



## **USAID AND BENIN**

### **20 YEARS OF PARTNERSHIP BUILT ON 50 YEARS OF DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCE**

In December 2011, USAID and Benin proudly celebrate twenty years of a renewed partnership. A partnership that is built on democratic principles, shared development goals, and mutual trust.

The following pages attempt to honor the accomplishments of past and current development professionals who dedicated their energy in supporting the government of Benin's efforts to improve basic education, strengthen family health, and provide services to vulnerable populations.

From the early years of Benin's independence in 1960 on to 1990, the partnership between the American people and the people of Benin has grown stronger. With the return of Benin to democracy in 1991, the United States Government and the American people, through USAID, have shouldered the efforts of the Beninese people to grow their economy, consolidate their democracy, and help their vulnerable populations who are struggling to make a better life.

Working with Beninese and American partners in governmental and non-governmental organizations, USAID is committed to raise the human capital, the prosperity and well being of the Beninese people until the days when Benin will forgo development assistance. ■

## HISTORY OF U.S. DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE TO BENIN

The United States and Dahomey –as Benin was called before 1975– entered in a first economic, technical and related assistance agreement on May 27, 1961. The U. S. Agency for International Development (AID) prepared a country assistance program in September 1963 and signed a second agreement on investment guaranties with Dahomey on March 17, 1965.

During the era of “coups d’état” (1960-1972) and the “Revolutionary” period of 1972 to 1990, assistance from the United States to Dahomey came and went. Due to limitations on bilateral programs, it was included in an AID-supported “Entente Fund” – an arm of the regional Entente Council formed by Ivory Coast, Niger, Togo, Dahomey, and Upper Volta (Burkina Faso). An example of regional AID assistance included the Development Bank of Benin, which, using funds from the Entente Fund, extended loans to private entrepreneurs for a variety of commercial purposes in textiles, food, cosmetics, and diversified commodities. It made a significantly larger share of its loans to women than most banks in other Entente countries.

In the 60s and 70s aid focused on agriculture, agricultural cooperative development, employment, technical and professional education, and water and telecommunication infrastructure. In February 1974, for example, it co-financed with the World Bank, the reconstruction and upgrading of the Parakou-Malanville Road. Between 1982 and 1990, USAID/Togo directed programs in Benin, which funded training of physicians, nurses, and midwives, long and short term scholarships in the U.S., and water supply and sanitation activities with Peace Corps volunteers.

### A NEW PARTNER IN DEMOCRACY

The United States renewed its interest in Benin since its transition to a democratic system started in 1989. Benin hosted the Fourth International Conference on New and Reestablished Democracy for the first time in Africa in December 2000. Benin is also a trade corridor for landlocked West African Economic and Monetary Union countries, which makes it important to U.S. national interests for promotion of democracy, U.S. exports to Benin, economic development, and regional stability and security.

The decision to re-establish a Mission in Africa at a time when USAID was closing missions worldwide sent a very clear signal of the United States Government’s support for countries that restructured their economies and democratized their politics. The decision also reflected USAID’s approach to focus efforts in countries that have demonstrated their own commitment to political and economic liberalization.

### A PARTNER IN DEVELOPMENT

Broad USAID assistance to Benin begins in late 1990 and supports U.S. interests in promoting democratic governance in this extremely fragile economic and political region of Africa.

Since, Benin can boast of having conducted three democratic changes of president. A total of twelve elections have been held since the National Conference (six parliamentary elections and two local elections in addition to the four presidential

## IMPACT: A GUINEA WORM SURVEILLANCE AND ERADICATION PROGRAM

---

During the 1990s and beyond, the USAID-Benin partnership focused on basic education and health. The strategy emphasized removing constraints to good governance in education and health, fostering local and national development, and linking democracy and governance activities to economic growth activities.



USAID investments for child survival materialized in the construction of water and sanitation infrastructures aimed to improve the health practices of rural inhabitants of central Benin while augmenting the adequacy and quality of their water supply and sanitary facilities. The activity benefited 250 villages with drilling and equipping of water wells, and the establishment of village committees to maintain the wells and pursue community health activities. The annual incidence of Guinea worm in the six project districts decreased by more than 30 percent. At the time, it demonstrated the positive results that follow a community's involvement in owning and managing its improved water supply. It also led to the establishment of a Guinea worm surveillance and eradication program.

elections) which were all evaluated as overall “fair and free”. The country enjoys free and lively media (over 60 private and government newspapers, some private and two government radio stations, two national television channels, apart from the foreign ones accessible via satellite). The Constitutional Court has admirably played its role as guardian of the Constitution and there are no political prisoners in the country. Benin has also been spared major outbursts of ethnic and social violence since 1991. In other words, Benin is seen as one of the few democratic model countries on the continent of Africa.

The country's good democracy and human rights track record have since positively impacted on development aid levels. In 1991, Benin featured for the second time on the list of recipients of U.S. aid. In response to significant policies adopted by Benin,

including the movement from a military to a civilian government and the successful completion of its first Structural Adjustment Program in conjunction with the World Bank and the IMF, AID increased its level of assistance to Benin, cancelled Benin's debt, and established a U.S. presence here. Benin, in fact, is one of the first countries to have had a substantial part of its debt canceled. In the same year, Benin entered into a second Structural Adjustment Program (SAP).

## IMPACT: MOST CHILDREN OF SCHOOL AGE ARE ENROLLED

---

Since 1990, USAID has worked with the Government of Benin to increase the number of primary school-age boys and girls receiving, on a more equitable basis, an education which prepares them for a productive role in society. Activities focused on administrative and financial management and promotion of public sector accountability and transparency. Thus, USAID and Benin's efforts sought to impact directly on governance and participation while improving the primary education sector.



Gender equality is a constant focus of USAID's efforts in support of development. Working with Benin and international partners, USAID contributed to more than doubling the percentage of girls starting primary school.

Benin's education sector reform, which was initiated in 1991 with support from USAID helped almost double school enrollment between 1990 and 2005. USAID financed the development of a modern curriculum and provided 100,000 mathematics textbooks, 100,000 French textbooks and 60,000 teacher guides and trained 27,000 primary school teachers to teach it.

Today, the 2010 United Nations reports that most Benin children of school age are enrolled.

This phenomenon is referred to in Benin as the "democracy bonus".

In 1993, USAID Development Fund for Africa funded a multi-year primary education

restructuring program. As the centerpiece of USAID's future assistance to Benin and a means to encourage a broad based economic growth, it invested in the country's human resource base and reinforced its commitment to democracy, an open society, and a market economy.



USAID approach to economic growth promotes increasing income of small-scale market gardeners. Photo by EnterpriseWorks/VITA

USAID helped establish and support successful microfinance institutions in Benin. Some of the better known today are PADME and MicroBank. For example, a Benin small-scale irrigation project introduced new simple cost-effective technologies for enhancing irrigation of fruit and vegetable crops. More specifically, in partnership with local NGOs, USAID helped setup manufacturing and marketing of a new tread pump, baptized the Naguézé Kinnin, which means "I'm going to be on easy street". Local Naguézé Pump manufacturers received training to produce the new pump. USAID worked with micro-credit institutions to ensure that small farmers who wanted to invest in their farms get access to financing.



USAID funded testing on three varieties of hybrid sunflower seed in 2002. Average yields were 1.4 tons per hectare, with a maximum of 2.6 tons.

In the same manner were introduced a hybrid tenera palm plant which yields more oil, a palm oil expeller and a press, which were marketed under the DEKANME brand name, which means "palm plantation" in the local language. Dissemination of the expeller improved processing by oil palm growers and reduced labor requirements, potentially stimulating greater production of palm fruit. Women's cooperatives and parent-student associations planted the hybrid Tenera palm trees and received technical assistance from EnterpriseWorks/Benin in maintaining their palm nurseries. Introduction of the tenera palm oil plant and a successful marketing plan including the use of parent-student associations as sales agents, ensured the sale of the new palm plant

Beninese farmers are heavily dependent on cotton for their cash income, even though many of them lose money on their cotton crop. In 1998, in partnership with Fludor, a producer and extractor of cotton seeds in Benin, USAID helped introduce and test several varieties of sunflower in North Benin. The results showed clearly that the sunflower seeds had relatively high yield and oil content. The better quality and price of the finished oil made it a good alternative or complement to cotton.

## BUILDING DEMOCRACY WITH BENIN CIVIL SOCIETY



Beninese citizens participating in the March 2006 elections. USAID technical assistance promotes decentralization and devolution of authorities to local communities. Community participation helps ensure that the government responds to the needs and

USAID's contribution to strengthening civil organizations has been significant. Specifically, beginning in 1994, USAID has invested considerable efforts, through a U.S. organization AFRICARE, in support of electoral processes, including Benin's electoral administration. The assistance resulted in the revision of electoral laws, provision of electoral materials, training of pollworkers and pollwatchers, and support to civic education organizations to educate voters.

In 1998, for example, it supported a seminar on election administration reform organized by the non-governmental organization Circle of Inter-Dependents (CID). The seminar resulted in recommendations to the National Assembly that included the codification of the method of selecting members of the electoral commission and provision for a permanent secretariat.

DRAFT

## IMPACT: A CIVIL SOCIETY EMPOWERED TO FIGHT CORRUPTION

---



FONAC members discuss complaints of corruption. To stem corruption, the Government of Benin created a National Public Procurement Verification Commission, which includes civil society stakeholders such as the National Front of Organizations against Corruption. Photo: FONAC

Another example of successful impact comes from the Front Des Organizations Nationales Anti-Corruption (FONAC), a local alliance of civil organization supported by USAID/Benin. FONAC has actively campaigned to raise public awareness of corruption. Custom agents, teachers, medical staff, and representatives of unions of education, health, and finance sectors were convened to various workshops on ethical behavior in their respective sectors. Presentations focused on the negative impact of corruption and how it directly affects the workplace and the economy.

The public discussion engendered by these programs has reflected popular will that government managers and leaders lead by example by sanctioning and enacting legislation and/or regulations that will protect whistle-blowers. FONAC leadership still acts as a pressure group on the National Assembly to take legislative action to deal with corruption.

Today, when citizens are victims of corrupt behavior, they trust FONAC to come to their rescue. Participation of civil society has led to the strong denunciation by public officials of involved corruption at all levels

## **Leland Initiative: Africa Global Information Infrastructure Gateway**

Following on the May 1995 Vice President Al Gore's invitation for USAID to lead U.S. effort to "bring the Global Information Infrastructure to Africa", the Leland Initiative was USAID response to bring the benefits of the global information revolution to people of Africa. The initiative helped connect more than twenty African countries to the Internet and other Global Information Infrastructure (GII) technologies with the view to promoting sustainable development.

### **Birth of Benin's Internet Industry**

USAID/Cotonou and the Leland Initiative played an integral part in developing the Internet industry in Benin. USAID and the Benin government signed an agreement on 9 January 1997. A representative from the Leland Initiative was sent to Cotonou at that time to train the Office des Postes et Telecommunications du Benin (OPT) personnel and provide technical support to all Internet Service Providers (ISPs). OPT inaugurated the country's USAID Leland Initiative gateway on June 12, 1998. In conjunction with the inauguration, eight organizations were selected by USAID/Cotonou and OPT as potential Internet Service Providers (ISPs).

The training introduced 112 participants to the Internet and the research and communication tools it offers. Participants were afforded time during the training for hands-on practice. Each participant of a two-day training session also created an action plan designed to guide the introduction of the Internet into his or her organization.



**Max and Marie-Pascale**  
*Max and Marie-Pascale show the chocolate they earned during the Leland training in Cotonou, August 1998.*



**USAID/Leland Team for Benin**  
*(l-r) Yaovi Atohoun (Leland/Benin), Brian Bacon (Leland/Washington), Jacqueline Ahouansou (Leland/Benin) at the Leland training in Cotonou, August 1998.*

The training sessions included two-day sessions for the USAID/Cotonou development partners working in the missions respective development sector programs, including health, education, and good governance. Working in close collaboration with USAID/Cotonou since early 1996, Leland activities in Benin have sought to improve Internet connectivity throughout the country by providing policy and technical assistance to Benin's Internet industry. Leland Internet awareness raising and training activities to date have focused on USAID/Cotonou development partners for the most part. USAID/Cotonou has a diverse development program that addresses a wide range of issues and involves a significant number of Beninese partners.



## Public-Private Partnerships Workshop in Benin Fosters Development Opportunities



*Five children perform a skit on public-private partnerships. The children, playing the roles of mayor, préfet, government official, and private sector and civil society representatives, argued about needs for the central government to delegate authority and empower local officials. [PHOTO: Liz Randolph]*

In the Blue Room of the Palais des Congrès, one of the largest conference venues in Benin, an attentive audience of government representatives, elected officials, and civil society and private sector representatives laughs at the comments being made by a group of children who are impersonating them in a skit. The theme of the skit is public-private partnerships (PPPs), and the young actors who are playing the roles of mayor, government officials, private sector executives, and civil society leaders are arguing about how the national government is not delegating authority to empower local officials and how the private sector does not trust the local government. The ice is broken, and the audience is ready to engage in a more serious dialogue about the subject.

## THE WAY FORWARD

Today, U.S. assistance focuses primarily on investing in the health, education, and welfare of Beninese women, children and men to enable them become more productive contributors to the prosperity of their country.

Health programs target the improvement of family planning and reproductive health practices, along with prevention and treatment of easily preventable diseases such as malaria.

These interventions help to lower high maternal, infant and child mortality rates. Assistance also focuses on containing and reducing the spread of HIV/AIDS.

Basic education assistance helps increase the literacy, numeracy, and problem solving skills needed for the development of a modern economy. Strong emphasis is on reducing the wide gender gap between the number of girls and boys who enroll in and complete primary school, and on improving management within the basic education system.

USAID projects also support vulnerable populations. Assistance to social services addresses trafficking in children, and gender-based violence and women's rights.

All U.S. Government assistance programs in Benin incorporate good governance and anti-corruption as a cross-cutting theme and support Benin's continued and peaceful transformation to a fully democratic nation.

The U.S. Government supports Benin's efforts to ensure that all of its citizens can participate in and benefit from its continued democratic transformation.

## INTEGRATED FAMILY HEALTH



USAID promotes immunization, breastfeeding, the use of mosquito nets, and the use of oral rehydration salts to treat diarrhea. USAID also trains health workers, introducing quality care in childbirth and managed labor that cut cases of hemorrhage after birth—a major cause of maternal deaths — by half in less than a year. Interventions focus on disadvantaged areas in central and northern Benin.

USAID is also implementing the President's Malaria Initiative, a three-year program that aims to reduce malaria-related deaths by half in children and pregnant women.

## BASIC EDUCATION



USAID projects contribute to raising education quality, extending access, improving persistence, and strengthening public and private institutions.

The basic education program is supporting and training Parent and Mothers Associations to ensure that more girls are enrolled and remain in school to complete their primary education and that schools are managed in a more effective and transparent way.

Scholarships also provide for tuition, meals, and school supplies, and help vulnerable children, particularly girls, to stay in and complete primary school.

USAID's investment helped create 431 mothers' associations, an award winning innovative model that involves women in education so that more girls enter and stay in school. The activity also supports the training of 1,500 parents from these associations and equips them to better participate and oversee how their schools are managed.

Also, close to 9,800 community teachers are being trained toward certification.

## WOMEN JUSTICE & EMPOWERMENT



Under the Women's Justice and Empowerment Initiative, USAID raises awareness about violence against women and strengthens the capacity of public and non-governmental organizations and civil society to address the medical, psycho-social, and legal needs of victims. In conjunction, the U.S. Department of Justice strengthens the capacity of legal systems and law enforcement to investigate and prosecute gender-based violence crimes.

## COMBATING CHILD TRAFFICKING



U.S. Foreign Assistance resources support Benin's efforts to protect children and prevent trafficking through increased public awareness of its dangers. Transit centers help ensure that trafficked children and children at risk of being trafficked receive formal and informal education and that they return to their family. □