



Ambassade de Suède
Ouagadougou

Multidimensional poverty analysis (MDPA): An update for Burkina Faso



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Executive summary

Burkina Faso's government faces a multidimensional crisis, which includes the spread of terrorist group activities, the proliferation of criminal networks, amounting pressure on natural resources, state weakness and governance problems.

Augmenting insecurity and conflict, climate change and environmental degradation, the pandemic covid-19 and escalating food prices are the current main drivers of food insecurity and vulnerability. It is estimated that a total of 3.3 million people are facing food insecurity and that 3.5 million people require emergency assistance in six out of 13 regions - North, Sahel, Centre East, Centre North, Boucle du Mouhoun and East. Several provinces run an increased risk of reaching IPC Phase 4 or 5.

Factors contributing to acute malnutrition for provinces in IPC phase 3 and above are due to multiple factors such as low diversity in diets, poor child feeding practices, prevalence of fever and diarrhoea, poor hygiene and/or inaccessibility to sanitation facilities, low access to drinking water, displacement caused by the insecurity crisis, inter-community conflicts and the closure and/or malfunctioning of health structures in provinces with limited humanitarian access.

The impact of the health crisis related to the covid-19 pandemic is a major contributing factor to the deterioration of the nutritional situation of the most vulnerable groups; pregnant and lactating women and children under five years of age.

People most exposed to the effects of the security crisis are internally displaced persons (IDPs), host populations and peri-urban populations. Internal displacement is now affecting 1.4 million citizens in Burkina Faso, i.e. close to 7% of the country's total population. Another vulnerable group are those living in areas hard hit by climate change.

The Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) identifies 83,3% of the population as multidimensionally poor. If vulnerable groups are included, i.e. people at risk of falling into poverty, the figure increases to 91,2% of the population. Nine out of ten poor people reside in the rural areas, where living conditions and access to resources are dire. The National Nutrition Survey of 2019 shows that 25.4% of children under 5 years of age are stunted, while 8.1% of children under 5 years of age are wasted.

Particularly vulnerable groups in terms of access to resources are nomads and pastoralists as well as female headed households, youths, disabled persons, and the elderly as well as stigmatised groups and individuals.

Distribution of power in Burkina Faso is according to rank in the society, i.e. that of age, gender, and clan. Persistence of discriminatory informal laws and practices in some regions however adversely impacts the implementation and efficiency of legislative frameworks promoting, among others, non-discriminatory practices, and gender equality.

Resources

Burkina Faso, with a population of 20,5 million people and about 60 different ethnic groups, is off-track to halve multidimensional poverty by 2030 by any model of calculation.³ Between 1996 and 2019 the population doubled and the current annual population growth rate stands at 2,9%.⁴ The Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) identifies 83,3% of the population as multidimensionally poor.⁵ If vulnerable groups are included, i.e. people at risk of falling into poverty, the figure increases to 91,2% of the population.⁶

Along with countries such as Niger, South Sudan and Chad, Burkina Faso has the highest percentage of people who are multidimensionally poor, who are deprived of school attendance as well as in years of schooling.⁷ In the Sahel region, the school completion rate at lower secondary level among girls has decreased from 6.8% to 5.9% and from 10.4% to 7.1% for boys between the 2017–2018 and 2018–2019 school years.⁸ The literacy rate in Burkina Faso for men and women of ages 15 and above is 50% and 33% respectively.⁹

The Burkinabé population is very young as 45% of the population are below 15 years of age while 78% are younger than 35 years of age.¹⁰ Nine out of ten poor people reside in the rural areas in Burkina Faso, where living conditions and access to resources are dire. Particularly vulnerable groups in terms of access of resources are nomads and pastoralists as well as female headed households, youths, disabled persons, the elderly as well as stigmatised groups and individuals.

Ending hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition by 2030, along the line of SDG 2, i.e. making sure that people and especially children have sufficient and nutritious food all year is beyond reach for Burkina Faso. The National Nutrition Survey of 2019 in Burkina Faso shows that 25.4% of children under 5 years of age in Burkina Faso are stunted, while 8.1% of children under 5 years of age are wasted. Moreover, the survey finds that 59% of the infants are exclusively breastfed and that only 17% of children of 6 to 23 months receive a minimally acceptable diet.¹¹

Augmenting insecurity and conflict, climate change and environmental degradation, the pandemic covid-19 and escalating food prices are the current main drivers of food insecurity and vulnerability in Burkina Faso. It is estimated that a total of 3.3 million people are facing food insecurity and that 3.5 million people require emergency assistance in six out of 13 regions - North, Sahel, Centre East, Centre North, Boucle du Mouhoun and East.¹²

³ Multidimensional poverty is interlinked to the Sustainable Development Goals number 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, and 11. See Charting Pathways out of Multidimensional Poverty: Achieving the SDGs, *United Nations Development Programme and Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative*, 2020.

⁴ See Cinquième Recensement Général de la Population et de l'Habitation du Burkina Faso: Résultats Préliminaires. *Institut national de la statistique et de la démographie (INSD)*, Septembre 2020.

⁵ See Global MPI Country Briefing 2020: Burkina Faso (Sub-Saharan Africa), *Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI)*, July 2020.

⁶ See *Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (2020)*.

⁷ See *United Nations Development Programme and Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (2020)*. About 21 per cent of girls in Burkina Faso are obliged to drop out of school during their menstrual periods and child marriage as well as adolescent pregnancies constitute barriers to retention of adolescent girls at school (see Global Programme to End Child Marriage: Burkina Faso Country Profile Phase I, *UNFPA and UNICEF*, 2019).

⁸ See Global Programme to End Child Marriage: Burkina Faso Country Profile Phase I, *UNFPA and UNICEF*, 2020.

⁹ See Poverty & Equity Brief Sub-Saharan Africa: Burkina Faso, *World Bank Group*, April 2020.

¹⁰ See Cinquième Recensement Général de la Population et de l'Habitation du Burkina Faso: Résultats Préliminaires. *Institut national de la statistique et de la démographie (INSD)*, Septembre 2020.

¹¹ See Ouedraogo, M. et al (2020) *Nutrition situation of Burkina Faso: A Narrative Review*, *The North African Journal of Food and Nutrition Research*, 2020 04(09)S36-S45.

¹² See Burkina Faso: Advocacy Note, *World Food Programme*, April 2021 and www.wfp.org/countries/burkina-faso.

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Factors contributing to acute malnutrition for provinces in IPC phase 3 and above are due to multiple factors such as low diversity in diets, poor child feeding practices, prevalence of fever and diarrhoea, poor hygiene and/or inaccessibility to sanitation facilities, low access to drinking water, displacement caused by the insecurity crisis, inter-community conflicts and the closure and/or malfunctioning of health structures in provinces with limited humanitarian access.¹³

Several provinces runs an increased risk of reaching IPC Phase 4 or 5. The impact of the health crisis related to the covid-19 pandemic is a major contributing factor to the deterioration of the nutritional situation of the most vulnerable groups; pregnant and lactating women and children under five years of age.¹⁴

Power and voice

Access to formal and informal decision-making forums, in private as well as public spheres in Burkina Faso, very much depend on wherein the social hierarchy a person is situated and whether the person has access to resources.

Resource poor groups such as nomads and pastoralists in the northern parts of Burkina Faso face severe discrimination by, among other things, agricultural encroachment in and around pastoral reserves. This forces some of them to become sedentarised and others to seek employment elsewhere in the country. Those who continue pastoral livestock rearing risk to be falsely linked to the terrorist groups and suffer attacks from armed militia groups as well as the military.¹⁵

Given gender stereotypes, especially in poor and rural households, women and girls are expected to allocate substantive amounts of time carrying out unpaid care and domestic work. Their bargaining position is very weak as discrimination of women and girls remain extraordinarily high in the social, economic, and political arenas.¹⁶

Achieving the SDG number 5 on gender equality, i.e. ending discrimination, violence and exploitation of girls and women as well as ensuring their full participation in leadership and decision-making, is a prerequisite for attaining socio-economic and political development. This is far from within reach for Burkina Faso with a Gender Inequality Index (GII) in 2019 of 0.594, placing it at the end of the list at 147 out of 162 countries.¹⁷ The SIGI country study from 2018

¹³ IPC Acute Food Insecurity Phases may be described as follows – IPC Phase 1) Households are able to meet essential food and non-food needs without engaging in atypical and unsustainable strategies to access food and income; IPC Phase 2) Households have minimally adequate food consumption but are unable to afford some essential non-food expenditures without engaging in stress-coping strategies; IPC Phase 3) Households either have food consumption gaps that are reflected by high or above-usual acute malnutrition OR are marginally able to meet minimum food needs but only by depleting essential livelihood assets or through crisis-coping strategies; IPC Phase 4) Households either have large food consumption gaps which are reflected in very high acute malnutrition and excess mortality OR are able to mitigate large food consumption gaps but only by employing emergency livelihood strategies and asset liquidation; and IPC Phase 5) Households have an extreme lack of food and/or other basic needs even after full employment of coping strategies. Starvation, death, destitution, and extremely critical acute malnutrition levels are evident. (For Famine Classification, area needs to have extreme critical levels of acute malnutrition and mortality (see Integrated Phase Classification).

¹⁴ See

https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/IPC_Burkina_Faso_Acute_Malnutrition_2020Oct2021July_English_summary.pdf

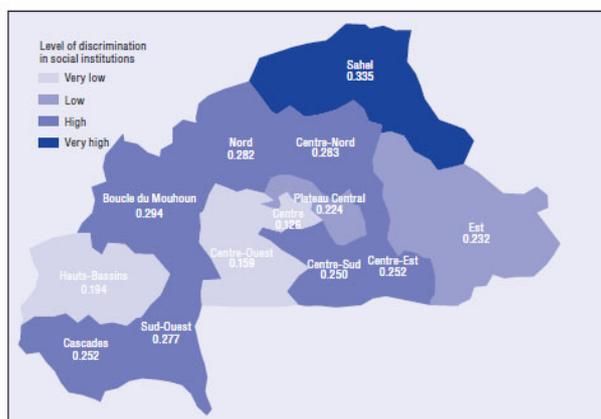
¹⁵ See www.iwgia.org/en/burkina-faso/3998-iw-2021-burkina-faso.html

¹⁶ Distribution of power is according to rank in the society, i.e. that of age, gender, and clan. Persistence of discriminatory informal laws and practices in some regions adversely impacts the implementation and efficiency of legislative frameworks promoting, among others, non-discriminatory practices, and gender equality.

¹⁷ See Human Development Report: Burkina Faso, *United Nations Development Programme*, 2020. The Gender Inequality Index (GII) reflects gender-based inequalities in three dimensions – reproductive health, empowerment, and economic activity. Reproductive health is measured by maternal mortality and adolescent birth rates;

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highlights and illustrates regional disparities of discriminatory social institutions in Burkina Faso; i.e. formal and informal laws, social norms and practices that restrict women's and girls' rights, access to empowerment opportunities and resources (see map below).



Note: This map shows the regional levels of discrimination, as measured by the Burkina Faso-SIGI. The thresholds are the following: very low [0; 0.21], low [0.21; 0.24], high [0.24; 0.31], very high [0.31; 0.67].
Source: OECD (2018), Burkina Faso Social Institutions and Gender Index, <http://stats.oecd.org>.

The proportion of women who are married before the age of 18 is high, with 3 million girls married before the age of 18 out of whom 500 000 married before age 15,¹⁸ albeit with large inter-regional differences.¹⁹ In the conflict-ridden Sahel, a region in the North of the country, more than 50 percent of girls marry before the age of 16.²⁰ Often the process implies violence, threats of violence or other forms of coercion towards the girl or the girl's family.²¹

Social norms and expectations on women are reflected in the low representation in the political arena. Burkina Faso has a gender quota law, mandating that women must represent 30 percent of candidate lists, but its application is limited, and women are frequently relegated to women's secretariats with little influence.²² The proportion of seats held by women in the national parliament has diminished, reaching 11% in the election of November 2020 compared to 13% and 19% after the elections in 2015 and 2012.²³

Opportunities and choice

The worsened security situation in Burkina Faso impacts the array of opportunities and choice at hand for large segments of the population. Access to livelihood opportunities, education facilities, water, and sanitation as well as health services are unevenly distributed between rural and urban areas in the country's 13 regions as well as between sub-groups in the population.

The Constitution guarantees education and health for all citizens, but in effect these rights have been difficult to access for minority groups such as the Peul and Tuareg, given their nomadic

empowerment is measured by the share of parliamentary seats held by women and attainment in secondary and higher education by each gender; and economic activity is measured by the labour market participation rate for women and men.

¹⁸ See Global Programme to End Child Marriage: Burkina Faso Country Profile Phase I, *UNFPA–UNICEF*, 2020.

¹⁹ Prevalence of child marriage is notably higher in the regions of Sahel, East, Cascades, Centre-Nord, Centre-East, and Boucle de Mouhoun.

²⁰ This figure may well increase due to the conflict context. See *Delaying Child Marriage and Childbearing can Improve Educational Outcomes in Burkina Faso's Sahel Region*, *USAID*, 2020.

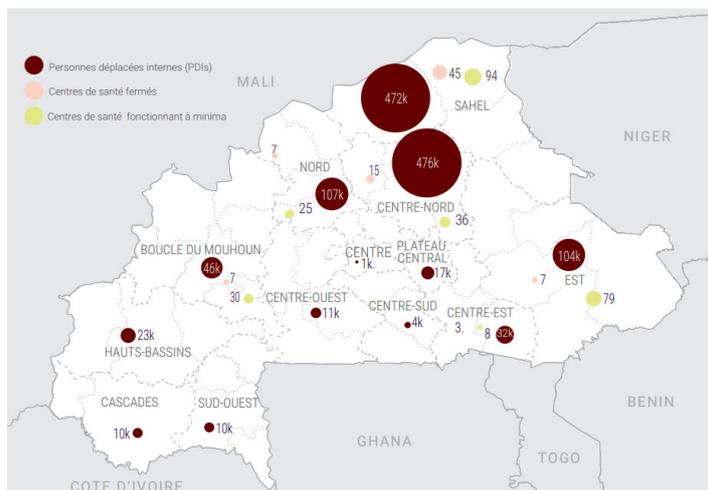
²¹ See *Forced and early marriages in Burkina Faso*, *Amnesty International*, 2016.

²² See freedomhouse.org/country/burkina-faso/freedom-world/2020.

²³ See *Burkina Faso: Freedom in the World 2020 Country Report* | Freedom House.

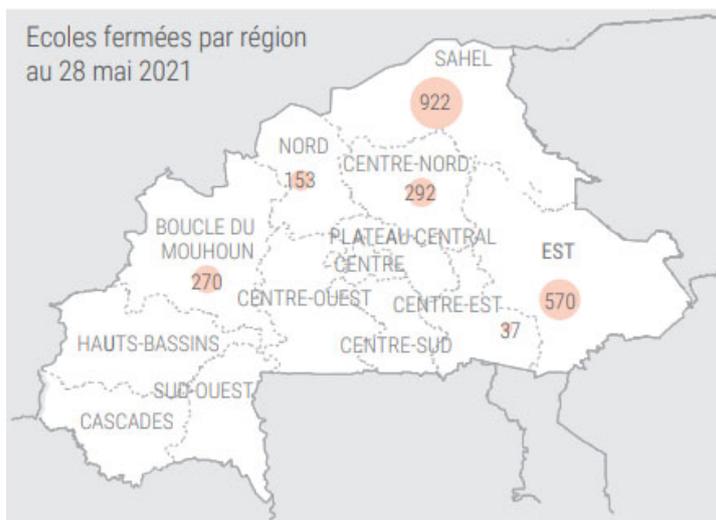
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and pastoral lifestyle.²⁴ Moreover, due to the insecurity context more than 300 health centres have been closed, affecting 822 000 people,²⁵ making the population vulnerable to epidemic diseases. In addition, more than 2 244 schools have closed throughout the country affecting at least 305 000 students.²⁶ In the region of Sahel school attendance has dropped from the already low average of 50-60% to 25% in the past two years.²⁷



Internal displacement and functionality of health centres by region (OCHA, July 2021).

Achieving the SDG 3 on good health and well-being is a challenge for Burkina Faso, even in a non-conflict setting, as it encompasses indicators on reduced maternal mortality ratio, skilled birth attendance, ending preventable deaths of new-borns and children under 5 years of age, fighting communicable diseases, promoting mental health and substance abuse, road injuries and death as well as universal access to sexual and reproductive care, family planning and education.



Closure of schools per region in Burkina Faso (OCHA, July 2021).

Women's and girl's access to sexual, health and reproductive services are inadequate. Despite several efforts to improve the use of contraception, contraceptive prevalence remains low. This

²⁴ See <https://www.iwgia.org/en/burkina-faso/3998-iw-2021-burkina-faso.html>.

²⁵ See Burkina Faso: Advocacy Note, *World Food Programme*, April 2021.

²⁶ See Burkina Faso: Aperçu de la situation humanitaire au 26 juillet, *OCHA* 2021.

²⁷ See Humanitarian Needs and Requirements Overview: Sahel Crisis, *Reliefweb*, April 2021.

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can be partly attributed to the low participation of men in reproductive health programs, as well as cultural norms and preferences for large families.²⁸ Religious leaders' opinions may have significant influence on individuals' reproductive decisions in communities and studies indicate that they are reluctant to promote family planning methods.²⁹

The challenges of meeting the Sustainable Development Goal number 6 on WASH-services are enormous; i.e. providing clean and affordable drinking water as well as ending open defecation and providing access to sanitation and hygiene, even if you disregard current internal displacement and the state of emergency imposed in six regions.³⁰

About one third of people living in rural areas lack even basic access to water and another 30% use an improved infrastructure that provides limited service. The challenge regarding sanitation is vast as 63% of the rural population practice open defecation. In the urban areas most people (93%) have access to a latrine, but only 2% are sewer-connected and most wastewater goes untreated. In terms of hygiene only 8% of rural households are having access to a handwashing station with soap and water.

The attainment of SDG number 7, on access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all and SDG 9 on building a resilient infrastructure, promoting an inclusive and sustainable industrialization and fostering innovation, would have direct effect on the standard of living, health and employment opportunities for the population. Given the structure of the employment market, i.e. the reliance on an inefficient agricultural sector and the non-expansive informal sector, the array of livelihood opportunities on offer for the population is small.

It is very difficult to access productive employment and to move between different sectors in Burkina Faso. The high rate of illiteracy and low level of education, more especially in the rural areas, also hamper the mobility of the work force. Moreover, neglected infrastructure in terms of road networks, telecommunications, inaccessible and expensive energy hinders spatial connectivity as well as the spread of innovations.³¹ Lastly, there are areas of the country which during the rainy season are not at all accessible due to damaged roads and bridges.

Human security

Internal displacement is affecting 1.4 million citizens in Burkina Faso, i.e. close to 7% of the country's total population.³² Approximately more than 1 500 people have died due to the escalating violence. The situation has worsened during the last two years and placed Burkina Faso on the list of the world's fastest growing humanitarian crises. More than 60% of the displaced people are children under 15 years of age.³³

There has been a significant increase in attacks targeting civilians during 2021 and approximately 200 000 people have fled their homes in search for security during the period of May to July 2021. The Sahel, Centre-Nord and Est continue to be the regions most affected by

²⁸ See A. Bado, H. Badolo, L. R. Zoma (2020) Use of Modern Contraceptive Methods in Burkina Faso: What are the Obstacles to Male Involvement in Improving Indicators in the Centre-East and Centre-North Regions? *Open Access Journal of Contraception*.

²⁹ See A. Barro, A. Bado (2021) Religious Leaders' Knowledge of Family Planning and Modern Contraceptive Use and Their Involvement in Family Planning Programmes in Burkina Faso: A Qualitative Study in Dori in the Sahel Region, *Open Access Journal of Contraception*.

³⁰ The state of emergency restricts freedom of movement at certain hours of the day, which may have implications for people's access to WASH-services.

³¹ Less than 75% of Burkina Faso is covered by mobile networks and only 25% of Burkina Faso has internet coverage. See Burkina Faso: Humanitarian Response Strategy 2021–2023, *WorldVision*.

³² Figure as of 30th of August. See Bulletin Santé Sahel 15 août– 5 Octobre 2021, Organisation mondiale de santé (WHO) Afrique and Burkina Faso Country Brief, World Food Programme (WFP), August 2021.

³³ See Burkina Faso: Aperçu de la situation humanitaire Au 26 Juillet. OCHA, 2021.

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the security crisis, although it is spreading to other parts of the country as well.³⁴ People most exposed to the effects of the security crisis are internally displaced persons (IDPs), host populations and peri-urban populations. Another vulnerable group is the population that is living in areas hard hit by climate change.

Widespread insecurity has reduced humanitarian access over the last two years. Humanitarian actors have been targeted by non-state armed groups trying to prevent the delivery of humanitarian assistance in the affected regions. During 2020, food intended as either general food assistance or as part of school feeding programmes has also been stolen by armed groups.³⁵

Human security may be depicted as a nexus as it brings together the majority of the 17 goals of the Sustainable Development Agenda. However, experience from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) shows that progress was very slow in fragile and conflict-affected settings, as violence is endemic and social cohesion, as well as trust in public institutions, is lacking.³⁶

Even in a non-conflict setting, violence is part of ordinary life for many Burkinabe. One in three women, 37% of the female population, compared to one in five of the men, has been victim of domestic violence. The legal framework prohibits all forms of violence against women, but domestic violence is not criminalised. Moreover, social norms justifying as well as normalising spousal violence against women are widespread in the country. As many as 34% of the population in Burkina Faso agree that a husband is justified in beating his wife under certain circumstances.³⁷

The incidence of gender-based violence, including rape, early and forced marriage and prostitution, sexual abuse, and exploitation, is aggravated by the ongoing conflict in Burkina Faso. Reports recent years also indicate the occurrence of sex for survival, sex for food aid.³⁸ Victims face difficulties in getting help as sexual and reproductive health care services are inaccessible, either in short supply or disrupted by the conflict.³⁹ Female gender mutilation (FGM) still remains although prohibited by law. In 2010 the prevalence of FGM in women and girls aged 15–49 was 75.8% while 90.8% of girls aged 15–19 was cut before ten years of age. The ‘cut, flesh removed’ is the most common type of FGM practised. More than 85% of the population is found to be against the continuation of the practice.⁴⁰

Another vulnerable group in Burkina Faso are victims of trafficking, which consist of children exploited in the mining sector, children forced into begging by Quranic schools/ marabouts or people pretending to be marabouts,⁴¹ women in prostitution and women fraudulent recruited for work overseas but exploited abroad (most commonly Middle Eastern countries). In a report with data from all 45 provinces the government identified 1 740 trafficking victims. Among those identified where Nigerian girls in sex trafficking within Burkina Faso and Burkinabe’s exploited abroad in forced labour in Libya and sex trafficking in Lebanon.⁴²

Causes of poverty in Burkina Faso

Sida’s conceptual MDP model makes it clear that in order to understand the causes of poverty as well as the opportunities to move *out* of poverty it is necessary to understand the overall

³⁴ See Burkina Faso: Aperçu de la situation humanitaire Au 26 Juillet. OCHA, 2021.

³⁵ See Burkina Faso: Advocacy Note, *World Food Programme*, April 2021.

³⁶ See <https://www.un.org/humansecurity/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Human-Security-and-the-SDGs.pdf>.

³⁷ See Burkina Faso Social Institutions and Gender Index (Burkina Faso-SIGI), *OECD Development Centre*, 2018.

³⁸ See <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/investigations/2021/7/26/sex-for-food-aid-allegations-in-burkina-faso>.

³⁹ See <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/africa/burkina-faso/report-burkina-faso/>

⁴⁰ See Burkina Faso: The Law and FGM. *Thomson Reuters Foundation*, September 2018.

⁴¹ A marabout is a religious teacher of Islam.

⁴² See US Department of State, 2018 Trafficking in Persons Report: Burkina Faso, available at <https://www.state.gov/reports/2018-trafficking-in-persons-report/burkina-faso/>

context in which a person is living and to identify the main risks that could aggravate poverty. In the following sections we will examine the development context along four axes; the economic and social context; the political and institutional context; the conflict/peaceful context and lastly the environmental context.

The economic and social context

The effects of COVID-19 have been reflected in the country's macroeconomy through a growth loss of -2.2 points per day, a replenishment of fiscal revenue at -9.8% and a reduction in budget deficit -5.0% as well as an aggravation of the endowment rate at +11.4 percentage points.⁴³ However, the medium-term outlook for Burkina Faso on a national level, according to the World Bank, is that the economy will gradually recover after the pandemic and grow by 3.1% in 2021 and reach 5% in 2022.

This development is expected to be driven by a rebound in services, continuing high gold production levels and a stable production in the agricultural sector.⁴⁴ Three of the largest exports from Burkina Faso are gold, cotton and zinc, where gold stands for 69% to a worth of 2.26 billion dollars.⁴⁵ Although gold and cotton are the two largest contributors to the GDP, only 5 percent of the nation's workers are employed in these two industries.⁴⁶

The reliance on these two industries with far-reaching environmental implication and pollution, address the need for responsible consumption and production as outlined in SDG 12, i.e. the responsible management of chemicals and waste as well as sustainable management and use of natural resources.⁴⁷ Moreover, although figures on an aggregate level are on the positive note, achieving SDG 10 on reduced inequalities – reducing income inequalities, ensuring inclusion, equal opportunities, and an end to discrimination – lie far ahead. The level of income inequality, measured by the index of GINI, increased from 0.353 in 2014 to 0.38 in 2018.⁴⁸

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) ranks Burkina Faso to a value of 0.452 in the Human Development Index (HDI), which places Burkina Faso in the low human development category at number 182 out of 189 countries and territories.⁴⁹ Furthermore, the Gender Development Index (GDI) for 2019 gives a female HDI value for Burkina Faso at 0.418 in contrast to 0.482 for males, which results in a GDI value of 0.867 for the country. This places

⁴³ See Étude d'impacts socio-économiques de la COVID-19 au Burkina Faso, *Ministère de l'économie, des finances et du développement mars 2021*.

⁴⁴ The fiscal deficit, given the ongoing pandemic and challenges associated with the current security and humanitarian context, is expected to remain at 5.2% of GDP in 2021 (www.worldbank.org/en/country/burkinafaso/overview).

⁴⁵ Cotton, neither carded nor combed, stands for 11% while raw zinc equals 5% of all exports.

⁴⁶ See Jobs Diagnostic: Burkina Faso. Overview and Suggestions for a Strategic Framework for Jobs. *World Bank Group*, Jobs Series Issue No. 15 2018.

⁴⁷ The organisation Earthworks describes gold mining as “one of the most destructive industries in the world. It can displace communities, contaminate drinking water, hurt workers, and destroy pristine environments. It pollutes water and land with mercury and cyanide, endangering the health of people and ecosystems” (<https://www.earthworks.org/campaigns/no-dirty-gold/impacts/>). WWF lists soil erosion and degradation as grave environmental impact of cotton cultivation, as it severely degrades the quality of the soil, as well as the contamination of water as the runoff of pesticides, fertilizers, and minerals from cotton fields contaminates rivers, lakes, wetlands, and underground aquifers. These pollutants have a long-term effect on biodiversity both directly and indirectly (<https://www.worldwildlife.org/industries/cotton>).

⁴⁸ See Projet de Référentiel National de Développement 2021-2025, *Gouvernement of Burkina Faso*, July 2021.

⁴⁹ The Human Development Index (HDI) summarize and assess long-term progress in three dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life (life expectancy), access to knowledge (mean years of schooling among the adult population) and a decent standard of living (Gross National Income (GNI) per capita expressed in constant 2017 international dollars converted using purchasing power parity (PPP) conversion rates).

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Burkina Faso into Group 5, i.e. the last category of five for GDI which entails low equality in HDI achievements between women and men.⁵⁰

Access to productive employment is a key to development, as anticipated by SDG number 8 on decent work and economic growth. However, in Burkina Faso unpaid jobs are common and especially more so among women and youth. The total labour force in Burkina Faso is 7,6 million out of which female labour make up 44,7%. The agricultural sector employs 80% of the work force and absorbs the expanding workforce through low-productivity and informal employment. Out of the 20% of the labour force who are non-agricultural workers approximately 70% work in the private sector.⁵¹

The private sector in Burkina Faso is dominated however by small informal enterprises, consisting of five employees or less, which seldom expand over time.⁵² Recent years have seen an incremental growth in jobs in the largest two urban areas; the capital Ouagadougou and Bobo-Dioulasso, mainly in commerce and services.⁵³ There are continuous high levels of unpaid work in industry as well as services, as well as in agricultural sector. Unpaid work accounts for more than half of the jobs held by youth in Burkina Faso.⁵⁴

Although less prevalent than in comparable countries, corruption is another factor hampering socio-economic development in Burkina Faso.⁵⁵ Bribery is present at all levels of the Burkinabé state and business sector. The latest Enterprise Survey of 2009 reported that 9.7% of enterprises considered corruption to be a major constraint for their businesses and 9.8% of all firms surveyed experienced a bribe request, while 18.8% of the firms reported being expected to give gifts to win government contracts. In 2020 Burkina Faso ranked 86 out of 180 countries with a score of 40 out of 100 according to Transparency International.⁵⁶

The political and institutional context

Burkina Faso is a unitary state and republic, divided into 13 regions, 45 provinces and 368 municipalities, with a legal system based on the French civil law system and customary law.⁵⁷ Traditional and religious authorities hold important positions in the society, described as a double connotation by Hagberg (2018), as they may both be linked to leading parties as well as to agents of the social opposition. On a local level, traditional leaders hold significant influence, and political party representatives try to get the chief's support as they are considered big electors.⁵⁸

⁵⁰ The GDI measures gender inequalities in achievement in three basic dimensions of human development: health (measured by female and male life expectancy at birth), education (measured by female and male expected years of schooling for children and mean years for adults aged 25 years and older) and command over economic resources (measured by female and male estimated GNI per capita).

⁵¹ See Social Protection: Burkina Faso, *ILO, AfDB and OECD*, 2008.

⁵² See Jobs Diagnostic: Burkina Faso. Overview and Suggestions for a Strategic Framework for Jobs. *World Bank Group*, Jobs Series Issue No. 15 2018.

⁵³ See The industry sector provides only 5% of all jobs. Jobs Diagnostic: Burkina Faso. Overview and Suggestions for a Strategic Framework for Jobs. *World Bank Group*, Jobs Series Issue No. 15 2018.

⁵⁴ See Jobs Diagnostic: Burkina Faso. Overview and Suggestions for a Strategic Framework for Jobs. *World Bank Group*, Jobs Series Issue No. 15 2018.

⁵⁵ The weight and impact of corruption as an obstacle to development is enormous. For example, it is estimated that one third of the Kenyan budget is lost to corruption each year, which undermines democracy, negatively impacts economic growth, and reduces the public services for vulnerable groups in society (Corruption and the Marginalisation of the Interests of the Poorest in Kenya: Power structures that Support the Status Quo, *FCG*, 2020)

⁵⁶ See <https://www.transparency.org/en/countries/burkina-faso#>

⁵⁷ See <https://www.oecd.org/regional/regional-policy/profile-Burkina-Faso.pdf>.

⁵⁸ See S. Hagberg *et al* (2018) Nothing will be as before! Anthropological perspectives on political practice and democratic culture in 'a new Burkina Faso', *Uppsala Papers in Africa Studies no. 3, Uppsala University*.

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The institutional separation of powers between the executive, legislative and judicial branches is guaranteed in the constitution, but significantly limited in practical terms.⁵⁹ The president's position is, de jure and de facto, strong while the unicameral National Assembly's authority and involvement in decision-making suffers from limitations in efficient mechanisms of oversight.⁶⁰

Given history, Burkina Faso is a young democracy still battling with its inheritance; institutions and practices introduced of previous regimes including that of Blaise Compaoré who governed the country for 27 years before being ousted by the people in 2014. During the reign of Compaoré political life was monopolized through a neopatrimonial state system, wherein state security and regime security was closely intertwined, thereby undermining the very foundations of the state and genuine state consolidation resulting in a weak state.⁶¹

The constitution of 1991 enshrines the delegation of parts of central government responsibilities to local structures. Hence, a process of decentralisation has been ongoing since 1995, with the last reform introduced in 2004 through a step-by-step-process of deconcentration and decentralisation of competencies to local governments, but the road map has encountered several challenges.⁶² Noted are the lack of human and financial resources by municipalities and regions, weak capacities needed to carry out duties assigned to them, as well as the unwillingness by the central departments to follow through the delegation.⁶³

The constitution enshrines full political rights and electoral opportunities for the entire population and guarantees the right to form political parties. However, Freedom House notes that the ability to participate in political life is often restricted by the government and the educated elite, the military, and labour unions, whose patronage and clientelist networks as well as access to media coverage continues to dominate Burkina Faso's political arena.⁶⁴

The judiciary is formally independent but has historically been subject to executive influence and corruption by the political and economic elite.⁶⁵ Cases of corruption of high-level officials were rarely brought forward during Blaise Compaoré's rule and when they were it was generally before elections to augment support for the regime.⁶⁶ Corruption is still present although studies indicate that Burkina Faso is performing better in comparison to her African peers.⁶⁷

An institutional set-up has been established for investigating corruption and providing oversight of government institutions as well as processes. This consists of Autorité Supérieure de Contrôle d'Etat et de Lutte contre la Corruption (ASCE-LC), Public accounts court (Cour des comptes), National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI), Authority for the Regulation of Public Procurement (Autorité de régulation de la commande publique, ARCOP) and the Ombudsperson (Médiateur du Faso).⁶⁸

Impunity for human rights abuses remain a real challenge.⁶⁹ A US Embassy human rights report for the year 2020 summarises human rights abuses such as unlawful or arbitrary killings,

⁵⁹ See Burkina Faso: Country Report, *Bertelsmann Stiftung*, 2020.

⁶⁰ See Burkina Faso: Country Report, *Bertelsmann Stiftung*, 2020.

⁶¹ See Haavik, Viljar (2020) Burkina Faso and Insecurity in the Sahel. *Department of Political Science, University of Oslo*.

⁶² See <https://www.oecd.org/regional/regional-policy/profile-Burkina-Faso.pdf>.

⁶³ See Burkina Faso: Country Report, *Bertelsmann Stiftung*, 2020.

⁶⁴ See <https://freedomhouse.org/country/burkina-faso/freedom-world/2020>.

⁶⁵ See <https://freedomhouse.org/country/burkina-faso/freedom-world/2020>.

⁶⁶ See Burkina Faso: Overview of Corruption and Anti-Corruption. *U4 Anti-Corruption Helpdesk*, November 2019.

⁶⁷ See <https://www.transparency.org/en/gcb/africa/africa-9th-edition>

⁶⁸ See Burkina Faso: Overview of Corruption and Anti-Corruption. *U4 Anti-Corruption Helpdesk*, November 2019.

⁶⁹ An innovative approach to legal proceedings undertaken in Burkina Faso is the use of mobile community courts (*audiences foraines*), which take the enforcement of law directly to the communities. The mobile community courts

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extrajudicial killings by the government and extremists; forced disappearance by the government and extremist groups; torture and cases of cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment by the government; harsh and life-threatening prison conditions; arbitrary detention by the government; serious abuses in an internal conflict; serious acts of corruption; crimes involving violence or threats of violence targeting members of national, racial, and ethnic minorities; and the worst forms of child labour.⁷⁰

Interlinked SDGs such as number 5 on gender equality, number 8 linked to labour rights and the promotion of safe and secure working environments of all workers, number 10 on ensuring equal opportunities and reducing inequalities of outcome, including eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and actions in this regard, are all relevant in the political and institutional context of Burkina Faso.

The peace and conflict context

A cleavage is taking place in Burkina Faso, caused by the increased level of conflict throughout the country. It is tearing entire communities, villages, and families apart. Since the peak of the crisis in Mali in 2012, the border region Liptako-Gourma region between Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger has become one of the areas most affected by violence in the Sahel.⁷¹

A state of emergency, following attacks on security forces in the northern regions, was initiated in December 2018 in six border regions and the 14 provinces most affected by insecurity.⁷²

For quite long regarded as a conflict driven by external actors by the Burkina government, the conflict dynamics have increasingly gained a foothold along ethnic and religious lines around land and community-based conflicts, frustrations that jihadist and other armed groups actively and successfully have exploited.⁷³

The latest years have seen an emergence of armed groups in Burkina Faso such as the jihadist Jama'at Nusrat al Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM), Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (EIGS), the al Qaeda-affiliated Group to Support Islam and Muslims (GSIM), the biggest jihadist alliance in the Sahel, and various self-defence groups such as the Koglweogo and the Dozo hunters.⁷⁴ State actors such as the Burkina Faso Defence and Security Forces (FDS), along with the armed Volunteers for the Defence of the Homeland (VDH) in their proxy role, have carried out abuses and attacks on civilians in their quest to quell jihadist violence in the country.⁷⁵

have been successful in raising awareness of the Penal Code prohibiting and punishing the practice of FGM. In so doing it is involving all members of the community and local media in the sentencing process of FGM cases (see Burkina Faso: The law and FGM. *Thomson Reuters Foundation*, September 2018).

⁷⁰ See <https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/burkina-faso/>.

⁷¹ See Conflict Mediation and Peacebuilding in the Sahel: The Role of Maghreb Countries in an African Framework, *SIPRI Policy Paper 58*, January 2021.

⁷² This order was prolonged for 18 months by the national parliament in June 2021 and affects Boucle du Mouhoun region: Kossi and Sourou provinces; Centre-Est region: Koulpélogo province; Est region: Gnagna, Gourma, Komandjari, Kompienga, and Tapoa provinces; Hauts-Bassins region: Kéné Dougou province; Nord region: Lorum province; Sahel region: Oudalan, Séno, Soum, and Yagha provinces.

⁷³ Burkina Faso: Sortir de la Spirale des Violences, *International Crisis Group*, Rapport Afrique No. 287, February 2020.

⁷⁴ See <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2021/country-chapters/burkina-faso> and <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/analysis/2020/03/09/who-is-who-burkina-faso-crisis>.

⁷⁵ In 2019 Parliament unanimously adopted a law mandating self-defence groups, *Volontaires pour la défense de la patrie (VDP)*, to use weapons to defend themselves against terrorists. By so doing the state de facto handed over parts of its monopoly on violence. VDP was at the launch described by President Marc Roch Kaboré to be an inclusive force for each region, ethnicity, political opinion, and religion. On paper anyone can apply to become a VDP, but in reality, there are very few members of the Peul ethnicity in the VDP. Villages that are primarily Peul do not have assistance by the VDP, which implies discriminations against pastoralist Peul communities (see www.clingendael.org/publication/volunteers-defense-homeland).

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With the increasing number of armed actors and extrajudicial abuses, a sense of alienation and stigmatisation have been reinforced in certain groups already feeling left out by the state.⁷⁶ This has secured a downward spiral of violence, leading to retaliatory actions on local level, which takes Burkina Faso, previously a role model of peaceful coexistence and religious diversity on the continent, further away from SDG 16 on peace, justice, and strong institutions.⁷⁷

Following the Solhan massacre in June 2021, which left over 130 dead (, thousands of people took to the streets to denounce insecurity and demand the government to act.⁷⁸

Numerous actors are involved in peacebuilding in the Sahel. These include the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the African Union (AU), the Group of Five for the Sahel (G5 Sahel), the United Nations (UN), the European Union (EU), Algeria and France. These stakeholders work through various mechanisms and convey diverse agendas, as well as approaches, which generates problems due to the lack of coordination.⁷⁹

The environmental context

Due to its geographical position, Burkina Faso is characterized by a dry tropical climate with three climatic zones: Sahelian, Sudanian and Sudanian–Sahelian.⁸⁰ The climate alternates between a short rainy season and a long dry season. Sahelian and sub-Saharan vegetation comprises mostly steppe, while Sudan-type vegetation includes savannas, forests, dry or open forests and gallery forests along a north–south gradient.⁸¹

Climate change is in a concrete way effecting the environmental context in Burkina Faso. The eastern and southwestern parts of the country, regions that generally have more favourable weather, are increasingly hit by high temperatures and pockets of drought. The UNDP estimates that by the year 2050 a 1.4-1.6°C rise in temperatures is expected in Burkina Faso, which increases the risk for forest fires and bushfires.⁸²

In Burkina Faso droughts, floods and epidemics are recurring threats to the population.⁸³ Extreme weather events pose challenges to the sustainable management of natural resources in agriculture, fisheries and forestry, which affects agricultural yields and exposes the country to food insecurity.⁸⁴ Given the reliance on agricultural production as a source of income most of the population depend directly or indirectly upon access to natural resources.

⁷⁶ See Haavik, Viljar (2020) Burkina Faso and Insecurity in the Sahel. *Department of Political Science, University of Oslo* and *If Victims Become Perpetrators, International Alert*, 2018.

⁷⁷ Gender relations have a significant indirect influence on encouraging young men to join violent extremist groups. The social construct of masculinity resonates with the aim of trying to protect women from the systematic abuses of which they are victims. All the regions of the central Sahel provide pertinent examples of this (see *If Victims Become Perpetrators, International Alert*, 2018).

⁷⁸ Given mounting pressure from the opposition and the larger public president Marc Roch Kaboré announced on the 20th of June that the defense and security ministers were sacked. The former minister for African integration, Maxime Koné, was nominated the new minister for security, whilst President Kaboré himself assumed the duties of minister of national defense and veterans, assisted by Colonel-Major Aimé Barthelemy Semporé, appointed to the post of minister delegate for national defense. In October 2021 Gilbert Ouédraogo, took office as the new Chief of General Staff of the Armed Forces and promised a new approach to address extremist violence in the country.

⁷⁹ See Conflict Mediation and Peacebuilding in the Sahel: The Role of Maghreb Countries in an African Framework, *SIPRI Policy Paper 58*, January 2021.

⁸⁰ See H. W. Kambiré *et al* (2016) The Context of REDD+ and adaptation to climate change in Burkina Faso: Drivers, agents, and institutions, *CIFOR and CGIAR*.

⁸¹ See H. W. Kambiré *et al* (2016).

⁸² See <https://www.adaptation-undp.org/explore/western-africa/burkina-faso>.

⁸³ See L. Simonsson (2005) Vulnerability Profile of Burkina Faso, *The Poverty and Vulnerability Programme, Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI)*.

⁸⁴ See Independent Country Programme Evaluation: Burkina Faso. *Independent Evaluation Office, United Nations Development Programme*, 2020.

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Moreover, most people depend on one season of rain-fed agriculture for their livelihoods, leaving the country vulnerable to the impact of climate shocks. Competition for resources, in particular arable land, water resources and forests, remain very high due to triggers such as environmental degradation, unequal distribution of resources and population pressure.⁸⁵ In areas affected by the security situation a decline in agricultural production of between 20 and 50 percent was observed in 2020 compared to previous years.⁸⁶

Traditional systems and traditional authorities such as local chiefs play an important role in allocating and protecting rights to land. In practice agricultural land is mostly governed by customary tenure systems with land tenure insecurity being a serious and increasing problem.⁸⁷ In the new national development plan, *Projet de Référentiel national de développement 2021-2025*, reducing imbalances in the development of regions as well as inequalities in people's access to natural resources are mentioned as major challenges to be addressed in order to reduce the vulnerability of populations resorting to violence.⁸⁸

Initiatives on sustainable forest and water management, as well as against desertification and land degradation exist in Burkina Faso. However, environmental methods and knowledge of external agents – among these the international community – often diverge with traditional knowledge and are at times rejected by the population and leads to conflicts.⁸⁹ Moreover, given the high poverty levels of the population in the rural areas, the protection of the environment often comes second although the livelihoods of the population depends heavily on sustainable natural resource management.⁹⁰

Key SDGs for a sustainable environmental development in Burkina Faso would be SDG 2 on achieving food security, improved nutrition and promoting sustainable agriculture; SDG 5 on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls as the current distribution of resources and power in the agricultural sector is not promoting just development; SDG 12 on ensuring sustainable consumption and production patterns; SDG 13 on climate action;⁹¹ SDG 15 on protecting, restoring and promoting the sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainable management of forests, combating desertification, and halting as well as reversing land degradation and halting biodiversity loss; and SDG 16 on promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, providing access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

Opportunities for change

Burkina Faso, as to recap the introduction of the document, is a fragile country whose population encounter interlinked multidimensional risks, shocks, and stress factors. Sweden's future work on Agenda 2030, the associated sustainable development goals as well as the core

⁸⁵ See L. Simonsson (2005) *Vulnerability Profile of Burkina Faso*.

⁸⁶ See Burkina Faso: *Advocacy Note*, World Food Programme, April 2021 and www.wfp.org/countries/burkina-faso.

⁸⁷ Burkina Faso: *Country Report*, Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2020.

⁸⁸ See *Projet de Référentiel National de Développement 2021-2025*, *Gouvernement of Burkina Faso*, July 2021 (see section 1.2.3).

⁸⁹ See Burkina Faso: *Country Report*, Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2020.

⁹⁰ See Burkina Faso: *Country Report*, Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2020.

⁹¹ "Climate action" are efforts related to reduce greenhouse gas emissions as well as strengthen resilience/ adaptive capacities to climate-induced impacts such as climate-related hazards in all countries; integrating climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning; and improving education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity with respect to climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning (see <https://www.sdfinance.undp.org/content/sdfinance/en/home/sdg/goal-13>). Changing weather patterns related to climate change, such as heavy rainfalls, droughts, high temperatures, crop failure, livestock loss and food insecurity may exacerbate the risk of violence against women. For example, prolonged drought forces women and girls to make frequent and longer journeys to obtain food or water, which make them vulnerable to sexual assault (see <https://www.undp.org/blogs/why-climate-change-fuels-violence-against-women>).

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principle of "leave no one behind", is hence extremely vital. Future tasks of the embassy entail further in-depth analysis of the poorest and the most vulnerable groups, i.e. those who are exposed to recurring crises and whose capacities are depleted by recurring shocks. In this vein, it is important to identify what absorptive, adaptive, and transformative capacities that already exists in the burkinabé society in the short, medium, and long term at various levels and areas as to identify entry points for support.

In terms of resources it is the untapped potential of the population that presents vast future opportunities for the country. For example, Burkina Faso's young population has great potential to boost future socio-economic growth as well as to strengthen democratic consolidation if included to drive development through access to education and productive as well as paid employment. Their voices need to be heard and their participation strengthened.

Females and girls, representing the majority of the population, have the potential of being agents of change if awarded a voice through political and economic influence at all levels. At present, the possibility for women to be an active force, in civil society as well as in the political arena at all levels, is relative and needs to be negotiated due to existing norms and traditions.

It is also clear that the traditional and religious authorities play an important role in the Burkinabe society. The emphasis on defence and security forces has to a large extent resulted in communities' loss of trust in the state, which sets the scene for another kind of approach to rebuild social cohesion in Burkina Faso. Religious and traditional authorities are agents who can play an active role and support in peacebuilding processes at all levels of society.

Lastly, the civil society represents a strong force that may drive change, as eloquently demonstrated when the authoritarian regime of Blaise Compaoré – in place for more than a quarter of a century – was ousted in October 2014. Although it is scattered and need to uplift the voices of women and girls, also the perspectives of the youth need to be strengthened, it is a force to count on as demonstrated by current civil society initiatives.