I. Introduction and Context

Country Context

1. With a per capita income of US$2,550 in 2012, the Republic of Congo (RoC) is one 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 to achieve 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. Overall, the NSS operates on the basis of annual programs developed by different institutions. However these programs are poorly designed because of lack of high level staff and the work in those institutions is often reduced to routine compilation of data. The coordination between data producing units is almost non-existent. This creates a lack of harmonization in methods, poor quality of statistical outputs and generates isolated statistical subsystems. 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 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 units, people without statistical training
are appointed to statistician position. As shown in Table 1, only 4 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 graduates or equivalent. The rest of the organization is made up of clerks, undergraduate or college degree statisticians (80 percent) and support staff (16 percent).

The NSS is not equipped with human resources management policies that could support management in attracting, retaining and motivating qualified staff. 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 covers all aspects of the employment lifecycle but has not been approved by management and staff representation. Several elements of this document will need to be reviewed to better reflect current and future market realities and the overall governance simplified to ensure an effective implementation. AS part of this work, a set of Human resources guidelines (reglement interne) will have to be elaborated to complement the 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. A complex job evaluation and related salary scale has been developed and is currently an essential element of the Collective Labor Agreement. It is not clear however if these have been benchmarked against relevant market data, including comparing with other public and private sector organizations where similar types of skills could be in demand. The suggested pay lines are also very much linked to tenure and academic backgrounds without reflecting elements of output. If implemented “as is”, this could hinder the potential progression of newly appointed staff and create an important gap between staff based on their qualification rather than on contribution to the performance of the institution. In time, there will be a significant impact on staff’s motivation and productivity which eventually is reflected in the quality of the work produced. Finally, it is not clear that current financial and budgetary arrangements will ensure the long term sustainability of the compensation system, especially since it does not yet account for typical benefits (i.e. medical coverage, vacation, pension, etc…)

The supply of certified statisticians to fill technical positions in the NSS is very low. At a local level the CASP is the only school that trains statisticians. It seems however that the current curriculum offered by the CASP as well as its infrastructure does not fulfill the needs of public and private sector organizations in the country. With only 12 permanent staff including 4 committed to administrative tasks, it seems urgent to rethink the overall approach to statistical certification in the country.

7. Some sectoral ministries lack functional statistical units either because of non-enforcement of current legislation and/or lack of qualified human resources. In the RoC, the NSS is responsible for providing other ministries with qualified statisticians. With nearly no perspective of employment in the public sector between 1986 and 2010, very few statisticians have been trained to enter the labor market. The CASP only certifies under-graduates with a generalists profile, the NSS is not yet equipped to train specialists on the job and even then, the slow pace of decisions in this matter does not allow a sufficient number of staff to be trained on time to fulfill current and future technical
statistical needs for the various sectors.

8. Sectoral departments depend on the Minister in charge of NIS and budgets are very limited. With few exceptions, all statistical department in sectorial ministries lack financial means to implement their work programs. A sectorial diagnostic conducted by the NIS in 2011, showed that only one-third of sectorial ministries statistics department manages their own budget for the statistical operations. Among the services that do not have their own budget (the budget being centralized at the Cabinet Office of lined ministry), four out of five (4/5) say that their budget is managed in a way that do not allow the achievement of statistical operations.

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.

Relationship to CAS

10. The 2013-16 CPS is focusing on the production of quality statistics to inform the transformation of the country and to support the country’s drive to become an emerging economy. Therefore the preparation of this operation is fully aligned with the CPS and the Government’s priorities. The CPS is organized around two pillars and the foundation of the new World Bank Strategy for Africa.

11. Through its 2013-16 CPS, the World Bank is committed to support the production and dissemination of reliable and timely data. The Bank’s commitment is stated in the CPS as follow: “Support will be provided for production and dissemination of reliable and timely data. This assistance, to be provided under the planned Statistical Development Project, includes strengthening the Government’s capacity to generate and use statistics, particularly gender data for analysis, policy, as well as monitoring and evaluation; improve coordination and develop sector statistical development strategies. Quality and timely data is important for: (a) enabling the Government to better target its interventions (for instance, addressing pockets of poverty and gender inequalities) and make informed policy and investment decisions; (b) measuring the impact of its programs, and more generally, adopt a results-based culture; (c) nurturing public debates on matters of national or local interest; and (d) ensuring transparency and accountability.”

II. Proposed Development Objective(s)

Proposed Development Objective(s) (From PCN)
The PDO of the proposed project is (1) to strengthen the National Statistical System in the production, dissemination of timely and robust statistics relevant for policies and decision making and (2) to promote the demand for statistical information.

Key Results (From PCN)
Measuring progress and achievements in capacity development is a challenge. However for this project performance improvement is used as a proxy for capacity and performance is defined as the delivery of predefined outputs. Therefore the PDO will be assessed by availability, quality and timeliness of statistical products and services provided by the National Institute of Statistics and targeted key Ministries Departments.
The PDO level indicators include: (1) Quality: adherence and compliance with agreed data quality standards by the NSS regarding the compilation and dissemination of key statistical products and
services: Consumer Price index, Producer Price Index, National Accounts, Balance of Payment, Government Finance Statistics, Human Development and Poverty Statistics; (2) Timeliness and Frequency of publication for key statistics in line with international standards as agreed by the NSS; (3) Availability: data readily available to users through the open data portal and (4) Use/Demand: Increase in the demand of statistics. This will be measured by the PDO outcome indicators:
• Statistics Capacity Index Score;
• Statistical discrepancy as % of GDP;
• Proportion of statistical publications compiled and published following international standard as agreed by the NSS;
• Rate of statistical output readily available to users through the open data portal
• Incidence of statistics quoted in the media;
• User Satisfaction Index
• Number of thematic areas where internationally accepted common concepts are adopted and used by NSS and,
• Availability of important statistics as evidenced by establishment of: (a) Annual Labor Force Survey; (b) Yearly Producer Price Indices; and (c) Yearly Exports...

III. Preliminary Description

Concept Description

14. The Project is structured into five components as follows.

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

This component aims at reinforcing the National Institute of Statistics (NIS) for the coordination of the National Statistical System (NSS) activities as well as the collaboration between different actors of the NSS. This will be done through:
i) the development of procedure manuals for statistical activities and resources management and,
ii) the organization of periodic seminars between the NIS and others NSS counterparts
The World Bank will also support the restoration or the creation of institutions that are part the statistical information system in diverse economic and social sectors (education, health, agriculture, trade, services, manufactures…). For each institution, the work program and the methodological framework should be elaborated; the profile of the staffs, the materials and the cost should be defined.

Component 2: Strengthening human, material and financial capabilities.

Sub-component 2.1: Strengthening human capabilities
i) Reform the local schools, review the training programs to adjust for the needs of the country;
ii) Attract and retain well trained and experienced professors;
iii) Develop training programs to prepare Congolese candidates for the competition to the regional statistical schools;
iv) Identify/design and support career development training programs for the SSN staff.

Sub-component 2.2: Supporting the material and financial capabilities
i) It addresses the issues of the lack of working equipment in statistic’s offices. This includes providing statistical software, IT and other equipment and upgrading the website of the NIS;
ii) It finances Consultants fees, trainings, costs related to reforming the local statistical schools, travels, per diem and hotels, communication and information activities; and other technical assistance.

Component 3: Improving the production and dissemination of statistics
Sub-component 3.1: Improving the production of statistics
The World Bank will support the SSN (mainly the National Institute of Statistics) to produce timely and reliable statistics, such as survey and routine data. In order to achieve this, it will support the following activities:

i) The elaboration of statistics yearbooks at central, sectorial and regional levels;

ii) The acquisition of software for national accounts elaboration and survey data analysis, and training of staff on the use of these software;

iii) The elaboration of national accounts and satellites accounts using the 1993 National Accounting System;

iv) The Production and dissemination of economic monitoring notes and the harmonized consumer price index;

v) The training on, sampling techniques, surveys design, implementation, data analysis and archiving;

vi) The updating enumeration areas and sampling frames;

vii) The support harmonization of statistical activities: nomenclatures, codes, definitions, concepts;

viii) The poverty assessment using Ecom 2011, analysis and dissemination of the DHS 2011 data;

ix) The production of analytical works to analyze government policies and shocks.

Sub-component 3.2: Improving the dissemination of statistics
It provides support to communication activities of the NSS and the elaboration of the communication plan of the NIS. The project will support some communication activities for diverse clients (government, enterprises, selected NGOs, population, parliament, and the media…).

The following items will finance under this component: (i) consultants fees (ii) production, multiplication and dissemination costs of statistical yearbooks, studies and reports (iii) communication and information activities and; (iv) other technical assistance.

Component 4: Promote and Develop of the use of statistics
Under this component the project will support activities that promote the use of statistics to support policy decision as well as the teaching of statistics in secondary schools. The project will also support the Poverty Observatory (located in the NSI) by initiating and releasing collaborative analytical works on many thematic as an independent agency for a greater public scrutiny.

Technical discussions, forums and workshops will be delivered under this component to stimulate open debates on development issues.

The component will finance: (i) training; (ii) technical assistance and studies; and (e) travel, workshops and seminars.

Component 5: Project management
This component will support project management to ensure that the management unit is operational and implements the project effectively. The project management team includes World Bank staff and the Project Coordination Unit (PCU) at the NIS, which will be responsible for the day-to-day
coordination and management of the implementation of the project.
The component will finance: (i) equipment and operating costs related to the project; (ii) independent monitoring and evaluation; (iii) training; (iv) technical assistance and studies; (v) travel, per diem, hotel, workshops and seminars for the PCU staff and counterparts and; (iv) external audit.

IV. Safeguard Policies that might apply

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V. Financing (in USD Million)

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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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