

Benin Profile

Official country name	REPUBLIC OF BENIN
Motto	Brotherhood – Justice – Labor
Currency	CFA Franc
Official language	French
Surface area	115, 762 sq km
Total population in 2008	8,053,690 inhabitants of which 4,187,919 women and 3,865,771 men
Density	59 inhabitants per sq km
Urban population in 2008	Estimated at 3,132,885 inhabitants
Rural population in 2008	Estimated at 4,920,805 inhabitants
Annual population growth rate	3.25 %
GDP growth rate	5.1%
HIV/AIDS prevalence rate	1.8%
Maternal rate	397 for 100,000 births
Infant Mortality Rate	67 for 1,000 births
Net Schooling Rate ()	7,9%
Girl/Boy Ratio (primary education)	0.75
Literacy Rate 15-24 years old	45.6%
Access Rate to drinking water	6.3%
Population living under poverty line in 2007	33.3% (56% of women, 44% of men)
Human development Indicator in 2008	0.471
Administrative Organization	12 Regions divided into 77 Communes and Urban Districts, gathering 569 Town Sections, which in turn are divided into 1011 Town Districts and 2367 Villages. The government is represented at regional level by Prefects; at local level by Mayors, at Town Sections level by Heads of Town Sections, at villages and town districts levels, respectively by Chiefs of Villages and Chiefs of Town districts. Only the prefect is appointed by the Government; others are elected by the population.
Fundamental Law	The Constitution of December 11, 1990: A presidential political system with a clear separation of powers: the Executive, the Legislative and the judiciary, each acting as a challenge to established authority. The parliament is unicameral.
Institutions of the Republic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Executive: The President of the Republic, Head of the Government: Dr Thomas Boni YAYI was elected in 2006 for a 5-year term. - The National Assembly: It gathers 83 members elected by the population for a 4-year term. It is responsible for enacting laws and checking the Government policy. -The Constitutional Court: It comprises 7 members appointed for 5 years and has the duty to ensure that laws and statutory decisions are consistent with the Constitution. It is also responsible for the monitoring of Constitutional organs as well as ensuring transparency during the election of the President of the Republic. Moreover, it stands as a watchdog for basic human rights as well as civil liberties. Every citizen can refer an act, Human Rights issues to it or search for it to declare an act unconstitutional.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Judiciary: It is separated from the Legislative and the Executive. It is exercised by the Supreme Court as well as Courts and Tribunals created pursuant to the Constitution. - Broadcasting and Communication High Authority: It encompasses 9 members appointed for 5 years and is responsible for the monitoring of information and is liable to ensure equal access to government means of information and communication for political parties, associations as well as for citizens. - The Economic and Social Council: It consists of 30 members appointed for 5 years and has the duty to advise the President of the Republic on the economic and social bills, ruling or order he submits to it. - The High Court of Justice: It gathers the members of the Constitutional Court except its Chairperson, six Members of Parliament elected by the National Assembly, and the Chairperson of the Supreme Court. It is competent to try the President of the Republic and Members of his Government. Pursuant to the regulation set by the National Assembly the decision to prosecute and commit the latter for trial, is voted for by a two third majority of the Members comprising the Parliament
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Benin History

Benin is the birthplace of ancient and prosperous civilizations which thrived in kingdoms centered around city-states. The three major kingdoms (created by the Fon ethnic group) were the kingdom of Allada, founded in the 16th century, kingdom of Abomey, founded in 1625 and kingdom of Porto-Novo, formerly known as Adjace and later on as Hogbonou. Those well-structured political entities had prosperous urban centers. As early as the 17th century, they developed a local trade based on slave trade, then on palm-oil tree after the abolition of slave trade in 1807. That slave trade-based economy favored the installation alongside the coast (known as the "Slave Coast") of trading posts managed by the British, the Danish, the Portuguese and the French.

- 1650: The British built a fort in Ouidah.
- 1664: First installation of missionaries in Juda (Ouidah).
- 1704: France was allowed to build a port in Ouidah while in 1752, the Portuguese settled in Hogbonou renamed as Porto-Novo.
- 1863: The first French protectorate was established with the King of Porto-Novo, seeking support against the King of Abomey and attacks by the British established in Lagos. The same year, Glele, the King of Abomey, allowed the French to settle in Cotonou.
- 1882: The sovereign of Porto-Novo Kingdom signed a new protectorate agreement with France which sent in a "French Resident" with the duty to assist the King.
- 1894: Dahomey was colonized by France, after the Abomey King surrendered. A decree designated the new territories as "Dahomey Colony and its Dependences".
- 1904: Dahomey was included in the AOF (The French West Africa)".
- Dec. 4, 1958: Proclamation of the Republic of Dahomey.
- Aug. 1, 1960: Independence of Dahomey.
- Oct. 26, 1972: Major Mathieu Kerekou seized power.
- Nov.30, 1975: Dahomey became the People's Republic of Benin (RPB) through the initiative of a military and revolutionary government led by Colonel Kerekou.
- Dec.1989: Under mass protests and international pressure, President Kerekou gave up Marxism-Leninism after 17 years of Marxist regime rule.
- Feb.19-28, 1990: The « Nation's Living Forces Conference » set up a transition government led by a Prime Minister, Nicephore Soglo.
- March 1991: Presidential elections based on multiparty system: Nicephore Soglo was elected as the President of the Republic.
- 1996-2006: Presidential elections: return to power of former President, Mathieu Kerekou for two terms of office.
- 2006: President Boni Yayi was elected for a 5-year term of office.

Foreign affairs

Benin is a member of the Conseil de l'Entente, OCAM (African and Malagasy Common Organization), as well as ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) and the AU (African Union). The country is also a member of WAEMU (West African Economic and Monetary Union) and the BCEAO (Central Bank of West African States). Benin is a member of the United Nations and most major international organizations (World Bank, IMF, WTO, OECD). Benin government partners with the European Union through the Lome Agreements dated February 28, 1975, renewed in 1979, 1984 and 1989. The last ACP-EU meeting was held in Cotonou, and the new Cotonou Agreement signed on June 23, 2000 laid the foundations of a new cooperation for the 20 coming years. Currently Benin is chairing the Least Developed Countries' group and is also co-chairing the Joint Assembly of ACP-EU countries.