

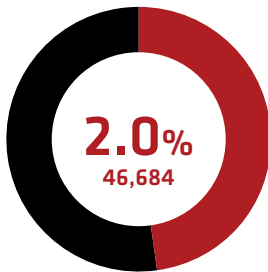


# Diaspora engagement mapping GABON

## Facts & figures

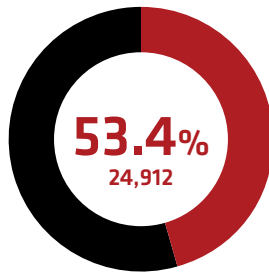
### Emigration

% of emigrants in total population



♂ 47.9%  
♀ 52.1%

% of which in the EU



♂ 45.7%  
♀ 54.3%



Remittances as a share of GDP: **0.1%**  
Remittances inflow (USD million): **18**



### Top countries of destination

France	21,779
Mali	13,370
Congo	3,260
Canada	1,144
Cameroon	1,073

### Political rights



Dual citizenship<sup>1</sup>



Right to vote in national elections for citizens residing abroad<sup>2</sup>



Voting from abroad:<sup>3</sup>

By proxy or at embassies/consulates



Terminology: Gabon uses the term 'Gabonese Abroad' (French: *Gabonais de l'étranger*) but the term diaspora is also used in some official documents.

**Gabon does not have a diaspora engagement policy.**

1 The 1998 Loi no. 37-1998 portant Code de la nationalité permits dual citizenship and also contains the unusual provision that if children are born in the border zones of countries neighbouring Gabon, or raised by Gabonese citizens, they may make a declaration during the 12 months preceding their majority that they have lived in Gabon for the preceding 10 years. Additionally, if they raised by a Gabonese citizen or on state assistance from before the age of 15, they can claim Gabonese nationality of origin.

2 Voting rights for those living abroad extend to presidential elections and referendums. See Code électoral du Gabon (2018).

3 <http://www.diplomatie.gouv.ga/informations/gabonais-a-letranger>

## Overview of the policy and legislative framework



- 1991** ● The **Constitution of Gabon**<sup>4</sup> (revised in 2018) guarantees freedom of movement within, and entry and exit from Gabon for all Gabonese citizens. It also states that all Gabonese citizens residing temporarily or permanently abroad can benefit from the protection and assistance of the state, according to conditions fixed by national law or international accord. In the perspective of the constitution aiming to protect citizens abroad, the minister of foreign affairs defended in January 22 a bill at the parliament that defines situations in which the State can intervene to protect diaspora members. Such situations include death or a serious injury abroad, arrest, detention, the need of an administrative document and others. This definition helps better translate the constitution to support the citizens of Gabon abroad.<sup>5</sup>
- 2008** ● **Accord France-Gabon relatif à la gestion concertée des flux migratoires et au codéveloppement** aims to facilitate human mobility, encourage temporary migration of Gabonese nationals, and to stimulate the circular return of skilled Gabonese diaspora professionals and investments in support of local development. In practical terms, this makes it easier for Gabonese students and skilled professionals to migrate to France for studies, employment, and skills development on a short- to medium-term basis. It thus enables skills transfer.
- 2012** ● **Plan Stratégique Gabon Emergent (PSGE): Vision 2025 orientations stratégiques 2011-2016** is Gabon's most recent development strategy. It sets out the need to establish an effective policy of protection and assistance to Gabonese abroad. It sets out initial activities to achieve this, including mapping its diaspora in countries of residence and allocating consular capacity accordingly. It also notes the potential role of the diaspora in helping deliver PSGE, and that new diaspora engagement structures and capacity need to be built, along with as a suitable framework for harnessing diaspora skills and mobilising diaspora savings.

### Trends

To date, Gabon's diaspora engagement has been limited. The country has had low levels of remittances for several years.<sup>6</sup> Over 80% of Gabon's revenues come from oil exports, which has further insulated the country from reliance on diaspora financial flows.

The Gabonese diaspora is divided along political lines. Many Gabonese diaspora organisations in France are of a political character and were active in the 2016 post-election crisis.<sup>7</sup> Political opposition within the Gabonese diaspora in France is particularly active on social media.<sup>8</sup>

Despite this, the government has sought to encourage diaspora investment, especially in the agro-processing and forestry sectors, by offering preferential investment opportunities in Special Economic Zones (see Spotlight section).



### Achievements

Gabon is interested in regulating migration flows and in particular in stemming brain drain. Consequently, the emphasis of its policy approach to diaspora engagement has been on seeking to enable circular return, as shown by its *Accord France-Gabon relatif à la gestion concertée des flux migratoires et au codéveloppement* agreement.

4 Unofficial English translation

5 <https://www.gabonreview.com/gabon-le-gouvernement-renforce-la-protection-des-gabonais-a-letranger/>  
<http://www.diplomatie.gouv.ga/9-actualites/1280-gabon-vers-un-renforcement-des-conditions-de-protection-consulaire/>

6 <https://www.gabonreview.com/gabon-la-diaspora-contribue-a-hauteur-de-0-au-pib/>

7 <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/mag/262359/politique/diaspora-gabonaise-operation-seduction-a-paris/>

8 [https://www.defense.gouv.fr/content/download/587845/9985445/file/202005-Mobilisation-politique\\_diaspora\\_gabonaise\\_doppositon\\_France\\_Afrique\\_australe-Note-12.pdf](https://www.defense.gouv.fr/content/download/587845/9985445/file/202005-Mobilisation-politique_diaspora_gabonaise_doppositon_France_Afrique_australe-Note-12.pdf)

Gabon has recognised dual citizenship, and has also enabled diaspora voting for Gabonese citizens abroad to enable them to play a role in the political life of the country. This arose in part due to requests from the diaspora, combined with the government's interest in enabling greater diaspora contributions to the country.

In addition, Gabon has created some nascent structures to support diaspora engagement, such as the *Direction des Gabonais de l'étranger*, and an Assistance Fund to help Gabonese diaspora returnees or who are in distress (see Spotlight section).

## Obstacles



- **Lack of trust:** There is a lack of trust between the government and its diaspora, which in France (the principal country of residence in Europe) tends to be polarised and politicised. This acts as a barrier to diaspora engagement in Gabon.<sup>9</sup>
- **Lack of capacity:** Gabon lacks adequate structures and capacity to drive forward a diaspora engagement agenda. The few existing structures require strengthening to fulfil their potential.
- **Lack of policy focus:** Gabon has few policy frameworks for diaspora engagement.

## SPOTLIGHT: effective practices



### Assistance Fund 2015

The Direction des Gabonais de l'étranger provides access to an emergency Assistance Fund for returnees or for diaspora in distress in their countries of residence. The fund is accessed via consular services in the country of residence, or via the nearest consulate in the region.

### High-level cooperation on diaspora engagement between France & Gabon 2019

France's Member of Parliament for French Abroad, Amélia Lakrafi, has travelled to Gabon on several occasions in the last two years to meet her counterparts in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Cooperation, Francophonie, Regional Integration, and Gabonese Abroad.<sup>10</sup> In November 2019, the Presidents of the French and Gabonese Parliaments signed a memorandum to strengthen relations between the parliaments in the cultural and social fields, including in relation to their respective diaspora communities.<sup>11</sup>

### Gabon Special Economic Zone Diaspora Investment Incentives 2015

In 2015, the Minister of Equal Opportunities and Gabonese Abroad signed an agreement with the Gabon Special Economic Zone (*Zone économique à régime privilégié, ZERP*), under which diaspora businesses and entrepreneurs are eligible for various incentives for setting up in the special economic zone (ZERP) of Nkok, which is located 27 km from the Gabonese capital.<sup>12</sup> According to the terms of the convention, the Gabon Special Economic Zone grants preferential rental rates for plots and/or sheds to Gabonese abroad.<sup>13</sup>

HUMANITARIAN  
ASSISTANCE

NETWORKING AND  
PARTNERSHIPS

INVESTMENT

9 [https://www.defense.gouv.fr/content/download/587845/9985445/file/202005-Mobilisation-politique\\_diaspora\\_gabonaise\\_dopposition\\_France\\_Afrique\\_australe-Note-12.pdf](https://www.defense.gouv.fr/content/download/587845/9985445/file/202005-Mobilisation-politique_diaspora_gabonaise_dopposition_France_Afrique_australe-Note-12.pdf)

10 <http://www.faapa.info/blog/gabon-la-cooperation-et-la-structuration-de-la-diaspora-gabonaise-au-menu-de-lechange/>

11 <http://www.faapa.info/blog/cooperation-gabon-france-signature-dun-memorandum-pour-le-renforcement-des-relations-parlementaires/>

12 <http://www.gaboninvest.org/les-secteurs-cles/zes>

13 <http://news.alibreville.com/h/52397.html>

## Annex:

# List of Actors

## Diaspora related institutions

- **At regional level**

### **African Union Citizens and Diaspora Directorate (AU-CIDO) 2008**

(AU-CIDO) is responsible for implementing the AU's engagement with non-state actors through the involvement of the diaspora and civil society. Gabon nominates a diaspora focal point to represent the country at AU Citizens and Diaspora Directorate (CIDO) Continental Meetings.

### **Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) 1983**

Gabon is a member of ECCAS, whose founding treaty includes provisions for achieving free movement of citizens of Member States, although Gabon has yet to implement these.<sup>14</sup>

- **National institutions**

- At ministerial level

### **Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Cooperation, Francophonie, Regional Integration, and Gabonese Abroad (French: *Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, de la Coopération, de la Francophonie, de l'Intégration Régionale et des Gabonais de l'étranger.*) 2003**

This ministry is responsible for designing and implementing the Government's foreign policy as well as coordinating and conducting the state's external action in the fields of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation, Consular Affairs, Francophonie, Law of the Sea, Refugees, and Diaspora Engagement. It took on responsibility for Gabonese overseas in 2015.

- At sub-ministerial level

### **Directorate of Gabonese Abroad (French: *Direction des Gabonais de l'étranger*) 2015**

This directorate is responsible for developing diaspora engagement policies and programmes, and works through Gabon's network of missions and consulates abroad. It is divided into 3 Divisions: the Gabonese Abroad Protection Division (*Division de la Protection des Gabonais de l'Etranger*), the Reintegration of Gabonese Abroad Division (*Division de la Réinsertion des Gabonais de l'Etranger*), and the Gabonese Abroad Assistance and Protection Division (*Division de l'Assistance et de la Protection des Gabonais de l'Etranger*). The Directorate also manages the Assistance Fund for Gabonese Abroad, as well as diaspora voter registration.

### **National Agency for Investment Promotion (French: *Agence Nationale de Promotion des Investissements, ANPI*) 2018**

The Gabon National Investment Promotion Agency (ANPI-GABON) is tasked with promoting investment and trade for Gabon, including diaspora investments. ANPI is the agency that manages the ZERP (Special Economic Zone) that grants preferential rates to Gabonese abroad.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.uneca.org/pages/eccas-free-movement-persons>

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.gaboninvest.org/>



## Diaspora organisations in Europe



### **Association Reflet du Gabon (ARG)** 2017 France

#### **Development activities**

A non-profit diaspora organisation whose objective is to promote Gabon and partner countries in the fields of agriculture and education. It supports small-scale farmers in Gabon and education in local communities. [ f ]

### **Convention de la Diaspora Gabonaise, (CDG)** 2012 France

#### **Development activities**

#### **Integration activities**

CDG is a non-partisan federative diaspora organisation. It brings together Gabonese men and women living outside Gabon for democratic dialogue between its members in order to influence the development of Gabon. It also collects and donates school textbooks and materials, builds houses of culture in rural area, and finances micro-projects in Gabon.

### **Conseil des Gabonais de France (CGF)** 2004 France

#### **Development activities**

#### **Integration activities**

CGF is a federation of Gabonese diaspora organisations across France. CGF works for the improvement of living conditions in the Gabonese diaspora in France and overseas as well as the economic and social development of Gabon. It aims to bring together Gabonese associations in France within a common federal structure.

### **Diaspora Gabonaise de France (DGF)** 2015 France

#### **Development activities**

#### **Integration activities**

DGF's mission is to bring together all Gabonese in France, regardless of background or political or religious affiliation, to support them in their integration activities in France, or to return to Gabon. It works to defend the interests of the Gabonese in France, to promote networking and collaboration between Gabonese associations and compatriots from France, Gabon and abroad, and to set up and maintain infrastructure and other solidarity development projects in Gabon. [ f ]

### **Fédération des Étudiants Gabonais (FEGAF)** 2018 France

#### **Development activities**

#### **Integration activities**

FEGAF is a non-political structure that works to defend the interests of Gabonese students of France and promote their achievements. It provides networking and peer support for Gabonese students and mobilises resources for local projects in Gabon. [ f ]

## Union des Associations Gabonaises de France – UAGF 2018 France

- ☑ Development activities
- ☑ Integration activities

UAGF brings together a dozen Gabonese diaspora organisations. It conducts lobbying and advocacy on Gabonese issues, and works to promote the socio-economic development of Gabon. [ f ]

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