



BENIN

Assisting National Disaster Preparedness and Response

Disaster Context

The West African nation of Benin has a surface area of 114,763 square kilometres, 62 percent arable land and 31 percent forest and woodland. Although the country is not considered to be very disaster prone, there has been an increased frequency of natural hazards over the last ten years. These hazards include floods, droughts, famines, food shortages, forest and scrub fires, epidemics, and the hot, dry, dusty Harmattan sandstorms that affect northern Benin during the windier season. A historical review of Benin over the last 30 years has suggested the observed frequency of a large-scale disaster is about 0.96 per year. Affected most are those exposed daily to fragile and vulnerable living conditions, such as high levels of poverty, unemployment, and environmental degradation. Due to the combination of increasing levels of natural hazards and vulnerability, the government created the National Office for Prevention and Civil Protection within the Ministry of Security and Decentralization in 1985.

Project Titles

- Carbon Sequestration in the North of the Country (BEN/93/G31)
- National Communication on Climate Change (BEN/98/G31)

Sectors

- Capacity-building
- Disaster prevention

Funding

The National Office for Prevention and Civil Protection is funded with government resources and donor assistance.

Partners

- National Office for Prevention and Civil Protection
- Bilateral donors
- UN agencies

Programme Activities

UNDP Benin activities focus on assisting national structures as they follow up on disaster response. The office also liaises with the UN system and donors.

In terms of prevention and capacity-building, two projects were developed:

- The carbon-sequestration project in the north of the country assists local communities' efforts to fight forest fires and promotes reforestation and land management for flow control. With the assistance of the Global Environmental Fund, farmers have been organised around three large forests, where they have gained capacity to manage natural calamities.
- The national communication project put in place a dynamic team that studied climate-change effects and made suggestions to minimize climate vulnerability in Benin.

A capacity-building evaluation exercise is expected to begin in the near future, including the development of a National Action Plan for Adaptation to Climate Change.

In terms of direct management of natural disasters at the national level, there is need for a new project to technically and financially assist the government and strengthen relevant institutions in the years to come. Benin national authorities put the National Office for Prevention and Civil Protection in place in 1985. The office gives assistance to victims of floods, fires, and other calamities. It also works on policy development, public awareness, training, and sensitisation.