

Press release

UN human rights experts make ground-breaking statements on privatisation of education in Ghana, Chile and Uganda

(Geneva, 24 June 2015) Two United Nations (UN) human rights expert bodies have this week issued ground-breaking statements that raise the alarm about the growth and effects of privatisation of education in Ghana, Chile, and Uganda, and made strong recommendations to address them.

The expert bodies' [concluding observations](#) depict a gloomy picture of the evolution of the education systems in these countries in recent years. They confirm that a rapid trend of unregulated privatisation in education is taking place in many countries, in particular the lower income ones, which in several instances amount to violations of international human rights law.

In Ghana, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) expressed its [concern](#) that “*private education [is] developing very quickly, without the necessary supervision regarding the conditions of enrolment, the quality of education provided, and the transparency and efficiency in the management of education resources.*”

In Uganda, the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) expressed [concern](#) about the “*widening of the gap in access to quality education resulting from the increase in the provision of private education and disproportionately affecting girls and children of low-income families*”.

The CESCR went as far as describing the education system in Chile, which is one of the [most privatised](#) in the world, as having [caused](#) “*segregation and discrimination on socio-economic grounds*”.

Ian Macpherson, representing the Privatisation in Education Research Initiative ([PERI](#)) reacted: “*Together with several organisations, including the Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights ([GI-ESCR](#)), the Right to Education Project ([RTE](#)), and national partners, since last year we have been [documenting](#) in the damaging and negative impact that the growth of private providers of education is having on economic and social rights, and it is crucial that mandated UN human rights experts are recognising and addressing this.*”

The UN committees provided strong recommendations to respond to the issue. The CRC recommended that Ghana “*assess and address the consequences of the rapid development of private education [...] and its impact on the full realization of children’s right to education [...] and ensure the effective and efficient regulation and monitoring of private education providers*”.

In analysis of Uganda, the CESCR recalled that States “*assume primary responsibility for the provision of quality education to all children*” and recommended that Uganda “*strengthen regulations and expand monitoring and oversight mechanisms for private education institutions*”.

In Chile, the CESCR welcomed the Government led reforms currently underway, and further recommended that it “take all the necessary steps to eliminate the sharp disparities that currently exist in the quality of education between private, subsidized and public schools, also ensuring that all schools have adequate infrastructure and adequately trained teaching staff”.

Sylvain Aubry, from the GI-ESCR, insisted: “These findings from the CRC and the CESCR are indicative of the harm all too often caused by privatisation of education. The recognition by international experts that privatisation in education creates socio-economic segregation, as in Chile, and that States have the legal obligation to provide quality education as well as to assess and address the consequences of this privatisation, are an important step forward in re-considering the role of private actors in education in the human rights framework.

Delphine Dorsi, from the Right to Education Project also highlighted: “The publication of these findings is very timely, as the Human Rights Council is currently discussing the [last report](#) of the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to education, Mr Singh, which analyses the trend towards commercialization of education, and how the private sector is increasingly being promoted as a solution in the current negotiations on the future [Sustainable Development Goals](#). We hope that States will build on these analyses to stop promoting privatisation in education and regulate education private providers in accordance with human rights law”.

All the recent UN expert bodies’ findings are available in a [document](#) published today by the GI-ESCR which sums up the recent key concluding observations from UN human rights treaty monitoring bodies related to privatisation in education.

END

Notes

The [CRC](#) and the [CESCR](#) are two UN bodies of 18 independent experts that monitors implementation of respectively the Convention on the Rights of the Child the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights by its States parties. All States that have ratified these treaties are obliged to submit regular reports to the relevant committee on how the rights are being implemented. The committees examines each report and address their concerns and recommendations to the States in the form of “concluding observations”.

Documents

- The summary of the recent concluding observations from UN human rights bodies: <http://bit.ly/1QPZmlz>
- The last report of the report of the UN Special rapporteur on the right to education on commercialization of education: <http://bit.ly/1CsI569>
- For more documents, see: <http://bit.ly/1ALhcIY>

Contacts

Sylvain Aubry
Legal and policy advisor
Global Initiative for Economic,
Social and Cultural Rights
sylvain@globalinitiative-escr.org

Ian Macpherson
Privatisation in Education Research
Initiative
info@periglobal.org

Delphine Dorsi
Executive Coordinator
Right to Education Project
delphine.dorsi@right-to-education.org