

TERRITORIAL ORGANIZATION

Panama is a unitary republic with a single tier of subnational government, that consists of 81 municipalities (*distritos*) and 678 townships (*corregimientos*). The country also has three semi-autonomous indigenous regions, and a local government headed by tribal leaders (San Blas). For administrative purposes the country is divided into 10 provinces.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

Prepared under the conceptual framework of the 2030 Agenda, the **National Strategic Plan (PEN) “Panama 2030”** combines the 17 SDGs and guides the national development process, within the framework of the provincial, regional and municipal decentralization process. The **Government Strategic Plan (PEG) “Joining Forces” 2020-2024** also incorporates the SDGs in its strategies and priority actions. The **Colmena Plan “Panama free of Poverty and Inequality, the Sixth Border”** is the territorialization strategy of the 2030 Agenda. It is a new style of governance, which seeks to strengthen LRGs, with and from the communities, to combat poverty and inequality. This national strategy covers 63 districts and 300 townships selected by the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) and the social risk factors observed in urban areas with high population (insecurity, employment, recreation and violence).

1.1 NATIONAL COORDINATION MECHANISMS

The **National Agreement for Development** brings together the government sector, civil society, the business sector, unions and academia. The **Secretariat for Follow-up to Execution and Compliance** and the **Technical Secretariat of the Social Cabinet (STGS)** constitute a mechanism for monitoring the SDGs, but they need to be strengthened and to create or adopt effective tools for monitoring. The technical coordination of the Colmena Plan is exercised by the Ministry of Social Development (MIDES). Besides, an **Inter-institutional and Civil Society Commission** was created in 2015 to support and monitor the SDGs. Its senior management is chaired by the Minister of Social Development.

1.2 VNR ELABORATION PROCESS

The process of preparing the 2020 VNR was coordinated by the Technical Secretariat of the Social Cabinet (STGS). To achieve the collection of the necessary inputs for the VNR, work tables were established, which are multisectoral spaces for follow-up and monitoring of actions related to the implementation of the SDGs: the **Social Statistics and Indicators Table** and the **Public Policies Table**. The first was intended to evaluate and update the indicators with the institutions responsible for the data, and the second to prioritize the SDGs. During the consultation process, public institutions, civil society organizations, private companies, academia and international organizations were contacted via virtual surveys.

1.3 MONITORING

The restructuring of the Social Cabinet and the installation of the Social Statistics and Indicators Table were the opportunity to strengthen national statistics and the National Statistical System (SEN).³ In order not to leave anyone behind and to include people living in poverty/extreme poverty, it was also decided to calculate the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI). An **Observatory for the Monitoring of the SDGs** was created with the Faculty of Public Administration and shares information with researchers, professionals, journalists, organizations and citizens interested in the subject of the SDGs.

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

2. See: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/16594Panama.pdf> (2017);

https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26427Panama_Informe_Voluntario_Reducido_1_reduced.pdf (2020)

3. More details on the modernization of the National Statistical System and creation of the National Institute of Statistics and Census in the VNR, 2020, p. 50.

2. LRGs INVOLVEMENT IN SDG LOCALIZATION

Incorporating the SDGs into national and sectoral strategic plans has served for **decentralization** and **deconcentration** of public policies, integrating subnational governments in order to reach all communities, especially the most vulnerable. The territorialization of the SDGs goes hand in hand with the issue of planning capacity. The **Colmena Plan** aims at the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the territorial level. In this sense, actions were carried out for planning and articulation between the local and the national authorities. Regarding the VNR process, there is no mention of any LRGs involvement.

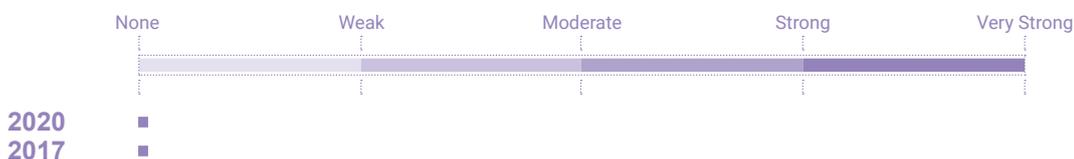
2.1 LRGs PARTICIPATION

► In the VNR process



Comments: No evidence of LRGs involvement. However, LRGs are mentioned throughout the report (without reference to their role in implementing the SDGs).

► In national coordination mechanisms for SDG implementation



Comments: No mention of LRGs involvement.

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

LRGs are mentioned throughout the report, as well as decentralization and the importance of territorialized strategies for the 2030 Agenda, but there is no specific section dedicated to their role in SDG implementation. For each sphere (People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace, Alliances), a table summarizes the initiatives carried out by civil society, the private sector, cooperation organizations and academia. LRGs are not mentioned (see VNR, 2020, p. 178-183).

2.3 SPECIFIC PROJECTS AND CASES

► The **Association of Municipalities of Panama (AMUPA)** identified the lack of awareness of local governments regarding disaster risk as the main challenge to make Panama's cities and territories more resilient. To mobilize municipalities and to promote local solutions to local problems, the local government association launched a comprehensive plan to increase the awareness and commitment of local governments across the country. In a first phase starting in 2017, ten pilot municipalities were closely supported, and in 2018 an online portal for local disaster risk management was established. The portal is based on the experiences from the pilot municipalities and aims to facilitate local action within the country. Moreover, and as a consequence of the work of the commission, at least 12 municipalities have established a department for disaster risk management and local interest and awareness has been significantly increased across the nation.⁴

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

Not applicable.

2.5 MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION

In general, the financing of actions that seek to meet the SDGs has been financed with resources from the General State Budget. The new Development Planning Institute aims to strengthen territorial planning processes in public management and administration. It is a systemic process that deals with financial aspects and that has a social perspective. With the establishment of this Institute, at the national, provincial and/or regional level, programs for the continuous strengthening and updating of planning capacities will be implemented.

4. See: https://learning.uclg.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/27_urban_resilience_and_sustainability.pdf

3. RELEVANT INFORMATION

General comments: From both a territorial and social point of view, a distinction is made in the 2020 VNR between five Panama as priority areas: the rural agricultural Panama, the Panama of the neighbourhoods, the Panama of the indigenous regions, the modern Panama and the Panama of the middle class.

3.1 WOMEN PARTICIPATION

Like women in managerial positions, the participation of women in elected positions, although still low, shows an increase. Between 2014 and 2019, there was an increase from 99 to 104 elected women. Among the elected positions at the national and subnational levels, the positions of local councillors show the greatest increase.

3.2 COVID 19

National measures in the face of the crisis are detailed (see VNR, 2020, p. 20-38). A national initiative in which local governments participate is that of **Vale Digital**. It is a form of solidarity support that consists of granting the beneficiaries consumption capacity, using the barcode of their identity card as a debit card. This mechanism is applied in certain neighborhoods and cities. It is implemented by teams made up of provincial governors, staff from the ministries of the Presidency and Social Development, local governments through mayors and community boards, the Public Force and volunteers.

4. SDG INDICATORS⁵

5.5.1. (b) Proportion of seats held by women (%) in local governments		9 (2019)
6.1.1. Proportion of population using safely managed drinking water services (%)	Urban	-
	Rural	-
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 (%)		22.1 (2018)
11.6.1. Proportion of municipal solid waste collected and managed (%)		70.4 (2015, Panama City)
11.6.2. Air pollution – annual means of particulate matter in cities (population weighted)		14.7 (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/pan>