



Students enjoying a meal provided by the United States Department of Agriculture Food for Education and Child Nutrition McGovern Dole (Keun Faaba) program.
Photo by Jean-Michel Kpakpo / CRS.



Project participant transforming groundnuts to cookies with the support from financial education groups under the USAID Kadjogbe Fou Itounou program.
Photo by Jean-Michel Kpakpo / CRS.

Catholic Relief Services in Benin

CATALYZING SELF-RELIANCE AMONG COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL PARTNERS

697,201

PEOPLE REACHED IN FISCAL YEAR 2024

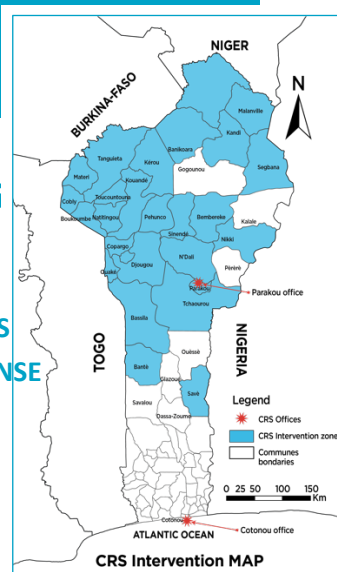
\$8.9 million

RESOURCES PROGRAMMED IN FISCAL YEAR 2024

11 Partners

KEY PROGRAMMING

- SOCIAL COHESION
- EDUCATION
- YOUTH LIVELIHOODS
- EMERGENCY RESPONSE
- AGRICULTURE
- PARTNERSHIP AND CAPACITY BUILDING



CRS in BENIN

CRS has been working in Benin since 1958. Our current initiatives focus on integrated education, school feeding programs, social cohesion and peacebuilding, agricultural livelihoods, entrepreneurship, and financial education. We are also enhancing the institutional capacity of the Catholic Church, community organizations, and government institutions to support them in maximizing their impact.

SOCIAL COHESION



The **Kadjogbé Fou Itounou Project**, meaning “let’s live and work together for peace” in Nagot, is a USAID-funded peacebuilding initiative implemented across four communes in the Borgou and Collines departments. Created in response to the 2019 political conflicts and recurring disputes between farmers and herders, the program aims to foster social harmony, promote collaboration within and between groups, and reduce risks of electoral violence, farmer-herder conflicts, and frustrations among disadvantaged groups, as well as prevent violence from neighboring regions. In May 2024, the Kadjogbé Fou Itounou project extended to seven communes in the northern regions of Benin to support communities affected by crises (border closures, violent extremism, and agro-pastoral conflicts) and to improve their alternative livelihoods, increase access to protection services, and promote social cohesion. By September 2024, Kadjogbé Fou Itounou strengthened the capacity of more than 3,000 participants in 40 villages and supported several local initiatives fostering peace and social cohesion. These activities have helped raise the social dimension of the social

cohesion barometer from 3.23 to 3.27 (on a scale of 5) within one year.

A five-year USAID-funded project called **Northern Economic Livelihoods for Youth (NELY)** is being implemented across 23 communes. This initiative includes three components, with an emphasis on social cohesion and peacebuilding through enhanced governance, conflict prevention, and community reintegration. It employs CRS's 3B/4D approach and innovative cultural activities for conflict resolution.

The Benin Country Program is also executing the **Nuwaki Project**, funded by the PATRIP Foundation. This project is being implemented in Materi, Benin, and neighboring Togo, areas impacted by violence from the Sahel crisis. The program aims to prevent conflict along the Benin-Togo border by promoting resilience, social cohesion, and cross-border cooperation. Nuwaki collaborates with communities and government officials to enhance climate-resilient infrastructure, strengthen social mechanisms for conflict prevention, and improve natural resource management. Specifically, the project has enhanced community access to infrastructure through the construction of six locally identified facilities in six villages. It has also built the capacity of 160 youth, women, and local leaders in social cohesion, conflict prevention, and management.

EDUCATION



Since 2014, **Keun Faaba**, meaning “supporting education” in Bariba, has been strengthening schools in northern Benin. Now in its third phase and running through 2026, the United States Department of Agriculture McGovern-Dole Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program, works with 111,163 participants (children, teachers, and parents) in 167 primary schools in the communes of Banikoara, Bembereke, Nikki, and Sinendé in the departments of Alibori and Borgou. Keun Faaba works to (1) provide daily meals to around 56,000 children per year, (2) improve the literacy of students via strengthened teacher capacity, (3) promote good hygiene and sanitation practices and WASH-friendly school certification, and (4) locally source 30% of products used in school canteen activities and ensure quality control. SILC groups provide increased economic and cultural incentives for parents to enroll and keep their children at school and contribute to school canteens.

YOUTH LIVELIHOODS



KFI Extension: The CRS program in Benin has secured a prominent role in the field of youth programming, thanks to the extension granted by USAID through CCF funds on the KFI project. In addition to addressing social cohesion and gender-based violence challenges, CRS aims to enhance the entrepreneurial skills of over 3,600 youth, women, and vulnerable individuals affected by the unintended negative impacts of ECOWAS sanctions on local livelihoods in the four northern departments of Benin. To this end, CRS is rolling out its signature **“I’m an Entrepreneur”** curriculum to these affected populations and will subsidize 140 project ideas with start-up grants.

NELY Project: The **Northern Economic Livelihoods for Youth (NELY)** initiative seeks to improve economic opportunities for rural and urban youth and women in northern Benin. Its primary focus

is on increasing purchasing power, fostering self-sufficiency, and enhancing economic inclusion through the adoption of relevant technologies, partnerships with the private sector, and solutions that engage vulnerable young men and women.

The second component aims to boost access to resources and support climate resilience by offering skills training for both on-farm and off-farm livelihoods, promoting climate-smart agricultural practices, and connecting producer groups to markets using the PASP model. The third component focuses on enhancing financial stability and resilience through the SILC+GTA approach, connections to microfinance, and support for entrepreneurship.

EMERGENCY PROGRAMMING



CRS emergency program focuses on monitoring of the humanitarian situation in the most affected areas in Benin in line with the government's orientation and synergy with other stakeholders. Over the 6 decades in Benin, CRS has responded to several emergency needs, including flooding and displacements. In response to these needs, CRS deploys different modalities such as in-kind and cash-based intervention to provide the food and Non food items (NFIs) to affected population. In 2018, for example, CRS provided aid to 1,000 displaced people (200 households) in the commune of Coby in the Atacora department in 2018 with 34.5 tons of food (rice, millet, maize, oil and beans) and 11,800 non-food kits (blankets, soaps, mats, buckets), following the violent conflict between farmers and herders. In 2023, CRS implemented a cash-based modality to 1,500 households affected by flooding. In September 2024, CRS mobilized over \$200,000 of its private fund to start a rapid initial response, providing Cash for NFIs and other basic needs to 7,593 individuals (1,323 households) of which 5,000 Burkinabe's refugees fleeing violence, largely coming from the Tapoa region, in southern Burkina Faso.

As part of its capacity strengthening and local leadership strategy, CRS is also investing in capacity building local organizations to better prepare for humanitarian responses.

PARTNERSHIP AND CAPACITY BUILDING



Partnership is at the heart of our approach, with strong collaboration between civil society and the public and private sectors to find solutions to poverty and injustice. In Benin, CRS works with several Catholic dioceses, various local NGOs, and government actors to strengthen their human and organizational capacity to implement humanitarian and development projects that serve the poorest and most vulnerable.