



INITIATIVE FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS

SUBMISSIONS BY THE INITIATIVE FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS (ISER) ON THE DRAFT GUIDING PRINCIPLES ON THE RIGHT TO EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION

A. Introduction

The Initiative for Social and Economic Rights (ISER) is a Non-Government Organization based in Uganda whose mission is to enhance realization of social and economic rights through innovative approaches to research, capacity building, social mobilization and advocacy. ISER runs several programs, including the right to education whose overall goal is to ensure access to quality education for all children in Uganda, regardless of their background or social status. ISER is a strong advocate of an environment where education is maintained as a public good that is adequately financed, regulated and supervised by the state.

ISER extends its appreciation to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for taking lead on developing the Guiding Principles on the Right to Early Childhood Care and Education to guide States on the implementation of pre – primary school in their respective countries.

B. Specific Response to the Draft Guiding Principles

i. Add regulation of school fees as part of the government obligations under paragraph 67

Currently, in Uganda, there is no state or public provision of pre-primary education. The delivery of pre – primary education is under the private sector, with the state only playing a regulatory role. However, even the regulatory framework is not effectively implemented as research indicates that a paltry 18% of the early childhood care and education centers are registered, and that a further 26% are licensed (meaning they have made an application but have not met quality standards).¹ The remaining 56% are neither registered nor licensed.² Due to the lack of public pre – primary education, only 9% of pre-primary aged children

¹ UNICEF, Uganda Ministry of Education and Sports, and G:ENESIS, Investing in the Future: A Cost-Benefit Analysis of Pre – Primary Education in Uganda: Final Draft Study Report, September 2023, <https://www.unicef.org/esa/documents/investingfuture-cost-benefit-analysis-pre-primary-education-uganda>

² Ibid.



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attend a licensed and registered pre- primary school, and more than 60% of pre-primary-aged children in Uganda are not attending any type of school.³ The limited access is largely attributed to absence of pre – primary schools in several communities especially rural areas; and the prohibitive costs in areas with the pre – primary schools.⁴ The schools fees ranges from UGX 5,000 (US\$1.35) per child per term in the hard to reach and poor rural Nakapiripirit district in North Eastern Uganda to UGX 1,750,000 (\$460) per term, or UGX 5,250,000 per year for one child in Kampala (capital city of Uganda) pre – primary schools, which is more than the annual tuition for many programs at Makerere University, the country’s leading university.⁵

We recommend that regulation of the cost/ school fees charged by the private pre – primary schools should be one of the obligations of the state under paragraph 67 of the Guiding Principles.

ii. There is also need to pay attention to access to pre – primary education among the urban poor living in informal settlements in urban areas

Under the part of Availability and accessibility, paragraph 14 underscores the need to pay particular attention to rural areas. However, we hasten to add that similar attention be given to informal settlements in urban areas. They are also grappling with either no or poor quality pre – primary education due to limited levels of affordability.⁶

We recommend that informal settlements in urban area be among those to receive particular attention from the State parties.

³ UNICEF, Uganda Ministry of Education and Sports, and G:ENESIS, Investing in the Future: A Cost-Benefit Analysis of Pre - primary Education in Uganda: Final Draft Study Report, <https://www.unicef.org/esa/documents/investing-future-costbenefit-analysis-pre-primary-education-uganda>

⁴ Human Rights Watch and Initiative for Social and Economic Rights, Lay a Strong Foundation for All Children: Fees as a Discriminatory Barrier to Pre-Primary Education in Uganda, 2024 at <https://iser-uganda.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Lay-a-Strong-Foundation-for-All-Children.pdf>

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Ibid.