

Girl-friendly interventions to retain girls in school

Because development partners have carefully harmonized their work to help build effective national education sector plans, the EFA FTI model has improved girls' education.

Education Sector Plans (ESPs) helped focus and consolidate donors' attention on a set of critical issues, especially gender equity. Indeed, the preparation of ESPs brought together different players to concentrate on analyzing gender outcomes and to understand them in the context of other factors of marginalization such as poverty and geographic isolation. In addition, ESPs convene people to brainstorm about the right interventions to fit specific contexts and thus to refine what needs to be done to improve the overall education experience for girls. The methods used in each country differ, depending on the social and cultural context. ESPs also highlight the need for increased government commitment to and financial support for education. In addition, recognizing challenges in implementation through Joint Sector Reviews (which monitor progress across countries), is crucial to identifying what works most effectively in furthering girls' education.

The most common intervention included in 23 country plans was to *mobilize communities to send their girls to school*. The media—television, radio, newspapers—and religious leaders were enlisted to communicate with parents and community members about the importance and benefits of education. Success stories of educated girls becoming productive members of society were publicized. To help girls stay in school, communities were encouraged to release girls from both home duties and care of younger brothers and sisters. Parents were encouraged to protect their daughters by monitoring schools for safety, abuse, or violence, and they were also urged to be active in parent-teacher or mothers associations.

A second set of interventions in 20 countries provides *targeted financial support*. Money was given to

cover school and examination fees, and to buy textbooks for girls. Free education was awarded to girls from poor families and specific disadvantaged groups. Remote ethnic groups, where gender disparities are widespread, were singled out for financial support. Quotas for girls were introduced in schools, and local communities funded to buy school materials for girls.

Country plans included *the creation of school health and feeding programs*, which provide healthy food choices daily for children and also assist with girls' health concerns, especially in rural areas. School cafeterias were established in nomadic areas and scattered remote settlements. De-worming programs strengthened girls' health and thus their presence in school. Gender and HIV AIDS prevention was mainstreamed in primary and secondary school activities, focusing on the special needs of girls. Teachers were equipped with relevant skills to deal with HIV and AIDS.

Several plans include a review of school curricula for gender stereotyping. More generally, the plans focused on gender mainstreaming across all educational materials. Depicting women as role models, and in professions normally held by men, was an important strategy to encourage girls' education. New curricula were developed which were gender-sensitive and gender-responsive. In addition, curricula focused



Alberto Begue, FTI Secretariat



specifically on gender issues such as sexuality, reproductive health, and HIV/AIDS were introduced.

Fourteen country plans focus on *gender-sensitive teacher development*. Strategies to ensure girls attended school regularly and enjoyed being there were included in pre-service and in-service teacher training. Training also included modules on the relationship between pupil and teacher, emphasizing the mentoring of girls. Teachers were given guides/handbooks about harassment of girls and women teachers, with special emphasis on building confidence to report cases.

Ensuring that school environments are conducive to girls' participation is an important intervention in about a dozen sector plans. Learning environments were created which were healthy, safe, and free of gender-based violence. Separate latrines/toilets for boys and girls were built, along with sanitary facilities to assist girls during menstruation. Boarding schools were

opened for girls from remote communities. To enable young girls to attend early grades without having to walk long distances, often in bad weather, schools were constructed close to the community. Monitoring systems hold teachers and principals accountable for actions detrimental to the access and survival of girls. Schools provided childcare facilities for siblings brought to school. This was also an incentive for girls who had children to return to school themselves.

Women teachers encouraged more girls to attend school. Accordingly, several plans focus on *gender-sensitive teacher management*. Incentives were given to teacher education institutions to enroll and retain more women students/trainees. Women's entry into teaching was targeted. Women teachers were recruited and deployed to act as role models. They were also encouraged to teach in rural and isolated areas and offered safe homes to rent or buy. More women teachers from disadvantaged communities were promoted in the system.

Seven plans discussed the importance of gender-sensitive administration. These include training national and sub-national technical experts and managers to create program plans to target both the poorest children, and girls. Operational budgets were specifically designed for local management committees to monitor girls' performance and gender focal points. Specialized departments on girls' education have been created within the Ministry of Education. These departments monitored gender-mainstreaming and girls' outcomes during ESP implementation periods.

Six plans have introduced *laws and policies that support girls' education*. The legal and structural framework for inclusive education was strengthened. Laws protecting girls from violence, particularly sexual harassment, drug abuse, and child labor were disseminated across school systems. Schools were charged with the implementation of gender and development policies. Non-formal and alternative methods were introduced to accelerate education for girls over the age of school entry. School calendars were adjusted so that hours of instruction were flexible, to increase girls' access.

Girls' Stories—Burkina Faso

Girls in Burkina Faso are taking enormous strides

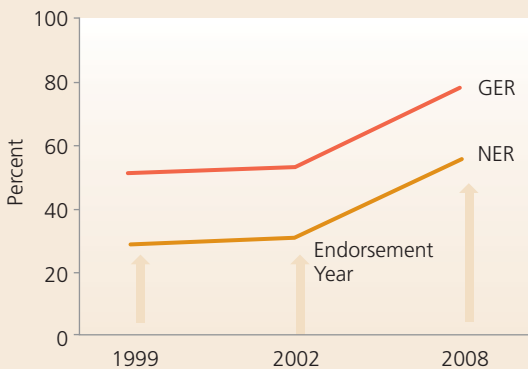
According to the Poverty Reduction Strategy 2004 (Ministry of Economy and Development), education in Burkina Faso was seen as “worrisome.” There were meager increases in Gross Enrollment Rates (GERs) between 1998 and 2002 from 41 to 44 percent. Moreover, 56 percent of children were excluded from the education system. Boys’ enrollment far exceeded that of girls. The completion rate for girls was one of the lowest in Africa for a variety of reasons, poverty being one of the most prominent.

But the “worrisome” label changed once Burkina joined the FTI partnership in 2002. There was clear acceleration in access and a strengthened capacity for girls’ education. Improvement in girls’ enrollment in Burkina Faso by 73 percent, since becoming an FTI partner, is testimony to the goals outlined in the plan, which emphasized increasing coverage of education without undermining the quality of education girls received. Similar increases apply to the Grade 1 intake and transition rate for girls into secondary schools. In addition, there was a substantial decrease in the percentage of repeaters annually.

Focusing on the low proportion of girls going to school, Burkina Faso’s education sector plan chose special measures to draw girls’ into the system. School meals and comprehensive campaigns on the importance of schooling motivated all children to enroll in school. Within the overall strategy of encouraging communities to send their children to school, pressure groups, mothers associations, and quotas (50 percent) for girls’ recruitment were set up. Women teachers were sent to areas with low girls’ enrollment to serve as role models. Within the school system, specialized departments for girls’ education were created, and in addition, teachers were trained to supervise girls’ education. Stereotyping girls’ images in curricula and textbooks were eliminated, and regular information sessions were conducted on the risks faced by girls in schools. Female students also received incentives such as take-home rations and prizes for attending school.



Burkina Faso—Girls’ enrollment



Burkina Faso—Girls’ transition and repetition

