

International partnerships building confidence

Congo and its investment partners are making exciting inroads in infrastructure development

Structurally speaking, Congo has seen many long-envisioned projects become world-class realities, thanks to a willing and cohesive government and the careful management of the General Delegation of Grands Travaux (Grands Travaux) — an entity made up of the boards of the National Congo-Ocean Railway, the Autonomous Port of Brazzaville and the Autonomous Port of Pointe Noire.

Headed by Jean Jacques Bouya, Grands Travaux collaborates with international players through bilateral and multilateral partnerships in order to transform the country.

China, France, South Africa, Brazil, The African Development Bank, the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa and the World Bank have all contributed to Congo's modernization.

As one of the most dynamic non-oil sectors, the construction sector offers huge potential. Representing around 4 percent of GDP, the sector has been liberalized in response to a very strong demand and is set to take off in the near future.

A growing population, coupled with a shortage of homes, schools, hospitals, and transport links has left the government calling for foreign investment to help rebuild the country.

Last year, an ambitious road-building program began in the capital, Brazzaville, in honor of the country's 50th anniversary of independence, and other major works are coming to fruition.

A gas-fired power station at Djéno has been built at a cost of \$398.4 million, homes are being built on oil industry sites and the railways, a key transport option for this vast country, are being modernized.

Cooperation from the international business community is of the utmost importance for Congo, and the President is keen to open the country to the rest of the world.

China is already one of the country's most hands-on partners, having signed many contracts with Congo in various infrastructural sectors.

Enjoying a relationship based on solidarity and mutual benefits, the partnership between the two countries has seen more than 10 major projects completed in recent years.

These include the highway between Pointe Noire and Brazza-

ville — a gigantic project that has required tremendous technical prowess and financing —, the construction of new terminals at Maya-Maya and Ollombo airports, a hospital in Oyo offering primary and secondary health care, modern housing initiatives, the Imboulou Hydroelectric Power Station and its electrical distribution network, a sophisticated fiber-optic network and water treatment stations.

Two French companies are also playing their part in the country's development through an agreement with CFCO. The deal includes the repair and maintenance of 15 locomotives, 25 wagons and 21 meters of container ship, as well as the construction.

The project is being backed by Korean company Sung Shin Rolling Stock Technology, which is providing 23 new wagons with air-conditioning, and the delivery of a back-up generator of 1,200 kilovolt-ampere for the CFCO's workshops in Pointe Noire.

Andrade Gutierrez, one of three major Brazilian construction com-

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panies, is building two national highways and is also in charge of Ewo's city roads.

In Brazzaville, the company has already completed a significant part of the city's main axes.

The French Development Agency is funding the extension of the road along the Congo River, the urban renovation of Brazzaville districts, Makélékélé and Bacongo, and the water evacuation system of Brazzaville.

Congo is also working closely with South African companies RRL Grindrod and Sibanye Trade and Services to acquire four new locomotives, two second-hand locomotives and the renovation and maintenance of six more.

All these initiatives are aimed at strengthening the present dilapidated railway, and will raise the trac-



Jean Jacques Bouya, head of Grand Travaux

tion power which was previously limited to 2,400 CV.

As well as making traveling more comfortable for passengers, it will also allow goods to be transported far more freely.

Improving regional links

Regional links are also being set up to improve trade and accessibility between the countries in Central Africa.

The African Development Bank, part of the art of the infrastructure network within the region supported by the New Economic Partnership for Africa's Development, has launched a number of regional integration projects with financial contributions of the states involved.

These include the link road between Congo and Cameroon (Ketta-Djoum), the road connecting Congo to Gabon (Dolisie-Doussala) and the bridge road and railtrack between Brazzaville and Kinshasa with the train from Pointe Noire continuing to Kinshasa-Ilebo.

In the meantime, a rail connection will join Franceville, in the east of Gabon, the country's second largest city to Lekety, a small city situated a few hundred kilometers north of Brazzaville. There will also be a link joining Libreville, the capital of Gabon, to Djibouti on the Horn of Africa.

The RN1 highway, which links the port town of Pointe Noire to the bustling capital has breathed new life into the country. The construction of



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The Dolisie road, part of the RN1 linking Pointe Noire to Brazzaville.

main roads and secondary offshoots has in turn, created direct jobs for hundreds of Congolese workers.

RN1 also plays an important regional role by linking Congo to its neighbor, the Democratic Republic of Congo. The financing of the road and railway bridge has seen a whole new economic opportunity open, particularly with the DRC's lack of a seaport.

Now the DRC, a country with a population of more than 71 million people, will be able to reap the advantages of being able to pass its imports and exports through Congo's Port of Pointe Noire.

Other new roads include the RN3, linking Gabon to Congo, which will enable the cities of Ndendé and Mouila to receive their goods faster.

The Central African Republic, a landlocked nation, will also benefit from these transport links. Small business links between South Cameroon and Congo have also benefited from a new connection between Brazzaville - Ouesso - Douala.

Entry points revamped

The Autonomous Port of Pointe

Noire is another key factor in Congo's economy. Last year, revenues were higher than previous years and benefited from a \$60.6 million budget allocation for growth and modernization.

The Autonomous Port of Brazza-

President Denis Sassou N'Guesso's decision to upgrade the airports shows Congo's willingness to open up to the outside world.

ville is still struggling to perform well, however, and is considered a thorn in the side of a transport network that is, on the whole, moving quickly in the right direction. The government hopes to find a solution soon.

As most travelers know, the true nature of a country can be gleaned as soon as the plane touches down in a new destination. Airports are not just entry points, but also the first impression a new visitor gets of the country he or she is about to stay or do business in.

President Denis Sassou N'Guesso's administration's decision to upgrade the country's airports shows Congo's

willingness to open up to the outside world.

Built by Weihai International Economic Technical Cooperative Co Ltd, a Chinese development company, the airport in Maya Maya is the latest entry point to be given a makeover.

With two landing strips and two terminals, renovation should be completed by the end of this year.

The runway can accommodate the world's largest aircraft, while the new airport will feature a basement entirely covered with glass and seven air passenger bridges, two of which will be able to fit the largest planes. Officials hope to welcome 2 million passengers a year.

The airport has parking capacity for up to 800 cars and a world-class hotel is being built in close proximity.

InFocus provided the story

Imboulou powers a new era of energy production

Widespread electrification and green energy development will greatly impact growth

Grands Travaux is also involved with energy infrastructure. Until fairly recently, Congo needed to import 50 percent of its energy from its neighbor the Democratic Republic of Congo, but it will soon enjoy increased output through its own power stations.

The Imboulou Hydroelectric Power Station pumped out its first unit last May and is expected to pump out 876 million kW per hour, resulting in 120 megawatts a year.

The station benefits from the latest management and information technology and is being financed through the state budget.

Around 600 Chinese technicians and engineers have been involved in the \$341 million project, which includes a city for employees, with 45 modern buildings, a hotel, a restaurant, a free health center, a school, resting areas and many other social facilities.

At the Imboulou inauguration, President Denis Sassou N'Guesso also opened a new high voltage transformer station in a mountain village nearby.

Thanks to this development, Brazzaville and other major cities are already being powered and the energy is injected within the national grid through two parallel lines of 220 KV, each of them linking the power station to the redistribution center.

This system will play a crucial

role within the Congolese power network as it is the link between Imboulou power station, the one already existing in the south of the country and a third network which is being built in the north.

Neighborhood grids

Last autumn, the government also signed a memorandum of agreement with Cameroon for the construction of a 600 megawatt hydropower plant, allowing both countries to expand their grids.

“Projects in the field of green business will depend on the ability of the respective states to adapt to new challenges.”

HENRI DJOMBO
MINISTER OF SUSTAINABLE DEV., FORESTRY ECONOMY & ENVIRONMENT

A dam will be built on the River Tcha in Cameroon, which lies 70 kilometers from the town of Ngouala, in Congo's Sangha province.

The project is an important development for other countries in the Central African region, who will receive a much-needed energy supply and thus be able to develop themselves.

Among other projects coming to fruition are the seven high-voltage power stations of 220 KV and 110 KV in Djiri, Ngo, Gamboma, Oyo, Boundji, Owando and Djambala, as well as an underground line of 220 KV in Tsiélambo and nine aerial

lines of 30 KV, spanning 242 km in length.

More lines will link the cities to the main network. Four underground lines of 20KV each, spanning 50 kilometers in total, will be constructed to inject the power from Imboulou into Brazzaville.

Nine other high voltage lines of 220 KV and 110 KV, covering a length of 841 kilometers will complete the project, making a total length of 1,588 km for the national electricity transformation network.

These undertakings, costing more than \$602 million, represent more than double the total works done in recent years.

Other complementary initiatives have been launched, including a factory to build concrete poles to reinforce the existing ones, as well as a fiber optic cable integrated to the electricity lines which will improve the communication system between the high-voltage stations and the hydropower station.

Street lighting has also received significant attention, with the government installing 4,522 streetlights across the



Imboulou Hydroelectric Power Plant.

major cities in the last year alone.

Reducing Carbon

The forward thinking, environmentally friendly Congo government has now launched the "Congo Carbon" initiative, with a view to establishing a renewable energy sector. Congo Carbon will involve making industrial carbon from forest residues.

At a continental level, Congo plays a key role in promoting green economies, and the Congo Carbon project, of which 10 percent is being financed by the African Biofuels and Renewable Energy Company (Faber), will see 2.7 million tons of carbon sequestered over 21 years. Other partners are being sought to help finance the \$6 million plan.

Faber's aim is to increase investment flows toward projects on biofuels and renewable energy to Africa, in order to promote sustainable development and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The Congo Carbon project will be completed in two phases, to produce carbon from waste products, and to plant forests where there are currently none.

At the fourth annual joint meeting of the African Union and the Economic Commission for Africa, held in Addis Ababa a year ago, Henri Djombo, the Congolese Minister in charge of the sustainable development, forestry economy and environment, encouraged the rest of Africa to develop green policies.

“Projects in the field of green business will depend on the ability of the respective states to adapt to new challenges,” he said.

“The advent of the ‘Green Fund for Africa’, launched by the African Development Bank in Cancun in December 2010, will serve as a trigger for the emerging economy.”

He added that opportunities offered by the development of the green economy are numerous in Africa and may concern several sectors, among which are the production of biofuels, ecotourism, renewable energy, the sustainable management of forests, and organic or ecologically sustainable agriculture.

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