

Sustainable Development Goals Tracker

PALESTINE 2018

Voluntary National Review





PALESTINIAN NATIONAL VOLUNTARY REVIEW
ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2030 AGENDA
JUNE 2018

Palestine VNR 2018 *Report*



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Palestine

2018

Voluntary National Review (VNR)

VNRs Submitted: 1 (25%)



SDGs Achieved: 0 (0%)

SDGs On-Track: 0 (0%)

SDGs Off-Track: 14 (82%)

SDGs No Progress: 3 (18%)



Introduction

The State of Palestine's Voluntary National Review (VNR) 2018 presents the country's progress, challenges and national efforts towards implementing the United Nations (UN) **2030 Agenda** for Sustainable Development under conditions of prolonged occupation and political instability. Palestine integrated the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into the National Policy Agenda (NPA) 2017–2022 and sectoral strategies, focusing on 105 SDG targets aligned with national priorities. Despite severe restrictions on movement, land, water and economic resources, the Palestinian Government continued efforts to improve social protection, healthcare, education, food security and institutional development. The VNR highlights that sustainable development in Palestine remains closely linked to ending the occupation and ensuring the rights and wellbeing of the Palestinian people (United Nations, 2018a; United Nations, 2018b).



VNR Framework Approach to assess Palestine'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 SDGs targets. Countries use available indicators and national statistics to evaluate whether they are:

- Achieved, on-track, moderately off-track, seriously off-track or 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 Palestine'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 Palestine's SDGs 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 Palestine SDG Report)

This analysis applies the *VNR framework* to Palestine's SDG Report. Initially, the report was processed using an AI tool to extract, summarise, and categorise data related to the **17 SDGs**. The AI provided preliminary insights into Palestine's progress, challenges, and measurable indicators. 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 Palestine's progress towards achieving economic growth, highlighting strategic areas for improvement, innovation, and sustainability.

Overall Progress

Table 1 presents Palestine'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: 0		1 NO POVERTY
Justification	- Poverty remains a major challenge in Palestine due to political and socio-economic conditions linked to the Israeli occupation. - In 2017, 29.2% of Palestinians lived below the national poverty line, including 53% in Gaza and 13.9% in the West Bank. - Deep poverty affected 16.8% of Palestinians, while poverty increased from 25.8% in 2011 to 29.3% in 2017. Refugee camps and rural areas experienced particularly high poverty rates.	
Challenges	- The VNR highlights that poverty is aggravated by the blockade on Gaza, restrictions on trade and movement, confiscation of land and water resources, and limitations on planning and construction in Area C. - The Wall around East Jerusalem weakened economic and social linkages, while the Gaza blockade reduced employment and trade opportunities. - Persons with disabilities also continue to face exclusion due to weak enforcement of disability-related legislation and limited accessibility to services.	
Progress/Solutions	- The Palestinian Government prioritised poverty reduction within the NPA 2017–2022 through social protection and economic empowerment programmes. - The Ministry of Social Development implemented a quarterly cash transfer programme supporting around 110,000 poor families, including 70,000 families in Gaza, at an annual cost of US\$130 million. - The Palestinian Families' Economic Empowerment Programme (DEEP) supported 27,827 impoverished households and created approximately 50,000 job opportunities.	
Unsolved Challenges	- The VNR stresses that poverty will continue to rise as long as the Israeli occupation persists. Declining international aid since 2011, alongside cuts in United States funding and reduced assistance to United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), further threaten the wellbeing of poor and vulnerable households, especially refugees. - Rapid population growth also increases pressure on social protection systems.	



Score : 0

Justification	- Food insecurity remains severe in Palestine and is closely linked to poverty, unemployment and restricted access to natural resources. - Between 2014–2016, 9.54% of Palestinians experienced severe food insecurity. - In Gaza, 18.7% of people suffered severe food insecurity and 21% moderate food insecurity. - Malnutrition also increased, with a 60% rise in underweight children and 10.3% of children aged 6–59 months suffering from stunting in 2013.
Challenges	- The Israeli occupation severely restricts Palestinian access to agricultural land and water resources. - Area C, which contains the majority of fertile land, remains largely inaccessible to Palestinians. - Agricultural contribution to GDP declined from 8.5% in 2000 to below 3% in 2016, while employment in agriculture fell from 14.1% to 7.4% during the same period. - Gaza's siege further restricted access to farmland and fishing areas, damaging agricultural productivity and increasing food insecurity.
Progress/Solutions	- The Government introduced several measures to strengthen food security and agriculture. - These included cultivating 1,850 hectares of land and increasing irrigation water by 4.7 million square metres through drip irrigation and treated wastewater. - Farmers were exempted from income tax, and the Palestinian Agriculture Credit Institution was established to support agricultural investment, especially for small farms. - The Government also launched the National Nutrition Monitoring Programme and the Child Friendly Clinic Initiative.
Unsolved Challenges	- The VNR notes that food security remains vulnerable due to continued restrictions on land, water and trade. - Climate change and desertification risks are increasing, while many Palestinian farmers and fishermen continue to face attacks and movement restrictions. - Gaza's agricultural lands and fisheries remain heavily constrained under the blockade, limiting long-term sustainability.



Score: 1

Justification	- Palestine achieved improvements in health indicators over the last two decades. Life expectancy reached 73.7 years in 2016, vaccination coverage reached 99%, and maternal mortality declined by 36% to 24.1 per 100,000 births. - Child mortality fell to 22 per 1,000 live births, while infant mortality declined to 18.2 per 1,000. - The number of primary healthcare clinics increased from 454 in 1994 to 739 in 2016.
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Challenges	- The health sector continues to face major pressures from the Israeli occupation. Israeli military violence caused 131 deaths and 14,000 injuries during the March of Return protests. - Restrictions on movement, checkpoints and permit systems limit access to specialised healthcare, particularly in East Jerusalem. - In October 2017, 45% of patient applications from Gaza seeking treatment outside Gaza were rejected by Israel. - Weak water and sewage infrastructure also contributes to disease and malnutrition.
Progress/ Solutions	- The Government expanded healthcare infrastructure and services, operating 64% of primary healthcare clinics and 54% of hospital beds in Palestine. - Public health insurance covers persons with disabilities, and hospitals and health centres have been adapted to improve accessibility. - Preventive healthcare measures, vaccination campaigns and maternal healthcare services significantly improved public health outcomes.
Unsolved Challenges	- The VNR identifies continued shortages of specialised doctors, nurses and mental health services. Non-communicable diseases, including cardiovascular disease and cancer, continue to rise. - The destruction of health infrastructure in Gaza, restrictions on construction in Area C and East Jerusalem, and limited access to medical supplies and treatment remain unresolved barriers to achieving SDG 3.



Score: 1

Justification	- Palestine achieved significant progress in education despite difficult political conditions. In 2017, the literacy rate among Palestinians aged 15 years and above reached 96.3%, while the enrolment rate in basic education exceeded 95%. - The education sector expanded considerably, with the number of schools increasing from 1,885 in 1994/1995 to 3,074 in 2016/2017.
Challenges	- The Israeli occupation continues to hinder access to quality education, particularly in Area C, East Jerusalem and Gaza. - Schools face demolition threats, movement restrictions and overcrowding. - The 2014 aggression on Gaza damaged and destroyed many schools, while checkpoints and the Wall obstructed students' and teachers' movement. - Students with disabilities also continue to face barriers due to insufficient inclusive infrastructure and specialised educational services.
Progress/ Solutions	- The Government prioritised inclusive and equitable education through the NPA 2017–2022. - Programmes focused on improving enrolment, reducing dropout rates and enhancing vocational and higher education. - The Ministry of Education expanded early childhood education, strengthened teacher training, and increased the integration of students with disabilities into mainstream schools.
Unsolved Challenges	- The VNR highlights persistent shortages in educational infrastructure, especially in marginalised areas and Gaza. - Israeli restrictions on construction continue to prevent school expansion in Area C and East Jerusalem. Overcrowded classrooms, limited financial resources and high youth unemployment also continue to affect education quality and graduates' transition into the labour market.



Score: 2

Justification	- Palestine has made progress in women's participation in education and public life. Female literacy rates are among the highest in the region, and women's participation in higher education continues to rise. - The Government adopted legal and institutional measures to enhance women's rights and empowerment through the Ministry of Women's Affairs and national gender strategies.
Challenges	- Women in Palestine continue to face discrimination, unemployment and violence, compounded by the Israeli occupation and socio-economic instability. - Female labour force participation remains low compared to men, while women in Gaza and rural areas experience higher vulnerability to poverty and food insecurity. - Women with disabilities face additional exclusion from services and employment opportunities.
Progress/ Solutions	- The Government strengthened gender-responsive policies and mainstreamed gender equality within national planning. - Programmes focused on women's economic empowerment, legal protection and participation in decision-making. - The Government also expanded support services for women exposed to violence and promoted awareness campaigns on women's rights
Unsolved Challenges	- The VNR notes that social norms, economic hardship and occupation-related restrictions continue to limit women's empowerment. - Gender-based violence, weak enforcement of protective legislation and limited employment opportunities remain unresolved issues, particularly in Gaza and marginalised communities.



Score: 1

Justification	- Water and sanitation remain critical development concerns in Palestine due to limited access to water resources and deteriorating infrastructure. - Palestinians consume significantly less water than international standards because Israel controls most Palestinian water resources. - In Gaza, over 95% of water from the Coastal Aquifer is unsuitable for human consumption.
Challenges	- Israeli control over water resources and restrictions on infrastructure development severely limit Palestinian access to safe water and sanitation services. - Area C communities face difficulties obtaining permits for water and sanitation projects, while Gaza suffers from damaged infrastructure, electricity shortages and sewage contamination. - Only around 30% of Palestinians are connected to sewage networks, increasing environmental and health risks.
Progress/ Solutions	- The Palestinian Government implemented programmes to improve water management and sanitation infrastructure. Efforts included expanding wastewater treatment projects, increasing water harvesting initiatives and strengthening institutional water governance. - The Government also worked with development partners to improve access to safe drinking water and sanitation services in vulnerable communities.

Unsolved Challenges	- The VNR stresses that sustainable water management cannot be achieved under continued occupation and restricted access to water resources. - Gaza continues to face a severe water crisis, while climate change and population growth further increase pressure on limited water supplies. Infrastructure rehabilitation remains constrained by restrictions on materials and movement.
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7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY



Score : 1

Justification	- Palestine faces major energy challenges due to dependence on external energy sources and restrictions imposed by the Israeli occupation. - Gaza suffers from chronic electricity shortages, where households often receive only a few hours of electricity daily. The energy crisis directly affects healthcare, water supply and economic productivity.
Challenges	- The Israeli occupation limits Palestinian control over energy resources and infrastructure development. - Restrictions on importing fuel, equipment and construction materials have constrained energy generation and renewable energy projects, particularly in Gaza and Area C. - Damage to electricity infrastructure during repeated military aggressions has further weakened the energy sector.
Progress/Solutions	- The Palestinian Government promoted renewable energy and energy efficiency initiatives to reduce dependency on imported electricity. - Programmes supporting solar energy systems and institutional reforms in the energy sector were introduced. - The Government also worked to improve electricity distribution networks and encourage private sector investment in clean energy projects.
Unsolved Challenges	- The VNR highlights that sustainable energy development remains constrained by occupation-related restrictions and financial limitations. - Gaza's electricity crisis continues, while growing population demand and limited local energy generation capacity place additional pressure on the sector. - Restrictions on infrastructure expansion in Area C also remain unresolved.

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



Score : 1

Justification	- The Palestinian economy continues to face structural weakness under the Israeli occupation. Economic growth remains unstable, with high unemployment rates, particularly among youth and women. - In 2017, unemployment in Gaza reached extremely high levels due to the ongoing blockade and restrictions on trade and movement.
Challenges	- Israeli restrictions on movement, trade and access to resources continue to undermine economic growth and decent work opportunities. - The blockade on Gaza, restrictions in Area C and limitations on exports and imports have weakened productive sectors and private sector investment. - Youth unemployment, poverty and labour market exclusion remain severe challenges.

<i>Progress/ Solutions</i>	- The Government prioritised economic empowerment, investment promotion and job creation within the NAP 2017–2022. - Programmes focused on supporting small and medium enterprises, vocational training and entrepreneurship initiatives. - The Government also promoted labour market reforms and partnerships to increase employment opportunities for youth and women.
<i>Unsolved Challenges</i>	- The VNR stresses that sustainable economic growth cannot be fully achieved under occupation. - Dependence on the Israeli economy, declining international aid and restrictions on natural resources continue to limit productivity and investment. - Gaza's prolonged blockade and political division further deepen unemployment and economic instability.



Score: 2	
<i>Justification</i>	- Infrastructure development in Palestine remains heavily affected by the Israeli occupation and repeated destruction of facilities, especially in Gaza. - The 2014 aggression on Gaza severely damaged roads, electricity systems, industrial facilities and public infrastructure, weakening economic productivity and service delivery.
<i>Challenges</i>	- Restrictions on construction permits, movement and access to Area C significantly hinder infrastructure expansion and industrial development. - The Israeli occupation limits Palestinian access to natural resources and prevents large-scale infrastructure investment. - Gaza's blockade also restricts the import of construction materials and industrial equipment, slowing reconstruction and economic recovery.
<i>Progress/ Solutions</i>	- The Government adopted policies to strengthen infrastructure resilience, industrial development and innovation. - Investments were directed towards improving roads, industrial zones and public facilities, alongside efforts to encourage private sector participation and technological development. - Partnerships with international organisations also supported reconstruction and infrastructure rehabilitation projects.
<i>Unsolved Challenges</i>	- The VNR notes that infrastructure and industrial development remain severely constrained by political instability and occupation-related restrictions. - Gaza continues to face major reconstruction challenges, while restrictions in Area C prevent sustainable infrastructure expansion and industrial growth. - Limited financial resources and restricted access to materials continue to delay long-term development plans.



Score: 1

Justification	- Reducing inequalities remains a national priority due to disparities caused by occupation, poverty and restricted access to services. - Vulnerable groups, including refugees, persons with disabilities, women and communities in Gaza and Area C, experience disproportionate socio-economic hardship. - In 2017, poverty among refugee-headed households reached 38.7% compared to 22.3% among non-refugee households.
Challenges	- The Israeli occupation deepens inequalities through restrictions on movement, land access and economic opportunities. - Gaza faces higher poverty, unemployment and food insecurity than the West Bank, while communities in East Jerusalem and Area C experience limited access to healthcare, education and infrastructure. - Persons with disabilities continue to face exclusion due to weak implementation of disability-related laws and limited accessibility.
Progress/Solutions	- The Government expanded social protection and inclusion programmes targeting poor and marginalised groups. - The Ministry of Social Development implemented cash assistance programmes, disability support schemes and economic empowerment initiatives. - Policies promoting equal access to healthcare, education and employment opportunities were integrated into the NAP 2017–2022.
Unsolved Challenges	- The VNR notes that inequalities continue to widen due to the prolonged occupation, declining international aid and economic instability. - Refugees, persons with disabilities and residents of Gaza remain highly vulnerable, while restrictions on movement and access continue to limit equitable development across Palestine.



Score: 1

Justification	- Urban development in Palestine faces major pressures from population growth, infrastructure shortages and restrictions imposed by the Israeli occupation. - Palestinian communities in East Jerusalem and Area C face threats of demolition, displacement and limited urban planning opportunities. - Gaza also suffers from overcrowding and damaged infrastructure due to repeated military aggressions.
Challenges	- Israeli restrictions on planning and construction severely limit sustainable urban development. - Palestinians in Area C and East Jerusalem face difficulties obtaining building permits, while demolitions and settlement expansion continue to threaten housing and community stability. The blockade on Gaza has further weakened housing, transportation and public service infrastructure.
Progress/Solutions	- The Government adopted policies to strengthen urban resilience, improve municipal services and support housing development. - Programmes focused on infrastructure rehabilitation, local governance and improving access to public facilities and transportation services. - Efforts also aimed to preserve cultural heritage and improve living conditions in vulnerable communities.

Unsolved Challenges	- The VNR highlights that sustainable urban development remains constrained by occupation-related policies, land confiscation and financial limitations. - Gaza continues to experience severe housing and infrastructure shortages, while Area C and East Jerusalem remain vulnerable to demolitions and forced displacement.
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Score: 2

Justification	- Palestine recognises the importance of sustainable consumption and production to protect limited natural resources and improve environmental sustainability. - Rapid population growth, limited land and water resources, and increasing waste generation place pressure on environmental systems and public services.
Challenges	- The Israeli occupation restricts Palestinian control over natural resources and waste management systems. - Industrial pollution from Israeli settlements, inadequate wastewater treatment and limited recycling infrastructure contribute to environmental degradation. - Gaza also faces severe waste management difficulties due to infrastructure destruction and electricity shortages.
Progress/Solutions	- The Government introduced environmental protection measures and policies promoting sustainable resource management. - Efforts included improving solid waste management systems, promoting recycling initiatives and strengthening environmental legislation and monitoring systems. - Partnerships with international organisations also supported environmental awareness and sustainability programmes.
Unsolved Challenges	- The VNR states that sustainable consumption and production remain difficult under continued occupation and limited access to resources. - Waste management infrastructure remains insufficient, while restrictions on movement and imports hinder the development of modern environmental systems and renewable technologies.

13 CLIMATE ACTION



Score: 1

Justification	- Palestine is highly vulnerable to climate change due to water scarcity, desertification and dependence on climate-sensitive sectors such as agriculture. - Changing rainfall patterns and rising temperatures threaten food security, water availability and livelihoods, particularly in vulnerable rural communities.
Challenges	- The Israeli occupation restricts Palestinian access to land, water and natural resources, limiting climate adaptation efforts. - Water shortages, environmental degradation and restricted infrastructure development increase vulnerability to climate change. - Most Palestinian farmland depends on rainwater, while climate change and unequal water distribution increase the risk of desertification.

Progress/ Solutions	- The Government adopted the National Plan for Adaptation to Climate Change and promoted programmes supporting sustainable agriculture and water harvesting. - Efforts included improving irrigation systems, reclaiming agricultural land and strengthening environmental awareness and resilience measures in vulnerable communities.
Unsolved Challenges	- The VNR notes that climate resilience remains limited due to occupation-related restrictions, weak infrastructure and financial constraints. - Continued pressure on water resources, increasing desertification risks and restricted access to Area C continue to undermine long-term climate adaptation efforts.



Score: 1	
Justification	- Marine resources in Gaza are under severe pressure due to the blockade, pollution and restricted fishing zones. - Fishing communities remain highly vulnerable, while access to marine resources is tightly controlled. - As of 2016, Gazan fishermen were permitted access to only nine nautical miles from the coast, limiting fishing activities to shallow waters with poor fish stocks.
Challenges	- The Israeli occupation severely restricts Palestinian fishing activities and marine resource management. - Fishermen in Gaza face repeated assaults and movement restrictions. - The VNR reported 1,283 violations against fishermen, including 1,193 shooting incidents by the Israeli navy. - Marine pollution from untreated sewage and damaged infrastructure also threatens coastal ecosystems.
Progress/ Solutions	- The Government and its partners worked to support fishing communities and improve environmental management of coastal areas. - Programmes focused on protecting livelihoods, improving food security and addressing wastewater treatment and pollution control in Gaza.
Unsolved Challenges	- The VNR stresses that sustainable marine resource management remains difficult under the blockade and continued restrictions on fishing access. - Coastal pollution, damaged infrastructure and limited institutional capacity continue to threaten marine biodiversity and the livelihoods of fishing communities.



Score: 1	
Justification	- Land degradation, settlement expansion and restricted access to natural resources continue to threaten ecosystems and biodiversity in Palestine. - Large areas of fertile land in Area C and the Jordan Valley remain inaccessible to Palestinians, limiting sustainable land management and agricultural productivity.
Challenges	- Israeli settlement expansion, land confiscation and construction of the Wall continue to damage Palestinian ecosystems and agricultural lands. - The VNR states that 85.2% of the fertile land in the Jordan Valley is off-limits to Palestinians. - Environmental degradation, desertification and pollution from settlements also threaten biodiversity and sustainable land use.

Progress/ Solutions	- The Government prioritised land reclamation, sustainable agriculture and environmental protection initiatives. - Programmes supporting reforestation, water harvesting and agricultural resilience were implemented to protect land resources and strengthen rural livelihoods. - Efforts also focused on improving environmental legislation and natural resource management.
Unsolved Challenges	- The VNR highlights that occupation-related restrictions continue to undermine environmental sustainability and land protection efforts. - Restricted access to Area C, ongoing land confiscation and climate-related pressures remain major barriers to preserving biodiversity and achieving sustainable land management.



Score: 0

Justification	- The Palestinian Government considers peace, justice and strong institutions essential for sustainable development under prolonged occupation. - The NPA 2017–2022 prioritised strengthening accountability, transparency, public participation and the rule of law. - Despite difficult political conditions, Palestine continued institutional development and governance reforms.
Challenges	- The Israeli occupation remains the greatest obstacle to achieving SDG 16. Violations of human rights, restrictions on movement, military operations, arbitrary detention and settlement expansion continue to undermine peace and institutional effectiveness. - Palestinian institutions also face financial pressures and restricted authority in Area C, East Jerusalem and Gaza. - Political division further weakens governance and public administration.
Progress/ Solutions	- The Government implemented reforms to strengthen public institutions, judicial independence and anti-corruption measures. - Efforts focused on improving access to justice, promoting transparency and enhancing citizen participation in decision-making. - Palestine also strengthened cooperation with international human rights mechanisms and continued institutional capacity-building programmes.
Unsolved Challenges	- The VNR highlights that sustainable peace and institutional stability cannot be fully achieved under continued occupation. - Restrictions on sovereignty, political fragmentation, financial instability and external pressures continue to limit governance effectiveness and long-term institutional resilience.



Score: 2

Justification	- Palestine recognises international cooperation and partnerships as essential for implementing the SDGs under occupation-related constraints. - The Government worked closely with United Nations agencies, donors, civil society and development partners to support national planning, humanitarian assistance and institutional development.
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Challenges	- The VNR notes that declining international aid since 2011 has weakened the Palestinian Government's capacity to finance development programmes and social services. - Restrictions imposed by the Israeli occupation continue to affect trade, investment and external cooperation. - Political instability and dependency on external assistance also create challenges for sustainable development financing.
Progress/ Solutions	- The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) strengthened cooperation with national and international institutions to monitor SDG implementation. - Palestine participated in the UN High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for statistics for the 2030 Agenda. - The Government also integrated SDG priorities into the NPA 2017–2022 and sectoral strategies.
Unsolved Challenges	- The VNR highlights continuing financial and capacity constraints, limited access to data and restrictions on movement and resources. - In 2018, only 109 SDG indicators were available out of 244 total indicators, while 135 indicators remained unavailable. - Continued occupation and declining aid flows remain major barriers to effective partnerships and SDG implementation.

Source: (United Nations, 2018a; United Nations, 2018b).

Major Challenges

- The Israeli occupation continues to be the main obstacle to achieving the SDGs through restrictions on movement, trade, land use, water access and infrastructure development.
- Poverty increased from 25.8% in 2011 to 29.2% in 2017, while deep poverty reached 16.8% in 2017. Gaza recorded the highest poverty rate at 53% in 2017.
- Food insecurity remained severe between 2014–2016, where 9.54% of Palestinians experienced severe food insecurity. In Gaza, 18.7% suffered severe food insecurity.
- The Gaza blockade and repeated military aggressions caused extensive destruction to infrastructure, agriculture, healthcare and housing facilities.
- Water scarcity and environmental degradation remain major concerns, with more than 95% of Gaza's water unsuitable for human consumption.
- In October 2017, 45% of patient applications from Gaza to access healthcare outside Gaza were rejected by Israel.
- The agricultural sector declined significantly, with its contribution to GDP decreasing from 8.5% in 2000 to below 3% in 2016, while agricultural employment fell from 14.1% to 7.4%.
- International aid sharply declined since 2011, limiting the Government's ability to finance development and poverty alleviation programmes.
- Only 109 SDG indicators were available out of 244 total indicators in 2018, reflecting major data and capacity gaps.

Key Lessons Learned

- Integrating SDGs directly into national development plans and sectoral strategies strengthens policy coherence and implementation effectiveness.
- Social protection programmes linked with economic empowerment initiatives can improve resilience among poor and vulnerable households.
- Expanding healthcare and education services, even under severe political and financial constraints, can significantly improve human development indicators.
- Investment in agricultural resilience, water harvesting and climate adaptation supports food security in fragile environments.
- Strengthening national statistical systems and institutional coordination improves SDG monitoring and evidence-based policymaking.
- Multi-stakeholder partnerships involving government, UN agencies and civil society improve implementation capacity in challenging contexts.

Notable Contribution

- Palestine integrated the SDGs into the NPA 2017–2022 and aligned 105 SDG targets within sectoral and cross-sectoral strategies.
- The Ministry of Social Development supported around 110,000 poor Palestinian families annually through cash transfer programmes, including 70,000 families in Gaza, with a total annual cost of US\$130 million.
- The Palestinian Families' DEEP supported 27,827 impoverished households and created approximately 50,000 job opportunities.
- Life expectancy increased to 73.7 years in 2016, while vaccination coverage reached 99%.
- Maternal mortality decreased by 36% to 24.1 per 100,000 births, while under-five mortality declined to 22 per 1,000 live births.
- The number of primary healthcare clinics increased by 63%, from 454 clinics in 1994 to 739 clinics in 2016.
- Literacy rates among Palestinians aged 15 years and above reached 96.3% in 2017, while school enrolment in basic education exceeded 95%.
- The Government cultivated 1,850 hectares of land and increased irrigation water by 4.7 million square metres through modern irrigation systems.

Recommendations

- End restrictions on Palestinian movement, trade and access to natural resources to enable sustainable economic and social development.
- Increase international financial and technical support for poverty reduction, infrastructure rehabilitation and SDG implementation.
- Expand social protection systems and economic empowerment programmes targeting refugees, women, youth and persons with disabilities.
- Strengthen investment in renewable energy, water management and climate adaptation to improve resilience and environmental sustainability.

- Improve healthcare infrastructure, specialised medical services and access to treatment, particularly in Gaza and marginalised communities.
- Enhance agricultural development through land reclamation, irrigation systems and farmer protection programmes.
- Strengthen national statistical systems and SDG monitoring mechanisms to improve availability and quality of development data.
- Promote inclusive governance, institutional reform and partnerships to support long-term peace, justice and sustainable development.

Conclusion

The VNR 2018 demonstrates that Palestine achieved measurable progress in several SDGs despite exceptionally difficult political and economic conditions. Improvements were recorded in healthcare, education, social protection and institutional development, including a life expectancy of 73.7 years in 2016, vaccination coverage of 99%, literacy rates of 96.3% in 2017 and support for 110,000 poor households through social protection programmes. However, poverty, unemployment, food insecurity, environmental degradation and infrastructure destruction remain significant challenges, particularly in Gaza and Area C. The report concludes that continued occupation, declining international aid and restrictions on natural resources continue to undermine sustainable development efforts. Palestine therefore emphasises the importance of international cooperation, strengthened partnerships and an end to occupation-related restrictions to achieve the SDGs by 2030.

Reference

United Nations (2018a): Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs), High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development 2018. Available at: <https://hlpf.un.org/2018>

United Nations (2018b): *Palestine Voluntary National Reviews 2018*. High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. Available at: <https://hlpf.un.org/countries/palestine/voluntary-national-reviews-2018>

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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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