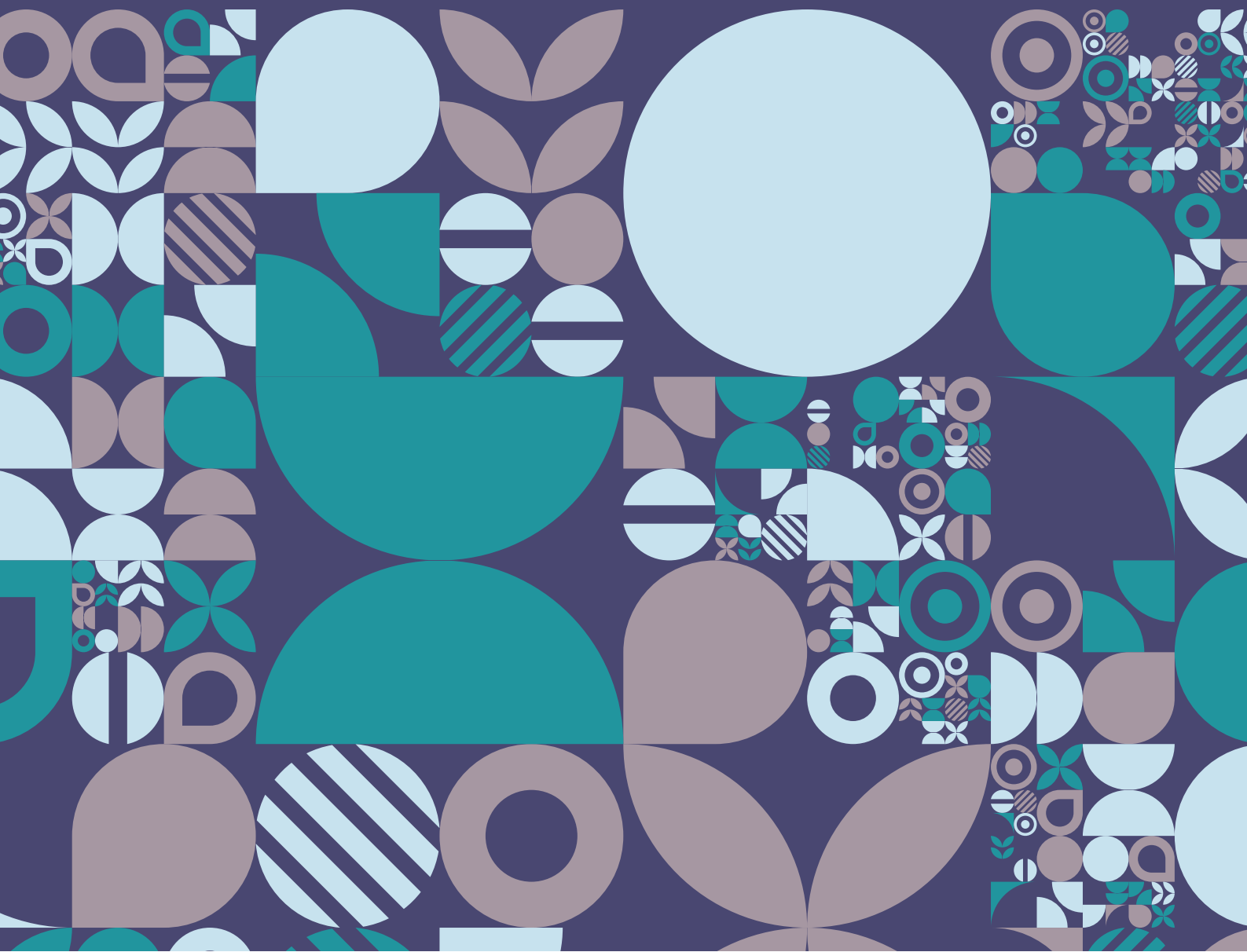


2022



# Annual report

Right to Education Initiative



# Table of Contents

---

03

About Right to Education Initiative

04

Building bridges and catalysing action

07

Promoting and defending the right to free quality public education against the commercialisation of education

08

Supporting and capacity building the sector

12

Defending rights from the very start

13

Knowledge is power: raising awareness on the right to education

16

Setting and clarifying legal standards

17

Our supporters

18

Our team, and our acknowledgements

# About RTE



## Who we are

We are a non-governmental international human rights organisation dedicated entirely to the promotion and defence of the right to education.



## What we do

Our mission is to promote and defend education as a human right worldwide, by:

- protecting and strengthening the international legal, political and institutional framework that guarantees the right to education and guides its implementation at national level
- strengthening civil society actors' capacity to understand and effectively use human rights law and mechanisms to advance the realisation of the right to education at all levels through monitoring, reporting, advocacy and litigation.



## Why we exist

We exist because the right to education is not fully realised, is still violated and is under constant and evolving threat.

There is a demonstrable need within the human rights, education and development sectors for a civil society organisation to be an expert on the right to education and act as its guardian. We exist to promote and defend education as a human right at international level, and to support civil society actors to understand and use human rights law and mechanisms to advance the realisation of the right to education at national level, holding states accountable through monitoring, reporting, advocacy and litigation.

Find out more  
about us

# Our impact

Over the course of the year we saw significant impact and progress across many areas of our work, primarily in terms of building bridges and catalysing action; supporting and capacity building the sector; and raising awareness on the right to education. Our main thematic areas of focus this year were early childhood care and education (ECCE), non-state actors in education, and higher education. We have also commenced work on educational technology, and continue to work on cross-cutting monitoring.



## Building bridges and catalysing action

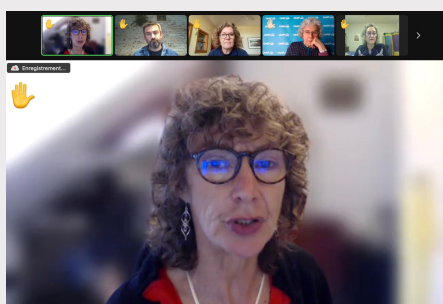
One of our core strengths is our ability to convene diverse actors in order to catalyse action for meaningful change. Drawing on our wide network and our in-house expertise and technical knowledge, we were able to drive forward progressive agendas on a range of issues throughout the year. The following is a snapshot rather than an exhaustive list of our achievements;

### **Successful global advocacy for strengthened legal frameworks around ECCE**

We have been laying the groundwork for increased international attention on the issue of ECCE rights, building bridges between academia, civil society organisations (CSOs), and international organisations since 2020, and contributing to norm-setting documents such as the UNESCO Global Partnership Strategy for early childhood in 2021. Our continued ability to bring diverse actors around a common table shaped the conversation, raised awareness, and bore plentiful fruit in 2022. In October, the outgoing UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education published a report on ECCE, thanks in significant measure to our efforts to promote the salience of ECCE as a human rights issue. Our statement in response to this report summarises its significance as a milestone for young children's rights.

In addition, over the year we worked with partners including the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education, UNESCO representatives, civil society organisations and academics, to strengthen a Global Advocacy Group on ECCE. This group, which we facilitate, meets regularly to discuss and launch collective actions to strengthen ECCE legal frameworks, and advocate, among other objectives, for one year free pre-primary education for all children. RTE worked to galvanise the Global Advocacy Group around advocacy efforts and possibilities emanating from the [UNESCO World Conference on ECCE \(WCECCE\)](#), held in November 2022 in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. Alongside UNESCO and other CSOs we held the parallel event '[Strengthening the Legal Framework on ECCE](#)', and side event '[Right from the start: the role of civil society actors and partnerships in advancing ECCE](#)', successfully meeting our objective of shaping conversations around the rights and legal dimensions of ECCE, and bringing diverse international actors together to drive forward thinking. In addition, during the year we supported and participated in side events at the Human Rights Council, and the Transforming Education Summit and [Pre-Summit](#).

Finally, in recognition of the importance of working not just at international level but with states, who as duty bearers must enact international law into national law and policy, we successfully developed close working relationships with right to education champion nations in 2022. In early November in a side event to the UN General Assembly, we brought together representatives of the State of Portugal alongside UNESCO, CSOs, academics, and the newly appointed UN Special Rapporteur on the right to education, Farida Shaheed, to discuss [strengthening legal frameworks for universal access to inclusive and quality ECCE](#).



*Pictures left to right: Sandra Fredman speaking at our online side event to the UN General Assembly; Delphine Dorsi speaking at a the WCECCE parallel event on strengthening legal frameworks; Rajakumari Michaelsamy and Mercedes Mayol Lassalle in discussion at our side event on civil society partnerships at WCECCE.*



## Challenging inequalities in higher education

Throughout the course of 2022 we worked to develop awareness and strategies for action around inequalities in higher education. We convened meetings and panel discussions on inequalities in education from a cross national perspective, and took part in UNESCO's World Higher Education Conference (WHEC). Our participation in WHEC enabled us to build bridges between different sectors and disciplines through our side events, whilst ensuring a rights framework was central to discussions in the UNESCO panel on new approaches to higher education in which we took part. A key achievement in 2022 was to co-draft a significant UNESCO policy document on the right to higher education knowledge document. This publication aims to help guide policy-makers, civil society and the international education community, to fully enforce the right to higher education and ensure that the human-rights based approach is placed at the heart of the higher education debate.

We also continued to work on our award winning collaboration with students from the Sciences Po law school clinic, to develop advocacy capacity and strategies on the topic of inequalities in higher education. This year we continued to build bridges between CSOs, parliamentarians and academics in France, bringing these sectors together for a session on the right to higher education in France exposing the issue and discussing solutions.

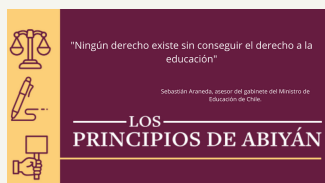


# Promoting and defending the right to free quality public education against the commercialisation of education

We continued to support the implementation of the Abidjan Principles in a variety of national contexts, offering training and capacity building on their use, and supporting national partners. A significant part of our remit with regard to the Abidjan Principles is promoting knowledge and awareness about the text among different audiences. Consequently, we supported the development and launch of the Abidjan Principles in Spanish and Portuguese, in addition to supporting the development of the Arabic version. We also held a joint celebration for the Abidjan Principles third anniversary, bringing together activists, civil society organisations, academics and UNESCO representatives to discuss profit making in education. Committed to integrating the Abidjan Principles into policy discussions at multiple levels, we co-wrote a chapter on Integrating the Abidjan Principles on the Right to Education into the Constitution: Keys for the Chilean Process, which was published in [Social Rights and the Constitutional Moment - Learning from Chile and International Experiences](#). While the draft constitution was rejected in a referendum held in September 2022, this process served to highlight the value of the Principles to new actors, in addition to raising awareness and shaping the debate on the normative dimensions of the right to education.

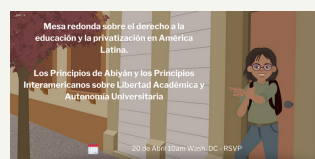
16

Total number of recognitions since 2019



2

Additional recognitions in 2022



Additionally, for several years, RTE has contributed to collective advocacy efforts to encourage international finance organisations to cease funding for commercial schooling. In 2022 we enjoyed a moment of significant achievement, as the [International Finance Corporation \(IFC\)](#) committed to [divesting from international commercial school chain Bridge International Academies](#), now known as New Globe schools. This decision marks a significant break with IFC past practice, and reinforces the importance of monitoring, awareness raising and advocacy on the part of CSOs like ourselves. Crucially, the IFC's decision is in line with findings from [UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring \(GEM\) Report 2021/2](#), to which RTE contributed, which states that 'profit making is inconsistent with the commitment to guarantee free pre-primary, primary and secondary education'.



## Supporting and capacity building the sector

RTE occupies a unique role within the education, development and human rights sectors. Whilst some of our work is outward facing, much of what we do is in service of the sectors in which we work. Across the year, we helped build capacity and support work at the intersection of these three fields in multiple ways.

### Providing technical support and expertise on legal and policy issues

This is a growing area of RTE's work, and is one of the primary means through which we meet our twin objectives of both strengthening the sectors in which we work, and strengthening the international human rights landscape.

We took part in teaching and capacity building across a range of domains, including facilitating a training in collaboration with the University of Geneva and GI-ESCR for civil society representatives from the Global South on how to conduct research for advocacy on privatisation

In addition, we delivered teaching and training on the right to education at the British University of Colombia, and Mission de droits de l'enfant.

In 2022, we provided specialist technical support to colleagues in Latin America for the development of submissions to the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) regarding ECCE rights in Peru, Guatemala and Argentina.

## Contribution to networks

We are an active member of a range of networks, through which we dedicate time, capacity, and knowledge to colleagues from around the world. Beyond supporting collaborative initiatives, we help shape conversations and ensure that a rights-based approach is central to the understanding and practical functioning of these spaces. Among them are:

### **Privatisation in Education and Human Rights Consortium (PEHRC)**

We play an active role in PEHRC, facilitating global calls and leading streams of work on ECCE and privatisation, and education technology (EdTech). We also provide regular inputs to colleagues in the form of peer learning sessions and training on topics on which we hold particular expertise, such as the [Abidjan Principles](#). Finally, throughout the year we helped galvanise advocacy efforts, drawing on our skills and experience conducting human rights advocacy to lead and contribute to initiatives for meaningful change.

### **The Francophone Network against the commercialization of education**

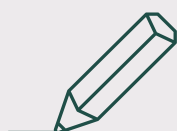
We sit on the facilitation group for this international network, and steer its strategic direction and priorities. Among the activities we engaged in were the [Second Day of Francophone Mobilisation against the commodification of education](#), and contributing to training on research capacity towards the right to education in collaboration with the University of Geneva and GI-ESCR, which has led to the publication of reports and the renewal of the training for a subsequent year.

### **ESCR-NET**

We continued to support ESCR-Net in 2022, forming part of the steering committee of the monitoring [working group](#) which seeks to promote and implement a human-rights based approach to data that can address imbalances in power, improve accountability and centre policymaking on people's lived experiences and perspectives - rather than serving the interests of powerful actors. In the spring, ESCR-Net launched the [Collective position on data and for economic, social and cultural rights](#), a document in whose development we played a significant role.

## Working together to strengthen our collective potential

We believe that through collaboration, more can be achieved. One of our strengths in the sector is our extensive network of contacts, our multilingual ability (our team of four speaks six languages), our agility, and our firm belief in participatory action. We work closely with partner organisations and networks to support others' initiatives, to shape joint endeavours, and to link and inspire collaboration between partners.



### Supporting others' advocacy efforts

We signed the [joint letter to the G20 on education financing](#) which calls on Indonesia, in its role as G20 President, to support a commitment to 'protecting, prioritizing and increasing education financing' within the Leaders' Declaration, including ensuring financing mechanisms are fully funded.

We collaborated on the production of a joint statement on the International Finance Corporation's (IFC) divestment from [profit-driven school chain Bridge International Academies](#), calling on other global funders to follow the IFC's lead.

We collaborated on the [development and launch of a statement](#) in response to the report "Can Education be Standardized? Evidence from Kenya". This statement urges governments and other actors to recognise the limitations of this study, which some will seek to use to justify the expansion of for-profit private provision of education and scripted teaching methods.

## Endorsements and in kind support

We are regularly called upon to support partners and international organisations with our in-house expertise. We review documents and reports to ensure the legal dimensions of the right to education are faithfully represented, we endorse and contribute to the development of tools and resources, and we support partners in their initiatives through the provision of materials and information.

- In 2022, we sponsored the fourth and seventh instalments of the Save the Children and partners' How to Child Rights series
- We co-sponsored an online event organised by Human Rights Watch on Transforming Education: Advancing Children's Rights for Today's World
- We provided advice regarding advocacy strategies to the CSOs involved in the Basque platform against the privatisation of education
- Over several months we took part in multi-CSO meetings in relation to the CESCR review of the UK. Our Executive Director contributed knowledge and experience related to RTE's extensive experience and technical expertise in reporting to the CESCR
- We prepared a video and presentation about the Abidjan Principles for the Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR), which was used in dialogue with policy makers at multiple levels to raise concerns regarding the lack of land, resources and infrastructure planning for accessible public schools in Zimbabwe.



# Defending rights from the very start

One of our primary areas of focus in 2022 was ECCE. We continued to drive forward a progressive agenda, catalysing efforts among actors from diverse sectors for advocacy and collective action to strengthen international legal frameworks and promote the right of all children to have one year of free, pre-primary education.

In addition to the successes in terms of global advocacy described on page 2, a core focus of our work on ECCE is to enhance the awareness and capacity of education actors, equipping them with the knowledge and tools to monitor, advocate and drive accountability on ECCE rights. We also seek to develop a wide network of diverse, interconnected actors with elevated ECCE understanding.

To this end, we worked to increase awareness, capacity and strengthened networks in multiple ways:

Alongside our partner organisation OMEP and network PEHRC, we launched an innovative international mapping project to track tendencies on ECCE and Privatisation at national levels which will enable evidence and data-driven advocacy efforts to take place in 2023.

4

networks contributed to, ensuring the rights dimension of ECCE is reflected

We participated in global fora and events, ensuring debates at multiple levels whilst contributing to consultations such as the World Policy Analysis centre's global initiative on measuring returns to lower to middle-income countries' (LMIC) investments in early childhood. We sit on the advisory group of this initiative, providing inputs from a human rights and practitioner's perspective.

6

documents, reports, and briefs published

We engaged new audiences with diverse aspects of ECCE, including via the launch of new multimedia resources like our series of video interviews, the first featuring World President of OMEP Mercedes Mayol Lassalle, and capitalising upon Education Day 2022 to highlight ECCE rights across multiple channels. We also enhanced ECCE understanding among different language communities, expanding our Arabic website readership on ECCE by 323%, and Spanish by 899%.

12

Events participated in



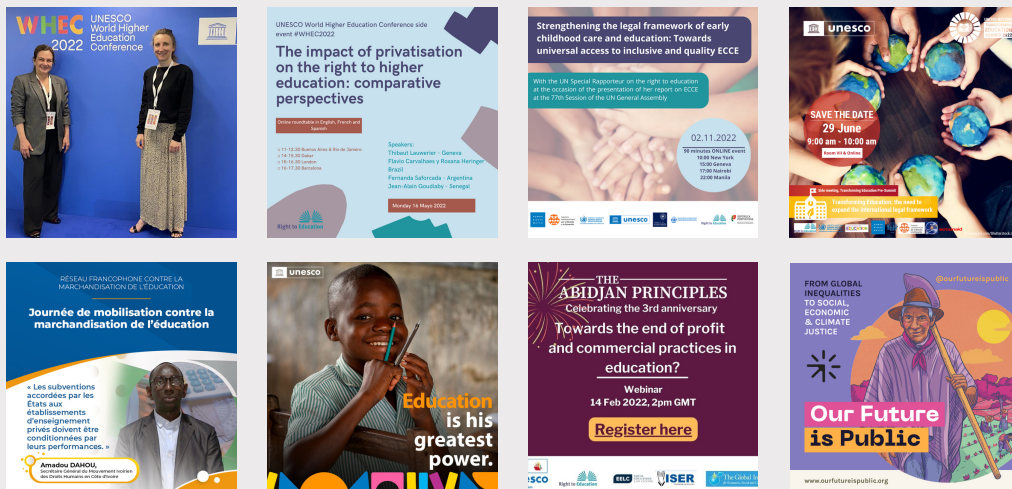


# Knowledge is power: raising awareness on the right to education

We know that knowledge gives access to power, and the ability to hold states accountable for violations of the right to education. This is why we continued to place significant emphasis on raising awareness, providing tools and materials, and engaging with our key audiences across the world throughout 2022.

## Representing the right to education at events and fora

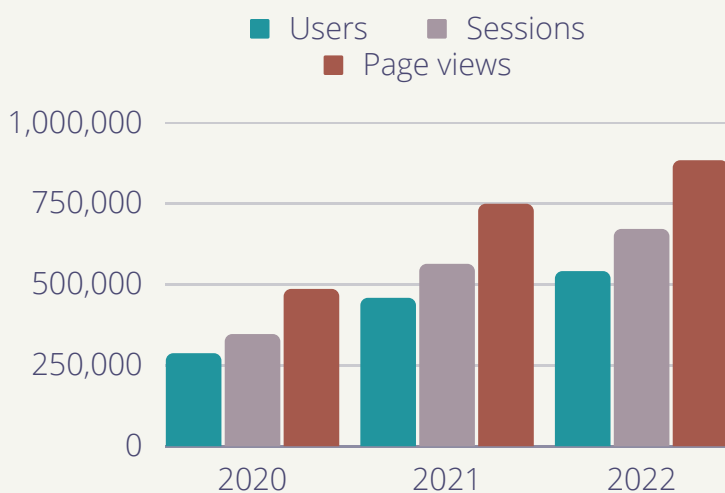
Throughout 2022 we contributed to a wide range of events, either through directly organising or participating in them. Event participation enables us to raise awareness while ensuring that a rights-based approach is central to discussions of education. We participated in more than 20 on and offline events across the year, including but not limited to the following:



- [UNESCO World Higher Education Conference](#)
- [UNESCO World Conference on ECCE](#)
- [Transforming Education Pre-Summit: Public vs Private Transformative Solutions for Education](#)
- [CIES 2022](#)
- [The impact of privatisation on education: comparative perspectives](#)
- [Second day of Francophone mobilisation against the commodification of education](#)
- [Human Rights Day: UNESCO Transforming Education webinar](#)
- [Strengthening the legal framework: towards universal access to inclusive and quality ECCE](#)
- [Abidjan Principles third anniversary](#)

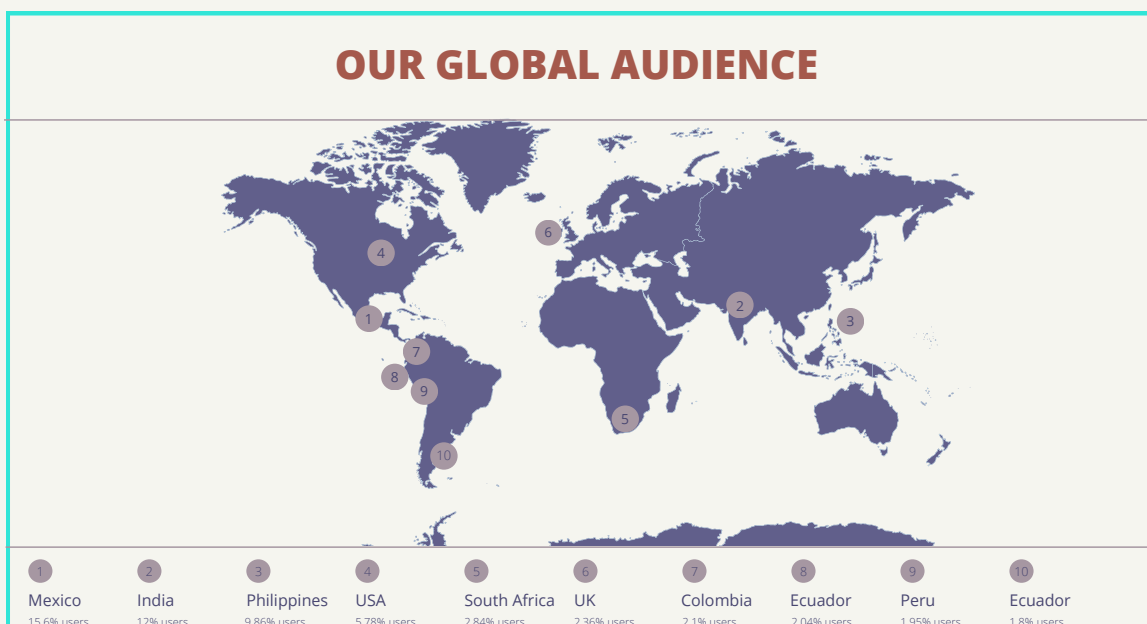
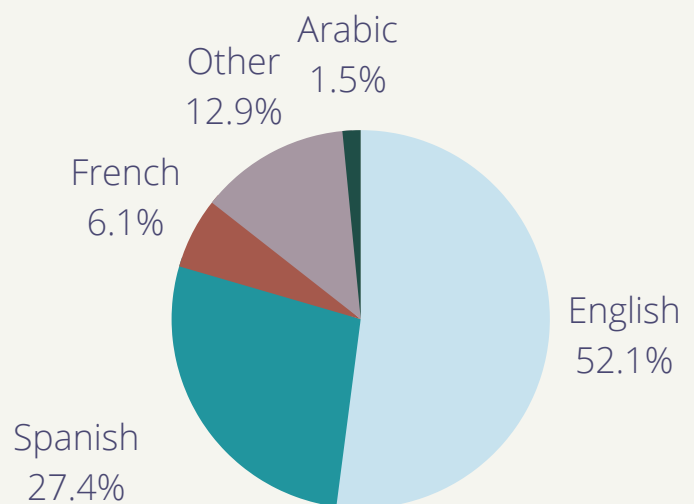
# How we engage with audiences across the world

In 2022, we continued to provide resources, tools and knowledge to diverse audiences worldwide. The growth in our website readership figures demonstrates the continued importance of our role, and the breadth of downloaded content reflects our utility as a resource for CSOs, IOs, academics and education actors worldwide.



**9%**  
increase on our Twitter  
followers from 2021

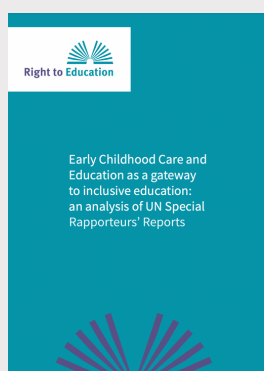
**4%**  
increase on our Facebook  
followers from 2021



## Providing tools and materials through our knowledge hub

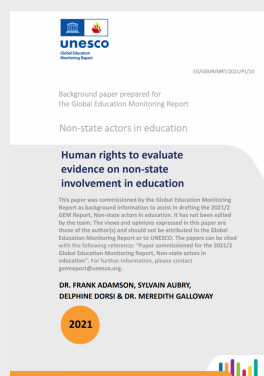
RTE began life as a virtual library and repository for information on the right to education. We continue to honour these foundations, while seeking to provide targeted materials which fill a need and provide a tangible, practical use to the sector. This includes research and legal analysis on critical and emerging areas, in addition to tools for practical use gathering and using data.

### 2022: highlighted resources



**Early Childhood Care and Education as a gateway to inclusive education: an analysis of UN Special Rapporteurs' Reports.** This Right to Education Initiative brief explores ECCE related content from the reports of UN Special Rapporteurs on the Right to Education published between 1999 and 2021. It harnesses our legal expertise and enhanced knowledge and understanding of UN processes to provide a document which addresses thematic references, in country situations, best practices and policy recommendations.

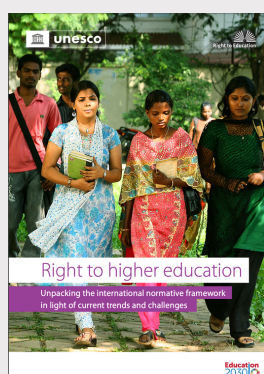
**Documenting Education Under Attack: Five key lessons for collaborations between civil society organisations and journalists.** This brief provides insight from a roundtable discussion held between journalists and CSOs in September 2021, providing five lessons for effective collaboration which bring benefits to journalists, CSOs, and affected communities.



**UNESCO Gem Report 2021-2022: non-state actors in education: who chooses? who loses?** RTE contributed a background paper to the prestigious UNESCO Gem Report, entitled 'Human rights to evaluate evidence on non-state involvement in education'.

**Higher Education in France: A right threatened by increasing inequalities?** Focusing on the impacts of inequalities based on place of residence, indirect study costs and privatisation on the implementation of the right to Higher Education in France, this document illustrates the challenges related to the realisation of the right to higher education.

Overcoming these hurdles for a country like France could, a priori, be held up as an example to others. Lastly, this report highlights France's legally binding obligations and potential infringements, especially with regard to its role in financing the Higher Education system.



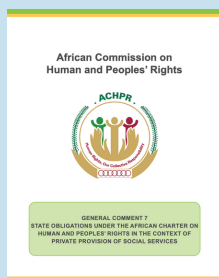
**Right to Higher Education: Unpacking the international normative framework in light of current trends and challenges.** This publication, drafted in collaboration with UNESCO, guides policy-makers, civil society and the international education community, to fully enforce the right to higher education and ensure that the human-rights based approach is placed at the heart of the higher education debate.

**UN Treaty Bodies Concluding Observations on Higher Education (2016-2021)** This document compiles the concerns and recommendations of UN Treaty Bodies for the period 2016-2021.



## Setting and clarifying legal standards

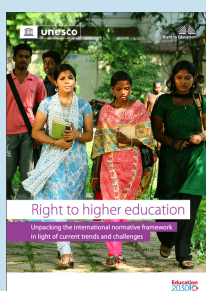
A core impact area for RTE is our ability to set and clarify legal standards. In 2022 we continued this important legacy, and saw significant advances across our core thematic areas.



In late 2022, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights launched General Comment No. 7 on State obligations in the context of private provision of public services. This landmark comment provides the most comprehensive analysis and authoritative interpretation of existing human rights law regarding the provision of public services essential for the enjoyment of human rights, particularly economic, social and cultural rights. The Right to Education Initiative sat on the General Comment working committee and helped draft inputs to the General Comment, which references the Abidjan Principles.



A crucial achievement of the ECCE Global Advocacy Group was the co-drafting and publication of an UNESCO-led thematic document on building and strengthening the international legal framework, published shortly before WCECCE. This significant document sets the tone for debate on ECCE and legal frameworks at international level, and their application at national level.



Finally, our report on higher education drafted in collaboration with UNESCO clarifies international normative frameworks and sets clear guidance as to how the right to higher education can be implemented and enforced.

# Our supporters

## Financials

Many thanks to our donors, whose generosity of support makes our work possible. We were supported in 2022 by the following organisations:



We were also supported in kind by A4ID, and law firms including Anglo American, Dechert LLP, DLA Piper UK LLP, and Morrison Foerster.

## Developing as an organisation

During 2022 we embarked upon an ambitious programme of internal reflection, to ensure that our ways of working, strategic priorities and economic model are best suited to the challenges the right to education faces, and the sector within which we work.

We were enabled by one of our supporters to work with two external consultants to develop an external review, which involved an extensive investigation into our own materials, alongside interviews with our partners, colleagues and board members.

The review has enabled us to better understand our impact and added value for the sector, in addition to the evolving role we hold and must shape for ourselves into the future.

**We thank you for your continued support to make the  
right to education a reality.**

# Our people, and our acknowledgements

## Our team

Our multilingual team of four spans three nations and speaks a combined total of six languages:

- Delphine Dorsi, Executive Director
- Natalia Dzevelaia, Finance and Administrative Manager
- Eleanor Rosenbach, Communications Manager
- Rajakumari Michaelsamy, ECCE Programme Manager

We were also joined in the first quarter of the year by Hoda Awwad, Programme Officer for non-state actors in education. Special thanks to consultants Susie Talbot and Juliana Lima, with whom we've worked closely this year, as well as consultants Danny Vannucchi and David Griffiths.

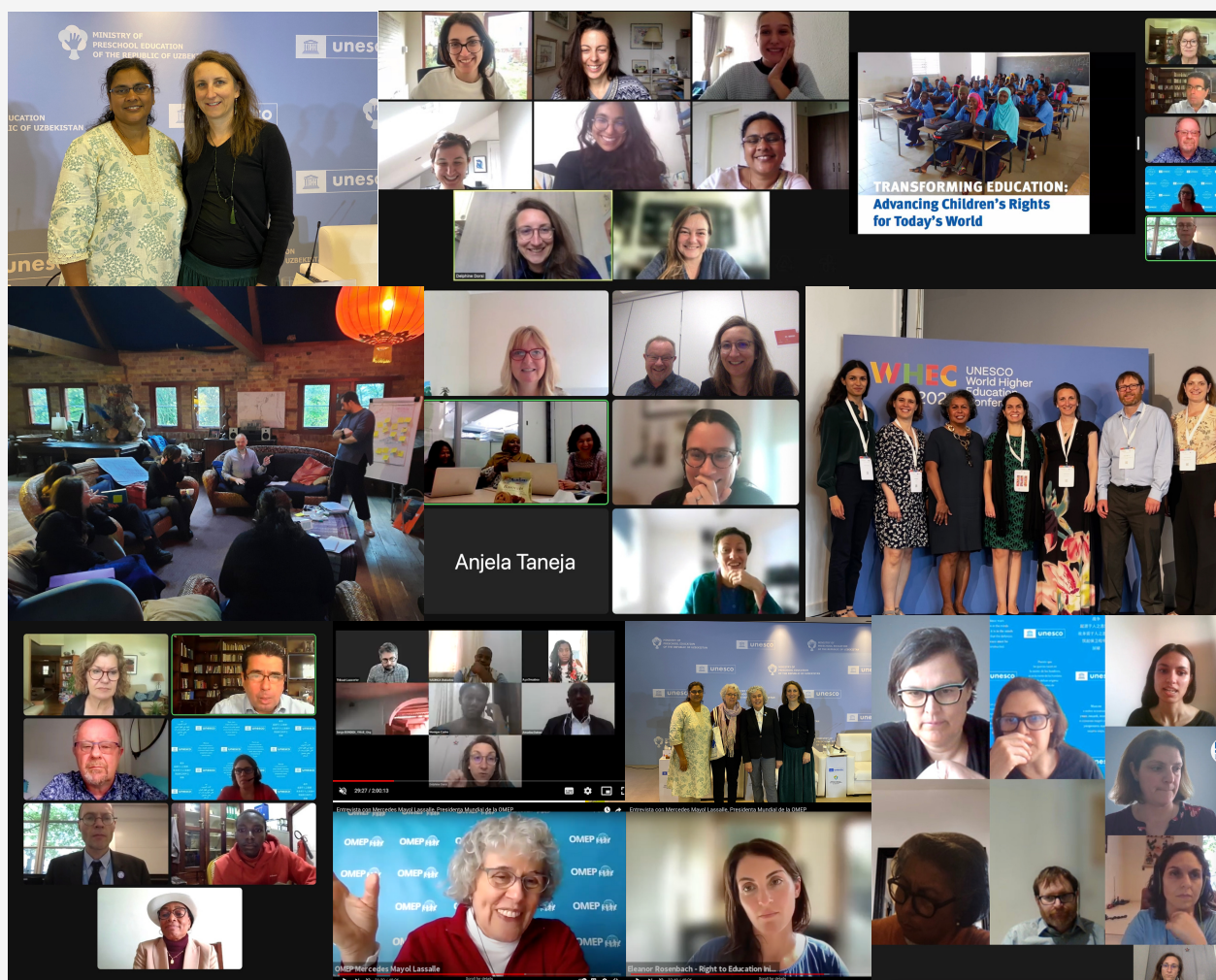
## Our executive board

The executive board is RTE's governing body. It is presently composed of eight trustees representing a diverse range of actors from the human rights, development and education fields:

- Elin Martinez, Senior Researcher in the Children's Rights Division of Human Rights Watch (Chair of Trustees)
- David Archer, Head of Civic Participation, Tax Justice and Public Services at ActionAid
- Dina Hashem, Associate Director for Global Partnerships at Habitat for Humanity International
- Ayan Hassan, Programme Finance Manager at War Child UK
- Bharti Patel, Child Rights and Social Justice Advocate
- Nikki Skipper, Head of Fundraising at The Queen's Commonwealth Trust
- Anjela Taneja, Lead Campaigner Inequality / Lead Specialist Essential Services at Oxfam India
- Carole Coupez, Network representative - Solidarité Laïque
- Iain Byrne, Researcher/Legal Advisor, International Secretariat at Amnesty International - stepped down during the year

## Our network of advisors

One of our assets as an organisation is the network of international experts on whose knowledge, expertise and guidance we can draw upon. Our network of advisors span sectors, continents and language communities - see the full list of individuals and their biographies [here](#).



## Get in touch with us

Right to Education  
Initiative



[www.right-to-education.org](http://www.right-to-education.org)  
[info@right-to-education.org](mailto:info@right-to-education.org)

@RTEInitiative