



The Global Initiative  
*for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*

# TRANSPARENCY OF PRIVATE COMMERCIAL EDUCATION PROVIDERS:

## A CASE STUDY OF BRIDGE INTERNATIONAL ACADEMIES

[ The Global Initiative for Economic,  
Social and Cultural Rights ]

May 2022

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DOI: 1053110/FPRS4412

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Suggested citation: Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Transparency of private commercial education providers: A case study of Bridge International Academies (2022) DOI: 1053110/FPRS4412

# 1. Introduction

The **Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights** (GI-ES-CR) works to improve and promote transformative change to end endemic problems of social and economic injustice through a human rights lens. Its work focuses on strengthening public services for the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, and promotes transparency and accountability in the delivery of education. It pays particular attention to commercial education providers, whose role in education systems has grown rapidly.

This case study draws attention to the importance of transparent education governance, for learners and their families and for education authorities. It argues that all education providers - including private education providers that make a profit – must be required to report consistently and transparently on their procedures, their decisions, and their performance. Bridge International Academies (BIA, or Bridge) is the largest commercial chain of low-fee pre-primary and primary private schools. It claims to have established a ‘new model’ that uses data, technology, and economies of scale to standardize all aspects of education, from content development to teacher training. Its model attracted support from private and multilateral development finance agencies because it claimed to offer affordable education of good quality to the poor. BIA expanded rapidly after it formed in 2007 but a series of controversies, some of which are described here, caused some observers and education experts to question the company’s performance and model. In 2020, BIA diversified its corporate identity as its model has evolved from establishing and running schools to focusing on partnerships and education transfer which it has done increasingly under its parent company, NewGlobe Schools. Around this time, it wholly renewed its website.

Transparency is one of the key criticisms of Bridge. Essentially, the company reported that it had raised educational standards and performance in its schools. Its critics disputed its performance reports, or claimed that these were ambiguous or even misleading.

Disputes about transparency inevitably create problems of evidence. It is inherently difficult to analyse information that is not provided or that is inconsistent. Many of the allegations against Bridge turn on interpretation of BIA’s own reports and statements. To complicate matters further,

Bridge responded to the criticisms of its performance by resisting external scrutiny, diversifying its corporate identity and replacing its website. Since the website was BIA's principal public reporting instrument, its replacement ruptured the statistical continuity of its reporting and made comparative analysis of its claims even more difficult.

It is therefore important to say how we have put together the information presented here. The Brief is based on a qualitative analysis of information that Bridge published on its website, as well as Bridge press statements, social media pages, blog posts, and articles. In addition, we have made use of public reports, articles, and social media posts published by government departments in Kenya, Uganda and the United Kingdom, independent researchers, civil society organisations, teacher unions, and journalists. Because Bridge changed its website during the research, some of its links are no longer accessible. To address this difficulty, we used a web archive service. Defunct link references indicate the original link and the last date of successful access, as well as the web archive link through which the information has been retrieved, and the date of retrieval.

It should not require arcane retrieval skills to monitor the performance and reports of educational institutions. This in itself is an issue. The core argument of this report is that both public and private education should be conducted in a clear and transparent manner that enables parents, teachers, school heads, officials working in ministries of education, researchers, taxpayers, and funders of education to understand the implications on the right to education, the cost of schools and the performance of schools, as well as the quality of education that learners receive.



## Note

This report examines a private corporation that manages schools as commercial concerns. BIA runs schools it owns but also provides educational services for publicly-run schools in certain countries. Private (non-State) education takes many forms: privately owned or privately managed schools may be charitable, mixed public-private, religious, supported by foundations, family businesses, etc. This brief does not consider other forms of private education, which have specific characteristics that make them distinct from corporate commercial education enterprises.

All schools, including publicly owned schools, have transparency obligations: this report addresses the transparency obligations of corporate commercial educational providers.

Secondly, this report discusses the transparency obligations of education providers, and specifically the transparency record of BIA. In doing so, it makes reference to BIA's 'education model', to its employment practices, and to a number of other educational issues, either because BIA has raised them or critics of BIA have raised them. The report does not reach judgements on these matters, however, which would require separate and more detailed research: it reports on BIA's transparency record.



## Key findings

- States and donors should work together to make sure that education providers are held to high standards of transparency and accountability.
- The standards they set should make it possible for all stakeholders to monitor and analyse the quality of education governance and education expenditure, decisions, and performance.
- Where a State engages private actors, it should carefully consider their diversity and the risks associated with different models of education provision.
- In particular, commercial providers of education have an additional interest to present positive results in terms of performance and value for money, because positive (and negative) outcomes directly affect their ability to attract financing and pupils. States and education authorities should specifically address this fact when they set, apply and enforce reporting and transparency standards.
- To complement State efforts to hold education providers to account and maintain high standards, private sector alliances should do more to set and enforce stringent transparency and accountability guidelines for their members. Their guidelines should draw inter alia on human rights standards.

## 2. Transparency and private delivery of education services

An organisation acts transparently when it makes reliable information available to its stakeholders and the public in a manner that enables them to understand and monitor the organisation's results, processes and decisions<sup>1</sup>. Transparency is an indispensable element of accountability and effective public participation<sup>2</sup>, both of which underpin enjoyment of human rights, including the right to education. To be transparent, institutions must grant stakeholders and the public the freedom to seek, receive, and impart information<sup>3</sup>, and must be open to external scrutiny and responsive to feedback from stakeholders and the public<sup>4</sup>.

Human rights and other standards require public and private sectors to be transparent. Within the private sector, transparency is considered an important element of good corporate governance<sup>5</sup> and a safeguard against corruption<sup>6</sup>. In the public sector, transparency is a requirement of democratic governance<sup>5</sup> and a bulwark against abuses of power<sup>7</sup>. Exercising the right to information and the right to question and participate enables stakeholders and the public to hold officials accountable.

Transparency is particularly important in education. In its 2017/18 Global Education Monitoring (GEM) report, which focused on accountability in education, UNESCO noted that transparency is key to building trust and leads to better feedback because all parties can access essential information<sup>8</sup>.

Transparency is especially crucial in emergency conditions<sup>9</sup>. The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to education, Dr Koumbou Boly Barry, has emphasised that hurried adoption of private educational interventions (including online learning and private-public partnerships) in the context of COVID-19 could diminish participation and transparency and increase educational inequalities<sup>10</sup>.



## Transparency requirements under human rights law

The ‘Guiding Principles on the human rights obligations of States to provide public education and regulate private involvement in education’ (commonly referred to as ‘the Abidjan Principles on the right to education’ or simply the ‘Abidjan Principles’) were adopted in February 2019 by a group of experts in the right to education. They apply human rights law on the right to education to the contemporary context. In doing so, they set out transparency standards under human rights law, including in education, and describe relevant State obligations.

The Abidjan Principles affirm that, when they deliver and exercise governance over education, States must apply principles of transparency and accountability (**Guiding principle 20**). They must be transparent at several levels, including when they plan (**Guiding principle 21**) and deliver public education (**Guiding principle 32**). Crucially, the Principles make clear that, under human rights law, failures of transparency in public education do not justify the adoption of a privatised education system, because States have an immediate obligation to take all measures to address ineffective governance, lack of transparency, lack of accountability, or corruption that may adversely affect public education (**Guiding principle 42**).

States must also ensure that private education providers act transparently. Private schools should meet transparency requirements, and provide access to information about the operation of schools they manage (**Guiding principle 55(a)**). Transparency obligations also apply when a State allocates public resources to a private actor (**Guiding principle 66**). The freedom to establish and operate private schools (**Guiding Principle 47**) may be limited if transparency will decline in consequence (**Guiding principle 48(c)**).

Transparency in education remains a challenge, including in the public sector<sup>11</sup>. Public sector education is often criticised for failing children due to bureaucracy, vested interests, conservatism, and sometimes corruption. In 2009, for instance, the United Kingdom's aid agency (DFID<sup>12</sup>) suspended aid to Kenya's primary education services following allegations of corruption in Kenya's Ministry of Education<sup>13</sup>.

These criticisms of public education have led some donors and policy-makers to conclude that private education will improve the transparency and efficiency of educational services. In 2018, for instance, DFID's education strategy stated that DFID would "look beyond stagnant public sectors, instead promoting improved transparency, accountability and coalitions seeking better education and investing through alternative channels which deliver for poor and marginalised children"<sup>14</sup>. DFID's position drew on a range of authors and policy actors who have argued that the private sector is more transparent and accountable than the public sector, primarily because parents feel they have more say over the managers and teachers of private schools, and as a result it is easier to hold them accountable<sup>15</sup>.

These arguments have encouraged a sharp rise in private sector involvement in education. Across the world, many more commercial companies have become involved in delivering and financing education services; more countries rely increasingly on private companies to provide schooling and on markets mechanisms to ensure accountability<sup>16</sup>.

This shift has occurred even though there is little solid evidence that private sector involvement brings accountability benefits, and some evidence leans the other way. The record of Bridge International Academies, described here, suggests that privatisation does not necessarily improve transparency, while other research suggests that private sector involvement can increase corruption<sup>17</sup>.

### 3. Bridge International Academies and private education providers

Bridge International Academies (owned by NewGlobe Schools, Inc.) is a particularly interesting example of commercial schools. Worldwide, it is one of the largest chains of private schools. For many international donors and investors<sup>18</sup> it has been a flagship investment<sup>19</sup>, on the grounds that it offers an alternative to supposedly opaque and corrupt government systems. It has made a profit while claiming to improve the educational performance of pupils. And it has attracted significant criticism from a range of educational institutions and observers, who have alleged that it has not in fact delivered the results it has claimed to deliver, has produced obscure documentation to support those claims, has treated its students and staff inequitably, and has obstructed attempts to inquire into or confirm the above criticisms. Bridge has therefore been both a poster child and a test case for the virtues of privatised education. The criticisms, and BIA's responses to them, are described in chapters 3 and 4.

Bridge International Academies (BIA)<sup>20</sup> is a subsidiary of an American-registered for-profit corporation, NewGlobe Schools. It runs private pre-primary and primary schools that aim to deliver affordable education of good quality to underserved families and children. In 2018, it reported that it operated over five hundred schools in India, Kenya, Liberia, Nigeria, and Uganda, and aimed to teach ten million pupils by 2025<sup>21</sup>. BIA is a member of the Global Schools Forum<sup>22</sup>. It has received funding from both public and private investors<sup>23</sup>, including the World Bank's International Finance Corporation (IFC), Pearson Education, Zuckerberg Education Ventures, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. In total, BIA is estimated to have received over USD 140 million in grants and investments<sup>24</sup>. In 2022, the IFC decided to exit its investment in BIA<sup>25</sup>.

BIA uses what it calls an "academy-in-a-box" model<sup>26</sup>. It employs a highly standardised approach to education. Every school looks the same; the same material is used in each classroom; and, most important, the same lessons are taught in the same way across all the academies of the same country. BIA uses a system of scripted lessons; teachers receive lesson plans on an e-tablet, which they must follow word-by-word. Most BIA teachers possess secondary school qualifications and have no formal training in teaching<sup>27</sup>. From 2015, in Liberia and Nigeria, BIA also started to operate through public-private partnerships.

As the largest commercial chain of low-fee pre-primary and primary private schools, BIA established a 'new model' for "delivering quality education, leveraging data, technology, and scale to standardize everything from content development and teacher training to academy construction and billing"<sup>28</sup>. The model attracted both private and multilateral development finance agencies to invest in the company and support its expansion. Investors presented BIA as a model for education institutions that want to improve access to "quality, affordable education" for the poor<sup>29</sup>. The International Finance Corporation (IFC) suggested BIA had a "demonstration effect" which it described as follows: "The education sector for the low income market is fragmented which results in inconsistent quality and higher costs. The Company will act as a consolidator in the sector and if successful will attract other companies to employ similar strategies, thereby improving quality and reducing costs of primary education in emerging markets."<sup>30</sup> In addition, the company has been hailed as an innovative tech-based solution to challenges that confront the education sector, notably its need to be transparent and accountable<sup>31</sup>. BIA has argued that "accountability and transparency is a core principle of school management, which is enabled by Bridge's use of technology"<sup>32</sup>; and that technology makes "government classrooms completely transparent to education ministries"<sup>33</sup>. A Brookings report that was particularly supportive of BIA stated that "Bridge has improved accountability to parents through several different accountability mechanisms", as well as teacher accountability<sup>34</sup>. BIA's co-founder, Shannon May, has noted that, "in many classrooms in Africa, accountability for learning is weak<sup>35</sup>, and that Bridge intended to address that gap.

The widespread acceptance of this narrative, and the confidence placed in BIA's ability to scale up, gave BIA profile and credibility, which brought access to political and financial support. BIA also stands out for its size, and because it operates in several countries. Finally, BIA exemplifies a specific form of private school provider: a corporate commercial provider of education, distinct from charitable or religious schools, endowed or grammar schools, or family-owned schools.

These factors together make BIA an obvious choice for closer scrutiny. As an established company that has operated for more than ten years and received large sums in investments, it should be expected to have established sound accountability and transparency processes.

In practice, starting in 2016, BIA encountered a series of controversies and criticisms that put in question its model, its performance and its reporting. The company's response was defensive and far from transpar-

ent. Around 2020, it removed the information on its previous website and put up a new website. It appears also to have at least partly rebranded as 'NewGlobe Education'<sup>36</sup>. While BIA has always been a wholly owned Kenyan subsidiary of a US-based company registered in Delaware, called 'NewGlobe Schools, Inc'<sup>37</sup>, the relationship of NewGlobe Education to Bridge International Academies and NewGlobe Schools, Inc. is not made clear in publicly-available company documents. NewGlobe Education's website does not mention 'Bridge International Academies'<sup>38</sup>; it refers only to 'Bridge'<sup>39</sup>, and specifically to 'Bridge Liberia'<sup>40</sup> and 'Bridge schools'<sup>41</sup>. According to Wikipedia, "the four Bridge International Academies programmes are part of the [NewGlobe portfolio](#)"<sup>42</sup>. NewGlobe Education appears to have broadened BIA's remit: in addition to running schools, it sells a range of education programmes and services to governments. This may be a response to the challenges faced by Bridge schools as well as to market opportunities. BIA still maintains its own separate website. This does not mention either of NewGlobe's entities<sup>43</sup>, except in the privacy policy, which states: "Bridge International Academies refers to the four community school programmes under NewGlobe Schools, this includes Bridge Andhra Pradesh, Bridge Kenya, Bridge Lagos and Bridge Uganda"<sup>44</sup>.

To simplify life for the reader, this Brief refers only to BIA, except when it is essential to distinguish BIA from NewGlobe Schools or NewGlobe Education.

Based on publicly available information, the next two chapters examine the criticisms made of BIA, and BIA's response to them, insofar as they are relevant to two essential dimensions of transparency. Chapter 4 discusses the company's transparency with respect to its operations and impacts. Chapter 5 discusses its openness to external scrutiny.

## 4. Transparency with respect to operations and impacts

This chapter reviews the accuracy of BIA's marketing information, exam results, and published enrolment figures, and its response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

### [ a ] Accuracy of marketing information

BIA has consistently published information about itself and has reported on its impact<sup>45</sup>. It has used different media to do so, including radio shows and billboards, and in addition has asked its teachers to market their school in their community<sup>46</sup>. However, several complaints have been made, including by the Ugandan Government<sup>47</sup> and in the British Parliament, about the veracity and completeness of the marketing information BIA has provided<sup>48</sup>.

For instance, it has been reported that, to attract more families in Kenya, Bridge teachers were sometimes told to give parents only the basic price of schooling and to “avoid mentioning additional costs, such as exam fees and uniforms”<sup>49</sup>. For the teachers, the number of new students they can recruit is a key performance indicator, linked to their job security<sup>50</sup>. This marketing function has meant that BIA teachers have a different relation to schooling: whereas teachers traditionally focus on enabling students to learn, BIA teachers were expected in addition to expand BIA's client portfolio.

Bridge often described its schools as community schools or, especially in Kenya, ‘*harambee schools*’<sup>51</sup>. In Swahili, *harambee schools* are schools established, funded and managed by the community; they are usually eventually handed over to the government<sup>52</sup>. ‘Harambee’ was a term employed by the first President of Kenya, Jomo Kenyatta, to pull the nation together after independence. Calling a school ‘harambee’ attached it to Kenya's culture and history, made it appear indigenous and therefore legitimate. BIA has made many efforts to adopt that identity<sup>53</sup>, possibly to attract families and win the support of local actors and policymakers, and possibly to benefit from the lighter regulatory framework that Kenya applies to community schools (often referred to as APBET<sup>54</sup> schools)<sup>55</sup>. BIA nevertheless remains a subsidiary of a Delaware company<sup>56</sup>, whose funds pass through the United States and whose senior leadership is largely outside Kenya<sup>57</sup>. The Ministry of Education in Kenya has chal-

lenged BIA's claim to be a 'non-formal' or 'community' school, and consistently advised BIA to register its schools as fully private<sup>58</sup>.

In April 2020, Uganda's Ministry of Education issued a status update report on BIA, in which it criticised BIA for misleading parents about the cost of fees. The Ministry recommended that "Bridge Schools should desist from aggressive and largely misleading promotion, especially as regards the quality education they provide and affordability for the poor in the Ugandan context"<sup>59</sup>.

### [ b ] Exam results

In 2015, the first group of BIA pupils sat the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE), the national primary school exit exam<sup>60</sup>. Since then, BIA has celebrated annually what it refers to as its above average examination results. In 2020, it announced that it had 'excelled for five consecutive years now in the government's national primary school exit exam—consistently performing above the national average'<sup>61</sup>, and emphasised the correlation between time spent at Bridge and good examination results<sup>62</sup>.



Text sent by Bridge celebrating its KCPE results, 31 December 2015.

Some researchers and journalists have challenged BIA's figures. It has been suggested, for example, that the results in Kenya were achieved by selecting which students took the exam<sup>63</sup>, requiring weaker students

to repeat the year, and using a ‘cram school’ to prepare pupils for their papers<sup>64</sup>. In Liberia, where Bridge registered reading gains of about 2.2 additional words per minute, BIA also ‘increased dropout by more than half and reduced transition to secondary school’<sup>65</sup>, while spending more than three times the government target allocated for the Liberian Education Advancement Program (LEAP), in which Bridge was participating<sup>66</sup>. When it promoted its results, BIA did not explicitly refer to these factors, although they might considerably dampen the positive result that its schools obtained.

It also appears that Bridge’s impact on learning may not have been as great as it has reported. Exam results are a very limited way of gauging the quality of ‘learning’, which is a multidimensional concept. Quality of learning outcomes would be better represented by a composite indicator that took into account and disaggregated socioeconomic status, gender, health status, ethnicity, and other forms of disadvantage. Even if BIA’s metric is accepted, however, its declared results appear to be inconsistent. The table below lists BIA’s own figures of student performance in the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE). The KCPE measures pupils’ score relative to a maximum of 500 marks. The average score in Kenya is 250 marks.

**Figure 1. Evolution of Bridge’s self-reported results for the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education national examination, 2015 – 2020.**

Examination results reported by BIA	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Average mark of BIA pupils (after 5+ years)	-	292 / 272.2	280	279	281	-
Proportion of BIA pupils who scored over 250 (after 5+ years)	-	-	69%	72%	71%	-
Average mark of BIA pupils (after 3-4 years)	282	275 – 286/269.9 <sup>*67</sup>	264	264	264	-
Pass rate <sup>68</sup>	61% scored over 250 marks	-	86% scored over 200 marks	“almost 60%... scored at least 250 marks”	“Over 30% scored more than 300 marks”	“34% scored more than 300 marks”
Average marks	264/266	259	265	262	266 <sup>**</sup>	271 <sup>***</sup>

Source. BIA website, at <https://bridgeinternationalacademies.com/kenyan-students-fantastic-results-in-national-exams/> [last accessed 07.07.2020, retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20200924014132/https://www.bridgeinternationalacademies.com/kenyan-students-fantastic-results-in-national-exams/> on 23.03.2022]. See also <https://bridge.ac.ke/kcpe-success/kcpe-results/>.

\*The average mark for pupils at BIA for at least three years is 275; the average mark for pupils at BIA for at least four years is 286.

\*\*This figure is not explicitly supplied by the company. Instead, it reports: “Our pupils sitting the KCPE scored an average of 16 points higher than pupils nationally”.

\*\*\*This figure is not explicitly supplied by the company. Instead, it reports: “Our pupils sitting the KCPE scored an average of 21 points higher than pupils nationally”. However, the figure (271) is confirmed in media reports<sup>69</sup>.

These figures show a decline in the average score of pupils who were in BIA schools before sitting the KCPE exam. The inconsistent trend in KCPE marks since 2015 contrasts with the story of successful learning gains reported by BIA, that are used to attract investors and new pupils. Additionally, BIA's presentation of its exam results is not consistent over time. For example, the measure that BIA used to present the pass rates listed in Figure 1 differed each year. As a result, it is difficult to independently verify, track and analyse BIA's results<sup>70</sup>.

In 2016, for instance, BIA simultaneously reported that "Pupils who had been at Bridge for at least five years scored an average of 292 marks", and that "pupils enrolled at least 5 years averaged 272.2 marks". This is a discrepancy of over 20 points. Similarly, BIA stated that "Pupils who [sic] been at Bridge for four years averaged 286 marks" and that "Pupils with at least four academic years at Bridge averaged 269.9 marks"<sup>71</sup>. The same issue recurred in 2015, when BIA stated that "Our pupils averaged 266 marks in the KCPE examination, 16 points higher than the national average" and that "Pupils had a mean score of 264; 14 points above the national average".

In addition, some information was not reported in certain years. In particular, the average mark was not reported in 2016; but BIA included an average mark of 259 for 2016 after it updated its website. The earlier omission does not appear to be due to lack of data, because other information was available in those years. A sceptical observer might ask whether the figure was not included because it was the lowest average score recorded in the six years BIA Kenya pupils have taken the KCPE exam.

The absence of clarity in these figures does not accord well with BIA's promise of 'accountability for learning' or with principles of transparency. (BIA has made reference to at least one other study that reported positively on its learning outcomes<sup>72</sup>. However, the study concerned was based on self-assessments, and has been criticised methodologically and for lack of independence.<sup>73</sup>)

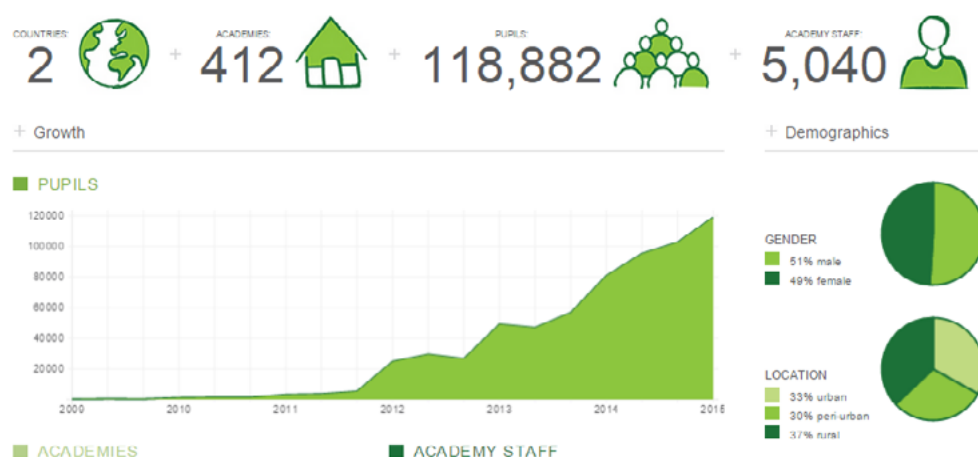
### [ c ] Enrolment

Concerns have been raised about the consistency of the declared enrolment numbers in BIA publicity. BIA has promoted its enrolment numbers as evidence of success, and attributed its initial rapid expansion to demand from parents and the impact of its model<sup>74</sup>.

However, BIA's data are often unclear. Disaggregated information about enrolment levels was available until 2020 on the company's former web-

site (see Figure 3). That information is no longer available; it was not included in the new website after 2020. The lack of data on school drop-out rates is noteworthy, because drop-outs (which occur when families are unable to pay fees, or children are expelled because fee payments are late) is likely to have contributed to falls in enrolment.

**Figure 2. Enrolment in BIA schools on 26 August 2015<sup>75</sup>**



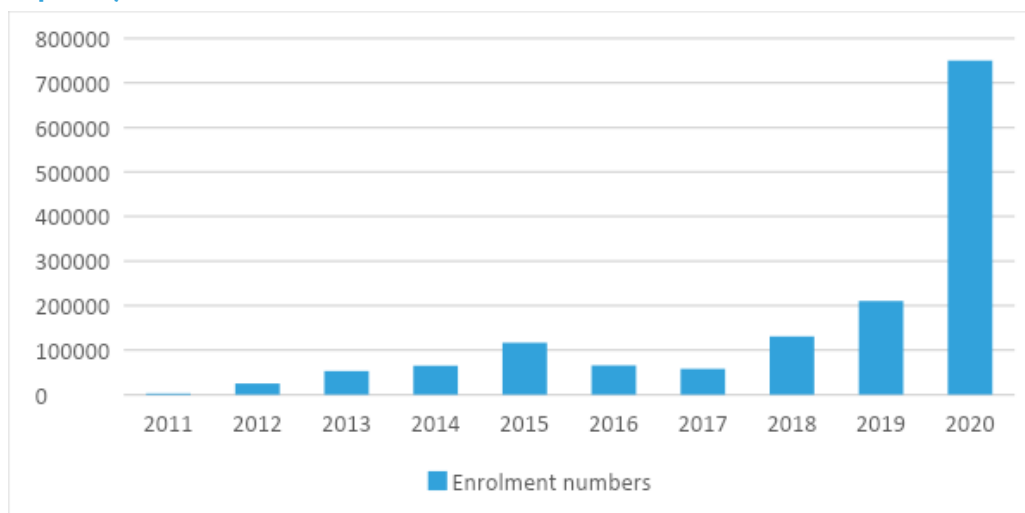
The way BIA has communicated data on pupil enrolment since 2020 makes it difficult to determine enrolment in the countries in which Bridge schools are located. The articles and documents which this Brief reviewed presented the enrolment figures in different ways<sup>76</sup>. For example, in 2015 BIA reported in one media article that 120,000 children were enrolled in its schools in Kenya<sup>77</sup>; but in another it reported enrolment of 100,000<sup>78</sup>. In some instances, enrolment data referred to a single country; in other cases enrolment in several countries was bundled, or covered all the locations in which Bridge operated. Figures were sometimes contradictory. This, again, is inconsistent with principles of transparency that the company promised to respect.

Based on BIA's figures, between 2009 to 2015 the company experienced a steady growth in enrolment. This was due partly to expansion of its operations in Uganda and Nigeria. Since 2015, however, enrolment in BIA schools appears to have stagnated or fallen, at least in Kenya and

Uganda. According to media reports, in July 2015 BIA’s enrolment levels peaked globally at 126,000<sup>79</sup>; enrolment of about 100,000 was reported between January 2016 and May 2017<sup>80</sup>. In July 2016, BIA schools were reported to have enrolled 120,000 pupils in Kenya and Uganda<sup>81</sup>; but in 2018 the media reported a drop in enrolment in Kenya “as a result of the uncertainty surrounding Bridge ... from 100,000 in 2015 to 80,000 in 2017”<sup>82</sup>. BIA itself stated that it had enrolled 70,000 pupils in 2017<sup>83</sup>. In a government report released in April 2020, the Ministry of Education in Uganda reported that 18 Bridge schools had closed, and that most had been closed by BIA due to low enrolment<sup>84</sup>.

Some supporters of BIA say that criticism by civil society organisations and teacher unions was responsible for the fall<sup>85</sup>. However, it appears that enrolment started to decline at the end of 2015 and the start of 2016, before Education International<sup>86</sup> and Results<sup>87</sup> released the first major critical reports in December 2016 and early 2017 respectively. The decline may have had several causes. For example, parents may have been disappointed by the performance of schools, or may have been unable to pay the fees; both factors would explain why BIA had to close or merge some schools<sup>88</sup>.

**Figure 3. Enrolment figures in BIA schools 2011-2020 (based on public reports).**



Source. The figures are averaged based on data from public sources. See the Annex for details.

Enrolment fell between 2015 and 2017 even though BIA had received scholarship funds from an organisation called United We Reach that were sufficient to cover the fees of at least 10,000-11,000 of its pupils in 2015<sup>89</sup> and 2016<sup>90</sup>. It is unclear whether the United We Reach programme continued in 2017 and 2018; but from 2017 BIA started its own sponsorship programme<sup>91</sup>, which was formalised in 2018 with support from the Global Fund for Emerging Scholars<sup>92</sup>. Without this boost, it must be assumed that enrolment would have fallen further.

There is therefore a disparity between the success that Bridge declared – a rise in enrolment and demand for its schools - and the information presented in public reports and the (limited) data that BIA's released.

In January 2020, Bridge stated on its website that it “has served more than 750,000 children to date, in over 1,500 schools”<sup>93</sup>. However, it is unclear whether this figure referred to the number of pupils enrolled in BIA schools at this time or aggregated all the pupils who had enrolled at a BIA school throughout the company's history, including pupils who chose to leave. Where enrolment rose, in addition, it was not made clear how much this was an effect of taking over the management of existing schools (as BIA did in Liberia), or opening new schools. In 2017, BIA opened 14 schools in Nigeria<sup>94</sup>. It is also unclear whether Bridge pooled other forms of partnership in these figures. In Nigeria, for instance, BIA operated an arrangement with the government under which it did not directly deliver education in schools, but provided other support such as teacher training.

### **[ d ] Response to the COVID-19 pandemic**

After schools closed due to the COVID 19 pandemic, Bridge officially announced that it was supporting its staff and teachers and would continue to pay them a monthly salary<sup>95</sup>.

## Tweet from Bridge International Academies on 27 March 2020



**Bridge** ✓  
@BridgeIntlAcads

Replying to @Fihi\_maFihi @leecrawfurd and 2 others

This is totally incorrect. Supporting our staff & teachers in this crisis is our priority. We will continue to pay everyone a monthly salary even though all schools are closed. These are difficult times and many will be suffering with no income as operations and orgs close.

1:46 PM · Mar 27, 2020 · [Twitter Web App](#)

However, media reports revealed that, in Kenya, BIA sent staff home on compulsory leave without a salary; it only provided medical insurance and “a monthly gratuitous payment equivalent to 10 percent of their salary”<sup>96</sup>. The salaries of BIA teachers were already very low. In 2018, it was calculated that BIA teachers earned between USD 88.80 and USD 118.50 per month; Kenya’s minimum wage from 2017 was USD 127.54<sup>97</sup>. In Liberia the Ministry of Labour launched an investigation into complaints that Bridge had reduced the salaries of its staff by 80-90%<sup>98</sup> and had put some employees on compulsory unpaid leave<sup>99</sup>, even though a government directive had prohibited pay cuts larger than 50% as well as layoffs (except in cases of redundancy)<sup>100</sup>. The Liberian Labour Ministry ordered Bridge to comply with the Government directive and “remit nothing less than 50% of employees’ salaries”<sup>101</sup>.

## 5. Openness to independent external scrutiny

To be transparent, institutions must be open to external scrutiny; they should allow and facilitate external evaluation of their policies, processes and impact. This is particularly important for organisations that deliver education. In 2017, a Committee of the British Parliament queried whether Bridge was “hostile to independent assessment”<sup>102</sup>. This chapter considers specific areas in which the company does not seem to be open to external scrutiny.

### [ e ] Headquarters in a tax haven

Bridge is the wholly owned subsidiary of NewGlobe Schools, Inc.<sup>103</sup>, a company registered in Delaware, USA, a state often qualified as a tax haven. Delaware is known to impose weak transparency requirements on corporations registered in the State<sup>104</sup>. As a result, it is difficult to obtain information about, and therefore to understand, the operations of BIA, although these affect the education and wellbeing of its tens of thousands of pupils.

### [ f ] Suppressing criticism

In a number of instances, BIA has resisted, rather than facilitated, attempts to obtain information about its work, or subject its activities to independent scrutiny. In May 2016, for example, it was reported that BIA had orchestrated the arrest of a Canadian PhD student who had been commissioned by Education International to research BIA’s operations in Uganda. The student was accused of impersonation and criminal trespass<sup>105</sup> but was subsequently released by the police, who dismissed the allegations when no evidence could be found. The President of the Canadian Teachers Federation commented that “BIA’s attempt at intimidation demonstrates how the company fears transparency about its own operations”<sup>106</sup>. In response to a critical letter sent to her by the Secretary General of Education International on June 6, BIA co-founder Shannon May asserted that BIA had a ‘civic duty to report any suspicious activity or any suspected criminal conduct’ and had “a fiduciary responsibility to protect our children”<sup>107</sup>. Subsequently, even though he had been prevented from completing his research, the arrested researcher released a report on Bridge schools in Uganda in September 2016<sup>108</sup>. By then the Ugandan Ministry of Education and Sports had already announced the closure of Bridge schools in Uganda, because they had failed to duly register,

and the Ministry's concerns poor infrastructure, hygiene and sanitation, and its doubts about a teaching methodology that did not promote pupil-teacher interaction<sup>109</sup>. This Ministry directive was later upheld by the Ugandan High Court<sup>110</sup>.

Faced by criticism in Kenya, BIA's response was similar. In March 2017, Bridge sued the Kenya National Union of Teachers (KNUT) and its Secretary General for defamation, claiming that KNUT's publications<sup>111</sup> and advocacy had cast BIA in a negative light. In this case, BIA sought gag orders, to restrain the union and union officials from (among other things) making or publishing "any statements defamatory or otherwise of or concerning Bridge"<sup>112</sup>. However, the court determined that references to Bridge's unregistered status were accurate and that "education is of such importance that the public are often engaged in questioning the happenings in public and private education [institutions] at all times"<sup>113</sup>. The court upheld the right to make fair comment on matters of public interest and in the public domain, and dismissed Bridge's application.

BIA has made at least one other attempt to suppress criticism. It threatened to sue the Chair of the Kenyan Complimentary Schools Association if he failed to retract a statement in which he had raised concerns about Bridge's curriculum and requested the Ministry of Education to investigate the curriculum of Bridge schools in the country<sup>114</sup>. The Ministry of Education later confirmed that Bridge's curriculum had not been approved by the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development<sup>115</sup>.

### [ g ] Lack of transparency in Liberia

In Liberia, BIA's participation in a large and controversial education public-private partnership (PPP) raised concerns about transparency and accountability<sup>116</sup>. In 2016, Liberia announced that it planned to hand the management of Liberian pre-primary and primary schools to Bridge<sup>117</sup>. The plan was heavily criticised by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to education, because it would violate the right to education<sup>118</sup>. Other educational bodies criticised the plan because it would reduce community participation and transparency<sup>119</sup>. These criticisms caused the Government to redesign the programme; it undertook to involve more private companies, that would manage fewer schools<sup>120</sup>. However, reports continued to suggest that Bridge would be invited to manage more schools than any other private bidder, without an open and participatory tendering process<sup>121</sup>, and that the number of schools BIA would manage had doubled in the 2021/22 academic year, due to expansion of the LEAP program<sup>122</sup>.

A report by the Coalition for Transparency and Accountability in Education (COTAE), a civil society organisation, found that schools that BIA managed were less accessible to stakeholders, especially civil society actors and independent actors who attempted to monitor the PPP pilot<sup>123</sup>. In September 2016, education staff from ActionAid International, an international NGO, reported problems they witnessed at a BIA-managed partnership school: they said pupils had been expelled, learning materials had been delivered late, and expressed concern about scripted teaching methods and censorship of staff<sup>124</sup>. The head teacher at the partnership school visited by the ActionAid team admitted that BIA had warned him “not to answer any questions about the school”<sup>125</sup>.

Separately, Liberian media reported that the Liberian Parliament had summoned BIA’s Country Director, Mr Griffin Asigo, several times to respond to questions regarding BIA’s operations in Liberia, but Mr Asigo had not attended<sup>126</sup>. In the end, the Education Minister appeared before Parliament to answer questions about Bridge<sup>127</sup>.

When the Government of Liberia commissioned an independent evaluation to assess the effectiveness and suitability of the PPP approach<sup>128</sup>, the evaluators reported significant resistance and obstruction by BIA and supporters of BIA. The evaluators claimed that BIA “wrote to [the evaluator’s] bosses and funders to impede [them]”<sup>129</sup>. When the evaluation was published<sup>130</sup>, Justin Sandefur, one of the authors, said the report was a “rare RCT [randomised controlled trial] run over the objections of some organisations being evaluated. Privately, some of those [organisations] have tried to block our funding, get us fired, etc. Publicly they have spun our past results as an unqualified success.<sup>131</sup>” In a separate interview, Sandefur said that “Bridge actively opposed the [assessment] at the beginning of year one because they thought it would be too difficult to demonstrate impact in the first year”<sup>132</sup>. In response to the report, Bridge published an article that challenged the report’s research methodology and criticised the authors for ideological bias; their methodological choices “suggest an active attempt to diminish the programme’s true impact and undermine its continuation.<sup>133</sup>”

## Conclusion and recommendations

Towards the end of a long independent review of Bridge's methods and impact, in which she saw a lot that was positive in BIA's approach, Jenny Anderson wrote:

Of the nearly 40 people I spoke to about Bridge, everyone who was not an employee or investor in Bridge said that the company had an inherently confrontational culture. Bridge bristles at questions that other organizations seem happy to answer, from evidence on scripting to how it characterizes its tablets (guides, not scripts). The tone of its answers ranges from combative to patronizing. And at times, their responses seem misleading. It insisted that it did not ask for the same funding the other operators got from the Liberian government, but multiple sources told Quartz it tried hard to do just that. (Bridge apologized for the error.)<sup>134</sup>

This paper does not examine BIA's teaching methods, or its financial model. But transparency is crucial to good education<sup>135</sup>. Everywhere, lack of transparency undermines trust in institutions, facilitates misuse of limited resources, and conceals abuse and corruption, undermining social justice and further harming the most marginalised groups and individuals. In education, it can put at risk very large populations of children, who are inherently vulnerable. Learners at school may experience poor quality teaching, dangers to health, psychological risks of different kinds, and of course general risks to their development. For these reasons, educational institutions have a particular responsibility to be accountable and transparent.

We focused on BIA because it is a large company in receipt of public funds that runs schools in several countries: it therefore has the resources and expertise to report accurately, make information available and accessible to the public, and account for its policies and actions. BIA's resistance to accountability and lack of transparency, as described here, means that it does not achieve those goals. The company's resistance to independent external scrutiny and failure to observe transparency standards raise significant concerns, and have aroused doubts about its performance that cannot be confirmed or denied. This brief explores just a few dimensions of transparency and more research would be needed to

make a fuller assessment. The evidence nevertheless strongly suggests that BIA's culture is insufficiently transparent, and that this is a problem that needs to be remedied.

As noted at the start, transparency is an important matter for educational providers of every kind, because they have responsibility for the well-being and development of learners. However, the transparency of commercial providers needs to be addressed specifically, because they have an additional reason to avoid transparency whenever accurate reporting about their performance, practices, financial position, or reputation would harm their ability to attract investment capital or retain learners.

How then can transparency be improved in education systems?

- **Whether education is delivered by the State or a private actor, it must be regulated and transparency standards must be enforced.**

This is a legal requirement, affirmed in the Abidjan Principles (Overarching Principles 3 and 8), but also a practical obligation. The case of the *More than Me* schools in Liberia, where dozens of girls were systematically raped from 2013 onwards, partly due to lack of effective oversight<sup>136</sup>, is a tragic reminder that education must be well regulated. Self-regulation or market mechanisms do not provide a sufficient guarantee that children's rights will be protected, partly because children are very vulnerable to abuses by adults; it will often be too late when the problem is detected. Regulation should ensure transparency and accountability, in particular where private actors have incentives to avoid full transparency. This means that public authorities need to remain involved: devolving education to private actors removes none of the State's transparency obligations. The opposite is true, because the involvement of private actors increases the system's complexity and adds actors who are less subject to formal mechanisms of accountability. Improving transparency always requires improving public capacity; this cannot be circumvented by relying on private actors or market solutions.

- **Commercial actors, especially large ones, have an additional incentive to avoid transparency.**

Announcing a decrease in enrolment or exam results can cause a commercial education company to lose revenue, investments, and customers. These risks create an incentive to report data that are favourable and

gloss or suppress data that are not. Where large sums are involved, commercial education companies may take risks to suppress criticisms that might damage their market or reputational standing. This is a danger that all private companies face, but its effects can be particularly problematic in education, because children are inherently vulnerable, and because millions of children depend on education to have a dignified life.

- **Privatisation of education makes unelected institutions directly responsible for providing one of society's most essential functions.**

Private companies, even if they are well-intentioned, are not designed to act democratically or for the public good, and can escape democratic scrutiny more easily than public institutions. This is so for many reasons. Multinational corporations may be run from tax havens or jurisdictions that offer companies a high level of secrecy, making it difficult to investigate their performance. Public monitoring bodies generally focus on oversight of governments, and are generally less well equipped to monitor or regulate the private sector. In most companies, few or no mechanisms protect the public good, because that is not a company's primary function; self-regulation tends to be trumped by more central financial and commercial interests.

There is no doubt that many States also fail to meet transparency requirements. However, in most cases, States and other public authorities have a duty to serve the public good, and a range of tools exist to provide and enforce oversight, even if they are imperfect. They include parliamentary, judicial and quasi-judicial mechanisms, regulatory institutions, and ultimately public opinion.

International and regional human rights legal frameworks also promote and oversee State obligations. They are only starting to define the parameters of private actors' accountability under international standards, however. These frameworks too have limited capacity to require private actors to be transparent.

In recent years, weight has been given to the idea that privatisation will improve transparency and accountability, or reduce corruption. It is a view based more on ideological conviction than evidence. Private actors can indeed play a role in strengthening transparency efforts; but there is no reason to believe that privatisation will resolve issues of transparency, and every reason to foresee that it will generate new transparency problems that societies will need to address.



## Recommendations

- **States and donors should work together to make sure that all education providers are held to high standards of transparency and accountability**
  1. States must invest in regulation of schools because they have a duty of care. Recourse to private education providers does not reduce that duty, or associated transparency obligations.
  2. Donors, investors, and governments should strengthen their oversight mechanisms when dealing with private actors in education, and systematically include independent monitoring of their programmes.
  3. Where lack of transparency is an issue, donors and governments must work together to improve the situation, as required under Overarching Principles 6 and 8 of the Abidjan Principles.
- **These standards should make it possible for all stakeholders to monitor and analyse the quality of education governance and reporting of educational expenditure and performance.**
  4. Governments should enable all stakeholders, including children and their families, community members and civil society, as well as regulatory bodies, researchers, and educational specialists, to participate appropriately in the governance of education, as envisioned in Guiding Principles 20 and 32 of the Abidjan Principles.

- **Where a State engages private actors, it should carefully consider their diversity and the risks associated with different models of education.**
  5. Where governments and education authorities choose to work with private actors, they should carefully evaluate such providers, taking into account the risks associated with different models of education. Commercial actors pose specific risks: Guiding Principle 73 of the Abidjan Principles warns States that commercially-operated schooling is generally incompatible with the right to education.
- **Commercial providers of education have an additional interest to present positive results in terms of performance and value for money, because positive (negative) results directly affect their ability to attract financing and pupils. States and education authorities should specifically address this fact when they set, apply and enforce reporting and transparency standards.**
  6. Policymakers, donors, and investors should properly scrutinise and independently assess the reporting and results of commercial education providers. They should do so to protect the interests of pupils and to sustain the quality of educational provision; but objective assessment is also in the longer-term interest of the companies concerned.

- To complement State efforts to hold education providers to account and maintain high standards, private sector alliances should do more to set and enforce stringent transparency and accountability guidelines for their members. Their guidelines should draw inter alia on human rights standards.
7. Organisations like the Global Schools Forum should require their members to meet transparency standards and should sanction members that breach them.
  8. Private regulation can complement but cannot replace public scrutiny, regulation, and monitoring.

# Annexe

## Number of pupils stated as enrolled in a Bridge International Academy according to public reports

Date	Quote	Source	Kenya	Uganda	Nigeria	Liberia	Kenya and Uganda	Africa and India	Kenya, Uganda and Nigeria	Kenya, Uganda, Nigeria, India, and Liberia
09/06/2010	"Currently Bridge has seven schools in Nairobi, in which 850 children are taught according to the Kenyan curriculum."	<a href="#">Link</a> (last accessed 28 March 2022)	850							
15/03/2011	"Just two years after the first school opened in January 2009, more than 2,700 students are now enrolled across the Kenyan capital."	<a href="#">Link</a> (last accessed 28 March 2022)	2,700							
18/10/2012	"We invested in having a robust, auditable, and secure financial system from when we only had 60 pupils so that once we had 26,000 (which we do today)."	<a href="#">Link</a> (last accessed 28 March 2022)	26,000							
21/12/2012	"Bridge International is a chain of 85 low-cost schools located in low-income neighborhoods. A total of 23,000 pupils are currently enrolled in these schools."	<a href="#">Link</a> (last accessed 28 March 2022)	23,000							
28/12/2012	"Bridge international has 85 academies with 26,000 pupils located in major slums."	<a href="#">Link</a> (last accessed 28 March 2022)	26,000							
07/03/2013	"Bridge opened its first academy in 2009. In January, it opened 50 new schools and enrolled 30,000 new students. It has 134 academies, almost 55,000 students and just over 2,000 academy staff."	<a href="#">Link</a> (last accessed 28 March 2022)	55,000							
08/05/2013	"Bridge is smaller, with 50,000 children, but it is only four years old, and it is opening a new school in Kenya."	<a href="#">Link</a> (last accessed 28 March 2022)	50,000							

11/11/2013	"We currently have 214 academies that offer both nursery and primary school within the same facility. We serve 60,000 children, six days a week. We teach Monday through Saturday."	<a href="#">Link</a> (last accessed 28 March 2022)	60,000							
11/12/2013	"This is just one of 212 Bridge Academies that have opened in Kenya during the past four years. Bridge's "schools in a box" spring up seemingly overnight: In January of 2013, the company launched 51 schools at once, while in September it opened another 78. Bridge now educates roughly 50,000 students in Kenya every day."	<a href="#">Link</a> (last accessed 28 March 2022)	50,000							
17/12/2013	"As of September 2013, there are 212 Bridge International Academies in Kenya, with over 50,000 pupils enrolled, and the company is growing at a rate of one new academy every three days."	<a href="#">Link</a> (last accessed 28 March 2022)	50,000							
10/01/2014	"Today, Bridge educates over 50,000 pupils across Kenya daily."	<a href="#">Link</a> (last accessed 28 March 2022)	50,000							
21/01/2014	"This network of primary schools, which runs 250 academies in Kenya, will use these funds to expand elsewhere in Africa. Its goal is to educate 10 million children in more than a dozen countries by 2025, compared to 80,000 today."	<a href="#">Link</a> (last accessed 28 March 2022)	80,000							
01/01/2015	"As of January 2015, Bridge operates more than 400 academies, serving roughly 120,000 pupils in Kenya and Uganda."	<a href="#">Link</a> (last accessed 1 April, 2022)					120,000			

07/04/2015	"For example, Bridge International Academies uses software and tablets in schools that teach over 100,000 students in Kenya and Uganda."	<a href="#">Link</a> (last accessed 28 March 2022)					100,000			
08/06/2015	"In Kenya, the Bridge International Academies already host nearly 120,000 disadvantaged students."	<a href="#">Link</a> (last accessed 28 March 2022)	120,000							
27/07/2015	"It believes it will start making a profit when student enrolment, currently at 126,000, reaches half a million. But Bridge, which has expanded at such a rapid rate in six years that it is present in more than 400 locations across Kenya and Uganda."	<a href="#">Link</a> (last accessed 28 March 2022)					126000			
26/01/2016	"Bridge has opened more than 400 nursery and primary schools in Kenya, Uganda and Nigeria, which now serve roughly 100,000 children." "In 2016, Bridge will partner with the Government of Andhra Pradesh in India to deliver high-quality education and strengthen the state's school system."	<a href="#">Link</a> (last accessed 28 March 2022)							100,000	
07/07/2016	"Bridge currently operates 460 schools serving more than 100,000 pupils in Kenya, Uganda and Nigeria."	<a href="#">Link</a> (last accessed 28 March 2022)							100,000	

09/08/2016	<p>“... statements made in the Ugandan parliament this afternoon threatening to force 12,000 Bridge children out of school and 800 Ugandans out of work, by seeking the closure of Bridge... Bridge now operates 63 nursery and primary schools across Uganda.”</p>	<a href="#">Link</a> (last accessed on 28 March 2022)		12,000						
01/09/2016	<p>“By 2016, Bridge had expanded its low-cost private school model to other countries, running more than 450 academies across Kenya, Nigeria, and Uganda, reaching more than 100,000 students.”</p> <p>“Direct reach—In total, 100,000 students in over 450 academies in Kenya, Nigeria, and Uganda, and 50 pilot schools in Liberia since 2009.”</p>	<a href="#">Link</a> (last accessed 28 March 2022)						100,000		
01/12/2016	<p>“In Kenya, we currently have 405 operational academies with approximately 70,000 pupils and over 6,000 staff.”</p>	<a href="#">Link</a> (last accessed 28 March 2022)	70,000							
01/12/2016	<p>“...the 63 schools run by Bridge International Academies. Bridge has expanded quickly since opening its first schools in Uganda in February 2015, with more than 12,000 students currently enrolled in its academies across the East African country.”</p>	<a href="#">Link</a> (last accessed 28 March 2022)		12,000						
28/01/2017	<p>“It has 100,000 pupils spread across Kenya, Liberia, Nigeria, Uganda and India.”</p>	<a href="#">Link</a> (last accessed 28 March 2022)						100,000		

30/01/2017	"Across Kenya Bridge has 405 operational academies with approximately 70,000 pupils."	<a href="#">Link</a> (retrieved from <a href="#">here</a> on 23 March 2022)	70,000							
04/04/2017	"Bridge is currently delivering education to over 12,000 children in 63 academies across Uganda."	<a href="#">Link</a> (last accessed on 28 March 2022)		120,00						
03/05/2017	"As you read this, there are currently more than 100,000 children receiving a quality education in Bridge schools across those five countries."	<a href="#">Link</a> (last accessed 28 March 2022)						100,000		
30/05/2017	"Bridge International Academies (Bridge) has opened a further 14 schools in Lagos Nigeria, increasing its network of high quality education to over 7400 pupils and 37 under-served communities across the state."	<a href="#">Link</a> (last accessed on 28 March 2022)			7,400					
22/01/2018	"As a result of the uncertainty surrounding Bridge, Kenyan enrolment has fallen, from 100,000 in 2015 to 80,000 in 2017. Meanwhile, Bridge has been expanding elsewhere, backed by a grant from the UK's Department for International Development and funds from CDC, its investment arm."	<a href="#">Link</a> (last accessed 28 March 2022)	80,000							
07/06/2018	"After three years of operation in Nigeria, Bridge is delivering life changing education to about 12,000 children."	<a href="#">Link</a> (last accessed on 28 March 2022)			12,000					

03/09/2018	"Bridge has served 300,000 children to date across Africa and Asia."	<a href="#">Link</a> (page no longer retrievable)						300,000		
12/08/2019	"It runs or supports over 1,200 schools and has educated 500,000 children."	<a href="#">Link</a> (last accessed on 28 March 2022)								500,000
17/12/2019	"Bridge will be supporting 170 schools and over 50,000 students."	<a href="#">Link</a> (last accessed on 28 March 2022)				50,000				
02/10/2019	"Ten years later, BIA is estimated to have 80,000 students on the African continent."	<a href="#">Link</a> (last accessed 28 March 2022)						80,000		
27/01/2020	"Bridge has served more than 750,000 children to date, in over 1,500 schools."	<a href="#">Link</a> (last accessed on 28 March 2022)								750,000
03/03/2021	"Since its inception in 2016, BIA has had 63 private nursery and primary schools, with more than 12,000 pupils and has been employing more than 800 Ugandans. But only 10 schools remain open."	<a href="#">Link</a> <a href="#">Link</a>		12,000						
15/02/2022	"In the case of EkoEXCEL, rather than running its own schools, NewGlobe acts as a technical partner for the programme, which covers more than 1,000 public schools, 14,000 teachers and 500,000 pupils."	<a href="#">Link</a> (last accessed 28 March 2022)			500,000					
09/03/2022	"Over the period of IFC's investment, the company scaled up significantly and currently reaches approximately 750,000 students through primarily its technology licensing contracts with government partnership schools."	<a href="#">Link</a>								750,000

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>See also, Florini, A., (ed) (2007), 'The Right to Know: Transparency for an Open World', Columbia University Press: New York, p. 5, cited in The Carter Center, 'Briefing Background: Access to information', p. 1, at [https://www.cartercenter.org/resources/pdfs/peace/americas/briefing\\_background\\_ati\\_en.pdf](https://www.cartercenter.org/resources/pdfs/peace/americas/briefing_background_ati_en.pdf).

<sup>2</sup>Global Education Monitoring Report Team, 'Accountability in education: Meeting our commitments, Global education monitoring report, 2017/8', UNESCO, p. xiii, at <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000259338>.

<sup>3</sup>See, Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), Article 19; and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), Article 19(2).

<sup>4</sup>Hallak, J., Poisson, M. (2006), 'Governance in education: transparency and accountability', UNESCO IIEP, at <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000148766>.

<sup>5</sup>Harvard Law School Forum on Corporate Governance (2016), 'Principles of Corporate Governance', at <https://corpgov.law.harvard.edu/2016/09/08/principles-of-corporate-governance/>.

<sup>6</sup>'The Ten Principles of the UN Global Compact', <https://www.unglobalcompact.org/what-is-gc/mission/principles/principle-10>.

<sup>7</sup>Meijer, A. (2014), 'Transparency', in Bovens, M., Goodin, R. E., Schillemans T. (eds), 'The Oxford Handbook of Public Accountability', Oxford University Press.

<sup>8</sup>UNESCO, 'Accountability in education: Meeting our commitments, Global education monitoring report, 2017/8', p. 10, at [Accountability in education: Meeting our commitments | Global Education Monitoring Report \(unesco.org\)](https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000259338).

<sup>10</sup>UN Special Rapporteur on the right to education, 'Impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the right to education; concerns, challenges and opportunities, Human Rights Council, A/HRC/44/39, 20 June 2020, at <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Education/SREducation/Pages/COVID19.aspx>.

<sup>9</sup>'United Nations (2020), 'COVID-19 and Human Rights: We are all in this together', at [https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/un\\_policy\\_brief\\_on\\_human\\_rights\\_and\\_covid\\_23\\_april\\_2020.pdf](https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/un_policy_brief_on_human_rights_and_covid_23_april_2020.pdf).

<sup>11</sup>Hallak, J., Poisson, M. (2006), 'Governance in education: transparency and accountability', UNESCO IIEP, at <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000148766>.

<sup>12</sup>The Department for International Development (DFID) was a ministerial department from May 1997 to September 2020; it was then merged with the British foreign office to become the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO). See <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-international-development/about>. This paper will continue to refer to DFID.

<sup>13</sup>Tom Burgis, 'UK cuts off Kenyan education aid', Financial Times, March 2010, at <https://www.ft.com/content/03b07738-311c-11df-8e6f-00144feabdc0>.

<sup>14</sup>DFID, 'DFID Education Policy: Get Children Learning', February 2018, p. 20, at <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/DFID-Education-Policy-2018a.pdf>.

<sup>15</sup>See, for example, Tooley, J. et al, 'Impact of Free Primary Education in Kenya: A Case Study of Private Schools in Kibera', Educational Management Administration Leadership, 2008, at <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1741143208095788>; and Dixon, P., 'Why the Denial? Low-Cost Private Schools in Developing Countries and Their Contributions to Education', Economic Journal Watch, 9, September 2012, p. 196, at [https://econpapers.repec.org/article/ejwjournl/v\\_3a9\\_3ay\\_3a2012\\_3ai\\_3a3\\_3ap\\_3a186-209.htm](https://econpapers.repec.org/article/ejwjournl/v_3a9_3ay_3a2012_3ai_3a3_3ap_3a186-209.htm).

<sup>16</sup>Dixon, P., 'Why the Denial? Low-Cost Private Schools in Developing Countries and Their Contributions to Education', Economic Journal Watch, 9, September 2012, p. 203, at [https://econpapers.repec.org/article/ejwjournl/v\\_3a9\\_3ay\\_3a2012\\_3ai\\_3a3\\_3ap\\_3a186-209.htm](https://econpapers.repec.org/article/ejwjournl/v_3a9_3ay_3a2012_3ai_3a3_3ap_3a186-209.htm).

<sup>17</sup>Reinsberg, B. et al (2020), 'Bad governance: How privatization increases corruption in the developing world', Regulation & Governance, 14, 698–717, at <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/rego.12265>.

<sup>18</sup>For a list of known investors (as of March 2018), see <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5a6e0958f6576ebde0e78c18/t/5ebb6d47e738976451c00dd0/1589341513094/List+of+BIA+investors.pdf> (last accessed 23.03.2022).

<sup>19</sup>See, for instance: International Finance Corporation, 'IFC Supports Expansion of Primary Education with Investment in Bridge International Academies', January 2014. At [https://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/news\\_ext\\_content/ifc\\_external\\_corporate\\_site/news+and+events/news/bridgeschools\\_feature](https://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/news_ext_content/ifc_external_corporate_site/news+and+events/news/bridgeschools_feature).

<sup>20</sup>At <https://bridgeinternationalacademies.com/>.

<sup>21</sup>At <http://www.bridgeinternationalacademies.com/company/mission/> [accessed 28.03.2016, page retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20160328235824/http://www.bridgeinternationalacademies.com/company/mission/> on 25.03.2022].

<sup>22</sup>Global Schools Forum, 'Our Members', at <https://www.globalschoolsforum.org/page/Ourmembers>.

<sup>23</sup>GI-ESCR (2018), 'Bridge International Academies' Investors' at <https://www.gi-escr.org/publications/brief-on-bridge-international-academies-investors>. See also <http://www.bridgeinternationalacademies.com/about/investors/> [last accessed 28.08.2018, page retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20180812150008/http://www.bridgeinternationalacademies.com/about/investors/> on 23.03.2022].

<sup>24</sup>BIA, 'Frequently Asked Questions', at <https://www.bridgeinternationalacademies.com/home/faq/> [last accessed 28.08.2020, retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20200815132257/https://www.bridgeinternationalacademies.com/home/faq/> on 23.03.2022].

<sup>25</sup>See IFC, at <https://disclosures.ifc.org/project-detail/SII/32171/bridge-international-academies>. See also, 'Civil society groups celebrate IFC's divestment from profit-driven school chain Bridge International Academies', at [https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5a6e0958f6576ebde0e78c18/t/6231a995d81fcf4a32aac4f/1647421845607/IFC+divestment+BIA\\_March+16+2022.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5a6e0958f6576ebde0e78c18/t/6231a995d81fcf4a32aac4f/1647421845607/IFC+divestment+BIA_March+16+2022.pdf).

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**Acknowledgments:** The research of this paper was done by Ashina Mtsumi, Africa Representative at the Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and by Sylvain Aubry, former Director of Law and Policy at the Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Zsuzsanna Nyitray, Programme Officer on the right to education at the Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights made valuable contributions. A draft of this report was edited by Robert Archer, from Plain Sense.

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May 2022