Activities and Achievements since November 2019

BACKGROUND

Adopted in February 2019, the Abidjan Principles on the human rights obligations of States to provide public education and to regulate private involvement in education compile and unpack existing human rights law to provide guidance on how to actualise State obligations to establish free, quality education systems for all, particularly in the context of the rapid expansion of private sector involvement in education.

The Abidjan Principles were adopted following a three-year participatory consultation and drafting process. So far, 57 international experts have signed the principles with over 60% of them from the Global South and over 50% women. Also, the Abidjan Principles have been officially recognised and quoted by at least 10 international institutions, including the UN Human Rights Council.

- To increase widespread accessibility of the Abidjan Principles, advanced versions of the translation to Arabic, French, Spanish and Russian are available or under final review.
- In June 2020, Right to Education Initiative (RTE) facilitated the dissemination of the Abidjan Principles in Brazil through an event organised by the Brazilian Campaign for the Right to Education.
- In February 2020, Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (GI-ESCR) provided technical assistance to representatives from the Ministry of Education and the National Center for Privatisation in Saudi Arabia, using the Abidjan Principles to discuss effective governance of education systems in light of the increasing participation of private actors.
- With support from GI-ESCR and RTE, the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to education also published a report advising States on how the Abidjan Principles can inform their responses to the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on education.
- GI-ESCR and RTE are also working with the UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) to develop methodological guidelines based on the Abidjan Principles to reflect the right to education in education sector strategic plans.
- In July 2020, the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights published Guidelines on the Right to Water in Africa which echo the Abidjan Principles provisions on public-private partnerships.

*Justice Zakeria Yacoob (South Africa)*

"The Abidjan Principles are completely consistent with the South African Constitution. They are very helpful to the implementation of [our] constitution."
ActionAid published a multi-country report in February 2020 which used the Abidjan Principles to assess the impact of private education providers on the right to education in Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria and Tanzania.

In June 2020, GI-ESCR and RTE co-organised a research webinar on the Abidjan Principles on the right to education with a group of researchers and civil society, to discuss how the Principles can be used in social sciences research.

GI-ESCR and RTE worked with the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) Africa to bring together judges and civil society from Kenya, Sierra Leone, South Africa and Uganda for a series of webinars on the right to education in the context of COVID-19, exploring what role the judiciary could play going forward.

In South Africa, the Equal Education Law Centre submitted an amicus brief referencing the Abidjan Principles in a case where the Constitutional Court held that private schools must not impair the right to education, echoing the Abidjan Principles.

"I was excited to read the Abidjan Principles! I think it’s going to be very helpful in providing a means for the judges to evaluate the actual allocations to public education [and determine] whether the government [has met its] obligations to respect, protect and fulfil the right to education."

"The Abidjan Principles would definitely provide guidance for [judges], it is very timely that these principles have been developed."