General Country Information:
The Republic of Benin is located in western Africa, and borders Burkina Faso, Niger, Nigeria and Togo with a south coast along the Atlantic Ocean. Benin is divided in 12 departments and 77 communes. Porto Novo is the capital but the largest city and the seat of government is Cotonou (located in the department of Littoral).

Also known as the former kingdom of Dahomey, Benin became a French colony between 1899 and 1960 and gained its independence in August 1960. It was renamed The People's Republic of Benin in 1975 under a Marxist government that was to last until 1980. Benin is nowadays a multiparty republic.

During late April 2005, following a presidential election held in a tense climate, clashes in Lomé (Togo) lead to the exodus of 25,000 Togolese to Benin. The refugees lived both in local communities (15,000) and in camps (10,000 in Come and Lokossa). The camp in Come closed in August 2006, however the one in Lokossa remains open with an estimate of 6,000 refugees as of August 2007.

Benin is located in the meningitis belt and suffers from regular outbreaks of meningococcal disease.

Cholera Background History:
The first cholera outbreak in Benin was reported when the current pandemic hit the African continent in 1970.

Major outbreaks occurred in 1991, 1996 and 2001. In 1991, the largest outbreak in the country accounting for 7,474 cases and 259 deaths (case fatality rate of 3.47%) was reported. In 1996, 6,190 cases and 203 deaths were reported (CFR 3.28%).

In 2001, an outbreak accounting for 3,943 cases and 71 deaths (CFR 1.8%) was recorded. The outbreak started in July in the department of Borgou which reported 732 cases and 43 deaths during the first 3 weeks. The epidemic further spread in the departments of Zou (18 cases between 30 July and 5 August 2001) and Atlantique.

In 2005, between 1 January and 13 November, a total of 749 cases including 11 deaths (CFR 1.46%) were reported from 5 departments out of 12: Atlantique, Littoral, Mono, Ouémé and Zou. The outbreak started in Cotonou in June. By August it had spread to the department of Ouémé and by September Zou was also affected. Cotonou and its closest department Atlantique reported most of the cases (510). Zou reported 106 cases, Mono and Ouémé reported respectively 17 and 73 cases with no death.

The weekly distribution of cholera cases, deaths and CFR between 1 Jan. and 13 Nov. 2005 is shown in Figure 1.

Communications between Cotonou and the departments of Atlantique, Ouémé and Zou involve both the rivers and roads.

In 2006, Benin reported 91 cases and 1 death (CFR of 1.1%) in the south of the country (departments of Mono, Atlantique and Ouémé) and in 2007, no cholera case was reported.
Demographic and Socio-Economic Data:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geography</th>
<th>Total surface</th>
<th>112 622 km² (coastline of 121km)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Capital</td>
<td>Porto Novo (population in Porto Novo: 4 799 432)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Departments</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Official Language</td>
<td>French</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Environment:
- Climate: Hot and humid
- Rainy season: April-July and September-November but relatively little rain
- Floods and droughts: Inadequate supplies of potable water; poaching threatens wildlife populations;
- Desertification: Deforestation; desertification
- Natural resources: Small offshore oil deposits, limestone, marble, timber

Demographics:
- Population: 8 439 000
- Religions: 30% Christian, 20% Muslim and 50% indigenous religions
- Ethnic groups: Fon 39.2%, Adj’a 15.2%, Yoruba 12.3%, Bariba 9.2%, Fulani 7%, Ottamari 6.1%, Yoa-Lokpa 4%, Dendi 2.5%, other 1.6% (includes Europeans)
- Migrants: 25 000 refugees from Togo between April 2005 and August 2006

Economy:
- Industry: Textiles, food processing, construction materials, cement
- Farming: Cotton, corn, cassava (tapioca), yams, beans, palm oil, peanuts, cashews; livestock

Health Indicators:
- Per capita total expenditure on health: 36$ (2003)
- Life expectancy birth (yrs): Males: 52  Females: 53
- Child mortality (per 1000): 152

Communicable Diseases:
- Food or waterborne diseases: bacterial and protozoal diarrhea, hepatitis A, and typhoid fever
- Vectorborne diseases: malaria, yellow fever
- Respiratory disease: meningococcal meningitis (2007)
- HIV prevalence (2005): 1.6%

Risk Factors for Cholera:
- Population with access to improved water source: 67% (2004)
- Population with access to proper sanitation facilities: 33% (2004)

Sources for Document: WHO, UN (MDG), UNHCR, UNICEF, UNDP

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