



Rethink Burkina Faso's response to COVID-19 under households experiences in Bobo-Dioulasso and Ouagadougou

KEYS MESSAGES

- Burkina Faso's response to the COVID-19 crisis has primarily focused on health security and economic recovery. Issues link to intra-family relationships and household experiences have been neglected, even if they have a direct impact on social cohesion.
- Develop a response that strategically incorporates these issues allow to have a more comprehensive approach and a better-balanced management of the crisis.
- As part of preparation for future crises, the communication strategy should include programs providing guidance to families for constructive management of lockdown. For this, it is imperative to make internet more affordable and accessible during such crises.

■ COVID-19 / @GRAAD Burkina
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Context

Burkina Faso recorded its first confirmed cases of COVID-19 in March 2020 in Ouagadougou (UNDP, 2021). In response to the disease and the ensuing pandemic, the government of Burkina Faso implemented various health security measures that profoundly disrupted the country's social, macro- and microeconomic dynamics (INSD, 2020; UNDP, 2021; Lankoandé et al., 2020).

Current literature on the subject shows that the COVID-19 pandemic had a disproportionate impact on certain groups of population, particularly vulnerable households, women, young people and workers in the informal sector (Kobiané et al., 2020; CECI, 2021).

Today, despite the virtual disappearance of the disease, some of these groups are struggling to return to their pre-crisis lifestyles and economic performance (Lankoandé et al., 2020; CECI, 2021).

To reduce the negative effects, it is crucial to rethink the country's response with the objective of putting in place measures that are better adapted to the specificities of the local context.

For that, the experiences of households in Bobo-Dioulasso and Ouagadougou provide valuable lessons for approaching the impacts of COVID-19 and its effects from an angle that has been little documented in Burkina Faso.

By learning from these experiences, policies and measures can be adapted to improve their effectiveness and foster a more resilient response in the future.

Today, it is fair to recognise that Burkina Faso's initial response to the COVID-19 crisis was based on international models and general recommendations (Ministry of Health, 2020).

Given the differentiated impacts of the pandemic, it is crucial to consider the local specificities and the social and economic realities of the country and its communities to develop a more appropriate response.

Analysis

This analysis is drawn from the COVIDImpact-Social Cohesion research. The general objective of this research was to assess the effects of the COVID-19 crisis on macro- and microeconomy and on governance and social cohesion in Benin, Burkina Faso and South Africa.

This policy brief analyses the experiences of households during COVID-19 in Bobo-Dioulasso and Ouagadougou.

Based on this analysis, it proposes concrete ideas for rethinking the measures and strategies for responding to crises such as COVID-19, with a goal to making them more effective in the light of the social and economic realities of the country and its communities.

Situations experienced by the respondent during the COVID-19 pandemic, by city, sex and age (%)

Situation experienced during COVID-19	City		Gender		Age Category		All
	Ouagadougou	Bobo-Dioulasso	Man	Woman	Youth	Adult	
Closer ties with the family	50,6	73,9	57,9	55,9	49,5	64,0	56,8
None of experiences	35,3	21,4	27,9	34,6	34,60	28,50	31,6
More arguments in the household	10,5	7,1	7,9	11,0	10,5	8,8	9,6
More free time	11,6	3,6	15,3	4,8	13,4	5,6	9,4
Increased alcohol consumption	1,7	1,8	3,6	0,2	2,30	1,10	1,7

Methodology

To achieve the objectives set, the research combined the quota method and simple random selection. The quota is based on the cities surveyed and the gender of the respondent.

On this basis, 1059 households and individual business households were surveyed in the two major cities most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic: Bobo-Dioulasso and Ouagadougou. The data were processed using Excel, SPSS and Stata.

Results

The containment measures taken to limit the spread of COVID-19 forced workers to stay at home all day. According to the data collected in the cities of Bobo-Dioulasso and Ouagadougou, this constraint was experienced differently. This note highlights the main experiences.

For more than half (57%) of the people surveyed, confinement was an opportunity to get closer to their family. However, for others, this rapprochement was felt to be forced and did not always have positive effects...

According to the data in Table 1, this experience was particularly important in Bobo-Dioulasso compared to Ouagadougou. In fact, 74% of respondents mentioned this experience in Bobo-Dioulasso, compared with 51% in Ouagadougou. In terms of gender, the experience seems to have been more significant for men (58%) than for women (56%).

In addition, the experience seems to have been more pronounced among adults, with 64% mentioning it, while only 49% of young people mentioned it.

...Confinement led to an increase in disputes within the household for almost 10% of respondents...

Because of the restrictions and forced proximity during the lockdown period, tensions and social friction emerged in some households. This was reported by 9.6% of respondents. This perception was more visible in Ouagadougou, where 10.5% of respondents mentioned this phenomenon, while in Bobo-Dioulasso the figure was 7.1%.

■ Breakdown of household experiences in Bobo-Dioulasso and Ouagadougou (%)
Source: COVID-Impact Survey, 2022

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A gender analysis shows that women were more affected by this increase of disputes, with 11.0% of them reporting this experience, compared to 7.9% of men. Young people also were more affected, with 10.5% reporting an increase in arguments during confinement.

...For the third category of respondents, lockdown offered the opportunity to have more time, without knowing how to use it productively...

This experience, cited by 9.4% of respondents, was more important in Ouagadougou, where 11.6% of respondents mentioned this experience, while in Bobo-Dioulasso the figure was lower, with only 3.6% of respondents citing it.

A gender analysis shows that men were more likely to experience this gain in free time, with 15.3% of them reporting this experience, compared with 4.8% of women. Young people also were more affected, with 13.4% reporting a gain in free time during confinement. Idleness being the mother of all vices, this forced idleness coupled with forced confinement can prove dangerous if no measures are taken..

...Moreover, a small proportion of respondents, 2%, said that they had experienced confinement as an increase in their alcohol consumption...

This experience affected men, with 3.6% reporting an increase in alcohol consumption. Young people were also affected, with 2.3% reporting this experience.

Implications for the better response to similar crises

As mentioned previously, the current response strategy to COVID-19 focused on health security and economic recovery. The results of the research show, however, that it is crucial to consider issues link to intra-family relations and the real experiences of households. These elements have a direct impact on living together and social cohesion. This will enable a more holistic and balanced approach to managing the crisis.

For this purpose:

Advice could be provided to families on how to deal constructively with lockdown. Practical advice on managing family relationships, communicating effectively, resolving conflicts and promoting mental and emotional well-being could be disseminated through awareness campaigns, informative brochures or online videos.

Another way is to develop access to information and communication technologies (ICTs) to encourage openness to the outside world. ***It is vital to make the Internet more affordable and accessible by working with telephone companies, especially for crisis response purposes.***

This will enable families to use online resources for entertainment, learning new skills, maintaining links with loved ones and accessing psychosocial support services.

Considering all these issues into the crisis communication strategy will strengthen support provided to families and reduce the feeling of isolation.

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