



Fund for Innovation and Transformation

Fonds pour l'innovation et la transformation



ALITUS FEMINA

Sexually Transmitted Grades – A Danger for the Future of Girls and Women

Context

In Burkina Faso, sexual abuse and exploitation of male and female students is a pervasive problem. In 2017, the government of Burkina Faso reported that around 174,000 students had been sexually abused over a three-year period. This abuse and exploitation is rooted in gender inequality, poverty and lack of power, which girls are disproportionately more likely to experience. In fact, sexuality in schools is of particular concern in Burkina Faso insofar as it is associated with obstacles to girls' schooling in particular, and strongly feeds gender inequality. A case in point is the practice of Sexually Transmitted Grades (STG), a form of sexual abuse that mainly targets girls, using the school grades as a forced means of gaining sexual favor from the victim.

The Innovative Solution

Alitus Femina worked with lead partner Association Alitus Femina in Burkina Faso to address the issue of STG and to break the taboo by: creating a space for discussion and data collection for a better understanding of the STG phenomenon, and then working with stakeholders to reduce the number of STG cases and create a database of evidence to enable decision-makers to develop a policy to address STG in all establishments.

Advancing Gender Equality

This innovation sought to fully integrate gender equality by recruiting a gender equality specialist at local level who helped guide the project regarding the following corrective actions:

- Break the taboo of STG as a detrimental factor to the quality of education of girls and women, for the first time.
- Raise public awareness of the importance of girls' and women's education, debate STG, highlight and solicit everyone's involvement for a sustainable solution - Over 13,000 (~ 68% girls/women) community members were directly involved in advocacy activities for gender equality. Over 63,000 in the urban and rural region of Ouagadougou and 78,000 in the urban and rural region of Bobo Dioulasso, 49% of whom were men, were reached.
- Strengthen the capacity of key players in gender equality and good education for girls and women - A total of 21 teachers (16 females) received effective training in gender equality and inclusive pedagogy. In addition, 795 participants, 94% of them women, received basic training on gender equality and PSEA.



COUNTRY
Burkina Faso

AMOUNT
\$174,190

TESTING PERIOD
12 months
Ended April 2023



GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE (GE3)

THEME: EDUCATION

- Consolidate achievements by creating and fostering leadership among young women and men students to fight for and contribute to data collection and, above all, initiate positive change by demanding their rights from decision-makers - A total of 203 people, including 163 girls, demonstrated leadership at institutional level, with the authorities and in their respective communities, mobilizing human and material resources to strengthen the quality of teaching.

Testing Framework

The project carried out a pre- and post-intervention measurement methodology in 22 schools, as well as a comparative evaluation of students aged 18 to 24, divided between an intervention group and a control group. In addition to the students, the project has been more inclusive by carrying out integrated gender equality activities focusing on awareness-raising, training and application of prevention strategies, while collecting data from students, teachers, parents, community and government educational leaders in order to create a database and develop effective means of combating the practice of STG.

Results and Impact

The hypothesis of this innovation project has been successfully proven. Many achievements were made, including the reduction of STG cases from 33.8% at baseline to 18.6% at endline, representing a total of 1066 students, including 881 girls, spared from this harmful STG practice. Overall, 13,358 direct participants, 67% of whom were girls/women, were sufficiently sensitized and trained in the fight against STG. By the end of the project, 56.8% of girls had improved their sense of STG safety, compared with only 29% at baseline. In the 22 participating schools, 757 students, including 512 girls/women, received leadership training on combating sexual violence in schools, including STGs. 795 participants, 94% of them women, received training on gender equality and PSEA, and shared their knowledge with the wider community. An STG database was made available to 22 schools, 95% of which developed and implemented strategies to combat STG.

Key Lessons

1. Acquiring knowledge and exposure to gender issues and STG is a practice that needs to be dynamic and ongoing, as realities can differ from one region to another, even when operating in the same country.
2. Working together with local gender specialists is an extraordinary advantage, as they have the facility to integrate the concept of gender equality into the local culture.
3. Recognizing the complexity of gender and the intersectionality of other identities is not just a matter of theory, but also of deploying the means to make room for others.
4. Using participatory methods to design activities, collect data and monitor and evaluate the project is an excellent way of achieving good results, as everyone feels valued at every stage of the project invest in and use technology to provide a safe space for victims to share their experiences without fear of reprisals.

“This project on sexual abuse in schools in Burkina Faso is an excellent example of how our community of young students can contribute to improving our own educational future if, and only if, we are accompanied. On that note, I'd like to say a big thank you to Alitus Femina and a huge thank you to the Canadian FIT program, which funded this pilot project”

-- Liliane T. Student participant.

PARTNER ORGANIZATION

BURCASO

TARGET PARTICIPANTS

Direct participants 13,358 including 8,932 women and girls, and indirect participants included 71,910 women and girls and 49,090 men and boys from both urban and rural regions of Bobo Dioulasso and Ouagadougou.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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ABOUT FIT

The Fund for Innovation and Transformation supports Canadian small and medium-sized organizations (SMOs) testing innovative solutions that advance gender equality in the Global South.



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