



REPUBLIC OF BENIN

NEWSLETTER

MAJOR EVENTS OF 2020

JANUARY 2021

COVID-19 MANAGEMENT

74.12 billion CFA francs is the amount of the government's support plan to contain the effects of the health crisis and revive an economy doubly hit, in 2020, by the closing of the border with Nigeria and the global economic consequences of the crisis due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Measures taken

On April 6 2020, Benin recorded its first COVID-19 case. Since the beginning of the pandemic, over 396208 tests have been conducted with **3893 positive cases**, of which **3421 have recovered** and **420 are still under treatment**. **There have been 52 deaths**.

As part of the fight against the spread of Covid-19, certain preventive measures have been taken by the Government. These primarily concern health measures and steps taken to limit contagion and manage the flow of patients in hospitals. The Government introduced protective measures (*i.e.* wearing of masks, physical and social distancing) as well as the promotion of hand hygiene, and implemented an epidemiological surveillance system through the installation of 46 Covid-19 Rapid Response Teams (**RRTs**) in 34 health zones throughout the 12 districts of the country, reinforced by additional staff (150 doctors and 700 agents from all healthcare institutions). The current prevention measures include:

- recommendation to keep a safe distance of at least one meter and for establishments receiving the public (*i.e.* banks, supermarkets, bars, restaurants, companies) to provide protective and hygienic gears and products ;
- obligation for transit carriers to provide appropriate masks for their employees and passengers;
- obligation of systematic self-isolation for all travellers from affected or at-risk countries (mandatory quarantine of any person coming to Benin by air) and restrictions on non-essential travel to affected or at-risk countries ;
- suspension of external missions for all members of the Government and public administration officials, with private sector actors being urged to observe the same caution;
- suspension of all demonstrations and all other non-essential events of a sporting, cultural, religious, political or festive nature (*i.e.* the suspension of preparations for the pilgrimage to Mecca);
- provision of stocks of protective masks at a regulated and affordable price.

The Government also developed a Covid-19 community response strategy with the support of its partners, including local NGOs and established health brigades in more than 5,000 villages. This Covid-19 community response sets forth five Pandemic Management Standard Operating Procedures, which consists of (i) alert management, (ii) suspicious case management, (iii) contact management, (iv) traveller management, and (v) management of co-infection with malaria. A call centre has been established for reports of suspicious cases and non-compliance with health measures.

COVID-19 STATISTICS



GOVERNEMENT
DE LA RÉPUBLIQUE
DU BENIN

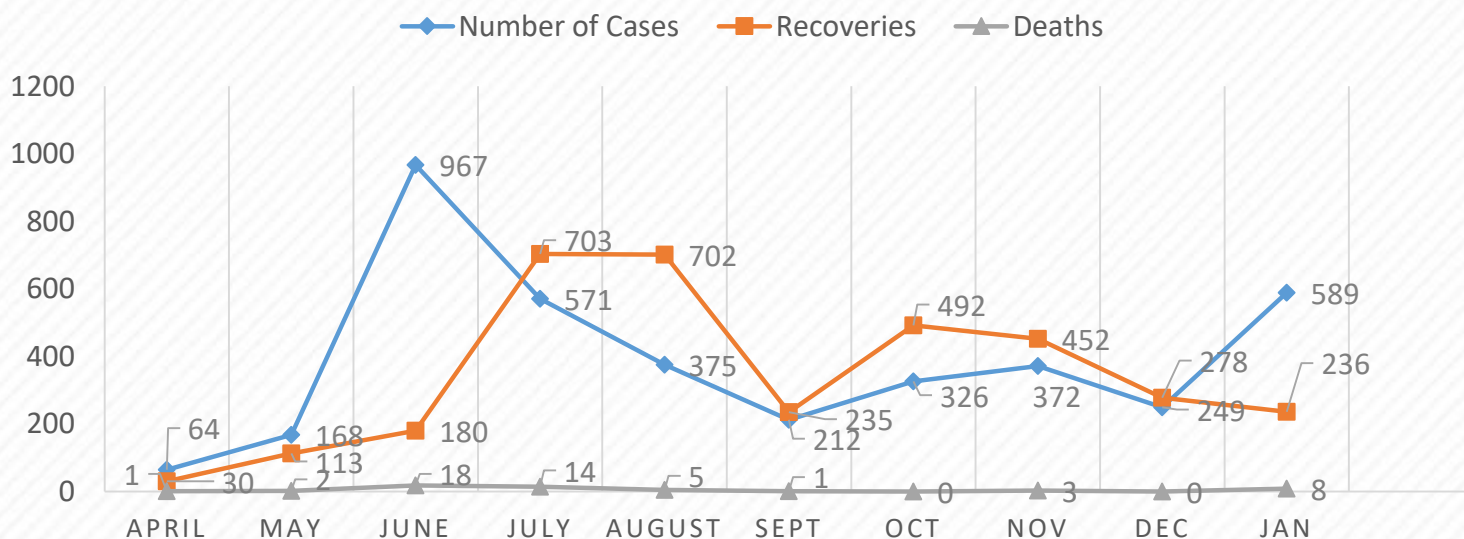
Coronavirus (Covid19)

In connection with diagnosing Covid-19 and the treatment of infected patients, the Government established 13 screening laboratories in the 12 districts of the country and three dedicated care sites (Cotonou, Allada and Parakou). Two additional dedicated care sites of 100 beds are being installed in Natitingou and Abomey-Calavi. In order to limit the spread of Covid-19, a system of sorting, screening and management of travellers arriving in Beninese territory was implemented at the Cotonou Airport.

As the Covid-19 pandemic evolved in Benin, new measures reinforced those already in place. The following additional measures have been implemented since 30 March 2020, for two months, in particular:

- establishment of a *cordon sanitaire* around the 15 communities most affected or exposed to the pandemic, *i.e.* Cotonou, Abomey-Calavi, Sô-ava, Allada, Ouidah, Tori, Zè, Sèmè-Podji, Porto-Novo, Aguégues, Akpro-Missérété and Adjarra, and the prohibition of entry and exit from the *cordon sanitaire* area unless authorized to do so by prefects, the *cordon sanitaire* was lifted on 11 May 2020 ;
- prohibition of grouping more than ten persons in any place, except in commercial areas, with the obligation to respect the minimum safety distance of one meter between persons;
- closing of bars, nightclubs, and other entertainment facilities;
- suspension of the public transport of persons, except the transport of goods and limiting the number of passengers on board taxis and boats to a maximum of three ;
- mandatory use of protective masks by all persons in all places, especially within the *cordon sanitaire*.

COVID-19 STATISTICS BY MONTH - BENIN



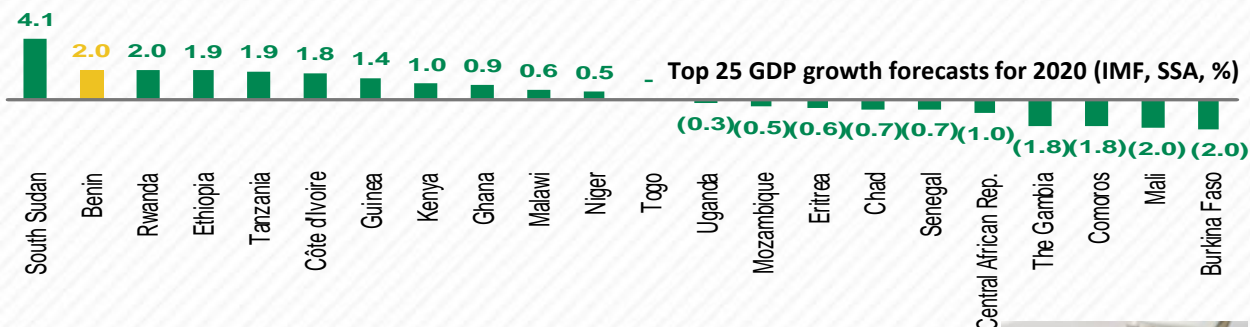
MACROECONOMIC PERFORMANCE

The latest IMF estimates and the first figures available for 2020 show the good performance of Benin's economy despite the pandemic caused by the coronavirus and the Nigerian border closing as of 20 August 2019, which finally reopened in December 2020, with a ban enforced on the import of rice, poultry and a few other products.

GDP growth for 2020



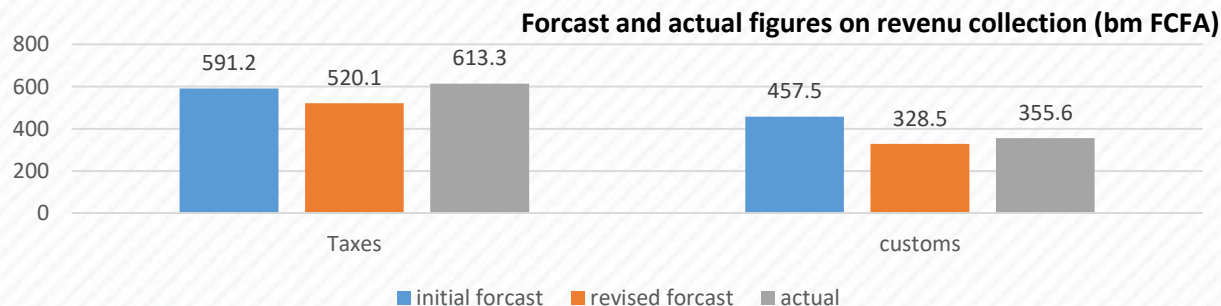
According to the IMF, Benin should register the second best economic growth in Sub-Saharan Africa, thus ranking better than Côte d'Ivoire (1.8) and Senegal (0.7).



Tax revenues



Mobilization of tax revenues has exceeded forecasted performance.



RATINGS AND RECOGNITION

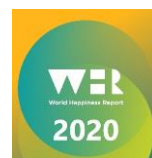
Benin's ability to maintain its reforms along with investments that enabled the country to keep planned projects on track and the smart management of the COVID-19 pandemic made it possible to keep good ratings and improve rankings.

Standard and Poor's annotation

**STANDARD
& POOR'S**

Standard and Poor's confirms Benin's **B+/ stable note**, hence keeping the country's top position among its African peers, at the same level with Senegal and Kenya. The agency also maintains its positive outlook with **real GDP growth at 6.5%** on average over the 2019-2022 period supported by public and private investments.

World happiness report



Benin has achieved the best progression moving from the 102nd position in 2012 to 86th in 2020. The report takes into consideration indicators such as GDP per capita, social support, freedom to make life changes, and perceptions of corruption.

<https://happiness-report.s3.amazonaws.com/2020/WHR20.pdf>

Recognitions



Earlier last year, the AfDB African Economic Outlook has reported six African countries among the **most dynamic economies in the world**: Rwanda, Ethiopia, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Tanzania and Benin.

In December 2020, the minister of Finance, Romuald Wadagni, was awarded the title of the best African minister of finance at the Financial Afrik Awards for the third consecutive year, as he has received this same award in December 2018 and a title of best minister of finance at the African Banker Awards in 2019.

The World Bank has updated its countries' classification by income group on July 1st, 2020. For the first time in its history, Benin has improved its position and has been **moved from the low-income economies category to the lower-middle-income economies**. This classification is based on several economic criteria such as the economic growth, the inflation, the exchange rate, and the population growth.

World Bank's assessments and rankings



THE WORLD BANK

CPIA Score: The World Bank through its Country Policy and Institutional Assessment (CPIA) raises the country's score from 3.5 in 2019 to 3.6 in 2020, the first increase in the past decade. Thus making it the second best CPIA score in Africa in terms of economic management.

Budget Transparency: When it comes to budgetary transparency, the country ranked first among Francophone West African countries with an above average score of 49, followed by Senegal (46), Mali (38), and Cote d'Ivoire (34).

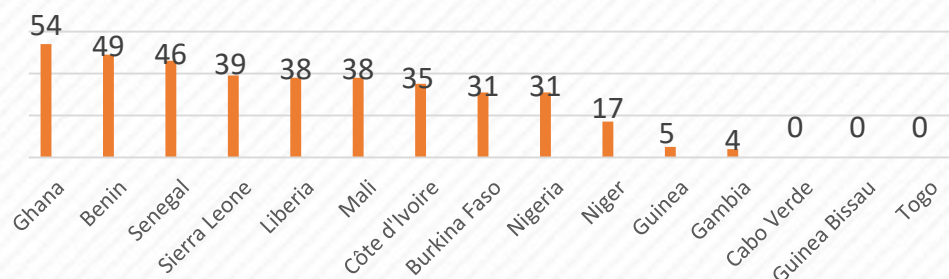
Public Debt Dissemination Practices: The World Bank assessment of public debt dissemination practices in IDA countries places Benin on top of all 76 IDA Countries with 7 out of 9 indicators clearly disclosed online.

Open Budget Survey



The 2019 Open Budget Survey published in March 2020, places Benin second among the 15 members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). As governments and international experts increasingly recognize the importance of public participation and fiscal transparency as key components of improved decision-making and accountability, the International Budget Partnership (IBP) and the Global Initiative for Fiscal Transparency (GIFT) have launched a new initiative with five countries – Benin, Liberia, Nigeria, Senegal, and South Africa to support the development and launch of new public participation mechanisms by 2022.

Budget Transparency Rating (ECOWAS)



https://www.internationalbudget.org/sites/default/files/2020-04/2019_Report_EN.pdf

BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

With the goal to attract direct private investments and boost small and medium business creation, the government took several measures to simplify doing business in Benin.

Online registration



The eRegistration platform, enabling entrepreneurs to create their business online and receive a certificate of incorporation within hours, places Benin, jointly with Estonia, as the [fastest countries in the world in which to start a company](#), jumping ahead of New Zealand, Georgia and Hong Kong, China according to UNCTAD.

Express construction permit



To attract and facilitate new corporate and project implementation in the country, from both national and foreign investors, a new digital portal was launched on the 11th of March to enable the online application for a construction permit. This allows corporates and project owners to apply for construction permits online for their offices and factories premises construction in Benin. Permits are delivered in 14 days within Cotonou and on average in less than 25 days in other cities.

With this reform, it is about twenty days saved in terms of duration and 427,000 CFA francs (about 700 USD) cost reduction compared to the previous process.

Water and electricity Free connection



Small and medium enterprises and industries in Benin are connected free of charge to the water network of the National Water Company of Benin (Soneb). [The free connection to the water network takes one week](#). Enterprises with low electricity consumption also benefit from a free electricity connection. Yet another measure to facilitate and attract private international investors and entrepreneurs.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Due to its geographical position, Benin is a natural strategic gateway to the whole West Africa. To take advantage of this, the Government is implementing several major projects to modernize transport, logistics and trade infrastructure.

Road construction



In the infrastructure and transport sector, the rehabilitation of 835 km of existing roads, and the construction of 889 km new roads have been made to facilitate the transportation of people and goods. The government's goal is to extend the national road network, including bypasses and national highways. In this sector, no less than 22 projects in 9 municipalities were designed, hence creating thousands of jobs. With an investment of almost 2000 billion Fcfa these projects are of incomparable scale and include the rehabilitation, development and asphaltting of urban roads. The asphaltage project is one of the biggest project of the current government, designed to considerably change the face of 9 major cities.

The Benin Government has also invested in street security, lightening and urban green spaces.

Automated management summary systems were installed at all toll booths in order to optimize and secure the revenues generated.

Optical fiber and digital network



Last year, at least 2000 km of optical fiber deployed across the country to promote high-speed and very high-speed Internet. A Digital Code has been adopted, and a reorganization has been carried out with specialized agencies to deal with specific challenges met throughout the process. The current government also created a national data center for the use of public administration.

Energy



With the thermal power plant of **127 Mw** installed in mid 2019, enabling the country to go from **0% autonomy to 60%**, the government's goal is to reach a 100% autonomy by 2023. In that regard many solar off-grid power plants are being installed with the support of the Millenium Challenge Account (MCA) and the Agence Française de Développement (AFD).

8 solar mini-grids and 10 hybrid solar mini-grids has been installed to distribute electrical energy to 19 localities. Likewise, 20 solar mini-grids and 22 solar photovoltaic systems will be installed in a near future to provide additional clean energy in 20 more localities. These various initiatives, along with many others will increase electricity production capacity and provide reliable energy to a total of 128 localities.

The installation of a new thermal station is being discussed with several partners to fully fill the existing power gap.

Hospitals



Launched on September 28, the construction of the University Hospital Center of Abomey-Calavi will bring forth a two-story hospital center with a capacity of **more than 430 beds on a surface area of over 40,000 m²**, designed to include six large inpatient units.

The technical platform will combine three day-hospitals, emergency rooms, laboratories for medical imaging and radiotherapy, and nine operating theaters. The building will also include learning facilities and staff accommodation.

Airport



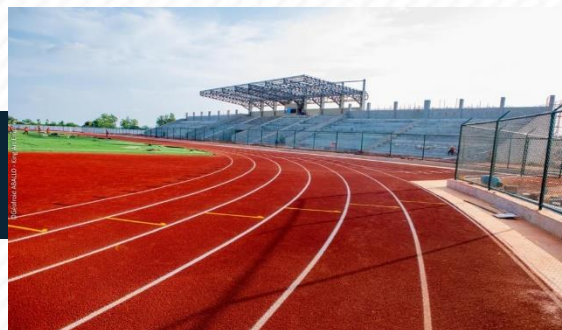
The massive renovation at the Cotonou International airport is almost coming to an end, and is expected to make it possible to serve more international companies, hence increasing direct destinations from Cotonou and the number of travelers passing through the airport. Both external and internal areas were rethought and rearranged to provide a safer environment, compatible with the COVID-19 safety rules. [Intelligent thermometry disinfection channels](#) were installed, [larger and more appealing interiors](#) were created to improve customer experience and a bigger parking lot was also constructed.



Local markets

The upgrade of urban and regional markets to become modern market infrastructures is another goal of the current government. This project is designed to improve the quality of life of the market users through sustainable materials, providing a safe and welcoming environment [20 markets](#) were selected out of 34, and the some of them will be delivered in 2021.

Stadiums



The construction of [22 sports stadiums](#) in various municipalities all over the country has considerably advanced. This social project is part of the current government's action program. The grandstand, the green lawn, the athletics track, the anti-hooligan grid and the media booth has been constructed and installed at most of them.

Port



The Autonomous Port of Cotonou (PAC) is one of the most dynamic in the Gulf of Guinea. The PAC contributes significantly to the mobilization of [customs and tax revenues](#) of the country. For the first time in its history, the Port welcomed a 300m ship, thus confirming its position as one of the most competitive seaports in the region. For better productivity, a digital platform was launched enabling port workers to access real time reliable and accurate marine traffic information.

It continues to strengthen its operational capacities namely by the acquisition of new tugs to manipulate larger ships and also plans to construct a new terminal to welcome ships as long as 360m in the near future.

The port has been under the [management of the Port of Antwerp International \(PAI\)](#) since 2018 with the aim to rapidly improve the efficiency of its management, its attractiveness and its profitability.



AGRICULTURE

The most important economic sector in Benin is agriculture. About two-thirds of the population lives on it and it provides 80 percent of export products.

Cotton



Benin remains for two (2) consecutive years, [Africa's first cotton producer](#) with a production of 715 000 tons for the most recent campaign. A 5.2% increase from the previous growing campaign.

Pineapple



Our production increased from 47 tons per hectare in 2015 to more than 63 tons by the end of 2019. The Sugarloaf Pineapple of Allada is [registered with the African Intellectual Property Organization \(OAPI\)](#).

Soyabeans



Soyabeans has also become an export product, with production increasing from 165,000 tons to 257,000 tons.

Vegetable growing



Benin has improved various vegetable production from 50,713 tons in 2019 to 190,000 tons in 2020.

Rice



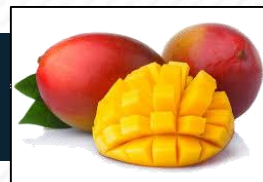
Rice production in the 2019-2020 season was a record 406,100 tons, and the rice self-sufficiency rate has now increased from 22.7% to 54.5%.

Shea



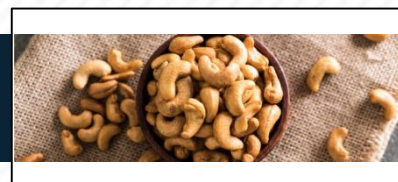
We have almost multiplied by four (4) the production in this sector, going from 50,713 tons in 2019 to 190,000 tons in 2020.

Mango



The mango sector is expected to constantly improve as 273 hectares has been set up with new plantations of different varieties destined for export.

Cashew



Cashew is the second largest exported produce after cotton with a production increase from 115,589.9 tons in 2018 to 130,276.5 tons by the end of 2019. The sector reached a production of 139,177.2 in 2021.

FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT

As agriculture becomes a booming sector, several factories are being installed for the transformation of local agricultural products.

The industrial zone of Glo-Djigbé



The industrial zone of Glo-Djigbé in the commune of Abomey-Calavi will be dedicated to the industrial transformation of local agricultural products in order to help Benin capitalize on its agricultural wealth. The ARISE group, a company owned by Olam International, a leading food and agri-business, will be responsible for the financing, construction and operation of this industrial zone including a [textile plant for the transformation of cotton](#).

BéninCajù



The BeninCajù project was set up for the integration and acceleration of the cashew sector in BENIN. The results of BeninCajù's activities translate into an increase in the volume of processed cashew nuts and sales of cashew products, improved yield and income for producers, large-scale job creation, and added value. maximum drawn from cashew by all actors. TOLARO GLOBAL, which valorizes cashew broken almonds, which are unprofitable and less sold than whole almonds, employs 2500 local workers.

Blue Skies



BLUE SKIES, an award winning fruit company opens a factory in Benin with the goal to export locally grown fruits. The company will supply trays of fresh chopped fruits to supermarkets in Europe such as Carrefour, Monoprix and Tesco, to only name a few. It is expected to make Benin a true distribution hub for pineapple, mango, coconut and a few other fruits. At full capacity, the company will be able to export 20 tons of products every day, employ thousands of local workers, and act as a source of opportunities for local producers.

TOURISM

Since 2016, the government of Benin has been developing a vast tourism promotion program through the revealing Benin action plan. The purpose of these projects is to promote the cultural heritage of Benin.

Construction of museums and historical sites

The historic city of Ouidah: The complex includes: a [voodoo arena](#) for the celebration of endogenous religions and various cultural events; two parking lots with over 350 spaces; a tourist esplanade with restaurants, bars and entertainment venues; [the historical reconstruction of a slave ship](#); a hotel zone of around 130 rooms and a floating promenade on the lagoon to only name a few. Work began on July 20, 2020 and will have to last 24 months.

Renovation of the Akaba Idenan Museum of Ketou: The project comprises the modernization of the museum and the paving of the access road as well as the interior and exterior courtyards of the museum.

The Royal Palace of Abomey: The project consists of the construction of a museum recounting the history of the Kingdom of Dahomey and Benin, and [the rehabilitation of the royal palaces classified as a UNESCO World Heritage Site](#). The financing agreement should be signed early 2021 and the works should take 5 years.

The royal Palace of Nikki: Every year, the celebration of the Gaani attracts thousands of people, hence making Nikki an important tourist asset. The rehabilitation of the royal palace and the construction of [a horse arena](#) for the city brings an undeniable effect in the enhancement of Baatonu and Boo culture.

Benin artifacts return: [French lawmakers unanimously voted to return prized artefacts to Benin](#) and Senegal more than a century after they were looted by colonial forces and hauled back to Paris to be displayed in museums. The pieces include a royal throne and 26 items from the Treasure of Behanzin. For this purpose, the government launched the construction and rehabilitation of a number of museums to display the artifacts.



National park promotion



The Government of Benin along with the National Geographic Society, African Parks and the Wyss Foundation established an unprecedented partnership to save and revitalize the Pendjari. This project is one of the flagship projects of Revealing Benin, and is part of the development of an environmentally friendly tourism industry with a strong social impact. With several other partnerships, we have increased local employment; and implemented programs including sustainable fish harvesting and beekeeping; fitted satellite collars on key species for monitoring purposes, including the West African lion and elephant; and established a well-trained team of rangers.

Hotels and resorts

In 2020 the government of Benin has approved the request of a group of investors in partnership with the Hilton group to renovate and construct three (3) hotels in Cotonou, Porto-novo and Ouidah in addition to the other ongoing projects in the industry all over the country.



SOCIAL SUPPORT TO THE POPULATION

The current government thinks about economic growth, but not only. Several of its projects also directly and immediately affects the quality of life of the population.

School canteens

Since 2017, the government has been implementing the National Integrated School Feeding Program (PNASI). This program is piloted by the World Food Program (WFP) throughout the country. In 2020, nearly 4,000 schools are covered and the meals are regularly served in all the schools.

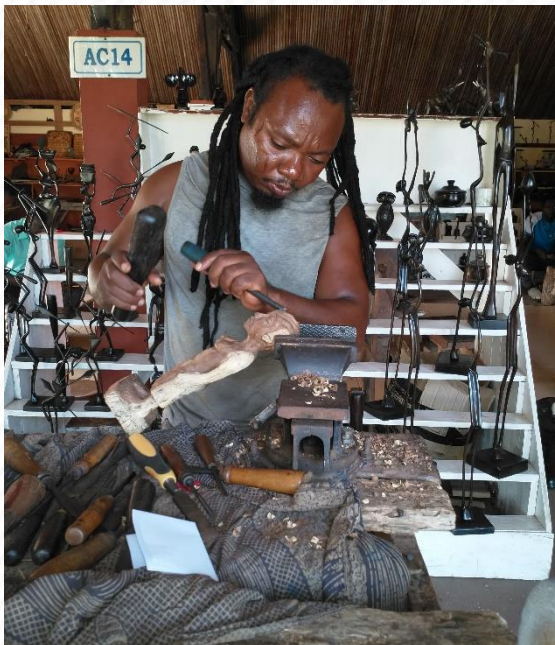


Human capital development



Projet ARCH

Projet de protection sociale conçu pour sortir le Bénin de la précarité



One of the main components of the Insurance for Human Capital Development Project is a health care support to the vulnerable population. The implementation phase which progressively covering the entire territory, has already in use in 14 of the 77 municipalities of the country. During the first half of 2020, 69 866 households were identified as poor or extremely poor. For the same period, over 3000 people benefited from the project.

The vocational training component began in the last quarter of last year. It has already covered eight (8) municipalities and fifteen (15) trades such as the processing and conservation of fruits, vegetables, leaves and nuts; bakery and pastry making; construction and building renovation; production of textile fibers, spinning and weaving. 8,720 registered artisans in the National Craftsmen's Census (RN ARTISAN) benefit from this project.

The Alafia microcredit



Projet ARCH

Projet de protection sociale
conçu pour sortir le Bénin de la
précarité

Launched at the end of 2020, the Alafia microcredit program designed for the most vulnerable segment of the population, is part of the implementation of its social policy. The program aims to strengthen the financial inclusion of these populations traditionally excluded from the financial system by offering them microloans. The credits are delivered in the digital wallets the beneficiaries through a platform interconnected with the mobile network operators. As of December 31, 2020, 18,500 recipients have benefitted from the program and for 2021, it is expected to impact more than 100,000.



PRESIDENTIAL TOUR ON ONGOING WORKSITES

In 2020, President Patrice TALON started a tour throughout the country to appreciate the evolution of the different projects in progress.

Phase 1



GOUVERNEMENT
DE LA RÉPUBLIQUE
DU BÉNIN



12

Departments

60

Municipalities

In ligne with its method of rational management of public resources, the President has initiated a field visit all over the country to assess the progress of the various ongoing projects.

In December 2020, President Talon traveled 6801km by land, visiting 60 municipalities of the 77 municipalities of the country. During this 4-weeks trip, he visited construction sites such as stadiums, markets, health centers, road construction sites, and water sanitation plants. He evaluated the work that has been accomplished on several sites; and spoke with the population about additional concerns that need to be addressed.

The second phase of the tour starts in January 2021 and will cover the remaining 17 municipalities.

