

LOCAL 2030
KNOWLEDGE AND SCIENTIFIC NETWORK

Implementing SDG7 at a Local and National Level: Monitoring as a Key Instrument

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PREFACE

Achieving the 2030 Agenda requires more than translating global goals into national targets – it demands that sustainable development be rooted in the realities, needs, and capacities of local territories. Local and regional governments are indispensable actors in this process: they deliver essential services, address inequalities on the ground, and turn policy commitments into concrete actions. Yet this critical role is only fully effective when backed by strong evidence, meaningful knowledge exchange, and coherent governance across levels.

The Local2030 Knowledge and Scientific Network (KSN) was established within the UN Local2030 Coalition precisely to respond to this need. As a dynamic global platform, KSN connects young researchers, policymakers, community leaders, and practitioners around a shared mission: to harness science for sustainable development with local impact. It does so by aligning academic inquiry with the specific priorities of local development stakeholders, while amplifying research findings as inputs to SDG-related global processes.

Central to this approach is the understanding that research must not only be produced – it must be translated into policy and action. KSN promotes a more dynamic and responsive model of academia, one that co-creates scalable solutions rooted in scientific evidence and community priorities, and that empowers local actors with the skills, tools, and institutional support needed to engage in evidence-based decision-making and influence policy. Through its Country Pilots – sponsored by the Italian government and implemented by UN-Habitat and the Centro Studi di Politica Internazionale (CeSPI ETS) – and Innovation Labs, the network operationalizes this vision by connecting universities and students with local policymakers, enabling interdisciplinary collaboration and capacity-building in territories across Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean.

Action-research is the methodological backbone of this work. Territories are engaged not as passive subjects of study, but as spaces for experimentation and learning, where sustained interaction between researchers, local governments, civil society, and communities drives learning, adaptation, and co-creation. By combining quantitative and qualitative methods – data analysis, spatial assessments, stakeholder engagement, and participatory approaches – this process generates a comprehensive and grounded understanding of local dynamics, inequalities, and development opportunities.

This policy paper is the result of that process. It reflects the outcome of collaboration between academic research, territorial analysis, and multi-stakeholder dialogue, in

the spirit of the KSN's core objective: translating research into policy and action. Its aim is to offer context-sensitive analysis and practical policy recommendations that can inform SDG localization at the local level — bridging the gap between global agendas and the communities that will ultimately determine their success.

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INTRODUCTION

Tunisia faces growing structural challenges in its energy sector. Declining domestic production, rising energy demand, and an increasing reliance on imported fossil fuels has significantly widened the country's energy trade deficit while placing increasing pressure on public finances through energy subsidies. At the same time, Tunisia has committed to ambitious climate and energy targets under its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), including increasing the share of renewable energy in electricity generation and reducing carbon intensity.

Despite these commitments, the implementation gap between national policy objectives and local action remains substantial. One of the key structural barriers is the limited integration of local governments into the energy transition and the lack of reliable local energy monitoring systems.

Municipalities are responsible for a significant share of public energy consumption through public lighting, municipal buildings and local infrastructure. However, most municipalities lack access to accurate and real-time energy consumption data and monitoring tools necessary to support evidence-based decision making.

This policy brief contends that municipal energy monitoring systems, along with strengthened local data governance, are critical tools for accelerating the implementation of SDG 7 particularly and advancing progress across all Sustainable Development Goals in Tunisia. By enabling real-time tracking of energy consumption and performance, such systems can support energy efficiency improvements, reduce operational costs, and strengthen accountability in local governance.

Using the municipality of Sousse as a pilot territory, this paper proposes a framework for integrating local monitoring systems into Tunisia's energy governance architecture. The proposed approach emphasizes multi-level coordination, digital data infrastructures, and capacity building at the municipal level.

Key policy priorities include:

- Developing a national framework for SDG localization integrating municipal monitoring systems
- Establishing standardized local energy indicators and data platforms
- Strengthening municipal technical capacity and digital governance tools
- Encouraging international and inter-municipal cooperation and citizen

participation in energy transition initiatives

By strengthening local monitoring capacities and fully integrating municipalities into national energy governance and SDG implementation, Tunisia can significantly accelerate its transition toward a sustainable, resilient, and inclusive energy system and broader development. Decision-makers should be aware of the critical importance of robust data and monitoring across all sectors to support informed, effective, and evidence-based decision-making.

1. THE POLICY CHALLENGE:

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) constitute the most comprehensive global framework for addressing today's social, economic, and environmental challenges. Effective implementation therefore depends on multilevel engagement and the ability of countries to leverage SDG-related opportunities, expertise, and partnerships. In this regard, localizing the SDGs has emerged as a key public management tool, ensuring that global objectives are aligned with local contexts, territorial specificities, and citizens' needs.

Energy plays a pivotal role on this international agenda. Access to affordable and clean energy is fundamental to achieving multiple SDGs, given its strong linkages to economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability. In Tunisia, the energy transition is not a luxury but a strategic necessity with global and national implications. Beyond reducing greenhouse gas emissions, it offers the potential to lower energy costs, ease pressure on public finances through reduced energy subsidies, and expand access to affordable energy, generating significant social benefits.

At the same time, Tunisia has committed to ambitious energy transition targets. Under its updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), the country aims to significantly expand renewable energy capacity and reduce carbon intensity over the coming decades. Against this backdrop, Tunisia faces intertwined social, economic, and environmental risks that call for integrated policy design and effective multilevel governance.

Decentralization, one of the key achievements of the revolution, was intended to enhance local well-being and promote sustainable territorial development. Since then, municipalities have demonstrated strong dynamism and active citizen engagement at the local level. However, as local authorities, they continue to face significant challenges. Addressing these requires sustained efforts in training, capacity building, and technical support, particularly given the scope of their responsibilities and the limited expertise in territorial development and management in some localities.

Overall, SDGs implementation should not be perceived as externally imposed constraints, but rather as a strategic framework to support national development priorities. One of the key obstacles to faster progress is the limited integration of local authorities into energy governance and the lack of reliable local energy data. To conclude, municipalities should play a stronger role in the implementation of SDGs, considering the specific characteristics of their regions as well as the needs of local citizens.

2. SDG.7 IMPLEMENTATION:

Among the global Sustainable Development Goals, this paper focuses on SDG 7, which emphasizes the need to ensure universal access to clean and affordable energy for all. It also emphasizes improving energy efficiency and accelerating the transition toward renewable energy sources.

In Tunisia, and particularly in Sousse, access to electricity is already near-universal, with more than 99% of the population connected to the grid. Achieving this high level of energy access has long been a state priority, including in rural areas, reflecting commitment to social equity and territorial cohesion. The government supplies energy (electricity, fuels, and cooking or heating gas) at subsidized prices, forming a central pillar of the social contract between the state and its citizens. However, the fiscal cost of these subsidies has increased steadily over time, driven by volatility in global energy prices and a persistent decline in domestic oil and gas production.

In this context, Tunisia's economic and energy challenges call for a stronger policy focus on SDG 7. Advancing its implementation represents a significant opportunity at both local and national levels to reduce energy costs and accelerate the transition away from fossil fuels. This shift is particularly important given that conventional energy sources account for around 60% of national carbon dioxide emissions. Moving toward cleaner energy is therefore essential to meeting Tunisia's climate commitments and reducing the environmental impact of its energy system.

Moreover, Tunisia has formally committed to the energy transition through its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The country targets an increase in the share of renewable energy in installed electricity capacity to 30% by 2030, with projections of meeting 50% of electricity demand by 2035 and achieving full coverage by 2050. Under its updated NDC 3.0, Tunisia also aims to reduce carbon intensity by 28% by 2030 and 31% by 2035. These targets account for nearly 75% of the country's total greenhouse gas mitigation commitments, highlighting the pivotal role of the energy sector in national climate policy. Nevertheless, despite these ambitious objectives, renewable energy is expected to represent only about 6% of total electricity generation by the end of 2025, pointing to a significant gap between policy commitments and on-the-ground implementation.

3.TUNISIAN ENERGETIC CONTEXT:

Tunisia’s local energy context, combined with its strong renewable energy potential, supports and encourages the transition toward sustainable energy.

Throughout the last decade Tunisia is experiencing an increasing energy deficit and the heavy reliance on imported oil and gas continues to widen Tunisia’s trade deficit and significantly increases the cost of energy subsidies, placing additional strain on the national fiscal balance.

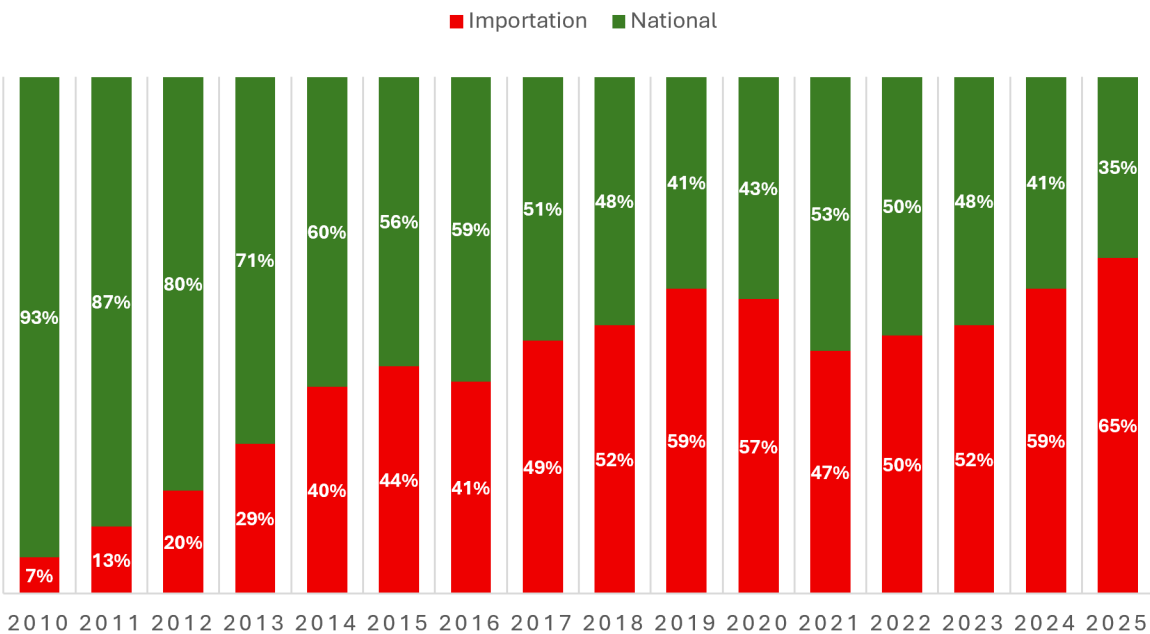


Figure 1: Share of National Energy Production and Energy Imports,2010–2025
Source : Direction Générale des Stratégies et de Veille Observatoire National de l’Energie et des Mines

- **Declining energy self-sufficiency:** In 2025, the energy self-sufficiency rate, measured as the ratio of primary energy resources to consumption, fell to 35%, down from 41% in 2024 (including the Algerian transit fee).
- **Greater dependence without transit revenues:** Excluding the Algerian gas

transit fee, the rate declines further to 31% in 2024, compared to 38% in 2023.

- **Widening energy trade deficit:** The energy trade balance deficit reached TND 11,143.9 million in 2025, representing 51% of the overall trade deficit.

To address the shortage of local energy resources, Tunisia must increasingly rely on renewable energy. By expanding the use of clean sources, particularly solar, wind and biofuel, where the country has significant potential, Tunisia can meet its national energy demand with low-cost and sustainable alternatives. Such a transition would not only generate positive social, economic, and environmental impacts but also enhance energy independence, protecting the economy and public finances from the volatility of global energy markets.

Despite its substantial solar and wind energy potential, Tunisia has yet to fully capitalize on its renewable resources. A stronger commitment from national and local authorities to promote the energy transition among households, the private sector, and public administrations is essential. This would not only reduce energy costs and subsidy pressures but also enhance the long-term sustainability and sovereignty of the national energy system.

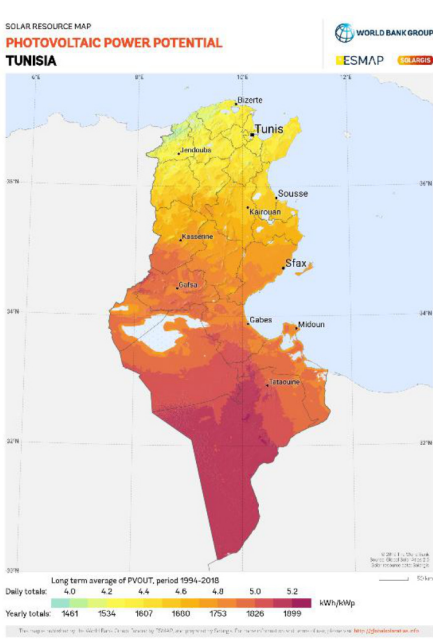


Figure 2: Tunisian photovoltaic power potential
Source: Global solarAtlas

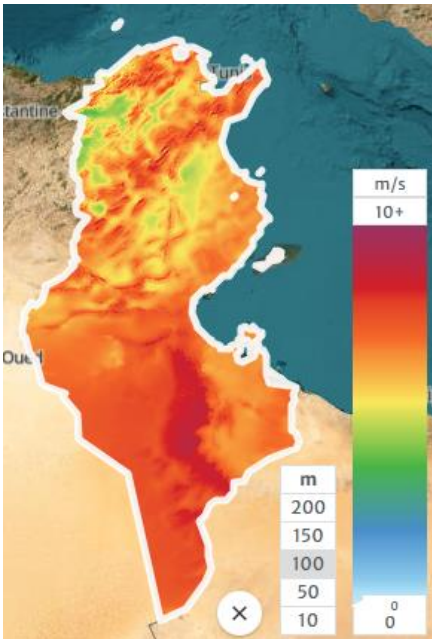


Figure 3: Mean Wind Speed at1 00m in Tunisia
Source: Global Wind Atlas

4. THE ROLE OF MUNICIPALITIES IN SDG IMPLEMENTATION AND ENERGY GOVERNANCE

Municipalities are mandated to contribute to the achievement of the SDGs, yet they often lack clear indicators, baseline data, and effective monitoring frameworks. As the level of government closest to citizens, local authorities are uniquely positioned to implement policies that directly influence local conditions and citizens.

Moreover, municipalities also contribute significantly to public energy consumption. Energy cost not only imposes a heavy financial burden on municipalities but also limits their investment capacity and their ability to improve the quality of life for citizens.

Municipal infrastructure accounts for a significant share of public energy consumption, particularly through:

- Public lighting and sanitation systems
- Parks and administrative buildings
- Sports and cultural facilities

Improving energy efficiency in these sectors represents an important opportunity to reduce operational costs and greenhouse gas emissions.

However, municipalities in Tunisia currently face several constraints that limit their capacity to contribute effectively to the energy transition. These constraints include limited access to reliable energy data, insufficient monitoring tools, and restricted institutional authority in the energy sector.

5. SOUSSE AS A PILOT CASE

The municipality of Sousse provides an illustrative example of how local governments can contribute to Tunisia's energy transition.

As one of the most economically dynamic cities in the country, Sousse has already implemented several initiatives aimed at improving energy management. The municipality of Sousse is among the most integrated and developed in Tunisia. These include the replacement of conventional street lighting with LED technology and the initiative to develop municipal energy monitoring dashboards. The municipality also possesses significant potential for renewable energy development, particularly through photovoltaic installations on municipal buildings and public infrastructure.

Its staff possesses strong expertise in local governance. Its financial capacity, supported by its large population and vibrant economic activity as a major tourist hub, further enhances its potential. It stands out as one of the most interactive local authorities, actively engaging in international cooperation programs.

Through cooperation and various development programs, the municipality has been integrating multiple dimensions of sustainable development while modernizing the city. In addition, with international support, the locality is exploring waste-to-energy solutions, demonstrating the potential of innovative approaches to energy production at the municipal level.

These initiatives suggest that municipalities can play a much stronger role in advancing national energy transition objectives. However, this potential can only be fully realized if appropriate legal frameworks, effective monitoring systems, and strong political support mechanisms are put in place.



Source : [Le site officiel de la ville de Sousse](#)

6. DATA VULNERABILITY AND LOCAL DATA GAPS:

The case of the municipality of Sousse highlights a critical structural constraint in local energy governance: the lack of access to reliable and disaggregated energy consumption data.

This absence of baseline data significantly limits the capacity of municipalities to measure energy efficiency, design targeted interventions, and monitor progress toward SDG7 objectives. It also represents a major barrier to accessing international funding and establishing partnerships, as donors increasingly require data-driven project design and measurable impact indicators.

Although municipalities are beginning to develop internal monitoring processes and energy dashboards, these efforts remain constrained by limited technical capacity, weak data generation systems, and insufficient data-sharing mechanisms.

To address these challenges, local authorities should prioritize the development of standardized data collection systems and simple, robust indicators that can be integrated into municipal monitoring frameworks.

In this context, the proposed Composite SDG7 Localization Index, developed as part of this research project, can serve as a synthetic monitoring tool, enabling municipalities to consolidate fragmented data into a coherent framework and support evidence-based decision-making.

More broadly, strengthening local data systems is essential to support evidence-based policymaking, enhance transparency, and improve resource allocation at both local and national levels.

7. MUNICIPAL ENERGY MONITORING SYSTEMS

Municipal energy monitoring systems represent an important instrument for improving local energy governance.

Such systems allow municipalities to track energy consumption across public infrastructure in real time, providing reliable data that can support evidence-based decision-making.

By enabling continuous monitoring, these systems help municipalities:

- Identify inefficiencies in energy consumption
- Optimize operational performance
- Reduce energy expenditures
- Monitor progress toward sustainability objectives.
- Composite index and clear information

Furthermore, the integration of digital monitoring systems into municipal governance structures contributes to the broader digital transformation of public administration.

Although Tunisian municipalities currently lack the legal and institutional authority to directly manage the energy sector, they can play a pivotal role in advancing the country's energy objectives. Local authorities can:

- Monitor energy efficiency in public and private buildings.
- Promote renewable energy adoption through awareness campaigns and community engagement.
- Encourage responsible energy consumption to protect urban environments and enhance sustainability.

Beyond operational improvements, monitoring systems also strengthen transparency and accountability by providing policymakers and citizens with clear information on energy performance.

8. INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND TERRITORIAL PLANNING:

Territorial planning represents a key entry point for integrating energy transition objectives into local public policies.

Municipalities such as Sousse should incorporate quantifiable energy and environmental targets into their territorial development strategies, including:

- Local CO₂ emissions monitoring and reduction target
- Air quality monitoring
- Energy efficiency improvements in public infrastructure
- Expansion of renewable energy deployment.

These targets should be supported by monitoring systems and quantitative targets to ensure regular evaluation and policy adjustment.

Given their regulatory role, municipalities can also leverage urban planning and building permit systems to promote the integration of renewable energy solutions in high-consumption sectors such as tourism, industry, and collective housing.

In addition, municipalities can act as facilitators of the local energy transition, connecting investors, citizens, and national energy agencies to accelerate the deployment of renewable energy projects.

In this context, international cooperation plays a critical role in mobilizing financial resources and strengthening technical capacities. Partnerships with international organizations and municipal coalition provide access to expertise, funding opportunities, and best practices.

Moreover, international institutions, including the UN agencies, International financial institutions and bilateral cooperation agencies can play a key role by providing financial support and technical assistance for the development of both national and local information systems and SDG monitoring frameworks.

Experience-sharing mechanisms, such as twinning arrangements and thematic networks between municipalities, can further support capacity building, particularly in local data generation and the training of municipal staff.

Finally, strengthening decision makers' engagement and citizen participation is essential to ensure the success of local energy policies. Awareness campaigns and participatory mechanisms can promote behavioral change, enhance public ownership, and contribute to attracting additional financial resources.

9. DECENTRALIZATION OF DECISION-MAKING AND CENTRALIZATION OF INFORMATION SYSTEMS

Addressing complex development challenges such as SDG implementation requires a governance model that combines decentralized decision-making with centralized and integrated information systems.

Local authorities are best positioned to design and implement policies that respond to territorial specificities and citizens' needs. However, effective decentralization must remain aligned with national priorities and supported by coherent policy frameworks. This requires governance architecture based on multi-level coordination, combining top-down strategic guidance with bottom-up feedback from local administrations and citizens.

Strengthening this model requires improving both vertical coordination between national and local authorities and horizontal interaction between local governments and citizens. Such interactions are essential to enhance policy relevance, legitimacy, and accountability.

From a data governance perspective, a key structural challenge lies in the fragmentation of information systems and the lack of standardized data across territories. To address this, governance systems should be based on a dual approach:

- **Decentralized data production** at the local level
- **Centralized data aggregation and standardization** at the national level

This approach would allow national authorities to access detailed and disaggregated territorial data while enabling municipalities to retain flexibility in addressing local priorities.

Strengthening participatory governance mechanisms is also critical. Citizen engagement through consultations, surveys, and participatory processes can

improve policy design and ensure that public interventions reflect local realities.

Ultimately, aligning decentralized governance with centralized data systems is essential for improving policy coherence, enhancing institutional coordination, and strengthening the effectiveness of public action across sectors.

10. LOCAL MONITORING AS A STRATEGIC INSTRUMENT:

Effective SDG implementation requires monitoring systems to become a core component of governance frameworks. Monitoring should not be treated merely as a technical exercise but as a strategic function supporting decision-making and policy design.

In Tunisia, the development of integrated monitoring systems remains limited due to fragmented data production, administrative constraints, and insufficient coordination across institutions. The current data production system is characterized by significant time lags, with key datasets often released with delays, limiting their usefulness for responsive and evidence-based policymaking. As a result, data is often outdated, incomplete, or not effectively used in decision-making processes.

To address these challenges, national authorities should promote the development of integrated data ecosystems, including:

- Real-time databases and digital dashboards
- Standardized indicators across sectors and territories
- Interoperable data-sharing mechanisms between institutions

Such systems would enable more timely, precise, and evidence-based decision-making.

At the local level, municipalities should develop integrated information systems covering multiple dimensions of territorial development. These systems are essential for:

- Monitoring local and national policy performance
- Identifying local needs and vulnerabilities
- Improving resource allocation
- Anticipating future challenges

To ensure effectiveness, local indicators must remain simple, robust, and

standardized, allowing for comparability across municipalities and overtime.

In addition, participatory approaches to data collection and monitoring can significantly enhance the quality and legitimacy of public policies. Engaging citizens and local stakeholders in data processes strengthens transparency, accountability, and public trust.

To ensure coherence across governance levels, national authorities should establish mandatory indicator frameworks and standardized data processes applicable to all local and regional administrations. This would improve data consistency, facilitate inter-territorial comparisons, and support coordinated policy implementation.

Ultimately, strengthening local monitoring systems and integrating them into a national data framework is a key condition for improving governance effectiveness, enhancing public sector performance, and accelerating the localization of the SDGs.

11. PRACTICAL STEPS FOR IMPLEMENTATION:

The municipality of Sousse, as one of the most advanced local authorities in Tunisia, is well positioned to serve as a pilot territory for local data generation and SDG monitoring systems. Building on its administrative capacity and ongoing initiatives, the State can leverage this experience to develop a standardized local data framework that can be progressively scaled up to other municipalities.

To adopt this approach, several priority actions should be undertaken:

First, the establishment of a dedicated institutional entity.

A Specialized entity should be created, it will be responsible for overseeing data production processes, ensuring data quality, and coordinating between national, regional, and local administrations. It should be equipped with strong technical expertise to support municipalities in developing and managing monitoring systems.

Second, Strengthen capacity at the municipal level.

Training programs in data management, digital tools, and SDG monitoring should be developed in collaboration with the National Institute of Statistics. Universities and research institutions can also play a key role by integrating local data production into academic programs and applied research initiatives, thereby fostering a sustainable pipeline of technical expertise.

Third, prioritize pilot implementation.

Pilot projects in selected municipalities, such as Sousse, should be initiated to test data collection methodologies, monitoring systems, and institutional coordination mechanisms. These pilots would generate practical insights and lessons learned, enabling a more effective and context-sensitive scale-up at the national level.

Fourth, reinforce international cooperation and knowledge exchange.

Partnerships with United Nations agencies, international organizations, and development partners can provide technical expertise, financial resources, and access to best practices. Inter-municipal cooperation, including twinning arrangements and thematic networks, can further support capacity building and experience sharing.

Fifth, rationalize the local institutional framework and restore effective local governance.

The multiplication of local structures without clearly defined mandates has led to institutional overlap, reduced efficiency, and weakened governance capacity. A clear political decision is needed to streamline governance structures, clarify institutional responsibilities, and update the legal framework governing local authorities. This includes advancing reforms related to municipal governance and electoral processes, as well as accelerating the reconstitution of municipal councils dissolved since 2023. The prolonged suspension of decentralization has significantly constrained local decision-making and undermined the effectiveness of territorial governance.

Finally, promote a culture of data-driven governance.

This includes raising awareness among decision-makers about the strategic value of data and ensuring that evidence-based policymaking becomes a core principle of public action

National recommendation:

Establish a national framework for SDG localization and data governance Develop a coordinated strategy that integrates local monitoring systems into national planning processes, ensuring alignment between national objectives and local implementation.

Create a national integrated data system Develop a unified digital platform providing real-time data at local, regional, and national levels. This system should include standardized indicators, interoperable databases, and monitoring dashboards.

Strengthen multi-level governance and coordination mechanisms Improve vertical coordination between ministries, regional administrations, and municipalities through structured communication channels and regular coordination platforms.

Establish a dedicated institutional entity for data governance Create a multidisciplinary body responsible for defining local indicators, ensuring data quality, and coordinating data production across territories.

Strengthen and restore local governance frameworks Clarify institutional roles, reduce overlaps, update the legal framework, and accelerate the reconstitution of municipal councils dissolved since 2023 to restore decentralization and local decision-making.

Standardize data production processes Harmonize data collection methods across regions and municipalities to ensure comparability, reliability, and consistency of data, enabling benchmarking, performance evaluation, and fostering constructive competition among territories.

Support capacity building and technical assistance Provide continuous training for local authorities in data management, digital tools, and monitoring systems, in collaboration with national institutions and universities.

Local Recommendations:

Develop local data systems and monitoring mechanisms Establish internal processes for data collection, management, and analysis, supported by digital dashboards and monitoring tools.

Integrate SDGs into local planning and governance Incorporate SDG targets into municipal strategies, territorial planning, and public service delivery.

Strengthen technical capacity and digital transformation Invest in training, digital infrastructure, and data management tools to improve local governance and decision-making.

Promote citizen engagement and participatory governance Encourage the involvement of citizens and local stakeholders in monitoring processes through consultations, surveys, and participatory initiatives.

Foster inter-municipal cooperation Develop collaborative initiatives between municipalities to share resources, knowledge, and best practices in data management and policy implementation.

Leverage international cooperation and funding opportunities Engage with international organizations and development partners to access technical support, financing, and expertise in SDG implementation and monitoring systems.

Potential National Strategic Partners



Potential International Strategic Partners



NB: These are potential partners for the Municipality of Sousse for expertise sharing and funding opportunities.

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