

Raising awareness: birth registration and education of young girls among Burkinabè migrants in Côte d'Ivoire

CASE STUDY



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INTRODUCTION

The research initiated by MIDEQ's partners in Côte d'Ivoire identified the issues of citizenship as one that constitutes the basis of unequal relationships in the context of migration within the Burkina Faso-Côte d'Ivoire corridor. This issue maintains and contributes to the perpetuation of cyclical inequalities structured around income poverty and the vulnerability of migrants, as well as to the existence of child labour. In other words, cyclical inequalities in Côte d'Ivoire revolve around the problem of the free movement of people and goods, the declaration of births in the civil registry, the schooling of young girls, the management of land assets, and income.

Faced with this state of affairs, one of the thorny questions that deserves to be asked is the following: how can we carry out community development actions consistent with the needs and expectations of migrant populations in order to contribute to the reduction of cyclical inequalities in Côte d'Ivoire? To answer this question, we first analysed how cyclical inequalities arise linked to the declaration of births and the schooling of young girls among Burkinabè migrants in Côte d'Ivoire, then describe the methodology implemented in order to identify the intervention actions that align with the expectations and needs of "vulnerable" populations and "bearers of the stigma of social inequalities". Finally, we present the practical activities carried out by the MIDEQ Côte d'Ivoire research team in line with the aspirations of the migrant populations benefiting from the project.

LEGAL INEQUALITIES: THE DECLARATION OF BIRTHS AND THE SCHOOLING OF YOUNG GIRLS

One of the biggest problems facing the Burkinabè community is the problem of the non-declaration of births. However, institutional arrangements are made in the host communities to allow migrant, non-local and local populations to declare the birth of their offspring. Indeed, according to Ivorian legislation, individuals have a period of three months after the birth of children to make the declaration to the civil registry, either at the town hall or at the sub-prefecture depending on the area of residence. Parents need to present identity documentation of either both parents or one of the parents and the sum of 500 FCFA for stamp duties. After a period of three months, the declaration is made to the court. Communities that reside in villages or rural areas are invited to contact their community leaders to have their files sent to the town hall. In addition, the sub-prefecture sets up secondary centres which have representatives in the villages. They are also responsible for collecting the parents' papers with a view to establishing birth certificates.

For those who live in urban areas, the problem seems to be less relevant. However, it is difficult for those who live in rural areas. Most Burkinabè migrants take refuge in villages and countryside when they arrive in Côte d'Ivoire to work in agriculture. They then remain confined in these camps for years, leaving on the occasion to return home to visit their family.



Photo via MIDEQ Côte d'Ivoire

Despite the establishment of an institutional mechanism to facilitate the registration of births, when children are born in these camps, they are not declared and grow up without any documentation. As a result they experience inequalities in access to education because during the school year, stay at home or

work in the fields because they do not have a birth certificate.

According to our analysis of interviews with Burkinabè communities, the problem is linked to several factors. These include, among other things, ignorance due to parental illiteracy or lack of means. We also note the problem of racketeering, extortion and police abuses by the defence and security forces. Social classes tend to reproduce themselves because parents who were not declared have acquired the habit of not also declaring their children.

Regarding the inequality linked to the non-schooling of young girls, according to the statistical surveys of MIDEQ Cote d'Ivoire, considering the sex of the children, we note that male children (77%) are more educated than those of female sex (73%). It appears that this inequality has its roots in the culture and social habitus of the group. The Burkinabè community in its essence acts by social reproduction of local norms, values and practices in the areas where it settles during its migration process.

METHODOLOGY

In the quest to improve the living conditions of Burkinabè migrants in Côte d'Ivoire, the activities of MIDEQ Côte d'Ivoire aimed to support various "vulnerable" families and raise awareness among these communities about the need to declare of births in the civil registry and provide access to schooling for young girls. To organise these activities for migrant families, the MIDEQ Côte d'Ivoire team carried out a diagnosis of the needs of the populations in an inclusive manner in line with the methodology of [decolonization](#).

The diagnosis was developed based on close collaboration with the Collective of Associations and Movement of Burkinabè Youth in Ivory Coast (CAMJBCI). This led us to carry out a qualitative survey among migrant communities and Burkinabè influence groups in Côte d'Ivoire, particularly in the southwest (Soubré and Meagui), in the south (Abidjan, Aboisso) and in the north (Korhogo). The general objective of this activity was to identify, from an inclusive point of view, the different needs or expectations of migrant populations in line with support for changing their living conditions in the reception areas. Specifically, the survey consisted of:

- Evaluating the state of satisfaction of migrant communities with the various MIDEQ activities;
- Identifying the different expectations and needs relating to the level of satisfaction of migrant communities;
- Defining the criteria for selecting people or families in situations of vulnerability and/or bearing signs of inequality;
- Understanding the relationship of migrant communities to the different social protection structures that exist in their area;
- Determining the future prospects of the migrants and the MIDEQ project.

FROM RAISING AWARENESS TO AID ACTIONS FOR BURKINABÈ MIGRANTS IN CÔTE D'IVOIRE

We implemented two major activities which correspond with the expectations and needs of migrant populations. This included the reduction of inequalities linked to the registration of births and the schooling of young girls. In addition, the communities identified the need to support “vulnerable” populations. In view of these survey results, the MIDEQ Côte d'Ivoire team structured its interventions with migrant communities around raising awareness about the declaration of births and the need for schooling for young girls.

These interventions were made possible by CAMJBCI, which led the organisation



Photo via MIDEQ Côte d'Ivoire team

and mobilization, overseen by the MIDEQ Côte d'Ivoire team. To do this, we opted for certain cities, which are under the umbrella of the Burkinabè consulates and recognised as areas of very high concentration of Burkinabè communities. Thus, the first awareness campaign on the declaration of births and the

schooling of young girls was in the town of Yamoussoukro, which is the political and administrative capital of the Côte d'Ivoire, in May 2023. This city is located under the administrative dome of the Bouaké consulate. Food was provided as a means of bringing Burkinabè people together and into the discussions and workshops. The MIDEQ Côte d'Ivoire team and CAMJBCI also went to Bouna, in the northeast of Côte d'Ivoire in July 2023 to provide considerable support to Burkinabè refugees, victims of terrorism.

In November 2023, in Soubré and Méagui, southwest Côte d'Ivoire, the team carried out the second [sensitization meeting](#) with Burkinabè communities on the declaration of births and the schooling of young girls. The ceremony was held at the Méagui Independence Square in the presence of prefectural and municipal authorities, Burkinabè community leaders and the representative of the honorary consul of Soubré. This ceremony culminated with the [distribution](#) of 200 school kits to young girls and boys.



Photo via MIDEQ Côte d'Ivoire team

In December 2023, the team went to Aboisso, capital of the Sud-Comoé region, for the third day of the awareness campaign. This ceremony was held in the village hall of Aboisso town hall in the presence of the Secretary General of Aboisso, prefecture and the representative of the honorary consul of Abidjan. It was also followed by the distribution of 200 school kits to young girls and some boys. The campaign was carried out by Mrs. Salimata Doumbia, civil administrator at the National Office of Civil Status of Côte d'Ivoire (ONECI).

CONCLUSION

The question of non-declaration of births raises the issue of the legal existence of Burkinabè migrant workers in Côte d'Ivoire. Burkinabè migrants therefore find themselves legally non-existent in the host communities of the Côte d'Ivoire. This accentuates cyclical inequalities, particularly those linked to childhood and income.

Legal non-existence is considered a social “death”. Thus, one of the effective means of combating these inequalities is to increase awareness about the registration of births and the schooling of young girls. The MIDEQ team in Côte d'Ivoire has therefore set about making these intervention actions with migrant communities the pillar of its community development strategy.

Cover Image

“Espoir Voyage” by Michel K. Zongo from Burkina Faso. Photo by This is Africa (TIA) . CC BY-NC-SA 2.0 DEED.



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