



2019-2020

BIENNIAL Report



The Global Initiative
for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Message from the Executive Director

Welcome to our biannual report 2019-2020. This report coincides with the anniversary of the first decade of the Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (GI-ESCR).

GI-ESCR was founded 10 years ago by two outstanding professionals - Mayra Gomez and Bret Thiele - with a long-standing commitment to economic, social and cultural (ESC) rights.

While I only joined the organization in October 2019, and as many of us who have been working on human rights, poverty and development, I have witnessed from the outside, how GI-ESCR was growing in credibility, reputation, and expectations.

In just a decade, GI-ESCR has provided first-rate leadership on ESC rights and achieved global recognition and ground-breaking outcomes on issues related to women's access to land and resources, extraterritorial obligations, education, public services and climate change, just to mention a few.

From the outside, I was particularly impressed by the way this small organization was always able to surpass itself, keep its independence and stick to its values and to its unique methodological approach of achieving transformative change by working in meaningful partnerships to effectively amplify the voices of local advocates and activists.

While witnessing the growing of GI-ESCR, I always thought that its agility, flexibility, high-quality technical expertise and sense of strategic opportunities offered great potential for impact. Such an environment could only make me delighted to join the team. After just over a year, I am glad that my expectations have even been exceeded.

Over the past fifteen months, I have worked with a handful of brilliant and hard-working colleagues, all of whom are extremely passionate about tackling the endemic problems of poverty, social injustice and inequalities through a human rights lens. We have been supported by a wonderful Board



of Directors, donors, and partners from around the world, who have closely monitored our progress.

While we were amid a continuous process of growth and development, the Covid-19 pandemic made our work more important than ever. It has exposed and exacerbated existing inequalities - including gender inequality -, environmental crises and the existing gaps in the enjoyment of ESC rights such as health and education.

At the same time, a growing number of people are realizing both that these rights are of paramount importance and that solidarity is essential to face societal challenges. We have therefore been striving to transform this terrible pandemic into an unprecedented opportunity to catalyse a movement aimed at rebuilding the role of the State in the provision of ESC rights-related services (e.g. health, education and social protection) and ensuring that recovery efforts support the transition to a fair, just and green economy. We aim to build a

cross-constituency movement demanding a recovery that invests in public services and in a green energy transition, that is rights-based and responsive to the needs of disadvantaged groups and women.

To overcome the current crisis, we cannot go back to 'business as usual'. We will continue to work to ensure that the voices and solutions of the most affected communities and peoples are heard by policy makers at the local, regional and international levels.

The achievements we made in 2019-2020, briefly presented in this report, give us a gleam of hope and encourage us to keep working for a world in which everyone has access to education, health care, social protection, water and sanitation, food, housing and other economic, social and cultural rights.

I sincerely hope that you will enjoy reading this report and that we will continue to chart the path towards a better world together ●

In solidarity,

Magdalena
Sepúlveda Carmona

Who we are

GI-ESCR promotes transformative change to end endemic problems of social, economic and gender injustice through a human rights lens.

Our vision

Our vision is of a world where the human rights framework reflects the real-world experiences of all by effectively furthering social and economic justice, gender equality and human dignity, and catalysing change from the local to the global, back to the local.



Our mission

The mission of the GI-ESCR is to harness collective power to address more effectively the root causes of poverty and social exclusion.

Our methodology

Through innovative and collaborative strategies, GI-ESCR tackles issues that lead to tangible change in the lives of people living in poverty.

By targeting the locus of power, abuse and injustice, fundamental change can be made to the systems and structures which maintain inequalities and marginalisation.

GI-ESCR strives to amplify the voices of local advocates by leveraging national and international law and mechanisms and informing the content and interpretation of international human rights standards from the perspectives of marginalised groups and communities.

This two-way exchange of information and advocacy results in specific change at both the local and the international levels.

GI-ESCR also maintains consultative status with the United Nations and observer status with the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR).

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GI-ESCR



Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights



GI-ESCR



www.gi-escr.org

Where we work

Our offices

GI-ESCR has a presence in Brussels, Dakar, Geneva, Mexico City, Nairobi, Paris and Santiago.

This dispersed structure enables us to be closer to the ground in several regions and to connect with different economic, social and cultural rights (ESC) rights struggles and institutions across the world.

Thanks to its presence in Geneva, where it is also the only NGO working exhaustively on ESC rights, GI-ESCR plays a unique role in the promotion and protection of ESC rights at the international level. We facilitate engagement with the human rights mechanisms, to ensure that their work is informed by the perspectives of movements, organizations and defenders on the ground and to maximise opportunities to use those bodies as levers for national level change.

Where we worked in 2019-2020

GI-ESCR works at both the global and national levels to advance new frontiers in ESC rights. Despite the lockdown and worldwide travel restrictions as of March 2020, GI-ESCR was able to carry out and accompany national-level work in many countries, most significantly in those indicated on this map. Most of the national work was conducted with, and often led by the partners at the national level, and GI-ESCR.

- ▼ Australia
- ▼ Canada
- ▼ Chile
- ▼ Colombia
- ▼ Côte d'Ivoire
- ▼ European Union
- ▼ France
- ▼ India
- ▼ Kenya
- ▼ Liberia
- ▼ Mauritania
- ▼ Mexico
- ▼ Nepal
- ▼ Nigeria
- ▼ Saudi Arabia
- ▼ Senegal
- ▼ Uganda
- ▼ USA



We also supported and advised national ESC rights advocates in their engagement with the Geneva human rights bodies, including human rights defenders from: Cameroon, Chile, El Salvador, France, Germany, Israel, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Nigeria, Serbia, Sweden, Switzerland, South Korea, USA and Yemen.

Achievements

in numbers

Media coverage

In 2019 and 2020, our work was featured in

80

major media outlets in 8 languages

2019

16

2020 ▲

64

Events

24

(co-)organised in 2020

12 (co-)organised

18 participated and spoke

2019

37 participated and spoke

2020 ▲

Publications

63 in 2020 ▲

34 in 2019

Website

48,050 page views

15,200 site visitors

190 countries and territories

2019

91,900 page views

27,780 site visitors

193 countries and territories

2020 ▲

Newsletter

2019

15,468 audience reached

2020 ▲

15,487 audience reached

Twitter

2019

422,600

impressions

1965 followers

2020 ▲

959,300

impressions

4265 followers

Facebook

228,216

impressions

2862 followers

231,193

impressions

3300 followers

LinkedIn

717 followers

95 views

748 followers

2270 views

YouTube

349 views

970 views

Blog

2020

45

different authors
71% from the Global South and 75% women

32

posts

8,941

page views
(April to October 2020)

Our publications

GI-ESCR has released a considerable number of publications over these two years, with a sharp increase in 2020 due to the development of its activities and partnerships.



12

Reports

2

2019

10

2020 ▲



2

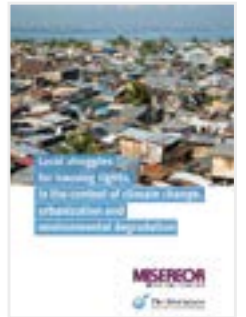
CESCR' Yearbooks

1

2019

1

2020



7

Policy papers and briefs

3

2019

4

2020 ▲



16

Parallel reports and submissions

6

2019

10

2020 ▲



16

Written statements & press releases

6

2019

10

2020 ▲



12

Oral statements

3

2019

9

2020 ▲



12

Updates from Geneva

5

2019

7

2020 ▲



8

Contributions by GI-ESCR to other publications

2

2019

6

2020 ▲



Contributions to GI-ESCR's blog about the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on economic, social and cultural rights

32

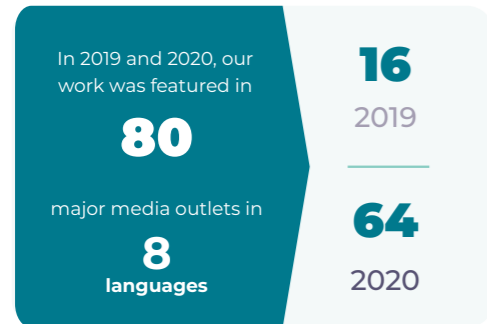
See all publications released in 2019 and 2020 on our website.

In the media

Changing the narrative on economic, social and cultural rights

We constantly look for innovative ways to effectively further social and economic justice, gender equality and human dignity. Changing the narrative is at the core of this mission. We seek to reach out to people, by engaging with their diversity, values and experiences and, as far as possible, in their own languages. For us, media outlets represent an important bridge that meet

this goal. As we work in many countries around the world and at global level too, we strive to engage with media outlets worldwide, focusing not only on articles but also on interviews and open editorials as a human voice relaying people's experiences and alternatives for transformative change ●



LATIN AMERICA

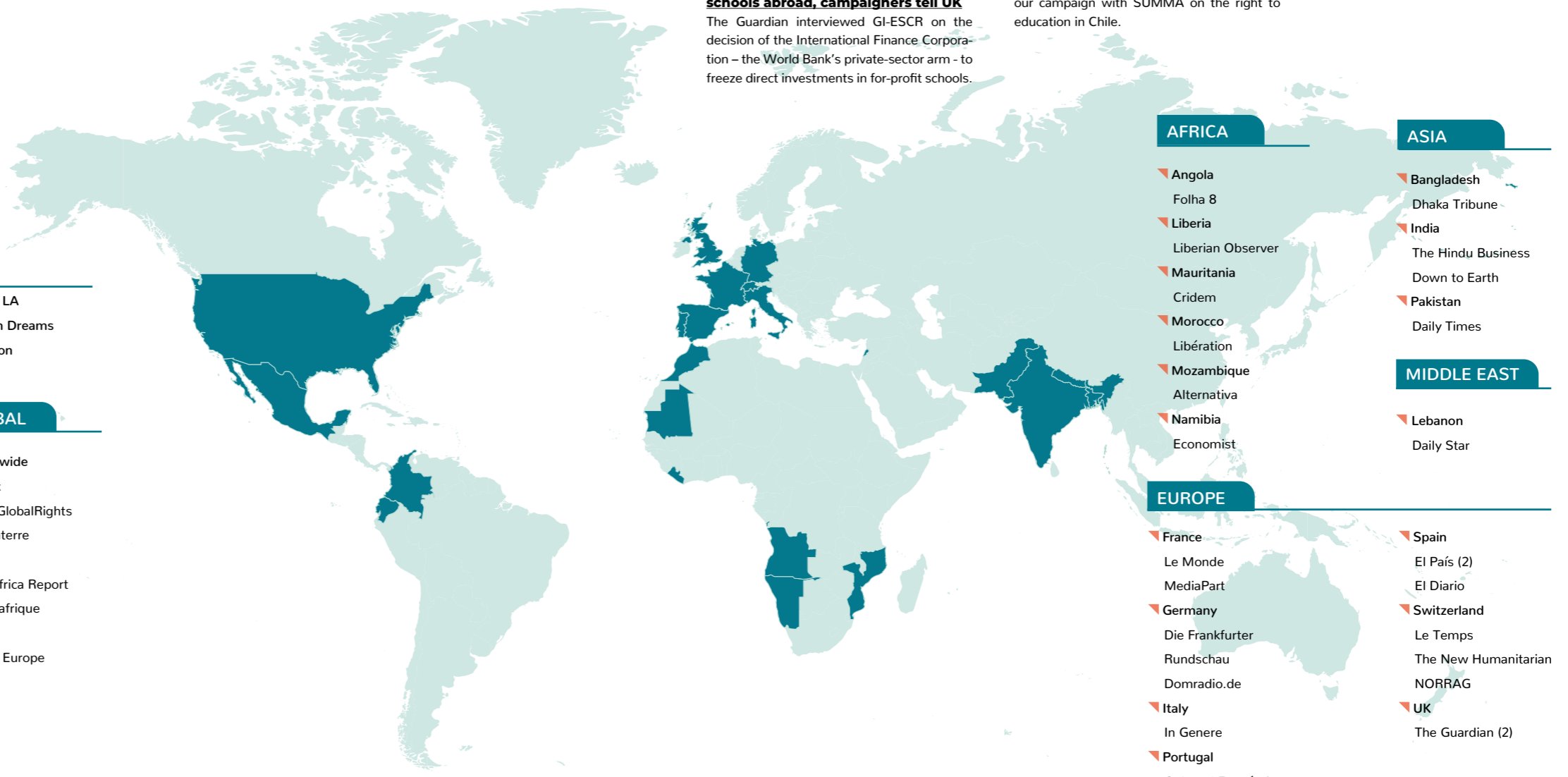
- ▼ Argentina
Página 12
- ▼ Brazil
UOL
Folha de Sao Paolo
- ▼ Chile
El Mercurio
El Mostrador
Soy Chile
Radio ADN
Radio USACH
Hoy x Hoy
El Vacanudo
El Magallanews
El Martutino
El Morrocotudo
- ▼ Colombia
Las dos Orillas
- ▼ Dominican Republic
Acento (2)
El Dinero
- ▼ Ecuador
El Universo (3)
- ▼ Mexico
La Jornada
Mexico Social
Animal Político
- ▼ Panama
La Prensa
La Estrella
- ▼ Peru
La Mula (2)
- ▼ Uruguay
La Diaria

US

- Hispanic LA
- Common Dreams
- La Opinion

GLOBAL

- ▼ Worldwide
Devox
OpenGlobalRights
Médiaterre
- ▼ Africa
The Africa Report
Mondafrique
- ▼ EU
Social Europe



October 2020

'Enough is enough': UN Experts' open editorial sparks worldwide media interest

Ahead of our 'Enough is enough' joint event on the impacts of privatisation on public services related to economic, social and cultural rights, five current and former UN Special Rapporteurs and a UN Independent Expert, including our Executive Director Magdalena Sepúlveda, signed an open editorial, for which GI-ESCR managed to spark [worldwide media interest](#). 15 media outlets relayed it, including The Guardian, Le Monde, El País, Die Frankfurter Rundschau and UOL.

April 2020

Stop spending millions on for-profit schools abroad, campaigners tell UK

The Guardian interviewed GI-ESCR on the decision of the International Finance Corporation – the World Bank's private-sector arm – to freeze direct investments in for-profit schools.



March 2020

Be a feminist, demand that the multinationals pay their taxes!

In this op-ed, relayed by 16 media outlets across Europe, Latin America, Africa, the Middle East and India, Magdalena Sepúlveda addresses gender injustice, advocating for a new fiscal pact based on progressive tax systems and for transnational corporations to pay their fair share of taxes.

November 2020

Informe de SUMMA y la Iniciativa Global por los Derechos Económicos, Sociales y Culturales - El aporte de la experiencia internacional a las políticas educativas en la nueva Constitución

In 6 weeks, 11 key media outlets reported on our campaign with SUMMA on the right to education in Chile.



December 2020

Marchandisation de l'éducation en Mauritanie

Main independent media in Mali relayed GI-ESCR's article on commercialisation of education in Mauritania.

August 2020

Women and Girls should not pay the bill of the pandemic

In this op-ed, relayed by 12 media worldwide, Magdalena Sepúlveda describes how women have been again the first victims of the social and economic crisis caused by the pandemic, as well as the possible way out for a fairer and sustainable future.

Stories of impact

Here are some significant examples demonstrating how GI-ESCR's work with its partners is making a difference in people's lives.

ABIDJAN PRINCIPLES

AWARDED SUPPORT BY THE PARIS PEACE FORUM 2019 FOR ONE OF THE MOST PROMISING GOVERNANCE PROJECTS



LEARN MORE: WWW.ABJDANPRINCIPLES.ORG #ABIDJANPRINCIPLES

The Abidjan Principles: a milestone on the right to education

February 2019

57 eminent experts on the right to education adopt the Abidjan Principles, which quickly become a landmark text on the right to education in the context of the growing commodification of education worldwide.

It is subsequently endorsed by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, the United Nations Human Rights Council, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to education and the High Commissioner for Human Rights, as a tool for States to ensure the realisation of the right to education.

November 2019

The Paris Peace Forum rewards the Abidjan Principles as one of the ten 'most promising governance projects' among 716 projects from 115 countries.

Legal advocacy: Supporting a new social pact in Chile

September 2020

The United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) follows closely the recommendations we made together with the Chilean network Nuevo Pacto Social in our joint parallel report on the enjoyment of ESC rights in Chile. 14 out of 20 questions the country is asked to respond to come from our joint submission.



ACHPR set standards on States' obligations to regulate private actors and regarding public services

May 2019

The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) adopts a resolution on States' obligation to regulate the involvement of private actors in the provision of health and education services.

March 2020

The ACHPR adopts another resolution to develop norms on States' obligations to regulate private actors involved in the provision of social services.

July 2020

Echoing key concepts from the Abidjan Principles on the right to education, the ACHPR publishes its Guidelines on the Right to Water in Africa, requiring substantive and procedural conditions to be met before the State may delegate the provision of water services to a private actor.



Influencing development aid

June 2019 and April 2020

The Abidjan Principles influence the policies of major education donors such as the Global Partnership for Education, the largest global fund dedicated to education and the International Finance Corporation, the corporate arm of the World Bank. Both of which decide to move away from for-profit education investments.



'Enough is enough' panel: impacts of privatisation in the spotlight

October 2020

Over 500 participants attend the first online panel event bringing together eight United Nations (UN) special procedures mandate holders to discuss the impacts of privatisation on public services and alternatives. GI-ESCR manages to spark the interest of 14 major media outlets worldwide, in the open editorial signed by five of the current and former UN mandate holders joining the panel.

Enough is enough
Privatisation & public services
A conversation with current
former UN Special Rapporteurs

Landmark decision by International Finance Corporation regarding Bridge International Academies

October 2019

Following a complaint of 10 Kenyan citizens legally supported by GI-ESCR, the Compliance Adviser Ombudsman (CAO) issues a preliminary finding raising "substantial concerns" about the International Finance Corporation (IFC) investment into Bridge International Academies (BIA).



New General Comment to the Maputo Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa

March 2020

The ACHPR issues a new General Comment to the Maputo Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa, acknowledging the discrimination women face and calls on States to enforce equal rights in marital property.

November 2020

The new General Comment is launched at an ACHPR high-level panel, with the participation of Mayra Gómez, former Co-Executive Director of GI-ESCR, in acknowledgement of GI-ESCR's tremendous work on the issue.





Private actors and public services

We monitor the impacts of the increasing privatisation and commercialisation of services related to the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights – such as education, health care, water and sanitation. We expose abuses when they occur and demand that those responsible be held accountable. We promote realistic, inspiring and rights-based alternatives, where States fulfil their obligations with respect to these rights and services.

Education

Over 2019 and 2020, GI-ESCR was instrumental in changing the discourse on the privatisation of education, which now much more consciously and cautiously integrates the human rights dimensions, notably the challenges posed by privatisation. GI-ESCR is particularly proud to count among its achievements the adoption of the [Abidjan Principles on the human rights obligations of States to provide public education and to regulate private involvement in education](#) (the Abidjan Principles) and their endorsement by the main human rights institutions.

The Abidjan Principles, a milestone and landmark instrument for public services

On 13 February 2019, the Abidjan Principles were successfully adopted by [57 eminent experts](#) on the right to education, following a three-year [consultative process](#) with decision-makers, communities, researchers, and practitioners. From 2016 to 2019, GI-ESCR played a leading role within the Abidjan Principles Secretariat, which facilitated a uniquely open, transparent, and broad consultative and research process. This landmark instrument has quickly become a reference instrument on the right to education in the context of the growing privatisation and commercialisation of education worldwide.

On the aftermath of this major achievement, GI-ESCR remained at the forefront of civil-society mobilisation to raise awareness of the Abidjan Principles and have them recognised by human rights institutions. The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) issued a Resolution in June 2019 on States' Obligation to Regulate Private Actors Involved in the Provision of Health and Education Services recognising the Abidjan Principles, followed closely by the United Nations Human Rights Council. At least 8 other bodies recognised the Abidjan Principles, including the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, the Global Partnership for Education and, in 2020, the European Committee of Social Rights.

The Abidjan Principles are increasingly considered as a potential game-changer for public services, recognised and endorsed by a wide range of human rights institutions. In 2019 and 2020, GI-ESCR focused its work on ensuring the implementation of the Abidjan Principles, carrying out training sessions for a wide range of actors, from judges to journalists, undertaking pilot projects and developing innovative tools in line with the education-sector plans developed with UNESCO.

GI-ESCR participates in landmark global policy change

In June 2019, the Global Partnership for Education [decided](#) not to fund commercial private schools. [This decision](#) - which will influence the allocation of billions of dollars in development aid - was the result of several years of active engagement by GI-ESCR with the GPE, partners and civil society representatives. It followed the November 2018 [resolution](#) by the European Parliament which GI-ESCR also contributed to, that declared that the



European Union and its Member States must not use development aid money to fund commercial private schools.

GI-ESCR has played a leading role in monitoring and demanding accountability for the impact of Bridge International Academies (BIA) on human rights since 2015 and achieved significant results in this regard. In October 2019, following a [complaint](#) of 10 Kenyan citizens legally supported by GI-ESCR, the Compliance Adviser Ombudsman (CAO) issued a [preliminary finding](#) raising "substantial concerns" about the World Bank Group's International Finance Corporation (IFC) investment into BIA. The case was still ongoing at the end of 2020, with GI-ESCR continuing to monitor the impacts of BIA.

Following this important step, the IFC set a [new precedent](#) in April 2020 in upholding the right to education by issuing an [official commitment](#) to freeze investments in private for-profit pre-primary, primary, and secondary schools.



Health

GI-ESCR has continued to assess the human rights impact of private actors in health systems and advocate for better policies and effective regulation, to ensure quality public-health services.

As a result of the collective efforts by several organizations, researchers and activists in June 2019, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights issued a [landmark resolution on privatisation of education and health, recalling States' obligation to regulate private actors involved in the provision of health and education services](#).

Furthermore, GI-ESCR, in collaboration with the [University of Essex Human Rights Centre Clinic](#) and the [Initiative for Economic and Social Rights \(ISER\)](#), consolidated the human rights framework applicable to private actors in health systems in a ground-breaking publication: [Private Actors in Health Services: Towards a human rights impact assessment framework](#). This key publication unpacks States' human rights obligations in the context of the increasing privatisation of healthcare, particularly health financing and provision.

'Enough is enough' panel creates momentum

In October 2020, an exceptional audience of over 500 participants attended the first online panel event bringing together eight United Nations (UN) special procedures mandate holders to discuss the impacts of privatisation and reflect on how to build renewed momentum for the public provision of services related to economic, social and cultural rights. The [event](#), led by GI-ESCR and co-organised with 8 other organisations, also received very positive feedback with over 1000 requests for more information.

Ahead of the event, five current and former UN Special Procedures mandate holders signed an open editorial, for which GI-ESCR managed to [spark the interest of 14 major media outlets](#) worldwide, including The Guardian, Le Monde, El País, Die Frankfurter Rundschau, and Brazilian UOL ●



Economic, social and cultural rights in changing times

GI-ESCR's blog on the COVID-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic emerged against the backdrop of existing and interrelated climatic, economic, social and political crises, which it aggravated, highlighting the serious dysfunctions of our societies. New economic, social and political systems and models that govern the world are needed, based on human-rights and focusing on tackling the environmental crisis and inequalities. This entails building strong, transparent and democratic public institutions and services which enable a fair distribution of societal resources, and ensuring gender equality and dignity for all, in all circumstances.

As a rapid response to COVID-19 pandemic, GI-ESCR launched a [blog series](#) in March 2020 to encourage de-

bates on how to address the crisis from a human rights perspective. As a result of this initiative, we published 32 thought-provoking articles between April and October 2020 from advocates, practitioners, policy makers and academics, opening a space to reflect on and assess the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the enjoyment of ESC rights.

The various contributions highlight the importance of putting economic, social and cultural rights, climate change and gender equality at the centre of policy responses to the pandemic. As curators of the blog, we ensured maximum visibility for unrepresented voices. Thus, out of 45 authors, 71% were from the Global South and 75% were women ●

Water

Our work so far has focused on unpacking the human rights framework applicable to the involvement of private actors in the provision of water as a public good, building on our experience in education and health.

GI-ESCR had responded to a call for submissions in 2018 by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) for input on the Draft Guidelines on the Rights to Water in Africa. The inclusion of GI-ESCR's [points](#) in the final [Guidelines on the Right to Water](#) published in July 2020 is a key achievement for the defence of water as a public good.





Strengthening ESC rights

frameworks, institutions and accountability

We work to ensure strong and effective economic, social and cultural (ESC) rights legal frameworks and monitoring and accountability mechanisms, that can respond to contemporary ESC rights injustices. We also support national and local rights advocates to leverage the human rights system to fight social, economic and climate injustice.

During 2019-2020, we continued to work with partners to ensure that the human rights framework and institutions are equipped to address contemporary ESC rights struggles and informed by the perspectives of ESC rights defenders. We strived to ensure that the human rights monitoring and accountability bodies (HRBs) are strong, effective, credible and sufficiently resourced to discharge their important mandates. We also pressed for expanded safe and accessible spaces for ESC rights defenders to engage with these mechanisms, particularly in the context of the measures taken to contain the COVID-19 pandemic which threaten the active engagement of civil society in the work of the international human rights system.

Updating human rights norms: UN Human Rights Committee strengthens the right to life

In 2019, GI-ESCR saw its efforts advocating for the recognition of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of the right to life rewarded, with the [adoption](#) by the UN Human Rights Committee of a new General Comment (No. 36) on the right to life (article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights [ICCPR]), which embraces a more fulsome understanding of the right to life and insists on the entitlement of individuals to enjoy a “life with dignity”. In a strong endorsement of the indivisibility of all rights, it acknowledges the implications for the right to life of economic and social deprivation

and of environmental degradation, climate change and sustainable development. These represent significant developments in human rights jurisprudence and an expansion of opportunities for access to justice for millions of people living in poverty, given the special, non-derogable, status of the right to life and the fact that a significant number of States have enshrined the right to life in their constitutions and national laws. The expanded notion of the right to life has already proved significant in litigation and advocacy work at the national and international levels, such as the children’s climate case before the Committee on the Rights of the Child, in submissions in national climate change litigation in Ireland, and in the [‘climate refugee’ case](#) of the Human Rights Committee against New Zealand.

Geneva updates: the only ESC rights focused update on the international human rights system

As part of our commitment to demystifying ESC rights and equipping human rights defenders to leverage the human rights system, we disseminate [regular updates](#) about the ESC rights work of the UN Human Rights bodies.

Over 2019-2020, we published 12 updates on the ESC rights developments of the UN Human Rights Council and the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, [including analysis of trends and opportunities for engagement and jurisprudential developments](#). These are the only ESC rights focused publications on the international human rights system and an essential source of information for national ESC rights advocates wishing to engage at the international level.

CESCR Yearbook: a unique publication showcasing the work of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

GI-ESCR continued to publish the [Annual Yearbook](#) of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) in 2019 and 2020. This publication seeks to enhance the visibility and accessibility of the Committee’s work for national organizations which do not have the capacity to follow closely the ESC rights protection work of this key monitoring body. The Yearbook captures the full range of the Committee’s activities throughout the year. Since it was first published in 2017, it has come to serve as an important tool for civil society, human rights practitioners, academics and States.

For the 2019 edition, released in 2020, we re-designed the publication, with yet more infographics, statistics and analysis. Widely disseminated, it received very positive feedback and outreach significantly increased.

“For those who are interested in the Committee, the GI-ESCR’s yearbook is extremely valuable.”
Philip Alston, former UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights.

Opening spaces for civil society engagement and ESC rights advocacy

We advocated for and co-hosted the first annual civil society meeting with the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), held in March 2020. The CESCR thanked us for our leading role in organising the important interaction with civil society and committed to creating a space for regular annual

meetings with NGOs to exchange on the work of the Committee and emerging ESC rights issues.

In September 2020, GI-ESCR arranged for civil society colleagues to brief the Committee during its first on-line session during the COVID-19 pandemic. We facilitated presentations to the Committee by colleagues from ESCR-Net, the Asian Indigenous Peoples’ Pact and the Abahlali baseMjondolo Movement (South Africa), on the ESC rights challenges of communities during the pandemic.

“I can’t emphasize how much I appreciate having GI-ESCR as our ‘Geneva mission!’”
Eric Tars, Legal Director, National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty.

Strengthening the human rights treaty bodies

During the period 2019-2020, GI-ESCR actively engaged in the state-led “Treaty Body Strengthening Process”. As part of the NGO Network on UN human rights treaty bodies (TB-Net), we [pushed for civil society-friendly reforms](#) to strengthen these crucial independent human rights monitoring and [accountability mechanisms](#) and for [States to adequately fund the system](#) and we resisted the efforts of states who sought to undermine the effectiveness of these bodies in order to avoid human rights scrutiny. Our advocacy efforts were rewarded when many of our proposals were reflected in the [recommendations](#) for action to the UN General Assembly in September 2020.

When the COVID-19 travel restrictions and confinement measures severely restricted the work of the human rights monitoring bodies, together with TB-Net, we [monitored](#) and made recommendations on the transition to online work to ensure neither civil society space, nor quality of human rights monitoring were compromised. Furthermore, we rallied over 500 civil society organisations to support [our call to the HRTBs](#) to lift their suspension of the reviews of states, continue their important work online and ensure the meaningful engagement of civil society ●



The international human rights system is made up of the human rights treaty bodies, the Human Rights Council and its subsidiary bodies and mechanisms including the Special Procedures mechanisms and the Universal Periodic Review. The human rights treaty bodies (HRTBs), such as the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), are committees of independent experts that monitor implementation of the core international human rights treaties. Currently, there are nine human rights international treaties, and one optional protocol, from which 10 treaty bodies have been established. The Human Rights Council is the inter-governmental body within the United Nations system made up of 47 States responsible for the promotion and protection of all human rights around the globe.



Climate change and human rights

We highlight the serious threat posed by climate change to ESC rights and demand that States take ambitious action to address climate change and respect, protect and fulfil human rights in their climate actions.

In collaboration with partners, we carried out foundational work over the past four years, to elevate climate change in the human rights field and develop the legal interpretation of States' human rights obligations with respect to climate change. We advocated for States to protect rights by taking ambitious, rights-respecting climate action and built the capacity of the human rights accountability mechanisms to address climate change in a way that supports the objectives of climate campaigners and litigators.

Supporting human rights bodies to address climate change

In collaboration with CIEL, we helped the human rights bodies, solidify their understanding of the link between human rights and climate change and respond to climate change in their work, through technical support, capacity building and briefings. We briefed the Human Rights Committee on the International Cov-

enant on Civil and Political Rights and climate change as well as on national jurisprudence on the right to life and climate change.

In order to influence and raise awareness amongst State delegates to the Human Rights Council, in June 2019, we hosted a [side event](#) on 'Climate change, poverty and human rights: protecting and promoting the human rights of the poor in climate action' with the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights and the Ambassadors of Ecuador and Fiji. We also and made numerous oral statements at the Human Rights Council highlighting, for instance: the [urgency of addressing climate change to protect rights, why climate change is a women's rights issue](#) and [how the right to water is undermined by climate change and environmental degradation](#).

In March 2020, we hosted a meeting with staff members of the Human Rights Committee (CCPR), the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the

Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) and of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to brief them on developments on human rights and climate change at the international and national levels. It also enabled the different Committees to exchange on how to advance their work on climate change, particularly in relation to cases filed with the treaty bodies.

Supporting civil society to use UN human rights bodies for climate campaigning

We convened strategising and capacity-building sessions with climate activists and litigators to enable them to leverage the monitoring and accountability functions of the human rights bodies, so as to ensure that the outputs of those bodies truly reflect and serve the campaigning priorities of climate activists. These included:

- Facilitating a session at the Humanity Survival Summit, organized by Amnesty International, Greenpeace and CIEL in September 2019, on the role of the human rights mechanisms in addressing climate change.
- Co-hosting with CIEL 'Leveraging the UN Human Rights Treaty Bodies (HRTBs) for climate legal strategies' international session where we presented the developments in the work of the HRTBs on climate change to a meeting with climate litigators and academics convened by Friends of the Earth the Netherlands, also in September 2019.
- In 2020, in light of the growing engagement in the human rights field regarding climate change, we published a Climate and [Human Rights Toolkit](#), a key tool for civil society organisations working on climate-related issues to leverage the HRTBs State reporting processes to advance climate campaigns.

Advancing human rights norms and increasing pressure on States to take action on climate change

In 2019 and 2020, together with our close partner CIEL, we again published our flagship publication: [States' Human Rights Obligations in the Context of Climate Change](#). The publication synthesises the jurisprudence of the HRTBs on climate-related issues, highlighting the growing engagement on climate change and how this engagement plays into efforts to hold governments accountable for failing to meet their human rights obligations. The publication was cited in several UN reports and has been a reference and guidance document for climate litigators and campaigners across the world.

In September 2019, following substantial advocacy and support by GI-ESCR & CIEL, five HRTBs adopted a [joint statement on the human rights obligations of States in the context of climate change](#), at the time of the UN Secretary-General's 2019 Climate Action Summit, sending a powerful message to States that they have legal obligations to protect human rights from the adverse impacts of climate change. This statement, already cited in the [climate case](#) filed by 16 children with the Committee on the Rights of the Child, has been a milestone for GI-ESCR and CIEL's joint work in advancing the development of human rights norms on climate change and acknowledged by climate litigators and campaigners as a key resource for their work for climate justice.

Strategic submissions by GI-ESCR and partners to HRTBs have elicited significant recommendations to States, both advancing human rights norms on climate change and increasing the pressure on States to take action to address it. Notably, the HRTBs requested:

- Mexico to specify, in consultation with indigenous peoples, measures to mitigate the effects of climate change on their lands, territories and resources, with a view to protecting their traditional ways of life and means of subsistence (CERD, Mexico, 2019),
- Switzerland to reduce public and private investment in the fossil fuel industry and ensure that investment is compatible with the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (CESCR, Switzerland, 2019),
- Australia to take measures to reduce its GHG emissions by establishing targets and deadlines to phase out the domestic use and export of coal and to accelerate the transition to renewable energy (CRC, Australia, 2019); to establish a fully accessible and inclusive mechanism to engage with persons with disabilities in the implementation of the Sendai Framework (CRPD, Australia, 2019), and
- Japan to reconsider their funding of coal-fired power stations in other countries (CRC, Japan, 2019).

Advancing the right to housing and women's rights in the context of climate change

We also worked to deepen the analysis of how climate change impacts economic, social and cultural rights and how it impacts particular groups differently.

In 2020, together with MISEREOR, we supported NGOs from Cameroon, El Salvador and Nigeria to [come to Geneva](#) and [brief human rights experts](#) about the impacts of climate change on housing rights and what States must do to address these challenges. These testimonies, together with case studies from Peru and the Philippines, were captured in the publication '[Local struggles for housing rights in the context of climate change, urbanization and environmental degradation](#)'. These were also discussed in an [online seminar](#) with UN agencies, UN human rights experts and academics we hosted on World Habitat Day, to further highlight how community-led initiatives can protect communities and build their resilience to both the climate and environmental crises and pandemics.

Linking renewable energy and gender justice

GI-ESCR also convened a [Roundtable](#) in November 2020 of women's rights experts and advocates with women human rights defenders from different countries to discuss the human rights analysis of what a just energy transition means for women's rights. The discussion fueled our detailed analysis in our [Briefing on Renewable Energy and Gender Justice](#), which spotlights case studies from Mexico and South Africa. The event created momentum, both as a space for movement building and for advancing a common understanding and advocacy proposals towards stronger gender-responsive policy-making in renewable energy by States and international institutions ●



Women's economic, social and cultural rights and gender equality

GI-ESCR champions women's economic, social and environmental justice by advocating for gender equality, women's empowerment and the enjoyment of ESC rights in the face of privatisation, the ecological breakdown and the COVID-19 pandemic.

GI-ESCR broadens its scope to promote women's economic, social and environmental justice

GI-ESCR has worked for many years promoting women's economic and social justice. We identified women's rights to land and productive resources, as a crucial element in ensuring women's economic and social justice and achieving substantive equality. Together with our partners, we produced in-depth analysis and expertise on women's land rights, which led to ground-breaking progress in legal standards and implementation efforts, particularly in the African context. Our collective efforts also led to a better understanding of the importance of land rights in reducing violence against women, promoting economic independence, improving women's status in communities and their resilience to climate change.

Building on this solid foundation of work, GI-ESCR shifted its focus towards advancing women's economic, social and environmental justice.

Grounding substantive equality through women's rights to land and other productive resources

During 2019-2020, GI-ESCR continued to work closely with local partners to advance international and regional standards on the protections of women's rights to land and productive resources and highlighted the need to remove barriers to implementation, such as gender stereotypes and cultural practices.

In 2019, together with our partners Landesa and APWLD, we drew attention to the importance of secure, gender-equitable and socially inclusive land tenure in addressing the inter-linked crises of inequality and climate change. Through our [joint submission on Gender Equitable and Socially Inclusive Land Rights](#) and advocacy work, we raised awareness about how gender inequality and other intersecting forms of discrimination compound the impacts of these crises, often impoverishing women and undermining their autonomy and independence, and contributed to influencing human rights norms on land.

After years of advocacy, a key achievement for GI-ESCR in 2020 was the [adoption](#) by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHR) of a new General Comment to the Maputo Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa. This General Comment 'on women's rights to property in cases of separation, divorce, or annulment of marriage' acknowledges the blatant discrimination women are subjected to and calls on States to enforce equal rights in marital property. Since its adoption, GI-ESCR has disseminated the General Comment widely, including through a [high-level panel](#) at the ACHPR with the participation of Mayra Gómez, former Co-Executive Director of GI-ESCR, in acknowledgement of GI-ESCR's tremendous work on the issue.

The General Comment has been welcomed by women's rights advocates as a landmark for the rights of women across Africa. Following this success, we were eager to share the lessons and tips with other advocates. Together with the Hamilton Lugar School of Global and International Studies, we published an important [report](#), along with a [toolkit](#), highlighting how use concluding observations from human rights treaty bodies to advance women's rights to land and property. The report and toolkit build on GI-ESCR'S [previous practical guide](#) on using CE-DAW to secure women's land and property rights.

Furthering women's economic and social rights for just transitions in the context of climate change

Women are differently and disproportionately impacted by the effects of climate change and GI-ESCR has been at the forefront of initiatives to convince States, policymakers and rights monitoring bodies, that climate change is a women's rights issue. Through advocacy, briefings, awareness-raising events with women's rights expert bodies, UN agencies and the [Human Rights Council](#), as well as capacity building for women's rights advocates, we helped elevate the nexus between climate change and women's rights in human rights and climate change spaces and sharpen the women's rights analysis of the climate crisis.

We gathered momentum on the topic and facilitated networking through the [Roundtable](#) on Renewable energy and Gender Justice we organised in November 2020. The meeting attracted women's rights activists and experts from across the world. Along with our [Briefing Paper](#) on the issue, we collectively advanced the understanding of the risks and opportunities for women's rights in the transition to renewable energy.

Advancing human rights through gender-responsive public services: a feminist alternative to privatisation and commodification

In 2020, GI-ESCR undertook several activities to raise awareness about the gendered impacts of the commodification of ESC rights. We, for instance, hosted a session at the [Global South Women's Forum 2020](#) to collectively deepen the analysis on the main impacts on women and girls and articulate share recommendations on how to reshape public services in line with women's rights. The meeting catalyzed collaboration among various feminist organisations.

GI-ESCR reached key audiences through its advocacy work on gender equality, in spaces such as the [2020 Human Rights Council Social Forum](#); the [UN Meeting for Civil Society in Fi-](#)

[ancing for Development in the Era of COVID and Beyond](#), convened by the UN Secretary General; [the 177th session of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights](#) and the [International Forum on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#) organised by the Mexican National Commission of Human Rights.

Defending women's ESC rights in times of COVID-19

Ever since the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, GI-ESCR has strived to raise awareness on its impact on women's ESC rights and to advocate for women's participation in the post- COVID-19 social and economic measures for a fair and just recovery.

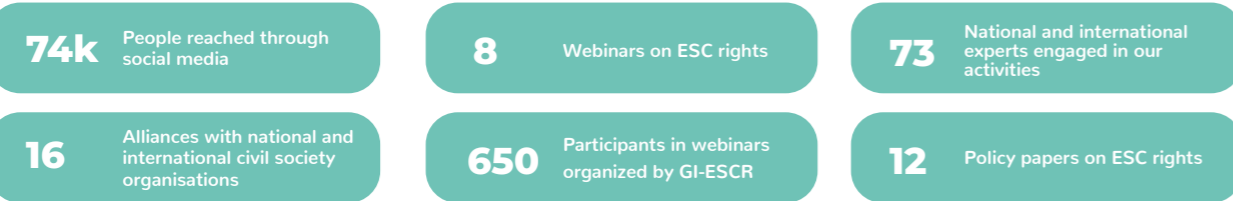
We played an active part in high-level online events with key international stakeholders to highlight the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women's rights. We also organized events, published articles, and used the media to raise awareness on the measures that can be taken to ensure a gender inclusive recovery. Magdalena Sepúlveda's open editorials on the issue also sparked media attention, with notably 2 of them covered by a total of 28 media outlets worldwide. ●

IACHR & OAS: Poverty, inequality and fiscal policies in the context of the pandemic in Latin America and the Caribbean

Magdalena Sepúlveda, GI-ESCR Executive Director, provided key fiscal policy recommendations to protect women's rights in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis at the [experts panel](#) convened by the Rapid and Integrated Response Coordination Unit for the COVID-19 pandemic crisis ([SACROI COVID-19](#)), established by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights to strengthen its institutional capacities to protect fundamental rights in the context of the pandemic.

Legal advocacy: Chile's constitutional process

We push for the legal recognition of economic, social and cultural (ESC) rights, demonstrating the importance of their justiciability. We identify opportunities at the domestic level to support legal advocacy and empower local actors, to promote ESC rights' recognition, monitoring and accountability.



The social uprising in Chile in October 2019, and the subsequent process for the drafting of a new constitution was exactly the kind of legal advocacy to which we could contribute, in addition to our staff's expertise on the history of privatisation and struggles for ESC rights in the country.

Over 2020, GI-ESCR built strong alliances with civil society organisations at national, regional and international levels to promote a progressive constitutional debate in Chile and wider access to knowledge and evidence regarding ESC rights.

Together with partners we initiated a series of projects and activities, aiming to secure the inclusion of ESC rights and gender-justice in the constitutional process. Through comparative studies, communication campaigns, seminars, workshops and participatory processes, we supported and strengthened mobilization and advocacy processes of our partners in Chile on ESC rights issues.

Bringing the concerns of national organisations to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Together with [Nuevo Pacto Social](#) (a network of 750 civil society organisations), we submitted a [Joint alternative report to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights \(CESCR\)](#) for the List of issues prior to reporting (LOIPR) on Chile. The CESCR largely echoed the submission on issues of justiciability of rights, inequality, poverty, the right to hous-

ing, social security, education, health, gender and women's rights, and indigenous peoples. This submission was critical to connecting local struggles on ESC rights with international advocacy spaces and rights accountability mechanisms such as the CESCR.

Webinar series 'Social Rights and the Constitutional Process: (re)imagining the Chile of the 21st century'

This high-quality webinar series on social rights in Chile, co-organised by GI-ESCR, Ahora nos Toca Participar, Avina and Contexto, with a total of 7 well-attended webinars between August and October 2020 and 28 speakers, generated a space for dialogue and debate with an inclusive participation across sectors, to reflect on a new social pact for the country. Over 650 people participated, notably members of Chilean civil-society organisations and grassroots communities, as well as academics. The initiative reached out to about 12.000 people. All seminars included sign language interpreters to ensure broader inclusion.

'Constituyamos otra Educación' - 'Let's build another education'

GI-ESCR joined forces with the Right to Education Initiative and the Chilean organisation SUMMA to highlight the importance of education in the country's constitutional debate. A social media campaign, in which key



public figures participated - including activists, politicians and artists - began in October, reaching out to about 30.000 people over two months. We also published the [report Let's Build Another Education. A Better Society is Possible - 10 constitutional knots in education and leading international experiences to inspire national debate](#), providing a concise and useful overview of the right to education, particularly in the context of the current constitutional debate in Chile, relayed by Chilean media.

Advocating for the right to adequate housing for all



Together with TECHO-Chile, GI-ESCR aimed to inform the debate around the right to housing with comparative evidence about this topic, international standards and experiences from local communities across Chile.

In collaboration with partners and networks on the ground, the alliance ran a series of seminars, workshops and other activities with communities and scholars, while building up advocacy networks

around the right to housing. In November 2020, we launched a [policy paper](#) and a social media campaign about the importance of enshrining the right to housing in the constitution. The policy paper was launched in a webinar with over 100 participants and 207 views of the recording on Youtube, and the campaign reached out to over 14,500 people in two months.

Guaranteeing ESC rights through fiscal policy

Together with the Economic Policy Observatory (Chile), the Center for Economic and Social Rights, the Initiative for Principles and Guidelines of Human Rights in Fiscal Policy and other national and international organisations, GI-ESCR furthered the debate on a progressive fiscal policy guaranteeing fulfilment of ESC rights in the new constitution, targeting civil society organisations and future members of the constitutional assembly.

Constitutional Essays to support ESC rights' inclusion in the new Constitution

GI-ESCR rallied over 30 well-known international and 15 national advocates, practitioners, policymakers and academics to contribute to its Collection of Constitutional Essays. The goal of this initiative, carried out jointly with the Universidad de Concepción of Chile and the Human Rights Centre at the University of Essex, is to provide academic responses to constitutional questions regarding ESC rights. The Collection aims to support a wide network of Chilean organisations to influence the work of the constitutional assembly as well as to develop hands-on materials for community work in Chile.

Advocating for women's rights and a care system to be included in the Constitution

Together with Corporación de Desarrollo de la Mujer La Morada, a long-standing feminist organisation in Chile, we organised a series of capacity-building workshops for women and feminist organisations working to advance women's rights in different regions of the country to advance a feminist agenda in the constitutional debate.

Together with 18 national, regional and international feminist organisations, GI-ESCR facilitated a workshop on "The right to care in Latin America: opportunities for the constitutional process in Chile", in order to foster collaboration among the various organisations and movements advocating for the recognition of a care system in the new Constitution.

Enabling grassroots communities to have their say in the constitutional debate

GI-ESCR partnered with Ahora Nos Toca Participar, a large-based civil society initiative, to run roundtables with local communities and grassroots groups across the country to enable them to contribute to the constitutional debate. In 2021, once all conclusions have been systematised, they will be published on a digital platform where citizens' proposals will be contrasted with those from the candidates to the constitutional convention ●

Outreach

Presence in the media

With our partners on the ground, we managed to attract [media attention](#) on the project. 11 major media outlets published a piece over October and November 2020.

Social Media

In order to promote this project amongst more targeted audiences, we created a specific Twitter account dedicated to Latin America, on 21 September 2020, which managed to attract around 220 followers in two months. This space allows us not only to reach more targeted audiences, in their own languages, but also to have an almost project-specific Twitter account and finally to create a rebound effect by passing on information between the global and regional accounts. Overall, the project had reached out to about 74000 people by the end of 2020.



Partnerships and networks

We work with partners, globally and locally, to further social and economic justice and catalyse change from the local to the global, back to the local.

GI-ESCR's work is grounded in partnerships. We believe that effective advocacy for economic, social and cultural (ESC) rights requires building collective power and breaking down silos between disciplines, types of organisations, and working cultures. Partnerships are at the core of GI-ESCR's methodology and theory of change and to a world that increasingly enjoys human rights.

Together with organisations, advocates, human rights defenders, social movements and grassroots communities at local, national, regional and international levels, we monitor and expose ESC rights violations and inequalities, craft advocacy strategies, mobilise constituencies to challenge vested interests, abuses of power and social injustices. We also connect local advocates and victims of ESC rights violations with national, regional and international human rights mechanisms and policymakers, so that they can directly contribute to shaping ESC rights standards and narratives.

We, for instance, facilitated the strategic engagement of national partners with UN human rights mechanisms and region-

al mechanisms such as the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights in order to set human rights standards and support local, grassroots mobilising work.

We also brought together organisations, trade unions and movements from the development, tax justice, development finance, and human rights spheres, as well as UN human rights Special Procedures mandate holders to discuss privatisation and renewed strategies for the public provision of services related to ESC rights such as health, education, water sanitation and housing.

We worked together with organisations demanding housing rights in the context of climate change, urbanisation and environmental degradation, in El Salvador, Cameroon, the Philippines, Peru, Nigeria and Chile. We raised awareness about ground-level experiences and highlighted how community-led initiatives can protect communities and build their resilience to both the climate and environmental crises and pandemics.

We strategised with climate change litigators across the world who are bringing human rights-based claims in national courts

to challenge States' inaction on climate change. Together we identified key concepts, themes and countries where international human rights norm development and State monitoring can support national climate campaign objectives and undertook legal advocacy to support those objectives, for instance, pressing for human rights scrutiny of Japan's funding of coal-fired power plants in other countries.

We also engaged actively in several networks, notably:

- ▶ **ESCR-Net**, as a member of
 - ▶ the Steering Committees of the
 - ▶ Strategic Litigation Working Group
 - ▶ Women and ESC Rights Working Group
 - ▶ Advisory Group of the Networkwide Project on Environment and ESCR
 - ▶ the Economic Justice Working Group
- ▶ **Bringing Human Rights Home**, as a member of the ESC Rights Working Group
- ▶ **ETO Consortium**, as a member of the Steering Committee
- ▶ **Geneva Climate Change Consultation Group**
- ▶ **Geneva Gender Network**
- ▶ **Group of Friends of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ESCR)** in Geneva
- ▶ **The NGO Network on the UN Human Rights Treaty Bodies (TB-Net)**
- ▶ **Privatisation in Education and Human Rights Consortium**
- ▶ **Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors**
- ▶ **Réseau francophone contre la marchandisation de l'éducation**
- ▶ **Nuevo Pacto Social** (Chile)
- ▶ **Climate Justice Network** (Mexico)

We also wish to thank each and everyone of our partners, individuals, groups and organisations, most of whom we will continue to engage with, for the road we have travelled and the achievements we have made together ●



GI-ESCR in West Africa and francophone countries

Since 2017, GI-ESCR has been expanding its work in West Africa and francophone countries. During 2019 and 2020, GI-ESCR offered its expertise to several projects in different countries to counteract the trends of increasing privatisation of public services. To this end, we worked with domestic civil society organisations mobilising together and building normative frameworks. Thanks to our capacity to connect actors at global, national and local levels, we played a leading role in building the Réseau francophone contre la marchandisation de l'éducation (Francophone network against the commodification of education). This is the only network covering issues related to the privatisation of public services in the sub-region, but also in francophone countries globally.

Over these two years, we contributed to increase mobilisation and research work in Mauritania, Liberia, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire, generating momentum on issues related to the education sector.

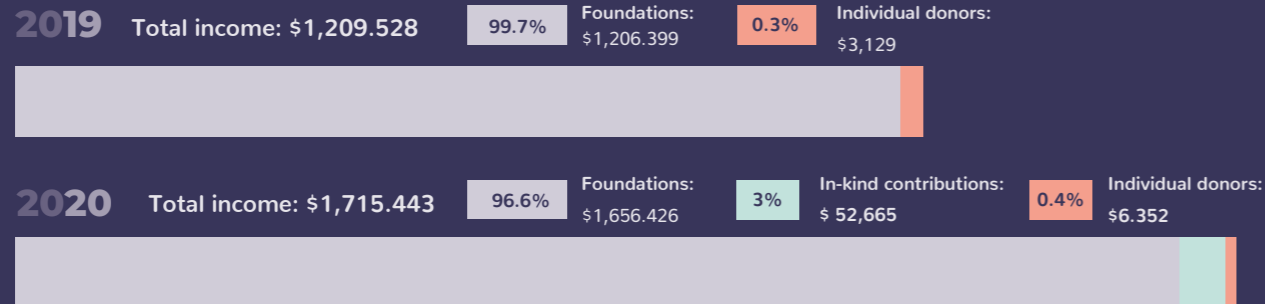
[Le Réseau francophone contre la marchandisation de l'éducation](#) (Francophone network against the commodification of education) gathers 303 francophone organisations from Québec, to France, to North and West Africa. This network has become a key advocate against privatisation of education. It successfully advocated for the 88 member States of the Organisation internationale de la francophonie (International Organisation of the Francophonie) to affirm the organisation's commitment to public, free and quality education and the need for regulation of private actors in education and for coordinated mobilisations of civil society organisations across the francophone network on several campaigns and meetings.



Financial overview

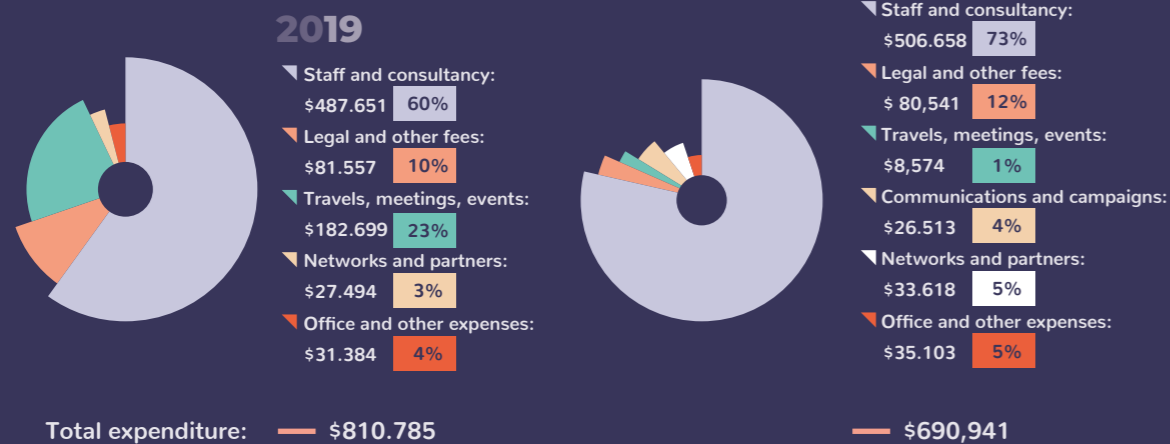
Sources of income

▲ Rollover from 2018: USD\$ 397,642



▲ Rollover into 2021: 1,024,502.43

Sources of expenditure



Our donors

GI-ESCR is grateful to all its donors listed below, who have made it possible to carry out the work presented in this report.

Our financial information can be found at www.guidestar.org.

2019

- ▼ Anonymous (General Support)
- ▼ Anonymous (Education)
- ▼ Wallace Global Fund
- ▼ Open Society Foundations
- ▼ Open Society Initiative for West Africa
- ▼ Fondation pour l'Égalité des chances en Afrique
- ▼ Climate Litigation Network (Urgenda)

2020

- ▼ Anonymous (General Support)
- ▼ Anonymous (Education)
- ▼ Wallace Global Fund
- ▼ Open Society Foundations
- ▼ Open Society Initiative for West Africa
- ▼ Open Society Policy Center
- ▼ Misereor
- ▼ The Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) Geneva
- ▼ UNESCO
- ▼ Climate Litigation Network (Urgenda)
- ▼ In-kind contributions

Our people



Magdalena Sepúlveda Carmona

Magdalena served as the United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights (2008 to 2014). She also worked as Senior Research Fellow at the Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD). From 2013 to 2017 she was a member of the High-Level Panel of Expert on Food Security and Nutrition. In 2015,

she was recognized in the Global Tax 50, among the individuals with the biggest impact on taxation worldwide.

She has worked as a researcher at the Netherlands Institute for Human Rights, staff attorney at the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, Co-Director of the Department of International Law of the UN-mandated University for Peace and Research Director at the International Council on Human Rights Policy.

Magdalena is a member of the Independent Commission for the Reform of International Corporate Taxation and of the High Level Panel on International Financial Accountability, Transparency and Integrity for Achieving the 2030 Agenda.

Magdalena holds a Ph.D. (Utrecht University) and LL.M (University of Essex).



Mayra Gómez
Bret Thiele

Mayra Gómez and Bret Thiele left GI-ESCR as the Co-Executive Directors and co-founders of the organisation in October 2019. Bringing deep knowledge and passion for ESC Rights, they built a dynamic organization that achieved significant impact. They were satisfied because confident to hand the organisation's lead over to Magdalena Sepúlveda Carmona, an experienced and strategic leader with an impressive track record.

Our Staff

United States
Mayra Gómez and Bret Thiele
Co-Executive Directors
(until October 2019)

Mexico
Magdalena Sepúlveda Carmona
Executive Director
(since October 2019)

Switzerland
Lucy McKernan
Geneva Representative

Belgium
Sylvain Aubry
Senior Legal and Research Advisor

Senegal
Océane Blavot
Research and Advocacy Officer

Kenya
Ashina Mtsumi
Policy and Legal Officer

Canada
Sarah French
Campaigner

Mexico
Mónica Ovalle Corona
Head of Finance, Operations
and Human Resources

Chile
Vicente Silva
Programme Officer Latin America

Mexico
Alejandra Lozano Rubello
Programme Officer on Women's
Rights and Gender Equality

France
Sarah Jameson
Human Rights and Public Services
Fellow

Belgium
Nellie Epinat
Communications Officer

Switzerland
Tom Bagshaw
Fellow

Cameroon/Senegal
Axel Etoundi
Senior Program Officer, Human Rights
and Public Services, and West Africa
Lead

Research Associates and Volunteers

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Alemayehu Begna Hordofa
Research Associate

Kenya
Bill Mokelwa
Research Associate

Kenya
Ruby Nyaoro
Research and Advocacy Associate

Kenya
Comfort Gatwiri
Research and Advocacy Associate

Geneva
Tom Bagshaw
Research Associate

Geneva
Stella Nasirumbi
Research Associate

France
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Volunteer

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Amnesty International USA

Malavika Vartak
Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
Policy Coordinator – Amnesty Inter-
national Former Coordinator – Global
Forced Eviction Programme, Centre on
Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE)

Support our work

Help us fight for transformative change to end endemic problems of social, economic and gender injustice with a rights-based approach.

Donate

The Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (GI-ESCR) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organisation. We rely on donations to make our work possible. Donations are tax-deductible in many countries, including the United States. Learn more at www.gi-escr.org/donate

About GI-ESCR

The Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (GI-ESCR) is an international non-governmental human rights advocacy organisation. Together with partners around the world, GI-ESCR works to end social, economic and gender injustice using a human rights approach.

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The Global Initiative
for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights