

Submission to the Universal Periodic Review of the United  
Nations Human Rights Council 4th Cycle – 44th Session

## **Right to Education**

### **Country Review: Burkina Faso**

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**Submitting Organization: BROKEN CHALK**

**April 2023**

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**Broken Chalk** is an Amsterdam-based NGO established in 2020 that monitors and minimises worldwide human rights violations in education. We aim to promote universal and equal access to education for all.

We encourage and support achieving societal peace with our international sponsors and partners by advocating for intercultural tolerance, preventing radicalism and polarisation, and tackling educational inequalities.

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## Introduction

1. Broken Chalk has prepared this report to contribute to the 4th Universal Periodic Review(UPR) of Burkina Faso. Broken Chalk is an Amsterdam-based NGO focused on human rights violations in education. Since the organisation’s primary mission is to fight inequalities and improve the quality of education worldwide, this report focuses on human rights, specifically education.
2. The report will first explore the main problems in the educational field in Burkina Faso, including information on what recommendations Burkina Faso received in the 3rd cycle UN UPR review in 2018 and the actions are taken to improve education. Then Broken Chalk offers some practical suggestions to Burkina Faso to enhance human rights in education further.
3. In the last review, Burkina Faso received 204 recommendations, and it supported 184 recommendations focused on the legal and general framework of implementation, universal and cross-cutting issues, civil and political rights, economic, social, and cultural rights, women’s rights, and rights of other vulnerable groups and persons. These recommendations will help Broken Chalk evaluate how Burkina Faso is performing according to the goals it set in 2017.
4. Quality education is a vital pillar of our society. It enables long-term growth and development, helps the integration of minorities and foreigners and shapes the future of the young ones in the community. Education in Burkina Faso has a very similar structure to the rest of the world, primary schools, secondary schools, and higher education. The academic year in Burkina Faso runs from October to July. The Education Act means that schooling is compulsory between 6 and 15, but unfortunately, this is only sometimes enforced. The education system is based on the French model, and the French language is taught in all Burkina Faso schools. According to World Bank, it is notable that approximately 56% of youth have no formal education and 16% of youth have attained at most incomplete primary education, meaning that in total, 72% indicating that 15-24 years old have not completed primary education in Burkina Faso.

## Leading issues in the educational field in Burkina Faso

### The Effect of Covid-19 on Education

5. Like every country worldwide, the education system in Burkina Faso was also affected by Covid-19. All schools in Burkina Faso were closed for nine weeks from March 2020. After this time, schools in some areas reopened, with all schooling resuming after 14

weeks(UNESCO, 2020). School closure affected more than 20,000 educational establishments and disrupted the education of over 4.7 million learners.

6. The impact of Covid-19 forced the closure of schools across the country, putting the most marginalised children at risk of losing out on learning and not returning to the classroom.
7. Broken Chalk congratulates Burkina Faso for adopting remote studying, undertaken during school closures, with learning materials provided via television, radio and Internet for ol (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, UNICEF & World Bank, 2020). However, 84% of students need internet access, 81% lack digital devices, and 81% have difficulty distributing hard copies of learning materials. These disadvantaged students needing access to remote studies fell behind, with others dropping out.
8. Another barrier to remote education is access to technology. The MILO (Monitoring Impacts on Learning Outcomes) project indicates that the support many schools need relates to accessing technology rather than human capital.

### **Armed groups attack teachers, students and schools in Burkina Faso.**

9. Burkina Faso's education system faces recurrent and growing attacks by armed groups. Schools have been attacked, teachers assaulted and killed, and educational resources destroyed. At one point, all schools were closed, disrupting the school calendar. Students and staff were sent home.
10. Burkina Faso is facing an education crisis, with severe deterioration in access to education due to armed violence over the past few years. Education indicators have been declining since 2018, with the gross enrolment rate at the primary level falling from 90.7% to 86.1% and the post-primary level from 52% to 47.3%, a loss of 5 points in three years. For example, in the Sahel region, which has been partially affected by insecurity, the gross enrolment rate at the primary level has fallen from 53.4% in 2018 to 20.3% in 2021. Thus, only one in four children were attending school in the Sahel region in 2021.
11. The attacks by armed groups have led to the closures of many schools in Burkina Faso. As of 31 May 2022, more than 4,000 schools were closed due to insecurity, representing 17% of schools nationwide, interrupting the education of more than 700,000 children. An estimated 2.6 million children and adolescents aged 6 to 17 are out of school, representing more than half of all children (51.4%).

## Access to water, sanitation and hygiene

**12.** 54% of the population of Burkina Faso has access to improved drinking water sources, while only 23% has access to improved sanitation facilities. Regarding water and sanitation facilities in schools, Burkina Faso faces challenges. Fourteen years old Pauline W.Somlare, grade 6, at mount primary school, located 13 km from Niou in the central plateau region. Open since October 1979, it was only in 2001 that the school got its first water pump. Despite the water installation, only some things are going how they should. A few weeks ago, the school faced a crucial water problem leading to thirst, lack of hygiene, late lessons and the often-served late lunch. The latest failure in 2019 could be repaired. In December 2019, thanks to UNICEF intervention following a request from the ministry in charge of education, the water pump was rehabilitated in Jan 2020.

## Quality of Education

- 13.** Despite the quality management of the Burkinabe education system and its numerous educational strategy: The Orientation Law, the Basic Education Sector Development Plan, the Education Sector Plan, the Integrated Strategy for the Strengthening of Pedagogical Management, the Integrated Strategy for the Continuous Training of Teachers and Pedagogical Managers, or its Quality Reference Framework for Basic Education... Burkina Faso is still not quite "top of the class". There needs to be more than just defining strategies to guarantee success.
- 14.** The transfer of competencies from the State to local authorities accentuates the need for more financial resources. And, if financial resources are lacking, the diagnosis also highlights that human resources are also limited. In a system that tends to move towards greater decentralisation and entrusts a great deal of responsibility to the actors closest to the ground, their support for these new responsibilities (mainly administrative and financial) is only sometimes equal to the challenges.
- 15.** Resources that only sometimes match the needs. With little training and support, teachers in the deconcentrated areas need help to play their role. Often burdened by a heavy administrative workload, they need help keeping up with the pace and thus slow down actions to improve quality teaching.
- 16.** Attacks on schools and class disruptions have reduced the quality of education students receive and put many students behind in their studies. One student said that she had

failed her final exam after an attack forced her school to close for weeks, leaving her unable to prepare. Another said, “It makes me unhappy not to be able to finish, to have to retake classes, not even to have any documents to show you took the course.

- 17.** Lack of psychosocial and material support to victims of attacks from the armed group of men
- 18.** Human Rights Watch identified the lack of consistent and timely support to victims of education-related attacks as another significant issue. Numerous teachers who were attacked or threatened said they had never received any psychosocial support from the government. Others said the support they had received was perfunctory and inadequate, without any longer-term follow-up. Many still struggle with emotional or psychological issues. Teachers said they felt abandoned and undervalued, expected to restart work following redeployments despite lacking psychosocial, financial or material support.

## Recommendations

- 19.** Improve hygiene in schools
- 20.** Help teachers improve their knowledge and skills so they can provide children with better education
- 21.** Prevent human rights violations in school institutions
- 22.** Fight the constant attacks on schools by the armed group
- 23.** Consult with UNICEF to create centres to help victims of school attacks for counselling to overcome the fear of returning to school.
- 24.** Tackling school access to safe water to provide clean water, sanitation and hygiene.
- 25.** Providing training to teachers in rural areas with more skills and knowledge in areas the
- 26.** Hold those responsible for school attacks legally accountable before the judiciary
- 27.** Help teachers improve their knowledge and skills to provide children with better education.

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