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. To improve economic development, policymakers need to focus on girls’ education, especially in the Sahel Region, which has lagging educational attainment. Education matters for girls in the Sahel Region, especially when it comes to increasing their economic opportunities.

Barriers to Girls’ Education in Burkina Faso’s Sahel Region

First sex before age 16
First birth before age 19
First marriage before age 16

Sahel Girls Are Dropping Out of School in Large Numbers

Girls in Burkina Faso’s Sahel Region are twice as likely to drop out 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.

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 education.

How many years of schooling are girls expected to receive given the dropout rates?

If reasons related to pregnancy, marriage, and unpaid care work were eliminated
If reasons related to economic need were also eliminated

30%
37%

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

Half of girls:

→ First sex before age 16
→ First birth before age 19
→ First marriage before age 18

7.5 YEARS of education for the remainder of Burkinabe girls.

4.3 YEARS of education for Sahel Region girls.

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Sources:

1. UNFPA West and Central African Regional Office (WCARO), Sahel Women’s Empowerment and Demographic Dividend (SWEDD) (Dakar, Senegal: UNFPA WCARO, 2016).
3. 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.