

CASE STUDIES ON: PARALLEL REPORTING TO TACKLE PRIVATISATION IN EDUCATION

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Several parallel reports have been successfully submitted by national civil society organisations to human rights treaty bodies between 2014-2015, in partnerships with the Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The result of this for the four first countries engaged in this work has been to strong pronouncements by UN human rights bodies, which you can consult [here](#), which in turn gave support for a [landmark resolution](#) from the UN Human Rights Council calling for regulation of private actors in education.

The case studies below detail the research and advocacy work undertaken by organisations in two countries to address the growth of private education in their contexts.

GHANA

Like many other countries, Ghana has allowed the increased involvement of private actors in education due to pressures to achieve universal basic education. The number of private schools has grown rapidly in the past decade with the number of private primary schools growing by almost 30% between 2008 and 2013. This figure may be even higher as some informal private schools are not included in these numbers.

Research shows that this growth of private schools leads to segregation between households according to their wealth, reflecting the persistent income inequalities across Ghana. Private schools tend to be clustered in

urban areas where more parents are able to pay and fail to reach the most vulnerable and disadvantaged learners, further increasing inequalities in the education system.

This is despite the emergence of so-called “low cost” or “low fee” private schools that target poor families. Attending these schools, however, involves making huge financial sacrifices for some families. As has been well documented in [a recent academic study](#), low-income households have to spend up to 40% of their earnings to send one child to the flagship of low-cost private schools, “Omega”. There is also evidence of gender discrimination where parents constrained by costs choose to send their sons to school.



Veronica Dzeagu, conducting research in a public school in Ghana, October 2014.

Advocacy

The Ghana National Education Campaign Coalition (GNECC) decided to address some of these issues by conducting both desk based and empirical research to produce reports to UN human rights bodies. Reports were submitted to the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), both of which raised questions on these issues with the Ghanaian Government.

These positive results allowed GNECC to generate media interest at the national level. Once the recommendations were published these were used for a second media strategy, generating further interest and a more sustained debate at the

national level. Importantly, it forced the government to start responding to the issues.

This work required relatively few resources from GNECC as a large part of the research was desk based. What was required was careful planning to ensure that key submission dates for the committees were met as well the development of a strong dissemination strategy with the media. GNECC also engaged effectively with key government ministries challenging them with statistics and information about the rapid proliferation of low fee private schools, which they did not have up to date information on.

As a result of the work, GNECC are now consistently consulted

and involved by the government and other stakeholders on policy making related to the role of private actors in education. There is now an admission from authorities that the growth of private actors in education is an issue and requires greater oversight and regulation. GNECC are also working with the teacher unions and other CSOs to develop their own advocacy strategies and to deepen their understanding of the impact of rapid privatisation, with a new momentum and interesting amongst civil society organisations to work on the issue. They had not previously reported to human rights bodies but would now be in a position to replicate this methodology with other bodies and highlighting other issues related to the right to education.



We learned a lot from this process. While it required a lot of work from us in collecting data and evidence, it was definitely worth the effort and it was very satisfying to see our research referenced in CRC and CEDAW questions and recommendations. This validated our arguments and made our position much stronger in Ghana. We are now building on this to engage more partners and to develop a position on regulation and accountability.

VERONICA DZEAGU, GHANA NATIONAL EDUCATION COALITION CAMPAIGN

FURTHER READING

PARALLEL REPORT submitted to the Pre-sessional Working Group of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on the occasion of the consideration of the List of Issues related to the Periodic Reports of Ghana, August 2014

PARALLEL REPORT submitted to the Committee on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, October 2014

OMEGA SCHOOLS FRANCHISE IN GHANA: A CASE OF "LOW-FEE" PRIVATE EDUCATION FOR THE POOR OR FOR-PROFITEERING?



Engaging with the process has definitely raised awareness around the impact of privatisation on the right to education, and helped expand ISER's networks worldwide. There is improved reportage in the press locally and abroad and ISER is featuring prominently in the press reports. The Concluding Observations have provided leverage for increased advocacy at the national level.

SALIMA NAMUSOBYA, INITIATIVE FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS

UGANDA

Uganda liberalised the education sector in 1993 to allow for private actors to supplement government efforts in providing education. This was part of wider Structural Adjustment Programmes, which introduced privatisation, deregulation and emphasis on the market economy for various economic and social sectors. Since then, the national government has actively supported the establishment of private schools. This support has partly been through the enactment of an enabling law and institutional restructuring to cater for the private sector. The government also supported the establishment of private schools through the provisions of tax exemptions on profits made by private education providers.

The Ugandan private educational sector is diverse and comprised of individual investors, community groups, civil society organisations, international NGOs and faith based organizations, running for profit and not-for profit private schools. For-profit private schools include high-fee and medium-fee schools that are purely financed from private sources, and 'low-fee' private schools. It is the growth of these schools that has the most concerning human rights implications. According to data from the Ministry of Education, currently, 27% of schools at primary level and 66% of schools at secondary level are private. As of 2013, the private school enrolment as a percentage of total enrolment was 16.2% and 51.0% at primary and secondary levels respectively.

The Initiative for Social and Economic Rights (ISER) undertook desk based research and empirical research and made a number of key findings:

- ◆ **Poor quality in the public education system, and shortage of public schools especially at the primary level and resulting from low government investment in education, is increasingly forcing parents to resort to private schools even where they have very limited income. Private education is thus often not a choice but seen as the only acceptable option for parents despite the fact that there is no conclusive evidence that the quality is better.**
- ◆ **When comparing Ugandan salaries to the monthly cost of low-fee private schools, it is clear that private schools, including low-fee ones, only cater for a minority of households whose income is much above the average.**
- ◆ **Privatisation in education also has a negative impact on the education of girls due to the cost as families choose to educate boys over girls.**
- ◆ **There is a growing reliance of the government on Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) to implement the government universal secondary education plan although there are concerns about the quality of education and value for money in these schools.**
- ◆ **The growing privatisation in education has not been matched with an appropriate regulatory, supervision and monitoring framework.**

Advocacy

ISER investigated the human rights implications of this growing trend of involvement of private actors in education in Uganda. They enlisted the help of a group of organisations that ranged from other rights monitoring organisations to child rights organisations and education focused organisations. Together they planned a research

Salima Namusoby, speaking on privatisation and human rights at the UK parliament, September 2015



and advocacy strategy involving reporting to the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.

These findings were presented in a parallel report to the United Nations Committee on Economic,

Social and Cultural Rights which as a result, formally asked the Ugandan Government to explain the impact of privatization in education **"on the right to education of girls and children living in poverty"**. It further made the ground-breaking recommendation that States **"assume primary responsibility for the provision of quality education to all children"** and recommended that Uganda **"strengthen regulations and expand monitoring and oversight mechanisms for private education institutions"**.

These statements strengthened the position of ISER and its partners in Uganda and as a result they were able to effectively engage the media and raise the profile of this issue in Uganda. The government was forced to respond to the issue and the dialogue with them is on-going. Civil society has also started to mobilise on this issue, and ISER is going to build on this momentum in the coming months to advocate for human rights reforms of the education sector addressing the role of private actors.

FURTHER READING

PARALLEL REPORT presented to the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights at its 54th Session for its consideration of the List of Issues for Uganda, October 2014

PRESS RELEASE: [UN Committee raises issues on the impact of privatization in education on the realization of the right to education in Uganda](#)

This is 3 of 3 documents designed to present recent research and advocacy work led by the Global Initiative for Economic Social and Cultural Rights (GIESCR) in partnership with civil society organisations in 7 countries around the world as well as the Privatisation in Education Research Initiative and the Right to Education Project. The work critically examines the effects of privatisation in education using human rights mechanisms. The documents are designed to be an introduction to this work and GIESCR can provide more resources, information and support to anyone wishing to engage in this work.

The other documents are:

- 01 | [Private actors in Education and Human Rights: a practical methodology to tackle the negative effects of privatisation in education on the right to education](#)
- 02 | [How to Use Human Rights Mechanisms](#)

You can find these documents along with methodological resources for working on private actors and the right to education here: <http://bit.ly/PrivatisationMethodo>



If you would like to get involved or learn more about this project please contact Sylvain Aubry, Research and Advocacy Advisor at the Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights: sylvain@globalinitiative-escr.org