

The Dakar Roadmap to Sustainable Sub-national Data Systems in Africa (2026–2030)

1. Background

The Dakar Roadmap (2026–2030) is a consensus-based strategic framework, adopted during the Multi-Country Workshop on Strengthening Sub-national Data Systems in Africa (Dakar, 2–4 December 2025). It provides a clear, time-bound pathway for African governments and partners to transition from donor-dependent, project-based data initiatives toward sustainable, nationally led sub-national data systems that are integrated within national statistical architectures.

The Roadmap is designed to guide policy reform, investment alignment, and institutional change. It is not a technical manual; rather, it sets out shared commitments, sequencing, and accountability mechanisms to support implementation at scale.

African data systems are at a turning point. The decline of large-scale, donor-financed household surveys—most notably the DHS Program—has exposed structural vulnerabilities in how countries generate and finance population and health statistics. At the same time, governance and service delivery are increasingly decentralized, creating growing demand for timely, granular, and locally relevant data.

The Dakar Roadmap responds to this dual challenge by advancing an Africa-led model of data systems, anchored at the sub-national level and embedded within national statistical systems. Evidence from Burkina Faso, Niger, Senegal, and Uganda demonstrates that locally owned, interoperable, and cost-effective sub-national systems can improve decision-making, accountability, and sustainability when they are institutionally embedded and domestically financed.

2. Vision and Principles

Vision

By 2030, African countries operate resilient, integrated, and financially autonomous sub-national data systems that support local decision-making and feed coherently into national statistical systems.

Guiding Principles

- **National ownership and leadership:** Governments lead governance and financing of data systems.
- **Local-first implementation:** Functional sub-national systems form the foundation of national statistics.
- **Integration, not parallelism:** Sub-national systems complement and strengthen national statistical systems.
- **Financial sovereignty:** Sustainable data systems require predictable domestic financing.

- **Open and interoperable systems:** Standards-based, non-proprietary solutions are essential for scale.

3. Strategic Pillars and Commitments

This section sets out the four strategic pillars and associated commitments that underpin the Dakar Roadmap 2026–2030. Together, these pillars translate the workshop’s lessons and country experiences into concrete, time-bound actions aimed at securing sustainable, Africa-led sub-national data systems. Each pillar addresses a critical constraint—governance, interoperability, capacity, and institutionalization—and outlines the policy reforms, investments, and accountability mechanisms required from governments, National Statistical Systems, and partners to move from pilot initiatives to durable national systems.

Pillar 1. Governance and Financing

Objective: Secure national leadership, financial sovereignty, and coordinated governance of data systems.

Key commitments:

- Establish and operationalize **National Statistical Development Funds (NSDFs)** by 2027, with predictable state financing for national and sub-national data systems.
- Introduce **dedicated budget lines** for sub-national data staffing, platform maintenance, and operations.
- Diversify domestic financing through mechanisms such as private sector engagement, diaspora contributions, and earmarked taxes where appropriate.
- Strengthen coordination tools (e.g. Statistical Visa mechanisms) to reduce duplication and align surveys and investments.

Table 1: Governance and Financing Milestones

Milestone Area	Key Action/Output	Lead Responsibility	Investment Priority
Institutional Governance	NSO mandate solidified; Statistical Visa mechanism strengthened; National Coordination Frameworks implemented.	NSO / National Government	Regulatory framework development; Local data hosting infrastructure.
Financial Autonomy	NSDF framework established and operationalized; Innovative tax revenue channels; Formal transition metrics and co-investment tracked.	The State / Ministry of Finance	NSDF replenishment; Regularity of state funds; Dedicated taxes on harmful products; Tracking mechanisms for government co-investment.

Partner Coordination	Partnership framework adopted aligning donor/private sector funds with country policy; Pan-African coordination committee created; Bilateral alignment based on performance benchmarks.	International Partners / NSS	Catalytic financing (AfDB's African Development Fund, grants) ; CSR operationalization for public capacity; Performance monitoring and auditing.
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Pillar 2. Interoperability and Quality Assurance

Objective: Ensure data credibility, coherence, and usability across levels and sectors.

Key commitments:

- Mandate the use of **open standards and documented APIs** to enable data exchange across systems.
- Establish and enforce a **common regulatory data governance framework** to ensure a single, trusted flow of data from sub-national to national level.
- Deploy **National Quality Assurance Frameworks (NQAFs)** at national and sub-national levels, supported by digitization and automation to improve data reliability.

Table 2: Interoperability and Data Quality Standards

Milestone Area	Key Standard/Protocol	Lead Responsibility	Investment Priority
Technical Integration	Documented Open APIs for system communication; Identification of metadata standards; Integration into long-term health information systems.	NSOs / IT Teams of Research Institutions like APHRC	Open-source toolkit development; Technical interface deployment; Investment in AI-compatible digital platforms (DHIS2/ODK) for automation; Accelerated rollout of Electronic Medical Record (EMR) systems.
Data Governance	Common regulatory data governance framework; Standardization of territorial identifiers (ANSD initiative); Long-term data plans for service delivery and epidemiology monitoring.	National Government (NSO/Line Ministries)	Legal framework establishment; Training on standards compliance; Data governance frameworks for security and privacy.
Quality Assurance	NQAF deployed subnationally; Automated data validation processes;	NSOs/ Sectoral Data Managers	Training and capacity building at subnational level for quality

	Streamlined performance monitoring system established.		management; Integrated statistical-geospatial SDG monitoring platforms; Dedicated staff for data validation and auditing.
Regional Alignment	Adoption of international statistical standards (SDMX, ISO 19100, OGC Web Services); Regional harmonization efforts.	WAHO / AfDB / NSOs	Technical cooperation agreements; Regional peer learning platforms.

Pillar 3. Capacity and Data-Use Culture

Objective: Build durable human capital and strengthen demand for data in decision-making.

Key commitments:

- Institutionalize **academic–local government partnerships** to support continuous capacity development through internships, fellowships, and mentoring.
- Recruit and retain **dedicated data professionals** (e.g. statisticians, data managers) within local administrations through public service structures.
- Promote **data use by political and administrative leaders** through tailored dashboards and integration of data review into routine planning and coordination forums.

Table 3: Pillar III: Capacity and Sustainability Milestones

Milestone Area	Key Metric/Milestone	Lead Responsibility	Investment Priority
Human Capital	Dedicated data manager/statistician recruited via dedicated budget lines in all target districts; Frontline staff transition plan executed.	National Government / Local Authorities	Dedicated budget lines for staffing; Data science training programs; Funding to transition payroll of donor-supported personnel.
Training & Pipeline	Academic/Municipal MoUs established in all target countries; Intern deployment program formalized; Rapid transition of technical assistance to government-led functions.	Universities / APHRC	Continuous mentoring resources; Partnership infrastructure.

Institutionalization	Project achievements integrated into routine NSO operations; Best practices documented and shared; Formal transition metrics achieved.	NSO/ Local Implementing Partners	Resource pooling mechanisms; Documentation and dissemination support; Institutionalization of Municipal Data Units (UDCs).
Data Use Culture	Customized data dashboards deployed for decision-makers across all participating communes; Increased data-driven planning sessions.	Local Authorities / APHRC-academia	Incentivization mechanisms; Support for sectoral planning meetings; Establishment of local data committees.

Pillar 4. Institutionalization and Sustainability

Objective: Embed sub-national data systems as core public sector functions.

Key commitments:

- Integrate successful project outputs into the **routine operations of NSOs and local governments.**
- Transition recurrent costs (staffing, hosting, maintenance) from donor support to **national and local budgets.**
- Document and disseminate best practices to support replication and learning across countries.

4. Phased Implementation Framework

Phase I (2026–2027): Foundations and Institutional Anchoring

- Establish legal and operational frameworks for NSDFs in pilot countries.
- Secure initial sub-national budget allocations for data systems.
- Finalize and deploy NQAFs and standardized territorial identifiers.
- Formalize academic–municipal partnership agreements.

Phase II (2028–2029): Scaling and Integration

- Expand standardized data platforms across priority sectors (health, education, planning).
- Enforce regulatory data governance frameworks and interoperability standards.
- Operationalize diversified domestic financing mechanisms.
- Embed trained data managers within local administrations.

Phase III (2030): Sustainability and Regional Alignment

- Demonstrate financial autonomy of NSDFs through diversified domestic revenues.
- Fully integrate sub-national systems into routine NSO and local government operations.

- Align national systems with regional standards and frameworks, supporting continental coordination.

5. Roles and Shared Accountability

- **Governments and NSOs:** Lead implementation, provide legislative backing, and finance recurrent costs.
- **Research institutions and academia (including APHRC):** Provide technical support, applied research, and capacity development.
- **Regional and international partners (AfDB, UNFPA, WAHO):** Provide catalytic financing, standards, and regional coordination aligned with country priorities.

Table 4: Matrix of Responsibilities and Commitments (2026–2030)

Pillar Focus	Lead: National Government (NSO/MoH)	Co-Lead: Research/Academia (APHRC/Universities)	Supporting Partner: Development Partners (UNFPA/AfDB/WAHO/U.S. Gov)
Governance & Financing	Ensure regularity of state funds; Operationalize NSDFs; Mandate statistical visa and priority policies; Track and meet co-investment benchmarks.	Provide technical leadership and convening capacity; Document lessons learned on innovative financing; Share project success stories from pilot countries.	Provide catalytic financing (e.g., ADF); Align investment with performance benchmarks and formal transition metrics; Support Pan-African coordination committee creation.
Interoperability & Quality	Enforce common regulatory framework; Standardize identifiers and metadata; Deploy integrated platforms (ODK/DHIS2); Deploy NQAF subnationally; Accelerate EMR rollout	Develop open-source toolkits; Conduct continuous data quality monitoring; Lead data science training initiatives; Pilot SDMX/geospatial integration models.	Promote and facilitate adoption of international standards (SDMX, ISO, OGC); Partner to integrate data systems into long-term national health systems; Invest in technical interfaces.

Capacity & Use	<p>Institutionalize project achievements (e.g., Municipal Data Units); Recruit statisticians/data managers via dedicated budget lines; Execute transition of donor-supported staff onto government payroll.</p>	<p>Formalize internship and mentorship programs via MoUs; Deliver ongoing training in analysis and visualization for local staff; Rapidly transition technical assistance to government-led functions.</p>	<p>Fund capacity building sessions for decision-makers; Support advocacy efforts for long-term financing and institutional reform; Facilitate access to survey and census data.</p>
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6. Conclusion

The Dakar Roadmap 2026–2030 represents a collective commitment to data sovereignty and sustainability. By prioritizing domestic financing, institutional embedding, and interoperable systems, the Roadmap offers a realistic pathway for African countries to secure their data futures. Its successful implementation depends on sustained political leadership, aligned investments, and shared accountability among all stakeholders.