



*Equipping Women
Empowering Change
Overcoming Poverty*

— in —

Benin



Women from the Lokossa, Benin women's group.

Women's Enterprises International (WEI) Philosophy:

We work to transform lives and communities by reaching across cultures equipping women living in poverty to achieve their God-given potential. We dream and work *with* the women, not for them. We envision and work towards sustainable change. Our work is done through local leaders who speak the language and live and work full time in Benin.

Programs:

- Education
- Income Generation

Issues:

Benin is a small, elongated country in West Africa, bounded by Togo on the West and Nigeria on the East. It's population is nearly 8 million, 75% of which lives on less than \$2 per day. Adult literacy is 39%. WEI is working in Cotonou on the coast and in Lokossa, about a two hour drive northwest of Cotonou, near the Togo border. Girls have just recently been encouraged by the government to attend primary school with tuition paid for both girls and boys. Uniforms, books and other school supplies must be provided by impoverished parents.

In-Country Coordinator:

WEI programs generally recruit the assistance of local women leaders to handle the organization and implementation of programs. In the case of Benin, however, we work with Daslin Small-Oueounou, who was born in Jamaica, and worked as CEO of the Medical Ship "Anastasis" for many years before moving to Benin. Daslin has an unending supply of energy and administers an orphanage, clinic and women's groups in Cotonou. We also work with Edith Dzampe, who served as health educator with Mercy Ships for 15 years. Edith is originally from Togo but has moved to Benin to help administer the WEI education program and start income generation projects with women. Edith is fun, spirited and highly capable.

WEI's Accomplishments:

- Education—WEI's education program started in 2004 with 225 kids in primary and secondary schools in and around Lokossa and Cotonou. Currently 343 students are sponsored, and our program

Continued on back . . .

Continued from front . . .

- has expanded to include high school students. Expenses include uniforms, books and other supplies.
- Income Generation—Funded by WEI, women from an established women’s group in Lokossa, have started a small business to produce uniforms for WEI sponsored students. Previously, the scholarship project hired local tailors to make the uniforms at inflated prices. The women WEI-sponsors already knew how to sew and agreed to undertake making uniforms for all the female students, which will provide much needed income for them and a school uniform for each girl WEI supports at a much lower cost. WEI purchased material and supplies and paid the women \$4 per uniform. This seems like so little by US standards but in a \$2 a day economy, this is a huge boost to family income.
 - The school uniform project was WEI’s first trial run on doing income generation with women in Benin. Based on this experience and the advice and input of the women and local leaders, WEI is eager to continue partnering with these women in future projects.

Opportunities for Involvement:

- Financially support the primary educational scholarship project. Supplying each primary school child with a uniform and books costs \$40.
- Financially support the secondary educational scholarship project. The Simpson Foundation has provided secondary students’ uniforms and tuition for \$70 per student. Books and supplies cost an additional \$40 per child. Most children in Benin do not have the luxury of owning their own textbooks but we would delight in changing this!
- Financially sponsor our Women’s Project Directors, Edith Dzampe and Daslin Small to travel to Kenya and receive hands on training with Kenya Director, Gracie Mullei. Costs = \$6,000.
- Learn more about West Africa– read a classic! Chinua Achebe’s award winning novel *Things Fall Apart* is set in Nigeria on the Benin border during the colonial era. It has been translated into 50 languages and has sold over 8 million copies around the world.
- Are you fluent in French? WEI needs French speakers to help us with this project.

October, 2008

Women’s Enterprises is a 501(c)3 organization, eligible for employer sponsored matching programs. Our Federal Tax ID number is 91-2153830.

Women’s Enterprises International • P. O. Box 95775, Seattle, WA 98145 • 206-214-5991
www.womensenterprises.org