

Right to Education Initiative



Annual Report 2017

Greetings

2017 was another remarkable year for the Right to Education Initiative (RTE), with our incredibly productive small team making significant contributions to advancing the right to education.

Almost a decade has passed since ActionAid and Amnesty International inherited RTE from its founder, the late Katarina Tomaševski, the first UN Special Rapporteur on the right to education. In 2017 we achieved a landmark in establishing RTE as an independent NGO, registered as a Charity Incorporated Organisation (CIO) under UK law. In the process RTE was transformed from the 'RTE Project' to become the more enduring 'RTE Initiative'. The Child Rights International Network (CRIN) is now playing the incubator role as RTE continues its path towards becoming fully independent over the next couple of years.

The RTE website remains the definitive reference point for anyone interested in the right to education. Available in English, French, Spanish and Arabic the website has an incredible reach, increasing its visitor numbers by 26% over the year. The monthly e-Bulletin that provides concise updates on key developments around the right to education, saw subscriptions rise by 11%, whilst our Facebook likes rose by 12% and Twitter followers by 20%.

RTE has done ground-breaking work in 2017 on the privatisation of education, playing a leading role in the development of human rights guiding principles on states' obligations related to private schools; being at the forefront of a consortium of actors advocating for strong Human Rights Council resolutions urging states to regulate private education providers and address the commercialisation of education; and making rights-based challenges to the practices of Bridge International Academies.

RTE has also made significant contributions to advancing SDG4 - the Education 2030 agenda. In 2017, RTE undertook new research on legal accountability in education which was widely picked up by and helped to shape the 2017 Global Education Monitoring Report that focused on accountability. RTE also provided high quality research inputs to the GEM Gender Review report in 2017, which highlighted inequalities in education.

More broadly on gender and education, RTE reviewed and updated its website page on women and girls in 2017, producing new thematic sections in three languages. RTE also engaged in advocacy where we saw serious violations taking place, such as in Tanzania where we challenged the government over blocking the re-entry of pregnant girls to school. This case was picked up in August 2017 by the Commissioner Rapporteur on the Human Rights Situation in Tanzania and the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in Africa, together with the Chairperson of the African

Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child – who also sent a joint appeal to Tanzania’s president about this critical issue.

One of the challenges for RTE is to remain an authoritative reference point whilst also picking up on hot contemporary issues. In 2017 this was exemplified by our work on the right to education of migrants. In collaboration with Advocates for International Development and law firms around the world, RTE collected information on the status of the right to education of migrants, including refugees, stateless individuals and internal displaced persons in 14 countries, helping to provide evidence and nuance to important political debates. This fed into a background paper which will inform the forthcoming UNESCO Global Education Monitor Report on migration. The information was also shared with the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to education to inform its forthcoming report on refugees.

We are particularly proud of RTE’s reach across language barriers. Indeed, we have played a key role in the Francophone coalition against the commercialisation of education, for example, in November 2017 co-organising the Francophone meeting on the privatisation and commercialisation of education in Dakar. We are committed always to work with diverse partners and networks, whether formal coalitions like the Global Campaign for Education or more *ad hoc* consortia such as the one on privatisation of education. We will work wherever we see the added value of bringing a systematic understanding of the right to education into research, policy, or practice.

We are thankful of course to our funders and agencies who have supported our work in various ways over the past year, notably Wellspring Philanthropic Fund, Open Society Foundation, UNESCO, RESULTS, Amnesty International, ActionAid, Human Rights Watch, Save the Children, and the Global Campaign for Education. We are always looking to extend our partnerships and connections so please do not hesitate to contact us to learn more about the newly independent Right to Education Initiative!



David Archer, Chair of the Executive Board, Right to Education Initiative

RTE’s Executive Board is composed of:

David Archer, ActionAid; Clive Baldwin, Human Rights Watch; Iain Byrne, Amnesty International; Rob Doble, Save the Children; Ayan Hassan, Financial consultant; Elin Martinez, Human Right Watch; Anjela Taneja, CARE India; Veronica Yates, Child Rights International Network.

About us

The Right to Education Initiative (RTE) is a **global human rights organisation focusing on the right to education**.

Established in 2000 by the first UN Special Rapporteur on the right to education, Katarina Tomaševski, RTE was re-launched in 2008 as a collaborative initiative supported by ActionAid International, Amnesty International, Global Campaign for Education, Save the Children, and Human Rights Watch. Since May 2017 the Right to Education Initiative is a charity registered in England and Wales with the charity number 1173115.

Our vision is a world where **the right to education for all becomes a reality**, from early childhood to lifelong learning, on the basis of the human rights principles of non-discrimination and equality. A world where **education is recognised as a human right itself**, in law and in practice, and where all human rights in, to, and through education are realised. A world where states and non-state actors **can be held**

to account for their obligations and responsibilities respectively; and where civil society is empowered to play a key role to monitor its implementation.

RTE promotes education as a human right, **making international and national law accessible to everybody**. We conduct research and legal analysis and we develop tools and guides to help understand and effectively use human rights mechanisms to claim and enforce the right to education. We build bridges between disciplines (human rights, education, and development), actors (CSOs, international organisations, academics), and language communities, linking international, national, and local advocacy with practical engagements leading to positive changes on the ground.

For more information about us please visit <http://www.right-to-education.org/about-us>

An independent NGO and a new name

In May 2017, RTE became an independent organisation officially registered as a Charity Incorporated Organisation (CIO) under England and Wales law with the Charity Number 1173115 under the name 'Right to Education Initiative'.

Although we were widely known as the 'Right to Education Project' we decided to change to the 'Right to Education Initiative' to better reflect who we are: a global human rights organisation leading the promotion and protection of the right to education. The use of 'project' gives the impression that we are temporary when we are not - we will continue to fight for the right to education for as long as violations occur.

In June 2017 an agreement was made with the Child Rights International Network (CRIN) to incubate RTE for a period of two years. During this period, CRIN will support RTE in becoming fully independent, by managing its finances and human resources, and providing advice.



Activities and impacts

In 2017, following its [Strategic Plan 2017-2019](#), RTE's work has focused on the following thematic areas: Privatisation and human rights; Monitoring of the right to education; Education 2030; and the right to education of migrants.

1. Privatisation in education and human rights - #EducationBeforeProfit - <http://www.right-to-education.org/privatisation>

A. Development of human rights guiding principles on states' obligations related to private schools



Nepal consultation Sept 2017

In close partnership with the Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (GI-ESCR), RTE has led on the [development of human rights principles on States' obligation related to private schools](#). These Guiding Principles aim at compile existing customary and conventional human rights law as it relates to

private actors in education and are intended to be operational in and adaptable to different contexts, and to provide a basis for advocacy, policy development, and litigation. In 2017, we held five consultations on the draft of the Guiding Principles: in Paris, Sao

Paulo, South Africa, Nepal and Dakar, with the participation of hundreds of people representing various organisations across the world. The comments made at these consultations have been considered in the successive revised drafts of the Guiding Principles. In addition, the Guiding Principles were presented at the Comparative and International Education Society Conference (Atlanta), at UNESCO Headquarters to education staff, and at the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Geneva). In 2017, three more organisations joined the Secretariat that facilitates the development of the Guiding Principles which now comprises RTE, GI-ESCR, Amnesty International, Equal Education Law Center, and the Initiative for Social and Economic Rights.

B. Advocacy against the commercialisation of education and for the regulation of private actors' involvement in education

Throughout 2017, RTE continued its advocacy actions **to confront the expansion of an international model of low-cost private schools ran by multinationals that undermine the right to education**. On 1 August, RTE together with 174 civil society organisations from around the world, released a [statement](#) calling on investors to cease support to Bridge International Academies, a multinational for-profit chain of private schools whose practices include lack of transparency, poor labour conditions, and non-compliance with relevant domestic laws. The statement sets out the mounting evidence and analysis published in the last two years,

including enquiries by independent journalists. The launch of the call was a success, with many organisations signing up and mobilising around the call to action.

We received favourable media attention, such as articles in [The Guardian](#) and the [Huffington post](#), a [blog](#) in a French in a major online paper, [photo mobilisation](#) of some Amnesty International Senegal activists, a radio interview in Liberia and a mention of the Call in a number of other news outlets.

The Guardian

UK urged to stop funding 'ineffective and unsustainable' Bridge schools

Civil society groups call on foreign donors not to fund Bridge International Academies, citing high fees, low pay and poor teaching methods



A coalition of 174 civil society organisations has called on international donors, including the UK government, to drop support for a private school company operating in Africa.

Bridge International Academies (BIA) provides technology-driven education in more than 100 primary and nursery schools in Kenya, Nigeria, Uganda, Liberia and India. Bill Gates and Mark Zuckerberg are among the high-profile philanthropists from whom the American startup has received funding.

In a statement, campaign groups said the firm charges prohibitively high fees and that teachers are poorly paid, receive little training, and are given inflexible, scripted lessons to read from tablets. The organisations also accused BIA of intimidating its critics, a claim the company has denied.

The Guardian Thu 3 Aug 2017

In April 2017, RTE participated in the Universal Periodic Review Pre-Session in Geneva promoting a joint report on the UK's support to private education in low income, particularly for-profit, low-cost private schools, and its impacts on the right to education. In November 2017, the International Development Committee (IDC) of the UK Parliament published its report on the Department of International Development (DFID)'s work on education:



Advocacy campaign on BIA

'leaving no one behind' which raised **serious questions about the UK government's funding of Bridge**. RTE published a joint [statement](#) welcoming the report. The concerns raised by IDC were built on **RTE's monitoring and reporting work regarding the UK's support to private education** in low income countries, undertaken over the last few years. For more information see [RTE's annual report 2016](#).

In June 2017, RTE **lobbied at the UN Human Right Council to maintain a paragraph** on the regulation and monitoring of private actors and the negative impact of commercialisation of education in the [Resolution on the right to education](#)

In September 2017, RTE attended the [Wilton Park meeting](#) on 'No child left behind: What is the complementary role of non-state actors in the delivery of quality basic education in low resource environments?' - with 60 other participants - mainly state representative (donors and recipients), private actors, and some

CSOs. We raised human rights concerns and questions on tax revenues. See the report [here](#).

In October 2017, RTE signed the [Eurodad Global Campaign Manifesto on Public Private Partnerships](#).

C. Research and advocacy within the Francophone community

As a member of the Francophone coalition against the commercialisation of education, RTE co-organised the **Francophone meeting on the privatisation and commercialisation of education in Dakar**. From 23-26 November 2017, RTE together with over 80 organisations and state representatives from 24 francophone



DAKAR, 23 - 26 OCTOBRE 2017

RENCONTRE FRANCOPHONE SUR LA
MARCHANDISATION ET LA
PRIVATISATION DE L'EDUCATION

Dakar Meeting Oct 2017

countries convened at the Institut de la Francophonie pour l'éducation et la formation (IFEFF) in Dakar to discuss the commercialisation and privatisation of education. It was a fruitful meeting with information and experience sharing, intense debates and concrete actions for moving forward on. [Media](#)

[coverage](#) following our [press release](#) was very important with more than 30 articles and videos. The [website of the Francophone](#)

[Network against the commercialisation of education](#) was launched, with the Francophone call against the commercialisation of

education, news and resources, podcasts and videos. In March, **the French minister in charge of development** made a statement **saying that France will act against the commercialisation of education** and RTE published a [joint statement](#) welcoming the statement, in French and English, also signed by

Coalition Education, Comité Syndical Francophone de l'Éducation et de la Formation, Fédération Internationale de CEMEA, Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and Solidarité Laïque, and which was widely shared on social media.



ESCR-Net / Red-DESC
@ESCRNet

Successful advocacy by [@GIESCR](#)
[@RTEProject](#), [#France](#) stands
against commercialization of
education [#Right2Education](#)



Civil society drives France to
stand against the commerci...
[escr-net.org](#)

29/03/2017, 18:51

2. Monitoring the right to education - #RTEMonitoring - <http://www.right-to-education.org/monitoring/>

RTE collaborated with RESULTS in **monitoring the right to education**, as part of the Right to Education Index project providing technical support to a partner organisation HakiElimu (Tanzania) to advocate for the government **to develop and implement evidence-based policies that promote girls' education, inclusive, and quality education**. RTE also contributed to the ESCR-Net Monitoring Working Group leading activities related to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, particularly its follow-up procedure for concluding observations and recommendations.

RTE continued developing and improving its [Guide to Monitoring the Right to Education Using Indicators](#), and updated legal information regarding selected right to education indicators. This unique tool is an interactive guide to monitoring education from a human rights perspective. The *Guide* consists of six easy-to-follow steps, each step providing guidance on how to gather credible and relevant evidence of human rights violations, using the *Right to Education Indicators Selection Tool*.



RTE's Monitoring Guide

3. Education2030 - #Education2030 - www.right-to-education.org/education2030

In 2017, RTE wrote **two background papers for the UNESCO Global**



GEM Report 2017/8

Monitoring Education Report (GEM Report): one for the 2017/8 GEM Report – Accountability in education: Meeting our commitments on [Accountability from a human rights perspective: The incorporation and enforcement of the right to education in the domestic legal order](#), published in October 2017; and one for the 2018 Gender Review: Meeting our commitments to gender equality in education on [Country commitments](#)

[to gender equality in education](#) published in March 2018. The two RTE reports were cited in the GEM reports and used for the advocacy. In addition, RTE provided **advice for and supported the [GEM Report youth campaign](#)** asking states to meet their commitment and make sure the right to education is enforced.

RTE also wrote an article on [The Role of Court Decisions in the Realisation of the Right to Education](#) for Norrag's right to education special taken from the accountability report. RTE also participated in the launch of the different reports: [GEM 2017-8 Accountability in education report](#), at the ODI in London in October, that featured RTE's statistics on justiciability; and the online launch of the [GEM Youth Report](#).

4. Migrants & Refugees - #RefugeesEducation - <http://www.right-to-education.org/migrants-refugees-IDP>

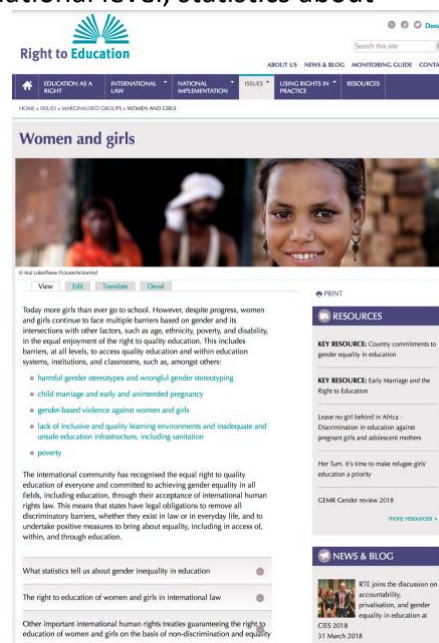
As part of our work on research and analysis on the right to education of migrants, and in collaboration with Advocates for International Development (A4ID) and law firms all over the world, RTE collected information on the status of the right to education of migrants (including refugees, stateless and internal displaced persons) in 14 countries (Argentina, Canada, China, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Spain, Ukraine, Uruguay, and Uzbekistan). The information was used in a

background paper RTE submitted to the UNESCO GEM Report on the right to education of migrants, to be published in 2018. The information was also shared with the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to education to inform her next report on the right to education of refugees.



5. Women and Girls - #GirlsEducation - <http://www.right-to-education.org/girlswomen>

In 2017, RTE actively worked to promote women and girls' right to education. An updated [webpage on this issue](#) was published in three languages, highlighting the right to education of women and girls at international, regional and national level, statistics about gender inequality in education, gender stereotypes and gender-based violence against women and girls, and some key factors affecting women and girls' right to education as child marriage and poverty. In July 2017 RTE also signed a [statement](#) with 25 organisations raising concerns



Women and Girls issue page

about the government of Tanzania's violation of girls' right to education, and threats against child rights and education NGOs.

In August 2017, the Commissioner Rapporteur on the Human Rights Situation in Tanzania and the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in Africa, together with the Chairperson of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child also sent a [joint appeal](#) to Tanzania's president about this critical issue.

In April 2017, RTE participated in Voice of Islam [radio show on Muslim girls' right to education](#)



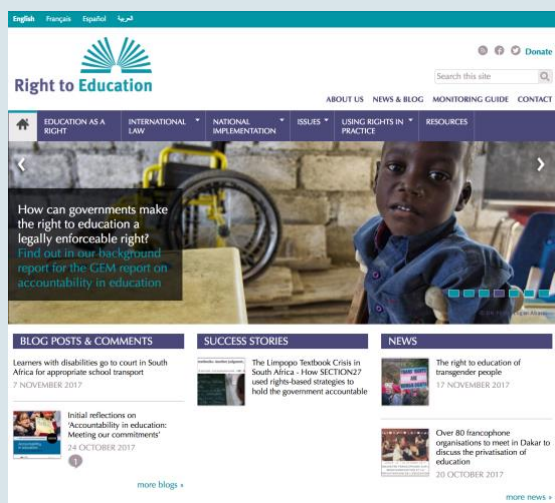
Voice of Islam's tweet

Information and experience sharing

RTE's first strategic goal is to **increase awareness and information sharing on the right to education**, making the legal framework understandable and accessible in order to facilitate information and experience sharing.

Website

In 2017 [RTE's website](#) consolidated its position as **the most specialised and specific online resource on the right to education** in English, French, Spanish, and Arabic.



RTE's website reached **609,880 pageviews** (+26% compared to 2016), including a significant increase in pages in other languages rather than English.

Our website activity in 2017:

- **10** thematic issue pages fully updated and translated into Spanish and French
- **39** new resources
- **12** new case-law summaries
- **17** news items
- **10** blog posts

Social media and media Impacts

Through 2017, RTE increase its social media presence across several platforms, including:

- **Facebook** (4,725 followers, +12%) and **Twitter** (2,337 followers, +20%), which we regularly updated on our work, news on the right to education, and promotion of our networking and advocacy activities.



Understanding education as a right

RIGHT TO EDUCATION INITIATIVE

Education as a human right means:

- the right to education is legally guaranteed for all without any discrimination
- states have the obligation to protect, respect, and fulfil the right to education
- there are ways to hold states accountable for violations or deprivations of the right to education

More info? Please visit our website <http://www.right-to-education.org/>

- **LinkedIn**: both a regular page and a discussion forum on the right to education
- **e-Bulletin** (576 subscribers, +11%: RTE's monthly newsletter increased its subscribers and continued informing on updates and resources related to the right to education
- **Media impacts**: RTE's staff promoted our work via several press releases, interviews with radio and press media, and contributions to independent blog posts.

Networking

In 2017, RTE contributed to several education and human rights networks, advocating for the right to education; participated in several key education and human rights events and forums where the right to education has been discussed or challenged and advocated for the right to education in these spaces; engaged with key actors influencing the right to education, such as UNESCO, UNICEF, the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to education, and UN treaty bodies; and maintained and expanded relationships with civil society organisations, in the fields of development, education, and human rights.

RTE is a member of:

- **International Network on Education in Emergencies (INEE) Advocacy Working Group** to which we bring a human rights perspective to INEE's advocacy work. In 2017, RTE mainly led on advocacy at the UN, making links with the work of the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to education. RTE participated in INEE annual meeting in Italy, from 19-20 October 2017, contributing to the development of the new INEE strategy.
- **The privatisation in Education and Human Rights (PEHR) consortium:** RTE contributed to the PEHR Consortium, leading the work on the development of the Guiding Principles and participating in joint actions, such as advocacy against the commercialisation of education (see above). From 6-9 September 2017, it held its annual meeting in Nepal. RTE's Director and Chair attended the meeting, together with about 60 participants from different areas of the world. During the meeting the consortium assessed its on-going work and reflected on the current strategy.
- **The francophone coalition against the commercialisation of education.**
- **ESCR-Net monitoring and economic policy working groups.**

INEE | An international network for education in emergencies



الشبكة العالمية
للحقوق الاقتصادية
والاجتماعية والثقافية



ESCR-Net
Red-DESC
Réseau-DESC

Acknowledgements

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