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BURKINA FASO

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Location

Burkina Faso is located in the heart of West Africa, at about 1 000 km away from the coast. It shares common borders with six (6) countries:

- Niger to the East;
- Mali to the West and North;
- Ivory Coast, Ghana, Togo and Benin to the South.



Some indicators

Area	274,200 Km ²
Population	About 13 000 000 inhabitants
GDP per inhabitant	154 800 FCFA (240 Euros)
Growth rate of GDP in 2005	+ 7.1%
Projection of growth of GDP in 2006	+ 5.6%
Inflation	In 2005: +1.7% (+0.2% in September 2003)
Capital	OUAGADOUGOU
Main cities	Bobo-Dioulasso, Koudougou, Banfora, Tenkodogo, Ouahigouya. and Fada N’Gourma
Mineral resources	Manganese, Limestone, Marble, Gold, Cupper, Nickel, Bauxite
Agricultural produce	Sorghum, Millet, Maize, Peanut, Sugar cane, Rice, Cotton
Export products	Cotton, Shea nut, Gold, Bovines, Caprines, Ovines, Sesame seeds, Fruits and vegetables

History

The history of Burkina Faso is characterized by the existence of structurally well organized kingdoms in the Center and the East of the country (Ouagadougou, Tenkodogo, Yatenga, Gourma).

Colonized by France at the end of the XIXe century, the country, then named Upper Volta, got its independence on August 5, 1960.

On August 4, 1984, Upper Volta changed name and became Burkina Faso, meaning "Homeland of honest people, courageous and worthy of respect." Its motto is "Unity, Progress, Justice". The country is currently ruled by Mr. Blaise COMPAORÉ, the first elected president of the 4th Republic.

Arts and culture

Burkina Faso has more than 60 ethnic groups, each with its own cultural values and model of organization of the society.

Like other African societies, the Burkinabè society does not have a structured culture in the modern sense of the term. To discover the secret culture of these societies, it is necessary to follow the events that punctuate the life of the villages; notably initiation rituals, marriages, harvests, funeral ceremonies... and some distinctive elements of this culture of which among others, oral tradition, music and dance, arts, handicraft.

One of the main features of the inhabitants of the "homeland of honest people" is undoubtedly, the popular affection for cultural traditions. It is therefore without surprise that Burkina Faso hosts the most prominent cultural events of the continent. This translates its faith in the future of African art. The most known cultural events are:

- SIAO, the International Handicraft Fair of Ouagadougou, organized every other even year, and that represents the biggest exhibition of handicraft of the African continent;
- FESPACO, the Pan-African Movies and Television Festival of Ouagadougou, that takes place every other odd year;
- SNC, the National Week of Culture that is also culturally a very important event and held every two years in Bobo-Dioulasso, the second city of the country.

Socio-economic overview

In this beginning of the 3rd millennium, Burkina Faso places its development strategy in a prospect of opening up to the regional and world markets. He sets for himself a specific objective: to become a pole of development in West Africa. Such an ambition is founded on an objective assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the country.

In the beginning of the 90s, important reforms, whose results today allow hope, have been undertaken in several domains. At the political level, Burkina Faso has revived the constitutional State after a dozen years of regimes of exception. Since then, the democratic institutions put in place operate in a satisfactory way and ensure the country a long period of freedom and stability that it had never known before.

In the economic domain, a structural adjustment program has allowed to re-establish the significant macro-economic balances, and stabilize the main sectors of the economy.

Finally, at the social level, it has been undertaken to fairly distribute the fruits of growth, while devoting an important part of the state resources to basic education, health, water and sanitation sectors.

The Government is now pursuing the modernizing the economy. This will allows creating more wealth, increasing competitiveness and conquering new foreign markets. In this strategy, the private sector is **playing more and more a key role.**

The institutional and legal environment put in place (investments code, customs code, mining code, work legislation, etc), offer national and foreign investors an ideal context to quickly materialize their projects and guarantee the return on investments. Burkina Faso has agro-pastoral and mining resources still slightly exploited. Besides, the fact of having abundant and hard-worker manpower constitutes additional advantage.

In the prospects of the integration under way, Burkina Faso has a great geographical asset. Ideally located in the heart of the sub-region, it constitutes an inescapable crossroads within the UEMOA common market (70 million of producers and consumers) whose coming into force is effective since January 1st, 2000. The Government reasserts to friends and partners of Burkina Faso the availability of the country to welcome and protect their investments, in the strict respect of reciprocal interests and rules of international cooperation.

Foreign policy

Internationalization and globalization have obliged Burkina Faso to review the practices of classic diplomacy to adopt a more pragmatic approach that consists in orienting the activities and all initiatives of diplomacy toward objectives of economic and social development. This diplomacy, supposed to be more active, dynamic and oriented to all its partners in this new global environment, must contribute advantageously to its economic and social development. It constitutes what Burkina Faso calls "**Development Diplomacy**".

It expends through three main functions:

- Extended “policy” as the necessity to follow the evolution of world political and legal issues, analyze its consequences and repercussions for Burkina Faso from the viewpoint of its fundamental interests;
- “International cooperation” making it obligatory for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to follow the evolution of important world economic problems, analyze its consequences and repercussions for Burkina Faso, negotiate with foreign partners the signing of general agreements of cooperation and, to manage, in collaboration with Diplomatic Missions of the country, economic cooperation relationship;
- “Protection” that has for object to ensure the defence of the interests of Burkinabè abroad, to ensure their full involvement in the development of Burkina Faso in order to promote its radiance in the world and to facilitate their reinsertion in national life.

Since the implementation of this new dynamics, a qualitative leap has been made by the Burkinabè diplomacy. Indeed, hardly considered at the international level some years ago, Burkina Faso now enjoys good reputation and attracts greater interests in the sub-region, Africa and the world.

In order to preserve its sovereignty and independence, Burkina Faso has undertaken in its new approach, to go beyond its traditional relations, in search of new axes of cooperation for partnership, in all regions of the world. This diversification of its partners is an essential component of Development Diplomacy and coincides with the new orientation of international relations, centered on the multiplicity of relations and permanent quest for new development partners.

In this spirit, Burkina Faso, decidedly committed to the search for an environment of peace, precondition to any sustainable development, is devoted without debarment, to strike up mutually advantageous multiform relations throughout the world, thus participating in the building of a global village.

ICT sector

The important transformations carried out by Burkina Faso in the last two decades, in favor of political stability and perseverance in good governance, have permitted to record substantial progress in the sectors of telecommunications and information and communication technologies.

The reform of the telecommunications sector started in 1998 has led to:

- the adoption in 1999 of a telecommunications sectorial policies declaration,
- the creation of a legal and regulatory framework,
- the setting up of a regulatory body in 2000,
- the liberalization of the mobile phone segment with the concession in May 2000 of 2 authorizations for GSM mobile networks, accompanied with requirements, to private operators in addition to the historic operator,
- the first step of the privatization of the historical operator (ONATEL) is finish in December 2006 with the choice of Maroc Telecom as the strategic partner of ONATEL with 51% of the capital.
- the adoption in March 2003 of a strategy for funding and implementing Universal access and services, and the launching of the implementation of this strategy in December 2005,
- the complete opening up of the telecommunications sector to competition is real since January 1st, 2006.

Following this reform and the 2nd national master plan 1996-2000, the Government initiated a participatory process that ended up with the taking into account of ICT in the Poverty Reduction Strategy as a guiding and lateral principle and the adoption in October 2004 of a global and integrated national cyber-strategy. The ambition of this national cyber-strategy is to encourage the convergence of development policies of telecommunications, computing and audiovisual, and to guarantee a large diffusion of ICT in the society, their accessibility and their appropriation by all social strata and the mobilization of their potential for the benefit of national development strategies.

In order to facilitate the implementation of this national cyber-strategy, monitoring bodies, defined as specialized working groups of sectorial and thematic Commissions of the institutional device for monitoring the Poverty Reduction Strategy were created lately and are responsible for managing the elaboration of **sectorial** cyber-strategies and integrating these cyber-strategies into sectorial development policies.

Results at the legal and regulatory level

Besides the law on the reform in telecommunications sector in Burkina Faso adopted on December 04, 1998 and the law on protection of personal data adopted on April 20, 2004 the legal and regulatory framework includes the following texts:

- a Decree on the terms of fixing and control of tariffs of telecommunications services;
- a Decree on definition of the general terms of interconnection of networks and telecommunications services;
- a Decree on the approval of the national plan of assignment of radio electric frequency bands;
- a Decree on the principles for implementing access to universal telecommunications service;
- Decree on the adoption of the strategy for implementing universal access and **services**;
- **Decree** on the adoption of the national cyber-strategy.

Results at the level of infrastructures and services development

In terms of infrastructures and services development, the results below were obtained as at December 31, 2006:

- global tele-density (fixed and mobile) of 10.5 telephones for 100 inhabitants as against a tele-density of 0.41 phone for 100 inhabitants in 1998,
- servicing in fixed lines 251 localities of which 205 (out of 351) district capitals,
- servicing in cellular mobile phone 107 localities of which 88 (out of 351) district capitals,
- complete digitalization of the transmission and commutation network,
- connection of the national network by optical fiber to the Ivory Coast, Mali and Togo, with an access to the submarine SAT3 cable via the Ivory Coast and Senegal,
- development of value added services notably in the area of mobile,
- passage from 128 kilobits per second in 1998 to 215 Mbit/s of the bandwidth of the International Internet Connection (IIC),
- setting up of an IP backbone including points-of-presence in eight cities,
- introduction of WiFi and ADSL for high speed Internet access,
- introduction of connection of fixed line subscribers by Wireless Local Loop (WLL) as an alternative to the wired network,
- installation of a governmental Intranet linking 12 cities,
- existence of more than 12 000 phone shops and more than 1 000 cyber cafés,
- growth of investments of telecommunications operators from 62 199 145.44 US dollars in 2001 to 200 682 081.2 US dollars,
- growth of turnover of telecommunications operators from 85 636 504.59 US dollars in 2001 to 255 450 826.6 US dollars,
- growth of the contribution of the telecommunications sector to the GDP from 2.30% in 2001 to 3.45%;
- indirect creation of about 35 000 jobs through the operation of private phone shops , cyber cafés and sale of phone cards.

Results at the level of new uses of ICT

The fruits of the efforts made during the 2nd national computer master plan 1996-2000 in order to introduce ICT within the public administration are today perceptible.

In a general way, one notes a generalization of the use of electronic office tools at all levels of the public administration resulting in greater productivity in the administrative processing of files.

In a more specific way, at the level of the financial administration, the use of ICT has resulted in an improvement in transparency and rigor in financial resource management. The main **working processes** linked to the management of **State employees**, public expenditure, revenues from taxes (customs and taxes) and the centralization of the accounting operations have been entirely computerized. This has particularly resulted in the interconnection by optical fiber of about thirty administrative buildings in Ouagadougou and networking by leased lines of Regional Treasuries and Main Treasuries in 12 cities.

At the level of the administration of local communities, a process of computerization has also been initiated on the basis of a common platform of software in order to give the decentralization a rigorous, transparent and efficient management. This platform is composed:

- a software for the management of administrative accounting;
- a software for the management of the registrar of civil status;
- a software for the management of payroll and human resources;
- a software for the management of plots;
- a software for the management of commercial infrastructures.

At the level of the judicial administration, some collaborative tools have been designed and developed for the penal, social, administrative, civil and commercial chains in view of implementing them in the County courts, Administrative courts, Court of Appeal, Supreme court, Court of cassation and Council of state. In the same way, a collaborative work tool has been designed and developed for information management related to organized crime in view of implementing them in the Gendarmeries and National Police. However, although pilot initiatives for operating these tools have been carried out with success, their full deployment is still at the project stage due to lack of adequate means of processing and communication.

At the level of the education system, some efforts have been made in order to introduce various management tools (financial, administrative and academic management in the universities and high schools, management of student scholarships and loans, management of the production of school statistics in primary education, etc.). These efforts have also permitted to start the introduction of computers as a training device.

At the level of the national health system, ICT has been put to contribution in order to improve among others, communication (interconnection of health posts in rural areas with the help of radio type system), management of the national health information system, management of generic essential medicines, management of pharmaceutical dispensaries and management of hospitals.

At the level of environmental and natural resources management, a network has been put in place in order to encourage the training of stakeholders, definition of common referential, collection and diffusion of information.

At the level of valuing the economic and cultural potentialities and the improvement of the competitiveness of the economic operators, the realizations were notably about the creation of a computerized list of enterprises in Burkina, creation of web sites for the Trade Point of Burkina, FESPACO and SIAO in order to constitute places of meetings and economic exchanges with the rest of the world.

Following these results, a pilot operation of putting the administration online has been initiated by the Government, with the support of United Nations Development Programme and the International Institute for Communication and Development (IICD). It permitted to endow every Institution and each Ministry with a web site (see <http://www.primature.gov.bf>) in order to improve the communication policies of authorities and make the development policies, services offered to citizens and enterprises better known. This operation also permitted to constitute a digital library of all the Gazettes published since 1954 in order to enhance this rich memory of the nation.

Multimedia contents in national languages in the domain of agricultural popularization and education in the matter of public health are equally under development.

Besides, the efforts made permitted the computerization of the voters' list and its publication on a web site. This has contributed to the organization in November 2005 and in April 2006 of transparent and unquestioned presidential and local elections. These efforts also allowed the realization of a project of electronic national identification cards with biometric authentication.

These different realizations have allowed their initiators to better understand the potential and constraints of ICT. They thus contributed to create the required conditions for a generalization of the use of these technologies through the structuring programs of the national cyber-strategy.

To strengthen these assets, the Government undertook in January 2006 the construction of a voice and data network with a very broad band on a national scale for the Governmental Intranet.

In this process, the **more significant** public and private enterprises are not left out. They have, for most of them, put in place sophisticated systems to facilitate the management of their operations.

Constraints and insufficiencies

In spite of the significant progress achieved, the following insufficiencies exist:

- the strong demand of telecommunication services non satisfied,
- the rate of telephone penetration that is among the lowest in the sub region with pronounced disparity between the urban and rural zones,
- the inadequacy of the existing infrastructures for the new uses of ICT,
- the relatively high cost of telecommunication services in relation to the average income of citizens and some countries of the sub region,
- the absence of competition on the fixed lines network and weak competition on the mobile networks,
- the low level of investments for the extension of the fixed lines and mobile networks,
- the very weak involvement of national economic operators in the investments achieved in the sector,
- the quasi-non-existence of adapted contents and services to local needs,
- the low level of development of local expertise,
- the low level of ICT appropriation by individuals, enterprises and the administration.

At the level of constraints on the development of the sector, one can mention among others:

- the very weak concentration of rural populations and weak income of these very populations,
- the low level of schooling (60.2% in 2005) and of literacy (30.5% in 2005),
- the high rate of taxes and customs duties on basic equipments and computers,
- the very weak penetration of electricity in rural areas.

Postal sector Survey

At the present stage, the postal sector in Burkina Faso is dominated by the historic operator, SONAPOST, that has a relatively well developed network: 75 fully operational post offices of which 10 are computerized and process in real-time the CCP-CNE operations, 136 mail cyclists for servicing hardly accessible localities, 9 specialized centers, two supplementary counters, a subsidiary in charge of international express and 9 pilot cyber-post offices. This historic operator offers varied products and services in its different branches of activity and the quality of service is constantly improved. It plays the role of regulator and postal operator concomitantly.

The sector is regulated by a decree signed in 1988 which is no more in line with the imperatives of the postal market that has become more important and more attractive for the private sector.

Competition is in the area of express mail both nationally and internationally. Nationally, illegal operators operate outside of the regulatory framework. It is essentially about individual public transport whose stops and headquarters serve as post offices, exchange bureaus or banking agencies for remittances.

Internationally, EMS CHRONOPOST, the subsidiary of SONAPOST must face the competition not only from three (3) authorized private national operators but also from the main unauthorized international integrators. These illicit and/or illegal activities, in addition to them being difficult to delimit, disorganize the mail market in general and that of express mail in particular; they evade any analysis due to lack of assessment.

Vision for the next 5 years in the ICT and postal sectors: build a modern, inclusive and dynamic society

Taking into account what has been presented so far, the Government of Burkina Faso seeks to build, for present and future generations, an inclusive society of information that symbolizes modernity, builds capacities, encourages good governance and sustainable development, and improves the competitiveness of the economy.

The Government will work to this effect with public, private and civil society partners, in accordance with the ambitions displayed in the national cyber-strategy, for a large diffusion of ICT in the society, for their accessibility and their appropriation by all social strata and for the mobilization of their potential for the benefit of national development strategies.

For this reason, and taking into account the complete opening up of the telecommunications sector to competition, the Government will work in the next five years, for the creation of a transparent, attractive and securing environment for private investors. It will also see to the implementation of structuring and mobilizing projects, in order to encourage by competition, the development on a national scale of quality, universal, sustainable, ubiquitous and financially affordable convergent infrastructure and of multimedia services.

In order for information and the communication technologies become a means of capacity building for all and a powerful lever of economic and social development, the Government will also devote to accompany development of basic infrastructure through e-administration, e-commerce, e-learning, telemedicine and electronic contents and services in national languages, adapted to the needs of the rural world. In this view, the legal and institutional framework will be reviewed in order to make possible and encourage the development of electronic transactions and tele-working, and to pay very particular attention to the protection of fundamental rights of individuals and struggle against cyber-criminality.

Ineluctably, the investment outlets that will thus be offered for the development of services based on ICT will encourage the creation of new direct and indirect jobs for the youth and new sources of revenue capable of contributing directly to poverty reduction.

With regard to the Postal sector, reform will be undertaken in order to define the operating and regulation conditions of this sector better. On the basis of the legal and institutional framework that will be elaborated, the Government will set as objective to encourage the development of this sector in order to reinforce the process of decentralization by offering adapted postal services.

In order to permit a better understanding of this vision, a new sectorial policy letter has been elaborated. In this sectorial policy letter, the ten priority objectives are the following:

In the domain of ICT

- to put in place a complete cyber-legislation and institutional framework adapted to the objectives of edification of an information society;
- to build at nation wide a mutualized infrastructure for transporting voice, data and video;
- to develop the offer for electronic communications services all over the country and in this context promote a convergent offer of voice, data and video services;
- to improve the operation and offer of services of the administration, education and health actors, thanks to an integration of ICT in all processes and promote electronic trade;
- to involve the whole society in a process of ICT appropriation to get a meaningful impact on productivity.

In the domain of postal services

- to elaborate and adopt a reform strategy of the postal sector;
- to put in place a legal and institutional framework adapted to the objectives of the reform of the postal sector;
- to elaborate, adopt and implement a strategy of reinforcing the competitiveness of the historic postal operator;
- to elaborate, adopt and implement a strategy for developing postal financial services, based on best international practices.

Transversely

- to mobilize the necessary resources for the implementation of the actions considered.

The program elaborated for the operationalization of this sectorial policy specifies, for each of the objectives, expected results, main activities that will be undertaken, the concerned actors, the dead lines and the required financial resources. The objective of this program is to provide some reference points in order to make the implementation of the sectorial policy predictable and easy to monitor and evaluate.

An unshakable faith for international cooperation, in the service of development in the ICT and postal domains

ICT offers an exceptional opportunity to developing countries to get in tune with technology and economic development. This opportunity must be seized by all and particularly Burkina Faso, a landlocked country, limited in terms of natural resources and therefore condemned to search for other comparative advantages, in order to succeed in sustainable development.

Ranked among the least developed countries (LDC) of the planet, Burkina Faso is today experiencing the handicaps and consequences of digital divide between the north and south.

That is why Burkina Faso is anxious to strongly reaffirm its will to contribute to the edification of a global information society, factor of progress and development, and open to all. In spite of its poor means, Burkina Faso set as a point of honour to actively participate in international meetings dealing with issues of public policies for the edification of such a society in order to add its voice to those of other developing countries sharing the same conviction.