

SDG 16 – Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

Section 1

Before 1994, South Africa met none of the criteria for SDG 16. However, since the dawn of democracy various institutions have been reconstituted to ensure they function in line with the constitution¹. South Africa has one of the strongest legal, institutional and policy frameworks for promoting inclusive societies. In addition to having one of the best legal aid systems globally, Chapter 9 of the 1996 Constitution mandated the establishment of state institutions to deepen constitutional democracy. The promulgation of the Promotion of Access to Information Act in 2001 has deepened access to public information relative to other developing countries. Fact, South Africa is one of the 24 African countries with constitutional and legislative frameworks that guarantee right of access to information. The current administration's uncompromising attitudes to dealing with the effect of state capture in public enterprises is key to promoting an inclusive service delivery and a prosperous society.

SDG 16 provides a framework for peace, justice for all and strong institutions which are fundamental to accelerating the progress made in other SDGs and to achieve the overall objectives of leaving no one behind. Sustainable development, providing access to justice for all, and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels – has been identified at the Conference on SDG 16 as a Goal that is both an outcome and an enabler of sustainable development. SDG 16 is closely interlinked with other SDGs. Without peace, justice and inclusion, achieving goals such as ending poverty, ensuring education promotes economic growth can be difficult or impossible.²

As COVID 16 gripped the world in 2020 this had a negative impact on South Africa as progress made towards SDG16 was reversed, the pandemic and lockdown regulations had increased poverty, unemployment as well as food insecurity. This exacerbated existing risk factors such as crime, gender-based violence, learners dropping out of school, challenges to governance systems, inequality, corruption in the public sector procurement processes, mismanagement of the fund, shrinking civic space and exclusion of the most vulnerable groups.

In South Africa, all sectors of society have implemented various measures to address challenges associated with SDG 16 including establishing more community policing forum, sector policing forums, legal aid clinics, anti-corruption agencies and implementing programmes to address human trafficking, GBV, statelessness and corruption. Despite progressive legal frameworks and policies, the gap between theory and practical implementation persists.

South Africa's crime levels have continued to increase, encompassing both violent and non-violent offenses within its jurisdiction. The country's murder rate in 2022 was reported as the second highest in the world among countries with reliable data, according to the Institute for Security Studies (ISS). The dynamics of

¹ <https://dullahomarinate.org.za/news/south-africa-makes-great-strides-towards-meeting-sdg16>

² https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/23402RSA_Voluntary_National_Review_Report__9_July_2019.pdf

crime are deeply localised, indicating that police responses are not tailored adequately to address the specific challenges faced in different communities.³

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and femicide have also reached alarming levels in South Africa, surpassing global averages and earning the country the unfortunate title of being the highest in the world for a post-conflict and democratic state. Disturbing statistics reveal that a woman is raped every 30 seconds, leading Interpol to designate South Africa as the "rape capital of the world. President Cyril Ramaphosa has characterised this pervasive issue as a hyper-endemic, linking it to another pandemic. The impact of GBV-F is particularly severe in rural areas and townships, exacerbating issues of poverty and inequality. Cultural practices and stereotypes further normalise the situation, especially for women in rural communities who lack political influence and economic opportunities. Limited access to essential services and information, coupled with harmful traditional practices like forced marriages, contribute to increased rates of child and teenage pregnancy, gender-based violence, and femicide. Women's groups consider GBV-F a national crisis, making the country unsafe for women and girls. The government has urged South Africans to actively contribute to community initiatives for gender transformation and mainstreaming processes.⁴

Child maltreatment and witnessing partner abuse in the home as a child increased the risk of becoming both a perpetrator and victim of sexual and intimate partner violence as an adult, contributing to intergenerational abuse and violence. Many children grow up in environments that expose them to violence from a very early age. Their safety is not only compromised in the home, but also in schools, care and justice systems and on the streets of their communities. There were government efforts to combat child abuse. The Western Cape High Court sentenced a foster mother to 30 years' imprisonment for the murder of a baby, age nine months, in her care. There were reports of abuse of students by teachers and other school staff, including reports of assault and rape. The law requires schools to disclose sexual abuse to authorities, but administrators sometimes concealed sexual violence or delayed taking disciplinary action.⁵

Although Section 34 of the constitutions enshrines the rights of access to courts, many South Africans lack access to justice. Access to justice is impeded by high levels of poverty and illiteracy. Legal fees and other costs associated with accessing the South African civil justice system are expensive and often prohibitive. Even where individuals are able to access the courts, there is a risk that they may be liable for costs if they are unsuccessfully litigated.⁶ Furthermore, LASA is severely under-capacitated and does not have adequate financial and human resources to provide substantive access to justice for women, it is found that LASA does not provide legal assistance when obtaining protection orders for the complainants who are mostly women. Only in limited circumstances has LASA provided assistance for respondents.⁷

³ <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/implications-violent-crime-law-enforcement-issues-south-gr%C3%BCnhaupt-sug7e/>

⁴ https://static1.squarespace.com/static/6214abdfa2fb3a127688652d/t/6490609d5870e227f415859b/1687183520561/AFLA+Quarterly+Jan-Mar-2023+Jun_19.pdf

⁵ <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/south-africa/>

⁶ Access to justice is impeded by high levels of poverty and illiteracy. Legal fees and other costs associated with accessing the South African civil justice system are expensive and often prohibitive

⁷ [CEDAW\SA CSO CEDAW_SR.pdf](#)

Corruption has been a pervasive issue in South African politics, economy, and business, with state capture having a far-reaching consequence, especially for public institutions that are meant to serve the people and stimulate development. The inquiry into state capture, chaired by Justice Raymond Zondo from 20 August 2018 to 12 August 2021, highlighted the extent of this problem and its threat to democratic institutions. The commission heard from over 300 witnesses and collected more than 1.7 million pages of documentary evidence. The State Capture Commission made 205 recommendations for criminal investigations and prosecutions, leading to the establishment of an Integrated Task Force by the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) and the Hawks. Nine cases involving 41 accused individuals and 12 companies are in court, with progress made in recovering proceeds of crime and unpaid taxes. Responding to the commission's recommendations, the government submitted the Public Procurement Bill to parliament in 2023 to increase transparency and accountability in procurement processes. Additionally, the State-Owned Enterprises Bill aims to enhance oversight and accountability in SOEs. Whistleblowers played a crucial role in exposing corruption, often facing victimisation for their bravery. The government has put forward clear and effective recommendations on whistle-blower protection and incentives. These recommendations propose a range of measures, such as criminalising threats against whistle-blowers, creating a fund for whistle-blowers dismissed because of their disclosures, and providing state protection for whistle-blowers and their families where necessary.⁸

The active participation of women in politics is a fundamental right and both male and female are supposed to be on equal terms at all levels of decision-making and political involvement. South Africa has had relatively strong representation of women in leadership positions, including in international relations and the justice, crime prevention and security clusters. Women's representation in cabinet increased to 50% after the 2019 elections. In 2021 the constitution court had eight judges, three of whom were women. The supreme Court had 23 judges, 11 of whom were women. The judiciary should be more sensitive to gender equality in its own ranks. The appointment of Judge Mandisa Maya as Deputy Chief Justice is a marked improvement. She was the first woman ever to be interviewed for the Chief Justice Position. However, although progress has been made there are many challenges that prevent women from playing a full and meaningful role and the biggest is poverty. Poverty is a struggle faced by women especially rural women. Access to basic services such as education, water and welfare has been influenced by unequal gender, race, and class relations. In order for women to fully participate in law-making. Women's access to basic services should be improved. Poor women have inadequate access to institutions that make laws. Furthermore, majority of women lack economic empowerment. Women are traditionally the poorest group in South Africa and more likely to be underemployed or unemployed.⁹

South Africa does not have a mechanism to identify stateless persons, but it is estimated that over 10 000 people are stateless and over 15 million people are unregistered or undocumented with 3 million under the age of 18. A number of legal, administrative and practical barriers exist in the immigration/refugee, birth

⁸ <https://www.gov.za/blog/working-prevent-state-capture-now-and-future>

⁹ <https://www.ijr.org.za/home/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/800769-IJR-Baseline-study-on-NAP-WEB.pdf>

registration and citizenship frameworks that increase the risk of statelessness. Exploring the extent to which parents complied with the legal requirement to register their child’s birth within the stipulated timeframe is imperative. Birth registration is integral to establishing a person’s legal identity and facilitates access to essential services such as healthcare and education. Despite South Africa’s international obligations, serious concerns exist relating to children’s right to a nationality and the law, policy and practice of birth registration which undermines children’s right to a nationality.¹⁰

South Africa’s 2019 National Action Plan to combat Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (NAP), recognises the need to prevent discrimination and prejudice against LGBTI persons, in line with its constitutional goals of equality and non-discrimination. The National Intervention Strategy, adopted in 2014, and reviewed in 2019, considers the Gender-Based Violence and Femicide National Strategic Plan to ensure that the protection and advancement of LGBTI rights are adequately funded by the government. The situation of LGBTIQ persons continue to deteriorate as campaigners and individuals live and operate in a hostile environment characterised by hate speech, killings, sexual assault, harassment, and discrimination. Furthermore, the 2022 national census failed to recognize gender diversity by including a gender question that provides respondents with only two options: male or female.¹¹ In 2023, the National Assembly passed the Prevention and Combating of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill. By doing so, the Bill gives effect to South Africa’s obligations in terms of the Constitution and international human rights instruments.¹²

The baseline research aims to assess progress and gaps in governance, justice, and human rights-related indicators in South Africa since the 2019 Voluntary National Review. It will focus on specific indicators associated with individual targets and identify data gaps. The research will utilize various methodologies and tools to analyse data from diverse sources and compare findings with the 2019 Voluntary National Review Report to track changes over time. This assessment will inform policy decisions and interventions to address challenges and ensure progress towards governance, justice, and human rights goals in South Africa.

<p>Target 16.1</p> <p>16.1 Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere</p>	<p>Indicator:</p> <p>16.1.3 (a)D Proportion of population aged 16 and above who experienced at least one incident of assault in the previous 12 months.</p>
<p>16.2 Target 16.2 End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children</p>	<p>16.2.1D2: Proportion of children who experienced corporal punishment at school in the last 12 months.</p> <p>16.2.2D Incidence of human trafficking for sexual purposes brought to police attention per 100 000</p>

¹⁰ https://static.pmg.org.za/210309Presentation_by_LHR_on_Statelessness.pdf

¹¹ <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2023/country-chapters/south-africa>

¹² <https://www.werksmans.com/legal-updates-and-opinions/the-hate-crimes-and-hate-speech-bill-is-a-step-further-to-becoming-law/>

16.3 Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all	16.3.1D1 Proportion of the population 16 years and above who were victims of crimes in the past 12 months
16.7 Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels	16.7.1 Proportions of positions in national and local institutions including (a) the legislatures, (b) the public service and (c) the judiciary compared to national distributions by sex, age, persons with disabilities and population groups
16.9 By 2030, provide legal identity for all including birth registration	16.9.1 Proportion of children under 5 years of age whose births have been registered with a civil authority by age

Section 2

A) Review of Policy framework and institutional capacity to deliver on the goals and respective targets

16.1 Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere.

South Africa recognises community safety as integral to creating a safe and secure environment that is conducive to social and economic stability and supporting a better life for all. In March 2022, Cabinet approved the integrated Crime Prevention and Violence Strategy which is an implemented tool for the 2016 white paper on safety and security with the primary objective of addressing the root causes of crime and violence through “whole of government and whole of society approach to crime and violence prevention in the country. Although they are political will to address these ongoing challenges there is a need to strengthen forensics, improve the detective’s services and prosecution-led investigations. In 2004 SAPS implemented the Firearms Control Act (FCA) of 2000. In May 2021, the Minister of Police published the Firearms Control Amendment Bill (FCAB), and this was mainly to control firearms from the manufacturing stage up to the destruction or loss report. Since the FCA came into operation the situation has not changed much as the public is still concerned about the high incidences of violent crime. The firearm registry needs to address some common issues as numerous firearms get leaked into the system via private security, the SANDF’s arms caches and the police which end up in the hands of for-hire assassins. The ISS recommended the government to see murder and violent crime as one of the nation’s most important thing to tackle. It should be unequivocally clear in word, budgets and activities that decreasing this crime is among its highest priorities.

Crimes against women and children remain a deeply disturbing issue in the country. The Presidential Summit Declaration against Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (GBVF) was launched by President Cyril Ramaphosa in March 2019. The Declaration sets out specific actions that the country must undertake to prevent GBVF. In May 2020 the President further launched the GBVF National Strategic Plan (2020-2030) which is intended to guide the country in the implementation of the Presidential Summit Declaration. The NSP on GBVF is anchored on six strategic pillars.¹³ In 2022, the President signed three new GBV laws

¹³ https://www.upr-info.org/sites/default/files/country-document/2022-10/A_HRC_WG.6_41_ZAF_1_E.pdf

aimed at strengthening efforts to end GBV namely the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act Amendment Act, the Criminal Related Matters Amendment Act, Domestic Violence Amendment Act these legislations afford greater protection to survivors of GBV and ensure that perpetrators are no longer able to use legislative loopholes to evade prosecution. In addition, the government has established and capacitated the Rapid Response Teams (RRTs) at provincial and local levels to end the pandemic. This includes the development of the Comprehensive National Gender-Based Violence and Femicide Prevention and the Integrated Femicide Strategic Frameworks, which signal a holistic approach to turning the gender-based violence tide.¹⁴

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

The Government redoubled their efforts to protect and uphold the rights of the child from a policy, legislation and implementation point of view. New policies had been drafted, including the Optional Protocol to the CAT in terms of the Prevention and Combating of Torture of Persons Act 13 of 2013 and established its prevention Mechanism (NPM), the Children's Amendment Act 2022, the Basic Education Laws Amendment Bill 2022, the whitepaper on citizenship, the revised whitepaper on families 2022, and the Marriage Bill 2022.¹⁵

South Africa's Prevention and Combating of Trafficking in Persons Act (PACOTIP) of 2013 criminalizes sex trafficking and labor trafficking, with penalties including life imprisonment and significant fines. However, critical sections of the act have remained inactive for ten years due to delays in formal adoption by parliament. Despite having various laws in place to combat trafficking, including provisions in addressing the exploitation of children, there are challenges in fully implementing these laws, leading to gaps in enforcement. South Africa has been on the Tier 2 Watch List for the third consecutive year, indicating a significant number of trafficking victims and insufficient efforts to combat trafficking compared to previous years, although some actions are being taken to comply with international standards.¹⁶

16.3 Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all

Legal Aid South Africa, an independent statutory body was established by the Legal Aid South Africa Act of 2014, which is a key national facility aimed at broadening access to justice and the realisation of the right of a person to have legal representation as envisaged in the Constitution and to render or make legal aid and legal advice available. The Legal Aid SA Strategic Plan 2020-2025 has been prepared in compliance with the Revised Framework for Strategic Plans and Annual Performance Plans issued by the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation. The relevant priorities in the NDP that have been included in this

¹⁴ <https://www.sanews.gov.za/south-africa/government-committed-ending-gbv>

¹⁵ <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/CSW/65/MS%20Inputs%20Review%20Theme/South%20Africa.pdf>

¹⁶ <https://mg.co.za/news/2022-07-20-rise-in-number-of-human-trafficking-victims-in-south-africa/>

Strategic Plan 2020-2025 include those from Chapter 12, focusing on “Building safer communities” which spell out priorities to focus on to achieve a crime-free South Africa. There is alignment between the NDP and the Seven-point Plan resulting from the Criminal Justice System (CJS) Review. It is recommended that all Departments in the Justice Crime Prevention and Security (JCPS) Cluster align their Strategic Plans with the Seven-point Plan. Cabinet also approved an Integrated Criminal Justice Strategy and Framework (ICJS) in 2017 as a mechanism to build on the Seven-point Plan and to ensure that a transformed, efficient, effective, victim-friendly, modernised and integrated CJS is achieved, leading to improved service delivery, improved quality of life and safety for all through interventions in an integrated approach across the CJS value chain. The implementation of the ICJS, inclusive of the CJS Seven-point Plan has been included in the SP.¹⁷

The Department of Correctional services has developed an Overcrowding Reduction Strategy which was approved in March 2021. The inmate populations for 2019/2020 was recorded at 154 449 against the approved bedspace total of 120 567. In 2019, Special Remission was granted by the President which led to the release of 15 911 low risk inmates into community corrections during the 2019/2020 financial year. Through this process overcrowding was reduced by 28%.¹⁸

16.7 Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels

The legislative and policy frameworks in South Africa that provide for the participation of women include, the National Policy Framework on Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality 2000, the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act 2000 and the National Development Plan 2030. Furthermore, South Africa adopted the National Action Plan on Women Peace and Security in 2020 under the auspices of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325. It is a 5-year plan (2020-2025) anchored on four pillars namely, participation, prevention, protection, relief and recovery. This NAP on WPS sets out specific objectives and actions to increase the participation of women in leadership positions, decision making, peacekeeping and mediations. The growing democracy has improved women's access to political power and decision making. The challenge is to make the rights accessible to all women. Although South Africa has progressive laws, policies and frameworks in place, patriarchal attitudes persist and the prevalence of GBV remains high. Many women continue to live in conditions of vulnerability and insecurity.

16.9 By 2030, provide legal identity for all including birth registration

South Africa governs birth registration through Act 51, the Births and Deaths Registration Act established in 1992. The Department of Home Affairs (DHA) is responsible for the implementation of the registration process. The Act stipulates that births should be registered within 30 days, with provisions for late registration using the DHA-24/LRB form for births occurring after this period, categorized based on the time elapsed. Once registered, a birth certificate is issued, and the information is recorded on the National Population Register (NPR). Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) acquires birth data from the DHA bi-annually. To address the issue

¹⁷ <https://legal-aid.co.za/3d-flip-book/legal-aid-sa-strategic-plan-2020-2025/>

¹⁸ https://www.upr-info.org/sites/default/files/country-document/2022-10/A_HRC_WG.6_41_ZAF_1_E.pdf

of stateless, the State had the Citizenship Act of 1995 which provided a process of granting citizenship to children born in South Africa who were stateless. The Government drafted a whitepaper which would serve as a foundational document for legislation around citizenship and is preparing to submit it to parliament.

B. Assessment of specific plans, strategies and programmes to deliver on the goals

Target 16.1 Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere.

The Department of Police in South Africa is undertaking several measures to address various aspects of crime and safety within communities. The department has approved a National Policing Strategy in 2022/23 to guide its efforts in improving community safety, reducing gender-based violence and femicide (GBVF), and combating serious and organised crimes. This strategy serves as a framework for coordinated actions and interventions. A significant aspect of the strategy involves targeting the top 30 high-contact crime areas in the country, which collectively account for about 50% of reported contact crimes. Efforts are directed towards stabilising crime in these areas by addressing various factors contributing to criminal activities, including illegal firearms, drugs, illicit mining, and undocumented foreign nationals. To support crime stabilisation efforts, the Department aims to ensure that police stations in high-contact crime areas have optimal human resources and sufficient operational equipment. This includes providing adequate staffing levels and necessary tools for law enforcement activities. In recognising the importance of effective investigation and prosecution, the department plans to develop and implement a detective service recovery plan over the medium term. This plan focuses on improving the detection of contact crimes through enhanced case docket management, which, in turn, facilitates better communication between investigating officers and victims and enhances cooperation with the National Prosecuting Authority.

The Department's Visible Policing and Detective Services programs are actively involved in combating GBVF. This includes establishing GBV desks in all police stations, providing in-service training to designated personnel, and implementing action plans in the top 30 GBV hotspots to address and prevent such crimes. Measures to eradicate DNA tracing backlog linked to crime scenes are also emphasised, as DNA evidence plays a critical role in investigations and prosecutions. Ensuring victim support is integral to the department's approach. Every police station is planned to have a dedicated, victim-friendly room for victims of GBV, including sexual assault. This aims to provide a safe and supportive environment for victims to seek assistance and report crimes.¹⁹

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

¹⁹<http://www.policeseecretariat.gov.za/downloads/reports/Final%20Approved%20Integrated%20Crime%20Violence%20Prevention%20Strategy.pdf>

Programmes that SAPS is currently working on include the development of regulatory frameworks that are handled by SAPS' Legal and Policy Services. This includes the training of members in the handling of children; the development and implementation of the SAPS Children's Programme and Safe School Programmes; Child protection weeks and awareness programmes; Crime Awareness Programmes on all levels of the organisations inclusive of Ministerial Community Izimbizo on Drugs and School Safety are conducted regularly. Some SAPS interventions include compliance inspection of police stations to ensure compliance with the applicable regulatory framework regarding handling children and adherence to administrative processes in handling children in need of emergency protection and care to appropriate alternative care. There is also docket inspection and guidance on investigations.

Further, the Forensic Social Work Services (FSW) have been put in place. SAPS Forensic Social Workers are registered with the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP) and they assist in crimes involving children. The SAPS Children's Programme is an integrated initiative aimed at creating a local platform for collaboration and engagement between key government stakeholders, community members, and civil society. Its primary goal is to develop and implement comprehensive strategies to prevent and address crimes against children that also impact the broader community. Central to the programme is establishing Child Committees within police stations, tasked with identifying children at risk of falling victim to crimes and pinpointing the specific risk factors affecting them. Hotspot police stations are identified based on data indicating a high prevalence of such incidents. These Children's Committees comprise representatives from government departments and community organisations, and to date, 24 have been established, all under the leadership of the SAPS. Furthermore, the program aims to build enduring partnerships between the South African Police Service and the local community to enhance child safety and well-being.²⁰

The Government continues to implement social change programmes targeting girls, traditional leaders and local communities. The Government had developed a marriage bill which addressed the issue of child marriages. There are proposed changes to the Marriage Act to ensure legislation governing the age of marriage and prevention of early marriages, prevention of forced marriages and harmful cultural practices.²¹ Trafficking, Furthermore, the Department of Justice will develop an intersectoral integrated system on Trafficking in Persons (TIP), which will be used to provide intersectoral data on the prevalence of TIP, as required by the UNODC, SADC and other international organisations.²²

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

The National Development Plan (NDP) vision 2030 aims to address the challenges of poverty, unemployment, and inequality in South Africa, with a key focus on ensuring safety and security for all citizens. It further sets out a long-term vision that directly affects the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development

²⁰ <https://pmg.org.za/committee-meeting/37798/>

²¹ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/news/2024/01/experts-committee-rights-child-congratulate-south-africa-significant-progress-made>

²² <https://static.pmg.org.za/dojcd-app-2021-2023.pdf>

(DOJ&CD) that, by 2030, South Africans should feel safe and be safe. This vision could be achieved by the DoJ&CD Annual Performance Plan 2022 – 2023 through a well-functioning criminal justice system in which the police, prosecution, judiciary and correctional services work together to ensure that suspects are arrested, prosecuted, convicted if guilty, and securely incarcerated. This vision is integrated into Priority 6 of the Medium-Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) 2019-2024, guiding the DOJ&CD's annual performance plans (APPs) to align with NDP deliverables.

However, the courts, particularly district and regional courts, are facing significant case backlogs, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns. To address this challenge, the DOJ&CD, in collaboration with key stakeholders such as the judiciary, National Prosecuting Authority (NPA), Legal Aid SA, and SAPS, has developed a case backlog reduction framework. The framework incorporates measures that were promulgated under the Court Directions published in respect of different Alert Levels. This framework includes measures such as compiling priority rolls of criminal cases, establishing local case management committees, and setting uniform targets for reducing case backlogs over the MTSF period. Consultations are ongoing to finalize performance targets and ensure effective implementation of strategies to significantly reduce backlogs in the criminal justice system.

The Department of Justice aims to enhance access to justice for women, particularly victims of gender-based violence and femicide (GBVF). This includes implementing the National Strategic Plan on GBVF, maintaining a 70% conviction rate for sexual offences, and establishing 70 additional sexual offences courts. Furthermore, efforts will focus on improving the management of the national register for sex offenders to enhance vetting processes for individuals working with vulnerable groups. Additionally, the Department plans to modernize and digitize its services, with 14 services, such as maintenance and protection order applications, becoming available online. Moreover, facilities for virtual court proceedings will be provided to 156 courts to facilitate easier access to justice.

Furthermore, the Department plans to establish Phases of Femicide Watch to monitor the processing of gender-based violence and femicide (GBVF) cases effectively. This initiative is aligned with Article 15 of the Presidential Summit Declaration against GBVF, Pillar 3 of the National Strategic Plan on GBVF, and UN recommendations. Femicide Watch will serve as a national repository for cases of female homicides related to GBVF, facilitating profiling for prevention and response. Over the medium term, the Department aims to complete Phases 5 to 7 of Femicide Watch.

Additionally, the Department aims to monitor the turnaround time for finalizing child justice preliminary inquiries, ensuring speedy resolution of cases involving children in accordance with constitutional rights and the Child Justice Act. The target is to finalize 92% of child justice preliminary inquiries within 90 days of the first appearance over the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) period. This aims to enhance access to justice services for children while safeguarding their rights.²³

²³ <https://static.pmg.org.za/dojcd-app-2021-2023.pdf>

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

The public service 8-Principles Action plan for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality launched in 2007, and institutionalised for implementation in 2008 is a measuring tool that monitors the extent to which equality is a measuring tool that monitors the extent to which equality and non-discrimination under the law, access to justice for women, poverty reduction, right to work, career pathing as well as women entrepreneurship and development of women's enterprises are covered within public service. Through this programme, the Public Service is currently at 45.2% of the required 50% equity representation for women at Senior Management Services (SMS) levels. There is therefore a need for individual departments to increase efforts implement the 8-principle action plan which is a mechanism to address the under representation of women at SMS levels and gender transformation in the workplace.²⁴

Furthermore, the Gender responsive implementation approach has been demonstrated in the Medium-Term Strategic Frameworks 2019-2024 which prioritises gender as a cross-cutting focus area that need to be mainstreamed into all elements of South Africa's developmental future and all programmes and interventions of government. The South African government has put measures in place to ensure that the Medium-Term Strategic Framework includes targets, indicators and intervention measures that are gender responsive, and which must be achieved within the period 2019-2024. In 2021, the South African government launched the Charlotte Maxeke Women's Initiative on Economic Justice and Rights as part of its pledge to support gender equality, increase opportunities for women and girls in entrepreneurship, leadership and diplomacy. Government of South Africa has introduced programmes which specifically target women to facilitate their participation in the mainstream economy.²⁵

The government made a commitment to allocate at least 40% of public procurement to women-owned business in Small, Medium and Micro enterprises (SMMEs). The government trained more than 6000 women entrepreneurs to take part in public procurement opportunities.²⁶

Through the National Action Plan, CSOs have helped the government in implementing activities under the National Gender Machinery (NGM) as one of the mechanism and strategies aimed to address women's inequalities in all spheres of life both private and public. It also calls for generation of data on the status of women in order to address the social economic developmental and needs that are promoting women's integration into the future we want.²⁷

²⁴ https://www.dpsa.gov.za/dpsa2g/documents/ee/2023/pswmw_30_07_23.pdf

<https://www.sanews.gov.za/south-africa/government-launches-initiative-empower-women-girls-africa>

²⁵ <https://www.sanews.gov.za/south-africa/government-launches-initiative-empower-women-girls-africa#:~:text=Government%20launches%20initiative%20to%20empower%20women%2C%20girls%20in,to%20the%20economic%20and%20financial%20inclusion%20of%20women.>

²⁶ <https://www.sanews.gov.za/south-africa/government-committed-advancing-lives-women>

²⁷ [Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities concludes 2023 National Gender Machinery | South African Government \(www.gov.za\)](https://www.sanews.gov.za/south-africa/government-committed-advancing-lives-women)

Target 16.9 By 2030, provide legal identity for all including birth registration

To improve access for registration of birth in both urban and rural areas, the DHA has identified 1445 Health Facilities to be connected with IT systems including online verifications. This is likely to be completed in 2023/2024 financial year. The DHA also has 100 Mobile Offices that are used in Provinces where the DHA has inadequate footprint. The DHA is currently developing the Official Identity Management Policy to guide development of a future non-discriminatory Identification Act, which will also cater for the birth registration of children who are born intersex.²⁸

C. Institutional and public service capacity to deliver on the SDGs

Implementing the SDGs poses significant challenges for developing countries like South Africa, particularly at the municipal level. Social ills affecting communities hinder service delivery, making SDG localisation difficult. Municipalities are crucial for meeting local needs and ensuring inclusivity in SDG efforts, but implementation remains low despite having frameworks in place. Political instability due to changing leadership further complicates SDG localisation efforts. Data disaggregation issues and competing priorities exacerbate the problem, with SDGs sometimes viewed as optional. Despite challenges, many municipalities have initiated activities, indicating willingness to localise the SDGs. However, there's a need for a standardised institutional framework. Progress is evident in aligning plans and processes with SDGs, notably in Integrated Development Plans (IDPs) and budgeting. UNHABITAT provides guidelines for successful SDG implementation, emphasising the importance of reviewing local programs, aligning budgets, and building resource management capacity. Stakeholder involvement is crucial for shared ownership of SDG implementation. Overall, addressing political, data, and policy gaps is essential for effective SDG localization in South African municipalities.²⁹

D. Review budget allocation by looking sufficient allocation and efficient use of resources

16.1 Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere

The National Treasury approved the Department of Police request to reallocate capital project funding and other earmarked funds to alleviate financial pressures in goods and services expenditure. The total virement approved was R100.6 million, well within the allowable threshold of 8% under the Public Finance Management Act. Allocation highlights include R65 million for prioritising and resourcing top 30 High Contact Crime Weight stations, R20 million for firearm licensing activities, and R70 million to support Community

²⁸ https://www.upr-info.org/sites/default/files/country-document/2022-10/A_HRC_WG.6_41_ZAF_1_E.pdf

²⁹ <https://unitar.org/sites/default/files/media/file/Localization%20of%20the%20SDGs%20in%20Municipalities%20%28002%29.pdf>

Policing Forums (CPFs). Over the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework period, SAPS's expenditure is expected to increase at an average annual rate of 3.9%, with funds allocated for appointing 15,000 police trainees and boosting Detective Service capacity. An Action Plan targets crimes related to gender-based violence and sexual offenses, with funding allocated for the resourcing of specialized units and enhancements to police station safety. Additionally, over R1 billion is allocated for the construction and upgrading of police stations.³⁰

The implementation of the National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (NSP on GBV-F) outlined in the 2024 State of the Nation Address (SONA) involves dedicating approximately R21 billion over the medium term to its six pillars, including women's economic empowerment. This plan, launched in 2020, is the government's comprehensive strategy to address violence against women and children. Key interventions include extensive legal reform, support for survivors through evidence kits at police stations, psychological and social services, and the establishment of a GBVF Response Fund. President Cyril Ramaphosa, along with the International Women's Forum of South Africa, launched the private-sector GBVF Response Fund in February 2021, which has garnered around R162 million in pledges, with 75% of the amount already collected. Concerns have been raised with the Department of Social Development for mismanaging R 100 000 transfer from the criminal assets recovery account meant for the empowerment programmes for the survivors of GBV-F.³¹

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

Despite the critical nature of anti-trafficking efforts, the South African government lacks a specific budget allocation for combating human trafficking. Instead, various government agencies contribute funds towards their respective anti-trafficking initiatives. The Department of Justice and Constitutional Development (DOJCD), for instance, allocated 1.7 million South African rand (equivalent to approximately \$100,310) for the year 2023. These funds are directed towards supporting training initiatives, the implementation of the National Policy Framework (NPF), the National Inter-Sectoral Coordination Team on Trafficking in Persons (NICTIP), and certain Provincial Task Team (PTT) meetings.³²

16.3 Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all

³⁰ [https://nationalgovernment.co.za/departments/department_of_police_\(saps\)/annual-report/2023-department-of-police-\(saps\)-annual-report.pdf](https://nationalgovernment.co.za/departments/department_of_police_(saps)/annual-report/2023-department-of-police-(saps)-annual-report.pdf)

³¹ <https://www.stateofthenation.gov.za/priorities/making-communities-safer/gender-based-violence#:~:text=The%20GBVF%20Response%20Fund%20was,of%20this%20amount%20already%20collected.>

³² <https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-trafficking-in-persons-report/south-africa#:~:text=The%20government%20did%20not%20have,some%20PTT%20meetings%20for%202023>

The Department of Justice and Constitutional Development has been allocated a budget of R23.2 billion for the 2023/24 financial year, emphasising its role in upholding the Constitution and the rule of law. This budget is crucial for ensuring accessible, fair, speedy, and cost-effective administration of justice, contributing to a safer and more secure South Africa. Specifically, the allocation includes R589.3 million for the Minimum Service Standards initiative, aimed at providing court users with disabilities reasonable access to the courts. Changes to the Legal Aid SA Means Test aim to allow more people to access justice, while a new Means Test under the ESTA Act is set at R13,625.00 for eviction matters, all aimed at ensuring fairness and accessibility within the legal system.³³

16.7 Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels

Over the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) period, the department will prioritise addressing gender-based violence, supporting empowerment initiatives, promoting responsive planning across government, empowering youth, and advocating for the rights of people with disabilities. Despite a projected decrease in total expenditure at an average annual rate of 4.7%, from R991.7 million in 2022/23 to R858.3 million in 2025/26, the department remains committed to allocating a significant portion of its budget (76.7%, approximately R2.1 billion) for transfers and subsidies to the National Youth Development Agency and the Commission for Gender Equality.

The National Council on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide Bill was submitted to Parliament in 2022/23, with the council's launch anticipated in 2023/24. Tasked with coordinating and overseeing the national response to gender-based violence and femicide, the council's operationalization is projected to cost R15 million over the medium term. This funding is allocated to the Social Empowerment of Women subprogramme within the Mainstreaming Women's Rights and Advocacy programme. Additionally, R26.4 million over the next three years is allocated to the Economic Empowerment of Women subprogramme to support public awareness, advocacy events, and the implementation monitoring of the NSP on GBV-F.

Meanwhile, the Commission for Gender Equality, with an allocation of R295.3 million over the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) period, will focus on advancing gender equality through legislative strengthening, public information and education, and investigating issues undermining gender equality.³⁴

To date, there is no government funding allocated for the implementation of the NAP on WPS. Instead, this funding has largely been sourced via the international community. It has been estimated that implementation will cost around R560 million for the 5 years.

³³ [Minister Ronald Lamola: Justice and Correctional Services Dept Budget 2023/24 | South African Government \(www.gov.za\)](https://www.gov.za/news/press-statements/2023/02/23-minister-ronald-lamola-justice-and-correctional-services-dept-budget-2023-24)

³⁴ <https://www.treasury.gov.za/documents/national%20budget/2023/ene/Vote%2020%20Women,%20Youth%20and%20Persons%20with%20Disabilities.pdf>

16.9 By 2030, provide legal identity for all including birth registration

According to the Department of Home Affairs the Citizen Affairs budget increased from R3 billion in 2021/22 to R3.9 billion in the 2022/23 financial year, but only 92% of the expenditure was utilised, falling short of the 100% ceiling. Immigration Affairs, on the other hand, spent 100% of its R1.4 billion budget in 2021/22 but saved 5% of its R1.4 billion budget in 2022/23. Despite a nominal increase in the budget from the previous year, there was a real reduction in funds due to high inflation.³⁵ Not information is provided on allocation of funding to deal with statelessness and birth registration.

E. Assessment of state of implementation to tackle this goal nationally linked to outputs and outcomes

Target 16.1 Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere.

The crime statistics for South Africa in the third quarter of 2023 reveal a concerning trend, particularly in violent crimes such as murder and attempted murder. The per capita murder rate for the year 2022/23 reached its highest point in two decades, standing at 45 per 100,000 people, representing a significant 50% increase compared to 2012/13. This increase in violent crime is alarming and raises concerns about the effectiveness of existing laws, policies, and interventions aimed at creating peaceful communities and ensuring citizen safety.³⁶

Several factors contribute to the elevated crime levels in South Africa, including inequality, poverty, unemployment, social exclusion, gang violence, taxi violence, vigilantism, robberies, and marginalisation. The abuse of alcohol has also been identified as a contributing factor to many other crimes such as attempted murder, assault, GBV, and rape cases.

The Global initiative Against Transnational Organised Crime, indicates that there are about 3.8 million unregistered, illegal firearms circulating in South Africa, Mozambique and Zimbabwe.³⁷ The proliferation of firearms in communities poses a significant threat to lives and livelihoods. Additionally, there is a lack of trust in the police force's ability to prevent, reduce, and respond to crime. According to data from the Human Sciences Research Council, only 27% of South Africans trust the police. This lack of confidence in law enforcement hinders community cooperation and participation in crime prevention initiatives.³⁸

South Africa has the highest rates of gender-based violence worldwide, including rape, female homicide and domestic abuse. The women in South Africa are faced with pronounced challenges stemming from a historical background of apartheid era, lack of government action in legal implementation, pervasive

³⁵ <https://pmg.org.za/taled-committee-report/5509/>

³⁶ [https://theconversation.com/south-africas-police-are-losing-the-war-on-crime-heres-how-they-need-to-rethink-their-approach-218048#:~:text=South%20Africa's%20crime%20statistics%20for,compared%20to%202012%2F13\).](https://theconversation.com/south-africas-police-are-losing-the-war-on-crime-heres-how-they-need-to-rethink-their-approach-218048#:~:text=South%20Africa's%20crime%20statistics%20for,compared%20to%202012%2F13).)

³⁷ <https://www.iol.co.za/the-star/news/country-facing-spike-in-gun-violence-as-72-people-are-killed-in-sa-everyday-e5721537-039b-4168-a941-dfc15343826e>

³⁸ <https://businesstech.co.za/news/government/675599/whats-driving-violent-crime-in-south-africa-expert/>

patriarchal cultural attitudes and widespread poverty. Data from the South African Police Service (SAPS) annual report recorded 25,204 murders in 2021/22, an increase of 26.6% on the 19,904 recorded in 2020/21. Of the victims, 3,198 were women and 1,082 were children. Crimes committed against women increased, by 15.6% from 155,062, in 2020/21 to 179,208, in 2021/22. Murder, sexual offences, common assault and attempted murder all contributed to the increase. Crimes against children increased by 13.3% from 39,878 in 2020/21 to 45,197 in 2021/22.³⁹

Intimate partner violence poses a significant barrier for girls to negotiate safe sex and condom use. In 2020, the Minister of Police identified around 30 communities as GBV-F hotspots, with Lusikisiki in the Eastern Cape Province labeled as the rape capital of South Africa. The urgent need for comprehensive action is evident to address this crisis and protect the well-being of women and girls in the country.⁴⁰

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

The law criminalises violence against children, including corporal punishment. Despite the abolishment of corporal punishment in South African schools in 1997, it is still used as a form of discipline. This is according to the children exposed to maltreatment 2021 report released by Statistics South Africa. The report further shows that the most common form of violence experienced by children was corporal punishment by teachers. Of the 1 million children who experienced violence at school, close to 84% experienced corporal punishment by teachers, followed by verbal abuse by teachers (13,7%) and physical violence by teachers (10,6%). About 6 in 10 children who experienced corporal punishment by teachers at school in 2019 lived in rural areas. However, 7 in 10 children who experienced physical violence by teachers in 2019 were residents of urban areas.⁴¹

Where child trafficking is concerned, South Africa is considered a source, transit and destination country. Children are trafficked within the country from poor rural areas to urban areas such as Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban and Bloemfontein and they are also trafficked internationally. Boys are forced to work in street vending, food service, begging, criminal activities and agriculture. Girls are subjected to domestic servitude and sexual exploitation which can include prostitution and pornography. According to a study, in 2021, approximately 500,000 children dropped out of school, resulting in a total of 750,000 children not enrolled in school; high death rates from the pandemic increased the orphan population, leaving more children vulnerable to exploitation.⁴² Furthermore, the incidents of Ukuthwala have been on the rise in recent years in KZN, rating the province second after Eastern Cape. Anecdotal evidence shows that Mpumalanga also

³⁹ <https://africacheck.org/infofinder/explore-facts/how-many-women-and-children-are-murdered-south-africa-year#:~:text=Crimes%20committed%20against%20women%20increased,to%2045%2C197%20in%202021%2F22.>

⁴⁰ Scorecard on the Localisation of the National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide

⁴¹ <https://www.statssa.gov.za/?p=16123>

⁴² <https://www.lovejustice.ngo/south-africa#:~:text=South%20African%20children%20are%20often,%2C%20criminal%20activities%2C%20and%20agriculture.>

has high cases of Ukuthwala. EMangwaneni is one of the well-known tribes with very high incidents of Ukuthwala in Bergville, KZN. In their case, young girls are abducted and forced into marrying older men depriving them of their innocence, childhood and learning opportunities. Girls who are victims of Ukuthwala are exposed to health implications, and lack access to healthcare, and less conscious of sexually transmitted infections or sexually related implications. Most of them also fall into a trap of early pregnancies, and domestic violence. Although ukuthwala has been criminalised and has been incorporated into the Trafficking in Persons Act, some people still see it as a normal form of tradition and custom.⁴³

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

Section 34 of the Constitution guarantees the right to a fair public hearing before a court or an independent tribunal. However, true access to justice remains a challenge due to various factors. Police abuse and prison overcrowding persist, hindering rehabilitation efforts. High legal costs and a lack of legal representation for those unable to afford prevent equal access to justice. Provincial governments often fail to comply with court orders, exacerbating the issue. Additionally, barriers such as socio-economic disparities, insufficient resources for legal aid, operational inefficiencies, and limited knowledge about legal rights further compromise access to justice, especially in lower courts.⁴⁴

Another myriad factor is the low conviction rates of crimes due to the backlog of cases. High levels of crime have placed considerable pressure on the criminal justice system too. For example, between 2019/20 and 2021/22, police recorded 66,486 murder cases. Of these, only 8,103 (12%) resulted in a guilty verdict. Due to decades of inadequate training, resources and accountability, the criminal justice system is largely ineffective, inefficient, and insensitive.⁴⁵

The real level of rape is, however, much higher because many survivors suffer in silence often have limited access or too disempowered too intimidated or too fearful of further traumatising or stigmatising in the criminal justice system to step forward. In 2021, the conviction rate for crimes of rape was 8.6% due to high number of cases dropping out of the criminal justice system and most reported cases never being prosecuted.⁴⁶ Currently, efforts have been made with strong interventions in place in clearing 251 000 DNA backlog cases discovered at the forensic service laboratories in 2021/2022 financial year currently standing at zero.⁴⁷ The convictions rate in sexual offences has tanked to 74.8% in 2022/2023. However, women at grassroots level objects this finding as most of them have lost hope in the justice system.⁴⁸

⁴³ https://www.masiphephe.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Harmful-Practices-Infringe-the-Rights-of-Women-and-Girls_Final-Policy-Brief-.pdf

⁴⁴ <http://www.scielo.org.za/pdf/dejure/v53n1/17.pdf>

⁴⁵ <https://www.citizen.co.za/news/sas-police-are-losing-the-war-on-crime/>

⁴⁶ <https://amnesty.org.za/action/gender-based-violence-call-on-the-south-african-police-service-to-care/>

⁴⁷ <https://www.sanews.gov.za/south-africa/decrease-sexual-offences-crimes>

⁴⁸ <https://www.stateofthenation.gov.za/priorities/making-communities-safer/gender-based-violence>

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

With regards to gender equality in local government the boundaries for the current municipal structure, consisting of 257 municipalities, were adopted during the 2016 local government elections and reported on for the first time in the non-financial census of municipalities report for 2017. This allows for meaningful comparisons over the period 2017–2021. In 2017, women occupied 36% of senior-level posts across local government, rising to 39% in 2021 according to Stats SA's non-financial census of municipalities report.⁴⁹

Despite progress made as indicated, there are still gaps because women continue to face substantial challenges in attaining leadership positions despite South Africa's progressive constitution and efforts to promote gender equality. These concerns are likely due to restrictive laws, cultural diversities and practices, institutional barriers, as well as disproportionate access to quality education, healthcare, and resources.⁵⁰ The Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Act 41 of 2003 makes provision for women to constitute at least 30% of the National House of Traditional Leaders. Traditional leadership is particularly hard to transform and there is a need to make substantive changes in this sector because, despite improvements, women in these leadership structures still face the challenge of unequal treatment in relation to their male counterparts.⁵¹

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

In accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), every child is entitled to a name, nationality, and official birth registration. Birth registration is essential for legitimising a child's existence and failure to do so limits their future opportunities in education, economic participation, and the exercise of human rights. Sustainable Development Goal 16.9 emphasises the need for legal identity, including birth registration, to prevent abuse, exploitation, trafficking, and violence against children (United Nations [UN], 2015). According to Census data from 2001 and 2011, women, representing 55% of residents in certain areas, are disproportionately affected by statelessness, particularly black African women accounting for 32.2% of this group. The registration of births within the legally mandated 30-day period is a critical process to ensuring that every child is officially recognised and accounted for. Any birth that is not registered after thirty days is considered a Late Registration of Birth. As stated in section 2 of this article, the Department of Home Affairs has set up 'offices' at major hospitals and clinics where birth certificates can be issued directly. However, this is not always accessible to parents – especially those parents who are not South African. A Notice of Birth is required to gain a birth certificate, and to be issued a Notice of Birth, valid documentation must be held by both parents. For people living in remote areas of the country and those with very low income find it challenging traveling to the nearest home affairs or clinics. There are also cases of children whose parents are South Africans but who abandoned them at an early age of either five, six or

⁴⁹ <https://www.statssa.gov.za/?p=16582>

⁵⁰ <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fsoc.2018.00038/full>

⁵¹ https://www.cogta.gov.za/cgta_2016/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/TLGFA-Traditional-Leadership-and-Governance-Framework-Act-2003-Act-No-41-of-2003.pdf

seven. At the later age when the children require an ID, it becomes difficult for them as they don't have any documents to prove their parentage. This has resulted in many children not being issued a birth certificate in South Africa.⁵²

F. Assessment of public awareness on 2030 agenda and commitment on specific target

Public awareness and capacity involvement in South Africa regarding the SDGs have seen some progress and challenges over the past six years. While there has been a decrease in awareness from 54% in 2017 to 43% in 2023, efforts to achieve SDGs' goal of inclusivity face structural obstacles, including gender inequality, lack of peace, justice, and strong institutions. Despite government efforts, there's a lack of grassroots-level awareness campaigns and funding allocation for SDG implementation.⁵³

Since 2019, with the establishment of the Ministry in the Presidency for Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, the 16 Days of Activism campaign within a broader approach of 365 days of action has been used to raise awareness of GBV-F against women, children, youth, the LGBTQIA+ community and persons with disabilities.⁵⁴ A national strategy to combat gender-based violence emphasises prevention through engagement with various stakeholders. Awareness campaigns promoting positive masculinity and initiatives like the Presidential Young Men and Boys' Indaba has been used as a platform to address the root causes of gender-based violence.⁵⁵

The South African Police Service (SAPS) participates in Child Protection Week campaigns and ongoing awareness programs addressing emerging trends in child safety. Partnerships with the Department of Basic Education focus on crime awareness and safety in schools. Additionally, efforts to combat Trafficking in Persons (TIP) include awareness campaigns targeting vulnerable groups and public transport users. The Department of Justice has integrated comprehensive public awareness and communication strategies into programs aimed at preventing and combating trafficking. These efforts focus on discouraging both demand and supply of cheap labour, addressing harmful traditional practices, and reaching rural areas with materials in local languages.⁵⁶

Civil legal aid providers like the Black Sash and Equal Education Law Centre raise community and individual legal rights awareness and connect indigent individuals with free legal assistance. Street law programs

⁵² <https://genderjustice.org.za/card/birth-registration-of-non-national-children-in-south-africa-explained/what-is-late-registration-of-birth/>

⁵³ https://www.dpme.gov.za/advertisements/Tenders/ToR%20Annexure%20A_16%20Days%20Campaign%20DPME%2003-2023-24.pdf

⁵⁴ https://www.dpme.gov.za/advertisements/Tenders/ToR%20Annexure%20A_16%20Days%20Campaign%20DPME%2003-2023-24.pdf

⁵⁵ <https://www.saps.gov.za/journal/sdetails.php?jid=16173>

⁵⁶ <https://www.justice.gov.za/docs/other-docs/2019-TIP-NPF-10April2019.pdf>

involving law students and paralegals complement these efforts by conducting interactive training sessions on relevant legal issues.⁵⁷

The Department of Home Affairs (DHA) conducts awareness raising campaigns to document children excluded from the National Population Register, with a focus on late birth registration and implementing an Online Birth Registration system.⁵⁸

Efforts to enhance women's participation in decision-making processes, led by CSOs alongside government departments like DWYPD, DIRCO, and DODMV in South Africa, involved translating the NAP on WPS into local languages. They also conducted various activities such as capacity-building workshops, public events, awareness raisings to equip women with skills in conflict resolution, mediation, and leadership and provide platforms for women to advocate for their inclusion.⁵⁹

While South Africa faces challenges in raising public awareness and promoting community involvement in SDG-related initiatives, various government and civil society efforts aim to address these issues and ensure inclusivity in sustainable development endeavors.

G. Assess availability of evidence-based data to measure implementation.

In assessing the availability of evidence-based data to measure implementation, South Africa demonstrates efforts to coordinate reporting on global, continental, and national development agendas through the Integrated Indicator Framework (IIF) by Statistics South Africa (Stats SA). Stats SA is committed to providing high-quality data for evidence-based decision-making, showcasing an improvement in reporting indicators from 64% in 2019 to 72% in 2023. Positive trends have been observed in economic, environmental, and social goals, while challenges persist in obtaining sufficient or new data for tracking progress.⁶⁰

South Africa has made strides in data collection systems related to crime and violence, facilitating a comprehensive understanding of incidence, prevalence, and risk factors. Initiatives like the Victims of Crime Survey (VOCS) and the collection of annual crime statistics by the South African Police Service (SAPS) provide valuable insights. However, challenges persist, such as limited disaggregated data at subnational levels or in terms of gender. Without accurate and disaggregated gender data, it is difficult to formulate policy and effectively allocate the financial, educational, and legal resources required to reduce sex and gender-based crimes.⁶¹

⁵⁷ http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S2077-49072021000100001

⁵⁸ <https://www.sanews.gov.za/south-africa/penalties-late-birth-registration>

⁵⁹ <https://www.ijr.org.za/home/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/800769-IJR-Baseline-study-on-NAP-WEB.pdf>

⁶⁰ https://www.statssa.gov.za/MDG/SDG_Country_report.pdf

⁶¹ <https://groundup.org.za/article/south-africa-lacks-statistics-gender/>

In response to rising sexual offences, there's a pressing need for disaggregated Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (GBVF) data sets. Article 15 of the Presidential Summit Declaration on GBVF mandates the integration of data systems to collect detailed information on survivors and offenders. While the National Register for Sex Offenders (NRSO) aligns with this goal, decentralisation to regional levels is proposed for broader coverage.⁶²

Underreporting poses a significant challenge, particularly in cases of violence against children. Factors such as fear of reprisal, parental involvement, and secondary victimisation during reporting further complicate data accuracy. Victimisation surveys offer alternative insights, but they too have limitations in recall and disclosure. Nonetheless, there are indicative estimations of the prevalence of stateless persons or persons at risk of statelessness in the country. South Africa does not have a dedicated mechanism to identify statelessness, hindering policy responses and human rights protections for affected individuals.⁶³

H. Assessment of the level of engagement from different stakeholders in the national implementation plan

Government institutions are pivotal in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SA CSO working Group which has representation from provinces and sectoral coalitions has actively engaged with the South Africa government on the development of the 2030 Agenda and its implementation in the country. The groups' purpose is to mobilise South African civil society around effective SDG implementation, ensuring that those most in need are prioritised in the mainstreaming of goals in the country's national, provincial and local government strategic plans.⁶⁴

The private sector holds significant potential in SDG alignment and implementation, given its influence on socio-economic development and environmental sustainability. Engaging businesses in SDG initiatives drive strengthen economic growth, innovation, and sustainable practices. International organisations like the UN Global Compact and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development advocate for business involvement in SDGs, offering resources and guidance. Currently, there is an apparent lack of formal relationships and partnerships between business, government and civil society. While public-private partnerships are nothing new, the SDGs and specifically SDG17 call on each country to investigate ways to more actively stimulate and strengthen multi-stakeholder partnerships.⁶⁵

⁶² <https://static.pmg.org.za/dojcd-app-2021-2023.pdf>

⁶³ https://static.pmg.org.za/210309Presentation_by_LHR_on_Statelessness.pdf

⁶⁴ <https://www.csvr.org.za/pdf/Citizens%20Report%20SA%20Ensuring%20an%20Inclusive%20Reporting%20Process%20for%20HLPF%202019.pdf>

⁶⁵ https://researchspace.csir.co.za/dspace/bitstream/handle/10204/11124/20094_RS%20The%20sustainable%20development%20goals%20in%20South%20Africa%20Investigating%20the%20need%20for%20multi%20stakeholder%20partnerships.pdf?sequence=1/1000#:~:text=Multi%2Dstakeholder%20platforms%20are%20proposed,people%2Dand%20planet%2Dcentred.

I. Review of regular policy dialogue within the governance mechanism for SDG implementation or with relevant government ministries during the preparation and since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda.

The 2030 Agenda, adopted by the United Nations in 2015, emphasises inclusive and participatory approaches to achieving its goals. CSOs in South Africa have been instrumental in advocating for sustainable development, raising awareness, mobilising resources, and holding stakeholders accountable. They engage in various mechanisms such as the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) and platforms like the UN SDGs Action Campaign and the Global Civil Society Forum.

The 2023 Sustainable Development Goals Country Report for South Africa builds from the previous two reports produced by the country, namely the baseline in 2017 and the 2019 SDG Country report which resulted from a multi-stakeholder consultation process, involving experts and input from civil society, multilateral organisations, and academia. Platforms were created to validate each of the seventeen goal reports. Although the government fully invited civil society to contribute to the drafting of the report, but they did not provide the resources to enable such participation.⁶⁶

South African CSOs Working Group on SDGs have had an opportunity to discuss civil society's plans for the 2024 Voluntary National Review (VNR), aiming to connect with the government's plans and identify collaboration opportunities.⁶⁷

Despite acknowledgment of the importance of citizen engagement, meaningful participation remains limited due to inadequate systems and institutional structures. Many citizens are unaware of the 2030 Agenda, and their exclusion from development programs contributes to its failure. There is a need to enhance citizen engagement by improving information dissemination and building capacity for participation, recognizing its vital role in sustainable development efforts.

⁶⁶ http://www.statssa.gov.za/MDG/SDG_Country_report.pdf

⁶⁷ <https://www.africanmonitor.org/2023-newsletter/>