



**INITIATIVE FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS**

## **PRESS STATEMENT**

### **MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SPORTS SHOULD REMAIN STEADFAST ON REGULATING PRIVATE EDUCATION PROVIDERS**

**02 February 2018, KAMPALA** - As Uganda moves closer to the date for opening of Schools for the first school term of 2018, there is controversy surrounding private schools that do not meet the Basic Requirements and Minimum Standards (BRMS). While the Ministry of Education issued a circular directing that unlicensed schools should not open for the new school year, there is pushback from the school owners who want to continue operating without meeting the required standards. The situation in Uganda at the moment is putting to question the capacity of the state to regulate private actors.

The Education Act 2008 and the BRMS set standards and requirements for any school to operate in Uganda, and it is following the fulfillment of these that schools are licensed. These range from minimum infrastructure, hygiene, sanitation, and equipment standards for schools and the Education Standards Agency through the school inspectors is in charge of ensuring that schools comply with these standards. The BRMS and other regulations on standards for example require that schools have qualified teachers, separate pit latrines or toilets for girls and boys, access to safe drinking water, a kitchen, a library, a laboratory, classrooms with adequate sitting space.

These MoES guidelines on school standards are geared at ensuring quality education for all children attending school. The standards also protect the children and the public from unscrupulous business actors, sacrificing education standards for profit accumulation. However, many schools have continued to operate with impunity and total disregard to the set guidelines and standards. Many schools are employing unqualified teachers, operate in makeshift structures, and maintain poor sanitation standards among others which greatly affect the quality of education and full development of the child. This is despite the fact that they have been collecting tuition and school development fees from the parents.

It is a fact the schools had prior notice from the Ministry of Education warning them that they would not open unless they met the required standards but ignored the warnings hoping that it would be business as usual whereby the Ministry issues threats that they cannot implement.

Given the rapid growth of private providers in education service delivery, it is time that the Ministry of Education becomes more serious about its regulatory role. It is not enough for the Ministry of Education and Sports to advise parents to desist from enrolling their children in schools that do not meet the basic standards - because the public has no capacity to know which schools do not meet the basic standards. There is need for the MoES and other Government Agencies to remain steadfast in ensuring strict adherence to set policies and guidelines on school standards.

It is also important that the Ministry makes good its promise that all children affected by the implementation of the guidelines are absorbed in other schools.

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**For further information, please contact:**

**Nakulima Saphina**, Initiative for Social and Economic Rights (ISER), [info@iser-uganda.org](mailto:info@iser-uganda.org) ,+256 782310904

**Plot 60, Valley Drive, Ministers Village, Ntinda | P.O. Box 73646 Clock Tower, Kampala Uganda**  
**Tel: +256 414 581 041 | E-mail: [info@iser-uganda.org](mailto:info@iser-uganda.org) | Website: [www.iser-uganda.org](http://www.iser-uganda.org)**