

# Executive summary - Sexual and reproductive health education in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger

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This summary presents key findings of the programmatic note based on a desk review conducted by KIT Royal Tropical Institute as part of the “Break Free” programme. The Break Free programme aims for adolescents to be able to exercise their right to a life without early pregnancy or child marriage, supported by civil society. The desk review aimed to inform the programme on the status of sexual and reproductive health (SRH) education in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger, including analysing existing policies, mapping current practices, and identifying the current debates in the national landscapes on SRH education.

## NATIONAL POLICIES IN MALI, BURKINA FASO AND NIGER

National policies on SRH education are different in all three countries. While in Mali there is no policy that supports SRH education, in Burkina Faso sex education is integrated into two policies of the Ministry of Health however, it is not included in the policies of the Ministry of Education. In Niger the comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) is included in the secondary education programmes but is not mentioned in the policies of the Ministry of Health. At the regional level in West Africa, despite having some regional strategies on SRHR and HIV, there is no policy or strategy on SRH education or comprehensive sexuality education. The only document that recognises the importance of providing youth with SRH education is the Maputo Plan of Action (2016-2030) and the African Youth Charter (2009). Both documents were developed at the continental level and ratified by Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger.

## WHAT IS HAPPENING IN PRACTICE?

In all three countries, SRH education is a sensitive topic, especially in Mali and Niger where there is a strong religious resistance towards sexuality. In Burkina Faso, the Ministry of Education developed SRH modules for secondary education. Despite debates on the terminology used to refer to this type of education in Burkina Faso, the modules developed follow a comprehensive approach.

The focus and type of information shared in programmes or policies, as well as their degree of comprehensiveness, differ in each country. In the three countries, there are organisations that not only focus on prevention or the provision of reproductive health information, but also include relationship information and negotiation skills. Nevertheless, based on the available literature, it is difficult to assess to what extent the initiatives and programmes are comprehensive in the three countries. Media channels are a big resource of SRH information for young people in all three countries. Websites like [Click Info Ado'](#) in Mali, offer a wide variety of videos and posts on topics such as sexuality, relationships, reproductive health, etc.

Aside from being challenging to provide information or educate young people on several topics linked to sexual and reproductive health, in all three countries reaching out-of-school youth was one of the main challenges. Most of the programmes and policies implemented focus on in-school youth. It remains important to invest in initiatives in the informal sector to reach out-of-school youth as well as formal initiatives in schools since most young people do not reach secondary school, especially in Niger and Mali. In Mali, political-civic collaboration is more complicated because of the sensitivity of the term name CSE and information activities at SRH are multiple but more dispersed. While the CSE is nationalised in both Niger and Burkina Faso, it seems that the content is not as comprehensive as in Mali, where the context is more restricted; the content of informal activities (such as website or artistic performances) is more comprehensive.