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**The contribution of the safe school approach to the resilience of stakeholders in the municipality of Fada N'gourma (Burkina Faso).
Burkina Faso's education system in the face of the security crisis¹**

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ABSTARCT

Since 2016, Burkina Faso has been faced with growing insecurity that is disrupting the state's ability to provide adequate education services. Armed attacks that were initially directed against the security forces are now deliberately targeting schools and those involved in them. Against this backdrop, the need to protect schools and those involved in them is growing. The government and its partners are therefore implementing the Safe School approach in regions affected by insecurity. This analysis was carried out in the commune of Fada N'Gourma and aims to highlight the causes of the difficulties encountered with the Safe School approach in the commune's pilot schools. A mixed methodology combining qualitative and quantitative data was used to arrive at the results. These indicate that the causes of the difficulties in implementing the approach can be summed up as inadequate training for those involved, poor community involvement, the failure of some teachers to get involved in drawing up the school's Response Preparedness Plans, unfamiliarity with the approach on the part of pupils in

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the lower grades and those who arrive during the school year, and inadequate monitoring and support.

Keywords: Safe School approach – preparedness plan responses – Resilience – pilot school

RESUME

Depuis 2016, le Burkina Faso est confronté à une insécurité croissante qui perturbe les capacités de l'État à assurer la fourniture adéquate de services éducatifs. Les attaques armées qui, au départ, étaient dirigées contre les forces de sécurité, ciblent désormais de manière délibérée l'école et ses acteurs. Dans ce contexte que se développe la nécessité de protéger l'école et ses acteurs. Ainsi, l'État et ses partenaires mettent en œuvre l'approche *Safe School* ou *école sûre* dans les régions impactées par l'insécurité. Cette analyse a été conduite dans la commune de Fada N'Gourma et vise à mettre en exergue les causes des difficultés de l'approche Safe School dans les écoles pilotes de la commune. Une méthodologie mixte alliant données qualitatives et quantitatives a permis d'aboutir à des résultats. Ceux-ci indiquent que les causes des difficultés de la mise en œuvre de l'approche se résument à l'insuffisance de formation des acteurs, la faible implication de la communauté, la non-implication de certains enseignants dans la formulation des Plans de Préparations Réponses de l'école, la méconnaissance de l'approche par les élèves des petites classes et ceux arrivés en cours d'années et l'insuffisance du suivi-accompagnement.

Mots clés : approche *safe school* – plan de préparation réponses- Résilience – écoles pilotes

1. INTRODUCTION

The constitution of Burkina Faso, like that of other countries in the world, recognises education as a fundamental right. One of the challenges facing Burkina Faso's schools is not only to ensure that every child has access to basic education, but also, and above all, to provide quality education for all. However, for many children across the country, this fundamental right, which is essential to their development, is compromised by the exposure and vulnerability of schools and education systems to various dangers. Indeed, the country has

been experiencing a security crisis since the middle of the 2010s, the manifestations of which are thwarting efforts by the government and its development partners to realise this fundamental right.

In many localities, basic social services, particularly education and health, are closed because of the many risks to workers and users of these services. The statistical report by the Secrétariat Technique de l'Éducation en Situation d'Urgence (Technical Secretariat for Education in Emergency Situations) dated 28 May 2021 lists 2,244 schools closed, affecting almost 304,564 pupils and 11,068 teachers (MENAPLN-ST-ESU 2021). Human Rights Watch (2020) notes that "schools are the targets of Islamist armed groups, because they cite their opposition to 'French' or Western-style education".

Faced with harassment from armed groups, people are moving to relatively safer areas. As at 30 June 2021, the number of internally displaced persons was estimated at 1,312,071 (Source UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 2022), nearly half of whom were school-age children. The Sahel, Centre-North, East and North regions, the most affected by this crisis, are those recording the highest number of displaced persons. The municipality of Fada N'Gourma is home to 46,532 displaced persons (CONASUR 2021).

In response to the negative effects of this crisis on the school system, the Ministry of Education, Literacy and the Promotion of National Languages (MENAPLN), with the support of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), has initiated emergency actions, including the safe school programme. In regions affected by insecurity, this programme has been developed thanks to Swiss Cooperation, the Danish International Development Agency and the Norwegian Agency for International Development. The aim of the programme is to ensure continuity in the education of pupils, given that education is one of the bulwarks against violent extremism and terrorism (UNICEF Burkina Faso 2020).

The safe school programme consists of psychosocial support (PSS) provided by teachers through fun educational activities, risk reduction by school preparations through plans to deal with various crises, collective or individual psychosocial assistance provided by professional psychologists and the support of community relays and health workers, and a radio education programme aimed at children living in inaccessible areas, in order to strengthen the resilience of schools and communities. Operational partners such as the non-governmental organisations (NGOs) Humanité et Inclusion (HI) and Danish Refugee Council (DRC), which specialise in psychosocial services, are supporting the decentralised structures of MENAPLN and local

authorities in implementing the Safe School approach. The vision of this approach is to create a protective, inclusive and friendly environment for quality teaching and learning in Burkina Faso schools. It helps to develop resilient behaviours among those involved in education - teachers, social workers, pupils, parents and even the whole community. This approach also aims to foster the development of a culture of prevention and disaster risk reduction in schools. This article is part of an analysis of the implementation of the Safe School approach in pilot schools in the commune of Fada N'gourma.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1- Presentation of the study area

Fada N'Gourma, the capital of the Eastern Region, was the site of the study. Located in the east of the country, Fada N'Gourma covers an area of 11.2 km, and is situated in a region subject to pressure from armed terrorist groups.

In the field of education, according to data collected from the statistics department of the CEB of Fada, the commune of Fada N'Gourma had 147 primary schools in 2020 (CEB of Fada, 2021). As of 07 March 2022, the number of functional primary schools had risen to 92, comprising 62 state schools and 30 public schools. There were 55 non-functional primary schools, or 37% of the total number of schools in the commune (CEB de Fada, 2022). The non-functioning of these schools is linked to the terrorist attacks suffered by the villages in the commune and the threat to teachers. There are 1,141 teachers working in these schools, 956 in state schools and 185 in public schools. All these teachers work under the coordination of a Head of Basic Education District (CCEB).

In the commune of Fada N'Gourma, the threats and consequences of terrorist attacks are a reality for the education system and its stakeholders. To address this reality, the Safe School approach is being implemented in several schools in the CEB of Fada N'Gourma. The approach is being implemented in ten (10) schools in the commune of Fada N'Gourma in pilot form for a period of 04 years for the period 2018-2022 at the initiative of the NGO Humanité et Inclusion (HI).

In view of the configuration of the problem and the objectives of safe school, a qualitative approach proved necessary. This will enable us to grasp the representations of the various stakeholders and safe school's adoption strategies. To this end, the interview proved to be the

most suitable data collection technique. It was devoted to understanding the rationale behind the choice of pilot schools, assessing the implementation of the Safe School approach in these schools, the difficulties encountered in implementing the approach, and the causes of these difficulties.

The other category of stakeholders concerned by these interviews is the pupils. They are the main beneficiaries of the Safe School approach, and for this reason it was important to understand their relationship with the approach, their appropriation of the approach's safety standards, etc. These pupils come from schools in which the Safe School approach has been implemented. These pupils come from schools where the safe school approach is being tested. Eighty-eight (88) people were interviewed in this category. Although the eighty-eight (88) pupils questioned were in pilot schools.

2-2- Survey populations

The survey population can refer to a group of people, organisations or objects, regardless of their nature.

The work focuses on primary schools in the commune of Fada implementing the pilot phase of the Safe School project. The target populations for the survey are education stakeholders, as follows

- primary school pupils, especially those in CM ;
- classroom teachers
- school headmasters, who are key players in the implementation of the national education policy
- Pedagogical supervisors (CCEB and CPI) from the Fada CEB, who monitor the quality of teaching;
- parents of pupils and a representative of the Humanité et Inclusion project living in Fada N'Gourma.

Table 1: Sample selected

Population cible	Total workforce			Sample workforce			Sampling rate
	Men /Boys	Total Men /Boys	Total	Total Men /Boys	Total Men /Boys	Total	

Schools			10			7	70%
Directors	7	0	7	07	00	07	100%
Teachers	30	65	95	11	10	21	22%
Pupils	419	450	869	40	48	88	10%
APE/AME/COGES office	70	49	119	11	10	21	17%
Supervisors	04	00	04	04	00	04	100%
Deputy Project Manager/ Safe School	01	00	01	01	00	01	100%
DPEPPNF	01	0	01	01	00	01	100%
Total population	532	564	1096	45	31	76	

2.3 Choice and administration of data collection tools

The instruments used were questionnaires and individual interview guides.

The questionnaire was chosen and sent to the teachers and headteachers of the schools, who are both the beneficiaries and the actors responsible for contributing to the application of the safe school principles. Indeed, in this work, it is vital to capture the opinions of the teachers and headteachers of the pilot schools, who are responsible for welcoming all pupils from different backgrounds into their classrooms, and for developing an environment conducive to learning. They are key players in the successful implementation of the Safe School approach in these schools. To this end, a questionnaire was sent to them. The aim was to find out how they felt about the implementation of the approach, the difficulties encountered, the causes of these difficulties and the suggestions they had for improving the implementation of the approach.

As the study was mixed, the other data collection tool used was the interview guide. It was designed to collect qualitative information from pupils, parents and members of para-educational structures such as the Associations des Mères Educatrices (AME), the Association des Parents d'Élèves (APE) and the Comité de Gestion (COGES). On the whole, these were individual interviews, which addressed the difficulties encountered by schools and stakeholders in implementing the Safe School approach, the sources of these difficulties, and the nature of the support provided to the school in implementing the approach.

With the supervisors, the interview guide focused on their assessment of the implementation of the Safe School approach in the CEB pilot schools, the difficulties encountered in implementing the approach, the causes of these difficulties, the social acceptance of the approach and also their suggestions for better implementation of the approach.

Finally, interviews were conducted with resource persons such as the Direction Régionale de l'Éducation Préscolaire Primaire et Non Formelle (DPEPPNF) and the Deputy Project Manager/Safe School at HI.) The DPEPPNF is a decentralised part of the Ministry of Education and, as such, is not only involved in the management of the schools under its responsibility, but also in authorising the intervention of non-state actors. Given the position of these actors in the implementation of the Safe School approach and the management of the education system at provincial level, it was essential to have their interpretation of the implementation of the Safe School approach in the district.

As regards data processing, we opted for a content analysis. This is the process used to understand the substance of the respondents' discourse. This method enabled us to identify the semantic units that make up the universe of statements and to bring them together in categories for interpretation purposes. The data was processed manually.

3. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

3.1. Appreciation of the approach by education authorities

Semi-structured interviews with public and private education officials in Gourma province revealed that the Safe School approach is appreciated in different ways. It should be noted that the aim of these interviews was to obtain their views on the implementation of the Safe School approach in the pilot schools in the commune of Fada N'Gourma, the difficulties encountered and the causes of these difficulties.

From the interview with the DPEPPNF of Gourma, we were able to retain that the Safe School approach is a topical approach given the current security context. It is essential to find solutions to curb the phenomenon and improve the indicators for keeping pupils in school. The Safe School approach, which is fairly new, is therefore the ideal solution for making the school environment safer. His assessment of the implementation of the Safe School approach is mixed, because most of the teachers are now trained and able to describe the approach and

give the guiding principles, but the approach is not really being implemented in all the pilot schools.

Regarding the causes of the difficulties encountered in implementing the approach, he stressed that the approach is struggling to be implemented for financial reasons. Humanité et Inclusion, the project leading this pilot phase, initially trained a headteacher and a deputy headteacher, who were in turn responsible for sharing what they had learned with colleagues who had not benefited from the training. Unfortunately, however, these colleagues have not been given a sympathetic ear, as each of the teachers would have liked to take part directly in the training in order to benefit from the financial support, in particular. He also mentioned the worsening security situation in the region, which has led to a flow of people into the schools, namely teachers (redeployed) and displaced pupils. These influxes are somewhat disruptive to the initial organisation, as classroom teachers now have to deal with heterogeneous groups of pupils from different backgrounds. As a result, class sizes become large and management becomes difficult, hence the difficulty in implementing the approach.

In addition to the interviews with students, parents, supervisors and the DPEPPNF, we felt it was necessary to have the opinions of HI's Deputy Project Manager/Safe School, as he is also a key player in the successful implementation of the safe school approach.

Our interlocutor first stressed the fact that the pilot schools benefit, compared to other schools, from a wider range of activities. This package includes Training/Awareness on:

- (i) the safe school approach,
- (ii) psychosocial care (PSS) and psychological first aid (PSP),
- (iii) risk education related to improvised explosive devices and explosive remnants of war (ER/IEW-REG),
- (iv) Child Protection (CP), establishment of focal points PSS, ER/EEI-REG and PE,
- the establishment and animation of school clubs for the protection of children,
- support for the establishment of school risk management committees.

These schools are identified in consultation with the local authorities in charge of education on the basis of a set of criteria taking into account in particular, the size, accessibility of the school, the interest and commitment shown by the various actors of the school community for the approach, the number of internally displaced students, etc.

The choice and consequent support for these pilot schools in limited number responds to a desire to promote the emergence of model schools in the implementation of the approach

capable of arousing, around them (neighbouring schools) a dynamic of training in the implementation and promotion of the approach.

Asked whether the causes of the difficulties would depend on insufficient monitoring of implementation by the supervisors and/or the HI team, the Deputy Project Manager/Safe School, said that the NGO - Humanity & Inclusion (HI) has set up a system to monitor the implementation of the approach in the pilot schools.

There are also weaknesses in the follow-up that help explain the difficulties. This is the lack of supervision of schools during the development phase of Risk Prevention Plans (PPR) (restitution of synthetic training to untrained actors, identification of main risks, mapping of strengths and vulnerabilities). It should also be noted that it sometimes happens that, due to a lack of sufficient financial resources, the support provided by the project to the supervisory structures does not make it possible to cover all the beneficiary schools. It should also be noted that the monitoring tools in place do not take into account the specific activities implemented in the pilot schools.

Regarding the complexity of the approach, our interlocutor thinks that the approach itself is not. However, it considers that its implementation requires a participatory and contextualized analysis of risks in terms of hazards/threats, vulnerability and capacities.

3.2.2. Assessments among primary school principals and teachers

From the analysis of field data, it appears that 82% of the teachers in charge of courses and school directors surveyed have knowledge of the safe school approach. This knowledge was acquired as a result of training in which they participated. 82% (23/26) of the teachers and school principals surveyed rated the implementation of the safe school approach as satisfactory. The elements of satisfaction listed include:

- encouraging a change in behaviour at the level of teachers and students;
- special attention to internally displaced students potentially carrying consequences related to the security crisis;
- the consultation of the entire teaching team for the identification and planning of the actions to be implemented to prepare for any eventuality;
- knowledge of measures for managing learners under stress,
- strengthening the sense of security within the school,
- community involvement to ensure the safety of students and teachers.

These elements of satisfaction mentioned above are not drawn from the implementation of the safe school approach. They are, in our opinion, the result of theoretical training received by teachers and school directors (DE).

Moreover, there are dissatisfaction with the implementation of the safe school approach. These elements are:

- the low level of implementation of the safe school approach in their school,
- their non-involvement in the formulation of the school's PPRs,
- the lack of knowledge of the approach by students in the lower grades and those who arrived during the years after the simulation exercises where they have been present.

All teachers and EDs surveyed (26/26) say they encounter difficulties in implementing this approach.

The following figure presents the causes of the difficulties listed by teachers and EDs and their frequency.

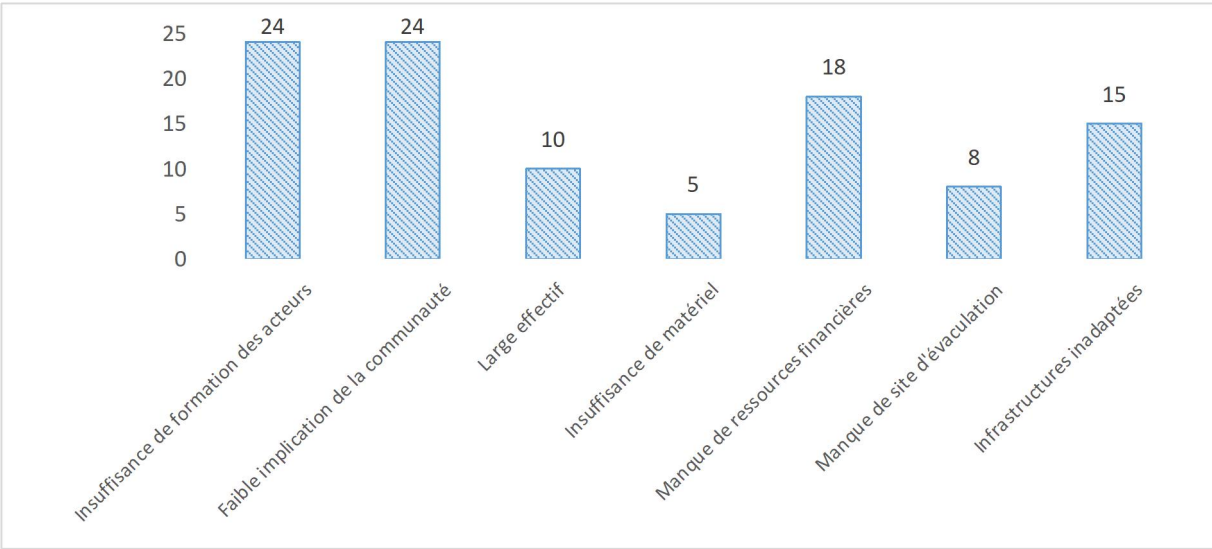


Figure 1: The causes of difficulties reported by teachers and school principals

It appears from the analysis to the reading of Figure 1 that the causes of the difficulties in implementing the safe school approach are of several kinds. The most commonly cited by teachers and ED are the lack of training of actors, i.e. 46.59% of untrained teachers and the low involvement of the community.

These two cases were each cited 24 times. The lack of training is therefore only a feeling fuelled by the strategy of the project, which organizes annual training for some of the teachers in each pilot school (usually two teachers per school). The clear interest of teachers (even if

they have already been trained) in this training (and the financial benefits that flow from it) unfulfilled increases the feeling of insufficient teacher training. Also, it emerged from the exchanges with the ED that sessions of restitution of the contents by the teachers trained to their colleagues who could not take part in the trainings are not systematically organized and if necessary do not meet the interest of the latter.

We can also interpret the apparent inadequacy by the lack of retraining of teachers. With the implementation of the approach, it is a safe bet that the loss of training gains can be significant. A low assimilation of the contents of the training courses can also be mentioned.

As for the low involvement of the community, it lies in the fear of reprisals that could be suffered by actors involved in the functioning of schools since the school is clearly a target of armed men. Moreover, in many schools, the operation of extracurricular structures (APE, AME and COGES) relies on a few members who are still active. The implementation of the safe school approach, with the roles assigned to these actors, consequently increases their workload.

The causes of the difficulties in implementing the safe school approach are, in descending order, the lack of financial resources (18), the inadequacy of infrastructure (15), large numbers (10), the lack of evacuation sites (8), the lack of equipment (5). Thus it appears that "schools lack fence", "some classes are under hut", "there is no money to recruit a permanent watchman", "there is no way to operate the deen kan club", "difficult to find evacuation sites near the school", "the large numbers and narrowness of classrooms that make simulations for shelter and evacuation difficult". This lack of training on the safe school approach noted mainly by the respondents combined with its underlying complexity could explain the causes of the difficulties in implementing the approach, according to the work of C. Rogers (2003) on the characteristics of an innovation.

Despite these challenges, actors on the ground are working hard to implement the approach. At least that's what the ED interviewees say. But, it turns out that some aspects are not fully implemented. Only two schools (29%) were able to identify evacuation sites and conduct evacuation drills this school year. These are the schools of sector 2 "A" and the school "Kompouoli". We can say that 71% of the pilot schools (5/7) that did not identify an evacuation site did not carry out a simulated evacuation during this 2021-2022 school year.

Another aspect discussed with the EDs concerns the follow-up they receive from CEB supervisors and the safe school project. At the time of our interviews in March 2022, only two

schools had received follow-up missions from the CEB. For the 2021-2022 school year, the other five pilot schools had not yet been followed. These figures show that monitoring the implementation of the approach is not sufficient. Principals and teachers seem visibly left to fend for themselves.

However, A. Huberman (1973) indicates in his theory on the diffusion of innovations that follow-up and accompaniment is an essential part for the successful implementation of an innovation. On the basis of this assumption, it can be concluded that the lack of follow-up in the implementation of the safe school approach in the pilot schools would explain the difficulties encountered.

3.2.3 Data collected from supervisors

During the interview on the first point, namely "the assessment of the implementation of the safe school approach in the pilot schools of the municipality of Fada", the three councillors of the CEB of Fada considered it good overall. Indeed, they based themselves on the summary data of monitoring schools on the approach whose degree of resilience rates vary between 50 and 80%. With regard to the second point on the difficulties encountered, it emerged from the interviews with these supervisors that teachers have enormous difficulties in finding an evacuation site in the vicinity. They also cited the mistrust of people to get involved in the development of preparedness/response plans when approached for this activity despite having benefited from the training on the safe school approach. One of the councillors adds on this point by explaining the reluctance of the populations in these terms : "They refuse to get involved for fear that unidentified gunmen will target them, because they may believe they want to fight them," he says.

In addition to these difficulties, they also noted the lack of mobilization of the EPAs, AME and COGES due to fear, and also the lack of training of some teachers and the lack of retraining of all actors. All unanimously stated that the difficulties mentioned above are related to the insufficient training of all teaching staff.

3.2.4. For parents and pupils

During the interview on the first point, namely "seniority in the position" the majority of parents are beyond three (03) years of seniority in the position they occupy within the extracurricular structure. In the second point, 90% of parents say they have participated at least once in the development of a preparedness plan in response to the dangers to which the school is exposed. 15% n'ont pas participé à l'élaboration du plan de préparation de l'école,

car ils n'ont jamais reçu une formation à l'approche *safe school*. 76% des parents ne possèdent ni le numéro de la gendarmerie ni celui de la police. Au quatrième point, la majorité des parents affirment qu'ils apportent un soutien moral, financier et des appuis - conseils au personnel et aux apprenants. À la cinquième question qui est de savoir les difficultés que l'école rencontre dans la mise en œuvre de l'approche, certains parents ont évoqué des points de vue similaires tels que l'absence de clôture et les larges effectifs. On the fifth question, on the difficulties faced by the school in implementing the approach, some parents referred to similar views such as the lack of closure and large enrolments. To the last question, which was to know the origin of these difficulties, they all spoke of the lack of support on the part of the authorities.

All students surveyed claim to know their parents' phone number and its importance. For them, "phone numbers are used to call parents and ask for help in case of danger".

When asked if learners know the telephone numbers of the police or gendarmerie, 90% answered in the negative. However, these structures have toll-free numbers that are easy to remember and free of charge. This lack of knowledge of these numbers for high class students is an illustration that these numbers were not communicated to them.

Moreover, these students also say they have not participated in the development of a preparedness plan to deal with hazards in their schools.

Students still say they know how to take shelter in case of danger. The actions they have been advised to take include:

- go out the window when possible,
- stay quiet,
- lie flat on your stomach under the bench tables,
- hiding behind the cupboard in silence in class.

Regarding evacuation, it is only the students of the school of sector 2 "A" who affirm that to access the place chosen for evacuation in case of danger it is necessary to stand in line and in calm walk to a home which is located a few meters behind the classes. The others don't know. From these interviews with students, it appears that they are under-informed about the "safe school" approach. However, C. Rogers (1995) also notes that the diffusion of an innovation is a communication process. This process facilitates the successful diffusion of innovation. As a result, it can be established that failures in implementing the safe school approach in the pilot

schools are due to the lack of student involvement from the development of response preparation plans to their implementation.

After the analysis of the data collected, it appears that of the 07 pilot schools, only 02 schools were able to find an evacuation site in agreement with the social partners. The number of schools that carried out at least one evacuation simulation exercise in the pilot schools for this school year is 02 out of 07 or 29% of the pilot schools.

From the analysis of the data collected, it appears that only 46.59% of the teachers of the pilot schools have not received training on the safe school approach. Similarly, in the opinion of all the actors interviewed, the lack of training is one of the causes of the weak implementation of the safe school approach. There would therefore be problems with teacher training, which must be rethought to address this lack of training. At the end of the trainings, which generally concern only two to three teachers per school, there is no restitution made to the other teachers. This situation is the same in all the pilot schools in the commune of Fada N'Gouma.

From the data collected from the School Directors (DE), it appears that only two schools have received follow-up and support from pedagogical supervisors. It was already in March and looking at the school calendar, we can deduce that for the rest of the year, the pilot schools will not receive more than one follow-up. The strengthening of school monitoring was also suggested by HI's deputy head of the safe school project (interview, May 2022).

CONCLUSION

The importance of education is well established. It remains a factor of development and a true generator of peace for nations. All developing countries have understood this and are working towards achieving Education for All (EFA). This is why, since May 2017, the safe school approach has been implemented in Burkina Faso through the training of certain teachers, national education supervisors, health workers, community actors in the regions affected by armed attacks. This has created a safe learning environment in our schools through the implementation of preparedness/response plans, PSS activations, sheltering and evacuations. However, challenges persist and prevent effective implementation of the approach.

Through our research work, we wanted to know the causes of the difficulties of implementing the safe school approach in the pilot schools of the commune of Fada N'Gourma. To achieve this, we tested the main hypothesis that the difficulties in implementing the safe school

approach in the pilot schools of the municipality of Fada are related to the complexity of the approach, the inadequacies of training of actors and follow-up and support of these actors. This main hypothesis was divided into three secondary hypotheses : first, the complexity of the safe school approach explains the difficulties related to its implementation in the pilot primary schools of the municipality of Fada, then the insufficient training of teachers and the educational community on the safe school approach explains the difficulties related to its implementation and finally the insufficient follow-up and support by the supervisors explains the difficulties related to its implementation in the pilot primary schools of the commune of Fada.

After a field investigation, we were able to realize that our hypotheses are confirmed.

However, challenges remain for the full restoration of safety in our schools and the social mobilization around this approach. More and more new areas are being attacked and the actors there therefore need to be trained and supported through the Safe School approach. Hence the need to generalize this formula for the well-being of our educational communities throughout the country for quality education.

In terms of perspectives, we hope that following our study, other aspects can be explored by future research, including measures to support the success of students who have suffered advanced trauma as a result of armed attacks.

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