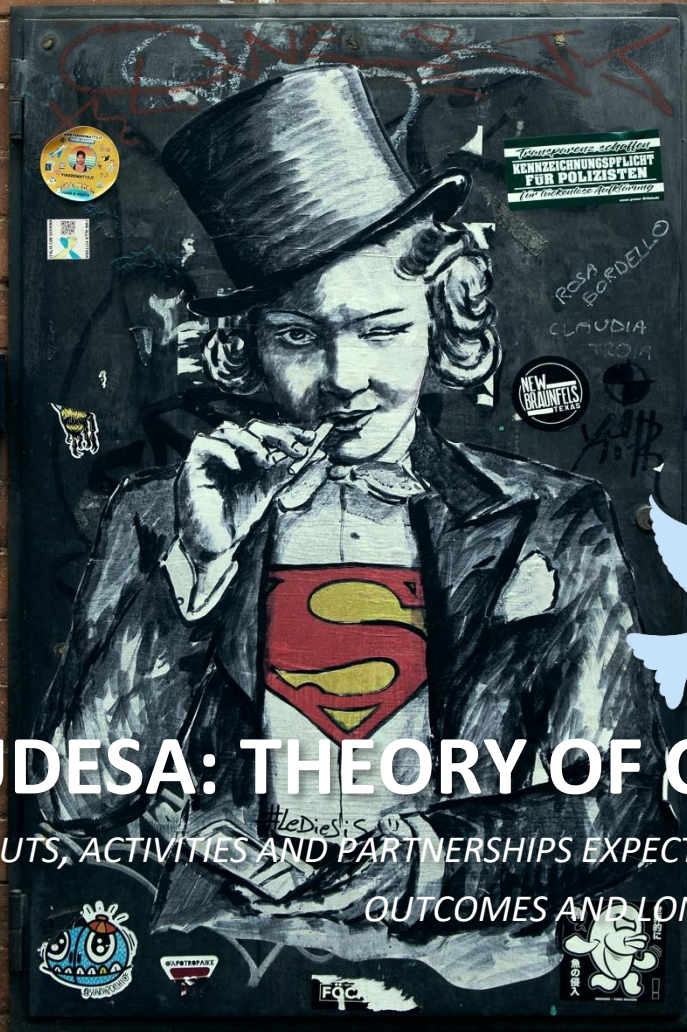




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# SUDESA: THEORY OF CHANGE

INPUTS, ACTIVITIES AND PARTNERSHIPS EXPECTED MEASURABLE  
OUTCOMES AND LONG-TERM IMPACT

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## Table of Contents

1. Introduction .....	2
2. Structure .....	2
3. Mandate .....	3
4. Unified Theory of Change.....	4
5. Budget Framework .....	5
Component Breakdown .....	5
6. Strategic Alignment .....	6
7. Job Creation .....	7
8. Digital Leapfrogging .....	8
9. Implementation Roadmap .....	9
10. Partnerships and Engagement .....	10
11. Conclusion .....	11

# SUDESA Theory of Change

## 1. Introduction

The South Sudan Digital Equity and Social Advancement Initiative (SUDESA) is a transformative national undertaking designed to reposition South Sudan as a digitally enabled, socially equitable, and institutionally resilient state. Conceived as both a strategic agenda and an institutional mechanism, SUDESA embodies a dual mandate: to lead the digitalisation of the country's public infrastructure and services, and to operate as a neutral, semi-autonomous unit co-owned by the Government of South Sudan and the European Social Label (EUSL).

SUDESA emerges in response to the urgent need for inclusive development pathways that transcend traditional models of state-building. In a context marked by fragility, limited infrastructure, and institutional fragmentation, digitalisation offers a unique opportunity to leapfrog legacy systems and deliver public services that are transparent, efficient, and citizen-centered. However, digital transformation alone is insufficient without a dedicated institutional framework capable of coordinating, implementing, and sustaining such efforts over time.

To this end, SUDESA is structured to function beyond political cycles, with a ten-year mandate anchored in the Agenda for Social Equity 2074. It is designed to align with national development goals while drawing on global best practices and partnerships. Its scope extends beyond technology to encompass agriculture, social development, and the advancement of women's rights — ensuring that digitalisation serves as a tool for equity, not exclusion.

This document presents the Theory of Change that underpins SUDESA's design and implementation. It articulates the logical framework through which inputs, activities, and partnerships are expected to generate measurable outcomes and long-term impact. It also outlines the institutional structure, budget logic, and strategic alignment necessary to operationalise this vision.

## 2. Structure

SUDESA is established as a semi-autonomous institutional unit, jointly owned by the Government of South Sudan and the European Social Label (EUSL). Its structure is designed to ensure operational independence, technical neutrality, and long-term continuity, while remaining fully accountable to the people of South Sudan and aligned with national development priorities.

The institution is governed by a dual-board model, comprising representatives from both co-owning entities, with advisory participation from key development partners. This governance framework ensures that SUDESA remains shielded from political interference while maintaining legitimacy and responsiveness to national needs.

Internally, SUDESA is organised into four core departments:

1. **Infrastructure and Connectivity** – responsible for the planning, deployment, and maintenance of digital infrastructure, including fiber optics, data centers, and cloud systems.
2. **Digital Systems and Services** – tasked with the development and rollout of e-government platforms, digital identity systems, and sectoral applications in health, education, and agriculture.



3. **Advocacy and Capacity Building** – focused on public engagement, digital literacy, vocational training, and the promotion of inclusive access, particularly for women and marginalized groups.
4. **Institutional Development and Partnerships** – overseeing governance, compliance, donor coordination, and strategic partnerships with public, private, and multilateral actors.

SUDESA's legal status is under consideration for elevation to a special agency model, similar to ACTESA under COMESA, with potential privileges to facilitate cross-border cooperation, diplomatic engagement, and access to international funding mechanisms.

This structural design enables SUDESA to function as both a national coordination body and an operational delivery mechanism — bridging the gap between policy and implementation, and between infrastructure and social impact.

### 3. Mandate

SUDESA is mandated to serve as the principal institutional mechanism for the digital transformation of South Sudan, with a broader remit that extends into agriculture, social development, and the advancement of women's rights. Its mandate is derived from the shared commitment of the Government of South Sudan and the European Social Label (EUSL) to establish a neutral, technically competent, and socially responsive body capable of delivering long-term development outcomes.

At its core, SUDESA is tasked with the following:

- **Digital Infrastructure and Systems:** To design, coordinate, and oversee the deployment of national digital infrastructure, including fiber optics, cloud systems, and data centers, as well as the development of digital public service platforms such as digital identity, e-health, e-education, and e-agriculture.
- **Institutional Strengthening and Service Delivery:** To support the digitalisation of public institutions and enhance their capacity to deliver services efficiently, transparently, and equitably, particularly in underserved and rural areas.
- **Social Equity and Inclusion:** To ensure that digital transformation is inclusive by design, with targeted interventions to empower women, youth, and marginalized communities through access, training, and participation in the digital economy.
- **Vocational Training and Capacity Building:** To develop and implement national training programs that equip citizens with the skills required to participate in and sustain the digital economy, with a focus on job creation and long-term employability.
- **Partnerships and Resource Mobilisation:** To act as a convening platform for public-private partnerships, donor engagement, and multilateral cooperation, ensuring that all investments and interventions are aligned with national priorities and the Agenda for Social Equity 2074.

SUDESA's mandate is intentionally broad yet focused, enabling it to function as both a technical delivery unit and a strategic development partner. It is designed to evolve over time, adapting to emerging needs and opportunities while remaining anchored in its founding principles of neutrality, equity, and sustainability.



## 4. Unified Theory of Change

The Theory of Change for SUDESA integrates both its identity as a national digitalisation agenda and its function as a semi-autonomous institutional mechanism. It articulates the logical pathway through which strategic inputs and coordinated activities are expected to generate measurable outputs, sustainable outcomes, and long-term impact for the people of South Sudan.

### Impact

South Sudan achieves inclusive digital transformation and social equity through the establishment of a resilient, citizen-centered digital public infrastructure and a neutral institutional mechanism that ensures long-term service delivery, development coordination, and rights advancement.

### Outcomes

- Government institutions and public services are digitally enabled, accessible, and efficient.
- Citizens, particularly women and marginalized groups, benefit from improved access to services, information, and economic opportunities.
- A skilled national workforce emerges through targeted vocational training and digital capacity-building.
- SUDESA functions as a trusted, independent body coordinating national and international efforts in digitalisation, agriculture, social development, and women's rights.

### Outputs

- National fiber optic and digital infrastructure deployed across key regions.
- E-government platforms operational, including digital ID, health, education, and agriculture systems.
- Vocational training programs launched in partnership with UCE/UACE, Microsoft, and other stakeholders.
- SUDESA institutional framework established, staffed, and diplomatically recognized.
- Strategic partnerships formalised with development banks, bilateral donors, and private sector actors.

### Activities

- Design and implement a national digitalisation roadmap aligned with Agenda 2074.
- Deploy foundational infrastructure including fiber optics, data centers, and cloud systems.
- Develop and roll out digital public service platforms across priority sectors.
- Establish and operationalise SUDESA's governance, staffing, and internal systems.
- Launch vocational training and digital literacy programs targeting youth and women.
- Coordinate stakeholder engagement, advocacy, and public-private partnerships.

### Inputs

- Co-investment and political commitment from the Government of South Sudan and EUSL.
- Technical expertise and digital solutions from Microsoft and other global partners.



- Infrastructure and programmatic funding from AfDB, Swedfund, and bilateral donors.
- Policy alignment with Agenda for Social Equity 2074 and national development strategies.
- Institutional models and governance frameworks adapted from ACTESA and GSIA.

## 5. Budget Framework

The financial architecture of SUDESA is structured to reflect its dual nature: a national digitalisation mission and an institutional implementation unit. This framework ensures transparency, strategic allocation, and alignment with both capital investment needs and operational sustainability.

### **Total Estimated Budget (10-Year Mandate)**

**USD 90–110 million**

#### Component Breakdown

##### **A. Digitalisation Program**

This component covers the capital-intensive aspects of national digital transformation, including infrastructure deployment and digital systems development.

- **Infrastructure and Connectivity**  
Deployment of fiber optics, data centers, cloud systems, and power solutions.  
**Estimated Allocation:** USD 40–50 million
- **Digital Systems and Public Services**  
Development and rollout of e-government platforms, digital ID, health, education, and agriculture systems.  
**Estimated Allocation:** USD 20–30 million

##### **B. SUDESA Institutional Operations**

This component supports the day-to-day functioning of the SUDESA unit, including staffing, governance, coordination, and advocacy.

- **Institutional Development and Staffing**  
Salaries, operational costs, compliance, and internal systems.  
**Estimated Allocation:** USD 10–15 million
- **Advocacy, Capacity Building, and Outreach**  
Vocational training, digital literacy programs, stakeholder engagement, and public communications.  
**Estimated Allocation:** USD 10–15 million

#### **Budget Justification**

While South Africa's digitalisation investment stood at approximately USD 40 million, it was primarily focused on broadband infrastructure and market liberalisation. In contrast, SUDESA encompasses a broader transformation agenda, including foundational infrastructure, public service systems, and institutional development. The higher budget reflects the depth and scope of this mission, particularly the inclusion of fiber optics as a strategic enabler rather than a commercial objective.

#### **Funding Sources**

- **Government of South Sudan and EUSL** (core contributions)

- **Development Banks** (AfDB, World Bank)
- **Bilateral Donors** (SIDA, EU, GIZ)
- **Private Sector Partners** (Microsoft, telecom providers)
- **Public-Private Partnerships** (for infrastructure deployment and service delivery)

## 6. Strategic Alignment

SUDESA is strategically aligned with both national priorities and global development frameworks, ensuring that its interventions are not only technically sound but also politically legitimate and socially responsive. Its design reflects a deliberate effort to harmonise digital transformation with broader goals of equity, resilience, and inclusive growth.

### National Alignment

SUDESA is anchored in the Republic of South Sudan's national development agenda and is intended to serve as a delivery mechanism for key government priorities, including:

- **Public Sector Reform and Service Delivery**  
Supporting the digitalisation of ministries, agencies, and local governments to improve transparency, efficiency, and citizen access.
- **Youth Employment and Skills Development**  
Creating pathways for vocational training and job creation through digital infrastructure and service deployment.
- **Social Inclusion and Gender Equality**  
Ensuring that digital transformation benefits women, youth, and marginalized communities through targeted programs and inclusive design.
- **Peacebuilding and State Legitimacy**  
Strengthening institutional capacity and public trust through reliable, accessible, and citizen-centered services.

### Agenda for Social Equity 2074

SUDESA is a flagship initiative under the Agenda for Social Equity 2074 — a long-term strategic framework that guides all EUSL-supported interventions. It contributes directly to the Agenda's Social Global Goals, particularly:

- **Goal 1:** Universal Access to Digital Public Services
- **Goal 3:** Inclusive Economic Participation
- **Goal 5:** Institutional Integrity and Public Trust
- **Goal 7:** Gender Equity in Access and Opportunity

### Continental and Global Alignment

SUDESA is also aligned with broader regional and international frameworks, including:

- **Agenda 2063 (African Union)**

Aspiration 1: A prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development  
Aspiration 3: An Africa of good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law

- **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**

SDG 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure

SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals

By aligning with these frameworks, SUDESA positions South Sudan as a forward-looking, globally engaged actor in the digital development space — while ensuring that all interventions are grounded in the lived realities and aspirations of its people.

## 7. Job Creation

SUDESA is designed not only as a digital transformation initiative but also as a national employment engine. By investing in infrastructure, systems, and institutional capacity, the initiative creates a wide spectrum of job opportunities across technical, administrative, and community-based roles. These opportunities are especially critical in a context where youth unemployment, gender disparities, and regional inequalities remain pressing challenges.

### **Vocational Training and Workforce Development**

SUDESA will coordinate with national institutions such as the University for Civic Education (UCE), the University for African Civic Engagement (UACE), and international partners including Microsoft to establish a national vocational training framework. This framework will focus on equipping citizens with the practical skills required to participate in and sustain the digital economy.

Key training areas include:

- **Fiber Optics and Network Installation**  
Trenching, cable laying, splicing, and testing for national connectivity infrastructure.
- **IT Support and Systems Administration**  
Helpdesk services, hardware maintenance, and basic cybersecurity for public institutions.
- **Digital Literacy and Community Education**  
Training local educators and outreach workers to build digital awareness and inclusion.
- **Data Management and Public Service Operations**  
Supporting digitisation of records, e-government platforms, and service delivery.
- **Project Coordination and Field Implementation**  
Local-level roles in monitoring, logistics, and stakeholder engagement.

### **Inclusive Employment Strategy**

SUDESA's employment strategy prioritises inclusion, with targeted pathways for:

- **Youth:** Entry-level technical roles and apprenticeships.
- **Women:** Leadership in digital literacy, community outreach, and service delivery.
- **Marginalised Groups:** Tailored training and placement programs to ensure equitable access.

### **Estimated Employment Impact**



Over the ten-year mandate, SUDESA is expected to generate:

- **Thousands of direct jobs** through infrastructure deployment and institutional operations.
- **Tens of thousands of indirect jobs** through service delivery, training programs, and private sector engagement.

These employment pathways are not temporary. They are designed to build a sustainable digital workforce that will continue to support South Sudan's development long after the initial infrastructure is in place.

## 8. Digital Leapfrogging

SUDESA positions South Sudan to bypass outdated development models and adopt modern, scalable digital solutions from the outset — a strategy commonly referred to as digital leapfrogging. In contexts where legacy infrastructure is limited or absent, leapfrogging enables countries to accelerate progress by adopting cutting-edge technologies without the burden of retrofitting or dismantling obsolete systems.

### Strategic Advantages of Leapfrogging

- **No Legacy Constraints**  
South Sudan's limited digital infrastructure is not a disadvantage but an opportunity. Without entrenched legacy systems, the country can adopt cloud-native, mobile-first, and open-source solutions that are more agile, cost-effective, and scalable.
- **Cloud and Mobile Infrastructure**  
By leveraging cloud platforms and mobile networks, SUDESA can deliver public services to remote and underserved areas without the need for extensive physical infrastructure. This includes mobile-based digital ID, health records, and education platforms.
- **Open Standards and Interoperability**  
SUDESA will adopt open standards to ensure interoperability across systems and sectors, enabling seamless data exchange, integration, and future scalability.
- **Real-Time Governance and Data-Driven Policy**  
Digital platforms will enable real-time monitoring, feedback loops, and data analytics, allowing government institutions to respond more effectively to citizen needs and development challenges.

### Leapfrogging Use Cases in SUDESA

- **Digital Identity:** Implementing a secure, biometric-based digital ID system as a foundation for accessing all public services.
- **e-Health:** Deploying mobile health platforms for remote diagnostics, vaccination tracking, and maternal care.
- **e-Education:** Delivering digital learning content through tablets and mobile devices in schools and community centers.
- **e-Agriculture:** Providing farmers with real-time market data, weather forecasts, and extension services via SMS and mobile apps.



- **Digital Payments:** Facilitating government-to-person (G2P) transfers, subsidies, and social protection through mobile money platforms.

### **Positioning South Sudan as a Digital Pioneer**

Through SUDESA, South Sudan can emerge as a regional model for digital-first development — demonstrating how fragile and post-conflict states can harness technology not only for efficiency, but for equity, inclusion, and resilience. This leapfrogging strategy is not merely technical; it is a political and social commitment to building a future-ready nation.

## **9. Implementation Roadmap**

The implementation of SUDESA is structured across a ten-year horizon, divided into three strategic phases. Each phase builds upon the previous, ensuring that foundational infrastructure, institutional capacity, and service delivery mechanisms are established, scaled, and sustained.

### **Phase I: Foundation and Institutionalisation (Years 1–3)**

- Formal establishment of SUDESA as a semi-autonomous entity under joint ownership of EUSL and the Government of South Sudan.
- Development of legal frameworks, governance structures, and operational systems.
- Design and launch of the national digitalisation roadmap aligned with Agenda 2074.
- Initial deployment of fiber optics and connectivity infrastructure in priority zones.
- Pilot implementation of digital ID and selected e-government platforms.
- Launch of vocational training programs in partnership with UCE/UACE and Microsoft.

### **Phase II: Expansion and Service Delivery (Years 4–7)**

- Full-scale rollout of digital infrastructure across all administrative regions.
- Expansion of e-government platforms to include health, education, agriculture, and social protection.
- Institutional strengthening of government ministries through digital systems integration.
- Scaling of vocational training and employment programs, with emphasis on youth and women.
- Establishment of regional SUDESA field offices for coordination and outreach.
- Formalisation of strategic partnerships with development banks, donors, and private sector actors.

### **Phase III: Consolidation and Sustainability (Years 8–10)**

- Transition from infrastructure deployment to service optimisation and citizen engagement.
- Integration of real-time data systems for governance, planning, and monitoring.
- Institutional review and adaptation of SUDESA's mandate for long-term sustainability.
- Expansion of cross-border cooperation and regional digital development initiatives.
- Evaluation of impact against Agenda 2074 Social Global Goals and national benchmarks.
- Preparation for renewal or transformation of SUDESA beyond its initial mandate.

### **Cross-Cutting Priorities**

- Continuous stakeholder engagement and public communication.
- Monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) systems embedded from inception.
- Gender equity and social inclusion mainstreamed across all phases.
- Risk management and adaptive planning to respond to evolving national contexts.

## **10. Partnerships and Engagement**

SUDESA is designed as a multi-stakeholder platform that brings together public institutions, private sector actors, development partners, and civil society in a coordinated effort to advance digital equity and social development in South Sudan. Its partnership model is grounded in transparency, mutual accountability, and alignment with national and global priorities.

### **Public Sector Engagement**

SUDESA will work in close coordination with key ministries, departments, and agencies of the Government of South Sudan, including:

- Ministry of Information, Communication Technology and Postal Services
- Ministry of Finance and Planning
- Ministry of General Education and Instruction
- Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security
- Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare

These institutions will serve as both beneficiaries and co-implementers of digital systems and services, with SUDESA providing technical support, capacity building, and coordination.

### **Private Sector and Technology Partners**

Strategic partnerships with global technology providers will be central to SUDESA's success. Microsoft is identified as a preferred partner for cloud infrastructure, digital platforms, and capacity-building programs. Additional partnerships will be pursued with:

- Telecom providers for infrastructure deployment and last-mile connectivity
- Local ICT firms for system integration, maintenance, and support
- Certification bodies for vocational training and workforce development

### **Development Partners and Donors**

SUDESA will engage with multilateral and bilateral development partners to mobilise financial and technical resources. Priority partners include:

- African Development Bank (AfDB)
- Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA)
- Swedfund and the Swedish AP Funds
- European Union and GIZ



- United Nations agencies with digital mandates (e.g. UNDP, ITU)

These partners will be invited to participate in a structured donor coordination mechanism under SUDESA's institutional framework.

### **Civil Society and Community Engagement**

To ensure that digital transformation is inclusive and responsive, SUDESA will engage civil society organisations, community-based groups, and advocacy networks. These actors will play a critical role in:

- Promoting digital literacy and awareness
- Monitoring service delivery and accountability
- Advocating for the rights of women, youth, and marginalized populations

### **Diplomatic and Regional Cooperation**

SUDESA's institutional model allows for potential diplomatic recognition and cross-border engagement. This opens pathways for regional cooperation on digital infrastructure, data governance, and shared service platforms — positioning South Sudan as a contributor to continental digital integration under Agenda 2063.

## **11. Conclusion**

SUDESA represents a bold and necessary step toward a digitally empowered and socially equitable South Sudan. It is not a conventional development project, but a long-term institutional and national transformation agenda — one that recognises the power of digital infrastructure, inclusive governance, and strategic partnerships to reshape the trajectory of a nation.

By combining a clear Theory of Change with a robust institutional structure, a realistic budget framework, and a phased implementation roadmap, SUDESA offers a credible and actionable pathway for achieving the goals set forth in the Agenda for Social Equity 2074. It is designed to be adaptive, inclusive, and resilient — capable of responding to the evolving needs of the country while remaining anchored in its founding principles of neutrality, equity, and sustainability.

As South Sudan stands at the threshold of a new digital era, SUDESA provides the institutional vehicle and strategic vision to ensure that this transformation is not only technologically sound, but socially just. It is an invitation to all partners — public, private, and multilateral — to join in building a future where digitalisation serves the people, strengthens the state, and advances the common good.