

EMBARGOED UNTIL 1<sup>ST</sup> MARCH 2018, 08:00 AM GMT

## Open letter - 88 organisations urge investors to cease support for Bridge International Academies



Kampala, Monrovia, Nairobi, 1st March 2018. In an [open letter](#) published today, 88 civil society organisations have urged investors to cease their support for the multinational for-profit chain of private schools Bridge International School Academies (BIA), which runs over 500 schools in Kenya, Liberia, Nigeria, Uganda, and India.

These organisations are calling investors' attention to a series of concerning practices by BIA and the associated legal and reputational risks they incur. These practices include lack of transparency, poor labour conditions, and non-respect of the rule of law in host countries. Investors in BIA [range](#) from well-known private investors such as the Omidyar Network, the Zuckerberg Education Ventures, and Bill Gates to public State agencies from the USA, the United Kingdom, France, Norway, the Netherlands, and the European Union.

According to the letter, BIA has been acting in defiance of the law and has a negative impact on the right to education of thousands of children in countries of Africa and other regions.

The recent [decision](#) of the Ugandan Minister of Education, in February 2018, to close Bridge Schools in the country for failing to meet minimum educational as well as

health and safety standards, following an 18-months negotiation with the company, illustrates BIA's disregard for national laws.

According to Salima Namusobya, of the Initiative for Social and Economic Rights in Uganda: *"The Government of Uganda has been negotiating with Bridge International Academies and giving them time to comply with the law. But Bridge has failed to meet basic standards and deliver on their promises, and the Government is currently closing illegal schools. Yet, the company is still supported by investors abroad that would never accept such a situation in their own country. Investors will be complicit in this disaster if they do not remove their support."*

Other concerns that have been [documented by various independent sources](#) include higher costs than those advertised by the company, failure to register schools, use of unapproved curriculum, failure to meet teacher certification requirements, and discriminatory impacts.

Public institutions, such as the [United Nations](#), the [African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights](#), and the UK Parliament's [International Development Committee](#), have also expressed specific concerns about BIA regarding the quality of education, relationship with governments, lack of compliance with government regulations, and high cost of fees.

*"Bridge Academies came to our country last year, with the promise to improve quality as part of a government program. But they have only managed to marginally improve outcomes, at an astronomical cost, by pushing out teachers and mass-expelling children. We trust that this new call and the further evidence provided will trigger investors' actions in line with their due diligence obligations to stop supporting Bridge's operations,"* said Anderson Miamen, from the Liberian Coalition on Transparency and Accountability in Education

The signatory organisations **are calling on investors to exit in the shortest possible time from their investment in BIA, including investments via intermediaries, and to fully discharge their legal due diligence obligations and responsibilities** by making no further financing commitments to BIA.

*"Private investors do have a role to play in improving education infrastructure and services. However, this does not mean that they can violate our laws and standards and treat their teachers or parents in an undignified and disrespectful manner. This would never be allowed in the West, why should we allow it here? Foreign investors who add value to our country and our people are welcome, but those that support illegal companies that undermine the right to education are not."* reacted Linda Oduor-Noah, from the Kenyan-based organisation East African Centre for Human Rights.

This letter comes seven months after an open [Call to investors](#) of 1<sup>st</sup> August 2017 calling on investors to cease support to BIA.

END

**For more information:**

- Open letter to investors, February 2018: <http://bit.ly/BIALetter>.

- Call to investors to cease support to Bridge International Academies, 1<sup>st</sup> August 2017: <http://bit.ly/biainvestors>
- Op-Ed of the Minister of Education of Uganda on the closure of Bridge Schools, 15 February 2018: <http://bit.ly/2BHyVfF>
- Monitoring page and latest information on the human rights impact of Bridge International Academies: <http://bit.ly/commerceduc>
- List of known investors of Bridge International Academies: <http://bit.ly/2BUQsRy>

#### Media contacts:

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#### Press release on behalf of:

##### Organisation

- ActionAid International
- ActionAid Liberia
- Aide et Action
- All for Education!' National Civil Society Coalition
- Alliance of Government Workers in the Water Sector
- American Federation of Teachers
- Africa Network Campaign on Education For All (ANCEFA)
- Antarctic
- Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE)
- Asociación Latinoamericana de Educación y Comunicación Popular
- Association Camerounaise pour la Défense des Droits de l'Homme des Libertés et du Bien être (ACADEHLIB)
- Association Française Pour un Enseignement Ambitieux et Humaniste (AFPEAH)
- Brazilian Campaign for the Right to Education
- Bretton Woods Project
- Cameroon Education For All Network
- Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE)
- Campaña Argentina por el Derecho a la Educación (CADE)
- Campaña Latinoamericana por el Derecho a la Educación (CLADE)
- Campaña Peruana por el Derecho a la Educación
- Center of African Studies of the University of Porto

##### Region

International  
Liberia  
France  
Mongolia  
Philippines  
United States of America  
International  
Democratic Republic of the Congo  
International  
International  
International  
France  
Brazil  
International  
Cameroun  
Bangladesh  
Argentina  
International  
Peru  
International



• CEPO/KASAI CENTRAL	Democratic Republic of the Congo
• CEPO-ONG	Democratic Republic of the Congo
• Child Rights International Network (CRIN)	International
• Cipe Consultores	Honduras
• Civil society Action Coalition on Education for All (CSACEFA)	Nigeria
• Coalicion Colombiana por el Derecho a la Educacion	Colombia
• Coalition des Organisations Mauritanienes pour L'éducation (COMEDUC)	Mauritania
• Coalition Éducation	France
• Coalition for Transparency and Accountability in Education (COTAE)	Liberia
• Construisons Ensemble le Monde	Democratic Republic of the Congo
• Corner House	United Kingdom
• CSC-Enseignement	Belgium
• DCI-Tunisia	Tunisia
• Defence for Children international - Ghana	Ghana
• Défense des Enfants International - Belgique	Belgium
• Economic & Social Rights Centre-Hakijamii	Kenya
• Equal Education	South Africa
• Equal Education Law Centre	South Africa
• FECASE	Cameroun
• Fédération Générale de L'enseignement de Base (FGEB)	Tunisia
• FERGET ASBL	Democratic Republic of the Congo
• Ficimea	International
• Foundation For Environmental Rights, Advocacy & Development (FENRAD-NIGERIA)	Nigeria
• FP CGIL	Italy
• Fundación Manatí para el Fomento de la Ciudadanía A.C.	Mexico
• Ghana National Education Campaign Coalition	Ghana
• Global Campaign for Education	International
• Global Campaign for Education-US	United States
• Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (GI-ESCR)	International
• Global Justice Now	United Kingdom
• Global Peace and Development Organization	Liberia
• Human Dignity	International
• Initiative for Social and Economic Rights (ISER)	Uganda
• Jeunes et Femmes pour les Droits De l'Homme et la Paix (J.F.D.HO.P)	International
• Jeunesse et Emplois Verts pour une Economie Verte (ONG JEVEV)	Benin
• Labour, Health and Human Rights Development Centre	International
• Les Anges du Ciel	Democratic Republic

• Mouvement Anfass Démocratique	of the Congo
• National Campaign For Education Nepal	Morocco
• National Coalition for Education (NCE)	Nepal
• National Network for Education Reform (NNER)	India
• Natural Resources Alliance of Kenya (KeNRA)	Myanmar
• Network for Public Education	Kenya
• Northern Territories Federation of Labour	United States
• OBESSU - Organising Bureau of European Schools Student Unions	Canada
• Organisation Démocratique du Travail	International
• Pakistan Coalition for Education	Morocco
	Pakistan
	United States of America
• Program on Human Rights and the Global Economy	Argentina
• Programa de Comunicación y Educación (CEA-FCS-UNC)	International
• Public Services International	International
• Red de Educación Popular entre Mujeres de América Latina y el Caribe Repem	International
• Rede Lusófona pelo Direito à Educação (ReLus) - The Lusophone Network for the Right to Education	International
• RESDEN	Niger
• Réseau Ivoirien Pour La Promotion De L'education Pour Tous	Côte d'Ivoire
• RESULTS	International
• Right to Education Forum	India
• Right to Education Initiative	International
• Sikshasandhan	India
• SNEN	Niger
• Society for International Development (SID)	International
• Solidarité Laïque	France
• Spanish Coalition Global Campaign for Education	Spain
• Syndicat National Autonome de l'Enseignement Secondaire (SNAES)	Cameroon
• Syndicat National de L'enseignement Secondaire (SNES)	Mauritania
• Syndicat National des Agents de la Formation et de l'Éducation du Niger	Niger
• The East African Centre for Human Rights (EACHRights)	Kenya
• UNISON - The Public Service Union	United Kingdom