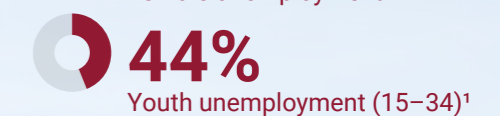
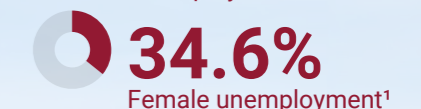
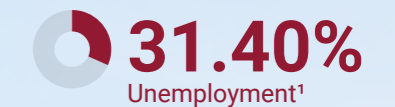


## Housing



## Economics

**1.1%**  
Gross domestic product growth<sup>13</sup>



<sup>1</sup> STATSSA, 2025 <sup>2</sup> DFFE, 2024; SANBI, 2024 <sup>3</sup> DHS, 2016 <sup>4</sup> SAPS, 2025 <sup>5</sup> UNICEF, 2023 <sup>6</sup> NDoH, 2023 <sup>7</sup> UNICEF, 2024 <sup>8</sup> STATSSA, 2023 <sup>9</sup> World Bank, 2024; OECD, 2025 <sup>10</sup> SASSA, 2025; National Treasury, 2025 <sup>11</sup> UNICEF, 2023; DHS, 2016 <sup>12</sup> UNICEF, 2023 <sup>13</sup> SARB, 2025; IMF, 2025

# 1 Key Developments in the Country and Regional Context

South Africa's economic environment in 2025 was marked by improving fundamentals, supported by modest but stabilising growth and easing macroeconomic pressures. Real GDP growth reached 1.1% in 2025, up from 0.5% in 2024. Labour market conditions remained a major structural constraint, with the official unemployment rate at 31.4% in Q4 2025, with youth unemployment at 44%. While these figures reflect persistent challenges, they also represent a slight improvement compared to previous years, signalling gradual progress in labour market reforms. Annual inflation eased significantly, averaging 3.2% in 2025, providing additional space for the South African Reserve Bank to continue reducing interest rates.

The monetary policy stance shifted towards accommodation, with the repo rate lowered to 6.75% at year-end. Globally, 2025 also required South Africa to navigate heightened trade tensions and

a fragile international economic environment, with risks linked to weaker global demand, commodity price volatility and renewed tariff pressures from major trading partners, all of which shaped export performance and policy uncertainty.

Politically, 2025 represented a period of consolidation in governance and reform. The Government of National Unity (GNU) remained intact for 18 months despite internal tensions and the complexities of coalition management, providing an important anchor for macroeconomic stability and policy continuity.

The year was also defined by South Africa's strong leadership in global governance through a successful G20 Presidency, through which it advanced an ambitious Africa-focused agenda, amplifying the continent's priorities on climate finance, energy access and efficiency, debt sustainability, digital inclusion, beneficiation of critical minerals, and disaster resilience.

Domestically, structural reforms deepened under Operation Vulindlela II, which expanded its focus beyond energy and logistics to include digital transformation, water security, spatial integration and local government capability, aiming to unlock long-term growth and reduce binding constraints on investment and service delivery.

Together, these political and reform advances, combined with improving macroeconomic indicators, positioned South Africa to enter 2026 with cautious optimism despite persistent structural vulnerabilities.



1.1%  
GDP growth (2025)



31.4%  
Unemployment rate



3.2%  
Annual inflation

# 2 UN Development System Support to National Development Priorities Through the Cooperation Framework

## 2.1 Cooperation Framework Priorities and Results

Under the Cooperation Framework, the United Nations Country Team in South Africa continues to be a committed partner in the country's pursuit of inclusive, sustainable development. The Framework is our shared five-year plan to translate commitments into tangible improvements in people's lives. Building on progress achieved in previous years, our work in 2025 focused on supporting the following key national priorities:

### Inclusive Just and Sustainable Economic Growth

The UN supported programmes and policies that create opportunities, especially for young people, persons with disabilities, women and those excluded from participating in the economy. The UNCT worked to strengthen small businesses and the township economy, improve access to skills and training, and support social protection systems for vulnerable households. The results show stronger livelihood support and greater economic stability for those most at risk.

### Human Capital and Social Transformation

The UN partnered with national and local institutions to improve access to quality healthcare, strengthen education systems and expand social services. Special attention was given to preventing and responding to gender-based violence and protecting vulnerable groups. This year's results demonstrate better access to essential services and stronger systems able to respond to people's needs.

### Effective, Efficient and Transformative Governance

The UN provided technical support to improve how public institutions plan, coordinate and deliver services. We also continued supporting inclusive participation and strengthening democratic processes. The results reflect improved institutional capacity, transparency and public accountability.

### Climate Resilience and Sustainably Managed Resources

The UN in South Africa supported climate action, sustainable resource management and community resilience initiatives. This included strengthening climate planning and promoting environmentally sustainable development. Reported results show progress in helping communities and institutions respond better to climate risks.

Overall, the results achieved in 2025 demonstrate steady progress toward a more inclusive, accountable and sustainable future. Through strong partnerships and practical support, the United Nations remains committed to helping South Africa build a society where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.



## Strategic Priority 1

# Inclusive, Just and Sustainable Economic Growth



## Key Results

**12,107**

township retailers  
digitally registered and  
geolocated.

**40**

Youth Digital  
Ambassadors  
trained.

**1,500**

women micro-  
entrepreneurs supported  
through EntreprenHER.

**84**

footwear and leather SMEs  
strengthened, most of them  
women-owned.

**230**

learners trained in  
green energy skills.

**72**

jobs created through  
EntreprenHER.



### Using Innovation to Support Economic Inclusion

The township economy, **valued at an estimated R900 billion** and representing nearly a third of South Africa's population, is a powerful engine of everyday economic activity and community resilience. Despite its scale and dynamism, township enterprises continue to face structural barriers, including infrastructure gaps, the legacy of spatial inequality, limited access to finance, and intense competition from large corporations. Through the Digital Innovation for Modernising the Informal Economy (DIME) initiative, the UN has digitally registered and geolocated more than **12 107 township retailers**, bringing thousands of previously invisible businesses onto the economic map and opening pathways to finance, markets and essential services that help local enterprises grow and create jobs. At community level, **40 Youth Digital Ambassadors** were trained and are now driving adoption by helping retailers embrace

digital tools, building trust in new systems, and creating new skills and livelihoods for young people while strengthening participation in the digital economy. The UN also partnered with African Bank to co-create Township Spark, **a blended finance facility** designed to de-risk lending and unlock capital for township enterprises.

Leveraging its Agri-Tech programme, the United Nations is supporting smallholder farmers and Agricultural Small and Medium Enterprises (Agri-SMEs) to overcome structural barriers to market access, export readiness and technology adoption, unlocking new opportunities for growth across South Africa's agri-food value chain. This support has helped build an export pipeline for **for 114 farmers**, while enabling **six South African agri-SMEs** to showcase their products to international buyers at the Japan Food Export Fair following targeted capacity-building. In parallel, the UN has equipped **50 Agri- and aqua-tech SMEs** with the skills to scale through a focused acceleration programme that strengthens business strategy, technology readiness and investor engagement.

## South Africa's Joint Strategy on the Just Energy Transition

Accelerating Inclusive and Just Energy Access & Transition - Empowering Women, Youth and SMMEs for SDG 7, by the United Nations Country Team under the coordination of the UN Resident Coordinator's Office

South Africa is undergoing a critical transition to address its heavy reliance on coal, persistent energy shortages, and the need for a more inclusive and climate-resilient economy. With more than **80% of electricity generated from coal**, largely concentrated in Mpumalanga, this dependence has created significant socio-economic vulnerabilities, particularly for communities reliant on coal-related livelihoods. At the same time, energy insecurity and rising costs continue to constrain economic activity and disproportionately affect vulnerable groups.

In 2025, the United Nations in South Africa, with support from the Joint SDG Fund, launched a Joint Programme to accelerate a **people-centred Just Energy Transition**. Aligned with national priorities and the Cooperation Framework, the programme integrates policy reform with community-level action to ensure that the transition is both inclusive and transformative.

The programme focuses on access to clean and affordable energy, particularly in underserved rural and township communities, through solutions such as solar mini-grids, productive-use technologies and clean cooking alternatives. It also seeks to strengthen the participation of women, youth, smallholder farmers and SMMEs in green economy value chains, supporting more equitable economic opportunities.



Recognising the link between energy and food systems, the programme promoted climate-smart agriculture and renewable energy solutions to enhance productivity, water security and inclusive participation in agricultural value chains. It also contributes to national policy processes, including electricity reform, green hydrogen development and clean cooking strategies, while supporting more coherent and inclusive regulatory frameworks.

A strong emphasis was placed on public engagement and narrative change to build awareness, trust and social ownership of the transition. Through advocacy, community dialogues and partnerships, the programme addresses concerns around job losses and supports informed adoption of clean energy solutions.

Expected results include increased adoption of clean energy technologies, improved livelihoods for smallholder farmers, expanded opportunities for women- and youth-led enterprises, and strengthened policy coherence. By prioritising vulnerable groups, the programme ensures that the transition to a low-carbon economy is equitable and leaves no one behind.

# 12 Actions to Shape a Greener Future

## 1. SUPPORT A JUST ENERGY TRANSITION



South Africa is moving towards a cleaner, safer energy future, and every community has a role to play. A just energy transition creates new opportunities while ensuring no one is left behind. By learning about the transition and taking simple actions at home, you help build a cleaner, healthier future for all.

## 2. PUMP YOUR TYRES



Check your tyre pressure regularly. Properly inflated tyres help your car use less fuel because the engine doesn't need to work as hard. This reduces emissions, saves money and supports cleaner transport. Small actions like this help lower reliance on fossil fuels and cut your climate footprint.

## 3. CONSUME LOCAL



Buy fruit, vegetables and staples grown in South Africa. Local food travels shorter distances, which reduces transport emissions. Supporting local farmers strengthens community livelihoods and keeps money circulating in the local economy. Choosing local also helps farmers adapt to climate change and protects food security.

## 4. SAVE ENERGY



Switch off lights, unplug appliances and choose energy-efficient bulbs. These simple habits reduce electricity use, lower household bills and ease pressure on the national grid. Saving energy helps create a more stable system that can support more renewable power and strengthens the shift to cleaner energy.

## 5. AVOID ILLEGAL CONNECTIONS



Illegal connections can cause electrocutions, fires and serious injuries. They also overload transformers and damage the grid, leading to more outages and worsening load-shedding. Avoiding illegal connections protects families, keeps communities safe and supports a more reliable electricity system for everyone.

## 6. RECYCLE TODAY



Recycling keeps neighbourhoods clean, reduces waste and supports people who earn a living through collection and sorting. Separate paper, plastic, glass, metal and old electronics at home. By reducing the need for new raw materials, recycling lowers emissions and helps build a more circular, sustainable economy.

## 7. CHOOSE ECO-FRIENDLY PRODUCTS



Choose items made from recycled or sustainable materials and use reusable bags, bottles and containers. Eco-friendly choices reduce pollution and waste while supporting companies that produce goods responsibly. Every purchase helps shift markets towards greener production and protects natural resources.

## 8. REDUCE FOSSIL FUELS



Walk, cycle, use public transport or car-pool when you can. Avoid unnecessary idling. Reducing petrol and diesel use cuts harmful emissions, improves air quality and lowers your climate footprint. These small choices support a cleaner, more efficient transport system for everyone.

## 9. CHOOSE CLEAN COOKING



Use safer stoves, LPG gas stoves, electricity or cleaner fuels and improve ventilation when cooking indoors. Traditional smoky cooking methods can harm family health, especially for children and older people. Clean cooking reduces indoor pollution, protects your family and supports cleaner air in your community.

## 10. BUY FROM WOMEN-OWNED BUSINESSES



Supporting women-owned shops, farms and services helps grow local economies and expand opportunities for women. When women-led businesses thrive, communities benefit through job creation, innovation and inclusive development. Your everyday purchases help build a stronger, fairer and more resilient South Africa.

## 11. CHOOSE CLEAN ENERGY

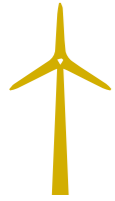


Choosing clean energy options helps reduce harmful emissions and supports a more secure energy future for South Africa. Cleaner alternatives like solar, wind and green hydrogen are becoming more accessible. Even small steps, such as using solar lights or reducing electricity waste, help build a safer, more sustainable future.

## 12. CHOOSE RESPONSIBLE MINING



Responsible mining helps protect workers, safeguard communities and reduce environmental harm. Minerals are used in many everyday products and in renewable technologies, so it's important that mining is done safely and fairly. Encouraging responsible practices, including rehabilitating old mine sites, helps ensure South Africa's natural resources support a sustainable future.



### Clean Energy that Works for Everyone

The United Nations invested in a clean energy future by supporting people, innovation and infrastructure across Africa. Through this support, **230 learners, 65% of them women, acquired green energy skills**, preparing the next generation to drive the Just Energy Transition. The UNCT delivered solar-hybrid power to rural health clinics, ensuring essential services continued uninterrupted and demonstrating the tangible impact of renewable energy. On the innovation front, the **UN supported 47 pan-African start-ups, most of them youth- and women-led**, through Timbuktoo, and strengthened green innovation ecosystems across six TVET colleges (T-Pods) and universities (UniPods), creating hubs where clean energy solutions could thrive, scale and transform communities.

The United Nations strengthened the country's green economy by building a skilled, resilient workforce for the Just Energy Transition. In the Waterberg District, UN support helped integrate green skills into the municipal development plan and launch the Waterberg Skills Forum, aligning training with local green priorities. At provincial level, it mapped skills gaps, identified emerging sectors, and co-designed pilot upskilling programmes in renewable energy, mechatronics, smart irrigation and more. In partnership with the African Development Bank, the UN trained business support organizations, women in mining and government officials, laying the foundation for a workforce ready to drive sustainable growth, innovation and inclusive opportunity in South Africa's evolving green economy.

**230**  
learners (65% women),  
acquired green energy skills,  
preparing the next generation  
to drive the Just Energy  
Transition.



### Improved Social Protection Coverage

The United Nations partnered with the National Planning Commission and Black Sash to convene a national dialogue on the Social Protection Floor, marking an important step towards strengthening South Africa's social safety net. The dialogue brought together policymakers, civil society and experts to advance a rights-based vision for social protection, ensuring that access to basic social security is recognized not as a privilege, but as a fundamental right. The process resulted in a comprehensive, evidence-based framework aimed at closing protection gaps, particularly for working-age adults and vulnerable populations, while strengthening the country's resilience to economic and environmental shocks. Building on the dialogue, partners produced a strategic report that provides a roadmap for aligning social protection with employment policies and informing the next phase of the National Development Plan, helping position social protection as a cornerstone of inclusive, long-term development in South Africa.



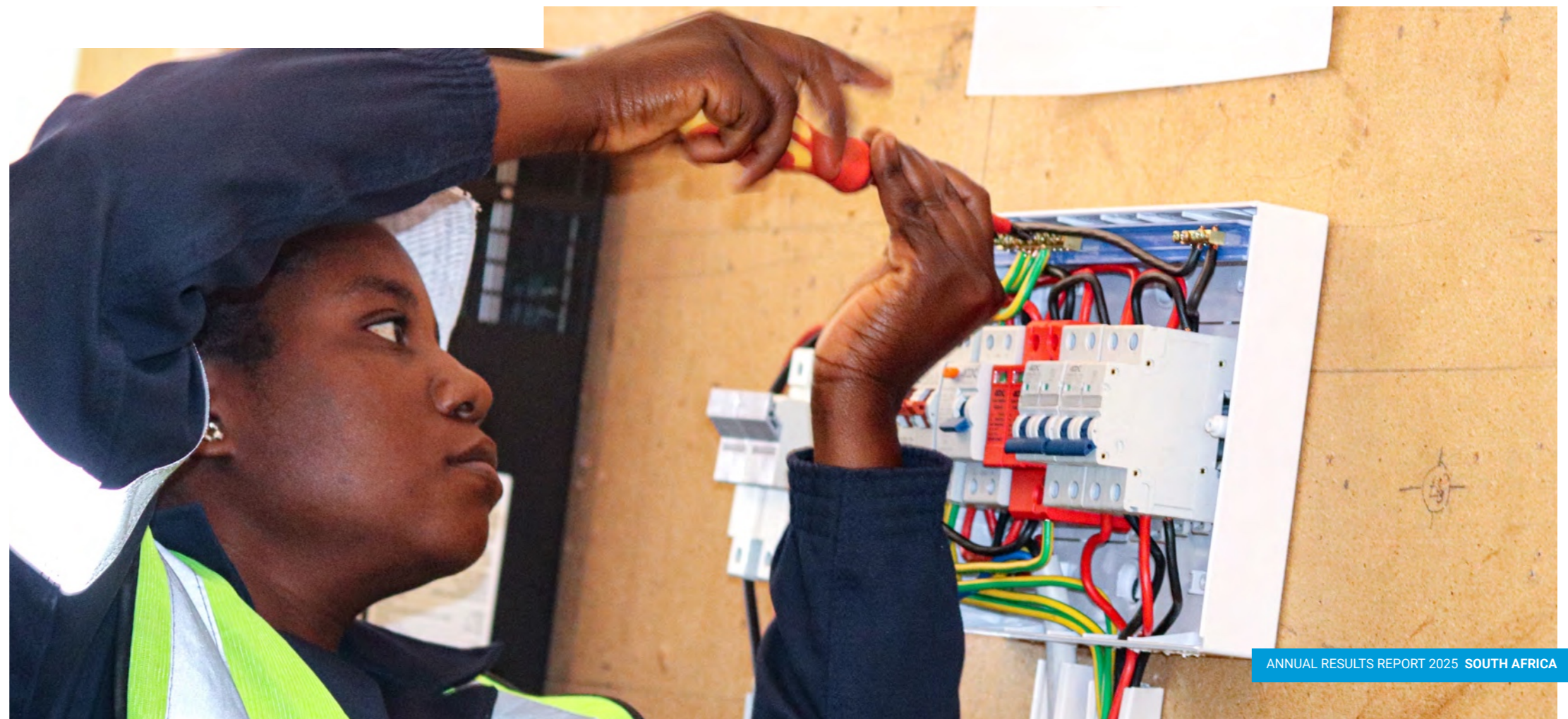
### Strengthening the Circular Economy

With support from the United Nations, the Waterberg District Municipality has driven tangible change by **integrating women waste pickers into formal waste management systems**. This has increased their recognition as essential service providers while expanding their access to economic opportunities and participation in decision-making processes. As a result, gender-based barriers in the local labour market have been reduced, and women's voices and leadership within the sector have been significantly strengthened.

Gender mainstreaming training and gender-responsive budgeting have improved how municipal resources are planned and allocated, ensuring that they better reflect women's lived realities. This also supports sustainability by embedding inclusive practices in ongoing municipal operations and advancing women's economic empowerment within the circular economy. Waterberg TVET College and Lephalale TVET College

have developed and integrated circular economy curricula aligned with local labour market needs, with Waterberg's programme accredited in 2026. This support has strengthened institutional and lecturer capacity through targeted technical assistance and training of trainers, enabling effective delivery of circular economy and just transition skills. Collaboration with industry partners and local circular enterprises has enhanced programme relevance and created clearer pathways into green jobs and sustainable livelihoods, contributing to a more inclusive and resilient local economy.

This support has strengthened institutional and lecturer capacity through targeted technical assistance and training-of-trainers, enabling effective delivery of circular economy and just transition skills. Collaboration with industry partners and local circular enterprises has enhanced programme relevance and created clearer pathways into green jobs and sustainable livelihoods, contributing to a more inclusive and resilient local economy.





# STITCHING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

## The UN in South Africa's Collaborative Drive for Wellbeing, Safety, Decent Work, and Competitiveness in the Textile Sector

Across the global economy, the textile and garment manufacturing sector faces intense and familiar pressures. In many jurisdictions worldwide, factories contend with shifting global supply chains, fluctuating trade tariffs, escalating energy and transport overheads, and fierce competition from mass-volume imports. These universal economic headwinds often squeeze margins and can inadvertently push the burden onto shop-floor workers through heightened stress, stagnant wages, and compromised safety.

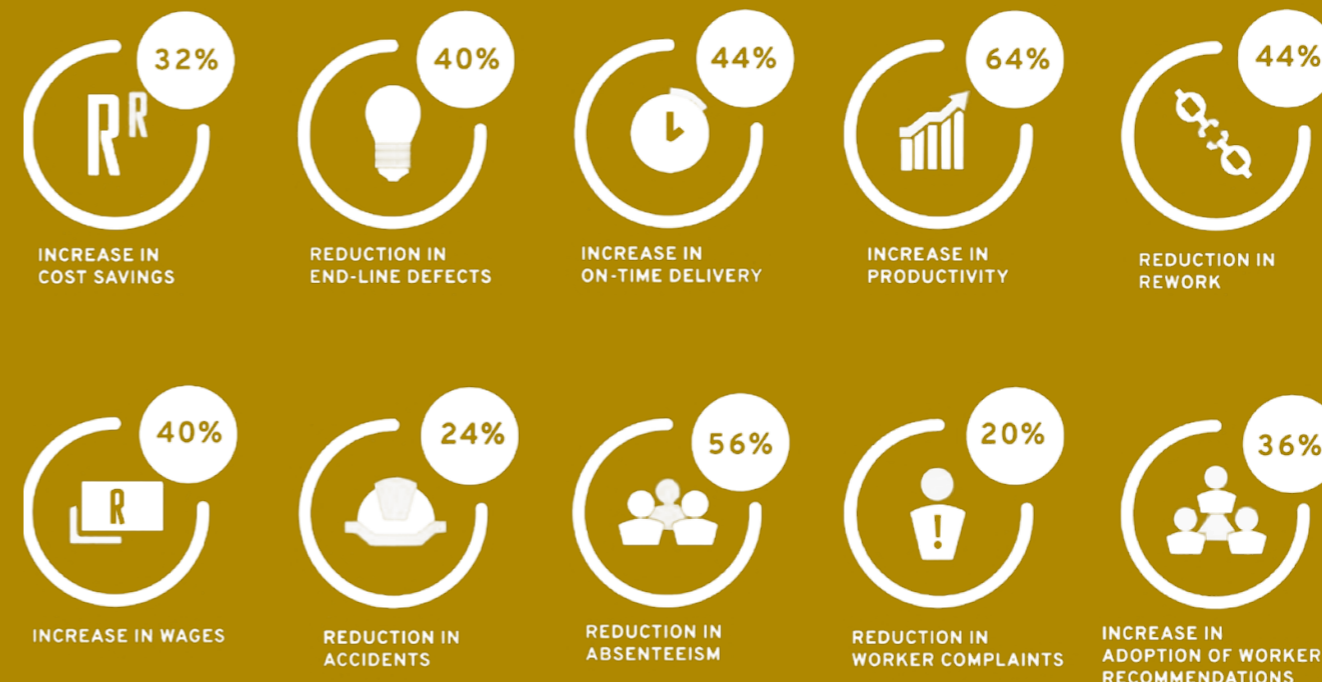
South Africa's retail, clothing, textile, footwear, and leather (R-CTFL) industry has navigated these exact global currents. To stabilize the industry, protect livelihoods, and advance decent work, the United Nations in South Africa, through the International Labour Organization (ILO), spearheaded a collaborative intervention to turn systemic challenges into opportunities for inclusive, sustainable growth.

**A Unified Approach to Enterprise Resilience**  
Delivering on the UN's mandate to foster sustainable industrial development, the ILO rolled out the Sustaining Competitive and Responsible Enter-

prises (SCORE) program between 2023 and 2025. This intervention was not implemented in isolation; it was a deeply collaborative effort executed in close coordination with the National Bargaining Council for the Clothing Manufacturing Industry and aligned directly with the national R-CTFL Master Plan. By bridging the gap between industry bodies, trade unions, and enterprise management, the UN facilitated a unified approach to target the root drivers of productivity and workplace wellbeing.

**Voices from the Factory Floor**  
The true impact of this UN-backed intervention is best understood through the people driving the machines. Historically, a lack of structured communication between management and the factory floor meant that the intuitive knowledge of workers—those who handle the garments and navigate operational bottlenecks every day—went untapped.

By establishing daily production meetings and joint problem-solving platforms, the collaborative program shifted factory cultures from top-down directives to inclusive environments. "I used to come in, and they could see on my face how the day was going to be. But with this training,



I smile a lot more. I'm more open... We understand each other more now and work together," shared one empowered production line worker.

This newfound voice translates directly into safer, more efficient workspaces. On the shop floor, simple but profound changes were championed by the workers themselves: non-slip strips were added to hazard-prone floors, and a wholesale distributor successfully redesigned its waste bags to allow for safe, single-operator handling, eliminating tripping risks and significantly reducing physical strain.

Impact by the Numbers Triangulated project data from the 2025 results brief demonstrates that prioritizing human wellbeing and safety is a direct catalyst for business competitiveness. Following the collaborative implementation of SCORE across 40 small and medium-sized enterprises:

- ▶ 64% of participating enterprises reported improved overall productivity.
- ▶ 56% experienced a measurable reduction in workforce absenteeism, reflecting improved morale, reduced stress, and better working conditions.
- ▶ 40% were able to increase worker wages as a result of operational savings and output growth.

These enterprise-level gains are highly tangible. At one participating sock manufacturing company, optimizing machine allocation and yarn usage not only reduced downtime but increased production volumes by 20%. Furthermore, leaning into circularity and environmental sustainability, the company repurposed redundant yarn into a new line of workman's socks. This initiative transformed waste into a new revenue stream that now accounts for 2% of the company's turnover, while simultaneously clearing out 80 square meters of previously cluttered, hazardous workspace.

**A Blueprint for Sectoral Vitality**  
The UN in South Africa's targeted intervention underscores a universal truth in industrial development: the most sustainable way to drive competitiveness is to invest in the people who power the production line. Backed by strong alliances with trade unions—who championed the program for giving workers an equal footing in solving basic productivity obstacles—the ILO's approach has provided a vital blueprint for resilience.

By collaboratively embedding skills development, cross-level communication, and rigorous safety standards into the daily fabric of the sector, the UN is helping prove that decent work and commercial viability are not competing interests, but inseparable threads of a thriving global industry.



### Inclusive Job Creation

With \$3 million in funding from the UN in partnership with De Beers Group, the **EntreprenHER** programme empowered **1,500 women micro-entrepreneurs** across multiple countries, strengthening profitability, income security and community job creation using the ILO's Generate, Start, and Improve Your Business model. Participants achieved a 5% increase in profitability and **created 72 jobs**, while benefiting from integrated business training, tailored mentoring, market access and procurement linkages.

**Women generated \$2,136 in single-day exhibition sales and \$33,910 through BuyFromWomen**, expanded into non-traditional sectors including 17 ventures in male-dominated industries, and built long-term capacity supported by certified trainers, case studies and global advocacy platforms such as the G20 Forum on Financial Inclusion. Strong partnerships and data-driven reporting systems enabled the programme to advance gender equality, decent work and reduced inequalities by unlocking women's economic potential and access to inclusive markets.

The UN, working with government, strengthened inclusive labour governance by advancing integrated policies, legislation and institutional capacity. Key achievements include the adoption of harmonized fishing vessel inspection procedures by the Department of Employment and Labour and the South African Maritime Safety Authority, improved frameworks to eliminate child labour aligned with International Labour Organization standards, and the development of a gender-responsive National Labour Migration Policy supported by the National Economic Development and Labour Council and reinforced through new legislation. Complementary capacity-building in the construction sector has further promoted decent work practices among small enterprises, including increased use of formal employment contracts. Together, these efforts enhance worker protection, promote fair and non-discriminatory labour practices, and strengthen pathways to decent work.

**1,500**  
women micro-entrepreneurs  
across multiple countries,  
strengthening profitability,  
income security, and  
community job creation

Women generated  
**\$2,136**  
in single-day exhibition  
sales and \$33,910 through  
BuyFromWomen

With UN support, the South African **Footwear and Leather Export Council** strengthened the development of SMEs in the footwear and leather sector by equipping **84 enterprises most of them women-owned** with tailored skills in product design, quality improvement, branding and market access. This targeted capacity-building enhanced business competitiveness, productivity and innovation, positioning SMEs to expand operations and create jobs. The formation of a women-led sourcing cooperative further reduced input costs and improved efficiency, enabling small businesses to scale sustainably. As a result, increased export readiness, including two firms qualifying for preferential market access, has opened new growth pathways, contributing to broader efforts to reduce unemployment in the country.





### Strengthening Data Quality for Evidence-Based Policymaking

The United Nations enhanced the quality, relevance and comparability of labour market data in South Africa through technical support to Statistics South Africa to revise the Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) in line with standards of the International Conference of Labour Statisticians. The updated questionnaire introduces improved measures of labour underutilisation, including potential labour force and time-related underemployment, and refines the definition of informality. Launched in October 2025, the revised QLFS strengthens the country's capacity to produce internationally comparable and policy-relevant labour statistics.

UN support to Productivity South Africa resulted in improved productivity measurement methodologies, enhanced statistical quality and stronger alignment with international standards. This is reflected in the 2025 Annual Report, which demonstrates clearer analytical framing and stronger links between productivity trends and decent work outcomes.

On social protection, UN collaboration with the Department of Social Development strengthened inter-institutional coordination and laid the foundation for an integrated national system of social protection statistics. A key outcome was the establishment of a Community of Practice, improving **collaboration, data harmonisation, and the use of evidence** for policy design, monitoring and evaluation.

**A key outcome was the establishment of a Community of Practice, improving collaboration, data harmonisation, and the use of evidence for policy design, monitoring, and evaluation.**

## Rewriting the Story of Waste: Thabo's Journey to Dignified Work

For most of his adult life, Thabo Maringa worked on the dusty outskirts of Mogalakwena Local Municipality, collecting discarded tyres from dumpsites and illegal dumping sites. Armed with little more than a knife, a wheelbarrow and sheer determination, he turned old tyres into useful products that helped him make a living. But the work was uncertain, and the possibilities remained small, confined to the margins of the informal economy.

"I never thought I needed a formal business," Thabo says. "To me, waste picking was just survival. I didn't think bigger because no one had ever shown me that it was possible."

That began to change when he joined a series of UN capacity-building programmes and coaching sessions designed to help waste pickers build safer, more sustainable and more dignified livelihoods.

At first, Thabo was unsure. He feared that "formalisation" would only bring paperwork, rules and complications he could not afford. But during one of the early training sessions, something shifted.

"The UN opened my eyes," he recalls. "They helped me see the value of my skills and what my business could become if I believed in myself."

With hands-on coaching from the UN team and support from the municipality, **Thabo was able to formalize his business activities**, with the support of the Mogalakwena Waste Picker Forum, of which he is a member. He learned how to keep basic financial



records, meet operational safety requirements and identify new market opportunities for his recycled tyre products. "Most importantly, the ILO team helped me understand that being a waste picker did not limit me; it placed me at the heart of a growing circular economy."

Within months, Thabo officially registered his tyre recycling enterprise. From that point on, things began to change.

"Once my business was registered, doors started opening. I was able to buy a second-hand van to collect more tyres and deliver products to more customers," he says with a smile. "I could approach suppliers, negotiate better prices and access formal markets."

With further technical training in waste tyre processing, he improved his production techniques, strengthened safety conditions and

expanded the range of products he could offer. His income became more stable. So did his confidence.

Today, Thabo is the proud owner of a recognised recycling business that not only supports his family but also creates jobs for two additional workers from his community.

"When I look at my garage workshop now, with more tools and the team working, I feel proud," he says. "I used to work alone with my wife, unsure of tomorrow. **Now I'm helping others to put food on the table. That's the power of support.**"

Thabo's journey from informal waste picker to registered entrepreneur exemplifies the UNCT's commitment to inclusive economic growth and the circular economy, directly supporting SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth).

Strategic Priority 2

# Human Capital and Social Transformation



## Key Results

**10,000**

change champions mobilised for health system transformation.

**4,000**

change champions mobilised for health system transformation.

**3 million**

learners reached through comprehensive sexuality education.

**50,000**

sets of ECD learning and teacher support materials distributed, benefiting about 500,000 children.

**44,560**

adolescents and young people reached with youth-friendly SRH services.

**11,000**

in-service teachers trained in CSE.



### Universal Health Coverage (UHC)

The UN Health Subgroup helped strengthen health system resilience, inclusivity and people-centred service delivery. National reform efforts under NHI were reinforced through the mobilisation of **10,000 change champions** to raise public awareness and support for health system transformation. Updated national clinical guidelines on HIV testing services, sexually transmitted infections, voluntary medical male circumcision, malnutrition management and termination of pregnancy were finalised and disseminated, improving standardisation and quality of care across provinces.

Approximately **4,000 healthcare workers** healthcare workers were trained on updated HIV testing guidelines, strengthening early diagnosis, linkage to care and differentiated service delivery. Provincial HIV contingency planning improved significantly, with completion rates rising **from 41% to 60%**, supported by real-time digital performance dashboards that enhanced accountability and decision-making.

# Health

Primary health care system strength improved through the integration of the **Integrated Care for Older People (ICOPE) framework and the expansion of diabetes management initiatives under DACT-SA**. Provincial TB managers' review meetings institutionalised routine, data-driven performance assessments, strengthening the interpretation and use of surveillance data to close detection and treatment gaps. Cervical cancer elimination readiness expanded to six provinces through national training-of-trainers initiatives, reinforcing the integration of screening services into PHC platforms.

Collectively, these interventions strengthened essential service coverage, enhanced workforce competency, improved governance and accountability, and advanced the implementation of UHC reforms.





### Building Resilient Health Security Systems in South Africa

Health security and emergency preparedness advanced markedly in 2025, with the United Nations driving faster, more coordinated and more effective responses to public health threats. National and provincial Mpox Incident Management Teams were activated, transforming coordination, accelerating information flow and strengthening rapid-response capacity. The delivery of 35 courses of tecovirimat enabled improved management of severe Mpox cases, while the swift mobilisation of **250 doses of diphtheria antitoxin** during the Western Cape outbreak strengthened lifesaving case management.

In Gauteng, United Nations-supported response efforts **contained 851 cases of foodborne illness and 30 deaths**, while a multisectoral Intra-Action Review produced updated outbreak response plans and stronger standard operating procedures, leaving systems better prepared for future shocks. All-Hazard Risk Assessments in two provinces brought together **more than 100 stakeholders** to generate actionable risk profiles, directly informing more targeted and evidence-based preparedness planning.

Implementation of the National Action Plan for Health Security gained momentum through resource mapping and costing, sharpening the visibility of funding gaps and aligning investments with priority needs. At the same time, electronic event-based surveillance pilots accelerated early detection, and expanded wastewater surveillance strengthened environmental monitoring as a front-line early warning system.

Cross-border coordination intensified across Mpox, cholera, polio and measles, strengthening regional collaboration and boosting immunisation readiness. Together, these actions delivered faster outbreak detection, more agile and coordinated responses, and stronger compliance with the International Health Regulations, advancing a more resilient and responsive health security system.

The delivery of 35 courses of tecovirimat enabled improved management of severe Mpox cases, while the swift mobilisation of **250 doses of diphtheria antitoxin** during the Western Cape outbreak

paign mobilised national commitment to **conduct 5 million TB tests**, increasing case detection and reinforcing progress towards reduced incidence. TB treatment success rates remained stable, reflecting stronger programme performance.

Maternal, child and newborn health services were strengthened through the adoption of updated **WHO recommendations for a positive postnatal experience**, improving the quality of reproductive and maternal health services. Although maternal mortality declined gradually, sustained efforts are required to meet SDG targets.

NCD prevention and management were strengthened through the expansion of the diabetes programme, implementation of cardiovascular disease guidelines, World Obesity Day awareness campaigns in four local languages, and integration of

NCD services into PHC. Community-based mental health transition tools were piloted, expanding treatment coverage for depression, psychoses and other priority disorders. Although NCD mortality remains high, integrated service delivery models improved early detection and continuity of care.

Malaria disease and case management remained aligned with national policy, maintaining high coverage of first-line treatment in endemic districts. Efforts to integrate TB and nutrition programmes also addressed persistent stunting among children under five.

Overall, 2025 saw improved access to preventive, promotive and curative services, better quality of care, and greater integration of services within primary health care systems.



### Driving Health Gains: Tackling South Africa's Quadruple Burden

The UN accelerated progress in addressing South Africa's quadruple burden of disease, comprising communicable diseases, non-communicable diseases, reproductive and maternal health conditions, and violence and injuries.

For HIV and TB, intensified case-finding and treatment strengthened epidemic control. The HIV cascade showed high levels of diagnosis and viral suppression, with continued efforts to expand antiretroviral therapy initiation. **The End TB cam-**



### Empowering Peer-Led Harm Reduction for Stimulant Drug Use

The United Nations, in partnership with the Community Oriented Substance Use Programme and the University of Pretoria, catalysed stronger front-line responses through a high-impact workshop, “Pins, Pipes, Peers, and Harm Reduction,” equipping **33 participants in the Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality** with practical, evidence-based strategies to support people who use stimulant drugs. The initiative translated global guidance into actionable tools, strengthening peer workers’ capacity to deliver harm reduction, promote safer practices, and improve HIV prevention, treatment and care outcomes. By bridging community experience, service delivery and academic insight, the workshop empowered peer-led interventions to drive behaviour change, expand access to support, and improve health outcomes among vulnerable populations.

**33** participants equipped with practical, evidence-based strategies to support people who use stimulant drugs



### Accelerating Youth-Centred SRH Access and Sustainable Service Delivery

Access to integrated, youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services expanded significantly, with **44,560 adolescents and young people** reached across supported provinces through inclusive, high-impact service delivery models. Targeted interventions ensured equitable access for youth with disabilities and LGBTQIA+ communities through specialised clinics, while the integration of dual HIV screening and GBV risk assessments into routine care strengthened early detection, prevention and holistic support for vulnerable groups.

A strategic shift to a “systemic catalyst” approach transformed programming for key populations, prioritising sustainability amid funding constraints. This included the development and wide dissemination of an advocacy brief amplifying stakeholder solutions to sustain services for sex workers and marginalised groups, alongside targeted transitional support to organisations such as OUT LGBT Well-being and Anova Health Institute. This intervention safeguarded conti-

**44,560** adolescents and young people reached across supported provinces through inclusive, high-impact service delivery models.

nunity of critical HIV and SRH services, including outreach, case management, psychosocial support and mental health care, while enabling **22 public health facilities** and **39 healthcare practitioners** practitioners to transition towards integrated, high-performing service delivery, resulting in accelerated PrEP uptake and increased youth engagement.

Sustainable financing for adolescent girls and young women (AGYW) was advanced through the design of a national SRH Outcomes Fund, grounded in a comprehensive landscape analysis identifying priority geographies, service packages and investment opportunities. With the South African Medical Research Council positioned as fund manager, Tiko as ecosystem enabler, and Bridges Outcomes Partnerships providing upfront capital alongside a **\$500,000 USD commitment from the UN**, the initiative gained momentum, with growing engagement from the National Treasury of South Africa to secure long-term domestic financing from 2027/28.



### Empowering Young People with Skills, Services, and Opportunities

Young people’s access to knowledge, skills and opportunities was significantly expanded through integrated SRH, digital innovation and economic empowerment interventions. Employability Skills Training reached **148 youth**, including **17 with disabilities**, in partnership with the National Youth Development Agency, while digital platforms scaled impact: #PowerInMe recorded **138,908 utilisations** and B-Wise engaged an additional **1,067 youth**. These combined efforts strengthened both health literacy and economic readiness, enabling young people to make informed life choices and improve their livelihoods.

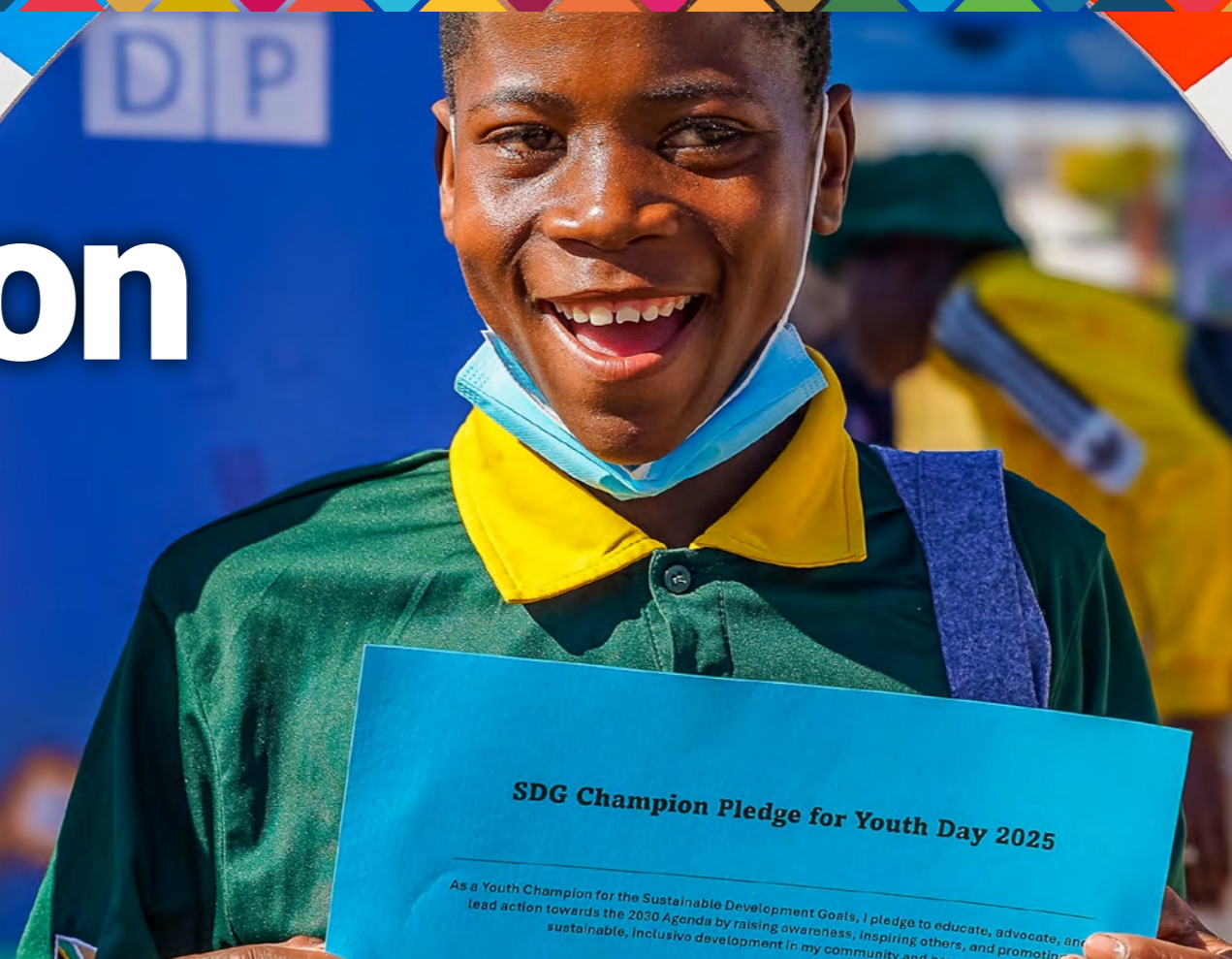
Targeted outreach prioritised the most vulnerable, reaching **4,209 youth** in Vhembe District and **3,671 youth with disabilities** across Limpopo and KwaZulu-Natal through Youth Zones and school-based programmes. Expanded delivery through **8 Youth Zones**, alongside GBV and crime prevention initiatives with the South African Police Service and the Department

of Social Development, further engaged **580 LGBT-QIA+ youth** and **90 young people living with HIV**, strengthening inclusive, community-level prevention and support.

Systemic impact was driven through policy and financing advances, including high-level commitment to a costed National Strategic Plan on adolescent pregnancy and the integration of SRHR into national health financing frameworks. Evidence-based advocacy, supported by engagement with the National Department of Health and innovations such as the Youth Digital Health Expo, positioned digital health, comprehensive sexuality education and adolescent-friendly services as core components of universal health coverage.

Health system strengthening further improved quality of care through technical support on maternal and adolescent health, including implementation of updated care guidelines, digital training tools and innovations such as point-of-care ultrasound. Collaboration with Traditional Health Practitioners in Limpopo strengthened early detection and referral for high-risk pregnancies, directly addressing gaps where **50% of maternal deaths occur outside health facilities**, advancing more inclusive, community-linked health systems.

# Education



## Strengthened Capacities for Quality Early Learning Programmes

A landmark achievement was the advanced development of a national, costed ECD Human Resource Development Plan in partnership with the Department of Basic Education (DBE). At the same time, policy engagements directly strengthened professional regulation through technical support to the South African Council of Educators, including participation in provincial colloquiums to refine policies for ECD practitioners. Implementation capacity was tangibly increased through the publication and initial distribution of **50,000 sets of Learning and Teacher Support Materials (LTSM)** aligned with the National Curriculum Framework for birth to four years, reaching **approximately 24% of the country's 42,000 Early Learning Programmes and benefiting at least 500,000 children**. To ensure inclusivity, these materials are being translated into 11 official languages.

## 500,000 children benefited from the Early Learning Programmes

Furthermore, 40 original storybooks, including 30 new titles and 10 adaptations, were developed and published on the ECD InfoHub to promote emergent literacy. Direct workforce capacity-building was achieved at scale: the P.L.A.Y. online in-service training **registered 52,619 users and recorded 22,513 completions**, benefiting an estimated **1.3 million children, while the Foundation Phase Initiative trained approximately 2,000 teachers in the Western Cape**. The National Parental/Primary Caregiver Programme expanded its reach through an updated online platform, indirectly benefiting approximately 750 children. System monitoring and knowledge management were also strengthened by the cross-sectoral ECD InfoHub, which maintained **2,500-3,000 active monthly users** and served as a central repository for policies and resources.



## Enhancing Capacities for Inclusive and Quality Basic Education

Systemic reforms focused on safe learning environments, foundational skills and modernised assessments. A critical output was the revision and nationwide dissemination of the **Care and Support for Teaching and Learning framework and handbook to 451,000 teachers in 24,677 schools**, fulfilling the DBE's commitment to support schools. Health promotion was integrated through the finalization of national WASH in Schools guidelines incorporating Menstrual Hygiene Management, and through support for the Adolescent Pregnancy National Consultation and draft regulations on pregnancy management.

To address the foundational learning crisis, outputs included the scaling of Mother Tongue-based Foundational Learning Training in the Northern Cape, **reaching 43,284 learners in 129 schools with 181,558 learning materials**, and support for

the Funda Uphumelele Survey which assessed the **reading performance of 27,838 learners**. A major curriculum milestone was achieved with the development and launch of South Africa's first free, state-owned Life Orientation textbooks for Grades 10–12, directly addressing a long-standing resource gap. Digital learning capacity was significantly expanded through support to Generation Unlimited platforms: the Siyavula mathematics and science platform and the Junior Tukkies programme collectively reached more than **3.5 million learners with online and offline resources**. To modernize assessment, an AI-based competency measurement tool aligned with the National 21st Century Core Competency Framework was developed and piloted with 600 Grade 8–11 students, and is now being adapted for the General Education Certificate (GEC). Evidence-based planning was strengthened through a partnership with Statistics South Africa under the SASQAF framework, resulting in key outputs including the finalized DBE Data Management Policy, the 2019–2020 Education Statistics report, and the 2024–2025 School Realities Publication.



### Improved Capacities for Tailored STEM and Robotics Learning

The focus was on expanding access, building educator competence, and fostering real-world exposure. Geographic and resource equity was advanced through the establishment of seven new Coding and Robotics hubs, bringing the national total to 12 hubs across all nine provinces, with an emphasis on underserved regions. These hubs function as centralised resource centres providing technology, training and support for competitions. Educator capacity was systematically built through a cascade training model: **37 Subject Specialists were trained, who subsequently trained 370 educators, indirectly benefiting 7,400 learners.**

A rapid assessment confirmed **334 educators were independently delivering the C&R curriculum weekly to 25,978 learners. Cumulatively, 707 educators reached 33,379 learners with UN support.** The programme demonstrated quality, with several hubs achieving pass rates above 95%. To bridge the gap between education and employment, the STEM Mentorship Programme was strengthened, resulting in signed MOUs with four private sector companies (Rayburn Holdings, National Financial Ombud Scheme, BMW, and AHD Architects), enabling workplace exposure and job shadowing for 100 learners (63% girls) in Gauteng and Western Cape provinces.

**37**  
Subject Specialists were trained, who subsequently trained 370 educators, indirectly benefiting 7,400 learners



### Equipping Adolescents with Knowledge and Skills for Life

The key output was the institutionalization of sustainable platforms for youth engagement and life-skills delivery. The most significant systemic achievement was the official integration of the Girls and Boys Education Movement (GBEM) into the functions of the government's Representative Council of Learners, ensuring its long-term sustainability within the school system. This was complemented by capacity-building for 90 national learner leaders at a National Leadership Summit and technical support for GBEM training in provinces. Using an innovative sport- and play-based delivery approach, an estimated 20,000 learners actively participated in GBEM youth leadership life-skills sessions across six provinces. Furthermore, collaboration with the DBE's School Sport Directorate was revitalised, enhancing delivery of Quality Physical Education and Sport for Development, **which enabled an estimated 9,600 young people across 120 schools to participate in structured sport and life-skills activities.**

Collectively, these results provided the essential building blocks of stronger policies, expanded resources, trained personnel and institutionalized platforms that directly contributed to enhancing the capacity of South Africa's education system to deliver inclusive, quality learning and developmental services for children and adolescents.

**9,600**  
young people from 120 schools participated in structured in sport and life-skills activities



## Protection from Violence and Discrimination



### Strengthening Justice and Frontline Responses to GBV

Institutional and technical capacities across the justice and security sectors were significantly strengthened, enabling more effective, survivor-centred responses to gender-based violence. The United Nations supported the South African National Defence Force and broader GBV stakeholders through targeted training on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA), gender mainstreaming and reporting mechanisms, resulting in improved compliance, accountability and safer reporting pathways for survivors. These efforts reinforced institutional readiness to prevent and respond to GBV within security structures.

Within the justice sector, partnerships with the South African Judiciary strengthened the quality and sensitivity of GBV adjudication. Advanced judicial training, the development of the South African Handbook for Judicial Officers on GBVAW, and the Judicial Wellness Handbook equipped judicial officers with tools to manage complex GBV cases while safeguarding their own wellbeing. The validation of trauma and debriefing guidelines further institutionalised support systems within the judiciary, contributing to more consistent, survivor-sensitive justice delivery.

Capacity-building for frontline service providers, including social workers, enhanced the quality of victim assessment reports and expert testimony in GBV cases. This directly improved the evidentiary base for prosecutions, strengthened case outcomes, and contributed to more effective accountability for perpetrators, advancing a more responsive and credible justice system.



### Embedding Accountability to Prevent Femicide

Systemic accountability mechanisms to address femicide were advanced through the institutionalisation of the Femicide Review Methodology (FRM). In partnership with the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, the United Nations supported the development of a national concept note and action plan, laying the foundation for a coordinated, evidence-based approach to reviewing femicide cases. This marked a critical shift from reactive responses to proactive, system-wide prevention.

Technical support to a national committee applying the FRM strengthened analysis of case outcomes, identifying systemic gaps and enabling targeted interventions across the criminal justice and social support systems. By embedding multidisciplinary reviews, these efforts improved accountability, enhanced institutional learning, and informed more effective prevention strategies.

Global and regional knowledge exchange further reinforced these gains, including engagement with platforms such as the International Association of Women Judges. Sharing South Africa's experience and lessons on femicide prevention elevated the country's leadership while strengthening the adoption of structured review mechanisms as a global good practice in combating GBV and femicide.



### Shaping Policy and Transforming Social Norms

The United Nations played a strategic role in shaping policy dialogue and advancing gender equality through high-level national and global platforms. Engagement with the G20 Empowerment of Women Working Group strengthened South Africa's contribution to advancing SDG 5, including the promotion of women's economic empowerment and financial inclusion as critical levers to reduce vulnerability to GBV. These efforts positioned GBV prevention within broader development and economic frameworks.

Evidence-based planning and accountability for gender-based violence and femicide (GBVF) were significantly advanced through strengthened data systems, policy analysis and multi-stakeholder engagement. The United Nations supported the technical review of the 10-year National Strategic Plan (NSP) on GBVF, synthesising evidence from **63 reports and the National GBV Prevalence Study** to assess progress and identify gaps. This process highlighted key achievements, including legislative reforms and the elimination of the DNA backlog, while producing a Reflective Review Report that was validated through multi-stakeholder workshops, establishing a strong technical foundation to guide implementation through 2030.

Public financing for gender equality was brought into sharper focus through collaboration with the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities on the Sanitary Dignity Programme: Financial Flows Analysis. Covering all nine provinces, the analysis exposed critical inefficiencies and opportunities in addressing period poverty and is now driving policy advocacy for centralised procurement, the adoption of sustainable menstrual products and the integration of menstrual health management into school-based SRH programmes, strengthening long-term sustainability beyond donor funding.

Innovative data systems were further advanced through the **development of the GBV Index Prototype (Version 0.1)** in partnership with the University of Cape Town and the Commission for Gender Equality. This proof of concept introduced a multidimensional framework measuring sexual, physical, psychological and economic violence, enabling spatial mapping of GBV trends and strengthening national communication and decision-making. While data limitations remain, ongoing collaboration with institutions such as the National Prosecuting Authority and the National Strategic Hub is positioning the index for greater precision and impact, laying the foundation for a robust, nationally owned tool to drive targeted interventions and accountability.

Targeted advocacy initiatives, including partnerships around positive masculinity, engaged policymakers and stakeholders in addressing the root causes of violence. Collaboration with the Johannesburg Positive Masculinity Initiative and participation in

**The United Nations supported the technical review of the 10-year National Strategic Plan (NSP) on GBVF, synthesising evidence from 63 reports and the National GBV Prevalence Study to assess progress and identify gaps**

ministerial-level dialogues elevated evidence-based approaches to transforming harmful gender norms and promoting behavioural change among men and boys, recognised as a key structural intervention to prevent GBV and femicide.

National convenings, including a GBV conference and contributions to dialogues on transnational organised crime, strengthened integrated policy responses by highlighting the intersections between GBV, financial violence and organised crime. These platforms fostered stronger coordination, reinforced institutional ownership of GBV interventions, and advanced more holistic, cross-sector strategies to prevent and respond to violence against women.

The UN also strengthened adolescent well-being in South Africa by mobilising communities to challenge harmful gender and social norms, **reaching 715 community leaders and 1,576 School Governing Body and Parent-Teacher Association members**. These efforts increased awareness of early and unintended pregnancy, gender-based violence and child marriage, fostering stronger community ownership and more protective environments for learners.



### Mobilising Communities and Systems to Prevent and Respond to GBV

Community-led responses to GBV were significantly strengthened through technical mentorship and capacity-building support to **130 community-based organisations** in high-incidence hotspots, in partnership with the GBVF Response Fund. These interventions improved financial management, governance and service delivery, enabling grassroots actors to scale survivor-centred care while enhancing accountability and sustainability. Strategic resource allocation contributed to over **R200 million in grants**, reinforcing a sustainable public-private partnership model and expanding access to critical services in underserved areas.

System-level coordination and prevention efforts were accelerated through the development of a comprehensive Community Mobilisation Initiative (CMI) Business Case, supported by regular multi-stakeholder engagement. The plan outlines integrated interventions, including mental health and substance use screening, expanded school-based education and stronger regulatory frameworks to drive long-term prevention and resource mobilisation, particularly in the Eastern Cape.

Targeted interventions to improve the safety of customary male initiation practices were strengthened through collaboration with provincial stakeholders, aligning implementation with the Customary Initiation Act (2021). Capacity-building for traditional practitioners, establishment of rescue centres, and integration of health screenings contributed to reducing preventable morbidity and mortality, while reinforcing the United Nations' role as a key partner in promoting safe, culturally sensitive practices.

In Eendukuil, Western Cape, a UN-led gender-responsive policing programme, implemented in partnership with Ilitha Labantu, transformed survivor experiences and strengthened community



**130**  
community-based  
organisations  
strengthened in high  
incidence hotspots

safety, reducing reported domestic violence cases from **13–20 per month to just three**. By equipping police officers with trauma-informed, survivor-centred approaches, integrating role-play exercises, and promoting women in station leadership, the initiative increased early reporting, improved protection order implementation and fostered survivor trust. This approach demonstrates that investing in empathetic, UN-supported policing not only enhances access to justice for GBV survivors but also directly contributes to measurable reductions in violence, offering a scalable model for national replication.

The UN strengthened efforts to address harmful attitudes and behaviours driving gender-based violence by empowering young people and community leaders to lead change and influence policy. Through leveraging South Africa's G20 Presidency, **more than 150 youth co-developed and endorsed a declaration**

on positive masculinities and GBVF prevention, while 145 youth from all nine provinces were equipped through intergenerational dialogues and a national leadership conference, culminating in the SAIIA–UN Women Young Leaders' Declaration 2025. HeForShe engagements **reached more than 1,500 men and boys**, challenging patriarchal norms and promoting behaviour change. Critically, youth-driven recommendations were formally integrated into G20 and Y20 governance processes, marking a significant shift towards inclusive, youth-led approaches to preventing GBVF and advancing long-term social norm change.

Through the O3 Programme, the UN supported the Department of Basic Education by enhancing policy, curriculum and multisectoral coordination, anchored in strong partnerships with the National Department of Health and Sida. This collaboration reinforced school-health linkages, advanced gender

equality and protection, and ensured sustainable, system-wide delivery of quality comprehensive sexuality education aligned with national priorities and the ESA Commitment.

South Africa achieved full institutionalisation of comprehensive sexuality education (CSE), integrating life skills-based HIV and sexuality education across all **15,000 primary and 6,000 secondary schools nationwide**. With sustained technical leadership from the UN, educator capacity was strengthened through the training of **11,000 in-service teachers and 221 teacher educators**, enhancing delivery of a more inclusive and gender-responsive curriculum. As a result, **nearly three million learners** were reached, contributing to shifts in harmful gender norms, the prevention of school-related gender-based violence, and reduced vulnerability to early and unintended pregnancy and HIV infection.

## Entrepreneurs in Action: Debbie Mdlongwa

My name is Debbie Mdlongwa, and I am 30 years old. I am a business consultant at the University of Pretoria Mamelodi Campus under the Mamelodi Business Hub, as well as an entrepreneur. On 28 August 2021, I was given the opportunity to attend an Agriculture Learnership at the University of Pretoria Mamelodi Campus. I was one of the 15 students who took part in the learnership.

During the programme, we covered both plant production theory and practical work. Afterwards, we were fortunate to be given the opportunity to continue taking care of the garden. The team was extremely impressed with the hard work and dedication we put into growing fresh, high-quality crops. Out of the 15 students, only six, including myself, were willing to continue maintaining the garden. We decided to research different types of crops, how long they take to harvest, and ways to protect both the soil and the crops. Agriculture is crucial to economic growth because it reduces poverty and improves food security. South Africa undoubtedly needs more farmers to make a stronger impact in the agricultural sector. We recently supplied our local supermarket with Swiss chard spinach and would like to become one of its regular local suppliers. Our biggest obstacle, however, is land. We need more land to produce more spinach. We have also had students from the business management faculty at the University of Pretoria volunteer in the garden in exchange for donating spinach to a local children's

home. We have completed numerous entrepreneurial courses to sharpen our skills. Being successful is a very uncomfortable process. You must be willing to learn and find new, innovative ways to change your way of thinking.



### Strategic Priority 3

# Efficient, Effective and Transformative Governance



## Key Results

### Integrity

and accountability systems were strengthened in key South African institutions.

**300**

young people reached through youth-focused human rights initiatives.

### Regional

cooperation between South Africa, Mozambique and Tanzania led to major drug seizures and stronger cross-border investigations.

### Training

on the Integrated Planning and Reporting Toolkit improved planning aligned with the SDGs, Agenda 2063 and the MTDP 2024–2029.



#### Driving Integrity and Accountability Across Institutions

Integrity and accountability systems were significantly strengthened, with the United Nations driving reforms across key institutions, including the University of Cape Town, the Platform to Protect Whistleblowers in Africa, and the Public Service Commission of South Africa. Leadership capacity-building initiatives equipped anti-corruption and prosecutorial bodies with practical tools to address real-world challenges, resulting in institution-specific reform commitments and more adaptive, resilient leadership. By embedding **gender-responsive approaches**, these efforts promoted more **inclusive leadership cultures and strengthened** institutional integrity systems.

Legal and policy frameworks were reinforced through targeted support to **whistleblower protection systems**, including revisions to South Africa's Protected Disclosures Act and technical assistance to the Public Service Commission to strengthen internal reporting mechanisms. At the same time, engagement through the G20 Anti-Corruption Working

By embedding **gender-responsive approaches**, these efforts advanced more **inclusive leadership cultures and strengthened institutional integrity systems**.

Group elevated South Africa's leadership in promoting transparency, integrity and **whole-of-society approaches to combating corruption**.

Multi-stakeholder collaboration was further strengthened through **partnerships with the private sector**, including Nedbank and Absa Group, alongside civil society and public institutions. These efforts **improved coordination on asset recovery and illicit financial flows**, unlocking new expertise and reinforcing a more transparent, accountable governance ecosystem.





### Disrupting Illicit Networks Through Regional Cooperation

**Regional cooperation** was reinforced through strengthened engagement with **cross-border platforms such as the Triangular Planning Cell and the Asset Recovery Inter-Agency Network of Southern Africa**. These initiatives enabled joint planning, intelligence-sharing and coordinated enforcement actions among countries including South Africa, Mozambique and Tanzania, contributing to significant operational results such as major drug seizures and improved cross-border investigations.

**Capacity-building efforts brought together prosecutors, investigators and financial intelligence practitioners, including representatives from the National Prosecuting Authority**, to strengthen asset tracing, seizure and recovery processes. This improved regional alignment and enhanced the efficiency of responses to complex financial crimes and illicit flows.

Targeted interventions also supported the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, particularly its Monitoring, Control and Surveillance Directorate, to strengthen **anti-corruption measures in the fisheries sector**. In parallel, regional convenings such as the SADC Informal Law Enforcement Network Meeting on Minerals Crimes brought together law enforcement agencies, customs and financial intelligence units to improve coordinated responses to illegal mining and related criminal activities.



### Advancing Human Rights Capacity and Civic Participation

The United Nations strengthened **civic engagement and human rights capacity** through partnerships with institutions including the South African Human Rights Commission, Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, Lawyers for Human Rights, and Front-Line Defenders. Women human rights defenders were equipped with skills in monitoring, documentation and engagement with international mechanisms, resulting in increased reporting of violations and direct submissions to UN Special Rapporteurs. Additional support on digital and personal security strengthened their resilience and ability to operate safely.



**Youth-focused initiatives** reached nearly **300 young people** across provinces including Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga and Northern Cape, equipping them with advocacy tools and knowledge of human rights systems. Through innovative approaches such as **“activism” and digital platforms**, participants were empowered to engage actively in civic processes and promote social justice within their communities.

These efforts fostered stronger linkages between communities and formal human rights systems, creating a more informed and connected civil society. As a result, participation in democratic processes increased, and a growing network of empowered advocates is now driving accountability and inclusion at local and national levels.



### Strengthening Rights-Based Governance and Legal Frameworks

Support to legal and institutional processes strengthened South Africa’s compliance with international human rights standards, including engagement with treaty bodies such as the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Capacity-building for government institutions improved the quality and timeliness of state reporting, reinforcing accountability and alignment with global commitments.

**Strategic engagement with civil society partners, including Scalabrini Centre of Cape Town, contributed to landmark legal outcomes such as the Scalabrini v Minister of Home Affairs judgment. This ruling strengthened protections for refugees and asylum seekers by affirming their right to fair asylum processes and reinforcing key human rights principles, including non-refoulement.**

Together, these efforts advanced a more robust, rights-based governance framework, where institutions are better equipped, legal protections are stronger, and individuals, particularly those most vulnerable, are increasingly able to claim and realise their rights.



### Strengthening National Planning Alignment through IPRT Capacity Development

The capacity-building programme on the Integrated Planning and Reporting Toolkit (IPRT) significantly strengthened institutional capacity within the department to align national and sectoral plans with the SDGs, Agenda 2063 and MTDP 2024–2029. As a result of the training, participants reported stronger technical skills and a more practical understanding of how to use the web-based, digitised toolkit to support integrated planning, monitoring and reporting processes. The department found the training extremely useful, noting an improved ability to analyse alignment across development frameworks and to link planning priorities with financing instruments through the Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF) module. This has contributed to more coherent, data-driven decision-making and strengthened readiness to support the effective implementation and tracking of national, regional and global development commitments.

# Grassroots Partnership Empowers South Africa's Youth

Kabelo Motlhophe never imagined he would trade his cleaning job for a leadership role in local government. But after observing a civic education workshop taking place in a building he was cleaning, he decided to make the switch.

The workshop was organized by **Activate! Change Drivers**, a South African youth empowerment network that encourages young people to take part in civic life. The group had arrived at the building Motlhophe was cleaning, and while he was intrigued by the young people, he was even more drawn to what was being said. "I listened to them, and then I said... let me try this field and see whether I could be equipped for leadership," he recalled.

This led Motlhophe to take part in civic training sessions offered by Activate! and eventually in their leadership project. Through the project, he discovered how he could become a respected voice in the community. Inspired and empowered, he decided to run for election as ward councillor in his area.

## And he won.

"I was always fighting for the community, always engaging the former councillor," he said. "So, the community saw that and thought, 'You know, let's give him a chance.' You must learn to know your councillor, engage your audience, and do things in the right way. I told myself, 'I can do this.'"



Kabelo Motlhophe is a Ward Councillor for his home district of Kagiso. While working as a cleaner at the ward HQ, Motlhophe listened in on an Activate! training, which he credits with inspiring him to seek training in civic education himself.

Motlhophe has been a ward councillor in Mamelodi, a community northeast of Pretoria, South Africa, since 2021. He said Activate!'s training, especially learning about the right to participate in public affairs, was crucial to his success.

"Basically, my job now is to be the mouthpiece of my community when they cannot reach the proper authority," he said. "That training taught me that you mustn't take decisions for people. As a leader, you must consult, speak to people, hear their views. The training taught me that as a leader, I must go to the community and ask their views."



## Strategic Priority 4

# Climate Resilience and Sustainably Managed Natural Resources



## Key Results

**14,182**

people directly benefited from biodiversity, water and climate interventions.

**10,079**

hectares brought under sustainable management.

**R700**

million in Green Climate Fund financing mobilised.

**366,000**

direct beneficiaries reached through ecosystem-based adaptation, with 5.1 million indirect beneficiaries.

**127**

cleantech applications supported, with 41 innovators advancing to acceleration and 38 semi-finalists receiving intensive support



### Biodiversity Preservation

In 2025, the UN delivered scaled, people-centred climate and biodiversity solutions that strengthened resilience at the intersection of ecosystems and livelihoods. A total of **14,182 people (52–64% women) directly** benefited from integrated biodiversity, water, and climate interventions, **while 10,079 hectares of natural resources were brought under sustainable management**, reinforcing ecosystems as critical economic and social infrastructure. Access to clean, affordable energy was expanded to **400 people (50% women)**, advancing inclusive energy transition pathways. At the systems level, the UN supported the mobilisation of **R700 million in Green Climate Fund financing** for ecosystem-based adaptation, unlocking large-scale impact with **366,000 direct beneficiaries and 5.1 million indirect beneficiaries**. These results show that investing in nature is not only an environmental imperative, but also a strategic pathway to protect livelihoods, strengthen resilience and sustain long-term economic stability.



### Catalysing a Continental Energy Transition: From Policy to Legacy Financing

A flagship achievement was the establishment of the Africa Energy Efficiency Facility (AEEF) as a G20 Energy Legacy Programme, formally endorsed in October 2025. The UNCT served as a founding member alongside AFREC and the Government of South Africa, helping secure long-term African ownership of energy-efficiency financing. Strategic engagement generated high-level political buy-in across Member States, financiers and development partners, supported by ministerial dialogues and a continental stakeholder workshop. This positioned the AEEF as a scalable mechanism for driving sustainable energy investment across Africa beyond the G20 cycle.

**400**

people (50% women), advancing inclusive energy transition pathways.



# Greening, Cleaning and Acting for People and Planet as South Africa Marks 80 Years of the United Nations

Community, youth and partners unite for climate action through service, environmental stewardship and civic engagement

To commemorate the 80th anniversary of the United Nations, the UN family in South Africa delivered a series of community-centred sustainability activations that translated global commitments into visible local action. Bringing together youth, local partners, members of the diplomatic community and civil society, the UN Day activations honoured the organisation's legacy of peace, development and human rights while mobilising collective responsibility for climate justice, environmental stewardship and inclusive progress.

A flagship community outreach event at the Pretoria Art Museum provided a platform for dialogue, creativity and action. Participants contributed to the greening of the museum grounds, engaged in environmental clean-up activities, took part in a guided museum walk-through, witnessed the unveiling of climate-themed artwork, and publicly pledged individual and collective actions in support of sustainability and climate resilience.

Complementing the Pretoria activation, UN Day activities extended to the coast through a **community beach clean-up initiative in Durban**, reinforcing the connection between climate action, ecosystem protection and community well-being. Working alongside local partners, volunteers removed waste from the shoreline while raising awareness about plastic pollution, marine degradation and their impacts on coastal livelihoods and biodiversity.

These UN Day actions were further reinforced through an **Environment Day activation at the Extrupet recycling plant**, where engagement centred on responsible consumption, waste reduction and circular economy principles. The collaboration highlighted the role of recycling and sustainable production systems in reducing environmental harm, creating green livelihoods and advancing climate-responsive development pathways.

Reflecting on the significance of the **UN Day Action for People and Planet activation**, Nelson Muffuh, United Nations Resident Coordinator in South Africa, underscored the importance of collective, service-driven action across communities and settings. *“Performing acts of service to the community is at the heart of what the United Nations stands for. Marking UN Day through practical action demonstrates what we can achieve when we work together in synergy. This year's focus is about doing better together—moving beyond conservation to restoring nature, strengthening communities and empowering people,”* he said.

Together, the inland, coastal and industry-focused activations demonstrated how UN Day and related commemorations serve as a catalyst for practical environmental action, partnership and civic engagement—advancing a shared commitment to a greener, more inclusive and sustainable future.





### Advancing Nature-Based Economies and Climate-Resilient Livelihoods

UN contributions advanced Africa’s transition to more sustainable economic models by promoting the bioeconomy agenda and launching the RELISA Project, which links ecosystem restoration with livelihoods. Coordination across national departments and AUDA-NEPAD strengthened policy coherence, while the RELISA launch positioned restoration as a practical pathway to sustainable livelihoods and environmental resilience. These efforts integrated biodiversity, land use and economic inclusion into climate strategies.



## NDC

### Supporting the NDC 3.0 Process

UN support significantly strengthened the human rights architecture of South Africa’s NDC 3.0, marking a shift towards more inclusive climate governance. For the first time, persons with disabilities were explicitly integrated into climate policy through two targeted adaptation goals, alongside stronger provisions for women, youth and vulnerable communities. The NDC also introduced a youth- and gender-responsive climate jobs register and expanded community-based natural resource management, embedding equity, participation and data-driven inclusion in national climate action.

At the national level, the UN supported a nine-month consultative process culminating in South Africa’s NDC 2035 submission, strengthening consensus on climate ambition, financing and technology. This inclusive process ensured that national climate commitments are participatory, investment-ready and aligned with a just transition.



### Scaling Low-Carbon Industrial Development and Clean Energy Solutions

The UN operationalised climate action through concrete investments and innovation pipelines, including:

- ▶ 3 feasibility studies for solar PV projects (10 MW, 15 MW, 4 MW) in key industrial zones
- ▶ 3 industrial stakeholder workshops and a national conference advancing sustainable energy systems
- ▶ The launch of a low-carbon industrial spaces project and multiple policy roundtables

These interventions translate climate ambition into bankable energy solutions and industrial decarbonisation pathways.



### Accelerating Climate Innovation and Inclusive Green Entrepreneurship

Through the Global Cleantech Innovation Programme, the UN supported 127 cleantech applications, with **41 innovators progressing to acceleration and 38 semi-finalists receiving intensive support**. The programme showed strong inclusivity, with **60% youth participation and 32.5% women entrepreneurs**, building a pipeline of scalable green businesses and reinforcing innovation-driven climate solutions.

**127** cleantech applications supported, with 41 innovators advancing to acceleration and 38 semi-finalists receiving intensive support



### Translating Climate Commitments into Jobs and Green Economy Opportunities

Through World Environment Day 2025, the UN helped catalyse tangible national outcomes, including the launch of a Waste-to-Wealth Programme (2025–2035) projected to **generate R60 billion and create 120,000 jobs**, alongside a national coastal adaptation plan and a large-scale anti-plastic pollution campaign. These outcomes reflect a shift from policy dialogue to job-rich, circular economy solutions linking environmental sustainability with inclusive economic growth.

**Waste-to-Wealth Programme (2025–2035) projected to generate R60 billion and create 120,000 jobs**

# A Cookbook that Brings Heritage, Resilience and Livelihoods to the Table

Roots & Recipes celebrates heritage and offers practical ways to boost livelihoods using indigenous crops such as sorghum, millet, Bambara groundnut and others. The United Nations, the South African Chefs Association (SACA), and the Gauteng Department of Agriculture and Rural Development recently launched *Roots & Recipes: Indigenous Foods for a Sustainable Future* – a book that celebrates South Africa’s indigenous cuisine while promoting food security, health and climate resilience. The launch took place at Nirox Sculpture Park in the Cradle of Humankind, bringing together chefs, farmers, policymakers and community leaders to honour the country’s diverse food heritage and explore its role in sustainable development.

Speaking at the launch, Vuyiswa Ramokgopa, the Gauteng Member of the Executive Committee, described the cookbook as “a partnership between government, chefs, farmers, scholars, and communities. It embodies the best of what we can achieve when we work together: a fusion of science and tradition, innovation and heritage.” She reflected on the deeper meaning behind the project, noting that “to reclaim our indigenous foods is to reclaim our independence. To cultivate what is ours, in our soil, in our kitchens, in our schools, is to plant the seeds of resilience.” Ms. Ramokgopa emphasised the book’s alignment with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Zero Hunger and Climate Action, adding: “We are saying that African

food is not primitive—it is prophetic. It holds the wisdom that can feed the future.” Nelson Muffuh, the UN Resident Coordinator in South Africa, highlighted the initiative as part of a broader UN effort to transform food systems and promote sustainable consumption and production.

“Roots and Recipes is a celebration of heritage and a practical guide for sustainable livelihoods,” said Mr. Muffuh. “The answers to hunger, malnutrition, economic empowerment, and even climate stress are often right under our feet in indigenous crops like sorghum, millet, Bambara groundnut, and wild greens.” He underscored three key reasons these foods matter: “**First, climate resilience – these crops are tough.** They thrive in heat and drought

when others fail. Second, nutrition – **they are rich in fibre and micronutrients.** Third, livelihoods – when we create demand for these foods, smallholders, especially women, win.”

The speakers called on South Africans, particularly youth, to embrace and innovate with indigenous foods. Ramokgopa urged young people to see the cookbook not just as a collection of recipes, but as a call to action: “Let this book inspire you not only to cook, but to innovate. To start food businesses, to experiment with recipes, to use social media to tell the stories of our land.” RC Muffuh echoed this sentiment, encouraging the public to “take this book home, try a recipe, share a meal, and make it trend. Let us turn heritage into a movement, one plate at a time.”

*Roots & Recipes: Indigenous Foods for a Sustainable Future* showcases traditional South African dishes from across the provinces, blending culinary storytelling with sustainability science. Developed in partnership with SACA, the project connects culture, climate and community, showing how food can drive both health and economic development.

As Ms. Ramokgopa concluded, “This is not an ending. It is a beginning – of a movement to eat consciously, to farm sustainably, and to celebrate proudly. Let us teach our children that umngqusho, morogo, and amadumbe are not the foods of poverty, but the foods of power.”



## 2.2 Key Challenges in the Implementation of the SDGs During 2025

Implementation of the Cooperation Framework in 2025 took place in a constrained global and national financing environment that affected both the scale and pace of programme delivery. Reductions in external development assistance, including funding cuts by key partners, created resource pressures across several United Nations programmes. As a result, the United Nations prioritised fewer high-impact interventions while postponing or scaling back selected activities. This ensured continuity of essential support but reduced the overall scope of implementation and slowed progress towards some planned results.

**Fiscal constraints across national and provincial governments further limited opportunities for co-financing and delayed jointly planned initiatives.** Capacity constraints within parts of the United Nations system also affected sustained participation in programme delivery and inter-agency coordination structures. Some agencies operate with few technical officers, limiting their engagement in collective planning and monitoring. To address this, the United Nations Country Team is exploring mechanisms to pool resources and strengthen coordination, monitoring and results management functions.

**The functionality of Results Groups also emerged as a key operational challenge.** In several instances, coordination structures were not consistently active or sufficiently engaged in collective planning and oversight. This limited the effectiveness of joint programming and reduced opportunities to leverage the comparative advantages of the United Nations system. Strengthening Results Groups through clearer leadership, stronger accountability and more regular engagement remains essential to advancing the One UN approach.

**In the health sector under Results Group 2 on Human Capital and Social Transformation,** implementation was further affected by funding reductions for HIV and tuberculosis programmes and delays in mobilising resources for new initiatives. These constraints created uncertainty around the continuity and scale-up of key services. At the

same time, outbreaks of mpox, measles, diphtheria and foodborne illnesses required the reallocation of technical and operational support to emergency response efforts. While necessary, this occasionally slowed progress on longer-term health system strengthening priorities.

**Alignment among multiple stakeholders, including national departments, provincial authorities, development partners and implementing agencies, also presented coordination challenges.** Integrating responses to communicable and non-communicable diseases while supporting National Health Insurance reforms required sustained policy dialogue and coordination across sectors.

In response, **the United Nations strengthened joint planning processes and prioritised catalytic interventions that could sustain progress despite resource constraints.** Engagement with international financing partners intensified to mobilise blended and catalytic financing, while technical support focused on high-impact, cost-effective interventions aligned with national priorities. Emergency preparedness and surveillance systems were also strengthened to ensure continuity of essential services and improve resilience to future shocks.

**Additional challenges persist in addressing drug use and substance abuse.** Evidence-based harm reduction services remain limited and are further affected by funding cuts and changing geopolitical dynamics. People who use drugs, including



those in correctional centres, often lack access to evidence-based treatment services such as opioid agonist maintenance therapy. Pilot initiatives represent important progress, but coverage remains limited relative to national need.

**Women who use drugs, including survivors of gender-based violence, continue to face stigma and limited access to tailored services.** Prevention and early intervention programmes for children in the education system also remain insufficiently scaled. The emergence of new psychoactive substances and synthetic drug mixtures has further complicated the national response, placing additional pressure on prevention and treatment systems.

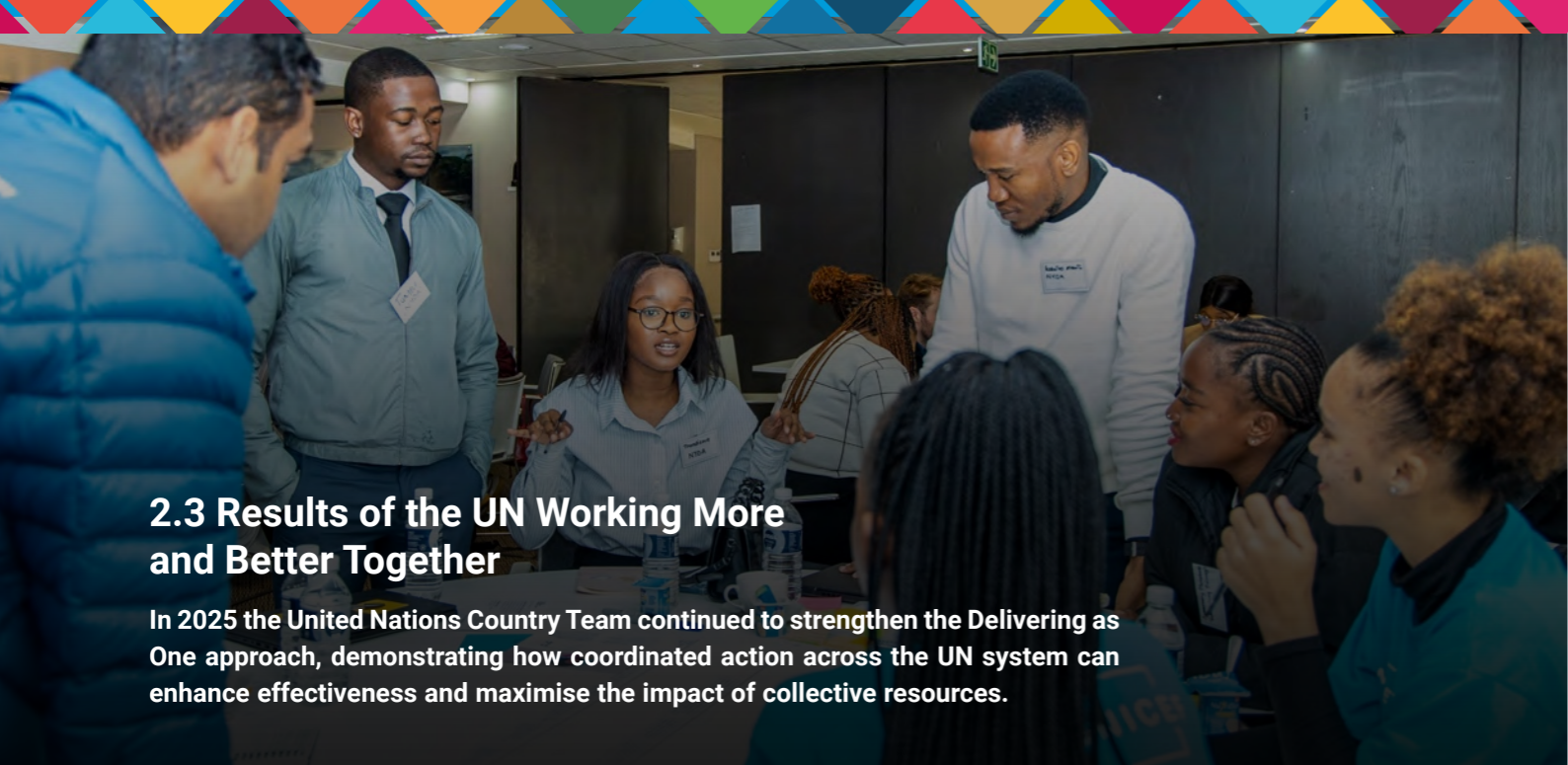
**Limited access to alternatives to incarceration for people who use drugs, such as treatment-based diversion programmes, remains another key challenge** within the criminal justice system. At the local level, Provincial Substance Abuse Forums and Local Drug Action Committees face capacity constraints in implementing the National Drug Master Plan, particularly in relation to prevention and harm reduction.

**Resource mobilisation presents a strategic opportunity for renewed focus and innovation.** As a middle-income country, South Africa is well placed

to explore more diversified and catalytic financing approaches that reflect its evolving development landscape while addressing persistent inequalities and complex challenges. There is significant potential to better leverage South Africa's role on global platforms such as the G20 and BRICS to strengthen partnerships, unlock new financing streams, and elevate its development priorities within the global agenda.

**The United Nations in South Africa is responding by strengthening its convening role to support governance reforms and institutional accountability systems.** Building on partnerships established during South Africa's G20 Presidency, the United Nations is supporting national efforts to strengthen anti-corruption systems, enhance transparency and reinforce accountability mechanisms. However, progress in certain governance reforms was slowed by competing national priorities and funding constraints, which delayed planned collaboration with national oversight institutions.

**These challenges highlight the importance of stronger coordination, strategic prioritisation and innovative financing mechanisms to ensure that the United Nations system can sustain high-impact support in complex middle-income contexts.**



## 2.3 Results of the UN Working More and Better Together

In 2025 the United Nations Country Team continued to strengthen the Delivering as One approach, demonstrating how coordinated action across the UN system can enhance effectiveness and maximise the impact of collective resources.

In 2025, the United Nations Country Team continued to strengthen the Delivering as One approach, demonstrating how coordinated action across the UN system can improve effectiveness and maximise the impact of collective resources.

A key example is the Joint Sustainable Development Goals Fund initiative supporting **South Africa's Just Energy Transition**. Through a single programme framework, the United Nations aligned its support around shared objectives, including equitable access to clean energy, inclusive economic participation and the promotion of decent work in emerging green sectors. This unified approach reduced duplication and enabled pooled financial and technical resources to be used more strategically.

The initiative brought together multiple dimensions of the transition, including gender equality, industrial development, labour market transformation and social protection. By combining complementary expertise across the United Nations system, the programme delivered a more coherent and comprehensive response to the economic and social implications of the energy transition.

The initiative also strengthened stakeholder engagement through joint multi-stakeholder dialogues involving government institutions, municipalities, private sector actors and civil society organisations. These dialogues helped shape policy discussions and identify practical pathways for expanding clean

energy access while ensuring that the transition remains inclusive and socially equitable.

Another example of effective collaboration was the multi-country programme on climate change, disability inclusion and intersectionality implemented between 2023 and 2025. In South Africa, the United Nations system worked with national partners to integrate disability inclusion into climate action and just transition planning.

Through joint technical support and policy dialogue, the United Nations helped develop guidance and diagnostic tools to support policymakers in integrating intersectional approaches into climate and development strategies. Engagement with organisations of persons with disabilities, labour unions and civil society organisations helped ensure that the perspectives of vulnerable groups informed policy design and implementation.

By pooling technical expertise and coordinating engagement with national partners, the United Nations strengthened policy coherence and avoided duplication. This approach reinforced the integration of disability inclusion into broader climate and development frameworks rather than treating it as a standalone issue. These initiatives demonstrate that, when the United Nations works as a coordinated system, it can deliver more integrated, inclusive and scalable solutions to complex development challenges.

# Business Operating System (BOS)

The United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in South Africa developed its first Business Operations Strategy (BOS) in 2017. That strategy expired in 2019, coinciding with the expiry of the extended United Nations Strategic Cooperation Framework. In February 2020, as part of the new Cooperation Framework, the UNCT in South Africa decided to develop a new BOS in line with the updated guidelines. The Operations Management Team (OMT) was tasked with leading the process and a BOS Task Team was established to support its development. The South Africa BOS 2.0 strategy is aligned with the current Cooperation Framework. The Resident Coordinator's Office (RCO) and 17 United Nations entities committed to working together in pursuit of the strategic priorities set out in the Cooperation Framework for 2020–2025, in support of the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in South Africa. Of the 24 listed participating entities, 8 are not participating in the BOS: UN-Habitat, WFP, UNESCO Regional Office, UNESCO South Africa, the World Bank, IFC, IFAD and IMF. The resident United Nations entities participating in the BOS, including the RCO, are FAO, UNDP, ILO, IOM, UNODC, OHCHR, UNAIDS, UNFPA, UNIC, UNICEF, UNEP, UNHCR, WHO, UNIDO, UN Women and UNDSS.

In 2025, through the implementation of the BOS, the UNCT achieved cost avoidance amounting to USD 800,000. This was accomplished under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator, with support from the OMT, which operated through five working groups. The Human Resources and Wellness Working Group focused on staff wellbeing and conducted salary surveys, while also providing counselling ser-

vices and health awareness programmes to staff members and their dependants in collaboration with the Wellness Group. The Administration and Finance Working Group focused on ensuring the efficient and effective management of the financial resources allocated to common services. The ICT Working Group focused on harmonizing ICT services, standards and processes across United Nations entities. The Procurement Working Group focused on establishing joint procurement services and identifying goods and services commonly required by agencies in support of programme implementation. These included security services, banking services and mobile phone services, among others.

In addition to the cost avoidance achieved, the Resident Coordinator led the establishment of a Building Management Committee, which has significantly strengthened oversight and coordination across common premises and services. The Common Services budget for 2025 was fully reset from previous years, creating a clearer and more accurate baseline. An overall budget reduction of 14 per cent for 2026 is also noted, reflecting deliberate efforts to improve value for money. Key budget changes include Metropark Building (-14 per cent), the United Nations Communications Group (-19 per cent), Staff Members Wellness (+4 per cent), and the Locally Cost-Shared Security Budget (LCSSB) (-25 per cent). Several important administrative and operational improvements were also achieved. These included updates to the long-term agreement list for goods and services, coordinated support for legacy value added tax (VAT) claims, implementation of the driver uniform policy, completion of data collection for the Daily Subsistence Allowance survey, and finalization of a new staff welcome and induction package.

The salary survey was completed, and essential wellness support was provided throughout 2025, a particularly challenging period marked by uncertainty and heightened staff anxiety resulting from workforce reductions within the United Nations in South Africa. While consensus on a joint internship programme has not yet been reached, meaningful progress is being made through a partnership with UNV, which continues to support the development of an innovative and future-ready United Nations workforce.

# UN Communications and Advocacy

## Communication Coverage of G20 Dialogues Ahead of the Summit

UNIC supported the communication strategy and visibility of the United Nations' engagement in G20 dialogues and preparatory meetings leading to the Summit. The office strengthened awareness of the UN's contributions to discussions on global economic governance, climate action, sustainable development and inclusive growth. Through media engagement, content development and event coverage, UNIC amplified the UN's presence and expertise, reinforcing multilateral cooperation and promoting shared global priorities among national and international audiences.

## United Nations @80 Advocacy and Public Engagement

UNIC led communications and advocacy efforts marking the United Nations' 80th anniversary. Activities included the development of opinion editorials, digital storytelling, video productions and event coverage to highlight the UN's impact in South Africa. The office supported the coordination and visibility of United Nations Day commemorations and related outreach initiatives, reinforcing the UN's legacy of promoting peace, human rights and sustainable development while encouraging continued multi-stakeholder collaboration.

## Media and Information Integrity Capacity Building

UNIC organized and facilitated a media training workshop focused on using artificial intelligence to combat misinformation and disinformation. The workshop strengthened the capacity of media practitioners and UN communicators to detect and counter false information through fact-checking tools, digital monitoring and responsible journalism practices. The initiative contributed to strengthening credible information ecosystems and promoting informed public discourse.

## Social Justice, Human Rights, and Inclusion Advocacy

UNIC supported communications and coordination efforts for several advocacy initiatives promoting social justice, human rights, gender equality, disability inclusion and anti-corruption awareness. Activities included communications support for the International Social Justice Conference, and UN commemorative days including International Human Rights Day, the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence campaign, International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, and outreach initiatives on disability inclusion and positive masculinity. Through multimedia storytelling, stakeholder engagement and digital campaigns, these activities amplified key UN advocacy messages and promoted inclusive participation in development processes.



## Digital Communications and Multimedia Content Development

UNIC expanded digital engagement through video production, social media campaigns and online storytelling to promote UN priorities and activities implemented by multiple UN agencies in South Africa. The office supported the development of multimedia products for advocacy campaigns, high-level visits, UN system coordination initiatives and public awareness efforts. These digital communication initiatives enhanced the reach and accessibility of UN messaging, particularly among youth and online audiences.

## NBA Africa – United Nations South Africa SDG Partnership Initiative

In June 2025, UNIC coordinated events for the partnership between NBA Africa and the United Nations in South Africa, leveraging sports and the creative industries to advance the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The initiative focused on youth empowerment by providing exposure to a global platform and coincided with Youth and Men's Health Month in South Africa. By leveraging NBA Africa's reach, the initiative demonstrated how sports and creative sectors can drive social change, promote inclusive growth, and improve youth development and health outcomes across the country.

## Launch of Indigenous Foods Cookbook Roots & Recipes: Indigenous Foods for a Sustainable Future

The launch of the cookbook *Roots & Recipes: Indigenous Foods for a Sustainable Future* marked a key milestone under the flagship projects of the UN Communications Group (UNCG). Developed through collaboration between the United Nations in South Africa, FAO and the South African Chefs Association, it celebrated South Africa's rich culinary traditions while offering practical guidance on sustainable livelihoods, nutrition and climate resilience. The initiative focused on cultural preservation, highlighting nutrient-dense, climate-smart ingredients and supporting local farmers, foragers and food entrepreneurs. Drawing on the expertise of partner chefs and media collaborators, the publication showed how indigenous foods can promote food security, economic empowerment and public engagement, while inspiring youth and communities to value and adopt South Africa's diverse culinary heritage. The book continues to shape dialogue on resilient foods, fostering awareness and action on sustainable diets and climate-smart agriculture across the country.

### Launch of the Mandela Quote Book and SDGs

The Mandela SDGs Business Book, launched in partnership with the United Nations in South Africa and the Nelson Mandela Foundation, celebrated Nelson Mandela's legacy while linking his words to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The publication aligns Madiba's messages with the SDGs, emphasising the critical role of business in driving inclusive, sustainable growth. With 2030 approaching, the booklet serves as a call to action for the private sector to embrace ethical leadership, social responsibility and equity, showing how organisations can be forces for positive change through corporate social investment and sustainable practices. The launch, timed with International Nelson Mandela Day on 18 July 2023, brought together stakeholders from government, civil society, youth groups, media and business. By connecting Mandela's enduring values to practical steps for SDG achievement, the publication inspired businesses and communities to take meaningful action towards building a just, sustainable and inclusive future.

### Training for Community Journalists and Content Creators: Intersection between GBV and HIV

Under the UN Communications Group (UNCG) – Equal Ground flagship project led by UN Women and UNAIDS, UNIC supported the Training for Community Journalists and Content Creators: Intersection between GBV and HIV in partnership with Fray College. Held during the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, the training equipped participants to communicate the intersection of GBV and HIV through ethical, youth-friendly TikTok content. Interactive sessions included storytelling techniques, hands-on filming and editing, group content creation and peer feedback, culminating in a one-month TikTok competition to promote engagement and innovation. The initiative highlighted the vital role of community journalists in shaping public narratives, raising awareness and influencing dialogue on HIV, GBV and broader health issues, while empowering young audiences with fact-based, survivor-centred messaging.

### Advancing Partnerships for SDG Impact and Inclusive Development in South Africa

Partnerships remained central to South Africa's sustainable development trajectory and to advancing both the 2030 Agenda and the National Development Plan (Vision 2030). In 2025, the United Nations in South Africa further strengthened its role as convener, connector and catalyst, deepening collaboration across government, the private sector, civil society and foundations to accelerate implementation of the Cooperation Framework.

In 2025, the UN also played a strategic role in supporting South Africa's engagement in Group of Twenty processes. Through its convening power and technical expertise, the UN facilitated dialogue between government, the private sector and development partners to align global economic discussions with national development priorities. This included advancing conversations on sustainable finance, inclusive growth and investment in key sectors, gender equality and positive masculinity, and environment and climate action, including food and agriculture.

The UN also deepened its partnership with national mechanisms addressing gender-based violence and femicide (GBVF), including through collaboration with the GBVF Response Fund. Through advocacy, resource mobilisation and private sector engagement, it supported efforts to position GBVF not only as a social concern, but also as a development and economic priority requiring coordinated investment. This included strengthening partnerships for prevention programmes and survivor-centred interventions, contributing to a more integrated and sustainable national response.

A major area of progress in 2025 was the launch of the South Africa Business Initiative for Impact (SABII), in partnership with Naspers and with the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE) as a strategic collaborator. SABII brought together government, private sector leaders and development partners around four priority pillars: energy transition, digital infrastructure, climate-smart agriculture and human capital development. Through SABII, the UN is advancing public-private collaboration that



directs investment towards sustainable, high-impact initiatives, directly contributing to South Africa's progress on the Sustainable Development Goals.

Engagement with civil society organisations, particularly youth and women's organisations, networks and structures, remained critical in 2025 to ensuring inclusive, participatory and responsive development processes. Through advocacy platforms and social dialogue, civil society partners helped advance gender equality, youth empowerment and social cohesion, while strengthening accountability and amplifying marginalised voices.

Strategic collaboration with foundations and thought leadership institutions continued to promote inclusive dialogue and ethical leadership. Partnerships with institutions such as the Stellenbosch University Centre for Social Justice, the Kgalema Motlanthe Foundation, the Desmond and Leah Tutu Legacy Foundation, and the Thabo Mbeki Foundation enabled the UN to support

high-level dialogue on governance, equity and social cohesion. These platforms reinforced constitutional values and strengthened South Africa's democratic discourse.

As emphasised by UN Resident Coordinator Nelson Muffuh, "sustainable development depends on partnerships that bring together leadership, resources, and a shared commitment to dignity, equality and inclusion."

Across these partnerships, the UN in South Africa demonstrated the value of collective action in addressing complex development challenges. Key results in 2025 included stronger multi-stakeholder platforms, closer alignment of partner programmes with national development priorities, enhanced coordination on GBVF response efforts, and greater integration of South Africa's priorities within global economic platforms such as the G20. These results reaffirm that strategic partnerships are essential to advancing peace, social justice and inclusive development at scale.

## 2.4 Evaluation and Lessons Learnt

Implementation of the Cooperation Framework in South Africa during 2025 generated valuable lessons to sharpen future programming, improve strategic alignment, and strengthen more effective, high-impact partnerships.

### First

First, strong **data and monitoring** systems are essential for effective development cooperation. Timely, disaggregated data enable evidence-based decision-making, strengthen accountability, and support adaptive programme management. Continued investment in national data systems is therefore critical to track progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals and ensure that interventions reach the most vulnerable.

### Second

Second, integrated approaches to **health programming** are necessary to address South Africa's evolving disease burden. The coexistence of HIV, tuberculosis and a rising prevalence of non-communicable diseases underscores the need for coordinated service delivery models. Integrated programmes linking HIV, tuberculosis, maternal health, mental health and non-communicable disease services proved more effective in strengthening health system resilience and improving health outcomes.

### Third

Third, innovative **financing** mechanisms are increasingly important in resource-constrained environments. Catalytic and pooled financing approaches can help sustain essential services while strengthening national systems. Aligning these mechanisms with national priorities increases sustainability and accelerates progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

### Fourth

Fourth, **emergency preparedness** must be embedded in routine systems. Recurrent outbreaks and climate-related health risks highlighted the need for stronger surveillance, contingency planning and emergency response capacities, particularly at subnational level. Integrating health security into routine health systems is critical to safeguarding development gains.

### Fifth

Fifth, **strong partnerships and policy coherence** amplify development impact. Collaboration with national institutions, regional organisations and development partners strengthened alignment with national strategies and enabled the United Nations to support major reforms, including implementation of National Health Insurance.



**Digital innovation** also emerged as a key enabler of accountability and system strengthening. Digital health tools, surveillance platforms and data dashboards improved monitoring, enhanced transparency and supported more effective decision-making.

At the same time, persistent **coordination challenges** highlight the need for stronger whole-of-government collaboration across sectors. In areas such as drug prevention and treatment, the limited availability of evidence-based harm reduction services and prevention programmes points to the need for greater policy attention and investment.

**Regional cooperation** also remains essential, particularly in addressing transnational organised crime and illicit drug trafficking. Strengthening cross-border collaboration and maritime monitoring can significantly improve national responses to these challenges.

Another operational lesson concerns the importance of **maintaining momentum after high-level engagements**. Discussions between the United Nations and national oversight institutions during 2025 identified several priority areas for collaboration, including anti-corruption initiatives, citizen participation and institutional capacity strengthening. Rapid translation of such discussions into formalised partnership agreements is essential to sustain trust and ensure implementation.

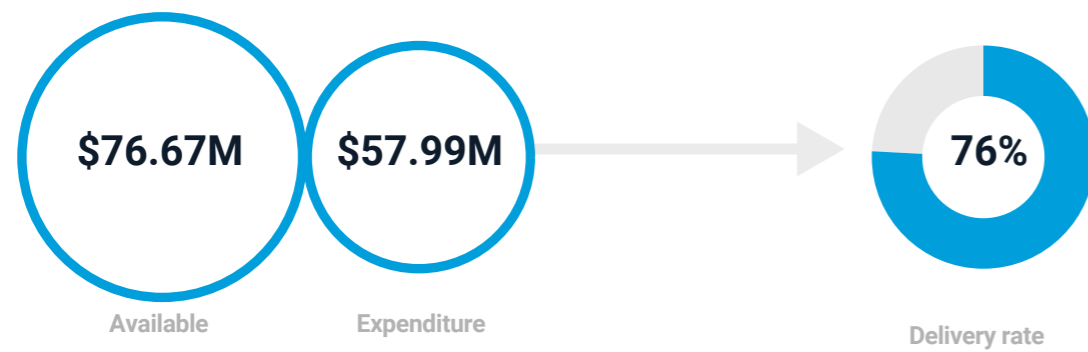
Finally, **the experience** of supporting global platforms hosted by South Africa, including its G20 Presidency, demonstrated the value of coordinated United Nations engagement. Delivering support collectively strengthens the strategic visibility of the United Nations and enhances its contribution to national and global development agendas.

**The lessons from 2025 reinforce that integrated approaches, stronger partnerships and sustained investment in systems strengthening are essential to accelerate progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals in complex middle-income contexts.**

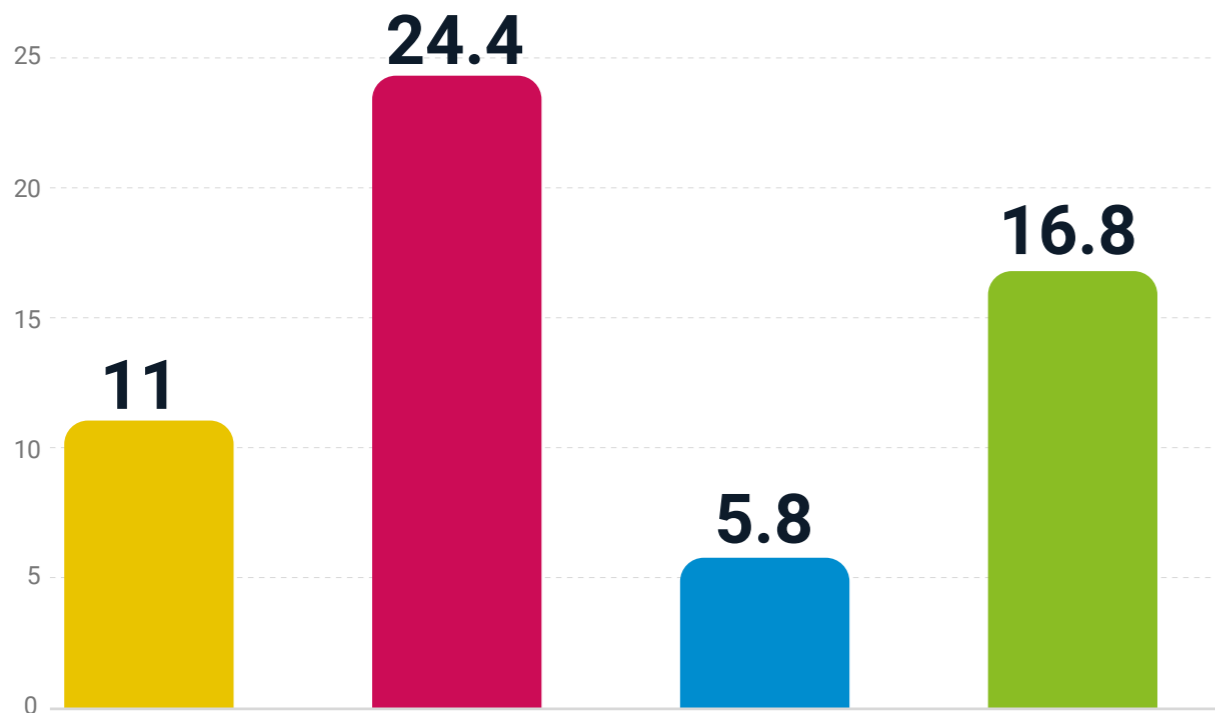
## 2.5 Financial Overview and Resource Mobilisation

### FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

# 2025



### Expenditure USD million



### Expenditure by pillar (%)



## RESOURCE MOBILISATION

Resource mobilisation in 2025 was marked by a significant gap between planned budgets and funds received, reflecting broader global funding constraints affecting the United Nations system. These geopolitical funding shifts also contributed to increased staff turnover across United Nations entities, affecting institutional continuity and programme delivery. In response, the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in South Africa took adaptive measures to mitigate these challenges and sustain programme implementation.

A key strategic shift in 2025 was the increased emphasis on innovative financing approaches and diversified funding streams. The UNCT strengthened partnerships beyond traditional donors, expanding collaboration with the private sector, financial institutions, foundations and other non-traditional partners. This multisectoral engagement reflects a deliberate move to leverage blended finance, catalytic investments and strategic alliances in support of national development priorities.

At the same time, the United Nations system reinforced its commitment to coherence and efficiency through enhanced joint programming and coordinated resource mobilisation. The UNCT adopted a more integrated Delivering as One approach, working collaboratively across agencies to optimise resources, reduce duplication and maximise collective impact. This included intensified efforts to mobilise pooled and thematic funding, including through the SDG Joint Fund, as a means of accelerating progress towards the SDGs.

Building on previous efforts, the UNCT continued to implement the Cooperation Framework Joint Financing and Resource Mobilisation Strategy, ensuring alignment between partner engagement and national priorities. The identification of strategic partners continued to be guided by shared values and programmatic synergies, with sustained emphasis on inclusive partnerships involving civil society, academia, think tanks and high-net-worth individuals.

Recognising its critical role in supporting the national development agenda, the UNCT further deepened engagement with the private sector in 2025. Strategic dialogues and convening platforms were expanded to better align corporate investment strategies with national and global sustainability objectives. These efforts aim to unlock additional resources, foster innovation and strengthen collective action in support of South Africa's development trajectory.

**Despite a constrained funding environment, strengthened partnerships, innovative financing efforts and a renewed focus on system-wide coherence positioned the United Nations to continue contributing meaningfully to the achievement of the SDGs in South Africa.**

# 3 UNCT Priority Pathways for 2026

Building on the conclusions of the UNCT Annual Retreat and lessons from the 2020–2025 Cooperation Framework cycle, the United Nations Country Team will prioritise five mutually reinforcing pathways in 2026, designed to accelerate SDG delivery, strengthen state capacity, and maximise collective impact under constrained global conditions.



## 1 Accelerating SDG Transitions through Focused, High-Impact Interventions

In 2026, the UNCT will sharpen its focus on a limited number of catalytic interventions that can deliver maximum impact in the shortest time, prioritising SDG acceleration and systems transformation. Emphasis will be placed on social cohesion and protection expansion, food security, human capital enhancement, and reducing violence and avoidable deaths, drawing on evidence and lessons from the Cooperation Framework evaluation. This will ensure that UN support remains strategic, results-oriented, and responsive to national priorities.

## 2 Strengthening State Capability and Localising the SDGs

The UNCT will deepen support to national, provincial, and municipal institutions, with a strong emphasis on state capability, ethics, accountability, and service delivery, including through the District Development Model. Collaboration with key institutions responsible for governance, oversight, and public administration will remain central to improving institutional effectiveness and rebuilding public trust, while localising SDG implementation across districts and communities.

## 3 Building Resilience, Anticipatory Action, and Climate Readiness

Recognising South Africa's exposure to climate, economic, and social shocks, the UNCT will prioritise resilience-building through early warning systems, anticipatory action, disaster risk management, and pandemic preparedness. Support to the Just Energy Transition and climate commitments, including nationally determined contributions, will be strengthened, positioning resilience as a core pillar of sustainable development rather than a parallel effort.

## 4 Mobilising Partnerships and Innovative Financing for Development

In response to tightening fiscal space and shifting donor landscapes, the UNCT will intensify efforts to mobilise innovative financing, blended finance, and private-sector partnerships. Leveraging the SDGs as an investment framework, the UN will use its convening power to crowd-in new partners, scale catalytic initiatives, and align financing flows with national development priorities, including social cohesion, green growth, and inclusive economic opportunities.

## 5 Delivering as One with Greater Visibility, Coherence, and Collective Accountability

The UNCT will reinforce Delivering as One by strengthening joint planning, collective accountability, and results reporting across agencies. Increased emphasis will be placed on making results more visible, enhancing UN credibility and access with government and partners, and ensuring that coordination mechanisms translate into tangible delivery. This includes disciplined prioritisation, effective use of UN assets, and stronger communication of collective achievements.”

The overall focus for 2026 will be to position South Africa to navigate emerging risks, safeguard development gains and accelerate progress towards the 2030 Agenda through integrated, forward-looking and scalable solutions.



## Acronyms

<b>ANC</b>	African National Congress	<b>NCD</b>	Non-Communicable Diseases
<b>AfCFTA</b>	African Continental Free Trade Area	<b>NDC 3.0</b>	Nationally Determined Contributions version 3.0 (climate change action plan)
<b>AU</b>	African Union	<b>NDP</b>	National Development Plan
<b>BIG</b>	Universal Basic Income Grant	<b>NHI</b>	National Health Insurance
<b>BMW</b>	Bayerische Motoren Werke (German automotive company)	<b>NPA</b>	National Prosecuting Authority
<b>BOS</b>	Business Operations Strategy	<b>NPC</b>	National Planning Commission
<b>BPeSA</b>	Business Process Enabling South Africa	<b>NSP</b>	National Strategic Plan
<b>CETM</b>	Critical Energy Transition Minerals	<b>NUM</b>	National Union of Mineworkers
<b>CSIR</b>	Council for Scientific and Industrial Research	<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>CSE</b>	Comprehensive Sexuality Education	<b>PET</b>	Polyethylene Terephthalate
<b>CSW</b>	Commission on the Status of Women	<b>PETCO</b>	PET Recycling Company
<b>DA</b>	Democratic Alliance	<b>PFMA</b>	Public Finance Management Act
<b>DBE</b>	Department of Basic Education	<b>P.L.A.Y</b>	Play, Learn, and Achieve with Youth (initiative/strategy name, can be context-specific)
<b>DHIS</b>	District Health Information System	<b>PPE</b>	Personal Protective Equipment
<b>DDM</b>	District Development Model	<b>PPP</b>	Public–Private Partnership
<b>DMRE</b>	Department of Mineral Resources and Energy	<b>PSEA</b>	Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
<b>DNA</b>	Deoxyribonucleic Acid	<b>RDP</b>	Reconstruction and Development Programme
<b>DoH</b>	Department of Health	<b>SADC</b>	Southern African Development Community
<b>ECD</b>	Early Childhood Development	<b>SADHS</b>	South African Demographic and Health Survey
<b>EGRP</b>	Early Grade Reading Programme	<b>SALGA</b>	South African Local Government Association
<b>ESKOM</b>	Electricity Supply Commission (South Africa’s public electricity utility)	<b>SAMSA</b>	South African Maritime Safety Authority
<b>EU</b>	European Union	<b>SANEF</b>	South African National Editors’ Forum
<b>Ewseta</b>	Energy and Water Sector Education and Training Authority	<b>SAPS</b>	South African Police Service
<b>EPWP</b>	Expanded Public Works Programme	<b>SARS</b>	South African Revenue Service
<b>GBV</b>	Gender Based Violence	<b>SOE</b>	State-Owned Enterprise
<b>GCSIS</b>	Government Communication and Information System	<b>SOP</b>	Standard Operating Procedures
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product	<b>SRHR</b>	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
<b>GIZ</b>	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (German Agency for International Cooperation)	<b>Stats SA</b>	Statistics South Africa
<b>GNU</b>	Government of National Unity	<b>STEM</b>	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
<b>HEIF</b>	Higher Education Innovation Fund	<b>TIKO model</b>	Trust, Information, Knowledge, Ownership (youth engagement model – e.g., for HIV prevention)
<b>HIV</b>	Human Immunodeficiency Virus	<b>TVET</b>	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
<b>ICT</b>	Information and Communication Technology	<b>TVWS</b>	TV White Spaces
<b>IDP</b>	Integrated Development Plans	<b>UCT</b>	University of Cape Town
<b>IEC</b>	Independent Electoral Commission	<b>UHC</b>	Universal Health Coverage
<b>IRMSA</b>	Institute of Risk Management South Africa	<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>JET</b>	Just Energy Transition	<b>UNCG</b>	UN Communications Group
<b>LEAN</b>	Learn, Engage, Apply, Network (often used in organizational efficiency models)	<b>UNSDCF</b>	UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
<b>LTSM</b>	Learning and Teaching Support Materials	<b>USA</b>	United States of America
<b>MEC</b>	Member of the Executive Council	<b>USAID</b>	United States Agency for International Development
<b>MoU</b>	Memorandum of Understanding	<b>VNR</b>	Voluntary National Review
<b>MTDP</b>	Medium Term Development Plan	<b>VLR</b>	Voluntary Local Review
<b>NAACAM</b>	National Association of Automotive Component & Allied Manufacturers	<b>WASH</b>	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene



UNITED NATIONS  
SOUTH AFRICA



# ANNUAL RESULTS REPORT 2025

[southafrica.un.org](https://southafrica.un.org)

@UNinSouthAfrica

