



Benin Development Profile 2009

Capital City: Port Novo (Political); Cotonou (Administrative)

Population: 8,791,832

Modern day Benin traces its history back to the Dahomey Kingdom, which dominated the region during the 17th and 18th centuries. It was labeled by some commentators as the “Black Sparta” due to its emphasis on creating both male and female military corps. However by the middle of the 18th century Dahomey start to lose its status as a regional power, with the French subsequently being able to take over the area and include it in its French West Africa colony block. France granted full independence to Dahomey in 1960, however for the next twelve years the country was to suffer from ethnic strife, numerous coups and regime changes. A military coup established power across the country in 1972, forming a Marxist government and renamed the country to Benin, after the body of water which lies adjacent to the country (the Bight of Benin). The government gradually abandoned its Marxist approach over the following years and subsequently allowed elections in 1979.

In 1991, Nicéphore Soglo the then Benin president loss an election and became the first black African president to voluntarily step down from office. Since this time the success of the fair multi-party elections in Benin has won praise internationally, with Benin widely being considered a model democracy in Africa. However great challenges lie ahead in order to improve the conditions of people living with the country. Only a minority of the population has access to primary health care services, with many people dying from easily preventable diseases. Adult literacy rate still remain very low and much work is needed to ensure that the Beninese can have greater opportunities in future.

mail@energyforopportunity.org
www.energyforopportunity.org



Human Development Index ranking:

161st (out of 179)

GDP per capita:

US\$1259

Adult Literacy:

39.7%

Life Expectancy:

55.8 years

Physicians per 100,000 people:

4

Under 5 Infant mortality:

123 deaths per 1000 births

Access to safe drinking water:

65% of the population

Electricity Access:

22% (urban 50%, rural 6%)

Sources: UNDP (2008) *Human Development Report 2007/2008: Fighting climate change: Human solidarity in a divided world*, United Nations Development Programme; UNDP (2008) *Human Development Indices: A Statistical Update 2008*; United Nations Development Programme, UNICEF (2009) *State of the World's Children*, United Nations Children's Fund, CIA (2009) *The World Factbook*, Central Intelligence Agency.