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The Nexus between Civil Registration and Social Protection Systems: **Five Country Practices**



TUNISIA



Prepared by Fourat Dridi



Global Affairs Canada
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This publication is a single chapter in a larger body of work. *The Nexus Between Civil Registration and Social Protection Systems: Five Country Practices* is available at CRVSystems.ca/SocialProtection.

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Case Study 5

TUNISIA

The Impact of Civil Registration on the Social Protection System: A Case Study of Tunisia

Fourat Dridi



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5.1 Civil status registry and legal identity

The *Code du Statut Personnel* (Personal Status Code), enacted on 13 August 1956, was the first step in radical reform by the Tunisian civil status system: it prohibited polygamy and regulated marriage and divorce procedures. Before this law came into effect, a husband could easily break the bonds and obligations of marriage. All he had to do was make a simple declaration before a notary or two witnesses, with a mere notification to the repudiated wife. A wife, on the other hand, had to overcome huge legal and social hurdles to divorce her husband.

Over the past six decades, the civil status system in Tunisia has gone through a number of changes. Today, it forms part of the foundation for the social protection system.

Women's rights are better protected since the law entered into force on 1 January 1957:

- Both spouses must be of legal age and express their mutual consent to marry;
- If they separate, one spouse or both spouses must begin divorce proceedings; and
- The judge is the only one who can make a decision and set the conditions of separation (such as custody of children and alimony).

Law No. 57-3 regulating civil status was enacted on 1 August 1957. It created a genuine Tunisian civil registration system one week after the Tunisian Republic was proclaimed and the hereditary monarchy was abolished. The law reorganized one of the foundations of the new state: the modernizing of the civil status system. It became secular and uniform, applying to all, no matter what their ethnic or religious background. Declaring births and deaths, which had been optional for Tunisian nationals, became mandatory. People who did not register births and deaths faced criminal penalties.

5.1.1 Organizational arrangements

The registration of civil events (births, marriages, divorces) has since begun to be systematic and subject to strict legal rules. The registration of deaths was instituted by Article 76 of Law 75-33, dated 14 May 1975. A medical certificate must be presented to register a death and to get a burial permit by the same municipal services.

Until 2016, the whole civil registration system in Tunisia was managed by the Ministry of the Interior, through its General Directorate of Local Government. That office was in charge of all municipal affairs. By government decree No. 2016-365 (18 March 2016), the Directorate was transferred to the Ministry of Local Affairs and Environment.

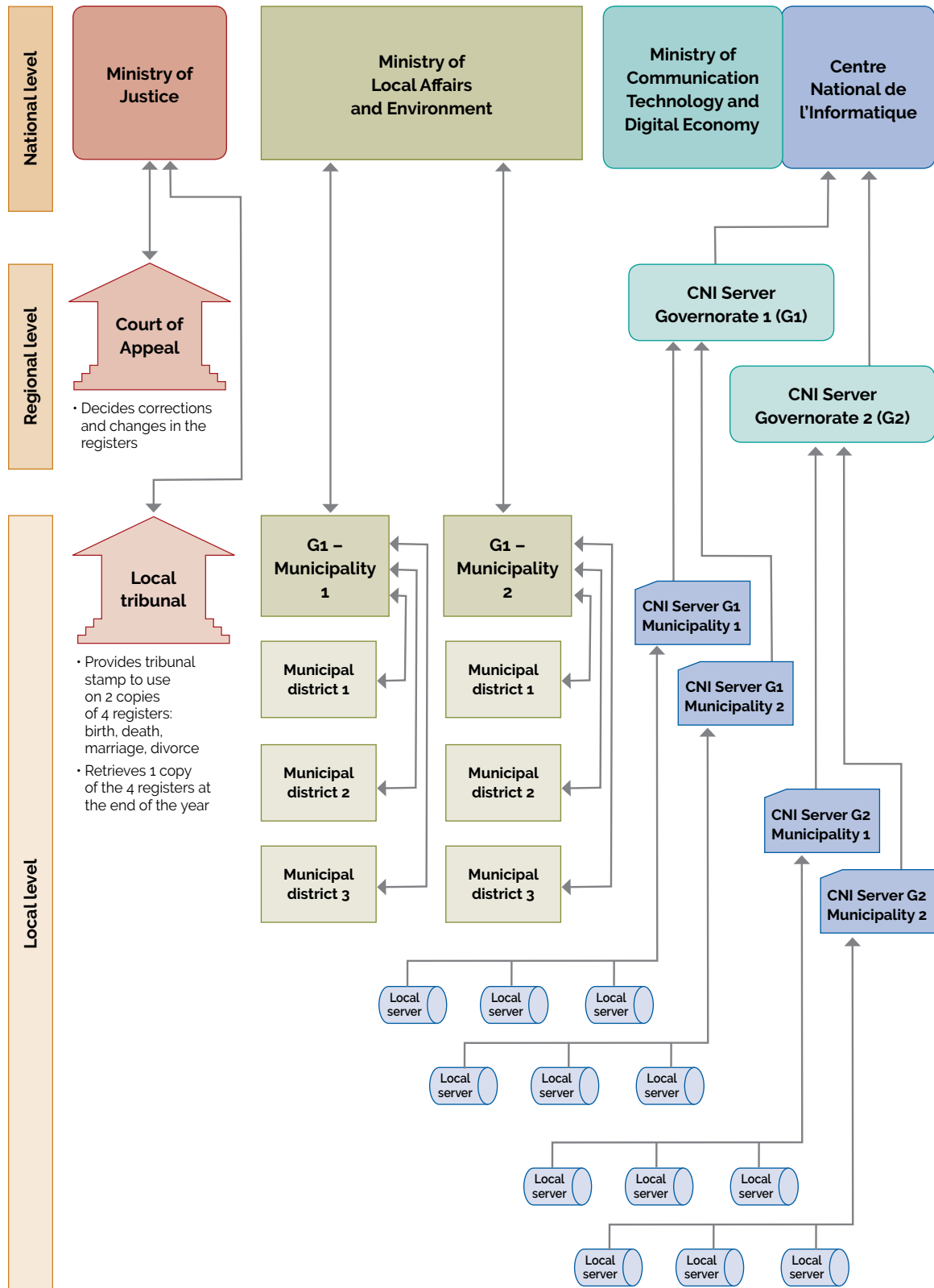
The *Code des Collectivités Locales* (Code for Local Communities), enacted on 9 May 2018, increased the number of municipalities from 264 to 350 to cover the whole territory. Today, the civil registration system is more decentralized. It includes:

- A civil registry bureau in 350 principal offices attached to local government offices;
- 170 subsidiary offices, annexes, and mobile units; and
- 85 Tunisian consular missions or diplomatic posts with a registration office.

At the same time, the system is under the authority and control of the Ministry of Justice through a tribunal of competent jurisdiction for each district (Figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1:
 Institutional map of the
 Tunisian civil
 registry system.

Source: Author



At the beginning of the year, the court gives all municipal districts a dry stamp, which is affixed to each page of the two copies of the four civil status registers (birth, death, marriage, and divorce).¹

- The civil status event is handwritten on both copies of the corresponding paperback register.
- At the end of the year, the court of competent jurisdiction gets one copy of each of the four vital event registers for archiving. The second copy is archived in the municipality.

The same procedure applies to vital events registered in Tunisian consulates abroad. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs processes both copies of the four civil status registers with the dry stamp of the court, then sends them to each diplomatic or consular office at the start of the year. At the end of the year, one copy of each register is sent back to Tunisia to be archived.

The Court of Justice intervenes in matters of civil status to

- allow marriage when at least one of the spouses is under legal age;
- grant a divorce;
- decide to register a birth or death after the legal period expires;
- correct a factual error in the drafting of a civil status document or modify a last name or first name (or both), based on the legal options; and
- verify and file all civil status certificates.

5.1.2 Notification and registration of birth

The mother is admitted for delivery of her baby to a health facility after the information from her national ID card, including her husband's name, is recorded. After childbirth, she is given a paper notification that contains information on the sex of the newborn and the date and time of birth.

When the birth takes place at home (0.3 percent of births in 2018)², the attending physician or midwife provides a birth notification with the same information. The civil status officer in the municipality requires this notification, along with the father's and mother's birth certificates, to register the newborn. Births are to be reported to municipalities within the 10-day period permitted by law, free of charge. After this deadline, birth registrations require a decision from the Court of Justice.

1 The notaries officiating in the court's area of jurisdiction are given two copies of one register. The notary records by handwriting certain official documents in his registers, such as donations, recognition of debts, and marriages that take place at home or in private spaces. The registers are replaced once they are fully completed: one copy is archived in the court and the second copy is archived in the municipal borough.

2 INS-UNICEF, MICS. 2019. Rapport final des résultats (PR.1.1, p. 101). mics-surveys-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/MICS6/Middle%20East%20and%20North%20Africa/Tunisia/2018/Survey%20findings/Tunisia_2018_MICS_SFR_French.pdf

Figure 5.2:
Sample Tunisian
birth certificate
(in French).

REPUBLIQUE TUNISIENNE
MINISTRE DE L'INTERIEUR

Gouvernorat : **TUNIS**
Délégation : **MEDINA**
Commune : **TUNIS-VILLE**
Arrondis. Com. : **MENZEH**
Secteur : **EL MENZAH**

Année : **1999**
Acte N° : **3298**
— Déclaration :
— ou Jugement :

**EXTRAIT DES REGISTRES
DE L'ETAT CIVIL**

NAISSANCE
(VERSION FRANÇAISE)

NOM PRENOMS	[REDACTED]
Date de naissance Jour, mois et année (en toutes lettres)	LE QUATORZE DECEMBRE MIL NEUF CENT QUATRE-VINGT-DIX-NEUF *
Lieu de naissance	TUNIS*
Sexe	FEMININ*
Nom, prénoms, profession et nationalité du père	[REDACTED] TUNISIENNE*
Nom, prénom, profession et nationalité de la mère	[REDACTED] TUNISIENNE*
Date de la déclaration (jour, mois, année, heure)	LE VINGT ET UN DECEMBRE MIL NEUF CENT QUATRE-VINGT-DIX-NEUF *
Nom, prénoms et profession du déclarant ou le Tribunal	LE PERE*
Nom, prénoms et qualité de l'officier de l'état civil	*****
OBSERVATIONS N E A N T	
marriage: date, place of marriage / names of the spouse divorce: act of the judgment of the divorce widowhood: names of deceased spouse / date of death	

Imprimerie Officielle Prix : 150 millimes

Nota : Tout faux, toute altération dans les actes de l'état civil donnent lieu aux poursuites judiciaires conformément aux lois réglementant l'état civil et au code pénal.

Pour version française, certifiée conforme à l'original
TUNIS VILLE, le 9 DECEMBRE 2002
L'Officier de l'état civil
SARR JILAN

Since 2001, the rate of birth registrations within the legal deadline is about 99.9 percent³ for the whole national territory. The main omissions or delays are related to marriages abroad that are not reported to consular offices or that took place in countries where Tunisia has no diplomatic representative.

3 INS-UNICEF, MICS. 2019. Rapport final des résultats (TM.6.1, p. 206). mics-surveys-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/MICS6/Middle%20East%20and%20North%20Africa/Tunisia/2018/Survey%20findings/Tunisia_2018_MICS_SFR_French.pdf

According to Law 98-75 of 28 October 1998, and Law 2003-51 of 7 July 2003, a child born of parents who are not married (about 0.48 percent each year) is registered by the mother, who hands on her (given) name to the newborn (matrilineal kinship). She can ask the court to do a paternity test; if the test is positive, the child receives the biological father's first name, even if he does not recognize paternity. When the birth occurs less than seven months after the official date of marriage, the civil status officer registers the newborn's birth under the mother's given name. A judge can decide to amend the child's birth certificate after paternity is formally recognized.

For adoption, there are two legal options (Law 27 of 4 March 1958) related to civil status. These are based on the adoptive parents' choice:

- The adopted child is registered with the name of the adoptive parents (entire adoption); or
- The adopted child keeps his original kinship name ("kafala").

5.1.3 Death registration

A medical doctor must be involved in registering a death. Article 76 of Law 75-33 of 14 May 1975 states that the "burial may take place only after obtaining an authorization issued by the president of the local authority concerned and the presentation of a medical certificate certifying the time and date of death." Burial is not possible without a permit issued from the municipal office.

The legal deadline for registering a death is three days. This is the maximum period in Tunisia for a burial to take place. Deaths abroad are recorded at the consulate. The rate for death registration is just under 99.5 percent.

The doctor who has recorded the death completes and signs the two parts of the death certificate. This medical certificate of death is strongly inspired by the international model recommended by the World Health Organization.

According to the Institut National de la Statistique (INS), the country's national statistics institute, about 70 percent of causes of death are reported. However, the Ministry of Public Health considers only 40 percent of death certificates to be reliable for statistical treatment of causes of death, even though it does training and awareness campaigns with physicians in the public and private sectors.

The Ministry is considering testing, implementing, and generalizing the reporting of causes of death using an online platform. It is now using version 10 of the International Classification of Diseases and has started training sessions to move to version 11.

5.1.4 Digitizing the civil registry system

Tunisian law has focused more and more on improving the civil registration system by making it easier for users to access their civil status documents by

- introducing the family booklet (June 1967) that is given to couples at their wedding;
- standardizing the civil status certificate form (September 1985); and
- regulating the giving of first and last names to abandoned children (October 1998).

Civil registries started to be digitized in the 1980s. Forty or so major municipalities have created software applications to computerize civil records. In 1996, the government decided to create a national computerized civil registry system. It used a single operating system that allows municipalities to work in a local mode. In 2000, a campaign was launched to enter all the data from the civil registers since they were created. The choice was made to enter all data manually from the first page of the national civil records, and not to scan them.

In 2003, some municipalities started using the computerized civil registration system. In March 2005, all the data of 100 percent of civil registers were entered and recorded in the database. This centralized all facts of civil status that took place in Tunisia and for Tunisian nationals abroad. By April 2005, the computerized system and its database were fully operational, linking all municipalities.

After the civil registration system was digitized, handwritten registers were not removed. Events are still recorded manually in each of the two copies of the register and then transcribed into the computer software. Only the version recorded in the paper registers has probative force: if there is a material error in the handwritten registers, only a judge can authorize that it be corrected. An error in transcription to the computer record is corrected by the officer of the civil status.

Since 2003, all civil registration offices have had interconnected computer systems. New civil status offices in the recently created municipalities also have the necessary equipment and connections.

All municipalities have access to the civil registry portal, *Madania*, through a uniform information system. The system links different levels of networks to enhance data sharing between offices. In this way, it provides a central database of civil status for all Tunisian nationals and for foreigners who have civil status in Tunisia. The civil status facts are directly recorded in the database by the registrar and are accessible the next morning throughout the national territory. Users no longer have to travel to the place of their birth to get a document: any civil status officer in their municipal district simply prints and certifies it in real time when the user gives their last name, first name, and date of birth.

Certificates are first issued in Arabic. The French version of the certificate is printed upon request after it is transcribed into that language. In most cases, the certificate takes only a few minutes to get. Today, it costs 0.700 Tunisian dinars (about US\$0.25) for either language.

Civil status certificates do not offer any guarantee of authenticity, beyond the specific form of the certificate and the registrar's stamp and signature. Fraud in the form of fake certificates does occur. A call for tenders has been sent out to include a QR code in the certificates within a year.

The Ministry of Local Affairs and Environment has contracted the Centre National de l'Informatique⁴ (CNI or national centre of informatics) to be the technical and technological interface of the municipalities:⁵ hosting the vital statistics database, activating the network, and providing services to the municipalities as users. The National Agency for Computer Security periodically audits and validates the security system for the centre's servers that host the civil status data.

A birth certificate is required as proof of life as well as proof of marriage or non-marriage and proof of divorce. For this reason, the certificate is valid for only up to three months after being issued. Each time a proof of birth/life is required, people need to get a new certificate. To protect private data, a person can only get her or his own documents; parents can get those of their children.

5.1.5 Identification system and issuance of ID cards

A birth certificate is required for enrollment in the national ID process and to get the Carte d'Identité Nationale, the national ID card. The card was created by law in July 1968 when a unique identification number was introduced. The Direction Générale de la Sureté Nationale (the directorate for national security) is in charge of implementing the national ID system. To enroll, people must apply in person at the police station (for those who live in cities) or at the Garde Nationale station in the district of their current residence (for those who live outside cities).

From the age of 18, all Tunisian nationals — men and women — living in Tunisia must have a national ID card. The card is the only legal document that certifies an individual's identity. People who don't have a birth certificate and need to apply for the national ID card must first get a birth certificate by documenting their identity through a court judgement. For some institutions, the national ID is equivalent to nationality and birth certificates. Many institutions still rely on the birth certificate along with the national ID card.

In March 1993, a law began to require the print of the right thumb and the digitized reproduction of a photo ID in a rigid plastic format. The thumb is inked by a police officer and the print is reproduced on a cardboard form and sent to a central office to be photographed, digitized, and added to the national ID card. The thumbprint on the national ID card is therefore not biometric.

4 The CNI is a governmental body under the Minister of Communication Technologies and Digital Economy. Its mission is to provide support to the public structures of the administration in realizing, deploying, and operating information systems.

5 See Figure 5.1, Institutional map of the Tunisian civil registry system.

Documents required to enroll in the national ID system are:

- Birth certificate;
- Proof of residence provided by the same police office when a person presents certain documents;
- Proof of nationality from the Ministry of Justice when a person presents their birth certificate;
- Photos; and
- Work or occupation activity.

The cost of the tax stamp for the national ID card is 3 Tunisian dinars (US\$1). It costs 25 Tunisian dinars (US\$8.50) to renew the card in case of loss, damage, change of address or profession, and so on.

The ID card gradually became essential for all transactions in Tunisia. Citizens must present it when a legal authority asks for it. No administrative procedure may be done without the card being shown, and a photocopy of both sides is often required. The national ID card's hold on the daily lives of citizens has reinforced the social acceptance of registration of civil status by almost the entire population.

For the general population — including women, girls, and persons belonging to vulnerable groups — having a proof of civil status and ID is essential for many things, such as

- accessing health and social services;
- going to school;
- looking for a job;
- working;
- receiving social security;
- opening a bank account;
- getting credit or a loan;
- owning a business;
- voting;
- claiming property rights or an inheritance;
- receiving retirement benefits; and
- getting alimony (for divorced mothers).

There is no discrimination against women when it comes to accessing their civil status documents or any administrative procedure.



Figure 5.3:
Tunisian national
identity card.

Printed information on the face of the card, all in Arabic characters:

Front side	Back side
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Republic of Tunisia • National Identity Card - Flag and emblem of Tunisia • National Identity Number (CIN) • Family name • Given name • Given names of father and grandfather • Date and place of birth • Digitized ID photo 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name and given name of mother • Profession/occupation • Address • Name of husband • Date of issuance of CIN • Digitized reproduction of right thumb with its sequential number • Stamp of authority that issued it • Barcode

Normally it takes 8–10 days in all cases to issue a new ID or to renew it.

5.2 National statistical system

The Institut National de la Statistique (INS), the national statistics institute, was created in 1969. The INS and the Central Bank are at the core of the Tunisian statistical system. The system, which is made up of 48 public statistical structures, is coordinated by the Conseil National des Statistiques, the national statistics council. More than 100 public and corporate databases also contain private data.

The INS is involved in different aspects of the country's economic activity and social situation, notably:

- Monitoring of employment, and evaluation of consumption, living conditions of households, and poverty. A National Household Survey on Budget, Consumption, and Standard of Living is done every five years;
- Business statistics through managing the national business register, conducting surveys of enterprises in the formal and informal sectors, and developing short-term indicators for monitoring the economic situation;
- National accounts statistics (annual and quarterly) using data from the INS, other public statistical structures, and administrative sources (such as financial statistics and state budget);

- Business statistics through developing indicators to monitor the economic situation using direct surveys and administrative documents; and
- Regional statistics in various economic and social fields.

To complete the scope of information, the INS does other demographic, social, and economic surveys and statistical analysis, such as:

- National Survey on Citizens' Perceptions of Security, Freedom, and Local Governance (2017);
- National Child Labour Survey (2017);
- Survey of the Economic Activities of Micro-Enterprises (2016);
- Annual Report on Infrastructure Indicators (2017); and
- Characteristics of Civil Servants and their Salaries (2012–2016).

For social protection policies, the INS offers a lot of help in setting poverty indicators and scores for allocating social assistance. All poverty indicators in Tunisia are gathered through the INS's work — especially the National Household Survey on Budget, Consumption, and Standard of Living.

In 2018, the INS, working with UNICEF, did the Tunisian Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS). The surveys

- provided quality data for assessing the situation of children, teens, women, men, and households in Tunisia;
- provided the data needed to monitor progress towards national goals as a basis for future actions;
- collected disaggregated data to identify disparities and inform policies for the social inclusion of the most vulnerable;
- validated data from other sources and the results of targeted interventions;
- generated data on national and global indicators for Sustainable Development Goals; and
- generated internationally comparable data to assess progress in various areas and increase efforts in areas that need further attention.

Since 1970, the civil registration system has allowed the INS⁶ to have privileged but regulated access to vital statistics data. This enables the INS to compile statistics and develop analyses on topics related to demographic aspects of the country. Every month, municipalities are asked to provide the INS with vital registration data using forms or CD-ROM. After the data is processed, it is published in the monthly bulletin of the INS. Through a new agreement to be finalized with the Ministry of Local Affairs and Environment, the INS will have access to download all anonymized data from the National Civil Registry every quarter.

6 Institut National de la Statistique (INS). 2015. Note conceptuelle sur le système d'enregistrement des faits de l'état civil et les statistiques vitales en Tunisie. ins.nat.tn/sites/default/files/pdf_actualites/note_03.pdf

5.3 Interoperability and the unique identifier

At first, the Tunisian identity ecosystem had different identity programs and registers. These had been running for several years and served different purposes. Each program created its own identification system. Identifier numbers were not interoperable and did not use the same logic or standards.

Many public actors were interested in using the same standards and language for citizen identification procedures. In 2011, these institutions began to consider creating a Citizen's Unique National Identifier Number (Citizen's UNIN). The roadmap resulting from various diagnostic and benchmark studies recommended setting up a universal identification system but also building on previous successes. A ministerial council in 2015 approved this approach and chose three strategic orientations:

- Create the Citizen's UNIN, to be assigned from birth;
- Make the Ministry of Local Affairs and Environment responsible for the Citizens' UNIN file; and
- Adopt the Estonian approach⁷ as a model and reference for interoperability.

The other public operators set up their own identification number system related to their users. Identification numbers can be made public or not, depending on the operator. Each operator remains the sole owner of the information in its database. This means that the same person has, from one public operator to another, several different identifiers, including the UNIN and the ID card number. Having a large number of identifiers has two advantages:

- It allows operators that have an identification system in place to avoid building a new one; and
- It limits managers of a public operator from accessing the personal data of users related to other public operators without permission.

The Identifier Management Unit of the Ministry of Local Affairs and Environment coordinates all activities related to identity management by Tunisian public bodies. The unit arranges interactions between different repositories (in the service-oriented architecture language) so a unified identity system can emerge using virtual tools. The unit's main task is to create lookup tables for different identifier numbers set up by those using the system, so they can do transactions and share data when needed.

System operators can set up an agreement via the Identifier Management Unit to access vital statistics or data belonging to other operators from time to time. They may also arrange one-time transactions to any public operator. For each request, the unit creates a lookup table between the identifier numbers of the two operators to open access to data. If problems arise, a technical team meets to find a solution quickly.

7 Vassil, Kristjan. 2016. Estonian e-Government Ecosystem: Foundation, Applications, Outcomes. World Development Report. pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/165711456838073531/WDR16-BP-Estonian-eGov-ecosystem-Vassil.pdf

The UNIN for each citizen and resident in the country is very useful: it links different databases and unifies the interaction of many organizations with the same individual throughout his or her life. This raises the issue of protecting the privacy of citizens and how they can control their personal data and prevent misuse.

The *Constitution and Organic Law No. 63-27 of July 2004* (Chapter VI) created a privacy commission, the Instance nationale pour la protection des données personnelles (INPDP). As the national authority for the protection of personal data, the INPDP acts as a legal partner and advisor to the Identifier Management Unit in all matters related to identification systems and personal data. The INPDP is also responsible for monitoring and regulation in these areas.

The protection of personal data is provided for by Article 9 of the Constitution of 1 June 1959 and confirmed by Article 24 of the new Constitution of January 2014. The law currently in force is the *Organic Law No. 63 of 27 July 2004*. Tunisia ratified Organic Law No. 42 on 30 May 2017 and signed the Convention 108+ of the Council of Europe for the Protection of Individuals with regard to the Automatic Processing of Personal Data and the Protection of Personal Data in November 2017. A draft of a new Tunisian law on the protection of personal data was submitted in March 2018 to the Tunisian Parliament to replace the 2004 law. When adopted, it will allow Tunisia to comply with the provisions of the European General Regulation 2016/679 on the protection of personal data.

The entire national identification system is under the supervision of a national steering committee. The committee is made up of members representing ministries and organizations involved in the Citizen's UNIN system, as well as representatives of the INPDP.

Citizens' UNIN should help to make the administrative work more efficient. It should also eliminate losses due to identity fraud that happen when identity programs don't cross-check and link IDs. This is particularly true for social protection programs, which need to go beyond the individual and set up unique households to target for social assistance.

5.4 Social protection policies

Improving living conditions and reducing poverty have always been at the core of the Tunisian government's concerns. It devotes more than half of its budget to social sectors.⁸ Given the country's financial problems and the limited available resources, the government's budget for social protection does not allow it to cover more than 8.3 percent of households in Tunisia.

Until 1986, social protection programs were mostly

- direct assistance (aid in kind, mainly food and cash);
- support actions (protection of the elderly who have no support and people with disabilities);
- and

⁸ Ministries: Social Affairs; Women, Family and Childhood; National Education; Public Health; Higher Education, Vocational Training and Employment.

- regional programs of integrated development (Productive Family Program, Assistance to Small Farmers Program, and development of activities that generate jobs and income).

In 1986, the Programme National d'Aide aux Familles Nécessiteuses (PNAFN), or national program for families in need, was launched to assist families in need. Its aim was to support the implementation of the Economic Stabilization and Structural Adjustment Program under the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. The obvious goals were to

- reduce the social effects of Structural Adjustment Program measures;
- minimize the impact of price liberalization measures and the state's gradual withdrawal from the Caisse Générale de Compensation (a general compensation fund); and
- support energy and essential goods, and avoid the kind of social anger that broke out in 1984 (the bread riots).

The PNAFN was not a new principle of social protection, since there was already permanent protection to poor households for 30,000 families. But it was new in its scale — the way it looked ahead at the effect on the possible social impacts of the Structural Adjustment Program, and in the way it put in place a policy of social protection.

The Ministry of Social Affairs did questionnaire surveys of families eligible for assistance. The list of eligible families was then submitted for approval by a regional commission. The commission was supposed to take into account the eligibility criteria and the quota system the Ministry set.

The PNAFN allocates permanent financial aid to families that are deemed needy and destitute. It also gives them access to health care through a totally free medical care type 1 (Assistance Médicale Gratuite-AMG1) in public facilities. The number of families receiving benefits from the program has increased over the years:

- 78,000 in 1987;
- 100,000 in 1990;
- 118,000 in 2010;
- 176,000 in 2011;
- 235,000 at the end of 2015; and
- more than 280,000 in 2019.

The monthly amount of financial aid increased as well:

- US\$5.20 in 1990 (about 4 daily Salaire Minimum Agricole Garanti [SMAG]— the legal minimum daily wage for agricultural workers);
- US\$12.50 (about 5.50 daily SMAG) in 2000;
- US\$19.50 (about 6.50 daily SMAG) in 2010;
- US\$51.50 (about 11 daily SMAG) in 2015; and
- US\$61.70 (about 14.50 daily SMAG) in 2019.

By paying a fixed symbolic annual fee of US\$3.50 (10 Tunisian dinars), many families have free access to health services at public health facilities under the Access to Care Program: Assistance Médicale Gratuite-2 (AMG2). There were

- 558,000 beneficiary families in 2010;
- 603,000 in 2015; and
- 623,000 in 2019.

In 2007, the Ministry of Social Affairs launched a program to help children of poor and disadvantaged families to receive schooling. The program provides monthly financial aid to educate children in families that receive benefits from the PNAFN. In 2019, families received US\$3.50 per month per pupil (up to three pupils), reaching more than 90,000 school-aged children.

The popular uprising that ended the previous regime and led to a political transition in January 2011 helped to focus on socio-economic inequality in Tunisian populations. These are even more striking in the western border regions.

More specifically, it turns out that:

- The two programs, the PNAFN and the Access to Care Program, provide coverage to only 10 percent of the poorest in the population. They send about 73 percent of their resources to only 30 percent of the poorest population targeted by these two programs.
- The poorest areas in the country are the least covered by social workers: only a small presence of social workers is in areas where the numeric incidence of poverty is highest. The errors of exclusion are higher in the governorates (north-west and central-west) that have low coverage by social workers.
- Allowances benefit a very small proportion of Tunisian children (2 percent), even though one-fifth of Tunisian children live in poverty (21.1 percent in 2016, compared to 12.8 percent for the adult population).
- Twenty percent of those who have been receiving the PNAFN benefit since the revolution are in the 40 to 59 age group, which is seen as an active group in the labour market.

The conclusion reached is that the current design of the Tunisian system cannot overcome poverty and exclusion. It cannot greatly reduce segregation between regions and between social categories, and thus meet social protection needs adequately. A new social program, called Amen Social, is intended to replace the PNAFN. This change will avoid a scattered approach and will create a more fair and inclusive social protection system. It is designed as part of the National Social Protection Floor, which seeks to guarantee

- access to universal care for the poor and vulnerable;
- minimum income for all those who do not have it;
- income for the elderly who are without resources and for persons with disabilities; and
- income for children.

5.4.1 Amen Social program

According to the law that created the Amen Social program (January 2019), those in the “poor” and “limited income” categories are individuals or families whose lack of resources affects their income, health, education, access to public services, and living conditions.

Two institutions will be set up under this program:

- Higher Council for Social Development, chaired by the President of Tunisia, aiming at inclusive development; and
- National Agency for Integration and Social Development, whose mission is to update the social register with a) information on the different aspects of poverty and deprivation for current and potential beneficiaries, and b) the list of people receiving social assistance using a social identifier that makes it easier to share data with other databases.

The first strategic orientation of the Amen Social program was to develop and implement a Social Identifier Number (SIN) at the national level. This will allow all the administrative databases attached to the Ministry of Social Affairs to be connected — a key condition that had to be put in place before starting to reform the protection system. The Ministry of Public Health recently decided to assign that same SIN to patients using public health facilities. This makes sense, since the two departments are already fully linked through the health insurance and social security management systems.

The Amen Social program aims to reach adults who are in the civil registration system but do not have a national ID card. In 2014,⁹ 300,000 people were in this group, but a large majority of them live abroad and mainly do not need Tunisian identification documents. Getting a monthly allowance through the Amen Social program may be another incentive for poor and marginalized families in Tunisia to apply for the ID card.

Managing information systems around the SIN should achieve the aims of social protection policies to better target programs and to reduce errors when it comes to who is included and excluded. The SIN is intended to link and combine the many programs that the Ministry of Social Affairs manages, such as:

- National program for families in need (PNAFN);
- Access to Care Program;
- Children without family support;
- Social action in schools;
- Social protection for all categories with special needs;
- Integration programs in schools for pupils with a disability;
- Training;
- Employment and income earning; and
- Physical and digital accessibility for people with disabilities.

9 Statement of the President of the High Authority of Elections.

The SIN also makes cross-checks between administrative databases (data cross-checking) possible. The mechanism that targets families who are deemed to be poor and vulnerable has automated access to administrative databases. It can now verify crucial information that people who receive aid have given to social workers and that has been recorded in the social survey. Cross-checks are made with other data banks created by the

- social security funds;
- health insurance fund;
- Ministries of Agriculture; Education; Employment and Vocational Training; Finance; Public Health; and Transport;
- STEG (national energy utility);
- SONEDE (national water utility); and
- others.

The database for deprived and low-income families will soon be finalized. The Amen Social program targets 900,000 families, or almost one-quarter of the total population (24.5 percent). Of these, about 285,000 families already benefit from the PNAFN and Assistance Médicale Gratuite-1 program (AMG-1), and 620,000 families benefit only from the Access to Care Program (Assistance Médicale Gratuite-2).

The procedure for registering potential beneficiaries to the Amen Social program is based on the proxy means test (scoring). This gives a score to each family visited, then classifies them based on their level of poverty and the possibilities of rising out of poverty.

A large-scale communication campaign¹⁰ is underway. It aims to inform and encourage potential applicants to open a social file by visiting their nearest local unit to apply for social assistance. (There are 350 of these units.) The Ministry of Social Affairs trained 1,500 social work specialists to increase and develop information about the program and to collect information on demographic and socio-economic features of households. This information covers a number of aspects of poverty and deprivation for current and potential beneficiaries:

- Location;
- Household size;
- Age;
- Sex;
- Marital status;
- Education level;
- Breadwinner's job;
- Living conditions; and
- Presence of chronic illness or disability.

10 Informational video (in Arabic) related to the campaign to register in the Amen Social program: [youtube.com/watch?v=a0TCZBkjgjk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a0TCZBkjgjk)



Figure 5.4: Screen capture from a YouTube video to promote enrollment in the Amen Social program.

In phase 1, the social work specialist and the applicant (head of the household, either man or woman) fill out an online application. Questions are asked about economic activities, health, owning of real estate, vehicles, and so on, for each member of the household.¹¹ If the person is already in a social assistance program, the existing file is retrieved and completed. Birth certificates of household members are no longer required, as the platform allows the Amen Social program to access civil status documents via a web service. Only the national ID card is compulsory for household members who are 18 years and over. A SIN is then assigned to the head of household and to each family member.

Phase 2 is a field survey that the social work specialist completes and verifies with material and visual data, such as

- number of water points;
- roofing material;
- number of persons living together per room; and
- verifiable state of health.

The use of electronic tablets allows data from social surveys to be processed almost in real time, including photos.

¹¹ The household is defined as family members living under the same roof and sharing meals.

Questionnaires for phases 1 and 2 include about 170 items related to the head of household that may also affect each member of the household. Any information added to the Amen Social program's databank is strictly protected as private data. Servers and computerized applications are hosted at the Ministry of Social Affairs' Data Centre.

Phase 3 of the survey takes place in the local unit. It is more focused on household income and verifying information that was collected in the past.

At the end of the process, the income of applicants for the Amen Social program is cross-checked with other databases: tax administration, social security, medical insurance, and more. The household is given a score based on data audited by the social work specialist's supervisor and by cross-checking. The household score is then compared to the eligibility threshold that was set.

Eligibility for benefits or social services (or both) is verified using the data gathered during the application and social survey. Cross-checks ensure that selected households and people really need social assistance at that time. The final decision is made by a regional commission. Selection is based on objectivity and fairness. It takes into account the principle of positive discrimination for households with special needs and for priority regions and areas, as shown by regional development indicators.

Of the 900,000 families that the Amen Social program targets, 630,000 have already submitted a registration file. Of these, 419,000 are recorded in the database and are now at one of the stages of the social survey.

Candidates who are not accepted can appeal the decision. All payments are collected through a monthly postal order and withdrawn in cash when the recipient presents their national identity card. Access to health care in public health centres is given when a person presents a free or reduced-fee family card issued by the Ministry of Social Affairs, along with the national identity card or the civil status certificate (or both).

5.5 Synergies and challenges

The civil registration and legal identity systems are very long-established and rooted in Tunisian society and in the different administrations' way of work. Their linkages and impact on social protection programs are not explicitly reflected. What is of interest in the Tunisian experience lies more in developing these systems within e-government and interoperability procedures for identification numbers created by different public operators.

Here are some ways to improve the process that are worth thinking about:

1. The UNIN concept and its interoperability platform should allow ministries and public agencies to use available databases and cross-check them. This would ensure that all categories of the population are monitored so they can exercise their rights and receive the social protection they need to help them claim their rights. That means detecting situations such as

- children who are not vaccinated on time, are out of school, or are having difficulties with their schooling;
 - pregnant women who miss the required schedule of prenatal exams; and
 - divorced fathers who do not pay court-ordered child support and need to be located.
2. Statistical processing and cross-referencing of data using the new Citizen's UNIN for vulnerable groups — underemployed persons, first-time job seekers, women working at home, informal sector workers, seasonal workers, and others — should set up other levels of support, help, and subsidies. These could include programs such as
- vocational training or apprenticeship programs;
 - microcredit;
 - income-generating activities; and
 - microenterprises or cooperatives.

These categories should go beyond material needs for survival and include needy groups based on a broader definition of poverty. This includes the ability to take part in economic activities. Even though people are in need, they can be integrated into productive economic activities if they get support at the start. If they are left behind, they risk falling with their families below the poverty line.

3. Thanks to the Citizens' UNIN and the data flows it allows, the Institut National de la Statistique (INS), or national statistics institute, has access to a vast amount of data. The crossing, processing, and analysis of this data will help the government create informed policies for all aspects of national development. This situation invites the INS to advance its practices in analyzing and interpreting statistical data.
4. The main problem in registering candidates for social assistance has to do with the legal identity of members of the household. There can be many errors in the transcribing of their names when issuing birth certificates, with variations of names within a single family.

This is a problem of national interest, given that in some cases, the same national identification number has been given to more than one person. Having a Citizen's UNIN attached to the birth certificate and having the ability to cross-check using the interoperability platform makes it possible to overcome these limits. It can be difficult to clarify birth registration procedures and to make sure registrars rigorously apply them. The same procedures must be created and applied for transcribing birth certificates into French, which is essential for creating passports and all legal documents to be used abroad.

5. A discussion is underway to decide on ways to stop duplicating civil status records in paper registers and registers that use a computer application. Ending the use of paper registers should lead to major savings of resources and labour. This approach will also be more efficient: it will allow the main actors (courts of justice, registry offices in municipalities, and consular offices) to play a direct role in sharing data across the territory and abroad.

6. The interoperability platform poses a potential threat to protecting personal data. This risk has been minimized in Tunisia using these measures:
 - The data that the platform gives access to is data that stakeholders could get directly from the users of their services. The platform saves time, means economies of scale for administrations and lower costs for citizens, and greatly reduces the chances of fraud.
 - Requests for data from other operators of the platform must be authorized by the data owner and the Identification Number Management Unit. When these operators have concerns, a technical committee makes a decision. The Instance nationale pour la protection des données personnelles (INPDP), or national authority for the protection of personal data, is involved in this committee and in the platform's steering committee.
 - Private data that could be accessed by stakeholders of the platform — including operators of the Identification Number Management Unit — is anonymized.
7. A bill to create an electronic identification card was modified by the Tunisian Parliament but was suspended after negative comments from civil society. The INPDP was concerned about the lack of guarantees for protecting personal data.

The Ministry of the Interior still wants to create a new identity card based on international standards for electronic identity documents. It would have a secure electronic chip containing the photo and electronic print of the cardholder's right thumb, along with other data that is available only to national security officers who are responsible for identity verification. It would also include

- storage of the data visible on the identity card; and
- optional data such as the first and last name of the spouse, blood group, and authorization for organ donation.

A new bill on an electronic identity card may soon be presented to the Tunisian Parliament. It will include measures and guarantees on giving citizens the legal ability to access the data in the chip of their ID card and, if needed, remove data or modify it.

Acronyms

CIN	Carte d'identité nationale (national identity card)
CNI	Centre National de l'Informatique (national centre of informatics)
INPDP	Instance nationale pour la protection des données personnelles (national authority for the protection of personal data)
INS	Institut National de la Statistique (national statistics institute)
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys
PNAFN	Programme National d'Aide aux Familles Nécessiteuses (national program for families in need)
SIN	Social Identifier Number
SMAG	Salaire Minimum Agricole Garanti (legal minimum daily wage for agricultural workers)
UNIN	Unique National Identifier Number



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