

To the people of Japan: Thank you!

Republic of Benin

Japan-Benin Parliamentary Friendship Association Delegation's Visit to Benin

From December 5th to 7th in the year 2000, a delegation of the Japan-Benin Parliamentary Friendship Association visited Benin, the first time for members of Japan's National Diet. The delegation consisted of five personnel: Mr. Kijuro Sugahara, member of the House of Representatives and leader of the Association, his fellow members of the House of Representatives Mr. Ichio Kumagai, Mr. Matsushige Ono, and Mr. Chiken Kakazu, and Zomahoun Rufin as their escort..

1. Attending the Official Document Exchange Signing Ceremony for Grant Aid for the Increase of Food Production

On December 7, the official document exchange signing ceremony for Grant Aid for the Increase of Food Production, a Japanese Grant Aid, took place in Benin's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation in Cotonou in the presence of the delegation. The Japanese representative, Ambassador Nakamura, and the Benin representative, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation Idji, each signed the document. Four members of the Friendship Association on the Benin side were also present at the venue.

The 200 million yen Grant Aid which was agreed on this occasion will be used to purchase fertilizer, agrichemicals, and agricultural machinery, which will be sold to farmers who produce Benin's food crops. The sales revenue will be accumulated by the government, and used for variety of social development projects after discussions between Japan and Benin.

During the signing ceremony, Ambassador Nakamura stated, "The delegation from the Japan-Benin Parliamentary Friendship Association is inspecting sites of Japan's economic cooperation, and through their participation in this ceremony, we expect the National Diet's understanding of economic cooperation to deepen." To the Benin government he said, "This is the 15th time that we have given aid; we hope that the potential of Benin's farming industry will improve, and that you will continue to make even greater efforts."

In response, Foreign Minister Idji said, "The attendance of the delegation at this signing made the ceremony even greater. I am delighted that the delegation's stay in Benin became a good opportunity to give new impetus to the bilateral relationship between Japan and Benin.

Furthermore, this aid will help farmers of Benin who strive for increasing food production and diversification, and I recognize its importance for Benin to achieve food self-sufficiency.”

2. Inspecting the Project for Primary School Construction

The Japan-Benin Parliamentary Friendship Association delegation visited Adjarra-Sota Primary School, which was completed in January 1999. Large numbers of children formed lines and welcomed the delegation’s visit with a drum rhythm. Diet Member Mr. Kakazu, who is from Okinawa, performed an Okinawan dance with the rhythm of the Benin drums, which the children enjoyed with sparkling eyes.

A representative of the school conveyed their gratitude to the delegation, saying, “Thank you very much for coming all this way far-off from Japan. Thank you for building us a wonderful primary school.” They also explained the current state of primary schools in Benin, and handed over a letter of their requests to the delegation.

3. Inspecting the Project for Water Supply in Rural Areas

Next, the delegation inspected a well that was constructed by Japanese Grant Aid, located in the village of Adoube, 30 minutes’ drive to the west of Cotonou. During the third Project for Water Supply in Rural Areas, a total of 151 wells were dug in three prefectures in the southern part of Benin; this well was one of them and was finished in May 1994. When the delegation arrived at the village, a crowd of people gathered there. The village leader and the villagers expressed their gratitude to the delegation. Each member of the delegation used the pump, pressing it with their feet and drawing water. The local residents cheered. The pump, which was built six years ago, is still in use.

4. Project to Improve Facilities for Rainwater Drainage in Cotonou

As the city of Cotonou is located at a low altitude, it floods for several days during the rainy seasons every year, causing difficulties for the local residents. Based on the request of Benin’s government, Japan completed facilities for rainwater drainage in 1997 as a solution.

After the completion of the facilities, there has been no flooding in people’s homes in the vicinity of the drainage facilities, even when it rains hard during the rainy seasons, and the local people are able to spend their daily life with peace in mind.

5. Reactions

During the Japan-Benin Parliamentary Friendship Association delegation’s stay, the Benin

national broadcasting service covered their courtesy call on President Kérékou, the signing ceremony of Exchange of Notes, and other occasions. It broadcasted Ambassador Nakamura and Foreign Minister Idji signing Exchange of Notes in front of a line of four members of the Japan-Benin Parliamentary Friendship Association, as well as Ambassador Nakamura's speech in the presence of members of the Japanese and Benin MPs and representatives from related Beninese ministries, and blessed the development of the new friendship between Japan and Benin.

Inspecting Adjarra-Sota Primary School

Many children welcomed the Japan-Benin Friendship Parliamentary Friendship Association's visit with a drum rhythm

Inspecting the Project for Water Supply in Rural Areas (Adoube Village)

The village leader and village residents, Zomahoun, the Japan-Benin Parliamentary Friendship Association delegation, and the ambassador. The well that was completed 6 years ago is still in use.