

# Issue BRIEF

**BRIGHT FUNDING AND IMPLEMENTATION**

The Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) sponsored BRIGHT through a threshold program for the first phase (three classrooms and complementary interventions) and through a compact for the second phase (three additional classrooms and complementary interventions). BRIGHT was implemented by a consortium of NGOs including Plan International, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Tin Twa, and the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) under the supervision of USAID.

By Ali Protik and Matt Sloan

## BRIGHT Improves Girls' School Enrollment, Test Scores

Less than half of the girls living in Burkina Faso in 2004 attended primary school. In the same year, only a quarter of all girls were enrolled in the last grade of primary school. To address these issues, the government of Burkina Faso launched "Burkinabé Response to Improve Girls' Chances to Succeed," or BRIGHT, in 132 villages throughout 10 provinces in the country, where primary school enrollment rates were the lowest nationwide. Starting in 2005, BRIGHT funded the construction of primary schools, one in each village, and implemented a set of complementary interventions. The schools had had three classrooms, one each for grades 1 to 3. To sustain the program's success beyond its first three years, the Burkina Faso government extended BRIGHT in 2009 by constructing three more classrooms, one each for grades 4 to 6, and by continuing the original complementary interventions.

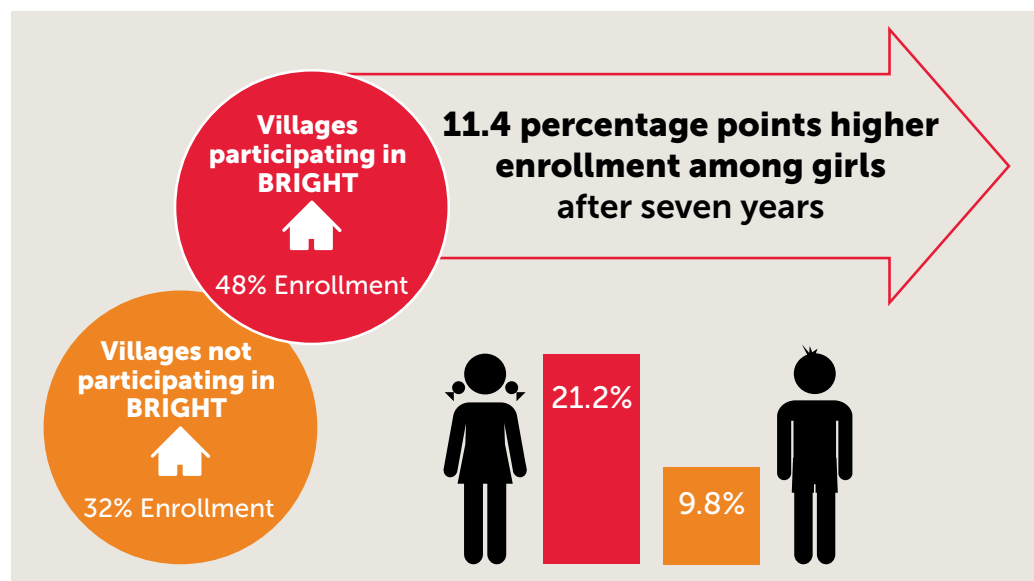
Mathematica Policy Research and its partners recently completed a mid-term evaluation of BRIGHT's seven-year impact on enrollment, attendance, test scores, health, and child labor. This issue brief summarizes key findings from the evaluation and presents a preliminary benefit-cost analysis of the program, estimating its economic rate of return.

**BRIGHT INTERVENTIONS PROVE SUCCESSFUL ON MANY FRONTS**

Seven years after the program began, BRIGHT schools still offered a superior learning and social environment. The schools became more

accessible, and they had a better educational infrastructure than schools in villages not selected for the program. BRIGHT schools have also sustained the girl-friendly characteristics that were present when the program was implemented.

**BRIGHT continued to have large, positive impacts on enrollment, especially for girls**





► A traditional school and classroom in Burkina Faso

**BRIGHT continued to have large positive impacts on enrollment after seven years.** As reported by parents, the enrollment of children in BRIGHT villages was 15.5 percentage points higher than enrollment in the villages not selected for the program. This impact is quite large, given that 85.8 percent of the unselected villages do have a school.

**BRIGHT’s positive impacts on test scores have been sustained since the program began.** Students in villages selected for BRIGHT scored 0.29 standard deviations higher than students in villages not selected for the program. A difference of 0.29 standard deviations means that a student who started at the 50th percentile in our sample moved to approximately the 73rd percentile if he or she was in a village selected for BRIGHT. This positive impact is consistent across the math and French sections of the exam. BRIGHT also had larger positive impacts on girls than it did on boys in terms of enrollment and test scores.

**BRIGHT had moderate positive impacts on child labor.** Children in Burkina Faso normally help their families with, or are paid by others to perform, several household activities, including collecting firewood, cleaning, fetching water, watching their siblings and/or children in other families, tending animals, and shopping. BRIGHT villages saw a modest drop of 2.5 to 5.9 percentage points in the number of children engaged in each activity.






**BRIGHT did not have an impact on child health.** The absence of impacts on child health could have been caused by low levels of participation in school-feeding and dry-ration programs. Evaluators used several measures of child health to estimate impacts: upper arm circumference, height, weight, and body mass index.



► A Burkina Faso school and classroom built as part of the BRIGHT Program

## BRIGHT COMPLEMENTARY INTERVENTIONS

BRIGHT funded not only the construction of 132 primary schools with girl-friendly features but also the development of six complementary interventions designed to increase girls’ enrollment rates:

-  **Daily meals** for boys as well as girls.
-  **Eight kilograms of dry cereal each month** that girls could take home if they had a 90 percent attendance rate.
-  **Textbooks and school supplies** for all students.
-  **Community awareness campaigns** to mobilize village residents and others with a stake in the education system; campaign activities included informational meetings and door-to-door canvassing about gender-sensitivity training.
-  **Literacy training** for adults and mentoring for girls.

## BRIGHT IS COMPARABLE TO MORE EXPENSIVE INTERVENTIONS THAT TARGET ENROLLMENT

Although BRIGHT’s positive impact on girls’ enrollment and test scores is particularly noteworthy, cost-effectiveness measures suggest that the program is among the more expensive interventions that target enrollment and test scores. However, findings from a preliminary benefit-cost analysis indicate that the benefits of BRIGHT may exceed its costs when the assumed returns to schooling are high, such as the higher earnings that result from increased education when better educated children enter the labor market as young adults.

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