Poverty and Vulnerability in Burkina Faso: A Composite Indicator of Hardcore Poverty

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Poverty is a complex phenomenon with many forms. Yet, monetary poverty is still the form that dominates in the literature.

However, once we accept that poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon affected by education, health, etc., any intervention that focuses on one form of poverty while neglecting others may not have the anticipated results. In very poor developing countries such as Burkina Faso, only an approach that integrates the various forms of poverty can ensure effective public policies. Such an approach considerably reduces the risk of targeting errors by prioritizing vulnerable groups that simultaneously suffer from all forms of poverty.

This realization has led a team of researchers in Burkina Faso to study poverty in its monetary, material (education, nutrition) and subjective forms, using data from the 2003 household living conditions survey.

**Intersection of various forms of poverty**

![Diagram showing the intersection of monetary, material, and subjective poverty]

Source: The authors.

The researchers find that, with a monetary poverty line of 82,672 CFA francs per person per year, 46.4% of the Burkinabe population suffers from monetary poverty. Monetary poverty is greater in rural areas (52.3%) than in urban areas (barely 20%).

It also emerges that, regardless of the method of calculation, the rate of material poverty remain very high. This form of poverty affects more than 83% of the population, including 96% of the rural population compared to 34% of those in urban zones.

The subjective experience of poverty is fairly high in both rural and urban areas. More than 3/4 of household heads – and 88.7% of rural household heads – feel that their households are in a difficult situation, both economically and in general.

The analysis of these three forms of poverty also reveals that 12% of Burkinabe households simultaneously experience all three forms of poverty. While there is a relatively strong link between the monetary and material forms of poverty, neither is strongly correlated with subjective poverty. This finding suggests that there should be complementarity in strategies to fight the different forms of poverty in Burkina Faso.

The researchers also analyse the determinants of multidimensional poverty in order to identify a number of areas for intervention: youth employment, decentralization of basic public infrastructure to rural and semi-urban areas, crop diversification and improved cultivation of cotton, and better regulation of the labour market, particularly in the informal sector, which comprises more than 60% of economic activity in the country.

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