

Civil society call on investors to cease support to Bridge International Academies

1ST AUGUST 2017



Available online on <http://bit.ly/biainvestors>

Introduction

In May 2015, 116 civil society organisations published a statement raising concerns about the costs, impact and quality of Bridge International Academies (BIA), and responding to misleading information about its approach.ⁱ Since then, evidence from various sources, including the United Nations (UN), a United Kingdom (UK) parliamentary enquiry, independent research reports, and independent media reports, has confirmed these concerns and raised the alarm about the serious gap between the promises of BIA and the reality of their practice, and pointed to other serious challenges.

Key evidence:

1. **Independent research shows BIA’s fees and practices exclude the poor and marginalised;**ⁱⁱ
2. **Documents from the Ministries of Education in Kenya and Uganda demonstrate that BIA has repeatedly failed to respect the rule of law, including minimum educational standards, over several years;**ⁱⁱⁱ
3. **Documents from BIA show poor labour conditions;**^{iv}
4. **Media reports cite concerns about freedom of expression and lack of transparency;**^v
5. **The United Kingdom (UK) Parliament has raised serious questions about BIA’s relationships with governments, transparency, and sustainability, as well as the absence of valid evidence of BIA’s positive impact;**^{vi}
6. **UN and African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights statements raise concerns about negative impacts on education quality, equity and social segregation and stratification.**^{vii}

We recognise that most investors in BIA have positive intentions in wanting to improve the education of children living in poverty. There is an urgent need for education reform – to improve access, equity, and quality for all – so that education can fulfil its potential to play a transformative role in personal, community, and national development. However, evidence demonstrates that investing in BIA is not an appropriate or effective means to meet these objectives.

In light of these findings, **the 174 undersigned organisations from 50 different countries are calling on investors and donors to fully discharge their legal due diligence obligations and cease support for BIA.** We would welcome an opportunity to explore alternatives with donors and investors to identify more effective ways to invest sustainably in providing quality education for all children, including those living in poverty.

What is Bridge International Academies?

BIA is a large-scale network of private pre-primary and primary schools claiming to deliver “quality affordable education to underserved families and children”.^{viii} It operates over 500 schools in India, Kenya, Liberia, Nigeria, and Uganda, with ambitions to reach 10 million pupils by 2025.^{ix} It has received investments from major international investors including the Chan-Zuckerberg Initiative, the Omidyar Network, the United Kingdom, the United States, the World Bank, Pearson, and Bill Gates,^x for a total amount estimated to be over 100 million US dollars.^{xi} It uses what it calls a “*school in a box*” model, employing a highly-standardised approach to education. At BIA, every school looks the same, the material used is the same in each classroom, and most importantly, the lessons

are the same across all the academies of the same country. BIA uses a system of scripted lessons, and its teachers – who are mostly secondary school leavers without formal teaching qualifications – receive lesson plans on an e-tablet, which they have to follow word by word.^{xii}

Evidence from independent research

Exclusion of the poor and disadvantaged

Many donors and investors in BIA are attracted by the idea that the company is helping the poorest and most marginalised children to access school. However, a number of studies have found that BIA schools are inaccessible to the very poor and particularly to students with special educational needs. Studies in Kenya, Uganda, and Nigeria all found the mandatory fees to attend Bridge schools to be significantly higher than the USD 6 per month or USD 72 – 74 per year usually claimed by the company. In Kenya, tuition fees alone ranged from USD 6.40 to USD 10.57 a month.^{xiii} Adding other mandatory items, such as uniforms, **the monthly costs jump to an average of USD 17.25 per month, or USD 207 per year.**^{xiv} Similarly, in Nigeria, with most parents needing to pay for computer access and lunch, the total for a year at BIA for a child in early primary grades was calculated to be at least USD 129.91 (USD 10.8 per month).^{xv} In Uganda, the fees were calculated to range between USD 129 and USD 152 per year (USD 10.75 to 12.7 per month).^{xvi} Such fees are well out of reach of poorer families.

In testimony provided to the UK Parliament's International Development Committee (IDC) recent inquiry on the Department for International Development's (DFID) work on education, Dr Joanna Härmä (Research Fellow, University of Sussex) observed: *"BIA schools are not very cheap. They publicly claim to offer education costing \$6 per month on average, but in reality the complete costs to families are much higher. In Nkumba near Entebbe, Uganda, the recently-opened BIA school costs \$137 per year (\$15.44 per month for the 9 schooling months of the year) without lunch, and \$184 per year (\$20.44 per month) with lunch."*^{xvii}

Despite BIA's claims that they reach the underserved, research has shown that students accessing BIA schools are not the most disadvantaged.^{xviii} Even relatively better off parents attracted by BIA marketing can still spend significant proportions of their income - and often struggle to keep up payments. In Kenya, sending three children to a BIA school was calculated to represent between 27 and 34 per cent of the monthly income of families living on USD 1.25 a day, and between 44 and 138 per cent for families living in informal settlements.^{xix} As a result, **58 percent of BIA students interviewed responded that they had missed school due to non-payment of fees.**^{xx} In the same study, over half of BIA parents interviewed stated that they did not think the very poor in the community could access education at BIA and 91.5 per cent of BIA parents admitted that they opted not to send all of their children to BIA, as they lacked sufficient funds.^{xxi} This situation can exacerbate poverty by impacting other aspects of family life. The study found that between 69 and 83 per cent of BIA parents had difficulty paying rent, providing food, or accessing healthcare due to the effects of fees at BIA, and 64 per cent of parents interviewed were borrowing money from friends and relatives to afford the fees.^{xxii}

Similarly, a study in Uganda found that BIA schools were not accessible to the most economically disadvantaged pupils.^{xxiii} Families with average household incomes in the communities around BIA schools would have to spend between 15 and 27 per cent of their

earnings to send just one child to a BIA school for a year, in a context where most families have multiple children in need of schooling.

This situation is amplified by the fact that BIA puts significant pressure on its staff to ensure fees are paid, even when it puts families in difficult circumstances. For instance, as one Bridge Academy Manager in Kenya noted: *“The company policy is that if you don’t pay, you send them home... They (the parents) are called to school to explain why they have not paid and given some time to pay while children are at home. If they fail to pay, nothing else happens – their chances [to join the school] are terminated”*.^{xxiv} This was confirmed by independent media inquiries, which described the pressure on poor parents to make their payments on time as “disheartening”.^{xxv}

In addition, factors other than cost appear to impede children’s access to BIA schools. In Liberia, BIA is involved in a public-private partnership with the Ministry of Education and is managing public schools. There, the Coalition for Transparency and Accountability in Education (COTAE)^{xxvi} and others^{xxvii} have identified concerns that children who previously accessed their local schools were turned away when BIA took over their school and imposed class size restrictions. There are also concerns about high drop-out rates from BIA schools owing to hunger – as school hours have been extended but no school meals are provided.

In Kenya, other concerns have been raised about **selective enrolment in BIA schools**. BIA runs “*placement tests*” to determine the grade in which pupils should be enrolled, which may result in some cases in pushing out low performing students.^{xxviii} Respondents interviewed by researchers also suggested that BIA does not generally facilitate or admit children with disabilities and children with special needs. Where and if it does, BIA teachers do not seem to be equipped or supported sufficiently to handle a diverse student population or address diverse needs.^{xxix}

Undermining of the rule of law

BIA’s compliance with legal standards has been questioned both in Kenya and in Uganda. In Uganda, a recent study^{xxx} found that BIA neglected legal and educational standards established by the Government of Uganda regarding the use of certified teachers, accredited curriculum, appropriate teaching methods, adequate school facilities, and the proper authorisation of schools. These concerns were later confirmed in August 2016 when the Ugandan Minister of Education and Sports, Hon Janet Museveni, announced during a session of parliament the intention of the Government to close the 63 BIA schools in the country.^{xxxi} Hon Museveni indicated that her decision was based on “*technical inspection reports*” from the Ministry that revealed that the **schools did not respect national standards, in particular that “material used could not promote teacher pupil interaction” and that “poor hygiene and sanitation [...] put the life and safety of the school children in danger”**.^{xxxii} Later it emerged that despite agreeing with the Government to not to open new schools after its initial seven, BIA proceeded to open 56 additional schools.^{xxxiii}

BIA immediately contested the Ministry decision in court, but the High Court of Uganda found in November 2016 that the Ministry’s decision was fair and legal.^{xxxiv} Shortly thereafter, the Ministry of Education published a statement indicating their intention to enforce the closure.^{xxxv} The company currently appears to be negotiating with the Government to have its teaching methodology approved, improve its teacher qualifications and infrastructures to meet legal requirements, and to licence the schools, but there is no information that the situation has been settled. Rather, a report from the Ugandan Parliament published in April

2017 further confirmed that a number of BIA schools were listed among the illegal schools in Jinja district.^{xxxvi}

In Kenya, a letter from the Ministry of Education dated August 2016 indicates that the Kenyan Government has been facing similar challenges with the 405 BIA schools in the country.^{xxxvii} The letter reveals that **BIA opened the 405 schools in the country on the basis of the authorisation for a single school in 2009**. The Ministry of Education indicates having formally requested, at least three times between mid-2014 and February 2016, that BIA comply with regulations and register their schools. These demands were not met, and in March 2016 the Government conducted an assessment of 61 BIA schools, finding that they did not meet registration requirements.^{xxxviii}

The analysis from the Kenyan Government particularly questions the core of the BIA methodology, the scripted curriculum. According to the letter, **the curriculum and materials used in BIA schools, which should have been approved by the Kenya Institute for Curriculum Development before being used, have not been licenced because:**

“(a) Most of the content taught is not relevant to the Kenyan curriculum objectives.

(b) The teaching approach the teachers are expected to use is teacher-centred, and the teacher is not allowed flexibility to attend to individual learner needs or adopt lessons to the different learning environment and to learners with special needs.

(c) Lesson plans used are not prepared by the individual teachers as required. These are downloaded a few hours prior to each lesson and are used as such.

(d) Teachers have no access to previous lessons taught for reference and continuity of lesson presentation.

(e) Teachers do not prepare schemes of work to plan for their teaching activities.”^{xxxix}

While BIA has claimed to be ‘partnering’ with the Government to solve this issue, the Ministry of Education in Kenya, in a letter dated 29 June 2017, addressed to BIA, states that the company continues to operate in breach of national standards and regulations.^{xl} The letter confirms that the materials and curriculum being used by Bridge have never been approved by the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development. In addition, the letter indicates that Bridge should register as a private school, as its model does not fall within the less demanding non-formal school category as claimed by Bridge, which is available in Kenya for specific type of community schools temporarily filling-in the gaps in Government provision.

In parallel actions, some counties in Kenya have moved towards enforcing the law and closing BIA schools. In Busia county in Western Kenya, the County Education Board decided in November 2014 to close local BIA schools for not complying with minimum education standards, including failure to employ trained and registered teachers and managers, inappropriate facilities, and lack of an environmental impact assessment. After the Board moved to enforce its decision in March 2016,^{xli} BIA responded by suing the County. As in Uganda, BIA lost the court case^{xlii} and in February 2016, the judge upheld the closure of 10 of the 12 schools in the county.^{xliii} The county officers have since reallocated the children to public schools and are in the process of closing BIA primary schools. **The process in Busia is likely to be replicated in other counties in the coming months, as the Busia County Education Board represents the national Ministry of Education and is enforcing national legislation equally applicable across the country.**

BIA is also party to other court cases in Kenya, reflecting its litigious relationship with a range of stakeholders.^{xliv} BIA and its employees have been arraigned as accused persons in criminal

proceedings where Quality Assurance and Standards Officers (school inspectors) have sought to close BIA schools found operating without a registration license – a criminal offence under the law.^{xlv} There are also at least seven separate cases before the Employment and Labour Relations Court of Kenya, instituted by former employees of BIA and by BIA itself. Two other cases are before the Commercial and Admiralty court.^{xlvi}

Legal standards are not mere formal requirements: they express legal obligations applicable to school operators, and potentially to investors, who may be sued in court for failing to comply with them. They also reflect matters of national sovereignty in a domain which plays an essential role for the culture and independence of the country.

Poor labour conditions

In Kenyan BIA schools, teachers are required to work **6 days a week (59-65 hours) for a salary that is barely above the poverty line (about USD 100 a month)**.^{xlvii} A 2016 teacher contract showed that there were potential bonuses if the number of children in each class increased (up to 60 children), as marketing of BIA is considered an integral part of the teacher role.^{xlviii}

A study in Uganda also found BIA hired unlicensed and unregistered teachers – **a violation of the Education Act in Uganda** – but seemingly a necessary step for BIA to keep their operational costs down. Monthly salaries provided to BIA teachers in Uganda range from Ush 130,000 (or USD 39) at the nursery and lower primary levels up to Ush 180,000 (or USD 54) at the upper primary levels.^{xlix} By comparison, public primary school teachers who are on the lowest end of the pay scale receive at least Ush 279,000 (or USD 84) per month.^l There are additional problems highlighted by BIA teachers themselves: *“When you are sick, teachers are not insured. So first we go to a pharmacy to see if maybe we can find some medicine that can help because maybe you can’t afford to go to the hospital because our salary is so low”*.^{li}

Attacks on freedom of expression and lack of transparency

BIA is resistant to public scrutiny, as British MPs observed during the IDC inquiry, with the Chair, Stephen Twigg MP, specifically highlighting **BIA’s “hostility to independent assessment”**.^{lii}

Research on BIA has been difficult due to the company’s unwillingness to undergo external assessment. A leaked email from the Ministry of Education in Liberia showed that BIA was reluctant to participate in the ongoing randomised control trial in Liberia.^{liii} Similarly, any critical third-party study tends to be dismissed, often as *“fabricated information”*.^{liv}

One extreme example of this resistance relates to the experience of independent researcher and Canadian doctoral student, Curtis Riep, who was arrested at the request of BIA in Uganda when attempting to collect independent evidence about BIA schools in the country. BIA initially published a public notice in the *New Vision*, a local newspaper, “warning” the general public of Riep’s presence. Later, at one of his meetings with BIA staff, Riep was arrested on the grounds of impersonation and criminal trespass while collecting data. These allegations were later considered baseless by the police, and he was released without charge.^{lv} When asked for evidence to support its accusation, BIA was unable to provide any.

More recently BIA has been accused of attempting to silence its critics following its legal action against the Kenya National Union of Teachers (KNUT) for allegations of defamation, resulting in a temporary injunction preventing KNUT Secretary General Wilson Sossion and any KNUT official from publicly mentioning BIA while waiting for the trial.^{lvi} The board of Education

International (the global federation of teacher unions) has unanimously adopted a resolution against BIA, accusing it of intimidation of KNUT and its secretary general.^{lvii}

BIA has also been the source of controversy in a recent public-private partnership (PPP) in Liberia. In January 2016, Liberia announced its intention to outsource its public pre-primary and primary schools to private actors through a pilot PPP, “Partnership Schools for Liberia” (PSL). Initially, BIA was to be the only private operator to run 120 schools under the PPP without having been through a transparent procurement process.^{lviii} This led to public outcry and international criticisms,^{lix} including by the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to education who considered this scheme to be “*a blatant violation of Liberia’s international obligations under the right to education*”.^{lx} After subsequent adjustments, there are now eight different providers included and a reduction in the number of schools in the pilot, with 25 schools allocated to BIA.

Nevertheless, a recent report by COTAE examining this PPP pointed to grave transparency and accountability issues. The memorandum of understanding (MOU) with BIA was not publicised until there was an outcry from civil society and other stakeholders.^{lxi} There is still no transparency on the levels of funding received by BIA. Teachers and school administrators in BIA schools have been warned against speaking to investigators and visitors, especially on issues affecting them and the welfare of students.^{lxii} The report also found that in most communities where BIA schools are operating, residents lack information about the operation and objectives of the PPP program. Attempts to do further independent research on these pilots has sadly been blocked, with a team from the University of Wisconsin notified on the eve of starting their research that they would not be allowed access to the pilot schools. This led to a letter of condemnation to the Minister of Education from 30 academics from renowned universities.^{lxiii} The letter notes: “*You will be aware of the widespread concerns about how Bridge International Academies blocked independent research in Uganda and have failed to allow external evaluation of their schools whilst making bold claims for their success based on their own internal data. This is very poor practice and we would be very concerned if the Ministry of Education in Liberia played a role in extending such practices.*”

As a result of this lack of transparency, parents appear to know little about the schools their children attend. In Nigeria for instance, research found that **parents were under the impression that their low-fee school was registered and approved by the Ministry of Education, although this was not the case.**^{lxiv}

BIA’s opacity also relates to its **financial status, making it difficult to obtain essential information about the company’s financial information, and raising questions about its tax status – an important point for a company purporting to have a social motive, and aiming at making profits out of poor customers.** BIA is a subsidiary^{lxv} of NewGlobe Schools, Inc.,^{lxvi} a company based in Delaware, a well-known tax-haven^{lxvii} that led the U.S. to be classified in 2015 as the third worst country in the world for financial secrecy.^{lxviii} One of the main investors in BIA, Novastar, also appears to be based in^{lxix} another well-known tax haven, Mauritius.^{lxx}

Insufficient evidence on quality and outcomes

Despite BIA’s claims, the quality of its schools has never been independently assessed,^{lxxi} and BIA’s claims about the performance of its students in the Kenyan national exams are not indicative of the quality of schools. This is for two reasons. First, any learning outcome measurement that does not control for the socio-economic background of children and other factors affecting performance says little or nothing about the quality of schools, especially

since BIA tends to not enrol certain groups, such as children with disabilities, who might affect BIA's exam results.^{lxxii} Second, given the high stakes for BIA, there are **significant risks that the company may be using tactics to try to artificially increase its results, such as filtering access for the brightest pupils to upper grades before exams**. This is supported by the high drop-out rates (i.e., many pupils leaving BIA before reaching the last grade) that appeared in BIA's own research on its model and the revelation in a recent *New York Times* article that, in preparation for the 2015 exam, BIA pupils "on track to get a lower score were asked to repeat a year" while "the rest were taken to a residential cram school and prepped for the test by teachers who flew in from the United States".^{lxxiii}

Even if independent research found gains in learning outcomes of BIA students, there are serious questions about whether this would justify BIA's negative practices and impacts. Certain practices documented to be central to BIA's model, such as expecting teachers to work above 60 hours a week for a near-poverty-line salary, cannot justify quality improvements elsewhere.^{lxxiv} Its impact on equity, exclusion and social segregation must also be considered.

Finally, some evidence suggests BIA schools may actually be providing a poor quality education, belying its marketing claims. BIA minimizes costs by relying on a workforce of poorly trained, unqualified teachers, many with only three weeks' training, who are given e-tablets to deliver inflexible, scripted lessons, developed in the USA, and oriented to a narrow curriculum. This approach has not been independently validated and runs counter to existing evidence on the factors that lead to high quality education.

Institutional analysis

The UK Parliament, the UN, and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights have conducted their own inquiries and analyses of available evidence and have raised concerns about BIA similar to those above.

UK Parliament International Development Committee

In a recent letter to the Secretary of State, Priti Patel MP, published on 27 April 2017 following an inquiry of several months into UK development aid to education,^{lxxv} the Chair of the UK Parliament's International Development Committee (IDC) stated: ***"the evidence received during this inquiry raises serious questions about Bridge's relationships with governments, transparency and sustainability."***^{lxxvi} The letter concludes: *"We would not recommend DFID make any further investments in Bridge until it has seen clear, independent evidence that the schools produce positive learning outcomes for pupils. Even at that time, we would want to see a compelling case for any further DFID support, including evidence to prove that Bridge was providing education to the very poorest and most marginalised children which was not being provided elsewhere."*

During the oral evidence session with the co-founder of BIA, Dr Shannon May, as part of the IDC inquiry, Conservative Member of the Committee, Pauline Latham MP, raised serious concerns regarding BIA's status as a social enterprise given its long-term aim to secure large profits for investors.^{lxxvii} In the same session, other Members of Parliament raised concerns about the quality of teaching in schools that they had visited in Uganda and questioned the qualifications of the teachers they had observed. Concerns were also raised regarding what Conservative MP Paul Scully described as *"Bridge failing to develop productive and respectful relationships with the Governments in the countries that it is operating in"*.^{lxxviii} Several

members of the committee also questioned BIA's "**host[ility] to independent assessment**"^{lxxxix} and "**resistance to inspection**".^{lxxx}

DFID has granted £3.45 million to BIA as part of its Developing Effective Private Education Nigeria (DEEPEN) program.^{lxxxi} The UK government's Development Finance Institution (DFI) also made a \$6 million investment in BIA in 2014.^{lxxxii} The DFI manages DFID's Impact Fund - a 13-year programme worth £75 million - which made a £15 million investment in the venture fund Novastar to support the latter's investment in BIA.^{lxxxiii}

In July 2016, the IDC had raised similar concerns in a report about DFID funding in Nigeria, including funds for BIA. The report regretted that DFID was funding BIA, an organisation which "**the poorest 10% cannot access**", noting that the fees claimed by BIA could be misleading.^{lxxxiv} It concluded by considering that "**reliance on for-profit companies to deliver education is not easily reconciled with DFID's commitment to 'leaving no one behind'**".^{lxxxv}

United Nations

Investments in and support to low-fee and commercial private schools including BIA have attracted the condemnation of the United Nations, with a number of recommendations made by UN bodies in charge of monitoring the implementation of human rights treaties,^{lxxxvi} underscoring concerns about BIA's negative impact on human rights.^{lxxxvii}

In the concluding observations of their review of Kenya, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child raised serious concerns about "**the low quality of education, and the rapid increase in private and informal schools, including those funded by foreign development aid, providing substandard education and deepening inequalities**" (February 2016), a reference to low-fee private schools such as BIA.

In an unprecedented statement made public in June 2016, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) also expressed concerns about the UK government's "**funding of low-fee, private and informal schools run by for-profit business enterprises**".^{lxxxviii} On the basis of evidence presented to it and its dialogue with the UK Government, the Committee considered that funding to such schools could undermine children's rights, and it recommended that the UK, "**refrain from funding for-profit private schools**" and "**prioritise free and quality primary education in public schools**".^{lxxxix} In July 2016, the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) similarly expressed "**particular concerns**" about the UK's "**financial support provided (...) to private actors for low-cost and private education projects in developing countries, which may have contributed to undermine the quality of free public education and created segregation and discrimination among pupils and students**".^{xc}

The former UN Special rapporteur on the right to education, Dr Kishore Singh, repeatedly highlighted this issue. In one of his reports, he stressed that governments "**allowing education to be commercialised**" and encouraging "**for-profit schools, such as the Bridge International Academies [...] violat[e] these States' international legal obligations to provide free basic education for all**".^{xci}

African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights

The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (African Commission) has equally expressed its deep concerns about the growth and lack of regulation of private schools in Uganda, which could be in violation of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. The African Commission expressed its worry that "**that the increase in the establishment of private schools [...] could result in discrimination against children from low-income households**". It

requested that the government “regulate the quality of education being provided by private schools” in Uganda.^{xcii} Moreover, during the review of Kenya, the African Commission also questioned the legal status of BIA schools, asking the Government why private school chains, such as BIA, are registered as non-formal schools when they offer formal education.^{xciii}

Concerns about continued World Bank support

Despite the World Bank Group’s commitment to promote free primary education,^{xciv} the International Finance Corporation (IFC, the World Bank’s private sector arm) approved \$162 million in investments for the expansion of fee-charging, for-profit primary and secondary schools (including BIA) worldwide from 2011 to 2015.^{xcv} The IFC has stated that investment in fee-charging private education is a mechanism for poverty alleviation, and its 2013-2015 strategy paper^{xcvi} notes investments in private education as complements to public education systems.^{xcvii}

However, a March 2017 report^{xcviii} by RESULTS Educational Fund found that IFC investments in basic education struggle to reach or benefit the poor. The research found that the IFC-supported schools were located in close proximity to other public or private schools, suggesting that their location had been determined by market viability and not by the needs of marginalised communities, who tend to live in more isolated areas. Most children in the IFC-supported, for-profit schools were not previously out of school and only 3-6 per cent of children received partial or full scholarships. Although fees in both public and private schools were the main barrier for the poor to access and remain enrolled in basic education, for-profit private schools visited during the research denied access to children who fail to pay fees, with parents often making sacrifices, such as foregoing meals and taking out loans to pay. As a local NGO spokesperson commented: “[it is] a concern that brings in a human rights issue because you are trading and profiting from the poor”.

These issues have been raised repeatedly to the World Bank, in particular through the 2015 CSO statement,^{xcix} which responded that it launched “a rigorous, independent impact evaluation of the Bridge International Academies program in Kenya, which will be the first large-scale, randomized, controlled trial of fee-paying schools in sub-Saharan Africa.”^c However, the details and methodology of this evaluation have not been shared publicly nor has it included input from civil society in Kenya or elsewhere.

Recommendations to investors

The evidence presented here establishes serious doubt that it is not and cannot be the solution to the education needs of poor families. Furthermore, the undermining of rule of law, lack of transparency and accountability, and perpetuation of inequalities run counter to the standards and values of many investors. BIA’s model is neither effective for the poorest children nor sustainable against the educational challenges found in developing countries.

Given the mounting institutional and independent evidence that raises serious concerns about BIA, and the significant legal and ethical risks associated with investments in BIA, we, the undersigned, strongly recommend current and potential investors and supporters of BIA to fully discharge their legal due diligence obligations and responsibilities and:

- Immediately and independently verify BIA’s compliance with national laws and standards, including human rights, educational, disability, and labour standards;

- Ensure that issues of equity, systemic discrimination, and exclusion are addressed;
- Demand that BIA immediately uphold standards of transparency and publicly disclose information about its operations, including accurate information on actual levels of fees and real costs for parents, teacher salaries and qualifications, enrolment data of children with disabilities, student attrition and completion rates, legal status and policy compliance in different countries, etc.
- Demand that BIA immediately stop intimidating civil society organisations and researchers, including teachers' unions, and collaborate with any interested researcher in order to provide reasonable access to its schools and all information required to make independent assessments of its claims;
- Engage in dialogue with civil society organisations to review the concerns about BIA and to explore alternative ways to make a valuable contribution to education;
- Demand immediate action to remedy the above violations, within a reasonable timeframe and with adequate monitoring, or alternatively withdraw existing investments;
- Transparently share information about existing or future evaluations of BIA, and engage in dialogue about these evaluations with all stakeholders, including civil society organisations;
- Cease future investments of public or private resources in BIA and other fee-charging, commercial private schools that are failing to reach the most disadvantaged and contributing to socio-economic segregation, undermining the public education system, or undermining the rule of law;
- Invest in programs that fight poverty and inequality by promoting high-quality, equitable, free public education, including programs that help local and national governments improve public schools and expand to under-served areas;
- Constructively engage with civil society organisations to promote the realisation of the right to education.

The undersigned organisations indicate their availability to meet with all investors at their earliest convenience.

Note on methodology

This statement summarises *independent* research and recommendations from international bodies and aid agencies regarding the activities of BIA in 2015 - 2017. It does not include evidence collected by BIA itself, which has been questioned by leading academics.^{ci} It also does not include reports lacking independent research and funded by BIA investors, such as a recent case study report by the Brookings Institution.^{cii}

Signatories



Organisation	Country
1. Action Contre la Pauvreté (ACP)	Burundi
2. Action Jeunesse et Environnement (AJE)	international
3. ActionAid International	International
4. ActionAid International	South Africa
5. ActionAid Liberia	Liberia
6. ActionAid Uganda	Uganda
7. Africa Network Campaign on Education For All (ANCEFA)	International
8. Aide et Action	International
9. AKS	Austria
10. Amnesty International	International
11. Amnesty International Kenya	Kenya

12. Amnesty International Sénégal	Senegal
13. Antarctic	Democratic Republic of Congo
14. Appel pour une école démocratique (Aped)	Belgium
15. Ashroy Foundation	Bangladesh
16. ASO EPT Niger	Niger
17. Associação Nacional de Pesquisadores em Financiamento da Educação (Fineduca)	Brazil
18. Association AMONTANA	Madagascar
19. Association Camerounaise Pour la Défense des Droits de l'Homme des Libertés et du bien être (ACADEHLIB)	Cameroon
20. Association d'Aide et de Protection des Personnes vulnérables	Democratic Republic of Congo
21. Association des Amis du Belvédère	Tunisia
22. Association des Personnes Handicapées Motivées de Tône (APHMOTO)	Togo
23. Association femmes pour l' égalité et la démocratie	Morocco
24. Association Française Pour un Enseignement Ambitieux et Humaniste (AFPEAH)	France
25. Association graine de paix	Algeria
26. Association Initiative Urbaine	Morocco
27. Association Rechida pour l'environnement et développement	Morocco
28. Association Tunisienne des Jeunes et Développement	Tunisia
29. Ayuda en Acción	International
30. Both ENDS	International
31. Brazilian Campaign for the Right to Education	Brazil
32. Bretton Woods Project	United Kingdom
33. Cameroon Education For All Network	Cameroon
34. Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE)	Bangladesh
35. Campaña Argentina por el Derecho a la Educación (CADE)	Argentina
36. Campaña Latinoamericana por el Derecho a la Educación (CLADE)	International
37. Campaña Peruana por el Derecho a la Educación (CPDE)	Peru
38. Campanha Brasileira pelo Direito à Educação	Brazil
39. Carrefour de la famille marocaine	Morocco
40. CEMEA Sénégal	Senegal
41. Centre d'Actions pour la Sécurité Alimentaire et le Développement Durable (CASAD-Bénin)	Benin
42. Centre d'Encadrement des personnes opprimées	Democratic Republic of Congo
43. Centre for Education Rights and Transformation	South Africa
44. Centre for Equity and Quality in Universal Education	India
45. Centres d'Entraînement aux Méthodes d'Education Active (CEMEA)	France
46. Centro de Defesa da Criança e do Adolescente (CEDECA/Ceará)	Brazil
47. Centro de Estudos Educação e Sociedade (CEDES - Unicamp)	Brazil
48. Centro de Investigación, Planeación y Evaluación (CIPE Consultores)	Honduras
49. Child Rights International Network (CRIN)	International
50. Civil Society Action on Education for All (CSACEFA)	Nigeria
51. Civil Society and Trade Union Institutions of Liberia (CTIL)	Liberia
52. Coalición Española de la Campaña Mundial por la Educación	Spain
53. Coalition des organisations en synergie pour la défense de l'éducation publique (COSYDEP)	Senegal
54. Coalition des organisations mauritaniennes pour l'éducation (COMEDUC)	Mauritania
55. Coalition Education	France
56. Coalition Education Pour Tous BAFASHEBIGE	Burundi
57. Coalition for Educational Development	Sri Lanka
58. Coalition for Transparency and Accountability in Education	Liberia
59. Coalition Nationale de l'Education Pour Tous en République Démocratique du Congo (CONEPT RDC)	Democratic Republic of Congo

60. Coalition nationale de Madagascar pour l'éducation accessible et inclusive (CONAMEPT)	Madagascar
61. Coalition Nationale pour l'Education Pour Tous - Burkina Faso (CN-EPT/BURKINA)	Burkina Faso
62. Comité National de Développement des Réseaux pour l'Education en Afrique de l'Ouest (CNDREAO)	Senegal
63. Comité Syndical Francophone de l'Education et de la Formation (CSFEF)	International
64. Construisons Ensemble le Monde	Democratic Republic of Congo
65. Corner House	United Kingdom
66. Counter Balance	Belgium
67. CSC-Enseignement	Belgium
68. Défense des enfants International Belgique	International
69. DEL PEP 21	France
70. East African Centre for Human Rights (EACHRights)	Kenya
71. Economic & Social Rights Centre (Hakijamii)	Kenya
72. Edugestion Cameroun	Cameroon
73. Environnement et Progrès ASBL	Belgium
74. Equal Education Law Centre	South Africa
75. Fédération Camerounaise des Syndicats de l'Education (FECASE)	Cameroon
76. Femmes unies pour le développement	Democratic Republic of Congo
77. Fonds voor OntwikkelingsSamenwerking (FOS)	International
78. Foro Dakar Honduras	Honduras
79. Foro por el Derecho a la Educación de Chile	Chile
80. Foundation For Environmental Rights,Advocacy & Development FENRAD-NIGERIA	Nigeria
81. Franciscans International	International
82. Fundación Manatí para el Fomento de Ciudadanía A.C.	Mexico
83. Ghana National Education Campaign Coalition	Ghana
84. Global Campaign for Education	International
85. Global Campaign for Education - US	United States
86. Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (GI-ESCR)	International
87. Global Justice Now	United Kingdom
88. Global Peace and Development Organization	Liberia
89. Government Teachers' Union	île Maurice
90. Grupo de Estudio Sobre Educación en Cárceles (GESEC)	Argentina
91. Grupo de Estudos e Pesquisas em Política Educacional (GREPPE)	Brazil
92. Homabay county education network	Kenya
93. Homabay county paralegal	Kenya
94. Human Dignity	International
95. Idealogía, Intervención Comunitaria S.Coop.Mad	Spain
96. Incidencia Civil en Educación (ICE)	Mexico
97. Initiative for Social and Economic Rights (ISER)	Uganda
98. Initiative For Women Empowerment & Development(IWED)	Nigeria
99. International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF)	International
100. Jeunes et Femmes pour les droits de l'homme et la paix (J.F.D.HO.P).	Democratic Republic of Congo
101. Jeunesse et Emplois Verts pour une Economie Verte (ONG JEVEV)	Bénin
102. Just Fair	United Kingdom
103. Kenya Human Rights Commission (KHRC)	Kenya
104. Kenya National Union of Teachers (KNUT)	Kenya
105. Kisora	Kenya
106. Kisumu county education network	Kenya
107. Labour,Health and Human Rights Development Centre	Nigeria

108.	Les Anges Du Ciel	Democratic Republic of Congo
109.	Ligue des Droits de l'Enfant	Belgium
110.	Lumiere Synergie pour le Développement	Senegal
111.	Mathare Association	Kenya
112.	Migori county education network	Kenya
113.	Mouvement Anfass Démocratique	Morocco
114.	Mouvement politique des objecteurs de croissance	Belgium
115.	Movimento de Educação para Todos (MEPT – Moçambique)	Mozambique
116.	Nadi Ghati Morcha	India
117.	Nadi Ghati Morcha	India
118.	National Campaign for Education Nepal	Nepal
119.	National Teachers Association of Liberia (NTAL)	Liberia
120.	Natural Resources Alliance of Kenya	Kenya
121.	Nepal National Teachers Association	Nepal
122.	Network for Public Education	United States
123.	Network for Public Education	USA
124.	NGO Education Partnership	Cambodia
125.	Organisation Democratique du Travail	Morocco
126.	Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions (OBESSU)	International
127.	Oxford Human Rights Hub	United Kingdom
128.	Pakistan Coalition for Education	Pakistan
129.	Planète Urgence	International
130.	PNG Education Advocacy Network (PEAN)	Papua New Guinea
131.	Prayatn Sanstha	India
132.	Program on Human Rights and the Global Economy	United States
133.	Public Services International	International
134.	Red de Educación Popular Entre Mujeres de Latinoamérica y el Caribe (REPEM)	Latin America and Caribbean
135.	Rede Angolana da Sociedade Civil de Educação para Todos (Rede EPT-Angola)	Angola
136.	Rede da Campanha de Educação para Todos – Guiné-Bissau (RECEPT-GB)	Guiné-Bissau
137.	Rede Nacional da Campanha de Educação para Todos de São Tomé e Príncipe (RNEPT-STP)	São Tomé and Príncipe
138.	ReLus - Lusophone Network for the Right to Education	International
139.	Rencontre pour la Paix et les Droits de l'Homme (RPDH)	Republic of Congo
140.	Réseau des Acteurs de Développement de l'Éducation au Bénin (ONG RADEB)	Benin
141.	Réseau des Organisations pour le Développement de l'Éducation au Burkina (RODEB)	Burkina Faso
142.	Réseau Ivoirien Pour la Promotion de l'Éducation Pour tous	Cote d'Ivoire
143.	Réseau Marocain pour la Defense du Droit à la Santé - Droit à la vie	Morocco
144.	Réseau Pour le Développement de l'Éducation au Niger (RESDEN)	Niger
145.	Réseau progrès et développement humanitaire du Niger (ONG REPRODEVH NIGER)	Niger
146.	RESULTS Education Fund	International
147.	Right to Education Forum (India)	India
148.	Right to Education Forum Jharkhand	India
149.	Right to Education Initiative	International
150.	Shala Mitra sangh	India
151.	Siaya county education network	Kenya
152.	Sikshasandhan	India
153.	Society for International Development (SID)	International
154.	Society for People's Awareness (SPAN)	India
155.	Solidarité Laïque	France (international)

156.	SOLIDARITE-UNAFETPCI (Union Nationale des Formateurs de l'Enseignement Technique et Professionnel de Côte d'Ivoire)	Côte d'Ivoire
157.	Star of the lake CBO	Kenya
158.	StopTFF	France
159.	Sudanese Coalition for Education for All	Sudan
160.	Sustaining Continuity in Education Foundation	Nigeria
161.	Syndicat des Enseignants Romands	Switzerland
162.	Syndicat des Travailleurs des Etablissements Privés du Cameroun (SYNTESPRIC)	Cameroon
163.	Syndicat général de l'éducation nationale - Fédération (Sgen-CFDT)	France
164.	Syndicat général de l'enseignement de base (SGEB)	Tunisia
165.	Syndicat National Autonome de l'Enseignement Secondaire	Cameroon
166.	Syndicat national de l'enseignement supérieur Fédération syndicale unitaire (SNESUP-FSU)	France
167.	Syndicat National des Agents de la Formation et de l'Education du Niger (SYNAFEN -NIGER)	Niger
168.	Syndicat National des Formateurs de l'Enseignement Technique et de la Formation Professionnelle (SYNAFETP-CI)	Côte d'Ivoire
169.	The Kairos Center for Religions, Rights and Social Justice	United States
170.	Union Nationale des Normaliens/Normaliennes et Educateurs/Educatrices d'Haïti (UNNOEH)	Haiti
171.	UNISON	United Kingdom
172.	Unnati Institute for Social and Educational Change	India
173.	Yemeni Coalition for Education for All	Yemen
174.	Youth Progressive Association in Taraba	Nigeria

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- ⁱⁱ See e.g. *Bridge Vs Reality: a Study of Bridge International Academies' for-profit schooling in Kenya*, available at: <http://bit.ly/2h1Rml9>; *Schooling the Poor Profitably: the innovations and deprivations of Bridge International Academies in Uganda*, available at: <http://bit.ly/2cSQidq>.
- ⁱⁱⁱ See e.g. Statement from the Ministry of Education and Sports on the closure of BIA, available at: <http://bit.ly/2eVg967>; Letter to CEO of BIA from Ministry of Education, Kenya <http://bit.ly/2rTRN69>.
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- ^v See e.g. *Can a Tech Start-Up Successfully Educate Children in the Developing World?*, available at: <http://nyti.ms/2sUjZpm>.
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- ^{vii} Concluding Observations and Recommendations on the 5th Periodic State Report of the Republic of Uganda (2010 – 2012), available at: <http://bit.ly/1Y3HGmm>.
- ^{viii} See <http://www.bridgeinternationalacademies.com/about/what-we-do/> [accessed 10 July 2017].
- ^{ix} See <http://www.bridgeinternationalacademies.com/company/mission/> [accessed 10 February 2017].
- ^x See <http://www.bridgeinternationalacademies.com/company/investors/> [accessed 9 February 2017].
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- ^{xiii} Ibid.
- ^{xiv} Ibid.
- ^{xv} Forthcoming ActionAid report on experience of private schools in Lagos, Nigeria.
- ^{xvi} *Schooling the Poor Profitably: The innovations and deprivations of Bridge International Academies in Uganda*, available at: <http://bit.ly/2cSQidq>.
- ^{xvii} Dr Joanna Harma - written evidence <http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/international-development-committee/dfids-work-on-education-leaving-no-one-behind/written/38340.pdf>
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- ^{xxii} Ibid., p. 51
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- xl See <http://bit.ly/2uGeDzx>. See also EACHRights, *Bridge International Academies continues to be found in violation of education standards in Kenya*, 19 July 2017: <http://bit.ly/2uGawDt>
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- lii Oral evidence: DFID's work on education: Leaving no one behind?, HC 639, available at: <http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/international-development-committee/dfids-work-on-education-leaving-no-one-behind/oral/49579.pdf>, Q204.
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