

# CONSENSUS STATEMENT

## Reaching the next level of Investment in Girls' Education and Family Planning in the West African Sahel

February 2022

Increasing access to voluntary family planning and quality education are strategic and mutually reinforcing interventions. Family planning and girls' education are fundamental human rights, and central to the health and well-being of women, girls and their communities. Combined, they can mitigate future humanitarian crises and create healthier, more resilient communities in the Sahel.<sup>1</sup>

The evidence before us is clear: girls' education helps to remove barriers that perpetuate gender inequality and increases girls' ability to postpone marriage, childbirth and their number of children. Together education and family planning contribute to healthier, more prosperous households, communities, and nations. With population growth exacerbating other regional challenges to the point of insolubility, targeted investments in family planning and girls' education are now critical.

We, the undersigned, comprising Sahel governments and civil societies, donors, and implementing partners, reviewed the evidence at a side event of the Global Partnership for Education's Global Education Summit called "Increasing Aid for Girls' Education and Family Planning in the West African Sahel" on July 27, 2021.

### **We call on donors across the globe and urge them to:**

- Increase overseas development assistance to G-5 Sahel countries to improve access to and expand the choice of voluntary family planning by 107 million USD per year<sup>2</sup>
- Increase overseas development assistance to G-5 Sahel countries for gender equitable education by 1.2 billion USD per year<sup>1</sup>
- Uphold a commitment to country ownership which stipulates countries should make decisions that are aligned with their national goals and programs
- Reduce burden on the national systems by streamlining reporting requirements and better aligning them with other donors

<sup>1</sup> [Avert Catastrophe now in Africa's Sahel](#) Graves, A., Rosa, L., Nouhou A.M., Maina F., Adoum D. Nature 575 : 282-286. Nov 2019.

<sup>2</sup> [A Fulcrum for the Future - Girls' Education and Voluntary Family Planning: The Best Investments for Development and Security in the Sahel. Family Planning, Girls' Education, Women's Empowerment"](#) March 2021.

## **We call on G-5 Sahel governments to:**

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- Increase spending on education to 3.9% of GDP, as recommended in the 2015 UNESCO Education for All Global Monitoring Report<sup>3</sup>
- Uphold international, regional and national commitments related to family planning/reproductive health and educational equity, (e.g. Maputo Protocol, Abuja Declaration, FP2030, 2030 Platform for Sustainable Development, Education for All, Beijing+25.) with an emphasis on systems strengthening and integration of family planning into the health care system

## **We call on Sahel-based organizations working on education and/or reproductive health to:**

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- Initiate and lead partnerships including diverse actors (civil society organizations, researchers, policy experts, donors, etc.) who will collaborate on priority action needed to mobilize funding in these areas
- Commit to meaningfully including those most adversely affected, women and girls, in the planning, development and implementation
- Urge governments and donors to increase investments in family planning and girls' education, per the recommendations above
- Monitor progress in implementation of their country's sectoral action plans to increase accountability
- Advocate for changes to make education and family planning more responsive to the needs of youth and of the poorest segments of society<sup>4</sup>

Through this statement, the undersigned parties hereby pledge to advocate for an increase in national spending and overseas development aid earmarked for family planning and girls' education in the Sahel region.

We commit to do our utmost to ensure investments in girls' education and family planning are spent effectively and reach more girls and women across the Sahel.

## **Signatories**

Alisha Graves, Director, OASIS, **USA**

Nouhou Abdoul Moumouni, Director, GRADE Africa, **Niger**

Marie Ba, Director, Ouagadougou Partnership, **Senegal**

Habiba Mohammed, Director, Center for Girls Education, **Nigeria**

Ndola Prata, Director, Bixby Center for Population Health and Sustainability, **USA**

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<sup>3</sup> [Global Education Monitoring Report 2020: Inclusion and education: All means all](#). Paris. UNESCO 2020.

<sup>4</sup> [Pathways to Choice: Delaying Age of Marriage through Girls' Education in Northern Nigeria](#) Perlman, D., Adamu, F. Mandara, M. Abiola, O. Cao, D. and Potts, M. in S. Dworkin, M. Gandhi, and P. Passano, editors. Women's Empowerment and Global Health: A Twenty-First-Century Agenda. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2016