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Gabon
## Gabon: Scenarios

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Briefly

Chart 10: Relationship between Current Path and scenarios
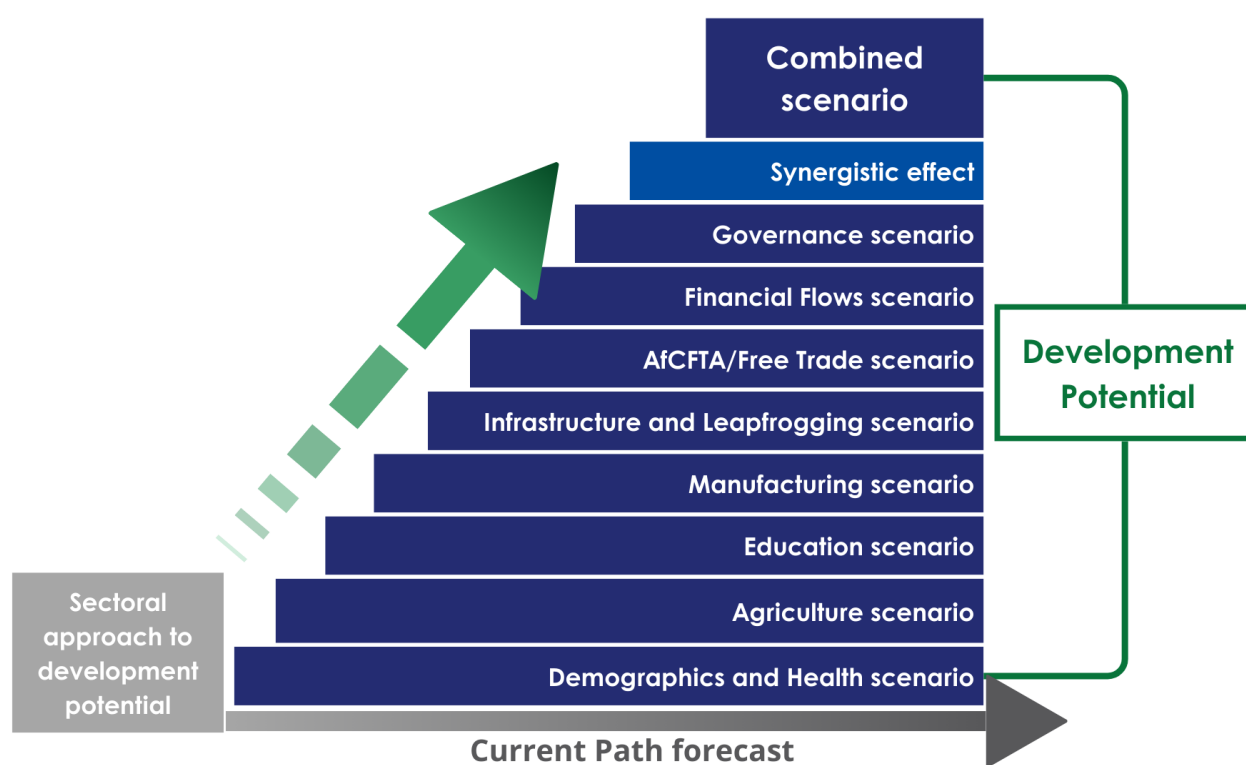
The eight sectoral scenarios as well as their relationship to the Current Path and the Combined scenario are explained in the About Page. Chart 10 summarises the approach.

Demographics and Health scenario

Chart 11: Mortality distribution in the Current Path, 2023-2043

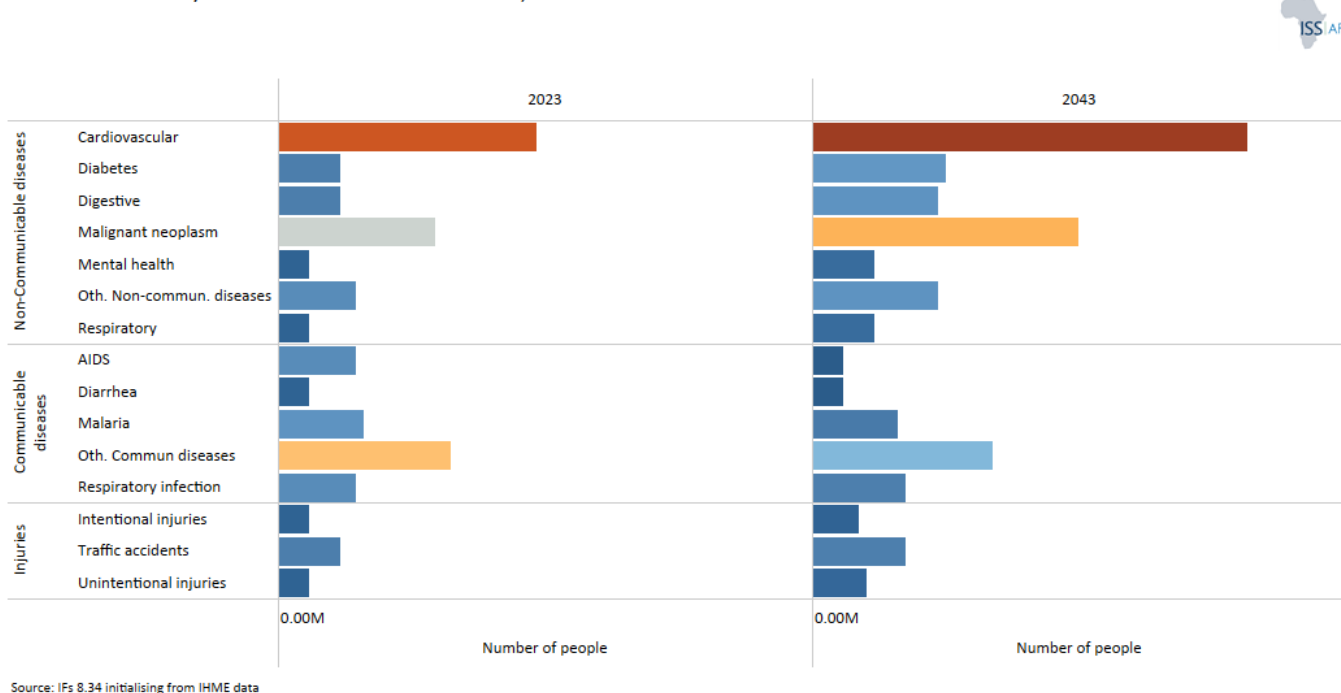Source: IFs 8.34 initialising from IHME data

Chart 11 presents the mortality distribution in the Current Path for 2023 and 2043.

Chart 12: Infant mortality rate in the Current Path and Demographics and Health scenario, 2020-2043

■ Gabon, Current Path
■ Gabon, Demographics and Health scenario

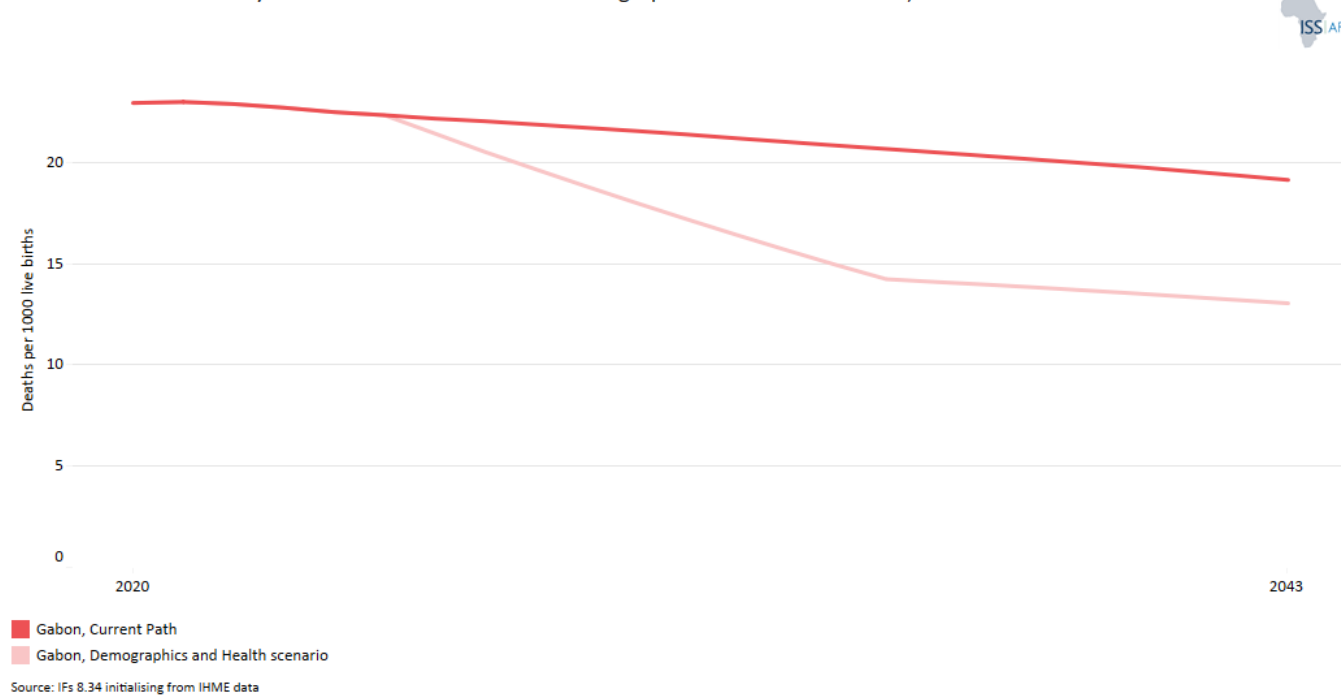Source: IFs 8.34 initialising from IHME data

Chart 12 presents the infant mortality rate in the Current Path and in the Demographics and Health scenario, from 2020 to 2043.

The infant mortality rate is the probability of a child born in a specific year dying before reaching the age of one. It measures the child-born survival rate and reflects the social, economic and environmental conditions in which children live, including their health care. It is measured as the number of infant deaths per 1 000 live births and is an important marker of the overall quality of the health system in a country.

The infant mortality rate is an important marker of the overall quality of a country's health system. Gabon significantly reduced its infant mortality rate over the past decades from 55.6 deaths per 1 000 live births in 1990 to 22.7 deaths in 2023. In the Demographics and Health scenario, Gabon´s infant mortality rate will drop by 42.5% to 13 deaths by 2043. The Current Path forecasts 19.1 deaths per 1 000 live births in 2043. The scenario interventions will help Gabon outperform the expected African upper-middle-income group average of 19.2 deaths in 2043 and bring it very close to meeting the SDG infant mortality goal of 12 deaths per 1 000 live births. Globally, the average upper-middle-income country already reached this target in 2023 while upper-middle-income Africa still lags behind with 23.8 deaths per 1 000 live births in 2023.

Access to safe water in Gabon is close to universal. However, the country still performs poorly on access to improved sanitation, an important driver of improved health outcomes. In 2023, only 51.1% of the population had access to improved sanitation compared to the average of 81.2% in Africa's upper-middle-income countries.

The Demographics and Health scenario envisions ambitious improvements in child and maternal mortality rates, enhanced access to modern contraception, and decreased mortality from communicable diseases (e.g., malaria, other communicable diseases) and non-communicable diseases (e.g., cardiovascular diseases, malignant neoplasms), alongside advancements in safe water access and sanitation. This scenario assumes a swift demographic transition supported by heightened investments in health and water, sanitation and hygiene (WaSH) infrastructure.

Visit the themes on Demographics and Health/WaSH for more detail on the scenario structure and interventions.

Chart 13: Demographic dividend in the Current Path and the Demographics and Health scenario, 2020-2043

Source: IFs 8.34 initialising from UNPD Population Prospects data
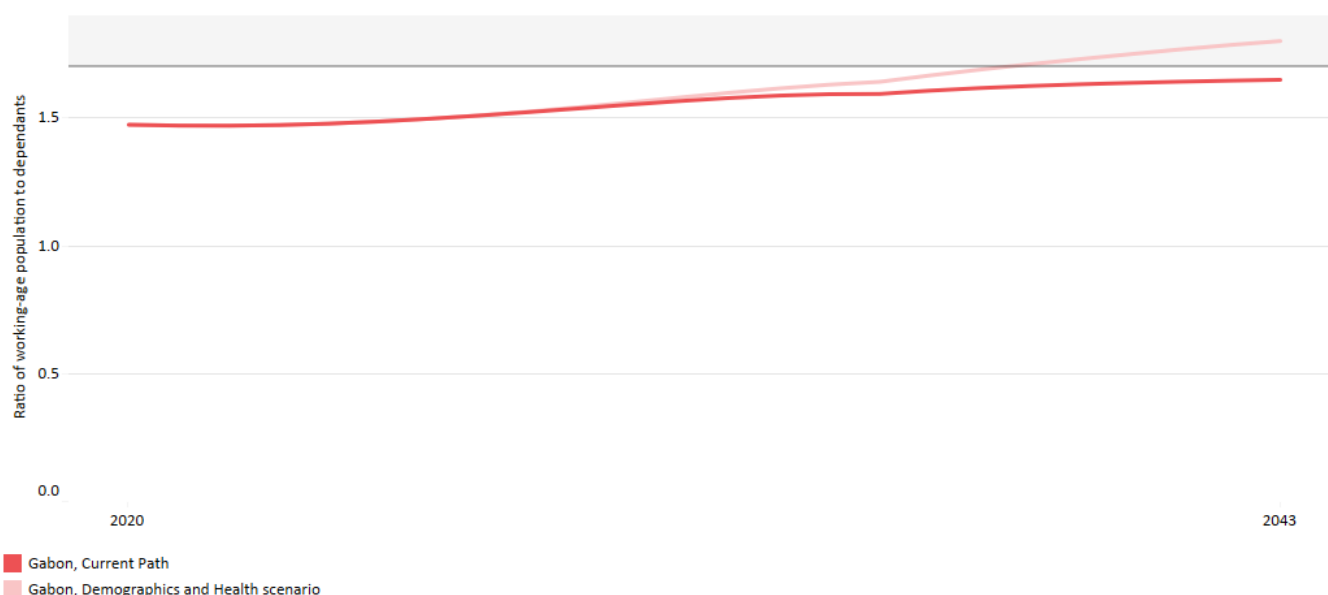
Chart 13 presents the demographic dividend in the Current Path and in the Demographics and Health scenario, from 2020 to 2043.

The dividend is the window of economic growth opportunity that opens when the ratio of working-age persons to dependants increases to 1.7 to 1 and higher, i.e. when the population structure changes. If for every dependant, there are 1.7 workers, there are fewer dependants to take care of, which frees up resources to invest in both physical and human capital formation. However, the improvement in the ratio between working-age persons relative to dependants does not automatically translate into rapid economic growth unless the labour force is sufficiently skilled and can be absorbed by the labour market. Failing improved education and employment generation to successfully harness their productive power, the growing labour force (especially those in urban areas) could increasingly become frustrated with the lack of job opportunities leading to social tension and even the emergence of instability.

In 2023, the ratio of the working-age population to dependants in Gabon was 1.5 to 1. This means that, on average, for every dependant in Gabon, there were roughly 1.5 people of working age (15–64 years of age). This is significantly below the 1.8 to 1 average for African upper-middle-income countries but above the 1.4 to 1 average for lower-middle-income countries in Africa in the same year. On the Current Path, Gabon would enter the window of demographic opportunity only around 2050 versus in 2036 in the Demographics and Health scenario. By 2043, that ratio will reach 1.8 to 1, much closer to the average for Africa´s upper-middle-income economies (1.99-to-1) and 0.15 points above the ratio to be expected on Gabon´s Current Path (1.65-to-1).

Agriculture scenario

Chart 14: Crop production and demand in the Current Path, 1990-2043
Area chart show demand less production

Agricultural demand ■ Agricultural production ■

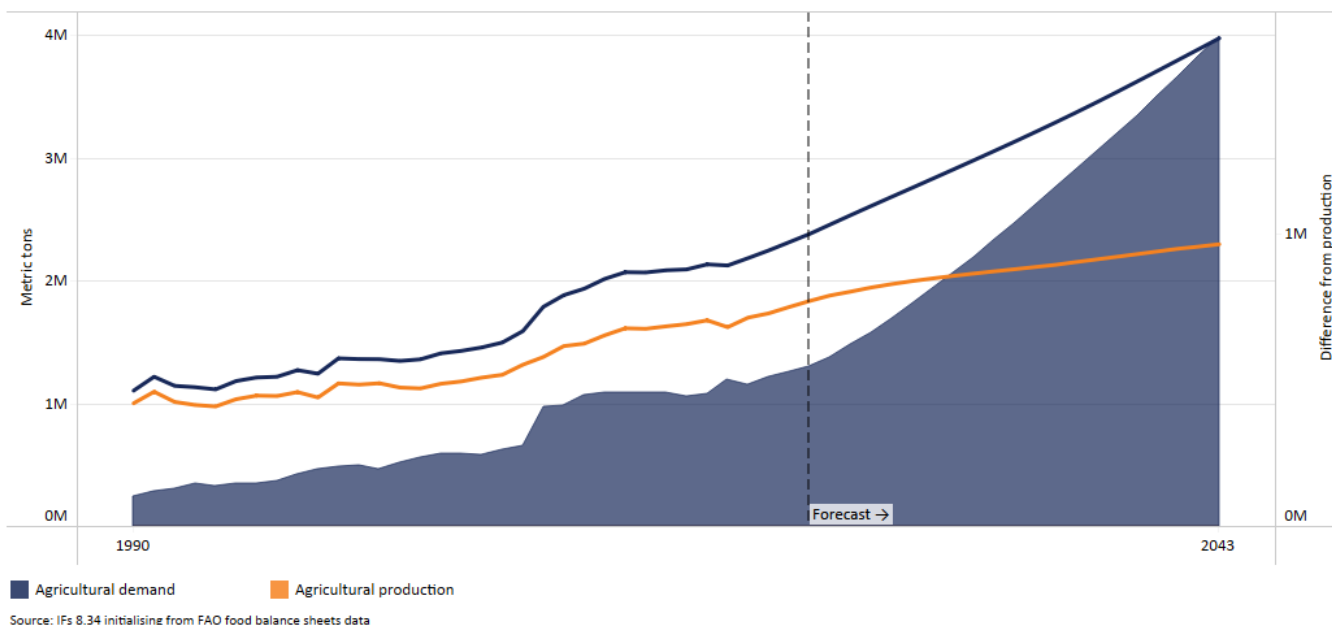Source: IFs 8.34 initialising from FAO food balance sheets data

Chart 14 presents crop production and demand in the Current Path from 1990 to 2043.

The Agriculture scenario envisions an agricultural revolution that ensures food security through ambitious yet feasible increases in yields per hectare, thanks to improved management, seed, fertiliser technology, and expanded irrigation and equipped land. Efforts to reduce food loss and waste are emphasised, with increased calorie consumption as an indicator of self-sufficiency and prioritising it over food exports. Additionally, enhanced forest protection signifies a commitment to sustainable land use practices.

Visit the theme on Agriculture for our conceptualisation and details on the scenario structure and interventions.

The data on agricultural production and demand in our modelling initialises from data provided on food balances by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). Our model contains data on numerous types of agriculture but aggregates its forecast into crops, meat and fish, presented in million metric tons.

In 2023, Gabon's total crop yield was approximately 1.8 million metric tons per hectare. Crop yields will increase by 25% to 2.3 million metric tons per hectare in 2043. However, crop production is outpaced by demand increasing the risk for excessive food import dependence. In 2023, 1.8 million metric tons were not enough to meet domestic demand, which stood at 2.4 million metric tons. Population growth combined with an unproductive agricultural sector means that the gap between demand and production has continuously been widening. The gap of almost 0.6 million metric tons observed in 2023 will widen to 1.6 million metric tons by 2043. A growing gap automatically translates into growing import dependence for food items, which in turn affects the current account balance.

Gabon has exceptional agricultural potential, but as a result of the economy's overreliance on oil, the agricultural sector remains underdeveloped. About 20% of the land is arable, but only about 10% of it is being used for agricultural production; mostly subsistence farming. With the discovery of oil, Gabon caught the so-called Dutch Disease. The oil-boom

led to a shift away from agriculture (and manufacturing) causing a rural exodus towards the urban centres.

However, in the pursuit of greater economic diversification for employment creation, poverty reduction and sustainable development overall, it is necessary to invest in agriculture. After all, Gabon boasts extremely favourable conditions for promoting agricultural development as land is available and easy to cultivate. In 2015, Gabon with the assistance of the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), World Bank, Economic Community of Central African States and the New Partnership for Africa's Development, had adopted a roadmap for the development of the sector with the explicit goal for it to account for 8.4% of GDP by 2020.

Some progress has been made since. In 2023, the agricultural sector accounted for 6.7% of Gabon's GDP (MER), up from 4.3% in 2015. The 2023 value lies just below the average for the world´s upper-middle-income economies at 7.1% which is significantly above the African upper-middle-income average of 4.5%. In relative terms, Gabon has the third-largest agricultural sector among its African upper-middle-income peers, following Namibia (ranked 2nd at 7.5%) and Algeria (ranked 1st at 10.2%). The remaining countries all have agricultural sectors that account for less than 4% of GDP. On the Current Path, however, the importance of Gabon´s agricultural sector will decline (4.8% by 2043). In the Agriculture scenario, the value added by the agricultural sector will account for 5.6% of GDP in 2043.

In 2023, Gabon's crop production stood at 1.8 million metric tons. In the Current Path, it will increase by 25% to 2.3 million metric tons in 2043. Interventions in the Agriculture scenario create momentum and push crop production to 2.7 million metric tons; a nearly 50% increase.

This level of crop production is still not enough to meet the increasing demand of a growing population, but it will help to gradually reduce the gap. In 2023, demand for crops was estimated at 2.4 million metric tons. By 2043, it will have grown to 3.9 million metric tons. In 2023, the gap between production and demand was 0.6 million metric tons. In 2043, in the Current Path, production will fall 1.6 million metric tons short of demand in 2043. In the Agriculture scenario, the expected gap will be 1.2 million metric tons; smaller than on the projected Current Path trajectory yet larger than in 2023. This result illustrates that systems are interconnected and more importantly, the need for holistic development planning.

Chart 15: Import dependence in the Current Path and Agriculture scenario, 2020-2043

Gabon, Current Path
Gabon, Agriculture scenario

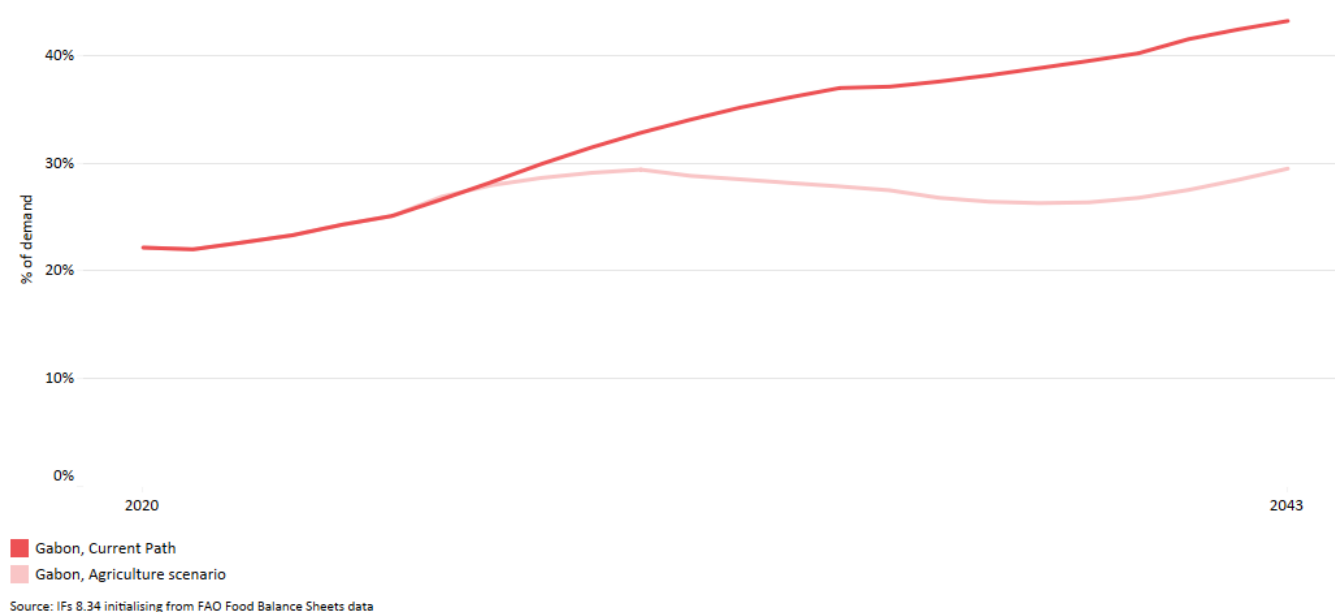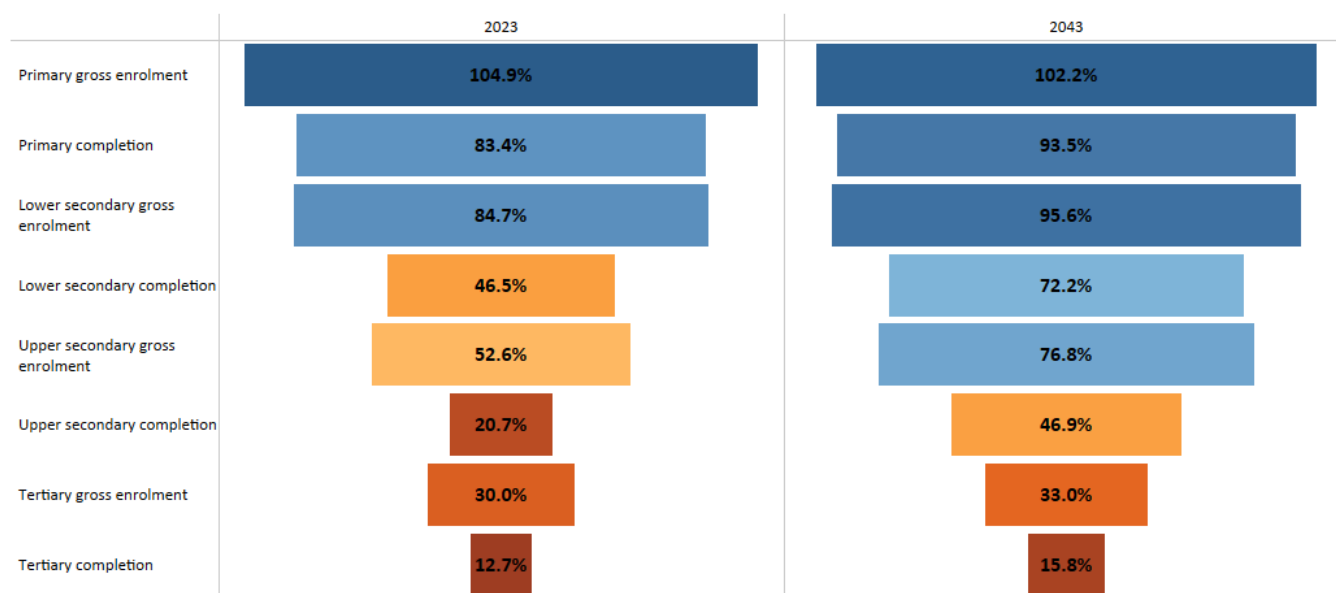Source: IFs 8.34 initialising from FAO Food Balance Sheets data

Chart 15 presents the import dependence in the Current Path and the Agriculture scenario, from 2020 to 2043.

In the Agriculture scenario, total agricultural production will increase from 2 million metric tons in 2023 to about 3 million metric tons by 2043, 0.5 million tons more than in the Current Path. This allows to curb the growing level of import dependence that Gabon will experience on the Current Path as demand continues to grow due to population growth. In 2023, imports accounted for 28.6% of agricultural demand. With increased agricultural production in the Agriculture scenario, by 2043, imports will account for 35% of agricultural demand compared to 46.7% in the Current Path. This reflects a reduction in import dependence by 25%.

Education scenario

Chart 16: Progress through education funnel in the Current Path, 2023-2043

	2023	2043
Primary gross enrolment	104.9%	102.2%
Primary completion	83.4%	93.5%
Lower secondary gross enrolment	84.7%	95.6%
Lower secondary completion	46.5%	72.2%
Upper secondary gross enrolment	52.6%	76.8%
Upper secondary completion	20.7%	46.9%
Tertiary gross enrolment	30.0%	33.0%
Tertiary completion	12.7%	15.8%

Source: IFs 8.34 initialising from Barro-Lee data

Chart 16 depicts the progress through the educational system in the Current Path, for 2023 and 2043.

The Education scenario represents reasonable but ambitious improvements in intake, transition, and graduation rates from primary to tertiary levels and better quality of education at primary and secondary levels. It also models substantive progress towards gender parity at all levels, additional vocational training at the secondary school level, and increases in the share of science and engineering graduates.

Visit the theme on Education for our conceptualisation and details on the scenario structure and interventions.

Gabon's education system is largely based on the French model, although efforts are underway to adapt the curriculum to better align with local needs. Education in Gabon is free and compulsory for all children between the ages of 6 and 16. Coming from a relatively high base, however, education in Gabon has deteriorated in recent years. The system is characterised by poor performance, evidenced in its high school dropout rates, and high repetition rates. Gabon's general expenditure on education as a share of GDP is low. In 2022, education expenditure was estimated to account for 2.2% of GDP, 1.7 percentage points below the regional average of just under 4% of GDP. In fact, expenditure was at its peak in 2000 (3.8%) and has since experienced fluctuation with a significant drop since 2020 when it stood at 3.4% of GDP.

In primary education, the repetition rate stands at 37%, one of the highest globally, while in secondary education, the repetition rates are 26% for lower secondary and 23% in upper secondary. Currently, the share of the Gabonese population that has received no formal education at all stands at 17%. Among those over the age of 30, 9.7% have attained a higher level of education, 39.3% have completed secondary education, and 28% have finished only primary education.

Gabon has one of the highest primary enrollment rates in Africa, with gross primary enrollment above 90%. However, the high dropout rate means that only 57% of girls and 48% of boys successfully transition to secondary school. Primary enrollment rates are 104.9% in 2023, down from 139.9% in 2011. On the Current Path, primary enrollment rates will

continue to drop, reaching 102.2% by 2030 and stagnate thereafter. In lower-secondary education, enrollment was 84.7% in 2023 and will increase to 90% by 2030 and reach 95.6 in 2043. Enrollment rates in upper-secondary education stood at 52.6% in 2023 and will increase to 64.9% and to 76.8% by 2030 and 2043, respectively. Tertiary education sees the lowest enrollment rate, with 30% in 2023, projected to increase to 32.1% by 2030 and to 33% by 2043.

A 2011 study by the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) identified several issues contributing to Gabon's high dropout and repetition rates. These included limited access to schools, particularly in the rural areas; inadequate funding and mismanagement of funds; shortages of qualified teachers and ineffective pedagogical supervision; as well as a lack of clear guidance for students in selecting suitable training programs. The study also highlighted insufficient preparation of students for higher education, poorly defined transitions between secondary and higher education, and substandard quality of education at both secondary and higher levels.

Completion rates follow the same trend as gross enrollment rates, with the highest rates recorded at the primary level, followed by a sharp decline as students progress to higher education levels. In 2023, the primary completion rate was 83.4%, while lower-secondary rates saw a significant drop to 46.5%. Upper-secondary completion stood at 20.7%, with tertiary education having the lowest rate at just 12.7%.

In 2023, the ratio of girls to boys for primary enrollment was 1, which reflects the expected trend where more boys than girls are enrolled in schooling. However, the ratio changes in favour of girls at higher education levels. At the lower-secondary level, the ratio increases to 1.07, to 1.06 at the upper-secondary level, and jumps to 3.9 at the tertiary level. This reflects a global trend as in many countries, secondary and even more so tertiary enrollment rates for females surpass those of their male peers.

However, the composition of Gabon's labour force does not reflect such progress in educational gender parity as female participation stands at only 39.9% compared to 57.7% for men. This indicates that systemic barriers and gender inequalities prevent women from fully benefiting from their educational achievements on the labour market.

The Education scenario helps to narrow the gender gap at the tertiary education level by bringing the female/male student ratio down to 1.3 in 2043 compared to the projected Current Path ratio of 2.5 female students per one male student. This means that by 2043, male tertiary enrollment will reach 51.1% and female enrollment will be 66.5% compared to the projected 19.2% and 47.6%, respectively, on the Current Path. On the upper-secondary level, the gender gap will practically be closed with enrolment rates of female and male students reaching 119.3% and 122.2%, respectively.

Chart 17: Mean years of education in the Current Path and Education scenario, 2020-2043
15 to 24 year age group

Gabon, Current Path
Gabon, Education sceanario
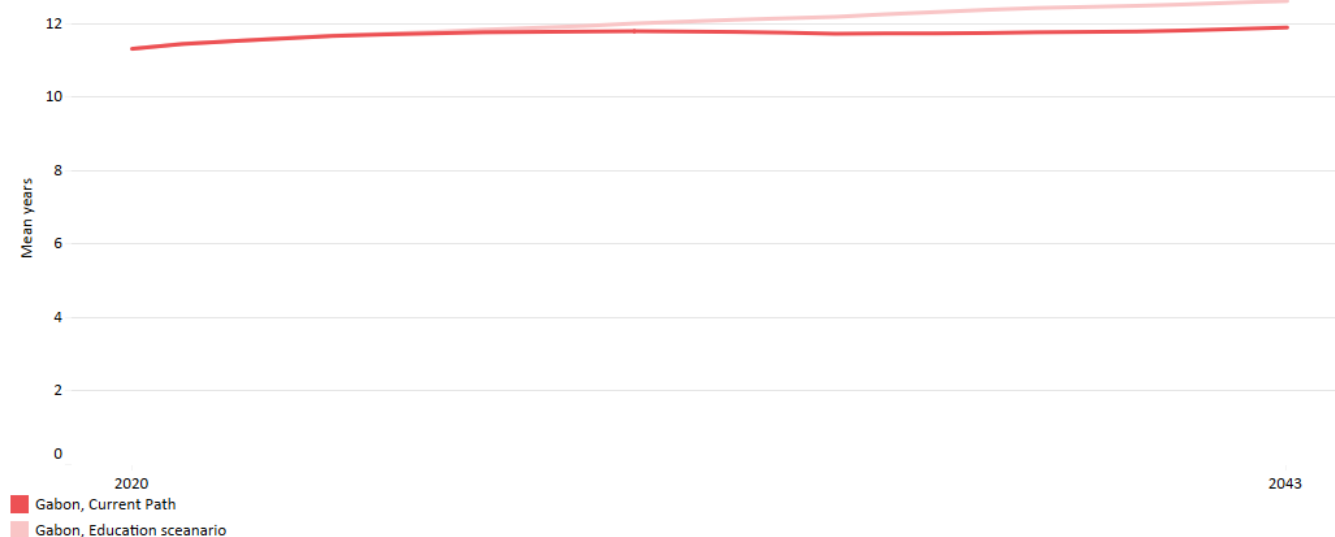
Source: IFs 8.34 initialising from Barro-Lee data

Chart 17 presents the mean years of education in the Current Path and in the Education scenario, from 2020 to 2043, for the 15 to 24 age group.

The average years of education in the adult population aged 15 to 24 is a good first indicator of how the stock of knowledge in society is changing.

Gabon ranks third among Africa's 54 countries for the highest mean years of education, with an average of 11.6 years in 2023. Notably, the mean years of education were higher for girls at 12.4 years compared to 10.8 years for boys, highlighting a gender disparity in favor of female educational attainment. Given Gabon's already high mean years of educational attainment, the implementation of the Education scenario yields modest improvements. By 2043, mean years of education for boys will increase to 11.9 years, up from 11 years on the Current Path. Over the same time horizon, mean years of education for girls will rise to 13.4 years compared to 12.8 years on the Current Path. Overall, the mean years of education will reach 12.6 years, an improvement from the projected 11.9 years on the Current Path.

In 2022, only 13% of baccalaureate candidates in Gabon came from science majors, and of these, just 50% successfully graduated to pursue higher education. This highlights a shortage of science students and graduates in the country. Contributing factors include a lack of science teaching materials, infrequent practical training for teachers and inadequate infrastructure in schools, such as laboratories and microscience kits, which are important for fostering the necessary skills among students. In 2023, science and engineering students accounted for 20.8% of tertiary graduates in Gabon. On the Current Path, this share will decline to 20.3% by 2043. However, the Education scenario offers a more optimistic outlook, with the share of science and engineering students expected to increase to 25.3% by 2043.

Manufacturing scenario

Chart 18: Value-add by sector as % of GDP in the Current Path, 2020-2043

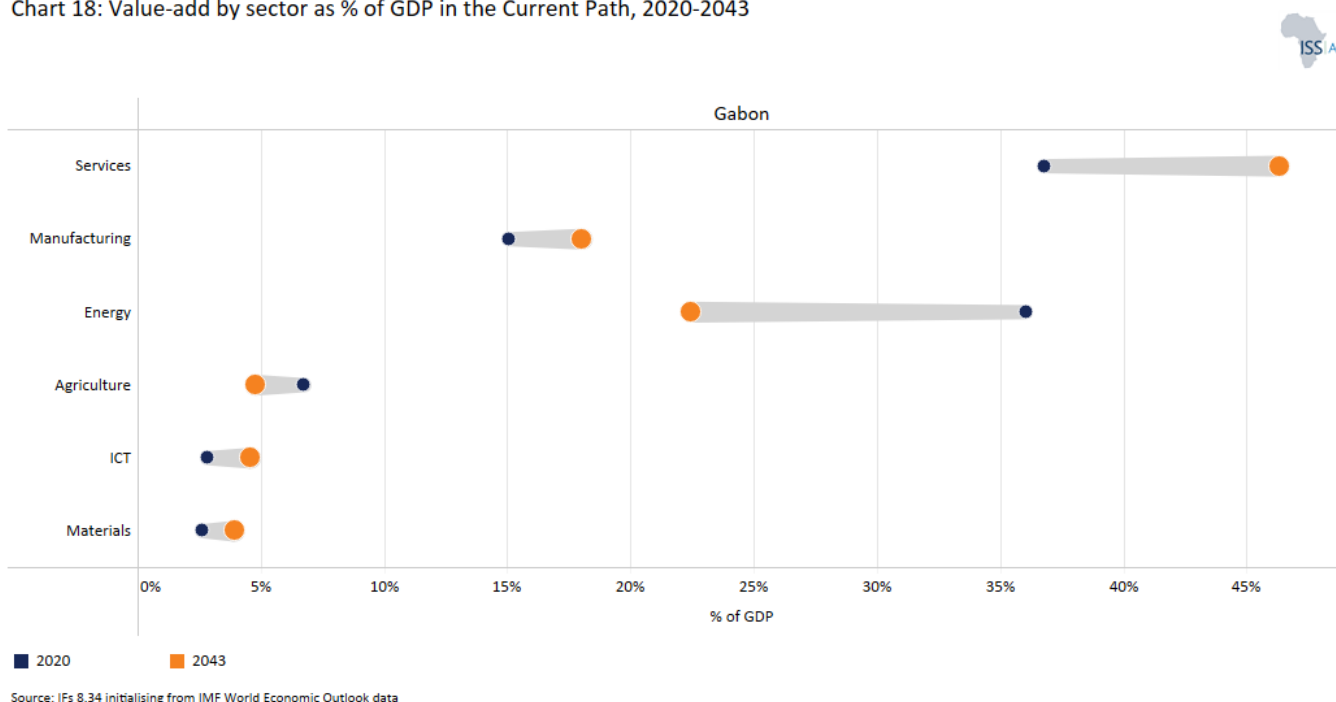Source: IFs 8.34 initialising from IMF World Economic Outlook data

Chart 18 presents the value-add by sector as share of GDP in the Current Path, for 2023 and 2043.

In the Manufacturing scenario, reasonable but ambitious growth in manufacturing is envisaged through increased investment in the sector, research and development (R&D), and improved government regulation of businesses. This aims to enhance total labour participation rates, particularly among females.

Visit the theme on Manufacturing for our conceptualisation and details on the scenario structure and interventions.

Gabon's key industries besides petroleum are minerals (mostly manganese) and timber processing with the industry expanding into the manufacturing of furniture and plywood products.

The country's industry faces a series of obstacles, such as inappropriate infrastructure, in particular transport networks, energy and port facilities which limit local value addition. Moreover, Gabon's industrial sector lacks competitiveness due to high energy costs and low productivity, and access to finance for local small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) is a challenge.

In 2023, manufacturing accounted for about 15.1% of Gabon's GDP (US$2.5 billion). The services sector accounted for 37.4% of GDP, the equivalent of US$6.1 billion, followed by energy which represented 35.2% of GDP (US$5.8 billion). Agriculture contributed US$1.1 billion, representing 6.7% of GDP. In the future, the services sector will continue to be the most important contributor to Gabon's GDP, forecast to account for 46.3% of GDP by 2043 at a value of US$13.4 billion, followed by the energy sector that will account for 22.5% of GDP (US$6.4 billion). The manufacturing sector will account for 18% of GDP (the equivalent of US$5.1 billion) and the relative contribution of agriculture will decline to account for 4.8% of GDP (US$1.4 billion).

Chart 19: Value-add by the manufacturing sector in the Current Path and Manufacturing scenario, 2020-2043

Gabon, Current Path
Gabon, Manufacturing scenario

Source: IFs 8.34 initialising from IMF World Economic Outlook data
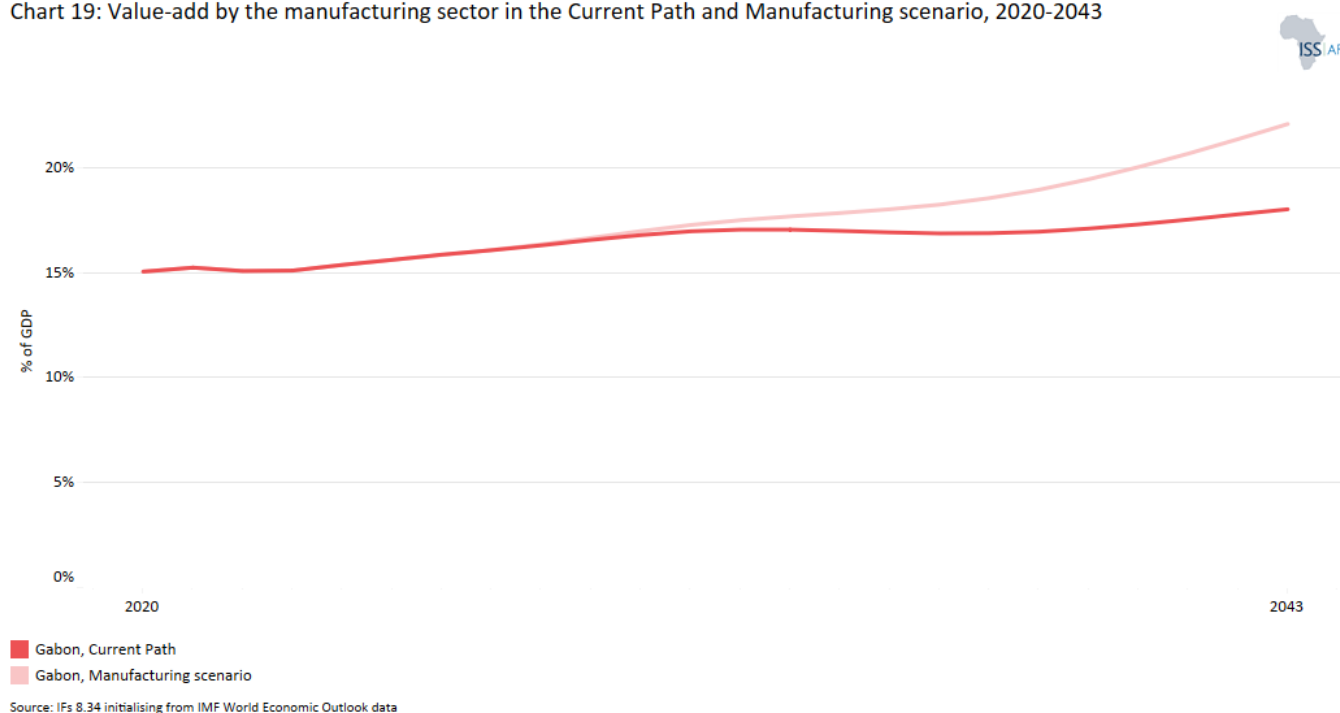
Chart 19 presents the contribution of the manufacturing sector to GDP in the Current Path and in the Manufacturing scenario, from 2020 to 2043. The data is in US$ and % of GDP.

In 2023, the value added by Gabon´s manufacturing sector accounted for 15.1% of GDP. This is in line with the average of the world´s lower-middle-income economies and more than 2 percentage points above the average of its African upper-middle-income peer group (12.7%). In the world´s upper-middle-income economies, in 2023 manufacturing accounted for on average 21.2% of GDP. On the Current Path, the value added to GDP by Gabon´s manufacturing sector will increase to 18% by 2043, again matching the expected average of the world´s lower-middle-income economies (18.1%) and outperforming the average of both its African lower-middle- (17.2%) and upper-middle-income economies (13.7%).

In the Manufacturing scenario, the value added by Gabon´s manufacturing sector will account for 22.1% of GDP in 2043, an increase of 4 percentage points compared to the Current Path and slightly ahead of the average of the world´s upper-middle-income economies (21.2%). Added value by manufacturing as per cent of GDP will increase by more than 22% relative to the 2023 baseline.

During the last 20 years Gabon's economy has become relatively less complex or less sophisticated, moving from the 98th to the 112th position in the Economic Complexity Index (ECI) rank. The ECI measures an economy's capacity which can be inferred from data connecting locations to the activities that are present in them. It is a holistic measure of the productive capabilities of large economic systems, such as countries, cities or regions. Productive capabilities are all the inputs, technologies and ideas that, in combination, determine the frontiers of what an economy can produce. They include infrastructure, land, laws, machines, people, collective knowledge and more. Typically, economies with higher economic complexity exhibit faster economic growth.

AfCFTA scenario

Chart 20: Export and imports as % of GDP in the Current Path, 2000-2043
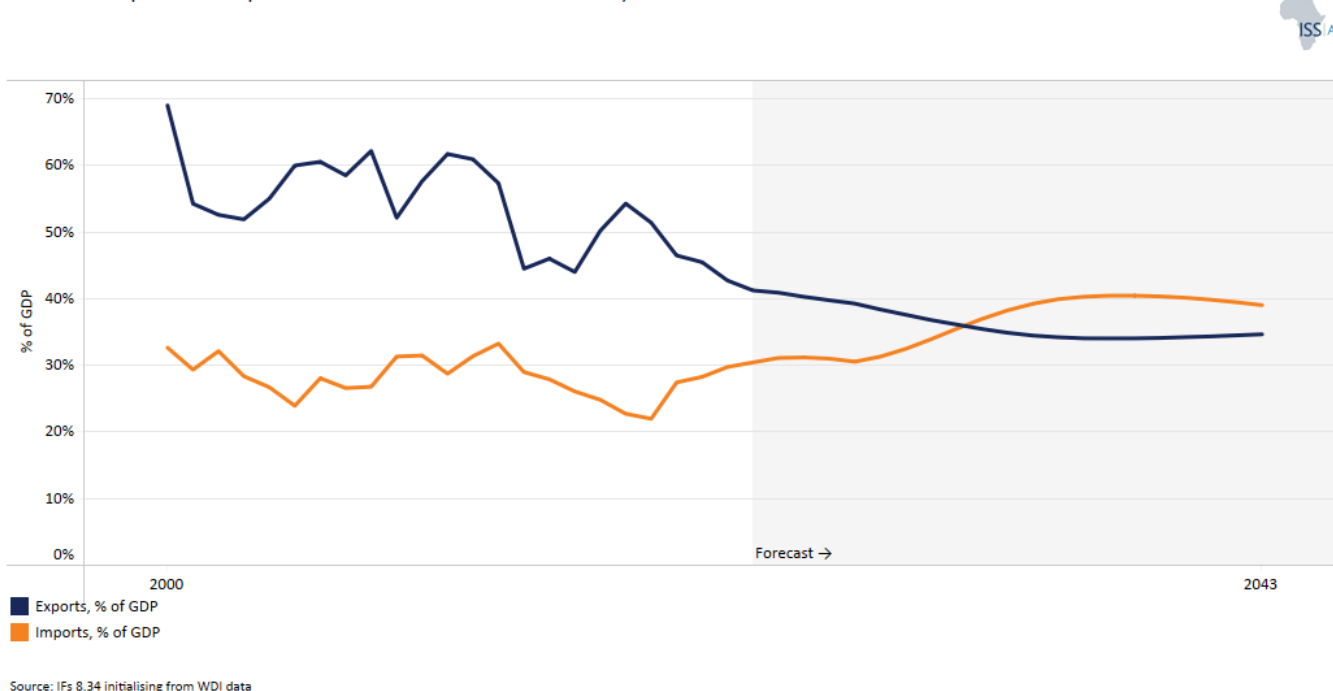

Source: IFs 8.34 initialising from WDI data

Chart 20 depicts exports and imports as a percentage of GDP, from 2000 to 2043, in the Current Path and in the AfCFTA scenario.

The AfCFTA scenario represents the impact of fully implementing the African Continental Free Trade Agreement by 2034. The scenario increases exports in manufacturing, agriculture, services, ICT, materials and energy exports. It also includes improved multifactor productivity growth from trade and reduced tariffs for all sectors.

Visit the theme on AfCFTA for our conceptualisation and details on the scenario structure and interventions.

Gabon's economy is largely dependent on its natural resource sector, primarily oil. Key exports include crude petroleum, manganese ore, sawn wood, veneer sheets and refined petroleum. Major trading partners are China, South Korea, Italy, India and Indonesia. At the continental level, Gabon's major export partners in 2022 were Morocco, Benin, DR Congo, Algeria and the Republic of Congo.

The top imports are poultry meat, excavation machinery, packaged medicaments, cars and delivery trucks. Major trading partners are China, France, United Arab Emirates, United States and Belgium. At the continental level, Gabon's key import partners included South Africa, Cameroon, Morocco, Senegal and Benin.

Gabon has a high level of specialisation in manganese ore, veneer sheets, sawn wood, plywood, and manganese oxides. Specialisation is measured using RCA, an index that takes the ratio between Gabon observed and expected exports in each product.

Gabon is a member of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC), a regional bloc characterised by low levels of intra regional trade. Trade within CEMAC is notably lower compared to other African regional groupings. Trade in the region has been hindered by several challenges, including the limited complementarity of natural

endowments, costly border procedures and the small size of regional markets. Moreover, the region's common external tariff, with an average rate of 18.3%, is relatively high, posing a significant barrier to competition. For Gabon, these challenges exacerbate its reliance on external markets and limit its ability to fully benefit from regional trade opportunities.

In 2023, Gabon's total export value reached US$6.8 billion, accounting for 41.3% of its GDP while its total imports were valued at US$4.9 billion, constituting 30.5% of its GDP. This indicates that Gabon had a trade surplus, which is generally considered a positive economic indicator as the value of exports exceeded that of imports. However, this also indicates that Gabon has a heavy reliance on exports to generate revenue, while also relying on imports to fulfill domestic needs. This dependence on trade makes Gabon's economy vulnerable to economic fluctuations.

Chart 21: Trade balance in the Current Path and AfCFTA scenario, 2020-2043

Gabon, Current Path
Gabon, AfCFTA scenario

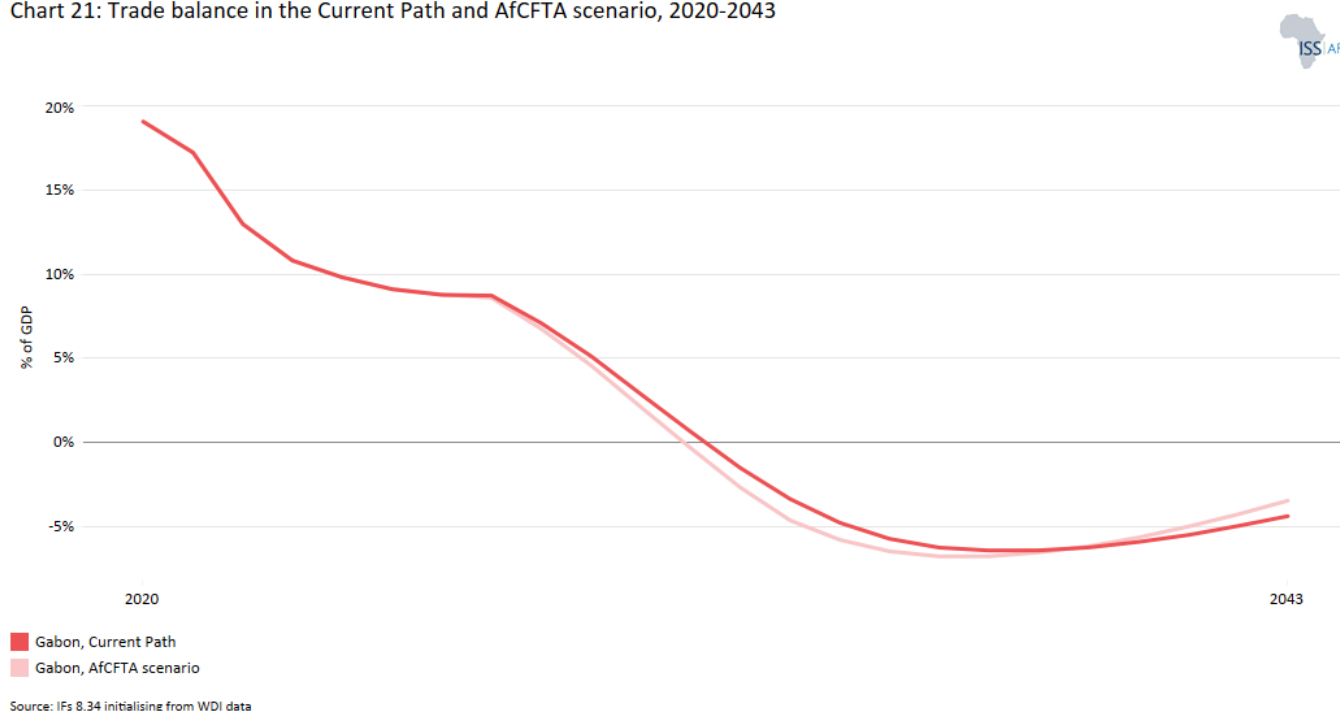Source: IFs 8.34 initialising from WDI data

Chart 21 presents the trade balance in the Current Path and in the AfCFTA scenario, from 2020 to 2043 as a percentage of GDP.

In 2023, Gabon recorded a trade balance equivalent to 10.8% of its GDP. This positive trade balance reflects a relatively stable economic position for the country. However, by 2030, the trade balance will decline to 2.9% of GDP—a 7.9 percentage point drop—and by 2043, it will reach a negative balance of 4.4% of GDP, meaning that imports will exceed exports. This downward trend can be attributed to Gabon's dependency on its resources, particularly oil. With oil reserves depleting, outdated infrastructure and the imminent global energy transition towards renewable energy sources, Gabon's revenues from oil are likely to decline. Furthermore, like many African countries, Gabon's focus on exporting raw material exports will limit its ability to capture more economic value. Therefore, it is imperative that Gabon prioritise economic diversification and invest in value-added processing industries to reduce its reliance on its natural resources and improve its long-term economic resilience.

Under the AfCFTA scenario, where trade barriers are reduced, Gabon's trade balance will improve. By 2030, the trade balance will account for 2.1% of GDP, and by 2043, the deficit will account for -3.5% of GDP, an improvement compared to the projected -4.4% of GDP in the Current Path.

The scenario highlights the potential of AfCFTA to mitigate trade imbalances by fostering diversification, industrialisation and greater market access for Gabon's exports. Local firms gain greater access to market intelligence and advice and increase their productivity, which ultimately leads to higher exports of higher value goods. Crucially, the impact of the AfCFTA scenario shows the positive impact of reducing imports tariffs and reducing non-tariff barriers to trade, as freer trade leads to local businesses having more access to the capital and intermediate goods they need to improve output.

Large Infrastructure and Leapfrogging scenario

Chart 22: Electricity access: urban, rural and total in the Current Path, 2000-2043
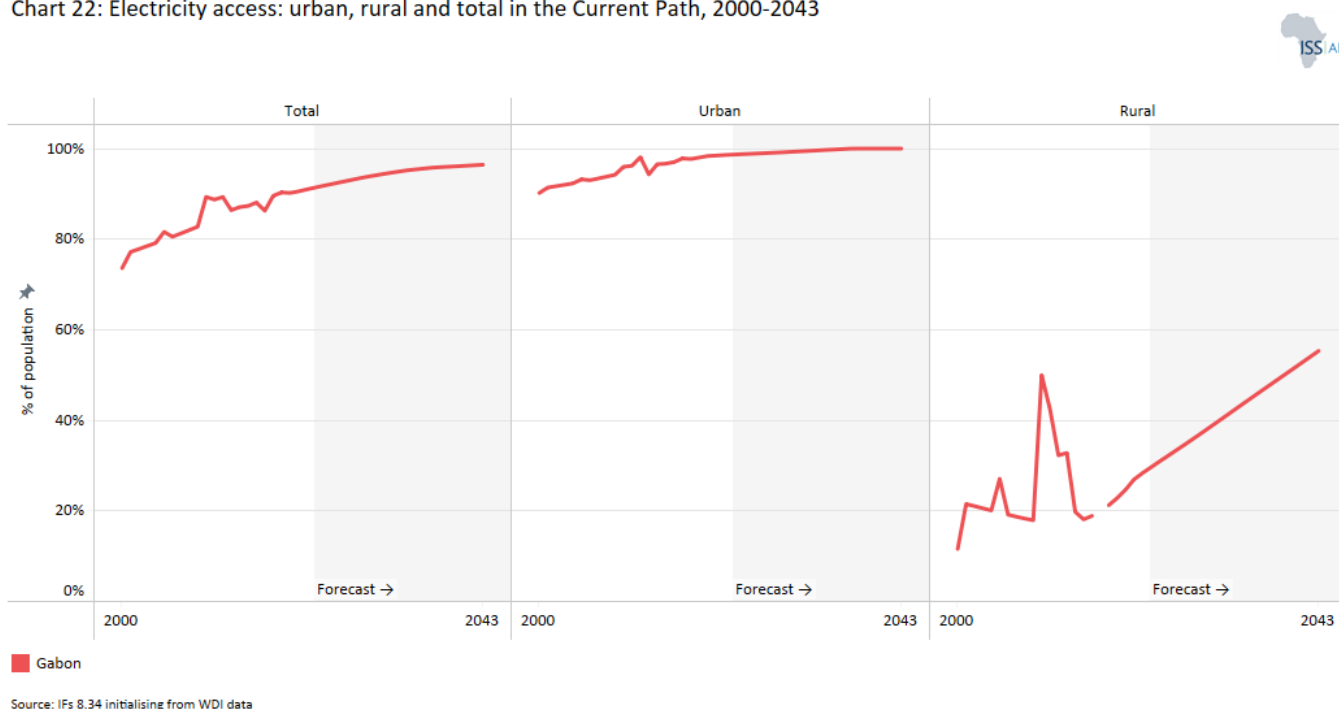

Source: IFs 8.34 initialising from WDI data

Chart 22 presents the Current Path of access to electricity for urban, rural and the total population from 2000 to 2043.

At the end of 2024, the transitional government unveiled an ambitious roadmap for 2025 with the objective to transform Gabon's economic outlook. Three major infrastructure projects aim to boost trade, modernise infrastructure and meet the country's energy needs.

1. The Mayumba deepwater port project aims to facilitate the export of natural resources and stimulate foreign trade and thereby boost Gabon's trade and turn it into a regional logistics hub.

2. The Belinga-Bouée-Mayumba railroad line consists of a 972-kilometre logistics corridor of track linking the Belinga mining site to the port of Mayumba. It is meant to facilitate the transport of minerals and other goods and transform Gabon into a regional hub for mining exports. The project, estimated at more than US$10 billion, will likely be implemented by a consortium led by the South African group Thelo, with the participation of the Egyptian company EGAAD. The aim is to transform Gabon into a regional hub for mining exports.

3. The Booué hydroelectric dam is a key investment to meet the country's growing energy needs and promote industrial development. A 600-megawatt hydroelectric dam worth US$2.5 billion is foreseen to be built at Booué to provide sufficient energy to power mining activities and meet the growing needs of the surrounding population. The Chinese group TBEA has signed a memorandum of understanding in preparation to implement this project.

According to the government, the projects are expected to create about 163 000 jobs to counter youth unemployment as well as boost priority sectors, such as agriculture, transport, tourism, digital technology and industry.

To promote a favorable environment for foreign investment it is key to ensure political stability, to strengthen the regulatory framework as well as emphasise reforms aimed at guaranteeing business transparency and legal certainty.

Gabon also aims to position itself as a leader in the green economy. Building on its pioneering role in forest preservation, the country plans to introduce a carbon tax on airlines and shipping companies crossing its territory. In the area of forest conservation, Gabon is investing to protect its rainforest, making it a net absorber of carbon. Since 2000, the country has created 13 national parks. Deforestation is a negligible risk, but there are several initiatives to limit deforestation and forest degradation.

Access to electricity in Gabon's urban areas is universal. Rural electricity in Gabon in 2023 is, however, 29.6%. On the Current Path, it will increase to 55.3% in 2043. In the Large Infrastructure and Leapfrogging scenario, access to electricity in rural areas improves more quickly. By 2043, 67% of the rural population will have access to electricity. Given Gabon's extremely high level of urbanisation, only a very small share of the population is affected by poor rural access rates.

Urban electricity access in 2023 is 98.7% and will reach 100% by 2037. There is no need for targeted interventions in this sector.

The interventions in the Large Infrastructure and Leapfrogging scenario involve (ambitious) investments in road, port and renewable energy infrastructure, improved rural electricity access and accelerated fixed broadband connectivity. The scenario models adopting modern technologies to improve government efficiency and investing in major infrastructure projects, such as rail, ports, and airports while highlighting the positive impacts of renewables and ICT.

Visit the themes on Large Infrastructure and Leapfrogging for our conceptualisation and details on the scenario structure and interventions.

Chart 23: Cookstove usage in the Current Path and Large Infra/Leapfrogging scenario, 2020-2043

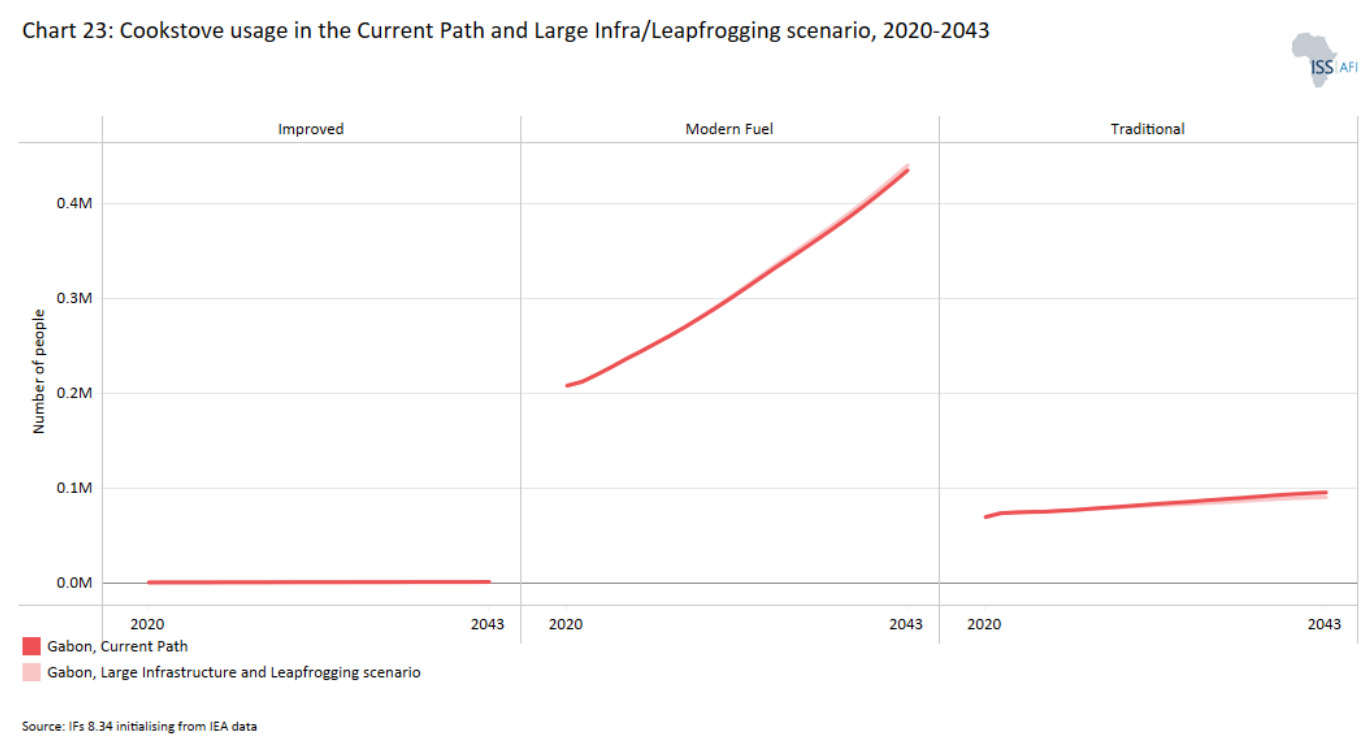Source: IFs 8.34 initialising from IEA data

Chart 23 presents the number of people using cookstoves in the Current Path and in the Large Infrastructure and Leapfrogging scenario, from 2020 to 2043.

In Gabon, 24.8% of households still rely on traditional cookstoves, the equivalent of 80 000 households. This usage is moderate in the broader African context, but more than twice as high as the average use in Africa's upper-middle-income economies in 2023, which stands at 10.8%.

This modest but yet significant reliance on biomass fuels contributes to deforestation, environmental degradation and bears significant health risks, in particular for women and children. In 2023, 74.7% of Gabonese households used modern fuels and only 0.5% relied on improved cookstoves.

On the Current Path, the reliance on traditional cookstoves will decline in relative but not in absolute terms. This means that by 2043, only 18% of the population will make use of such cookstoves, but this equals 96 020 households representing an increase by 16 020 households. In the Large Infrastructure and Leapfrogging scenario, the usage rate will drop to 17.1% (90 950 households) compared to the average of 6% for Africa´s upper-middle-income economies. However, 90 950 households will still depend on traditional cookstoves, 15 360 more than in 2023.

Chart 24: Access to mobile and fixed broadband in the Current Path and Large Infra/Leapfrogging scenario, 2020-2043

Mobile broadband

Gabon, Current Path
Gabon, Large Infrastructure and Leapfrogging scenario

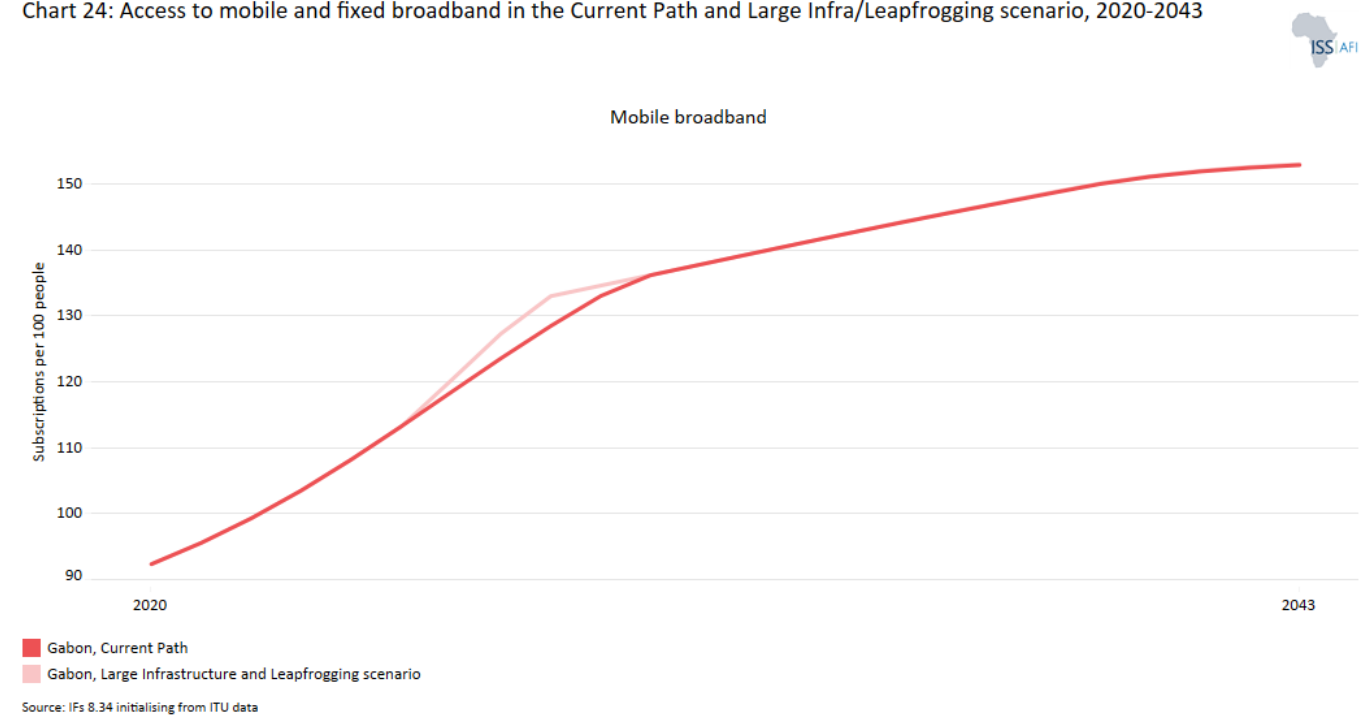Source: IFs 8.34 initialising from ITU data

Chart 24 presents the percentage of the population and number of people with access to mobile and fixed broadband in the Current Path and in the Large Infrastructure and Leapfrogging scenario, from 2020 to 2043. The user can toggle between mobile and fixed broadband.

Over the past decade, Gabon has made great progress when it comes to internet access. In the United Nations ICT Development Index 2023, Gabon scores 73.7 out of 100, which places the country ahead of the global average of 72.8 and close to the average for the world´s upper-middle-income economies of 80.1. Gabon is one of the top performers on the continent, only being outperformed by Mauritius, South Africa, Egypt, Tunisia and Botswana. Gabon outperforms the average score for Africa of 47 by 26.7 points.

Between 2012 and 2020, Gabon has greatly improved its network coverage and roll out of high-speed fiber optics through the Central African Backbone (CAB) project.

As a result, mobile broadband coverage in Gabon is high. In 2023, Gabon had a mobile broadband subscription rate of 104 subscriptions per 100 people, which is however below the average subscription rate of 122 in Africa´s upper-middle-income countries. On the Current Path, Gabon's mobile broadband subscription rate will increase to 153 and have more than caught up with its peer group average of 152 subscriptions per 100 people. Because of its rapid

progress in recent years, Gabon is coming from a high base, and the Large Infrastructure and Leapfrogging scenario has little impact.

However, the scenario does have a positive impact on the evolution of fixed broadband subscriptions. In 2023, the number of fixed broadband subscriptions in Gabon was estimated at about 4 subscriptions per hundred people. This lies below the average for Africa's upper-middle-income economies of 7.1 subscriptions per 100 people. In the Large Infrastructure and Leapfrogging scenario, subscriptions in Gabon will rise to 35.3 subscriptions per 100 people, 12 more than in the Current Path and outperforming the expected average for upper-middle-income Africa in 2043 at 26 subscriptions per 100 people.

Gabon needs to stay the course on growing its ICT capacity and continue to invest in the quantity and quality of services to transition to a modern economy.

In November 2024, the transition government officially launched the program Gabon Digital, a project supported by the World Bank that aims to digitalise public administration and position the country as a technology hub in Central Africa. This entails modernising digital infrastructures, strengthening data security and improving access to public services.

Financial Flows scenario

Chart 25: FDI, foreign aid and remittances as % of GDP in the Current Path, 1990-2043
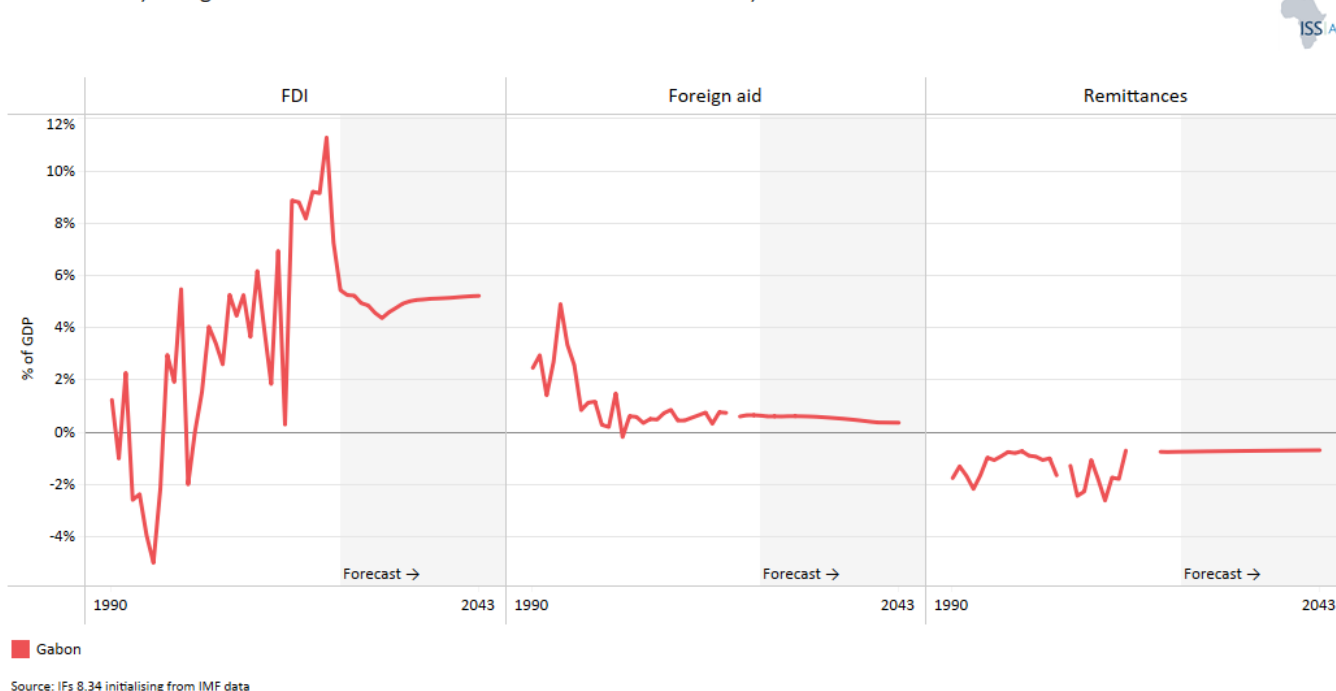

Source: IFs 8.34 initialising from IMF data

Chart 25 presents the trends in FDI, aid and remittances in the Current Path and in the Financial Flows scenario as a percentage of GDP, from 1990 to 2043.

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) as per cent of GDP accounted for 5.4% of GDP in 2023. The negative impact of the coup on the investment climate is reflected in the data as FDI inflows had stood at 11.3% of GDP in 2021. On the Current Path, Gabon does not attract significantly more FDI inflows (5.2% in 2043), but under the Financial Flows scenario such inflows will account for 6.8% in 2030 and for 6.1% in 2043, reflecting renewed investor confidence. This recovery would drive investment in key sectors like mining, renewable energy and infrastructure, increasing economic growth and government revenues through improved tax compliance and natural resource royalties. In this scenario, the economy will be worth US$29.9 billion by 2043 compared to US$28.5 billion on the Current Path.

Intense diplomatic efforts led by Gabon´s transitional President General Brice Oligui Nguema who attended global summits, such as COP28 and Saudi Arabia-Africa summit as well as hosted representatives from France, the United Kingdom and the United States, and meeting with neighboring presidents and heads of African regional organisations can be interpreted as an attempt to restore investor confidence and attract foreign direct investment.

According to the latest United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) report on foreign direct investment, Gabon escaped the slowdown in FDI inflows to the continent in general and to Central Africa in particular. The country, buoyed by oil, gas, timber and the mining sector, took the lead in the CEMAC ranking occupying 15th place on the continent.

As an upper-middle-income country, Gabon does not receive significant amounts of aid. As such, it is not included on the OECD's Development Assistance Committee list of Official Development Aid (ODA) Recipients that are eligible to receive ODA. In 2023, foreign aid accounted for 0.6% of GDP, and on the Current Path this share will drop to 0.4% by 2043. Under the European Union's (EU) Global Gateway strategy, the European Union invests in infrastructure projects worldwide. The

upcoming Global Gateway Investment Forum organised in Gabon intends to present the Global Gateway approach, to public and private sectors, donors, DFIs, banks and all potentially interested stakeholders.

Similarly, Gabon is not a net receiver of remittances. Remittances accounted for -0.75% of GDP in 2023; a level that is expected to remain unchanged in the future.

The Financial Flows scenario represents a reasonable but ambitious increase in the stock of foreign direct investment (FDI) and additional portfolio investment inflows. We reduce outward financial flows to emulate a reduction in illicit financial outflows. Such efforts would further strengthen Gabon´s fiscal position, ensuring more capital remains in the economy and contributes to sustainable development.

Visit the theme on Financial Flows for our conceptualisation and details on the scenario structure and interventions.

Chart 26: Government revenue in the Current Path and Financial Flows scenario, 2020-2043
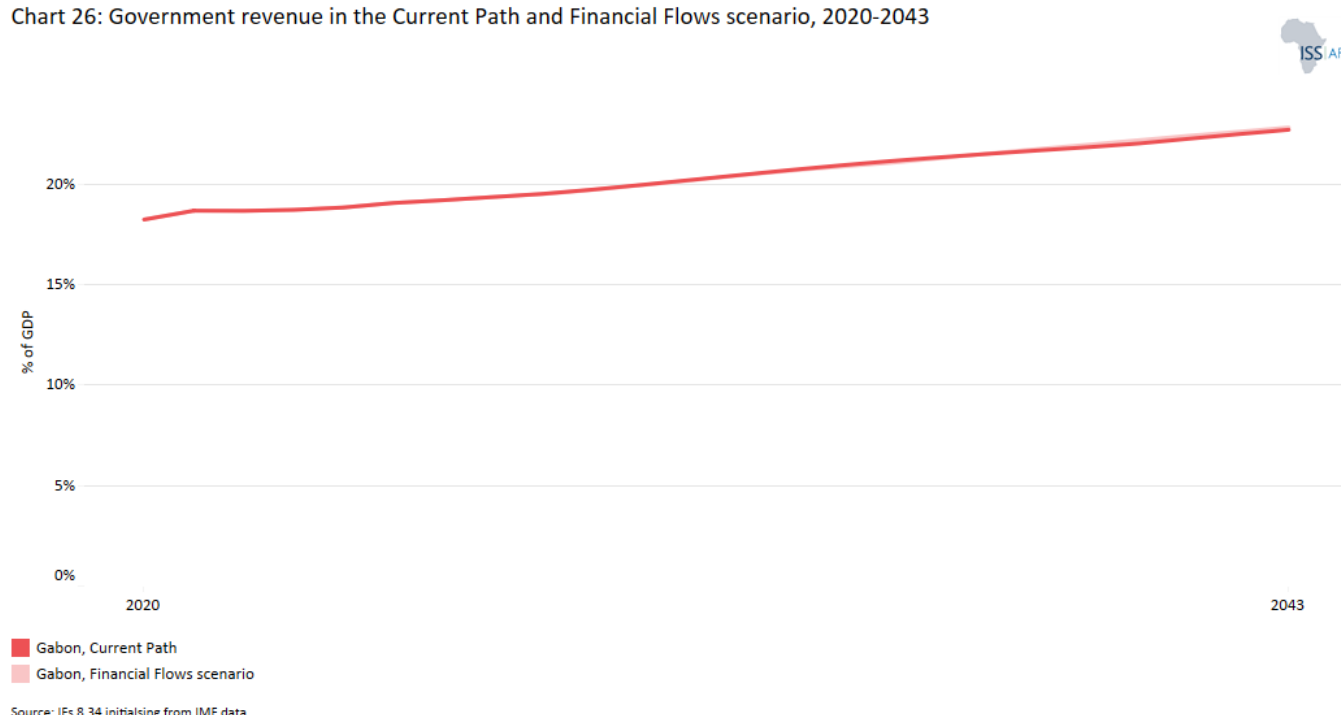
Gabon, Current Path
Gabon, Financial Flows scenario

Source: IFs 8.34 initialsing from IMF data

Chart 26 presents government revenue in the Current Path and in the Financial Flows scenario, from 2020 to 2043. The data is in US$ 2017 and % of GDP.

Wagner's law, or the law of increasing state activity, is the observation that public expenditure increases as national income rises. It is reasonable to expect that government revenues will increase as a share of GDP in the Financial Flows scenario compared to the Current Path.

In the Current Path scenario, government revenue will increase from 18.7% of GDP in 2023 to 20% in 2030 and 22.7% in 2043, the equivalent of US$6.5 billion. In the Financial Flows scenario, government revenue will account for 22.8% of GDP in 2043 or US$6.8 billion.

This growth reflects a positive association between capital inflows, such as FDI and government revenue, driven by increased public services, tax compliance and economic growth fueled by higher external investments.

Governance scenario

Chart 27: Government Effectiveness score in the Current Path, 2002-2043

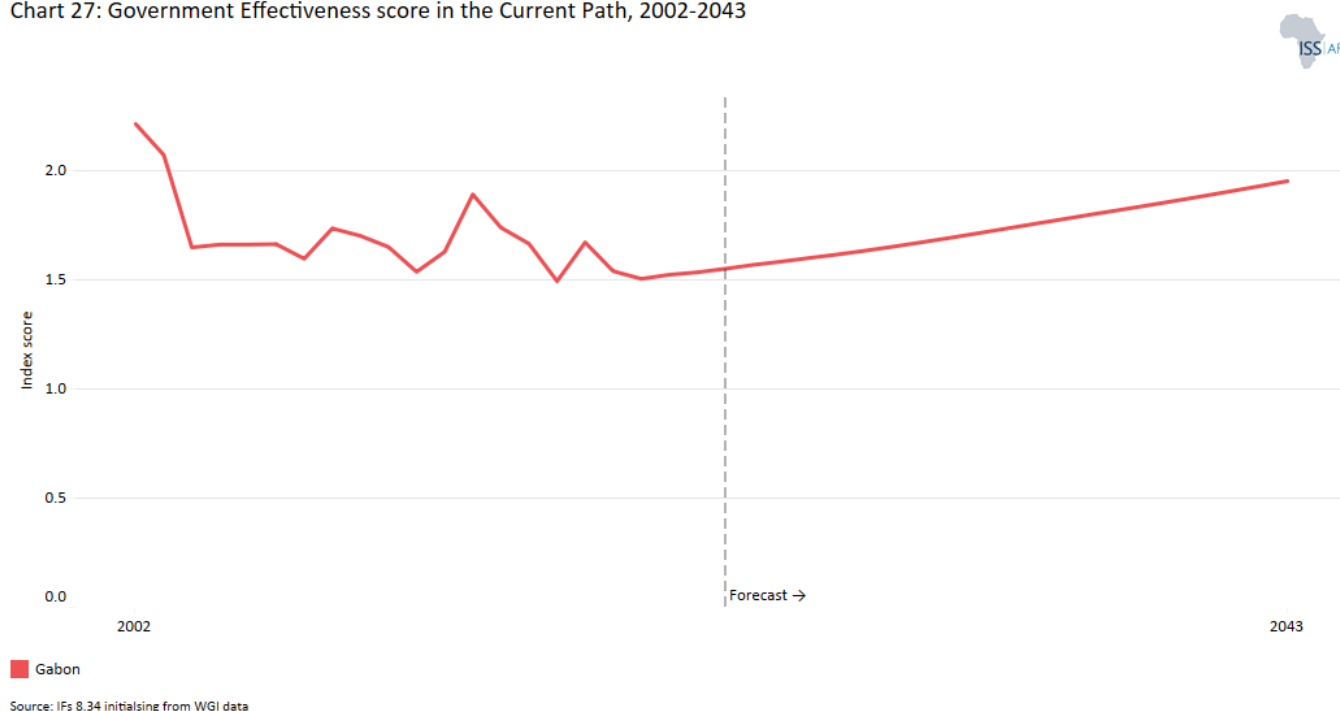Source: IFs 8.34 initialsing from WGI data

Chart 27 presents the Current Path of government effectiveness comparing the country to the average for the Africa income group, from 2002 to 2043.

The World Bank's index on government effectiveness captures perceptions of the quality of public services, the quality of the civil service and the degree of its independence from political pressures, the quality of policy formulation and implementation, and the credibility of the government's commitment to such policies.

The 2023 coup in Gabon, the latest in a wave of military takeovers across the "coup belt" of West and Central Africa, underscores the persistent challenges to political stability and democratic governance in Francophone Africa. While coups in the Sahel were driven by jihadist threats, anti-French sentiments and popular support, the coup in Gabon stemmed from allegations of electoral fraud and prolonged frustration with authoritarian rule.

A combination of political, social and economic factors created a volatile environment, leaving the country vulnerable to instability following Omar Bongo's death in 2009. His son, Ali Bongo, then assumed the presidency after a contested election in August 2009 fueling perceptions of political injustice. Decades of corruption, authoritarian rule, rigged elections, economic mismanagement and social inequality further fueled public discontent, eventually leading to an unconstitutional change of regime.

In terms of economic policies, the coup led to significant changes, in particular the "implementation of more expansionary fiscal policies and increased efforts to strengthen institutions and transparency in public financial management".

The 2023 Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IIAG) ranks Gabon 32nd out of 54 countries. Its score of 46.6 falls below the continental average (49.3), but exceeds both the Central African regional average (39.9) and the average of the Sahel

region (46.4). It is also among the 13 countries that have made progress in overall governance. In 2023, Gabon achieved a government effectiveness score of 1.55 out of 5. Forecasts predict steady improvement, with the score projected to rise to 1.67 by 2030 and 1.96 by 2043, though still below the average of 2.56 for upper-middle-income African countries.

Chart 28: Composite governance index in the Current Path and Governance scenario, 2023-2043

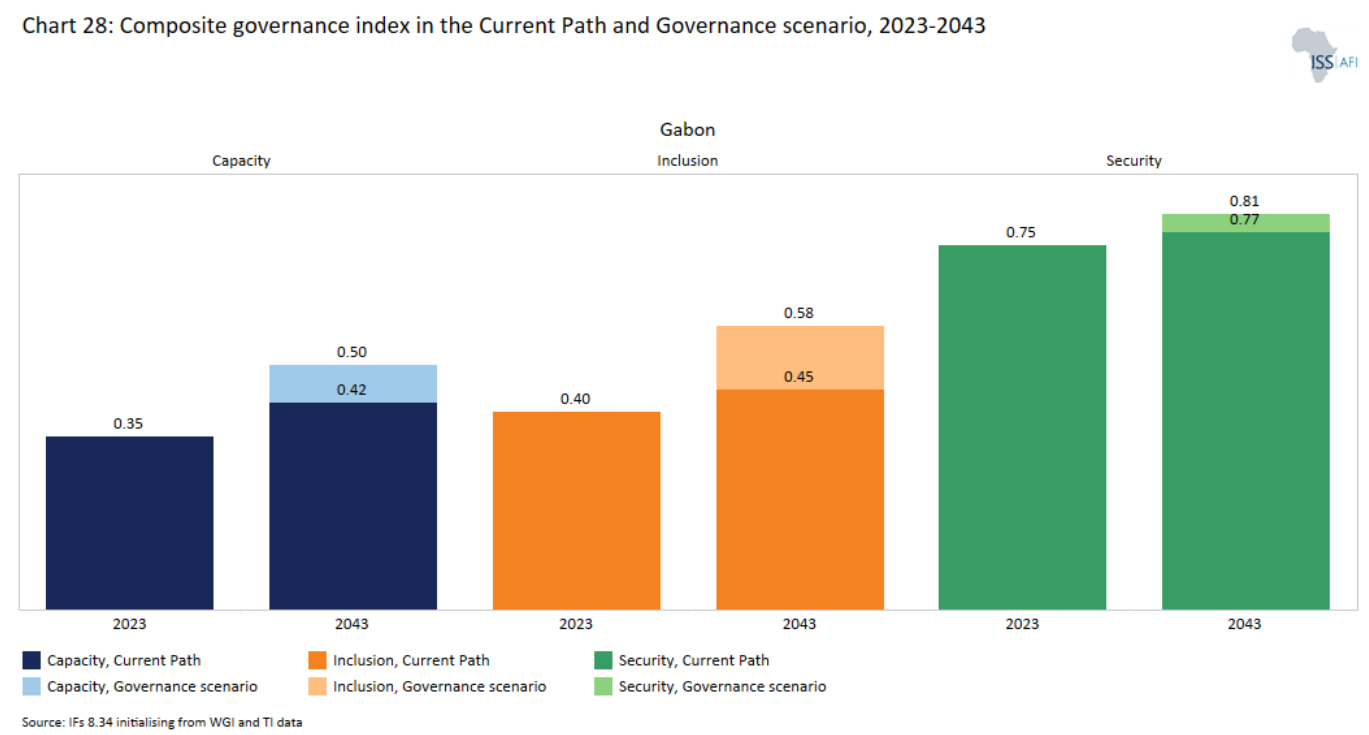Source: IFs 8.34 initialising from WGI and TI data

Chart 28 presents security, capacity and inclusion index for the Current Path versus the Governance scenario, for 2023 and 2043.

Governance in our modelling is conceptualised along three key dimensions—security, capacity, and inclusion—reflecting the traditional sequencing of state formation. Each dimension is scored on an index ranging from 0 (poor) to 1 (excellent), with higher scores indicating improved governance outcomes.

The security dimension evaluates the probability of intra-state conflict and the general level of risk, reflecting a state's ability to maintain stability. The capacity dimension relates to government revenue, corruption, regulatory quality, economic freedom, and government effectiveness, capturing the efficiency and effectiveness of state institutions. Finally, the inclusion dimension measures the level of democracy and gender empowerment, highlighting the inclusiveness of governance structures.

Gabon is a relatively stable country and as such stands out in a region plagued by violent conflict and insecurity. It ranks 23rd of 44 sub-Saharan African countries on the Global Peace Index, with a score of 2.37, slightly below the regional average of 2.39. Unlike its Central African neighbours, Gabon rarely experiences violence rooted in social, ethnic or religious divisions. The occasional instances of violence are typically post-election protests, which often escalate when met with excessive force from authorities, such as the protests following the 2016 presidential elections. As a result, Gabon boasts a high security score. In 2023, it achieved a score of 0.75 out of 1, ranking 3rd among upper-middle-income African countries and 13th overall on the continent.

On the other hand, in 2023, Gabon performed poorly in government capacity, as it attained a score of 0.35 out of 1, placing it in 6th place among the 7 upper-middle-income countries. Despite challenges in government capacity, Gabon's tax-to-GDP ratio showed a slight recovery in 2022, increasing by 1.1 percentage points from 10.3% in 2021 to 11.4%.

However, this remains significantly below the 2022 average of 16% for the 36 African countries included in the Revenue Statistics in Africa publication. Over the past decade, Gabon's tax-to-GDP ratio has declined by 4.5 percentage points, from 15.9% in 2013 to 11.4% in 2022. This poor performance in revenue generation contributes to broader concerns about government capacity and fiscal sustainability. Public administration in Gabon is both inefficient and costly, with a large portion of government revenue consumed by elite spending, while corruption and nepotism dominate governance. Since 2012, public debt has tripled to US$69.5 billion in 2023, with a projected debt-to-GDP ratio of 68% by 2024. Politically motivated anti-corruption campaigns like "Operation Scorpion" have removed experienced officials, while recruitment favoured the ruling Bongo family and allies. These structural issues undermine effective governance and limit benefits to citizens.

Moreover, Gabon's low inclusion index of 0.4 in 2023, indicates limited social, economic and political inclusion of its population. Historically, the country has struggled with democratic performance, ranking in the bottom 25% globally. The August 2023 coup further exacerbated this issue, leading to significant declines in scores for most factors of representation. Additionally, 'Freedom of Expression' has deteriorated compared to its standing five years ago, underscoring ongoing challenges to inclusivity and democratic freedoms.

Gender inequality remains a significant challenge in Gabon, with a gender inequality index of 0.525 in 2020. However, since 2021, the country has initiated a series of reforms aimed at addressing this issue. These reforms include granting women the same rights as men to choose their place of residence, allowing women to pursue employment without seeking permission from their husbands, and ensuring women have equal rights to open bank accounts.

On the Current Path, Gabon will show improvement across all three dimensions of governance by 2043, with a composite score of 0.55, up from 0.5 in 2023 (Chart 28). In the Governance scenario, Gabon's score will reach 0.63 by 2043, slightly ahead of where Namibia stood in 2023.

Government revenue will grow from 18.7% to 24.2% of GDP, enabling increased spending on social protection and public services. These improvements reflect stronger institutions, reduced corruption and enhanced inclusivity, supporting sustainable development and greater stability.

The Governance scenario assumes better governance: stability, capacity, and inclusion. It measures a state's progress using the average of these three indices. To this end, it includes an index (0 to 1) for each dimension, with higher scores indicating improved outcomes. participation rates, particularly among females where appropriate.

Note that the scenario includes increased welfare transfers to unskilled workers, which are paid for by taxes on skilled workers. Note: the two should roughly balance one another in US$ terms. In the context of high poverty levels and inequality, social transfers have proven the most effective short/medium-term measures of alleviating both.

Visit the theme on Governance for a full conceptualisation and details on the scenario structure and interventions.

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