

# Burkina Faso

## Reaching students in insecure areas

Education in Burkina Faso is making important advances under difficult conditions. The increase in primary school enrollment—from 60 percent in the early 2000s to 88 percent today—is particularly significant. Yet, the country faces many pressing education challenges. Making progress on two in particular—curriculum reform to improve learning outcomes and delivering education to remote and unsafe areas—could deliver big socioeconomic gains.



GPE/Kelley Lynch

Burkina Faso was one of the first countries to join GPE in 2002. Since then, it has received more than US\$214 million in grants from GPE. The current grant, channeled through a pooled fund to better align donor funding, will help support the implementation of the country's 2017-2030 education sector plan.

### Reforming the curriculum for improved learning

With a high population growth rate, demand for education is pushing the capacity of schools to the breaking point. Despite the increase in primary school enrollment rates, completion rates remain low, though improving. And despite a marked drop in poverty, from more than 80 percent in 2000 to 44 percent in 2016, the country has one of the lowest rankings on the UNDP's human development index, placing 183 out of 189 countries in 2018.

The curriculum reform launched by the Ministry of Education and Literacy is central to the government's plan to improve the quality of education and ensure more children complete basic education. With 70 percent of the population under 20 years of age, developing human capital by ensuring that all children are in school and learning will be vital for the country's economic development.

The new curriculum is more streamlined and focuses on learning rather than simply "transmitting" knowledge. In a pilot, the curriculum was tested in six of Burkina Faso's 13 districts in rural, urban, and peri-urban areas to see how it performed in these different settings.

A hurdle being encountered is that the textbooks used to teach the new curriculum are out of date. With GPE's help students received new textbooks that are consistent with the new curriculum. The objective is to increase the ratio of essential textbooks per student, and new funding from the partnership is being used to put more textbooks into the hands of children.



**GPE partner:** Since 2002

**Challenges addressed:**

Insecurity in northern provinces, poor learning results, weak linkage between curriculum and job market needs

**Key interventions:**

Curriculum reform, support to disadvantaged provinces

**Total grants:** US\$214 million (2009-2022)

**Grant agent:** Agence française de développement (AFD)

**Coordinating agency:** UNICEF



GPE/Kalley Lynch

**Franco-Arabic schools**, if they prove to be successful and can be scaled up, could be a game changer for getting more children into school in the Sahel region. Here, **just 8 percent of students enroll in lower secondary school, compared with 25 percent nationally.**

## Making learning relevant to the local job market

Making education more relevant to students is an important aspect of the new curriculum. Twenty percent of class time is now dedicated for local knowledge. As well as cultural and housekeeping topics, children are introduced to local professions to help prepare them early for the job market.

GPE is contributing to this by supporting more community participation and give parents the ability to provide local solutions to identified needs.

The new curriculum also covers social issues like early marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM), which had previously not been discussed in the classroom. With an estimated 76 percent of girls aged 15–17 having experienced FGM, this is a critical topic to address. The new curriculum also tackles environmental issues and social behavior.

*“The new curriculum is very important because with previous programs there were gaps. The students we trained were not able to integrate into the job market.”*

—Emilienne Sawadogo, a school inspector, commends the way that the new curriculum prepares children for the workplace.

## Ensuring education isn't derailed by insecurity

While the new curriculum is a nationwide education initiative, improving education in areas where enrollment and completion rates are particularly low is a special concern of GPE's Burkina Faso program.

A focus of the GPE program is making education gains in eight provinces, four of which are in the volatile Sahel region, which has been made unstable by Islamist extremism. The Sahel region and particularly the provinces of Soum and Oudalan are GPE program priorities. The provinces are insecure, schools have been attacked and teachers threatened and killed. The extremists want the language of instruction in schools to be Arabic instead of French, the country's official language.

The government is trying to mainstream Franco-Arabic schools in the Sahel region—and the GPE program is supporting this effort. Franco-Arabic schools are popular with many Muslim parents who believe the addition of religious education adds value to what their children learn in the French curriculum.

Ibrahima Kabore, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education, believes that Franco-Arabic schools, if they prove to be successful and can be scaled up, could be a game changer for getting more children into school in the Sahel region. Here, just 8 percent of students enroll in lower secondary school, compared with 25 percent nationally.

The future for children in Burkina Faso remains challenging and GPE's support is helping the government to address critical issues. It is a powerful example of GPE's mission: to improve learning outcomes and equity through strengthening education systems.