Joint Education and Child Protection Needs Assessment

© UNICEF/UNI388473/Dejongh

Burkina Faso

Background

This assessment was conducted as part of a Global Education Cluster (GEC) and Child Protection Area of Responsibility (GCPAoR) project funded by the Bureau of Humanitarian Affairs (BHA) to strengthen joint needs assessments. The project aims to improve the availability of data and evidence to support strategic planning, response, and preparedness at country level for both education in emergencies (EiE) and Child Protection (CP) actors. This is critical as EiE interventions contribute to protection outcomes by providing access to lifesaving services through schools and learning spaces (school feeding, nutrition, health, mental health and psychosocial services). The classroom is also an important space to convey life-saving messages, raise awareness and promote behavioral changes. Moreover, classroom and learning settings offer a space to identify protection needs and mitigate risks.

In Burkina Faso, as of November 2022, the National Council for Emergency Relief and Rehabilitation (Conseil National de Secours d'Urgence et de Réhabilitation - CONASUR) and its partners recorded 1.81 million displaced persons[1], 60% of whom were children. The vast majority (83%) of these displacements were related to attacks and threats by non-identified armed groups (GANI -- groupes armés non identifiés).[2] The crisis in Burkina Faso is part of a broader crisis in the Central Sahel encompassing Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, characterized by "political instability, governance crisis, inter-communal conflicts, lack of access to basic services, human rights violations, and the consequences of COVID[3]."

The objective of this joint assessment is to improve the common understanding of the impact of the crisis on education and child protection needs to enable:

- the prioritization of geographic areas of intervention, and
- the formulation of recommendations to inform operational strategies and decisions.

The assessment targeted 14 communes within the 8 regions with high security challenges as of May 2022 (Boucle du Mouhoun, Centre-East, East, Centre-North, North, Sahel, Cascades and South-West). Data collection took place from 20 June to 5 July 2022 and coincided with the beginning of the school vacations. The period of interest was therefore the 2021-2022 school year.

The assessment followed a mixed methodological approach, i.e. combining quantitative and qualitative methods: data were collected at the school level through interviews with educational staff (164), and 4 other key informant profiles: members of educational mothers' and parents' associations (157), provincial and regional educational authorities (37), service providers (29) and community leaders (31). Moreover, 37 focus groups with children aged 9-12 (17), 13-15 (10), and 14-17 (10) were also conducted, with a total of 290 children consulted. School targets were defined based on the resources available for the assessment. In addition, security and logistical constraints narrowed the selection of schools to be surveyed within each commune. Thus, the results are purely indicative of the educational situation in the targeted communes.

The findings will be disseminated widely at both country and global levels and will inform the humanitarian response, the Education Cluster and Child Protection AoR strategies, and resource mobilization efforts. The full report can be accessed here.

Summary of main results

The security situation in the regions surveyed is complex, with 73% of provincial and regional authority informants reporting a deterioration in security conditions over the past 12 months. At the same time, only 44% of the schools surveyed reported the presence of a functional community watch committee and less than half (45%) of the schools visited had developed an emergency preparedness plan using the "safe school" approach.

---

[1] National Emergency Relief Council (CONASUR) and OCHA, Humanitarian Overview, November 30, 2022
[2] OCHA, Site at 28/06/2022
[3] Project 21, Regional Protection Monitoring, January-December 2021

The joint evaluation showed that the reception of displaced children in schools remains a major challenge. The main obstacles to accepting more displaced children into the school were overcrowded classrooms (83%), lack of materials and equipment (77%), and a lack of teachers (30%) In addition, there are difficulties in integrating displaced children into the school system, particularly in relation to the lack of information for parents (32%), the stigmatization of certain learners (11%) and language differences (10%)). In 69% of the schools surveyed, at least one specific measure was put in place to facilitate the integration of children during the school year. Of these, raising awareness of school integration (76%), organizing remedial classes (70%) and organizing pairings (41%) were among the most frequently implemented measures.

In the schools visited, 4% of learners dropped out of the school during the year. School children consulted for this assessment identified seven reasons for dropping out of school: paid work (49%), insecurity (40%), early marriage (31%), poverty (31%), corporal punishment (20%), lack of canteen (10%), and household chores (6%). In addition, school fees were required in 38% (62) of the schools visited, including 42 public schools. These costs are among the main barriers to access to education in Burkina Faso.[4]

Approximately 3-4% of children enrolled in the schools visited live with a disability, of which 70% have at least one physical disability, 46% have a visual disability and 35% have a hearing disability. The level of accessibility of the school infrastructure for children with disabilities varied significantly from one area of the facility to another: accessibility to water, hygiene and sanitation infrastructure (wash basins, toilets) seemed relatively lower than that of the canteen or the playground.

Unsurprisingly, the assessment found that insecurity and working conditions also had a negative impact on the demand for and supply of services: Insecurity on the way to and within the school, followed by delays in the payment of salaries to eudcation staff were the main reasons for teachers to leave their jobs, according to the education authorities surveyed. Eight percent of teachers surveyed said they had witnessed violence in their workplaces during the school year. These included physical violence between learners (48%), emotional abuse between learners (42%), emotional abuse between learners and teachers (10%), stigmatization of certain minority groups (7%) and physical violence between learners and teachers (5%). Support in response to the psychosocial needs of education staff and the learners remains limited. Less than a quarter (23%) of the schools surveyed had teachers trained in the provision of psychosocial support to children. A psychosocial support service was available to teachers in only 18% of the schools surveyed.

Among the child protection risks, work (hazardous occupation) was the most frequently reported risk for the 14-year age group by key informants (parent-teacher associations TA members and mother educators, service providers, and community leaders). This risk particularly affected boys. Child marriage was among the top three most common risks and affected mostly girls, starting at age 12. It is worth noting that risks related to work (hazardous occupation) and child marriage

---

4 NASM Results, 2022

were relatively less mentioned for children in school, suggesting that access to education decreases the risks of child protection and gender-based violence.

In addition, 43% of service providers and community leaders reported the presence of unaccompanied and separated children in their communities. The majority perceived that this phenomenon had worsened over the past 12 months.

15% (9/60) of key informants (community leaders and service providers) reported knowledge of episodes of child recruitment by armed forces and groups in the town's vicinity or within the community in the past 3 months. Community members' poor perception and fear of these children were identified as important factors for rejection, while financial incentive, forced recruitment, and religious incentive were the main factors for joining armed forces and groups.

In an effort to encourage parents to send their children to school, key informants made the following recommendations:

- Organize awareness sessions on the importance of education in order to improve the schooling rate of girls and boys;
- Increase school capacity through the creation of temporary learning spaces;
- Provide a school canteen service to encourage the retention of learners under the age of 5 and those aged 6-14 in school;
- Provide children aged 6-14 with school kits;
- Organize remedial classes for children during the vacations to improve the quality of their learning, minimize school absenteeism and offer them a safe space.

To reduce child protection risks, the provision of cash transfers to affected households is deemed essential to reduce economic barriers to education, cover the opportunity costs of lost child labor, and discourage child marriage as a potential economic survival strategy.

Psychosocial support and child protection elements could also be strengthened as part of the development and strengthening of the skills of educational staff (notably the safe school approach, psychosocial support, child protection, gender-sensitive inclusive pedagogy). Increasing learning opportunities through the development of distance learning programs would also ensure better continuity of education during displacement episodes.

To learn more about the project visit:
https://www.educationcluster.net