



Mennonite  
Mission  
Network



## Children's Mission Project



Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."

—Matthew 19:14

### Packet contents

- Introduction and background information
- Guidelines for using mission banks
- A story card for use in worship or Sunday school
- Age-specific activities.

### Introduction for children

How many types of transportation do you use to get to your best friend's house? What about your grandma's house? Today, we're going to learn about the country of Benin, in West Africa. Can you find Benin on a world map or globe? How many types of transportation would you use if you were to travel to Benin? Probably a car to get to the airport, then you would fly in an airplane, and take public transportation to a marketplace. From there, you might take a motorcycle to the house where you will stay.

Benin is 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 a neighbor to 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 grassland, and the Atacora Mountain range. Benin lies right on the equator, and temperatures are hot and humid. This is good weather to grow cotton, cashews 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 America and South America. Even after the slave trade, Benin was controlled by France's government. People in Benin gained independence from France in 1960. Even though French is still the official language, 54 other regional languages are spoken. *Fon* and *Yoruba* are two of the most important.

### Mennonites in Benin

Mennonite ideas first came to Benin in the 1970s, when Mennonites 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 requests of the people in Benin. Then, together with local people like Augustin Ahoga, Drs. Barthélemy Dossou-Bodjrénu 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](http://www.MennoniteMission.net/MissionBank).

More activities and resources about Benin can be found at [www.MennoniteMission.net/BeninMissionBank](http://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.*

## 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.

## Meet our workers



**Felipe Preciado and Diana Cruz** are from Colombia, but live and serve at *La Casa Grande*, the children's home in Allada, Benin. Diana teaches English and Spanish in the school, *Les Lideres*, and Felipe combines science and farming to help raise money for the children's home.

## Material for teachers

### Story cards

Share this story from Benin with children during worship, Sunday school, or another gathering time. After reading the story together, invite children to reflect on how they might follow Jesus at home, in school, and in church.

### 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. You can help them spread God's love by helping to send Mawuli, and other children like her, to training school. There's a saying that "when you educate a

boy, you educate an individual. When you educate a girl, you educate a generation." Here are a few ways you can help both boys and girls in Benin:

- **\$10** helps buy school books.
- **\$25** helps a student attend one class for a semester.
- **\$100** helps a student attend a year of school.

## Giving project display idea

*La Casa Grande* is being built by people from Benin, Spain, and the United States. You can build a children's home of your own, using Legos, to show how much money you've raised for *La Casa Grande*. Add one wall for every \$20 raised. (*Teachers, adjust the amount as you see fit.*)

## Additional activities

### Early childhood activities

- Find Benin on a map. (*Teachers, point out the countries that are close to it.*)
- Using green, yellow and red construction paper, make the flag of Benin.
- Watch the video about Mawuli's miracle!  
[www.mennonitemission.net/Stories/Multimedia/Pages/Mawulismiracle.aspx](http://www.mennonitemission.net/Stories/Multimedia/Pages/Mawulismiracle.aspx)

### Kindergarten–grade 3 activities

- Find Benin on a map. (*Teachers, point out the countries that are close to it.*)
- Using green, yellow and red construction paper, make the flag of Benin.
- Using the map of Africa coloring page, find the country of Benin. Many times, the African continent is discussed as a whole (as if it were one country), disregarding the different countries and cultures within. Ask children to point out countries nearby. Then, use crayons or markers to color the map, using a different color for each country.
- Using the map of Benin, put a sticker on the major cities: Cotonou, Parakou, and Djougou. Draw a star near Porto-Novo, Benin's capital city. Draw a heart shape around Allada, where *La Casa Grande* children's home is located.
- In many countries, water is scarce and needs to be rationed. This is true in the northern part of Benin where it is very dry. Suppose you need to ration your water to 25 liters (6.6 gallons) a day. What are ways that you can use less water, so you

have enough for drinking, cooking and washing? When you wash your hands before snack, place a bucket in the sink to collect the water. Then use that water to water a garden, flowers, or to flush the toilet.

- In Beninese art, statues and face masks tell us about the strength and power of their king, the Oba. How might you show God's power? What about God's love or protection? Use Play-Doh or clay to show characteristics of our King, Jesus Christ. Invite each child to share about their creation and how it shows a characteristic of God. *(Teachers, to learn more about art in Benin, visit [www.bbc.co.uk/guides/z84fvcw](http://www.bbc.co.uk/guides/z84fvcw).)*
- Watch the video about Mawuli's miracle!  
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#### Grades 4–6 activities

- Using the map of Benin, put a sticker on the major cities: Cotonou, Parakou, and Djougou. Draw a star near Porto-Novo, Benin's capital city. Draw a heart shape around Allada, where *La Casa Grande* children's home is located.
- Using the map of Africa coloring page, find the country of Benin. Many times, the continent of Africa is talked about as a whole, disregarding the different countries and cultures within. Ask children to point out countries nearby. Then, use crayons or markers to color the map, using a different color for each country. If you have time, children could research unique things about each country that borders Benin.
- In many countries, water is scarce and needs to be rationed. This is true in the northern part of Benin where it is very dry. Suppose you need to ration your water to 25 liters (6.6 gallons) a day. How would you divide and use (perhaps re-use) water between the following activities?
  - Drinking
  - Cooking (3 cups for oatmeal, 5 cups for soup, 5 cups for pasta)
  - Handwashing/bathing
  - Flushing a toilet (1.5 gallons)

- In Beninese art, statues and face masks used to tell us about the strength and power of their king, the Oba. Use Play-Doh or clay to show characteristics of our King, Jesus Christ. How might you show God's power? What about God's love or protection? Invite each child to share about their creation and how it shows a characteristic of God. *(Teachers, to learn more about art in Benin, visit [www.bbc.co.uk/guides/z84fvcw](http://www.bbc.co.uk/guides/z84fvcw).)*
- Watch the video about Mawuli's miracle!  
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#### Snack idea

- More cotton is grown in Benin than any other country on the continent of Africa. Someone might think that would make the people of Benin wealthy, but often times, the money only goes to a small number of people: the people who own the cotton farms. This is called inequality. It's a big problem in the United States, too. To show inequality, choose two "special children" in the class and give 20 Goldfish crackers to them. Give two Goldfish crackers to the rest of the children in the class. For the rest of the class period, give the "special children" certain privileges (example: they can walk around the room, talk without raising their hand, etc.) while the rest of the class must behave as normal. Then discuss these questions at the end of class:
  - How did it make you feel to receive extra Goldfish and special privileges?
  - How did it make you feel to see others receiving so much more than you, for no reason?
  - In your class at school, are there people who have more or less than you? How do you think this makes them feel?
  - In our world, just like in our classroom today, there are *few* people who have a lot of money, and there are *many* people who live on as little as \$2 a day. How does God tell us to treat the poor? Read Matthew 25:34-36 and 1 John 3:17-18.



## 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 Mission Network ministry happening in that area.
- A giving project.
- Activities, songs, and snack ideas to help children engage the country's or region's culture.

**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 children in grades K-6.

**Resources**—Along with each teaching tool packet, we also post extra resources online. Check back often at [www.MennoniteMission.net/MissionBank](http://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.

**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 Banks: Benin"** or **"Project #1820"** written in the check memo line. Congregations may decide to participate with other congregations in bringing the total collected to a cluster or area conference gathering.

**Alternate gift designation**—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.

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

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