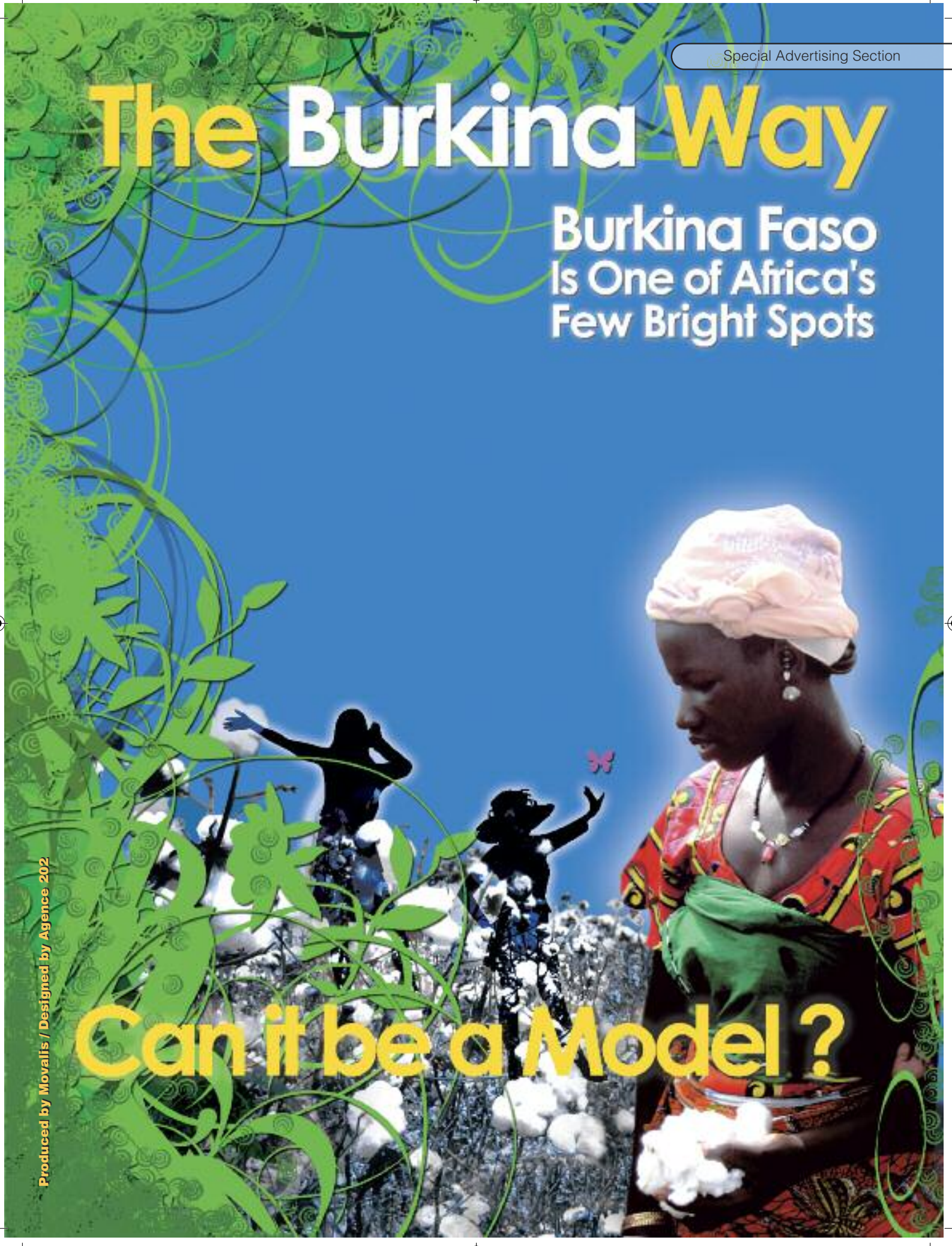


The Burkina Way

Burkina Faso
Is One of Africa's
Few Bright Spots

Can it be a Model?

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Burkina Faso



Stable, Sustainable and ... Sexy

Women to Women : Organic cotton growers in Burkina partner with Victoria's Secret

Madame Koritimi Sory is beaming with pleasure. She is just back with her nephew from a trip to an internet café in Tiéfora, the small town nearest to her. "Maybe Michelle Obama is wearing our pyjamas," she giggles. She has been looking at the web site of Victoria's Secret, the American underwear empire, which uses the organic and fair trade cotton grown by the women's co-operative she heads in the South East of Burkina Faso. There is more to it than the intriguing possibility that Burkina's cotton is helping to clothe America's First Lady. Victoria's Secret has changed Sory's life, and that of thousands of women like her, by buying their cotton crop. The Fair Trade premium they get finances the building of community wells.

"The money we get helps us afford the necessities of life, which for us means schooling for our children, and buying medicines and food," says Sory. "And it gives us pride." It has also made a real difference for Burkina's cotton. It was once lost in the anonymity of mass-produced T-shirts. Now, for the first time, it is branded "100 per cent Burkinabè cotton" – and showcased as "Burkina Fashion" by leading models.

Several options were open to Victoria's Secret CEO Sharen Turney when her team was evaluating environmentally sustainable practices for the brand. Turney insisted on a more ambitious goal than just going green. "I wanted something that was not only innovative and good for the earth," she says. "As a brand

run by women for women, I wanted to get into something that would make a positive difference for women. I wanted Victoria's Secret to create good for women. When I learned that organic cotton in Burkina Faso is mainly produced by women, I was excited. I thought, Women helping Women – let's go for it."

Normal, non-organic cotton is often promoted as a "natural" product. But it is one of the world's most heavily sprayed crops. It uses more than a quarter of the world's insecticides – yet only 3 per cent of the world's farmland is devoted to growing it. In Burkina, Africa's leading cotton producer, women are excluded from agriculture that uses heavy pesticides. "With non-organic cotton the fumes from pesticide spraying are noxious for pregnant women and for babies who are with their mother at work. We began an organic cotton program, without chemical pesticides and fertilizers, with the Swiss NGO Helvitas in 2004. It has created a real opportunity for women," says Delphine Zoungrana, agronomist at the National Union of Cotton Producers of Burkina (UNPCB).

Fuel and fertiliser price hikes, chemical damage to the soil, and the need of employment for women have all led the UNPCB to produce organic cotton. Burkina Faso is now the largest producer of organic cotton in Sub-Saharan Africa. "Unlike Colorado's water abuse or India's child labour, we have chosen to be part of the solution instead of the problem. Our cotton comes from 100% rain-fed plantations, and is 100% hand-picked with no defoliants, and with no child labour involved," says Zoungrana.

Women make up 70 per cent of organic cotton producers. They take part in all UNPCB activities: training, information, research trips, support and counseling. Their involvement in the cotton production is often linked to other income-generating activities, like growing organic sesame as a rotation crop or shea butter production. In Burkina, the money a woman earns is her business, and she decides how she wants to spend it. The husband often does not know how much she makes.

The status of women is another reason why Burkina is attractive to Victoria's Secret. The country is one of the few in Africa that has signed all Treaties and Conventions on Women Rights and Empowerment. And it puts words into action, closely watched by a National Commission that ensures that measures in favour of women are put into practice. "There is still a lot to be done. That said, school attendance by girls has jumped from 46 per cent in 2004 to 71 per cent in 2008. This is thanks to important government initiatives, in applying positive discrimination for women in various areas, from university access to politics with the introduction of a 30 per cent quota of female candidates for municipal and legislative elections," says Alice Tiendrébéogo, who heads SUKA, a Burkinabè NGO that promotes women rights.

The mentality even in remote areas has started to change, with multiple awareness campaigns on women's rights carried out by a wide range of influential figures – as well as government bodies and civil society. "Burkina's society has well-known organizational capacities and strong institutions which help facilitate policy to action," says

Ambassador Jeanine Jackson, who recently left Burkina to serve the US in a different environment, Irak.

And Burkina is leading Africa in the fight against genital excision. Thanks to financial and legal support from the government, and the involvement of more than thousand people on a national, provincial and local level, this practice is about to be eradicated, not only by severe punishment but also by the changing attitude of judges and local police along with the general population. Other African NGOs, government officials and scholars involved in the fight against excision, frequently pay visits to Burkina Faso in order to learn best practices.

"As we learned about the status of women in Burkina Faso, the idea became even more attractive. As a brand, Victoria's Secret wants to be involved in countries where the rights of women are respected," adds Turney.



Victoria's Secret model, Emanuela de Paula, wearing the Organic Collection made from fairly traded Burkinabè cotton. Photo: "Courtesy of Regan Cameron for Victoria's Secret"

Burkina Faso may be one of the poorest countries on the planet, but women are getting ahead thanks to political will and enlightenment, and a rising demand in the developed world for organically grown cotton and anti-oxidant rich shea butter. From 2004 to 2008 shea butter output in Burkina Faso doubled. All of this was produced by women. "An orga-

nic product fetches a higher price, and the women earn more," comments Henriette Ouédraogo. She is president of the shea butter cooperative Ragussi that supplies l'Occitane, France's hottest fragrance and bath chain. "Burkina Faso is one of the world's leading suppliers of shea nuts, and now thanks to funding of the United States African Development Foundation, we will be able to become world's leading supplier of shea butter," Ouédraogo notes proudly.

“ We are immensely proud of our initiative in Burkina Faso and we are thrilled about the results so far ”

Sharen Turney, CEO Victoria's Secret

"Burkina is one of the countries that definitely deserves the Foundation's assistance. It has political stability, security, and a good regulatory framework for fostering free trade," says Lloyd Pierson, President and CEO of the United States African Development Foundation (USADF), the only US government agency working directly at the grassroots, supporting 100 per cent African solutions to its problems. "Less than a year since we started our program in Burkina, the Foundation has funded a total of 11 grassroots groups, mostly involved in direct food production and processing in the amount of \$1.5 million dollars."

Burkina Faso has been the heart of skilled farming in West Africa for centuries. Now the country is surfing the wave of the future. The first futuristic farming tower of the French company Courtirey, will become reality in Toussiana, in the North of Burkina. It aims to revolutionize market gardening, multiplying cultivation cycles while saving water, using solar power and protecting the crop against violent sunlight and heavy rainfalls.

"Western media paints too often a doomsday scenario, one which depicts Africans as helpless. This has discouraged the very trade and investment necessary to drive development," says Dilip Jiwrajka, managing director of ALOK Industries, India's textile giant. ALOK is currently looking into a prospective partnership with the Burkinabè public and private sector to set up the first operational ring

spinning plant of West Africa, in Bobo Dioulasso, Burkina's cotton capital. A partnership with the \$1.5 billion dollar Indian textile leader could have far-reaching implications for Africa's leading cotton producer. By starting to spin its own yarn, Burkina Faso could be lifted from a simple main cotton producer and exporter up to a "global player" like Egypt or Peru.

For chic brands like Victoria's Secret and l'Occitane, and for technical pioneers and textile giants alike, Burkina seems to be "hot". The acclaimed enfant terrible of the German art scene, Christophe Schlingensiefel, is thinking of building Africa's first festival theatre in Burkina. Inspired by Wagner's Bayreuth, where he directed a controversial production of the opera "Parsifal", Schlingensiefel wants to make the world sit up with a production in Ouagadougou. All this will stamp Burkina, recently still one of the less known countries of the continent, even more vividly on the world map. Burkina is becoming known as the place to be.

Trade talks

Fundamental Fairness

Global trade rules must not be rigged to exclude a measure of fundamental fairness for the poorest African countries.

In a span of seven years, the U.S. spent over \$20 billion on cotton subsidies for about 10.000 farmers. This is the problem plain and simple.

Without unfair subsidies, we know that West Africa can be the long term producer of cotton. We must be allowed to trade fairly in the global economic system. The existence of 15 million poor people in the subregion depends on it.

Let us be clear, we want to allow a conclusion of DOHA negotiations. But our friends in the U.S. need to understand that they have to make a choice between the continuation of the existing production subsidies for its cotton farmers and moving forward in negotiations.

Mamadou Sanou
Minister of Trade, Burkina Faso
Coordinator of the Cotton-4
Benin, Burkina, Mali and Chad



UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and Burkina Faso's President Blaise Compaoré chairing the Security Council

The Compaoré Effect

Blaise Compaoré presides over one of the world's poorest countries, Burkina Faso. It is easy to describe the 58-year-old Compaoré as a regional strongman, but he has an impressive record of getting things done. Under his pragmatic leadership, the country adopted free-market reforms and consolidated state democratic structures while maintaining national cohesion, winning international recognition for its achievements. Today, the United States is its most important development partner.

Once an army captain, and now a respected statesman, Compaoré is winning a reputation as a peacemaker with a gift for restoring calm and quietness. Here, he speaks about subjects as diverse as the Sudan, global warming, the empowerment of women and his own record of achievements.

Question: The subsidies given to American cotton producers undermine the competitiveness of Burkinabè growers, and leave them in a very precarious position. Can we talk of a "fresh approach" after the election of President Obama?

Compaoré: During his campaign, Barack Obama indicated that he would be willing to review policy on subsidies if he was elected. To that extent, we can talk of a "fresh approach." Obviously Burkina Faso and other cotton producers have a lively interest in the outcome of this promise.

Given your experience as a mediator, what are the keys to successful negotiations? What approach do you recommend for the conflict in the Sudan?

Several factors make for effective mediation. The first, without question, is the willingness of the parties involved to leave the crisis behind them. The second

is linked to the qualities of the individual mediator. He has to enjoy the confidence of all parties, and he must maintain strict neutrality, impartiality and patience in all he does.

And, for the Sudan, we have to be tireless in our efforts to keep the peace, to protect human rights, to encourage development and to provide humanitarian aid. Clearly, this must be with the cooperation of the Sudanese government. It is in these ways that we are continuing to encourage and support all parties in working with the UN-African Union Chief Mediator, to arrive at a negotiated political settlement of the conflict.

What are the principal achievements of your economic and social policies?

Our country has progressively built and consolidated its democratic process. This rests in essence on the deeply embedded institutions of the republic. Important social gains have also been made at different levels. In primary education, the numbers attending school has risen by more than 30 per cent,

“ We have made more progress in the past ten years than in the first forty years after independence ”

Blaise Compaoré



climbing from 41.1 per cent in 1998 to 71.2 per cent in 2008. This means that we have made more progress in the past 10 years than in the first forty years after independence. In basic health care, the main indicators are also on the up, thanks to the part of the budget devoted to health climbing from 7 per cent to 15 per cent between 1999 and 2008, and to efforts to increase attendance at health centres. The rate of attendance was 45 per cent in 2008, against an average of 20 per cent between 1997 and 2002. The prevalence of HIV/AIDS, which reached 7.14 per cent in 1997, had fallen to 2 per cent by 2006.

In terms of the economy, Burkina Faso is now a striking example as one of the African countries where the growth in income per capita in real terms has remained positive since 2001. Public investment in transport, energy and water resources has had an average growth rate of more than 20 per cent over the past decade.

What impact has the economic and financial crisis had on your country?

A slow-down in Africa's growth rate is already expected. It will fall from 5.1 per cent in 2008 to 1.6 per cent in 2009. Burkina Faso has not escaped the crisis. We have had to revise our growth rate. It will be more than two percentage points lower than we had hoped. That means economic growth revised to 3.5 per cent from our initial estimate of more than 6 per cent.

As to the outlook for 2010-2012, there is a fear that the crisis will continue to have an impact on Burkina's economy. Public revenues may be squeezed by the expected slow-down in economic activity. At the same time, pressure on social spending to offset the effects of the crisis will grow. The government has adopted a program of priorities. In essence, this is to revive and to support economic activity, to assure social welfare, and to maintain the viability of the Burkinabè financial system. Some of our development partners have already made positive comments on accompanying us in putting our action program into effect.

Do poor countries like Burkina have the means to cope with climate warming?

Obviously, Burkina can not deal with a global problem on its own. The question how to tackle global warming will be central during the Seventh World Forum of Sustainable Development that Burkina will host in October. Its outcome will hopefully

strengthen the political determination badly needed to reach a post-Kyoto agreement to cut greenhouse emissions during the UN Climate Change at Copenhagen in December. Africa has few industries emitting greenhouse gases, but regions are badly affected by drought and desertification. Global warming slashes water resources and food output, and feeds pandemics like malaria. That is why the CDM, the Clean Development Mechanism, is so important, which gives the rich world the right to offset their emissions by paying activities in the poor world that help retain carbon. It is a huge opportunity for the industrial countries to practice solidarity by transferring funds and technology to developing countries, such as Burkina Faso, with the Carbon Market. Burkina Faso is developing strategies to attract investors in reforestation, energy and bio-fuels.

A Power House for the Empowerment of Women

- Leading Africa in the fight against female genital excision
- Minima quota of 30 percent for women in legislative and municipal elections
- BRIGHT, Burkina's Program to boost education of girls, became Best Practices for Africa
- Agrarian and property rights confer men and women with the same rights
- Free counselling services for women victims of violence or violation of their rights
- Labour law against sexual harassment
- Subsidies for child-birth and obstetrics to cut maternal mortality by 30 per cent



What role do women play in Burkinabè society? For example, in your anti-poverty program?

The population of Burkina Faso is predominantly rural and feminine. The latest census showed there were 93.1 men for 100 women. However, there are manifest imbalances in the enjoyment of rights and responsibilities between the sexes in many fields. There is a strong sense of this in the importance of women in my 5 year program for social progress.

Women are increasingly present in areas which were once closed to them, notably in the army, and in traditionally men-only fields like carpentry, or as mechanics and civil engineers. As an example, at the Kadiogo military cadet school, the 6th class, recruited in 2008, has 25 girls and 46 boys. In the national police, entrants are running at 50 girls a year and 450 boys.

The government is supporting rural women's groups by improving working conditions and building social infrastructure that allows them to boost their economic activities. The improvement in women's economic power, and the reduction in poverty, is underpinned by reinforcing the FAARF, the government fund that supports paid activities for women. A third of all poor working women already benefit from the role played by the FAARF.

We recently promulgated a law by decree that fixes a minimum quota of 30 per cent for either sex in legislative and municipal elections. Positive discrimination is not the only way of assuring greater equality for women. Others exist. The code of persons and families of 1998 improved the judicial status and the social protection of women and children. Texts reorganising agrarian and property rights confer men and women with the same rights. The recently adopted National Gender Policy, the blueprint of fundamental national policy, visions a society stripped of all forms of inequality and human abuse. The

"Zero Tolerance" programme in the struggle against female genital mutilation shows the political will to improve the situation of women. I think we are the only country in West Africa to legislate to protect the physical integrity of women.



From Burkina, With Peace

A small nation and its president, emerging as a leader in African Peacekeeping and Conflict Mediation, seek to soothe and stabilize a vast region

It has long been seen as the heartland of African cinema, theatre and design, with its highly-rated FESPACO film festival and the SIAO handicrafts fair. More and more, though, Ouagadougou is now emerging as the centre of the region's diplomacy and peace initiatives. US-Burkinabè relations steadily improved along with President Blaise Compaoré's major mediation efforts that have enabled fellow Africans to resolve issues among themselves.

Burkina chaired the United Nations Security Council last September, and Compaoré earned widespread compliments for his leadership in the UN. When he made his first visit to the White House on July 16 2008, former President George W. Bush personally thanked him for being "a constructive force for peace and stability in the region, sharing the goals of advancing democracy and human rights in Africa, especially in Zimbabwe and Sudan."

Recognition of Compaoré's *savoir faire* is implicit in the nomination in July 2008 of Djibril Bassolé, the former Burkinabè minister of foreign affairs, as the Joint African Union-United Nations chief mediator for Darfur. Thus encouraged, Burkina's president is determined to work in partnership with other African leaders as well as the United States to get the apparently log jammed Darfur

peace process moving forward. Is he up to the job?

The task is difficult, but the omens are good. As well as successful mediation in Togo and Niger, and involvement in Mali, Compaoré has brokered a peace deal in Côte d'Ivoire, pacifying a conflict that had disrupted the region's biggest economy and ravaged thousands of human lives since September 2002. "I have deep respect for President Compaoré's efforts to promote peace and stability in this region," says UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

“Burkina Faso is proving that a country with limited resources can ‘punch above its weight’ when it comes to making peace”

Senator John Kerry
Chairman of the U.S. Senate
Committee on Foreign Relations



As Facilitator of the inter-Ivorian dialogue, Compaoré's personal engagement and efforts have been instrumental in maintaining the consensus among all political parties needed to hold presidential elections, in the face of all emerging difficulties. Both President Gbagbo and former rebel leader – turned – Prime Minister Soro agree that the relative stability that had prevailed in Côte d'Ivoire

since the signing of the Ouagadougou Agreement on March 4 2007 had allowed the country to proceed towards the elections, which should be held on November 29 this year. "That was very much facilitated by the diplomatic role of President Compaoré," comments Ban Ki-moon.

As a mediator, Compaoré has a hard-won reputation as a good listener. In Burkina, the moral force of civil society such as traditional chiefs and religious leaders are a party to decision-making and linked to the leadership. For that,

he deserves credit. This explains why Burkina has never lost its way even in times of crisis. This social stability has helped Burkina to be considered as a model for resolving crises in the subregion.

Now, the 58 year old Blaise is quietly but effectively leading the fight against terrorism

and criminality in West Africa. Vast and virtually stateless stretches of neighboring countries, subject to political tensions or violence make it vulnerable for terrorist groups as well as drugs and weapon smuggle. Burkina Faso has proved to be an important trans-Saharan ally of the United States in the fight against terrorism. It will host the multinational military exercise Flintlock 2010, organized by the

Burkina's Challenge

The virtues of dynamic stability highly recognized by the US

Twenty years ago, Ouagadougou, looked a lot like Ruidoso, New Mexico, only much worse. Over the past two decades, Burkina's capital has been transformed from a run-down backwater into one of the most energetic – and most fun – metropolises in West Africa. Burkina's take off has come about not through turmoil but from what economists classify as "dynamic stability." "Burkina is the new princely peacock, after years of being looked down on by its coastal neighbours as a poor land-locked country," says Amadou Nikiema, an entrepreneur who has surfed the Burkinabè wave, turning from a simple cab driver 10 years ago into the owner of a rental car company.

Not so long ago, such cool confidence would have been unthinkable in Burkina Faso. In a single generation the country has turned itself upside down. "Despite its poverty and lack of natural resources, Burkina Faso has worked extremely hard to move ahead. It is a serious, focused country that is determined to invest wisely in its people and its infrastructure.

The economy is very well managed and the country's leaders have shown a real, sustained determination to play a constructive role in West Africa," says Anthony Holmes, a former US Ambassador to Burkina Faso.

And this has been noticed. The "naming and shaming" in the "Doing Business Guide 2007-2008" has countries competing fiercely to improve their business-friendliness and their position in the World Bank's ranking. Burkina is classified among the top 10 investment climate reforming countries world wide. And, it is among the 10 least corrupt countries in Africa, according to Transparency International.

These achievements made the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) look at Burkina Faso as an eligible country for funding through a Compact. MCC funding is a cornerstone of the US strategy to jump start Africa's economic development and conditioned on "countries having demonstrated good policies". As US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton puts it: "We will work to produce tangible results from every

taxpayer's dollar we spend overseas, and we partner with developing countries that take responsibility for their development needs and accept the highest standard of accountability for those dollars."

"The country had much going for it - stable politics, an open and fairly harmonious society, an economy that has learned how to grow," says Darius Mans, MCC Acting CEO. "But when it came to the quality of schools, it fell far short. Therefore we started with the two-year threshold MCC project, called BRIGHT, which dramatically improved the educational outcomes of children in Burkina. It is focused on girls in particular. With 20 per cent enrolment or more of girls and math and French their best scores, this project became MCC's success story."

In recognition of its impressive broad macroeconomic reforms, and the tremendous success of its BRIGHT Program, MCC has signed a five-year, \$480.94 million Compact with the government of Burkina Faso. This is the

Burkina is among the top 10 investment climate reforming countries world wide

World Bank's Doing Business Guide 2007-2008

biggest amount accorded to an African country. The Burkinabè government, convinced that education is key and gender promotion vital for development, included a second BRIGHT School project in its Compact Program. The other Compact components are results-oriented towards a green revolution. A strategic plan is aimed at improving agricultural productivity, land use rights and land management and farm to markets roads.

"I am elated that Burkina Faso is so committed to the education of women and to the development of 'girl friendly schools'," says Stephen Hayes, President of the Corporate Council on Africa, a US non-profit organization dedicated to strengthening commercial relationships with Africa. "This is especially important in agriculture, where women comprise much of the work force. Burkina Faso is a good place to invest and its MCC Compact underscores this."

The MCC's list of eligible countries is closely watched by development partners and investment firms who see it as a confidence vote in governments in the developing world. With agriculture

US in order to train the military of several Sahelian countries in fighting jointly cross-border terrorism. The country will be home to the coordination center of the Trans-Saharan Counterterrorism Initiative.

All this means that Compaoré has great potential in seeking a diplomatic solution to solve the crisis that erupted six years ago in Darfur, in the West of Sudan, but which now affects the whole country and which is destabilizing the region. "Burkina Faso is proving that a country with limited resources can 'punch above its weight' when it comes to making peace: Burkinabè battalions are deployed in rotation in Darfur, and the chief mediator for the AU-UN's peace effort, Djibril Bassolé, is from Burkina Faso," says Senator John Kerry, Chair of the Committee on Foreign Relations.

Troops from Burkina fought with Allied forces to help liberate Europe from Nazi Germany in the last century. Otherwise they were not in action, at home or abroad. Over the past decade, however, they have been involved in peacekeeping efforts in Haiti, Togo, Niger, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Comoros, Burundi, Liberia and the Central African Republic. The first battalion of the 2,400 US-trained peacekeepers that Burkina has pledged for Darfur, recently arrived in Sudan. "Military cooperation between the United States and Burkina Faso is exemplary and dynamic," says Yéro Boly, Burkina's defense minister.

Blaise Compaoré's determination to revive the peace process in Sudan through a pragmatic approach brings new hope to the demoralized. The maximum of help should be made available to him. Sudan needs it. And Compaoré deserves it.



representing 40% of its GDP, and employing 86% of its population, the government is determined to make the maximum of its "Compact Effect". And it works.

"Burkina is moving very fast. It is a terrific partner for MCC for many reasons. They have a tremendous track record of economic performance. They are way ahead if you compare it with other countries' commitment," adds Mans.

Although MCC financing is 100% done directly by the US government, the bid offers related to the different MCC Compacts on the African continent do not attract a lot of US companies' attention. "We want to have more American partners and we deeply hope that the MCC Compact which offers a wide range of opportunities to businesses, will interest US companies to participate in the bid offers," asserts Prime Minister Tertius Zongo. "After having strongly reinforced political ties with the US, it's now time to make benefit US and Burkinabè companies from this new relationship."

Furthermore, the country does not produce a drop of oil, and, with a few exceptions, imports all the manufactured goods that its 15 million people consume. This offers excellent potential in manufacturing and renewable and alternative energies.

The Burkinabè government is particularly keen on developing solar energy. On climate change, Zongo points out that Burkina, like other poor, hot, agrarian countries, will be among the worst-hit by global warming. The country has an overriding interest in a successful international regime emerging from the climate-change conference in Copenhagen in December. It is hosting the Seventh World Forum of Sustainable Development on October 19th until 22nd in order to prepare this major event.

The United States wants Burkina Faso's Compact to succeed in every way as a model of stability and growth in Africa. Burkina's challenges are multiple. If Burkina is to sustain a growth rate of 6%, as it did over the last decade, it will need to manage them.



BURKINA 2009 Universal Value & Global Award for Architecture

The global construction scene may be gloomy. In Ouagadougou, Burkina's capital, it is sparkling with light and energy. All manner of ambitious architecture projects are being translated from drawing board to reality. The future spirit of the nation's modern architecture will spring from two recent major cultural achievements. The Ruins of Loropéni have been inscribed on the World Heritage list. And, Diédédo Francis Kéré has won a Global Award for Sustainable Architecture.

The imposing lateritic walls of Loropéni, of clay weathered rock-hard by the tropical sun, date back for a millennium. They bear witness to the power of the trans-Saharan gold trade that flourished for eight hundred years in West Africa, reaching its height between the 14th and 17th centuries. The UN's cultural body UNESCO has classified the ruins as "works of outstanding universal value", and they entered the exclusive "World Heritage" club on June 26 2009. Mystery and mysticism surround the site. Much of it has yet to be excavated, and is hidden by luxuriant vegetation. But it is already creating awareness among the Burkinabè of this glorious episode in their history, and strengthens the sense of their cultural roots.

Experts, and locals and tourists alike, admire the techniques that built Loropéni. Laterite, though, is rarely used as a building material these days. The rehabilitation of traditional materials like laterite and mud is the cornerstone of the work of the Burkinabè architect Diédédo Francis Kéré. Nature has provided them in abundance – and at no cost – and ecological and economic factors make their use more relevant than ever. Kéré's school building in Gando won the prestigious Aga Khan Award for architecture in 2004. This has been followed this year by the Global Award for Sustainable Architecture for his public school in Dano.

Both reveal innovative building solutions that cope with extreme climatic conditions. They also showcase the beautiful and simple blending of the oldest building material on the planet

with modern sustainable architecture.

Like the Ruins of Loropéni, Kéré's buildings are a focal point of pride and hope in the new perspectives of Burkinabè that are opening up. The architecture is dedicated to the efficient use of resources, to energy innovation and to the holistic principle of union between the natural and the cultural environment. "We have to look to the traditional *savoir-faire* in our region, as well as to Nature and African art," the architect comments. "Traditional houses evolved from the extremes of climate. We need to reflect that. The imperative for architecture is reversed in the South. An architect in the North seeks to capture every ray of sunshine. We need to protect ourselves from the sun. We need to build houses that breathe." The whole building shelters from rain and sun beneath an all-embracing roof. Beneath this is a false ceiling made of earthen bricks. The whole works as a sort of 'solar chimney', with natural currents of air rising towards the heated upper surface.

Francis Kéré's dream project:

"A museum of modern African art in New York – with a branch in Ouagadougou."

