

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and Education International act to deny a Child's Right to Education for 12,000 Children in Uganda**

**Kampala, 14 August 2016:** Families across Uganda and the 800 Ugandans, the majority teachers, diligently working to deliver education to 12,000 children, have expressed shock and concern over the uninformed, irresponsible statement released by Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights that suggests that Bridge International Academies is being closed in Uganda. Bridge remains open, supporting teachers and serving pupils.

“We would expect that advocates for children and education, as well as champions for Uganda more broadly, would be opposed to 12,000 children being forced out of school,” says Ugandan Parent Ochwo Joy Rose. “My child had been in the local government school for 3 years and still could not read. I am thankful that Bridge created a school in our community that in just 4 months enabled my child to read to me.”

Parents and pupils were surprised by many of the comments raised on the Parliamentary floor, which were based on false allegations promoted by Education International, the world's largest federation of teacher unions. Education International had previously hired a Canadian researcher in Uganda to impersonate Bridge personnel in an attempt to steal materials and pupil information and now are pushing The Ministry and Parliamentarians to shut Bridge down.

The recent [Uwezo](#) report on Uganda, ‘Are Our Children Learning’ concluded that most children don't receive a quality education because of insufficient knowledge on the part of teachers, a high rate of teacher absenteeism and a lack of text-books in classes. “Our intensive child-centric teacher training, supported by teacher computers and textbooks for every child, ensures that our children are learning”, says Godwin Muhwezi, Liaison Officer at Bridge International Academies in Uganda. “We are proud to be delivering on a child's right to education in Uganda, supporting Uganda's effort to achieve SDG 4, and demonstrating that Ugandan teachers can deliver incredible education to marginalized children in difficult circumstances.”

“There is no excuse for why schools fail to deliver quality education to children other than lack of will to hold schools accountable. If teacher shortcoming and absenteeism are cited as the main problems preventing a quality education in Uganda, then Education International should look inwards and investigate the quality of education in all schools, looking at quantifiable learning outcomes. That is certainly a far more productive use of their time and energy than seeking for suspect reasons to close down 63 primary schools serving the needs of 12,000 marginalized children across urban and rural Uganda.

“Bridge is a committed partner to the government of Uganda, demonstrating that even on limited public budgets, a world-competitive education can and should be delivered to every child. Unfortunately, that is not yet happening for every child in Uganda, or across much of the world. Until that happens, Bridge serves parents, donors, and governments, demonstrating how teachers can be supported and parents engaged to ensure that every child not only masters reading, writing and mathematics, but also becomes a confident citizen and leader for the country's future.

“Bridge has followed the process for licensing as laid out by District Education Officials, and by thousands of other schools across the country. Despite false allegations, there is no widespread threat to public health at our schools. The High Court of Uganda has ensured that the children's interests are protected by preventing any closure of Bridge International Academies.

“Bridge has shown that it is possible to support teachers, and create a culture of responsibility and accountability within the teachers and administration of schools. We need innovation and progress and Bridge is at the forefront of such progress for teachers and pupils in Uganda”, says Muhwezi.

Since opening in 2015, Bridge has offered paid teacher training to over 1,000 teachers, and manages the largest roll-out and maintenance of teacher computers in Uganda, seeking to ensure that teachers have all the resources that they need to support children's development, and socio-emotional learning.

"Bridge teachers work with their pupils for 8 hours a day, actively engaging pupils to produce transformational learning outcomes," says Muhwezi. "Bridge pupils in Kenya had a 40% higher chance of passing the national primary exit exams than the national average, and have gone on to the best secondary schools in Kenya and the United States. Independently administered EGRA and EGMA studies in Kenya show our children outperforming their public school peers to the equivalent of 32% and 13% more schooling in a single academic year in reading and math, respectively. These are the results and opportunities that Ugandan children deserve too.

"IESCR signatories should visit a Bridge school, speak to our parents, teachers and children and discover why complementary schools such as Bridge are so important to improving Uganda's education system. For many of our children there are no Universal Primary Education schools in their communities, meaning that if Bridge schools are closed, thousands of children will be left stranded."

"I sent my daughter to Bridge because it was the only school that really seemed to focus on the quality of education in our community. Her cousins go to a UPE school but the teachers are often missing and there are too many pupils in the classrooms. I don't know what my daughter would do without Bridge," says parent Nalibaddawa Mariam.

**End**

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