The Republic of Congo (or Congo Brazzaville, or Congo) is a unitary country with a two-tier subnational government structures. The subnational level is made of 12 departments, including two departments with a specific status, corresponding to both departmental and municipal councils: Brazzaville, the administrative capital, and Pointe Noire, the economic capital. Then, the country has 6 cities with a municipal status (including Brazzaville and Pointe Noire). The departments and municipalities of Brazzaville and Pointe Noire each have their respective budgets. Representatives at both levels are directly elected. Municipalities and districts are then divided into sub-municipalities and urban sub-districts, 2753 villages, without administrative autonomy. Decentralization is enshrined in the constitution since 2002 (Art. XVI) and the 2003 judicial framework (after past attempts in 1973, 1979, and 1992). Its implementation follows a devolution process. Since then, the departmental councils have been renewed twice following local elections. Subnational governments are autonomous administrative entities, yet the central State through the national law that allocates their responsibilities, resources, operating and for supervision of their activities. Currently, the laws on local governments are specific within 9 laws. The departments are supervised by national delegates as Prefects (préfets) and Sub-prefects (sous-préfets). The current context of accelerated growth and urgent need of infrastructures could lead to rapid progress in the decentralization process if the national environment and frameworks allow for developing subnational governments responsibilities and resources.

**MAIN FEATURES OF TERRITORIAL ORGANISATION.** The Republic of Congo (or Congo Brazzaville, or Congo) is a unitary country with a two-tier subnational government structures. The subnational level is made of 12 departments, including two departments with a specific status, corresponding to both departmental and municipal councils: Brazzaville, the administrative capital, and Pointe Noire, the economic capital. Then, the country has 6 cities with a municipal status (including Brazzaville and Pointe Noire). The departments and municipalities of Brazzaville and Pointe Noire each have their respective budgets. Representatives at both levels are directly elected. Municipalities and districts are then divided into sub-municipalities and urban sub-districts, 2753 villages, without administrative autonomy. Decentralization is enshrined in the constitution since 2002 (Art. XVI) and the 2003 judicial framework (after past attempts in 1973, 1979, and 1992). Its implementation follows a devolution process. Since then, the departmental councils have been renewed twice following local elections. Subnational governments are autonomous administrative entities, yet the central State through the national law that allocates their responsibilities, resources, operating and for supervision of their activities. Currently, the laws on local governments are specific within 9 laws. The departments are supervised by national delegates as Prefects (préfets) and Sub-prefects (sous-préfets). The current context of accelerated growth and urgent need of infrastructures could lead to rapid progress in the decentralization process if the national environment and frameworks allow for developing subnational governments responsibilities and resources.

**MAIN SUBNATIONAL GOVERNMENTS RESPONSIBILITIES.** Despite the 9 laws adopted on decentralization between 2003 and 2005, the judicial framework on local governments’ responsibilities is still incomplete and the lack of clear framework leads to some mismatch between department and municipal responsibilities. In addition, The Mayors-Administrators of the sub-districts of Brazzaville and Pointe Noire are nominated by the Central Level, leading to conflicts with the Municipal Mayors on their jurisdictions. According to the law N°10-2003, local governments are autonomous administrative entities, yet the central State through the national law that allocates their responsibilities, resources, operating and for supervision of their activities. Currently, the laws on local governments are specific within 9 laws. The departments are supervised by national delegates as Prefects (préfets) and Sub-prefects (sous-préfets). The current context of accelerated growth and urgent need of infrastructures could lead to rapid progress in the decentralization process if the national environment and frameworks allow for developing subnational governments responsibilities and resources.

**SUBNATIONAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXPENDITURE</th>
<th>% GDP</th>
<th>% GENERAL GOVERNMENT (same expenditure category)</th>
<th>% SUBNATIONAL GOVERNMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL EXPENDITURE (2010)</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CURRENT EXPENDITURE</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>99.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STAFF EXPENDITURE</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>43.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INVESTMENT</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Subnational expenditures remain very low in Republic of Congo despite the slow progress in decentralization since 2003. In 2010, they accounted for 0.4% of GDP and 1.9% of overall public expenditures. Moreover, subnational expenditures were essentially dedicated to current expenditures, including for the half to staff expenditures (43.5% of subnational governments expenditures). Local public investment is not yet operational, as the rest of subnational expenditures were spent on capital transfers.
There is a lack of official data on economic classification of expenditures by subnational governments, as opposed to the national level. The very high share of current expenditures in subnational governments expenditures (99.5%) in 2010 leaves no concrete room for manoeuvre for subnational authorities, compared to the wide array of responsibilities devolved upon them by law.

General public services  
Defence  
Security and public order  
Economic affairs  
Environmental protection  
Housing and Community Amenities  
Health  
Recreation, Culture and Religion  
Education  
Social protection

Outstanding debt

Sources:  
IMF-GFS  
Alternatives citoyennes, 24 August 2015, Collaborative multi-stakeholders program PCPA-Congo  
Law N°10-2003 on the allocation of responsibilities to local governments  
F. Breitzer MOUNZEO, The Congolese taxation system (2013)  
National Statistical Institute of Congo

With the participation of the French Development Agency Country Office in Congo

A joint- study of: