UNITED NATIONS SOUTH AFRICA COOPERATION FRAMEWORK 2026-2030

REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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LIST OF ACRONYMS/ABBREVIATIONS

AU	African Union
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CA	Country Analysis
COGTA	Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DFI	Development Finance Institutions
DIRCO	Department of International Relations and Cooperation
DPME	Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation
DPSA	Department of Public Service and Administration
EWSs	Early Warning Systems
FACE	Fund Authorization and Certificate of Expenditures
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEF	Global Environment Facility
HACT	Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IOM	International Organization for Migration
JWPs	Joint Workplans
LNOB	Leave No One Behind
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MEAs	Multilateral Environmental Agreements
MHPSS	Mental Health and Psychosocial Support
MSME	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
MTDP	Medium-Term Development Plan
NBSAPs	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans
NDCs	Nationally Determined Contributions (under the Paris Agreement)
NDP	National Development Plan
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
RBM	Results-based Management
ReLISA	Resilient Livelihoods Investment Strategy for Africa
SBAA	Standard Basic Assistance Agreement
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
ToC	Theory of Change
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UN	United Nations
UN WOMEN	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNCDF	United Nations Capital Development Fund
UNCF	United Nations Cooperation Framework
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNRCO	United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
UNU-WIDER	United Nations University World Institute for Development Economics Research
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
VNR	Voluntary National Review
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

Foreword

by the UN Resident Coodinator

Mr Nelson Muffuh
Resident Coordinator
United Nations South Africa

It is with deep appreciation that I acknowledge the Government of South Africa, our development partners, civil society, the private sector, academia, and the United Nations Country Team for their steadfast commitment and collaborative spirit in shaping this new Cooperation Framework. This Framework is grounded in the aspirations articulated in South Africa's Mid-term Development Plan and National Development Plan, informed by our comprehensive Country Analysis, and aligned with the UN's future-oriented priorities, including the Pact for the Future.

This new phase is defined not only by the identification of transformational pathways, but also by a deliberate reduction in the number of priorities and outcomes. By focusing on fewer, more strategic objectives, we can deliver results in an integrated manner that drives systemic change and addresses the root causes of poverty, inequality, exclusion, and vulnerability. Our approach moves beyond fragmented, project-based support, concentrating collective capacities on areas where joint action can achieve the greatest impact.

A defining feature of this Framework is the integration of foundational interventions that serve as the engine room for progress. We are strengthening policy coherence and alignment across sectors, harnessing robust data systems to inform action and measure progress, and empowering local institutions and communities to ensure solutions are responsive and tailored. To propel transformation and maximise sustainable development impact, we are also advancing a more strategic approach to financing. This includes supporting the development of Integrated National Financing Frameworks, encouraging the use of blended finance, and mobilising domestic resources so that South Africa can unlock new opportunities and sustain progress towards its national goals.

As we embark on this journey, we do so with a clear-eyed understanding of both the challenges and the immense opportunities that lie ahead. Economic headwinds, climate risks, and persistent inequalities remind us of the urgency of our mission, but they also inspire innovation, resilience, and renewed solidarity. Our commitment to inclusivity is unwavering: we will work tirelessly to ensure that youth, women, and all those who have been marginalised are not only included but empowered to shape the country's future.

Internally, the UN system is undergoing its own transformation through UN80 and UN 2.0, enhancing efficiency, agility, and relevance. By embedding data, digital solutions, innovation, and foresight across our programmes, we are better equipped to offer future-ready support that responds to the evolving needs of South Africa.

Implementation is anchored in national coordination and accountability mechanisms, with a deliberate focus on established platforms such as the Inter-Ministerial Committee on the SDGs. This approach reinforces national ownership, avoids parallel structures, and strengthens a whole-of-government and whole-of-society response.

As Resident Coordinator, I am personally inspired by the resilience and ambition of South Africa's people and institutions. This Framework is not just a roadmap, but a shared commitment to building a future where every person in South Africa can thrive. I invite all partners and stakeholders to remain actively engaged, bringing their expertise, passion, and innovation to this transformative endeavour. Together, with an integrated United Nations Country Team efficiently playing its part, we will harness our collective strengths to realise the country's aspirations and build a more inclusive, resilient, and prosperous future for all.

Joint Statement of Commitment

The Government of South Africa and the United Nations Country Team reaffirm their commitment to implementing the Cooperation Framework 2026–2030, building on their longstanding partnership.

The Framework provides a unified strategy for joint efforts, aligned with the National Development Plan: Vision 2030 and the Medium-Term Development Plan. It is structured around three interconnected pillars:

1. Inclusive Growth and Jobs – fostering economic growth, employment, social inclusion, and reducing poverty and inequality.

2. Accountable Governance – improving governance, human rights, safety, and accountability.

3. Resilience and Sustainability – advancing environmental sustainability, climate action, and risk management.

We acknowledge the inclusive and participatory process involving government, civil society, the private sector, labour, and development partners, ensuring national ownership and alignment with the SDGs.

Through this partnership, we commit to mobilising expertise, resources and innovation to deliver transformative results and build a more prosperous, equitable and resilient South Africa.

Ms Maropene Ramokgopa
Minister in The Presidency for Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation
Government of South Africa

Date: 10/07/2026

Mr Nelson Muffuh
Resident Coordinator
United Nations South Africa

Date: 10/07/2026

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for South Africa has been developed through an iterative, inclusive, and consultative process involving a wide range of stakeholders. This process included multiple consultations, workshops, and feedback sessions with government departments and state entities, organized labour, organized business representing the private sector, civil society, and development partners. These efforts ensured that the Cooperation Framework aligns with the development priorities and aspirations of the South African people, promotes national ownership, and is aligned with national, continental, and global goals.

In parallel, high poverty levels, a skills mismatch between education outcomes and labour market transitions, and income inequality remain among the country's most significant challenges. In addition, infrastructure inefficiencies, slow economic growth, and high levels of violent crime, especially against women and children, continue to pose serious concerns. The Country Analysis (CA) undertaken by the UN highlights capacity gaps, implementation deficiencies, tighter fiscal constraints, and government expenditure leakages, which hinder progress in reducing inequality, unemployment, and poverty.

In response to these challenges, the Cooperation Framework 2026–2030 reflects a strong joint commitment by the UN and South Africa to address poverty, unemployment, income inequality, service delivery constraints, the impacts of climate change, governance challenges, socioeconomic and environmental shocks, violence, corruption, and criminality, as well as the protection of human rights as enshrined in the Constitution. South Africa, as an upper-middle-income country, has a diverse and integrated economy, relatively strong infrastructure, and remains a significant economic hub in Africa.

The country has made progress towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union's Agenda 2063 through expanded social protection, universal healthcare initiatives, early childhood development programmes, and strengthened educational support. However, these advances remain uneven and are undermined by entrenched structural challenges, including persistently high unemployment, widening inequality, weak economic growth, and fiscal pressures that constrain the scale and sustainability of progress.

United Nations South Africa Cooperation Framework 2026-2030

"The Cooperation Framework 2026–2030 reflects a strong joint commitment by the UN and South Africa"

At the same time, opportunities exist in harnessing natural resources, diversifying the economy, advancing digital transformation, and fostering innovation. The country's young population and abundant natural and mineral resources provide a strong foundation for sustainable development and growth, supported by its human capital. Implementing the Medium-Term Development Plan (2024–2029), the Just Energy Transition Implementation Plan, and the Climate Mitigation Action Plan can generate employment through the clean energy transition and green technology value addition, strengthen resilience in the disaster management, food, health, and education sectors, and support biodiversity conservation.

Digital connectivity remains essential across all socioeconomic sectors. Expanding access for youth, women, and marginalized groups can create opportunities in education[1], healthcare, agriculture, entrepreneurship, and employment, ensuring that no one is left behind.

1 Basic education refers to early childhood development (early learning/ ECCE), basic education, and special needs education

These efforts should be supported by policies that safeguard data sovereignty and digital rights and protect labour rights in the evolving digital economy.

These national priorities are reflected in the three main goals of the National Development Plan (NDP) Vision 2030, namely to eradicate poverty, reduce income and opportunity inequality, and decrease unemployment, with 2030 serving as the central target guiding these objectives. This vision is further operationalised through the three strategic areas of the Medium-Term Development Plan (MTDP), anchored in economic growth and job creation, social protection, and building a capable state. The Cooperation Framework 2026–2030 is aligned with and supports these national frameworks, with a focus on socioeconomic inclusion, strengthened governance, and enhanced resilience.

Within this strategic alignment, the Theory of Change (ToC) for the Cooperation Framework 2026–2030 adopts a comprehensive and inclusive approach to sustainable development. It addresses the root causes of unemployment, inequality, exclusion, and poverty and seeks to establish conditions for growth, safety, resilience, and prosperity, particularly for vulnerable groups, including youth and persons with disabilities. It envisages a future in which strategic actions in governance, economic diversification, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability foster improved living conditions, equal opportunities, access to quality services, and a safe environment for all.

This approach includes strengthening governance and institutions, empowering communities, building resilience, managing natural resources sustainably, and promoting inclusive economic growth and decent employment. The ToC emphasizes the interconnections across these areas and promotes a systematic and holistic approach, encouraging sector-wide efforts to reinforce progress and generate synergies.

The Cooperation Framework sets out how to achieve the long-term goal of enabling people in South Africa to lead prosperous and healthy lives within a safe and cohesive society that values environmental sustainability. This will be achieved through a set of mutually reinforcing outcomes aligned with three interconnected Strategic Priorities:

1. Supporting economic growth, job creation, social inclusion, and addressing structural poverty and inequality.

2. Promoting good governance, accountability, rights and tackling safety issues.

3. Building resilience via sustainability and risk preparedness.

These priorities are aligned with the 2030 Agenda and the country's development goals, as defined through consultations with key stakeholders. Implementation will involve results groups and relevant partners, with an emphasis on collaboration, inclusivity, and a whole-of-society approach to ensure effective and sustainable outcomes.

In support of this, UN agencies will provide technical assistance in areas such as policy development, private sector engagement, capacity building, and data systems. This support will contribute to economic transformation, resource mobilization, and reform processes. The UN's expertise spans governance, transparency, justice, civic participation, social protection, gender equality, and community engagement, drawing on local presence, global experience, and established networks.

To ensure accountability and alignment with the Cooperation Framework 2026-2030's objectives, the UN and its partners will rely on existing national mechanisms rather than establish new joint structures. This approach reduces duplication, improves efficiency, and reinforces national ownership. The UN Country Team will oversee the Cooperation Framework and develop Joint Workplans for each strategic priority. Outcomes will be supported by Results Groups co-led by a government representative and a UN agency.

Progress will be tracked by a Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Group, while a Cross-Cutting Thematic Group will focus on engagement with marginalized communities and the recognition of diversity. Monitoring of the Cooperation Framework's implementation will draw on existing national coordination mechanisms, including the Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), and the African Union's Agenda 2063 reporting structures, all of which involve civil society, the private sector, academia, and other non-state actors.

To ensure meaningful and continuous engagement of marginalized groups and civil society in implementation and monitoring, thematic groups will organize regular engagements with vulnerable populations. These will include multi-stakeholder review platforms and feedback mechanisms that intentionally include women, youth, persons with disabilities, rural communities, and other vulnerable groups.

Finally, capacity-building initiatives for community-based and grassroots organizations, supported through specific agency programmes, together with inclusive data systems and community monitoring tools, will strengthen their capacity for engagement. These measures will enhance transparency, accountability, and participation in monitoring the Cooperation Framework and ensure that the perspectives of marginalized groups are reflected throughout implementation.

1. COUNTRY PROGRESS TOWARDS 2030 AGENDA

1.1 Country Context

South Africa's path to sustainable development requires addressing historical legacies, persistent economic and social challenges, environmental pressures, and governance constraints. As an upper-middle-income and resource-rich country, it holds significant potential for progress while continuing to face substantial development challenges.

The country promotes multilateralism and African integration through its participation in the African Union, the G20, BRICS, and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). However, regional instability, weak infrastructure linkages, and unequal trade benefits constrain regional integration and its potential contribution to the SDGs. Rising tariffs in the United States and protectionist policies in other developed economies further affect South Africa's export prospects. Climate change poses growing risks to human and environmental well-being, while the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) and artificial intelligence present both challenges and opportunities.

Since the beginning of the democratic era in 1994, South Africa has remained among the most unequal societies globally, with a Gini coefficient of 0.68. This reflects significant disparities in income and asset ownership, as well as the legacy of economic dualism and marginalisation rooted in apartheid. Many structural inequalities persist. The spatial legacy of apartheid continues to shape socioeconomic outcomes, with townships and former homelands experiencing long-standing underdevelopment and weak economic integration. Absolute poverty, measured as the share of the population living below the lower-bound poverty line, declined from 51% in 2006 to 36.4% in 2011, but increased again to 40% in 2016[2].

At the same time, **since 1994, the social sector has recorded notable gains, including reductions in maternal and infant mortality and improvements in life expectancy.** Currently, more than 25.4 million South Africans, approximately 40.1% of the population[3], currently rely on social grants, which play an important role in cushioning poverty. Effective coverage with at least one social protection benefit reached 63.4% in 2022, above the global average of 52%.

Nevertheless, significant gaps remain. **The Child Support Grant remains below the food poverty line, and 28.8% of children under five experience long-term undernutrition.** Secondary school completion reached 37.6% in 2022, while youth literacy and primary school enrolment rates remain a concern. Furthermore, poverty remains a significant issue, particularly in rural areas and among women- and child-headed households. The rise in poverty rates in South Africa in recent years has been driven by slow economic growth, structural challenges, and the COVID-19 pandemic[4].

Despite the presence of strong democratic institutions, governance weaknesses, including corruption and state capture, have eroded public trust. Local governments face capacity and financial constraints that affect service delivery and development planning aligned with the SDGs. In addition, limited fiscal space, high debt-servicing costs, and governance weaknesses constrain investment in infrastructure and the advancement of inclusive policies, thereby slowing progress towards the SDGs.

Following the May 2024 elections, a Government of National Unity was formed after the African National Congress (ANC) share of the vote declined from 55.6% in 2019 to 40.2% in 2024[5]. The loss of a parliamentary majority at the national level and the subsequent formation of a coalition Government of National Unity contribute to a broader trend characterized by the prevalence of coalition governments at provincial and local levels. These coalitions, often composed of parties with divergent priorities, have at times experienced legislative and policy deadlocks, contributing to political uncertainty; however, they also offer grounds for optimism regarding more collaborative forms of governance.

Gini coefficient
0.68

Average annual GDP growth
0.7%

Unemployment rate (Q2 2025)
33.2%

Number of days without load-shedding (February 2026)
260

2 Sulla and Zikhali(2018). Overcoming Poverty and Inequality in South Africa: An Assessment of Drivers, Constraints and Opportunities (English). Washington, D.C.: World Bank Group. http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/530481521735906 53
3 GHS 2023 P0318
4 DBE NSC Report, 2015-2021
5 https://results.elections.org.za/dashboards/npe/

South Africa's economy is characterised by a dual structure comprising a competitive formal sector and a subsistence-oriented informal sector. The formal sector dominates finance, mining, manufacturing, and services and is largely capital-intensive, skills-dependent, and urban-based. The informal sector, including street vendors, informal traders, and smallholder farmers in townships and rural areas, supports millions of livelihoods but remains under-protected, under-financed, and weakly integrated into formal value chains. Over the past decade, average economic growth has remained below 1%, with GDP expanding by around 0.7% annually. This reflects low investment, external shocks, political-economic factors, and entrenched structural constraints, including high market concentration, barriers to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMMEs), deteriorating infrastructure, a declining manufacturing base, and reliance on skills-intensive services. Skills mismatches further reinforce income inequality.

In response, **Operation Vulindlela[6] seeks to stimulate economic recovery through reforms aimed at strengthening competitiveness, productivity, and investment in key sectors** such as energy, transport, data services, and local service delivery, including water, in line with the 2023 National Planning Commission action plan. While these reforms are expected to support growth, emerging challenges, including high tariffs in major export markets, continue to pose risks for sectors such as agro-processing and automotive manufacturing, which are important for value addition and job creation. Current growth levels remain insufficient to significantly reduce unemployment and poverty, a situation compounded by weak gross fixed capital formation, which averaged around 16% of GDP between 2012 and 2024[7], largely due to subdued private sector investment amid policy uncertainty and a constrained economic outlook.

The country continues to face a structural unemployment crisis, particularly among youth and women. The labour market is characterised by low absorption capacity, limited job creation, and persistent mismatches between educational outcomes and labour demand. As of the second quarter of 2025, the unemployment rate stood at 33.2%, while youth unemployment increased from 36.9% in the first quarter of 2015 to 46.1% in the first quarter of 2025[8]. This trend reflects deteriorating conditions for young people, who represent a significant share of the population, with 36.5% aged between 15 and 35. This potential demographic dividend is therefore under pressure. Young people who are Not in Employment, Education, or Training (NEET) face considerable barriers, including high levels of economic exclusion, unemployment, and poverty. In the second quarter of 2025, 43.5% of South Africans aged 15–34 were not in employment, education, or training. This increases risks of marginalisation and social instability and may have implications for national security.

In parallel, **the country faces growing environmental and climate-related risks,** including energy poverty, water scarcity, and increased frequency of droughts, floods, storms, and wildfires, particularly in KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape. The 2022 World Bank report[9] estimates that such events caused economic damage of approximately USD 9 billion between 1952 and 2019. Urban areas are increasingly affected by flooding and by electricity and water shortages linked to ageing infrastructure. Continued reliance on coal-based energy contributes to high emissions, and although a Just Energy Transition is underway[10], the pace and scale of transformation remain critical challenges.

Civil unrest in Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal provinces in July 2021 underscored ongoing socioeconomic and political challenges, resulting in approximately 350 deaths, R50 billion in damages, and the loss of 2 million jobs[11]. Despite progress in strengthening democratic institutions, South Africa continues to face structural problems, particularly in service delivery. Poor-quality and limited services have exposed governance weaknesses and eroded public trust.

Local governments face low revenue collection, high debt, inefficient procurement, limited capacity to spend, and mismanagement of financial resources, all of which adversely affect service delivery and infrastructure maintenance. As a legacy of the past, South Africa continues to experience a disconnect between housing delivery and human settlements, on the one hand, and investments in land use, transport, healthcare facilities, and municipal infrastructure, on the other. As a result, the spatial development fabric has remained largely unchanged over time.

South Africa has made notable progress in gender equity laws and policies; however, patriarchy and gender-based violence (GBV) remain widespread. Data from Statistics South Africa show that women are disproportionately affected by poverty, unemployment, and informal sector employment. High levels of GBV and femicide threaten societal well-being and hinder progress on gender equality. Displaced populations, such as asylum seekers and refugees, face greater risks, including insecurity, limited access to documentation, and challenges in integrating into the formal economy and social services.

Severe weather patterns have caused extensive damage and displacement, especially in the Eastern Cape, where children face increased risks of sexual abuse and exploitation. Factors such as family separation, inadequate shelter, weak child protection systems, and economic hardship intensify these risks. In temporary settings, children's safety is often uncertain, affecting their mental health and increasing exposure to exploitation[12]. Social workers need to adopt proactive measures to safeguard children and prevent abuse, with sustained efforts helping to restore safety and stability.

People relying on social grants
40.1% of the population
25.5M

Social protection coverage (2022)
63.4%
of the population

Secondary school completion (2022)
37.6%

While the country continues to face these challenges, including GBV, high homicide rates, general crime, and corruption, it remains committed to non-racialism, democracy, and equal rights for all, including women and LGBTQI+ persons. South Africa is currently home to approximately 250,000 refugees and asylum seekers from various countries. In the aftermath of COVID-19, xenophobic vigilantism and violence have persisted and remain a cause for concern. In 2025, members of Operation Dudula, an anti-migrant organisation, sought to prevent migrants from accessing health and education services in parts of the province of Gauteng and the city of Durban[13], urging them to seek medical care and schooling in their countries of origin. The Government has stated that discrimination in access to public services is unconstitutional and prohibited under South African law.

South Africa's development landscape is shaped by strong institutions and significant natural and human resources. However, persistent poverty and inequality, weak implementation capacity, and governance challenges, despite a vibrant civil society and strong constitutional oversight bodies, continue to hinder progress. Understanding these structural and demographic dynamics remains essential for assessing progress towards the SDGs and for designing interventions that are transformative, inclusive, and grounded in local realities.

6 Operation Vulindlela, a partnership between the Presidency and National Treasury, aims to accelerate economic growth through reforms. The first phase focused on electricity, freight logistics, water, telecommunications, and visas for their potential to boost investment, competitiveness, and employment. The second phase continues with reforms for faster, inclusive, and lasting progress.

7 SARB Quarterly Bulletin June 2025

8 Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) released by Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) for Q2:2025. https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0211/P02112ndQuarter2025.pdf

9 https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents/reports/documentdetail/099742311072334460

10 Country Analysis 2025: South Africa

11 https://www.sanews.gov.za/south-africa/sahrc-releases-july-2021-unrest-report

12 Shayamano, M. (2025). Vulnerability of Internally Displaced Children to Sexual Abuse During Climate-Change-Related Disasters in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa: A Social Work Perspective. TWIST, 20(2), 336-342.

13 https://www.medicalbrief.co.za/activists-deny-migrants-access-to-hospitals-and-clinics/

1.2 National Vision for Sustainable Development

South Africa's national vision for sustainable development is anchored in its commitment to transformative socioeconomic justice, inclusive growth, and environmental sustainability. This vision is shaped by the Constitution, the accession to and ratification of international treaties and conventions, the NDP 2030, and international commitments to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its SDGs, as well as the African Union's Agenda 2063: *The Africa We Want*. South Africa envisages a prosperous, equitable, and just society in which all people, regardless of race, gender, or geographic location, have the capabilities and opportunities to live dignified lives and reach their full potential, without leaving anyone behind. The country's sustainable development vision is rooted in:

- Human dignity, equality, and freedom, as enshrined in the Constitution.
- Social solidarity and a capable developmental state that works in partnership with citizens.
- The principles of environmental stewardship, intergenerational equity, and inclusive prosperity.
- The drive to overcome the triple challenges of poverty, unemployment, and inequality, which are seen as structural and intergenerational.

The NDP 2030 serves as South Africa's primary long-term development blueprint and the basis for aligning national development efforts with the SDGs and Agenda 2063. It articulates a future in which:

"South Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in our diversity. We seek to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality by 2030 through inclusive and sustainable economic growth, capable institutions, and active citizenry."

In addition, the country views the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 as complementary and mutually reinforcing and integrates them through:

The NDP, which is the overarching strategic framework.

The MTDP (2024 -2029), which translates the NDP and SDGs into five-year implementation plans and indicators, also prioritizing economic growth, poverty reduction, and promotes state ethical standards.

Spatial planning, National Spatial Development Framework (NSDF), Spatial Planning and Land Use Management Act (SPLUMA).

The District Development Model (DDM), which localises the SDGs and NDP through spatially targeted, integrated development plans at the district level.

Implementation of the NDP faces multiple challenges, including global and domestic political tensions, crime, corruption, and capacity constraints in translating high-level policies into effective service delivery. Nevertheless, the NDP remains the central blueprint guiding national ambitions and is supported by the MTDP 2024–2029, which seeks to advance progress towards the 2030 targets. Over the next five years, the focus will be on promoting inclusive growth and job creation through a whole-of-society approach involving all levels of government, economic sectors, and social actors.

The three strategic priorities are driving inclusive growth and job creation, reducing poverty and the cost of living, and building a capable, ethical, and developmental state. These priorities are interconnected and mutually reinforcing. Social protection plays a central role in preventing and alleviating poverty and protecting vulnerable groups. A capable state depends on effective governance, regulation, oversight of network industries, and law enforcement.

The Cooperation Framework provides an opportunity for the UN system to support a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach, which is essential for effective MTDP implementation and improved coordination and execution. The Presidency, including the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME), is expected to be strengthened to enhance oversight of policy, planning, and implementation and to improve the efficiency of the cluster system. Central government will ensure robust intergovernmental coordination.

As outlined in the MTDP, organisational reforms are required to improve service delivery and reduce duplication through clearer roles, rationalisation, and process improvements. Sectoral reforms are intended to support inclusive growth, increase competition, and stimulate investment and job creation. Local governments require performance improvements and legislative reforms to strengthen capacity. Addressing governance, funding, and service delivery challenges related to State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) is critical to align them with strategic objectives and ensure fulfilment of their developmental mandates.

The Government needs to intensify efforts to address crime and violence through coordinated action across investigation, prosecution, and adjudication. Stronger interdepartmental coordination is required to reduce procedural barriers and improve implementation. Given fiscal constraints, prioritisation of resources is necessary, particularly to protect social spending and support inclusive growth and employment, potentially through the discontinuation of underperforming programmes rather than through broad-based austerity measures. Engagement with the private sector through effective public–private partnerships (PPPs) and reform initiatives such as Operation Vulindlela remains important in creating conditions conducive to investment and inclusive growth. The Government of National Unity's Basic Minimum Programme of Priorities should therefore focus on strategic, high-impact interventions.

Strengthening strategies, building efficient systems, and partnering with non-state actors are essential and are grounded in NDP principles. This requires translating long-term goals into medium-term priorities, focusing on measurable outcomes that drive societal progress, and establishing clear metrics for evaluation and ongoing monitoring. Balanced trade-offs are necessary, as pursuing all objectives simultaneously is not feasible.

1.3 Progress towards the SDGs

South Africa has demonstrated sustained political commitment to the 2030 Agenda since its adoption in 2015 and has integrated the SDGs into national, provincial, and local planning processes through the NDP 2030.

South Africa's efforts to eliminate poverty by 2030 have so far achieved only limited progress. While improvements in healthcare, education, and housing have contributed to reductions in multidimensional poverty, deep-rooted structural challenges persist. Constraints related to local human capital development, equitable access to land, and the creation of sustainable livelihoods continue to constitute significant barriers to progress. Addressing land disputes is particularly critical, given historical injustices that have shaped patterns of resource access; a fair and effective land reform process is therefore central to advancing justice, economic empowerment, and community development. Without sustained progress on land reform, poverty reduction efforts are unlikely to succeed.

The country has submitted two Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs), in 2019 and 2025, to monitor progress and to promote stakeholder participation. The 2025 VNR highlights efforts to improve conditions for vulnerable populations through social protection measures, universal healthcare, early childhood development, and education support.

In basic education, including early learning programmes, primary and secondary schooling, and special needs education, access has improved, but significant quality issues remain, particularly in reading skills. These challenges are linked to poor infrastructure, shortages of learning materials, unqualified or poorly qualified teachers, overcrowded classrooms, and disparities in educational resources across provinces. South Africa's National Statement of Commitment adopted at the Transforming Education Summit in 2022 outlines the country's commitments to accelerate progress towards SDG 4 (quality education).

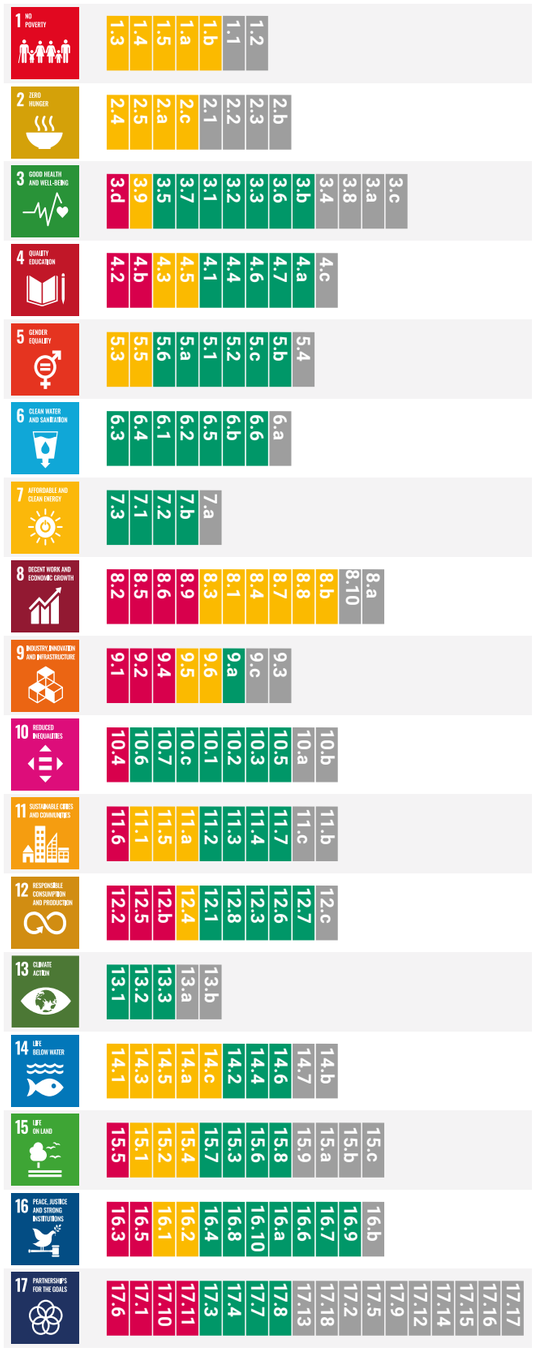
With regard to SDG 5 (gender equality), South Africa has developed laws and strategies to address gender inequality and to promote the empowerment of women. However, enforcement gaps, weak coordination among agencies, and inadequate funding limit their effectiveness, hampering efforts to reduce gender-based violence and discrimination[14].

14 The people's report on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, a civil society complementary report to South Africa's National VNR Report 2024.https://southafrica.fes.de/fileadmin/user_upload/SDG_PEOPLES_REPORT_2024_web.pdf

South Africa's progress towards achieving the SDGs

Progress · Stagnant/No change · No Progress · Insufficient/No data

33% of the targets have shown positive trends.
23% have seen no noticeable change in the data.
11% of the targets are showing no progress.
33% of the SDG targets did not have sufficient or new data.



Source: South Africa SDG Report 2023

With regard to energy, SDG 7 illustrates how load shedding severely affects energy access and job stability in key sectors. Vulnerable communities are disproportionately affected, often lacking the means to transition to renewable energy, which constrains progress towards SDGs 1 (no poverty) and 2 (zero hunger).

For sustainable cities and climate action (SDGs 11 and 13), policies such as the Climate Change Bill and the Renewable Energy Masterplan have been introduced; however, their effectiveness depends on improved implementation, transparency, and active community participation in order to ensure tangible benefits.

In South Africa, a range of societal and institutional responses, including community policing, legal aid, anti-corruption agencies, and programmes addressing trafficking, GBV, and corruption, are in place to address challenges related to SDG 16 (strong institutions). The country is making progress on SDG 17 (strong partnerships) across finance, technology, capacity, trade, and systemic areas, demonstrating a strong commitment to sustainable development through partnerships with civil society, the private sector, and international organisations[15].

Despite these obstacles, South Africa has made progress in finance, technology, and trade through international partnerships; nevertheless, rising public debt and the energy crisis pose additional challenges to sustainable development.

15 SDG_Country_report.pdf

United Nations South Africa Cooperation Framework 2026-2030

The 2025 VNR recommends six high-impact SDGs Acceleration Mechanisms for South Africa:

1. **Prioritise human well-being and sustainable development by investing in social infrastructure, including healthcare, basic education, water, and sanitation, particularly for vulnerable groups.**
2. **Invest in youth for growth sectors such as the green and digital economies through targeted skills development and entrepreneurship support. This empowers young people to contribute to fields with high job growth potential.**
3. **Promote economic growth by expanding sustainable energy sources to strengthen energy security, support the transition to renewables, reduce emissions, and foster economic opportunities.**
4. **Address infrastructure barriers by investing in network industries and strategic projects that support a diversified, environmentally sustainable, and competitive economy, while boosting employment and social infrastructure.**
5. **Rebuild trust by addressing corruption and improving public service efficiency, alongside strengthening local and global partnerships to accelerate progress and scale successful interventions.**
6. **Enhance implementation by strengthening domestic resource mobilisation through improved tax collection, addressing illicit financial flows, facilitating technology transfer, and expanding technical and financial cooperation to advance the SDGs.**

1.4 Challenges and opportunities

South Africa continues to face high unemployment, persistent poverty, and deep income inequality, as reflected in its high Gini coefficient. Spatial inequality further constrains economic efficiency and job creation. Many low-income households also lack access to basic services, resulting in ongoing food insecurity and heightened vulnerability.

To address poverty and social disparities, it is essential to strengthen social protection systems while fostering inclusive economic growth through equitable strategies. The Government expanded coverage of social protection benefits from 48% in 2015 to 63.4% in 2022, as reflected in SDG indicator 1.3.1 on effective coverage. However, significant challenges remain in relation to coverage for the working-age population and the adequacy of benefits.

Efforts should therefore encompass all aspects of the social wage. This includes the redesign and legislation of the Social Relief of Distress Grant (SRD Grant) within a comprehensive social protection framework. It also includes strengthening social insurance institutions and integrating cash benefits with services that support labour market inclusion. Delivery mechanisms can be further improved to ensure that services effectively reach those in need, particularly the most vulnerable individuals and households.

Social protection also plays a critical role in supporting the just energy transition. This requires more flexible protection mechanisms for unemployment. It also requires support for workers transitioning from carbon-intensive industries to green industries, combined with access to skills development and tailored social plans for affected communities.

Overall, social protection expenditure stands at 5.4% of GDP (excluding health), which is approximately three percentage points below the average for upper-middle-income countries. Estimates suggest that an additional 1.8% of GDP would be required to close coverage gaps for cash benefits related to children, persons with disabilities, maternity, old age, and unemployment. In a context of entrenched inequality, poverty, and unemployment, the progressive expansion of coverage and financing remains a viable option, subject to assessments of fiscal space and financing mechanisms.

At the same time, **the country faces an unstable political climate and weak coordination across government levels, resulting in fragmented planning and policy implementation.** Disparities in housing, transport, and municipal infrastructure further constrain economic growth. Challenges related to social cohesion, governance, violence, and corruption also persist.

Educational outcomes remain misaligned with labour market needs, underscoring the need for coordinated action. In 2021, 81% of Grade 4 learners were unable to read for meaning, and only 41% had acquired foundational knowledge and skills in mathematics[16]. Progress in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields has stagnated.

These challenges are not confined to the first three years of schooling (Grades 1 to 3). They also reflect persistently poor quality and outcomes in early learning for children from birth to five years. Only 42% of children aged 4 to 5 enrolled in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programmes were on track for the Learning Total Score. Only 53% were on track with emergent literacy and language, and only 33% were on track with emergent numeracy and mathematics.

To address these issues, it is essential to improve accountability, strengthen digital infrastructure, and enhance the quality of education, while treating basic education as a fundamental public service. This includes strengthening the capacity of educators and practitioners delivering early learning programmes for children from birth to age five.

16 https://www.up.ac.za/centre-for-evaluation-and-assessment/news/post_3151785-up-study-shows-81-of-grade-4-learners-in-sa-have-reading-difficulties-

United Nations South Africa Cooperation Framework 2026-2030

Quality early learning outcomes depend on qualified human resources who can implement and support programmes grounded in active pedagogical approaches.

Strong leadership at school and district levels is also critical. In parallel, implementation of the National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy for the first 1,000 days of life should be accelerated, particularly with regard to expanding quality early learning opportunities for young children from birth to school-going age, both in early learning programmes and in home environments.

It is also essential to strengthen transitions from school to employment for students from low- and middle-income communities. This includes elevating the role of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in the national skills base.

Corruption remains a significant challenge for South Africa. Investigations such as the Zondo Commission have addressed large-scale corruption and state capture. However, increasing attention is now directed to localised corruption, including bribery and abuse of power by local officials. These practices undermine service delivery and erode public trust.

Organised crime continues to infiltrate government structures. These dynamics are compounded by limited policing capacity, overstretched courts, and insufficient training within the South African Police Service (SAPS).

Persistent inequality and high crime, particularly affecting vulnerable groups, threaten social cohesion and contribute to social unrest. Rebuilding trust between citizens, non-citizens, and the state remains essential. This must go hand in hand with strengthening crime prevention, investigation capacity, and justice delivery.

To reduce inequality, South Africa should expand public employment in green infrastructure projects and strengthen support for rural businesses. Robust social protection systems can protect vulnerable groups from rising living costs and climate shocks. They can also support workers and their families through economic and lifecycle transitions.

Strengthening climate resilience requires systemic changes in land use and urban planning. It also creates opportunities for employment in clean energy and green technologies.

2. UNITED NATIONS SOUTH AFRICA SUPPORT TO AGENDA 2030

"By 2030, all people in South Africa live with dignity, are resilient and prosperous, thriving economically and socially, protected from shocks, and benefiting from a peaceful, inclusive, and environmentally sustainable society."

2.1 Theory of Change

This Cooperation Framework aims to achieve the long-term impact that, "*By 2030, all people in South Africa live with dignity, are resilient and prosperous, thriving economically and socially, protected from shocks, and benefiting from a peaceful, inclusive, and environmentally sustainable society*"

The Cooperation Framework 2026-2030 operates through four mutually reinforcing pathways. These pathways address key development constraints and are supported by critical cross-cutting enablers.

Core Pathways to Impact

1. Inclusive Economic Transformation (Pathway 1)
Focuses on reducing structural poverty and spatial inequality by creating decent jobs, particularly in the green, digital, and care economies. This requires improving the investment climate and integrating land and housing planning to address spatial exclusion.

2. Human Capital & Access (Pathway 2)
Addresses learning poverty and inequitable access to services by strengthening foundational education (literacy and numeracy from birth to Grade 3), aligning TVET skills with labour market demand, expanding Universal Health Coverage (including mental health), and improving social protection coverage for informal workers.

3. Governance, Safety, and Cohesion (Pathway 3)
Aims to restore public trust by addressing corruption, crime, weak public trust, political instability, GBV, xenophobia, organised crime, and community violence. This involves strengthening anti-corruption institutions, professionalising public administration, enhancing capacities for crime prevention and justice delivery, and institutionalising participatory governance mechanisms (e.g. participatory budgeting).

4. Climate Resilience and Environmental Stewardship (Pathway 4)
Focuses on safeguarding long-term development gains by strengthening resilience to climate shocks and environmental degradation. This includes scaling climate-smart agriculture, mobilising innovative green and blue finance, and embedding climate and biodiversity targets into national planning and monitoring systems. The effectiveness of these pathways is sustained by an "engine room" of cross-cutting enablers, including political stability, blended financing, robust data systems, digital transformation, and institutional capacity development.

The entire Cooperation Framework is guided by a commitment to human rights and the "Leave No One Behind" (LNOB) principle, ensuring that marginalised groups remain central to programming. It is also strategically aligned with global (SDGs), continental (AU Agenda 2063), and regional (SADC) commitments, requiring adaptive management to respond to political and economic risks.

Table 1 presents the strategic reorientation of the Cooperation Framework in relation to the previous one.

The shift from isolated projects towards more integrated results and joint programmes reflects the UN's responsiveness to lessons learned from previous development cycles and its commitment to Delivering as One for more impactful and sustainable development.

Table 1 | Cooperation Framework 2020 – 2025 vs Cooperation Framework 2026– 2030

Category	Cooperation Framework 2020–2025	Cooperation Framework 2026–2030	% Change (↑ / ↓)
Outcomes	9	5	↓ **44%**
Outputs	26	18	↓ **31%**
Outcome Indicators	54	37	↓ **31%**

Key shifts

- The **Cooperation Framework 2026–2030 consolidates** strategic priorities, outcomes, outputs, and indicators compared to 2020–2025, indicating a more streamlined and focused approach.

- The **reduction** in outcome indicators (–31%) points to an intentional effort to reduce the monitoring burden and to focus on fewer, more strategic measures.

The Cooperation Framework 2026–2030 TOC fully aligns with and complements South Africa's NDP 2030 and MTDP, as well as the outcomes of the SDG Summit (SDG Transition), the Pact for the Future, and the G20 Presidency priorities for accelerated implementation in the final five years to 2030. All strategic outcomes, outputs, and investments are clustered under the economic, social, governance, resilience, and environmental sustainability transformation priorities, while also ensuring that they embody elements of integration, coherence, and scale aimed at accelerating progress towards SDG targets (see Table 3).

Links Interventions to SDGs, Regional Plans, SA National Plans and Global Plans

Table 2 | Alignment of NDP, MDTP, SDGs & Cooperation Framework 2026-2030

Policy/Initiative	Relevant Global Focus	How We Directly Contribute	Interventions
SDGs	2030 Agenda (UN Sustainable Development Goals and Transitions)	All five Cooperation Framework Outcomes contribute directly to multiple SDGs and transitions, including SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), SDG 13 (Climate Action), SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). The Outcomes also align with all six SDG transitions and "engine room" actions: (1) food systems; (2) energy access and affordability; (3) digital connectivity; (4) education; (5) jobs and social protection; and (6) climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution.	▶ Green jobs, MSME support, labour and economic policy reform (Outcome 1) ▶ Universal Health Coverage, TVET alignment, education access and skilling outcomes (Outcome 2) ▶ Governance, ethics, and anti-corruption reform (Outcome 3) ▶ GBV prevention, mental health support, civic engagement, rights delivery (Outcome 4) ▶ Just energy transition, circular economy, early warning and resilience building, climate-smart agriculture/food systems transformation, biodiversity protection, green financing, supply chains and value addition (Outcome 5)
African Union (Agenda 2063)	AU Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want	Supports AU Aspirations: 1 (inclusive growth and sustainable development), 3 (good governance, democracy, respect for human rights), 6 (development driven by youth and women), 7 (strong cultural identity and common heritage)	▶ Industrialisation, skills development, and regional trade (Outcome 1) ▶ Human capital development (Outcome 2) ▶ Democratic governance and institutional reform (Outcome 3) ▶ Gender equality and social norm change (Outcome 4) ▶ Regional climate action and ecosystem management (Outcome 5)
SADC	Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP); SADC Protocols on Education, Health, Environment, Gender	Supports regional integration, peace and security, social development, and environmental sustainability. Promotes cross-border cooperation and knowledge sharing.	▶ Labour migration and trade facilitation (Outcome 1) ▶ Education and health cooperation (Outcome 2) ▶ Justice and decentralisation support (Outcome 3) ▶ Regional gender equality and GBV protocols (Outcome 4) ▶ Transboundary natural resource management and climate resilience (Outcome 5)
NDP (National Development Plan)	Vision 2030 for South Africa	Fully aligned across all five outcomes, especially chapters on economy, education, health, social cohesion, safety, governance, environment and climate.	▶ Inclusive growth and job creation (Outcome 1) ▶ Health and education improvements (Outcome 2) ▶ Public sector reform and justice delivery (Outcome 3) ▶ Civic engagement, human rights, and GBV prevention (Outcome 4) ▶ Green economy and climate strategies (Outcome 5)
MTDP (Medium-Term Development Plan)	Operationalisation of NDP via 5-year implementation plans	Supports implementation of priority actions in the MTDP 2025–2029 (e.g. inclusive growth and job creation; reducing poverty and tackling the high cost of living; and building a capable, ethical and developmental state).	▶ Technical support and capacity building for sector departments and municipalities ▶ Financing mechanisms and public-private partnerships ▶ Data systems for results-based monitoring ▶ Integration of SDG/Agenda 2063 indicators in national plans ▶ Strengthened coordination

The Cooperation Framework's **five interconnected outcomes** —focused on inclusive economic growth, human capability expansion, accountable governance, social cohesion, and environmental sustainability—were co-created through a multi-stakeholder National ToC workshop that integrated national priorities (NDP, MTDP) with global mandates (SDGs, AU Agenda 2063, SADC).

This alignment is operationalised through Strategic Alignment Table 2, which links each outcome to specific targets across these mandates. Crucially, the framework embeds four **Cross-Cutting Themes**—Gender Equality, Human Rights (LNOB), Climate/Environmental Sustainability, and Data/Evidence—across all outcomes to ensure coherence.

This comprehensive structure is mobilised through a Partnership Ecosystem that leverages the UN's convening power and technical expertise to bring together government, the private sector, and civil society in a coordinated, evidence-based effort to achieve national goals of ending poverty and reducing inequality by 2030.

UN SOUTH AFRICA COOPERATION FRAMEWORK 2026-3030

Theory Of Change

Strategic Priorities

Interventions

Outputs

Outcomes

Impact

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1 Supporting Economic Growth, Job Creation and Social Inclusion and Tackling Structural Poverty and Inequality

1. Support national employment creation strategies, especially in green, care, and digital economies
2. Provide technical support and policy advise for the accelerated just energy transition
3. Support digitalisation strategy spanning governance, education and service delivery
4. Entrepreneurship support - identifying gaps - MSMEs access to markets and finance
5. Labour & migration policies - promote industrialisation
6. Provide technical expertise and policy advice

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1. National employment creation strategies implemented with specific targets for job creation in green, care, and digital economy sectors
2. Accelerated just energy transition focusing on renewables and including critical minerals value chains benefiting SMEs, women and youth
3. Extensive digital connectivity coverage for socioeconomic transformation and inclusion
4. Increased access to markets and financial services for MSMEs, driven by evidence-based interventions targeting identified gaps in the entrepreneurial ecosystem
5. Revised labour and migration policies implemented to support domestic industrialisation and protect worker rights
6. Increased investment and private sector engagement to stimulate the economy

→

1 Equitable and Sustainable Livelihoods Improved for all through Inclusive Economic Growth

1. Supporting Universal Health Coverage - including pandemic preparedness
2. Scale up integrated human capital investments (early childhood, health, education, skilling)
3. Align TVET and higher education systems with labour market needs
4. Strengthen national policies and strategies and promoting sustainable agricultural practices
5. Mainstream equity and Leave No One Behind (LNOB) in social protection and economic inclusion policies

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1. Expanded access to essential health services and strengthened pandemic preparedness through the implementation of a comprehensive Universal Health Coverage plan
2. Increased enrolment and improved quality across integrated human capital development programs (early childhood, health, education, skilling)
3. Revised curricula and training programs in TVET and higher education institutions, aligned with identified skills gaps and employer demands in key sectors
4. Improved nutrition and food security through food systems transformation
5. Social protection and economic inclusion policies revised and implemented with concrete measures to mainstream equity and Leave No One Behind principles

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2 Expanded Human Capabilities and Equitable Opportunities Achieved Through Improved Access to Quality Education, Health, and Decent Livelihoods

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2 Promoting Good Governance, Accountability, Rights and addressing Safety Deficits

1. A. Support Public sector professionalisation - Strengthen anti-corruption mechanisms, oversight, & institutional accountability - minimise waste and improved efficient use of public resources.
   B. Promoting social compacting and inclusive business to address key developmental challenges
2. Enhance justice, law enforcement, and community-based crime prevention judiciary & parliament support
3. Establish and operationalise asset recovery units; strengthen anti-money laundering frameworks through targeted legislation, inter-agency cooperation, training, and technology upgrades
4. Provide technical support, training, and resource mobilisation assistance to municipalities to improve planning, budgeting, monitoring, and participatory governance mechanisms

→

1. Strengthened anti-corruption mechanisms, oversight functions, and institutional accountability frameworks adopted across key government departments, promoting policy coherence, ethical conduct and reducing impunity, waste and inefficient utilization of resources
2. Strengthened capacity of the judiciary, law enforcement agencies, and community-based organisations to enhance justice delivery and implement effective crime prevention strategies with parliamentary oversight
3. Spending efficiency, asset recovery and anti-money laundering mechanisms institutionalised to strengthen financial integrity
4. Strengthened capacity of Local government capacity for integrated planning, budgeting, and improved service delivery

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3 Accountable and Responsive Governance Institutions Ensuring Quality Public Services, Human Rights and Safety for All

1. Support GBV prevention and response and mental health issues.
2. Support civic engagement and social compacting for better service delivery, participatory governance/ traditional leadership.
3. Develop, pilot, and institutionalise LNOB targeting tools and guidelines; build capacity of government and civil society actors to use these tools for programme design, implementation, and monitoring.

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1. Integrated GBV prevention and response programs implemented with increased access to mental health services for survivors and affected communities
2. Empowered citizens to meaningfully engage in governance processes (planni budgeting, service delivery, monitoring and evaluation) at all levels
3. Intersectional LNOB targeting frameworks are developed to address overlapping vulnerabilities in programming

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4 Sustainable economic growth and resilient livelihoods enabled through environmental stewardship and ecosystem-based approaches.education, health and decent livelihoods

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3 Building Resilience Through Sustainability & Risk Preparedness

1. A. Support Policy and Strategy development/review - VNRs (for SDGs); NDCs (climate); NBSAPs (biodiversity); etc. B. Implementation Support - Landscape-level restoration; Climate-Smart Agriculture; roll-out Climate Act
2. Capacity Building, Skills Development and Institutional Strengthening - Foresighted Futures Training; EWSs
3. Upgrade environmental data infrastructure, improve data collection and analysis methods, and enhance inter-agency data sharing to meet SDG and MEA reporting requirements
4. Support Strategic Partnerships, Resource Mobilization and Innovative Financing - Joint SDG Fund; Thematic Bonds (Green; Blue; Gender & Sustainability Bonds); addressing the barriers to Private Sector Investment (ReLISA's key differentiator); G20 & BRICS processes; etc.
5. Support the development and scaling up of innovative circular economic solutions across priority sectors
6. Support the promotion of climate smart agriculture and blue economy
7. Strengthening capacities for disaster risk management, early warning systems at all levels.
8. Provide training, technical assistance, and funding to municipalities for adopting climate risk governance toolkits; integrate early warning systems into municipal planning; ensure participatory approaches involving communities

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1. National policies and strategies (VNR for SDGs, NDCs (climate), NBSAPs (biodiversity, etc. revised/ updated and validated, driving SDG, climate and biodiversity goals
2. Enhanced institutional capacity and skilled workforce enabling effective implementation of environment management and climate action strategies
3. Reliable data and reports available to measure progress towards MEA commitments, ensuring accountability and improved decision making
4. Diverse and sustainable financing streams secured to support the large-scale implementation of sustainable development priorities
5. South Africa accelerates inclusive and sustainable environmental transformation through circular economy innovation, marine and biodiversity protection, energy efficiency, and nature-based ecotourism.
6. Climate-smart agriculture and blue economy promotion linked to nature-based solutions and ecosystems/biodiversity conservation, enhancing sustainable growth.
7. Disaster risk management including early warning systems and anticipatory action adopted T national, provincial and municipal levels and implemented.
8. Climate risk governance toolkits including early warning systems and anticipatory planning adopted by municipalities and implemented.

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5 A Safe, Enabling Society which Fosters Participation, Ethics, and Rights-Based Values

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MONITORING & EVALUATION

Assumptions

1. Political Will, commitment and leadership remain strong and consistent- Government maintains its commitment to implement SDG-aligned national strategies and reforms.
2. Institutional capacity is sufficient and effective- relevant public institutions have the resources, skills, and autonomy to deliver policies and programmes aligned with SDGs and national priorities.
3. Reliable data and monitoring systems exist and are used- Data systems are in place and used for decision-making, accountability, and SDG progress tracking (especially MEAs, VNRs, NDCs, NBSAPs).
4. Stakeholder coordination and partnerships are functional and Inclusive- National and subnational actors, development partners, civil society, and the private sector are aligned and actively collaborating.

By 2030, all people in South Africa live with dignity, are resilient and prosperous, thriving economicall y and socially, protected from shocks, and benefiting from a peaceful, inclusive, and environmen tally sustainable society."

Cooperation Framework 2026-2030 Theory of Change

Table 3 | Cooperation Framework 2026-2030-Theory of Change

Impact Statement
By 2030, all people in South Africa live with dignity, are resilient and prosperous, thriving economically and socially, protected from shocks, and benefiting from a peaceful, inclusive, and environmentally sustainable society.

Strategic Priority 1 Supporting Economic Growth and Social Inclusion and Tackling Structural Poverty and Inequality		Strategic Priority 2: Promoting Good Governance, Accountability, Rights and Addressing Safety Deficits		Strategic Priority 3: Building Resilience Through Sustainability and Risk Preparedness
Outcome 1.1: Equitable and Sustainable Livelihoods Improved for all through Inclusive Economic Growth	Outcome 1.2: Expanded Human Capabilities and Equitable Opportunities Achieved Through Improved Access to Quality Education, Health, and Decent Livelihoods	Outcome 2.1: Accountable and Responsive Governance Institutions Ensuring Quality Public Services, Human Rights and Safety for All	Outcome 2.2: A Safe, Enabling Society which Fosters Participation, Ethics, and Rights-Based Values	Outcome 3.1: Sustainable economic growth and resilient livelihoods enabled through environmental stewardship and ecosystem-based approaches.
Outputs ▶ National employment creation strategies implemented with specific targets for job creation in industrialisation, green, care, informal, digital and rural economy sectors. ▶ Increased opportunities for youth, especially NEETs, to access decent employment and entrepreneurship through co-created models that integrate their voices into policy design and implementation ▶ Accelerated just energy transition focusing on renewables and including critical energy focusing on renewables/energy mix including use of minerals value chains benefiting MSMEs, women and youth. ▶ Extensive digital connectivity coverage for socioeconomic transformation and inclusion. ▶ Increased access to markets and financial services for MSMEs, driven by evidence-based interventions targeting identified gaps in the entrepreneurial ecosystem. ▶ Revised labour and migration policies implemented to support domestic industrialisation and protect worker rights. ▶ Increased investment and business engagement to address infrastructure (energy, transport, water, ICT etc) deficits, create jobs and promote reforms to stimulate the economy.	**Outputs** ▶ Expanded access to essential health services and strengthened pandemic preparedness and response through the implementation of a comprehensive Universal Health Coverage plan. ▶ Increased enrolment (equitable access for all vulnerable and disadvantaged populations) and improved quality across integrated gender-responsive human capital development programmes (early childhood, early learning health, basic education, skilling). ▶ Revised curricula and training programmes in TVET and higher education institutions, aligned with identified skills gaps and employer demands in key sectors. ▶ Improved nutrition, well-being, socioeconomic opportunities and food security through food systems transformation. ▶ Social protection and economic inclusion policies revised and implemented with concrete measures to mainstream equity, social justice and Leave No One Behind principles. ▶ Enhanced institutional and private sector partnerships expand sustainable livelihood opportunities particularly for young people, women and vulnerable populations.	**Outputs** ▶ Strengthened anti-corruption mechanisms, oversight bodies, and institutional accountability frameworks adopted across key government departments, promoting policy coherence, ethical conduct and reducing impunity, waste and inefficient utilization of resources. ▶ Strengthened capacity of the judiciary, law enforcement agencies, and community-based organization to enhance justice delivery and implement effective crime and violence prevention strategies with parliamentary oversight and Chapter 9 institutions. ▶ Strengthened local government capacity for integrated planning, budgeting, and improved service delivery for efficient governance. ▶ Spending efficiency, asset recovery and anti-money laundering mechanisms institutionalised to strengthen financial integrity.	**Outputs** ▶ Integrated GBV prevention and response programmes implemented with increased access to justice and mental health services for survivors and affected communities. ▶ Cohesive communities and empowered citizens meaningfully engaging in accountable governance processes that deliver improved rights and services (planning, budgeting, service delivery, monitoring, and evaluation) for all at all levels. ▶ Intersectional LNOB targeting frameworks developed to address overlapping vulnerabilities. ▶ Reduced harmful gender and social norms related to GBV and violence against children and anti-migrant sentiments, strengthened engagement of community, faith and traditional leaders in combating violence in communities.	**Outputs** ▶ Enhanced capacity of government, skilled workforce and stakeholders to generate and share high-quality, open data and information for science -based environmental decision-making, implementation as well as for monitoring and reporting on progress towards Multilateral Environmental Agreements and other international commitments (Voluntary National Reviews, Nationally Determined Contributions, National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans). ▶ Sustainable financing streams secured to support the large-scale implementation of sustainable development priorities for building resilience, responding to disasters and advancing climate action. ▶ Accelerated, inclusive, and sustainable environmental transformation achieved through circular economy innovation, air pollution, chemical and waste management, marine and biodiversity protection, climate-smart agriculture, blue economy promotion, cultural and creative economy, energy efficiency, and nature-based ecotourism ▶ Resilience building, Disaster and Risk management strategies, including early warning systems and anticipatory action adopted at national, provincial and municipal levels.
Investments ▶ Support national employment creation strategies, especially in green, care, and digital economies. ▶ Provide technical support and policy advice for the accelerated just energy transition. ▶ Support digitalisation strategy spanning governance, education, and service delivery. ▶ Entrepreneurship support – identifying gaps – MSMEs' access to markets and finance- ▶ Labour and migration policies – promote industrialisation.	**Investments** ▶ Supporting Universal Health Coverage – including pandemic preparedness ▶ Scale up integrated human capital investments (early childhood, health, education, skilling) ▶ Align TVET and higher education systems with labour market needs. ▶ Strengthen national policies and strategies and promoting sustainable agricultural practices. ▶ Mainstream equity and Leave No One Behind (LNOB) in social protection and economic inclusion policies	**Investments** ▶ Support Public sector professionalisation - Strengthen anti-corruption mechanisms, oversight, and institutional accountability – minimise waste and improved efficient use of public resources. ▶ Promoting social compacting and inclusive business to address key developmental challenges ▶ Enhance justice, law enforcement, and community-based crime prevention – judiciary and parliament support. ▶ Establish and operationalise asset recovery units; strengthen anti-money laundering frameworks through targeted legislation, inter-agency cooperation, training, and technology upgrades. ▶ Provide technical support, training, and resource mobilization assistance to municipalities to improve planning, budgeting, monitoring, and participatory governance mechanisms.	**Investments** ▶ Support GBV prevention and response, and mental health issues. ▶ Support civic engagement and social compacting for better service delivery – participatory governance/ traditional leadership. ▶ Develop, pilot, and institutionalise LNOB targeting tools and guidelines; build capacity of government and civil society actors to use these tools for programme design, implementation, and monitoring.	**Investments** ▶ Support Policy and Strategy development/review – VNRs (for SDGs); NDCs (climate); NBSAPs (biodiversity); etc. ▶ Implementation Support – Landscape-level restoration; Climate-Smart Agriculture; roll-out Climate Act ▶ Capacity Building, Skills Development, and Institutional Strengthening – Foresighted Futures Training; EWSs ▶ Upgrade data infrastructure, improve data collection and analysis methods, and enhance inter-agency data sharing to meet SDG and MEA reporting requirements. ▶ Support Strategic Partnerships, Resource Mobilization, and Innovative Financing – Joint SDGs Fund; Thematic Bonds (Green Bonds; Blue Bonds; Gender Bonds; Sustainability Bonds); addressing the barriers to Private Sector Investment (ReLISA's key differentiator); G20 processes; BRICS processes, etc. ▶ Support the development and scaling up of innovative circular economic solutions across priority sectors. ▶ Support the promotion of climate-smart agriculture and blue economy. ▶ Strengthening capacities for disaster risk management, early warning systems at all levels ▶ Provide training, technical assistance, and funding to municipalities for adopting climate risk governance toolkits; integrate early warning systems into municipal planning; ensure participatory approaches involving communities.
Drivers 1. Predictable and coherent economic policies 2. Public–private partnership frameworks 3. Access to enabling infrastructure (energy, transport, broadband) 4. Stable investment climate and private sector participation 5. Inclusion of women, youth, and MSMEs in green, care, and digital economies 6. Adequate and sustained financing for health, education, and social protection 7. Stronger workforce capacity (teachers, health workers, social workers) 8. Integrated planning across education, health, and social protection 9. Robust national data systems for LNOB and equity monitoring 10. Targeted inclusion of informal workers and marginalised groups		**Drivers** 11. Strong political will and leadership commitment 12. Independent oversight institutions and judiciary 13. Anti-corruption and financial integrity mechanisms 14. Safe civic space and citizen participation platforms 15. Professionalisation of public service 16. Deepened civic engagement and participatory governance (budgeting, planning, monitoring) 17. Cultural and community leadership fostering cohesion and ethics 18. Survivor-centred GBV response systems and mental health services 19. Social compacts between state, private sector, and communities 20. Media freedom, information integrity and access to accurate and reliable information		**Drivers** 21. Coherent environmental governance frameworks 22. Access to climate finance (green, blue, gender bonds, SDG funds) 23. Regional and cross-border cooperation on climate and biodiversity 24. Community leadership in adaptation and ecosystem stewardship 25. Integration of NDC and NBSAP targets into national and municipal plans 26. Building resilience and strengthening disaster risk management strategies

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2.2 Strategic Priorities for the UN Development System

The UN Development System in South Africa aligns its support with the National Development Plan (NDP) 2030, the Medium-Term Development Plan (2025–2029), and the Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan, while remaining consistent with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the AU's Agenda 2063, and relevant SADC frameworks. The three strategic priorities underpinning the Cooperation Framework are:

▶ Economic and Social Transformation

Promoting inclusive and sustainable growth, addressing structural poverty and inequality, and expanding livelihoods in the green, care, and digital economies, while also strengthening human capabilities through improved access to quality education, health services, social protection, and decent livelihoods.

▶ Transformational Governance

Strengthening accountable institutions, advancing human rights, promoting safety and social cohesion, and enhancing citizen participation.

▶ Resilience and Sustainability

Addressing climate vulnerability, biodiversity loss, environmental degradation, inequitable access to natural resources, circular economy gaps, and weaknesses in urban resilience.

LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND

2.3 Cooperation Framework Outcomes and Partnerships

This Cooperation Framework defines five mutually reinforcing outcomes that operationalise these strategic priorities. These are supported by whole-of-society partnerships involving government, civil society, the private sector, academia, and regional institutions. The UN's role will be to convene diverse actors, provide technical expertise, and mobilise resources to accelerate progress towards the SDGs and NDP 2030. Partnerships will build on South Africa's strong policy frameworks, institutional capacity, and domestic financing, while addressing persistent gaps in equity, accountability, and resilience.

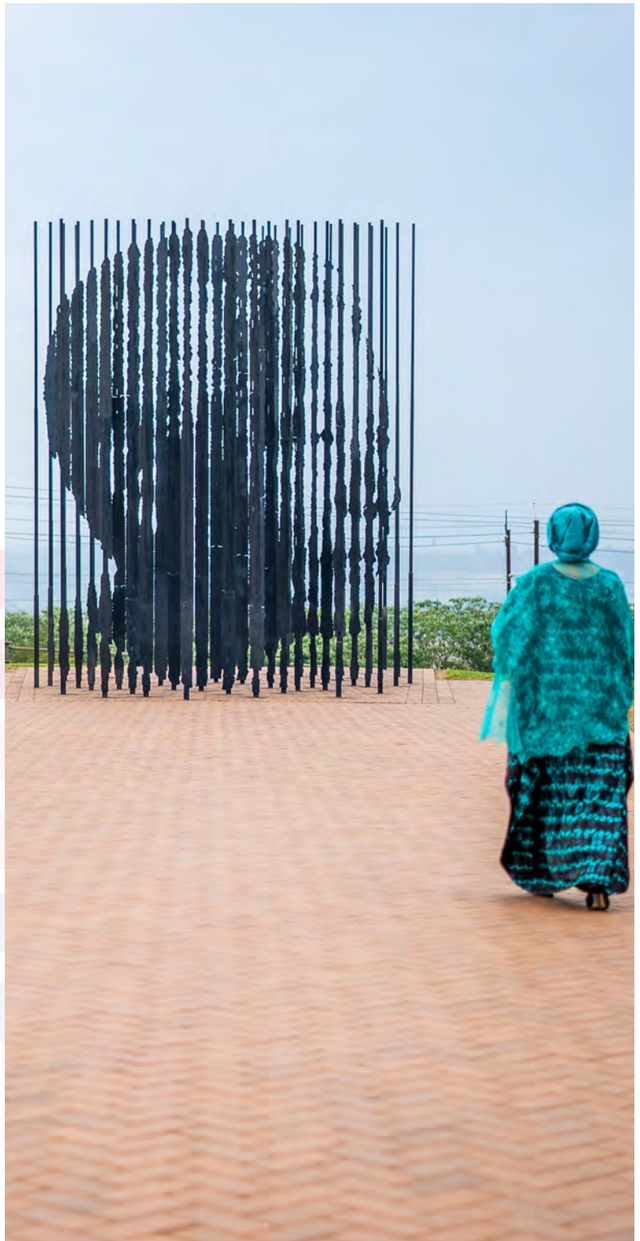

Table 4 | South Africa Cooperation Framework 2026–2030 – Priorities, Outcomes, NDP-MTDP Priorities and SDGs

Cooperation Framework Priorities	Cooperation Framework Outcomes (South Africa 2026–2030)	NDP–MTDP Priorities (SA context)	SDGs
Supporting Economic Growth and Social Inclusion and Tackling Structural Poverty and Inequality	**Outcome 1** Equitable and sustainable livelihoods improved for all through inclusive economic growth	1. Inclusive growth and job creation 2. Industrialization, MSME development and export promotion 3. Just energy transition (renewables, critical minerals, energy access) 4. Expanded digital transformation and connectivity 5. Strengthened labour and migration policies 6. Improved access to finance, markets, and infrastructure	1 NO POVERTY; 5 GENDER EQUALITY; 7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY; 8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH; 9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE; 10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES; 11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES; 12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION; 13 CLIMATE ACTION; 17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS
	Outcome 2 Expanded human capabilities and equitable opportunities through improved access to quality education, health, and decent livelihoods	1. Human capital development (education, skills, health) 2. Universal Health Coverage and social protection 3. Nutrition and food systems transformation 4. Digital skills and equity-focused education reform.	1 NO POVERTY; 2 ZERO HUNGER; 3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING; 4 QUALITY EDUCATION; 5 GENDER EQUALITY; 6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION; 7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY; 10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES; 11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

Cooperation Framework Priorities	Cooperation Framework Outcomes (South Africa 2026–2030)	NDP–MTDP Priorities (SA context)	SDGs
Promoting Good Governance, Accountability, Rights and addressing Safety Deficits	**Outcome 3** Accountable and responsive governance institutions ensuring quality public services, human rights and safety for all **Outcome 4** A safe, enabling society which fosters participation, ethics, and rights-based values	1. Building a capable, ethical, and developmental state 2. Strengthening anti-corruption, oversight, and accountability frameworks 3. Enhancing citizen participation and access to justice 4. Social cohesion, unity, and safety (GBV prevention, crime reduction)	
Building Resilience Through Sustainability and Risk Preparedness	**Outcome 5** Sustainable economic growth and resilient livelihoods achieved through environmental stewardship and ecosystem-based approaches	1. Climate change adaptation and mitigation 2. Circular economy and biodiversity protection 3. Disaster risk reduction and anticipatory action 4. Innovative and blended financing, including green, blue and gender bonds	

2.3.1 Strategic Priority I

Supporting Economic Growth, Job Creation and Social Inclusion and Tackling Structural Poverty and Inequality

This priority focuses on addressing inequality and unemployment by promoting inclusive and sustainable growth.

The UN will support:

- National employment creation strategies targeting green, care, digital, and rural economies.
- The expansion of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) and the informal sector through improved access to finance, markets, and digital infrastructure.
- A just energy transition that creates opportunities for women and youth.
- Strengthened labour and migration policies that support industrialisation and workers' rights.
- Partnerships will leverage government leadership, private sector investment, and civil society innovation to achieve broad-based economic transformation.

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Outcome 1

Equitable and sustainable livelihoods improved for all through inclusive economic growth

IF South Africa is to achieve equitable and sustainable livelihoods for all through inclusive economic growth, then national employment creation strategies must be implemented with specific targets in the green, care, and digital economies, and the just energy transition must accelerate with a focus on renewables and critical minerals that benefit MSMEs, women, and youth;

IF digital connectivity is expanded and access to markets and financial services for MSMEs is improved through evidence-based interventions, enterprises will be better positioned to grow, integrate into value chains, and create jobs;

IF labour and migration policies are revised to support domestic industrialisation and protect workers' rights, and if increased investment is mobilised alongside private sector engagement to address infrastructure deficits;

THEN the structural drivers of inequality and unemployment will gradually be dismantled.

For these outputs to materialise, government must prioritise employment creation, MSME development, and industrialisation in policy frameworks, backed by budgets aligned with clear targets. Financial institutions and private sector actors need to expand inclusive finance and supply chain opportunities, while labour unions and employer associations contribute to shaping fair and inclusive labour practices. Academia and training institutions must ensure curricula are aligned with labour market demand, and targeted programmes for youth not in education, employment, or training should be rolled out with integrated skilling, psychosocial support, and job placement pathways.

This outcome is grounded in the principle of Leaving No One Behind. If unemployed and underemployed youth in rural and township areas, women-owned enterprises, women in informal work, persons with disabilities, migrants, and other excluded groups are prioritised, then equitable access to opportunities, resources, and markets will be strengthened. In doing so, the UN can design programmes that specifically target underserved groups and regions and ensure inclusive participation in policy dialogue, social protection, and employment creation strategies.

Sustainability is reinforced if institutions are capacitated to engage in evidence-based planning and labour market design, if informal enterprises are formalised and made more resilient, and if long-term investments in infrastructure, digitalisation, and innovation ecosystems are supported. Strengthening the enabling environment for inclusive finance, impact investment, and social enterprises will help ensure that gains are not temporary but embedded within national systems.

If partnerships are effective, outcomes will be accelerated. National and provincial departments such as Trade, Industry and Competition; Employment and Labour; Small Business Development; and Treasury must lead, while Development Finance Institutions, banks, and fintech companies expand access to finance. Private sector associations can create inclusive supply chains and apprenticeships, while youth organisations, women's networks, and labour unions practise rights-based participation. The UN will act as convener, technical adviser, and broker of innovation to ensure that all stakeholders work in a coordinated manner.

This outcome also contributes to broader national, regional, and global agendas. If South Africa advances its Decent Work Agenda and implements NDP priorities on inclusive growth, it also supports the AU Agenda 2063 economic transformation pillar and strengthens regional integration through SADC trade and labour migration frameworks. At the global level, it reinforces commitments under the ILO Centenary Declaration and the UN Joint SDG Fund's focus on inclusive transformation.

Regionally, if South Africa promotes inclusive enterprise and employment models and shares lessons on the green economy, youth employment, and gender-responsive industrialisation, these practices can be replicated across Southern Africa. Success depends on several key assumptions: that national strategies for green, care, and digital economies remain political priorities; that employment and MSME institutions are coordinated and adequately resourced; that financial ecosystems extend support to MSMEs; and that revised labour and migration policies are implemented with broad stakeholder buy-in.

Finally, if the UN system works jointly, complementary capacities can be fully leveraged. ILO, UNECA, UNU-WIDER, UNDP, and UNIDO will support employment, MSME growth, and industrialisation; UN Women, UNCTAD, IOM, and UNHCR will ensure inclusion of women, migrants, and displaced groups; FAO, IFAD, UNU-WIDER, UN-Habitat, and UNCDF will contribute to rural livelihoods and green jobs; the World Bank, IMF, and IFC will invest in the just energy transition and infrastructure; and UNICEF, UNU-WIDER, ILO, WHO, and UNAIDS will focus on youth employability, child labour prevention, social protection, and a healthy and disease-resilient workforce. Together, these agencies provide the technical expertise, policy advice, financing leverage, and data systems needed to drive inclusive and sustainable economic transformation in South Africa.

This priority also aims to expand human capabilities and reduce exclusion. The UN will support:

- Universal Health Coverage and pandemic preparedness.
- Literacy and numeracy acceleration, curriculum reform, and improved teacher training.
- TVET and higher education systems aligned with labour market needs.
- Strengthened social protection coverage, particularly for informal workers, women, youth, and rural communities.
- Improved nutrition and food security through sustainable food systems.
- Partnerships will involve education institutions, health providers, communities, and development partners to ensure equity and uphold the Leave No One Behind principle.

Outcome 2

Expanded human capabilities and equitable opportunities through improved access to quality education, health, and decent livelihoods

IF South Africa is to achieve expanded human capabilities and equitable opportunities through improved access to quality education, health, and decent livelihoods, then essential health services must be expanded and pandemic preparedness strengthened under a comprehensive Universal Health Coverage plan;

IF enrolment in human capital development programmes increases and their quality improves across early childhood, education, health, and skilling, then children and youth will be better prepared to participate fully in society and the labour market;

IF curricula and training in TVET and higher education institutions are revised and aligned with identified skills gaps and employer demand;

THEN young people and adult learners will acquire relevant skills for emerging economic sectors. Improved nutrition and transformed food systems, coupled with revised equity-focused and adequately financed social protection policies, will ensure that vulnerable households and workers and their families are safeguarded against lifecycle risks and shocks and can access the opportunities created.

These results depend on contributions from multiple actors. If government leads by prioritising and investing in education, health, and social protection systems across all levels, system-wide reforms can be institutionalised. If the private sector co-designs workforce development initiatives, internships, and digital learning pathways, skills supply can be better matched with demand. If civil society remains engaged in advocating for inclusive service delivery and monitoring effectiveness, accountability will be strengthened. Development partners must also align financial and technical support to expand coverage and accelerate reform implementation.

This outcome is rooted in the Leave No One Behind principle. If children and youth in rural and under-resourced areas, women and girls—especially adolescent girls and young women at risk of early pregnancy, GBV, and school dropout—people with disabilities, migrants, and informal workers are actively included in programming, then disparities in service access will narrow. By targeting these groups, the UN can reduce inequalities, support equity-based reforms, and build inclusive systems.

Sustainability is achieved if inclusive health, education, social protection, and skilling reforms are embedded in national policy, budgeting, and delivery mechanisms. If workforce planning is strengthened in both education and health, South Africa will have the professional capacity to sustain quality services. If monitoring systems are enhanced, service delivery gaps can be tracked and addressed. Integrated planning across sectors will further enable coordinated delivery of education, health, and social protection, reinforcing long-term resilience.

If partnerships are strong, the pace of change will accelerate. Collaboration with national departments such as National Treasury; Justice; Communications and Digital Technologies; Environment; Energy; Small Business; Trade; Public Service; Basic Education; Higher Education and Training; Health; Social Development; and Labour will be critical, alongside engagement with Chapter 9 Oversight Bodies, Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, the South African Local Government Association (SALGA), and municipalities to improve service delivery at community level. If private sector actors, business councils, and labour organisations are involved, skills training can be aligned with market needs. Civil society and youth-led groups can help sustain inclusive and rights-based approaches, while donor coordination can align external support with South Africa's human capital priorities. In this ecosystem, the UN will act as policy adviser, convener, and catalyst for innovation, ensuring coherence across partners.

This outcome contributes to South Africa's obligations under international human rights frameworks such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100) and the Discrimination Convention, 1958 (No.111), international normative standards, and UPR recommendations, while linking humanitarian and development planning to ensure resilient health, social protection, and education systems. It also reinforces the NDP's human capital and social inclusion goals and AU Agenda 2063 aspirations related to well-being and youth empowerment. Regionally, it supports SADC Protocols on Health and Education and continental frameworks such as the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16–25), while promoting cooperation in pandemic preparedness and migration-sensitive service delivery.

These results assume that education, health, social protection, and skills development remain budgetary and political priorities; that Universal Health Coverage and human capital reforms are adequately funded; that TVET and higher education institutions remain responsive to labour market needs; and that social protection reforms are supported by strong evidence and equity principles.

Illustratively, the UN Country Team will draw on complementary strengths: UNDP, the World Bank, IMF, ILO, and others will work on de-risking and improving economic and financing opportunities for entrepreneurship and job creation; UNICEF, UNFPA, and WHO will advance health, nutrition, maternal and child health; UNESCO, ILO, and UNDP will strengthen education systems, skilling, and labour market alignment; UN Women, IOM, and UNHCR will support gender equality and migrant and refugee inclusion; FAO, IFAD, and UNICEF will enhance school feeding, food security, and food systems transformation; UNODC, UNDP, and OHCHR will jointly advance ethical, responsive, and rights-based expenditure and governance; and UNEP, UNDP, UNESCO, and others will work on nature-based solutions, digitalisation, and the circular economy. Together, these agencies provide the tools, expertise, convening power, and partnerships required to achieve inclusive, gender-responsive, and equity-driven human capital development in South Africa.

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Partnerships for Supporting Economic Growth and Social Inclusion and Tackling Structural Poverty and Inequality

To realise investments supporting South Africa's economic transformation over the next five years, the UN will engage with key public institutions responsible for financing, data, policy, strategy, and programmes linked to inclusive growth and structural transformation under Outcome 1. This will involve active participation in relevant sector working groups and platforms, including those focused on industrialisation, employment creation, small business development, digitalisation, energy transition, trade and investment, and infrastructure development.

Government and State Entities

- Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (DTIC)
- Department of Employment and Labour
- Department of Small Business Development
- National Treasury
- Department of Mineral Resources and Energy
- Department of Public Works and Infrastructure
- Department of Communications and Digital Technologies
- Department of Science and Innovation
- Provincial governments
- Municipalities

Regulatory Bodies

- South African Council for Educators (SACE)
- South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP)
- Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA)
- South African Nursing Council (SANC)
- South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA)
- Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO)
- Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs)

Private Sector

- Business Unity South Africa (BUSA)
- Chambers of commerce
- Sector associations (mining, agriculture, manufacturing, ICT)
- Financial institutions
- MSME networks

Labour and Worker Organizations

- Trade unions (e.g. COSATU, FEDUSA, NACTU)
- Informal sector worker associations

Civil Society and NGOs

- Organisations supporting entrepreneurship, skills development, women's and youth economic empowerment, and social enterprises

Academia and Research Institutions

- Universities
- TVET colleges
- Think tanks focused on industrial policy, skills development, and innovation

Development Partners and IFIs

- UN agencies (ILO, UNDP, UNIDO, FAO)
- World Bank

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2.3.2 Strategic Priority II

Promoting Good Governance, Accountability, Rights and Addressing Safety Deficits

This priority addresses governance, safety, and accountability.

The UN will support:

- Strengthened anti-corruption mechanisms, oversight functions, and institutional accountability frameworks adopted across key government departments, promoting policy coherence and ethical conduct and reducing impunity, waste, and inefficient use of resources.
- Strengthened capacity of the judiciary, law enforcement agencies, and community-based organisations to enhance justice delivery and implement effective crime prevention strategies with parliamentary oversight.
- Strengthened institutionalised mechanisms for dialogue, participation, and labour market governance.
- Spending efficiency, asset recovery, and anti-money laundering mechanisms institutionalised to strengthen financial integrity.
- Strengthened capacity of local government for integrated planning, budgeting, and improved service delivery.

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Outcome 3

Accountable and Responsive Governance Institutions Ensuring Quality Public Services, Human Rights and Safety for All

IF South Africa is to build a safe, inclusive, and rights-based society under Strategic Priority 2, then governance systems must be strengthened to ensure accountability, transparency, and effective service delivery;

IF anti-corruption mechanisms, oversight functions, and institutional accountability frameworks are adopted across key government departments, then ethical conduct will be promoted, impunity reduced, and resources used more efficiently;

IF the judiciary, law enforcement agencies, and community-based organisations have strengthened capacity and parliamentary oversight, then justice delivery will improve and effective crime-prevention strategies will be implemented;

IF local government institutions strengthen their capacity for integrated planning, budgeting, and service delivery;

IF spending efficiency, asset recovery, and anti-money-laundering mechanisms are institutionalised, then financial integrity will be safeguarded and public trust reinforced;

IF institutional mechanisms for dialogue, participation, and labour-market governance are strengthened;

THEN stakeholder engagement and accountability will increase, leading to better-informed, more transparent, and effectively enforced policies and, ultimately, to more inclusive and equitable socio-economic outcomes.

For these outputs to translate into tangible change, government must sustain a high-level commitment to governance reform and ethical leadership. If legislatures, Chapter 9 institutions, and courts are empowered and adequately resourced, they will be able to fulfil their constitutional mandates. If civil society and the media continue to exercise their watchdog role, accountability will be sustained and public awareness strengthened. If donors and partners align support for public sector reform, justice, and decentralisation, reforms will be both adequately financed and technically supported.

This outcome will leave no one behind if it addresses the barriers faced by women, youth, persons with disabilities, and poor and rural communities that are disproportionately affected by corruption and service backlogs. If informal workers, migrants, and survivors of GBV gain improved access to justice and protection, governance will become more inclusive and responsive to marginalised voices. By expanding access to fair and transparent services and embedding participation in decision-making, institutions will better reflect societal needs and priorities.

Sustainability will be secured if national and sub-national systems for financial management, ethics enforcement, and oversight are institutionalised. If citizen-engagement platforms, participatory budgeting, and social compacts are embedded, people will remain central to governance processes. If public institutions build their capacity to integrate accountability and human rights into service frameworks, reforms will endure beyond project cycles. Establishing feedback loops through which citizen voices shape decisions and institutional performance is monitored openly will support continuous improvement and responsiveness.

If partnerships are harnessed effectively, progress will accelerate. Government institutions such as the Department of Public Service and Administration, National Treasury, the Department of Cooperative Governance, Parliament, and judicial and oversight bodies must lead. If civil society, academia, traditional leadership, and the media collaborate, civic monitoring and capacity-building will be strengthened. If bilateral and multilateral partners such as the EU, USAID, and GIZ align support for transparency and justice reform, reforms will have the resources required to succeed. Coordination with Chapter 9 institutions will be essential to uphold constitutional mandates. In this environment, the UN will act as a trusted adviser, capacity-builder, and bridge, ensuring that reforms remain both people-centred and institutionally robust.

This outcome also contributes to national, regional, and global agendas. If South Africa advances its National Anti-Corruption Strategy and commitments under the Open Government Partnership, domestic reforms will align with global governance frameworks. By embedding human rights instruments such as the UPR, CEDAW, ICCPR and the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize Convention, 1948 (No 87), and the Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98), into governance systems, inclusive and rights-based approaches will be institutionalised. Regionally, alignment with AU Agenda 2063 and SADC experiences in decentralisation and anti-corruption will strengthen cooperation and mutual learning.

The pathway to results rests on key assumptions: that there is political will to tackle corruption and strengthen accountability, that Parliament, judiciary, and oversight bodies remain independent and effective, that communities and civil society are engaged and enabled to participate, and that local governments are resourced and incentivised to improve delivery. If these assumptions hold, then governance reforms will create the trust, accountability, and inclusiveness necessary for South Africa to move towards resilient, rights-based, and people-centred development.

This priority also focuses on tackling inequality and unemployment by driving inclusive and sustainable growth. The UN will support:

- Integrated GBV prevention and response programmes implemented alongside expanded access to mental health services for survivors and affected communities.
- Empowered citizen engagement in governance processes (planning, budgeting, service delivery, monitoring, and evaluation) at all levels.
- Development of intersectional LNOB targeting frameworks to address overlapping vulnerabilities in programming.

Outcome 4

A Safe, Enabling Society which Fosters Participation, Ethics, and Rights-Based Values

IF South Africa is to achieve Strategic Priority 2 on promoting good governance, accountability, and addressing safety deficits, it must foster a safe and enabling society grounded in ethics, participation, and rights-based values;

IF integrated GBV prevention and response programmes are implemented, together with expanded access to mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) for survivors and affected communities;

THEN communities will become more resilient and levels of violence will decline. If citizens are empowered to engage meaningfully in governance processes such as planning, budgeting, service delivery, and monitoring;

THEN public institutions will become more accountable, responsive, and trusted.

IF intersectional Leave No One Behind frameworks are developed to address overlapping vulnerabilities;

THEN excluded and marginalised groups will gain fairer access to justice, services, and participation in society.

IF the Government, particularly the departments responsible for health, social development, justice, policing, and traditional leadership, commits to multisectoral GBV action plans and scales MHPSS services;

THEN institutional responses to violence and trauma will be strengthened.

IF civil society and community-based organisations maintain and expand grassroots support networks;

THEN survivor-centred and community-driven accountability will be sustained.

IF academic institutions contribute evidence and norm-change strategies;

THEN policymaking will be better informed and social attitudes will evolve.

IF the private sector and the media promote inclusive and ethical practices;

THEN responsible communication and positive social change will be advanced.

This outcome will leave no one behind if women and girls, particularly survivors of GBV, gain access to survivor-centred justice and care; if children and adolescents affected by violence or trauma are supported; if LGBTQIA+ individuals are protected from discrimination; and if persons with mental health conditions, disabilities, migrants, refugees, and marginalised youth are included in services and civic participation. If rights-based reforms are implemented and community empowerment strengthened, then structural inequalities and exclusion will be reduced.

Sustainability will be strengthened if GBV and MHPSS services are institutionalised within national and provincial plans and budgets; if robust data and monitoring systems track coverage and equity; and if the capacity of public servants, justice actors, and health and social workers is systematically built. If social cohesion programmes are nationally owned and participation mechanisms embedded, then citizen voices will remain integral to governance, reducing mistrust and strengthening the social contract.

If partnerships are effectively mobilised, this outcome will gain traction. Government entities, including those responsible for social development, health, justice, policing, cooperative governance, and women, youth and persons with disabilities, must lead implementation. If civil society, women's groups, traditional leaders, and activists are empowered to anchor social norm change, then grassroots accountability will be strengthened. If development partners such as the EU and GIZ align funding and technical support, then reform and scale-up will be enabled. If regional and continental institutions such as SADC and the AU Gender Unit engage, then peer review, harmonisation, and learning will support sustained regional solidarity. The UN will act as a neutral convenor and technical partner, creating space for dialogue, alignment, and evidence-informed policymaking.

If South Africa implements this outcome, it will also strengthen its commitments under the UPR, CEDAW, CRC, the Conventions Nos. 100 and 111, the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No.138), the Worst Forms of Child Labour, 1999 (No.182), the Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No.190) and the National Strategic Plan on GBVF. It will reinforce continental obligations under the AU Women, Peace and Security agenda and the SADC Gender Protocol, while bridging humanitarian and development actions to ensure protection in vulnerable communities. If xenophobia, hate speech, and cross-border GBV are addressed through regional cooperation, then solidarity, stability, and inclusion will improve across Southern Africa.

Achievement of this outcome rests on key assumptions. If political will and commitment to human rights, gender equality, and social cohesion remain strong, then governance reforms will be sustained. If government and traditional leadership support rights-based approaches and citizens are willing to participate, then inclusive development will take root. If multisectoral frameworks are aligned and funded, if security and law enforcement institutions uphold ethical conduct, and if cultural norms shift towards inclusivity, then public trust in state institutions will grow and dignity, security, and mutual respect will be strengthened.

The UN Country Team will play a central role. UN Women, UNFPA, WHO, and UNICEF will lead on GBV, MHPSS, and service integration. OHCHR and UNDP will advance human rights, governance, and platforms for social compacting. UNESCO, IOM, and UNAIDS will focus on social norm change, stigma reduction, and inclusive outreach. UN-Habitat will support urban planning for social inclusion and urban safety. If these agencies combine their expertise in health, rights, gender justice, social protection, and community engagement, then South Africa will further strengthen its path towards a safe, cohesive, and ethically grounded society in which all people live with dignity and trust in one another and in their institutions.

Partnerships for Promoting Good Governance, Accountability, and Addressing Safety Deficits

To realise investments supporting South Africa's economic transformation over the next five years, the UN will engage with key public institutions responsible for financing, data, policy, strategy, and programmes linked to inclusive growth and structural transformation under Outcome 1. This will involve active participation in relevant sector working groups and platforms, including those focused on industrialisation, employment creation, small business development, digitalisation, energy transition, trade and investment, and infrastructure development.

Government
- Department of Justice and Constitutional Development (DoJ&CD)
- Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA)
- National Treasury
- Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA)
- South African Police Service (SAPS)
- National Prosecuting Authority (NPA)
- Independent Electoral Commission (IEC)
- Parliament and provincial legislatures
- Municipalities

Independent Institutions and Oversight Bodies
- Public Protector
- South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC)
- Auditor-General
- Special Investigating Unit (SIU)
- Financial Intelligence Centre (FIC)
- Independent Police Investigative Directorate (IPID)

Judiciary and Legal Sector
- Constitutional Court
- Legal Aid South Africa
- Law societies
- Bar Councils

Civil Society and Community Organizations
- CNGOs and CBOs focusing on human rights, anti-corruption, GBV prevention, migrant protection, and civic participation
- Faith-based organisations
- Traditional leadership structures

Private Sector and Media
- Business Unity South Africa (BUSA)
- Sector associations
- Investigative media platforms promoting corporate integrity, transparency, and accountability

Labour and Social Partners
- Trade unions
- Employer associations
- Community safety forums supporting participatory governance and workplace accountability

Academia and Think Tanks
- Research institutions and universities advancing governance reforms, justice delivery, and crime prevention strategies

Regional and International Partners
- UN agencies (UNDP, UNODC, UN Women, OHCHR, UNICEF, IOM)
- AU governance frameworks
- SADC Organ on Politics, Defence, and Security
- Bilateral and multilateral partners providing technical and financial support for governance and safety reforms

2.3.3 Strategic Priority III

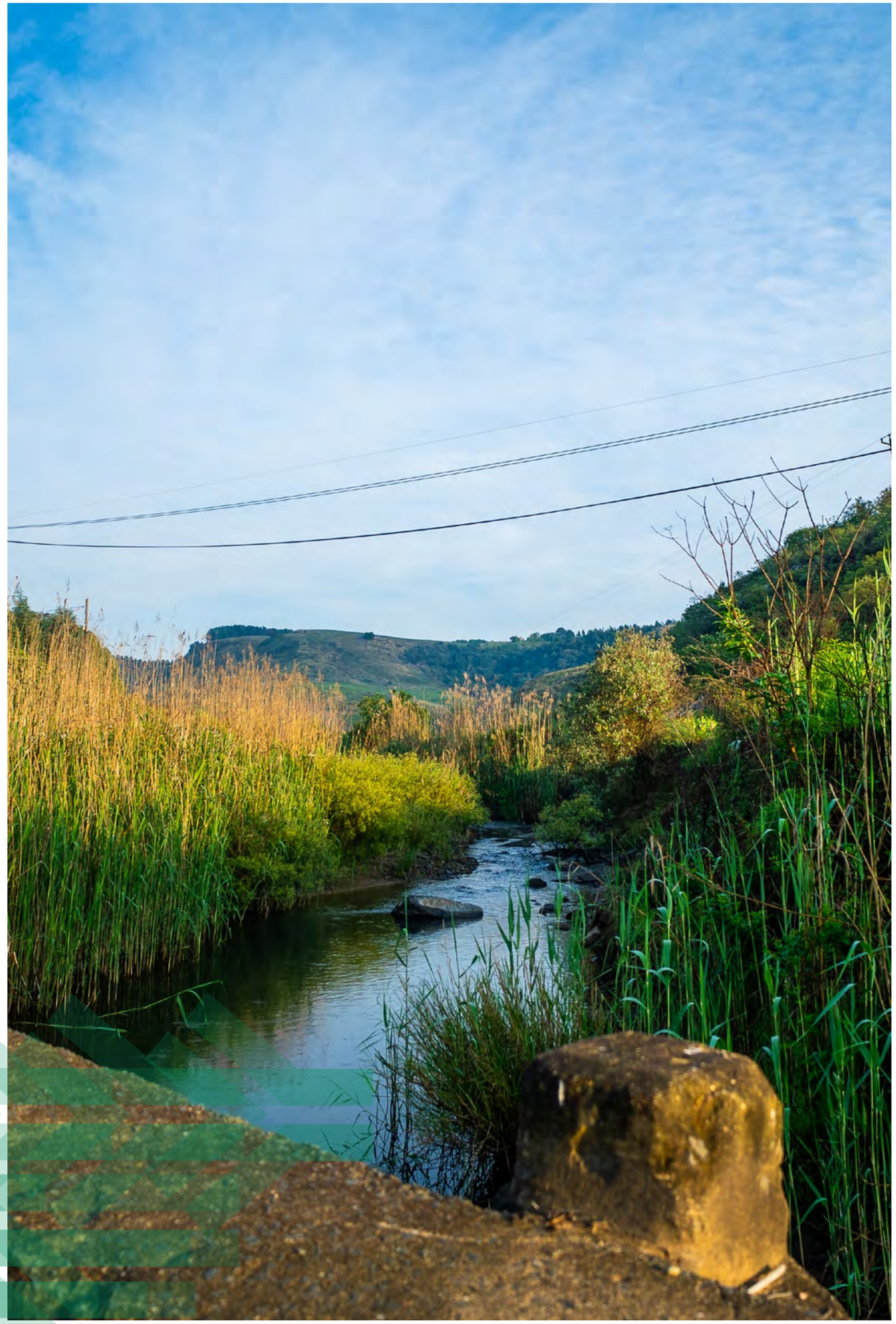
Building Resilience Through Sustainability and Risk Preparedness

This priority focuses on resilience-building and sustainability.

The UN will support:

- The validation of national frameworks such as the VNR for the SDGs, the NDCs, and the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans, to ensure coherence and effectiveness in environmental action.
- Strengthening institutional capacity and workforce skills, as well as data availability and reporting systems, to enable evidence-based decision-making in meeting environmental commitments.
- Mobilising diverse financing streams, including from development banks, to ensure that climate, biodiversity, and sustainability goals are adequately resourced and implemented at scale.
- Ensuring that rural communities, women, youth, indigenous groups, and informal workers have access to climate-smart practices, secure land rights, and green jobs.
- Encouraging cross-sectoral coordination, private sector investment, academic and civil society engagement, and regional collaboration (e.g., with SADC and AU) to scale green economy pathways and protect transboundary ecosystems.

United Nations South Africa Cooperation Framework 2026-2030



Outcome 5

Sustainable economic growth and resilient livelihoods enabled through environmental stewardship and ecosystem-based approaches.

IF national policies and strategies, including the Voluntary National Review for the SDGs, the Nationally Determined Contributions on climate change, and the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans, are revised, updated, and validated to provide the overarching framework for action;

IF institutional capacity and workforce skills are strengthened to support environmental management and climate action;

IF reliable data and reporting systems are in place to track progress towards commitments under multilateral environmental agreements and enable accountability and informed decision-making;

THEN large-scale implementation of sustainable development priorities becomes feasible, ensuring that climate, biodiversity, and sustainability goals are adequately resourced through diverse and sustainable financing streams.

IF South Africa accelerates environmental transformation through circular economy innovation, biodiversity protection, renewable energy efficiency, and nature-based ecotourism;

IF climate-smart agriculture and blue economy initiatives are implemented to protect livelihoods while conserving ecosystems and biodiversity;

IF disaster risk management frameworks, including early warning systems and anticipatory action, are adopted at national, provincial, and municipal levels;

THEN communities will be better prepared for climate shocks, reducing vulnerability and losses while fostering inclusive and sustainable growth.

IF government ensures cross-departmental coordination among environment, agriculture, rural development, and finance sectors, supported by clear budget allocations;

IF private sector actors invest in green value chains across energy, water, and agriculture;

IF academia and civil society contribute through research, community-based monitoring, and public awareness;

IF development banks and donors mobilise infrastructure investment and technology transfer;

THEN coherence in policy and implementation will be strengthened and green economy pathways can be scaled and sustained.

This outcome will leave no one behind if rural communities, particularly smallholder farmers and pastoralists, gain access to climate-smart practices; if women and youth in climate-sensitive sectors receive secure land rights and resources; if indigenous and traditional communities benefit from ecosystem co-management; if informal workers are protected against the shocks of environmental degradation; and if the urban poor living in high-risk informal settlements are supported through resilience strategies. If inclusive access to climate finance, sustainable technologies, and green jobs is promoted, then vulnerable groups will participate in and benefit from the green transition.

Sustainability will be strengthened if climate resilience and biodiversity targets are institutionalised in development plans and budgets, if multi-stakeholder platforms ensure coordination across governance levels, and if environmental monitoring systems and research partnerships reinforce evidence-based policymaking. If human capacity in environmental management and natural resource governance is built and retained, then South Africa will maintain the expertise required to sustain long-term resilience.

If partnerships are mobilised effectively, then progress will be accelerated. Government departments, including those responsible for environment, agriculture, water and sanitation, forestry, and rural development, must lead implementation. If development partners, including the Global Environment Facility, the Green Climate Fund, and bilateral donors, align financing, then large-scale environmental priorities will be implemented. If the private sector supports green investment and responsible business practices, then sustainable value chains will expand. If research institutions contribute evidence and innovation, then adaptive solutions will remain at the forefront. If regional bodies such as SADC and the AU harmonise policies and protect transboundary ecosystems, then resilience will extend beyond national borders.

If this outcome is achieved, then South Africa will advance its NDCs, National Adaptation Strategy, and biodiversity obligations under multilateral agreements, while also strengthening regional strategies such as the SADC Climate Change Strategy and AU Agenda 2063. If disaster risks are reduced, then the humanitarian–development–peace nexus will be reinforced, particularly in climate-vulnerable communities. If transboundary ecosystems are co-managed and regional cooperation strengthened, then South Africa will contribute to continental initiatives such as the Great Green Wall and AFR100, positioning itself as a leader in sustainable development.

This outcome assumes that policies and strategies are consistently implemented and supported by adequate budgets and legislation; that environmental institutions are capacitated to lead; that communities adopt climate-smart agriculture and ecosystem restoration practices; and that green financing mechanisms remain accessible and aligned with national priorities.

The UN Country Team will play a pivotal role. UNDP, UNEP, UN-Habitat, FAO, and WFP will support climate adaptation, sustainable food systems, and nature-based livelihoods. UNESCO, ILO, and UN-Habitat will promote environmental education, green jobs, and urban resilience. UNIDO and UNCTAD will advance green industry and sustainable value chains. If these agencies combine their technical expertise, global best practices, and tested tools, then South Africa will strengthen its resilience, reduce vulnerabilities, and accelerate its transition towards a sustainable, inclusive, and climate-ready future.

Partnerships for Building Resilience Through Sustainability and Risk Preparedness

Government Institutions
- Department of Justice and Constitutional Development (DoJ&CD)
- Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA)
- Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA)
- South African Police Service (SAPS)
- National Prosecuting Authority (NPA)
- Department of Home Affairs (migration governance)
- Department of Social Development (protection services)
- National Treasury (public financial management, anti-money laundering)
- Parliament and provincial legislatures
- Municipalities and local government structures

Independent Institutions and Oversight Bodies
- Public Protector
- Auditor-General of South Africa (AGSA)
- South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC)
- Independent Electoral Commission (IEC)
- Independent Police Investigative Directorate (IPID)
- Special Investigating Unit (SIU)
- Financial Intelligence Centre (FIC)

Judiciary and Legal Sector
- Constitutional Court, High Courts, Magistrate Courts
- Legal Aid South Africa
- Law societies
- Bar Councils

Civil Society and Community Organizations
- NGOs working on governance, accountability, anti-corruption, human rights, and GBV prevention.
- Faith-based organizations
- Community safety forums and civic movements
- Traditional and indigenous leadership structures

Private Sector and Media
- Business Unity South Africa (BUSA) and business associations promoting ethical corporate governance
- Investigative media platforms advancing transparency and watchdog journalism

Labour and Social Partners
- Trade unions
- Employer associations
- Community organizations engaged in participatory governance

Academia and Think Tanks
- Universities and governance research institutes
- Independent think tanks on justice reform, decentralisation, and anti-corruption

Regional and International Partners
- UN agencies (UNDP, UNODC, UN Women, OHCHR, UNICEF, IOM, UNESCO)
- AU governance frameworks, African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM)
- SADC Organ on Politics, Defence, and Security
- Bilateral and multilateral partners (EU, GIZ, USAID, DFID, etc.) providing technical and financial supporting governance and justice reforms

2.4 Synergies Between Cooperation Framework Outcomes

The Cooperation Framework for South Africa emphasises an integrated approach to sustainable development through the three interlinked strategic priorities outlined above: Supporting Economic Growth and Social Inclusion; Tackling Structural Poverty and Inequality; Promoting Good Governance, Accountability and Rights, and Addressing Safety Deficits; and Building Resilience through Sustainability and Risk Preparedness. Each outcome under these priorities is mutually reinforcing, generating synergies that amplify overall development impact. This approach strengthens South Africa's pathway towards inclusive growth, resilience, and sustainability, while contributing to continental commitments under AU Agenda 2063 and global goals under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The integrated design of the Cooperation Framework also promotes the humanitarian–development–peace nexus, ensuring that prevailing poverty, deepening inequality, and governance deficits are addressed within a coherent, multi-sectoral framework.

More specifically, these synergies reflect clear linkages across the economic, environmental, and social dimensions of the SDGs, underpinned by South Africa's National Development Plan (Vision 2030), the MTDP, the NSP-GBVF, and the National Climate Change Response Policy.

Synergistic Interactions: Economic and Social Transformation Outcomes

The outcome on job creation and economic transformation focuses on advancing livelihoods through inclusive growth, industrialisation, a just energy transition, and digital innovation, and aligns closely with the **Social Transformation** priority, which seeks to expand human capabilities by strengthening health, education, nutrition, and social protection systems. If South Africa creates decent jobs in the green, care, and digital economies, demand for a healthy, educated, and skilled workforce will increase. This demand can only be met if education systems provide quality learning, skilling, and training opportunities, and if health systems ensure the well-being and productivity of workers. Economic growth therefore depends on the social sector's capacity to deliver inclusive and resilient human capital.

Similarly, a resilient economy reinforces social stability. As employment and incomes grow, dependence on social safety nets declines, allowing social services to focus on improving quality and expanding equity. Conversely, social protection, healthcare, and education enhance household resilience, ensuring that economic shocks do not push vulnerable groups deeper into poverty. This virtuous cycle illustrates the interdependence between inclusive growth and social well-being in South Africa.

Synergistic Interactions: Economic and Governance Outcomes

Economic transformation requires effective governance, accountability, and transparent regulation. Without functional and ethical institutions, industrialisation and job creation cannot be sustained. The **Transformational Governance** priority is therefore indispensable to economic progress.

If governance systems are strengthened to enhance accountability, reduce corruption, and deliver efficient public services, the business environment becomes more attractive to investment, small enterprises gain fairer opportunities, and resources are more equitably distributed. Transparent and accountable governance also builds public trust, encouraging private sector participation and resource mobilisation for transformative investments, including in renewable energy, infrastructure, and green innovation.

Conversely, inclusive economic growth supports governance stability. When citizens experience tangible improvements in livelihoods and opportunities, trust in state institutions increases, reinforcing social contracts and political legitimacy. Together, these dynamics create an enabling environment for structural reforms and democratic consolidation.

Synergistic Interactions: Social and Governance Outcomes

The **Social Transformation** centred on equitable access to quality education, health, and social protection, directly supports **Transformational Governance** by empowering citizens to participate meaningfully in governance processes. When people benefit from accessible and quality services, they are better positioned to engage in civic dialogue, policy oversight, and social accountability. A healthy and educated population strengthens democracy by enhancing agency and participation. In turn, good governance ensures that these services are delivered equitably and transparently, reinforcing trust and reducing exclusion.

By mainstreaming a human rights–based approach across programming and embedding citizen participation in planning, budgeting, and service delivery, governance reforms become more people-centred. This fosters inclusive decision-making, accountability, and social cohesion, which are essential for addressing South Africa's history of inequality and exclusion.

Synergistic Interactions: Economic, Social, Governance and Resilience Building and Environmental Sustainability

The Cooperation Framework 2026-2030 highlights the synergies between economic and social transformation, governance reform and resilience-building, and environmental sustainability. By pursuing these priorities in an integrated way, the Cooperation Framework enables progress in one area to reinforce advances in others, thereby strengthening inclusive growth, social cohesion, institutional effectiveness, and environmental stewardship. This integrated approach reinforces South Africa's trajectory towards resilience and sustainability and aligns with continental objectives under AU Agenda 2063 and global commitments under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It also ensures that efforts to reduce poverty, inequality, and governance deficits are pursued through a coherent, multi-sectoral framework.

2.5 Sustainability

The sustainability of the Cooperation Framework 2026-2030 in South Africa is grounded in its alignment with the National Development Plan 2030, national sectoral strategies, and the country's long-term vision of eliminating poverty, reducing inequality, and building a more inclusive and capable state. While addressing deep-rooted structural challenges, the Cooperation Framework is also forward-looking, building on the foresight analysis of the country context and anticipating newly identified uncertainties. It is designed to ensure that interventions are nationally owned, institutionally embedded, and financially viable, thereby providing a durable foundation for long-term results.

Sustainability will be pursued through several interlinked approaches. First, by placing capacity development and institutional strengthening at the centre of all interventions, the UN will support national, provincial, and municipal institutions to design, implement, and monitor policies that respond to both current and emerging concerns. This includes strengthening data systems, evidence-based planning, accountability mechanisms, and coordination platforms to ensure continuity beyond the period of direct UN engagement.

Second, sustainability will be reinforced through a deliberate focus on inclusive systems and rights-based approaches. By prioritising vulnerable and marginalised groups and advancing equity, the Cooperation Framework seeks to ensure that all South Africans—particularly women, youth, persons with disabilities, migrants, and people in rural or underserved communities—are able to contribute to and benefit from development outcomes. Integrating Leave No One Behind principles into policy and service delivery helps to reduce structural inequalities and strengthen social cohesion.

Third, the Cooperation Framework will place strong emphasis on financial sustainability. Through partnerships with government, development finance institutions, private sector actors, and multilateral climate and development funds, the UN will support the mobilisation of diverse and innovative financing instruments. These include impact investment, blended finance, climate finance, and other mechanisms that expand fiscal space for inclusive growth, service delivery, and social protection.

Fourth, policy and programme coherence will be strengthened by systematically integrating climate resilience, gender equality, and digital transformation across all outcomes. In practice, this includes embedding climate-smart approaches in agriculture, supporting a just transition in the energy sector, building resilient health and education systems, and strengthening accountable governance. This ensures that sustainability is not treated as a stand-alone objective, but as a cross-cutting principle underpinning all interventions.

Finally, sustainability will be advanced through scalability and replication. The Cooperation Framework 2026-2030 will prioritise models, pilots, and proof-of-concept initiatives with strong potential for scale-up by government and partners. By institutionalising successful approaches — for example, embedding GBV prevention in community health systems, integrating skills development into national curricula, or mainstreaming circular economy practices in industrial policy — this Cooperation Framework ensures that results are sustained beyond the cooperation cycle.

In sum, the sustainability of the Cooperation Framework lies in its capacity to strengthen institutional ownership, mobilise sustainable financing, embed inclusive and rights-based practices, and promote climate and environmental resilience. Together, these strategies will enable South Africa to make durable progress towards the NDP 2030 and the SDGs, while reinforcing its role as a regional leader in sustainable development.

2.6 Cooperation Framework Cross-Cutting Principles

The Cooperation Framework 2026–2030 is guided by a set of cross-cutting principles that shape all programming and ensure that results are inclusive, sustainable, and transformative. These principles provide the normative and operational foundation for UN support and ensure coherence across outcomes and alignment with national and international commitments.

1. Leave No One Behind
It is a core operational principle of the Cooperation Framework 2026–2030, reflecting a commitment to ensure that no individual or community is excluded from development gains. Particular attention will be directed to groups most affected by structural inequality and exclusion, including women, youth, persons with disabilities, people living with HIV, informal workers, migrants, refugees, and rural and township populations. By systematically embedding equity across all interventions, the Cooperation Framework aims to reduce disparities and remove barriers to participation and access.

2. Human Rights–Based Approach (HRBA)
Programming will be firmly grounded in South Africa's constitutional values and in the country's obligations under international human rights treaties and normative standards. This entails supporting institutions to uphold rights, strengthening accountability mechanisms, and enabling citizens to claim their rights. The Cooperation Framework will also incorporate recommendations from UN human rights mechanisms, including the UPR and treaty bodies, to ensure coherence between governance reforms and the protection of rights.

3. Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
Gender will be mainstreamed across all outcomes, with a specific focus on reducing inequalities in access to resources, opportunities, and decision-making. This Cooperation Framework will also support implementation of the National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide and advance the economic inclusion of women and girls. Gender-responsive budgeting, monitoring, and policy reforms will be promoted to institutionalise sustainable and systemic change.

4. Climate Action and Environmental Sustainability
In recognition of South Africa's vulnerability to climate change and environmental degradation, the Cooperation Framework will integrate climate-smart strategies, biodiversity conservation, circular economy initiatives, and a just energy transition across all objectives. Environmental sustainability will not constitute a stand-alone priority; rather, it will inform economic transformation, social development, and governance reforms, in alignment with South Africa's NDCs and national climate strategies. The country targets 398–510 $MtCO_2e$ by 2025 and 350–420 $MtCO_2e$ by 2030 and aims to reach net-zero emissions by 2050 through its Low-Emission Development Strategy, demonstrating its commitment to sustainable growth and global climate objectives.

5. Resilience and Risk-Informed Programming
Strengthening resilience to shocks, including economic crises, climate-related disasters, pandemics, and governance risks, is central to the Cooperation Framework. Programmes will be designed to anticipate risk, integrate disaster risk reduction, and reinforce preparedness at national, provincial, and community levels. This approach is intended to protect development gains and enhance the capacity of systems to withstand and recover from future disruptions.

6. Digital Transformation and Innovation
This Cooperation Framework will leverage South Africa's digitalisation agenda to expand opportunities in education, health, governance, and entrepreneurship. Digital tools, data systems, and innovation ecosystems will be incorporated into programme design to improve efficiency, extend reach to marginalised groups, and support the transition towards a knowledge-based economy.

7. Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships and Coherence
Implementation will be anchored in collaboration with government, civil society, the private sector, academia, development partners, and regional bodies. Partnerships will be structured to strengthen national ownership, align with the African Union's Agenda 2063, and promote coherence across humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding efforts.

United Nations South Africa Cooperation Framework 2026-2030

2.7 UN Comparative Advantages and Configuration

The United Nations in South Africa brings a distinct set of comparative advantages that position it as a trusted partner in supporting the country's transformation agenda under the **NDP Vision 2030**, the **SDGs,** and regional frameworks such as **AU Agenda 2063** and **SADC protocols**. These advantages derive from the UN's global mandate, neutrality, convening power, technical expertise, and its capacity to connect South Africa's national priorities with international commitments.

Comparative Advantages

1. Normative Mandates and Human Rights Frameworks
The UN is uniquely positioned to support South Africa in fulfilling its international obligations under the UN Charter, human rights treaties, and multilateral frameworks. Through mechanisms such as the UPR, treaty bodies, and SDG reporting, the UN provides normative guidance that anchors governance, social, and economic reforms in rights-based principles.

2. Convening Power and Neutral Broker Role
As a trusted and impartial convener, the UN can bring together diverse stakeholders — government, civil society, the private sector, academia, development partners, and communities — within structured dialogue platforms. This role is particularly important in South Africa's complex governance and socio-political context, where inclusive multi-stakeholder partnerships are essential to advancing reform.

3. Technical Expertise and Global Knowledge
The UN system provides access to a wide range of technical expertise, global networks, and evidence-based practices that can be adapted to South Africa's context. Across areas such as climate adaptation, governance reform, gender equality, and digital innovation, the UN facilitates access to global best practices and supports their contextual application.

4. Regional and Global Linkages
The UN ensures that South Africa's development efforts are linked to broader regional and global agendas. This includes aligning national strategies with AU Agenda 2063, supporting South Africa's leadership within SADC, and leveraging its role as a G20 member to advance sustainable development, climate action, and social justice.

5. Multi-Sectoral and Integrated Approach
Through its diverse agencies, the UN offers integrated support across economic, social, environmental, and governance domains. This promotes coherence across outcomes, reduces fragmentation and duplication, and facilitates the mainstreaming of cross-cutting principles such as LNOB, gender equality, resilience, and climate action.

6. Capacity Development and Systems Strengthening
The UN has a strong track record in South Africa in supporting institutional capacity development, policy reform, and systems strengthening — including in social protection, labour markets, climate resilience, health, and governance. This upstream engagement supports long-term sustainability and strengthens national ownership.

UNCT Configuration

The UN Country Team (UNCT) in South Africa comprises resident and non-resident agencies working under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator. The configuration is designed to deliver the three strategic priorities of the Cooperation Framework through a coordinated, programmatic, and integrated approach.

▶ **Resident Agencies**

FAO · IFAD (Investing in rural people) · International Labour Organization · IOM UN MIGRATION · UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS (OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER) · UNAIDS · UNDP · UNFPA · UNHCR (The UN Refugee Agency) · UNIDO · unicef (for every child) · UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime) · UN environment programme · UN-HABITAT (FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE) · unesco · UNU WIDER · UN WOMEN · World Health Organization

▶ **Non-Resident Agencies:** And others contributing through technical expertise and programme support.

International Trade Centre · ITU · ECA · UNITED NATIONS UNCTAD · UNOPS

▶ **International Financial Institutions:** IFC, IMF, and the World Bank collaborate with the UNCT in areas such as economic reform, financing, and investment for sustainable development.

IFC · International Monetary Fund · THE WORLD BANK

▶ **Specialised UN mechanisms:** Including the UN Human Rights Office, the UN Joint SDG Fund, and partnerships with global vertical funds (e.g. GEF, GCF, Global Fund).

The UNCT works in close collaboration with the Government of South Africa, development partners, and other stakeholders through established coordination mechanisms, including Development Cooperation Forums, the National Coordination Steering Committee for the SDGs, Agenda 2063 and the SADC RISDP, sector working groups, and inter-agency task teams.

The configuration is flexible and adaptive, enabling the UN to respond to emerging challenges such as pandemics, climate shocks, migration dynamics, or governance crises. This adaptability ensures that the UN remains a relevant and effective partner throughout the implementation of the Cooperation Framework.

2.8 All Outcomes-Cross-Cutting Assumptions and Risks

The table below provides details on mitigation measures for assumptions and risks.

Table 5 | Risks and assumptions mitigations

Cross-Cutting Assumptions	Mitigation Measures
Political will, commitment and leadership remain strong and consistent, with the Government maintaining its commitment to implement SDG-aligned national strategies and reforms.	Maintain continuous high-level advocacy with government leaders; embed commitments in legislation and policy frameworks; and strengthen public accountability through regular progress reporting and multi-stakeholder review forums.
Institutional capacity is sufficient and effective — relevant public institutions have the resources, skills, and autonomy to deliver policies and programmes aligned with the SDGs and national priorities.	Provide targeted capacity-building and skills-development programmes; ensure adequate resourcing through budget advocacy; and strengthen institutional autonomy through legal and governance safeguards.
Reliable data and monitoring systems exist and are used — data systems are in place and used for decision-making, accountability, and SDG progress tracking (especially MEAs, VNRs, NDCs, and NBSAPs).	Invest in national statistical systems and digital infrastructure; standardise data collection and reporting; and promote open data access for stakeholders to improve transparency and evidence-based decision-making.
Sustainable and diversified financing streams are secured — domestic and external financing (public, private, and innovative instruments) remain available and resilient to shocks.	Develop blended finance mechanisms; expand innovative financing tools (e.g. green bonds and thematic bonds); and strengthen partnerships with the private sector and international donors to diversify funding sources.
Stakeholder coordination and partnerships are functional and inclusive — national and sub-national actors, development partners, civil society, and the private sector are aligned and actively collaborating.	Establish and maintain formal coordination platforms; promote joint planning and monitoring; and incentivise collaboration through shared targets and pooled resources.
Shifting geopolitical landscape — characterised by increased multipolarity, great power competition, rising nationalism, and erosion of trust in multilateral institutions — poses a significant risk to the UN's financial stability and its ability to effectively deliver technical assistance and fulfil its mandates.	Diversify the donor base and funding sources; strengthen partnerships with regional bodies and South–South cooperation platforms; and increase efficiency in resource use to mitigate funding volatility.
Weak or inconsistent political commitment — leadership or policy changes could deprioritise SDG implementation or delay reforms.	Embed SDG commitments in long-term national plans and legislation; engage across political parties; and maintain strong civil society and private sector advocacy.
Insufficient institutional capacity and staff turnover — high turnover, low capacity, or corruption may limit the effectiveness of policy delivery.	Develop institutional retention strategies; implement anti-corruption safeguards; and provide continuous training and succession planning.
Limited or unstable financing — economic downturns or fiscal constraints may disrupt investment in key SDG sectors (e.g. health, environment, and local governance).	Build fiscal resilience through diversified revenue streams; prioritise cost-effective interventions; and leverage private investment and development finance institutions.
Data gaps and weak monitoring frameworks — inadequate or unreliable data could impair accountability, SDG reporting, and evidence-based decision-making.	Strengthen statistical capacity; integrate data requirements into sectoral plans; and improve data quality assurance mechanisms.
Climate shocks, social unrest, or pandemics — external shocks (e.g. droughts, pandemics, or conflict) could derail planned outcomes, particularly those related to health, livelihoods, and the environment.	Implement adaptive and flexible programming; develop contingency funding; and strengthen disaster preparedness and response systems.
Poor intergovernmental or multi-stakeholder coordination — fragmentation, siloed planning, or lack of cooperation could hinder the coherence and impact of interventions.	Institutionalise cross-sectoral coordination mechanisms; align incentives for cooperation; and create integrated planning and reporting frameworks.

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3. COOPERATION FRAMEWORK IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

This Cooperation Framework is supported by governance structures that facilitate effective planning, implementation, monitoring, and oversight of sustainable development initiatives and programmes in South Africa. The UN in South Africa seeks to build on the progress achieved over the past 30 years of democracy to help foster a fair, resilient, and sustainable future for all. Implementation will include the development of Joint Workplans (JWPs) and agency-specific workplans, defining objectives, outcomes, roles, and resource-sharing arrangements among UN entities and partners. This collaborative approach ensures alignment with the Cooperation Framework's objectives while accommodating the specific requirements of individual programmes.

3.1 Implementation Strategy and Strategic Partnerships

The United Nations in South Africa plays a key role as a knowledge partner, providing policy advice and technical support in areas including social protection, renewable energy, inclusive economic growth, job creation, universal health coverage, education, and climate action. As it enters a new operational phase, its focus increasingly emphasises community engagement and multi-stakeholder collaboration to strengthen development outcomes.

The UNCT works with national and local government, communities, and other stakeholders to localise the SDGs and strengthen South Africa's development ecosystem through research, innovation, and partnerships. Six interconnected transition areas are prioritised for accelerated SDG implementation: food systems, energy access, digital connectivity, education, employment and social protection, and climate action. These pathways reflect national priorities and are fully integrated into the Cooperation Framework.

Achieving progress in these transitional areas and pathways necessitates integrated and coordinated efforts that address the needs of vulnerable populations and promote cooperation among social partners, including civil society, government, and international organisations. The Resident Coordinator's Office (RCO) within the UN oversees the work of the UNCT in the country, ensuring that the efforts of the various agencies align with the national development priorities outlined in the Cooperation Framework. Several formal joint structures exist between UN agencies and national partners to guide, coordinate, and monitor the activities of the Cooperation Framework.

Coordinating multi-stakeholder South-South cooperation is vital for South Africa's transformation in line with the 2030 Agenda, AU Agenda 2063, and the SADC RISDP 2020–2030. South-South Cooperation and Triangular Cooperation are key tools supporting the implementation of AU Agenda 2063 and the SDGs, particularly within SADC and beyond. Through these partnerships, the UNCT aligns South Africa's development priorities with regional and global initiatives, including AU Agenda 2063 and the SDGs.

3.2 Governance

This Cooperation Framework will be driven by a comprehensive and adaptable governance structure and coordination mechanism that brings together a wide range of stakeholders, including the United Nations, government entities, development partners, civil society organisations, and the private sector. This layered and hybrid approach promotes transparency and accountability, which are essential for effective planning, implementation, decision-making, and collaboration. By leveraging the respective strengths of each actor, the multi-stakeholder coordination framework enables the UN to remain flexible and responsive to South Africa's evolving development needs.

Coordination between UN agencies and national, development, and social partners under the Cooperation Framework will be conducted through existing mechanisms and structures designed to facilitate planning, implementation, and monitoring in support of agreed objectives and outcomes.

Figure 1 below illustrates the governance architecture and highlights how the roles of different actors are interconnected in advancing sustainable development.

Figure 1 | Internal UN Coordination Mechanisms

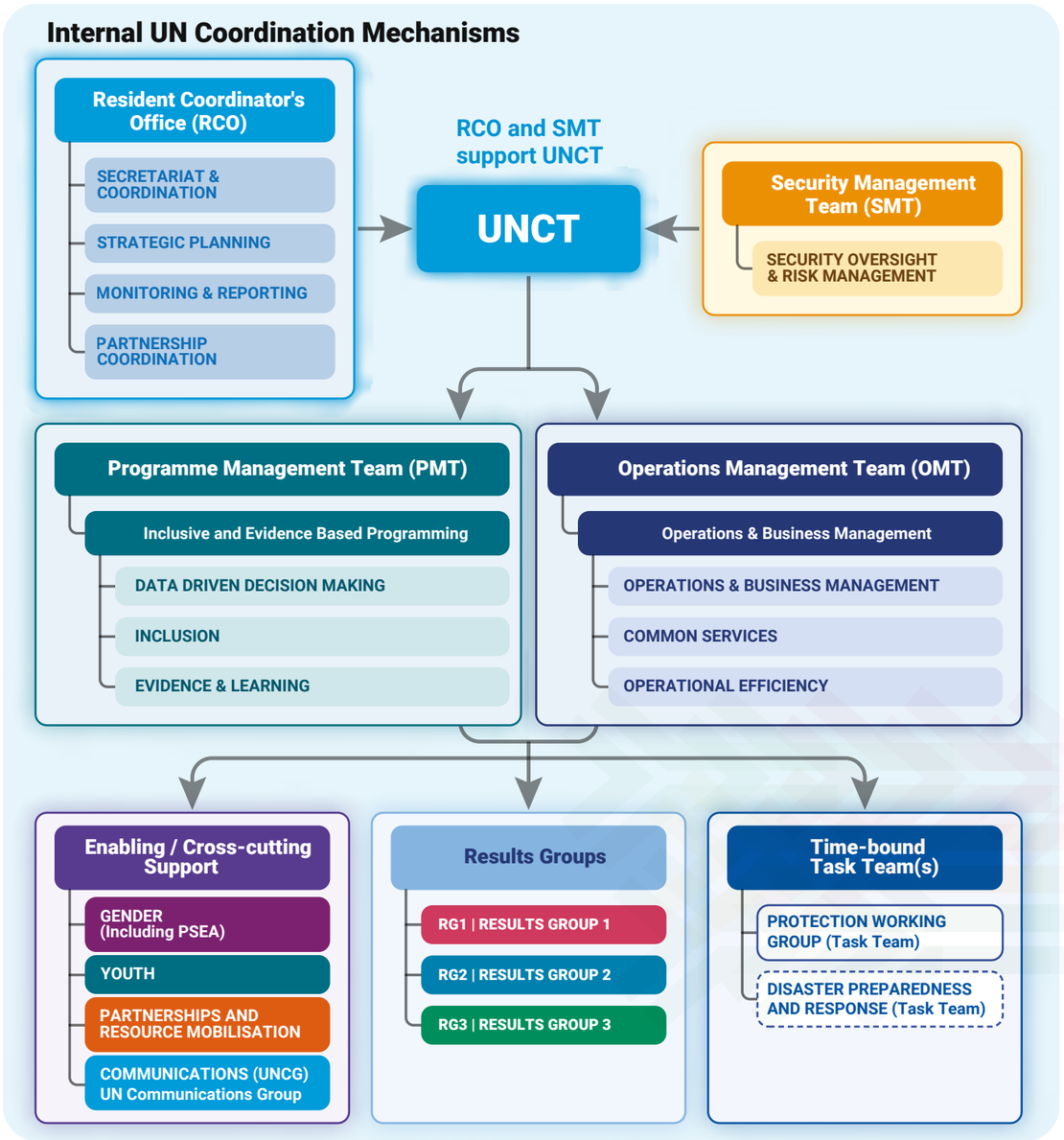
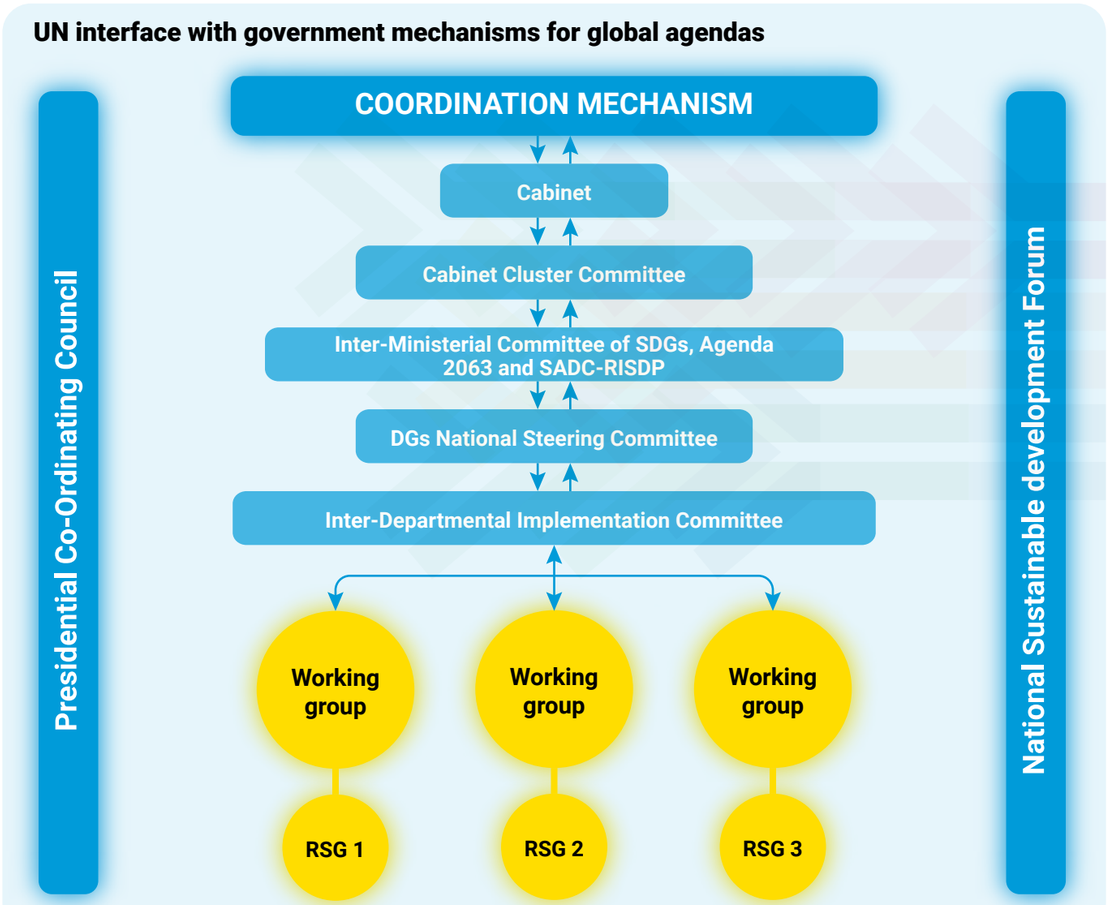


Figure 2 | UN interface with government mechanisms for global agendas.



Coordination structures that exist in the country.

Figure 2 illustrates how the UN in South Africa interfaces with government structures on global and regional agendas, including Agenda 2030, Agenda 2063, and the SADC RISDP, through the cluster system: Governance, State Capacity and Institutional Development (GSCID); Economic Sectors, Investment, Employment and Infrastructure Development (ESIEID); International Cooperation, Trade and Security (ICTS); Social Protection, Community and Human Development (SPCHD); and Justice, Crime Prevention and Security (JCPS).

This collaboration seeks to align UN interventions with national development priorities and to address key challenges related to poverty reduction, human development, governance, and international cooperation. Results Group 2, focusing on governance, accountability, and safety, works closely with the GSCID and JCPS clusters to leverage institutional expertise. UN programmes are aligned with government priorities to strengthen partnerships and maximise impact. The ICTS cluster includes the Department of International Relations and Cooperation, with which UN agencies collaborate on international policy engagement.

These partnerships promote coordinated action through the sharing of knowledge, resources, and good practices, thereby strengthening a responsive and coherent governance framework. Their effectiveness depends on shared ownership, cross-sectoral collaboration, contextual adaptation of goals, and transparent monitoring. South Africa's sustainable development trajectory is rooted in this collective responsibility, which is essential for achieving the SDGs and advancing a more equitable future.

Coordination Mechanism for the Implementation of the Cooperation Framework

Given South Africa's upper-middle-income status and the findings of the previous Cooperation Framework evaluation, the UN Country Team will not establish a new joint governance structure. Instead, the approach will prioritise the use of existing national coordination mechanisms in order to avoid duplication, enhance efficiency, and promote a more forward-looking model of development cooperation. This reflects both South Africa's institutional capacity and the UN's role as a strategic partner supporting nationally led systems.

At the strategic level, the Cooperation Framework will be steered through a governance mechanism convened under the **auspices of the Deputy President and co-chaired by the Resident Coordinator and the Minister in the Presidency for Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation**. This mechanism will **draw on the National Planning Commission and the National Coordinating Mechanism Steering Committee for the SDGs**, Agenda 2063 and SADC-RISDP[17] as the central platform for reviewing progress on the Sustainable Development Goals, discussing strategic priorities, and aligning UN support with the government's long-term vision. Through its integration into this forum, the UN ensures coherence between the Cooperation Framework and national planning processes, while strengthening accountability to both government and citizens.

At the implementation level, UN Results Groups will align with the **government's cluster system** by engaging directly with sectoral clusters for coordination, delivery, and reporting. This structure reduces overlap, enhances coherence, and enables targeted technical support. Results Group 1 (Economic and Social Inclusion) will engage primarily with ESIEID and SPCHD; Results Group 2 (Governance Transformation) with GSCID and JCPS; and Results Group 3 (Resilience and Environmental Sustainability) across all clusters. Results Groups will also facilitate cross-sectoral dialogue to enable integrated responses to complex challenges such as inequality, climate risks, and inclusive growth.

By embedding governance within these existing structures, the Cooperation Framework promotes national ownership, accountability, and sustainability. It also reaffirms the UN's role as a knowledge broker and convener, working alongside government, civil society, and other stakeholders to accelerate progress towards South Africa's development priorities and the SDGs.

17 Key stakeholders from government (national, provincial and local), parliament for oversight, civil society, private sector and academia are respresented in the coordination mechanism

Internal United Nations Coordination Mechanism

UN Country Team: The UNCT, led by the Resident Coordinator, serves as the central UN coordination and decision-making platform, with members jointly responsible for the use of resources, delivery of results, and adherence to UN principles and the Management Accountability Framework, particularly in the context of UN system reform. Under the RC's leadership, the UNCT brings together heads of agencies in South Africa for monthly strategic meetings, engaging all signatory UN agencies, funds, and programmes to the Cooperation Framework and mobilising resources to achieve the 2026–2030 goals. The UNCT also strengthens operational efficiency through strategies on business operations, communications, advocacy, partnerships, and resource mobilization, working closely with the PMT, OMT, and UNCG. In addition, it will establish a Youth Advisory Body to ensure meaningful and sustained youth engagement throughout the implementation of the Cooperation Framework.

Resident Coordinator Office (RCO): It coordinates, monitors, and supports the activities of the UNCT in the country, ensuring that the efforts of different agencies align with national development priorities as outlined in the Cooperation Framework. Several formal joint structures exist between UN agencies and national partners to guide, coordinate, and oversee activities under this Cooperation Framework. The RCO acts as the Secretariat for the Programme Management Team, organising meetings, recording minutes, and following up on decisions. It also plays a critical role in advancing the 2026–2030 goals through strategic planning, analysis, data management, communications, partnerships, and resource mobilization.

Programme Management Team: Overseen by the UNCT, the PMT comprises Deputy Representatives, Senior Technical Focal Points serving in the Results Groups, and focal points from other thematic areas. It is chaired by the head of an agency appointed by the UNCT. The PMT's core responsibilities include ensuring the quality of Results Group work, providing advisory support to the UNCT, engaging with the National Coordinating Steering Committee on programme-related issues, and promoting synergies and coherence across UN programming and implementation. The PMT also plays a central role in identifying joint programmes and fostering collaboration among UN agencies.

Results Groups: These groups coordinate efforts between the UN system and national, development, and social partners, aligned with the three strategic priorities of the Cooperation Framework. They comprise managers and technical staff from relevant UN agencies and meet four times a year, in accordance with their Terms of Reference.

Results Groups develop Joint Workplans detailing deliverables, responsibilities, costs, and resources. The Cooperation Framework Results Groups are internal UN bodies comprising active agencies across the five Outcomes, led by a Head of Agency and an alternate, rotating annually with a one-year term. Transitions occur in March to ensure continuity. Results Groups may establish sub-groups to support coordination, implementation, and delivery of Outcomes and to ensure comprehensive programme coverage..

In this context, the Results Groups oversee inter-agency coordination and technical support for implementing the Cooperation Framework Outcomes and Outputs. They prepare annual Joint Workplans in line with UNSDG guidance through UN INFO, ensuring that outputs are costed, resources are identified, funding gaps are reported, and plans are reviewed and updated regularly.

The Cooperation Framework will have three main Results Groups as follows:

- **Supporting Economic Growth and Social Inclusion and Tackling Structural Poverty and Inequality.**
- **Promoting Good Governance, Accountability, and addressing Safety Deficits.**
- **Building Resilience Through Sustainability and Risk Preparedness.**

Each Results Group includes a designated UNCG member for communications and advocacy and a member from the Monitoring and Evaluation Working Group to ensure alignment with results-based management (RBM) principles. Thematic Groups addressing cross-cutting issues are also integrated into all Results Groups to support coherence.

Thematic Groups: The UNCT has established internal coordination mechanisms to strengthen collaboration among agencies. Theme groups focused on Gender, Youth, HIV/AIDS, and Protection meet quarterly to facilitate engagement with communities on youth empowerment, gender equality, and disability inclusion, and to promote dialogue and volunteerism for social well-being and community resilience.

Other Inter-agency Groups: Additional inter-agency groups are tasked with facilitating coordination among UN agencies across various thematic areas.

The Operations Management Team (OMT) ensures the effective implementation of programmes through simplified and harmonised procedures, including the Business Operations Strategy (BOS), shared services, and common business solutions for financial management, reporting, procurement, and human resources management.

The M&E Working Group (MEwG) oversees the coordination, monitoring, and reporting of results under the Cooperation Framework. Its primary objective is to harmonise M&E methods and align the interventions of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework Results Groups in order to enhance consistency, promote best practices, and reduce transaction costs.

The Communications Group (UNCG) functions as a coordination body to ensure that agency communication efforts are complementary rather than competing. It strengthens communication initiatives by sharing resources and expertise, provides recommendations to the UNCT on communication matters, and identifies opportunities for collaboration and innovation to enhance the visibility and impact of UN programme activities. Composed of UN communication officers or focal points from participating agencies, the UNCG is coordinated by the United Nations Information Centre.

Partnerships and Resource mobilization Group seeks to strengthen collaboration and resource mobilization. This mechanism supports a coordinated "Deliver as One" approach, fostering strategic partnerships and aligned resource mobilization in support of United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework priorities. The PRM Group meets quarterly to review progress, align partnership efforts, and develop an annual workplan. It comprises the Chair and Co-Chair, representatives from the Resident Coordinator's Office, and Partnerships and Resource Mobilization focal points from UN agencies, funds, and programmes in South Africa.

Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) is a key priority for UNCT entities, with a strong focus on prioritising victims' rights and creating an environment in which sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) does not occur. SEA constitutes unacceptable behaviour and is strictly prohibited for UN personnel and UN implementing partners. UNCT entities will therefore pursue all appropriate means to protect against, prevent, and respond to SEA, and will require the same commitment from their partners.

Task Teams: To strengthen coordinated responses to the country's evolving crises, the United Nations will also establish inter-agency task teams to address critical issues related to the protection, inclusion, and resilience of all groups in South Africa. These task teams will focus on priority areas including Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA), disability inclusion, and disaster preparedness and response, ensuring that the needs and rights of those most at risk are systematically integrated into crisis planning and response efforts. By bringing together UN agencies, government partners, and civil society, the task teams will promote shared anticipatory actions, accountability, stronger safeguards, and more inclusive emergency responses, helping ensure that humanitarian and development interventions reach those most affected by economic, social, and climate-related shocks while building long-term community resilience.

In fulfilling the obligations articulated in the present Cooperation Framework, the UNCT and the Government of South Africa affirm their commitment to preventing and responding to reports of SEA in connection with personnel involved in common or joint projects. This entails: (i) adherence to common values on PSEA; (ii) the adoption of preventive measures against SEA; (iii) the investigation of allegations; and (iv) the application of appropriate corrective action when incidents occur, including the provision of support to victims in line with a victim-centred approach.

3.3 Joint workplans

Joint workplans covering Cooperation Framework outcomes, outputs, resources, SDG targets and indicators, along with gender equality, human rights, and other system-wide markers, will be developed annually for each Cooperation Framework outcome area. All UNCT members, whether physically present or not, will participate in preparing the Joint Workplans for the outcomes to which they contribute.

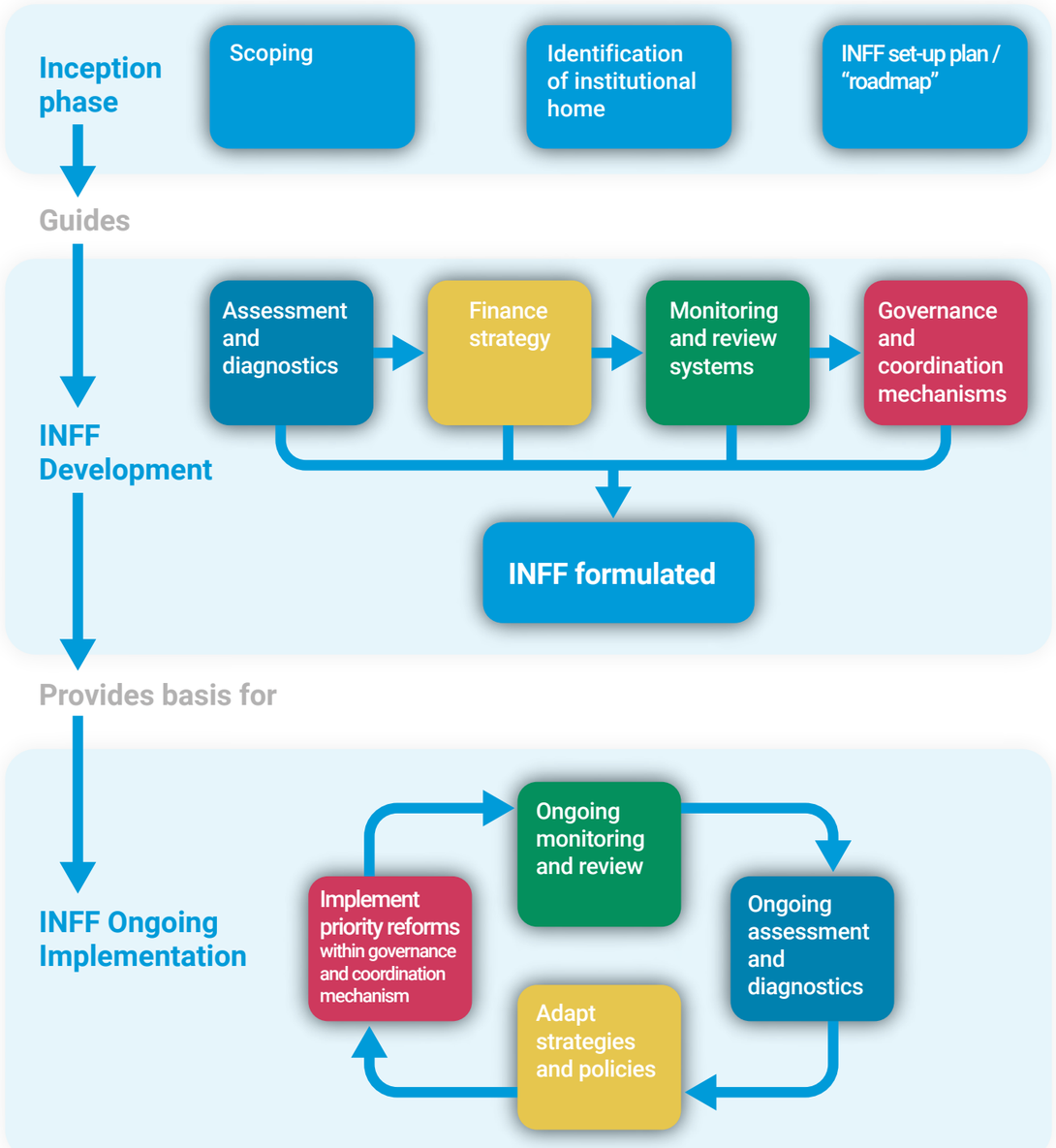
The annual JWPs, together with agency-specific workplans and project documents, will operationalise the Cooperation Framework as required. These JWPs, developed in consultation with key partners, will specify the results to be achieved towards the agreed common outcomes and will serve as agreements between UN agencies and each implementing partner regarding accountability for shared results and the use of resources. Wherever possible, UN agencies and partners will rely on the minimum necessary documentation — such as the signed Cooperation Framework and related workplans and project documents — to implement their programmes. When needed, project documents may incorporate relevant sections from the Cooperation Framework and workplans. Reflecting global efforts to increase inter-agency pooled funding, the UN in South Africa will continue to use Joint Programmes to enhance coordination and collaboration, in line with the Delivering as One approach.

The Cooperation Framework 2026-2030 will be implemented nationally under the overall coordination of DPME. Government departments, NGOs, INGOs and UN agencies will carry out programme activities. Cash assistance, including for travel, stipends, honoraria and other expenses, will be set at rates consistent with those used nationally, but not exceeding those applicable within the UN system, as outlined in International Civil Service Commission circulars.

3.4 Financing the Cooperation Framework and Advancing Sustainable Development

Advancing the goals of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework and fostering sustainable development in South Africa require significant investment and innovative financing solutions. The country's fiscal policy is guided by the NDP, which seeks to align public expenditure with the SDGs. However, due to limited fiscal space, an effective financing strategy must be comprehensive and capable of mobilising resources from diverse sources, including multilateral development banks, international financial institutions, private capital (both domestic and international), development partners and philanthropic organisations. Leveraging this varied funding pool is crucial to support coordinated, catalytic efforts on multiple development fronts. Ongoing low economic growth exacerbates structural challenges such as poverty, inequality and unemployment, further constraining the government's ability to deliver timely and impactful results aligned with public expectations.

Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF) Process



South Africa's budget deficit, expected to reach 3% of GDP by 2028/29, consistently surpasses economic growth, resulting in sustained high public debt. Although there has been a primary surplus for several years, mid-term forecasts indicate that the debt-to-GDP ratio will level off at 77.9% this year — marking the first stabilisation since 2008. Since then, government expenditures have continually exceeded revenue, causing debt and debt-service costs to rise. These increasing costs now necessitate spending cuts in vital services such as education and security.

The United Nations will collaborate with the government and other stakeholders to support the broader financing strategy, including through the Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF). In parallel, it will pursue a targeted resource mobilisation approach to ensure the effective implementation of the Cooperation Framework. Specifically, the UN Country Team will work to diversify its funding base by leveraging domestic financing opportunities, accessing innovative international funding mechanisms and engaging non-traditional development partners to secure pooled funding and joint programme interventions.

On both fronts, strengthening local resource mobilisation and fostering inclusive collaboration across a wide range of stakeholders will be required. The UN Country Team will promote joint funding initiatives, establish shared financing mechanisms and forge partnerships with development agencies, civil society, academia, the private sector, multinational corporations, philanthropic organisations and high-net-worth individuals. These partnerships are essential for unlocking technical expertise, accelerating SDG progress and supporting South Africa's path towards sustainable development.

Beyond the sources of finance outlined above, potential funding opportunities exist through mechanisms such as SDG stimulus packages, tax reforms, improved public expenditure management, climate finance, blended finance models and public–private partnerships. Unlocking these resources requires the alignment of political will, strategic investment and broad-based social engagement. By mobilising both domestic and international resources and addressing financing gaps, South Africa can move closer to building an inclusive, resilient and sustainable society in line with its national development vision.

In addition, the UNCT will continue to pursue and expand South–South and triangular cooperation modalities, including through platforms such as the IBSA Trilateral Forum, to broaden partnership opportunities and strengthen implementation.

3.5. Business Operations Strategy in support of the Cooperation Framework

To improve operational efficiency and accountability, the United Nations in South Africa will strengthen the Cooperation Framework through the implementation of the Business Operations Strategy (BOS) and the establishment of Common Premises. These measures are central to the UN's broader efficiency agenda and aim to promote more coherent and effective operations.

The BOS seeks to streamline UN processes by reducing processing times, lowering unnecessary costs and improving service quality through collaboration and strategic partnerships. By recognising the policies of individual UN entities and emphasising client satisfaction, implementation of the Cooperation Framework will be enhanced, helping to reduce duplication, increase collective bargaining power and achieve economies of scale.

Furthermore, the BOS supports the SDGs by promoting sustainable practices aligned with global environmental and social standards, including energy efficiency, environmentally responsible and gender-responsive procurement, accessibility for persons with disabilities and the sharing of resources among UN agencies in co-located premises in South Africa.

The BOS will focus on five operational areas: Common Administration and Premises with Security, Common Human Resources, Common Finance and HACT, Common Procurement, and Common Shared Services. These focus areas will reinforce the UN's commitment to operational excellence and contribute to a more sustainable and inclusive future.

3.6. Harmonised approach to cash transfers / Management Accountability Framework

The Harmonised Approach to Cash Transfers (HACT) will be implemented as a common operational framework for transferring cash to government and non-government implementing partners. The framework applies to UNDP, UNFPA, and UNICEF in all situations, including emergencies, crises, and post-conflict contexts. Other UN agencies and inter-agency programmes may adopt the revised framework, subject to its applicability to their rules, policies, and business models.

All cash transfers to an Implementing Partner are based on the workplans agreed between the Implementing Partner and the UN system agencies. Cash transfers for activities detailed in workplans may be made by the UN system agencies using the following modalities:

1. Cash transferred directly to the Implementing Partner:

A) *Before the start of activities (direct cash transfer), or*
B) *After activities have been completed (reimbursement);*

2. Direct payment to vendors or third parties for obligations incurred by the Implementing Partners based on requests signed by the designated official of the Implementing Partner; and

3. Direct payments to vendors or third parties for obligations incurred by UN system agencies in support of activities agreed with Implementing Partners.

Where cash transfers are made to the National Treasury, the National Treasury shall transfer such cash promptly to the Implementing Partner.

Direct cash transfers shall be requested and released for programme implementation periods not exceeding three months. Reimbursements of previously authorised expenditure shall be requested and released quarterly or upon completion of activities. The UN system agencies shall not be obligated to reimburse expenditure incurred by the Implementing Partner beyond the authorised amounts. Following the completion of any activity, any balance of funds shall be refunded or reprogrammed by mutual agreement between the Implementing Partner and the UN system agencies.

Cash transfer modalities, the size of disbursements, and the scope and frequency of assurance activities may depend on the findings of a review of the public financial management capacity in the case of a Government Implementing Partner, as well as an assessment of the financial management capacity of the non-UN Implementing Partner. A qualified consultant, such as a public accounting firm, selected by the UN system agencies, may conduct such an assessment, in which the Implementing Partner shall participate. The Implementing Partner may participate in the selection of the consultant.

During programme implementation, cash transfer modalities, the size of disbursements, and the scope and frequency of assurance activities may be revised based on the findings of programme monitoring, expenditure monitoring and reporting, and audits. In case of direct cash transfer or reimbursement, the UN system agencies shall notify the Implementing Partner of the amount approved by the UN system agencies. They shall disburse funds to the Implementing Partner within 5 days.

In case of direct payment to vendors or third parties for obligations incurred by the Implementing Partners based on requests signed by the designated official of the Implementing Partner, or for obligations incurred by the UN system agencies in support of activities agreed with Implementing Partners, the UN system agencies shall proceed with the payment within 5 days. The UN system agencies shall not have any direct liability under the contractual arrangements concluded between the Implementing Partner and a third-party vendor. Where UN system agencies and other UN system entities provide funding to the same Implementing Partner, programme monitoring, financial monitoring, and auditing will be undertaken jointly or in coordination with those UN system agencies.

A standard Fund Authorisation and Certificate of Expenditures (FACE) report, reflecting the activity lines of the workplan (WP), will serve as the instrument used by Implementing Partners to request the release of funds or to secure the agreement that [UN organisation] will reimburse or directly pay for planned expenditure.

The Implementing Partners will use the FACE to report on the utilisation of cash received. The Implementing Partner shall identify the designated official(s) authorised to provide the account details, request and certify the use of cash. The FACE will be certified by the designated official(s) of the Implementing Partner. Cash transferred to Implementing Partners shall be spent solely on the agreed-upon activities and within the timeframe specified in the workplans.

Cash received by Government and national NGO Implementing Partners shall be used in accordance with established national regulations, policies, and procedures consistent with international standards, ensuring that cash is expended for activities as agreed in the workplans and that reports on the utilisation of all received cash are submitted to [UN organisation] within six months after receipt of the funds. Where any national regulations, policies, or procedures are not consistent with international standards, the UN system agency financial and other related rules and system agency regulations, policies, and procedures shall apply.

In the case of international NGO/CSO and IGO Implementing Partners, cash received shall be used in accordance with international standards, ensuring that cash is expended for activities as agreed in the workplans and that reports on the full utilisation of all received cash are submitted to the UN system organisations within six months after receipt of the funds.

To facilitate scheduled and special audits, each Implementing Partner receiving cash from UN system organisations will provide the concerned UN entity or its authorised representative with timely access to:

- All financial records establishing the transactional record of the cash transfers provided, together with relevant documentation.
- All relevant documentation and personnel associated with the functioning of the Implementing Partner's internal control structures through which the cash transfers have passed.

The findings of each audit shall be reported to the Implementing Partner and the UN organisation. Each Implementing Partner shall furthermore:

- Receive and review the audit report issued by the auditors.
- Provide a timely statement of the acceptance or rejection of any audit recommendation to the UN organization that provided cash (and where the SAI has been identified to conduct the audits, add to the SAI) so that the auditors include these statements in their final audit report before submitting it to the UN organisation.
- Undertake timely actions to address the accepted audit recommendations.

Report on the actions taken to implement accepted recommendations to the UN system agencies and, where the Supreme Audit Institution (SAI) has been identified to conduct the audits, also to the SAI, on a quarterly basis (or as locally agreed). The audits will be commissioned by the UN system agencies and undertaken by private audit service providers.

3.7. Communication and Advocacy

Effective communication and advocacy are central to the Cooperation Framework 2026–2030 and reflect a commitment to working with South Africans toward a more inclusive future. The UN Communications Group (UNCG) has developed a strategy aimed at highlighting key priorities, sharing progress, correcting misconceptions, and holding decision-makers accountable.

The primary objectives include raising awareness of the Cooperation Framework in alignment with South Africa's NDP 2030 and the African Union's Agenda 2063. Technical content will be translated into engaging narratives that highlight young entrepreneurs, women leading community initiatives, and public–private partnerships. Building strong relationships is essential; opportunities will be created for communities, the private sector, and local governments to collaborate with UN agencies.

A particular focus will be placed on youth and women, promoting campaigns on climate action, digital skills, and employment. Advocacy efforts will align with the six SDG acceleration priorities identified in South Africa's 2025 Voluntary National Review, supported by evidence and compelling storytelling to influence policymakers and the broader public.

A mix of communication channels — including social media and national media — will be used to reach diverse audiences, complemented by flagship events and outreach to businesses, NGOs, and academic institutions. Progress will be monitored through stakeholder feedback and media analytics, with an emphasis on strengthening awareness and partnerships rather than merely tracking visibility. Communications will promote hope, inclusivity, and transparency, framing challenges as opportunities for collective action and trust-building toward a sustainable future.

The strategy seeks to motivate action, foster partnerships, and build trust by highlighting South Africa's talent, resources, and resilience in achieving the SDGs. It underscores the importance of societal engagement and the shared responsibility for solutions.

The first priority is raising awareness of the Cooperation Framework as a five-year plan linked to NDP 2030 and Agenda 2063 by transforming technical language into relatable narratives.

The second priority is fostering dialogue: UNCG will facilitate online and offline platforms for communities, the private sector, and local governments to exchange experiences, propose solutions, and collaborate. Youth and women will remain central to campaigns on climate, digital skills, and employment.

The third priority is driving change through thematic campaigns aligned with the six SDG acceleration areas, supported by evidence and clear calls to action aimed at both decision-makers and citizens. Communication channels will include platforms such as Twitter/X, TikTok, Facebook, and YouTube to engage younger audiences, alongside traditional media partnerships to ensure broad reach. Flagship events will anchor the strategy and be complemented by targeted stakeholder engagement.

Monitoring will include stakeholder feedback, social media insights, and media analytics, focusing on contributions to awareness, partnerships, and SDG progress rather than pageviews alone. UNCG will promote a strategic approach that supports behavioural change, programme impact, and social mobilisation, integrating communication into programme design and policy in line with the Social and Behaviour Change Communication framework and UN global guidance.

This approach positions communications as a development enabler that supports key Cooperation Framework outcomes by:

- **Promoting behaviour change** in climate action, gender equality, digital literacy, and food security;.

- **Localising messages and interventions** through participatory processes with communities, civil society, and traditional leaders.

- Using **data-driven audience segmentation** to tailor messaging that is culturally relevant and resonates across South Africa's diverse social landscape.

- **Combating misinformation and stigma** by promoting trusted messengers, including youth champions, community leaders, and media professionals.

- **Embedding communications** within programmes (e.g. health, education, livelihoods), making it an operational tool for achieving development results rather than only a support function.

Programme communications will be fully integrated into UNCT implementation of the SDG Acceleration Framework, enabling adaptive, results-focused storytelling that links local experience to national and global agendas, including NDP 2030, Agenda 2063, and the SDGs.

Above all, communications will be guided by the principles of hope, inclusivity, and transparency. The UNCG will not avoid South Africa's challenges but will present them as opportunities for collective action. The aim is to rebuild trust in institutions and reinforce confidence that a prosperous, equitable, and sustainable South Africa can be achieved through sustained engagement and honest narratives.

4. MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND LEARNING PLAN

Purpose and Scope

This Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Plan ensures transparent, accountable and adaptive implementation of the Cooperation Framework. It provides a structured approach to tracking progress, assessing effectiveness and strengthening learning, with the overarching objective of accelerating progress towards the SDGs while ensuring that no one is left behind, in particular marginalized populations, women and vulnerable groups.

Grounded in results-based management (RBM), the plan defines expected results, monitors progress and facilitates feedback to foster accountability and continuous learning. In collaboration with government, the UN will implement an integrated M&E system anchored in national priorities, leveraging and strengthening data ecosystems to establish baselines, improve data quality, and enable timely, evidence-based decision-making. Harmonised indicators and data systems across government spheres will align with the national M&E system under the Presidency's Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) and Statistics South Africa. These will contribute to SDG reporting.

At the programmatic level, UN staff capacities will be enhanced for regular monitoring, quality assurance and compliance with the results framework. Financial management and risk monitoring systems will support efficiency in procurement and resource use. Implementing partners will cooperate with UN agencies by facilitating access to financial records and to staff managing cash-based transfers.

Strategic Alignment

The MEL Plan builds on the Theory of Change and Results Framework developed during the Cooperation Framework design. It is aligned with South Africa's MTDP (2024–2029), national SDG indicator frameworks and sectoral reporting systems. The plan also reflects national and UN strategic priorities identified through stakeholder consultations and the UNCT visioning process, with emphasis on economic inclusion, job creation, human capital development, governance reform and climate resilience.

Monitoring Framework

The indicators of the results matrix will be disaggregated by gender, age, disability, geography and other LNOB dimensions. These indicators are drawn primarily from national SDG frameworks and supplemented by proxy indicators where gaps exist. Each outcome and output will be tracked using both quantitative and qualitative measures to ensure a holistic understanding of progress. Targets at the output level will be reviewed annually to ensure that they remain realistic and achievable in a changing context.

Monitoring will rely on a mix of traditional and non-traditional data sources, including national statistics, administrative data, UN joint monitoring activities and innovative sources such as big data, geospatial analytics and real-time feedback mechanisms. Verification protocols will be established to ensure data integrity and reliability, with emphasis on triangulation and participatory validation.

Key monitoring activities will include:

- Annual performance reviews linked to updates of the Country Analysis.
- Joint monitoring by Results Groups and the UNCT.
- Real-time tracking through UNINFO and other digital platforms.
- Participatory monitoring involving LNOB groups and civil society.

Evaluation Framework

The Cooperation Framework will undergo a final evaluation at the end of its cycle, complemented by evaluability assessments during inception and periodic joint evaluations. UN entity-specific evaluations will be sequenced to feed into the overall Cooperation Framework evaluation, ensuring coherence and minimising duplication.

All evaluations will adhere to UNEG norms and standards to ensure independence, credibility and utility. External evaluators will be engaged where necessary, and peer-review mechanisms will be used to validate findings. Evaluation processes will be participatory, involving government counterparts, civil society and affected communities.

Evaluation findings will inform adaptive programming, strategic decision-making and future Cooperation Framework cycles. Lessons learned will be documented and disseminated through Country Results Reports, Voluntary National Reviews and stakeholder dialogues.

Learning and Adaptive Management

The MEL Plan will institutionalise learning through periodic reflection sessions, knowledge-sharing platforms and documentation of good practices. These mechanisms will enable the UNCT and partners to adapt strategies based on evidence and emerging trends.

Monitoring and evaluation will be participatory, involving LNOB groups, civil society and government stakeholders. Community-led data collection and grievance mechanisms will be established to ensure accountability and responsiveness. Feedback loops will be integrated into planning and implementation processes.

Institutional Arrangements

Oversight of the MEL Plan will be provided by the UNCT and the National Coordination Steering Committee on the SDGs, Agenda 2063 and RISDP. The Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Group, composed of RBM experts, will coordinate MEL activities, support Results Groups and ensure regular updates in UNINFO.

Roles and responsibilities

- United Nations Country Team: Overall accountability and coordination.
- Results Groups: Monitoring of outputs and outcomes.
- Government: Data provision, validation and integration with national systems.
- Civil Society: Participatory monitoring and feedback.

Resourcing and Budgeting

A costed MEL Plan will be developed during the inception phase. UN system benchmarks will be applied, with at least 5% of programme budgets allocated to monitoring and 2% to evaluation. Resource-mobilisation strategies will address data gaps and strengthen national systems. MEL activities will be sequenced to optimise efficiency and impact.

Risk and Assumption Tracking

The MEL Plan will maintain a log of key assumptions and risks identified during the Theory of Change process. Risks will be categorised as implementation-related, external or contextual. Regular monitoring will validate assumptions, identify emerging risks and enable timely course correction. Stress testing may also be used to identify additional risks and refine mitigation strategies.

Successful implementation of the Cooperation Framework depends on government ownership, partner contributions and community participation. While this creates opportunities, it also carries risks if stakeholder buy-in is weak. To address this, the UN will conduct continuous risk analysis to ensure that threats are mitigated and opportunities leveraged.

Key risks include weak coordination and oversight, limited political will for new approaches, a shrinking funding base in an upper-middle-income context — further exacerbated by economic downturns or fiscal constraints — data gaps and weak monitoring frameworks, social unrest, climate, pandemic and external shocks, entrenched patriarchal and cultural norms, and limited UN technical capacity. These risks will be mitigated through strong partnerships, advocacy, knowledge-sharing and adaptation of UN tools and systems.

Preparedness and response mechanisms will be in place for external shocks such as pandemics and socio-economic crises. Financial and quality-assurance risks will be managed through established frameworks such as the Management Accountability Framework and Harmonised ACT, as well as through adherence to social and environmental standards (SES) and project quality-assurance measures.

United Nations South Africa Cooperation Framework 2026-2030

ANNEXES

ANNEX 1 | THE COOPERATION FRAMEWORK RESULTS MATRIX

Cooperation Framework Priority 1

Supporting Economic Growth and Social Inclusion and Tackling Structural Poverty and Inequality

National Development Priority

Economy and Employment

NDP Chapter

Chapter 3: Economic Infrastructure and Employment

Related Global SDG Targets

1, 5, 8, 9, 10

Outcome 1

Equitable and Sustainable Livelihoods Improved for all through Inclusive Economic Growth and Job Creation

Indicators	Related SDG Indicator	Baseline	Target 2030))	Source	Partners
Percentage of people living below the food poverty line	1.1.1	50% (2023 PMBEJD)	25%	Living Conditions Survey, Stats SA	DALRRD, DSD, NT
GDP Growth	8.1.1 and 8.2.1	1.1% (2024)	3%	Stats SA	NT
Gini Coefficient	10.2.1	0.63 (2025 Statista)	0.58 by 2030	Stats SA, World Bank	NT, DPME and NPC
Unemployment Rate (disaggregated by age)	8.5.1	32.9% (2025) (46.1% Youth unemployment rate)	↓ to 25% by 2030	Stats SA, Labour Force Survey	DEL
South Africa's score and ranking on the WEP global gender gap index	5.1; 5.5; 5.c	score 0.785 ranking 18 (2024)	score 0.8 ranking 10	World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Index	National Treasury, DTIC, DPWI, SOEs, DBSA/IDC/IFIs, Provincial/Municipal Govts, Private Investors/PPP Units, UN Agencies
Private investment in infrastructure (% of GDP);	9.1.1; 7.1.1; 6.1.1; 8.5.1	9.8 % (2020)	20%	National Treasury, NT/ PPP Unit, SOE reports (Eskom/ Transnet/Water Boards), Stats SA, Programme M&E	National Treasury, DTIC, DPWI, SOEs, DBSA/IDC/IFIs, Provincial/Municipal Govts, Private Investors/PPP Units, UN Agencies
Digital Transformation (South Africa's ranking in the GovTech Index)	4.4, 9.c, 16.10 & 17	103 out of 199 in the GovTech Index	Within the top 50 in GovTech Index	World Bank – GovTech Maturity Index (GTMI), Stats SA, UN E-Government Surveys	DPSA, SITA, GITOC; UNDP South Africa; World Bank; OECD; Research institutions / academia

Outcome 2

Expanded Human Capabilities and Equitable Opportunities Achieved through Improved Access to Skills, Quality Education, Health, and Decent Livelihood

Indicators	Related SDG Indicator	Baseline	Target 2030))	Source	Partners
Proportion of youth (15-24) not in education, employment and training	8.6.1	34% (2025)	30%	Stats SA, Labour Force Survey, SALDRU	DSD, NYDA, HET, NT, COGTA
Percentage of children accessing quality ECD programs	4.2.1	64% of all 4 years old accessing ECD(2025)	85% of all 4 years old accessing ECD	DBE (E cares System), MTDP	DBE
Life Expectancy at birth	3.1	66.5 years (2024)	70 years and above	Stats SA-Mid Year Population Estimates	DOH
Maternal mortality ratio	3.1 and 3.7	109.6 deaths per 100 000 live births (2025)	70 deaths per 100 000 live births	Stats SA-Mid Year Population Estimates, MTDP	DOH
Under 5 mortality Rate	3.2.1	29.7 deaths per 1000 live births (2025)	25 deaths per 1000 live births	Stats SA-Mid Year Population Estimates, MTDP	DOH
New HIV infections per 1000 uninfected population, all ages	3.3.1	4.4 (2022)	0,025	DHIS; SA National HIV Prevalence, Incidence and Behaviour Survey	National Department of Health (NDoH)
Percentage of people living with HIV that are receiving ART	3.3.1	79% (2025)	95%	DHIS; TIER.Net	National Department of Health (NDoH)
Tuberculosis incidence per 100 000 population	3.3.2	427 (2023)	197	Global TB Reports, WHO; DHIS	National Department of Health (NDoH)

Indicators	Related SDG Indicator	Baseline	Target 2030))	Source	Partners
Adolescent birth rate years per 1000	3.7.	1.10% - 10-14 years and 15-19 years is 43% (2020)	30% reduction (2030)	SDG Report 2023, SADC Score Card 2021.	National Department of Health (NDoH) and Department of Social Development
Percentage of total government spending on essential services (education, health and social protection)	1.a.2	20% (2016)	20%	NT- National Treasury Estimates of National Expenditure	NT
Universal health coverage (UHC) service coverage index	3.8.1	71,7%	>80%	WHO reports	Statistics South Africa
International Health Regulations (IHR) Core capacity index through the States Parties Self-Assessment Annual Reporting	3.d.1	63%	80%	WHO reports	National Department of Health (NDoH)
Number of beneficiaries received social protection transfers	1.3.1	18.6 million (2025)	20.8 million	SASSA	SASSA
Food waste diverted (tonnes) / % reduction in food loss	12.3	10 million tonnes lost/ year	-30%	Stats SA, DALRRD	Stats SA, DALRRD

Cooperation Framework Priority 2

Promoting Good Governance, Accountability and Addressing Safety Deficits

National Development Priority

Chapter 13: Building a Capable and Developmental State

Chapter 14: Fighting Corruption and Nation Building

Medium-Term Development Plan

Strategic Priority 3: Build a Capable, Ethical and Developmental State

Related Global SDG Targets

5, 16

Outcome 3

Accountable and Responsive Governance Institutions Ensuring Quality Public Services, Human Rights and Safety for All

Indicators	Related SDG Indicator	Baseline	Target(2030)	Source	Partners
Proportion of seats held by women in the national assembly	5.5.1	Male: 56.5%, Female 43.5% (IEC 2024)	50%	Parliament of South Africa	UN Women; Parliament of South Africa; Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities; ICJ (women in leadership); UNDP
Proportion of positions (by sex, age, persons with disabilities and population groups) in public institutions (National and local legislatures, public service and judiciary) compared to national distribution	16.7.1	Female judges 37% (2017), African judges 47% (2017), Coloured Judges 11% (2017), Indian judges 9% (2017) White judges 33% (2017)	Female judges 50% African judges 60–65%, Coloured Judges 10%, Indian judges 5% White 20 - 25%	Office of the Chief Justice, ICJ – Women in African Judiciaries South Africa Judicial Service Commission Reports / StatSA	DoJ&CD) Judicial Service Commission (JSC)
Proportion of national and local policies and/ or programmes developed with documented citizen participation, inclusion of vulnerable groups and engagement of social dialogue mechanisms	16.7.1	National level: Limited comprehensive data; some citizen participation through People's Assembly and social dialogue platforms (Parliament of South Africa, 2024); Local level: Participatory budgeting and public consultations in select municipalities (ResearchGate, 2024) Vulnerable groups: Data sparse	National level: 100% of policies/programmes developed with documented citizen participation and social dialogue mechanisms; Local level: 100% of municipal policies/ programmes involve documented citizen participation Vulnerable groups: 100% inclusion in policy development	Parliament of South Africa Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) South African Local Government Association (SALGA) National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC)	NEDLAC, SALGA, Parliament, DoJ&CD), Judicial Service Commission (JSC), South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC), Civil society organizations (Social Justice Coalition, InkuluFreeHeid)

Indicators	Related SDG Indicator	Baseline	Target(2030)	Source	Partners
Percentage of population satisfied with the quality and accessibility of public services, disaggregated by sex, disability, age, and other relevant characteristics	16.7.1 T	Overall satisfaction varies by service type; e.g., 70% satisfied with local water services, 65% with healthcare, 28.2% with UIF claims, 1.3% of job seekers with Government Labour Centres (Stats SA General Household Survey, 2023)	100% of citizens report satisfactory or higher levels of access and quality across public services, with equitable satisfaction across all disaggregated groups (sex, age, disability, vulnerable groups)	CCMA reports, DoEL, Stats SA (General Household Survey, Service Delivery Survey) Auditor-General of South Africa (performance audits) Departmental service delivery reports	DoJ (labour Court), DoEL, CCMA, DPSA, DoH, DOE, Local Municipalities, CSOs, SAHRC, NGOs
Change in international perceptions of corruption in South Africa as measured by the Corruption Perceptions Index	16.5.1	South Africa CPI 2023: Score 44/100, ranked 72nd out of 180 countries (Transparency International)	Score ≥ 60/100 with a significant improvement in ranking, indicating reduced perceived corruption and stronger governance integrity	National Treasury, Department of Public Service and Administration, Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) African Development Bank World Bank	STATS SA, NT, DPSA, DPME,AG, CoGTA, DPSA, National Treasury, PSC Civil Society / Corruption Watch, SAHRC
Number of municipalities receiving clean audits	16.6	38 municipalities with clean audits (AGSA 2022/23)	≥ 100 municipalities achieving clean audits by 2030	Auditor-General South Africa (AGSA) annual municipal audit outcomes	DPME, COGTA, AGSA
Estimated Illicit Financial Flows (IFFs) (USD million and % GDP)	16.6	USD 3.5-5 bn (1–1.5% GDP)	-25%	OECD, Global Financial Integrity, National Treasury	National Treasury, DPME

Outcome 4

Safe, enabling society which fosters participation, ethics and rights based values

Indicators	Related SDG Indicator	Baseline	Target(2030)	Source	Partners
Active Citizenship Index	16.7.1	Score - 55/100, indicating moderate levels of civic engagement across national and local levels (Institute for Democracy in South Africa – ACI Report)	Score ≥75/100, reflecting high citizen engagement, inclusivity, and active participation in decision-making processes	IEC, Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA) – Active Citizenship Index reports Afrobarometer surveys National Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) public participation data	IEC, Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA), Parliament of South Africa, Municipalities Civil Society: NGOs, community-based organizations, social movements
Proportion of population aged 16 and above who were asked a bribe by a public official in the last 12 months	16.5.1	18% of adults reported being asked for a bribe in the last 12 months (Transparency International Global Corruption Barometer, 2023)	≤5% of adults asked for a bribe annually, indicating strengthened anti-corruption measures and improved integrity in public service delivery	Stats SA, Transparency International Global Corruption Barometer Afrobarometer surveys Public Service Commission (PSC) complaint and hotline data Auditor-General reports	Stats SA, Public Service Commission (PSC), Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA), National Treasury, Anti-Corruption Task Teams
Gender Inequality Gap	5.1.1	South Africa (2023/2024): Gender Inequality Index (GII) score = 0.382 (UNDP Human Development Report, 2023)	TBD	DEL, DPSA	DEL, DPSA
Proportion of population that feel safe walking alone around the area they live	16.1.4	Daytime: Approximately 42.5% of individuals aged 16 and older reported feeling "very safe" walking alone during the day in 2023/24. Statistics South Africa Nighttime: Only 34.9% felt "very safe" walking alone at night during the same period	14,55%reduction	Stats SA	SAPS, DOJ
Percentage of identified organised crime groups/syndicates neutralised	16.1.3.	new indicator	90% of identified organised crime groups/ syndicates neutralised.	SAPS	SAPS, DOJ
Social Cohesion Index	16.1.3	62.8 (2023)	70% improvement in social cohesion index	Dept of Sports, Arts and Culture, Commission for Scientific and Industrial Research	Brand SA, Dept of Sports, Arts and Culture

Cooperation Framework Priority 3

Building Resilience through Sustainability and Risk Preparedness

National Development Priority

Chapter 3: Economy and Employment

Chapter 5: Environmental Sustainability and Resilience

Medium-Term Development Plan

Strategic Priority 2: Reduce Poverty and Tackle the High Cost of Living

Related Global SDG Targets

2, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17

Outcome 5

Sustainable economic growth and resilient livelihoods enabled through environmental stewardship and ecosystem-based approaches.

Indicators	Related SDG Indicator	Baseline	Target (2030)	Source	Partners
Number of deaths attributed to disasters and other forces of nature	13.2	437 000 (2016)	288 000 (2030)	Stats SA	DOEE, DFFE, DLE, DOT, NGOs
Renewable power generation (GW/H)	7.2.1	Installed capacity of 48 GW (2025)	Additional capacity of 30	DFEE annual reports, Stat SA	DFEE,DTIC,NERSA
Total GHG emissions	2.1.2	614 Mt CO_2-eq	350-420 Mt CO_2-eq by 2030	DFFE	DFFE, DARDLR, CBO,NGOs
Number of national and local disaster risk reduction strategies adopted by South Africa(Domesticated indicator)	13.1.2	13	TBD	Stat SA SDG Report	Cogta, National Disaster Management Centre
Proportion of jobs created through the expansion and implementation of environmental sectors	8.9.2	5% of total jobs in green/ environmental sectors (Stats SA, 2023)	10% of total jobs by 2030	• Stats SA – Labour Force Survey & Quarterly Employment Survey • DEL – Sectoral Employment Reports • DFFE, DMRE – renewable energy jobs data • Green Fund & private sector environmental projects	DEL, DFFE, DMRE, Green Fund, Private sector green employers, Sectoral industry associations (e.g., Renewable Energy Council)

Indicators	Related SDG Indicator	Baseline	Target (2030)	Source	Partners
Climate Change vulnerability Index	13.1.2	0.395 (ND-GAIN 2023) – baseline cross-checked with SA data (SARVA/ Green Book)	0.360 (reduce vulnerability by 9% by 2030)	CSIR Green Book, South African Risk and Vulnerability Atlas (SARVA) – CSIR, National Climate Change Response Monitoring & Evaluation System (DFFE), National Climate Change, Adaptation Strategy (NCCAS) reports, Stats SA Environment Statistics	CSIR, DFFE, SALGA, National Treasury, Universities & research councils, Civil society & private sector platforms
Percentage of Marine and Coastal ecosystem types that are Well Protected	14.5.1D	30.5 (2021)	TBD	SDG Report for South Africa 2023	DFFE
National municipal recycling rate (%)	SDG 11.6 / 12.5	10% (2025)	15%	Stats SA, DFFE, Municipal reports	Stats SA, DFFE, COGTA
Creative & Cultural Industries (CCI) value added to GDP (%)	SDG 8, SDG 9	~ 3.0% of GDP (2020)	4.5%	DTIC / SACO, Stats SA	DTIC / SACO, Stats SA
Employment in creative industries (number of jobs)	SDG 8, SDG 9	TBD	+100,000 net new jobs	Stats SA Labour Force Survey, DTIC, industry associations	Stats SA Labour Force Survey, DTIC, industry associations

ANNEX 2 | THE COOPERATION FRAMEWORK LEGAL ANNEX

This Legal Annex refers to the cooperation or assistance agreements and other instruments that constitute the existing legal basis for the relationship between the Government of the Republic of South Africa and each United Nations organization supporting the country in delivering the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (2026–2030).

Whereas the Government of the Republic of South Africa has entered into the agreements listed below with the United Nations, including its Funds, Programmes and other subsidiary organs, and other organizations of the United Nations system ("UN System Organizations"), which are applicable to their programme activities in the Republic of South Africa (the "UN Agreements") under the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (the "Cooperation Framework");

Whereas the UN Agreements, together with the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations of 13 February 1946 (the "General Convention") and/or the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the Specialized Agencies of 21 November 1947 (the "Specialized Agencies Convention"), as applicable, form the primary existing legal basis for the relationship between the Government and each UN System Organization for supporting the delivery of the Cooperation Framework, and are without prejudice to any other legal instruments the Government may enter into, including additional agreements with UN System Organizations for the purpose of their activities in the country;

a) With United Nations Development Programme (hereinafter referred to as UNDP) have entered into a basic agreement to govern UNDP's assistance to the country (Standard Basic Assistance Agreement (SBAA)), which was signed by both parties on 3 October 1994. Based on Article I, paragraph 2 of the SBAA, UNDP's assistance to the Government shall be made available to the Government and shall be furnished and received in accordance with the relevant and applicable resolutions and decisions of the competent UNDP organs, and subject to the availability of the necessary funds to the UNDP. In particular, decision 2005/1 of 28 January 2005 of UNDP's Executive Board approved the new Financial Regulations and Rules and along with them the new definitions of 'execution' and 'implementation' enabling UNDP to fully implement the new Common Country Programming Procedures resulting from the UNDG simplification and harmonisation initiative. In light of this decision, this Cooperation Framework together with a workplan (which shall form part of this Cooperation Framework and is incorporated herein by reference) concluded hereunder constitute together a project document as referred to in the SBAA.

b) With the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) a Basic Cooperation Agreement (BCA) concluded between the Government and UNICEF on 3 May 1996.

c) With the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) a Country Co-operation Agreement concluded between the Government and UNHCR on 20 September 1993.

d) With the World Food Programme, a Basic Agreement concerning assistance from the World Food Programme, which Agreement was signed by the Government and WFP on 22 May 2003.

e) With regard to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Basic Agreement concluded between the Government and the United Nations Development Programme on 3 October 1994 (the"Basic Agreement") mutatis mutandis applies to the activities and personnel of UNFPA, in accordance with the agreement concluded by an exchange of letters between UNFPA and the Government which entered into force on 17 July 1996. This Cooperation Framework together with any workplan concluded hereunder, which shall form part of this Cooperation Framework and is incorporated herein by reference, constitutes the Project Document as referred to in the Basic Agreement.

f) With United Nations Industrial Development Organization UNIDO the Agreement between the Government for the establishment of the UNIDO Office was on 19 April 2006.

g) With the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations the Agreement for the opening of the FAO Representation in the Republic of South Africa on 27 August 1997.

h) With the International Labour Organization of the United Nations the Agreement for the opening of the ILO Representation in the Republic of South Africa in 1995.

With the International Organization for Migration of the United Nations the Agreement for the opening of the IOM Representation in the Republic of South Africa 22 February 1995.

j) With the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime of the United Nations the Agreement for the opening of the UNODC Representation in the Republic of South Africa October 1994.

k) With the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights of the United Nations the Agreement for the opening of the OHCHR Representation in the Republic of South Africa is covered under the UNDP agreement.

l) With the UNWOMEN of the United Nations the Agreement for the opening of the UNWOMEN Representation in the Republic of South Africa is covered under the UNDP agreement.

m) With the United Nations Environment Programme the Agreement for the opening of the UNEP Representation in the Republic of South Africa is under the UNDP-UNEP agreement for Provision of administrative services and reimbursable support service arrangements – Signed in 2008.

n) With the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the Headquarters Agreement between the Government of the Republic of South Africa and the International Fund for Agricultural Development for the establishment of the IFAD's Country Office was established in 2019.

3. With respect to all UN System Organizations: Assistance to the Government shall be made available and shall be furnished and received in accordance with the relevant and applicable resolutions, decisions, rules and procedures of each UN System Organization.

4. Without prejudice to the above, the Government shall: (i) apply to each UN System Organization and its property, funds, assets, officials and experts on mission the provisions of the General Convention and/or the Specialized Agencies Convention; and (ii) accord to each UN System Organization, its officials and other persons performing services on behalf of that UN System Organization, the privileges, immunities and facilities set out in the UN Agreement applicable to such UN System Organization. 5. United Nations Volunteers performing services on behalf of a UN System Organization shall be entitled to the privileges and immunities accorded to officials of such UN System Organization. 6. Any privileges, immunities and facilities granted to a UN System Organization under the Cooperation Framework shall be no less favourable than those granted by the Government to any other UN System Organization signatory to the Cooperation Framework. 7. Without prejudice to the UN Agreements, the Government shall be responsible for dealing with any claims which may be brought by third parties against any of the UN System Organizations and their officials, experts on mission or other persons performing services on their behalf, and shall hold them harmless in respect of any claims and liabilities resulting from operations under the Cooperation Framework, except where it is mutually agreed by the Government and the relevant UN System Organization(s) that such claims and liabilities arise from the gross negligence or misconduct of that UN System Organization, or its officials, or persons performing services on its behalf. 8. Nothing in or relating to this Cooperation Framework shall be deemed: (i) a waiver, express or implied, of the privileges and immunities of any UN System Organization; or (ii) the acceptance by any UN System Organization of the jurisdiction of the courts of any country over disputes arising from this Cooperation Framework, whether under the General Convention or the Specialized Agencies Convention, the UN Agreements, or otherwise, and no provision of this Cooperation Framework shall be interpreted or applied in a manner, or to an extent, that is inconsistent with such privileges and immunities.

ANNEX 3 | COMMUNICATIONS AND ADVOCACY STRATEGY FOR THE COOPERATION FRAMEWORK 2026–2030

1. Introduction

This communications strategy provides a unifying framework for how the United Nations in South Africa will communicate the vision, priorities, and impact of the Cooperation Framework for 2026–2030. It is not an activity plan, but a high-level guide setting out the approach, principles, and priorities that will underpin all communication and advocacy efforts. Its objective is to ensure that communications contribute to ownership, visibility, accountability, and impact, while building trust and mobilising action in support of the SDGs.

2. Overall Approach

Communications and advocacy under the Cooperation Framework will:

Promote shared ownership: Position the Cooperation Framework as a partnership between the UN, government, civil society, the private sector, and the people of South Africa.

Highlight results and impact: Focus on communicating outcomes and human-interest stories of transformation, rather than only processes.

Bridge global and national narratives: Align UN messaging in South Africa with the SDGs, Agenda 2030, and the African Union's Agenda 2063, while grounding stories in the South African context.

Be inclusive and accessible: Ensure that communication products reach diverse audiences across languages, geographies, and digital divides.

Be adaptive: Respond to emerging opportunities, risks, and crises in line with the Cooperation Framework's risk management and resilience agenda.

3. Guiding Principles

Leave No One Behind: Ensure that communications give visibility to vulnerable and marginalised communities, reflecting diversity in language, imagery, and voices.

Human Rights-Based Approach: Frame messaging around rights, justice, dignity, and accountability, consistent with UN values.

Transparency and Accountability: Provide timely and accessible information on progress, results, and challenges in the implementation of the Cooperation Framework.

Partnership-centred: Elevate the voices of partners, including government, youth, civil society, and the private sector, ensuring the UN is seen as a convener and enabler rather than the sole actor.

Evidence-based storytelling: Use data, evidence, and lived experiences to communicate change credibly and compellingly.

Innovation and digital first: Leverage digital platforms, inclusive technologies, multimedia, and innovative storytelling to reach wider audiences, while ensuring inclusion of those who are offline.

4. Strategic Communication Priorities

Priority 1: Positioning the Cooperation Framework

Frame the Cooperation Framework as the defining UN instrument for partnership and delivery in South Africa.

Communicate its alignment with the NDP 2030 and the MTDP (2024–2029).

Ensure that stakeholders recognise the Cooperation Framework as the roadmap for collective UN action.

Priority 2: Communicating Results and Impact

Showcase tangible results under the three interconnected strategic priorities of the Cooperation Framework:

- Economic growth, job creation, social inclusion, and addressing structural poverty and inequality.
- Good governance, accountability, rights, and tackling safety deficits.
- Resilience, sustainability, and risk preparedness.

Use human-centred stories (case studies, profiles, testimonials) to demonstrate how the Cooperation Framework improves lives.

Priority 3: Advocacy for the SDGs

Promote the SDGs as a national development agenda, not only as a UN agenda.

Leverage the Nelson Mandela books on the SDGs to link his legacy of justice, equity, and resilience to the pursuit of the SDGs.

Emphasise high-impact themes for South Africa: youth, gender equality, a just transition, social protection, innovation, and climate resilience.

Priority 4: Strengthening Partnerships and Trust

Use communications to reinforce the UN's role as a trusted partner, convener, and knowledge broker.

Elevate stories of collaboration with government, the private sector, civil society, and regional bodies (SADC, the African Union, BRICS, the G20, etc.).

Promote South Africa's contributions to multilateralism and regional solidarity.

Priority 5: Public Engagement and Inclusion

Ensure wide accessibility by producing content in South Africa's 11 official languages, in addition to English.

Target outreach to youth, women, persons with disabilities, migrants, and rural communities.

Promote two-way communication and feedback mechanisms to foster ownership and accountability.

5. Target Audiences

Primary: Government (national, provincial, and local), parliamentarians, civil society, the private sector, media, academia, and youth.

Secondary: International development partners, regional organisations, and global UN stakeholders.

Public: The people of South Africa, particularly those most affected by poverty, inequality, and exclusion.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

Resident Coordinator: Chief spokesperson for the UN in South Africa, articulating the vision and outcomes of the Cooperation Framework.

UN Country Team: Responsible for integrating Cooperation Framework messaging into agency-specific communications and amplifying joint messages.

UN Communications Group: Coordinates common messaging, branding, campaigns, and joint advocacy efforts.

Government partners: Co-own and co-brand communications where appropriate to strengthen national ownership.

7. Monitoring and Learning

Impact metrics: Media reach, digital engagement, downloads of Cooperation Framework-related materials, stakeholder participation, and visibility in policy debates.

Learning loops: Regular review of communications performance to adapt approaches, drawing lessons from data and feedback.

Accountability: Annual reporting on communications and advocacy as part of Cooperation Framework reporting to government and stakeholders.

8. Conclusion

Communications around the Cooperation Framework 2026–2030 will be guided by the principles of inclusivity, transparency, and partnership. By positioning the Cooperation Framework as both a national development instrument and a collective UN commitment, communications will help mobilise action, build trust, and reinforce South Africa's progress toward the SDGs and Vision 2030.

ANNEX 4 | JOINT PAPER ON THE CONFIGURATION OF THE UNCT SOUTH AFRICA

1. Introduction

In line with the guidelines for developing the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, the United Nations Country Team in South Africa undertook a configuration exercise to assess the capacities, positioning, and resources of the UN development system required to deliver on the Cooperation Framework for 2026–2030. The exercise was designed to ensure that the UN system in South Africa is optimally structured, positioned, and capacitated to deliver on the strategic priorities, outcomes, and outputs of the Cooperation Framework, in alignment with national development policies, plans, and priorities, and in response to the evolving needs and expectations of the country. The overarching aim is to strengthen the relevance, coordination, transparency, efficiency, integration, and impact of UN development activities, while advancing UN reform under the "Deliver as One" approach.

The configuration exercise followed a structured and participatory approach to identify the most effective delivery model. Four steps guided the process:

1. Engagement with, and guidance on, Government expectations regarding the needs and expectations vis-à-vis the United Nations system under the Cooperation Framework.

2. Drafting agency statements to capture individual contributions and comparative advantages.

3. Using these statements as the basis for interactive UNCT discussions on the most appropriate delivery model for the Cooperation Framework.

4. Developing a draft configuration concept note informed by the Evaluation, the Common Country Analysis, discussions with Government, and UNCT deliberations and inputs, which was then consolidated into a final concept paper for adoption by the UNCT and clearance by the Government.

The Resident Coordinator provided strategic leadership throughout the process, guiding UNCT discussions towards a coherent configuration that looked beyond individual mandates and positioned the UN collectively as a strategic, trusted, and effective partner of the Government and the people of South Africa. Building on insights from the Common Country Analysis, the configuration exercise ensured that the UNCT's posture is responsive to South Africa's evolving priorities and institutional landscape.

The UNCT's deliberations were twofold: first, to examine South Africa's broader operating and development context as an upper-middle-income country with constrained fiscal space, persistent structural challenges, and significant state and non-state capacity to deliver programmes, and to identify the strategic shifts required for the UN to strengthen its relevance, role, and impact; and second, to determine the strategic posture, technical capacities, and resources necessary for the successful, integrated implementation of programmes and activities over the five-year Cooperation Framework cycle.

In addition, the configuration process took into account the UN 2.0 and UN 80 reform agendas, which emphasise the need for a more agile, data-driven, and impact-oriented UN development system. In line with the principles of UN 80, the Country Team reflected on how innovation, digital transformation, strategic foresight, and strengthened partnerships could be mainstreamed across programme design and delivery. The exercise also underscored the importance of aligning internal capacities with evolving expectations under the UN's global reform priorities, ensuring that the UN in South Africa not only remains fit for purpose but also exemplifies the new generation of country teams envisaged under the UN 80 framework.

A key consideration guiding the configuration exercise was the vision articulated by the United Nations Secretary-General under the UN 80 and UN 2.0 reform agendas, calling for a UN Development System that is leaner, more coherent, and more impactful. The Secretary-General emphasised that the future UN must embody a culture of collaboration, efficiency, and unified delivery, moving away from fragmented structures towards integrated country teams that act as one.

As he noted:

"Entities that are more streamlined — with fewer redundancies; more collaborative — with different parts of the system working seamlessly together; and more cost-effective — ensuring that resources entrusted to us deliver maximum impact for the people we serve. Too often, a patchwork of UN entities and specialised agencies presents governments with a maze of entry points — and sometimes competing initiatives — when they seek UN support. We need leaner, more impactful country teams — with less spending on physical presence and more resources for expertise and impact. Resident Coordinators must serve as the single entry point — ensuring that Member States can access the full breadth of UN expertise."

António Guterres, United Nations Secretary-General, UN80 Vision Statement

This guidance provided the strategic backdrop for the configuration process in South Africa, informing the UNCT's discussions on how to strengthen coherence, reduce duplication, and ensure that collective UN resources are directed towards systemic advocacy and knowledge-driven interventions, and towards delivering measurable results and lasting impact.

The process culminated in a Joint Statement, representing the collective agreement between the UN development system and the Government of South Africa. This Statement consolidates the shared vision and commitments generated through the configuration exercise and reaffirms the UNCT's determination to strengthen its role as a strategic partner in advancing South Africa's development agenda through coherent, efficient, and impactful engagement. The configuration process is intended to transcend agency silos, positioning the UNCT as a unified and trusted partner to the Government and the people of South Africa.

2. Consolidated Findings

2.1. Strategic Priorities, Outcomes and Outputs

The UN in South Africa, together with government, development partners, civil society, the private sector, academia, labour, and communities, identified three interlinked strategic priorities to guide UN engagement under the Cooperation Framework 2026–2030:

1. **Supporting Economic Growth, Job Creation, Social Inclusion and Tackling Structural Poverty and Inequality.**

2. **Promoting Good Governance, Accountability, Rights and Addressing Safety Deficits.**

3. **Building Resilience Through Sustainability and Risk Preparedness.**

These strategic priorities are operationalised through five outcomes, supported by cross-cutting themes that include gender equality, human rights and inclusion, climate and environmental sustainability, and data and evidence. These themes are mainstreamed across all outcomes.

- **Outcome 1:** Equitable and sustainable livelihoods improved for all through inclusive economic growth and job creation.

- **Outcome 2:** Expanded human capabilities and equitable opportunities achieved through improved access to skills, quality education, health, and decent livelihoods.

- **Outcome 3:** Accountable and responsive governance institutions ensuring quality public services, human rights, and safety for all.

- **Outcome 4:** A safe, enabling society which fosters participation, ethics, and rights-based values.

- **Outcome 5:** Sustainable economic growth and resilient livelihoods enabled through environmental stewardship and ecosystem-based approaches.

The configuration discussions in South Africa highlighted a range of opportunities and challenges facing the United Nations development system in positioning itself as a strategic and effective partner of government in the identified areas of support. A central concern was how the UN can achieve greater impact with limited resources, while minimising transaction costs and strengthening coordination across entities. The UNCT underscored the need to move away from fragmented or reactive approaches towards a more strategic, fit-for-purpose model that leverages collective capacities and avoids duplication.

Resource mobilization and financing emerged as a key theme, given the constrained fiscal space, significant social wage and rising debt servicing costs, as well as South Africa's classification as an upper-middle-income country with limited access to official development assistance and no humanitarian funding that the UN could leverage. It was noted that continued reliance on declining and almost non-existent bilateral donors and non-core project funding limits operational flexibility and sustains high administrative costs. Questions were raised about how best to unlock additional funding and financing, including through innovative mechanisms such as cost-sharing, blended finance, and partnerships with international financial institutions. The importance of establishing a clear value proposition and a monetised, expertise- and knowledge-driven strategic offer — particularly in the context of South Africa as an upper-middle-income country — was emphasised as central to future engagement with government, business, and development partners.

At the same time, structural and institutional challenges were identified. These include business models, funding and reporting incentives, and systemic barriers that discourage joint programming and reinforce siloed approaches. The UNCT highlighted that these factors hinder the ability of the UN to deliver integrated support and uphold its commitment to Leave No One Behind. Moreover, revenue uncertainty, staffing cuts, and the lack of clarity on core versus non-core funding were flagged as risks to sustained delivery.

The discussions also stressed the importance of aligning UN activities not only with national development priorities, but also with regional agendas and global frameworks, including opportunities emerging from the G20. Specific opportunities were identified in areas such as youth employment, industrialisation, value chains, and support to oversight and parliamentary processes. Building issue-based and action-oriented coalitions, high-impact hubs for inter-agency collaborative delivery, and partnerships with the private sector were seen as practical ways to expand reach, integrate delivery, and improve efficiency.

Finally, the UNCT highlighted the UN's continued recognition by government as a trusted, norms-based knowledge, advocacy, convening, and technical partner, with access to a credible global network and field presence. This comparative advantage, if leveraged effectively, can provide a foundation for strengthening the UN's collaboration and impact. However, it was also acknowledged that the UN must clearly define and communicate the nature and scope of its offer — upstream and downstream — quantify the value of its expertise, and adapt its business model to remain credible, responsive, and sustainable in a rapidly evolving development landscape.

2.2. Overall UNCT Configuration

To ensure that the United Nations system in South Africa is strategically positioned and adequately equipped to deliver on the Cooperation Framework, the UNCT undertook a comprehensive assessment of the collective expertise, capacities, positioning, and competencies required for effective implementation. This assessment identified specific capacity gaps, which will be addressed through engagement with non-resident agencies and the application of tailored operational modalities to enhance the UN system's overall efficiency, coherence, and impact.

Building on this review of capacities, resources, posture, and business models — and irrespective of the physical location of individual UN entities — the Resident Coordinator has proposed the configuration outlined in Table 1. This configuration delineates the UN agencies that will constitute the UNCT and collectively support the Government and people of South Africa in achieving the three strategic priorities and five outcomes of the Cooperation Framework.

To inform this process, the Resident Coordinator invited UN entities to articulate their commitments and contributions to the Cooperation Framework. These inputs, developed with the support of the Technical Steering Committee, the UN Inter-Agency Team, and through dedicated UNCT consultations, reflect a system-wide approach to alignment and collaboration. Submissions from 25 agencies underscored the breadth of the UN system's comparative advantages and reaffirmed its collective commitment to advancing South Africa's national development priorities.

Participating entities included:

- **Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)**
- **International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)**
- **International Labour Organization (ILO)**
- **International Organization for Migration (IOM)**
- **International Telecommunication Union (ITU)**
- **International Trade Centre (ITC)**
- **Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)**
- **Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)**
- **United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)**
- **United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)**
- **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)**
- **United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA)**
- **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)**
- **United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women)**
- **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)**
- **United Nations for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR)**
- **United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)**
- **United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)**
- **United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)**
- **United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)**
- **United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)**
- **United Nations World Institute for Development Economics Research (UNU-Wider)**
- **World Bank Group**
- **World Health Organization (WHO)**
- **IMF (non-signatory of the Cooperation Framework)**

The UNCT configuration reflects the alignment of agency mandates with the identified outcomes. Agencies will work jointly and individually, bringing their comparative advantages in technical expertise, policy advice, advocacy, capacity development, innovation, and resource mobilisation.

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Representative Office	Through headquarters, regional, sub-regional or multi-country office	Separate liaison/ project office	Capacity embedded in another UN entity/ RCO please specify	Short-term technical support	Agency	OUTCOME 1	OUTCOME 2	OUTCOME 3	OUTCOME 4	OUTCOME 5
X	X			X	FAO	X	X			X
X	X				IFAD					
X					ILO	X	X	X	X	X
X	X				IOM	X	X	X	X	
X					OHCHR	X	X	X	X	
					UNAIDS					
X					UNDP	X	X	X	X	X
	X				UNECA	X				
	X				UNCTAD	X				
	X		X		UNEP					X
	X	X			UNESCO	X	X	X	X	X
X					UNFPA	X	X	X	X	
X		X			UNHCR	X	X	X	X	
X	X			X	UNICEF	X	X	X	X	
X	X			X	UNIDO	X				X
	X				UNODC		X	X	X	
X	X			X	UNWOMEN	X	X	X	X	
					World bank	X				
X	X				WHO		X	X	X	
X	X				UN-Habitat	X				X
	X				ITC	X				
	X			X	ITU	X				
	X				UNU-WIDER	X				
	X				UNDRR					X
X	X				IMF	X				

Changes to the configuration of the country team
The UNCT configuration for the new programming cycle includes the addition of six agencies — ITU, UN-Habitat (now with an in-country programme office), UNU-WIDER, UNDRR, UNECA, and UNCDF (through UNDP) — to strengthen the UN's collective capacity to deliver on the Cooperation Framework. Each agency brings specialised expertise that complements the existing UNCT's work: ITU enhances digital transformation and connectivity; UN-Habitat advances spatial integration, equality, and safety; UNU-WIDER contributes cutting-edge research and policy analysis for inclusive economic development; UNDRR strengthens disaster risk reduction, early warning, and resilience building; UNECA provides regional economic policy and integration expertise alongside national technical assistance; and UNCDF offers innovative financing solutions and local development finance mechanisms. Their inclusion reinforces a more dynamic, evidence-driven, and financially sustainable UN configuration that is well suited to South Africa's upper-middle-income context.

2.3. Implementation modality and areas of support

The UNCT, headed by the Resident Coordinator, comprises 25 entities and serves as the primary inter-agency platform for joint policy formulation, strategic decision-making, and coordination. To maximise its impact in South Africa's upper-middle-income context, the UN will adopt a catalytic and adaptive approach, acting less as a direct implementer and more as an integrator, convener, and enabler of multi-stakeholder solutions. While engagement will remain primarily upstream — at both national and subnational levels — through the provision of policy, planning, monitoring, and budgeting advice, strategic guidance, and normative support, the UN will also pursue targeted downstream interventions to address service delivery gaps and systemic inefficiencies.

At national and local levels, UN support will focus on technical assistance, regulatory guidance, capacity-building, advocacy and convening, and the shaping of financing models, alongside the identification of bankable projects with potential for replication and scaling. Through innovation labs, impact investment mechanisms, public–private partnerships, and digital platforms for policy experimentation and data-driven decision-making, the UN will help drive transformation and inclusive growth. By balancing upstream thought leadership and knowledge support with downstream demonstration projects and by strategically mobilising domestic and blended finance, the UN will enhance its relevance, foster structural reform, and deliver tangible community-level impact, positioning itself as a catalyst for sustainable and equitable development in a country that is both a regional leader and a site of persistent inequality.

In addition, to ensure long-term sustainability beyond UN support, the focus will shift towards fostering genuine national and local ownership. Rather than operating as a parallel implementer or capacity provider, the UN's value-add will centre on strengthening government systems and capacities from within, with a focus on reducing waste and inefficiencies. This approach emphasises building institutional resilience, enhancing accountability mechanisms, and ensuring that national and subnational stakeholders lead and sustain development outcomes. By adopting this modality, the UN will prioritise partnerships that embed capacity development into existing governance structures, empowering local actors to drive and maintain progress independently.

The UNCT also agreed that the following considerations will guide the Cooperation Framework's delivery modality:

- Deepening Delivering as One, ensuring joint planning, implementation, monitoring, and reporting to maximise efficiency, reduce duplication, and enhance collective results.
- Strategic alignment with South Africa's national development priorities, the Medium-Term Development Framework, and relevant regional and global agendas, including the African Union's Agenda 2063, SADC protocols, and relevant G20 outcomes and legacy initiatives.
- Operational focus on implementation, scalability, and impact, emphasising delivery models that yield measurable and sustainable results.
- Enhanced subnational engagement, strengthening UN presence and support at provincial and local levels to improve inclusivity, service delivery, and local ownership.
- Strengthened early warning, disaster management, humanitarian, and resilience capacities, in recognition of growing vulnerabilities linked to climate, health, and economic shocks.
- Strategic resource mobilisation and partnerships, including innovative financing approaches and engagement with the private sector, international financial institutions, and non-state actors to address funding gaps and ensure sustainability.

The UNCT reaffirmed that cross-cutting priorities such as gender equality, disability inclusion, human rights, climate action, and environmental sustainability will underpin all areas of UN engagement. These are recognised as essential enablers for achieving the Cooperation Framework outcomes and for ensuring that no one is left behind in South Africa's transition.

2.4. Technical Capacity

Given the strategic direction of the Cooperation Framework for the next five years and the agreed implementation modality, the UN reviewed the existing capacities across agencies. It was evident that relevant technical expertise is present within most agencies in the country, supported by regional offices and headquarters.

In line with the UN80 imperatives, the configuration must embed digital transformation, strategic foresight, and innovation to ensure that the UNCT remains fit for purpose and responsive to South Africa's dynamic development context.

Some of the core technical capacities within the UN system that will enable delivery of the Cooperation Framework outcomes include the following areas of expertise:

- Reviewing and developing policy recommendations and action pathways across all three strategic priorities (inclusive economic growth, governance and ethics, and resilience and circular economy) to support evidence-based, inclusive, and sustainable development.
- Inclusion of refugees, migrants, persons with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups in national systems and interventions through LNOB approaches.
- Support for the development sector and financing options for infrastructure and logistics, job creating growth and economic activity including SMMEs, rural, informal and township economy, agriculture, manufacturing, minerals (value chain and addition), green economy, digital innovation, and financial inclusion.
- Conservation and restoration of natural resources, environmental sustainability, and climate action, including climate adaptation, disaster risk reduction, and the mobilisation of risk-informed development finance.
- Advocacy to promote inclusive policies, systemic reforms, and structural improvements at national and local levels.
- Capacity development and training (including skilling) across multiple sectors, including education, health, governance, energy, and economic development.
- Human rights, gender equality, and women's empowerment, including equity-responsive budgeting, programming, implementation, and monitoring, aligned with global normative frameworks, HRBA, and LNOB principles.
- Creating platforms for dialogue between government, civil society, private sector, academia, labour, and communities to foster participatory governance and multi-stakeholder engagement and co-creating of solutions.
- Capacity to train stakeholders in gender-disaggregated data collection, analysis, and use, strengthening evidence-based planning, monitoring, and accountability.

The UN also has operational capacity to support the effective and efficient delivery of the Cooperation Framework. An Operations Management Team, chaired by a Head of Agency and composed of Deputy Representatives and Operations Managers from all agencies, coordinates operations management, including Common Services. This team is further organised into thematic subgroups, namely Administration, Procurement, Human Resources, BOS, and ICT. In addition to this common operational capacity, UN Agencies, Funds, and Programmes retain their own internal operational capacities, which complement the common services.

Securing a One UN House will serve as a catalyst for further operational efficiencies across agencies. Under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator, the UNCT has prioritised this as a key deliverable under the Cooperation Framework.

Current estimates for delivering the Cooperation Framework amount to USD 266,928,748.00

2.5. Financial Capacity

The UNCT indicated that substantial investment — including predictable, pooled, and flexible funding — will be required to implement UN activities and programmes under the Cooperation Framework. At the same time, a funding gap has been identified that poses a challenge to successful delivery. This challenge is compounded by South Africa's current fiscal constraints and its classification as an upper-middle-income country, which limits access to concessional financing and official development assistance compared to other African countries.

In response, the UNCT is committed to diversifying its resource base. This includes mobilising domestic state and non-state financing, exploring innovative international funding mechanisms, and engaging non-traditional donors. To address financial and partnership constraints, the UNCT will strengthen local resource mobilisation and promote inclusive collaboration across a wide range of stakeholders.

Given South Africa's fiscal context and donor classification, the UNCT's financial strategy will centre on articulating a compelling value proposition that justifies investment and positions the UN as a catalytic partner in sustainable development. Key approaches include launching joint funding initiatives, establishing shared financing mechanisms, and building partnerships with development agencies, civil society, academia, the private sector, multinational corporations, philanthropic organisations, and high-net-worth individuals. These partnerships are essential to unlock technical expertise, accelerate progress towards the SDGs, and support South Africa's transition towards sustainable development.

3. Gaps, Synergies and Overlaps in Capacity, Delivery and Approaches

Drawing on the agency statements and UNCT discussions, the Country Team identified gaps, potential synergies and overlaps in relation to their respective mandates. In this context, a gap is defined as the difference between existing and/or planned capacity and the capacity required to deliver on the Cooperation Framework. Synergies refer to areas where two or more UN agencies share complementary interests and where combined action can generate greater development impact than isolated interventions. Overlaps are defined as common areas of engagement where there is a risk of duplication across agencies.

3.1 Gaps

UNCT discussions and the evaluation of the current Cooperation Framework cycle identified significant resource and capacity gaps that have constrained the UN's ability to fully deliver on its technical commitments. Limitations in both financial and human resources have affected the depth and continuity of technical support to national counterparts, particularly in areas requiring specialised expertise. These constraints have at times reduced the UN's ability to respond flexibly to emerging priorities and to implement programmes at scale.

To address this, the UN will strengthen collaboration with regional and global technical hubs and specialised offices, leveraging system-wide expertise to bridge capacity gaps and provide more coordinated, comprehensive and sustainable support in the next programme cycle.

Another priority area, identified as a mechanism to maximise impact under conditions of limited resources, is the promotion of joint programming and flagship interventions among UN agencies, leveraging existing resources and mobilising additional pooled funding. By aligning agency expertise, mandates and resources around shared outcomes, joint programmes enable the UN system to deliver integrated responses to complex development challenges, particularly those that cut across sectors such as governance, social protection, resilience building, economic transformation and job creation. This approach reduces duplication and transaction costs and strengthens national ownership and accountability by providing governments and partners with a unified platform for engagement and support. It also enhances the UN's ability to collectively attract larger and more diversified funding from traditional and non-traditional sources, including international financial institutions, development banks, private sector partners and philanthropic foundations.

In light of the multiple and interlinked shocks experienced by South Africa in recent years — including the COVID-19 pandemic, recurrent natural disasters, climate-related crises and economic disruptions — the UNCT recognised the urgent need to strengthen national and institutional capacities for disaster risk reduction, resilience building and risk-informed development planning. These shocks have exposed systemic vulnerabilities in communities, infrastructure and governance systems, underscoring the importance of shifting from reactive to anticipatory approaches to crisis management and resilience.

To address these capacity gaps, the UN will strengthen technical collaboration with UNDRR, WFP, OCHA and WMO. These agencies' global expertise in resilience building, risk governance, early warning systems and multi-hazard preparedness will be leveraged to reinforce South Africa's institutional frameworks and ensure that risk considerations are integrated across all stages of policy and programme design. This partnership will support the operationalisation of a whole-of-society approach to resilience, enabling national and subnational authorities to better anticipate, absorb and recover from shocks while safeguarding development gains.

This collaboration will complement ongoing efforts led by the UNCT, enhancing the UN system's capacity to provide coordinated, evidence-based and risk-informed support. In doing so, the UN will contribute to advancing South Africa's commitments under the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, while maintaining coherence with national priorities such as the National Disaster Management Framework and the Climate Change Bill.

In support of efforts to accelerate progress towards the SDGs, the UNCT has included ITU in its configuration. Recognising digital transformation as a key enabler of sustainable development, ITU's inclusion strengthens the UN system's collective capacity to promote innovation, connectivity and the strategic use of digital technologies in support of South Africa's development priorities. ITU's engagement will support the expansion of equitable access to information and communication technologies, enhance digital literacy, and facilitate the integration of data and digital solutions across sectors. It will also contribute to strengthening national capacity for digital governance, promoting inclusive and resilient digital infrastructure, and accelerating SDG delivery in areas such as education, health, climate action and economic growth.

3.2 Synergies

Across outcomes, agencies identified strong existing and potential synergies that can accelerate the implementation of Leave No One Behind (LNOB) interventions. Complementarities in policy, normative and implementation expertise are evident and will be leveraged to support delivery of the Cooperation Framework. Cross-sectoral inter-agency coordination mechanisms are already established and functioning in areas such as just energy transition, gender equality, human rights, and disaster and humanitarian response.

3.3 Overlaps

Several functional roles are common across UN agencies in South Africa, including economists and specialists in key thematic areas such as environment, gender, human rights, HIV/AIDS, governance, innovation and the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), monitoring and evaluation, private sector engagement, social protection, strategic resource mobilisation, partnerships and communication.

During the previous Cooperation Framework cycle, the UNCT established coordination mechanisms among staff working in these functional areas — particularly in gender, monitoring and evaluation, disability inclusion, economics and resource mobilisation — to strengthen collaboration and minimise duplication.

In the new Cooperation Framework cycle, the UNCT will maintain and expand these functional coordination platforms to enhance coherence and synergy where mandates and technical expertise intersect. A new Technical Working Group on Digitisation will also be established to strengthen coordination in the rapidly evolving digital and innovation space, given the engagement of multiple UN entities in this area.

Through these mechanisms, the UN system aims to strengthen its integrated support to South Africa, improving efficiency, coherence and impact in advancing national development priorities and the SDGs.

This coordination also contributes to reducing transaction costs for partners.

Additional resources for RCO to support the UNCT

To effectively support the UNCT, the RCO requires strengthened technical, strategic planning and coordination capacity, as well as resources for convening, thought leadership and advocacy. This includes access to specialised expertise in innovative financing, digital transformation and policy intelligence. UN Volunteers will continue to play an important role in supporting coordination and integrated planning across thematic areas such as youth engagement, disability inclusion and community participation, ensuring that UN engagement remains inclusive and responsive to national priorities. Strengthening this capacity will enable the RCO to more effectively foster coherence, stimulate innovation and maximise the UN system's collective impact.

Accountability, Monitoring, and Follow-Up

Accountability for the UN configuration rests with the Resident Coordinator and the UNCT. The RC provides overall strategic leadership and, through structured reviews and discussions, ensures that the configuration remains fit for purpose, coherent, adaptive and responsive to national priorities under the Cooperation Framework and to emerging trends. Together with the UNCT, the RC will oversee periodic reviews of the configuration to assess its effectiveness, alignment of resources and delivery capacity across the three strategic priorities, taking into account reforms under the UN80 initiative. This will be done through regular UNCT meetings, Results Group reporting and annual Cooperation Framework reviews, ensuring that adjustments are evidence-based and aligned with evolving national contexts. The RC, supported by the RCO, will also facilitate coordination with government counterparts and partners to ensure accountability for results, transparency in resource use and collective delivery on the UN's commitments in support of South Africa's development agenda.

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