I. Project Context

Country Context

1. With a per capita income of US$2,550 in 2012, the Republic of Congo (RoC) is one of the richest Sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries but its statistical system is one of the weakest of the region. The country is ranked 10th out of 47 countries in SSA in terms of per capita GDP based on purchasing-power-parity. However, its score for the statistical capacity indicator is weak (50 out of 100); ranking the country at the 38th position out of 47 countries in the SSA region. This relatively poor score reflects not only the weakness of the statistical system to provide reliable, timely and accurate output over time, but also reflects the fact that the coverage of the system is far from meeting the basic needs of any operational and effective statistical system. This overall score also shows that on the various quality dimensions the performance has been insufficient, with additional concerns about: (a) methodological weakness underlying the data production; and (b) accountability and efficiency of resource utilization (e.g. uncoordinated surveys).

2. The 2012-2016 PRSP emphasizes governance (political and economic), diversification of the economy, infrastructure development, social inclusion, and equity. In the same vain, the World Bank’s FY13-FY16 Country Partnership Strategy (CPS) focuses on two majors pillars: (a) economic diversification based on a private sector-led growth and employment generation while
assisting the country achieving better outcomes in basic public services especially in education and health; (b) support the government to better target its public investment program while increasing its efficiency in a context of improved governance. Achieving these objectives will depend on the Government’s ability to prepare and implement effective policies.

3. An effective policy preparation process in turn requires that decision-makers focus their deliberations on the best possible policy assessment based on statistics as they provide the foundation for economic analysis and policy-making. The availability of reliable and timely statistics is a prerequisite for an effective and accurate assessment of the economic situation and for monitoring and evaluation of development policies. But the Congolese statistical system does not provide statistics regularly to satisfy the current needs.

**Sectoral and institutional Context**

4. The Congolese National System of Statistics (NSS) is highly decentralized. It is composed of: i) the high commission of statistics; ii) the national institute of statistics (NIS); iii) sectoral statistical departments; iv) academic institutions; and v) various units of the Central Bank African Countries (BEAC). A peer review of the Congolese NSS was conducted in 2011 and focused on governance of the NSS, its organization, strategic planning, service to users, funding, and sustainability. The review shows that the major strengths of the Congolese statistical system are the increase engagement of the government for statistics and the elaboration of the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) supported by international partners. The weaknesses of the system are primarily related to the weak coordination of the NSS and the lack of human resources across the NSS that raise significant challenges for the production of statistics.

5. The NIS does not fully play its role as coordinator of the NSS. Indeed, consultations within the NSS institutions are almost inexistent, statistical activities are not planned nor assessed. The lack of coordination does not guarantee the quality of the outputs. As a leading institution, the NIS has the responsibility to reorganize and strengthen the institutional and organizational framework of the NSS. This also means that the NIS should insure that all laws establishing the NSS structures are adopted, promulgated and enforced.

The Congolese NSS lacks qualified human resources to support the development and execution of products the institute needs. The system suffers from a quantitative and qualitative shortage of qualified staff due to the cessation of recruitment in 1986 by the public administration and the application of structural adjustment reforms. Despite this, the Centre d’Application Statistique et de Planification (CASP) continued to train undergraduate statisticians and planners even though they were not absorbed by the NSS. In 2010 and for the first time since 1986, 75 graduates of the CASP were hired and assigned to the regional statistical offices (DEP) where the lack of human resources was the most significant. Nevertheless, only 17 percent of the NSS’ staff is fully trained statisticians, in other words a ratio of 1/5 for the entire organization. There is an inadequacy between actual staff skills and appointments. For example in most sectoral statistical unit, people without statistical training are appointed to statistician position. As shown in Table 1, only 9 percent of the staff are graduate statisticians or equivalent. This proportion is low compared to Benin for example where 65 percent of overall staff are graduated or equivalent. The rest of the organization is composed of clerks, undergraduate or college degree statisticians (55 percent) and support staff (36 percent).

The system lacks human resources management policies that could support management in
attracting and retaining qualified staff to the NIS. Despite the effectiveness of the Projet de Statuts de l’Institut National de la statistique (decret 2010-805 du 31 Decembre 2010) which clearly provides mandate to management to establish transparent and efficient Human resources policies and procedures no progress has been made in this regard. The SNDS points the need to strengthen human resources capabilities as one of the 4 strategic themes supporting the development of statistic institution in RoC. A very comprehensive collective labor agreement has been drafted and would need to be updated and review to reflect current market realities as it has not yet been approved for implementation. Additionally, simple Human resources guidelines (reglement interne) are supposed to complement this collective labor agreement.

6. The inadequate compensation and benefits packages hinder management’s ability to attract and retain the best people. Currently, staff wages are aligned with public sector pay lines which are not reflecting the actual value of statistical skills on the local labor market. There is a significant impact on staff’s motivation and productivity which eventually is reflected in the quality of the work produced.

7. The supply of statisticians to the NSS is very low. At a domestic level the CASP is the only school that trains statisticians. In 2010, the CASP has 12 permanent staff including two statisticians committed to administrative tasks and two non-statisticians teachers. Some actors of the NSS believe that the trainings of the CASP are not adapted to the needs of the NSS. The prospect of the CASP and its training curricula need to be rethought to adapt the skills of the graduates of the CASP to the current and future needs of the Congolese public and private sectors. Very few Congolese statisticians are trained in the regional schools in Yaoundé, Abidjan and Dakar and there is no a clear policy to hire statisticians who graduate from regional schools in the public administration. There are possibilities to partner with countries from the sub-region where important investments in statistical capacity building has been done and based on South-South Knowledge exchange.

8. Some sectoral departments lack statistical unit either because of non-enforcement of current law or lack of adequate human resources. The lack of graduated and qualified statistician in the central NIS units and the low pace of training new ones are hampering the possibilities for staff to specialize in particular sectors. Sectoral departments depend of the Minister in charge of NIS and budgets are very limited.

9. The statistical outputs of the NSS do not meet the demand and the methodological framework underlying the production of the available data is weak. To name a few, the 1996 Census was invalidated; most of the publications from the 2007 Census are still not completed. In general, external trade statistics, production data, and social statistics, are not reliable, published with delay or simply not available. External trade statistics have not been published for many years.

II. Proposed Development Objectives
The objectives of the project are (i) to strengthen the National Statistical System in the production, dissemination of timely and robust statistics relevant for policies and decision making and (ii) to promote the demand for statistical information.

III. Project Description
Component Name
Component 1: Improving the institutional and organizational framework of the National Statistical
System (NSS)

Component Name

Component 2: Improving the production, the dissemination and the use of statistics

Component Name

Component 3: Project management

Component Name

IV. Financing (in USD Million)

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| International Development
  Association (IDA)              | 5.00   |
| Total                          | 33.00  |

V. Implementation

A. Institutional and Implementation Arrangements

31. The project will be implemented by the National Institute of Statistics which is the main executing agency of the NSDS and is responsible for its coordination. The Project Coordination Unit (PCU) will be located at the INS and will be responsible for the day-to-day coordination and management of the implementation of the project. The PCU team will include staff from National Institute of Statistics and selected agencies of the NSS (Agriculture, Health, Education, Finance and Trade), and consultants.

32. The Project Steering Committee (PSC): The committee will: (a) be headed by a representative of the Ministry in charge of Statistics and be comprised of representatives of INS and key ministries, development partners and data users. The committee will be mandated to oversee, promote, coordinate, support, monitor and evaluate the implementation of the project. To prevent conflict of interest, no direct beneficiary of the project should be member of the committee. The PSC and the High Commission of Statistics will identify a clear overall goals and NSS mission and promote awareness of these throughout the organization –with an emphasis on commonly shared values that should be reflected in achieving these goals. The steering committee will nominate each year the three best performing project beneficiaries and award the top performing in each category of the Data Quality Assessment Framework (DQAF) introduced by the IMF and endorsed the UN.

33. Work program and budget allocation: The Project coordination unit will prepare an integrated multi-year work plan which includes activities from NSDS action plan and priority activities from key ministries. Annually budgeted work plan will be derived from the multi-year action plan and submitted to the review of the steering committee which will submit the plan to the World Bank for approval.

34. The project policies and procedures will be incorporated in an implementation manual,
which will be adopted by the High Commission of Statistics. It will include or be complemented by protocols based on DQAF which will provide guidance for key statistical works. The Project Coordination Unit and the Bank will work to insure consistency within protocols and with the overall implementation manual. A more detailed description of the implementing arrangements is presented in Annex 3.

B. Results Monitoring and Evaluation

35. The Monitoring and Evaluation system of the Project focuses on accountability for results and a flexible M&E encouraging better performance and greater ‘ownership’ — it moves beyond the usual tracking of inputs and outputs and places a strong emphasis on intermediate outcomes and processes.

36. Results based monitoring: The Project's results framework includes monitoring framework for the overall NSDS program extended to critical activities not covered by the NSDS. The key monitoring indicators are set out in the result framework of the project (Annex 1).

37. Functional M&E: Quarterly reflection workshop involving the NIS, the high commission of statistics, the Statistics Thematic Group (STG) and all stakeholders and beneficiaries of the project will assess the progress of planned activities. The first workshop will be conducted no later than 24 months after effectiveness. These workshops will provide regular opportunities for learning from collective experience, self-assessment and exchange of success stories as well as errors and constraints delaying activities. This dynamic approach is a complement to the static results framework of the project, as it assimilates the project to a living entity that can learn and adapt itself to new conditions. At these periodic workshops the discussions should go beyond the quantitative measurement of progress and focus on qualitative improvements that contribute to the broad goal of the project.

38. The project's steering committee will meet semi-annually to assess the Project's performance, intermediate results, and outcomes. The first meeting will be conducted no later than 12 months after effectiveness. An independent assessment will be conducted prior to the meeting to ensure that data production activities are performed following predefined protocols. The review meeting chaired by the representative of the Ministry in charge of statistics will involve members of the NSS and statistical information and services users. The meeting provides a platform to the PCU and its beneficiaries to report progress to authorities, clients and partners. The committee will be responsible for: (i) facilitating the overall coordination of the Project, (ii) reviewing and recommending for the approval by the World Bank of proposed Annual Work Plans and Budgets; and (iii) reviewing progress made towards achieving the Project's objectives and making recommendations for removal of any obstacles to the implementation of the project.

39. These mechanisms are often more effective in encouraging better performance and greater ownership than the results-based management monitoring.

C. Sustainability

40. Budgetary allocation. Over the past years, the government has shown strong support to the development of statistics in Congo through institutional reform by passing the Statistical Law, approving the NSDS and the providing budget for: (i) the construction equipment of a new building for the National Institute of Statistics, (ii) the implementation of censuses and households surveys
and data production activities and (iii) commitment of counterpart financing for the project. The overall sustainability of the project will depend critically on the Government's sustained commitment to release the planned budget to support the NSS.

41. Increasing demand for statistics is expected to translate into budgetary support. Demand from the government, Development Partners, civil society, and other stakeholders for data to monitor implementation and impact of Development Programs is likely to be sustained over the long term. The dialog between users and producers of data will continue and the activities planned under the sub-component 2.2 of this project are designed to increase demand for statistical information. Such demand is expected to translate into sustained budgetary support from the Government and Development Partners.

42. Improved human resources capacity is a strategic asset for statistics development and an important factor for sustainability of the project. With qualified and increased number of staff, an appropriate incentive and management structures the NSS will be autonomous in fulfilling its mission. As the NSS becomes more performing, it will be asked to implement statistical work outside its routine activities which will strengthen its capacities. Additionally, on-the-job training programs will support continuous improvements as well as innovation amongst the staff as it will allow the renewal of skills. This training program will be enhanced by a strong partnership with the CASP a comprehensive and formal pre-service training program will ensure that newly appointed staff are trained to required international standards.

VI. Safeguard Policies (including public consultation)

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Comments (optional)

VII. Contact point

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