



South Africa: Sustainable Development Goals Initiative

Support the Government of the Republic of South Africa in achieving evidence-based implementation of the 2030 Agenda

The challenge

South Africa has made significant advances to improve the welfare of its citizens since its transition to a strong democracy in 1994, but progress has deteriorated in the last decade, undermining gains in reducing poverty and historical inequalities. The country remains a dual economy with one of the highest inequality rates in the world. South Africa is facing weak economic growth and ecological and social challenges, reflected in unreliable public service delivery.

Furthermore, South Africa has made slow progress in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Recent data from the Sustainable Development Report 2022 shows that South Africa is on track with only two SDG goals, namely gender equality (goal 5) and responsible production and consumption (goal 12). There is modest progress on six SDG goals (3, 6, 9, 11, 13, 17), while progress has stalled on seven goals (2, 4, 7, 8, 14, 15, 16). Progress on goal 1 (end poverty) has been reversed throughout the last decade.

The South African government, driven by The Presidency, is focused on revitalising the economy and ending poverty, inequalities, and all structural forms of social injustice. This is founded on the Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan, which remains a common programme centralised within the Presidency to rebuild the economy. Furthermore, the policy analysis capability within the government has been ineffective in driving evidence-based implementation. Policy coordination remains weak at the central level, with reduced alignment and oversight abilities. The Presidency has also identified the lack of data driven policy decision-making and a slow transition from opinion-based policy making into evidence-based policy making as key problems.

Project name	Sustainable Development Goals Initiative (SDGI)
Commissioned by	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Project region	South Africa
Lead executing agency	The Presidency, Republic of South Africa
Duration	10/2021 to 09/2025

Our approach

The objective of the SDG Initiative is to support the government of the Republic of South Africa in achieving evidence-based policy implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the National Development Plan (NDP). The project aims at strengthening the coordination capacity of the Policy and Research Services Unit (PRS) in The Presidency for effective policy coordination and implementation across all sectors of government.

In addition to technical support for the PRS, the Initiative will support the SDG Initiative Secretariat hosted by the University of Pretoria's Albert Luthuli Leadership Institute (ALLI) and further develop the ALLI-based SDG Hub's knowledge platform on Agenda 2030-relevant research outputs.

The project's target groups are primarily intermediaries, i.e., middle and senior managers in the public administration, especially at national level, who are responsible for processes to formulate or adapt laws, policies or other regulatory measures in the context of Recover Better. Through the support of the SDG Hub, executives from various universities and researchers from public universities are also reached.

The programme comprises three complementary areas of intervention (outputs):

- **Output 1** - aims to strengthen the capacity of the PRS to use and implement mechanisms of evidence-based policy field



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L. to r.: Logos of SDGI partners: University of Pretoria, Stellenbosch University, African Monitor

coordination, which will lead to greater use of PRS services by other government institutions.

- **Output 2** –aims to strengthen the capacities of the SDG Initiative Secretariat as interface between politics and science to respond to policy inquiries and research needs by structuring and processing existing scientific knowledge, or by referring to a pool of relevant researchers on issues for which scientific knowledge and data are not available.
- **Output 3** - aims to ensure that the inclusive dialogue between state and non-state actors on the SDGs, SA’s Voluntary National Review 2024 and the SDG architecture has been strengthened.

Exemplary Results so far

The initiative has set-up institutional systems for the effective implementation and sound cooperation through various inter-partner agreements and funding frameworks. Noteworthy are agreements with University of Pretoria, Stellenbosch University and African Monitor Trust. The latter to bring in the voice of civil society into various inclusive dialogues with Government and academia on the SDG architecture and the VNR.

Central to the objective of SDGI has been its ability to support the PRS with important impact assessments through the Socio-Economic Impact Assessment System (SEIAS), developed by the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME). This system is used for assessing the impact of policy initiatives, legislations, and related regulations and helps decision-makers to make informed decisions based on evidence.

The most notable of these impact assessments is that of the Public Procurement Bill, which President Cyril Ramaphosa mentioned in the 2020 State of the Nation Address. This Bill is being considered by Parliament as part of efforts to empower black and emerging

businesses and to advance radical economic transformation. The Bill also aims to better prevent corruption, collusion, and bid-rigging in public procurement, by establishing a central procurement authority and procurement oversight bodies.

Highlights:

In 2022/2023, the initiative supported an independent and comprehensive review of the commitments made during the **State of the Nation Address (SONA)** since 2019 for the current administration. This review was well-received by the Management Committee in the Presidency.

Additionally, the initiative supported The Presidency in convening the **National Coalitions Dialogue (NCD)** in 2023. This inclusive dialogue involved various stakeholder such as political parties, civil society, and academia. SDGI assisted in preparing the discussion document for the NCD and synthesized inputs from South Africa’s political parties to inform the construction of a Coalitions Framework for South Africa. This Framework will serve as a roadmap for South African coalition practice, especially as the country enters a period of heightened coalition governance. The Framework is designed to provide guidance to the Government of South Africa in addressing challenges associated with unstable coalition practices, ultimately enhancing the quality of governance.



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