



Burkina Faso

MCC Learning from

“Ten-Year Impacts of Burkina Faso’s BRIGHT Program”

Mathematica, August 2016

MCC has identified the following programmatic and evaluation lessons based on the Ten-Year Impacts of Burkina Faso’s BRIGHT II Program.

PROGRAMMATIC LESSONS

- *Improvements in enrollment and progression drove improved levels of learning, but without efforts to address weak overall performance of schools, the rate of learning may not improve.* As education access (availability, distance) and girls’ participation were constrained in rural Burkina Faso, the project’s approach of bundled interventions to address these two constraints seem to have driven improvements on these dimensions. Teacher housing and performance awards seems to have helped BRIGHT schools attract more female teachers and allow schools to reduce teacher/student ratio. However, despite improving girls’ engagement and smaller classroom sizes, BRIGHT schools did not seem to have a steeper learning profile than non-BRIGHT schools (i.e. how long it takes a given student to arrive at a skill/competency such as recognizing letters or reading a sentence). In contexts where education quality lags acts as a more binding constraint than enrollment, improvements to the academic environment – including quality instruction, better educational management and leadership, and academic support for struggling students – might help steepen learning profiles.
- *Girls may require specific interventions to improve their educational outcomes and to reduce the likelihood of early marriage.* The BRIGHT evaluation links to other literature suggesting that responsibilities for younger children’s care, cultural and religious attitudes, mothers’ own educational levels, food insecurity and school availability are a



mix of factors that negatively impact girls' schooling. Low participation in schooling also seems to be linked to early marriage. Moreover, BRIGHT girls' educational levels, learning, and likelihood of avoiding early marriage improved at a higher rate than for eligible boys, indicating BRIGHT's *specific* offerings motivated families to value girls' schooling and success in particular. Understanding the unique trajectories of and constraints facing girls and boys is a necessary prerequisite to identifying impactful solutions.

- *Early consideration should be given regarding the sustainability of any activities that will require institutional support in the longer-term.* The physical structures remain in good condition in BRIGHT villages, but the size of educational impacts have decreased over time, indicating that the “soft interventions” which ended at the conclusion of the BRIGHT II program collectively had an impact on outcomes while they lasted. While not all supplementary interventions need to continue perpetually after the end of an intervention such as BRIGHT, working towards support/funding strategies with education authorities may ensure continued impacts after the end of donor funding.

EVALUATION LESSONS

- *Project and Evaluation Design Must Match Desired Learning:* Because the BRIGHT and BRIGHT II interventions were implemented in all of the same communities, and because all treatment sites received all of the interventions, it was not possible to disaggregate the impacts of different project components. For instance, it was not possible to know how much of the improvements in enrollment and/or test scores were due to school construction vs. having access to gender-specific latrines vs. activities to increase community engagement in education, etc. While disaggregating impacts of bundled interventions is always difficult, early attention to matching project and evaluation design to desired learning can help mitigate these issues. Also, early attention to desired learning can also suggest additional methods (such as qualitative research methods) to address desired research questions that can't be well answered through quantitative analyses.

Evaluation Brief: <https://www.mcc.gov/resources/doc/evalbrief-082016-burkina-faso-bright>