



13 May 2015

**Dr Jim Yong Kim**

President, World Bank Group  
 1818 H Street, NW  
 Washington, DC

**Subject: joint open letter and statement in reaction to your speech in which you praised Bridge International Academies**

Dear President Kim,

We are writing to express our deep concern about your recent speech, on 7<sup>th</sup> April 2015 titled “Ending Extreme Poverty by 2030: The Final Push,” in which you praised the for-profit, fee-charging chain of private primary schools in Kenya and Uganda, Bridge International Academies (BIA). Your remarks, in the context of a speech about poverty reduction, suggest that the World Bank believes this model should be supported and expanded through public policy, and that it is acceptable and desirable to expect poor people and communities to pay for basic education. The international community has fought to abolish school fees over the last two decades due to their negative impact on the poor, and their role in entrenching inequality. We are deeply troubled that this fee-based model is now being promoted as a means of ending poverty.

In your remarks you argued that, thanks to these schools, “[a]fter about two years, students’ average scores for reading and math have risen high above their public school peers.” And you said these results are achieved for “just” \$6 dollars a month. The underlying message is that \$6 is a small amount of money worth paying for schooling; however, this suggests a lack of full understanding of the situation of poor people in our countries.

In fact, school fees at BIA range from \$6.5 to \$9, depending on the grade. Beyond this, other costs to families are substantial, including uniforms (about \$18.5 per year), exam fees (\$2 to \$3 per term), textbooks, and payment transfers; a conservative estimate of the real monthly amount received by BIA for each child ranges rather between \$9 and \$13 a month – excluding food, which BIA provides for an additional \$7 per month. These costs are either prohibitive or demand a significant sacrifice for many Kenyans and Ugandans.

For the poorest half of Kenyan households who earn KES 7,000 (\$75) or less per month, sending three children to a Bridge Academy would cost **at least 24% of their monthly income**, assuming a \$6 monthly cost. Taking into account more realistic monthly costs of \$17 that include school meals, the proportion rises to **at least 68% of their monthly income**. For 47% of Kenya's population living below the poverty line – nearly half of the population – any expenditure to access education, even \$6, means sacrificing another essential right for their survival, such as health care, food, or water. With nearly one out of six of Kenya's primary school-aged children not enrolled in primary school, mostly due to cost factors, a model of expanding education based on charging school fees will continue to leave these children behind.

In Uganda, the situation is similar. Half of Ugandan households earn USH 200,000 (about \$68) per month or less, and 21% of households earn less than USH 100,000 (\$34) per month. Thus, for half the Ugandan population, sending three children to BIA would represent **52% of their monthly income** assuming a \$6 monthly cost, **and more likely around 75%**, taking the more realistic figure of \$17 a month – and around 150% for the bottom quintile of the population, who cannot even afford to buy enough food. Such an expense is inconceivable for this segment of the population. Charging fees will also exclude the 9% of children who currently remain out of school in Uganda, and it is bound to result in more school dropouts – as research shows that fees are the most common educational barrier cited by parents whose children drop out or never enrol in school.

In your speech you also stated that students in Bridge Academies have better results than those in public schools. However, to-date we are not aware of any independent academic study available on Bridge Academies; it appears that the data you cited was from a study conducted by BIA itself. Other information about BIA schools calls into question these claims of higher quality. For example, teachers have only five weeks of training and rely on scripted, standardized lessons. Technology is a promising tool to improve learning, but it cannot substitute for a qualified teacher.

If the World Bank is serious about improving education in Kenya and Uganda, it should support our governments to expand and improve our public education systems, provide quality education to all children free-of-charge, and address other financial barriers to access. However, the Bank has no active International Development Association (IDA) investments in either Kenya or Uganda's public basic education systems, and neither does it have any such future commitments in the pipeline. In contrast, last year, the World Bank's private sector arm, the International Finance Corporation, made a \$10 million investment in Bridge International Academies to enable its expansion. It is alarming to see the World Bank Group supporting fee-charging, profit-making, private education instead of free, public basic education in Kenya and Uganda. Given the World Bank's power to influence the development landscape, it is a worrying indication of future trends.

Public primary education in Kenya and Uganda is, in law, free and mandatory. International human rights standards also require these countries to provide free quality education for all. The World Bank should work towards supporting countries such as Uganda and Kenya to put the laws into reality, and support public education systems.

Attached is a short briefing, which explains our concerns in more detail. Only a month before your speech, members of civil society from several countries, including Uganda, met with senior education officials of the World

Bank specifically to discuss the rise of fee-charging, private primary schools, the World Bank’s support to them, and funding for BIA in particular. These civil society representatives were not just isolated voices but part of a global movement in support of the right to education, with strong concerns and deeply united positions on these issues. For this reason, we were particularly disappointed to hear your recent remarks. However, we understand that you are committed to dialogue with civil society and we are hopeful that you will consider and act on our concerns.

**In particular, we call on the World Bank Group to:**

- Stop promoting the model used by Bridge International Academies and other fee-charging, private schools, and publicly re-commit the World Bank to universal, free and compulsory basic education.
- Cease investments in Bridge International Academies and other fee-charging, private providers of basic education.
- Re-establish World Bank investments in Kenya and Uganda’s public basic education systems.
- Refrain from basing its views on self-produced evidence from corporate providers of education, and instead base its policies on independent, rigorous studies assessing the impact of education models on the totality of the right to education, including on discrimination and segregation.
- Listen to and respond to the concerns of civil society, including by seriously taking into account their views when assessing and considering models such as that of Bridge International Academies and other fee-charging, private providers of basic education.

## Signatory organisations

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Country</b>
1. ActionAid International Kenya	Kenya
2. ActionAid International Uganda	Uganda
3. Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group	Uganda
4. Community Restoration Initiative Project	Uganda
5. East African Centre For Human Rights (EACHRIGHTS)	Kenya
6. Elgon Benet Indigenous Organisation	Uganda
7. Federation Of Women Lawyers – Kenya (FIDA Kenya)	Kenya
8. Foundation for Human Rights Initiative	Uganda
9. Girls Education Movement Uganda Chapter	Uganda
10. Hakijamii	Kenya
11. Initiative for social and Economic Rights	Uganda
12. Kenya National Union Of Teachers (KNUT)	Kenya
13. Kenya Youth Foundation	Kenya
14. Kisumu Social Rights Association	Kenya
15. Kituo Cha Sheria – Legal Advice Centre	Kenya
16. Legal Brains Trust Uganda	Uganda
17. Mathare Association	Kenya
18. Mburugu & Kanyonge Associates Advocates	Kenya
19. Muungano Wa Wanavijiji- (Federation of the Urban Poor)	Kenya

20. National Union of Disabled Persons in Uganda	Uganda
21. Pan African development education and advocacy programme	Uganda / Nigeria
22. Rights Promotion and Protection Centre	Kenya
23. Soweto Forum	Kenya
24. The Eastern Africa Collaboration For Economic Social Cultural Rights (EACOR)	Kenya
25. The Kenya section of International Commission of Jurists (ICJ Kenya)	Kenya
26. Uganda National Teachers Union (UNATU)	Uganda
27. Uganda Society for Disabled Children	Uganda
28. United Organisation for Batwa Development in Uganda (UOBDU)	Uganda
29. Western Water and Sanitation Forum	Kenya
30. Women of Uganda	Uganda

### *Supporting organisations*

The following organisations signed the above statement in solidarity with organisations in Uganda and Kenya:

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Country</b>
31. Action Paysanne Contre la Faim RDC	Democratic Republic of Congo
32. ActionAid International	International
33. Africa Network Campaign on Education For All (ANCEFA)	Africa region
34. Albanian Coalition for Child Education	Albania
35. American Federation of Teachers (AFT)	United States
36. Arab Network for Civic Education	Arab region
37. Arabic Campaign for Education for All	Arab region
38. Armenian Constitutional Right-Protective Centre" (ACRPC)	Armenia
39. Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE)	Regional – Asia-Pacific
40. Attac/CADTM Maroc	Morocco
41. Australian Education Union (AEU)	Australia
42. Bank Information Centre	USA
43. Brazilian Campaign for the Right to Education	Brazil
44. Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE)	Bangladesh
45. Centre de Recherche et d'Action pour le Developpement	Haiti
46. Civil Society Network for Education Reforms (E-Net Philippines)	Philippines
47. CNC-D-11.11.11	Belgium
48. Coalición Colombiana por el Derecho a la Educación	Colombia
49. Coalition Béninoise des Organisations pour l'Éducation Pour Tous (CBO-EPT)	Benin
50. Coalition camerounaise des ONG de l'Éducation (CEFAN)	Cameroon
51. Coalition des Organisations en Synergie pour la Défense de l'Éducation Publique (COSYDEP)	Senegal
52. Coalition Marocaine pour l'Éducation pour Tous	Morocco
53. Coalition Nationale de l'Éducation Pour Tous en RDC	Democratic Republic of Congo
54. Coalition Nationale pour l'Éducation Pour Tous (CN-EPT/BF)	Burkina Faso
55. Coalition Nationale Togolaise pour l'Éducation Pour Tous	Togo

56. Coalition nigérienne des Associations Syndicats et ONG de campagne Education Pour Tous (ASO-EPT Niger)	Niger
57. Confederação Nacional de Acção Sobre Trabalho Infantil	Portugal
58. Conseil Régional des Organisations Non Gouvernementales de Developpement	Democratic Republic of Congo
59. Edmund Rice International	International
60. Education For All Sierra Leone	Sierra Leone
61. Education for all Somalia	Somalia
62. Education International	International
63. Egyptian Center for Housing Rights	Edypt
64. Egyptian Coalition for Education	Egypt
65. Equal Education	South Africa
66. Fédération Internationale des Ceméa (FICEMA)	International
67. Fédération Nationale des Associations de Parents d'élèves du Maroc (FNAPEM)	Morocco
68. Foro por el Derecho a la Educación	Chile
69. Foundation For Environmental Rights,Advocacy & Development(FENRAD)	Nigeria
70. GCE Irish Coalition	Ireland
71. GCE Italy	Italy
72. GCE Netherlands	Netherlands
73. Georgian Coalition for education For All	Georgia
74. Ghana National Education Campaign Coalition	Ghana
75. Global Campaign for Education	International
76. Global Campaign for Education, US (GCE-US)	USA
77. Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	International
78. Global Justice Now	United Kingdom
79. Human Dignity	Regional - Africa
80. IBIS	International
81. International Accountability Project	International
82. International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC)	International
83. International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers Associations (IUF)	International
84. Jivar éducation et développement	Morocco
85. Jordanian National Coalition	Jordan
86. Labour,Health and Human rights Development Centre	Nigeria
87. Latin America and the Caribbean Social Science Council (CLACSO)	Latin American region
88. Latin American Campaign for the Right to Education (CLADE)	Latin American region
89. Lumière Synergie pour le Développement	Sénégal
90. Mouvement Anfass Démocratique	Morocco
91. Mouvement Ivoirien des Droits Humains (MIDH)	Ivory Coast
92. Mwalimu Nyerere Chair in Pan African Studies	Regional – Africa
93. National Coalition for Education (NCE India)	India
94. NGO Education Partnership (NEP)	Cambodia
95. Organisation démocratique du Travail	Morocco
96. Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions (OBESSU)	Regional – Europe

97. Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions (OBESSU)	Regional – Europe
98. PREMICONGO	Democratic Republic of Congo
99. Privatisation in Education Research Initiative	International
100. Public Interest Law Center (PILC)	Chad
101. Public Services International	International
102. Réseau des Organisations du Secteur Educatif	Niger
103. Réseau Ivoirien pour la Promotion de l'Education Pour Tous (RIP-EPT)	Ivory Coast
104. Right to Education Forum	India
105. Right to Education Project	International
106. Rukmini Foundation	USA
107. Rwanda Education For All Coalition (REFAC)	Rwanda
108. SECTION27	South Africa
109. Sudanese Collation for Education for All	Sudan
110. Syndicat National Autonome de l'Enseignement Secondaire (SNAES)	Cameroon
111. The Bretton Woods Project	International
112. The Child Labor Coalition	USA
113. The National Consumers League	USA
114. urgewald	Germany
115. Vanuatu Education Policy Advocacy Coalition (VEPAC)	Vanuatu
116. Yemeni Coalition For Education For All	Yemen