

# COUNTRY STUDY

BURKINA FASO

## Social Protection Monitoring

### Main recommendations

- The EU should **support the development of a comprehensive plan for financing the National Social Protection Policy** adopted in 2013 including the financing of the Universal Health Insurance to ensure adequate funds are in place.
- The EU should also **support the reform of the education curriculum** to ensure that students are taught in their mother tongue and are equipped with the knowledge and skills they need to enter the labour market.
- More **opportunities must be created in the labour market** to tackle the problems of un- and under-employment and to move away from subsistence agriculture.
- In line with the EU Communication on Europe's engagement with Civil Society in external relations, **support to local civil society organisations (CSOs)** should be aimed at: 1) Enabling the participation of the National NGOs Platform (SPONG) in a meaningful and structured dialogue on domestic policies of partner countries, in the EU programming cycle and in international processes. 2) Increasing the capacity of local CSOs to perform their roles as independent development actors more effectively.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Strategy for Acceleration Growth and Sustainable Development (SCADD) 2011-2015 presents the country's development strategy, based on the findings of "Burkina 2025".<sup>1</sup> According to this study, Burkina Faso cannot attain economic development without strong national solidarity, redistribution of wealth and combatting social discrimination. The second axis of the SCADD concerns the establishment of human capital and social protection, and focuses on increasing income and employment, technical and vocational training and access to basic social services.

Burkina Faso has ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of 1976, which recognises a whole range of rights relating to social protection. Moreover, by adopting the ILO Recommendation on National Floors of Social Protection (R 202) the country is engaged in the set-up of a national floor of social protection for all its residents with the aim of building a comprehensive and human rights-based national social protection system. The recent adoption of the National Social Protection Policy (in 2013) and the National Health Insurance bill (in 2015) are significant steps in the right direction. Nevertheless, currently there are significant challenges to achieving universal social protection in Burkina Faso, to address which will require support from the development community.

In the framework of the 11th European Development Fund (EDF), the EU's development cooperation priorities with Burkina Faso are defined in the National Indicative Programme (NIP) 2014-2020<sup>2</sup>. The three priority areas for cooperation were agreed jointly by the EU and Government of Burkina Faso, in consultation with other donors and civil society. These include: 1) governance, 2) health (where social protection is mentioned), and 3) food and nutrition

1 [http://213.154.74.164/invenio/record/18783/files/burkina2025\\_reportgeneral.pdf](http://213.154.74.164/invenio/record/18783/files/burkina2025_reportgeneral.pdf)

2 [https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/pin-ocr-2014-2020-burkina-faso\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/pin-ocr-2014-2020-burkina-faso_en.pdf)

security, including sustainable agriculture and water. The program includes also an envelope aimed at supporting CSOs.

The following report provides the views of SOLIDAR member *Solidarité Socialiste*, *SOLIDAR Suisse*, and their partners *ASMADE* (Association Songui Manégré/Aide au Développement Endogène), *SPONG* (the National NGOs Platform) and *PFDS* (Promo-Femmes Développement Solidarité) on issues the NIP could tackle to better support the achievement of decent work and social protection for all in the country. This would be in line with the EU's commitments enshrined in the 2012 Communication on Social Protection in Development Cooperation, the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy and the objectives and targets of Agenda 2030 adopted in September 2015. In this respect, the forthcoming NIP Mid-Term Review could provide the space for these commitments to be better reflected in the 11th European Development Fund programmes.

## BURKINA FASO

### BURKINA FASO AT A GLANCE<sup>3</sup>

#### Population

17.59 million

#### Gross Domestic Product (GDP)

US \$12.54 billion

#### Human Development Index (HDI) and ranking

0.402 (183rd out of 188 countries)

#### Public spending on social protection including health

5.07% of GDP

3 World Bank: <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/kenya>, UNDP Human Development Report 2014: [http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr\\_theme/country-notes/KEN.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr_theme/country-notes/KEN.pdf), ILO World Social Protection Report 2014/15, Kenya National Indicative Programme 2014-2020



Total envelope of National Indicative Programme (NIP)  
EUR 623 million

#### MAIN ISSUES TO BE TACKLED

- Essential services are inaccessible to a large proportion of the population, given the relatively high costs of healthcare and schooling which are unaffordable for poor families.
- There are very few opportunities in the labour market, which is dominated by low productivity, subsistence agriculture and casual employment. Young people in particular are not sufficiently equipped with the training and skills they need to find decent jobs or start their own businesses.
- The vast majority of the population has little or no income security. Social security is only available to 5% of the working population that is engaged in the formal economy.
- Currently, the National NGOs Platform (SPONG) remains marginally engaged in the structured dialogue with the EU.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE EU NATIONAL INDICATIVE PROGRAMME

- The EU should support the development of a comprehensive plan for financing the National Social Protection Policy adopted in 2013 including the financing of the Universal Health Insurance to ensure adequate funds are in place. In addition, the coverage of mutual health should be scaled up dramatically to increase access to health care for the poorest and most vulnerable.
- The EU should also support the reform of the education curriculum to ensure that students are taught in their mother tongue, rather than just in French, and are equipped with the knowledge and skills they need to enter the labour market.
- More opportunities must be created in the labour market to tackle the problems of un- and under-

employment and to move away from subsistence agriculture. The EU should provide support to the Government in this process.

- In line with the EU Communication on Europe's engagement with Civil Society in external relations<sup>4</sup>, support to local civil society organisations (CSOs), should be aimed at:
  1. Enabling the participation of the National NGOs Platform (SPONG) in a meaningful and structured dialogue on domestic policies of partner countries, in the EU programming cycle (including the identification of focus areas and the NIP Mid-Term review) and in international processes. The participation of the SPONG would ensure a more systemic and consistent approach of the NIP.
  2. Increasing the capacity of local CSOs to perform their roles as independent development actors more effectively and to perform their function as key actors in the design, implementation and monitoring of public policies including social protection programmes.

#### REPORT

##### 1. Improving access to essential services

Access to quality health care services is a major challenge in Burkina Faso. The Government adopted a National Health Development Plan for 2011-2020 to address the challenges of unequal distribution of health infrastructure and staff shortages, particularly in rural areas. Financial barriers to accessing health care are one of the principle causes of poor health outcomes, including high rates of maternal, infant and child mortality, according to the partners. After considerable advocacy from civil society organisations, including ASMADE, the law on universal health insurance (UHI) was adopted in September 2015, strongly contributing to the implementation of the National Social Protection Policy. It is based on an equitable contributory financing system in that members pay according to their ability to pay and [4 http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regdoc/rep/1/2012/EN/1-2012-492-EN-F1-1.Pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regdoc/rep/1/2012/EN/1-2012-492-EN-F1-1.Pdf)



receive benefits based on their health status. Those most in need are supported by the state, which contributes on their behalf. The adoption of UHI marks a major step to improve access to health in Burkina Faso. The challenge now is to ensure adequate financing for the scheme, as well as for the health system as a whole. Although the Government has committed 12.5% of the national budget to the National Health Development Plan, this is insufficient to meet the needs of the health system according to the partners.

The EU is prioritising the health sector in the NIP, committing a total of EUR 80 million. The main objectives of this support are in line with the Government's targets and include developing leadership and governance, improving the quality of services, ensuring equitable access to health, developing human resources, improving the management of health information systems, increasing the financing for health, and improving the financial accessibility to health services for the population.

According to the partners, the EU's support to health should also include a component on reinforcing the capacity of health care users and civil society to monitor and evaluate the implementation and governance of the health programme, to hold service providers accountable as well as to advocate for better service provision. According to them, **civil society organisations (CSOs) have an important role to play in monitoring the quality of health care** particularly at the local level, and they require support to take on this mandate. In addition, the partners believe that the financial barriers faced by most people could be tackled, among other measures, by promoting health mutuals. **Health mutuals, based on principles of solidarity, offer much wider access to health care, particularly for those working in the informal economy.** Much more needs to be invested to scale up coverage, however, as only 4.5% of the population was enrolled in a mutual health benefit scheme in 2011,

according to ASMADE. It is important to highlight that these are not intended to substitute the State, which should continue to take responsibility for service provision and ensure adequate financing. The mutual health organisations should be rather seen as contributors to build of the national health system.

**When it comes to education**, although the gross enrolment rate for primary school increased to 81% in 2013, the completion rate is still too low, at 59%. The secondary gross enrolment rate was only 28% in 2013, with significant gender and income disparities<sup>5</sup>. Access to primary and secondary education is constrained by inadequate school infrastructure and overcrowded classrooms as well as long distances from home to school, which is of particular danger to girls travelling on isolated roads, especially in rural areas. In addition, schools often charge unregulated top-up fees to supplement Government funding, which, combined with the cost of textbooks and other indirect costs, makes education unaffordable for many poor families. There is weak demand for secondary education, particularly for girls, who are more often withdrawn from school either to help with productive activities at home, to get married, or because of unwanted pregnancies. In addition, there is a shortage of qualified teachers at secondary level.

The Government launched a basic education curriculum reform in 2014 to smooth the transition between primary and secondary school and to provide pre-TVET (technical and vocational education and training) to students to better prepare them for the job market.

The partners are particularly concerned about the quality of education offered in Burkina Faso. They believe that the **whole education system should be reviewed** and completely overhauled, so that school leavers are equipped with the knowledge they need. Professional training opportunities must be offered to young people given the problem of youth

<sup>5</sup> World Bank 2015, Education Access and Quality Improvement Project, Project Appraisal Document



unemployment. Moreover, according to them, as **the language of instruction in Burkina Faso is French, a language that only a minority of children understand, this excludes de facto many of them from their right to education.** In order to facilitate better learning outcomes and to safeguard cultural values, classes should be taught in students' mother tongues, rather than just in French. Currently, more than 33,000 students are enrolled in over 200 bilingual schools and nine trilingual schools. More effort needs to be made for a systematic generalisation of formal multilingual education, transferring skills to official bodies of the education system<sup>6</sup>.

## 2. Ensuring income security

Burkina Faso is one of the poorest countries in the world as almost half of the population lives below the national poverty line. Poverty is particularly pronounced in rural areas, where people rely on subsistence agriculture. Agriculture employs almost 80% of the total workforce<sup>7</sup>. **The majority of the population in both rural and urban areas are employed in the informal economy with no access to social security,** which only covers the 5% of workers in the formal economy<sup>8</sup>. The statutory minimum wage also only applies to the formal sector, and is set at CFA 34,664 francs (around EUR 53) per month. Although there are several targeted social assistance schemes in place, such as cash transfers and food vouchers for vulnerable households and subsidies to cover the cost of health care, these have low coverage. Only 3.2% of the population above the statutory pensionable age received an old-age pension in 2009<sup>9</sup>.

Unemployment and underemployment are high, particularly in rural areas, with a high proportion of young people struggling to find opportunities in the job market. In response, the Government has developed a national policy on technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and has

6 SOLIDAR SUISSE, <http://www.solidar.ch/fr/projet/des-lecons-que-tout-le-monde-comprend>

7 African Economic Outlook, Burkina Faso 2015

8 Ibid.

9 ILO, World Social Protection Report 2014/15

introduced employment programmes aimed at increasing opportunities for decent work, particularly for young people. These include the Youth Initiatives Support Fund, the Informal Sector Support Fund, and the Employment Promotion Support Fund, which promote the creation of enterprises and income generating activities. While these have had some success in creating and consolidating jobs, the partners point out that there is still much to be done to ensure decent livelihoods for all. Supply-side factors must also be addressed, creating opportunities for people to work, regardless of their skillset.

The EU's priority on food and nutrition security aims to increase the resilience of the most vulnerable, reduce poverty, and increase food security. In addition, support to sustainable agriculture is intended to combat deforestation, and make more sustainable use of water, soil and other natural resources. By improving farming practices, productivity and thus agricultural incomes should also increase.

In the view of the partners, careful attention should be paid to water use and adaptation to climate change in farming processes, given the increased occurrence of environmental shocks and water shortages. Better links should be established between productive zones in order to make food available in areas which are food deficient. In addition, despite playing a large role in the agricultural sector, **women lack access to land and the means of production,** which must be addressed in order to ensure their rights to decent work and livelihoods.

## 3. Promoting a rights based approach to social protection

Chapter 4 of the 1991 Constitution of Burkina Faso relates to social and cultural rights, which includes an article guaranteeing the right to "education, instruction, [professional] training, work, social security, housing, sport, leisure, health, protection of maternity and of infancy, assistance to the aged or disabled persons." The need for social protection was



recognized in the Cadre stratégique de lutte contre la pauvreté (CLSP), the strategic poverty action plan of 2000-2003, where access to basic social services and social protection represented one of the four main priorities of the strategy. This is also the case in the SCADD for 2011-2015. The country adopted the **National Social Protection Policy** in 2013. It is based on the principles of solidarity, and the respect of rights and human dignity, amongst others. Civil society organisations were involved in the elaboration of this policy, and are actively working to increase the influence of civil society in the implementation of the policy.

The partners call on the EU to support the Government in putting in place a sustainable implementation plan for the National Social Protection Policy. They call for a particular focus on vulnerable people in rural areas and those working in the informal economy who have no form of social protection. They believe that the EU should prioritise universal social protection in its development cooperation with Burkina Faso and encourage the Government to take further concrete steps to implement ILO Recommendation 202.

#### 4. Promoting Freedom of Association and CSOs' participation

According to SOLIDAR, Freedom of Association is not only a right per se but is also an essential precondition for the progressive realisation of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ESCRs) including social protection. Freedom of association is enshrined in the Constitution but sometime demonstrations are suppressed or banned by the Government. Human rights groups have reported instances of abuse by security forces. The country's largest protests broke out in 2014 when the President proposed changes to the Constitution to remove the term limit on the Presidency. Violence was increasingly used on both sides leading to the declaration of a state of emergency and a brief period of military rule. Although freedom of expression is generally respected, many media outlets practice self-

censorship. Journalists occasionally face criminal defamation prosecutions, death threats, and other forms of intimidation. The Constitution also guarantees the right to strike, although only a minority of the workforce is unionised<sup>10</sup>. Burkina Faso was given a score of 2 by the Global Rights Index, signifying that collective labour rights are generally guaranteed, that workers can freely associate and defend their rights and can improve their working conditions through collective bargaining. Violations against workers are not absent but do not occur on a regular basis<sup>11</sup>.

The law N. 10/92 ensuring freedom of association has been revised in 2015, during the transition period. National CSOs have expressed their worries that this revision may reduce their independence towards the Government.

The NIP includes an envelope to support civil society, to reinforce their crucial role as both partners, and critical observers in the implementation of public policies. Capacity building support should be provided to facilitate better dialogue between different civil society actors and the state, according to the NIP.

The partners believe that, in line with the EU Communication on Europe's engagement with Civil Society in external relations<sup>12</sup> and with the EU Civil Society Roadmap 2014 – 2017 for Burkina Faso, the EU should strengthen representative local CSOs platforms able to speak with one voice and support the establishment of a structured and constant dialogue and coordination mechanisms between local CSOs (platforms) and the EU.

When it comes to labour rights and collective bargaining, the partners believe that the lack of unionisation in the country is seriously hampering the possibilities for workers to challenge poor working conditions and to realise their rights. They strongly

10 <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2015/burkina-faso>  
11 International Trade Union Confederation Global Rights Index 2014: The world's worst countries for workers  
12 <http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regdoc/rep/1/2012/EN/1-2012-492-EN-F1-1.Pdf>



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believe that support should be given to enable informal economy workers to unionise, which could be achieved in part through the promotion of health mutual organisations and other types of workers organisations that provide a platform to put forward their views and grievances. Finally, they highlight the need to fight corruption and ensure that the Government takes strong measures against those perpetrating offences and crimes.

### 5. Mobilising financial resources for social protection

Burkina Faso is a landlocked country with very few natural resources and falls among the least developed countries in the world. The economy is highly vulnerable to weather conditions and external shocks, particularly the price of cotton, energy and foodstuffs and the fluctuating rate of the dollar. The main drivers of the economy are agriculture, livestock, construction, trade and the extractive industries, which together represented almost 55% of GDP in 2014<sup>13</sup>. The country has limited resources and a small tax base. Public spending on social protection including health amounted to just 5.07% of GDP in 2011<sup>14</sup>. A national social protection fund was created under the National Social Protection Policy document of 2012, which is fed from the State budget, the private sector, civil society and various other donors.

As part of the priority area on governance, the EU is providing support to public financial management (PFM), which should support the Government in its management of the national budget. The EU should play a role in ensuring that adequate finances are made available for the implementation of the National Social Protection Policy adopted in 2013.

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<sup>13</sup> African Economic Outlook, Burkina Faso 2015

<sup>14</sup> ILO, World Social Protection Report 2014/15

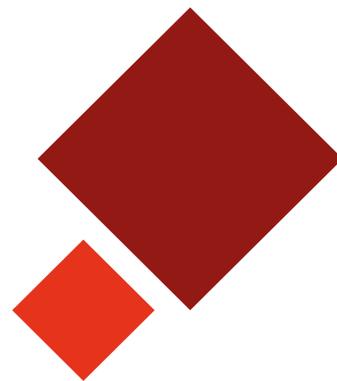






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This Social Protection Monitor Country Report was written by Dharini Bhuvanendra, based on the contributions of SOLIDAR members SOLIDAR Suisse, Solidarité Socialiste and its partners in the field, ASMADE, SPONG and PFDS. ASMADE is an NGO that works to promote health (sanitation, education and the promotion of mutual health societies), to fight against poverty, particularly of women and works for the socio-professional integration of youth. ASMADE works with forty groups in Ouagadougou and in villages surrounding the Burkinabe capital. PFDS is an NGO promoting women's rights in Burkina Faso.

The Social Protection Monitor is a tool developed by SOLIDAR, the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung and the Africa Platform for Social Protection to consult partner organisations on the priorities of the 11th European Development Fund's (EDF) National Indicative Programmes (NIPs).

SOLIDAR is a European network of membership based Civil Society Organisations who gather several millions of citizens throughout Europe and worldwide. SOLIDAR voices the values of its member organisations to the EU and international institutions across the three main policy sectors; social affairs, lifelong learning and international cooperation.

