

TERRITORIAL ORGANIZATION

The Kingdom of Tonga is a unitary monarchy. **There is no system of organized local government**, but 23 district and 155 town officials are elected by popular vote and report directly to the Prime Minister's Office.¹



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

1. NATIONAL STRATEGIES FOR SDG IMPLEMENTATION

The **Tonga National Development Framework (TSDF) II 2015-2025** is the country's roadmap for the achievement of the SDGs.

1.1 NATIONAL COORDINATION MECHANISMS

The **National Planning Division** in the **Prime Minister's Office** coordinates the implementation of the SDGs in Tonga, supported by the **Tonga Sustainable Development Taskforce**, which is a multi stakeholder body,³ and a **Technical Working Group**, which supports the Taskforce. The Taskforce's main purpose is to consider and endorse annual reports on progress made in the implementation of the TSDF II 2015-2025 and the SDGs. The Technical Working Group focuses on preparing the technical aspects of reporting including strengthening data capacities and collection systems, monitoring and analysis.

1.2 VNR ELABORATION PROCESS

As a country-led initiative, various national stakeholders including civil society partners participated in drafting the 2019 VNR. The Prime Minister's Office led the process of consultation and drafting, with the support of UNESCAP and UNDP. The report precises that "in consultation with various stakeholders, locally driven messages were identified to support implementation going forward" (see VNR, 2019, p. 9).

1.3 MONITORING

The **Tonga Strategy for the Development of Statistics (TSDS)** has been developed to enable the production, management and use of statistical information and indicators that are needed to inform the development and implementation of policies, interventions and the monitoring of progress towards achieving the SDGs.

With UN support, Tonga has established a monitoring system which maps key policy, planning and budget documents related to the SDGs, including the TSDF II 2015-2025.⁴

Tonga's Office of the Auditor General, provides an independent oversight mechanism for assessing the performance of government in ensuring institutional and enabling mechanisms are in place for TSDF II and SDG implementation. It has prepared a performance audit of SDG implementation processes in the country and a report will be tabled in the national Parliament for scrutiny and debate.

Existing designs were improved to include the 'small area estimation' technique: collected information is now disaggregated at the main island level, as well as all rural islands, and by villages, districts and constituencies.⁵

1. UCLG, 2019, Towards the Localization of the SDGs, https://www.gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/Localization2019_EN.pdf. The 2019 VNR specifies that "In Tonga, due partly to its size, there is little distinction in tiers of government. Decisions taken by the central government provide direction for the sub-national and local levels of government. The subnational and local levels of government do not have authority to collect any form of tax, and their budgets and operation are all funded by the central government" (see VNR, 2019, p. 22).

2. See: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/23588Kingdom_of_Tonga_Voluntary_National_Review_2019_Report_web.pdf (2019)

3. Its membership includes representatives from Government, Civil Society Organizations, Church Leaders Forum, United Nations Joint Presence Office Coordinating Officer and Chamber of Commerce.

4. More details on the planning and monitoring system developed to integrate the SDGs into the TSDF II can be found in the VNR, 2019, p. 17.

5. UCLG, 2019, Towards the Localization of the SDGs, https://www.gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/Localization2019_EN.pdf

2. LRGs INVOLVEMENT IN SDG LOCALIZATION

In 2016, the national government launched 126 **Community Development Plans (CDPs)** to document disaggregated needs and priorities. CDPs reflect the SDGs and the TSDf II principles.⁶ Community development planning follows the national multi-sectoral consultation model. The consultations are driven by NGOs to all communities, and the implementation of development plans is a joint collaboration of NGOs, private sector, and communities themselves.

2.1 LRGs PARTICIPATION

Not applicable.

2.2 VNR REFERENCES

There are limited references to local officials in the 2019 VNR, and no example of locally-led initiative for SDG implementation.

2.3 SPECIFIC PROJECTS AND CASES

No reference.

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

Not applicable.

2.5 MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION

Tonga is committed to improving the links between national sector plans and budgets in order to ensure that development priorities are resourced for implementation as planned. In this context, a tailored tool called **One Process** has been operationalized in order to better allocate resources for targeted outputs.⁷

3. RELEVANT INFORMATION

A National Climate Change Policy and Joint National Action Plan 2018-2028 provide strategies for climate actions. A Climate Change Trust Fund has been established to strengthen coping capacities of all vulnerable communities. The dispersed geographical nature of Tonga, with many small communities on many small islands, requires particular effort for sound development and management of urban and rural areas. The dispersion of Tonga has important consequences for access to development and participation to promote greater inclusion. The 2019 VNR states that it is impossible to have equal levels and quality of infrastructure, equal access to services, and equal development on all islands.

3.1 WOMEN PARTICIPATION

Following the 2016 local elections, 1.1% of local government officers were women.⁸

3.2 COVID 19

Not applicable.

6. These plans are formulated according to key national regulatory instruments directed by the Ministry of Internal Affairs which oversees the implementation of the SDGs related to local government, women's affairs and youth.

7. More details can be found in the VNR, 2019, p. 18.

8. See: https://www.clgf.org.uk/default/assets/File/Country_profiles/Tonga.pdf

4. SDG INDICATORS⁹

5.5.1. (b) Proportion of seats held by women (%) in local governments		-
6.1.1. Proportion of population using safely managed drinking water services (%)	Urban	51 (2020)
	Rural	23 (2020)
6.2.1. (a) Proportion of population using safely managed sanitation services (%)	Urban	23 (2020)
	Rural	37 (2020)
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)		11.0 (2016)
11.b.2. Proportion of local governments that have adopted local disaster risk reduction strategies in line with national strategies (%)		66.7 (2020)

⁹ 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/ton>