



The way ahead for aid to Burkina Faso

This Factsheet looks at aid to Burkina Faso, one of the world's largest recipients of external development aid. This comes mainly from France, EU (bilateral aid) and World Bank (multilateral aid) from a huge variety of NGO's. As the profile shows, the aid is certainly needed: Burkina Faso is a LLEDC, in 1999 the 3rd poorest country in the world. The question is why some aid projects are very successful and others, although well intentioned, are less well targeted. In Burkina Faso the amount of money received is high but how it is spent is far more of an issue.

So why is Burkina Faso so poor?

Background profile of Burkina Faso

- Est. population 12 million in 2002
- Land area 273,600 sq km
- Per capita GNP \$310
- Urban population 19%
- External debt 61% GNP
- Development aid received in 1999: \$398 million
- 42% population have access to safe water (mainly in urban areas).
- Life expectancy: 47/49 years
- Maternal mortality 480/100,000
- Under 5 child mortality 198/ 1000
- 1 doctor / 57,300 people
- School enrolment: Primary 27%
Secondary boys 11%, girls 6%
- Adult literacy 23%: 33%, 13%
- 1999 HDI ranking: 172/174
- 1 newspaper, 35 radios, 12 TV's, 4 cars, 3 phones per 1000 people

Resources:

Fish: (annual catch) 8,000 tonnes

Goats: 8 million

Sheep: 6.5 million

Cattle: 4.5 million

Burkina has some mineral wealth including large deposits of manganese and silver but only gold is being mined. 3 HEP dams will reduce use of imported coal, oil and local fuelwood.

Strengths: Money from migrant workers in Ghana and Ivory Coast. Low debt burden. Attracts foreign aid. Cotton growing. Gold production set to expand.

Weaknesses: Landlocked. Few viable natural resources. Potential political instability. Drought prone. Number of migrant workers dropping.

Historical Background

A French colony from 1896 to 1960, Burkina Faso (formerly Upper Volta) was beset by coups for twenty years following independence. Thomas Sankara came to power in 1983 and re-named the country Burkina Faso (land of the incorruptible men), and divided it into thirty provinces. The capital remained Ouagadougou. His radical socialist reforms increased public spending on education, health and infrastructure. He was assassinated in 1987 in a military coup led by Captain Blaise Campoare, now the president. Since then most socialist measures have been dropped, Burkina is a multiparty democracy in theory. Its landlocked position make good relations with its southern neighbours a foreign policy priority.

Conclusion: Lack of investment in exploiting natural or human resources, improving social conditions or infrastructure. As a result there is a vicious cycle of poverty especially, in rural areas.

Fig 1. Location map of Burkina Faso

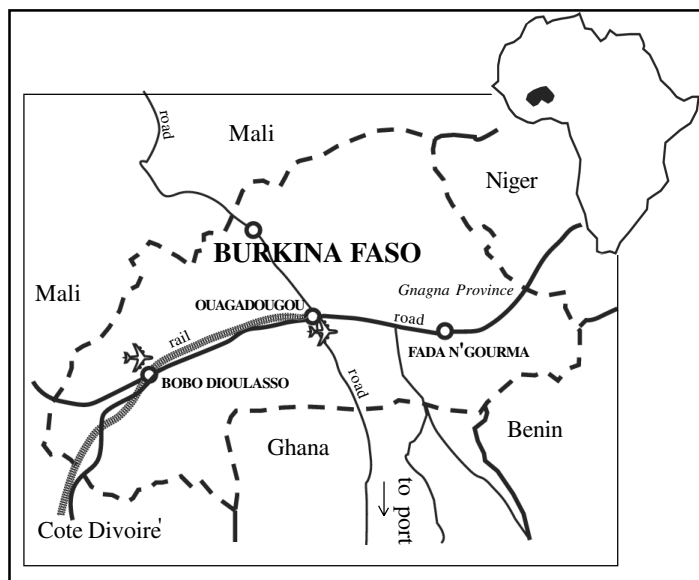
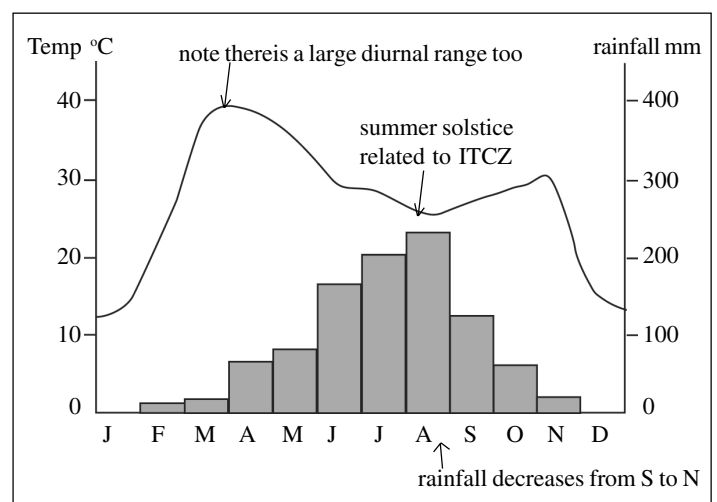
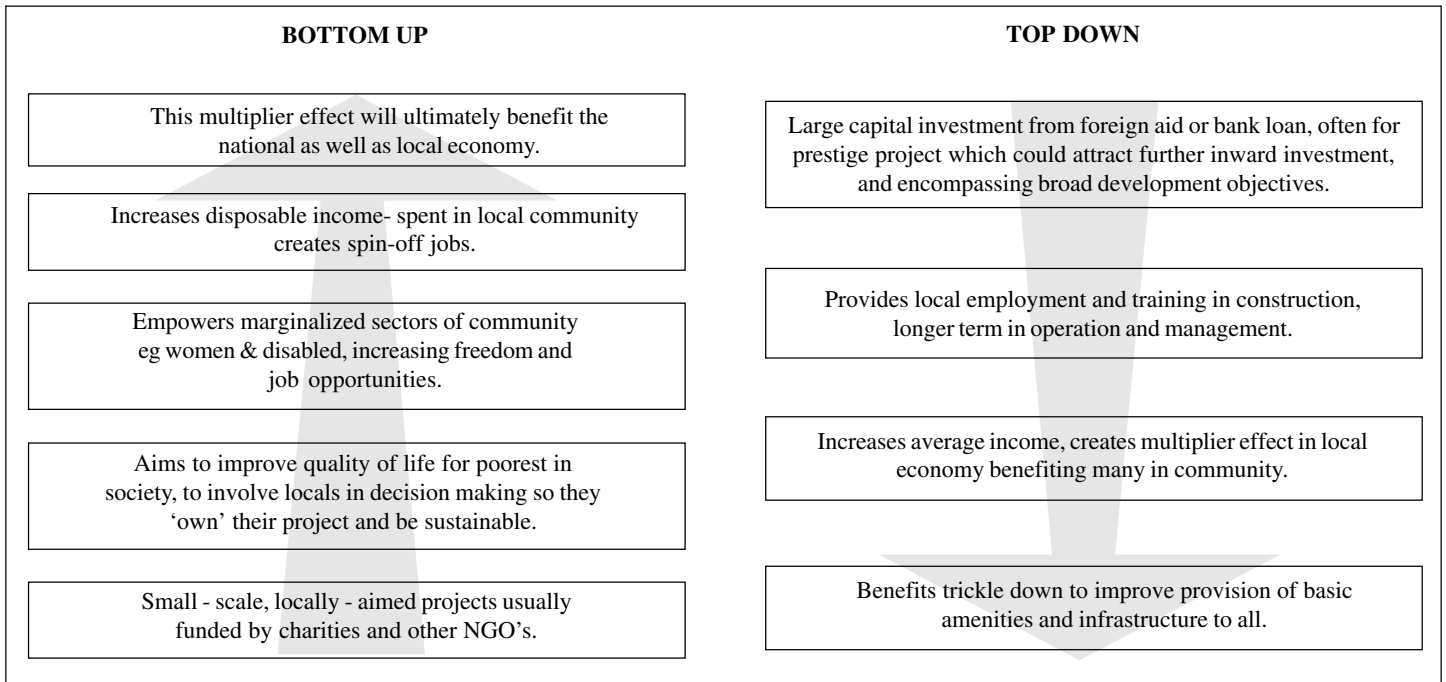


Fig 2. Climate



Styles of aid: Top down and bottom up

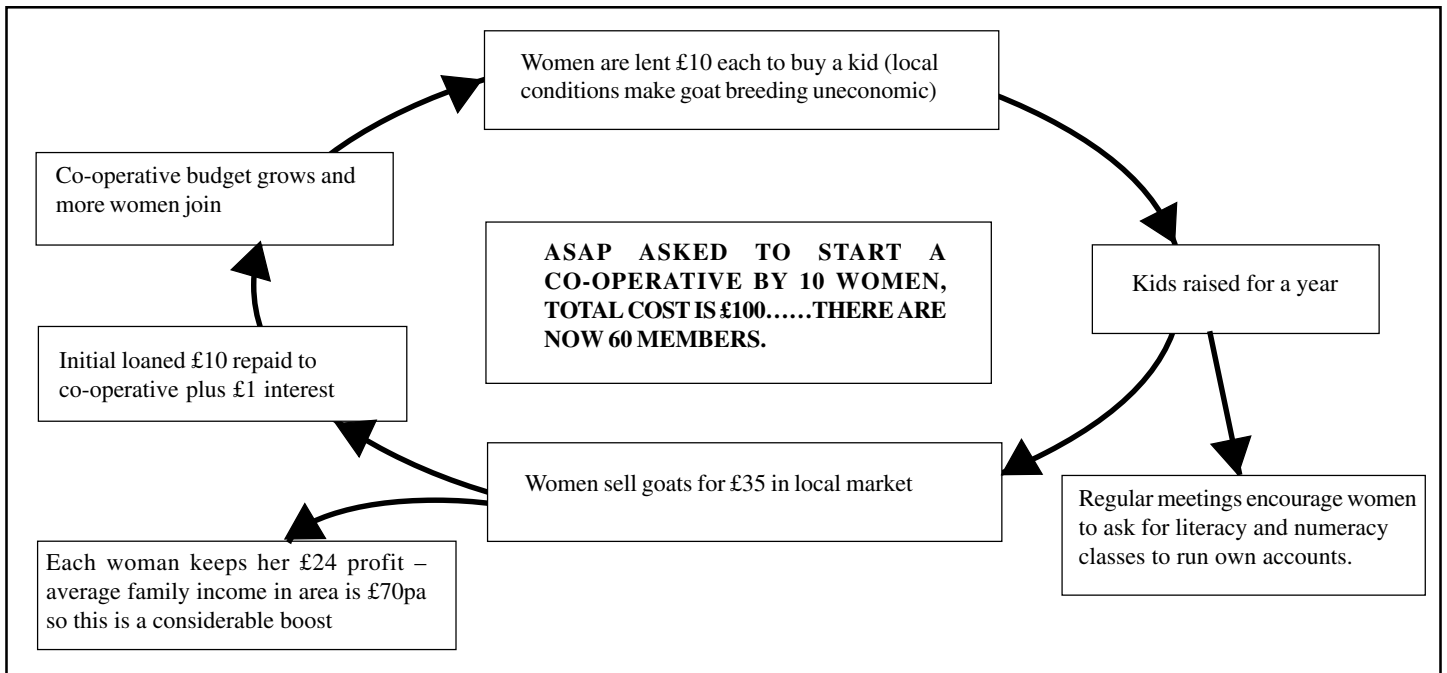


So how does this work in Burkina Faso?

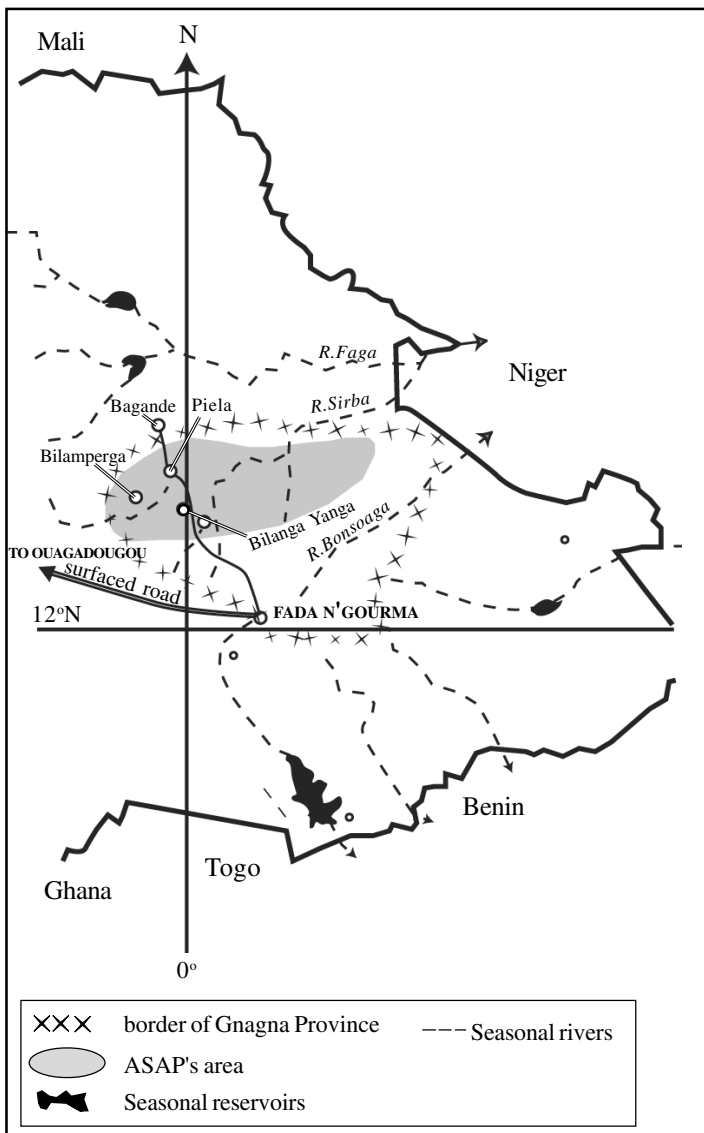
Both styles of aid are seen in the remote rural eastern province of **Gnagna** (Fig 1), home to a southern based NGO called **L'Association de Soutien a l'Autopromotion (ASAP)**- the association for the promotion of self-help.

Gnagna Province	ASAP
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dry season temp.25°C, wet season 45°C. • Dust storms in April, av. 600mm rain pa • No permanent rivers. • Thin soils, savanna scrub vegetation. • Subsistence farming of goats, guinea fowl, millet, peanuts, vegetables. • No surfaced roads, one unsurfaced road from Piela to Fada N'Gourma. • 150,000 people per doctor (based in Fada) • Infant mortality 127 per 1000 • Life expectancy 44 years • Main causes of death: malaria, diarrhoea and malnutrition. • Polio endemic, estimated 8% HIV/Aids • 20% children go to primary school, 5% secondary, classes 90-120 normal, boy:girl ratio in school 5:1 at best. • No sanitation or electricity, water from well or pump. • Villages consist of compounds of huts, maybe a primary school and a market. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Started in 1995 by group of local people, its motto 'Teaching people to fly with their own wings' sums them up. • Works mainly with women, children and disabled in isolated rural areas with no road access. • Aims to inform people on healthcare, environmental protection, farming, education, empowerment of women and integration of disabled in society. • Villagers choose a 5 year project which includes training in composting, vegetable/tree growing, hygiene, nutrition, civic rights budgeting, group management. ASAP also raise awareness of local social issues. • Budget of £30,000pa is not secure and pays for all equipment, transport, overheads and wages of the 10 members of the team. Funding comes from a variety of European charities and organisations.

ASAP IN OPERATION: How £10 empowers a woman in the Bilamperga Goat Co-operative.



ASAP's area of operation



ASAP's PROGRESS OVER LAST 8 YEARS:

- Financed several co-operatives.
- Set up malnourished baby clinic and courses for mothers in nutrition.
- Built a community centre with farming and textile courses.
- Started projects in 19 villages on soil conservation, composting, building diguettes (lines of stones along the land contours to trap top soil during heavy rain), irrigation methods.
- Set up tree nurseries, school gardens (produce sold for school equipment), school kitchens and pit latrines at 6 primary schools.
- Set up bursaries for secondary education of 66 pupils at £35pa.
- Started a disabled centre and workshop.
- Built pit latrines and given health education to 19 villages.
- Started water filtration systems.
- Set up interschool football tournaments to encourage socialising between villages.
- Reduced the incidence of female excision.
- Increased number of girls attending school.

Exam Hint:- Learn annotated sketchmap and list of schemes. Relate the project to sustainability and intermediate technology - both potential exam questions

Contrast: Top Down Projects

Top down projects are either government initiated (bi-lateral) and funded from other governments or the World Bank. They can be led by European NGOs. There are examples of different top down projects in Gnagna Province. Government schemes can be very beneficial if people's needs and local conditions are taken into account ie the project is appropriate to the area.

Appropriate top down initiative

The construction of a dam and creation of a shallow reservoir in 1964 and subsequent irrigation of 20 ha. land next to the village of Bilanga Yanga in 1984 has been hugely successful.

The irrigated land is divided into 80 x ¼ hectare plots and is overseen by a local committee, each family pays a nominal rent for an allotment and keeps all their own produce. If the plot is not cultivated for a year it is reallocated to the next family on the waiting list.

Year-round cultivation of this land produces crops of rice, maize, vegetables and fruit in addition to each families traditional millet fields (red for beer and white for flour). This scheme listened to local needs and put responsibility for upkeep and running firmly back in the community.

Prestigious top down project

Some government and World Bank sponsored projects can be poor value for money. A £50million agricultural research centre in Gnagna Province provides air conditioned bungalows for visiting advisors in a street lit complex with conference and office facilities but has done very little for local farmers or morale.

Similarly, the construction of a water tower (providing the centre with year-round clean water) has series of taps at its base for locals to use the water. This would seem a good idea but 2p per bucket is too expensive and the taps are only on for a few hours a day. So it stands idle while the secondary school in its shadow has no water or sanitation and pupils walk half a mile for a drink from a well at break times.

European NGO-led project

In comparison to ASAP's highly effective use of a small budget, European based NGO's, whilst very well intentioned, can run into administrative difficulties either from expecting things to run as they do in Europe and perhaps assuming local needs and skill levels or from administering the project from Europe. Not being on the spot to oversee contracts and watch developments can be an invitation to corruption. For example a European NGO wanting to rebuild a local market were overcharged as the contractors came from the town of Fada not the local area, they understandably chose these contractors as they were contactable by phone and mail from Europe. However they were charged European rates for labour and materials when the job could have been built for a fraction of the price if they had used local tradesmen and sourced materials locally. To do this someone with local knowledge would have to have been on the spot. The result is an excellent and well used market that the locals wanted but costing ten times more than necessary.

Conclusion

All projects, either top down or bottom up must take into account the needs and wishes of the local community, reflect the local conditions and culture and put responsibility for upkeep firmly in the hands of the community who then feel they have ownership of the scheme. They must be appropriate for local needs and conditions and use accessible technology. Consultation and training are prerequisites of success.

Imposing Eurocentric ideas on local projects is doomed to failure as are show-piece prestigious projects out of phase with the level of development in the area. Developmental projects are for the people and must be run by the people, they cannot be isolated islands of modernity in a sea of poverty.

References

Primary research in Gnagna Province, June 2001 and October 2003

Jeune Afrique Atlas 'Burkina Faso' Pub. Les Editions J.A.

Further information

www.burkinafasolink.org.uk

UN sustainable development: www.un.org/esa/susdev

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