



**Convention on the Elimination  
of All Forms of Discrimination  
against Women**

Distr.: General  
1 April 2021  
English  
Original: French  
English, French and Spanish only

---

**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination  
against Women**

**Combined fourth and fifth periodic reports submitted by  
Djibouti under article 18 of the Convention, due in 2015\***

[Date received: 28 October 2020]

---

\* The present document is being issued without formal editing.



---

## Contents

	<i>Page</i>
Introduction: reporting methodology . . . . .	3
I. General information . . . . .	4
A. Demographic, economic, social and cultural characteristics of the State . . . . .	4
B. Constitutional, political and legal structure of the State . . . . .	4
II. General measures of implementation of the Convention: . . . . .	6
A. Legal and policy framework for gender equality . . . . .	6
B. Institutional mechanisms for gender equality . . . . .	7
III. Specific measures of implementation of the Convention . . . . .	10
A. Policy and special measures, human rights and fundamental freedoms, stereotypes and prejudices, and prostitution (articles 2 to 6 of the Convention) . . . . .	10
B. Measures related to representation in political and public life . . . . .	17
C. Social and economic measures and rural women . . . . .	19
D. Measures related to equality, marriage and family life . . . . .	26

## Introduction: reporting methodology

1. In accordance with existing laws and regulations, the State party entrusted the preparation of this report to the Interministerial Committee on the Drafting and Submission of Periodic Reports to treaty bodies. Set up in 2008, this Committee includes the main public actors in the area of human rights. Since its establishment, it has engaged in dialogues with nearly all international and regional human rights mechanisms.
2. This Committee was strengthened in November 2017 by Decree No. 2017-355/PRE, establishing the Interministerial Coordinating Committee on the Drafting and Submission of Periodic Reports. Its duties, which had initially been limited to the drafting and submission of periodic reports, were expanded to include monitoring the implementation of recommendations issued by the various international and regional human rights mechanisms.
3. Presided over by the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Justice, Prison Affairs and Human Rights, the Committee is composed of five women and three men, all of whom are senior public administration officials.
4. With the aim of drawing up a national document consistent with Committee guidelines, broad-based consultations were held with the participation of civil society stakeholders, regions, religious and traditional leaders, members of the National Human Rights Commission, teachers and numerous other professionals who work with children.
5. The preparation of this report was delayed because other sectoral reports were being considered by the Committee, notably the report on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the report on persons with disabilities and the universal periodic review. The country has submitted reports, although only for the universal periodic review, in February 2009, April 2013 and May 2018.
6. Since July 2011, when the last report under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was submitted, several other periodic reports have been submitted to the corresponding bodies. These include:
  - Report on civil and political rights
  - Report on economic, social and cultural rights
  - Report on the Convention against Torture
  - Report on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
  - Report on the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights;
  - Report on the Convention on the Rights of the Child

## **I. General information**

### **A. Demographic, economic, social and cultural characteristics of the State**

7. With an estimated surface area of 23,200 km<sup>2</sup>, the Republic of Djibouti, located in the Horn of Africa, has an important geostrategic position and is one of the busiest sea lanes in the world.

8. The country has a semi-arid tropical climate with low rainfall and high temperatures of around 40°C in the summer.

9. Nearly 70.6 per cent of the population of Djibouti lives in urban areas, and 58.1 per cent lives in the city of Djibouti, which is divided into three municipalities (Ras Dika, Boulaos and Balbala). Although it occupies less than 2 per cent of the total area of the country, the concentration of significant economic activity (port- and airport-related, industrial, commercial) in the city of Djibouti accounts for its demographic heft.

10. The economy of Djibouti is dominated by resources coming mainly from the ports. The tertiary sector is also dominant, accounting for 79.8 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP) and employing 50 per cent of the labour force. The annual growth rate for 2019 was 7 per cent.

### **B. Constitutional, political and legal structure of the State**

11. The Republic of Djibouti became independent on 27 June 1977. It has a presidential system of government. There is an effective separation of powers, and the opposition is represented at the legislative level.

12. The Constitution enshrines the fundamental principles of human rights and undergirds the institutions of the Republic. The principle of separation of powers is clearly affirmed in the Constitution. Article 7 provides that “the institutions of the Republic are: the executive branch, the legislative branch and the judicial branch. Each of these branches assumes full and complete responsibility for its powers and functions under conditions so as to ensure the continuity and regular functioning of republican institutions”.

13. The Constitution, which was adopted in 1992, establishes a presidential political system in which the President of the Republic, elected by universal suffrage, also serves as Head of Government. According to article 21 of the Constitution, “executive authority is exercised by the President of the Republic, who is also the Head of Government”. The President appoints the Prime Minister and, on the recommendation of the Prime Minister, appoints the other members of Government, whom he nevertheless retains the right to dismiss, in line with article 33, which stipulates that “the members of Government are accountable to the President of the Republic”. The President is not accountable to the National Assembly which, in turn, cannot be dissolved.

14. In terms of decentralization, five regional authorities, namely, Arta, Ali Sabieh, Dikhil, Obock and Tadjourah, were established and endowed with legal and financial autonomy under a law adopted in 2002.

15. With regard to the capital, pursuant to a law adopted in 2005 on the status of the city of Djibouti, three municipalities and the Djibouti Council were established and endowed with legal personality and financial autonomy.

16. Since the early 2000s, Djibouti has shown real dynamism in the promotion and protection of human rights, broadly conceived, by ratifying a host of international and regional conventions in which the values of fundamental human rights are upheld.

17. The Republic of Djibouti has ratified or acceded to most of the international human rights instruments and is therefore committed to ensuring that its citizens and public institutions comply with human rights standards.

18. The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights are integral parts of the Constitution.

*Main international human rights conventions ratified by the Republic of Djibouti*

1. Convention on the Rights of the Child, 2 December 1990
2. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 27 May 1998
3. Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, 9 September 2002
4. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the two Protocols thereto, 9 September 2002
5. International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 2 September 2002
6. Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, 9 September 2002
7. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol, 3 January 2010
8. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

*Main regional human rights conventions ratified by the Republic of Djibouti*

1. African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, 18 September 1986
2. Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, 2 February 2005
3. African Charter on the Rights of the Child, 21 February 2009
4. African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention), 3 January 2011
5. African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, 28 October 2012

19. In order to ensure that human rights are upheld, protected and promoted, the Republic of Djibouti, like many States, has created an independent and autonomous body, namely, the National Human Rights Commission, to monitor the protection and practical application of human rights.

20. The situation of the women of women in Djibouti has also undergone a significant transformation. Strong institutional and legal measures have been adopted to enable women to be better represented in decision-making bodies, to hasten their participation in the economic and social life of the country and, more generally, to improve their status and achieve the fundamental objective of gender equality.

21. As early as 1992, the Constitution of Djibouti enshrined equality between men and women.

22. The adoption and implementation of various policies and programmes in support of women's development led to the creation in 1999 of a ministry reporting to the Prime Minister in charge of the Advancement of Women, Family Welfare and Social Affairs. It became a full-fledged ministry in 2008. The Family Code (aimed at preserving the unity and harmony of the family and protecting children) and a national strategy for the integration of women into the development process were both adopted in 2002.
23. Under the framework for implementing the strategy, gender focal points have been placed within ministries in each sector, with a view to integrating gender into the process of formulating development policies, programmes and projects.
24. The creation of the Head of State Award, established by decree in February 2000 and thereafter awarded on 8 March each year, on the occasion of International Women's Day, is a positive measure to elicit creativity and contributions from Djiboutian women for the development of society.
25. Djibouti also ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women without reservations in 1998 and the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol) in 2005 in order to accelerate the achievement of gender equality, in the interest of sustainable and equitable development.
26. After the conclusion of the national strategy for the integration of women into the development process (2001–2010), formulated by the ministry responsible for promoting gender equality, the National Gender Policy (2011–2021) demonstrated the economic progress achieved and enumerated the remaining challenges.
27. In addition, over the past decade, the overall context in the Republic of Djibouti has been conducive to the advancement of women. A gender perspective has been incorporated into several sectoral programmes, including the strategic framework for poverty reduction, the national strategy for the integration of women into the development process, and the National Gender Policy.
28. In 2002, the Government enacted a law on the family that enhances the protection of women and children. These initiatives have yielded substantial results.
29. Since March 2010, the Republic of Djibouti has made progress towards incorporating a gender perspective and gender equality into the work of institutions. Laws and other legal instruments have also been enacted to protect the rights of women. Moreover, there has been a marked increase in the number of women that hold decision-making, leadership and management positions, particularly in the public sector.
30. There are three women in the current Government and 16 in Parliament, accounting for 26 per cent of deputies. A woman is serving as a city mayor, and two political parties, one of which is an opposition party, are headed by women.
31. Djiboutian women are now represented at the highest levels of power and occupy positions that were once reserved for men. The data collected for this report attests to this trend.

## **II. General measures of implementation of the Convention:**

### **A. Legal and policy framework for gender equality**

32. The principle of equality and non-discrimination is clearly set out in article 1 of the Constitution of Djibouti, which stipulates that "the State of Djibouti is a

sovereign, single and indivisible democratic Republic. It guarantees the equality of all citizens before the law, without distinction as to origin, race, sex or religion. It respects all beliefs. Its motto is ‘Unity, Equality, Peace’.”

33. The principle of equality and non-discrimination is constantly alluded to in Djibouti law, including labour law, criminal law and the general statute on civil servants.

34. By ratifying the core instruments, in particular the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Government of the Republic of Djibouti has committed to adopt all necessary administrative, legal, political and other measures to address discrimination against women and girls in the sociopolitical, economic and cultural spheres as soon as possible. The authorities are aware that, in order to ensure effective implementation of the Convention, it is imperative to ensure that national legislation is brought into line with it.

35. The strategy on accelerated growth and employment creation (2015–2019) and the Djibouti Vision 2035 are the frameworks for the country’s sustainable development policies and strategies.

36. The National Gender Policy and its action matrix define the policy framework for gender in the Republic of Djibouti. The National Gender Policy establishes mechanisms to carry out the following mandated tasks:

- Assess the impact of all policies, projects, strategies and laws on gender mainstreaming in development
- Seek funding and launch pilot projects and national programmes
- Build the institutional and management capacities of governmental and non-governmental stakeholders working to implement the National Gender Policy and its action plan
- Create and carry out awareness-raising and informational programmes on the role of gender in national development

## **B. Institutional mechanisms for gender equality**

37. In order to take legislative measures that promoted and protect women’s rights, the Government established a ministerial department in 1999, which evolved and eventually became the Ministry for Women and the Family in 2017. The Ministry, in accordance with the law, formulates and implements the government policy on the integration of women into the country’s development process. It contributes to social cohesion, particularly that of the family unit. The law defines the nature of the partnership between the Ministry for Women and the Family and all other ministries in order to effectively mainstream a gender perspective into sectoral policies.

38. The Ministry for Women and the Family works in partnership with all ministries and is specifically responsible for:

- Directing, in conjunction with the Ministry of Health, the government policy on family planning and prevention of risks to maternal and child health; and raising awareness of good early childhood practices
- Participating, in conjunction with the State Secretariat for Youth and Sport, in programmes to prevent and raise awareness of high-risk behaviour
- Defining, in conjunction with the Ministry of Labour, the legal framework and implementation of provisions related to the protection of the rights of women

- Developing and implementing the government policy on the integration of vulnerable women (particularly those working in the informal sector) into the labour market and the social policy on child protection, in conjunction with the other relevant ministries
- Developing and implementing the government policy on the social and professional integration of vulnerable women (especially those working in the informal sector) and on disadvantaged children, with the State Secretariat for Social Affairs
- Developing and implementing literacy, informal education, vocational training and early childhood programmes, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training

39. The Directorate for Gender Mainstreaming established within the Ministry for Women and the Family is responsible for technical implementation, in addition to the specific activities falling within its remit (e.g. literacy and the integration of women into social and professional life).

40. The Centre for Social Action to Promote the Empowerment of Women, which has a mandate to perform social, educational and economic actions and services on the ground, with a focus on women and girls, is one of two entities attached to the Ministry for Women and the Family.

41. The Centre, established by Decree No. 2012-260/PR/MPF on the organization and operation of the Centre for Social Action to Promote the Empowerment of Women, is a social institution under the supervision of the Ministry for Women and the Family. The Centre's duties are:

- To promote, facilitate and manage, with the help of trained staff, activities and the provision of services of a social, family, educational and economic nature for women and girls
- To provide women and girls with opportunities for training and professional integration
- To play an active role in organizing activities in and developing the municipality of Balbala
- To ensure the development and implementation of a local social project, subject to approval by the Ministry for Women and the Family

42. The Centre for Social Action to Promote the Empowerment of Women (established in 2007) provides training programmes in cooking, hairdressing and cosmetology, sewing and embroidery, with the aim of capitalizing on the potential of young girls and women who have not been to school are not in school and/or have dropped out of school in the municipality of Balbala, equipping them with the knowledge and skills needed to combat illiteracy and poverty.

43. Upon completion of the training programme, graduates receive support and assistance from the Centre in finding work or starting up an income-generating activity. It organizes open house events to introduce the public, and associations in particular, to the training provided and to other activities that fall under its remit. Since 2011, the Centre has been providing preschool education for children from disadvantaged families in the municipality of Balbala.

44. The second entity attached to the Ministry for Women and the Family is the Gender Observatory, which was established in 2018. Its role is to monitor and alert, as well as to provide guidance and recommendations to the various institutions to serve as a guiding framework for compliance with and application of the principles of gender equity and equality in public policy.

45. All national bodies, particularly the technical ministries, associations and national non-governmental organizations (NGOs), are responsible for implementing the National Gender Policy and the action matrix, within the framework of the partnership established between the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Parliament, in coordination with development partners.
46. The competent national authorities, entities operated either entirely or partly by the State and private sector entities are required to ensure that the National Gender Policy and the related action matrix inform their actions.
47. The National Assembly, as a legislative body, is an important institution, particularly in terms of advocating for the adoption of laws and budgets that take into account issues related to the rights of women.
48. In the most recent legislative elections, as a result of the 2018 amended law on quotas, which raises the mandated proportion of women from 10 to 25 per cent, the number of women in the National Assembly increased. In fact, the number of women parliamentarians has risen from 9 to 17 (26 per cent), including one vice-president, chairpersons of standing committees, among them the Committee on Law and Human Rights, and a former Minister for Women. These developments clearly demonstrate that the State party considers issues related to gender to be of major concern.
49. In October 2019, a gender caucus was formed in the National Assembly to strengthen cooperation among women involved in politics and to monitor legislative reforms related to the rights of women.
50. The National Human Rights Commission plays an important role in the promotion and protection of human rights in general. It is specifically mandated to contribute to all aspects of the promotion and protection of the rights of women, at both the national and international levels. The Commission advises the relevant public authorities on all general matters relating to the promotion and protection of human rights in the Republic of Djibouti.
51. The Commission's opinions, recommendations, proposals and reports may be published either on its own initiative or at the request of the authority concerned.
52. The Commission has a subcommission on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
53. In July 2014, in order to strengthen institutional capacities, the State party undertook an amendment of the statute of the National Human Rights Commission, leading to the adoption of Act No. 59/AN/14/7 L of 20 July 2014, which repeals and replaces Decree No. 2008-0103/PR/MJAP of 23 April 2008 establishing the National Human Rights Commission.
54. The main reason for amending the Commission's statute was to establish a financially autonomous and independent institution with a robust and expanded mandate. Experience has shown that restricting the mandate of a national human rights institution often diminishes its credibility.
55. The other reason to reform the Commission's statute was the need to bring it into line with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles) and to obtain accreditation from the International Coordinating Committee of National Human Rights Institutions. Since then, parity has been achieved in the Commission, whose Vice-President is a woman.
56. Since its inception, the National Union of Djiboutian Women, an association recognized as operating in the public interest, has worked to affirm the place and role

of women in society, ensure that their rights are respected and contribute to building a interdependent world in which women are equitably represented.

57. It also supports the Government and development partners in carrying out activities related to sustainable development. In collaboration with national associations, the National Union of Djiboutian Women aims to:

- Combat poverty
- Combat all forms of violence against women and promote and protect human rights, particularly the rights of women
- Promote and work to improve maternal and child health
- Protect the environment
- Improve the living conditions of rural women
- Promote culture and handicrafts

58. The National Union of Djiboutian Women has a support centre whose purpose is to help women victims of violence. This centre, established on 8 March 2007 in observance of International Women's Day, specifically caters to young girls and women who are victims of violence. The staff is composed of trained professionals working in areas related to gender-based violence (Ministry for Women and the Family, National Union of Djiboutian Women, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Justice). A woman lawyer is also available at the centre.

### **III. Specific measures of implementation of the Convention**

#### **A. Policy and special measures, human rights and fundamental freedoms, stereotypes and prejudices, and prostitution (articles 2 to 6 of the Convention)**

##### **1. Visibility of the Convention**

59. The State party is supporting a project to translate human rights instruments, in collaboration with the National Human Rights Commission.

60. As part of the project, the State party has already been able to finalize the translation into Afar of the preamble and the 30 articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, with the support of the Government. The document was distributed on Human Rights Day in December 2019.

61. This initiative is set to continue with the translation of ratified regional and international legal instruments (including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women) into local languages, including Afar and Somali.

62. In addition, in order to strengthen the visibility of CEDAW, every year the State party, in partnership with the National Union of Djiboutian Women, organizes:

- The 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence campaign
- The annual commemoration of International Women's Day on 8 March
- The Head of State Award, established by decree in 2000
- Regular advertising and communication campaigns with commercials on radio and television

- Awareness-raising sessions on the Convention in the five inland regions of the country
- Activities to raise awareness of the Convention in refugee camps and among migrants

63. The purpose of these campaigns is to raise awareness of the issues related to the rights and obligations set forth in the Convention. The campaigns also serve to educate the public about human rights mechanisms, especially the follow-up on recommendations concerning the universal periodic review, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In addition, they disseminate the recommendations of the universal periodic review regarding female genital mutilation, early marriage and all other forms of violence against women.

*Organization of panel discussions and training workshops on women's rights*

64. The first events are often held as part of the observance of International Women's Day. After the debates and discussions, participants in the panel discussion are called upon to formulate recommendations on how to improve the situation of women in Djibouti.

65. The training workshops may be geared towards more specific themes and actors, such as judicial police officers and judges. The aim of these sectoral training workshops is to strengthen the judicial system by establishing local legal services through the following actions:

- Increasing the punishment for female genital mutilation, which has been a criminal offence since 2009
- Setting up a mobile legal brigade to combat female genital mutilation
- Defining a coherent framework for dialogue in partnership with professionals working in the justice system (judicial police officers, judges and others) by engaging directly with the Ministry of Justice

## **2. Harmonization of laws**

66. The development policies pursued by Djibouti have created a framework conducive to the promotion and protection of the rights of women and to gender equality.

67. The Government has adopted legislative measures to ensure the full development and advancement of women, for the purpose of guaranteeing them the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on a basis of equality with men.

68. Its actions in that regard are reflected in the National Gender Policy (2011–2021), which the Ministry for Women and the Family has been implementing for almost nine years. The policy covers a 10-year span.

69. The sole purpose of the policy is to contribute to the achievement of gender equity and equality in all areas of economic and social life. In that regard, actions taken to implement the National Gender Policy are based on two broad objectives, namely:

- (i) To create a sociocultural, legal, economic, political and institutional environment conducive to the achievement of gender equity and equality in Djibouti society;

(ii) To effectively incorporate a gender perspective into development activities in all sectors.

70. Actions to implement this policy are also based on the following five interdependent strategic guidelines:

- Promoting gender awareness at the household and community level
- Strengthening equitable access to basic social services for women, men and adolescents
- Promoting women's and men's economic potential and access to economic resources in an equitable manner
- Strengthening the equitable exercise of the rights of women and men and their participation in economic and political governance and decision-making bodies
- Building national institutional capacities

71. Pursuant to Act No. 154 of 9 June 2012, the Republic of Djibouti is implementing the National Gender Policy by taking several actions, including:

- Establishing a Gender Observatory; opening social welfare centres and community day-care centres; organizing awareness-raising workshops on family planning; and establishing literacy centres and nurseries
- Formulating a joint Ministry of Health and Ministry for Women and the Family action plan and a new national strategy to combat female genital mutilation (2017–2021)

72. It should also be noted that Vision 2035 and the strategy on accelerated growth and employment creation give gender equality pride of place.

### 3. Specific measures to promote the rights of women

73. Specific measures adopted by the Government as part of a strategy to accelerate the achievement of substantive equality between men and women, particularly in the areas of education, justice and decision-making, include the enactment of a new law on the protection and prevention of violence against women, as well as other measures to combat female genital mutilation, trafficking and prostitution.

#### *Violence against women and female genital mutilation*

74. Djibouti has always paid attention to the situation of women in the country, as demonstrated, in particular, by its gradual enactment of a protective legislative framework and its adoption of policies designed to protect women from all forms of violence.

75. Important measures taken in that context include:

- The development of a legal guide to address gender-based violence. The guide is a legal, informational and orientation tool for women victims of violence, covering physical, psychological, sexual, economic and legal violence. It is a very important educational tool that helps women, specifically, to press charges and seek legal assistance.
- The development of a guide on sexual violence. This guide is a tool for awareness-raising, prevention and protection of the rights of vulnerable people and victims of sexual violence. It sets out guidelines on what steps to take and describes the different stages of the legal process. The guide was conceived and disseminated in line with the requirements set out in the international

conventions on the protection and promotion of the rights of women ratified by the country, further enabling Djiboutian women to thrive in society.

- The adoption of Act No. 221/AN/17/8 L amending and supplementing Act No. 133/AN/05/5 L of 28 January 2006 on the Labour Code of 25 June 2018, which prohibits sexual harassment, which is now punishable by a fine of one to two million Djibouti francs and a term of one month of imprisonment. A repeat offence shall be punishable by a term of two months of imprisonment or a doubled fine, or both.
- The adoption of Act No. 66/AN/719/8 L on violence prevention and the protection and care of women and children who are victims of violence, the purpose of which is to combat all forms of violence against women and children in Djibouti. The law provides for the adoption of measures to prevent gender-based violence, protect and provide care to victims and hold perpetrators accountable.

76. In addition, panel discussions are organized regularly by the Ministry of Women and the Family, in partnership with the National Union of Djiboutian Women and the National Human Rights Commission, to educate the public on the gravity of gender-based violence and to remind the perpetrators that their crimes will no longer go unpunished.

77. These actions attest to the fact that the Government takes the issue of violence against women and girls very seriously.

78. Since female genital mutilation is a major concern in Djibouti, the policy of eradicating all forms of female genital mutilation is part of the overall objective of combating all forms of gender violence.

79. A national committee for the total eradication of all forms of excision is still active. The committee, which operates under the supervision of the Ministry for Women and the Family, has a mandate and structure established by decree. The committee is responsible for coordinating and ensuring synergy among initiatives and actions taken to eradicate those harmful practices.

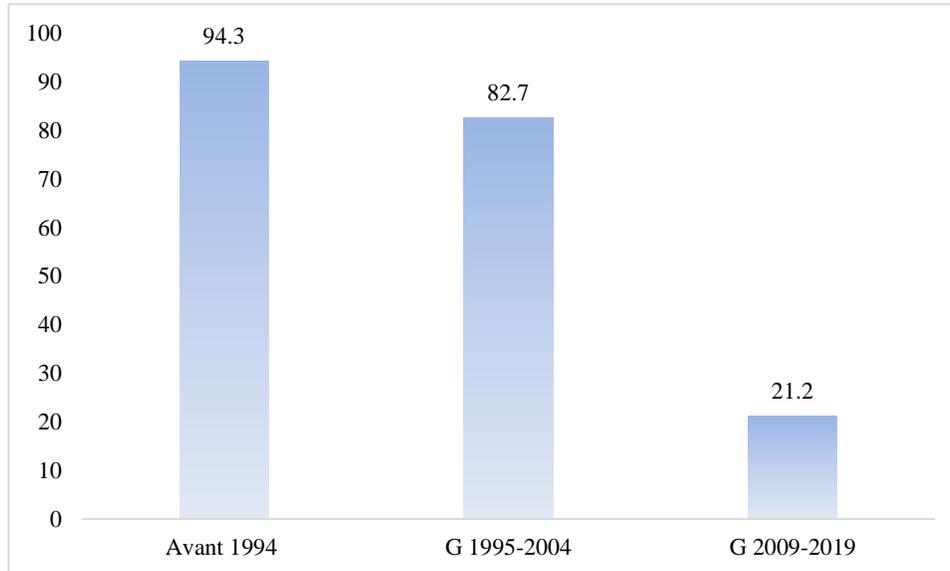
80. Several five-year strategies on abandoning all forms of female genital mutilation and cutting have been developed and implemented.

81. Several awareness-raising campaigns are conducted each year by the Ministry for Women and the Family, the Ministry of Muslim Affairs, the National Union of Djiboutian Women, religious and traditional leaders, and women's, girls' and boys' associations. The "Chamikhat" regional network, made up of the countries of the subregion, also conducts large-scale campaigns to raise awareness about the harmful effects of female genital mutilation and, in particular, on the stances on all forms of excision that are consistent with Islamic tenets and human rights principles. The National Human Rights Commission also takes part in these campaigns.

82. Through these dialogues and debates between the population and religious leaders, the Government seeks to catalyse a change in harmful practices with a view to abolishing female genital mutilation.

83. Lastly, a national survey on violence against women containing a section devoted to female genital mutilation was conducted in 2019. The results of the new survey indicate that there has been a significant decline in the practice of female genital mutilation in recent years, with fewer young and adolescent girls having undergone female genital mutilation than had been subjected to the practice in earlier generations.

84. A comparison of the 0–10 year old cohorts since 1994 illustrates this substantial decline in the incidence of the practice, which fell from 94.3 per cent among generations born before 1994 to 21.2 per cent among generations born in the last 10 years.



85. At the legal and institutional levels:

- The support, information and counselling centre has been strengthened by the signing of a national referral protocol for gender-based violence. This protocol was developed to meet the need for a referral system to coordinate the actions of the mechanism for providing care to victims of violence against women, as part of the close collaboration and cooperation between the various providers. To that end, a lawyer was hired, and a doctor has been made available.
- A toll-free helpline has been set up.
- An itinerant court was established, prevention programmes were launched and an operational database was established.
- The package of essential services was launched.
- A social assistance office was established to receive and handle the complaints brought by the vulnerable population.
- In 2016, a survey was conducted to identify areas of resistance to the total eradication of all forms of female genital mutilation
- A bill establishing gender parity at all levels of government was drafted. The bill approved by the Council of Ministers and studied by the Law Commission aims to put in place measures to promote equal access by men and women to decision-making authority in all institutions.

86. With regard to health:

- In November 2018, a national referral protocol for the care of victims of gender-based violence and female genital mutilation was adopted. It is a cooperation agreement that will enlist the efforts of the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Health, alongside such NGOs as the National Union of Djiboutian Women and other actors and partners

involved in resolving this cross-cutting issue. This will ensure that all victims of violence receive holistic and early care.

- The popular awareness-raising radio programmes for female and male listeners, with a focus on health in general and reproductive health and family planning in particular, have made it possible to:
  - Provide comprehensive care to victims of gender-based violence, in collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund, which extended support to civil society, particularly to the National Union of Djiboutian Women and the support centre.
  - Provide medical and psychosocial care to survivors of gender-based violence.

87. With regard to employment:

- In a formula that has become a mantra of sorts, nearly every invitation to tender concludes with a phrase such as “Female candidates encouraged to bid” or “Equally qualified women candidates shall be given priority”.
- From 12 to 14 March each year, a trade fair is organized, at which civil society organizations and cooperatives from the five inland regions exhibit their handicrafts and agricultural and food products.
- Thirty-five projects carried out by young people from the inland regions have been financed, enabling them to undertake income-generating activities.
- Sixty-seven women fishmongers have received training on the concepts of preservation and processing of seafood. This training, organized in partnership with the relevant ministry, will enable participants to gain a command of how to ascertain the quality of fish and the main causes of fish deterioration, as well as to master techniques for processing fishery products.
- Vocational training in sewing, hairdressing, cookery and preschool instruction is provided to young girls who left school early. There are 202 students enrolled in the training, split up into first-year and second-year levels.

#### *Trafficking and exploitation of prostitution*

88. The Criminal Code of the Republic of Djibouti contains provisions that punish trafficking in women and girls. The acts covered include offences against public morality: prostitution, incitement to debauchery and prostitution, indecent assault and rape (in the case of rape, the penalties are very severe and act as a deterrent).

89. Moreover, the Government has acceded to the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, ratified by Act No. 95/AN/05/5 L on the ratification of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its additional protocols.

90. Article 1 of that Act, adopted on 8 February 2005, stipulates that the following instruments shall be ratified:

- United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime
- Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime
- Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime

91. In order to prevent trafficking in women and girls and improve their economic situation so that they are no longer vulnerable to exploitation and traffickers, the Government has undertaken cross-cutting measures, as follows:

- The Government has shown renewed interest in combating this crime, including by formulating a national action plan for that purpose in March 2014.
- The Ministry of Justice has taken steps to coordinate and focus its anti-trafficking efforts and to secure donor support for anti-trafficking projects by establishing a high-level working group that meets regularly. The working group is composed of the public prosecutor, the Inspector-General of the Judicial Services and a Ministry of Justice adviser.
- The Government expanded its partnership with the International Organization for Migration in 2013 to include joint training sessions for officials as well as the publication of awareness-raising materials. It also continued to provide basic health care to undocumented migrants.
- Act No. 133/AN/16/7 L of 24 March 2016 on Combating Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants was enacted. The law was enacted after it was observed and acknowledged by all the relevant actors and institutions that the previous law on combating trafficking in human beings was not in line with the general principles of the Organized Crime Convention. Its aim is to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children.
- The Code on the Legal Protection of Minors was instituted in 2015. It concerns the protection of children in difficult or dangerous situations as well as of those who have committed offences. Its main aim is to promote and protect the rights of children. The code stipulates that in any action concerning a child, undertaken by any person or authority, the best interests of the child shall be the primary consideration. The best interests of the child must be understood as everything that is beneficial to his or her mental, moral, physical and material well-being.

92. In addition, the Republic of Djibouti, with the assistance of the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons of the United States Department of State has set up a project to be implemented by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

93. The aim of the two-year project having been to strengthen the national criminal justice system's response to trafficking in persons in Djibouti, it covered the following four areas:

- Cooperation on protecting and assisting victims of trafficking
- Training of judges and officials working in law enforcement
- Awareness-raising
- Data collection

94. Since 2016, several training sessions have been organized as part of the fight against trafficking and prostitution:

- 26–28 September 2016: session on identifying victims of human trafficking
- 18–19 December 2016: workshop held for the purpose of approving various documents pertaining to the establishment of a national referral mechanism for victims of trafficking in persons
- 20 December 2016: workshop held for the purpose of developing the national action plan to combat transnational organized crime and terrorism

- 26–27 February 2017: workshop held for the purpose of endorsing 10 training-of-trainers modules on combating trafficking in persons
- 2–4 May 2017: training-of-trainers course

95. In 2017, a conviction was handed down on a trafficking case in Djibouti for the first time. Other government initiatives are strengthening measures to protect against trafficking in persons. Thanks to the two Ministry of the Interior migration centres, one at Obock and the other at Loyada; the remarkable efforts of the national police and gendarmerie; the Ministry of Health mobile clinics and the initiatives undertaken by the Ministry for Women and the Family, the Government has provided assistance related to the most basic human rights to more than 40,000 migrants, thereby lowering the risk of trafficking in persons, a risk to which they might have been exposed on account of their vulnerability.

96. In close partnership with its technical and financial partners, the Republic of Djibouti remains committed to strengthening prevention mechanisms and protecting victims of trafficking.

## **B. Measures related to representation in political and public life**

### **1. Measures related to participation in political and public life**

97. The overall rate of representation of women in the realm of political decision-making was 15 per cent for the period 2006–2011, compared to 26 per cent for 2012–2019, an increase of 11 percentage points. At the National Assembly level, the 2018 law setting a minimum quota of 25 per cent of elected legislative positions for women has had a significant impact.

98. Since February 2018, women have occupied 26 per cent of the seats in the legislature, up from 11 per cent in the previous legislature (2013). Their participation in the National Assembly itself has also increased: the institution has a woman Vice-President, and women deputies preside over a third of the committees, such as the Committee on Laws and Human Rights.

99. With regard to decentralization, the proportion of women elected in the last two regional and communal elections (2012 and 2017) has also increased, from 10 per cent in 2006 (11 of 103) to 29 per cent in 2012 (48 of 168); the proportion remained stable in 2017 (56 of 194). The unanimous election of the first female mayor by the elected officials of the Djibouti city Council was a highlight of the 2017 electoral results. Laws that provide for the representation of women in high-level positions accelerate progress and guarantee stability once the desired level of representation is reached.

100. In terms of women appointed to government positions, there have been one, two, or at most three women ministers in office at any one time since independence, out of 23 or 24 ministers. The same goes for the secretaries-general of ministries.

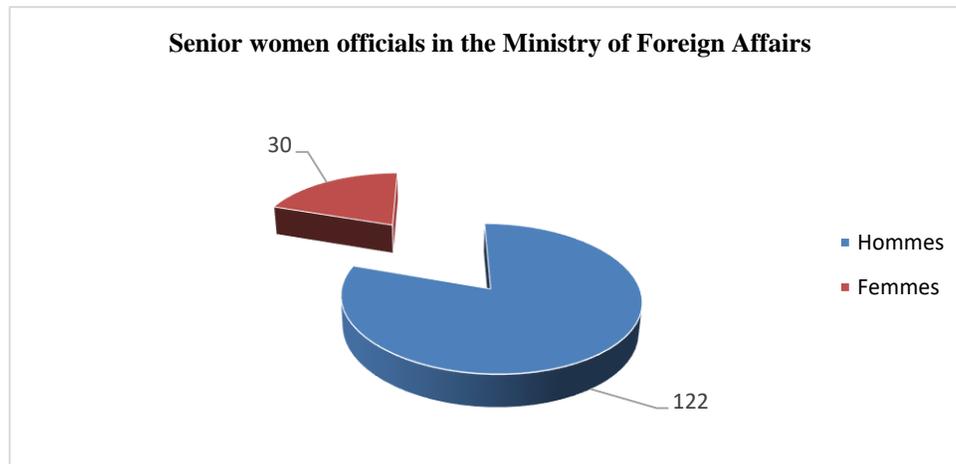
101. The percentage of women in positions of responsibility, particularly directors and heads of department, has changed since 2011.

	<i>Men</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>%</i>
Head of office	66	66	33	33
Head of Department	287	65	151	35
Director	123	73	46	27
Technical adviser	317	87	49	13
Secretary-General	18	85	4	14

102. All these results and actions attest to the Government's clear political will to make gender equality a reality in decision-making bodies.

## 2. Equality and representation of women at the international level

103. As in the civil service, women account for only a quarter of the senior management staff of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Only 24.59 per cent of the senior Ministry of Foreign Affairs staff are women. The distribution of senior managerial staff of the central administration of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is approaching parity, while the distribution of staff in the field is not.



104. The representation of women in diplomatic missions abroad has progressed since 2013. In 2016, the first woman ambassador to Kenya was appointed, serving until 2018.

105. In addition, a woman has held the position of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Djibouti to the Swiss Confederation since September 2016. She is also Permanent Representative to the United Nations Office, the World Trade Organization and other specialized agencies based in Geneva. Before being appointed to that post, she had served at the Permanent Mission of Djibouti to the United Nations in New York since 2007 and was appointed Chargé d'affaires a.i. there in August 2015.

## 3. Gender equality in the laws on nationality

106. The fundamental right of each child to birth registration is guaranteed. That right is further reaffirmed in article 7 of the Code on the Legal Protection of Minors, adopted in 2015, which stipulates that "every child shall be registered immediately after birth and shall have from birth the right to a name, the right to acquire a nationality and, as far as possible, the right to know and be cared for by his or her parents".

107. In 2016, more than 90 per cent of newborns were registered at birth in Djibouti. In order to achieve the target of 100 per cent registration, in the last quarter of 2017 the Government approved a major study to analyse bottlenecks in the birth registration system.

108. No distinction is made between men and women as far as the acquisition and transmission of nationality is concerned. The laws of the Republic of Djibouti are therefore in full compliance with the Convention. Article 9 of the Nationality Code stipulates that "a child born of unknown parents in the Republic of Djibouti is a

Djiboutian. A child born of a Djiboutian mother in the Republic of Djibouti but whose father is unknown is also Djiboutian.” Pursuant to this article, a mother therefore transfers her nationality or citizenship to her child, even if the child’s father is unknown.

## **C. Social and economic measures and rural women**

### **1. Measures adopted and progress made in the area of education**

109. The Committee’s concerns about the education of young girls, concerns that the Government shares, have also been addressed by implementing the Convention. The efforts made by Djibouti in that area have been significant, given its limited resources. Those efforts were also aimed at doing away with traditional attitudes that perpetuate discrimination and failure to comply with the Convention, in order to promote girls’ access to education on an equal footing with boys.

110. The results are encouraging; the gross school enrolment ratio increased from 75 per cent in 2009 to 80.5 per cent in 2017 at the primary level, and from 46 per cent in 2009 to 82.6 per cent in 2017 at the general secondary school level.

111. The gross enrolment ratio has improved significantly at the middle and secondary levels of the Djiboutian school system. That improvement reflects the impact of the investments that the State party has made in school infrastructure.

112. A considerable effort has been made to provide vocational education and professional training by putting in place a national policy on professional training to improve integration into the workforce. Moreover, attendance and guidance rates have increased from 15 per cent to 25 per cent in a few years (source: annual monitoring indicators of the strategy on accelerated growth and employment creation 2015–2019).

113. Parity between girls and boys at school has been achieved at the primary level, rising from 0.86 to 1 (2009–2017). The percentage of girls enrolled in secondary school increased slightly, bringing the parity score from 0.73 to 0.85.

114. The proportion of women participants in the literacy programme increased from 39.5 per cent in 2013 to 62 per cent in 2019, according to the same source. The literacy programme has been expanded in both rural and urban areas, as funds have been mobilized to enhance its efficiency.

115. A recent qualitative study based on the sociological determinants of key social practices, conducted by the State party with technical and financial support from the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), demonstrated that there are good social practices that are driving positive social and behavioural change in the population of Djibouti.

116. The main results of this study highlight Government efforts in several areas, including:

- Advances in the position and social status of Djiboutian women as a result of access to education and information, skills acquired, salaried work, participation in community activities, the pursuit of income-generating activities that enable women to gain access to monetary resources outside the family (where men have authority) and the assertion of women’s empowerment without changing the image of the man
- Greater equity, or even equality, in social relations between people of different genders, as a result of the changing situation of women (level of education, economic influence, etc.)

- The systematic enrolment of children in school, regardless of gender
- The interest in and importance of the birth certificate for a child, even though birth certificates are not issued automatically. The slogan used to encourage parents to report the births of their newborn children to the civil registry services is “A child without a birth certificate is considered ‘unborn’”

117. In rural areas, keeping girls in school remains a challenge, which is why the Government is stepping up efforts to establish integrated rural schools (in 2019) to create new momentum with regard to schools. Several government departments are working together to make this initiative a success. The objective is to equip schools with basic social infrastructure, in areas such as health, livelihoods, empowerment and a sense of community, in rural areas.

118. Djibouti has undertaken several actions in response to the recommendations on girls’ education. Those actions concern:

- The Action Plan on Education 2017–2019
- The Master Plan 2010–2019
- The education targets for Sustainable Development Goal 4 in the context of Djibouti
- The development of early childhood education in collaboration with the private sector, the community and the Ministry for Women and the Family, with Ministry of Education efforts focused on children from poor and rural areas
- The goal of 100 per cent enrolment in the first year of primary school in 2020 and a gross enrolment ratio of 79 per cent for students aged 11 to 14 in 2019
- The elimination of disparities between girls and boys at the primary and secondary levels by 2019 and full equality in that area by 2019
- Improved administrative practices at all levels in order to ensure efficient and effective management of the quality of the services provided and of the use of those services

## 2. Measures adopted and progress made in the area of education

119. One of the aims of the long-term national development plan, Djibouti 2035, is for 35 per cent of women to be economically independent by 2035, thus providing for greater integration of women into entrepreneurship as well.

120. According to a household survey conducted by the State party in 2017, among the working population, women’s participation is 32 per cent, while that of men is 59 per cent.

121. The public sector remains the country’s largest employer, accounting for 60 per cent of all employment. Women in that sector have increased over the long term.

122. Between 2000 and 2018, the number of persons employed by the State (civil servants and contractors) quadrupled. The proportion of women has increased significantly compared to that of men (4.6 times versus 3.7 times).

	<i>Civil servants in 2000</i>	<i>Contractors in 2000</i>	<i>Civil servants in 2018</i>	<i>Contractors in 2018</i>
Men	1 813	1 043	6 791	3 035
Women	615	475	2 910	1 995
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>2 428</b>	<b>1 518</b>	<b>9 701</b>	<b>5 030</b>

123. The female-to-male ratio improved between 2000 and 2018, from 0.38 in 2000 to 0.47 in 2018.

124. Women's participation in the formal private sector is estimated at 33.6 per cent. They are active mainly in trade and housekeeping. Ten per cent of working women are self-employed, working as lawyers, notaries, restaurant owners and entrepreneurs. In the informal sector, women account for 74.3 per cent of all workers.

125. In 2018, women accounted for a third of employees in the formal private sector, while three quarters of informal sector workers were women, the vast majority of whom were in vulnerable situations: 50.8 per cent were widows, 33.8 per cent were divorced and 64.20 per cent were women aged 65 and over.

126. The State party has supported several training programmes to encourage vulnerable women and girls to undertake economic initiatives to reduce poverty.

127. In 2017, the State party established a multi-sectoral programme aimed at creating income-generating activities; 220 women and girls received support. It also launched an initiative called "Entrepreneurship Monday", which consists of organizing entrepreneurship training modules and providing support until the business is launched.

128. More than 100 rural young people participated, and 43 income-generating activities were created. The Centre for Social Action to Promote the Empowerment of Women, located in the city of Djibouti, is a second-chance institution that provides vocational training to young girls who left school at an early age.

129. In three years, 245 women and girls have been trained there. In June 2016, the Ministry for Women and the Family launched the "Economic Empowerment and Strengthening of Women's Communities" initiative. Funded by development partners, its main objective has been to build the capacity of vulnerable women in order to facilitate their economic empowerment, by supporting them in establishing income-generating activities in the five regions of the country and the suburban areas around the city of Djibouti.

130. In 2019, the Women's Economic Project award was given to a deserving female entrepreneur, one of the recipients of the Head of State Award for the Advancement of Women.

131. To achieve the empowerment of women and girls and facilitate access to economic resources, land, financial services and natural resources, the State party has taken a host of measures, foremost among them:

- Incorporating provisions on moral and sexual harassment into the Labour Code in June 2018
- Amending provisions on maternity leave in both the private and public sectors, extending maternity leave to six months
- Passing Act No. 28/AN/18/8 L on the ratification of the loan agreement for the Women and Youth Entrepreneurship Support Project
- Adopting Act No. 194/AN/17/7 L on the ratification of the International Labour Organization Protocol to the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29)

### **3. Measures adopted and progress made in the area of health**

132. Population-wide access to health care is a matter of concern for the Republic of Djibouti. The Government has undertaken efforts to improve the national health-care infrastructure, incorporate gender equality into all health sector reforms, take the

necessary measures to improve women’s access to health care and services, and so forth.

133. Those efforts are reflected in the results of a 2018 qualitative study conducted in collaboration with UNICEF that highlighted the following advances, among others:

- 91 per cent of mothers breastfeed, although not exclusively, during the first 6 months;
- There has been an improvement in maternal and child health care, in particular, with regard to vaccination, prenatal and postnatal consultations, assisted childbirth, contraception, care for children’s illnesses (diarrhoea, fevers, etc.).

134. As part of its effort to guarantee the right of all to health, in 2019 the State party conducted a survey on nutrition. The survey showed the country’s progress towards achieving food and nutritional security.

135. Acute malnutrition has declined sharply as a result of the nutrition programmes put in place by the Government to address the 2013 national emergency.

#### **Acute malnutrition 2013–2019**

<i>Acute malnutrition</i>	<i>2013</i>	<i>2019</i>
Overall	17.8	10.3%
Severe	5.7	2.6%

136. The State party is aware that efforts must continue, as the country has yet to reach the level defined as normal by the World Health Organization.

137. The maternal mortality rate declined slightly, from 383 per 100,000 births to 362 per 100,000 births. There has also been an increase in the rate of assisted deliveries (midwives, nurses, doctors and/or gynaecologists), from 87 per cent in 2012 to 92 per cent in 2019, as a result of the expanded geographical distribution of health-care facilities, with the construction of health-care clinics throughout the country. In addition, the mobile health-care (health caravan) strategy provides coverage in remote rural areas.

138. Another measure taken to achieve the objective of health for all was the establishment of a universal health insurance scheme. Established by Law No. 24/AN/14/7th of 5 February 2014, it includes protection for the most vulnerable categories, of which women constitute a significant proportion.

139. Vulnerable people have better social security coverage thanks to the Social Assistance for Health Care Programme. As at 2019, more than 20,000 people had received coverage under the programme since 2015, 67 per cent of them hailing from rural areas and 45 per cent of them persons with special needs.

140. In line with its international commitments, Djibouti is preparing to extend the services available under the Social Security Assistance Programme to refugees. By 2021, 12,500 refugees will have received coverage.

141. Public funding allocated in the State budget for the health-care system increased by 15.77 per cent between 2013 and 2017. In 2014, that funding accounted for 52.5 per cent of overall spending on and investment in health care.

142. In 2018, a new national health development plan was adopted. The plan covers the period from 2018 to 2022. The aim of the plan is to guarantee “health for all and everywhere”. It is organized along the following four key elements:

- Making available nationwide quality health care that meets the needs of the population
- Making available preventive care and treatment that are suited to the epidemiological context throughout the country, in order to reduce the incidence and prevalence of and better manage diseases
- Strengthening health-care financing and governance to meet the challenges of universal health coverage
- Strengthening the health-care information system to make quality data continuously available for informed decision-making in the health-care sector

143. Two major outcomes are expected, namely:

- A decline in maternal, neonatal, child and youth mortality rates
- A 50 per cent reduction in the incidence of malaria, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS

144. The health-care system in Djibouti is structured as a three-tier pyramid. Hospitals and referral bodies make up the first tier. Health centres and hospital-level medical centres make up the middle tier, and rural clinics make up the third tier.

145. Finally, the authorities' proactive policy on health-related matters, supported by the commitment of technical and financial partners and by the backing of health-care administrators and staff, has translated into tangible action on the ground, with significant results, as evidenced by all the health-related statistics that attest to the expansion of health coverage.

146. The following health-related statistics attest to the expansion of health-care coverage:

- Between 2004 and 2015, the number of clinics increased from 22 to 38.
- The number of community health centres increased from 8 to 15 over the same period.
- By 2014, the country had, among others, five hospital-level medical centres, six hospitals and national referral centres and eight health-care centres owned or controlled partly by the Government.
- Four urban outpatient clinics were established in order to open up tier one, increase the rate of attendance of health-care facilities and place them within closer reach of local populations.
- Regional hospitals (in Ali Sabieh and Arta) have been built to serve rural areas.
- The number of doctors increased from 102 to 304 between 2010 and 2013, and the number of midwives rose from 40 to 303 between 2000 and 2015. From 2005 to 2015, the number of community pharmacies increased from 5 to 20.

147. The Government has also enacted the following health-related laws:

- Act No. 58/AN/19/8 L on the ratification of the financing agreement for the project to strengthen the health-care system, focusing on maternal, neonatal and child health, signed into law by the President of the Republic on 23 July 2019
- Decree No. 2017-326/PR/MTRA on the establishment and organization of a steering committee of the project in support of capacity-building in the health-care sector.

#### **4. Measures adopted and progress achieved in the provision of economic and social services**

148. A study on the gender situation conducted in June 2011 revealed that gaps exist between men and women, particularly in the economic and social fields.

149. The National Gender Policy adopted in 2011 for the period from 2011 to 2021 constitutes a strategic gender policy framework to contribute to the achievement of gender equity and equality in all areas of economic and social life.

150. The two main objectives of the National Gender Policy are:

- (i) To create a sociocultural, legal, economic, political and institutional environment conducive to the achievement of gender equity and equality in Djiboutian society;
- (ii) To effectively incorporate a gender perspective into development activities in all sectors.

151. In view of these specific needs in terms of financing, women wishing to launch or strengthen an income-generating activity turn to microfinance institutions, in which women account for 70 per cent of members. Such institutions have been created by the Government and its partners for that very purpose, as part of the fight against poverty.

152. Furthermore, the conclusions of the various focus groups conducted as part of a study show that such services are in high demand among women and that women see microfinance as a path to independence.

153. However, the women noted certain obstacles, in particular, the restrictive and slow procedures for granting credit, high interest rates, incompatibility of interest with the tenets of Islam, and payment terms that are too short. Some women, especially young women, also mentioned the dearth of information about microfinance institutions.

154. It should be noted, however, that in recent years an Islamic microfinance unit has been created to meet the needs of people for whom a commitment to comply with the tenets of Islam is an obstacle to access to credit.

155. There are plans to extend the microfinance unit throughout the country in the next few years.

156. In addition, data from the 2015 Djibouti Survey on Employment, the Informal Sector and Consumption shows that only 45.3 per cent of women are aware that microfinance services are available in Djibouti, and only 6.9 per cent of them have applied for a loan.

157. The data show that women as a group are better informed about microfinance than men are, and that they apply for credit more frequently than men, though men have their applications approved slightly more often.

158. Lastly, it should be noted that the right of access to bank loans remains the same, and women and men have equal access to credit. Djiboutian law makes no distinction between men and women in governing the provision of financial services, whether they be loans or credit. Discrimination is not tolerated.

159. Decree No. 298/PR/MEFI on the statute of the Djibouti Partial Credit Guarantee Fund was adopted. The Fund's mission is to contribute to developing and promoting a private sector and a network of modern small and medium-sized enterprises capable of promoting the economic and social development of Djibouti.

160. Women's participation in recreation, sports and all other aspects of cultural life is increasing steadily in urban areas. Level of education is the determining factor: the higher a woman's level of education, the more her participation tends to approximate that of men.

161. In competitive sport, a women's championship is held in almost every sport played in the country, although the number of women competitors is still low. As a result of awareness-raising activities, the perception of gender in popular sports played in urban areas has undergone significant changes, with the percentage of women participants rising steadily. Consequently, the National Olympic Committee of Djibouti is headed by a woman president who is a member of the International Olympic Committee governing bodies.

162. While the overall trend has been positive, women's participation in various sports remains low in rural areas (even men do not participate very much in sport in rural settings, where infrastructure is very limited).

163. On the other hand, the participation of women in cultural life is remarkable. Women are visibly active in the cultural life of the community in both rural and urban areas. It should be noted that in Djiboutian culture, a distinction is made between cultural activities for women and cultural activities for men; activities in which both men and women participate are a third, distinct category.

164. With regard to social security benefits, Act No. 168/AN/17/7 L repealing article 102 of Act No. 154/AN/02/4 L, which codifies the functioning of the Social Protection Organization and the general retirement scheme for employees, was amended to allow the first six dependent children to receive family allowances (instead of the first three children, as previously stipulated).

##### **5. Measures adopted and progress achieved with regard to the rights of rural women**

165. The Government has made an enormous effort to address the needs of rural women since its last report in 2011. Some of its achievements have been remarkable, particularly in terms of basic social services provided to the population, women being the primary beneficiaries thereof.

166. The Government has developed a new strategy to strengthen its efforts to combat poverty among rural women. The aim of this new strategy, entitled "Women's empowerment and community building", is to provide economic and social support to women in rural and suburban areas.

167. As part of this project, the State has developed income-generating activities and management training for those women. More than 300 women from five regions were provided with equipment to begin producing handicrafts.

168. The women, who are grouped into associations or cooperatives, have received capacity-building training in order to better learn how these types of groups are organized and operate.

169. Since the project was launched, dozens of fairs have been organized in various tourist sites and major hotels, allowing these women to sell their goods.

170. Community nursery and day-care programmes have also been established in the inland regions, especially in the most remote areas, in order to support vulnerable families, in particular, by enabling mothers to find time to set up an income-generating activity.

171. In 2018, the commemoration of International Women's Day coincided with the twentieth anniversary of the creation of a special mechanism for the promotion and

protection of women's rights. The mechanism, a directorate for women and the family in the Office of the President of the Republic, was a fairly small one.

172. The theme of the celebration was "The time is now: rural and urban activists transforming women's lives". Many activities took place. For example:

- Kits containing materials were distributed to women with disabilities at the National Union for Djiboutian Women offices.
- A conference on the rights of women was held.
- Materials were distributed to the cash management committees from the town of Douda in the Arta region.
- Materials were distributed to the young girls running projects.
- Materials were distributed to women detainees.
- Materials were distributed to the women fishmongers of the Obock and Arta regions.
- Promotional materials, including posters, leaflets, brochures, capsules, reports and television and radio programmes, were produced.

173. Measures taken by the Government to help rural women go beyond economic and social support, also addressing political participation and decision making. For example:

- Numerous awareness-raising campaigns have been held to encourage women to become actively involved in the various electoral processes and in community life.
- Training and awareness-raising programmes have been organized for grassroots authorities, members of community development committees, local elected officials and leaders of associations working on gender issues and the mainstreaming of gender into community development programmes.
- For many years now, International Women's Day has provided an opportunity to encourage women to participate more.

## **D. Measures related to equality, marriage and family life**

### **1. Equality before the law**

174. The laws in force in the Republic of Djibouti champion the equality of all people before the law. Article 22 of the Constitution guarantees all people equal protection, without distinction of any kind between men and women, as well as equal right of recourse to the courts.

175. Between 2000 and 2019, Djibouti acquired substantial legal tools to prevent and combat violence against women and also to give a greater basis and scope to the implementation of the national gender policy pursued by the Government and civil society for greater gender equality and equity.

176. The main tools include:

- The Family Code (2002), which defines the rules, rights and obligations of spouses and children during marriage, divorce and separation
- A support, information and counselling centre, established in 2007, to report acts of violence, the majority of which are perpetrated against women
- The law on violence against women, including female genital mutilation (2009)

- The new Civil and Civil Procedure Code of April 2018
- The Act on the Legal Protection of Minors, whose purpose is to protect and promote the rights of the child
- Decree No. 2018-181/PR/MI of May 2018, which recognizes the National Union of Djiboutian Women as a charitable association
- The legal guide on gender-based violence, including female genital mutilation, intended for judicial police officers

177. The Government, NGOs and associations, development partners and the international community are firmly committed to women, their rights, their protection against violence and their genuine integration at all levels of political, economic and social development.

## **2. Marriage and family**

### *Discrimination against women in marriage and family relations*

178. Marriage and family life are governed by the Family Code, which allows married couples “to live lawfully and, together, to form a family rooted in understanding and harmony”.

179. However, it should be noted that laws on the subject have not changed much. Efforts are under way to bring the Family Code more closely into line with Convention.