



Project Information Document (PID)

Concept Stage | Date Prepared/Updated: 29-Jan-2021 | Report No: PIDC31087

BASIC INFORMATION

A. Basic Project Data

Country Gabon	Project ID P175987	Parent Project ID (if any)	Project Name Digital Gabon (P175987)
Region AFRICA WEST	Estimated Appraisal Date Apr 05, 2021	Estimated Board Date Apr 29, 2021	Practice Area (Lead) Digital Development
Financing Instrument Investment Project Financing	Borrower(s) Ministry of Economy & Recovery	Implementing Agency Ministry of Digital Development	

Proposed Development Objective(s)

To improve the delivery of and access to selected digitized government services and strengthen the enabling environment for digital technology adoption

PROJECT FINANCING DATA (US\$, Millions)

SUMMARY

Total Project Cost	62.00
Total Financing	62.00
of which IBRD/IDA	62.00
Financing Gap	0.00

DETAILS

World Bank Group Financing

International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD)	62.00
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Environmental and Social Risk Classification
Substantial

Concept Review Decision
Track II-The review did authorize the preparation to
continue



Other Decision (as needed)

B. Introduction and Context

Country Context

1. **Gabon is a small central African country with low population density and a youthful demographic profile. It stands out in Sub-Saharan Africa for its high income and rich natural resources.** It is one of the few countries in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) with upper middle-income status and its prosperity is due its rich and diverse endowment of natural resource. It boasts the second largest economy in the Central African Economic and Monetary Union (CEMAC). Topping its wealth of nonrenewable resources are petroleum, manganese, and to a lesser extent uranium, iron ore, diamonds, and gold. The country, which is 88 percent covered by rainforest, has a uniquely rich ecosystem extensive endowments of fertile land, water courses, and fisheries.
2. **Despite Gabon's economic level and wealth, one-third of the population still lives below the poverty line, unemployment is among the highest in Africa, and the country underperforms on most human development and living conditions dimensions.** According to the 2020 Systematic Country Diagnostic (SCD) of the World Bank, the poverty rate was 32.2 percent in 2017 – about 12 percentage points higher than what might be expected from Gabon's per-capita national income. The unemployment rate is among the highest in Africa and reached 20 percent in 2017, while youth unemployment was 60 percent during the same year. Although Gabon ranks 58th in GDP per capita, it ranked 109th out of 188 countries in the 2015 Human Development Index (HDI) and it was 110th out of 157 in the 2018 Human Capital Index (HCI). The country underperforms on most human development and living conditions dimensions, ranking near the bottom among upper- middle-income countries.
3. **Weak governance has been a major challenge to sustainable economic growth and the equal distribution of the country's wealth.** The development of a modern, pluralistic polity and the establishment of rules-based institutions have been hampered by political privilege and patronage, which encouraged clientelism and the elite capture of public resources. The unequal distribution of wealth has steadily eroded the social compact, increased social inequalities, and exacerbated negative public perceptions of governance. Public trust in the state has been eroded by the failure to distribute wealth to the poor equally. Limited demands on governance have also led to pervasive corruption and the lack of transparency in resource management.¹

Sectoral and Institutional Context

4. **Digital economy has been identified as a priority for the diversification of the economy and placed at the center of economic and social transformation for the past decade.** The Strategic Plan for an Emerging Gabon (PSGE: Plan Stratégique Gabon Émergent) was adopted by the Government of Gabon (GoG) in 2009, setting an ambitious reform plan that aims to turn the country into a center of excellence in services and a pioneer of the digital revolution by 2025. This economic development program aims to build a competitive, resilient, inclusive, and diversified economy while leveraging the country's natural resources, with digital development being prioritized as one of the engines for growth and societal

¹ According to Afrobarometer 2014/15, 65 percent of the population reports not being interested in public affairs. Gabon ranks in the third most corrupt group of countries (123th out of 180) in the 2019 Transparency International report. According to the 2017 Afrobarometer survey, over 95 percent of the population believe that government officials are involved in corruption and over 80 percent believe that the level of corruption has increased over time



transformation. Gabon is among the few countries in SSA that have demonstrated commitment to protect forests and biodiversity, curb carbon emissions, and address climate risks. The digitalization of governmental operations and the increased use of digital technologies and services has a potential to improve the country's resilience to climate change.

5. **Building on such progress, Gabon has the potential to rapidly accelerate the digital transformation and address persistent societal inequalities and exclusion by investing into interconnected digital public platforms.** A diagnostic of Gabon's digital economy as part of the Digital Economy for Africa (DE4A) initiative, completed in June 2019, reviewed the key building blocks of Gabon's digital economy and recommended advancing the development of interconnected digital public platforms to accelerate digital transformation. Significant investments in digital infrastructure have helped Gabon progress in e-government development, demonstrating higher than regional average scores in the UN E-Government Index (EGDI) 2020. However, the country is below the world average and lags behind even regional averages in the provision of online services and e-participation. The scarcity of public services and the difficulty in accessing them have created inequities that have deeply affected the Gabonese society. There is a critical need to strengthen public institutions and make them more accountable and inclusive in order to enhance the capacity of the administration to deliver high-quality services and restore public confidence in the Government. Building on the GoG's clear vision to develop the digital economy, Gabon can step up its efforts to position e-government as a central element in broader public-sector reform. The introduction of harmonized and integrated digital public platforms can help improve efficiency and quality of public services for individuals and businesses as well as governance and accountability. It can also increase the private sector's trust and willingness to participate in the e-government agenda and engage in the digital economy ecosystem.
6. **Digital transformation of public services is vital for economic and social recovery amidst the COVID-19 crisis and has higher chances to success in the context of a massive adoption of broadband Internet services in the country.** The limited administrative capacity that stems from paper-based public administration and the limited availability of online public services have had a significant impact on the delivery of services to the population during the COVID-19 crisis. The situation confirmed an urgent need for the digitalization of public administration and services to ensure business continuity and the timely provision of public services to individuals and businesses. The social and economic transformation that will result from the use of digital technologies will allow the GoG to reach the population directly and expeditiously. It will also benefit the poor who need assistance most, provide job opportunities for the youth, and foster the development of the local digital industry – all critical elements for economic and social recovery.
7. The Government has identified the following high-priority initiatives: interoperability of public digital platforms as a technological underpinning, establishment of the foundational identification system, and improvements in social protection registry, civil service resource management, fiscal registration, and public procurement.

Relationship to CPF

8. **The proposed project is aligned with the World Bank Country Partnership Strategy (CPS) for the Gabonese Republic for the period FY12-18 and priority policies proposed in the Systematic Country Diagnostics (SCD, 2020).** Given its cross-cutting nature, the project supports all three pillars of the CPF -- CPS Pillar One: Governance and Public Sector Capacity, Pillar Two: Competitiveness and Employment, Pillar Three: Human Development and Environmental Sustainability -- and the cross-cutting gender theme. The project will particularly focus on advancing the following CPS outcomes: Outcome 2: Strengthened public financial management, Outcome 4: Improved investment climate, Outcome 6:



Improved access and quality of services, and Outcome 8: Improved knowledge, tools and policies for social service delivery. The project will advance the following SCD policy priorities: reduce economic distance through universal provision of essential public services, pursue investments in the digital sector to increase the momentum of digital connectivity (through soft infrastructure developing public platforms), improve the capacity and economic opportunities of women and reduce gender gaps, improve fiscal stability and economic governance.

C. Proposed Development Objective(s)

To improve the delivery and access to selected government services delivery using digital technologies and strengthen the enabling environment for digital technology adoption

Key Results (From PCN)

- (1) increased access to selected digitized public services (disaggregated by gender and urban/rural area)
 - Percentage of the population above the age 16 with a unique ID, including female
 - Number of individual and businesses accessing digitized public services
 - Number of registered taxpayers
 - Number of contracts processed through e-procurement
- (2) Enhanced digital technologies enabling environment for government development
 - Number of e-government public services that can be delivered digitally and securely through end-to-end digitization

D. Concept Description

- 9. **The project is designed to scale up the digital transformation process started through other World Bank initiatives: Central African Backbone (CAB4) project (P122776) and eGabon (P132824) operations. Gabon has the potential to accelerate the digital transformation of government beyond the health sector tackled in eGabon.** The project is focused on : (1) strengthening the enabling environment for accelerated digital transformation (the strategic, legal, regulatory and institutional framework and the technological foundations); (2) Completing and modernizing the foundational ID system, and digitalizing the civil registration system; (3) digitizing and improving selected public services (Fiscal Registration System, Public Procurement System, Human Resource Management Information System), empowered by the ID system, interoperability, and made easily accessible through a one-stop platform.

Legal Operational Policies	Triggered?
Projects on International Waterways OP 7.50	No
Projects in Disputed Areas OP 7.60	No
Summary of Screening of Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts	



CONTACT POINT

World Bank

Charles Pierre Marie Hurpy, Heriniaina Mikaela Andrianasy
Senior Digital Development Specialist

Borrower/Client/Recipient

Ministry of Economy & Recovery

Implementing Agencies

Ministry of Digital Development
Michel Audrey Abaga Abessolo
Direction Générale du Développement des Réseaux Numériques
michelabaga1@yahoo.fr

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT

The World Bank
1818 H Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20433
Telephone: (202) 473-1000
Web: <http://www.worldbank.org/projects>

APPROVAL

Task Team Leader(s):	Charles Pierre Marie Hurpy, Heriniaina Mikaela Andrianasy
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Approved By

Country Director:	Abdoulaye Seck	09-Feb-2021
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