



Burkina Faso

Country Overview

Politics

Burkina Faso is a constitutional republic in West Africa. Following independence from France in 1960, Burkina Faso saw repeated military coups during the 1970s and 1980s, and then multiparty elections in the early 1990s. Former President Blaise Compaore was in office from 1987 to 2014, when 2014 saw his resignation because of popular protests that condemned his attempt to amend the Constitution's two-term presidential limit.¹ An interim government, led by President Michael Kafando and Prime Minister Yacouba Isaac Zida, organized presidential and legislative elections that were to be held in October 2015. Elections were postponed due to a failed coup attempt in September but elections were carried out in November 2015.² President Roch Mark Christian Kabore won with 53 percent of the vote, with his party, the People's Movement for Progress, winning 55 seats in the 127-seat national assembly.³ Freedom House reports that the elections were the "freest and most competitive ever to be held in the country."⁴

Economy

Burkina Faso is classified by the World Bank as a low-income country.⁵ As a landlocked country with few natural resources and a limited industrial base, Burkina Faso faces prevalent and persistent elevated poverty rates, although GDP has been increasing.⁶ Behind the increased growth are rising commodity prices in cotton, the country's most important cash crop, and the opening of new industrial mines, including gold mines, with investment coming from Canadian and UK firms.⁷

Agriculture dominates employment, with 90 percent of the 7.9 million person labor force working in various agricultural jobs. The remaining ten percent are employed in industry and services.⁸ While there is a vast supply of unskilled labor, skilled labor resources are limited for formal sector jobs most commonly in construction, civil engineering, mining and manufacturing industries.⁹

Social/Human Development

More than 65 percent of Burkina Faso's population is under the age of 25 due to declining mortality and high fertility rates, leading to a population growth of three percent per year.¹⁰ While access to education has improved, only about a third of the population is literate.¹¹ The average literacy rate in sub-Saharan Africa is 71 percent, making Burkina Faso's literacy rate lower than average. In addition to this, the unemployment rate is high.¹² According to the Education and Policy Data Center, by the age of 18, 85



percent of girls and 72 percent of boys are out of school—this, in tandem with high unemployment, dulls economic prospects for the vast reserve of working-age youth.¹³

According to the World Bank, the poverty rate in Burkina Faso went from 46 percent in 2009 to 40.1 percent in 2014.¹⁴ However, the country remains one of the poorest in the world, as Burkina Faso’s Human Development Index score for 2015 was 0.402, ranking 185 out of 188 countries.

Despite the challenges that Burkina Faso faces, including food shortages and high poverty rates, the country has become a destination for refugees and currently hosts around 50,000 Malians.¹⁵

U.S. Department of State TIP Report Summary (2017)

U.S. Department of State TIP Ranking: Tier 2

According to the *Trafficking in Persons Report*, trafficking risk may be found in export supply chains including agriculture.

Read the full TIP Report at: <https://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/countries/2017/271151.htm>

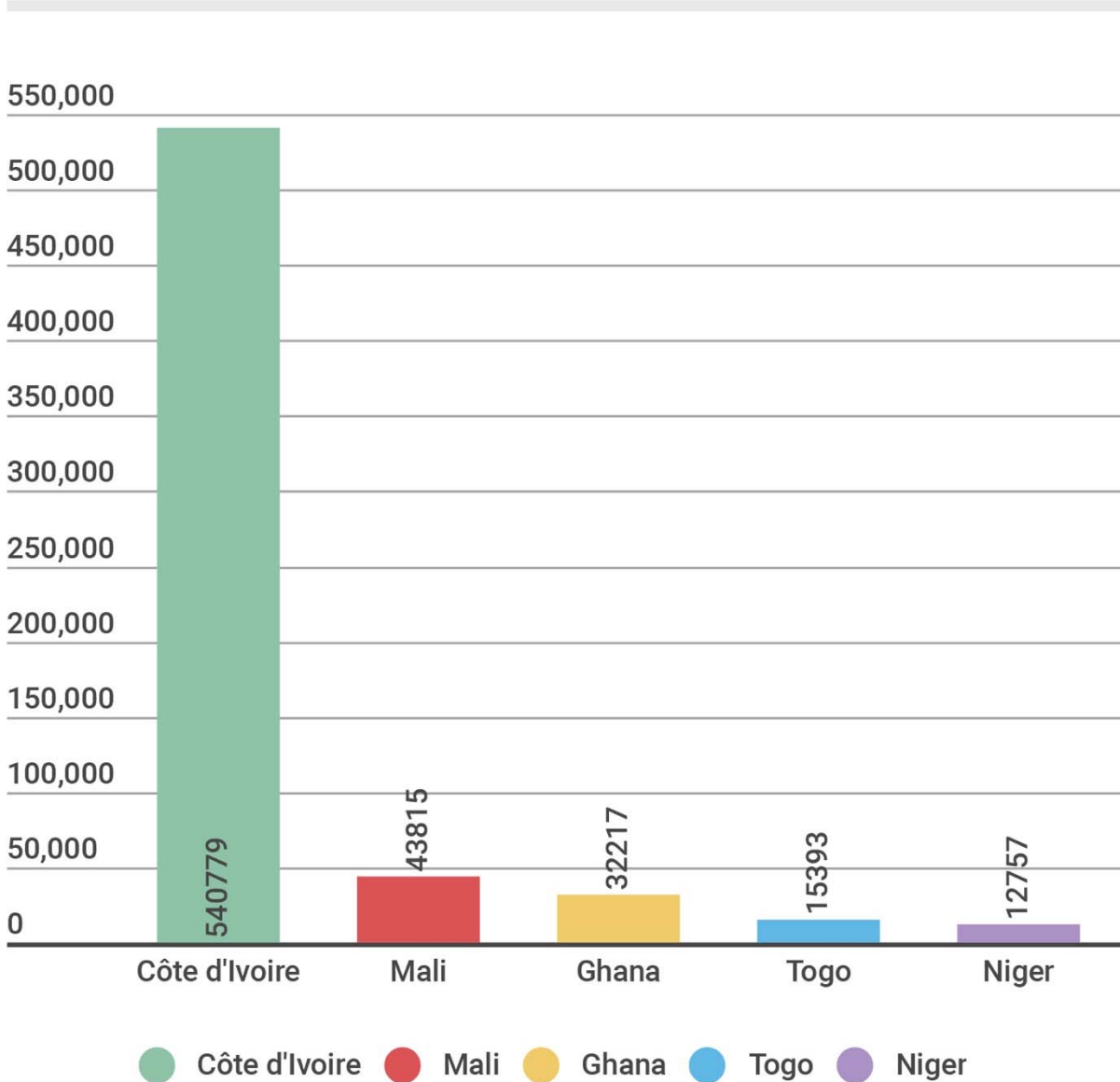
Migrant and Other Vulnerable Populations

Burkina Faso has negative net migration. The most common migrant sending country was, by far, Côte d’Ivoire, followed by Mali, Ghana, Togo and Niger.¹⁶

There were an estimated 32,756 persons of concern in Burkina Faso at the end of 2015, most of whom were refugees.¹⁷ Malians fleeing militant groups are the largest group of refugees in Burkina Faso.¹⁸



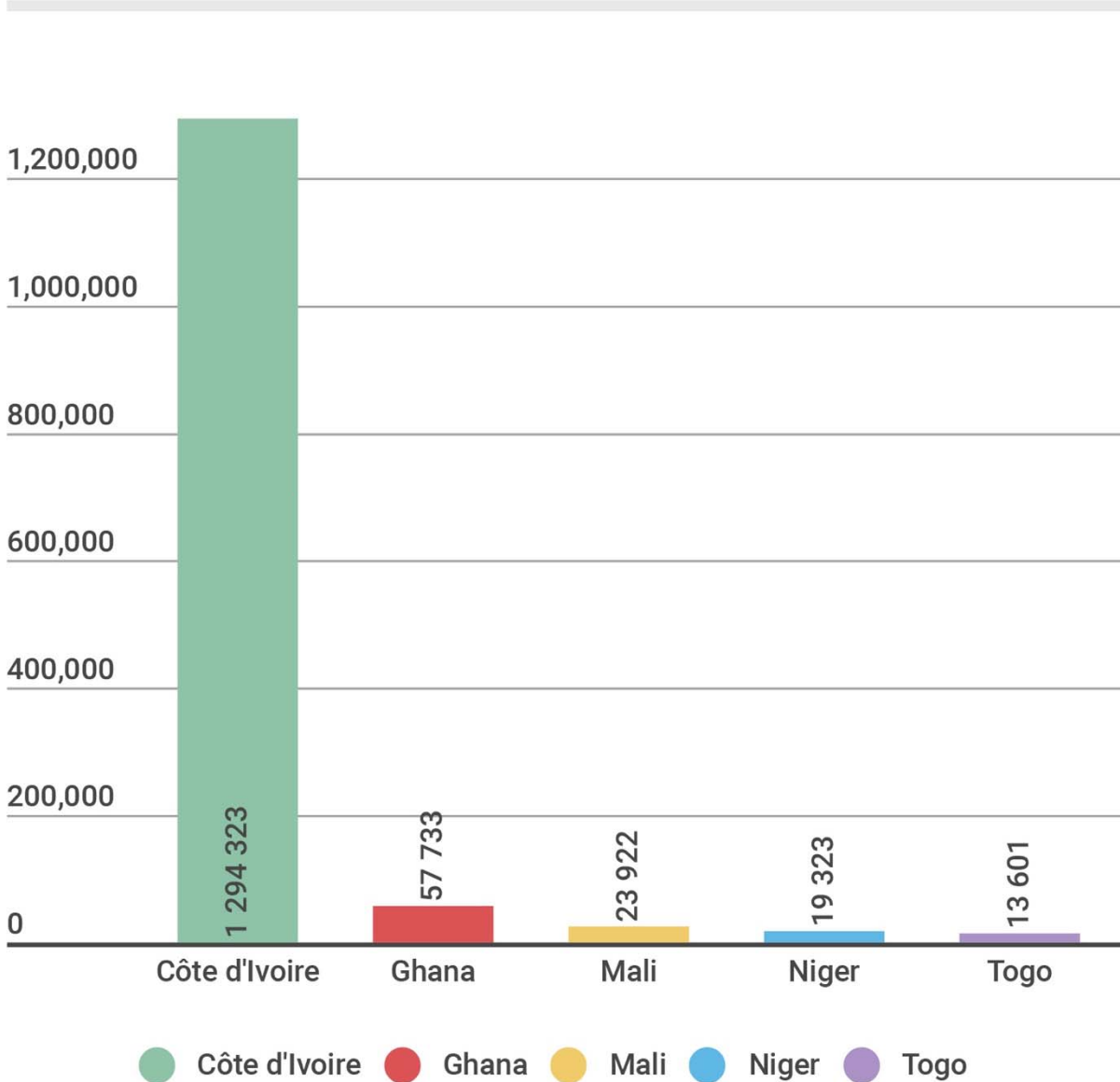
Migrants to Burkina Faso



Migrants from Burkina Faso are primarily destined for Côte d'Ivoire. There is an extensive history of Burkinabe migration for work in Côte d'Ivoire.¹⁹



Migrants from Burkina Faso

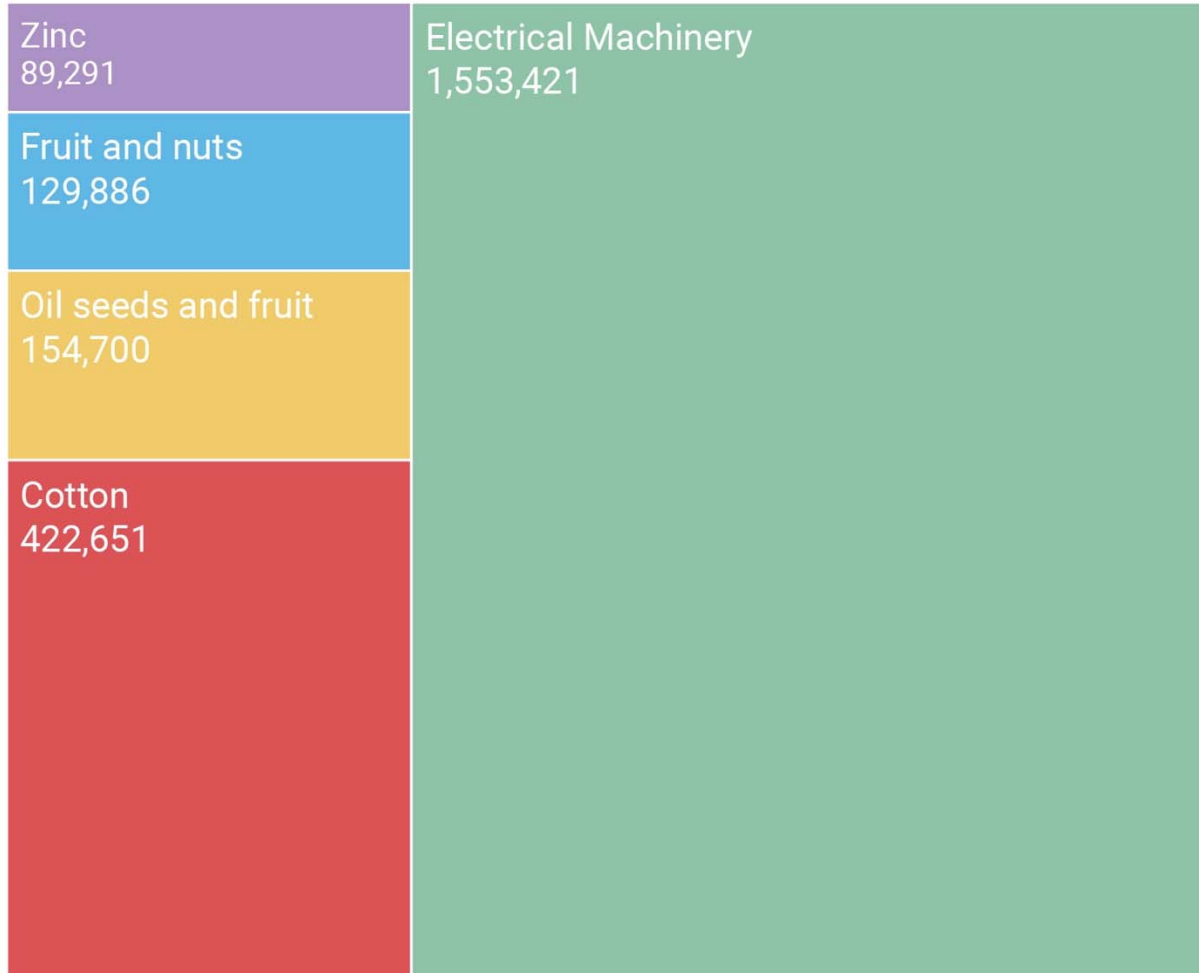


Exports and Trade

Burkina Faso's top exports in 2016 were gold, cotton, oil seeds and fruits, and fruit and nuts.²⁰



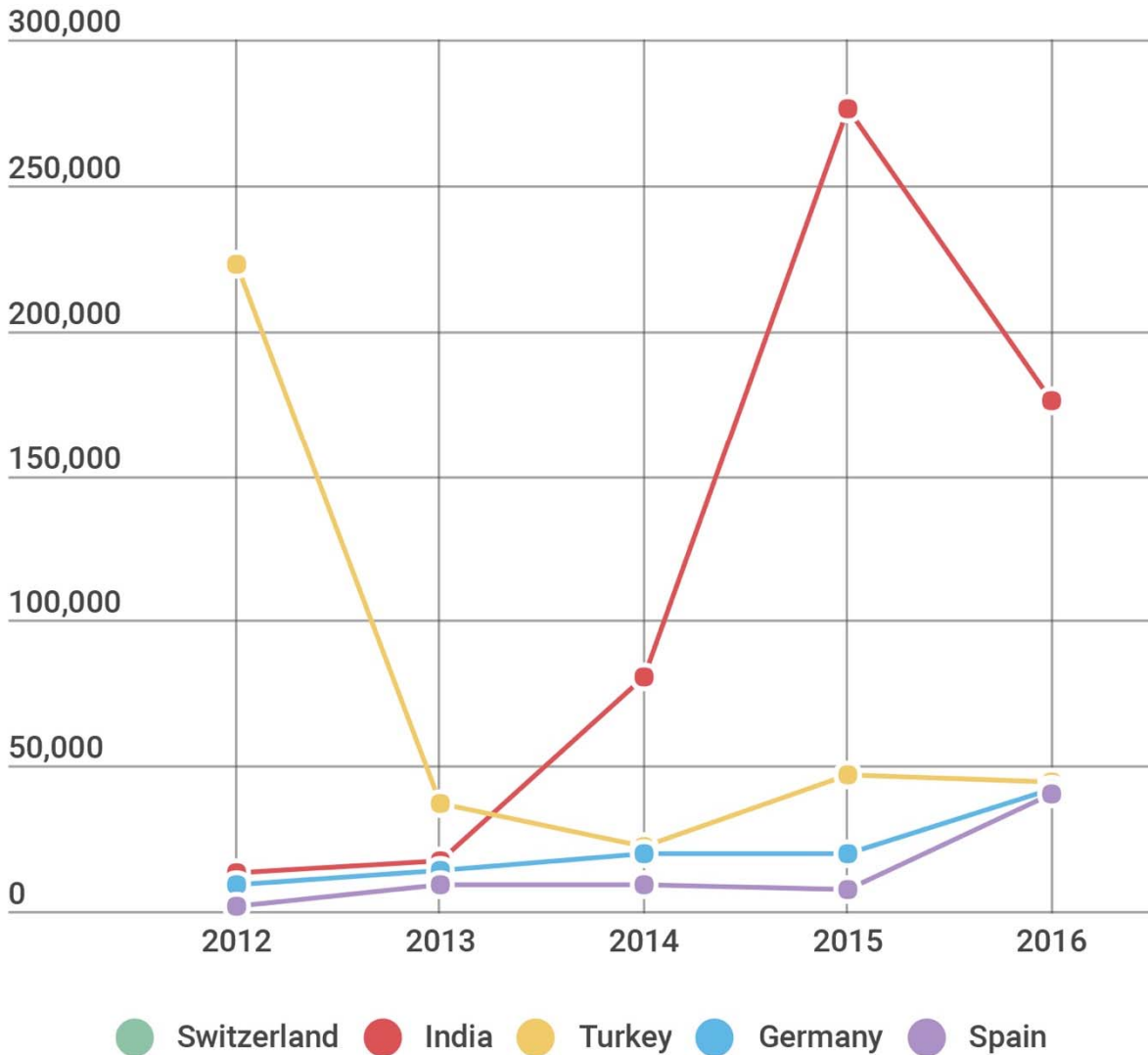
Top Commodity Exports (USD/Thousands)



The top importers of goods from Burkina Faso were Switzerland, India, Turkey, Germany and Spain.²¹



Burkina Faso Export Partners (USD/Thousands)



Burkina Faso's primary commodity export to the United States was cashews, and overall, Burkina Faso was the United States' 191 largest supplier of goods in 2015.²²



Trafficking in Persons Risk Factors Analysis

Legal/Policy Risk Factors

Level of Legal Protection for Civil Liberties and Workers' Rights

Freedom of Association

The law provides workers, apart from those employed in essential services, the right to form and join trade unions of their choice without prior authorization or excessive requirements.²³ Private-sector employers do not always respect Freedom of Association for workers in the gold mining sector, and the U.S. Department of State reports that employers' use of subcontracting in the mining industry makes it difficult to enforce workers' rights systematically.²⁴ The law prohibits anti-union discrimination and provides the immediate re-instatement of workers fired for union activity. Relevant legal protections cover all workers, including migrant and informal workers.²⁵

The law provides for the right to strike, although the term 'strike' is narrowly defined, and different strikes have different pre-strike requirements. According to Freedom House, only a minority of the workforce is unionized, but despite this, unions play an important role.

Working Conditions

The law mandates a minimum monthly wage of CFA 32,218 (USD 55) in the formal sector, which applies to a minority of people as most of the labor force is employed in subsistence agriculture or other informal occupations.²⁶ The law establishes the minimum workweek to be 40 hours for nondomestic workers and 60 hours for household employees.

The law sets occupational health and safety standards and requires companies with 30 or more employees to have a work safety committee. If employees choose to remove themselves from a hazardous situation, a court rules on the relevancy of their claim.²⁷

The U.S. Department of State reported that the Government of Burkina Faso has made efforts to reform labor policy in order to make the labor market more flexible while ensuring workers' rights, including workers' safety and health.²⁸

Discrimination

The law prohibits discrimination with respect to employment and occupation based on race, color, sex, religion, political opinion, social origin, disability, language, sexual orientation, gender and gender identity. The U.S. Department of State reports that women frequently face discrimination in jobs, and although women have the right to equal pay, they generally receive lower pay for equal work. It has



been reported that private sector employers are more reluctant to employ women because of their “childrearing and domestic responsibilities.”²⁹

Forced Labor

The law prohibits all forms of forced or compulsory labor, yet the U.S. Department of State has reported that the government does not effectively enforce applicable laws.³⁰

Child Labor

The law prohibits the worst forms of child labor, including commercial sexual exploitation of children, child pornography, and jobs that harm the health of a child.³¹ The law sets the minimum working age to 16, which is commensurate with the age required for completing educational requirements. While children under the age of 18 are not permitted to work at night, children 13 and older are permitted to work in the domestic labor and agricultural sectors.

The official school entry age is six. According to the Education Policy and Data Center, 66 percent of girls and 63 percent of boys are out of school at the age of six.³²

Civil Society Organizations

Freedom House has reported that while nongovernmental organizations generally operate openly and freely, human rights groups sometimes face abuses by security forces. During the most recent coup attempt in September 2015, leaders of prominent civil society organizations were targeted by the formal presidential guard.³³

Immigration Policies Limiting the Employment Options or Movements of Migrants

In an attempt to increase employment for Burkinabe workers, the government adopted a policy in which job seeker cards will not be issued to non-nationals if a sector is determined to have an oversupply of labor.³⁴



Ratification of ILO Conventions Related to Human Trafficking or Rights of Workers and Migrants

Conventions	Status
ILO 29 Forced Labor	In force
ILO 87 Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize	In force
ILO 98 Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining	In force
ILO 100 Equal Remuneration	In force
ILO 105 Abolition of Forced Labor	In force
ILO 111 Discrimination	In force
ILO 138 Minimum Age	In force
ILO 181 Private Employment Agencies	Not ratified
ILO 182 Worst Forms of Child Labor	In force
ILO 97 Migration for Employment	In force

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Political Risk Factors

Political Instability or Conflict

Burkina Faso scored an 88 and ranked 44 out of 178 countries on the 2017 Fragile States Index, placing it in the “Warning” Category.³⁶ The past two years’ political turmoil surrounding the former president’s attempt to stay in office for a third term has greatly subsided.

Level of Crime and Violence

Amnesty International reported that armed groups attacked civilians and members of security forces in the capital and near the Malian border in 2016-2017. An armed group deliberately and indiscriminately killed and injured civilians in an attack in Ouagadougou. Al-Mourabitoune, a group affiliated to Al-Qa’ida in the Islamic Maghreb, claimed responsibility and 30 people were killed.³⁷

State Persecution



In Burkina Faso, citizenship is derived either by birth within the country's territory or through a parent. When a child is born, parents are required to register their children and many, especially in rural areas, are unaware of the requirement to register, with consequent impacts on access to public services like education.³⁸

Level of Corruption

The 2016 Transparency International Corruption Perception Index scores Burkina Faso as 42 out of 100, where a 0 signals "Highly Corrupt" and 100 signals "Very Clean." Burkina Faso is ranked 72 out of 176 on that same index.³⁹ For 2015, Burkina Faso scored a 38, which may suggest the modest improvement is a reflection of the government's improvement in government representation, accountability and transparency. In 2016, the U.S. Department of State reported that although the law provides for criminal penalties for corruption by officials, the government did not implement the law effectively and officials engaged in corrupt practices with impunity.⁴⁰

Socio-Economic Risk Factors

Level of National Economic Development

Burkina Faso scored low in the human development category, according to the UN Human Development Index 2015, with a rank of 185 out of 188 countries and a score of 0.402.⁴¹ Burkina Faso's neighboring countries Côte d'Ivoire, Benin, Togo, Ghana and Mali have relatively higher HDIs, except for Niger, which ranked 187 out of 188 countries. Burkina Faso's comparatively lower level of economic prosperity could be associated with the lack of inward regional migration.

Level and Extent of Poverty

For Burkina Faso, poverty is pervasive, with 82.8 percent of the population determined to be living in "multi-dimensional poverty" according to the UN.⁴² When adjusted for inequality, the Human Development Index falls to 0.267, a loss of 33.6 percent due to inequality. Burkina Faso's gross national income (GNI) per capita was USD 650 in 2015.

Degree of Gender Inequality

The UNDP Gender Inequality Index (GII) scored Burkina Faso 0.615 and ranked the country 146 out of 159 countries in the 2015 index.⁴³ Gender discrimination towards women remains prevalent, despite the government's effort and commitment to establish a policy and legal framework to bridge the gaps



between legislation and reality.⁴⁴ Despite the existence of laws intended to ensure access to land, women's rights are restricted in practice. One impediment to women's access to land is that land is usually accessed through inheritance, and women's right to inheritance is often not respected.⁴⁵

Women have difficulty accessing bank loans because formal institutions classify women as "high-risk" applicants, as they often do not have financial or material security.⁴⁶ The government has taken measures to improve women's access to loans through schemes like micro-credit and loans in the form of farming materials, equipment and input.⁴⁷

Landlessness and Dispossession

Since 2009, the Government of Burkina Faso has been making reforms to land tenure to recognize land titles and ownership rights. The process is focused in 47 communities, with the hope of nationwide expansion. Since 1960, only 5,000 land titles have been distributed.⁴⁸

Environmental Factors

Due to Burkina Faso's dependence on the agricultural sector, it is highly vulnerable to environmental shocks like rainfall shortages.⁴⁹ A drought in April 2016 left millions without water and power in the Sahel region. The capital, Ouagadougou, was badly affected by shortages, causing many to travel several kilometers looking for drinking water.⁵⁰ Residents noted that they had not experienced such a severe drought in the 20 years that they have lived in the region.⁵¹

Documented Trafficking in Persons Risk Factors in Key Commodity Supply Chains

Cotton

Cotton Overview

Cotton provides fifteen to twenty percent of Burkina's active labor force with employment. Cotton is predominantly produced by smallholder farms; there are also a few larger plantations.⁵² Within the past decade, reforms to the cotton sector have resulted in rapid economic growth. However, Burkina Faso's dependence upon cotton has resulted in increased economic vulnerability to market shocks.



Documented Trafficking in Persons Risk Factors in Cotton

The U.S. Department of Labor has reported that cotton is produced with both forced labor and child labor.⁵³ The U.S. Department of State has reported that migrant children from Mali and Côte d'Ivoire have been transported within Burkina Faso for forced labor on cotton plantations.⁵⁴ The Department of Labor has reported that children in Burkina Faso are involved in the worst forms of child labor in cotton harvesting.⁵⁵ Both domestic and transnational migration among child workers is common to assist in the cotton harvest; this often occurs within the context of extended family. This migration can be involuntary and may sometimes lead to conditions of human trafficking.⁵⁶

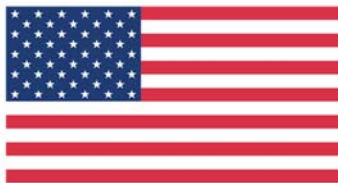
Gold

Gold Overview

While cotton is Burkina Faso's most important cash crop, the gold export market has increased in recent years.⁵⁷ Burkina Faso has seven large-scale industrial goldmines, and smallholder and artisanal mining is also common.⁵⁸

Documented Trafficking in Persons Risk Factors in Gold

The U.S. Department of State has reported that children in Burkina Faso are engaged in forced child labor as gold panners.⁵⁹ The U.S. Department of Labor has reported that gold is produced with both forced labor and child labor.⁶⁰ There have been reports of child migrants rescued from gold mines in Burkina Faso, where they were working under conditions of involuntary labor.⁶¹



Gift of the United States Government

This report was funded by a grant from the United States Department of State. The opinions, findings and conclusions stated herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the United States Department of State.



Endnotes

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