

TERRITORIAL ORGANIZATION*

India is a federal republic with a two-tiered subnational structure. It has 29 states and 7 Union Territories (UTs) (with 736 Districts) and 267,543 elected local governments at the municipal level: 262 983 rural local bodies, including 255,492 villages (*Gram panchayat*), and 4,560 urban local bodies.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 **National Institution for Transforming India (NITI) Aayog** replaced the previous Planning Commission of India in 2015 to nourish the federal spirit of the Constitution. NITI Aayog has released the national strategy document, namely, '**Strategy for New India@75**', envisioning a thriving nation in the year 2022. It lays out a detailed strategy to materialize the '**New India**' and factors the SDGs, as well as related targets, across all strategic domains.

1.1 NATIONAL COORDINATION MECHANISMS

NITI Aayog, chaired by the Prime Minister, has been designated as the government institution responsible for overall coordination and monitoring of the SDGs in the country, in close collaboration with Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), which is responsible for the development of the baseline data on the National Indicator Framework. **High level committees** have been established at the state level, as well as **District Development Coordination and Monitoring Coordination**, to provide continuous guidance, oversee implementation and monitoring, and put in place mechanisms for ensuring coordinated action on SDGs. The Public Accounts Committee of the Parliament exercises legislative oversight on the progress of the SDG agenda through periodic reviews of NITI Aayog and related line ministries.

1.2 VNR ELABORATION PROCESS

NITI Aayog prepared the 2020 VNR action plan. The report preparation process involved seven major elements: i) a **VNR Forum** involving different stakeholders, ii) the **SDG Taskforce** which provided technical issues, iii) stakeholder engagement using consultations, iv) government consultations were set up with the national and subnational level for inputs on progress update and knowledge sharing, v) communications, vi) research: NITI Aayog and the Ministry of Finance undertook a joint study with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to estimate the cost for achieving select SDGs and vii) drafting the VNR, during which the inputs from CSOs, private sector, central ministries and the governments at the state and UT levels were collected.

1.3 MONITORING

- ▶ There is a **National SDG Indicator framework (NIF)** with 297 indicators across all SDGs and a coordinated system for generating and managing data through a process of multi-layered and iterative consultations.
- ▶ NITI Aayog developed the **SDG India Index** first in 2018 to measure progress, rank the performance of the states/Union Territories and trigger remedial action.³ The indicator base has been substantially widened to cover 100 indicators, which are largely drawn from the National Indicator Framework (NIF).

*Dotted line represents approximately the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the parties.

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

2. See: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/16693India.pdf> (2017);

https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26279VNR_2020_India_Report.pdf (2020)

3. The first SDG India Index covered 13 out of 17 SDGs (excepting Goals 12, 13, 14 and 17) in 2018, while the 2019 edition was far more comprehensive, covering all the 17 Goals.

► The **SDG India Index and Dashboards**, the first government-led measure of subnational progress on SDGs, has provided direction to efforts of subnational governments.⁴

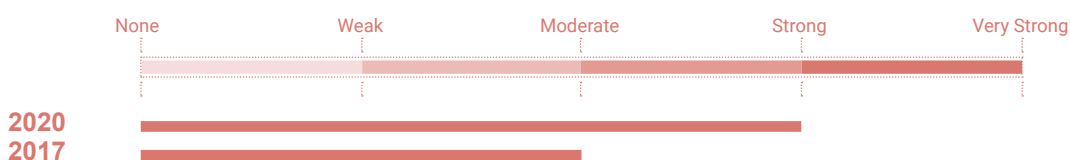
► While a State Indicator Framework serves as the foundation of the State-level SDG monitoring system, with indicators relevant to the state, the **District Indicator Framework (DIF)** for each state facilitates competition among the districts.

2. LRGs INVOLVEMENT IN SDG LOCALIZATION

All states have created **professional units** on SDGs in the shape of an SDG cell in the nodal department with personnel having technical expertise and experience. Several states have gone further and established or adapted even **district level structures** for taking SDG implementation and monitoring to the grassroots. They are evolving as they have created, for example, the District Planning Committees (DPC), which are constitutionally mandated structures to facilitate planning and review at the district level. The **District Development Coordination and Monitoring Committee (DISHA)** at the district level, actively coordinates and monitors 28 major schemes/programmes in tandem with the central, state and local government. In addition, NITI Aayog, in alliance with the United Nations and other partners, initiated sensitisation and awareness building measures. It has conducted a series of 25 national and subnational consultations on SDGs and their implementation strategies.

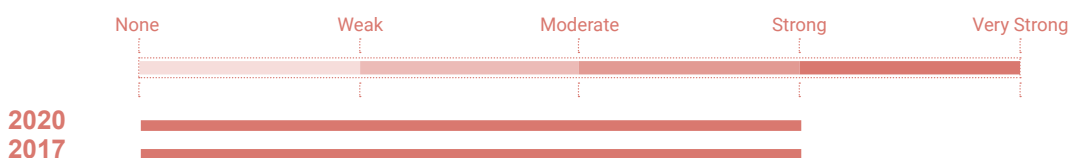
2.1 LRGs PARTICIPATION

► In the VNR process



Comments: LRGs have been consulted, but they have not been part of the drafting team in 2020.

► In national coordination mechanisms for SDG implementation



Comments: Participation is limited to federal states.

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 third section of the 2020 VNR, entitled "Policy and Enabling Environment", is dedicated to explain how the government has been strengthening the federal relations with the subnational level in order to consolidate SDG implementation strategies. It makes emphasis on the competences and jurisdiction of the subnational governments showing how they have constitutionally well-defined legislative and executive jurisdiction, giving the states considerable autonomy in their management (see the VNR, 2020, p. 13). It also mentions the "Team India", which comprises the national government, the states and the Union Territories, working in close collaboration to drive and implement the SDGs. The fourth section is entitled "the Indian approach to localising SDGs" (see the VNR, 2020, p. 17). It describes the strategies that have been undertaken at the subnational level for SDG implementation and it details the institutional mechanisms that have been created.

2.3 SPECIFIC PROJECTS AND CASES

► **Assam, Uttarakhand, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka** and **Haryana** have matured renditions of the professional units on SDGs with full-fledged centres of excellence in collaboration with support organizations like UNDP.

► Other states, such as **Madhya Pradesh** and **Chhattisgarh** are developing a methodology to orient district planning to SDGs and preparing manuals/guidelines for the same.

4. The SDG India Index and Dashboard is available at <https://sdgindiaindex.niti.gov.in/>

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

Not applicable.

2.5 MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION

With the acceptance and implementation of the **14th Finance Commission Award**, financial devolution to the states was increased from 32 to 42% of the divisible pool of taxes along with an increased share of cess and surcharge in tax collections. The share of general-purpose transfers that are unconditional has increased from 51.41% of the total transfers to around 60%.⁵ The 2020 VNR makes reference to the legal evolution of the subnational planning system in the subsection called “Addressing Local Priorities – The Space for the Third Tier”, showing how the 14th Finance Commission award was important for the local development planning, as more than 50% of the financial devolution was meant for the local governments, capitalizing on the new fiscal decentralization measure. This section explains how the government, in 2015-2016, began a new initiative of preparation of village-level holistic planning at the *Gram Panchayat* (village council) level, for pooling of resources (Gram Panchayat Development Plan - GPDP). The report highlights how these programs were fundamental for the localization process at the community level as the GPDP is fully aligned with SDG principles.

3. RELEVANT INFORMATION

General comments: Even if there have been several policy initiatives in post-Independence India to initiate and institutionalize decentralized local development planning, it came into practice only **after the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments in 1992**, which conferred constitutional mandate respectively to the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) at the village, block and district levels. But progress is limited by state governments and varies from state to state.

3.1 WOMEN PARTICIPATION

Regarding the participation of women in the implementation of the SDGs, the 2020 VNR mentions several meetings and conferences, such as the BRICS Women Parliamentarians “Forum in 2016, on Perspectives on implementation of SDGs”, and “Achieving SDGs - Role of Women Parliamentarians in involving Citizens”. In 2017, the South Asian Speakers’ Summit on Achieving the SDGs also called upon parliaments to create gender-sensitive elected bodies, particularly at the grassroots level, in order to identify and prioritize issues relevant to women. Regarding the participation of women in politics, progress has been made in recent years. Even if it remains low overall, it is steadily increasing. In particular, women occupy 44.4% of the seats in rural municipal councils. In addition, more and more women are going to vote, overtaking men in 2019 (68%). The VNR stresses the need for bottom-up consultations as well as an evaluation of the programs implemented at national, regional, and local levels, to develop gender responsive policies. Finally, the VNR mentions a few examples of good practices from regional and local governments, aimed directly at women (access to employment, eradication of poverty) or which take them into account indirectly (recycling of waste, sustainable fishing).

3.2 COVID 19

In the 2020 VNR, the measures taken by the national government to cope with the pandemic, whether economic or social, are presented as opportunities to continue progressing towards the SDGs and bring about transformative changes in the country, on the basis of strengthened partnerships (particularly with the private sector and civil society organizations). The report does not refer to initiatives carried out by Indian local governments.

5. “The Centre-State fiscal relations underwent major changes in recent years on account of two major moves: (i) fundamental changes in the system of revenue transfers from the Centre to the States by providing higher tax devolution to the States from the fiscal year 2015-16 onward, (based on the recommendations of the 14th Finance Commission); and (ii) the Constitutional amendment to introduce the Goods and Services Tax (GST) and the establishment of the GST Council for the Centre and State governments to deliberate and jointly take decisions. Total transfers to States has maintained a progressive upward trend, climbing steadily from INR 8.29 trillion (USD 110.5 billion) in 2015-16 to INR 13.19 trillion (USD 175.9 billion) in 2019-20.”

4. SDG INDICATORS⁶

5.5.1. (b) Proportion of seats held by women (%) in local governments		44.4 (2018)
6.1.1. Proportion of population using safely managed drinking water services (%)	Urban	-
	Rural	56 (2020)
6.2.1. (a) Proportion of population using safely managed sanitation services (%)	Urban	37 (2020)
	Rural	51 (2020)
11.1.1. Proportion of population living in slums, informal settlements or inadequate housing (%)		35.2 (2018)
11.6.1. Proportion of municipal solid waste collected and managed (%)		75 (2012, Bangalore)
11.6.2. Air pollution – annual means of particulate matter in cities (population weighted)		68.8 (2016)
11.b.2. Proportion of local governments that have adopted local disaster risk reduction strategies in line with national strategies (%)		91.7 (2020)

6. 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/ind>