

19 April 2024

Civil society organisations call on investors in Bridge International Academies to immediately divest and to investigate and address concerns raised

45 civil society organisations receive with concern the Compliance Advisor Ombudsman's (CAO's) [Compliance Investigation Report](#) into the World Bank's International Finance Corporation (IFC) investment in Bridge International Academies (BIA, also known as NewGlobe schools), and acknowledge its grave findings regarding allegations of child sexual abuse at the company's for-profit chain of schools in Kenya.

The report makes clear that IFC's failures in due diligence and supervision resulted in irrevocable harm to students including "*acute and long-term damage to [survivors'] physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development, in addition to economic disadvantage due to lost productivity, disability, and reduced quality of life*".

Crucially, the report compels us to consider the role of both current and past public and private investors in BIA. These stakeholders, through their investments, have played a part in establishing BIA as the largest network of low-cost private schools in Africa and they are therefore also responsible by extension. Among these investors include British International Investment, PROPARCO, European Investment Bank, Norfund among others, including private investors.

The CAO found that the IFC failed to consider or assess potential child sexual abuse risks and impacts, despite known contextual concerns. Additionally, the IFC did not analyse BIA's capacity to address these risks, nor did it propose any mitigation or remedy measures once the cases of abuse emerged or were reported. In summary, the independent complaints and accountability mechanisms findings concluded that the IFC failed to effectively assess, monitor, and supervise its client, BIA. Despite knowing of multiple incidents of child sexual abuse, the IFC did not prioritise, pursue, or call for remedy prior to [exiting](#) its investment. We are gravely concerned by the fact that IFC's failures are potentially mirrored in the approach used by other investors.

We note that the IFC has drafted an [action plan](#) that addresses most of the CAO's recommendations. It however remains silent on financial compensation and specific remedies for survivors, despite this being [best practice](#) and a component of remedy in human rights law. Other investors will also be required to contribute, to remedy any harms experienced.

Due to the seriousness of the findings, the signatory organisations call on:

Investors to:

- Respond publicly to the findings of the CAO report and take all necessary measures to remedy the harm caused;
- Provide a comprehensive account of their due diligence and supervision of the Bridge International Academies investments to date and the steps they will take to improve oversight and accountability going forward;
- Outline the steps they will be taking to remedy harms committed to students, particularly in regard to contributing to financial compensation and rehabilitation of survivors;

- Responsibly exit their direct or indirect investments in Bridge International Academies, where investments are still active, and;
- Describe how their lending strategies for K-12 education will change given the report's findings.

The IFC to:

- Publicly outline the steps it has taken to reach out to other investors in Bridge International Academies, share its findings, and discuss collective actions towards remedy for survivors.

World Bank's public sector arm to:

- Step up and expand its support to the countries affected by the investment —Kenya, Liberia, Nigeria, and India— to support them in fulfilling their constitutional obligations to provide free and quality public education for all children, particularly in underserved areas.

Countries where BIA/NewGlobe schools still operate (i.e., Uganda, Kenya, Liberia and Nigeria) to:

- Review the findings outlined in this report and ensure that the respective ministries of education take the necessary steps in line with national laws and standards, to bring Bridge International Academies into compliance, or to shut the schools down within the time stipulated by the law.

ENDS

Signatory organisations:

1. ActionAid Kenya
2. ActionAid International
3. Action Contre la Pauvreté (ACP)
4. Africa Network Campaign on Education for All (ANCEFA)
5. AGEDE: ALLIANCE GLOBALE POUR L'EDUCATION ET LE DÉVELOPPEMENT
6. Arab Network Popular Education (ANPE)
7. Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE)
8. Association pour la promotion et la Défense des Droits Humains et le Développement Familial (ADDHF-DUKUNDANE)
9. Brazilian Campaign for the Right to Education
10. Civil Society Network for Education Reforms (E-Net Philippines) Inc.
11. Coalition des Organisations en Synergie pour la Défense de l'Education Publique (COSYDEP)
12. Coalition pour l'Education Pour Tous "BAFASHEBIGE"
13. Coalition for Transparency and Accountability in Education (COTAE)
14. Coordination Nigérienne pour l'Education à la Non-Violence (CONEN-VP NIGER)
15. Corporate Accountability and Public Participation Africa (CAPPA), Nigeria

16. Economic and Social Rights Centre, Hakijamii
17. Education International
18. Education For All Coalition Sierra Leone (EFAC-SL)
19. Eurodad
20. Femmes Unies pour le Développement (FUD SUD-KIVU), RD Congo
21. Global Campaign for Education
22. Global Labor Justice-International Labor Rights Forum (GLJ-ILRF)
23. Government Teachers Union, Mauritius
24. Initiative for Social and Economic Rights (ISER)
25. Jamaa Resource Initiatives, Kenya
26. La Centrale des syndicats du Québec (CSQ)
27. La Coalition Education
28. Latin American Campaign for the Right to Education (CLADE)
29. Le Comité syndical francophone de l'éducation et de la formation (CSFEF)
30. Organisation pour la Démocratie le Développement Économique et Social (ODDES), Côte d'Ivoire
31. Oxfam International
32. National Campaign for Education Nepal
33. Public Services International
34. Réseau Nigerien pour la Défense des Droits de l'Enfant et de la Femme (RENIDEF)
35. Results UK
36. Right to Education Initiative
37. RTE Forum India
38. Solidarité Laïque
39. SYNAFEN NIGER
40. The Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (GI-ESCR)
41. The East African Centre for Human Rights (EACHRights)
42. The Coalition against Sexual Violence
43. The Survivors of Sexual Violence in Kenya Network
44. The Wangu Kanja Foundation
45. World Organisation for Early Childhood Education (OMEP)

Notes

- The IFC [divested](#) from BIA and [froze](#) all investment in K-12 private schools in March 2022, following concerted efforts by civil society organisations to chronicle and [raise concerns](#) around the negative impacts of commercial and profit-oriented private schools in education, especially their impacts on inequality and exclusion as well as their persistent lack of compliance with the education standards in Kenya.
- The [Office of the Compliance Advisor Ombudsman \(CAO\)](#) is the independent accountability mechanism for projects supported by the International Finance Corporation (IFC). In September 2020, CAO's Vice President initiated a compliance appraisal or investigation specifically looking into allegations of child sexual abuse issues at Bridge International Academies.
- The IFC has committed to survivor focused interventions, such as counselling and health support to all survivors of CSA or SGBV (beyond BIA students) in communities where BIA operates, as well as community-based interventions. Institutional commitments made by the

IFC include IFC reviewing its entire portfolio for CSA/GBV risks; reviewing environmental and social (E&S) provisions in its investment agreements; updating E&S screening, monitoring and reporting; and providing mandatory training and sensitization for all IFC staff with project responsibilities, and more.