

## **Complaints body publishes an assessment report regarding concerns relating to the IFC's investment in Bridge International Academies**

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**(NAIROBI, 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2019)**

Yesterday the World Bank's [Compliance Advisor Ombudsman \(CAO\)](#) published its [assessment report](#) as part of its ongoing investigation into the operations of Bridge International Academies (Bridge Academies) in Kenya.

On 16 April 2018, 10 Kenyan citizens, including current and former parents and teachers at Bridge, with support from the [East African Centre for Human Rights \(EACHRights\)](#), submitted a [complaint](#) to the CAO outlining various alleged abuses of IFC standards and human rights law committed by the company. The complainants requested that the IFC take action to stop the harm caused by the [multinational chain](#) of low-cost pre-primary and primary private schools.

The complaint was considered [eligible](#) in May 2018 after which the CAO began the assessment phase of their investigation process.

The US-based company Bridge Academies operates over 500 schools in the world, most of them in Africa, that have been the focus of multiple complaints in Kenya and other countries concerning its lack of legal registration, exploitative labour practices, discrimination, lack of transparency and failure to meet national standards for education, health and safety. The International Finance Corporation (IFC), the World Bank's private sector investment arm, having made a \$10 million US dollar equity investment in BIA in 2014 now has a legal obligation to ensure its investments are not in breach of its internal investment guidelines, called [Performance Standards](#), and that they are compliant with national law.

During the assessment phase, the CAO gathered views and statements from all parties concerned. The assessment report, which makes no judgment on the matter, presents the issues discussed from the perspective of each party.

The complaint is now moving into the appraisal stage where the CAO will determine whether a compliance investigation of the IFC's involvement is required.

Dr Judith Oloo, the Chief Executive Officer at EACHRights, said: *"It is important that this phase is now over and that we can move forward to the full investigation of the company's operations. The CAO process provides an opportunity to ensure greater transparency and accountability, which is crucial in this case given the gravity of the company's alleged practices. We look forward to the CAO's rigorous appraisal of the issues presented by the complainants."*

### **CONTACTS**

The East African Centre for Human Rights (EACHRights): Linda Oduor-Noah, [linda@eachrights.or.ke](mailto:linda@eachrights.or.ke), +254 701 670 090

### **DOCUMENTS**

- CAO Assessment Report: <https://bit.ly/2Vh9LLF>
- CAO Complaint Eligibility Acceptance Letter <https://bit.ly/2LpXLmB>
- CAO Complaint <https://bit.ly/2JQNTBI>
- Blog: "Using international accountability mechanisms: A test case for private education in Kenya" <https://bit.ly/2KtcCeU>
- 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>
- More information on Bridge International Academies: <https://bit.ly/2WIOQDb>