

Independent Reporting Mechanism

Results Report:
Tunisia 2021–2023

Open
Government
Partnership



Independent
Reporting
Mechanism

Executive Summary

Tunisia's fourth action plan achieved modest early results, with most progress in opening up governance at the municipal level. The E-Government Unit of the Presidency, civil society steering committee members, international partners, and engaged municipalities were key drivers of reforms. Significant political shifts and government reorganization inhibited implementation of many of the action plan's most ambitious elements.

Early Results

Tunisia's fourth action plan was implemented in the context of significant government upheaval and reorganization. While most commitments made some implementation progress, few achieved notable early results.

The IRM observed the most notable results in the co-creation of municipal youth action plans and continued support to municipalities implementing open government plans. Commitments that made the greatest progress were often those spearheaded by the E-Government Unit in coordination with funding partners.

Tunisia achieved modest early results for the ongoing reforms on open data and access to information. Concrete progress included draft decrees to operationalize the Access to Information Authority, collaborative development of an open government strategy and a manual on audit publication, as well as revitalization of the national open data portal.

Completion

The plan's implementation was affected by major political shifts, including the suspension of the 2014 Constitution and the dissolution of parliament in 2021 and the introduction of a new constitution in August 2022.¹ These events disrupted the continuity of several commitments and introduced uncertainties in the open government process. Changes within the Presidency of the Government and impact of the COVID-19 pandemic presented additional obstacles. Tunisian reformers continued to try to make headway despite the challenging context. Commitments requiring stable institutional support, such as those on public sector integrity and financial transparency, faced difficulties. Consequently, 8 of the 13 commitments were either not started or achieved limited progress.

Participation and Co-Creation

Tunisia's OGP process is overseen by the E-Government Unit and managed by an OGP Steering Committee comprised of government and civil society members. The steering committee played a central role in shaping the co-creation process and commitment design.² The action plan priorities were identified through online public consultations, comment periods, and steering committee working groups. Steering committee members also monitored implementation progress despite some coordination challenges.³ Several civil society organizations drove

IMPLEMENTATION AT A GLANCE

LEVEL OF COMPLETION

5/13

Complete or substantially complete commitments

EARLY RESULTS

4/13

Commitments with early results

0/13

Commitments with significant results

COMPLIANCE WITH MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

Acting according to OGP process

implementation progress, such as in Commitments 2 and 7. Over the last decade, a small but dedicated civil society community has contributed to Tunisia's open government reforms. As such, broadening civil society involvement remains a key opportunity to strengthen the movement and implementation of ambitious reforms.

The action plan cycle revealed resource constraints, especially in terms of cross-governmental coordination. The E-Government Unit faced occasional unresponsiveness from some government departments, highlighting the need for improved communication and collaboration mechanisms.⁴ The Director of the E-Government Unit and Point of Contact since Tunisia's ascension to OGP left government service during the implementation period, which temporarily slowed momentum.⁵ OGP efforts were reinvigorated when the interim director of the E-Government Unit assumed leadership of the OGP process.

Implementation in Context

The implementation of Tunisia's fourth national action plan unfolded amidst a period of significant governance changes. On 25 July 2021, the Tunisian President suspended the 2014 Constitution, dissolved the parliament and sidelined various independent institutions.⁶ This led to a substantial reshaping of the institutional landscape. The country operated without a parliament until early 2023 and without a constitution until July 2022. A referendum was held for the new 2022 constitution while legislative elections in 2022 and 2023 established a new parliament.⁷ This period of transition affected the momentum and focus of OGP initiatives. The shift of executive competencies from the Presidency of the Government, which had been the epicenter of power under the 2014 Constitution, to the Presidency of the Republic, altered the dynamics of governance.⁸ The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic further complicated the landscape as several government programs and action plans were suspended and budget priorities were shifted.⁹

¹ Constitution of the Republic of Tunisia. August 2022. <https://shorturl.at/4IPLS>.

² International organization representative, interview by IRM Researcher, 9 November 2023; "Stages of preparing for the fourth national action plan for the Open Government Partnership (2021–2022) by the Joint Advisory Committee tasked with following up on the preparation and implementation of this plan," Open Government Partnership Tunisia, February 2021, <http://www.ogptunisie.gov.tn/?p=4718>.

³ Civil society representative, interview by IRM Researcher, 8 November 2023.

⁴ Civil society representative, interview by IRM Researcher, 3 November 2023.

⁵ Civil society representative, interview by IRM Researcher.

⁶ "Presidential Decree n° 2021-69 dated 26 July 2021, ending the functions of the head of government and members of the government," Government of Tunisia, 26 July 2021, http://www.iort.gov.tn/WD120AWP/WD120Awp.exe/CTX_4984-25-rUYjsddugY/RechercheJORT/SYNC_1497127144; "Le Secrétaire général de l'INLUCC démis de ses fonctions," [INLUCC Secretary General dismissed], La Presse, 20 August 2021, <https://lapresse.tn/2021/08/20/le-secretaire-general-de-linlucc-demis-de-ses-fonctions>; Presidency of the Republic, "Decision of the Presidency of the Republic of 25 July 2021," Facebook, 25 July 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/Presidence.tn/posts/4462752577116098>.

⁷ Francesca Ebel, "New constitution gives some Tunisians hope, others concern," Associated Press, 29 July 2022, <https://apnews.com/article/middle-east-africa-tunisia-constitutions-06c915ec08ed05686a09081d74287cb6>.

⁸ Tarek Amara and Angus McDowall, "Tunisian president ousts government in move critics call a coup," Reuters, 26 July 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/tunisian-president-relieves-prime-minister-his-post-2021-07-25>.

⁹ Tarek Amara, "Tunisia says health care system collapsing due to COVID-19," Reuters, 8 July 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/tunisia-says-health-care-system-collapsing-due-covid-19-2021-07-08>.

Table of Contents

Section I: Key Observations 2

Section II: Implementation and Early Results 5

Section III. Participation and Co-Creation 12

Section IV. Methodology and IRM Indicators 15

Annex I. Commitment Data 17

Section I: Key Observations

Despite significant political and administrative transitions, the Tunisian open government community continued to advance reforms within available windows of opportunity, including at the municipal level. Civil society and the E-Government Unit remained a driving force for positive change. The Access to Information Authority has the potential to take a leading role if fully operationalized. However, ongoing government and political reorganization impeded implementation of the more ambitious open government objectives.

Observation 1: Municipal open government efforts persist despite a complex context.

Tunisian reformers advanced open government at the municipal level across action plans, as illustrated by the early results of Commitments 10 and 11. It is particularly notable given that local reforms took place amid a significant reorganization of local governance structures.¹ A key contributor to this was the partnership between the E-Government Unit in the Presidency of Tunisia and the German Corporation for International Cooperation (GIZ), which provided technical and financial support to participating municipalities. Civil society partners were also highlighted as a stabilizing force in the context of local governance changes.²

Steady progress indicated that municipal open governance could thrive despite a challenging context. Under the third national action plan, eight municipalities received support to develop and implement open government action plans.³ In 2021 and 2022, the Municipalities of Regueb and Carthage submitted action plans under the OGP Local Program. As detailed in this report, municipalities implementing action plans continued to receive support while nine of them co-created youth action plans. In 2024, the Municipalities of Zriba and Dar Chaabane El Fehri joined the OGP Local Program.⁴ Tunisia's fifth national action plan seeks to support 10 new municipalities in developing open government action plans and facilitates municipalities in co-creating action plans with women and youth.⁵

Observation 2: The E-Government Unit and a small but dedicated civil society community drove Tunisia's open government movement forward.

The E-Government Unit has longstanding experience in coordinating Tunisia's OGP process and implementing reforms. The Unit's coordination of government bodies, civil society, and development partners was a key factor across commitments that saw the most progress. The unit is supported by a small but committed civil society community, represented on the steering committee, that has been engaged since Tunisia joined OGP in 2014. These organizations have helped carry forward reforms throughout political and administrative changes.⁶ For instance, the Tunisian Association of Public Auditors supported audit transparency under Commitment 2⁷ and the Natural Resource Governance Institute advocated for Tunisia's application to the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative under Commitment 7.⁸ However, broadening civil society engagement in Tunisia's open government movement remains an untapped potential. To address this, the steering committee could intensify efforts to raise awareness of open government initiative, such as seen in the establishment of a civil society open government platform in Côte d'Ivoire and Nigeria.

Observation 3: Tunisia’s Access to Information Authority (INAI) faced significant obstacles in fulfilling its central role to implement open government principles.

In addition to its mandate of laying the foundational legal and regulatory framework for open governance, the INAI is also tasked with capacity building and sensitization of government bodies and civil society organizations to cultivate an informed and engaged citizenry.⁹ However, the delayed adoption of decrees to fully operationalize the INAI under Commitment 1, coupled with limited human resources, presented a significant challenge to its ability in carrying out that mandate.¹⁰ In 2024, the term of the former president of INAI, who had championed access to information reforms in Tunisia, was ended by decree.¹¹ According to the Government of Tunisia, the Secretary General of INAI has been appointed interim director.¹² INAI could also strengthen its partnerships with civil society organizations in carrying out advocacy, education, capacity building.¹³

Observation 4: Tunisia's political and institutional changes significantly impeded the implementation of commitments.

Tunisia’s OGP journey since 2014 has been marked by significant political and institutional instability. The nation had undergone profound shifts with the adoption of two constitutions in 2014 and 2022, eight different governments, and frequent government restructuring. This has impacted the center of political power and decision making processes. On 25 July 2021, the Presidency of the Government shifted to the Presidency of the Republic¹⁴ and led to the introduction of various ministerial portfolios focused on governance issues. These portfolios, often dissolved with changing governments, have hindered consistent implementation of Tunisia’s OGP action plans.

Amid continuous instability, rallying the necessary political will among decision makers to effectively implement and sustain OGP commitments has been particularly challenging.¹⁵ For example, Tunisia’s OGP point of contact (Interim Director of the E-Government Unit) had not fully assumed their responsibilities following the conclusion of the most recent action plan cycle. Tunisia’s lacks a ministerial OGP point of contact, with the Secretary General of the Government serving in the interim. While the E-Government Unit has provided steady and dedicated leadership for OGP reforms, political support across branches and levels of government is needed to implement ambitious commitments, such as those that could address critical areas related to OGP eligibility criteria e.g., asset disclosure and timely audit report publication.¹⁶

¹ Angus McDowall, “Tunisian president to dissolve municipal councils months before local elections,” Reuters, 9 March 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/tunisian-president-dissolve-municipal-councils-months-before-local-elections-2023-03-09>.

² Municipal councilor, interview by IRM Researcher, 2 November 2023.

³ “Commitment 11: Instaure the OGP at the local level,” Open Government Partnership Tunisia, <http://www.ogptunisie.gov.tn/en/?p=1329>.

⁴ “55 Local Governments Join International Partnership on Open Government,” Open Government Partnership, 16 April 2024, <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/news/55-local-governments-join-international-partnership-on-open-government>.

⁵ “Tunisia Action Plan 2023–2025,” Open Government Partnership Tunisia, 9 January 2024, https://www.opengovpartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Tunisia_Action-Plan_2023-2025_EN.pdf.

⁶ Municipal councilor, interview.

⁷ “Commitment 2 : Enhancing transparency and accountability regarding audit reports,” Open Government Partnership Tunisia, <http://www.ogptunisie.gov.tn/en/?p=2346>; “Best practices for the publication of audit reports,” High Committee of Financial and Administrative Control, June 2021, https://drive.google.com/file/d/1H48Pc_BZCIV-NsrzHVEVdnHr78zbAPZX/edit, p. 5.

⁸ “Commitment 7 : Promoting transparency in the field of energy and mines,” Open Government Partnership Tunisia, <http://www.ogptunisie.gov.tn/en/?p=2327>.

⁹ “Organic Law No. 2016-22 relating to the right of access to information,” Tunisia Legal Database, 24 March 2016, <https://legislation-securite.tn/latest-laws/loi-organique-n-2016-22-du-24-mars-2016-relative-au-droit-dacces-a-linformation>.

¹⁰ Former President of the Access to Information Authority, interview by IRM Researcher, 8 November 2023.

¹¹ “Fin de mission de Adnen Lassoued à la tête de l’INAI,” [End of Adnen Lassoued's mission at the head of INAI, Réalités Online, 21 May 2024, <https://realites.com.tn/fr/fin-de-mission-de-adnen-lassoued-a-la-tete-de-linai>.

¹² Information provided to the IRM by the Government of Tunisia during the public comment period of this report. August 2024.

¹³ Civil society representative, interview by IRM Researcher, 8 November 2023.

¹⁴ Tarek Amara and Angus McDowall, “Tunisian president ousts government in move critics call a coup,” Reuters, 26 July 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/tunisian-president-relieves-prime-minister-his-post-2021-07-25>.

¹⁵ Civil society representative, interview by IRM Researcher, 11 November 2023.

¹⁶ “OGP Eligibility Database (based on 2020 data),” Open Government Partnership, June 2021, https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1PK_bRjYYZrYCLTGWW0R9Z3qpfcqUgT7WZNyIpld9Y/edit#gid=1406221191.

Section II: Implementation and Early Results

The following section looks at the two commitments that the IRM identified as having the strongest results from implementation. To assess early results, the IRM referred to commitments identified as promising in the Action Plan Review as a starting point. After verification of completion evidence, the IRM also took into account commitments that were not determined as promising but that, as implemented, yielded predominantly positive or significant results.

Commitment 10: Enhancing the role of youth in designing and monitoring public projects at the local level [Municipalities cooperating with the National Federation of Tunisian Municipalities and the E-Government Unit of the Presidency of the Government.]

Context and Objectives

Commitment 10 aimed to empower youth in designing and monitoring public projects at the local level. Tunisia faces a pressing need to address youth unemployment, social and geographical disparities, and illegal migration. By involving young people in decision making processes, especially in the formulation of national reforms and local projects, the commitment aimed to harness the potential and capability of the youth to contribute positively to comprehensive reform and community development. It sought to expand mechanisms for youth participation in public life, addressing the limited frameworks and reluctance of youth to engage in public affairs. Built on an ongoing partnership between the Government of Tunisia and GIZ, under which 29 municipalities had undertaken youth action plans,¹ this commitment strengthened the relationships of trust and responsibility between youth and local authorities. As a result, it was expected to enhance the effectiveness of decision-making processes and promote a culture of partnership and accountability at the local level.²

This reform was built on commitments in previous action plans to strengthen open governance at the local level. Commitment 11 in Tunisia's 2018–2020 action plan led to eight municipalities co-creating action plans with civil society. Under Commitment 10, the Ministry of Youth and Sports piloted 5 municipal youth councils. However, most youth councils stopped activities after support from the ministry ended.³ It was therefore implemented in the context of local open government reforms being carried out through past national action plans and membership of Tunisian municipalities in the international OGP Local Program.⁴

Early Results: Moderate

This commitment achieved moderate results towards enhancing youth participation in local governance. All milestones were completed, resulting in the formation of 12 multistakeholder municipal working groups and youth action plans. Of these, nine municipalities were selected to receive financial support to implement their plans. Workshops and training on participatory process and open governance aided the municipalities in integrating greater transparency and youth participation into their governance processes.

The E-Government Unit, the National Federation for Tunisian Cities, and the German International Development Agency (GIZ) launched a call for applications in August 2021 to select 12 municipalities to participate in the “Youth Action Plan” project (Milestone 1). A selection committee comprised of representatives of these institutions reviewed applications from 25 municipalities and selected 12 municipalities based on a scoring system that prioritized

municipalities with no prior youth action plans, municipalities from the interior region, and municipalities that had developed prior open government action plans or other participatory projects. These included Hammam Chott, Gabès, Dar Chaabane, Zriba, Zaouiet Sousse, Carthage, Métlaoui, Sidi Bou Rouis, TébourSouk, Ghezala, Enfidha, and Bechri Fatnassa Nagga.⁵

Numerous open days and workshops were organized across these selected municipalities (Milestone 2). Facilitated by experts, these sessions focused on communications and governance themes targeting mayors, municipal executives, advisors and civil society. They provided an interactive platform for sharing experiences and discussing the project's objectives and methodologies. The detailed schedule and diverse locations of these sessions underscored a commitment to comprehensive capacity building at the local level.

The E-Government Unit and GIZ initiated the process with an online introductory meeting for municipal representatives on 27 January 2022.⁶ This was followed by a series of online working meetings from 8–16 February 2022 focused on the project and its implementation process.⁷ Subsequently, in-person workshops were held in the municipalities on 21–30 March 2022. These sessions established contact with local working groups and discussed the youth action plans' objectives, methodologies, and ethical guidelines. The composition of each municipal working group, which included municipal representatives and local civil society, was published online.⁸ A seminar to launch the youth action plan project was organized on 6–8 May 2022 in Hammamet, bringing together representatives of the municipal working groups to share experiences and plan future actions.⁹

The E-Government Unit and GIZ held four workshops, each attended by working groups from 3 municipalities, on 17–19 June 2022. These workshops trained working groups in the design of the youth action plans, covering critical aspects such as project analysis, stakeholder identification, and budgeting. These comprehensive activities ensured the engagement of various stakeholders and set a solid foundation for the successful implementation of the Youth Action Plans across the selected municipalities.¹⁰

Working groups were successfully established in all 12 municipalities (Milestone 3) with varying compositions, often including municipal representatives, cultural center directors, civil society activists, and youth center representatives. Diverse representation ensured that various perspectives were incorporated into the project. The meetings focused on discussing and debating the next steps for the project and required work, indicating an ongoing engagement throughout the implementation period.¹¹

A series of training sessions in May 2022 covering communications and governance (Milestone 4) were held in different municipalities. These were part of an overarching strategy to strengthen local capacities. Attendance details and content specifics indicated a tailored approach to address the unique needs and challenges of each municipality.¹²

In August 2022, the 12 municipal working groups presented their youth action plans to a jury¹³ comprised of representatives from the E-Government Unit, GIZ, the National Federation of Tunisian Cities, and the Tunisian Association of Local Governance. The committee selected 9 municipalities to receive support from GIZ for implementation (Milestone 5), which included Ghezala, Bechri Fatnassa Naga, Enfidha, Métlaoui, Zriba, TébourSouk, Carthage, Dar Chaabane El Fehri, and Sidi Bou Rouis.¹⁴ These plans represented the collective effort of various stakeholders to engage youth in public project design and monitoring at the local level. A representative from GIZ highlighted Carthage and Métlaoui's "Memory of the Mines" festival as projects that resulted

from implementation.¹⁵ A representative from Carthage noted that the youth ambassadors program developed through this commitment was later included in their OGP Local Action Plan.¹⁶

Commitment 10 was implemented during an unexpected transition in local governance structures. It was designed following the 2018 municipal elections and based on the 2018 Code of Local Authorities. However, the President of Tunisia dissolved municipal councils in March 2023 and created local councils, with a lack of clarity around the mandate of the new local government structures.¹⁷ Despite the dissolution of municipal councils and the introduction of new decentralized structures, there has been formal and informal institutionalization of open government changes. For instance, Carthage continued this reform informally in an associative framework, demonstrating municipal reformers' commitment despite a lack of formal structures.¹⁸

This commitment has shown moderate early results, marked by a discernible improvement in practices and policies governing youth participation in governance. Importantly, this commitment continues to develop a process for youth engagement in governance processes in a context with limited frameworks and reluctance of youth participation. The structured approach in forming youth working groups and implementing capacity building programs had been crucial. However, the extent of youth influence on local decision-making processes and the tangible impact of their contributions remains to be seen.

The commitment successfully navigated several enabling factors, such as the proactive involvement of municipalities and the systematic approach to training and capacity building. However, challenges remain in ensuring the sustainability of youth participation and continuous support from local authorities. The commitment opened up opportunities for improving governance through youth participation, but there are potential roadblocks, particularly in maintaining the momentum of youth engagement and ensuring that their inputs have a lasting impact on local policies and projects.¹⁹ Going forward, the ongoing challenge will be to sustain these initiatives, ensure the depth of youth impact in governance, and continue to integrate open government principles into local governance practices effectively.

Looking Ahead

Tunisia's ongoing pursuit of open government reforms across national action plans began to show dividends. Two municipalities engaged in this commitment, Zriba and Dar Chaabane El Fehri, were accepted to the 2024 international OGP Local cohort, joining Carthage, El Kef, and Regueb.²⁰ Their membership indicates continued appetite and opportunity for open government reforms at the municipal level despite a challenging national context. The E-Government Unit and partners are continuing similar reforms under Tunisia's 2023–2025 action plan. Commitment 8 in the fifth action plan will select 10 new municipalities to develop and implement open government action plans. Commitment 9 will repeat a similar process to select and support municipalities to engage women and youth in designing and implementing development projects.²¹ In addition, the IRM offers the following reflections:

- **Ongoing technical and financial support from the Government of Tunisia and partners for municipalities undertaking reforms is key to maintaining momentum.** This is evidenced by the discontinuation of municipal youth councils after the Ministry of Youth and Sport ended technical support in the previous action plan. Meanwhile, municipalities that developed open government action plans under the previous commitment continue to receive support and make progress.

- The E-Government Unit and GIZ could **continue investing in capacity and relationship building** for interested municipalities. This is important given the human and financial resource constraints often faced at the municipal level.
- Tunisian reformers can consider opportunities to **formally institutionalize youth participation in local governance** within the new legal and administrative landscape.

Commitment 11: Entrenching OGP principles at the local level [Municipalities of Carthage, Hammam Chott, Dar Chaabane, Zaouiet Sousse, Zriba, Regueb, Souassi, and Gabès.]

Context and Objectives

Commitment 11 aimed to entrench OGP principles at the local level, particularly in the context of the 2014 Constitution and the Local Authorities Code of 2018 which emphasize strengthening local democracy and open government. It sought to implement projects outlined in municipal open government action plans by addressing challenges like inadequate frameworks for coordination and limited mechanisms for citizen engagement in local governance. The focus was to develop communication mechanisms with citizens, inventorying public data for open access, and enhancing the quality of municipal services. The objective was to build a governance system rooted in local contexts with improved municipal services, participatory democracy, and alignment with broader open government principles.²²

This commitment is part of a larger reform to institutionalize open government processes at the municipal government spanning across multiple action plans. It built on Commitment 11 in the third national action plan, under which 8 municipalities developed open government action plans.²³ Tunisia's fifth action plan includes a commitment to select and support 10 additional municipalities to develop open government action plans.²⁴ Moreover, the municipalities of Carthage, Regueb, Zriba, and Dar Chaabane El Fehri have submitted their action plans directly to OGP as members of the OGP Local Program.²⁵

Early Results: Moderate

This reform contributed moderate progress towards stronger communications and open data in the eight municipalities implementing open government action plans. Implementation resulted in a diagnostic of communications and the collaborative development of communications action plans in the eight municipalities. It also facilitated development of data inventories and a modest increase in the number of datasets published by municipalities. This commitment achieved a substantial level of implementation as most milestones were completed, resulting in an incremental improvement in transparency in eight of Tunisia's 264 municipalities.

Implementation partners held a series of workshops and trainings that aided each municipality in identifying and developing a plan to address their communication needs. The E-Government Unit, the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ), and a consulting agency hosted work meetings across the eight municipalities. Attended by mayors, municipal secretaries, councilors, civil society representatives, and open government program coordinators, these meetings focused on diagnosing and enhancing internal and external communication capacities. For instance, meetings in Hammam Chott, Carthage, and Dar Chaabane El Fehri in late

December 2021 highlighted the importance of tailoring communication plans according to each municipality's unique needs and characteristics.²⁶

In March 2022, GIZ, the National Democratic Institute (NDI), the E-Government Unit, and the National Federation of Tunisian Municipalities held a workshop in Sousse. Each municipalities' diagnostic on communications needs was presented and discussed. Participants, including mayors, secretary generals, civil society, and OGP Tunisia Steering Committee Members, formed working groups to develop communication action plans.²⁷ The E-Government Unit, with GIZ assistance, held further training sessions in October 2022 to bolster the communication skills of municipal employees. Covering digital and mobile communication, event organization, and media training, these sessions underscored the commitment of municipalities to modernize and improve their communication strategies.²⁸

Communication plans, municipal logos, and other communication materials were developed to support the municipalities' public communications. All eight municipalities developed communication action plans that focused on addressing a specific goal. For instance, the municipality of Carthage targeted the engagement of young people in local development.²⁹ New logos were created for the municipalities of Zriba, Dar chaabane el Fehri, Hammam Chatt-Regueb, and Souassi. Online communication materials were developed for the municipalities of Carthage, Zaouia Sousse and Gabes. A video on public participation and guide for municipal communications were developed to support the eight participating municipalities' communications and outreach efforts.³⁰ These materials were presented at a seminar in November 2022 on strengthening municipalities' public communications. The seminar was attended by the mayor or a representative, commitment coordinator, and communications officer for each municipality. Technical equipment was not provided to municipalities as foreseen in the action plan, as it was determined that the municipalities were equipped to implement the communication action plans.³¹ At the time of assessment, the IRM did not have information on whether the enhanced communication strategies had led to more effective citizen engagement.

Parallel to these efforts, progress was made in the inventory and publication of data through meetings to discuss methodologies and set objectives, followed by a diagnostic phase to assess the existing data stock within each municipality. Municipalities then approved of final data inventories and published key datasets in an open format. Achievements in this regard included the completion of data inventories in municipalities like Ariana, Danden, Carthage, and Hammam Chott. However, the extent to which the open data was being actively used for public benefits, such as in service provision or citizen engagement, was not yet evident.³²

There had been a modest increase in the availability of municipal data available online. A civil society representative reported that 60 datasets were published,³³ while a review of the civil society-run Baladati platform in April 2024 showed 776 municipal datasets, which is a slight increase from the 754 available in October 2021.³⁴ Datasets from 49 municipalities were readily available on the national open data portal, which was revitalized in 2023. The municipalities of Kélibia, Jemmel, d'Enfidha, Bouarada, Métouia, and Zriba showed the greatest number of published datasets, ranging from 49 to 95 each.³⁵ Additionally, the Ministry of the Interior has published data such as population, human and financial resources, and projects across municipalities.³⁶ No progress was made in publishing municipal spatial data as envisioned by the commitment.³⁷

Looking Ahead

While these foundational steps are commendable, the commitment's long-term success hinges on how these initiatives are applied within the wider political and administrative context. The changing landscape provides an opportunity to integrate open government principles into the new governance framework. However, frequent political and administrative changes in Tunisia pose potential challenges to the continuity and effectiveness of these initiatives. Key enabling factors included the support from international partners like GIZ and the active involvement of municipal authorities. Constraints such as ensuring uniformity in implementation across different municipalities and maintaining momentum in citizen engagement may have impacted the outcomes.

The trajectory of Commitment 11 suggests that with careful navigation of the political landscape, the principles of open government can continue to advance at the local level. Commitment 8 in Tunisia's fifth action plan will continue this reform with the aims of facilitate the development and implementation of municipal action plans.³⁸ To support this, implementers can consider:

- **Actively engage with emerging administrative structures** to integrate open government practices from the outset.
- **Develop adaptive implementation strategies** that can respond to changing political and administrative contexts.
- **Continue supporting and building the capacity of local government staff and officials** to champion open government principles, regardless of structural changes.
- **Leverage the active involvement of civil society and community groups** to maintain the momentum for open government initiatives.

¹ "Digital municipalities in Tunisia: transparent, citizen-oriented and efficient," GIZ, accessed in April 2024, <https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/31897.html>.

² "Tunisia Action Plan 2021–2023," Open Government Partnership Tunisia, 6 August 2021, https://www.opengovpartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Tunisia_Action-Plan_2021-2023_EN.pdf, p. 47–49.

³ "IRM Transitional Results Report: Tunisia 2018–2020," Open Government Partnership, August 2021, https://www.opengovpartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Tunisia_Transitional-Results_Report_2018-2020_EN.pdf.

⁴ "OGP Local," Open Government Partnership, accessed in April 2024, <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/ogp-local>.

⁵ Of these municipalities, some (Gabès, Zriba, Hammam Chott, Zaouiet Sousse, Carthage, and Dar Chaabane) developed local action plans under Commitment 11 in the previous action plan. Carthage is also a member of the OGP Local Program. See: "Result of the call for applications for the selection of 12 municipalities to strengthen the participation of youth in public affairs at the local level," Open Government Partnership Tunisia, accessed in April 2024, <http://www.ogptunisie.gov.tn/en/?p=2310>.

⁶ "Kick-off meeting related to Commitment 10 of the 4th OGP National Action Plan: Enhancing the role of youth in designing and monitoring public projects at the local level," Open Government Partnership Tunisia, 27 January 2022, <http://www.ogptunisie.gov.tn/en/?p=2407>.

⁷ "Accompaniment of the municipalities in the constitution of the local working group of the 'Youth Action Plan' project," Open Government Partnership Tunisia, 16 February 2022, <http://www.ogptunisie.gov.tn/en/?p=2416>.

⁸ "Workshops with local working teams on the 'Youth Action Plan' project," Open Government Partnership Tunisia, 30 March 2022, <http://www.ogptunisie.gov.tn/en/?p=2520>.

⁹ "National seminar to launch the 'Youth Action Plans' project related to Commitment 10 of the 4th OGP National Action Plan," Open Government Partnership, 8 May 2022, <http://www.ogptunisie.gov.tn/en/?p=2561>.

¹⁰ "Organization of 4 workshops on the design of the 'Youth Action Plans'," Open Government Partnership Tunisia, 19 June 2022, <http://www.ogptunisie.gov.tn/en/?p=2656>.

¹¹ "Workshops with local working teams on the 'Youth Action Plan' project," Open Government Partnership Tunisia, 30 March 2022, <http://www.ogptunisie.gov.tn/en/?p=2520>.

- ¹² “Organization of training sessions for the local work teams in charge of the ‘Youth Action Plans’,” Open Government Partnership Tunisia, May 2022, <http://www.ogptunisie.gov.tn/en/?p=2639>.
- ¹³ “Organization of a validation seminar of the ‘Youth Action Plans’,” Open Government Partnership Tunisia, 5 August 2022, <http://www.ogptunisie.gov.tn/en/?p=2747>.
- ¹⁴ “Results of the call for ‘Youth Action Plan’ projects,” Open Government Partnership Tunisia, 5 August 2022, <http://www.ogptunisie.gov.tn/en/?p=2796>.
- ¹⁵ International organization representative, interview by IRM Researcher, 6 November 2023.
- ¹⁶ “Action Plan - Carthage, Tunisia, 2022–2023,” Tunisian Association of Local Governance, 30 November 2022, <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/action-plan-carthage-tunisia-2022-2023>.
- ¹⁷ “Tunisie: Quelles sont les vraies prérogatives des conseils locaux?” [Tunisia: What are the real prerogatives of local councils?], L’Economiste Maghrébin, 30 December 2023, <https://www.leconomistemaghrebin.com/2023/12/31/tunisie-queelles-sont-les-vraies-prerogatives-des-conseils-locaux>; “ISIE : La mise en place des conseils régionaux prévue le 6 mars,” [ISIE: The establishment of regional councils planned for March] La Presse, 5 March 2024, <https://lapresse.tn/2024/03/05/isie-la-mise-en-place-des-conseils-regionaux-prevue-le-6-mars>; Angus McDowall, Tunisian president to dissolve municipal councils months before local elections, Reuters, 9 March 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/tunisian-president-dissolve-municipal-councils-months-before-local-elections-2023-03-09>.
- ¹⁸ Municipal councilor, interview by IRM Researcher, 2 November 2023.
- ¹⁹ International organization representative, interview.
- ²⁰ “55 Local Governments Join International Partnership on Open Government,” Open Government Partnership, 16 April 2024, <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/news/55-local-governments-join-international-partnership-on-open-government>.
- ²¹ “Tunisia Action Plan 2023–2025,” Open Government Partnership Tunisia, 9 January 2024, https://www.opengovpartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Tunisia_Action-Plan_2023-2025_EN.pdf.
- ²² “Tunisia Action Plan 2021–2023,” Open Government Partnership Tunisia, p. 51–55.
- ²³ “Final versions of the open government action plans at the local level,” Open Government Partnership Tunisia, <http://www.ogptunisie.gov.tn/en/?p=2212>; “IRM Transitional Results Report: Tunisia 2018–2020,” Open Government Partnership.
- ²⁴ “Tunisia Action Plan 2023–2025,” Open Government Partnership Tunisia.
- ²⁵ “OGP Local,” Open Government Partnership.
- ²⁶ “Implementation of the 1st sub-commitment of Commitment 11 of the 4th national OGP action plan on strengthening public communication in municipalities,” Open Government Partnership Tunisia, 21 December 2021, <http://www.ogptunisie.gov.tn/en/?p=2383>.
- ²⁷ “Projet Initiative pour le Développement Municipal: Participation citoyenne,” [Municipal Development Initiative Project - Citizen participation], Open Government Tunisia, 25–26 March 2022, <http://www.ogptunisie.gov.tn/en/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Agenda-Atelier-engagement-11-PAN-4-PGO-3.pdf>.
- ²⁸ “Organization of two training sessions on public communication,” Open Government Partnership in Tunisia, October 2022, <http://www.ogptunisie.gov.tn/en/?p=2801>.
- ²⁹ Communication Action Plan. Municipality of Carthage. 2022. <http://www.ogptunisie.gov.tn/en/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Plan-de-com-Commune-de-Carthage.pdf>
- ³⁰ “Closing Seminar on Strengthening Public Communication in Municipalities” Open government Partnership Tunisia. <http://www.ogptunisie.gov.tn/en/?p=2840>
- ³¹ Information provided by the Government of Tunisia to the IRM during the public comment period for the report. September 2024.
- ³² International organization representative, interview by IRM Researcher, 9 November 2023; Commitment 11: Entrenching the OGP principles at the local level, Open Government Partnership Tunisia, <http://www.ogptunisie.gov.tn/en/?p=2303>.
- ³³ Civil society representative, interview by IRM Researcher, 11 November 2023.
- ³⁴ “Portail des données ouvertes des Municipalities,” [Municipalities Open Data Portal], Open Baladiati, accessed in April 2024, <http://openbaladiati.tn>.
- ³⁵ “Portail National des Données Ouvertes,” [National Open Data Portal], E-Government Unit of the Presidency of the Government, accessed in April 2024, https://data.gov.tn/fr/cms/producteurs-de-donnees/?search=commune&order_by=desc_dataset.
- ³⁶ “البيانات المفتوحة” [Open Data], Ministry of the Interior, accessed in April 2024, <http://www.collectiviteslocales.gov.tn/data>.
- ³⁷ Information provided by the Government of Tunisia to the IRM during the public comment period for the report. September 2024.
- ³⁸ “Tunisia Action Plan 2023–2025,” Open Government Partnership Tunisia.

Section III. Participation and Co-Creation

The E-Government Unit and Tunisian OGP Steering Committee oversaw an inclusive co-creation process to develop the fourth action plan. Collaboration continued but faced challenges during implementation, such as a transition of leadership in the E-Government Unit and a challenging political context. However, a dedicated coalition of government, civil society, and international partners continued to steer open government reforms in Tunisia.

The E-Government Unit of the Presidency of the Government is responsible for overseeing OGP initiatives and coordinating OGP efforts across government agencies in Tunisia.¹ Changes in the unit's leadership during implementation of the fourth action plan temporarily caused some delays in the coordination and implementation of some commitments.² However, the appointment of an Interim General Director of the E-Government Unit and OGP point of contact resumed the momentum. She was supported by deputy directors and executive staff from the Presidency of the Government, whose mission includes managing the OGP portfolio.³ Resource constraints, particularly in cross-governmental coordination, were noted but were not entirely prohibitive. Challenges included occasional lack of responsiveness from some government departments when coordinating with the unit. This lack of fluidity in communication and collaboration sometimes posed obstacles to effective implementation.⁴

Tunisia's OGP Steering Committee leads Tunisia's OGP process. The committee was reconstituted and expanded in January 2021 for the fourth action plan with 10 representatives each from government and civil society each. The committee was expanded through an open call for civil society membership application.⁵ A civil society representative stated that the criteria for selecting non-governmental members were not entirely transparent, but the committee generally represented a broad range of stakeholders involved in Tunisia's open government initiatives.⁶ The selection process and criteria for non-government members were later published in the fourth action plan.⁷ Steering committee members oversaw the design and monitored progress of the action plan, with four formal meetings over the action plan period.⁸

The government frequently engaged in consultative workshops with non-governmental actors, fostering an ongoing dialogue. This iterative dialogue set the agenda for co-creation, with inputs and representation from civil society and from outside the forum were actively incorporated. The co-creation process began in 2020 with a public call for proposals through the e-participation platform from mid-October to mid-November. Ministries and other public institutions received official invitations to submit proposals for inclusion in the plan. Three online seminars were held in November 2020 on open government and attended by approximately 100 government and non-government participants. The steering committee then formed three thematic working groups to review the 275 proposals received by thematic area. The criteria for selected proposals included alignment with the specific, measurable, actionable, relevant and timebound (SMART) model, relevance to open government, and a strong potential for results. The shortlisted proposals were published online and discussed in the steering committee meetings in January and February 2021. A draft action plan with 21 commitments was shared online for a second public consultation phase from 17 February to 10 March 2021.⁹

During implementation, civil society monitored progress and actively participated in commitments directly or indirectly related to their areas of interest. Some civil society representatives led the implementation of several commitments. The Tunisian Association of Public Auditors contributed

to drafting the procedural manual that organizes the process of publishing audit reports under Commitment 2. Their involvement underscored the collaborative nature of this commitment.¹⁰ Similarly, the Natural Resource Governance Institute was particularly vital in backing Tunisia's dossier for membership in the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative under Commitment 7. This included organizing consultation sessions with stakeholders in various regions. Progress made in this commitment can be largely attributed to the active involvement of civil society.¹¹ Nonetheless, some non-governmental members expressed concerns about the level of coordination after the plan's conception.

Compliance with the Minimum Requirements

The IRM assesses whether member countries met the minimum requirements under OGP's Participation and Co-Creation Standards for the purposes of procedural review.¹² During co-creation, Tunisia acted according to the OGP process.¹³ The two minimum requirements listed below must achieve at least the level of 'in progress' for a country to have acted according to OGP process during implementation.

Key:

- Green = Meets standard
- Yellow = In progress (steps have been taken but standard is not met)
- Red = No evidence of action

Acted according to OGP process during the implementation period?	
The government maintained an OGP repository that is online, updated at least once during the action plan cycle, and contains evidence of development and implementation of the action plan. ¹⁴	Green
The government provided the public with information on the action plan during the implementation period. ¹⁵	Green

¹ Representative of the E-Government Unit of the Presidency of the Government, interview by IRM Researcher, 6 October 2023.

² Civil society representative, interview by IRM Researcher, 8 November 2023.

³ Representative of the E-Government Unit of the Presidency of the Government, interview.

⁴ Civil society representative, interview by IRM Researcher, 2 November 2023.

⁵ "Comité mixte chargé du suivi de l'élaboration et de la mise en œuvre du 4ème Plan d'Action National du PGO (2021–2023)," [Joint Committee responsible for monitoring the development and implementation of the 4th OGP National Action Plan (2021–2023)], Open Government Partnership Tunisia, 22 January 2021,

<http://www.ogptunisie.gov.tn/fr/index.php/2021/01/22/comite-mixte-charge-du-suivi-de-lelaboration-et-de-la-mise-en-oeuvre-du-4eme-plan-daction-national-du-pgo-2021-2022>; "Composition du comité de pilotage chargé de l'élaboration du 1er et 2eme plans d'action PGO et de suivi de leur mise en œuvre," [Composition of the steering committee responsible for developing the 1st and 2nd OGP action plans and monitoring their implementation], Open Government Partnership Tunisia, 11 October 2018, <http://www.ogptunisie.gov.tn/fr/index.php/2018/10/11/comite-de-pilotage>.

⁶ Civil society representative, interview by IRM Researcher, 8 November 2023.

⁷ "Tunisia Action Plan 2021–2023," Open Government Partnership Tunisia, 6 August 2021, https://www.opengovpartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Tunisia_Action-Plan_2021-2023_EN.pdf, p. 8.

⁸ "Meetings Minutes," Open Government Partnership Tunisia, accessed in April 2024, <http://www.ogptunisie.gov.tn/en/?cat=51>.

⁹ "Stages of preparing for the fourth national action plan for the Open Government Partnership (2021–2022) by the Joint Advisory Committee tasked with following up on the preparation and implementation of this plan," Open Government Partnership Tunisia, February 2021, <http://www.ogptunisie.gov.tn/?p=4718>.

¹⁰ “Commitment 2: Enhancing transparency and accountability regarding audit reports,” Open Government Partnership Tunisia, accessed in April 2024, <http://www.ogptunisie.gov.tn/en/?p=2346>; “Best practices for the publication of audit reports,” High Committee of Financial and Administrative Control, June 2021, https://drive.google.com/file/d/1H48Pc_BZCIV-NsrzHVEVdnHr78zbAPZX/edit, p. 5.

¹¹ “Commitment 7: Promoting transparency in the field of energy and mines,” Open government Partnership Tunisia, accessed in April 2024, <http://www.ogptunisie.gov.tn/en/?p=2327>.

¹² Please note that future IRM assessment will focus on compliance with the updated OGP Co-Creation and Participation Standards that came into effect on 1 January 2022. See: “OGP Participation and Co-Creation Standards,” Open Government Partnership, 24 November 2021, <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/ogp-participation-co-creation-standards>.

¹³ “IRM Action Plan Review: Tunisia 2021–2023,” Open Government Partnership, 31 January 2022, <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/tunisia-action-plan-review-2021-2023>.

¹⁴ “Open Government Partnership Tunisia,” Open Government Partnership Tunisia, accessed in April 2024, <http://www.ogptunisie.gov.tn/en>.

¹⁵ “Meeting of the Advisory Committee in charge of monitoring the implementation of the 4th OGP Action Plan held on February 14, 2022,” Open Government Partnership Tunisia, 14 February 2022, <http://www.ogptunisie.gov.tn/en/?p=2439>.

Section IV. Methodology and IRM Indicators

This report supports members' accountability and learning through assessment of (1) the level of completion for commitments' implementation, (2) early results for commitments with a high level of completion identified as promising or that yielded significant results through implementation, and (3) participation and co-creation practices throughout the action plan cycle. The IRM commenced the research process after the first year of implementation of the action plan with the development of a research plan, preliminary desk research, and verification of evidence provided in the country's OGP repository.¹

Completion

The IRM assesses the level of completion for each commitment in the action plan, including commitments clustered in the Action Plan Review.² The level of completion for all commitments is assessed as one of the following:

- *No Evidence Available*
- *Not Started*
- *Limited*
- *Substantial*
- *Complete*

Early Results

The IRM assesses the level of results achieved from the implementation of commitments that have a clear open government lens, a high level of completion or show evidence of achieving early results (as defined below). It considers the expected aim of the commitment prior to its implementation, the specific country context in which the commitment was implemented, the specific policy area and the changes reported.

The early results indicator establishes three levels of results:

- **No Notable Results:** According to the evidence collected (through desk research, interviews, etc.), the implementation of the open government commitment led to little or no positive results. After assessing the activities carried forward during the period of implementation and its outcomes (if any), the IRM did not find meaningful changes towards:
 - improving practices, policies or institutions governing a policy area or within the public sector, or
 - enhancing the enabling environment to build trust between citizens and the state.
- **Moderate Results:** According to the evidence collected (through desk research, interviews, etc.), the implementation of the open government commitment led to positive results. After assessing the activities carried forward during the period of implementation and its outcomes, the IRM found meaningful changes towards:
 - improving practices, policies or institutions governing a policy area or within the public sector, or
 - enhancing the enabling environment to build trust between citizens and the state.

- **Significant Results:** According to the evidence collected (through desk research, interviews, etc.) the implementation of the open government commitment led to significant positive results. After assessing the activities carried forward during the period of implementation and its outcomes, the IRM found meaningful changes towards:
 - improving practices, policies or institutions governing a policy area or within the public sector, or
 - enhancing the enabling environment to build trust between citizens and the state.Significant positive results show clear expectations for these changes (as defined above) will be sustainable in time.

This report was prepared by the IRM in collaboration with Mohamed Adem Mokrani and was reviewed by an IRM external expert. The IRM methodology, product quality, and review process is overseen by the International Experts Panel (IEP).³ This review process, including the procedure for incorporating comments received, is outlined in greater detail in Section III of the Procedures Manual⁴ and in Tunisia's Action Plan Review 2021–2023.⁵ For more information, refer to the IRM webpage⁶ or OGP glossary.⁷

¹ "Open Government Partnership Tunisia," Open Government Partnership Tunisia, accessed in April 2024, <http://www.ogptunisie.gov.tn/en>.

² The IRM clusters commitments that share a common policy objective during the Action Plan Review process. In these instances, the IRM assesses "potential for results" and "early results" at the cluster level. The level of completion is assessed at the commitment level. For more information on how the IRM clusters commitments, see Section IV on Methodology and IRM Indicators of the Action Plan Review.

³ "International Experts Panel," Open Government Partnership, <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/about/who-we-are/international-experts-panel>.

⁴ "IRM Procedures Manual, v3," Open Government Partnership, 16 September 2017, <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/irm-procedures-manual>.

⁵ See: "IRM Action Plan Review: Tunisia 2021–2023," Open Government Partnership, 31 January 2022, <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/tunisia-action-plan-review-2021-2023>.

⁶ "IRM Overview," Open Government Partnership, accessed in April 2024, <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/irm-guidance-overview>.

⁷ "OGP Glossary," Open Government Partnership, accessed in April 2024, <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/glossary>.

Annex I. Commitment Data

Commitment 1: Completing the regulatory framework to consecrate access to information right

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verifiable: Yes • Does it have an open government lens? Yes • Potential for results: Modest | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion: Substantial • Early results: No Notable Results |
|--|--|

Commitment 1 aimed to strengthen the right of access to information in Tunisia by completing its legal and regulatory framework as outlined in Organic Law No. 2016-22. This included issuing necessary decrees for the Access to Information Authority (INAI) and establishing internal access to information entities in public bodies. These decrees aimed to enhance transparency and operational effectiveness in public information management.

INAI aimed to adopt a participatory approach in drafting the regulatory texts, particularly concerning the conditions for establishing an internal entity responsible for access to information within public structures. The plan detailed organizing workshops, seminars, and public consultations, including through the national e-participation portal.¹

Notably, INAI had drafted decrees (1) establishing the personnel status for the staff, (2) outlining the organizational chart, and (3) guiding the creating an internal entity responsible for access to information in public intuitions. They submitted these draft decrees to the Presidency of the Government.² However, there is no explicit mention of these drafts being prepared through a participatory approach as originally planned. The e-participation platform indicated that none of the three texts were made available online.³

INAI plays a pivotal role in upholding the constitutional right to information. However, this body faces challenges due to a lack of human resources. These texts are crucial for ensuring the continuity and effectiveness of INAI. Next steps include submitting the decrees to the ministerial council for approval.⁴ If implemented, the decrees are expected to enhance its operations and ensure its sustainability.⁵ The decrees have not yet been adopted due to a lack of responsiveness from the executive branch. While important, this commitment has not yet achieved notable results as decrees were not drafted through a participatory approach and have not yet resulted in greater access to information for the Tunisian public.

Commitment 2: Enhancing transparency and accountability regarding audit reports

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verifiable: Yes • Does it have an open government lens? Yes • Potential for results: Substantial | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion: Limited • Early results: No Notable Results |
|---|--|

Commitment 2 aimed to enhance transparency and accountability in the public sector through the publication and utilization of audit reports. This commitment sought to establish an online platform to monitor the implementation of audit recommendations and engage civil society in the selection of specific reports for publication as well as shaping the procedures for report dissemination. The commitment's goal was to strengthen the integrity and performance of the

public sector by ensuring greater transparency and accountability based on the insights and outcomes derived from audit reports.⁶

The High Committee for Administrative and Financial Control developed a manual on good practices for audit report publication. A working group was formed to develop the manual. Significant outreach efforts were made, including training sessions for groups such as students, journalists, and civil society representatives. Facilitated by the Tunisian Association of Public Controllers with the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom, these sessions engaged a wider audience in the conversation about audit report publication.⁷ The manual, now available online, serves as both a procedural guide and a resource for best practices in audit reporting. The manual's content reflects an understanding of the need for civil society's active participation in both the dissemination and application of audit findings.⁸ However, the extent to which non-governmental stakeholders were able to influence the content of the manual or the overall strategy for audit report publication is not clear from the information provided.

Development of an electronic platform for monitoring audit recommendations remained outstanding. A feasibility study was conducted with Korean government support. However, the platform's testing and launch had not been finalized. While this commitment was highlighted as promising in the Action Plan Review,⁹ it did not achieve its aim to improve transparency and accountability in the audit process. The manual's value will be truly realized if it is widely utilized by the authorities responsible for audit reports and if it successfully guides and improves the quality and transparency of these reports. Operationalization of the electronic platform would also help this reform fulfill its aim in the longer term.

Commitment 3: Strengthening the integrity of the public sector through asset transparency

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Verifiable: Yes ● Does it have an open government lens? Yes ● Potential for results: Unclear | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Completion: Not Started ● Early results: No Notable Results |
|---|--|

Commitment 3 aimed to enhance public sector integrity by improving transparency in the declaration of assets and interests. This commitment faced significant challenges due to the inactivity and eventual dissolution of the National Anti-Corruption Authority (INLUCC), which led the IRM to assess this commitment as having an unclear potential for results in the Action Plan Review.¹⁰ Initially a provisional body pending the establishment of a constitutional authority as per the 2014 Constitution, INLUCC was never fully formalized throughout its existence since 2011 and faced obstacles that limited its ability to fully exercise its competencies. The 2022 Constitution does not provide for a similar independent authority.¹¹

Commitment 4: Entrenching financial transparency

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Verifiable: Yes ● Does it have an open government lens? Yes ● Potential for results: Modest | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Completion: Limited ● Early results: No Notable Results |
|--|--|

Commitment 4 aimed to improve financial transparency by launching an updated version of the open budget portal and publishing budget data. This commitment did not achieve notable results during the implementation period due to the limited level of completion. There was initial progress towards Milestone 1 to develop a new version of the "Mizaniatouna" open budget portal. Activities such as drafting of the terms of reference and selecting a study office were completed, accompanied by collaborative workshops in 2021 and 2022 with the World Bank's Global Initiative for Fiscal Transparency (GIFT). These workshops laid the groundwork for the portal's redesign and emphasized the importance of open data and budget transparency. However, the design and development phase of the portal was not yet completed by the end of the implementation period.¹²

Milestone 2 to open public finance data saw little progress. Incomplete activities include the publication of disaggregated data on state budget subsidies and preparation of simplified versions of state and municipal budgets for citizens and individuals with special needs. However, an online workshop on citizen budgeting was held in March 2022, in partnership with GIFT. Despite initial progress, this commitment did not lead to tangible outcomes, such as making financial data more accessible and understandable to the public, during the implementation period.¹³

Commitment 5: Enhancing the public data opening and promoting its reuse

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verifiable: Yes • Does it have an open government lens? Yes • Potential for results: Modest | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion: Substantial • Early results: Moderate |
|--|--|

Commitment 5 aimed to improve the openness of public data and promote its reuse. Commitment objectives included the development of a new version of the national open data portal. This would have involved the preparation of a specification document, selection of a consulting firm for development, and establishment of a steering and technical committee for project oversight. It also aimed to create an inventory of priority public data across various sectors, starting with identifying priority sectors, organizing workshops, and engaging in preliminary inventory activities.¹⁴

The launch of a new version of the national open data portal in early March 2023 significantly enhanced the accessibility and usability of public data. The portal now features 2,484 open datasets from 179 data producers which covers 23 different themes of open data. While the number of data reutilizations stood at 6 and there had been 5 requests for open data, these figures indicate a growing interest and engagement with the available data. Additionally, the portal attracted 233 registered users, reflecting a budding community of individuals and entities interested in utilizing open government data.¹⁵

According to the E-Government Unit, a public data inventory management system was made available to government agencies in June 2022. By the end of 2023, the unit reported that over 40 public entities registered on the system were in the process of identifying and inventorying data, with public entities having identified around 296 datasets.¹⁶ Training sessions were provided for ministries to inventory data and use the system. A partner organization representative noted that the inventory of priority public data for 14 ministries

demonstrates progress in creating a comprehensive and accessible data repository, signifying a move towards greater transparency and efficiency in public information management.¹⁷

The E-Government Unit in partnership with the Ministries of Health, Social Affairs, and Education organized an Open Gov Data Hack event in 2023. As in previous years, it aimed to foster a dynamic environment for the creative use of open public data. It brought together developers, data scientists, startups, and data activists to explore innovative opportunities and develop digital applications showcasing the potential of open data exploitation.¹⁸

The commitment laid important groundwork in open data accessibility in Tunisia. However, the journey continues towards realizing its full potential in terms of data depth, quality, and practical utility. While it shows promise, it also highlights the need for continued efforts to foster a more data-literate and engaged user base, and for the data itself to be leveraged more effectively for public benefit.

Commitment 6: Improving public data accessibility through defining common specifications and nomenclature

- **Verifiable:** Yes
- **Does it have an open government lens?** Yes
- **Potential for results:** Modest

- **Completion:** Not Started
- **Early results:** No Notable Results

Led by the National Statistics Institute (INS), this commitment aimed to establish national benchmarks for public data standards but was not fully realized. The planned actions included forming a steering committee to oversee the project, identifying priority sectors for data standardization, developing and consulting on initial versions of nomenclatures, finalizing and publishing these nomenclatures in an open format, and ultimately experimenting with and generalizing their use within public structures. According to OGP Tunisia website, this commitment was not started.¹⁹

Commitment 7: Promoting transparency in the field of energy and mines

- **Verifiable:** Yes
- **Does it have an open government lens?** Yes
- **Potential for results:** Modest

- **Completion:** Limited
- **Early results:** No Notable Results

Commitment 7 sought to promote transparency in the energy and mining sectors, but challenges remained in implementing this reform as seen in previous action plans, such as institutional instability and lack of political support.²⁰ Intended activities included developing a dedicated portal for the energy and mining sector, drafting and approving regulatory texts for the Social Responsibility Law, and submitting Tunisia's application to the EITI. The Ministry of Energy, Mines, and Renewable Energies faced instability due to the creation and dismantling of the ministry, negatively affecting the coordination and continuity of efforts.²¹

The regulatory texts for the Social Responsibility Law, passed in 2018 from parliamentary legislative initiative, had not materialized.²² Government reluctance was evident during the debates, especially following a proposal to allocate a portion of company revenues to

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).²³ Meanwhile, the lack of transparency continues to fuel tensions in Tunisia's energy sector, especially in regions rich in natural resources.²⁴ The non-realization of this engagement has impeded improvements in governance within the sector. Additionally, there have also been dysfunctions in the multistakeholder group for the natural resource transparency initiative.

According to OGP Tunisia website, a participatory process to submit the application to EITI was carried out with cross-sectoral consultations involving companies, parliamentarians, and civil society in the capital as well as resource-rich regions such as Gabes, Tataouine, Kebili, and Gafsa, with support from the Natural Resource Governance Institute and the United Nations Democracy Fund.²⁵

Commitment 8: Defining the Open Government strategic priorities in Tunisia

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verifiable: Yes • Does it have an open government lens? Yes • Potential for results: Modest | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion: Substantial • Early results: Moderate |
|--|--|

Commitment 8, focused on defining open government strategic priorities, saw a commendable level of activity in the preparatory stages but stopped short at validation and implementation of the open government strategy.²⁶ The strategy was developed through a participatory approach, involving various public structures and civil society in consultations and workshops, with the OGP Tunisia steering committee playing a key role. To begin, the E-Government Unit, along with the Access to Information Authority (INAI) and services related to constitutional institutions and civil society at the Presidency of the Government, completed an open government survey by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in February 2022. In parallel, a public consultation was organized through the national participation portals from 1 October to 1 November 2021. This initiative engaged citizens in identifying priority reforms for the open government strategy.²⁷

With OECD support, the E-Government Unit held a series of workshops to develop and finalize the strategy. Two workshops in May and June 2021 facilitated an exchange of experiences on Canada's and Spain's open government strategies. An initial open government diagnostic was presented at three workshops in December 2021 to assess Tunisia through the axes of open government, transparency, public participation, and accountability. The final stages involved compiling inputs and the development of the initial strategy draft, with two workshops on 29 March and 11 April 2022 formulating the strategic vision and defining the mission, objectives, and axes for the open government strategy. In these workshops, insights were synthesized and a coherent strategic framework for open government was developed.²⁸ The strategy was finalized and validated at a technical level at a workshop in July 2022.²⁹

While these activities indicate a proactive approach in gathering insights and shaping the strategy, the effectiveness of this commitment ultimately depends on the tangible open government outcomes achieved.³⁰ Focused on the five pillars of transparency, integrity and accountability, citizen participation, local open government, and the extractive and renewable energy industries, the strategy faced challenges inherent in its ambitious scope and the complexity of its implementation across various sectors and levels of government. While comprehensive, the strategy does not explicitly address the recent significant institutional

changes in Tunisia since 2021 and was never officially adopted by the government.³¹ Ongoing evaluation and adaptation of the strategy can ensure that it remains responsive to emerging challenges and opportunities in the dynamic landscape of governance in Tunisia.³²

Commitment 9: Promoting the use of national portals for public participation

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Verifiable: Yes ● Does it have an open government lens? Yes ● Potential for results: Modest | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Completion: Limited ● Early results: No Notable Results |
|--|--|

Commitment 9 aimed to promote the use of the national portals for public participation. The E-Government Unit as well as the Central Bureau for Citizen Relations of the Presidency of Government sought to do so through technical enhancements and capacity building. However, efforts to date had not yet translated to widespread public participation through the e-people and e-participation platforms.

There were efforts to enhance the technical aspects and capacity building for online public participation, but the full impact on increasing public engagement and interest is yet to be fully realized. Some technical improvements to the e-People platform supported by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and Korean government.³³ This marked the partial completion of the first milestone. In terms of capacity building, the commitment surpassed its initial target under Milestone 2 as 28 training sessions were conducted, benefiting 183 public officials—considerably more than the target of 100 officials. The development and implementation of a communication plan to enhance public use of these portals was still underway.³⁴ Workshops were held in September 2022 with OECD support to formulate recommendations to improve the technical and communications aspects of the e-participation platform.³⁵ The first day included public officials and the second day included civil society and web developers. However, technical improvements were not made to the e-participation platform within the implementation period.³⁶

There remains an opportunity to synchronize the use of the platforms across government services and departments and to standardize their use in government processes. There was a missed opportunity to demonstrate the utility of these platforms during the public consultation launched by the Presidency of the Republic in 2022. This suggests a need for more strategic planning in leveraging these platforms for significant national initiatives.³⁷ Furthermore, robust communication strategies could better promote these platforms among citizens.

Enhancing the management of e-participation platforms, establishing a unified strategy, and revising legal frameworks related to e-participation remain key areas for progress. Additionally, there is an opportunity to bolster human resources for their administration and effective operational use. Overall, the commitment's aims of increasing the platforms' efficiency and utility by securing support from top political levels and incorporating them into a standard government structure, potentially expanding their reach through mobile applications and additional portals,³⁸ were not achieved during the action plan period. Despite efforts, progress remains to enhance public usage and awareness of online participation portals as well as integration across online tools. The platforms represent an asset for participatory governance,

but their value could be better realized through improved synchronization, strategic use in public consultations, and enhanced communication efforts.

Commitment 10: Giving effect to the role of the youth in designing and monitoring public projects and at the local level

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verifiable: Yes • Does it have an open government lens? Yes • Potential for results: Modest | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion: Complete • Early results: Moderate |
|--|---|

This commitment is assessed in Section II.

Commitment 11: Entrenching OGP principles at the local level

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verifiable: Yes • Does it have an open government lens? Yes • Potential for results: Modest | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion: Substantial • Early results: Moderate |
|--|--|

This commitment is assessed in Section II.

Commitment 12: Supporting financial transparency at the local level

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verifiable: Yes • Does it have an open government lens? Yes • Potential for results: Modest | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion: Limited • Early results: No Notable Results |
|--|--|

Based on the available evidence, Commitment 12 achieved a limited level of progress in advancing fiscal transparency at the local level. To date, several milestones were completed, including the establishment of a multiparty working group to oversee the commitment, the identification of operational and technical requirements for the platform, and the selection of a consulting firm for platform development. The design and development phase of the online platform were successfully concluded. By the end of the implementation period, the remaining tasks included the trial run and approval of the platform by the team, followed by the platform's official launch and its subsequent data population.³⁹ The IRM researcher did not find information regarding the development, testing, and launch of the digital platform.⁴⁰ This commitment recorded some initial progress in laying a solid groundwork for enhancing financial transparency at the local level. However, given the partial availability of implementation details, the commitment is classified as partially realized at this stage. The ultimate success and impact of this initiative will depend on the effective completion and utilization of the digital platform.

Commitment 13: Developing a range of online administrative services at the sectoral level

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Verifiable: Yes ● Does it have an open government lens? No ● Potential for results: Unclear | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Completion: Limited ● Early results: No Notable Results |
|--|--|

This commitment sought to develop a digital directory of public structures, online consular services, and online services for investors. As determined in the Action Plan Review, this commitment lacked a strong connection to open government as its objective was to digitalize existing government services and information.⁴¹ The impact and effectiveness of the digital directory in improving administrative efficiency and accessibility remain unclear, especially without comprehensive usage data and feedback from citizens.⁴² The overall evaluation of Commitment 13 is hampered by limited access to evidence of implementation or results.

¹ “Tunisia Action Plan 2021–2023,” Open Government Partnership Tunisia, 6 August 2021,

https://www.opengovpartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Tunisia_Action-Plan_2021-2023_EN.pdf, p. 15–17.

² “Engagement 1 : L’accomplissement du cadre organisationnel consacrant le droit d’accès à l’information,” [Commitment 1: The accomplishment of the organizational framework enshrining the right of access to information], Open Government Partnership Tunisia, 14 October 2021, <http://www.ogptunisie.gov.tn/fr/index.php/2021/10/14/engagement-1-laccomplissement-du-cadre-organisationnel-consacrant-le-droit-dacces-a-linformation>.

³ As of July 2024, the platform is still not publicly accessible but will be hosted on <http://fr.e-participation.tn>.

⁴ Civil society representative, interview by IRM Researcher, 3 November 2023.

⁵ President of the Access to Information Authority, interview by IRM Researcher, 8 November 2023.

⁶ “Tunisia Action Plan 2021–2023,” Open Government Partnership Tunisia, p. 18–21.

⁷ “Commitment 2 : Enhancing transparency and accountability regarding audit reports,” Open Government Partnership Tunisia, <http://www.ogptunisie.gov.tn/en/?p=2346>.

⁸ “Best practices for the publication of audit reports,” High Committee of Financial and Administrative Control, June 2021, https://drive.google.com/file/d/1H48Pc_BZCIV-NsrzHVEVdnHr78zbAPZX/edit.

⁹ “IRM Action Plan Review: Tunisia 2021–2023,” Open Government Partnership, 31 January 2022, <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/tunisia-action-plan-review-2021-2023>.

¹⁰ “IRM Action Plan Review: Tunisia 2021–2023,” Open Government Partnership.

¹¹ “Le Secrétaire général de l’INLUCC démis de ses fonctions,” [INLUCC Secretary General dismissed], La Presse, 20 August 2021, <https://lapresse.tn/2021/08/20/le-secretaire-general-de-linlucc-demis-de-ses-fonctions>.

¹² “Engagement 4 : Consacrer la transparence financière,” [Commitment 4: Enshrine financial transparency], Open Government Partnership Tunisia, 14 October 2021, <http://www.ogptunisie.gov.tn/fr/index.php/2021/10/14/engagement-4-consacrer-la-transparence-financiere>.

¹³ “Commitment 4: Enshrine financial transparency,” Open Government Partnership Tunisia.

¹⁴ “Tunisia Action Plan 2021–2023,” Open Government Partnership Tunisia, p. 28–31.

¹⁵ “Portail National des Données Ouvertes,” [National Open Data Portal], E-Government Unit of the Presidency of the Government, accessed in April 2024, <https://www.data.gov.tn/fr>.

¹⁶ E-Government Unit of the Presidency of the Government, pre-publication comment, July 2024.

¹⁷ International organization representative, interview by IRM Researcher, 9 November 2023.

¹⁸ “Appel à candidature pour l’inscription au Hackathon «OpenGovDataHack2023»,” [Call for applications for registration to the ‘OpenGovDataHack2023’ hackathon], Open Government Partnership Tunisia, March 2023, <http://www.ogptunisie.gov.tn/fr/index.php/appele-a-candidature-pour-linscription-au-hackathon-opengovdatahack2023>.

¹⁹ “Engagement 6 : Établir des référentiels nationaux pour définir les spécifications et nomenclatures communes des données ouvertes et assurer leur adoption et leur développement,” [Commitment 6: Establish national benchmarks to define common specifications and nomenclatures for open data and ensure their adoption and development], Open Government Partnership Tunisia, 14 October 2021,

²⁰ “IRM Transitional Results Report: Tunisia 2018–2020,” Open Government Partnership, August 2021,

https://www.opengovpartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Tunisia_Transitional-Results_Report_2018-2020_EN.pdf.

²¹ Civil society representative, interview by IRM Researcher, 11 November 2023.

- ²² “The Issue of CSR in Tunisia Has Not Progressed since 2018.” The Maghreb Times. 27 October 2022. <https://themaghrebtimes.com/the-issue-of-csr-in-tunisia-has-not-progressed-since-2018/>
- ²³ Mohamed Adem Mokrani, “Corporate Social Responsibility in Tunisia: Between Law and Practice,” Tunisian Association of Public Auditors, 2021, p. 29.
- ²⁴ “Grassroots Engagement in Tunisia’s Gafsa Region Leads to Increased Phosphate Production,” Natural Resource Governance Institute, 17 July 2023, <https://resourcegovernance.org/articles/grassroots-engagement-tunisi-as-gafsa-region-leads-increased-phosphate-production>.
- ²⁵ “Engagement 7 : Promouvoir la transparence dans le secteur des énergies et des mines,” [Commitment 7: Promote transparency in the energy and mining sector], Open Government Partnership Tunisia, 14 October 2021, <http://www.ogptunisie.gov.tn/fr/index.php/2021/10/14/engagement-7-promouvoir-la-transparence-dans-le-secteur-des-energies-et-des-mines>.
- ²⁶ “Engagement 8: Définir les priorités stratégiques du gouvernement ouvert,” [Commitment 8: Define strategic priorities for open government], Open Government Partnership, 14 October 2021, <http://www.ogptunisie.gov.tn/fr/index.php/2021/10/14/engagement-8-definir-les-priorites-strategiques-du-gouvernement-ouvert>.
- ²⁷ “Commitment 8: Define strategic priorities for open government,” Open Government Partnership.
- ²⁸ “Commitment 8: Define strategic priorities for open government,” Open Government Partnership.
- ²⁹ International organization representative, pre-publication comment, June 2024.
- ³⁰ International organization representative, interview by IRM Researcher, 9 November 2023.
- ³¹ International organization representative, pre-publication comment.
- ³² Elyssa Amara, “National Open Government Strategy for Tunisia,” Unpublished document shared with the IRM, December 2022.
- ³³ “E-people platform,” Government of Tunisia, accessed in April 2024, <https://www.e-people.gov.tn/main.do>.
- ³⁴ International organization representative, pre-publication comment; “Engagement 9 : Promouvoir l’utilisation des portails nationaux de participation publique,” [Commitment 9: Promote the use of national public participation portals], Open Government Partnership Tunisia, 14 October 2021, <http://www.ogptunisie.gov.tn/fr/index.php/2021/10/14/engagement-9-promouvoir-lutilisation-des-portails-nationaux-de-participation-publique>.
- ³⁵ As of July 2024, the platform is still not publicly accessible but will be hosted on <http://fr.e-participation.tn>.
- ³⁶ International organization representative, pre-publication comment.
- ³⁷ International organization representative, interview by IRM Researcher, 3 November 2023.
- ³⁸ Civil society representative, interview by IRM Researcher, 22 October 2023.
- ³⁹ International organization representative, interview, 9 November 2023.
- ⁴⁰ No information was publicly available on OGP Tunisia website.
- ⁴¹ “IRM Action Plan Review: Tunisia 2021–2023,” Open Government Partnership.
- ⁴² “Engagement 12 : Appuyer la transparence financière au niveau local,” [Commitment 12: Support financial transparency at the local level], Open Government Partnership Tunisia, 14 October 2021, <http://www.ogptunisie.gov.tn/fr/index.php/2021/10/14/engagement-12-appuyer-la-transparence-financiere-au-niveau-local>.