

TERRITORIAL ORGANIZATION

Azerbaijan is a unitary republic in which local government is exercised both through local bodies of state administration and through elected municipal governments. There are 66 regions in the country, and 11 cities including the capital city of Baku, Gyandja, Sumgait, Khyrdalan and Shirvan. With the exception of Khyrdalan, the countries' largest cities do not have the status of municipality. They do not have elected representative bodies and their executive governments are centrally appointed.¹



Unless otherwise indicated, all the information in this profile is taken from the previously published Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs).²

1. NATIONAL STRATEGIES FOR SDG IMPLEMENTATION

The government had aligned the “Azerbaijan 2020: Look into the Future” Development Concept and “Strategic road maps for the national economy and main economic sectors” with SDGs and their targets. After that, Azerbaijan prepared and approved a new development strategy for the post-pandemic and post-war period covering the period 2021-2030 on the implementation of the SDGs: “Azerbaijan 2030: National Priorities for Socio-economic Development”. In this framework, the government has established five national priorities: a sustainable and growing competitive economy; a dynamic, inclusive and social justice-based society; competitive human capital and modern innovations; great return to the liberated areas; a clean environment and green growth. In line with these priorities, a strategy and an action plan for 2021-2025 will be formulated and approved.

1.1 NATIONAL COORDINATION MECHANISMS

The **National Coordination Council on Sustainable Development (NCCSD)** coordinates fulfillment of duties of the state agencies arising from the commitments under the 2030 Agenda. It is led by a chairman, who is the Deputy Prime Minister, and a deputy chairman who is the Minister of Economy. Also, a permanent **Secretariat** and **thematic working groups** in 4 areas (economic growth and decent work; social issues; environmental issues; monitoring and evaluation) were established.

1.2 VNR ELABORATION PROCESS

For the 2019 VNR, a broad consultation workshop was conducted on the nationalization of the SDGs and the results of the MAPS Report with the participation of UNDP. For the 2021 VNR, the **National Coordination Council on Sustainable Development** and the **Ministry of Economy** lead the reporting process, through consultation with various stakeholders including Parliament, line ministries, public institutions, NGOs, the private sector and academic institutions.

1.3 MONITORING

According to the 2019 VNR, one of the four **SDG Working Groups** was created for monitoring. It is responsible for providing policy advice to decision makers to better mainstream, implement, monitor and report on the progress made on SDGs. The 2021 VNR emphasizes advancements in the statistical framework, yet these do not seem to include or relate to LRGs. There are two main advancements: the nationalization of the statistical database for the 2030 Agenda and the State Program on Improvement of Official Statistics between 2018 and 2025. Moreover, during the VNR process, the “SDG: Statistical Review” was made available to the National Information Portal on SDGs. Six new indicators were

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

2. See: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/16005Azerbaijan.pdf> (2017); https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/23411AZERBAIJAN_VNR_Report.pdf (2019); https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/23411AZERBAIJAN_VNR_Report.pdf (2021)

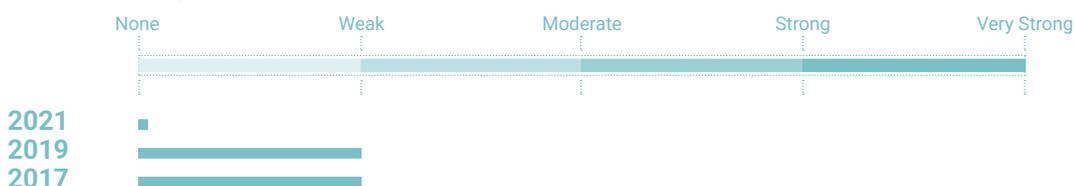
developed in collaboration with relevant government agencies. There is no mention of LRG involvement despite the fact that one indicator is “11.6.1 Proportion of municipal solid waste collected and managed in controlled facilities out of total municipal solid waste generated by cities”.

2. LRGs INVOLVEMENT IN SDG LOCALIZATION

Neither LRGs nor their association are members of the National Coordination Council. Local executive authorities are mentioned in the 2019 VNR as important actors to gain national ownership of the SDGs and contribute to its implementation. On the contrary, there is no explicit mention of LRGs in the 2021 VNR, although perhaps they are included as “public institutions”. The report also states that a written request was sent to stakeholders to provide information on the status of actions taken to achieve the SDGs, but there is no mention that LRGs are included among those stakeholders.

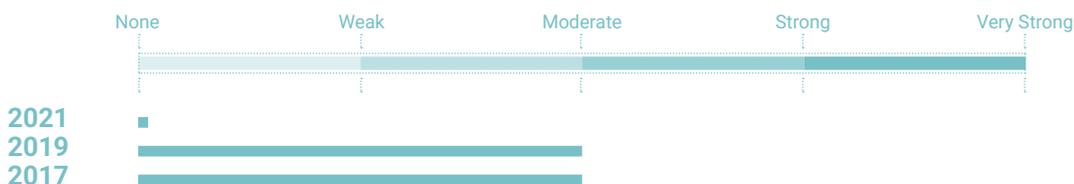
2.1 LRGs PARTICIPATION

► In the VNR process



Comments: No reference to LRG participation.

► In national coordination mechanisms for SDG implementation



Comments: Neither LRGs nor their association are members of the National Coordination Council.

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 are only two “large” references to LRGs in the whole 2021 VNR and both feel generic: “By integrating the SDGs into the national development agenda the 2030 Agenda can be amalgamated with national, regional and local plans, as well as relevant budget allocations”; and “The action plans prepared for implementation of the 2030 Agenda focus on national and regional governing organizations in terms of the importance of supporting the implementation of goals and targets at the central executive level and the significance of the role of regional and local governments in achieving the SDGs”.

2.3 SPECIFIC PROJECTS AND CASES

► A notable example is the **Sustainable Land and Forest Management project** in 11 districts in northwestern Azerbaijan implemented by local governments over 2013-2018 with the assistance of UNDP. District governments’ actions are aimed at mitigating climate change by managing natural forests, emphasizing the importance of promoting natural regeneration through improved grazing and wood collecting in forests.³

► Based on SDG 11 targets, the government took the decision to start the alignment of smart city and smart village standards in newly established cities and villages.

► Regarding SDG 2, land plots were selected for the construction of modern (stationary, modular and mobile) slaughterhouses in the regions and in **Baku City**, to promote the establishment of slaughterhouses in compliance with

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

veterinary-sanitary and sanitary-hygienic requirements, together with the establishment of coordination mechanisms between the relevant central and local executive authorities.

► Regarding SDG 16, local staff has been provided training on criminal procedures.

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

Not applicable.

2.5 MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION

The 2019 VNR states that the sectoral strategic plans (started to be developed in 2019) associated with the “National Expenditure Priorities” under the “Education”, “Agriculture” and “Environmental protection” sections of the functional classification of budgetary expenditures and their action plans are planned to be coordinated with the sustainable development goals and targets.

3. RELEVANT INFORMATION

General comments: Decentralization in the country is more a case of wishful thinking on the part of the central government which is more aware of the potential role of local governments (rather than actual) in citywide and regional economic development. Since 2009, the number of municipalities, i.e. the decentralized level of self-government, has been reduced by 40%. Current legislation only vaguely describes the relationship between the municipalities and local deconcentrated bodies of central government. In reality however, municipal governments appear to be subordinate to the deconcentrated bodies of the central government.⁴ The **Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic**, with its own constitution but subordinate to the Azerbaijan national constitution, has only two layers of government: the state government and municipalities. The 2021 VNR is marked by the end of the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan in November 2020: “in this respect the rehabilitation, reconstruction and reintegration of its liberated and conflict-affected areas will constitute the key dimension of the development strategy of the Republic of Azerbaijan in the coming years”.

3.1 WOMEN PARTICIPATION

A guidebook on SDG 5, namely “Practical recommendations for implementation of Gender Equality Policy in Municipalities”, was published by the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs under the framework of mutual cooperation between the State Committee and the GIZ. The National Action Plan on Gender 2021-2025 intends to implement actions to enhance the participation of women in public life, but there is no further information in the VNR on whether this means increasing women’s participation in LRGs.

3.2 COVID 19

The 2021 VNR provides an exhaustive list of actions taken by the national level to address the crisis, yet no involvement of LRGs is recorded.

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

4. SDG INDICATORS⁵

5.5.1. (b) Proportion of seats held by women (%) in local governments		35 (2018)
6.1.1. Proportion of population using safely managed drinking water services (%)	Urban	96 (2020)
	Rural	78 (2020)
6.2.1. (a) Proportion of population using safely managed sanitation services (%)	Urban	9 (2020)
	Rural	-
11.1.1. Proportion of population living in slums, informal settlements or inadequate housing (%)		-
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)		21 (2016)
11.b.2. Proportion of local governments that have adopted local disaster risk reduction strategies in line with national strategies (%)		-

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/aze>