NATIONAL COMMUNICATION
STRATEGY FRAMEWORK 2025 – 2030

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|| Approved Theme: "A nation that works for all" ||

1. BACKGROUND

1.1. The Government Communication and Information System (GCIS), as the custodian and coordinator of government communications, is responsible for developing the National Communication Strategy Framework (NCSF) in consultation with other key stakeholders, informed by the Medium Term Development Plan (MTDP).

1.2. Since 2009, the NCSF has been developed to cover a five-year period in line with the Medium Term Strategic Framework, which has been renamed the MTDP, to give more intentional and outcome-oriented implementation of national priorities.

1.3. The development of the NSCF is further informed by key government communication policies that ensure uniformity and alignment of government communication. It refers to the Government Communication Policy (GCP) approved by Cabinet in 2018, which sets out a vision for government communication in the country and the *Government Communicators' Handbook*, which provides guidelines around government communication. Inputs were received from government communicators at all levels of government to review the GCP, which was expected to be presented to Cabinet for approval after being presented to all Directors-General (DGs') clusters.

1.4. The NCSF is also guided by Communication Protocols for the National Executive adopted by Cabinet to ensure coherence in government communication.

1.5. This framework serves as a supporting structure around which departmental communication strategies at all spheres of government can be developed.

1.6. The NCSF is informed by the communication environment, and provides a framework that sets the tone and direction for all national and provincial government departments, municipalities and government entities to develop their own communication strategies and plans for the medium-term period. These strategies must be costed and funded in line with the provision in the GCP, which states that 1% to 5% of the budget must be allocated to communications. This term is important as it represents the final five years of administration in leading up to the realisation of South Africa's National Development Plan (NDP): Vision 2030, which is the defining blueprint for South Africa's growth and development.

1.7. The GCIS assists in the implementation of the NCSF by coordinating the strategies of departments, provinces and municipalities, and monitoring the implementation. It also oversees the coordination and monitoring of implementation of cross-cutting campaigns.

1.8. This NCSF is also informed by President Cyril Ramaphosa's Opening of Parliament Address (OPA) in 2024, the 2025 State of the Nation Address (SoNA) and the Statement of Intent agreed upon by parties forming the Government of National Unity (GNU) of the Seventh Democratic Administration. The Statement of Intent advances the following three strategic priorities to:
   - drive inclusive growth and job creation;
   - reduce poverty and tackle the high cost of living; and
   - build a capable, ethical and developmental state.

1.9. This 2025-2030 NCSF proposes the strategic approach in communicating government priorities and brings us closer to realising the objectives of the NDP: Vision 2030.

1.10. In January 2025 the Cabinet Lekgotla adopted the 2025-2030 MTDP, which was tabled to Cabinet for final approval. It sets out the vision and strategic plan for the Seventh Administration, with clear goals and measurable objectives over the next five years.

1.11. As and when required, depending on conditions in the external and internal communication environment, the NCSF will be reviewed to ensure alignment.

2. CONTEXT

2.1. The country held its General Elections on 29 May 2024, which resulted in a number of political parties coming together to form the Seventh Administration.

2.2. The hallmark of any democracy is regular and credible elections, and since 1994 one of the enduring symbols of our democracy has been the sight of citizens standing in line to make their mark.

2.3. For many, 1994 marked the first time they had a direct say in the country's direction. It was a watershed in our journey to freedom and democracy. Regular elections since then have rejuvenated and strengthened our democratic system. Thirty years on, it is evident that elections are crucial and remain a vital part of our democracy.

2.4. South Africa has transitioned from a single majority party government system to a unity government under the Seventh Administration formed by political parties from across the political spectrum which, in the absence of an outright majority government, contracted through a Statement of Intent agreed to on 14 June 2024.

2.5. A significant milestone in setting up the GNU was the allocation of Ministerial and Deputy Ministerial positions to political party leaders from multiple parties. This ushered in a new era of consensus politics in the South African landscape.

2.6. The Seventh Administration in its current form is unprecedented in the history of our democracy. It is representative of and reflects a wide diversity of views of South Africans and as such, wider and in some cases, divergent policy choices from different political organisations.

2.7. In this regard, government no longer operates in a normal communication environment given the wide-ranging divergent party-political views and policies. This new terrain presents a communication challenge that could foster incoherent and inconsistent government messaging resulting from contestation in political and policy positions. Relatively soon into the term of the Seventh Administration, there emerged from the ongoing work of government, policy disputes and disagreements.

2.8. Therefore, government communication can no longer be handled in the same manner it was during the first 30 Years of Freedom and Democracy, where the governing administration was formed under a single party. Issues of contestation addressed through the GNU Clearing House Mechanism chaired by Deputy President Paul Mashatile should ensure government continues to function effectively and communication on key issues remain cohesive so that government continues on its course to build an inclusive nation.

2.9. Insights from 11 Western European countries with similar multiparty governments and publicly announced Statements of Intent indicate that such agreements result in a more effective working government than those without any form of agreement or contract.

2.10. During the Seventh Administration, government's response to the challenging economic environment and job creation is of critical interest to all South Africans. This has emerged as the top priority for all political parties within the GNU.

2.11. Key to the success of the Seventh Administration is strategic communication that profiles the work of government in a clear, integrated and coherent manner to ensure a unified government voice that builds trust and confidence among citizens.

2.12. This communication must show the continuity from the Sixth to the Seventh Administration, and how the structural reforms initiated under the Sixth Administration are now paying off.

2.13. The stabilisation of the electricity grid is a massive achievement for government and proof that partnerships are key in building the future we all want. The steadfast implementation of the Energy Action Plan (EAP) has helped to ensure no load-shedding for well over 200 days and that the country is on a path to achieving energy security in the long term.

2.14. Similarly, the achievements from the Sixth Administration in the recovery of the vital commuter rail network must be celebrated, as this has resulted in 31 out of 40 key passenger corridors being operational.

2.15. Likewise, the progress in the recovery of freight rail is because of the partnership between government and the private sector that was initiated during the Sixth Administration. This has enabled us to deal with longstanding operational challenges at ports, including the issue of container terminals in Durban and Cape Town, along with infrastructure upgrades.

2.16. The MTDP period will be defined by government's performance in achieving the three stated priorities of the multiparty government: growing the economy and creating jobs, reducing poverty and tackling the high cost of living, and strengthening the capacity of the State to deliver on its mandate.

2.17. These priorities are not entirely new, as elements of them have been integrated into successive administrations since 1994, particularly during the Sixth Administration. Continuity should be the golden thread running through all communication efforts, while guarding against assertions that the Seventh Administration is the panacea for all the ills in our nation.

2.18. Communication should build on the concrete steps taken through Operation Vulindlela, the Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan (ERRP) and Operation Shanela, which have given rise to a number of positive outcomes.

2.19. Consumer inflation is at a four-year low. This has made essential goods like fuel and most staple foods more affordable. There has also been a notable decrease in the fuel price over the past months. Coupled with declining interest rates, the environment is ripe for growth and renewal.

2.20. In 2025 South Africa will convene a National Dialogue to draw everyone together in crafting a common vision for the country. The dialogue will build on the successful partnership between government, business, labour and civil society, which has seen us work together to overcome our common challenges.

2.21. South Africa will host the Group of Twenty (G20) Summit in November 2025 under the theme: "Solidarity, Equality, Sustainability". In advancing the theme, South Africa will emphasise collective efforts to ensure

a fair global order that meets the needs of the present while considering the future of our world and generations to come.

2.22. South Africa's assumption of the Presidency of the G20 provides a platform for our country to highlight the instrumental role of Africa and developing nations in tackling the globe's socio-economic issues. The country will use this forum to highlight the interests of Africa and the developing world, as well as achieve lasting solutions to challenges faced by developing countries across the world.

2.23. Effective government communication is critical for driving inclusive growth and job creation; reducing poverty and tackling the high cost of living; and building a capable, ethical and developmental state. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the government-wide communication system to support the delivery of government priorities through coordinated and effective communication across all spheres of government.

2.24. Government communication places a high premium on development communication, which provides citizens with information that is accurate, timely and proactive to empower and improve their lives. Various communication products and platforms are used for such purposes to allow citizens to participate in their own development and influence the direction of the country. The fundamental premise of a democratic government communication, 30 years into freedom and democracy, remains the provision of citizen-centred communication that ensures active participation of communities and key social sectors in all public communication programmes.

2.25. Communicating with citizens is a critical component of government in service delivery. Moreover, it helps build pride, trust and awareness as well as increases activism that contributes to enhancing the quality of life in our nation. In this regard, government recognises communication as a strategic element in service delivery.

2.26. On the other hand, the prevalence of poor service delivery and inaction on key deliverables limits the effectiveness of good communication. The lived reality of South Africans because of ineffective service delivery can result in the best communication efforts and campaigns ringing hollow.

2.27. Successful government communication is attested to in the implementation of the 2019-2024 NCSF that saw a number of communication milestones, including the strengthening of partnerships between civil society and government in the fight against the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19).

2.28. The increased usage of community media platforms, community outreaches and digital communication under the 2019-2024 NCSF became a powerful tool to communicate directly with South Africans. However, it is also clear that many communities still prefer face-to-face engagement with government (GCIS Qualitative and Tracker Research, 2024).

2.29. During the Seventh Administration, **government communicators must perform their duties objectively and without political bias in all the content they produce or disseminate**. To address the risk of political contestation and public contradictions by opposing political leaders, the GCIS has established executive communication protocols for consideration and adoption by Cabinet. These protocols aim to foster collegiality and prevent incidents that could confuse citizens, stakeholders and international audiences.

2.30. Maintaining a high standard of professionalism within the government communication system is important to improve levels of trust and confidence in government and its institutions.

2.31. As we aim to rebuild public trust, which is a central enabler of a partnership between government, business and the public, we must ensure that there is alignment between service delivery and communication content.

2.32. The NCSF proposes a strategic approach to communicating government priorities and objectives of the Seventh Administration, aligning with the objectives of the NDP: Vision 2030.

3. THIRTY YEARS OF DEMOCRACY GOVERNMENT ACHIEVEMENTS THAT INFORM COMMUNICATION

3.1. South Africa emerged from generations of oppression in 1994 and faced the mammoth task of uniting people around a reconstruction and development mandate, while also inspiring hope for a better future. This involved undoing much of the damage of the past and putting in place the building blocks of a new society.

3.2. One of the distinguishing features of our nation is that we are a listening government that continues to learn and evolve. This has put us in good stead over the past 30 years during times of crisis such as load-shedding, corruption and the COVID-19 pandemic.

3.3. Our journey since 1994 has also been about partnerships and harnessing the power of active citizenry. This has been instrumental in building a new society where all citizens feel they have a part to play.

3.4. As we celebrate 30 Years of Freedom and Democracy, we can take pride in knowing that we have made huge strides towards building a just, equal, free and fair state that represents and protects all citizens. The values of non-racialism and non-sexism are central to our democratic principles.

3.5. We have upheld independent and democratic institutions created to safeguard our rights along with deepening our vibrant and robust constitutional democracy.

3.6. As a relatively young nation, we have made strong inroads into transforming the lives of millions of South Africans for the better. We have succeeded in lifting millions of people out of poverty.

3.7. Our constitutional order and the progressive policies of respective democratic administrations since 1994 have created space for successive democratic governments to gradually meet the basic needs of all the people, particularly the majority of those who had been deliberately denied these by the apartheid government. In the past, the provision of basic services was based on race and black people were excluded.

3.8. Millions of South Africans now have access to water, healthcare, education, housing and many other basic services, which they did not have before 1994. The strides we have made since 1994 have placed our nation on a trajectory to build a better future for all.

3.9. We are aware that challenges remain, particularly in local government service delivery and infrastructure development, especially concerning basic services. However, despite these challenges, we cannot deny that our nation's landscape has changed significantly since the start of democracy. Moreover, no country in the world has achieved as much in electrification, housing, water and sanitation programmes in such a short time as South Africa.

3.10. Our democratic breakthrough in 1994 and the 30 intervening years have moved us forward, but the deep and debilitating scars from our past remain. Therefore, we must find ways to forge greater social cohesion and unity, with a national focus on shared priorities that will build a better and stronger country, ensuring no one is left behind.

3.11. For social cohesion to be meaningful, it must go hand in hand with nation-building. Our nation comprises people with diverse origins, histories, languages and religions. A key part of nation-building is continuous dialogue, which must be both candid and solution-driven.

3.12. We have leveraged the benefits of the economy to redistribute public resources and meet the basic social needs of our people. While we still have a long way to go before all South Africans can share in the wealth of their country, we have made substantial progress and are determined to achieve much more.

3.13. While we are not where we would like to be on the economic trajectory we envisioned, our efforts in a short space of time to reverse more than 350 years of discrimination and injustice, have made strong inroads to create a more inclusive economy.

4. CURRENT ENVIRONMENT

4.1. Mood of the Nation and the International Perspective about South Africa

4.1.1. The framework is anchored on empirical research to gauge the mood of the nation.

4.1.2. The period prior to the elections was characterised by a less optimistic public on the outlook of the country. This is mostly attributed to experiences of the people with high levels of unemployment, poor service delivery and governance, corruption and impact of load-shedding prior to the current stabilisation of the grid, dampening the public mood.

4.1.3. However, according to the Ipsos Predictions 2025 Report (December 2024) and the Ipsos Socio-Political Trends (SPT) Research (December 2024), there has been a notable shift in public mood and the GCIS Public Opinion Tracker Survey for 2024 shows that there has been a notable decline in pessimism between March and November 2024.

4.1.4. This shift in public sentiment may be influenced by factors such as balanced media coverage, consistent electricity supply that has a positive impact on the quality of life, the formation of the multiparty government under the Seventh Administration, and the daily experiences of South Africans.

4.1.5. The data also suggests that more people now believe the country is moving in the right direction. The survey findings highlight that the mood of the country is significantly influenced by government performance and the lived experiences of South Africans.

4.1.6. The report also shows a strong sense of optimism about the country's future direction. There have been significant improvements in public perception regarding employment and growth indicators, as well as government's ability to create jobs and ensure stable prices. Overall, the research findings from the GCIS Public Opinion Tracker Survey show improvements in positive sentiments across many of the key indicators of government performance.

4.1.7. The latest Ipsos' SPT Reaserch and the South African Government Performance Barometer (GPB) (field period November to December 2024 and released January 2025) findings compared to March 2024 findings also show marked increases in the mood of the nation and general optimism across many indicators, mimicking findings of the GCIS Public Opinion Tracker Survey. There is a significant increase in the number of South Africans who believe the country is heading in the right direction and this indicator speaks to the national mood.

4.1.8. Positive sentiments on government's performance in fighting crime and corruption also improved, as well as economy-related indicators such as managing the economy, reducing unemployment by creating jobs, controlling inflation and the cost of living (GPB – field period November to December 2024, and released January 2025).

4.1.9.   Several interventions that began under the Sixth Administration are now beginning to bear fruit. Our ambitious plans to grow the economy, create jobs and secure greater investment are working, and this is reflected in a number of ways.

4.1.10.   There has been a positive trend in the country's employment figures, which shows that the number of employed people increased by 132 000 to 17.7 million in the fourth quarter of 2024, with the unemployment rate declining to 31.9% from 32.1% in quarter three.

4.1.11.   The positive employment trend is a result of concerted efforts and interventions which began during the Sixth Administration through the implementation of the ERRP and the EAP.

4.1.12.   The formation of the Seventh Administration and the commitment by political parties to work together constructively for South Africa's benefit, has generated a great deal of goodwill, as can be indicated by the GCIS Tracker Research in November 2024. South Africans are hopeful, signalling that the members of the Seventh Administration must continue to work together to build trust and use effective communication to demonstrate their collective efforts in advancing the nation.

4.1.13.   Furthermore, according to the latest Ipsos and GCIS Tracker surveys, government is seen positively for its efforts in social protection such as dealing with tuberculosis, HIV and AIDS, diabetes and other related illnesses, and distributing social grants. Improvements in education are also acknowledged by South Africans, especially the previously disadvantaged cohort of the population.

4.1.14.   The marked improvement of trust and confidence in government, rising from 46% between February and March 2024 to 52% between October and November 2024 (GCIS Tracker Research) is also observed in the Edelman Trust Barometer (2025) – which indicates the highest trust levels since 2019 and a significant 7% improvement from 2024 – call for a concerted effort by the Seventh Administration to sustain this positive trend. This can only be achieved through effective and timely implementation of government programmes aimed at improving the lives of South Africans, supported by effective communication at all spheres of government.

4.1.15.   On the international front, insights from Brand South Africa's (Brand SA) SA Global Reputation Study show that while South Africa's perception internationally improved in most areas such as exports, investment, prominence, visiting, working and studying in South Africa since 2022, it is yet to reach a score of 3,5 which is regarded as the "Love Mark" where there is a strong emotional connection with consumers.

4.1.16.   Among the nations against which South Africa is benchmarked – which include the United Kingdom (UK), United Arab Emirates (UAE), Thailand, Türkiye, Brazil, Egypt, Chile, Vietnam and Nigeria – the country ranks third in the majority of areas assessed. In the area of Competitor Comparison, it ranks behind the UK and UAE except in tourism and study.

4.1.17.   The country's international policies have had a positive impact on South Africa's perception and global reputation. The most notable positive impact on the country's global reputation is its peacekeeping efforts and International Court of Justice case against Israel. The country's stance on war between Russia and Ukraine, however, does not generate much positive perceptions.

4.2. Communication Environment

4.2.1.   Sustained media attention following the establishment of the Seventh Administration focused largely on ideological differences between members of the Seventh Administration. Reports periodically predict an early collapse of the agreement

because of an alleged instability in a multiparty Seventh Administration. However, there has been some focus on the view that South Africans only want a government that works, despite differing political affiliations.

4.2.2.   The anxiety of the early days of the Seventh Administration has abated, with the country quickly settling into higher expectations from government. There is currently high expectation for the Seventh Administration, led by President Ramaphosa, to deliver services and chart a path forward for the nation.

4.2.3.   The tensions between political parties of the Seventh Administration continue to play out in the media space. It is evident in the media continuously referring to Ministers of the Seventh Administration by their political affiliation followed by their portfolio designation.

4.2.4.   The three priorities announced by President Ramaphosa during the OPA and in the SoNA have driven coverage on government. Some media initially saw the return of these priorities as a fusion mostly of policies from the biggest parties but also demonstrates continuity from the previous administrations, with some concessions made to accommodate each other. However, sentiments have improved, with more positivity and optimism following the President's SoNA.

4.2.5.   The current geopolitical frictions have in the main been brought by South Affrica's participation in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) Peacekeeping Mission and the United States's (US) response to the signing of the country's transformation laws. The decision by US President Donald Trump not to attend the G20 Summit in November 2025, as well as the absence of the Treasury Secretary and the Secretary of State in the G20 meetings require skilful diplomatic communication. While tensions with the Rwandan Government over the war in the DRC has sparked debate over foreign policy, the media has been critical over the DRC war. It has somewhat noted with optimism the sense of solidarity in the messaging from the GNU partners in support of the President's address and resolve that South Africa will not be bullied. Carefully crafted messages, led by The Presidency and the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO), must guide all communication and a key messenger must be appointed urgently for a rapid response to issues in this space.

4.2.6.   The state of municipalities is often associated with poor service delivery and media coverage reflects the view that local government performance impacts overall perceptions of government. Moreover, the mounting water challenges across several municipalities and in particular Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal, threaten the quality of life and economic prospects for all South Africans, making it a priority task for 2025.

4.2.7.   Sentiments on energy have been boosted by the stability of power supply since March 2024 and its potential as a catalyst to advance economic growth. Particularly to the performance of the economy, the high rate of unemployment and the high cost of living are expected to continue.

4.2.8.   There are green shoots across the economy, with the International Monetary Fund and rating agency Standard & Poor's positively revising their outlook for the country. Furthermore, the country's employment has been on an upward trend, with the number of employed people increasing by 132 000 to 17.7 million in the fourth quarter of 2024.

4.2.9.   Concern over the rise in crime involving kidnappings, human trafficking and cash-in-transit heists continue to dominate media headlines. However, action from the police has been met with mounting criticism over the perceived heavy-handedness when dealing with such crimes.

4.2.10. Third quarter crime statistics show that our nation's efforts to turn the tide in the fight against crime are starting to yield results with a decrease in both murder and violent crimes. The murder rate in South Africa has decreased by 9.8%, while sexual offences decreased by 2.0% and robbery with aggravating circumstances decreased by 13.1%. Additionally, rape decreased by 3.3% while robbery at residential premises and non-residential premises decreased by 1.6% and 21.3% respectively.

4.2.11. Corruption remains the key driver of negativity against government, and some media houses have dedicated resources to expose key individuals and failures in the criminal justice system to deal with such incidents.

4.2.12. The appointment of capable officials to lead government institutions is also a focal point that often gets linked to cadre deployment. On the other hand, the latest Ipsos findings regarding government performance in appointing the right people to lead government departments and agencies show that citizens' sentiments on the matter have picked up.

4.3. Geopolitics and Communication

4.3.1.   In the global arena, geopolitics plays a crucial role in shaping communication by influencing the narratives and information flows between nations. South Africa as a global player is profoundly impacted by geopolitics that affects government communication by dictating the tone, content and channels through which information is disseminated.

4.3.2.   Governments often tailor their messages to align with national interests and geopolitical strategies, using communication as a tool to influence both domestic and international audiences.

4.3.3.   The rise of digital media has further complicated this landscape, enabling rapid information exchange but also increasing the risk of cyber-attacks and misinformation campaigns. Overall, geopolitics shapes not only what government communicates but also how and why it communicates.

4.3.4.   South Africa's geopolitical standing reflects its commitment to multilateralism and international law.

4.4. Mandate

4.4.1.   The Seventh Administration has a broad mandate to support rapid, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, and to create jobs by implementing three key strategic priorities guided by the Statement of Intent and aligned to the MTDP. The three key strategic priorities are:

   4.4.1.1. Drive inclusive growth and job creation;

   4.4.1.2. Reduce poverty and tackle the high cost of living; and

   4.4.1.3. Build a capable, ethical and developmental state.

4.4.2.   The medium-to-long-term nature of these priorities brings the challenge of sustaining confidence in their achievability, and giving visibility to progress and the impact on people's lives.

4.4.3.   Therefore, the core mandate of government communication is to meet the communication and information needs of government and the public by driving sustained, regular, predictable and accurate information to build confidence in government and enhance active citizenship.

4.4.4.   This mandate commands the whole government to consistently ensure that the public can access information on programmes, policies and opportunities so that they can actively participate in the transformation agenda to better their lives.

4.4.5.   Government communication derives its mandate to provide South Africans with information about the policies of government and its activities from the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996, which guarantees freedom of expression and the right of access to information.

4.5. Communication Landscape of South Africa

4.5.1. South Africa's media landscape remains dominated by a few large corporations, with their interests stretching from newspapers to magazines and the internet. Radio is mostly the domain of the state broadcaster, the SABC, although there is a growing number of community stations. Online media is recording strong growth as it is now accessed through mobile phones.

4.5.2. The communication landscape is constantly evolving, and it is increasingly being shaped by omnipresent technology companies which enjoy massive monopolies and have the power to influence and drive the agenda in the communication space. Technology is an integral part of our daily lives and large companies such as Google and Meta seemingly have tentacles that spread into every sphere of life, and this influence is likely to grow even more in the future.

4.5.3. Communicating with citizens is a critical component of government in ensuring service delivery and the role of large tech cannot be overlooked. In the MTDP period, the influence of these tech monopolies is bound to become even greater. Through their phones, personal computer systems and smart devices, citizens will have an instant connection to the world. This is something we need to tap into as communicators; much more forcefully than in the past. The agility of government communication on digital platforms using messengers that understand the needs and expectations of the audiences while at the same time adopting tactics that ensure responsiveness and engagement with these audiences could improve the effectiveness of all government digital media platforms.

4.5.4. We have the potential to reach citizens at the click of a button and to speak to them directly and meaningfully. To fully harness this reach we must connect with these technology companies and forge partnerships so that they are part of the larger media ecosystem that we have cultivated over the years.

4.5.5. At the start of 2023, 43.48 million internet users, 25.8 million social media users and 112.7 million cellphone connections were recorded in South Africa. The statistics suggest that almost all South Africans have access to a cellphone and almost everyone is an internet-user.

4.5.6. In the past 30 years, South Africa's legal framework for mass media (broadcasting, advertising and new media) regulations has become out of tune with the rapid technological developments and the inevitable forces of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR).

4.5.7. This 4IR has already begun disrupting society, business models and traditional ways of distributing goods and services through digitisation, the Internet of Things, cloud computing and storage, artificial intelligence, robotics, and advances in nanotech and bio-tech.

4.5.8. These changes will require government communication and policy interventions to ensure that the disruptions and changes will not reinforce current disparities of access in South Africa to information and communications technologies and services, thereby widening the digital divide. Today, government has entered the era of audio and audiovisual services often called Television (TV) Everywhere, Content Everywhere.

4.5.9. These rapid and unprecedented changes are occurring both in society and communications, and have brought a period of volatility, complexity and unprecedented disruptive change. They are propelled by the pervasiveness of social media platforms and the proliferation of different broadcasting like

on-demand and video-sharing platform services using the Internet as a means of distribution, and many of which operate on a global scale.

4.5.10. While South Africa's largest segment still relies (Government Segmentation Model (GSM), 3rd edition 2024) on traditional media, the COVID-19 pandemic led to an increased demand for digital media. Facebook is a popular media platform in South Africa, with 22.15 million users recorded at the start of 2023. Additionally, X, TikTok and Instagram are gaining popularity, making social media a crucial area for government communication to focus on moving forward.

4.5.11. Moreover, the continued rise of WhatsApp is changing the way citizens engage, communicate and share information. WhatsApp can be a powerful tool for government to communicate with citizens, promote transparency and increase citizen engagement.

4.5.12. The NDP: Vision 2030 highlights that "access to information through print, broadcasting and the internet are vital for building an informed citizenry." The media play a core role in nation-building and are critical for democracy to function.

4.5.13. Notwithstanding this, the whole media system is experiencing a digital revolution and is in transition. As many analysts have correctly put it, this is a period of unprecedented disruptive change. The driving force behind this revolution as in other sectors, is the Over-The-Top services driven and delivered by the internet.

4.5.14. The print media paradigm which flourished in the pre-Internet era – where instant access to news using smartphones and online news aggregators – was not within reach to an ordinary person. This reveals that print media is an age-old business which for long maintained its position as the number one form of conveying information.

4.5.15. Today the print media faces many challenges such as maintaining its relevance as a trusted source of information; operating in the digital environment; how to curb and reduce excess print, distribution and transport costs; lessening newspaper subscribers and dwindling circulation figures coupled with reduced advertising budgets both from corporate and government since the global economic meltdown.

4.5.16. The above has given rise of digital media that has resulted in tight revenue for traditional media which has resulted in the closure of print editions of several newspapers, including *Beeld*, *City Press*, *Daily Sun* and *Rapport*. Radio and TV still dominate our local media space, with radio being a big player in the South African media industry.

4.5.17. While there is a consolidation of mainstream media, the local community media sector is showing significant potential as a communication platform for government to reach communities across the country. Community media continue to foster a sense of belonging and inclusivity among community members, which is essential for social cohesion and nation-building. It enables active citizen involvement through the various community activities, mobilisations and engagements it facilitates. Through community media, citizens are kept accurately informed and up to date about national and local matters, events, services, local initiatives as well as issues that directly affect them. This sector could benefit from government with access to content and a share in the government advertising budget.

5. BROAD COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVES

5.1. Illustrate efforts towards economic recovery, employment support and relief, economic transformation and driving investment.

5.2. Demonstrate government's commitment to reduce poverty, tackle the high cost of living and decisively deal with social challenges.

5.3. Promote the building of a capable, ethical and developmental state that responds to citizens' needs.

5.4. Promote national unity and solidarity among all South Africans.

5.5. Demonstrate how the Seventh Administration works in unity to continue to advance South Africa's development. The fight against crime and corruption remains central to safeguarding our gains and realising our nation's full potential. Therefore, it must be a fundamental aspect of all our communication objectives.

6. COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES

6.1. The challenges for communication in this period derive in part from the dynamics of transition from one administration term to another. These dynamics bring both challenges and opportunities.

6.2. The rise in misinformation, disinformation and speculative and sensationalist reporting frustrates the communication environment, impacts perceptions on key areas and dampens the public mood.

6.3. The changing media landscape, including the sustainability of media ownership, creates various communication challenges. There is an increasing shift to the digital sphere with many media houses closing their physical publications.

6.4. Service delivery protests across the country are receiving coverage and, in most cases, are accompanied by violence and the destruction of property and infrastructure.

6.5. Communication must align to the strategic focus of the MTDP, promote the implementation of and give visibility to programmes informed by the apex priorities and other cluster priorities for the period to 2030.

6.6. Better collaboration between and within departments is important to the success of government communication, from delivering audience-focused campaigns and ensuring a coherent and cohesive narrative to the public to sharing insights, resources and learnings across government.

6.7. Negative trends in the environment should not be allowed to deflect government communication from focusing on the work of government. Equal attention should be given, on the one hand, to promoting and profiling implementation, and on the other, to addressing areas of contestation.

6.8. Continued attention will be required for improved communication coordination and discipline in adhering to communication protocols and a united front in engaging with South Africans. This calls for effective operation of the communication clusters and of the rapid response system. It requires rapid, consistent articulation of government positions on all key issues, in line with collective responsibility.

6.9. To promote coherence, the discussion of issues in the communication environment should be a standing item on the agenda of executives in all spheres of government. In instances where departments do not immediately issue holding lines on key priority matters, the GCIS as part of the renewed coordination mandate, will issue the immediate holding statement and allow the lead department to provide a detailed response or account later.

7.   THEME AND MESSAGING

7.1.   "A NATION THAT WORKS FOR ALL"

7.1.1.   This theme serves as a powerful call to action for all citizens. It reminds us that our strength lies in our unity and collective effort. By coming together, we can overcome obstacles and build a brighter future for everyone. The theme emanated from immense challenges of rising levels of poverty and destitution from the difficult economic conditions, the impact of COVID-19 and implications of State Capture that undermined our socio-economic advance.

7.1.2.   Our country is rich in cultural diversity, which is our strength. By embracing our differences and working together, we can create a more inclusive and harmonious society. We must actively drive home the point that our role as active citizens does not end with voting and call on everyone to work together to move our nation forward. By uniting around a common goal of improving everyday life for the better, we can draw citizens together.

7.1.3.   We must reaffirm that government remains committed to working together with all citizens to build a better tomorrow for all, and stress that the active participation of citizens is needed in building a vibrant and representative nation. We can strengthen the call for collective action by reminding citizens of what we have achieved as a country. Our people are united by their love for our country and our flag, and cherish our constitutional values, principles and ideals. Active citizens are key in ensuring that we arrive at solutions that enhance our unity yet also begin to undo the social and structural damage of our past.

7.1.4.   When South Africans stand together there is no obstacle that cannot be overcome. Therefore, every South African has a role to play in navigating us forward. Active citizens also take an interest in the running of the country, and make their voices heard on issues that affect them or their communities. Our democracy is built on listening to the voice of the people and provides many avenues for people to make their views known.

7.1.5.   Each of us has a role to play in the nation's progress. Whether it is through community service, supporting local businesses, voting, reporting crime and corruption where we see it, cleaning up our villages, towns and cities or participating in civic activities; every action counts. Together, we can address issues such as poverty, inequality and environmental sustainability. As we work together, we can achieve the three key priorities we are advancing over the next five years.

7.1.6.   A united nation is one that shares a common vision for the future. By aligning our goals as depicted in the NDP and MTDP, and working towards them collectively, we can achieve remarkable progress. This vision includes economic growth, social justice and a healthy environment for future generations.

7.1.7.   Empowering citizens to take part in decision-making processes strengthens our democracy. When everyone has a voice and feels valued, we can create policies and initiatives that truly reflect the needs and aspirations of the people.

7.1.8.   Unity fosters resilience. By supporting each other and encouraging innovation, we can adapt to changing circumstances and find creative solutions to our challenges. This spirit of collaboration and ingenuity will drive our nation forward.

7.1.9.   Let us come together, harness our collective strength and work towards a nation that works for all. Together, we can build a future where everyone thrives and no one is left behind.

7.1.10. The theme rallies South Africans to build together and ensure that we all benefit. It advances our participatory government that engages South Africans through unmediated communication, which has long been a hallmark of our democracy.

7.1.11. Our message should encourage South Africans to pull together as one nation where the concern of one is a concern of all. One message should be communicated in one voice and in a coordinated manner. A coherent message sets the agenda and arms communicators in the battle of ideas.

7.1.12. The message of government should always be inspirational, informative and inclusive. For this to be achieved, it is important for our messages to be believable, truthful, transparent, reliable and consistent. Messaging needs to be distilled into clear, tangible concepts that South Africans can comprehend, believe and advocate.

    a) **Inspirational** – presents new perspectives to citizens which empower them to undertake the necessary behaviour change to transcend the status quo.

    b) **Informative** – conveying information to citizens in a way that is simple and understandable, and keeps citizens interested.

    c) **Inclusive** – enhances citizen engagement and creates a sense of belonging, which gives gravitas to **"A NATION THAT WORKS FOR ALL"**.

8. ALIGNING GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATIONS TO THE MTDP

8.1. The MTDP provides renewed impetus for government communication. Citizens, business and civil society eagerly await details of how the Seventh Administration will over the next five years address key challenges, build the country and position it for the future.

8.2. The three strategic priorities of the Seventh Administration offer the opportunity for broad communication campaigns on each priority.

8.3. Government's firm stance in the fight against crime and corruption will dovetail each of the three strategic priorities ensuring that all gains made over the period are not undermined by graft and unlawful acts. It will build on efforts to mobilise all resources in law enforcement and the participation of civil society through partnerships to reduce levels of crime and deal with corrupt practices.

8.4. The detailed interventions of the MTDP to be implemented over the next five years and its specific measurable objectives creates a roadmap that can be mirrored in government communication. This can be done by sharing significant milestones through dedicated communication campaigns.

8.5. All departments must champion the MTDP by communicating on how their key programmes contribute towards the attainment of national priorities. This will ensure proactive communication and allow us to reclaim the communications space on key issues. This is an opportunity to reframe South Africa over the next five years.

8.6. Overarching MTDP Communication

8.6.1. The current improved optimism in the country indicated by the GCIS Tracker Research (2024) is an opportunity to ensure that all citizens take ownership of the MTDP, become part of its implementation and part of our nation's development over the next five years.

8.6.2. The MTDP sets out a well-defined vision to draw all sectors of society to support and advance our nation under a common banner of 'we are all in this together'. As the plan is derived from commitments of Seventh Administration members, it ensures a wide buy-in from across society and the political spectrum. Moreover, the MTDP offers an opportunity to forge greater partnerships in addressing our nation's most pressing challenges. Communication remains a cornerstone in fostering such partnerships and drawing all South Africans into a common front.

8.6.3. Government clusters will drive the MTDP commitments through an outcomes-based approach. This further creates communication opportunities through overarching communication campaigns that bring alive the main thrusts of the MTDP in impacting the lives of South Africans. The following cluster outcomes uplift our nation's imperatives of driving inclusive growth and job creation, reducing poverty and tackling the high cost of living, and building a capable, ethical and developmental state.

8.7. Targeted MTDP Communication Campaigns

8.7.1. The implementation of key plans and programmes on apex priorities through dedicated communication

Economic Sectors, Investment, Employment and Infrastructure Development	• Increased employment opportunities • Re-industrialisation, localisation and beneficiation • Enabling environment for investment and improved competitiveness through structural reforms • Increased infrastructure investment and job creation.
Social Protection, Community and Human Development Cluster	• Reduce poverty and improved livelihoods • Improved access to affordable and quality healthcare • Equitable distribution of health professionals to health facilities • Mental healthcare integrated in primary healthcare • Life expectancy improved to 70 years • Improved education outcomes and skills • A Just Energy Transition (JET) • Increase employment opportunities • Social cohesion and nation-building • Spatial transformation.
Governance, State Capacity and Institutional Development Cluster	• Provide maximum public value by delivering on government's plans • Meeting service delivery targets by achieving government priorities as outlined in the MTDP • Improved trust and citizens' confidence • Improve local government functionality and financial stability • Accelerate delivery of public infrastructure through improved spending by metros and public entities • Economic inclusion of women, youth and marginalised groups • Empowerment, economic inclusion, employment and improve poverty reduction for women, youth and marginalised communities.
Justice, Crime Prevention and Security (JCPS) Cluster	• Reform integration and modernisation of the Criminal Justice System • Effective border security • Secured cyber space • Increase feeling of safety in the community • Increased feelings of safety of women and children in communities • Protect the national financial system to comply with global Financial Action Task Force standards • Combat economic and organised crime • Fight corruption.
International Cooperation, Trade and Security Cluster	• Increased investment, trade and expand tourism • Energy security and a JET • Strengthened diplomacy, and advanced South Africa's national interest and values in all international engagements • Promote South Africa internationally • Enhanced peace and security in Africa.

campaigns will support the MTDP over the five-year period. Targeted cross-cutting campaigns hold enormous benefits in terms of impact and the streamlined use of valuable resources. Such an approach draws together relevant departments, social partners and the public at large.

8.7.2. Government efforts to decisively combat crime and create safer living spaces will be integrated into all cross-cutting campaigns, enabling all sectors of society to grow, develop and excel. By incorporating the country's Integrated Crime and Violence Prevention Strategy into targeted campaigns, government will actively demonstrate its commitment to prevent crime and violence. This comprehensive approach extends beyond effective policing to address the underlying causes of crime such as poverty, inequality, and unemployment.

|| Communication of Strategic Priority 1: Inclusive Growth and Job Creation ||

8.7.3. The campaign on Building the Economy taps into the power of communication to drive job creation and economic growth. It draws South Africans in a united and focused national push to reignite growth, create jobs and importantly, inspire hope for a better tomorrow. A dedicated campaign to empower citizens with information to become active participants in our economy will bolster the priority of inclusive growth and job creation. While South Africans appreciate the need to do things for themselves, information on government programmes that empower them will further enable them to participate in the economy.

a) **Inclusive Growth:** There is a constitutional imperative to redress the imbalances of the past and deal with the slow process of economic development. Communication must showcase government's work towards inclusive and transformational growth that drives the redistribution of wealth and opportunities. A communication approach of "show and tell" will uplift work done to support the empowerment of black South Africans and women and youth, and all those who in the past had been relegated to the fringes of the economy.

b) **Investment Drive:** Advance the mantra of turning South Africa into a construction site and the advantages of focused infrastructure investment in our future growth and development. Communication must align with planned investments in national infrastructure and create confidence in its implementation by affirming the country's ability to carry out its infrastructure build. In building confidence and assurance, communication can assist in securing massive infrastructure investment, while also fostering public-private partnerships to strengthen energy, communication, water and transport infrastructure. Major events such as the annual South Africa Investment Conference, which serve as landmark pillars during government's annual planning cycle, will receive focused communication treatment for both domestic and international audiences.

c) **Job Creation:** The opportunity arises to shift the narrative from government being a creator of jobs to being responsible to create the conditions for job creation to flourish. In advancing this priority, it is critical to bring to the fore work to boost key job-creating sectors and build a competitive economy. There must also be ongoing communication to incorporate the Presidential Employment Stimulus as a measure to support job creation and protect the most vulnerable while we wait for the economy to reach growth levels that allow the private sector to become the nation's main creator of jobs. This initiative similarly continues to play a key role in bridging the gap between the world of study and the world of work, thus allowing youth to obtain the experience they need to meet job requirements.

d) **Growing the Economy:** The economy remained robust, particularly through difficult periods, signalling its potential to record strong future growth. Communication that builds confidence about

our economic prospects will ensure that we rally together as one nation. We must encourage South Africans as shareholders in the national economy to support this common economic objective. Profile the fast-tracking of high-impact reforms as part of Phase 2 of Operation Vulindlela to uplift our economic growth and drive job creation. The National Logistics Crisis Committee's work in the implementation of the Freight Logistics Roadmap, outlining a range of actions undertaken to restore the efficiency and competitiveness of key industry supply chains, as well as ports and rail more generally. In improving our nation's energy supply, interventions are driven at the highest level through the National Energy Crisis Committee, which is led by government and supported by business, to implement wide-ranging reform in our energy sector. Showcase efforts to boost small business growth, empower entrepreneurs and cooperatives, especially in townships and villages. Efforts to uplift key economic sectors such as the agricultural sector, mining sector, transition to a low-carbon economy and bridging the digital divide, offer communication opportunities.

|| Communication of Strategic Priority 2: Reduce poverty and tackle the high cost of living. ||

8.7.4.   A sustained communication campaign over the Seventh Administration on a societal-wide movement to support and assist government to overcome the threat of poverty and inequality will be implemented. Drawing South Africans into this social compact will not only change perceptions but will encourage behaviour change. This will be strengthened through the National Dialogue convened by Deputy President Mashatile with stakeholders representing civil society, traditional leaders, the faith-based sector, labour, business, cultural workers, sportspeople and other formations representing the diverse interests and voices of South African citizens.

8.7.5.   Communication efforts must show that amidst extraordinary and unprecedented challenges experienced by the country there has been progress. The journey we have taken since the early months of 2020 has been remarkable when one considers that for 750 days, South Africa was in a National State of Disaster due to COVID-19. The National State of Disaster, which was in place from 15 March 2020 until 4 April 2022, empowered government to save lives and livelihoods.

8.7.6.   The pandemic affected every facet of people's lives and forced us all to find new ways of doing things. The pandemic caused severe human suffering and took many precious lives from us. It destroyed many livelihoods and resulted in thousands of job losses.

8.7.7.   We have, however, clawed our way back and the number of employed people has now surpassed pre-COVID-19 days. This is even more remarkable when one considers the devastating impact of the July 2022 riots and other major weather-related events that shook our nation to the core.

8.7.8.   Despite these challenges, we have found a way to keep going, to grow and to move forward. Government, along with its social partners, has worked to ensure hope for a better tomorrow and a determination that we will leave no one behind.

8.7.9.   During the COVID-19 pandemic, we witnessed a national and coordinated response, which harnessed the strengths of all sectors of society. We must do so again now as we implement the ERRP, along with the agreed upon priorities of the Seventh Administration.

8.7.10. Our communication efforts must highlight how the implementation of the ERRP is helping to create jobs, and reduce poverty and inequality. It must show how the plan is helping to transform key sectors of our economy such as electricity, rail, ports and telecommunications.

8.7.11. We must show how every new job created brings hope and in many cases one job has the potential to support entire households. We must continually highlight that government and our social partners are working to create pathways to employment, and to grow our economy so that we can ignite hope for a better tomorrow.

8.7.12. We are doing this by focusing on our economic fundamentals, and by pursuing new sources of growth and investment while also ensuring that we create a capable and stable state.

a) **Reduce Poverty:** Communication that rallies South Africans as a caring society to take action to change their communities for the better by looking out for each other. In doing so, we can build a movement for good that spans across the nation and protects the most vulnerable in our midst. Profile government's package of social interventions to address our pressing challenge of poverty. Including social grants to 18 million South Africans as a safety net for the poor and vulnerable that assists many people to overcome the barriers of economic and social exclusion. Government currently supports more than 3,5 million indigent households through its Free Basic Services programme. It continues to roll back the ravages of poverty by providing housing, free water, electricity and sanitation.

b) **Education:** Education is one of the most powerful instruments for reducing poverty and inequality, as well as for laying the basis for sustained growth. Government's no-fee paying schools have been instrumental in uplifting the prospects of our nation's young people. Almost 90% of all learners in the public education system attend no-fee schools. Through the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS), we have ensured that education is no longer an elitest preserve. The number of students benefiting from NSFAS rose from around 40 000 in the early years of democracy to over 780 000 in 2023. Our investment in education and skills development continues to elevate the fight against poverty. South Africa will continue to provide quality education from early childhood, ensure schools are well-resourced with necessary facilities and expand vocational training.

c) **Healthcare:** In supporting development and breaking the poverty trap, government provides free primary healthcare. Government is also working to provide accessible healthcare for everyone by transforming our nation's healthcare sector.

d) **High Cost of Living:** South Africa, like many countries around the world, is experiencing increases in the prices of food, housing and fuel. The message that government is closely monitoring the situation and will do everything to protect citizens from unsustainable increases will provide comfort. Demonstrate how government will use the country's competition policy to protect consumers against unjustifiable price increases. Encourage all sectors to play their part to ensure that consumers do not pay more for food than they must.

Government will continue with efforts to provide water, sanitation, waste and energy services in former townships and homelands. Maintain subsidised basic services and ensure that local governments implement the indigent policy so the elderly, infirm and poor can get assistance with the payment of basic services. People vulnerable to hunger will be provided food through nutrition security initiatives. Furthermore, the basket of essential food items exempt from Value-Added Tax will be expanded and a basket of high protein basic foods affordable to all through a partnership with the food industry and civil society will be introduced.

The annual review of the National Minimum Wage level in line with inflation and income poverty to be addressed through sustainable income support for unemployed individuals aged from 18 to 59. A

social protection floor will progressively ensure a decent standard of living for all, as well as improve availability of social welfare services.

|| Communication of Strategic Priority 3: Build a capable, ethical and developmental state. ||

8.7.13. The partnership between government and business is important for South Africa in fighting crime and corruption. By creating a safer country, we can create an enabling environment for inclusive growth, job creation, increased public confidence and enhance the implementation capacity of the State.

a) **Local Government:** Stabilising local government by calling on individuals and communities to play their part in building better communities. Active citizens advocate for what is right and work together to make things better. Advance active citizens to take an interest in the running of their municipality and make their voices heard on issues that affect them or their communities. Initiatives to improve water services and professionalise municipal management.

The Presidential District Development Model (DDM) Imbizo Programme plays an important role in assessing progress on service delivery at local government and engaging communities. Moreover, it provides an opportunity for communities, social partners and various stakeholders to provide their ideas and inputs on how to address challenges in respective district and metropolitan municipality areas, guided by the One Plans developed for each geographical space.

Ensure that the catalytic projects identified in the DDM One Plan are profiled and awareness of the opportunities stemming from these projects are marketed continuously, in partnership with all three spheres of government in the local areas but also social partners.

b) **Public Service:** A campaign of Professionalising the Public Service that inculcates an attitude of a servant leader, which actively cares for the welfare of others with courage, compassion, humility and flexibility. Emphasise that the Public Service is a calling where public servants have a higher purpose of ensuring all citizens enjoy the benefits of our democracy. Highlight initiatives to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the overall Public Service. Outline work to strengthen government effectiveness and ramping up digital transformation.

c) **Crime and Corruption:** Demonstrate how government is taking a tougher stance on crime and enhancing community safety. Communication should bring alive the National Anti-Corruption Strategy, which is our national blueprint to stamp out corruption. It provides common mechanisms for government, social partners and society at large to fight corruption.

Profile progress in preventing and dealing with corruption through concrete actions by the JCPS Cluster. Draw all citizens into playing their role in fighting corruption by reflecting on their individual actions in ending the cycle of corruption. Communication that encourages the continuous practice of integrity, the fight against corruption and that details the consequence of corruption.

d) **Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (GBVF):** The scourge of GBVF remains a pressing concern for our nation and efforts to keep the issue at top of mind through broad communication are essential. This will ensure that we draw all of society into the campaign to combat GBVF, through behaviour change communication that changes the practices and attitudes of individuals, families and communities, as well as stimulates and facilitates wider social change.

9. PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNICATION

9.1. Development communication remains the foundation of the principles that empower citizens to actively participate in activities that directly impact their lives.

9.1.1. Executive Coherence

9.1.1.1. Members of the National Executive in the Seventh Administration share a collective responsibility for government decisions and to advance coherent communication. Communication should adhere to the agreed upon communication framework of the Seventh Administration and pursue common communication goals that are aligned with the administation's principles.

9.1.1.2. Honouring the value and reputation of the government and public institutions in all communication activities builds public trust, confidence and integrity between government and the people it serves. Communication is a professional function and all content should be driven by minimum programme priorities of the Seventh Administration (Statement of Intent of the GNU, 2024). The GCIS coordinates communication on key transversal programmes to ensure integrated planning and coherent government communication of messaging.

9.1.1.3. The Minister in The Presidency, supported by the DG: GCIS, holds the fortnightly post-Cabinet media briefings and continues to popularise government news in the media.

9.1.1.4. Premiers and Mayors to hold regular post-EXCO media briefings to update residents on key development and programmes in the province and municipality.

9.2. Occupying the Communication Space

9.2.1. In support of the National Executive, there should be a plethora of government voices. DGs, Deputy DGs (DDGs), chief directors, programme specialists and technical experts must serve as communicators to influence the narrative.

9.3. Understanding your target audiences

9.3.1. Understanding who you are communicating with is essential for crafting effective messages. Identifying and segmenting target audiences allows for more personalised and relevant communication.

9.3.2. The GSM allows communicators to better understand citizens, and to create greater alignment between citizens' needs, and government services and messages. The model segments the population into five broad groups, highlighting the needs, concerns and characteristics of the different citizens' groups. This ensures targeted communication rather than a blanketed communication approach.

9.3.3. The main users of the GSM, government communicators and media-planners, should consistently use it as a reference and guiding tool when developing communication strategies, planning campaigns or developing communication content and/or material.

9.3.4. This will ensure that communication strategies and campaigns address the specific communication needs of different segments within the South African population. The use of the GSM will enable government communicators and media planners to maximise the impact of government communication campaigns.

9.4. Direct Public Engagements

9.4.1. Direct public engagement is an effective form of communication that epitomises the ethos of development communication. It demonstrates a government that is in touch with and responsive to its people.

9.4.2. The DDM Presidential Imbizo spearheaded by the President in direct engagement with citizens, paves the way for departments to hold similar follow-through engagements on their key programmes.

9.4.3. The presence of ministers at frontline visits is essential as demonstrated repeatedly during the DDM Presidential Imbizo. When residents can engage directly with leaders, they feel that their issues are being taken seriously. The presence of ministers is crucial in addressing issues such as poor service delivery, along with ensuring integrated intergovernmental planning, budgeting and implementation.

9.4.4. The litmus test for an Imbizo as a critical aspect of governance rests in its credibility in responding to the numerous issues that the public raise, guided firmly by Batho Pele principles.

9.5. Responsive and Timeous Communication

9.5.1. Departments must be vigilant on emerging matters that require timeous responses. Our inability to respond timeously to stories tends to overshadow our proactive communication programme.

9.5.2. The one message with many messengers communication principle holds enormous potential to timeously increase government's voice on important issues. It includes identifying ambassadors, third-party endorsers and community activists to advance government messaging.

9.5.3. Regular and consistent communication ensures predictability even in times of crisis and disasters. The communication of plans and milestones towards bigger project deadlines keep citizens abreast of important developments.

9.6. Strengthening Communication Longevity

9.6.1. Communication longevity can also be secured using a multitude of platforms to ensure that our messages and communication resonate across a broader spectrum of the South African population.

9.7. Taking South Africans into Confidence

9.7.1. Taking the public and stakeholders into confidence inculcates a level of public trust and appreciation when things go right and understanding when things go wrong. There needs to be a level of frankness that accompanies all communication. The public should be made aware of challenges to prevent them from assuming the worst; or that nothing is being done to improve their lives. Communication must set out government's plans to deal and remedy any challenges or failures.

9.8. Promote Informed Communication

9.8.1. Government communication should avoid propaganda and rhetoric style communication. Communication should rather target information gaps and address what citizens want to know about government, its programmes and available services. Communication efforts must therefore be informed by empirical research rather than an approach based on what we think citizens want to know.

10. DEPARTMENTAL AND PROVINCIAL COMMUNICATION

10.1. The framework paves the way for all departments, provinces and clusters to develop their own communication plans and programmes informed by the NCSF and apex priorities.

10.2. Each department, province and cluster will develop its communication plan and programme informed by the NCSF and apex priorities for the medium-term period, but also annually following the SoNA.

11. MEDIA PROGRAMME

11.1. The media engagement approach is guided by the NCSF, which is a five-year framework for the Seventh Administration.

11.2. As such, its content centres on the priorities of government as outlined in the MTDP, which is based on the current protocols of the Seventh Administration.

11.3. While many interactions with the media do take place, augmented by the work of spokespersons and other communications platforms, there is significant scope for a more curated interaction with the media, especially on progress on core societal issues. These core issues identified by Cabinet and endorsed by public opinion research on the mood of the nation, should serve as an important guide to the issues that the country is most concerned about.

11.4. Considerations for the communication cycle should be that there is a standing fortnightly post-Cabinet media briefing as well as regular media briefings to update on government's key priority issues during the non-Cabinet week cycle.

11.5. The cycle will be replicated in provinces with briefings on executive meetings and national priorities. Provinces will host monthly EXCO or clustered media briefings. The inland provinces will brief on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. Coastal provinces to brief on Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

11.6. The non-Cabinet weekly cycle will be informed by the Rapid Response mid- to long-term issues that are sustained in the communication environment as well as crisis issues or issues emanating from the national and provincial communication planning meetings. Rapid Response will be guided by holding statements issued by the GCIS until the department concerned issues its statement.

11.7. In some cases, ministries, with the support and counsel of the GCIS, could consider alternative platforms to those of the traditional media briefing. For instance, well-curated, themed public webinars and panel discussions with appropriate issues specialist and experts, even at a technical level, have proven to attract huge virtual audiences. Many, given the currency of the issue, also secure live TV broadcasting, which significantly enhances the reach of communication.

11.8. Consideration can also be given to the model where a roundtable or panel discussion, including various partners and stakeholders, takes place. In such a session, the priority expert or other social partners could present parts of the thematic area (burning issue) relevant to the discussion.

11.9. The variation also allows for areas where specific, detailed, issue briefings by a line Minister or Deputy Minister, can be recommended. There should also be the scope for issue specialists, be these DGs or DDGs, to undertake communications activities on major items.

11.10. As part of positioning South Africa internationally, the following approach is proposed: Consistency in the biweekly media briefing by the DIRCO, which will lead a biweekly media engagement on international matters.

11.11. Centralised coordination of media engagement platforms for outgoing and incoming state visits, international conferences and regional summits in partnership with Brand SA, The Presidency and the DIRCO.

12. COORDINATION FOCUS AND STRUCTURES/FORUMS AT ALL SPHERES

12.1. The GCIS is the centre of all government communication and provides strategic leadership and coordination to the whole government communication system. There is a network of many communicators located countrywide, across all spheres of government who must drive communication within their realm of influence.

12.2. Internal communication in government serves as a platform to use public servants to spread government messages further into communities. The GCIS coordinates various planning and reporting structures in which all communicators are expected to actively participate. These include the Government Communicators' Forum; Media Liaison Officers' Forum; Internal Communicators' Forum; Intergovernmental Communication Forum; Communication Cluster/ Communication committees of all five Forum of South African DGs' clusters; the meeting of the GCIS EXCO and co-chairs of communication clusters; specialist communicators' forums (e.g. social media managers), as well as communication forums at district and local levels.

13. COMPONENTS OF THE NCSF IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

13.1. Stakeholder engagement on the approved NCSF.

13.2. Development of provincial and departmental communication strategies aligned to the NCSF and the GCP, with support from the GCIS.

13.3. Cross-cutting campaigns to be featured in all departmental and provincial communication strategies aligned to the objectives of the NCSF.

13.4. Development and consolidation of costed communication plans across government reflecting on apex priorities and supporting cross-cutting campaigns.

13.5. Plans for effective use of digital media platforms and internal communication to bolster reach to all segments.

13.6. Community media placements, digital media and internal communication must be factored into the strategies.

13.7. Plans to communicate during disasters and crises require proactive communication and quick turnaround in the release of messages.

13.8. Internal communication taking into consideration the use of public servants as messengers.

14. REPORTING, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

14.1. Progress reports on implementation of communication strategies and plans in line with the NCSF will be submitted to Clusters and Cabinet.

14.2. Reporting on the execution of departmental and provincial communication plans.

14.3. Progress reports should reflect the use of the outlined communication principles in the NCSF.

14.4. Evaluation will be undertaken after 18 months.

15. ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

4IR	Fourth Industrial Revolution
Brand SA	Brand South Africa
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
DDG	Deputy Director-General
DDM	District Development Model
DG	Director-General
DIRCO	Department of International Relations and Cooperation
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EAP	Energy Action Plan
ERRP	Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan
EXCO	Executive Committee
G20	Group of Twenty
GBVF	Gender-based violence and femicide
GCP	Government Communication Policy
GPB	Government Performance Barometer
GSM	Government Segmentation Model
JCPS	Justice, Crime Prevention and Security Cluster
JET	Just Energy Transition
MTDP	Medium Term Development Plan
NCSF	National Communication Strategy Framework
NDP	National Development Plan
NSFAS	National Student Financial Aid Scheme
OPA	Opening of Parliament Address
SoNA	State of the Nation Address
SPT	Socio-Political Trends
TV	Television
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States