High Commission of India
Abuja (Nigeria)
(Concurrently Accredited to Benin)

India – Benin Bilateral Brief

A. Overall Relations:

1. India and Benin have friendly ties characterized by democracy and secularism. Benin as a shining example of a tolerant, progressive multi-ethnic and multi-religious society with a multi-party democracy, is a natural partner to India, being the world's largest democracy.

2. Benin as a member of several international forums, including the United Nations, works closely with India. During the visit to India of the then President of Benin Dr. Boni Yayi in March 2009, Benin extended its unflinching support to India in her bid for a Permanent Seat in an expanded UN Security Council. Benin expressed solidarity with India in its efforts to tackle the scourge of terrorism, which has become the biggest threat to international peace and security in the current times.

B. Bilateral Visits

3. India-Benin relations were placed on a firm footing with the State visit of the then President Boni Yayi accompanied by five Cabinet ministers to India from 3 to 7 March 2009. In addition to delegation-level meeting with the then Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh, President Boni Yayi held meetings with the President, Vice President, and External Affairs Meeting. India announced a Line of Credit (LoC) of US$ 15 million for Benin during the visit. Two grants of one million dollars each for mutually identified projects in Health & Education sectors as well as the setting up of an IT Centre for Excellence and a Centre of Demonstration of Technology (both on grant basis) were also agreed to. The visit concluded with five bilateral agreements with Benin including an MOU on setting up an Information Technology Centre of Excellence (CETI) in the Republic of Benin.

4. Prof. Ram Shankar Katheria, MoS (HRD) visited Benin as the Special Envoy to Prime Minister from September 14-15, 2015, to personally handover invitation letter to Beninese President to attend the third India-Africa Forum Summit (IAFS-III) scheduled to be held in New Delhi from October 26-30, 2015. During the visit, Minister Prof Katheria met Benin President Boni Yayi and Foreign Minister Saliou Akadiri.

5. The then President Boni Yayi paid a second visit to India from October 26-30, 2016, to attend the Third India-Africa Forum Summit (IAFS-III) held in New Delhi. Prime Minister Narendra Modi met with President Yayi on the sidelines of the IAFS-III. President Yayi was accompanied by 27-member delegation comprising Mr. Saliou Akadiri, Minister of Foreign Affairs; Mr. Pocoun Dame Kombienou, Minister of Industries and Commerce; and senior officials. Earlier, Benin Minister of Industry and Commerce, Mr. Pocoun Dame Kombienou

travelled to India to attend the fourth meeting of the India-Africa Trade Ministers at New Delhi on October 23, 2015.

6. Benin President Mr. Patrice Talon led a 13–member delegation including Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Economy, and Planning, to India to attend the annual meetings of the African Development Bank (AfDB) held in Ahmedabad from 22-26 May 2017.

7. The Minister of Energy of Benin, Mr Dona Jean-Claude Houssou visited India to participate in the Founding Conference of the ISA and the Solar Summit in Oct 2018.

8. His Excellency Mr. Ram Nath KOVIND, President of the Republic of India, paid a State visit to Benin on July 28-30, 2019, heading a high-level delegation and met his counterpart His Excellency Mr. Patrice TALON, President of the Republic of Benin. He also visited the Benin National Assembly where he had discussions with the Speaker of the Benin Parliament and addressed Beninese MPs during a regular session of the Parliament. This visit is an historic visit, very first to Benin at the level of Head of State/Government. During the visit, the two Heads of State held a tete-a-tete, at the Palace of the Republic, for discussions relating to bilateral cooperation, India-Africa partnership, and global issues. President KOVIND announced a soft Line of Credit of USD 100 million to Benin for its national priority projects. President KOVIND also announced the inclusion of Benin in India's e-visa regime. Four (4) Agreements/MoUs were signed during the visit -Cultural Exchange Programme between Benin and India for 2019-23; MoU on Tele-medicine and Tele-education; Agreement on mutual exemption from visa requirement for holders of diplomatic, official/service passports; and MoU on cooperation in the field of export credit and investment insurance.

9. Ms. Medesse Veronique Tognifode, Hon'ble Minister of Social Affairs and Micro Finance of the Republic of Benin visited India in Jan 2020, to attend the Peer Exchange- "Accelerating Digital Social Protection Payments" organized in New Delhi.

10. Mr. Romuald WADAGNI, Minister of Economy and Finance visited India from 01-05 February 2025 to meet EXIM Bank officials.

11. Mr. Dona Jean-Claude HOUSSOU, Minister of Energy, visited India to from 01-05 February 2023 to meet EXIM Bank officials.

12. Mr. Shegun Adjadi Bakari, Minister for Foreign Affairs led a 7 members delegation to India on a bilateral visit from 16-18 December 2023.

13. Mr. Gaston Cossi Dossouhoui, Minister of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, visited India as part of delegation for bilateral visit from 16-18 December 2023.

C. Institutional Mechanisms

14. India and Benin have also established two institutional mechanisms to review the bilateral engagement.

(i) **Joint Commission Meeting (JCM):** The Agreement to establish the India-Benin Joint Commission on political, economic, scientific, technical, and cultural cooperation was signed during the first-ever State Visit to India (3-7 March 2009) by Dr. Boni Yayi, President of the Republic of Benin. Minister of State for External Affairs Dr Shashi Tharoor paid an official visit to Benin from October 21-23, 2009 and co-Chaired the first Meeting of the India-Benin Joint Commission on political, economic, scientific, technical and cultural cooperation held at Cotonou. The 2nd India-Benin JCM is to be held soon on mutually agreed dates.

(ii) **Foreign Office Consultations (FoC):** The then Secretary (East) Mr. Shashak, visited Cotonou in August 2003 for the first round of the FOC. Secretary-General for Foreign Affairs of Benin visited New Delhi in April 2005 for second round of Foreign Office Consultations. The 3rd India-Benin FoC was held in Benin in June 2024, Indian side was led by AS(C&WA) and Secretary-General for Foreign Affairs of Benin led the Beninese delegation.

D. Defense Cooperation

15. Beninese Armed Forces have been attending training courses in defense institutions in India under the ITEC program. In addition, Benin Armed Forces have also regularly participated in various military exercises and events organised in India. The focus of defence cooperation remains on capacity building through training assistance. In addition, vacancies in UN courses are also being provided.

16. **Aero India 2025**. The Benin delegation led by the Chief of Air Staff, Benin Air Force participated in the event in Bengaluru from 10 to 14 February 2025.

17. **IFR 2026 and MILAN 2026.** The Benin delegation led by the Chief of the Naval Staff participated in the event in Vishakhapatnam from 15 to 20 Feb 26.

E. Commercial and Trade Relations

18. India has emerged as the largest trading partner of Benin with two-way trade touching US $ 1.3 billion in 2024-25. Lead items of India's exports were rice, pharmaceutical products, electrical machinery, cotton, and automobiles particularly two and three-wheelers etc.

F. India-Benin Bilateral Trade Statistics (Value in US$ million)

	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
India's Exports	**327**	**555.20**	**716.41**	**892.81**	**752.55**	**1,194.98**	**954.77**
India's Imports	**359**	**325.97**	**402.12**	**452.58**	**214.57**	**130.51**	**113.00**
Total trade	**686.00**	**881.17**	**1118.53**	**1345.40**	**967.12**	**1,325.49**	**1067.77**

Source: DGCIS India

G. Development Cooperation

(I) Credit Line Facilities

India has extended Lines of Credit worth US$ 208.25 million to Benin Republic, of which US$ 159 million constitute bilateral Lines of Credit. Projects worth US$ 17 million have been completed, which include US$ 15 million for agricultural equipment and two grants of US$ 1 million each for mutually identified projects in the health & education sectors.

19. India had donated 100 tractors each in 2009 and 2010, 4 Tata buses in July 2010 and 60 ambulances in February 2011 to Benin. Another Line of Credit of $ 15 million for tractor and agricultural machinery assembly plant was approved in May 2012, which since been completed and inaugurated by Benin President in December 2014. Yet another LoC of US$ 42.61 million equivalent has been approved in May 2013 for upgradation of water supply schemes in 69 villages in Benin.

20. Benin is part of the Pan African e-Network project. An MoU on e-VBAB (Tele-education and Tele-medicine) was signed between the Republic of Benin and TCIL, during the State Visit of President Ram Nath Kovind to Benin from 28-30 July 2019.

21. IBSA's Salt Farming Project: An India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) project on Salt farming in the Republic of Benin was announced on 16 July 2021 in Djegbadji village near Ouidah, Benin. The Salt Farming Project provides improved technology, capacity building and distribution support to the local population (mainly women) in the efficient, cost-effective, and environmentally safe production of salt. On 21 May 2026, the Djegbadji Salt Production Unit was formally handed over to the local salt farming community, marking the successful completion of the IBSA Fund project with support from the Government of India.

(II) Capacity Building Program

22. ITEC/e-ITEC: Since 1964, India has been supporting Benin's efforts in Capacity building under Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) Program. India regularly offers training slots under ITEC to Benin annually. Beninese officials regularly attend short to medium terms training programs in diverse subjects ranging from IT to Parliamentary studies in India.

23. Consequent to the India-Africa Forum Summit-III held in New Delhi in October 2015, India has been offering additional training programs to Benin in diverse subjects ranging from Agriculture to Hydro power etc. Beninese diplomat regularly attending the Professional Course for Foreign Diplomats (PCFD) in Foreign Service Institute, New Delhi. Every year there are scholarships offered by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) for Beninese nationals to pursue undergraduate / post graduate courses in India.

(III) COVID-19

24. India donated a 6 tonne-consignment of essential medicines, including HCQS and antibiotics, to the Republic of Benin in July 2020. During the Covid-19 pandemic, a total of

293 stranded Indian nationals in Benin have been repatriated to India in 3 flights. On 10 March 2021, India sent consignment of 1,44,000 doses of Covishield vaccine from the Serum Institute of India (SII), under the Covax scheme of GAVI.

H. Cultural Exchanges

25. India and Benin signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Cultural Exchange Programme (CEP) for 2019-23 during the State Visit of President Ram Nath Kovind to Benin from 28-30 July 2019. A 15-member Theyyam dance group from Kerala visited Benin on December 2, 2011 and gave a performance at Palais de Congress in Cotonou.

I. Indian Community

26. The Republic of Benin hosts approximately 2500 Indians including OCIs mainly in business. About 90 Indian companies mainly in trading and retailing are in Benin. Indian experts are working in the West Africa Rice Development Centre (WARDA). Indian community is well respected in the country and has been engaged in charitable and socio-economic activities including education, healthcare, potable water supple etc. especially in rural areas. A School for local rural children is being run by the Indian community. Cotonou has Indian Association of Benin (IAB), a Hindu Temple to anchor cultural activities, and has established an Indian International School in May 2008 which has received CBSE affiliation in October 2011 and currently has around 150 students.

Indian community in Benin as well as Beninese nationals participated in the 12th International Day of Yoga (IDY) in June 2026. The High Commissioner and Mission's officials visit Republic of Benin regularly for high level meetings, visiting prisons and rendering consular assistance to Indian nationals facilitating their release, and also actively engage with the Indian diaspora. Mission through its Honorary Consul regularly organised Cultural and other events and rendered Consular assistance to Indian national imprisoned in Benin.

September 2026