



Privatization in and of education in Africa and Girls' Rights to Education : Submission to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW): July 2014.

1. Introduction & Background

[GEEDA](#) (Gender Education & Enterprise Development for Africa) is a growing independent women's and African Diaspora led network based in the UK. We are responding to the recent call by the Rights to Education Project call for civil society contributions to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) discussions when [CEDAW](#) will be discussing a General Recommendation on girls and women's right to education. We want to draw attention to some of the impacts that privatisation in and of education in Africa is having on the rights of education of girls and women in Africa¹.

With almost 200 million people aged between 15 and 24, Africa has the youngest population in the world, and it keeps growing rapidly. If this trend continues, the continent's labour force will be 1 billion strong by 2040, making it the largest in the world, surpassing both China and India (McKinsey Global Institute, 2010).² However, as African economies grow and more African women become empowered, millions more women are being left behind in poverty, deprivation and destitution.³

Privatisation in and of education in Africa is occurring at a rapid pace. Non-state education is delivered by a mix of community, NGO, faith-based, philanthropic and private providers and takes many forms including low-fee private schools, for-profit private schools, community schools, education public-private partnerships, private tutoring, and religious schooling through madrasas and church schools.⁴

1.1 The international al policy framework for the right to education of girls and women

Article 10 of CEDAW, in providing the right to education for women and girls, is based on five core principles:

¹ See *Make Every Woman Count's* [third annual monitoring report for the African Women's Decade](#) for an update on human rights with respect to women and girls in each African country

² Africa Economic Outlook: Promoting Youth Employment in Africa

http://www.africaneconomicoutlook.org/en/theme/youth_employment/

³ <http://newafricanmagazine.com/is-africa-rising-with-women-leading-the-way/>

⁴ <http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/events/globalization-regionalization-and-privatization-and-education-africa>



- a) Elimination of all forms of discrimination to ensure that women and girls receive equal opportunity with men and boys to the same quality and type of education and have the same potential to benefit from such education;
- b) Education is not limited to primary and secondary education. An expansive framework is adopted to include all levels of education from pre-school through to the tertiary level in academic and technical-vocational fields as well as sports and physical education and continuing education;
- c) Education must be available, accessible, acceptable, and adaptable to women and girls in urban as well as in rural areas and to all disadvantaged groups;
- d) Primary measures, including the elimination of stereotypical concepts of the roles of men and women in society, must be supported with a number of related, complementary measures that are designed to enhance the right of women and girls to education and to make free choices in fields of study and careers to be pursued;
- e) Promoting the right of women and girls to education facilitates enjoyment of rights in their personal and family life as well as in their political and public life.

This explicit right to education is also recognized in many international legal instruments, including but not limited to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Article 13), the International Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Racial Discrimination (Article 5), the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (Article 30), the International Charter of Physical Education and Sport (Article 1), the Convention on Technical and Vocational Education, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Article 24), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 28), the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious, and Linguistic Minorities (Article 4) and the 1960 Convention against Discrimination in Education.

1.2 The Maputo Protocol on Education & Training of Women in Africa

Furthermore, Article 12 of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol) states that:

1. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to:
 - a) eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and guarantee equal opportunity and access in the sphere of education and training;



- b) eliminate all stereotypes in textbooks, syllabuses and the media, that perpetuate such discrimination;
- c) protect women, especially the girl-child from all forms of abuse, including sexual harassment in schools and other educational institutions and provide for sanctions against the perpetrators of such practices;
- d) provide access to counselling and rehabilitation services to women who suffer abuses and sexual harassment;
- e) integrate gender sensitisation and human rights education at all levels of education curricula including teacher training.

2. States Parties shall take specific positive action to:

- a) promote literacy among women;
- b) promote education and training for women at all levels and in all disciplines, particularly in the fields of science and technology;
- c) promote the enrolment and retention of girls in schools and other training institutions and the organisation of programmes for women who leave school prematurely.

1.3 An outline of the impact of educating or not educating girls and women in Africa

Globally, 55% or over half of the 31 million girls not in school in 2011, are never expected to enrol in school. Currently the maternal mortality ratio in Sub-Saharan Africa is at 500 per 100,000 births which is almost two and a half times the world average and forty times more than the UK. International statistics show that women who are educated are less likely to become child brides, have children later, and increase the health and survival of their children. What is more, educated mothers are less likely to die in childbirth.

*“If recent trends continue, universal primary completion in sub-Saharan Africa will only be achieved in 2069 for all poorest boys and in 2086 for all poorest girls”.*⁵

Key messages from *Gender summary of the Education For All Global Monitoring Report*⁶ include:

- If all women in sub-Saharan Africa completed primary education, the maternal mortality ratio would fall by 70%, from 500 to 150 deaths per 100,000 births.
- Globally, women are paid less than men for comparable work. However, the higher the level of education, the smaller the gender wage gap.

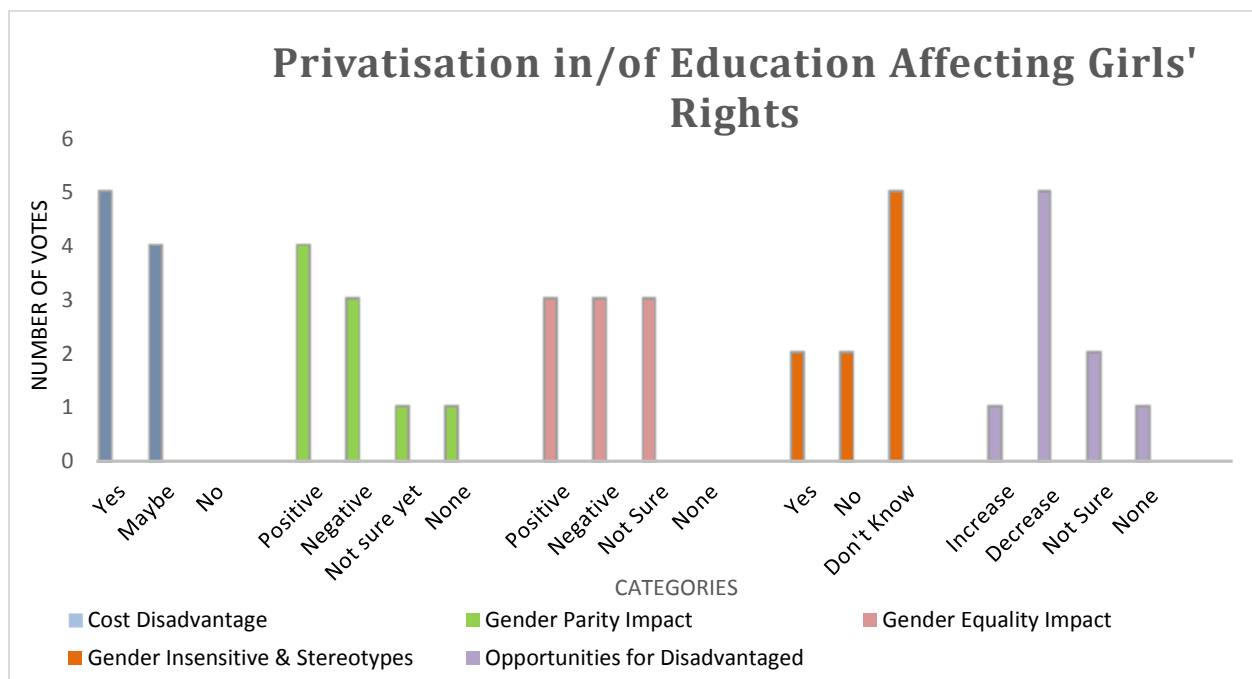
⁵ [EFA Global Monitoring Report 2013/14](#) : Teaching and Learning: Achieving quality for All – Gender Summary

⁶ op cit



- By altering attitudes, education of women – as well as that of men – leads to political changes, including the more democratic representation of women.
- If all girls had secondary education in sub-Saharan Africa and South and West Asia, child marriage would fall by 64%, from almost 2.9 million to just over 1 million.

2. Results of GEEDA Online Poll : Expert responses



A total of nine self-selected members of GEEDA and Education in Developing Countries Linked In groups responded to the [GEEDA-CEDAW Poll](#). Respondents included Professor Elaine Unterhalter a world renowned educational expert in Gender and international development at the Institute of Education; Gordon Carver, Project Director at GEMS Education Solutions, Ghana (the parent company owns and operates high performing private schools across the world) and Patricia Lamour, the Director of Aspire Education Group and a former head teacher of a private international school in West Africa. Other respondents included a director of an international NGO, three Gender and Education consultants and two international education students.

2.1 Costs disadvantage to girls

Most of the respondents stated that increased costs associated with privatisation in/of education would disadvantage girls in relation to boys. The comments of the rest of the respondents, who indicated “maybe”, also indicated that they thought the cost factor was likely



to disadvantage girls being sent to school. One respondent importantly identified the opportunity cost of losing unpaid household labour mostly done by girls as a factor disadvantaging girls being sent to (private) school. Lastly, one of the respondents, highlighted the educational level of the mother and her influence over family income as being a deciding factor whether her girls as well as her boys were sent to private school.

“The normalisation of fees as part of schooling will more likely have a detrimental impact on girls than boys.”

“The research evidence suggests when charges are made girls are left out, so I think increased costs will disadvantage girls”

“Boys in many countries are likely to be prioritised in households with limited resources”.

2.2 Gender Parity

Whereas four of the respondents stated that privatisation would have a positive impact on gender parity, a third of respondents that it would have a negative impact, and the remaining two were either not sure or thought it would have no impact. Respondents mentioned parental concern over girls’ safety walking long distances to reach school as well as the “abuses” of girls in schools, which keep them out. One respondent’s commented on the lack of regulation of private schools, which was also echoed by other respondents in answers to other questions.

“A nearby and affordable private school would positively increase girls' school attendance”

“In some situations you see private education increasing girls' access to government schooling - because the boys are prioritised to go to the paid institutions”

“...girls tended to slightly outnumber the boys in my school. I think that the privileged and educated in most countries value sending their girls to school”

“...there is little evaluation evidence of these schools at present, particularly their gender effects.”

“...since regulation is by definition less at a private school, abuses which keep girls out of school may not be easy to address through existing administrative or legal channels.”



2.3 Gender Equality

Responses to this question weighted all answers equally. One third of respondents thought that privatisation would have a positive impact on gender equality and one cited the driver being maintaining tuition fees and reputation rather than equality per se. One third thought it would have a negative impact and the final third thought privatisation would have no impact at all on gender equality. The BRIGHT project in Burkino Faso was cited as a case study of a private initiative which brought about greater gender parity and equality, through gender sensitive pedagogies, school feeding programmes, giving girls take home food rations and building schools with separate latrines for girls and boys. Lastly, one respondent pointed out the immense work needed to ensure gender equality within the education system, which would require efforts from both state and private providers within a policy and accountability framework.

“Private schools want to ensure their standing and their income by trying to ensure that both sexes do well in their exams. However, we are still talking essentially about privatised education positively impacting gender equality of outcomes for the few and not the majority.”

“Some low-cost private schools employ more female teachers, which while being a disadvantage to the teachers who are often not paid well, could provide for greater achievement by female students via a role model effect.”

“But with limited processes for monitoring private schools, I don't know how we will know what the impact is.”

“The immense work needed to ensure gender equality within the education system is required across both state and private providers, and should be systemised across both by clear policy that is implemented with the force of accountability.”

2.4 Disadvantaged Groups in Education

Most respondents felt that privatisation of education would decrease opportunities for disadvantaged groups through cost barriers or lack of inclusive approach. One respondent who thought it would increase opportunities, made the proviso that it would not be automatic and



“needs deliberate efforts”. Another person pointed out the possibility that certain niche private sector operators could start providing better services for disadvantaged groups.⁷

“..they will always be left to the hands of whatever state provision their happens to be.”

“...putting any cost barrier up is likely to disadvantage the most vulnerable groups”

“Very little profit to be made from disadvantaged groups, so little incentive for private sector to reach out to them”

“..Private schools are just as able to discriminate and/or not be inclusive through their location, approach, ethos etc.”

2.5 Gender insensitive curricula and stereotypes

An often overlooked point was made that although some modern international curricula taught in private schools may seek to avoid gender stereotypes, they tend to perpetuate cultural stereotypes and standards which may not be relevant or effective for Africa's cultural and economic development. Another respondent highlighted the effect of curricula based on extreme religious or nationalist agendas, whilst another highlighted pro-gender work that is being done by non-state schools.

“Gender insensitive curricula and materials are predominant in the government systems, so no reason to think that a private system would be much different.”

“If by ‘private’ school we include NGO and Church-based schools, then there is a lot of pro-gender sensitive curriculum work being done within them already, although more could be done.”

“Some curricula almost demand that children are exposed to more open-minded ideas and ways of thinking ... curricula carrying nationalist or extreme religious ideals can have the opposite effects.”

“Public and private sector education need to invest more in gender sensitive curriculum development and assessments appropriate to national cultural and economic development priorities.”

⁷ James Tooley's work of promoting private, parent-funded schools serving the poor in India, China and Africa is relevant here.



2.6 Relevant case studies or research

Professor Elaine Unterhalter was able to cite relevant case studies or gender educational research which she had undertaken, whilst another education consultant referred to *Young Lives*, the international longitudinal research study on childhood poverty which looked at student outcomes in relation to private and public schools in India. However, the lack of responses to this question highlights a general lack of available research in the area of gender impacts of privatisation in/of education particularly in Africa.

2.7 Key Messages to CEDAW

Generally, respondents' comments support the premise that there are problems with quality and equality on the Continent in both state and privatised schools. The key unasked question that was emerging was whether, with increasing privatisation in of education, education is becoming more of a right or a privilege in Africa.

“Africa is at a state of development where it is critical that education remains free and a basic human right as opposed to a privilege.”

“There are major system-wide flaws within both private and public education institutions when it comes to gender parity and educational quality.”

1. Education of young people is a state rather than a private sector responsibility, as private companies are driven by profit motives rather than the public good
2. Gender equality needs to be built in “*deep and sustainable ways*” in both state and privatised education to preserve and promote girls rights to education.
3. The importance of state regulation, monitoring and emphasis on corporate social responsibility within privatised education
4. More rigorous research into the assumptions underpinning privatisation of education and in particular their gender effects
5. Parental education to overcome social and cultural attitudes which discriminate against girls and to empower them to expect more from schools, private and public, which educate their children.



3. Conclusions

The African continent already has huge disparities between a relatively rich minority and a vast majority who are poor, increasingly female and young. Whereas we might all agree that education is a human right for girls as well as boys, given the economic realities of many African countries and their underdeveloped state service provision in health and welfare, education, energy and transportation, schooling for many has become a privilege that increasingly poorer parents cannot afford. By 2030, there are predictions that 59% of Africa's 20-24 year olds will have completed secondary school, as opposed to 42% now⁸. However without gender equality, we may still be deploring the fact that *"there are too many African girls not going to, or not staying in, secondary school and forced into early marriages"*⁹.

Significantly, the Maputo Protocol which to date has been signed and ratified by 48 out of 54 countries on the African continent, is very explicit in its recommendations with regards education and training of women and girls and recommends the integration of gender sensitisation and human rights education at all levels of education curricula including teacher training. However, as Faiza Muhammed, the Somalian women's rights veteran and co-editor of the report *Journey to Equality*, stated: "There is no doubt that the Maputo Protocol is useless unless it contributes to substantial changes in the situation of the African women and girls".¹⁰

What GEEDA believes is that African governments need to urgently address the lack of supply, i.e. teachers and schools which are resourced and accessible to the majority of girls (in terms of location, transportation and cost). Secondly, they need to address the multiple social, economic and cultural barriers and discrimination that prevent girls being sent to or being kept on in school; and finally, the lack of enabling environment, i.e. a social policy climate of gender justice, implementation of national and international laws and the Maputo Protocol ensuring children's and girls' right to education, as well as quality technical vocational education and training (TVET), university education, jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities that are available to girls once they finish school.

"Privatisation can be an important driver of better school access, and critically better educational quality."

This assumption as voiced by one of our respondents is at the heart of encouraging the greater privatisation in and of education both in developing and developed countries. However, GEEDA has come across a recent review of evidence which showed that most of the assumptions

⁸ African Economic Outlook, op cit

⁹ <http://newafricanmagazine.com/is-africa-rising-with-women-leading-the-way/>

¹⁰ op cit



underpinning the role and impact of private schools in developing countries, e.g. quality, equity, parent accountability are weakly evidenced and require more rigorous research. In the case of equal accessibility of private schools by girls and boys, the review found this was not the case.¹¹

We all also need to fully appreciate that privatisation in/of education in Africa has a different impact within a developing country as opposed to a developed country context, and that state regulation would need to be put in place to ensure that privatisation does not simply reproduce or amplify existing inequalities which are systemic.

“Developing countries are using private markets to increase the supply of schools, while developed countries use private markets to improve quality and choice where the supply is already fully developed. These strategies have profound implications for equity...Many developing countries have severe problems with inequitable access to education, and these inequities can create profound obstacles to economic development” (Lincove, 2009)

Lincove’s¹², analysis of World Bank neoliberal education reforms in developing countries, also highlighted practices prevalent in private schooling in countries in Africa and India in which teachers, with the knowledge of private school proprietors, deliberately held back on teaching the curriculum within the school, so as to supplement their (insufficient) private school teaching income through private tuition.

Finally, GEEDA agrees with the Rights to Education project that by *“ensuring an effective and appropriate monitoring and regulatory mechanism that is human rights compliant, States will be able to fully respect, protect and fulfil education rights and maintain educational freedoms.”*¹³

In addition to this, we believe that privatisation in and of education could do more to make a difference to the rights of girls in Africa. By being led by gender conscious women and men; by reaching out to the disadvantaged groups in society and by building the leadership capacity of girls and boys for greater human rights and gender equality.

¹¹ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/326247/Private_schools_rigorous_review_evidence_brief.pdf

¹² Are Markets Good for Girls? The World Bank and Neoliberal Education Reforms in Developing Countries <http://blogs.shu.edu/diplomacy/files/archives/06%20Lincove.pdf>

¹³ [Privatisation of education: Global trends of Human Rights Impact](#)