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REVIEW ARTICLE

THE SUCCESSFUL TUSEME MODEL IN BURKINA FASO

*OUEDRAOGO Félix

Development Sociologist, Burkina Faso

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ABSTRACT

In sub-Saharan Africa, the issue of girls' education remains a major concern in terms of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4. This issue involves several aspects, such as school retention and success. In Burkina Faso, keeping girls in school and ensuring their success is one of the major concerns of the education authorities. Despite the government's efforts, gender inequalities still persist. While parity has been achieved at primary level, inequalities still persist at secondary level despite all the efforts made. The gross enrolment ratio (girls/boys) is 1.02 at primary level, compared with 0.90 at secondary level by 2021-2022. The completion rate is 17.1% for girls and 21.1% for boys in 2021-2022. Women are also under-represented in the teaching profession, particularly at secondary level: the proportion of women teachers is 49.0% at primary level and 22% at secondary level in 2021-2022 (DGESS/MENAPLN, 2022). The security crisis that the country has been experiencing since 2014 has severely shaken the national education system. Girls are the hardest hit. This concern is also shared by the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) and the Laboratoire de Recherche sur les Transformations Économiques et Sociales (LARTES-IFAN), which, since 2021, with the technical and financial support of the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), have initiated and are implementing a programme to benefit four (04) countries, namely Burkina Faso, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sao Tome and Principe and Chad. One of the main approaches used in implementing the project is TUSEME, which is a FAWE model aimed at empowering young people, especially girls. One of the strategic objectives of implementing the TUSEME approach is to create transformational leadership among girls and build their confidence and self-esteem to enable them to remain in the education system and successfully complete their schooling. A mixed qualitative and quantitative method was used to mobilise empirical data for this study. The article analyses the issues involved and the factors conducive to increasing girls' school retention and success rates: the case of the TUSEME project in Burkina Faso.

INTRODUCTION

According to Burkina Faso's National Gender Strategy (NGS), "gender must be analysed from the angle of inequalities and disparities between men and women by examining the various social categories with the aim of greater social justice and equitable development" (NGS, 2021). Gender is therefore a learned social asset. It is relative, changing and dynamic. It evolves in time and space. It is social. Social relations are determined by role relationships, which are responsibilities, tasks and activities. In Burkina Faso, 53% of victims of domestic violence were girls in 2022 (MENAPLN, 2023). Social norms are rules or practices that are recognised as legitimate in a group or society that sets them and maintains them. They play a decisive role in defining women's and men's access to resources and freedoms, affecting their voice, power and sense of belonging to their society, community, etc. This project is being carried out against a backdrop of persistent gender inequalities in and through education in Burkina Faso.

*Corresponding author: *Kabore Amado*,
OUEDRAOGO Félix, Development sociologist, Burkina Faso.

It is part of the implementation of the TUSUME approach, "let's express ourselves without embarrassment" in Swahili, a process of empowerment for girls and boys, to enable them to understand and overcome the problems that are holding back their academic and social development. The approach used consisted of documentary research and a qualitative survey of key players in the promotion of girls' education, particularly in the implementation of the TUSEME approach (clubs, school heads, teachers, parents, NGOs/associations, the special delegation, the directorate responsible for girls' education, etc.). In terms of its contribution to promoting the retention and success of girls, the TUSEME approach has achieved notable results in Burkina Faso in general and in the eight beneficiary schools in particular. Four training workshops (each lasting three days) on TUSEME were held for 119 school staff from the beneficiary schools (including 67 pupils, i.e. 49 girls and 18 boys), and eight TUSEME clubs were set up in eight schools in the Centre (Ouagadougou) and Centre-South (Manga and Guiba) regions. These are the Nelson Mandela high school, the Lycée Professionnel Régional du Centre (LPRC), the lycée Mixte de Gounghin, the Marien N'Gouabi high school, the El Hadj Aboubacar Sangoulé LAMIZANA National Technical High School (formerly LTO), the Paspanga

municipal high school, Each TUSEME club is supervised by a sponsor (chosen from among the teachers) and has an office and an action plan for carrying out the activities identified by the pupils during the training sessions on the realities of their school environment. With material and financial support from the project, the TUSEME clubs have carried out a number of activities in the beneficiary schools. These include conducting advocacy hearings with education authorities, public awareness-raising conferences, training sessions on making GHM towels and forum theatres. The effective involvement of the school community in the implementation of the TUSEME approach, good ownership of the approach by club members and the establishment of a mechanism for monitoring and evaluating club activities to enable better reorientation of actions on the ground have been decisive in the conduct of TUSEME club activities.

KEEPING GIRLS IN SCHOOL IN BURKINA FASO

Social gender norms refer to a set of conventions and practices that often place girls in a secondary position and assign them a role they are expected to play in society. These practices are deeply rooted in certain communities in Burkina Faso, particularly in rural areas, and some parents are still reluctant to send their daughters to school, despite the many awareness-raising efforts underway. In some localities, there are pockets of resistance that deny girls the right to go to school. These communities have no interest in girls' education. For them, school is not a priority for girls, who are more suited to domestic work that will serve them well in their lives as wives. In most of these communities, the division of labour is based on gender. The work assigned to one sex or the other is clearly demarcated. Girls are generally found in "invisible" tasks such as reproduction and labour. As a result, these communities adopt a passive, even "wait-and-see" attitude to educational activities, with the corollary that there is little ownership of the benefits of the projects and programmes carried out by development partners. Very often, communities are not very involved in the projects intended for them, which sometimes results in little capitalisation of what has been achieved and affects the effectiveness and sustainability of programmes and innovations to promote school enrolment and keep girls in school. The weight of tradition (early marriages, forced marriages) means that in some localities girls are given in marriage at birth or drop out of school to get married.

DESCRIPTION OF THE METHODOLOGY ADOPTED

The study is based on documentary research and a qualitative survey. The documentary research consisted of examining documents relating to the establishment of TUSEME clubs and girls' schooling. It was based on documentary analyses of information relating to the study on innovative practices that encourage girls to stay in school and make the transition to secondary and higher education in sub-Saharan Africa. The qualitative survey was conducted among key players in the promotion of girls' education and TUSEME clubs. Individual interviews were conducted with schools, institutions, local communities and NGOs/associations. Group discussions were also held with pupils (boys and girls) who were members of the TUSEME clubs. In addition, the biographies (via life stories) of the godmothers/ godfathers or teachers, and of the children in and out of school were traced. It should be noted that data collection took place between 1 November and 15 December 2023.

It was carried out according to the availability of those involved. Table 1 below gives details of the targets covered by the qualitative survey. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. These transcripts were summarised and their content analysed.

THEORETICAL DETAILS

In Swahili, TUSEME means "let's express ourselves without embarrassment". It was initiated by the Fine Arts Department of the University of Dar Es Salaam in Tanzania. It is a process of empowerment for girls and boys, to enable them to understand and overcome the problems that hinder their academic and social development. It is a framework created to give girls and boys a forum to discuss issues that affect their academic or social development. Its objective is to empower young people (girls and boys) so that they are able to: (i) identify and analyse the problems that hinder their academic and social development; (ii) speak out and express themselves on these problems; and find solutions and take the necessary action to resolve these problems (FAWE, 2023).

Club TUSEME is a place for girls and boys to raise awareness and discuss gender issues with a view to improving self-esteem and social skills. To make this possible, we need to develop theatre, songs, shows, etc. where we learn to negotiate. The role of the club is to encourage community participation, improved learning and freedom of expression for learners. Setting up the club requires consultation with the head of the school, who will be the spokesperson for teachers, non-teaching staff, the PTA, all pupils and the community in introducing TUSEME in his or her school. The TUSEME club is made up of: (i) president; (ii) vice-president; (iii) secretary; (iv) treasurer; (v) reporter and (vi) sponsor.

RESULTS

The main activities of the TUSEME Clubs: In Burkina Faso, eight (08) TUSEME clubs have been set up in eight (08) schools in the Centre and Centre-South regions. In the Centre region, the schools concerned are: Lycée Nelson Mandela, Lycée National Technique Aboubacar Sangoulé Lamizana, Lycée Professionnel Régional du Centre, Lycée Mixte de Gounghin and Lycée Marien N'Gouabi. In the Centre Sud region, the schools that have benefited from TUSEME clubs are the Lycée Provincial Naaba Baongo and the Lycée Départemental de Guiba. The main activities carried out by the TUSEME clubs are advocacy hearings with the education authorities and technical and financial partners, public awareness-raising conferences and forum theatres. The themes addressed include the fight against insecurity and delinquency in schools, the fight against unwanted pregnancies and GBV in schools, girls' access to GHM kits, the installation of GHM adapted toilets in schools, the fight against child marriage, etc.

Promoting female leadership in beneficiary schools: The country report on the project "Improving knowledge of gender norms and understanding resistance to change in order to promote gender equality in and through education", January 2024, highlights that girls' lack of self-confidence is one of the obstacles to their success at school and their participation in science subjects. This highlights the need to strengthen girls' leadership and academic performance in science subjects. TUSEME is an empowerment model that enables girls and boys to understand the problems they face, talk about them and take action to find solutions.

Through the training sessions and TUSEME clubs, the girls have been able to discuss the difficulties affecting their studies or their social development, and to identify and take action themselves to overcome them. They have organised and led advocacy hearings, public awareness-raising conferences, forum theatres and training sessions in their schools.

Promoting positive masculinity in beneficiary schools:

Positive masculinity is an approach aimed at men to obtain their commitment to fighting violence against women and girls. At international level, it is therefore a perspective through which the commitment of men and boys has been used to support the wider movement for equality between men and women and the empowerment of women¹. For Jobert (2020: 5), citing the sociologist Caroline New, this commitment on the part of men can entail "masculinity costs", according to whom "the domination of men over women, which brings benefits and privileges for men, also leads to constraints for men, whether perceived or real, as a result of their conforming to behaviour identified as masculine". Again according to Jacquemart (2020: 3), "men do not benefit from engaging in feminist mobilisation, and even have something to lose by challenging their privileged position within the patriarchal system".

However, the need to deconstruct and eradicate negative aspects of masculinity by including men and boys in programmes to combat violence against women is a reality in many programmes today (Jobert, 2020). In Burkina Faso, the Ministry of Education has drawn up and adopted a guide to promoting positive masculinity in schools, with technical support from UNFPA. The guide sets out national guidelines for engaging boys and men in actions to prevent and manage early sexuality, pregnancy in schools, voluntary termination of pregnancy (VTP), STI/HIV/AIDS, menstrual hygiene, child marriage, gender-based violence in schools and the promotion of girls' education. Through the TUSEME experiment, signs of change have been recorded in the beneficiary schools. These include

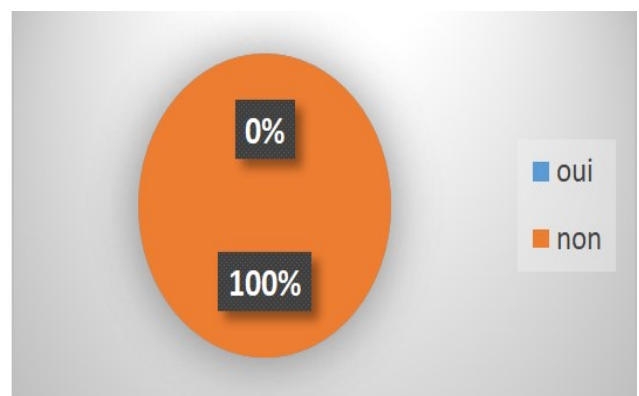
- The effective involvement of boys in organising and leading TUSEME club awareness-raising activities on topics such as girls' education, the fight against unwanted pregnancies and gender-based violence (GBV) in schools;
- The participation of boys in training sessions on the preparation of kits for Menstrual Hygiene Management (GHM) organised by the TUSEME clubs in collaboration with the Department for the Promotion of Inclusive Education, Girls' Education and Gender (DPEIEFG).

Taking into account factors linked to the family environment:

The activities of the TUSEME Clubs have not spared questions relating to the family environment. In Burkina Faso, the poverty of parents and the high cost of sending their children to school go some way to explaining why girls do not go to school and/or drop out. This is because "girls are invaluable family helpers and parents' poverty (especially in rural areas) means that they prefer to enrol the boys who perpetuate the family" (Kaboré, 2015). In addition, poverty pushes young girls to go to urban centres to work in households as domestic servants, which helps to compromise their chances of schooling (Baux & Pilon, 2002; Boly, 2017; Kaboré et al., 2003; Wayack and Pilon, 2011). Lack of

resources is cited by parents (30.2% of men and 16.2% of women) as one of the main barriers to girls' accessing and staying in school (country report on the study by the project "Améliorer les connaissances sur les normes de genre et mieux comprendre les résistances au changement en vue de promouvoir l'égalité des sexes dans et par l'éducation", January 2024). Poverty remains a major obstacle to children's access to education, particularly for girls. Although basic education is free, a large number of children do not attend school because parents are unable to buy school uniforms, learning materials and the fees indirectly charged by schools (Kazianga, 2012). The security crisis, with its large number of internally displaced people, has highlighted the contribution made by children, particularly girls, to the survival of displaced households, which are totally destitute. Young girls, who are forced to engage in economic activities to support their very vulnerable families (Boly, 2023), drop out of school to help run their households and support their parents. In some cases, the situation of vulnerability and extreme poverty leads some girls to prostitution². Socio-cultural constraints are still very much alive, particularly in rural areas. Certain traditions suggest that girls should be homemakers. As a result, they need to be introduced to the role of housewife at a very early age. In Burkina, the persistence of such considerations still explains the priority given to boys who are heirs to the detriment of girls who are forced to leave the family home. It should also be mentioned that in traditional families, girls are a source of alliance maintenance. They are promised in marriage from early childhood, or even from birth. These alliances are the corollary of early or forced marriages. In such cases, sending the girl to school would compromise the family's position. A study carried out by Save The Children (2020) emphasises that insecurity contributes to aggravating child marriage. In areas under the control of armed terrorist groups, parents prefer to give their daughters in marriage at an early age to enable them to escape abduction by terrorists.

Through the training and awareness-raising activities for the stakeholders concerned, the data collected from the TUSEME action research shows that there are signs of change, particularly among the beneficiaries of this approach. Parents and teachers are pleased to note that it is important to work with other parents and the general public to ensure that girls stay in school and succeed. When asked whether they thought the activities had been useful, the graph below gives an idea of the effects of the intervention. In fact, all the people interviewed said that the activities carried out as part of TUSEME's activities had brought about change.



² Cette information a été fournie lors d'un reportage de la radio voix de l'Amérique dans un camp de déplacés internes dans le Centre Nord. E titre du reportage est intitulé « sexe contre la nourriture ».

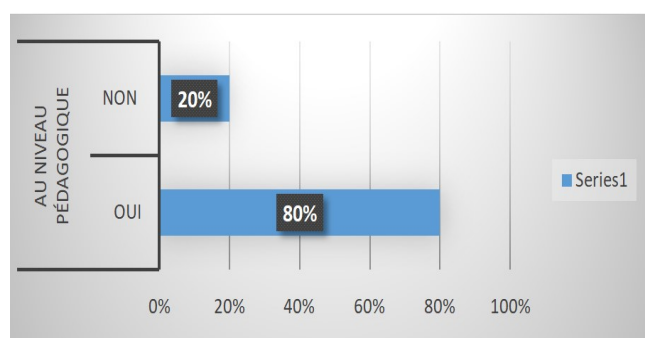
¹<https://au.int/fr/newsevents/20221110/2eme-conference-des-hommes-sur-la-masculinite-positve>

Table 1. Stakeholders interviewed according to collection methods in Burkina Faso

Target categories	Target groups	Number	Collection methods
TUSUME Clubs	Girls	4	FG
	Male students	4	FG
	Mentors (teachers) if teachers (4 women and 4 men)	8	Life story
	Girls at school (1 girl to be identified at FG or GD)	8	Life story
	Girls who have dropped out of school	8	Life story
Girls who have dropped out of school (experiences of failure)			
School players	Heads of secondary schools	8	EI
Institutional players	DPIEFG	1	EI
	Zoundweogo Provincial Department of Secondary Education	1	EI
Local players	Secondary school parents' association	8	EI
	Special delegation (town halls)	2	EI
	Manga traditional chiefs	1	EI
NGOs/Associations	FAWE	1	EI
	Azly	1	EI

Notes: IE=Individual interview; FG=Focus group

Improving factors linked to the school system: Burkina Faso's school environment is marked by numerous sexist stereotypes, which also constitute obstacles to girls' schooling (Kaboré, 2015). Consciously or unconsciously, teachers convey and/or reproduce gender prejudices. In their relations with pupils, they do not adopt the same attitude towards boys and girls. This discourages girls or reduces their performance in Burkina Faso schools. Added to this is the content of certain teaching manuals (see the CP1 class reading book: Gogo goes to the marigot; Ramata prepares rice; Nani is naked, etc.) which present images that do not always value the positions occupied by women and girls, or which advocate male superiority. Moreover, as Kaboré (2015) rightly points out, generally speaking, the heroes in stories from reading or history books are men. Following the intervention of TUSEME's activities, the stakeholders note significant signs of change, particularly at school level. These include improved teaching practices (pedagogy) that are increasingly free of sexist stereotypes and that promote gender much more. The graph below gives an overview of respondents' perceptions on the issue of improving the teaching practices of teachers who have benefited from TUSEME activities.



This graph shows that 80% of those surveyed said that teachers had made a positive change towards promoting girls, thereby helping them to stay in school and succeed. In the opinion of a pupil at the Lycée de Guiba: "The teachers pay a lot more attention to us and explain the lessons better so that everyone understands. Girls are more involved in educational activities than they used to be".

CONCLUSION

Social gender norms refer to a set of conventions and practices that often place girls in a secondary position and assign them a role that they are supposed to play in society. These practices are deeply rooted in certain communities in Burkina Faso, particularly in rural areas, and some parents are still reluctant to send their daughters to school, despite numerous efforts to raise awareness.

In some localities, there are pockets of resistance that deny girls the right to go to school. These communities have no interest in girls' education. For them, school is not a priority for girls, who are more suited to domestic work that will serve them well in their lives as wives. In most of these communities, the division of labour is based on gender. The jobs assigned to one sex or the other are clearly demarcated. Girls are generally found in "invisible" tasks such as reproduction and labour. As a result, these communities adopt a passive, even "wait-and-see" attitude to educational activities, with the corollary that the benefits of projects and programmes carried out by development partners are not widely taken on board. Very often, communities are not very involved in the projects intended for them, which sometimes results in little capitalisation of what has been achieved and affects the effectiveness and sustainability of programmes and innovations to promote school enrolment and keep girls in school. The weight of tradition (early marriages, forced marriages) means that in some localities girls are given in marriage at birth or drop out of school to get married. However, following the example of the TUSEME model, innovative and adapted approaches could eventually help to deconstruct these gender norms and change attitudes in favour of gender equality.

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