



**SWEDD SERIES: OPERATIONAL BRIEF**

# SUPPORT FOR GIRLS' EDUCATION AND KEEPING THEM IN SCHOOL



The research informing this brief was led by the Population Council and focused on the SWEDD project. The information will guide the implementation of SWEDD+

This operational brief is part of a series that retrospectively documents the process of implementing the interventions of the Sahel Women's Empowerment and Demographic Dividend (SWEDD) project. It describes good practice, challenges and lessons learned in the process of supporting girls' enrolment and retention in school. It summarizes the literature review and conversations with key respondents in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Chad between December 2022 and January 2023. The implementation experiences described in this brief and the guide of the same name can be used to provide information on school support in SWEDD+, and other projects in the Global South, particularly in West and Central Africa. Implementation took place in three phases.

## School support roll-out phases

### Phase 1: Initial design

- Engagement with the stakeholders involved, such as the various departments responsible for girls' education (primary, post-primary and secondary), parents' associations, traditional authorities and the students themselves.
- Identification of intervention areas and schools for activities based on statistics and studies on school drop-out.

### Phase 2: Implementation of interventions

- Community involvement using campaigns and awareness-raising activities to bring about behavioural change.
- Launch of campaigns in post-primary and secondary schools to obtain a formal commitment from the departmental authorities to girls' enrolment.
- Compliance with the criteria for identifying the most vulnerable girls - such as parental poverty or home-school distance - in the choice of targets for school support activities.
- Particular focus on the budgets and mechanisms used to distribute financial and material support to the approaches deemed most appropriate in each context.

### Phase 3: Monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL)

- Agreement on a results framework and on the indicators to be used to measure success (for example, choosing between the retention rate and the drop-out rate), with periodic reviews to monitor the indicators.
- An integrated vision taking account of a clear MEL plan, ensuring that all stakeholders (government ministries and NGOs) use the same indicators and collect appropriate data to measure them.

In accordance with global best practice, the essential elements of keeping girls in school include:

- ▶ Efforts to reduce costs and facilitate access to schooling through conditional cash transfers, scholarships and the supply of materials such as school uniforms, the construction of community schools, and access to transport.
- ▶ Efforts to provide sanitation facilities and food, especially separate toilets for girls and boys, school food and food to take home.

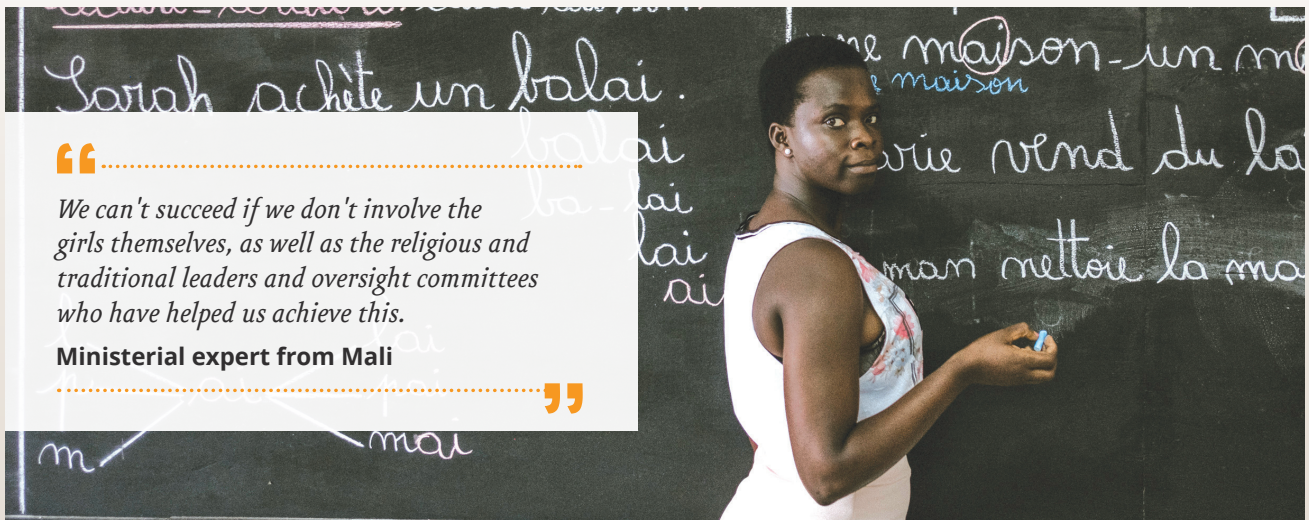
Psaki et al, 2021; Psaki et al, 2022



*The data... have genuinely guided the choice of regions where the situation was really problematic.*

**Ministerial expert from Burkina Faso**





“  
 We can't succeed if we don't involve the girls themselves, as well as the religious and traditional leaders and oversight committees who have helped us achieve this.  
 Ministerial expert from Mali  
 ”

“Consider including the teaching teams, especially as one of the components of this project was to improve the quality [of teaching].”

**Ministerial expert from Chad as a recommendation for the initial process of designing the approach to retention in school.**

## SUMMARY OF KEY LESSONS

Phase 1: Initial design	1	Involve a range of stakeholders in the design and implementation, with a clear division of tasks between them.
	2	Increase training opportunities for teachers, including gender-sensitive pedagogy, to improve their skills and ensure that interventions remain faithful to the SWEDD approach.
	3	Design programmatic activities, including financial and social assistance, based on well-defined criteria.
Phase 2: Implementation of interventions	4	Anticipate external changes and logistical challenges and be prepared to overcome them.
	5	Respect identification criteria – such as distance from school and poverty of parents – in selecting targets for school support activities.
	6	Dedicate a contextually-appropriate level of funding to efforts to reduce the cost of schooling and to the distribution of financial support and equipment.
Phase 3: Monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL)	7	Organize periodic reviews to monitor indicators and use the results to make changes to programme activities and to MEL.
	8	Throughout the project, provide refresher training on aspects of MEL to inform all stakeholders, especially new actors.
	9	Ensure that programme evaluation takes place to guarantee the best use of limited resources.

Sources: Psaki, S., N. Haberland, M. Kozak, and L. Woyczynski. 2021. “Girls’ Education Roadmap: 2021 Report.” EGER Reports. New York: Population Council. Psaki, S, N. Haberland, B. Mensch, L. Woyczynski and E. Chuang. Policies and Interventions to Remove Gender-Related Barriers to Girls’ School Participation and Learning in Low- and Middle-Income Countries: *A Systematic Review of the Evidence*. *Campbell Syst Rev.* 2022 Jan 19;18(1):e1207.

This brief is based on a guide that details the processes involved in supporting girls’ enrolment and retention in school. It was developed by the Population Council with the technical support of UNFPA and the World Bank.

For more information on the documentation of the processes involved in this intervention and on the SWEDD project, visit the SWEDD project’s virtual resource platform: <https://sweddknowledge.org/>