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**AGENCY FOR
INTERNATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT**



**Small Program
STRATEGY STATEMENT**

BENIN

1981 - 1985

BEST AVAILABLE

**DEPARTMENT
OF
STATE**

January 1979



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Objectives and Rationale

Benin ranks 14th on the U.N.'s list of the world's poorest nations. The vast majority of its population are poor and rural. Dating back to the colonial period, most development efforts focused on the coastal areas of the south. Since independence, a succession of governments has placed emphasis on infrastructure projects and agro-industrial development. American assistance also stressed infrastructure projects that have made vital contributions to north-south connections within Benin, improved Niger's access to the sea, and, when the Cotonou Bridge is completed, will improve the transportation links between Nigeria, Benin, Togo, and Ghana. Hence, investments in infrastructure in Benin have been of significant regional as well as domestic importance.

The Government's development priorities, as reflected in its recently adopted three-year plan, still place great emphasis on development of agro-industrial capacity and on development of a cement plant and oil refinery. The latter two would be heavily dependent on foreign financing that is apparently not yet available. Emphasis is also being placed on the transport sectors, presumably reflecting Benin's awareness that it is a strategically-located transit center and its excellent opportunity to continue tapping the gigantic Nigerian market.

Yet the Plan places great emphasis on the needs of the rural majority, and the Government is asking the international donor community for considerable assistance to develop a nationwide system of health care for the rural areas. It is also requesting considerable assistance in the agricultural area.

Notwithstanding intermittent differences in political perceptions that at times lead to certain positions in international fora, Benin's emphasis on improving the lives of its rural poor coincides to a significant degree with the philosophy of AID's new directions.

We have not engaged in wide-ranging discussions with the Government concerning its development objectives and strategies. And, as is often true elsewhere, the Government has not offered to enter into such a comprehensive dialogue. Accordingly, our contacts have been limited to the discussion of requests in specific project areas. Our overall insights, however, have been greatly amplified by collaboration and exchange of views with other donors.

Basically, our objectives in Benin are developmental and humanitarian. Discussions with the Government related to specific undertakings in the areas of agriculture and health have revealed important areas of common concern for the betterment of the lives of the rural poor. The needs, though, are vast, and apparently far beyond our ability to address comprehensively. However, relatively small U. S. inputs in the form of technical assistance and equipment can make a telling difference. The importance of the U. S. interventions proposed herein lies in their catalytic ability to redirect increasingly greater government resources--both human and financial--into the rural areas for the direct benefit of the poor. Because improvements in the quality of their lives will be largely a function of greater agricultural productivity and better health and nutritional conditions, these are the areas where American assistance should help the Government to help its poor.

Analytical Description

Estimates as of 1976 place Benin's population at approximately 3.2 million people. The relatively high urban growth rate of 6.6%, as opposed to the national rate of 2.8%, has increased the percentage of urban population to 18% or approximately 575,000. The 2.6 million people comprising the 82% rural population derive their primary livelihood from sedentary agriculture (71%), fishing (7.5%), and nomadic herding (4%). There are seven main ethnic groups in Benin: The Adja, Fon, Goun and Yoruba predominate in the south and central part of the country and the Peul (Fulani), Bariba and Fendi are concentrated in the north.

The majority of the rural population is poor - as evidenced by the 1976 per capita GNP of \$130. Nevertheless, they evidence a self-sufficient, enterprising spirit - especially in the south where they have long been exposed to the market economy associated with coastal port areas but also in the north where the acceptance and recent spread of animal traction technology has far exceeded that of neighboring countries.

Both geographical and past political reasons have combined to form distinct separations between the north and south. Geographically, the north is less well endowed than the south, being essentially part of the Sahel-sudano zone of West Africa. The uneven rainfall pattern and less fertile soils allow only meager yields of the predominate sorghum, corn and yam culture. Only 3-5% of existing arable land is

presently under cultivation and large areas are unexploited due to water shortages, terrain and diseases - especially onchocerciasis. These factors have kept the north relatively underpopulated - averaging only 10 persons per sq. km. - and accounts for the presence of nomadic herders who graze their cattle on the land unutilized for agriculture production. These herders maintain a symbiotic relationship with the sedentary farmers by grazing on the stalks of the harvested fields and exchange dairy products for agriculture produce. The relatively less populated north, despite its more meager yields per hectare, is, in good years, able to provide a small surplus production for southern markets.

The south is a tropical area more endowed with climatic and soil conditions, allowing it to produce higher per hectare yields of its dominant corn, manioc and bean culture with the same primitive technology. The coastal peculiarity of two rainy seasons per year allows double cropping of some crops through natural precipitation and increases the relatively small crop area per family of 1.2 hectares to the equivalent of 2 hectares. Approximately 60% of the population live in the southern 15% of the country, giving a population density of 143 per sq. km.

The central portion of the country is a transistional zone. Population density is 36 per sq. km. Principal food crops are corn, manioc, yams and beans, while palm oil, peanuts and cotton are produced as cash crops.

The south has both a higher incidence of tse-tse fly, which endangers animal health, and has less available grazing lands. The economic advantage in livestock production for the north thus makes it the chief supplier of beef for the heavier populated south. Notwithstanding, sheep and goats are raised throughout the country and swine raising is relatively important as a source of meat in the Christian areas of the south.

Politically, the south has historically dominated the north and received the major attention. Historical roots go back to the tribal power held by the coastal peoples which was reinforced during the colonial era which concentrated economic activity along the coast and the palm oil and coffee producing areas of the south. Historical dominance of the south was also reinforced by the colonial administration which tended to favor the southern Togolese and Dahomeans as local administrators. Thus the present-day educated class, political leaders and civil servants heavily represent the southern ethnic groups.

Despite the differences between the northern and southern parts of Benin, the rural population in both sections remain poor. Although past development efforts (primarily in cash crops) have tended to favor the south, these initiatives have been minimal and resulted in only accentuating degrees of poverty. In addition to low incomes, this poverty is reflected in (1) low levels of nutrition caused both by food scarcity in times of bad weather and the perennial lack of a

balanced diet; (2) a national life expectancy rate of 41 years; (3) a high incidence of disease and mortality - especially among infants and children; (4) inadequate water supplies and sanitation facilities; and (5) insufficient educational facilities in the rural areas, resulting in a 90% illiteracy rate which assists in the perpetuation of the above factors.

The fundamental reason for poverty in Benin is the agriculture resource base and climatic conditions in the north and the population pressures on limited land in the south, which, combined with traditional agriculture practices, basic lack of modern education, knowledge of health and sanitation practices and inadequate access to fundamental human requirements such as potable water, has tended to force the rural standard of living continually downward.

Past efforts at attacking these fundamental problems have been minimal and with little overall impact. Prior political instability following Benin's independence which was marked by six coup d'etats in twelve years effectively prevented any concerted action on the part of previous governments. A lack of known mineral resources in exploitable quantities limits the financial resources available to the country to mount major actions and provide the basic infrastructure and materials needed for a serious development effort.

Several years of instability preceded the ascension to power of the present socialist/military government in 1972 while it attempted to

consolidate its support base and ward off other coup attempts. It has recently begun to take new steps in the direction of social and economic development of the rural areas, although they are still insufficient in relation to the emphasis being placed upon the nationalized and mixed corporation industrial/commercial sector and heavy infrastructure projects.

Constraints to the rapid implementation of a development program are legion: The causes of poverty enumerated above are themselves a major constraint. The soils and climatic conditions of the north will require the development of new techniques for the improvement of yields which can economically be adopted and utilized by rural farmers with small holdings. The government services, although fairly well structured, are inadequately staffed and require both additional training and material resources to perform their development role. Efforts at improving rural technology have been constrained both by the lack of research facilities, the lack of agriculture extension agents to work closely with the rural populations, and inadequate supplies of small farmer credit funds. Efforts at improving rural health are likewise constrained by the inadequate human and physical infrastructure base. The present structure includes 214 village dispensaries, 66 maternity centers, 31 health centers and 3 leprosariums. This compares to the GPRB's stated requirements for an additional 2,800 village dispensaries, 110 commune health centers and 12 district health centers.

While the establishment of a health care system is essential to the well-being and productive capacity of the rural population, a one-front effort without a complementary attack on the causes of the disease and sickness which continually plague and debilitate the people would have a vastly reduced impact. While the population is in great need of an educational program which would provide them with knowledge on basic hygiene and sanitation practices, the inadequacy of reliable and clean sources of village water presents one of the greatest obstacles to the prevention of disease. The provision of both health care and disease prevention are primarily a function of government service personnel training and physical infrastructure. The present constraint to the provision of these elements, and thus the development program of Benin, is the financial resources available to the government.

Past external assistance efforts, following both the proclivities of the donors and previous governments, have been unbalanced and concentrated on the industrial/commercial sectors and the provision of heavy infrastructure. The efforts of the present government to lessen its previous dependence on France by soliciting increased assistance from the socialist bloc resulted in reduction of French assistance without a compensating increase from the other donors.

As has been speculated by some observers, the socialist experience begun by Benin in 1972 caused reluctance among traditional donors to

invest in the rural areas since they were unsure of the extent to which the GPRB intended to pursue its proclaimed Marxist ideology. As infrastructure and industrial projects were relatively neutral interventions, Western donors felt comfortable in associating with such forms of assistance. This in turn reenforced the development dream - the steel mill syndrome - which is dominant in many young governments of developing countries which equate modernization and development with industrialization. It is easily reenforced by donors who succumb to the lure of least resistance and by-pass fundamental development problems in preference to turn-key projects. It is also reenforced by donors who demand a change in emphasis prior to their participation. This strategy produces neither the change nor the participation.

Entente Fund and Regional AID Activities

Suggestions have been made that AID bilateral programs in Benin should be limited to the health sector and that agriculture efforts should be dealt with by regional AID programs and/or projects by the AID-supported Entente Fund - an arm of the regional Entente Council formed by Benin, the Ivory Coast, Niger, Togo, and Upper Volta. However, despite the present efforts of the Entente Fund, it has not sufficiently addressed the long-term needs of Benin. The Entente Fund was originally formed and given assistance due to AID's previous limitations on bilateral programs.

A REDSO/WA assessment is currently under way to determine whether, and in what context, AID should continue this support. A preliminary conclusion reached by REDSO is that any further AID funds in support of the Entente Fund should be devoted to projects of a truly regional nature rather than country-specific subprojects which could be more effectively implemented through the bilateral AID offices and missions now present in those countries. The Mission believes the use of the Entente Fund to implement AID-funded, bilateral-type projects only serves to introduce another intermediary between AID and the recipient country at best without any cost savings. Secondly, the use of an intermediary with its own criteria and procedures lessens AID's effective control over the use of the financial resources and may produce support of projects which are not of the highest priority

within a bilateral strategy. While projects may be in the right sector, AID has little control over the choice of projects within that sector.

AID-assisted Entente Fund activities in Benin are presently confined to projects to improve the health and production of small ruminants, improve production of corn in one southern province and sorghum in one northern province, and to increase the availability of credit to private enterprise. Except for the loans to private enterprise, these activities are not yet operational. As such, it is not yet possible to assess their impact on Benin's rural sector. In the case of the private enterprise loan activity, an evaluation commissioned by REDSO/WA has just been completed.

Although the evaluation's focus was on the participation of women in the program, it appears that the Development Bank of Benin, using Entente Fund loan funds over the last five years, has been able to meet their objectives by making loans available to private entrepreneurs for a variety of commercial purposes, including trade in textiles, food, cosmetics, and diversified commodities. The Development Bank of Benin made a significantly larger percentage of its loans to women than most banks in other Entente countries. This is the type of truly regional project which the Mission regards as a legitimate Entente Fund activity.

Other AID regional projects, such as SAFGRAD, SHDS and AMDP, are indeed complementary to Benin's development requirements and should continue to provide inputs into the program. However, they cannot provide the magnitude of specific project interventions required for developmental impact.

Other Donors

Historically, the Beninese have relied heavily upon the French for wide-ranging support that has varied from construction of the original port in the early sixties and general budgetary support to support for certain agricultural projects. Though wide-ranging, French assistance has been declining since 1972 in accord with Benin's desire to lessen its dependence on France.

Past assistance from Canada had focused on higher education. Support of higher education has been devoted to training high-level civil servants in specific specialties, and in constructing, equipping, and staffing a technical institute on the campus of the University of Benin. The Institute is training secretaries, administrative support specialists, and laboratory technicians. Intending to expand its assistance program to Benin, Canada had recently been expected to participate in programs for village water supply. However, it has since redirected its assistance resources towards participation in the major expansion of the Cotonou port.

West Germany has primarily concentrated its resources on communications, having financed development of television facilities in Benin and helped with the training of its journalists. It is also financing a feasibility study for a new bridge in Porto Novo and is financing miscellaneous small efforts.

At Benin's request, the FED has spread its resources over a series of very small projects in various sectors. It is also providing economic support to Benin under the Lome Convention's STABEX program.

The IBRD has concentrated most of its contributions in the transport sector, putting 70% of its funds into four road projects in Benin. It has also contributed studies and coordination of financing on the expansion of the Cotonou port. Its current major effort is a program for feeder road rehabilitation, expansion and maintenance. Its agricultural assistance programs have focused on cash crops such as palm oil and cotton, and, most recently, on a technical assistance effort to improve management of a para-statal agricultural production agency and the new agricultural-extension agency.

The WHO has recently focused on development of the regional public health institute for West African medical doctors, general planning and technical assistance, and coordinating a modest program of vaccinations.

The FAO, which has just recently assigned an FAO representative to Benin, is placing initial efforts on planning assistance and on cattle.

As in the case of its collaboration with AID on the rural water supply effort, the UNDP concentrates its resources on high-level coordination and planning assistance, with the significant exception that it is recommending commitment of UN Capital Development Fund resources to support both the program of IBRD-UNICEF to provide potable water to rural areas, and AID's water supply project.

In concert with the World Bank, UNICEF is supporting the development of 4-D clubs (equivalent to 4-H clubs) and through them on the drilling of wells primarily in the Zou and Mono provinces.

UNESCO is providing some technical assistance to the education sector.

China is providing technical assistance in rice-growing, as well as providing a stadium and omni-sports complex. Cuba has provided medical doctors and medical assistants. North Korean assistance has comprised planning, medical and technical advisors, including rice experts.

AID Assistance Strategy

AID's assistance strategy in Benin should focus on those key sectors which are essential to an improvement in the lives of the rural populations, i.e., health and agriculture.

1. Health

AID's health strategy for Benin will be considered within the larger context of interrelated variables including nutrition, education, sanitation and potable water. This strategy for Benin should pursue two major objectives: (1) Basic prevention of disease; and (2) expansion and improvement of the rural health delivery system.

a. Disease Prevention

Disease prevention measures will concentrate on the provision of village water supply systems and basic education on sanitation. These project actions will also emphasize the development of local and governmental capacity to assure the functioning, maintenance, and continued expansion of the program. AID's initial contribution to this program will be placed in Atacora and Borgou provinces the two northern and most disadvantaged provinces of the country. The Peace Corps will cooperate in the well-digging portions of the project.

As another preventive health measure, AID strategy should build on its recent regional efforts through the SHDS project to provide material assistance for expanded vaccination programs against the most prevalent childhood diseases.

b. Health Delivery System

The proposed AID strategy is to assist the government of Benin implement its policy of effective and adequate health delivery services on a decentralized basis. As a key contribution to this effort, opportunities exist for AID to build on its recent pilot efforts in maternal and child health, (MCH) which includes family planning, by developing two MCH training centers for training paramedical and auxiliary personnel capable of providing both curative medical care and advice and information on disease prevention. As part of the Government's national health plan, AID can assist in the expansion and equipment of the existing system of rural health centers in which these paramedical workers will work.

An assessment of the health sector from a systems analysis point-of-view would greatly assist the formulation and design of further efforts to improve the effectiveness of and long-run impact of these government-sponsored services. With this end in mind, both long and short-term training in health leadership and technical skills should be considered. Because of the rapid urbanization which is affecting the sprawl of cities and towns and increasing the problems of the urban poor. AID strategy should consider future assistance in urban sanitation infrastructure.

In order that health services are of optimum acceptability and effectiveness in rural areas, the GPRB has recently requested AID assistance in a program which would investigate and develop the rich availability and proven effectiveness of traditional medicines in Benin and to ultimately license its practitioners and legitimize their partnership with the modern medicine sector.

c. Nutrition

Nutrition strategy will call for a continuation of the past PL 480 program conducted by Catholic Relief Service (CRS) which has concentrated primarily on delivery of high protein foods such as bulgur wheat and CSM to maternal and child health centers and secondarily on school-child feeding programs. Dependent upon the success of the soybean production and nutrition project to be carried out by CRS under a FY 79 OPG, this strategy would envisage a follow-on program which would expand the project actions to rural villages untouched by the pilot program phase.

2. Agricultural Strategy

AID assistance in agriculture should concentrate on the Government of Benin's capacity to conduct applied agricultural research and provide efficient extension services through assistance with rural agriculture infrastructure and training of government service personnel. Project interventions should concentrate on the two northern provinces. Either through AID assistance or through studies performed by other donors such as the IBRD or the AFDB, an adequate sector assessment should be included within the overall sector strategy. Such additional information will be complemented by the socio-economic study of the northern provinces to be presently undertaken under the auspices of ROAP.

The GPRB has requested specific assistance in the area of applied agronomic research that would improve the quality of technological advice and services going to small farm-holders in Benin. Other opportunities exist to improve the quality of the agricultural faculty at the

University of Benin, which is planning the establishment of a series of localized institutes in various parts of Benin. Such assistance could also facilitate the coordination of Benin's research efforts with those of the nearby International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) in Nigeria.

The development of surface water resources in the northern provinces presents a further opportunity for AID to go beyond the basic initial assistance to research and extension and engage in direct production of cultivable land through the provision of dependable water resources.

3. Participant Training

In relation to the needs for academic and technical training in Benin the regional AMDP has not been able to supply sufficient scholarships to have an effective impact on the development of Benin's human resources in the top level of technical skills required for a sustained rural development effort. Although future projects would include a participant training component, the necessity to tie such training to the specific project would seriously limit AID's ability to significantly address training needs. Present strategy would therefore envisage a country-specific training project which could accommodate a broad range of training related to the rural sector.

Proposed Assistance Planning Level

| Category | Fiscal Year (\$'000) | | | | | <u>Total</u> |
|--------------------------|----------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|--------------|
| | <u>81</u> | <u>82</u> | <u>83</u> | <u>84</u> | <u>85</u> | |
| <u>Health:</u> | 4,050 | 3,750 | 4,100 | 4,100 | 4,100 | 20,100 |
| Rural Water Supply | (1,800)* | (1,500)* | (1,500) | (1,500) | (1,500) | (7,800) |
| Health Delivery Systems | (1,500) | (1,500) | (2,000) | (2,000) | (2,000) | (9,000) |
| Nutrition | | | | | | |
| OPG | (150) | (150) | - | - | | |
| PL-480, Title II | (600) | (600) | (600) | (600) | (600) | (3,000) |
| <u>Agriculture:</u> | 2,500 | 2,500 | 3,000 | 3,000 | 3,000 | 14,000 |
| Research | (1,000) | (1,000) | (1,000) | (500) | (500) | (4,000) |
| Extension/Infrastructure | (500) | (500) | (1,000) | (1,000) | (1,000) | (4,000) |
| Surface Water | (1,000) | (1,000) | (1,000) | (1,500) | (1,500) | (6,000) |
| <u>Training:</u> | 200 | 200 | 200 | 150 | 150 | 900 |
| | 6,750 | 6,450 | 7,300 | 7,250 | 7,250 | 35,000 |

*Continuation of project to be approved in FY 79

This planning level is indicative of the general magnitudes which could usefully be utilized within the various sub-sector categories. It does not represent allocations toward specific projects. It is noted that the above five-year level totals considerably less than the level which would have been indicated by using the FY 85 Indicative Planning Allocation figure for Benin which was supplied by AID/W.