17 September, 2024 | Data Analytics

Key Facts

Sponsor	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, India
Duration	2021-2023
Project Link	https://www.localsdg.in
Stakeholder	Municipal Corporation of Coimbatore
Geography	Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu

Highlights

- The Municipal Corporation of Coimbatore, with the GIZ, needed a tool to monitor SDG at the city level.
- Avalon was onboarded as a technical partner to help frame city level indicator frameworks and develop a SDG dashboard.
- An SDG dashboard and a data warehouse was developed for the city of Coimbatore as a decision making tool for city administration.

Scope of Work

In 2021, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) joined forces with the Municipal Corporation of Coimbatore to develop an SDG dashboard adapted to an indicator framework tailor-made to meet the needs of Coimbatore city.

Executive summary

Coimbatore is the second-largest city in the southern state of Tamil Nadu with a population of approximately 3,084,000 people (2021). It is known as the Manchester of India, owing to extensive textile industries, along with a rapidly expanding IT Industry & small and medium scale enterprises making it one of the fastest emerging Tier II cities in India.

The mission of the principal civic body, Coimbatore City Municipal Corporation is to render the city an "inclusive, secure and effectively governed metropolis that offers the highest quality of living for its progressive and diverse populace". While the city works relentlessly on its sector priorities, the need to link these efforts to the global agenda emphasizes the importance of a bottom to top approach of development.

The Smart cities initiative translates the effort of the government in the decentralization of the development of urban areas and strategic empowerment of cities; in identifying and implementing their own development priorities. This process is also known as SDG Localization which UN Habitat defines as

> the process of transforming the SDGs into reality at the local level, in coherence with the national frameworks and in line with communities' priorities. Localization means collaboration among all stakeholders and coordination across sectors and spheres of governance. It is a two-way process where the local meets the national and the global, and vice-versa.

The SDG dashboard developed for the city of Coimbatore, through a participative approach with the city team, is an excellent example of how city priorities contribute to the bigger development national and global agendas.

Problem statement

India is a signatory of the 2030 Global agenda of the Sustainable Development Goals. While the country is striving at the national and state levels to monitor the achievement of the SDGs, the Government of India's Smart Cities Mission (SCM), launched in 2015, shifted the development agenda to the local level. Addressing concerns of cities and developing customized development plans for them, the SCM is aligned to the localisation of the SDGs.

GIZ supported the Coimbatore Municipal Corporation through its Sustainable Urban Development – Smart Cities (SUD-SC) project, aimed at enhancing integrated and intersectoral planning while improving synergies and funding efficiency. A key objective was to establish a framework that enables better coordination between sectoral planning and national urban missions and programs. Our role focused on developing a data system to facilitate intersectoral dialogue, using the SDGs as a guiding framework to advance urban planning. This intervention involved creating an SDG-aligned sectoral framework and designing an SDG dashboard to track and monitor progress.

Our Approach

We drew on our global experience in implementing SDG Dashboards to effectively support Coimbatore. Our expertise in designing SDG Dashboards positioned us to understand the strategic significance of this tool for the city. Additionally, our prior work on a similar project for the city of Patiala, funded by the SDSN grant, provided valuable insights that guided our approach to the Coimbatore initiative.

We were tasked to setup the SDG indicator framework for Coimbatore, based on available indicator frameworks developed for the national and state levels, then design and develop the data warehouse and dashboard. For this, we adopted a multi-tiered approach for this project :

- **Step 1: Desk review** - We consulted key national SDG indicator sources, including the compendium of indicators prepared by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MOSPI) and the SDG India Index from Niti Aayog. This helped us understand the monitoring and reporting priorities of various stakeholders across different programs. We also reviewed Tamil Nadu's State Indicators Framework to assess the formulation of priority indicators. Based on these insights, we developed a city-level framework tailored to Coimbatore's specific priorities.

- **Step 2 : Consultative multi-stakeholder Workshop** - With consistent support from GIZ, Avalon liaised with multiple stakeholders to align the city indicator framework with the city's reporting and monitoring priorities. We reached out to the city civic body and other relevant administrative bodies to deliberate upon a strategy to implement the SDGs in the city.

- **Step 3 : Data warehouse/Dashboard design & Development** - The indicator framework for Coimbatore was classified by themes and SDGs. Hence, the data warehouse and Dashboard was classified as per 8 themes which aligned to the SDGs and the city priorities as stated in the key city frameworks.

> **These 8 themes were the guiding lines for the design & development of the digital data warehouse. The 8 themes are as follows :**
>
> ▶ Education ▶ Economy ▶ Environment ▶ Governance ▶ Health ▶ Services ▶ Safety ▶ Energy Management

Furthermore, the Coimbatore SDG data warehouse and the dashboard were developed dynamically, and can be accessed by the public. Avalon leveraged the in-house Open Source Data Tools, DFA Toolkit, to set up this platform for Coimbatore.
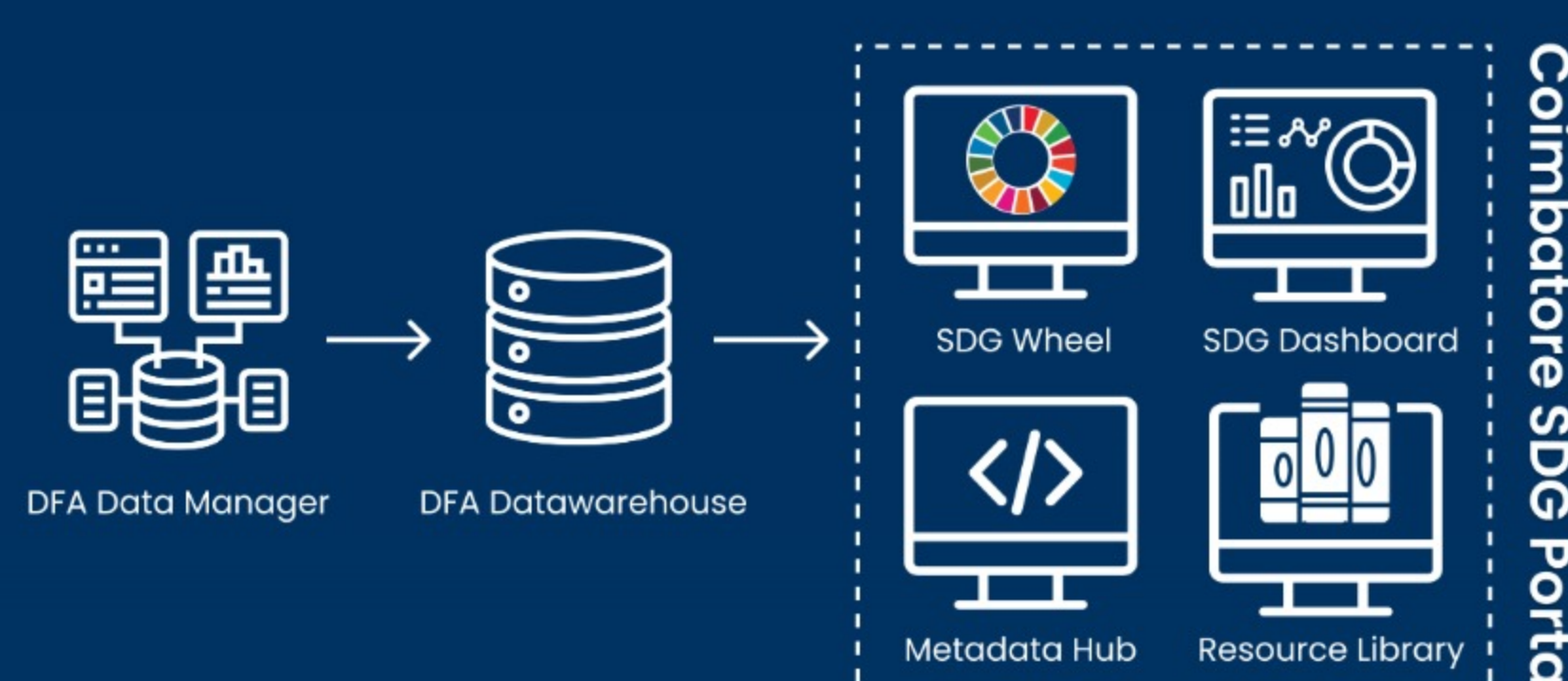
- **Step 4 : Capacity Development & project learnings** - The Municipal Corporation was trained on how to use and manage the data portal. Documentation was handed over to the relevant team containing all key learnings.

Solution

To develop the Coimbatore SDG Platform the Data For All (DFA) tool suite was used. We leveraged tools like the Data Manager and the Dashboard Builder. The Data Manager was used to develop an indicator based database while the Dashboard Builder was used to design and develop the SDG Dashboard. This dashboard is by nature dynamic, at two levels:

Level 1 : Whenever new data is input for an indicator in the Data Manager, this indicator visualization will automatically update in the dashboard.

Level2 : If the administrator wants to add new visualizations or new sections to the existing dashboard, it can be done easily through the dashboard builder tool.

Drupal content Management system framework has been used to develop the portal of Coimbatore. Modules like Resource Library, and Metadata Hub have been developed to further share information with users on definition of indicators, & key reports. The end product is a user-friendly and dynamic data portals which provides key insights on the city development to the public.

Implementation

Our approach towards the implementation of the Coimbatore SDG Platform was multifaceted, and can be broadly categorized into three sections:

- **Inclusive and participative meetings :** The key to the success of this project has been the inclusiveness of the implementation. Several technical meetings were held with Avalon at the helm. These discussions focused on the identification of the indicators that best reflected the city's development needs, points of concerns and progress. Avalon's understanding of the city's frameworks and needs was greatly enhanced by GIZ's support to liaise with the various relevant stakeholders.

- **Capacity development :** A 2 days, face to face workshop was conducted in Coimbatore with members of the Municipal corporation. The objective of the workshop was to sensitize the team members to the importance of the SDGs and their alignment to the sectors on which the team is currently actively working on. Furthermore, the SDG dashboard was presented, and the participants were asked whether it aligned to their decision-making requirements. Since the city team would also be the administrator of the SDG platform, they were trained on how to manage their data warehouse and the dashboard.

- **Documenting Key Learnings :** The sustainability of a project depends on capturing and documenting the key learnings of implementation for the reference of the city level team. Considering the constant turn-over of staff, the need for efficient and effective knowledge transfer was felt. A series of documents were developed for this project focusing on the importance of SDGs for cities as well as manuals on how to use the tools.

Impact & Benefits

As a result of the work undertaken by Avalon in close collaboration with the GIZ, today the city of Coimbatore is equipped with a data portal on SDG localisation, a key decision-making tool for the city level administration. Such an initiative boosts local development and encourages the city administration to easily disseminate the wealth of data they are collecting on an almost day-to-day basis

The former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon was convinced that "Our struggle for global sustainability will be won or lost in cities". The collaboration between the various departments at the city level mirrors what is happening at the state and national level. Since development is a bottom to top approach, we feel the localisation initiative of the city of Coimbatore is a model that other cities should follow to create more transparency and accountability in their development agenda.

Furthermore, the development of the data portal has contributed to the democratization and the centralization of data pertaining to city development. Not only decision makers, but also researchers and civic volunteers benefit from the platform to create awareness, which adds an educational dimension to the initiative.