CASE STUDY

ZAIN GROUP'S ESG DOUBLE MATERIALITY ASSESSMENT POWERED BY Datamaran®

OVERVIEW

Zain Group, a leading provider of innovative ICT and digital lifestyle communications operating in eight markets across the Middle East and Africa, has been on a sustainability journey for well over a decade. Since publishing its first sustainability report in 2011, the company has steadily aligned with international frameworks such as GRI, SASB, TCFD, CDP, and the UN SDGs, while also committing to continuous improvement in ESG practices.

With a fast-moving industry landscape and rising stakeholder expectations, Zain recognized the need to move beyond manual, time-intensive materiality assessments. In adopting Datamaran, the company transformed its ESG processes, becoming the first mobile operator in the MEA region to conduct a double materiality assessment, embedding data-driven insights into reporting, strategy, and board-level oversight.

CHALLENGES

Before Datamaran, Zain's sustainability team faced several hurdles:

- **Manual and time-consuming assessments:** Materiality processes took 3 - 4 months, relying on handwritten stakeholder feedback, phone calls, and social media outreach.
- **Limited scope:** Difficulties segmenting stakeholder input and expanding the sample size made it hard to capture diverse perspectives.
- **Reactive approach:** The team often responded to emerging topics late, leaving little time to address them proactively.
- **External benchmarks needed:** In the absence of regional reporting requirements, Zain had to rely on international best practices to shape its strategy and maintain leadership in the region.

SOLUTION

Zain adopted Datamaran to bring structure, speed, and data-driven rigor to its ESG governance. Key benefits include:

- **Real-time materiality analysis:** Automated, data-driven insights replaced manual processes, enabling quarterly updates of Zain's double materiality assessment.
- **Peer benchmarking and regulatory monitoring:** The platform allows Zain to track competitors' disclosures and regional ESG regulations, ensuring proactive adaptation.
- **Audit and assurance support:** Datamaran's client success team worked directly with Zain's external auditors, smoothing the assurance process and building credibility.
- **Stakeholder inclusivity:** With surveys adapted into Arabic, Zain expanded the scope of stakeholder engagement to include suppliers, employees, and marginalized customer groups.

PLATFORM USERS AND BENEFICIARIES

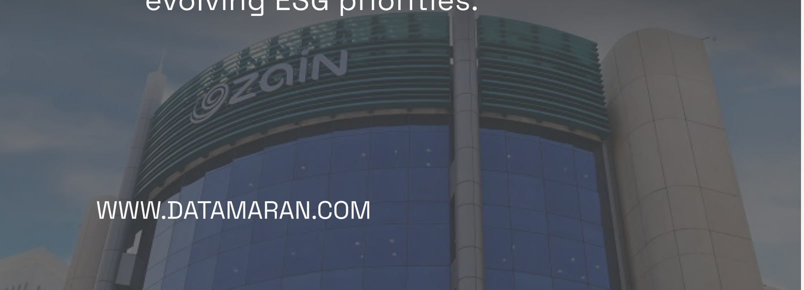
While the sustainability team leads Datamaran usage, insights are shared, and relevant enhancements are applied across the organization:

- **Governance and Risk:** Incorporating materiality findings into enterprise risk management.
- **Technology and Procurement:** Using ESG insights to guide supplier expectations and technology roadmaps.
- **Executive Leadership and Board:** Receiving quarterly updates with materiality matrices and top-priority issues to guide decision-making.
- **Employees:** Leveraging Datamaran outputs in onboarding and training, highlighting the company's ESG priorities and commitments to new starters.

IMPACT

The use of Datamaran has allowed Zain's sustainability program to be proactive, thus becoming efficient in its approach to material issues affecting the organization.

- **Efficiency:** Materiality assessments that once took months are now completed in weeks, delivering a 75% time saving and freeing up capacity to act on findings.
- **Expanded reach:** Zain now engages a wider spectrum of stakeholders, including all employees, suppliers, and regulators, with greater accuracy in reflecting their perspectives and opinions. Datamaran also enables peer benchmarking, ensuring more robust and representative insights that strengthen decision-making.
- **Strategic influence:** Insights have driven the introduction of new KPIs, such as data privacy measures tailored to vulnerable customer groups.
- **Board engagement:** Quarterly refreshes ensure executives stay aligned with evolving ESG priorities.



RESULTS

Zain has achieved measurable improvements in its ESG governance:

- First mobile operator in the MEA region to implement a **double materiality assessment**.
- Strengthened **data privacy governance**, embedding targeted KPIs into the sustainability strategy.
- Increased **frequency and quality** of board-level ESG reporting with quarterly updates.
- Enhanced the **selection process for reasonable assurance**, leveraging Datamaran's data-driven insights.

> *"We have a great relationship with the Datamaran team. It's more of a partnership than a vendor-client relationship. Datamaran not only gives us the platform, but also the insights, the best practices, and the support we need, from stakeholder inclusivity to external assurance. It has transformed how we approach materiality and stakeholder engagement."*
>
> – Jennifer Suleiman, Chief Sustainability Officer, Zain Group

LOOKING AHEAD

As Zain continues its sustainability journey, the company aims to further integrate Datamaran insights into its governance framework, deepen its proactive monitoring of emerging ESG topics, and maintain its leadership position in the region. With more regulation coming to the region in 2026, Zain is already well ahead, proving that leadership in sustainability is about commitment, not compliance.