

Burkina Faso



Population: 15,746,232
Population Growth Rate: 3.103% (2010 est.)
Birth Rate: 44.33 births/1,000 population (2010 est.)
Life Expectancy: total population: 52.95 years
male: 51.04 years
female: 54.91 years
Literacy Rate: total population: 21.8%
male: 29.4%
female: 15.2%
Net Migration Rate: N/A
Unemployment Rate: 77% (2004)
Gross Domestic Product per Capita: \$1,200 (2009 est.)
Religions: Muslim 50%, indigenous beliefs 40%, Christian (mainly Roman Catholic) 10%
Languages: French (official), native African languages belonging to Sudanic family spoken by 90% of the population
Ethnic Groups: Mossi over 40%, other approximately 60% (includes Gurunsi, Senufo, Lobi, Bobo, Mande, and Fulani)
Capital: Ouagadougou¹

Trafficking Routes

Burkina Faso is a country of origin, destination, and transit for trafficking in persons, mainly children, for forced labor and sexual exploitation.² Burkina Faso's children are trafficked throughout West Africa, particularly Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, and Niger, along with some other destinations throughout Europe.³ Conversely, children from Benin, Ghana, Mali, and Nigeria are trafficked to Burkina Faso.⁴ Children are also trafficked through Burkina Faso to various other destinations in West Africa and to Europe. Moreover, in Burkina Faso, cases of internal trafficking of women for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation have been reported.⁵

Factors That Contribute to the Trafficking Infrastructure

¹ CIA, THE WORLD FACTBOOK 2010, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/uv.html>.

² UNHCR, *Trafficking in Persons Report 2010 - Burkina Faso* (2010), available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4c18840c.html>.

³ INTEGRATED REGIONAL INFORMATION NETWORKS (IRIN), *Burkina Faso: New Child Trafficking Law Hard to Enforce* (2008), available at: <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=78570>.

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION, *Child Labour Migration and Trafficking in Rural Burkina Faso* (2007), available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2435.2007.00407.x>.

Burkina Faso is set at a crossroads between West Africa and Europe, nestled between coastal and land-locked countries.⁶ Given its geographical location, and proximity to neighboring countries, Burkina Faso has been used as a main trafficking route and hub for traffickers.⁷ Other common factors contributing to trafficking in persons in Burkina Faso are economic disparity, lack of opportunities and education for young people, flawed birth registration systems, and war.⁸

The economic vulnerability, especially for women and children, has created a sense of desperation and hopelessness.⁹ Additionally, the fact that most Burkinabe children are not legally registered at birth has left many children unable to take advantage of social institutions or basic services, as these unregistered children do not legally exist.¹⁰ However, this situation has seen some improvement due to the free birth registration campaign launched by the government with UNICEF's assistance in 2009.¹¹

Another factor contributing to the problem of child exploitation is the fact that children under 18 make up 56 percent of Burkina Faso's total population.¹² Accordingly, 57 percent of children between the ages of 5 and 14 have been known to engage in economic activities and domestic labor.¹³ Children also migrate to neighboring countries in search of work due to the economic disparity. Migration patterns reveal that more than two million Burkinabe nationals currently live in Côte d'Ivoire.¹⁴ Many of these migrants work on cocoa plantations, which have been known to contribute to child trafficking for forced labor.¹⁵

Forms of Trafficking

The majority of victims are trafficked for the purpose of forced labor and begging. In addition, there have been reports of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Most women are trafficked for sexual exploitation, while children are trafficked for prostitution, domestic labor, or manual labor.¹⁶

⁶ IOM, *Fact and Figures- Burkina Faso* (2009), available at:

<http://www.iom.int/jahia/Jahia/activities/africa-and-middle-east/west-africa/burkina-faso>.

⁷ United Nations Office on Drug and Crime (UNODC), *Transitional Trafficking and the Rule of Law in West Africa: A Threat Assessment* (2009), available at: http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/Studies/West_Africa_Report_2009.pdf.

⁸ UNICEF BURKINA FASO, *The War against Child Trafficking* (2005), http://www.unicef.org/bfa/english/protection_916.html.

⁹ UNICEF BURKINA FASO, *Creating a Protective Environment for Children and Women*. available at: <http://www.unicef.org/bfa/english/protection.html> (last visited July 2, 2010).

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ UNICEF NEWSLINE (2009), *National Campaign Accelerates Birth Registration in Burkina Faso*, available at: http://www.unicef.org/protection/burkinafaso_49667.html.

¹² IRIN NEWS, *Burkina Faso: Humanitarian Country Profile* (2007), available at: <http://www.irinnews.org/country.aspx?CountryCode=BF&RegionCode=WA>.

¹³ CIA *supra* note 1.

¹⁴ Blue Chevigny, UNICEF CÔTE D'IVOIRE, *Child Trafficking in Côte d'Ivoire: Efforts Under Way to Reverse a Tragic Trend* (2007), available at: http://www.unicef.org/protection/cotedivoire_39995.html.

¹⁵ INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION, *Internationally-Recognized Core Labour Standards in Ghana: Report for the WTO General Council Review of Trade Policies of Ghana* (2008), available at: http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/TPR_Ghana.final.pdf.

¹⁶ *Id.*

In rural areas, trafficking is mainly carried out in agricultural work, particularly in banana and coffee plantations, and in mining operations.¹⁷ The majority of the child recruitment is done with parental consent, under false pretenses that they will receive a stipend for the work or their child will receive an education.¹⁸

Most of the women forced into prostitution in Burkina Faso come from the sub-region of West Africa.¹⁹ There are reports of young girls who are lured with fraudulent offers of jobs in Europe but are later forced into prostitution.²⁰

Government Responses

In 2008, Burkina Faso adopted an anti-trafficking law which prohibits all forms of trafficking and suggests a maximum punishment of imprisonment from 20 years to life for those convicted.²¹ This law has made the punishment for human trafficking consistent with prescribed penalties of other serious crimes, such as rape.²²

Additionally, Burkina Faso's Code du travail prohibits child trafficking for economic or sexual exploitation.²³ This law also prohibits "illegal adoption, early or forced marriage, or any other purpose that is harmful to a child's health, well being, or physical or mental development."²⁴ The punishment for violating this law is 1 to 5 years imprisonment.²⁵ The punishment is increased to 5 to 10 years imprisonment if the trafficked victim is under the age of 15 years.²⁶ Life sentence is the punishment for traffickers whose victims die or are permanently disabled.²⁷

In 2006, Burkina Faso adopted the Multilateral Agreement to Combat Trafficking in Persons, especially in Women and Children, in West and Central Africa, along with the Joint Plan of Action Against Trafficking in Persons, especially in Women and Children in the West and Central African Regions.²⁸ The government agreed, as part of the Multilateral Cooperative Agreement, to ensure birth certificates, provide assistance in anti-trafficking measures, and to assist victims of trafficking.²⁹ Recently, the Burkina Faso government disbursed 5 million dollars to issue birth certificates to children.³⁰ The national police, custom service, and labor inspectors are responsible for child trafficking investigations.³¹ In 2005, the authorities intercepted 1,253 trafficked children and arrested

¹⁷ INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION *supra* at 8.

¹⁸ *Id.*

¹⁹ INDEPENDENT ONLINE, *Trafficking of African Women is Thriving* (2007), available at: http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=3016&art_id=nw20070510150022241C437730#more.

²⁰ *Id.*

²¹ UNHCR *supra* note 2.

²² *Id.*

²³ UNHCR, *2006 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor- Burkina Faso* (2006), available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country,,USDOL,,BFA,,48d7492615,0.html>.

²⁴ *Id.*

²⁵ *Id.*

²⁶ *Id.*

²⁷ *Id.*

²⁸ *Id.*

²⁹ *Id.*

³⁰ BBC NEWS AFRICA *Reclaiming Burkina Faso's Children* (2009), available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/8038125.stm>.

³¹ UNHCR *supra* note 26.

44 traffickers.³² However, due to resource constraints, the government can only provide minimal support to trafficked victims.³³

Non-Governmental and International Organizations

There are several NGO's and international organizations operating in anti-trafficking efforts in Burkina Faso. Save the Children Canada has done extensive work in Burkina Faso for over 25 years.³⁴ The NGO has several programs in West Africa, specifically targeting child trafficking.³⁵ One of the programs, PACTE (Project Against Child Trafficking in West Africa), aims to improve the government and the stakeholders' capacity to fight child trafficking in specific zones.³⁶ Another project TREAT (Training and Education Against Trafficking), which concluded in 2007, focused on prevention of trafficking through education.³⁷

Plan International has also been active in Burkina Faso since 1976.³⁸ It has concentrated on such children's rights as the right to education, health, sanitation, and protection.³⁹ One project Plan International initiated is BRIGHT (Burkinabe Response to Improve Girls' Chances to Succeed).⁴⁰ BRIGHT finished its first phase with the successful completion of 132 schools.⁴¹ The second phase, began in 2008, focuses on developing 6 classrooms in Namentenga and Sanmatenga regions.⁴² Plan International also assisted UNICEF in a 12-month national campaign, issuing birth certificates to the most vulnerable children.⁴³ In 2008, there were 132,000 birth certificates issued to Burkinabe children.⁴⁴

A joint program between the United States Department of Labor (USDOL)-funded International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour was established in 2006 to combat the trafficking of children, targeting 9,000 children for withdrawal and prevention from trafficking in 6 countries, including Burkina Faso.⁴⁵

In April 2006, USDOL-funded a program entitled "LUTRENA Joint Action Program to Mobilize and Strengthen the Capacity of Transport Sector Employers and

³² *Id.*

³³ *Id.*

³⁴ SAVE THE CHILDREN CANADA, 2008/2009 ANNUAL REPORT (2009), *available at:*

<http://www.savethechildren.ca/scc%20ar%202008-2009.pdf>.

³⁵ SAVE THE CHILDREN CANADA, Burkina Faso, *available at:* <http://www.savethechildren.ca/en/where-we-work/africa/burkina-faso> (last visited June 30, 2010).

³⁶ SAVE THE CHILDREN CANADA, 2008/2009 ANNUAL REPORT *supra* at 8.

³⁷ *Id.* at 6.

³⁸ PLAN INTERNATIONAL, *Plan Burkina Faso*, *available at:* <http://plan-international.org/where-we-work/africa/burkina-faso> (last visited July 2, 2010).

³⁹ *Id.*

⁴⁰ PLAN USA, *Annual Review* (2009), *available at:* <http://www.planusa.org/docs/planusaannual09.pdf>.

⁴¹ *Id.* at 14.

⁴² *Id.*

⁴³ UNICEF BURKINA FASO, *Burkina Faso: Accelerating Birth Registration* (2009), *available at:* http://www.unicef.org/bfa/english/protection_944.html.

⁴⁴ *Id.*

⁴⁵ UNHCR, *2006 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor - Burkina Faso* (2006), *available at:* <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country,,USDOL,,BFA,,48d7492615,0.html>.

Workers in the Fight Against Child Trafficking.”⁴⁶ This established the partnership of the Syndicat National des Transporteurs routiers et de voyageurs du Burkina (SNTRV-B) and the Burkina Faso Coalition for the Rights of the Child (COBUFADE).⁴⁷ The LUTRENA project was charged with two tasks: to create public awareness of the issue of child trafficking and to take preventative measures to fight child trafficking.⁴⁸ An alert system was put in place in seven of the country’s most trafficking-prone regions, as well as 16 bus stations, allowing members to identify potential traffickers, and report them to law enforcement.⁴⁹ The warning system has become highly efficient, aiding in the interception of some 596 trafficked children.⁵⁰

Multilateral Initiatives

In 2005, the Burkina Faso government signed the Multilateral Cooperation Agreement to Combat Child Trafficking in West Africa with Benin, Cote d’Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Nigeria, and Togo, to address child trafficking issues as a key priority.⁵¹

In 2006, Burkina Faso, along with 23 other countries, adopted the Multilateral Cooperation Agreement to Combat Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, in West and Central Africa and the Joint Plan of Action Against Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children in the West and Central African Regions.⁵² The Agreement was a joint effort by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS).⁵³ In this

⁴⁶ INTERNATIONAL LABOR OFFICE (ILO), *The Social Partners and IPEC: Action Against Child Labor, 2008-2009*, available at:

http://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&q=cache:rHtaEWICgPUJ:www.ilo.org/ipeinfo/product/download.do%3Bjsessionid%3D0a038009ce9b6894301728246e3b8d0ad9dcd00cf14.hkzFngTDp6WImQuUaNaKbhd3IN4K-xaIah8S-xyIn3uKmAiN-AnwbQbxaNvzaAml-huKa30xgx95fjWta3eIpkzFngTDp6WImQuxbN8TaNiMa3aR8OexhOaOgzX9i4j38QfznA5Pp7ftolbGmkTy%3Ftype%3Ddocument%26id%3D12833+In+April+2006.+US+DOL-funded+a+program+entitled+%E2%80%9CLUTRENA+Joint+Action+Program+to+Mobilize+and+Strengthen+the+Capacity+of+Transport+Sector+Employers+and+Workers+in+the+Fight+against+Child+Trafficking&hl=en&gl=us&pid=bl&srcid=ADGEESisn-ZnoGyatk_Ex1yOTX8kre_j5nsQXXny5ncGuH48aA-mnDtknNZ-13PhylM_fx9QxF9QSD-4b-Yk5DvmbGoAPX2sXOifsr4UEbWpBk_CGrWeWrNkb5P91V_KcSzkaKe_Eo0&sig=AHIEtbST1XyZq3vzFRfi9uuLr9MZhqAWYg

⁴⁷ MINISTRY OF SOCIAL ACTION AND NATIONAL SOLIDARITY- BURKINA FASO, *Initial Report of Burkina Faso on the Implementation of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child 1999-2005*, available at: <http://www.africa-union.org/root/ar/index/SA121-ENG-Initial%20Report%20of%20Burkina%20Faso%20on%20African%20Charter%20on%20Children%20-%20OBIJAJA.pdf>.

⁴⁸ ILO *supra* at 24.

⁴⁹ INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION, *IPEC action against child labour 2006-2007: Progress and future priorities* (2008), available at: <http://www.ilo.org/ipeinfo/product/viewProduct.do?productId=7650>.

⁵⁰ *Id.* at 44.

⁵¹ U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, *Media Reports: Burkina Faso* (2006), available at: http://www.dol.gov/ilab/media/reports/tda/tda2006/Burkina_Faso.pdf.

⁵² U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR’S BUREAU OF INTERNATIONAL LABOR AFFAIRS, *U.S. Department of Labor’s 2006 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor* (2007), available at: <http://www.dol.gov/ilab/programs/ocft/PDF/2006OCFTreport.pdf>.

⁵³ *Id.*

initiative, the governments were willing to use the child trafficking monitoring system (developed by the USDOL-funded ILO-IPEC LUTRENA project) and to collaborate with each other in investigations, arrests, and prosecution of traffickers, in addition to providing protection, rehabilitation, and reintegration for victims of trafficking.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION *supra* note 52.