South Sudan

Inaugural SDG Report

Republic of South Sudan
Ministry of Finance and Planning

UNITED NATIONS
SOUTH SUDAN

A Roadmap Towards Sustainable Development

September 2017

List of Acronyms

AAAA	Addis Ababa Action Agenda
AfDB	African Development Bank
ARCISS	Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan
AU	African Union
CAR	Central African Republic
CIC	Center on International Cooperation
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
CSO	Civil Society Organization
EITI	Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative
FIES	Food Insecurity Experience Scale
GBV	Gender-based violence
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HDI	Human Development Index
HLPF	High-level Political Forum
HRP	Humanitarian Response Plan
ICF	Interim Cooperation Framework
IDP	Internally displaced persons
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPC	Integrated Food Security Phase Classification
JMEC	Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission
MAPS	Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
NAPA	National Adaptation Programme of Action
NBS	National Bureau of Statistics
ODA	Overseas Development Assistance
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
PoC	Protection of Civilians
PSG	Peacebuilding and Statebuilding Goal
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SGBV	Sexual and gender-based violence

SOE	State of the Environment
SSP	South Sudanese Pound
UN	United Nations
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDG	United Nations Development Group
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WB	World Bank
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

Executive Summary

South Sudan is today embarking on a mission to achieve Agenda 2030 and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the global and universal goals to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity. The country is starting this process from a very low base in a context of an active conflict and humanitarian emergency. This report aims to examine the state of affairs in each SDG area, but also offer ideas and guidance on achieving the SDGs in this challenging environment. At the time of writing, the scale of the multiple crises affecting the country is immense. Armed conflict is affecting nearly all parts of the country, four million people have been displaced from their homes and some six million are severely food insecure. Humanitarian agencies are, rightly, at the forefront of the response efforts, and are undertaking essential life-saving activities. Despite the urgency of humanitarian challenges, there is also a need to balance relief with responses that address the needs of South Sudanese over the long term. The SDGs are not intended to be applied only once conflict has ended but are integral to early recovery efforts and can help build a future based on common aspirations and equal opportunities for all people. Therefore, this report stresses the importance of shared objectives, strategies and approaches between humanitarian and development actors.

Today, nearly all available data on the SDGs paint a grim picture, and the main underlying factor is the ongoing armed conflict. Finding a lasting political resolution to the conflict and building a peaceful, just and inclusive society, as expressed in SDG 16, was the most urgent and widely expressed priority of stakeholders consulted for this report. SDG 16 is also seen as an 'enabler' that can unlock pathways in most other SDG areas and build the foundations for longer-term development. Restoring security among communities is the single quickest way to increase school attendance, boost agricultural productivity, facilitate access to markets, and achieve more inclusive economic growth. Similarly, addressing the conditions of and finding solutions for the country's displaced people, and enabling them to make informed and positive choices, is needed to make progress on the SDG framework as a whole. Long-term progress on the SDGs will require more inclusion of marginalized groups and increased accountability in the political and governance spheres (alongside technical and capacity building approaches) and establishing what an equitable and representative South Sudanese state and society can and should look like. It will require addressing the very real justice and reconciliation needs of the people, as well as the historical (and more recent) grievances that underpin many inter-communal tensions and violence.

Additional findings reflect the need for unimpeded delivery of food aid and concrete steps to revive the agricultural sector and reduce food insecurity (SDG 2), which is increasingly widespread, and to improve access to quality education for all (SDG 4). They also call for eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls and making concrete advances on gender equality (SDG 5), and addressing years of economic stagnation and reversing the severe austerity measures currently in place (SDG 8). Approaches to addressing these, and other

priority areas, are referred to as 'critical pathways'. They require applying SDG principles, accounting for the impact of the conflict, and defining desired and lasting outcomes. For instance, by applying the principle of 'leave no one behind,' SDG strategies can be advanced across the entire spectrum of South Sudanese society, irrespective of gender, ethnic or political affiliation, or socio-economic status. Similarly, recognizing how all the SDGs are 'interlinked' means that while some goals need to be prioritized, other (less recognized) goals neither can nor should be excluded. For example, gender equality (SDG 5) is overlooked in South Sudan, even though women and girls are disadvantaged in most aspects of public and private life. As such, strategies to promote the advancement of women and girls in society are needed, not only as part of SDG 5 but as part of all SDG efforts.

Delivering on the SDGs will require strategic, long-term efforts to alter the status quo and reverse harmful trends. Financing them will entail a structural shift from security-related spending to increased social expenditure. This must occur alongside an expansion of the tax base, and a diversification of the economy away from its dependency on oil. In addition to mobilizing domestic resources, revitalizing the global partnership for development (SDG 17) will also be part and parcel of bringing the SDGs to life in South Sudan. The process will be long and hard but the SDGs are integral to this young country's development as a safe, thriving and cohesive society, with all citizens and the institutions that represent them working towards the wellbeing of the country.

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Chapter 1. The SDGs: Setting the scene

An overview of the inaugural SDG report

In September 2015, 193 Heads of State adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,[1] and committed themselves to implementing the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, or SDGs. 'Agenda 2030' is both ambitious and universal. It applies to developed and developing countries alike, to Middle-Income and Small Island States, as well as to Fragile and Conflict-Affected States like South Sudan. Agenda 2030 sets forth "a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity", and it is in this context that this inaugural SDG report on South Sudan has been produced. The report seeks to provide a foundation on which the country can base its future engagement on the SDGs. Concretely speaking, it has two objectives:

  i)   To report on the state of SDG implementation in South Sudan, and identify challenges as well as areas of progress and prospects for delivering the SDGs; and

  ii)   To provide a roadmap, or guide, for effective SDG implementation, based on available knowledge and resources, while accounting for the multiple challenges facing the country.

The SDGs are important for building a stable and peaceful South Sudan, even though the country is mired in a protracted conflict, which has resulted into a complex humanitarian emergency. An SDG-based perspective is not meant to overtake or replace approaches based on human rights, the protection of civilians, humanitarian aid or political reform. Rather, the SDGs offer a common framework for aligning with these concerns, and a long-term vision of development that goes beyond the current crisis, and is consistent with both national aspirations and a global vision. In fact, the report assumes that critical recovery and development efforts are not only essential to SDG implementation, but also complementary to humanitarian concerns. The SDGs can also help reduce political fragmentation and bring South Sudanese communities together around common objectives, as well as encourage dialogue about the future of the country. They can also provide a forum for South Sudan to participate more actively and constructively in the international community.

This is primarily a national-level report. Its findings are based on a desk review of available SDG-related data and literature, approximately 40 in-person and remote interviews, and an SDG workshop in Juba, all of which were conducted between March and May 2017 (see Annex 1). Putting these sources of information together has helped to identify critical areas of concern, as well as important data gaps. Creating a truly national report will, however, require further SDG-related information and data at state and local levels, and pertaining to the particular circumstances of different communities in the country.

To make this report as clear and coherent as possible, it has been divided into three chapters:

Chapter 1 focuses on practical SDG guidance and background information. It introduces important concepts and principles related to the SDGs and explores how these are (and can be) related to South Sudan. It also looks at some of the 'big picture' report findings and outlines 'critical pathways' – ways of making sense of the SDGs and achieving SDG outcomes.

Chapter 2 looks more closely at the state of all 17 SDGs. It gives an overview of the causes of progress and setbacks in each SDG area, and outlines 'pathways' for the future. The SDG narratives in Chapter 2 are not meant to be exhaustive, although extra space has been dedicated to the SDGs considered to be priorities or particularly relevant to South Sudan. 'Featured' SDG targets and indicators are also looked at in more detail.

Chapter 3 discusses how to go about it all. It introduces the tools and means for SDG implementation over the longer term, and includes a brief section outlining short-term recommendations. The Annex contains a methodological note and a Matrix with SDG-relevant data, which is also used in Chapter 2.

Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development explained

Agenda 2030 includes 17 goals and 169 targets to be achieved by 2030. It is designed to allow countries like South Sudan to meet their current development needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own. The Agenda is based on five interconnected themes outlined in Box 1.

Box 1: The five P's of Agenda 2030

People (Social development: SDGs 1-5) *End all dimensions of poverty & hunger.*
Planet (Environment: SDGs 6, 12-15) *Protect the planet from degradation via sustainable Natural Resource Management and action on Climate Change.*
Prosperity (Economic development: SDGs 7-11) *Ensure that all humans can enjoy prosperous and fulfilling lives.*
Peace (Governance and peacebuilding: SDG 16) *Foster peaceful, just, and inclusive societies, free from fear and violence.*
Partnership (SDG 17) *Mobilize partnerships as a means to implement Agenda 2030.*

The SDGs build on their predecessor, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs),[2] which were intended to halve extreme poverty and hunger by 2015. While the MDGs did achieve a degree of global success, including halving the likelihood of children under five years of age dying, many countries made insufficient progress on the most pressing challenges. At the time, South Sudan was emerging from decades of conflict, which resumed in 2013 and then again in 2016. As a result, all the MDGs were left unmet. The SDG framework was designed to learn from these MDG-era experiences. As a result, it is more comprehensive, collaborative and integrated. It draws on the principles of sustainable development and spans across social, economic, peace and environmental dimensions, as shown in Box 2.

Box 2: The MDG and SDG frameworks compared

FEATURES	MDGs	SDGs
Number of goals	8	17
Focus of goals	Social	Social, economic, environmental & peace
Universality	Developing countries	Universal
Structure of goals	Isolated from each other	Interconnected
Peacebuilding & governance	Not incorporated	Incorporated
Funding sources	Mainly aid flows	Multiple forms of revenue generation

Why the SDGs? Why South Sudan?

Although no MDGs were eventually met, the country has a collective responsibility to ensure that the SDGs succeed. South Sudan deserves it. Critics argue that the SDGs and South Sudan are a bad fit, and not appropriate to introduce them into conflict-affected situations. In such environments sustainable development should, however, not come as an afterthought. Despite the violence being perpetuated, disillusionment cannot come in the way of either saving lives, or of planning for long-term engagement. Ending the ongoing war and ensuring food security are imperative, as they rightly should be. Furthermore, justice, reconciliation, dialogue and mediation are crucial for reaching a lasting political solution to the conflict, just as humanitarian assistance is essential for saving lives. This, however, does not mean that the SDG agenda should be put on hold. Meaningful progress on peace and security is, in fact, integral to achieving the SDGs, and South Sudan, barely in its sixth year of independence, deserves a chance at doing so. Even where objectives cannot yet be realized because of insecurity and violence, it is not too soon to plan for, and work towards, a future based on shared priorities and aspirations. The SDGs can, in this sense, help promote inclusion in South Sudan. They are inherently applicable to all communities, and can therefore contribute to a common vision for the future and wellbeing of society as a whole.

Box 3: A snapshot of the Sustainable Development Goals

	Goal 1 calls for ending poverty in all its forms everywhere. It also aims to ensure social protection for the poor and vulnerable, increase access to basic services and support people affected by climate-related extreme events and other forms of shocks and disasters.
	Goal 2 calls for ending hunger, achieving food security and improving nutrition, and promoting sustainable agriculture. It also commits to universal access to safe, nutritious and sufficient food at all times. This requires sustainable food production, resilient agricultural practices, and access to land, technology and markets.
	Goal 3 calls for ensuring healthy lives and promotion of wellbeing for all. It addresses all major health priorities, including reproductive, maternal and child health; communicable, non-communicable and environmental diseases; universal health coverage; and access to safe and affordable medicines.
	Goal 4 calls for ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all. SDG 4 notes the importance of providing education for all, and explicitly addresses the challenges of educational quality and equity.
	Goal 5 calls for achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls. Gender inequality remains a persistent challenge worldwide, and an obstacle to sustainable development.
	Goal 6 calls for ensuring availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all. SDG 6 not only addresses issues relating to drinking water, sanitation and hygiene, but also the quality and sustainability of water resources.
	Goal 7 calls for ensuring access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all. This has a particular impact on the eradication of poverty through advancements in health, education, water supply and industrialization, as well as the combating climate change.
	Goal 8 calls for promotion of sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all. SDG8 is critical to finance and sustain SDG progress. SDG 8 also focuses on creating decent jobs as a means and an end to sustainable development solutions.
	Goal 9 calls for building resilient infrastructure, promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialization and fostering innovation. Infrastructure provides the physical systems and structures essential for a society to function. Industrialization drives economic growth, creates job opportunities and thereby reduces income poverty.
	Goal 10 calls for reducing inequality within and among countries. It also addresses inequalities among countries, including those related to representation, migration and development assistance.
	Goal 11 calls for making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. By 2030, six out of 10 people will live in urban settings. Despite planning challenges, well-managed cities can promote innovation and be important drivers of sustainable development.

12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION	**Goal 12 calls for ensuring sustainable consumption and production patterns**. Focusing on sustainability requires minimizing the natural resources and toxic materials used, and the waste generated throughout the entire production and consumption process.
13 CLIMATE ACTION	**Goal 13 calls for taking urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts**. Its unprecedented impact disproportionately burdens the poorest and most vulnerable. Urgent action to combat climate change and minimize its disruptions is key to implementing the SDGs.
14 LIFE BELOW WATER	**Goal 14 calls for conserving and sustainably using the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.** Such resources are, however, extremely vulnerable to environmental degradation, overfishing, climate change and environmental pollution.
15 LIFE ON LAND	**Goal 15 calls for protecting, restoring and promoting sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably managing forests, combating desertification, and halting and reversing land degradation and halting biodiversity loss.** It also seeks to reduce the degradation of natural habitats and important ecosystems, ending the loss of biodiversity as well as protecting endangered wildlife.
16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS	**Goal 16 calls for promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, providing access to justice for all and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.** It recognizes that effective, accountable institutions are needed to address protracted armed conflict and violence, limited and unequal access to justice, and other violations of fundamental freedoms.
17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS	**Goal 17 calls for strengthening the means of implementation and revitalizing the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.** It brings together governments, civil society, private sector, UN system and other actors. It seeks to mobilize all available resources and sources of revenue to finance and implement the 17 goals.

The human and physical toll of the ongoing war has been devastating and impacted nearly all aspects of life for the average South Sudanese. It has caused human displacement on a massive scale, and dramatically impacted provision of education, access to health, social protection, women's empowerment, and other key benchmarks for development. Failure to seriously address these benchmarks would not only be detrimental on their own terms but would also perpetuate the conditions that allowed the crisis to emerge in the first place. Seen in this light, the SDGs are also integral to effective conflict prevention, and offer an opportunity for a 'prevention logic' to become part and parcel of sustainable development policies and long-term planning.[3] The UN Secretary General referred to Agenda 2030 as "the road to dignity by 2030: ending poverty, transforming all lives and protecting the planet", and this label accurately reflects what South Sudanese rightly deserve.

Box 4: Principles of Agenda 2030

The case for the SDGs in South Sudan is reflected in a core set of principles, outlined in Agenda 2030, which are also tools to be analysed and applied at each stage of SDG implementation. They include the following:

Leave no one behind: This principle is a recipe for dialogue and inclusion. It emphasizes the importance of reaching the furthest away from the target first. This is not only a moral standpoint, but also makes economic sense, as pro-poor growth agendas can help improve overall levels of economic growth.[4] 'Leave no one behind' refers to marginalized groups such as women, youth, the disabled and elderly, but also groups that are excluded for other reasons. In the divided and conflict-affected South Sudan of today, applying this principle means that sustainable development must be afforded to everyone, irrespective of their political affiliation, ethnic identity or other social status. Accordingly, SDG principles, processes and outcomes must also apply to opposition groups, civilians from all backgrounds (including all displaced populations) and in areas both where state authority exists and where it does not.

*National ownership***:** National ownership of the SDGs is key to real and lasting change. This implies a need to set targets guided by global ambitions but that also take South Sudan's national priorities into account. However, national ownership does not mean government ownership. The SDGs are inclusive by design, and call for participatory decision making, with key roles and 'buy-in' from all sections of society. National ownership in South Sudan means inclusive participation in governance and political processes at the national, state and grassroots levels. It also means inclusive growth, and bottom-up approaches informing all aspects of the ongoing peace process.

SDG integration: The SDGs are indivisible and connected across their social, economic, peace and environmental dimensions. Emphasizing the links between different SDGs can help identify targets that are not only important on their own, but bring positive impacts elsewhere. This will help to improve the long-term effectiveness of strategies and policies, and minimize unnecessary trade-offs between them. Integration means that the SDGs need to be implemented as a whole, and not in a simple pick-and-choose fashion. It is also a basis for *sequencing* decision-making, in the right order, to help generate results over time. For example, ensuring security (16.1) is in most areas a pre-condition for infrastructure investments in the road network (9.1), which in turn must be undertaken to increase access to local markets and support small enterprises (8.3).

*Human rights***:** The SDGs can only fully be realized if South Sudan lives up to its obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law. It has, for example, ratified the Conventions on the Rights of the Child, Against Torture, and Elimination of Discrimination against Women. Adopting (and enforcing) basic legal standards and human rights-based approaches to the SDGs can help meet these commitments and inspire progress on many SDGs. For instance, ensuring the right to self-identification is a [legally] useful means to verify the age of young girls to prevent them from being forcefully entered into child marriage.

Universality: The SDGs apply everywhere and to everyone. But while the individual goals are universal, their targets, and indicators, are not. Rather, they should be selected on the basis of the country's unique needs and priorities. For instance, South Sudan's volatile economic conditions, characterized by declining growth, excessive inflation and a fiscal deficit, are unique in their scale and scope. These disparities must be reflected in its economic recovery strategies (e.g. by drawing on target 8.5 and devising public employment schemes that build resilience to economic risk) provided that they meet the universal SDG 8 by promoting full and productive employment and decent work for all.

Reporting on the SDGs

The Agenda 2030 principles are useful, but only to the extent that they are applied, including in the SDG reporting process. Simply put, SDG reporting can be understood as a cycle. As illustrated in Figure 1 below, it begins with relevant and reliable data collection, which aims to make decision-making informed and effective. This in turn helps monitor effective implementation of these decisions to achieve concrete development outcomes. The data process itself is based on a 'food chain' of sorts. For each SDG, targets must be carefully selected and prioritized, while indicators – the objects that are to be measured – can be adapted to local context. The choice of targets and indicators also depends on the availability, quality and timeliness of data.

Figure 1: The SDG reporting and data cycles (example of SDG 2)

Typically, SDG review processes seek to align priorities with national development plans, and important legal and policy frameworks. In South Sudan today many of these plans and frameworks are either outdated or not being
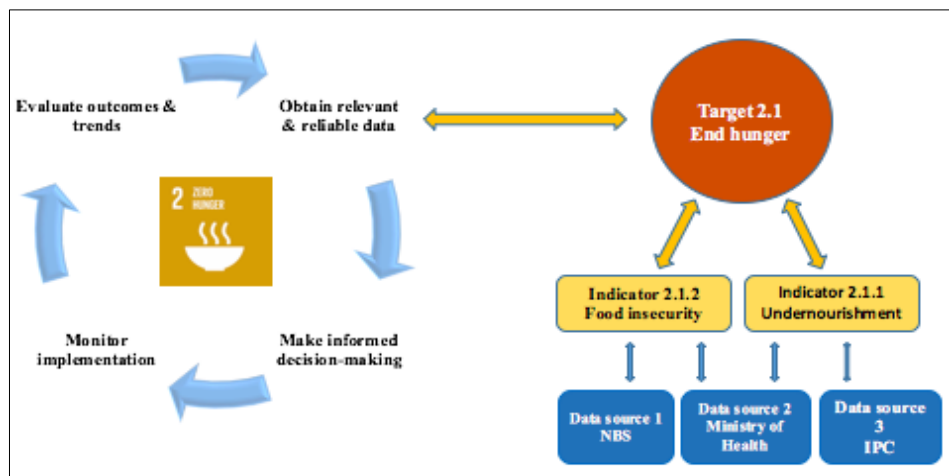
implemented due to the conflict. As a result, the country finds itself at the very early stages of SDG engagement. This provides it with an important opportunity to 'get the SDGs right' from the start. For example, it offers the prospect of aligning the SDG priorities closely with the forthcoming national development strategy: as part of its initial design. Incorporating accountability, inclusiveness and dialogue as key elements of the strategy will help ensure that the SDGs remain relevant, and are understood and 'owned' by all.

Inclusive dialogue is needed to enhance collaboration as well as for capacity development across all government agencies and ministries. For instance, the Ministry of Finance and Planning has a critical role in advancing the SDG agenda, and it is imperative that it is given the mandate and authority to do so. Similarly, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) has a central role for collecting, analysing and disseminating the data that will underpin all SDG reviews. This will require adequate funding of the NBS, and the transparent use of funds, as well as improved cooperation and information sharing with both Government and international partners. Above all, an improved security situation is required for the NBS to operate effectively and unhindered across the whole country, which it is currently unable to do.

Figure 2: SDG review types
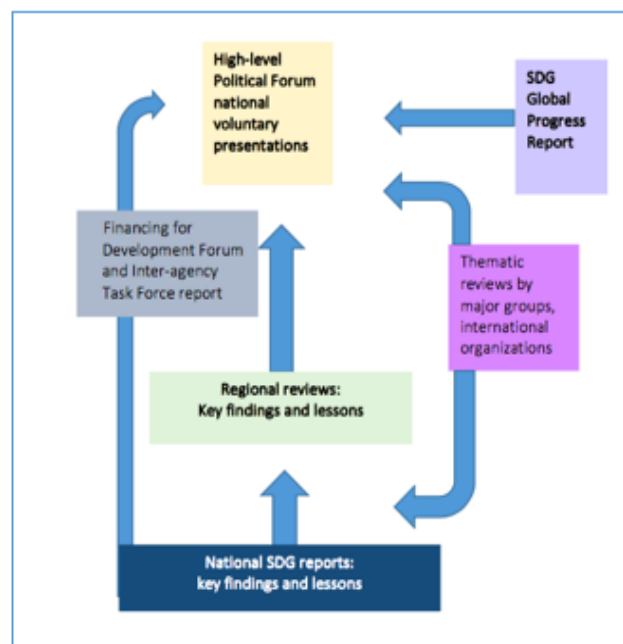
Effective review processes also bring opportunities for stakeholders to hold themselves and each other accountable, in part by making SDG outcomes more of a 'vested interest' (e.g. through financial investments, or political capital). Accountability is particularly important to incentivize actors with political influence, or who manage resources and assets that can benefit sustainable development. Such accountability mechanisms were referred to in South Sudan's 'Compact', which was designed to improve the partnership between the Government and its international partners before the outbreak of violence in December 2013. It was also referenced in the UN Country Team's Interim Cooperation Framework (ICF) as the basis for stronger relations between national and international actors.[5] Accountability measures should ideally be applied throughout the SDG reporting cycle to inform decision making, allocate budgets transparently and incentivize effective service delivery.

Box 5: National and international SDG review mechanisms

National SDG reviews typically include annually published reports, supplemented by state and local level reporting. While SDG reports are intended to be unique, they benefit most when they are consistent with the guidelines of the High-level Political Forum (HLPF).[6] The HLPF is the main global forum to follow up and review national level SDG processes. It happens in July every year and offers all countries an opportunity to submit Voluntary National Reviews. Submitting future reports to the HLPF will allow South Sudan to show the progress it has made on the SDGs to the world, and to learn from the experience of others, including fragile and conflict-affected countries. In addition to the HLPF, complementary regional SDG forums and reviews also take place on a regular basis, and are designed to boost regional cooperation and shared accountability.[7] Major international groups and organizations also conduct thematic reviews, which shed light on specific areas of concern and implementation challenges. For instance, in late 2016 the g7+ group of fragile states (g7+) held a technical level meeting on the progress of SDG implementation in the g7+ countries.[8] Figure 2 above illustrates how the multiple and interlinked SDG review processes are linked to each other.

Approaches to SDG implementation in South Sudan

Analytical tools and perspectives

In addition to the principles and mechanisms of Agenda 2030, there are analytical tools and perspectives that allow us to make better sense of the SDGs, and how they relate to each other. These include the following:

Linking the SDGs

To link the 17 SDGs is to see them all as one whole, and an important part of the 'integration' principle outlined above. In practice, this means that progress or setbacks on one SDG will also impact the other SDGs. For instance, an increase in violence will likely reduce access to basic health services (SDG 3), and likely have a stronger impact on certain communities, or with a gender bias (SDGs 10,5). This basic example shows that progress in one SDG area can lead to progress, or setbacks, in another. While the relationship between the different SDGs is complex, it is important to understand how they are (and can be) linked to make SDG implementation as effective as possible.
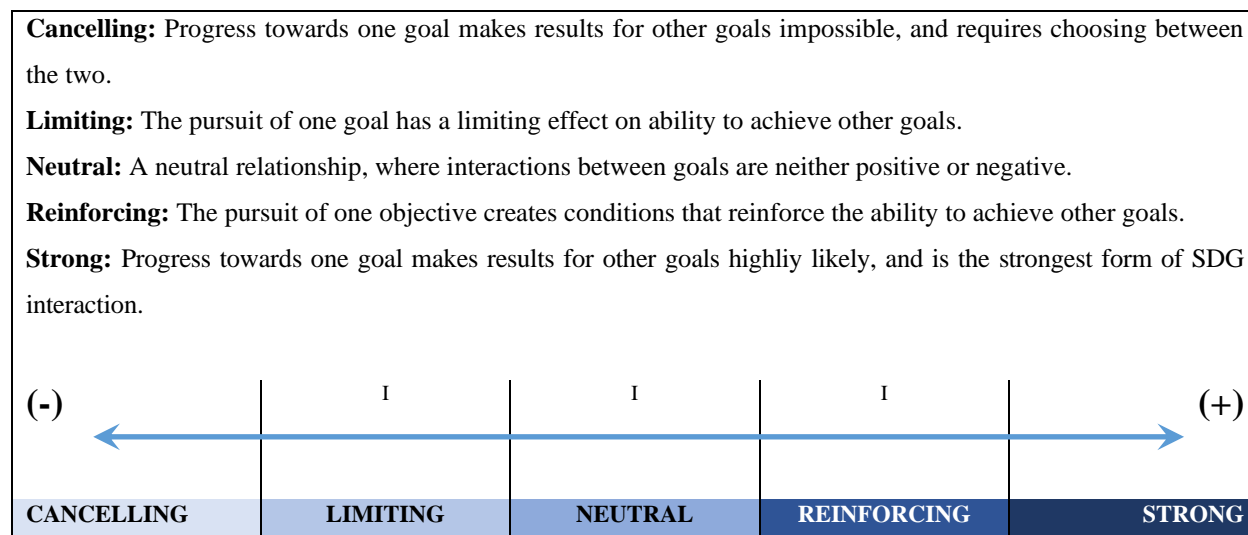
Figure 3: Types of interactions between SDGs

> **Cancelling:** Progress towards one goal makes results for other goals impossible, and requires choosing between the two.
>
> **Limiting:** The pursuit of one goal has a limiting effect on ability to achieve other goals.
>
> **Neutral:** A neutral relationship, where interactions between goals are neither positive or negative.
>
> **Reinforcing:** The pursuit of one objective creates conditions that reinforce the ability to achieve other goals.
>
> **Strong:** Progress towards one goal makes results for other goals highliy likely, and is the strongest form of SDG interaction.
>
> (-) ←——————————————————————————————→ (+)
>
> | CANCELLING | LIMITING | NEUTRAL | REINFORCING | STRONG |

Figure 3 shows how SDGs can interact with each other in multiple ways.[9] For instance, two goals can have cancelling interactions where simultaneous progress towards both goals is impossible. They can also have strong interactions where the achievement of one goal is positively linked to the achievement of another (the most desirable interaction). Goals and targets can also interact in more complex ways, e.g. in only one direction, or both, or impact each other differently over time. Understanding these interactions is important to decision makers, who may need to sequence interventions gradually, or balance difficult trade-offs. For example, improving access to electricity (indicator 7.1.1) will steadily reduce the use of charcoal and firewood, which is used for 80 per cent of the country's energy supply. A positive side effect may be reinforcing efforts to curb deforestation (indicator 15.1.1). It will, however, also negatively impact the livelihoods of charcoal producers (target 8.3).[10] While this trade off may be acceptable, the purpose of linking SDGs, in this case, is to account for both positive and negative impacts, in the short term and long term.

Prioritizing goals, targets & indicators

Because South Sudan is facing violent conflict and multiple humanitarian emergencies, it would be unrealistic to achieve all 169 SDG targets by 2030. Adopting a more pragmatic approach, by prioritizing the SDGs that reflect urgent and important needs, can instead help to achieve tangible outcomes. Prioritization is meant to be an inclusive and consultative process, as well as a repetitive exercise that requires continuous identification of both short and longer-term priorities as the country context changes. It does not imply 'cancelling interactions' (see Figure 3 above) where one goal needs to be chosen at the expense of another. The SDGs are still interdependent and complementary and need to be approached as a package.

A starting point is the 'suitability' criteria, as highlighted by the g7+. This emphasizes Agenda 2030's integration principle (see above), as well as the need to prioritize goals, targets and indicators. This combination may seem paradoxical, but the two principles can in fact be complementary. The suitability concept involves prioritization in a way that 'connects the dots' across multiple goals and targets even where resources and capacities are scarce. For instance, rates of gender discrimination (target 5.1) as well as violence against women and girls (target 5.2) are so high today that they both can and should be considered priority targets. Enhancing the legal and social protection mechanisms needed to end discrimination and gender-based violence can, however, also impact other areas. They can contribute to increased female representation and leadership in political, economic and public life (target 5.5) and improve economic productivity (target 8.2) by encouraging the role of women in the economy. Other factors that can leverage the suitability approach involve identifying: i) the most optimal order and sequence of SDG implementation; ii) which interventions or budgetary allocations can make change that inspires popular confidence in the SDG as a whole; or iii) the risks associated with doing things either too fast or too slowly.

A prioritization exercise was conducted for this report. This painted a picture of a country that is deeply tired of violence, and a population that is demanding peace and an end to years of hunger, famine and economic dysfunction. The main findings of this exercise include the following:

SDG 16: Achieving peace is the most urgent and widely expressed priority. Nearly all people and groups interviewed, across all sectors and institutions, stressed the importance of achieving sustainable peace and silencing the guns once and for all. While opinions vary between stakeholders on how to achieve peace, it was nearly universally held that an end to the conflict – in addition to access to justice, reduced corruption, and strengthened institutions (SDG 16) – would have strong, positive interactions with most other SDG areas. SDG 16 was also discussed in terms of ending violence against civilians, and building a system where the rule of law, and accountable and inclusive institutions, function.

SDG 2: Food insecurity is a major and structural concern. After SDG 16, a majority of stakeholders stressed the importance of reducing, and ultimately eliminating, hunger and food insecurity. South Sudan has for several years now suffered from severe food insecurity, including in areas of the country previously less affected. Until recently, several counties were declared to be in famine,[11] with near-famine conditions in many others. As South Sudan is a largely rural and agrarian country, challenges related to sustainable agriculture and nutrition have had an overbearing impact on many other SDG areas (including poverty and employment): this was commonly heard among the individuals consulted.

SDG 8: South Sudan's economic deterioration must be reversed. Another priority, albeit to a somewhat lesser degree, was SDG 8 on promoting sustainable and inclusive growth and achieving quality employment for all. Stakeholders stressed the need to achieve [macro-]economic stability and undertake reforms to reverse the trends causing, for example, the persistent devaluation of the South Sudanese Pound (SSP), the rising of food and fuel prices to unsustainable heights, and the loss of livelihoods.

SDG 4: Access to quality education must be improved. Concerns regarding SDG 4 were also cited as a priority. These concerns relate both to the quality of education provision, and to overall access to education, including technical and vocational education opportunities.

Other priorities and concerns emerging from the research and consultation process include: i) as part of the political process (SDG 10) the prevalence of discrimination and inequality between political and ethnic communities, and between communities and the state; ii) climate change and its often-unseen impacts on other SDG areas such as access to safe water sources, and livelihood opportunities and; iii) health challenges (SDG 3) that often come about as a result of limited progress in other SDG areas such as food security, as well as peace and justice. Improving the status and condition of women and girls (SDG 5) was seen as an urgent priority among those stakeholders who were most involved and aware of the status of women in the country, and is further reinforced by most policy and academic literature on the subject. However, many individuals demonstrated either little knowledge or concern for challenges such as gender-based violence and child marriage, which are both endemic in the country. This does not imply that these issues are not real and urgent concerns. Rather, it reveals that limited awareness, legal frameworks, customary practice and patriarchal structures may reinforce the problem and impede change.

Identifying SDG 'Enablers'

An enabling SDG reflects not just a particular priority area, but one that has the ability to generate net-positive outcomes across multiple other goals and targets. Therefore, identifying enabling goals and targets, with strong interactions across the SDG spectrum, can be a good investment. Literature on the SDGs refers to enablers in other terms like synergies, catalysts or multipliers. Broadly speaking, they all mean the same thing. Identifying enablers is not easy: it requires access to quality data, and an analysis of the 'state of affairs' across multiple goals and targets, to be able to evaluate progress and the potential of particular SDGs.[12]

So far, two SDGs have shown features consistent with enablers. Firstly gender equality (SDG 5), in its many forms (be it reducing gender discrimination or harmful practices, or increasing representation in public life), emerged as an enabling SDG. Simply put, gender inequality is pervasive and women and girls tend to be disproportionately affected in many SDG areas, including: intensity of poverty (SDG 1), access to nutritious food (SDG 2), access to health services (SDG 3), literacy rates (SDG 4), and exposure to various forms of violence and harm (SDGs 5 and 16). Consequently, investing in expanded opportunities for women and girls to advance their economic, legal and political empowerment is essential for positive, long-term results in all of the above areas. In other words, promoting gender equality and the status of women as a whole can help to secure progress across much of the SDG spectrum.[13]

In addition, SDG 16 on peace, justice and inclusion was determined to be the most important enabler. In addition to being an urgent priority to end the conflict and the extreme violence it has brought, progress on SDG 16 is seen as a basic precondition for progress in nearly all other areas (a view echoed in a study that found SDG 16 to directly relate to at least 34 targets across eight SDGs).[14] This perspective is shared among domestic as well as international stakeholders. The Interim Cooperation Framework, which is the temporary development assistance framework of the UN Country Team, sees transformation towards peace and stability on the one hand and sustainable development on the other as inseparable in the short, medium, and long terms, and at all levels of South Sudanese society.[15] Similarly, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) argues that insufficient progress towards peace and economic stabilization could lead to further economic deterioration, which would further undermine implementation of the peace process.

Box 6: The SDGs as one of many connected frameworks.

The SDGs do not stand in isolation. Rather, they should be seen as part of a broader whole, aligning with other strategic legal and policy frameworks. For instance, the SDGs (notably SDG 16) can, and should, inform ongoing efforts to revive the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (ARCISS),[16] as well as peacebuilding efforts at the local level. Agenda 2030 can also provide entry points for the ongoing National Dialogue process, by generating ideas on what desirable outcomes of the talks should look like (including on governance and equality), and what 'leave no one behind' means in the context of future state building.

South Sudan's forthcoming National Development Strategy, and its successors, should align with and re-enforce the SDGs, both in spirit and concrete implementation. As part of this process, Vision 2040, can help guide long-term SDG implementation, as well as thinking on what SDG progress can and should look like. The same applies to Agenda 2063,[17] the African Union's strategic framework for Africa's socio-economic transformation over the next 50 years. Although they may appear to be distinct, as Agenda 2063 addresses the political and cultural priorities of the continent as a whole, they have many areas of strategic overlap, including on social development (people), inclusive economic development (prosperity), and environmental sustainability (planet). Agenda 2063 also aligns with SDG 16, with the exception of specific language on democracy that is absent in SDG16.

Implementing the SDGs in a context of fragility

Conflict and Fragility in South Sudan

South Sudan is embarking on its path towards achieving the SDGs in a highly volatile context. From the signing of the comprehensive peace agreement (CPA) of 2005 – which ended a civil war that led to the deaths of millions – until two years after the country's independence in 2011, South Sudan was mostly peaceful. The calm was disrupted, and violence returned in December 2013, following a dispute over political power and resources between the main political factions. In August 2015 the IGAD block of regional states mediated the ARCISS peace agreement. It outlined an end to hostilities, a power sharing arrangement and a 30-month transition period wherein a constitution, free elections, justice for crimes committed during the conflict and a series of institutional reforms would be put in place.[18] The deal's critics argued that the protagonists neither could nor wanted to genuinely meet its highly ambitious terms, as disputes resulted in renewed fighting in July 2016, while political fragmentation and contested governance increased, as did the number of armed groups, generally not party to the peace agreement.[19]

The long legacy of war in South Sudan has resulted in multiple, interlinked drivers to the current conflict further amplified by regional interests. These drivers include an exclusionary governance system, based on patronage, wherein political pacts that could no longer be financed and sustained ultimately became

unmanageable and instead negotiated through violence.[20] Hardened ethnic identities often acted as a mobilizing factor, while multiple forms of corruption and local grievances,[21] often triggered by competition over resources such as water or livestock, further enabled and encouraged violence. A recent survey found that 57 per cent of respondents were exposed to intense and violent competition for resources.[22] Other related drivers are rooted in state-building challenges during the transition period following the CPA, and insufficient efforts to build the core functions of the Government, and the legal, political, and administrative functions of the state. Taken together, these factors constrain the capacity and legitimacy of the country's institutions – and the resources required for these institutions – to implement the SDGs.

Like in other conflict-affected countries, these constraints emphasize the need for communities to build the resilience required to withstand such crises and shocks. The ability to withstand external shocks, or 'stresses' in South Sudan, depends on a number of factors. A 2015 UN analysis found that such factors included access to a minimum level of productive assets (e.g. human capital), health and nutrition, education and other basic services.[23] It is in this context that we can make sense of the SDGs, as well as the importance of SDG 16 as an enabler with the ability to leverage results across other SDG areas. A focus on SDG 16 and building peaceful, just and inclusive societies also brings the advantage of addressing the structural, governance-related factors underpinning the conflict, as opposed to strictly technical approaches.

Box 7: Understanding 'fragility'

Fragility can be understood as the accumulation of risk, which is combined with insufficient capacity in the state, or communities, to manage, absorb or mitigate its consequences.[24] Though not all fragile environments are affected by conflict, they tend to be more susceptible to different forms of conflict and violence. During the MDG years, the worst performers were mostly countries experiencing fragility, and this trend is persisting. According to the World Bank, in [FY] 2017, 35 countries around the world were in fragile situations, half of which were located in Africa.[25] In many of them, armed conflict has been a recurring phenomenon, as about 70 per cent have seen conflict since 1989. Agenda 2030 recognizes these challenges, noting that "there is no development without peace, there is no peace without development". Today fragile countries are furthest away from implementing the SDGs, but many countries have still successfully managed to transition out of conflict and fragility, including Rwanda, Uganda and East Timor. Other countries have made much progress despite the challenges of fragility, including Sierra Leone and Liberia.

The experience of countries in fragile situations, including South Sudan, exemplify how solutions to sustainable development need to be suited to their own unique circumstances.[26] The g7+ agrees. It has lobbied extensively to put the concerns of fragile countries at the forefront of the SDG agenda, and to include SDG 16 in the final list of goals. Concretely, this means paying attention to the particular features of fragility and understanding the stresses or shocks that make a country susceptible to violence, as well as its sources of resilience. Fragility Assessments can help illustrate this point. Fragility Assessments are a

perception-based tool to better understand the factors that underpin fragility and resilience and are an important commitment under the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States. The Assessments analyse fragility in the context of the five Peace and State-building Goals (PSG), covering aspects of politics, security, justice, economy and service delivery. Given the pervasiveness of conflict and the depth of fragility in South Sudan, the PSGs can act as a useful lens for applying the SDGs and help guide the process of prioritization as well as implementation.

Fragility Assessments are not new to South Sudan. The country conducted its first assessment in 2012, which at the time found sufficient progress across all PSGs since the CPA period and independence. Perceptions of progress were, perhaps, misguided (particularly in areas related to governance and legitimate politics: PSG 1) given the resumption of conflict in 2013.[27] The second Fragility Assessment has now been undertaken (at the time of writing this report) and will be an important complement to the SDG process as a whole by helping identify priority areas, setting targets and devising possible pathways to achieving the SDGs. However, this presupposes that the assessment process reflects the views and challenges that matter most to those affected by the conflict, and that these are translated into actionable policy. At the least, the Fragility Assessment is expected to enable and encourage constructive dialogue and help build a shared understanding of the future of the country. Box 8 below provides a general overview of the links between the PSGs and the SDGs and is expected to be further refined based on the findings of the second Fragility Assessment.

Box 8: Mapping the PSGs to the SDGs[28]

Peace & Statebuilding Goals (PSGs)	Corresponding SDGs
PSG 1: Legitimate Politics • Political settlement • Political processes & institutions • Societal relationships	
PSG 2: Security • Security conditions • Security institution capacity • Security institution performance	
PSG 3: Justice • Justice conditions • Justice institution capacity • Justice institution performance	
PSG 4: Economic Foundations • Economic conditions • Jobs, livelihoods, private sector • Exploitation of natural resources	
PSG 5: Service Delivery • Revenue generation • Public administration • Service delivery	

Bridging the humanitarian-development divide

> *We must bring the humanitarian and development spheres closer together from the very beginning of a crisis to support affected communities, address structural and economic impacts and help prevent a new spiral of fragility and instability.*
>
> António Guterres, UN Secretary-General-designate, December 2016

As conflict affects nearly all parts of the country, humanitarian and protection objectives are at the forefront of most programmes supported by international organizations, and planning is often based on the assumption of increased humanitarian needs. Often, their development counterparts operate with different mandates, budgets and programme objectives, which tend to be designed and implemented in parallel. While this is understandable and does not have to be detrimental per se, it can be burdensome to a country like South Sudan with limited institutional capacity and ability to coordinate international efforts. This poses a difficult question,

with real implications for achieving the SDGs: *can the country's overwhelming humanitarian needs be met while also catering to sustainable development and building resilience to conflict over the long term?*

While these two objectives appear to stand in contrast, the SDGs are not a zero-sum game. SDG-based approaches can in fact help bridge the gap and identify areas of convergence. SDG targets do not only accommodate both humanitarian and development objectives. Careful SDG prioritization can also offer opportunities to better coordinate the efforts required to reduce humanitarian needs, including preventing future crises and facilitating the return and reintegration into society of displaced populations. This message is echoed in the Interim Cooperation Framework. It promotes a balanced approach to humanitarian and development objectives by building *resilience* and mitigating *risk* to address the recurrent effects of crisis and instability.

SDG implementation in South Sudan thus requires boosting collaboration between humanitarian and development actors, and promoting the idea of 'collective outcomes,' summarized in the New Way of Working commitment from the World Humanitarian Summit in May 2016 in Istanbul.[29] This implies concrete, joint efforts between development professionals and humanitarians, across 'silos' and in partnership with local and national-level stakeholders. Importantly, collective outcomes stress reducing risk and vulnerability as a means of achieving the SDGs, while also respecting humanitarian principles. In the same light, recent UN General Assembly and Security Council resolutions on Sustaining Peace, which call for increased operational and policy collaboration at both field and HQ-levels, and reinforced collaboration between development, security and humanitarian actors.[30] The resolutions also call for increased attention to conflict prevention and improved coherence across the UN's many 'arms'. Approaching the SDGs in this spirit can help anchor all 17 goals and make them relevant to the South Sudanese context.

Identifying critical pathways to achieving the SDGs

The figure below is part of a proposed framework to achieve the SDGs by identifying 'critical pathways'. These pathways are intended as tools to make the SDGs less abstract by identifying practical and actionable approaches toward achieving them. They can also help clarify what progress actually looks like, even where data are limited. As illustrated in Figure 4, achieving the SDGs is not a linear, start to finish process. Instead, continuous adaptation will be required as the country experiences both progress and setbacks throughout its development planning processes. Identifying critical pathways involves the following steps:

- **Priorities:** Rigorous prioritization exercises are required to identify the goals, targets and indicators that reflect the most urgent and essential needs. As noted above, this report found SDGs 2, 4, 8 and 16 to be of particular importance, while also recognizing the importance of approaching all 17 SDGs as a package.

- **Principles:** After identifying priorities, it is important to thoroughly apply relevant principles from Agenda 2030. Principles such as 'leave no one behind' are intended to be actionable and feed into SDG strategies. These strategies will be better informed, more targeted and forward-looking when filtered through Agenda 2030 principles and the values on which they are based.

- **Conflict and resilience**: Once priorities and principles have been applied, all strategies must account for how the conflict – and its drivers – will impact SDG implementation, and which actions can help build resilience against external shocks. Given the pervasiveness of conflict in South Sudan, the SDGs cannot and should not be met in the absence of a prevention or 'conflict lens'. Similarly, pathways must take extra care to safeguard humanitarian concerns and uphold non-negotiable humanitarian principles.

- **Outcomes:** Concrete and achievable outcomes must be identified once a clearer picture of the needs and conditions for progress in each SDG area emerge. This involves establishing baselines and target measures for every SDG indicator, based on a vision for what a future South Sudan can and should look like. It is important that outcomes are sustainable and subject to revision. Achieving outcomes does not involve meeting a certain target once or twice, but rather maintaining and building on results over time.

- **Pathways:** Together, the above measures can inform concrete pathways towards meeting specific, articulated SDG objectives. Pathways should be guided by 'what works'. They can be reflected in policies, strategies or programmes, as advocacy campaigns or measures undertaken by either the Government or non-government actors. While the state can be seen as a duty bearer for the SDG agenda, critical pathways to achieve the SDGs do not all require the endorsement of authorities, as they are the responsibility of all South Sudanese.

- **Results and linkages:** The final step notes the importance of monitoring results and collecting quality data. Doing so, while paying attention to both positive and negative impacts in other SDG areas, reinforces the idea that the SDGs must be looked at as a whole as they are connected to each other in a myriad of ways.

Figure 4: Critical pathways to the SDGs
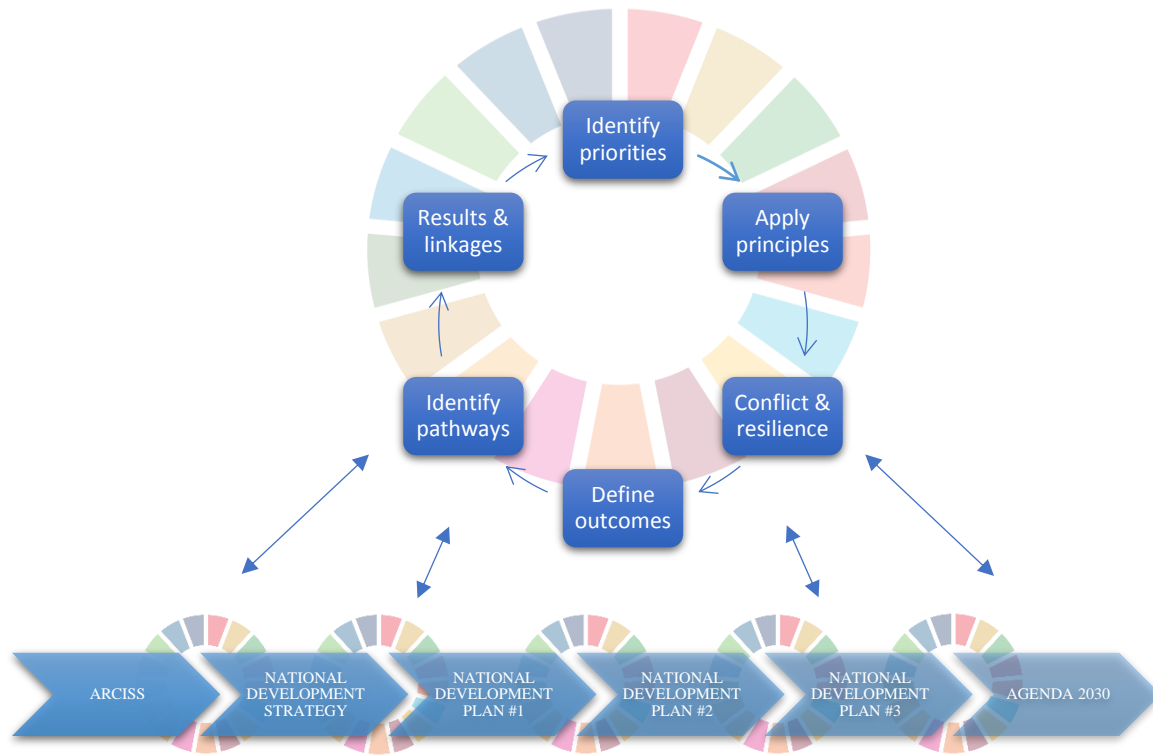
This outline of critical pathways is intentionally broad and flexible enough to apply to different situations. As such it can identify approaches that meet the unique requirements and needs that exist in each SDG area. For example, it can be helpful for developing solutions to meet the needs of persons with disabilities. Already vulnerable in conflict-free contexts, challenges faced by persons with disabilities include inadequate education and health services, unemployment and discrimination. Priority targets that reflect these unique challenges may include 8.5 (on employment) and 10.3 (on discrimination), both of which can reflect the principle of 'leave no one behind'. Efforts are also required to assess the impact of conflict as it not only brings challenges for persons with disabilities, but can also cause people to become disabled. Tailored solutions must therefore focus on conflict prevention, and mitigating efforts, and also seek to strengthen legal provisions to enable access to jobs and equal protection under the law. Discriminatory practices can also be addressed by increasing awareness, to avoid marginalizing an entire generation of victims of war.[31]

Chapter 2. SDG implementation in South Sudan

Overview

Chapter 2 takes a closer look at the data and common themes relevant to the SDGs in South Sudan. The objective is not to analyse all 17 SDGs in any exhaustive sense: this has not been possible because of data limitations and access constraints given the prevailing insecurity. Rather, the aim is to provide an overview of the 'state of affairs' in each SDG area and to discuss existing data and information provided that in some way:

a) reflects priority goals, targets, or indicators that emerged as part of the research process;

b) is relevant to SDG implementation in South Sudan; and

c) identifies critical pathways, or possible outcomes.

Each SDG discussed in the pages below contains a 'featured' target or indicator that reflects one or more of these criteria.

SDG workshop findings on priorities

As noted above, a prioritization exercise was conducted for this report, highlighting both critical and recurrent themes that pointed to the importance of certain SDGs. This involved extensive desk research, and a consultative process including interviews, as well as South Sudan's first SDG workshop, conducted in May 2017 and attended by around 70 people. While the focus of the workshop was on broader SDG-related themes in South Sudan, it also involved a voting exercise. The workshop sought to establish a common sense of which goals are most important for South Sudan in light of the ongoing crisis and humanitarian emergency in order to identify pathways towards long-term peace and development. Two sets of votes took place: one amongst the entire plenary group at the workshop, and one following deliberations in five breakout groups.

Figure 5: Results of SDG workshop voting exercise on SDG priorities
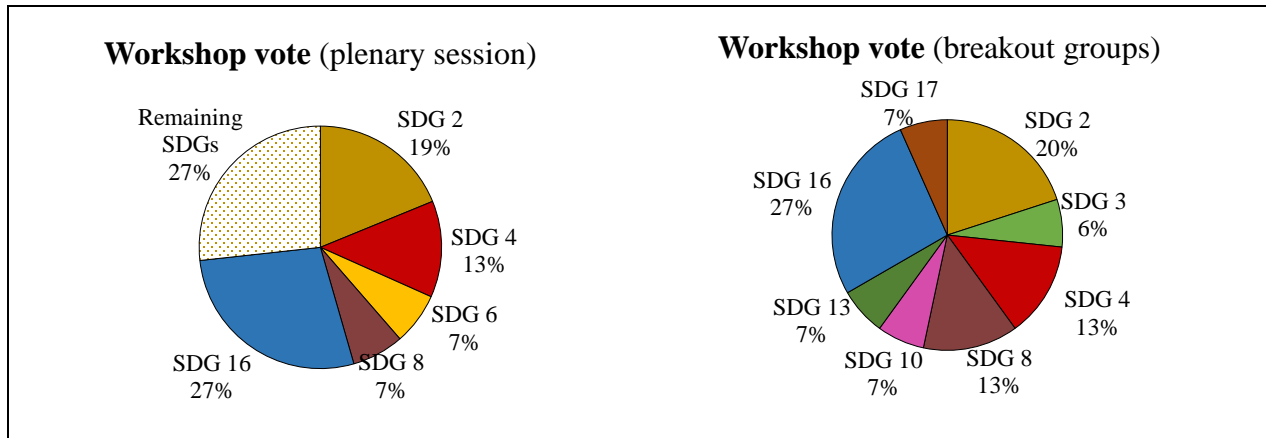
Both voting rounds, which took place at the end of the full-day workshop, highlighted the importance of peace and making progress on SDG 16 (albeit in somewhat general terms). Participants noted the urgency not only of making peace, but also of identifying the root causes of the conflict for it to ultimately be resolved. Inclusive dialogue; a more impartial, professional civil service; improved service delivery; and fairer, more effective security provision were all seen as ways to advance the cause of peace. Distressed conditions among communities as the grassroots level, in contrast to those of political and military elites, were also discussed, as was the need for bottom-up peacebuilding. Many of the laws and frameworks that can underpin conditions for peace, were seen to already exist, but were not being implemented. Priority SDG 16 targets among participants included demand for the rule of law (16.3), a significant reduction of all forms of violence (16.1) and addressing the particular impacts of the conflict on children (16.2). SDG 16, and the need for an end to the conflict through a just and inclusive settlement, was also mentioned as a priority in nearly every interview and meeting, and the only way in which progress can be made on the SDGs. Furthermore, SDG 16 was characterized as an enabler, with the ability to generate positive outcomes in many other SDG areas, and it has been treated as such in this report.

After SDG 16, the second most important priority of workshop participants was SDG 2. In both voting rounds, around 20 per cent of participants cited hunger and food insecurity as the most important challenge facing South Sudan today. The country has for many years suffered from severe food insecurity. Until recently, parts of South Sudan were reported to be facing famine conditions,[32] and challenges related to nutrition and sustainable agriculture have impacted all development efforts in the country. Workshop participants cited improved education (SDG 4) and empowerment of women (SDG 5) as means of addressing hunger, in addition to reducing insecurity (SDG 16). They also cited malnutrition (2.2) as well as hunger and food insecurity (2.1) as priority targets under SDG 2 and urgent issues to be addressed.

SDG 4 was the third most prioritized goal in both voting rounds, reflecting the importance of access to inclusive and quality education, and to create an enabling environment for sustainable development as a whole. Progress in the education sector was mentioned as particularly important among refugees and internally displaced persons. Other cited priorities in the education sector included the elimination of gender disparities in education (4.5) and ensuring equal and affordable access to technical, vocational and tertiary education for all (4.3). Priority concerns in other SDG areas were less clear but there was a definite preference for, and understanding of, SDG 8 and the need to achieve macroeconomic stability and turn the tide on the country's long-lasting recession.

As mentioned in Chapter 1 above, the prioritization of certain SDGs does not negate the importance or relevance of the other goals. Therefore, the voting results above must be understood as indicative, and not definitive conclusions. Rather, they represent issues that participants found to be particularly urgent, and also likely reflected their areas of expertise. The country's many health epidemics (SDG 3) were, for example, not discussed at length. This does, however, not diminish the importance of eliminating cholera, or preventing malaria. Climate change (SDG 13) too was not expressed as an urgent concern, even though temperatures in South Sudan have increased by more than 1°C since 1980 – two and a half times more than global warming, which is effectively making 'normal' years drier. Taken together, these workshop results are still noteworthy, in part because they are similar to the findings from the desk review and interviews and thus indicate a high degree of validity. They also bear similarity with findings from other, similar SDG exercises, as illustrated in Figure 6 and Box 9 below. Moving forward, these combined findings need to be validated, and further consultations need to be undertaken at the state and local levels, and among all stakeholders, including displaced persons and residents of Protection of Civilians (PoC) sites.

Figure 6: Findings of survey on 'SDG Priorities'
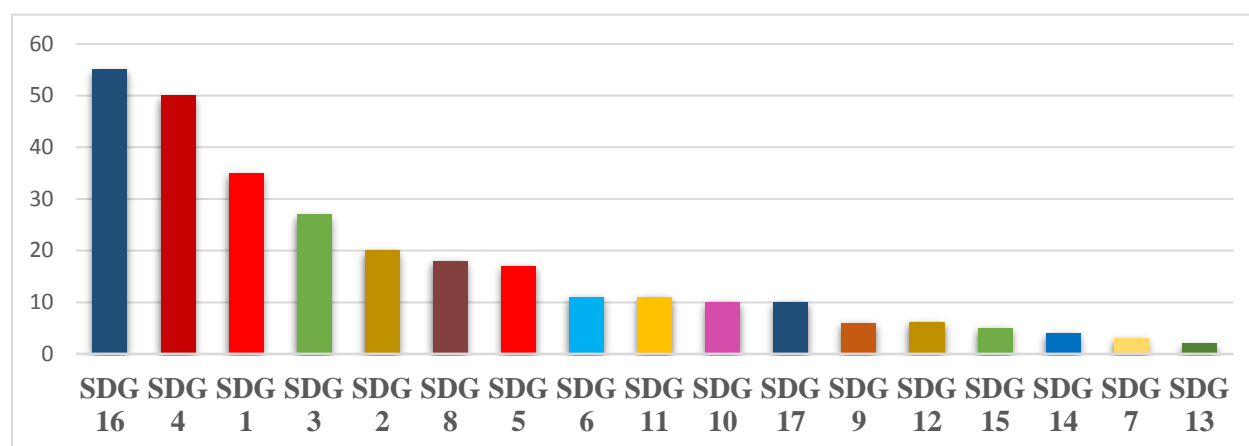
Box 9: Survey on SDG priorities

During the course of 2016, the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the South Sudanese Network for Democracy and Elections conducted consultations and a survey to solicit views and perspectives on the SDGs, and which goals matter most. More than 650 respondents participated, including representatives from the media, the private sector, women's groups and civil society. Most of them were based in Juba. Approximately 78 per cent of respondents were students from seven universities across the country, many of whom were part of a project seeking to improve their knowledge of the SDGs, and disseminate it further at the grassroots level. Among all groups, more than half found SDG 16, and SDG 4 to be of particular concern, and speak to the South Sudan they want, and believed they should be pursued. These results were consistent across all groups as top priorities. When asked to prioritize their own personal goals, or goals for Africa as a whole, SDGs 16, 4 and 1 were still top of the list.

Data-specific findings

Access to reliable and quality data is a significant challenge in South Sudan. As part of improving data availability in the country, it is also necessary to set realistic SDG targets, make decisions based on evidence, monitor implementation and exercise accountability. Among interviewees for this report, there was much awareness of the importance of data, and data-related challenges, including current limitations on data collection and the prevalence of outdated, often scattered data. The central role of the National Bureau of Statistics was also well noted. While the challenges are numerous, and include capacity and funding, there are still useful and important data sources available, many of which have informed this report and are summarized in the Annex. Therefore, an important part of this report has been to highlight where data exists and where it is missing, with the objective of encouraging improved data coverage in the future.

Other findings

As noted in Chapter 1 above, additional themes and issues of concern emerged from the research process. These include the prevalence of discrimination and inequality (SDG 10), the increasingly noticeable impacts of climate change (SDG 13) as well as health epidemics (SDG 3) such as tuberculosis and most recently cholera. SDG 5 and gender-related concerns were frequently expressed among those stakeholders aware of the general status of women in the country. Others demonstrated little or no knowledge of issues like gender-based violence or child-marriage, which are both endemic in the country. This does not imply that these issues are not a concern, but rather that limited awareness is also part of the problem.

Among most stakeholders, including government agencies, detailed knowledge of the principles and concepts underpinning the SDGs was limited. Nevertheless, the SDGs were broadly seen in a positive light, with the potential to address many of the predicaments facing the country. Mainstreaming the SDGs in South Sudan will, however, require leveraging these positive perceptions in a way that improves knowledge of the SDGs, generates new sources of revenue to finance them, and influences governance structures to become more inclusive, transparent and effective. Chapter 3 discusses SDG mainstreaming in further detail.

Some international stakeholders offered more cautious perspectives on the role of the SDGs in the South Sudanese context. These include the importance of meeting protection and humanitarian objectives in an environment characterized by multiple protracted crises, as well as limited budgetary (and operational) space. Together these findings, and those outlined subsequently in this Chapter, reflect the concerns and priorities that must be addressed as part of South Sudan's future SDG implementation. However, more work needs to be done to fully identify the priorities of communities across the country. The SDGs need to resonate with people at the grassroots level, and efforts to meet them should be informed by detailed understandings of fragility and how it is experienced. In the interim, the following national-level findings are intended to be a useful first step in the right direction.

Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere

Featured target: 1.1 By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than $1.25 a day (as of October 2015, the new global line has been updated to $1.90)[33]

Featured indicator: 1.1.1 (Proxy) Population in multidimensional poverty, headcount: 89.3% (2015)

Key SDG interlinkages: SDGs 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 16

SDG 1 focuses on several definitions and measurements of poverty. Target 1.1 refers to 'extreme' poverty, which applies to persons living under $1.25 a day, and uses a constant value to assess progress over time. There is limited nationwide data on the proportion of the population living under this threshold, which is why 'multi-dimensional' poverty has been included as a proxy indicator. This reflects the breadth and scale of poverty in South Sudan by accounting for the multiple disadvantages that may be suffered by people at the same time, and therefore ties progress towards SDG 1 to improved nutrition and food security (SDG 2), health (SDG 3), access to quality education (SDG 4), and clean water and sanitation (SDG 6). The most recent figures available have been drawn from the 2015 Human Development Report, which show that in 2015 approximately 89.3 per cent of South Sudanese people experienced multi-dimensional poverty. Nearly 70 per cent were experiencing 'severe' poverty while 62 per cent suffered from 'intensity of deprivation'. Among the disadvantages that make up these multi-dimensional figures, deprivation in the education sector was the starkest, while that in the health sector was described as the lowest.[34]

Chronic poverty tends to be exacerbated in conflict-affected areas, where the destruction of household assets, livelihoods and incomes reduces their purchasing power, limits food access and affects coping mechanisms. Within conflict contexts, a general lack of social protection measures exposes vulnerable or conflict-affected groups to deepened or new poverty, which in turn worsens their ability to withstand shocks. Vulnerable groups, such as women and girls, are especially impacted, and overrepresented among the poor in conflict – as well as non-conflict – areas. This not only reflects women's lack of access to resources but also their limited participation in decision making.[35] Discrepancies can also be detected at state level. Figures from the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI), based on surveys from 2010, show the largest population shares living in severe multidimensional poverty in [former] Warrap, Northern Bahr el Ghazal, Jonglei, Unity and Lakes states.[36] Poverty also tends to be higher in rural areas, which has implications for food insecurity. By 2014, over half the rural population was unable to consume minimal calorie levels (2,400 calories per person per day) with food that they had purchased or produced themselves.[37]

Pathways to SDG 1: Given the scale of poverty, continued and unimpeded humanitarian assistance is the only way to mitigate its effects in the short term. Sustainable pathways out of poverty will require building resilience to the many vulnerabilities that afflict the poor, particularly in conflict-affected areas. This includes improved access to education, better access to clean water and sanitation, improved health outcomes, and sustainable livelihoods and incomes at household level. Introducing effective social protection measures is particularly important in the context of conflict, although it will require a more positive economic outlook. Investments in social and economic safety nets over the longer term, and access to basic services and credit, are essential to prevent or mitigate deepening poverty. They increase the capacity of households to plan, adapt and develop, even when exposed to multiple external shocks.[38]

Long-term progress on SDG 1 will require actions that live up to the principle of leaving no one behind. For example, budgetary allocations must take account of the geographical areas and communities worst affected by poverty. With regards to vulnerable groups such as women, this means increasing access to resources and participation in decision making. Importantly, long-term poverty reduction requires a growing and diversified economy with a decreasing reliance on oil revenues, in favour of viability of the agriculture sector on which most South Sudanese depend for their livelihoods. Finally, targeted and multi-dimensional interventions to address both acute and structural poverty needs require updated and disaggregated poverty figures. To this end, an updated high-frequency survey is being undertaken by the NBS with support from the World Bank, alongside additional surveys.

# Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security & improved nutrition & promote sustainable agriculture

Featured target: 2.1 By 2030, end hunger and ensure access by all people, in particular the poor and vulnerable people, to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round.

Featured indicator: 2.1.2 Share of population estimated as severely food insecure: 50% (July 2017)

Key SDG interlinkages: SDGs 1, 3, 5, 8, 17

SDG 2 emphasizes the causes and effects of malnutrition, smallholder agricultural productivity and food security, which are all pressing issues. A key measurement of food insecurity is the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES), which tracks the experiences of individuals and households. As no FIES survey has yet been conducted, the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) has been used here as the featured indicator. This is based on analysis following a protocol agreed by key stakeholders including the Government, and conducted twice a year. The IPC utilizes findings from different surveys – the most prominent being the twice-yearly nationwide survey of the Food Security and Nutrition Monitoring System– and classifies the magnitude and severity of food insecurity. By July 2017 (the peak of the lean season) over 50 per cent of the population (some six million people) were estimated to be *severely food insecure*:–in crisis (Phase 3), emergency (Phase 4) or famine (Phase 5) on the IPC scale. This is a nearly a 20 per cent increase from the same period in 2016,[39] and the proportion of those in food stress who fall into crisis situations has increased from about 20 per cent in 2012 to 50 per cent in 2017. Figure 7 illustrates similar changes between 2015 and 2017. Food security deteriorated with the re-emergence of conflict. In February 2017, Leer and Mayendit counties in [former] Unity state experienced famine while famine was likely in Koch county (also in Unity state). Currently, no county is classified as being in famine. Early detection of the deterioration of food security into famine followed by a large-scale immediate response averted further loss of life. However, the level of food insecurity remains extremely high. By July 2017, around 1.7 million people were estimated to be facing food security emergency (IPC Phase 4), one-step below famine on the IPC scale, while 45,000 people were estimated to be facing a humanitarian catastrophe.[40]

Figure 7: Contrast between IPC in April 2015 & May 2017 (projected)
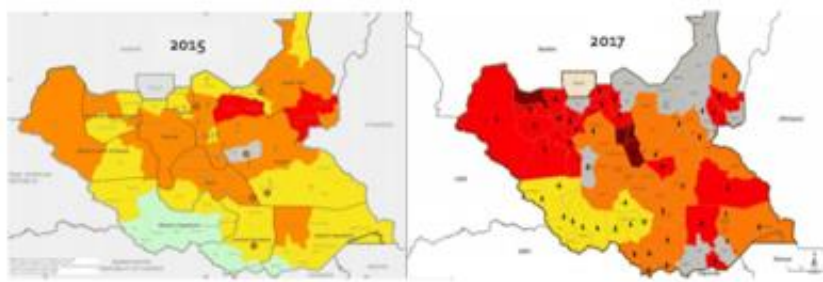
Note: Dark red – humanitarian catastrophe, red – emergency, orange – crisis, yellow – stressed, and green minimal **Source:** Various integrated food security phase classification (IPC) reports for South Sudan

Areas affected by food insecurity closely follow areas affected by violence. Food insecurity at household, community and higher levels are not only consequences, but also drivers, of conflict. This vicious cycle further contributes to poverty, reduces resilience and

social cohesion,[41] and is particularly prominent in the Greater Upper Nile region. The role of conflict can be better understood in the context of the food value chain – from production to transportation to markets and consumption. Firstly, food production has experienced a persistent decline, mainly as a result of conflict. In a majority of [former] states it has displaced farmers and their assets, disrupting planting and harvests. The year 2017 has seen a cereal production deficit of about 500,000 metric tonnes.[42] The southern 'green belt' (Greater Equatoria) used to produce an agricultural surplus, but is now experiencing production deficits. And with nearly half of the population displaced, half of the labour to produce food has become unavailable. Insecurity also affects the transportation of (both domestically-produced and imported) food. Commodity transportation is affected by the poor state of roads and supply routes. National and international humanitarian agencies also face great challenges in reaching vulnerable groups due to access restrictions such as illegal seizures and charges. Harassment and direct attacks on aid workers by armed actors, operating in a context of impunity, also take place. Humanitarian aid, which is often limited or insufficient to begin with, is the main or only source of food for many people.

Limited food production and transportation also impacts market supply and prices. Prior to May 2015, commodity prices doubled on average every fifty months. Between February and September 2016, they doubled every four months, further limiting access to food. These increases have, with the macroeconomic crisis resulting in hyperinflation and weakening of the SSP, made the ability of markets to operate both limited and irregular. The two-year period from July 2015 to July 2017 saw the official rate of the SSP depreciate from 2.96 per US$ to 118 per US$ (while the parallel market rate changed from 12.25 to 158 SSD per US$). With regard to consumption, the diminished ability of households to purchase and store food impacts the amount of food consumed, its nutritional value, and coping strategies during difficult times (including displacement). Limited food consumption particularly impacts vulnerable groups, including female-headed households, which tend to be more food insecure due to their unequal access to productive resources, protection issues such as early marriage, and a high burden of care of families and children. Children in particular face acute under-nourishment (limited quantity), as well as acute malnutrition (inadequate quality). Over one million children under five years of age are estimated to be experiencing acute malnutrition, and are nine times more likely to die than their healthy peers.[43] This remains a major public health emergency, with most areas found to have global acute malnutrition (GAM) prevalence much higher than the WHO-specified emergency threshold of 15 per cent (requiring an emergency nutrition response). In June 2017, of 23 counties with recent data, 14 were found to have a GAM rate at or above 15 per cent. A survey conducted in July-August 2017 found overall GAM prevalence to be higher than 20 per cent.[44]

Pathways to SDG 2: An immediate and lasting end to hostilities will have a strongly positive effect on food security. It is therefore of utmost importance for all decision makers and armed actors to guarantee the safe movement of foods for markets and halt all obstructions to the delivery of food aid to communities in need. Ensuring peoples' security, and safe return to their homes and farmlands, can in the longer term enable conditions for strengthened resilience and stable food production. Building resilience, particularly at community level will require the creation of productive assets as well as basic services, including health, to strengthen the ability to withstand, for example, high and unstable food prices. It will also require social protection measures (such as food and livelihood assistance) to make food production and access more stable and predictable.

At the policy level, this will entail analysis and delivery of assets required to build resilience (in different conditions and parts of the country) and targeted aid efforts to reach the most vulnerable groups. These measures imply multi-sectoral approaches to addressing urgent humanitarian needs while accounting for long-term approaches to build institutional capacities, including at state and county levels.[45] Reducing food insecurity will require quality and effective governance, compared to today's governance that is characterized by insufficient engagement and capacity to meet existing needs. Where it exists, decision making tends to be overly fragmented and ineffectual. Particularly where conflict is not the primary challenge, governance approaches to food insecurity must aim for basic functionality at all stages of the food value chain. This will involve making gains with respect to SDG 8 and undertaking macroeconomic measures to stabilize the SSP, contain hyperinflation and improve market functionality, as well as to ensure basic service delivery and free movement of food.

Progress on SDG 2 in the context of national development planning will also require joint analysis and planning between the Government, the UN and other relevant actors. In particular, this will entail a number of nutrition and food security responses, including food aid, that bridge into structural economic interventions, recognizing that most emergencies in South Sudan do not immediately subside, but tend to become structural. It will also include rural road and market rehabilitation, which are critical to humanitarian actors given the lac of access during the rainy season. In the context of the rapidly-changing food insecurity situation, development of an early warning system and a strong food security and nutrition information system could support evidence-based programming decisions. Over the long term, as oil resources become depleted, gains in SDG 2 will be linked to the revival of the agricultural sector, beginning with improved production methods to enhance the resilience of local and traditional food systems and biodiversity. This also involves progress on SDG 13, and strengthening resilience to climate change to mitigate risk within the value chain. Harnessing unrealized agricultural potential is also vital. The World Bank estimates that 2.7 million hectares were being cultivated (in 2014), out of 47 million hectares of arable land. An expansion to 6.3 million hectares could increase the share of cultivated land from 4 per cent to 10 per cent of the country's land area, and increase agricultural output by 240 per cent.[46] Still,

such an expansion must account for low population densities, limited rural connectivity and the high upfront costs of land clearing.[47]

Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives & promote well-being for all at all ages

Featured Target: 3.1 By 2030, reduce the global maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 100,000 live births

Featured Indicator: 3.1.1 Maternal mortality ratio per 100,000 live births: 789 (2015)

Key SDG interlinkages: SDGs 5, 6, 8, 16

The health challenges in South Sudan have become chronic and protracted, particularly since the outbreaks of conflict in December 2013 and July 2016, and the population displacements that followed. The building blocks of the health system in South Sudan have been severely affected, as illustrated by poor health indicators and the lack, and limited functionality, of health facilities. It is estimated that by the end of 2016, 43 per cent of the country's 1,384 health facilities had remained operational since the most recent onset of conflict[48]. Facilities that have stayed open only provide a limited number of services, which in turn are impacted by a lack of essential medicines and electricity, limited funding and high operational costs. Due to the chronic nature of health challenges in South Sudan, around 80 per cent of healthcare services are managed by NGOs, for which the continuity of services relies on external funding.[49]

The heavy strain the health system is under can be attributed to the conflict and protracted crises, including mass displacement, as well as the economic downturn, which is evident in the absence of skilled medical personnel. In 2013, skilled attendance at birth was only accessible for 11 per cent of new mothers, down from 20 per cent before independence.[50]

This shortage of human health resources combined with limited supply (and demand) for family planning services are all factors contributing to South Sudan's high maternal death ratios. Reducing maternal mortality is one of the main priorities for health professionals in South Sudan today. It is a serious health issue in itself, but also an important measure of the country's overall health capacity, which is one of the reasons it is highlighted both as a featured target and as an indicator for SDG 3. In particular, maternal mortality speaks to the capacity of health systems to deal with complications during pregnancy and childbirth, and reflects women's general and reproductive health. While figures vary between sources, WHO estimates the maternal mortality ratio to be 789 annual pregnancy (or childbirth-related) deaths per 100,000 live births.[51]

Another key SDG target (3.2) and priority health objective are the under-five mortality rate, and the probability of a child dying before the age of five. As with maternal mortality, under-five year child mortality is also a broader measure of child health and survival. The most recent figures are from 2015 and show an under-five death rate of 92.6 per 1,000 live births: nearly one in every ten children.[52] Other priority

areas are covered by SDG target 3.3, which deals with HIV and AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and other diseases. While occasionally overlooked among the many health issues facing the country, these diseases are causing the most harm. Today, about 50 per cent of all outpatient care is for malaria. In 2015 there were 156 cases of malaria and 146 of tuberculosis for every 1,000 people.[53]

Pathways to SDG 3: In spite of the many challenges, the health sector is experiencing a degree of functionality, which must be strengthened and expanded to reach severely underserved areas and populations, including the displaced.[54] State and country authorities, in particular, must be adequately funded through budget transfers in order to deliver essential services, reinforce health infrastructure, and build the health system's foundations in the long-term. However, unimpeded humanitarian access and reduced insecurity will yield the most immediate and dramatic short-term benefits, including restoring access to basic health and nutrition services. Even where resources exist, lifesaving access to vulnerable populations is hampered by the conflict. Armed actors have at times denied humanitarian access, while in other instances aid workers have themselves been targets.[55] While the role of humanitarian actors as primary service deliverers is essential, improved coordination between humanitarian and development partners is required for long-term health gains. Today coordination is working well, notably at planning and operational levels, but is not obstacle free, including in areas such as information sharing and management and disease surveillance. Gender inequality also underpins many of the health responses needed today. Reducing maternal mortality and strengthening reproductive health requires a focus on areas that break down the political, economic, social and cultural barriers that women face in making decisions about their reproductive health. Other key areas include maternal mortality prevention, gender and sexuality education and youth-oriented HIV programmes.

Goal 4: Ensure inclusive & equitable quality education & promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

Featured Target: 4.1 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes

Featured Indicator: 4.1.1 (proxy) Youth literacy rate, population aged 15-24 years, both sexes: 44.35% (2015)

Key SDG interlinkages: SDGs 1, 5, 8, 10, 16

South Sudan has two major 'learning' groups: those at school and those in non-school settings, including adults. The primary education Net Enrolment Rate was 43.5 per cent in 2016,[56] while data for the latter group is hard to come by (a forthcoming UNESCO study will identify out-of-school marginalized groups deprived of educational opportunities). Nationwide literacy rates are among the lowest in the world, with a youth literacy rate of 44 per cent in 2015. This level of disrupted education is commonly attributed to the economic crisis and the ongoing conflict, and their impact on school facilities and supplies, teachers and their training, and displacement (as school-aged children make up 47 per cent of the displaced).[57] Progress in the education sector is seen as particularly important among internally displaced and refugee children. By the end of 2016 the crisis had damaged education infrastructure to a great extent, and left some 1.17 million children without access to education (recent estimates put the number at close to two million). Approximately 31 per cent of schools had been subjected to at least one attack between the end of 2013 and the end of 2016, while around 25 per cent of primary schools were currently closed, mainly because of insecurity and displacement of teachers and students.[58] These impacts have a gender dimension too. Approximately 76 per cent of girls are missing out on a primary school education as a result of the conflict and the food crisis.[59] Taken together, these figures are broadly consistent with the International Organization for Migration's (IOM) Village Assessment Survey, which collects key data with the aim of reintegrating displaced people. It found that of the five [former] states for which data was available between 2011 and 2016, 30 per cent of 161 assessed education facilities were non-functional.[60]

The education sector – and the role of schools, teachers, and students – is often credited with bringing together members of diverse communities, and supporting civic values during times of crisis. As such, there is more to the above figures than a simple correlation between the conflict and access to education. In the context of conflict, educational inequality is a multifaceted and complex issue. A 2016 UNICEF report, based on extensive surveys, shows how conflict occurrence, particularly in northern parts of the country, is linked to socioeconomic and geographically-based inequalities in both educational resources and outcomes. However, the study also contends that different approaches to addressing inequalities have both helped to promote peacebuilding, and reproduce patterns of inequality. Such inequalities can be linked to languages of instruction, validation of particular versions of citizenship in curricula, and neglecting the interests, identity or livelihoods of certain communities.[61]

Pathways to SDG 4: Pathways in the education sector, particularly at local government level, must firstly address the limited functionality of education facilities. It is also critical to improve access to education among marginalized groups, including girls as well as conflict-affected internally displaced and refugee populations (e.g. by ensuring that refugee children are included in the South Sudanese Education Plan). Pathways should also prioritize teacher training – and reflect the interlinkages between conflict, education and inequality – to contribute to peacebuilding. For instance, inclusive and conflict-sensitive criteria must be developed to inform strategies, policies and practices to promote access to equal education opportunities for both national and refugee populations (both in South Sudan, and those abroad who will eventually return). This pertains to the allocation and disbursement of resources, enforcement of appropriate quotas, and development of curricula that sufficiently represent all communities. Beyond distribution and equality, a review of the absolute level of resources allocated to the education sector is needed. Education received only 4.4 per cent of the 2016-2017 budget, compared to 34.7 per cent for the security sector. Despite the challenges, progress has been made on mainstreaming the SDGs in the education sector, with SDG-specific targets already included in the forthcoming general education plan, and a national report on SDG 4 has been produced by the Ministry of General Education and Instruction. In addition, at the higher education level a joint project between civil society groups, universities and UNDP has raised awareness and helped to anchor the SDGs among future civil servants and public officials. Additional efforts will require improved availability and quality of education data, in a way that is operationally useful to stakeholders in the education sector, and supports collaboration between humanitarian and development actors.

Goal 5. Achieve gender equality & empower all women & girls

Featured Target: 5.2 Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation

Featured Indicator: 5.2.2 (proxy) Number of women and girls at risk of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV): 15,093

Key SDG interlinkages: SDGs 1, 3, 6, 8, 16

SDG 5 can be understood as an enabler, with the ability to generate results in other SDG areas, albeit in an unconventional way. Its transformative potential is mainly recognized by stakeholders with experience of South Sudan's gender-related challenges (such as women's groups and gender experts). The catalytic features of SDG 5 were, however, not broadly acknowledged among other groups as a result of limited awareness, understanding and exposure to the many unique challenges faced by women.

One such challenge, which has reached endemic proportions, is gender-based violence (GBV). In many instances, this issue was described as either culturally contingent or "normal", and it is particularly prevalent in conflict contexts. Sexual violence, including rape, accounted for one in every four incidents recorded by the Gender-Based Violence Information Management System.[62] While difficult to measure, the same source also estimates that around 2 per cent of all SGBV victims are men.[63]

There are many forms of GBV, most of which have different reporting mechanisms. Cases of GBV also tend to be under-reported and do not reach service providers, particularly where customary authorities are involved. Different forms of GBV also have different policy and justice implications. A recent survey found that weak laws or lack of proper legislation perpetuated GBV and that culprits often escaped justice.[64] GBV is often conflict-related and used as a weapon of war or as a reward for fighters. 'Intimate partner' violence, such as marital rape is also common, and tends to become more prevent during conflict. This accounts for 48 per cent of GBV incidents reported to humanitarian organizations.[65] The many forms of GBV are particularly prevalent among displaced populations. Women and girls are at increased risk of sexual violence even inside, or in close proximity to, Protection of Civilian (PoC) sites, in clear violation of international human rights law and humanitarian law. According to the Gender-Based Violence Information Management System, approximately 21 per cent of internally-displaced women report having been raped during the ongoing crisis, and sexual violence, including rape, constitutes one in every four incidents that it records.[66] Other critical gender-related challenges, as expressed by national women's organizations, include forced early – or child – marriage, a practice which is often made worse by limited access to birth certificates and identification documents, or to judicial processes that can help verify the age of girls. Deep

structural economic and social inequalities underpin these gender challenges, which have been exacerbated by years of conflict.

Pathways to SDG 5: In South Sudan there is a prevailing lack of political and economic empowerment for women, both in the public and the private spheres. Sustainable development planning and forward-thinking policies are important to reverse these trends, but need to be fully implemented to be effective. Policy dialogue on gender issues must also become more prominent, including among UN agencies that are obliged to mainstream gender equality in their work. Beyond policy solutions, there is an urgent need to raise awareness about gender challenges, and the importance of advancing women's rights, particularly on often culturally-sensitive issues like child marriage. Challenging commonly-held practices and gender norms is important at grassroots level and throughout government institutions. Today, women hold nearly three in 10 seats in parliament, which is an important and noteworthy accomplishment. Nevertheless, SDG 5 requires going beyond political representation and mainstreaming gender sensitivity throughout planning and policy strategies, budgets and reporting mechanisms. Empowering the work and standing of the Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare could be a useful step in this direction as the Ministry seeks to mainstream gender issues throughout the Government and its institutions. Finally, reinforced efforts are required to reduce the high rates of GBV, including prevention and risk mitigation in all sectors. While some useful policy and legal frameworks are in place, such as the National Social Protection Policy and the National Action Plan on UN Security Council Resolution 1325,[67] these require comprehensive implementation, as well as increased access to education and empowerment opportunities for women.

Goal 6. Ensure availability & sustainable management of water & sanitation for all

Featured Target: 6.1 By 2030, achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all

Featured Indicator: 6.1.1 Proportion of population using safely managed drinking water services

Key SDG interlinkages: SDGs 1, 2, 3, 9, 11

Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) is a priority for both development and humanitarian professionals in South Sudan as more than five million people are estimated to be in need of WASH services. Current limitations to water access are illustrative. On average, six litres of water are consumed per person per day in rural areas, compared to the minimum requirements of at least 7.5 litres under ordinary conditions.[68] People with limited water access are also economically disadvantaged, as they must dedicate time and resources to fetching and carrying water. Water quality is also a critical concern, and has been highlighted as the featured indicator above. UNICEF notes that 59 per cent of the population had access to improved water sources in 2015. OCHA's more recent figures are lower, estimating that 41 per cent of the population have access to safe water, reflecting the challenge of producing accurate data on safe drinking water in a context of active conflict. Improved sanitation and hygiene are also important aspects of SDG 6. Safely-managed sanitation services, as outlined in SDG target 6.2, is defined as a handwashing facility with soap and water, and the safe, hygienic treatment of human waste. Between 2011 and 2015, less than 7 per cent of the population had access to safely-managed sanitation services, and 74 per cent practised open defecation.[69] In the course of 2017 an estimated 303,000 refugees will require WASH services.

Figure 7: The severity of WASH challenges

Source: WASH Cluster
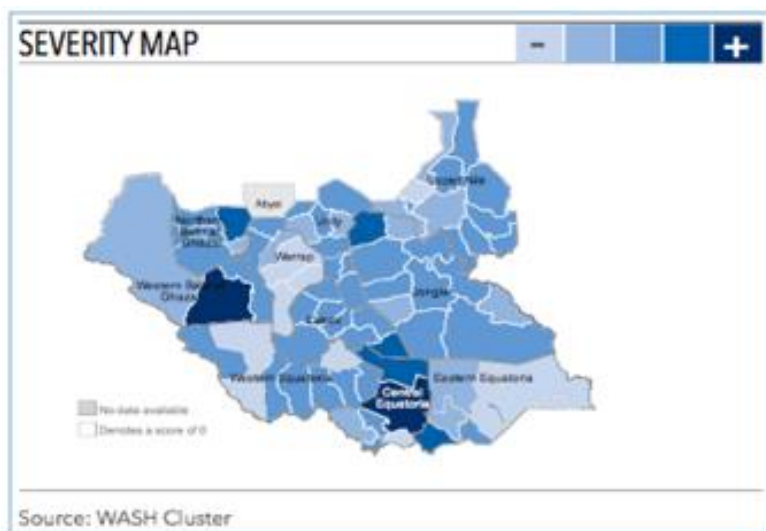
When the conflict spread to previously unaffected areas of the country in late 2016, WASH needs intensified, as boreholes were damaged or made dysfunctional. The impact on water supply has contributed to the spread of water-borne diseases, such as cholera. The country is currently host to a cholera outbreak, which is particularly severe. As of mid-June 2017, 11,210 cases of

cholera had been reported, with 189 confirmed fatalities. Both figures are likely to be much higher as a result of underreporting. The outbreak is also unusually long lasting, and stretched beyond the six-month average through the entire dry season.[70] Displaced people were particularly impacted and have high WASH needs. This includes those residing outside PoC sites as well as people living in PoC sites, often in overcrowded and unsanitary conditions.

Pathways to SDG 6: As advocated in the Interim Cooperation Framework, enhancing equal and sustainable access to safe water and basic sanitation, particularly for children and mothers, is a priority for the country, and will require strengthening linkages between humanitarian and development interventions in WASH programming.[71] At present, the majority of WASH services are supplied by international agencies. Sustainable pathways toward SDG 6, and improved water access, will require a shifting division of labour over the long term towards country-led solutions. These solutions require a focus on infrastructure, institutional capacity to deliver services, and increased protection and sustainable usage of the country's expansive wetlands.

Goal 7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable & modern energy for all

Featured Target: By 2030, ensure universal access to affordable, reliable and modern energy services

Featured Indicator: 7.1.1 Proportion of population with access to electricity (4.5%)

Key SDG interlinkages: SDGs 1, 3, 5, 8, 9, 11, 12

Energy sources are abundant in South Sudan. They include petroleum, hydropower, solar, wind and biomass, which are used by a majority of South Sudanese to meet their energy needs. Energy sources other than biomass are inadequately harnessed and exploited, which is one of the reasons for the lack of affordable, reliable and sustainable energy access for all. Electrification, highlighted above as a featured indicator, is the most pressing challenge related to SDG 7 . Nationwide electrification estimates hover at around 5 per cent, with large discrepancies in access between rural areas and urban centres.[72] Specifically, this figure refers to the proportion of the population with an electricity connection at home, or that relies primarily on electricity for lighting. There are no national electric grids, but rather a series of networks, which cover parts Juba, Wau and Malakal towns, and are subject to severe power outages and infrequent service.

The implication of this is an over-reliance on costly diesel-powered generators, generally provided by rural cooperatives or local businesses. At present, most government ministries are reliant on generators, and, because of fuel shortages and the economic crisis, do not have electric power for large portions of the day. Even where generators exist, the vast majority of people have no access to electricity at all, which is why South Sudan has the lowest per capita electricity consumption in Africa, equivalent to 1-3 kWh, compared to an average of 80 kWh in Sub-Saharan Africa.[73] Regular, reliable access to electricity is critical for achieving economic growth and poverty reduction. The World Bank Ease of Doing Business ranking, which assesses the level of regulatory performance, notes getting electricity as one of the principal problem areas in the business environment, and South Sudan is ranked number 188 out of 190 territories in this category for 2017.[74]

Pathways to SDG 7: Incorporating a strong electrification component in all future development strategies will be important, as ensuring that a critical mass of South Sudanese people can access electricity will undo many of the constraints faced by businesses and households. A renewed focus on achieving macro-economic stability, so as to incentivize investment in sustainable and renewable sources of energy, will be an important part of achieving this objective.

After independence, with African Development Bank support, the Government drew up an ambitious action plan to modernize and expand its physical infrastructure, including its power distribution capacity. These efforts, which would have included a dramatic rise in electricity distribution capacity through power grids to all state capitals as well as international links, were interrupted after the outbreak of conflict in December 2013.[75] The plan could, in theory, be revamped, but until the country is stable improving the nation's power supply, including its power generation capacity, will be a challenge. When conditions permit, realistic opportunities would involve investments in innovative solutions that combine fuel and more renewable energy sources such as solar power, which could also improve the carbon footprint of UN agencies.

A modelling scenario by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs estimates that it would cost $350 million to achieve full yet basic levels of electrification by 2030 (based on a projected population of 17.7 million). Photovoltaic sources such as solar power, would account for 53 per cent, more than 46 per cent would come from diesel (costing $0.7 per litre) and less than 1 per cent from the national grid.[76] While this model is rudimentary, and would depend on factors such as stable and affordable diesel prices, and political stability, it still illustrates a model of SDG planning, and the importance of basic energy provision.[77]

Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive & sustainable economic growth, full & productive employment & decent work for all

Featured Target: 8.1 Sustain per capita economic growth in accordance with national circumstances and, in particular, at least 7% gross domestic product growth per year in the least developed countries

Featured Indicator: 8.1.1 Annual growth rate of real GDP per capita: 10.5% (projected)

Key SDG interlinkages: SDGs 1, 2, 5, 11, 16

Today, South Sudan finds itself in a macroeconomic crisis, which has deteriorated since the beginning of the conflict in late 2013. Real GDP growth declined by nearly 20 per cent in the two years to 2016 while inflation rose to about 550 per cent in September 2016 before declining to 370 per cent in Jan 2017.[78] In consequence, private and public economic activity ground to a near halt, with suspended government salaries, and limited institutional capacity. In combination with severe austerity measures, this means that most of the population faces significant economic burdens. The recent economic downturn began in January 2012 following a total shutdown in oil production, after a dispute over transit fees and financial arrangements with northern Sudan. This shock significantly contracted GDP, and was made worse by the steep decline in global oil prices and declining oil production and export proceeds. These events in turn depleted foreign exchanges and weakened the South Sudanese Pound (a key indicator of economic distress), which lost 190 per cent of its value against the US dollar in eight months (from 6.4:1 to 18.5:1).[79] This consistent drop in value restricted food imports, hiked food prices and deepened poverty. As government revenue fell, security spending remained high, coming to five times the combined allocations for the social and humanitarian, health and education sectors, in the 2016/ 2017 budget.

SDG 8 also speaks to the issues of full and productive employment and job creation. The goal makes reference to "*decent* work for all", taking into account not only the creation of jobs, but also the quality of employment and equitable access and pay for vulnerable groups, including women and youth. This is important from the standpoint of fragility, as it goes beyond a simple economic calculus to link employment policies with perceptions of social identity and justice, as well as drivers of conflict. Promoting employment as part of the SDG agenda is also a unique challenge in South Sudan's context because nearly four in five households depend on crop farming or animal husbandry as a primary source of livelihood. Around half of all working people were unpaid family workers, while around 85 per cent of the working population were non-waged employees.[80] Employment and other challenges related to SDG 8 are also highly relevant in the context of displacement. With few livelihood options at their disposal during the course of displacement, internally displaced persons, refugees and demobilized youth are also disproportionately impacted at the

point of return and reintegration into their communities. Limited economic prospects and access to jobs, education and health services all impact the drivers as well as the solutions to displacement.

Box 10: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) 2016 Article IV Consultation[81]

In March 2017, the IMF concluded its Article IV Consultation with South Sudan. It outlined a sustainable medium-term outlook in the context of immense economic and humanitarian challenges, which is only likely if normalization is achieved of the political and security situation. Without significant progress toward peace, South Sudan risks falling into a spiralling trap of deteriorating economic performance and worsening security conditions with continued high humanitarian costs. If peace is achieved and lasts, economic reforms implemented, and access to external financing renewed, the fiscal deficit could fall to 2-3 per cent of GDP, alongside single digit inflation and exchange rate stability. And with a recovery in oil production and non-oil GDP, annual GDP growth could increase to 5-6 per cent in the next five years.

Pathways to SDG 8: Realizing economic rights at the local level while adopting sustainable macroeconomic approaches to SDG 8 requires a re-examination of the oil sector as it is, and will remain for some time, the most vital source of revenue. Although recurrent shocks from falling oil prices could not have been avoided, their impact could have been managed better. As South Sudan remains dependent on oil proceeds, there is still space to take actions to transform them into the country's main mechanism for financing the SDGs. One important area of focus is implementation of the Petroleum Revenue Management Act (2013), and in particular the mechanisms that separate revenue streams from spending, such as its Future Generations Fund. If properly managed, such funds can help improve economic resilience and mitigate the impact of short-term shocks associated with oil dependency. Nevertheless, with over half of all oil deposits depleted, a long-term approach must eventually involve a shift to alternative sources of revenue. Strengthening domestic resource mobilization and increasing the fiscal space available to sustainably finance the SDGs (and increase social spending in areas such as social protection, education and health) will involve critical thinking and innovative solutions to economic diversification. This is particularly important given the unlikelihood of increased Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) in the short term.

A growing tax base also requires a growing working population, which in turn must mean the voluntary return of many of the over four million displaced persons. Revitalizing the agricultural and livestock sectors, and improving rural connectivity and development, are likely sources of employment and will be useful for reversing the macroeconomic crisis. In this light, the Interim Cooperation Framework calls for tailored, context-specific and market-linked support for sustainable livelihood generation and skills training for rural, urban and pastoralist communities. Examples include rural finance mechanisms, savings and credit

schemes, private sector and entrepreneurial development, and increased regional trade. In the short term, emergency employment programmes also hold potential, given that private sector development is a long-term undertaking. While reforms designed to incentivize private sector development are important, such pathways also carry a significant amount of risk, as the sequencing and speed of reform ("too slow or too fast") can involve destabilizing trade-offs. In the context of high oil dependency, limited infrastructure, large fiscal imbalances and overspending in the security sector, future reforms must be undertaken with realistic timeframes in mind, as well as assessments of the consequences they will bring. As long as there is active conflict and a perpetuation of inequality and grievances, perceptions of "winners and losers" will be emphasized. Therefore, pathways to achieve economic growth and restore macroeconomic stability must focus on getting the policies right, as well as their timing and implementation mechanisms.

As illustrated in Box 10 above, South Sudan's economic outlook is by most accounts gloomy, but not hopeless. Any scenario involving progress on the SDGs is, however, premised on a complete, and lasting, cessation of hostilities, Moreover, as oil dependence makes the country sensitive to price volatilities, any sound policy choice must address the dual challenges of: a) managing future price declines and harnessing oil wealth to enable investment in sustainable development (which presupposes reducing security spending) while; b) mitigating oil dependency through economic diversification. Together, these steps may have the added benefit of building confidence among bilateral and multilateral partners who at present are reluctant to engage in development financing. Figure 8 puts this reluctance into context. It compares funding for the current Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP)[82] with key domestic expenditures, including security, illustrating the potential funds that could be utilized for the SDGs in a post-conflict scenario.

Figure 8: Key humanitarian and domestic expenditures
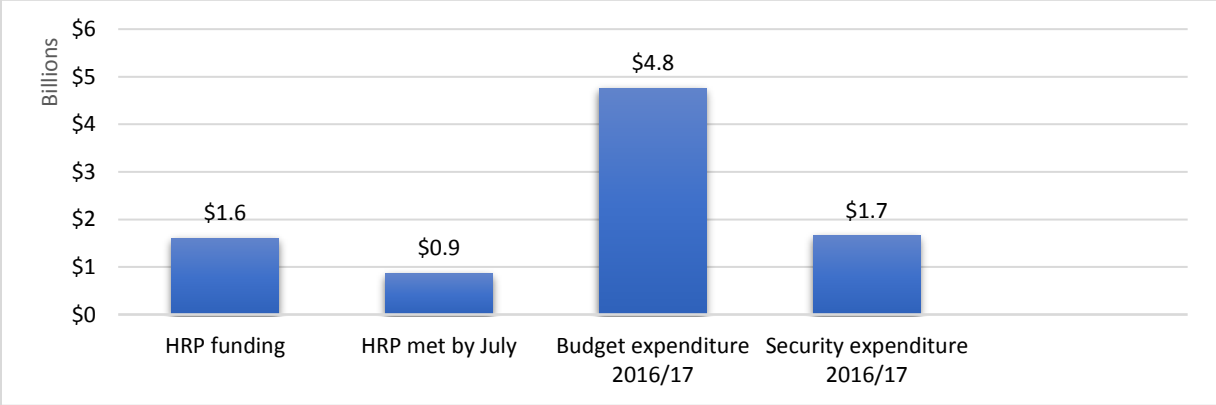
Goal 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive & sustainable industrialization & foster innovation

Featured Target: 9.1 Develop quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure, including regional and trans-border infrastructure, to support economic development and human well-being

Featured Indicator: 9.1.1 (Proxy) Type and length of [year-round, and non-year-round] roads – 15,000 km

Key SDG interlinkages: SDGs 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 11

South Sudan is one of the most logistically challenging countries in the world. Its main transport infrastructure assets include roads, rivers and airports (and a now defunct rail line), all of which were in poor condition at the time of independence in 2011, and were further damaged or destroyed after resumption of conflict in 2013. The state of the country's roads is of particular concern for the country's development and industrialization, and for the connectivity of the rural population. South Sudan has only 15,000 km of accessible roads, 7,000 km of which are major roads connecting cities (trunk roads), and 6,000 km supplementary secondary roads. There is only one tarmacked international road, between Juba and Nimule on the Ugandan border. During the rainy season, between around April and November, most of the country's roads become completely impassable.[83]

This inaccessibility, which is made significantly worse by insecurity and active fighting, has had severe impacts on humanitarian relief efforts, particularly in remote and hard-to-reach areas. Improving the road network and overall access to all areas of the country is a priority for many humanitarian agencies, which are often forced to delivery aid by air at around eight times the cost of delivering by road. Uninterrupted access to roads is equally critical for sustainable development efforts, particularly in rural settings, as most existing and functioning infrastructure exists in the major urban centres and cities such as Juba. Notably in the agriculture sector, poorly maintained and inaccessible road networks limit access to markets, trade in goods and services, and education and health provision.

Pathways to SDG 9: Rehabilitating the road network and enabling safe access to all parts of the country would, in conditions of peace, generate positive spinoff effects and benefits in many other SDG areas, and improve prospects for adequate health provision and food security, poverty reduction and economic diversification. The ambitious African Development Bank-supported plan to upgrade the country's physical infrastructure, which never reached the stage of implementation, would have seen existing road networks improved and upgraded to connect major regional and international markets, and link major cities and state capitals, at a cost of US$6.3 billion.

Revitalizing these plans is imperative. This will require measures to create the required political and security conditions, and to achieve the fiscal space and generate the revenue required to pay for it. Improved infrastructure is an essential component of successful industrial and social policies. Such policies can in turn create the potential for economic diversification and growth, notably in the agricultural sector.

Goal 10. Reduce inequality within & among countries

Featured Target: 10.3 Ensure equal opportunity & reduce inequalities of outcome, by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies & practices & promoting appropriate legislation, policies & action.

Featured Indicator: 10.3.1 Proportion of the population reporting having personally felt discriminated against or harassed within the previous 12 months on the basis of a ground of discrimination: tbc

Key SDG interlinkages: SDGs 1, 4, 5, 8, 16

Inequality in its many forms, whether real or perceived, matters for the SDGs as a whole, and is integral to the principle of 'leave no one behind'. Ability to withstand conflict is often affected by how individuals and groups perceive their identity, notably as a basis for mistreatment and injustice. This is an important aspect of SDG 10, which addresses inequality in its many forms and across its economic, social and political manifestations. It applies to horizontal inequalities (between social groups) as well as vertical ones (between households or individuals). As such, SDG 10 can be a useful starting point from where discussions on how to address the drivers of inequality can begin.

The marginalization, and status, of communities – expressed in the form of competition and unequal access to power and resources – is relevant to the country's recent history, and the emergence and longevity of the conflict. Inequity is also linked to governance outcomes and expressed in the form of popular trust in political processes, perceptions of bias and discrimination against particular communities, and disputes over resource flows, including budgets. Its development consequences are also significant, as illustrated by the Human Development Index (HDI). Simply put, the HDI measures average achievements in key dimensions of human development: life expectancy, education and Gross National Income per capita (South Sudan's 2014 HDI ranking was 169 out of 188 countries). Nationwide, there was a 34 per cent fall in the Human Development Index (HDI) as a result of conflict in 2015 (former Central Equatoria state saw a 41 per cent loss).[84] Another useful measurement is the inequality-adjusted HDI, which allows HDI indices to reflect inequalities in income, health and education. The 2015 Human Development Report found that inequality brought a 34 per cent loss to South Sudan's overall HDI score, which further emphasizes the importance of SDG 10.[85]

Purely economic inequalities are also prevalent, and important, even though they can be difficult to identify in a context where economic deprivation is so widespread and common. South Sudan's Gini coefficient, which is an index measuring inequalities of income among individuals or households was 46.3 in 2016. This score ranks the country at 35th from the bottom globally.[86]

Pathways to SDG 10: Developing pathways and finding solutions to inequality can be a daunting and challenging task, as it generally require long-term investments, and persistence, to positively adjust deep-seated attitudes and habits, and encourage recognition of the perspective of "the other," even at the policy level. Strategies and approaches to address inequalities are 'SDG-friendly' when they are premised on an inclusive approach to reaching the most vulnerable, and creating equitable opportunities, especially between adversarial and marginalized groups.

In this light, solutions to promote national cohesion and integration, as found in a recent survey, need to start with addressing the current political crisis in the country, and establishing mechanisms for equitable representation in society, including in political, economic, national and lower levels of government administration.[87] At the local level, efforts to address inequality also need to be geared towards building resilience and increasing the ability of communities to cope with crises and the insecurity associated with violence and conflict.

Goal 11. Make cities & human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient & sustainable

Featured Target: 11.1 By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums

Featured Indicator: 11.1.1 Proportion of urban population living in slums: 95.6% (2014)

Key SDG interlinkages: SDGs 8, 9, 15, 16

Today, over half of the world's population lives in cities, and 10 percentage points more are projected to do so by 2030. Over 90 per cent of urban expansion is expected to occur in the developing world. In contrast, South Sudanese society is mainly rural, with low urbanization rates compared to its neighbours. The figure rose from 8.9 per cent in 1950 to 16.5 per cent in 2000, and is likely reach 33.9 per cent by 2050.[88] SDG 11 covers social and economic development in urban settings, including safe and adequate housing. In 2014, 95 per cent of the country's urban population lived in slums or slum-like conditions,[89] as a result of unplanned urban expansion and increased rural-urban migration, combined with a lack of infrastructure investment. These issues have a negative impact on water, sanitation and municipal waste, which spreads water-borne diseases and environmental pollution, and lead to mortality rates that are higher in South Sudan than the rest of Africa. One group that is denied access to safe and affordable housing is the internally displaced, who today makes up more than a quarter of South Sudan's population. Measured by population, the Bentiu Protection of Civilians site with its 120,000 residents could be the second largest city in the country. For this reason, IDPs have been incorporated as a proxy indicator under SDG target 11.1. Future versions of this indicator could also include measurements of shelter and housing for IDPs.

Pathways to SDG 11: In many ways, SDG 11 reflects the SDG framework as a whole, but specifically applied to urban environments. While urbanization brings numerous challenges, pathways to SDG 11 recognize that it can also be an economic driver. Productive urbanization requires enhanced capacity among national and local officials to plan and organize urban development, which will involve diversification of the economy away from oil dependency. Peace and good governance are also pre-requisites to improving urban planning, strengthening infrastructure and harnessing oil revenue.

Goal 12. Ensure sustainable consumption & production

Featured Target: 12.2 By 2030, achieve the sustainable management & efficient use of natural resources

Featured Indicator: 12.2.1 Material footprint, material footprint per capita & material footprint per GDP

Key SDG interlinkages: SDGs 8, 9, 11, 15

SDG 12 addresses the need to separate economic growth from the use of natural resources to achieve sustainable development. Globally, trends have regressed over the past decade, with an increase in natural resource use in economic processes (domestic material consumption). South Sudan also faces challenges related to air, soil, and water pollution, but there is insufficient data to provide a detailed understanding of indicators such as 12.2.1, which looks at material footprints. For this reason, oil production has been used as a proxy indicator, to shed light on production patterns as well as material footprints. Oil production has declined to 43.4 million barrels per year in 2016, following a production shutdown and declining prices. Nevertheless, the urgency to generate oil revenue incentivizes production shortcuts that insufficiently protect the environment from pollution. This can cause oil spills, in turn exacerbated by flooding in the rainy season.[90]

Pathways to SDG 12: South Sudan could benefit from a strategy to reduce waste generation, based on prevention, reduction, recycling and reuse. In the oil sector, developing guidelines for impact assessments could help ensure that socioeconomic, environmental and gender factors are integrated in new policies and legislation. However, the ability of these and existing laws, including the 2012 Mining and Petroleum Acts, to contribute to sustainable development objectives are contingent on their full implementation.

Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change & its impacts

Featured Target: 13.1 Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries

Featured Indicator: 13.1.1 Existence of disaster risk reduction strategy - yes

Key SDG interlinkages: SDGs 6, 7, 11, 12, 13, 15, 17

Changing climate patterns have become a real challenge for South Sudan, with equally real, and often disproportionate, impacts. These include regular droughts, torrential rain and seasonal floods. Temperatures have increased by more than 0.4 °C per decade over the past 30 years, while average rainfall has declined since the mid-1970s and become more unpredictable and erratic.[91] One of the effects of these changing patterns is the increased difficulty for farmers to know when they should plant their crops. When combined with drought, this has serious impacts on crop yields, water resources and health. Displacement induced by climate change has also become more frequent and occurred almost every year since 2007.[92] The importance of addressing these impacts is reflected in the featured indicator 13.1.1 above.

The impact of climate change on agriculture exacerbates food insecurity, causes displacement and reduces livelihood opportunities, all of which are worsened by population growth and the expansion of farming. These factors also exacerbate land disputes. Unfortunately, there are limited climate models and data available to chart the future impact of climate change in South Sudan. Capacity to understand and predict the effects of climate change in the country's institutions is also limited. It is, however, widely anticipated that continuing trends will have negative effects on water resources and agricultural productivity, and accelerate environmental degradation and desertification. Factors that contribute to vulnerability to climate change include reliance on rain-fed subsistence agriculture, increased deforestation (as forest ecosystems act as buffers against crop failures related to drought), and erratic rainfall. Increased soil erosion and reductions to water flow and quality in wetlands and rivers are also 'controllers' of the impacts of climate change.[93]

Pathways to SDG 13: To address climate-related vulnerabilities, the focus must be on strengthening domestic preparedness for adaptation actions. This applies in particular to vulnerable communities such as subsistence farmers, women-headed households, pastoralists in areas experiencing desertification and internally displaced persons. Examples of important adaptation activities include reforestation and agroforestry to reduce vulnerability to droughts and floods. Such projects can simultaneously promote peacebuilding and job creation, and feed into the development of regulatory frameworks (e.g. on natural resource governance).[94] In a similar vein, the Interim Cooperation Framework suggests strengthening agricultural extension services, developing an early warning system for natural disasters, and helping the government create an adequate social protection system. It also notes the need for capacity building for disaster risk reduction, and support

for community-driven mitigation of the effects of depleted natural resources. Much progress has already been achieved, particularly where communities have applied adaptation mechanisms to cope with floods and drought. Improving inter-communal interaction and social bonds can help strengthen reciprocal support systems during hard times.[95] Other useful interventions include climate-smart agriculture techniques, and fuel-efficient energy sources (e.g. stoves) as alternatives to coal and firewood, which contribute to deforestation. Raising awareness among communities is crucial for building their resilience to withstand climate shocks.

Many of the legal and policy frameworks required for addressing or mitigating the impacts of climate change already exist. However, some have not been approved, while others have only been partially implemented, as a result of insecurity, lack of resources or capacity. In 2014 South Sudan acceded to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and released its Intended Nationally Determined Contributions as part of the Framework. In 2016, it published its first National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA), which proposes practical interventions based on extensive consultations, and is the first step towards meeting its commitments under the UNFCCC. In addition, South Sudan is developing its Initial National Communications and has undertaken a National Capacity Self-Assessment, enabling the formulation and implementation of policies on climate change adaptation. It has also adopted the Paris Climate Accord, which has been endorsed by the Council of Ministers, and is pending ratification in Parliament.

Goal 14. Conserve & sustainably use the oceans, seas & marine resources for sustainable development

Featured Target: n/a

Featured Indicator: n/a

Key SDG interlinkages: SDGs 6, 8, 13

In a context where the effects of climate change, overfishing and marine pollution are on the rise, SDG 14 seeks the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources. As South Sudan is a landlocked country with no direct access to the sea or marine or coastal resources, SDG 14 is of little direct relevance to the country.

However, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which is regarded as the basis for implementing SDG 14, affords landlocked states a number of rights. These include the right to access (and use) ocean space and resources, the rights of access to and from the sea and freedom of transit as well as rights in exclusive economic zones. South Sudan has, however, neither signed the agreement or the actual convention itself.

Even though South Sudan is not a coastal country, it does have abundant access to rivers and wetlands. Though these water sources are not under the direct purview of SDG 14, the same principles of conservation and sustainable use can apply. For instance, South Sudan's wetlands, which during the rainy season can expand to cover over 100,000 square kilometres, are important for managing climate change impacts, as well as an important source of livelihoods. The Sudd wetlands alone cover 5 per cent of the country's geographical area, and have been declared a Ramsar Site of international significance. They have a significant impact on the flows and health of the White Nile River as well as the climate. The ability of these water sources to do so is diminished when they are degraded.

Pathways to SDG 14: To improve water quality and avoid contaminating water sources, especially in populated areas, wastewater and sanitation management must be upgraded. The authority overseeing the water sector in South Sudan is the Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation, which requires clear mandates, regulatory frameworks, funding and human resources in order to operate effectively.

Goal 15. Promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage

forests, combat desertification, halt land degradation & halt biodiversity loss

Featured Target: 15.1 By 2020, ensure the conservation, restoration & sustainable use of terrestrial & inland freshwater ecosystems & their services, in particular forests, wetlands, mountains & drylands

Featured Indicators: Forest area as a proportion of total land area: 30% (est.)

Key SDG interlinkages: SDGs 2, 4, 12, 13, 16

South Sudan is endowed with great biodiversity. It has expansive forests, agricultural land and pastures, plentiful water resources and a rich, unique wildlife as well as livestock. These ecosystems offer a range of environmental benefits such as food, carbon sequestration and important water resources.[96] Forests are particularly abundant, but the precise expanse of forest resources is unclear. Depending on how they are measured, forests cover between 11.1 per cent and 35 per cent of the total land area, and up to 90 per cent if "other wooded land" (shrubs, smaller trees) is included. The rural, as well as the urban, population depends on forests as a source of energy, building materials, hunting and other livelihoods. As noted above, wetlands such as the Sudd also provide important benefits, including employment opportunities in the fisheries and agriculture sector, and together make up nearly 15 per cent of the country's land base. They are also important habitats for wildlife.[97]

However, surveys conducted as far back as the 1980s have shown a significant reduction in the number of wildlife species, in part due to an expansion in poaching and commercial trafficking. The Wildlife Conservation Society estimates that approximately 30 per cent of the elephant population has been lost to poaching. Furthermore, increases in both human and livestock populations are followed by land degradation. Sustainable land management can help to achieve land degradation neutrality (and combat desertification), which is made worse where rapid deforestation and local conflicts over land resources occur.[98] At the core, conflict is the principle obstacle to the environmentally-sustainable use and management of South Sudan's diverse ecosystems. An estimated 45 per cent of South Sudan's forests have been lost since the outbreak of war in 1983, mainly due to illegal logging and other forms of deforestation.[99] While there is little accurate data, it is widely held that teak and mahogany trees are cut for conflict financing.

Pathways to SDG 15: Building strong, functioning institutions is the best means of ensuring the productive use of natural resources and protecting environmental assets. In spite of the continuing deforestation and land degradation, sustainably-managed forests can help meet South Sudan's short-term energy and construction needs, and be a source of export foreign currency. The forthcoming State of the Environment Report proposes the following measures to the conservation and responsible use of forests: i) promoting

agroforestry and community forest initiatives in non-conflict zones to create employment over time; ii) encouraging research on issues such as species planting, charcoal production and reforestation; and iii) pursuing longer-term initiatives to curb illegal logging and develop a sustainable timber export sector, even though many forestry concessions have already been granted. Another long-term pathway to SDG 15 lies in wildlife preservation, which can become a source of sustainable tourism in the future. Similarly, the Sudd can provide the basis for resilient livelihoods, maintain biodiversity and manage climate change impacts.

Progress has been made at the legal and policy levels, including the introduction of the Environmental Protection Bill (2013) and Wildlife Conservation and Protected Areas Bill (2015), both of which are pending. Similarly, the National Environmental and draft Disaster Risk Management Policy proposes important adaptation strategies. At the international level, South Sudan is party to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity and the UN Convention to Combat Desertification, and has demonstrated commitment to implementing its provisions. Currently, the Government, with the technical support of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), is preparing its first National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan. Still, most legal and policy frameworks have not yet been enacted or implemented, as this is effectively not possible in the current context of conflict and economic deprivation.

Goal 16. Promote peaceful & inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all & build effective, accountable, inclusive institutions

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

Featured Indicator: 16.1.2 (Proxy) Conflict-related fatalities: exact number unknown

Key SDG interlinkages: SDGs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10, 15, 17

SDG 16 emphasizes that addressing the factors that give rise to violence, insecurity and injustice is essential to fulfilling Agenda 2030. In the South Sudanese context, SDG 16 is therefore an enabling goal, and can be a framework from which progress can be made on nearly all the other SDGs. This perspective was shared by most of the people consulted for this report, and corroborated in a recent survey that found linkages between insecurity and a wide range of problems including hunger and the Government's failure to deliver services.[100] SDG 16 is also strategically linked to 'Sustaining Peace', the global policy objective aimed at reinforcing deliberate, proactive measures (across all SDG areas) to strengthen the structures, attitudes and institutions that underpin peace.[101] This makes SDG 16 essential for implementing the 'leave no one behind' principle, and a strong foundation for equitable and sustainable recovery.

In the same survey cited above, roughly half of respondents felt that the security situation at the national level was bad. The figure was 92 per cent in former Upper Nile state and around 85 per cent in the Equatorias region.[102] Extreme violence against civilians has been a common feature of the conflict, which has also produced high direct and indirect death tolls. Casualty figures are one of the basic measurements of SDG 16. Measuring them is, however, a challenge as they are generally unknown and few are keeping count. Estimates vary, partly due to the many indirect deaths from hunger and disease. The ACLED (Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project) database claims around 20,000 people have been killed since independence, while the International Crisis Group estimates between 50,000 and 100,000. The crisis has taken a particular toll on vulnerable groups, notably youth and women. Sexual violence is a common weapon of war, with military actors responsible for a large share of rapes and sexual assaults.[103] Other indicators under SDG 16 highlight governance challenges and other drivers of fragility. In South Sudan, a focus on SDG 16 thus requires reflection on the prerequisites for achieving an inclusive political settlement. For instance, a focused reading of the SDG 16 and Agenda 2030 principles can inform approaches to the ARCISS peace agreement, notably on inclusive institutional and governance arrangements (Chapter 1), security provision (Chapter 2) and justice and reconciliation (Chapter 5). A revitalization of the agreement is currently under consideration. This would provide an important opportunity to address the factors behind the resumption of fighting in July 2016, and not only formalize peace but also incentivize an end to the

violence in a manner that its signatories have the capacity to implement. Further, it could help articulate a vision that addresses what the state, its institutions and their relationship with citizens, should look like, and how political rivalries can be managed in the absence of coercion and violence.

Any such vision will also need to involve meeting the justice needs of the people. Institutionally-based rule of law is not only a key conflict indicator, but will be essential to successful prevention efforts over the long term. Limited access to justice was a cited as a major concern among stakeholders, and large segments of society continue to face injustices, often linked to grievances rooted in ethnic identity, political injustice or poverty.[104] Today, the formal justice system is under-resourced and often incapable of performing its duties on an equitable basis. As of 2016, there was less than one judge per 100,000 people.[105] The lack of transparency in the justice sector is particularly damaging to social cohesion and confidence in governance as a whole. A 2011 survey by Transparency International found that 43 per cent of respondents paid bribes when dealing with the police and judiciary.[106] But in spite of its justice challenges, South Sudan is neither lawless nor anarchic. Around 80 per cent of people use informal, customary justice mechanisms to resolve disputes and promote local-level security.[107] Critics often question them on human rights and due diligence grounds, while proponents see them as viable, and socially relevant, alternatives to impunity. Future justice sector reforms, including the creation of a hybrid court to prosecute major crimes committed during the conflict (as called for in the ARCISS) are bound to make use of these systems, which also exist in the PoC sites. They will, however, require resources, education and training to function well and maintain legitimacy in the communities they serve.[108]

> **Box 11: Justice lessons from Rwanda**: After Rwanda's 1994 genocide, which killed one million people, 125,000 people were arrested on genocide-related charges, and the justice system was destroyed. Restoring it was a priority. Through intense training and institutional restructuring, it reached pre-1994 capacities by 2002. But even with an advanced judicial system's capacity, it would have taken over a century to try all cases in formal court. A flexible solution emerged whereby Rwanda's traditional dispute resolution mechanism was strengthened. The re-introduction of 'Gacaca' courts saw persons of high standing engage their communities to resolve lower-level crimes and disputes. More than 1.9 million genocide-related cases were tried through Gacaca courts, which led to the added benefits of discovering what happened during the genocide, and freeing up the resources needed to re-establish the rule of law.

Agenda 2030 promotes inclusive approaches to governance, and recognizes exclusion as a driver of conflict and political instability that undermines capacities for sustainable development. South Sudan is today a fragmented society. Seventy-five per cent of respondents to a national survey believed there was an absence of national unity, for reasons including the lacking of a sense of common purpose, justice, and inclusive and functioning social contract between the state and the people.[109] Peace efforts must account for these

views and foster a genuinely shared vision for the country's future.[110] Creating employment opportunities, particularly for youth, and improving service delivery will also help build a more unified South Sudan, as will forming partnerships and coalitions, and increasing trust in institutions at the national and local levels. With this aim in mind, along with the aspiration to better understand and agree on the future relationship between the state and its citizens, SDG 16 can add value to the ongoing National Dialogue process. It can do so by: i) broadening the dialogue (in terms of its content and stakeholders); ii) linking its outcomes to progress on SDG 16 indicators; iii) creating a pretext for addressing conflict drivers; and iv) discussing and determining 'who is being left behind,' and finding actionable solutions to address this.

With regard to promoting inclusion, existing information on levels of political, social or economic inclusion is insufficient, but circumstantial evidence does exist. For instance, armed groups and the civilians under their control are currently not part of the national political process, or the national dialogue. Another example concerns the around two million internally displaced, and two million South Sudanese refugees and asylum seekers, who are not only 'left behind' but make up entire constituencies with unique needs that must be mapped against the SDGs. Facing insecurity, lost livelihoods and precarious situations, their speedy and voluntary return to regular social and economic life is paramount. But this is a challenge, as divisions in society are rife. Sixty per cent of respondents to an Oxfam study across five locations cited the civil war as the main reason for their displacement, a figure that reached 85 per cent in PoC sites.

Pathways to SDG 16: Making progress on SDG 16 will be the principal means of tackling food insecurity, curbing GBV, increasing literacy and school enrolment rates, and getting the economy back on track. Any headway on SDG 16 will likely occur in a context where political obstacles to progress exist. Therefore, a strong case needs to be built for long-term efforts to tackle violence, injustice and exclusion. For instance, the importance of the rule of law must be recognized, as restoring legal services and reforming security and justice situations are needed to improve the judiciary's enforcement capacity and adherence to legal norms. This can help rebuild confidence between authorities and communities, and demonstrate a break with the past. A survey aimed at gaining a better understanding of solutions to the country's legacy of violence found high demand for mechanisms to promote truth, justice and healing. It also found broad support for transitional justice and national reconciliation processes, which could include criminal prosecution of persons suspected of conflict-related abuses.[111] A focus on SDG 16 must also focus on long-term prevention efforts to keep the crisis from worsening, and building resilient foundations for recovery. Approaches should aim to improve cooperation between communities, anchored in the realization of equal rights and opportunities, and national reconciliation as well as justice. Schools, churches, mosques and healthcare facilities have been regarded as inclusive civic spaces that enhance community cooperation and promote

peaceful coexistence. Their positive functions, and the civic values and services that they deliver, must therefore be supported.

Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation & revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

Featured Target: 17.1 Strengthen domestic resource mobilization, including through international support to developing countries, to improve domestic capacity for tax and other revenue collection

Featured Indicators: (Proxy) 17.1.1 Total revenues and grants as share of GDP: 34.4%

Key SDG interlinkages: All SDGs

SDG 17 focuses specifically on the 'how' of SDG implementation. Given the importance of effective SDG implementation for South Sudan, Chapter 3 below discusses in further detail approaches that can help to make progress. SDG 17 is also unique in that it covers multiple areas including finance, technology, capacity building, and systemic issues to better coordinate SDG benefits, multi-stakeholder partnerships, data, monitoring and accountability. For South Sudan, a 'big picture' priority to enable basic progress on the SDGs will be the expansion of its domestic resource mobilization, and creating the fiscal space required to plan for a future beyond oil dependency.

Improving tax revenue is a commonly-referenced priority, in part due to declining oil production and low oil prices. As part of its 2017-2018 budget, the Government aims to cover part of the deficit by increasing its non-oil revenue collection. Steps being taken to this effect include increases in sales tax and duties on specific products and services, a new airport departure tax and the elimination of certain personal income and corporate tax exemptions. Efforts have also been made to establish a National Revenue Authority, with the objective of improving tax administration and promoting the mobilization of both tax and non-tax revenues, particularly in non-oil sectors.[112]

Having said this, tax compliance and enforcement capacity remains low, and the context is of frequent unauthorized tax collection, extortion at roadblocks, and abuse of tax exemption regulation.[113] Respondents to a survey who had contact with nine public institutions, 66 per cent reported paying bribes over the course of a year.[114] Moreover, some observers note that the budget process itself faces challenges related to credibility, predictability and execution controls.[115] Together, these factors underpin South Sudan's combined score (33.5) on the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Index, and its ranking of 186 out of 189 countries in 2017.[116]

Pathways to SDG 17: The most critical pathways to achieving SDG 17 lie in innovative financing mechanisms, which in turn are premised on a peaceful resolution of the conflict. While there are formidable constraints to private sector development in the country, there are areas where gains can be built on. Sub-

categories of the Ease of Doing Business Index, such as the ease of paying taxes and contract enforcement, have had more favourable rankings over the past couple of years (68 and 73 respectively). Non-oil tax revenue was 11.2 per cent of total government expenditure for the 2016/2017 fiscal year.[117] South Sudan's Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning and UNDP are currently undertaking a multi-functional project to improve public financial management by improving national, state and county-level government capacity to collect non-oil revenues.

An improved tax revenue system could, if properly managed, enable an expansion of services in areas such as education and health. Expanding South Sudan's tax base is in many ways a capacity-related issue, which is why UNDP and its government partners are engaging in technical training for tax officers and legislators, and is helping to develop a unified tax schedule. Expanding the tax base as a means of financing the SDGs is a realistic objective that can be attained by strengthening public financial management and boosting non-oil economic opportunities in areas such as mining, forestry and agriculture. Improving the use of the Nile and the country's expansive wetlands can also help facilitate domestic trade and thereby expand the tax base.

Chapter 3. Means of Delivering the SDGs

Overview

This chapter takes a closer look at the ways and means of delivering the SDGs, on the basis in the findings in Chapter 2. The various strategies, tools and approaches discussed in the pages below are not only important, but also contingent on the commitment and engagement of all sections of society. Notably, their implementation requires investing sufficient political capital and 'buy-in' from decision makers. South Sudan's experience as a pilot country in the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States,[118] the global agreement aimed at helping countries overcome fragility, illustrates this point well. Through consultations with over 1,000 stakeholders, the New Deal process established priorities for change in areas such as national reconciliation, security sector reform, public financial management and infrastructure development. However, the process was not matched with the political will required for inclusive reform, as it received insufficient commitment and follow up from all main political leaders, despite support from state-level decision makers. It was ultimately disrupted by the crisis of December 2013.[119]

The re-emergence of conflict in 2013 points to another lesson from the same period. An independent review of the New Deal[120] noted how some observers found that the strong focus on statebuilding and aid effectiveness at the time came at the expense of identifying the causes of conflict and fragility, as well as the measures required to address them. This lesson is equally valid for SDG implementation today. Agenda 2030 cannot fully be realized in the context of conflict, or under the conditions that perpetuate it. As such, delivering on the SDGs requires planning for peace, and articulating a shared national vision for the future, even before conflict has ended. Without the burden of conflict, and with the commitment of political leadership, the processes underpinning SDG delivery have a stronger chance at translating these commitments into action. One of the first of these processes will be to align and incorporate the SDGs into the forthcoming National Development Strategy. This will involve applying the critical pathways for each SDG and linking them to sector-specific plans that extend over both short- and longer-term horizons. Another crucial component is financing. For the SDGs to be achieved, they must be paid for in full, and creative thinking will be needed to achieve this. Prospects mainly lie in expanding the country's fiscal opportunities, and diversifying revenue sources beyond oil, while also reducing spending in the security sector. Generating the means to deliver on the SDGs will also require building capacity for data collection, and investing in valuable multi-stakeholder partnerships. These issues are the focus of this chapter.

SDG mainstreaming in South Sudan: A 'how to' approach

The UN Development Group (UNDG) developed the 'MAPS' framework (Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support) as a means of supporting countries in their efforts to deliver the SDGs. It emphasizes policy coherence, multi-stakeholder engagement and the importance

Figure 9: The MAPS framework

of adopting a 'whole of system' approach to delivering on the SDGs. For South Sudan, the most important part of the framework is its Mainstreaming component, which is the basis of this chapter. This involves integrating the SDGs at the national, state and county levels, within political and institutional processes, and as a part of budgets and financing mechanisms. At its core, mainstreaming involves making the SDGs a central reference point in all development planning processes.[121] A useful starting point is raising awareness about the SDGs.

Raising awareness about the SDGs

Opportunities to meet the SDG targets will increase if key stakeholders, constituencies and decision makers are aware of their existence, as well as their benefits. In South Sudan, there is a degree of familiarity with the SDGs and key SDG concepts among civil servants and members of civil society. In a recent survey of the general public, 70 per cent of respondents expressed lack of knowledge about the SDGs.[122] Therefore, one of the first steps of SDG implementation is to raise the profile and improve understanding of the goals, and encourage ownership of them. Many of the issues covered in Chapter 1 are appropriate topics for public discussion, including SDG prioritization, Agenda 2030 and its principles, and how they apply to the South Sudanese context. Raising awareness should be an inclusive and participatory process, aiming to include women and marginalized groups, and should take place at all levels of society. There are many examples, including: i) workshops to sensitize public officials, civil servants or civil society; ii) university lectures and programmes; iii) media training; and iv); campaigns aimed more at a general audience through, for example, community radio and rural and urban radio listeners' clubs. The role of education and the formal school system in raising awareness about the SDGs is also significant, as SDG-related content can be streamlined into school activities and throughout the learning process.

Such efforts are challenging, even in the best of circumstances. They are likely to face obstacles including restrictions imposed by the security situation and the tightening space for media, journalists and civil society, as well as perspectives that de-emphasize the importance of the SDGs. This is expected in a conflict-affected environment, but also paradoxical given the urgent need for development in South Sudan today.

Furthermore, generating the economic resources required to raise awareness may also prove difficult in a context where funding is highly limited. Developing innovative low-cost solutions, as well as drawing on UN or other international financing mechanisms where possible, are both worthwhile approaches to address this problem. Learning from other countries in similar crisis situations would also be useful. In Uganda, for instance, dedicated 'goal ambassadors' helped raise public awareness about individual SDGs.

Box 12: South Sudan's first SDG workshop. In May 2017, the Ministry of Finance and Planning and the National Bureau of Statistics convened a workshop with the support of the UN Country Team, with over 80 attendees representing several government ministries, UN agencies, civil society and academia. The workshop's objective was to generate ideas and solicit input for this inaugural report. However, it also provided an important advocacy opportunity. The workshop built momentum and created interest in the SDGs, but also generated strong opinions and ideas about priority goals, data deficits and capacity, partnerships and the way forward to effectively implement the SDGs in South Sudan.

'SDG-Sensitive' institutional arrangements

As a central reference point for development planning, the SDGs need to be reflected in the country's institutional arrangements both within and across national and state governments. In South Sudan, this includes all ministries (notably Finance and Planning, Health, Education, Justice, Agriculture, Interior and Environment), departments, commissions (notably Anti-Corruption, Chambers of Commerce and the Bureau of Statistics), and other institutions. Furthermore, it will require planning instruments that incentivize coordination across all relevant agencies and sectors. Such 'cross-sectoral' planning will require boosting of the capacity of ministries to collaborate effectively in areas including information sharing, human resources, technology, strategy design, and monitoring and evaluation. Strengthening institutional arrangements, and the functioning of democratic institutions, will also require approaches that identify and address the issues that matter to most people – and putting human rights and justice at the centre of governance efforts.

Other examples of institutional arrangements that could promote SDG implementation include: i) mapping exercises to identify relevant actors or mechanisms across all levels of national and local-level government; ii) creating forums and consultative bodies to enhance institutional partnerships and coordination on the SDGs, including in parliament; iii) undertaking assessments of the (both positive and negative) impacts of national policies and actions at the state and local levels, ensuring that that all voices and perspectives are taken into account; and iv) leveraging the SDGs by integrating them into existing laws and policy frameworks, thereby giving them an automatic platform and audience. All of the above should have the aim

of informing development planning efforts, setting ambitious yet achievable targets, and incentivizing positive outcomes.

These institutional arrangements must, however, be guided by a degree of realism, given the capacity constraints imposed by the current crisis. At the time of writing, most ministries were only supplied with electricity by generators for parts of the day. The economic situation has severely restricted the operational capacity of institutions, and left little room for expenditure beyond salaries, which in many instances have also been delayed or suspended. Mainstreaming the SDGs at institutional level also requires adaptive and flexible implementation. For example, it can be beneficial to focus primarily on the SDG outcomes and 'what works' as opposed to a strict emphasis on procedures. Where possible, mainstreaming the SDGs among customary and informal institutions may also lead to better SDG outcomes.[123]

Incorporating SDGs into national development planning

The SDGs are not designed to exist in isolation. In order for them to have impact, they need to be fully integrated into the forthcoming National Development Strategy. The Strategy offers an important opportunity to reflect the SDGs among national priorities, and account for the impact of the current crisis, to help meet the country's SDG objectives. Answering the following questions could clarify these objectives:

   i.   As a country, what is our long-term vision, and what is our strategy to achieve it?
   ii. How can a mid-term national development plan incorporate this strategy?
   iii. How can we best design a results framework for this plan that suits our national context?
   iv. Which goals and targets does the plan cover, and which ones should be incorporated?
   v.   What are our sectoral plans and strategies, and do these reflect our national SDG priorities?

The use of a vision statement is an appropriate place to start, and a useful way to help articulate and leverage the SDGs. South Sudan has a draft vision in place entitled 'Vision 2040', which can be used as a framework for a long-term vision for sustainable development (with the caveat that the 'deadline' for Agenda 2030 and the SDGs is 2030, a full decade before Vision 2040). According to Vision 2040, the South Sudanese people aspire to become: *1) an educated and informed nation; 2) a prosperous, productive and innovative nation; 3) a free, just and peaceful nation; 4) a democratic and accountable nation; 5) a safe and secure nation; 6) a united and proud nation; and 7) a compassionate and tolerant nation.* These aspirations can inform long-term objectives, which in turn can help design tangible strategies. Figure 10 demonstrates this logic in relation to a typical development planning process. It shows how the questions outlined above can help integrate the SDGs into every stage of the broader planning process.

Figure 10: Sample development planning process
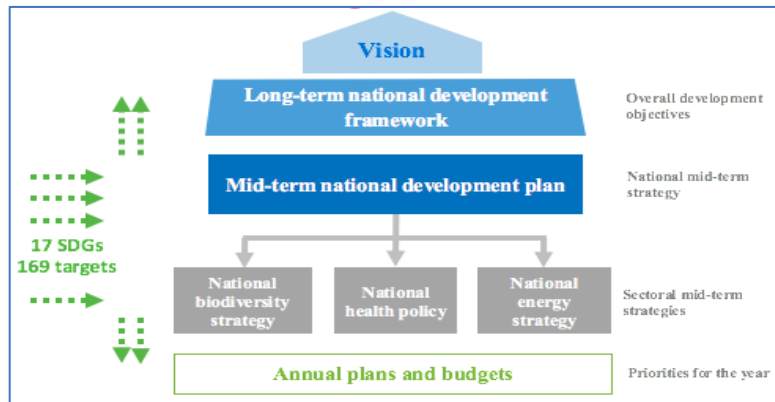
For the SDGs to become relevant to the national development process, the SDG principles and other sources of guidance, such as the MAPS framework, can be useful resources.[124] They can help identify pathways to achieve each SDG, and inform the various priorities and strategies that make up the development planning process.

As argued in Chapter 1, adopting the logic of critical pathways could be useful for identifying approaches and actionable solutions to make progress on each SDG. This logic involves: i) prioritizing urgent goals and targets and continuously adapting priorities to changes in national circumstances; ii) using the principles of Agenda 2030 as criteria for whether or not strategies are effective or appropriate; iii) applying a 'conflict lens' to all strategies to ensure that they are based on an understanding of the drivers of fragility and the shocks that make the country vulnerable to conflict and violence, as well as its sources of resilience; iv) identifying realistic, achievable and desirable SDG outcomes; and v) using the above measures to develop concrete pathways and measures to meet SDG objectives. The specific ways in which critical pathways are applied to the planning process may vary, but their logic is key to encouraging approaches that actually work, and can ensure continuous progress over time, on all goals.

Applying the SDGs to national development planning does not imply following a rigid set of rules. Rather, emphasis should be placed on using the SDG framework to assess challenges and opportunities as they exist on the ground, and reflecting the perspectives and needs of all people. There are many useful methods and approaches, such as creating scorecards, whereby a value (such as a number) is assigned to each SDG area to indicate if it adequately reflects a goal, or if measurable progress has been made over time. Other countries have adopted similar approaches. Turkmenistan held a series of national consultations to assess the relevance of SDG targets and indicators to the national context. Similarly, Sierra Leone held a technical-level retreat to assess the SDGs against the landscape of existing strategies and plans, which resulted in an SDG adaptation report. As part of Uganda's Second National Development Process, key government

stakeholders traced linkages between their work and various national priority areas. This allowed SDG targets to adjust to national circumstances and be included in the NDP results framework. Over time, the NDP results framework was revisited to include more detailed and refined linkages with the SDGs.

Once South Sudan's National Development Plan is in place, Agenda 2030 and the SDGs are in a good place to be useful organizing frameworks. Particularly where national and local-level priorities have been identified, the SDGs can become revised benchmarks, and a basis on which to hold decision makers and influencers accountable. Universities, research institutes and the media all have important roles to play to this end. They can help provide analysis and recommendations to show how the SDGs can be an asset and help meet national development objectives, and also help demonstrate when strategies and policies are ineffectual and need to be revised. Another means of incorporating 'SDG thinking' into the development planning process is to promote coordination and share expertise among key stakeholders and across sectors. As the SDGs are integrated and indivisible, it is important for knowledge of all SDG areas to be disseminated widely. One useful step in this direction would be the establishment of technical working groups for different SDGs. These groups could meet regularly to discuss issues of concern to the development planning process, and also partner with parallel structures created within the UN Country Team and among other international partners to benefit from their resources and expertise. In Afghanistan, for example, the SDGs are coordinated by special groups, which include an SDG Secretariat, a National Coordination Commission, Technical Working Groups and a High-Level Board.[125]

Financing SDG implementation

Developing the means to finance SDG implementation lies at the heart of SDG 17. Progress on SDG 17 in South Sudan requires an expansion of fiscal space – notably a broader tax base and improved public financial management. Importantly, SDG 17 requires concrete steps to move South Sudan beyond its current dependency on oil. In this vein, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA) framework, agreed on at the Third International Conference on Financing for Development in July 2015, provides ideas that can enable the investments "required to tackle a range of economic, social and environmental challenges" and help South Sudan meet its SDG targets.[126] The following lessons and outcomes of AAAA are of particular relevance to the country. However, as noted in the overview of this chapter, they are premised on an end to conflict and sustainable peace over the long term.[127]

Consider all available and feasible sources of financing: public or private, domestic or international: In the South Sudanese context, this means improving domestic revenue generation, including by creating fiscal space and expanding the tax base. It also means encouraging private sector financing from both domestic

and international sources, and creating an environment that can improve access to markets, both within the country and with important trade partners such as Uganda. These measures are, of course, contingent on a permanent end to the conflict. In this light, expectations of official development assistance should also be tempered, particularly in the short-term, as it is not likely to resume in the current conflict context. Beyond a resolution to the conflict, steps that can be taken to improve relations with development partners include strengthening public financial management, and combating corruption in all its forms. Finally, exploration of the landscape of possible sources of SDG financing could benefit from undertaking assessments of development finance options. Such exercises would assess the financing policies and institutional arrangements required to generate revenue and strengthen coherence between various revenue sources and the specific needs required, particularly by priority SDGs.

Figure 11: Sources of revenue mobilization

Use sources of financing effectively to benefit SDG implementation: Innovative solutions to improve revenue generation are important, but not sufficient. It is also important to minimize waste and free up resources to invest in sustainable development. This can, for instance, involve reductions in security-related spending, with commensurate increases in sector-specific investment (such as health and education), and imposing stringent accountability criteria to reduce waste and combat corruption. There is a need to ensure transparent ways for the Government to clarify its expenditure and link it to SDG spending. 'Results-based budgeting' is one such approach, and is a means of organizing and reporting the allocation of fiscal resources toward high-level goals. This can be done as a part of the budgeting process, or included in legislation. For example, gender-mainstreaming efforts within ministries can involve costing expenditure related to gender equality with the aim of adjusting and improving policies and practices. The AAAA also emphasizes the importance of using financing effectively to promote equal rights and opportunities for women and girls in the economy, and accounting for the growing impact of environmental degradation and climate change. This is not just a moral or social imperative, but also makes economic sense.

Financing for SDG implementation needs to be 'risk-informed': Advancing progress on the SDGs in fragile environments such as South Sudan requires more than exploring a range of financing sources and using them in the most effective manner possible. It also requires an analysis of the ways in which financing for development is impacted and informed by risk. Shocks and stresses, progress and setbacks are and will remain part and parcel of SDG implementation in the country. As such, a key objective must involve building and encouraging resilient financing mechanisms that are able to withstand risks. In practical terms, this means looking systematically and creatively beyond ODA and the oil sector and the volatility they bring, and building capacities around alternative forms of domestic resource mobilization. Risk-informed financing for SDGs also requires building strong partnerships to ensure that the different financing sources are able to complement and reinforce each other. AAAA emphasizes multi-stakeholder partnerships, including with the private sector and civil society actors.

Improving the data landscape

> _"Quality, accessible, timely and reliable disaggregated data will be needed to help with the measurement of progress and to ensure that no one is left behind. Such data is key to decision-making."_
>
> _SDG outcome document, Transforming Our World_

The importance of quality and timely data for achievement of the SDGs cannot be overstated. As evident in the attached Matrix, most SDG-related data in South Sudan is highly fragmented and of variable quality. Improving the data landscape would help build consensus around SDG priorities, and contribute to finding solutions to challenges that are not fully understood. In other words, data helps us understand 'what works' and 'what to fix'. For South Sudan, prioritizing goals and indicators will be an important part of this process, as well as defining indicators or, in other words, deciding what to measure.

Box 13: Selecting SDG indicators

Effective indicator selection will take the following lessons into consideration: i) measure only what is possible to measure, taking capacity constraints as well as prioritized goals and targets into account; ii) keep the choice of indicators as simple as possible, to ensure that what is to be measured _actually_ gets measured; iii) select indicators that enable frequent and regular data collection, to enable measurements over time and to identify trends; and iv) disaggregate indicators to identify important differences between areas of communities.

The disaggregation of data and determining which dimensions of data will be separately collected involves deciding what, or whom, to measure (such as gender, particular communities, or geographic areas). This process is particularly important in South Sudan, as it can influence the fairness (or scale) of resource

allocation in an environment where resources are extremely scarce. Consequently, data disaggregation has the potential to be a source of contention and dispute, and is therefore a political as well as a technical process. However, if done transparently, this can also promote fairness and inclusion among communities and apply the 'leave no on behind' principle. Disaggregating indicators in this way and applying detailed data measurement can, for instance, help assess the conditions for return and reintegration of displaced people, and assess progress against poverty and food security targets for vulnerable groups, such as women. Disaggregating data is laborious and expensive given the data capacity constraints, and should therefore focus on categories that tend to be most relevant, such as sex, age and geographic location.

Establishing baseline measures, as well as determining annual or biannual targets, is important for identifying realistic and desirable outcomes and critical pathways to achieving the SDGs. This can be challenging as current capacity to collect and process data in the country is limited. Baselines and targets have, for example, not been established as part of this report, due to limited data availability, as well as a lack of agreed criteria for data quality. These will be necessary components of future SDG engagement, and will require renewed efforts to build statistical capacity, and strengthen the conditions for effective data collection.

To this end, the role of the National Bureau of Statistics is very important. The NBS is, however, constrained by the current conflict context. Its staff's ability to conduct nationwide surveys is severely impaired by safety concerns. For instance, a nationwide census was scheduled for 2013, but it was deferred due to the ongoing crisis. Limited funding has also left the NBS unable to collect targeted national and sub-national data, based on representative surveys: a critical part of national development planning. As a result, much of its existing data is based on surveys conducted in or before 2010. Taken together, insecurity and limited financing have imposed significant capacity constraints on the NBS, which are compounded by high staff turnover, and a reluctance of donors to provide funding. In spite of these challenges, important data is still being generated, including the Consumer Price Index, Gross Domestic Product and other administrative data. The NBS also has a strategic plan in place, and numerous studies are either pending or planned.[128]

Even limited or fragmented data can still benefit SDG implementation, provided that it is used in a more co-ordinated and coherent way. Adjusting to imperfect conditions – 'doing what we can with what we have' – and utilizing pragmatic data sharing mechanisms are all suitable approaches in this regard. A range of partners, notably humanitarian agencies, are still collecting SDG-relevant data covering multiple topics and geographical areas, albeit with varying degrees of buy-in from national stakeholders. To help build data capacity in the short-term, and improve the general data climate, the following proposals may be useful:

i. *Collect and organize all available data* currently produced by UN agencies and national stakeholders under one umbrella to address immediate data shortages, as they relate to prioritized SDG areas;

ii. *Establish criteria for data quality for pooled data resources,* and methods to make inferences in key SDG areas (e.g. using displacement figures to complement incomplete census data);

iii. *Give the NBS a coordinating role* over the long term, and consider it as the central institutional repository on all SDG-related knowledge and data;

iv. *Revive the Information Management Working Group*, which was a UNCT-initiated forum for data sharing that included UN agencies, the NBS and government stakeholders as members, and proved useful during the brief MDG era but was later disbanded. This initiative would require resources and political support, including from the Office of the Resident Coordinator;

v. *Ensure that data sharing efforts are conflict-sensitive and recovery-oriented* to help meet humanitarian needs and prepare for a post-conflict future. It would bring relevant actors together to share national and sub-national data that could benefit national development planning and SDG implementation.

Strengthening partnerships and dialogue

Agenda 2030 emphasizes the need for a renewed and revitalized global partnership with all countries and actors working to achieve the 17 goals. This calls for whole of government and whole of society approaches, and the formation of new partnerships with and between those who may normally not find areas of commonality. Purpose-driven partnerships should aim to: i) raise public awareness about the importance and feasibility of SDG implementation; ii) conduct strategic advocacy among decision makers, including at state level; ii) raise funds to finance the SDGs; iii) promote accountability, and play an oversight role (particularly important for civil society groups and media organizations); and iv) devise implementation strategies that demonstrate the viability of investments or policies. These partnership features can also be understood by examining how they are applied to the five Ps of Agenda 2030:

People-oriented partnerships are critical to help the 'furthest behind' first, as is evident in the health sector, where the functionality of systems and facilities is extremely limited and impacted by mass displacement. The World Health Organization (WHO) oversees a system where humanitarian and development actors collaborate across silos, often successfully. For example, core development services such as malaria and tuberculosis response, are today mainly delivered through humanitarian systems, while development actors support their counterparts with critical drugs and capacity.

Partnerships for prosperity are needed to finance the SDGs. The energy sector plays an important role in this regard, but could benefit from expertise and oversight from partnerships such as the voluntary Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI). The EITI imposes reporting requirements on all revenues, production volumes, licences and government transfers. South Sudan has committed to become an EITI candidate, but has yet to attain membership.

Partnerships for the planet offer opportunities to combat environmental degradation and the impacts of climate change. The South Sudan National Forest Corporation, a semi-autonomous income-generating institution, is implementing national and state forest plans by partnering with state governments, local communities and the private sector.

Partnerships for peace are integral for preventing violence and strengthening institutions, and there is growing momentum behind partnerships that in different ways promote peace. A partnership between UNDP and the Bureau for Community Security and Small Arms Control helps to manage arms stocks held by both state and non-state agencies and is a step towards armed violence reduction. At the international level, the g7+ supports 'Fragile to Fragile' cooperation, which includes peer learning and capacity building between g7+ members, which can prove beneficial to South Sudan, as can the Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies initiative. This provides a platform for member states to develop strategies needed to deliver on SDG 16 and targets for peace, justice and inclusion in other goals. Regional partnerships, and a common approach to regional political engagement in South Sudan, are also critical to the pursuit of peace.

Partnerships for SDG 17 are also emerging to strengthen domestic resource mobilization and the transfer of technology, monitoring and accountability, and their success is essential for implementing all 17 SDGs. Stakeholders (notably in the public sector) also have the opportunity to leverage international forums tied to the SDGs, including at the UN and African Union, as well as in academic and research contexts, to improve knowledge, share ideas and receive technical support.

Successful partnerships can also be identified by their inclusiveness, accountability features and 'multi-stakeholder' approaches to SDG implementation. Such approaches encourage partnerships between the Government and a broad array of stakeholders, who can draw on each other's comparative advantages in areas from planning to budgeting to monitoring. Effective SDG-focused partnerships in South Sudan should ideally also: i) not require central coordination or top-down institutional arrangements, but still have strong organization and participation; ii) be based on shared goals, clear narratives for action and mobilization strategies; iii) conduct regular evaluations to better understand what works and to hold partners accountable; and iv) feed into critical pathways to achieving the SDGs, and contribute to understandings of how to achieve outcomes.

Box 14: SDG partners in South Sudan

National government: While 'national ownership' does not imply 'government ownership', the Government and the state are 'duty bearers' of the SDG agenda, and indispensable actors for achieving sustainable development, and advancing the process of statebuilding. As the primary SDG partner the national Government, and the broader state apparatus, must ensure that the SDG agenda is upheld at all stages – from strategy to implementation, monitoring and review – and also carried forward during changes in government. Partnership ideas at government level include advisory groups, such as the National Council on Sustainable Development, and sectoral working groups on SDG implementation.

State-level government: State and county-level authorities are critical SDG partners, as they possess the local expertise, networks and authority to deliver on the SDGs, particularly where effective decentralized systems exist.

Academia: Universities and seats of higher learning can be 'problem solvers', and supply research to guide policy makers, inform public opinion across all SDG areas, and educate future leaders and civil servants. The Juba University School of Public Service is the first such public institution providing the tools to guide future public service leaders.

Civil society: Civil society organizations (CSOs) can offer unique expertise, and represent the interests of marginalized communities. Religious institutions are important anti-poverty and peace advocates. CSOs can also provide government with technical assistance, or contribute to inclusive dialogue, provided that they are able to operate freely and independently.

Private sector: Encouraging the business community to engage on the SDGs can benefit sustainable production, corporate social responsibility and natural resource management, provided that: i) a safe business environment exists; ii) incentive structures align with SDG objectives; and iii) business models are geared toward community interests.

UN agencies: The UNCT, and its agencies, can contribute with timely survey data, technical expertise, and support for the consultative process behind national development planning. Successful UN partnerships can respond to shifting country needs and national priorities within the context of their mandates and suitable divisions of labour.

International financial institutions: Partners like the African Development Bank and the World Bank are important, particularly with regard to developing long-term economic strategies, their sector expertise and critical data contributions.

Regional states: As South Sudan is landlocked, its neighbours are key trading partners. The agendas of regional states also impact conflict dynamics, making regional strategies and interests highly relevant to advancing or undermining the peace process.

Humanitarian and development partners: South Sudan is dependent on support from these partners to meet its citizens' most basic needs. Today, practically all humanitarian activity is donor funded, while development funding has sharply decreased. World Bank International Development Association operations decreased from US$71 million in FY2013 to US$9 million in FY2015.

Partnerships and the humanitarian-development nexus

South Sudan has since independence, and throughout its liberation struggle, experienced a combination of conflict, humanitarian emergency and socioeconomic crises. Their protracted nature makes the ideal paradigm of 'do relief first and then development' unrealistic, since urgent humanitarian and development needs exist in parallel. This is the reason why, for instance, UNDP has continued its development programmes in Syria and Yemen, which alongside South Sudan, are host to some of the largest humanitarian operations in the world. Mainstreaming the SDGs will therefore depend on the degree to which both national and international actors undertaking humanitarian and development efforts can engage in successful partnerships and collaborate across 'silos'. As noted in Chapter 1, achieving 'collective outcomes' requires joint efforts that transcend humanitarian, development and peacebuilding boundaries. The New Way of Working notes that meeting collective outcomes requires collaborative efforts over multiple years, based on the comparative advantages of a diverse range of actors, and should reinforce capacities that already exist at national and local levels.

Among those interviewed for this report, there is broad (albeit not universal) recognition that humanitarian and development objectives do not need to stand in opposition, and that humanitarian funding does not need to be reduced at the expense of development financing. This is especially true for displaced populations whose unique needs, in each SDG area, must be met in the context of humanitarian assistance, as well as in the national development planning process and future international cooperation frameworks. For example, investment in education at PoC sites is not only critical, but must be made with a long-term perspective in mind, in a way that does not perpetuate inequalities, but rather facilitates the peaceful return and reintegration of displaced persons into their communities of origin. Mapping the SDGs against the needs of displaced persons can be useful to this end. To illustrate, forms of violence (16.1), access to justice (16.3) and forms of decision making (16.7) in PoC sites differ from those in the public at large, and this needs to be reflected in the strategies and programmes of both humanitarian and development actors. Overall, efforts to improve coherence and complementarity between these actors must seek to address performance gaps and strengthen alignment between programmes, as the country context evolves. Such efforts should include:[129]

i) *More and longer-term joint analyses*, based on enhanced and coordinated data collection, including collaboration on risk assessments and harmonizing data and evidence for improved SDG outcomes. Open digital platforms to improve data sharing can be useful in this regard;

ii) *More joint planning* that reflects comparative advantages and helps define collective outcomes.

iii) *Empowered leadership*, with the ability to incentivize collaboration wherever demand for it exists, and hold actors accountable where it fails to deliver.

Improving humanitarian-development coordination applies in particular to UN agencies and international financial institutions such as the World Bank. The relationship between the two bodies in South Sudan has in the past been characterized by strained relations and limited incentives to collaborate.[130] Enhancing partnerships between such key international actors will be important for implementing the SDGs in the future. It will require aligning their interests and areas of expertise, balancing headquarters and in-country decision making, and incentivizing pooled financing, shared analysis, planning and implementation.

Improved collaboration between these and other actors will also require innovative, and sufficient, financing mechanisms, to enable flexible, multi-year joint programming. In this light, the AAAA (see above) emphasizes the need to better integrate humanitarian, peacebuilding and development assistance through, for example, pooled funds and shared multi-year planning, and enhanced aid modalities such as cash transfers. Such measures could, for example, help to improve monitoring and evaluation to build resilience and expand social protection measures that would help communities withstand the effects of climate change. Signatories of the AAAA outcome document committed themselves to spending US$300 per capita on social protection and resilience in developing countries in the SDG era. In South Sudan, this would constitute approximately 16 per cent of current GDP.

Humanitarian-development collaboration is important in the context of building resilience among local communities, with a view to the long term, as it will contribute to mitigating dependency on aid and reliance on humanitarian support. One approach is to make gains in areas such as education, where interventions and investments can be, and need to be, made irrespective of the political or governance context. In one of its projects, the World Food Programme is supporting around 300,000 children in 600 schools through school feeding programmes, which also use take-home rations to incentivize school attendance among girls. This is not only an example of an action that aligns humanitarian and development objectives, but also one in which positive interlinkages are encouraged on SDG areas (in this instance SDGs 2, 4 and 5). Similarly, in the agricultural sector it is important to maintain support for crop cultivation even where conditions are challenging, to ensure food security and the functioning of local markets. With this objective in mind the World Food Programme and its partners are helping to stimulate local food production by procuring food items from local farmers, and as a result building local resilience by addressing both humanitarian needs and longer-term development objectives.

Collaborative efforts to build resilience can also strengthen governance mechanisms at the community level to enhance social cohesion. This can be particularly useful in areas where recovery and stabilization have

a high chance of success, as it can reduce vulnerability to conflict, and the risk of it spilling over into neighbouring areas. For instance, enabling the capacities of traditional authorities, churches, schools and other institutions that function well, can incentivize non-violent political behaviour and community relations. As the country works to achieve the SDGs, it will be essential to enable the conditions required for emergency response efforts, including unrestricted access and full funding of humanitarian appeals, while also thinking about what comes next, and preventing the further deterioration of development indicators. Meeting this twin challenge, and drawing on the strengths and complementarities of both humanitarian and development actors will require shifts in mindsets, as well as more flexible financing, reporting and accountability mechanisms. Importantly these lessons, and the dynamics of successful humanitarian- development cooperation, must also be reflected in the forthcoming national development framework.

A Short-term SDG roadmap

Chapter 3 introduced means of delivering the SDGs, and examined approaches that need to be acted on in the long-term, based on the key messages and priorities highlighted in the report. The following proposals are meant as concrete steps that can be taken in the immediate term (albeit with a longer-term perspective of change in mind). They can set the stage for comprehensive and detailed recommendations based on key priorities, as well as a more detailed roadmap to SDG implementation, which can be expanded on as part of the development planning process:

1. **Build on early SDG momentum to raise awareness:** The inaugural SDG workshop was well- attended and created much interest in how to apply the SDGs in the context of the ongoing crisis, and in pathways toward long-term peace and development. It also helped to determine key priorities among goals and targets. There is an opportunity to capitalize on this momentum (and from the launch of this report) to raise awareness about Agenda 2030 and the SDGs. This is in addition to other SDG engagements in the country. If properly harnessed, this attention could inform the revitalization of the ARCISS peace agreement, contribute to the National Dialogue, and help generate the momentum needed to design an inclusive, accountable and ambitious development plan.

2. **Incorporate findings from the Fragility Assessment into broader SDG efforts:** South Sudan's second national Fragility Assessment was taking place at the time of writing this report, and its findings and recommendations should be incorporated as part of the broader SDG implementation process. The perception-based findings that emerged from the assessment process can inform the 'critical pathways' toward achieving the SDGs. They may generate ideas on how to operationalize SDG 16 and leverage the SDGs to advance the

cause of peace and reduce overall violence. The fragility assessment can also help improve knowledge and understanding of the SDGs, in part by linking them with the New Deal's Peace and Statebuilding Goals.

3. Conduct state and local-level SDG consultations and gather perspectives at all levels of society: Building on the format of the inaugural SDG workshop, it will be important to conduct workshops and consultations at the national and grassroots level, including in PoC sites. These need to be open forums that encourage stakeholders to prioritize and share perspectives on the issues that matter most, which will ensure that geographic or gender differences, or conflicting perspectives between communities, are accounted for. Such consultations should ideally be conducted periodically, and feed into ongoing SDG implementation efforts.

4. Seek commitment from political leadership: To succeed, the SDGs require true, long-term political buy in, as well as financial commitments, from all levels of leadership. Increasing stakes in the accomplishment of the SDGs, is important in its own right, but can also enhance accountability. At the technical level, such accountability can incentivize strategic SDG prioritization, and help align budgets, work programmes and results frameworks to the SDGs. Thematic working groups could be created to lead on SDG reporting, analysis and outreach, with clearly defined actions points, responsibilities and lines of authority. They can also seek UNCT support in the form of expertise to improve coherence and promote accountability.

5. Create the SDG frameworks needed to support development planning: These include improved data collection systems, which can draw on the SDG data matrix (see Annex) as a starting point. Support for the planning process should also come from partnerships such as the g7+, as learning from other fragile countries that have undergone similar experiences and adopted SDGs into their national development plans will be important. In addition, forming (or building on existing) technical and sector-level working groups in priority areas can help generate the inputs required to make informed policy decisions on SDG-related matters. Finally, development planning should leverage a critical pathways approach. Applying its logic throughout all SDG mainstreaming will help ensure that it is accountable and incorporates all appropriate principles and processes.

Conclusion

As a newly independent nation emerging from decades of conflict, South Sudan embarked on its journey towards meeting the MDGs rather late in the process. Its first and only MDG report noted encouraging progress on some goals, but a negative picture of MDG attainment as a whole. With the re-emergence of conflict in 2013, the country's chances of meeting any of the MDGs were all but lost.

In recognition of its experiences of violence and conflict, and the consequences of this for sustainable development, South Sudan is today presented with a new opportunity to work on the SDGs and Agenda 2030 and get them right from the start. Achieving a sustainable peace, and a political resolution to the conflict that discourages and ultimately ends all forms of violence is, however, a prerequisite for the SDGs to take hold. The emphasis of this report on SDG 16, and the need to view all SDGs through the lens of peace, justice and inclusion, has been intended to highlight and illustrate this point.

Other critical areas that require urgent attention in South Sudan today include: intensified levels of poverty (SDG 1); widespread hunger and food insecurity (SDG 2); persisting and preventable diseases (SDG 3); an unequal and often inaccessible education system (SDG 4); and a macroeconomic crisis (SDG 8) that has imposed painful austerity measures on the population. Stakeholders highlighted these areas as priorities, and together with gender equality (SDG 5) they make up the areas of importance that should be considered with extra scrutiny as the nation prepares to launch a new development planning process.

A realistic objective for South Sudan today is to build on the short-term roadmap above, and seek to benefit from practical, pragmatic and hands-on engagement with the SDG framework. This will involve learning from other country experiences, drawing on available guidance and expertise, and using the SDGs both as an aspiration for what can be achieved and as a means of holding all relevant actors and decision makers to account. Initiating dialogues with citizens at grassroots level, business people, civil servants, members of civil society, displaced persons and other constituencies to obtain inputs and perspectives on the issues of most concern to them, can help put the SDGs front and centre. This will require hard, and continuous work, creating the right incentives and exercising accountability, and all with a view towards the long term.

Given the terrible scale of the ongoing humanitarian emergency, and the currently limited resources and capacity of institutions to fulfil their obligations, much responsibility now lays with international partners, and life-saving humanitarian agencies in particular. In recognition of this, SDG implementation moving

forward will require strengthened partnerships between government stakeholders and their international counterparts. It will also require improved collaboration between humanitarian and development actors that in spite of their differing mandates and practices have many of the same objectives in mind.

Challenges notwithstanding, the general narrative required to approach the SDGs is one of hope, and a focus on the future. South Sudan is endowed with an abundance of natural resource wealth, opportunities for sustainable livelihoods and a young and resilient population that has withstood the most difficult of times. It is this very resilience that must be harnessed to withstand the stresses and shocks associated with violence and conflict. Other countries, including Rwanda, Uganda, Sierra Leone and Liberia, have managed to do so and are, in spite of many obstacles, meeting important SDG targets. With the right ambition, approach and determination, so can South Sudan.

Annex 1: Methodological note

Approach. The report production process was designed with the twin objectives of: i) reporting and analysing existing SDG-related data and information, and ii) providing guidance and direction on delivering the SDGs in a fragile context such as South Sudan. It was premised on the assumption that critical recovery and development efforts are integral to SDG implementation, and a complement to humanitarian concerns. With the aim of producing factually-correct and contextually-relevant material, this report was assembled to be a forward-looking tool, capable of informing strategic action on behalf of both national and international stakeholders. The process was conducted over the course of two general phases:

Desk review. In this phase, existing documentation, analysis and data pertaining to the SDGs in South Sudan was collected, analysed and compared. This incorporated previous assessments, including South Sudan's Fragility Assessment (2012), and the Millennium Development Goals Status Report (2012). While not guided by any particular theoretical anchor, the report was rooted in economic and political analysis of past and current events in South Sudan, to account for a multitude of perspectives. Both qualitative and quantitative analysis was carried out as part of the desk review. The quantitative data collected included both national and international sources and datasets. The availability, and quality, of recent data covering most SDG goals and targets was, however limited. Therefore, an important part of this report has been to highlight where data exists, and where it is missing with the objective of encouraging improved data coverage in the future. To mitigate any quantitative limitations, the report also adopted a mixed-methods approach, drawing heavily on qualitative research and analysis to reflect existing knowledge and experience of key constituencies on SDG themes. A matrix containing all the data relevant to this exercise has been included as a separate annex. It is anticipated that this matrix will be of use for future SDG review efforts.

Semi-structured interviews. As a means of validating the available quantitative information, and contextualizing important data gaps, approximately 40 interviews were conducted with both national and international stakeholders to inform the report. Building on, and complementing, desk review findings, these interviews enabled the collection of original information reflecting the perspectives and experiences of interviewees. They were conducted in person, mainly in Juba but also in New York, while others were conducted remotely via Skype and telephone. Interviewees were selected on the basis of their knowledge, experience and roles vis-à-vis the SDGs as well as the current context in South Sudan. They were also chosen with a view to obtaining a range of perspectives to offset any particularly polarizing views. To this end, both decision-making and working-level officials were interviewed, including representatives of government ministries, non-government organizations, the UN and other international agencies. Interviews were conducted in a 'semi-structured' manner as questions were adapted to the particular circumstances

and areas of expertise of each interviewee, while also structured to make responses comparable. In addition to interviews, a workshop was hosted by the Ministry of Finance and Planning, the NBS and UNDP. The workshop was attended by technical-level stakeholders, mainly from national institutions, UN agencies and civil society attended, and discussions were structured to solicit inputs and perspectives on the SDGs, including on the prioritized goals and targets.

Methodological issues:

i) *Report scope:* A full account of the SDGs in South Sudan would require time and resources beyond the scope of this exercise. Rather, reasonable levels of coverage were prioritized to produce an informative, actionable report;

ii) *National level*: While this is a national report, it was not possibly to fully incorporate regional, state and local perspectives;

iii) *Security*: Current security concerns prevented travel outside Juba and restricted the ability to conduct sub-national research;

iv) *Data:* Limited data availability (and data quality) impeded efforts to get a full picture of the SDGs with baselines and targets;

v) *Fragility:* South Sudan is experiencing civil conflict and a humanitarian emergency, presenting unique challenges that have been accounted for by drawing on frameworks such as the New Deal;

vi) *SDG engagement:* South Sudan's limited SDG engagement inspired the reports coverage of SDG guidance, and principles.

Endnotes

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