



The Global Initiative  
for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights



## **Statement: New report highlights potential of the Abidjan Principles to respond to the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the right to education**

We warmly welcome the insightful report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to education focusing on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. We wish to highlight her analysis of how the Abidjan Principles on the right to education can be utilised to respond to this situation.

The COVID-19 crisis presents an unprecedented challenge to education systems. Schools were among the hardest hit institutions as many governments closed schools and attempted to devise alternative means to keep learners engaged.

The crisis highlights the limitations of a market-driven approach to education delivery, and the challenges raised by for-profit actors in education. For instance, the Liberian Government is investigating allegations that the commercial chain of schools, Bridge International Academies, slashed teachers and staff salaries beyond the government-recommended percentage.<sup>1</sup>

We have also observed with increasing caution the rapid growth of digital learning platforms. This shift to distance learning has amplified the inequalities in education.

These are difficult challenges. However, we agree with the Special Rapporteur that the Abidjan Principles can provide a useful, practical tool for States to navigate this context in an effective and just way.

We would like to emphasise the Rapporteur's call for States to implement minimum standards to safeguard the right to privacy and data protection for learners and teachers.

Similarly, as detailed in the Abidjan Principles, now more than ever States need to fulfil their obligation to fund and deliver the right to free, quality, public education for all, in order for societies to realise the potential of education as a transformative right.

I thank you.

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<sup>1</sup> Labor Ministry Expresses Concern Over Labor Issues at Bridge International Academies Liberia; Several Employees Express Frustration, 26 May 2020. Available at <https://libeyewitness.com/index.php/2020/05/26/labor-ministry-expresses-concern-over-labor-issues-at-bridge-international-academices-liberia-several-employees-express-frustration/> [last accessed 02 June 2020].