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OF  
JOHANNESBURG

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ANNUAL  
REPORT:  
SDG REPORT

16 PEACE, JUSTICE  
AND STRONG  
INSTITUTIONS



SDG 16: PEACE JUSTICE AND  
STRONG INSTITUTIONS

Our Future  
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# UJ SDG REPORT 2023

## SDG 16: PEACE JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

# 16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



# Report on the University of Johannesburg's Contribution to Sustainable Development Goal 16

## SDG 16: Peace Justice and Strong Institutions

### OVERVIEW: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report outlines the University of Johannesburg's (UJ) contributions to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG 16) on Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions during the 2023 academic year. UJ has consistently demonstrated its commitment to fostering peace, justice, and strong institutions in alignment with SDG 16. In 2023, UJ took significant strides in promoting inclusive societies, ensuring access to justice, and strengthening institutional frameworks both within the university and in collaboration with local and global partners. Through academic research, community engagement, policy development, and governance practices, UJ has advanced SDG 16 by addressing key areas such as social justice, the rule of law, transparency, and human rights.

In 2023, the university enhanced its role in promoting legal awareness and human rights education through initiatives like the UJ Law Clinic and community outreach programmes. These initiatives provided practical legal assistance, strengthened access to justice, and supported

marginalised communities in gaining the legal knowledge necessary for their empowerment. The university's efforts in good governance, anti-corruption practices, and democratic processes were also critical in ensuring strong institutional frameworks.

This report provides an in-depth review of UJ's contributions to SDG 16, highlighting the key activities, partnerships, and impacts that have been central to achieving peace, justice, and strong institutions at the university and in the wider community.

## INTRODUCTION

SDG 16 is focused on promoting peace, justice, and building strong institutions, which are vital to the creation of fair, inclusive, and resilient societies. This goal underscores the importance of promoting access to justice for all, reducing corruption, ensuring inclusive decision-making processes, and enhancing the effectiveness of public institutions.

As a leading South African institution, UJ plays a pivotal role in advancing these ideals through a combination of academic programmes, community engagement, and research. In 2023, the university continued to integrate SDG 16 into its operations, both by promoting legal rights and democratic participation and by fostering a culture of good governance and transparency. Through strategic partnerships and collaborations with civil society, government, and other stakeholders, UJ has worked tirelessly to contribute to building a peaceful and just society.

This report examines UJ's actions in contributing to SDG 16, particularly in the areas of legal education, human rights advocacy, community engagement, and institutional governance. It outlines the university's efforts to embed justice and peace at the core of its educational programmes and governance frameworks.

## KEY ACTIVITIES AND INITIATIVES

UJ's commitment to SDG 16 is reflected in its diverse initiatives across several domains: legal education, community service, governance, transparency, and human rights advocacy. Below are the key areas where UJ made significant progress in 2023.

### ***1. Legal Education and Access to Justice***

UJ's Faculty of Law has long been at the forefront of promoting justice and access to legal resources. In 2023, UJ continued to empower marginalised and vulnerable communities through the UJ Law Clinic, which offers free legal services to those unable to afford professional legal representation. In 2023, the clinic provided 466 consultations, resolving various issues related to family law, evictions, contract disputes, and delict. Notably, over half of the cases were settled successfully, and the rest resulted in favorable outcomes in court. This initiative has been vital in promoting access to justice for disadvantaged communities, aligning with SDG 16's call for fair legal systems accessible to all.

In addition to providing legal assistance, the Law Clinic also hosted gender-based violence workshops in collaboration with community organisations. These workshops aimed to raise awareness about legal protections for survivors of gender-based violence and provided valuable legal knowledge to victims and community members. The clinic also serves as an educational tool for UJ law students, offering them

practical legal experience while simultaneously contributing to the university's goal of creating socially responsible and ethically aware legal professionals.

## ***2. Governance and Transparency***

UJ is committed to maintaining strong institutional governance and ensuring the highest standards of accountability and transparency in its operations. In 2023, the university continued to strengthen its risk management processes by implementing a comprehensive Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) framework. This framework ensures that all aspects of university operations, from financial management to academic processes, are closely monitored and evaluated to mitigate any risks that could impact the institution's effectiveness or reputation.

The university's approach to governance is also informed by the principles outlined in the King IV Report on Corporate Governance, which emphasises ethical leadership, transparency, and sound decision-making processes. These principles guide UJ's leadership and staff in ensuring that all institutional activities align with the university's mission of fostering social justice and equity.

UJ's audit committees and risk management teams play a vital role in maintaining oversight over the university's operations, ensuring compliance with legal and regulatory frameworks, and safeguarding the institution's financial and academic integrity. The rigorous application of these governance practices ensures that the university remains a model of transparency and responsibility, both within the higher education sector and the broader community.

## ***3. Community Engagement and Social Justice***

UJ's community engagement efforts are critical in promoting SDG 16's objectives of peace and justice. In 2023, the university continued to foster social justice through various community-based initiatives. The Community Engagement Unit led 317 community engagement projects, including programmes focused on human rights advocacy, anti-corruption efforts, and promoting the rule of law. These projects were implemented through service learning, community-based research, and organised outreach, engaging UJ students, faculty, and external stakeholders in efforts to address social inequalities and promote peaceful coexistence.

One of the standout initiatives in 2023 was the Community of Practice for Social Systems Strengthening, which aimed to improve child well-being outcomes. This initiative involved collaboration with community-based organisations, social workers, and government partners, focusing on strengthening social safety nets for vulnerable children. It utilised digital tools to track well-being indicators, ensuring that child welfare is continuously monitored and supported.

UJ also expanded its focus on immigrant rights and social justice through research initiatives and short learning programmes (SLPs) designed to address issues such as xenophobia and human rights. Notably, UJ hosted a conference on immigrant literacies and social justice, which explored the intersection of human rights and justice for migrant communities, aligning directly with SDG 16's goal of promoting peaceful and inclusive societies.

#### ***4. Research and Advocacy on Human Rights***

Research at UJ continues to play a pivotal role in advancing peace and justice through the Centre for Human Rights and the Centre for Social Development in Africa. These centers conduct extensive research on issues such as gender equality, rule of law, corruption, and human rights. In 2023, UJ scholars contributed to the global discourse on human rights, transparency, and institutional governance by publishing research articles and conducting public dialogues with experts on topics related to justice and strong institutions.

The university also hosted several public lectures and workshops on topics such as peace-building, conflict resolution, and restorative justice. These events brought together local and international experts to discuss strategies for promoting peace and strengthening justice systems in Africa and beyond. Through such initiatives, UJ plays an important role in shaping the conversation on justice and governance in the region.

#### ***5. Promoting Equality and Fighting Corruption***

In 2023, UJ continued its efforts to combat inequality and corruption through initiatives aimed at promoting ethical behavior, good governance, and democratic participation. As part of its transformation agenda, UJ has worked to dismantle barriers to access to education and employment for historically disadvantaged groups. The UJ Imbokodo Women's Rugby Tournament and various other programmes aimed at women's empowerment serve as examples of the university's efforts to promote social equity and address gender-based disparities.

Furthermore, UJ's student volunteer programmes engage students in community service projects focused on poverty alleviation, anti-corruption education, and promoting ethical practices. These programmes equip students with the skills and knowledge needed to advocate for social justice and ethical behavior in both their personal and professional lives.

## **CONCLUSION**

The University of Johannesburg has made significant contributions to achieving SDG 16 in 2023 through its focus on peace, justice, and strong institutions. Through initiatives in legal education, community engagement, research, and good governance, UJ has worked to create a more equitable and just society. The university's commitment to transparency, human rights, and inclusive decision-making continues to position it as a leader in promoting SDG 16 both locally and internationally.

Looking ahead, UJ will continue to build on its achievements, strengthening its efforts to promote justice, accountability, and peace across all levels of society. The university's ongoing focus on research excellence, community service, and ethical governance will ensure that it remains at the forefront of initiatives aimed at achieving SDG 16, fostering a fairer and more inclusive society for all.



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