

THE ABIDJAN PRINCIPLES

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.



Increasing public awareness about the implications of private provision of education at the global, national and community level

- 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.



Building capacity and providing technical support to States

- 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.



Building collaboration with other actors and movements

- 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."



Promoting or undertaking empirical and quantitative research and academic publications

- 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.

Justice Cosmotina Jarret (Sierra Leone)
"The Abidjan Principles would definitely provide guidance for [judges], it is very timely that these principles have been developed."



Seeking formal accountability mechanisms and litigation

- 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.

Justice Joel Ngugi (Kenya)

"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 Global Initiative
for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights



Right to Education