

PRESS STATEMENT

UGANDA GOVERNMENT MAINTAINS ITS POSITION TO CLOSE BRIDGE INTERNATIONAL ACADEMIES BASED ON FAILURE TO MEET NATIONAL STANDARDS

Kampala, Uganda, 14th August 2017

Communication from the Ministry of Education and Sports to Parliament shows that Bridge International Academies are operating illegally and do not meet the Basic Requirements and Minimum Standards.

On Tuesday 8th August 2017 while appearing before the Education Committee of Parliament, the Minister of Basic Education-Honourable Rosemary Sseninde [stated](#) that Bridge International Academies, which runs 63 schools in Uganda, is operating illegally and does not comply with the Basic Requirements and Minimum Standards.

According to a [video interview](#) of the Minister of State for Basic Education “*the position of the Ministry of Education is that Bridge schools should remain closed. They don’t follow our curriculum and we found out that they lack qualified teachers, and their teachers work like robots.*”

In addition to the video, originally in Luganda language, an [audio recording](#) of Minister of Basic Education, Honourable Rosemary Sseninde during a discussion with Members of Parliament on the same day confirms the position of the Ministry. The Minister for Basic Education can be heard stating: “*we have confirmed with no doubt: they are not following our curriculum. They are actually using teachers as robots. They don’t have trained teachers.*” She added that after having worked with them in the last months, they have “*now discovered that what they [Bridge] are doing is wrong and we have to totally ensure they are closed. [...] We are going to do all it takes to ensure that this problem of Bridge schools is resolved.*” MPs can be heard in the background expressing their discontent about the delay in enforcing the closure of the schools.

This statement confirms that Bridge Schools still constitute a major “challenge” to the Government, despite the [High court judgment](#) from November 2016 that found that BIA schools were operating illegally. BIA had originally appealed this judgment, but appears to have later withdrawn the appeal under unclear circumstances, the Minister indicating that they “had to work with them” after the withdrawal. Minister Sseninde’s statement further confirms that BIA schools are still operating in disregard of its directives, which it had made clear in a [statement](#) of 9 November 2016, and of the High Court judgment.

This comes 10 days after 174 Civil Society Organizations worldwide issued a [statement](#) calling on investors to cease support to Bridge International Academies, based on mounting evidence regarding the negative impacts on poverty, the failure to respect of the rule of law, and the lack of transparency of the company.

Bridge International Academies is a for-profit commercial company that runs a chain of over 500 private nursery and primary schools offering fee-paying, standardized, education in countries in Africa and Asia. Bridge schools are not a part of Uganda’s state-provided education system but part of a burgeoning low-fee private education sector, and have been one of the most [contested](#) chains of schools in the last years for their corporate practices.



INITIATIVE FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS

As a result, ISER:

- **Urge Bridge International Academies to respect and comply with national laws and guidelines on Basic Requirements and Minimum Standards as set by the Ministry of Education.**
- **Urge BIA investors to conduct due diligence on the operations of Bridge International Academies.**
- **Call on government to enforce the regulations and ensure that the affected children are absorbed into other schools prior to the closure**

Documents:

- Video interview of Honourable Rosemary Sseninde: <https://youtu.be/4TweNmzwnt0>
- Audio Interview of Honourable Rosemary Sseninde: <https://soundcloud.com/kemigisa-jacky>
- Statement of August 2017 signed by 174 organisations: http://www.iser-uganda.org/images/downloads/BIA_call_investors_press_release_1_August_2017.pdf

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