

The preparation of parallel reports (also called “shadow reports”) for submission to United Nations (UN) or regional human rights bodies<sup>1</sup> (also called “treaty bodies”), is a powerful tool in helping these bodies better understand the situation in a country and to formulate well targeted recommendations to governments, to catalyse education change and support mobilisation at the domestic and local level.

These recommendations in turn facilitate dialogue with education authorities and other stakeholders based on human rights principles. This is a useful methodology for taking a rights-based approach to the issue of growing private education. Human rights bodies’ recommendations also provide the basis for mobilisation and action by civil society organisations to strengthen the right to education.

This methodology is an excellent way of linking global trends to national and local realities, and vice versa. It can serve as a foundation for further work - such as advocacy - on privatisation and the right to education, and is in itself a capacity-building exercise. The whole process can be completed in 12-18 months and involves research and report writing, as well as monitoring and advocacy (including media dissemination).

## The review cycle

Preparing parallel reports is just one part of the treaty body reporting cycle, which gives organisations several opportunities to bring influence to bear on governments upholding the right to education.

The cycle begins with the submission by the State of its report on how it respects, protects and fulfils the particular treaty to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) or the regional human rights body. On the basis of this report the Committee prepares a list of questions, called “list of issues”, requesting more information from the State. The government is invited to provide written responses to the list. Next, a public dialogue between committee members and representatives of the government takes place. On the basis of that exchange, the Committee adopts so-called concluding observations and makes recommendations on action to be taken by the State. Following this process, a next important step is the follow-up of the implementation



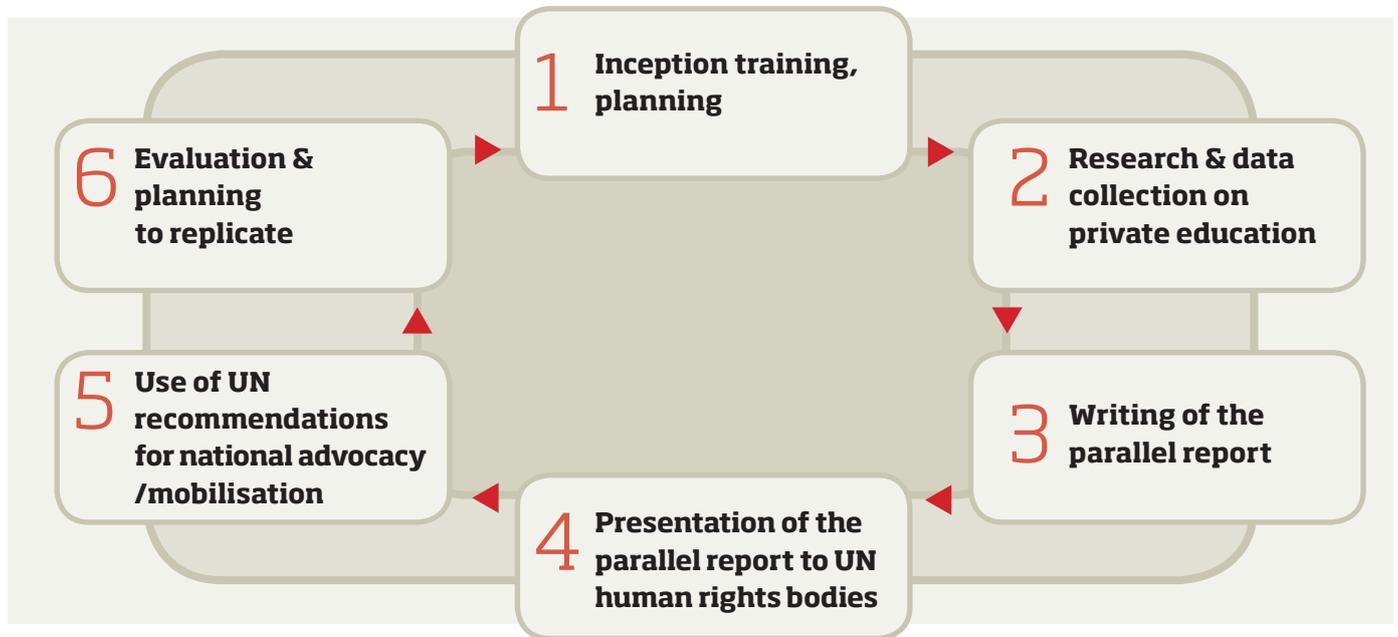
Moroccan CSOs during the Committee on the Rights of the Child review, September 2014.

of the recommendations by the committee and by NGOs and other national actors. At almost every one of these stages NGOs and CSOs have the opportunity to advocate for change.

<sup>1</sup> UN and regional human rights bodies are made up of human rights experts selected by States.

## The parallel reporting process

Below is a step-by-step explanation of the parallel reporting process:



### Step 1a

#### When is my country being reviewed? Identify key dates and submission deadlines

First you need to find out when a human rights body will review your country. A list of all the UN treaty bodies can be found [here](#). The dates for review are published on the OHCHR website and you can find a searchable master calendar [here](#).

### Step 1b

#### Identify key partners to work with

You should consider which partners can help you undertake the work, which organisations are already planning to submit parallel reports as well as those you feel can help you with your media/dissemination. Parallel reports are often taken more seriously when they are the work of multiple organisations - although

it is not a requirement. NGO coalitions or networks play a key role in the coordination and drafting of NGO reports and other activities pertaining to the treaty bodies, and we can help connect you to existing networks and even help you form your own for the purpose of the report.

### Step 1c

#### Convene partners/interested parties and develop a research and advocacy strategy

You can plan your whole strategy by identifying key dates and dividing tasks among partners. It is important to think about the media and dissemination strategy at this stage.

E.g. In Ghana, the national coalition convened media and NGOs and other organisations working at the community level at the start of the project so they could be called

upon at later stages to strengthen research and dissemination.

As privatisation in education is such a complex issue it is also important to note that you should endeavour to focus your efforts as much as possible and you may decide to focus on just one more pressing aspect of the issue such as fees, discrimination, access, quality etc. This will help you develop clear advocacy messages and better measure your impact.

Step 1d - Prepare a budget  
Once you have an outline research and advocacy strategy you can prepare a budget. Budgets will vary according your activities but CSOs have successfully undertaken this work with very limited budgets (\$15,000 or less). We can offer support on preparing a budget and share experiences from CSOs that have already undertaken this work.



**Workshop of the Ghana National Education Campaign Coalition, October 2014**

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## Step 2

### **Undertake research**

In most cases the majority of the research work can be desk based. There is often a lot of data available already which we can help you find. We have created a [methodology guide](#), which includes sources of data and access to networks that can help you. You may also undertake some empirical research to support your findings. Research

should include interviews with authorities and other education stakeholders such as parents and teachers, to take into account their views, and ensure that the process is one of dialogue.

## Step 3a

### **Compile report and submit to treaty body**

This is a straightforward process and there are a number of templates, examples and resources you can use to produce your report. You can reference the situation in other countries as well as previous submissions by other organisations in your report. You may also wish to disseminate your report to relevant media.

## Step 3b

### **Monitor to see if a list of questions prepared by the treaty body references your work**

You should prepare a press release and disseminate to national media, even if your concerns are not included in the list of questions by the UN committee reviewing your government.

## Step 4a

### **Presentation and Review**

This is the dialogue that takes place in Geneva between the treaty body and the state party. Attending the treaty body sessions allows NGO representatives to brief UN committee members, either during formal or informal meetings, and to observe the discussion, including the issues raised, the government's replies and the recommendations made by the treaty body. Many of these sessions are now webcast so those unable to attend can still follow them online.

E.g. For the Uganda Review, informal meetings were held with Committee members before the session highlighting key aspects of their report. This contributed to a better understanding and mention of the same issues during the session. You can read a summary record of the session [here](#).

## Step 4b

### **Concluding observations and recommendations**

The [concluding observations](#), which is the list of recommendations made by the treaty bodies, often recommend changes in law, policy and programmes, establishment of institutions or bodies to ensure implementation, and any other relevant measures. The adoption of the concluding observations, which are public, marks the end of the review. If

successful, the observations include recommendations that relate to the role of private actors in education, based on human rights law.

## Step 5

### Dissemination and follow up of recommendations

This is crucial step for driving change at the national and local levels. You should monitor the efforts of the government to implement the concluding observations and recommendations of the treaty bodies, and report this information to the public through press conferences and other media strategies. You and your partners should also engage in dialogue with governments to push them to implement the concluding observations. This may include holding meetings or conferences with government officials and NGOs, meeting members of parliament individually, and discussing the

recommendations of the treaty bodies with State delegates.

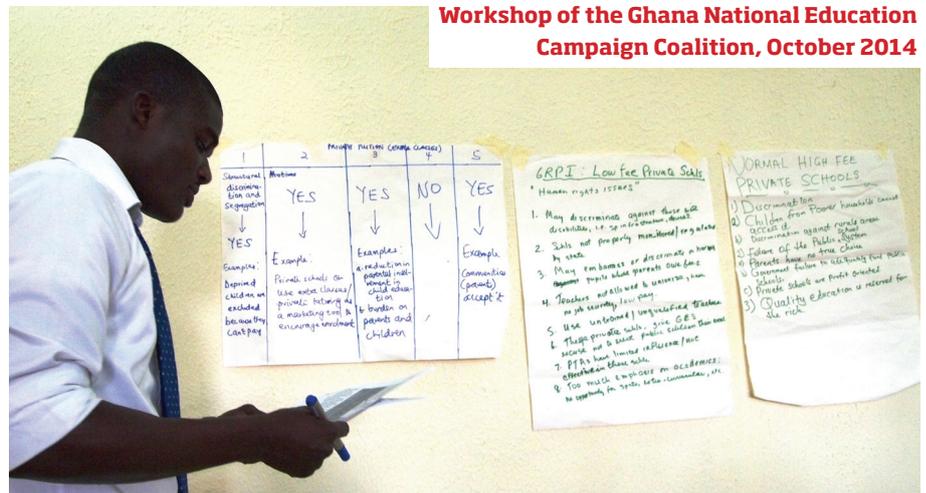
## Step 6

### Evaluation and planning future actions

Evaluate the impact of your efforts and plan future activities and submissions accordingly.

Capacity building (whether on research, analysis, report

writing, media engagement, etc.) is crosscutting throughout the process and can be carried out on-the-job or through dedicated sessions/trainings depending on capacity needs of coalitions/networks. An important added value of this methodology is learning by doing, and with the additional support we can provide, engaging in this work will build the capacities of those involved.



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## Collaboration with the Universal Periodic Review (UPR)

The UPR is a process by which the human rights records of all UN member States are examined by their peers - other States. It works in a similar way as the human rights treaty body reviews, and civil society can submit reports and undertake lobbying activities in a similar fashion to the treaty bodies above. You can find out more about the process and the calendar of review of your country on this [website](#).

### USEFUL RESOURCES

[A SIMPLE GUIDE TO THE UN TREATY BODIES, INTERNATIONAL SERVICE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, July 2015](#)

[OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS \(OHCHR\) WEBSITE](#)

This is 2 of 3 documents designed to present recent research and advocacy work led by the Global Initiative for Economic Social and Cultural Rights (GIESCR) in partnership with civil society organisations in 7 countries around the world as well as the Privatisation in Education Research Initiative and the Right to Education Project. The work critically examines the effects of privatisation in education using human rights mechanisms. The documents are designed to be an introduction to this work and GIESCR can provide more resources, information and support to anyone wishing to engage in this work.

The other documents are:

- 01 | [Private actors in Education and Human Rights: a practical methodology to tackle the negative effects of privatisation in education on the right to education](#)
- 03 | [Case Studies on Parallel Reporting to Tackle Privatisation in Education](#)

You can find these documents along with methodological resources for working on private actors and the right to education here: <http://bit.ly/PrivatisationMethodo>



If you would like to get involved or learn more about this project please contact Sylvain Aubry, Research and Advocacy Advisor at the Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights: [sylvain@globalinitiative-escr.org](mailto:sylvain@globalinitiative-escr.org)