

BURKINA FASO (Country Practice)

[Burkina Faso]

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A. Background

1. Which UNCT members have collaborated on this case study?

- UNDP
- UNICEF
- UNCHR
- UNOHCHR

2. Which national partners (governmental and non-governmental) were involved in developing this case study and how?

- Présimètre; <https://www.presimetre.bf/>, Centre for Information on Human Rights in Africa (CIFDA), + 226 70 27 87 28

3. Does the case study illustrate one or several phases or levels?

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Adapting SDG 16 | <input type="checkbox"/> Implementing SDG 16 | <input type="checkbox"/> Monitoring & Reporting on SDG 16 |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> National level | <input type="checkbox"/> Regional level | <input type="checkbox"/> Local level |

B. Practice

OPTION 1 (pre-structured)

4. Country context for the achievement of SDG 16

At the time Agenda 2030 was adopted, Burkina Faso was in a transition period following the popular up-rising in October 2014 which put an end to 27 years of consecutive rule by president Blaise Compaoré. In January 2016, a new government was ushered-in, under a civilian President, following an election that was widely recognized as free and fair.

The new era inspired optimism but carried high expectations for the new government to deliver immediately, on a number of commitments made during the transition period. The commitments represented a “New Social Compact to restore the confidence of the Burkinabe in their government and comprised a package of reforms and measures for i) the renewal¹ of the justice system, ii) application of anti-corruption measures and iii) addressing impunity. In addition, Burkina Faso’s active civil society and expectant youth, who have been commended for their constructive engagement during the transition, were determined to continue to hold the new government to account through increased citizen engagement and transparency mechanisms. The call for participatory, inclusive approach to governance, based on rule of law, has been captured in a popular slogan “*plus rien ne sera comme avant*”, or “nothing will be as before”.

In July 2016, government adopted a five-year national economic and social development plan (2016-2020) organized around three pillars focusing on i) Institutional reforms to address functional capacities, inequalities, inclusion and delivery of critical social services, ii) Development and improvement of the quality of human and social capital and iii) Sustainable transformation of the structure of the economy. The plan was subjected to a rapid assessment to determine the degree of alignment to the SDG framework and targets using the UN Development Group Rapid Assessment tool and found to be close to 90% SDG compliant.

¹ Pact for Renewal of the Justice System - to promote rule of law & address impunity, signed 28 march 2015,

5. Efforts to achieve SDG 16

In line with commitments made during the transition, including the “social compact” package, Burkina Faso has embarked on a number of reforms to improve the **efficiency of the justice system and render it independent**. Important work is also underway to promote human rights, including implementation of recommendations emanating from the UPR, strengthening of institutional efficiency, addressing corruption and ensuring legal inclusion.

On Justice – A major legal reform was undertaken with respect to its independence through adoption of a law removing the President/Head of state from the Superior Council of the Judiciary, thus effectively separating the justice system from the executive. The law was accompanied by establishment of a Permanent Secretariat to provide administrative services, in particular, human resources management and remuneration packages. The latter were revised upwards to align with the practice of incentives to avert of corruption of judges and magistrates. Furthermore, two major High Courts in Ouagadougou and Bobo-Dioulasso have been considerably strengthened and are now operational, albeit still requiring more qualified staff. Importantly, advocacy efforts by a woman led civil society organization “Association des Femmes Juristes” resulted the adoption of a law to ensure access to justice by vulnerable populations. To make the law operational, its adoption was followed by the establishment of a “Legal aid fund” to cover legal costs and support women who need judicial assistance. The fund has in the period between mid-2016 to end-2018, assisted close to 600 individuals who otherwise would not have had access to justice services or still be in prison without trial. Drawing on lessons emerging, revisions have been made to make ensure more inclusion with respect to minors, widows and orphans.

Human Rights – The country’s efforts in promoting a rights-based approach to overall development was most evident throughout the process of preparing the 2018 Universal Periodic Review which was participatory and involved government, civil society (CIFDA), development partners and UN entities, in particular, UNOHCHR, UNDP and UNICEF. In adopting the report with recommendations, the international community commended Burkina Faso’s efforts to continuously improve civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, as evidenced by an implementation rate of close to 92% of the previous set of UPR recommendations. The adoption in May 2018, of the report on Burkina Faso by the Human Rights Council launched a new implementation cycle with 184 recommendations. Shortly after adoption, the Ministry of Justice and Human rights prepared a roadmap for the country to implement new recommendations and these have been endorsed by a Council of Ministers chaired by the President. Furthermore, the establishment of the National Human Rights Commission in 2016, was guided by criterion and norms, as recommended by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Finally, in 2018, parliament adopted a law abolishing the death penalty and increasing protection of witnesses and victims.

Institutional efficiency, accountability and transparency - remain key priorities of the administration as articulated in the first pillar of the national development plan. To this end, Burkina Faso adopted a National Strategy for the Promotion of Good Governance (2018-2027) with a medium-term action plan. A number of bills are currently being reviewed to close gaps in the application of the code of ethics and promote preventive measures for maladministration. These are supported by reforms led by the Ministry of Finance, Economy and Development to accelerate delivery of services by strengthening internal controls and increasing transparency in critical government processes and sectors. In this connection, the country initiated the reform of the public procurement system to render the procurement cycle transparent and reduce turnaround time for completing critical phases of the procurement process. On the sectoral front, following an Expenditure Tracking Survey which identified gaps and inequity across communes and schools as well as bottlenecks relating to institutional capacity, accountability and transparency in the education sector, the country has developed a social accountability and citizen oversight initiative to increase transparency in allocation of local level resources and the capacity of local authorities for budget monitoring.

Anti-Corruption Measures - Major achievements include the establishment of the Auditor general Office (Autorité Supérieure de Contrôle d'Etat), mandated to review public spending and with new powers to investigate. The Auditor general Office has published its first report which spurred an open dialogue in the media about corruption and the efficient and equitable use of public funds. In this regard, Reporters without Borders considers Burkina Faso to be among one of Africa's success stories stating that "the transition that followed President Blaise Compaore's departure took place without any major crackdown on the media" and also that "defamation was recently decriminalized".

Legal Inclusion – Significant progress has been made in ensuring civil registration of children under five and of displaced populations in particular, migrants and refugees in Burkina Faso who risked being classified as stateless. Modernization of civil registration has facilitated inter-operability of systems supported by a number of partners contributing to expanding number of civil registration centers and bringing them closer to communities. Furthermore, in October 2018, the country ratified the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness and adopted a National Action Plan against Statelessness focusing on prevention, reduction, identification and protection. As part of the implementation of the action plan, the government in collaboration with religious institutions and with support from the UN, organized hearings in several regions and allocated citizenship to almost 40 000 people.

Participatory governance – Government has created platforms for citizen engagement through structured annual dialogue between government and all civil society groups to discuss a broad range of issues openly over two days set aside for the purpose. This citizen engagement platform is accompanied by a range of initiatives led by a consortium of Civil Society and NGOs with the most prominent called Presimetre and Dialogue Citoyen (open public interviews of Ministers and the President on their performance).

Plurality of free, private media plays a crucial role in challenging leaders in Burkina Faso, where the press increasingly dares to write critically about the country's leadership, increasing also the credibility of the press. Citizens are given the opportunity to ask critical questions and challenge political leaders, who are a willing to participate in the debate and respond to queries.

6. Results so far and Way Forward

Three years into implementation of the National Economic and Social Development plan, the country is making significant efforts to implement aspects of the social contract to address institutional effectiveness, human rights, citizen participation and accelerate the achievement of SDG 16. According to 2018 Africa Governance Index, Burkina Faso recorded an overall increase, ranking the country at number 16 out of 54 African countries (Burkina Faso's score in 2018 was 57.1 compared to the African average of 49.9). The 2018 score represents an overall improvement in ranking from 21th (in 2017) to 16th place (in 2018). Improvements were most notable in 3 of the 4 categories of indicators. Specifically, the country has **progressed 5 steps in the sustainable economic opportunity category** (23rd place in 2017 / 18th in 2018); **11 steps in participation and human rights** (21st place in 2017 / 10th place in 2018) and **21 steps in human development** (40th place in 2017 / 19th rank in 2018). However, Burkina Faso due to recent and growing security challenges related to armed groups, the country lost 5 points in "safety and rule of law" category. If the current trend continues, the country may lose some of its gains on human rights and rule of law.

The Presimetre - (www.presimetre.bf), a citizen engagement and civil society managed platform to hold government and the President accountable for service delivery and promises made, has instilled a culture of dialogue and periodic reporting to citizens by government through publishing of citizen surveys and giving the public and civil society organisations the opportunity to pose critical questions to political leaders live on tv and radio shows. Since its launch, a number of surveys have been launched and published, and cabinet members have appeared before media platforms. The President has so far had two appearances. Cabinet members have followed based on a schedule and an agenda set by citizens and media platforms. For its part, the **government's commitment to accountability and transparency** is reflected in its memberships to the Open Government and Open Budget Initiatives, and Burkina has been recognised as among the French Speaking and African countries to join.

Current security challenges which are impacting the country's development efforts and putting a wedge between communities which hitherto were living peacefully side by side, have put a spotlight on the centrality of social cohesion and promotion of peaceful societies to achieve SDG 16 and broader development objectives. An all of society approach and international support (SDG 17) is needed to support the country to prevent the erosion of gains already registered and stalling of current efforts. Government has adapted its strategy to focus on social cohesion, prioritize delivery of basic services to fragile zones in a challenging security context, while at the same time mobilizing partners to structural development issues and underlying drivers of vulnerability.

7. Lessons Learned

1. Efforts to promote peaceful Societies are an ongoing process and directly linked to the full functioning of institutions and require constant dialogue platforms supported by widely accepted plans to address grievances.
2. Engaged Citizens, free press and participatory governance through structured Accountability platforms such as the Presimetre, are contributing to a shift in behavior of government and must be pursued so that accountability to populations becomes a standard practice for any public authority at both central and decentralized levels.
3. Social accountability cannot be separated from decentralization and includes addressing spatial inequalities and strengthening the capacity of local authorities to manage budgets and the awarding of public contracts.