Translocality and community transformations in Burkina Faso

Key policy message

- In Burkina Faso, migration is a social phenomenon rooted in the colonial era and is part of the collective experience of the Burkinabè people.
- Migration is a significant phenomenon in Burkina Faso. Almost 20% of the population do not live in their place of birth, i.e. people who have migrated within the country.
- Men are more involved in international migration and women in internal migration.
- Migration does not mean severing ties with the community of origin.
- Although international migration is much more studied and taken into account in policy-making, internal migration is just as important.
- Both internal and international migration contribute enormously to improving the living conditions of households, especially in rural areas, through various transfers (of money, goods and services, etc.).
- Migrants not only transfer money to their households but also to the community through substantial projects such as the construction of schools, maternity wards, health centres, boreholes, etc.) and participate in community development.
- Through their various transfers, visits and lifestyles, migrants transform rural landscapes by modernising them.
- Migration also brings social challenges related to the loss of labour and the distortion of traditional norms, especially in rural areas.
- Migration is an important factor in the resilience of populations in the face of climatic challenges and impoverishment in rural areas.

INTRODUCTION

In Burkina Faso, migration is a social phenomenon whose current trends date back to colonial times (Sawadogo, 2016; Dabiré, 2003, 2005, 2016). According to the 2019 General Census of Population and Housing, 19.2% of the resident population are considered to be migrants (INSD, 2022). Caused by factors that are part of both micro-individual and macro-structural dimensions, this migration takes place in various forms both within inside and outside Burkina Faso.

Migratory movements often lead to significant changes in the communities of origin. However, these effects can be ambivalent, ranging from the economic benefits of remittances to the social challenges of the loss of labour and the distortion of traditional norms. Translocality, as a network of interactions between migrants and their communities of origin, adds further complexity.

This policy brief examines how migration and translocality are changing the social, economic and cultural structures of migrants' communities of origin. It first describes migrants' individual and collective investments in their communities of origin, before identifying the different community transformations that these investments undergo.

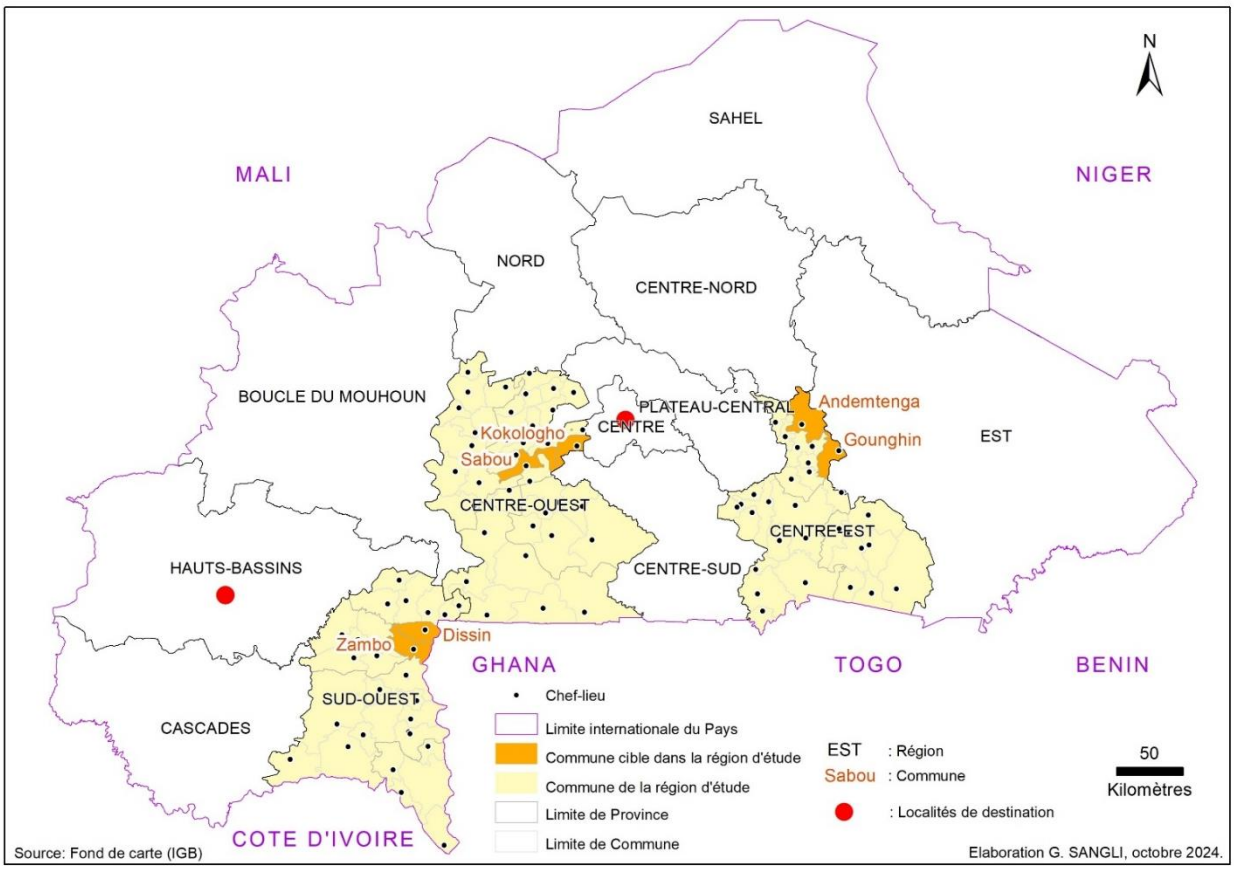
This policy brief provides valuable insights for policy-makers, NGOs and community actors working on local development and support for migrant families. The knowledge generated by this policy brief can also contribute to better managing migration dynamics and promoting sustainable development strategies adapted to local contexts. ,

This policy brief is part of the 'Migration and Translocality in West Africa (MiTra|WA)' research project conducted by the Institut Supérieur des Sciences de la Population (ISSP) of Joseph KI-ZERBO University. It employs a multilocal survey approach based on a translocal methodology.

Data were collected in research areas located along the main migration corridors, which are safe from the current threat of terrorism in Burkina Faso. Terrorism has led to the internal displacement of 1,902,150 people, the majority of whom are women and children, as of April 30, 2022 (OCHA, 2023). For the purposes of this study, localities directly affected by terrorism have been excluded from the analysis.

Through a multi-site approach, both quantitative and qualitative data were collected between June 2022 and November 2023. These include information on rural households and individuals in the regions of origin and on migrants in their respective destinations.

For the quantitative survey, 537 households were interviewed in the rural communes in the provinces of Kouritenga, Boulkiemdé and Ioba. The qualitative data collection involved 73 in-depth individual interviews with migrants, heads of households, community leaders and local council departments. In addition, nine focus groups were organised with heads of household.



KEY FINDINGS

Characteristics and destinations of migrants

Of the 811 migrants registered, there were both internal and international migrants. Most of the internal migrants go to the country's two main cities, Ouagadougou and Bobo-Dioulasso. This is a rural exodus. The preferred destinations of international migrants are Côte d'Ivoire, Mali and Guinea Conakry. These trends observed in our survey are identical to those of the 2019 census in Burkina Faso. The majority of internal migrants are women, while the majority of international migrants are men. This pattern is a trend observed in all migration surveys in Burkina Faso. Economic and family reasons are the main reasons for migration. Migration networks are well developed, with migrants living with members of their household, their community of origin or their friends.

Organisation of migrants in destination areas

Migrants, especially in large urban centres such as Ouagadougou and Bobo-Dioulasso, organise themselves in associations that bring together people from the same locality.

It is through these structures that migrants play a significant role in the development of their community of origin. This organisation is a factor that encourages migrants from a locality to come together but also creates a framework for more structured interaction. When the community of origin has needs, it turns directly to the association.

Migrants, whether collectively or individually, participate in improving the living conditions of their households of origin but also in making community investments in various areas, particularly in the fields of health, education, culture, the economy, social affairs and even politics.

Migrant remittances: an essential factor in the resilience of rural households

Of the 811 migrants registered in their households of origin, 39.83%, or 323 migrants, indicate that they send remittances to their household of origin.

The various studies on migrants in Burkina Faso have shown that migration is a risk-mitigating strategy in which the household sends some members to migrate. From this point of view, the migrant is obliged to transfer money back. Though, figures reveal that only 39.83% of migrants actually transfer money. However, for many reasons, it is challenging for migrants to transfer money, as remittances are a sign of successful migration.

Almost 70% (69.13%) of migrants who send money to their household do so occasionally. So only 30% of migrants make regular remittances, a behaviour that corresponds to the role that the household would have assigned to them. The purpose of these transfers is to deal with emergencies (famine, death, illness). This was emphasised by the returnee interviewed during the qualitative interviews stressed when asked when and why to transfer money to the family:

'*Because it is to improve their [household's] situation that you left* [on migration]*. If they send you money, that's good, but it's impossible. If they send, it's when they need to...* '. (Returnee, 54 years old, living in Douamtenga, father of five children, married to two women).

Almost 64% of households say that these remittances are used to meet basic primary needs. This confirms that migration is one of the resilience strategies used by rural households use in the face of economic and social shocks.

Intense Ttranslocal movements: Transfer highway from urban to rural community

Migration does not mean breaking ties with the community of origin. The organisation of migrants described above is the source of intense flows between area of destination and the area of origin. Two out of three migrants (67.2%) return to visit family members in the area of origin. During these visits, the migrant brings money to the household, but above all during his stay he brings technical knowledge and distils a way of life and behaviour. In addition to visits, the migrant is in constant contact with the household by telephone, as communication technologies have developed.

Almost all rural households have a mobile phone. During the survey, the households reported the situation of their rural households. Ththat they regularly received phone calls from their migrants or from the household, depending on the need.

In addition to transfers of money and goods, migrants share various ideas and skills with members of their households of origin. In fact, 18.1% of migrants transferred new skills or ideas to improve e main ideas brought by migrants are aimed at improving housing, health, trade and agriculture. These multiple links between the place of the destination and the place of origin create a kind of bridge. This motorway carries a large mass of materials and ideas that drive community development in the areas of origin, which are essentially rural.

Migrant remittances: the lifeblood of community development

Through their organisation at their destination, migrants participate in community development.

This essentially takes the form of :

- Significant investment in the construction of health centres in the six villages studied. In Béguédo, for example, migrants have built a health centre that is fully equipped health centre with an ambulance. The same situation can be seen in the commune of Andemtenga, where migrants from this locality living in Côte d'Ivoire have enabled the construction of the local market.
- In the field of education, the actions carried out by migrants in their areas of origin include the construction and renovation of school infrastructures. In the commune of Douamtenga, migrants living in Abidjan have contributed to the construction of the school, set up a literacy room in the local language, 'More', and dug a borehole for the school.

In the commune of Gounghin in the Centre-East, migrants used the funds transferred to support initiatives aimed at promoting excellence.

These efforts included:

- Organizing days of excellence to reward outstanding teachers and students
- Sponsoring underprivileged students to ensure access to education.

To achieve these goals, they successfully raised over three million euros.

Migrants enliven social life by building temples and promoting the cultural values of their places of origin. One example is the construction of religious buildings (churches, mosques) in the Tambela Mossi commune by migrants living in Ouagadougou.

In addition to the social sphere, the economic sector benefits from significant investment made by migrants, which help to stimulate the local economy.

The construction and renovation of economic infrastructure, such as shops, rural roads, bridges, boreholes, hotels, transport and accommodation facilities, etc., are all worthy of note.

Classroom built by a migrant, Gounghin

Migrants' contribution to school construction, Disshin

Individually and collectively, migrants invest heavily in real estate, often transforming villages into veritable towns. In some localities, migrants have built cities that are often referred to as '*diaspora cities*'. We have seen the case of Tenkodogo, where migrants living in Italy have built a large housing estate called 'Cité de la Diaspora' Once uninhabited, these houses are now being increasingly leased to local officials.

Cité de la Diaspora, Tenkodogo

Among the areas in which migrants invest, the political sector is no exception, as migrants are involved in the governance of their places of origin. Many migrants in their place of the destination are involved in local governance in their region of origin. In some localities, migrants are elected to positions of responsibility in their area of origin while living in their place of the destination.

Prefecture renovated by a migrant, Gounghin

All these different investments have had an impact on the beneficiary areas. These effects are both positive and negative as the remaining point indicates :

❖ *Impact on community development*

Migrants' investments have an impact on community development at different levels:

- **Changing the architecture of village dwellings** (modern buildings): migrants have brought about an evolution in the architectural model by building with permanent materials.

'*You see, tin houses are the prerogative of those who migrate, agriculture cannot feed us and allow us to build these houses, to have the amount of tin. It's the migrants who build for their parents and for themselves*'. Customary leader, Nidaga

- **Changes in people's lifestyles** (clothing, food, etc.): there have been major changes in different areas of social life, particularly in terms of clothing, religion, etc.

' *They go on adventures so they see other ways of dressing over there. We are in the area of the Dagara (an ethnic group in Burkina Faso), so Dagarakparou (the traditional dress of the Dagara) should be in fashion. But when the migrants come, we see that it's the culture they're trying to forge over there that they're applying. If you just look at their hair, it's 4 colours or 5 colours, I don't even know anymore, and we don't know that among the DAGARA. Religion is also affected. When they come back, very few of them are interested in it and they don't go to church anymore. They have a Catholic name, some are even baptised, but with their main occupation there, going to church is no longer their problem*', Head of household in Zambo.

- Introduction of new tree species: various plantations have been created by migrants to reforest their places of origin.

- The emergence of certain scourges, such as theft and prostitution: the changes brought about by the migrants' investment have not all been positive. In fact, the migrants have introduced deviant practices in their places of origin.

'*I can say that there have been changes, because when we were children we always learned that there are certain bad practices in other people's homes. I'm talking about theft, prostitution, our parents used to say that it was when they went to Côte d'Ivoire or Ghana, that they saw these kinds of things. But these days these practices are in our villages*' Village Development Committee of Nakar

- The emergence of intercommunity tensions (land disputes, chieftaincy, ...): the participation of migrants in the local elections is often a source of division in some communities.

'*During election campaigns, everyone returns to the village to win votes through their friends, and this is a source of division*', says the Nibagdo traditional leader.

CONCLUSION

Translocal practices are intense in Burkina Faso, both between regions within the country and with foreign countries.

Translocal analysis shows that migrant investment can be a potential source of development for the local community. All the different sectors of activity benefit from migrant investment.

Although these investments' social, economic, political and environmental impacts of these investments are tangible, their mixed nature means that they are not always pro-development. The ambivalence of their impacts calls for the formulation of several recommendations to make translocality a lever for development

RECOMMANDATIONS

- Take measures to reduce the cost of remittances by lowering the taxes imposed on money transfer companies;
- Provide rural development opportunities by training migrant households in the creation and management of income-generating activities, such as livestock fattening, market gardening, and agro-food processing.;
- Adopt an integration policy for returning migrants by creating employment opportunities to facilitate their reintegration;
- Promote further research on translocality through a nationally representative study.
- Ensure compliance with texts and regulations on the free movement of persons and goods.
- Migration policies should be included in the Communal Development Plans (CDPs) and Regional Development Plans (RDPs), which focus on migrant investment.

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