
Kenyan citizens lodge a complaint with the Compliance Advisor Ombudsman against the International Finance Corporation's investment in Bridge International Academies (BIA).

(Nairobi, 16th April 2018) In a [complaint](#) submitted to the [Compliance Advisor Ombudsman](#) earlier today, the East African Centre for Human Rights (EACHRights) and 8 current and former Bridge parents and teachers raised concerns over the operations of Bridge International Academies in Kenya. The complainants provided details concerning the negative social impact of the company, which includes the violation of international human rights principles, national law, and IFC Performance Standards 1, 2 and 4.

The Compliance Advisor Ombudsman is an independent accountability mechanism of the International Finance Corporation (IFC) and the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA) for environmental and social concerns related to investments or clients of the IFC and MIGA.

The complaint comes after 88 civil society organisations from around the world wrote an [open letter](#) to investors in Bridge International Academies on 1st March 2018 outlining significant issues around the corporate practices and impact of Bridge. The letter called upon investors to cease support to Bridge until the concerns raised were adequately investigated.

The complaint details Bridges violations as follows: failure to comply with national law and regulations; discrimination and marginalization; lack of transparency and advertising of false information concerns over the impact of Bridge's operations on workers' rights including: excessive working hours; payment below minimum wage and poor student safety.

One complainant outlined the misleading effects of Bridge's advertisements in an interview stating: *"A lot of promises that yield to nothing. When school fees were raised in 2014 we were told that laptops and a school bus would come. We were given scholarship numbers – like a till or lottery number but nothing came. You are told you will get free uniform, then you go to the school and have your child measured. But we never got anything"*.

Bridge has been in the limelight in the recent past over its ongoing lack of compliance in regard to protecting the right to education under Kenyan national law, including respecting articles 43 and 53 of the Constitution as well as Sections 5 and 7 of the 2013 Basic Education Act.

Linda Oduor-Noah, a Project Manager at EACHRights stated “*EACHRights and other civil society organisations have met the World Bank and IFC team several times to raise issues regarding Bridge’s operations. To-date, no adequate steps have been taken to address the very concerning practices we have documented. The lack of accountability and transparency in this process, as well as lack of urgency in addressing these ongoing grave problems raises concerns about the IFC’s due diligence with respect to its investments. How can an institution like the World Bank, through the IFC, fund illegal private schools that make profit off poor parents?*”

The complainants therefore call upon the CAO to launch an investigation into the violations caused by International Finance Corporation’s (IFC) client, Bridge International Academies (BIA) in fairness to the hundreds of children, parents and teachers who are daily affected by these violations.

END

CONTACTS

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DOCUMENTS

- Complaint <https://bit.ly/2JPkhnW>
- Open Letter to investors of Bridge International Academies <https://bit.ly/2F31CIU>
- Report on Bridge International Academies in Kenya: <http://bit.ly/2h1Rml9> and human rights analysis <http://bit.ly/2tm7JLs>