

TERRITORIAL ORGANIZATION

China is a unitary one-party socialist republic with three tiers of subnational government. There are 2,851 local governments at the municipal level (counties), 333 at the intermediary level (prefectures) and 31 at the regional level (provinces), amounting to 3,215 LRGs.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

In 2016, the country released **China's National Plan on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**, which translates each target of the SDGs into action plans for the country. China's **13th Five Year Plan (2016-2020)** for Economic and Social Development, also adopted in 2016, is aligned with the SDGs. The **14th Five-year Plan** for Economic and Social Development and Vision 2035 covers the immediate next five years. Several sectoral plans are also aligned with SDGs.

1.1 NATIONAL COORDINATION MECHANISMS

According to the 2016 VNR, the national coordination mechanism established for SDG implementation comprises 43 government departments and is led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The 2021 report states the interministerial coordination mechanism comprises 45 government agencies. The VNR states that for the 17 SDGs and their 169 targets, relevant ministries are lead agencies, and local governments assume the main responsibility of implementation, thus forming an effective structure comprising the central, local and primary levels.

1.2 VNR ELABORATION PROCESS

The 2021 VNR focuses on the SDGs under discussion for 2021 HLPF and covers five cross-cutting areas: poverty reduction, climate and environmental governance, COVID-19 and recovery, food and agriculture governance, and infrastructure.

1.3 MONITORING

The strategy of poverty eradication of China contains a monitoring dimension. Yet, the 2021 VNR acknowledges that the monitoring and support mechanisms need to be improved to detect and prevent any relapse through intervention and assistance. There is no reference to specific SDG monitoring mechanisms or strategies.

2. LRGs INVOLVEMENT IN SDG LOCALIZATION

LRGs are not directly involved in national coordination mechanisms.³ In such an extended and complex country as China, in general a top-down approach has been taken in the implementation of the SDGs: the 2021 VNR acknowledges that the "central government coordinates national efforts, provinces assume overall responsibility, cities and counties work to meet the targets". To counterbalance this top-down logic, China is developing a set of tools involving a mix of policy processes. Within the '**Development Plan of China's Innovation Demonstration Zones** for the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development', the central government and LRGs collaborate to facilitate vertical and horizontal coordination, as well as create greater opportunities for public participation. Three pilot cities have been selected: **Guilin, Shenzhen** and

1. These statistics cover mainland China only, without the special administrative regions of Hong Kong and Macau.

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

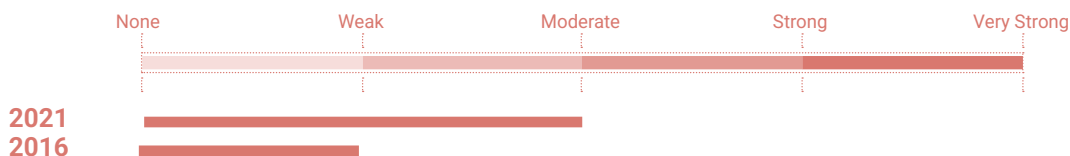
2. See: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/280812021_VNR_Report_China_English.pdf (2021)

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

Taiyuan. In these cities, legislation has been adopted to confirm the city's overall sustainable development planning to 2030. They are also establishing SDG-related institutions to conduct further implementation work.⁴ The 2021 VNR doesn't mention any involvement of LRGs and local stakeholders in the reporting process. However, some LRGs (**Hangzhou** and **Zengzhou**) that answered the GTF annual survey in 2021 mentioned that they met with representatives of the reporting unit and sent contributions.

2.1 VNR REFERENCES

► In the VNR process



Comments: The 2021 VNR doesn't mention any involvement of LRGs and local stakeholders in the reporting process. However, Hangzhou and Zengzhou mentioned that they met with representatives of the reporting unit and sent contributions (GTF Survey 2021).

► In national coordination mechanisms for SDG implementation



Comments: The local level is taken into account for SDG implementation (no further details in the 2021 VNR).

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

The localization of strategies to realize the SDGs and the role played by local governments are mentioned in the 2016 VNR. Regarding national coordination mechanisms for SDG implementation, the 2021 VNR mentions LRGs as implementers: "for the 17 SDGs and their 169 targets, relevant ministries are lead agencies, and local governments assume the main responsibility of implementation, thus forming an effective structure comprising the central, local and primary levels". Overall, there are only a very few references to LRGs.

2.3 SPECIFIC PROJECTS AND CASES

► Some cities and provinces in China are competing in different areas to foster sustainable development through ambitious and innovative programmes, such as **Deyang, Yiwu, Haiyan** and **Huangshi** as resilient cities; and **Chengdu, Nanhu, Zhejiang Langzhong, Libo** and **Chibei** as models for international sustainable pilot cities.

► **Xiangyang** is testing out technologies for recycling sludge from wastewater treatment into energy, and recovering resources through an innovative cost effective green treatment process.

► **Wuhan** received the Guangzhou International Award for Innovation for the transformation of one of the largest landfills in Asia into a recreational park and ecological garden covering an area of over 170 square km.⁵

► According to the Provincial and Large and Medium Cities Sustainable Development Ranking 2018 Annual Report, **Beijing, Shanghai, Zhejiang, Jiangsu, Tianjin, Guangdong, Chongqing, Shandong, Fujian** and **Anhui** rank top ten in terms of sustainable performance among provinces and metropolitan cities. According to the ranking, the most developed and wealthy regions, such as **Beijing, Shanghai, the Pearl River Delta** and other coastal cities, ranked the highest.

► **Chengdu** has been practising participatory budgeting since 2008, and has funded over 100,000 projects.⁶

► More than 60 million new urban jobs have been created.

► The objective of eradicating extreme poverty is considered "achieved". By the end of 2020, 98,99 million poor rural people had been lifted out of poverty and 832 counties and 128,000 villages had graduated from their poverty-stricken status.

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

5. The project involved government departments as well as experts from 82 cities. This is the largest application of aerobic technology for landfill remediation and the biggest ecological bridge in China.

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

► Regarding public services and infrastructures, by the end of 2020, all counties had been connected to large power grids, and basically all rural areas had access to stable and reliable power supply. There has been major improvement, in schools in poor areas, hospitals and village doctors, and cultural facilities. Poor regions have now access to key infrastructures: 99.3% of administrative villages have access to industrial electricity, 99.9% of administrative villages have access to communications signals; over 98% poor villages have fiber-optic and 4G connections; garbage is collected and disposed in a centralized way in 89.9% of administrative villages; 62.7% have e-commerce delivery stations. Tap water access rose to 83 % in poor areas.

► As part of a structural reform of the agriculture in the country, China has improved agricultural support policies, and implemented the system of holding local governments responsible for doing their share for national food security.

► The One Village One Product Project aims to help villages, or towns and counties, develop one or a few unique products and brands based on their resources or advantages. Each village will specialize in certain small and unique products that they can make well on a commercial scale and build their own brands. Such villages are expected to become demonstrations and have a radiating effect on neighboring villages.

► **Zhejiang Province's** eco-restoration program involves 1,000 demonstration villages and aims to improve 10,000 villages. This program was recognized through the United Nations Champions of the Earth Award.

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

Deqing (in 2017 and 2018), as well as **Guangzhou** and **Yiwu** (both in 2021) presented a VLR.⁷

2.5 MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION

Funding and resources at different levels of government often do not match. In the past, this mismatch was not as problematic, as local governments could rely on land revenues and borrowing money to deliver unfunded services. However, local government land sales and borrowing capacity have been curtailed more recently.⁸ LRGs indebtedness needs particular attention. For poor areas, interregional collaboration and paired assistance have been organized. The 2021 VNR highlights that "9 provinces in the east have paired up with 14 provinces in the central and western regions (e.g. 100,5 billion inf fiscal aid and assistance funding), and 343 more advanced eastern counties (cities and districts) paired up with 573 poor counties in the central and western regions in a campaign to achieve common prosperity".

3. RELEVANT INFORMATION

General comments: UN agencies are developing several initiatives to support environmental government, strengthening climate change resilience / adaptation and clean air, biodiversity protection, circular economy and sustainable urban planning (e.g. low carbon urban transportation demonstration zones in **Shanghai** and **Yancheng**, smart urbanization, Smart City Planning Guideline). They are also active regarding reforestation.

3.1 WOMEN PARTICIPATION

No reference.

3.2 COVID 19

To control the spread of the COVID-19, assistance was flown in **Wuhan** and **Hubei** from 19 provinces. Overall, the 2021 VNR presents the national strategies to cope with COVID-19 and highlights China's international role in facing the pandemic: "China has shared its experience in preventing, controlling, diagnosing and treating COVID-19 with more than 180 countries and over 10 international and regional organizations, and sent medical expert teams to more than 30 countries and assistance to more than 160 countries and international organizations, and donated or exported COVID-19 prevention and control goods to more than 200 countries and regions. China has fulfilled its commitment of giving China's vaccines as a global public good, first to developing countries. Under WHO's COVAX, China has provided vaccine assistance to more than 80 developing countries to meet their urgent needs, and exported vaccines to more than 50 countries, contributing to the global fight against COVID-19".

7. See: [https://www.gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/Deqing%20\(2017\).pdf](https://www.gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/Deqing%20(2017).pdf) ; [https://www.gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/Deqing%20\(2018\).pdf](https://www.gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/Deqing%20(2018).pdf) ; https://www.gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/guangzhou_2021.pdf ; https://gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/yiwu_2021.pdf

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

4. SDG INDICATORS⁹

5.5.1. (b) Proportion of seats held by women (%) in local governments		23.1 (2018, Macao Special Administrative Region)
6.1.1. Proportion of population using safely managed drinking water services (%)	Urban	95 (2020)
	Rural	-
6.2.1. (a) Proportion of population using safely managed sanitation services (%)	Urban	86 (2020)
	Rural	44 (2020)
11.1.1. Proportion of population living in slums, informal settlements or inadequate housing (%)		24.6 (2018)
11.6.1. Proportion of municipal solid waste collected and managed (%)		100 (2015, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region)
11.6.2. Air pollution – annual means of particulate matter in cities (population weighted)		45.8 (2016)
11.b.2. Proportion of local governments that have adopted local disaster risk reduction strategies in line with national strategies (%)		-

9. See: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/UNSDG/IndDatabasePage>.

More information on the country's progress towards the SDGs here: <https://country-profiles.unstatshub.org/chn>