

Sustainable Development Goals Tracker

DIJIBOUTI 2022
Voluntary National Review





REPUBLIQUE DE DJIBOUTI

MINISTRE DES AFFAIRES ETRANGERES
ET DE LA COOPERATION INTERNATIONALE

EXAMEN NATIONAL VOLONTAIRE

Djibouti « Initiative innovante pour une Éducation robuste, un renforcement de la condition de vie des femmes et des filles et un écosystème résilient après COVID 19 »



Forum Politique de Haut Niveau sur le développement durable des Nations Unies
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Djibouti VNR 2022 Report



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Djibouti
2022

Voluntary National Review (VNR)

VNRs Submitted: 1 (25%)



SDGs Achieved: 0 (0%)

SDGs On-Track: 0 (0%)

SDGs Off-Track: 17 (100%)

SDGs No Progress: 0 (0%)



Introduction

Djibouti's 2022 Voluntary National Review (VNR) marks the country's first comprehensive assessment of its progress towards the United Nations (UN) 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), presented at the High-Level Political Forum under the theme "Building back better from the COVID-19 pandemic while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda." The review underscores Djibouti's position as a stable and peaceful democracy in a region often affected by conflict, displacement, and climate shocks, while highlighting its emergence as a rapidly developing economic hub. Anchored in the long-term vision of *Vision Djibouti 2035* and operationalised through the Strategy for Accelerated Growth and Promotion of Employment (SCAPE 2015–2019) and the current National Development Plan, Djibouti ICI (Inclusion, Connectivity, Institutions) 2020–2024, the VNR reflects a whole-of-society approach to SDG implementation. It outlines the country's efforts to manage the COVID-19 crisis, strengthen institutional frameworks, and support a disproportionately large refugee population, all while navigating structural development challenges and striving to accelerate inclusive national progress (United Nations, 2022a; United Nations, 2022b).



VNR Framework Approach to assess Djibouti's Progress Towards the 2030 Agenda

A VNR is a self-assessment process through which the UN Member States review and report on their progress in implementing the **2030 Agenda** for Sustainable Development and its **17 SDGs**. These reviews are **voluntary, country-led, and inclusive**, allowing each nation to share experiences, identify challenges, and highlight best practices.

VNRs are essential because they promote accountability and transparency in the implementation of the SDGs, allowing countries to demonstrate their commitment and progress openly. They help governments track progress, identify gaps, and strengthen policies, ensuring that national development strategies remain aligned with the **2030 Agenda**. Moreover, VNRs facilitate knowledge sharing among nations by enabling the exchange of experiences, innovations, and lessons learned. They also encourage multi-stakeholder participation, bringing together government institutions, civil society, the private sector, and academia in a collaborative effort to advance sustainable development. Finally, the VNRs serve as the foundation for the UN High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) reviews, providing evidence-based insights that guide global discussions on accelerating progress towards achieving the SDGs.

Objectives of VNRs

- Assess a country's progress towards achieving the SDGs.
- Identify key challenges and barriers to implementation.
- Share lessons learned and innovative approaches.
- Mobilise support, partnerships, and policy coherence for sustainable development.

Methodology to Measure VNRs Progress

VNRs assess development performance using quantitative and qualitative data, aligning national priorities with SDG targets. Countries use available indicators and national statistics to evaluate whether they are:

- Achieved, on-track, moderately off-track, seriously off-track, no progress;
- Facing data gaps or methodological challenges.

Due to incomplete or inconsistent data, some assessments rely on proxy indicators or qualitative descriptions of progress. Each SDG is rated on a **0-5 scale** to measure Djibouti's progress towards the **2030 Agenda**.

- 0 – No Progress:** No measurable progress or data available.
- 1 – Severely Off-Track:** Very little advancement; major gaps persist.
- 2 – Off-Track:** Limited progress with minimal improvement.
- 3 – Moderately Off-Track:** Some progress achieved, but key challenges remain.
- 4 – On-Track:** Noticeable progress made; close to achieving the target.
- 5 – Achieved:** Goal fully met with sustained performance and monitoring in place.

This scale helps to quantify Djibouti's SDG performance, showing where strong progress exists and where further policy actions are needed. VNRs are vital tools for evaluating and accelerating progress towards the **2030 Agenda**. They enable countries to reflect on achievements, recognise shortcomings, and strengthen collective action for a more sustainable and equitable world.

Explanation of Analysis (Applied to Djibouti SDG Report)

This analysis applies the *VNR framework* to Djibouti’s SDG Report. Initially, the report was processed using an AI tool to extract, summarise, and categorise data related to the **17 SDGs**. Following the AI review, the information was cross-verified by two independent human experts to ensure factual accuracy, contextual relevance, and alignment with the official UN SDG indicators. This validation step strengthened the reliability of the data interpretation.

Finally, a team of SDG experts conducted an in-depth qualitative and quantitative analysis to identify key challenges, potential solutions, and policy-level recommendations. The comprehensive approach, integrating AI-driven insights with expert validation, provides a balanced, evidence-based assessment of Djibouti’s progress towards achieving economic growth, highlighting strategic areas for improvement, innovation, and sustainability.

Overall Progress

Table 1 presents Djibouti’s progress across the **17 SDGs**, with ratings assigned to each goal based on the report’s findings. The ratings reflect the extent of progress made, highlight areas where challenges have been addressed, and identify those that remain unresolved.

Table 1. SDG Progress Scoring

Score: 2		1 NO POVERTY 
Justification	- Poverty remains a deep-rooted structural issue in Djibouti despite periods of economic growth. - The 2017 Household Survey (EDAM-4) shows an extreme poverty rate of 21.1% and an overall poverty rate of 35.8%, with rural areas almost four times more affected than urban centres. - Poverty is further compounded by very high unemployment—47% nationally, rising to 86.2% among young people and 38.2% among women. While monetary poverty has declined, deprivation remains pronounced in sanitation, housing, and access to basic equipment. - These indicators highlight the need for sustained interventions targeting both monetary and non-monetary dimensions of poverty.	
Challenges	- Despite progress, several constraints limit the effectiveness of current interventions. Unemployment remains extremely high, preventing households from achieving sustainable improvements in living standards. - Economic gains are unevenly distributed, and significant disparities persist between the capital and the interior regions. - Key areas of deprivation—such as sanitation (64%), inadequate building materials (61%), and limited ownership of essential equipment (51%)—continue to affect a large segment of the population. - Additionally, the lack of timely and disaggregated poverty data weakens the government’s ability to design agile, evidence-based policies.	

<i>Progress/ Solutions</i>	- Major unresolved issues include closing the persistent rural-urban divide, ensuring that poverty reduction initiatives reach the most remote and disadvantaged communities. - Expanding social protection to the informal sector and refugees remains essential, as these groups remain largely unprotected and highly vulnerable to shocks. Improving employment opportunities—particularly for youth and women—also remains a critical priority for achieving long-term poverty reduction. - Without addressing these structural gaps, poverty is likely to persist and continue hindering inclusive and sustainable development.
<i>Unsolved Challenges</i>	- Key unresolved issues include reducing the stark socio-economic disparities between the capital and rural regions, and expanding social protection coverage to informal workers and refugees. - Without addressing these gaps, structural poverty will persist, undermining long-term development goals and inclusive growth.

2 ZERO HUNGER



Score : 2	
<i>Justification</i>	- Djibouti has made significant progress in reducing malnutrition, with the prevalence of undernourishment falling from around 40% in 2001 to 16.2% in 2019. - Despite these gains, the country remains highly dependent on food imports, making it vulnerable to global price fluctuations and supply chain disruptions. - Around 11% of households continue to face severe food insecurity, particularly in rural areas.
<i>Challenges</i>	- The country faces structural challenges, including achieving food sovereignty in an arid climate with limited arable land. - Rural households experience the highest levels of food insecurity, and dependence on imports leaves the population exposed to external shocks.
<i>Progress/ Solutions</i>	- In response, Djibouti launched the “Zero Hunger” strategy in 2018. - Complementary programmes provide food vouchers and support the agricultural and fisheries sectors to enhance local food availability. - These measures aim to improve access to nutritious food and strengthen domestic production capacity.
<i>Unsolved Challenges</i>	- Key unresolved issues include reducing food insecurity in rural regions—where 46% of households remain vulnerable—and building resilience against global market volatility. Without addressing these structural vulnerabilities, sustainable food security remains at risk.



Score: 3

Justification	- Djibouti experienced a relatively limited direct health impact from COVID-19, recording 11,602 cases, 11,447 recoveries, and 155 deaths by June 2021, with a case-fatality rate of 1.33%, well below the African average. - However, the pandemic generated significant socio-economic disruptions. - Lockdown measures and mobility restrictions sharply reduced private investment, with fixed capital formation falling to 8.1% of GDP and FDI dropping from 5.5% to 4.9% of GDP between 2019 and 2020. - Vulnerable households were disproportionately affected, particularly women and informal-sector workers whose livelihoods were disrupted by the economic slowdown.
Challenges	- Economic repercussions were uneven across sectors, with services—particularly tourism, transport, hospitality, and retail—being the hardest hit. International passenger arrivals fell by more than 50% in 2020. - Lockdowns exacerbated inequalities, as nearly 70% of surveyed households lacked the resources to cope with prolonged income loss. - Female-headed households and women working in informal jobs were especially vulnerable. At the same time, Djibouti's health system remains under strain due to population growth, regional disparities, and additional pressures linked to refugees and migrants.
Progress/Solutions	- Despite these pressures, Djibouti demonstrated strong public health management and achieved notable improvements in maternal and child health. - Maternal mortality declined significantly—from 383 per 100,000 live births in 2012 to around 248 in 2019. - The government expanded primary healthcare facilities, strengthened surveillance, and rolled out extensive vaccination campaigns. Policy responses included the Universal Health Insurance law and social assistance measures to protect vulnerable groups. These interventions helped cushion income losses and maintain essential health services during the pandemic.
Unsolved Challenges	- Key outstanding issues include reducing persistent inequalities in access to quality healthcare between urban and remote regions and ensuring long-term financial sustainability for universal health coverage. - The health system must strengthen its capacity to absorb demographic growth and future crises while maintaining essential services. - Maternal mortality, though improving, remains above global targets. Without addressing these structural gaps, progress in health outcomes may remain uneven and vulnerable to future shocks.



Score: 3

Justification	- Access to basic education in Djibouti has improved markedly, with enrolment rates reaching around 90% and strong gender parity at the primary level. - These gains reflect efforts to broaden access and reduce historical inequalities in education.
Challenges	- Despite high enrolment, dropout rates remain high, and completion rates are low. - Secondary enrolment declines sharply, particularly for girls, and the quality of education continues to fall short of labour market requirements.

Progress/ Solutions	- The Ministry of Education has successfully integrated refugee children into the national system. - Programmes to modernise the curriculum and strengthen technical and vocational education and training (TVET) are underway to better align skills with labour market needs.
Unsolved Challenges	- Key unresolved issues include reducing dropout rates and ensuring that youth, especially in rural areas, transition successfully to secondary or tertiary education and employment. - Addressing these gaps is critical for sustainable human capital development.

5 GENDER EQUALITY



Score: 2	
Justification	- Djibouti has made notable progress in political representation, with women holding 26% of parliamentary seats (up from 10% in 2013) and 25% of ministerial positions. - Despite these gains, harmful practices such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) remain widespread, and women's economic participation continues to lag behind men.
Challenges	- FGM remains prevalent despite declining rates, and economic opportunities for women are still limited. - Gaps persist in access to higher education and formal employment, constraining women's full participation in society.
Progress/ Solutions	- Legal frameworks, including the Family Code, guarantee women's property rights and prohibit underage marriage. - A national strategy aimed at the total abandonment of FGM has been implemented, alongside efforts to promote women's participation in public and economic life.
Unsolved Challenges	- Key unresolved issues include completely eradicating FGM and other harmful traditional practices, as well as closing the gender gap in higher education and formal employment. - Achieving these goals is essential for sustainable gender equality and inclusive development.

6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION



Score: 2	
Justification	- Access to water remains a critical challenge in Djibouti, an arid country. - While national statistics suggest 90% access in 2017, rural coverage is only around 50%. - Water scarcity is further compounded by climate change and environmental stressors.
Challenges	- Chronic water stress persists, with aquifer salinization and significant disparities between the capital and rural areas. Sanitation coverage remains lower than water access, limiting overall water security and public health outcomes.
Progress/ Solutions	- To address shortages, a major cross-border water pipeline from Ethiopia has been completed, and desalination projects are underway. - These initiatives aim to increase the supply of fresh water and improve overall access across the country.

Unsolved Challenges	- Key unresolved issues include ensuring sustainable water management amid climate change and population growth, and improving sanitation infrastructure in rural and urban areas. - Addressing these challenges is essential for long-term water security.
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7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY



Score : 3	
Justification	- Djibouti has significant potential for renewable energy, including geothermal, wind, and solar resources, and aims to achieve 100% green energy. - Hydroelectric power is also supplied through interconnection with Ethiopia, supporting the country's energy needs.
Challenges	- Electricity costs remain high, limiting business competitiveness, and access to power is uneven, with rural areas less well served than the capital. Ensuring reliable and affordable electricity for all remains a key challenge.
Progress/Solutions	- Projects such as the Red Sea Power wind farm and various solar plants have been developed to expand renewable energy generation. - The national "Vision 2035" strategy prioritises the energy transition and supports investment in sustainable energy infrastructure.
Unsolved Challenges	- Key unresolved issues include achieving full energy independence and extending grid access to remote rural communities. - Overcoming these barriers is critical for inclusive development and sustainable economic growth.

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



Score : 2	
Justification	- Prior to COVID-19, Djibouti experienced strong economic growth, averaging around 6% between 2013 and 2019. - Despite this, growth has not translated into sufficient job creation, and unemployment remains extremely high at approximately 48%, particularly among youth.
Challenges	- The economy remains heavily reliant on capital-intensive logistics and port activities, which generate relatively few jobs. - The informal sector is large, and youth face limited access to stable, formal employment, exacerbating social and economic vulnerabilities.
Progress/Solutions	- The government has implemented the National Employment Policy and the "Djibouti ICI" plan to promote economic diversification and strengthen human capital. - These initiatives aim to expand opportunities in sectors beyond traditional logistics and port services.
Unsolved Challenges	- Key unresolved issues include reducing youth unemployment and diversifying the economy to create inclusive growth. - Expanding labour-intensive sectors and improving workforce skills are essential to achieve sustainable employment outcomes.



Score: 3

Justification	- Djibouti has established itself as a strategic regional logistics hub, capitalising on its geographic position at the crossroads of major shipping routes. - World-class port infrastructure, the Ethiopia–Djibouti railway, and expanding free zones have strengthened the country’s role in regional trade and connectivity. - These assets underpin national economic ambitions and support long-term development goals. - However, economic growth driven by these large-scale investments has not been sufficient to reduce unemployment and poverty, highlighting the need to ensure that infrastructure-led development translates into broader socio-economic benefits.
Challenges	- Despite robust infrastructure growth, the economic gains have not produced sufficient employment or reduced poverty at the expected pace. - By the end of the SCAPE period, growth reached 6.6% in 2019, yet unemployment remained at 48%, with youth unemployment at 70%. - A significant proportion of the population—especially in rural areas—continued to experience extreme poverty. - The COVID-19 pandemic further slowed economic activity, leading to revenue losses for businesses and increased fiscal pressure on the state, which faced over US\$83 million in additional expenditures. - These constraints hinder the transformative impact of infrastructure on human development.
Progress/ Solutions	- Significant progress has been made through the modernisation and expansion of port facilities—such as the Djibouti Multipurpose Port—and the operationalisation of the Ethiopia–Djibouti railway. - Digital transformation strategies are being implemented to improve efficiency, enhance service delivery, and support industrial development. Since adopting the SDGs in 2015, Djibouti has integrated the 2030 Agenda into its national planning, embedding SDG priorities in Vision Djibouti 2035, the SCAPE strategy, and the current National Development Plan. - The mobilisation of substantial foreign investment has enabled the development of ultra-modern infrastructure and strengthened the country’s economic positioning.
Unsolved Challenges	- Key unresolved issues include ensuring that infrastructure investment drives inclusive industrialisation and creates meaningful employment opportunities. - Local value-addition remains limited, and the benefits of major investments do not yet extend evenly across society, particularly to young people and rural populations. - Strengthening institutional capacity, improving the business environment, and deepening industrial development remain critical to unlocking the full potential of Djibouti’s strategic assets. - Without sustained efforts to link infrastructure growth with job creation and poverty reduction, progress under SDG 9 will remain uneven.



Score: 2

Justification	- Inequality remains persistently high, with a Gini coefficient of 0.42, indicating significant disparities in income and opportunity. A strong spatial divide separates Djibouti City from the interior regions, where access to services, jobs, and infrastructure is more limited. - The uneven distribution of wealth generated by the national logistics hub further reinforces these inequalities, leaving many communities excluded from the benefits of economic growth. - Refugee populations, while protected by progressive national policies, add additional pressure to vulnerable host communities whose resources are already stretched.
Challenges	- Despite progress, major challenges remain. - Economic opportunities continue to be heavily concentrated in Djibouti City, limiting regional development and deepening territorial disparities. - Host communities face limited employment prospects and basic-service shortages, which are amplified by the presence of refugee populations. - The benefits of the logistics sector do not sufficiently reach poorer households, leaving large segments of the population vulnerable to shocks. - Limited administrative capacity in regional areas further slows the effective implementation of decentralisation.
Progress/Solutions	- The government has initiated decentralisation reforms to improve regional governance and rebalance access to public services outside the capital. - A landmark step was the adoption of the 2017 laws enabling refugee inclusion in national education and health systems—an internationally recognised best practice. - These reforms strengthen social cohesion and provide refugees with pathways to self-reliance while supporting host communities. - Ongoing investments in local development, service delivery, and governance structures aim to reduce spatial inequalities and promote a more equitable distribution of national growth.
Unsolved Challenges	- Reducing the entrenched spatial divide between the capital and the interior regions remains an unresolved priority. - The full socio-economic integration of refugees and migrants is still incomplete, particularly in terms of employment, housing, and long-term resilience. - Ensuring that national growth—especially from the logistics hub—is more inclusively shared requires stronger regional development strategies and targeted social policies. Without sustained investment and institutional strengthening, both inequality and regional disparities are likely to persist.



Score: 2

Justification	- Rapid urbanisation, with 78% of the population concentrated in the capital, has resulted in a significant expansion of informal settlements. - This accelerated growth has outpaced the capacity of formal housing markets and public services, leaving many households in precarious living conditions. - The concentration of people in densely populated urban areas continues to place pressure on already limited resources, creating persistent inequalities in access to housing, sanitation, and essential urban services. - These dynamics justify urgent and sustained action to improve the quality, accessibility, and inclusiveness of urban development.
Challenges	- Despite progress, the “Zero Slum” programme faces considerable implementation difficulties, including resource constraints, technical bottlenecks, and coordination gaps among stakeholders. - Informal settlements continue to expand faster than they can be formalised or upgraded. Housing shortages persist, waste management systems remain under strain, and essential services struggle to keep pace with growing demand. - Urban growth has also increased environmental pressures, particularly in waste disposal and sanitation, further complicating city management.
Progress/ Solutions	- The Government has prioritised urban restructuring through the “Zero Slum” programme, which seeks to rehabilitate and regularise precarious neighbourhoods. - Efforts are also underway to update and modernise urban planning master plans, aiming to guide future development more effectively and ensure better land use management. - These measures are designed to enhance service delivery, promote sustainable urban expansion, and provide safer, more dignified living environments. Gradual upgrades to infrastructure and community services demonstrate a commitment to addressing long-standing urban challenges.
Unsolved Challenges	- Managing rapid urban expansion remains a major unresolved issue, especially in ensuring that urbanisation translates into improved living standards for all residents. - The provision of affordable, adequate housing continues to lag behind population growth, leaving many families in vulnerable conditions. Long-term urban resilience is not yet fully secured, as infrastructure development, service provision, and environmental management require sustained and more coordinated investment. Without comprehensive and inclusive urban policies, informal settlements and service gaps are likely to persist.



Score: 2

Justification	- Waste generation and pollution continue to put significant pressure on both land and marine ecosystems. Improper waste disposal, limited recycling systems, and expanding urban activities contribute to soil degradation, water contamination, and damage to coastal and marine habitats. - These environmental stresses threaten biodiversity, reduce ecosystem resilience, and undermine livelihoods that depend on natural resources. Addressing these issues is therefore essential for protecting national ecological assets and supporting sustainable development.
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Challenges	- Despite these efforts, enforcement of environmental regulations remains weak. Limited institutional capacity, insufficient monitoring systems, and overlapping mandates reduce the effectiveness of existing policies. - Waste management infrastructure is not yet adequate to meet growing demand, and illegal dumping continues in both urban and rural areas. These gaps hinder the country's ability to control pollution, protect ecosystems, and ensure compliance with environmental standards.
Progress/ Solutions	- The Government has developed and implemented biodiversity conservation measures through National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAP). These frameworks guide conservation efforts, habitat protection, and species management. - Environmental awareness campaigns have also been launched to encourage more responsible behaviour among communities, schools, and businesses. - Together, these initiatives aim to strengthen environmental stewardship, reduce pollution, and promote sustainable resource use.
Unsolved Challenges	- Industrial and household waste remain persistent problems, with long-term solutions still lacking. - Existing waste treatment facilities are insufficient, and recycling or waste-to-energy options are not widely available. Marine pollution and landfill pressures continue to increase, threatening biodiversity and environmental health. - A comprehensive, integrated waste management system—supported by stronger enforcement and investment—remains an urgent and unresolved priority.



Score: 2	
Justification	- Djibouti is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, facing recurring droughts, periodic floods, and the long-term threat of sea-level rise. - These climate shocks severely undermine rural livelihoods, degrade natural resources, and intensify water scarcity. - The frequency and intensity of extreme events continue to strain communities and ecosystems, making climate resilience a national development priority. Strong political commitment has already been demonstrated, but vulnerabilities remain acute, particularly in remote pastoral areas.
Challenges	- Despite progress, major challenges persist. Climate financing remains limited, restricting the scale and speed of adaptation interventions. - High exposure to climate shocks continues to threaten households, especially those dependent on rain-fed livelihoods. Existing protective infrastructure is insufficient to cope with recurrent droughts and floods. - Institutional capacity constraints also slow the coordination and expansion of climate-resilient development programmes.
Progress/ Solutions	- The country has advanced several climate adaptation initiatives, including the implementation of the National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA). Investments have been directed towards water and pasture management, with efforts reinforced through Great Green Wall (GGW) projects that aim to combat land degradation. - Infrastructure solutions, such as the construction of dams and protective structures against flooding, also contribute to strengthening community resilience. These measures reflect a growing institutional and technical focus on climate preparedness.

Unsolved Challenges	- Djibouti still lacks a comprehensive national resilience framework capable of fully addressing the increasing frequency and severity of climate-related hazards. - Mobilising sufficient and predictable climate finance remains a key unresolved issue. - Long-term resilience will require integrated planning, robust data systems, and sustained investments in climate-smart infrastructure. Without these, communities—particularly rural and pastoral populations—will remain at high risk from future extreme weather events.
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Score: 3	
Justification	- Djibouti's marine environment hosts a remarkable concentration of biodiversity, including extensive coral systems with 167 identified species and mangrove areas covering 700–800 hectares. - These ecosystems provide vital ecological services and support fisheries, tourism, and coastal livelihoods. However, they face growing threats from pollution, habitat degradation, and pressures linked to expanding port activities. - Maritime traffic, wastewater discharge, and the risk of oil spills contribute to the erosion of fragile marine habitats, placing coral reefs and coastal ecosystems under increasing strain.
Challenges	- Despite substantial efforts, significant challenges remain. Wastewater pollution, sedimentation, and coastal erosion continue to affect reef health and water quality. - Monitoring capacity is limited, resulting in weak enforcement of marine protection regulations. - Economic priorities linked to port expansion and maritime activities create additional pressure on coastal zones, increasing the difficulty of balancing ecological preservation with development needs. Persistent risks of pollution from shipping traffic further complicate conservation efforts.
Progress/Solutions	- The Government has established several Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), notably around the Moucha and Maskali islands, to safeguard sensitive habitats and strengthen biodiversity conservation. - Protective measures for coral reefs and mangrove ecosystems have been integrated into national strategies, reflecting a commitment to marine stewardship. Djibouti also participates in regional cooperation initiatives focused on preserving the Red Sea environment, recognising that ecological pressures transcend national borders. - These combined actions form a growing foundation for sustainable marine management.
Unsolved Challenges	- Striking an effective balance between economic exploitation of marine resources and long-term conservation remains an unresolved goal. - Monitoring systems for MPAs are still insufficient, and enforcement mechanisms lack the institutional strength required to ensure full compliance. Pollution control, habitat restoration, and sustainable coastal planning require sustained investment and improved coordination. Without comprehensive and well-resourced protection frameworks, Djibouti's rich marine biodiversity will continue to face mounting risks from human activity and environmental change.



Score: 2

Justification	- Djibouti faces severe land degradation, affecting 34.93% of its territory, with forest areas shrinking and vegetation cover declining due to overgrazing and climate variability. - These pressures have accelerated desertification and contributed to biodiversity loss, threatening key ecosystems such as mountain habitats and dryland forests. - The degradation of land and natural resources directly impacts rural livelihoods, reduces soil productivity, and increases vulnerability to climate shocks. - Protecting terrestrial ecosystems is therefore essential for environmental stability and long-term development.
Challenges	- Despite ongoing efforts, the country continues to struggle with persistent desertification, drought, and the loss of vegetative cover. - Overgrazing, unsustainable land use, and water scarcity further weaken already fragile ecosystems. - Mountain biodiversity remains particularly under-protected, with only 1.4% of these ecosystems currently designated as protected areas. Limited institutional capacity and insufficient resources hinder the expansion and effective management of conservation programmes.
Progress/ Solutions	- The country has expanded protected areas and implemented targeted reforestation initiatives, including the planting of 10,000 trees on 7 hectares in Hanlé. - Conservation efforts continue in important biodiversity sites such as Day Forest, while national programmes support restoration of degraded lands. Djibouti is also engaged in the GGW initiative, aiming to curb desertification and restore ecological balance across dryland zones. - These measures demonstrate strong national commitment to preserving biodiversity and rehabilitating fragile ecosystems.
Unsolved Challenges	- Halting the spread of desertification and restoring degraded pastoral lands remain major unresolved priorities. - Long-term sustainability requires broader landscape restoration, stronger monitoring systems, and improved management of natural resources. - Expanding protection for mountain ecosystems and other sensitive habitats is still necessary to safeguard biodiversity. Without sustained investment and strengthened ecological governance, land degradation and loss of habitats are likely to continue.



Score: 3

Justification	- Governance challenges continue to affect national productivity, public service delivery, and institutional performance. Although Djibouti remains politically stable in a volatile region and plays an important role in regional mediation, internal governance gaps persist. - Public confidence has been weakened by perceptions of declining institutional effectiveness and corruption. - These issues justify the need for stronger, more transparent, and more accountable governance systems to support social cohesion, economic development, and the achievement of the SDGs.
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Challenges	- Despite reforms, inefficiencies in public administration continue to limit service delivery and overall government performance. Governance indicators have shown declining public perceptions, reflecting concerns about transparency, responsiveness, and bureaucratic delays. - Limited institutional capacity also affects the consistency and effectiveness of decision-making. Coordination challenges persist—particularly in SDG monitoring—hindering the integration of policies across ministries and preventing stronger accountability mechanisms.
Progress/ Solutions	- Significant progress has been made in strengthening the institutional framework. Civil registry coverage is high, with 92.6% of children under five registered, improving legal identity and access to services. - New laws guaranteeing refugee protection mark an important human rights advancement. - Reforms include the modernisation of the justice system, the establishment of the Court of Auditors, and the creation of the National Human Rights Commission. - These actions demonstrate strong political will to enhance governance, rule of law, and accountability.
Unsolved Challenges	- Further strengthening governance institutions remains essential for improving public trust and supporting long-term development. - Combating corruption, enhancing administrative efficiency, and ensuring full implementation of judicial reforms are key unresolved priorities. Institutional coordination must be significantly improved to ensure reliable SDG reporting and strategic planning. Without deeper reforms and greater transparency, governance gaps will continue to constrain national development and hinder progress towards inclusive and accountable institutions.

17 PARTNERSHIPS
FOR THE GOALS



Score: 3	
Justification	- Djibouti relies heavily on international partnerships due to its limited domestic resources and narrow revenue base. - The country acts as a strategic hub for global and regional cooperation, hosting several foreign military bases and serving as a vital gateway for regional trade. - Despite these advantages, heavy public debt accumulated through major infrastructure projects poses increasing fiscal pressure. - Strong external engagement remains essential to sustain development progress and to support national priorities, including SDG implementation.
Challenges	- Debt vulnerabilities remain a major concern, with limited domestic revenue—around 20% of GDP—restricting the government's ability to self-finance development. - Dependence on external resources creates exposure to global economic shifts and donor priorities. - Data availability and quality gaps significantly hinder effective SDG monitoring and evidence-based policymaking. - Ensuring sustained financing while improving governance frameworks poses additional challenges.

<i>Progress/ Solutions</i>	- Foreign Direct Investment has risen significantly, reaching US\$265 million in 2018, while Official Development Assistance for biodiversity alone has increased to US\$9.1 million. - Djibouti enjoys strong collaboration with UN agencies, development banks, and international partners supporting the “Djibouti ICI” plan and sectoral reforms. - The country also plays an active role in South-South cooperation, enhancing knowledge exchange and regional integration. These partnerships continue to mobilise financial resources, technical expertise, and institutional support.
<i>Unsolved Challenges</i>	- Long-term financing gaps persist, and greater diversification of funding sources is needed to ensure sustainable development. - Strengthening the national statistical system remains an urgent priority to enhance SDG tracking, planning, and transparency. - Djibouti must continue to balance reliance on external partnerships with the development of stronger domestic resource mobilisation and institutional capacity. Without comprehensive reforms, fiscal pressures and data limitations will continue to constrain progress.

Source: (United Nations, 2022a; United Nations, 2022b).

Major Challenges

- **Unemployment:** Structural unemployment remains one of Djibouti’s most serious socio-economic challenges. National unemployment is estimated at 48%, while youth unemployment is close to 70%, leaving a large proportion of the population without stable income. This situation threatens social stability and slows progress towards inclusive human development.
- **Climate Vulnerability:** Djibouti is highly exposed to climate hazards such as recurrent droughts, flash floods, and long-term sea-level rise. These shocks undermine water security, damage infrastructure, and erode rural livelihoods, particularly for pastoral households. Limited climate financing and fragile ecosystems further intensify the country’s vulnerability.
- **Data Gaps:** A persistent lack of up-to-date, reliable, and disaggregated data continues to hinder effective SDG monitoring and evidence-based policymaking. Weak coordination among institutions and limited analytical capacity make it difficult to assess progress, identify emerging challenges, and design targeted interventions.
- **Regional Instability:** Located in a volatile regional context, Djibouti is affected by conflicts and crises in neighbouring countries. It hosts a large number of refugees and migrants, placing additional pressure on public services and local labour markets. Ongoing regional insecurity also heightens economic, social, and humanitarian risks.

Key Lessons Learned

- **Resilience through Stability:** Djibouti’s sustained political stability has enabled the government to pursue long-term development planning, including Vision 2035. This stability has also allowed the country to navigate regional tensions and maintain a favourable environment for investment and international partnerships.

- **Inclusion of Refugees:** The 2017 law integrating refugees into national health and education systems stands as a leading example of the humanitarian–development nexus in practice. This approach promotes social cohesion, supports vulnerable populations, and strengthens service delivery for both refugees and host communities.
- **Infrastructure as a Driver of Transformation:** Strategic investment in ports, railways, and logistics infrastructure has allowed Djibouti to establish itself as a regional trade and transport hub. These investments have stimulated economic growth, although further action is needed to ensure the benefits are shared more inclusively across all regions and social groups.
- **Adaptability in Times of Crisis:** Djibouti’s rapid and coordinated response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including the launch of the “Pacte National Solidaire,” demonstrated strong institutional adaptability. The country showed an ability to mobilise resources quickly, protect vulnerable groups, and maintain essential services during a major global crisis.

Notable Contribution

- **Adoption of Vision Djibouti 2035 (2014):** Djibouti introduced a long-term national development framework that sets out a clear roadmap for economic transformation, social progress, and institutional strengthening. Vision 2035 provides strategic direction for investment, human capital development, and regional integration.
- **Promulgation of the Refugee Law (2017):** The landmark 2017 Refugee Law grants refugees access to national education, health services, and employment opportunities. This progressive approach is recognised internationally as a model for the humanitarian-development nexus and supports stronger social cohesion.
- **Ethiopia–Djibouti Water Pipeline & Addis Ababa–Djibouti Railway (2017):** The inauguration of these major cross-border infrastructure projects strengthened regional connectivity, improved access to potable water, and enhanced trade flows. The railway, in particular, supports Djibouti’s ambition to become a key logistics hub in the Horn of Africa.
- **Launch of the Zero Hunger Strategic Review (2018):** In 2018, Djibouti undertook a comprehensive national review of food security challenges and response strategies. This resulted in stronger policy coordination and reinforced national commitment to SDG 2. In the same year, the Government created the National Agency for People with Disabilities (ANPH), improving support and visibility for persons with disabilities.
- **Introduction of the “Pacte National Solidaire” (2020):** During the COVID-19 crisis, Djibouti launched a major social protection and economic mitigation package to support vulnerable households and stabilise the economy. This rapid mobilisation of resources showcased the country’s institutional adaptability and crisis-response capacity.
- **Adoption of the National Migration Strategy (2021):** Djibouti adopted a comprehensive migration policy to better manage migration flows, protect vulnerable populations, and align national priorities with regional and international frameworks. This strengthened institutional coordination and improved support for migrants, refugees, and host communities.

Recommendations

- **Diversify the Economy:** Djibouti should reduce its dependence on the logistics and port sector by developing complementary industries such as tourism, fisheries, renewable energy, and digital services. This will help generate broader employment opportunities and strengthen economic resilience.
- **Strengthen Statistical Capacity:** Investing in INSTAD is essential to ensure the regular production of reliable, disaggregated data. Improved data systems will enhance SDG monitoring, support evidence-based planning, and reduce current information gaps that limit effective policymaking.
- **Enhance Rural Development:** Targeted investments, social protection schemes, and infrastructure upgrades should be directed towards rural areas to reduce spatial inequality. Strengthening rural livelihoods will also ease demographic pressure on the capital and contribute to balanced national development.
- **Accelerate Human Capital Development:** Improving the quality of education, expanding vocational training, and aligning skills with labour market needs are critical. This is particularly important given high youth unemployment and the need to prepare the workforce for emerging economic sectors.
- **Prioritise Climate Adaptation:** Djibouti should scale up water-security initiatives, drought-resilient agriculture, and protective infrastructure against floods. Enhancing climate resilience will safeguard pastoral communities and reduce vulnerability to recurring climate shocks.
- **Improve Governance and Institutional Efficiency:** Strengthening public administration, combating corruption, and improving coordination for SDG implementation will increase public trust and efficiency. Enhancing judicial capacity and accelerating digital governance reforms will also improve service delivery.
- **Expand Social Protection Systems:** Building on initiatives such as the “Pacte National Solidaire,” the country should broaden social safety nets to protect vulnerable households from economic shocks and climate-related crises, particularly in rural and informal-settlement areas.
- **Deepen Decentralisation Efforts:** Empowering regional authorities with resources and decision-making capacity can help reduce disparities between Djibouti City and interior regions. Decentralisation will also improve service delivery and local accountability.
- **Strengthen Environmental Management:** Enhancing enforcement of environmental regulations, improving waste management, and expanding biodiversity protection will help address pollution and natural-resource degradation. Scaling up monitoring systems for MPAs and terrestrial ecosystems remains essential.
- **Leverage International Partnerships More Strategically:** Given Djibouti’s strong network of global partners, the government can prioritise partnerships that deliver technology transfer, concessional finance, and capacity building. Deepening South–South cooperation and improving donor coordination will further support national priorities.
- **Ensure Inclusive Economic Growth:** Policies should ensure that the benefits of port expansion and large-scale infrastructure projects are more widely shared. Programmes to integrate youth, women, and refugees into the labour market would contribute to reducing inequality.
- **Strengthen Migration and Refugee Integration Policies:** Building on the 2017 refugee law and the National Migration Strategy, Djibouti can further support the socio-economic inclusion of refugees and migrants through expanded access to training, jobs, and local services.

Conclusion

Djibouti's 2022 VNR portrays a country that has achieved important progress in infrastructure development, governance reforms, and regional stability, yet continues to face persistent structural challenges that constrain inclusive growth. While the nation has capitalised on its geostrategic position to become a regional gateway, high levels of poverty and unemployment demonstrate that the dividends of economic expansion have not been evenly shared. The government's strong commitment to the **2030 Agenda** is reflected in its policy frameworks, social protection measures, and pioneering approach to refugee inclusion. Looking ahead, Djibouti's ability to convert infrastructure gains into broad-based human development, strengthen resilience to climate change, and reduce the inequalities between the capital and remote regions will be essential to ensuring that no one is left behind.

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United Nations (2022a): Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs), High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development 2022. Available at: <https://hlpf.un.org/2022>

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The SDG Tracker (SDGT) is a global research initiative, developed under the auspices of the World Association for Sustainable Development (WASD), designed to systematically analyse and score the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) submitted by United Nations member states. The SDGT aims to enhance global accountability, promote transparency, provide evidence-based insights for policymakers, and facilitate cross-country comparison and benchmarking, with all its comprehensive findings made publicly available on the dedicated SDGs Tracker Platform. For more information about this report and/or any other activities of the initiative, please visit: www.sdgstracker.org and contact us: director@sdgstracker.org.



WASD COLLABORATION WITH THE UNITED NATIONS

WASD is delighted to be working very closely with various United Nations Agencies, most specifically with the UN Joint Inspection Unit (JIU). Both JIU and WASD are inspired by the conviction that the UN **Agenda 2030** for Sustainable Development (SD) and the **17** Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide the momentum for renewed UN engagement with the public and private sectors.

In **2018**, WASD collaborated with JIU on the UN project **Strengthening policy research uptake in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**, aimed at reviewing the policy research uptake in service of the **2030 Agenda** for SD. For the first time in its **52** year history, the UN (aided by WASD) officially consulted academics and researchers from all over the world on the policy research uptake in the UN.

In **2019**, WASD also worked very closely with the UN JIU to undertake a UN system-wide review of policies, programmes, and platforms to support learning and enhancing the adequacy of training policies in the UN. The report **Policies and platforms in support of learning: towards more coherence, coordination, and convergence** was launched officially on **28** October 2020 at the opening of WASD's Online Learning Conference.

These various initiatives and events with the UN JIU have encouraged WASD to launch its **Sustainable Development Goals Tracker (SDGT)**.



Sustainability Tracker

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