

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CLARIFICATION ON BRIDGE OPERATIONS IN UGANDA: PRAYERS ANSWERED, CHILDREN ENJOY RIGHT TO EDUCATION

This is to bring to your attention that all our schools in Uganda remain open. This follows a successful petition filed at the High court in Uganda granting us a stay of execution order on the 14th of November. The order holds until the 8th of December, allowing our schools to be legally open until the end of the term.

The ruling means that the interests of the 12,000 pupils and thousands of households that rely and depend on Bridge are taken care of until the said date. Normal operations at the 63 academies will remain open with those set to sit for their final examinations assured of doing so.

Much is spoken about Bridge. We want to set the record straight:

1. Bridge teaches, and has always taught, the Ugandan curriculum. We engaged with National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) before opening schools, and have formally written to NCDC to review our materials.
2. The majority of our primary teachers are GIII certified and registered. The rest we want to be licensed and attend in-service training
3. All schools have good sanitation facilities. All have 7 latrines and a urinal, 2 large water tanks, safe drinking water and hand washing facilities.
4. All Bridge structures are approved by Local District Government Planning committees before construction.
5. We do not teach any foreign or non-Ugandan cultural values, nor do we have sexual education curriculum in our schools.
6. Licensing of schools in Uganda is a “process not an event”. The process started for all 63 schools before opening, and continues in all locations. 30 schools have been endorsed by the Local District Government officials, the others remain in process.
7. We have always wanted, and continue to want to work in partnership with the Government of Uganda and comply with all laws. We remit 40m+ a month in tax and contribute to the economic development of Uganda.
8. In January 2016, Bridge presented to the Basic Education Working Group. Bridge was asked to submit plans for how various forms of PPP could work, which Bridge submitted.

Bridge looks forward to continuing to work within all regulations, and work closely with the Government to achieve SDG4 over the coming years. We will continue to seek engagement with the Ministry as we trust that the Ministry is only seeking to ensure that children are put first, and that learning is the foundation of development in Uganda. We trust that our prayers for a factual review of our service to the children and country of Uganda, as a complementary provider supporting Uganda’s progress to achieving universal learning for all children, will be heard.

Bridge is grateful to all the people who have voiced their support for its cause in education, the parents and pupils who have trusted us and remained committed despite the challenges. We assure you that we will continue to engage all relevant stakeholders to collectively improve the quality of education in Uganda.

END

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Notes to Editors: The following is a chronology of events that led to the obtaining situation.

- The acting Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Education and Sports issued a blanket closure for all Bridge schools on the 25th of July 2016.
- The order meant that Bridge was to close all its schools immediately in the middle of term two.
- This directive did not include justifiable cause for closure, and a right of reply was not accorded. The order jeopardized the lives of over 12,000 pupils, 800 employees and over 20,000 parents.
- Bridge applied to the High Court to review the process under which the directive was given without allowing Bridge to be heard.
- The High Court gave an injunction preventing the enforcement of the closure directive until the hearing was concluded.
- On the 4th of November 2016, the court ruled that Bridge had been heard and upheld decision by Ministry officials.
- Noting the merits of appeal given that Bridge had still not been provided with a hearing by the Ministry nor shown facts that would merit any closure, Bridge filed a notice of appeal to the court of appeal for a second opinion.
- Bridge also filed an application for interim stay of execution before the Court to enable pupils complete their third term harmoniously as it continues to engage with all relevant stakeholders.
- On the 14th of November 2016, Bridge obtained an interim order allowing all its schools to be open until the 8th of December 2016 when the main case for stay would be heard.