



*History of Political Commitment to the Institutionalization of the Speed Schools (SSA/P) approach in Burkina Faso*

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**SUMMARY**

This case study examines the institutionalization process of the Speed Schools (SSA/P) program in Burkina Faso, with a particular focus on the nature and drivers of the political commitment that enabled its sustainability and scale-up.

Originally introduced as an educational innovation by the Stromme Foundation, SSA/P was progressively integrated into the national education system through collaborative design mechanisms, evidence generation, contextual adaptation, and strong institutional ownership.

The study demonstrates that political commitment, when grounded in credible evidence, supported by inclusive governance arrangements, and reinforced by clear regulatory frameworks, serves as a critical lever for sustaining and scaling educational innovations aimed at out-of-school children.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.fdcbf.org/index.php/multimedia/galerie-photos/fdc>

## Introduction

In a context marked by persistently high numbers of out-of-school children and adolescents, Sahelian countries have progressively explored alternative education pathways to uphold the right to basic education for all. The SSA/P approach forms part of this broader effort by offering a flexible and inclusive pathway into formal primary education for children who have never enrolled or who have dropped out of school.

In Burkina Faso, SSA/P stands out as a particularly instructive example of an educational innovation that has successfully moved through the successive stages of piloting, contextual adaptation, scale-up, and institutionalization. This case study seeks to document and analyze the evolution of political commitment in support of SSA/P, identifying the mechanisms that have enabled its sustained integration into the national education system.

## Methodology

The study adopts a qualitative case study approach, combining: (i) a review of relevant documentation (regulatory texts, partnership agreements, study and evaluation reports); (ii) analysis of administrative data on learner enrolment, SSA/P centers, and transition rates into the formal education system; and (iii) a systematization of institutional knowledge drawn from the experience of key stakeholders involved in the implementation and oversight of the SSA/P.

Particular attention was given to insights from the Permanent Secretariat of the SSA/P, which later evolved into the Technical Directorate in charge of the SSA/P within the General Directorate of Non-Formal Education (DGENF) of the Ministry of Basic Education, Literacy and Promotion of National Languages (MEBAPLN).

The main limitations of the analysis relate to the unavailability of certain key data, particularly regarding the tracking of learners beyond the primary cycle, which would have further strengthened the comprehensiveness of the study

## History of the SSA/P and Its Progressive Integration into the Education System of Burkina Faso

The SSA/P program was first introduced in 2004 in Mali by the Strømme Foundation in response to the educational needs of out-of-school children aged 8 to 12. Its implementation in Burkina Faso began in 2006 through local NGOs and community-based organizations, at a time when the national regulatory framework provided limited recognition of alternative education pathways



for out-of-school children, with the exception of the Centers for Non-Formal Basic Education (CEBNF).

From 2007 onwards, SSA/P progressively emerged as a sub-regional educational innovation, expanding across Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger. In Burkina Faso, this initial phase served to pilot the pedagogical model, which is based on one year of accelerated learning facilitated by trained instructors, followed by the integration of learners into formal primary school (Grade 2 or Grade 3) upon successful completion of a final assessment.

In line with national regulatory requirements, an institutional support and oversight mechanism was established through an agreement signed in 2008 between the ministry in charge of basic education, the Strømme Foundation, and partner NGOs. This agreement authorized an official three-year pilot phase. The pilot generated results considered compelling, both in terms of improved access and successful transition into the formal education system.

Following this experimental phase, successive partnership agreements facilitated the gradual expansion of the SSA/P to additional localities. The eligibility age range was adjusted from 8–12 years to 9–12 years to avoid competition with formal primary education and to better target children who had been durably excluded from the school system

Over the past five years, more than 61,000 out-of-school children have been integrated into the formal primary education system through the SSA/P, with an average transition rate of 89%<sup>2</sup>. The number of centers serving out-of-school children has also increased steadily over the years, reflecting a gradual scale-up of the program. For example, the number of SSA/P centers rose from 461 in the 2023–2024 school year to 686<sup>3</sup> in 2024–2025. In addition, teaching and learning materials adapted to national languages have been developed and progressively expanded in line with the inclusion of additional languages. The number of national languages covered increased from three (3) in 2008 to seven (7) in 2023, thereby strengthening both the accessibility and contextual relevance of learning<sup>4</sup>.

## Political Commitment as a driver for institutionalization

The institutionalization of the SSA/P in Burkina Faso can be largely attributed to a progressive and structured political commitment. This commitment was reflected in the formal involvement of state actors at every stage of the process, from initial piloting to nationwide scale-up.

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<sup>2</sup> SP-SSA/P Statistical Report 2022–2023

Administrative Data from the Directorate of the Accelerated Schooling/Bridging Strategy (SSA/P) for 2023–2024 and 2024–2025

<sup>3</sup> Directorate of the Accelerated Schooling/Bridging Strategy (SSA/P) – 2024–2025 Enrollment Data as of 13 May 2025.

<sup>4</sup> Permanent Secretariat of the SSA/P – Report on the Production of SSA/P Materials in National Languages, May 2023



At the sub-regional level, high-level consultations among the governments of Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger, the Strømme Foundation, and partner NGOs led to the establishment in 2010 of a Sub-Regional Permanent Secretariat for the SSA/P. This body, with a formal governance framework, facilitated the harmonization of approaches and the consolidation of teaching and learning tools prior to the gradual transfer of responsibilities to the member states, completed in 2019.

Within Burkina Faso, this process enabled the creation of the Permanent Secretariat of the Accelerated Schooling/Bridging Strategy (SP-SSA/P) in 2019. The country's political commitment to the SSA/P has been built on several complementary pillars, including the co-development of pedagogical tools and curricula with the education administration; the formalization of roles and responsibilities through official regulatory texts; the continuous capacity building of both institutional and field-level actors; the generation and use of evidence through internal assessments and two external studies commissioned by the Strømme Foundation, conducted in 2014 and 2018 respectively<sup>5</sup> demonstrating the effectiveness and added value of the SSA/P.

This commitment materialized through the integration of the SSA/P into the national education system, the establishment of a dedicated technical structure, and the financing of SSA/P centers using state resources since 2011. This process of institutional ownership has been most fully expressed in the creation of a formal technical governance mechanism responsible for overseeing and coordinating the nationwide scale-up of the strategy.

The government has significantly strengthened scale-up efforts through the establishment of the SSA/P Technical Directorate. This directorate is a member of the "Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)" thematic group within the Education-Training Sectoral Dialogue Framework (see Interministerial Decree No. 2025/MEBAPLN/MESRI/MESFPT/MSJE). It also provides leadership for the steering committee of all SSA/P programs implemented nationwide, whether led by the state or by NGOs. This coordination framework brings together all NGOs and associations involved in accelerated education, aiming to consolidate experiences, share lessons with all partners, and thereby strengthen the evidence base and data system for these programs.

## Role of NGOs in the Dissemination and Consolidation of the SSA/P

In addition to the Strømme Foundation, numerous national and international NGOs and associations have incorporated the SSA/P into their educational programs. Key actors include Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Educo, Terre des Hommes Suisse, and Faso-Action for Community Development (FDC). These organizations play a central role in adapting the SSA/P model to local contexts, particularly in areas affected by insecurity where disruptions to the formal education system are most pronounced, including regions such as Bankui, Djoro, Goulmou, Koulsé, Liptako, Nakambé, Soum, and Yaadga.

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<sup>5</sup> Evaluation of the SSA/P in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger, August 2014



NGOs also contribute to the scale-up of the SSA/P by supporting internal data collection, piloting innovative practices, and consolidating lessons learned, all while aligning with national policy directions. This complementary partnership between state and non-state actors has strengthened both the resilience and the reach of the program.

## Lessons Learned from the Burkina Faso Experience

The SSA/P experience in Burkina Faso highlights several key lessons for the sustainability and scale-up of educational innovations.

First, the institutionalization of an innovation depends on the continuous engagement of education authorities, regular stakeholder consultations, and strict adherence to formalized commitments. Second, the availability and sharing of factual evidence is a critical factor in ensuring resilience against institutional and political changes. Finally, successful scale-up requires effective state ownership, clear regulatory frameworks, sustained financial resource mobilization, and the ongoing adaptation of pedagogical standards to evolving local contexts.

## Conclusion

The trajectory of the SSA/P in Burkina Faso illustrates how an educational innovation, initially driven by non-state actors, can be sustainably integrated into a national education system through political commitment grounded in co-creation, evidence generation, and shared governance. This experience provides transferable lessons for other contexts facing the challenges of inclusive education and the schooling of out-of-school children.

*Conducted by CERFODES, Burkina Faso*



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