development
initiatives

the P20 Initiative – data to leave no one behind in Benin

discussion paper

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Introduction

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set an ambitious agenda for change. They are universal – a challenge to all countries – and apply to subnational districts, cities, the public sector and business and all of civil society. They encompass the environment, poverty, inequality, sustainable growth, inclusion, healthcare, education, nutrition and much more to achieve Agenda 2030.

The SDGs' challenging goals, targets and indicators also are a departure from the past. In addition to setting forth more than 230 indicators, the SDGs contain a principle that changes the way these indicators have traditionally been viewed. The SDGs say that no one should be left behind. Ensuring no one is left behind requires a different approach than looking at national averages. It requires data to be disaggregated to look at people – not averages – and understand the characteristics of those groups that may be excluded. It also requires data on the whole population – otherwise we cannot know who is missing. For these reasons the UN called for a data revolution for sustainable development.[1]

This report is about progress on the commitment to leave no one behind and the extent to which the poorest 20% of people (the P20) are included in progress. Reflecting the universal nature of the challenge, Benin and Switzerland are looking in parallel at their own data, statistics and approaches to ensure that everyone is included in progress.

Agenda 2030 is clear that each country has responsibility for its own development and that there are mutual responsibilities for achieving the goals. The P20 applies at global and national level. The global P20 are the people in the poorest 20% of the world's population and ensuring that they are not left behind is both an international and a national responsibility. But in addition, Agenda 2030 makes it clear that in each country, everyone must be included, so progress for the national P20 -the poorest 20% of people in the country must also be the measure of whether the goals are being achieved or not.

Initial lessons, challenges and experiences from both countries will be shared at the High-level Political Forum (HLPF) in July 2018 and will inform the 2019 HLPF on Empowering People and Ensuring Inclusiveness and Equality.

Benin has been active in incorporating the SDGs into its national planning frameworks and in engaging on ways to accelerate progress internationally.

- In 2016, the Government of Benin held a national seminar on the SDGs to increase domestic ownership of Agenda 2030.
- In 2017, Benin's presentation to the HLPF highlighted the role of the SDGs in the National Development Plan and the National Strategy for the Development of

Statistics and processes to accelerate the achievement of Benin's priority SDG targets.[2]

- In 2018, the Government of Benin outlined its priority targets under the SDGs, applying Agenda 2030 to the national context.[3]
- In 2018, the Government of Benin is presenting a Voluntary National Review (VNR) to the HLPF and is considering the status of the poorest 20% of people – the P20 - and the data available to ensure that no one is left behind. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has reported strong economic activity in 2017 and in particular that domestic revenue mobilisation and spending on priority social programmes exceeded the programme targets.[4] Benin is one of two African countries taking part in a costing exercise on financing needed to achieve the SDGs in education, water and sanitation and health.

The P20 Initiative and data to leave no one behind

Rather than offering a new poverty measure, the P20 Initiative is an effort to better understand the data on people who are at risk of being left behind so that action can be taken, and policies and resources can be better targeted to ensure that they are included in progress.

The idea of focusing on the P20 can apply to any population or any sector. For instance, it may be valuable for a ministry to look at how effective their services are at reaching the poorest 20% of their populations. Alternatively, a non-governmental organisation (NGO) or business could seek to better understand the people in the bottom 20% of incomes among their clients.

The P20 Initiative has proposed three key bellwether indicators – income, nutrition and Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS). If progress on these three indicators is not going in the right direction for the P20, then it is unlikely that other SDGs will be achieved. But other sectors need to be added which reflect the priorities of governments and agencies, so that data is available on who is included in progress on all SDGs. To further understand populations at risk of being left behind, the P20 Initiative stresses the importance of disaggregation so that data is available on the inclusion of different vulnerable groups. It uses five simple dimensions to disaggregate data and show different rates of progress – wealth quintile, gender, geography, age and disability.

Development Initiatives has produced this report with support from the Ministry of Planning and Development of Benin and Swiss Development Cooperation. The analysis was produced drawing on interviews in Benin with the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Analysis; the Ministry of Culture, Tourism, Sports and Youth; the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries; the Ministry of Primary Education; the Ministry of Secondary Instruction, and Technical and Professional Training; the Ministry of Higher Education and Research; the Ministry of Energy, Water and Mines; the Ministry of Social Affairs, Microfinance, and the Family. We are very grateful for input from these actors. Every effort has been made to ensure the information in this report is reliable and if any errors are present, these are those of DI and not these actors.

Policies to leave no one behind in Benin

In 2017, Benin published its first VNR of the SDGs in New York. While there were limited explicit references to the leave no one behind agenda, the importance of that goal was interlaced through the report. The 2018 VNR contains more content focusing on the leave no one behind agenda. The VNR highlights four major areas of government activities to leave no one behind:

1. Social protection for all
2. Social safety nets for the most vulnerable
3. Legislation for the most vulnerable
4. Geographically balanced development initiatives.

It is important to remember that the 'Leave no one Behind' imperative applies beyond social sectors to all areas of service provision and all SDGs, so it is helpful to see how the Government of Benin is applying a 'leave no one behind approach' in different ministries and agencies.

The Government has recently instituted L'Assurance pour le Renforcement du Capital Humain (ARCH). ARCH focuses on providing health insurance, professional training, microcredit and pensions for those living in extreme and non-extreme poverty.

The social protection net efforts are still in a pilot phase with a focus on improving access to social services as well as conditional and unconditional cash transfers, with special attention to people with disabilities. On the legislative front, a 2017 law sought to provide protection and services for persons with disabilities. With respect to geographic inequalities, the government has made it a priority to ensure that all areas of the country have adequate access to government resources, with a focus on drinking water.[5]

Health

Benin has focused on providing adequate healthcare for many years. Providing universal healthcare has been an official objective for the government for decades. Currently the Government has several programmes to reduce inequalities in healthcare and to ensure that vulnerable populations receive adequate care. The Ministry of Health has focused on providing malaria treatment and prevention for children under five and pregnant women. The government has also sought to decrease infant mortality and improve maternal health by increasing access to healthcare and covering the costs of caesarean sections.

Education

Benin's efforts to encourage improved enrolment rates and outcomes have focused on leaving no one behind. There have been two major policy focuses on this in primary education. Benin has made primary education enrolment mandatory for school-aged children. Additionally, the government has provided school meals. Government priorities have focused further on increasing access to education for those who have left schooling, providing certification programmes for those in trades, improving access to facilities for those with disabilities, and building schools in areas with lower enrolment rates. There are persistent challenges in increasing enrolment in some areas, particularly in the north of the country.

Energy and water

The government has sought to expand access to drinking water and electricity in rural areas. Developing sustainable networks is a challenge in some areas where residents find it difficult to pay for services. Consequently, those in lower income areas tend to experience lower quality and quantity of electricity and drinking water. A major government priority is to expand rural access to electricity.

Agriculture

A large proportion of Benin's population works in agriculture or fisheries. Food security and nutritional security are major priorities for the government. 12% of those in rural areas experience moderate food insecurity, compared to 6% of those in urban areas. The Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries has 24 projects under way to reduce food insecurity in the 2018 budget.

Culture, tourism, sport and youth

Artists and crafts workers are among the poorest in Benin. The Government has struggled to work with organised groups to promote their interests. Benin's tourism industry is small but there are efforts under way to further develop these resources. The Government has sought to provide training and support to areas with limited resources to help develop teams and leagues. There have not been significant efforts to generate women's leagues or to make athletics in Benin accessible for people with disabilities. Unemployment remains a challenge for young people and the Government has struggled to meet demand for services.

Social protection

The Government is currently engaged in several programmes to reduce the risk of certain populations being left behind. The government is also focusing on reducing premature pregnancies.

It is clear that across different sectors, the Government of Benin is giving priority to groups left behind. Key now, is how Benin can build on this approach to targeting and reporting. This will enable it to systematically monitor progress and assist all actors to focus their efforts on delivery for the P20 and provide an accessible evidence base on progress.

Status of the P20 in Benin

Under SDG 1, the Government of Benin has set the goal to reduce the national poverty rate by half among men, women and children of all ages by 2030. 40% of Benin's population was estimated as living below the national poverty line in 2015, an increase from 33% in 2007. Similarly, Benin has recently seen increases in the number of people living below the international extreme poverty line of US$1.90 per person per day – from 49% in 2002, to 51% in 2013.[6] Benin experienced notable GDP growth during this period, but that growth did not translate to poverty reduction for several reasons. Benin's National Institute of Statistics and Economic Analysis (INSAE) identified several factors, including agricultural productivity remaining stagnant and limited resources for vulnerable populations.[7]

Approximately 65% of the population of Benin is among the world's poorest 20% of people, the global P20. The most recent data shows maximum daily consumption per person of US$2.54.[8] Their average daily consumption was US$1.38 in 2013, an improvement from US$1.15 in 2002. Globally therefore, there is an imperative to address the two thirds of Benin's people who are in the poorest 20% of the world's population.

However, the imperative to 'Leave no one Behind' also sets the goal of reaching those furthest behind first.[9] To better understand who is at risk of being left furthest behind, we can look at those in the poorest 20% of Benin's population, the national P20. As of 2015, the poorest 20% of people in Benin were living on less than US$0.95 per person per day – less than half of the international poverty line. This population has seen a decrease in average daily consumption over the past several years. In 2002, their average daily consumption was US$0.90; by 2013 it had dropped to US$0.64. This means that the average consumption of those in the national P20 was roughly one third of the global extreme poverty line, down from a little less than half. Even though Benin's P20 account for 20% of the national population, they only account for 3.2% of the daily national consumption.

This raises two fundamental issues and illustrates the challenge that Agenda 2030 presents. The poorest people have to make progress at a rate fast enough to narrow the gap – otherwise, by definition, the gap between them and everyone else will be getting bigger. Reducing disparities means that the consumption floor – the lowest levels of consumption – needs to rise. SDG 10 makes this clear – progress for the poorest people has to be at a rate higher than the national average.

For the poorest 20% of people in Benin, the national P20, we see that average daily consumption remained stagnant during the 1990s and 2000s and declined in the 2010s. Meanwhile, the rest of the population has seen significant gains.

Figure 1: Growing gap in consumption between the poorest 20% of people in Benin and the rest of the population
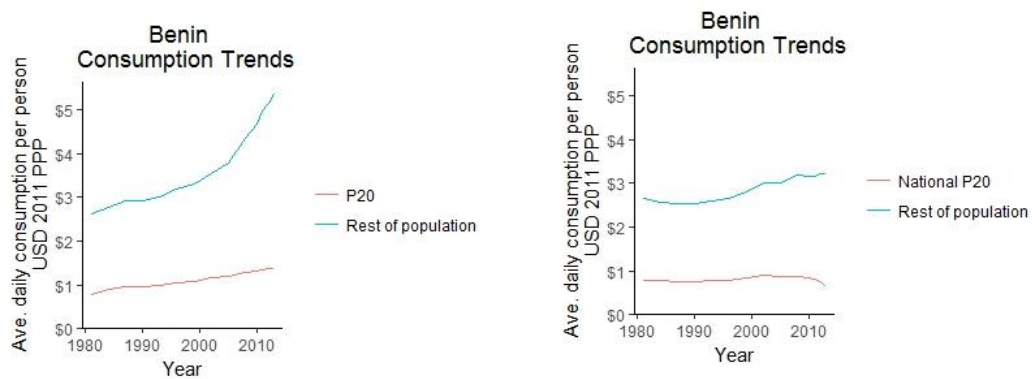
Source: Development Initiatives calculations based on PovcalNet 2018.

If recent trends continue, the P20 in Benin seem likely to be left behind in terms of consumption. The ARCH programme and other government initiatives to leave no one behind could help. Its focus on health insurance could provide an important means for ensuring that families don't fall into poverty. Anirudh Krishna[10] has found that healthcare costs are one of the major factors driving families into poverty across a wide range of contexts. Cash transfer programmes have also been successful in reducing poverty across diverse contexts.

Nutrition

Under SDG 2, the government has set the goal to eliminate hunger, all forms of malnutrition particularly among children, pregnant and nursing women and older persons, and to double the productivity of agricultural producers. Benin recently published the results of a national food security survey, L'analyse globale de la vulnérabilité et de la sécurité alimentaire 2017. The survey found that 9.6% of Benin's population is food insecure, a decrease from 11% in 2013. The report found that a lack of access to food drives food insecurity in Benin more than a lack of availability of food.[11]

579,000 of children in Benin were estimated to be stunted in 2014. Stunting is the result of previous deprivations, especially malnutrition, and is a predictor of future deprivation as it affects cognitive as well as physical development and can have an intergenerational impact. The data shows that there has been no significant progress on reducing the rates of stunting in Benin in recent years. The 2014 UNICEF Multi Indicator Cluster Survey[12]

(MICS) shows rates approximately on par with those experienced in 1996[13], however, they are down from a peak in 2011–2012[14]. The 2014 MICS indicates that 39% of children under five in the global P20 (two third of Benin's population) are stunted, compared to 21% among the rest of the population. Among the national P20, 45% of children under five are stunted, compared to 30% for the rest of the population. Wasting, or low weight for height, is experienced by 4.6% of the P20 in Benin and 3.9% of the rest of the population under five.

Data on the nutritional status of the P20 can help to focus efforts and attention on measurable progress as an urgent investment in human capital building – part of a major programme of the Government of Benin.[15]

Civil registration and vital statistics

CRVS is an important part of leaving no one behind because people have a right to be counted by their government. It is hard to make the case that people count in the eyes of the government when they have not been officially recognised.

In Benin, the Ministry of Interior has the central office of civil registration. There has been real progress: 85% of births were registered in 2014 (MICS 2014), an increase from 53% in 2006[16] (Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) 2006). There is however a difference between the P20 and the rest of the population, with the P20 being left behind: according to MICS 2014, 71% of those under five in the global P20 have birth certificates, compared to 86% among the rest of the population.

In recent years, the Ministry of Health has made significant improvements in its health administrative data system (DHIS2) which houses CRVS data. These efforts have gone along with efforts to have municipalities collect data on births and deaths that occur outside of the public health system.

The Government is also expanding a large national identification campaign known as 'le Recensement Administratif à Vocation d'Identification des personnes' (RAVIP). In May 2018, the government announced that 10.2 million of an estimated 11 million residents in Benin had enrolled in RAVIP.[17] The initial exercise did not include efforts to link elements of eligibility for certain social services to the identity cards. Similarly, no policy has been announced on how the RAVIP cards may be linked to other government administrative databases. Nevertheless, such tools could play a significant role in increasing access to government services among the P20. RAVIP also holds potential for providing better data on where people are being left behind.

SDG targets for 2018

Under SDG 6, the government has set the goal to provide universal access to safe, affordable drinking water and adequate toilets. According to the 2014 MICS, 67% of the

global P20 in Benin have improved drinking water compared to 88% among the rest of the population. Among the global P20, 15% have adequate toilets compared to 76% among the rest of the population.

Under SDG 7, the government has set the target to provide reliable, affordable electricity to everyone. Electrification has increased from 14.5% in 1996 to 34.1% in 2014 (MICS 2014). Only 11% of households in the P20 have electricity, compared to 79% among the rest of the population (MICS 2014). The government has also set goals to expand the use of renewable energy.

Under SDG 11, the government has set a goal to ensure that the entire population has access to adequate housing. To accommodate urbanisation, the government is working on a rainwater sanitation project, as well as a project to pave the roads of all large cities in the country.[18] 34% of Benin's population lives in households with unfinished floors and 64% live in households made of natural or unfinished materials (MICS 2014).

SDG 12 aims to promote sustainable production and consumption. To achieve this goal, the government is implementing a ban on non-biodegradable plastic bags.

SDG 15 includes goals to fight desertification and deforestation. The Government has implemented a policy paper on efforts to protect terrestrial ecosystems.

Data, statistics and disaggregation – understanding which groups of people are being left behind

There are all sorts of reasons why particular groups of people get left out of progress. The differences according to aspects of identity such as age, gender or disability can be very significant. Where a person lives is often another important factor in terms of the chances and opportunities available to them. The SDG indicators include many different disaggregations. The P20 Initiative proposes an initial focus on just five – income quintile, gender, geography, age and disability. While data on these dimensions is available for some basic services and social sectors, more work needs to be done to understand which groups are left behind in goals covering areas like energy or economic growth.

INSAE is currently finalising a new National Strategy for the Development of Statistics. This strategy will include specific plans to best develop indicators for the National Development Plan, Agenda 2063 and the SDGs. The strategy will address many issues including the development of environmental statistics. INSAE is interested in increasing participation in international forums to improve statistics on leaving no one behind.

Many ministries lack administrative data systems that can provide accurate, timely data that can be disaggregated to better understand who may be left behind. The Ministry of Energy, Water and Mines for instance, does not have data that can be disaggregated except by geography, yet access to these services may be influenced by gender and wealth quintile.

An Agricultural Census is currently in development. When it is implemented, it should be possible to disaggregate by gender and age of household. In general, the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries noted that disaggregation by age, sex and disability would be helpful for improved targeting of services.

Gender

MICS 2014 includes several indicators disaggregated by sex. Girls are only slightly less likely than boys to have their births registered. As is true in most countries, girls are less likely to experience stunting in Benin. However, the adjusted net primary enrolment rates are 55% among boys in the national P20 compared to 46% among girls. Among the rest of the population, the rate is 85% for boys compared to 80% for girls.

Most ministries with administrative data are capable of disaggregating their data by sex. The education ministries and the Ministry of Health have robust statistical systems that frequently generate data by sex.

Benin does not collect data on LGBT populations or on gender identity.

Geography

Benin, like neighbouring countries, sees large geographic differences in wellbeing. The coastal south has far more wealth and much lower poverty rates than the north (World Bank 2018). Mapping the distribution of extreme poverty from data in DHS and MICS suggests that poverty has increased between 2002 and 2013, particularly in the north of the country. The Government has made a priority of ensuring that all regions of the country get equal treatment.[19]

Figure 2: Extreme poverty rates in Benin in 2002 and 2013
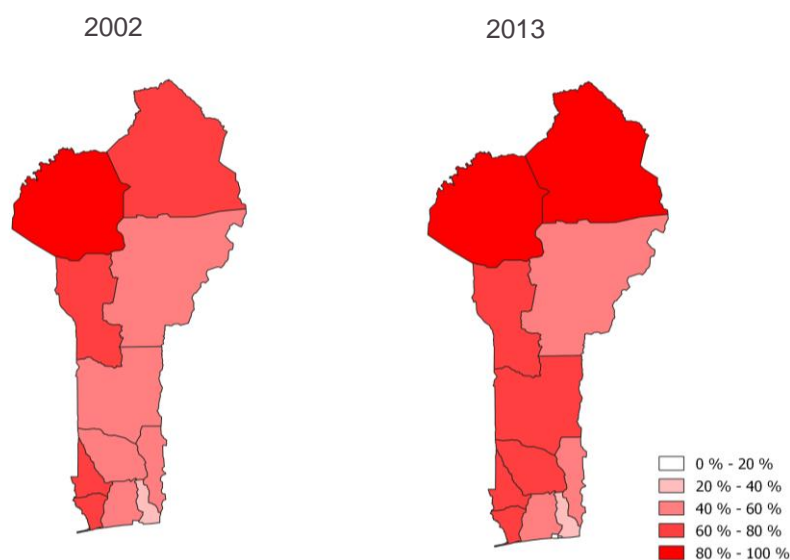
Source: Development Initiatives calculations based on PovcalNet and DHS

Age

Some of the key international data sources in Benin, the DHS and MICS, focus primarily on children aged 0–5 and adults aged 15–49. This leaves less information about people in other age groups. For instance, few questions are asked about children between 5–15; however, questions posed to people aged 15–49 find that 15–16% of these people began sexual activity before the age of 15 with about 9% of women marrying before the age of 15 (MICS 2014). Furthermore, men and women over 49 are not asked about sexual activity, sexual violence or sexually transmitted diseases in these surveys, though they may be particularly at risk of being left behind. The development of administrative data systems also provides potential for better understanding and better disaggregation by age in Benin. The UN Statistics Commission recently established the Titchfield Group on Ageing which is focusing on giving recommendations for better tracking of age over the course of the life cycle.

Disability

Benin's 2013 Housing and Population Census asked respondents to identify based on disability – motor, visual, auditory/verbal, intellectual and mental. The census identified 92,495 persons with disabilities, less than 1% of the population. The census provides geographic disaggregation for this population. The UN Statistical Commission's Washington Group on Disability Statistics has found that there is a strong tendency for persons to underreport disability. They recommend a set of questions for surveys, censuses and administrative data that produces more accurate results. Benin has not yet incorporated these questions in their censuses or surveys.

Other Considerations

According to the 2014 MICS, 13% of Benin's children under 17 do not live with either their biological mother or biological father. 12% of these children live in households in the P20 compared to 17% among the rest of the population. These numbers can mask some of the diversity within households. It may be that these children live in worse conditions than the biological children of the head of household.

Many of the P20 and those who are at risk of being left behind may not be counted among these surveys. These populations may include those who are homeless, those who live in institutions such as prisons, convents, orphanages, migrants and those who are hospitalised. Additionally, in many parts of the world, there is evidence that those living in the lowest-income housing in urban areas tend to be undercounted.

Notes

[1] The United Nations Secretary-General's Independent Expert Advisory Group on a Data Revolution for Sustainable Development, 2015. A World That Counts: Mobilising The Data Revolution for Sustainable Development. www.undatarevolution.org/report/

[2] Ministère du Plan et du Développement, République du Bénin. Presentation of Voluntary National Review, 18 July 2017.

[3] Republic of Benin and UNDP, 2018, Objectifs de développement durable: Cibles prioritaires pour le Bénin.

[4] IMF Press Release 18/117, 30 March 2018.

[5] Republic of Bénin, 2018. Draft Contribution Nationale Volontaire a la mise en œuvre des ODD au forum politique de haut niveau.

[6] The World Bank has flagged that there are some methodological issues that make comparing poverty across time difficult in Benin. Beegle, Kathleen; Christiaensen, Luc; Dabalen, Andrew; Isis Gaddis, 2016. Poverty in a Rising Africa. Washington, DC: World Bank. © World Bank. www.openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/22575 License: CC BY 3.0 IGO.

[7] INSAE, March 2014. Evaluation de la pauvreté au Bénin. http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/200021468226191071/Evaluation-de-la-pauvrete-au-Benin

[8] All monetary amounts are reported as $ 2011 PPP and are based on calculations taken from the World Bank's PovcalNet. http://iresearch.worldbank.org/PovcalNet/home.aspx

[9] United Nations General Assembly, 2015. www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E. "As we embark on this great collective journey, we pledge that no one will be left behind. Recognizing that the dignity of the human person is fundamental, we wish to see the Goals and targets met for all nations and peoples and for all segments of society. And we will endeavour to reach the furthest behind first."

[10] Krishna, Anirudh, 2010. One Illness Away: Why People Become Poor and How They Escape Poverty. Oxford University Press, New York.

[11] Institut National de la Statistique et de l'Analyse Economique www.insae-bj.org/actualites/dissemination-du-rapport-de-lanalyse-globale-de-la-vulnerabilite-et-de-la-securite-alimentaire-le-mardi-15-mai-2018-a-azalai-hot.html (accessed 9 June 2018)

[12] Institut national de la statistique et de l'analyse économique (INSAE), 2015, Bénin. Enquête par grappes à indicateurs multiples 2014, Rapport final, Cotonou, Bénin: Institut national de la statistique et de l'analyse économique.

[13] Kodjogbé, Nicalse, Gora Mboup, Justin Tossou, Léopoldine de Souza, Timothée Gandaho, Alphonse Guédémé, Thomas Houedokoho, Rafatou Houndékon, Thomas Tohouegnon, Suzanne Zomahoun, Virgile Capo-Chichi, and Andrée Cossi. 1997. Enquête Démographique et de Santé, République de Bénin 1996. Calverton, Maryland USA: Institut National de la Statistique et de l'Analyse Économique/Bénin and Macro International.

[14] Institut National de la Statistique et de l'Analyse Économique – INSAE/Bénin and ICF International, 2013. Enquête Démographique et de Santé du Bénin 2011–2012. Calverton, Maryland, USA: INSAE and ICF International.

[15] See VNR presentation 2017 "The insurance for human capital building (pension, training, micro-credit, universal health insurance) a major program of the Government is launched"

[16] Institut National de la Statistique et de l'Analyse Économique – INSAE/Bénin and ICF International, 2013. Enquête Démographique et de Santé du Bénin 2006. Calverton, Maryland, USA: INSAE and ICF International.

[17] RFI, 17 May 2018. Recensement au Benin: les premier resultats du RAVIP rendus publics www.rfi.fr/afrique/20180517-recensement-benin-premiers-resultats-ravip-rendus-publics

[18] Ministere du Plan et due Developpement, Republique due Benin, Presentation of Voluntary National Review, 18 July 2017. XXXWEB REFXXX

[19] Wagstaff, Adam, 2003. Child Health on a Dollar a Day: Some Tentative Cross-country Comparison. Social Science and Medicine 57(9):1529-38. Following Adam Wagstaff, we use the distribution of DHS/MICS wealth scores to approximate wealth distributions. In this case, we have mapped the wealth of two DHS surveys to approximate the allocation of people in extreme poverty in 2002 and 2013.

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We work to ensure that decisions about the allocation of finance and resources result in an end to poverty, increase the resilience of the world's most vulnerable people, and ensure no one is left behind.

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