



Integrated Country Strategy

BENIN

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1. Chief of Mission Priorities

The U.S. Mission to Benin serves the American people by promoting sustainable development, economic opportunity, and strong ties between our governments and people based on shared democratic values; by joining forces to combat threats affecting the security of Beninese and Americans alike; and by partnering for a healthier, democratic, stable, and prosperous Benin closely allied with the United States. These goals are predicated on policy outlined in the U.S. National Security Strategy.

For thirty years, Benin enjoyed a reputation as a model of democratic stability in an otherwise troubled region. President Patrice Talon, elected to his first term in 2016 and to a second term in 2021, has prioritized economic development over strengthening democracy, and the space for pluralism, dissent, and free expression has narrowed under his administration. Revisions initiated in 2015 and incorporated into the electoral code and the law governing parties in the run-up to 2019 legislative elections dramatically altered the political landscape, and no opposition parties qualified to participate, thereby ensuring that all 83 members of the National Assembly came from two pro-Talon parties. In the 2020 municipal elections pro-Talon candidates swept to a majority in 70 of 77 communes. A subsequent amendment to the constitution in 2020 limiting presidential candidates to those backed by National Assembly members and mayors further restricted competitive democracy and pluralism. As of April 2022, opposition parties are registered with the government and, if the legal landscape remains the same, they should be able to participate in January 2023 legislative elections. Nonetheless, the same legal landscape that was altered in 2019 remains in place and reduces the likelihood that opposition candidates will retain seats in the legislature if their party fails to secure 10 percent of the nationwide vote.

Beninese pride in their democratic history and traditional tolerance of political debate and freedom of expression persists, and Beninese are dedicated to peaceful coexistence among religious and ethnic groups. Despite challenges faced by global economic conditions, Benin's government remains focused on implementing its five-year national development strategy. While the Talon Administration has prioritized developing Benin's infrastructure and fighting

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corruption, ineffective governance persists in some areas and the country faces alarming health statistics. Trafficking in persons – particularly internal trafficking of young girls to work as domestics – and child labor remain serious problems. Nonetheless, Benin has a proven track record of repatriating child trafficking victims, working in close partnership with Gabon, Togo, and the Republic of the Congo (Congo-B).

Benin is facing a serious security threat, including attacks by extremists against the Beninese military (FAB) and other security forces. Leaders in northern Benin are concerned over the vulnerability of their communities due to the lack of economic opportunity and scarcity of government services, and Benin's security forces need improved capacity to counter this challenge. From December 2021 through mid-July 2022 violent extremist organizations perpetuated at least 17 attacks, resulting in the deaths of soldiers, police officers, and civilians, and numerous casualties. The May 2019 kidnapping of two Western tourists from a national park on Benin's border with Burkina Faso highlighted the threat that instability and extremism pose chiefly to northern Benin. Women and the large youth population have particularly dim economic prospects throughout the country, making them more vulnerable to instability and extremism.

Poverty and lack of services in northern Benin have increased the vulnerability of these communities to the emerging violent extremist threat, and supporting Benin's efforts to address this challenge is an important priority.

We have identified three Mission Goals that reflect our own capacity to influence the most pressing issues facing Benin:

- Promote democratic values and interests, strengthen institutions, improve governance, and advance adherence to international human rights standards as outlined in the National Security Strategy and as directed in E.O. 13985.
- Partner with Benin, in coordination with our closest allies and likeminded organizations, to counter the threat of violent extremist organizations (VEOs), transnational and maritime crime and improve regional stability, as outlined in the National Security Strategy.

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- Benin is better able to expand opportunity, reduce poverty, and implement effective, transparent and climate friendly development and health initiatives as outlined in the National Security Strategy and in E.O. 14008 and the United States' Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII).

Promote American values and advance American interests through strengthened democratic institutions, improved governance, and adherence to international human rights standards

Benin's incremental turn away from democracy will undermine in the long term the peace and security it needs to drive economic growth, increasing the potential that disaffected and disenfranchised elements, particularly among the youth, might adopt agendas antithetical to regional stability and U.S. interests. To strengthen representative government responsiveness to citizens, we will work across agencies and multilaterally to support competitive and inclusive elections (notably the 2023 legislative elections), build the capacity of civil society organizations and local government, strengthen independent human rights institutions – including for women and the LGBTQI+ community, and professionalize the media.

While Benin's legal framework provides for an independent judiciary and the right to a fair trial, vague and overly broad definitions of terrorism, arbitrary and lengthy detentions, wrongful convictions, and politically motivated judicial harassment have increased, decreasing citizens' confidence in the impartial rule of law. We will support and encourage an independent judicial system and increased access to justice, and promote professional prison management, rehabilitation, crime prevention, and strengthened community policing.

Although Benin generally respects human rights standards, its record has deteriorated, and several fundamental civil liberties, including freedoms of assembly and expression, have suffered. While the Government of Benin espouses the principle of gender equity, women face institutional and societal inequities. Moreover, much work remains to ensure the equitable treatment of members of the LGBTQI+ community throughout Benin. We will partner with civil society and like-minded members of the international community to promote greater government adherence to human rights standards, respect for civil liberties,

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and access to services for women, girls, the LGBTQI+ community, and persons with disabilities, particularly for those at risk of gender-based violence. Mission Cotonou's Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion Council will contribute to embassy efforts to work with local partners to raise awareness about women's rights and underrepresented groups, and to build the capacity of local NGOs and the Government of Benin to combat gender-based violence, assist victims, and advance equity for all. We will support efforts to build Benin's judicial and forensic capacity to combat gender-based violence and will prioritize efforts to increase women's political participation.

Public diplomacy outreach and programs will demonstrate to the Beninese people the economic advantages of preserving and strengthening democracy, freedom of expression, and market-friendly business practices. To do this, we have rekindled and will sustain democracy workshops to train everyday citizens how to effectively but peacefully lobby their local and national government to address their most pressing needs. The Mission will mobilize staff from every section and agency to conduct outreach to Benin's expanding youth population – especially young women – using their strong interest in learning English as a platform for learning about American culture, values, and foreign policy. We will support media partners who offer accurate reporting, particularly investigative journalists and community radio stations, and continue to train journalists who reject Benin's pay-for-play media culture. USAID will support the national human rights institution to enable it to execute its mandate to investigate and report state violations of human and social rights.

Partner with Benin to counter transnational threats, including terrorism, and improve regional stability

Benin is a willing partner in promoting stability in a region that is threatened by terrorism, piracy and transnational crime, but its long, porous borders and limited capacity leave it highly vulnerable to VEO activity.

The onslaught of VEO attacks in Benin's northern departments have spurred political will to confront the problem of ill-protected borders and potential extremism, but the government's capacity is low and its security forces have limited resources. Benin must also improve services

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to marginalized and potentially alienated areas in the north. We will advocate for Benin to allocate additional state resources to prevent and counter violent extremism. Likewise, we will assist Benin to increase control over its borders, contribute to counter-terrorism initiatives, and improve information gathering, analysis, and response related to security threats, and work within the interagency and with other regional Missions to coordinate policy within the U.S. Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability, i.e., 1) prevention of violent conflict before it erupts; 2) stabilization through inclusive processes to resolve ongoing conflicts; 3) developing partnerships to create conditions for long-term regional stability; and 4) management of these through improved prioritization, integration, and efficiency. The Public Diplomacy Section will increase the availability of existing programs for emerging leaders and to counter misinformation in underrepresented border areas of northeastern Benin.

We will work with Beninese investigators and judicial authorities to strengthen efforts to counter terrorism, prosecute traffickers and build the capacity of port and border authorities to interdict trafficking, while encouraging Benin to cooperate more effectively and consistently with its neighbors in the region against transnational crime.

Given Benin's presence in a volatile region, we will ensure that our consular, regional security, and management sections are well prepared to respond to local and regional crises. We will facilitate legitimate travel to the United States while protecting our borders through rigorous application of visa law and improving fraud prevention capabilities. We will also provide the best possible support to U.S. citizens in need of consular services or emergency assistance.

Assist Benin to expand opportunity, reduce poverty, and implement effective and transparent development initiatives

Benin's 2021 sovereign credit rating upgrade to B+ in 2021 by the three major rating agencies as well as the government's raising of €1.5 billion in from the international Eurobond market the same year indicate President Patrice Talon's economic policies are improving Benin's business environment. The Port of Cotonou is undergoing a \$175 million refurbishment (by China Harbor Engineering Company) to increase annual cargo intake thus generating taxes and spurring business; government policies designed to stave off the malign

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and disruptive economic effects of Russia's invasion of Ukraine and keep \$133 million in the pockets of Beninese consumers are also noteworthy. The government's launch of a new specialized industrial zone at Glo-Djigbe 30 miles north of Cotonou holds promise to attract foreign investment and create employment through reduced taxes for investors, consolidated government services to start businesses, and, eventually, a spur rail line to connect it to the Port of Cotonou. A new law that entered into force in early 2022 allows the central government to install executive secretaries with exclusive budgetary spending authority in each of Benin's 77 municipalities with the intention of reducing the risk of municipal-level graft. Finally, government enacted reforms such as removing internal roadside police-check points have helped to curb low-level police extortion.

Nevertheless, Benin faces enormous challenges in reducing high levels of poverty and growing its economy. These include rapid population growth, low levels of literacy, weak public institutions, corruption, inadequate infrastructure, an undiversified economy, and poor education and health services. Historically weak development and marginalization have made communities in northern Benin particularly vulnerable to the emerging violent extremist threat, and addressing this challenge is a priority. Our interagency approach to increasing Benin's capacity to implement development initiatives aimed at promoting increased prosperity for all Beninese citizens will include helping Benin take advantage of trade opportunities under AGOA; reforming Benin's electricity and transportation sectors through the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) Power and Regional Compacts to facilitate economic growth; expanding access to quality health services; and increasing youth, entrepreneurship, and English-language programs run by the economic and public affairs sections, as well as USAID.

MCC's six-year, \$391 million Compact focuses on electric power, a key constraint to economic growth in Benin. Since the Compact entered into force in June 2017, it has incentivized the Government of Benin to strengthen its national electricity utility through a management contract, adopt tariff reforms, support private investment in power generation, and create an enabling environment for off-grid electrification. By the Compact's completion in June 2023, Benin will benefit from a more reliable, modernized electricity distribution grid

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that can accommodate demand growth over the coming decades, as well as expanded access to power for unserved communities and households through public-private partnerships for off-grid electrification. [Note: Due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, in September 2021, MCC and the Government of Benin signed a Compact amendment that extended its duration by one year and added \$16 million to the total investment. End Note.]

In 2018, the United States Congress granted MCC the authority to enter into compacts for the purpose of regional economic integration, increased regional trade, or cross-border collaboration. The legislative authority provides that such compacts may be concurrent with bilateral compacts. MCC's Board of Directors selected Benin in 2019, 2020, and 2021 as eligible to develop a regional compact focused on the transportation sector (with Niger). MCC anticipates signature of the Benin-Niger regional compact in 2022, with entry into force in 2023.

To contribute to economic growth and attain prosperity, the Beninese people must have access to adequate health services, education, and nutrition. The Global Health Initiative (GHI) is a major USG initiative that brings together disease-specific programs to ensure an integrated approach to addressing global health. USAID implements the GHI in Benin with resources that support the President's Malaria Initiative (PMI), maternal and child health, family planning, HIV/AIDS, and infectious disease outbreak preparedness. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), serving within USAID's framework of activities, has one resident advisor in Benin to assist with delivery of services through the President's Malaria Initiative (PMI). In FY2022 USAID began implementation of PEPFAR programming. Through these resources, USAID will strengthen Benin's capacity to improve the health status of its citizens by expanding the availability of health services, increasing citizen use of those services, strengthening key health sector systems including supply chain continuity, and increasing citizen participation in decision-making regarding health sector resources. Support also promotes broader good governance objectives as they will strengthen the health sector. Furthermore, programs support national efforts to improve public audit and oversight functions with pilot projects in the health sector and with the Ministry of Economy and Finance. These efforts are expected to have direct impacts on the health sector while also

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contributing to stronger national commitments to democratic principles.

We will support entrepreneurship development, especially among women and youth, via Public Diplomacy Section programming, and Special Self Help funding. The Mission will also increase experiential learning and mentorship opportunities for young microentrepreneurs, using American business best practices to build skills necessary to transition their small enterprises to the formal economy. We will seize on a growing interest among Beninese youth in environmental protection to promote climate-friendly development and business practices. To increase bilateral trade with Benin, we will promote improvements to Benin's business climate, expand U.S. commercial outreach, and encourage more active Beninese use of AGOA, including through encouraging the Government of Benin to finalize and implement a national AGOA strategy.

The political section supports the Department of Defense HIV/AIDS Prevention Program (DHAPP) in Benin, through which the Beninese Armed Forces' medical unit and patients benefit from U.S.-funded medical supplies and equipment, professional development, and public awareness campaigns.

USAID, the United States African Development Foundation (USADF), CDC, and USDA projects will improve gender equality, health, and food security, including through the pursuit of Food for Peace funding. USAID and Public Diplomacy will partner with civil society and NGOs to promote English language and educational opportunities for at-risk youth.

2. Mission Strategic Framework

Mission Goal 1: Promote democratic values and interests, strengthen institutions, improve governance, and advance adherence to international human rights standards as outlined in the National Security Strategy and as directed in E.O. 13985.

- **Mission Objective 1.1:** Benin improves accountable, transparent, and democratic governance and holds inclusive and competitive elections.
- **Mission Objective 1.2:** Benin improves rule of law, due process, and equitable access to justice.
- **Mission Objective 1.3:** Benin's government, institutions, and civil society protect human rights, freedom of expression, and democratic values, including gender equity and equality.

Mission Goal 2: Partner with Benin, in coordination with our closest allies and likeminded organizations, to counter the threat of violent extremist organizations (VEOs), transnational and maritime crime and improve regional stability, as outlined in the National Security Strategy.

- **Mission Objective 2.1:** Benin continues and augments its efforts to counter the threat of VEOs based in the Sahel, builds its counterterrorism capacity and supports U.S.-led counterterrorism initiatives.
- **Mission Objective 2.2:** Benin secures its border and reduces human and narcotics trafficking that often fund VEOs in addition to other criminals.
- **Mission Objective 2.3:** Improve fraud prevention strategies and enhance support for U.S. citizens to better protect them at home and in Benin.

Mission Goal 3: Benin is better able to expand opportunity, reduce poverty, and implement effective, transparent and climate friendly development and health initiatives as outlined in the National Security Strategy and in E.O. 14008 and the United States' Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII).

- **Mission Objective 3.1:** Benin's government and private sectors work toward broad-based, sustainable economic growth, including in its most vulnerable areas, and closer trade linkages with the United States.
- **Mission Objective 3.2:** Foster a healthier and more inclusive society by expanding the delivery of health services and strengthening the governance of health sector resources.

Management Objective 1: Improve the Mission's effectiveness in attaining ICS goals with an enhanced diplomatic platform.

Management Objective 2: Build a more effective workforce through competitive recruitment predicated on diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) principles, outlined in E.O. 13985, and capitalizing on the Mission's diverse American, Beninese, and third-country national workforce.

Management Objective 3: Increase the efficiency and quality of service deliverables by streamlining management controls.

3. Mission Goals and Objectives

Mission Goal 1: Promote democratic values and interests, strengthen democratic institutions, improve governance, and advance adherence to international human rights standards as outlined in the National Security Strategy and as directed in E.O. 13985.

Description: Working with partners to strengthen democratic institutions, improve governance, and advance adherence to international human rights standards are priorities for U.S. engagement abroad as laid out in the President's National Security Strategy (NSS).

Objective 1.1: Benin improves accountable, transparent, and democratic governance and holds inclusive and competitive elections.

- **Justification** Benin is a democratic republic that has enjoyed four peaceful transfers of power since 1990 and, until recently, held a reputation as a model for democracy in West Africa. Benin has recently experienced a reduction in democratic space, signaling a possible divergence from its democratic foundations. A government that is transparent, accountable, and inclusive can better ensure peace and stability, counter extremist narratives that threaten U.S. national security interests, and promote economic growth and open markets that lead to commercial opportunities for U.S. businesses.) Post will address challenges through trainings, diplomatic engagement, and election monitoring.
- **Linkages:** These efforts also align with Goals 1, 2, and 3 of the Department/USAID Joint Strategic Plan (JSP). Stronger democratic institutions and governance will promote peace and stability, allow the government to respond to longstanding human development needs, and counter the growing threat of malign non-state actors in ungoverned areas. These improvements will benefit Beninese citizens, create favorable conditions for economic growth, and expand opportunities for U.S. investors and bilateral trade.

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- **Risks:** The risk of not achieving this goal is further democratic backsliding in Benin which could negatively impact political stability, economic growth, and the government's ability to counter extremist threats. Post will mitigate risk through engagement with the Government of Benin and civil society.

Objective 1.2: Benin improves rule of law, due process, and equitable access to justice.

- **Justification:** Benin's legal framework provides for an independent judiciary and the right to a fair trial. It also prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention and cruel and inhumane punishment. Post will address these challenges through training, by reporting on judicial processes, and conducting engagements with senior leaders.
- **Linkages:** Improving the rule of law in Benin advances ICS Goal #1.
- **Risks:** Despite these protections enshrined in Beninese law, the government has arrested and convicted political opponents of President Talon on questionable charges in 2021, carried out arbitrary arrests, and used disproportionate force against protesters. Prolonged pre-trial detention is common, at times exceeding the sentence for the crime accused. A fair, effective, and accessible judicial system will build citizens' confidence in the judicial process, strengthen rule of law, and ensure stability. Post will mitigate these risks through continued diplomatic engagement.

Objective 1.3: Benin's government, institutions, and civil society protect human rights, freedom of expression, and democratic values, including gender equity and equality.

- **Justification:** Benin is a democratic society that generally respects internationally recognized human rights standards and civil liberties, though it has recently backslid in these areas. Post will address these challenges by providing technical support and training to advance democratic governance.
- **Linkages:** Improving the rule of law in Benin advances ICS Goal #1.
- **Risks:** Recent human rights concerns include unlawful or arbitrary killings, inadequate government action on violence against girls and women, and child labor. Improving adherence to internationally recognized human rights standards, respect

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for civil liberties, and gender equity will help Benin become a more peaceful, prosperous, and participatory society. If left unaddressed, these negative trends could become worse. Post will mitigate these risks through continued diplomatic engagement.

Mission Goal 2: Partner with Benin, in coordination with our closest allies and likeminded organizations, to counter the threat of violent extremist organizations (VEOs), transnational and maritime crime and improve regional stability, as outlined in the National Security Strategy.

Description: Working with closest allies and likeminded organizations to counter VEO threats are consistent with U.S. priorities to combat terrorism, transnational maritime crime, and improve regional stability, as outlined in the National Security Strategy (NSS).

Objective 2.1: Benin continues and augments its efforts to counter the threat of VEOs based in the Sahel, builds its counterterrorism capacity and supports U.S.-led counterterrorism initiatives.

- **Justification:** There is a growing threat of violent extremist organizations and movements in Benin. Benin is a motivated security partner, although its current security challenges have led it to reduce its participation in international peacekeeping operations. The Government of Benin's effort to prevent and counter violent extremism inside the country addresses root causes, consistent with the U.S. Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability and well as to rollback drivers of extremism. Post will provide various trainings to address these challenges.
- **Linkages:** Insurgents have already demonstrated their ability and desire to attack Beninese security forces installations and personnel – resulting in multiple deaths and injuries. Benin has made good use of U.S. training and continuing our efforts in this area advances Goal #2.

- **Risks:** The security situation in Benin is worsening, and marginalized communities in the north are at particular risk. Beninese military has asked for U.S. help which offers us an opportunity to support Benin's security policy and not chance this to a third and possibly malign partner. Post will mitigate these risks through continued diplomatic engagement.

Objective 2.2: Benin secures its border and reduces human and narcotics trafficking that often fund VEOs in addition to other criminals.

- **Justification:** Benin is a transit country for cocaine, methamphetamines, chemical precursors, and heroin. It is a source, transit, and destination country for sex and labor trafficking in persons. Criminal networks and extremist groups exploit security vulnerabilities in national parks, ports, and land borders. Post will address these challenges through trainings and raising awareness with appropriate authorities.
- **Linkages:** The U.S. Mission in Benin's capacity-building programs foster bilateral cooperation and support the NSS priority action of countering terrorism and trafficking in Africa, thus advancing Goal #2.
- **Risks:** Inadequate progress on this goal could lead to weakened maritime and border security environments, leaving space for criminal and extremist groups to expand operations and threatening U.S. security and commercial interests in West Africa. Post will mitigate these risks through continued diplomatic engagement.

Objective 2.3: Improve fraud prevention strategies and enhance support for U.S. citizens to better protect them at home and in Benin.

- **Justification:** Readily available visa facilitators and falsified documents in Benin make fraud prevention and detection activities essential to keeping bad actors out of the United States. The poor quality of emergency medical care and other social services, underdeveloped transportation and telecommunications infrastructure, and bureaucratic inefficiencies increase the embassy support required by U.S. citizens in crisis in Benin. The consular section will modernize its communication and support to U.S. citizens through the American Liaison Network and adopt strategies to root out all

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forms of consular fraud. Additionally, Post will provide trainings and improve information sharing with the Government of Benin to address these challenges.

- **Linkages:** The Objectives supports ICS Goal #2 given the high possibility of document fraud and lack of overall infrastructure for U.S. citizens traveling to or residing in Benin
- **Risks:** If left unaddressed, we potentially increase the chances that malign actors may succeed in exploiting visa safety protocols or that the Embassy may not be able to best serve U.S. citizens in Benin. Post will mitigate these risks through continued diplomatic engagement.

Mission Goal 3: Benin is better able to expand opportunity, reduce poverty, and implement effective, transparent and climate friendly development and health initiatives as outlined in the National Security Strategy and in E.O. 14008 and the United States' Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII).

Description: This goal reflects the National Security Strategy and Joint Regional Strategy focus on supporting African nations to move from assistance recipients to enduring partners that promote prosperity, improve the business environment, and become strong trade partners. This goal is also reflective of USAID priorities that focus on locally sustained results, mobilizing public and private revenues, and strengthening local capacities.)

In addition, poverty and lack of services has increased the vulnerability of many communities in Northern Benin to the emerging violent extremist threat, and supporting Benin's efforts to address this challenge is a priority.

Objective 3.1: Benin's government and private sectors work toward broad-based, sustainable economic growth, including in its most vulnerable areas, and closer trade linkages with the United States.

- **Justification:** More than 70 percent of Benin's population remains dependent on agriculture, which contributes up to 35 percent of the GDP. Cotton accounts for 70 percent of official export earnings followed by cashew, shea butter, pineapples, and seafood. The Government of Benin's vision is to diversify its economy through a more robust services sector and become a major exporter of agricultural products by 2025. Benin is also encouraging new information and communications technology to boost economic growth.

Mission Cotonou will increase efforts to support Benin's growing economy, focusing specifically on increasing U.S.-Benin economic activity by promoting AGOA, encouraging business climate improvements that create a level playing field for local and international companies alike, encouraging and supporting entrepreneurship, increasing the reliability of energy for the country's economic transformation, and supporting the transition of small enterprises to the formal economy. Mission Cotonou will draw upon the Prosper Africa initiative to accomplish this objective. Post's activities align with the Government of Benin's second five-year government action plan (PAG2, valued at almost \$21 billion) whose three pillars are 1) reinforcing democracy and the rule of law; 2) structural transformation of the economy; and 3) increasing the well-being of vulnerable populations.

The 2017-2023 Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) Power Compact will increase the quantity and quality of electric power in Benin through policy reforms, institutional strengthening, and infrastructure investments. The Compact aims to: (i) strengthen the national electricity utility through a management contract, support the independent electricity regulator, and enact tariff reforms; (ii) attract private sector investment in solar power production; (iii) fund nationwide distribution grid modernization; and (iv) increase access to electricity through off-grid electrification.

The Millennium Challenge Corporation's regional compact (est. 2023-2028) with Benin and Niger is expected to rehabilitate portions of the existing transport corridor between Cotonou and Niamey, while addressing institutional and market constraints that increase freight costs and transit times.

- **Linkages:** The fight against poverty remains at the heart of Benin's development agenda. According to government projections, over 25 percent of the PAG2 is currently funded as the government pursues additional investment to complete its five-year vision. The government estimates ultimately 48 percent of the PAG2 will be publicly funded with the remaining amount to be funded through public-private partnerships. This effort requires bringing electricity to Beninese businesses and homes, promoting economic growth and trade, and improving health outcomes in order to have a healthy, capable workforce. In alignment with the Joint Regional Strategy's objective of promoting and protecting fundamental rights and liberties, these efforts will place a special focus on reducing gender-based violence and supporting those who have been affected, strengthening women's roles regarding health care decisions for themselves and their families, and promoting women's leadership, including in determining health budgets, and monitoring for accountability and transparency from the national to the community level. MCC's ongoing compact focused on the power sector and planned regional compact focused on road transportation and regional trade are fully aligned with GoB economic and development priorities. Ten percent of planned investment in the PAG II (2021-2026) is dedicated to electric power, which is the condition sine qua non for planned GoB development of industry, commerce, tourism, and public service delivery. One-quarter of PAG II is dedicated to roads and trade facilitation, by the single largest sector of investment for the GoB over the coming five years.
- **Risks:** Not achieving this goal could lead to weakened economic growth and hinder progress on human rights and human development indicators. Post will mitigate these risks through continued diplomatic engagement and outreach.

Objective 3.2: Foster a healthier and more inclusive society by expanding the delivery of health services and strengthening the governance of health sector resources.

- **Justification:** Benin's development is impeded by the extremely poor health status of its citizens, which is evidenced by extraordinarily high infant, child, and maternal mortality rates. More than a third of Beninese children suffer from chronic malnutrition, which significantly contributes to premature deaths. Poor water quality and sanitation increases the incidence of diarrhea and other infectious diseases. Infectious disease is also a top public health threat in Benin, and deeply affects the wellbeing of its citizens and significantly weakens its workforce. Endemic malaria is the leading cause for all hospital visits and the primary cause of child mortality. Although bed net ownership and use are improving, malaria prevalence remains high with almost a third of children carrying malaria parasites. Neglected Tropical Diseases, a diverse set of communicable diseases that primarily affect populations living in poverty, further take a heavy human toll, causing chronic illness, blindness, and physical disfigurements. Post will address these challenges by working with local authorities to improve medical delivery supply chains, offering training to community health workers, and working with local communities to develop endogenous solutions.
- **Linkages:** Benin's population growth rate of approximately three percent annually is unsustainable and will have serious consequences on the country's development if left unchecked. Benin's low contraceptive prevalence rate of 13.2 percent is an outlier for the region, falling well below neighboring countries. Together, these trends are costly to individuals, families, and communities, and ultimately to the nation as it tries to respond to the chronic burden of disease and reduced productivity. Benin will require a strong and healthy workforce to overcome its major development challenges. The U.S. government will help to strengthen Benin's capacity to foster a healthier, more inclusive society by expanding the delivery (both supply and demand) of essential health services, strengthening the management systems that govern health sector resources, and ensuring the most marginalized groups in Benin are more integrated within the larger society. The U.S. aims to partner with Beninese

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counterparts to develop stable, resilient, and self-reliant healthcare systems that endure long after foreign assistance has been provided.

- **Risks:** Unsustainable growth rates that will destabilize Benin by overpopulation as well as increasingly negative health indicators that will erode Benin's workforce and further add to social and economic insecurity. Post will mitigate these risks through continued diplomatic engagement and health programming.

4. Management Objectives

Management Objective 1: Improve the Mission's effectiveness in attaining ICS goals with an enhanced diplomatic platform.

- **Justification:** The U.S. Embassy in Cotonou moved into the New Embassy Compound (NEC) in 2015. Frequent electricity cuts require backup systems to ensure a reliable power supply when the main feed is down, and the Mission will take steps to reduce consumption at the NEC and at residences to reduce electricity costs.
- **Linkages:** Workforce efficiencies can also be gained by improving the mission's IT infrastructure and updating the housing and residential property platform while maintaining high standards of cost efficiency and accountability.
- **Risks:** Longer power outages result in less work production and slowing the advancement of ICS goals.

Management Objective 2: Build a more effective workforce through competitive recruitment predicated on diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) principles, outlined in E.O. 13985, and capitalizing on the Mission's diverse American, Beninese, and third-country national workforce.

- **Justification:** In order to maximize the Mission's effectiveness and enable it to fully implement the ICS goals and objectives, we need to recruit competitively using DEIA principles and advance existing personnel development efforts in order to ensure every staff member has the skills, resources, and motivation to perform at the highest possible level.
- **Linkages:** Building a more diverse workplace will yield an enhanced work product and foster an environment that advances American ideals of inclusion and equity, both of which are consistent with E.O. 13985.
- **Risks:** Not achieving this objective may lead to low morale, lower quality work product, inefficiencies, and not living up to American values.

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Management Objective 3: Increase the efficiency and quality of service deliverables by streamlining management controls.

- **Justification:** Recognizing the need to identify opportunities to improve service delivery that undergird the advancement of ICS goals and objectives, the Mission will review how it can do so.
- **Linkages:** More efficient and higher quality service delivery will permit the Mission to enhance interagency cooperation, streamline processes, and maximize its budget and time to advance U.S. policy goals
- **Risks:** Not achieving this objective may lead to stovepiping, lower quality work product, inefficiencies, and un-necessary expenditures.