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RESEARCH ARTICLE

SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF TWINS' MOTHERS IN BEGGING SITUATION IN OUAGADOUGOU

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ABSTRACT

This contribution draws on the results of doctoral research on begging by twins' mothers in Ouagadougou. **Context:** In a multicultural and multi-religious country, place of birth is not the only significant information. It must be cross-referenced with cultural and religious specificities that could explain certain behaviors of women in a begging situation. The variety of individual and family characteristics of "mothers of twins" in a begging situation is important and must be taken into account because a wide variety of factors can influence life as well as different ways of seeing the world. Age, education, gender, income, and other socio-demographic characteristics can influence the relationships one forms, learning experiences, social roles one plays, aspirations one has, and abilities one develops. Therefore, the socio-demographic data of twins' mothers are fundamental in that differences in socio-demographic characteristics determine differences in the circumstances of each other's lives. They largely define the social position of each of the women. **Methods:** The fieldwork consisted of a triangulation of approaches: spatial, quantitative and qualitative. The data collection made it possible to geo-locate 39 begging sites using the Global Positioning System (GPS) and to identify 198 women who were begging on these sites using an identification form. In addition, 33 twins' mothers who were begging participated in in-depth individual interviews conducted using the semi-structured individual interview guide. In this proposal, the socio-demographic characteristics of the women surveyed will be highlighted. The data come from the identification sheet specifically designed to collect the profile of each woman. **Results:** The information presented here focuses on the essential characteristics of the 198 women surveyed. The results show that these women are young and able-bodied and do not constitute a homogeneous group. They have specific socio-demographic and economic profiles. For them, begging is an alternative way to survive and support their families. **Conclusion:** The informal sector is unstable and cannot contribute to the autonomy of the women who work in it nor ensure their long-term resilience.

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INTRODUCTION

Burkina Faso is a country in West Africa that brings together more than sixty socio-cultural groups with cultural, linguistic and religious diversity. This mosaic of socio-cultural groups is composed of Moosé who represent 53% of the population, Gourmantchés 7%, Peuls 7.8%, Bissa 3% and Gourounsi 6%. The Samo 2%, Marka 1.7%, Bobo 1.6%, Sénoufo 2.2% and Lobi 2.5% of the Burkinabe population. The socio-cultural groups speak different languages, and each functions according to its value systems and world views. With respect to religion, the Muslim community is the strongest religious community in Burkina Faso. Indeed, 63.7 percent of the population reported being Muslim. The Catholic religion (20.4%) is in second place, followed by the traditional religion (9.3%) and the Protestant religion (5.9%).

In terms of place of residence, the proportion of people of the Catholic religion is higher in urban than in rural areas. Conversely, the proportion of Burkinabe claiming traditional religions is significantly higher in rural areas. Regarding marital status, the National Institute of Statistics and Demography (INSD) has targeted a population of 12 years and older in 2015, estimated at 10,732,143 or 60.0% of the total population. This population is mostly single (never married). (36.6%) and monogamous married (34.5). Polygamy occupies a rather important place in the Burkinabe population. In fact, slightly more than one person in four of the population aged 12 and over is in a polygamous situation. Widowed persons represent 5%, while divorced and separated persons occupy the last position with a proportion of 0.9% (INSD, 2015). Furthermore, with regard to socio-economic data, the National Survey on Employment and the

In formal Sector conducted in Burkina Faso in 2015 (ENESI-2015) estimates the unemployment rate for people aged 15 years or older at 4%, with disparities according to education level: 1.8% for people with no education and 23.4% for people with higher education. Data from the ENESI-2015 show that in Burkina Faso, "less educated people (no level and primary school) have more difficulty finding a job with an average unemployment duration of (5 years) in contrast to more educated people (secondary and higher education) who take an average of 4 years to find a job" (INSD, 2016: 23). Data from the ENESI-2015 also show that "in general, the majority of women (62%) lose their jobs involuntarily, compared with 32.1% of men (INSD, 2016: 24), while "in general, women take longer to find work (5 years) than men, regardless of the type of unemployment" (INSD, 2016: 23). How can we explain women's difficult access to the labour market? Is this what explains the current investment of many women in begging, a question that is at the heart of our concerns and which was the subject of investigation during our doctoral research. To do so, we triangulated three approaches to understand the complex phenomenon of female begging in Ouagadougou.

METHODOLOGY AND EMPIRICAL DATA

Three approaches, cartographic, quantitative and qualitative, were necessary to grasp the logic of women's begging in the city of Ouagadougou. Data collection took place from 2015 to 2018. A first phase enabled the geo location of 39 preferential sites occupied by women in begging situations using GPS. This made it possible to understand their spatial occupation logic. On each identified begging site, we filled out an identification form that identified 198 women in a begging situation and captured their socio-demographic profile (age, marital status, religion, socio-cultural group, level of education and professional status before begging). An in-depth qualitative survey was carried out and 33, including 3 false mothers of twins, agreed to participate in semi-structured individual interviews. We also interviewed 3 husbands of mothers of twins, 4 police officers, 5 religious and customary leaders, and 3 leaders of associations campaigning for the protection of women and/or children. In addition, we spoke with 11 other beggars sharing the same begging site as the women, 9 marabouts/healers and 33 other city dwellers. The results obtained reveal the socio-demographic and economic characteristics of these women.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Ouagadougou, the social contrasts' city: Ouagadougou, the capital of Burkina Faso, is the most populous city in the country and represents 12% of the total population. It is an urban commune with 12 districts and 55 sectors. It is located in the center of the country. According to INSD statistics, the population of the capital is changing rapidly: from 465,969 inhabitants in 1985, it rose to 750,398 in 1996, then to 1,475,223 in 2006 and to 1,915,102 in 2012 (INSD, 2015). It alone accounts for the majority of the national urban population, i.e. 46.4%, of which 13% are women and 15% men (INSD, 2011). Ouagadougou is the richest city in the country, the results of the Demographic and Health Survey (EDSBF-MICS, 2010) and the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) show that the richest population is concentrated in the urban environment and, in particular in Ouagadougou, 73% and 86% respectively (INSD, 2012).

In view of its assets as the country's capital, the city of Ouagadougou is a "golden refuge" for many populations seeking better living conditions. However, Ouagadougou has very limited employment and housing opportunities, and the cost of living is gradually rising. ENESI-2015 data show that "unemployment is mainly an urban phenomenon, with disparities between regions. The Central region, which is home to the city of Ouagadougou, therefore has the highest level of unemployment. Women are more exposed to unemployment in urban areas and are more affected by the phenomenon of discouragement" (INSD, 2016, p. 8). The unemployment rate in Ouagadougou is 13.2 percent, which is well above the national average of (4 percent) (INSD, 2016). Moreover, according to data from the ENESI-2015, "while there is a gap of 1.9 points between the unemployment rate for women and men, this difference reaches 6.6 points in urban areas. Indeed, in urban areas, the unemployment rate in the broad sense of the term for women is 15 per cent while that of men is 8.4 per cent" (INSD, 2016: 14). Rich city where everyone hopes to find the solution to their problems, especially those related to employment. However, Ouagadougou is the place where many social problems are observed: housing problems, problems of access to basic social services, underemployment, unemployment, prostitution, begging, etc. Nowadays, several categories of beggars are observed in this city. Older people, those with disabilities, children living in the streets, and increasingly women. Among the women are women with disabilities and the elderly (Rouamba, 2015), twins' mothers (Bako, 2008; INSD, 2011; Sawadogo, 2011; Degorce et al., 2016; Sawadogo, 2019). Perceived as the only alternative at the moment, women are involved in the project on a daily basis. However, the presence of numerous beggars in its streets paradoxically confirms the level of comfort of the population of Ouagadougou. It is important to know who are the "mothers of twins" begging in the streets of Ouagadougou.

The gemellity' place in the collective imagination:

Multiple births have always fascinated the collective imagination, as noted by Gélis (1991), and have always been subject to mythological, cultural and religious interpretations (Savary, 1995; Zazzo, 2015). The fact that a woman can give birth to several children is a challenge for any society, any culture (Gélis, 1991). Also, since ancient times, the birth of twins has been perceived as a rupture of the natural order, as the result of a magical and divine intervention (Staraci, 2013). This explains the conception of social representations of twins and the implementation of ritual practices that, in some societies, forced the mother of twins to make a symbolic and punctual quest after birth in order to protect her twin children.

This is the rite of presentation of twins to the community, which consists of the mother walking with her twins in a public place, especially the market, and making a symbolic quest. In return, the members of this community ask for their blessing: it is a symbolic act, culturally charged with meaning (Bako, 2008: 7). It is thought out and supervised by the community and is intended to be punctual. Nowadays, many twins' mothers beg all day long in the streets of Ouagadougou at major urban crossroads (traffic lights, bus stations, petrol stations) and parking lots, in front of financial institutions (bank, credit union) and in front of mosques, which have become a high point of daily visibility. Who are these women?

Socio-demographic characteristics of the women interviewed: The socio-demographic profile of the women surveyed highlights their age and marital status, their religious denomination and socio-cultural group, their level of education and place of residence, the age of their twins, and the size of their household. The distribution of women into two age groups reveals two striking facts. Firstly, all the twins' mothers surveyed are at least 19 years old and none of them are over 45 years old. This reflects the fact that among our interviewees, there are no minors or elderly women who were begging in the street at the time of the survey. Next, 86.4% of the women are between 19 and 34 years of age and only 13.6% are between 35 and 45 years of age. The average age of the women surveyed is 29.5 years and the median age is 30, which means that half of the women surveyed are under 30 years old. The third quartile is 32 years old, which means that 75% of the respondents are 32 years old or less and 25% of them are over 32 years old. This reflects the fact that the majority of the female beggars surveyed are young. In short, it emerges that among the population of women surveyed, there are neither underage women nor very old women; rather, there are young women who are of working age but find themselves in a situation of begging. Young and able-bodied women spend a third of the day on the streets in search of their livelihood instead of attending vocational training or carrying out an income-generating activity.

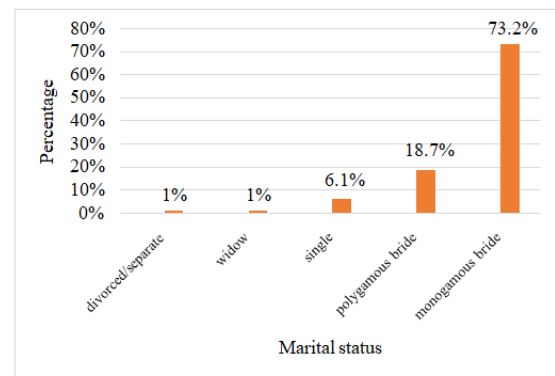
Table 1. Distribution of female respondents by age group

Socio-demographic profile	Staff	Percentage
Age group		
[15-19]	2	1%
[20-24]	25	12,6%
[25-29]	66	33,3%
[30-34]	78	39,4%
[35-39]	22	11,1%
[40-45]	5	1,5%
Total	198	100%
Grouped age group		
[19-35]	171	86,4%
[35-45]	27	13,6%
Total	198	100%

Source: Survey of twins' mothers on begging sites, 2015

Monogamy to the precariousness' test: An analysis of the marital situation of the women interviewed (Figure 1) shows that at the time of the survey, 73% of the women were in monogamous unions. Less than one woman in five (19%) is in a polygamous union. On the other hand, 6% of women are still single and only 2% of them declare themselves to be divorced, separated or widowed. There is a high representation of women in monogamous unions. While there are very few single, divorced/separated and widowed women who practice begging. When we take all women living in union together, we see that the proportion of women in monogamous unions is 80%. Can the type of union affect begging? Clignet (1975) notes that in Côte d'Ivoire, having co-wives allows Aboure women to be economically independent and have their own budget. In Mali, women in polygamous households are more likely to engage in income-generating activities (Marcoux, 1997). In analysing the evolution of polygamy in Senegal, Mondain et al. (2004) note that men and women benefit twice from forming a polygamous household. On the one hand, co-wives benefit from mutual support in domestic work; on the other hand, husbands gain some freedom of movement. There is every reason to believe that women in polygamous unions are

better prepared to face the difficulties of life than women in monogamous unions, who are always dependent on the head



Source: Survey of twins' mothers on begging sites, 2015

Figure 1. Distribution of women interviewed by marital status

of the household. When the head of the household is confronted with a problem of employment and income, the whole family feels it. In fact, in a context of precariousness, women in monogamous unions are more vulnerable than those in polygamous unions. However, our analysis on this point is limited, as a monogamous household can potentially become polygamous. As Antoine et al. (1995) point out, we only know the characteristics of the individual at the time of the survey; these characteristics can change over time.

Religious denomination and socio-cultural group to which it belongs

Survey reveals religious and socio-cultural disparity: A large proportion of women surveyed (65.7%) practise Islam and 30.3% practise Catholicism; only 1.5% claim traditional religion and 2.5% Protestantism. These figures may reflect the fact that Muslim women are more involved in begging than women of other religions. However, according to national statistics, these proportions more or less reflect the distribution of the Burkinabe population by religious denomination, with a majority of the Muslim community. In addition, Table 2 shows that Moose women are the most represented (78.8%), followed by Bissa (9.6%).

Table 2. Breakdown of women interviewed by religion and socio-cultural group to which they belong

Socio-demographic profile	Staff	Percentage
Religion		
Islamique	130	65,7%
Catholique	60	30,3%
Traditionnelle	3	1,5%
Protestante	5	2,5%
Total	198	100%
Socio-cultural group		
Bissa	19	9,6%
Gourounsi	5	2,5%
Moaga	156	78,8%
Peulh	7	3,5%
Samo	5	2,5%
Bella	1	0,5%
Dagara	2	1%
Dioula	1	0,5%
Gourmantch	2	1%
Total	198	100%

Source: Survey of twins' mothers on begging sites, 2015

Peulh (3.5%), Gourounsi (2.5%) and Samo (2.5%) women are poorly represented. As for the other socio-cultural groups

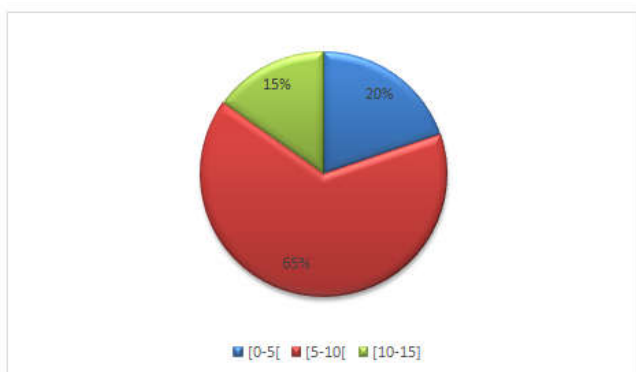
in the country, they represent only 3%. Compared to national statistics, these proportions more or less reflect the distribution of the Burkinabe population, with a majority given to the Moosé. What is curious is the high proportion of Bissa women (9.6%) in a situation of begging, whereas on a national scale this socio-cultural group represents only 3%. The rural exodus and interurban migration could explain the presence of many Bissa women in Ouagadougou and particularly in begging.

Women heads of household: Current family dynamics, the employment crisis in the city and the demands of urban life are leading some men to migrate to other cities or neighbouring regions in search of work, leaving their families in charge of their wives. Almost all (91.9%) of the women surveyed reside in a built-up area, only 8.1% reside in non built-up areas. It can be seen that the residence declared by the women is not located in the unzoned areas, which are nevertheless the homes of a large majority of poor people in Ouagadougou (INSD, 2015). Furthermore, half (50%) of the women surveyed have no education at all, 38% have a primary school education and only 12% have attended Koranic schools, none of whom have received vocational training. The non-enrolment of girls could explain the poverty in which they currently live, which leads them to beg. Soumaré and Kaboré have shown that women's low level of education disqualifies them from the labour market (Soumaré, 2002), making them more economically vulnerable (Kaboré, 2004). Similarly, of the 30 women interviewed by INSD, 23 had no education at all. Our results also echo those of Ann Clé and Adriaenssens (2006), who point out that most of the people begging in Brussels have a very low level of education, which also severely limits their access to the labour market. They attended school until an average age of 10.5 years and a quarter of Roma beggars have never attended school.

Table 3. Marital status and head of household status

Marital status of household status	Head of household status	Monogamous bride	Polygamous bride	Others	Total
Yes		56 (39 %)	14 (38 %)	16 (100 %)	86
No		89 (61 %)	23 (62 %)	-	112
Total		145	37	16	198

Source: Survey of twins' mothers on begging sites, 2015

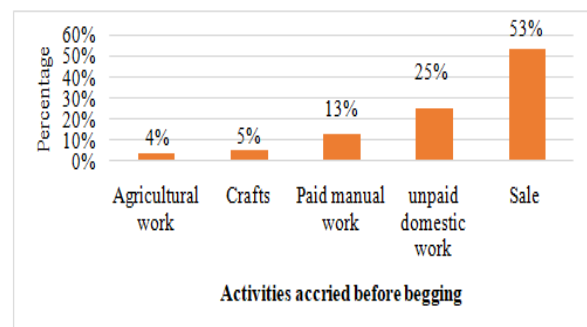


Source: Survey of twins' mothers on begging sites, 2015

Figure 2: Distribution of female heads of household by household size

In addition, more than half (67.2%) of the women surveyed live in households of five to ten people. Those living in

households of less than five people represent 15.2% at the time of the survey. Women living in households of more than 10 people accounted for 17.7% at the time of the survey.



Source :Survey of twins' mothers on begging sites, 2015

Figure 3: Activities carried out by women prior to begging

The calculation of the median shows that half of the respondents live in a household of seven people or less and the other half in a household of more than seven people. The third quartile further specifies the size of the household by showing that 25% of women live in a household of more than 9 people. A non-negligible number of women are heads of households (43%); this rate is significant compared to the rate in the general population of Lagos, which is 12% of households headed by women (INSD, 2012). By crossing the status of head of household with marital status, as shown in the table below. It can be seen that the proportion of female heads of household in monogamous unions (39%) is slightly higher than that of female heads of household in polygamous unions (38%). This means that the type of union does not significantly affect the presence or absence of the husband.

When we cross-tabulate head-of-household status with household size, as shown in the graph below, we find that almost two-thirds of women (65%) who declared that they were heads of their household at the time of the survey are responsible for a household of 5 to 9 people. While 15% of them are responsible for a household of more than 10 people. These figures are surprising because, in Burkina Faso, the man is considered to represent the household, i.e. the one who has the most influence on the household, as he contributes the largest share of income. It is he who gives the 'nasongo', the money needed to feed the household members on a daily basis. The "nasongo", also known as the "nasongo", is an expense of sovereignty for the man, because whatever the amount, the "nasongo" is a symbol of pride and honour for him. "It's a disgrace for the husband to let his wife support his family, it's a shame that the entourage does not fail to point out, even in public!" (Bado, 2006, p. 28). Today, however, this male pride is being put to the test. Indeed, although women's husbands are opposed to the practice of begging, their wives' participation in family expenses through the income from begging does not pose any problems given the precarious situation of their income. Moreover, the lack of income and the prolonged absence of men leads to a reshaping of family and social relations and a change in economic and cultural roles within households.

Twins presented or children exposed in the street by their mother: The age of twin has been grouped into three main categories: early childhood from 0 to 2 years old, pre-school from 3 to 5 years old and school age which is 6 years and

over. 51.5% of the twins who accompany their mother in begging are under three years old, 42.4% are between three and six years old and 6.1% are over six years old. With the promotion of Education for All, which is an important programme of the Burkinabe government, it should be expected that no 6-year-old child will be out of school. However, our data show that there are school-age children (24 children) who accompany their mothers on the streets instead of being in school. In addition, considering the time women have already spent in the practice of begging at the time we interviewed them, it emerges that one woman in five has been begging for less than a year. Half of them have already spent between 1 and 2 years begging and continue to beg. While 23% of them have spent between 3 and 5 years begging and continue to do so. 10 women have been begging for more than 5 years. In view of the time taken by the 198 women in the activity at the time of the survey, it can be said that they have already spent an average of 24 months, i.e. 2 years in practice and continue to beg. Calculating the median gives 20 months. This means that half of the women spend more than 20 months on the street. There is a discrepancy between the rite of presentation of twins, which was traditionally intended to be punctual, disinterested and symbolic, and the current practice of begging by twins' mothers in the city of Ouagadougou, which is apparently structural and professional. Savary and Gros noted as early as 1995: "begging by twins' mothers, traditionally limited to a few days, is increasing and sometimes becomes a real profession. The status of these women goes from consideration for their good fortune to have been honoured by Amma, to pity for the passer-by in front of their double burden" (Savary and Gros, 1995: 205).

Economic characteristics of the respondents: Before the practice of begging, the women we met were working in the informal sector.

The informal sector, a slippery slope: According to Figure 3, women reported carrying out four types of activities before begging. They worked mainly in sales (53%) and 25% were engaged in unpaid manual work, while 13% were engaged in paid manual work. To a lesser extent, they worked in handicrafts (5%) and agriculture (4%). With the income from their activities, many women thus contributed to financing their children's schooling, some paid the electricity and water bills, or helped pay the rent. However, the activities carried out by these women remain fragile because they are informal sector activities that operate with little capital. In addition, the women work alone without employees, and most of their income is used to meet the family's subsistence needs. The fragility of these activities means that the birth of twins incapacitates them and makes them unable to continue their gainful activities. The problem of childcare emerges as the main difficulty following their birth and as the element that has led them to become beggars. Their income does not allow them to pay someone to look after the children. Without support, they find themselves unable to reconcile childcare with their activities, especially those related to catering and housekeeping in private homes.

Begging, an activity with a random income: The majority of women say that the main purpose of their begging is to meet their most urgent needs: access to basic health care, children's schooling and food. On the street, these women receive alms in cash (money) and in kind (clothing and food)

which enables them to feed themselves and their families. According to the women we met, the daily sums collected vary on average between 1,000 and 2,000 CFA francs. Taking into account the imponderable nature of begging, they do not spend all their income on a daily basis: "I am careful in managing my daily income. The day I earn more than 1,000 CFA francs, I spend only 500 CFA francs. The rest I keep, because there are days when it doesn't work" [MV]. They are trying to adapt to the vagaries of donations, but also to save money in the face of an even more uncertain future. Indeed, the "declaratory" nature of begging income is the subject of much debate. Mougin shows that begging is far from being "a profitable activity", and does not enrich the person who engages in it. He adds that even if some people declare that they receive 'huge' incomes, it is probably to demonstrate their skills, abilities and self-worth (Mougin, 2008). Anderson (1923) concludes that it is a 'resourceful' activity given the uncertainties and low level of income from this activity. From the point of view of the giver and the receiver, it can be said that almsgiving to women begging in Ouagadougou has two major characteristics. On the one hand, women always note the random and irregular nature of the donations. According to them, donations vary for the same person, depending on the hours, days and periods of the month. In addition, they point to a downward trend in the value of donations, which they attribute mainly to the economic crisis. Even the most regular donors are said to be less and less generous. On the other hand, donors recognise that the choice of which category of beggars to give alms to is often arbitrary. A city dweller can decide whether or not to give to a category of beggar according to his or her own criteria. Some interviewees say they choose according to emotional and affective criteria: "I give to whom I prefer"; "I give to whoever touches me the most"; "I give to get rid of", "I don't give to those I don't like, whose behaviour I don't like", or again, "I always give the same amount to be fair to the beggars"; "I give according to what I have in my pocket", "I give according to the inspiration of the moment". All these comments illustrate the arbitrary behaviour of city dwellers towards beggars.

CONCLUSION

A reading of the socio-demographic characteristics shows that the population of twins' mothers in a begging situation is mostly young and in monogamous unions. Moreover, it emerges that most of them claim the Islamic religion. These women are generally from the moaga socio-cultural group and half of them have no education at all. Residing in Ouagadougou in suburban neighbourhoods, most of them live in households of between 5 and 10 people. Some are heads of households and a few beg with children who have reached school age, i.e. at least 6 years old. Before the practice of begging, women worked in the informal sector. Their current investment in begging is evidence that the informal sector is unstable and cannot guarantee their economic autonomy and resilience to shocks. The main conclusions to be drawn from this analysis are of several kinds. Firstly, there is the high youthfulness of the population of women beggars, which must be taken into account in urban development policies and strategies. The youthfulness of the women surveyed and the presence of children on the streets raises, among other things, the crucial issues of schooling, care and employability. This implies that more investment is needed to support the education, health and

employment sectors in the short, medium and long term. Furthermore, the youthfulness of the population of women in begging situations calls for population issues to be included in all development priorities and for actions focused on population control to be developed and implemented. Secondly, the informal sector is the most feminised sector and occupies a central position in Burkina Faso's economic growth and development process. It is imperative to strengthen the resilience of girls/women working in this sector by supporting them in the process of formalising their microenterprises for greater stability, self-confidence and economic autonomy.

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