

# Education Matters

## Keeping Girls in School Can Improve Economic Development in Burkina Faso's Sahel Region

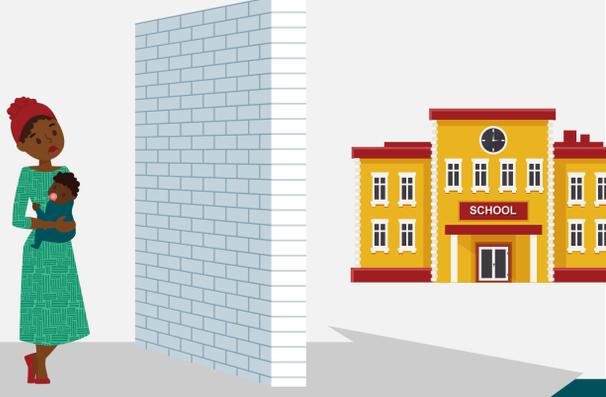


Girls' educational attainment affects the human capital of Burkina Faso's future labor force, shaping their economic opportunities and their country's economic growth. In northeastern Burkina Faso, educational attainment in the Sahel Region lags compared to the rest of the country. The Sahel Region's stability and socioeconomic development are hindered by recurring conflicts, natural disasters, food insecurity, and epidemics that exacerbate poverty and perpetuate inequality.<sup>1</sup>

### Barriers to Girls' Education in Burkina Faso's Sahel Region

Half of girls:

- First sex before age 16
- First birth before age 19
- First marriage before age 16<sup>2</sup>



### Sahel Girls Are Dropping Out of School in Large Numbers



Girls in Burkina Faso's Sahel Region are **twice as likely to drop out** in the first four years of primary school as girls nationally.

Dropout rates peak in the **final year of lower secondary school**, when students must pass exams to move to the upper secondary school, with over **30% of Sahel Region girls** dropping out of school.



### How many years of schooling are girls expected to receive given the dropout rates?<sup>3</sup>



**4.3 YEARS**  
of education for Sahel Region girls.



**7.5 YEARS**  
of education for the remainder of Burkinabe girls.

### What if barriers causing Sahel girls to drop out of school were removed?

- If reasons related to pregnancy, marriage, and unpaid care work were eliminated → **30% more schooling**
- If reasons related to economic need were also eliminated → **37% more schooling**



### What can policymakers do to intervene?

- Implement strategies to increase community awareness of benefits to **delaying marriage** to keep girls in school through secondary school.
- Increase access to **family planning and reproductive health** information and services so that girls stay in school.
- Identify and engage local leaders and positive role models who can influence acceptance of sociocultural attitudes that promote **gender equality**.<sup>4</sup>

Keeping girls in school can ensure that more women are well-prepared to enter the labor force and contribute to Burkina Faso's economic development. Educated mothers raise more highly educated children, and contribute to the labor supply and household income with improved human capital. With the right investments, including in education and employment opportunities, young women can **boost economic activity and growth** in Burkina Faso's Sahel Region.

#### SOURCES

<sup>1</sup> UNFPA West and Central African Regional Office (WCARO), *Sahel Women's Empowerment and Demographic Dividend (SWEDD)* (Dakar, Senegal: UNFPA WCARO, 2016).  
<sup>2</sup> Data used are median age among women ages 20-24 in the Sahel Region, Burkina Faso; Institut National de la Statistique et de la Démographie (INSD)/Burkina Faso and ICF International, *Enquête Démographique et de Santé et à Indicateurs Multiples du Burkina Faso 2010* (Calverton, Md.: INSD and ICF International, 2012).

<sup>3</sup> Data from Mali was used to estimate the effects of eliminating certain causes of dropout. Given cultural, geographic, and other similarities between Burkina Faso's Sahel Region and neighboring Mali, data from Mali may better capture reasons for girls' school dropout in this region than national data from Burkina Faso; INSD/Burkina Faso and ICF International, *Enquête Démographique et de Santé et à Indicateurs Multiples du Burkina Faso 2010*.

<sup>4</sup> Madeleine Wayack Pambé, Biliampoa Gnoumou, and Idrissa Kaboré, *Relationship Between Women's Socioeconomic Status and Empowerment in Burkina Faso: A Focus on Participation in Decision-Making and Experience of Domestic Violence*, DHS Working Papers No. 99. (Calverton, Md.: ICF International, 2013).