



Benin and Togo

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Country Snapshot

Population:	8.7 million
Life expectancy at birth:	61 years
Adult literacy rate:	41%
Access to improved water source:	65%
GDP per capita (PPP)*:	US\$1,312
Infant mortality rate: per 1,000 live births	76
Maternal mortality rate: per 100,000 live births	840
HIV prevalence:	1.2%

Benin

Togo

6.5 million
63 years
53%
59%
US\$788
64
510
3.3%



Sources: UNICEF State of the World's Children Report 2010, *UNDP Human Development Report 2009

Program Overview CARE started working in Benin in 1999 and today is recognized for its education, gender-based violence, and microfinance interventions. Nearly half the population of Benin is under the age of 15, and one of the major challenges to be addressed is the improvement of the legal and political status of women in Benin. CARE conducted a study in 2009 and then designed, together with partners and participants, a strategy for the empowerment of women and girls. CARE Benin is currently working with partners to design new programs on maternal and reproductive health, food security, nutrition, and adaptation to climate change. CARE Benin also oversees operations in neighboring Togo, which began in 1986. Since then, CARE Togo has been involved in programs in health, water infrastructure, prevention of child trafficking, and capacity building for community organizations.

Education

CARE has worked for over six years in the Borgou department of Benin to increase equitable access to a quality basic education. Most of the 13,000 direct beneficiaries are girls. Strategies include: community mobilization; improvement in school practices; promotion of parents' and teachers' associations (PTAs); involvement in school performance monitoring and follow-up of girls in school; strengthening stakeholders' capacities in promoting initiatives for girls' schooling; and girls' capacity building in leadership skills. As local governments need to lead the efforts to ensure access to a quality education, CARE works to build the capacity of elected authorities to deliver on their responsibilities.

Through community mobilization efforts, based on carefully designed Information, Education, and Communication campaigns, CARE raises awareness about young girls' right to access to basic education rather than stay at home to help in the household. CARE supports cooperation between community-based organizations, local aid agencies, and other key players in the communities to increase enrolment and retention of girls at school. In addition, teachers are trained on class equity, gender and development, and children's rights. CARE also completed a project in Togo in June 2010 which

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enhanced educational rights of girls facing exploitative and hazardous child labour through advocacy and implementation of monitoring systems.

To ensure good governance, CARE supports PTAs, which play a key role in mobilizing communities to demand and support quality education. At the same time, they help schools respond to children’s needs and address any obstacles in the educational system that keep children, both boys and girls, from enjoying their right to a quality education and a positive school environment.

Gender-based Violence

As part of its gender-based violence interventions, CARE Benin began a project to ‘Enable Mobilization and Policy Implementation for Women’s Rights’ (EMPOWER). Through this project, CARE builds the capacity of six local organizations to mobilize over 325,000 Beninese, raise their awareness, and engage them in a successful behaviour-change process. EMPOWER initiates dialogue among communities and organizations actively fighting gender-based violence and provides support for survivors’ short-, medium-, and long-term needs. The ultimate short-term objective is to enable the Benin Government’s Social Promotion Centres and civil society organizations to efficiently support gender-based-violence survivors.

The EMPOWER approach is multidimensional, bringing together leaders and institutions from various social and professional groups: traditional, cultural, religious, and governmental authorities; aid agencies; lawyers; education officials (from schools and vocational centres); health and shelter providers; microfinance institutions; etc. EMPOWER is the first countrywide project to combat gender-based violence in Benin. CARE International is using this unique opportunity to reduce poverty by decreasing gender-based violence in Benin. A similar project, called ETODE, will last for three years and build on EMPOWER project experiences.

Economic Development

In 2003, CARE Benin started PRISM, a three-year project to strengthen the microfinance sector in general through networking and information management and by

developing better microfinance services and products. PADSA/CAFIR, a five-year economic empowerment project, began in 2005 to apply efficient natural resource management as a strategy for the social and economic advancement of the rural poor. CARE focuses on strengthening community-owned and -managed microfinance institutions to diversify services and products, improve access to financial services for the marginalized rural population, and engage and empower women. In 2007 and 2008, CARE Benin implemented a village savings and loan association pilot project in the Donga and Collines departments, benefitting around 2,500 women through 85 associations. In addition, CARE Benin is implementing a large microfinance program to support two national microfinance institution networks, RENACA and ACFB. The program reaches 47 community-managed local microfinance institutions in 10 of the 12 departments in Benin, thus serving more than 65,000 members as of June 2009. Similarly, CARE Togo works to support women’s agriculture through its project to develop microfinance, train savings and loan associations, and improve women’s access to agriculture expertise.

Governance

As part of its ongoing commitment to good governance and accountability, CARE Benin established an Advisory Board—a dedicated group of individuals not employed by CARE—which provides independent, non-political, non-sectarian advice and feedback to CARE Benin’s Director and Senior Leadership Team. Over 40 civil society organizations have learned to organize themselves, manage their activities effectively, and reach policymakers as a result of CARE’s training, coaching, and technical, organizational, and institutional support.

Major Donors

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