



Let us grow the seed into a tree sheltering the next generation!

Paper for All Burkina Faso 2 pages overview



Key facts and figures

- Name: Burkina Faso (meaning the "land of fair/upright people")
- Capital city: Ouagadougou
- Official languages: French
- Government: Parliamentary system
- President: Blaise Compaoré
- Prime Minister: Paramanga Ernest Yonli
- Independence day (from France): August 5, 1960
- Total area: 274,000 km² or 106,000 square miles (74th, with 0.1% for water)
- Population in 2005: 13.3M (66th, 10.3M in 1996)
- Density: 48/km² or 124/square miles (145th)
- Total GDP in 2005: \$16.8 billion (117th), 27th poorest country in the world
- GDP per capita: \$1,284 (163rd)
- HDI in 2004: 0.342 (174th)
- Currency: CFA franc (XOF)
- Literacy: 21.8%, one of most illiterate countries in the world (2006 UN Development Program Report)

Summary: A very poor illiterate country and an ancient French colony

- Burkina Faso (formerly Upper Volta) is one of the poorest countries in the world (27th) with few natural resources with 90% of the population in agriculture and a weak industrial base. It is considered one of the most illiterate countries in the world (2006 UN Development Program Report, <http://www.undp.org/hdr2006/>)
- Burkina Faso achieved independence from France in 1960. Repeated military coups during the 1970s and 1980s were followed by multiparty elections in the early 1990s. Current President Blaise Compaoré came to power in a 1987 military coup and has won every election since then.
- Recent droughts, mostly due to global warming have worsened the living conditions and need for water in the outside the capital city. Recent unrest in Cote d'Ivoire and northern Ghana has hindered the ability of several hundred thousand seasonal Burkinabe farm workers to find employment in neighboring countries.

1. Geographical situation: A flat land with no access to the sea

- Burkina Faso is a nation in West Africa which is surrounded by six countries: Mali to the north, Niger to the east, Benin to the south east, Togo and Ghana to the south, and Côte d'Ivoire to the south west.
- Burkina Faso is divided into 13 regions, 45 provinces, and 301 departments. It is made up of two major types of countryside. The larger part of the country is covered by a peneplain which forms a gently undulating landscape with, in some areas, a few isolated hills. The south-west of the country forms a sandstone massif, where the highest peak is found: Ténakourou (749 m, 2,450 ft).
- Burkina Faso is a flat country. The average altitude is 400 metres (1,300 ft) and the difference between the highest and lowest terrain is no greater than 600 metres (2,000 ft).



2. Climate: A tropical climate with two seasons

- Burkina Faso has a primarily tropical climate with two very distinct seasons: the rainy season with between 24-35 inches of rainfall, and the dry season during which the harmattan blows, a hot dry wind from the Sahara. The rainy season lasts approximately 4 months, May/June to September, and is shorter in the north of the country.

3. Origins and brief history: An ancient French colony

- It was formerly called the Republic of Upper Volta, and renamed in 1984 by President Thomas Sankara to mean "the land of upright people" in Mossi and Dioula, the major native languages of the country.
- The country was a French colony which became independent in 1960. Governmental instability during the 1970s and 1980s was followed by multiparty elections in the early 1990s.
- The constitution of June 2, 1991, established a semi-presidential government with a parliament (Assemblée) which can be dissolved by the President of the Republic, who is elected for a term of 5 years.

4. Education: The most illiterate country in the world and an education system too expensive

- Education in Burkina Faso is divided into primary, secondary, and higher education and is not free. Secondary school costs approximately \$65 a year which is far above the means of most Burkinabe families.
- The United Nations Development Program Report places Burkina Faso as one of the most illiterate countries in the world, with only a 21.8% literacy rate (2006 UN Development Program Report).

5. Economy: One of the poorest (27th) countries in the world

- Burkina Faso is one of the poorest countries in the world. The country has few natural resources and a weak industrial base. About 90% of the population is engaged in subsistence agriculture, which is vulnerable to periodic drought.
- Agriculture represents 32% of its gross domestic product and occupies 80% of the working population. It consists mostly of livestock but also, especially in the south and southwest, of growing sorghum, millet, maize (corn), peanuts, rice and cotton.
- Cotton is the main cash crop and the government has tried to gain improved access to Western markets. GDP growth is largely driven by increases in world cotton prices and the industry remains dominated by unprofitable government-controlled corporations.
- Burkina Faso is called one of the 'good students' of international aid. For instance, following the CFA franc currency devaluation in 1994, the government updated its development program in conjunction with the international agencies and its exports and economic growth increased. The government also devolved macroeconomic policy and inflation targeting to the West African regional central bank (BCEAO), but maintains control over fiscal and microeconomic policies, including implementing reforms to encourage private investment.

6. Population and geopolitics: Low life expectancy and migrations to the South

- Burkina Faso has an estimated life expectancy at birth of slightly under 50 years of age. The median age of its inhabitants is under 17 and the population growth rate is 2.71%. Population estimates take into account the effects of excess mortality due to AIDS which is a big issue over there.
- The bitter internal crisis in neighboring Cote d'Ivoire continues to hurt trade and industrial prospects and deepens the need for international assistance.
- Several hundred thousand farm workers migrate south every year to Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana in search of paid labour.

Overall

- Overall, Burkina Faso is a very poor, illiterate country.
- But it is also a stable country which followed advice from Western International Aid organisation and showed that it could improve its economic situation. Its people are proud and fair, and they value education as a key factor to their dignity.
- With our help, Burkina Faso can become more developed. By supporting education, we can enable its development.

Sources: Wikipedia (<http://en.wikipedia.org>), the CIA World FactBook (<https://www.cia.gov/>), 2006 UN United Nations Development Programme Report (<http://undp.org>), Ouaganet (<http://www.ouaganet.com/>), Info please (<http://www.infoplease.com>). First Ministry of Burkina Faso (www.primature.gov.bf/)

