



AN ASSESSMENT OF THE EXTENT TO WHICH SOUTH AFRICA IS ALIGNED TO AND DELIVERING ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL SIXTEEN: IMPLICATIONS FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal Sixteen is premised on promoting peaceful and inclusive societies, providing access to justice for all, and building effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels. As a signatory to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals in 2015, the South African state regards them as central to its national development pathway. The state thus seeks to ensure that Sustainable Development Goals' targets are embedded within its governance framework. This article explores the extent to which the South African state is progressing towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal Sixteen, and further assesses how the pursuit of Sustainable Development Goal Sixteen may serve to accentuate the achievement of the state's strategic developmental objectives and outcomes as outlined in the National Development Plan: Vision 2030. The article finds that, despite South Africa having crafted strong anti-crime legislation and legal frameworks, their practical implementation is hindered by weakened state institutional capacities and a lack of political will to address macroeconomic challenges that give rise to acts of criminality and violence, thereby threatening the security of the state.

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1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The South African state has transformed from a pariah state characterized by an apartheid legacy to a progressive state that espouses the principles and mechanisms of democracy and good governance. However, the current trajectory of South African statecraft faces challenges, including corruption, organized crime, a poorly resourced criminal justice system, inefficient and ineffective governance systems, and a lack of accountability, resulting in an inability to deliver adequate services to all citizens. This article explores the imperatives of capacitating the South African state to build stronger institutions that promote peace, justice, and accountability, as outlined in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal Sixteen (SDG#16). The Sustainable Development Goal on peace, justice, and building strong institutions is directly linked to the South African state's developmental agenda of building a capable and developmental state envisioned in the National Development Plan (NDP). The South African state can transition into a capable and developmental state by building the human and social capital of its citizens through knowledge and skills acquisition, and moral and ethical conduct, in pursuance of peace, justice, and accountability to realize the Sustainable Development Goals.

The first section of the article is an introduction and background which foregrounds how the Sustainable Development Goals on peace, justice, and building strong institutions contribute to South Africa's vision of building a developmental state. The second section describes a methodological approach which is desktop analysis that employed secondary document analysis as a research strategy. The third section assesses South African state since democratic dispensation in 1994 in order to understand how it can align with sustainable development goal indicators and targets on peace, justice and building strong institutions to resonate with its national development plan. The fourth section reflects on the National Development Plan as a strategic vision of South Africa which should align with Sustainable Development Goal 16 to strengthen peace and build strong institutional mechanisms that can mitigate against crime and violence within society. The fifth section analyses how the South African legislative framework and strategic mechanisms contribute to

strengthening peace, justice, and accountability to align with Sustainable Development Goal 16. The sixth section critiques how peace, justice, and building strong institutions in South Africa adopt Sustainable Development Goal 16 indicators and targets. The seventh section elaborates on opportunities and challenges South Africa faces when aligning its institutional mechanisms with indicators and targets of Sustainable Development Goal 16. The eighth and final section concludes the article by summarizing how Sustainable Development Goal 16 should be aligned with South Africa's institutional mechanisms to build a capable state. It also shares recommendations that can be implemented to strengthen South Africa's legislative and institutional mechanisms to be responsive to Sustainable Development Goal Sixteen on peace, justice and building strong institutions.

2. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

A desktop analysis that employed secondary document analysis was adopted as a research strategy¹. By adopting this research strategy, researchers are able to review, engage, and examine relevant documents, such as public legislation, policies, institutional strategies, and scholarly articles that are suitable to respond to an identified research problem and purpose, thereby assisting in generating relevant themes for an article. Researchers analysed and determined the authenticity and accuracy of each document by engaging in a systematic and detailed review to compare and extract themes that focused on the topics of sustainable development goals and building statecraft in a country². The choice of secondary documents for analysis was determined by their relevance to the identified problems at hand and the purpose that the article strives to achieve. Researchers chose documents that aligned with the conceptual framework of sustainable development for peace, building strong institutions, and the creation of a developmental state. Documents that were viewed as

1 C Fischer, *Research Methods for Psychologists: Introduction through Empirical Studies* (Elsevier Inc 2006).

2 A Labuschagne, 'Qualitative Research: Airy Fairy or Fundamental?' (2003) 8(1) *The Qualitative Report* <http://www.nova.edu/ssw/QR/QR-1/labuschagne.html> accessed 20 May 2026.

diverging from the topic at hand were then excluded from the analysis process.

Furthermore, in order to validate the quality of reviewed documents, researchers engaged in inter-coding process whereby each reviewer generated relevant themes from the documents that aligned with the purpose of the topic on sustainable development goals, peace-building and creation of a developmental state. Later the reviewers reflected on the generated themes and agreed on the ones that were relevant to the topic³. After completion of writing, the article was subjected for peer review to academic colleagues who are in the same field of public management to guide and proffer advice.

3. ASSESSMENT OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN STATE SINCE DEMOCRATIC DISPENSATION IN 1994

The South African state grapples with contradictions of having a world acclaimed constitution that manifest democratic principles and legislative framework of good governance but the reality on the ground manifests trifecta of challenges being poverty, inequality and unemployment⁴. The South African society is perceived to be highly unequal despite its democratic dispensation⁵. As a consequence, societal discontentment amongst the poor citizens in the townships and rural areas threatens peace, justice and security of the state⁶. It therefore becomes necessary to assess the successes or failures of the South African state by analyzing how its legislative framework, institutional policies and mechanisms are crafted to build strong institutions that strengthen peace, justice and accountability

3 NK Denzin, *The Research Act: A Theoretical Introduction to Sociological Methods* (Aldine 2017).

4 John Motsamai Modise, 'Unpacking the Drivers of Violent Property Crime in South Africa: Socio-Economic Inequality, Structural Legacies, and Criminal Justice Challenges' (2024) 2 MRS Journal of Arts, Humanities and Literature 10.

5 World Bank, 'New World Bank Report Assesses Sources of Inequality in Five Countries in Southern Africa' (2022).

6 South African Human Rights Commission, 'Basic Income Grant' (Policy Brief, 2018).

espoused in the Sustainable Development Goal Sixteen that it has signed for⁷.

A major challenge that threatens peace, stability, justice and democracy within the South African state is unequal distribution of economic resources that lead to high crime rates and violence⁸. The current state of affairs in the South African state is that the poor become poorer whilst the rich become richer resulting in high levels of crime (inclusive of organized crime) and corruption that weaken state's institutional mechanisms⁹. The Freedom Charter propounds amongst its goals that “*there shall be peace and security whereby land shall be shared by all who live in it*” but this has become a mirage¹⁰. Crime, corruption, and social discontentment replaced the positive and hopeful outlook prevalent during the 1994 democratic election and forecast the South African state towards a failed trajectory.

Since the democratic transition in 1994, macroeconomic policies of the South African state yielded limited economic growth but perpetuated societal inequalities inherited from the apartheid system¹¹. The economic trajectory of the South African state has resulted in uneven distribution of resources to the political elites, resulting in job losses and high crime rates that threaten peace, justice, and security of the state¹². The majority of the populace is left to their own devices, forced to fend for themselves. Unequal distribution of resources creates societal tensions and divisions that undermine the security of the state, causing instability, high levels of crime and violence¹³. The prevailing socio-economic factors (social instability, high crime, violence, corruption) that characterize the South African state are incompatible to the aspirations of Sustainable Development Goal Sixteen that direct the South African state to promote

7 United Nations, ‘Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions’ (2021) <https://www.org/sustainabledevelopment/peace-justice> accessed 12 November 2025.

8 S Masoetsa, *Eating from One Pot* (Wits University Press 2011)

9 Ibid.

10 Freedom Charter, ‘Adopted by the African National Congress and Other Organizations’ (1955)

11 Masoetsa (n 8)

12 Modise (n 4)

13 B Chirwa, *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa* (Government Printer 2024)

peace, justice and peace within its governance approach and programmes of action.

4. REFLECTION ON THE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN TO CAPACITATE THE SOUTH AFRICAN STATE TO BUILD STRONG INSTITUTIONS TO STRENGTHEN PEACE, JUSTICE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The analytical review reflects on the National Development Plan to illustrate how the South African state should embed national development priorities and outcomes within sustainable development goals and build the state's capacity to tackle general and organised crime and corruption that undermine peace, justice and social cohesion in the country. It reviews the National Development Plan's Outcome Three on "All People in South Africa Being and Feeling Safe", which synthesizes with Sustainable Development Goals on peace, justice and building strong institutions¹⁴. The subsequent section outlines the negative effects of poor state institutions, such as police services and the criminal justice system, which are susceptible to organized crime and corruption that threaten peace and justice within the South African state. Lack of effective coordination between the criminal justice system and policing services, as acknowledged in the NDP: Vision 2030 is detrimental to the intentions, strategic indicators, and targets of Sustainable Development Goal Sixteen that seek to entrench peace and justice in a country such as South Africa¹⁵.

In an effort to improve governance efficiency and efficacy within the South African state, a diagnostic report by the National Planning Commission identified numerous systemic challenges within government's institutional mechanisms that erode the state's performance capabilities. The eleven challenges that undermined the state's efficiency, effective performance, and threaten peace and stability are:

14 National Planning Commission, 'National Development Plan 2030: Our Future-Make It Work' (2024).

15 United Nations 'The Challenge of Sustaining Peace. Report of the Advisory Group of Experts for the 2025 Review of the United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture' (New York, United Nations, 2015).

- fewer people working,
- poor quality of education for the majority of black children in poor areas
- poor infrastructure that is inadequate and under-maintained
- spatial divides that undermine inclusive development
- economy that is unsustainably resource intensive
- poor quality health service unable to meet citizens' demands
- poor public service
- high levels of corruption, and
- Major division in South African society¹⁶.

To ameliorate these structural and systematic governance inefficiencies, the National Development Plan (NDP): Vision 2030 was adopted as a blueprint of the developmental pathway for the South African state to strengthen governance capabilities and actualize societal transformation¹⁷. The NDP sets out six interlinked strategic priorities to capacitate the state to carry out its governance mandate and build strong institutions that can foster peace, justice and accountability. The strategic priorities of the South Africa state to reverse challenges of social inequality and uneven economic distribution are: *building unity around common programme to achieve prosperity and equity, promoting active citizenry to entrench governance performance towards democracy and accountability, bringing about faster economic growth, higher investment and job absorption, building human and state capabilities, building capable developmental*

16 National Planning Commission, 'Diagnostic Report' (Pretoria, National Planning Commission, 2011).

17 National Planning Commission (n 14).

*state, and encouragement of strong leadership in society to work together and collaborate to solve problems*¹⁸.

The intention of the NDP: Vision 2030 is to strengthen states' institutions to be capable in-service delivery by strengthening institutional accountability which requires democratic participatory engagement with private sector and societal entities. Furthermore, the NDP outlined fourteen strategic outcomes to align government actions with developmental priorities of which the focus area is on Outcomes Three "Ensuring that All People in South Africa Are and Feel Free"¹⁹. Outcome Three on Ensuring that All People in South Africa Are and Feel Free correlates with the Sustainable Development Goal on Peace, Justice and Building Strong Institutions (SDG#16). The NDP: Vision 2030 is implemented through the Medium Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) as government's five year planning cycle that provides direction on how government's departmental programmes guided by strategic priorities and annual performance plans outline performance indicators and targets that should aim to achieve its fourteen strategic outcomes²⁰. In a sense, it implies that the South Africa state should craft institutional and departmental programmes and annual performance plans within the lead departments for safety and security (i.e., Departments of Police, Defense and Military Veterans, Justice and Constitutional Development). Departments of Police, Justice and Constitutional Development, and Defense and Military Veteran should aim and strategize to promote peace, justice and security for the country centered on building safer institutions that can be more resilient against crime, corruption, political pressure; and be accountable to citizenry.

One critique of the NDP is that it is broader rather than a systematic and coherent plan that guide departmental performance in order to factor

18 Ibid.

19 N Orlandi and B Rabie, 'Reforms Required for Successful Implementation of a National Development Plan (NDP)' (2025) Public Leadership <https://doi.org/10.5117/PULE2025.1.017.ORLA> accessed 22 February 2026

20 F Cloete, 'Policy Indicator Consistency and Coherence in Measuring Public Sector Development Programmes in South Africa' (2018) 6 African Evaluation Journal 2 <https://doi.org/10.4102/aej.v6i2.338> accessed 23 March 2026.

implementation process to achieve performance milestones²¹. Poor implementation of the Medium Term Strategic Framework that guide South African government's performance cycles is ascribed to non-availability of progress reports and poor quality of Annual Performance Reports on departmental activities which makes NDP: Vision 2030 to stagnate and not implementable²². In essence, the NDP is then viewed as being theoretically sound but lack practical application on how to improve statecraft in South Africa. This results in skyrocketing poverty, crime and corruption that undermine peace, justice and accountability as outlined in the Sustainable Development Goal Sixteen performance indicators and targets thus pose threat to state's functionality.

5. POLICY DOCUMENTS AND INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS TO STRENGTHEN PEACE, JUSTICE AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN SOUTH AFRICA

Numerous laws, policies, and institutional mechanisms have been passed and adopted by the South African state that align with SDG 16 to strengthen peace, justice, and accountability and uphold the human rights culture in the democratic dispensation. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, No. 108 of 1996 views democracy as the cornerstone of the South African state²³. Section 9 of the South African Constitution, as an Equality Clause, resonates with SDG#16 on peace, justice, and the building of strong institutions, as it asserts equality before the law for all citizens and prohibits discriminatory practices by the state and its institutions²⁴. Sections 11 and 12 on the rights to life and to freedom and security oblige the state to ensure that citizens are protected from violence and criminal acts²⁵. The inference is that the South African government is mandated by the Constitution, the Supreme Law of the Land, to pass legislation and policies, and to design mechanisms within government

21 J Cilliers and C Aucoin, 'South African Scenarios 2024' (Institute for Security Studies Paper, 2016).

22 Orlandi and Rabie (n 19).

23 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act No 108 of 1996.

24 Statistics South Africa, 'SDGs Country Report 2019: South Africa PDF' <https://www.statssa.gov.za?MDG/SDGs_Country_Report_2019_South_Africa.pdf> accessed 24 April 2026.

25 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act No 108 of 1996.

institutions and departments, to guarantee peace, justice and the security of citizens. Through implementable legislation and institutional mechanisms, citizens can be free to contribute to and participate in socio-economic development opportunities and activities that sustain their livelihoods and help mitigate poverty, inequality, and unemployment.

To strengthen the intersection between SDG#16 on peace, justice and accountability and the human rights culture espoused by the South African Constitution, the South African state subjected itself to international mechanisms designed to safeguard human rights. For example, the South African state participated in three cycles of the Universal Periodic Review of the Human Rights Council, a global forum that promotes accountability, peace and justice, in 2008, 2012 and 2017. Furthermore, to maintain its human rights culture, which requires the state to protect women and children against violence and abuse and to uphold the rights of people with disabilities, the South African state ratified seven of the nine core human rights treaties, including the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Rights of Persons with Disability. At the continental level, South Africa has ratified the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, which gives effect to SDG#16 by implementing its indicators and targets to strengthen peace, justice and inclusive institutions. The South African state has also adopted the African Peer Review Mechanism as an institutional mechanism that seeks to promote governance, economic and management accountability, which are important ingredients for the sustainability of socio-economic development. This implies that the African Peer Review Mechanism can strengthen governance accountability, which is essential to improve service delivery performance and to mitigate poverty, inequality and unemployment that contribute to violence and criminality. The impression garnered from the analytical review of international mechanisms that ensure peace, justice and accountability, which seek to give expression to SDG#16, is that, from legislative and institutional perspectives, South Africa has aligned its constitutional imperatives to be responsive to human rights obligations that necessitate conditions for peace, justice and security.

In 1994, the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) was promulgated as the “first national development policy framework,” aimed at mobilizing citizens and the country’s resources to eradicate poverty and inequality, thereby building a democratic and non-racial South Africa. The five key programs of the RDP, which were meant to bring about social transformation and leverage human capabilities, were “meeting basic needs (i.e., jobs, water, and electricity), human resource development focusing on education and training, building the economy by addressing gender and racial inequalities, democratization of the state, and creation of institutional structures to implement the RDP.” This implies that the RDP became a legislative instrument meant to improve the socio-economic conditions of previously disadvantaged citizens, with a redistributive effect that could minimize crime and violence due to poverty. The macroeconomic policy in the form of Growth, Employment, and Redistribution (GEAR) was implemented as an extension to the RDP to meet basic needs, develop human resources, and increase societal participation in democratic institutions. GEAR was targeted to achieve economic growth of between 3 percent and 6 percent and to create 400 000 jobs by 2000, in an effort to revitalize socio-economic development and reduce poverty and inequality amongst citizens. However, criticism of GEAR is that it relied on the ‘trickle-down effect’ of economic growth, which did not occur as expected, thereby heightening levels of inequality that create societal division and mistrust.

6. UNDERSTANDING PEACE, JUSTICE AND BUILDING STRONG INSTITUTIONS WITHIN THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

Like many countries, South Africa perceives sustainable development goals outlined by the United Nations as being central to its national development pathway²⁶. This means that South Africa is currently ensuring that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their targets are embedded in its governance framework. Sustainable Development Goal Sixteen (SDGs#16) is relevant for the South African context in the sense that peace, justice and building strong institutions are intertwined

26 National Planning Commission (n 14).

with reducing poverty, promoting socio-economic development and a growth path that can lead to the realization of other sustainable development goals²⁷. Understanding the nexus between the broader SDGs and South Africa's context is essential to achieving the strategic objectives and outcomes of the South African developmental pathway outlined in the National Development Plan: Vision 2030.

Specifically, it is imperative to understand how Sustainable Development Goal 16 on peace, justice and building strong institutions (SDG#16) applies within the South African context to strengthen peace, stability and the rule of law and to address challenges of poverty, inequality, unemployment and corruption that are spillovers of the apartheid legacy. While the focus is on the intersection of SDG#16 with the South African developmental context of statecraft, the Sustainable Development Goals are interconnected and should be viewed holistically rather than in isolation. Furthermore, the SDGs and their targets should be implemented through a national development strategy guided by South Africa's context to mitigate socio-economic and political challenges.

The contextualisation of the Sustainable Development Goal Sixteen (SDG#16) acknowledges the interconnectedness of peace, justice and strong institutions towards achievement of sustainable development within the South African context to address numerous societal variables²⁸. The three pillars or domains of SDG#16, which are peace, justice and strong institutions, are fundamental to ensuring that South Africa addresses societal challenges of poverty, inequality and unemployment that heighten socio-economic disparity and threaten the state's governance capacity and stability.

Peace and security constitute the first pillar of SDG #16, which focuses on promoting peaceful coexistence in a country such as South Africa by crafting legislation and designing institutional mechanisms. Relevant legislation and institutional mechanisms should be effectively

27 AR Matamanda and V Nel, *Sustainable Development Goals and Urban Health: Strides, Challenges and Way Forward for Poor Neighborhoods* (Springer Nature Switzerland 2024) <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-68734-1> accessed 17 April 2026.

28 Matamanda and Nel (n 27).

implemented to reduce violence and conflict in society and create an enabling environment that promotes economic growth and sustainable development. Justice, as the second pillar, stresses the importance of ensuring that every individual and community in South Africa has equal access to justice. Equal access to justice should be characterized by government responsiveness, inclusiveness, a transparent legal system, and effective, accountable government institutions at all levels. Access to justice should be driven by key objectives relating to “increasing legal identity for all citizens, providing legal aid and supporting vulnerable groups, and promoting the rule of law.” Strong or inclusive institutions, as the third pillar of SDG #16, aim to strengthen and advance good governance across all levels of government in South Africa. Good governance across the cooperative governance sphere in South Africa should be strengthened by placing greater emphasis on transparency, accountability, and inclusiveness in the decision-making process that allows for democratic participation, as outlined in Section 152 of the South Africa Constitution, No. 108 of 1996.

7.0. OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES TOWARDS ENSURING PEACE, JUSTICE AND BUILDING STRONG INSTITUTIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA

Since the dawn of democratic dispensation in South Africa in 1994, strides have been made to redress inequality and poverty by crafting pieces of legislations and strategies that provide opportunities to forge ahead in creating a developmental state and improve quality of lives of citizens. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act No. 108 of 1996 being the foundation of a new South African state declare in its preamble “to heal the division of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights”²⁹. By centering human rights and justice as foundational, its intention is to ensure equality of every citizen and eliminate poverty that has created social upheaval and division during apartheid period.

29 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act No 108 of 1996

South African state has made some progress to promote and strengthen peace, justice and accountability as observed in its performance indicators on reduction of homicide and child labour³⁰. South African state has established national coordination mechanisms to strengthen implementation of policies, national development strategies so that they can align with SDGs, including SDG#16 on peace, justice and building strong institutions³¹. This coordinated approach facilitates and improve integration of national developmental agendas and arrangements with sustainable development goals of the UN 2030 Agenda, and African Union 2063 Agenda. It also finds expression through government's implementation tool which is the Medium-Term Strategic Framework that responds to NDP: Vision 2030 strategic outcomes.

A case in point is that from 2015 to 2020, there has been a decrease in homicide rate from 35, 8 percent to 33, 5 percent for every 100 000 people in South Africa³². In terms of child labour, between 2016 to 2019, there was a percentage decrease from 5, 5 percent to 3, 6 percent³³. This is an indication of South African institutional mechanism yielding positive impacts in SDG#16 performance targets 16.3 (strengthening national institutions, and preventing violence and crime), and 16.2 (end of abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children, respectively)³⁴. World Bank reports that between 2006 and 2015, around 2.3 million South Africans managed to escape poverty when using "the national lower-bound poverty line of R 758 per person per month in 2017 prices"³⁵. The main driver of exit from poverty is the grant schemes that have been implemented by the Department of Social Welfare that enabled 23 percent of South Africans to exit from poverty by increasing household consumption between 2008 and 2015³⁶. Statistics South Africa further points out that South African state has made progress in increasing access to education, water, electricity, health services, housing and social

30 Matamanda and Nel (n 27).

31 Statistics South Africa (n 24).

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid.

34 Matamanda and Nel (n 27).

35 World Bank (n 5).

36 A Finn and M Leibbrandt, "The Dynamics of Poverty in the First Four Waves of NIDS" (SALDRU Working Paper 2016, 2016).

protection that were denied to majority of the population during apartheid period³⁷.

Despite some serious challenges in eliminating violence, crime and corruption indicated in various presidential commissions, South Africa under the current Ramaphosa's presidency has also implemented institutional measures aimed at promoting peace, justice and accountability by strengthening judiciary and anti-corruption watchdogs (Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation and Special Investigative Unit) to improve criminal justice system that was weakened during Zuma's presidency. Access to justice has also been improved through community-based justice services and legal aid programs³⁸. South Africa since its transition to democracy in 1994 has been a leading light in allowing high level of press freedom through supportive legal framework that allowed strong civil society organizations that continuously hold government accountable³⁹. Based on this observation, the narrative argues that if South Africa can heighten its political will towards implementation of programmes within its governance system, numerous measures and strategies can assist in tackling challenges of poverty, inequality and unemployment that undermine peace, justice and security as outlined in the SDG#16.

Despite the National Development Plan: Vision 2030 laying a foundational vision for the South African state; there are huge social disparities amongst citizens due to macro-economic policy direction. Social-economic inequalities fermented by South Africa's macro-economic policy and strategy due to lack of economic distribution effect continuously heighten poverty and unemployment⁴⁰. As a consequence, acts of criminalities including organized crime, corruption and violence threaten peace and stability in the country. South Africa being the signatory of Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations in 2015 should factor in government's departmental programmes of actions

37 Statistics South Africa (n 24).

38 Matamanda and Nel (n 27).

39 Ibid.

40 JC Streak, 'The Gear Legacy: Did GEAR Fail or Move South Africa Forward in Development?' (2004) 21 Development Southern Africa 2.

to redress poverty, inequality and unemployment in an effort to build a capable and developmental state⁴¹. The current South Africa state of affairs is characterized by a high rate of crime and corruption that have increased which undermine social cohesion and create instability⁴².

Weakened state institutions including the criminal justice system made up of policing, correctional services and judicial institutions are susceptible to corruption and undue influence and threaten peace, justice and stability in South Africa⁴³. The State Capture Commission in 2020 and the ongoing Madlanga Commission of Inquiry in 2025 demonstrate a pattern of state institutions being influenced and rendered dysfunctional by criminal cartels thereby threatening peace and safety⁴⁴. Criminality and corruption encroach on state institutions when some government ministers, senior police officers and members of the justice system are alleged to be on the payroll of organized criminal cartels and captured by influential families with economic muscles. Social instability, economic deprivation and lack of social cohesion become ingredients that drive individuals to engage in acts of criminality⁴⁵. The consequence is to threaten peace, safety and justice and undermine South Africa's ability to promote sustainable development goals on peace, justice and building state institutional capacity that can withstand crime and corruption.

8. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A desktop analysis that employed secondary document analysis was chosen as a research strategy to assess the extent to which South Africa is aligned to and delivering on SDG16, and the implications thereof for her developmental goals. Secondary documentary sources such as South African state's legislations, policies, strategic plans, and scholarly articles were reviewed to identify, consolidate and integrate themes that intersect

41 Orlandi and Rabie (n 19).

42 Modise (n 4).

43 M Ragolane and NG Khoza, 'Challenges Faced by the Government in Addressing Organized Crime in South Africa: A Policy Framework Analysis' (2024) 6 International Journal of Business Ecosystem & Strategy 3

44 A Kempen, 'Unprofessional Behavior among Police' (2025) 118 Servamus 12 https://hdl.handle.net/10520/ejc_servamus_v118_n12_a10 accessed 23 April 2026.

45 Ragolane and Khoza (n 43).

with the sustainable development goal sixteen on promoting peace, justice, and building strong institutions. Sustainable Development Goal Sixteen on peace, justice and stronger institutions guides different states, including South Africa, to adopt a governance approach that design legislation, policies and strategies that can protect citizens' life and promote economic growth through sustainable development practices.

The findings reveal that the South African state has adopted a world acclaimed constitution that manifests democratic principles and legislative framework of good governance. However despite human rights based constitution, the South African state is still grappling with the reality that manifests trifecta of challenges being poverty, inequality and unemployment. Democratic South Africa adopted governance approaches that were intended to improve socio-economic conditions by creating much needed employment to mitigate against poverty and inequality that contribute to crime and violence and render the country to be unstable.

Lack of effective coordination between criminal justice system and policing service was acknowledged in the NDP: Vision 2030 as being detrimental to the intentions, strategic indicators and targets of the Sustainable Development Goal Sixteen that seek to entrench peace and justice in a country such as South Africa. There is lack of political will, governance, management and professional competencies to effectively implement legislations and strategies that can contribute in promoting peace, justice and accountability. Sustainable Development Goal Sixteen is relevant for the South African context in the sense that peace, justice and building strong institutions are necessary in reducing poverty, promoting socio-economic development and growth path that can lead to realization of other sustainable development goals.

It is therefore recommended that the South African state should effectively implement relevant legislations and institutional mechanisms to reduce violence and conflict in a society and create an enabling environment that promotes economic growth and sustainable development. South Africa should build strong institutional governance and administrative mechanisms that can strive to integrate sustainable development goals in a holistic approach rather than operating in silos. South Africa should also

revisit and revive a “Culture of Ubuntu” that can be institutionalized to guide legislative and governance frameworks which should influence moral and ethical standards and practices within public service institutions.