

BENIN EDUCATION FUND

The Benin Education Fund (BEF) is a grassroots organization run primarily by volunteers. We provide scholarships and educational support to needy and under privileged, but promising students from rural and most under-served region of [Benin](#). Most of our scholars would have no access to education without the support of BEF. Our program covers secondary and university level studies. Basic secondary school fees and related expenses can exceed \$150/year and university level can cost up to \$2500/year, even though the average annual income is less than \$1000.



Our Impact:

Since the founding of the Benin Education Fund in 1998, we have touched on the lives of over 6000 students. During the 2018–2019 school year alone, we sponsored 75 **high school students who** stayed in school thanks to BEF scholarships. About 2/3 are girls. A typical scholarship includes tuition and fees, supplies, uniforms, and books. We provide housing for students who must leave their villages to attend school elsewhere. Students preparing national exams, such as the BEPC or the French Baccalaureate (BAC), receive tutoring and additional financial support as needed.

BEF Project on COVID–19 Response:

As the global COVID19 situation continues to evolve rapidly, many people in the developing world are already facing famine and starvation. Our goal is to raise funds to help feed women and families with young children. We are targeting women in the informal sectors that rely on micro and small commercial activities to feed their families; these activities are now shutdown due to COVID19. The families generally live day to day with money earned

daily from their small businesses. The Benin Education Fund has decided to redirect the funds raised through GlobalGiving to help those that have been left with the means to feed their families.

The Problem:

As the Coronavirus continues to spread around the globe, it is impacting severely the poorer communities in developing countries. The informal sector is predominant across Sub-Saharan Africa; in Benin, informal economic activities are particularly high, about 70% of the private sector. The informal economy constitutes a major source of employment for at least 70% to 90% of the population. The COVID19 Pandemic has forced nations to shutdown most commercial activities, taking away the life-line employment for poorer communities already susceptible to famine, especially women and children.

Current Project: Solution:

Our COVID response through this project, targets families and individuals that rely on small informal sector economic activities to provide for their families. Our target group depends on the daily cash generation to feed the family. They often have no savings to fall back on in situations like these. 100% of the money we raised is being deployed in the forms cash transfers and food that have gone toward feeding this extremely vulnerable segment of the population in rural towns in Benin.

The beneficiary households were identified through an intense process, whereby, every family was visited by our university students who volunteered to help with the project with a questionnaire to collect the detailed family situation. The information was then vetted by the Benin Education Fund's staff with a follow up phone calls to confirm the information provided on the questionnaire forms. With a limited budget, the number of potential beneficiaries was filtered and reduced from 200 households to 50 final households, which are currently receiving cash transfers or food (see attached file).

Long-Term Impact

The aim is to help families get through the months of the COVID19 Pandemic. As economic activities resume, most of the individuals can resume their informal economic activities and return to independence. We do understand that start-up capital may be required for some of them in order to be able to resume commercial activities after the COVID19 crisis, As such, BEF staff are looking to identify opportunities where the women can obtain funds through grant programs from the Benin government or small loans from the local Micro Finance Institutions. 100% of the funds raised will go directly to support the cause.

Following the COVID-19 crisis, the Benin Education Fund (BEF) intends to develop a vocational training offering adapted to the needs of economic development with a focus on partnering with the private sector through diversified training programs that will help some of the women, especially young women, build practical skills for better access to employment. BEF will enable at least 100 women, over a period of five years, from the poorest regions in Benin to access technical education and become successful professionals. This will offer to the women, an alternative to the informal commercial activities.

Areas education interests:

- Electrician (specialized in renewable energy like solar installations)
- Carpentry (furniture – still a big market for this)
- IT and creating tech platforms for commercial activities
- Farming/agriculture – we are currently two students attending farming programs
- Nursing – In nursing for example, we have more demand than we can fill – we currently sponsor 5 nursing students in Burkina Faso.
- Tourisme activities

For those that chose or prefer to continue with their informal activities, BEF will offer a training program to teach the women to establish saving plans in case another crisis should disrupt their commercial activities in the future.