

Clothing Lifestyles in Burkina Faso

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In Burkina Faso, it's very important to be well dressed. There is a link between the image of somebody and his way of dressing. That's why a chief or an important personality socially or at political level cannot dress in the same way as ordinary people. Well dressing is a kind of respect for everybody, you met or everybody you know. These explanations relay the possible different meanings that people give to clothing in Africa in general. In addition, the weather is principally hot. In spite of the context of poverty, people live in happiness. The way of life is very simple daily. Through the way of clothing, it is possible to see that the joy of living "clothing" in Burkina Faso depends on the history and the culture of the country.

In Burkina Faso, there are traditional European, Arabic and mixed ways of clothing in men, women, young and children's styles. In their daily lives, everybody wears the kind of clothes his or her likes. Religion also impacts on the way people wear clothing. Moslems, Christians and polytheists do not have the same styles of dressing. "Clothing" generally depends on the social position and what you have to do. When people have to go to the office or to the church or a civil ceremony, they do not wear the same cloth. Sometimes, there are uniforms and in that case, everybody has to wear them. It's a way to show your mark of respect to the organization. Men and boys have the same style of clothing, women and girls have the same one. There are about sixty-five ethnic groups in Burkina Faso. All of the ethnic groups have its own type of textile and dressing.

The Ministry of Communication and Culture is working to organize the sector of handcraft textile production. Although people like wearing this kind of cloth, without help, however, it will be difficult for this field of national economy to take off. In Burkina Faso, people do not leave their old way of clothing. There is a habit which consists of protecting traditional cloth through their way of living. In daily life, all kind of styles are meeting in principals and secondary cities as well as villages. As we have public officers everywhere in the country, fundamentally there is not a real gap in clothing level between towns and villages.

Styles of cutting textiles are various. Traditionally, we have two kind of handcraft textile: *dan fani* (cotton textile) and *tuntun fani* (type of textile which is the mixing of

cotton and silk). In the local language *fani* means tissue. *Dan* is to weave and each ethnic group has its own of *dan fani* and its own of *tuntun fani*. In each group, we have also some different ethnic styles.

In addition to European classic clothes, women in Burkina Faso wear what we usually call “grand-mother”, *buboes*, *abbaya*¹ (a cultural nice dress). Men’s clothes are: traditional trousers that the majority ethnic group named *Moose* called *kurug* in their language, adding to European men classic clothes like ties, shirts, suits, etc. Children use more modern (jean, T-shirt, short, little trousers, dress (for girl only), etc.) style than the traditional ones. All parents do not have the means to dress well their children. So there are some differences between children’s clothing because of their parents’ positions. In Burkina Faso, we have annually a solidarity month. At that time, the Social Action Ministry gives clothes to some families to help them and invite everybody to follow its example.

Today, Burkinabe are in globalization and in spite of their attachment to their traditions. In the national plan, there is a governmental program to promote local textiles. And many organizations are created to value traditional textiles handcraft production. People in Burkina Faso are also proud of their way of clothing.

¹ The one I wear the day we have the public conference in Kitakyushu during the training of KFAW about “gender mainstreaming for government officer” in 2004.