

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

174 organisations worldwide call investors to cease support to American chain of schools Bridge International Academies

(Nairobi, Kampala, Monrovia, Johannesburg, 1st August 2017) 174 civil society organisations from around the world have today released a [statement](#) calling on investors to cease support for Bridge International Academies, a company running over 500 commercial private schools in the Global South with the support of international donors and investors.

This statement comes two years after a [similar one](#) that was addressed to the World Bank. It has been signed by a broad range of organisations from 50 different countries, including human rights, development, community-based, and faith-based organisations, as well as trade unions, demonstrating increasing, broad-based, and large-scale concerns regarding the operations of Bridge Academies.

The statement lists mounting concurring evidence and analysis published in the last two years, including [independent journalist inquiries](#), that raise grave concerns regarding Bridge's transparency, relationship with governments, labour conditions, and breach of educational standards. It highlights **the cases of Uganda and Kenya where Bridge has operated schools illegally and failed until now to adhere to national education standards**. In both countries Bridge schools have been ordered to close schools the authorities.

'The quality of Bridge schools has not been independently assessed. In any case, any claimed gains in learning outcomes could never justify the shocking practices that have been documented in this statement. What can justify for instance the treatment of unlicensed, unregistered teachers being denied a living wage while working over 60 hours work per week?' reacted Linda Oduor-Noah, from the East African Centre for Human Rights, in Kenya.

The statement outlines how **Bridge fails to reach the most disadvantaged it claims to serve** due to high costs, as well as negative impacts on families who were accessing the schools. [One study](#) found that between 69 and 83 per cent of Bridge parents had difficulty in paying rent, providing food or accessing healthcare due to high school fees.

'Rather than the 6 USD per month as claimed by the company, the total costs to attend a Bridge school are closer to 20 USD per month. Not only are such costs unreachable by a large part of the population of our countries where Bridge operates, but their announced fee is misleading', said Salima Namusoby, from the Initiative for Social and Economic Rights, in Uganda.

The document also underscores **Bridge's resistance to public scrutiny and attempts to limit transparency**, building on the UK Parliament's International Development Committee's [recent letter](#) to the Secretary of State, which also raised this issue.

'We've seen how in Liberia, Bridge, which is part of a public-private partnership arrangement with the State, has operated in total secrecy, challenging public procurement rules and undermining independent assessment of its operation by civil society. This confirms the trend in other countries, where Bridge has been involved in the arrest of an independent researcher, the silencing of unions, resistance to assessment, and more. This is a global education company shrouded in secrecy and hiding, and this is extremely worrying', added Anderson Miamen, from the Liberia Coalition for Transparency and Accountability in Education.

The organisations signing the statement are therefore **calling on investors and donors to fully discharge due diligence obligations and cease support for Bridge**. The organisations cite a number of other recommendations in the statement on compliance with national laws and standards, transparency, accountability, treatment of civil society and redirection of funds to programs that promote equity in education.

'It is important to recognise that most investors are genuinely seeking to make a difference in the lives of children living in poverty. We share these concerns and recognise the need for major improvements in education. However, there is now significant evidence that investing in Bridge is not an effective way to improve access, equity and quality in education which should be the aim of any education initiative targeting the most disadvantaged. We would welcome an opportunity to explore alternatives with donors and investors, to identify more effective ways to invest sustainably in providing quality education for all children living in poverty;' concluded Chikezie Anyanwu, from the Global Campaign for Education.

This latest statement follows repeatedly raised concerns about the fast-paced and unregulated growth of certain private education providers, in particular [commercial ones](#), such as Bridge. In May 2015, 116 organisations had published [a statement](#) raising concerns about misleading facts regarding the costs and quality of Bridge schools. Since then, evidence from various sources and presented in the statement, including the UN, a UK parliamentary report, independent research reports, and independent media reports, have confirmed those concerns and raised the alarm about the serious gap between the promises of Bridge and the reality of their practice.

END

NOTES TO EDITOR

- Civil society call on investors of Bridge Academies: <http://bit.ly/biainvestors>
- Letter from the UK Parliament: <http://bit.ly/2q12pa6>
- More information about Bridge International Academies: <http://bit.ly/commerceduc>

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12. Amnesty International Sénégal	Senegal
13. Antarctic	Democratic Republic of Congo
14. Appel pour une école démocratique (Aped)	Belgium
15. Ashroy Foundation	Bangladesh
16. ASO EPT Niger	Niger
17. Associação Nacional de Pesquisadores em Financiamento da Educação (Fineduca)	Brazil
18. Association AMONTANA	Madagascar
19. Association Camerounaise Pour la Défense des Droits de l'Homme des Libertés et du bien être (ACADEHLIB)	Cameroon
20. Association d'Aide et de Protection des Personnes vulnérables	Democratic Republic of Congo
21. Association des Amis du Belvédère	Tunisia
22. Association des Personnes Handicapées Motivées de Tône (APHMOTO)	Togo
23. Association femmes pour l' égalité et la démocratie	Morocco
24. Association Française Pour un Enseignement Ambitieux et Humaniste (AFPEAH)	France
25. Association graine de paix	Algeria
26. Association Initiative Urbaine	Morocco
27. Association Rechida pour l'environnement et développement	Morocco
28. Association Tunisienne des Jeunes et Développement	Tunisia
29. Ayuda en Acción	International
30. Both ENDS	International
31. Bretton Woods Project	United Kingdom
32. Cameroon Education For All Network	Cameroon
33. Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE)	Bangladesh
34. Campaña Argentina por el Derecho a la Educación (CADE)	Argentina
35. Campaña Latinoamericana por el Derecho a la Educación (CLADE)	International
36. Campaña Peruana por el Derecho a la Educación (CPDE)	Peru
37. Campanha Brasileira pelo Direito à Educação	Brazil
38. Carrefour de la famille marocaine	Morocco
39. CEMEA Sénégal	Senegal
40. Centre d'Actions pour la Sécurité Alimentaire et le Développement Durable (CASAD-Bénin)	Benin
41. Centre d'Encadrement des personnes opprimées	Democratic Republic of Congo
42. Centre for Education Rights and Transformation	South Africa
43. Centre for Equity and Quality in Universal Education	India
44. Centres d'Entraînement aux Méthodes d'Education Active (CEMEA)	France
45. Centro de Cultura Luiz Freire (CCLF)	Brazil
46. Centro de Defesa da Criança e do Adolescente (CEDECA/Ceará)	Brazil
47. Centro de Estudos Educação e Sociedade (CEDES - Unicamp)	Brazil
48. Centro de Investigación, Planeación y Evaluación (CIPE Consultores)	Honduras
49. Child Rights International Network (CRIN)	International
50. Civil Society Action on Education for All (CSACEFA)	Nigeria
51. Civil Society and Trade Union Institutions of Liberia (CTIL)	Liberia
52. Coalición Española de la Campaña Mundial por la Educación	Spain
53. Coalition des organisations en synergie pour la défense de l'éducation publique (COSYDEP)	Senegal
54. Coalition des organisations mauritaniennes pour l'éducation (COMEDUC)	Mauritania
55. Coalition Education	France
56. Coalition Education Pour Tous BAFASHEBIGE	Burundi
57. Coalition for Educational Development	Sri Lanka
58. Coalition for Transparency and Accountability in Education	Liberia
59. Coalition Nationale de l'Education Pour Tous en République Démocratique du Congo (CONEPT RDC)	Democratic Republic of Congo

60. Coalition nationale de Madagascar pour l'éducation accessible et inclusive (CONAMEPT)	Madagascar
61. Coalition Nationale pour l'Education Pour Tous - Burkina Faso (CN-EPT/BURKINA)	Burkina Faso
62. Comité National de Développement des Réseaux pour l'Education en Afrique de l'Ouest (CNDREAO)	Senegal
63. Comité Syndical Francophone de l'Education et de la Formation (CSFEF)	International
64. Construisons Ensemble le Monde	Democratic Republic of Congo
65. Corner House	United Kingdom
66. Counter Balance	Belgium
67. CSC-Enseignement	Belgium
68. Défense des enfants International Belgique	International
69. DEL PEP 21	France
70. East African Centre for Human Rights (EACHRights)	Kenya
71. Economic & Social Rights Centre (Hakijamii)	Kenya
72. Edugestion Cameroun	Cameroon
73. Environnement et Progrès ASBL	Belgium
74. Equal Education Law Centre	South Africa
75. Fédération Camerounaise des Syndicats de l'Education (FECASE)	Cameroon
76. Femmes unies pour le développement	Democratic Republic of Congo
77. Fonds voor OntwikkelingsSamenwerking (FOS)	International
78. Foro Dakar Honduras	Honduras
79. Foro por el Derecho a la Educación de Chile	Chile
80. Forum for Education NGOs in Uganda (FENU)	Uganda
81. Foundation For Environmental Rights, Advocacy & Development FENRAD-NIGERIA	Nigeria
82. Franciscans International	International
83. Fundación Manatí para el Fomento de Ciudadanía A.C.	Mexico
84. Ghana National Education Campaign Coalition	Ghana
85. Global Campaign for Education	International
86. Global Campaign for Education - US	United States
87. Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (GI-ESCR)	International
88. Global Justice Now	United Kingdom
89. Global Peace and Development Organization	Liberia
90. Government Teachers' Union	île Maurice
91. Grupo de Estudio Sobre Educación en Cárceles (GESEC)	Argentina
92. Grupo de Estudos e Pesquisas em Política Educacional (GREPPE)	Brazil
93. Homabay county education network	Kenya
94. Homabay county paralegal	Kenya
95. Human Dignity	International
96. Ideologa, Intervención Comunitaria S.Coop.Mad	Spain
97. Incidencia Civil en Educación (ICE)	Mexico
98. Initiative for Social and Economic Rights (ISER)	Uganda
99. Initiative For Women Empowerment & Development (IWED)	Nigeria
100. International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF)	International
101. Jeunes et Femmes pour les droits de l'homme et la paix (J.F.D.HO.P).	Democratic Republic of Congo
102. Jeunesse et Emplois Verts pour une Economie Verte (ONG JEVEV)	Bénin
103. Just Fair	United Kingdom
104. Kenya Human Rights Commission (KHRC)	Kenya
105. Kenya National Union of Teachers (KNUT)	Kenya
106. Kisora	Kenya
107. Kisumu county education network	Kenya
108. Labour, Health and Human Rights Development Centre	Nigeria

109.	Les Anges Du Ciel	Democratic Republic of Congo
110.	Ligue des Droits de l'Enfant	Belgium
111.	Lumiere Synergie pour le Développement	Senegal
112.	Mathare Association	Kenya
113.	Migori county education network	Kenya
114.	Mouvement Anfass Démocratique	Morocco
115.	Mouvement politique des objecteurs de croissance	Belgium
116.	Movimento de Educação para Todos (MEPT – Moçambique)	Mozambique
117.	Nadi Ghati Morcha	India
118.	Nadi Ghati Morcha	India
119.	National Campaign for Education Nepal	Nepal
120.	National Teachers Association of Liberia (NTAL)	Liberia
121.	Natural Resources Alliance of Kenya	Kenya
122.	Nepal National Teachers Association	Nepal
123.	Network for Public Education	United States
124.	NGO Education Partnership	Cambodia
125.	Organisation Democratique du Travail	Morocco
126.	Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions (OBESSU)	International
127.	Oxford Human Rights Hub	United Kingdom
128.	Pakistan Coalition for Education	Pakistan
129.	Planète Urgence	International
130.	PNG Education Advocacy Network (PEAN)	Papua New Guinea
131.	Prayatn Sanstha	India
132.	Program on Human Rights and the Global Economy (PHRGE)	United States
133.	Public Services International	International
134.	Red de Educación Popular Entre Mujeres de Latinoamérica y el Caribe (REPEM)	Latin America and Caribbean
135.	Rede Angolana da Sociedade Civil de Educação para Todos (Rede EPT-Angola)	Angola
136.	Rede da Campanha de Educação para Todos – Guiné-Bissau (RECEPT-GB)	Guiné-Bissau
137.	Rede Nacional da Campanha de Educação para Todos de São Tomé e Príncipe (RNEPT-STP)	São Tomé and Príncipe
138.	ReLus - Lusophone Network for the Right to Education	International
139.	Rencontre pour la Paix et les Droits de l'Homme (RPDH)	Republic of Congo
140.	Réseau des Acteurs de Développement de l'Éducation au Bénin (ONG RADEB)	Benin
141.	Réseau des Organisations pour le Développement de l'Éducation au Burkina (RODEB)	Burkina Faso
142.	Réseau Ivoirien Pour la Promotion de l'Éducation Pour tous	Cote d'Ivoire
143.	Réseau Marocain pour la Defense du Droit à la Santé - Droit à la vie	Morocco
144.	Réseau Pour le Développement de l'Éducation au Niger (RESDEN)	Niger
145.	Réseau progrès et développement humanitaire du Niger (ONG REPRODEVH NIGER)	Niger
146.	RESULTS Education Fund	International
147.	Right to Education Forum (India)	India
148.	Right to Education Forum Jharkhand	India
149.	Right to Education Initiative	International
150.	Shala Mitra sangh	India
151.	Siaya county education network	Kenya
152.	Sikshasandhan	India
153.	Society for International Development (SID)	International
154.	Society for People's Awareness (SPAN)	India
155.	Solidarité Laïque	France and International

156.	SOLIDARITE-UNAFETPCI (Union Nationale des Formateurs de l'Enseignement Technique et Professionnel de Côte d'Ivoire)	Côte d'Ivoire
157.	Star of the lake CBO	Kenya
158.	StopTFF	France
159.	Sudanese Coalition for Education for All	Sudan
160.	Sustaining Continuity in Education Foundation	Nigeria
161.	Syndicat des Enseignants Romands	Switzerland
162.	Syndicat des Travailleurs des Etablissements Privés du Cameroun (SYNTESPRIC)	Cameroon
163.	Syndicat général de l'éducation nationale - Fédération (Sgen-CFDT)	France
164.	Syndicat général de l'enseignement de base (SGEB)	Tunisia
165.	Syndicat National Autonome de l'Enseignement Secondaire	Cameroon
166.	Syndicat national de l'enseignement supérieur Fédération syndicale unitaire (SNESUP-FSU)	France
167.	Syndicat National des Agents de la Formation et de l'Education du Niger (SYNAFEN -NIGER)	Niger
168.	Syndicat National des Formateurs de l'Enseignement Technique et de la Formation Professionnelle (SYNAFETP-CI)	Côte d'Ivoire
169.	The Kairos Center for Religions, Rights and Social Justice	United States
170.	Union Nationale des Normaliens/Normaliennes et Educateurs/Educatrices d'Haïti (UNNOEH)	Haiti
171.	UNISON	United Kingdom
172.	Unnati Institute for Social and Educational Change	India
173.	Yemeni Coalition for Education for All	Yemen
174.	Youth Progressive Association in Taraba	Nigeria