



**Mennonite
Mission
Network**

The mission agency of
Mennonite Church USA



Mission Banks

A stewardship and mission resource

“Blessed are those who hear the word of
God and obey it!”

— Luke 11:28

BENIN

LISTENING FOR GOD’S CALL

Packet contents

- Introduction and background information
- Guidelines for using mission banks
- Three story cards, for use in worship or Sunday school
- Children’s prayer card

Introduction for children

Benin is a country in West Africa, about the size of Tennessee. If you find it on a map (located on the inside cover of your mission bank materials), you’ll see that Benin is neighbored by the countries of Togo, Burkina Faso, Niger and Nigeria, as well as the Atlantic Ocean. Although small, Benin has four main geographical regions: a sandy coast, swampy lakes, flat land, and the Atacora Mountain range. Benin lies right on the equator, and temperatures are hot and humid. This is good weather to grow cotton, cocoa and corn, which are some of Benin’s top exports to other countries.

History

Many years ago, Benin was called the Kingdom of Dahomey and was very large and powerful. As Europeans arrived in Benin in the 1400s, they began trading posts. But instead of trading items like cotton or iron, they traded people.

During this terrible time in Benin’s history, many Beninese people were taken from their homes, separated from their families, and sold as slaves in Asia, Europe, North and South America. Even after the slave trade slowed down, Benin was controlled by France’s government.

People in Benin gained independence from France in 1960. Even though French is still the official language, many people speak native languages called *Fon* or *Yoruba*, or the other 54 languages that are spoken in the country.

Mennonites in Benin

Mennonite ideas first came to Benin in the 1970s, when they were invited to lead Bible studies that were offered in churches a few weeks every year.

Eventually, Mennonite mission worker families were invited to live in Benin, where they listened to God and to the needs of the people in Benin. Then, together with local people like Augustin Ahoga, Drs. Barthélemy Dossou-Bodjrénou and Victorine Ongnibon, Raphaël Edou, and Héloïse Clédjo, they began the Benin Bible Institute, Bethesda Hospital, and, with Mennonites from Spain, *La Casa Grande*. You will learn more about these ministries as you read the stories together. (*Teachers, for more context, read Missio Dei #23: 3-D Gospel in Benin.*)

Using mission bank teaching tools

These teaching tools are used in conjunction with the globe-shaped mission banks provided by Mennonite Mission Network. Banks for children can be ordered online at www.MennoniteMission.net/MissionBank.

For more resources about Benin, visit
www.MennoniteMission.net/BeninMissionBank.

Mission bank projects teach children mission-focused stewardship. The tools show children how God is at work in Benin and what mission can mean in a child’s own context.

Meet our worker



Janet Stucky has lived and worked in Benin since 2013. She works for Bethesda Hospital helping mothers and children eat the food that will keep them healthy. She also works together with *La Casa Grande* and Benin Bible Institute to let people know about health and how communities can work together to have better lives.

In addition to working with the three Mennonite ministries in Benin, Stucky works with community gardeners who supply major markets and restaurants with fresh vegetables. Recently, she co-led a nutrition class for gardeners just outside of the city of Cotonou, in order to teach the value of including more fruits and vegetables during meal times.

Material for teachers

Story cards

Included in this packet are three story cards. These stories from Benin can be shared with children during worship, Sunday school, or other gathering times. After reading these stories together, invite children to reflect on ways that they can follow Christ in their own lives.

Giving project

Mennonite Mission Network supports a variety of ministries in Benin. One of the primary ways that mission happens is by sharing the good news of Jesus through friendships and loving our neighbors. Here are some examples:

Offering

\$100 helps to provide job training for young adults as they prepare to enter the working world.

\$50 helps to provide a child with education, health care, food, and clothing for a month.

\$40 helps to provide school supplies for one child.

\$1 helps to provide a day of vacation Bible school for one child.

Giving project display idea

Use a large piece of paper to cover part of a wall or bulletin board. On the paper, draw a house and label it "*La Casa Grande*." Then, have children

color and cut out drawings of children in Benin. (These can be downloaded from our website.) For every \$10 raised by your mission banks, tape a drawing of a child near the drawing of *La Casa Grande*, to symbolize the children that you are helping. Each time you gather, remember to pray for the children in Benin.

Suggested activities

1. Ginger Cooler

This Beninese drink is sure to cool you off on a hot summer day! But plan ahead; this is best when served cold.

Ingredients

3 pieces of 2-inch ginger root	¾ c sugar
Water	1 lemon

Steps

- Soak ginger root in water for 20-30 minutes, then scrape off outer peeling.
- Cut ginger root into half-inch pieces.
- In a blender, combine 1 cup ginger root pieces and 1 cup water.
- Liquefy and pour into a 2-quart container. Repeat until ginger root is used up.
- Add sugar and the juice from the lemon.
- Fill container with water.
- Before serving, strain with a cheese cloth or fine strainer.
- Refrigerate at least half a day, or overnight for fuller flavor. Dilute with water, or adjust with sugar, according to taste. May be served over ice.

Adapted from Extending the Table, Herald Press 1991.

2. Relay racing

Children in Benin often play with whatever materials are available rather than new toys. For this game, divide children into two teams and mark two lines where the relay race will start and finish. The first team to have everyone complete the following activities wins.

- Roll a bicycle rim or a tire with a stick to a line and back again without having it topple.
- Carry a pot of water on your head.
- Dribble a soccer ball (made of wadded-up rags or plastic bags) to a line and back.

3. Bring it back home

The way we live at home can have a big impact in the lives of people around the world. Here are a few ideas for how to live simply with your family at home. Consider putting the money you save into your mission bank to give to children at *La Casa Grande*.

- Make a meal at home instead of eating out. The money that you save can be put into your mission bank.
- Go to a friend's house for the evening instead of going to a sporting event. The money that you would spend at the game, you can give to your mission bank.
- If you have cable TV, consider turning it off for a month and put that money in your mission bank, to donate to children at *La Casa Grande*.

4. Make baked bananas

Place peeled bananas in a buttered, shallow baking pan. Sprinkle with lemon juice and honey. Bake at 350 degrees for 15-20 minutes.

5. Sand box game

Gather a small group of children around a sand box, and make as many small piles of sand as there are children playing the game. While the other children close their eyes, one child hides a small item in one of the piles of sand. Each child chooses a pile. The child who finds the item in their sand pile is the winner and hides the item next.

6. Step-by-step baby carrying.

- For beginners, carrying a baby on your back is a two-person job. Find a partner! One is the “carrier” and one is the “helper.”
- The carrier bends forward 90 degrees from the waist, so that their back is horizontal to the ground. Helper places baby, so that its legs are wrapped around the carrier's back. (African mothers bend forward and slide the baby under one arm onto their back, pinning one of the baby's arms in the mother's armpit so the baby can't fall.)
- Helper lays a two-yard-by-one-yard cloth across the baby's back with the top edge of the cloth at the base of the baby's neck. Cloth should be centered with both right and left sides equal. (African mothers bend forward and have the cloth drape over their hips and, then, extending their arms backward, lift it up and over the baby.)
- Carrier takes the top edge of left and right sides of the cloth in respective hands and securely twist one over the other, like when making a knot.
- Carrier stands upright while gathering bottom edge of the left and right sides of the cloth in respective hands, and twists them around each other in a ball, tucking the remaining tails of cloth into the part of the cloth that is stretched across the carrier's chest.
- Carrier and baby are ready to go!

Did you know?

- Benin's flag has the colors green, red and yellow that represent plants, soil and the sun.
- Fifty-four languages are spoken in Benin, but French is the official language.
- Benin's national animal is the leopard.
- Benin's capital city, Porto-Novo, is known as the “city with three names.” It's also known as Adjatche and Hogbonou in the *Yoruba* and *Goun* languages.
- Cotton and cashews are two of Benin's biggest exports to other countries.

▶ Visit us online at www.MennoniteMission.net/BeninMissionBank for more resources.



Using mission banks

Please follow these guidelines as you use Mennonite Mission Network's mission banks to support God's work in Benin.

Use of banks—The globe-shaped mission banks were created to collect funds for ministries in the countries highlighted by the mission bank teaching tools produced by Mennonite Mission Network. In these packets you can find:

- Stories about Mennonite Mission Network ministry happening in that area.
- A giving project.
- Activities, songs and recipes to help children engage the country's or region's culture.
- Video presentations that help to put a face on each country and the giving project.

Age range and cost—Mission banks are a fun way for children and congregations to learn together about stewardship and generosity, and to hear stories about the ways that God is working around the world. Because we want each child to be able to participate in this learning experience, banks are offered free of charge to all Mennonite Church USA children in grades K-6 from Jan. 1–Mar. 31 of every year. Banks can also be ordered throughout the year for \$4.95 per bank.

Resources—Along with each teaching tool packet, we also post extra resources online. Check back often at www.MennoniteMission.net/MissionBank for new pictures and ideas for mission education.

Other uses—Stewardship and mission education are not just important for children; they are important for the whole church. Consider giving one globe bank to each household, or sharing stories from the Mission Network teaching tool packets during worship. Invite all members of your congregation to pray and support Mission Network personnel around the world.

Gift designation—Mennonite Mission Network supports workers and partners all around the world. You may wish to consider using your banks to also support Mennonite Voluntary Service or Service Adventure participants from your congregation, or to raise support for a Mission Network worker that your congregation is connected with.

Collecting funds—Congregations are asked to collect the funds contributed through the mission banks and send a check payable to Mennonite Mission Network, with **"Mission Bank: Benin"** or **"Project #1520"** written in the check memo line. Congregations may decide to participate with other congregations in bringing the total change collected to a cluster or area conference gathering. Then funds may be disbursed in the same manner as above.

If you have other questions about how to use your Mennonite Mission Network mission banks, or would like to order more teaching tool packets, please contact us at MissionBank@MennoniteMission.net or 1-866-866-2872.

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