



PATHWAYS TO JUSTICE

U.S. Department of State, INL Improving Court Administration in Tunisia

2016 - 2021

F O R E W O R D

Since 2016, the Improving Court Administration in Tunisia Program has worked with the Government of Tunisia to improve access to and the quality of justice in Tunisia by promoting efficiency and responsiveness in service delivery and empowering local actors to collaborate and innovate.

Funded by the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL), the Improving Court Administration in Tunisia Program was implemented by the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) in partnership with the International Legal Assistance Consortium (ILAC), and in collaboration with the Ministry of Justice (MOJ), the High Judicial Council (Conseil supérieur de la magistrature, CSM), and eight Model Courts—including the Courts of Appeals of Gafsa and Kef, the First Instance Courts of Ariana, Bizerte, Kef, Sousse 2, and Tozeur, and Tunis District Court.

This publication recognizes the contribution of partners and allies within the justice ecosystem to improve the efficiency, accessibility, and responsiveness of the justice system. On behalf of the Improving Court Administration Program Team and NCSC, I wish to extend our gratitude to the many champions and innovators in the courts who are enhancing services to citizens in ways large and small.

We are proud to note the impact of the Improving Court Administration in Tunisia Program in empowering local actors to come together to engage in problem-solving and design innovative responses to long-standing challenges. The Program's rigorous focus on empowerment has ensured that past and present investments in courts and service delivery can be sustained, leveraged, and amplified.

The “Pathways to Justice” publication is a retrospective of program achievements. Highlights are included below:

Pursuing Justice Innovation

The program advanced reforms to improve the organization of administrative services, the delivery of judicial services to users, and the management of hearings, cases, and records through a Model Courts initiative. Eight Model Courts participated in the program, serving as incubators for innovation. Innovations tested in Model Courts were validated by the Ministry of Justice and replicated by other courts, amplifying the reach of the program.

Advancing People-Centered Justice

The program addressed the information deficit that negatively impacts the ability of citizens to access and navigate justice services and leads to low satisfaction and trust in the system. A multidimensional Court

User Information Kit was developed and made available in Model Courts. Between 2016 and 2021, NCSC trained 224 court clerks on communication skills to respond to user needs more effectively, mitigate conflict, and facilitate user navigation of the court process. The program also worked with assistant prosecutors in Model Courts to develop a guide for the “orientation judges”.



Modernizing Systems and Services

The program supported the modernization of the judiciary, in line with Tunisia's digital transformation agenda. Over the life of the program, Model Courts developed and tested applications to manage archived records, compile and submit statistics, and facilitate the recording of hearing minutes and publication of hearing outcomes. These solutions contributed to time and costs savings for courts and court users alike. The statistical report application, developed and tested in Model Courts, was subsequently validated and rolled out to 145 courts countrywide. As of February 2021, 85% of target courts were using the application to prepare their report.

Promoting Problem-Solving Justice

The Program empowered local actors within the justice ecosystem to tackle challenges in the efficiency and quality of services. More than 1,700 judges, prosecutors, and clerks received skills-building training on case and records management, communication, training delivery, orientation, training techniques, and statistics. Program interventions fostered a culture of collaboration and innovation across Model Courts and between courts and the Ministry of Justice, leading to the development of new resources and solutions that address long-standing challenges.

Strengthening Judicial Governance

The Program facilitated debate to improve judicial governance. Model Courts leadership and Ministry of Justice personnel engaged in transformative dialogue that explored new approaches to court management, administrative staff development, and problem-solving. In addition, the Program provided comparative research and technical assistance to the High Judicial Council to inform internal organization and the drafting of a new Code of Ethics for Judges.

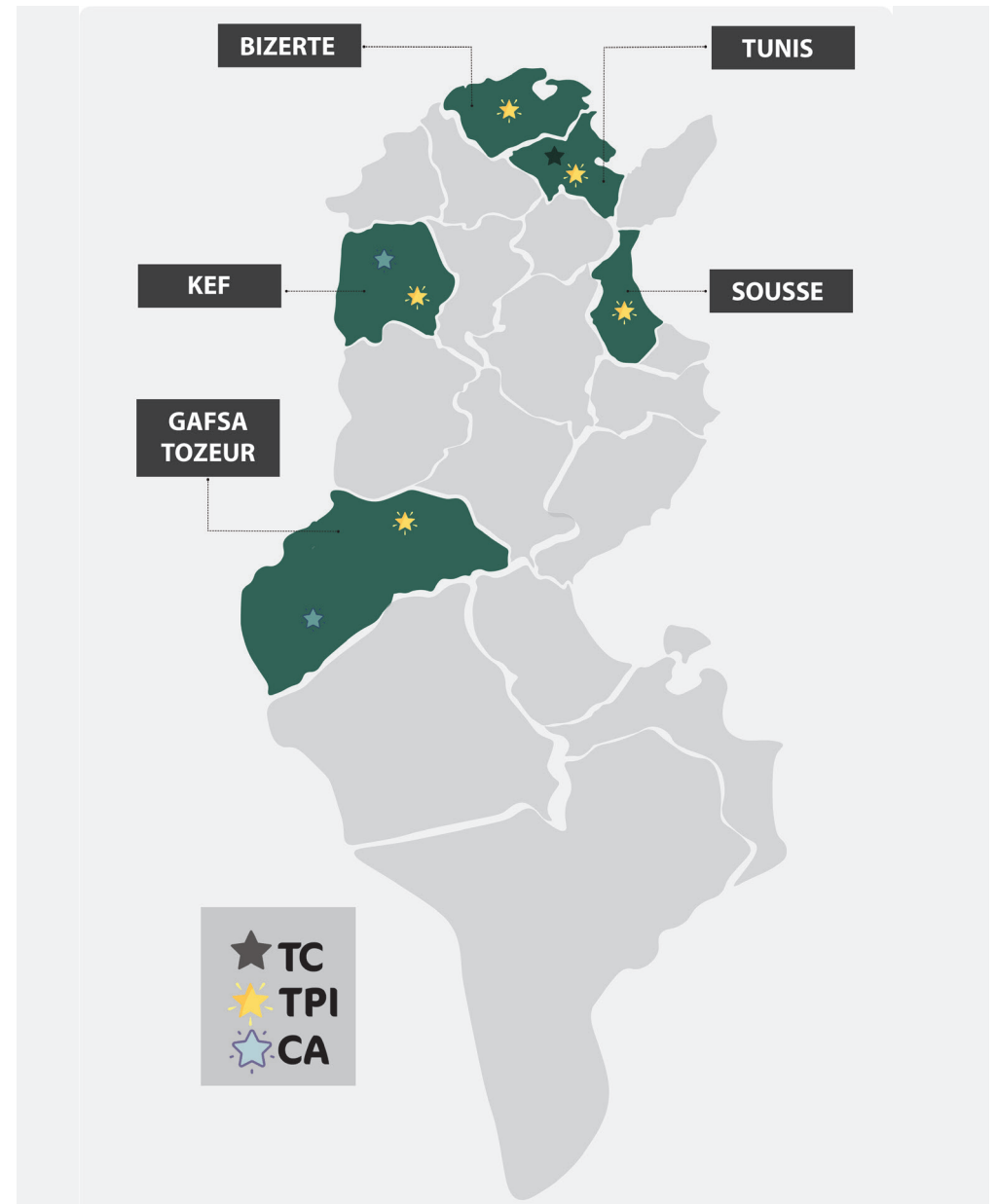
Thank you to our partners, allies, and friends, without whom this program would not be possible.

Violaine Autheman
Director
NCSC Tunisia

PURSUING JUSTICE INNOVATION

Through the Model Court initiative, the Improving Court Administration in Tunisia Program advanced reforms to improve the organization of administrative services, the delivery of judicial services to users, and the management of hearings, cases, and records. Eight Model Courts were selected in collaboration with the Ministry of Justice. Selected courts included all levels of first and second instance jurisdiction and reflected a geographic diversity that extended assistance beyond Tunis and coastal areas. Model Courts served as incubators to test and validate innovations and reforms, several of which were replicated in other courts with the support from the Ministry of Justice. As of February 2021, Model Court achievement had reached 88% of projected action plans.

- Performance dashboard developed and installed in all Model Courts, enabling court leadership to track productivity, analyze performance data, and manage human resources to improve performance.
- Reporting judge function activated in first instance civil cases, optimizing judge time, resulting in documented time gains in case processing, and improving calendar predictability and court coordination with lawyers and experts.
- Archiving practices streamlined and chain of custody of archived records improved, ensuring ability to locate and track records and the integrity of record content.
- Archive records management application tested, validated, and rolled out to all Model Courts.
- Live hearing minute recording introduced, enabling real-time production of hearing transcripts and resulting in documented time gains in the delivery of judgments.
- Live hearing minute recording application tested, validated, and rolled out to 7 Model Courts, facilitating hearing management, record keeping, and user access to case status information.



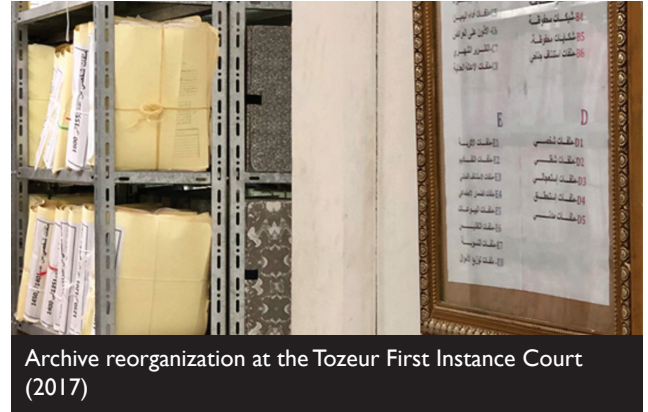
Map of Model Courts sites



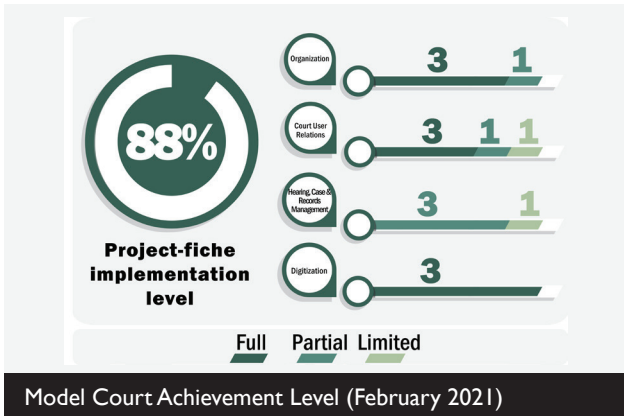
Minister of Justice Omar Mansour speaks at the launch of the Improving Court Administration in Tunisia Program (June 2016)



Archive recording at the Gafsa Court of Appeals (2017)



Archive reorganization at the Tozeur First Instance Court (2017)



Model Court Achievement Level (February 2021)



Live hearing recording at the Tunis District Court (September 2020)



Model Court peer exchange workshop on the performance dashboard (October 2018)



Model Court Evaluation Workshop (July 2019)



Peer exchange between Sousse 2 and Bizerte First Instance Courts on live hearing recording (February 2020)



Peer Exchange between Bizerte and Ariana First Instance Courts on the reporting judge (December 2018)

ADVANCING PEOPLE-CENTERED JUSTICE

The Improving Court Administration in Tunisia Program worked with Model Courts to improve relations with litigants and develop people-centered approaches to service delivery. Through training, the program built the communication and orientation skills of court clerks, investing in an environment conducive to procedural fairness and improved user experience of judicial services. In addition, the program developed and disseminated a Court User Information Kit to guide citizens in contact with courts through common procedures and educate them on their rights and obligations. The program strengthened mechanisms to improve user navigation and experience, functionalizing the orientation judge, installing line management systems, and testing the use of digital screens to publish informational videos and hearing outcomes.

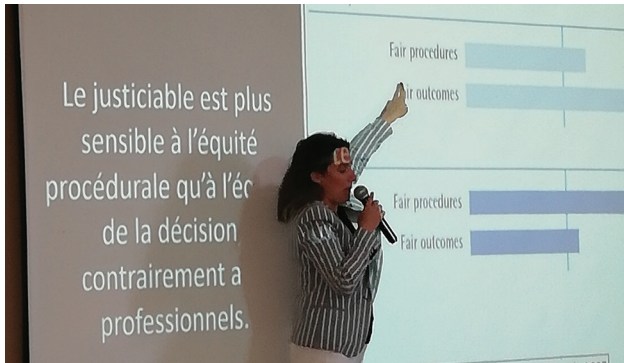
- 224 court clerks trained on communication skills, equipping them to respond to user needs more effectively, mitigate conflict, and provide non-legal orientation.
- 20 prosecutors trained on the role of orientation judge and how to assist citizens in navigating court processes and procedures.
- One Court User Guide and six procedural leaflets developed and made available in Model Courts.
- Service charter developed, outlining the “do’s” and “don’ts” of court users in their interactions with staff.
- 10 education videos produced, sensitizing citizens to basic court procedures, operations, and services.
- Ticket system installed in four Model Courts to manage lines and service delivery.
- Publication of hearing outcomes using digital screens piloted in one Model Court, providing real-time information to litigants.



Court User Kit Presentation Webinar (January 2021)



Court User Service Charter



Procedural fairness presentation to Model Courts (July 2019)



Training for Model Courts Assistant Prosecutors on orientation judge function (October 2017)



Model Court working group on the orientation judge guide meeting (November 2017)



Ticket system at the Kef First Instance Court



Communication skills training for Model Court clerks in Bizerte (May 2017)



Communication skills training for Model Courts clerks of the Gafsa Court of Appeals (June 2019)



Citizen reception area at the Bizerte First Instance Court (July 2019)



Publication of hearing outcomes on digital display screens at the Ariana First Instance Court (March 2020)

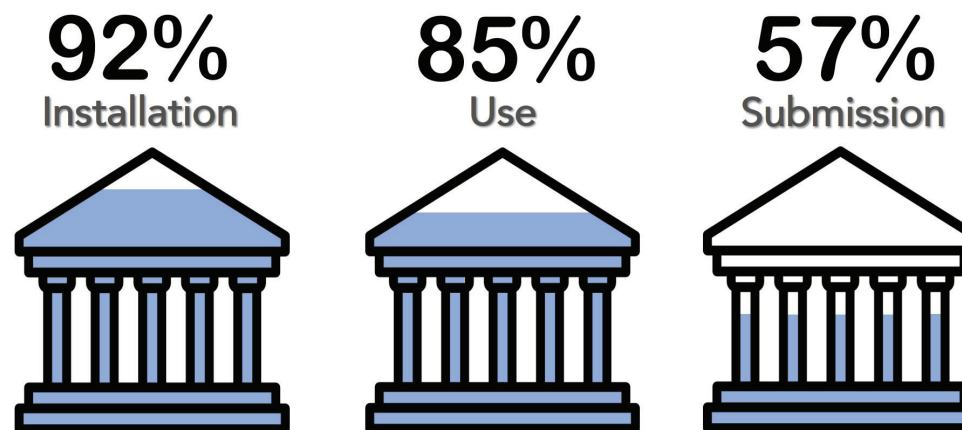


Communication skills training for Model Courts clerks of the Kef Court of Appeals and First Instance Court (December 2017)

MODERNIZING SYSTEMS AND SERVICES

The Improving Court Administration in Tunisia Program supported the modernization of the judiciary, strengthening user capacity to operate in an automated environment and piloting court-generated IT solutions to manage records, statistics, and hearings. Through the development of user manuals and the delivery of basic IT skills training, the program has laid the groundwork to further the digital transformation of the judiciary, in line with the Government of Tunisia's digital agenda. Over the life of the program, applications to manage archived records, compile and submit statistics, and facilitate the recording of hearing minutes and drafting of judgments were developed and tested in Model Courts. In addition, the program worked with actors of the criminal justice chain to map governance, organizational, and technical parameters of interoperability, a first step in enabling digital exchange of documents and information from police to prison.

- Four IT User Manuals developed and disseminated to all courts in Tunisia, enhancing court staff capacity to utilize computers, MS Office software, and existing applications.
- 608 clerks in 8 Model Courts trained on basic IT skills.
- Monthly statistical report application developed by Model Courts, standardizing statistical reporting, reducing the time and cost of preparation and submission of reports, and enhancing accountability for data entry and validation.
- Monthly statistical report application validated for countrywide rollout and 470 IT technicians and clerks in 145 courts across Tunisia trained.
- As of February 2021, 85% of target courts are using the application to prepare their monthly report and 57% are submitting it electronically.
- Criminal justice chain interoperability feasibility study initiated with the Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Interior.



Implementation status of the new judicial statistics application, as of December 30, 2020



Interface of the new electronic judicial statistics application (March 2019)



Launch of the new electronic judicial statistics application in Tunis (January 2020)



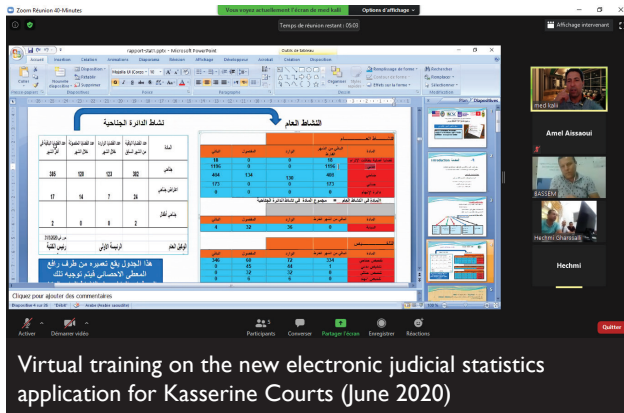
Certificate ceremony at the Kairouan statistics orientation workshop (November 2019)



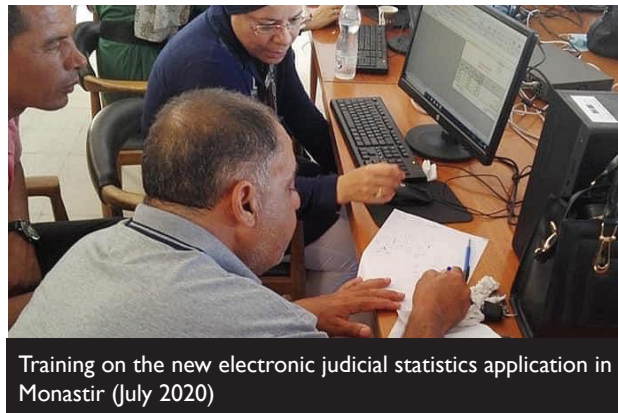
Training on the new electronic judicial statistics application in Kairouan (July 2020)



Training on the new electronic judicial statistics application in Tunis (July 2020)



Virtual training on the new electronic judicial statistics application for Kasserine Courts (June 2020)



Training on the new electronic judicial statistics application in Monastir (July 2020)



Training on the new electronic judicial statistics application in Medenine-Tataouine (January 2020)



IT skills training for Model Court clerks at the Sousse 2 First Instance Court (November 2018)



IT skills training for Model Court clerks at the Kef First Instance Court (April 2018)

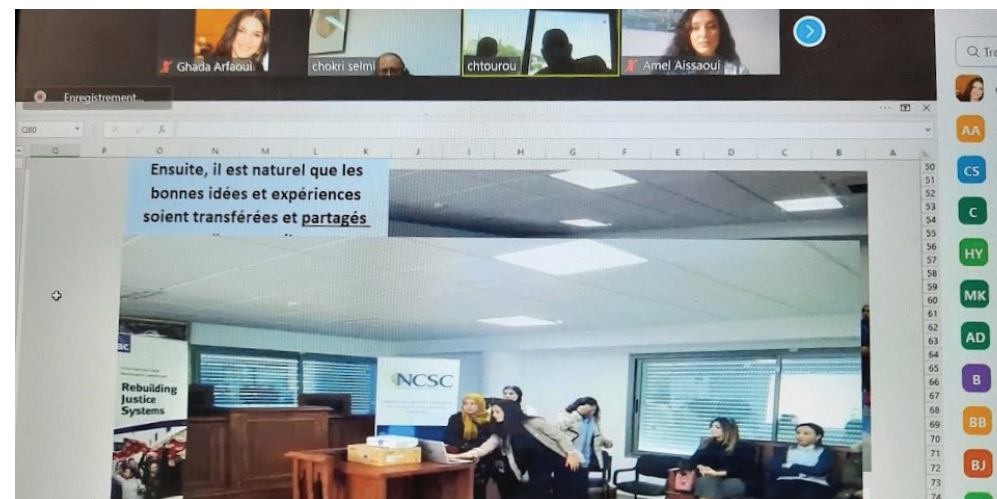


IT skills training for Model Court clerks at the Ariana First Instance Court (2018)

PROMOTING PROBLEM-SOLVING JUSTICE

The Improving Court Administration in Tunisia Program supported local actors within the justice ecosystem to develop resources, test solutions, and pilot innovations to address long-standing challenges to efficiency and quality in service delivery. The program fostered a culture of collaboration across Model Courts and between courts and the Ministry of Justice, creating space for peer exchange and collaborative innovation. Model Court representatives convened both in person and virtually throughout the program to work together to share ideas, best practices, and solutions to overcome obstacles. In addition, the program invested in magistrates and administrative personnel, delivering skills-building training and disseminating procedural manuals.

- Three Model Court peer exchange workshops organized to take stock of reforms, address implementation challenges, and facilitate replication of successful innovations.
- Collaborative space created for Model Court IT Technicians to develop user resources, user training, and custom-made applications.
- 1,729 judges, prosecutors, and clerks trained in court administration, case and records management, training skills, basic IT skills, statistics, communication skills, and user service and orientation in 78 skills-building training sessions, as of December 2020.
- 48 members of the Ministry of Justice's International Cooperation Department and Model Courts enrolled in comprehensive training on crisis management, risk management, leadership, and quality of service.
- Five procedural manuals developed in collaboration with Model Courts representatives, providing reference materials on the reporting judge and orientation judge functions, archive management, and operation of clerk offices of District Courts and of the Presidency of First Instance Courts.



Model Court virtual peer exchange on hearing recording (November 2020)



Training of trainers for Model Court clerks (March 2019)



Model Court IT technician working group meeting (March 2017)



Clerk office procedural manual drafting working group (September 2017)



District Court clerk procedural manual drafting working group (July 2018)



Model Court IT technician working group meeting (February 2017)



Reporting judge guide drafting working group (July 2017)



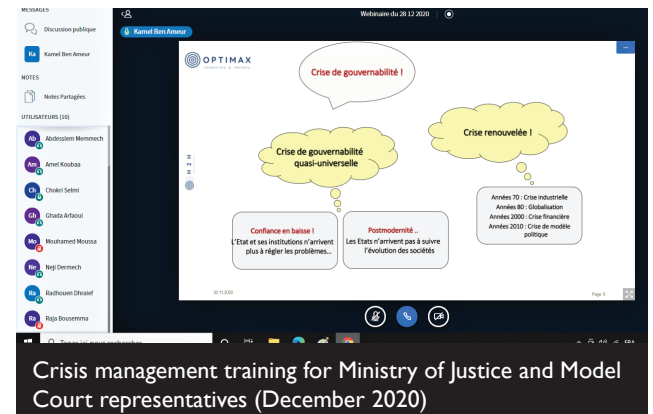
Rollout of the reporting judge guide workshop in Sfax (February 2021)



Training of trainers for Model Court IT technicians (March 2019)



Continuous IT training cell at the Sousse 2 First Instance Court (March 2020)



Crisis management training for Ministry of Justice and Model Court representatives (December 2020)

STRENGTHENING JUDICIAL GOVERNANCE

The Improving Court Administration in Tunisia Program facilitated debate to improve judicial governance. Through workshops, peer exchanges, and training, Ministry of Justice personnel and the leadership of eight Model Courts explored new approaches to court management, administrative staff development, and problem-solving. Model Courts formalized management structures involving magistrates and administrative staff and used consultative methodologies to address operational problems. In addition, the program provided comparative research and expert assistance to the High Judicial Council to inform internal organization and the drafting of a new Judicial Code of Ethics.

- Three workshops organized on Court Management and Customer Service, attended by 74 judges, prosecutors, clerks, and IT technicians.
- Court-based continuing training cells established at the Gafsa and Kef Courts of Appeals, providing a model for skills-building of administrative staff to mitigate disruptions resulting from clerk rotation.
- Three weighted workload studies developed on judges of district courts, first instance courts, and appellate courts, providing models for the allocation of human resources across the justice system.
- Comparative research provided to the High Judicial Council to inform internal organization, especially the organization of the Secretariat, the operation of Commissions, and the performance of key functions related to the administration of the judicial career, budget, and public relations.
- Three consultations organized for the High Judicial Council Ethics Committee to discuss international practices and address policy questions related to judicial integrity to draft a new Judicial Code of Ethics.



Weighted workload interviews (April 2018)



Model Court evaluation workshop (July 2019)



Introductory meeting between NCSC and the Tunisian Judicial Council (CSM) (June 2020)



Weighted workload advisory group meeting (October 2017)



Weighted workload study interviews at the Bizerte Court of Appeals (March 2017)



Ethics consultations with the Judicial Council (CSM) (July 2020)



Training on court management and customer service for Model Courts in Sousse (November 2016)



Continuing education on IT at the Tunis District Court (July 2018)



Ethics consultations with the Judicial Council (CSM) (July 2020)



Launch of the archive management manual (December 2018)



Workshop on court management and customer service for Model Courts in Tozeur (December 2016)

The Improving Court Administration in Tunisia Program was made possible with the funding of the U.S. Department of State, Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL).

The design and implementation of the program was made possible through the efforts of many. On behalf of NCSC and our partner ILAC, we extend our sincere gratitude and appreciation to the following organizations and individuals.

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Minister Mohamed Boussetta, former Minister Thouraya Jeribi, former Minister Mohamed Karim Jammoussi, former Minister Ghazi Jeribi, former Minister Omar Mansour and the current and former Chiefs of Staff, General Inspectors, and Heads of the International Cooperation Department, General IT Directorate, and Statistics Department.

High Judicial Council

Council President Youssef Bouzakher, Judicial Sub-Council President Malika Mezzari, and the Chairs and members of the International Cooperation and of the Ethics Commission.

Model Courts

The Presidents, Chief Prosecutors, Chief Clerks, judges, prosecutors, and court staff of the Gafsa Court of Appeals, Kef Court of Appeals, Ariana First Instance Court, Bizerte First Instance Court, Kef First Instance Court, Sousse 2 First Instance Court, Tozeur First Instance Court, and Tunis District Court.

Special recognition is given to the IT Technicians of Model Courts for their active engagement as champions and innovators over the life of the program, in alphabetical order: Bassem Bouallegue (Tozeur First Instance Court), Chokri Selmi (Kef Court of Appeals), Foued Haj Salah (Sousse 2 First Instance Court), Mohamed Ezzine (Ariana First Instance Court), Mohamed Klai (Kef First Instance Court), Mounir Chtourou (Tunis District Court), Ramzy Bessaadi (Gafsa Court of Appeals), Samia Belhaj (Ariana First Instance Court), and Wissem Ben Amor (Bizerte First Instance Court).

Improving Court Administration in Tunisia Program Staff

Director Violaine Autheman and the current and former staff of NCSC-Tunisia and ILAC-Tunisia who worked to make the program possible, in alphabetical order: Amel Aissaoui, Amine Dhoub, Besma Ben Abid, Besma Jebali, Ghada Arfaoui, Habib Borni, Hela Abouda, Imen Ben Rhouma, Ismael Benkhalifa, Marwen Ayed, Med Ali Soussi Fathallah, Mehdi Rezig, Nessrine Telliza, Nizar Rezgui, and Selim Ben Abdeselem.

Our experts and trainers who contributed their experience and expertise to supporting counterparts in achieving improvement in the efficiency, accessibility, and responsiveness of justice services, in alphabetical order: Bob Wily, Brian Ostrom, Carlos Eugenio Jimenez-Gomez, Judge (ret.) John Fields, Kamel Ben Ameer, Laura Klaversma, Matt Kleiman, Monia El Abed, Moufida Abbassi, Moez Abbassi, and Nebil Meddeb.

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