



## **Migration Profile**

### **BURKINA FASO**

#### **A. Executive Summary**

Migration in Burkina Faso has long been a traditional way of life for Burkinabe, with seasonal migration being replaced by years spent abroad. Under French colonization and the Colonial Development Act of 1921, Burkina Faso (then named the Republic of Upper Volta) became a main labour source for agricultural and factory work in Côte d'Ivoire. Burkinabe also migrated to Ghana, Mali and Senegal for work between the world wars. Since Burkina Faso's independence in 1960, these migratory trends have continued. Severe droughts combined with difficult economic conditions have led to considerable migration from rural to urban areas within Burkina Faso and also to neighbouring countries.

Mass protests in October 2014 and the removal of the transitional government in September 2015 contributed to the increase of instability in the country. Since 2018, the country's security situation has deteriorated indeed due to the growing active presence of non-state armed groups which has resulted in a significant increase in forced displacement. This insecurity has spread from conflict in Mali in 2016, first to northern, and then eastern Burkina Faso, and has led to a spike in human rights violations and abuses. Recently, attacks against students, teachers and schools have increased in the Sahel, with more than 85 attacks recorded in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger between January and July 2020.

Between 2019 and 2020, the increase in the activities of non-state armed groups, community violence, and the deterioration of security conditions have led to a cycle of violence that has resulted in massive population displacements and an unprecedented humanitarian crisis. Burkina Faso has one of the fastest-growing displacement crises in the world.

#### **B. Country Profile**

##### **I. Basic information**

Burkina Faso is a landlocked country of 274,200 km<sup>2</sup> in West Africa, bordered by Mali, Niger, Benin, Togo, Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire. It has two principal climate regions: the Sahelian zone in the North with semiarid steppe, and the Sudanic zone in the South with tropical wet and dry weather. There are an estimated 21.5 million inhabitants in Burkina Faso (2020), with a population growth rate of approximately 2.66% (2020). The capital, Ouagadougou, has more than 2.6 million inhabitants. As of 2018, most Burkinabe (70.6%) lived in rural areas, mainly in the centre of the country. Although much of the country's soil

is infertile, the vast majority of the population (around 90%) is engaged in subsistence agriculture or raising livestock. The agricultural sector accounts for 35% of the country's gross domestic product and 82% of its labour force.

The western and eastern regions are cotton-growing areas. Cotton, shea nuts, sesame and sugarcane are export commodities, while sorghum, millet, corn, peanuts, and rice are grown for local consumption. Burkina Faso also mines manganese and gold. There are 448 artisanal (small-scale) mine sites in the country, producing approximately 10 tons of gold annually. An estimated one million people are said to make their living from gold mining in Burkina Faso. They also report unsafe living and working conditions, exploitation at work, theft of property and working materials, ill treatment, and physical violence and persecution.

Burkina Faso's population comprises various ethnic groups: Mossi (52.5%), Fulani (8.4%), Gurma (6.8%), Bobo (4.8%), Gurunsi (4.5%), Senufo (4.4%), Busansi (3.9%) and other (14.7%). The official language of Burkina Faso is French, although it is not widely spoken. Moore (the language of the Mossi) is spoken by a great majority of the population and Dyula is widely used in commerce. The majority of Burkinabe are Muslims (61.6%) and other religions found in Burkina Faso are Roman Catholic (23.2%), traditional beliefs/animism (7.3%), and Protestant (6.7%).

Burkina Faso is one of the poorest countries in the world with a poverty rate estimated at 40.1% (2014), which means that 40.1% of the country's population lives on less than US\$1.90 a day. It is hardly surprising, then, that 25% of children under the age of 5 suffer from stunting, which the WHO defines as low height for age, resulting from chronic or recurrent undernutrition.

The factors that cause food insecurity and hinder sustainability and stability in the country are many and complex. These include environmental degradation and economic marginalisation; reliance on single-crop rain-fed agriculture, poor agricultural production capacity, and significant post-harvest losses; low literacy and education levels, gender inequality, and negative socio-cultural practices such as early marriage. The country is forced to rely on international aid and on remittances from emigrants to help with its current deficit. Burkina Faso has a negative net migration of -0.6 migrants per 1,000 people (2020 est.).

The risk of infectious diseases (bacterial and protozoan diarrhoea, hepatitis A, typhoid fever, dengue fever, malaria, schistosomiasis, rabies, and meningococcal meningitis) is very high. Malaria is one of the primary causes of death in children. As of 14 December 2020, there are 4,030 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 71 confirmed COVID-19-related deaths.

## **II. International and Internal Migrants**

At the crossroads of the main migration routes in the region, Burkina Faso is a major country of departure, transit, and destination for migration in West and Central Africa. It is a country which attracts international and internal migrants in the agricultural and mining sectors. There is no discontinuity between internal and international migration, it is a continuous chain where the same areas feed both types of migration and are connected to an imbalance in terms of agricultural potential between rural areas. For example, the central

regions of the country commonly known as the Mossi Plateau (the Central, Central-North, and Central-Western regions) are the main providers of internal migrants to the Western and South-Western regions.

International migrants also come mainly from the Mossi Plateau region. In 2019, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) reported more than 718,000 international migrants living in Burkina Faso, 3.5% of the total population. Most came from Cote d'Ivoire (76.5%), and others from Mali, Ghana, Niger and Togo. The median age of international migrants is 29.5 years, with 22.8% under the age of 19, and more than half of international migrants (52.4%) are women.

According to estimates by the International Organization for Migration between January and March 2020, most of the travellers to Burkina Faso are men (77%) and 23% are women with 1% minors. They are predominantly Burkinabe (55%), Nigerian (19%), Malian (14%), Ivorian (4%), Togolese (1%), Senegalese (1%), and Ghanaian (1%). They travel mainly for economic reasons (59%), to join their family (20%), to attend a family event (7%), to access services (3%), for religious events (1%) and for tourism (1%). Most are self-employed (67%), the rest are unemployed (21%), employed (9%) or students (3%).

Several areas of Burkina Faso, particularly mining and agricultural regions, attract workers from Burkina Faso but also nationals from other West African countries. Even before the 2012 Malian crisis, Malians were immigrating into Burkina Faso (more than 30% of all immigrants), as well as Togolese (14.5%) and Beninese (9%) (2006 est.). Yet, the bulk of immigration data to Burkina Faso is made up of return migrants, the majority coming from Cote d'Ivoire (79.4%), as most migrations follow circular and seasonal patterns.

Transhumance<sup>1</sup> is also an important dimension of mobility in Burkina Faso with circular movements along transhumance corridors. These activities mostly involve men (47%) and boys (32%), and also women (11%) and girls (10%).

### **III. Emigration and Skilled Migration**

Migration is a social phenomenon in Burkina Faso, and is not specific to a region or to any ethnic group. As many as 1.5 million people have been abroad at any given time. In Sub-Saharan Africa, Burkina Faso is one of the largest suppliers of migrants, mainly to Cote d'Ivoire. However, emigration data remain limited and often unreliable. Emigration mainly originates from rural areas to other rural areas to pursue agricultural activities. UNDESA counts 1,011,682 Burkinabe living abroad, the majority in Côte d'Ivoire. It should be noted, however, that this number may be underestimated.

Between January and June 2020, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) reported that among Burkinabe in Libya, most were men (89%) with low levels of education: 40% with a primary school education, 18% with a secondary school education, and 29% who

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<sup>1</sup> "Transhumance, form of pastoralism or nomadism organized around the migration of livestock between mountain pastures in warm seasons and lower altitudes the rest of the year. [...] Transhumance is practiced in those parts of the world where there are mountains, highlands, or other areas that are too cold to be inhabited and utilized for grazing except in summer." Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Transhumance". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1 Aug. 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/transhumance>.

had never attended school. The main final destinations considered by Burkinabe within Libya were Libya itself (35%), Europe (30%), Burkina Faso (11%) or no intended destination (17%). Their reasons for leaving Burkina Faso included insufficient income (42%), lack of job opportunities (36%), desire to seek work opportunities abroad (11%), other economic reasons (5%), limited or insufficient access to services (2%), limited ability to meet their food needs (2%), gradual environmental degradation (1%), and violence or persecution against them or their families (1%).

Between 2016 and 2020, about 3,000 Burkinabe migrants arrived in Spain, Italy and Greece through irregular migration routes, representing about 0.3% of the total number of arrivals over this period.

Emigration is often the result of a collective survival strategy in the face of the country's very austere environment. It is undeniable that emigration has an overall positive effect because cash transfers from migrants back to their households of origin enable them to cope with food deficits. Although migrant remittances are certainly underestimated, they represent at least three times the level of foreign direct investment and one-tenth of official development assistance. Remittances contribute to the reduction of poverty, especially in rural settings as 80% of remittances go to family support, 5.2% to education and 1.4% to health. The government of Burkina Faso is also working to increase the contribution of the diaspora to development of the country.

#### **IV. Forced Migration (internally displaced, asylum seekers and refugees)**

Due to worsening security conditions in the Sahel, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) recorded an astounding 712% increase in forced displacement between 2018 and 2019 in Burkina Faso, rising from 72,196 displaced people in 2018, to more than half a million (585,935) in 2019.

As of August 2020, according to estimates by the National Council for Emergency Relief and Rehabilitation (CONASUR), 111,087 households comprising 1,013,234 individuals were forcibly displaced within Burkina Faso, representing 1 in 20 people. This is an increase of 32% since the beginning of 2020, and mainly in northern Burkina Faso, with an average of 1,600 people fleeing every day since January 2019.

Of these internally displaced persons (IDPs), 54% are women and 55% are minors under the age of 14. IDPs are distributed mostly in the Centre-North (41.1%), followed by Sahel (34%), North (7.3%), East (6.5%), Boucle du Mouhoun (3.7%), Centre-East (2.3%), Plateau-Central (1.4%), Hauts-Bassins (1.1%), Centre-West (1.1%), Cascades (0.8%), South-West (0.4%), Centre-South (0.2%), and Centre (0.1%) regions. IDPs in Burkina Faso come mainly from the provinces of Sanmatenga, Soum, Bam, Seno and Namentenga, and are hosted in these same provinces (especially Sanmatenga and Soum). IDPs have needs that are basic and urgent: food (48%), shelter (3%), cash (1%), medical health service (1%), and work (1%).

Burkina Faso is also hosting more than 23,000 Malian refugees. Refugees are prevented from returning in safety and dignity due to the prolonged crisis and increased insecurity in most of the return zones in Mali. Refugees represent 3.4% of international migrants in Burkina Faso. Before the Malian crisis, refugees in Burkina Faso came mainly from Chad, Congo,

Rwanda, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Togo. In 2013, Burkina Faso hosted 50,000 refugees in the provinces of Mentaou, Goudébo, and Oudalan, and 771 asylum seekers from Cote d'Ivoire and the Central African Republic.

## **V. Victims of Human Trafficking**

Burkina Faso is a source, transit, and destination country for men, women, and children subjected to forced labour and sex trafficking. On the ENACT scale of 1 to 10, Burkina Faso has a criminality score of 4.98 and a human trafficking score of 5.0. In 2020, the United States Department of State placed the government of Burkina Faso on the Tier 2 Watch List because the country “does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but is making significant efforts to do so.” Data on human trafficking in Burkina Faso are not exhaustive because of decreased effort to identify trafficking victims by the government. Due to the justice sector being overburdened with terrorism-related cases, the government has not reported any investigation, prosecution, or conviction related to any cases of trafficking.

Yet, in 2020, the government identified 114 children who were victims of forced labour and 1,628 who were potential trafficking victims, compared to 851 trafficking victims and 2,844 potential victims in the previous year. The Ministry of Women identified that amongst those 1,628 potential victims, most (1,578) were vulnerable children living on the street, including *talibés* (Quranic students) exploited in forced begging. The 114 children who were victims of forced labour were from Central and Central-East Burkina Faso and were found in small-scale artisanal gold mines in Mali and Cote d'Ivoire. They were given travel documents and repatriated to Burkina Faso. The government of Burkina Faso also intercepted a convoy of 38 children and 12 adults who were en route to potential exploitation in small artisanal gold mines in Bobo-Dioulasso, Mali and Cote d'Ivoire. In collaboration with the Nigerian embassy in Ouagadougou, the Burkinabe government provided financial assistance to repatriate 34 Nigerian victims of trafficking back to Nigeria.

Traffickers in and out of Burkina Faso promise Burkinabe families educational opportunities for their children but instead force the children into labour as farm hands, gold panners and washers in artisanal mines, street vendors, and domestic servants. In some cases, parents know their children will be exploited but permit it in order to supplement family income. It is estimated that 200,000-300,000 children work in small artisanal mining sites, some of whom may be victims of trafficking. In 2016, 9,313 children were living in Ouagadougou's streets and 46% of them were *talibés*, vulnerable to forced begging. Girls are also exploited in sex trafficking in Ouagadougou and mining towns, and women are compelled into commercial sex and domestic servitude in Lebanon, Qatar and Saudi Arabia. Burkina Faso is a transit country for traffickers transporting children from Mali to Cote d'Ivoire and women and girls from Cote d'Ivoire to Saudi Arabia.

IDPs and refugees are also vulnerable to exploitation by violent extremist groups, in forced labour, sex trafficking and as child soldiers.

## **VI. National Legal Framework**

Although Burkina Faso does not have a legal framework that deals solely with migration it has passed many laws about inward and outward migration in Burkina Faso, though few of them are strictly implemented. Here is a non-exhaustive list.

- Article 9 of the Constitution of Burkina Faso declares the free movement of persons and goods, the free choice of residence, and the right to asylum
- Ordinance No. 84-49 of August 4, 1984, stipulates that any person wishing to leave Burkina Faso must have a passport with an exit visa, a pass admitted by the country of destination, a return ticket or a repatriation bond
- Article 3 of Ordinance 84-49 stipulates that to enter Burkina Faso, it is necessary to hold a travel document with a Burkina Faso visa, a return transport ticket, a bond or exemption from a repatriation bond
- Article 4 of the same ordinance requires a residence permit for foreigners wishing to settle for a period exceeding 3 months
- Article 11 stipulates that any foreigner in an irregular situation will be refused entry and will be liable to a fine and imprisonment for a period of between 1 and 6 months.

Burkina Faso is also a signatory to several regional conventions and treaties, including:

- The Abuja Treaty establishing the African Economic Community (AEC), which states in Article 4 that freedom of movement of persons is a *sine qua non* condition for the establishment of an African common market
- The 1981 African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, which authorizes free movement and choice of residence within a member state of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and prohibits the collective expulsion of foreigners
- The OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa, 1969 (ratified in 1974)
- The African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention), 2009 (ratified in 2012).

Last but not least, Burkina Faso is signatory to several international agreements related to migration, including:

- The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and its Article 13, which establishes freedom of movement and residence within the borders of a state as well as the right to leave one's country
- The International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, ratified by Burkina Faso in 2003
- Conventions No. 97 and 143 of the International Labour Organization on migrant workers.

Burkina Faso is a state party to the UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, 1951 and its 1967 Protocol (ratified in 1980), the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, 2000, including its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children and its Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by

Land, Sea and Air (ratification in 2002), the UN Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, 1954 (accession in 2012) and the UN Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, 1961 (accession in 2017). Burkina Faso is also state party to 16 International Human Rights Treaties including the International Convention of the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families, 1990 (ratified in 2003). Burkina Faso voted for the endorsement of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) on 19 December 2018.

## **VII. Main Actors**

### *The State*

The main administrative agency in charge of migration in Burkina Faso is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Cooperation. This ministry is mainly in charge of the management of Burkinabe residing abroad or returned. It includes and supervises the National Commission for Integration, the National Commission for Refugees (CONAREF), and the Permanent Secretariat of the Higher Council of Burkinabe Abroad (CSBE), whose mission is to ensure the protection of Burkinabe and their interests abroad, to facilitate their reintegration into national life, to ensure their full participation in the development of Burkina Faso and to promote its influence in the world.

Other administrations having an impact on migration are the Ministry of Economy and Finance, which includes the Directorate of Population Policies (DPP), the Ministry of Territorial Administration, Decentralization and Security, which includes the Migration Control Division (DCM) in charge of issuing passports, the Border Police Division and the Territorial Surveillance Division (DST), the Ministry of Youth, Vocational Training and Employment, and the Ministry of Social Action and National Solidarity.

Burkina Faso has also signed bilateral agreements, such as the one established with France in January 2009 which among other things provides that France will take charge of the voluntary repatriation of Burkinabe migrants living in France and their economic integration.

### *The Catholic Church*

The Catholic Church in Burkina Faso is divided into three ecclesiastical provinces: the Archdiocese of Ouagadougou, the Archdiocese of Bobo-Dioulasso, and the Archdiocese of Koupéla, as well as 15 dioceses. The Church implements the concept of the "Family Church" which tailors its efforts to the size of the neighbourhoods or villages. The Church of Burkina Faso is part of the Episcopal Conference of Burkina-Niger (CEBN), which itself is a member of the Regional Conference of Western Bishops (CERAO). The Archdiocese of Ouagadougou runs a radio station, a television channel (TV Maria), and a printing house that publishes magazines and newspapers.

The Catholic Church is also present through associated structures which implement development projects and programmes in the 45 provinces of Burkina Faso, thanks to the financial partnership of sister organisations, mostly from Europe. Since 1998, the Catholic

Organisation for Development and Solidarity (OCADES Caritas Burkina) has been able to weave and consolidate the Church network in Burkina Faso.

OCADES Caritas Burkina is a technical instrument for the implementation of the social pastoral care of the Church Family of God in Burkina Faso. It operates in the areas of human development, solidarity and sharing, operational capacity building and programmes relating to women, youth and family. Among OCADES Caritas Burkina's recent migration-related projects, one can mention the launch (September 2020) of the project EA/14 2020 to assist internally displaced persons (IDPs), which aims to help more than 10,000 IDPs from several parishes in the dioceses of Dédougou, Nouna, Kaya and Fada. OCADES, Caritas Spain and the European Union have launched (July 2020) cash transfer operations for 16,000 IDP households, host households and vulnerable households in Sebba and Gorom-Gorom. OCADES and the Réseau des Vaillantes Educatrices du Burkina (REVE-Burkina) are also helping 150 IDP women in Kongoussi with basic supplies: blankets, soap and food. Finally, also in 2020, OCADES is helping IDPs in the commune of Pissila (Centre-North), providing them with food, blankets and hygiene kits.

The Catholic Relief Services (CRS) has also launched an emergency response in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, providing clean water and sanitation services, food, shelter and household items for more than 22,000 displaced families.

### *International Organisations*

Since 2003, the main international actors working with migration in Burkina Faso are UNHCR and IOM. In 2019, UNHCR secured shelter support for 41,500 IDPs and vulnerable host communities, cash-for-shelter and non-food items for 3,200 IDP households and provided every refugee with individual documentation. The IOM has launched MIDA (Migration for Development in Africa) with the main objective of assisting and facilitating the transfer of skills, resources and expertise of the highly skilled African diaspora to their countries of origin.

The association TOCSIN is also very active in the domain of support to the diaspora, ensuring that the concerns formulated by the diaspora are heard by the public authorities.

### **VIII. Other Important Issues**

According to the Persecution watchdog group Open Doors USA, Burkina Faso ranked 32<sup>nd</sup> in a 2020 worldwide list of 50 countries that have been identified as the most dangerous countries for Christians, with the label “very high persecution.” On 12 May 2019, six congregants including the priest were killed in the Catholic church of Dablo in the Province of Sanmatenga, and the next day four more people were killed during a Catholic procession in Zimtenga in the Province of Bam.

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