

AFGHANISTAN

TERRITORIAL ORGANIZATION

Afghanistan is a unitary country with three tiers of subnational government. The major subnational administrative division is the province (*wilayat*), numbering 34 since 2008. Each province has between 5 and 15 districts. In total, there are 387 districts. Each province has one designated provincial municipality; some have a single rural municipality. All the 153 municipalities fall under the direct jurisdiction of the Ministry of Interior.¹



Unless otherwise indicated, all the information in this profile is taken from the previously published Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs).² As this profile was elaborated before the 2021 Taliban offensive, some of the information provided here might no longer be accurate.

1. NATIONAL STRATEGIES FOR SDG IMPLEMENTATION

Before the Taliban offensive, the SDGs had been integrated into national development plans, including the **Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework (ANPDF)**. Also, the **Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS)** had mainstreamed the 17 SDGs into its 8 main sectors, in order to help government institutions to align their development priorities and budget allocation for new development programs with the A-SDGs targets and indicators.³ Additionally, the SDGs had been aligned with the **National Priority Programs (NPPs)**. The five NPPs (Urban Development, Women's Economic Empowerment, Citizen Charter, National Infrastructure and Connectivity, and Human Capital Development) cover approximately 47% of all SDG targets.

1.1 NATIONAL COORDINATION MECHANISMS

The **High Council of Ministers** oversees and supervises the nationalization, alignment and implementation process of the SDGs in the country. The Ministry of Economy (MoEc) has organized the nationalization, alignment, implementation and monitoring processes into a series of specialized groups that include the **SDGs National Coordination Commission**, the **SDGs Secretariat**, the **Technical Coordination Committees**, the **Technical Working Groups**, and the **SDGs High-Level Board** which is responsible to assess and supervise the technical, financial and political status of the SDGs coordination, nationalization and implementation processes. The 2021 VNR indicates that a high-level **Executive Committee**, with four sub-committees, was established to provide policy directions to the implementation of the SDGs. As the lead entity for coordination, monitoring and evaluation, and reporting of SDG implementation, the **Ministry of Economy (MoEc)** is the head of this Committee.

1.2 VNR ELABORATION PROCESS

For the 2017 VNR, the SDGs Secretariat conducted a series of consultations, workshops, and bilateral discussions with different stakeholders (civil society organizations, private sector, NGOs, gender related entities and government institutions). For the VNR 2021, the **Ministry of Economy** also organized consultations, workshops, and bilateral discussions involving different stakeholders. It was able to conduct virtual consultations with all Provincial Directors of Economy (PDoE), who serve as a secretary for Provincial Development Councils (PDCs). Over 200 meetings, workshops, conferences, seminars, and citizens' debates on the SDGs were held at the national and subnational levels.

1. Afghans have formed local councils, which in turn have built ties to appointed local leaders in secure areas. However, forming these linkages has been slowed by centralized decision making processes; localities have their own governing bodies but the central government ministries in the provincial capitals of each province actually implement national programs. Local officials often disagree with the Kabul ministry representatives on priorities and implementation.

See: https://www.sng-wofi.org/reports/SNGWOFI_2019_report_country_profiles_DEC2019_UPDATES.pdf

2. See: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/16277Afghanistan.pdf> (2017);

https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/280392021_VNR_Report_Afghanistan.pdf (2021)

3. Indeed, the government has nationalized the global SDGs into Afghanistan Sustainable Development Goals (A-SDGs).

1.3 MONITORING

A national indicator framework has been developed which has designated 28 different government entities as SDGs custodians by assigning specific goals, targets, and indicators to each of them. Additionally, the Ministry of Economy was assigned to align the SDGs with the updated version of the ANPDF (ANPDF II, 2021-2025) in close coordination with MoF and National Statistics and Information Authority (NSIA). The Ministry of Economy is creating a national-level automated online data and information coordination platform for real-time information sharing and informed policy and decision making for the SDGs.

2. LRGs INVOLVEMENT IN SDG LOCALIZATION

The ongoing activities of the four technical committees of the SDGs Executive Committee include SDG localization (that is to say, the integration of the SDGs into provincial development plans). LRGs are not mentioned among the participants of the consultations organized as part of the 2017 and 2021 VNR processes.

2.1 LRGs PARTICIPATION

► In the VNR process



Comments: Almost no consultation with local and regional authorities (GTF Survey 2021).

► In national coordination mechanisms for SDG implementation



Comments: One of the actions of the four Sub-committees that make up the SDGs Executive Committee consists in the integration of the SDGs into provincial development plans. Punctual participation of the municipality of Bakh (GTF Survey 2021).

This assessment is based on the information collected in the VNRs and in the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments' annual survey on the localization of the SDGs.

2.2 VNR REFERENCES

There is no specific subsection dedicated to the LRGs or the localization process. They are mostly mentioned in the first part, referring to the methodology and process of preparation of the review.

2.3 SPECIFIC PROJECTS AND CASES

The municipality of **Balkh** holds accountability sessions and provides information on the SDGs to local stakeholders: local departments, elders, people representatives and youths with local community activists.

2.4 VOLUNTARY SUBNATIONAL AND/OR LOCAL REVIEWS (VSRs / VLRs)

Not applicable.

2.5 MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION

The 2017 VNR stated that the 2030 Agenda was considered as the foundation strategy for the socio-economic development of Afghanistan and that all available resources would be used to attain the SDG targets. According to the 2021 VNR, the Ministry of Economy is leading the alignment of ANPDF-II with A-SDGs. Once done, the ANPDF-II will serve as the main means of implementation for the SDGs.

3. RELEVANT INFORMATION

General comments: The World Bank has assisted in the creation of the Independent Directorate of Local Authorities in Afghanistan. UN-Habitat has also been very active in Afghanistan, sponsoring several programmes in partnership with the national government and subnational authorities. Even if designed outside the SDG framework, many of the 30 projects, active on the ground since 2008, have a strong impact on the achievement of core SDG targets and development indicators in Afghan territories and communities.⁴

3.1 WOMEN PARTICIPATION

The previous government committed to bolstering coordination, implementation, and results in a re-focused and re-invigorated Women Economic Empowerment – National Priority Program (WEE-NPP) over the next five years. The Cabinet recently approved to designate one deputy governor position for each province to women. Also, every province now has a woman heading the office of prevention of violence against women. The proportion of seats held by women in parliament and local governments is 23%.

3.2 COVID 19

The government established an emergency relief fund to provide all Afghans with support for the first two months of the pandemic. In the longer term, the government will support the Afghan people in building resilience among poorer households in rural areas, increasing investment in water management, seeds provision, and improved livestock practices to improve agricultural productivity. A whole-of-government response was executed, and unprecedented authority was delegated to the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) and **provincial governors** to quickly respond to COVID-19.

4. SDG INDICATORS⁵

5.5.1. (b) Proportion of seats held by women (%) in local governments		16.5 (2019)
6.1.1. Proportion of population using safely managed drinking water services (%)	Urban	36 (2020)
	Rural	24 (2020)
6.2.1. (a) Proportion of population using safely managed sanitation services (%)	Urban	-
	Rural	-
11.1.1. Proportion of population living in slums, informal settlements or inadequate housing (%)		70.7 (2018)
11.6.1. Proportion of municipal solid waste collected and managed (%)		-
11.6.2. Air pollution – annual means of particulate matter in cities (population weighted)		55 (2016)
11.b.2. Proportion of local governments that have adopted local disaster risk reduction strategies in line with national strategies (%)		0 (2017)

4. UCLG, 2019, GOLD V Report, <https://www.gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/ENG-GOLD-V-2020.pdf>

5. The data used for this table come from the UN SDG Indicators Database. See: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/UNSDG/IndDatabasePage>. More information on the country's progress towards the SDGs here: <https://country-profiles.unstatshub.org/afg>