

IDEV

Independent Development Evaluation
African Development Bank

From experience to knowledge...
From knowledge to action...
*From action to **impact***



Gabon:

Evaluation of the AfDB Country Strategy and Program (2011-2020)

Summary Report

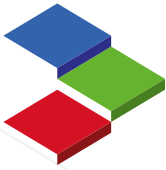


AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK GROUP

July 2021

IDEV conducts different types of evaluations to achieve its strategic objectives





IDEV

Independent Development Evaluation
African Development Bank

From experience to knowledge...
From knowledge to action...
*From action to **impact***



Gabon:

Evaluation of the AfDB Country Strategy and Program (2011-2020)

Summary Report



AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK GROUP

July 2021

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	
Task Manager:	Samson K. Houetohossou , Principal Evaluation Officer
Team Members:	Eric A.O. Yai , Consultant (at the beginning) and Mohammed Khoali , Consultant (at completion)
Consultants:	Analysis for Economic Decision (ADE - Belgium), under the supervision of Hubert Cathala
Internal Peer Reviewer:	Oswald Agbadomé , Principal Evaluation Officer
External Peer Reviewer:	Mohamed Hedi Manai , International Consultant
Bank's Internal Reference Group:	Central Africa Regional Development and Business Delivery Office (RDGC); African Development Bank Country Office in Gabon (COGA); Country Economy Department (ECCE); Governance and Public Finance Management Department (ECGF); Delivery, Performance Management and Results Department (SNDR).
Knowledge Management and Communication Officers:	Jacqueline Nyagahima , Principal Knowledge Management Officer, Raky M. Gassama , Senior Knowledge Management Officer, Najade Lindsay , Knowledge Management Officer and Marc Bappa Se , Junior Consultant
Additional support provided by:	Yao Parfait Kouassi , Team Assistant; Henda Ayari , Team Assistant; Myrtha Diop , Senior Budget and Administrative Assistant, and Ruby Adzobu-Agyare , Secretary
Special thanks to:	All AfDB Country Office staff in Gabon, development partners met during the field mission, the Government of Gabon, especially the FINEX Unit and other external stakeholders that contributed directly or indirectly to the evaluation process.
Division manager:	Madhusoodhanan Mampuzhasseril
Evaluator-General:	Karen Rot-Münstermann (Acting) Roland Michelitsch (Former)

© 2021 African Development Bank Group
All rights reserved – July 2021

Gabon: Evaluation of the AfDB Country Strategy and Program (2011-2020) – Summary Report
IDEV Country Strategy Evaluation, July 2021

Disclaimer

Unless expressly stated otherwise, the findings, interpretations and conclusions expressed in this publication are those of the various authors of the publication and are not necessarily those of the Management of the African Development Bank (the "Bank") and the African Development Fund (the "Fund"), Boards of Directors, Boards of Governors or the countries they represent.

Use of this publication is at the reader's sole risk. The content of this publication is provided without warranty of any kind, either express or implied, including without limitation warranties of merchantability, fitness for a particular purpose, and non-infringement of third-party rights. The Bank specifically does not make any warranties or representations as to the accuracy, completeness, reliability or current validity of any information contained in the publication. Under no circumstances including, but not limited to, negligence, shall the Bank be liable for any loss, damage, liability or expense incurred or suffered which is claimed to result directly or indirectly from use of this publication or reliance on its content.

This publication may contain advice, opinions, and statements of various information and content providers. The Bank does not represent or endorse the accuracy, completeness, reliability or current validity of any advice, opinion, statement or other information provided by any information or content provider or other person or entity. Reliance upon any such opinion, advice, statement, or other information shall also be at the reader's own risk.

About the AfDB

The overarching objective of the African Development Bank Group is to spur sustainable economic development and social progress in its regional member countries (RMCs), thus contributing to poverty reduction. The Bank Group achieves this objective by mobilizing and allocating resources for investment in RMCs and providing policy advice and technical assistance to support development efforts.

About Independent Development Evaluation (IDEV)

The mission of Independent Development Evaluation at the AfDB is to enhance the development effectiveness of the institution in its regional member countries through independent and instrumental evaluations and partnerships for sharing knowledge.

Independent Development Evaluation (IDEV)

African Development Bank Group
Avenue Joseph Anoma, 01 BP 1387, Abidjan, 01 Côte d'Ivoire
Phone: +225 27 20 26 28 41
E-mail: idevhelpdesk@afdb.org
idev.afdb.org

Photo Credit: AfDB Group and AfDB Projects on Flickr | Design & layout: GK Graphics (www.gkgraphics.in)

Original language: French

Translation: AfDB Language Services Department

Contents

Abbreviations and Acronyms	v
Executive Summary	1
Management Response	9
Introduction	19
Evaluation Objective and Scope	19
Methodology and Limitations	19
Gabon's Development Context	21
Economic and Governance Context	21
Social Context	22
Gabon's Main Development Challenges	23
Gabon's Development Strategies	23
Bank Strategies and Programs in Gabon	25
Strategic Framework of Bank Interventions in Gabon	25
Bank Portfolio in Gabon	26
Performance of Bank Strategies and Programs in Gabon	29
Relevance	29
Effectiveness	31
Efficiency	37
Sustainability	39
Crosscutting Issues	41
Program Management and Bank Performance	45
Knowledge Management and Policy Dialogue	45
Donor Coordination	46
Results-based Management	47
Conclusions, Lessons and Recommendations	49
Conclusions	49
Lessons	50
Recommendations	51
Annexes	53

Contents

List of Tables

Table 1	Evaluation Questions	20
Table 2	Gabon's Key Macroeconomic Indicators	22
Table 3	Bank's Strategic Pillars and Objectives for Gabon	25
Table 4	Assessment Summary of the Main Evaluation Criteria	49

List of Figures

Figure 1	Trends and Sector Distribution of AfDB Approvals in Gabon, 2011-2020	26
Figure 2	Trend of Recurrent Expenditure and Non-oil Revenue	33
Figure 3	Trends of Gabon's "Doing Business" Ranking (2011-2020)	34
Figure 4	Average Start-up Delay by Project Type (months)	37

List of Boxes

Box 1	Diversifying the Gabonese economy	11
Box 2	Gabonese Government's Response to the COVID-19 Crisis	24
Box 3	Efficiency of AfDB programs in light of Changing Leadership	39
Box 4	Summary of Success and Failure Factors	50

Abbreviations and Acronyms

ADAG	Gabon Agricultural Development Agency	IDEV	Independent Development Evaluation
ADOA	Additionality and Development Outcomes Assessment	IMF	International Monetary Fund
AfDB	African Development Bank	MIC	Middle-income Country
ANCAR	National Agricultural and Rural Advisory Agency	MUA¹	Million Units of Account
BEAC	Central Bank of Central African States	PABURC	Emergency Budget Support Program in Response to the Crisis
BSTP	Subcontracting and Partnership Exchange	PACEBCo	Congo Basin Ecosystem Conservation Support Program
CAMC	Arbitration, Mediation and Conciliation Centre	PADEG	Gabonese Economic Diversification Support Project
CCAIMAG	Gabonese Chamber of Commerce, Agriculture, Industry, Mining and Handicraft	PAGDRF	Support Project for the Sustainable Management of Forest Resources in Gabon
CEMAC	Central African Economic and Monetary Community	PAMPDIEG	Business Incubator Development Support Project in Gabon
CGA	Accredited Management Centre	PAPG	GRAINE Support Program (phases 1 & 2)
COMIFAC	Central African Forest Commission	PAREF	Economic and Financial Reform Support Program
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019	PASIG	Infrastructure Sector Support Project in Gabon
CSP	Country Strategy Paper	PASTA-PEJA	Project to Support the Agricultural Transformation Strategy and Promote Youth Entrepreneurship in Agriculture and Agribusiness
ECCAS	Economic Commission for Central African States	PCR	Project Completion Report
ESMP	Environmental and Social Management Plan	PPP	Public-Private Partnership
FCFA	Franc of the African Financial Community	PRE	Economic Recovery Plan
FER	Road Maintenance Fund	PR-1	Road Program - Phase 1
GDP	Gross Domestic Product	PSGE	Emerging Gabon Strategic Plan
GRAINE	Gabonaise des réalisations agricoles et des initiatives des nationaux engagés (Agricultural Production and Initiatives of Committed Gabonese Nationals)	PSO	Program Support Operation
GSEZ	Gabon Special Economic Zone Port Project	PSPA	Fisheries and Aquaculture Sector Support Project
ICT	Information and Communication Technology	RISP	Regional Integration Strategy Paper

Abbreviations and Acronyms

SIAT	Société d'Investissement pour l'Agriculture Tropicale (Tropical Agriculture Investment Company)	TA	Technical Assistance
SME	Small and Medium-sized Enterprise	TFP	Technical and Financial Partner
SOTRADER	Société Gabonaise de Transformation Agricole et Développement Rural (Gabonese Agricultural Processing and Rural Development Company)	USD	United States Dollar
		WB	World Bank



GABON



Executive Summary

Introduction

This report presents the main findings, lessons and recommendations of the Evaluation of African Development Bank (AfDB) Strategies and Programs in Gabon for the 2011-2020 period. The evaluation covers the Bank's two Country Strategy Papers for the period (CSPs 2011-2015 and 2016-2020). Their implementation covers an overall portfolio of UA 1,093.65 million, comprising 22 national projects of about UA 1,004.9 million (including 12 Technical Assistance projects), 8 multinational projects (UA 88.7 million) and 4 other projects approved before 2011, but implemented during the period under review. The interventions cover 7 operational sectors: i) Governance; ii) Agriculture; iii) Water and Sanitation; iv) Transport; v) Environment; vi) Social; and vii) Communication. The evaluation aims to analyze the performance of Bank interventions in Gabon and their contribution to the country's development outcomes as well as draw lessons from its experience to improve the design and implementation of future strategies and programs in the country.

Methodology

The evaluation is based on the theory of change that underpins the Bank's assistance strategies. Based on specific evaluation issues, it analyses the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of Bank interventions using a pyramid approach at project, sector and country strategy levels. The evaluation also covers the Bank's program management performance. Data for the analyses was collected through a comprehensive desk review of projects and strategies, interviews with key stakeholders involved

in designing and implementing Bank strategies and programs in Gabon, and site visits to road, port and agricultural projects. The approach followed is based on an in-depth analysis of three main sectors that form the backbone of the core pillars on which the assistance strategies were founded, through the review of completed projects in the following sectors: (i) Governance and Inclusion, (ii) Agriculture and the Environment, and (iii) Infrastructure. Sector briefs and portfolio analysis were consolidated into a technical document used for preparing this Summary Report.

The evaluation faced two main constraints: apart from the weak national statistical system and hence the unavailability of required data, the evaluation was undertaken during the 2019 Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, which forced the team to conduct mostly virtual interviews with the assistance of local consultants for site visits.

Key Findings

Relevance

The relevance of the Bank's strategies and programs over the period under review was deemed satisfactory. The Bank's CSPs for the evaluation period were broadly aligned with national policies and strategies, including the Strategic Plan for an Emerging Gabon (PSGE) and the Economic Recovery Plan (PRE). The operations responded to the country's priority challenges and needs, including macroeconomic instability, weak governance structures, unfavorable business climate and heavy dependence on the oil sector. The Bank's focus on key sectors such as governance, infrastructure

and agriculture responded to the country's urgent economic diversification needs.

Concerning governance, the Economic and Financial Reform Support Program (PAREF) together with the various capacity-building operations supported most of the strategic objectives under PSGE Thrust 1. aimed at reinforcing the country's competitiveness, including one of the four sub-areas on strengthening governance, especially by strengthening the legal framework for public-private partnerships (PPPs), promoting public and private investments, budget reform, etc. It also backed the second strategic thrust of the PSGE, which aims to diversify sources of growth. The program also underpins the second strategic thrust of the ESMP, aimed at diversifying the sources of growth.

The Bank's interventions in the infrastructure sector, especially Road Program Phase I (PR-I) and the Infrastructure Sector Support Project in Gabon (PASIG-I), correspond to national challenges and priorities, particularly the development of the private sector and productive zones, as well as regional integration, all of which are in line with the PSGE. The implementation of Road Program Phase 1 (PR-1) addresses the objectives of gradually establishing a transformational national road network and opening up areas with a high agricultural and forestry production potential. As a continuation of PR-1, PASIG-I targets the objective of modernizing the road network and diversifying the economy. The project is in line with the National Infrastructure Development Plan and the Libreville Urban Development and Planning Master Plan 2010-2035. However, pending an official request from the Gabonese Government, a procedure for the cancellation of the project would be initiated. Lastly, the GSEZ (Gabon Special Economic Zone) Port Project is helping to solve the current infrastructure and logistics problems assailing Owendo Port.

Bank assistance in the agricultural sector is also in line with the diversification needs expressed in the PSGE. The GRAINE² Program Support Project Phase 1 (PAPG-1) focuses on the rehabilitation

of road infrastructure to open up rural areas with high agricultural production and provide services to farmer cooperatives. Support for the provision of services to farmers corresponds to the needs recognized by all sector stakeholders.

Operations in all sectors covered by the Bank in Gabon are consistent with the Bank's overall priorities and sector strategies and plug directly into four of the High 5s. They also contribute to regional integration and are in line with the priorities of the two Regional Integration Strategy Papers (RISP) for Central Africa, the first pillar of which addresses the need to strengthen regional infrastructure.

However, analysis of the Bank's portfolio over the period under review indicates a lack of selectivity and depth in the initial diagnoses. Beyond the three key sectors, there is a certain dispersion of AfDB-financed operations in Gabon over the 2011-2020 period in the drinking water and sanitation, as well as information and communication technology (ICT) sectors. Furthermore, CSP 2016-2020 lays too much emphasis on agro-industry in the absence of an in-depth diagnosis, to the detriment of existing agricultural production systems, local dynamics and the logic underpinning rural family activity systems.

Effectiveness

The effectiveness of the Bank's support to Gabon during the period under review was deemed satisfactory overall. The weak implementation of the indicative lending program under CSP 2011-2015 gave way to a revitalized cooperation between 2016 and 2020. Expected outputs were delivered in most sectors of intervention (except energy), even though they did not systematically achieve the expected outcomes and impacts.

The Bank was unable to intervene in the energy sector during the CSP 2011-2015 period due to the low delivery on the indicative lending program over the period. Of the 12 projects identified in the

indicative lending program, only 4 TAs operations materialized. This situation particularly affected the energy sector where the two projects planned were abandoned. In contrast, most of the actions planned in other sectors were replicated (at least partially) in projects approved under the second CSP.

The Bank's support in the governance sector, in collaboration with World Bank (WB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF), has helped to restore macroeconomic stability and strengthen public financial management. AfDB financial support contributed to a significant expansion of the fiscal space, particularly in 2017 when the two PAREF disbursements totaling MUA 400 accounted for 55% of the total budgetary support allocated to the country by the various technical and financial partners (TFPs). At the end of the implementation of the PAREF program in 2019, 16 of the 19 planned measures had been implemented, two were ongoing, and one had been partially implemented. These different measures helped to reduce recurrent expenditure in 2019 to below 21% of non-oil gross domestic product (GDP) as set out in the PAREF. This trend, combined with a moderate increase in non-oil revenue (which nevertheless remained below the expected 20% of GDP target in 2019), helped to consolidate the country's fiscal position with a cash-based budget balance that became positive again at 1.5% of GDP in 2019. Public debt also started declining from 64.2% of GDP in 2016 to 60.9% in 2018, before rebounding in 2020. Through PAREF, the Bank supported the clearing of arrears owed to the private sector. A five-year clearance plan (2018-2022) is underway for companies that have joined the Libreville Club.

However, work must continue to improve the business climate and boost economic competitiveness and diversification. The Bank supported the strengthening of the regulatory framework for PPPs through PAREF, with the adoption in 2018 of three fundamental implementing texts of the PPP Decree. Despite the outcomes achieved, the PPP management framework has neither been completed nor fully

operational. Gabon does not have a national strategy or an exhaustive list of PPP³ projects, meaning that there is a lack of articulation with other public investments. The Bank's support has not sufficiently led to the emergence of structures to support investment and economic activities. Therefore, except for the improvement recorded in 2015 (144th/189 countries), Gabon's Doing Business ranking deteriorated over the 2013-2020 period.

The Bank's support to infrastructure helped to strengthen both road and port infrastructure. Under PR-1, the Bank supported the upgrading of 245.6 km of roads on three trunks. These improvements helped to reduce vehicle operating costs by up to 35% (PR-1 PCR, 2014). Transporters and road users have confirmed a reduction in travel time by half and an increase in trade. Following the commissioning of the rehabilitated sections of PR-1 in 2013, the road traffic volume increased by 30% and 13% on the Fougamou-Mouila and Ndendé-Lébamba sections, respectively. Thanks to the ancillary infrastructure built (schools, dispensaries, boreholes, etc.), the project also improved the attractiveness of the rural areas impacted and contributed to public access to basic services (education, health, etc.). Regarding the GSEZ Port, all quay extension (380 m) and dredging works as well as storage facilities have been completed. Although the terminal is operational, the project's long-term outcomes could be affected since the dredging has not yet reached the terminal's required depth of 14 meters to accommodate larger vessels. Therefore, COVID-19 and its negative impact on the OLAM⁴ Group's turnover present a risk for the achievement of the targeted outcomes.

In the agricultural sector, the Fisheries and Aquaculture Sector Support Projects (PSPA) and the Project to establish Société d'Investissement pour l'Agriculture Tropicale (Tropical Agriculture Investment Corporation - SIAT) achieved most of their outputs. However, these outputs have not translated into significant impacts. In the case of PSPA, the expected increase in the production and

marketing of fisheries and aquaculture products did not materialize - in fact, domestic production declined by 37.5% between 2007 and 2014. As for SIAT-Gabon, although oil palm and rubber plantations as well as the related processing plants (crushing, refinery, soap factory), storage and fisheries support infrastructures have been established, SIAT Gabon no longer produces palm oil, has reduced its rubber sector activities and divested its livestock activity. SIAT has not obtained the expected results from its business in the various intervention zones. The outcomes in terms of job creation (especially for Gabonese citizens) and foreign exchange generation are limited, if not non-existent.

Moreover, the implementation of the main agricultural program (PAPG-1) has only just begun. Thus, the project's support to agricultural cooperatives has not yet started. However, progress has been made through OLAM financing to increase the area under rubber and oil palm cultivation, to strengthen institutions and generate knowledge, thanks to several studies conducted. The Bank supported the establishment of the Gabon Agricultural Development Agency (ADAG) and the National Agency for Agricultural and Rural Consultancy (ANCAR). However, ANCAR is not yet operational and ADAG still has relatively limited resources. Similarly, the farmers' cooperatives still need significant consolidation before they can become autonomous. Overall, the rural areas are not yet fully developed and the agricultural sector's contribution to economic diversification remains limited.

In sum, diversification remains a work in progress. The Gabonese economy continues to be heavily dependent on oil and vulnerable to external shocks. Non-oil GDP growth has been limited to between 2.5% and 3.5% since 2015. The rate of private investment as a percentage of GDP was far below the 32.6% expected for 2018 (27.8% in 2018, 28% in 2019 and expected to reach

28.4% in 2020⁵ according to recent data from the International Monetary Fund). However, the agricultural sector's share of GDP increased slightly from 3.7% in 2014 to 5.5% in 2019 (World Bank, 2020), marginally above the PAREF target of 4.7%, and the volume of food imports continues to rise.

Efficiency

Overall, the efficiency of AfDB interventions in Gabon during the 2011-2020 period is deemed unsatisfactory, mainly due to project implementation delays attributable to late start-up and the low capacity of project implementation units, among others. However, the evaluation concluded that the cost-benefit ratio for infrastructure projects in the country was satisfactory.

Despite a lower-than-expected discounted economic rate of return (ERR) at project completion, the road project is still economically viable. For the GSEZ Port Project (port concession), the debt cost recovery issue must be of particular concern in the coming years. The COVID-19 crisis could compromise the initial revenue forecasts in the short and medium term, and the private operator could find it difficult to meet its debt repayment deadlines.

Except for program-based support operations (PBOs), the overall compliance of projects with timeframes was considered unsatisfactory in all sectors. Delays were observed both at project start-up and during implementation. Average delays at start-up were around 10 months from approval to first disbursement, above the 6-month target. The delays experienced were due to several factors, the most recurrent of which were poor knowledge of Bank procedures, particularly in terms of procurement and financial management, delays in start-up and initial disbursements, inadequate institutional anchoring as well as lack of coordination and/or involvement of the various

national authorities operating in the sectors of intervention. However, the situation improved during the period under review, with delays decreasing from an average of 14.48 months under CSP 2011-2015 to 6.31 months for the CSP 2016-2020 cycle.

Sustainability

The sustainability of Bank interventions in Gabon during the evaluation period was unsatisfactory.

Regarding governance, successive PBOs helped the country to regain its budget surplus, establish a stable macroeconomic framework and strengthen its resilience to pandemic-related shocks. However, Gabon's public finances are still vulnerable, with high dependence on oil revenue (30% of total revenue), a public debt in 2020 at the very limit of sustainability (74.7% of GDP) and debt interest at 2.5% of GDP or 17% of public revenue according to the IMF. Moreover, the sustainability of measures adopted was limited by the inadequacy of or delay in implementing institutional support.

Concerning infrastructure, even if the technical quality of the facilities is satisfactory, the lack of ownership and weaknesses in road maintenance pose a real threat to sustainability in the short/medium term. Due to the low allocations granted to the RMF (Road Maintenance Fund), the maintenance program for the priority road network is not being carried out in favor of non-programmed and non-priority works (resurfacing of less priority sections, paving of secondary roads, etc.). Consequently, the percentage of the road network in excellent or good condition has been falling since 2015, from 16% and 20% to 6% and 7% in 2020 respectively, while 80% of the road network is in poor condition. Moreover, the axle load control system for heavy vehicles is inadequate.

In the agricultural sector, the economic and financial viability of agricultural activities is limited by Gabon's high production costs, particularly those related to labor, fertilizer and small agricultural equipment. Furthermore, agricultural projects are

characterized by a lack of financial empowerment and non-sustainability of outcomes. Local banks are not accessible to small-scale farmers.

At the environmental level, the two CSPs for the period under review include brief analyses of the environment and climate change. The environmental aspect was also covered in the portfolio through two projects, PACEBCo⁶ and PAGDRF⁷. At project level, the Bank applies its requirement on identification of negative environmental impacts on all sectors of intervention. However, despite the preparation of Environmental and Social Management Plans (ESMPs) and their public dissemination during the implementation phase, monitoring and reporting are almost always lacking. Site visits conducted as part of the evaluation process revealed a low level of ESMP implementation. This is due to the absence of environmental specialists in the project management units, among others.

Crosscutting Issues

Besides the environmental aspects discussed above, the evaluation also analysed gender and social inclusion issues. The Bank mainstreams gender in all its interventions but lacks a clear global approach to its priorities in the fight against gender inequality in Gabon. Therefore, this dimension is not sufficiently addressed at the project level. The Bank's strategies in Gabon address the challenges of inclusion, while also showcasing its ambition to tackle them directly. However, despite initiatives in the agriculture and infrastructure sectors, these ambitions have not yet materialized at the operational level.

The Bank's Performance: Coordination, Policy Dialogue and Managing for Results

Gabon does not have a standard framework for coordinating TFPs, despite the establishment in April 2010 of a joint strategic orientation and consultation committee on external aid coordination split into several thematic groups. The framework

was hardly functional given the limited availability of financial assistance from TFPs under the first CSP. Coordination with TFPs was boosted over the second CSP period (2016-2020), particularly in the governance sector (especially with the IMF and the World Bank) during the preparation of budget support. However, measures selected sometimes overlap (e.g. AfDB and World Bank e-tax). Despite good initial coordination, the delay of the Gabonese Economic Diversification Support Project (PADEG) affected the continuity of operations and limited synergies with other programs.

Through its CSPs, the Bank identified a list of relevant analytical work, most of which are logically in line with the diversification of the Gabonese economy. However, the analytical work conducted by the Bank has contributed more towards identifying new financing and less towards strategic or policy dialogue. For example, in the infrastructure sector, the Bank regularly conducts dialogue missions with Gabon to identify new projects or areas of intervention in line with the country's and AfDB priorities. However, the important issue of road maintenance is not the subject of an explicit and specific dialogue. In the governance sector, dialogue with the country intensified with the preparation of PAREF. Moreover, although dialogue between donors on the governance component (IMF, WB, AfDB, France) became more fluid during the second CSP period, policy dialogue remains essentially bilateral.

The AfDB made provision for a monitoring mechanism under the two CSPs, marked by mid-term reviews and the preparation of completion reports. The two CSPs under review were subject to mid-term reviews and completion reports, particularly for the first CSP. Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms were set up at the project level, but they were generally not well developed. Similarly, self-evaluation assessments of project outcomes (IPR, PCR) seem to be too optimistic, and

the lessons drawn from monitoring/evaluation work are not widely disseminated to stakeholders.

Recommendations

In light of the above findings, the evaluation proposes the following recommendations:

1. **Deepen the analysis of the context and the specific challenges facing Gabon, especially those related to the country's economic diversification and private sector development** by establishing a conducive environment for promoting small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).
2. **Strengthen the selectivity of Bank interventions** around key sectors with high potential for economic recovery and diversification.
3. **Strengthen the implementation of the Bank's country program for Gabon.** It is recommended to:
 - Further structure policy dialogue mechanisms in the long term and within a clear context involving policy makers and strategic advisors;
 - Ensure ownership of reform measures through appropriate conditionalities for commitment and monitoring, particularly with regard to sector plans for economic recovery;
 - Reach agreement with the Gabonese authorities on a formal commitment before starting project preparation, especially for investment projects requiring substantial resources for identification and preparation.
4. **Support the promotion of PPPs** particularly by modernizing Gabonese legislation and strengthening building national institutional capacity in PPP management and monitoring.

5. Strengthen the sustainability of Bank interventions. The following measures are proposed:

- Incorporate in the project design document the institutional and financial management and maintenance arrangements to be put in place, including a clear description of the responsibilities and obligations of each stakeholder;
- Support the establishment of an effective monitoring and evaluation system for implementation, especially for the transport sector: axle load control and improved governance of the Road Maintenance Fund;
- Ensure monitoring and reporting on ESMP implementation throughout the project management cycle. ■



Management Response

Management welcomes the outcome of the evaluation conducted by the Independent Development Evaluation Department (IDEV) on the African Development Bank's strategies and programmes in Gabon during the 2011-2020 period. The evaluation aims at analysing the performance of Bank interventions in Gabon and their contribution to the country's development outcomes; and at drawing on the Bank's experience to improve the design and implementation of future Bank strategies and programmes in the country. Management agrees with the five main recommendations on: deepening knowledge of the country context, strengthening the selectivity of interventions, reinforcing the implementation of the country programme, promoting Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) and improving the sustainability of Bank interventions.

Introduction

The Bank's country strategy serves as the basis for its engagement with member countries and is a programming framework that determines programmes and projects as well as the allocation of financial resources to achieve national development objectives. Recognising the importance of this tool, Management seeks to continuously refine its approach to better serve its clients in a dynamic environment. To this end, Management welcomes the outcomes and recommendations of the evaluation of the Bank's strategies and programmes in Gabon for the 2011-2020 period.

The evaluation concluded that the overall relevance and effectiveness of the Bank's interventions in Gabon were satisfactory; however, efforts are still needed to address delays in project commencement and implementation, ensure sustainability and selectivity of interventions, and maintain on-going dialogue with all stakeholders at the country level. The recommendations relate to: (i) deepening the analysis of the context and specific challenges in Gabon; (ii) ensuring the selectivity of Bank interventions; (iii) implementing the country programme;

(iv) promoting Public-Private Partnerships (PPP); and (v) ensuring the sustainability of Bank interventions.

Management appreciates the quality of the analysis in the evaluation report and has already taken into consideration the report's findings and recommendations in the updating of the 2016-2020 Country Strategy Paper (CSP) and extension to end-2022, which is currently being prepared. The various lessons and recommendations identified will guide the dialogue with stakeholders at the country level as well as the implementation of the country programme in the future.

Relevance

Management is pleased that the evaluation of the relevance of the Bank's strategies and programmes over the review period was deemed satisfactory. The evaluation recognised the alignment of the CSPs with national policies and strategies, especially those emanating from the Emerging Gabon Strategic Plan (PSGE) and the Economic Recovery Plan (ERP). By focusing on key sectors such as governance, infrastructure

and agriculture, the Bank's interventions have met the country's urgent needs regarding economic diversification.

In addition to its dialogue on the CSP pillars, the Bank will endorse the new 2021-2023 Transformation Acceleration Plan (TAP) which was approved by the government in January 2021 and whose implementation has already begun. TAP has identified 34 priority projects built around three pillars (economic, social, and cross-cutting). It prioritises ten sectors of intervention in Gabon, namely: hydro-carbons, mining and metals; agriculture, agri-business and fishing; timber, construction and housing; infrastructure; digital and telecommunications; energy and water; the business environment; health; education; and public finance. This Plan is consistent with the Bank's priority objectives (High 5s) and provides the right conditions for dialogue with the Government. It is important to note that the Bank has played a key role in setting up a Bank project delivery unit under the TAP (2021-2023).

Management agrees with the recommendations on the dispersion of AfDB-financed projects in Gabon over the 2011-2020 period, toward the sectors of energy, water and sanitation, information and communication technology (ICT), and will take this into consideration in the identification of future projects submitted for financing.

Management agrees that it is appropriate to regularly deepen the analysis of the context and the specific challenges related to the implementation of country strategies in the country. With this in mind and drawing from the dispersion of our interventions mentioned above, the Bank redefined its intervention framework in 2016 by focusing on the issue of private sector diversification and promotion. Indeed, the first pillar of the 2016-2020 CSP is entitled "support for economic diversification through infrastructure development and improvement of the business climate".

Significant progress has been made by the country with respect to economic diversification, marked, in particular, by a significant increase in the share of processed raw materials in export products, such as sawn timber (12% in 2017 compared to 3.3% in 2010) and the growth of non-oil GDP, which rose from 56% in 2010 to 67% in 2019. However, economic diversification progress has not significantly improved the population's well-being and must be continued and strengthened. The CSP update at the end of 2022, with maintenance of pillars, that will be submitted to the Board, will focus on the pillar relating to "Support for economic diversification through infrastructure development and the improvement of the business climate". The Bank plans to increase its support in diversification (Box 1).

Management therefore takes note of the observation that there is a lack of in-depth analysis of the initial assessments, especially in the agricultural sector. To remedy this, Management plans to prepare a Country Diagnostic Note by 2022, before the preparation of the next CSP, to better identify the country's sector challenges and opportunities. A fruitful dialogue exists among the Bank, the Government and forestry and agricultural stakeholders. Thus, the Bank will prepare an agricultural profile study relating to gender issues, while identifying production methods. In addition, the Bank will prepare a soil quality mapping study relating to agriculture, to better identify the soil potential of the different regions and to know which crop is better adapted to which soil type. In addition, in the agricultural sector, to have better knowledge of agricultural production systems, in 2020, the World Bank, with the technical support of the FAO, financed a general agriculture census whose report will be available by May 2021. This report will provide a mapping of the agricultural sector, including agricultural production systems. The outcomes of this agricultural census will be used to have a better understanding of the sector and production practices in order to improve the effectiveness of Bank interventions in the sector.

Box 1 : Diversifying the Gabonese economy

The Timber Sector Industrialisation Support Project currently under preparation aims at diversifying the economy. The objective is to support the acceleration of the development of the 2nd and 3rd wood processing industries while promoting the diversification of products and export markets for processed products which are currently and primarily oriented towards Asia (China, India) and Europe to a lesser extent. The implementation of this project will make it possible to take advantage of the African market with the advent of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), given the growing urbanisation and the boom in the construction sector. Gabon could also be considered under the Bank's "African Industrial Transformation Outlook" initiative.

Lastly, within the framework of the Reform Matrix of the RDVP, a study has been planned on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and reforms to be carried out to revive the Gabonese economy.

With a view to diversifying, the Bank will also strengthen its actions to promote PPPs in Gabon. It plays a key role in identifying structural reforms as codified in the water and energy codes. It should be recalled that in terms of promoting Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) in Central Africa, the Bank held a regional sensitisation and training workshop for member countries of the region in Yaoundé on 8 May 2017. At the end of this workshop, the Bank began mobilising resources to provide technical support to countries in the region for the: (i) identification of bottlenecks that hamper the implementation of PPPs in countries of the region; (ii) upgrading of the legal and regulatory frameworks; and (iii) building of a pipeline of projects that can be financed under the PPP model. In Gabon, the Bank also provided regular support to the National Investment Promotion Agency for the promotion of public-private partnerships. The Bank also supported PPP-related reforms in the water sector in 2019.

Management recognises that it must enhance the selection of its interventions around sectors with an inclusive impact on development. Based on the TAP, this selectivity of our future operations will be based on the lessons learned from our cooperation with Gabon, prioritising their inclusion according to their state of maturity, in accordance with the CSP guidelines updated at the end of 2022. It should be recalled that in the process of preparing the 2016-

2020 CSP and its mid-term review, CODE had asked the Bank (COGA) to contact the Gabonese authorities to discuss CSP selectivity. The various studies conducted in Gabon since 2017 by the Bank were aimed at focusing our interventions on key sectors with high impact for economic recovery and diversification. The CSP update at the end of 2022 will maintain the two pillars, including the one on "supporting economic diversification through infrastructure development and the improvement of the business climate". Also, in order to better reflect our concern for selectivity, the new operations will mainly concern this first pillar in order to strengthen infrastructures in support of economic diversification and continue progress in terms of reforms and improvement of the business climate (governance and reforms, PPP, employability of young people...). The second pillar relating to human development will be maintained for the dialogue on current operations.

Effectiveness

The evaluation deemed the effectiveness of Bank support to Gabon during the period under review to be satisfactory overall. The evaluation highlighted progress made, especially regarding governance, through budget support which helped to strengthen public finance management until 2019 and the process of clearing arrears to the private sector. It noted the Bank's key role in the launch of the process of establishing a new Investment Code, the development of 246.5 km of roads and the construction of the GSEZ port in Owendo.

In addition, Management takes note of efforts to be made to (i) advance economic diversification and the business climate, especially through the establishment of an operational management framework for PPPs; (ii) increase the level of production and marketing of fishery and aquaculture products in order to increase agriculture's share in GDP; and (iii) ensure the continuity or sustainability of the results obtained through its interventions.

Efficiency

The efficiency of operations over the 2011-2020 period in Gabon was deemed unsatisfactory overall. This dissatisfaction is due, among other things, to delays in project commencement and implementation. Management acknowledges these observations and agrees with the recommendations to strengthen project implementation.

The delays are due to: (i) weak capacity of the project management units (PIUs) regarding procurement procedures, monitoring and evaluation, and financial management; (ii) weak institutional anchoring, coupled with a lack of coordination and/or involvement of the various national authorities concerned; (iii) delays in meeting the conditions precedent to the first disbursement of projects, and sometimes in recruiting key PIU staff; and (iv) numerous changes in project management staff at the country level.

To improve project commencement, the Bank will prioritise the early procurement procedure for all new operations. To speed up the implementation of ongoing projects, project implementation acceleration action plans will be established and rigorously implemented to increase the project disbursement rate. To build the capacity of the PIUs, fiduciary clinics will be organised regularly.

Management takes note of efforts to be made to strengthen the dialogue with national authorities and concerned sector ministries to ensure their

involvement and commitment in the implementation of projects.

Sustainability

The evaluation deemed the sustainability of Bank interventions in Gabon during the evaluation period unsatisfactory. The sustainability of

the measures adopted was limited by: (i) lack of adequate resources for project monitoring; (ii) weak ownership of projects by line ministries; (iii) numerous changes in government staff (involved in project management) which weaken national ownership of already approved operations; and (iv) lack of a national system of empowerment and sustainability of results. To ensure continuity in the Bank's intervention, high-level dialogues with the national authorities are already under way and will be strengthened in the future, and fiduciary clinics will be held regularly to build the capacity of the PIUs.

In the infrastructure sector, the evaluation noted a lack of ownership and weaknesses in road maintenance which pose a real threat to sustainability in the short to medium term. In the transport sector, the Bank is carrying out a series of reforms which, with the agreement of the authorities, will involve the establishment of an infrastructure maintenance fund to ensure sustainability. In addition to the establishment of a Second-Generation Road Fund, the Bank has already begun requiring the recruitment of a monitoring and evaluation expert and an environmental expert for each project.

Regarding the environment, Management agrees with the observations on inadequate monitoring and reporting of the Environmental and Social Management Plans (ESMPs) which has limited their implementation. The Bank has already begun to systematically require: (i) the presence of an environmental and safeguards (E&S) expert for each new project, and for Category 1⁸ projects with a resettlement action plan, the presence of two experts (an environmentalist and a social development

expert); and (ii) annual E&S audit reports of projects under implementation to verify compliance with the Bank's financing agreements, country system, and Integrated Safeguard System (ISS). In addition, the Bank has already put in place some actions to build the country's capacity to monitor the implementation and reporting of ESMPs, including: (i) training of all the PIUs on the monitoring of the implementation of the ESMPs and reporting - a first training session took place in 2020 and a second one is planned for 2021; and (ii) preparation of the reporting template which will serve as a guide in the preparation of the quarterly reports.

Coordination, Knowledge Management and Dialogue

The evaluation noted the lack of a formal and effective framework for the coordination of technical and financial partners (TFPs) interventions, as well as the fact that policy dialogue, which is essentially bilateral, does not properly include all TFPs in Gabon, sometimes resulting in overlapping development partner interventions. It also noted that the analytical studies conducted by the Bank have mainly contributed to the identification of new financing and less to strategic or policy dialogue.

Management acknowledges that overall dialogue with the authorities was not satisfactory during the CSP 2011-2015 period and that the level of Bank portfolio commitments was also low. Moreover, the implementation of the CSP was halted by mutual agreement in 2014. The new strategy for the 2016-2020 period made it possible to initiate studies to improve knowledge by the Government and the Bank on future areas of intervention. These various studies are aimed at promoting economic diversification and concern areas as varied as mining

mapping (under way), agricultural sectors, timber sector transformation, and certain reforms in basic infrastructure (roads, drinking water and sanitation, energy, etc.).

These studies thus supported the Bank's dialogue efforts in the preparation of the 2021-2023 TAP. Regular meetings were held with the authorities on the projected lending programme. Regarding the implementation of its loan programme, the Bank systematically ensures that it receives the Presidency's approval of the opportunity. In addition to this approval, a formal request from the Governor should be received by the Bank before any operation is appraised.

Regarding portfolio implementation, the Bank's office in Gabon, whose staffing is being reinforced, has set up a framework for dialogue, close monitoring of projects and budgeting of the national counterpart. The Bank's Office in Gabon, the World Bank and the government have established a monthly meeting chaired by the Prime Minister in the presence of other technical ministries on the management and implementation of our respective portfolios. The Bank will continue to build the capacity of the PIUs and ensure better institutional anchoring for greater ownership of the operations implemented.

Conclusion

Management takes note of the observations and welcomes the recommendations made in the evaluation of the Bank's strategies and programmes in Gabon for the 2011-2020 period. The summary of actions in the table below presents specific measures to be taken to address the recommendations made in the evaluation report. ■

Summary of Management Actions	
Recommendation	Management Response
<p>Recommendation 1: Deepen the analysis of the context and Gabon's specific challenges, especially the constraints on the diversification of the Gabonese economy and the conditions for the development of the private sector through the creation of a favorable environment for SME development.</p>	<p>AGREEMENT – Management is of the view that Gabon's specific context and challenges should be explored in greater detail on a regular basis for the implementation of country strategies. To this end, the Bank will continue to implement the recommendations of studies already conducted and will initiate new studies. The studies already completed or under way include: (1) the integrated and sustainable development of the timber sector in the Congo Basin, accompanied by a monograph for Gabon; and (2) studies on the transformation of the mining and agricultural sectors, etc. New studies are planned to deepen the analysis of Gabon's specific context and challenges. These studies will identify the constraints on the diversification of the Gabonese economy and the conditions for private sector development. To gain a better understanding of the sector challenges and opportunities and to inform the Bank's dialogue in Gabon, the following actions will be undertaken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ In collaboration with the Country Economists Department (ECCE), the Regional Development and Business Delivery Office for Central Africa (RDGC) will develop the Gabon Country Diagnostic Note (RDGC, Q4, 2022). ■ In collaboration with the Country Economists Department (ECCE), RDGC will conduct a study on Covid-19's impact on the private sector and economic recovery (RDGC, November 2021). ■ In collaboration with the Agriculture and Agribusiness Department (AHA), RDGC will develop a gender profile of the agricultural sector and a soil quality mapping study on agriculture (RDGC, Q4, 2022).

Summary of Management Actions	
Recommendation	Management Response
<p>Recommendation 2: Strengthen the selectivity of Bank interventions around key sectors with high economic recovery and diversification impact.</p>	<p>AGREEMENT. Management recognises that it needs to strengthen the selectivity of its interventions around sectors with an inclusive development impact. To this end, all new interventions will focus on the first pillar of the CSP, which is currently being updated, namely “support for economic diversification through infrastructure development and improvement of the business climate”. This pillar is based on the TAP, with one of its key objectives being to promote diversification through the development of basic infrastructure and the improvement of the business climate. To this end:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Regional Development and Business Delivery Office for Central Africa (RDGC) will ensure that future operations are anchored on the pillars of the Bank’s strategy. (RDGC, December 2021). ■ In collaboration with the Governance and Public Financial Management Department (ECGF), RDGC will support the Government in the establishment of a system for the maturation of operations, which is a prerequisite for the selection and inclusion of an operation in the Bank’s lending programme. This support is aimed at continuing the implementation and strengthening of the framework for the identification, preparation and selection of investment programmes and projects (RDGC, December 2021).
<p>Recommendation 3: Enhance the implementation of the Bank’s country programme in Gabon. It is recommended to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <i>Further structure policy dialogue mechanisms in a long-term and clear framework involving decision-makers and strategic advisors;</i> ■ <i>Ensure ownership of reform measures through appropriate conditionalities allowing for commitment and monitoring, especially of sector economic recovery plans.</i> ■ <i>Agree with Gabonese authorities on a formal commitment before the start of project preparation, especially investment projects requiring significant resources during identification and preparation.</i> 	<p>AGREEMENT. The Bank’s office in Gabon, the World Bank and the Government have set up a monthly meeting, chaired by the Prime Minister, in the presence of other technical ministries on the management and implementation of their respective portfolios. To better structure the dialogue mechanisms, the Bank will pursue the following actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Bank’s office in Gabon and the Government will establish a framework for dialogue, close monitoring of projects and budgeting of the national counterpart. This framework will also be used to assess the contribution of Bank operations to TAP’s implementation. (COGA, T1, T2, T3, T4 2021, 2022, 2023). ■ COGA will systematically have the approval of the Presidency and a formal request from the Governor before any operation is appraised (COGA, Q1 2021, 2022, 2023).

Summary of Management Actions	
Recommendation	Management Response
<p>Recommendation 4: Support the promotion of PPPs, especially through the modernisation of Gabonese legislation and the building of national institutional capacity in PPP management and monitoring.</p>	<p>AGREEMENT – The Bank will continue and strengthen its support for the promotion of public-private partnerships. Specifically, the Bank will carry out the following actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Regional Development and Business Delivery Office for Central Africa (RDGC) will, in collaboration with the Department of Energy (PEVP), the Syndication Department (FIST) and the African Legal Support Facility (ALSF), provide technical and legal support to the Government to: (a) finalise the electricity and water codes brought in line with the PPP law to provide the necessary legal certainty to allow for the development of PPPs in several forms; (b) provide a Partial Risk Guarantee (PRG) to mitigate the perceived political risks of implementing PPPs (risk of non-payment, etc.); and (c) support, as Lead Arranger, the structuring of non-sovereign debt to the PPPs in order to raise the necessary financing for the implementation of projects. (RDGC, December 2022). ■ Management will provide technical and financial support to the government, including through Project Preparation Facility funds, for the development of PPP projects (pre-feasibility and feasibility studies of works, procurement for the hiring of a dealer, negotiation of project documents with dealers for the development of balanced and sustainable PPPs, etc.) (RDGC, December 2022)

Summary of Management Actions	
Recommendation	Management Response
<p>Recommendation 5: Strengthen the sustainability of Bank interventions. This will involve the following actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <i>Include in the project design document the institutional and financial management and maintenance arrangements to be put in place, including a clear description of the responsibilities and commitments of each actor;</i> ■ <i>Support the establishment of an effective implementation monitoring and evaluation system, especially for the transport sector: control of axle loads and improved governance of the Road Maintenance Fund;</i> ■ <i>Ensure monitoring and reporting on ESMP implementation throughout the project management cycle.</i> 	<p>AGREEMENT – The Bank recognises that the sustainability of its interventions needs to be a key part of the reforms, especially at the sector level. In the infrastructure sector, maintenance and upkeep are concerns in the sector strategies supported by the Bank. The Bank will also ensure that the Government provides annual budget lines for the upkeep and maintenance of the projects it finances. The production of monitoring reports on the implementation of the ESMP will henceforth be done on a quarterly basis and systematically. As a result:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ the Regional Development and Business Delivery Office for Central Africa (RDGC) will work with the Government to establish a second-generation road fund and an adequate axle load control system (RDGC, December 2022). ■ in close collaboration with the Environmental and Social Safeguards and Compliance Department (ESSC), RDGC will continue to systematically ensure the presence of an E&S expert in every new project. For Category 1 projects with a resettlement action plan, the Bank will also require two experts (one environmental expert and one social development expert). The Bank may also use a third party for implementation, monitoring and reporting on a complex resettlement plan. (RDGC December 2021, Q4 2022, Q4 2023). ■ in close collaboration with SNSC, RDGC will continue to ensure the presence of environmental and social experts or a Health and Environmental expert in each works company and each control mission (RDGC, December 2021, Q4 2022, Q4 2023). ■ in close collaboration with SNSC, RDGC will continue to require annual E&S audit reports of projects being implemented to verify compliance with the financing agreements, the country system and the Bank's ISS. (RDGC, Q4 2021, Q4 2022, Q4 2023). ■ in close collaboration with SNSC, RDGC will step up its training efforts for all project implementation units (PICs) on monitoring the implementation of ESMPs and RAPs and on reporting. A detailed reporting template which serves as a guide in the preparation of periodic reports (monthly or quarterly depending on the environmental and social category of the project) has already been made available to the project PIUs. (RDGC, December 2021, Q4 2022, Q4 2023).



Introduction

This report presents the main findings, lessons and recommendations of the Evaluation of African Development Bank (AfDB) Strategies and Programs in Gabon for the 2011-2020 period. The evaluation covers the Bank's two Country Strategy Papers for the period (CSPs 2011-2015 and 2016-2020). Their implementation covers an overall portfolio of UA 1,093.65 million, comprising 22 national projects of about UA 1,004.9 million (including 12 Technical Assistance projects), 8 multinational projects (UA 88.7 million) and 4 other projects approved before 2011, but implemented during the period under review. The interventions cover 7 operational sectors: i) Governance; ii) Agriculture; iii) Water and Sanitation; iv) Transport; v) Environment; vi) Social; and vii) Communication. The evaluation aims to analyze the performance of Bank interventions in Gabon and their contribution to the country's development outcomes as well as draw lessons from its experience to improve the design and implementation of future strategies and programs in the country.

Apart from the introduction, this summary report also comprises the following five chapters: Gabon's development context, AfDB strategies and programs in Gabon between 2011 and 2020, analysis of the performance of AfDB strategies and programs in Gabon, program management and lastly, conclusions, lessons and recommendations.

Evaluation Objective and Scope

The evaluation covers the last two Country Strategy Paper cycles (CSPs 2011-2015 and 2016-2020) and aims to analyze the performance of Bank interventions in Gabon and their contribution to the country's development outcomes. It also seeks to draw lessons from the Bank's experience, particularly the success and failure factors that affect outcomes

to improve the design and implementation of future Bank strategies and programs in Gabon. The analysis also took account of projects approved before 2011 but completed during the period under review.

Methodology and Limitations

The methodology adopted was based on the Theory of Change (see Annex 1) and used international evaluation criteria and approaches, including relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability. The Theory of Change clarified the links between the inputs, outputs and short- and long-term effects of the country program, as well as assumptions and risk factors. Furthermore, it helped to identify the evaluation issues as summarized in Table 1. Each criterion included in the intervention assessment grid was rated on a four-level scale as described in Annex 3 (1 "Highly Unsatisfactory"; 2 "Unsatisfactory"; 3 "Satisfactory" and 4 "Highly Satisfactory").

The methodology followed was based on an in-depth analysis of the three main sectors that form the backbone of the key pillars of the assistance strategies, through the review of completed projects in the following sectors: (i) Governance and Inclusion, (ii) Agriculture and Environment, and (iii) Infrastructure and Water/Sanitation.

The evaluation used a pyramid approach allowing for in-depth analysis at the project, sector and country strategy levels in three main phases, i.e. inception, data collection, analysis/reporting. Three sector notes on governance, agriculture and infrastructure, together with portfolio analysis, were consolidated into a Technical Report used for preparing this Summary Report. The annexes provide a detailed description of the methodology adopted (Annexes 1 to 5).

Table 1: Evaluation Questions

Criteria	Sub-criteria
1. RELEVANCE	1.1 Relevance of objectives to country needs, challenges and priorities 1.2 Alignment with Bank priorities 1.3 Response to the needs of target groups/focus on strategic objectives 1.4 Selectivity of interventions and objectives
2. EFFECTIVENESS	2.1 Achievement of outputs and expected outcomes 2.2 Contribution to the achievement of the country's development objectives and results
3. EFFICIENCY	3.1 Cost-benefit analysis 3.2 Timeliness
4. SUSTAINABILITY	4.1 Technical soundness 4.2 Financial and economic sustainability 4.3 Institutional sustainability and capacity building 4.4 Ownership and partnership sustainability 4.5 Social and environmental sustainability
5. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES	5.1 Inclusiveness of interventions (gender, regional disparities, etc.) 5.2 Contribution to green growth
6. KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AND POLICY DIALOGUE	6.1 Analytical work 6.2 Engagement in policy dialogue
7. PROGRAM MANAGEMENT	7.1 Quality of design and selectivity of CSPs 7.2 Coherence, partnership and leverage 7.3 Managing for results

Several **evaluation limitations** should be highlighted. The advent of the COVID-19 (coronavirus 2019) pandemic disrupted the data collection mission that had to be conducted virtually with 58 interviews out of the 75 initially planned. These limitations were mitigated by the few site visits conducted by local consultants (see Annex 4 for more details). To these constraints must be added the country's internal difficulties, relating mainly to (i) data availability and quality, due essentially to weakness of the

national statistical system, (ii) frequent changing of supervisory ministries resulting in loss of institutional memory, and (iii) the relatively small number of completed projects. The following mitigation measures were taken to address these difficulties, with focus on: (a) data triangulation, (b) additional interviews with officials in charge during project implementation, and (c) inclusion in the results analysis the four projects approved before 2011 but completed during the review period. ■

Gabon's Development Context

Gabon is a French-speaking Central African country crossed by the Equator and located on the Gulf of Guinea. It covers over 267,670 km², has an Atlantic seaboard with 885 km of coastline and a maritime area of 250,000 km². The country shares land borders with Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea and the Republic of Congo. Gabon is the planet's second "green lung" after the Amazon and is 85% covered by forest. It is sparsely populated, with 2.2 million inhabitants (2019), 37.2% of whom are under 15 years of age. Almost 90% of the inhabitants are concentrated around the coastline ([AfDB Open Data Portal for Africa](#)).

Economic and Governance Context

Gabon is the third largest economy in Central Africa and accounts for 13% of the region's gross domestic product (GDP). It is the fifth largest oil producer in Africa and endowed with abundant natural resources. Gabon is an upper-middle-income country (UMIC) with a gross income per capita that has been declining since 2014 to slightly above USD 6,830 in 2018 ([AfDB Open Data Portal for Africa](#)). It recorded strong economic growth at the beginning of the decade under review, driven particularly by oil and manganese production. The oil sector accounted for an average 80% of exports, 45% of GDP and 60% of fiscal revenue over the 2010-2015 period. Although some positive developments have been observed in the services sector (from 36% in 2011 to 45% of GDP in 2017), the agricultural sector (around 4% of GDP between 2011 and 2017) and the manufacturing sector (from 6% to 10% of GDP between 2012 and 2017), the country is struggling to diversify its economy, which remains vulnerable to oil price fluctuations.

After recording a current account surplus of almost 18% in 2012 and a budget surplus of about 2.5% of GDP, the oil shock negatively impacted macroeconomic stability between 2015 and 2017, thereby reducing the country's external assets level and significantly decreasing state revenue (see Table 2). Severe fiscal adjustments were necessary, and hence an urgent financing need, recourse to external borrowing and arrears accumulation. This in turn resulted in a rapid increase in public debt after 2017. These efforts helped to revive economic growth and restore a budget surplus in 2019. The surplus was also driven by a renewed performance in non-oil revenue mobilization, which grew by 28.7% in 2019 after 17.5% in 2018.

The COVID-19 crisis is a new challenge for the country. The two shocks faced by Gabon due to the effects of the pandemic, namely the fall in external demand and drop in oil prices, has resulted in a negative outlook. International Monetary Fund (IMF) forecasts ([IMF Report No. 20/267](#), August 2020) indicate a significant current account deficit projected at -8.4% of GDP, a drop in activities (fall in GDP) estimated at 2.7% and a public deficit of almost 2.7% of GDP, reminiscent of the same level recorded in 2017 but below the thresholds set within the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC). The pandemic is generating increased financing needs for the country that would result in a sharp rise in debt (around 74.7% of GDP), a level that remains sustainable according to the latest debt sustainability analysis by the IMF in August 2020, even though it exceeds the prevailing convergence threshold in the CEMAC zone set at 70% of GDP.

Table 2: Gabon's Key Macroeconomic Indicators

Indicators	Year							
	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020 ^a (Estimate)
Current account balance in GDP %	7.3	7.6	-5.6	-10.4	-6.9	-3.2	-0.8	-8.4
External reserves in months of G&S imports	5.2	5.2	4.5	2.2	2.2	2.8	3.3	
Borrowing requirement as GDP % (Cash basis)	1.8	2.5	-0.96	-4.9	-2.6	-1.3	1.8	-2.7
Arrears accumulation as GDP %				9.6	6.3	3.8	1.1	
Public debt as GDP %	29.2	32.2	44.7	64.2	62.9	60.9	62.4	74.7
GDP growth rate	5.5	4.4	3.9	2.1	0.5	0.8	3.4	-2.7

Sources: AfDB, IMF, BEAC (Bank of Central African States)

Gabon's governance indicators deteriorated over the 2008-2017 period. Despite good scores in participation rate and human rights (parity) and in economic and sustainable development (rural sector), the Mo Ibrahim Foundation's governance ranking dropped from 27 in 2011 to 42.4/100 in 2018, largely due to poor performance in terms of the rule of law and social protection. This trend is consistent with the Economist Magazine democracy index (Gabon was ranked 124th out of 167 countries assessed in 2018). Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index ranked Gabon 123rd out of 180 countries in 2019 (but 2nd out of 7 countries in the Central African sub-region)¹⁰. Nevertheless, a series of efforts have been made to improve public management, including (i) the creation of a Commission for the Fight against Illicit Enrichment and a Financial Investigation Agency; (ii) the accelerated deployment of the Court of Auditors and the strengthening of a legal framework to fight financial crimes; and (iii) the civil service reform rationalizing staffing levels and reducing ministerial missions and allocated resources, with emphasis on results and performance.

The private sector is still small with a low level of local and national entrepreneurship because of the barely attractive business climate and the country's poor infrastructure development. The overall business environment indicators are low,

especially with regard to paying taxes, enforcing contracts, registering property, skills training, and infrastructure. This situation is also reflected in Gabon's low ranking in the [Global Competitiveness Index](#) – 119th in 2019 compared to 112th in 2014. Transport infrastructure comprised a low density of paved roads (3.86 km per 100 km² compared to an average of 5 km per 100 km² in Central Africa) and poor maintenance. As for port facilities, the only adequately functioning complex is Owendo Port, handling over 80% of port activities.

Social Context

On the social front, there was a modest improvement in Gabon's human development index during the period under review, from 0.663 in 2011 to 0.702 in 2018. Nevertheless, poverty is still a major challenge. Although the country is classified in the upper MIC bracket, poverty is high and persistent (33.4% in 2017 against 32.7% in 2005) with significant social inequalities (Gini index of 38 in 2017). Extreme poverty affects mainly rural areas (over 25% vs. 8% overall, 2017). Nearly 15% of the population was deemed in a state of multidimensional poverty in 2019, deprived of access to education, health and improved living standards. The social situation is deteriorating in terms of access to basic services, such as health care, or recurrent cuts in drinking

water and electricity in 60% of the country. Entire regions such as Nyanga and Ngounié have an estimated poverty rate of 57%, provoking an exodus to the cities and a depleting workforce in the countryside. Despite the introduction of a national health insurance system in 2008 and increased resources for health, social spending on education, health and social protection accounts for only 20% of the state budget. However, basic health indicators show some progress, especially in terms of higher life expectancy (from 62.2 to 66.5 years during the 2011-2019 period) and lower infant mortality, half of which is represented by neonatal mortality (from 60.4 to 44.8 per thousand between 2011 and 2018). With regard to education, although Gabon has one of the highest net literacy (84.7%) and primary school enrolment (96.4%) rates in Africa, the education system is characterized by a low completion rate (37.2%). Unemployment in 2018 accounted for 19.6% of the active population according to the International Labour Organization, while unemployment among youths in the 15-24 age bracket was around 35.7%. In terms of gender, the country has made significant progress (national strategy, adherence to international legislation, creation of a targeted ministry) but discrimination persists, particularly regarding access to political and leadership positions. There are discriminatory dimensions to the Civil Code, with women's income being almost 50% lower than that of men and the unemployment rate being twice as high among women ([Gender Profile, Gabon](#), UNDP - United Nations Development Programme).

Gabon's Main Development Challenges

Based on the socio-economic analysis, Gabon faces several development challenges, including i) weak economic diversification and limited competitiveness; ii) an insipid business climate and ineffective governance; iii) insufficient infrastructure in terms of quantity and quality to leverage diversification and inclusive development; iv) the small size of the domestic market and weak national and sub-

regional integration; and v) underdeveloped human capital potential with high labor costs.

The health and economic crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic poses new challenges for the Gabonese economy, despite the 2017-2019 Economic Recovery Plan (PRC) implemented by the government with the support of technical and financial partners (TFPs) to restore the country's economic and fiscal stability and lay the foundation for key public finance reforms. The COVID-19 pandemic blew open the structural weaknesses of the health system and is generating greater social demand within limited budgetary provisions. According to the Bank's recent analyses when preparing the Emergency Budget Support Program in Response to the Crisis (PABURC), the pandemic would have the major effects of (i) generating additional financing needs and (ii) aggravating the social disparities that have been growing since oil prices dropped in 2014.

At the regional level, the country has managed to align itself with CEMAC community standards, save for the 2014-2018 crisis period. In 2019, for instance, Gabon met three of the four key convergence criteria, except for that relating to payment arrears. However, the Gabonese market is constrained by its small size as well as the low national and regional integration. The concentration of people in urban areas and the inadequacy of sub-regional connectivity infrastructure have led to an economy oriented towards the importation of consumer goods.

Gabon's Development Strategies

The **Strategic Plan for an Emerging Gabon** (PSGE 2011-2025) provided the main framework for guiding Gabon's development policy during the period under review. PSGE takes the form of an ambitious program of reforms, economic and social policies and investments to diversify the economy and increase industrial and service sector competitiveness while preserving the country's immense natural resources. It is based on **three strategic thrusts**: i) consolidation

Box 2: Gabonese Government's Response to the COVID-19 Crisis

From a social standpoint, measures taken are targeted mainly at economically weak households. The measures cover the payment of water and electricity bills, the provision of free land transport in public companies, rent payment support, food aid and an unemployment allowance estimated at between 50 and 70% of gross salary for private sector workers. On the economic front, the measures include tax relief (for instance, a 50% reduction in patents and combined tax at source for small businesses and service companies), emergency financing of CFAF 225 billion for the cash needs of companies lacking the necessary funds to finance investment and operating expenses, and a moratorium on debt repayments to credit institutions for bankrupt companies. To avoid further deterioration of the public finance deficit, all these measures were covered by an equivalent drastic reduction in public investment spending pending the implementation of the recovery plan.

Source: PABURC Appraisal Report, 2020.

of the foundations of emergence; ii) development of the pillars of emergence; and iii) shared prosperity. These thrusts are operationalized through three emergence pillars: **Green Gabon, Industrial Gabon and Services Gabon**, themselves supported by four foundations (sustainable human development, governance, human capital and infrastructure)

The implementation of the PSGE since 2011 has resulted in massive public investment programs and the introduction of a proactive industrial policy, through the development of Special Economic Zones (SEZ) to attract foreign direct investment, public-private partnerships (PPP) and shareholding in local subsidiaries of large multinational companies.

On the economic front, the country's strategy was adjusted to address macroeconomic imbalances and budget deficits accumulated as a result of the acute economic crisis triggered by the fall in oil prices in 2014. The new roadmap is based on the Economic Reform Program (PRE) 2017-2019, which aims to give impetus to PSGE through economic recovery measures, the strengthening of public expenditure efficiency, the optimization and a more rational use of budgetary resources, the development of basic infrastructure and the promotion of the private sector as a means of economic diversification and transformation. Lastly, the government has prepared a response strategy to mitigate the negative socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 (see Box 2). ■

Bank Strategies and Programs in Gabon

The Bank began its cooperation with Gabon in 1974. The cooperation has developed considerable in recent years. As a middle-income country (MIC), Gabon is principally eligible for ADB-window resources. Although the country received ADB resources amounting to MUA 338.18 between 1996 and 2008, Bank commitments in Gabon during the review period stands at MUA 1,093.65, with an acceleration recorded since 2016.

Strategic Framework of Bank Interventions in Gabon

The Bank's intervention strategies in Gabon over the period 2011-2020 focused on strengthening governance, improving the business climate, developing infrastructure and strengthening the productive base to diversify the economy (see Table 3). Two Country Strategy Papers (CSPs) provided the framework for these interventions during the review period.

The Bank's development strategy in Gabon for the five-year period 2011-2015 focused on support for public reforms and the development of basic infrastructure to foster a more attractive business environment. The objective was to promote the private sector as an engine for diversified economic growth and support non-oil sectors.

CSP 2016-2020 was prepared in the context of revitalizing cooperation between the Bank and Gabon following the 2015 oil crisis with a view to building the country's resilience. Based on this, the Bank's interventions were directed towards economic diversification through infrastructure development, promotion of agriculture, strengthening of governance and human development under the January 2014 Social Pact. A revised Theory of Change is presented in Annex 2. Furthermore, as regional integration is a major challenge for Gabon, the two Regional Integration Strategy Papers (RISPs) for Central Africa for the respective periods [RISP 2011-2015 (extended until 31 December 2017),

Table 3: Bank's Strategic Pillars and Objectives for Gabon

CSP 2011-2015	CSP 2016-2020
Strategic Pillars and Objectives	
<p>Pillar 1: Improve the business climate for private sector development</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop the SME/SMI (Small and medium-sized enterprise/industry) 2. Improve labor productivity and employment 3. Support private sector investment promotion reforms. 	<p>Pillar 1: Support economic diversification through infrastructure development and improvement of the business climate</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop infrastructure and agricultural value chains 2. Progress towards a green and sustainable economy 3. Reforms to stimulate the private sector
<p>Pillar 2: Strengthen infrastructure to support non-oil growth poles</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Open up production areas 2. Develop productive sectors 3. Raise energy supply 	<p>Pillar 2: Support the human development strategy</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Diversify training supply and employability 2. Improve social protection 3. Improve access to drinking water and sanitation services.

Sources: AfDB CSPs 2011-2015 and 2016-2020 for Gabon

and the RISP 2019-2025] provide a platform for strengthening regional infrastructure and developing intra-regional trade.

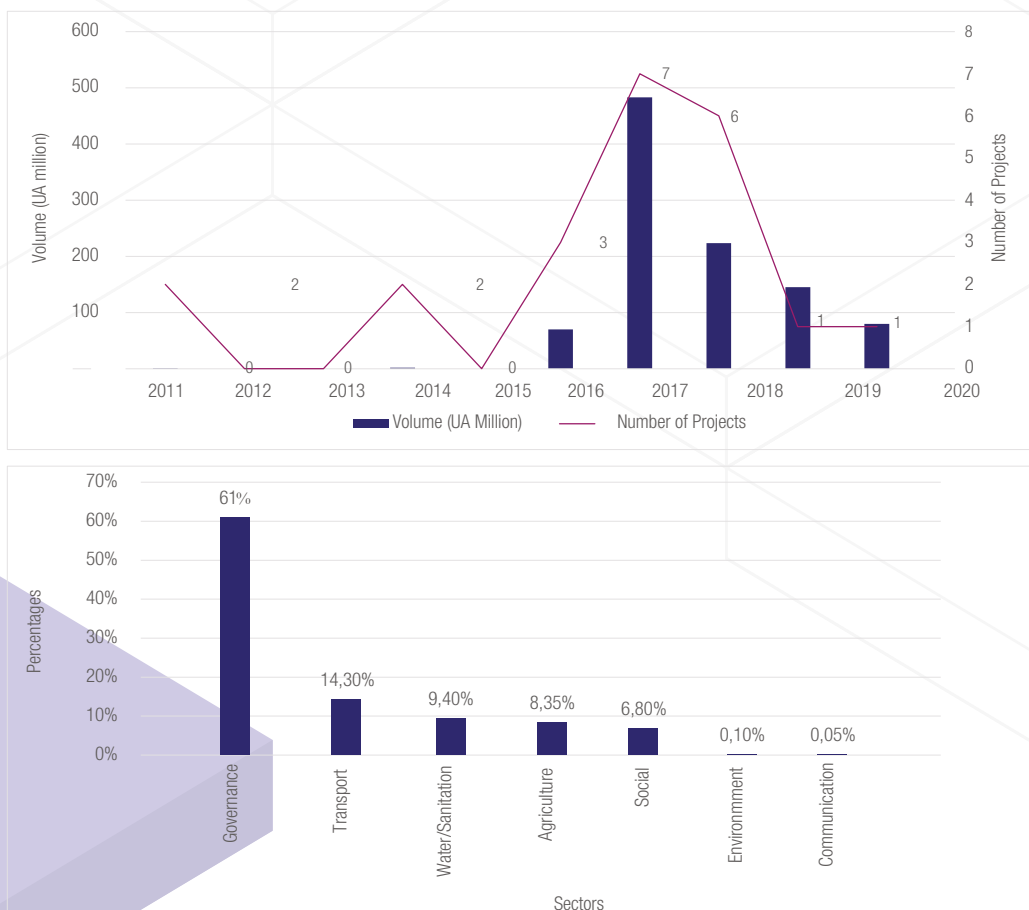
the status as of 30 June 2020, 10 projects were being implemented, 9 completed and 3 had just been approved.

Bank Portfolio in Gabon

The Bank's portfolio in Gabon for the 2011-2020 period comprises 30 projects amounting to UA 1,093.6 million. It includes 22 national projects financed to the tune of UA 1,004.9 million and 8 multinational projects worth UA 88.7 million. It does not include projects from the CSP 2011-2015 indicative program that did not materialize. Based on

Regarding national projects, the momentum of approvals was accelerated during the 2016-2020 period (see Figure 1) with more than 99% of approvals in volume spread over 18 projects compared to only 4 projects for the period 2011-2015. This was due to changes in priorities and the country's use of alternative sources of funding. In terms of scaling up activities, 2017 marks an important milestone with 7 projects approved for UA 487 million, including 2 budget support operations. Over the review period,

Figure 1: Trends and Sector Distribution of AfDB Approvals in Gabon, 2011-2020



Sources: AfDB SAP Information System

the Bank made extensive use of budget support (55.8% of the volume of approvals) and institution building (14 out of the 22 national projects).

In terms of volume, over half of the Bank's portfolio (61%) is concentrated in the governance sector, largely driven by the three tranches of budget support granted between 2017 and 2018. This is followed by the transport sector (14.3%), drinking water and sanitation (9.4%), agriculture (8.35%) and social (6.8%). Furthermore, the number of approvals during the period is more significant in the governance and agriculture sectors with 8 and 7 projects respectively, while the transport and social sectors each have 2 projects. It should also be noted that the sanitation, environment and communication sectors benefited from only one project each during the review period.

During the review period, Bank portfolio in Gabon covered four of the High 5s with a predominance¹¹ for "Improve the quality of life for the people" with 71% and for "Integrate Africa" representing 13%

of the volume of approvals. However, since some projects span the two High 5s, this distribution has its limits. An analysis in terms of numbers reveals a more balanced trend with 29% and 26% respectively for the two High 5s. The other two operational priorities "Feed Africa" and "Industrialize Africa" each represents 8% of the portfolio by volume and 22% by number.

Regarding financing arrangements, the Bank's portfolio in Gabon is primarily made up of project loans (99% in volume), mainly from the public sector, with 19 projects representing 96% of the portfolio in volume. Although significant in terms of number, non-loan operations (12 grants spread over 5 studies and 7 technical assistance operations) accounts for only 1% of the portfolio volume. Private sector operations represent about 3.31% of the portfolio, spread over 3 projects in the agricultural/agro-industrial and logistics sectors. Finally, the regional portfolio is dominated by transport and governance for 81.17% and 10.15% respectively, by volume. ■



Performance of Bank Strategies and Programs in Gabon

Relevance

In this section, the evaluation examines the relevance of the Bank's objectives to the country's challenges and priorities, including the needs of groups targeted, alignment with institutional priorities and selectivity of interventions.

The relevance of Bank strategies and programs over the period under review is deemed satisfactory. The strategies were broadly relevant to Gabon's development challenges and aligned with Bank priorities. However, the Bank's interventions suffered from dispersion and insufficient analytical depth.

The Bank's CSPs over the evaluation period were broadly aligned with national policies and strategies, especially the PSGE in the first instance and the PRE thereafter. Operations in all sectors responded to the country's priorities and challenges as well as the people's needs. By focusing on key sectors such as governance, infrastructure and agriculture, the Bank was able to respond to the country's urgent economic diversification needs (in the face of the projected depletion of oil resources), balance of trade improvement (while boosting local production and strengthening foreign exchange reserves), opening up and equipping the hinterland, consolidating public finance management and improving the business climate.

Concerning alignment with Bank priorities, operations in all the sectors covered by the Bank in Gabon are in line with the general priorities and sector strategies and hence directly consistent with four of the Bank's High 5s, namely: "Feed Africa", "Industrialize Africa", "Integrate Africa"

and "Improve the quality of life for the people".

For instance, the transformational priorities selected (strengthen public finance management, improve the business climate, open up the hinterland, strengthen human capital and diversify the economy through local processing of agricultural raw materials) align fully with the Bank's Ten-Year Strategy 2013-2022 (Governance, Infrastructure Development, Private Sector Development and Inclusive Growth), as well as its willingness to promote industrialization. The Bank's assistance to the agricultural sector through the GRAINE Program and its supporting TA operations is in line with the "Feed Africa" strategy.

The Bank's interventions also contribute to regional integration and are consistent with the priorities of the two RISPs for Central Africa, the first pillar of which addresses the need to strengthen regional infrastructure. Transport infrastructure projects/programs aim to improve national and regional trade and services, reduce transport costs and time, open up, and enhance the quality of life for the people through better access to basic infrastructure. Such infrastructure is a major challenge to economic diversification and the connection of markets and people, as envisaged in the national strategy (PSGE). Environmental interventions correspond more generally to AfDB's general sustainable development policies.

At the sectoral level, interventions in governance aligned generally with national policies and strategies. PAREF and various capacity-building programs backed most of the strategic objectives of the first PSGE thrust with focus on strengthening the country's competitiveness, one of the four sub-areas of which concerns reinforcing governance by consolidating the PPP legal framework, promoting

investment, fiscal reform, etc. It also supports the second PSGE strategic thrust, which aims to diversify sources of growth by shifting focus from a rent-driven economy based on commodities (hydrocarbons, timber, minerals) to one that is more diversified. The Gabonese Economic Diversification Support Project (PADEG) prepared during the implementation of PRE, also shows strong consistency with these thrusts, in particular those aiming to (i) optimize tax revenue and economic financing; (ii) control public expenditure, and (iii) improve the business environment to promote private initiative. Lastly, the PABURC implemented during the COVID-19 crisis was an opportunity for the Bank to respond with appropriate instruments (emergency budget support) to the urgent needs of the Gabonese government to deal with the health, economic and social consequences of the pandemic.

However, CSP 2016-2020 did not anticipate the “stabilization” dimension of key operations undertaken under PAREFs, although the oil crisis and its potentially highly negative impacts were foreseeable at the time of its preparation. The document mentions possible recourse to program-based support, but the country’s needs in terms of PBO were not thoroughly assessed during the CSP preparation.

The Bank’s interventions in the infrastructure sector address national challenges and priorities, especially private sector development, development of productive sectors and regional, sub-regional and national integration, all of which are in line with the PSGE. The implementation of Road Program Phase 1 (PR-1) meets the objectives of gradually establishing the national road network and opening up areas with a high agricultural and forestry production potential. The regions crossed by PR-1 roads are indeed among Gabon’s most isolated. The inclusion of related socio-economic infrastructure works is an added value. Following on from PR-1, the Gabon Infrastructure Sector Support Project (PASIG-I) meets the objective of modernization and diversification. The project is in keeping with the priorities of the National Infrastructure Development Plan and the

Libreville Master Plan 2010-2035, and supports the connection of markets and people as envisaged in the PSGE. However, this project could be cancelled unless the Gabonese government makes a formal request. Lastly, the GSEZ Port Project contributes to solving the current infrastructure and logistics problems at the Owendo Port. The construction of the new multipurpose terminal is a strong boost to the development of Gabon’s port infrastructure. With a draught of 14 meters (compared to the current 10 meters), this terminal seeks to enable large vessels to dock in Gabon. Hence, the GSEZ Port Project responds adequately to beneficiary needs and the country’s priorities for economic diversification as advocated in the PSGE. The Bank’s recent involvement in the drinking water and sanitation sector through PIAEPAL is in line with the PSGE strategic objectives and priority actions to ensure access to drinking water and sanitation services for all.

The Bank’s assistance in the agricultural sector also aligns squarely with the diversification needs articulated in the PSGE. More specifically, support for the introduction of services for farmers, including advisory services, quality control laboratories, supply of select seeds and access to credit, addresses needs acknowledged by all sector stakeholders. Similarly, the GRAINE Program Phase 1 focuses on upgrading road infrastructure to open up rural areas with high agricultural production and provide services to agricultural cooperatives. Moreover, the achievements envisaged with the Bank’s support for drinking water, electrification, schools and health centers in rural areas will help to create a more conducive environment for agricultural development and retain workers at the production sites

However, the overall analysis of Bank programs reveals a lack of selectivity. It shows that beyond the three main sectors of intervention (governance, transport infrastructure and agriculture), there is a certain dispersion of interventions in the energy, information and communication technology (ICT) sectors and, more recently, water and sanitation.

The dispersion is reinforced by segmentation among partners and insufficient coordination. In the governance sector, the Bank proposed a balanced mix of reforms (regulatory measures and quantitative targets) and institutional support. **However, the package of measures that covers a broad spectrum over a short period of two years has been hampered by a lack of selectivity in the design of support to reforms, thus leading to difficulties in terms of ownership by national stakeholders and the capacity for dialogue with the government on several themes (PAREF, PADEG).**

Project quality at entry is generally satisfactory, although there are some weaknesses in governance and agriculture projects. Projects in the infrastructure sector (notably PR-1) were based on requisite technical studies and the objectives and results of interventions were clearly stated and streamlined in the logical frameworks. However, some overestimates were detected in respect of numerical targets (e.g. the number of people to be sensitized, and the number of staff to be trained under the Capacity Building Project in the Ministry of Transport¹). Furthermore, for the GSEZ Port Project, the logical framework did not provide all the necessary targets. However, some of those targets were set in the Additionality and Development Outcomes Assessment (ADOA¹²) in terms of vessel traffic and waiting time. In the case of PAREF, the results chain as reflected by the prior measures / triggers set, reforms supported, and intermediate outputs sought (outputs) is not clear and the risks/assumptions not explicit. In the case of PADEG, the intervention logic presented did not systematically integrate all the program components.

Lastly, the emphasis in the agricultural sector seemed not to have been adequately placed on the country's resilience, particularly its food security based on domestic production, which is at the heart of the Bank's intervention rationale. The overly strong support for agribusiness has been

to the detriment of family holdings and the value chain approach. Given the difficulty in accessing credit and the high cost of agricultural workforce, this choice does not seem relevant in promoting Gabonese SMEs in the sector, creating local jobs and ensuring food self-sufficiency. By including support to the food sector following the 2017 Conference on Agriculture, the GRAINE Program opened up more clearly the possibility of working with family farmers. However, the Bank has not done enough in this regard. Instead, it has favored support to large enterprises, especially through PPPs, rather than access to financing for small-scale family holdings or small agro-processing SMEs. In practice, the Bank's interventions in the sector do not sufficiently integrate local dynamics and farmers' aspirations are hardly considered. Support to Société Gabonaise de Transformation Agricole et Développement Rural (Gabonese Agricultural Processing and Rural Development Company) (SOTRADER) was not based on an analysis of the credit needs of farmers or an institutional diagnosis of farmers' cooperatives. The Bank's interventions were never part of pre-existing dynamics but seemed to transpose an exogenous model onto a much more complex local reality. There are few studies on current agricultural production systems in Gabon, or sector studies to identify constraints facing producers¹³. Similarly, by focusing its support on the production segment, the Bank seems to pay less attention to the upstream and downstream segments of the agricultural sector and the country's resilience, particularly in terms of food security. Therefore, this approach has not been sufficiently integrated into the analysis aimed at creating value-added throughout the production chain.

Effectiveness

This criterion assesses the output of Bank interventions, the achievement of expected outcomes and their contribution to the attainment of Gabon's development objectives and results.

The overall effectiveness of the Bank's support to Gabon during the period under review was deemed satisfactory. The weak implementation of the CSP 2011-2015 indicative lending program was followed by a renewed focus on cooperation between 2016 and 2020. Expected outputs were delivered in most sectors of intervention, especially governance and infrastructure (except energy), but did not systematically generate the expected outcomes and impacts.

Due to the poor implementation of the CSP 2011-2015 indicative lending program, the Bank was unable to intervene in the energy sector. Of the 12 projects identified in the indicative lending program, only 4 TA operations were implemented (see Annex 7). This low recourse to TFP resources in general, and AfDB resources in particular, is attributable to the country's preference for alternative sources of financing and changes in priorities resulting from shifts in government leadership. The situation particularly affected the energy sector, where the two projects planned were abandoned. In contrast, most of the activities planned in the other sectors were included (at least partially) in projects approved under the second CSP.

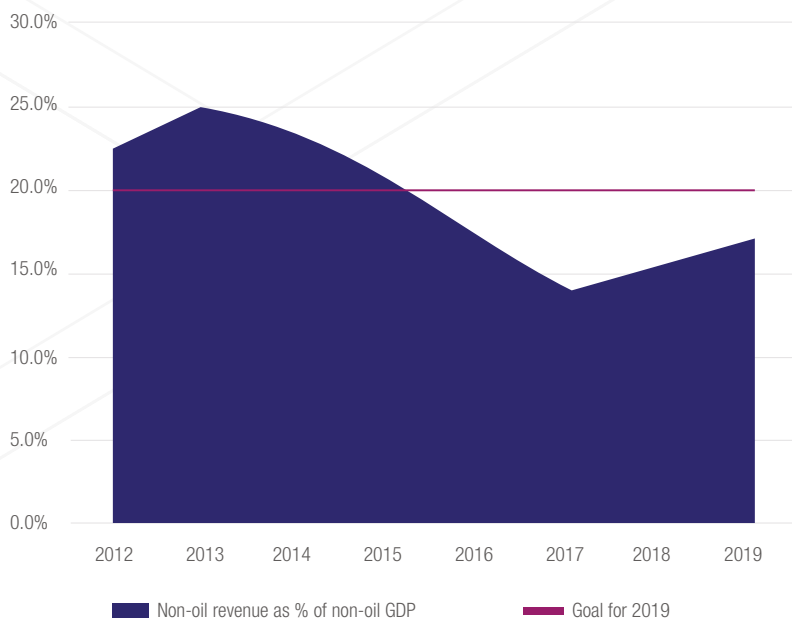
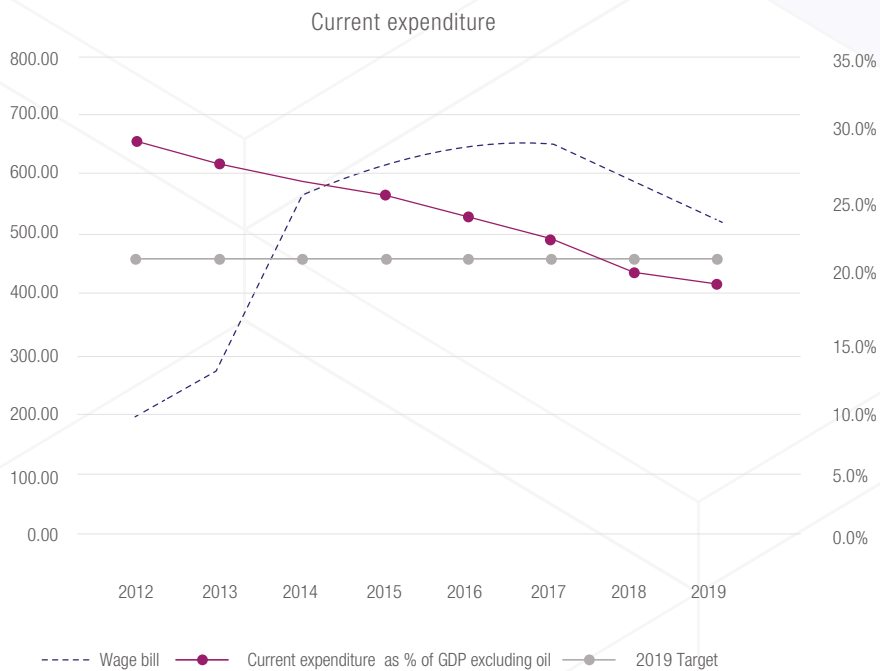
In the Governance sector, the Bank, in collaboration with World Bank (WB) and IMF, supported major reforms in macro-fiscal stability, improved business environment and diversification. The main program during the period under review was PAREF. At the end of its implementation in 2019, 16 of the 19 measures selected had been implemented, two were ongoing (relating to PPP management and public procurement), and one was partially implemented (on e-filing and e-payment platforms). The measures and reforms supported by PAREF include (i) reducing recurrent expenditure, particularly the wage bill (freezing recruitment in non-priority sectors and promotions, adopting structural measures on retirement, taking a census and reviewing the salary database, rationalizing tax exemptions, eliminating fuel subsidies, etc.), (ii) removing tax exemptions that had no legal basis and expanding the non-oil

revenue base, (iii) drafting a new investment code and establishing a roadmap for business facilitation, and (iv) clearing external and internal debt arrears. At the institutional level, the Bank supported the creation of three institutions: the Chamber of Commerce, Agriculture, Industry, Mining and Handicrafts of Gabon (CCAIMAG), the Sub-contracting and Partnership Exchange (BSTP), the Arbitration, Mediation and Conciliation Centre (CAMC) as well as the Libreville incubator. The audit of domestic arrears, revenue and reserve precautionary adjustment, and a study on mining and telecommunications taxation had not yet been carried out at the time of the data collection mission.

AfDB's financial support contributed to the significant expansion of the fiscal space, the restoration of macroeconomic stability and the strengthening of public finance management. This was particularly true in 2017, when the two PAREF disbursements amounting to EUR 500 million accounted for 55% of the total budget support allocated to the country by all TFPs. By intervening quickly in 2017, the Bank enabled the country to ease cash flow pressures¹⁴ and permit the settlement of priority expenditures, especially the payment of external creditors which was a conditionality for concluding an IMF program¹⁵ Mechanically, the foreign exchange inflow also helped to gradually reduce the pressure on the country's external reserves, which recovered in 2019 to 3.3 months of imports after having reached a floor of 2.2 months of imports in 2016 and 2017, compared to 5.2 months in 2013 and 2014

Various measures adopted under PAREF helped to achieve the 2019 target of reducing the level of recurrent expenditure to below 21% of non-oil GDP. This trend, combined with a moderate increase in non-oil revenue (which nevertheless remained below the 2019 target of 20% of GDP) (Figure 2), strengthened the country's fiscal position with a positive cash-based budget balance of 1.5% of GDP in 2019. The implementation of the five-year repayment plan (2018-2022) for Libreville Club companies is underway, with 38.7% of government

Figure 2: Trend of Recurrent Expenditure and Non-oil Revenue



Sources: IMF and BEAC Data

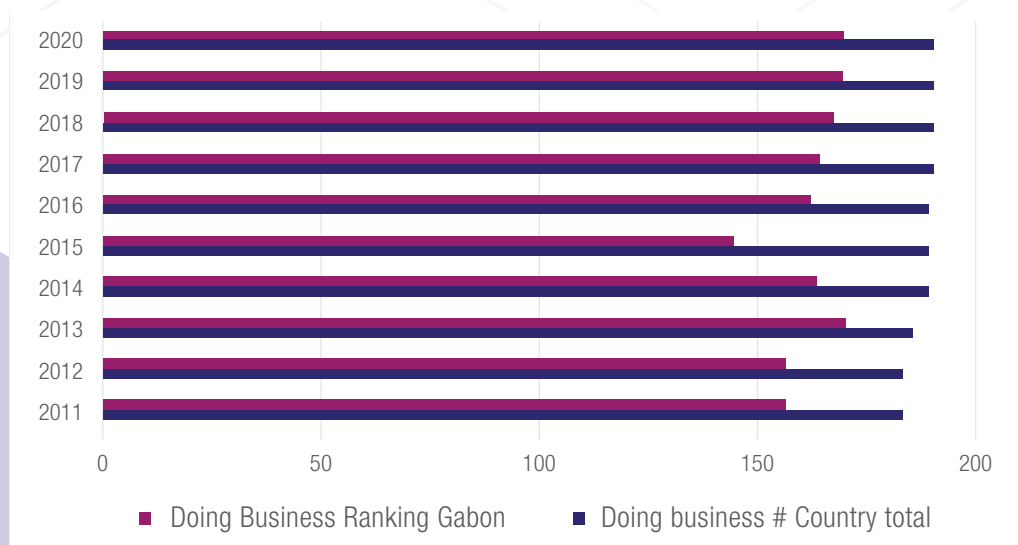
debt stock due to companies repaid by mid-2020, compared with a target of 40% that was to be attained by end-2018. However, public debt, which had begun to fall from 64.2% of GDP in 2016 to 60.9% in 2018, is on the rise again, reaching 62.4% in 2019 and projected to rise to 74.7% in 2020 according to the IMF, partly due to the COVID-19 crisis mitigation measures.

Further work is needed to improve the business climate, enhance competitiveness and diversify the economy.

In view of the repeated failures of PPP initiatives¹⁶, the Bank decided to support the operationalization of the PPP unit and strengthen its regulatory framework, with the adoption in 2018 of three fundamental implementing texts that include several decrees on the organic framework, the PPP selection commission, etc. Despite the results obtained, the PPP management framework is neither complete nor fully operational. More specifically, there is no national strategy for the use of PPPs or an exhaustive list of PPP projects. There

also is no articulation with other public investments. Furthermore, the Bank contributed to the launching of a process to establish a new Investment Code and supported the creation of the Commercial Court of Libreville (decree adopted in 2017), although the court is not yet operational. Similarly, interviews conducted as part of this evaluation indicated that none of the three trade support structures supported by the Bank - the CGA, BSTP, and CAMC - were operational in 2020. Through the Project to Support the Establishment of a Business Incubator Facility in Gabon (PAMPDIEG), the Bank backed the establishment of a multi-sector business incubator in Libreville. By September 2020, the incubator had assisted 99 young project promoters in various sectors, mainly based in Libreville, 46 of whom are self-employed. However, measures taken to improve the business climate have not resulted in an improved access to finance for SMEs. Despite the existence of a number of mechanisms for financing SMEs-SMIs (the Gabonese Strategic Investment Fund, the Okonma-Capital Fund, the

Figure 3 : Trends of Gabon's "Doing Business" Ranking (2011-2020)



African Financial Company or the National Social Assistance Fund), access to credit is still extremely limited according to the heads of the microfinance associations interviewed, due to high interest rates (over 10%) and restrictive guarantee requirements. Similarly, apart from the improvement recorded in 2015, the World Bank (WB) "Doing Business" ranking for Gabon shows a deteriorating trend over the 2013-2020 period (see Figure 3).

Overall, the various reform and institutional building operations undertaken have not yet had a significant impact on economic diversification and private sector development.

Private sector development continues to face numerous impediments including debt arrears, cash flow difficulties, lack of transparency in public procurement, obstacles to access to property and an overall low economic competitiveness. Moreover, despite the establishment of business incubators, Gabon still lacks support structures for investment and economic activities. Lastly, there is still extremely limited access to credit for individuals and SMEs. Non-oil GDP growth has locked in between 2.5% and 3.5% since 2015. Private investment rate, another target of the program, was far below the 32.6% expected in 2018, standing at 27.8% in 2018 and 28% in 2019, and expected to rise to 28.4% in 2020 (recent IMF data). Dependence on oil revenue is still high (30% of total revenue). Non-oil receipts are increasing very slowly (1% of GDP in 2019 but only because of an increase in total direct and indirect taxes, including taxes on international trade).

The Bank's support in the infrastructure sector helped to strengthen road and port facilities.

The Bank supported the construction of 245.6 km of roads on three sections: Fougamou-Mouïla, La Leyou-Lastoursville and Ndendé-Lébamba. These sections also benefited from ancillary facilities such as wells, latrines, schools, boreholes, etc. Not all outputs were obtained with regard to dispensaries (61%) and sheds for selling agricultural products (38%). Other key activities were also not undertaken,

especially the road maintenance reorganization study, rehabilitation of the Fougamou Training Centre, weighing/counting station equipment, and awareness raising programs (environmental protection, AIDS prevention, road safety). Regarding the GSEZ Port, all works to extend the quay (380 m) and dredging have been completed; the storage facilities (palm oil storage tanks, timber storage warehouses, hydrocarbon storage tanks, etc.) have also been built and the terminal is now operational.

Various infrastructure developments supported by the Bank helped to reduce transport costs and travel time, as well as increase freight traffic in the PR-1 areas.

The upgrading of road sections reduced vehicle operating costs by up to 35% (Project Completion Report - PCR 2014). Although ex-post statistical data was not available, the PCR findings were corroborated by interviews with transporters and road users during site visits conducted by the evaluation team on the Mouïla-Fougamou section. The transporters and road users confirmed a reduction in travel time by half and an increase in trade. The volume of road traffic after the commissioning of the upgraded sections of PR-1 in 2013 increased by 30% and 13% on the Fougamou-Mouïla and Ndendé-Lébamba sections, respectively¹⁸. Transport demand in this region is mostly driven by rapid population growth and the associated agro-forestry and mining potential. In contrast, traffic on the La Léyou - Lastoursville route fell by 4% over the 2007-2013 period. The developments planned under the PASIG-I should consolidate these results (however, PASIG is struggling to get off the ground and is already eligible for cancellation). Thanks to the ancillary infrastructure built (schools, clinics, boreholes, etc.), the project improved the attraction of rural areas on which interventions were made and provided the people access to basic services (education, health, etc.). However, road maintenance programming and axle load controls could not be affected due to the non-implementation of the road maintenance reorganization study.

It is still too early to assess the impacts of the GSEZ Project, but in the short term the COVID-19 crisis seems to be negatively affecting the port's performance.

The project's targeted outcomes include (i) increasing the average volume per container ship by 70% to reduce shipping costs by 10-15%; and (ii) increasing the maximum cargo carried by vessels (from 8,000 to 15,000 tons, with the possibility of attaining 60,000 tons), to reduce shipping costs by at least 30%. The project had only been operational for a few months and consolidated data was not available during the data collection mission to assess the outputs. However, although the main partner (the OLAM Group) has a potential market, the impact of COVID-19 has been rather negative for the Group at this point. According to estimates presented during interviews with stakeholders in connection with the GSEZ Port Project, traffic and hydrocarbon consumption may have dropped by 50%, logistics and cargo by 30-35%, and between 60 and 70% for handling. The project's long-term outputs may also be affected by the fact that dredging has not yet reached the 14-meter depth for the terminal to accommodate larger vessels. Although those currently berthing at the port are not affected by this situation due to their shallow draught, dredging to 14m in the future may maximize project outcomes.

The completed agricultural sector projects, including the Fisheries and Aquaculture Sector Support Project (PSPA) and the Tropical Agriculture Investment Company (Société d'Investissement pour l'Agriculture Tropicale SIAT) Project, achieved most of their outputs, while the GRAINE Support Program Phase 1 (PAPG-1) is still at its early implementation stage.

Examples of outputs include increased palm oil and rubber production, the establishment of a health control system, aquaculture stations, a geomatics laboratory, boreholes, schools, clinics, etc. However, in the case of PSPA, landing points were not been built. Similarly, some of the outputs under the SIAT Project, especially the palm oil plantations, were transferred to another company. At the institutional

level, the Bank also supported the establishment of the Gabon Agricultural Development Agency (ADAG) and the National Agricultural and Rural Advisory Agency (ANCAR). However, the launching of the sensitization and awareness on the law facilitating agricultural investments and the law on the sustainable agricultural development policy in the major agricultural basins as well as the finalization of the national livestock development strategy were not implemented. The implementation phase of PAPG-1 has only just begun. However, progress has been made in expanding the rubber and oil palm plantations, institution and knowledge building, particularly through the several studies carried out.

However, the outputs of completed agricultural projects have not translated into significant outcomes.

The expected increase in the levels of fishery production and marketing as well as aquaculture products under the PSPA did not materialize. Production in the fisheries and aquaculture sector at national level fell by 37.5% between 2007 and 2014. Similarly, although oil palm and rubber plantations as well as processing plants (crushing, refinery, soap factory), storage and fisheries support infrastructure have been established, SIAT Gabon no longer produces palm oil, has reduced its activities around the rubber sector and has dropped its livestock production activities. Moreover, in the rubber sector, although the product is effectively marketed through Michelin and Bridgestone, the drop in world prices has limited profitability. The effects in terms of job creation (especially for Gabonese nationals) and foreign exchange generation are limited, if not non-existent. SIAT Gabon's workforce was 2,929 in 2007 and, although the production sites generated 8,000 indirect jobs before 2014, they now provide only 3,000 (of which merely 10% are permanent jobs and 18% are for women). Similarly, at the institutional level, ANCAR is not yet operational and ADAG still has relatively few resources. Moreover, the farmers' cooperatives still need to be significantly strengthened before they can be autonomous. Lastly, support for improved farmers' access to funding requires further support

for microfinance institutions to build their knowledge agricultural sector knowledge and their capacity to package more suitable financial products.

Overall, boosting rural development is not yet effective at this stage and the contribution of the agricultural sector to economic diversification remains limited. However, the agricultural sector's share of GDP increased slightly from 3.7% in 2014 to 5.5% in 2019 (World Bank, 2020), which is somewhat above the 4.7% target set under PAREF. This notwithstanding, the quantity of food imports continues to rise.

AfDB interventions in the environment sector helped to build technical capacity and contributed to slowing down the annual loss of the forest cover, but the achievements fall short of addressing the needs of natural resource protection and management. At the institutional level, technical and operational capacity for the sustainable management of national forest resources and ecological heritage were strengthened through preservation and conservation tools, equipment, training, and community awareness-raising provided

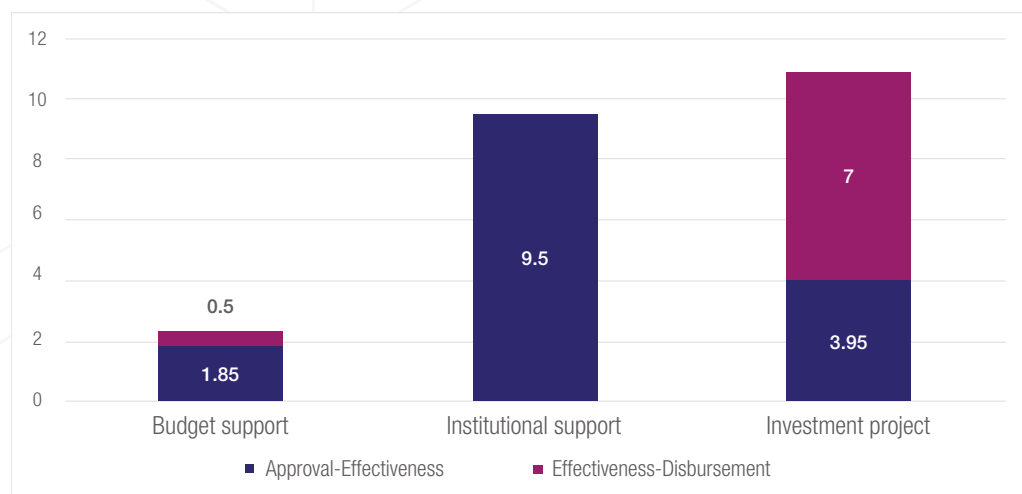
under the Support Program for the Conservation of Congo Basin Ecosystems (PACEBCo) and the Support Project for the Sustainable Management of Forest Resources in Gabon (PAGDRF). The latter project also facilitated the development of 600 hectares of forest and agroforestry regeneration, but these figures fall far short of the 6,000 hectares targeted by the project. However, the completion of plantations under PAGDRF coincided with a slowdown in the annual tree cover loss trend in Gabon after 2014.

Efficiency

This criterion analyses the cost-effectiveness of Bank interventions and gauges compliance with budgets and implementation timeframes.

In spite of a satisfactory cost-benefit analysis of infrastructure projects, the efficiency of AfDB interventions in Gabon over the 2011-2020 period is deemed unsatisfactory overall because of delays in project implementation due, among other things, to start-up delays and the weak capacity of project implementation units.

Figure 4 : Average Start-up Delay by Project Type (months)



Source: SAP and project documents

In terms of project financial profitability, particularly for infrastructure, the cost-benefit analysis was satisfactory despite the additional costs observed, meaning that the actual total cost of PR-1, initially estimated at just over EUR 284 million, increased by 12% at completion. This increase in investment costs due to additional works and contingencies brought the discounted economic rate of return (ERR) to 13.7% at completion, compared to the initial rate of 14.9%. Therefore, the project is still economically viable¹⁹. For the Port GSEZ Project (port concession), the debt cost recovery issue will be a particular focus in the coming years. The Bank estimates the internal rate of return (IRR) of the Port GSEZ Project at 15.9%, hence its financial viability at pre-appraisal. However, the COVID-19 crisis could, in the short and medium term, compromise the initial revenue projections and the private operator could face difficulties in meeting debt repayments. Lastly, the internal rate of return of the PIAEPAL Project, which is at its start-up phase, has also been estimated at 15.42%. In the agricultural sector, the cost-benefit analysis of the PSPA is considered unsatisfactory (despite a positive estimate at completion) because of anticipated benefits being below initial expectations. Furthermore, many PSPA expenditures were retrospectively considered ineligible, forcing Gabon to reimburse almost CFAF 80 million.

With the exception of PBOs, overall timeliness was unsatisfactory for the other projects in all sectors. Delays were observed both at start-up and during the project implementation phase. Average delays at start-up amounted to about 10 months from approval to first disbursement, beyond the target of 6 months indicated in Presidential Directive PD 02/2015 concerning the Design, Implementation and Cancellation of Bank Group Sovereign Operations. However, the timeframes improved during the period under review, from an average of 14.48 months during CSP 2011-2015 to 6.31 months for the CSP 2016-2020 cycle. In contrast, the situation was quite different for PBOs

under which rapid disbursements were recorded despite a 2- to 3-month time lag in relation to the program approval date (PAREF III and PABURC²⁰). The Bank was the first to disburse resources to finance the recovery plan in 2017. On the downside, there were significant delays in the implementation of investment and institutional support projects (see Figure 4).

Significant delays were also observed during project implementation. Of the 8 completed projects, 6 were delayed by between 12 months and 21.33 months and the completion dates of 9 projects in the portfolio under review were extended at least once. The delays were due to a number of factors, the most recurrent of which include: **the poor knowledge of Bank procedures, especially those on procurement and financial management** (PAMPDIEG, CCAIMAG support project, PAPG-1, PASIG, PADEG, etc.). Various implementation teams have complained about the long procurement delays, especially regarding the issuance of no-objection notices. Although AfDB staff provide training to PIU members at the beginning (and sometimes during) the intervention, this has fallen short of needs.

Delays in start-up and initial disbursements: For example, in the case of the GSEZ Port Project, the lengthy approval process led the promoter to advance own funds to accelerate the works. In the case of PAREF III and the COVID-19 Emergency Program, the budget of UA 160 million initially announced was revised downwards (UA 80 million) due to the ceilings set by the Bank's prudential ratio, which in both cases were attained. According to some interlocutors, these budget shifts and revisions were not accompanied by sufficient dialogue to anticipate the delay and shortfall in expected resources. Some projects even recorded ineligible expenditures as mentioned above. Furthermore, the monitoring reports of the PAPG2 studies and the Support Project for the Transformation Strategy and the Promotion of Youth Entrepreneurship in Agriculture and Agribusiness (PASTA-PEJA) reveal non-functional

Box 3 : Efficiency of AfDB programs in light of Changing Leadership

Most AfDB operations in Gabon under CSP 2011-2015 either did not materialize (Business Climate Reform Project, Fibre Optic Project, etc.) or were abandoned after approval at government request (Road Project Phase 2, Power Plant Construction Project, etc.). Projects in the agriculture sector also suffered from the instability of their staff and of partner organizations. This was the case for PASTA-PEJA and PAPG2, which saw several changes within their implementation teams, including the coordinator. Similarly, based on interviews, the Youth Employability Capacity Building Project has had 4 or 5 different Ministers since its launch in 2018. The change in priorities linked to cabinet reshuffles and the use of alternative sources of financing (recourse to financial markets, bilateral financing, private partners, etc.) have been at the origin of these situations and pose a real challenge to the diligent implementation of Bank programs. More recently, PASIG (currently awaiting a formal request from the Government of Gabon) may also be cancelled.

steering committees and major weaknesses in the internal control and financial management system. Lastly, it is also worth mentioning the poor quality of the studies conducted (e.g. non-exhaustive definition of certain actions in the detailed sketches).

An unsuitable institutional base combined with inadequate coordination and/or involvement of various national authorities involved in the intervention sectors. For instance, until the end of 2019, the management of the Bank's governance programs (including PAREF) was part of the prerogatives of the Directorate General of Planning in the Ministry of Economy, while the IMF and WB programs were managed directly by a unit in the Office of the Ministry of Finance, thus limiting synergies in program monitoring and joint dialogue. Since then, all programs have been managed by the same unit, which has strengthened synergies between the three main donors (joint mission conducted for the preparation of the fifth IMF review in September 2019). In the agricultural sector, PAPG-1 is overseen by the President's Office, resulting in a reduced involvement of the Ministry of Agriculture. Regarding PAMPDIEG, having the Secretary General of the Presidency of the Republic as the chair of the Steering Committee did not facilitate the holding of Steering Committee meetings within the indicated timeframes and the making of timely decisions.

Other factors such as unstable implementation teams (see Box 3) at both the Gabonese and AfDB level and delays in mobilizing counterpart funding

(PAPG-1, PAMPDIEG, PACEBco, etc.) also account for the delays observed.

Sustainability

This criterion analyses the technical soundness, financial and economic viability, institutional, stakeholder ownership, social and environmental sustainability.

It is unlikely that the Bank's interventions in Gabon over the period evaluated will be sustainable.

In the governance sector, the sustainability of the outcomes of measures adopted was limited by the inadequacy or delay in implementing institutional support. Several units/directorates in charge of reforms supported by PAREF (such as the General Tax Directorate for the tax justice initiative or the unit in charge of PPPs) did not have sufficient resources to undertake the reforms. These findings are also shared by the IMF in its 2019 analysis of governance issues²¹. Several institutions established or strengthened with the Bank's support are yet to be consolidated. Despite being taken over by the APJA Association (Act Autonomous Youths), the Libreville incubator requires a change in its economic model to maintain its sustainability. The three trade support structures set up as part of the assistance to the CCAIMAG - the CGA, the BSTP and the CAMC - are not operational and lack the resources to operate. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic poses risks to

the sustainability of the gains of reforms undertaken since 2017. Although the country has regained positive economic growth and a budget surplus, arrears clearance is still ongoing while the public debt, projected at 74.7% in 2020, has reached its sustainable limits.

Regarding infrastructure, even though the technical quality of the facilities is satisfactory, the absence of ownership and poor road maintenance pose a real threat to their sustainability in the short/medium term. Road maintenance in Gabon depends on the Road Maintenance Fund (FER), whose resources are channeled through the national budget with initial allocations inadequate to meet real road maintenance needs and low resource commitment rates. For example, the budgetary allocations under the 2017 and 2018 Budget Acts amounted to CFAF 10.4 billion and CFAF 5.5 billion, respectively, while the actual disbursement rates were only 60% and 43%. Actually, following the merger of the National Agency for Major Works (ANGT) and FER.2 (second generation) in January 2015, FER was unable to meet its objectives. The maintenance program for the priority road network was not carried out at the expense of non-programmed and non-priority works (repaving of less important sections, paving of secondary roads, etc.). As a result, the percentage of the road network in excellent or good condition has been steadily decreasing since 2015 from 16% and 20% to 6% and 7% in 2020, respectively, with 80% of the road network in poor condition. Moreover, the system for controlling the axle load of heavy vehicles has largely failed. Only the Ndjolé weighing station is operational, out of the four on the entire network. Heavy goods vehicles are excessively overloaded (up to 20 tons per axle for a legal limit of 13 tons). Regarding the socio-economic developments related to PR-1, a lack of inter-sector coordination threatens their sustainability. These include the non-operation of the two bus stations built in Fougamou and Mouila; the partial fencing of schools; some abandoned buildings, unused markets and a lack of monitoring and maintenance of infrastructure, buildings and equipment. Lastly, for the GSEZ Port Project, the site visit did not reveal any particular

challenges associated with the quality of the works. However, the COVID-19 crisis poses risks to the financial viability of the project and consequently to loan maturities, at least in the short and medium term. The long-term impacts of the project may be undermined by the fact that dredging is not yet 14 meters deep.

Although the technical quality of the facilities built in the agricultural sector appear satisfactory, some projects lack an autonomous system for maintaining and sustaining the outcomes. For example, in the case of the PSPA, no autonomous system for infrastructure and equipment maintenance seems to have been put in place and the required resources are not available. Technical sustainability was already seriously compromised before project completion. The PCR review had already established that in 2014, (i) over half of the IT and office equipment was obsolete, (ii) the cars, boats and motorcycles were no longer properly maintained, and (iii) they had had no insurance coverage for over 2 years. Regarding PAPG-1, apart from being taken over by OLAM, the lack of a sustainable maintenance system for rural roads and paths was a major concern. Support for organizing beneficiaries, the deployment of management tools for better maintenance, and the coverage of recurrent costs of agricultural infrastructure (markets, pooling centers, rural roads, platforms, etc.) are mentioned in the project document, but without further details. At the institutional level, ADAG does not have enough budget to operate satisfactorily. ANCAR is still not operational. These points show a lack of commitment by the Gabonese authorities.

Similarly, the economic and financial viability of agricultural activities is limited by the expected results falling short of forecasts. For the PSPA, the levels of initially expected production were not attained (28,000 tons produced annually instead of the projected 65,000 tons), while SIAT Gabon's turnover in September 2019 was 39% below projections and 18% short of the September 2018 figures. SIAT posted insufficient operational and financial performance from 2017 to September

2019 to secure stable profitability on a multi-year basis.

Crosscutting Issues

This section analyses the integration of crosscutting issues such as gender, social inclusion, environment and green growth into Bank strategies and interventions.

Gender

The Bank mainstreams gender in all its interventions, but it does not have a clear overall approach to its priorities in the fight against gender inequality in Gabon. As a result, this dimension is not adequately considered. In the agricultural sector, gender mainstreaming is limited to mentioning the presence of women in the production, processing and marketing of food products. Quantified objectives on the roles and positions of responsibility held by women were set under agricultural projects (26 women chairs out of 50 cooperatives under SOTRADER and 35% of women in SIAT staffing). These projects did not achieve their targets as no specific measures were taken in this respect. The agricultural component under PAREF includes gender in the GRAINE Program. In PADEG, women were able to benefit from SME incentives. For example, the incubation project includes a target of 20% of enterprises managed by women. Although this target has not yet been reached, the evaluation team noted that the most successful business monitored by the Libreville incubator is run by a woman.

The gender dimension was reflected under infrastructure projects through the creation of permanent jobs for women in port logistics (GSEZ) and ancillary facilities specifically targeting women (women's community centers, markets, boreholes, schools under PR-1). Lastly, the PARCI project supported the Economic Commission of Central

African States (ECCAS) in developing and training focal points (37% of whom are women) for gender awareness in regional infrastructure projects. The same is true for PACEBCo, which includes activities dedicated to women. It should be noted that Gabon has a National Strategy for Gender Equality and Equity (SNEEG-2010) whose orientations are in line with the provisions of PSGE 2011-2025.

Social Inclusion

AfDB strategies in Gabon address the challenges of inclusion, with the ambition of tackling them directly. CSPs 2011-2015 and 2016-2020 also include an analysis of the social situation in Gabon, identifying challenges posed by poverty, economic inclusion, gender, education, health, water and sanitation. However, these analyses are not sufficiently thorough on factors such as exclusion, gender equity and regional disparities. Four of the six outcomes of CSP 2011-2015 envisaged inclusive components of employability, access to the interior, development of agricultural value chains and access to energy in rural areas. However, these results did not materialize because of the poor implementation of the CSP. The subsequent strategy went further by adding a specific human development pillar by expanding on its ambitions to include improved access to water and sanitation services and social protection.

However, these goals have not yet been achieved through Bank operations and key intervention sectors. With regard to transport infrastructure, the social inclusion dimension is mainly addressed through ancillary school and health infrastructure or strengthening the role of women. The results are satisfactory for school facilities (an increase in school enrolment and the number of pupils attending school was highlighted during the Fougamou-Mouila section case study), but less favorable in terms of the ownership and operation of social, health and economic facilities (unused or abandoned markets or motor parks). The construction works mostly

generated temporary jobs. The agricultural projects funded mainly support agro-industry (OLAM, SIAT), with a secondary focus on traditional agriculture, which fails to promote inclusive wealth generation across the entire sector. Agricultural cooperatives are being set up at an extremely slow pace (100 for an initial target of 800). In the area of governance, PABURC explicitly aims to strengthen the resilience of the most vulnerable and low-income groups.

Environment and Green Growth

The two CSPs of the period reviewed include brief analyses on the environment and climate change (see “Context”). The sustainable transformation of natural resources is considered a key component of Gabon’s economic diversification strategy in both country strategies. A greater focus on the country’s economic development potential can be seen in CSP 2016-2020, in line with the “Green Gabon” PSGE pillar in contrast to CSP 2011-2015, which explicitly included an environment-related outcome aimed at achieving “progress towards a green and sustainable economy”.

The environmental dimension is addressed in the Bank’s portfolio through two projects, PACEBCo and PAGDRF, which respectively support ECCAS and COMIFAC (Central African Forest Commission) to strengthen their regional structures. PACEBCo contributes to the conservation of Congo Basin ecosystems in line with ECCAS environmental objectives. PAGDRF aligns with the COMIFAC Convergence Plan and supports the 1999 Yaoundé Declaration on the Conservation and Sustainable Management of Tropical Forests.

At the operational level, the Bank complied with its requirement to identify negative environmental impacts in all relevant sectors of its operations. Despite the preparation of Environmental and Social Management Plans (ESMPs) and their disclosure to the public during the implementation phase, monitoring and reporting have been virtually non-existent. Environmental and social impact assessments are systematically carried out for all

projects, (i) attesting that environmental and social sustainability aspects are considered from the outset of an intervention and (ii) leading to the development of ESMPs for continued management throughout the project implementation phase. However, the level of ESMP implementation is limited. In the agricultural sector, to reduce river contamination by retted water discharge, PAPG-1 prioritized the construction of 131 small soaking units. The Green Gabon Initiative Support Program for the Transformation of the Forestry and Wood Sector (PAGTFOB) also includes environmental impact mitigation components, namely the recovery of wood waste through a pellet and charcoal production plant. In the case of the SIAT Project, the implementation of the ESMP has been significantly delayed. Similarly, under the PSPA, the borrower did not comply with the safeguard provisions during project implementation. The ESMP was not prepared before the infrastructure was built. A corrective ESMP was belatedly completed thereby depriving all stakeholders of a reference document to comply with environmental and social standards and procedures.

Lastly, in terms of transport infrastructure, awareness-raising activities for environmental protection, STD/AIDS prevention and road safety were planned and partially implemented under Road Program Phase 1 (PR-I). However, the level of environmental performance and compliance varies according to the road sections developed: overall “unsatisfactory” (“poor” for La Léyou-Lastoursville, “unsatisfactory” for Fougamou-Mouila, and “satisfactory” for Ndendé-Lébamba). The PR-I and GSEZ projects systematically submitted their ESMP monitoring reports late. Regarding the GSEZ Port, despite the key role the AfDB sought to assign to the environmental and social dimensions, the private operator did not respect its commitments especially in terms of systematic and rigorous monitoring of environmental outputs and, above all, taking measures to mitigate the negative environmental impacts. ■





Program Management and Bank Performance

This section measures the Bank's performance through knowledge management and policy dialogue, donor coordination and results-based management.

Knowledge Management and Policy Dialogue

The Bank identified a list of relevant analytical work through its CSPs, most of which are consistent with Gabon's economic diversification: (i) Timber Sector Development Study, (ii) Agri-food Sector Promotion Study, (iii) capacity building activities, (iv) sustainable industrialization of the timber sector in Congo Basin countries, and (v) carrying out a regional study on constraints facing private sector investments in ECCAS countries. The analytical work carried out by the Bank helped to identify new financing and strengthen strategic dialogue.

The Bank regularly conducts dialogue missions with Gabon in the infrastructure sector (3 dialogue missions between 2015 and 2019). The aim is to identify priorities aligned with Bank and country policies and strategies. Due to its historical experience in the sector, the Bank's position as a leading TFP for infrastructure and the fact that it is the only technical and financial partner with an infrastructure engineer in the Gabon Country Office, the Bank has a more significant impact on the dialogue with the Gabonese authorities on infrastructure-related issues. More recently, the Water and Sanitation Master Plan, prepared with a long-term vision, will certainly guide the Bank's new financing opportunities in this area. However, the key issue of road maintenance is not the subject of an explicit and specific dialogue.

In the governance sector, dialogue with the country intensified following the preparation of PAREF. The analytical work was intended to contribute to shaping the reforms promoted under the program, but stakeholders indicate that the studies conducted were not sufficiently assimilated or used by the Bank in the policy dialogue. Nevertheless, PAREF helped to develop a policy dialogue on major issues related to public governance (public finance management, business environment) that had not been addressed before. Although relatively discontinuous and devoid of a structured framework, dialogue has gradually been established and consolidated as the Bank has improved its knowledge of the country and its institutional workings. The arrival of a Country Manager has also strengthened the dialogue capacity of the AfDB office in Gabon. Moreover, although dialogue between donors on the governance component (IMF, WB, AfDB, France) became more fluid during the second CSP period, policy dialogue is still essentially bilateral.

Policy dialogue in the agricultural sector is limited. Discussions were held during the preparation of the PAREF on agricultural support services that had to be put in place. The involvement of the Ministry of Agriculture was coordinated by the Ministry of Finance, but only a limited number of departments were involved. Despite being the main TFP supporting the GRAINE Program, which is the key agricultural sector development program, the Bank did not develop any dialogue on the program's orientations, even though it offered many strategic points for discussion (impact on the Gabonese population, development of export-oriented industrial agriculture, approach to strengthening farmers' cooperatives, development strategy for the upstream and downstream segments of production, etc.). The PASTA-PEJA study, whose objectives include the

preparation of a support project for implementing the agricultural development and transformation strategy, also offered prospects for fruitful dialogue between the AfDB and Gabon. However, the study has so far only led to discussions on implementing the future program without considering the different strategic orientations.

Donor Coordination

In the absence of a standardized and functional framework during the first CSP, coordination between key multilateral donors intensified during the preparation of budget support from 2016. Gabon does not have a standard TFP coordination framework, despite the establishment in April 2010 of a Joint Strategic Orientation and Consultation Committee on external aid coordination, which has now been split into several thematic groups. This framework was barely functional given the limited recourse to financial assistance from TFPs under CSP 2011-2015. Coordination with TFPs was revitalized during the CSP 2016-2020 period, particularly in the governance sector (especially the IMF and the WB) at the time the budget support was being prepared. This coordination, governed at the regional level by the decision of the CEMAC Council of Ministers and donors at end-2016 to conduct a joint strategy to stabilize the Franc Zone, led to strong coherence between the programs of the various institutions. As part of a joint response to the growing risks of instability, the three partners (AfDB, WB and IMF) intensified their dialogue to pool their resources. Specifically, AfDB developed close links with the IMF in terms of sharing analysis and approaches, aligning reform matrices and preconditions, and analyzing and responding to capacity building needs. Joint missions were also carried out with the IMF to prepare institutional support, which particularly led to a joint proposal to finance a long-term public finance management expert (however, the Government did not approve this measure). Similarly, the interventions of other donors (in particular the WB's Investment and Competitiveness Promotion Project) were duly considered in preparing PADEG.

There was coordination between the AfDB, the WB and the IMF in addressing the impact of the COVID-19 crisis through the PABURC framework, but to a lesser extent. Although complementarities were noted between PABURC and the IMF program that disbursed USD 147 million under the Rapid Financing Instrument in April 2020, as well as the WB's USD 150 million budget support, the measures precedent were set within the framework of bilateral discussions with few linkages between the respective matrices of the TFPs (unlike PAREF). Moreover, the Gabonese authorities set up a steering committee under the Prime Minister to ensure internal coordination of the COVID-19 response and serve as a relay to donors.

However, coordination with other TFPs beyond the governance sector is not explicit and even overlaps sometimes. Since 2016/2017, donor coordination in the transport sector - where the Bank plays a leading role in Gabon - no longer functions properly. There are only information exchanges at the level of project managers. Similarly, multiple initiatives, notably from the Bank, the EU and the WB in the field of vocational training, employability (overlapping of certain activities), support to SMEs and business creation (incubators), do not seem to be coordinated and even duplicate efforts in the case of incubators. In the agriculture sector, the Sector Coordination Group under the Prime Minister's Office that exists since the early 2010s has not been functional for many years. The AfDB also has no specific partnership with other development partners in the sector. PAPG-1 planned to establish synergies with the WB-funded "Access to Basic Social Services in Rural Areas" Project (USD 60 million in 2015), intervening particularly in the drinking water and energy sectors. However, given the delays recorded under PAPG-1, it is unlikely that these synergies will be achieved. Moreover, the main TFPs active in the agricultural sector (International Fund for Agricultural Development and the French Development Agency) focus on food production, smallholding and farmers' organization, thus offering opportunities for coordination.

Results-based Management

Under the two CSPs, the AfDB established a monitoring mechanism through mid-term reviews and completion reports. Both CSPs under review were subject to mid-term reviews and completion reports, especially for the first. Similarly, country portfolio performance reviews were also regularly conducted and aligned with the CSP cycle. Four portfolio reviews were carried out (in 2011, 2013, 2016 and 2019), accompanied by portfolio improvement plans.

Lessons learned and implementation challenges are recurrent across the reviews and will require strong actions to be taken. They are related, inter alia, to the need to i) build project implementation unit capacities; ii) shorten the response time to various requests for procurement and disbursement; iii) improve project supervision; and iv) reduce the deviation of actual portfolio from the indicative operations program in the CSP.

At project level, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are put in place but are generally not been fully developed. Except for PAMPDIEG, all projects have a logical (or performance) framework for monitoring purposes. However, those monitoring indicators are often more focused on outputs than

outcomes. Performance indicators in the governance sector are often not measurable (inappropriate choice of outcome indicators; unclear or no baseline data; unrealistic targets not aligned with the results frameworks of national strategies; indicators not measured/available). Sometimes, inconsistencies in the indicators used between programs (GDP growth rate, private investment rate, non-oil revenue in PAREF/PADEG) were noted. Moreover, at the partner country level, performance management was handicapped by the weak national statistical system and the mechanism for monitoring/evaluating development progress.

Similarly, self-assessments of project outcomes (IPR, PCR) appear to be over-optimistic. Where more independent reports exist, particularly in the case of PCR review notes (as is the case for PSPA and PACEBCo), these documents invariably found the previous monitoring reports to have overstated their achievements. For instance, the PSPA Review noted that impact analysis in the PCR was not sufficiently documented and the assessment scores were too optimistic. Lastly, it should be noted that the recommendations of supervision missions were poorly or belatedly implemented. **Furthermore, lessons learned from monitoring and evaluation were not widely disseminated to stakeholders.** ■



Conclusions, Lessons and Recommendations

Conclusions

The Bank's assistance to Gabon over the 2011-2020 period was based on two Country Strategy Papers. CSP 2011-2015 was developed within the PSGE context. It aimed to improve the business climate for private sector development and strengthen infrastructure to support non-oil sectors. For its part, CSP 2016-2020 fell within the context of revitalized cooperation between the Bank and Gabon following the 2015 oil crisis, to strengthen the country's resilience to falling oil prices. Accordingly, the Bank's interventions targeted economic diversification through infrastructure development, agricultural promotion, enhanced governance and human capital improvement under the January 2014 Social Pact.

In terms of results, Bank strategies and programs in Gabon over the period reviewed are pertinent. The interventions addressed the country's priority challenges and needs and those of its people. Operations in the governance, transport and agriculture sectors are well aligned with Gabon's development strategies and are consistent with the country's priorities. However, there is some fragmentation of projects beyond the main sectors of intervention, thus limiting the overall coherence of the CSPs and the internal synergies of the assistance program. With regard to effectiveness, very few projects in the CSP 2011-2015 indicative lending program materialized. That notwithstanding, the Bank's assistance over the period under review facilitated macroeconomic stabilization, road

Table 4 : Assessment Summary of the Main Evaluation Criteria

Evaluation criteria	Evaluation sub-criteria	Score*			
		GOV	INFRA	AGRI	SYNTH
Relevance	Relevance of objectives	4	4	4	4
	Relevance of the design of operations to achieving the objectives	4	4	3	4
	Selectivity of activities and objectives	4	4	3	4
Effectiveness	Achievement of outputs	4	4	4	4
	Achievement of outcomes	3	4	3	3
Efficiency	Cost/benefit analysis	4	4	3	4
	Implementation timelines	3	1	1	1
Sustainability	Technical soundness	4	3	4	4
	Economic and financial sustainability	4	1	4	3
	Institutional sustainability and capacity building	4	3	4	3
	Ownership and partnership sustainability	4	1	4	3
	Environmental and social sustainability	N/A	1	4	4

* GOV: Governance; INFRA: Infrastructure; AGRI: Agriculture and Environment; SYNTH: Overall summary

4= Highly satisfactory 3= Satisfactory 2= Unsatisfactory 1= Highly unsatisfactory

Source: Sector Rating Scores and Assessments

network development, port infrastructure upgrading and the initiation of a major program to promote agricultural development, among others. However, institution building, business climate improvement and economic diversification are still areas to develop.

Although the cost-benefit analyses of the projects were conclusive, the overall efficiency of Bank interventions is unsatisfactory due to significant delays in project implementation, particularly in terms of institutional support. The same is true for sustainability or the lack of ownership and resources of several structures in governance and agriculture as well as weak road maintenance, all of which pose significant risks to the sustainability of Bank interventions. Table 4 summarizes the scores for the various evaluation criteria, and Box 4 below summarizes the main success and failure factors.

Lessons

- Policy dialogue, driven by in-depth analysis of the country context, challenges and institutional machinery, helps to improve strategy and program design and delivery.

- The concentration of available resources in a limited number of sectors is crucial for the Bank to make a difference and strengthen the impact of its interventions on the country's development, even in difficult contexts.

- Frequent changes in strategic orientations or operational priorities following leadership changes in a partner country's public administration constrains the implementation of the indicative lending program and the effectiveness of Bank interventions in the country.

- In the event of a fiscal crisis, PBOs with flexible conditions and rapid disbursements are a powerful instrument enabling the Bank to respond exceptionally to urgent needs and ensure the continuity of government operations. They are also a key to establishing a structuring policy dialogue that should underpin interventions.

- The deepening of comprehensive approaches to institution building through a participatory approach (involving all stakeholders), the ownership of a good governance, control and accountability culture, and the consolidation of monitoring and evaluation capacity are key to the effectiveness of the Bank's technical assistance projects in Gabon.

Box 4 : Summary of Success and Failure Factors

Several factors contributed to the relative success of Bank interventions. They relate essentially to the relevance of the Bank's response, coordination between donors, and the flexibility of conditions precedent to disbursement that helped to address the oil crisis. The commitment in principle and the political will of the authorities with regard to structural and institutional reforms, combined with the quality of national strategies (especially the PRE), ensured the continued support to reforms that should be further consolidated. In terms of infrastructure, the Bank's support for road development projects and ancillary activities is a comparative advantage. Thus, the Bank favoured an integrated approach conducive to inclusion (access to health services, schools, drinking water and markets). In productive sectors such as agriculture, the combination of PPP support to create and establish an institutional and regulatory environment conducive to the private sector is a relevant approach.

The main constraints include: (i) weak national capacity in the administrative and financial management of development programs, (ii) the lack of an effective monitoring and steering framework and (iii) the high turnover of administrative staff. Similarly, the extremely limited effectiveness of capacity-building activities in the ministries (staff turnover, lack of supervision and monitoring resources) were obstacles to the proper implementation of infrastructure and agricultural sector projects. The non-involvement of the authorities concerned at central level or the compartmentalization of certain ministries resulted in a lack of ownership and maintenance of ancillary infrastructure.

- Ownership by stakeholders and the implementation of complementary measures by the partner country are key to ensuring the sustainability of project impacts and infrastructure.

Recommendations

In light of the above findings, the evaluation recommends as follows:

- Deepen the analysis of Gabon's specific context and challenges**, especially the constraints to economic diversification and the conditions for private sector growth through the creation of a conducive environment for SME development.
- Strengthen the selectivity of the Bank's interventions** around key sectors with high impact for economic recovery and diversification.
- Strengthen the implementation of the Bank's country program in Gabon.** It is recommended to:
 - Further structure policy dialogue mechanisms by setting them on a long-term and transparent framework with the participation of decision-makers and strategic advisors;
 - Ensure ownership of reform measures through appropriate conditionalities enabling commitment and monitoring, particularly of sector economic recovery plans;
- Support the promotion of PPPs**, especially by modernizing Gabonese legislation and building national institutional capacity in PPP management and monitoring.
- Strengthen the sustainability of Bank's interventions, through the following measures:**
 - Incorporate in the project design document the institutional and financial management and maintenance arrangements to be put in place, including a clear description of the responsibilities and commitments of each stakeholder;
 - Support the establishment of an effective monitoring and evaluation system for implementation, particularly for the transport sector: axle load control and improved governance of the Road Maintenance Fund;
 - Ensure monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the ESMPs throughout the project management cycle. ■



Annexes

Annex 1: Evaluation Methodology	54
Annex 2: Analysis of Operations by Size and Status	57
Annex 3: Rating	61
Annex 4: Adapting the Approach to the COVID-19 Pandemic	62
Annex 5: Summary Table of the Adopted Evaluation Methodology	64
Annex 6: Statistical Data	65
Annex 7: Bank Portfolio in Gabon for the 2011-2020 Period	72
References	77
Endnotes	78

Annex 1: Evaluation Methodology

General Evaluation Methodology Framework

The methodological approach addresses two main issues identified by the Bank (development results and intervention management), which are further broken down into 10 evaluation criteria and 24 related evaluation issues, as set out in the Terms of Reference. Most of the criteria and evaluation issues are addressed at the level of each portfolio intervention (depending on the level of maturity of the intervention), as well as those at the strategic and country level.

The evaluation's overall methodological framework is based on an Inception Report following a scoping mission conducted from 10 to 14 February 2020. It defines the scope of the evaluation and outlines a three-phase process namely: inception, data collection and reporting. A Technical Report was prepared at the end of those three critical phases, summarizing (i) the descriptive analysis of projects in the portfolio and (ii) the three sector notes on the three priority sectors selected for the evaluation, namely (1) governance and inclusion, (2) agriculture and the environment, and (3) basic infrastructure, and drinking water and sanitation.

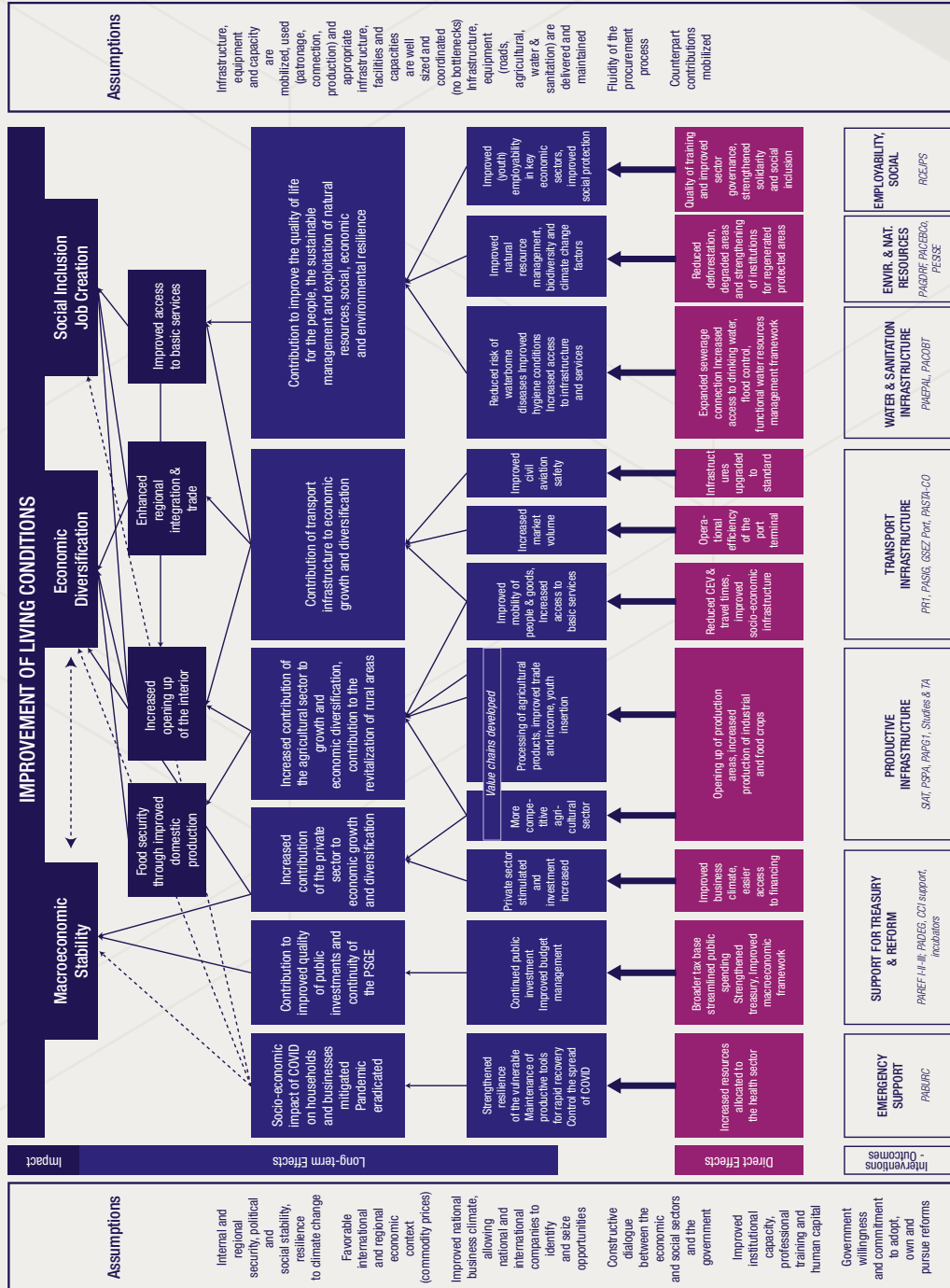
Theory of Change-based Approach

The analysis of AfDB program implementation in Gabon is based on the "Theory of Change" approach presented in Figure A1.1 of the main report. It factors in the results achieved, how and why they were achieved (or not achieved). This is done through a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, using a variety of data collection tools, including desk research, direct observation and participant observation.

The Theory of Change was used as a framework for the evaluation process. It was based on the principles of contribution analysis, which makes it possible to assess the existence and importance of the intervention's contribution to observed changes using a rigorous and systematic analysis of a chain of expected outcomes.

Figure A1.1 presents the three fundamentals of the Theory of Change of the Bank's program in Gabon for the 2011-2020 period, which are (i) macroeconomic stability, (ii) economic diversification, and (iii) social inclusion and job creation, aimed at achieving the overall objective of improving the living conditions of the Gabonese people, as outlined in the Bank's fifth priority goal [High 5s].

Figure A1.1 : Theory of Change of Bank's program in Gabon over the period 2011-2020



Pyramid Approach

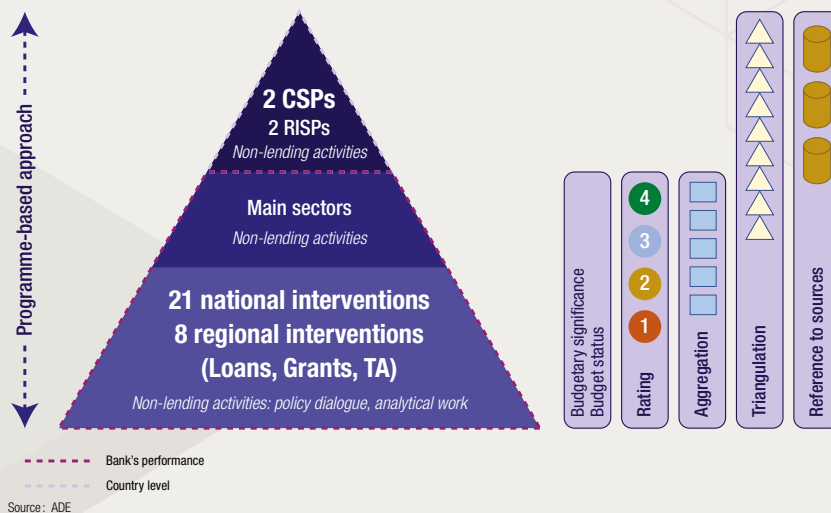
The Theory of Change approach is combined with a Pyramid Approach. The latter provides specific inputs at three levels of analysis: (i) strategic (CSP), (ii) sector (3 Sector Notes), and (iii) operational (Interventions, Project Portfolio Analysis). It focuses on the articulation and coordination between outputs to achieve an overall analysis and synthesis of the Bank's support to Gabon during the evaluation period. The Pyramid Approach is based on the Theory of Change analysis and the five key principles, explained in more detail below [Figure A1.2]: analysis of operations according to their budgetary magnitude and status, scoring, aggregation, triangulation and linkage to information sources...

The aim is to combine both project-level analysis and other levels of analysis to be considered, including strategies as described in CSPs, sector-wide approaches, evaluative issues on themes that go beyond specific projects (e.g. coordination, non-lending operations, policy dialogue, risk management, etc.)

The three levels of analysis in the pyramid approach include:

- **Project Portfolio Analysis:** interventions are analyzed based on an assessment grid derived from the evaluation criteria and issues and structuring them into assessment criteria and indicators. The level of analysis depends on the status of each intervention,
- **Analysis of the three core sectors:** Sector Notes are developed for the “Governance”, “Agriculture and Environment” and “Infrastructure and Water-Sanitation” sectors,
- **Strategic analysis and synthesis** based on portfolio and sector analysis, as well as other information collected. The evaluation team carried out an overall analysis based on the evaluation criteria and related issues and reached conclusions and recommendations that are included in the Technical Report.

Figure A1.2 : Key Principles of the Pyramid Approach



Annex 2: Analysis of operations by size and status

The evaluation team examined the entire project portfolio financed during the period reviewed, as well as 4 other projects approved before 2011 but which continued to be implemented during the period reviewed and for which an output analysis was conducted.

Projects approved prior to 2011 and whose execution continued during the 2011-2020 evaluation period

Of the 7 operations approved before 2011 but whose implementation continued during the period reviewed, 4 were selected for specific analysis under the current study (see Table A2.1). This selection is justified by the following considerations:

- Interest expressed by the Bank's Country Office in Gabon/COGA;
- Significance as expressed by the Gabonese national authorities;
- Large operations reflecting Bank support to key sectors (agriculture, transport) under previous strategies or at regional level (resource management in the Congo Basin);
- The need to analyse the results and sustainability of the Bank's interventions, given that most of the projects approved during the review period are ongoing.

Levels of Analysis of Operations

The three different levels of analysis of Bank operations retained were:

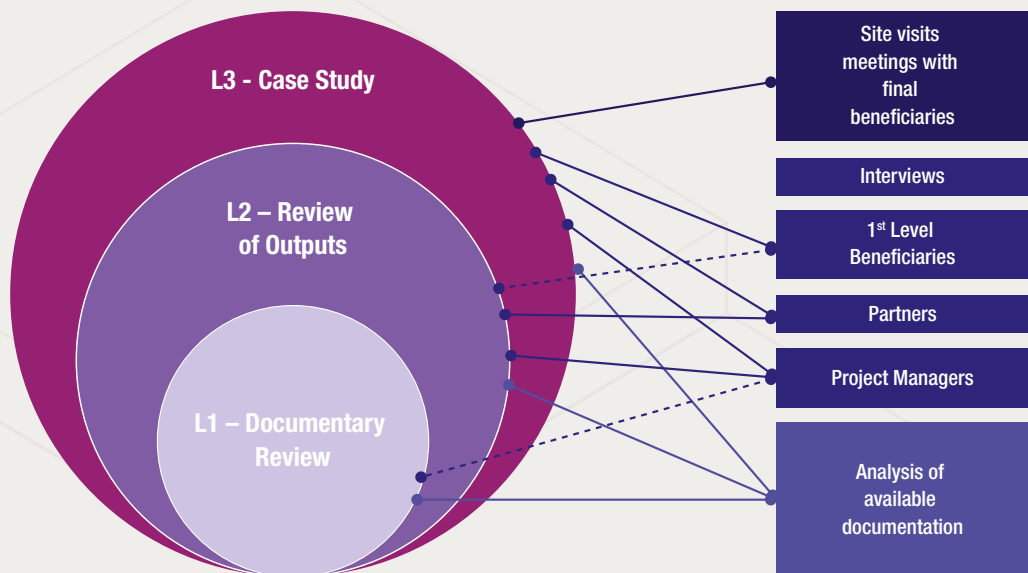
- L3 - In-depth case studies
- L2 - Analysis based mainly on results grids
- L1 - Desk review

These three levels of analysis are illustrated in Figure A2.1.

Table A2.1: Projects approved before 2011 and implemented during the evaluation period

Project	Level	Sector	Status
Road Program Phase 1 (RP-1)	National	Public	Completed
Fisheries Sector Support Project	National	Public	Completed
SIAT Gabon Project	National	Private	Ongoing
Congo Basin Ecosystem Conservation and Aquaculture Program	Regional	Public	Completed

Figure A2.1 : Levels of Analysis of Operations



Projects Selected for In-depth Study (Case Studies)

Five operations were selected for more detailed study, including site visits by local experts and more extensive remote interviews with their stakeholders. These operations, identified with the AfDB Office in Gabon/COGA and based on suggestions from the national authorities during the scoping mission, are presented in Table A2.2.

Table A2.2: Projects Selected for In-depth Study

Title	Sector	Type	Approvals (UA million)
GRAINE Program	Agriculture	One (1) investment project + 2 institutional support	81.2
PAREF (Phases I, II & III)	Governance	Budget support	480.9
Road Program (PR-1)	Transport	1 Investment project	197.5
Owendo Port			32.1
PACEBCo	Environment	1 Private sector project	32.0

Source: SAP/AfDB data base

These interventions represent over 58% of the 2011-2020 portfolio in financial volume. Most of them have been completed. Only the GRAINE Program and the Owendo Port Project are still in ongoing; the Owendo Port Project has been fully disbursed. Under the GRAINE Program, disbursement have only begun for studies and TA (62% to 72% depending on the study).

The following analysis will be compiled:

- Definition of project data (name, country, year of approval, year of closure, disbursement level, sector, ERP date, etc.);
- The project's intervention rationale;
- Analysis and assessment of various aspects of the evaluation criteria and issues for which the project analysis may be relevant.

The main sources used for these analyses are:

- All relevant project documents (Appraisal Report, Loan Agreements, Monitoring and Mid-Term Review, Completion Reports, etc.);
- Interviews with Bank Project Managers, in-country partners and beneficiaries;
- Some site visits to directly obtain observations and beneficiaries' views on the projects.

Results Matrix Analysis

This analysis focuses on the remaining projects with over 70% completed rate and a budget of above UA 1 million, and not selected for case study.

Table A2.3: Projects not Selected for In-depth Study

Title	Sector	Type	Approvals (UA million)
SIAT	Agriculture	One (1) investment project + 2 institutional support	81.2
PARCI-CEEAC	Governance	Institutional support	7.0
PAGDRF	Environment	Institutional support	5.4

Source: SAP/AIDB Data base

The following analytical details are collected:

- Project data (name, country, year of approval, year of closure, disbursement level, sector, ERP date, etc.);
- Project intervention rationale;
- Analysis and assessment of the different aspects of the evaluation criteria and issues for which the project analysis may be relevant.

The main sources for these analyses are:

- All relevant project documents (Appraisal Report, Loan Agreements, Monitoring and Mid-Term Review, Completion Reports, etc.);
- Remote interviews with the Bank's Project Managers and in-country partners.

Desk Review

The other projects (those with a budget below UA 1 million and/or which started very recently), not falling into the two above-mentioned categories, represent around 27% of the portfolio (see complete list of projects in Annex 7). Their analysis is document-based, i.e. without field visits, as they are studies, technical assistance and/or investments at an early stage of implementation. Wherever possible, the desk review is supported by remote exchanges with the project management units and selected stakeholders. As these projects are at an early stage, certain themes within the evaluation criteria and questions are examined - e.g. issues of relevance, design, implementation and efficiency (e.g. timeframes or obstacles to implementation), as well as crosscutting issues, etc.

Annex 3: Rating

Rating Scale

Each criterion included in the intervention assessment matrix is rated. The Rating Scale has four levels [from 1 “Unsatisfactory” to 4 “Highly Satisfactory”]. This scale aims to ensure sound qualitative assessments, based on evidence from desk reviews, stakeholder exchanges and project observations.

The table A3.1 shows the evaluation criteria and sub-criteria and considers (i) the definition adapted by the OECD²² at end-2019, and (ii) the IDEV Evaluation Manual updated thereafter.

Table A3.1: Evaluation Criteria, Sub-criteria and Scores

Criteria	Sub-criteria	Scores
1. RELEVANCE	1.1. Relevance of objectives 1.2 Relevance of program design to achieve objectives 1.3 Selectivity (focus on strategic objectives)	4- Highly satisfactory 3- Satisfactory 2- Unsatisfactory 1- Highly unsatisfactory
2. COHERENCE	1. Compatibility with other interventions and the extent to which they mutually reinforce or undermine each other. 2. Internal consistency (consistency of the intervention and links/synergy with other Bank interventions) and external consistency (consistency with interventions of other stakeholders).	4- Highly satisfactory 3- Satisfactory 2- Unsatisfactory 1- Highly unsatisfactory
3. EFFECTIVENESS	3.1 Achievement of outputs 3.2 Achievement of outcomes	4- Highly satisfactory 3- Satisfactory 2- Unsatisfactory 1- Highly unsatisfactory
4. EFFICIENCY	4.1 Cost-benefit analysis 4.2 Timeliness	4- Highly satisfactory 3- Satisfactory 2- Unsatisfactory 1- Highly unsatisfactory
5. SUSTAINABILITY	5.1 Technical sustainability 5.2 Financial and economic sustainability 5.3 Institutional sustainability and capacity building 5.4 Ownership and sustainability of partnerships 5.5 Social and environmental sustainability	4- Highly satisfactory 3- Satisfactory 2- Unsatisfactory 1- Highly unsatisfactory
6. IMPACT	Significant generated or expected, positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects (potentially transformative: longer-term or wider social, environmental and economic impacts)	4- Highly satisfactory 3- Satisfactory 2- Unsatisfactory 1- Highly unsatisfactory

Source: SAP/AIDB data base

Annex 4: Adapting the Approach to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Alternative Methodological Approach

International travel, especially of experts from areas with high epidemic density (including France and Belgium), was suspended in reaction to the global COVID-19 pandemic. Consequently, the methodology initially proposed involving field missions for 4 international experts accompanied by a national expert was reviewed.

This methodological review helps to ensure that the deliverables meet the two main objectives mentioned in the Terms of Reference, namely: “To provide an independent and evidence-based judgement of the Bank’s development outcomes, including the causes and factors underlying results achieved; and “To identify lessons and suggest potential improvements to inform the next CSP cycle”²³. Specifically, the second point requires that the evaluation deliver its findings on time if they are to be useful for the next programming cycle.

After the inception mission, the evaluation team could no longer travel to Gabon and had to adopt an alternative methodological approach. This enabled the work to continue and deliver useful results on time, while providing the necessary flexibility under COVID-19.

The remote data collection mission was conducted between 15 June and 27 August 2020.

The adapted approach comprised:

- **An in-depth project review and a desk analysis** as initially planned and validated in the Inception Report.
- **Briefings with the AfDB Office in Gabon/COGA and IDEV.**

First, targeted briefings by sector were conducted in mid-June, especially with the Bank’s Country Office representatives in Gabon/COGA on infrastructure and agriculture/environment. The planned meeting with the governance specialist was not held.

An additional briefing with the country economist was subsequently held on 3 July 2020, through videoconferencing.

Lastly, these briefings helped to collect additional background documents and, above all, target the stakeholders to be interviewed. It also provided an update on possibilities for national consultants to travel within the country. After the briefing, remote contact was facilitated and interviews were planned, taking into account the work schedules of both the international consultants and IDEV staff.

Remote Interviews

Fifty-eight (58) individual or group interviews out of 75 planned were conducted during the data collection mission, involving 74 people.

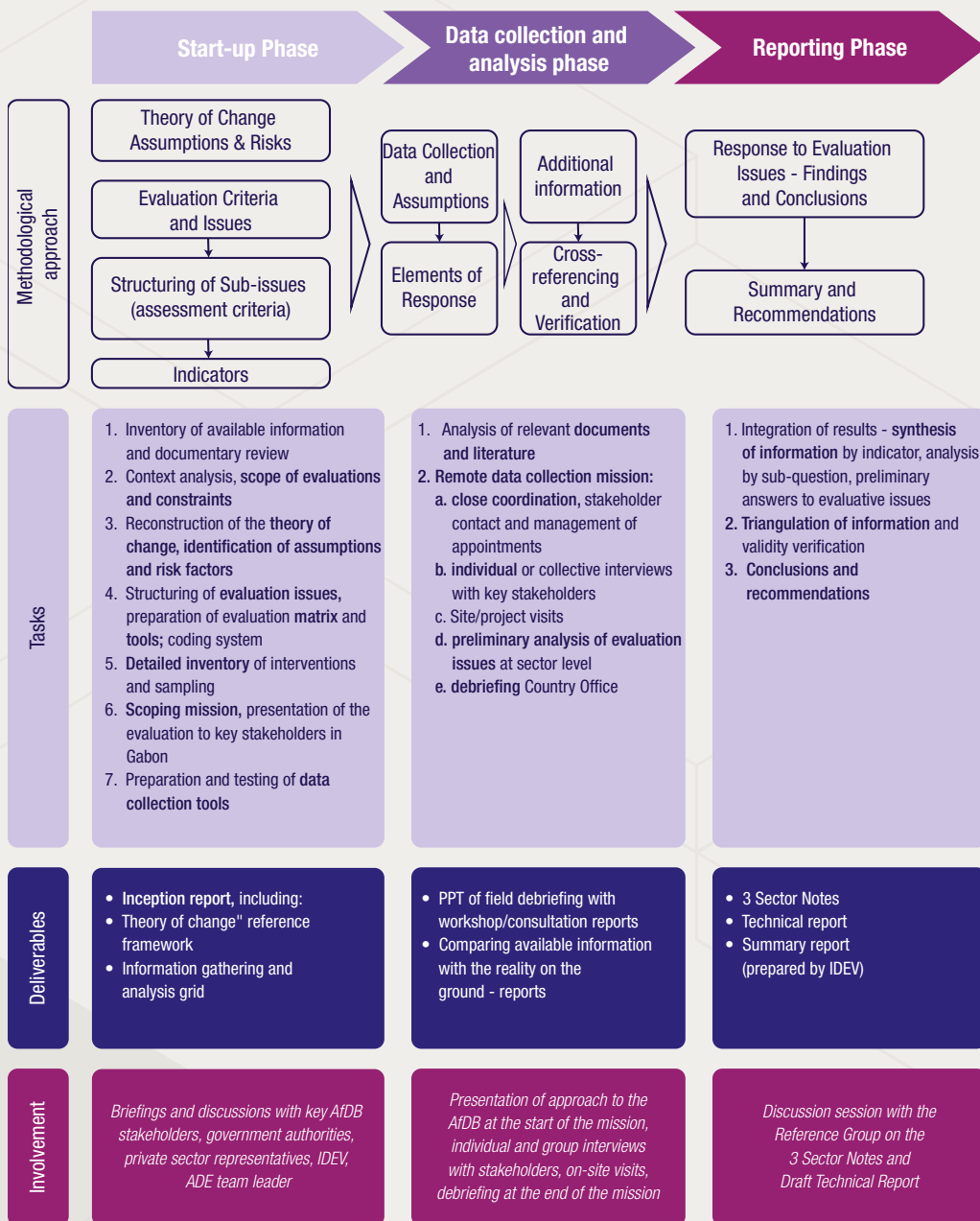
Field visits by two Gabonese experts

4 site visits were conducted, namely

- Visit to the Fougamou - Mouila road section and related developments on this road axis under Road Program (PR-1), conducted from 13 to 15 August 2020,
- Visit to the GSEZ Port Terminal, undertaken on 26 August 2020,
- Visit to 2 cooperatives (Life and Forest; Moutsigé), undertaken on 27 August 2020,
- Visit to the Libreville Multisector Incubator, conducted on 3 September 2020.

These visits were carried out by two local consultants whose role was strengthened to meet the challenges of conducting a remote assessment mission.

Annex 5: Summary Table of the Adapted Evaluation Methodology

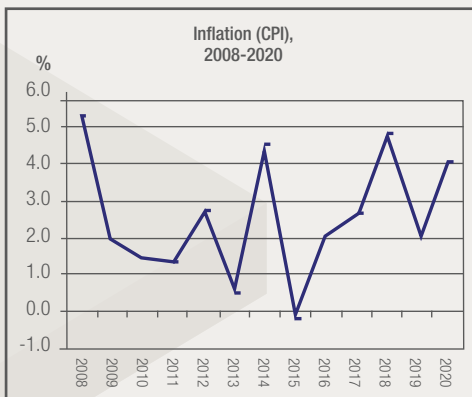
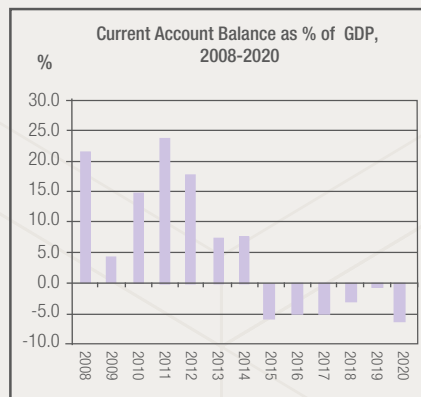
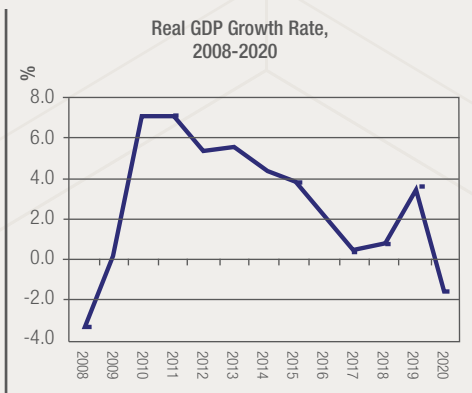


Annex 6: Statistical Data

Gabon Selected Macroeconomic Indicators

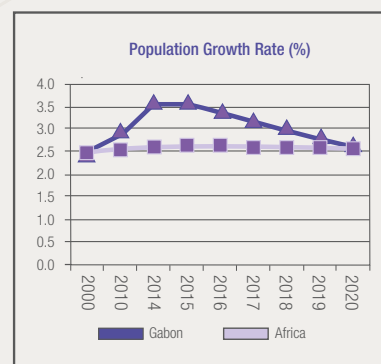
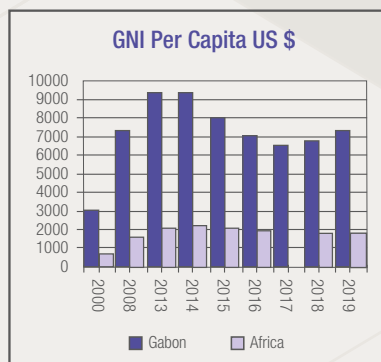
Indicators	Unit	2010	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019 (e)	2020 (p)
National Accounts								
GNI at Current Prices	Million US \$	12,717	15,523	14,216	13,421	14,475	...	...
GNI per Capita	US\$	7,830	7,970	7,080	6,500	6,830	...	...
GDP at Current Prices	Million US \$	14,359	14,377	14,014	14,893	16,859	16,633	15,063
GDP at 2010 Constant prices	Million US \$	14,359	18,526	18,914	19,008	19,169	19,814	19,481
Real GDP Growth Rate	%	7.1	3.9	2.1	0.5	0.8	3.4	-1.7
Real per Capita GDP Growth Rate	%	3.4	0.5	-1.0	-2.3	-1.7	0.8	-4.0
Gross Domestic Investment	% GDP	29.7	34.8	34.2	30.5	30.4	31.1	33.3
Public Investment	% GDP	21.2	5.0	4.9	1.5	2.6	2.5	2.7
Private Investment	% GDP	8.5	29.8	29.3	28.9	27.7	28.6	30.6
Gross National Savings	% GDP	41.0	29.2	24.1	27.2	30.3	32.1	39.3
Prices and Money								
Inflation (CPI)	%	1.4	-0.1	2.1	2.7	4.8	2.0	4.0
Exchange Rate (Annual Average)	local currency/ US\$	494.4	591.4	593.0	582.1	555.7	581.2	574.9
Monetary Growth (M2)	%	19.0	-1.6	-6.1	0.8	6.5	...	...
Money and Quasi Money as % of GDP	%	26.1	34.4	33.0	31.9	31.5	...	...
Government Finance								
Total Revenue and Grants	% GDP	25.8	21.1	18.7	18.5	18.8	19.7	16.5
Total Expenditure and Net Lending	% GDP	23.1	22.3	23.7	20.3	19.0	18.0	19.1
Overall Deficit (-) / Surplus (+)	% GDP	2.7	-1.1	-4.9	-1.9	-0.2	1.7	-2.7

Indicators	Unité	2010	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019 (e)	2020 (p)
External Sector								
Exports Volume Growth (Goods)	%	8.2	20.2	-4.0	-3.4	-9.8	14.7	9.0
Imports Volume Growth (Goods)	%	12.4	-10.2	-16.1	6.3	4.0	2.7	-0.5
Terms of Trade Growth	%	22.9	-45.1	-10.3	28.5	27.3	-6.1	-7.1
Current Account Balance	Million US \$	2,140	-801	-695	-773	-539	-137	-996
Current Account Balance	% GDP	14.9	-5.6	-5.0	-5.2	-3.2	-0.8	-6.6
External Reserves	months of imports	4.9	4.0	2.0	2.3	2.0	...	...
Debt and Financial Flows								
Debt Service	% exports	11.0	9.5	20.7	13.4	7.5	22.9	18.5
External Debt	% GDP	16.8	33.3	35.6	40.6	38.5	40.6	47.5
Net Total Financial Flows	Million US \$	504	-721	-200	62	...	...	...
Net Official Development Assistance	Million US \$	106	99	42	106	...	...	...
Net Foreign Direct Investment	Million US \$	522	991	1,241	1,498	846	...	...

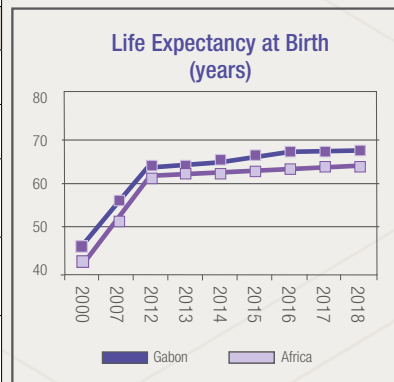


Gabon Comparative Socio-Economic Indicators

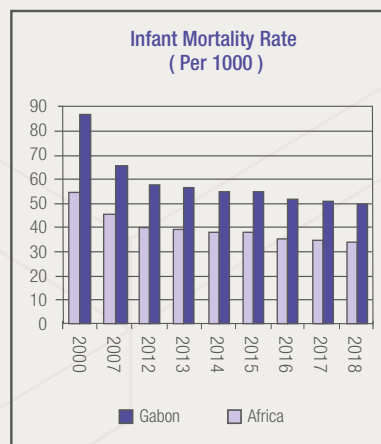
	Year	Gabon	Central Africa	Africa	Developing countries
Basic Indicators					
Area ('000 Km ²)	2019	258	5,365	30,067	94,797
Total Population (millions)	2019	2.2	142.3	1,306.3	6,384.0
Urban Population (% of Total)	2019	87.1	46.3	43.3	50.3
Population Density (per Km ²)	2019	8.4	27.1	44.5	69.2
GNI per Capita (US \$)	2019	7 210	924	1 843	5 102
Labor Force Participation *- Total (%)	2019	52.9	67.0	63.2	60.7
Labor Force Participation **- Female (%)	2019	43.5	63.1	54.6	45.8
Sex Ratio (per 100 female)	2019	103.7	100.0	99.8	107.1
Human Develop. Index (Rank among 189 countries)	2018	115	...	...	...
Popul. Living Below \$ 1.90 a Day (% of Population)	2007-18	3.4	56.1	35.6	11.9
Demographic Indicators					
Population Growth Rate - Total (%)	2019	2.5	3.0	2.7	1.2
Population Growth Rate - Urban (%)	2019	2.4	4.2	3.6	2.3
Population < 15 years (%)	2019	37.2	45.0	40.6	27.6
Population 15-24 years (%)	2019	17.0	19.4	19.3	16.4
Population >= 65 years (%)	2019	3.5	2.9	3.5	7.2
Dependency Ratio (%)	2019	68.7	91.8	78.7	54.6
Female Population 15-49 years (% of total population)	2019	24.9	22.8	24.2	25.2
Life Expectancy at Birth - Total (years)	2019	66.5	59.7	63.5	70.8



	Year	Gabon	Central Africa	Africa	Developing countries
Life Expectancy at Birth - Female (years)	2019	68.7	61.2	65.3	73.0
Crude Birth Rate (per 1,000)	2019	31.0	39.0	33.0	20.2
Crude Death Rate (per 1,000)	2019	6.7	9.5	8.0	7.3
Infant Mortality Rate (per 1,000)	2018	32.7	64.6	48.7	31.3
Child Mortality Rate (per 1,000)	2018	44.8	88.6	70.2	42.0
Total Fertility Rate (per woman)	2019	3.9	5.4	4.4	2.6
Maternal Mortality Rate (per 100,000)	2017	252.0	559.8	432.3	230.0
Women Using Contraception (%)	2019	36.7	25.5	39.1	61.7
Health & Nutrition Indicators					
Physicians (per 100,000 people)	2010-18	68.2	8.9	33.4	121.8
Nurses and midwives (per 100,000 people)	2010-18	294.6	78.0	107.8	240.8
Births attended by Trained Health Personnel (%)	2010-18	89.3	69.7	62.9	79.4
Peop. Using at least basic drinking water services (% of Pop.)	2017	85.8	48.1	66.3	87.7
Peop. Using at least basic sanitation services (% of Population)	2017	47.4	23.5	40.3	68.5
Percent. of Adults (aged 15-49) Living with HIV/AIDS	2018	3.8	1.7	3.4	...
Incidence of Tuberculosis (per 100,000)	2018	525.0	287.5	202.3	154.0
Child Immunization Against Tuberculosis (%)	2018	87.0	80.6	81.4	84.9
Child Immunization Against Measles (%)	2018	59.0	71.7	76.1	85.2
Underweight Children (% of children under 5 years)	2010-17	6.5	21.9	17.5	14.5
Prevalence of stunting	2010-17	17.5	39.2	34.0	23.6
Prevalence of undernourishment (% of pop.)	2017	10.5	25.39	18.49	12.3
Current health expenditure (% of GDP)	2017	2.8	4.0	5.6	5.4



	Year	Gabon	Central Africa	Africa	Developing countries
Education Indicators					
Gross Enrolment Ratio (%)					
Primary School - Total	2010-19	139.9	104.4	100.1	103.6
Primary School - Female	2010-19	137.7	101.5	98.1	102.4
Secondary School - Total	2010-19	...	45.2	52.4	71.9
Secondary School - Female	2010-19	...	36.9	50.3	71.4
Primary School Female Teaching Staff (% of Total)	2010-18	52.9	34.0	48.6	62.9
Adult literacy Rate - Total (%)	2010-18	84.7	70.2	66.9	84.0
Adult literacy Rate - Male (%)	2010-18	59.2	79.3	70.8	88.2
Adult literacy Rate - Female (%)	2010-18	83.4	61.2	60.0	79.8
Gouvernement expenditure on Education (% of GDP)	2010-18	2.7	2.4	4.7	4.0
Environmental Indicators					
Land Use (Arable Land as % of Total Land Area)	2016	1.3	4.0	8.0	11.4
Agricultural Land (as % of land area)	2016	20.0	20.4	38.2	38.3
Forest (As % of Land Area)	2016	90.0	46.6	13.2	31.9
Per Capita CO2 Emissions (metric tons)	2014	2.8	0.2	1.2	3.5



Source : AfDB Statistics Department Databases; World Bank: World Development Indicators; last update :October 2020

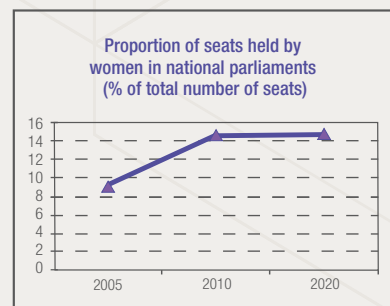
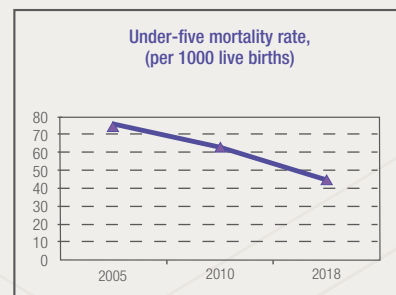
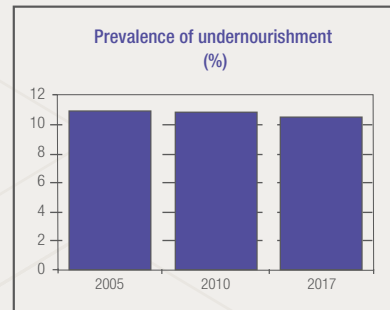
UNAIDS; UNSD; WHO, UNICEF; UNDP; Country Reports.

Note : n.a.: Not Applicable ; ... : Data Not Available. * Labor force participation rate, total (% of total population ages 15+)

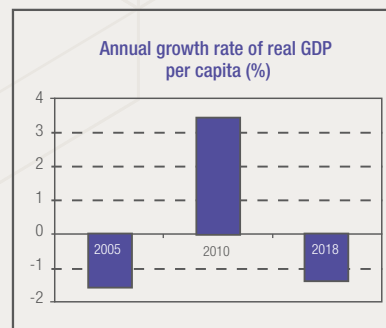
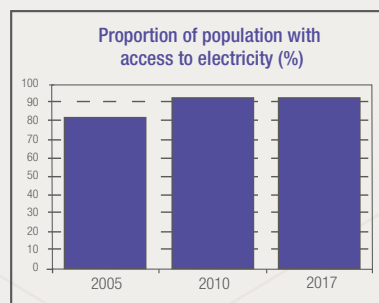
** Labor force participation rate, female (% of female population ages 15+)

Progress Toward Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals

	2000 ¹	2010 ²	2020 ³
Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere			
Proportion of population living below the international poverty line of US\$ 1.90 (PPP) per day	...	8.0	3.0
Proportion of population living below the national poverty line (%)	...	32.7	33.4
Employed population below the international poverty line of US\$1.90 per day, aged 15-24 (%)	...	7.3	2.4
Employed population below the international poverty line of US\$1.90 per day, aged 25 and over (%)	...	5.3	1.7
Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture			
Prevalence of undernourishment (%)	11.2	10.8	10.5
Proportion of children moderately or severely stunted (%)	25.9	...	17.0
Agriculture orientation index for government expenditures	...	...	...
Total official flows for agriculture (Millions of Constant 2018 US\$)	5	16	4
Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages			
Maternal mortality ratio	354	314	252
Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel (%)	85.5	...	89.3
Under-five mortality rate (deaths per 1,000 live births)	77.3	62.8	44.8
Malaria incidence (per 1,000 population)	382.8	177.8	248.2
Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all			
Proportion of children and young people at the end of primary achieving a minimum proficiency level in: Reading (%)	...	69.2	...
Proportion of children and young people at the end of primary achieving a minimum proficiency level in: Maths (%)	...	...	...
Gender parity index of trained teachers, primary (ratio)	1.0	...	...
Total official flows for scholarships (Millions of Constant 2018 US\$)	...	1	2



Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls			
Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments (% of total number of seats)	9.2	14.7	14.8
Proportion of women who make their own informed decisions regarding contraceptive use (% of women aged 15-49 years)	...	...	90.2
Proportion of women who make their own informed decisions regarding reproductive health care (% of women aged 15-49 years)	...	...	60.2
Goal 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all			
Level of water stress: freshwater withdrawal as a proportion of available freshwater resources (%)	0.5	0.5	0.5
Water body extent (permanent) (% of total land area)	...	0.72	0.77
Total official development assistance for water supply and sanitation (Millions of Constant 2018 US\$)	0.1	8.3	1.0
Goal 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all			
Proportion of population with access to electricity (%)	79.2	92.4	92.2
Proportion of population with primary reliance on clean fuels and technology (%)	72.0	81.0	87.0
Renewable energy share in the total final energy consumption (%)	85.8	85.8	81.2
Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all			
Annual growth rate of real GDP per capita (%)	-1.7	3.5	-1.4
Unemployment rate, (aged 15-24) (%)	...	35.7	...
Unemployment rate, (aged 25 & over) (%)	...	18.2	...
Proportion of youth not in education, employment or training (%)	...	...	...



Source : ADB Statistics Department Database; last update : August 2020

United Nations Statistical Division, Online Database on Sustainable Development Goals (<https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/>).

Note : n.a. : Not Applicable ; ... : Data Not Available,

1 Latest year available in the period 2000-2005; 2 Latest year available in the period 2006-2010; 3 Latest year available in the period 2011-2020

Annex 7: Bank Portfolio in Gabon for the 2011-2020 Period

(Including interventions approved before 2011 and continued during the review period)

Finance Project	National - Regional	Short Name	SECTOR	STATUS		Approval	1 st Disbursement Effective	
P-GA-AAG-002	N-old	SIAT	AGRI	Ongoing	◐	9/12/2007		
P-GA-AAF-002	N-old	PSPA	AGRI	Completed	●	7/27/2005		
P-GA-AAB-004	National	PADIACN	AGRI	Completed	●	1/20/2011	3/31/2011	
P-GA-AAD-005	National	Gabon Initiative Study	AGRI	Completed	●	6/30/2016	2/13/2017	
P-GA-AAG-003	National	Seed Programme - End	AGRI	Approved	○	10/27/2017		
P-GA-AAG-003	National	Seed Programme - Coop	AGRI	Approved	○	4/18/2018		
P-GA-A00-004	National	AGRI Strategy Study	AGRI	Ongoing	◐	2/10/2017	5/24/2017	
P-GA-A00-005	National	GRAINE Study Programme II	AGRI	Ongoing	●	2/10/2017	5/24/2017	
P-GA-A00-003	National	GRAINE PPP & Ind Programme	AGRI	Ongoing	●	11/28/2017	10/5/2018	
	National	PNS Gabon Digital	COM	Approved	○	6/26/2018		
P-GA-E00-001	National	PIAEPAL	WATER-SANITATION	Approved	●	1/10/2019	9/17/2019	
P-GA-E00-001	National	PIAEPAL	WATER-SANITATION	Approved	●	10/3/2018	9/17/2019	
P-GA-C00-001	National	Support to Eval Envir Program	ENVIR	Ongoing	◐	2/14/2017	5/2/2017	
P-GA-K00-006	National	Support Chamber of Commerce	GOV	Completed	●	10/14/2014	9/18/2015	
P-GA-KA0-005	National	PAREF I	GOV	Completed	●	1/11/2017	2/27/2017	
P-GA-KA0-006	National	PAREF II	GOV	Completed	●	11/8/2017	12/12/2017	
P-GA-KF0-001	National	Incubator Support	GOV	Completed	●	5/14/2014	9/8/2015	
P-GA-KF0-002	National	Invest. Promising Sectors	GOV	Completed	●	6/3/2016	12/8/2016	
P-GA-K00-007	National	Economic Diversification	GOV	Approved	○	6/29/2018		
P-GA-KA0-007	National	PAREF III	GOV	Approved	●	11/22/2018	3/7/2019	
	National	PABURC	GOV	Approved		6/15/2020		
P-GA-IBD-003	National	Demo & Health Survey	SOCIAL	Completed	●	2/4/2011	10/24/2011	
P-GA-IAE-002	National	Youth Employability	SOCIAL	Ongoing	◐	12/9/2016	10/6/2017	
P-GA-D00-001	N-old	Road phase 1	TRANSP	Completed	●	9/17/2007		
P-GA-DB0-009	National	PASIG	TRANSP	Ongoing	●	12/12/2019		

	Implementation	Actual 1 st Disbursement	Last Disbursement	End Date (planned)	Approvals (UAC)	Disbursement Rate %	Instrument	Loan / Grant
					7,283,900	100%	ADB	Loan
	9/20/2006	2/6/2007	12/31/2014	12/31/2014	10,872,940	100%	ADB	Loan
	3/31/2011	3/21/2012	11/12/2014	12/31/2014	455,543	100%	ADB-FPRI	Grant
	10/19/2016	3/10/2017	12/6/2018	6/30/2018	1,199,000	95%	ADB-FPRI	Grant
	12/27/2017			3/31/2021	728,390		FAPSA	Grant
	8/10/2018			3/30/2020	399,161		FRCM	Grant
	4/12/2017	7/18/2017	6/21/2019	6/30/2020	991,095	62%	ADB-FPRI	Grant
	4/12/2017	7/18/2017	6/12/2019	6/30/2020	993,878	72%	ADB-FPRI	Grant
	10/5/2018			12/31/2023	79,018,057		ADB	Loan
	11/15/2018			12/31/2019	236,727		KOAFEC	Grant
	9/17/2019			6/30/2023	33,663,827		AGTF	Loan
	9/17/2019			6/30/2023	60,434,584		ADB	Loan
	5/2/2017	6/21/2017	5/29/2019	9/30/2019	967,361	92%	ADB-FPRI	Grant
	3/10/2015	1/13/2016	3/13/2018	12/31/2017	785,168	45%	ADB-FPRI	Grant
	2/7/2017	3/6/2017	3/6/2017	4/6/2018	160,303,936	100%	ADB	Loan
	12/12/2017	12/15/2017	12/15/2017	6/30/2018	240,455,904	100%	ADB	Loan
	5/23/2014	12/18/2015	5/8/2018	12/31/2017	799,107	80%	ADB-FPRI	Grant
	8/3/2016	6/9/2017	4/8/2019	12/31/2018	799,274	91%	ADB-FPRI	Grant
	3/26/2019			12/31/2022	50,310,673		ADB	Loan
	3/7/2019	3/21/2019	3/21/2019	12/31/2019	80,151,968	100%	ADB	Loan
				9/30/2013	80,400,000	100%	ADB	Loan
	7/26/2011	11/4/2011	9/26/2012	9/30/2013	429,378	100%	ADB-FPRI	Grant
	10/6/2017	12/13/2017	7/19/2019	12/31/2022	67,863,104	3%	ADB	Loan
	9/30/2008	7/10/2009	31/12/2014	12/31/2024	197,524,041	100%	ADB	Funding
				12/31/2021	75,097,516		ADB	Loan

Finance Project	National - Regional	Short Name	SECTOR	STATUS		Approval	1 st Disbursement Effective	
P-GA-DB0-009	National	PASIG	TRANSP	Ongoing	●	12/12/2019		
P-GA-DD0-002	National	Port Project	TRANSP	Ongoing	●	12/14/2018	7/30/2019	
P-Z1-GZ0-001	Regional	Fiber Optic Study	COM	Approved	○	12/29/2017		
P-Z1-EAZ-047	Regional	PACOBT	WATER-SANI	Ongoing	◐	11/8/2017	4/25/2018	
P-Z1-EAZ-053	Regional	PACOBT	WATER-SANI	Ongoing	◐	9/13/2017		
P-Z1-C00-010	R-old	Ecosystem BC	ENVIR	Completed	●	3/11/2009		
P-Z1-C00-037	Regional	PAGDRF	ENVIR	Completed	●	5/18/2011		
P-Z1-K00-034	Regional	PARCI-CEEAC	GOV	Completed	●	12/19/2012	12/13/2013	
P-Z1-KZ0-035	Regional	PAI-AFE	GOV	Ongoing	◐	3/29/2017	8/12/2017	
P-Z1-BD0-071	Regional	Gabon-Congo Road Project	TRANSP	Cancelled		12/18/2013		
P-Z1-DA0-012	Regional	PASTA-CO	TRANSP	Ongoing	◐	6/7/2015	1/14/2016	
Total								

	Implementation	Actual 1 st Disbursement	Last Disbursement	End Date (planned)	Approvals (UAC)	Disbursement Rate %	Instrument	Loan / Grant
				12/31/2021	36,297,064		AGTF	Loan
	7/30/2019	8/19/2019	8/19/2019	2/7/2023	32,075,200	100%	ADB	Loan
	2/20/2018			12/31/2019	622,773	89%	NEPAD-IPPF	Grant
	10/25/2017			12/31/2019	883,029	56%	AWF;NEPAD-IPPF	Grant
	11/1/2018			12/31/2019	781,343	36%	NEPAD-IPPF	Grant
			6/30/2017	6/30/2017	32,000,000	79%	ADF	Grant
				7/31/2015	5,420,000	86%	FFBC	Grant
	3/24/2013	24/3/2013		12/30/2016	7,000,000	71%	ADF	Grant
	7/21/2017			3/30/2020	2,000,000	57%	ADB FAT	Grant
				6/30/2020	70,000,000	x	x	x
	12/23/2015	1/14/2016		12/31/2019	2,000,000	33%	ADF	Grant
					1,013,163,060			
					Total excluding projects approved before 2011			

Annex 7 (continued): CSP Indicative Lending Program 2011-2015

List of Projects Initially Planned for 2011-2015	Status
Project to Support Reforms and Improve the Business Climate (PARACA)	Withdrawn from the pipeline at Government's request (preference for funding from own resources) but partially covered in CSP 2016-2020.
Support Project for Improved Work Productivity and Employment	
Lines of Credit to Finance SMEs/SMLs	Not completed
Road Program Phase II	Signed in 2012 and cancelled at Government's request. Some components were included in PASIG
Project to Build Hydropower Stations on the "Impératrice" Falls and FE2	Approved in 2012 and cancelled at Government's request
Project to Build Power Transmission Lines connected to hydropower stations	Approved in 2012 and cancelled at Government's request (preference for other resources)
Support Project for the Rehabilitation of the Woleu-Ntem Rural Infrastructure	Approved in 2011 and cancelled in 2012 at Government's request following leadership change but partially covered under PAPG-1
National Fibre Optic Network Deployment Project	Removed from the pipeline due to lack of visibility
Non-Project Operations	
Support for the Implementation of the Monitoring and Evaluation System of the "Emerging Gabon" Strategic Plan	Postponed and completed.
Feasibility Studies of Development Projects in the Agro-Industry and Timber Sectors	Completed
Informal Sector Survey	Withdrawn from the pipeline but partially covered under the employability project in CSP 2016-2020
Preparatory Studies for the National OITC Fibre Optic Network Deployment Project	Withdrawn from the pipeline but covered under CSP 2016-2020

Source: Mid-term Review of the AfDB CSP 2011-2015 for Gabon

References

- African Development Bank: African Economic Outlook 2020, Abidjan, 2020
- African Development Bank: PABURC Appraisal Report, 2020
- African Development Bank/GABON: A Country Diagnostic Note on Transport Infrastructure, Abidjan, January-February 2020
- African Development Bank/Gabon: Mid-Term Review of the Country Strategy Paper (CSP 2016-2020) and the Country Portfolio Performance Review (CPPR), Abidjan, July 2019
- African Development Bank/African Development Fund/Central Africa: Regional Integration Strategy Paper/RISP - 2019-2025 /Revised version-Abidjan, June 2019
- African Development Bank: Evaluation of AfDB's Regional Integration Strategy and Operations, 2011-2016, Abidjan, 2018
- African Development Bank: Additionality and Development Outcomes Assessment (ADOA) - GSEZ Port Project, 29 November 2018
- African Development Bank: Meeting the Challenges of Regional Integration in Central Africa: An Evaluation of AfDB's Regional Integration Strategy and Operations, 2011-2016-Summary Report, Abidjan, March 2018
- African Development Bank: Implementation Status and Results Report (ISR)/Incubator Development Project Abidjan, September 2017
- African Development Bank/Gabon: Combined Country Strategy Paper (CSP) 2016-2020 & Portfolio Performance Review (PPR) Report, Abidjan, March 2016- African Development Bank/Gabon: Country Strategy Paper 2016-2020, Abidjan, September 2015
- African Development Bank: Sector and Analytical Note on Transport in Gabon, Abidjan, 2015
- African Development Bank/Gabon: Preparation Mission for a New Country Strategy Paper 2015-2019, Abidjan, April 2014
- African Development Bank: Note on Cooperation between the Bank and Gabon, Tunis, October 2013
- African Development Bank/Gabon: Evaluation of Bank Assistance 1996 2008, Tunis, July 2011- African Development Bank/Gabon: Country Strategy Paper 2011-2015, Tunis, September 2011
- African Development Bank/Central Regional Department (ORCE)/NEPAD Department: Regional Integration and Trade (ONRI), Tunis, February 2011
- African Development Bank: Regional Integration Strategy Paper (RISP) 2009-2013, Tunis, 2009
- GABON: Economic Recovery Plan 2017-2019/PRE, Libreville 2017
- GABON: Human Investment Strategy for Gabon, Libreville, 2013
- GABON: Emerging Gabon Strategic Plan-Vision 2025 and Strategic Orientations 2011-2016, Libreville 2012
- GABON: Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper/2006-2008, Libreville 2005
- International Monetary Fund: 2019 Article IV Consultation, IMF Report No. 20/267/Gabon, IMF Staff Report, August 2020
- International Monetary Fund: Gabon Selected Issues, Improving Governance for Higher and More Inclusive Growth in Gabon, 4 December 2019
- World Bank: Doing Business Report 2020
- World Bank/Gabon: Overview, 2018
- UNDP: Human Development Report 2019.

Endnotes

- 1 Exchange rate applied UA 1 = EUR 1.25
- 2 Agricultural Production and Initiatives of Committed Gabonese Nationals.
- 3 Decree No. 009/PR/2015 of 11 February 2016 on Public-Private Partnerships.
- 4 OLAM is the GSEZ Project promoter.
- 5 IMF report No. 19/389/January 2020, Page 31.
- 6 Congo Basin Ecosystem Conservation Support Program
- 7 Support Project for the Sustainable Management of Forest Resources in Gabon
- 8 <https://www.afdb.org/fr/topics-and-ectors/topics/environmental-social-and-governance-esg>
- 9 According to projections by the AfDB Statistics Department, Gabon was expected to fall into recession in 2020 with a negative real GDP growth rate of -1.7%. According to a worst-case scenario, a loss of growth of around 7.5 points in 2020 would be recorded. Budget deficits would increase by 6.2 and 14.7 percentage points of GDP, respectively (Source: AfDB - PABURC post-COVID-19 Economic Outlook).
- 10 Other Central African countries have much lower scores than Gabon (31 for 2019): Cameroon and CAR 25, Chad 20, Congo 19, DRC 18 and Equatorial Guinea 16. Only Sao Tome and Principe had a higher score than Gabon, with 46 and ranking 64th out of 180 countries.
- 11 The predominance is due to the significance of budget support activities in terms of volume, which have all been categorized under the High 5 "Improve the quality of life for the people of Africa".
- 12 ADOA/AfDB "Additionality and Development Outcomes Assessment - GSEZ Port Project," 29 November 2018, Page 3
- 13 However, the French Development Agency's Agricultural Development and Investment Project in Gabon (PRODIAG) assessed farming in the country.
- 14 The AfDB was the first donor to make a transfer to the government account with its first disbursement of UA 160 million on 27 February 2017.
- 15 The IMF program was completed over three years in June 2017.
- 16 Several projects were abandoned: CODER Hydro project, GFC, PADIACN, SOTRADER.
- 17 Decree No. 009/PR/2015 of 11 February 2016 on Public-Private Partnerships.
- 18 Unfortunately, there have been no road counts in Gabon since 2013 (based on interviews with the MTEITP) that would indicate traffic trends from 2013 to 2020.
- 19 A project is deemed viable if the ERR is higher than the discount rate, which in this case is 12%.
- 20 Delays under the PABURC are attributable to a provision requiring the enactment of an appropriations bill by Parliament for every disbursement made.
- 21 IM, Gabon Selected Issues, Improving Governance for Higher and More Inclusive Growth in Gabon, December 4, 2019
- 22 Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
- 23 AfDB Terms of Reference, 2019.





IDEV

Independent Development Evaluation
African Development Bank



About this evaluation

This report summarizes the findings of an independent evaluation of the African Development Bank Group's (AfDB) Country Strategy and Program in Gabon for the period 2011 - 2020. Under this strategy, an overall portfolio of UA 1,093.65 million, comprising 30 projects in 7 sectors, was implemented. The objective of this evaluation was twofold: (i) to analyze the performance of the Bank's interventions in Gabon and their contribution to the country's development results; and (ii) to draw lessons from the Bank's experience to improve the design and implementation of subsequent strategies and programs in Gabon.

The evaluation concluded that the Bank's interventions in Gabon are overall relevant and effective, addressing the challenges and priority needs of the country and its population, while being well aligned with the Bank's priorities and Gabon's national policies and strategies. The expected outputs were delivered in most of the intervention sectors, in particular governance and infrastructure (except energy). However, the expected outcomes and impacts were not systematically achieved and the evaluation finds that efforts are still needed to correct the delays in project start-up and implementation, to ensure a selective focus on high-impact sectors and the sustainability of interventions, and to maintain ongoing dialogue with all stakeholders at the country level.

To fill these gaps, the evaluation recommends that the Bank deepen its analysis of Gabon's context and specific challenges, particularly the constraints to diversification of the Gabonese economy and the conditions for private sector development. It recommends that the AfDB strengthen the selectivity and sustainability of its interventions, as well as the implementation of its program in the country. Finally, the AfDB should also support the promotion of PPPs, through the modernization of the Gabonese legislation and the strengthening of national institutional capacities in the management and monitoring of PPPs.



IDEV

Independent Development Evaluation
African Development Bank

African Development Bank Group
Avenue Joseph Anoma, 01 BP 1387, Abidjan 01, Côte d'Ivoire
Phone: +225 27 20 26 28 41
E-mail: idevhelpdesk@afdb.org

