

# PROFILE: BURKINA FASO



**Burkina Faso is a landlocked French-speaking country in the Sahel region of West Africa. Compared to some of its neighbours, it has known relative stability and peace since independence in 1960, yet indicators show it is one of the poorest countries in the world.**

The country has few natural resources and is dependent on agriculture and foreign trading partners. It is vulnerable to droughts and food shortages, and in recent years, desertification, deforestation and swarms of locusts have affected national harvests.

High levels of child and maternal mortality are associated with poor water and sanitation, which spread diseases such as cholera, typhoid, malaria, dysentery and diarrhoea.

Huge stigma surrounds HIV in Burkina Faso because it is associated with witchcraft and sexual promiscuity. An estimated 260,000 children have lost one or both parents to AIDS-related illness.

Though the number of girls attending school is increasing fast, in rural areas many are forced into early marriage that stifles their education. Female genital mutilation is illegal, but still widely practised.

The church is well established throughout the country, but a minority (more or less ten per cent) of the population are Christians. There is tolerance between Muslims and Christians, and in recent years, awareness has grown of the need for the church to be involved in integral mission.

## TEARFUND'S WORK IN BURKINA FASO

Tearfund has been working in Burkina Faso since the 1970s, and we now work with nine Christian partner organisations across the country. Our work focuses on mobilising local churches, caring for widows and orphans, combating child trafficking and preventing the spread of HIV. Tearfund's work in Burkina Faso also includes integrated development projects, which combine food security, child nutrition, health, farming and skills training.

Four partner organisations provide relief and rehabilitation during food shortages, and interest in this area of work has grown since the Sahel food crisis of 2005. Tearfund partner CREDO takes a lead in coordinating advocacy activities among the other partners.

One partner working in the north of the country, AEAD, runs an ox loan scheme among rural families associated with an adults' literacy programme. This is a sustainable way to improve the yield from a plot of land, saving labour for families and helping to bridge the hunger gap.

A pioneering Tearfund project to challenge men within the church about their attitudes to women was piloted in Burkina Faso, aiming to reduce domestic violence and the spread of HIV.

- **Pray for people living in poverty in Burkina Faso.**
- **Please pray for our partners as they seek to help others.**
- **And pray for the country of Burkina Faso, for justice, peace, good health and hope for everyone.**