

THE DANISH INSTITUTE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS (DIHR) IN BURKINA FASO

Burkina Faso is a former French colony and one of the poorest countries in the World. Together with neighbouring Niger and Mali, Burkina Faso is a DIHR Priority Country. The three countries play a crucial role in the fight against terrorism in the region.

The Danish Institute for Human Rights (DIHR) has worked in Burkina Faso since 2007. Our engagement started with a partnership with the Ministry of Human Rights, and in 2007 a DIHR human rights expert was posted in the country. In 2011, the DIHR established a local office in the capital Ouagadougou with a local representative.

After the departure of president Blaise Compaoré on 31 October 2014 due to public uprisings following his attempt to extend his 27-year rule through an amendment to the constitution, Burkina Faso went through a transitional period which was marred by a short-term coup in mid September 2015 by forces seen as connected to the former president. Due to a strong stand from the population and the major part of the army, the transition quickly came back on track and culminated in elections considered generally peaceful, free and fair on 29 November 2015. The new president is Roch Marc Christian Kaboré who had high posts in the Compaoré regime until he left the ruling party to start a new opposition party in January 2014.



BRIEF FACTS

Geography: Burkina Faso is a country in West Africa, neighbouring Niger, Mali, Benin, Togo, Ghana and Ivory Coast. The capital is Ouagadougou.

Demography Population of 17 million, life expectancy at birth 56 years, Human Development Index (2014) 181st/187.

Economy GNI per capita USD 670 (2013) (low income country), 46.7% of population below poverty line.

Politics: Parliamentary republic with 13 administrative regions. Independence from France in 1960.

Official language: French

Source <http://data.worldbank.org/>, <http://hdr.undp.org/> and <https://www.cia.gov/>

DIHR PROGRAMME 2015-2017

In line with the DIHR's International Strategy for 2015-2017, our objective in Burkina Faso is to contribute to a well-functioning national human rights system where key state human rights actors improve their capacity to exercise their mandate and work in complementarity for a better protection of the rights of individuals. In this light, DIHR has entered into partnership with three key public human rights actors:

The Ministry of Justice and Human Rights of Burkina Faso

The Ministry plays a key role in the national human rights system as it coordinates international human rights reporting from all resort ministries. The DIHR works with the Ministry to improve reporting to the UN

and the coordination between the various human rights actors in Burkina Faso with the goal being a sustainable state mechanism for human rights reporting and review of legislation. In 2016 there is a special focus on implementing recommendations from the UN on protection of human rights of children working in gold mines as well as of prisoners and detainees and women marginalized because of suspicion of witchcraft. Previous achievements with this partner include the establishment of human rights documentation and orientation centres across the country, promoting human rights at a local level and the transfer of expertise on human rights based approach in the Ministry. The DIHR also contributed to the current national human rights strategy and action plan, adopted in 2014.

The National Police of Burkina Faso

In 2012, the DIHR initiated a study on the human rights and security challenges in northern Burkina Faso. The study was conducted together with national security institutions, the Ministry of Human Rights and the Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF). This study became the entry point for the partnership between the DIHR and the National Police. The recommendations from the study have been used in the implementation of the EU Strategy for the Sahel and the Danish Sahel Security Programme.

Since 2013, the DIHR has worked with the National Police in Burkina Faso on developing a manual on human rights to be used in training of police officers. The integration of context-based human rights courses in the training curricula is the beginning of a process of transforming the National Police from a police force to a police service with the goal being a National Police that is more service-minded and protective of citizens' rights. The chairman of the working group developing the manual, Lazare Tarpaga, became Director of the National Police during the political transition. A Supreme Court judge, Kassoum Kambou, who also participated in the work on the manual, was sworn in as president of the Constitutional Council which prepared the new constitution and the 2015 elections.

Based on the experiences with the police in Burkina Faso and in the neighbouring countries Niger and Mali, the DIHR supported the police services in these three countries to jointly create a 'Police and Human Rights Platform' in 2014. Human rights concerns remain essential for police services working in a region challenged with threats from Al-Qaida, Daesh and Boko Haram.

The National Human Rights Commission in Burkina Faso

Burkina Faso's National Human Rights Commission does not conform to the Paris Principles with regard to composition, mandate and funding structure. During the political transition in 2015, DIHR supported a process including the present Commission to draft a new law for a more independent Commission with a strong mandate; this law is expected to be adopted by the National Assembly during the course of 2016.

The Commission is a catalyst for human rights change and a sister institution to the DIHR. The DIHR aims at continuing to support the reform process to enable the Commission to play its mandated role in the national human rights system with the goal being a National Human Rights Commission able to fulfil its missions of regular human rights reporting and monitoring.

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